The Visual Representation of the Robin Redbreast in Victorian Culture

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This dissertation is submitted by the undersigned to the Institute of Art Design and Technology, Dun Laoghaire in partial fulfilment for the BA (Hons) in Design for Stage and Screen. It is entirely the author's own work, except where noted, and has not been submitted for an award from this or any other educational institution.

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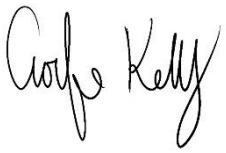

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Abstract

The representation of the robin redbreast bird through the Victorian era, where the notions of the songster were enhanced by cultural practises. The robin's depictions during the Christmas season and festive rituals in the 1880s including the sentiments and moral obligations evoked from the Victorians as a result of these red breasted birds. This dissertation is an examination and exploration of the robin's links with the Victorian postal service, postmen uniforms and the significance of their red colour and their role as a messenger. Chapbooks[1], poetry and folklore are a means of carrying the sentiments and messages of the bird over time. A look at how the robin is presented as a sacrificial vessel and the bird's link to flames, warmth and name fire-bringer. The robin's depiction as a symbol of Christmas ideals coinciding with the birth and surge of Christmas merchandizing. How to interpret the image of the dead robin as well as the sentimental value of the robin as a messenger for compassion and togetherness.

Keywords: Robin Redbreast, Representation, Victorian Sentiment, Christmas Cards

[1] A chapbook, also known as a penny dreadful, is a small pamphlet containing poems, ballads and fiction.

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Introduction

There are few birds that evoke such affection as that of the little robin red; no other bird is as ever-present, familiar and embedded in our culture. Folklore, religious telling's, poetry and song paint a consolidated picture of the benevolent kindly songster. For the purpose of this dissertation, the robin referred to is the European robin or Erithacus rubecula. This robin belongs to a subfamily of the old world flycatcher family predominately found in Ireland, Britain and across Europe. The term robin has been adopted by a multitude of bird families with red or orange feathers in their breast which are not addressed in this work.

Mild winters and kindness towards birds draw the robins to the British Isles and Republic of Ireland to build their homes, only here do the birds behave in such a tame manner. Robins are persistently present during the brisk bitter months and are reliable for their sturdiness to endure the harsher weather. Their consistency all year round and loyalty to their territories emanates a likeness and endearment with humans. Richard Mabey notes that when we gaze upon a robin "no wonder we melt, and feel for a moment that we both live in the same one world"[2]. Perhaps that is why collectively there is a fondness for the robin.

The robin is not shy of human companionship and is known to perch by the trowel of the gravediggers and watch over them as they tend to the dead[3]. The robin is known to nest anywhere and everywhere even in the pocket of a gardener, built between morning and lunch or in an unmade bed or a shoe of a guest passing through a home. They in fact appear to enjoy the company, emerging from the church rafters to sing at mass and perch by open windows to serenade its occupants. The robin has always been a friend to us.

[2] Lack, Andrew. *Redbreast: The Robin in Life and Literature Introduction.* London: SMH Books, 2008.
[3] Robin's diet consist primarily of worms and they will scour the fresh dirt and feast as the earth is unturned by gravediggers

However, alongside the real biological robin there is the human invention of the cultural, literary and historical robin, but its existence is just as palpable and absolute. Mabey observes that "there are no truly great robin poems, like Ted Hughes's 'Swifts' or George Meredith's "The Lark Ascending"; the robin simply isn't that kind of heroic, elusive creature". There is an ordinariness and familiarity that makes this creature so approachable to admire, celebrate and love as we do. The cultural notions of the robin are not always positive bringing darkness and death as well as the light and warmth but in this again they mimic our faults as well as our virtues, they "haunts the same sphere as us"[4].

The name 'robin' began as a friendly nickname. Although the name 'robin' wasn't always attached to the bird, it was formerly known as 'ruddock' or 'redbreast'. The reddish plumage generates the name 'ruddock' or 'ruddy' of Anglo-Saxon origin, the appellation persists well into the Victorian era. The term 'redbreast' came later[5]. Other European names reflect its red breast such as Rougegorge, Pettirosso, and Rudzik or it may simply be derivative from the Latin rubens meaning red. The name robin was fortified as the title for this bird through Victorian times.

This work examines the representation of the robin redbreast bird through the Victorian era, where the notions of the songster were enhanced by cultural practises and founding traditions. Thus exploring the robin's depictions during the Christmas season and festive rituals in the 1880s and discussing the sentiments and moral obligations evoked from the Victorians as a result of these red breasted birds.

Chapter One, *a robin: the red breasted bird as a Victorian Postman* addresses the symbol of the robin as a messenger and protector at Christmas time by analysing the connection with the postal service uniforms and as a visual tool on Christmas cards and merchandise. Exploring the sentiments

[4] Moss, Stephen. *The Robin: A Biography.* London: Random House, 2017.

[5] The robin may be called "redbreast" when in actuality plumage is an orange colour. Only in the Middle Ages did oranges, the fruit, enter into circulation in Britain and Ireland. It wasn't until 1557,the the word "orange" was used to describe the intermediate colour between red and yellow. Dating a hundred years after the name "redbreast" was first recorded.

of togetherness, connection and compassion, and addressing and understanding how the robin bird became of a symbol of the postal service, this chapter explores how it embellishes lessons and teaches sentiments of kindness and good-will, encouraging an affinity for attachment, relationships and closeness.

Chapter Two, *the robin as a sacrificial vessel and fire-bringer* addresses the representational value of the bird as a sacrificial vessel. The robin's appearance as signifier of sacrifice appears through the role of a fire-bringer and its associations with flame and selfless acts of suffering. This includes the redbreast's associations with the colour red, fiery tongues and bringer of warmth and light. This chapter delves into sentiments of moral duty, guidance, tenderness and shelter, by observing how folk and religious narratives have provided meaning to the robin as a link to fire and as a beacon of light in darkness and how this translates onto the Victorian Christmas card.

Chapter Three, *the Deathly Kind Robin* examines how the visual representation of the dead robin on seasonal Christmas cards, through shared cultural codes, can be interpreted. Discussing the robin's meaning as a good omen and its association with luck within superstition, and addressing intertexts such as 'Babes in the Woods' and an 'Oliver Twist' themed Christmas postcard, this chapter investigates and explores the various interpretations of the symbol of the dead robin.

Chapter One

A Robin: The Red Breasted Bird

as a Victorian Postman

The robin redbreast's link with Christmas and biblical narratives dates back to ancient times, however the attachment between the robin and festive traditions surrounding the Christian celebration is fortified as a result of Victorian practices in the late 1800s. The robin redbreast has been linked to the Victorian postman due to its dependable presence during the holiday period, and the red overcoat is linked to the role of a messenger delivering comfort and togetherness.

The representation of the robin as a messenger emanates from the bird's role in these early religious depictions. In *Symbolic and Mythological Animals* J.C. Cooper notes a prominent version telling of Jesus nailed to the cross when the songbird heard his suffering and sang to soothe His aching soul, piercing the robin's breast on the thorns and in doing so turning red[6]. The robin is sent from God above bringing an analgesic message of relief and hope. Additional stories include the robin attempting to pry the nails from Jesus on the cross; of Mary, where the bird fanned its wings to remove a piece of grit from her eye and pouring cooling water from its beak to ease the burning[7], and another rendition where the robin's breast was "scorched fetching water for souls in Purgatory"[8]. *Birds in legend, fable and folklore* by Ernest Ingersoll discusses in length the appearance of birds in Christian tradition and festival and the robin's active co-relation with Jesus's biblical tales.[9] All these narratives portray the robin as carrying a message of soothing qualities, easing discomfort and hardship.

[6] Cooper, J. C. *Symbolic and Mythological Animals*. London: Aquarian Press, 1992. p. 194.
[7] Calvert, W. R. *Watchers of the Wild*. Cornell University: Hutchinson & Co Ltd. 1947
[8] de Vries, Ad. *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*. Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1976. pp. 388–89.
[9] Ingersoll, Ernest. Birds *in legend, fable and folklore*. New York: Longmans, Green & co, 1923. p.114.

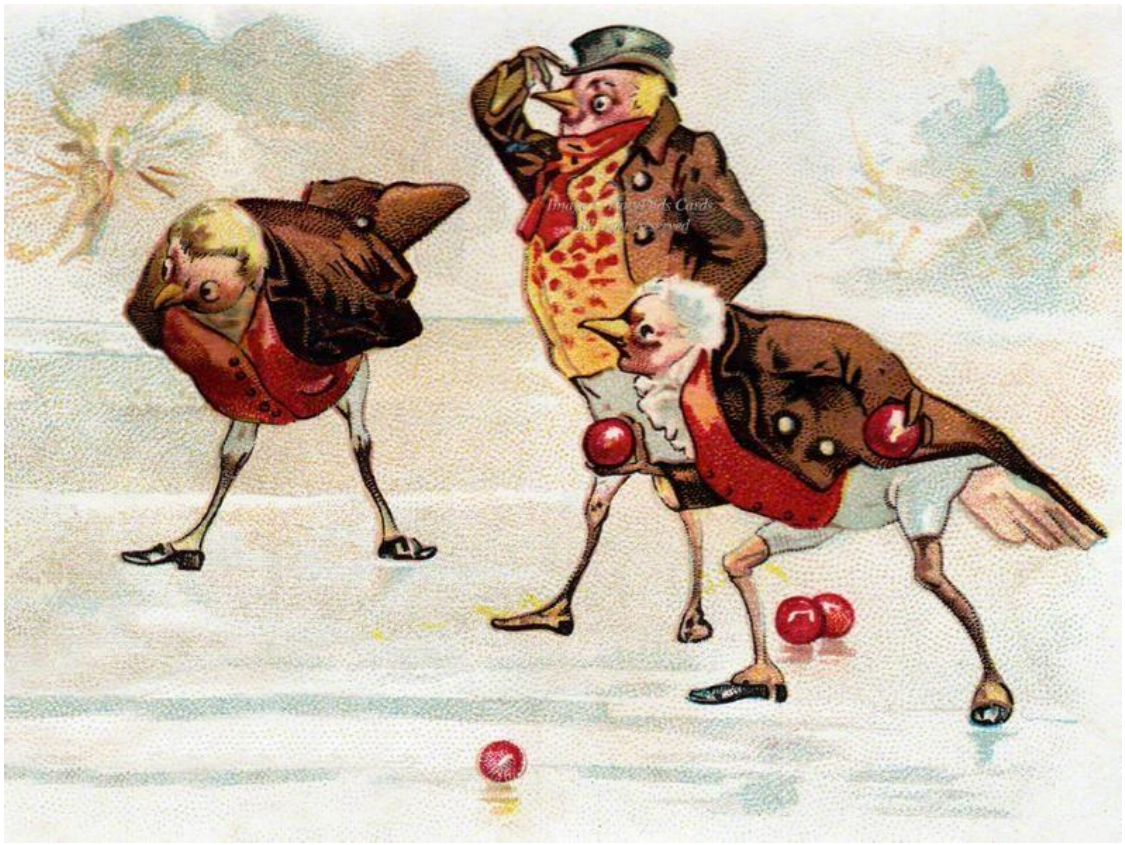

FIGURE 1: Dudley, Robert. "*Robins bowling Berries on a Frozen Pond*". United Kingdom: Castell Brothers. C 1889.

