

THE WORKS OF JOHN BACON RA (1769-1799)

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## ABSTRACT

John Bacon (1740-1799) was one of the most prolific and significant sculptors working in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Bacon, whose works still stand in Westminster Abbey, St Paul's Cathedral and a host of other important spaces of sculptural display, enjoyed national and international celebrity as a sculptor, receiving some of the most prestigious memorial commissions of the period. Despite this fame, his work has yet to be properly examined and interpreted; my thesis seeks to begin filling this art-historical vacuum.

My doctoral research reassesses Bacon's sculpture through a series of close readings of particular works, exploring for the first time the tactility and expressiveness of his sculpted surfaces and recovering the subtle physiognomic, gestural and bodily exchanges upon which his sculptural narratives depended for their meaning. Crucially, this approach responds to the ways in which Bacon himself intended his art to be explored. By combining this method with a detailed study of the sculptor's own writings, my thesis seeks to supersede the sketchy and often dismissive scholarship on Bacon and offer readers an historically specific mode of understanding and appreciating his ambitious sculpture.

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

**Society of Arts - Society for the Encouragement of Arts,  
Manufacture and Commerce.**

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1796 John Bacon was commissioned to produce a funerary monument for the brewer Samuel Whitbread, for St Mary's church, Cardington, Bedfordshire (fig.1). The sepulchre, installed by his son, was the last work of sculpture the artist was to produce before his death on 7 August 1799. Framed by curtains, which are drawn back to reveal a dramatic tableau of Whitbread expiring on his deathbed, Bacon's monument compellingly presents to spectators the comfort and confidence that a faith in Christ secures.

The dying brewer is accompanied in the work by the supportive and sympathetic figures of Benevolence and Religion. Religion gently cradles Whitbread's limp head and directs his gaze towards an array of celestial beams of light at the top of the work. Her actions parallel the words of hope and encouragement - 'I am the Resurrection and the Life: He that Believeth in me tho he were dead yet shall he Live' - that are inscribed on the pages of the Bible located at the side of Whitbread's chair. The brewer appears to have been contemplating and studying the verses from John 11:25 before his death, with a ribbon poignantly marking the spot where he had stopped reading. It is a suggestion supported by the brewer's epitaph, which claims that Whitbread had 'died in the earnest Hope and firm Belief of a Resurrection to Eternal-Life'. To emphasise this sense of confidence Bacon does not depict Whitbread re-reading the scriptural promise himself, but instead shows him holding the text open for viewers to see. It is an action which extends Christ's comforting declaration - a type of evangelical *memento mori* which encourages spectators to have faith that they too will one day 'see the glory of god'.<sup>1</sup>

At the foot of Whitbread's bed Bacon depicts Benevolence in mourning. From beneath the folds of her drapery a pelican is revealed, piercing its breast to release blood for its young to feed upon. The pelican was a traditional

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<sup>1</sup> John, 11:40.



accompaniment to personifications of Benevolence, designed to refer particularly to Christian charity: the bird sacrificially spilling its blood as Christ had also done. Together the weeping figure of Benevolence and the pelican remind viewers of Whitbread's own famed philanthropic generosity, the brewer having 'endeavoured to live as all Men, when they are about to die, would wish they had done'.<sup>2</sup> The figure also offers an introspective counterbalance to the animated figure of Religion, in which Benevolence's sorrow is assuaged by Religion's optimism.

With its fusion of animation, allegory and Christian sentiment, the Whitbread monument offers an evocative and poetic account of the last few moments of the brewer's life. To fully explore the emotions of the scene Bacon incorporates delicate gestural and expressive touches, most notably in his figure of Whitbread. Weakened by his illness, the brewer's facial expressions are muted; however, the motions of his body subtly articulated his response to the spiritual events unfolding before his eyes. Whilst the brewer, in true evangelical spirit, directs viewers to the Bible he holds open with his left hand, his right is shown gently unfolding in the centre of the composition. It is an understated reaction to the divine revelations the brewer is experiencing, his hand movingly articulating his wonder before the celestial epiphany. The sculptor also effectively capitalises upon the location of the work by using the light from the window directly above the piece to emphasise the heavenly rays depicted at the top of the sepulchre. For spectators viewing the monument at the right time of day, the light from the window above would have created a dramatic spotlight, illuminating the dying brewer's face and quite literally making God's 'Light shine upon' him.<sup>3</sup>

In design and sentiment Bacon's last work of sculpture offers an eloquent distillation of the type of aesthetic and stylistic concerns that had preoccupied the sculptor throughout his career. During his thirty years of professional practice Bacon had actively pursued a sculptural aesthetic which spoke

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<sup>2</sup> From Whitbread's epitaph at the base of the monument.

According to his obituary Whitbread's private benevolence 'is said to be have exceeded 3000L per annum'. *The Gentleman's Magazine* (June, 1796), p.531.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm, 118:27.

powerfully to contemporary audiences. His passion for sentimental narratives with a heartfelt religious meaning pervaded the designs he created for the funerary trade. Even in public commissions which demanded a less personal touch, the sculptor remained committed to an aesthetic which was above all animated and expressive. Yet despite the appeal his designs had in the period, as the century drew to a close the sculptor's work began to occupy an increasingly uneasy and ambivalent position in relationship to developing sculptural theory and taste. Indeed, while writers on sculpture increasingly demanded that practitioners emulated the noble simplicity of the antique, Bacon continued to prefer to use an animated and emotive mixture of Christian piety and fashionable sentimentalism.

### *Bacon's expressive style*

Born in Southwark on 24 November 1740, Bacon had begun his training in manufacture, apprenticed to a porcelain maker, Nicholas Crisp. The sculptor, however, had quickly progressed into professional practice and by the late 1770s was considered one of Britain's foremost sculptural talents. Bacon initiated his sculptural career by presenting bas-reliefs for premiums at the Society of Arts in the 1760s, winning awards on numerous occasions. In 1769 he enrolled at the Royal Academy, winning the institute's first gold medal for sculpture, and by 1778 had become a full Academician.<sup>4</sup>

As Matthew Craske has indicated, sculptural success at the Academy depended upon 'the capacity of British-born sculptors to inherit the mantle of the classical 'ancients''.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, an Academician's ability to work in the antique manner, particularly in public art, came to signify not only his own aptitude, but also, more broadly, the achievements of the British or English

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<sup>4</sup> For a biographical account of Bacon's life see Richard Cecil, *Memoirs of John Bacon Esq. RA, with Reflections Drawn from a Review of his Moral and Religious Character* (London, 1801).

<sup>5</sup> Matthew Craske, 'Reviving the 'School of Phidias': The Invention of a National 'School of Sculpture' in Britain (1780-1830)', *Visual Culture in Britain*, 7, no.2 (2006), p.25. The desire for a national school of art was, during Bacon's career, largely a literary phenomenon which as Matthew Craske has claimed was a 'nationalistic fiction that developed out of a socio-political preoccupation with achieving such progress in the national arts as would provide visible evidences of the broader advance of the nation's civilisation'. Craske, 'Reviving the 'School of Phidias'', p.42.

School of art.<sup>6</sup> During his initial years at the Royal Academy Bacon was careful to emphasise his developing skills and prove his worth as an Academician through the exhibition of a series of classically inspired statues. These works eloquently conveyed Bacon's ability to work in the Grand Manner, highlighting his knowledge of the forms of the antique and his appreciation of Academic expectations. However, whilst Bacon had evidently felt it convenient to be identified with the aesthetic values of the Academy, as his career progressed he became increasingly outspoken in his opposition to key aspects of the institution's theory and practice.

Writing in 1796, George Cumberland argued that artists 'who do not make the study of the antients[sic] their constant employment, as well as the refinements of proportion, never *will*, never *can*, rival such performances'.<sup>7</sup> Though Bacon, during his initial years at the Academy, had sought to follow the example of the classical past, he found himself increasingly critical of the assumption that antique sculpture was intrinsically superior to all other examples of art. In an essay 'On Sculpture' in 1783, he suggested that

partiality to the ancients is so strong as to prevent almost all discrimination; and is the sole reason, why many antiquities, that now stand as patterns of beauty in the judgment of most connoisseurs, are not discovered to be copies.<sup>8</sup>

Rather than slavishly imitating the art of the ancients, the sculptor instead advocated a union of 'great expression with great beauty'.<sup>9</sup> Bacon saw this fusion as the only way in which modern sculptors could ever truly 'wrest the palm' out of the hands of the ancients.<sup>10</sup> Whilst Bacon did not dispute the value

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<sup>6</sup> The school was referred to in period as both the 'English School' and the 'British School' by the press and writers on art however there does not appear to have been any significant difference in meaning between the two. This thesis will in the main refer to a 'British School'.

<sup>7</sup> George Cumberland, *Thoughts on Outline, Sculpture, and the Systems that Guided Ancients in Composing their Figures and Groups: Accompanied with Free Remarks on the Practice of Moderns, to which are Annexed Twenty Four Designs of Classical Subjects Invented on the Principles Recommended in the Essay by George Cumberland* (London, 1796), p.9.

<sup>8</sup> John Bacon, 'On Sculpture', *Cyclopaedia: or Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences containing an Explanation of the Terms and an Account of the Several Subjects in the Liberal and Mechanical Arts, and the Sciences, Human and Divine*, ed. by Abraham Rees, 4 vols. (London, 1783), IV, under (S), no pagination.

<sup>9</sup> Bacon, 'On Sculpture', *Cyclopaedia*, IV, under (S), no pagination.

<sup>10</sup> Bacon, 'On Sculpture', *Cyclopaedia*, IV, under (S), no pagination.

of ideal beauty when found in genuine antique examples, he did question the ability of the ancients to depict 'pathetic' subjects, claiming that they tended to sacrifice 'expression to beauty'.<sup>11</sup> In proposing to marry the two values together Bacon looked to invigorate the restrained ideals of antique art with the types of animation and expression he had observed in the works of modern sculptors.<sup>12</sup> For an artist who had never visited Rome, receiving only a domestic training, this approach was particularly shrewd. Indeed, Bacon must have realised that he could never reasonably champion a theory of art which demanded an intimate knowledge of antique sources. As such he proposed an aesthetic which was more pertinent to his own experience.

Bacon's critical attitude to contemporary sculptural theory initially caused little conflict. As this thesis will highlight, the sculptor was successful in securing some of the period's most significant public commissions, and Bacon dominated the trade in private funerary monuments. Yet for critics writing towards the end of the eighteenth century Bacon's reluctance to subscribe to the rigid tenants of Academic theory made him a problematic artist. By abandoning the art of the ancients, and in so doing upsetting the rules of sculptural grammar, Bacon's art was seen to occupy an increasingly ambiguous and inconvenient place in the transition towards a new style of sculpture.<sup>13</sup>

James Dallaway's comments on Bacon's 1799 monument to Samuel Whitbread are symptomatic of the confusion his work generated in the last decade of the century. Describing the monument, Dallaway claimed that 'one of Bacon's last works was a monument for Mr. Whitbread, which is a beautiful composition... It is well worthy of the antique'.<sup>14</sup> Yet, although Dallaway noted Bacon's use of an antique vocabulary in the design of the sepulchre, he was

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<sup>11</sup> Bacon, 'On Sculpture', *Cyclopaedia*, IV, under (S), no pagination.

<sup>12</sup> Bacon frequently expressed his admiration for the art of his more recent predecessors; foreign artists who had worked in Britain such as Roubiliac, Cibber, Scheemakers and Rysbrack.

<sup>13</sup> George Cumberland argued that until 'we have a real school of sculpture... one may venture to predict, that our fine arts will make little progress, but are infinitely more likely to decline than advance; for as well might we expect to see fine writing from men, who reversed the rules of grammar, or any writing at all without the alphabet, as artists formed, where correct Outline is overlooked; the ancients little venerated; and where sculpture is not considered as the fountain of the Art'. Cumberland, *Thoughts on Outline*, p.11.

<sup>14</sup> Dallaway, *Anecdotes of the Arts in England* (London, 1800), p.407.

unable to be entirely positive in his commentary, proceeding to proclaim in the same paragraph that

We must, however, in candour, confess that the merit of the design is not Bacon's. The principle figure, fainting, and supported by Religion, is almost a repetition, with the difference only of costume, of F. Girardon's groupe... Girardon finished his figures [to a] much higher [degree] than Bacon, who, it is much to be regretted never visited Italy; and appears to have been not very susceptible to ideal beauty.<sup>15</sup>

The similarities between Francois Girardon's sepulchre to Cardinal Richlieu (fig.2) in the Church of the Sorbonne, Paris (1675-94) and Bacon's monument to Whitbread are marked.<sup>16</sup> However, in modelling the composition and narrative of his monument on Girardon's earlier design Bacon emulated an artist whose sculpture, for many in the period, stood profoundly at odds with prevailing tastes for Grecian simplicity.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, Winckelmann had claimed that the French sculptor's work was 'worse' than the art of Bernini, an artist who had 'forsook' the Greeks in his use of 'common nature' and for 'whom Grace had never visited even in dreams'.<sup>18</sup> The confused terms in which Dallaway described the Whitbread monument, being both 'well worthy of the antique' and yet paradoxically 'not very susceptible to ideal beauty', eloquently highlights the ambivalent position the sculptor's art was seen to occupy toward the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>19</sup> However, it was a reading which profoundly misunderstood Bacon's intentions. Preoccupied by the values of 'neo-classicism' Dallaway had failed to acknowledge the sculptor's fusion of

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<sup>15</sup> Dallaway, *Anecdotes of the Arts*, p.407.

<sup>16</sup> Girardon's work was well known in the period, having been singled out by Arthur Young in his 1792 *Travels* as 'by far the finest statue I have seen. Nothing can be wished more easy and graceful than the attitude of the Cardinal, nor more expressive in nature than the figure of weeping science'. Arthur Young, *Travels during the years 1787, 1788 and 1789, undertaken more Particularly with a View of Ascertaining the Cultivation, Wealth, Resources and National Prosperity, of the Kingdom of France* (Bury St Edmund's, 1792), p.64.

<sup>17</sup> Bacon had singled out Girardon's monument to Cardinal Richelieu in his essay 'On Sculpture' in 1783 as an example of the type of sculpture produced under the patronage of Louis XIV in France. See Bacon, 'On Sculpture', *Cyclopaedia*, IV, under (S), no pagination

<sup>18</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks: with Instructions for the Connoisseur, and an Essay on Grace in Works of Art*, trans. Henry Fuseli (London, 1765), pp.285-286.

<sup>19</sup> Dallaway, *Anecdotes of the Arts*, p.407.

‘great expression’ with ‘great beauty’ and as a result had misconstrued intent for inability.<sup>20</sup>

### *A forgotten artist*

Perhaps because of such misunderstandings, narratives of eighteenth-century sculpture have left little room for discussions of Bacon’s work, despite that fact that between 1769 and 1799 he was one the country’s most prolific and popular sculptors.<sup>21</sup> Studies which have considered Bacon’s contributions, however briefly, have like Dallaway tended to note his failure to adhere to the precepts of emerging ‘neo-classical’ taste rather than to critically interpret or understand his output. As such, Bacon has been cast by history as a rather inconvenient anomaly in the development of a British sculptural tradition.

Writing in 1833 Allan Cunningham offered perhaps the most condemnatory account of Bacon’s work, describing how the sculptor, being unaccustomed ‘to the marbles of ancient Greece and Modern Italy’ felt in his ‘pocket and mind, that poetic sculpture was a poor pursuit, and moreover demanded thought and study’.<sup>22</sup> Cunningham went on to suggest that Bacon, unable to pursue the higher lines of sculpture, had

lent more and more to the money-making line of art, and preferred commissions which dictated size, subject, and sentiment, to those where all the interest was to be created by the sculptor, and all the magic to be breathed from the marble alone.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> I use the term neo-classical in quotation marks in recognition of the ambiguity and scrutiny the term has received. See David Irwin, *English Neoclassical Art. Studies in Inspiration and Taste*, (London, 1966), in particular see his introduction. Also see ‘Neoclassicism Surveyed’, *The Burlington Magazine*, 107, no.742, (January, 1965) pp.30-31+33. Vicky Coltman, *Fabricating the Antique: Neoclassicism in Britain, 1760-1800*, (Chicago & London, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, whilst this compromise made Bacon’s aesthetic appear confusing for many writers on art, it was a payoff which was ultimately financially fruitful for the sculptor. Indeed, for contemporary audiences there appears to have been something profoundly appealing and relevant in the mixture of classical allegory, Christian sentiment and ‘great expression’ which Bacon almost without fail incorporated into his designs.

<sup>22</sup> Allan Cunningham, *The Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, 3 vols. (London, 1833), III, p.215.

<sup>23</sup> Cunningham, *The Lives*, III, p.215.

Cunningham attributed Bacon's avaricious disposition and uninspired designs to his training in manufacture which he argued had made him, 'acquainted with public feeling' and had

revealed to him the important art of addressing his products to the grosser faculties of the people at large. In all that he did, there was a plain meaning, a sentiment which lay on the surface; which ignorance had not to call on learning to explain, and which could be felt without any reference to the antique.<sup>24</sup>

The perception that Bacon was an artist who was somehow unable to generate original or elevated works of sculpture, and who exchanged high ideals in favour of profit, is deeply deceptive. However, it is a view which has dogged accounts of the sculptor's work. Indeed, despite discussing Bacon's contributions in more measured tones, recent historians have similarly focused upon the sculptor's failure to subscribe to antique ideals rather than considering in any real depth the actual dynamics of his sculptural aesthetic. Margaret Whinney's *Sculpture in Britain 1530-1830* (1964), castigates Bacon for his 'inability to understand the principles of antique sculpture', claiming that his work was far more agreeable when he was being 'less pretentious and not trying too hard to compete with true neo-classicists such as Banks'.<sup>25</sup> Like Cunningham, Whinney described Bacon's work as inconsistent with wider developments in British sculpture. She argued that Bacon was a sculptor who had neither the training nor the mind to take a proper 'intellectual interest in art', and for whom classicism was more 'a question of fashion than conviction'.<sup>26</sup> Whinney also saw Bacon's training in manufacture as a limiting quality, claiming that the designs he made for sepulchres would be 'more appropriate as mantelpiece ornaments, perhaps holding a gilt clock, than on the scale of an Abbey monument'.<sup>27</sup>

Bacon's preference for an alternative set of sculptural values, in a period dominated by discussions of a revival of the true tastes of the antique, has

<sup>24</sup> Cunningham, *The Lives*, III, p.218.

<sup>25</sup> Margaret Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain*, revised by John Physick (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1988), pp.307-8.

<sup>26</sup> Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain*, p.303.

<sup>27</sup> Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain*, p.312.

resulted in his relative obscurity.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, artists working in the generation before Bacon have, in recent years, enjoyed substantial critical attention; this is most notably the case with Roubiliac, the subject of David Bindman's and Malcolm Baker's 1995 ground breaking *Roubiliac and the Eighteenth-Century Monument: Sculpture as Theatre*.<sup>29</sup> At the same time contemporaries of Bacon who appear to have followed the precepts of 'neo-classicism' such as Banks, Nollekens and Flaxman have all received detailed scholarly attention.<sup>30</sup> However, Bacon has never been the subject of a scholarly monograph.<sup>31</sup> Up until now, only Ann Cox-Johnson's 1961 essay on Bacon for the St Marylebone Society has offered any sustained engagement with the sculptor's work.<sup>32</sup> Tracing the development of Bacon's career, Cox-Johnson presents a brief survey of the artist's major contributions to eighteenth-century sculpture. However, throughout her discussion, the author remains heavily influenced by a conventional understanding of the development of the sculptural tradition in England: one which saw art in the century moving unerringly towards the noble simplicity and calm grandeur of neo-classicism rather than acknowledging the

<sup>28</sup> See David Irwin, *English Neoclassical Art; Studies in Inspiration and Taste* (London, 1966).

<sup>29</sup> David Bindman & Malcolm Baker, *Roubiliac and the Eighteenth-Century Monument: Sculpture as Theatre* (New Haven and London 1995). For further discussion of Roubiliac's art see David Bindman, 'Roubiliac in Westminster Abbey', *Oxford Art Journal*, 4, no.2 (Nov, 1981), pp.10-16. Malcolm Baker, 'The Making of Portrait Busts in the Mid-Eighteenth-Century, Roubiliac, Scheemakers and Trinity College, Dublin', *Burlington Magazine*, 137, no.1113 (December, 1993), pp.821-83. Malcolm Baker, 'Roubiliac's Argyll Monument and the Interpretation of Eighteenth Century Sculptor's Design', *Burlington Magazine*, 134, no.1077 (December, 1992), pp.785-797. On Henry Cheere see M.I. Webb, 'Henry Cheere, Sculptor and Businessman and John Cheere I', *Burlington Magazine*, 100, no.664 (June, 1958), p.232 & pp.235-240. M. I. Webb, 'Henry Cheere, Sculptor and Businessman and John Cheere II', *Burlington Magazine*, 100, no.665 (August, 1958), pp.274-279. On John Cheere (brother of Henry Cheere) see Terry Friedman and Timothy Clifford, *The Man at Hyde Park Corner: Sculpture by John Cheere, 1709-1887*, exh. cat., (Leeds, 1794), exhibition held at Temple Newsam, May-June 1974. On Michael Rysbrack see Katharine Eustace, *Michael Rysbrack, Sculptor, 1694-1770* exh. cat., (Bristol, City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, 1782). On Peter Scheemakers see Ingrid Roscoe, *Peter Scheemakers: 'The Famous Statuary', 1691-1781*, exh. cat., (Leeds, Centre of the Study of Sculpture, Henry Moore Institute, 1996).

<sup>30</sup> In 2005 the Soane Museum exhibited a one man show of Thomas Banks work: see Julius Bryant, *Thomas Banks 1735-1805: Britain's First Modern Sculptor*, exh. cat., (London, Soane Museum, 2005). For discussions on the art of John Flaxman see David Bindman, *John Flaxman, R.A.* exh.cat., (London, Royal Academy of Arts, 1979). Margaret Whinney, 'Flaxman and the Eighteenth Century a Commemorative Lecture', *Journal of the Warburg Courtauld Institutes*, 19, no.3/4 (Jan, 1956), 269-282. For Nollekens see Malcolm Baker, *Figured in Marble: The Making and Viewing of Eighteenth-Century Sculpture* (London, 2000). Richard M. Baum, 'Joseph Nollekens: A Neo Classical Eccentric', *The Art Bulletin*, 16, no.4 (Dec, 1934), pp.385-395.

<sup>31</sup> As also noted in Craske, 'Reviving the 'School of Phidias'', p.43.

<sup>32</sup> Ann Cox-Johnson, 'John Bacon RA', *St Marylebone Society Publication*, no.4 (London, 1961). pp.1-47.



variations upon and, challenges to, the antique ideal offered by artists like Bacon. It was a bias which naturally led Cox-Johnson to suggest that ‘though Bacon cannot now be considered to be a great sculptor, he was a good one’.<sup>33</sup> Her conclusion is equally as damning, Bacon being ‘too much a man of his own time to be remembered long afterwards’.<sup>34</sup>

This thesis will seek to redress the sketchy and often dismissive scholarship which currently exists on Bacon and offer readers an historically specific mode of understanding and appreciating his ambitious sculpture. It will consider Bacon’s contributions to the sculptural tradition in Britain from what Matthew Craske has recently described as a ‘revisionist’ perspective.<sup>35</sup> Rather than following, as most modern scholars do, the notion that the foundation of the Royal Academy in 1768 created a crucial juncture in aesthetic taste in the period, this thesis will place Bacon’s output in a longer history of eighteenth-century sculpture. This thesis will also explore the sculptor’s status and position as they were perceived in the period. Bacon was an artist who one commentator in 1778 claimed, ‘bids fair to be a modern Phidias in his profession’.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, for many commentators on sculpture in the 1770s and 1780s, he came to embody the aspirations of the British School of Sculpture, by being a ‘Briton born, a Briton bred’: a factor which has often been conveniently forgotten in assessments of the rise of the British School.<sup>37</sup> As such this thesis intends to rediscover the pivotal and influential role Bacon played in the dynamics of late eighteenth-century sculpture and in so doing offer new arguments for the development of the medium in the period 1769-1799.

### *Methodology and summary of thesis*

My thesis is organised in a broadly chronological manner, beginning with Bacon’s enrolment at the Royal Academy and concluding with the last two significant public commissions he was awarded. It traces the evolution of Bacon’s style and his attempts to negotiate a path through the competitive late

<sup>33</sup> Cox-Johnson, ‘John Bacon RA’, p.44.

<sup>34</sup> Cox-Johnson, ‘John Bacon RA’, p.44.

<sup>35</sup> Craske, ‘Reviving the ‘School of Phidias’’, p.42.

<sup>36</sup> *The Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* (Saturday April 25<sup>th</sup>, 1778), p.2.

<sup>37</sup> Anon, ‘Mr Bacon’s Exhibition’, *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, (February, 1803), p.120.

eighteenth-century art market. For each chapter I have chosen a number of exemplary sculptures which I study in detail and use to recover the preoccupations and characteristics of Bacon's art. Many of these works, sometimes known only through engravings or sketches, have never been considered in depth before. The analysis of such pieces will take into account contemporary reviews and the sculptor's own writings on his medium. Throughout this thesis I try to understand Bacon's sculpture in ways which would have resonated with his contemporary audiences, investigating issues such as location, reception and taste.

I begin my argument by considering the nature of Bacon's sculptural identity and seeking to understand the value which was attached to his domestic training. As a sculptor who 'acquired his fame without foreign instruction or study in the schools of Italy, and who may be produced as proof that genius is the growth of the British Isles', Bacon occupied a unique position in the late eighteenth-century sculptural market, one which he shrewdly exploited to emphasise the 'Britishness' of his training at a time when it was pertinent to do so.<sup>38</sup> In assessing the initial development of Bacon's sculptural identity at the Academy the first chapter of this thesis will consider in detail the nature of Bacon's engagement with emerging Academic theory and his newly acquired audiences. As well as discussing Bacon's hitherto forgotten contributions to the Academy's annual exhibitions this chapter will also think afresh about Bacon's relationship with the world of manufacture and, more pertinently, his continued commitment to the seemingly anachronistic values of the Society of Arts.

As part of a thoroughgoing reassessment of Bacon's sculpture, my second chapter will explore the tactility and expressiveness of his sculpted surfaces and recover the subtle physiognomic, gestural and bodily exchanges upon which his sculptural narratives depended for their meaning. Crucially, this approach tallies with the ways in which Bacon himself intended his art to be explored. By focusing on Bacon's monument to Thomas Guy (1779), and his 1778 diploma piece *Sickness*, a work which emerged from the Guy commission, this chapter

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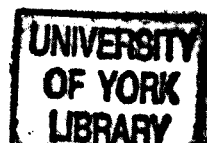
<sup>38</sup> *The European Magazine* (January, 1790) p.84.

will also consider the equivocal dynamics of Bacon's relationship with the theories and doctrines of the Royal Academy. Indeed, through examples such as the Guy monument and *Sickness*, Bacon appears to have been deliberately positioning himself in opposition to some of the Academy's primary ambitions for his medium. This chapter will consider the extent to which Bacon was actively pioneering an alternative vision of sculptural development from within the Academy, a vision which was heavily dependent upon the aesthetic model provided by predecessors such as Roubiliac, Cibber, Rysbrack and the Scheemakers.

In his monument to Thomas Guy Bacon championed a sculptural aesthetic of animation and expression, fuelled by modern sentimental ideals. My third chapter will consider what happened when Bacon took this alternative aesthetic into a more public arena. As in previous chapters, this discussion will focus upon close readings of particular works, in this case Bacon's two monuments to the Earl of Chatham at the Guildhall (1782) and Westminster Abbey (1784). The Chatham commissions were the most prestigious public monuments to be erected in almost twenty years and, when completed, secured Bacon considerable acclaim from contemporary audiences. By visually analysing the pieces alongside a detailed historical investigation of the commissioning of the works, I intend to sidestep the bias which has obscured the value of the monuments and reengage with the original narratives and aesthetic intentions Bacon had for them. The monuments will also be set in context by considering the sculptor's 1783 essay, 'On Sculpture', printed in Abraham Rees' *Cyclopaedia: or Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*.<sup>39</sup> This is a little known text, despite representing a critical alternative to the theory of sculpture Reynolds, president of the Royal Academy, had promoted in his tenth annual discourse, given at the Academy in 1780. Bacon's piece of writing persuasively outlines his vision for a union of 'great expression' and 'great beauty', a methodology which he hoped would enable modern sculptors to supersede the ancients. It also promoted the value of foreign artists who had practiced in eighteenth-century Britain, proposing that the development of art in the country

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<sup>39</sup> See Appendix 1 of this thesis.



did not require a dismissal of the work of the immediate past, but rather could benefit from the earlier era's best productions.

In presenting an alternative vision for the development of a sculptural tradition in England, Bacon championed from within the Academy a compromise between classical austerity and the public's apparent preference for sentimental, animated and heartfelt narratives. This alternative aesthetic found its most poignant and moving outlet in the numerous designs Bacon created for the funerary trade. Between 1769 and 1799 Bacon created an eclectic array of designs for this brand of sculpture, matching the sentiments of such works with the tastes of his patrons. The fourth chapter of this thesis will consider the range of designs Bacon created for the sepulchre market, offering close readings of individual pieces and considering the reception such works received in both the press and in the numerous guides and tours of parish churches published in the period.

The final chapter of this thesis concerns the conflicting ideals which governed the erection of the first two monuments ever to be permitted inside St Paul's Cathedral: those to John Howard and Samuel Johnson (1796), both of which were sculpted by Bacon. The sculptor faced significant opposition to his first design for the Howard monument and was asked to modify the work so that it more closely corresponded to the design of the Johnson commission and the aspirations of the Royal Academy. It was the first time Bacon had received significant critical opposition to his animated and sentimental style and, through an examination of the circumstances which led to the commissioning of the two schemes, the final chapter of this thesis will offer a detailed assessment of the factors behind such demands and Bacon's inventive attempts to resolve them.

With the intervention of the Royal Academy in this independent commission, Bacon saw his freedom to invent overridden in favour of the ideal of a nationally coherent style. From a historical perspective it was the beginning of the end for Bacon's sculptural reputation. Whilst the sculptor continued to receive a significant number of commissions from private patrons, the artist who had once been described as the country's 'modern Phidias', found his

public sculpture increasingly scrutinised in negative terms. As we have seen, such criticism continued after his death in 1799, and has contributed to his current obscurity and poor standing in the history of late eighteenth-century sculpture. This thesis, in contrast, hopes to revive Bacon's reputation, pay proper attention to his sophisticated and expressive sculptural designs, and bring back to life his forgotten contributions to the aesthetic debates of the period.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **FORGING A PROFESSIONAL CAREER (1769-1778)**

In June 1769 John Bacon enrolled at the newly opened Royal Academy, being one of the first sculptors to join the institution. The Royal Academy sought to redefine the arts in England, formalising aesthetic expression and distancing art from the taint of commerce and manufacture. More specifically it hoped to establish a national school, making British art less dependent on foreign productions and at the same time more able to compete with continental schools. Bacon fully embraced the opportunities provided by the newly formed institution, proving his worth as an Academician through the systematic display, between 1769 and 1778, of a series of classically inspired mythological figures at its annual exhibitions.

Whilst Bacon's adherence to academic expectations enhanced his status as a sculptor, he also recognised the impact such associations could have on the work he produced for manufacture. Bacon had received his initial training as a sculptor in industry and appears to have been eager to continue this line of work after his enrolment at the Academy. Unlike his contemporaries, who had tended to shy away from such commercial endeavours, Bacon had taken the controversial decision to actively promote this aspect of his sculptural practice at the Royal Academy's annual exhibitions. In line with such aspirations Bacon also continued to present works for premiums at the Society of Arts, forging a unique bond with the organisation which he was to foster throughout his professional career. In coveting accolades from *both* the Academy and the Society of Arts, and in continuing a prolific outpouring of designs for the world of manufacture, Bacon was able to secure critical acclaim in a diverse range of sculptural genres and arenas. However, whilst this approach offered Bacon maximum opportunities to promote his sculpture, in marrying the values of high art with those of the applied arts the sculptor contravened some of the Royal Academy's primary ambitions for his medium.

By closely surveying and studying the works Bacon exhibited during his initial years at the Royal Academy, this chapter will seek to understand the unconventional and, at times, paradoxical position he took towards prevailing sculptural thought in the period. Indeed, Bacon's experience during the 1770s attests to the mutability of the Academy's theories on art during its formative

years. In assessing Bacon responses to emerging Academic theory this chapter will also think afresh about the sculptor's continued commitment to the world of manufacture. Whilst Timothy Clifford has considered the contributions Bacon made to industrial design during the 1770s, the sculptor's decision to exhibit such pieces at the Royal Academy has yet to be examined.<sup>1</sup> In conjunction with such concerns this chapter will also address the nature of Bacon's continued relationship with the Society of Arts and seek to uncover the sculptor's strongly held desire for recognition from a variety of artistic authorities.

### *Bacon's early career*

Before entering the Royal Academy Bacon had worked as an apprentice to Nicholas Crisp, a jeweller and porcelain maker.<sup>2</sup> Although this experience was ridiculed by later writers, the terms of Bacon's apprenticeship obliging him to 'submit to the drudgery of moulding shepherds and shepherdesses in china', this early training was nevertheless crucial in acquainting him with the practices and procedures of manufacture.<sup>3</sup> More particularly, Bacon's time at Crisp's Lambeth china factory provided the sculptor with the 'opportunity of observing the models of different sculptors which were sent to a pottery on the same premises to be burnt' from which, according to Bacon's biographer Richard Cecil, 'Mr B first conceived a strong inclination for his future profession'.<sup>4</sup>

Although Crisp's business suffered from a series of rather unfortunate financial crises, resulting in his bankruptcy in November 1763, these seem to have had little impact on either the duration or diversity of Bacon's apprenticeship.<sup>5</sup> Crisp was a liveryman of the Haberdasher's Company and his entrepreneurial spirit had led to his involvement in numerous, often obscure, projects ranging from jewellery making, clock making, porcelain manufacture,

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy Clifford, 'John Bacon and the Manufactures', *Apollo*, CXXII (October, 1985), pp.288-304.

<sup>2</sup> For more on Crisp see Aubrey J. Toppin, 'Contributions to the History of Porcelain-Making in London', *English Ceramic Circle Transactions*, I (1933), pp.38-43.

<sup>3</sup> Anon, 'Mr Bacon's Exhibition', *The Gentleman's Magazine* (February, 1803), p.120.

<sup>4</sup> Cecil, *Memoirs of John Bacon*, pp.5-6.

<sup>5</sup> J.V.G. Mallet, 'Nicholas Crisp, Founder Member of the Society of Arts', in *The Virtuoso Tribe of Arts and Sciences: Studies in the Eighteenth-Century Work and Membership of the London Society of Arts*, ed. by D.G.C. Allan & John .L. Abbott, (London, 1992), p.69.



china manufacture, fostering silk-worms in Georgia and exploiting cobalt mines in Scotland.<sup>6</sup> The variety of Crisp's endeavours and his failures financially would have undoubtedly provided Bacon with, as Timothy Clifford has outlined, a 'healthy balance', acquainting the sculptor with the difficult realities of running a commercially successful business.<sup>7</sup>

For a sculptor this experience was perhaps particularly pertinent, with many artists in the period finding it difficult to maintain financial stability. Indeed, to achieve a degree of economic security most of the leading sculptors of the generation working before Bacon had found it necessary to supplement their sculptural output with work in industry. Henry Cheere, for example, created an eclectic array of domestic luxuries alongside his more rigorous one-off pieces in marble.<sup>8</sup> Joseph Wilton similarly diversified his sculptural practice, designing architectural mouldings for interior decoration, whilst also holding the position of coach-carver to the King.<sup>9</sup> Even Roubiliac, who was later to distance himself from industry, worked for a time as a modeller for the Chelsea china factory.<sup>10</sup>

Although work in manufacture created a degree of conflict for many artists, the mundane reality of designing for industry contrasting against any lofty ideals concerning the sculptor's vocation, there were nonetheless strong ambitions in the period to see the liberal and applied arts united. As Malachy Postlethwayt in his 1757 *Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce* stated:

the studies in the liberal arts, and all other branches of literature, are but of little benefit to the state, unless they tend to promote honest industry, and such arts as are useful to commerce in some shape or another.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Mallet, 'Nicholas Crisp, Founder Member of the Society of Arts', p.69.

