

## ENGLISH SILVER IN THE EARLY YEARS OF MASS PRODUCTION: THE ROLE OF PAUL STORR

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*Англійське срібло на ранньому етапі масового виробництва: роль Пола Сторра**Йоханніс Цумас*

*Мета статті полягає у поглибленому вивченні значення англійської індустрії обробки срібла, найстаршої з традиційних галузей ремесла, що використовувалися для задоволення соціальних, естетичних та функціональних потреб англійської знаті та аристократії упродовж століть, для британського ринку, економіки, дизайну та культури наприкінці 18 – на початку 19 ст., у період масштабних змін у галузі металообробки. У цьому контексті ми дослідимо роль одного з найважливіших майстрів з обробки металу зазначеної епохи, а саме – постать славетного Пола Сторра. На відміну від більшості своїх сучасників, йому вдалося утвердити гідну традицію англійської обробки срібла, яка тривала до самого кінця 19 ст. На прикладі важкої та запеклої боротьби з новими стандартами, встановленими промисловою революцією у галузі обробки срібла (та репрезентованими її прихильником – бізнесменом Метью Бултоном), ми простежимо шляхи, якими Пол Сторр намагався утвердити свій статус зберігача традицій англійської обробки срібла та передати ці традиції наступним поколінням дизайнерів.*

**Ключові слова:** *англійське срібло, Пол Сторр, масове виробництва, шеффілдський посуд, промислова революція, 18 століття, початок 19 століття.*

It is true that in the great course of decorative and applied arts in Great Britain during the last three centuries before the Industrial Revolution, the importance of design as well as the truth of materials for the production of high-quality functional and / or aesthetic objects constituted integral concepts of the craft production process. However, the gradual emergence of the industrial production phenomenon meant perhaps the sharp decline and, in some cases, extinction of many types of artifacts which were based on pure artisanal skill. Although the vindication for many of them came only with the emergence of the famous Arts and Crafts Movement in the second half of the nineteenth century, there were cases in which traditional techniques and methods remained faithful to the high quality raw materials, yet followed the new business practices.

One such case is the evolution of traditional silversmithing and, by extension, the English silver wares, that is to say, objects that traditionally constituted the most characteristic form of expensive and luxurious crafted objects mainly addressed to the rich and the powerful of England (Wakefield, M. & Scerce, M., 2019). This research focuses on the importance of this particular craft, and in particular its strong resistance to maintaining its integrity in the voracious wave of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century unprecedented industrialization, especially in the field of silversmithing which was profoundly shaken by Matthew Boulton's revolutionary inventions (Burton & Tann 2012, p. 18). The main leader of this proud resistance was the already

renown silversmith of the time, Paul Storr, whose course in the field of English silver design will be examined thoroughly.

I presume that a subject like this has to be deeply investigated as the literature on it is rather weak and consequently the gap in knowledge of English silver wares evolution through the very first decades of Industrial Revolution should be filled. Therefore, I assume that this research can contribute significantly to the existing, however limited, bibliography and can also lead to a further research of the topic discussed. The sources I will use are not particularly rich; however they include an adequate amount of bibliography and also some valuable, reliable online resources, mainly through several museum and private collections sites, all of which are listed at the end of the research.

### Handicraft and mass production in silversmithing in the eighteen century Britain

For over six centuries English silver has had the reputation of being the most expensive, but also the finest in Europe. Hallmarks, that constituted the official signature of the manufacturer of each item, but also the guarantee of its high quality, contributed greatly to this<sup>1</sup>. Specifically, English silver's hallmark for its purity in the early eighteenth century was a lion's head. This was almost exclusively found on the outer surface of the wares along with the maker's mark. High-quality silver was softer and easier to work with, but the lion's head standard was phased out in the 1720s. Nevertheless, it was also used in later years with minor changes to still indicate the high quality of this valuable raw material.



Figure 1. Paul de Lamerie: centerpiece, 1744.  
© Victoria and Albert Museum.