The ideology of the robin as a messenger originates from these stories but to Victorians the messenger they recognise named 'robin' refers to a postal worker adorned in a red coat, as shown in *Figure 1* with the depiction of anthropomorphic postmen bowling berries on a frozen pond. After the tradition of sending Christmas cards was founded in 1843 by Henry Cole, the first director of the Victoria and Albert museum, the concept quickly gained momentum and it became common practise to send and receive festive postcards and holiday greetings [10]. This was stimulated by the new universal penny post in 1840, reducing the price and accomplishing accessibility for all social classes to afford to send post[11], the penny black in *Figure 2* was the first adhesive postage stamp released nationally. By 1881, the Royal Mail issued a request to encourage people to dispatch their Christmas post early as a result of unamenable strain on the postal service during this period.[12]

[10] Buday, György. *The history of the Christmas card*. United States: Spring Books, 1964. Pg109
[11] Staff, Frank. *The Penny Post, 1680-1918*. University of Michigan: Lutterworth Press, 1964.
[12] The Postal Museum, "*Christmas through the Post*". www.postalmuseum.org. United Kingdom

FIGURE 2: English Photographer, "*Penny Black and Penny Red*". London: Bridgeman Images, Private Collection. Archives Charmet. 1850.

As Christmas drew near, families, friends and loved ones from all over the country eagerly anticipated a delivery from their own local 'robin'. The red coated postmen were kept consistently in the public eye with the surge in popularity of seasonal greeting cards. These two 'robins' build a domestic link from household to household. Winter is often a time for loneliness and despair in the cold months and there is a disconnect from society, routine and human contact as the shutters are closed to keep out the frost and darkness. The convivial joyful robin bridges between the homes and delivers messages of warmth and love. There is a sense of familial solidarity when awarded the opportunity to reach family members out of reach due to work or other circumstances. The invention of the Christmas card has drawn them together with the robin as the messenger.

The representation of these two 'robins', the postmen and the bird, as messengers pertain heavily to the visual red plumage and red coat that accompanies their appearance. The red symbol acts as a

message in its own right serving to further the meaning of their role as a messenger. For this we must examine what the postmen and redbreast represent wearing the red emblem.

The first recorded use and existence of the postal service in Britain stems back to 1516 for the use of the King Henry VII, the royal family and government only, establishing a "Master of the Posts" position[13]. The postal service emerged from the requirements of the monarchy and the state so it has always been recognised as a metonymic representation of royalty and thus so an intrinsically British institution and mark of nationality. *Figure 3* depicts a 1935 rendering of the beginning of the royal postal service, when all mail was transported by a horse and footman on long journeys to serve the crown.

FIGURE 3: Armstrong, John (1893-1973). "*The King's Messenger*". British Postal Museum and Archive. 1935 Colour Litho.

[13] The Postal Museum. "*Postal Uniforms Collection*". www.postalmuseum.org. United Kingdom

Red was chosen for the postal establishment servants, acknowledged as the royal colour of England and the Post Office, having its origins in royal couriers. The red coat acts as a reminder of the crown's status in the country and to encourage a sense of unified nationality within culture. In 1793 as outlined in the *Postal Museum Archive* the initial official issue of standardised clothing was made for London General Post carriers, the drivers and guards of its mail coaches receiving gold-braided scarlet uniforms[14]. Following this the Post Office issued each mail driver and guard with a "scarlet cloth coat faced with blue lapels and linings (as shown in *Figure 4)*, a blue waistcoat and a black felted beaver fur hat". This uniform was supplied to honour and mark Queen Charlotte's birthday May 19th, dominated by the red, a rendition of the British flag and subsequently the crown.

FIGURE 4: "*Mail Guards Frockcoat*". London: Herbert &Co, 1875-1882.

[14] The Postal Museum. "Postal Uniforms Collection". Online Archives. United Kingdom

A practised custom on Victorian streets saw red-coated bellmen prior to the departure of the mail coaches, rounding up letters not submitted to the post office yet, ringing a bell and carrying a sack for letter collection. This duty was discontinued with the erection of green road-side pillar boxes and pre-paid penny post shown in *Figure 5*[15] . The first post boxes were introduced in 1852. The reason why British post boxes were eventually standardized to be the iconic red pillar boxes now in use are as a result of the popularity of the scarlet postal uniforms and their acceptance as a British royal symbol.

FIGURE 5: "*Green post box*". Great Britain, England, Berkshire, Windsor: Dorling Kindersley. Bridgeman Images

[15]Shrimpton, Jayne. "*Scarlet and blue: a traditional uniform at Christmas"* London: The Post Magazine Online, History Section. 1st Dec 2015.

In 1855, the letter carriers' cut away tail coat was replaced by a skirted, scarlet frock. This uniform again is dominated by the colour red. The attire consisted of "a scarlet skirted frockcoat with blue lapels and cuffs, and brass buttons with the wearer's number, a beaver hat and blue waistcoat" shown in *Figure 6.* The Frock Coats were manufactured by Herbert &Co. The uniforms were constructed and produced in London from the year 1875 to 1882. In *Figure 6* we observe a watercolour painting of Moses James Nobbs from 1890 by H.E Brown, Nobbs is known as the last of the mail coach guards working the position.

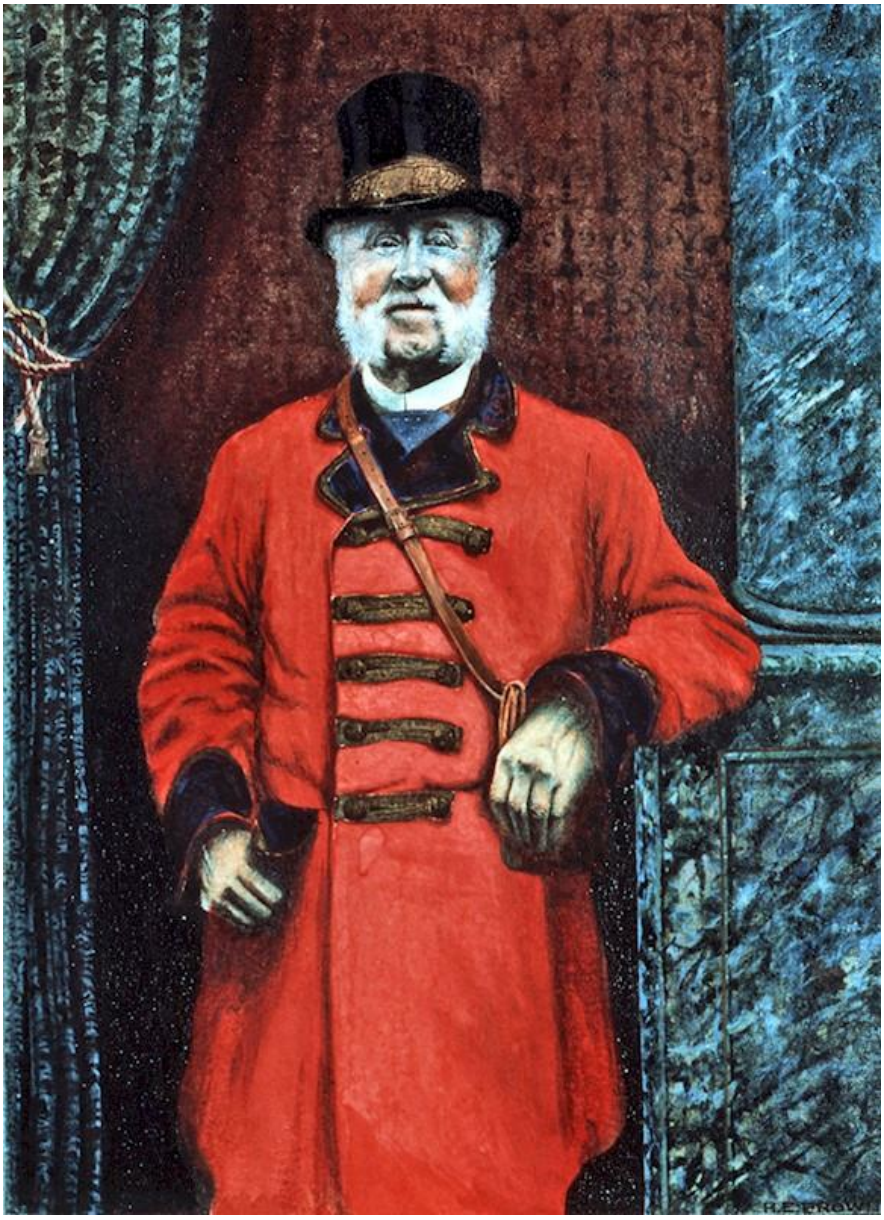

FIGURE 6: Brown, H, E. "*Moses James Nobbs*" Watercolour. C 1890

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the letter carrier's uniform underwent significant changes. The more potent scarlet elements gradually disappeared in favour of a sterner, professional, sombre look. However, a key moment had already been fixed within Christmas culture and solidified the red hue as a symbol of Christmas and of the messenger role. The discernible blue coat appeared in the latter half of the 19th century. Uniform provision for provincial postmen 'robins' were not fully distributed until the 1830s as the adoption of standardized garments beyond the capital was slow. Regional variations, like the 'Two Penny Postmen' wore uniforms in reverse colours, which meant there were often a mixture of blue and red uniforms throughout the country at any one time as the garments headed towards a unified look as displayed in *Figure 7.* In spite of this, the proud link between the scarlet hue and British identity had been established in the popular imagination and from this point the colour red continued to be utilized as a national emblem. The cultural importance of red was secured when the architect Giles Gilbert Scott (1880- 1960) designed the red telephone box, red post box and the red London bus, which were and retain the stature of a recognizable British emblem.

