NINETEENTH-CENTURY GENDER STUDIES

ISSUE 14.2 (FALL 2018)

Special Issue:
Making Masculinity: Craft, Gender and Material Production in the Long Nineteenth Century

Guest Edited by Freya Gowrley, University of Edinburgh
& Katie Faulkner, Courtauld Institute of Art

Crafting Colonial Masculinity: Charles Robert Ashbee's Educational Programme in Egypt and Jerusalem, 1917-1921(1)

By Aurélie Petiot, Paris Nanterre Université

<1>In 1911, Charles Robert Ashbee (1863-1942)'s utopian venture, the Guild and School of Handicraft (established in 1888), had faltered. A member of the Arts and Crafts Movement, architect and philanthropist, Ashbee had established the Guild as an educational and productive enterprise, producing silverwork, woodwork and bookbinding. Yet more than these practices, Ashbee's whole philosophy was above all geared towards the crafting of 'new men', according to a model he started to implement first in London (1888), then in Chipping Campden (1902-1909), through his Guild and School of Handicraft and the University Extension Movement, set up to offer higher education to mostly middle and working-class people unable to attend Oxford or Cambridge. Following from Ruskin's ideas that the making of a work of art must be through the working of the head, the hand and the heart together, Ashbee's educational utopia was centred on the space of the workshop, which promoted comradeship and learning by doing. His guildsmen were his works of art, whom he tried to fashion in as many ways as possible following the model he had devised. Life together first at Essex House, in the East End of London, and then in the Cotswolds, in Chipping Campden, was an integral part of his conception of craftsmanship, where working in the workshop was supplemented with excursions, the putting up of theatre plays, and physical activities. But according to one of his most faithful collaborators, the sculptor Alec Miller (1879-1061), this ideal of collaboration among craftsmen in the workshop never completely worked out: "it produced things under your direction, and cooperation was almost entirely non-existent" (Ashbee 1938). This damning assessment calls into question the outcome of Ashbee's method, particularly as he wrote about it extensively and tried to repeat first in Egypt (1917-18) then in Palestine (1919-21), albeit under different circumstances. His brief time in Egypt was spent as a teacher of English at the Sultanyiia College, where he was not in charge of any artistic teaching, but during which he

wrote extensively in his memoirs about his ideas to reform craftsmanship and his observations of the country. On the contrary, in Jerusalem he was named “civic advisor”, in charge of rethinking urban planning with a means to preserve the built heritage of the city and accommodate some elements of modernisation.

<2>Ashbee’s concern with both craft and masculinity in England is well known. Besides Alan Crawford’s unparalleled eponymous biography (1985), and Fiona McCarthy’s book *The Simple Life: C. R. Ashbee in the Cotswolds* (1981), scholars such as John Potvin, Seth Koven and Michael Hatt, have tackled questions of interactions at the core of Ashbee’s activities. John Potvin’s *Material and Visual Cultures Beyond Male Bonding, 1870–1914, Bodies, Boundaries and Intimacy* (2008), for example takes a psychological approach to Ashbee’s practices; while Seth Koven, in *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (2006) studies Ashbee’s role as a social reformer during his time in 1888 at Toynbee Hall, a philanthropic structure meant to provide education to the working-class population of the East End of London. To a certain degree, craft and masculinity were linked with social reform in Ashbee’s mind. Koven stresses that “remaking men and redefining masculinity were explicit aims of many of their class – bridging projects in the slums and grew out of their need to understand their own gender and sexual identities” (229). At Toynbee Hall, social classes were mixed through living together, evening lectures, and divided into “colonies”, the wording of which leads Koven to highlight a parallel between that specific group of poor, uneducated Londoners, and the perceived primitiveness of colonised peoples of the British Empire (254). In “Space, Surface, Self: Homosexuality and the Aesthetic Interior”, Hatt studies the décor of homes inhabited by gay men, presenting their domestic aesthetic as a middle-ground setting reuniting public sphere and private self. He analyses Ashbee’s house in Chelsea as a result of collaborative effort with his craftsmen, and a locus for Ashbee’s promotion of sexuality through elements of decoration in the shape of nude pubescent boys: “style and desire, the homoerotic and social formation were inseparable in Ashbee’s thought” (164). Although Ashbee’s homosexual sympathies are well known, as Crawford demonstrates (161), they are not documented for his time in Egypt and Jerusalem, and this will not be tackled here. Finally, John Tosh’s *Manliness and masculinities in Nineteenth-century Britain* (2005) is paramount, especially when it comes to Empire: for Tosh, in colonial Britain, “[Masculinity’s] meaning is mediated not only through class, but through ethnicity and—most importantly of all—through sexuality. It relates not just to bodily distinctions or to formal precept. At one moment masculinity appears to be an almost entirely visual metaphor, achieved through negotiation with fashion and style, in the next moment it invites an intrusion into the fantasies and insecurities of the individual psyche” (3). Masculinity here will also be understood as what historian Wilson Chacko Jacob terms “effendi masculinity” in *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870-1940* (2011). Effendi as the term was first used during the Ottoman occupation of Egypt for a man of high education or social standing, but by the interwar period it had become “a far more capacious category, including sons of small merchants, students, unemployed graduates, and essentially anyone who was able to affect the proper look” (1). This

article will also borrow Jacob's definition of masculinity as "a performance, or more accurately, a set of performances that spans history and the everyday, and that makes legible otherwise overlooked discursive formations that were both important objects of struggle and means by which power was normalised" (1). Nationalism is closely woven through this redefinition of masculinity "as a historically constructed nexus of power relations and site of subject formation" (1), in which I contend Ashbee took an active part.

<3>Using these definitions, the article will focus on four aspects of Ashbee's actions: firstly, his plan to reconstruct the workshop in Egypt and Jerusalem and the translation of his comradeship there; secondly, how the male colonial body was fashioned through a reflexion upon sports; thirdly, the performance of hybridity between British and Egyptian identities through theatre and traditional dress; and lastly, how Ashbee tried to craft a transnational man and educate him in citizenship to promote peace.