<sup>7</sup> Clifford, 'John Bacon and the Manufacturers', p.289.

<sup>8</sup> Mathew Craske, 'Plan and Control: Design and the Competitive Spirit in Early Modern and Mid-Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of Design History*, 12, no.3 (1999), p.193 & pp.207-208.

<sup>9</sup> Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain*, p.265.

<sup>10</sup> Bindman & Baker, *Roubiliac*, p.70.

<sup>11</sup> Jacques Savary des Brulons, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce, Translated from the French of Monsieur Savary, Inspector General of the Manufacturers for the King, at the Custom House of Paris with Large Additions and Improvements Incorporated Throughout the Whole Work; which more Particularly Accommodate the Same to the Trade and Navigation of these Kingdoms, and the Laws, Customs, and Usages, To which all Trades are Subject*, trans. ed. by Malachy Postlethwayt, 2 vols. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1757), I, p.189.

The financial benefits of uniting art with industry in this manner were also clearly recognised, as William Chambers was at pains to explain in his 1759 *Treatise on Civil Architecture*. For Chambers the natural result of investing in the arts was economic growth: if the arts flourished they had

an influence on Manufactures, even on the minutest [sic] mechanic productions: for Design is of universal advantage, and stamps a value on the most trifling performances; the consequence of which, to a trading people, are too obvious to require any illustration.<sup>12</sup>

The ambitions of writers like Postlethwayt and Chambers were perhaps most strongly realised in the philosophy of the Society of Arts, whose primary goal was to improve the quality of British goods produced for manufacture. It was decided at the Society's first meeting, held at Rawthmell's Coffee House in Covent Garden on 22 March 1754, that British talent could be effectively encouraged by the awarding of premiums:

it being the Opinion... that ye Art of Drawing is absolutely Necessary in many Employments Trades, and Manufactures, and that the Encouragem't thereof may prove of great Utility to the public.<sup>13</sup>

The Society hoped that such monetary awards would, as Anne Puetz has summarised,

help raise design awareness amongst the wider population and encourage young children and young adults to acquire and practice drawing skills in preparation for the competitions... [and] bring forward gifted and design literate candidates who could then be channelled into the various trades appropriate to their gender.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> William Chambers, *A Treatise on Civil Architecture; in which the Principals of that Art are Laid Down, and Illustrated by a Great Number of Plates, Accurately Designed and Elegantly Engraved by the Best Hands* (London, 1759), p.ii.

<sup>13</sup> RSA Minutes, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1754 as quoted in Derek Hudson & Kenneth W. Luckhurst, *The Royal Society of Arts 1754-1954* (London, 1954), p.8.

<sup>14</sup> Anne Puetz, 'The Society and the 'Polite Arts' 1754-1778: 'Best Drawings', 'High' Art and Designs for the Manufacture', in *'Cultivating the Human Faculties' James Barry Commemorated*, ed. by Susan Bennett, [online], [http://www.rsa.org.uk/acrobat/cultivating\\_human\\_faculties\\_barry\\_pdf](http://www.rsa.org.uk/acrobat/cultivating_human_faculties_barry_pdf), RSA/William Shipley Group, p.32. (accessed May 2007).

Inherent in the desire to encourage young talent, and in the process to champion British manufacture, was the much broader ambition to see art and artists liberated from aristocratic patronage and authority. For this to happen it was argued that British talent needed to be more effectively nurtured outside traditional spheres of elite influence, a role the Society of Arts, through its premium competitions, sought to fulfil.<sup>15</sup>

Whilst the Society of Arts' primary ambition was to improve the quality of British goods produced for manufacture, in 1759 the institution took the unusual decision to add a history painting and classical bas-relief category to their list of premiums.<sup>16</sup> Influenced by the aspirations of a small but vocal group of artists within the Society, the intention was, as Martin Myrone has argued, to enable artists to

produce ambitious works of art that, given the general indifference of the State, Church or private individuals toward modern high art, they would not otherwise have a reason to produce.<sup>17</sup>

As in the case of manufactured goods, the ambition was also to help cultivate the liberal arts in Britain so that they were more able to compete with foreign rivals. Artists were given free rein in their choice of narratives for the premium competition, though suggestions were made which strongly encouraged the type of heroic and dramatic narratives associated with the Grand Manner.<sup>18</sup>

It was against this backdrop of enthusiasm for the polite arts that Bacon began his career. As a founding member of the Society of Arts, Nicholas Crisp naturally encouraged Bacon to enter the institute's annual competitions. The

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<sup>15</sup> More generally it was a shift which, as Matthew Craske has argued, saw 'The capacity to judge whether objects were tastefully designed gradually passed from an elite of connoisseurs and practitioners to that portion of the public with the education to read periodical and pamphlet literature. Design, and its manual expression drawing, was promoted in the mid-eighteenth century as an essential skill for any individual who wished to raise themselves above the labouring masses. The skill of designing became a central power in the public realm by the practice of 'useful' trades or professions'. Craske, 'Plan and Control', p.190.

<sup>16</sup> Martin Myrone, 'Patriotism, Virtue and the Problem of the Hero: The Society's Promotion of High Art in the 1760s', in *Cultivating the Human Faculties*, ed. by Susan Bennett, [online], p.32.

<sup>17</sup> Myrone, 'Patriotism, Virtue and the Problem', p.34.

<sup>18</sup> Myrone, 'Patriotism, Virtue and the Problem', p.36.

sculptor entered the Society's premium competition on a number of occasions, winning awards for a model of *Peace* (1759), for a relief of *David and Abigail* (1760), for *Sampson and Delilah* (1761), for a depiction of *Mucius Scaevola burning himself before Porsenna* and *Death of Virgina* (1764) and for his portrayal of the Roman dictator *Cincinnatus* (1765). The contributions Bacon made in the 1760s to the Society of Arts, likely modelled in terracotta or plaster, are now all unfortunately lost.<sup>19</sup> However, the choice of subject matter Bacon repeatedly interpreted suggests that the sculptor was clearly aspiring to create works of an elevated and sophisticated nature. Indeed, the moralistic narrative of *Sampson and Delilah*, the heroic stoicism of *Mucius Scaevola* and the virtue of *Cincinnatus* were all works which, in their intellectual scope and moral/religious intensity, articulated a serious and weighty form of historical narrative.

Although Bacon was given an arena during the 1760s in which he could define himself as a fine artist, the Society's support for the liberal arts was an uneasy and ultimately short lived enterprise - the classical bas-relief competition ceased in 1770, most likely because of the foundation of the Royal Academy. Indeed, whilst such competitions made concessions towards the development of the polite arts, it is clear that the primary goal of the Society continued to be the encouragement of industrial and applied art. The number of awards presented to the liberal arts in 1769 was 28, out of a total of 176, unambiguously reflecting the Society's continued commitment to manufacture.<sup>20</sup>

For Bacon, however, the Society's decade long engagement with the aspirations of high art proved fruitful and must have encouraged the young sculptor to continue to develop his talent in a particular direction. Yet, interestingly when the Society faced inevitable schisms over the issue of the liberal arts, which saw many artists exhibit at either the Society of Artists of Great Britain in 1761 or at the Free Society of Artists in 1765, Bacon largely avoided presenting his work, apparently choosing to remain loyal to the Society

<sup>19</sup> Anon, 'Patrons to a Sculptor: The Society and John Bacon RA', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, CX (London, 1962), pp.705-709.

<sup>20</sup> D.C.G. Allen, 'Artists and the Society in the Eighteenth Century', in *The Virtuoso Tribe of Arts and Sciences*, p.106.

of Arts.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, although Bacon had presented works for exhibition at the Free Society between 1762 and 1764, after it sought independence from the Society of Arts in 1765, moving its annual exhibition from their Great Room on the Strand, first to Mr Moreing's Great Room in Covent Gardens and later to Pall Mall, Bacon did not presents works for display with them again.<sup>22</sup> It was an unusual stance to take and one in which Bacon was alone amongst his contemporaries. Thomas Banks, John Flaxman and Joseph Nollekens, as well as more established figures such as Thomas Scheemakers and Michael Rysbrack all actively embraced the opportunity to exhibit their art at the Free Society of Artists after 1765, whilst the older sculptors Roubiliac, Cheere and Wilton continued to favour the Society of Artists of Great Britain.

Bacon's decision to adhere the Society of Arts was, in part, influenced by a sense of loyalty to Nicholas Crisp. Indeed, his master's strong links with the institution may well have made the option to abandon the organisation more difficult for Bacon than it was for other sculptors. Bacon's decision to remain at the Society of Arts was, however, also clearly influenced by his continuing commitment to work in manufacture. After completing his apprenticeship with Crisp in July 1764 Bacon found work as a stone carver and modeller at Daniel Pincot's artificial stone manufactory in Whitechapel. At Pincot's Bacon was likely to have been involved in copying antique works as well as designing new pieces for reproduction.<sup>23</sup> It was a role that strongly accorded with the vision of the Society of Arts, which imagined high art improving the quality of the industrial arts, and as such Bacon must have considered it beneficial at this stage

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<sup>21</sup> The only time Bacon did present his art to audiences outside of the Society of Arts was in 1768 when he presented a *Bacchanalian Model* for exhibition at The Society of Artists of Great Britain, a work he was to present for exhibition at the Royal Academy the following year. See *A Catalogue of the Pictures, Sculptures, Designs in Architecture, Models, Drawings, Prints &c, Exhibited at the Great Room in Spring-Garden, Charing-Cross, April the twenty-eight, 1768, by the Society of Artists of Great Britain* (London, 1768), p.13.

<sup>22</sup> In 1762 Bacon presented a clay model of *Interview between Coriolanus and Volumina*, in 1763 a model in alto-relievo of *Marc Antony* and in 1764 a *Model in clay*, the subject of which is unknown. See Algernon Graves, *The Society of Artists of Great Britain, 1760-1791 (and) the Free Society of Artists, 1761-1783: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their Work from the Foundation of the Societies to 1791* (London, 1907), p.18.

<sup>23</sup> Although we do not know what type of sculptures Pincot's manufactory was making, in 1769 Pincot was made head designer at Coade Stone (taking Bacon with him), and it is likely that the designs he was involved in creating at Coade, which were classical in nature, were the same as those he produced at his own manufactory in the 1760s. Clifford, 'John Bacon and the Manufacturers', p.290.

in his career to remain loyal to the Society. His alignment with the institution continued to bolster his reputation as an artisan without jeopardising his ambitions to be a professional sculptor, thanks to the high minded works he could present there.

### *Bacon at the Royal Academy*

Despite the efforts of the Free Society of Artists and the Society of Artists of Great Britain it was not until 1768 with the foundation of the Royal Academy that a new vision of the polite arts was able to be firmly asserted. The establishment of the Royal Academy was an answer to pleas that Britain should have its own national school of art. Thus, Robert Campbell had argued in 1747 that were

the lovers of Painting among our Nobility to contribute to the erecting and maintaining [of] Academies of Painting, as is done in other Nations, we should in a few Years boast of as eminent hands as any in Italy. For this would not only be a Nursery for Painters, but improve the National Taste and Judgement in the Art: Our Nobility would then be able to judge of a Piece by the Rules of Art, and value it according to its own intrinsic Excellence, without consulting the Name or depending on the Judgement of *Italian* Picture-Mongers.<sup>24</sup>

The desire to distance the polite arts from commerce and locate aristocratic patronage as the primary catalyst, signalled a considered break from the agenda of the Society of Arts. It was an issue Joshua Reynolds tackled directly in his opening address to the Academy in 1769 when he asserted that

An Institution like this has often been recommended upon considerations merely mercantile; but an Academy, founded upon such principles, can never effect even its own narrow purposes. If it has an origin no higher, no taste can ever be formed in manufactures; but if the higher Arts and Design flourish, these inferior ends will be answered of course.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Robert Campbell, *The London Tradesman. Being a Compendious View of all the Trades, Professions, Arts, both Liberal and Mechanic, now Practiced in the Cities of London and Westminster* (London, 1747), pp.96-97.

<sup>25</sup> Joshua Reynolds, 'Discourse I' (1769), in *Discourses on Art*, ed. by R. Wark, (New Haven & London, 1997), p.13.

Enrolling at the Royal Academy in 1769 enabled Bacon, at 28, to make the transition from a modeller in manufacture to a professional sculptor. The Academy offered Bacon his first real chance to engage with progressive critical theory, to systematically study the antique and, perhaps more importantly, to exhibit his work before an informed urban audience. As his biographer noted,

it was then... in attending the Royal Academy... that he received his first instruction in his future profession, having never before seen the art of Modelling or Sculpture regularly performed.<sup>26</sup>

The foundation of the Royal Academy, with its focus on teaching, saw many of those sculptors who had begun their careers by exhibiting at the Society of Arts enrol at the school. John Flaxman and Thomas Banks registered in 1769 and Joseph Nollekens in 1770. Of Bacon's contemporaries only Nollekens could claim any real status as a professional at the time of his enrolment, having lived in Rome for almost ten years restoring and copying antique works. It was an experience which later critics claimed 'formed his taste on the antique and introduced a purer style of art'.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, by 1770 Nollekens had established his own studio on Mortimer Street and secured the patronage of Lord Rockingham, who had engaged the sculptor to produce a series of mythological statues for his Wentworth Woodhouse estate.<sup>28</sup> This offered a stark contrast to Bacon's position at the time of his enrolment at the Academy. The sculptor, though only three years younger than Nollekens, remained tied almost exclusively to the world of manufacture, casting pieces in artificial stone for Daniel Pincot whilst developing a lucrative sideline in modelling decorative pieces for Wedgwood and Crown Derby.<sup>29</sup>

### *Training at the Royal Academy*

In seeking to differentiate the liberal arts from mercantile considerations, the newly opened Royal Academy asked students of sculpture to concentrate upon

<sup>26</sup> Cecil, *Memoirs of John Bacon*, p.8.

<sup>27</sup> John Flaxman, *Lectures on Sculpture as Delivered before the President and Members of the Royal Academy* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1838), p.291.

<sup>28</sup> Rupert Gunnis, *Dictionary of British Sculptors 1660-1851* (London, 1954), p.276.

<sup>29</sup> For a full account of Bacon's work in manufacture see Clifford, 'John Bacon and the Manufactures', p.289.

the modelling stage in the production of their medium rather than pushing them to complete full size works. It was a tactic that, as Myrone has suggested, highlighted the institution's preference for the 'imaginative or inventive aspect of artistic production' over the merely manual.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, sculpture was particularly problematic when it came to elevating the artist, as workshop practice required manual labour and delegation, factors that interfered with notions of the polite arts.<sup>31</sup>

To encourage this type of intellectualism the Royal Academy, following the example of continental schools, held an annual competition for students to showcase their newly developed abilities.<sup>32</sup> The sculpture competition, like that for painting, encouraged students to work on subjects appropriate for high art. Each year a subject from either classical mythology or the Bible was chosen to test students' skills of interpretation. Once the topic had been disclosed students had half an hour for research in the Academy library, before creating a model under the supervision of the Keeper. The works were then assessed and a winner chosen.<sup>33</sup>

In asking students to interpret heroic narratives, the Academy's annual student competition closely followed the Society of Art's classical bas-relief premium, though without the hope that such designs would ever filter down into manufacture. Moreover, the emphasis it placed on the speedy completion of the works strongly asserted the conceptual and intellectual nature of the pursuit. In having only half hour to consult the Academy's library, it was assumed that artists were both acquainted with classical and biblical literature and were able to rapidly recall antique examples appropriate to the chosen theme. Having won premiums on six separate occasions during the 1760s from the Society of Arts, Bacon had acquired significant experience in this type of competition, learning

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<sup>30</sup> Martin Myrone, 'Body Building: British Historical Artists in London and Rome and the Remarking of the Heroic Ideal c.1760-1800' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Courtauld Institute, London, 1998), p.159.

<sup>31</sup> Bindman & Baker, *Roubiliac*, p.209.

<sup>32</sup> As such, students from the Royal Academy could be promoted as the equals and rivals of foreign competitors, and consequently were able to exploit the benefits of continental patronage networks.

<sup>33</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the workings of the Academy's student competition see Myrone, 'Body Building', (1998), pp.158-161.



to pick the most dramatic and emotionally engaging moments in a narrative and to convey such details effectively within the constraints of bas-relief. Despite his previous successes it must have been a significant achievement for Bacon when he won the Academy's first sculpture competition in 1769 for his interpretation of *Aeneas Escaping from Troy*. There are two known copies of Bacon's gold winning relief, one at the Royal Society of Medicine's rooms at 1 Wimpole Street, the other at the Foundling Hospital (fig.3).

For the chosen theme Bacon had a number of works he could draw on for inspiration, Bernini's famed 1618 *Aeneas, Anchises and Ascanius* offering perhaps the most dramatic sculptural example (fig.4). However, in design Bacon's relief more closely corresponds to Frederic Barocci's painting *Aeneas Fleeing Burning Troy* (1598) (fig.5). The work offered a dramatic vision of the fall of Troy and powerfully highlighted the individual emotions of the characters involved: the petrified Ascanius, the despondent Creusa, the vigilant Anchises and the stoical Aeneas. Bacon may well have known of Barocci's painting through Agostine Carracci's engraving of the work and quickly assimilated aspects of his predecessor's design for his own competition piece (fig.6).<sup>34</sup> Yet, whilst it seems likely that Bacon would have turned to Barocci's previous representation of the episode for inspiration, it is clear that the sculptor also fused this visual knowledge with an intimate reading of Virgil's original text.

Like Barocci's earlier work, Bacon's award winning relief focused upon the four principle figures Virgil described in his account, whilst similarly setting the whole scene against an architectural backdrop. Bacon depicted Aeneas carrying his father, Anchises away from the burning city of Troy. As in Barocci's painting, Bacon showed the hero struggling to balance the weight of his father over uneven ground, standing with his legs astride and his muscles tensed. The blind Anchises clutches a household God in his left arm whilst raising his right arm to warn Aeneas of the approaching Greeks. As Virgil described,

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<sup>34</sup> Barocci produced two versions of the painting in 1594 and 1598 and Carracci took his engraving from the artist's first work, hence the reason why the engraving referred to in his chapter predates the painting.

Alarm'd my Sire look'd forward through the Shade,  
 And, fly my Son, they come, they come, he said;  
 Lo! from their Shields I see the Splendors stream,  
 And ken distinct the Helmet's fiery Gleam.<sup>35</sup>

Ascanius, Aeneas' son, clings to his father's tunic looking upwards for comfort and assurance. However, where in Barocci's image Aeneas looks down to his son, in Bacon's portrayal the hero appears preoccupied with his mission, defiantly pressing forward in order to escape. Creusa, Aeneas' wife, is also forgotten in the rush to flee from the invading Greeks. In Bacon's relief the figure hesitates in front of the city's large portal, her pathetic gesture one of both grief and hopelessness. Unlike Barocci, Bacon maintains a clear distance between Aeneas and his wife, as if to more powerfully emphasise the couple's imminent separation and Creusa's death:

I lost my dear CREUSA, nor can tell  
 from that sad Moment, if by fate she fell;  
 Or sunk fatigu'd; or straggled from the Train;  
 But ah! She never blest these Eyes again!<sup>36</sup>

In translating the narrative of Aeneas' escape from Troy into sculptural form Bacon capitalised on the potential of his medium, particularly in his use of modulating planes of relief. In contrast to the low relief Bacon employs for the figure of Creusa the sculptor shows Aeneas pushing forward out of the work. His head is cast almost entirely in the round, as if to emphasise a sense of forward movement and to highlight Aeneas' determination to reach his homeland. It was a device which also enabled Bacon to create a sense of chronology in the narrative; the past, in the form of the portal and Creusa, resigned to the lowest form of relief, the present and future indicated by the highest. The dexterity with which Bacon cast his relievo is also reflected by the differing textures he established across the surface of the piece, from the delicate folds of Creusa's drapery, to the finely wrought fur flung over Aeneas' shoulder.

<sup>35</sup> Virgil, *The Aeneid of Virgil, Translated by Mr Pitt*, 2 vols. (London, 1740), I, book II, p.91.

<sup>36</sup> Virgil, *The Aeneid of Virgil*, I, book II, p.91.

The choice of *Aeneas escaping from Troy* for the Academy's first sculpture competition was perhaps a pointed metaphor for the journey the institute itself would have to take before it achieved its goal of creating a new school of British art. Furthermore, Aeneas' flight to Rome was in many ways a subtle indication of the importance the Academy ascribed to the city in the development of an artist's career. However, the heroic tale of Aeneas' escape also powerfully conformed to the type of moralistic masculine behaviour considered to be the staple of the Grand Manner.<sup>37</sup> According to Shaftesbury such elevated and rarefied themes should be located in the context of aristocratic households where they could influence, by example, the minds of future leaders. In a manner of speaking, Bacon's relief did end up fulfilling this ambition, being bought by Sir William Chambers and displayed above his fireplace at his 33 Berners Street residence; Aeneas' heroism presumably being 'no slight memorandum' to future generations.<sup>38</sup>

A copy of the work was also on display at the Foundling hospital in the lobby outside the court room.<sup>39</sup> Bacon had given the relief gratis to the hospital, a gift which was perhaps not entirely disinterested given the benefits its exhibition alongside some of the most significant works of art from the 1740s and 1750s would have secured for the sculptor: works such as Michael Rysbrack's relief *Charity children engaged in navigation and husbandry* (1745), Joseph Highmore's *Hagar and Ishmael* (1746), Hogarth's *Moses brought before Pharaoh's daughter* (1746).<sup>40</sup> Like the Christian narratives of charity and sympathy displayed in the main court room of the hospital, Bacon's depiction of Aeneas protecting his young son after being uprooted from his home,

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<sup>37</sup> The Grand Manner signified the most elevated and sublime narratives, which were invariably based on antique examples. It was, as Myrone has described, 'the embodiment of masculine virtue in its various aspects as a memorial to role models drawn from history and literature, a narrative prompt to heroic action, and an exemplification of the principles of manly understanding and skill'. Martin Myrone, *Bodybuilding: Reforming Masculinities in British Art 1750-1810* (New Haven & London, 2005), p.4.

<sup>38</sup> Earl of Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, 'Judgement of Hercules', *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, 4 vols. (Glasgow 1758), IV, p.46.

<sup>39</sup> Rhian Harris & Robin Simon eds., *Enlightened Self-Interest: The Foundling Hospital and Hogarth*, exh. cat., (London, Thomas Coram Foundation for Children, November 1997), p.42.

<sup>40</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the works exhibited at the Foundling Hospital see David Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (Hew Haven & London, 1993), pp.159-176.

particularly in the absence of his mother Creusa, pointed to the succour the Foundling Hospital provided for its abandoned infants. However, in presenting the work to the Foundling Hospital Bacon also somewhat subverted Shaftesbury's ambitions for the purpose and function of heroic art. Indeed, rather than presenting his account of heroic masculine virtue to aristocratic youths, the sculptor instead presented it to the abandoned and orphaned children the hospital cared for. It was a more egalitarian approach than Shaftesbury would have been prepared to advocate, however it was one which nonetheless eloquently corresponded with the Hospital's ambitions to nurture and support its young charges so as to make them useful and productive members of society.<sup>41</sup>

### *Bacon the Academician*

Bacon was eager to be defined as an Academic artist and in 1771 presented a full sized statue of *Mars* for exhibition, perhaps in order to cement his relationship with the institution (fig.7 & 8).<sup>42</sup> With his figure of *Mars* Bacon made explicit his desire to be taken seriously as an Academic sculptor. The full length statue cast in plaster, known today through a marble version made for the Earl of Yarborough in 1772, depicted *Mars* at rest, leaning against a tree stump. Bacon showed his mythological figure in a relaxed contrapposto stance, his left hand resting upon his sword whilst his right is tucked behind his back. It was a traditional pose for a man of war standing at ease. As in classical examples such as the *Terme Ruler* (fig.9) and *Meleager* (fig.10), Bacon's *Mars* rests his right hand on his lower back to denote a sense of inactive comfort whilst his left is purposefully poised over his weapon, so as to be ready to spring into action.

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<sup>41</sup> Whilst the design of Bacon's relief of *Aeneas* conveyed a narrative of heroism and virtue, its location, in both Chamber's Berners Street house and at the Foundling hospital, also points to its decorative function. Indeed, in both locations the reliefs hover between the paradigms of the Grand Manner coveted by the Academy and the applied arts ethos endorsed by the Society of Arts. Having trained in manufacture Bacon must have been aware of this mutability: the design of roundels such as his moralistic *Aeneas* elegantly fulfilling Shaftesburian ideas about the purpose and function of art, whilst at the same time being highly suitable for reproduction in manufacture.

<sup>42</sup> The previous year the sculptor had presented a bas-relief of the *Good Samaritan* for exhibition. The work, which received little critical attention, is now unfortunately lost. However in subject matter it attests to Bacon's ambition to be taken seriously as a sculptor, the biblical narrative eloquently highlighting his ability to work with weighty and morally significant narratives.

Although *Mars* is depicted in a passive, open stance, his idealised muscular form nonetheless exemplifies heroic masculinity; his taut muscles suggesting a latent alertness which was eminently suitable for a god of war. This sense of dormant power was reinforced by the figure's gaze, which, though vigilant, is relaxed and confident. Indeed, the impact of this assertiveness must have been reinforced by the scale of the work, which stands nearly two metres high (198cm).

Reviews of the statue noted Bacon's achievement, one commentator claiming that the work was a masterly performance, which displayed 'great knowledge of Anatomy, with the graceful Attitudes of the Antique'.<sup>43</sup> Bacon had not followed any specific classical sculptural prototype for his figure; rather the artist had used the vocabulary of classicism to offer a modern interpretation of the subject. It was an approach which followed Gerard de Lairesse's advice to students of art, in which the sculptor was not obliged

to imitate the Actions and Postures of the Ancients, without the least Deviation; certainly every Man has the Liberty of exercising his Ingenuity: I propose their Work only as Patterns which I have always followed, and would have others do the same, without Fear of being therefore call'd Copyists, or their Works Copies.<sup>44</sup>

In taking de Lairesse's advice in the design of his figure of *Mars* Bacon thus produced a statue which clearly asserted his *own* ingenuity, avoiding any suspicions that he had been a mere 'copyist'. However, whilst the piece did not have a direct classical lineage, Bacon had evidently studied, as the reviewer also noted, the 'graceful Attitudes of the Antique'.<sup>45</sup>

For his depiction of *Mars* Bacon appears to have intentionally subdued what Joseph Spence described as the 'outrageous' and 'impetuous' nature of the god

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<sup>43</sup> *St James Chronicle or British Evening Post* (Saturday May 3<sup>rd</sup> – Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup>, 1777), p.2.

<sup>44</sup> Gerard de Lairesse, *The Art of Painting, in all its Branches, Methodically Demonstrated by Discourses and Plates and Exemplified by Remarks on the Paintings of the Best Masters*, trans. John Frederick Fritsch (London, 1738), p.536.

<sup>45</sup> *St James Chronicle or British Evening Post* (Saturday May 3<sup>rd</sup> – Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup>, 1777), p.2.

of war. Instead the sculptor showed the figure in an inert and relaxed pose.<sup>46</sup> By giving *Mars* a static stance Bacon closely observed the Academy's teachings on animation and movement. As William Hunter, Professor of Anatomy at the Academy, stated,

Most of the Ancient Statues... are figures in a quiet state of standing, sitting or lying down. And when they study Life or Nature itself, they see it commonly in the same inactive state. For at most an academical figure is put into an active attitude only, not into Action; which makes all the difference in the world.<sup>47</sup>

In this 'academical' manner Bacon's figure of *Mars* excelled, the god of war's inert body and resolute gaze echoing Winckelmann's appeals for 'simplicity' in sculpture.<sup>48</sup> The economy and restraint Bacon employed in his figure minimised expression and maximised the aesthetic qualities of the piece, producing as Hunter claimed, 'more elegance and beauty in the form, more grace in the figure and more dignity in the Character'.<sup>49</sup>

Whilst the reviewer of Bacon's *Mars* acknowledged the sculptor's use of graceful antique attitudes, he also recognised the artist's skill in rendering the human body. Indeed, the work possessed a sense of truth to nature which was clearly derived from the study of the body in life classes. Indeed, the pose of *Mars* closely mirrors the stance adopted by life models at the Academy as seen in Ravenet's 1771 painting *A Life Class* (fig.11). Whilst this reference to nature acknowledged the progress Bacon had made at the Academy, graduating from the study of casts to life, it also more specifically aligned him with a certain strand of academic thought. A preference for the ideal beauty of antiquity strongly pervaded academic theory in the period. Reynolds declared that 'What has pleased, and continues to please, is likely to please again: hence are derived the rules of art, and on this immoveable foundation they must ever

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<sup>46</sup> Joseph Spence, *A Guide to Classical Learning; or Polymetis abridged* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1765), p.191.

<sup>47</sup> William Hunter, 'The Text of William Hunter's Lectures to the Royal Academy of Arts 1769-1772', in *Dr William Hunter at the Royal Academy of Arts*, ed. by Martin Kemp (Glasgow, 1975), p.44.

<sup>48</sup> Winckelmann, *Reflections*, trans. Henry Fuseli, p.215.

<sup>49</sup> Hunter, 'The Text of William Hunter's Lectures', p.43.

stand'.<sup>50</sup> However, within the Academy an alternative doctrine of the arts was also being promoted by William Hunter, who, contrary to Reynolds' assertions, stated that artists should follow the forms and functions of nature accurately: claiming that,

the superiority of Nature over Art seems to shine forth in almost every thing, in the Fine Arts the more precise the imitation of Nature is, that is, the nearer we come to the point of realising [Nature], the more striking I should suppose the effect will be; and therefore the more pleasing.<sup>51</sup>

In discussing the study of anatomy Hunter was equally cogent, declaring that,

a very correct knowledge of Anatomy must be of the utmost consequence to every artist who is to make resemblances of the human Body. It enables him to observe and distinguish clearly all the variations of form, because it explains their causes... Above all it enables the artist to catch those fleeting forms which are the result of the quick and transient Actions of the Muscles and which he cannot see in the living body for any time together. An exact imitation of these requires an eye so perfectly [the] master of Anatomy as to observe and retain an instantaneous effect of muscular action.<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, by looking to nature instead of antiquity an artist, as a later reviewer noted, could more readily display his own genius:

The beauties of Nature are at all times our models, and we ought not to neglect her on account of our having the works of great Masters. – They may facilitate the means of considering, perceiving and imitating her: but not to prevent our consulting, and having incessant recourse to her... But people consult the copies, and neglect the originals; they regard the admirable pieces produced by the Artists, as the capital objects of their attention, and study of Nature as only an accessory employment. From this mistake it necessarily follows, that they adopt the faults of others, and degrade the beauties of the Art, by endeavouring to borrow [from] those of the Artist: the creative fire of Genius, which borrows from Nature, becomes, little by little, extinguished.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse VII' (1776), p.133.

<sup>51</sup> Hunter, 'The Text of William Hunter's Lectures', p.38.

<sup>52</sup> Hunter, 'The Text of William Hunter's Lectures', p.43.

<sup>53</sup> Anon, *The Earwig; or an Old Woman's Remarks on the Present Exhibition of Pictures of the Royal Academy* (London, 1781), p.2.

In his statue of *Mars* Bacon appears to have willingly embraced this theory, finely delineating swelling veins and muscles across the surface of the work. With his arms drawn back behind his body spectators are confronted with *Mars*' naked body in its entirety, the inertness of the figure enabling viewers to focus upon Bacon's rendering of the human form rather than upon any narrative concerns. For Bacon the forms of nature were perhaps particularly important to emphasise, given that, unlike Nollekens, he had never visited Rome. Indeed, despite the opportunities Rome provided to study the ancients and secure patronage, the sculptor never appears to have truly coveted such an experience. An anecdote, recounted by Bacon's biographer, of a conversation between the sculptor and a prospective patron, exemplifies this position:

"Pray Mr. B have you been at Rome?" – Mr. B answered in the negative. "I suppose you have been at Wilton, to see the antiques there?" – No – After two or three more such questions and answers, he said with his patience almost exhausted, "Have you ever been at Westminster Abbey?" On Mr. B replying yes, the stranger said, "I may, however, as well walk to your rooms, and look at your works". He examined them attentively, saying as he passed "Well – very well – excellent – and all this produced without going abroad! – But I can tell you one thing, and that is you have no need to go".<sup>54</sup>

Bacon had undeniably acquired more experience of the antique than he was prepared to admit in the anecdote, as his use of the 'graceful Attitudes of the Antique' in the *Mars* statue attests.<sup>55</sup> However, there appears to have been some advantage in maintaining the pretence that he had not. Rather than apologising for the nature of his training, Bacon appears to have embraced his difference and used it as a marketable aspect of his sculptural identity. Indeed, for many Bacon came to be identified as a 'Briton born, Briton bred' and praised as a sculptor who 'To his honours may it be said, he never saw Italy and yet is the greatest statuary in England'.<sup>56</sup> It was a stance, moreover, which offered justification for the sculptor's interest in the forms of nature. Without the experience of Rome Bacon's primary models in many ways had to be those found in nature itself.

<sup>54</sup> Cecil, *Memoirs of John Bacon*, pp.13-14.

<sup>55</sup> *St James Chronicle or British Evening Post* (Saturday May 3<sup>rd</sup> – Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup>, 1777), p.2.

<sup>56</sup> Anon, 'Mr Bacon's Exhibition', *The Gentleman's Magazine* (February, 1803), p.120. *Morning Post* (Thursday April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1775), p.1.



As the century progressed and Academic theory become more formalised the emphasis writers on art, such as Hunter, placed on nature became increasingly problematic. Indeed, as early as 1770 Reynolds had openly rebutted Hunter's teachings when he argued in his *Discourse III* that 'There are excellencies in the art of painting beyond what is commonly called the imitation of nature' and that ideal beauty was 'superior to what is found in individual nature'.<sup>57</sup> Such debates, however, do not appear to have impacted negatively upon perceptions of Bacon's talents in the 1770s. Rather, Bacon's statue of *Mars* offers tangible evidence of the sculptor's attempts to negotiate the competing teachings and expectations placed on students at the Royal Academy; his figure carefully marrying the variety of nature with the symmetry and simplicity of ideal beauty. Moreover, *Mars* offered confirmation of the developments Bacon had made in his career, graduating from small scale domestic decorations and bas-relief to present statuary in the Grand Manner, a progression which was recognised by contemporaries; Benjamin West stating, 'if this is his first essay, what will this man attain to when he arrives at maturity?'.<sup>58</sup>

### *Venus*

Following on from the success of his statue of *Mars* Bacon continued to present works annually for exhibition at the Academy, offering a diverse range of pieces for the scrutiny of the public. Thus in 1772 he presented a *Model of a child*, in 1773 a *Bust in Marble* and in 1774 *A Marble bust of his Majesty*.<sup>59</sup> However, the next work to receive substantial critical attention after the exhibition of *Mars* was in 1775 when the sculptor produced a companion figure *Venus*. Exhibited at the Academy as a model, the figure was made into a full sized work in 1778. The statue, which is known today only through a later engraving, shows *Venus* in a contrapposto stance, holding a shell in her right hand and uncurling her hair with her left (fig.12). Bacon's second mythological

<sup>57</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse III' (1770), pp.41-42.

<sup>58</sup> Cecil, *Memoirs of John Bacon*, p.9.

<sup>59</sup> The 1774 *Marble bust of His Majesty* is discussed in chapter three of this thesis.

figure was evidently based on the idea of the Venus Anadyomene, the shell and loose hair suggesting the goddess's birth from the sea.