Traditionally, and under the Laws of the Guild<sup>2</sup> as early as the late seventeenth century, silversmiths were required to follow a specific course of education in which they had to serve as apprentices for at least seven years in order to meet the high demands of this difficult and important craft. Once they completed this apprenticeship, they could become full members of the Guild as Master Silversmiths.

However by the end of the 17th century, when Protestants in France were being persecuted by the Catholics,

the best French silversmiths along with other skillful craftsmen, known as Huguenots, would flee to the rest of Europe, but mainly to the Netherlands and England, two strongly Protestant countries, seeking refuge where they could enjoy their religious and social freedom. In England many of them would work with the best local silversmiths and help keep the art of silversmithing high for centuries to come (Wakefield, M. & Scerce, M., 2019).

<sup>1</sup> For instance at the end of seventeenth century, the King of England required silverware to be 95.8 % pure silver, rather than 92.5 %. This type of law, known as the *Britannia standard*, constituted a strict prohibition to silversmiths as it prevented them from melting down coins and using the extracted silver to make their wares. Thus, the purity of silver used in English silverware could be proved with the implementation of specific types of hallmarks.

<sup>2</sup>Established in the medieval times the term of Guild signified an association of craftsmen or tradesmen working in the same field. The members of the Guild would elect wardens who would make rules concerning the smooth running of the trade and the members' general appropriate behavior. Most Guilds owned a building, widely known as *The Hall*, where they had several meetings.

Coming from a distant generation of talented Huguenot silversmiths, Paul de Lamerie (1688–1751) was perhaps the most famous, but also the most capable of all the craftsmen of his time, as it was him who defined the meaning of *classicism* in the 18th century English silverwork, making it even more powerful. His exceptional talent in experimenting, inventing and creating new designs, forms and textures, but also his ability as a businessman, made him produce some of the most admirable silverware of his time. His work was distinguished by an astonishingly broad aesthetic and stylistic scale as it ranged from the elaborate elegant forms of Queen Anne's style to the striking complexity of rococo (Alcorn 2006, p. 42). Besides, he is considered to be the first designer in the history of English silver who managed to explore the aesthetic potential of the French rococo and integrate it into the strict English aesthetics of the time, creating silverwork that had never before been experienced in the country. His inspiration sources were endless, the techniques he used innovative and imaginative, but in any case the final objects decoration was highly intense: engraved, chased, or even cast moulded silver wares were heavily decorated with marine themes such as shells, sea creatures and plants but also human figures and richly decorative scrolls and cartouches. De Lamerie's reputation soon crossed the boundaries of the country in which he had already gained the trust and interest of English aristocracy with clients such as the Countess of Berkeley, the Earl of Bristol and the first Prime Minister of England Sir Robert Walpole and expanded to the Russian Imperial Court from which he began receiving a large number of orders. By the end of 1740s he was established as the most influential figure in silversmithing not only in England, but also in the rest of Europe as his work would constitute a dear repository for the generations that would follow.

The Georgian period in its heyday became synonymous with the concept of high taste in silversmithing. Paul de Lamerie would soon give the baton of his frantic race in the traditional English silver arena to the first and most important female silversmith of the time: Hester Bateman (1708-1794). Following the traditional occupation of her late husband John Bateman<sup>3</sup>, Hester would soon emerge as an exemplary silversmith and would enjoy the distinction and the respect of all her colleagues of the time.