<4>During Ashbee's time in Egypt and Jerusalem, social reform was replaced by colonial reform: instead of merely crafting a new kind of man, Ashbee aimed to create a new citizen, and his attempts were set in a complex web of influences, both colonial and anti-colonial. Taking place in a completely different setting, with Ashbee working as a teacher of English under the supervision of the department of Public Instruction in Egypt, and as civic adviser in Jerusalem, the relationship between craft and masculinity in his work outside of Britain seems less self-evident. Instead of an all-male guild, his audience during these years was varied, and consisted mostly of middle-class Egyptian male students training to be teachers, and of young craftsmen in Palestine. Issues of age, class, race and gender were deeply imbedded in this newly redeployed attempt for Ashbee to implement his theories, arguably representing his last chance to do so. In both Egypt and Palestine he was given a number of important responsibilities, from teaching to heritage preservation and urban renewal in Jerusalem. At the Sultaniyya Training College in Cairo, he did not teach craftsmanship, but English. Nevertheless, he wrote abundantly in his diary and memoirs about the various forms of craftsmanship he encountered there, and took interesting stances on the education of a people under colonial rule. Importantly, he tried to implement the same social activities as he did in England, with sports and theatre playing an important role in his formulation of his rather ambiguous position towards colonisation.

<5>This article will accordingly ask how Ashbee negotiated these changes—firstly, of location to another geographical sphere, and secondly to another temporal era, that of modernity—through his artistic practice and his theoretical reflexion. Indeed, the 1910s were an opportunity for Ashbee to rethink his practice through different axes: heritage preservation, the reconstruction of crafts, and politics. This article is concerned with the transfer of ideas and these new practices onto the colonial male body, and the role of craft, both material and metaphorical, in constructing nineteenth-century colonial masculinities. It thus relies on relies on several fields, those of craft education, New Imperial History, and masculinity. Although the case studies date from the end of the 1910s and the beginning of the 1920s, they are anchored

in Ashbee's Victorian experience as an educator in England, and are considered here as part of an extended long nineteenth century, slightly longer than defined by Eric Hobsbawm in *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914* (1987). This article will ask how Ashbee adapted his idea of subject formation in a colonial setting when confronted to different forms of masculinities.(2) As such, it asks how did the ideals of male comradeship and crafting of new men transfer into a different political and cultural sphere, that of the Middle East? This study is part of a wider consideration of the impact had by the members of the Arts and Crafts movement on the crafts and craftspeople they worked with during their respective time in territories under British rule, attention to which allows us to rethink the nature of the question of the vernacular and cooperation within these territories.

<6>Ashbee's position as colonialist is complex. Egypt was for him a good example of the mixing between colonialists and colonial subjects, a synthesis of people that he understood by looking at his students: "the face of my boys have supplied me with a new generalisation. I have watched them carefully now for a month or so. Egypt has accomplished something that no other race has succeeded in doing […] she has blended the types. On the stock of the Fellah she has over several thousand years grafted the Greek, the Negro, the Latin, the Semite" (Memoirs April 1917). Ashbee did not entirely dismiss the topos of the effeminate effendi (using the expression himself), but he attributed it to years of oppression: "Turkish? French? English? We are all to blame" (Memoirs May 1917). Expressions such as "sham orientalism" used in his memoirs could lead the reader to think that Ashbee rose against this system of colonial oppression, but instead he promoted a more sympathetic way of ruling. He is in this respect anchored in a specific current of early twentieth-century thought, that of the French polymath, Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931). Ashbee had read Le Bon's work, and firmly adhered to his idea that one could not simply erase a culture and replace it with another. The French anthropologist believed that if such a scheme of colonialism was implemented, the "Oriental" would refuse to benefit from education and would become "the ferocious enemy of his educators" (Memoirs April 1917). Le Bon also developed the idea, controversial at the time, that there was such a thing as a national character, which he characterised the product of a nation's history, but also of its specific environment, and especially the climate. This paradigm replaced that of race in this schema, which was itself a category that Le Bon viewed as too restrictive (Volait 105). In his memoirs from Egypt, Ashbee quotes Le Bon at length, focusing particularly on passages that demonstrate how colonisation had humiliated the colonised (Memoirs April 1917). He directly connected this correlative relationship to craft production, when he wrote that "for every craftsman that we waste, we create a discontent effendi" (Record 6, qtd. in Crawford 180). For in his system, craft lies at the heart of society, aesthetic and the social structure of society are inseparable.

"Reconstructing the workshop": Collaboration and Homosociality

<7>The aim of Ashbee's Guild was to create a new man, a craftsman who would take pleasure in his daily work, but who would also be part of a community united around activities that

moulded his mind and his body. His life was centred on the workshop, where he learnt by doing, away from more prescribing systems such as the South Kensington one, the centralised state system that relied upon a model of copy and repetition to teach industrial design. Instead, Ashbee advertised for classes taught "by a real potter, with a real wheel" and through lectures illustrated by lanternslides (Record Book). His teaching system was built around strict pedagogical goals, such as the following dictum: "each [guild] member must be an instructor at the school where boys are to be trained in the various branches of work […]. He is thus responsible for the school's development and each pupil may aspire to be a workman in the guild, as its scope is widened and openings occur" (Minutes, Prospectus 1888). Practise and teaching were thus inseparable. However, Ashbee's ideal of an autarkic life characterised by a complete system of education, and the crafting of new men fell through for mostly economic reasons. In the 1910s, Ashbee did not take responsibility for the failure of the Guild, which he attributed to the use of machines in the production of manufactured goods. Nevertheless, the failure of this quixotic venture encouraged him to reconsider his theories in a wider framework, that of Empire. It is in this context that he wrote his most programmatic text, *Where the Great City Stands* (1917), which was intended as a treatise in urbanism in favour of both the garden city and what he would term the 'new civic city'. Both the Egyptian protectorate and the Palestinian mandate offered him the opportunity to try this model out.

