

Britain and the Slavs in the 19th Century: The Ilchester Endowment in Context*

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Who were the Slavs? Some of them are here imagined on screen. **[pic 1]** I shall return to that question shortly; and explain the picture by the end. But first to the endowment.

On 1 June 1860, the 4th Earl of Ilchester made his will. In it he assigned a sum of £1,000 ‘to found an exhibition, lectureship, or scholarship or a periodical prize for the encouragement of the study of the Polish and other Slavonic languages, literatures, and history, with the view of promoting the knowledge of European politics in general and more especially benefitting the diplomatic service of this country’. Five years later Ilchester died and the bequest became effective; after five more years Oxford University finally implemented his wishes, though with a shorter statement of purpose that omitted special mention of Polish.

The local circumstances of this grant, together with its antecedents, for there had been abortive efforts (from the same quarter) to establish some kind of Slavonic instruction at Oxford back in the 1840s, were closely

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examined long ago by the late JSG Simmons.¹ I won't dwell on them now. Rather I salute John's memory: born a century ago and died a decade ago, he was one of the great savants of the Slav world. He founded a club for his friends, whose only distinguishing feature, indeed its only activity of any kind, was sporting a tie, which he had given them, on Slav occasions (and on the first of April). He called it the 4Cs club: I've long forgotten what those Simmonsian 'C's on my tie stood for;² but as an aural mnemonic for today, I suggest Christ Church, Cryptogamia, Karelia, and Krasiński.

A thousand pounds constituted a substantial amount in 1870 (around £100,000 today). More importantly, it was the first endowment of its kind in the United Kingdom; and (incidentally) it still serves its original objectives to this day. In *international* terms the Ilchester provision matched developments elsewhere, although those proceeded mostly with public funding. The earliest regular Slavonic teaching at universities outside the actual Slav territories was in the German lands: Čelakovský at Breslau from 1842, Miklošić at Vienna from 1849, then Jagić at Berlin from 1874. In France, after the famous initiative at the Collège de France by Adam Mickiewicz and Cyprien Robert, courses started at the Sorbonne, given by Louis Léger, in 1869-70. Apparently nothing else

existed, by the Ilchester year, except some low-level activity at Graz and Leiden.³

But I want to concentrate on the *national* context: to survey the scene before and after the 1860s, to measure what difference Ilchester made. Behind that lies the deeper issue of ‘Slavonic Studies’ themselves, as a conceptual category discovered, or fabricated, by the systematic philology of the 19th century: a Herderian vision, where linguistic affinities create the presumption of mutual ethnic cohesiveness and a common mission.

The inherent discongruity in this was never plainer than in the 1860s, with the two largest Slav nations, Russians and Poles, locked in bitter struggle – a tension already visible in the issue of the Ilchester wording. [2] That formed just the sharpest manifestation of a larger inconformity between pan-Slavism as a cultural manifestation of all the relevant peoples and as Russian political hegemony over the rest. And it held implications for an understanding of the Slav geopolitical region and beyond, by those on the ground, and by external commentators, including those across the English Channel.

We shall see later how lecturers on the Ilchester foundation interpret Slavonic Studies, as the terms of the bequest required of them (and of me!). They certainly weren't trained in what nowadays we call 'donor appreciation': not one appears to have been at all curious about Ilchester himself (and even Simmons gave him only cursory attention).

The 4th Earl of Ilchester is a forgotten man of many parts.⁴ [3] William Thomas Horner Fox Strangways (as I shall call him, since it was his name for most of his life) was born in 1795, the second son of the 2nd Earl – there had been a clutch of daughters too – and the eldest son of his father's second marriage. William's governess, whose memoirs have survived, remarked of him at the tender age of two: 'He is so sweet a child that at last he makes even me love him, et *c'est beaucoup dire*' – no love was lost between her and the new countess.⁵ We sense strong family bonds, for all that, and a clear educational track: 1813 William went up to Christ Church, like the rest of his kinsmen. In fact, as we'll shortly see, he was a youth precocious in kinds of learning he probably *didn't* acquire at the House.

His career then lay in foreign service. This began with four years at St Petersburg, where he only gradually assumed any diplomatic duties. During the 1820s William lived mainly in Italy; by the early thirties he

was in Vienna; then he had a spell back in London from 1835 to 1840 as Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs in Lord Melbourne's administration. Through the 1840s he acted as British minister to the German Confederation at Frankfurt am Main. Then he retired, married late, inherited the earldom, and died without issue.

Evidently William acquired a fund of experience of eastern and central Europe from his cub posting to Russia onwards. In the 1840s we find him explaining the intricacies of the Schleswig-Holstein question to Palmerston⁶ – the very statesman who later famously said he'd forgotten all about it again in the meantime. That was enhanced by linguistic inquisitiveness. One of his letters contains an erudite disquisition on the history of German dialect, from one extreme ('I have seen perfect Plattdeutsch written in Livonia about the 15th century') to another: 'look up Herberstein's embassy to Muscovy in 1549' – he enjoins his correspondent – 'where you will see specimens of old Austrian'.⁷ At Vienna and Frankfurt he would no doubt have observed the first tentative initiatives within the Confederation for professional study of the Slavs. Both abroad and at home he forged those links to exile Poles which must explain his special wording for the bequest.