Registering her first of nine punch-marks at the Goldsmith's Hall in 1761, with the simple initial letters 'HB' and employing her dominant personality, her talent for enterprise and her unique and irrefutable instinct in the popular design trends, she soon managed to become one of the most noted Georgian silversmiths (Bly 2000, p. 23). The new, simple forms she introduced in combination with the innovative and bold qualities on silver surfaces made her be distinguished for her austere, but enchanting and elegant style which was based more on the classical, symmetrically linear taste rather than in the heavily decorative rococo style. As she had chosen to produce mainly domestic silver wares for the needs of the rising English middle class, she lowered her cost without reducing the products quality, as she had to compete with the new trends in English silver mass production which were based on the *Sheffield Plate* technique (Wakefield, M. & Scerce, M., 2019). During her almost 30-year career, when she operated the famous Bateman workshops, her design and enterprise genius was developed in a formidable manner: her early works, rather dull flatware, consisted mainly of spoons and later jugs and salts soon came into sharp contrast with the elaborate, exuberant tea sets and later with a plethora of well made items such as seals, medallions and snuff boxes. She also made unique ecclesiastical silver pieces for many parish churches of England, but also expensive wares for the English nobility, contributing this way to the English silver resistance to the rapid rising of the new industrial era.

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<sup>3</sup>He was specialized mainly as a gold chain maker and wire drawer but his workshop also produced different types of sterling silver wares.

The second half of the eighteenth century was proved to be a time of great innovation for Great Britain, which strangely enough did not follow the political and economic mainstream of the rest of Europe. Although in the fields of product design and mass production its differences from other European countries were small, the structure and organization of the business idea, especially in the first few decades of the Industrial Revolution, were completely different. The economic values of free trade and private benefit were developed to such an extent that the



Figure 2. Hester Bateman: sterling silver engraved teapot, 1788. © Ahmeek Antiques and Decorative Arts, LLC.

immediate motto for the era was 'the profit as a first source of inspiration and creation'. This may be a sufficient explanation for the fact that many of the people who began to take the lead in the mass production of popular products were neither designers nor artists themselves, but entrepreneurs, that is, the 'architects' of the hitherto dominant business ideology, something that undoubtedly influenced both the formalistic, utilitarian, but also the aesthetic character of the objects (Heskett 1985, p. 14). Therefore, this new situation would fatally affect, inter alia, the status quo in traditional English silversmithing.

One of the pioneers of the new order of things in the field of metalwork, and especially silversmithing, was the businessman and manufacturer Matthew Boulton (1728-1809) who, based in the burgeoning industrial city of

Birmingham, managed to master its hitherto difficult and expensive art of English silverwork, inventing ways to make it more accessible to the general consumer society. Within the frantic framework of the industrial excitement across the country, exploring new ways of organization and using the steam energy<sup>4</sup> Boulton succeeded in impressing and gaining the general public's interest by applying specific, unprecedented techniques such as the silver and gold plating of copper, creating objects that would look authentic without, however, being economically inaccessible<sup>5</sup> (Burton & Tann 2012, p. 35).

As a classic enterprising industrialist Boulton also started using the hallmark idea for the benefit of his business, regardless of who was the originator of the project at hand. Especially since the 1880s, the initials 'MB' began to constitute a guarantee of Boulton's production quality credibility, as well as its copyright, while eliminating any reference to individual artists or designers.

Traditional craftsmanship then seemed to be systematically threatened by the spectacular expansion of stunning candlesticks, amphorae, jugs and cups of plain cast copper that had lent the expensive glow of pure silver or gold in the mid 1770s and that had begun to be massively sold at particularly attractive prices. Boulton's approach to the delicate issue of the aesthetics of his work was particularly cautious: a refined eclecticism in the choice of designs offered to him by major artists and designers such as John Flaxman, Robert Adam and James Wyatt in combination with the then-current English Neoclassicism fashion and the ever-increasing needs of the market, led to

<sup>4</sup>He was one of the first to discover the very important capabilities of the then emerging steam engine of James Watt (1736-1819) and to apply them to the production process of his enterprises.

<sup>5</sup>The invention of silver or fused plating in 1743, which became widely known as *Sheffield Plate* is due to Matthew Boulton's protégé, Thomas Bolsover (1705-1788).

the production of cheap, but tasteful items that flooded the British market until the early nineteenth century.