<8>In Egypt, Ashbee met a pre-industrial system of workshops that reminded him of his medieval ideal; commenting that the crafts which were "dead with us in England," were "here alive" (Memoirs May 1917). Though not in charge of preserving craft in any official capacity in Egypt—as he would be in Jerusalem—Ashbee wrote lengthy notes about the various forms of craft that he encountered, dwelling particularly on characteristics of Egypt to promote his analysis of both British urban decay and the local capacity to produce crafts. As an example of the latter, Ashbee noted that "the atmosphere, i.e. constant sun and open air, is a preservative against mechanism and the factory system, a sort of quinine, or tonic, keeping off the worst abuses of the system under which we suffer. They will, of course, want the rubbish we produce, but I doubt if they will ever desire themselves to produce it" (Memoirs April 1917).(3) Besides machinery, Ashbee was also concerned with the types of material objects being produced. Eventually, when bemoaning the decline in the quality of craft in Egypt, Ashbee complained that instead of being used in the production of fine art objects or buildings, he saw the country's craftsmen being fruitlessly deployed in the making of more quotidian objects, writing "at Sornarga's Pottery I found rather an unhappy falling off. They have abandoned the making of their mosque and the beautiful experiment in Arabic forms; the writing, they were on two years ago, – and are now concentrating on urinals, lavatory basins, and drain pipes. The boys, as a consequence are not nearly so happy!" (Memoirs April 1921). The Ruskinian subtext, that of craft revival as a means to rethink the production of daily artefacts, and the working conditions in Industrial Revolution England, is clear: men should not be mere tools in the production of such objects, but think deeply about the object from the start; feel happiness while making it; and preserve their vernacular traditions. At the same time, the passage also accords with a

common orientalist trope, that of the wishful medievalising of Cairo, whose heritage was viewed as having been abandoned by the local population and whose safeguarding therefore lay in the hands of the coloniser.(4)

<9>In Jerusalem, Ashbee had more leeway to intervene on the social and urban fabric due to his acting there in a more official capacity. As civic adviser, he was in charge of building conservation and craft revival. In his report for the Pro-Jerusalem Society (1920)—part of the British administration of the city, aimed at redesigning its urban fabric, and for which Ashbee was Secretary—he rejected a form of teaching that would turn students into "boukinistes" (*sic*), implying that they learned by rote and had no practical skill, and insisted on an education based on skill and character, which to him was the only guarantee for the production of artefacts of quality (Record 73). The Ruskinian union of the heart, hand and head (Works 16:294) was thus reaffirmed in the East by Ashbee, who recommended teaching by practise, and the reform of the entire school system through the idea of a guild system, "for regulating their use and output" (Memoirs March 1918). In order to achieve these aims, he recommended the creation of a central body, which would be associated with the reconstruction of the city following the Ottoman occupation, and of Palestine; while he also insisted on the preservation of vernacular techniques, against the influence of the American and Zionist colonists.

<10>Ashbee identified the old cotton market in the southwest of the city as the place, which, once rehabilitated, could welcome the workshops of a weaving school (Record 30). There he managed to briefly combine the principle of a workshop with an educational structure, in the heart of Jerusalem, while respecting, so Ashbee professed, vernacular traditions. The Jerusalem Looms (1919-1921) was comprised of 40 looms, which were utilised by male apprentices under the guidance of masters. Despite Ashbee's enthusiastic conclusions, the venture had mixed success (Rapaport 13). Weaving was a craft he had neither practised, nor taught. The enterprise was in fact the continuation of a scheme initially implemented in Jerusalem by the American Red Cross to help Armenian and Syrian refugees following the Armenian genocide by the Ottoman army (1915-1925). It employed 70 people in its first year. At the Guild in England, Ashbee had sought to abolish the "principle of mastership" that was modified "so as to give freedom to the individuality of the producer, trusting in his allegiance to the corporate whole"; there was no contract between him and the apprentices (Manual 18-19). There was arguably a more structured approach in Ashbee's apprenticeship system in Jerusalem, perhaps because Ashbee was not solely in charge, but working under the auspices of the Pro-Jerusalem Society. The report (1920) he wrote for the Society notes that the system was modelled on the East London Apprenticeship fund started by Samuel Montagu in 1887, roughly around the time when Ashbee started his own guild in East London (Record 35, 76). The duration of the contract between apprentice and guild was a year, during which the apprentice received a fee, which he would have to pay back if he ceased his activity. In exchange, he owed his master respect and obedience, and received unquantified tuition on weaving and other forms of craftsmanship. The system was continued after the Looms closed, and transferred to a school of ceramics, the Dome of the Rock Potteries, around 1919 (Record 29). In this venture Ashbee also encouraged

other vernacular crafts such as glassblowing, or ceramics, with the school functioning as a palimpsest of Arts and Crafts techniques (Petiot 2019). In Jerusalem, Ashbee devised a detailed plan to develop a central and national School of Arts and Crafts, which would centred around vernacular crafts, be trade and education oriented, and linked to a museum and heritage preservation measures (Record v).

The "homogenic touch": Building Comradeship and Mutual Understanding through Sports and Excursions

<11>Ideas of the "homogenic touch," defined by McCarthy as "the sympathy for men and power to handle them" (70), and comradeship, were at the heart of Ashbee's educational method, particularly in Egypt. Ashbee had famously written to his wife Janet on the occasion of their marriage, defining comradeship as "an intensely close and all absorbing personal attachment, 'love' if you prefer the word – for my men and boy friends", noting that it had been "the one guiding principle" of his life, inspiring anything that he had "vouchsafed to accomplish in the nature of the influencing or the building up of character" **(**qtd in Crawford 75). Ashbee therefore promoted comradeship as a kind of homosociality, as defined by Eve Kosovsky Sedgwick as the enjoyment of the company of one's own sex, without involving sexual interactions (5). Social bonds among members of the same sex did not separate between the professional and the personal spheres. Homosociality is thus on a continuum of, here, male interactions: it is stronger than friendship but does not, contrary to homosexual relations, threaten the social fabric of the Victorian society upheld by marriage. By coining the term "homosocial desire", which she calls an oxymoron, Sedgwick shows how the limits between each category, friendship, homosociality, and homosexuality, are porous (1).