William was, however, deliberately not a politician: he never became an MP, even as a participant in government, though compliant local boroughs stood at the family's disposal. That's an important clue for the nature of his endowment. When not on travels he enjoyed his Strangways rural inheritance: Melbury in Dorset [4] as the family seat, with a summer residence at Abbotsbury, the so-called Castle [5], on the adjacent south coast. Yet William couldn't help embodying a political *culture*. For he was also a Fox, and the Foxes were one of the prime Whig clans. His cousins in the junior line were the greatest rivals of the William Pitts, elder and younger. They established 'Holland House', England's most sophisticated and international salon in the first decades of the 19th century, under the formidable and imperious Lady Holland.⁸ [6] Had William lived a decade longer, he would actually have inherited the building (it passed to his nephew, the 5th Earl, in 1874).

His siblings furnished the childless William with an extended but close-knit family network. [7] There were two rather conventional brothers: Henry, the 3rd Earl, who rose to the dizzying height of Captain of the Yeomen of the Guard – in fact a post in the Melbourne government, for all its Gilbert & Sullivan ring; and John, a diplomat and gentleman-usher. But of William's sisters, the two elder wed (Mansel) Talbots (their husbands were second cousins to each other), yielding a pair of notable

nephews relevant to our story; the youngest married Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, the 3rd Marquess of Lansdowne.

Lansdowne, Chancellor of the Exchequer by the age of 26 and long-serving Lord President of the Council, well illustrates some chief features of the Whig DNA: amiable but cliquish; magnanimous but arrogant; metropolitan, worldly, rational, indifferent in religion, Francophile.⁹ Whigs shared some kind of mildly progressive agenda, equally distanced from monarchy and democracy: they believed in constitutionalism, parliamentary and other kinds of reform, Catholic and other kinds of emancipation, abolition of slavery.

Whigs also identified themselves with material improvement, with commercial and industrial development. William's nephew Christopher Rice Mansel Talbot was another politician in the clan: he represented Glamorgan for sixty years (though he spoke only thrice in the House, once in order to have a window opened). More significantly, he managed the family estates of Penrice and Margam, and also turned the latter into South Wales' first global hub of trade and manufactures, above all copper and iron (giving his name to Port Talbot, which he founded in the 1830s).¹⁰

Mansel Talbot shone as a mathematician, but in the typically Whig pursuit of scientific curiosity he was far outshone by his cousin, Henry *Fox* Talbot: not only brilliant mathematician, philologist and linguist, but inventor as well. [8] Fox Talbot's theoretical work on optics led him to revolutionary advances during the 1830s through the conception and then realization of what came to be called photography. [9-10] This, along with much else, was picked up in the dense correspondence with his favourite uncle, William Fox Strangways.¹¹ In 1840 the latter reports that even Metternich – 'the Austrian Machiavel as the papers call him' – is being kept *au courant* with the new technique.¹²

The same impression, of reasoned liberalism, elitist but open to progress and novelty, is conveyed too by William's official reports as a diplomat, and provides the background to his activities in London during the 1830s as a member of the Whig government. We find him cautious, shrewd, and fundamentally broad-minded, on a wide range of matters: from the trivia of lost passports or the correct style of address for Teutonic princelings, to the political institutions of Germany and the early writings of Karl Marx.¹³

Yet the public career was only a foil to cultural, learned and aesthetic concerns. Not for William his father's dreary addiction to field sports, or the rakish drunkenness and compulsive gaming of his brilliant cousin Charles James Fox. For him the Continent was a substitute for the round of Whig social and political business at home. As he remarked to Fox Talbot in 1831: 'I prefer the beauties of Riva & the Lago di Garda to the hustings of Chippenham or any other' (in fact nephew Henry would shortly be elected there).¹⁴ However his *foreign* connections yielded *domestic* outcomes, three in particular.

The first was collecting pictures.¹⁵ William's taste inclined heavily towards the old Italian masters, i.e. those who would increasingly be known and admired as 'pre-Raphaelites'. These paintings were acquired abroad, and many of them promptly gifted to his alma mater Christ Church in two tranches, 1827 and 1832, to form the core of a college picture gallery: an example is Filippino Lippi's *Wounded Centaur* (note for present purposes not so much the mythology as the depiction of rocks). [11] Then came more than forty canvases for the Ashmolean, given in 1850 to be housed in Cockerell's new two-in-one building with the new Taylor Institution, among them Paolo Uccello's iconic *Hunt in the Forest* (note here the carpet of flowers and tree canopy). [12] Those

pictures which William retained at Abbotsbury were lost when the house burnt down in 1913.