### Competing the New Age phenomenon

The road to mass production of silver or gold plated artifacts had already been opened, marking a new era in the metalworking industry that would prevail throughout the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain, covering mainly the aesthetic needs of the middle and lower classes of new social stratification.

But what was the 'reaction' of classic silversmiths to the rapid industrialization of silversmithing that had begun to become synonymous with the concept of 'affordable', but at the same time, 'cheap taste'? How could a truly great genius in the field of classic silversmithing, such as that of Paul Storr (1771-1844), not simply survive, but become great by creating objects of unparalleled design aesthetics in an unprecedentedly difficult mass production environment? How could the great designer compete with the sweeping power of industrialization, the reckless use of new inventions, techniques and pseudomaterials aimed at conquering a broad market in England and overseas, using only traditional techniques of his own craft and his inexhaustible talent?



Figure 3. Matthew Boulton: two Sheffield Plate wine coolers, 1800.

© Spencer Marks Ltd.

Paul Storr's father, Thomas, a silver chaser and a skilled tradesman whose job involved the creation of patterns and designs on silverware constituted the most important influence for him. It was not accidental then that he would follow his father path into the metalwork profession, and in 1785 he would become an apprentice silversmith by the διάσημο Swedish silversmith Andrew Fogelberg (1732-1815) who appeared to have

gone into partnership with Stephen Gilbert from 1780 until 1793 operating from Soho premises in Church Street, London. There he was mainly active as a 'plateworker', following the enormous trend of the time in the field of metalwork and he was very much influenced from the restrained, but elegant classicism of his master's work. His remarkable critical thinking and his unmistakable instinct enabled him to take advantage of the fruitful, creative relationship between Folgeberg and the capable, particularly popular gem engraver and modeler James Tassie (1735-1799). Tassie's contribution to Folgeberg's work in the form of modeling or medallion type patterns was catalytic (Hyman 1994, p. 63), and this contributed to the shaping of the ambitious imagination of Storr who found the right chance to leave his master and be a freeman in 1792. In the same year he joined the workshop of William Frisbee the partnership with whom did not last for a long, in spite of the fact that they had both hoped to a long endurance cooperation as they had registered their joint mark 'WF over PS' in their astonishingly beautiful, handmade objects (Campbell 2006, p. 399). Opposed to the trends of the time which promoted the easy, economical production, both partners tried to apply in the most appropriate way all the new ideas, techniques and design knowledge they had gained from their many years of experience. Thus, they believed, they could successfully compete with the monster of industrialization which grew increasingly threatening



Figure 4. Paul Storr: battle of the Nile Cup, 1799. © Chinese Argent.

the quality, the value, but mainly the artistic ethos of English silver which was directly associated with the glorious history of Great Britain.

Therefore, much of their joint work could not be addressed to the middle class consumer as the inability of the company to compete with the new achievements in the silversmithing design field as defined by the new industrial era was a major obstacle. So it was expected that their output would be small, as silver which bore their mark was extremely rare at the time. Items by that partnership are still very desirable, and sought after because they are synonymous with Storr's starting point in his outstanding career, which saw him attain the title of the most famous English silversmith of the following century. The strongly fashionable Neoclassical style which swept the major areas of applied arts and architecture of the time, was the most favorable for them and characterized the biggest part of their exuberant silverware collections.

But his greatest and boldest step in his attempt to resist to the new order Boulton had set the previous decades and to fight for the preservation and perhaps promotion of traditional silversmithing craft in the affluent English markets, was soon after. Feeling

