

Richard Dadd - The Flight from Insanity to Murder:
A Forensic Navigation of the Recondite Artist

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Abstract

Aged twenty-six, during a psychotic episode, the artist Richard Dadd (1817-1886) murdered his father in Cobham Park, Kent. Subsequently, Dadd spent the rest of his life in the Victorian asylum system, continuing to paint at the infamous Bethlehem Hospital (Bedlam) and at the equally notorious Broadmoor. Previous scholarly focus has viewed Dadd's oeuvre as being within the vanguard of original enchanted invention and since the 1960s, Dadd has become a poster-boy for 'outsider art'. Conversely, this thesis argues that Richard Dadd has largely been mythologised by earlier researchers and evaluates a fresh idea that *The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke* amounted to Dadd's own 'Last Judgement'. In the past, with the reinforcement of retrospection, study of Dadd's artwork has chiefly been viewed through the stereoscopic lens of modern psychiatric understanding, projecting a neoteric perception of a psychotic, paranoid-schizoid artist onto his work. Therefore, this thesis breaks with previous convention and, in direct contrast, considers whether Dadd was inspired by his own lived experience rather than topics suggested by doctors charged with his care. This idea is a radical new way of looking at Dadd's art, that is not from the top down where the control of those who ran nineteenth-century asylums held sway, but rather from below, where the patient's perspective is represented. To accomplish its objective, the thesis employs a forensic approach to evaluate the concurrent evidence surrounding Dadd's criminal insanity, physical act of murder, and artistic production. Richard Dadd was a recondite artist: his work was obscure, complex, concealed, and hidden, so this thesis untangles Dadd's enigmatic imagery to offer a different viewpoint, serving as a re-evaluation of Dadd's art, whilst broadening critical focus, with the hope of reinvigorating Dadd research.

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INTRODUCTION

*"Hell is empty, And all the devils are here."*¹

The artist Richard Dadd, (1817-1886) is perhaps most famous for murdering his father during a psychotic episode in 1843 before being held for the rest of his life at the infamous Bethlehem Hospital ('Bedlam'), and later in the equally notorious Broadmoor.²



Fig.1: Richard Dadd working on *Contradiction. Oberon and Titania*, Portrait Photograph by Henry Hering, c.1857, Bethlem Royal Hospital, London. (Public domain.)

¹ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act I, Scene II, Line 214.

² Richard Dadd always claimed not to have murdered his father, believing him to be the devil incarnate.
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This retrospective understanding may have influenced earlier researchers' consistent prioritization of Dadd's psychiatric disorder in their hierarchical historiographical analyses.³ Yet multiple key themes are repeatedly portrayed within Richard Dadd's art: they relate to murder, alcohol and violence, the control of money, doomed or forbidden love, jealousy and reckless behaviour. So many instances returning repeatedly to these themes is unlikely to be a coincidence and implies Dadd's complex interconnected contemplation of his life events, such as what happened, how it happened, and how he ended up at Bethlem. Therefore, this thesis proposes an alternative hypothesis for Dadd's artwork and utilises a forensically styled approach to available evidence which suggests Dadd may have been painting his own lived experience.

Previous art historical scholarly focus upon *The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke* (quasi 1855-64) and *Contradiction. Oberon and Titania* (1854-58) has also repeatedly led to Richard Dadd's artwork being seen within the vanguard of original enchanted invention. Since the 1960s, perhaps because of Dadd's mental health crisis and subsequent murderous crime, together with obfuscation of meaning within his paintings, Dadd has become a poster-boy for 'outsider art'⁴ and Symbolism. However, the early nineteenth century saw a resurgence of emphasis on artistic representation of myths, fairytales and folklore, with artists such as Joseph Noel Paton, John Anster Fitzgerald, and Frederich August Moritz Retzsch, as well as Richard Dadd enjoying popular success.

Nonetheless, as Roy Porter has suggested, "for people in the past, illness experiences were far more likely to be charged with life meanings, involving and transforming ideas of self, salvation, destiny, providence, reward, and punishment."⁵ Also of importance is that Victorian society was hierarchical, gender- and class-based, but with an expanding middle class who were deeply interested in morality.⁶ Dadd himself often shared or split his

³ Patricia Allderidge, *The Late Richard Dadd: 1817-1886* (London 1974); Louise Lippincott, 'Murder and the Fine Arts; Or, a Reassessment of Richard Dadd', in *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal*, Vol.16. (1988); John M. MacGregor, *The Discovery of the Art of the Insane* (Princeton 1989), (for example).

⁴ "The art of children, psychiatric patients and prisoners who create art outside conventional structures of training and art production is often categorised as outsider art." <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/o/outsider-art>. Accessed: 2023.

⁵ Roy Porter, 'The Patient's View: Doing Medical History From Below', in *Theory and Society*, Vol.14:2, (1985), 193.

⁶ Mike Huggins, *Vice and the Victorians* (London 2016) 23-24.

allegorical emphasis between two figures, indicating an exploration of folly as well as madness, more frequently expressed in morally instructive didactic literature.⁷ With that idea in mind this thesis investigates how probable it is that Dadd's Bethlem paintings were intentionalist productions, conceived as illustrative allegories, and that the images imply multi-layered, satirical, literary and theatrically emblematic ideas. Therefore, the following study of Richard Dadd's life and art proposes his graphic exploration of nineteenth century understanding of the underlying causes of his mental illness (and subsequent act of murder) was one of the few forms of control remaining to him within the asylum system. This is in direct contrast to how Dadd's art has been studied since 1974, when Tate Britain staged a large exhibition and tour of Dadd's artworks, accompanied by a detailed catalogue compiled by Patricia Allderidge, Archivist to The Bethlem Royal Hospital and The Maudsley Hospital. Allderidge's thorough scrutiny has been the most referenced work on Dadd ever since, but her analysis considered his art from the perspective of the authoritative influence of senior Bethlem staff.⁸ Fifty years on from the Tate's initial exhibition, my study suggests Dadd's oeuvre should be revisited and re-examined from a more contemporary perspective. Consequently, with the aim of reinvigorating Dadd research, this thesis offers a radical new way of looking at Richard Dadd's art, that is not from the top down where the control of those who ran nineteenth-century asylums held sway, but rather from below where the patient's perspective is represented. Hence, my thesis will take a similar approach to Roy Porter, where he acknowledges the sufferer's view and proposes, "we must avoid making the past fit into the categories of the present".⁹ As Porter demonstrates, a "physician-centred account of the rise of medicine may involve a major historical distortion", as both sides are needed for inter-personal interaction.¹⁰ Whilst it is possible that modern historians might object, on the principle that only medical hospital records and case histories can be counted upon as factual evidence, because the patients' perspective is "mute pre-history",¹¹ I would argue that in the case of Richard Dadd we have access to his handwritten notes and pictorial evidence which can be interpreted as his viewpoint.

⁷ Literature, such as Aesop's *Fables* and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, used the struggles, battles, experiences and encounters of their characters to explore moral differences between good and evil.

⁸ Allderidge, 28-31 (for example).

⁹ Porter, 184.

¹⁰ Ibid., 175.

¹¹ Ibid., 182. However, more recent studies are beginning to explore the potential of alternative viewpoints, for example: Cindy Diamond Zolnierak, 'Exploring Lived Experiences of Persons with Severe Mental Illness: A Review of the Literature.', in *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, Vol.32:1 (2011), 46–72.

The Passions Sketches

Previous attempts have been made to serialize some of Richard Dadd's Bethlem oeuvre under the title of the 'Passion series'; for example, Patricia Allderidge suggested just such a group classification styled under this assemblage in her exhibition catalogue *The Late Richard Dadd*.¹² Allderidge's contribution to Dadd studies trod closely upon the heels of the anti-psychiatry movement walked by Michel Foucault, Erving Goffman and Thomas S. Szasz. As a professional archivist employed by Bethlem Museum of the Mind, Allderidge's exhibition catalogue charted a path that linked Dadd's production with the progressive regime of Bethlem Medical Superintendent Doctor William Charles Hood. While Nicholas Tromans, another major contributor to Dadd studies, explains, "Allderidge's book is so well documented (by the standards of what was available at the time),¹³ and so complete in its listing of known and recorded works that, unintentionally, it gave the impression of being the last word on the subject, and the study of Dadd appeared to stop at this point."¹⁴ Therefore, one of the aims of my research will be to return to the original works of Dadd himself, utilising the inscriptions he added to his 'Sketches' in the 1850s, and comparing them to his play on emblematic visualisation and satiric exaggeration and jokes, made fashionable in contemporaneous comic literary illustration such as *Sketches by Boz*. - Caricature: literary such as in the works of Charles Dickens, and visual in the works of Hogarth for example, exaggerated the persona, features and faults of its characters, making them both obvious and humorous.

As Ruth Bernard Yeazell has explained, "decoding pictures now presented a greater challenge to the average person than did reading."¹⁵ Consequently, whilst in the nineteenth century within art iconography, sacred images could still be easily recognised and identified from conventional characters, new ideas from the imagination needed additional clarification for the viewer. Therefore, whilst ancient historical and origin

¹² Allderidge, 30.

¹³ The volume of information available to the researcher at the touch of a button in the twenty-first century far exceeds that available to researchers prior to the advent of the internet. Whilst Allderidge had the advantage of being an insider at a respected institution, which would have made research available to her that was not open to many, her options were considerably more limited in the 1970's.

¹⁴ Nicholas Tromans, *Richard Dadd: The Artist and the Asylum*, (London 2011), 184.

¹⁵ Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Picture titles: how and why Western paintings acquired their names* (Princeton 2015), 119.

myths were easily recognisable worldwide, original poetic and fantasy ideas such as Dadd's would have needed further explanation. Dadd's way around this difficulty was to inscribe his paintings with quotations.

Individual Agency

There was exponential growth in etchings, print, and illustrated books during the early to mid-eighteen-hundreds, often sketched and line-drawn in the first instance by highly trained and complex artists such as John Everett Millais and Frederick Richard Pickersgill (and before his breakdown, by Dadd himself).¹⁶ As Alderidge has noted, Dadd had access to many printed illustrations within Bethlem, which may have inspired him.¹⁷ Therefore, my thesis will examine whether Richard Dadd's paintings were a collection of synchronous representations, which came together to create one private homogeneous artistic idea.

In addition, the sociologist, Eviatar Zerubavel, has proposed that it is only when things are differentiated from other things, that we are able to understand how we give meaning to ourselves and the environment around us.¹⁸ It is this distinction which enables the individual to incorporate the social meaning of his life and surroundings. Similarly, Jodi O'Brien makes clear that a "feature of realities is that they have an order and structure to them, realities are *coherent*. Even realities that seem nonsensical and anarchical to outsiders reveal their own order and logic when carefully examined."¹⁹ Consequently, my thesis will argue that Richard Dadd and his canon has largely been mythologised by others, projecting on to him our neoteric perception of a psychotic, paranoid-schizoid artist. With the reinforcement of retrospection, research into Dadd's miscellany of work has chiefly been viewed through the stereoscopic lens of modern psychiatric understanding. In a paper read out by Patricia Alderidge to the Osler Club of London, 16 October 1969, several years before the 1974 Tate Britain exhibition, Alderidge reveals

¹⁶ See *The Book of British Ballads*, Ed. Samuel Carter Hall, with illustrative designs by R. Dadd to 'Robin Goodfellow', (London 1842), Vol.1, 85-90.

¹⁷ Alderidge, 26.

¹⁸ Eviatar Zerubavel, *Islands of Meaning* (1991), in *The Production of Reality: Essays and Readings on Social Interaction*, Ed. Jodi O'Brien (California 2001), 14.

¹⁹ Jodi O'Brien, *The Production of Reality: Essays and Readings on Social Interaction* (California 2001), 339.

that Dadd's retrospective schizophrenia diagnosis was made by Dr D.L. Davies of the Maudsley Hospital.²⁰ Allderidge quotes Davies: "from the diagnostic point of view Richard Dadd was indisputably schizophrenic".²¹ Dr Davies worked at The Maudsley Hospital from 1946 to 1976, where he "was exposed to the intellectual influence of Aubrey Lewis. The research tradition to which he was introduced emphasised case description" but Davies's theories have since been analysed and suggested to be based on faulty data.²² It should also be noted that Eugen Bleuler was the first psychiatrist to use the term schizophrenia in 1911,²³ twenty-five years after Richard Dadd's death in 1886.

Nevertheless, my objective in this thesis will be to investigate whether Dadd explored cultural ideas of humanism within his 'Sketches'. Previous studies of Richard Dadd, such as Eleanor Clare Fraser Stansbie's PhD thesis,²⁴ have approached Dadd's work from a psychopathological angle.²⁵ Fraser Stansbie identified that "Dadd's art has been analysed for clues to his mental condition, or conversely, that his mental illness has been seen as somehow responsible for providing meanings, usually seen as psychopathological."²⁶ Consequently, my approach differs in an attempt to explore his works from an alternative perspective – that of Dadd's artistic exploration of his own life experiences, rather than his mental health struggles.

Shakespearean Allegory

Some Shakespearean and proverbial themes may be observed within Dadd's 'Passions Series' (for example those created in 1853). In *Sketch of the Passions. Love* which references the balcony scene of *Romeo and Juliet* and, *Sketch to Illustrate Jealousy* quoting Iago from *Othello*, the Shakespearean connection appears clear. Meanwhile *Sketch to illustrate the Passions. Treachery* suggests oriental treachery and, *Sketch to*

²⁰ Allderidge's paper was printed in 2021: Patricia Allderidge, 'Richard Dadd (1817-1886): painter and patient', in *Medical History*, Vol.14:3 (2021), 308-313.

²¹ Ibid.

²² See: G.D.L. Edwards, 'Davies and 'Normal drinking in recovered alcohol addicts': the genesis of a paper', in *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*. Vol.35:3 (1994), 249-259.

²³ A. Jablensky, 'The diagnostic concept of schizophrenia: its history, evolution, and future prospects', in *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience*, Vol.12:3 (2010), 271-287.

²⁴ Eleanor Clare Fraser Stansbie, 'Richard Dadd: Art and the Nineteenth-Century Asylum' (PhD Thesis, University of London, 2006).

²⁵ Psychopathology is the study of mental illness.

²⁶ Fraser Stansbie, 15.

Illustrate the Passions. *Gaming* shows profligates gambling at an inn but there is no obvious Shakespearean connection. Therefore, to establish a persuasive parallel between a literary work and the ideas expressed within Dadd's art, there should be evidence that Richard Dadd was referring directly to his own life events as well as passages within the Bible, Shakespeare's plays, popular ballads, stories, myths and proverbs.²⁷ If this evidence exists, then examination of Dadd's multiple, related meanings might be constructed, suggesting successful if complex allegorisation of his own life experiences within his images.

For that reason, my study requires a close look at Dadd's art as a depiction and exploration of his own biography, leading up to the conclusion of each finished painting. This idea is representative of how all lives are lived, where the focus is often retrospective, but only up until a moment happens, because it is not possible to see into the future.²⁸ One of the difficulties with interpretation of Dadd's art today is that it is often viewed with hindsight, and all together, as if Dadd had a grand plan that he executed at the behest of his doctors as Alderidge suggests.²⁹ In its place, my alternative hypothesis is that Dadd created works in reaction to events he may have learned about via secondary information such as art journals and contemporaneous newspapers to which he had access in the asylum.³⁰ I propose that when an event was reported which triggered a particularly relevant lived memory, Dadd produced a corresponding artwork. Therefore, those works must at some level reflect Dadd's own insight, which John M. MacGregor suggested, may also represent elements of Dadd's psychopathological self-understanding.³¹ This consideration of Dadd's works in relation to his psychological dysfunction differs from my approach because I am instead, studying his direct engagement with aspects of his own life experiences and memories. Moreover, as an extremely clever man, I suggest Dadd also introduced private satire and secret puns or

²⁷ Margaret A. Sullivan, 'Madness and Folly: Peter Bruegel the Elder's Dulle Griet', in *The Art Bulletin*, Vol.59:1 (1977), 59.

²⁸ Idea borrowed from Hilary Mantel, *A Memoir of My Former Self: A Life in Writing*, (London 2023): When discussing *Wolf Hall*, Mantel describes her historical fiction as looping and leaping like memory, with the camera being behind his [Thomas Cromwell's] eyes. i.e. events unfold and Cromwell reacts as events take place and are seen, rather than with a retrospective perspective.

²⁹ Alderidge, 30. Sander L. Gilman, *Disease and Representation: Images of Illness from Madness to AIDS* (Ithaca 1988), 104.

³⁰ Alderidge, 30.

³¹ MacGregor, 140.

jokes both into his art and the inscriptions on his pieces.³² This idea fits with Dadd's artistic practices before he entered the asylum,³³ and would also have provided him with amusement and a measure of control over his life when so much had been lost. Therefore, I propose that although examination of variances surrounding Dadd's life story may suggest many elements of his life are obscured, his pictures remain as his own personal comment on aspects of his history and one of the best examples of this practice is Dadd's painting *Juvenile Members of the Yatcht Club* (1853).

³² Tromans, *The Artist*, 168: discusses Dadd's interest in the satires of Juvenal, of which Dadd had a copy in Broadmoor.

³³ See Dadd's paintings: *Toby Fillpot* (c.1839); *Portraits of his Friends in Character* (c.1838-1840); *When I Speak, Let no Dog Bark* (c.1841).



Fig.2: Richard Dadd, (1853), *Juvenile Members of the Yacht Club*, 35.6 x 25.7cm, The Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Centre for British Art, Connecticut.

Patricia Alderidge has suggested (and all other writers have accepted) that Dadd misspelt 'Yacht' in the inscription on this painting, principally because it shows boys and a toy yacht.³⁴ Alternatively, I propose Dadd's painting *Juvenile Members of the Yatcht Club* acts as a metaphor for his attempt to understand the rapidly changing world of his youth, particularly as Dadd did not misspell any other painting inscriptions. To begin to understand Dadd's convoluted ideas within this painting, it is crucial to know that the meaning of the word 'Yatcht' in Chaldean numerology, is nine.³⁵ It is also important to be aware Richard Dadd owned a copy of Juvenal's *Satires*,³⁶ because in Satire No.VI, line 552,³⁷ and No.X, line 94,³⁸ Juvenal specifically mentions 'Chaldeans'. Also significant is the incongruous Elizabethan ruff worn by the left-hand boy in the painting, which may be a subtle reference to Edmund Spenser's poem *The Faerie Queene*. Dadd's punning inscription on his painting encapsulates Juvenal's and also Spenser's emphasis on the number nine, for Spenser references both Egypt and the lightning struck Tower of Babel, through 'Ninus', whose kingdom began in Babel (Genesis 10:10).³⁹ In the same Canto (Book II, Canto IX), Spenser draws further conclusions connecting the number nine to "the circle set in heavens place," a possible reference to the correspondence of the artists' drawn form of the circle to the human head.⁴⁰ Additionally, Françoise Dunand and Christiane Zivie-Coche, in *Gods and Men in Egypt* recount that the Egyptians derived the verb 'to die' and the nouns 'dead person' and 'death', from their root *mut*, which is depicted in hieroglyphic form as a kneeling man holding his hand to his head, from which a stream of blood flows, representing an enemy wounded in combat, "whose blow to the

³⁴ Alderidge, 92.

³⁵ There were nine children in the Dadd household, see Alderidge, 150.

³⁶ Tromans, *The Artist*, 168: Dadd was still referring to the *Satires* of the Roman poet Juvenal when a journalist from *The World* visited Broadmoor in 1877 and reported on Dadd's conversation relating to Juvenal's Satire V and the serving of "foul dinners", something Dadd clearly found relevant to asylum life.

³⁷ Rev. Martin Madan (trans.), *Juvenal and Persius*, (Princeton, 1850), 54.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

³⁹ Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, Book 2, Canto 9, 21, lines 5-6: "But of thing like to that Aegyptian slime, Whereof king Nine whilome built Babell towre;"

Dadd may also have been referencing Egypt by his incongruous inclusion of cows in the lower left-hand corner of the painting. Hathor, the ancient Egyptian cow-goddess not only represented motherhood, but also the sky, love, and the dead. <https://www.britishmuseum.org/learn/schools/ages-7-11/ancient-egypt/ancient-egyptian-gods-and-goddesses#:~:text=Hathor,the%20body%20of%20a%20woman>.

Alderidge has identified that Dadd has situated his two boys on a background of Chatham, (Alderidge, 93) the location where both his mother and stepmother died.

In addition, the tomb of King Ninus was the backdrop for Ovid's tale of the doomed love of Pyramus and Thisbe, included in Shakespeare's play *A Midsummer Nights Dream*, and the basis of Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*, both of which were later painted by Richard Dadd at Bethlem, and Dadd's painting of *A Castle Shattered by Lightning* (1845) is now whereabouts unknown.

⁴⁰ Spenser, Book 2, Canto 9, 22, line 8.

head we may presume is fatal.” i.e. A violent death.⁴¹ (I will return to the idea of violent death due to a blow to the head in Chapter Two – Murder.)

Spenser’s poetic satire was inspired both by Juvenal and by Dante’s *Commedia*, and Dante’s presentation of the *primum mobile*⁴² in *Paradiso*, which not only suggests a reality of heaven which exists beyond appearance, but also sets in opposition, the pursuance of the realistic representation of the world found in medieval cartography and the sea-going commercial exploration of the world.⁴³ Having identified these ideas, it is helpful to understand that Dadd grew up in the sea-going dockyard town of Chatham and both his mother and step-mother died at Chatham whilst he was still a boy, traumatic losses which must have been difficult and painful for the Dadd family. In addition, my idea of Dadd artistically exploring aspects of his childhood experiences within the painting gains further resonance when it is known there were nine children in the Dadd household.⁴⁴ There are other important references to Osiris and Isis in Juvenal’s *Satires*, but for now I suggest Dadd’s picture inscription *Juvenile Members of the Yatcht Club* might also be read as a coded riddle or ‘Juvenal Members of the Nine Club’.⁴⁵

Titular Inscriptions

Another important characteristic of Dadd’s Bethlem watercolours is his addition of inscriptions (but not titles) to many of them. In her book *Picture Titles, How and Why Western Paintings Acquired Their Names* (2015), Ruth Bernard Yeazell considered if art titles really matter and asked, ‘what constitutes a title?’.⁴⁶ She suggested that for the museum and gallery visiting public, titles democratize art and often provide the only vernacular by which the image will be understood.⁴⁷ Most of the titles by which we now know Dadd’s ‘Sketches’, produced between 1851 and 1857, are relatively new labels for

⁴¹ Françoise Dunand; Christiane Zivie-Coche. 2005. David Lorton (Trans.) *Gods and Men in Egypt: 3000 BCE to 395 CE*, (London 2005), 155 and 161.

⁴² The ninth sphere.

⁴³ Susanna Barsella, ‘How Does It Work? Hypotheses and Perspectives on Dante’s Cosmos.’, in *Dante Studies*, Vol.140 (2022), 185-198.

⁴⁴ Allderidge, 150.

⁴⁵ See Dunand and Zivie-Coche, 32, for explanation of numerical conceptual thinking relating to both Egyptian and Hebrew culture.

⁴⁶ Yeazell, 4.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

his paintings, as his art was originally created with an inscription and no title. According to Jerrold Levinson, if 'only artists are entitled to title their work',⁴⁸ then only Dadd's original inscription should be used to caption the paintings. However, it is likely that 'whatever titles are selected will dictate what the viewer sees',⁴⁹ and this matters because there is very little written evidence in Dadd's own hand. His letters to David Roberts and William Powell Frith, during his travels with Sir Thomas Phillips in 1842, are known and have been quoted by both the major writers on Richard Dadd to date.⁵⁰ Tromans' recent *'Pruning a Genius' Marginalia by Richard Dadd* (2021), also provides a careful transcription of Dadd's notes written in the margins of Benjamin Robert Haydon's *Lectures on Painting and Design*. These were previously owned by Bethlehem Hospital Steward, George Henry Haydon, and are now held at the Morgan Library and Museum in New York. The above-mentioned notations are particularly helpful for illuminating Dadd's personal thoughts on B.R. Haydon's artistic ideas. The only other direct first-person texts the historian currently has available to them are Dadd's poem *Elimination of a Picture & Its Subject – Called the Feller's Master-Stroke* (1865) and the inscriptions which Richard Dadd added to his paintings. Nevertheless, using only the mediated voice of Dadd, through doctors and attendants at Bethlem and Broadmoor, creates a power imbalance or partial and potentially weighted history.⁵¹ Like the reinvention of history by the victor of the battle, we gain only a one-sided or distorted viewpoint. Then again, apocryphal quotes from others (provided in Dadd's medical notes, newspaper articles, and the biographies of those who knew him) cannot be considered an accurate transcription of Dadd's words because we have no way of knowing how much they represent the interpretation of the other writer. For this reason, we are equally unable to be certain of the titles attributed to Dadd's work during this period which adds another layer of complexity to understanding his paintings. Therefore henceforth, it is my intention to read Dadd's artwork contrary to the narrative of historical evidence which has often been interpreted through the lens of specific interests, in this instance the viewpoint provided by medical professionals, each with their own therapeutic theories to promote.

⁴⁸ Jerrold Levinson, 'Titles', in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.44:1, (1985), 33.

⁴⁹ Yeazell, 111.

⁵⁰ Patricia Allderidge in *The Late Richard Dadd* (1974), and Nicholas Tromans in *Richard Dadd, The Artist and the Asylum* (2011).

⁵¹ John Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford 2000). 45, 67, 78, 93 and 116.

A Forensically Styled Approach

It is in a return to attentiveness to detail, reference, and allusion (such as in the Chaldean example above), that I expect to reveal hidden depths to Dadd's work which have so far been under explored. As Zerubavel has observed, inattentiveness to detail means that features remain unperceived by the viewer even when they have subconsciously penetrated the senses.⁵² As Zerubavel has also noted, "what we can access through our sense organs and thus potentially see, hear, taste, or smell is always more than what we actually notice. Simply looking at something, for instance, does not guarantee, therefore, that you will in fact notice it."⁵³ Ways of analysing this would be to search for patterns within Dadd's production. Does he repeatedly include motifs which 'jar' within his works? Does he place a great deal of emphasis on background elements which are easily overlooked? Does he obscure meaning in his artworks via satire and riddle-like puns or jokes?⁵⁴ Are there constrictions within his work or obvious influences? All these elements and their layered complexity might propose that it cannot be assumed that Dadd's doctors advocated topics, which Dadd simply created to fulfil their motives, as Allderidge's hierarchically based interpretations suggest.⁵⁵ It is my intention to explore what other forces may have been at work within Dadd's creation. Nicholas Tromans has presented a possible reason for items being poorly examined and why so few people have written about Dadd previously was because of the control and dominance of Bethlem's curatorial staff over any aspect of Bethlem. Says Tromans, "Now queries about Dadd had to be addressed to Bethlem. Anyone making comments about any aspect of Bethlem without going through the archive risked a severe reproach, [...] Art historians, perhaps not the most determined of archive-botherers in any case, learned to leave the subject of Dadd alone."⁵⁶ In addition, Zerubavel has suggested that irrelevance and inattention may be a contract of social convention,⁵⁷ and that power "involves the ability to control the scope of the information others can access as well as what they pass on" which promotes silence and denial.⁵⁸ Therefore, my first chapter will break that convention and look at

⁵² Eviatar Zerubavel, *Hidden in Plain Sight: The Social Structure of Irrelevance* (New York 2015), 1.

⁵³ Ibid. See also Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simons, *The Invisible Gorilla and Other Ways Our Intuition Deceives Us* (London 2010), 16.

⁵⁴ Dunand and Zivie-Coche, 56. For ancient Egyptians, wordplay was pregnant with symbolic meaning, and words and their written representation were not abstract but rather elements charged with the reality of 'being'.

⁵⁵ Allderidge, 30.

⁵⁶ Tromans, *The Artist*, 184.

⁵⁷ Zerubavel, *Hidden*, 53.

⁵⁸ Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Elephant in the Room: Silence and Denial in Everyday Life* (New York 2006), 15.

Dadd's metaphorical 'journey towards insanity', via his travels with Sir Thomas Phillips, and incorporate any additional salient points from his early life, where appropriate, to reinforce my hypothesis that Dadd was painting clues to his own lived experience rather than simply following the instructions or direction of the medical personnel surrounding him at Bethlem.

Having first considered aspects of power and control in chapter one, I will, in chapter two, evaluate theories relating to aspects of Dadd's criminal insanity. Eleanor Clare Fraser Stansbie has previously considered the historiography of history of art and madness from the nineteenth century to the present day, commenting on Dadd's case as occurring at a particularly relevant era of theories on criminal insanity.⁵⁹ Fraser Stansbie explored the idea of morality from both the psychological and the behaviourally respectable modes of thought, contemporaneous at the time of Dadd's incarceration.⁶⁰ Significantly for Dadd, it was the case of Daniel M'Naghten which also occurred in 1843 (the year Dadd murdered his father), which changed the history of criminal insanity pleas.⁶¹ M'Naghten was accused of a mistaken identity killing, but was ultimately cleared of having an understanding of the full consequences of his actions due to partial insanity (monomania), which meant he was unable to distinguish between right and wrong and therefore lacked self-control.⁶² Despite controversy surrounding witness opinion, M'Naghten was found 'guilty but insane', a verdict later known as 'The M'Naghten Rules', by which Richard Dadd was admitted to Bethlem in 1844.⁶³ Therefore, in chapter two, an analysis of the concurrent primary evidence surrounding Dadd's physical act of murder, his asylum records held at Clermont, Bethlem, and Broadmoor, together with their potential affect upon his artistic production after 1843, an idea which has previously been acknowledged by Allderidge,⁶⁴ but never fully developed, will be carried out.

Finally, in chapter three, Dadd's art with specific reference to the murder, will be examined. At this point I will rebut the implication and modern accord, initially proposed

⁵⁹ Fraser Stansbie, 27.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 36-39.

⁶¹ Ibid., 45.

⁶² Ibid., 45-46.

⁶³ Ibid., 46.

⁶⁴ Allderidge, 30.

by Allderidge, and later developed by Fraser Stansbie, that Dadd's asylum art was created at the behest of his doctors,⁶⁵ and that Dadd's creation was an early form of what would today be described as art therapy.⁶⁶ In conclusion, I will compare Richard Dadd's most famous artwork, *The Fairy Feller's Master Stroke*, with Michelangelo's masterpiece *The Last Judgement*, from the East End Altar Wall of the Sistine Chapel. My argument is that Dadd's masterful and most elusive work is also his most damning and may have secretively, cleverly, and creatively, been conceived as 'The Last Judgement of The Fairy Feller'.

In summary, my proposal in this thesis is to re-evaluate Dadd's art, following his incarceration, and weigh up whether it is a reflection of his own biography, rather than an exploration of moral topics suggested by Dr Hood at Bethlem. If my hypothesis is correct, then this study matters because it serves as a re-evaluation of Dadd's art, broadening critical focus, and potentially reinvigorating Dadd research.

⁶⁵ Allderidge, 30; Fraser Stansbie, 24 and 60.

⁶⁶ A term not actually introduced until the 1940s.

CHAPTER 1 – INSANITY

*“The past is always present, whether we want it or not;
its omnipresent power cannot be erased, only
evaded.”⁶⁷*

This chapter will explore and evaluate current historiographical evidence surrounding the artist Richard Dadd’s metaphorically symbolic journey towards insanity, ‘placing Dadd’s personal and professional experiences in the context of his particular historical and cultural moment’.⁶⁸ Before beginning this analysis, it is anticipated that twentieth-century historiography will suggest contradictions in the interpretation of events. For example: observations and commentary incorporating the order in which occurrences took place and overlooked primary evidence pertaining to those happenings, including the incident of Richard Dadd’s murder of his father. Assumptions which carry gravitas such as a retrospective diagnosis of Dadd’s madness as schizophrenia, for example,⁶⁹ have become absorbed within the telling and re-telling of Dadd’s biography and become ingrained within the understanding of his life story.