Yet plenty of evidence survives there for Fox Strangways' second pastime: he was an ardent and highly expert botanist and plant collector, and that from an early age. Here he is in August 1816, writing to Fox Talbot: 'By the bye I am going to Russia where they tell me there are nothing but Cryptogamia [i.e. ferns, mosses, fungi] ... I shall be glad to know what is to be expected in the dreary plains ...' On arrival the 21-year-old William jumps into breathless lists of species for his 17-year-old nephew. 'I have had the pleasure of looking over part of a voluminous hortus siccus [i.e. a herbarium] from the Moravian settlement of Sarepta in the government of Saratov ... Salicornias or Salsolas innumerable which grow in the salt marshes and lakes of Central Asia, together with Tamarisks ... Astragali endless – which I know are your favourites ... many sorts of Linum ... Ipomea quamoclit and Chelidonium glaucium [yellow-horned poppy] ...' and so on.¹⁶

In Russia William met local botanists (including two Razumovskys) and began the world-wide seed and specimen banks with which he – in some cases before anyone else – embellished his English gardens, above all in the mild clime of Abbotsbury.¹⁷ [13] Notably he planted trees, with a

special fondness for the Chilean Huillipatagua (*Citronella mucronata*), the Caucasian wingnut (*Pterocarya fraxinifolia*), and the Austrian or Corsican pine (*Pinus nigra* subsp). [14] Likewise he planted shrubs, one genus of which, *Stranvaesia* (now often called *Photinia*), especially *sp nussia*, from the Himalayas, actually took his name. [15] Fox Talbot's picture of a leaf, one of his first photographs, encapsulates their shared devotion to plants. [16]

The young Fox Strangways had one yet more consuming passion. As a niece of his observed, he 'likes flowers better than men, and stones better than flowers.'¹⁸ When still a child, William would have come to know the pioneering geologist, William Smith, who was employed for a time by his family¹⁹; and the subject has a particular relevance here. Fox Strangways must have spent much of his sojourn in St Petersburg prospecting. He wrote up his finds as contributions to the *Transactions* of the newly-founded Geological Society of London; and it was these – rather than just his aristocratic credentials – that earned him fellowship of the Royal Society at the age of 25. He investigated specific landforms: the Pulkovka brook to the south of the capital; [17] the Imatra falls, further away, on the Voxa [Vuoksa] river in Karelia.²⁰ And he charted the entire field: initially just the environs of St Petersburg; [18-19] then the whole of Russia (albeit concentrated in the north and west), with vivid depictions

especially of riverine scenery and regular evocations of comparable British topography. [20] William's pioneering achievement was later acknowledged by Roderick Murchison and others.²¹

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Was this the first scientific presentation of a Slav landscape by an Englishman? In any case it leads us to ask what 'Slav[onic]' signified in Britain at the start of the 19th century. Mostly it meant Russia (and I did not notice any use of the word 'Slav' in Fox Strangways' papers), as befitted her crucial accretion of great-power status through the Napoleonic wars. And at that time Russia was personified (that's not too strong a word) by Count Semyon Vorontsov, both a great aristocrat – owner of 24,000 serfs – and for decades an effective, visible and highly anglophile ambassador in London.²² [21] Vorontsov exerted real public influence in 1791, moulding British public opinion to keep the government out of a war with Russia during the Ochakov crisis. When he lost favour at St Petersburg in 1806, he stayed in England for the rest of his long life, and became part of the domestic scene: Woronzow road, in St John's Wood, bears his name.²³ [22]

It's a striking detail that Vorontsov (however *we* wrote *his* name!) never learned English. He could always speak French with his Whig friends,

and grew so close to the profoundly dysfunctional family of the Herberts, earls of Pembroke, that his daughter Yekaterina married George, the 11th Earl. Whereas her husband had travelled in Russia in the 1770s, she now settled for decades at Wilton House (some 40 miles from Melbury, and there was contact with the Fox Strangways, at least in respect of domestic servants²⁴). Their son Sidney Herbert became a prominent politician who ran the War Office at the time of the Crimean campaigns. Meanwhile Vorontsov's son, Mikhail Semyonovich, resettled in Russia, where William had dealings with him²⁵, and was eventually appointed viceroy of the Caucasus.

The embassy continued to be primarily involved in commercial policy, the traditional staple of Anglo-Russian relations. The historic Russia (ex-Muscovy) Company still eked out a shadow existence, although it had long forfeited its privileges. One of its members, Adam Kroll, issued in 1800 *A Commercial Dictionary, in the English and Russian Languages; with a Full Explanation of the Russian Trade*. At that same time Philip Samuel Nemnich's *Universal European Dictionary of Merchandise*, which included vocabulary in both Russian and Polish, also carried a London imprint. [23]

However, the practical needs were mainly at the Russian end: generations of sailors trained in English marine expertise; substantial, mainly unassimilated, British communities in St Petersburg and Moscow – traders, craftsmen, medical doctors.²⁶ All the full Anglo-Russian dictionaries and grammars in the earlier 19th century (as through the whole of the 18th) appeared in Russia; when they started to find a market elsewhere, it was in Germany rather than the UK. But by the 1830s the Russian empire did attract the interest of the high-flying liberal Richard Cobden, who promoted a controversial defence of it not only as trading partner, but as a power considerably less hegemonic than Great Britain.²⁷

Another object of fitful attention was the Orthodox Church, again long associated with the embassy, where Jakob Smirnov served as chaplain for sixty years and ultimately supervised the move of his congregation to 32 Welbeck St, Marylebone. [24] He went more native than Vorontsov, especially as an enthusiastic agronomist and friend of Arthur Young²⁸ – even if had to appeal to diplomatic immunity to frustrate the distrait of his property through debt to an English plumber (evidently there was not yet a supply of Slavonic ones).²⁹