FIGURE 7: Unknown, Artist. "*Postmen's Uniforms*", Watercolour on Paper. English School: British Postal Museum and Archive. 1894.

The visual representation of the Victorian postmen and the red-breasted bird have been employed to remind society that this is a time for family and togetherness. The advancements in the industrial revolution caused home life and work life to become separated, driving families to relocate and lose touch with loved ones.[16] This cultural shift in family dynamics necessitated the demand for messengers and a way of facilitating connectivity among long distance relatives. Furthering the point, *Figure 8* illustrates the idea of the Victorian postman imagined as the embodiment of its nickname, the 'robin'. The Christmas card depicts two robins delivering the morning post with anthropomorphic qualities such as human clothing wearing a peaked shako, red waistcoat, blue tie and white shirt. The clear visual meaning for this drawing is that both the bird and postmen are messengers, whether of postal letter or of sweet song but beyond the visual portrayal there is a further cultural contextual link.

FIGURE 8: Unknown, Artist. "*The Christmas Morning Post*". London: Raphael Tuck &Sons, 1934. *National Museums Liverpool, Accession number 1976.561*

[16] Hopkins, Eric. "*Working Hours and Conditions during the Industrial Revolution: A Re-Appraisal*". United States: Wiley Publication. New Series, Vol. 35, No. 1. Feb 1982. pp. 52-66.

The Victorian postman with a scarlet coat fulfils an important role, delivering mail connecting relatives and families which eases the hardship of being disconnected from those you cherish at Christmas. These depictions elicit sympathy from the viewer through an appropriate expression of strong feeling stirred by accurate visual details linking to everyday struggles[17]. The postman in this sense fulfils and mirrors the role the robin redbreast songster is known for, the pair both bear gifts of love inclusivity and hope to its recipients. The robin emulates the helpful, giving and selfless nature that originates from tales of Christian legends[18], its actions ease the suffering and hardship of others. The postmen mimic this sentiment bringing families closer together by transporting messages between cherished loved ones, and easing the separation and ameliorating the hardship during a time meant for love and togetherness.

Figure 9 displays the cover art of a box of Tom Smith's Christmas Crackers where a family of robins is eagerly pulling their father home so they can pull open their crackers and some get impatient. This artwork relays the sentiments of togetherness and love and connection. The Victorian postmen and the European red breasted bird jointly represent the term "robin" and collectively carry out their roles as messengers to deliver the young robins and crackers home safely.

[17] Codell, Julie, F. "*Sentiment, the Highest Attribute of Art: The Socio-Poetics of Feeling Author*". Penn State University Press: Dickens Studies Annual, Vol. 21,1992.

[18] Swainson, C. *The Folklore and Provincial Names of British Birds.* London: Trübner and co, 1885.

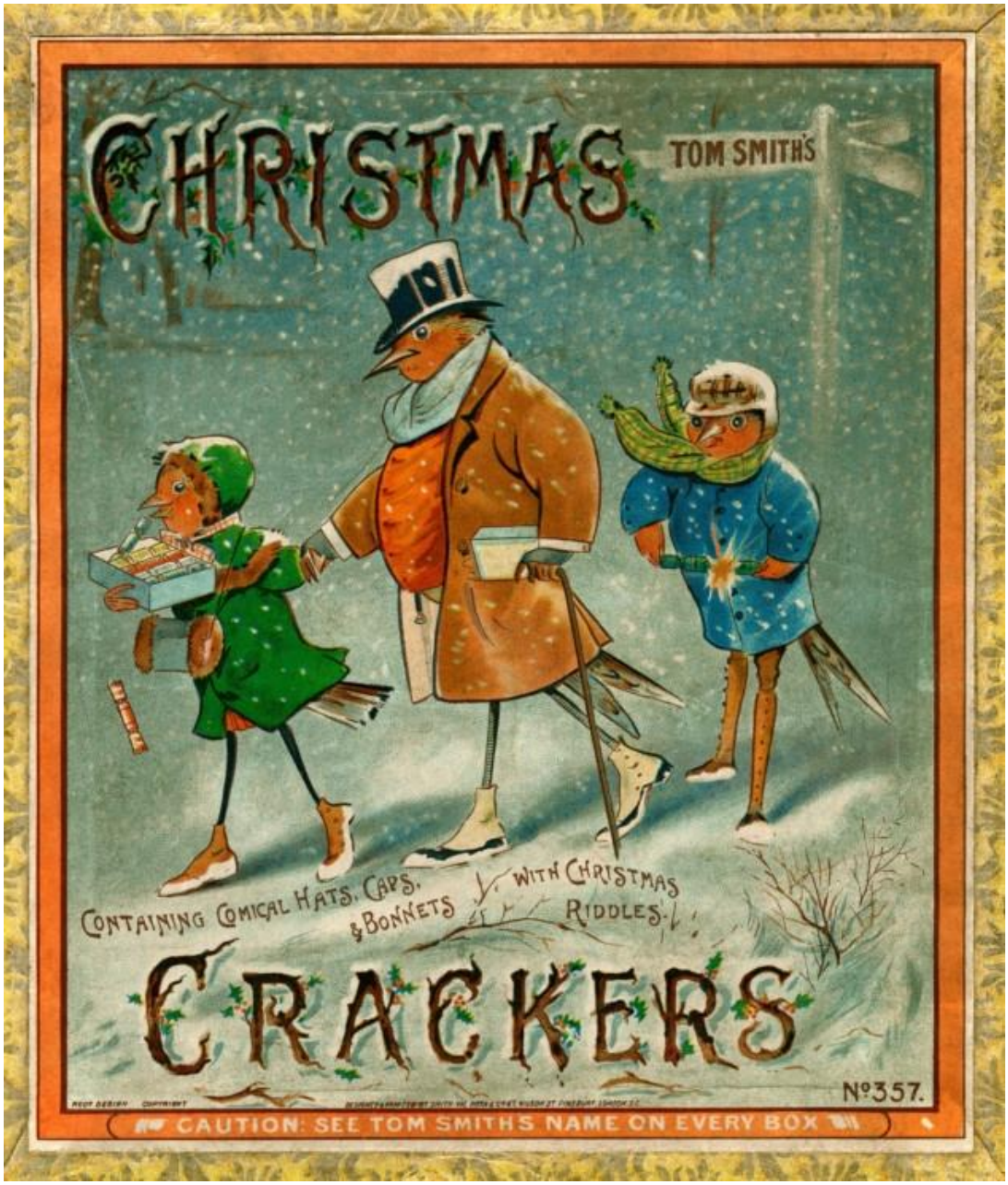

FIGURE 9: Unknown, Artist. "*Robin birds in the snow carrying and pulling, the Tom Smith's crackers*". United Kingdom: Tom Smith's Crackers. 1890.

The connection between the robin and festive traditions surrounding the Christian celebration are reinforced as a result of Victorian traditions and customs especially in relation to the postal service and the invention of Christmas cards. The pair of robins each display their iconic red colours, the scarlet tailcoat frock and the Ruddock's burnt breast exhibit the symbol of national pride for their British identity and as an emblem of the crown. The red mark is distinct, recognizable and visually broadcasts a message when on display at Christmas. The representation of these robins serve as a

reminder that Christmas can be difficult when isolated from family and loved ones but the robin is there to make the season a little easier to bare and creates a link by post between households. The robin brings families together, spreading comfort and joy delivering sentiments of hope around the country. They have become a visual representation and embodiment of what is the meaning of Christmas. Royal Mail postmen have earned the title of 'robin' in the Victorian Era and they are celebrated on Christmas cards and festive decorations to this day. At Christmas, people eagerly awaited the arrival of cards from loved ones far and wide delivered by their very own local "robins". While this chapter has looked at the postal service focusing on the origins and context of the societal link with the robin the next chapter looks at cultural meanings of the robin's role as a fire-bringer and a sacrificial being.

Chapter Two

The Robin as a Sacrificial Vessel and Fire-Bringer

The representation of the robin redbreast as a sacrificial being or object weaves together the robin's many meanings both as a cultural symbol and within biblical narratives. Acts of the robin's selfless nature are often incorporated through the bird's roles as a messenger, a healer and a protector as discussed in Chapter One. The presence of fire or light and the act of delivering warmth and nursing embers is a key tool in these tales. The robin's proximity to fire has been recognised as how the bird obtained its red breast thus marking it distinctly among species. As the robin's representation of sacrifice in its red burnt breast lives on, so too do the lessons and sentiment that the bird epitomizes. The motif of fire and light aids the robin on festive merchandise evoking sentiments of pity for the singed creature, relief of the breaking dawn from darkness, comfort of shelter and warmth from a burning fire. The robin's presentation as a sacrificial being manifests itself prominently by its duty as a fire-bringer and protector of the light.

The robin acts as a vigil and watch guard for those in peril during religious tales. In a Breton Legend noted by Eugéne Rolland while the robin plucked out the thorns from the Saviour's brow, suddenly a "drop of blood fell from His forehead to her breast and tinged with scarlet its dull brown feathers" [19]. Anointing the bird and consecrating the songster by saying "Blessed be thou, thou sharer in my sufferings. Whenever thou goest happiness and joy shall follow thee; blue as the heaven shall be thy eggs and from henceforth thou shalt be 'the Bird of God' the bearer of good tidings". The robin's bloodstained red chest demonstrates his willingness to sacrifice itself for the welfare of others, protecting those in jeopardy. In this account, a passionate response is evoked from God and by

[19] Rolland, E. *Faune Populaire de la France*. Paris: Maisonneuve & cie, 1877. P. 263.

awarding the bird its' redbreast encouraging sentiments of sympathy and tenderness for the robin and honouring its' courageous struggle.