This replicated telling, over time, of a person’s story has introduced conjecture and speculation which cloud the historical evidence existing for the researcher today. An early example of this is Sir Sacheverell Sitwell who was one of the first to call, one hundred years after the murder of Richard Dadd’s father, for those ‘still living’ to come forward and tell what they knew of Dadd’s life, “for the time has come when Dadd can be written of apart from the associations which might cling to his name.”⁷⁰ This propensity towards mythologising Dadd’s life has not decreased in the years since Sitwell’s appeal,

⁶⁷ Cordula Grewe, *The Nazarenes, Romantic Avant-Garde and the Art of the Concept* (Pennsylvania 2015), 309: Suggests, “This is why Nietzsche praised, in 1874, the therapeutic power of forgetting”. [Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche. 1874. *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*.]

⁶⁸ Fraser Stansbie, 107.

⁶⁹ Alderidge, ‘Richard Dadd (1817-1886): painter and patient’, *Medical History*, Vol.14:3 (2021), 308-313.

⁷⁰ Sacheverell Sitwell, *Narrative Pictures. A Survey of English Genre and its Painters* (London 1937), 74. Sitwell’s request came 50 years after Richard Dadd’s death and stemmed from his own interest in Dadd’s art (he found and purchased Dadd’s painting *The Flight out of Egypt* from the Army and Navy Stores, London, c.1930). See Alderidge, 82.

and indeed, his life story has only become increasingly mediated. Therefore, obfuscation needs first to be identified before it can be unpicked and compared to existing primary evidence, particularly in relation to the murder act. Gaps within the evidence, together with conflicts between findings, can then be studied and evaluated. For example, most research into Dadd's art, up until this point, has considered Dadd as under the direct creative control of the asylum system, influenced by and representative of his doctors' practice of moral therapy. Gilman was the first to see Dr Hood as resisting becoming an intermediary or 'Agent' for Dadd's work.⁷¹ MacGregor later proposed Dadd received painting materials from his doctors in the 1840s, "because Dadd was not only a patient, but a prisoner and ward of the state, the provision of gifts or supplies of any type, once he had entered the hospital, was difficult."⁷² Another MacGregor suggestion was "That Dadd chose to dedicate the two most important paintings of his career to Hood and Haydon [Bethlem's Steward] cannot be without significance."⁷³ (The assumption surrounding Dadd's dedication of his art is a point of contention I will dispute later in this thesis.) Allderidge has suggested Dr Hood and Richard Dadd's relationship came close to friendship because Hood owned thirty-three examples of Dadd's work at Hood's own death in 1870.⁷⁴ (Again, I will dispute this idea of friendship in a later chapter). It was not until Tromans (2011), that discussion gained ambiguity as to whether Hood really was at the centre of Dadd's art production in 1850s Bethlem, "yes, Dadd should paint, because he was a painter, but no his pictures should not be shown or discussed. In other words, Hood liked the idea of a painter-patient, but was at a loss as to how to control his art."⁷⁵

Dr Hood was a proponent of moral therapy which was introduced by Philippe Pinel in his book *Traité medico-philosophique sur l'aliénation mentale* (1801),⁷⁶ and widely copied throughout Europe following political dissent over early 1800s asylum care practices. Moral therapy has been credited, initially by William Tuke of The York Retreat and later by his grandson Samuel and others, with the removal of chains from patients.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Gilman, 104.

⁷² MacGregor, 124-125.

⁷³ Ibid., 129.

⁷⁴ Allderidge, 30.

⁷⁵ Tromans, *The Artist*, 119. Also see Greysmith, 82.

⁷⁶ Andrew Scull, Charlotte MacKenzie, Nicholas Herve, *Masters of Bedlam: The Transformation of the Mad-Doctoring Trade* (Princeton, 1996), 22-23: an English translation of Pinel's book appeared in 1806.

⁷⁷ Andrew Scull, *Madness in Civilization: A Cultural History of Insanity from the Bible to Freud, from the Madhouse to Modern Medicine* (London 2022: 2015), 202-203

Alternatively, moral constraints such as those proposed by Scottish ‘alienist’ W. A. F. Browne, including “discipline and inspection exercised during active pursuits into the night, and during silence and sleep”,⁷⁸ compelled patients to behave in a socially acceptable manner or face ‘treatment’ consequences such as the use of opium to subdue difficult or unacceptable behaviour.⁷⁹ However, it was not until 1988, that Louise Lippincott first suggested “the likelihood that Dadd was given opium at times of mental crisis, and perhaps even as a regular alternative to physical restraint or isolation”.⁸⁰ Lippincott noted that at Bethlem in 1862, Dr Hood confessed “that opium in some form *“is continually required...often indeed it is almost the only remedy...to calm the excitement of the patient...”*”⁸¹

Notwithstanding Dad’s potential use of opiates either during his travels (see page 40) or later during conduct management at Bethlem, and before we begin the subject of Richard Dadd’s journey towards insanity, both physical and metaphysical, it is pertinent to note David Greysmith’s assertion that at least one person had a sense of unease in Dadd’s presence even before he left British shores. Samuel Carter Hall confessed that although he “thought highly of Dadd [...] he was a little afraid of him”, and that sometimes when he visited him in his studio at Charlotte Street, “I could never tell why, but, although I liked him much I had always in his presence a sense of apprehension.”⁸² If this is a genuine recollection and not a retrospective interpretation based upon what later became known, then it suggests the possibility that Dadd was already slightly unwell before his travels with Phillips and would therefore have been more sensitive and vulnerable to any difficulties encountered on the trip, perhaps pushing him over the fine line between eccentricity and insanity.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 207-208.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Lippincott, 78.

⁸¹ Ibid.; William Charles Hood, *Statistics of Insanity: Embracing a Report of Bethlem Hospital, from 1846 to 1860, Inclusive* (London 1862), 110.

⁸² David Greysmith, *The Rock and Castle of Seclusion* (London 1973), 15.

The Journey to Insanity

The story of Dadd's travels throughout Europe and Asia leading up to his diagnosis of insanity have been well documented by other scholars,⁸³ so I will not repeat every detail of his trip in this thesis, concentrating instead on areas of interest where it may be possible to add to existing understanding, such as Phillips and Dadd's visits to Bodrum and Jerusalem, their abduction by Arab spearmen at Jericho, and the deteriorating relationship between the two men throughout the journey.

It was on 16 July 1842 that the fateful trip, which is usually credited with the onset of Richard Dadd's insanity, began.⁸⁴ At the recommendation of David Roberts, the country's best known Orientalist painter and a friend of Richard Dadd's father,⁸⁵ Dadd's name was put forward as artist/draughtsman-companion for the journey of Sir Thomas Phillips.⁸⁶ Phillips intended to make a tour of Europe and Asia over a period of ten months, and it has been proposed that this tour was prompted by Phillips' desire to make a gentlemanly 'Grand Tour' style trip, following his knighthood, after suppressing a Chartist rebellion in Newport, Wales, in November 1839.⁸⁷

If Dadd expected many opportunities to sketch on the journey he would be disappointed, for the tour turned out to be anything but leisurely, as the "stages were long, the pace unrelenting, and the conditions exhausting."⁸⁸ Dadd and Phillips travelled by multiple modes of transport for hundreds of miles, for example spending just two days in the Bernese Alps, covering eighty-five miles, of which thirty were on horseback.⁸⁹ The effects of the pressures on Dadd's mental health were later reported: "His insanity showed itself in a complete change of character: he was now watchful and suspicious, increasingly reserved and gloomy, and showed 'a degree of shrewdness and sharpness about little things utterly foreign to his former character'."⁹⁰ However, as this anecdote was reported

⁸³ Greysmith, 41-51; Alderidge, 18-22; MacGregor, 117; Tromans, *The Artist*, 36-60; et. al.

⁸⁴ Alderidge, 18.

⁸⁵ Tromans, *The Artist*, 35.

⁸⁶ Alderidge, 18.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 20.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 18.

⁹⁰ Alderidge, 22; *Art Union*, (October 1843), 268.

in the *Art Union* in the October following the murder, it cannot now be known if it was influenced with the benefit of hindsight over Dadd's subsequent act of murder.⁹¹

One notable aspect of the trip is, that by the time Phillips travelled, the idea of an artist travelling with a gentleman tourist was rather old fashioned.⁹² As Tromans states, the "precise details of the arrangement between the two travellers remain unclear,"⁹³ but it would appear that Phillips contracted to meet all Dadd's travelling costs in return for retaining some of Dadd's drawings and paintings of places visited.⁹⁴ Thereby, at least in theory, the journey should have been a reciprocal act, advantageous to both parties, with Dadd gaining material to further his career and Phillips adding to his cultural capital and social status within the political elite.⁹⁵ Evidence of this aspect of the tour is borne out by Phillips sending Dadd's drawings of the bas relief friezes,⁹⁶ at the Castle of St. Peter, Bodrum, to the British diplomat and parliamentarian Sir Stratford Canning (British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire 1842-1852).⁹⁷ Canning later facilitated the donation of the original friezes to the British Museum in 1846.⁹⁸ Also, after their return to England, Phillips claimed some of Dadd's paintings to recover his expenses (of approximately £250),⁹⁹ for Dadd's travel. Tromans speculates that Phillips may have intended to write a 'travel book',¹⁰⁰ and Fraser Stansbie has speculated that Phillips may have intended an admired art collection,¹⁰¹ but I can find no evidence to support either of these hypotheses.

The trip followed an era of political uncertainty, beginning as Fraser Stansbie has noted, with Napoleon's 1798 military expedition, which opened up routes to Egypt,¹⁰² and

⁹¹ *Art Union*, (October 1843), 268.

⁹² Tromans, *The Artist*, 35-6.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 36-37.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Fraser Stansbie, 110.

⁹⁶ A bas-relief frieze is a low relief sculpture in which the figures form a procession, similar to the Parthenon marbles for example.

⁹⁷ Philip Salmon and Howard Spencer, Stratford Canning (1786 – 1880), available at:

<https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/canning-stratford-1786-1880>.

Accessed 2023.

⁹⁸ See for example: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1847-0424-4.

⁹⁹ Tromans, *The Artist*, 60.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁰¹ Fraser Stansbie, 111.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 112.

against an element of instability in the Near and Middle Eastern regions in this period. Other factors in nineteenth-century British understanding of the region (especially after the Greek war of independence against Turkey¹⁰³), included the fragility of the Ottoman Empire, struggles in Palestine, and the expansionist eyes of the Russian Empire turned upon the Turkish capital, all creating political unease. Yet, according to Tromans, no 'political questions' or concerns seem to have seeped into the travelling experience of Phillips and Dadd because 'they were too busy travelling',¹⁰⁴ which, for an ambitious legal and political man like Phillips, who sought to climb the social tree once he returned home, seems rather odd. As Zerubavel suggests, "whereas the marked parts of our phenomenal world are explicitly articulated (thereby becoming special objects of attention), the unmarked ones are only implicit."¹⁰⁵ Therefore, the complete absence of such references in Phillips' letters home to his brother suggests, the possibility of concealment due to their conspicuous absence. However, Dadd's art from the period satirises the very idea of British meddling, for example in *Sketch to Illustrate the Passions. Patriotism* (1857). Might Dadd's satirical schoolboy-humorous character 'Prince Plaiatit' ('play at it'), be a facetious reference to Phillips and Canning?¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Nineteenth-century spelling used for context (now known as Türkiye).

¹⁰⁴ Tromans *The Artist*, 38.

¹⁰⁵ Zerubavel, *Hidden*, 22.

¹⁰⁶ Allderidge, 110-111: Discusses elements of the painting. Also see David Greysmith, 134-136, for a full reprint of the wording on the map.



Fig.3: Richard Dadd, 1857, *Sketch to Illustrate the Passions. Patriotism*, 36.1 x 25.9 cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, Forster bequest.

Once they reached the city of Constantinople (modern Istanbul), Phillips decided that a two-week stop was necessary. Whilst most eighteenth-century ‘grand tours’ and indeed Dadd himself were awed by the grandeur of the Rhine and the Byronic castles glimpsed on the mountain tops, Phillips seemed anxious to get to Constantinople and, once there, to spend a fortnight. As Tromans advises however, Phillips’ “surviving references to these

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weeks are scant.”¹⁰⁷ Presumably, Phillips traded upon his political connections to facilitate a meeting with the British Ambassador during their sojourn, and Sir Stratford Canning requested Phillips visit the castle of St. Peter at Halicarnassus (modern Bodrum), and report back on the current state of the marble Amazonian bas-relief friezes built into the castle walls.¹⁰⁸



Fig.4: Luigi Mayer, The Castle of Boudron in the Gulf of Stancio, from *Views in Egypt, Palestine, and Other Parts of the Ottoman Empire*, 1802-5. Aquatint by T. Milton.

In October, after their two-week stopover in Constantinople, Phillips and Dadd resumed their rapid travels and returned to Smyrna by coastal steamer. The men rode the remaining distance to Bodrum, with Phillips insisting on as much as twelve hours in the saddle each day utterly precluding any possibility of Dadd making detailed drawings.¹⁰⁹ Given that was the supposed purpose of Dadd’s companionship, this seems a

¹⁰⁷ Tromans, *The Artist*, 42.

¹⁰⁸ Allderidge, 19.

¹⁰⁹ Tromans, *The Artist*, 44.

contradictory way of achieving Phillips' stated aim. The group, meanwhile, carried a letter of recommendation and enjoyed an escort from the Pasha of Aydin.¹¹⁰ It was at Bodrum that Dadd was set to making formal drawings of the Amazonomachy friezes, which could be viewed from outside the sixteenth-century castle of St. Peter (internal access was not permitted), and Phillips immediately sent those drawings to Canning, along with his own report.¹¹¹ This was the only time that drawings and papers were documented as being sent to the British political elite during the trip.

Why does this matter and what else might have occurred at Bodrum during their time there? Well, Dadd's pictorial evidence,¹¹² suggests the detour was possibly a return to an area which the two men had already seen – perhaps significant because it was not something that happened at any other time during their travels. Phillips' letters home to his brother Benjamin, a key figure in the London art world,¹¹³ contradict Dadd's evidence, and as a sane man of higher status than Dadd it is Phillips' version which has generally been accepted. Dadd later recreated images from the Bodrum frieze in two watercolours he produced at Bethlem, firstly, in *Dymphna Martyr* (1851) and seven years later in *Street Scene in Bodrum* (1858). Dadd inscribed the latter picture as: 'Street-scene in Boudroon. the Birthplace of Herodotus from a sketch made on the spot on Monday. Sept 9th. 1842 by Richard Dadd. Bethlehem Hospital. St Georges in the Fields. London. April 5th. 1858'.¹¹⁴ This mention of Herodotus in the inscription is of significance because as the father of history, he was also the classical figure who preserved the myth of Osiris, a god of key importance to Dadd's insanity.¹¹⁵ As exemplified in a long and 'abstruse'¹¹⁶ letter written by Dadd to Dr Wood, the apothecary of Bethlem Hospital:

¹¹⁰ Allderidge, 19.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² See text added to *Sketch to Illustrate the Passions. Patriotism 1857; Street Scene in Boudroon 1858; Bodrum Sketch* (folio No.127, Victorian and Albert Museum).

¹¹³ Fraser Stansbie, 116.

¹¹⁴ Allderidge, 114. Further research on Dadd's Middle-Eastern sketchbook (page 38) now at the V & A shows "Boudroon 8th September" – when Dadd and Phillips were crossing from Greece. This sketchbook was acquired by Sir Thomas Phillips from Richard Dadd's family following his breakdown. If Dadd's dating was incorrect, it is interesting that Phillips did not correct the date in the sketchbook whilst it was in his possession, despite notating other Dadd paintings.

¹¹⁵ Lippincott, 90.

¹¹⁶ Allderidge, 22.

“My religious opinions varied and do vary from the vulgar; I was inclined to fall in with the views of the ancients, and to regard the substitution of modern ideas thereon as not for the better. These and the like, coupled with the idea of a descent from the Egyptian god Osiris, induced me to put a period to the existence of him whom I had always regarded as a parent...”¹¹⁷

Allderidge states that Dadd incorrectly dated the original sketch from which the picture was worked up, because Phillips’ letters identify that he and Dadd were crossing from Greece on Friday 9 September and were instead in Bodrum on Sunday 9 October. She advises that Dadd made a similar mistake over the month, relating specifically to a Bodrum sketch (folio No.127) now at the Victoria and Albert Museum.¹¹⁸ Dadd did not incorrectly date any other paintings or sketches, so it is a significant coincidence that his paintings relating to the extraordinary visit to Bodrum are the only ones to contain this dating anomaly. In addition, the evidence of Phillips’ letter home to his brother shortly afterwards contains an inconsistency: “Clearly delighted with the mission, Phillips wrote to his brother with relish about ‘diplomatic security’ and the importance of strict secrecy”.¹¹⁹ However, Allderidge also reveals that, “in Sir Thomas’s estimation, [they became] the first Franks that century to set foot inside the forbidden fortress”, but, as she also notes, on their documented visit, permission was only given to, “sketch the four bas-reliefs in the outer face of the wall”.¹²⁰ Interestingly, as can be seen in Fig.4 above, Dadd and Phillips would have seen many more than four bas reliefs on the outer face of the wall and those reliefs were not removed and gifted to the British Museum, by Sir Stratford Canning, until 1846.¹²¹ Dadd himself wrote casually of their visit to David Roberts, without the caveat and proviso of strict secrecy, leading to later publication of the letter in the *Art Union*¹²²

¹¹⁷ William Wood, *Remarks on the Plea of Insanity and on the Management of Criminal Lunatics* (London 1851), 41-2.

¹¹⁸ Allderidge, 114.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Dadd’s drawings are catalogued at the British Museum as being by Walter Bouchier Devereux, after Richard Dadd. See https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_2014-5006-1 for example.

¹²² Greysmith, 44.

“thence to Boudroon (Halicarnassus) where ‘we saw the sculptures that have created so much sensation in the literary world, about whether they belong to the tomb of Mausolus, or no. These I have made sketches of, and Sir Thomas Phillips has forwarded them to Sir Stratford Canning in the hope of his obtaining them from the Sultan. They are the finest works in bas-relief in marble that I have seen, after the marbles of the Parthenon. The subject is ‘The Combat of the Athenians with the Amazons’, and has all the energy and spirit of Greek Art in its highest perfection.”¹²³

Therefore, speculatively, could it be that strict secrecy was needed for an earlier unauthorised visit to Bodrum in September 1842, one month before the official visit, and which could have taken place on the journey towards Constantinople, since the identical route was reversed to reach the site during the official visit? If so, might the men have dressed in local attire and entered the castle without permission? - The risks of such action potentially included suspicion of spying, violent expulsion, and penalties for trespass, as the Ottoman Empire frequently detained unauthorised foreigners during the Greek anti-Ottoman revolts.¹²⁴ This is a tantalising possibility given Dadd’s paintings of Sir Thomas Phillips in both Turkish and Arab dress.¹²⁵ Fraser Stansbie considered the tradition of British travellers, “exchanging western clothes for native costume [which] offered a way of penetrating a hitherto hidden society; both physically, as a means of disguise in some cases, and intellectually as a way of understanding its manners and customs.”¹²⁶ It is entirely possible that Phillips and Dadd may have borrowed local costume in order to pass unnoticed amongst resident inhabitants, as John Frederick Lewis was known for doing in Cairo during his time there,¹²⁷ and, Dadd had also previously painted portraits of his friends in character, including one (who had ‘an oriental look’) as a Pacha.¹²⁸

¹²³ Ibid. Also see Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, Book XXXVI - The tomb of Mausolus was originally topped by a pyramid.

¹²⁴ Masayuki Ueno. ‘Purifying Istanbul: The Greek Revolution, Population Surveillance, and Non-Muslim Religious Authorities in the Early Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire’, in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol.67:2 (2025), 281–302.

¹²⁵ Allderidge, 75. Catalogue raisonné numbers 83 and 84, *Portrait of Sir Thomas Phillips in Eastern Costume, Reclining* (1842), and *Portrait of Sir Thomas Phillips in Eastern Costume, Standing* (1842-3).

¹²⁶ Fraser Stansbie, 119: but not in the same context as she is discussing Dadd’s portrayal of Phillips in oriental costume.

¹²⁷ See John Frederick Lewis’ self-portrait of himself as a carpet seller, *In the Bezestein, El Khan Khalil, Cairo* (1860).

¹²⁸ Allderidge, 56.

It is also of interest that one of Dadd's very first watercolour sketches in the 'Sketch series' *Dymphna Martyr* (Fig.5) references the Bodrum location in its reuse of the 'pose and grouping of the two chief protagonists' - particularly as the story of St. Dymphna relates to insanity. The tale of St Dymphna, known as the patroness of the insane, is that she was the victim of her father's incestuous desire following his wife's death. Attempting to escape, St Dymphna fled with her chaplain, but her father followed and killed them both.¹²⁹ Allderidge notes Dadd's likely interest in any such story relating to insanity was due to his incarceration at Bethlem, but it is not known exactly how he became aware of the tale.¹³⁰ Tromans, meanwhile, suggests Dadd's interest may stem from an overlap of Christian tradition and contemporaneous medicine, particularly as Dadd created an image of Aesculapius (the founder of medicine) as an alternative Christ-like infant in the same year, *Infant Aesculapius Discovered by Shepherds* (1851) (Fig.33).¹³¹

¹²⁹ Ibid., 83-84 and 157.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 83.

¹³¹ Tromans, *The Artist*, 97.



Fig.5: Richard Dadd, 1851, *Dymphna Martyr*, 36.2 x 26.0 cm. Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California.

After further travels in Lycia, Dadd and Phillips finally left Asia Minor and continued their journey onwards at a terrific pace.¹³² Tromans documents that the travellers had “apparently met up at some point with Lieutenant Thomas Spratt,” and his Naval surveillance ship HMS *Beacon*, which had been tasked with a Mediterranean Hydrographic Survey, possibly connected with future military requirements.¹³³ It is known from the Remark Book held at UKHO that Commander Walter Bouchier Devereux of HMS *Snake* visited Bodrum once on 8 March 1843, but commented only that “The place is decayed, and of little importance.”

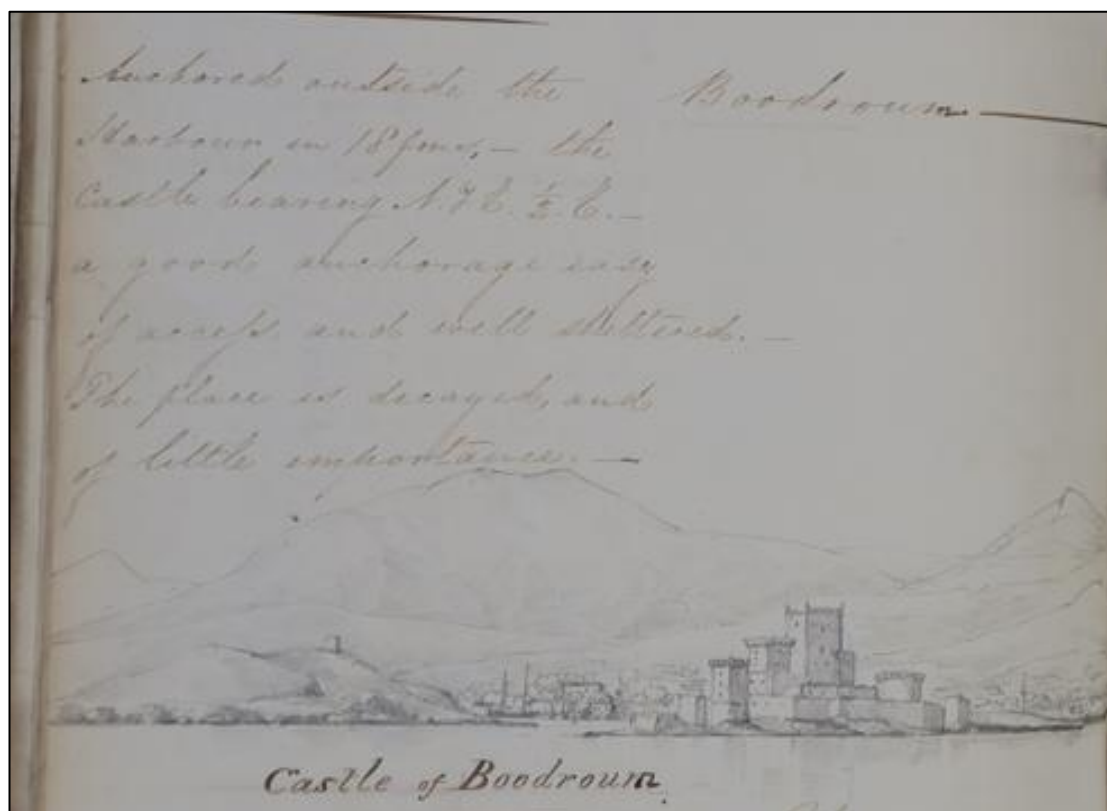


Fig.6: HMS *Snake* ‘Remark Book 1843-4’, sourced from the UK Hydrographic Office (www.ukho.gov.uk), 18 June 2024.

Continuing on to Baalbek and later Jerusalem, there was once again no time to linger before the travellers joined a Naval party of British sailors to ride out to the Dead Sea.¹³⁴ Importantly, it was during this period that the first glimpse of Dadd’s emerging interest in

¹³² Allderidge, 20.

¹³³ Tromans, *The Artist*, 45-47.

¹³⁴ Allderidge, 21; Tromans, *The Artist*, 49.

sun-god worship was noted, when he visited the Temple of the Sun at Baalbek.¹³⁵ The sun being mistakenly connected with the cult of sun worship within nineteenth-century scholarly understanding of Osirian mythology.¹³⁶ Osiris was instead the mythological Egyptian god of the underworld, whose moon goddess wife Isis reassembled his dismembered body parts following his murder by his brother Set. Osiris is later said to have fathered the god Horus, thus bringing together a story of betrayal, murder, and rebirth.¹³⁷ Dadd would later be reported, by the governor of Clermont Asylum in France after his arrest, as spending many hours gazing at the sun,¹³⁸ which Dadd described as his father.¹³⁹ Moreover, Dadd was not really interested in the Christian resonances of the Holy Land,¹⁴⁰ once again focusing his attention on the female watercarriers of the area,¹⁴¹ in a letter home to his Clique friend William Powell Frith.¹⁴² Shortly afterwards, Dadd also recounted another story to Frith of being intercepted by a party of Arab spearmen at Jericho who demanded a ransom for their release. Following payment of the fee (presumably by Phillips), the party was escorted by their captors on through the Ein Gedi desert by moonlight to the shores of the Dead Sea. The issue of capture and payment to various Arab sheikhs is very well explained by Viscount Castlereagh in *A Journey to Damascus through Egypt, Nubia, Arabia Petra, Palestine, and Syria* (1847). Setting out just nine months ahead of Dadd, Castlereagh provides examples of local feuding, threats, and extortion,¹⁴³ which became an unforeseen issue for Phillips and Dadd. Whilst Dadd played down the kidnapping in his jocular report to Frith suggesting the armed attackers' leader was a sheikh "whose black grizzly beard would make capital brushes",¹⁴⁴ the event must have been memorably frightening at the time, as Dadd later included it in two

¹³⁵ Tromans, *The Artist*, 48.

¹³⁶ Lippincott, 90: "In the 1830s and 1840s Osiris was the most famous, indeed notorious, of the ancient Egyptian gods. [...] Early nineteenth-century scholars incorrectly associated his cult with sun worship and also believed in a direct connection between Egyptian Osiris cults and Judaism."

¹³⁷ Mark Stevens, *Broadmoor Revealed: Victorian Crime and the Lunatic Asylum* (Barnsley 2013), 39. Ian Shaw, *Ancient Egypt, A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford 2021), 81-2 and 100-1.

¹³⁸ See Dunand and Zive-Coche, 15, for explanation of Egyptian Ptolemaic ritual relating to being recharged with divine energy by uniting with the sun.

¹³⁹ Allderidge, 26.

¹⁴⁰ Tromans, *The Artist*, 48.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. Also, Dunand and Zive-Coche, 271 and 317, demonstrate imagery relating to Osiris: the "canopic Osiris", showed the head of the god emerging from a water jar that constituted his body, and strengthened his association with the Nile and stories that some of his dismembered limbs were cast into the river or 'drowned'.

¹⁴² Tromans, *The Artist*, 48.

¹⁴³ Viscount Castlereagh, *A Journey to Damascus through Egypt, Nubia, Arabia Petra, Palestine, and Syria*, Vol.II, 1847, 3-38.

¹⁴⁴ Allderidge, 20: quotes from Dadd's letter to Frith printed in *My Autobiography and Reminiscences*, Vol.III, 1888, Chapter IX.

paintings *The Artists Halt in the Desert* (c.1845), and *The Flight out of Egypt* (1849-50). In the first painting, a spear pierces the moon in the centre of the encampment and in the second, a party of Arab spearmen are represented on the left-hand side of the painting. Therefore, within the space of a few days Dadd experienced significant references to both the sun and the moon. This suggestion of imagery and stories being confused and interconnected in a cyclical, convoluted and inseparable way, relates very closely to my interpretation of how Dadd conjoins ideas within his art, and I will explore this suggestion in greater depth in chapter three.

For now, having identified the context of Dadd's kidnapping, it would seem likely that the whole abduction event was possibly far more disturbing than either man revealed at the time, as Phillips and Dadd immediately altered their travel plans. Instead of trekking overland to Egypt, they took passage to Alexandria on an armed wooden paddle steamer. It was during this journey that Dadd wrote his most extraordinary letter to Frith, which suggested both a giddy sense of liberation and deeply disturbing confusion beginning to creep into his psyche.¹⁴⁵ Published in Frith's memoirs of 1888, with italicised emphasis from Frith to draw attention to Dadd's mental confusion, Dadd wrote,

"At times the excitement of these scenes has been enough to turn the brain of an ordinary weak-minded person like myself, and often I have lain down at night with my imagination so full of vagaries that I have really and truly doubted of my own sanity. The heat of the day, perhaps, contributed somewhat to this, or the motion of riding is also another reason for this unusual activity of fancy."¹⁴⁶

However, Dadd was not alone in finding the sights and sounds of the Middle East disturbing, as Viscount Castlereagh also noted similar imagery during his trip just a few months before Dadd. For example:

"as I lay down to sleep, [...] the last sounds I heard were the noisy debates of the Arabs, and the last sight I saw as I closed my eyes was the fitful gleam of their watch-fires with the wild figures surrounding them."¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Tromans, *The Artist*, 49-51.

¹⁴⁶ William Powell Frith, *My Autobiography and Reminiscences*, Vol.III, 1888, 187.

¹⁴⁷ Castlereagh, Vol.II, 24.



Fig.7: Richard Dadd, 1842, *Portrait of Sir Thomas Phillips in Eastern Costume, Reclining*, 16.5 x 25.4 cm, Bethlem Museum of the Mind.