Orthodoxy aroused more interest at the British end as the Oxford Movement took off. Several prominent local ritualists paid some

obeisance to it, most notably William Palmer, who though he suffered repeated humiliating rebuffs from the Orthodox hierarchy, engaged in a robust but collegial and discerning theological correspondence with the learned and well-informed Slavophile leader, Aleksey Khomiakov.³⁰ Then there was the visionary ecclesiologist and famous hymn-writer, John Mason Neale.³¹ Ironically, the best-remembered witness to his lifelong study of the Eastern and Slavonic churches is that much-loved Christmas farrago of historical nonsense Good King Wenceslas, cobbled together from an obscure Czech poem of 1847 by one Václav Svoboda.

[25]

As that example reminds us, the earlier 19th-century romantic enthusiasm for peasants and (supposedly primitive) folk culture had its Slav dimension in Britain, albeit more modestly than elsewhere. (Sir) John Bowring, the celebrated translator and almost equally repugned mistranslator, may stand as its epitome.³² Mainly, however, it's the noble, and sophisticated Polish refugees after the failed anti-Russian insurrection of 1831 who perforce represented here the rest of the Slav world. Several hundred of them settled at any one time; and £200,000 was raised for them by public subscriptions.³³

The Poles' chief British backer was Lord Dudley Coutts Stuart, a fervently Whig-Liberal scion of Tory magnates – his brother, the Marquess of Bute, became Mansel Talbot's rival in South Wales – and a banker's daughter. Stuart, with the then fashionable romantic poet Thomas Campbell and others, established a Literary Association of Friends of Poland from 1832. Parliament debated their cause, with a sympathetic but guarded response from its Whiggish majority. From 1847 a Polish National Freemasonic Lodge set the seal on their social acceptability.

Their wider impact remained slight, but two self-appointed spokesmen made a name as publicists. Krystyn Lach-Szyrma published *Letters on Poland* already before the insurrection, with a remarkably thorough presentation of the culture of his homeland. Later he settled in England, where his son Władisław made good as an Anglican parson in Cornwall and an early science-fiction author, *pars pro toto* of a trickle of wholly naturalized Slavs in Victorian Britain. Another would be Woronzow [!] Greig, whose mother was a great real scientist, Mary Somerville, name-giver to the Oxford college.

We have another Oxford connection with the second publicist: Count Walerian Krasiński, who was already the putative candidate for a possible

Slavonic chair at the Taylorian in the 1840s. Krasiński propagated ultra-Herderian political and linguistic views:

‘The Slavonic nations are called by Providence to enact, at a no distant period, a prominent part on the stage of the world ... This is attended by a growing tendency towards a union of all [their] branches ... [since] they are in all their essentials one and the same nation, so nearly connected among themselves, that the sailors of Ragusa can freely converse with the fishermen of Archangel.’³⁴

Wild stuff; even wilder his bizarrely unbalanced Protestant interpretation of Slav history, which delighted British evangelicals, but compromised Krasiński’s wider reputation with his overwhelmingly Catholic countrymen.

Fox Strangways had contacts with Polish patriots from the time of his visit to Adam Czartoryski’s estate at Puławy in 1826. He engaged in well-disposed behind-scenes activity while in government; then as envoy in the 1840s he was supportive of Prussia’s brief liberal turn over Posen/Poznań. He shows himself informed and involved in his private correspondence with Stuart.³⁵ By the fifties he had more time back in Britain to consort with the Literary Association, becoming a vice-president in the aftermath of Crimea. Hence evidently the wording in his will, which he drew up shortly after. However, I find no sign that William

played a major part in the Poles' campaigns; and neither they nor Slavs more generally seem to feature much in his public dealings.³⁶

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With that we have returned to the terms of Ilchester's endowment. How did speakers on his foundation from 1870 onwards seek to acquit themselves of their task? For the present, the Taylorian Curators, in whom was vested management of the scheme, decided to commission series of lectures, typically four or six at a time. By 1900 there had been 18 of these series, on a roughly biennial basis: a total of 78 lectures.³⁷

The earliest speakers were two locals, more or less the only two immediately available. William Morfill, a budding Slavonic scholar, eked out a living for the moment as a private tutor (mainly cramming for examinations, one suspects) and a language instructor resident in Park Town. William Ralston, already an expert in Russian folklore, worked for years at the British Museum: an original but tormented soul, who ended in suicide. The first Ilchester-related publication, in 1874, contained Ralston's talks at Oxford on *Early Russian History*, a subject about which he declared privately, 'I know very little, but my audience knows still less'.³⁸ [26] The list then began to include some eminent foreign scholars (Vilhelm Thomsen, Copenhagen; Carl Abel, Berlin; Fedor Sigel,

Warsaw) and some distinguished émigrés: Moses Gaster from Rumania and Maksim Kovalevsky and Pavel Vinogradov from Russia.