Unlike the statue of *Mars*, and perhaps in response to Reynolds' promotion of the ideal beauty of classical art, Bacon based the design of his figure on an antique model. The Royal Academy had a cast of an antique *Venus Anadyomene*, donated by the Duke of Gloucester, which was believed to have been the work of antique sculptor Cleomenes (fig.13).<sup>60</sup> According to 'general opinion' the Anadyomene Venus was considered to be 'the most beautiful representation now existing of the female body... which appears beautiful in every point of view', making it an appropriate subject matter for Bacon to try to recreate; the challenge of equalling the original providing the ambitious sculptor with a career-defining opportunity.<sup>61</sup>

For his second classical statue Bacon emulated the delicate incline of the antique Venus' body to the right and slight bend of her left leg. Bacon, however, created a greater sense of movement in his interpretation of the figure. By separating the *Venus*' legs and giving more flex to her left leg, Bacon subtly suggested that the figure was stepping forward rather than simply posing passively. The bend of *Venus*' body to the right is also exaggerated, giving her the type of graceful and delicate tilt a figure in motion should display. In the areas where Bacon was left to create, the sculptor again implied movement: the extension of *Venus*' left arm and the twist of her head to the right bringing a further sense of action and life to the figure.

The alterations the sculptor made were subtle but significant. Rather than creating a static passive figure, Bacon ensured his interpretation was responsive and animated. It was an approach which reflected Hunter's influence, and saw Bacon attempting to capture the 'fleeting forms which are the result of the quick

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<sup>60</sup> Anon, 'Description of the Casts and other Ornaments in the Apartments of the Royal Academy', in *The British Magazine and Monthly Review; or Universal Miscellany of Arts, Sciences, Literature, History, Biography, Entertainment, Poetry, Politics, Manners, Amusements and Intelligence Foreign and Domestick*, II, (April, 1783), p.267.

<sup>61</sup> Anon, 'Description of the Casts and other Ornaments', p.267.

and transient Actions of the Muscles'.<sup>62</sup> However, the sculptor achieved this without sacrificing the overall antique effect of the work, as one critic noted:

Mr Bacon's Model of a *Venus* is a charming Figure: the Body and Limbs are executed with great Symmetry and Proportions, and in the true Taste of the Antique.<sup>63</sup>

The formal qualities of the piece were also highlighted by another reviewer who claimed that the work united classical 'Grace, Proportions and Expression, very characteristically'.<sup>64</sup> The emphasis both critics attached to the formal qualities of the piece attests to the importance given to the organisation of sculptural parts in the period. For de Lairese the members of a figure 'must be *perfectly joined*, in a Manner best befitting their Natures and Qualities, the Head and Face duly proportionate'.<sup>65</sup> Whilst for Lord Kames (Henry Home),

viewing any body as a whole, the beauty of its figure arises from regularity and simplicity; viewing the parts in relation with each other, uniformity, proportion, and order, contribute to its beauty.<sup>66</sup>

In animating his interpretation of *Venus* in such a sympathetic manner, Bacon was again able to highlight, as he had done with *Mars*, his understanding of antique beauty; at the same time, his additions to and revisions of the figure made it clear that he was an individual and inventive artist in his own right.

Although Bacon's figure of *Venus* was commended for its proportional qualities and antique styling, it was also clearly a sensual piece of sculpture, the artist having sculpted his figure 'very characteristically'.<sup>67</sup> The erotic potential of the character of Venus was noted by Joseph Spence in 1765 when he imagined her shape to be 'the most exact imaginable, all soft, and full of tenderness' and her eyes were 'either wanton, or quick, or languishing, or

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<sup>62</sup> Hunter, 'The Text of William Hunter's Lectures', p.43.

<sup>63</sup> *Public Advertiser* (Saturday May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1775), p.2.

<sup>64</sup> *London Evening Post* (Tuesday April 25<sup>th</sup> – Thursday 27<sup>th</sup>, 1775), p.2.

<sup>65</sup> de Lairese, *The Art of Painting*, p.14.

<sup>66</sup> Henry Home (Lord Kames), *Elements of Criticism*, 2 vols. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Edinburgh 1765), I, p.188.

<sup>67</sup> *London Evening Post*, (Tuesday April 25<sup>th</sup> – Thursday 27<sup>th</sup>, 1775), p.2.

insolent'.<sup>68</sup> The beguiling qualities of Venus had been similarly explored by Spence in the account he offered of his experience before the *Venus de Medici*,

At your first approaching her, aversion appears in her look; move one step or two, and she has a compliance in it, and one step more to the right turns it into a little insulting smile, as having made sure of you.<sup>69</sup>

Spence's titillating experience before the *Venus de Medici* offers a model for how contemporaries may have also approached and read Bacon's *Venus*; a work which presents an equally eroticised vision of the goddess. Indeed, Bacon's statue appears to similarly proposition spectators. The figure, whilst demure, nonetheless seductively lifts her hair off her left breast and in so doing reveals the delicate incline of her neck. This sensual demeanour is reinforced by the figure's gaze to the right which, for spectators walking around the statue, fosters a profound sense of intimacy.

The sensuality and femininity of Bacon's *Venus* contrasted with the robust muscularity of his earlier figure of *Mars*. Indeed, Bacon's seductive *Venus* was clearly intended to be a pendant to the 1771 statue. Viewing the works as a pair the seductive power of *Venus* is thus reserved to woo her lover. Although *Mars* appears, through his stoic form and expression, to be able to withstand *Venus*' allure, he is shown to have already lowered his weapon, suggesting *Venus* will soon captivate and tame the god of war. It was a dialogue Bacon extended through the forum of the Royal Academy's annual exhibitions, asking spectators to recall his earlier work and consider the figures as part of a larger, more involving story.

### *Narcissus*

Bacon extended this sculptural narrative further a year later when he presented *Narcissus* for exhibition in 1776 at the Academy (fig.14).<sup>70</sup> Like Bacon's earlier

<sup>68</sup> Spence, *A Guide to Classical Learning*, p.104.

<sup>69</sup> Spence, *A Guide to Classical Learning*, p.106.

<sup>70</sup> A work which is similarly only known through a later engraving. See *Transactions of the Society for the Encouragement of Art, Manufacture and Commerce*, XIII (1796), London, Royal Society of Arts, AD.MA/104/10/324. Also see *Letter from John Bacon RA about the Frontispiece of Vol XIII of the Transactions* (February 26<sup>th</sup>, 1796), R.S.A., AD.MA/104/10/324.

figure of *Mars*, the piece does not appear to have been based on any specific antique prototype. However, it nonetheless displays and indeed promotes Bacon's understanding of a classical sculptural vocabulary. The statue depicts a youthful Narcissus spear in hand, bending down to observe his reflection. Bacon positioned his statue in a contrapposto stance, *Narcissus*' left arm folded across his upper torso whilst his right arm stretches backwards as balance. The sculpture appeared in the Royal Academy catalogue accompanied by a quote from Garth's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*:

Still o'er fountains wat'ry gleam be flood,  
Mindless of sleep and negligent of food,  
Still view'd his fate and languish'd as he viewed.<sup>71</sup>

The sculptor's figure closely follows Ovid's text with *Narcissus* enraptured by his own reflection. Bacon endowed his figure with a youthful, almost bacchanalian quality, his fleshy form reflecting his 'languishing' state. As in *Venus*, Bacon nonetheless implied an element of movement and a degree of animation in his depiction of the mythological character. Indeed, although the suggestion is that *Narcissus* has been gazing at his reflection for sometime, Bacon made the figure stand in a rather unsteady contrapposto pose. Supporting the weight of his body on one leg, with the aid of the spear, the figure appears to be caught at a point of tension, tentatively leaning further forward to get a better glimpse of his reflection. This sense of unbalance again highlighted Bacon's study of anatomy, his interest in the 'fleeting forms' of nature and his desire to give his classicised figures a greater sense of life.<sup>72</sup>

Although Bacon endowed *Narcissus* with a sense of movement, unlike *Mars*, or even Bacon's portrayal of Aeneas, whose muscular forms attested to their heroic and moral struggles, his body has been softened and feminised by his vanity. *Narcissus* does not offer an exemplar of virtue but rather stands as a warning against the dangers of self-indulgence and conceit; his body attesting to the corruptibility of masculinity. As such the figure brought a new, more subversive, dimension to the dialogue on love than the sculptor had established

<sup>71</sup> Royal Academy Catalogue (1776), entry no.8.

<sup>72</sup> Hunter, 'The Text of William Hunter's Lectures', p.43.

between *Mars* and *Venus*; diversifying the narrative by highlighting the dangers of the wrong type of love.

Together, Bacon's series of classical figures powerfully attested to his ability to conceive ambitious, large scale, sculptural works, with an intellectual scope conversant with the Grand Manner. More specifically, Bacon's trio of classical figures also testifies to the sculptor's ambition to secure professional status and to rival contemporaries. Indeed, whilst the series of figures highlighted his ability to work in a variety of classical tropes, showing the heroic male body, the ideal female body and the sensual male form, as a group they also emphasised Bacon's awareness of the type of art his closest competitors were producing in the period.

The mythological statues Bacon designed during his first six years at the Academy share a particular affinity with the sculptures Nollekens was commissioned to create for Lord Rockingham's Wentworth Woodhouse in the 1770s. Like Bacon, Nollekens' figures of *Venus* (1773), *Minerva* (1774) and *Juno* (1776) were designed to stand as both independent pieces and as part of a collective narrative: in this case the 'Judgement of Paris' (fig.15, 16 & 17).<sup>73</sup> Like Bacon, Nollekens exhibited his figures at the Academy's annual exhibition, presenting his *Venus* the year after Bacon's *Mars*, *Minerva* a year before Bacon's *Venus*, and *Juno* in the same year as Bacon's *Narcissus*. The Academy offered the two sculptors the perfect forum within which their respective abilities and talents could be compared and contrasted. Indeed, in presenting comparable works to the Academy the two sculptors were, in many ways, tracking each others' performances, no doubt in an attempt to secure the most lucrative commissions and the highest status.

Given Nollekens' experience abroad and his already significant professional status it was a battle perhaps more pertinent to Bacon. Although the Royal Academy's annual exhibitions were an important occasion for Nollekens, when exhibiting his classical figures in the early 1770s he had already secured the

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<sup>73</sup> Baker, *Figured in Marble*, p.16.

patronage of Rockingham and knew that his figures would eventually be exhibited in the sculpture gallery at Wentworth Woodhouse. In contrast, the Royal Academy's annual shows were the highlight of Bacon's exhibiting calendar. Without the assurance of a patron like Rockingham Bacon had to fully exploit the opportunities that the Royal Academy's annual exhibitions offered to showcase his abilities. As such the sculptor presented a more diverse range of classical figures for exhibition than Nollekens and, perhaps to ensure that his figures caught the full attention of critics, instilled within them a greater sense of movement and animation. It was a shrewd approach to self-promotion and one that proved fruitful for Bacon, one reviewer in 1775, after the exhibition of *Venus*, resolving that

The Art of Sculpture, in this Country, has been prodigiously improved, of late Years, and Messers *Bacon* and *Nollekens* have shewn very great merit in their Profession, both in Point of Taste and Execution.<sup>74</sup>

### *Bacon and the Sublime*

With his status as a professional sculptor rapidly increasing, in 1777 Bacon exhibited his *Head of Jupiter Tonans*, a work which is now unfortunately lost. Through his choice of the 'thundering' *Jupiter*, Bacon was again able to highlight the diversity of his sculptural range, proving his worth as an Academician by tackling one of the most prestigious and difficult genres in art, the sublime.<sup>75</sup> In his second discourse to students at the Academy Reynolds had suggested that when an artist had been 'enabled to express himself with some degree of correctness' and assimilated the experiences of all 'that has been known and done before his own time' he was ready to extend his capacity to the sublime.<sup>76</sup> Bacon evidently felt himself ready in 1777 for this progression and when exhibited at the Academy reviewers agreed, claiming that his *Head of Jupiter Tonans* showed Bacon's 'ideas of the sublime', the head being 'to adopt a vulgarism, of a *thundering* size'.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>74</sup> *Public Advertiser* (Saturday May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1775), p.2.

<sup>75</sup> Jupiter 'Tonans' referred to god's ability to control thunder.

<sup>76</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse II' (1769), p.26.

<sup>77</sup> Anon, *Morning Chronicle*, (Monday April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1777), p.2.

There was, however, more to Bacon's colossal creation than the desire to display his progression into a new genre of art. Whilst the work unequivocally proclaimed Bacon's rarefied abilities, the sculptor also used the *Head* to make a rather pertinent attack on the culture of connoisseurship. According to the sculptor's biographer the work was designed to look like an actual antique and therefore deceive viewers as to its origins. The stunt apparently worked, with the head being 'inspected by several eminent connoisseurs and mistaken for a fine antique' with enquiries being made as from which 'temple abroad it had been brought'.<sup>78</sup> It was even suggested that Bacon purposefully aged the head, staining and chipping the surface in order to make it more fully evoke an antique relic.<sup>79</sup> Bacon's attempt to dupe connoisseurs was designed to prove how misguided and blinded they could be in their penchant for the antique. It was an old argument, which highlighted the hypocrisy of a system which claimed that 'the only way for us to become great, and indeed – if this is possible – inimitable, is by imitating the ancients'.<sup>80</sup> As such, if connoisseurs and critics could not tell the difference between an antique and a modern copy then the notion that antique sources were infallible guides was proven to be deeply flawed.

An astute viewer of Bacon's 1777 submission to the Academy, however, might also have recognised the significance of his choice in subject matter. Indeed, in selecting *Jupiter Tonans* Bacon interestingly linked his design with one of the most celebrated sculptors of the Grecian past, Phidias, who had also famously depicted the colossal god. Quoting Proclus, Reynolds, in his third discourse, had stated that when Phidias had 'formed his Jupiter, [he] did not copy any object ever presented to his sight; but contemplated only that image which he had conceived in his mind from Homer's description'.<sup>81</sup> For Reynolds, this account of Phidias offered a pattern for how an artist, using nature as their source, could achieve the intellectual dignity of the 'beau ideal'.<sup>82</sup> By

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<sup>78</sup> Cecil, *Memoirs of John Bacon*, p.17.

<sup>79</sup> Cunningham, *The Lives*, III, pp.212-213.

<sup>80</sup> Johann Joachim Wincklemann, *Thoughts on the Imitation of the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks* (1755) in *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: Wincklemann, Lessing, Hamann, Herder, Schiller*, Goethe ed. by H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge, 1985), p.35.

<sup>81</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse III' (1770), p.42.

<sup>82</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse III' (1770), p.43.



‘selecting’, ‘digesting’ and ‘methodizing’ his observations of nature an artist could ‘make an abstract idea of their forms more perfect than any one original’.<sup>83</sup> However, whilst Reynolds argued that ‘reiterated experience, and close comparison of the objects in nature’ enabled an artist to conceive ideal beauty in the mind, as Phidias had done, he nonetheless directed modern sculptors to ‘the careful study of the works of the ancient sculptors; who being indefatigable in the school of nature, have left models of that perfect form behind them’.<sup>84</sup> For Bacon, however, given his domestic training and his suspicion that many antique works were in fact fakes, it was the Grecian example of studying from nature in order to achieve the ideal which must have appealed. It was an approach Bacon had employed in his figures of *Mars*, *Venus* and *Narcissus*, and in selecting *Jupiter Tonans* as his subject matter for his 1777 exhibition piece Bacon was perhaps making explicit his affinity for this methodological approach: a theory of art which reiterated the type of training William Hunter had advocated in his anatomy lectures.

To what extent contemporaries recognised the *Head of Jupiter Tonans* as a manifesto of Bacon’s aesthetic preferences is difficult to entirely substantiate, as no reference to the visual trick was made when the work was exhibited at the Royal Academy. However, Bacon’s controversial experiment with the *Head of Jupiter Tonans*, attests to the sculptor’s increasing status and confidence as an Academician in the 1770s. Indeed, in attempting to undermine the validity of antique works Bacon looked to raise both his own status and that of modern sculptors generally.

### *Thames*

In 1778 Bacon presented another colossal and sublime work of sculpture, his *Model Statue of Thames*, for exhibition at the Royal Academy. There has been some confusion as to which work was actually presented to the Academy. Records from the Conway Library suggest that Bacon submitted a bronzed terracotta model of the figure of Ocean from his monument to Lord Chatham at

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<sup>83</sup> Reynolds, ‘Discourse III’ (1770), p.44.

<sup>84</sup> Reynolds, ‘Discourse III’ (1770), p.45.

Westminster (fig.18). However, Bacon was not commissioned for the commemorative sepulchre until March 1779 and though the sculptor would have probably designed a model of the monument before this date, it seems more likely that the figure Bacon exhibited in 1778 was the figure of *Thames* reproduced as an engraving in Coade's 1779 catalogue: which was to be later included in Bacon's 1789 bronze statue to George III at Somerset House (fig.19 & 20). The differences between the two figures are, however, slight; *Thames* and Ocean sharing an obvious visual heritage, with Ocean being a version of *Thames* in reverse.<sup>85</sup>

Although Bacon only presented a model of *Thames* the piece nonetheless aroused considerable attention from contemporaries and was to mark the last profoundly classical statue Bacon presented for exhibition at the Royal Academy.<sup>86</sup> Bacon depicted *Thames* in an agitated state, aggressively pointing with his left hand to the water he is shown pouring from an urn (fig.20). His actions are directed towards spectators, forcefully and defiantly highlighting his divine generosity. The abundance precipitated by *Thames*' benevolence is shown through the wreath of flowers and fruits which Bacon placed in a laurel wreath on his head. In the engraving of the figure made for the frontispiece of Coade's 1779 catalogue (fig.19), the water flowing from *Thames*' urn falls onto the coat of arms of the City of London. The arms, placed on a shield and surmounted by a cap of liberty, emblematically highlighted the identity of the river god, as well as confirming that the Thames was the source of London's commercial prosperity and security. The figure's hyper masculine body asserted a Herculean strength which was in keeping with the commercial narrative of the piece: the sublimity of Bacon's *Thames* metaphorically referring to Britain's own commercial authority and strength. Indeed, the decision to exhibit an allegory of *Thames* in 1778 was a pertinent choice. The figure powerfully reasserted the source of Britain's domestic prosperity at a time when her colonies in America were being slowly eroded. In this manner, Bacon's statue

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<sup>85</sup> As also noted by Margaret Whinney in *Sculpture in Britain*, p.307.

<sup>86</sup> His subsequent contributions to the Academy tended to be busts and examples of monuments he had produced for other clients.

must have been a profoundly reassuring figure, robustly presenting a vision of commercial stability at a time when in reality it was increasingly under threat.<sup>87</sup>

In design Bacon's dramatic figure strongly echoes the reclining antique sculptures of the *Nile* and the *Tiber* (fig.21 & 22), however, the body of Bacon's river god also seems to have offered a sophisticated reinterpretation of one of the most famous relics from the antique past, the *Belvedere Torso* (fig.23). Bacon's figure shares the antique fragment's contracted form and expressive muscular body. By incorporating the abstracted fragment of the *Belvedere Torso* into his work Bacon carefully delineated and promoted the figure as a work of the sublime.<sup>88</sup> This sense of poetic grandeur was noted in an anecdote recounted by Bacon's biographer in 1801,

When Mr B exhibited his statue of Thames... it was noticed by a certain great Personage, who after having expressed her admiration at it as a work of Art enquired, "Why he could not avoid making it so frightful a figure?" He replied, "Art could not always affect that which was still within the reach of nature – the union of beauty and Majesty".<sup>89</sup>

The sculptor, however, married his antique references with his passion for the forms of nature. Reviewing the figure in the *The General Advertiser and Monthly Intelligencer* one commentator eloquently noted the sculptor's study of nature, declaring that

There is a grandeur in this subject that must have rendered even the design the master of our admiration, if the execution had fallen short of beauty. But how much more abundantly must we give it our praise when we view [that] the execution keeps pace with the design. It is an

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<sup>87</sup> Given the figure's close connections with Ocean from the Chatham monument and later use in George III's bronze statue at Somerset House this commercial reading was perhaps particularly pertinent. Indeed, the use of the figure in two of the period's most significant public monuments also offered invaluable proof of Bacon's rise to professional status, one commentator claiming that, 'we are happy to think, that the external appearance of a school [Somerset House], dedicated to the cultivation of the liberal arts, will be ornamented with so noble a proof of British proficiency'. *The General Advertiser and Monthly Intelligencer* (Tuesday May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1778), p.4.

<sup>88</sup> Anton Raphael Mengs had described the fragment as a statue 'of the most sublime degree' in which 'the Ideal is united with Beauty and Truth', See Anton Raphael Mengs, *The Works of Anthony Raphael Mengs, first painter to his Catholic Majesty Charles III, translated from the Italian*, 2 vols. (London, 1796), I, p.77 & p.219.

<sup>89</sup> Cecil, *Memoirs of John Bacon*, p.16.

object of the greatest beauty, and possesses every requisite of excellence in so high a degree that it is of itself sufficient to place the name of Mr. Bacon among the most eminent of our modelers. The anatomy is perfect. After the most minute inspection we cannot trace a single fault in the proportion. The muscles are copied from life with beautiful exactness, and the character of Thames is preserved most happily through the whole.<sup>90</sup>

As the reviewer suggested Bacon had rendered the surface of *Thames* in detail, including swollen veins and finely delineated musculature. However, throughout the artist had *selected, digested* and *methodized* the best from his observations of nature and the antique.<sup>91</sup> As such, *Thames* boldly asserted Bacon's Academic credentials and the sculptor must have been particularly pleased when his figure of *Thames* was praised as not only 'one of the grandest efforts that ever was exhibited in this species of performance' but also when it was claimed that he 'bids fair to be a modern Phidias in his profession'.<sup>92</sup>

### *Bacon and manufacture*

Despite the significant achievements Bacon made at the Academy, his status as one of the country's foremost Academicians was made problematic by his continued relationship with the world of manufacture. Certainly, for most sculptors seeking professional status in the 1770s work in industry was a means to a higher end. John Flaxman, for example, used the money he had earned as a modeller for Wedgwood to help further his artistic career. Together with income he accrued from designing funerary monuments, the young sculptor used the money he had earned in manufacture to fund a trip to Rome in 1787. Thomas Banks similarly worked in the applied arts, carving chimneypieces in Piccadilly before leaving England for Rome in 1772. For both artists, however, such work was a necessary evil. Academic sculpture was still in its infancy in Britain in the 1770s and patronage for such art was limited. Indeed, whilst artists could often find critical acclaim for their productions in the Grand Manner, most sculptors found it difficult if not impossible to find financial security through the production of such works. For those sculptors who refused

<sup>90</sup> *The General Advertiser and Monthly Intelligencer* (Tuesday May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1778), p.4.

<sup>91</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse III' (1770), p.44.

<sup>92</sup> *The Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* (Saturday April 25<sup>th</sup>, 1778), p.2.

to submit to the drudgery of designing for manufacture the consequence, as Martin Myrone has highlighted in the case of Thomas Procter, could be financial ruin.<sup>93</sup>

Although the response of many aspiring sculptors was to judiciously conceal their continued associations with manufacture, Bacon appears to have positively embraced this aspect of this career. In 1771 he succeeded Daniel Pincot as head designer at Coade Stone, a position he continued to fill until his death in 1799. Coade's output offered clients a mixture of works after the antique, as well as more modern designs in the neo-classical style. The variety of products on display offered a staggering array of choice, including 'statues, vases, bustos, pedestals, stoves, medallions, panels in bass-relief, models from the Antique, chimney-pieces, monuments, fonts, coats of arms &ct'.<sup>94</sup> Within this context Bacon's 'academic' figures were also eminently suitable for reproduction in manufacture, eloquently fulfilling the Society of Arts' desire to see high art improving the quality of goods produced for industry. Although Coade reproduced many of Bacon's designs, interestingly his figures of *Mars*, *Venus*, *Narcissus* and *Jupiter Tonans* were never translated into designs for manufacture.<sup>95</sup> *Thames*, however, was to become one of Coade's most expensive pieces for sale. Sold under the title *River God* the statue cost 100 guineas: a price which not only reflected the size of the work, at nine feet long, but a fee which also took into account the use of the personification in significant public monuments, such as that erected to George III at Somerset House.<sup>96</sup> Yet whilst Bacon maintained strong links with manufacture, it is clear that after enrolling at the Academy he no longer considered himself to be a 'Stone Carver and Modeller'. Rather, as an advertisement for Coade's artificial stone in 1771 clarifies, Bacon was now a professional sculptor:

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<sup>93</sup> Myrone, *Body Building: Reforming Masculinities*, pp.278-283.

<sup>94</sup> Coade Stone, *Coade's Gallery or Exhibition in Artificial Stone, Westminster Bridge – Bridge Street* (Lambeth, 1799), p.i.

<sup>95</sup> Possibly because Bacon had already sold a version of *Mars* to the Earl of Yarborough in 1772 or because he intended to give *Mars*, *Venus* and *Narcissus* to the Society of Arts (discussed in the next section of this chapter). *Jupiter Tonans* was perhaps excluded because of the sculptor's controversial ambitions for the piece.

<sup>96</sup> A Coade Stone *River God* can be found at Ham House.

The Manufactory at Kings Arms Stairs, Narrow Wall Lambeth, lately conducted by Mr Daniel Pincot, is now under the Superintendence of MR JOHN BACON, sculptor, whose Merit as an Artist being too well known to need any ENCOMIUMS.<sup>97</sup>

Despite the Academy's proclamations against the low artistic value of manufactured goods, Bacon displayed numerous examples of the type of prosaic objects he was involved in creating for industry at the Academy's annual show. Bacon presented such works for exhibition in tandem with his more rigorously academic creations. For example, in 1773, in addition to submitting a *Bust in Marble*, the subject of which is now unknown, Bacon also included a *Design for own door-plate*, a small bronze work that depicted a classical figure, reclining over an oval frame, upon which Bacon had emblazoned his name (fig.24). The toga clad figure of *Sculpture* supports a small female bust under one arm whilst holding a hammer with the other. In scale the ornamental work mirrored the type of modelling Bacon would have been involved in producing for Wedgwood and Crown Derby and on one level emphasised the diversity of the sculptor's practice. Indeed, as a promotional work the *door-plate* acted as a sophisticated form of business card. The work powerfully reminded reviewers of Bacon's name and by virtue of its location, suggested to prospective patrons that he was unequivocally endorsed by the Royal Academy. However, in presenting his *door-plate* for exhibition at the Academy alongside more academically rigorous works, Bacon appears to have been doing more than simply promoting his name and highlighting his versatility. Indeed, the sculptor appears to have been implying parity between the designs he produced for manufacture and those he created to accord with elite tastes.

This sense of equality, between high art and the applied arts, was repeated by Bacon at the Academy's 1775 exhibition where, in addition to presenting his praised *Venus*, the sculptor also exhibited a statue of *Minerva* cast in artificial stone. Unlike Bacon's other mythological statues from the period the work appears to have been designed specifically for Coade, appearing in the manufacturer's catalogue in both 1779 and 1799 accompanied by lines from

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<sup>97</sup> *Daily Advertiser* (September 23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>, 1771), p.2.

Virgil (fig.25).<sup>98</sup> The work, known today through the image in Coade's Catalogue, shows Minerva, with her traditional attributes: a helmet with a plume, a spear, a shield and serpents round her bosom. In design Bacon's figure closely corresponded with Nollekens' statue of *Minerva*, which had been exhibited a year earlier at the Academy (see fig.16). Both statues share a delicate contrapposto stance and a similar downward gaze. However, Bacon's figure appears to be more alert, holding her spear in her right hand and the snake in her left. Bacon's *Minerva* received some critical attention when exhibited, one reviewer claiming that he thought her 'too petite for the Goddess of war'.<sup>99</sup> Standing at 152cm high Bacon's *Minerva* was in fact 8cm taller than Nollekens' and the reviewer's comments were perhaps directed towards Bacon's delineation of the goddess' body, which may have appeared too delicate.<sup>100</sup> Despite the piece's apparent deficiencies, the work nonetheless unambiguously highlighted Bacon's work for Coade and perhaps more shrewdly advertised the type of products on sale at the manufactory. As such, it capitalised on the desires of visitors to the Academy who wanted the signifiers of elite taste without the cost such works normally incurred. Indeed, given that Nollekens had presented his *Minerva* just a year before there is a sense in which Bacon, in exhibiting his figure at the Academy, was promoting just that, a cheaper knockoff version.

In the same year as Bacon presented his figures of *Venus* and *Minerva* the sculptor also presented a marble *Chimney-piece* for exhibition. The whereabouts of the work is now unfortunately unknown, but given descriptions of the piece it seems likely that it resembled a work later reproduced for sale in Coade's 1779 catalogue (fig.26). In contrast to the meagre criticism *Minerva* generated, Bacon's *Chimney-piece* received significant critical attention when exhibited;

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<sup>98</sup> Coade Stone, *Coade's Gallery*, p.25.

High in the midst, the blue-eye virgin flies,  
 from rank to rank she darts, her radiant eyes,  
 The dreadful Aegis, Jove's immortal shield,  
 Blaz'd on her arm, and lighten'd all the field:  
 Round the vast orb a hundred serpents roll'd  
 form'd the bright fringe, and seemed to burn in gold;  
 With this, each Grecian manly breast she warms  
 Swells their bold hearts, and strings their nervous arms.

<sup>99</sup> *London Evening Post* (Tuesday April 25<sup>th</sup> – Thursday 27<sup>th</sup>, 1775), p.2.

<sup>100</sup> Coade Stone, *Coade's Gallery*, p.25.

one reviewer going as far as to state that the piece was evidence of how well British art had developed under the auspices of the Royal Academy, claiming,

There never was, since the institution of this Academy, a better performance of a whole length in marble than the chimney-piece by this Gentleman. The idea is simple, the attitudes elegant, the characters modern, becoming, and beautiful, and the drapery easy and natural... It is impossible for any but an artist to conceive the very great difficulty that attends the execution of a piece of this kind; and therefore the connoisseurs admire it, and the vulgar judge sees nothing but nature.<sup>101</sup>

In catering to both the ‘connoisseur’ and the ‘vulgar’, Bacon’s chimneypiece broke down the exclusive divides extolled in Academic theory between high and applied arts and, perhaps more fundamentally, between the elite and the public.

Whilst this approach, on the surface, appeared to contradict some of the Academy’s foundational proclamations, it caused little conflict or confusion for reviewers in the period. Indeed, Bacon’s chimneypiece was readily understood and appreciated by contemporaries. One critic, who analysed the work in detail, stated that

The two Marble figures, which support the Chimney Piece, are excellent in their kinds, both as to the Characters of the Heads, and the Disposition of the Limbs and Drapery: The Drapery which hangs in festoons over the fire-place is likewise well *executed*; but there is perhaps some Degree of *Impropriety* in hanging any Drapery there at all.<sup>102</sup>

The depth of praise and analysis attributed to Bacon’s *Chimney-piece* suggests that the critic understood the work to be of a status and importance comparable to more academic pieces such as *Venus*. The work was analysed by contemporaries with a sense of confident familiarity, the ‘impropriety’ of the drapery suggesting there were certain expectations which needed to be

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<sup>101</sup> *Middlesex Journal or Chronicle of Liberty* (Tuesday April 25<sup>th</sup> – Thursday 27<sup>th</sup>, 1775), p.5. Also in *Morning Post* (Thursday April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1775), p.1.

<sup>102</sup> *Morning Chronicle* (Wednesday April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1775), p.2. *Public Advertiser* (Saturday May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1775), p.2.



observed: perhaps that drapery was only really appropriate for figures and not as decoration. Indeed, writing in 1759, William Chambers in his *Treatise on Civil Architecture* outlined a specific set of 'rules' for sculptors designing chimney-pieces to follow, claiming that

The Workmanship of all Chimney-Pieces must be perfectly well finished; like all other objects liable to a close inspection... All nudities, and indecent representations, must be avoided in Chimney-Pieces... to which Children, Ladies, and other modest and grave persons, have constant recourse; together with all representations capable of exciting Horror [sic], Grief, Disgust &c.<sup>103</sup>

Chambers also recognised the significance of the 'art' of designing chimneypieces, professing that,

England is at present possess'd of many able sculptors, whose chief employment being to execute magnificent Chimney-Pieces, now happily much in vogue, it may be said that, in this particular, we surpass all other nations; not only in point of expense, but likewise in taste of Design and goodness of Workmanship.<sup>104</sup>

Whilst the British had excelled in the design of chimneypieces and Bacon had found an accepting audience for his piece in 1774, it was a form of sculptural design which ultimately stood profoundly at odds with the aspirations of the Academy. The Academy's new agenda for the arts looked specifically to distance sculpture from the taint of manufacture and mere ornamentation, emphasising instead its intellectual qualities, not its applicability to the decorative arts. However, the submission of works such as *Door-plate*, *Minerva* and *Chimney piece* suggest that the Academy, at least initially, was willing to take a more pragmatic approach to the realities of sculptural practice in the period, compromising somewhat on its ideals.

This tolerance was, however, short lived, and when Bacon attempted to exhibit a second chimneypiece in 1786 his entry faced significant opposition. The difficulties Bacon faced with his second chimneypiece centred upon the

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<sup>103</sup> Chambers, *Treatise on Civil Architecture*, p.79.

<sup>104</sup> Chambers, *Treatise on Civil Architecture*, pp.77-78.

title he had given the work. Bacon had originally submitted the piece under the simple title of *Chimney-piece*. However, this literalism was condemned by the Academy who felt it insufficiently elevated the work. In response Bacon wrote to the Academy to clarify the narrative of his piece, claiming that ‘the subject of it is, two Nymphs holding a festoon of flowers over a sleeping Cupid (in marble)’ and that he was ‘very sorry that his not mentioning the subject and only saying it was a chimney piece, may have caused any doubts respecting its admission’.<sup>105</sup> Bacon further qualified his position stating that he hoped the ‘situation puts him above the suspicion of urging any point which he conceives to be inconsistent with Spirit or the interests of the Academy’.<sup>106</sup> The council of the Academy responded to Bacon with a resolution that ‘the council have no Objection to receiving Mr Bacon’s Work provided the word *Chimney-piece*, be lifted out, and that it be introduced under another Title’.<sup>107</sup> Finally exhibited under the title *Marble; Two Nymphs holding Festoons*, the concern generated by Bacon’s later chimneypiece highlights the Academy’s gradual withdrawal and disassociation from the influence of manufacture. Indeed, Bacon’s concern that his piece may have somehow been construed as intentionally subversive or contrary to the spirit of the Academy, further clarifies the shift the institution had made between the 1770s and 1780s.

### *Bacon and the Society of Arts*

Through the mixture of academically approved figures and industrial designs he presented to the Royal Academy, Bacon was able to mount a sophisticated campaign of self-promotion; presenting pieces for exhibition which both satisfied elite expectations and broader commercial tastes. Whilst this tactic secured Bacon’s status as one of Britain’s leading sculptors, it also saw him increasingly distanced from Academic theory as it was refined and developed during the 1770s. Indeed, Bacon’s approach to his medium can be said to have

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<sup>105</sup> ‘Letter from John Bacon to the Royal Academy’, (22<sup>nd</sup> April, 1786), *Minutes of the Council of the Royal Academy (1785-1798)*, II, no pagination. (RA archives).

<sup>106</sup> ‘Letter from John Bacon to the Royal Academy’, (22<sup>nd</sup> April, 1786). *Minutes of the Council*, II, no pagination.

<sup>107</sup> ‘Minutes of the Council of the Royal Academy’, (23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1786). *Minutes of the Council*, II, no pagination.

had more in common with the aspirations and rhetoric of organisations such as the Society of Arts than it did with those of the Royal Academy.