Nonetheless, it was also in this letter that Dadd referenced a “growing disenchantment with his companion”.¹⁴⁸ Greysmith insightfully proposed this was a suggestion “if not of positive animosity, at least of disapproval, of Sir Thomas,”¹⁴⁹ and that Dadd’s complaints implied all was not well between himself and his travelling companion,

“the officers on board are very civil and attentive, and I perceive the value of my companion’s title, as it procures him the smiles of all. I’m very tired of the world, and have seen so much disgusting selfishness since I have left England that I am half a misanthrope.”¹⁵⁰

It is therefore interesting that subsequent researchers have only followed Phillips’ suggestion to the Dadd family that Dadd had suffered heatstroke during a later Nile cruise, which brought on his mental illness.¹⁵¹ Alternatively, as seen in this letter (quoted above) and written long before the Nile cruise, Dadd himself does not attribute his

¹⁴⁸ Greysmith, 45.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Allderidge, 21 and 23: adds the caveat that Dadd’s disorder may have been dormant and would have been triggered anyway at some point, and that it is possible that his ‘sunstroke’ was actually an early episode of his illness.

mental vagaries to heatstroke, but rather to a variety of potential causes,¹⁵² to which I would add complicating long-term factors including the loss of both mother and step-mother at a young age,¹⁵³ together with the potential strain of hiding a secret mission at Bodrum, dehydration, and drug smoking whilst in the Middle East.¹⁵⁴

It is important to consider also Louise Lippincott's suggestion that "Dadd's narrowing focus and obsession with detail is typical not only of schizophrenia but also of opium addiction."¹⁵⁵ Added to the mix was the disappointment of finding his route well-travelled by those who had gone before and who were better suited artistically to topographical representation,¹⁵⁶ in conjunction with physical exhaustion,¹⁵⁷ and an awareness that time was slipping away on a fruitless journey over which he had no control. In addition, Dadd was homesick for his friends and, an important art competition, in which Dadd later competed, was already underway for redecoration of the Palace of Westminster in London.¹⁵⁸ Therefore, Dadd was artistically disillusioned with the journey, disliked and distrusted his dominant travelling companion, and was running out of time for his own entry to a potentially lucrative competition which chimed far more closely with his own creative interests. Together, this may have been a catastrophic combination of events, and it is difficult to discount or pretend that it had no impact upon Dadd's mental breakdown.

To return to Dadd's journey through the Middle East, after arriving in Egypt, Phillips and Dadd travelled onwards to Cairo and then began a two-month Nile cruise in a boat hired from the English consul.¹⁵⁹ Greysmith, Alderidge, and Tromans have all demonstrated

¹⁵² Also see chronology in Andrew Clayton-Payne, *Dreams of Fancy: A Loan Exhibition*, 10.

¹⁵³ Richard Dadd experienced parental loss at a young age. (Also see findings of: Steven Pham; Giovanna Porta; Candice Biernesser; Monica Walker Payne; Satish Lyengar; Nadine Melham and David A. Brent, 'The Burden of Bereavement: Early Onset Depression and Impairment in Youths Bereaved by Sudden Parental Death in a 7-Year Prospective Study', in *The American Journal of Psychiatry* (20 June 2018).)

¹⁵⁴ For example, see Dadd's *Portrait of Sir Thomas Phillips in Eastern Costume, Reclining* (1842) which shows Sir Thomas Phillips reclining in Turkish dress, and smoking a Hookah pipe - and possibly Dadd also partook.

¹⁵⁵ Whilst hashish may also have been smoked by the travellers, opium was used at asylums to subdue particularly difficult patients and Dadd's outbursts were recorded – see Alderidge, 34 for example.

¹⁵⁶ Fraser Stansbie, 122-126.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 127-130.

¹⁵⁸ Greysmith, 49: quotes Dadd's enquiry about the "proposed competition for decorating the new Houses of Parliament" in a letter to Frith dated 26 November 1842.

¹⁵⁹ Alderidge, 21; Tromans, *The Artist*, 51.

that Dadd was visually overstimulated by the sights and sounds of both Alexandria and Cairo.¹⁶⁰ Alderidge and Tromans recount that Dadd seemed unable to sketch, instead he was roaming around seeking further sensations:

“For my part I walked about the streets with my eyes and mouth wide open, swallowing, with insatiable appetite the everlasting succession of picturesque characters. I had the most unaccountable impulses, that would not let me stop to sketch, but were constantly prompting me on, to drink in, with greedy enjoyment, the stream of new sensations.”¹⁶¹

These experiences included those he encountered at Giza where a Prussian expedition, led by Dr K.R. Lepsius, was working on a unified chronology of ancient Egyptian and Old Testament narratives.¹⁶²

Additionally, the long journey up and down the Nile, in a claustrophobically small boat, would have placed the two men together in conversation for a far greater length of time than they had experienced so far. Earlier in the journey, horse-riding, trekking, and travel on much larger vessels would have mitigated the possibility of lengthy conversation. It was perhaps during this time, that Dadd came to further understanding of how little the two men had in common. The radical reformer Dadd would have been diametrically opposed to the ambitious but conservative social climber Phillips. This must surely have created some tension between the two men and may go some way to help explain why Phillips was so anxious to have his side of the story heard first by the Dadd family, when Dadd abruptly left him to return home. For his part, Dadd did not mention the sunstroke, which he was later reported to have suffered about this time, in a letter to David Roberts dated 24 February 1843, despite vividly expanding upon this stage of his travels.¹⁶³

Once back in Cairo, Phillips met with the orientalist painter John Frederick Lewis, who had been living in the city since 1841, but he reported only that Lewis ‘has not been very

¹⁶⁰ Greysmith, 45; Alderidge, 21; Tromans, *The Artist*, 51.

¹⁶¹ Alderidge, 23; Tromans, *The Artist*, 51.

¹⁶² Greysmith (49-50) and Tromans (*The Artist*, 52) both advise that foremost in the Prussian expedition’s occupational interest was the biblical figure of Moses who, before leading the Israelites out of Egypt, had also been an Osirian priest.

¹⁶³ Greysmith, 50.

usefully employed hitherto.’¹⁶⁴ What Phillips might have meant by this as Lewis claimed to be making drawings - which he proved, by later very successfully surviving upon them once he returned to the UK - was that Lewis was supposed to be helping the British government, perhaps in their desire to collect art for British institutions.¹⁶⁵ In a letter to David Roberts, Dadd said he ‘saw Lewis at Cairo but was not introduced to him’.¹⁶⁶ Why not? Given that Lewis was already a successful artist before moving to the Middle East, and a friend of David Roberts, Dadd’s briefest of mentions to Roberts of a fellow draughtsman, of equal talent to himself, from whom Phillips kept Dadd at a distance, seems somewhat odd. However, if Dadd was sworn to secrecy by Phillips about any time or event in Bodrum, or potentially, a later trip with Phillips to the ‘Sacred Autonomous Royal Monastery of Saint Katherine of the Holy and God-Trodden Mount Sinai’ in Egypt, as suggested in Dadd’s artwork *The Flight Out of Egypt* (1849-50), which was painted directly before *Dymphna Martyr*, then it is what Dadd does not say about British methods of cultural acquisition of world art during the nineteenth century that may be of more import.

The men next returned to Italy, via Malta, where Dadd wrote to David Roberts about experiencing a sense of melancholia and nervous depression.¹⁶⁷ It was to be in Rome that Dadd would express his first desire to commit an act of violence against the Roman Catholic State, in a self-terminated attack upon Pope Gregory XVI due to the Pope’s solid security arrangements.¹⁶⁸ It was also in Italy that Phillips later declared he had become concerned enough by Dadd’s erratic behaviour to be worried about his own safety. Patricia Alderidge states that Phillips sought medical advice as Dadd’s ‘self-control’ had failed completely and he showed “symptoms of aberration of mind (no more is said)”.¹⁶⁹ The relationship between the two men had now irretrievably broken down and, with Phillips noting an increased “violence of expression” in Dadd,¹⁷⁰ once they reached Paris

¹⁶⁴ Alderidge, 21.

¹⁶⁵ Sitwell suggests Lewis may have previously exhibited political interests because, before travelling to Constantinople (modern Istanbul), Asia Minor, and Cairo, Lewis had lived for some years in Seville and Granada, where he painted *The First Carlist War* about the capture of a spy during the brutal Spanish civil war of the 1830s (75).

¹⁶⁶ Tromans, *The Artist*, 53.

¹⁶⁷ Alderidge, 21; Tromans, *The Artist*, 53.

¹⁶⁸ Alderidge, 22; Tromans, *The Artist*, 54. Both refer to Dadd’s Bethlehem casenotes.

¹⁶⁹ Alderidge, 22.

¹⁷⁰ Andrew Bianchi, ‘Masterstroke’, in *The Lancet*, Vol.12:10 (2015), 876.

Dadd abandoned Phillips and returned home by his fastest possible route.¹⁷¹ Phillips' report to Robert Dadd Snr, that his son had succumbed to madness due to sunstroke in Egypt followed swiftly behind.¹⁷² The sunstroke diagnosis has retrospectively been made more believable by Dadd's behaviour after his arrest in France, when at Clermont Asylum he was reported to have spent hours gazing at the sun.

Once home, Dadd rushed to enter the Palace of Westminster competition in the short time it remained open. Working long hours and, drinking copious amounts of beer, angry and anxious about missed opportunities and wasted time, he was also under pressure to produce artworks for the disgruntled and out-of-pocket Phillips. Speculatively, it was perhaps during this period that Dadd came to his own understanding that responsibility for these missed opportunities, and for his futile travels, lay with those who had encouraged him to go – his father and some of his friends. Clayton-Payne reproduces part of a letter from Dadd to David Roberts in which Dadd appears to suggest that he has taken a wrong turn in his artistic career, but it seems he cannot be completely straightforward in his language to the career influencing Roberts,

“I hope I shall reap all the advantages I ought to do from this journey and I sometimes try to persuade myself I shall and am doing so.”¹⁷³

Whether or not Dadd did suffer a heatstroke whilst in Egypt, his life had become a pressure cooker, with stresses, anxieties, and strains overlaid one on top of another.

Allderidge and Stevens have also argued that on his return, now mad, Dadd survived on a diet of eggs and ale because Dadd and Phillips had breakfasted on eggs during their Nile cruise.¹⁷⁴ As an alternative, I propose there is another historiographical explanation for the number of eggshells found in his room when it was searched after the murder. During his travels Dadd had been disappointed at the deterioration of the frescoes he

¹⁷¹ Allderidge, 22; Tromans, *The Artist*, 54.

¹⁷² Allderidge, 22. Although Sitwell, 69, was one of the first to include this detail when discussing Dadd's art.

¹⁷³ Clayton-Payne, 13. Fraser Stansbie, 109: also points out the letters cannot necessarily be taken at face value.

¹⁷⁴ Allderidge, 23: “When his room was searched after he had left it was found to contain nearly three hundred eggs, the carpet covered in shells, and quantities of ale, this having been his exclusive diet for some time.” Also see notes 7 & 41 on 155; Stevens, 40.

viewed in Italy, rather ambitiously writing to Frith that they could probably improve upon the techniques of Raphael, and the Palace of Westminster competition prize was for the winners to decorate the Houses of Parliament in large frescoes.¹⁷⁵ Therefore, could Dadd have been practising with egg tempura, traditionally used for fresco painting? This would also fit rather more practically with his stated ambitions, his expectation of winning the competition (as he had often won competitions in the past), and with his residence in rented rooms at the time. On his return to England, Dadd had taken lodgings at 71 Newman Street, which would not have offered him any culinary facilities. It was common for Victorian Londoners, in rented accommodation, to purchase their food from stall holders and licensed victuallers, together with alcohol to wash down their repast (see Fig.8 below). A self-contained food such as a pasty or pie, and also bread and cheese,¹⁷⁶ would leave no visible remains, whilst bottles and jugs of ale, if Dadd had not had time to return them, would have left physical evidence. Bread, cheese, and beer had, after all, been the preferred meal at the end of The Clique's (an art collective set up by Richard Dadd, William Powell Frith, and others between 1837 and 1842)¹⁷⁷ weekly meetings, held in Richard Dadd's rooms before his travels.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Fraser Stansbie, 81.

¹⁷⁶ See Allderidge, 14 and note 41, for this choice of repast at meetings of The Clique.

¹⁷⁷ Greysmith, 9-10 and 14.

¹⁷⁸ Allderidge, 15.



Fig.8: Richard Dadd, 1855, *Sketch to Illustrate the Passions. Senility or Peevishness*, 35.9 x 25.8 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

It is also important to remember that water had not yet been rendered safe to drink within nineteenth-century London and cholera and typhoid were rife. So, if Dadd was drinking copious amounts of alcohol during this time, then his mental health would likely have continued to suffer. However, despite rumours of Dadd's poor mental health in the summer of 1843, evidence of Dadd's madness must have been in short supply, for no

action was taken.¹⁷⁹ Dadd and Phillips even breakfasted together to discuss subjects for pictures Dadd might create, as he had previously contracted to do before the trip, to cover his travelling expenses.¹⁸⁰ So, it was not until late August that Robert Snr finally consulted about his son's mental health with Dr Alexander Sutherland, Physician to St. Luke's Hospital for Lunatics, although Sutherland does not appear to have examined Richard Dadd in person.¹⁸¹ The doctor's advice was unequivocal – Richard was dangerous and should be hospitalised immediately. Robert Snr, for whatever reason, vacillated and this lack of a quick and decisive decision on Richard Dadd's mental health treatment would ultimately end in his own murder at Cobham Park.¹⁸²

Therefore, in the next chapter, I will investigate the evidence surrounding Dadd's patricide, comparing and contrasting the varying accounts, together with reference to primary evidence from the time. As well as newspaper reports, friends' reminiscences, and other secondary speculation, some aspects of the murder, referred to in the legal hearings, appear to have been overlooked. These include events before the murder, location of evidence at the crime scene, and injuries sustained by the deceased, together with pictorial representation of such by Richard Dadd, which may shed perspicuous light on the sequence of events. My aim is to reach an understanding of the pattern and order of actions, to further compare Dadd's life story to his subsequent creative output, in chapter three.

¹⁷⁹ Tromans, *The Artist*, 54.

¹⁸⁰ Tromans, *The Artist*, 60.

¹⁸¹ MacGregor, 117: suggests that Dadd was seen by Dr Sutherland, although no evidence is provided to support this hypothesis.

¹⁸² Tromans, *The Artist*, 60.

CHAPTER 2 – MURDER

“Only homicidal mania had a *necessary* objective: murder.”¹⁸³

Surprisingly few analyses of Dadd’s catastrophic patricide have been written and those that do exist often propose interpretive ideas which do not wholly correspond with evidence gathered at the time. For example, David Greysmith’s unsubstantiated timeline of events seem to derive from a sensationalist newspaper article from 4 September 1843.¹⁸⁴ Nicholas Tromans’ theory that Richard Dadd punched his father, meanwhile, is speculative,¹⁸⁵ because to punch someone is a very unreliable way of knocking someone down for the purpose of overpowering them. The effectiveness of a punch in incapacitating another person is contingent on several factors. Firstly, precision and accuracy are crucial as a poorly aimed blow may not succeed. Additionally, if the victim anticipates the punch, they may brace themselves to withstand impact, lessening its effect. Lastly, individuals with anatomically stronger neck muscles or bone density are often able to withstand substantial force without being knocked down. Consequently, due to these variables, relying on a single punch to knock someone down is inherently unreliable.¹⁸⁶ That being said, it is my intention to return to the contemporaneous witness testimony deposited shortly after discovery of Robert Dadd Snr’s body and during the inquest held on 31 August, 1843, sitting before the Coroner J. Hinde, and Kent magistrate William Masters Smith. Transcripts, whilst invaluable, are not always complete verbatim accounts as some legal arguments are on occasion omitted.¹⁸⁷ They are, nevertheless, the most contiguous memories, so I will compare newspaper reports and witness testimony at the inquest with evidence given during subsequent magistrates’ hearings in 1844, after Richard Dadd had been extradited back to England following his capture in France. My intention is to consider whether a closer and perhaps more

¹⁸³ J.P. Eigen. 2010. ‘Diagnosing Homicidal Mania: Forensic Psychiatry and the Purposeless Murder’ in *Medical History*, Vol.54:4, 441.

¹⁸⁴ Greysmith, 56-62.

¹⁸⁵ Tromans, *The Artist*, 60-65.

¹⁸⁶ Anders Hånell; Elham Rostami. 2020. ‘How Can a Punch Knock You Out?’ in *Frontiers in Neurology*, Vol.11, 1-6.

¹⁸⁷ Jade Shepherd. “‘I am not very well I feel nearly mad when I think of you’: Male jealousy, murder and Broadmoor in late-Victorian Britain’, in *Social History of Britain*, Vol.30:2 (2017), 277-298.

accurate understanding of the facts, as noted at the time, may provide evidence that has previously been overlooked (or discounted by other researchers). The aim in exploring this evidence is to ascertain whether aspects of Dadd's lived experience of the murder are apparent within his later artistic production (for example in *Sketch of the Passions. Hatred* (1853) and *Sketch to Illustrate the Passions. Murder* (1854)).

My research seeks to answer some key questions which have not previously been explored by others, such as why Dadd selected his father as his first victim (after his aborted attempt on the Holy Father in Rome). Dadd's "mission as an envoy of God (or more probably Osiris) was to 'exterminate the men most possessed with the demon'"¹⁸⁸ and, as explained to his doctor at Bethlem,¹⁸⁹ "coupled with the idea of a descent from the Egyptian God Osiris, induced me to put a period to the existence of him whom I had always regarded as a parent, but whom the secret admonishings I had, counselled me was the author of the ruin of my race."¹⁹⁰ That being said, and despite Dadd's later imaginative obfuscation of events surrounding the murder, I propose that it is necessary to understand (as clearly as possible given the interim period of time), not only when Dadd decided to kill his father, but also his potential reasoning for selecting the murder location of Cobham Park, Kent. This understanding should aid interpretation of Dadd's paintings created after the murder and is important because the act was both pre-planned, involved travel to the murder location, and some difficulty in its accomplishment.

Both Greysmith and Allderidge have stated that the murder victim Robert Snr, was a respected figure within the Chatham community. Robert Snr was interested in educational concerns, founding and curating the local museum, taking a keen interest in the relatively new scientific study of geology, and also, actively participating in the Reform movement whilst successfully running two businesses.¹⁹¹ In addition, Allderidge has advised that Robert Snr was 'intelligent and energetic', "a kindly and sensible man who was popular among his fellow townsmen and, almost certainly, among his large and

¹⁸⁸ Allderidge, 22-24.

¹⁸⁹ Dr William Wood, the apothecary of Bethlem Hospital – see Allderidge 24.

¹⁹⁰ Allderidge, 24 and Note 38 on 155.

¹⁹¹ Greysmith, 11; Allderidge, 10.

equally intelligent family.”¹⁹² However, some of Dadd’s paintings contain references to the negative effects of alcohol within family environments (see examples below). There is also direct evidence of the impact drink had on the Dadd family specifically, in the loss of George William Dadd’s sanity.¹⁹³ In addition, witnesses at the inquest into Robert Dadd Snr’s murder gave evidence that Robert Snr consumed several alcoholic drinks in the hours before his demise. Richard Dadd’s artworks such as *Still-Life with Knife and Jar* and *Still Life with Bottles and Corkscrew* (both c.1838), together with *Sketch to Illustrate the Passions. Brutality* (1854), and *The Child’s Problem* (1857), all suggest the possibility of tensions and violence within the family, potentially connected to alcohol as all contain alcoholic references within the paintings, and I will explore those ideas later in the thesis.

Having considered both public and private aspects of the family’s respectability, it was not until 2011, that a voice of dissention was heard about Robert Snr, when Nicholas Tromans provided evidence not everyone in the Chatham vicinity was impressed by the intellectual ambitions of Robert Snr and his close involvement with the Chatham and Rochester Literary and Philosophical Institution:

“This heckler took a particular tilt at Robert Dadd, [...] now presenting himself as the Institution’s ‘CURATOR, or nominal professor of Mineralogy. This is a conceited and ignorant little Cockletop of intellect’, who ‘may often be seen in all the chalk and gravel pits in the neighbourhood’ (various laboured scatological jokes about excavating in latrines follow).” [Anon, 1828, p.11.]”¹⁹⁴

Nevertheless, it should be noted that anonymous publications complicate verification of the author’s intent or motives and may be considered less reliable or even misleading. However, whilst an anonymously published pamphlet cannot necessarily be relied upon as a rounded portrait of the man, and may contain personal bias for whatever reason, it does suggest the possibility that Robert Snr was not always as universally “popular and respected”¹⁹⁵ as he was portrayed. Robert Snr’s ambitious streak was clearly visible in his

¹⁹² Allderidge, 9-11.

¹⁹³ Greysmith, 133; Allderidge, 54-55; Tromans, *The Artist*, 81: quotes a family friend’s description of George as “a sad reprobate”, and that in 1876 one of Richard Dadd’s half-brothers recalled George’s ‘black sheep’ reputation in that Robert Jnr had “stood up as the champion to protect the rights of others from the selfish desires of a weak and erring brother”.

¹⁹⁴ As quoted by Tromans, *The Artist*, 9; & 200.

¹⁹⁵ Allderidge, 10.

business and societal choices, and thus also raises the question of how much time Robert Snr was able to spend with his nine children, in between running his businesses and being involved in so many local institutions and good causes.

Returning to the order of events up to and during the murder, both Richard Dadd and his father lived in London, so getting to the scene of the crime involved travel arrangements and interaction with multiple other potential witnesses. In addition, on the day of the homicide, father and son took two walks together. So not only the weapons used but, also, the timing of the murder is relevant to understanding the act. Dunand and Zivie-Coche explain that in Egyptian mythology action could only be taken against a god (or devil) if the aggressor was also godlike, and Dadd proposed himself as related to Osiris.¹⁹⁶ Dunand and Zivie-Coche also recount that “the god knows the one who acts for him”, and “Act for the god – he will do the same for you [...] Nevertheless, this reciprocal interaction of man and god in no way undermined the freedom and the human necessity to act.”¹⁹⁷ Therefore, it is interesting that following his patricide, Richard Dadd clearly made some attempt to tidy up the body. Yet, it has subsequently been claimed that Dadd believed his victim to be the devil rather than his biological father,¹⁹⁸ so why might Dadd have needed to tidy his slain devil? I will explore a possible explanation later in this chapter in ‘A New Theory on the Murder’.

Lastly, during Dadd’s pre-planned getaway, it has been claimed by Tromans that he was carrying a list of ‘people who must die’.¹⁹⁹ Whilst Dadd’s father headed the list, second was the Emperor of Austria. Yet, Dadd’s final journey through France was heading in the wrong direction for Emperor Ferdinand I’s Imperial Palace in Vienna, so was there another powerful Austrian nobleman who may instead have been Dadd’s potential target? I will consider the possibility that Dadd’s next proposed victim may have been another member of the Habsburg-Lorraine family – Leopold II, Grand Duke of (Austria-controlled) Tuscany.

¹⁹⁶ Dunand and Zivie-Coche, 127.

¹⁹⁷ Dunand and Zivie-Coche, 149-151.

¹⁹⁸ Tromans, *The Artist*, 198.

¹⁹⁹ Tromans, *The Artist*, 196.

My approach to these questions and the homicide examination will be styled forensically, comparing different testimonies, from the several hearings which followed the killing. This is in order to derive the closest possible account of events directly leading up to the act, the patricide itself, and Dadd's subsequent escape and capture. This will necessitate the dispassionate description of injuries sustained by the deceased, notwithstanding any private sympathy towards Robert Dadd Snr's physical suffering, or Richard Dadd's analogous mental distress.

Discovery of the Body

On Tuesday 29 August 1843, at twenty minutes past seven o'clock in the morning, whilst driving through Cobham Park towards Wrotham cattle market, Rochester butcher Abraham Lyster and his nephew Charles Lyster observed a gentlemanly man (without his hat), lying on his front in the Park, with his arms outstretched above his head.²⁰⁰ The two men were riding in a one-horse open 'gig' or 'chaise' with the seat considerably higher than the shafts so their view into the Park was clear, even over the hedgerow and stile to the side of the road.²⁰¹ The conditions were arid, following an exceptionally dry spell of weather during that summer,²⁰² reducing the growth of any obscuring vegetation.

Concerned for the wellbeing of the prone man, Charles Lyster alighted from the carriage to check on his welfare. In his evidence to the inquest, Lyster stated he "went towards the body thinking the person must be asleep, but I found him dead. I returned and told my uncle that the man was dead. I returned to the body and turned it over and placed it on its back. There was a considerable quantity of blood on the face and hands. There was also blood on the ground."²⁰³

²⁰⁰ Dreadful Murder at Cobham Park, *London Evening Standard*, 1 September, 1843.

²⁰¹ *Kentish Gazette*, 5 September, 1843: "The place where the parricide executed his horrible purpose is approached from the road by a stile, which is scarcely perceptible even in the daytime, in consequence of a hedge-row running between it and the road."

²⁰² Tromans, *The Artist*, 60.

²⁰³ Dreadful Murder at Cobham Park, *London Evening Standard*, 1 September, 1843.

While Lyster was viewing the body, he was approached on foot by the second man on the scene, George Biggs, a shepherd from the estate. Although Biggs had been unaware there was a dead body in the Park, he did propose the practical suggestion that the Lysters should use their vehicle to fetch the local constable whilst he remained with the body.²⁰⁴ The Lysters made their way to the home of Constable William Dawes in Cobham village who, together with John Adams, the waiter at the Ship Inn, Cobham, were the final named people to attend the murder scene. Subsequently, a hurdle was produced from a neighbouring sheep pen to transport the body to the wheelwright's shed (which adjoined the Ship Inn), for medical examination.²⁰⁵ Recognising the clothing of the deceased, the body was identified by John Adams as Robert Dadd Snr after some of the blood had been washed from the dead man's face.²⁰⁶

Then, as now, police evidence can be some of the most disturbing at an inquest, in part because officers describe and produce any found weapons used in the act as well as the bloodstained clothes of the deceased. Constable William Dawes' evidence began with a description of his actions: "I went to the park, as they described, and found the body, with the throat cut and a stab on the left breast. There was a quantity of blood on the ground, and the clothes were exceedingly bloody."²⁰⁷ Having secured physical evidence remaining at the scene, Dawes produced it for the inspection of the Coroner and jury. Firstly, a locked knife, with a pointed blade about four inches in length. The knife was new, albeit much covered with blood. Dawes explained that he had found the knife lying approximately "nine feet from the deceased's head." He said, "I also found a razor, lying open, under the body, covered with blood." Dawes's evidence confirmed that Robert Dadd Snr had not been the victim of robbery, "I searched the pockets of the deceased, and found in his waistcoat pocket two pair of silver mounted spectacles, 17s, 6d, in silver, and a purse containing one sovereign and two half sovereigns, a gold watch, with a metal guard chain."²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ *Chelmsford Chronicle*, 8 September, 1843.

²⁰⁶ Greysmith, 58.

²⁰⁷ Dreadful Murder at Cobham Park, *London Evening Standard*, 1 September, 1843.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

Interest next turned to the clothing which Robert Dadd Snr had been wearing on the night of his death. Charles Lyster described Robert Dadd Snr's clothing "The deceased had a black coat on and it was buttoned."²⁰⁹ George Biggs also described the injuries and clothing in his evidence to the inquest, "The deceased had a cut on the throat, and there was a considerable quantity of blood under the body"²¹⁰, and crucially, "The hat belonging to the deceased was lying, nearly doubled, on the grass between the stile and the body of the deceased. The deceased had on a black coat, green plaid waistcoat, dark trousers, with low shoes. The coat, when unbuttoned, had in it a quantity of congealed blood. I saw a knife picked up."²¹¹ This was the knife collected by Constable Dawes and produced for the court. Dawes also produced Robert Dadd Snr's clothing: a shirt, a Guernsey frock, and a waistcoat. The garments the constable brought had a great quantity of clotted blood upon them, and in each was a puncture wound through which the blade of the knife had passed. The right lapel of the coat was cut, but there was no puncture wound to the coat. A newspaper reporter in attendance from the *London Evening Standard* supposed that "From the position of the neck of the coat the deceased must have been dragged by it by some person."²¹² This is a potentially erroneous speculation because the reporter could not have seen the body at the scene as his report was written four days after the murder, which suggests the reporter was venturing a personal opinion or reporting the words of another person who may, or may not, have seen the body in situ. This conjecture has percolated down to representations of the murder in current research,²¹³ and I will return to this, and the following points, later in the chapter. For now, I draw attention to additional important pieces of evidence which have not been reported by recent commentators, but which may help to piece together what happened during the murder. These include the fact that Robert Dadd Snr was found with his arms stretched out above his head, and his badly squashed hat and his walking stick (see additional evidence below) were found close to the entry stile to the park. Useful clues include the information that the razor was found under the deceased's body, whilst the knife was found approximately nine feet away from the body, all important background intelligence for fresh interpretation.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Greysmith, 57, and Tromans, *The Artist*, 61.

What is clear from the inquest depositions given above is that Charles Lyster was likely in a state of shock at discovering the body because, at this point, he did not record seeing the deceased's hat and stick by the stile, which he had climbed four times getting into and out of the Park. Nor did he mention the razor found under the body, or the knife found a short distance from the body. However, by the time he came to give evidence at Rochester Magistrates court on Monday 12 August, 1844, he had recalled further information: "I observed a hat and stick lying on the grass." Constable Dawes also recalled further evidence at the same court hearing: "I saw the hat lying between the body and the road; also a walking stick and a razor."²¹⁴

From the dead man's clothing, the inquest turned next to the deceased's body. A post-mortem examination was carried out by William Saunders M.D., a surgeon from nearby Gravesend. He was assisted by his father and a medical gentleman from London, Mr Green. Dr Saunder's evidence explained the extent of Robert Dadd Snr's injuries, which although not usually so closely considered, are important in understanding exactly how the murder may have been carried out, so are quoted here in full:

"I found on the external appearance of the body a considerable quantity of coagulated blood on the right hand and fingers, and on the face. I also found an incision of an inch long on the left side of the throat, not sufficient to cause death. The lips and chin were much swollen and bruised. The right side of the head was much bruised; also the forehead. The wrists were also bruised. There was a small puncture wound on the right thumb. On the left breast, between the second and third ribs, vertical to the body, was a wound. The lungs were penetrated in two places and extending through the upper tube of the left lung. The other wound in the lung did not penetrate so deep. There was also a wound extending under the skin towards the left shoulder. The wound in the chest which caused death was about one inch in breadth, and four inches in depth. The knife produced was the instrument used. The whole of the wounds must have been made by some person and not the deceased. The deceased could not have done it to himself."²¹⁵

²¹⁴ *Kentish Advertiser*, 13 August, 1844.

²¹⁵ Dreadful Murder at Cobham Park, *London Evening Standard*, 1 September, 1843.

Previous Theories on the Murder

The first twentieth century recount of the homicide appeared in David Greysmith's 1973 book, *The Rock and Castle of Seclusion*:²¹⁶

"Richard and his father had walked through the darkening Park, circling around the Hall. They reached a point about a quarter of a mile from the Hall on the Rochester side, close to a path which crossed the Park from Halfpence Lane to the village of Shorne, about thirty yards from the road near a small stile – not far, in fact, from Cobham village. Nearby was a large chalk pit called Paddock Hole, surrounded by trees. By now it may have been as late as half past ten or eleven o'clock. In the dark, Richard attacked Robert with terrible violence, using the knife and razor that he had bought. They fought fiercely and desperately. No cries were heard in the night. Leaving the body of his dead, or dying, father, Richard climbed the stile and fled along the road. There was some evidence that an attempt had been made to drag the body. Richard was very familiar with the geography of Cobham Park and may have intended to dispose of it in Paddock Hole."²¹⁷

For reasons unknown, some of Greysmith's report does not correspond to evidence stated at the second magistrates hearing at Rochester in 1844 (see below), particularly in relation to the timeline of events. Examination of *The Evening Chronicle*, Monday 4 September 1843, may reveal where David Greysmith founded some of his theory.