<12>Homosociality was at the heart of Ashbee's educational method. The writings of the poet and philosopher Edward Carpenter (1844-1929), whom Ashbee met in 1885, were especially instrumental in the defence of homosexual relationships.(5) Notably, Carpenter defined the ideal male, which he called the "Uranian Venus", as the following: "fine, healthy specimens of their sex, muscular and well-developed in body, of powerful brain, high standard of conduct, and with nothing abnormal or morbid of any kind observable in their physical structure or constitution" (Carpenter 23). Perhaps even more tellingly, Carpenter also highlighted the healthiness of relationships between men, insisting upon the educational role such bonds can play:

> That such attachments may be of the very greatest value is self-evident. The younger boy looks on the other as a hero, loves to be with him, thrills with pleasure at his words of praise or kindness, imitates, and makes him his pattern and standard, learns exercises and games, contracts habits, or picks up information from him. The elder one, touched, becomes protector and helper; the unselfish side of his nature is drawn out, and he develops a real affection and tenderness towards the younger. He takes all sorts of trouble to initiate his protégé in field sports or studies; is proud of the latter's success;

> and leads him on perhaps later to share his own ideals of life and thought and work (Carpenter 49).

This idea of homosocial love, based on the creation of an intellectual and affectionate bond, defined the professed basis of Ashbee's educational method. Revealingly, Ashbee himself wrote an undated poem entitled *The Uranian Venus*, in which he portrays himself as the torchbearer for this kind of homosocial relationship (Ashbee Papers, undated). Strangely, in Jerusalem, he created little to no bond with the craftsmen, but in Egypt he insisted on an explicitly homogenic touch, rooted in Victorian theories on education.

<13>The specifics of Carpenter's concept of homogenic love and its application to education can be partly applied to Ashbee's own pedagogical practices. Josephine Crawley Quinn and Christopher Brooke argue that Carpenter's 1899 essay on *Affection in Education* did not rely on the traditional Victorian hierarchy—itself based on Greek antiquity—but on "egalitarian sexual relationships between men […] closely associated with his own ideals of social and political progress" (683). Carpenter used a scientific argument to ground his theory, explaining that "it is beginning to be seen that the affections have an immense deal to say in the building up of the brain" and that the "evolution and organization" of the affections would accordingly "become an important part of school management" (qtd. in Brooke & Quinn, 683). Carpenter's influence on Ashbee had been of utmost importance for his own conception of comradeship and social work, and, as Quinn and Brooke argue, Carpenter's definition of "homogenic love" was based on John Addington Symonds's reaction against the Oxford aesthetes (such as Richard von Kraft-Ebbing and Henry Havelock Ellis), who advocated platonic affection. This implied an idea of class-structure and admiration of the beautiful. Carpenter's model, on the contrary, was based on physical love and egalitarian life in a community, which was itself aimed at social improvement (Brooke & Quinn 684). Ashbee's conception of the homogenic touch can be positioned somewhere between these two theories. Indeed, he was a friend of Carpenter's whom he met in 1885 and kept a correspondence with the latter (Crawford 16). According to Ashbee in 1901, the "homogenic way" was a specifically humanistic method; and is presented as opposed to the "intellectual" way (Memoirs August 1901). By 1904, Ashbee argued more explicitly that this was "sympathy for men and power to handle them" (McCarthy 69).

<14>In England and in the East, his educational method was indeed based on a close relationship with the students, but it was not a relationship devoid of a certain hierarchy, be it based on class or on race. In Egypt, the framework of domination was specifically that of colonised to coloniser. The authoritarian aspect of Ashbee's educational method in England has yet to be studied adequately, but it nevertheless emerges in some testimonies by his former students, who wrote that he was controlling, and some even felt they had to suffer through evening readings of Ruskin to keep their employment (Petiot 2013). Nevertheless, Ashbee strove to portray himself as a benevolent educationalist. In his memorandum on Egyptian education, he rejected his British colleagues' refusal to acknowledge their students in the street and to take refuge at the Turf Club, a venue solely reserved for the British elite, and which

functioned as a paragon of British masculinity. In his writings from 1919, he affirmed that on the contrary, “the first gift of the teacher is sympathy”, and that to this end instructors should try to highlight the converging points between the Koran and the Bible, so as to build real cohesion, in the true meaning of fellowship, a keyword at the heart of his theoretical discourse (Ashbee, Memoirs January 1919). Therefore, in both England and in Egypt, the homogenic touch reflected what could be termed the soft power implemented by Ashbee: from his position of authority as master of the Guild, or that as English teacher in Egypt, he tried to find ways to impart his ideas without seeming to impose them.

Physical Activities to Build the Body and Comradeship

<15>Having established the basis of Ashbee’s educational praxis and its relationship to specific kinds of communal masculinity, the second half of this article tackles the relationship between craft and sport, and craft and dress. Firstly, it will interrogate Ashbee’s use of sport, and more specifically, swimming, in order to understand the translation of his craft practices from Chipping Campden to the Empire, before focusing on the opposition between colonial and western dress, to see in what way Ashbee tried to fashion effendi masculinity, as defined above. Sport was integral to Ashbee’s program and helped to craft his vision of transnational and cosmopolitan masculine identity. For Ashbee, swimming competitions and excursions in the Cotswolds (undertaken from 1902 onwards) developed the body and occupied the mind to the detriment of lower pursuits. As in British public schools, the Guild’s and the School’s time was organised around work and play in the form of communal activities which included the Guild’s cricket team (‘the Essex House XI’). Excursions were an opportunity for the boys and men to relax and bond together. They linked physical to aesthetic education, combining visits to ruins with a general appreciation of nature (Crawford 55-60). Frank Galton, one of the pupils at Toynbee Hall who followed Ashbee to Chipping Campden, wrote of the effect such excursions had on him: “it is impossible to exaggerate the value of these short weekends for us two boys […] above all the society of three young men of high culture and great ability, all combined to produce an effect it is difficult to describe and impossible to overrate” (qtd. in Koven 267). Above all, these practices were directly tied to the construction of a masculinity rooted in the building of fellowship and making of the perfect man, the comrade.