confident enough to register the hallmark he had first used in his collaboration with Frisbee<sup>6</sup>, but in his own right, in 1796 Storr installed his business in Air street, Piccadilly, London, a workshop which would accommodate his enormous success in silversmithing and goldsmithing for the following ten years. His style would continue the then current neoclassical fashion, which he had already successfully served, although his pieces were often less decorative than the work of his contemporaries. During the reign of King George III<sup>7</sup>, the third British monarch of the House of Hanover (Brooke 1972, p. 314), who loved, protected and promoted the arts, Storr triumphed as he not only had the opportunity to keep the very important clientele he had acquired during his collaboration with Frisbee, but also to make it larger. Trying to keep his rare technical skills in perfect harmony with his talent in design, he soon began to enjoy patronage and receive orders from the great noble houses of England for several sets of cups, impressively designed vases, kettles, wine coolers and wonderfully decorated dishes and plates. His most important work at this stage of his career that paved his way for glory was a special commission he received by the Duke of Portland in 1797: a large gold font for the christening of his son William Henry. Two years later, he continued by creating the famous 'Battle of the Nile Cup', a piece of work of astonishing skill made for presentation to Admiral Lord Nelson after his resounding victory over Napoleon's fleet off the east coast of Egypt, in 1798 (Miller 2015, p. 322). During the period 1793-1806, Storr had realized that despite his strong opposition to the concept of industrialization, there were some benefits. Adherence to the new ideology of business organization and the adoption of new

<sup>6</sup> Storr would keep this mark for the rest of his career with minor changes.

<sup>7</sup> In reality King George III ruled until 1811 when he was considered literally unfit to rule for health reasons. Then and his son, as prince regent (the future King George IV 1820-1837), reigned until his death in 1820. However, in English history the whole period of George III reign and after (1795-1837) is often regarded as the Regency era.



principles for the division of labor, the hiring of skilled artisans, and the use of new technologies were considered necessary for him, as both Boulton and Wedgwood<sup>8</sup> had already done (Mankowitz 1953, p. 34). However, the use of original raw materials such as pure silver and gold was undisputable, and thus the pace and the quantity of his production limited. Though his products were of variable qualities and prices, but most of them were addressed to the rich and powerful.

It is obvious then that Storr had not only emerged as an exceptional silversmithery figure, but also as an unbeatable entrepreneur with a talent for spotting the best artists, including famous painters and sculptors as well as designers and specialized technicians and craftsmen such as modelers and draftsmen who he could cooperate with. His use of innovative technology was also surprising. In terms of style he was much influenced by the classical style of Robert Adam: in the beginning, much of his work was heavily decorated with garlands, beads and scrolls, but by the time, he developed his own, distinctive style less flamboyant and fussy. Soon, and according to the new trends his first restrained - but later, magnificent and elaborate – neoclassical style was enriched with Egyptian symbols and rococo motifs (Proudlove 2015). However, he was noted not only for his immaculate, inventive designs and the techniques he introduced: his approach to every piece of work, from start to finish, was extremely meticulous, as he used to handle it in a magical way, adding unexpected details and finishes so that the final piece would result into a small miracle of silversmithing. One of the most notable works of that time which bears the main characteristic of

his design ideology was a silver soup tureen commissioned by Sir Richard Carr Glyn.<sup>9</sup> This extraordinary piece of art reflects the level of his craftsmanship, superior quality, and attention to detail he imparted to all of his works and constitutes an admirable example of Georgian craftsmanship.

The footed tureen's handles are of exquisite shape and texture terminating in impressive lion masks, whereas the refined ornamentation in a repetitive, almost geometrical beaded pattern covers significant parts of the foot, body and cover, rendering it even more elaborate and fancy. The symbolic saying 'Fidei Tenax' or 'Firm to my Trust' is incorporated in the engraved coats of arms both in the cover and the body making the whole object an unprecedented work of art and honor.



Figure 5. Paul Storr: silver soup tureen, 1805.  
© M. S. Rau Antiques catalogue.

<sup>8</sup>Joshia Wedgwood (1730-1795) was possibly the most prominent potter and entrepreneur in England in the beginning of Industrial Revolution who introduced the mass production of functional and decorative wares establishing, thus, the concept of taste in the field of ceramics.

<sup>9</sup>An eminent and highly respected British banker and politician who served as both the Sheriff of London (1790) and the Lord Mayor of London (1798).