"The spot where the melancholy occurrence took place is situated within a quarter of a mile of Cobham Hall, on the Rochester side, and close to a path which crosses the Park from Halfpenny Lane to Shorne; and it is judged that the unfortunate father and son must have taken a circuitous walk round the hall, and were on the eve of returning to their abodes when the catastrophe occurred. Mr. Dawes the constable of Cobham, has endeavoured to ascertain whether any cries were heard during the night of the murder, but has failed; the only fact which he has been able to glean was that a young man somewhat resembling the

²¹⁶ Greysmith, 58-59.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 57.

description of Richard Dadd was seen about 11 o'clock on the night by an earthenware hawker, walking down the road towards the village, at a very quick pace, and in a direction from the park. Whether the individual was really the unfortunate youth it is impossible to say."²¹⁸

No evidence was presented at the inquest or subsequent hearings to suggest the two men fought fiercely or desperately, although Robert Snr did sustain a defence injury, a small puncture wound to his right thumb, during the attack. In addition, this timeline contradicts evidence given at the second Magistrates hearing by witnesses from the Crown Inn, Rochester, who were party to Dadd's getaway from the location, which confirms that Richard Dadd was in Rochester by 10pm and on a coach to Sittingbourne by 10:30pm.²¹⁹ For example, on 13 August, 1844, the *Kentish Advertiser* reported evidence provided by:

'Eliza Coleman, Chambermaid at the Crown Inn, Rochester' – "On Monday night, the last night of Strood Fair, I remember a gentleman coming in to wash his hands. I showed him into a room upstairs, it was about 10 o'clock."

and,

'Mr Calder, Landlord of the Crown Inn, Rochester' – "on 28th August a person came to the Crown whom I believe to be the prisoner, by his stature, although he is very much altered." [*Richard had a long beard and moustache by the time of the hearing.*] "When the bell went, [the landlord] went and asked him his business. He said he wanted a chaise to go to Sittingbourne."

and,

'Charles Overy, Postilion at the Crown Inn, Rochester' – "remembers hearing that Mr Dadd was found in Cobham Park. I remember the night previous to his being found that I drove someone from the Crown in a chaise with a pair of horses, to The George at Sittingbourne; I left Rochester about half past 10. As I was driving

²¹⁸ *The Evening Chronicle*, Monday 4 September, 1843.

²¹⁹ Evidence reported by *Kentish Advertiser*, 13 August, 1844.

down the street the prisoner said something. I pulled up and asked him what he said. He told me to drive very fast as he was going to Dover.”²²⁰

This evidenced timeline confirms the two men could not have been enjoying a long circuitous walk around the Hall or been seen on Halfpence Lane at eleven pm. It is also worth noting here that no witnesses ever gave evidence, at any hearing, in relation to the claim of a sighting of Dadd making his way down Halfpence Lane. Even so, this would have been an extremely curious choice of escape route as it was not Dadd’s quickest way on foot to Rochester (see Fig.9), where he was next seen by witnesses. Richard Dadd was extremely familiar with Cobham Park and its vicinity from time spent sketching there in his youth,²²¹ so I suggest it is highly unlikely, having planned the murder and getaway so carefully,²²² that he would make such a fundamental error.

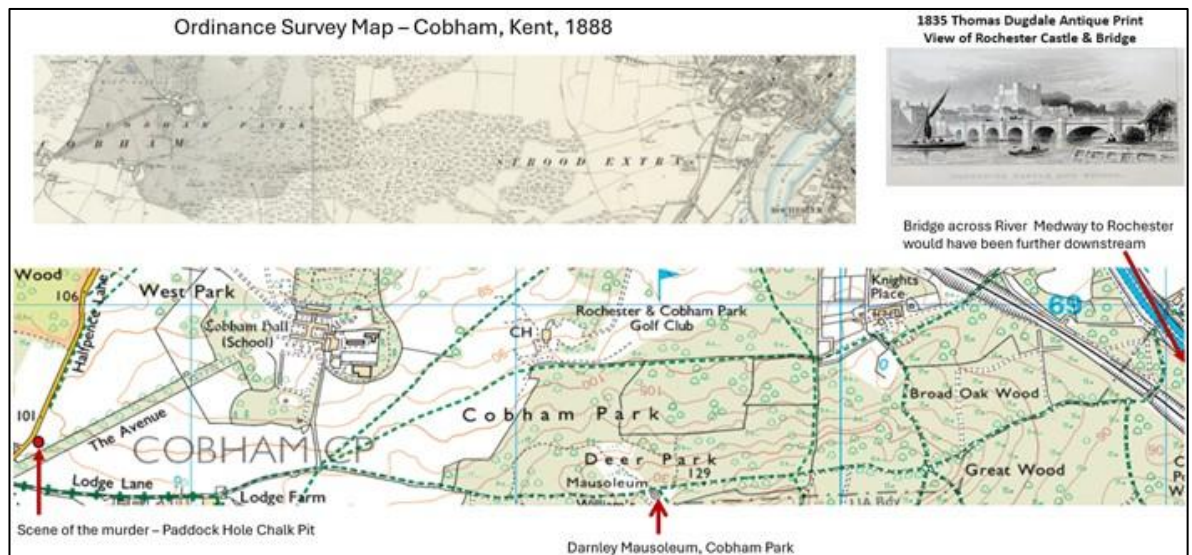


Fig.9: Cobham to Rochester. Ordinance Survey Map – Cobham, Kent. (1888).
(<https://digimap.edina.ac.uk/roam/map/os> Accessed: 2025).

In 1843, the main road was Watling Street. For Dadd to leave the scene, travel up Halfpence Lane to Watling Street and make his way to Rochester would have been circuitous and evidence presented at the court hearings means he would not have had enough time to do this before arriving at the Crown Inn, Rochester. Likewise, to walk

²²⁰ Ibid. At this point Richard Dadd interrupted and, showing an example of his meticulous memory almost a year after the event, corrected Charles Overy – “No; I told you to go a good pace.” This specificity of detail proposes that Dadd had clear recollection of some events on the night!

²²¹ Allderidge, 45.

²²² Ibid., 24.

down the road towards the village would have been in the wrong direction for Rochester. It was much more straightforward to make his way, at pace and unseen, across the Park, joining the footpath past the Darnley Mausoleum, onwards into the Great Wood, passing Hangman's Shaw at Strood, before reaching the medieval bridge into Rochester. He would have to cross the river to the town of Rochester using the old bridge as this was the only available option at the time.²²³

The second recount of the murder was brief,²²⁴ but the third by Nicolas Tromans, was more considered:

"After Robert Dadd's body was recovered early the next morning by a butcher from Rochester, there was indeed some initial difficulty in establishing the precise order of events. The body was found at the edge of a deep dell or ravine just off the road, circled by elms; it had apparently been dragged towards the drop but not thrown over. The victim may have been occupied answering a call of nature when he received the first blow – a blow possibly delivered not from a sharp weapon but a fist, as the deceased's head was badly bruised. A razor found under the body had been used to inflict a one-and-a-half-inch gash on the neck – an aborted attempt to cut the throat, not in itself lethal. Death had been caused by a five-inch folding rigger's knife recovered a few yards from the corpse. With this, Richard had stabbed his father in the chest, pressing the blade again into his lung without fully withdrawing it after the first thrust. There must have been a struggle, for Robert's wrists were bruised, but nothing had been heard. Richard may have tidied up the body before leaving; Robert's coat was fully buttoned up but had not been cut by the knife."²²⁵

However, no witnesses gave evidence that Robert Dadd Snr's clothing suggested the likelihood of him answering a call of nature at the time he was struck down. Therefore, this hypothesis may be based more on conjecture than evidence. The same conclusion

²²³ The medieval bridge was demolished in 1856, and its replacement was moved further upriver to its current location. The railway bridge was added in 1858. <https://castellogy.com/sites/sites-south-east/rochester-bridge>. Accessed: 2024.

²²⁴ Allderidge, 24.

²²⁵ Tromans, *The Artist*, 61.

might also be reached with regard to Tromans' suggestion that Dadd punched his father.²²⁶ Tromans is correct that Robert Dadd Snr's body showed bruising to the head, but, to punch someone is a very unreliable way of rendering a person unconscious or to bring them to the ground.²²⁷

Richard Dadd and his father were approximately the same height and build. Dadd was never described as being particularly strong and, following his mental ill-health after returning from a foreign tour with Sir Thomas Phillips, his diet was poor.²²⁸ In addition, Dadd was an artist, not a pugilist, he used his hands to create, not destroy. Hands are often injured during a bare-knuckled punch, sometimes even broken, and Dadd's hands were his livelihood so he could not afford to damage them. Crucially, no witnesses ever described Dadd as having any damage to either of his hands, although his dishevelled clothing and appearance were commented upon both in Rochester and in France.²²⁹ He also used his hands to attack a second person in France a few days later, with another cut-throat razor (which led to his arrest),²³⁰ something that would have been difficult had they been damaged in any way.

Lastly, Dadd, by his own account, was mentally distanced from his father at the time of the killing and, denied that Robert Dadd Snr was actually his father, as he later claimed to believe him to be an agent of the devil.²³¹ However, it is the matter of how Richard Dadd was to overpower his father so that he would not be able to fight back when Dadd attacked him with the razor and knife, that may possibly be the reason why he did not kill him during the first walk taken by the pair after 6:30pm.²³² Perhaps no opportunity presented itself at that time. At the inquest, The Ship Inn's waiter John Adams gave evidence relating to the timeline of both men's actions on the night:

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ I am grateful to retired Detective Constable Martin Parry for his time and consideration (during a telephone conversation in 2020) relating to my theory of the order of events leading to Richard Dadd's murder of his father. In particular, his corroboration of my theory that Richard Dadd did not punch his father to bring him to the ground due to the lack of certainty that a punch between two men of similar height and stature would guarantee to fell the victim.

²²⁸ Allderidge, 23.

²²⁹ Greysmith, 59.

²³⁰ Allderidge, 24.

²³¹ Ibid., 24.

²³² Dreadful Murder at Cobham Park, *London Evening Standard*, 1 September, 1843.

“On my return I found they had gone out. They returned to the house between seven and eight o’clock, when the deceased told me to bring his son a biscuit and some cheese, which I brought in, and then the deceased ordered me to bring him some broiled ham and a pint of porter. When I again entered the room, the son of the deceased got up and said to his father, “Will you go for a walk?” It was then about half-past eight o’clock.”²³³

A New Theory on the Murder

During the long dry summer of 1843, Richard Dadd was showing signs of paranoia. Believing he was being watched, he must have been feeling both excessive excitement and heightened fear. Therefore, it is important to consider when Dadd may have decided that his father must die. Sometime between Monday 21 and Friday 25 August 1843, Dadd visited ‘Mosely & Co. Cutlers’, New Street, Covent Garden, and purchased “a new cut-throat razor, and a large clasp knife or rigger’s knife”.²³⁴ It is known Dadd brought these items with him to Cobham because the two weapons found at the crime scene were stamped with Mosely & Co’s identifying insignia.²³⁵ We cannot know if Richard Dadd’s family were aware that he had purchased them prior to the trip to Cobham, though this would seem unlikely because earlier consultation about Dadd’s mental health with Dr Sutherland made the family aware of the danger Dadd represented. Indeed, Dadd must have exhibited some change in behaviour during the weeks prior to the murder because his father consulted Dr Alexander Sutherland, physician to St. Luke’s Hospital for Lunatics. Either Robert Dadd Snr or his immediate family, had grave concerns over Richard Dadd’s conduct, sufficient to feel this step was necessary. Typically, for the early nineteenth century, the doctor does not appear to have examined Richard Dadd in person but instead heard the evidence of family,²³⁶ and recommended, “that the strictest caution be exercised in watching his movements”, adding that Dadd, “was not responsible for his actions” and “should be put under restraint”, thereby ordering, “a total cessation of work”.²³⁷ Apparently, “this advice was strictly attended to, he not being

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Greysmith, 55.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Sarah Wise, *Inconvenient People, Lunacy, Liberty and the Mad-Doctors in Victorian England*, (London: 2013), 375.

²³⁷ Greysmith, 55.

allowed out of sight”.²³⁸ It would seem that Dadd may have controlled his outward behaviour sufficiently to reassure his father as, by Sunday 27 August, Robert Dadd Snr, “could not accept that his son was beyond his control”,²³⁹ and “determined to care for him, himself”.²⁴⁰

Facts relating to the morning of the murder remain somewhat vague but exactly why Cobham was Dadd’s preferred location may be critical to his later explanations relating to the murder. Robert Dadd Snr’s interest in geology has previously been noted (in chapter one - in an unkind pamphlet which implied he could be found in “all the chalk pits in the area”). Therefore, why might Richard Dadd have chosen the chalk pit in Cobham Park to dispose of the body? It is my proposition that a monument within the Park’s grounds may hold the answer, as it is topped by a pyramid possibly based upon the Pyramid of Caius Cestius in Rome²⁴¹ where Dadd expressed a wish to kill the Holy Father. Alderidge advises that on Monday 28 August, Richard Dadd “called on his father asking him to go down into the country”.²⁴² Greysmith states that “Robert wanted to go to the Rosherville Gardens at Gravesend, but Richard said, ‘No, we will go to Cobham’”.²⁴³ Neither man seems to have suggested they should instead travel to their home town of Chatham to join Richard Dadd’s brother Stephen who was watching manoeuvres on the River Medway.²⁴⁴ Both Alderidge and Greysmith agree that Dadd told his father he would unburden his mind on the trip.²⁴⁵ However, if Dadd was not allowed ‘out of sight’,²⁴⁶ how could it have come about that Dadd should call upon his father? This revelation would suggest that one or other of these statements is not factually accurate. Perhaps Dadd

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Alderidge, 24.

²⁴¹ <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/kent/cobham-wood-and-mausoleum/the-history-of-cobham-wood-and-mausoleum>. Accessed: 2024.

²⁴² Alderidge, 24: “One or possibly two days after the consultation with Sutherland, on Monday, 28 August, Dadd called on his father asking him to go down into the country. He insisted they should go to his favourite haunt of Cobham, and promised to ‘unburden his mind’ when they got there.”

²⁴³ Greysmith, 56: “There is a sort of vagueness about the details of Monday morning as if they were unimportant and unreal. Robert wanted to go to the Rosherville Gardens at Gravesend, but Richard said, ‘No, we will go to Cobham.’ He told his father that he would ‘disburden his mind to him’.

²⁴⁴ Alderidge, 24: “After they had set off one of the sisters, probably Mary Ann, had a premonition of disaster and wrote to her brother Stephen, who was staying at Strood to watch the Chatham manoeuvres, that Richard had gone to Cobham with his father, that he was much worse, and that she feared him to be dangerous.”

²⁴⁵ Alderidge, 24; Greysmith, 56.

²⁴⁶ Greysmith, 55.

was not as closely watched as the stated evidence implies, especially as a letter from Stephen Dadd Jnr to David Roberts after the murder suggests Richard came and went within the family,

“He came to his Father on Monday morning and persuaded him to go to Cobham in Kent, [...] Twas only the Sunday previous to the fatal day that my dear Father went with Mr Humby to Dr Sutherland who said he was not safe was not accountable for his own actions and that when that particular hallucination took possession of him he would most likely destroy anyone who was near him! Even after that on Sunday evening my poor Father did not seem to apprehend any danger and seemed to think he could do anything with him. Richard has not been seen or heard of since with the exception that he came back to London on Tuesday morning and asked a Cousin of his about getting a passport to Paris, he also went to Mr Joys on the same errand, since then he has not been seen or heard of.”²⁴⁷

Dadd’s recorded address at the time of the murder was not his father’s home in Suffolk Street, but rather, rented lodgings just over a mile away in Newman Street, distanced and independent from other family members.²⁴⁸ This might explain how Dadd was secretly able to purchase a cut-throat razor and rigger knife, and also to obtain the passport enabling his later escape to France.²⁴⁹

What is known is that Dadd and his father left London by the one o’clock steam-boat for Gravesend. They landed at the town pier and walked up the High Street, to the stand where the ‘gigs’ plied for hire (equivalent to a modern taxi rank). Richard Dadd discussed the fare from Gravesend to Cobham with ‘gig’ driver Daniel Beachy. Beachy later gave evidence that at this time he saw “nothing peculiar in Richard’s manner or conversation”.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ Allderidge, 39-40.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 22-23.

²⁴⁹ Greysmith, 59.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 56.

The distance from Gravesend to Cobham is approximately five miles by road, depending on the route selected, and Dadd and his father arrived at Cobham around six pm. They alighted from the 'gig' at the Ship Inn in the village high street and were greeted by the waiter, John Adams.



Fig.10: Early postcard of The Ship Inn, Cobham, Kent (Public Domain).

This image of the Ship Inn is looking up from Cobham High Street towards Cobham Park. Richard Dadd and his father entered straight into the parlour, to arrange accommodation for the night and some light refreshment. John Adams assisted them but said at his Inquest evidence that Dadd displayed a “surly and aggressive manner”.²⁵¹ This is the first time we are given a glimpse into Richard Dadd’s more unpleasant behaviour and mood on the day. However, Adams later during the inquest also stated, “During their time in the

²⁵¹ Dreadful Murder at Cobham Park, *London Evening Standard*, 1 September, 1843.
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house, I never saw any conduct or behaviour of the young man that could induce me to believe that anything was the matter with him in his mind.”²⁵²

After serving tea, Adams exited the parlour to confirm the visitors’ sleeping arrangements at cottages in the village. At approximately six-thirty pm, the Dadds’ left the Inn for their first walk together. They were seen leaving by the landlord’s wife but were not seen around the village by any other witnesses.²⁵³ This would suggest that the two men turned left out of the Inn and headed into Cobham Park woods. If they had turned right, they would have been walking in the direction of the village and were more likely to have been noticed. Speculatively, Richard Dadd may have expected to murder his biological father at the Darnley Mausoleum within the grounds. Dadd, who had spent much time in his youth drawing the house and grounds, would have been very familiar with the pyramid topped structure. It has been suggested by The National Trust that the design of the building may have been based upon the pyramid mausoleum of Caius Cestius, in Rome.²⁵⁴

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ *Kentish Advertiser*, 13 August, 1844. Evidence of Emma Gardener: “I remember they left the house shortly after their arrival, and then returned and had some refreshment; they left again about half past six; when they left I believe they went in the direction of the park;”

²⁵⁴ <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/kent/cobham-wood-and-mausoleum/the-history-of-cobham-wood-and-mausoleum>: “Lord Darnley’s ideas for his mausoleum were possibly inspired by the Roman remains, including the monumental pyramid mausoleum of Cestius, he saw on his grand tour.” Accessed: 2024.



THE MAUSOLEUM, COBHAM PARK.

This octangular building was erected in 1731 at enormous cost by John, 3rd Earl of Darnley. It is close to the public footpath, about halfway between Cobham and Rochester, and resembles a Greek temple with a pyramid at top. Notwithstanding its classical architecture and upholstered chapel within, this remarkable structure has never been consecrated, and although a hermit is rumoured to abide therein—indeed Lord Darnley has often received applications for the post—the building remains empty.

Fig.11: Early postcard of the Darnley Mausoleum, Cobham, Kent (Author's own).

The Darnley Monument may be a significant part of the reason Dadd did not decide to murder his father in London, instead choosing to travel by steamboat and gig to a location closer to the south coast to carry out his plan. However, Dadd did not kill his father beside the pyramid topped Monument, so the question arises – why not? Perhaps Dadd was unable to surprise or overpower his father beside the Monument during their first walk together. This adds further strength to my argument that Dadd did not punch his father later in the evening to bring him to the ground. If Dadd could have felled his father with a punch then the remote location of the Monument within the deserted grounds of the Park, in the early evening, would have been the obvious choice. Instead, evidence provided at the Inquest by John Adams states that sometime between seven and eight pm, the Dadds' returned to the Inn. Robert Dadd Snr ordered further refreshments, including a pint of porter for himself. He did not order any alcohol for his son.

Towards dusk, at approximately eight thirty pm, John Adams overheard Richard Dadd asking his father to head out for another walk. His father demurred, saying he was very tired. Richard Dadd then left the parlour for approximately fifteen minutes whilst Adams cleared the table, chatted to Robert Dadd Snr and provided him with his second alcoholic drink, a glass of whiskey and water.²⁵⁵ It is not certain what Richard Dadd did during his fifteen-minute absence, but Greysmith suggests he had been to the bar to ask the landlord's wife, Emma Gardener, for a glass of water.²⁵⁶ Emma "thought that he spoke in a very abrupt manner, 'not in the way in which gentlemen usually speak'."²⁵⁷ This noted change in demeanour would seem logical if Dadd was becoming anxious that he had missed his opportunity and would not be able to execute his murderous plan. At approximately eight-forty-five pm, Richard Dadd returned to the parlour and again asked his father if they might go for another walk. John Adams left the parlour and this is the

²⁵⁵ Dreadful Murder at Cobham Park, *London Evening Standard*, 1 September, 1843. Evidence of John Adams: "They returned to the house between seven and eight o'clock, when the deceased told me to bring his son a biscuit and some cheese, which I brought in, and then the deceased ordered me to bring him some broiled ham and a pint of porter. When I again entered the room, the son of the deceased got up and said to his father, "Will you go for a walk?" It was then about half-past eight o'clock. The father replied that he was tired and, had had walking enough and the son left the room," and the deceased told me to clear the table. He ordered a glass of whiskey and water, and we entered into general conversation, but no allusion was made to the son, who came again into the room, about a quarter to nine o'clock. I then left the room,"

²⁵⁶ Note that Dadd apparently did not ask for alcohol which would have dulled his senses and reaction speed.

²⁵⁷ Greysmith, 57.

last time he saw either of the two men, until he identified Robert Dadd Snr's body the following day.²⁵⁸

Soon after John Adams left the parlour Richard Dadd prevailed upon his father to go out for the all-important second walk because, when Adams returned to the parlour at around nine-thirty pm, he found the two men had disappeared and he asked Emma Gardener where they were. She told him that, shortly before, she had seen them go out together walking in the direction of the Park. Although it is known that Dadd murdered his father, it is this piece of evidence which clarifies that Richard Dadd was likely to be the last person to see Robert Snr alive, and it is this evidence which would make him the prime suspect in any murder enquiry, even today.²⁵⁹

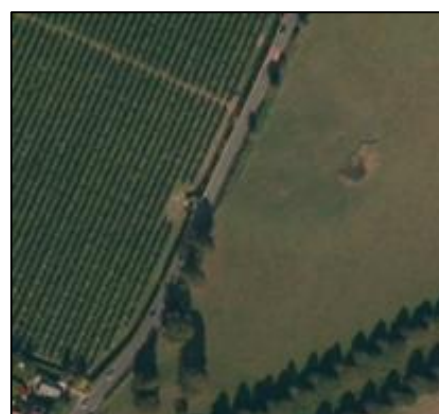
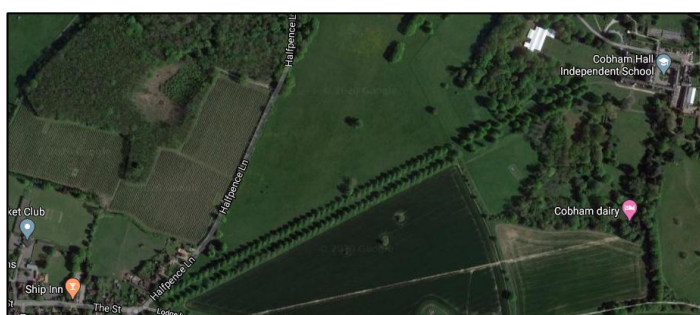


Fig.12 & 12a: Satellite image of the south western corner of Cobham Park showing the now 'backfilled' Paddock Hole as a darker green patch to the right of the now widened road (Halfpence Lane). The orange marker denotes the Ship Inn, Cobham. Google Maps (Accessed 2022).

²⁵⁸ Dreadful Murder at Cobham Park, *London Evening Standard*, 1 September, 1843. "about half past nine o'clock. I again entered the room of my own accord and, found the deceased and his son had left. On inquiry, I learned they had gone out together."

²⁵⁹ <https://www.college.police.uk/app/major-investigation-and-public-protection/missing-persons/missing-person-investigations>.



(Left) Fig.13: The view up Halfpence Lane towards Paddock Hole (the entrance to the Richard Dadd Path shows as a gap in the hedge on the right).

(Right) Fig.14: Entrance to the Halfpence Lane footpath, now known as the 'Richard Dadd Path'.
(Both photographs author's own.)

To meet the timeframe for Richard Dadd's getaway, as outlined in earlier evidence to the Magistrates Court by staff from the Crown Inn, Rochester, there is only one route which
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the two men could have taken from the Ship Inn. They turned left out of the Inn and after a few hundred yards, turned left again on to the Halfpence Lane footpath. At the time of the murder, Halfpence Lane was a single track. Today it is a 'B' road, having been widened in 1964.²⁶⁰ The two men walked the short distance to the chalk pit known as Paddock Hole. Allderidge advises that this chalk pit was extremely familiar to them both as Robert Dadd Snr was a keen fossil hunter and Richard Dadd also knew the area well, having sketched in and around Cobham Park many times before the family moved from Chatham to London.²⁶¹

The Halfpence Lane footpath ran external to Cobham Park, parallel to the road from Cobham to Shorne. This public footpath still exists today and can be seen on the above images, although it is now closer to the hedge-line due to road widening. The Park land and Hall have since been sold off, becoming a private girls' school and the grounds are fenced off. In 1843, it was still possible to enter the Park, by Paddock Hole, via a stile. It was at this location that the murder took place.



Fig.15: Detail from 'Scene of the Murder, Cobham Park' - Kentish Independent, 9 September 1843. Victoria and Albert Museum.

²⁶⁰ *The Evening Standard*, 30. July 1964, reported that Paddock Hole, (known as Dadd's Hole) was being filled in during road widening operations.

²⁶¹ Allderidge, 11: "a favourite haunt was Lord Darnley's estate of Cobham Park, about five miles west of Rochester."

On the evening of the walk, the weather was dry, albeit slightly colder than average, and a new moon provided light in a clear and cloudless sky. The balmy summer's evening was most likely enjoyed by the sartorially elegant Robert Snr with his outer coat unbuttoned.²⁶²

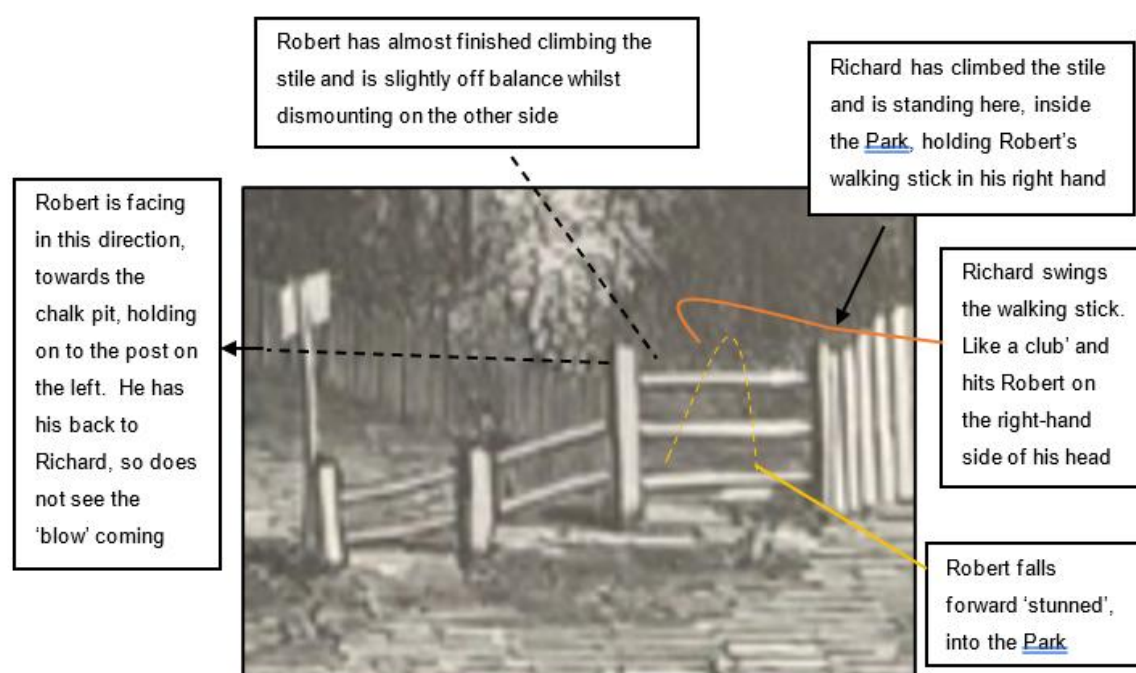


Fig.16: Detail from Fig.15 – Mock-up of my theory of what happened at the stile beside the 'Scene of the Murder'.

Once the two men reached the stile and decided to enter the Park, the evidence collected at the scene by Constable Dawes suggests that Richard Dadd may have climbed over the stile first. His father, who it must be remembered was tired and had enjoyed a couple of alcoholic drinks, probably handed his walking stick to his son to enable an easier empty-handed climb over the stile. A walking stick was not only a sartorial statement for a gentleman in Victorian times, it could also be used as a weapon of self-defence and was generally quite robust. I suggest that, as Robert Snr climbed down from the stile, Richard Dadd seized his opportunity and swung the walking stick like a club, hitting his father hard

²⁶² Tromans, *The Artist*, 61: "Robert's coat was fully buttoned up but had not been cut by the knife." Therefore, the coat must have been unbuttoned at the time of the attack – see 'A New Theory on the Murder'.

on the right-hand-side of his head. This would have caused the severe bruising noted in the post-mortem and stunned his unsuspecting father. It would also be a much more reliable way of bringing his father to the ground than punching him. In the act of climbing down from the stile Robert Snr would have been off-balance and having been struck he would have fallen forwards into the Park. His hat would fall off, his body would follow, and he may have landed on the hat, bending it double as described in later evidence. It would also seem most likely that it was during such a fall that Robert Snr's forehead, lips and chin became bruised (again noted in the postmortem).

Since both the hat and the walking stick were found inside the park by the stile, Richard Dadd may have simply dropped the walking stick once it had served its purpose. Once Robert Dadd Snr had fallen, Richard Dadd's most straightforward homicide action would have been to club his father to death with the walking stick but instead, showing 'malice aforethought', Dadd used the weapons he had brought with him expressly to commit the murder. This proposes that the use of the walking stick as a club was possibly the only part of the whole murder process which was improvised on the night.

For that reason, it may also be why Dadd chose to portray his most identifiable image of murder, as Cain leaning over Abel with a club (see Fig.17). In opposition to Patricia Allderidge, who has claimed that in depicting murder, most particularly in Richard Dadd's painting, *Sketch to Illustrate the Passions. Murder* (1854), Dadd "did not seize every passing pretext to re-enact the scene"²⁶³, conversely, I would argue that in this painting Dadd was addressing his own act of murder. Dadd's depiction of murder shows a biblical Cain clutching a large club in his right hand, poised above the fallen body of Abel who clearly shows extensive bruising to the right side of his temple.

²⁶³ Allderidge, 103.
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Fig.17: Richard Dadd, 1854, *Sketch to Illustrate the Passions. Murder*, 36.2 x 26.0 cm, Board of Governors of The Bethlem Royal Hospital and The Maudsley Hospital.



(Left) Fig.1: A right-handed Richard Dadd photographed at his easel in Bethlem, c.1857.
 (Right) Fig.17a: Detail from Fig. 17.