Bacon had stressed his affinity with the Society of Arts back in the 1760s when, even after his contemporaries Nollekens, Flaxman and Banks favoured the newly formed exhibiting societies, he had remained committed to the institution. It was a loyalty Bacon was to maintain as his career progressed. The artist continued to covet success at the Society even after enrolling at the Royal Academy in 1769, religiously presenting works for premiums until his election as a full Academician in 1778. Given his ambivalent stance towards some of the teachings of the Royal Academy Bacon had evidently found it advantageous to win approval and definition as a sculptor from outside the parameters of the institution. Interestingly, however, Bacon did not present examples of his industrial designs at the Society. Rather, he repeatedly used the occasion to highlight the experience he had acquired at the Academy. In 1773, two years after he had won acclaim for his statue of *Mars* at the Academy, Bacon presented the piece to the Society of Arts and was granted a premium of twenty guineas. In 1775 he presented his figure of *Venus* to both the Academy and the Society, a dual approach to exhibiting his art he was to repeat in 1776 with *Narcissus*, on both occasions winning plaudits from critics at the Academy and fifty guineas from the Society. Whilst in 1777 he pre-empted his contribution to the Academy's annual exhibition, by presenting his *Personification of Thames* or *River God* a year earlier at the Society, again winning fifty guineas for his efforts.

In taking a mutable approach to the display and promotion of his art Bacon was able to balance his status as a fine artist with that of someone who was still committed to the values of manufacture. Indeed, as the exhibition of his sculpture testifies, Bacon evidently saw little conflict between the industrial values of the Society of Arts and the more refined tastes of the Academy, proving he could create sculptures which satisfied the demands of both organisations. From a promotional perspective it was a shrewd decision, the sculptor seeing his art celebrated in two of the most important artistic institutions in the period. However, Bacon's continued relationship with the

Society of Arts was motivated by more than an avaricious desire for fame and fortune. The Society of Arts had sponsored Bacon's talent from the very start of his career, supported him for a period of almost 20 years, from 1759 to 1778, and as such Bacon appears to have genuinely desired to remain loyal and supportive of the organisation.

In presenting some of the same pieces for exhibition at the Academy as at the Society of Arts Bacon was able to highlight the progression he had made in his career, linking his achievements at the Academy with the initial encouragement he had received from the Society of Arts during the 1760s. It was a gesture which, although worthwhile financially, clarified his loyalty and, perhaps more profoundly, his appreciation of the older institution. Indeed, when it was no longer viable for Bacon to present works for premiums, his age making such presentations increasingly difficult to justify, the sculptor continued to recognise the support he had received from the Society by donating works to the organisation. In 1778, perhaps to celebrate his election as a full Academician, the sculptor presented full length statues of *Mars* and *Venus* to the Society as gifts, to acknowledge

the many obligations I am under to you whose approbation has stimulated, and whose encouragement has enabled me, to pursue those studies which a disadvantageous situation had otherwise made difficult, if not impossible. Believe me Gentleman I never think of the Society without gratitude and without the highest idea of the principles on which it was formed; and which justly places it among the institutions that do honour to human nature... and promote the general good of mankind.<sup>108</sup>

It was a gesture Bacon was to repeat almost twenty years later, presenting a full sized figure of *Narcissus* to the institution in 1796. In return the Society of Arts praised the statues claiming that 'works so correctly designed and so accurately executed could not fail of giving high pleasures to the Society' and 'served to prove how well their premiums have been bestowed on one who unites the most

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<sup>108</sup> *Transactions of the Society for the Encouragement of Art, Manufacture and Commerce*, R.S.A., MS. Transactions 1777-1778, p.39.

sensible Gratitude with the most Consummate abilities'.<sup>109</sup> Bacon's professional achievements were similarly noted by Samuel More in 1797 who, in addressing the Society at their annual meeting, declared that,

The three Statues of Mars, Venus and Narcissus which form Part of the Ornaments of this Room stand conspicuous Proofs of the Advantages resulting from the... Rewards so deservedly in his Younger Days adjudged to Mr. John Bacon whose Works they are and who so richly merited the repeated Honours of the Society bestowed upon him, And which he still mentions as the Principal Inducement to apply himself... to the study of his Profession.<sup>110</sup>

The figures of *Mars* and *Venus* were placed in the Society's Great Room after James Barry had completed his monumental series *The Progress of Human Culture* in 1783, while *Narcissus* was added in 1796.<sup>111</sup> Bacon was consulted at what height the works should be displayed, but agreed to sacrifice 'the full effect of the Statues' if it was felt they would interfere with Barry's series, as 'nothing is so important with me as that Society to whom I owe so much'.<sup>112</sup> The gratitude Bacon possessed for the Society of Arts and in the return the pride the Society felt towards one of its most successful protégés, was echoed by Bacon's kinship with the philosophy of the organisation. Indeed, whilst the sculptor's contributions to the Society of Arts reflected his newly acquired identity as an Academic artist and clearly located his talent in patriotic terms, it also boldly asserted his position as an artist-manufacturer.

Bacon's affinity for the aspirations of the Society of Arts also enabled the artist to distance himself somewhat from the demands of aristocratic patronage. Whereas Nollekens' series of mythological figures from the 1770s were determined by his patron Lord Rockingham, Bacon's figures of *Mars*, *Venus*, *Narcissus*, *Jupiter* and *Thames* were a product entirely of the artist's own imagination: a factor only further emphasised when Bacon presented some of the pieces as a gift to the Society of Arts. It was a stance which in many ways

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<sup>109</sup> *Draft of letter to John Bacon RA from Society for the Encouragement of Arts* (1778), R.S.A., PR.AR/103/10/444.

<sup>110</sup> Recounted in D.G.C. Allen 'Artists and the Society in the Eighteenth Century', p.144.

<sup>111</sup> It is not known where the statues were placed before the completion of Barry's series.

<sup>112</sup> *Letter from John Bacon RA: Regarding the Statues of Mars and Venus for the Great Room* (1784), R.S.A., AD/MA/305/10/43.

enabled Bacon to position *himself* as an arbiter of taste, an approach which saw the sculptor firmly associated with the ethics of the producer classes, rather than as a servant to the elite.<sup>113</sup> However, although Bacon's classical statues were not directly influenced by the tastes of a single patron, a factor which implied industriousness and innovation on the sculptor's part, in design his pieces nonetheless responded to elite expectations. Moreover, whilst Bacon coveted recognition at the Society of Arts and shared an affinity with some of their aspirations, the sculptor never alienated himself from the Royal Academy. Indeed, despite the contradictions Bacon, during his initial years at the Academy, appears to have negotiated a careful path between the ambitions of the two institutions, eloquently satisfying, even championing their respective expectations.

### *Negotiating an artistic identity*

Bacon had begun his career as a professional sculptor at a time when the definitions and parameters of British art were being significantly redefined, pushed primarily by the newly formed Royal Academy. However, Bacon's experience at the Academy during the institution's first decade, testifies to an organisation which was in many ways still coming to terms with its own theory and doctrine. The mix of works Bacon presented for exhibition highlights this sense of confusion. Indeed, although the Academy was explicit in stating its objections to the applied arts, Bacon continued to work for manufacture, fostering close relationships with the Society of Arts and, perhaps more pointedly, exhibiting examples of his industrial crafts for exhibition at the Academy's annual shows. Interestingly, however, such factors did not impinge upon the sculptor's reputation at the Royal Academy during the 1770s. Rather, for many reviewers Bacon came to embody the success and impact the new institution had made on British art.

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<sup>113</sup> For a more complete discussion on the ethics of the producer classes see, Craske, 'Plan and Control', p.189.

## **CHAPTER II**

**SYMPATHISING WITH SICKNESS: BACON'S MONUMENT TO  
THOMAS GUY (1779).**

On 6 November 1776 Bacon was commissioned by the governors of Guy's Hospital to design a monument to the institute's philanthropic founder, Thomas Guy (fig.27). The monument was Bacon's most prestigious commission to date, securing him the substantial sum of £1160.10s.<sup>1</sup> Created to celebrate Guy's benevolence, the work was intended to emphasise the hospital founder's compassion for the 'incurable', the 'lunatics' and those to whom the 'charities of others had not yet reached'.<sup>2</sup> In response Bacon designed a monument which powerfully asserted the active nature of Guy's charity, showing the philanthropist sensitively checking the pulse of an emaciated Lazar. It was an evocative and highly sentimental account of Guy's benevolence. His tender expression of sympathy towards the disease ridden victim eloquently conveyed to spectators his extraordinary compassion for the most neglected in society. However, whilst the monument poignantly promoted Guy's benevolent impulses, its animation and contemporaneity was seen to have transgressed and subverted the bounds of polite aesthetic decorum.

David Solkin has recently considered the monument in relationship to Guy's contested public status.<sup>3</sup> Solkin's observations are pertinent to this discussion and have helped inform my readings of the monument. However, this chapter aims to take Solkin's initial observations further, considering the work in relationship not only to Guy's philanthropic identity, but also to Bacon's developing sculptural aesthetic. Through a detailed reading of the monument I will determine the aesthetic boundaries Bacon crossed in his attempt to vividly portray Guy's philanthropy. By focusing particularly upon the figure of the Lazar from the monument, and upon the bust Bacon made from this figure for his Royal Academy diploma piece, this chapter will assess the ways in which the sculptor justified such indiscretions. This chapter will also consider the impact Bacon's animated diploma piece had when it was first exhibited at the

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<sup>1</sup> The cost was not to exceed £1000 but in the end actually came to £1160,10s. Samuel Wilkins & G. T Bettany, *A Biographical History of Guy's Hospital* (London, 1892), p.95.

<sup>2</sup> From the inscription on Bacon's monument to Guy.

<sup>3</sup> David H. Solkin, 'Samaritan or Scrooge? The Contested Image of Thomas Guy in the Eighteenth Century', *Art Bulletin*, 78, no.3 (Sept, 1996), pp.467-485.



Royal Academy, and measure the extent to which the sculptor presented the piece as an example of his mature style.

### *Thomas Guy*

Bacon's monument to Thomas Guy was the second sculpture to be erected in memory of the hospital founder. The first, commissioned in March 1732 and completed in 1734, was designed by Peter Scheemakers and consisted of a larger than life bronze statue of Guy dressed in Livery robes (fig.28). Located on a square pedestal in front of the hospital, the work unequivocally linked the philanthropist with the institution he had founded, his open handed gesture and generous expression appearing to invite spectators into the hospital's grounds. Guy had left the substantial amount of £219,499 for the development of the hospital, the largest amount to be posthumously donated in the period.<sup>4</sup> In his statue, Scheemakers highlighted this extraordinary gift through the scroll of papers Guy holds in his right hand; papers which were symbolic of the hospital founder's will. The sculptor made further references to Guy's benevolence on the base of the statue, placing the hospital's coat of arms on the front of the plinth and the Latin quote 'Dare Quam Accipere' ('it is more blessed to give than receive') on the reverse. Scheemakers also included two detailed bronze reliefs of *Christ healing the sick man at the pool of Bethesda* on the east of the plinth and the *Good Samaritan* on the west (fig.29 & 30). They were narratives which helped to frame Guy's philanthropy within an appropriately pious context, linking the hospital founder's generosity with the example of Christ and the impartiality of the Good Samaritan. Such references, as Solkin has argued, also helped to reconcile some of the posthumous criticism Guy had received for his deathbed bequest.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, although the hospital founder had been an active philanthropist throughout his lifetime, his substantial donation was viewed by many in the period with suspicion.

Perhaps the most scurrilous attack on Guy's character was made by John Dunton in 1728, three years after Guy's death. In his essay *Death-bed Charity*

<sup>4</sup> Solkin, 'Samaritan or Scrooge?', p.467.

<sup>5</sup> Solkin, 'Samaritan or Scrooge?', p.472.

*Exemplify'd*, Dunton characterised Guy as a great miser whose bequest was in reality 'no charity' at all, and that his benevolence had been motivated by 'a sort of Compounding with God Almighty for giving Nothing to the Poor in... [his] Life Time'.<sup>6</sup> Although there was little basis to Dunton's claims, the notion of Guy the miser developed force and in 1732 the governors of the hospital were pressed to protect Guy's reputation by republishing a copy of his will.<sup>7</sup> It was hoped that the will would offer proof that Guy's intentions had been honest, countering claims that he had done 'no good in his life-time, but heaping up a great estate with an ostentatious design to founding an [sic] Hospital at his death'.<sup>8</sup> Scheemakers' statue, commissioned in the same year as the publication of the will, appears to have been a further attempt to counter the posthumous slander Guy's reputation had received.<sup>9</sup> As Solkin has argued, the Christian narratives on the base of the monument characterised the philanthropist in the most positive light, refuting any anxieties regarding the nature of his donation to the hospital.<sup>10</sup>

By the time Bacon was commissioned to create his monument to Guy in 1776, nearly fifty years later, much of the initial controversy surrounding the nature of the hospital founder's deathbed bequest had been forgotten. Indeed, the hospital had been operating successfully for over half a decade and in the late 1770s was expanding to meet its growing needs. However, the suspicion that Guy had been a miser continued to be held in some quarters and his charitable act was still dismissed, as Solkin has noted, as that of a 'greedy and hypocritical philanthropist'.<sup>11</sup> Bacon thus needed to be careful in the design of his later monument to distance his representation of Guy from any lingering suspicions that he had ever been a miser. To do this, as we shall see, Bacon

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<sup>6</sup> John Dunton, *An Essay of Death-bed Charity Exemplify'd in the Life of Mr Thomas Guy, Late Book Seller in Lombard Street, Madame Jane Nicholas, of St Albans and Mr Francis Bancroft, Late of London Draper. Proving that Great Misers giving Large Donations to the Poor in their Last Wills is No Charity, To which is added the Last Will of Mr. Francis Bancroft* (London, 1728), p.5.

<sup>7</sup> Before his death in December 1724 Guy had already donated £19, 000 towards the construction and fabric of Guy's Hospital, see Solkin, 'Samaritan or Scrooge?', p.467.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Guy, *A Copy of the Last Will and Testament of Thomas Guy Esq* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., London, 1732), p.1.

<sup>9</sup> Solkin, 'Samaritan or Scrooge?', p.471.

<sup>10</sup> Solkin, 'Samaritan or Scrooge?', p.473.

<sup>11</sup> Solkin, 'Samaritan or Scrooge?', p.480.

characterised the hospital founder, like Scheemakers' Guy, as a paradigm of Christian benevolence.

### *Architectural sculpture at Guy's Hospital*

Bacon's monument to Guy was produced as part of a wider programme of redevelopment at the hospital, which began in 1776. This consisted of building a new west wing, a chapel and a new main façade, all of which were completed by 1780. Bacon's monument was to be located in the Chapel, on the east wall, directly opposite the altar. At the same time as receiving the commission for the monument Bacon had also been employed by the hospital to sculpt a pediment, two allegorical statues and three panel reliefs for the institution's new main façade.

The pediment, perhaps the most expressive of Bacon's architectural sculptures, depicted *Charity* supported on either side by allegorical figures (fig.31).<sup>12</sup> Positioned in a laurel framed roundel, *Charity* is shown proudly holding a small statuette of Guy, presenting the philanthropist to viewers, quite literally, as an icon worthy of praise (fig.32). Next to *Charity's* feet Bacon included a pelican feeding its young with its own blood, the traditional symbol of sacrifice and Christian generosity. On the left of the central medallion, Bacon placed an animated figure of *Madness* (fig.33), which bore a strong resemblance to Cibber's 1676 sculpture *Raving Madness*, at Bethlem Hospital (fig.34). Cibber's image of *Raving Madness* and its accompanying figure of *Melancholy Madness* (fig.35) were highly praised in the period; one reviewer in 1772 stating that they were the sculptor's most accomplished works of art, noting their 'admirable execution' and 'bold and very expressive' style.<sup>13</sup> In emulating Cibber's earlier work for his allegory of *Madness*, Bacon created a figure with which spectators could have readily identified. Indeed, the distressed figures

<sup>12</sup> Bacon was paid in two instalments for the pediment: £200 on the 16<sup>th</sup> October 1777 and £300 on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1778 for the pediment. See Public Monuments and Sculpture Association: National Recording Programme, [online] pmsa.cch.kcl.ac.uk, CL/CLSK88.

<sup>13</sup> Anon, *English Architecture: or, the Publick Buildings of London and Westminster, with Plans of the Streets and Squares, Representing in One Hundred and Twenty Three Folio Plates* (London, 1772), p.88.

Cibber had created for Bethlem Hospital had become synonymous in the period with representations of mental instability: his *Raving Madness* having also been used by William Hogarth to represent Tom Rakewell's demise into insanity at the end of the *Rake's Progress* (1733-5) (fig.36).<sup>14</sup>

As in Cibber's earlier deception, Bacon endowed his crazed figure with an uncomfortable sense of realism, showing the unfortunate victim manically tugging at his robes and snarling at the viewers below. Bacon evidently included *Madness* to highlight the most desperate individuals the hospital sought to help; individuals who, according to Guy, were either

by reason of the small hopes there may be of their cure, or the length of time which for that purpose may be required or thought necessary, are, or may be adjudged or called Incurable, and as such not proper Objects to be received into or continued in the present Hospital of Saint *Thomas*', or other Hospitals, in and by which no other prevision has been made for distempers deemed or called Incurable; of whom my mind is, That they receive and entertain Lunatics.<sup>15</sup>

However, unlike Cibber's figure, Bacon did not show his victim in chains; rather he depicted him restrained by tangled robes. Bacon also limited the visceral qualities of Cibber's figure by endowing his *Madness* with a full head of hair and concealing more of his body behind his robes. To a certain degree such alternations made Bacon's figure a more palatable and perhaps sympathetic account of mental distress. The sculptor updated Cibber's gruesome portrayal of madness, and avoided Hogarth's comedic devices, to match the modern sensibilities of his audience. It was an imagery which also reflected the change in values new institutions such as Guy's hospital hoped to precipitate, viewing the treatment of the mentally ill in a more compassionate and rational manner. In this way, rather than evoking the clanking of chains, Bacon's toga clad figure was able to suggest a more humane and perhaps progressive attitude towards the mentally distressed.

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<sup>14</sup> Jane E. Kromm, 'The Feminisation of Madness in Visual Representation', *Feminist Studies*, 20, no.3 (Autumn, 1994), p.508.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Guy, *A Copy of the Last Will*, p.38.

On the opposite side to *Charity*, in contrast to the animalistic mania of *Madness*, Bacon positioned an introverted female figure (fig.37). The figure is shown slumped against the side of *Charity's* medallion, unaware of spectators and consumed by melancholia. Her body appears to be limp and lifeless, the pathetic droop of her head and dishevelled hair movingly accentuating the feeble nature of her condition. In design the figure shares a particular affinity with Cibber's depiction of the City of London from the bas-relief he created to adorn the side of Christopher Wren and Robert Hooke's monument to the Great Fire of London (1671-1677) (fig.38 & 39). The two figures share a comparable pose and disconsolate expression, features which in both cases passionately convey to spectators a sense of hopelessness and despondency. Given that Bacon had already turned to Cibber's figure of *Madness*, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he also looked to the earlier artist's monumental bas-relief for inspiration. However, where the despair expressed by Cibber's allegorical figure is explained by the destruction of London, Bacon does not make explicit the reasons why his character appears to be so despondent. Indeed, the nature of her illness, whether the result of physical or mental ill-health, is left relatively open to interpretation. Certainly, as a counterpart to *Madness*, Bacon's introverted female figure might be read, following Cibber, as an allegory of 'melancholy madness'. However, whilst the hospital looked to serve those Guy described as 'Lunaticks', the institution was also established to help individuals who had been afflicted by physical diseases. As such, it is perhaps more likely that Bacon intended this figure to be a representation of 'sickness'. Indeed, in balancing *Madness's* mental distress against a depiction of physical ill-health, Bacon would have been able to offer a more comprehensive account of the range of conditions treated by the hospital.

Whatever the original meaning of the female figure, the pediment offers a vivid and compelling account of the care the hospital was able to offer to those in distress, as a result of Thomas Guy's deathbed bequest. To complement this narrative, Bacon was also asked to produce three allegorical tablets celebrating the medical practice of bloodletting. Bacon was paid £500 for the three panels which, from left to right, showed a cherub holding a vase for the collection of

blood (fig.40), a cherub clutching a wreath (fig.41), presumably for victory and healing, and a cherub holding the instruments of bloodletting; leeches, a tourniquet and a multi blade scarificator (fig.42).<sup>16</sup> Together Bacon's three panels offered an optimistic vision of modern medical healing, with the cherubs highlighting the triumph of the advanced and rational treatments undertaken at the hospital. Bloodletting was used to treat many illnesses in the period and as such may have been included in the design of the facade to refer specifically to the type of medical care the distressed individuals on the pediment would have received.<sup>17</sup>

To complete the design of the main façade Bacon was also commissioned by the hospital to produce two allegorical figures of *Aesculapius*, the God of healing (fig.43), and his daughter *Hygeia*, the goddess of health and cleanliness (fig.44). Bacon received £262.10s for the two sculptures when they were finished and installed in October 1779.<sup>18</sup> Located in niches on either side of the main entrance of the building, the figures were accompanied by their appropriate attributes: *Aesculapius* with a rough-hewn branch entwined by a serpent and *Hygeia* with a snake and bowl of soothing oils.<sup>19</sup> As in the pediment Bacon contrasted introversion with animation: *Aesculapius's* thoughtfulness is balanced by *Hygeia's* outward display of compassion. Bacon also used the composition of the main façade to define the stoicism of *Aesculapius* against the mania of *Madness* and the warmth of *Hygeia* against the despondency of 'sickness'. This comparison not only accentuated the desperate conditions of the figures on the pediment but again offered spectators reassurance that the hospital was governed and underpinned by rational and benevolent principles. More practically such contrasts also helped to create a balanced composition, seeing active and passive figures spread evenly across the span of the façade.

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<sup>16</sup> P.M.S.A., CL/CLSK88.

<sup>17</sup> Bloodletting was particularly used for those suffering from raving-madness as it was claimed that the illnesses proceeded 'from a plethora, or too great Fullness' and 'is cured by plentiful Bleeding and Purging'. John Arbuthnot, *An Essay Concerning the Nature of Aliments, and the Choice of them According to the Different Constitutions of Human Bodies: to which is added the Practical Rules of Diet* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., London, 1756), p.321.

<sup>18</sup> P.M.S.A., CL/CLSK89.

<sup>19</sup> Samuel Wilkins & G.T. Bettany, *A Biographical History of Guy's Hospital*, p.95.

Together the architectural sculptures Bacon created for the hospital's new entrance eloquently conveyed the principles upon which the institution had been founded. It compassionately highlighted the type of impoverished and disaffected individuals the hospital sought to help whilst also emphasising the progressive and humane treatment they were likely to receive once admitted.

### *The Thomas Guy Monument 1779*

Bacon was to repeat this compelling narrative of ill-health and healing in the design of his monument to Guy (see fig.27). Bacon positioned Thomas Guy standing in front of a low relief depiction of the hospital's new main façade. Although Guy had died over fifty years before the hospital was extended in the 1770s, Bacon nonetheless used the occasion, as Solkin has noted, to identify the redevelopment of the site as 'an outgrowth and fulfilment of Guy's original act of generosity'.<sup>20</sup> Bacon's decision to reject historical accuracy also allowed him to emphasise his own recent contributions to the site – with the sculptor including representations of *Hygeia*, the triumphant central cherubim and 'sickness' in his low-relief depiction (fig.45).

Whilst Bacon's monument emphasised the developments that had been made at the institution, in design it also looked back to Scheemakers' earlier statue. Indeed, in fictionally positioning Guy in front of the hospital he had founded, Bacon closely mimicked the location of his predecessor's bronze sculpture, which was placed in the centre of the institution's entrance forecourt. Bacon made further references to Scheemakers' earlier statue in his depiction of Guy. Like his predecessor, Bacon depicted Guy wearing an elaborate Livery robe over the top of more modest contemporary clothing (fig.46 & 28). It was a dress code which pointed to Guy's status as a governor of St Thomas' Hospital but also, through his underclothing, to his position as a respectable man of business. Bacon similarly emulated Scheemakers' portrayal of the hospital

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<sup>20</sup> Solkin, 'Samaritan or Scrooge?', p.481.

founder's facial features, ensuring that the two depictions of Thomas Guy in sculpture at the hospital exhibited a sense of continuity.<sup>21</sup>

In linking the design of his monument with Scheemakers' earlier statue Bacon established a clear sense of continuity between the two works. However, where Scheemakers' statue offered a record of Guy's public identity as a prosperous tradesman and public minded citizen, Bacon's monument created a more personal account of the philanthropist's deeds. It was a contrast which echoed the differing locations of the two works and enabled spectators to meet first with the public Guy in the forecourt and then to engage with a more private and intimate expression of his benevolence in the contemplative space of the hospital's chapel.

### *The Benevolence of Thomas Guy*

In his account of Guy, Bacon depicted the hospital founder fully engaged in an act of benevolence, checking the pulse of an emaciated and impoverished Lazar before having him admitted to the hospital in the background.<sup>22</sup> Guy shows great sympathy to the Lazar, his affectionate smile gently encouraging and offering hope to the dejected figure. In pointing to the hospital's entrance Bacon also reassured viewers that the invalid's distress was soon to be alleviated, an optimism reinforced by the inclusion of another figure being stretchered into the institution in the background (fig.47). In response, the Lazar weakly lifts his head to meet the philanthropist's compassionate gaze, his expression poignantly speaking of his sufferings and helplessness.

In his dictionary Samuel Johnson describes a Lazar as 'one deformed and nauseous with filthy and pestilential disease'.<sup>23</sup> Though historically Lazars were

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<sup>21</sup> Bacon only deviated slightly from Scheemakers' earlier statue by giving figure soft flowing curls which, as Nicholas Penny as noted, followed the fashionable *all'antica* style. See Nicholas Penny, *Church Monuments in Romantic England* (New Haven & London, 1977), p.142.

<sup>22</sup> The figure was described as a 'Lazaret' when a bust of the figure was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1779. However, when Bacon represented the same bust as his diploma piece a year earlier in 1778, it was referred to as 'Sickness'.

<sup>23</sup> Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language in which the Words are Deduced from their Originals, and Illustrated in their Different Significations by Examples from the Best*



also associated with leprosy, Bacon does not appear to have suggested that his figure suffers from this particular debilitating disease.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, though his body is emaciated and hideously gaunt, the Lazar's skin displays no evidence of the ravages of leprosy nor does he suffer from the type of deformities which commonly accompanied the disease. Bacon does, however, suggest that the figure is suffering from some kind of infectious and debilitating condition; the large handkerchief he holds in his right hand suggesting that his illness is likely to be respiratory, thus highly infectious and potentially lethal. Bacon wrapped the figure in an expressively flowing robe, highlighting his poverty through his semi naked state. Bacon used the frame created by his swirling robes to focus the spectator's gaze onto the figure's protruding ribcage and concave abdomen, providing an intimate view of his emaciated form (fig.48). The sculptor maintains this sense of immediacy in his depiction of the Lazar's withered legs which, dangling over the inscription, creep disconcertingly into the viewer's space.

In depicting Guy intimately engaged with a contagious and impoverished Lazar, Bacon was able to boldly emphasise the truly sacrificial nature of the hospital founder's philanthropy. Moreover, in showing Guy checking the Lazar's pulse, Bacon was able to stress the medical help the invalid would receive as a result of the philanthropist's sizable bequest. It was an account of Guy's charity which eloquently re-contextualised his deathbed bequest into one of *active* benevolence. The unique nature of Guy's charity was also powerfully articulated in the inscription which accompanied the monument, which is included here in full:

Underneath are deposited the Remains of Thomas Guy, Citizen of London, Member of Parliament and the sole founder of this Hospital in his Life time. It is peculiar to this beneficent Man to have preserved during the course of prosperous industry in pouring forth the works of

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*Writers. To which are prefixed, a History of the Language, and an English Grammar, 2 vols. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1755-1756), II, under (LAZ), no pagination.*

<sup>24</sup> Alexander Pennecuik, in his 1720 poem 'O Fair Lady, Dispensing Medicines in her Lazar House', suggested that a Lazaret might be suffering from a variety of diseases ranging from, 'Jaundice, Cancer and the pox' as well as 'ev'ry plague flew from Pandora's Box'. Alexander Pennecuik, *Streams from Helicon: or Poems on Various Subjects, in three parts* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1720), p.152.

Others, all that He had earned by labour, or withheld from self-indulgence. Warm with Philanthropy, and exalted by Charity his Mind expanded to those noble affections which grow but too rarely from the most elevated pursuits. After administering with extensive Bounty to the claims of Consanguinity He established this Asylum for that stage of Languor and Disease to which the Charities of Others had not yet reached. He provided a Retreat for hopeless Insanity and rivalled the endowments of Kings. He died the 27<sup>th</sup> December, 1724, in the 80<sup>th</sup> year of His life.

The 'warmth' of Guy's philanthropy, as already noted, is evident in Bacon's depiction of the hospital founder, with his expression towards the Lazar being one of gentle compassion and genuine concern (see fig.46). In line with this sense of integrity Bacon avoided the temptation to give his figure an artificial or staged pose. Instead the artist shows the philanthropist fully committed to his benevolent deed and completely unaware of any onlookers. Through his characterisation of Guy Bacon also suggested the rational and progressive principles which underpinned the foundation of the hospital. Confronted with the disease ridden Lazar Guy does not recoil at the sight, but rather points in a calm manner towards the entrance of the hospital, implying that the Lazar's condition can be treated; presumably with advanced medical treatments such as bloodletting.

Through this portrayal of Guy, Bacon characterised the hospital founder as a type of modern day Good Samaritan, his benevolence helping those whom no-one else in society wanted to be associated with. Indeed, there are notable similarities between Bacon's portrayal of Thomas Guy and Peter Scheemakers' bronze bas-relief of the *Good Samaritan*, found on the base on the 1734 statue (see fig.30). Like Scheemakers' relief, Bacon showed Guy bending down and holding the wrist of a semi naked figure. The reclining figure of the Lazar in Bacon's monument also appears to have been influenced by Scheemakers' relief; the pathetic gestures of Bacon's victim closely corresponding with those the earlier artist had used to dramatise his narrative.<sup>25</sup> For Bacon such similarities were pertinent and purposeful. Indeed, it seems likely that the

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<sup>25</sup> As noted in Chapter one, Bacon had already narrated the story of the Good Samaritan in a bas-relief exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1770. It is likely that Bacon also used this earlier experiment to help formulate his design for the later Guy monument.

sculptor would have wanted his depiction of the hospital founder to have all the characteristics of the Good Samaritan.<sup>26</sup>

Whilst the narrative of the Good Samaritan undoubtedly resonated with the nature and character of Thomas Guy's philanthropy, Bacon appears to have had another biblical parable in mind when he designed the monument. The term Lazaret or Lazar, as Johnson noted, was derived from the character of Lazarus from the parable in Luke 19:16 of 'Dives and Lazarus'.<sup>27</sup> The biblical story described how

There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even dogs came and licked his sores.

The time came when the beggar died and angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.

But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony...'<sup>28</sup>

Given the criticism Guy's philanthropy had received in the period, his deathbed bequest being described as the actions of a rich man desperate to make amends with God for 'giving Nothing to the Poor' in his life time, the associations with the parable from Luke were pointed.<sup>29</sup> Representations of the biblical story, such as Veronese's c1540 image (fig.49), invariably showed Lazarus begging at the side of the rich man's table, who allows his leftover food to be eaten by dogs but not the Lazar. However, unlike the rich man in the biblical story, who was destined to spend eternity in hell for his selfish behaviour on earth, Bacon compellingly emphasised in the design of his monument that Thomas Guy had

<sup>26</sup> Laurence Sterne in his 1760 sermon *Philanthropy Recommended*, described such individuals as exhibiting the 'warm zeal of a brother, mixed with the affectionate discretion and care of a parent'. See Laurence Sterne, *The Sermons of Mr Yorick, By Laurence Sterne*, 2 vols. (London 1794), I, p.40.

<sup>27</sup> Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, II, under (LAZ), no pagination.

<sup>28</sup> Luke, 19:16-25.

<sup>29</sup> Dunton, *An Essay of Death-bed Charity*, p.5.

not ignored the plight of the poor. Rather, in a dramatic reversal of the biblical narrative, Bacon showed the wealthy hospital founder tenderly and delicately tending to the needs of the impoverished Lazarus.

Bacon also reiterated Guy's integrity in the two allegorical roundels he located on either side of the inscription. The left panel depicted *Industry* with a beehive, *Prudence* with a mirror and snake and *Temperance* with a halter (fig.50). The three figures, united like the three graces, testified to the foundation of Guy's wealth and hence his bequest to the hospital. Whilst Guy had made a significant amount of money from the South Sea Company, Bacon's allegorical roundel, like the inscription, only referred spectators to the money the hospital founder had 'earned by labour or withheld from self-indulgence', avoiding references to his more dubious investments of the early eighteenth century. The roundel on the right of the inscription presented a maternal figure of *Charity* nurturing and clothing three small children, her tenderness echoing the compassion Guy shows to the Lazarus above (fig.51).

Through such details and references Bacon was able to eloquently rebut any suggestions that Guy had ever been a miser or a dubious investor, and instead vividly characterises him as a man of true Christian virtue. The position of the work in the hospital's chapel must have only magnified this impression. Indeed, given its location, the work must have acted as a type of sermon in stone, showing the hospital founder fulfilling Jesus' command to 'love your neighbour as yourself'.<sup>30</sup> As such, the monument confronted spectators with a pertinent moral dilemma, rhetorically asking them to consider what their *own* response to the suffering of the Lazarus would be. Would they walk away and, in so doing, deny Christ's claim that, 'whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me', or more appropriately respond with compassion and sympathy?<sup>31</sup> To aid spectators in this decision they naturally had the example of Guy to follow. Indeed, Bacon's vivid depiction of Guy's benevolence provided an eloquent example for emulation. For as Lord Kames suggested in 1765,

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<sup>30</sup> Mark, 12:31.

<sup>31</sup> Mathew, 25:40.

When we contemplate a virtuous action, which never fails to delight us, and to prompt our love for the author, the mind is warmed, and put into a tone similar to what inspired the virtuous action; and the propensity we have to such actions is so much enlivened, as to become for a time an actual emotion.<sup>32</sup>

*The Lazar and heroic suffering*

Although Bacon's portrayal of Guy's philanthropy was intended to *warm* the hearts and minds of spectators, the Lazar offered a more difficult and challenging figure for viewers to interpret. In his depiction Bacon refused to mollify, or even subtly subdue, the effects of disease which had ravaged the Lazar's body; indeed, he pointedly confronted spectators with such features. The Lazar's body is so ravaged by disease that it is difficult to determine his age, although he does not appear to be old. His face, with sunken eyes and gaunt cheeks, matches the desperate nature of his pleas for help. His skin hangs loosely over his chest, his muscles having been withered by disease and poverty. From underneath the thin folds in his skin, viewers can clearly see his ribcage and the emaciated outline of his stomach. Through the delicately wrought surface of the figure's arms, veins and tendons are also visible, whilst his feet and hands are gruesomely reduced to an almost skeletal form. As if the depiction of the figure's emaciated body was not sufficient, his description as a 'Lazaret' vividly suggested the character's poverty and perhaps even encouraged spectators to imagine the stench and filth which was commonly associated with such desperate individuals in the period.

The almost repulsive realism Bacon used to characterise the Lazar stood in contrast to Scheemakers' victim in his 1734 account of the *Good Samaritan* (see fig.30). Whilst the figure, according to St Luke, was supposedly stripped of clothes, beaten and left 'half dead', his body in the Scheemakers' relief shows no evidence of such an attack; whilst his face is that of an old man, his body remains fleshy and muscular.<sup>33</sup> The same is also true in Scheemakers' account of *Christ at the pool at Bethesda* where the soon to be healed paralytic, who had

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<sup>32</sup> Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, 2 vols. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Edinburgh 1765), I, p.56.

<sup>33</sup> Luke, 10:30.

been an 'invalid for thirty-eight years', shows little sign of such disabilities (see fig.29).<sup>34</sup> In contrast, for the Guy monument Bacon had actively embraced the grisly reality of disease and distress, creating a figure whose fragile frame bore an acute testimony to the long term and potentially incurable nature of his debilitating condition.