### Rundell and Storr: exploitation and creativity

Along with Storr's legendary silversmithing presence, an even greater and more competitive firm had already managed to nearly monopolize the early British 19th century market for silver, gold and jewelry in general and held the warrant as Royal Goldsmiths in 1806: the famous Rundell & Bridge firm<sup>10</sup> (Lovett 1949, p. 154). Philip Rundell (1747-1827), a former shopman in London's jewelry showrooms and later the very founder of the firm, along with his junior partner John



Figure 6. Paul Storr (for Rundell, Bridge & Rundell Co.): silver-gilt tea set, 1813. © Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Bridge (1755–1834) won, by the time, the valuable – and extravagant – patronage of George III and especially for Prince Regent, the future George IV, who throughout his life, commissioned exquisite pieces of work (Granville 2006, p. 176). Their cooperation with well known and talented artists of the time, many of who cooperated with the Adam Brothers and also Storr, such as the sculptor John Flaxman, helped them create their own style in English silver which had the imperial splendor that

absolutely suited to both monarchs. Being two totally different, contrasting but at the same time mutually benefited personalities with different skills each, Rundell and Bridge worked together with the only scope to produce high caliber silver and gold works which would reflect and, at the same time, influence the fashion spirit of the time in their Regency high society clientele. Philip Rundell, a rather temperamental and harsh businessman and at the same time the best judge of gemstones in the city of London cooperated, if not smoothly, at least productively with the mild-natured and intelligent John Bridge, who constituted the public face of the firm for obvious reasons (Hartop 2007, p. 14).

In the 1810s their business was so renowned that they could not cope easily with the masses of orders which flowed in not only from Great Britain, but also from many parts of the world. This resulted to the establishment of many agents or correspondents in the biggest commercial and cultural centers of the world such as Istanbul, Paris, Vienna and St Petersburg, but also Smyrna, Baghdad, Calcutta, Bombay and South America's big cities. However, Storr's business genius and his unbeatable skills in silversmithing, attracted Rundell's interest who thought that a partnership with him would only be for his business profit. Thus, as early as 1803 he started approaching the 33 year old Paul in order to persuade him to join their business under 'favorable and particularly lucrative terms'. Some of his many tempting arguments was that Storr would have the opportunity not only to experiment his already high technical and design methods in much larger and better equipped premises, but also to take on commissions through Rundell's influential firm that he might not have the opportunity to meet with otherwise. In 1806 and after much hesitation and deep thought, Storr was finally convinced to leave his own workshop in Air Street and move at 53

<sup>10</sup>Philipp Rundell's nephew Edmund Waller Rundell joined their company in 1805 which since then became known as Rundell, Bridge & Rundell.



Dean street in Soho, where the premises of the Rundell, Bridge & Rundell retailing firm were housed (Penzer 1954, p. 44).<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, before he agreed to join their company Storr made clear that by so doing he had no intention of leaving his own career by abandoning his work identity. One of his most important and inviolable terms was to continue his own work at the new address but he would also keep his own business under the new name 'Storr & Co', executing any kind of orders he would be given by Rundell. However, the cunning businessman's plan was to keep Storr so busy as he would not be able to keep his own business running properly. Thus, Storr was mainly engaged in executing almost solely the orders that poured lavishly into Rundell's firm. A part of the silver production continued to be inscribed with Storr's 'PS' mark, but the most elaborate, expensive pieces bore the characteristic Latin inscription '*RUNDELL BRIDGE ET RUNDELL AURIFICES REGIS LONDINI FECERUNT*' (*MADE BY RUNDELL BRIDGE AND RUNDELL LONDON'S KING GOLDSMITHS*), which would literally attribute their unique skill and unsurpassable design finesse to the Rundell, Bridge & Rundell company, rather than to Storr himself (Truong 2007). By the time commissions and orders would grow bigger and bigger as his skills were widely sought after attracting clientele from the richest, most famous and powerful people of the time both in England and abroad.