<16>Swimming allowed for what Ashbee wanted to build in his new men: chivalry, a return to physical and moral strength, beauty and homogenic feelings. A source of Ashbee’s insistence on swimming must have been the swimming baths at the People’s Palace in the Mile End, where he had taken his guildsmen in the 1880s. In Chipping Campden, he had a swimming bath built, for the guildsmen and the villagers to enjoy, and he took his apprentices on trips on the river where they all swam together, which enabled to break down, on these occasions, the hierarchical and social between the guild master, or in Egypt, the teacher, and his workmen and then pupils.

<17>In his memorandum on Egyptian education written in 1918 contained in his Memoirs, Ashbee chastised the Ministry of Public Instruction (M.P.I.) for ignoring the resources offered by

the Nile, going as far as to advocate the use of the river similar to that made of Oxford or Cambridge. According to Ashbee, water polo, rowing and sailing could be practiced alongside activities such as swimming (Memoirs, appendix, 1918). He even went as far as suggesting that "the M.P.I. might have its floating bath, and every College or large group of students its house boat with attendant craft their colours and their badges". Here, he also expressed the same desire for developing his relationships with his students by going on excursions on the Nile, through which the group developed a kind of homosociality. He used sport and excursions on the Nile in the same way as he did on the Severn in England, taking on one occasion, in 1918, up to 24 students with him (Memoirs May 17 1918). The toponymy of these expeditions as written in Ashbee's memoirs is particularly interesting, as the destination is not site specific, but always referred to as "The Island on the Nile", thus creating a sort of romanticised orientalist setting to accommodate his new bond to his students. In the same entry, Ashbee recalled how he and the group "ate together, swam together, discussed everything, sang round the camp fire at night and slept out in the open under the stars".

<18>Swimming as an activity was a conscious choice, and functioned in lieu of typically imperialist and rigid sports such as football and cricket. Health and hygiene, with a view to the the development of a sound body, were Victorian preoccupations that Ashbee took with him on his travels. As John Tosh has argued**, "**Victorian manliness was an elite cultural form, of an often crudely didactic kind" (32). At Chipping Camden, these concepts were anchored in muscular Christianity, which linked moral and physical fortitude. Such visits were also the occasion for Ashbee to discuss and engage with students' cultural and religious practices, for example, praying with them one morning (Memoirs May 17 1918).

<19>A number of surviving testimonies reveal that the excursions were well received by the students: like their English counterparts, Ashbee's students showed their gratitude, sometimes to the point of adoration, but the tone of the following letter can also be accounted for by cultural differences and Ashbee's position as part of the colonial elite. The student, El Sawi, asked him "to keep thinking that your faithful student El Sawi regards you as a father […] and worships you as a hero of truthfulness. Nothing but death will make me forget your beloved person, your sweet conversation, your splendid ideas, your precious articles, and your open air excursions" (Memories of Ashbee).

<20>Ashbee writes about these excursions as if he were the sole proponent of physical activity in Egyptian education. Yet Wilson Chacko Jacob demonstrates compellingly in *Working out Egypt* that a sports culture had long been in place in Egypt: as early as the late nineteenth century the Egyptian effendi desired to replicate the positive outcomes of physical education they witnessed on the British colonists, who exemplified "the connection between historically great nations and their commitment to encouraging sport" (81). Bodybuilding, both in national and international competitions were very much in vogue in Egypt in the 1910s. Even more importantly, health and hygiene were growingly linked to the self-determination of the Egyptian people, with a National Club for Physical Culture established in 1909, its name

indicating a link between national conscience and the reform of the strong body. Further to this, it was precisely where Ashbee was teaching, at the Sultaniyya College, that the first Boy Scout Club based in Egypt was launched in 1918 (93). Sports were therefore believed to contribute to the fashioning of an independent Egyptian man, and Ashbee presented this as his own contribution to this part of nationalist reform.

<21>Ashbee also wanted to develop athleticism in Jerusalem, following "more civilised Graeco-Roman ideals" (Record 177). Here, Ashbee wished to match each craft with a sport, according to the specific muscles worked by that craft, a new practice he had not previously enacted in London: if in Camden he had hired a military instructor to give his guildsmen callisthenics drills, it never was craft-specific. Perhaps he remembered the jeweller Sammy Samuel's words, when he attributed his fine muscles to his practice of athleticism, rather than to his craft: "How do you come by these two beauties? I asked fingering two strong little fellows on the upper arm. Ah, said Sammy 'there's the secret of it all. That's work, jewellers don't get muscles like that, that's pure athletics – pure athletics" (Ashbee, Journal 1907). In Jerusalem, Ashbee hoped that the baths would be rehabilitated by the British tommies, who could also teach the local boys to swim: "for breaking down religious prejudices there is nothing so effective as swimming: clothes and religious obscurantism invariably go together" (Record 78). He thus promoted homosociality between his craftsmen, but also between peoples.

Dressing the Colonial Body: Performing Hybridity

<22>In his memoirs, Ashbee reflected as follows upon his excursions on the Nile: "there was beauty in the boys, their faces and their forms, here in their own settings and their own costume" (Memoirs January & May 1918). In Egypt and in Jerusalem, dress was a powerful tool for Ashbee, whether in the form of a theatre costume or a uniform, or whether completely absent, such as during the swimming sessions. As numerous historians including Jacob have demonstrated, dress was not innocuous; it participated of the performance of cultural, social and political bodies in the public realm. Ashbee clearly associated dress with its symbolic function, and formulated stern judgements on the topic, noting, for example, that "dress and religious obscurantism go together" (Record 73). For the purposes of the current article, we will focus on dress as an attribute of masculinity, asking how Ashbee used dress to make a political stance in Egypt and Jerusalem in the 1920s.

<23>Although Jacob shows that there were debates on the veil from the 1890s and studies the use or rejection of the tarbush (the flat hat worn by Muslim men in the Middle East), less attention has been paid to the idea of men's suits as visual symbol of otherness. Nevertheless, this is a recurrent topic in Ashbee's observations and interactions with local effendi. Mustapha Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938), first president of the Republic of Turkey, famously banned the tarbush in 1925 in a conscious effort to westernise Turkey (Jacob 191). In 1917 it was already quite common to see young Egyptian effendi dressed in western suits. In this manifestation, suits functioned as a signifier for the formation of masculine modernity, constantly negotiating between East and West, traditional and modern. As a pressing issue in the early twentieth-

century Middle East, it is unsurprising that Ashbee took an interest in the question, which, characteristically, he linked to craft.