Whilst the Lazar conveyed a profound sense of realism and contemporaneity, Bacon seems to have based the head and facial expressions of the figure on an antique bust of the *Dying Alexander*, of which the Academy had a cast in the 1770s (fig.52). The *Dying Alexander* was widely admired in the period for its dramatic and expressive qualities. Jonathan Richardson described the piece as 'Great and Vast',

the Nose does not come strait down from the Forehead, but the joining is much swell'd; his Mouth is a little open. He is Dying throughout without Agony, except what that Swelling, and a little turn of the Eyes expresses, which at the same time gives a Grandeur to the Whole.<sup>35</sup>

As in the *Dying Alexander*, Bacon twisted the head of the Lazar upwards to the right, a rhetorical gesture which poignantly suggested that the figure was asking for help (fig.48). The sculptor further mimicked the classical bust by recreating the figure's furrowed brow and down turned mouth; facial expressions which spoke powerfully of bodily pain. Bacon also emulated the raised shoulders of the antique work which made it appear as if the Lazar had just taken in a deep convulsive breath, which spectators were perhaps encouraged to imagine might be his last.

In alluding to the facial expressions of the classical bust Bacon may well have been intending to suggest that his disease ridden victim possessed a heroic resolve comparable to that of the *Dying Alexander*. Indeed, the antique bust depicted male heroism at its most poignant moment when, as Alex Potts has

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<sup>34</sup> John, 5:5.

<sup>35</sup> Jonathan Richardson, *An Account of Some of the Statues, Bas-reliefs, Drawings and Pictures in Italy* (London, 1722), p.47.

argued, man's 'inner resources are almost faltering, but still just holding out'.<sup>36</sup> Such perseverance not only embodied ideal masculinity but also polite decorum. As Adam Smith in his 1759 *Theory of Moral Sentiments* claimed, 'to cry out with bodily pain, how intolerable soever, appears always unmanly and unbecoming'.<sup>37</sup> In referring to this type of stoic self-restraint Bacon was possibly hoping to show that the Lazar had also battled through his pain with an appropriate sense of manly fortitude. Like the *Dying Alexander* and other epic examples such as the *Laocoon*, the figure does not 'cry out' at his bodily pain, instead, like the heroes of antiquity, he raises his eyes heavenwards, stoically containing his anguish.

In suggesting that the Lazar possessed a type of classical heroic fortitude, Bacon was able to imply that the figure's current distress could be read, rather paradoxically, as a positive and morally uplifting experience for spectators. Indeed, like the leprous beggar Lazarus from Luke 16:19 or even the Old Testament figure Job, the Lazar endures without complaining because he is mindful that his present sufferings are 'not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us'.<sup>38</sup> The importance of this type of moral suffering was perhaps most assiduously analysed in the period by Adam Smith, who, when considering the relationship between the victim and viewer, argued that the

man, who under the severest tortures allows no weakness to escape him, vents no groan, gives way to no passion which we do not entirely enter into, commands our highest admiration. His firmness enables him to keep time with our indifference and insensibility... We approve of his behaviour, and from our experience of the common weakness of human nature, we are surprised, and wonder how he should be able to act so as to deserve approbation.<sup>39</sup>

Smith further highlighted the importance of controlling emotions and maintaining decorum stating that,

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<sup>36</sup> Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (New Haven & London, 1994), p.138.

<sup>37</sup> Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. by D.D. Raphael & A.L. Macife, (Oxford, 1976), p.26.

<sup>38</sup> Roman, 8:18.

<sup>39</sup> Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, pp.30-31.

we are disgusted with that clamorous grief, which, without delicacy, calls upon our compassion with sighs and tears and importunate lamentations. But we reverence that reserved, that silent and majestic sorrow, which discovers itself only in the swelling of the eyes, in the quivering of the lips and cheeks, and in the distant, but affecting, coldness of the whole behaviour.<sup>40</sup>

Although Bacon, in emulating aspects of the *Dying Alexander* was able to suggest that the Lazar possessed a 'silent and majestic sorrow' perhaps worthy of a Grecian hero or a biblical figure, in the details of his design the sculptor significantly deviated from the antique original. Indeed, rather than seeking verisimilitude between the Lazar and the *Dying Alexander*, Bacon instead appears to have been intent upon dramatising the differences between the two works.

In contrast to the muscular and fleshy frame of the *Dying Alexander*, Bacon's figure is dehydrated and emaciated. Indeed, Bacon's Lazar seems to have had more in common with the Academy's *Ecorche* model than it did with paradigms of the classical masculine form (fig.53). The *Ecorche*, a teaching device used by William Hunter in his anatomy classes, showed the human body stripped of flesh, revealing only the muscles beneath. As in the case of the model, Bacon carefully delineated what remains of the Lazar's muscles through his thin skin, giving the piece a grim sense of *vera carne*. To emphasise this correspondence, Bacon stretched the figure's arms open in a diagonal manner, a posture he appears to have copied from the stance of the *Ecorche*.

In making his figure of the Lazar potentially so repellent, Bacon fundamentally threatened the poignancy of his inaudible cries - the naturalism of his wasted frame making the figure's suffering potentially too gruesome to attract sympathy. Certainly, as Laurence Sterne had highlighted in his 1760 sermon *Philanthropy Recommended*, figures which were 'uncommonly tragical, and complicated with many circumstances of misery' could exercise a spectator's sympathy, and generate 'all the tender emotions of pity and deep

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<sup>40</sup> Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p.24.



concern'.<sup>41</sup> However representations of such instances were required to maintain a degree of aesthetic decorum. As Anna Barbauld in her 1773 *Inquiry in to those Kinds of Distress which excite agreeable Sensations* claimed, 'the misfortunes which excite pity must not be too horrid... The mind is rather stunned than softened by great calamities'.<sup>42</sup> Barbauld continued by stating that

there must be some degree of complacence mixed with our sorrows to produce an agreeable sympathy; nothing, therefore, must be admitted which destroys the grace and dignity of suffering; the imagination must have an amiable figure to dwell upon: there are circumstances so ludicrous or disgusting, that no character can preserve a proper decorum under them, or appear in an agreeable light.<sup>43</sup>

It was an approach which Joshua Reynolds, from an artistic perspective, shared, claiming in 1776 that

A picture should please at first sight, and appear to invite the spectator's attention: if on the contrary the general effect offends the eye, a second view is not always sought, whatever more substantial and instrinsick merit it may possess.<sup>44</sup>

The realism of Bacon's figure thus had the potential to limit both its appeal and its meaning. Moreover, the Lazar, unlike the *Dying Alexander*, had significant contemporary relevancy. Where spectators of the *Dying Alexander* could view the military leader with the distancing effect of history and the knowledge that his present sufferings were counterbalanced by his previous achievements, the infectious, anonymous character of the Lazar offered no such reassurance. Indeed, in locating the Lazar in front of the newly completed west wing of the hospital and showing him receiving charity from the contemporaneously dressed Guy, Bacon firmly located his desperate victim in the present. In showing the Lazar suffering without any indication of his previous history, Bacon again transgressed the bounds of decorum. It was something Barbauld was similarly at pains to criticise, claiming that

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<sup>41</sup> Sterne, 'Philanthropy Recommended', pp.34-35.

<sup>42</sup> Anna Barbauld, 'An Inquiry into those Kinds of Distress which excite agreeable Sensations' (1773), in *The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld*, ed. by Lucy Aikin, 2 vols. (London 1825), II, p.218.

<sup>43</sup> Barbauld, 'An Inquiry into those Kinds of Distress, II, p.220.

<sup>44</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse VII' (1776), p.126.

Poverty, if truly represented, shocks our nicer feelings: therefore, whenever it is made use of to awaken out compassion, the rags and dirt, the squalid appearance and mean employments incident to that state, must be kept out of sight, and the distress must arise from the idea of depression, and the shock of falling from higher fortunes. We do not pity Belisarius as a poor blind beggar; and a painter would succeed very ill who should sink him to the meanness of that condition. He must let us still discover the conqueror of the Vandals, the general of the imperial armies, or we shall be little interested.<sup>45</sup>

It was an approach to sympathy with which Edmund Burke agreed, arguing that a viewer's delight is heightened 'if the sufferer be some excellent person who sinks under an unworthy fortune'.<sup>46</sup> Bacon, however, explicitly avoided this in his narrative. Rather, spectators are confronted by the image of an unknown victim whose only heroism is located in his dignified response to his present sufferings.

In giving his Lazar a subversively cadaverous form Bacon appears to have been deliberately blurring the accepted boundaries of decorum and taste, creating an image of contemporary suffering which asked spectators to abandon their polite sensibilities and confront the disturbing realism of disease, evisceration and neglect. It was a design which, though indebted to the bust of the *Dying Alexander*, nonetheless significantly deviated from its palatable and polite account of suffering: Bacon using the similarities between the two works to powerfully accentuate the distinctive aesthetics of his figure. In this manner Bacon's Lazar offered a provocative challenge to those who advocated ideal beauty above and before any other form of art.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Barbauld, 'An Inquiry into those Kinds of Distress', II, p.222.

<sup>46</sup> Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., Dublin, 1757), p.61.

<sup>47</sup> My use of the term 'sensibility' is informed by Janet Todd's definition, being 'a belief in the appealing aesthetic quality of virtue, displayed in a naughty world through a vague and potent distress. This distress is rarely deserved and is somehow the nature of things... The distressed are natural victims, whose misery is demanded by their predicament as defenceless in being aged men, helpless infants or melancholic youths'. See Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction*, (London & New York, 1986), pp.2-3. For additional discussions on the meaning and use of the term 'sensibility' see Syndy McMillen Conger ed., *Sensibility in Transformation: Creative Resistance to Sentiment from Augustus to the Romanics* (London & Toronto, 1990).

### *Sickness*

It is unclear precisely when Bacon's monument to Thomas Guy was officially unveiled. The monument is dated 1779, but the new chapel at the hospital was not completed until 1780 and Guy's body only interred there on 4 September 1780. However, in what may have been an effort to promote and pre-empt the completion of the monument, in 1778 Bacon presented a bust, *Sickness*, that was based on the head of the Lazar as his diploma piece to the Academy (fig.54 & 55). The work was also displayed the following year at the Academy's annual exhibition under the title *The head of a Lazaret in a monument executed for the Founder of Guy's Hospital*.

In presenting the bust to the Academy Bacon was able to anticipate the completion of his full sized work and create a synecdochical relationship between the two pieces, the bust offering spectators a tantalising glimpse of what they could expect from the completed monument. However, in choosing the Lazar for his diploma piece, Bacon interestingly favoured the figure over the depiction of Guy. Given that Bacon had emulated Scheemakers' earlier portrayal of Guy for his figure, the artist may have preferred to present a work of art that was entirely his own creation. Moreover, given the directional angle of Guy's head in the monument Bacon would have had to make significant modifications to the figure to make it suitable for translation into a bust: modifications not necessary in the case of the Lazar. Yet, whilst such difficulties may have influenced Bacon's decision, the choice of the Lazar was probably shaped by the fact that it offered a more dramatic and powerful summary of the sentiments of the whole monument.

Whilst Bacon used *Sickness* to promote the full scale monument, in presenting the work as his diploma piece the sculptor also distinguished the bust as an example of his mature style. Election as an Academician represented a pivotal moment in any artist's academic career, implying that a student was ready to graduate from the Academy and develop an independent practice. Although this ceremonial birth was in reality a rather contrived and artificial

piece of institutional pomp, most sculptors having already established independent practices before graduating, it was nevertheless an important accolade. Election to the Royal Academy helped to raise the profile of emerging artists by linking them with the country's leading authority on art, the crucial initials RA acting as a powerful distinction and marker of quality to potential patrons.

The diploma piece was a compulsory part of the election process, intended to illustrate an artist's improved technical skills and powers of interpretation and provide evidence of the knowledge artists had accumulated during their time at the Academy.<sup>48</sup> Untainted by patronal tastes or an imposed subject matter, the diploma piece was in theory designed to proclaim and celebrate an artist's true, unhindered potential. However, whilst artists were granted an element of creative freedom, the pieces still had to be approved by the Academy's general council. Indeed, as all successful works were ultimately intended to form an archive of British talent, a pantheon reflecting the Academy's benevolent investment in national art, they were expected, at least in part, to reflect the institution's teachings.<sup>49</sup>

Aside from a small exhibition in 1801, the Academy's collection of diploma pieces were never publicly exhibited as a whole, although some were on display for a short time at the Academy's rooms.<sup>50</sup> It was a factor which made them a rather redundant exercise for many artists. Indeed, unless an artist made copies of his diploma piece he could expect no financial return for his work; the Academy expecting the pieces gratis in return for their investment. It was a system that purified the works of art from the unfavourable taint of commercialism but that did little to promote best practice amongst applicants.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> For a further discussion on the diploma competition see Myrone, *Bodybuilding: Reforming Masculinities*, p.253.

<sup>49</sup> I am indebted to Mark Pomeroy (RA archivist) for his help in researching this area of the Academy's practice.

<sup>50</sup> For the location of diploma pieces see G.M.A Barette, *A Guide Through the Royal Academy* (London, 1781).

<sup>51</sup> The half-heartedness of many newly elected Academicians, as Martin Myrone has highlighted, is exemplified in the cases of Richard Westall and Thomas Lawrence both of whom had their diploma pieces returned as 'unfinished' after submitting them to the Academy's general council. See Myrone, *Bodybuilding: Reforming Masculinities*, p.253.

For Bacon, however, it must have meant a great deal. He eagerly anticipated being made a full Academician, applying to be elected on six different occasions: twice in 1771 and again in 1772, 1773 and 1777, before finally being accepted in 1778 when he beat John Singleton Copley to the position by thirteen votes to two.<sup>52</sup>

The only artist before Bacon to be awarded a sculptural diploma was Joseph Nollekens in 1773, an unsurprising decision given the artist's experience in Rome and his thriving London studio. Nollekens' diploma piece *Cupid and Psyche* reflected his acknowledged competence (fig.56). The delicately rendered relief shows *Cupid and Psyche* exchanging a tender kiss. Their gently intertwined bodies, together with their depiction in various modulating planes of relief, exemplify the sculptor's sophisticated technical abilities. Nollekens took his subject from classical mythology, basing his work on an antique original, the Medici *Cupid and Psyche* (fig.57). Indeed, Nollekens was specifically praised for his ability to emulate the antique style. One reviewer claimed that Nollekens 'more than any other, copies the beauties of the Antique, and transfers them into his own words'.<sup>53</sup> It was an emulative approach to the arts, which we have seen, was being widely endorsed in the period. Thomas Burgess succinctly summarised such ideas in 1780, claiming that

by studying the works of the best masters, the imagination becomes conversant with images of beauty and grandeur, the combination of which enables the ARTISTS to approach nearer to the perfect ideal form, than the most exact imitation of ordinary individual beauty.<sup>54</sup>

The debt Nollekens' diploma piece owed to the antique original is evident in his emulation of the figures' entwined bodies, intimate gestures and winged backs. However, Nollekens' was careful also to express his own genius through the work, subtly reinterpreting the antique subject matter. The modern relief shows *Cupid and Psyche* as playful cherubs rather than as adolescents, their chubby

<sup>52</sup> *Minutes of the Council of the Royal Academy*, I, no pagination. (RA archives). Also see Cox-Johnson, 'John Bacon RA', p.246.

<sup>53</sup> Roger Shanahan, *The Exhibition, or a Second Anticipation being remarks based on the Principal Works to be Exhibited Next Month, at the Royal Academy* (London, 1779), p.71.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas Burgess, *An Essay on the Study of Antiquities* (Oxford, 1780), p.11. Also see Reynolds, 'Discourse VI' (1774), p.98.

genderless bodies perhaps used to diminish any provocative overtones. Nollekens further deviated from the original by locating his figures on a mass of swirling clouds, suggesting Psyche's ascent into heaven and her long awaited reunion with Cupid. It was a detailing which, though implied in the narrative of the antique original, was only truly viable in relief form.<sup>55</sup>

Bacon's diploma piece contrasts starkly with the fleshy sentimentalism of Nollekens' submission. Where Nollekens' design clearly exemplified his knowledge of antique sources and his use of ideal beauty, Bacon's presented a provocatively challenging work of sculpture, which not only appeared to overstep the bounds of aesthetic decorum but also those of polite sensibility. Here we need to remember that for the Academy the process of responding to a classical work was as much about implying an artist's ability to invent and adopt the subject matter as it was about his dependence upon such forms. Yet the changes and modifications Bacon made in his reinterpretation of the *Dying Alexander* created an object which instead of supporting the doctrines of the institution he was graduating from, looked to openly revise its aesthetic theories.

For writers on art such as Reynolds the aim of studying the art of ancients was to achieve the beau ideal, as the 'arts receive their perfection from an ideal beauty, superior to what is found in nature'.<sup>56</sup> The robust realism of Bacon's bust, however, did little to support Reynolds' paradigm. Rather than selecting the best from nature, Bacon, for his figure of the Lazar had drawn upon the grotesque and the deformed. Indeed, Lazars were frequently used by writers on art to describe the most debased and hideous figures. Dryden in the preface to Du Fresnoy's *Art of Painting* stated that the difference between a 'Lazar in comparison to a *Venus*' was like contrasting the meaner parts of nature and the lowest forms of painting with the highest and most dignified.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> In working in relief Nollekens also gestured towards the use of the narrative in both antique and Renaissance interior decoration: a contextual sign which would have undoubtedly been useful in securing further contemporary patronage.

<sup>56</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse III' (1770), p.42.

<sup>57</sup> John Dryden, 'A Parallel between Painting and Poetry', in *The Art of Painting, by C. A. Du Fresnoy with remarks translated into English, with an Original Preface, containing a Parallel*

In its fidelity to the defects found in nature Bacon's diploma piece looked to radically undermine the values of antique ideal beauty. Indeed, in truncating the head of the Lazar Bacon only amplified the figure's gruesome aesthetics. Without the subduing effect of formal features, such as framings, inscriptions and, perhaps most crucially, the compassionate figure of Guy, the bust essentially offered spectators an unfettered personal encounter with the suffering of the Lazar. Where in the monument the tragic upward gaze of the Lazar was met by Guy's compassionate expression, spectators of the bust, when the work was exhibited at the right height, could themselves become the unwitting recipients of the Lazar's desperate pleas for help. Though details are imprecise, Baretti's 1781 *A Guide Through the Royal Academy* suggests that this might have been how many spectators actually encountered the piece, for it was located for a short time on a desk in between two windows in the Academy's library, a position low enough to afford an intimate and emotionally poignant exchange with viewers.<sup>58</sup>

The impact of this type of provocative encounter was only compounded by the bust's unresolved narrative. In the monument the distress of the Lazar was alleviated by the benevolent figure of Guy. However, in the diploma piece the sculptor leaves the figure suspended in a state of continuing distress. It was the type of open-ended narrative which Anna Barbauld was again explicit in warning against, claiming that

scenes of distress should not be too long continued. All our finer feelings are in a manner momentary, and no art can carry that, beyond a certain point, either in intensesness or duration. Constant suffering deadens the heart to tender impressions.<sup>59</sup>

James Beattie shared Barbauld's concern for the overall effect and experience of sympathy in his slightly later *Elements of Moral Science* in which he argued that, 'scenes of exquisite distress, too long continued, enervate and overwhelm

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*Between Painting and Poetry*, by Mr Dryden, by Charles-Alphese Du Fresnoy (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1716), pp.xxviii-xxvii.

<sup>58</sup> Baretti, *A Guide Through the Royal Academy*, p.17.

<sup>59</sup> Barbauld, 'An Inquiry into those Kinds of Distress', II, p.225.

the soul'.<sup>60</sup> However, for his diploma piece, Bacon appears to have subverted the bust's sublime and heroic potential and opted instead for a depiction of anonymous and potentially overwhelming helplessness.<sup>61</sup>

In replacing traditional masculine heroism for an image of resigned biblical perseverance, Bacon effectively went public with an alternative aesthetic, presenting an ignominious victim as an object worthy of the viewer's sympathy, pity and perhaps even veneration. Whereas in his *Head of Jupiter* Bacon had subtly questioned the abilities of connoisseurs and promoted the value of nature as a source for artists in the pursuit of the sublime, his bust of *Sickness* appeared to go one step further and openly challenge the importance the Academy placed on ideal beauty. It was a move which signalled Bacon's graduation and independence from the Royal Academy and, perhaps more profoundly, articulated his opposition to the direction in which the institution's sculptural theory was developing.

The bust offered a manifesto of some of the primary preoccupations Bacon had with his medium; whereas the Academy insisted on ideal beauty, Bacon embraced an aesthetic of natural, even repulsive, animation. Yet despite the contradictions this may have caused, the bust was accepted as Bacon's diploma piece, exhibited at the Academy's annual exhibition and put on display in the institution's library. It was a response which again points to the mutable dynamics of Academic practice and theory in the 1770s, which saw the institution accepting a diverse range of objects and aesthetic styles for exhibition.

### *Contemporary Criticism*

Despite being accepted as his diploma piece and exhibited at the Royal Academy, the idea that Bacon's figure of the Lazar was problematic even

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<sup>60</sup> James Beattie, *Elements of Moral Science*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1790-1793), I, pp.175-176.

<sup>61</sup> The anxieties surrounding this type of suspended narrative perhaps explains Bacon's decision to exhibit the work under a different title, '*The head of a Lazaret in a monument executed for the Founder of Guy's Hospital*' when exhibiting the work at the Academy's 1779 annual show.



subversive was confirmed in a review the sculptor received just one month before the opening of the Academy's 1779 annual exhibition. *The Exhibition, or a Second Anticipation being remarks based on the principal Works to be Exhibited next month, at the Royal Academy*, written by a 'Roger Shanhagan', was a satirical review which offered brief discussions on the works of leading Academicians.<sup>62</sup> However, rather than commenting on the actual works of art, the small pamphlet mockingly anticipated the type of contributions artists were likely to make; enabling the reviewer to offer his readers a more generalised summary of a leading artist's work. Whilst Shanhagan prefixed his discussion of Bacon with the titles of two fiction works, 'A statue of Mercury' and 'A reclining Water Nymph', it seems likely that the author would have in fact looked to Bacon's most recently completed works for reference. Indeed, by 1779 Bacon was close to completing the Guy monument and had already submitted *Sickness* to the Academy in 1778 and as such it seems likely that Shanhagan would have based his review, at least in part, on such examples.

Shanhagan began his account of Bacon's style by complementing the sculptor's prowess, claiming that he justly merited 'the reputation he possesses'.<sup>63</sup> However, this initial praise was subsequently obscured by a concentration on Bacon's faults and his deviations from 'true excellence':

the Sculptor more particularly than the Painter should follow the antique beauty. The veneration we pay to Antiquity, without the consideration of intrinsic excellence, is sufficient to prescribe to us in so undefineable[sic] a matter as mere form, where the beauty is not derived from obvious utility or character. Painting has several means of claiming our attention, but when Sculpture neglects that choice of Nature and chastity of outlines, which are seen in the ancient Statues, it must have a very high degree of intellectual grandeur to make it at all valuable. This is a fault we sometimes find in Mr. Bacon's work. He neglects in his forms the ideal beauty of the Antique, and puts up with nature as he finds it in any common model.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> 'Roger Shanhagan' has been identified as the young architect William Porden, the painter Robert Smirke and the artist Robert Watson. See Michael Rosenthal & Martin Myrone, *Gainsborough*, exh. cat., (London, Tate Britain, 2003) p.10.

<sup>63</sup> Roger Shanhagan, *The Exhibition, or a Second Anticipation being remarks based on the Principal Works to be Exhibited Next Month, at the Royal Academy* (London, 1779), pp.63-64.

<sup>64</sup> Shanhagan, *The Exhibition*, pp.63-64.

Shanhagan continued to highlight Bacon's deviation from the 'intrinsic excellence' ascribed to antique beauty by suggesting that the sculptor had a still 'greater fault';

We see in his pieces an animation often urged too far. Spirit and Energy, when not judiciously directed, are dangerous, and degenerate into Bombast. Neither does he sufficiently avoid the modern affectation.<sup>65</sup>

Shanhagan's objections were some of the first probing negative comments Bacon had received in print; the purposefully eclectic array of works he had presented to the Academy prior to this date had enjoyed little detailed critical analysis. Shanhagan, however, was particularly eager to highlight the anomalies he had noticed in Bacon's art, irregularities which he saw as not only challenging aesthetic decorum, but also devaluing the authority of antique sources. Meanwhile, at the core of Shanhagan's objections to Bacon's sculpture was his complaint that Bacon was willing to put up with nature as he found it in any 'common model'. The tensions Shanhagan noted, between ideal beauty and the forms of nature, was by 1779 a well rehearsed argument. As early as 1715 Jonathan Richardson had claimed that 'Common Nature is no more fit for a picture than plain narration is for a poem', and went on to observe that 'A painter must raise his ideas beyond what he sees...Particularly with respect to mankind, he must give them all imaginable beauty, and grace, dignity and perfection'.<sup>66</sup> Writing in 1770 Reynolds similarly claimed that in selecting the best from nature an artist, 'like the philosopher, will consider nature in the abstract' and in the process elevate art to a truly intellectual pursuit.<sup>67</sup>

From the outset of his career Bacon had taken a particular interest in anatomy and the variety of nature, closely following the teachings of William Hunter. However, where works such as *Thames* and *Jupiter* had used the forms of nature to attain an ideal, even sublime beauty, Bacon in his figure of the

<sup>65</sup> Shanhagan, *The Exhibition*, p.64

<sup>66</sup> Jonathan Richardson, *The Theory of Painting* (1715), in *The Works of Jonathan Richardson* (London, 1792), p.73.

<sup>67</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse III' (1770), p.50.

Lazar had amplified the imperfections of nature in order to accentuate the moral and religious message of his sculpture. His aspirations in this case appear to be more evangelical than intellectual. It was an appropriately pious approach given both the intended location of the monument and Bacon's devout Methodism. Indeed, according to Bacon's biographer the sculptor 'positively refused to execute Monuments whenever he judged that the design or the inscription would have an unchristian tendency'.<sup>68</sup> However, for critics like Shanhagan, this deviation had dangerous consequences. In fusing the noble sentiments of antiquity with some of nature's more visceral aspects in the Lazar, Bacon created a powerfully grotesque rather than an idealised figure for spectators to contemplate. Indeed, it is clear that Bacon's objective in creating the Lazar was not to display ideal beauty but rather to specifically stress the vulnerability and corruptibility of the human body. In this way Shanhagan's complaint that Bacon's sculpture neglected the forms of ideal beauty and put up with the common model was perhaps valid: for in the design of the sculptor's monument to Guy that was precisely his intention.

Bacon complemented his preference for the forms of nature with a profound interest in movement and animation. Both figures in the Guy monument are shown in action. The hospital founder twists downwards to meet the gaze of the Lazar, his left leg suggesting that he is about the step off the ledge to be on the same level as the diseased victim. The Lazar, whilst seated, is similarly animated. Bacon showed the figure on the verge of standing, drawing his right leg up to his side and pushing his withered body upwards with his left hand. Whilst Bacon delicately balanced animation in the design of the Guy monument, the hospital founder's downward movements being complemented by the Lazar's attempts to stand up, for Shanhagan the sculptor's art possessed an 'animation urged too far'. Moreover, Bacon's figures had an 'energy' and 'spirit' which directly contradicted the desire in the period for sculpture which had a noble simplicity and calm grandeur.

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<sup>68</sup> Cecil, *Memoirs of John Bacon*, pp.37-38.

In criticising Bacon's art for being too energetic and spirited, Shanhagan pointedly referred back to the teachings of William Hunter who, in defence of modern sculptors, had claimed that whilst there was much 'elegance and beauty and grace and dignity in Nature' there was besides 'animation, Spirit, fire, force and violence, which make a considerable part of the most interesting scenes'.<sup>69</sup> Whilst Bacon obviously acknowledged qualities such as elegance and beauty, grace and dignity in his art, in his figures of Guy and the Lazar he had made the intentional decision to deviate from that 'quiet state of standing' so extolled in the art of the ancients.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, given the nature of the individual being celebrated, the location of the monument and the values it was intended to extol, Bacon was evidently willing to abandon decorum and risk degenerating into 'Bombast' in order to give his monument a compelling and affecting narrative. The complaint that Bacon did not 'sufficiently avoid the modern affectation' was thus perhaps also equally justified.

### *Reynolds' Tenth Discourse*

Although Shanhagan's comments were intended to be criticisms of Bacon's art, they actually powerfully and eloquently detailed the nature of his mature sculptural aesthetic. Bacon's preoccupations with animation, affectation and naturalism were, however, to face increasing opposition. Indeed, Shanhagan's complaint that Bacon had deviated from 'true excellence' received substantial backing just one year later when Reynolds presented his tenth discourse to the Royal Academy.<sup>71</sup> It was the first lecture in which the President had focused specifically upon the sculptural medium, and his comments fleshed out the theory behind Shanhagan's earlier criticisms. Although Reynolds, unlike Shanhagan, was not specifically criticising Bacon's art in his discourse, rather the practices of modern artists more generally, his comments nevertheless seem pointedly to object to the type of approach the sculptor had taken in his monument to Guy. Indeed, the President's forceful discourse appears to have been a very specific attempt to draw a line under the Academy's relaxed attitude

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<sup>69</sup> Hunter, 'The Text of William Hunter's Lectures', p.43.

<sup>70</sup> Hunter, 'The Text of William Hunter's Lectures', p.44.

<sup>71</sup> Shanhagan, *The Exhibition*, p.63.

towards sculpture in the early 1770s, and to impose rigid rules and doctrines where before a mixture of styles, aesthetics and objects had characterised the display of sculpture at the Academy's exhibitions.

It is perhaps no coincidence that Reynolds' defiant speech was the first to be delivered at the Academy's new home, Somerset House. Completed in 1780 the building marked a new era for the Academy and it would seem that Reynolds saw it as an ideal opportunity to reassert the aesthetic values and principles upon which the institution had originally been founded. Reynolds pronounced that

The grave and austere character of Sculpture requires the utmost degree of formality in composition; picturesque contrasts have here no place; everything is carefully weighted and measured, one side making almost an exact equipoise to the other, a child is not a proper balance to a full-grown figure, nor is figure seating or stooping a companion to an upright figure.<sup>72</sup>

For Reynolds, sculpture was to be above all 'formal, regular and austere', in which all contrasts 'of one figure to another, or of the limbs to a single figure, or even in the fold of drapery, must be sparingly employed'.<sup>73</sup> As we have seen, in the design of his monument to Guy, Bacon appears to have systematically flouted such attitudes to sculptural formation. He showed the Lazar seated, his legs extending out into the viewer's space and beyond the frame of the narrative, whilst Guy is seen 'stooping' down to his aid. The unbalanced nature of Bacon's monument was further complicated by the sculptor's use of a relief for the background. Whilst Reynolds had recognised the success modern sculptors had made in the field of basso-relievos, he nonetheless criticised the 'imaginary improvement of the moderns' in using perspective in such designs:

all must recollect how ineffectual has been the attempt of modern Sculptors to turn the buildings which they have introduced as seen from their angle, with a view to make them appear to recede from the eye in perspective. This, though it may shew indeed their eager desire to encounter difficulties, shews at the same time how inadequate their materials are even to this their great humble ambition.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse X' (1780), p.176.

<sup>73</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse X' (1780), p.187.

<sup>74</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse X' (1780), p.186.

It was a complaint which again evokes Bacon's monument to Guy, in which the depiction of the hospital in the background shows what Reynolds would have considered to be an 'ineffectual' use of perspective, detrimental to the required 'regularity and firmness of effect'.<sup>75</sup>

Although the composition of Bacon's monument to Guy appears to have blatantly contradicted Reynolds' understanding of the Grand Manner, it was in the animation of his figures, as Shanhagan had also noted, that the sculptor most profoundly clashed with the President's aesthetics. For Reynolds, 'faultless, ideal beauty' was the primary pursuit of sculpture;

It may be thought at the first view, that even this form, however perfectly represented, is to be valued and take its rank for the sake of a still higher object, that of conveying sentiment and character, as they are exhibited by attitude, and expression of the passions. But we are sure from experience, that the beauty of form alone, without the assistance of any other quality, makes itself a great work, and justly claims our esteem and admiration.<sup>76</sup>

In the case of the Lazar in Bacon's monument to Guy, however, the opposite appears to have been the case. The sculptor passionately sought to communicate with spectators through the language of sentiment and characterisation. Indeed, Bacon intentionally contradicted ideal beauty in order to ensure that his figure of the Lazar spoke dramatically and convincingly to spectators about the effects of disease on the body.

Bacon looked to make such expressions and sentiments seem all the more potent by locating Guy's benevolent deeds in a modern context - his depiction of the philanthropist standing before the hospital he founded creates a profound sense of immediacy for spectators. However, in this Bacon was again at odds with Reynolds' ambitions for the sculptural medium. The Academy's president declared that use of contemporary clothing was a 'folly' as,

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<sup>75</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse X' (1780), p.186.

<sup>76</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse X' (1780), p.177.

WORKING in stone is a very serious business; and it seems to be scarce worth while to employ such durable materials in conveying to posterity a fashion of which the longest existence is scarce a year.<sup>77</sup>

It was a proclamation which echoed Reynolds earlier suggestion that in portraiture an artist should

divest himself of all prejudices in favour of his age or country; he must disregard all local and temporary ornaments, and look only to those general habits which are every where and always the same. He addresses his works to the people of every country and every age; he calls upon posterity to be his spectators, and says with Zeuxis, *in aeternitatem pingo*.<sup>78</sup>

In addition to contemporary clothing and setting, the sculptor also gave his figure a highly sentimental and animated pose. Bacon used 'modern affectation' in his figure of Guy to help animate his character, using his interaction with the Lazar as a means to promote the philanthropist's benevolence. It was an method of characterisation supported by William Combe in his 1777 *Poetical Epistle to Sir Joshua Reynolds* in which he argued that the

Addition of Character, whether Historical, Allegorical, Domestic, or Professional, calls forth new sentiments to the Picture: for by seeing Persons represented with an appearance suited to them, or in employments natural to their situation, our ideas are multiplied, and branch forth into a pleasing variety, which a representation of a formal Figure, however strong the resemblance maybe, can never afford.<sup>79</sup>

Whilst Bacon had attempted to classicise his depiction of the Lazar through clothing his figure in swirling drapery, the sculptor's portrayal would have again caused Reynolds distress. Tackling the issue directly Reynolds observed that

The folly of attempting to make stone sport and flutter in the air, is so apparent, that it carries with it its own reprehension; and yet to

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<sup>77</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse X' (1780), p.187.

<sup>78</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse III' (1770), p.49.

<sup>79</sup> William Combe, *A Poetical Epistle to Sir Joshua Reynolds Knt, & President of the Royal Academy* (London, 1777), p.ii.

accomplish this, seemed to be the great ambition of many modern Sculptors.<sup>80</sup>

Although the Lazar's voluminous drapery served to emphasise the figure's emaciated form, framing his body against the backdrop of the hospital, Bacon nonetheless instilled within it a profound sense of energy. The robe appears to be slipping off the Lazar's shoulder as he reaches upwards to the figure of Guy, yet it falls with an unnatural, almost weightless, 'flutter'. The effortless flow of the Lazar's drapery contrasted with the static and weary form of the figure's body, a contrast which appeared to have more in common with Roger de Piles' suggestion that drapery should possess 'a sort of contradiction, that seems to animate' because 'contrast is a kind of war, that puts the opposite parts in motion'.<sup>81</sup> For Reynolds, however, artists who used this exaggerated sense of motion 'risked every thing that was valuable in the art' and in the process eliminated a sense of balanced decorum.<sup>82</sup>

### *An alternative aesthetic*

In jeopardising all that was 'valuable' in his medium, Bacon critically undermined some of the Academy's most cherished doctrines regarding taste and the reception of works of art. Indeed, it would seem that Bacon was deliberately positioning himself in opposition to some of the Academy's primary ambitions for sculpture, pioneering an alternative vision for his medium from within the Academy. From the outset of his time at the Academy Bacon had taken an ambivalent stance towards the doctrines of the organisation; balancing the development of his Academic career against his position as a designer for manufacture. The artist's continued association with the Society of Arts confirmed this sense of tension, reinforcing the ways in which the sculptor identified as much with the professional practices of manufactures as with the

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<sup>80</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse X' (1780), pp.182-183.