I can only report properly on the half or so of the lectures (36 in all) that appeared in print. They are erudite, for the most part, although analysis sometimes stands at a premium; they tend to be ponderous and dour, with suitable Victorian seriousness. They weigh into current controversies (e.g. the Dane Thomsen on the Varangian, i.e. Scandinavian origins of Rus'). Abel argued that much of Russia was a kind of Slavified Finland, and 'Little Russian'/Ukrainian the real 'native' tongue. He also broached the Polish question, to the extent of addressing notions of liberty, and showing – to his own satisfaction, at least – that Russian 'volny' meant individual licence, whereas Polish 'swobodny' connoted political freedom.³⁹

The themes treated were overwhelmingly antique, or timeless. We encounter much on early history, legends, folklore. Even Arthur Evans, just installed as Keeper of the Ashmolean, doughty publicistic champion of the rights of South Slavs in his own day vis-à-vis the Ottoman empire, lectured on the Slavonic conquest of Illyricum. Arthur Patterson, known as a political and social commentator, discoursed on the *early* relations of the Slavs and the kingdom of Hungary.⁴⁰ The proto-Zionist Gaster,

recently expelled from Rumania for membership of an irredentist society, lectured on Greek traditions among the early Bulgarians and Serbs.⁴¹

At first, most speakers sought to address some substantial aspect of the entire Slavonic field. The spectacular exception was Albert Wratistlaw, an utterly English schoolmaster-cleric, but proud of his purportedly aristocratic Czech ancestry, who presented only a single century in the literature of medieval Bohemia. Though Wratistlaw counted himself a disciple of Krasiński,⁴² it's conspicuous how little in the Ilchester programme concerned Poland specifically. Then in 1889 Charles Turner, an English lector at St Petersburg, delivered a course on modern Russian literature, introducing a phase of concentration on Russia that culminated in the appearance of Konstantin Bal'mont in 1897. [27] The highly-strung symbolist writer gave lectures which remained unpublished, in French, on contemporary poetry, to a thin sprinkling of young ladies, but reckoned himself much flattered by the invitation.⁴³

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Thus by the turn of the 20th century the Ilchester endowment had some claim to international status. What difference had it made at home, and what else of relevance was happening in Britain? The Oxford lectures now constituted the single most important source of information on the

Slav world for Victorian audiences; but there were others. Understanding of Russia, from the bogeyman of the Eastern crisis in the 1870s, and the 1880s climax of the Great Game in Asia, to the beginnings of rapprochement around 1900, gained from Donald Mackenzie Wallace's sympathetic and immensely popular book on the country, its history and its institutions, first published in 1877. For those on guard at the North-West Frontier, translations were made into Urdu, Hindi, Persian and Gurmukhi Punjabi; and much of its content was recycled in works of reference such as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*).⁴⁴

Dictionaries were now somewhat more readily available, though even the bulk of English–Russian ones still appeared abroad. Aleksandrov's standard 'complete' 2-volume dictionary at least acquired a London imprint. And the genre began to extend to other Slav languages: one of the first the *Anglo-Polish Lexicon* compiled by an irrepressively inventive émigré in London, Jan Józef Baranowski, who was also responsible for patented railway signals and a 'Simple System for Checking the Passengers' Fares in Omnibuses or Tramways'.⁴⁵ Grammars were advanced especially by Morfill, who compiled them for five different Slavonic tongues.

Further ecclesiastical links developed, notably through the activity of an Eastern Church Association from 1864. William Birkbeck (Ilchester lecturer in 1895) directly revived Palmer's programme of reconciliation; he became an unequivocal apologist for Orthodoxy past and present, and rivalled Wallace in his access to Russian elites, even if he had scant practical success.⁴⁶ Russian literature began its rise in esteem, mainly through Turgenev (as translated by his good friend Ralston). Ivan Sergeyevich undertook a dozen visits here – he loved to shoot British partridge – and was awarded an Oxford honorary degree (the first novelist of any kind to receive it). [28] The esteem assumed institutional form in the 1890s, in the shape of an Anglo-Russian Literary Society, based in London, but with membership across the Continent.⁴⁷

Knowledge of other Slavs and their literatures remained rudimentary. Morfill's 1883 survey of all of them (under the characteristically Victorian imprint of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, a reminder that religious influences moved in the other direction too) hardly reached beyond the year 1600.⁴⁸ At the end of the century Count Francis Lützow – soon to give his own set of Ilchester lectures on the historians of Bohemia (themselves an overwhelmingly medieval crew) – announced in his likewise heavily medieval history of Czech literature that the subject 'is absolutely unknown in Western Europe', despite

Wratislaw's Ilchester work on exactly the same subject twenty years earlier (and Wratislaw had said just the same thing at the time). By the nineties translations of some Polish novels – mostly by Sienkiewicz – were on offer.⁴⁹

More dramatic was the sudden British discovery of Slavonic music, signalled above all by the extraordinary fame of Antonín Dvořák, who visited England eight times in quick succession after his first tumultuous reception in 1883, and became a household name, not only in London, but in Birmingham, Leeds, and other provincial centres. [29] Yet, for all his Slavonic Dances and Rhapsodies, it's squarely as a *Czech* that Dvořák was extolled when given his Cambridge honorary degree.⁵⁰ Tchaikovsky followed him in that award, with slightly less *éclat*, in 1893, a few months before his death.