The image of Cain (Fig.17a. above) bears a strong resemblance to Henry Hering's photograph of Dadd at Bethlem; having to all intents and purposes the appearance of a self-portrait, and the club is held in the right hand. Dadd was right-handed, as shown in the most famous photograph of him at his easel in Bethlem Hospital (painting *Contradiction. Oberon and Titania*, in 1857). In addition, in *Murder*, the image of the fallen Abel shows a man with grey hair, suggesting that he is older than his assailant and yet the bible story tells us that Abel was younger than Cain. Most tellingly of all, the painting shows bruising to the right side of the victim's head, just as Robert Dadd Snr sustained in the attack (see Fig.17). Moreover, in selecting this imagery it is possible that Dadd may also have been referencing the commonality of fratricidal murder in mythical tales, such as that of Remus by Romulus in Rome, and the murder of the Egyptian god Osiris by his brother Set. Lastly, I suggest the biblical image also enabled Dadd to make use of a painterly satirical pun: 'Walking Cane and Able'.

To return to the scene of the murder and with his father now vulnerable on the ground, stunned and possibly semi-conscious, Richard Dadd could attack with his cut-throat razor.

The small wounds to Robert Snr's neck were not enough to kill him and suggest Dadd may have found cutting his father's throat a more difficult challenge than he imagined. A razor is best described as a slashing tool, and as a weapon it is surprisingly flimsy.²⁶⁴ If Robert Snr was semi-conscious, his instinctive reaction when he felt his son trying to cut his throat would be to bring his hands up to defend himself. This correlates with the defensive injury noted in the postmortem as a small puncture wound to his right thumb. His father's struggles would have made the task of slashing Robert Snr's neck more difficult and in addition, would have transferred blood from the victim to the attacker. At some point it must have been clear that the razor was not going to kill his father and Dadd may have chosen to throw the razor aside. It is likely he threw it towards the chalk pit, perhaps believing it would land in the pit, where he may also have intended to dispose of the body, perhaps delaying its discovery. It did not, landing instead on the grass beside the pit at the highest point.

Richard Dadd next resorted to his second pre-planned weapon, the rigger's knife. Once fully open and locked this would have made a much more rigid weapon. Dadd stabbed his father between the second and third ribs, on the left side, to a depth of four inches. This suggests that as a right-handed man Richard Dadd was most likely, at this point, poised over the top of the body (as seen in his painting of *Murder*). This would have given him the power and momentum to plunge the knife into his father's chest right up to the hilt. As he began to withdraw the knife, he either chose to push it back in (for theatrical reasons as suggested in chapter three) or, possibly, his hand slipped: Richard Dadd's hands and the handle of the knife would have been covered in blood and therefore slippery. As the knife went back in, it twisted, causing a second internal puncture wound. As the knife had not been fully withdrawn, there was only one external entry/exit point as noted in the postmortem. Robert Dadd Snr would now have been mortally wounded and his son threw the knife aside.

For their visit to Cobham, Robert Snr was wearing the fashion of the day with a coat and cravat neck-tie. The collar of the coat sustained a small cut from the razor but had no

²⁶⁴ I am grateful to retired Detective Constable Martin Parry for this understanding.
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holes from a stab wound, so it must have been unbuttoned at the time of the attack. It also implies that Robert Snr must have been lying on his back when he was stabbed, so the coat could fall back and away from the body, rather than forward and into the path of the knife. Since his father's body was found with the coat buttoned up, at some point after the stabbing, Richard Dadd must have buttoned up his father's coat. I suggest he probably did this immediately after the stabbing given there is no mention, in the evidence, of blood staining on the grass by the stile. The coat would have contained most of the blood inside its folds.

This issue of why Dadd tidied up his father's body by buttoning the coat, is perhaps explained by a lack of prior knowledge of how difficult it is to move a body or 'dead-weight'. If Richard Dadd initially took hold of his father's coat collar to drag the body over towards the chalk pit, the coat would have pulled upwards unless it was buttoned. However, Dadd would have found this method of moving the body very difficult, with friction resistance between the body and the ground. At this point, he may instead have taken hold of his father's wrists and dragged Robert Snr towards the chalk pit.²⁶⁵ This far more effective method of moving the body would also explain the bruising to Robert Snr's wrists as mentioned in the postmortem evidence.

It is improbable that bruising to the wrists could have been caused during a tussle, as Richard Dadd would have struggled to hold both of his father's wrists out of the way with one hand whilst attacking him with a weapon in the other. It is also the reason why it is doubtful that Robert Snr was killed after being dragged to the edge of the chalk pit, as he was found with both his hands above his head. If he was dragged before being attacked, his right hand at least would not have been above his head because it sustained defence injuries during the attempt to cut his throat. Therefore, the hand must have been lowered at this point in proceedings and would not have been stretched above the head. If the body had already been dragged, there would be no logical reason for Richard Dadd to stretch the arm back up above the head after the murder. In addition, if the coat was used in an attempt to drag the body, before Dadd attempted to cut his father's throat,

²⁶⁵ I am grateful to retired Detective Constable Martin Parry who suggested this manner of moving a body is taught, during police training, as the quickest method of removing an injured colleague from danger.

the coat would have been buttoned up prior to the later stabbing unless, implausibly, Dadd had undone it again before stabbing his father. It would also have been 'in the way' for the attack with the razor as it was pulled up around the neck area, meaning Dadd would have needed to pull the coat collar back down to reveal the neck. None of these propositions are reasonably feasible and they do not fit with contemporaneous evidence from the scene.



Fig.18: Richard Dadd, 1853, *Sketch of the Passions. Hatred*, 31.1 x 25.7 cm, Board of Governors of The Bethlem Royal Hospital and The Maudsley Hospital.

Therefore, it is interesting that in his painting *Hatred*, Dadd not only represented the murder of Henry VI by Richard Duke of Gloucester from the last act of Shakespeare's play Henry VI, part III but also, as Alderidge has noted: "this clearly represents a scene very

like the killing in which Dadd himself had been involved.”²⁶⁶ Alderidge goes on to say that “The Duke is almost certainly a physical self-portrait,”²⁶⁷ and “it is more than coincidence that his name should be Richard.”²⁶⁸ I agree with Alderidge’s interpretation, but what Alderidge does not mention is that Richard also illustrates the effect of his father’s dishevelled clothing in this painting. The collar of Henry VI is pulled up as if the body had been dragged by the method described above. Interestingly, Richard Dadd drew a slain body in his notebook,²⁶⁹ when sketching the bas-relief friezes at Bodrum (see chapter one), so this may be part of his remembered portrayal in the later painting, although in his notebook the body faces towards the viewer.



Fig.19: Richard Dadd, 1842, *Sketch number 092-1534 of Bodrum*, Victoria and Albert Museum.

If Robert Dadd Snr did cry out at any point during the attack, nobody heard him do so. Certainly, as both men were likely on the ground, they would have been less visible in the early evening dusk despite the light of a new moon.

²⁶⁶ Alderidge, 88.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 90.

²⁶⁹ Held at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Having pulled his father towards the ravine drop at the side of Paddock Hole, Dadd must have let go of Robert Snr's wrists. The attack and dragging of the body may also help to explain the heel indentations and scuff marks noted at the scene. Dadd possibly pushed his father towards the drop and the body may have rolled over, face downwards with his arms still above his head from being dragged. Dadd Snr was certainly no longer capable of offering any resistance. Whether Dadd had intended the body to roll into the chalk pit we cannot know. Yet, it did not roll in and unbeknown to Richard Dadd, he had inadvertently landed the body on top of the discarded razor - as found when the body was moved the following day. I would add that the location of the body was also at the highest point above the chalk pit and suggests Robert Snr's body being offered in some form of sacrificial manner, possibly in keeping with Dadd's later comments to his doctor in Broadmoor about raising his arm to Osiris after the assault.²⁷⁰

After the murder Dadd's quickest, and least likely to be seen escape route, would not have been to make his way down Halfpence Lane, but rather to have moved at pace and on foot through Cobham Park in a straight line towards Rochester. This might also help to explain his dishevelled and torn clothing as noted by later witnesses in Dover.²⁷¹ The distance from Cobham Park to Rochester is just under five miles 'as the crow flies'. Richard Dadd had just under an hour to make the journey. However, precisely because he was not seen, Dadd's actual route remains conjecture (see Fig.9).

What is known is that he arrived at The Crown, in Rochester at around ten pm, ordered a chaise to Sittingbourne, went upstairs, washed the blood from his hands, took the towel which he saw had blood upon it, and returned downstairs to enter the chaise at approximately ten-thirty pm.²⁷² He was dishevelled and so attracted some notice from

²⁷⁰ Tromans, *The Artist*, 61: "When his father fell, Dadd (posing himself with upstretched arm), thus apostrophised the starry bodies 'Go,' said he 'and tell the great god Osiris that I have done the deed which is to set him free'." From Broadmoor case notes, BA D2/1/3/1 (14 May 1877).

²⁷¹ Greysmith, 59.

²⁷² *Kentish Advertiser*, 13 August, 1844. Evidence of Charles Overy, Postilion at The Crown Inn, Rochester.

the landlord but under cover of darkness and poor candlelight, any blood on his clothes was not noticed. Dadd threw the towel from the chaise on the journey to Sittingbourne.

At four-fifteen the following morning, Dadd arrived in Dover. His clothes were torn and disordered, and he explained to people who remarked on his appearance that he had fallen from a coach. He had a large sum of money with him. At Dover he hired an open boat to take him across to Calais. When he landed in France, he was stopped and taken to the Customs Office where he explained again that he had an accident. His passport was in order, so he was allowed to continue his journey. At Calais he purchased a new suit and abandoned his soiled clothes at a local inn. Soon after his departure, they were discovered “saturated with blood”.²⁷³

Richard Dadd next took the train towards Paris and then a diligence towards Marseille. It was in this vehicle that he attacked another passenger with a cut-throat razor, was overpowered, captured and taken to Clermont Asylum, where he remained until his extradition to Britain in the summer of 1844.²⁷⁴ Dadd’s journey however, makes his next intention clear. In the 1840s and 1850s it was possible to catch an English steam ship from the port of Marseille to Genoa in Italy. From Genoa, the usual mode of transport was a carriage ride enroute to Pisa, then onwards to Florence. The Austrian nobleman who ruled Tuscany in 1843, Leopold II, Grand Duke of Tuscany, resided in the Palazzo Pitti, Florence. If, as I propose, Richard Dadd intended Leopold II as his Austrian target from his list of ‘people who must die’, then heading for the Port of Marseille, would be a logical explanation for his choice of escape route. This route from England to Florence was perhaps made most famous by Elizabeth and Robert Browning, who took this exact route on their escape from Elizabeth’s oppressive father, following their secret marriage in 1845.

²⁷³ Greysmith, 59 – “While at Calais he purchased a new suit: ‘The money he had with him is believed to be his own as it is known that he recently realised a considerable sum by the exercise of his talents as an artist.’ He abandoned the clothes in which he had arrived at the inn at Calais, but soon after his departure they were discovered saturated with blood.”

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 59-62.

Meanwhile, during the morning after the murder, Richard Dadd's brother Robert Dadd Jnr arrived in Cobham and, on beholding the "lifeless corpse of his parent. He suddenly burst into a paroxysm of grief. 'Richard has done this; he has murdered him, and I shall never see him again'."²⁷⁵ Although Dadd's family realised immediately that Dadd had murdered his biological father, Richard Dadd himself disputed that Robert Snr was his father, instead suggesting he was an envoy of the devil.²⁷⁶

To conclude, this chapter has reconsidered and re-evaluated evidence relating to Richard Dadd's act of patricide in August 1843. The aim of the chapter was to investigate whether fragments of evidence from witnesses to the case, deposed during the various hearings, had been overlooked by previous researchers. If so, this was of import because my research proposes that Richard Dadd was exploring his own lived experience in his later artistic production at Bethlem. I suggest the evidence supports my hypothesis that Dadd was pictorially commenting upon his own life experiences and that Dadd did return to some elements of the murder within his subsequent artwork. In addition, it is worth mentioning again here the key themes which are repeatedly portrayed within Dadd's art and which will be explored in the next chapter. They relate to murder, alcohol and violence, the control of money, doomed or forbidden love, jealousy and reckless behaviour. So many recurrent references to these themes is unlikely to be a coincidence and indicates Dadd's complex interconnected reflection on what happened, the surrounding circumstances, and how he ultimately ended up at Bethlem.

²⁷⁵ Greysmith, 59.

²⁷⁶ Tromans, *The Artist*, 195.

CHAPTER 3 – ART

“a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma, but perhaps there is a key.”²⁷⁷

The purpose of my first two chapters was to re-examine disputed facts for comparison in this chapter to Dadd’s creative output once incarcerated. Therefore, this chapter will include analysis of whether Dadd was working through his own intentionalist production or was instead creating artwork that reflected the moral therapy treatments of others. My hypothesis directly contravenes earlier hypotheses because I argue that Dadd was creatively exploring his own life story and humanistic ideas, via the use of allegory and satire, rather than producing morality tales at the behest of the medical personnel surrounding him as Allderidge suggests. Therefore, to my mind, Dadd’s technique of presenting his characters with some degree of historical truthfulness adds to the viewer’s sense of being drawn into Dadd’s material authenticity.²⁷⁸ Yet, because Dadd, at times, worked with a reliance on emblematic representation, quite literally depicting scenes from the Bible or Shakespeare, it is this facet of Victorian popular culture which may have led to Dadd’s multi-layered presentation giving rise to interpretations of interpretations.²⁷⁹

It is for this reason that any study of Richard Dadd’s artwork requires not only a comprehension of his past but also an identification with his thought processes. To get as close as possible to a sense of Dadd’s complex ideas for his sketches, I maintain it is necessary to metaphorically ‘put on his shoes and walk about in them for a bit’.²⁸⁰ Whilst it is not possible to ever realise another person’s mind fully, it is important to not only question and analyse what Dadd fashioned, and how Dadd may have come to that

²⁷⁷ Winston Churchill. October 1939. Radio Speech:

<https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/anniversaries/october/winston-churchills-first-wartime-broadcast>

²⁷⁸ Idea borrowed from Stuart Sillars, *The Illustrated Shakespeare, 1709-1875*, (New York 2008), 259.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 25.

²⁸⁰ Idea from Harper Lee’s, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, (Philadelphia 1960), 35: when Atticus Finch explains to Scout, “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view [...] until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.”

consideration but also fundamentally, why Dadd chose to explore the themes within his creations in the way he did. To achieve an understanding for this model or 'bottom up' approach, it is helpful to turn to Dadd's case notes from his incarceration at Broadmoor. Dadd left Bethlem and was admitted to what was then known as Broadmoor Criminal Lunatic Asylum on 23 July 1864, where he remained until his death on the 8 January 1886.²⁸¹ During this period, Broadmoor staff maintained regular notes on Dadd's physical and mental health and conversation.²⁸² On 7 November 1864, Dadd's case notes reveal he was "unable to converse for long without introducing fanciful ideas connected with spiritual agency and in explaining his idea he becomes much excited".²⁸³ On 26 January 1871, his "delusions very prominent and curious – a sort of insane connection of ideas",²⁸⁴ and on 30 June 1872 they report that "Although very quiet usually when he begins to talk will go on from one idea to another in an insane and incoherent manner."²⁸⁵ This complex pattern of connecting ideas in a way that Broadmoor staff considered 'rambling and incoherent'²⁸⁶ continued throughout Dadd's life.²⁸⁷ Therefore, with an awareness that Richard Dadd formed complicated mind-map connections between ideas, sometimes circling back on earlier concepts to produce his art, this chapter will re-appraise this idea, through close study of several paintings produced by Dadd during his incarceration at the State Criminal Lunatic Department of Bethlem Hospital between 22 August 1844 and 23 July 1864.

Dadd, it should be noted, was a classically educated man of his era.²⁸⁸ His grammar school and subsequent Royal Academy education would have covered Greek and Roman poetry and philosophy, religious understanding, the history of art, and study of the

²⁸¹ Tromans, *The Artist*, 196.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 195-6. Conversely, at Bethlem, following one extended entry on 21st March 1854, (over a year after Dr William Charles Hood's tenure at Bethlem began), his case notes on Richard Dadd thereafter, show roughly monthly entries of "No Change" until 1860, when one further note was added, which is surprising given Allderidge's claims to a 'close' relationship between Hood and Dadd's 'Passion series' production, as reviewed later in this thesis.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 196.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 198.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 4 October 1873.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, For example: 20 December 1876 - "Talks in a mysterious way about the myths of a past age." And 5 April 1878 - "wandering & disjointed in his conversation. [...] Occupies himself reading the classics & painting."

²⁸⁸ Allderidge, 10-11.

greatest renaissance masters (as encouraged by Sir Joshua Reynolds in his *Discourses*).²⁸⁹ This was supplemented by Dadd's own imaginative exploration of literary ideas within the home environment,²⁹⁰ and all was set against a backdrop of new scientific discoveries which were beginning to advocate alternative theories to those proposed in religious teachings. Richard Dadd's father, Robert Snr (formerly an apothecary), was a member of the Geological Society, and the family were early customers of photographic portraiture, several of which were taken before 1842. A little-known daguerreotype of Richard Dadd, posed shortly before his episode of mania and perhaps before he set sail for his travels with Sir Thomas Phillips, shows a darkly brooding, somewhat Byronic image, in stark contrast to the better-known photograph of a bearded and more dishevelled Dadd taken at his easel,²⁹¹ after thirteen years of incarceration within Bethlem.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 13.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 11.

²⁹¹ See Fig.1.



Fig.20: Daguerreotype of Richard Dadd – unknown photographer. c.1840s. 5.3cm x 4.1cm. Victoria and Albert Museum. Accessed 1/4/24.
<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1403545/richard-dadd-photograph/?carousel-image=2017KA9009>

With Richard Dadd's early years in mind, it is pertinent to begin the process of focusing upon his artistic exploration of his life events leading up to and including murder, starting with the modus operandi of a modern-day case of homicide, where detectives consider various lines of enquiry surrounding the act and attempt to understand the attacker's motivation.²⁹² Given that 180 years have passed since Richard Dadd murdered his father, it is not possible to revisit the scene as it was in 1843, to re-interview witnesses, or re-examine the murder weapons. Nonetheless, as shown in earlier chapters, it is possible to re-examine evidence presented and recorded at the time. It is also possible to undertake

²⁹² *Murder Investigation Manual* (Produced on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers by the National Centre for Policing Excellence 2006), 59. [murder-investigation-manual-redacted.pdf](https://www.college.police.uk/murder-investigation-manual-redacted.pdf)
([college.police.uk](https://www.college.police.uk))

close study of Dadd's artworks to see if any clues to motive or murderous actions are able to be unpicked and interpreted from within the scenes depicted. It is my estimation that within his 'Sketch series', Richard Dadd has provided us with multiple clues to potential conflicts within the Dadd family as he remembered them. These include rivalries amongst the siblings, and a heavy reliance upon alcohol particularly within the male line. This, together with a potential conflict between religious conformity and societal pressures most especially during Dadd's early years, may have led to incidents of domestic violence, witnessed by Richard Dadd and other family members.²⁹³

²⁹³ For further reading on drink and domestic violence in the Victorian period see: Huggins, 59-67.



Fig.21: Richard Dadd. 1854. *Sketch to Illustrate the Passions. Brutality*. 36.2 x 25.4 cm. Board of Governors of The Bethlem Hospital and The Maudsley Hospital.

A good example of Dadd's representation of domestic violence is Dadd's watercolour *Sketch to Illustrate the Passions. Brutality*. Patricia Alderidge has proposed *Brutality* is set in a fisherman's cottage, on a Sunday, within a picturesque part of the port of Chatham, such as Dadd may have remembered from his childhood.²⁹⁴ Alderidge carefully identifies items within the scene which have been reproduced from a painting created sixteen years prior, and to which Dadd no longer had access within Bethlem:

"Amongst the objects on the shelves in the top left corner are some which Dadd had painted in a still-life study in 1838 (No.22); the key and phial hanging from nails, the knife, now reversed and with its handle protruding instead of the blade, and a blue and white jug just visible on the top shelf which is, perhaps, an amalgam of the jug and jar in the earlier picture."²⁹⁵

Perhaps because the two companion pictures were in private ownership, what Alderidge does not identify is that the companion painting to No.22 was No.23, *Still Life with Bottles and Corkscrew* (1838). Nor does she advise that Dadd's two central characters appear to be representations of his paternal grandfather Stephen Snr (c.1757-1835), and his paternal grandmother, Rebecca Sarah Dadd, née Spraslin (c.1767-1822).²⁹⁶ Their images can be found in a painting of the family by Boyden (1817), which is still held in the sitter's family archives.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁴ Alderidge, 94.

²⁹⁵ Ibid. For Alderidge's reference to Catalogue Raisonné No. 22 *Still-Life with Knife and Jar*, and its companion piece No.23 *Still-Life with Bottles and Corkscrew* – which she does not mention – see 50-51, both from 1838, and both privately owned. Alderidge notes Dadd's inspiration for the knife may have been Albrecht Dürer's *Melancholia I*. What Alderidge does not mention is that early impressions of Dürer's famous print contained an error in the numbers portrayed in the magic square on the wall – significantly, the number 9 was reversed.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 150. Family tree.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 142. Catalogue Raisonné No.239. Alderidge identifies that Stephen Snr and Rebecca were living in Plymouth, where Stephen worked from Richard Dadd's birth in 1817 until Rebecca's death in January 1822.



Fig.22: Boydell, 1817, *Stephen and Rebecca Dadd and their Sons*, private collection, by descent in the sitter's family.²⁹⁸

In Boydell's portrait, Rebecca is seated far left with her youngest son standing beside her, and Stephen Snr is seated to the far right with his eldest son and heir (a Naval surgeon)²⁹⁹ seated in front of him. Robert Snr, the middle son (Richard Dadd's father) sits in the centre. In Boydell's representation, the gaze of each sitter is directed towards the eldest son who appears to be reading to the group but, unfortunately, this son would soon be deceased, dying in the following year.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁸ Image is reproduced from Allderidge, 142.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

Also of import in *Brutality* is the boy who is attempting to stop the assault and is dressed in a sailor suit,³⁰¹ suggesting the scene has a connection to the Naval dockyard rather than to the fishing community. This boy, whose size indicates he is older than the young boy in the doorway, also bears a resemblance to a later portrait of Richard Dadd's older brother Stephen (see Fig.23 where Stephen appears lower right).³⁰²



Fig.23: Richard Dadd, 1838, *Family Portraits*, private collection.

The upturned nose, projecting upper lip, strong jawline and prominent chin are all represented in both images. The smaller boy in the doorway of *Brutality* may be a representation of Richard Dadd himself, looking up towards the female beside him, perhaps expecting another adult to intervene, whilst her posture shows her looking away from a situation she had witnessed before and felt powerless to stop. All the characters are wearing workaday dress which, to me, suggests the action is not taking place on a

³⁰¹ Sailor suits for boys became fashionable following the 1846 portrait by Franz Xaver Winterhalter of four year old Prince Albert Edward wearing one Queen Victoria had commissioned. Sailor suits for girls did not become popularised until the 1870's. <https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/topics/origins-nautical-fashion-britain#:~:text=Queen%20Victoria%20sets%20a%20fashion,of%20status%20in%20British%20society.>

³⁰² Allderidge, 50. Catalogue Raisonné No.20. *Family Portraits*, 1838.

Sunday (despite the Bible). A passing hawker with a basket of fish upon his head looks in through the doorway and appears to be the only person unmoved by the horror of events unfolding before him. It may be the inclusion of this character which led Allderidge to identify the scene as a 'fisherman's cottage'; however, the brutal male is not dressed in nineteenth-century fishermen's attire. His headwear is instead representative of that of a forge worker with a long neck cover to protect the nape from sparks. The forge would have been a location in the Plymouth Naval dockyard with which Stephen Snr would have been very familiar.³⁰³ As David Greysmith has pointed out, there is a mixture of Hogarthian allegory and realism within the painting which suggests it is hard to believe Dadd had not actually witnessed such a scene as a boy.³⁰⁴ Whilst both Allderidge and Greysmith propose Chatham as a location for the scene,³⁰⁵ I suggest a more likely scenario is Plymouth (as Rebecca Sarah died in Plymouth - see Note. 297).³⁰⁶ If Richard Dadd had witnessed an act of domestic violence during a summer holiday to visit family, perpetrated by his grandfather upon his grandmother shortly before her death in 1822, this may have been one of Dadd's earliest and most shocking memories tied into the loss of his grandmother, as he would have been around four or five years of age at the time. In addition, given that Stephen Snr and Rebecca's eldest son had died in 1818, it would not be an impossible proposition that each dealt with their own private grief in different ways. Speculatively, Rebecca may have turned to religion and the temperance movement as suggested by the symbolic dropped Bible at the foot of the abused woman. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Stephen Snr may equally have found solace in drink, especially as he worked in a particularly stressful, masculine, and patriarchal environment at the military dockyard.³⁰⁷ The savage cruelty depicted in the image is only enhanced by the man's clenched fists, and arm raised like a club, to rain down blows upon his victim. For comparison, in the imagery of Fig.24 (below) we see the same forge workers headwear as that depicted on the central protagonist in Dadd's painting of *Brutality*.

³⁰³ Ibid., 9.

³⁰⁴ Greysmith, 83: "The Hogarthian scenes in *Brutality* and *Drunkenness* are so convincing that it is hard to believe that he had not actually witnessed them, perhaps as a boy in Chatham."

³⁰⁵ Ibid.; Allderidge, 142.

³⁰⁶ See Fig.22 for Boyden's portrait of Stephen and Rebecca Dadd painted whilst they resided in Plymouth.

³⁰⁷ Allderidge, 9-10.



Fig.24: An original drawing in the style of image No.6 (reversed) from *Fridolin or The Road to the Iron-Foundry*, A Ballad by Friedrich Schiller With A Translation by J.P. Collier, Esq., Author of the Poetical Decamerone, Illustrated with Eight Engravings in Outline, by Henry Moses, From the Designs of Retzsch. London: 1824. 11.75 x 14.92cm. Author's own collection.

Shakespearean Murder

Allderidge has previously drawn attention to Dadd's early interest in the theatre,³⁰⁸ and Shakespeare in particular. I agree Dadd was using Shakespearean themes of love, anger and treachery, together with other allegorical influences possibly from Samuel Hall's *Book of British Ballads* (1842) as metaphors for his own lived experiences.³⁰⁹ Particularly because, although Dadd did not produce paintings within a clearly defined Hogarthian narrative form,³¹⁰ he did often paint two images as companion pieces, which was a

³⁰⁸ Allderidge, 54.

³⁰⁹ See for example: Samuel Hall, 1842. *Book of British Ballads*, 'Robin Goodfellow', with designs by R. Dadd, Vol.I, 85-90, and 'Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne' with designs by J. Franklin, Vol.II, 323-32, and 'The Death and Burial of Robin Hood' with designs by H. Warren, Vol.II, 333-80. Also see Richard Dadd's Bethlem painting *Robin Hood* (1852).

³¹⁰ Such as *'The Rake's Progress'*, 1733-5, by William Hogarth.

common device of the time. Therefore, I next intend to discuss jointly two of Dadd's paintings which could have a close representational connection to aspects of the murder.



(Left) Fig.25: Richard Dadd, 1853, *Sketch of the Murder of Henry VI*, 35.9 x 25.9 cm. The Wellcome Collection.

(Right) Fig.18: Richard Dadd, 1853, *Sketch of the Passions. Hatred*, 31.1 x 25.7 cm. Board of Governors of The Bethlem Royal Hospital and The Maudsley Hospital.

Whilst complex and compound ideas can be conveyed within one image, by using two, Dadd instead suggests joined up story telling around pictorial clues. As a sequential duel between two images, the duality of the art is transformed into something more.³¹¹ Dadd's painting (Fig.25) brings echoes of an image, etched by George Cruikshank, of Edmund Kean acting Richard III (Fig.26).

³¹¹ Scott McCloud; Bob Lappan; Mark Martin, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, (New York 2000), 5. Also see Dunand and Zivie-Coche, 68-70, for explanation of the Egyptian concept of duality and the ouroboros. And 98: "scenes on the walls [of Egyptian temples] correspond to one another in pairs. [...] We must therefore read such scenes together, not separately."

By focusing on the ‘unreal’ within his imagery I would argue that Dadd was able to reveal his own reality, and if his artworks are read in this way then Dadd’s voice, ‘speaking through his art’ may still be heard.³¹³ For example, in Fig.25 Dadd paints a satirically theatrical image of Shakespeare’s Richard III (then Richard, Duke of Gloucester) having murdered his distant cousin King Henry VI,³¹⁴ which is, in essence, a scene where a future King murders the block to his own impending advancement. Of particular import is the text Dadd adds to the top left of the painting:

“Sketch of the Murder of Henry the Sixth
In the Tower by Richard Duke of Gloucester
Afterwards King Richard the Third
Look how my good sword weeps the poor king’s death -
Vide. Shakespeare’s Play by Richard Dadd
Bethlem Hospital 1853”

Line 63, “See how my sword weeps for the poor King’s death.”, from Shakespeare’s play *Henry VI, Part III*, Act V, Scene VI, is staged within the Tower of London. Gloucester and Henry VI begin the scene by speaking of the death of Henry’s son Edward, whom Henry describes in metaphor as Icarus whose wax wings were melted by the Sun in Splendour (Edward IV), before being drowned by Gloucester as “thysself, the sea, Whose envious gulf did swallow up his life.”³¹⁵ After Gloucester has stabbed and killed Henry and immediately before he ensures he is dead by stabbing him for a second time,³¹⁶ Gloucester cries, “Down, down to hell; and say I sent thee thither-“.³¹⁷ In his painting Dadd shows the body lying on its back at Gloucester’s feet, whilst the lethal blade is held aloft in the killer’s right hand and the dead man’s blood drips from it to the floor. Gloucester is placed to the deceased’s left-hand-side, just as Dadd must have been placed at the time of his patricide in order to stab his father, as discussed in the previous chapter. However, in *Hatred*, (Fig.18), Dadd exchanges the caricature of Richard III for a caricature of himself. He remains in a similar attitude and position but, has now turned his back on the body as if

³¹³ Matthew Pustz, *Comic Books and American Cultural History: An Anthology*, (London; New York 2012), 240-6.

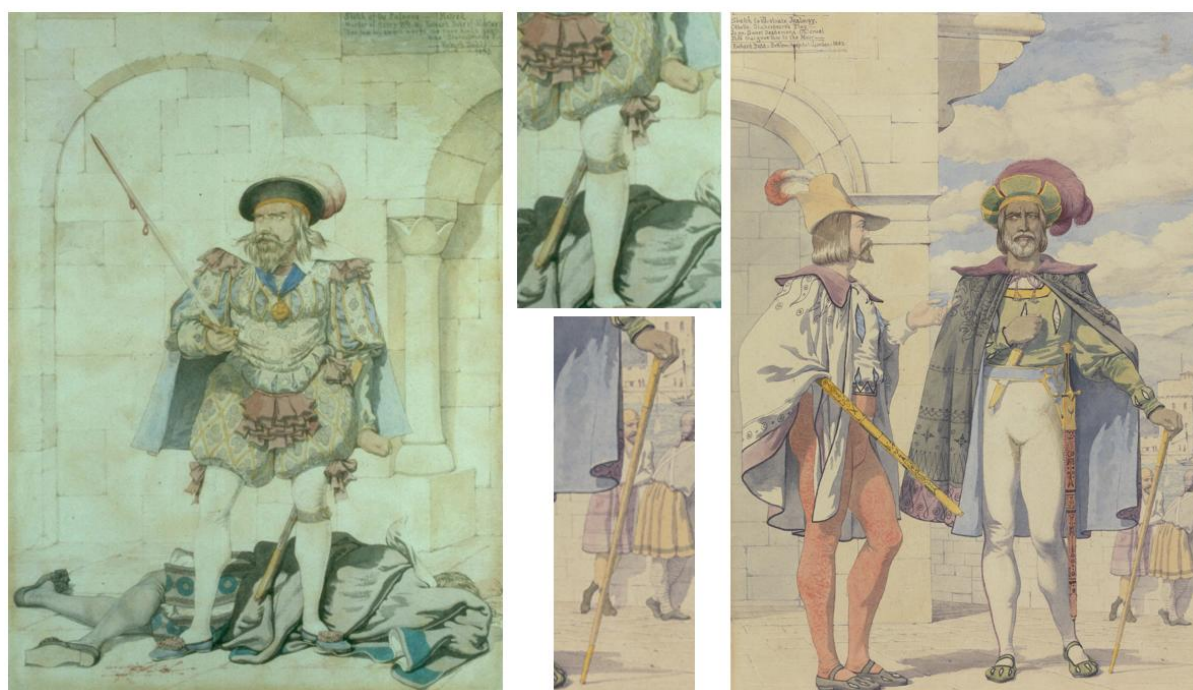
³¹⁴ Alexander text, Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part III*, Act V, Scene VI.