The robin's role in these stories is as a sacrificial object during which time his own life is irrelevant. The songster's duty is to serve the life of those teetering on the edge of death or those whose current trajectory will make them vulnerable. This French account tells of

> "When the wren brought down fire from heaven, and in consequence lost all her plumage owing to its being scorched away, the other birds with one accord gave her, each of them, one of their feathers. The robin, in his anxiety and trouble, came too close to the poor wren, who was in flames, and his plumage took fire also, traces of which are still visible on his breast"[20].

In this instance although all the other birds extended a gracious wing, the robin's deep desire to help results in himself getting burnt. The robin eternally wears the scorch mark of the red breast that acts as a reminder that they will defend and protect at their own uncertain consequences.

Early mythology links the robin redbreast with fire in numerous reports with sentiments of selflessness and an altruistic nature[21]. The bird is believed to have brought fire from heaven to man, prevented the fire from going out, as well as attempting to quench the fires of hell and carried drops of water to moderate the temperature of the damned[22]. Their breast is red as a result of getting singed and putting himself in harm's way in the process; and so acquired the name of fire-bringer.[23] There is a humble fable, derived from Guernsey, where it is believed that the robin was the first who brought fire to the island[24]. During the robin's quest in carrying flames across the water, his feathers were singed from his clasp on the embers, and so his breast has remained burnt red ever since. The storyteller explains that 'My mother had a great veneration for the robin, for what should we have

[20] de Vries, Ad. *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*. Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1976
[21] Frazer, Sir J, C. *Myths of the Origin of Fire - An Essay.* London: Macmillan, 1930
[22] Swainson, C. *The Folklore and Provincial Names of British Birds.* London: Trübner and co, 1885. p.16-17
[23] Lack, Andrew. *Redbreast: The Robin in Life and Literature.* London: SMH Books, 2008. Pg 143
[24] *Notes and Queries Ser. V., vol, iii*. United Kingdom : Oxford University Press, 1875. p.492

done without fire?' A reminder that fire, warmth and shelter are necessities in life and without which we would not survive.

Another Breton version of 'the Robin and the Wren' suggests redbreasts who have been to seek the fires in purgatory can speak Latin. This allows them the ability to communicate in all fiery tongues so all can understand them and their songs bringing hope when the light has gone out.

> "Cusse, Cusse, Cusse, Cusse,
> Istine spiritum sanctum tuum,
> Il y a dix bons dieux"[25]

The fiery tongues speak a message that is a mixture of Latin, French and English; they protect and communicate with all that follow the Christian God. These reports connect the descent of the fire directly with the redbreast bringing fire and warmth to the isolated island and the bird's fiery song that enables them to fulfil their role as a messenger and sing to all.

A Welsh legend from *Notes and Queries* tells of the

> "far, far, far away, is a land of woe, darkness, spirits of evil, and fire[26]. Day by day does this little bird bear in his bill a drop of water to quench the flame. So near the burning stream does he fly, that his dear little feathers are scorched; and hence he is named brou-rhuddyn (Breast-burnt). To serve little children the robin dares approach the infernal pit. No good child will hurt the devoted benefactor man. The robin returns from the land of fire, and therefore he feels the cold of winter far more than his brother birds. He shivers in the brumal blast; hungry he chirps before your door. Oh! My child, then in gratitude throw a few crumbs to the poor redbreast!".

The element of fire in these cases is less of a contentious saviour, swooping in at the last minute to change the course of fate. The robin instead is harnessing the flame and playing the gentle protector by being a resource of water and relief to keep the burning fires at bay. When the robin returns to the cold winter, the sentiment of empathy and compassion ringing for the bird freezing to death in the harsh elements. This encourages hope that the robin's internal flame, light and protective sacrificial nature will not be extinguished.

[25] Swainson, C. *The Folklore and Provincial Names of British Birds.* London: Trübner and co, 1885. p.16-17
[26] *Notes and Queries Ser. 1., vol, viii*. United Kingdom : Oxford University Press, 1853. p.328

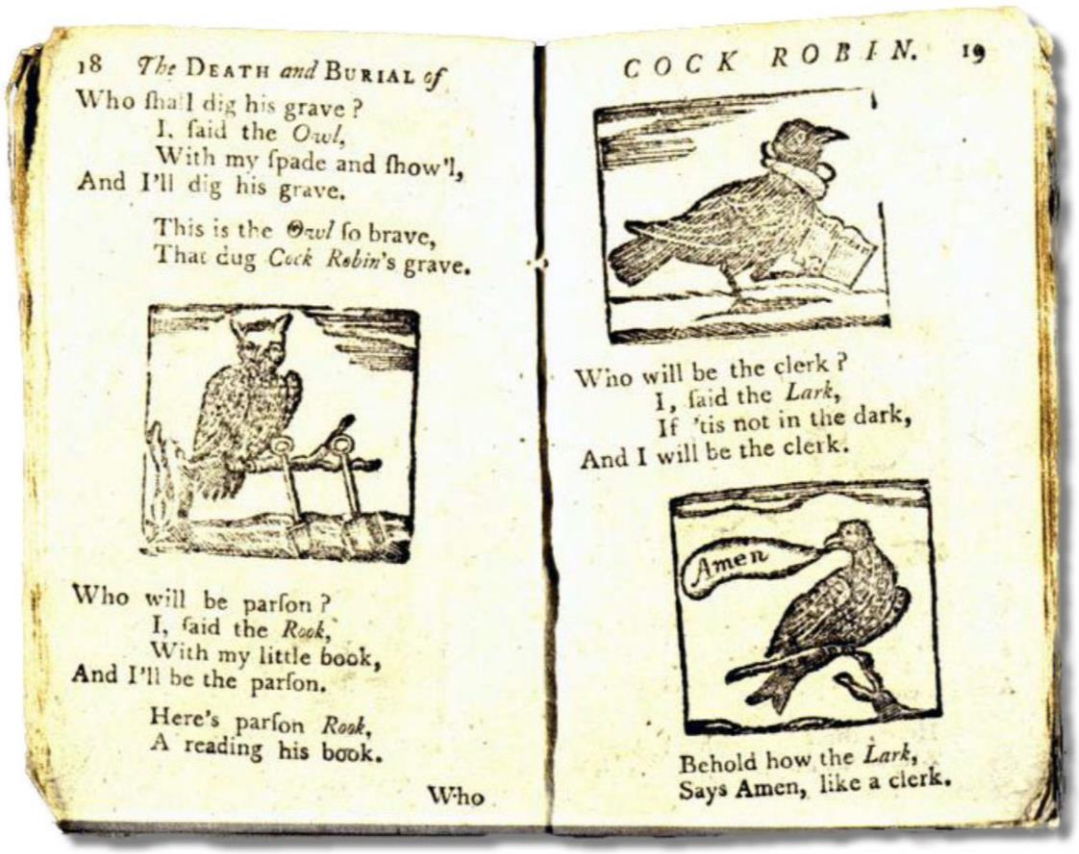

FIGURE 10*:* Unknown artist, '*The Death and Burial of Cock Robin'* 1787. The British Museum Archive. Museum Number 1865,1111.810-814

The robin is a prevalent symbol in Victorian times relating to postmen and representing a messenger in red as referred to in Chapter One. However, another notion commonly recognised by Victorians is the story about the killing of the cock robin and viewing the bird as a sacrificial vessel. The British Museum holds the oldest known printed version of the anonymous '*Who Killed the Cock Robin'* intended for children with strangely no obvious moral for a younger audience and with its popularity became familiar as a nursery rhythm[27]. *Figure 10* is a chap-book or penny dreadful dated from 1787 entitled *'The Death and Burial of Cock Robin'*. The evolution of this chapbook from its earliest known publication to the mid twentieth is recorded in Virginia Haviland's article "Who Killed Cock Robin? Depositions in the Collections of the Library of Congress. [28]

[27] Lack, Andrew. *Redbreast: The Robin in Life and Literature.* London: SMH Books, 2008. Pg 27
[28] Haviland, Virginia. "Who Killed Cock Robin? Depositions in the Collections of the Library of Congress." The Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress, vol. 30, no. 2, 1973, pp. 95–139. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/29781540. Accessed 26 Oct. 2020.