<24>In his memoirs, Ashbee sometimes adopts orientalist descriptions of the people he encounters in his trips. For example, in 1917 he described a fellah—a term which places the man in the category of the peasant, poorer and less educated than the effendi—and wearer of the galabiah, the traditional long robe, as follows: "the fellah or countryman, as a mere piece of form and colour passing through the light, is wonderful to look at. You see him in his blue galabiah, the long robe open to the neck, ungirdled and reaching to his bare feet" (Memoirs March & April 1917). Ashbee was consistently attentive to dress in his memoirs, which functions as part of a sort of ethnographic description of the people he encountered. They contain some photographs typical of the colonial traveller, with figures in local dress punctuating the architectural landscape. These seemingly anecdotal encounters are useful for understanding Ashbee's stance on national identity and the social differences between colonisers and colonial subject, as articulated through the question of masculine dress.

<25>The dichotomy between western and eastern dress was a very pregnant issue in Egypt at this time. Ashbee, for example, described a visit to the Shaikh's tent to take tea, noting that his younger family members wore western dress, contrary to their uncle: "beside the shining splendour of the old costume this machine cut Western dress looked utterly insignificant. And yet he was a handsome youth who sat besides me. I touched his arm – the quality of its stuff so to speak. 'How much nicer you'd look if you were dressed like your uncle!'" (Memoirs December 20 1919). Three points are worth noting here: firstly, the rejection of machinery in craft, which is one of the issues Ashbee takes against the suit; secondly, Ashbee's aesthetic appreciation, and indeed touching of the young man; and thirdly, the wish to understand the need to wear such a suit.

<26>Western ways of dressing were costly for Egyptians and were therefore sometimes rejected on the basis of inadequate financial means. Western dress was thus a social marker, which stigmatised rather than modernised man when not worn properly. Ashbee recounted another encounter in 1918 where yet again he touched the arm of a young boy as a pretext to talk about his coat, a "horrid machine made" Western example worn over a traditional galabiah. The ensuing dialogue shows that by 1918, Ashbee rejected the idea of Western dress worn by Egyptians even more strongly, when he equated it almost with moral fault: "Tell me why you, so pious a student of the Koran, wear this ugly European garment?" (Memoirs March 1918). Not only does Ashbee note the aesthetic inconsistency of this combination of garments, he also hints towards a moral inconsistency. In this instance, the coat embodies for him all that is wrong in the colonial system, which, by importing industrialisation, deprives the Egyptians from the means of buying traditional crafts, here, clothing. His conclusion is a striking parallel to the modernity that brought about the end of his Guild in England: "on the one hand Western Industrialisation all but forces them to take the cheap and filthy factory product, on the other it creates a condition by which their own beautiful product is gradually increased in price – till

only the rich and curious can possess it" (Memoirs March 1918). For Ashbee then, dress, craft and masculinity were implicitly linked to the political questions surrounding modernity and its imperial manifestations.

<27>In Jerusalem, dress was also part of Ashbee's reflexion on craft and masculinity, although there it was imbued with a different political dimension. For the first time, he imposed the uniform at the weaving guild, so as to unite the workers, without any distinction of religion. To this aim, the first task of the apprentices was to weave their own uniform. Nevertheless, he also wrote in the Records of the Pro-Jerusalem society (1920) about his desire to preserve a "national costume", a notion which seems specifically difficult to define and implement in Jerusalem. Dressing the masculine body in the East seemed to be an important issue for Ashbee, since it coalesced problems of class, social standard, and craft. It puts into question the hybridity of these practises, which is even more obvious in the use he makes of theatre.

<28>Like sport and dress, theatre was also used by Ashbee as an educational tool. In Chipping Campden, the shared staging of plays as a recreational means served to teach his guildsmen both history and literature, functioning as a way to teach Ashbee's a body of English texts by authors such as Shakespeare or Sheridan. It also served to teach elocution: in his Memoirs, one of the guildsmen, Alec Miller, described the rehearsals as "conducted by CRA [Ashbee] who took endless pains to correct cockneyisms, – or as in my case, Scots accent – and mispronunciation, awkward movement or gestures. Every detail was watched, and he was relentless in his correction, particularly of slovenly speech" (19). This attention paid to enunciation betrayed Ashbee's desire to erase regional and class differences.

<29>Ashbee's use of theatre in Egypt, during his time as a teacher at the Sultaniyya Training College (1917-18) is rarely studied in its colonial context. At the College, theatre was used to transform Egyptian pupils into connoisseurs of Shakespeare, thereby familiarising these men with the cultural heritage of the colonising power. In his memoirs, Ashbee recalled: "I had arranged for my students to act *As You Like It* in native costume with Arabic music. After several months coaching, and refining of their English, they achieved a most beautiful performance" (Memoirs April 23 1918). Here, Ashbee was doing exactly what he had attempted to do with his apprentices and guildsmen in England a decade earlier. Although the conventions of Islamic society meant that *As You Like It* was performed by an all-male cast—as it would have been in an English school—in Egypt Ashbee was dealing with a distinctive social group, belonging to the upper and the middle classes of Egyptian society, albeit in a colonial context. He questioned the validity of colonial rule:

> What I've found out in playing with these boys, studying them, is that not only our system of teaching is all wrong, but that we have ourselves to change our point of view. […] We shall never govern this people rightly, nor guide their nationalism wisely unless we shed a little of our own philistinism, – absorb some of the finer qualities they possess and we once had. Shakespeare and the Elisabethans had them, and so those 'brown boys' may even understand Shakespeare better than we do (Memoirs April 22 1918).