³¹⁵ Ibid., lines 24-25.

³¹⁶ As also described in evidence about Robert Dadd Snr’s body having two internal stab wounds during the inquest.

³¹⁷ Alexander text, Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part III*, Act V, Scene VI, line 67.

denying its relationship to him. The body has been rolled on to its front and the dead man's cape has been pulled up, as if the body had been dragged. In neither image are the dead man's features clearly visible. One interesting point of note is that in *Hatred*, Dadd's left hand is oddly angled as if something is missing. To understand the missing object is a walking cane it is necessary to make a second dual comparison, this time with *Jealousy* also painted in 1853:



(Left) Fig.18: Richard Dadd, 1853, *Sketch of the Passions. Hatred*, 31.1 x 25.7 cm. Board of Governors of The Bethlem Royal Hospital and The Maudsley Hospital.

(Right) Fig.27: Richard Dadd, 1853, *Sketch to Illustrate Jealousy*, 35.0 x 24.1 cm. American Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford, Connecticut.

It is only in the 'gutter' between the two paintings that the connection is able to be made. Whilst both show the hand angled in the same manner, only *Jealousy* rests the hand upon a walking cane. However, Dadd hints at the missing object in *Hatred* by angling Gloucester's scabbard to echo the missing cane, which I propose was crucial in his ability to overcome and murder his father. Although not discussing Dadd's art, McCloud has suggested that comparing two paintings offers the viewer a 'jagged staccato rhythm of unconnected moments',³¹⁸ but the viewer is enabled to connect those moments and mentally join up ideas to construct a 'continuous, unified reality'.³¹⁹ Or as McCloud

³¹⁸ McCloud, 66-67.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

explains, “Here in the limbo of the gutter, human imagination takes two separate images and transforms them into a single idea”.³²⁰ For example, Dadd painted three images around this period, catalogue raisonné numbers 113, 114, and 115, in which the main protagonist is similarly dressed. All are dated 1853, so the catalogue raisonné order may be arbitrary. Therefore, if we adjust the order slightly, we find a pattern of ideas which would not be unrecognisable even for a crime today: No.114, *Sketch for the Passions. Love* (1853); No.113, *Sketch to Illustrate Jealousy* (1853), No.115, *Sketch of the Passions. Hatred* (1853). No.114 shows Romeo climbing down from the balcony of Juliet; No.113 is Iago whispering poisonous words into the ear of Othello; and No.115 is Richard Duke of Gloucester standing over the dead body of King Henry VI. If Shakespeare’s plays provided Dadd with the symbols for portraying events, then Dadd’s paintings could be read like a comic strip, where thwarted love, distorted by jealousy, leads to murder. This idea is further strengthened when considering Dadd’s recent travels to the middle east, and his stated belief in the Egyptian god Osiris, portrayed in hieroglyphs on so many of the temples Dadd had recently visited. Significantly, hieroglyphs are not strictly concerned with showing sequence, but instead “are actually showing two different locations, events and casts(?), grouped only by subject.”.³²¹ This idea was used extensively by Hogarth, whose images, such as *The Rake’s Progress* (1733-5), were designed to be viewed side by side to form a sequence which could be read.³²²

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid., 13.

³²² Ibid., 16.



(Left) Fig.28: Richard Dadd, 1853, *Sketch for the Passions. Love*, 35.6 x 25.4cm, American Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford, Connecticut.

(Centre) Fig.27: Richard Dadd, 1853, *Sketch to Illustrate Jealousy*, 35.0 x 24.1cm, American Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford, Connecticut.

(Right) Fig.18: Richard Dadd, 1853, *Sketch of the Passions. Hatred*, 31.1 x 25.7cm, Board of Governors of The Bethlem Hospital and The Maudsley Hospital.

There is far more which could be gleaned from each painting individually, but for now I wish to point out the potential of the idea that Dadd was telling his own story through imagery and allegory. By doing so, in this way, Dadd could explore his own lived experience in plain sight of the controlling authorities at Bethlem, in a manner which might seem conventional but was instead subversive and hidden. Dadd hints at this with his devilish Pan-like imagery on the left-hand side of the balcony in *Love* and would return to the idea in *The Grotto of Pan* (1856), an artwork which Allderidge describes as “closest to *Murder*” in “style and finish”.³²³

Biblical Murder

Whilst on his travels, in Venice Dadd made a quick sketch, now lost, of Tintoretto’s *The Miracle of St. Mark* (1548). Tintoretto’s painting shows St. Mark saving a slave from torture and he holds aloft a broken weapon, whilst another broken shaft and axe head lie in the foreground. Dadd included just such a broken shaft in his painting *Sketch to Illustrate the Passions. Anger* (1854) and it is this painting I intend to explore next. For that reason, it is necessary to return to imagery relating to a forge, and significantly,

³²³ Allderidge, 107.

featuring a broken weapon. In *Anger*, Allderidge has suggested that Dadd created a more impressionistic sketch, perhaps related in style to that of *Sketch to Illustrate the Passions. Grief or Sorrow*, also created in 1854.³²⁴



Fig.29: Richard Dadd, 1854, *Sketch to Illustrate the Passions. Anger*, 36.2 x 26.0 cm. Board of Governors of The Bethlem Royal Hospital and The Maudsley Hospital.

³²⁴ Ibid., 103.

Although Alderidge states the man with the broken shaft may have broken it in a “paroxysm of anger”, she also specifies that “The narrative content has never been satisfactorily elucidated.”³²⁵ By contrast, Greysmith draws attention to the other smaller forge shown in the upper lefthand corner of the painting, describing it as a “sacrificial fire” with “the remains of some animal”.³²⁶ The painting also appears loosely reminiscent of William Blake’s depiction of *The Simoniac Pope* (1824-7) from Dante Alligheri’s *Commedia, (Inferno)* Canto XIX. I propose Richard Dadd may earlier have been inspired by William Blake’s swirling Dantesque imagery from *The Circle of the Lustful: Francesca de Rimini, ‘The Whirlwind of the Lovers’* (1826-7), in Dadd’s own painting *Titania Sleeping* (c.1841). Significantly, Dante’s *The Simoniac Pope* is a depiction of a corrupt official being punished for buying his way into a position of power.

The man with most power at Bethlem was Dr William Charles Hood and Hood has been portrayed by Alderidge as a man of vision and compassionate outlook who, with the assistance of Bethlem’s new steward George Henry Haydon, turned the fortunes of Bethlem around due to the introduction of moral therapy.³²⁷ Notwithstanding Alderidge’s depiction, also of interest is a recent revelation by Sarah Wise in chapter seven of her book *Inconvenient People: Lunacy, Liberty and the Mad-Doctors in Victorian England*,³²⁸ which suggests Hood was a man of ambition who was ruthless in his desire to promote himself (and Bethlem) to his own advantage. Wise details the phenomenon of ‘malicious incarceration’ and Dr Hood’s involvement in the scandalous persecution of Rosina Bulwer-Lytton.³²⁹ The incident came about because Charles Dickens’ long-term friend and collaborator, and a Commissioner in Lunacy, John Forster, suggested Dr Hill’s asylum was not suitable for another patient (Mrs Burkitt). Dr Hill reminded the Commissioner that he had been most helpful to Forster and his friend Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton in placing Rosina Bulwer-Lytton into confinement long before any insanity certificates had been signed, an act not only immoral but also controversial. Forster

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Greysmith, 84.

³²⁷ Alderidge, 30.

³²⁸ Wise, 208-251.

³²⁹ Ibid., 234. Following a medical visit by Dr Conolly and Dr Hood, Lady Lytton expressed her extreme dislike and distrust of Hood who played a significant role in support of her husband’s shocking cruelty.

subsequently denied Hill's accusation, but Hill retained documentation and had a witness and legal support to prove his accusation against Forster:

"Now Dr William Charles Hood began to make a sinister intervention, as he attempted to get hold of the paperwork that Hill believed would prove Forster's key role in the plot. Over dinner on 18 March, Hill claimed that Hood soothed him by saying that Sir Edward 'would protect me against any attack by the Commissioners' and would 'give me something that would make me independent of the Commissioners for the future'. When this attempt at a pay-off failed, Dr Hood 'gave me to understand that if I did not accede to this proposition then I was a ruined man. I told him I might as well be ruined at once as by degrees...I told him that I had been completely sold by Sir Edward BL.' Hood informed his powerful crony, Lord Lytton: 'I have not at present altogether succeeded with Mr Hill. He is more stubborn than I anticipated...I shall adopt other measures and am determined not to be defeated.'"³³⁰

Hill made a copy of his documentation in his diary, "in case Hood should somehow be able to get his hands on the original."³³¹ Hill was quietly sidelined over time and his groundbreaking non-restraint practices were appropriated and attributed to Dr John Connolly and subsequently copied by Dr Hood at Bethlem. Lady Lytton's argument was 'that this group of powerful men protected each other and performed each other's bidding', and documentation supports this contention.³³² What this means for Richard Dadd, is that Dr Hood was perhaps less focused upon criminal rehabilitation and friendship with one specific patient, and rather more focused upon building up his own reputation and the reputation of Bethlem within the wider political world. This idea directly contravenes Alderidge's earlier suggestion of friendship between Dadd and Hood.³³³

³³⁰ Ibid., 244.

³³¹ Ibid., 245.

³³² Ibid., 243.

³³³ Alderidge, 30.

In relation to Richard Dadd, whilst Dr Hood began early changes, improving the living conditions of the 'pleasure men'³³⁴ at Bethlem, he did not fully extend those privileges and improvements (until 1857) to the criminal elements in the Hospital, who he considered to be shamming or faking their symptoms for an easier life than in prison. In his book *Suggestions for the Future Provision of Criminal Lunatics* (1854), Hood wrote:

“Feuchtersleben advises physicians not to enter into any unnecessary discussion with their insane patients, and acutely observes: ‘The previously educated lunatic often penetrates deeper, at least for the moment, into the mind of one who engages with him, than the latter does into his; so that it appears almost as if the understanding of the lunatic were less affected by insanity, than the reason of many sane persons by passions and prejudices.’³³⁵ Furthermore it should be remembered,- and I am satisfied of the fact,- that Criminal Lunatics are more difficult to manage than other lunatics: there is more irritability of temper, and general restlessness about them; they are cognizant of the offences they have committed, and being under the impression that they will never recover their liberty, they are less disposed to be contented or happy.”³³⁶

Hood's comments may help to explain why Dadd's medical notes at Bethlem simply read 'No Change', for six years from 1854 to 1860.³³⁷ Whilst Lippincott supports the idea that Hood proposed topics for Dadd's art,³³⁸ this argument is weakened because antidotes were needed in treatment, but no record of treatment is made for Richard Dadd and Dadd never portrayed any antidotes within his art at Bethlem. Dadd began his passions sketches in 1853, but Hood made no comments about Dadd until 1854, which is surprising if he suggested a passions theme to Dadd. Perhaps Dr Hood was uneasy that any conversation with Dadd, as a 'previously educated lunatic', might enable Dadd to

³³⁴ Her (now His) Majesty's Pleasure is a term used to describe an indeterminate sentence for someone who has committed a crime, been officially declared insane and detained in a secure mental health facility. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/at-his-her-majesty-s-pleasure>. Accessed: 2024.

³³⁵ Dr William Charles Hood's book (122) quoting: Feuchtersleben, *Principles of Medical Psychology* (Lloyd and Babington, printed for the Sydenham Society 1847), 358.

³³⁶ Hood, 28.

³³⁷ Greysmith, 66. Dadd's Clermont notes also make reference to 'spitting' (see Tromans, *The Artist*, 195-6) which has ideological connections to how Egyptian gods such as Osiris came into existence, "either by masturbating or by spitting" (see Dunand and Zivie-Coche, 29; 58; and also 64, who recount how spittle transformed into the serpent Apopis - the Egyptian equivalent of the devil – which may have relevance to Dadd's claim to his French doctors that he was forced to spit out the devil).

³³⁸ Lippincott, 83.

penetrate more deeply into Hood's own psyche, than Dr Hood into Dadd's. Lippincott has also suggested:

"It seems logical to suppose that, having used works of art to study his patient, Dr. Hood would also use a work of art to introduce the antidote to his illness. Thus the painting *Mercy*, representing the only healthy passion in the lot. Moreover it is the only work executed in oil, indicating its special character."³³⁹

However, there are no records to indicate that Hood used art to study Dadd. If Hood had done so, surely, he would have written some notes about it? *Mercy. David Spareth Saul's Life* (1854) is also not the only painting Dadd executed in oils, there is also *Portrait of a Young Man* (1853) and the even earlier *The Flight Out of Egypt* (1849-50).³⁴⁰ Therefore, I propose the argument to support Dr Hood's influence on Dadd's artistic production is weak. There are also no notes to suggest that Hood tried to cure Dadd in any way. In fact, numbers of patients in the asylum rose under Hood's leadership. Also, Hood had a very low opinion of criminal patients who he saw as people trying to avoid more serious punishment. In addition, Hood stated that he did not agree with the construction of one separate state structure (such as Broadmoor) to house criminal lunatics.³⁴¹ Instead, he suggested that criminal lunatics should be classified according to their crime level. Building upon his assertion that "We may adjudicate upon the overt act – but the motive which dictated it will very often elude the most searching examination".³⁴² Hood wrote,

"there can be no doubt that habits of self-control and self-denial, acquired in early life, will enable men to resist temptation, moderate their passions, and ward off insanity itself.*(sic) *Vide*: an excellent little work in the series of 'Small Books on Great Subjects,' entitled, 'On Man's Power over himself to prevent or control Insanity.' John Barlow, London, Pickering. 1849."³⁴³

This suggests little private sympathy with criminal patients under his care, such as Dadd.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ See Allderidge, 154. Dr Hood did not join the staff of Bethlem until November 1852.

³⁴¹ Hood, 122-125. Also see Tromans, *The Artist*, 151.

³⁴² Hood, 125.

³⁴³ (sic) replicated as Hood, 130-1.

Conversely, a much more positive slant provided and discussed within Hood's book is his proposal that patients should be made to work in a productive manner for the benefit of the Asylum:³⁴⁴

"In the general management of Criminal Lunatics, I would strongly recommend their being induced to occupy themselves in some kind of productive employment, consonant with their former habits and stations in life."³⁴⁵

It is perhaps this comment which has seen Hood credited with inducing Richard Dadd to produce the 'Passions Series' (1853-1857).³⁴⁶ Although it is not clear how Dadd's paintings benefitted the Asylum, given Hood's reluctance for Dadd's artworks to leave the Hospital.³⁴⁷ This is particularly relevant since Hood suggested patients should still be treated with kindness if they recognised their crimes and became afflicted with melancholia.³⁴⁸ In fact, Hood asserts that, "Criminal Lunatics - like other patients – receive every attention and kindness, and are provided with every comfort compatible with their situation."³⁴⁹ However, Hood does not state exactly to what "their situation" should entitle the patient, and Dadd did not repent his crime.

Having identified inconsistencies within Dr Hood's attitude to patients under his care at Bethlem, I turn next to an example of Dadd's interest in the cruelty of enslavement, coupled with the vulnerability of childhood, perhaps in relation to his own lived experience. Dadd includes the symbol and slogan of the Anti-Slavery Society, 'AM I NOT A MAN AND A BROTHER',³⁵⁰ in his painting *The Child's Problem* (1857), and I suggest, demonstrates interest in Goethe's *Faust*.

The Child's Problem, much like Retzsch's depiction of Faust's devil in *The Chess Players*, shows the two protagonists with a female above and central to the composition. Allderidge explains she represents a "statue of Ceres [and] is reminiscent of the kneeling

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 150-151.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 150.

³⁴⁶ Allderidge, 30.

³⁴⁷ Greysmith, 67.

³⁴⁸ Hood, 152-3.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 161-2.

³⁵⁰ Allderidge, 113.

nude in 'Evening' (No.60) which he had painted while still a student, [...] It also recalls the famous statue of Narcissus, long believed to be by Michelangelo (now in the V. & A.)".³⁵¹ However, Ceres is also known by the name Demeter,³⁵² and the male character Demetrius (meaning 'belonging to Ceres')³⁵³ is the unrequited lover of Hermia in Shakespeare's play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.³⁵⁴



Fig.30: Frederich August Moritz Retzsch, *Die Schachspieler (The Chess Players)*, c.1831. Public Domain.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Peter Ogwen Jones, *The Symbolism of Richard Dadd*, 1974 and 2021, 56.

³⁵³ Jenny March, *Dictionary of Classical Mythology* (Oxford 2014), 155-6.

³⁵⁴ Richard Dadd painted *Contradiction. Oberon and Titania* from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, at Bethlem. Also see Dionysius of Halicarnassus [modern Bodrum], *Roman Antiquities*, VII, 2 – for the apocryphal story of the Sibylline Books: "The temple of Apollo sent the revered Sibylline Books to Rome in the 5th century, BCE. Also, Rome obtained its priestesses who administered the important cult of Ceres from the temple of Demeter in Cumae."



Fig.31: Richard Dadd, *The Child's Problem*, 1857. 17.1 x 25.4 cm. Tate Britain.

The 'Game of Life', an alternative title for Retzsch's work, shows Mephistopheles (the Devil) playing chess for the young man's (Faust's) soul, although this scene does not arise in Goethe's original play. In Retzsch's image the chess board is placed on the lid of a sarcophagus, whilst in Dadd's image the chess board is placed upon a table shaped like a coffin and clothed in symbols. Allderidge explains that Dadd has represented the chess problem 'White to play, and mate in two', which she advises is a problem simple enough to be set or solved by a child.³⁵⁵ However, further research reveals that this chess problem can be attributed to Paul Morphy and was first published on 28 June 1856 in the New York Clipper,³⁵⁶ just one year before Dadd produced his painting. In the move, a pawn is sacrificed in order to 'checkmate' the black king which conjoins the idea of Dadd, the devil, and sacrifice.³⁵⁷ The date of Dadd's painting is also of import because 1857 was the year of Retzsch's death. In addition, the corresponding initials Dadd uses for the title of his piece to the title of Retzsch's artwork are also significant: 'The Chess Players' – 'The Child's Problem'. That being said, an added layer of interest is that Dadd's contemporary

³⁵⁵ Allderidge, 113.

³⁵⁶ <https://www.sparkchess.com/chess-puzzles/paul-morphys-problem.html>. Accessed: 2024.

³⁵⁷ Dunand and Zivie-Coche, 91, explain how sacrifice for ancient Egyptians represented the evil of Seth or Apopis (the devil) and so the victim was considered dangerous.

at the Academy Schools, who was known to have an awareness of Retzsch's work, was Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood member Sir John Everett Millais,³⁵⁸ and Millais' nickname whilst attending as a young prodigy at the Academy Schools was 'The Child'.³⁵⁹ Additionally, close looking at the painting reveals two glasses on the table, one presented by the sleeping man's elbow, whilst the other is on the far left beyond the decanter. Since the child is clearly too young to be drinking spirits, this raises unanswerable questions about who else may previously have enjoyed a drink at the table whilst playing the chess game. Allderidge notes that "The child on the other hand is distinctly unnerving, with his unfocused stare,"³⁶⁰ and also, that the tonal qualities of the painting are peculiarly pale, "like a face drained of colour under stress."³⁶¹ Building upon those suggestions, I propose that the child is not the sleeping man's chess opponent but instead, has been tasked with waking the adult, which he is doing by plucking at the man's clothing. Consequently, his face shows not an "unfocused stare", but rather the absolute terror of what may happen when the figure is awoken, perhaps symbolised by the glasses and decanter. Greater resonance between Dadd's artworks can be found when comparing this idea of terror with Dadd's earlier paintings such as Fig.21 *Brutality* (1854) and Fig.32 *Sketch to Illustrate the Passions. Suspense or Expectation* (1855), where the young girl's face shows a similar expression of terror as her pretty doll is about to be killed by the toy cannon.

³⁵⁸ See Stephen Calloway. 2015. Diana Dethloff (Ed.), Tessa Murdoch (Ed.), Kim Sloan (Ed.), Caroline Elam (Ed.). *John Everett Millais, James Wyatt of Oxford and a Volume of Retzsch's Outlines to Shakespeare: a Missing Link*, (London 2015), for example.

³⁵⁹ I should like at some point in the future to undertake further study into the links between Millais and Dadd.

³⁶⁰ Allderidge, 113.

³⁶¹ Ibid., 114.



Fig.32: Richard Dadd, 1855, Sketch to Illustrate the Passions. Suspense or Expectation, 36.8cm x 26.0cm, The Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Centre for British Art, Connecticut.

Whilst there is much which could be discussed in *Suspense or Expectation*, perhaps the points of most relevance to my suggestion of potential hidden violence within the family are, that the boy firing the cannon is depicted with the peak of his cap moved from its usual position and upturned into a crescent shape resembling black devilish horns. Secondly, the young boy holding the reins of his pull along toy hobby horse in his left hand, also holds a very large whip in his right hand, which would be difficult to use if you were pulling the horse from the front rather than whipping from the rear.

Returning to *Anger*, (Fig.29), this painting depicts a man on the left holding the head of a broken hammer in his right hand and its shaft in his left.³⁶² The man grasps the shaft slightly above the middle, at a vaguely suggestive phallic angle. Were he to turn the shaft around, it would form the shape of a club. A second man on the right, behind the forge, holds a sword or knife blade down towards the flame, as if stabbing at it rather than resting the blade horizontally in the flame to heat it up. Where the two objects meet suggests the point at the top of a pyramidal triangle, directly in the centre of the painting. The flame of the forge is echoed by a second flame or forge set at a distance in the top left of the artwork with broken bars appearing like those on the window of an asylum cell. A red-hot striking anvil is placed prominently at the front on the bottom right of the painting. Significantly, one aspect of this painting which has not previously been discussed is a pictorial reference to Vulcan's forge. In mythology, Vulcan was the Roman god of fire and forges producing lightning bolts and alchemy, which may potentially bring Dadd's contiguous ideas back full circle to his 'whereabouts unknown' painting *A Castle Shattered by Lightning* (1845). In addition, the curly-haired and straight-haired men resemble the appearance of two characters, in *Murder*, painted just one week afterwards, in 1854. Also, of import is a Richard Dadd painting discovered since Allderidge's catalogue raisonné of 1974: *The Infant Aesculapius Discovered by Shepherds on a Mountain* (1851). Aesculapius was the mythical Greek god of healing and medicine, who raised mortals from the dead. He was struck down by Zeus using a thunderbolt, produced in Hephaestus' forge.³⁶³ Hephaestus was the Greek blacksmith of the gods, whose Roman

³⁶² Perhaps bringing a reminder of Dadd's earlier 'whereabouts unknown' sketch of Tintoretto's *The Miracle of St. Mark* (1548), where the torturer of the slave has the shaft of his hammer broken.

³⁶³ March, 82-3.

equivalent designation was Vulcan.³⁶⁴ Artistically, Hephaestus is generally represented as a middle-aged, bearded man and is specifically and definitively depicted in a short sleeveless tunic with a round close-fitting cap on his unkempt hair,³⁶⁵ just as we find one of the shepherds depicted in Dadd's imagery. Dadd's painting of Hephaestus as a shepherd is quite different to that of other shepherds Dadd painted, such as the shepherd holding his hat (in Fig.33 below) and the shepherd in *Wandering Musicians* c.1878 (Fig.34)



Fig.33: Richard Dadd, 1851, *The Infant Aesculapius Discovered by Shepherds on a Mountain*, 25.9 x 35.8 cm. The Wellcome Collection.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 230.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 232.



Fig.34: Richard Dadd, c.1878, *Wandering Musicians*, 61.0 x 50.5 cm. Tate Britain.

In addition, the Rod of Aesculapius is wrapped around by a single snake (perhaps proposing ideological connections to Robert Snr's professions of apothecary and alchemist-water-gilder). In his painting *Sketch to Illustrate the Passions. Deceit or Duplicity* (1854), (Fig.36), Richard Dadd portrays his father as the snake of temptation in the Garden of Eden, with his serpent's tail wrapped around the tree trunk of knowledge, on the end of the chair upon which the doubly duplicitous Deceit sits. Dadd's painting bears many tonal similarities with Michelangelo's portrayal of the Cumaean Sibyl at the Sistine Chapel in St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, which implies Dadd was further ideologically

circling around ideas relating to the number nine. The legend of the Cumaean Sibyl being that she wrote nine prophetic books in her role as a prophet of the Greek god Apollo, which were sought by the King of Rome.³⁶⁶



(Left) Fig.35: Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarrotri Simoni, 1511, *Cumaean Sibyl*, 375 x 380 cm. Sistine Chapel ceiling.

(Right) Fig. 36: Richard Dadd, 1854, *Sketch to Illustrate the Passions. Deceit or Duplicity*, 36.5 x 26.0 cm. Board of Governors of The Bethlem Royal Hospital and The Maudsley Hospital.

However, the most obvious of all Dadd's portrayals of Biblical murder can be found in his artwork *Murder*. Polemically, as Allderidge points out, "It is interesting to see that in depicting 'Murder', a subject about which he knew a good deal, Dadd should have chosen to use the archetypal murder story of Cain and Abel which requires no specialised knowledge."³⁶⁷ Therefore, why might Dadd have chosen the Biblical murder story of Cain and Abel to depict one of the few paintings he inscribed with the word 'murder'? Conversely, as I have earlier shown in the thesis (see chapter two), Dadd did not know "a good deal" or have particularly "specialised knowledge" about murder. Despite Dadd's pre-planning and obtaining of weapons prior to his patricide, he ended up improvising a

³⁶⁶

https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/dinner_party/heritage_floor/sibyl_of_cumae#:~:text=The%20Cumaean%20Sibyl%20was%20the,early%20Rome%2C%20sought%20to%20procure. Accessed: 2024.

³⁶⁷ Allderidge, 103.

crucial part of the attack on the night. However, Dadd's interest in stories of fratricide and the story of Osiris in relation to the murder is, I suggest, potentially connected to his artistic choices. During his travels with Sir Thomas Phillips, Dadd visited the valley beneath Mount Sinai, as depicted in the background of his painting *The Flight out of Egypt* (1849-50). The most famous Biblical event connected to this location is The Exodus, when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt.³⁶⁸ Richard Dadd would have seen Michelangelo's statue of Moses whilst in Rome (where his first desire to kill a patriarch surfaced).³⁶⁹ Less commonly known is that prior to his conversion, Moses was a priest of the cult of Osiris.³⁷⁰ The mythical story of Osiris was mistakenly connected to the cult of sun worship within nineteenth-century scholarly understanding,³⁷¹ whereas Osiris was instead the mythological Egyptian god of the underworld, whose moon goddess wife Isis reassembled his dismembered body parts following his murder by his brother Set.³⁷² Osiris was purported to have fathered the god Horus, because the sun (having spent each night in the underworld before being reborn each morning), brought together a story of betrayal, murder, and rebirth.³⁷³ Therefore, Dadd may have chosen to represent murder as the biblical story of fratricide,³⁷⁴ rather than patricide, because Dadd had previously toured the pyramids of Giza. Dadd's tour was led by Dr K.R. Lepsius, whose archaeological discoveries in Egypt were closely bound to associations between Osirian myth and the Bible.³⁷⁵ Lippincott suggests the meeting between Dadd and Lepsius probably took place in early January 1843 when Lepsius and his team were excavating and deciphering a tablet in front of the Sphinx, from which he hoped to work out the age of Egyptian civilization and the date of the Jewish Exodus.³⁷⁶ Certainly Dadd had religious doubts at this time and wrote a remarkably coherent letter (considering his reported descent into insanity) to David Roberts about the brothers Moses and Aaron,

“I have always felt the greatest pleasure in seeking into the origin of the manner & opinions of my fellow beings, there amongst the monuments of the old Egyptians

³⁶⁸ The second book of The Bible.

³⁶⁹ Allderidge, 22.

³⁷⁰ Tromans, *The Artist*, 52.

³⁷¹ Lippincott, 90.

³⁷² Dunand and Zivie-Coche, 39 and 44, recount the mythological story of Osiris from sources such as the *Coffin Texts* and the *Book of the Dead*.

³⁷³ Stevens, 39.

³⁷⁴ The Bible, Genesis 4:1-16.

³⁷⁵ Tromans, *The Artist*, 52: “Lepsius was working on a unified chronology of ancient civilisations, determined to bring together ancient Egyptian and Old Testament narratives.”

³⁷⁶ Lippincott, 90.

is matter for speculation indeed; here we find ourselves conversing with a people of whose antiquity no one knows the date, for after all the researches of the learned, & this “most learned *Theban*,” we find ourselves set down at once amongst a People highly civilised & polished acquainted with Arts & Sciences to a degree that puts to shame our puerile notions of them & at so early a date in our chronology as to make us laugh at the extreme youth with which our modern antiquarians give to our Race – at any rate these Egyptians must have been a very precocious & might[y] generation to have so soon after the general destruction of the race, built such things as the Pyramids of Ghiza. There are many other things belonging to them so extremely curious & so terribly astounding, even according to the shewing of this author, that the call upon our Faith to believe in received opinions is so great that I fear a great many will be found bankrupt in that article [...] Now Moses was a Priest at Heliopolis as also his brother Aaron & they were skilled in all the wisdom & learning of the Egyptians - & so they applied it to the Government of the People whom they led out of the Land of Egypt, etc etc.”³⁷⁷

“Dadd seems to have accepted not only Lepsius’ chronology but also the theory that Moses had served as a priest of Osiris at Heliopolis before he led the Jews out of their Egyptian captivity. From this Dadd inferred that Egypt had provided the basis for Old Testament Jewish civilization.”³⁷⁸

That being said, and for reasons we cannot now know with certainty, Richard Dadd seems to have blamed his father for thwarting his aspirations. By mentally transposing the body of his father into a persona of the devil, and himself into the persona of the son or instrument of Osiris, Richard Dadd could be psychologically enabled to commit an act of patricide during a period of mania, thereby removing both the obstacle to his own success/happiness and possibly becoming the saviour of his other siblings. This idea has parallels to my earlier argument in relation to Dadd’s choice of murder location in

³⁷⁷ Allderidge, 39, provides a full copy of the transcript by Dr L.P. Senelick of the Drama Department, Tufts University, Medford, M.A., of Dadd’s letters to Roberts. The original letters have been lost but Dadd refers to the three volumes on Ancient Egypt by Sir John Gardner Wilkinson.