<sup>81</sup> Roger de Piles, *The Principles of Painting, under the head of Anatomy, Attitude, Accident, Architecture, Composition, Claro-obscuro, Colouring, Design, Disposition, Draperies, Expression, Harmony, History, Invention, Landskip, Lights, Proportions, Passion, Portraiture, Sculpture, Style, Truth, Unity &c. In which is contained an Account of the Athenian, Roman, Venetian, and Flemish Schools* (London, 1743), p.112.

<sup>82</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse X' (1780), p.183



aspirations of the Royal Academy. Whilst Bacon encouraged the perception that his style was profoundly English, capitalising upon the patriotic appeal of being a 'native' sculptor, he nonetheless owed much to the art of his predecessors, who in the main were foreigners. Like the creations of artists such as Roubiliac, Cheere, Cibber, Rysbrack and the Scheemakers', Bacon's Thomas Guy monument and his diploma piece championed animation, expression and the display of contemporary sentiments. Indeed, as we have seen, Bacon appears to have readily drawn upon the works of his foreign predecessors: he followed aspects of Peter Scheemakers statue of Thomas Guy for his later monument and closely mimicked Cibber's portrayal of *Raving Madness* in his depiction of *Madness* for the main pediment of the hospital's new facade. Whilst such predecessors might have been foreign, for Bacon they were nonetheless instrumental in forming a British style and tradition in sculpture; one which he obviously felt was worthy of emulation and continuance.

Whilst Bacon's equivocal relationship with the theories and doctrines espoused by the Royal Academy brought criticism upon the sculptor, his expressive and animated style ensured he was to become one of the period's most successful sculptors. After being made a full Academician in 1778 and completing his monument to Thomas Guy in 1779, Bacon was fortunate enough to secure some of the most important public commissions of the period. His sentimental and sympathetic aesthetic spoke eloquently to audiences in the latter half of the eighteenth century and, as the next chapter of this thesis will demonstrate, by the mid 1780s Bacon was the country's foremost sculptor of public monuments. However, whereas Bacon's revisionist attack on the aesthetics of the Academy in 1779 was rather limited and covert, his increased status and confidence in the 1780s saw the sculptor's agenda pitted in direct opposition to Reynolds' ideals.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **PLEASING THE PUBLIC: BACON'S MONUMENTS TO THE EARL OF CHATHAM 1779-1784**

Having completed his training with the Royal Academy Bacon was successful in winning some of the period's most important public commissions. Indeed, as one biographer reminded his readers,

In the thirteen different competitions with rival artists, Mr. Bacon had twelve times the extraordinary happiness to bear away from his competitors the prize of preference; a decisive and unequivocal proof of superior and uncommon merit.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter will consider the basis of Bacon's 'superior and uncommon merit' by focusing upon two of the most significant contributions the artist made to public sculpture in the period: his monuments to the Earl of Chatham at the Guildhall (1782), commissioned by the City of London's Common Council and that at Westminster Abbey (1784) commissioned by Parliament (fig.58 & 59).

The Chatham commemorations were the first public monuments to be commissioned in almost twenty years.<sup>2</sup> For many they heralded a new era in public art. Valentine Green declared in 1782 that he knew of no

striking instance in the line of Sculpture, on which Public Patronage had shed its influence, excepting those of the Statue of the late Earl of Chatham, erected in the Guildhall of the City of London, [and] his Monument preparing for Westminster Abbey.<sup>3</sup>

Green hoped that such 'Acts of Public Munificence' would 'operate in favour of sterling Genius' and in turn shine 'a lasting splendour' on 'National Generosity, and Discernment'.<sup>4</sup> Whilst the monuments commissioned by the City and Parliament were seen to be venerating a worthy and celebrated hero, they were also more generally understood to be contributing to the development of a

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<sup>1</sup> Anon, 'Modern Improvements in the Arts', *The British Magazine and Review: or Universal Miscellany of Arts, Sciences, Literature, History, Biography, Entertainment, Poetry, Politics, Manners, Amusements and Intelligence Foreign and Domestic*, 3 vols. (October, 1782), I, p.257.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Wilton's monument to General Wolfe in Westminster Abbey was the last monument to be commissioned by Parliament in 1759, although not erected until 1772.

<sup>3</sup> Valentine Green, *Review of the Polite Arts in France at the Time of their Establishment under Louis the XIVth, compared with their Present State in England* (London, 1782), p.57.

<sup>4</sup> Green, *Review of the Polite Arts*, p.57.

sculptural tradition in England: one reviewer claiming that the Westminster monument

will remain to after-ages as an honourable testimony to the merit of departed worth, so it will at the same time serve as a memorial to mark to posterity the improvement and perfection of the arts in Great Britain at the present time.<sup>5</sup>

The prestige of the commissions thus offered Bacon the perfect opportunity to showcase his abilities as a sculptor and, as one commentator recognised, to ‘boldly call upon his contemporaries, to equal the present effort in his art, fearless of a competitor, and confident in the success of his challenge’.<sup>6</sup>

Whilst the Chatham monuments have been briefly discussed by other scholars, none have presented close readings of the pieces, nor considered the works within the context of Bacon’s developing career.<sup>7</sup> This chapter will seek to redress this neglect, considering in detail the designs of the monuments, their patronage and the reception they ultimately received from the public. In conjunction with such concerns this chapter will also consider the development of Bacon’s sculptural aesthetic and the unconventional decisions he made in the designs of both works. Such issues will be related to an essay Bacon wrote in 1783 entitled, ‘On Sculpture’. The essay, printed in Abraham Rees, *Cyclopaedia: or a Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* and abridged a year later for *The Artist’s Repository and Drawing Magazine*, offered an emphatic defence of the artist’s distinctive sculptural style.<sup>8</sup>

In the essay Bacon controversially championed the art of modern sculptors over the ancients and located the basis of good art in a union of ‘great

<sup>5</sup> Anon, *The European Magazine* (April, 1784), p.248.

<sup>6</sup> Anon, *The European Magazine* (April, 1784), p.248.

<sup>7</sup> Myrone, *Bodybuilding: Reforming Masculinities*, pp.208-211. Phillip Ward-Jackson, *Public Sculpture of the City of London* (Liverpool, 2003), pp.166-170.

<sup>8</sup> Bacon ‘On Sculpture’, *Cyclopaedia*, IV, under (S), no pagination. John Bacon, ‘Of Sculpture’, *The Artist’s Repository and Drawing Magazine*, 5 vols. (London, 1784-94), III, pp.124-127. The work was also included without reference to Bacon’s authorship in John Guy’s, *Miscellaneous Selections: or the Rudiments of Useful Knowledge, from the First Authorities, Designed for Senior Scholars in Schools and for Young Persons in General. Containing Useful Information on a Variety of Subjects not to be found in any Book of General Use, in Schools; and yet by all Persons, Necessary to be Known*, 2 vols. (Bristol, 1796), I, pp.194-205. Also Appendix 1 of this thesis.

expression' with 'great beauty'.<sup>9</sup> Written a year after the erection of the Guildhall monument and a year before the Westminster commemoration was completed, Bacon's essay clearly delineated and justified the stylistic decisions the sculptor had made in the designs of the two works. More specifically, viewed together the Guildhall monument, the Westminster monument and the essay 'On Sculpture', offered a vivid and forceful rebuttal of contemporary sculptural values. Following the precedent of his monument to Thomas Guy, the works suggest that Bacon was actively seeking to forge a new vocabulary for public sculpture in the period. By considering all three works together this chapter will assess the sculptor's aspirations for his medium, explore his desire to redefine the parameters of allegorical sculpture, and think afresh about sculptural taste in the 1780s.

### *The 'irreparable loss' of the Earl of Chatham*

The decision to erect two separate monuments to Chatham was provoked by the conflicting demands of Parliament and the Court of the Common Council, the municipal governing body for the City of London. However, both monumental schemes were united in their desire to publicly commemorate the Earl of Chatham's virtuous and sacrificial achievements for the nation. Chatham had long been venerated for his success in expanding Britain's commercial interests, for saving the country from a miserable defeat in the Seven Years War and for his infallible sense of moral integrity.<sup>10</sup> He was celebrated for having managed to 'persuade this nation that they were *irresistible* and *invincible*... [whilst also living] to *prove* to the *truth* of what he *foretold*' and praised for being 'Above temptation, and unaw'd by pow'r'.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Bacon 'On Sculpture', *Cyclopaedia*, IV, under (S), no pagination.

<sup>10</sup> However as Marie Peters has highlighted this perception was clearly exaggerated. See Marie Peters, 'The Myth of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham: Part One – Pitt and Imperial Expansion 1738-1763', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 21 (1993), pp.31-74.

<sup>11</sup> Anon, *Characters Containing an Impartial Review of the Public Conduct and Abilities of the Most Eminent Personages in the Parliament of Great Britain: Considered as Statesmen, Senators, and Public Speakers* (London, 1779), p.36. Anon, 'The Machine', *Gentleman's Magazine* (Jan, 1757), p.34.

In 1778 Chatham had died at seventy years of age, after dramatically collapsing in the House of Lords whilst attempting to dissuade the Duke of Richmond from withdrawing troops from America. Chatham had long prophesised the difficulties Britain would face if Parliament did not concede on the issues fundamental to American liberty: no taxation without consent, trial by jury, independent judges and the acceptance of a United States Congress. Considered by many at the time to be mere hyperbole, Chatham's suggestions consequently made little impact on the government's policy towards the American colonies.<sup>12</sup> Chatham nonetheless defended his position on America until his death, declaring just before his collapse in the House of Lords that although 'he was exceedingly ill',

as long as he could crawl down to that house, and had strength to raise himself on his crutches, or to lift his hand, he would vote against giving up the dependency of America on the sovereignty of Great Britain; and if no other lord was of opinion with him, he would singly protest against the measure.<sup>13</sup>

Britain's ultimate defeat by the Americans saw Chatham posthumously lamented as the only figure who could have saved the nation's dignity. As Horace Walpole waspishly noted in a letter to Horace Mann a few weeks after the Earl's death, 'All England, which had abandoned him, found out, the moment his eyes were closed, that nothing but Lord Chatham could have preserved them'.<sup>14</sup>

Walpole's comments reflected the reality of Chatham's position at the time of his death. Since his disastrous administration of 1766-1768 Chatham had remained politically isolated, a factor which in combination with his declining health meant he was unable to effect any significant changes in governmental policy. The myth of Chatham, however, endured in the country's collective psyche, sustained and extended by the numerous eulogies, poems and

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<sup>12</sup> He had almost no personal following mainly owing to his refusal to form an alliance with the Rockingham party.

<sup>13</sup> Anon, *The Biographical Magazine. Containing Portraits and Characters of Eminent and Ingenious Persons of Every Age and Nation* (London, 1794), p.27.

<sup>14</sup> 'Letter To Sir Horace Mann, (May 31, 1778), in *The Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Oxford*, ed. by Peter Cunningham, 9 vols. (London, 1877), VII, pp.74-75.

biographies published in the wake of his death. Thomas Hastings' 1778 poem *The Tears of Britannia* wrote of how,

Thy fate, O CHATHAM, myriads now deplore;  
 And men now weep, unus'd to weep before!  
 Britannia's firmest FRIEND, her hope is fled;  
 And PITT, alas! is numbered with the dead!  
 Weep, Britons, weep; 'tis now your time to mourn.  
 The brightest sun, again shall ne'er return.<sup>15</sup>

One later commentator on Chatham's legacy took a less sentimental, though equally extreme view of the Earl's death, suggesting that the 'critical moment' at which it had happened threatened 'to circumscribe the extent and lessen the power of this once-flourishing empire'.<sup>16</sup>

#### *Commissioning the monuments*

Following Chatham's death on 11 May 1778, a little under a month after his collapse in the Lords, Parliament unanimously decided that, in addition to a state funeral, a monument should also be erected 'at public expense... with an inscription expressive of the sentiments and feelings of the House for so irreparable[sic] a loss'.<sup>17</sup> The scheme received the support of the King on 12 May, who in addition to offering his approbation asked that the inscription be 'worded as a testimony of gratitude for his rousing the Nation at the beginning of the last War, and his conduct whilst at that period he held the Seals of the Secretary of State'.<sup>18</sup>

Parliament's decision to bury Chatham at Westminster and commission a monument in his honour, whilst warmly received, was seen by some to be

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Hastings, *The Tear of Britannia; a Poem, on the Much Lamented Death of William Earl of Chatham* (London, 1778), p.1.

<sup>16</sup> Anon, 'Modern Improvements in the Arts', *The British Magazine* (Oct., 1782), I, p.252.

<sup>17</sup> *The Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* (Wednesday May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1778). Also see John Almon, *Anecdotes of the Life of the Right Hon. William Pitt, Earl of Chatham and the Principle Events of his Life*, 2 vols. (London, 1792), II, pp.183-185.

<sup>18</sup> For North's letter to the King, see *The Gentleman's Magazine* (May, 1778), p.236. For the King's reply, see 'George III to Lord Fredrick North' in *The Correspondences of the King George the Third from 1760 to December 1783*, ed. by John Fortescue, 6 vols. (London, 1928), IV, pp.138-9.

insincere. As Walpole shrewdly noted days after Chatham's death, neither the government nor the opposition 'care a straw about him. He is already as much forgotten as John of Gaunt'.<sup>19</sup> It was a perception which in many ways reflected both the isolation of the Earl's position at the time of his death and the annoyance he had become to the government. Indeed, the hyperbolic veneration the death of Chatham had fostered was potentially embarrassing for Prime Minister Frederick North and his administration. Decisions and misjudgements made by North's government (1770-1782) had led to significant military failings in the war against America, and the impact of such defeats must only have been magnified when considered alongside Chatham's earlier achievements in expanding Britain's commercial empire.

If, however, Chatham remained a difficult figure for the current administration to commemorate, for the City of London he was still seen to be the infallible father of commerce and a true patriot commoner. Indeed, whilst Chatham's authority and influence in Parliament had waned in the latter years of his life, he continued to enjoy the City's admiration and support. Having 'so gloriously protected the commerce of this country' and proven he was independent of aristocratic society, Chatham was seen to be working in the City's very best interests.<sup>20</sup>

On 22 May 1778 the City's Common Council presented a 'humble petition' to Parliament requesting that 'the remains of the Earl of Chatham be deposited in the Cathedral church of St. Paul, in the city of London' as a mark of gratitude and veneration 'toward the statesman whose vigour and counsel had so much contributed to the protection and extension of commerce'.<sup>21</sup> It was a request which undoubtedly reflected a genuine desire to 'share in the expressions of public veneration to a minister, so exemplary for his integrity, ability and virtue'.<sup>22</sup> However, it is clear that the City also perceived their affection for

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<sup>19</sup> Letter To Sir Horace Mann (May 31, 1778), in *The Letters of Horace Walpole*, VII, pp.74-75.

<sup>20</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* (June, 1778), p.283.

<sup>21</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* (May, 1778), p.237.

<sup>22</sup> 'To the King's Most Excellent Majesty: The Humble Address and Petition of the Lord Mayor, Alderman and Commons of the City of London, in Common Council Assembled', in *Anecdotes of the Life of the Right Hon. William Pitt*, II, Appendix, p.153.



Chatham to be a more honest and sincere form of approbation than that of Parliament.

In a bid to further their case the Common Council extended their request on 5 June to the King, begging his influence on the matter in the hope that they may be 'admitted to share in the expression of public veneration'.<sup>23</sup> Commenting again on the situation Walpole sarcastically noted that 'the city want to bury Lord Chatham in St. Paul's which as a person said to me this morning, would literally be "robbing Peter to pay Paul"'.<sup>24</sup> The City's request was refused, George III stating in a letter to the Common Council that preparations had already been made for the Earl's internment at Westminster Abbey.<sup>25</sup> Parliament consequently continued with its own scheme to erect a monument to Chatham at Westminster, and in March 1779 confirmed their choice of John Bacon as the sculptor for the project. He was awarded nearly £6000 to complete the work which was to be 30ft high and to be placed in the north transept of the Abbey.

Bacon had secured the commission with the help of Royal favour, being personally recommended by George III after showing a model of the monument to the King.<sup>26</sup> Bacon had recently found favour with George III after completing a bust of the King, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1774 (fig.60). Pleased by Bacon's work the King requested three further copies of the piece.<sup>27</sup> According to an anecdote told by Nollekens' biographer, John Smith, Bacon had found particular favour with George III for his courteous behaviour in front of the monarch:

A modeller keeps his clay moist by spirting water over it; and this he does by standing at a little distance with his mouth filled with water, which he spurts upon it, so that the water is sent into all the recesses of

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<sup>23</sup> 'To the King's Most Excellent Majesty', in *Anecdotes of the Life of the Right Hon. William Pitt*, II, Appendix, p.153.

<sup>24</sup> 'Letter To the Rev William Cole', (May 2, 1778), in *The Letters of Horace Walpole*, VII, pp.69-70.

<sup>25</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* (June, 1778), p.282. Anon, 'His Majesty's Answer', in *Anecdotes of the Life of the Right Hon. William Pitt*, II, Appendix, p.154.

<sup>26</sup> Anon, 'Modern Improvements in the Arts', *The British Magazine* (Oct., 1782), I, p.257.

<sup>27</sup> Copies can be found at Christ Church, Oxford, the Royal Collection, the University of Gottingen, and the Society of Antiquaries.

his model before he covers it up; this, it is said, Nollekens did in the King's presence, without declaring what he was about to do. However, this was not the case with Mr. Bacon, the sculptor, who had provided a long silver syringe for that purpose, before attending the King, with which he could easily throw water into the recesses of the model, without making so disagreeable a noise in his Majesty's presence.<sup>28</sup>

It is likely that Bacon also secured the King's favour on account of his patriotic identification as a 'Briton born, Briton bred', with the sculptor's domestic training offering tangible proof of the advantages that the Royal Academy, sponsored by the King, had afforded.<sup>29</sup>

### *Chatham and the City of London*

The decision to bury Chatham at Westminster was a disappointment to the Common Council, if perhaps not an unexpected one. It was even speculated that the decision had been influenced by North's refusal to promote the Earl's fame any further, one later reviewer claiming that

The minister, who wished as much as possible to detract from the reputation of that great statesman, did not choose to acquiesce in the [council's] demand: the funeral trophies were therefore banished into one of the most obscure corners of Westminster Abbey, where the effect is entirely lost.<sup>30</sup>

Relationships between the City and Parliament further soured when the Common Council was not given sufficient notice to attend the Earl's funeral on 8 June, despite specifically asking for the courtesy.<sup>31</sup> Disgruntled with being ignored and sidelined, the Common Council thus unanimously resolved that

a committee be now appointed to consider what further mark of respect is fit to perpetuate the memory of that excellent and disinterested statesman, in the time of whose administration the citizens of London never returned from the throne dissatisfied.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> John Thomas Smith, *Nollekens and his Time* (1828 repr. London, 1949), p.39.

<sup>29</sup> *The Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* (Saturday April 25<sup>th</sup>, 1778), p.2.

<sup>30</sup> Johann Wilhelm von Archenholz, *A Picture of England: Containing a Description of the Laws, Customs, and Manner of England* (London, 1789), p.138.

<sup>31</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* (June, 1778), pp.283. See also *Anecdotes of the Life of the Right Hon. William Pitt, II*, Appendix, p.155.

<sup>32</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* (June, 1778), pp.283-284.

One month later on 9 July the committee requested a model for a monument from John Bacon and a painting from Benjamin West.<sup>33</sup> During the 1770s West, like Bacon, had also developed a strong reputation as one of the King's artists, having been commissioned to paint a series of biblical pictures that had recently been installed in the Royal Chapel at Windsor Castle. In choosing West and Bacon the City appeared to be ensuring that they had the very best artists involved in their scheme; the prestige of commissioning the King's current favourites elevating the status of their commemorative plans. The choice of Bacon and West was perhaps also a conciliatory gesture on the part of the City, who did not want their plan to commemorate Chatham to appear disloyal to the King, despite their problems with Parliament.

On 28 October 1778 both artists submitted works for the approval of the committee, who determined that a work of sculpture would be a more appropriate and enduring means of commemoration.<sup>34</sup> This decision was not, however, universally approved, with Alderman John Boydell going so far as to express his disapproval in a pamphlet. Addressed directly *To the Lord Mayor, Alderman and Common Council-men of the City of London*, Boydell's pamphlet highlighted the benefits of a painting over a work of sculpture, forcefully arguing that a statue with emblematical figures would be 'understood by very few' and that a description would have to be in the 'hands of most who would understand the Meaning'.<sup>35</sup>

Boydell's objections to the erection of a statue at the Guildhall were part of a well rehearsed argument, which pitted the immediacy of paintings depicting contemporary events against the obscurity of allegorical and idealised classical sculpture. Just twenty years earlier, a comparable debate had raged around the

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<sup>33</sup> *Minutes of the Committee for Erecting a Monument to the Earl of Chatham*, London, Corporation of London Records Office, Misc. Mss., 55/28, (9<sup>th</sup> July, 1778).

<sup>34</sup> *Minutes*, C.L.R.O, Misc. Mss., 55/28, (28<sup>th</sup> October, 1778). Although it would seem the decision in favour of a work of sculpture had been made as early as June, when the committee resolved that 'Sculpture is most fit to perpetuate the Memory of the Late Earl of Chatham'. See *Minutes*, C.L.R.O Misc.Mss., 55/28, (Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 1778).

<sup>35</sup> John Boydell, *To the Lord Mayor, Alderman and Common Council-Men of the City of London*, (London, June, 1779), p.2.

most appropriate manner in which to commemorate General James Wolfe. As Martin Myrone has detailed, the proposal for a monument to the fallen hero had, like the Chatham commission, raised doubts about the validity of using allegory to celebrate a modern figure.<sup>36</sup> After much debate, Joseph Wilton was ultimately awarded the commission for a design which pointedly stressed a sense of contemporaneity (fig.61). However, despite Wilton's concessions the monument was overshadowed when Benjamin West exhibited his painting *The Death of General Wolfe* in 1771 (fig.62).<sup>37</sup> The painting offered a vivid contemporary representation of Wolfe's heroic death in the assault on Quebec in September 1759 and appeared to offer unequivocal proof of both the superior value of painting and of a contemporary subject matter.<sup>38</sup>

Boydell must have had the success of West's painting in mind when he proposed the superiority of a painting of *The Death of the Lord of Chatham in the House of Lords*. Indeed, the printmaker had made a significant amount of money after securing, in November 1772, the right to sell engravings after West's *The Death of General Wolfe*. Boydell no doubt had similar aspirations in mind for his suggested *Death of Chatham*, which he argued was

worthy of the Pencil of the greatest painter – The Attitude of a dying Man falling into the Arms of those near him - the sorrow and confusion that such a Accident must create – the portraits of our most noted Nobility that were there at the time – the Expressions of the various Passions – the rich Dresses – The Opportunity that a Painter has of grouping his figures, by the Confusion that must be in the House upon the Occasion; every thing tends to make it as capital a Subject as ever was painted.<sup>39</sup>

Whilst Boydell's objections to a work of sculpture were pertinent, and he was successful in delaying the Guildhall's commemorative scheme for over a year, his efforts ultimately failed.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, even Boydell had to acknowledge that sculpture was a more durable medium than painting, conceding in his pamphlet

<sup>36</sup> Myrone, *Bodybuilding: Reforming Masculinities*, p.28-29.

<sup>37</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this event see Myrone, *Bodybuilding: Reforming Masculinities*, pp.105-110.

<sup>38</sup> For a more detailed discussion on West's painting, see Solkin, *Painting for Money*, pp.209-213.

<sup>39</sup> Boydell, *To the Lord Mayor*, p.3.

<sup>40</sup> *Minutes*, C.L.R.O., Misc.Mss 55/28, (Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 1778).

that a work of sculpture would 'last longer' and 'that it will not be so subject to Decay'; although, in the same pamphlet, Boydell attempted to counter such claims by stating that 'various Accidents' may also 'happen to deface or destroy a Statue beyond repair'.<sup>41</sup>

Despite the arguments in favour of painting, it is clear that sculpture was still considered to be a more distinguished and appropriate medium for commemoration in the period: the Common Council believing that sculpture was 'most fit to perpetuate the Memory of the Late Earl of Chatham'.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, the cost alone of a monumental sculpture gave the medium gravitas. The Common Council may also have wanted to steer away from the type of commercialism which was often associated with painting, preferring to commission a work of art which could not be readily reproduced and thus was not seen to be making money out of the dead politician's fame. In choosing to commemorate Chatham with a work of sculpture the Common Council, moreover, were able to complement the recently erected monument to William Beckford (fig.63). Beckford's monument had been commissioned in 1770 to celebrate his speech defending British liberty. The monument, designed by John Francis Moore, depicted Beckford in mid speech, accompanied on either side by allegories of the 'City of London' and 'Trade and Navigation'.<sup>43</sup> It was the first monument the City had commissioned for the Guildhall and, together with the Chatham commemoration, may have been intended to form part of larger scheme to establish a pantheon for some of the City's most noteworthy citizens.

After the various setbacks had been negotiated, the decision to sponsor a work of sculpture was finally officially secured on 28 December 1779 when Bacon signed an agreement to execute a monument; the decision having been made with just one dissenting voice.<sup>44</sup> Bacon was given four years to complete

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<sup>41</sup> Boydell, *To the Lord Mayor*, pp.1-2.

<sup>42</sup> *Minutes*, C.L.R.O Misc.Mss., 55/28, (Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 1778).

<sup>43</sup> On the base of the Beckford monument in the inscription, Moore also included a section of Beckford's famous speech.

<sup>44</sup> *Minutes*, C.L.R.O., Misc.Mss 55/28, (28<sup>th</sup> December, 1779). Bacon had also previously beaten Copley in 1778 when he was successful in being made a full Royal Academician over the painter.

the commission, which was to follow the design he had submitted to the committee on 3 December 1778:

the size of the principle figures to be nearly seven feet; the figures of Britannia and the City of London exceeding six feet, and the figure of Commerce five feet six inches and the other figures proportionate – the whole expence thereof including the Erection not to exceed the Sum of Three Thousand pounds.<sup>45</sup>

The differing scales specified for the figures reflected both their respective positions within the composition of the monument and their relative level of importance. Chatham was the largest and hence most important figure, whilst Britannia and the City of London were scaled to emphasise their significance over minor allegories in the piece such as Commerce. The monument was destined for the north side of the Guildhall near the hustings, opposite the recently erected monument to Beckford: a position which saw Chatham's defence of British commercial interests complementing Beckford's defence of British liberty.

### *The Guildhall monument*

The choice of Bacon for both commissions, given the antagonism expressed between the two institutions, is perhaps surprising. It was a factor Boydell noted when arguing for a commemorative painting over a piece of sculpture, questioning whether because of the difference in the amount of money ascribed for the two schemes, the City should 'run the hazard of having an inferior one?'<sup>46</sup> However, it was a gamble the Common Council were evidently prepared to make, choosing Bacon almost in defiance of Parliament's decision.

The Guildhall monument, costing almost half the amount of the Westminster commission, was the first work to be erected, being officially unveiled and opened to the public on 10 October 1782 (see fig.58).<sup>47</sup> The monument appears to have been finished to the satisfaction of the City and

<sup>45</sup> *Minutes*, C.L.R.O., Misc.Mss 55/28, (28<sup>th</sup> December, 1779).

<sup>46</sup> Boydell, *To the Lord Mayor*, p.2.

<sup>47</sup> *Public Advertiser*, (Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October, 1782), p.2

whilst there were those who did ‘not think it beyond the just Value’ the Court of the Common Council voted Bacon an extra £150 as

It appears to us that it was executed in a most masterly manner...that Mr. Bacon had greatly exceeded his original contract having enlarged the figures, added many ornaments and placed a pyramid behind the monument of Broccadilla marble; which has been attended with an additional expense to him, and to a considerable amount.<sup>48</sup>

The work also received significant public acclaim, being celebrated as ‘an excellent piece of sculpture’ and proof of Bacon’s ‘ingenious’ skill as an artist.<sup>49</sup>

To celebrate the completion of the work, various journals printed articles to commemorate the occasion: the most substantial being written for *The British Magazine and Review* in October 1782.<sup>50</sup> The essay, covering six pages, started with a three page discussion of Chatham’s career, highlighting the Earl’s ‘conspicuous’ abilities and charting the high and lows of his political endeavours. The essay proceeded to offer an account of the commissioning and design of the monument, complemented by an engraving of the piece (fig.64). In the account the magazine claimed that

to say generally that this Monument is well executed, will be to fall infinitely short of its deserved praise; to point out all its beauties, would be a task much above out abilities... it may be, on the whole pronounced a work of the highest merit, reflecting an equal degree of honour on the patrons and the artist.<sup>51</sup>

In conclusion, the review offered a two page summary of the development of Bacon’s artistic career. It was the first time Bacon’s credentials had been recounted in this manner, recording his initial training with Nicholas Crisp, his achievements in winning premiums at the Society of Arts and his accomplishment in winning the Academy’s first gold medal. The review noted

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<sup>48</sup> *Public Advertiser*, (Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October, 1782), p.2. *Minutes*, C.L.R.O., Misc.Mss 55/28, (12<sup>th</sup> November, 1782).

<sup>49</sup> Anon, ‘Modern Improvements in the Arts’, *The British Magazine* (Oct., 1782), I, p.254.

<sup>50</sup> See Appendix 2 of this thesis.

<sup>51</sup> Anon, ‘Modern Improvements in the Arts’, *The British Magazine* (Oct., 1782), I, p.255.

Bacon's 'Statues of Mars and Venus; Colossal Bust of Jupiter; Colossal Statue of Thames' and recorded his success in winning the commission for the Thomas Guy monument. The essay also described the sculptor's achievement in securing Royal patronage and his gift of *Mars* and *Venus* to the Society of Arts in 1778, including a copy of the letter he sent the Society thanking them for accepting his gift. For the editors of the magazine such accolades and attention clearly befitted the large and complex nature of the monument. Indeed, given the extra work Bacon put into the monument it is clear that the sculptor understood the potential significance a commission of this size and importance could have upon his reputation and career.

The monument, fulfilling Boydell's gloomy prophesy that various accidents might damage a work of sculpture, unfortunately suffered significant bomb damage during the Second World War and was altered when repaired. Most notably, the heads of Chatham and Commerce were replaced by crude plaster facsimiles of the originals, destroying the expressions and facial gestures of the two figures. The original Broccadilla marble backing was also removed in the nineteenth century when the monument was dismantled during refurbishments to the interior of the hall.<sup>52</sup> However, the essay in the *British Magazine and Review*, coupled with journalistic descriptions of Bacon's 1778 clay model and engravings of the piece offer a helpful picture of the sculptor's original intentions.

Describing Bacon's original model for the monument, an anonymous reviewer for the *St James' Chronicle* in 1779 offered a vivid description of the work's narrative;

Lord Chatham holding the Cap of Liberty, leaning on a Rudder, the Emblem of the Office of the Prime Minister; his looks are directed to the City with an inviting Complacency; the City is looking at his Lordship, and pointing at the same time, to the Figure of Commerce, who receives into his Protection the four Quarters of the world, who are pouring Plenty into the lap of Britannia. The leading Ideas of this Design are evidently these:- Showing Lord Chatham's Care of the Liberty of this Country, his Attention to Commerce, and the blessed

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<sup>52</sup> Phillip Ward-Jackson, *Public Sculpture of the City of London*, p.169.



Effects his Administration had on the Affluence and Happiness of this Nation. The Figures are pyramidically arranged and have a very beautiful Effect.<sup>53</sup>

Although Bacon relegated the cap of liberty noted in the model to the base of the monument where it hangs beneath the inscription, the Earl continues to lean against a rudder, controlling the helm of state (see fig.58). Bacon depicted Chatham wearing a loose fitting toga, a 'dress of fancy' which the reviewer for the *British Magazine and Review* claimed

will not be regretted by those who recollect the clumsy weight of the modern tight garments, and the fluctuating state of fashions in this country. This work is designed for ages yet to come...<sup>54</sup>

On Chatham's right Bacon positioned the seated figure of Commerce, who is paternalistically shielded by the Earl's right arm. Bacon depicted Commerce responding to Chatham's instinctual care with a child-like vulnerability, gently resting her body and head against his thigh. Around the figure of Commerce Bacon also included various nautical instruments, symbolic of the relationship between British commercial interests and the nation's naval dominance. In her right hand Commerce is seen holding a large round compass, while an anchor and sail are placed at her feet, all of which point to the global scale of trade developed under the leadership of Chatham. The engraving from the *British Magazine and Review* also shows that Commerce once held a top-mast in her left hand; an umbrella shaped object which made further references to Britain's commercial success and the country's dominance over maritime trade (fig.64).<sup>55</sup> Below the figures of Chatham and Commerce Bacon explored the 'blessed Effects his [Chatham's] Administration had on the Affluence and Happiness of this Nation' through four energetic allegorical putti.<sup>56</sup> Representing the four corners of the world, Bacon depicted the playful putti pouring 'plenty' from a

<sup>53</sup> *The St James' Chronicle or British Evening Post* (Thursday Dec 16<sup>th</sup> – Saturday Dec 18<sup>th</sup>, 1779), p.1.

<sup>54</sup> Anon, 'Modern Improvements in the Arts', *The British Magazine* (Oct., 1782), I, p.255.

<sup>55</sup> For a further reference to the top-mast see, Anon, *A Companion to the Principle Places of Curiosity and Entertainment in and about London and Westminster* (London, 1783), p.73.

<sup>56</sup> *The St James' Chronicle or British Evening Post* (Thursday Dec 16<sup>th</sup> – Saturday Dec 18<sup>th</sup>, 1779), p.1.

cornucopia into the lap of Britannia, who, with a shield, and originally a trident, leans confidently against a lion for support.

Bacon balanced the movement and animation created by the putti and overflowing cornucopia on the left hand side of the monument with the animated allegorical figure of the City of London on the right. As in the 1779 description of the model, the figure is shown reaching up towards the Earl and pointing at Commerce, to recommend her 'to his lordship's protection' or, as the critic for the *British Magazine and Review* described, 'to bespeak that protection which the position of his [Chatham's] arm shews [sic] him already inclined to afford her'.<sup>57</sup> Before the monument was damaged Chatham originally responded to City's urgency with an expression of 'benignity', as if sympathetically looking to alleviate and calm the allegorical figure's anxieties.<sup>58</sup> Chatham's pose is one of easy benevolence, paralleling popular perceptions of the Earl as a man who enjoyed a 'pure and untainted zeal for the public' which 'actuated his conduct, in preference to all the pageantry of office, or the huzzas of multitudes'.<sup>59</sup> However, although Chatham offers reassurance to the figure of the City, Bacon nevertheless emphasised that the animated figure was herself also capable of protecting Commerce. Indeed, Bacon gave City a proactive and militaristic means of defence, accompanied as she is by a shield, bearing the arms of the city, a cannon and pile of cannon balls. In arming the City of London Bacon pointedly suggested that Britain's commercial interests could be supported and maintained through a combination of London's civic strength and Chatham's political acumen. It was a view which mirrored the basis of Chatham's commercial policies, the politician claiming in his 1739 speech against the Spanish Convention, 'When trade is at stake, it is your last entrenchment; you must defend it or perish'.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Anon, 'Modern Improvements in the Arts', *The British Magazine* (Oct., 1782), I, p.255.

Anon, *A Companion to the Principle Places* (1783), p.73.

<sup>58</sup> Samuel Ireland, *Picturesque Views, with an Historical Account of the Inns of Court, in London and Westminster* (London, 1800), p.217.

<sup>59</sup> *The Public Advertiser* (Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October, 1782), p.2.

<sup>60</sup> William Pitt (Lord Chatham), 'Speech against the Spanish Convention in the House of Commons' (March 6<sup>th</sup> 1739) in *The Beauties of the British Senate: taken from the Debates of the Lords and Commons, from the Beginning of the Administration of Sir Robert Walpole, to the End of the Second Session of the Right Hon. William Pitt. To which is prefixed, the Life of Sir Robert Walpole*, by Anon. (London, 1786), p.16.