Figure 7. Paul Storr –Philip Rundell:  
dessert stand (part of the Grand Service)  
1811. ©The Royal Collection Trust.

Ingenious Rundell had succeeded in making Storr an important part of his excellently organized 'business machine' which, despite producing expensive and highly artistic silverware, had adopted many of Boulton's principles and, by extension, the current industrial ideology with regard to the perfection of production and the increase of its profits. Under this new order of things Rundell had found out that one of the most important issues in his company's production success was the efficient use of his business name or trademark in his products. (Tsoumas 2005, p. 311). This would be another reason for them to be established not only in the domestic and international markets, but mainly in the consciousness of their wealthy clients.

One of the most important commissions undertaken by the Rundell, Bridge & Rundell on behalf of George IV was a magnificent silver-gilt dining service which included more than 4.000 unique pieces for dining and display in different styles. Elegant simple dishes, dinner plates, trays, forks and spoons, immaculately

designed salts and ice pails, imaginative dessert stands and elaborate candelabra were some of the exquisite items of this unique silver-gilt collection the first installment of which was handed in 1811.<sup>12</sup> The so-called 'Grand Service' had no particular decoration style, and constituted an unprecedented medley of Oriental, ancient Greek, Roman and Egyptian designs, but also some attractive marine themes. The idea that mysterious Egyptians motifs, such as palm-tree leaves,

<sup>11</sup>However, it has never been known what else Storr was unofficially offered other than the likely promise of a partnership in the firm in order to agree with Rundell.

<sup>12</sup>The biggest part of the first installment included plain silver items while only a small part of the collection was silver-gilt. But after many scholastic comments by the aristocratic circles of the Palace that silver objects looked 'cold and poor' George IV ordered every piece to be gilded. The gilding of the whole 'Grand Service', which was composed of different styles and sizes pieces, gave it a satisfying feeling of consistency.

lotus flowers and sphinxes<sup>13</sup>, classic Greek and Roman Gods, nymphs and other mythical creatures could coexist harmonically with sea shells and waves, the Royal coat of arms, fruiting vines and entwined serpents on a sole table, was proved to be more than successful. The whole service would ideally serve George IV's strongly theatrical personality who would be satisfied with anything designed for display.

As time went on and the company's production grew, Storr realized that his chances of producing his own business wares were diminishing. Moreover, as his position was then established as the head of a mass-production workshop, and therefore his duties were very specific, he realized that his creative freedom in designing and manufacturing objects had been relentlessly restricted. His handling of orders whose style was dictated by Rundell himself had turned him into a mere executive individual of a dull production process whose purpose was solely his boss's business fame and profit. The almost blatant cancellation of his artistic individuality and his personal craftsmanship constituted a major obstacle to his personal career aspirations and at the same time a strong alarm to restore his lost creativity. Storr realized that he had fallen victim to a typical English businessman who would not hesitate to sacrifice anyone on the altar of his own profit. After all, the basic ideology of industrial development, the results of which had already begun to be seen on multiple levels, held that 'capitalistic production is the production of commodities by commodities', a principle which Rundell had always been a staunch supporter of (Kaldor 1977, p. 193).



Figure 8. Storr & Mortimer: a William IV large silver salver, 1836.  
© Bonhams.

It was not until 1819 when Storr decided to leave the firm, resign his partnership with Rundell, Bridge & Rundell and start working again on his own, moving to a large workshop at 18 Harrison Street, Gray's Inn Lane. However, it is worth noting that much of the work that had been produced under his supervision was in naturalism and rococo revival forms, two distinctive styles which he would employ for many of his own works the years that would follow in his new workshop (Freeman's 2015, p. 13). However, three years later Storr would start a new partnership with the Bond Street retailer John Mortimer, a man who used to deal with the jewelry retail business, in one of the most fashionable streets of London. The main reason of this agreement was

mainly enterprising rather than artistic as he thought that this new arrangement would help him to promote his work more effectively. This is why he then concentrated almost entirely on the design and manufacture of goods Mortimer would sell in this prestigious New Bond Street shop. Soon the two partners would become two manufacturing and retail jewelers and silversmiths, but