By my terminus at the turn of the century new horizons beckoned. In 1900 Morfill at last became an Oxford professor (of 'Russian and the other Slavonic languages'). Cambridge received its first modest grants for Slavonic Studies: one from Sir David Salomons, inventor, horologist, and pioneer motorist (president of the Self-Propelled Traffic Association); and the other from a still unlikelier source, the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers.⁵¹ Baltic shipping interests started to move to create the

subject at Liverpool. In London (where the Whig-inspired University College had promoted languages from its inception in 1830, but only west European ones) steps would quite shortly be taken to create a full School of Slavonic Studies.

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Finally: what did all our Ilchesterites think they were doing? They still often endorsed an undifferentiated Slavdom, a kinship community; and they expressed this in the parlance of the time. The liberal sociologist Kovalevsky begins his series in 1889 thus: ‘The wide historical studies pursued by members of the University of Oxford necessarily include the study of the Slavonic race ... The Ilchester lectures were, I believe, founded in order to make known to Oxford students the present and past of this undoubtedly Aryan branch of the human race.’⁵² Thomsen speaks of the ‘Slav language’ [*sic*] - a vehicle, no doubt, for those Ragusan sailors and Archangelic fishermen. To him ‘the Slavonians have always been, as they are still, by nature a peaceable people’. Ralston views submissiveness as a native Slav trait, and as part of the Orthodox tradition.⁵³

The Slavs are late developers, and victims of an incomplete evolution. Kovalevsky speaks of ‘the part which this race is *beginning* to play in the

economic and social progress of our time.’ Morfill surveyed the scene in 1890: whereas political union is impossible (‘language and religion alone will prevent their complete fusion’); yet, as he doggedly puts it, ‘the Slavs have a great future and are every year pushing more to the front.’⁵⁴

Sigel in 1900 claims that Slav society, although ‘originally like to that of other Aryans’, has distinctive traditions (his concern is with the legal one); indeed, ‘the development of the Slavonic nations greatly differs from the development of other European peoples.’ But that is largely played out: ‘By now the Slavonic states, with the exception only of Russia, have brought their evolution to an end.’ As a Petersburg-trained Russian making his academic career in the former Poland, perhaps he would say that.⁵⁵

Above all our commentators reach no clear decision as between ‘pan-Slav’ and Russocentric alternatives (to return to my earlier formulation); or on how the two might be reconciled in future. Thus, for example, the essentially apolitical Wratislaw feels the need for a *cri de coeur* on behalf of his Czech contemporaries: ‘What wonder if the oppressed and despised Slavonians turn with hope towards that empire of Russia which is simply too vast to be despised, and whose very vastness almost renders the utmost efforts of slander and insinuation impotent?’⁵⁶

All that explains why we hear so little from the Ilchesterians about contemporary politics, so little that could have benefited the country's diplomats, as the donor proposed; also why – ironically – scientific subjects, like William's own geology and botany, were ignored, since they didn't have (as the speakers would have put it) 'racial' connotations. Hence the study of much of central and eastern Europe and northern Asia became locked into ethnolinguistic parameters which could constrict as well as liberate.

Whether we think of it as Slavophilia or as pan-Slavism, the field of Slavonic Studies, identified and fostered by the Ilchester endowment, was a kind of Kantian category. Eventually art would claim its due, since the underlying assumptions could only be sublimated in a creative visual imagination. The final and most memorable embodiment of the romance of the Slavs is in the epic cycle of historical canvases painted by Alfons Mucha in the early years of the 20th century, the anti-modernist climax to a famously modernist career. They bring together much of the thematic armoury of the early Ilchester lectures: primary legends, Cyril and Methodius, Simeon and Dušan, Hussites, through to the abolition of serfdom in Russia, and culminating in an apotheosis of the four periods of

the history of the Slavs. **[30-3]** I wonder if William Fox Strangways, had he been born a century later, would have collected them.

¹ JSG Simmons, 'Slavonic Studies at Oxford. I: The Proposed Slavonic Chair at the Taylor Institution in 1844', *O[xford] S[lavonic] P[apers]*, 3 (1952), 125-52. Id., 'Slavonic Studies at Oxford, 1844-1909, *ibid* NS, 13 (1980), 1-27, based on two Ilchester Lectures given in 1979, summarizes and extends the earlier article. The present lecture also benefited from the relevant sections of Gerald Stone, 'Slavonic Studies at Oxford: A Brief History', at http://www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/files/docs/russian/slavonic_studies.pdf

² I'm subsequently reminded that they were Conserve, Consider, Contribute and Cooperate. See *The Case for a Fifth 'C', or, A Keepsake to Mark the Occasion of a Celebration of the Life of a Librarian-Lecturer-Bibliographer-Buccaneer: J.S.G. Simmons, O.B.E., 1915-2005, The Codrington Library, All Souls College Oxford 28 January 2006* (Oxford, 2006).

³ Compendious material in Josef Hamm and Günther Wytrzens (ed), *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Slawistik in nichtslawischen Ländern* (Vienna, 1985).

⁴ There is no substantive treatment of his life. The *O[xford] D[ictionary] of N[ational] B[iography]* includes only the 6th Earl (William's great-nephew). I cite his two family names without hyphenation, as was customary at the time.