<30>In arguing for a soft colonial approach through culture adapted to the local context, Ashbee was ahead of his time, and out of line with mainstream colonial ideology. Indeed, one of his fellow Englishmen, Sir Maurice Amos (1872-1940), wrote to him in 1918 to say that he could not "think that 'As you like it' in Arabic with brown actors would be very happy" (Ashbee, Memoirs April 1918).(6) Amos's stance was more typical of a colonial administrator, who believed in keeping the cultures separate, whereas Ashbee seems to have been more tolerant and fully satisfied with the result of the experiment, replying "had you come to our performance […] you would have written otherwise, you would have discovered that Shakespeare is universal and not insolently English, that hence he plays exquisitely in Arabic costume with Arabic instruments (qtd. in MemoirsApril 1918). Continuing, Ashbee asserted that:

> You would have discovered how Jacques, in the distinguished enunciation of his lines by the son of a distinguished Shaikh, with a face like Akhenaton, had behind him many thousand years of a wisdom and a poetry that is as Eastern as it is Western, being a 'Melancholy of his own' which all the great religious reformers have; you would have seen a Touchstone played as Abd Al Nawas might have played him at the Court of Haroun Al Rashid, – for there too were wise men in the fool's motley. You would have found the Forest of Arden Shepherds quite at home as Felaheen.

Here, then, hybridity is sought out by Ashbee with an educational and political aim: for him, Shakespeare was universal, and if his Egyptian students could play it better than the English, this was partly because to him they belonged to an idealised preindustrial world that had long since disappeared in England. This vignette is accordingly one of the most interesting examples of Ashbee's carefully thought out approach to colonial rule, in which theatre was part of a political and cultural apparatus he used to create comradeship, not between men anymore, but between peoples. The educational and political success of this venture was confirmed by a clergyman who had attended the play, who noted "I cannot but imagine that those boys, from merely having acted that play, now love Shakespeare – and so English, – and so England, better than they did before. Well, had there been any amount of the same thing during the last half century, the British Government itself might have been today a more popular institution" (Canon W. H. Gairdner to Ashbee, Memoirs April 25 1918). Hybridity of costumes and cultural references therefore served to craft universal citizens.

<31>However, British authorities did not condone this way of teaching and suspected Ashbee of inculcating nationalist principles to his student (Lanver 150). Indeed, although Ashbee served the administration, he was very much in favour of the self-determination of peoples; was vocal about the absence of discussion regarding the nationalist Arab movement in British newspapers; and pointed towards the difference of treatment in the press between the Balfour declaration, which gave autonomy to an Israeli state on the one hand, and on the repression of any nationalist movement in Egypt or in Ireland, on the other. "What a wonderful people we are!", he bitterly exclaimed (Palestine Notebook 7-8). Ashbee was repeatedly admonished for

this lack of discipline and was even under particular surveillance from MI5 because of his socialist sympathies and his barely hidden sexuality. As much as he can be called a conservative socialist, Ashbee's position on colonialism is not very clear. Imbued with colonial tropes and a romanticised idea of the East, he nonetheless sought to nuance these ideas and apply—without changing too much—the methods he had devised for his Guild: comradeship; a sound body as well as a sound mind; and a nationalist spirit, in both craft production and politics.

Citizenship: Crafting Peace

<32>The scope of Ashbee's entreprises, through craft, sports, dress or theatre is a political one. In the 1910s, Ashbee did not seek to craft a new man, but a new citizen to promote peace. The word "create" recurs throughout the texts mentioned above, and all the activities described culminate towards one aim: civics. For Jacob, effendi masculinity meant the redefinition of the Egyptian man as a modern subject, towards emancipation from colonial rule. Although Ashbee does not precisely define "civics" in his writings, it encompassed the coming together of people with different histories and beliefs, a genuine communion. For Ashbee, his time in Egypt and Jerusalem was a period of rebirth, and of creation, writing from Jerusalem in 1920, that "I am very happy because I'm so busy creating […] In fact I've done more creative work during the last 18 months than I was permitted to do in England during the last 18 years" (qtd. in Crawford 185). If he is also referring here to his preservation and town planning work in Jerusalem, "creation" can also be applied to his idea of new citizens, with the different strands of his work being geared towards this single idea. On several occasions, Ashbee applied the idea of "creation" to men. In his memorandum to Lord Milner, written in July 1919, on the subject of Egypt, he wrote: "in our reconstruction we should ever be asking ourselves what is our aim? Do we want, as at present, merely to go on creating clerks for official jobs, young effendis with no particular aim in life […]?"

<33>Citizenship is understood here as the relatively wide concept of peacefully living together, which at times for Ashbee, encompassed self-rule. In Egypt, Ashbee promoted nationalism and the right to self-determination. Writing from Cairo in 1918, he argued that

> insufficient thought has as yet been given to the connection between the native craftsman's standard of life and his attitude towards the Nationalist movement. Yet the two are integral […] But where we consider Education as understood in its deeper senses, how men are made into citizens, how they are to be guided, governed or shaped for rulership, their attitude of mind towards the citizens of countries, the vexed question of "nationalism", and that "measure of the aesthetic consistency of the universe and its creative action, which men call God, we touch matter that is as burning now as it ever was (Memoirs January 1918).

<34>In the same letter, he presents craft as a means to keeping in check the populace's nationalist aspirations: "in our view none the less it were better for these lads – the sons of weavers, potters, glass-blowers, cabinet makers, – to be practising the crafts they love and

studying their much needed service to Western Industrialism rather than shouting catchword politics in streets and class rooms."

<35>However, the aim of this patrimonial renewal was as much to create some economic dynamism as social cohesion. The workshops in Jerusalem enabled him to occupy the population, who had previously been dependant on international charity, and to promote a new form of civics, keeping men from empty political speculation. Ashbee confirmed this, writing "for every craftsman we create, we create also a potential citizen. For every craftsman we waste, we fashion a discontent effendi" (Record 34). The use of the words "create" and "fashion" is deliberate here, and Ashbee's material is that of men. The sharing of tools and space, and collaboration in the workshops would help him bridge the religious and political dissensions between the three main communities of Jerusalem. He attributed the same function to archaeology, which, by showing the many layers of heritage in the city, could work as a means of unifying the people. But it is also where the complexity of his "imperialism-socialism" is most obvious. Whereas in Egypt he seemed to promote nationalism and self-determination, in Jerusalem he seemed much more paternalistic, and opened his report for the Pro-Jerusalem Society by the statement that the inhabitants of Jerusalem "still have much to learn about the basic duties of citizenship" (Record 4-5) Perhaps one element of explanation is his strong anti-Zionist, bordering anti-Semitic, feelings. The very first sentence of his 1938 memoirs reads: "I remember in Egypt, during the war, we dreamed dreams of a possible synthesis of Christianity and Islam […] The disturbing element was the Jew" (Memoirs introduction). Ashbee's complex stance towards colonialism and nationalism is thus unresolved.