³⁷⁸ R. Lepsius, *Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Peninsula of Sinai*, trans. L and J.B. Horner (London, 1853), 413-416. However, I note Lepsius’s letters were translated after Dadd had painted *The Flight out of Egypt* (1849-50) therefore, Dadd’s understanding must have come from personal experience and conversations in Egypt itself, in 1843. See also: Lippincott, 90.

Cobham. It has already been suggested that the design of the Darnley Mausoleum may have been based upon the pyramid mausoleum of Caius Cestius, in Rome. The Roman pyramid was once one of two, and the second Roman pyramid was known as the 'Pyramid of Romulus'. The brothers Romulus and Remus were believed to be the founders of Rome but, in an example of fratricide, Romulus later murdered his brother to become sole ruler. Therefore, Dadd's choice of imagery may also reference the commonality of sibling rivalry and fratricidal murder in mythical tales, such as Remus by Romulus in Rome, and the murder of the Egyptian god Osiris by his brother Set.

Artistic Misidentification

As Nicholas Tromans demonstrated throughout his book *Richard Dadd: The Artist and the Asylum* (2011), one of the complexities of studying the artwork of Richard Dadd, is overcoming previous researchers' identification of Dadd's paintings with his psychotic diagnosis. This has led to "discontinuous continuity, multiple reference, and analogical relationships that point simultaneously both to likeness and to unlikeness"³⁷⁹ within Dadd's artistic output. As MacGregor has uncovered, Dadd's art does not reveal typical symbols and thought processes of schizophrenic art but, "the majority of viewers and reviewers have, over time, seen what they expected to see in Dadd's work".³⁸⁰ An example of this idea is catalogue raisonné No.94, *Dead Camel* (?1843):

This picture was referred to in the *Handbook to the Watercolours...in the Art Treasurers Exhibition* as 'full of gloomy madness', and [...] in the *Handbook to the Gallery of British Painting*...as 'a ghastly little invention of desert-horror, framed in by demons such as his distempered brain alone could devise'.³⁸¹

However, these dramatic descriptions may be based more upon the imagination of the writers than of Dadd himself. Viscount Castlereagh's travels to the middle east, undertaken just a few months before Dadd and Phillips, explain the horrific realities of multiple dead camels within the desert landscape:

³⁷⁹ Isabel MacCaffrey. 'Allegory and Pastoral in *The Shepheardes Calendar*', pp.88-109. Reproduced in Hugh Maclean (Ed.); Anne Lake Prescott (Ed.). 1993. Also *Edmund Spenser's Poetry: Authoritative Texts Criticism, Third Edition* (New York, London 1969), 770.

³⁸⁰ MacGregor, 120.

³⁸¹ Allderidge, 78.

“Our road extends across a wide waste of sand, [...] It is strewn with the skeletons of camels, who have travelled here their last journey, and have sunk from fatigue or been left to perish. We saw one poor animal near the track, lying among some stones, so weak as not to be able to reach the prickly shrubs which grew near. The birds of prey, a very ill-looking set, were waiting for their victim.”³⁸²

These ideas are also relevant when interpreting Dadd’s artworks which are not clearly titled. To explain this difficulty in greater depth, in this section of the thesis, I propose that one of Dadd’s paintings currently identified as catalogue raisonné No.32 *Head* (?c.1837-40) has been misidentified, and is instead, a ‘whereabouts unknown’ painting – catalogue raisonné No.96 *Portrait of Sir Thomas Phillips in a Monk’s Cowl* (1843). As an example of how Dadd’s creative works may have been misinterpreted due to previous hierarchical or doctor-led analysis of his artistic production, this painting adds credence to my theory that Dadd was exploring his own lived experience. This misidentification may also make future research possible into other Dadd artworks which may have been misinterpreted.

³⁸² Castlereagh, Vol.1, 267-8.
Kim Forester (100332280)

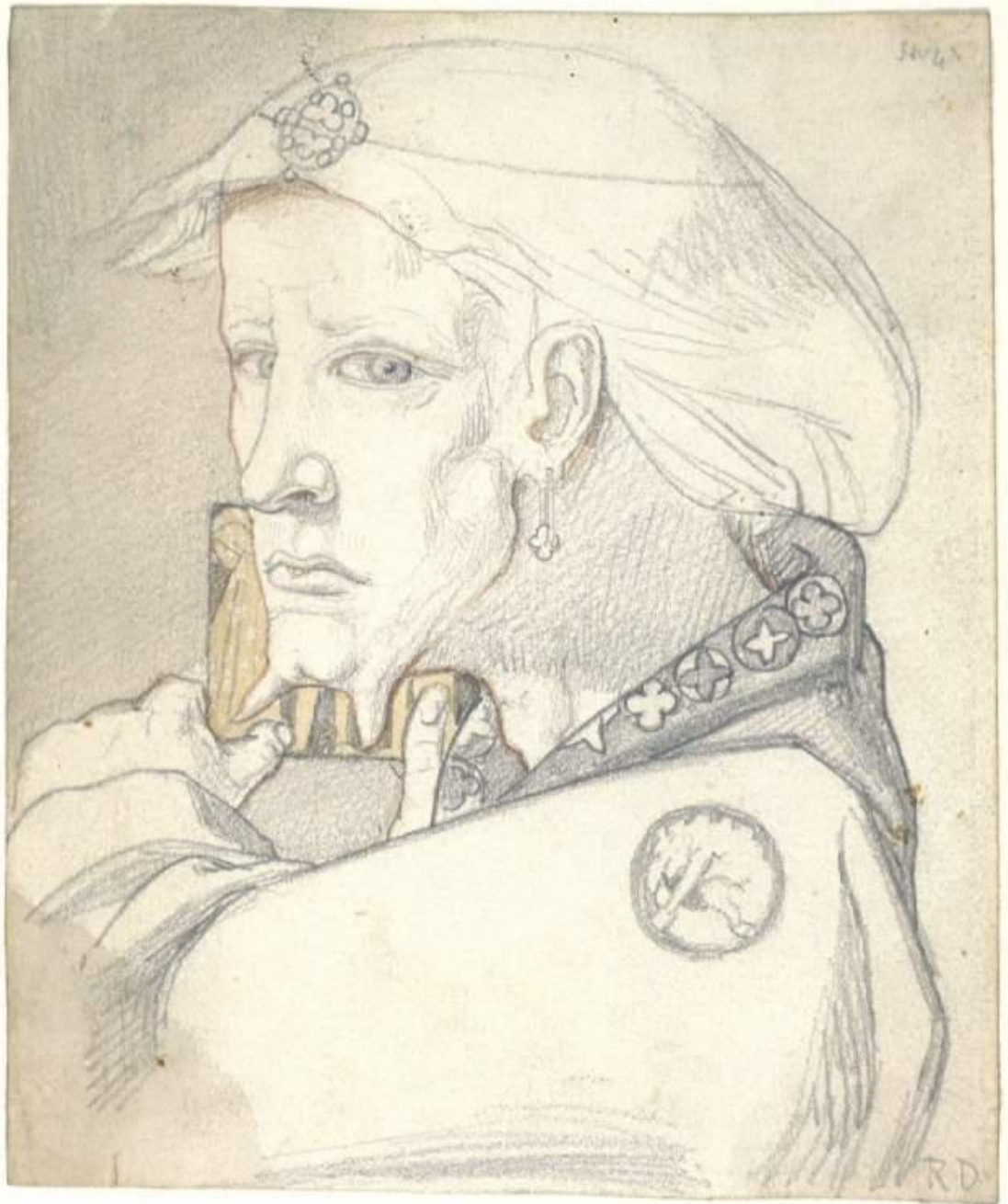


Fig.37: Richard Dadd, 1843, *Portrait of Sir Thomas Phillips in a Monk's Cowl*, 14.0 x 11.5cm, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. This painting is currently known in the catalogue raisonné as *Head*, ?c.1837-40, and has recently been retitled 'An Imaginary Head' and redated to 1860 by the Fitzwilliam Museum.

Richard Dadd's painting (Fig.37) was gifted to the Fitzwilliam Museum in 1917 by Charles Fairfax Murray, a close associate of John Ruskin and Pre-Raphaelites Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Edward Burne Jones.³⁸³ There is no other documentation on file at the Fitzwilliam until 11 December 1972, when Peter Ogwen Jones wrote to Malcolm Cormack, then Keeper of Paintings and Drawings at the Museum and suggested a date for their

³⁸³ Charles Fairfax Murray in the V&A Archive. Nominal file – Charles Fairfax Murray MA/1/M3216. Kim Forester (100332280) University of East Anglia

painting of c.1860, a date which Mr Cormack took seriously.³⁸⁴ However, when Patricia Alderidge wrote her catalogue raisonné *The Late Richard Dadd* to accompany the Tate Gallery's 1974 exhibition, she dated the painting ?1837-40.³⁸⁵ Until recently it was Alderidge's dating and artistic analysis which took precedence. In 2021 Ogwen Jones published his Tate lecture convened in 1974, during the exhibition,³⁸⁶ sometime after which the Fitzwilliam re-evaluated their painting's title and date to *An Imaginary Head* (c.1860). Conversely, I suggest that Richard Dadd's image has been completely misidentified and is not the painting recognised in the catalogue raisonné as No.32, but is instead catalogue raisonné No.96, *Portrait of Sir Thomas Phillips in a Monk's Cowl* (1843).

To gain a closer understanding of the painting's connection to Dadd's act of patricide, it is necessary to investigate earlier hypotheses and consider their basis in evidence.

Alderidge describes No.32, *Head* as:

"The head has been described as 'Norse or Irish', but nothing is known about the subject or purpose of this drawing. **The garments are reminiscent of priestly robes**, and the small half-concealed picture, of an icon: these together with the insignia and **the menacing mask-like face, hold the suggestion of a participant in some occult rite**. From the style of the drawing it seems likely to date from Dadd's early years at the Academy Schools. It could have been intended for an illustration to some literary work."³⁸⁷

Whilst Alderidge describes No.96, *Portrait of Sir Thomas Phillips in a Monk's Cowl* (1843) as:

"In *The World* 26 December 1877 there is an account of some of Dadd's strange behaviour after his return from the Middle East, amidst which **'A portrait of Sir Thomas Phillips in monk's cowl, and with strange owl-like eyes, was shown as the devil who could take any shape he pleased...'**³⁸⁸ The parts of this article dealing with Dadd's early life are often very fanciful, and it is just possible that the

³⁸⁴ Fitzwilliam Museum Notes File for 'An Imaginary Head': Letter from Peter Ogwen Jones to Malcolm Cormack dated 11/12/72, and letter reply from Malcolm Cormack to Peter Jones dated 19/12/1972.

³⁸⁵ Alderidge, 53.

³⁸⁶ Peter Ogwen Jones, *The Symbolism of Richard Dadd*, 1974 and 2021.

³⁸⁷ Alderidge, 53. Emphasis added.

³⁸⁸ In Egyptian mythologic polytheism, gods were multiple beings whose forms, images, and names could be varied. See Dunand and Zivie-Coche, 7; 9; 15; 27; 29; 339.

portrait referred to merely showed Sir Thomas in his Arab costume (see No.84), if it existed at all: **Dadd may, however, have alluded to it himself as portraying the devil.**"³⁸⁹

Close examination of the painting reveals that the figure is wearing a hooded priestly garment, has a horned chin representative of the devil (which is goat-like) and, is partially obscuring a religious icon. In addition, the linear outline form of the painting does not stylistically match the watercolours or oil paintings Dadd was producing in the late 1830s, or those Dadd produced in 1860 (see examples below in Fig.38 and Fig.39). Instead, I argue the artwork stylistically aligns far more closely with Dadd's 'sketch series' of paintings, produced at Bethlem in the early 1850s (see examples below in Fig.40).



Fig.38: All watercolour artworks by Richard Dadd. Top Left - *Family Portraits*, (1838), private collection. Lower left - *Portrait of John Phillip as 'Glorious Jock'*, (1839), Trustees of the British Museum, given by E.E. Leggatt c.1919. Middle Left - *Portrait of Maria Elizabeth Dadd, the Artist's Sister*, (1839), Yale Centre for British Art, Connecticut.

All oil artworks by Richard Dadd. Top Right – *Study of a Head - ?John Alfred Dadd*, (c.1839), privately owned. Middle Right - *Portrait of ?Augustus Egg* (?c.1838-40), The Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Centre for British Art, Connecticut. Lower right - *Portrait of a Man, possibly H.G. Adams*, (?c.1837-40), Victoria & Albert Museum.

³⁸⁹ Allderidge, 78. Emphasis added.

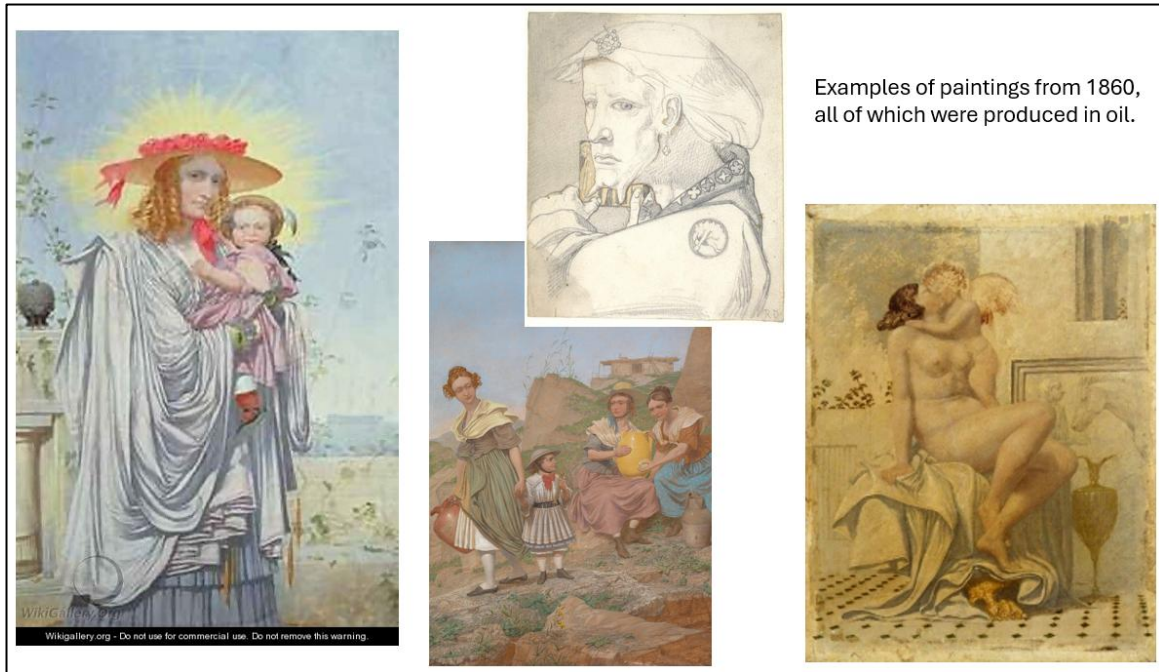


Fig.39: All artworks by Richard Dadd. Left - *Mother and Child*, (1860), privately owned. Middle – *Negation*, (1860), The Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Centre for British Art, Connecticut. Right - *Cupid and Psyche*, (1860), Visitors of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

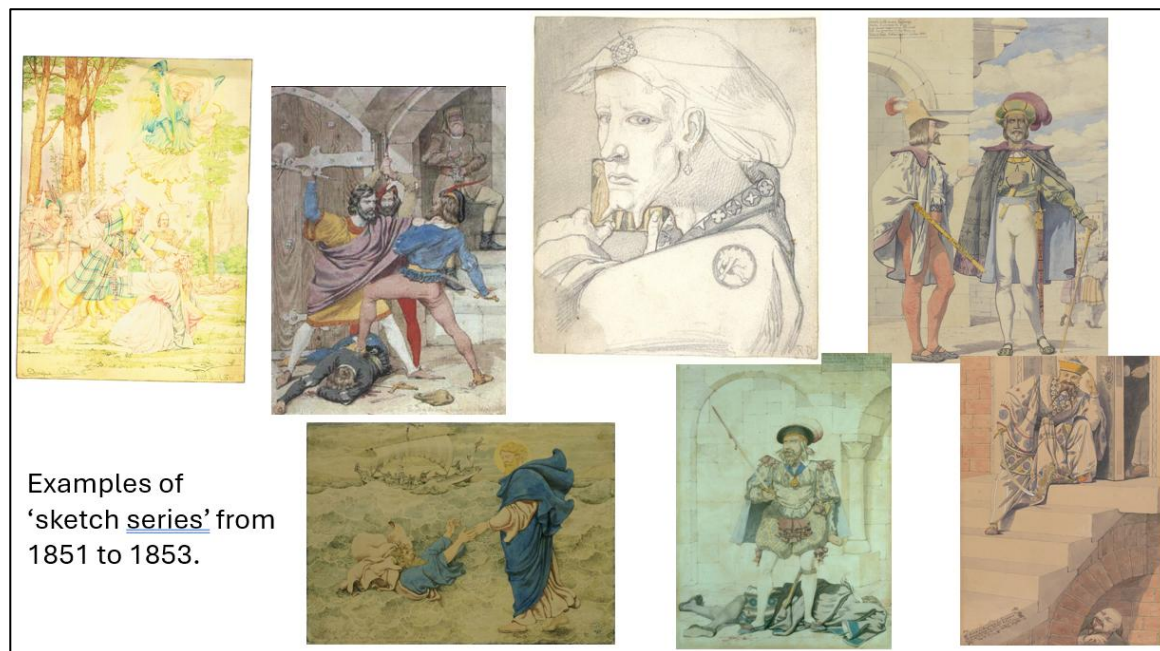


Fig.40: All artworks produced by Richard Dadd. Top Left - *Dymphna Martyr*, (1851), Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California. Top Middle - *The Death of Richard II*, (1852), private collection. Lower Left - *Jesus Christ Walking on the Sea*, (1852), Victoria & Albert Museum. Lower Middle - *Sketch of the Passions. Hatred*, (1853), Board of Governors of The Bethlem Royal Hospital and The Maudsley Hospital. Top Right - *Sketch to Illustrate Jealousy*, (1853), American Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford, Connecticut. Lower Right - *Sketch to Illustrate the Passions. Treachery*, (1853), The Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Centre for British Art, Connecticut.

My assertion gains traction when the details of the painting are closely observed. The photograph below (Fig.41 - taken just over fifty years after Dadd's travels), shows that the cowl worn by monks at the Armenian Convent in Jerusalem was light in colour. The headwear on the central figure of *Head* is somewhat reminiscent of that worn by monks at the Convent. This Convent was the location where nineteenth-century Christians stayed when visiting the holy city, as Dadd and Phillips did on their travels in 1842.³⁹⁰ Viscount Castlereagh also commented upon the monk's unusual attire in the memoir of his travels through the Middle East: "The dress of the brotherhood is very striking, though simple, and the cowl, which all wear, is of a peculiar shape, and differs from any I have observed."³⁹¹



Fig.41: Jerusalem El-Kouds Entrance to the Armenian Convent American Colony, 1898, Israel. 63.1 x 48.7 cm. Photograph taken by Artokoloro, 29/6/19, Contributed by Penta Springs Limited, Alamy Stock Photo. (Licence to use this image purchased by the author on 22/7/24.)

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 20 & 79.

³⁹¹ Castlereagh, Vol.2, 105.

When this idea is further compared to other images with which Dadd would have been familiar, Dadd's painterly clues to an image representative of a monkish brotherhood, combined with representations of those who depicted hell and the devil, emerge.



(Left) Fig.42: Johann Friedrich Overbeck, 1809, *Stamp of the Brotherhood of St. Luke (Lukasbund)*, Etching with lettering in ink. <https://victorianweb.org/painting/german/overbeck/engravings/4.html>. Accessed 28/7/24.

(Centre) Fig.37: Richard Dadd, 1843, *Portrait of Sir Thomas Phillips in a Monk's Cowl*, 14.0 x 11.5cm, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

(Right) Fig.43: Sandro Botticelli, c.1495, *Ritratto di Dante Alighieri* (Portrait of Dante), 54.7 x 47.5cm, (Public Domain).

Whilst in Rome, it is known that Richard Dadd and Sir Thomas Phillips visited the studio of the artist Johann Friedrich Overbeck and, potentially, other Nazarene studios.³⁹² I propose another Lukasbrüder artist, who may have been of interest to Dadd, was Peter Cornelius whose illustrations of Goethe's *Faust* were published in 1816 and included *Faust and Mephisto on the Brocken* (Walpurgisnight). Richard Dadd's own interpretation of *Walpurgis Night* (1842) contained *The Piper of Neisse* and *The Devil's Bridge*, and I suggest it is easy to see Cornelius' influence on Dadd's illustrations, from the Piper himself to the small, winged creatures. Yet another person of interest from the Brotherhood may have been Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, particularly when we compare Dadd's painting

³⁹² Allderidge, 22.

Jesus Christ Walking on the Sea (1852), which directly followed Schnorr von Carolsfeld's visit to London in 1851 (associated with his designs for the windows of St. Paul's Cathedral),³⁹³ to Schnorr von Carolsfeld's artwork *Jesus and Peter Walking on Water*, which appeared in *Die Bible in Bilden* (1852/60), and supports my contention of the influence of printed materials on Dadd's output within Bethlem.

Returning to Fig.37, and my suggestion that Dadd's portrait has been misidentified, I propose it is crucial to analyse elements within the artwork, including the badge portrayed upon the character's sleeve. This badge has variously been described as an 'insignia',³⁹⁴ and an 'Ouroboros' (by Peter Ogwen Jones), the serpent also being representative of the devil:

the symbol of the Ouroboros, or tail eating serpent, the dragon used by Dadd being a common variation from the Greek for serpent, drakon. [...] You have to try and imagine the outcome of this creature's impossible meal, since it is devouring itself; you soon reach a point where the intellect fairly strains to grasp the result. [...] a 'question' designed to ensnare the intellect." And, "In essence then, the Ouroboros is a hieroglyph for Eternity, which is beyond the grasp of the finite intellect of man, [...] This is the realization of the Platonic idea, [...] where 'The One', i.e. the individual or microcosm, fuses (Transmutation) into 'The All' or macrocosm, which has many names in many cultures, e.g. Greek 'Pan' or Judeo-Christian 'God'.³⁹⁵

Consequently, when we combine these ideas with my suggestion about Dadd's penchant for visual jokes, and clever subversion, the badge as representation of an element of Dadd's act of murder becomes clear. In Dadd's image the arm is raised to hold the icon. Were the arm to be lowered the badge would rotate anticlockwise by ninety degrees, no longer showing a gaping serpent's mouth around the edge of the badge, but instead, revealing a body which has been clubbed to the ground headfirst in the centre of the badge.

³⁹³ Hugh Chisholm, (Ed.). 1911. 'Schnorr von Karolsfeld, Julius', in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol.24 (11th ed.). 345.

³⁹⁴ Allderidge, 53.

³⁹⁵ Letter from Peter Ogwen Jones to Malcolm Cormack, Keeper of Paintings and Drawings, dated 11/12/1972, Fitzwilliam Museum Archives.



Fig.37: Richard Dadd, 1843, *Portrait of Sir Thomas Phillips in a Monk's Cowl*, 14.0 x 11.5cm, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

This idea matches my proposition for how Dadd overpowered his father at Cobham Park and suggests the painting could not have been completed before August 1843, because the act of striking with the walking stick was the only part of the murder which was improvised on the night. Furthermore, the area of the head in the badge is obscured, just as Dadd obscured the heads of the victims in his paintings *Hatred* (Fig.18) and *The Murder of Henry VI* (Fig.25).



(Left) Fig.17: Richard Dadd, 1854, *Sketch to Illustrate the Passions. Murder*, 36.2 x 26.0 cm, Board of Governors of The Bethlem Royal Hospital and The Maudsley Hospital.

(Centre) Fig.37a: Detail of Fig.37, rotated ninety degrees anticlockwise.

(Right) Fig.44: Richard Dadd, 1855, *A Fallen Warrior*, 36.4 x 26.1 cm, Victoria and Albert Museum.

Having assessed and reflected upon the stylistic details of the painting (Fig.37), together with new discoveries such as Dadd's depiction of the character's hood and arm badge, I suggest Dadd's painting must have been produced after August 1843. Therefore, I assert the painting cannot be catalogue raisonné No.32 as identified in Allderidge's book, because that painting was dated c.1837-40, making it far more likely to be a *Portrait of Sir Thomas Phillips in a Monk's Cowl* (c.1843).



(Left) Fig.7: Richard Dadd, 1842, *Portrait of Sir Thomas Phillips in Eastern Costume, Reclining*, 16.5 x 25.4 cm, Bethlem Museum of the Mind.

(Centre) Fig.37: Richard Dadd, 1843, *Portrait of Sir Thomas Phillips in a Monk's Cowl*, 14.0 x 11.5cm. Fitzwilliam Museum.

(Right) Fig.45: Richard Dadd, 1842-3, *Portrait of Sir Thomas Phillips in Eastern Costume, Standing*, 24.1 x 16.5 cm, Tate Britain.

The Last Judgement of The Fairy Feller

It is from an amalgamation of the many ideas discussed in this thesis that I propose Dadd conceived his plan for his most famous painting, *The Fairy Feller*.



Fig.46: Richard Dadd, *quasi* 1855-64, *The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke*, 54.0 x 39.4 cm, Tate Gallery (presented by Sir Siegfried Sassoon in 1963, in memory of the painter's great-nephews Julian, Edmund and Stephen Gabriel Dadd).

The Fairy Feller is not only considered Richard Dadd's masterpiece but, is generally held up to be Dadd's defining image. The idea of the mad artist, painting in obscurity for years and years in a lunatic asylum, going over and over tiny figures in his own private fairyland, until he almost completed a picture so detailed it gives the impression of embroidery,³⁹⁶ is today how we imagine Richard Dadd working in Bedlam. To add to the painting's mystery and drama, the painting was given to Bethlem Hospital Steward George Henry Haydon, when Dadd transferred to Broadmoor.³⁹⁷ This image of Dadd unable to leave and forget his private fairy world is cemented in our imagination because, when he arrived at Broadmoor, he supposedly began a second version titled, *Songe de la Fantasia* (1864), and an intricately mad poem, *Elimination of a Picture & Its Subject – Called the Feller's Master Stroke* (1865).

Before discussing the painting itself, there are some questions which need consideration (and which will later be addressed in greater depth). Firstly, what was it about painting *The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke* which Richard Dadd found so difficult to complete? The painting was given to Haydon,³⁹⁸ when Dadd was transferred in the final cohort of men who moved from Bethlem to Broadmoor. Did Dadd simply run out of time before he was relocated? Or, as I will argue, was not finishing the painting a deliberate choice. Secondly, why might Dadd have felt the need to create another watercolour version of *The Fairy Feller* once he was at Broadmoor? Conversely, I propose that *Songe de la Fantasia* may have been started at Bethlem as a 'sketch', taken with Dadd when he transferred, and then completed at Broadmoor. More particularly, because the two drawings are virtually identical and *Songe de la Fantasia* was completed within four months of Dadd's arrival at Broadmoor,³⁹⁹ Therefore, if Dadd believed he had revealed too much of himself in *The Fairy Feller* might he have felt the need to write a very long poem to 'eliminate' its significance?⁴⁰⁰ The poem ends,

"You can afford to let this go

³⁹⁶ Greysmith, 121.

³⁹⁷ Ibid. Allderidge, 125 and 128.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Allderidge, 126-7.

⁴⁰⁰ Richard Dadd, 1865, *Elimination of a Picture & Its Subject – Called the Feller's Master Stroke*, autograph manuscript, signed and dated: R^d Dadd. Broadmoor, Jan^y. 1865. Written in a notebook and now available in the public domain.

For nought as nothing it explains
And nothing from nothing
nothing gains.”⁴⁰¹

Equally of interest is that despite the poem’s meandering incomprehensibility, the verses were not lost or destroyed by the authorities, as many of the other artifacts Dadd created at Broadmoor seem to have been.⁴⁰²

Returning to Dadd’s painting, I propose that Dadd’s original conception incorporated references to several renaissance masterpieces and most significantly to Michelangelo’s *The Last Judgement* (1534-41).

⁴⁰¹ Dadd’s love of puns may also suggest a reference to Shakespeare’s play *Much Ado About Nothing* where the witticism of the title alludes to the secrets and deceptions that are the foundation of the play’s comedy.

⁴⁰² For example: furniture, Christmas cards, and fire buckets – See Alderidge, 138

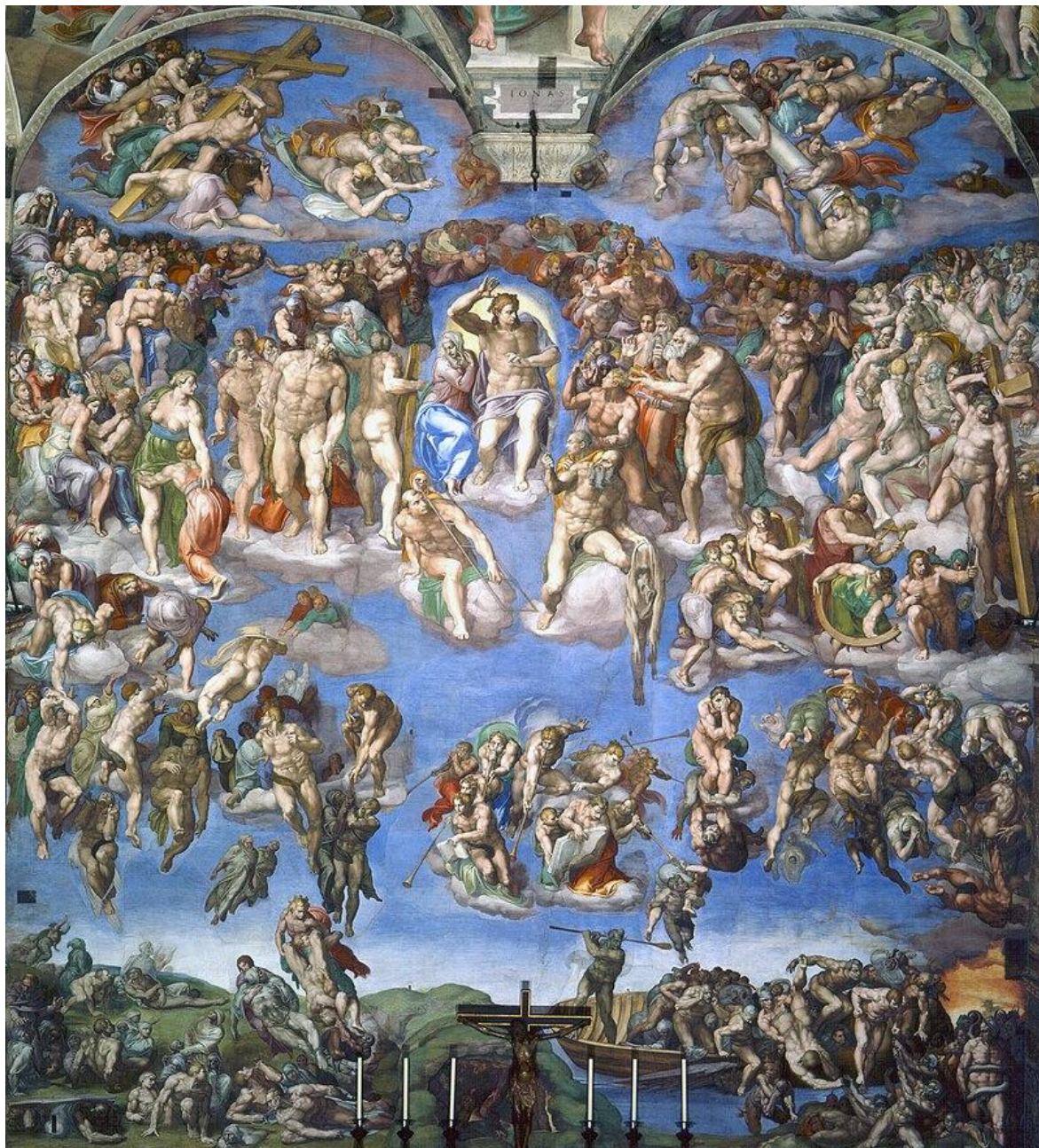
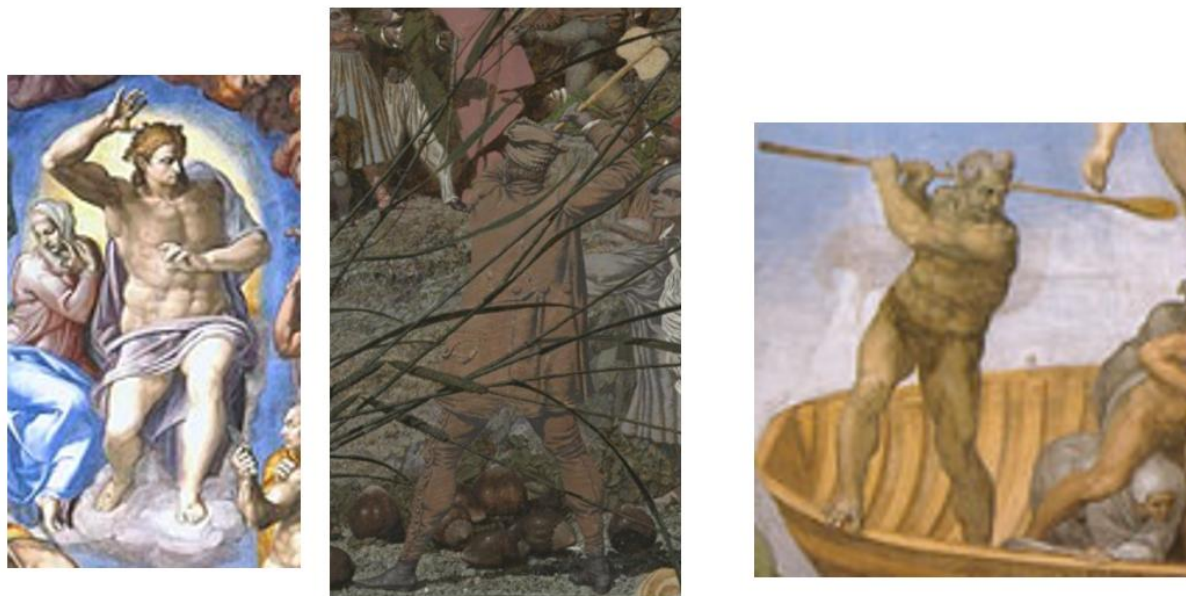


Fig.47: Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni, 1534-41, *The Last Judgement*, East End Altar Wall Fresco, Sistine Chapel, Vatican City.