⁵ Joanna Martin (ed), *A Governess in the Age of Jane Austen. The Journals and Letters of Agnes Porter* (London, 1998), 187.

⁶ *British Envoys to Germany, 1816-66*, ed Markus Mösslang et al (4 vols, Cambridge, 2000-10), ii.105f.

⁷ Fox Talbot correspondence (see below, n 12), no 1246: F[ox] S[trangways] to F[ox] T[albot], 21 Jan 1825.

⁸ Leslie Mitchell, *Holland House* (London, 1980).

⁹ Vividly anatomized in Leslie Mitchell, *The Whig World, 1760-1837* (London, 2005).

¹⁰ Thomas Methuen Campbell, 'CRM Talbot, 1803-90: A Welsh Landowner in Politics and Industry', *Morganwg*, 44 (2000), 66-104.

¹¹ The whole correspondence of Henry Fox Talbot preserved at Lacock Abbey has been made available online at < <http://foxtalbot.dmu.ac.uk> >. I'm most grateful to the team which has provided this wonderful scholarly resource, and especially to its leader, Larry J Schaaf, for his help.

¹² 'Baron Neumann asked me for a specimen of your Art for P^{ce} Metternich who is very curious to know something of it – Could you send me anything worth presenting to the Austrian Machiavel as the papers call him.' Fox Talbot correspondence, no 4002: FS to FT, 26 Jan 1840; cf *ibid* nos 4013, 4186, 5025.

¹³ *British Envoys to Germany*, ii.104ff, *passim*; iii.22-8

¹⁴ Fox Talbot correspondence, no 2192: FS to FT, 21 May 1831.

¹⁵ Christopher Lloyd, *A Catalogue of the Early Italian Paintings in the Ashmolean Museum* (Oxford, 1977), Introduction; based substantially on his 'Picture Hunting in Italy: Some Unpublished Letters, 1824-9', *Italian Studies*, 30 (1975), 42-68, which prints those of William's letters to Fox Talbot which have an artistic content.

¹⁶ Fox Talbot correspondence, no 759: FS to FT, 1 Apr [1817].

¹⁷ Cf now Stephen Griffith, *The Abbotsbury Gardens Story* (Frampton, Dorset, 2015).

¹⁸ Lloyd, *Catalogue*, p xvii.

¹⁹ Hugh S Torrens in *The Age of the Earth from 4004 BC to AD 2002*, ed CLE Lewis and SJ Knell (= *Special Publications of the Geological Society*, 190, London, 2001), 61-83 at 66, 70.

²⁰ *Transactions of the Geological Society of London*, ser I, vol 5 (1821), 382-91, 340-5.

²¹ *Transactions of the Geological Society of London*, ser I, vol 5 (1821), 392-458; *ibid* ser II, no 1 (1822), 1-39. R I Murchison et al, *The Geology of Russia in Europe* (2 vols, London, 1845), Preface.

²² James W Marcum, *Semen R. Vorontsov, Minister to the Court of St. James's for Catherine II, 1785-96* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1970); *Vorontsovy. Dva veka v istorii Rossii* (Vladimir, 1992), 82-9 (by V O Katsik); V N Alekseev, *Grafy Vorontsovy i Vorontsovy-Dashkovy v istorii Rossii* (Moscow, 2002), 151-78; O Yu Zakharova, *Graf S R Vorontsov, posol Rossiiskoi imperii* (Simferopol, 2005).

²³ Apparently because of the local Marylebone almshouses, which he founded. It's unclear whether Vorontsov was actually resident there himself.

²⁴ Fox Talbot correspondence, no 1241: FS to FT, 17 Jan 1825; cf *ibid* nos 75, 1243, 1283, 2904, 480, 4194, 4615.

²⁵ Fox Talbot correspondence, no 296: FS to FT, 26 Apr 1826; no 1370, FS to FT, 16 Feb 1826.

²⁶ For the (rather earlier) peak of such activities, see Anthony Cross, *'By the Banks of the Neva': Chapters from the Lives and Careers of the British in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (Cambridge, 1997).

²⁷ A Manchester Manufacturer [R Cobden], *Russia* (Edinburgh, 1836)); cf S Yakobson in *OSP*, NS vii (1974), 60-74.

²⁸ Anthony Cross in *OSP*, NS viii (1975), 37-52; *id.*, *'By the Banks of the Thames': Russians in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Newtonville, Mass, 1980), 44ff; Zacharova, *Vorontsov*, *passim*.

²⁹ W E Butler in *OSP*, NS xii (1979), 104-16.

³⁰ William Palmer, *Notes of a Visit to the Russian Church in the Years 1840-1*, ed JH [Cardinal] Newman (London, 1882); WJ Birkbeck (ed), *Russia and the English Church during the Last Fifty Years*. Vol I: *Containing Correspondence between William Palmer and M Khomiakoff in the Years 1844-5* (London, 1895). Cf PE Shaw, *The Early Tractarians and the Eastern Church* (Milwaukee, 1930).

³¹ Michael J Chandler, *The Life and Work of John Mason Neale, 1818-66* (Leominster, 1995).