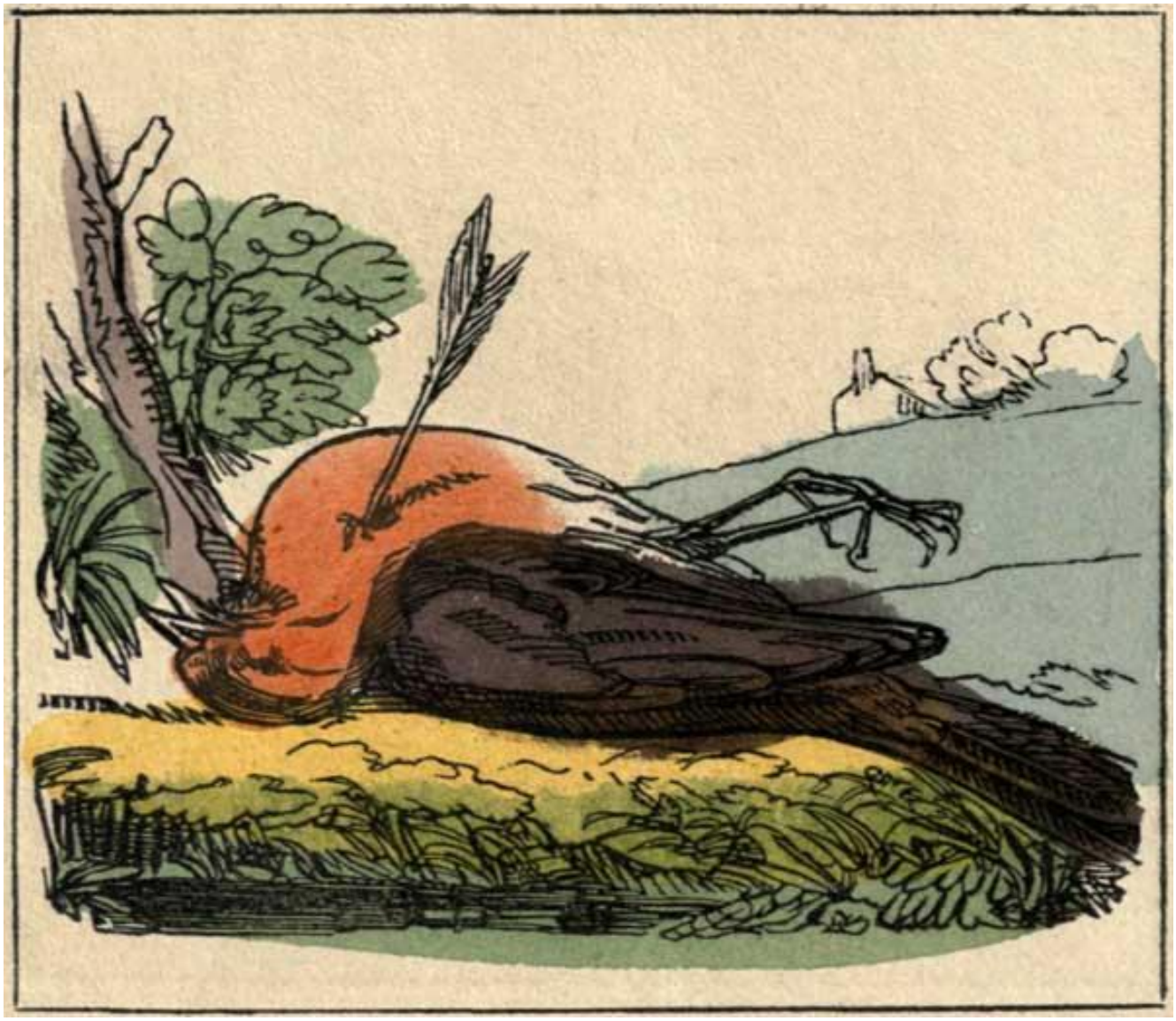

FIGURE 11*:* Unknown artist, *'The Death and Burial of Cock Robin'*. London: William Darton and Son, Holborn Hill, 1830-1837. Page 8.

The ideology of killing a robin and the visual symbol of a dead robin became effectively engrained and normalized in culture as a result in the growing popularity of this penny dreadful. *Figure 11* and *Figure 12* are drawings from an iteration of this chapbook published in the 1830s. With the image of the shot cock robin appearing with different animals watching; there appears to be no anxiety about this being suitable for children, this illustration to children as it has become natural and almost mundane, a further discussion on normalizing the concept of death will be discussed in Chapter 3.

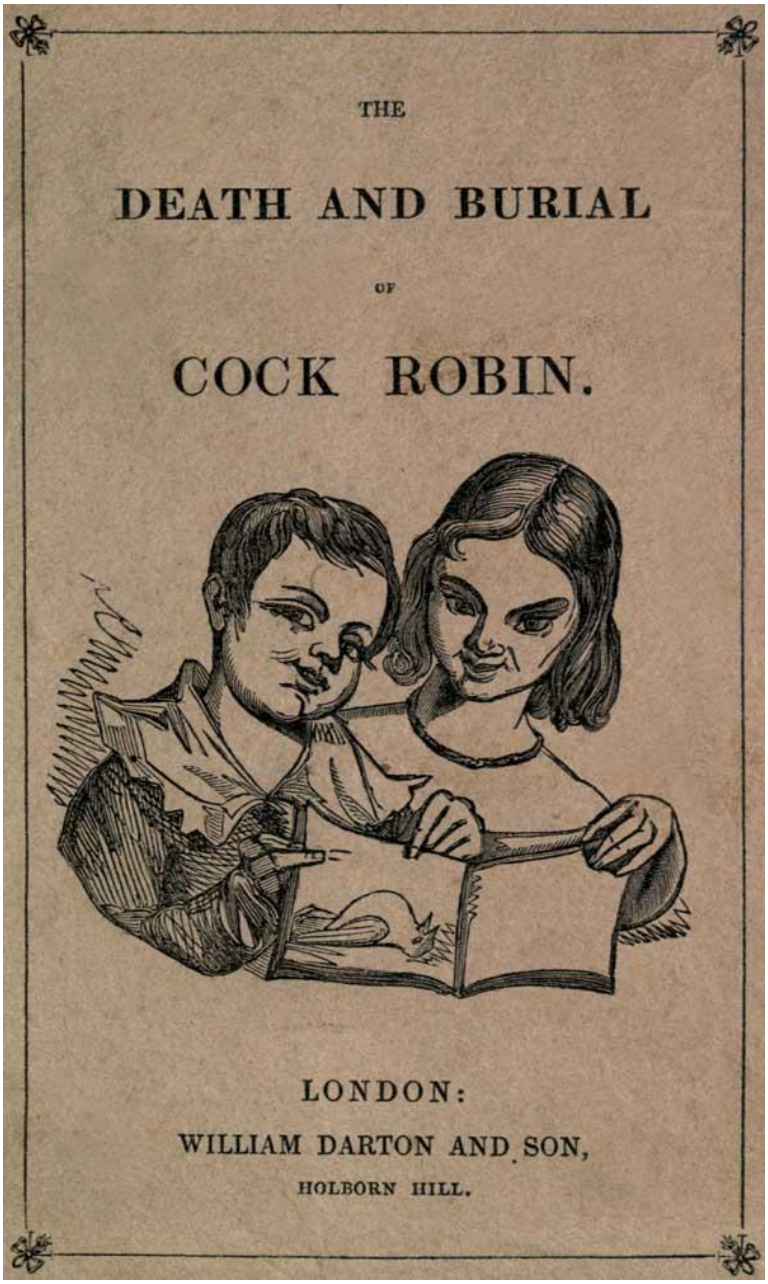

FIGURE 12*:* Unknown artist, '*The Death and Burial of Cock Robin'*. London: William Darton and Son, Holborn Hill, 1830-1837. Front Cover.

The chapbook is based on a poem that itself is likely much older. The narrative tells of the marriage between the robin and the wren, of the cuckoo that tried to take the wren away, and in the robin's attempt to protect her, was struck by an arrow and killed on his wedding day. E.A Armstrong in *Folklore of the Birds* (1958) suggests a stained glass window dating from the fifteenth century in Buckland Rectory, Gloucester depicts a robin pierced with an arrow shown in *Figure 13*[29]. The central

[29] Armstrong, A, Edward, "The Folklore of Birds". Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959

diamond shows a bird with an arrow in its chest. The bird to the right is a sparrow, who in the poem is the one to let loose the arrow and accidentally kill the robin.

FIGURE 13*:* Fifteenth century stained glass window, Buckland Rectory, Gloucester, depicting a robin pierced with an arrow in central panel

The representation of the robin as a selfless charitable creature found its way on to festive holiday greetings cards because of the link already established between the redbreast, Christmas wishes and the postal service, as discussed in Chapter One. *Figure 5* portrays the familiar set up where the robin puts himself in harm's way and finds an arrow pointed at his chest. The robin plays the part of the postal delivery service when ruffians arrive to ransack the load in search of valuables and money. The card's title reads as a playful pun "Robin the mail" meaning the thieves robbing the mail as well as the redbreast robin delivering the mail.

FIGURE 14*: 'Robin the mail'* Postcard. Lack, Andrew*. Redbreast: The Robin in Life and Literature.* London: SMH Books, 2008. Pg 87

The representation of the robin as a fire-bringer and protector of the light likewise is displayed in the festive season. The robin as a beckon of light symbolizes hope and relief from the darkness. They stand as an emblem that there will be a new light in the morning time when the sun breaks in the sky and the bright days of spring will return again. In *Figure 15* the fleet of red breasts march forth with their burning matchsticks under wing, lighting the way in the darkness. The slogan on the postcard reading "May all jollity lighten your Christmas hours". The robins are in military formation by marching with uniform matchsticks or weapons creating a threatening and protective message. The torchlight procession of birds may look a little ominous but the slogan solidifies its cheerful tone. Robins are not as docile as they are appear, they may be a protector but they are not shy of aggressive tactics. They will gladly fight another robin out of their own territory and in myth it's known a robin would " kill its own father" and would "Chase all the birds of his own species, and

drives them from his little settlement". [30] When protecting their own territory, robins will fight at the price of their own life, their protective nature can sometimes be their own downfall, but they also, in the name of protection and shelter go to great lengths to protect those in danger and near death. [31]