<sup>13</sup>The Egyptian civilization had already become a major source of inspiration for French designers at the turn of the nineteenth century, following Napoleon Bonaparte's great campaign in the Middle East (Egypt and Syria, 1798-801), which consequently influenced the general European taste of the time.

who would be synonymous almost exclusively to high quality English silver work. However, much of their high class clientele, such as the Royalty, the British nobility and other severely affluent individuals were attracted by Storr's reputation developed during his cooperation with the Rundell, Bridge & Rundell firm.<sup>14</sup>

At the time there were severe changes in the field of precious metals in Great Britain. While the country adopted the gold standard in 1816 which consequently became the highest unit of value, above the former sterling money, the supply of silver increased dramatically as the discovery of large deposits of silver-bearing ores in North America established mine operations which made it cheaper and even more accessible in the world markets (McNab 2000, p. 23).

Under these particularly ideal conditions, and during his recent and highly productive phase of his turbulent, but also constructive course in the history of English silver, Storr created some of his most characteristic works that reflected his profound insistence on the full use of this valuable material. Having largely adopted the new technological breakthroughs and the latest business ideas, he never betrayed the 'good and honest' use of silver, since he was one of the few silversmiths who knew its nature so well. This means that he was able not only to take advantage of its multiple properties to the fullest, but also to negotiate any of its weaknesses compared to other precious metals. And of course his magic touch on such a familiar and beloved material enabled him to bring anything he made to life.

Many art historians and experts in English silver agree that Storr's undeniable skill, artistic instinct, creative imagination and especially attention to detail were rare virtues that advocated for a large-scale project with a high level of versatility, but with definitely undisputable high quality in any sense. Most of all we have to admit that he knew that he had the ability to apply his own unique identity to any type of work he dealt with ranging from the plain and often austere neo-classical pieces to the extravagantly ornamented rococo forms. He avoided repeating himself in any of his designs and this is why he believed that had the ability to make each of his pieces be completely unique as it had its own, individual features. His exemplary work constituted the major incentive for many other silversmiths and artisans who would keep English silver in its traditionally high standards in the rest of nineteenth century. Its legendary quality would still thrive on Queen Victoria's ascendancy in 1837, inaugurating the rise of Victorian silver which reflected, with its extravagant ornamentation and purity, not only the aesthetic, but also the moral and social values of the Victorian era. English Art Nouveau owes much to Storr, too, as pure silver would still remain incompatible in spite of the fact that fashion trends and methods of production would change dramatically in form and style.

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<sup>14</sup>John Samuel Hunt (1785-1865) an also renowned silversmith joined their business in 1826, bringing the significant investment capital of £5,000 with him. Twelve years later they moved to new premises in the same prestigious road just prior to Storr's retirement of at the end of 1838.

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### ***English silver in the early years of mass production: the role of Paul Storr***

*This article aims to provide an in-depth research into the importance of English silver, the oldest of the traditional crafts that served the social, aesthetic and functional needs of English nobility and aristocracy for centuries, in the British market, economy, design and culture, in general, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a period of sweeping changes in the field of metalwork. In this context, we will explore the role of one of the most important silversmiths of the era, the celebrated Paul Storr who, unlike many of his peers, constituted a worthy successor of the English silver wares tradition in the rest of the nineteenth century. Through many and severe battles with the then new order of thing established by the rules of the Industrial Revolution in the field of silversmithing the main representative of which was the intelligent businessman Matthew Boulton, we will explore the ways in which Storr managed to impose himself as a classic silversmith and pass the splendor of English silver on the future generation of designers.*

**Keywords:** *English silver, Paul Storr, mass production, Sheffield plate, Industrial Revolution, eighteenth century, early nineteenth century*

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