Although Britain's commercial interests needed to be protected and defended, Chatham also argued that they needed to be propagated. Indeed, throughout his political career Chatham had overseen proactive military campaigns in all the four quarters of the world and as a result Britain had gained substantial material wealth. Interestingly, however, in the monument it is the figure of the City who appears to take the lead in protecting Commerce: a factor further emphasised by the beehive, symbolic of industriousness, which Bacon positioned at the figure's feet. Chatham, in contrast, is characterised by Bacon as a responsive figure, tenderly cradling Commerce and gazing benevolently at the City. Significantly, he is not shown as an active orator or as a military leader, in fact, on first viewing, Bacon's design appears to suggest a lack of equality between the City and the Earl: the City eagerly and energetically making recommendations to Chatham. However, the 'complacency' and 'benignity' noted by contemporary reviewers in the face of Chatham suggests that the statesman's calm was rather a sign of his confidence and foresight.<sup>61</sup> This relaxed, yet self-assured, portrayal of Chatham in the monument was supported by the Earl's epitaph at the base.<sup>62</sup> Written by Edmund Burke, the inscription deliberately emphasised the role of war in securing Britain's commercial success and, as Bacon appears to have been suggesting, Chatham's 'wisdom' in *overseeing* such events:

In grateful acknowledgement to the supreme disposer of events; who intended to advance this nation, for such time as to his wisdom seem'd good, to a high pitch of prosperity and glory; by unanimity at home; by confidence and reputation abroad; by alliances wisely chosen and faithfully observed; by colonies united and protected; by decisive victories by sea and land; by conquest made by arms and generosity in every part of the globe, by commerce for the first time united with, and made to flourish by war...

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<sup>61</sup> *The Public Advertiser* (Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October, 1782), p.2. Samuel Ireland, *Picturesque Views*, p.217.

<sup>62</sup> Although Burke's inscription alluded in part to the sculptural narrative and aided the legibility of the allegorical sculpture, the epitaph was ultimately criticised as a rather 'dull, inanimate composition, very unworthy both of the subject and the Monument'. Anon, 'Modern Improvements in the Arts', *The British Magazine* (Oct., 1782), I, p.255.

In making the City, as one commentator noted, ‘the most active figure’ in the composition, Bacon was thus able to shrewdly highlight Chatham’s position as the benevolent ‘disposer of events’, whilst also affirming the City’s role in supporting and protecting Commerce.<sup>63</sup> The monument essentially offered an idealised vision of what the city imagined its role and relationship with government could be; one in which, as in the monument, it was fully supported by the genuine sympathy of a virtuous statesman. Burke reinforced this idyllic relationship in the second half of his epitaph to Chatham, declaring that,

The Mayor, Aldermen, and Common Council, mindful of the benefits which the City of London received in her ample share in the general prosperity, have erected to the memory of this eminent statesman and powerful orator this monument in her Guildhall: that her citizens may never meet for the transaction of their affairs, without being reminded, that the means by which Providence raises a nation to greatness, are the virtues infused into great men; and that to withhold from those virtues, either of the living or the dead, the tribute of esteem and veneration, is to deny to themselves the means of happiness and honour.

By the time Bacon was commissioned to design his monument to Chatham this harmonious relationship was in reality nothing more than a nostalgic vision of how things had once been. Indeed, by the 1780s relationships between the City and Parliament, as the debacle over Chatham’s burial testifies, had become strained and increasingly problematic. In this respect the design of the monument was intended, not only to recall better times for the City, but perhaps also to propagate a vision of how things could be in the future.

### *Allegory and animation at the Guildhall*

In portraying Chatham’s character in the Guildhall commission through classical allegory, Bacon had used a language which according to Winckelmann enabled the artist ‘to show himself a poet’ and to express ‘the character even of a whole person’.<sup>64</sup> For Reynolds the use of allegory produced ‘a greater variety of ideal beauty, a richer, a more various and delightful composition, and gives

<sup>63</sup> Anon, *A Companion to the Principle Places* (1783), p.73.

<sup>64</sup> Winckelmann, *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks*, p.57.

to the artist a greater opportunity of exhibiting his skill'.<sup>65</sup> Given the intended scale of the Guildhall commission it was judged to be the most appropriate language to apply; the sublime and poetic rhetoric of allegory making it eminently suitable for such a significant public monument. It was a choice which also closely corresponded with the ambitions of the committee, who wanted to celebrate *all* that Chatham had come to embody. In promoting the Earl's general achievements and virtues rather than commemorating any specific event it was hoped that the work would be able to 'live forever'.<sup>66</sup>

As already noted, the use of allegory in such works was not without its critics. For Boydell, Bacon's allegorical design had lacked the immediacy and ease of comprehension that a pictorial account of Chatham's collapse in the House of Lords would have offered. The Committee rejected Boydell's claims on the grounds that a painting, by being too specific in nature, would not have been able to convey Chatham's greater qualities, as 'an Encourager of Commerce, a Patron of public Liberty, and a zealous friend to the Citizens of London'.<sup>67</sup> Boydell had fiercely rebutted such suggestions claiming that a depiction of the death of Chatham in the House of Lords would 'revert back, and bring to Mind all his great and worthy Actions'.<sup>68</sup> His comments, however, were to no avail. Despite this Boydell remained resolute and, outside the jurisdiction of the Guildhall, commissioned a painting of Chatham's death from John Singleton Copley. The image was completed and exhibited in May 1781, recreating the drama and pathos Boydell had desired when he first proposed the idea to the Common Council (fig.65). The work, displayed at the Exhibition rooms at Spring Gardens, received substantial critical attention, one reviewer noting the profound impact the piece had made upon spectators, claiming that 'the general Effect of the Painting is astonishing; for the Room, whatever Number of People it contains, is silent, or the Company whisper as at the Bed of a sick Person'.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse VII' (1776), p.129

<sup>66</sup> Boydell, *To the Lord Mayor*, p.3.

<sup>67</sup> Boydell, *To the Lord Mayor*, p.3.

<sup>68</sup> Boydell, *To the Lord Mayor*, p.3.

<sup>69</sup> *The St James's Chronicle: or, British Evening Post* (Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> June – Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> June, 1781), p.4.

Promoted by Boydell in his 1779 pamphlet as everything that a work of allegorical sculpture was not, Copley's image certainly made a significant impact on the public when exhibited. Indeed, Bacon must have been anxious about the completion of Copley's animated painting, a work which, in many ways, looked to undermine the impact of his own sculptural creation, as Benjamin West's painting of the *Death of General Wolfe* had done to Wilton's monument in 1771. The sculptor must have also been acutely aware of the original debate between Boydell and the Common Council regarding the limitations of allegory and the superiority of painting as an expressive medium. Bacon, however, was the perfect sculptor to tackle such issues. The artist had proven, with his 1779 monument to Thomas Guy, that he was able to make sculpture both comprehensible and emotionally involving for spectators. Moreover, his passion for animation had managed to bring the figures in his sculptures to life, their expressive movements mirroring the type of picturesque contrasts Reynolds had argued was only suitable in painting.<sup>70</sup>

Bacon's confidence in reconciling the competing demands placed on the Guildhall commission can be measured by his speedy completion of the monument; the sculptor finishing the design over a year earlier than anticipated.<sup>71</sup> However, given the awareness Bacon had of his audiences and his astute ability to self-promote, this was likely to have been a calculated move. In pushing the completion date for the monument forward Bacon was able to capitalise upon the enthusiasm the Copley image had generated, creating a ground swell of anticipation for the unveiling of his sculpture a year later. Yet, whilst Bacon may have found it opportune to take advantage of the enthusiasm generated by Copley's painting, it is clear that in the design of his monument the sculptor had worked hard to marry the elevated and poetic language of allegory with a profound sense of animation, expression and emotion and to make his allegorical design both coherent and compelling.

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<sup>70</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse X' (1780), pp.175-176.

<sup>71</sup> After an inspection of the monument at Bacon's Newman Street studio on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> February 1782 the committee found the work in such a state of forwardness that it would be ready to put up in the Guildhall as soon as the basement was completed. It was reported to the committee that the monument was completely finished and in situ by Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> October 1782. *Minutes*, C.L.R.O., Misc/Mss 55/28 (Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> February, 1782) & (Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> October, 1782).

For clarity of understanding, Bacon had organised the figures in his monument in a graceful circular manner; leaving one critic of the work to question whether ‘the obvious simplicity of the composition, or the striking effect it immediately produces, is most the subject of admiration’.<sup>72</sup> Bacon deftly arranged his figures in the monument to guide the viewer’s eyes logically around the work; a feature which can only have been enhanced by the original pyramidal backing of Broccadilla marble, which would have enclosed and defined the entire arrangement. Considering the monument as a whole, Bacon first drew spectators into the narrative of the work through the most active figure in the composition, the City of London. Bacon depicted the City with her back to viewers making it difficult to see her facial expressions from certain angles. However, in making the figure turn into rather than look out of the monument, Bacon gave spectators a more privileged view, allowing them to share in the compassionate look Chatham originally offered the allegorical figure of Commerce. Indeed, in viewing the monument from the right hand side this was clearly Bacon’s intention (fig.66). As recipients of Chatham’s benignity the viewer is then naturally drawn to consider the figure of the Earl, directing the helm of state, at the top of the monument. From Chatham Bacon then drew the viewer’s gaze, via the Earl’s left arm, to the figure of Commerce who sits at his feet. The flow of Chatham’s drapery similarly encouraged spectators to follow the narrative in this anticlockwise manner. From the figure of Commerce viewers were then directed to follow the dramatic curve of the cornucopia which, pushed and directed by the putti, led to the base of the composition and the figure of Britannia. The outward twist of Britannia’s body was designed to complement the location of the monument at the end of the hall, positioned by Bacon so that she could overlook the entire room.

It was a sophisticated approach to the narration of an allegorical work and one which undoubtedly aided the viewer’s understanding of the piece. Indeed, Bacon’s sensitive use of drapery was specifically praised by the *British Magazine and Review* who stated that it was ‘executed in a stile of infinite ease,

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<sup>72</sup> Anon, ‘Modern Improvements in the Arts’ *The British Magazine* (Oct., 1782), I, p.254.

elegance and propriety'.<sup>73</sup> The ease and elegance of Bacon's drapery in the Guildhall monument stood in contrast to the flamboyantly styled robes he had used to dress his figure of the Lazar in the Thomas Guy monument: the sculptor evidently choosing to follow more closely Academic recommendations in his later monument. Yet, whilst Bacon used the flow of the robes to subtly guide viewers around the composition of the work, it was claimed that the sculptor achieved this without ever setting his draperies. Speaking after his father's death John Bacon Jnr stated that Bacon always cast his draperies according to 'his own feelings, and of the observations he had made, with scarcely any assistance from artificial arrangements and dispositions of them upon a figure'.<sup>74</sup>

Through his tightly controlled composition Bacon was able to vividly animate his allegorical figures, maximising the impact of their gestures and expressions to powerfully convey to spectators the narrative and meaning of the work. Bacon instilled a further sense of animation in his allegorical design through the use of contrasts: between the static figure of Commerce and the active movement of the City of London and between the sentimental portrayal of Chatham and the stoicism of Britannia. It was a stylistic agenda which again saw Bacon distance his art from the opinion that sculpture had 'but one style' and could not indulge in 'picturesque effects, contrasts or pretty excellencies'.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, in the composition of his monument Bacon appears to have actively sought out contrasts and avoided distinct lines of separation; depicting his figures overlapping and interacting.

The intricate delineation of narrative and expression used by Bacon to animate his work must have stood in contrast to the only other monument erected in the Guildhall. Located at the opposite end of the hall to the Chatham commission, the William Beckford monument had used allegory in a far more formal and austere manner, depicting Beckford in the pose of an orator, accompanied by allegories of the City of London on the right and Trade &

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<sup>73</sup> Anon, 'Modern Improvements in the Arts' *The British Magazine* (Oct., 1782), I, p.255.

<sup>74</sup> Cecil, *Memoirs of John Bacon*, p.18.

<sup>75</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse X' (1780), p.175 & p.176.



Navigation on the left (see fig.63). However, unlike the animated dialogues Bacon established between Chatham, Commerce and the City, the allegories in Moore's monument are connected only by the symmetry of the composition. Moore's allegorical figures do not interact with each other, their defeated poses being symptomatic of their despondency at the Mayor's death. Whereas the composition of the Beckford monument is balanced and static, Bacon's later offering is asymmetrical, dynamic and visually complex: one later reviewer declaring Bacon's work to be 'one grand group in *alto Relievo*', a claim which reflected the unity and cohesion the sculptor had established across the surface of the work.<sup>76</sup>

The subtle organisation of characters and emotional exchanges Bacon had employed in the design of his monument offered an eloquent response to the criticisms Boydell had made in his pamphlet about the legibility of allegorical sculpture. However, in redefining the parameters of what allegorical sculpture could achieve Bacon rejected the formalism and emotional austerity many in the period argued was intrinsic to good sculpture. In fact, apart from Britannia, Bacon had rejected classical prototypes for all his figures; their gestures are modern, sentimental and animated. Meanwhile, the composition and organisation of sculptural parts deliberately avoid symmetry and simplicity. They were deviations from decorum which, although unnoticed when the work was first unveiled, were pointedly objected to by later reviewers, one commentator suggesting that 'all is reeling, Chatham, the two ladies, the lion, the boys, the cornucopia, and all the rest, have been tumbled out of a wagon from the top of their pyramid'.<sup>77</sup>

### *The Westminster Monument*

Despite Bacon's achievements with the Guildhall commission, the work was soon eclipsed by the second monument the sculptor designed for Chatham at Westminster (see fig.59). The Westminster monument, although commissioned nine months before the Guildhall commemoration, was not completed until 9

<sup>76</sup> Anon, 'Modern Improvements in the Arts' *The British Magazine* (Oct., 1782), I, p.254.

<sup>77</sup> Cunningham, *The Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters*, III, p.212.

March 1784. Erected at public expense, the monument was celebrated ‘as a tribute to public gratitude’ remaining to ‘after-ages as an honourable testimony to the merit of departed worth’.<sup>78</sup> The civic nature of the work was complimented by Bacon’s untainted British status: one reviewer claiming that ‘We record with exultation, that the present monument, worthy of ancient Greece, has been produced by a person who is indebted to no foreign aid for his distinguished reputation’. Another commentator argued that the monument would,

at all times remain a proof of the genius of the artist who produced it: an Artist who has acquired his fame without foreign instruction or study in the schools of Italy, and who may be produced as a proof that genius is the growth of the British Isle unassisted by such aid.<sup>79</sup>

The design of the monument, as befitted a commemoration to Britain’s great patriot, was similarly nationalistic in sentiment. Dressed in parliamentary robes, Chatham is shown in a niche at the apex of a pyramidal monument. Beneath his feet recline allegories of Prudence and Fortitude, each of whom lie upon a sarcophagus, and below them Britannia, who herself is accompanied by the figures of Ocean and Earth, who lie at her feet.<sup>80</sup> The work was designed to impress upon spectators the ‘wisdom and fortitude’ Chatham had directed towards the ‘greatness and glory of the nation’; Ocean and Earth gesturing towards to imperial scope of such achievements.<sup>81</sup> However, by the time the monument was erected in the Abbey this nationalistic narrative must have taken on, as Martin Myrone has indicated, a slightly ironic edge.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, given the signing of peace in November 1783 and the consequential collapse of British authority in America, the celebration of Chatham’s colonial achievements must have appeared tragically poignant.

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<sup>78</sup> Anon, *The European Magazine* (April, 1784), p.248.

<sup>79</sup> Anon, *The European Magazine* (April, 1784), p.248.

Anon, ‘An Account of John Bacon Esq. F.R.A’, *The European Magazine* (August, 1790), p.83.

<sup>80</sup> The depiction of ‘Ocean’ closely following Bacon’s figure of *Thames* discussed in chapter one of this thesis.

<sup>81</sup> Anon, ‘Modern Improvements in the Arts’ *British Magazine* (Oct., 1782), I, p.256.

<sup>82</sup> Myrone, *Bodybuilding: Reforming Masculinities*, p.211.

Like the Guildhall commission the design of the monument was praised for its legibility and coherency, one commentator claiming that ‘Although there are six figures in the monument, the idea on which the design is founded, is the most simple that can be conceived’.<sup>83</sup> The commemoration was also commended for its ‘masterly stile’ in which the ‘subject and grandeur of the monument command equal attention’.<sup>84</sup> The composition of the piece, however, differed from the sculptor’s first commission at the Guildhall, being a more faithful expression of Academic values. Bacon organised the figures in his monument symmetrically, the large tablet of blank marble behind the work enclosing and defining this arrangement. Even the inscription on the base of the work conformed to a more austere aesthetic, being more concise and abstract than the Guildhall commemoration:

Erected by the King and Parliament,  
As a Testimony to  
The Virtues and Ability  
of  
WILLIAM PITT, Earl of CHATHAM;  
During whose Administration  
Divine Providence  
Exalted Great Britain  
To an Height of Prosperity and Glory  
Unknown to any former Age.

The design of Bacon’s second monument to Chatham mirrored the suggestion Reynolds had made in his tenth discourse that everything should be ‘carefully weighted and measured, one side making almost an exact equipoise to the other’.<sup>85</sup> Bacon similarly avoided the temptation to involve his figures in any form of dialogue as he had done at the Guildhall, keeping the real and the imaginary worlds of allegory and portraiture separate. It was an approach which seems to respond to concerns voiced in the period that modern sculpture was too fanciful. In 1768 Joseph Spence had argued that,

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<sup>83</sup> Anon, *The New and Complete History, Description and Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster* (London, 1784), p.116.

<sup>84</sup> Anon, *An Historical Description of Westminster Abbey its Monuments and Curiosities* (London, 1788), p.120.

<sup>85</sup> Reynolds, ‘Discourse X’ (1780), p.176.

As propriety and simplicity are the distinguishing character of the ancient [sic] artists, so multiplicity and impropriety may almost be deemed the distinguishing character of the modern, in their allegorical figures, which are frequently so obscure and far-fetched, that it can hardly be known what they mean, and by their manifold marks are often more complicated riddles.<sup>86</sup>

Bacon's more rigid approach to the arrangement of parts in the second monument to Chatham also reflected the patronage of the piece. For, whereas the Guildhall monument was a celebration of Chatham's relationship with the City and as such a more personal form of tribute, the Westminster monument was designed to reflect the interests of the public at large, under the auspices of Parliament. As such the monument had to reflect more general and abstract principles, making a less specific address to its audiences.

In experimenting with a more austere composition Bacon avoided the temptation to interconnect his figures as he had done at the Guildhall. Instead he created four distinct sculptural layers for spectators to meditate upon: Chatham at the top of the work, Prudence and Fortitude resting on the sarcophagus in the middle, Britannia, Ocean and Earth on the next layer down with the inscription at the base. Though Britannia is seated on the lowest level of the sculptural arrangement she also operates between layers, her upper body being located in the middle section of the work; a feature which subtly softens the formal arrangement of the composition. It was an organisation which, reading from top to bottom, hierarchically defined Chatham's posthumous fame. The depiction of Chatham at the apex of the work, clothed in contemporary dress, clearly distinguished the Earl from the classical figures beneath. Here Chatham is not asked to partake in any allegorical fantasies; rather he is presented to spectators as he was best known, as a statesman and orator. Meeting first with the person of Chatham the viewer is then invited to progress down to the next layer of the monument and consider his character. Here, Prudence, accompanied by her usual symbol of a serpent twisted around a mirror, and Fortitude, with a column, expressed the Earl's acknowledged moral strength and foresight.

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<sup>86</sup> Joseph Spence, *A Guide to Classical Learning; or, Polymetis Abridged* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., London, 1768), pp.xxvi-xxvii.

Although they do not physically interact with Chatham as in the Guildhall monument, from their reclined position on the sarcophagus they nonetheless appear to listen thoughtfully to Chatham's words. From this subordinate position beneath the Earl, they add gravitas to both his personal virtue but also to the wisdom of his words and maxims. The final sculptural layer of the work which shows the proud and secure Britannia surrounded by the abundance provided by Ocean and Earth, reinforced, as in the Guildhall monument, the prosperity Chatham had secured for Britain during his administration. Whilst the three figures at the base of the monument do not appear to be listening to the Earl in the same way as Prudence and Fortitude, they are similarly shown to be subordinate to his authority and subject to his will: it is as if Ocean is actively tamed by Chatham's words.

Bacon offset the formal and symmetrical composition of the monument by the inclusion of subtle and delicately wrought contrasts. Commenting on this aspect of Bacon's design one contemporary reviewer noted that 'the energy' of Fortitude 'strongly contrasts the repose and contemplative character of the figure of Prudence' whilst the naked figure of Ocean 'is agitated, and his countenance severe, which is opposed by the utmost ease in the figure of the Earth, who is leaning on a terrestrial globe'.<sup>87</sup> The use of contrast and variety was an accepted method of expression in painting and one which was particularly important in a symmetrical composition: as Matthew Pilkington commented, 'One foot placed like another, or one member extended or depressed like another, excites our disgust; because that symmetry deprives us of the pleasures arising from variety, and makes the attitudes appear too frequently the same'.<sup>88</sup> However, in sculpture such contrasts had to be handled with care, Reynolds warning students that all contrasts must be 'sparingly employed'.<sup>89</sup>

The variations in form Bacon established between his allegorical figures were, however, appropriately slight and notably different from those the artist employed at the Guildhall. Prudence, for example, reclines in a similar manner

<sup>87</sup> Anon, *The European Magazine* (April, 1784), p.248.

<sup>88</sup> Matthew Pilkington, *The Gentleman's and Connoisseur's Dictionary of Painters* (London, 1770), p.xvi.

<sup>89</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse X' (1780), p.187.

to Fortitude but is shown with her left leg tucked under her right and her left arm drawn to her forehead in contemplation, whilst below, Ocean's open legs contrast with Earth's crossed legs, the fold of his right arm over his body differing from the open form Bacon gave to Earth. They were subtle differences in body language, which managed to establish variety without sacrificing an overall sense of uniformity. Indeed, whilst Bacon's figures of Fortitude and Ocean were praised for their energy and agitation, in comparison to the active figure of the City of London in the Guildhall commission, their movements and expressions appear restrained, their energy latent; an economy which Bacon reinforced by the seated positions he gave to all his allegorical figures.

### *Animating Chatham*

The sense of emotional equilibrium Bacon created across the composition of the work provided the type of expressive stability the sculptor had failed to achieve in the Guildhall commission. In judiciously balancing *spirit* and *energy* in his second monument to Chatham Bacon was also able to suggest the stability of Chatham's own maxims and character: his prudence balanced by his fortitude and his ease complemented by an appropriate degree of animation. The sculptor's attempts to subdue his use of animation and establish a degree of emotional balance were rewarded by contemporary reviewers, who proclaimed the Westminster monument to be a work 'worthy of ancient Greece' in which 'Roman virtue is... eternalized by Grecian elegance'.<sup>90</sup> However, whilst Bacon had evidently attempted to present an aesthetic more in keeping with academic ambitions for public sculpture, his piece was far from a rigorous example of classical austerity. Indeed, the monument's symmetrical composition and its sparsely decorated marble background, serve to disguise the mutable aesthetics of, what, under closer examination, is an interesting hybrid creation.

The figure of Chatham at the top of the monument was perhaps the most incongruous aspect of the design (fig.67). Dramatically framed by the arch of the niche, Bacon showed Chatham in mid speech, raising his right arm to

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<sup>90</sup> Anon, *The European Magazine* (April, 1784), p.248.

emphasise a pivotal moment in his oratory. It was a pertinent choice for Bacon to make and one which, given the Earl's dramatic collapse in the House of Lords and Copley's subsequent painting recalling the event, spoke powerfully to the public's perception of Chatham's celebrity.<sup>91</sup> When unveiled to the public Bacon's portrayal of Chatham provoked considerable attention. The figure's expressive gesture in particular aroused discussion, one viewer stating that

The statue of the Earl is in his parliamentary robes: he is in the action of speaking, the right hand thrown forward and elevated, and the whole attitude strongly expressing that species of oratory for which his Lordship was so justly celebrated.<sup>92</sup>

In animating his figure and depicting him at the apogee of his oratorical strength, Bacon recovered something of the power and impact of Chatham's public speaking in his sculpture. Chatham's style of oratory was renowned for its unconventional, sentimental and expressive manner. Commenting upon the Earl's public speaking, one anonymous reviewer remarked that

Lord Chatham's oratory differs from any thing we ever heard uttered, or any rule or example in writing. It has consequently one merit, it is all his own; was fabricated by him, and will certainly die with him. The marvellous, the bold, the extravagant, the improbable, are severally his fort.<sup>93</sup>

Thus whilst Chatham's style of oratory possessed a 'bold purity and classical force of phraseology' and a 'persuasive gracefulness in his actions' it was also identified with a 'restless power' which was perhaps more eloquently conveyed through a modern sculptural characterisation.<sup>94</sup> In attempting to convey some of the passion and character for which Chatham's speeches were famous, Bacon in

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<sup>91</sup> The depiction of Chatham in mid speech, with his arm raised, closely followed John Francis Moore's depiction of William Beckford's oratory at the Guildhall (fig.63), and was a fairly traditional stance for an orator. However, when Bacon's biographer ventured to hint that his figure was a copy of Roubiliac's figure of Eloquence from his 1749 monument to the Duke of Argyll (fig. 68 &69) the sculptor had claimed that he 'was unconscious of it when he modelled that statue, but would affirm that a figure, which he had so long admired, might have given rise to his idea'. Cecil, *Memoirs of John Bacon*, p.30.

<sup>92</sup> Anon, *The European Magazine* (April, 1784), p.248.

<sup>93</sup> Anon, *Characters Containing an Impartial Review of the Public Conduct and Abilities of the most Eminent Personages in the Parliament of Great Britain: Considered as Statesmen, Senators and Public Speakers* (London, 1777), p.34.

<sup>94</sup> Anon, 'Of Lord Chatham's Eloquence', in *Anecdotes of the Life of the Right Hon. William Pitt*, II, Appendix, p.170.

his portrait looked to offer an accurate representation of the politician. Indeed, for many spectators, Bacon's depiction of Chatham seemed to breathe life into the marble figure:

Where are the fires that flash'd from Chatham's eye,  
 The strains that from those lips impetuous broke;  
 When, warm'd by truth, and rous'd by Liberty,  
 His thundering voice th'astonish'd senate shook?  
 By Bacon's genius with new life inform'd,  
 Again the bold, expressive features glow;  
 The patriot kindles, by the sculpture warm'd,  
 When fancy hears his manly periods flow.<sup>95</sup>

For William Cowper the piece was similarly expressive, the poet proclaiming that

...., Bacon there  
 Gives more than female beauty to stone,  
 And Chatham's eloquence to marble lips.<sup>96</sup>

In animating his figure of Chatham Bacon also avoided, as he had done in his depiction of the Lazar in the Thomas Guy commission, the temptation to idealise his characterisation. Instead, Bacon depicted the Earl in old age, showing the 'imbecilities of his frame' which as one commentator later noted was an 'unpardonable error, as he should have wrought his semblance, when in the zenith and full blossom of his ability'.<sup>97</sup> It was a characterisation moreover which evidently stood at odds with observations that the work embodied classical decorum and Grecian simplicity. For critics, Chatham's dress and pose were excessively modern, his frame idiosyncratic and un-idealised whilst his expression was overly animated. They were discrepancies noted by the pseudonymous Anthony Pasquin just over ten years later when he argued that, though the portrayal of Chatham be 'the truth of nature', it was an

<sup>95</sup> Thomas Maurice, *Westminster Abbey: an elegiac poem* (London, 1784), p.8.

<sup>96</sup> William Cowper, *The Task: a poem, in six books* (London, 1785), p.37.

<sup>97</sup> Anthony Pasquin (John Williams), *Memoirs of the Royal Academicians, being an Attempt to Improve the National Taste* (London, 1796), p.111.



absurd choice of time and circumstance... he should have seemed as the firm delegate of Jove and Virtue; and, in a certain degree, as soaring above mortal infirmity.<sup>98</sup>

The energetic figure of Chatham at the top of the work served to unsettle the monument's formal composition, challenging geometrical artifice with the irregularity and variety of natural expression and contrast. Indeed, in locating his figure of Chatham at the top of the work, Bacon through the hierarchical arrangement of figures in the piece appeared to be promoting the modern over the allegorical, privileging the expressive over the static. Yet, although Bacon had confined his modern depiction of Chatham to a recessed niche, the figure appears to be about to step out of the frame, his right foot hovering over the edge of the base. His raised right hand similarly tantalises the viewer by also edging out of the confines of the niche. These were features which enabled Bacon to establish an interesting dialectic in the monument. Although Chatham is isolated from the figures beneath, in spite of his modern clothes and the niche in which he is situated, by stepping out of his arched recess Bacon was able to suggest that the figure was also involved and integrated with the allegorical design beneath. In showing Chatham on the verge of breaking out of the niche, stepping from the modern into the allegorical, Bacon was in effect able to maintain both aesthetic decorum by separating the real from the imaginary, whilst also suggesting that the two areas were integrally connected. It was an approach to sculptural expression Bacon is likely to have taken from Roubiliac, who had used it to great effect in his figure of Eloquence in his monument to the Duke of Argyll (fig.68 & 69). However, in contrast to the liberties Bacon had taken in his monument to Chatham at the Guildhall, showing the Earl intimately engaged with allegorical figures, for the Westminster commission Bacon only depicted the Earl on the cusp of breaking out of his defined sculptural space. It was a subtle but significant difference, which enabled Bacon to maintain a greater degree of equilibrium between the values of classical decorum and the animation expressed by a more modern sculptural vocabulary.

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<sup>98</sup> Pasquin, *Memoirs of the Royal Academicians*, p.111.

Despite such concessions, Bacon's monument to Chatham at Westminster was far from a paradigmatic example of the antique. Indeed, the perception that the piece was somehow an example of 'Grecian elegance' suggests the ambiguity and relative confusion the term possessed in the period.<sup>99</sup> Whilst pivotal texts had presented definitions and explanations of this new aesthetic, such notions in the 1780s were still unstable, even incoherent. The term was applied liberally by reviewers to denote the general excellence of a piece or to imply that a work possessed certain classical qualities. Moreover, reviewers had little against which to compare the sculptor's interpretation of classicism. The monuments Bacon created for Chatham at the Guildhall and Westminster were the first substantial public works of sculpture to be commissioned in almost twenty years and in comparison to earlier monuments, such as Joseph Wilton's monument to General Wolfe (c.1760-1772), must have appeared highly classicised and thus consistent with developing tastes (see fig.61). The austerity of the Westminster commission with its plain backing and seated classical allegories was certainly a less animated and more faithful expression of classical values than that found in Wilton's earlier work. Indeed, given that Wolfe owed his immortalisation to the imperial policies of Chatham and that the two works were located in close proximity to each other, the Earl's monument placed on the opposite side of the same transept in which the Wolfe commemoration was housed, makes it likely that Bacon would have anticipated such comparisons.

Whilst the Westminster monument may have appeared 'Grecian' in comparison to the works of earlier sculptors, Bacon must have been conscious of the liberties he was taking with the natural portrayal of Chatham at the top of the monument. Indeed, like the Guildhall commission, the Westminster monument was later to receive substantial criticism for such ambiguities, Anthony Pasquin claiming in 1796 that

When I look around me for leading proof of MR. BACON'S abilities, I naturally recur to the monument in Westminster Abbey; and I am unhappy to observe that the execution of this massy pile does not

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<sup>99</sup> Anon, *The European Magazine* (April, 1784), p.248.

correspond with my hope or the honor [sic] of the country, as far as the polite arts are involved... I am mortified to believe that our visitors of taste from the Continent should be induced by the celebrity of the subject, to regard this structure as a specimen of British genius in the province of sculpture.<sup>100</sup>

*Bacon's essay 'On Sculpture'*

Bacon's monument to Chatham at Westminster trod a fine line between competing values, fusing the aspirations of Academic taste with his own enthusiasm for animation and characterisation. It was a mode of sculptural expression which also mirrored the design of the sculptor's monument at the Guildhall, which conveyed the language of allegory through the vocabulary of modern sentiment and expression. Bacon's ability to marry what, for many in the period, were competing aesthetic values, was noted by a later reviewer, who claimed that

Too often in art (and in every branch, in sculpture as well as in painting and in music) it is usual to contrast the classical and the popular, and it is rare to find superiority in both. In Bacon's case both were combined; he was honoured by the awards of the Royal Academy and the Society of Arts, while his work delighted the common people.<sup>101</sup>

Bacon's attempts to negotiate a middle ground, to 'delight the common people', was given a substantial theoretical voice in 1783 with the publication of his essay 'On Sculpture' in Abraham Rees, *Cyclopaedia: or a Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*.<sup>102</sup> Written just after the opening of the Guildhall commission and a year before the completion of the Westminster monument the essay persuasively articulated the theory that underpinned Bacon's amalgamated aesthetic vocabulary and in the process presented an alternative vision for the development of this medium.

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<sup>100</sup> Pasquin, *Memoirs of the Royal Academicians*, pp.110-111.

<sup>101</sup> Anon, 'John Bacon RA', *The Religious Tract Society – Short Biographies for the People*, III, no.36 (London, 1883), p.7.

<sup>102</sup> See Appendix 1 of this thesis.

Bacon's short essay begins by offering an accepted account of the development of sculpture, highlighting the skills of well known ancient practitioners such as Phidias and Praxiteles and Renaissance masters such as Ghiberti and Michael Angelo. Bacon, however, deviated from traditional historiographical accounts of his medium by also crediting the achievements of more recent sculptors, positioning Cibber, Scheemakers and Roubilliac as artists of equal influence in the development of sculpture. Claiming that England was 'not without some excellent specimens of *sculpture*' Bacon proceeded to argue that Cibber's 'statues of Phrenzy and Melancholy on the piers before Bethlehem hospital, deserve to be ranked among the first performances in this art'. Bacon further praised the generation of sculptors working before him by suggesting that 'the monument of the duke of Argyle, and one of Mrs. Nightingale, both by Roubiliac, and Dr Chamberlain's, by Sckeemaker [sic], seem to stand in the highest in the public opinion'.<sup>103</sup>

In praising the works of foreign sculptors Bacon interestingly acknowledged a debt to a group of artists who were increasingly viewed by others in the period as problematic. Indeed, whilst Reynolds in his tenth discourse did not specifically criticise such sculptors by name, the President was nonetheless explicit in countering the type of aesthetics they promoted. Valentine Green, in his 1782 *Review of the Polite Arts in France at the Time of their Establishment under Louis XIV compared with their Present State in England* similarly did little to promote the achievements of England's foreign sculptors; his muted response to the impact they had made on sculpture in England reflected the disregard with which he treated their achievements. For Green the birth of English sculpture coincided with the foundation of the Royal Academy in 1768.<sup>104</sup>

It was generally accepted that the art of modern sculptors could not and should not be compared with the ancients, one reviewer declaring in 1782 that,

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<sup>103</sup> Bacon 'On Sculpture', *Cyclopaedia*, IV, under (S), no pagination.

Dr Hugo Chamberlain or Chamberlayne was the man-midwife to the Duchess of Buckingham who commissioned this monument for his role in the safe delivery of her children.

<sup>104</sup> Green, *Review of the Polite Arts*, pp.57-58.