³² G. F. Bartle, *An Old Radical and his Brood. A Portrait of Sir John Bowring and his Family* (London, 1994); J. Youings (ed.), *Sir John Bowring 1792–1872: Aspects of his Life and Career* (Exeter, 1993).

³³ Krzysztof Marchlewicz, *Wielka Emigracja na Wyspach Brytyjskich, 1831-63* (Poznań, 2008), is sound and thorough. The most recent survey is Jędrzej Kwiatek, *Polonica angielskie w okresie międzywojennym. Dzieło i ludzie* (Katowice, 2015), 20ff. Cf also AP Coleman in *The Cambridge History of Poland*, ed WF Reddaway et al, vol ii (Cambridge, 1941), 311-24; Lucjan Lewitter, 'The Polish Cause as Seen in Great Britain, 1830-63', *OSP*, NS xxviii (1995), 35-6. Contrast the earlier unconcern documented by Norman Davies in *OSP*, NS, xvi (1983), 79-90.

³⁴ Valerian Krasinski, *Sketch of the Religious History of the Slavonic Nations* (Edinburgh, 1851), xi-xii. On him: Mieczysław Paszkiewicz in *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol 15 (1970), 193-5.

³⁵ Fox Talbot correspondence, no 1522: FS to FT, 2 Jan 1827. *The Holland House Diaries, 1831-40*, ed AD Kriegel (London, 1977), 364, 385. For Lord Holland's espousal of the Poles, cf Mitchell, *Holland House*, 291f. Marian Kuciel, *Czartoryski and European Unity, 1770-1861* (Princeton, 1955), 230f and n, 236, 240f, 249f, 258-60.

³⁶ Marcei Handelsman, *Adam Czartoryski* (3 vols, Warsaw, 1948-50), i.245, and Marchlewicz, *Wielka Emigracja*, 45, have only one casual reference to William each. *British Envoys to Germany*, ii and iii, passim.

³⁷ List in Simmons, 'Slavonic Studies', 22-7.

³⁸ M P Alexeyev, 'Ralston and Russia', *OSP* xi (1964), 83-93, at 88.

³⁹ Carl Abel, *Slavic and Latin* (London, 1883).

⁴⁰ On him, cf Tibor Frank, 'Arthur J. Patterson és a magyarok', in *Eszmék, forradalmak, háborúk. Vadász Sándor 80 éves* (Budapest, 2010), 141-53.

⁴¹ Moses Gaster, *Ilchester Lectures on Greeko-Slavonic Literature and its Relation to the Folk-Lore of Europe during the Middle Ages* (London, 1887).

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- ⁴² AH Wratislaw, *The Native Literature of Bohemia in the Fourteenth Century* (London, 1878). Much on him in JD Naughton, 'The Reception in Nineteenth-Century England of Czech Literature and of the Czech Literary Revival', (diss Cambridge, 1977). Wratislaw's *Lyra Czecho Slovanska. Bohemian Poems, Ancient and Modern* (London, 1849), is dedicated to Krasieński.
- ⁴³ Charles Edward Turner, *The Modern Novelists of Russia* (London, 1990). For Bal'mont: Anthony Cross in *OSP*, NS xii (1979), 104-16.
- ⁴⁴ Donald Mackenzie Wallace, *Russia* (London, 1877); cf W Harrison in *OSP*, NS iv (1971), 73-82; *ODNB*, s.v.
- ⁴⁵ On him: SP Koczorowski in *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol 1 (1935), 281-2.
- ⁴⁶ *Birkbeck and the Russian Church*, ed Athelstan Riley (London, 1917); Michael Hughes, 'The English Slavophile: WJ Birkbeck and Russia', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 82 (2004), 680-706.
- ⁴⁷ JSG Simmons, 'Turgenev and Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, 31 (1967), 146-51. For the Society: Dorothy Galton in *SEER*, 48 (1970), 272-82, with an interesting list of prominent members.
- ⁴⁸ WR Morfill, *Slavonic Literature* (London, 1883).
- ⁴⁹ Francis Lützow, *A History of Bohemian Literature* (London, 1899), Preface; cf id ('The Count Lützow'), *Lectures on the Historians of Bohemia* (London, 1905). Wratislaw, *Native Literature*, Preface. Kwiatek, *Polonica angielskie*, 261ff.
- ⁵⁰ Viktor Fischl, 'Dvořák in England', *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 68 (1941), 1-17 at 11f.
- ⁵¹ Anthony Cross, *Cambridge: Some Russian Connections* (Cambridge, 1987), lays out the bare facts. The Worshipful Company's archivist (if they have one) didn't respond to my request for further information.
- ⁵² Maxime Kovalevsky, *Modern Customs and Ancient Laws of Russia* (London, 1891), p 1.

⁵³ Thomsen, *Relations*, p 2. Ralston, *Early Russian History*, passim.

⁵⁴ Kovalevsky, loc.cit (my italics). WR Morfill, *An Essay on the Importance of the Study of the Slavonic Languages* (London, 1890), 29-31.

⁵⁵ Feodor Sigel [Zigel'], *Lectures on Slavonic Law* (London, 1902), Preface and p 3.

⁵⁶ Wratislaw, *Native Literature*, 164.