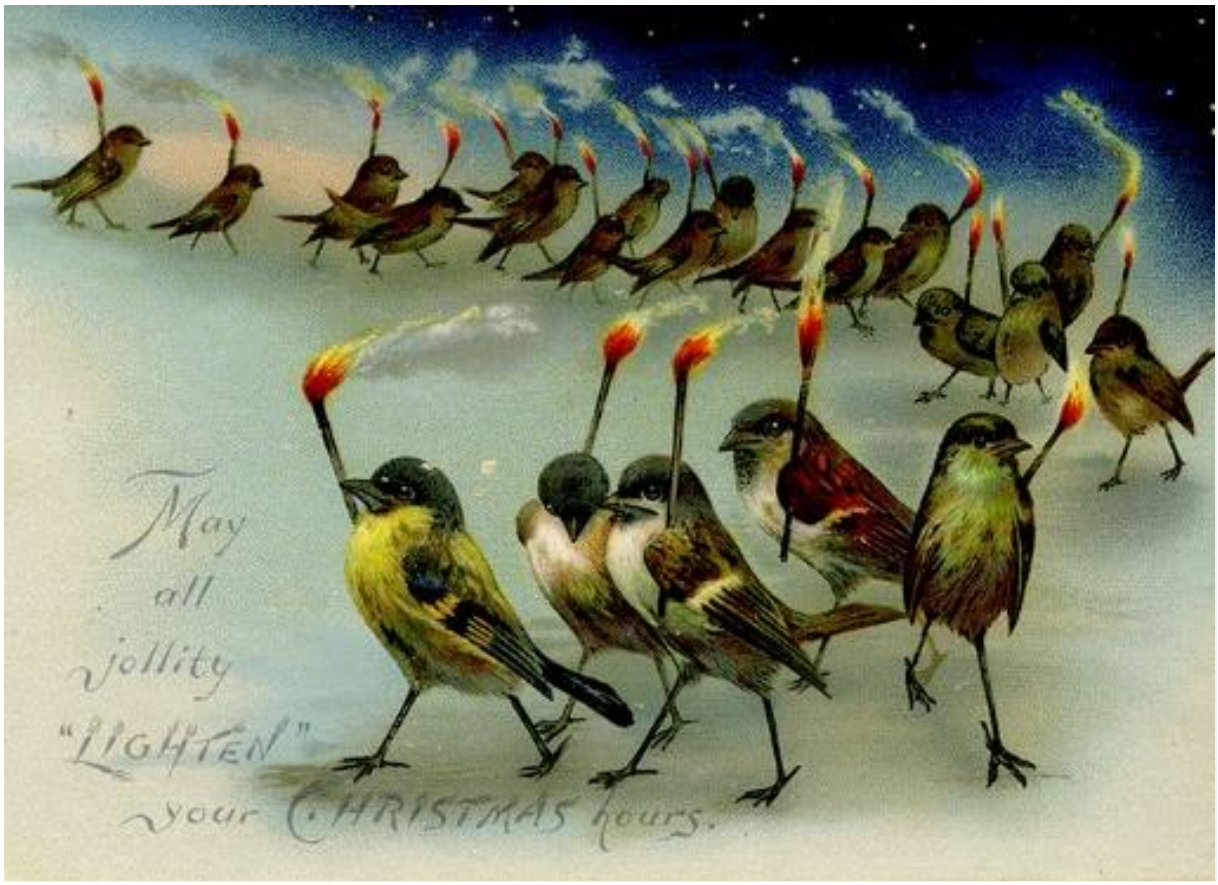

FIGURE 15*:* Unknown Artist, "*May all jollity 'lighten' your Christmas hours*" 19th-century Christmas card. Bloomington: Lilly Library at Indiana University.

During the Christmas Period, there is plenty of visual evidence of the robin as a protector and a fighter on display on festive merchandise. For example, in *Figure* 16, The robin carries out the role as

[30] Buffon, G., Count de. *Historie Naturelle des Oiseaux.* Paris*:* Imprimerie nationale. 1771.

[31] There is plenty of evidence that robins would kill another robin to protect their own turf. Robins mostly live alone "Erithacus avis est solitaria" Gesner (1555) meaning the robin is a solitary bird. Thus a captive robin will kill those around it if not allowed able space for its territory: this is known by bird catchers. See Bell, Richard. *My Strange pets*. London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1910. Pg114-115. John Webster in *The Duchess of Malfi* notes the ferocity of the robin and said that if you doubt it "Thou art a fool; the robin breast and the nightingale never live long in cages. Charles Darwin also noted the aggression of robins, he wrote that "(he was) obliged to turn out a robin, as it fiercely attacked all the birds in his aviary with any red in their plumage, but no other kinds; it actually killed a red-breasted crossbill, and nearly killed a goldfinch.' See Darwin, Charles, et al. *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*. REV - Revised ed., Princeton University Press, 1981. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt19zbz6c. Accessed 26 Oct. 2020

a watchful vigil guarding lost travellers in the cold and snow, guiding them a safe passage until dawn breaks and they can find their way in the safety of the light. Although this task does not seem as heroic or demanding as its previous empowering depictions the robin still acts as a gentle protector simple keeping watch in darkness. In *Figure 17* the robin brings warmth and fire to those wanders in the blizzard the robins song leads the way as they reach shelter and safety. The card reads:

"Within your home may mirth abide
Throughout a happy Christmastide
And joy in every heart bear reign
Until the season comes again"

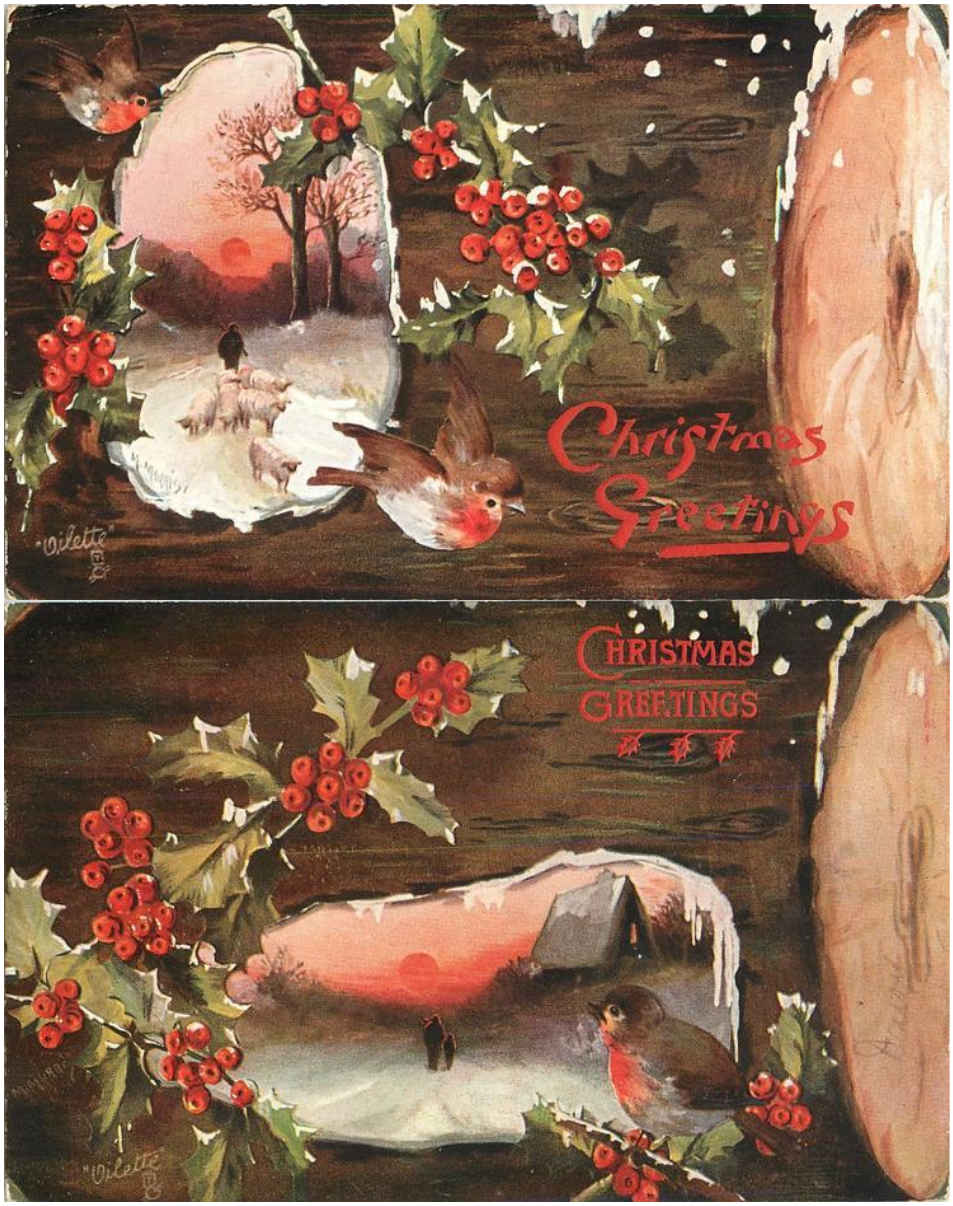

FIGURE 16: Artist M. Morris (unsigned), "*Christmas Greetings*" a Raphael Tuck & Sons inscribed 'Oilette Collection: Art Publishers to their masteries the King and Queen, PROCESSED IN BAVARIA'. First use 1902.

FIGURE 17*:* Unknown Artist "*A Happy Christmas*" a Raphael Tuck & Sons inscribed 'Oilette Collection: Art Publishers to their masteries the King and Queen, gilt embossed, CHROMOGRAPHED IN BAVARIA'. First use 1914.

As mentioned the robin is believed to have travelled to the depths of hell in an attempt to quench the flames and has burnt himself all the while adjusting to the heat in the underworld below. The bird seeks pity and empathy by means of food and a warmth as he has grown accustomed to the heat of hell below.

The robin is believed to ease the journey into death and peaceful afterlife, a realm where the songster frequently visits. If the travellers should meet an unfortunate death in the cold winter nights, the robin is known to carry souls from one life to the next, bridging the gap between afterlife and singing all the while. *Figure 18,* shows a gathering of the robin and two wrens around the body of a child presumably lost and frozen to death in the snow. The representation of the robin is a symbol of numbing transition into death. Following this, the visual presence of the dead robin is a

symbol of a good omen and in Victorian superstition a sign of good luck as it brings peace in death which will be addressed in Chapter 3. [32]

FIGURE 18: Christmas Card from Collection of George Buday. Image from Armstrong, A, Edward, "*The Folklore of Birds*". Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959

Although the meaning and purpose of the robin as a sacrificial vessel in its more sensational variations does not survive intact through the visual passage of representation, some of its accompanying features take centre fold. The representation of the bird as relief and respite from the cold and wintery storm, alleviation from darkness with light and as a signpost towards refuge and

[32] The robin is not only believed to visit dead children but also prisoners on death row and of those who believe in God. Swainson *in The Folklore and Provincial Names of British Birds* quoted an incident in which Dr. John Bastwick was sentenced to pillory, imprisonment for life and the loss of his ears. While being amputated the man uttered God's words throughout, demonstrating his religious devotion. He was to be taken to the Island of Scillies prison and the day he arrived hundreds of robins swarmed the island, the robin had never been spotted on this land before then. Another account in Andrew Lack's *Redbreast* tells of two men hung to death after confessing to a crime. The bodies remained there until the hang pole was taken down many years later when it was discovered that a robin had built a nest in the skull bone.

safety all stem from the robin's symbol as a sacrificial being of altruistic qualities. The robin continues to embody sentiments of hope, charity, and trust in better, warmer, brighter times. The representation of the robin aids the spirit and spread of Christmas through its duty as a fire-bringer and protector of the light. This chapter looks at the robin's attempts to rescue and guide those near death however the next chapter instead looks at the death of the robin and what that represents.