Conclusion

<36>Thus craft and masculinity in the East for Ashbee were inscribed in a complex web of cultural, social and political transactions. Every aspect of his educational programme in Britain found its translation in Egypt and Palestine, albeit modulated by the varying circumstances of these regions. Craftsmanship, sports, clothing, and theatre concurred to teach men what we have called "effendi masculinity", with the professed aim to make citizens who could live happily alongside one another. After his successful ventures in London, the territories under British rule, offered Ashbee yet another opportunity for fashioning young men. In these shifting contexts, he no longer wanted to create individuals, but members of a worldwide community who, while caring for their national traditions, would let go of any acrimony towards their neighbours and live peacefully. Craftsmanship, sport, and theatre would unite bodies and minds to form Ashbee's model of comradeship, which finds here its last expression, translated politically without losing any of its utopian idealism.

Endnotes

(1)This article is partly based on a chapter published in the following book: Jérémie Cerman (dir.), *Les années 1910. Arts décoratifs, mode, design.* Bruxelles, Peter Lang, 2019.(^)

(1)Here, sources and lack thereof will not enable us to grasp the effect Ashbee's "civilisational mission" had on the men he encountered. Only Ashbee, as a member of the colonial rule, will be studied.(^)

(3)See also de Morgan, William. "Report on the feasibility of a manufacture of glazed pottery in Egypt", Cairo: 1894.(^)

(4)See also Nochlin, Linda. *The Politics of Vision*. New York: Harper & Row, 1989. For heritage preservation in Cairo, see Volait, Mercedes. *Fous Du Caire?: Excentriques, Architectes et Amateurs d'art en Égypte, 1863-1914*. Montpellier: l'Archange Minotaure, 2009, and *Architectes et Architectures de l'Egypte Moderne (1830-1950)?: Genèse et Essor d'une Expertise Locale*. Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2005.(^)

(5)See Rowbotham, Sheila. *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Liberty and Love*. London: Verso Books, 2008.(^)

(6)Sir Percy Maurice Maclardie Sheldon Amos was an English barrister who served as a judge in Egypt and advisor to the Egyptian government at the same time as Ashbee. Quoted in *Memoirs,* April 25 1918.(^)

Works Cited

Ashbee, Charles Robert. *The Papers of Charles Robert Ashbee*. King's College Cambridge:
- Journal of C. R. Ashbee, CRA/A/1
- *Memories of C. R. Ashbee*, CRA/19/19
- *Echoes from the City of the Sun*, CRA/10/3/2
- Jerusalem Papers, CRA/E/21

Ashbee, C. R. "Guild workshop record book", 1889. Special collections, drawer 125, National Art Library, London.

Ashbee, C. R. *The Manual of the Guild and School of Handicraft: Being a Guide to County Councils and Technical Teachers*. Cassell & Company, 1892.

Ashbee, C R. *A Few Chapters in Workshop Reconstruction and Citizenship*. Essex House Press, 1894.

Ashbee, C. R. *Where the Great City Stands: A Study in the New Civics*. Essex House Press, 1917.

Ashbee, C. R., ed. *Being the Record of the Pro-Jerusalem Council During the Period of the British Military Administration 1918-1922*. John Murray, 1922.

Ashbee, C. R. *A Palestine Notebook, 1918-1923*. Doubleday, Page, 1923.

Ashbee, C. R. "Memoirs," 1938. 86.DD.13, National Art Library, London.

Brooke, Christopher, and Josephine Crawley Quinn. “Affection in Education’: Edward Carpenter, John Addington Symonds and the Politics of Greek Love.” *Oxford Review of Education* 37 (2011): 683–98.

Carpenter, Edward. *The Intermediate Sex*. S. Sonnenschein, 1909.

Crawford, Alan. *C.R. Ashbee: Architect, Designer & Romantic Socialist*. Yale University Press, 1985.

Hatt, Michael. “Space, Surface, Self: Homosexuality and the Aesthetic Interior.” *Visual Culture in Britain* 8, no. 1 (2007): 105–28.

Hoffman, Adina. *Till We Have Built Jerusalem: Architects of a New City*. Macmillan, 2016.

Jacob, Wilson Chacko. *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870-1940*. Duke University Press, 2011.

Koven, Seth. *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London*. Princeton University Press, 2006.

MacCarthy, Fiona. *The Simple Life. C.R. Ashbee in the Cotswolds*. University of California Press, 1981.

Mak, Lanver. *British in Egypt: Community, Crime and Crises 1882-1922*. I.B.Tauris, 2012.

Miller, Alec. “C.R. Ashbee and the Guild of Handicraft,” 1952. AAD/2003/18, National Art Library, London.

Petiot, Aurélie. “Entre Occident et Orient: Charles Robert Ashbee et le mouvement Arts and Crafts, 1910-1922.” in Jérémie Cerman (dir.), *Les années 1910. Arts décoratifs, mode, design.* Bruxelles, Peter Lang, 2019.

Petiot, Aurélie. “‘Should We Stop Teaching Art?’ Charles Robert Ashbee’s Educational Theories and Practices, 1886-1940.” Unpublished PhD thesis, Cambridge, 2013.

Potvin, John. *Material and Visual Cultures Beyond Male Bonding, 1870–1914: Bodies, Boundaries and Intimacy*. Ashgate, 2008.

Rapaport, Raquel. “The City of the Great Singer: C. R. Ashbe’s Jerusalem.” *Architectural History*, no. 50 (2007): 171–210.

Tosh, John. *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth Century Britain*. Pearson Education Limited, 2005.

Kosofsky Sedgwick, Eve. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. Columbia University Press, 1985.

Volait, Mercedes. “De l’anthropologie physique à “l’ethnographie artistique”?: Gustave Le Bon et sa Civilisation des Arabes (1884) ». *Histoire de l’Art*, 2007:101-11.