Between 1534 and 1541, Michelangelo completed his world-famous fresco on the East End Altar Wall of the Sistine Chapel, which is a depiction both of the second coming of Christ, and the day of judgement.⁴⁰³ Incorporating over three hundred figures, the saved ascend to heaven (on the left) and the damned descend to hell (on the right), whilst Christ is at the swirling centre of the verdicts handed out in the final judgement. The damned, having been ferried across to Hades are offered up to Minos at the entrance to

⁴⁰³ Discussed on multiple websites.

hell, helped along by the ferryman Charon threatening them with his oar,⁴⁰⁴ which he holds like a club about to strike the condemned souls.



(Left) Fig.47a: Detail of Fig.47.
 (Centre) Fig.46a: Detail of Fig.46.
 (Right) Fig.47b: Detail of Fig.47.

I suggest that at the heart of Dadd's painting, perhaps set in the undergrowth of purgatory rather than heaven, is a reversed image of Michelangelo's Christ. Dadd obscures his woodsman-Feller's features and provides him with an unfinished axe, elevated, and ready to strike upon the patriarch's instruction.⁴⁰⁵ In this way, Dadd references not only the murder stroke with the walking cane, but also Michelangelo and his portrayal of Christ and Charon, whilst suggesting a reference to the hellish journey of the woodsman from Dante's nine canto masterpiece, the *Comedia*.⁴⁰⁶ (Dadd would later return to ideas relating to poetry in his own poem *Elimination*, and in his watercolour *Leonidas with the*

⁴⁰⁴ <https://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei/cappella-sistina/giudizio-universale.html>. Accessed: 2025.

⁴⁰⁵ Allderidge, 125: "In the centre is a white-bearded old man, the arch magician, a patriarch with 'triple crown of subtle might'. The crown looks like a reference to the Pope, reinforced by the gesture of his right hand as if in blessing; but Dadd explains [in his *Elimination* poem] this is a command 'Except I tell you when, strike if you dare'. In his outstretched left hand he holds a 'large little club', for hitting small fairies over the head."

⁴⁰⁶ Dunand and Zivie-Coche, 320-5. Charon's equivalent, Anubis was the Egyptian 'guide of the dead' during the judged peoples' subterranean journey through the netherworld. Anubis was sometimes depicted in canine form with the key to the netherworld hanging around his neck – a Graeco-Roman corruption of Egyptian symbolism.

Woodcutters (1873), which locates a poem by Richard Glover (1712-85) about the rural worshippers of Pan, in nine books.)⁴⁰⁷ Nonetheless, not only had Dadd previously referenced Michelangelo's art in *Deceit or Duplicity*, with its connotations of the Cumaean Sibyl, but as Allderidge has pointed out, he also referenced Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* from the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in his 1853 painting, *The Ballad Monger*.⁴⁰⁸ Dadd also replicated the Virgin Mary's leg position from Michelangelo's *The Last Judgement*, for *Cupid and Psyche* (?c.1853-60). The idea that Dadd created artworks referencing Michelangelo's in the years preceding the start of *The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke*, makes my hypothesis less likely to be co-incidence. In *The Ballad Monger* (1853) Dadd uses Michelangelo's pose reversed, and this idea of reversal⁴⁰⁹ is seen again in *The Fairy Feller*. Therefore, Dadd may have been allegorising Michelangelo's work representing the heavens above, whilst his own work was set below in the undergrowth and world of fairies. Ergo, when looking up we see the front, and when looking down we see the back. It was also a neat trick for Dadd to hint at the central character being himself whilst not actually portraying his own features. I would argue that a secret, hidden in plain view, is a very typical stylistic joke for Richard Dadd.

In addition, I propose that the layout of *The Fairy Feller* is based upon Dadd's earlier education at the Academy schools, and references Sir Joshua Reynolds *Discourses* in particular. Reynolds encouraged the use of the best artistic ideas from earlier masters, and proposed those ideas might be brought together in a new work to create an even greater masterpiece.⁴¹⁰ With time on his hands and his 'Sketches' as a pre-working of his own ideas, I suggest Richard Dadd set out to do exactly this within his most famous painting, apparently created over nine years (*quasi* 1855-64).

⁴⁰⁷ Allderidge, 132.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 87: "There is a slightly disturbing element in the central figure, which comes partly from the inexplicable way he balances on a piece of turned wood; but also, perhaps, from the fact that his pose is taken from the Adam of Michael-angelo's 'Creation', reversed and stood on end."

⁴⁰⁹ A technique used in creating etchings and engravings, with which Dadd was familiar – see Allderidge, 61-63.

⁴¹⁰ Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, from a series of lectures between 1769 and 1790.



(Left) Fig.47c: Detail of Fig.47.
 (Right) Fig.46b: Detail of Fig.46.

One example of my theory is found immediately above Charon in *The Last Judgement*, where angels blow trumpets and hold books of verdict ruling on those saved or condemned, and which Dadd also incorporated into his imagery (see Fig.46b). The iconography of Dadd's painting is quite different to that of Michelangelo however. Whilst Michelangelo represents Christian ideology, with a little pagan mysticism included for dramatic effect, Richard Dadd reverses this idea to pagan judgement, with a little Christian representation incorporated for dramatic effect.⁴¹¹ I suggest Dadd cannot resist identifying himself as the son of another god (Osiris) via the reversed raised and bent arm.

⁴¹¹ Dunand and Zivie-Coche, 180-3 and 239, make clear that judgement of actions before a tribunal of gods also existed in Egyptian understanding, as noted in chapters 30 and 125 of the *Book of the Dead*, and this was known as 'Judgement of the Dead'. And on page 187, where immortality (justification before the god Osiris) is understood in some sense as transforming into an Osiris.



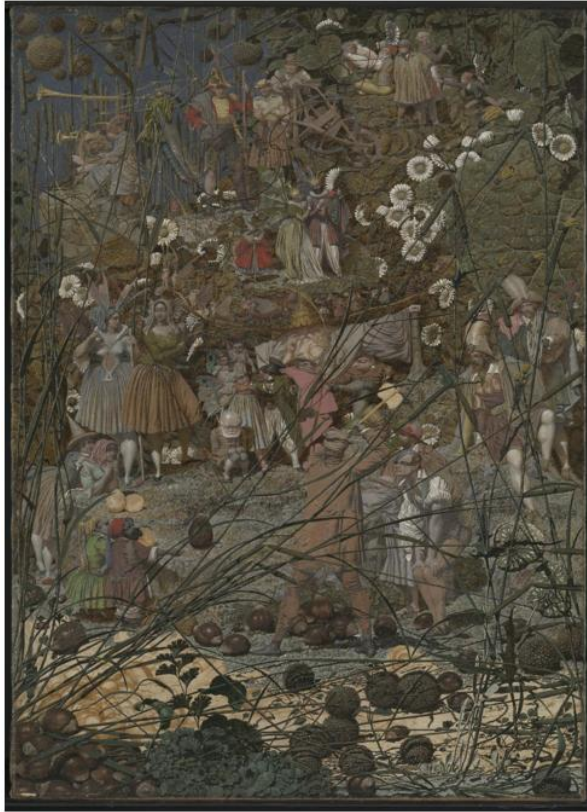
(Left) Fig.47a: Detail of Fig.47.

(Right) Fig.46a: Detail of Fig.46.

In Michelangelo's Christ we see a reminder of Jesus' crucifixion or 'Passion' in the wound upon his raised hand, so with his raised axe perhaps Dadd also wished to metaphorically remind us of his series of paintings relating to his own 'Passion' and suffering. For Dadd, potentially the most striking representations of Christ's 'Passions' were recreated within the engravings of Albrecht Dürer.⁴¹² Possibly, Dadd's inspiration for his inclusion of Timothy grasses, overlaid both on *The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke*, and perhaps even more vividly on *Songe de la Fantasie*,⁴¹³ introduce one of Dürer's masterpieces, the *Great Piece of Turf* (1503).

⁴¹² For example: Dürer's *Great Passion Series* (1497-1510) and his *Small Passion Series* (1511).

⁴¹³ Allderidge, 126.



(Left) Fig.46: Richard Dadd, *quasi* 1855-64, *The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke*, 54.0 x 39.4 cm, Tate Gallery (presented by Sir Siegfried Sassoon in 1963, in memory of the painter's great-nephews Julian, Edmund and Stephen Gabriel Dadd).

(Right) Fig.48: Albrecht Dürer, 1503, *Das große Rasenstück* (Great Piece of Turf), 40.3 x 31.1 cm, Albertina, Vienna. (Public domain).

Returning to Michelangelo's fresco, Dadd has echoed the lower right-hand section, where the golden yellow of Michelangelo's flames of the fires of hell are hinted at in Dadd's artwork as a golden yellow snail, suggesting a fairy's slimy, instead of fiery, end. The delight of this ingenuity is that it also subtly reminds the viewer of Richard Dadd's earlier fairy painting, *Titania Sleeping* (1841). Patricia Allderidge suggested the earlier painting's composition was conceived in the spiral shape of a snail's shell.⁴¹⁴ In addition, in Michelangelo's masterpiece, he is confident enough to leave a section, in the lower middle of the fresco, which is devoid of characters. Dadd too leaves an empty, unfinished space in the same location, perhaps suggesting the decision not to finish *The Fairy Feller* was deliberate, rather than a matter of time.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 59.

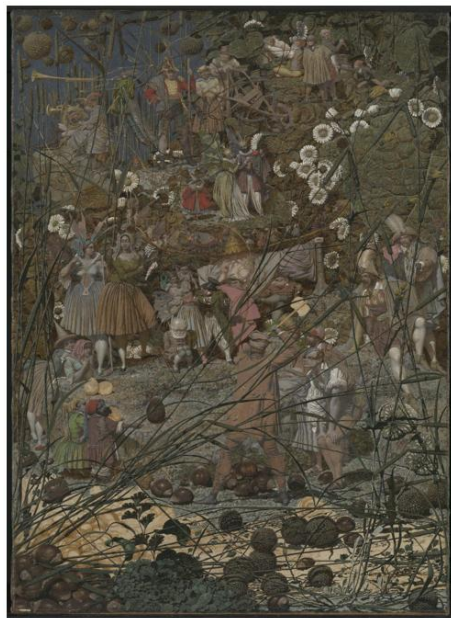


(Left) Fig.47d: Detail (from lower right corner) of Fig.47.
 (Right) Fig.46c: Detail (from lower right corner) of Fig.46.

Another renaissance masterpiece from the Vatican which Dadd appears to reference is Raphael's *The Disputation of the Sacrament* (1509-10) from the Pope's apartments on the second floor at the Apostolic Palace. In brief, Raphael's artwork in the Room of the Signature portrays the "pillars of Christian humanism",⁴¹⁵ with the church triumphant above and the church militant below, where an assemblage of scholars attempt to penetrate the meaning of the Eucharist and the mystery of God made flesh.⁴¹⁶ Therefore, I propose Dadd's inspiration taken from this painting is to show various characters all peering intently at the central paused inaction of the artwork, perhaps poking fun at others attempt to understand the meaning and mystery of Richard Dadd himself. Dadd also incorporates many figures on the broad brim of his patriarch's hat, which divides the composition, just as Raphael incorporates many putti (winged cherubic figures) on his dividing cloud formation and multiple seated saints along the top edge of the cloud.

⁴¹⁵ Anja Grebe, 2020, Richard Elliott (Trans.), *The Vatican: All the Paintings*, (New York 2020), 210.

⁴¹⁶ <https://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei/stanze-di-raffaello/stanza-della-segnatura/disputa-del-ss-sacramento.html>, Grebe, 210-21.



(Left) Fig.46: Richard Dadd, *quasi* 1855-64, *The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke*, 54.0 x 39.4 cm, Tate Gallery (presented by Sir Siegfried Sassoon in 1963, in memory of the painter's great-nephews Julian, Edmund and Stephen Gabriel Dadd).
 (Right) Fig.49: Raffaello Sanzio, 1508-11, *La disputa del sacramento* (Disputation over the Blessed Sacrament), 500 x 770 cm, The Room of the Signature, Apostolic Palace, Vatican City.

However, it is in the patriarch's hand gesture that we find Dadd's closest resemblance to Raphael's golden-lit God the Father (see Fig.46d below). Dadd also described his patriarch's hat as a triple crown,⁴¹⁷ symbolising the Pope as Holy Father,⁴¹⁸ and this doubling down on imagery reinforces Dadd's depiction of a dominant male father figure. It is also in the other hand of the patriarch that we see the duality of weapons for striking,: a 'large little club' for hitting small fairies over the head.⁴¹⁹ With its suggestion of real, rather than imagined, adult male cruelty to small children or women, might this be another reference to hidden bullying behaviour within the Dadd household? Although elfin, the patriarch's quietly controlling and menacing figure dominates the other occupants of the painting. He directs the central space, with all other fairy groupings revolving around him. In addition, the use of the term 'nut' to describe the head was well known during the Victorian period.⁴²⁰ Therefore, it might also be a reference to the fact that Dadd used his father's own walking cane to knock him to the ground in Cobham Park during the murder.

⁴¹⁷ Tromans, *The Artist*, 188 – see *Elimination* poem.

⁴¹⁸ Allderidge, 125.

⁴¹⁹ Tromans, *The Artist*, 188 – see *Elimination* poem.

⁴²⁰ Oxford English Dictionary. https://www.oed.com/dictionary/nuthead_n?tl=true



(Left) Fig.46d: Detail of Fig.46.

(Right) Fig.49a: Detail of Fig.49.

By pausing himself, as woodsman, in the act of lifting the axe, immediately before the nut is struck, the viewer is able to conceive a different outcome. Had Dadd stopped and not attacked his father, just as he stopped and did not attack the Pope in Rome, he would not have been in the position of having received his own judicial last judgement.



Fig.46a: Detail of Fig.46.

In Michelangelo's fresco, the Virgin Mary is placed in her usual position to the left of her son and she looks down towards the souls who have been saved and will ascend to heaven. Although previously sketched in as pleading and interceding for those souls in traditional form, Michelangelo later changed his design to portray Mary as a more passive figure in his final depiction.⁴²¹ In Raphael's masterpiece the Virgin Mary is also to Christ's left and Dadd references both Michelangelo and specifically Raphael with his reversed hand placement for his fairy nymph who is turning away from the fairy dandy, making, in modern parlance, 'a pass' at her,⁴²² thereby supposedly maintaining her innocence and virginity. However, Dad replaces Mary's traditional blue veil, representing purity, with red, which usually represents the more passionate Mary Magdalene, who was also a witness to Christ's resurrection (see Fig.46e). Dadd's training at the Academy schools would certainly have been very instructive about the great renaissance artists and all aspects of their work, as encouraged by Reynolds in his discourses on art.



(Left) Fig.49b: Detail of Fig.49.
(Right) Fig.46e: Detail of Fig.46.

⁴²¹ <https://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei/cappella-sistina/giudizio-universale.html>

⁴²² Allderidge, 125.

Patricia Alderidge described the characters to the left-hand-side of Richard Dadd's painting as:

"To the far side of the magician stand two ladies maids, one holding a mirror, the other with a broom in one hand and her favourite hawkmoth perched on the other: their bulging calves and tiny feet, and the huge breasts of the girl on the left, shaped like the pointed end of the hazel nuts and straining against her bodice, provide an overtly erotic element which is extremely rare in Dadd's work, and is emphasised by the presence of a leering satyr whose head appears just by the elbow of the crouching pedagogue, peering under the skirts of the right-hand girl."⁴²³

Initially, within *The Last Judgement*, Michelangelo had included a depiction of Saint Catherine and Saint Blaise but viewers of the fresco were shocked to note that the positioning of the figures meant that Blaise appeared to be looking at Catherine's naked posterior, and perhaps their poses even suggested the possibility of sexual intercourse. The two figures were subsequently chiselled out and painted over by Daniele da Volterra in 1565.⁴²⁴ Volterra's changes to Michelangelo's original vision, show Blaise looking away from Catherine and up towards the Christ figure. To that end, I suggest Richard Dadd's subtle pun on the prudery of the Counter Reformation was to depict his satyr 'up-skirting' his own version of a sexy Saint Catherine.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Anthony Blunt, 1940 (reprint 1985), *Artistic Theory in Italy, 1450-1600*, (Oxford 1985), 112-4 & 118-9.



Fig.46f: Detail of Fig.46.

In addition, I propose that Dadd's inclusion of an erotic element to his painting at this location may actually be an astute reference to Michelangelo's original fresco, where the woman in the same location has rather unnatural looking pointed breasts, as if female attributes had been added to a muscular male anatomy. To the left of Christ and his mother in *The Last Judgement* is the figure of John the Baptist depicted as both teacher and prophet.⁴²⁵ Dadd too has included his own teacher in the same location on his painting, or in Dadd's original words from his *Elimination* poem, "the crouching squinting figure of a pedagogue, a critic whose 'business is to teach to do. Do it himself? Oh! No! tis you';".⁴²⁶ In addition, "seated on his right a well shod clod-hopper with a satyr's head, a 'modern fay'".⁴²⁷ Dadd's use of the word 'fay' for fairy, or crazy, may be another pun

⁴²⁵ The Bible, Matthew 3:1-12: John the Baptist as teacher; Luke 3:1-20: John the Baptist as prophet of God's judgement.

⁴²⁶ Tromans, *The Artist*, 190 – see *Elimination* poem.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

upon madness, but the pronunciation is also the same as 'fey', whose meaning in old English is 'one at the point of death or fated soon to die'.⁴²⁸ This character has been given the head of a satyr, one of a group of licentious and drunken woodland gods who included Pan. In Roman representations, satyrs and Pan were usually depicted as having the hindquarters, legs and horns of a goat to symbolise their lustful ways. However, in Greek art, they were often represented as a man with a horse's ears and tail, much as Michelangelo represented Biagio da Cesena in his fresco.⁴²⁹

Perhaps of equal significance to the pictorial references are Dadd's puns in the title of his painting. Only twelve of Dadd's 250 known paintings represent the fairy world, and I would argue even those dozen secretly symbolise not fairies, but doomed or unrequited love as portrayed within Shakespeare. In addition, the use of the word 'Feller' is of meaning because it ties ideas within the painting back to Dadd's travels in the middle east. Castlereagh has recounted, the title 'Fellah', in Egypt, was common and used in relation to the abhorrent slave-market of the time.⁴³⁰ Ideas relating to slavery contained within the title of *The Fairy Feller*, may also be found within *The Child's Problem* (1857). As Allderidge explained in her description of the painting Dadd included the symbol and slogan of the Anti-Slavery Society (a kneeling slave and the words 'AM I NOT A MAN AND A BROTHER') as well as a ship titled 'The Black Feree', "Dadd might be expected to show sympathy with captives of all kinds; and it is also probable that his family had always been interested in the anti-slavery cause".⁴³¹ In addition, the words 'Master-Stroke' might very obviously be understood to mean 'Masterpiece', but also subversively suggests Dadd's improvised and significant stroke of clubbing his father to the ground during the murder. The idea of the 'master' stroking or hitting his 'victim' also brings reminders of Dadd's painting of *Brutality*, as well as having vaguely suggestive overtones such as those seen in the phallic angle of the broken weapon in *Anger*. In conclusion, and as shown throughout, I propose Dadd enjoyed playing with both words and images to secretly and rebelliously express elements of his own lived experience within plain sight of his captors.

⁴²⁸ <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095816101>

⁴²⁹ Giorgio Vasari, 1965 (reprint 1978), *Artists of the Renaissance*, (New York 1978), 274.

⁴³⁰ Castlereagh, Vol.I, 16-7, & 29.

⁴³¹ Allderidge, 113. What Allderidge does not mention is that the Egyptian mythological god Osiris was also always portrayed as having 'black skin', (see Dunand and Zivie-Coche, 163).

CHAPTER 4 - CONCLUSION

"We lose something by insisting on any single meaning of a Spenserian image, for the reason that all the meanings are related to and shed light on each other."⁴³²

Throughout this thesis my hypothesis has been that Richard Dadd created artworks based upon his own lived experience rather than at the behest of others. Dadd's imagery is complex, multilayered, interconnected, literary, theatrical, and tends towards ideas that encompass the whole. However, this creates a potential problem for the modern observer when Dadd's artistic ideas loop and rotate into a vortex, like a spiral version of an ouroboros. Dadd's use of flat colours and suspended action does, nevertheless, direct the viewer's attention to potential moral and religious meaning within the dramas presented. I have argued that for Richard Dadd, this technique was adapted to subtly draw attention to the story he wished to tell of his own life suffering and 'passions' but the problem this conception creates is that the viewer is required to decode or decipher each artwork. Therefore, studying Dadd's paintings commands an intellectual struggle with the concepts which shaped their creation. It has become harder for the modern witness to understand, experience and know the underlying art-historical and philosophical sources upon which these early paintings were based. Today, it is less common to be instructed upon ideas which were fully expected to be understood by Victorian audiences.

Richard Dadd's subtlety and clever juxtaposing of ideas, whilst not in any way detracting from the complexity of his imagery, places Dadd amongst the very finest of artists. Yet, apart from a handful of well-known paintings, such as *The Fairy Feller, Contradiction.*, *Puck* (1841), and *Artists' Halt in the Desert* (1842), Dadd's mental ill-health and subsequent terrible crime has led to much of Dadd's art becoming virtually invisible to museum-going audiences. This, in my view, coupled with current interest in artistic

⁴³² MacCaffrey, 771.

painterliness and impressionistic modernism mostly emanating from the French schools, has exacerbated the obfuscation of Dadd's draughtsmanship and skill.

In addition, I would argue that current emphasis on interpreting paintings from twenty-first-century concerns and perspectives, and overlaying modern ideas and thinking, further blurs and softens focus upon Dadd's creations. Richard Dadd's artwork is difficult to modernise. To fully understand Dadd's art, it is necessary to study what *he* suggests to the viewer and to pay close attention when he links themes together. This is of particular relevance because Dadd's speech has mostly been lost to researchers or can only be heard, in the main, through the interpretation of his words by physicians and attendants within Bethlem and Broadmoor. Like the reinvention of history by those who emerge victorious from the battle, we gain only a biased or distorted perspective. Notably, and of particular importance is that the viewpoints provided by medical professionals each had their own therapeutic theories to promote. Only via his paintings could Dadd speak directly to the viewer, using entirely his own voice, a fact I propose he himself fully understood.

Therefore, it is my contention that, almost all of Richard Dadd's paintings are very personal to himself and were used to portray various elements of his life. Dadd only drew or painted people he had personally met, and he represented many ideas in an obscure or allegorical way that may be the only form of control he retained once incarcerated. Subjectively, it may have been a macabre game for Dadd to tease his gaolers within plain sight. Dadd's use of allegory was almost certainly a tool in his armour and was possibly influenced by his meeting with Nazarene leader Johann Friedrich Overbeck in Rome. The connections within the frozen movement and linear forms of Nazarene art have already been suggested,⁴³³ so I will not reiterate them here. The use of puns within his art and titling, is pure Richard Dadd. The most obvious analogy for punning within *The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke*, being the idea that the nut has not been cracked. This idea evokes a satirical reminder of the hostile brother at the centre of Millais' first Pre-Raphaelite

⁴³³ For example: Lionel Gossman; M. Taylor Pine, *Unwilling Moderns: The Nazarene Painters of the Nineteenth Century*; and Cordula Grewe, *The Nazarenes: Romantic Avant-Garde and the Art of the Concept*.
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Brotherhood painting *Isabella* (1848-9), who cracks a nut whilst extending his leg to kick his sister's dog.

According to Allderidge, colour differences between *Songe de la Fantasie* (1864) and *The Fairy Feller* might be explained by the change in medium from oil to watercolour, or that Dadd had far greater access to nature at Broadmoor than Bethlem, and, that Dadd was purportedly working from memory.⁴³⁴ Or was he? *The Fairy Feller* was started around 1855 and left unfinished at Bethlem in 1864, a time frame of nine years of work. Dadd supposedly produced *Songe de la Fantasie* in just four months, after his arrival at Broadmoor.⁴³⁵ Admittedly, Dadd did not need to redesign the concept, this was a work he had already laid out previously. Yet, to duplicate such a complicated and intricate artwork in the space of four months when a previous version had taken nine years, to me seems unlikely. It is my contention therefore, that Dadd did not create catalogue raisonné No.192 in just four months but rather, that he had either drawn up the design at Bethlem and was working from this for his masterpiece (like a cartoon for a fresco), or he created a copy of *The Fairy Feller* at Bethlem and brought it with him to Broadmoor. This would be a very logical method for enabling Dadd to emotionally part with his masterpiece, for he would not really be leaving the ideas behind, but rather bringing them with him, allowing him to continue to play, experiment and create another version of his own last judgement. Be that as it may, when Dadd arrived at Broadmoor he found not another Bethlem but a new hospital specifically designed to offer its inhabitants broad vistas across the landscape from the terraces, and a much greener environment which brought nature closer than Dadd would have seen for many years.⁴³⁶ There was a cruel irony in the freedom Dadd could now see from the terraces of Broadmoor, in that it was eternally out of reach beyond the high walls of the Asylum.⁴³⁷

What cannot now be known for certain is whether Richard Dadd always preferred to make a watercolour version or preliminary drawing of his artworks when he created an oil painting. It is possible that he did sometimes do this, but the only other known situation

⁴³⁴ Allderidge, 127.

⁴³⁵ Ibid., 126-7.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 31.

⁴³⁷ Tromans, *The Artist*, 152.

where two identical paintings in different media exist is from 1878 when Dadd created catalogue raisonné No.211 *Wandering Musicians*, and No.212, *Italian Rustic Musicians*. Of particular interest is Dadd's unusual order of production. The first No.211, is an oil painting and the second No.212, a watercolour. This reversal of order might seem to be the wrong way around. Most nineteenth-century artists made a sketch or watercolour daub before working their schematic up into an oil painting. However, for Dadd the watercolour may have acted like a cartoon, providing a point of reference to the original drawing from which to always refer back. As Henry Hering's c.1857 photograph of Richard Dadd (Fig.1) shows, Dadd's technique was to draught the entire piece, before working on small areas of an oil painting, completing each before moving to the next small area. Effectively, each section of the bigger artwork became a miniature painting in and of itself. By retaining a clean original drawing upon which to refer, Dadd never lost sight of his initial idea or plan in its purest and most idealistic form. Once the oil painting was complete, Dadd was then able to revisit his ideas in a medium over which he had always excelled - watercolour. Dadd's lightness of touch was well suited to the watercolour medium and even when painting in oil he often did not varnish, leaving his work with the finish and feel of an opaque watercolour or tempura. It is for these reasons I propose Richard Dadd began his painting *Songe de la Fantasia* at Bethlem, together with his oil painting schematic for *The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke*. The main differences in his two paintings came about therefore, precisely because Dadd no longer had access to his original oil painting.

In addition, Dadd was fully aware that his artworks were leaving Bethlem and used this knowledge within his production. Until Dr Hood restricted Dadd's paintings from leaving the Asylum,⁴³⁸ Dr Alexander Morison both supplied Dadd with art materials and created his own personal collection of Dadd's artworks.⁴³⁹ Therefore, logically, if Dadd wished to ensure a painting reached the outside world after Dr Hood's tenure, his most effective method would be to dedicate that artwork to a person of importance within the Asylum, such as Hood (*Contradiction.*) or Haydon (*The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke*).

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 113-4.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 83.

In essence and to conclude, my hypothesis is that Richard Dadd painted his own lived experience throughout his artwork production. Precisely because of this focus, his work became an exploration of good and bad, which as I have demonstrated, most particularly developed through his interest in the hellish number nine. Dadd's fascination with the mythical Egyptian god Osiris demonstrates his interest in stories of betrayal, murder and rebirth (or forgiveness), which mirrors the Biblical stories of Christ and of Cain, the world's first murderer, and suggests a unification of ideas. This concept plays out within Dadd's choice of location for his murderous act in Cobham Park, where the footpath of his escape route runs closely beside the Darnley Mausoleum which is itself, another representation of The Pyramid of Cestius in Rome suggesting further connections and connotations.

Therefore, my final contention is this may be why Dadd's artworks, with their influence and depiction of satire, puns and jokes, do not fit the usual pattern of schizophrenic art as explored by other researchers.⁴⁴⁰ It is not the duality of schizophrenia the viewer sees represented in Dadd's paintings, but rather the duality of his own lived exploration of good versus evil.

⁴⁴⁰ For example: Sander L. Gilman, *Disease and representation: images of illness from madness to AIDS*; and Louise Lippincott, 'Murder and the Fine Arts; Or, a Reassessment of Richard Dadd'; and John M MacGregor, *The Discovery of the Art of the Insane*; and Hans Prinzhorn, *Artistry of the mentally ill: a contribution to the psychology and psychopathology of configuration*.

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