Chapter Three

The Deathly Kind Robin

This chapter explores and concentrates on the more morbid and bizarre festive customs that are practised by Victorians, in contrast to the warmth, joy and tenderness displayed through the robin previously. Victorian Christmas cards tended to be quite macabre, their greeting cards featuring disturbing imagery are far from the modern merry iconography of jolly Saint Nicolas with a green adorned tree. Every historical period and culture has their own idiosyncratic beliefs; in a Victorian fashion, to have received a dead bird's corpse for your Christmas box would be considered normal[33]. This period of time marked an epoch in which death was visually present in daily life. Wide spread acceptance of customs such as posthumous portraits, and mourning rituals inevitably percolated down into the newly founded Christmas postcard industry as discussed in Chapter One. Sinister and disconcerting illustrations of anthropomorphic frogs, gigantic insects, murderous snowmen and dead birds embellish these greeting cards.

In Figure 19 the postcard depicts an ogre-like snowman poised behind a shrub, a snow weapon in hand, ready for an unsuspected victim. The postcard clearly demonstrates a casual fascination with death circling in public opinion and an attempt to evoke the sentiment of mercy, pity and compassion for the prey.

[33] Buday, György. The history of the Christmas card. United States: Spring Books, 1964. Pg109

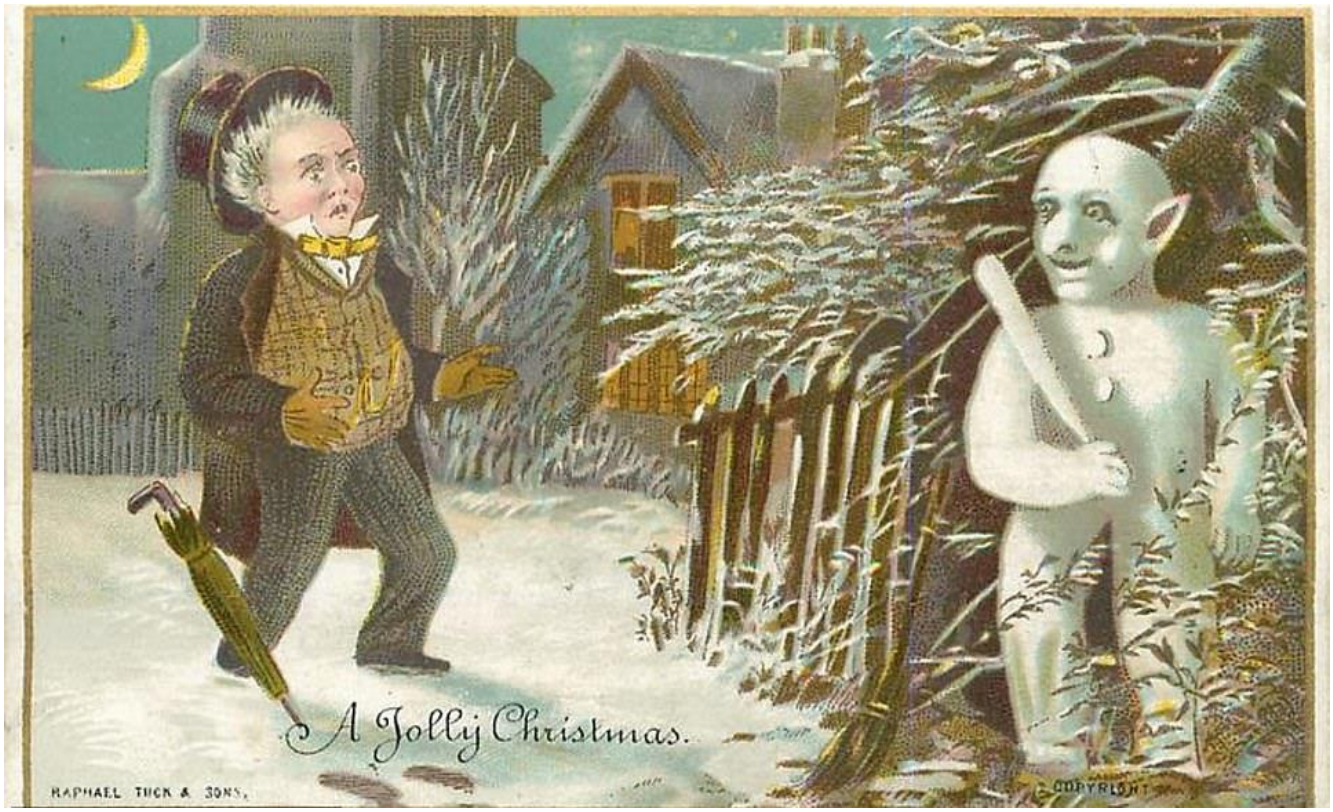

Figure 19: Unknown, Artist. *The Bloodthirsty Snowman" A Jolly Christmas*". London: Raphael Tuck &Sons, 1883.

The representation specifically of the dead robin revolves in different circuits of meaning circulating in Victorian culture at this time. These Christmas cards provide an effective communication of meaning through this representation of the robin redbreast bird, but what do they mean? What were these messages which were conveyed by the representation of death, with a seemingly malevolent meaning? How was the visual language of these deathly robin pictures interpreted and understood in Victorian Britain in the 1880s?

The imagery of a dead robin on a Christmas card creates a curious juxtaposition of a visually distressing impression beside a disguised cheerful message. The postcard of the lifeless songster appears to an uncultured eye, as a bad omen or a sign of ill will. Equally to the twentieth century minds who do not share the same cultural language map to those of the 1880s or acquired knowledge, it is an obscenely upsetting scene. The culturally aware Victorian on the other hand, who possesses and understands the cultural codes of nineteenth century Britain would know that

this custom is a sign of good fortune and a gesture of a kind nature. The representation of the deathly robin is a symbol of a good omen.

The sender intends to relay good tidings and well wishes for the festive season and the symbol of the bird's upturned corpse communicates that message through known shared meanings in society. The giving and taking of meaning amongst members of a society ensure that the representation system is updated and interpreted as desired[34]. The arbitrary concept of this sweet songster dead and cold having portrayed a positive message through a visual language of representation can only be understood form a cultural standpoint. *Figure 20* is representation of the redbreast on Christmas postcard inscribed "May yours be a joyful Christmas". In a despairing state, motionless lying alone, clearly a bleak display, it lies on its back, legs curled in on themselves, wings limp, eyes firmly shut with a clenched beak. The usually joyous robin has no fluffed plumage, protective stance, or indication of its sweet song for which it is known. There is no natural relationship between the signifier, a dead bird, and the signified, a happy gesture of faith, the concept alone in actuality implies no connotation to death. It is an arbitrary icon that starkly contrasts its meaning, good omen. The darkly twisted humour at play of the Victorian era have presented the robin as a beautiful dead thing that sincerely dispatches the message merry Christmas. The recondite ideologies wash away any straitlaced perception we have left of Victorians in our mental map of the 1880s[35].

[34] Hall, Stuart. *Representation Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1997 pgs. 5-7

[35] Houghton, Walter E. "HYPOCRISY." In *The Victorian Frame of Mind: 1830-1870*, 394-430. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1985.

Figure 20: Unknown, Artist. *Dead Robin Redbreast" May yours be a joyful Christmas*". London: De La Rue, 1890

The dead robin is a harbinger of superstition, a seemingly blind belief that a dead robin was a symbol of luck. In the nineteenth century robins were hunted as a sport based on this superstition[36]. Hunter Oatman-Stanford at *Collectors Weekly* noted that the act of killing a robin was considered a 'good-luck' ritual performed in late December at the Christmas season[37]. *The Folklore and Provincial Names of British Birds* by Charles Swainson depicts a series an instances of how killing the robin is a bad omen and will follow the culprit to the grave with bad fortune, and how variations of this piece of superstition are found around Britain.[38] Like all good superstition there are two variants: one lucky

[36] Specifically, in Ireland St. Stephen's Day or December 26th is known as "Wren Day," with a traditional hunt of the bird with would be mounted on a pike and carried through the village collected money for the local church.

[37] Stanford, Hunter-Oatman. "The War on Christmas Cards: Dead Robins, Used Paperclips, and Other Secular Greetings" *Collectors weekly.* December 23rd, 2015

[38] Swainson, C. *The Folklore and Provincial Names of British Birds.* London: Trübner and co, 1885.

and one unlucky. To some however, the superstition would be recognised as a nod to a children's story still in circulation in the latter half of the 1800s by the name of 'Babes in the Woods'.

Figure 21 shows another rather unusual Christmas postcard depicting the little robin red breast. On a tabletop, we see a bowl of punch with lemons and an upturned robin that appears to have drowned in the punch. The strange concept of a mulled robin would befit the morbid Victorian sense of humour. Alongside this another robin has drunk himself to death on the sherry while the remaining bird is close on its tail, perching at the edge of the bowl sipping the wine. The words "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year" are printed below them. The black cat, another staple of good luck superstition, looks on in shock and dismay from afar but alas, he is too late to have his fun, the birds are already dead. The representation of the lifeless redbreast is an omen of good luck in the coming year. The contrasting view of a drowning robin and the happy slogan would garner no notice, the superstition in this sense was commonly understood because the postcards were printed and sold around Britain.

Figure 21*:* Unknown, Artist. *Robins drinking Sherry, A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year*. London: De La Rue, 1876.

The deceased robin redbreasts' symbolic function can be interpreted as a *tempus fugit*, a Latin phrase that means "time flies" as their flight represents the quick passing of the years and the fragility of life. The life span of the bird is usually one to two years and so the appearance of the dead robin serves as a reminder that life can be very short and precious, especially during the Christmas period. Francis Bacon notes in 'The History and Naturall and Experimentall of Life and Death' that while "Touching the Length and Shortness of Life in Living Creatures, the information which may be had is but slender observation is Negligent"[39]. We often neglect to remember that life is fleeting and it swoops before us in an instant. The social effects of the dead robin as a signifier, helps preserve the notion of charity, those less fortunate and those close to death like the robin. The motifs set out to elicit sympathy for those in need, a sentiment closely associated with the ideal spirit of Christmas.

Figure 22*:* Cooper, J. C*. The Kindly Robin Symbolic and Mythological Animals*. London: Aquarian Press, 1992.

[39] Bacon, Francis*. The History and Naturall and Experimentall of Life and Death,* 1638. trans. Rawley, William. *The Historia Vitae et Mortis*, 1622-23

The representation of the dying robin evokes a sentiment of charity and a feeling of sympathy and a sense of moral obligation in the Victorian Era. *Figure 22* shows a postcard entitled 'The Kindly Robin' with the inscription "A Happy Christmas To You" depicting a street scene populated with anthropomorphic robins. A snapshot of two families' brief encounter; one a clearly a wealthier breed adorned in a red waistcoat to mimic its plumage, a top hat and pointed new shoes, the other clothed in only rags with their feathers moulting and sparse. The poorer male bird wears an eyepatch and a walking cane, his health deteriorating and he is himself possibly on death's door. The richer male robin extends its claw and drops a berry into the invalid's hat; berries being the currency in which robins would surely trade. The bird bows in gratitude as the kindly robin performs its social festive duties of giving to less fortunate. The proximity of the rich robins to the poor robins dying are a reminder that all deserve an act of kindness regardless. Indeed, in the human meaning equivalent, giving charity means that next time you post your letter in the post-box, you won't pass as many starving children and freezing families on the streets. In the winter Christmas season, children often died from the cold or starved to death in the winter Christmas months[40].

The postcard at Figure 23 acts as an intertext containing many references to *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens, such as the artful dodger's top hat. The image invokes Dickens' works and ideas of societal apathy, but the message works well enough even if the viewer does not make the connection. *Oliver Twist* was published in 1838, a story about industrialism, apathy of society towards poor children, the struggle goodness must endure to triumph, and giving charity to those who need it. The robin serves here as a symbol of reminder to perform acts of charitable good will. The postcard delivers a reminder to give to those who are children who are vulnerable. The drawing is an obvious nod to the Victorian tale.

[40] Houghton, Walter E. "ANXIETY." In *The Victorian Frame of Mind: 1830-1870*, 54-90. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1985

The redbreast's appearance in the presence of dead children, or at the moment they pass on , continues the robin's strong associations with death. A traditional children's tale, 'Babes in the Wood' was commonly known during this period. The tale is the story of two children left in the care of unfit relatives, who trade them to ruffians to be killed, and gain their inheritance. The killers abandon them in the woods, they starve to death and their faces are covered by the robins with dead leaves. The birds present themselves to protect the deceased children and to aid their journey from one life to the next. The redbreast represents the transition into death in a gentle comforting manner. The birds cover their eyes showing the babes that the worries of this world no longer apply to them; shut your lids and rest easy[41]

And they could look out through a crack in the leaves
And see little bushes and some of the sky.
They could see robin coming with leaves in her mouth,
And they watched for her when she went by.[42]

Figure 23 Depiction of robins covering the children with leaves. Roxburghe Ballads Edition. 1595

[41] Opie, Iona. Opie, Peter. *The Oxford Book of Narrative Verse*. London: Oxford University Press, 1983. p 45
[42] Madox Roberts, Elizabeth. *Under the Tree.* United States: Barnes & Noble, 1922 pg 14

Figure 23 is the earliest depiction of robins covering the Children of the Wood appearing on a woodcut from the Roxburghe Ballads edition of 1595[43]. *Figure 24* shows a woodcut 'Children in the Wood' by Harrison Weir. The birds discover the children starved to death and carefully gather and envelop their still eyes with leaves. John Grossman in 'Christmas Curiosities', tells that the cards were "bound to elicit Victorian sympathy and may reference common stories of poor children freezing to death at Christmas" a call to empathy for the less fortunate.[44]

Figure 24 Trimmer, Sarah. "*History of the Robins"* London: Simpkin Marshall and Co. 1786.

[43] As noted in *The Oxford Book of Narrative Verse* (Opie, Iona. Opie, Peter. *The Oxford Book of Narrative Verse*. London: Oxford University Press, 1983. page 387) the ballad was first published as an anonymous broadside ballad by Thomas Millington in Norwich in 1595 with the title "The Norfolk gent his will and Testament and howe he Commytted the keepinge of his Children to his own brother whoe delte most wickedly with them and howe God plagued him for it". The ballad is so familiar and popular as it has been around for hundreds of years at this stage

[44] Grossman, John. *Christmas Curiosities: Odd, Dark, and Forgotten Christmas*. United States: Harry N. Abrams, 2008

Throughout the eighteenth century, the ballad of the Babes in the Woods had been frequently reprinted in chapbooks, sometimes in prose accounts, with acknowledgement to the 'ancient song'.[45] "One of the darling songs of the common people" regarded by Joseph Eddison[46] and Thomas Pennant alluded to it as " a composition of a most beautiful and pathetic simplicity"[47]. The robins' importance marks that even though these babes have suffered terrible hardship, the pain can be eased even in death.

Victorian Christmas card oddities invite death into everyday normality. The image of the dead robin represents a wish of good tidings and sign of good omens to come. In nineteenth-century society, when religion and duty pervaded almost every aspect of life, these strange Christmas cards may have provided some humorous respite. These unsettling cards are a strange humorous way of reminding them of the superstition of the redbreast and it is superstition and luck that drive this unusual tone of language on the cards.

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[46] Addison, Joseph. Steele, Richard. *Spectator Papers*: Mount Vernon, New York. :Peter Pauper Press. 1711-14

[47] Pennant Thomas. *The British Zoology, Class I Quadupeds, II Birds*. London: Cymmrodorion Society by J&J March. 1776

Conclusion

The love and adoration for the robin as a society has continued and thrived until present day, within Irish culture one will often look to the robin and fondly think of a loved one who has passed on. Every time my mother spots a robin in our garden without fail, she will say "hello Mam" and think that her mother has come back to check in on her and send her love and guidance. This is now considered a well-known idea but as discussed a long history of storytelling and tradition has brought us to this point.

Figure 25 *'Bronagh agus Bean Sídhe'* Monkstown International Puppet Festival September 2019. Photographed by Annie Walsh

Irish mythology and tradition has always piqued my interest and I have been fortunate enough to be involved with Animism productions with my fellow creative friends, bringing life to some of these ideas like the kindly robin redbreast.[48] As a team together through puppetry, poetry, song and performance we have brought to life the story of "Bronagh agus an Bean Sídhe" a story of a young girl's death and how she learns she has become a banshee. Bronagh is aided along her journey by her own kindly robin who has appeared to help her and ease her path into the afterlife. This

[48] The word Animism means to bring life to an in object. Further visuals from this production @animismproductions

character named Spideog[49] is inspired by the cultural literary robin that is a messenger delivering loved ones into death. This tale inspired my inquiry and research into how exactly we came to believe the robin was such a helpful and loving creature.

Although the songster has never been associated with reincarnation it has been often admired in the absence of those departed. For example, a belief understood to be one of a kind or at least rare and perhaps transpired from a coincidental sighting of the robin coinciding with a death in the family. Instead learning that the association displays a cultural concept bequeathed through generations. The robin possesses healing values, that aid bereavement and the process of mourning; they carry with them the notion that someone is watching over you, if you believe that they do. At home, the robins perch on the garden bird feeders and to replenish the seeds are of equal importance to feeding household pets and even family members. Upon realising this idea is not unique to just one family and is common among Irish familiar belief systems whether religious or otherwise, this sparked my intrigue on the subject and knew there was more to be discovered.

The ideas discussed in this dissertation reiterate the fact that common folklore and fables surmising the robin are then consolidated into belief and general knowledge during the Victorian Era. The fun nickname of 'robin' assigned to postmen survived for many years. Although its origins may be forgotten the colour red is still a ubiquitous emblem of the royal mail. Postal workers continue to deliver the cards with their festive robin redbreast bird that helped at one stage expand the mail service industry into the impressive multinational courier company they have become today. Persistently and consistently bringing families closer together. The link to fire and warmth holds strong as the bird can still be seen each winter as ever present as they watch the transition from winter to spring. As the bird population remains stable and almost identical to that in the Victorian times, the little songster is set to be around for a long while.

[49] Spideog is the word for the robin redbreast in Irish(as Gaeilge)

As a design practitioner, having a firm grasp on what it means to conduct in depth research and analysis of a time period, specific ideologies and cultural thinking at the time, visual materials for public assumption from an array of sources and manufacturers is invaluable. Before now I had not known that Christmas cards are artefacts that reveal social ideas, visual trends and graphic depictions within culture. Learning and understanding that finding a thought-provoking and layered starting point is key and more crucially a topic that passionately drives you. The story behind the robin and its meaning has delivered that for me.

Determining key markers in an idea's growth, and knowing how these ideas would have been perceived when they were published. As the chap book 'Who Killed the Cock Robin' surged in popularity and verifying that the tale is viewed with fondness for a dead bird as death was highly glorifying and even celebrated within culture. Trying to look at an artefact through the eyes of the generation that created it can illuminate hidden meaning and importance. A modern glance at this penny dreadful 'Who Killed the Cock Robin' sees a violent story about revenge. Whereas in Victorian times as a story with no obvious moral lesson, it acts as a means to display the images of a dying robin as they know it's a lucky symbol bring joy and prosperity. Detecting what hidden and symbols lie within the artwork, what relationship do they play in the lives of the recipients and what role does the object fulfil through its cultural value.

The robin redbreast is a bird that has been written about for thousands of years with near unfathomable unanimity about the qualities that give the dear creature its undeniable appeal. After completing this investigation and research, the robin will always conjure ideas of compassion, togetherness and a connection to the death and loved ones who have died. Looking at Christmas cards will never be quite the same. When the little songster enters my garden, it will be looked at with fondness and admiration.

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