To compare the ancient Greeks and Romans with their modern successors, would be an affront to common sense... the latter, who set up for a refined taste, inherit little else but what was frivolous in the tastes of the inhabitants of the Campania of Italy.<sup>105</sup>

Of the moderns, Roubiliac was particularly criticised for his frivolousness. Horace Walpole claimed that the sculptor's monument to the Nightingales in Westminster Abbey was 'more theatrical than sepulchral' whilst James Dallaway, writing later in the century, declared that the sculptor's art displayed a 'want of simplicity, and a certain French air'.<sup>106</sup>

The inspiration Bacon derived from his predecessors is evident in his two monuments to Chatham; his Guildhall monument in particular reflected the interest Roubiliac expressed in creating animated dialogues between figures in his allegorical designs. Bacon also referred to Cibber's inspirational designs in the figure of *Madness* he had created for the pediment at Guy's Hospital. However, whilst Bacon was inspired by the animated works of Roubiliac and Cibber, he was also evidently influenced by Peter Scheemakers' more stoic and classical aesthetic. Although Bacon had relied heavily on Scheemakers' statue of Thomas Guy for the design of his own monument to the philanthropist, in his essay the sculptor singled out his predecessor's monument to Dr Hugo Chamberlain (fig.70). Bacon also cites the Flemish sculptor's 1737 'elegant statue of King Edward VI. in bronze which stands in one of the courts of St Thomas's hospital, in Southwark,' as one of the 'first performances' of sculpture in England (fig.71).<sup>107</sup> Both works were suitably economical in style. The Chamberlain monument avoided any pictorial devices by clearly distinguishing the realm of allegory from the figure commemorated in the centre, whilst the statue of the young Edward VI, known today through an engraving, showed the King dressed in court clothing, his crown modestly

<sup>105</sup> Anon, 'Reflections on Taste' in *The British Magazine*, (1783), II, p.104.

<sup>106</sup> Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting: with some Account of the Principle Artists; and Incidental Notes on Other Arts; collected by the Late George Vertue*, 4 vols. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Twickenham 1765-80), IV, p.96. James Dallaway, *Anecdotes of the Arts*, p.401.

<sup>107</sup> Bacon 'On Sculpture', *Cyclopaedia*, IV, under (S), no pagination.

placed on a small pedestal next to him, standing in a simple contrapposto stance.<sup>108</sup>

These were works which, at their time of execution, represented a palpable attempt on the sculptor's behalf to avoid excesses. As Craske has noted, Scheemakers' static compositions, like those of fellow Flemish artist Michael Rysbrack, appealed specifically to the culture of 'Augustan politeness', promoted in the period by the third Earl of Shaftesbury.<sup>109</sup> For Shaftesbury art had to have a plain, uncomplicated meaning; he warned that 'a *historical* or *moral* piece must of necessity lose much of its natural simplicity and grace, if any thing of the *emblematical* or *enigmatick* kind be visibly and directly intermix'd'.<sup>110</sup> It was an aesthetic which more closely followed the paradigms of antiquity, in which the real was clearly distinguished from the allegorical: as Joseph Spence, writing in 1768, had similarly argued;

The allegories of the antients [sic], where they are well settled and known, might be of very great service to our modern artists and poets in general. The reason for this is founded on the clearness and simplicity usually to be met with in the antient allegories, and the confusion and darkness but too common in the modern. The allegorical representations of the antients express what they mean directly and easily and often by a single circumstance.<sup>111</sup>

In advocating both the animated creations of Roubiliac and Cibber *and* the relative stoicism of Scheemakers art, Bacon suggested a union which acknowledged both the beauty of antiquity as well as values of inventiveness and expressiveness. It was a fusion which paralleled the aesthetic and stylistic decisions he had made in the designs of both his monuments to Chatham: the works fusing a classical vocabulary with a modern sense of energy and variety.

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<sup>108</sup> Edward VI founded St Thomas' Hospital and the monument was commissioned by Charles Joyce in 1737 in memory of the King's gift. The monument, however, was removed when the hospital moved sites in 1862 and is now lost. For further description of Scheemakers monument to Edward VI see Charles Burlington, *The Modern Universal British Traveller; or a New, Complete and Accurate Tour through England, Wales, Scotland and the Neighbouring Islands* (London, 1779), p.326.

<sup>109</sup> Mathew Craske, *The Silent Rhetoric of the Body: A History of the Monument and Commemorative Art in England 1720-1770* (2004 unpublished at the time of writing this thesis), in chapter 1:3 'Roman, Chivalric and Reformed Christian Conventions', no pagination.

<sup>110</sup> Shaftesbury, 'Judgement of Hercules', *Characteristicks*, IV, p.28.

<sup>111</sup> Spence, *A Guide to Classical Learning*, p.xxvi.

It is, however, interesting that Bacon in his essay neglected to include Rysbrack in his discussions of modern sculptors. Indeed, although Rysbrack's sculptural business had suffered in c.1732 from the arrival of Roubiliac, he nonetheless remained one of the countries most prolific sculptors in first half of the century.<sup>112</sup> In choosing not to recognise this contribution Bacon was perhaps intentionally weighting his account of the 'moderns' in favour of those who produced more animated sculpture, thereby emphasising his preference. Equally, Rysbrack was more closely associated with the aesthetics of the 'ancients' than Peter Scheemakers, his restrained sculptures standing in direct comparison to the animation of Roubiliac's creations.

Although Bacon clearly saw significant value in the sculptures of his predecessors, for writers on art like Green and Reynolds such foreign artists did not fit their vision of the development of sculpture in England. It was a bias which, as Craske has recently highlighted, stemmed back to the assertions of Jonathan Richardson's 1719 essay *The Science of the Connoisseur*.<sup>113</sup> Richardson had claimed that one of the main things standing in the way of development of English sculpture was 'our own false modesty and partiality to foreigners'.<sup>114</sup> Expanding further in such claims Richardson stated that England had not yet reached 'Maturity in the Art of Design';

Our Neighbours... have made frequent and successful Inroads upon us, and in This particular have *Lorded* it over our Natives Here in Their own Countrey[sic]. Let us at length Disdain as much to be in Subjection in This respect as in Any Other; Let us put forth our Strength, and employ our National Virtue, that Haughty Impatience of Subjection, and Inferiority, which seems to be the Characteristick [sic] of Our Nation in This as on many Other Illustrious Occasions, and the thing will be effected; the *English* school will Rise, and Flourish.<sup>115</sup>

In acknowledging the influence and importantly the value of modern, foreign, sculptors Bacon associated himself with artists whose style was, for many contemporaries, inadequate not only because it was 'theatrical' but more

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<sup>112</sup> Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain*, p.179

<sup>113</sup> Craske, 'Reviving the 'School of Phidias'', pp.30-31.

<sup>114</sup> Jonathan Richardson, *A Discourse on the Dignity, Pleasure and Advantage of the Science of the Connoisseur*, (London, 1719), p.53.

<sup>115</sup> Richardson, *A Discourse on the Dignity*, pp. 55-56.

fundamentally because it was not truly English. Although Bacon evidently did not partake in this nationalistic bias, his affinity for their art placed him in an equivocal position. Thus the sculptor identified by contemporaries as a 'Briton born, Briton bred' was also, paradoxically, inspired by the perceived excesses of foreign sculptors.

The ambivalent position Bacon occupied as one of the heirs to Richardson's English school was further complicated by the assertions the sculptor made in the second half of his essay. Shifting the basis of his discussion away from the history of sculpture to more aesthetic concerns, Bacon proceeded to present a rather pertinent and pointed critique of contemporary art theory. Indeed, Bacon's essay in many ways offered a direct rebuttal to the values Reynolds had so passionately promoted in his tenth discourse; values which seemed to directly attack and undermine the basis of Bacon's own sculptural style. It was a bold gesture which not only enabled Bacon to assert an alternative theory for sculpture from within the Academy but also to outline the logic behind the designs he had made for the Chatham monuments.

Picking up on the debate which had delayed the erection of the Guildhall monument to Chatham, Bacon opened the second half of his essay with a rhetorical discussion on the respective values of painting and sculpture. Naturally favouring sculpture Bacon forcefully outlined the superiority of his medium over painting:

Which is the most difficult art has been a question often agitated. Painting has the greatest number of requisites, but at the same time her expedients are the most numerous; and, therefore, we may venture to affirm, that, whenever *sculpture* pleases equally with a painting, the sculptor is certainly the greatest artist... The reason, perhaps, is, that being divest of those meretricious ornaments by which painting is enabled to seduce its admirers, it is happily forced to seek for its effect in the higher excellencies of the art: hence the elevation of the idea, as well as purity and grandeur in the forms, are found in greater perfection in *sculpture* than in painting.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Bacon 'On Sculpture', *Cyclopaedia*, IV, under (S), no pagination.



For Bacon the prostitution of art to gaudy, extravagant even sensual details stood in contrast to the purity, grandeur and durability a sculptural design could offer; securing sculpture's rank above painting. Bacon also noted the intellectual qualities of his medium or the 'higher excellencies' which distinguished painting from sculpture. Reynolds, in his tenth discourse, had similarly noted sculpture's elevated qualities but suggested that it was an intrinsically different medium to painting.<sup>117</sup> Whilst Bacon appears to have acknowledged the absence of 'meretricious ornaments' in sculpture, he was nonetheless purposeful in shying away from Reynolds' absolutist suggestion that the medium had 'but one style'.<sup>118</sup> For an artist who had seemingly embraced an animated and expressive approach in his art this was a calculated omission and one which conveniently left room, as the sculptor suggested, for comparison between the two mediums: a comparison which Reynolds argued was not valid.

Bacon similarly took Reynolds to task over the importance of antique sources and the value of emulating the ancients. Stating his case plainly the sculptor argued that

It is conceived, that it will scarcely admit of a question, whether the ancients or moderns have most excelled in this art; the palm having been so universally adjudged to the former. To determine in what proportion they are superior is too difficult an attempt. Wherever there is a real superiority in any art or science, it will in time be discovered; but the world, ever fond of excess, never stops at the point of true judgement, but dresses out its favourite object with ornaments of fancy, so that every blemish becomes a beauty. This it has done by ancient Sculpture to such a degree as not to form its judgement of *that* by any rules, but to form an opinion of *rules* by the example.<sup>119</sup>

In highlighting the inequality between the art of the ancients and the moderns Bacon addressed one of the central problems he perceived to exist in modern art theory. For Bacon, because the rules of his medium had been defined by example, he argued that the legitimacy of those models could never be

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<sup>117</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse X' (1780), pp.175-176

<sup>118</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse X' (1780), p.175.

<sup>119</sup> Bacon, 'On Sculpture', *Cyclopaedia*, IV, under (S), no pagination.

questioned. It was a methodological failure which confirmed in the sculptor's eyes that, 'modern art can never have a fair comparison with the ancients'.<sup>120</sup>

The restrictions Bacon rather acutely observed in a theory of art that advocated the antique over all other expressions contributed to a field of criticism on the subject which stemmed back to observations Hogarth had made in the 1750s when he controversially claimed that many of the most highly praised antiquities were in fact mere copies. Writing on how mankind had been drawn into a 'sort of religious esteem, and even bigotry, to the works of antiquity', Hogarth exposed the consequences of such favouritism, arguing that there were 'artful people'

who have made good profit of those whose unbounded admiration hath run them into enthusiasm. Nay there are, I believe, some who still carry on a comfortable trade in such originals as have been so defaced and maimed by time, that it would be impossible, without a pair of *double-ground* connoisseur-spectacles, to see whether they have ever been good or bad: they deal also in cook'd-up copies, which they are very apt to put off for originals. And whoever dares to be bold enough to detect such impositions, finds himself immediately branded, and given out as one of low ideas, ignorant of the true sublime, self-conceited, envious &c.<sup>121</sup>

In his essay Bacon offered a comparable account of the dangers an unchecked admiration for the art of the ancients could produce. Picking up where his experiment which the *Head of Jupiter Tonans* in 1777 had left off, Bacon claimed that

The partiality to the ancients is so strong as to prevent almost all discrimination; and is the sole reason, why many antiques, that now stand as patterns of beauty in the judgement of most connoisseurs, are not discovered to be copies.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Bacon, 'On Sculpture', *Cyclopaedia*, IV, under (S), no pagination.

<sup>121</sup> William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty: written with a View of Fixing the Fluctuating Ideas of Taste* (London, 1753), p.92.

<sup>122</sup> Bacon 'On Sculpture', *Cyclopaedia*, IV, under (S), no pagination. It was a perception John Armstrong similarly highlighted in his 1753 poem *Taste: An Epistle to a Young Critic* in which he questioned the legitimacy of antique examples, declaring:

"But to the ancients." – Faith! I am not clear,  
For all the smooth round type of Elzevir,  
That every work which lasts in prose or song,  
Two thousand years, deserves to last so long.

Like Hogarth's earlier critique, Bacon's objections centred on both the prevalence of bogus ancients as well as the ineptitude of connoisseurs, a view commonly held in the period. Writing in *The Connoisseur* in 1756, 'Mr Town' (George Colman or Bonnel Thornton) declared that

our persons of rank acquire just enough scholarship to qualify themselves for Connoisseurs. These sort of students become sufficiently acquainted with the customs of the ancients, to learn the less interesting particulars concerning them. They can distinguish a Tiberus from a Trojan, know the Pantheon from the Amphitheatre and can explain the difference between the *praetexta* and the *Tunica*: which (only supposing the present times have elapsed some hundred years) is just as deep knowledge, as if some future antiquarian should discover the difference between a *Carolus* and an *Anna*, or St Paul's church and Drury Lane playhouse, or a full trimmed suit and a French frock.<sup>123</sup>

It was perhaps inevitable that Bacon, having never visited Rome, should find reason to criticise the contemporary preoccupation with the art of antiquity.<sup>124</sup> However, unlike more radical opponents of the rules, Bacon was careful to avoid taking a dogmatic stance. In defining beauty in his 1783 essay Bacon argued that it was both 'very much under the influence of association' but also that, at least in sculpture as a work of 'perpetuity', it was 'obliged to acquire and maintain the essential principles of beauty and grandeur'.<sup>125</sup> It was a view that conveniently placed Bacon in a less controversial position than other opponents of classical uniformity. Equally, although Bacon was forceful in discounting the preference given to the antique, he was nevertheless willing to defer to ancient sources when they were confirmed by his own experiences, as his art of the

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John Armstrong, *Miscellanies*, 2 vols. (London, 1770), II, p.189.

<sup>123</sup> 'Mr Town', 'No. CXIII – Thursday, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1756', *The Connoisseur*. By Mr Town.: critic and censor general, ed. by George Colman, 4 vols. (London, 1788), IV, p.225.

<sup>124</sup> Interestingly, however, a later reviewer objected to the assertions of both Hogarth and Bacon that 'The antique statues would not be so highly valued as they are, did their possessors perceive (what yet is evident that they are for the most part copies', in arguing that 'Yet neither one or other ever saw the objects of their criticism! What confidence shall their readers repose in their sentiments?' Anon, 'Miscellanies, *The Artist's Repository and Drawing Magazine* (1784-1794), IV, pp.146-147.

<sup>125</sup> Bacon, 'On Sculpture', *Cyclopaedia*, IV, under (S), no pagination.

1770s testifies.<sup>126</sup> Indeed, throughout his criticism on the antique Bacon remained clear that it wasn't the actual works of the classical past which were the problem, rather the overtly biased approach contemporaries had taken towards them. Speaking at a later date the sculptor emphasised this case plainly

Call it but an antique, and people begin immediately to find some beauty. Look at the figure in the corner of my study –can you see anything in it? – Yet many who come here, and at first take no notice of it, as soon as they hear it is a cast from the antique, they begin to admire! – Had I made it a few years ago, it would not have produced me a shilling.<sup>127</sup>

In highlighting the unjustified preference given to antique sculpture over more modern creations, Bacon was able to question the most fundamental values underpinning contemporary theories of art. In undermining the value of the antique, Bacon was able, in his 1783 essay, to propose that art could be judged by an alternative system. The basis of Bacon's new methodology rested on the connoisseur or viewer abandoning their dependence on an acquired knowledge of the antique and instead relying on their own sensibilities and judgements. As Bacon claimed with emphatic simplicity in his essay,

Modern and ancient art can never, therefore, be fairly compared, till both are made to submit to the determination of reason and nature.<sup>128</sup>

In a sense, Bacon was demanding that his art be judged on its own artistic and technical merits. It was a desire which mirrored the plain talking rhetoric of figures like Hogarth and John Armstrong who similarly reacted against the type of empirical and aesthetic legalism promoted at the Royal Academy. Armstrong had claimed that viewers should

Judge for yourself; and as you find, report  
Of wit, as freely as of beef or port.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>126</sup> Examples include his use of the *Farnese Hercules* for the statue of Dr Johnson (1796) in St Paul's Cathedral, London.

<sup>127</sup> Cecil, *Memoirs of John Bacon*, pp.30-31.

<sup>128</sup> Bacon, 'On Sculpture', *Cyclopaedia*, IV, under (S), no pagination.

<sup>129</sup> Armstrong, *Miscellanies*, II, p.191.

The need Bacon expressed for fair comparison, on the basis of 'reason' and 'nature', was naturally one which favoured and supported his work. It was a shrewd move, suggesting that his art could be appreciated without any prior knowledge or experience: a perspective on sculpture that Bacon had undoubtedly acquired through his early experience in manufacture. It was a claim Bacon's monuments to Chatham at the Guildhall and Westminster also appeared to be making. Although they did not abandon the forms of the antique, the artist's ability to infuse his classicised designs with a sense of modern expression and animation made them readily comprehensible. However, although reason and nature can be seen to parallel the desire to broaden receptivity to the sculptural medium, the terms also seem to have been directly applied to emphasise the *biased* and *artificial* approach taken by other contemporary theorists: namely the connoisseurial elite.

In his essay Bacon was essentially proposing a subjective system for the judgement of sculpture. Freed from the shackles of antiquity, modern artists such as Bacon thus had the potential and the opportunity to surpass the masters of antiquity. It was a position Bacon was eager to propound and he concluded his essay by declaring that

It may be observed, that the ancients have chiefly confined themselves to the sublime and beautiful; and whenever a pathetic subject has come before them, they have sacrificed expression to beauty. The famous group of Niobe is one instance of this kind; and, therefore, however great our partiality to the ancients may be, none can hesitate to affirm, that, whenever the moderns shall unite great expression with great beauty, they will wrest the palm out of their hands.<sup>130</sup>

It was a declaration which boldly justified the stylistic decisions the sculptor had made in the designs of his two monuments to Chatham, having eloquently married expression with the beauty of the antique in both works. Together, the essay and Bacon's monuments of the early 1780s publicly asserted a fresh approach to the interpretation and application of the antique and modern art. Indeed, in presenting 'great expression' as an equal attribute to 'great beauty',

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<sup>130</sup> Bacon, 'On Sculpture', *Cyclopaedia*, IV, under (S), no pagination.

Bacon subtly redefined sculptural aesthetics, undermining Winckelmann's favoured notion that

the calmer the state of the body, the fitter it is to express the true character of the soul: in all physical postures too far removed from the state of rest, the soul is not in the condition most proper to it, but subject to violence and constraint.<sup>131</sup>

Bacon's objections to such opinions were further emphasised by his reference to the Niobe group, which was specifically singled out by Winckelmann as one of the most important examples of the sublime austerity of Greek art (fig.72). The state of Niobe, struck dumb with grief after the death of her children and later turned to stone, epitomised, according to Winckelmann, the prioritisation of 'beauty' over 'expression'.<sup>132</sup> It was an opinion echoed by a certain 'Dr Moore' in 1788 who succinctly echoed Winckelmann's claims, suggesting that

The author of Niobe has had the judgement not to exhibit all the distress which he might have placed in her countenance. This consummate artist was afraid of disturbing her features too much, knowing full well that the point where he was to expect most sympathy was there, where distress co-operated with beauty, and where *our pity met our love*. Had he sought it one step farther in *expression*, he had lost it.<sup>133</sup>

Bacon, we can conclude, was willing to take this extra step.

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<sup>131</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann, 'Thoughts on the Limitations of the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks' (1755) in *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: Winckelmann, Lessing, Hermann, Herder, Schiller, Goethe*, ed. by H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge, 1985), p.43.

<sup>132</sup> Winckelmann writing on the Niobe grouping claimed, 'In the countenance of antique figures, joy bursts not into laughter; 'tis only the representation of inward pleasure... In sorrow and anguish they resemble the sea, whose bottom is calm, whilst the surface raves. Even in the utmost pangs of nature, Niobe continues still the heroine, who disdained yielding to Latona. The ancients seem to have taken advantage of that situation of the soul, in which struck dumb by an immensity of pains, she boards upon insensibility: to express, as it were, characters, independent of particular actions: and to avoid scenes too terrifying, too passionate, sometimes to paint the dignity of minds subduing grief'. Winckelmann, *Reflections on the Painting*, pp.277-278.

<sup>133</sup> Dr Moore as quoted in 'Some Account of the Statue of Niobe', *The Literary Magazine and British Review* (July, 1788), p.33-34.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **INVITING MELANCHOLY: THE FUNERARY MONUMENTS OF JOHN BACON 1769-1799**

Any study of Bacon's work must consider the contributions he made to funerary sculpture in the period. Indeed, the interest the sculptor expressed in sentimental and affecting narratives was given its most poignant and poetic outlet in the designs he made for the funerary trade. His sepulchres appeared to have satisfied the public's appetite for sensibility. They framed loss and mourning for the dead in an appropriately pious and sorrowful light: his monuments delicately reminded viewers of the deceased's worldly virtues and Christian fortitude. For contemporaries there appears to have been something profoundly appealing and relevant in the mixture of classical allegory, Christian sentimentalism and melancholy narratives which Bacon incorporated into his designs. Bacon accordingly established a highly successful and lucrative business, becoming one of the period's most prolific designers of funerary art.

### *Private commemorations*

Unlike public commissions, such as those Bacon undertook for Chatham at Westminster and the Guildhall, sepulchres were primarily commissioned by private individuals.<sup>1</sup> Although occasionally ordered by the deceased prior to death, they more often represented the appreciative gestures of family members. For Vicesmius Knox, writing in 1779, this expression was an essential part of the grieving process:

The affection of those we leave behind us, is at a loss for methods to display its wanted solicitude, and seeks consolation under sorrow in doing honour to all the remains. It is natural that filial piety, parental tenderness, and conjugal love, should mark the clay-coldspot, where the form still fostered in the bosom moulders away, with some fond memorial.<sup>2</sup>

Monuments accordingly tended to focus on promoting the deceased's status in life, their private virtues, their public offices, their charitable deeds and, of

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<sup>1</sup> As Rouquet suggested in his assessment of British sculpture in 1755, 'to be buried in that church [Westminster] is a matter of mere private concern; the custom is to apply to the chapter, who for the sum of twenty guineas, grant leave to break ground, and for forty guineas more vouchsafe to let you have a proper place to erect a monument'. Jean Andre Rouquet, *The Present State of the Arts in England* (London, 1755) pp.64-65.

<sup>2</sup> Knox, *Essays, Moral and Literary*, II, p.193.



course, their pious natures. If the design of the monument did not make such factors clear, then an epitaph was on hand to further clarify the deceased's fame.<sup>3</sup>

While the funerary monument was considered to be a natural and highly personal response to the death of a loved one, its location inside a church made it open to public scrutiny. Spectators were often actively encouraged to share in the grief of the family who had commissioned the monument, whether metaphorically, via the presence of allegorical weepers or, as was increasingly the case towards the end of the century, as witnesses to the victim's last moments of life. Writing at the beginning of the century, Joseph Addison's response to the tombs and grief he found on display in Westminster Abbey eloquently describes the reaction of the sensitive spectator:

When I look on the tombs of the *Great*, every emotion of envy dies in me; when I read the epitaphs of the *Beautiful*, every inordinate desire goes out; when I meet with the grief of *parents* on a tombstone, my heart melts with compassion.<sup>4</sup>

Addison's empathy for grieving parents was echoed by James Hervey in his 1746 *Meditations among the Tombs*. Hervey's famous, and much imitated text similarly noted the powerful impact of 'the *little Images*, reclin'd over the sleeping Ashes, [which] hang down their Heads with that pensive Air! None can consider so mournful a story without feeling some Touches of Sympathizing Concern'.<sup>5</sup> Hervey's encounter at Westminster with the sorrowful little images, presumably a reference to the cherubs and putti which adorned so many of the cathedral's sepulchres, fundamentally exercised his sense of fellow feeling.

This type of moral and sentimental encounter proved to be highly popular. The success of melancholic poetry such as Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742), Blair's *The Grave* (1743), Hervey's *Meditations* (1746) and Gray's *Elegies*

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<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the type of requests patrons of funerary monuments tended to make see Bindman & Baker, *Roubiliac*, section 1.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Addison, 'Tombstone Lectures from Spectator', in *Roach's Beauties of the Modern Poetics of Great Britain carefully Selected and Arranged in Six Volumes*, ed. by Anon, 6 vols. (London, 1793), I, p.7.

<sup>5</sup> James Hervey, *Meditations among the Tombs: In a Letter to a Lady* (London, 1746), p.20.

(1751) provided a framework within which viewers could approach and experience sepulchres. Indeed, by the mid eighteenth century, cathedrals and churches had in many ways become pilgrimage sites for those seeking an affecting and sentimental experience. To visit Westminster Abbey, or any other church, was to partake in a form of melancholic tourism. Not only were the bonds of human sympathy exercised by meditating on the tombs of the dead, but death itself could be vicariously imagined and confronted. It was an experience true for Anna Williams who, when confronted by the 'hapless state of mortal show' in Westminster Abbey, aptly contemplated 'What now I am, what shortly I shall be'.<sup>6</sup> The vanity of funerary art only added to the poignancy of Williams' viewing experience,

To gloomy isles, and scenes of death I go,  
 Where mouldering trophies hang, while falling dust  
 Confutes the warrior's hope, the proud man's trust.  
 Where marble statues seem to mourn,  
 And point to flattery on the Sculptur'd urn;  
 Detain with useless praise the wand'ring eye,  
 To tell where learning, greatness, beauty lye.<sup>7</sup>

For Williams the abandoned sculptures of the dead pathetically emphasised her own mortal condition, a *memento mori* which also powerfully recorded the desperate futility of man's desire for the accolades of others.

Williams found this a profoundly moral experience which was best taken alone, having been 'fatigu'd with noisy crowds and pompous show'.<sup>8</sup> George Wright similarly acknowledged the importance of solitude, his steps among the 'gloomy mansions' of 'silent rest' helping the author to 'devoutly meditate the moral lay'.<sup>9</sup> For both Williams and Wright, viewing the tombs of the dead was a deeply moving and morally edifying experience. It was an encounter which Wright considered to have suffused his mind with a sense of 'pleasing

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<sup>6</sup> Anna Williams, 'Reflections on a Grave digging in Westminster Abbey' in *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse* (London, 1766), p.69.

<sup>7</sup> Williams, 'Reflections on a Grave digging', p.68.

<sup>8</sup> Williams, 'Reflections on a Grave digging', p.69.

<sup>9</sup> George Wright 'Evening Reflections written in Westminster Abbey' in *Roach's Beauties of the Modern Poetics*, I, p.2 & p.5.

melancholy'.<sup>10</sup> Both poets seemed to have taken pleasure in their solitary contemplations. The basis of their self-reflection was naturally facilitated by the 'voice of melancholy' which emanated from funerary monuments, a factor which as Thomas Warton suggested encouraged spectators to

leave the busy trifles of vain life,  
And let these twilight mansions teach thy mind  
The Joys of Musing, and of Solemn Thought.<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, Warton proceeded to question whether in fact there was 'a pleasure like the pensive mood. Whose magic went to sooth your soften'd souls?'<sup>12</sup>

Although a pensive mood helped to soften the soul, confronting death and partaking in the grief of others could also be an occasion to foster personal strength and individual resolve. As Joseph Addison suggested,

I know that entertainments of this nature are apt to raise dark and dismal thoughts in timorous minds and gloomy imaginations; but for my own part, though I am always serious, I do not know what it is to be melancholy; and can, therefore, take a view of nature, in her deep and solemn scenes, with the same pleasure as in her most gay and delightful ones. By this means I can improve myself with those objects, which others consider with terror.<sup>13</sup>

To confront death with a sense of reasoned resignation and sympathetic concern rather than with fear and hysteria was, as Addison implies, a sign of manly sensitivity and social refinement.

Responses to funerary art in the period were inevitably deeply personal and multifaceted, with commentators offering a medley of individual accounts and responses to such works. However, consistent in all was the belief that the tomb offered a moral guide to viewers, edifying sensibilities, elevating personal virtue and reminding audiences of their own mortal condition. To withdraw

<sup>10</sup> Wright 'Evening reflections', in *Roaches Beauties*, I, p.5.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Warton, *The Pleasure of Melancholy: A Poem* (London, 1747), pp.14-15.

<sup>12</sup> Warton, *The Pleasure of Melancholy*, p.15.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Addison, 'Mediations on Westminster Abbey' in *Eighteenth Century Essays*, ed. by Austin Dobson (London, 1882), p.77.

from public life and meditate on eschatological events was essentially an opportunity to be improved, refined and edified. It was also an educative process which broadened viewers' skills as antiquarians, theologians, moralists and gentlemen or women of taste.<sup>14</sup>

### *Bacon's first funerary monument*

When he started to design funerary monuments in the 1770s Bacon was, perhaps, unsurprisingly drawn to the rhetorical designs of Roubiliac. The sculptor was later to note his admiration of Roubiliac's art, having singled out the Nightingale and Argyll monuments in his 1783 essay 'On Sculpture' as standing 'highest in public opinion'.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, although Roubiliac's sculptures had been derided for being 'more theatrical than sepulchral' and his style criticised for possessing a 'certain French air', his art nonetheless continued to appeal to audiences in the 1770s and 1780s.<sup>16</sup> In fact, as Bacon was to prove, there was still considerable demand for the type of dramatic narratives Roubiliac had favoured, the public's preference for sentimental and affecting encounters overriding demands for the aesthetic formality and emotional austerity that were beginning to be promoted by the newly formed Academy.<sup>17</sup>

One of Bacon's earliest known monuments was to Thomas Langton-Freke in Kings Sutton, Northamptonshire (fig.73). The monument was completed in 1769, and in vocabulary, style and narrative technique closely followed the example of Roubiliac. For the commemoration Bacon depicted the epic return of Christ to judge the living and the dead. Bacon arranged this redemptive

<sup>14</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the tradition of 'pleasing melancholy' see John Sparrow, 'Gray's Spring of Tears', *The Review of English Studies: New Series*, 14, no.53 (February, 1963), pp.58-61 & Robert. J. Griffin, 'The Eighteenth Century Construction of Romanticism: Thomas Warton and the Pleasures of Melancholy', *ELH*, 59, no.4 (Winter, 1992), pp.799-815.

<sup>15</sup> Bacon, 'On Sculpture', *Cyclopaedia*, IV, under (S), no pagination.

<sup>16</sup> Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting*, IV, 96. Dallaway, *Anecdotes of the Arts*, p.401.

<sup>17</sup> Writing in 1784, Mary Shackleton's response to the Nightingale monument typifies this trend, claiming that of all the monuments in Westminster, 'none pleased me so much as one erected to the memory of Squire Nightingale & his wife...the Skeleton aims his dart at the lady, while her husband, with every thing that we can imagine expressed in his Countenance, stretches his hand to ward off the blow & with the other supports his Lady, who sinks dying in his arms; the beauty of the sentiments & the wonderful expression, even in the limbs, made it an affecting, as well as interesting object'. Mary Shackleton, 'A Tour through part of England, by Mary Shackleton, in the Year 1784', *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XL, no.2 (1916), p.141.

narrative in a triangular composition. By gently interconnecting his figures the sculptor drew spectators' eyes around the work, starting with the triumphant figure of Christ, moving down to the defeated allegory of Death and concluding with the praise and adulation of the angel (fig. 74).

The monument was, unusually, made from plaster cast around an iron frame. Plaster was often used during the preliminary stages of designing a monument. Roubiliac, for example, frequently used full sized plaster figures to ensure that the constituent parts of his monuments would fit precisely when modelled in marble.<sup>18</sup> However, it was a highly irregular medium to use for a completed funerary monument, especially given the inevitable wear and tear sepulchres tended to be subjected to because of their public locations. It is possible that plaster was chosen for the monument because Bacon, at this stage in his career, lacked the experience necessary to sculpt the whole work in marble. Indeed, Bacon had cast his figures of *Mars* and *Venus* in plaster. Yet, if this was the case it is unusual that Bacon was chosen for the Freke commission. More likely is that the patron of the monument had insufficient funds to complete the commemorative scheme in marble and instead settled on Bacon's preliminary design in plaster as a compromise.

Whilst plaster was an unusual choice it nevertheless gave Bacon substantial versatility when it came to animating the apocalyptic narrative of the work. Bacon actively exploited the malleability of the medium in the turbulent mass of swirling clouds which he included as a frame to the entire work. The clouds appear as an almost painterly wash of movement, recalling the enigmatic scenes of Christ's return described in the book of Revelation.<sup>19</sup> The raised position of the monument coupled with the slight forward tilt Bacon gave to his figure of the triumphant Christ, made his body appear to hang over viewers' heads, his frame encroaching into their space. It was an expressive technique Roubiliac also frequently used in his art. The artist constantly pushed the boundaries of

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<sup>18</sup> For a further discussion on the use of life-sized plaster models see Bindman & Baker, *Roubiliac*, pp. 248-249.

<sup>19</sup> Revelation, 19:11-21.

sculptural space in order to make his spectators feel more involved in the work's unfolding narratives.

Bacon's portrayal of Death similarly gestured towards Roubiliac's monument to General Hargrave (1757), which also depicted the apocalyptic events of Judgement Day (fig.75).<sup>20</sup> The macabre figure of the 'King of Terrors' was intended to shock and terrify spectators, his withered form used as a gruesome *memento mori*.<sup>21</sup> Like Roubiliac, Bacon depicted Death entwined in tattered robes with his crown just about to fall off his head (fig.77). Bacon's interpretation of Death, lying flat and already defeated, does not have the same animated vigour as the personification in Roubiliac's monument to General Hargrave (fig.78). However, the sculptor was nonetheless careful to imbue his characterisation of Death with a comparable sense of the dramatic, showing his crushed and contorted figure looking eerily outwards in the direction of spectators; perhaps threatening the living for one last time.<sup>22</sup>

Bacon concluded the redemptive narrative of the monument with the angel, positioned on the right hand side of the work, who beholds the dramatic return of Christ and the defeat of Death with surprise and wonder. In the absence of an actual depiction of Freke, the angel acts as an intermediary for spectators. Having just arrived to witness Christ's second coming, the angel's emotional response offers a mirror and guide for spectators viewing the work. Like the angel we too are perhaps encouraged to respond to the dramatic scene with astonishment and be attuned to the consequences of final judgement.

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<sup>20</sup> The monument also strongly echoed Michel-Ange Slodtz's 1753 monument to the theologian Languet de Gergy in St. Sulpice, Paris (fig.76). Whilst Bacon is more likely to have been familiar with Roubiliac's monument in Westminster Abbey, having never visited France, it seems likely that he could have known the work through engravings and descriptions of the piece. Slodtz, a contemporary of Roubiliac, shared his fellow countryman's interest in animated and affecting scenes and, as David Bindman has suggested, is likely to have influenced the design of Roubiliac's later Hargrave monument. Bindman & Baker, *Roubiliac*, p.87.

<sup>21</sup> For a contemporary account of Roubiliac's monument to General Hargrave see David Henry, *An Historical Account of Westminster Abbey, its Monuments and Curiosities* (London, 1788), p.91.

<sup>22</sup> Roubiliac, as Bindman has argued, was one of the first to revive the representation of Death as a skeleton in funerary art. Bindman & Baker, *Roubiliac*, p.105.

Although Bacon's monument to Freke seems to have been inspired by aspects of Roubiliac's working style and particularly his sepulchre to General Hargrave, his interpretation had a notably different emphasis. Roubiliac almost always focused the design of his monuments on the figure being commemorated, as in the Hargrave monument, placing all other characters in a subordinate position. In the Freke commission, however, Bacon ensured that the narrative was entirely centred upon the figure of Christ. Indeed, Bacon positively neglected the identity and personality of Freke in the monument, favouring a more universal celebration of Christ's victory over death. The sculptor also explicitly pointed viewers to the theological basis of the Christian hope in life after death through the slightly awkward positioning of Christ's legs, which were intended to be a reminder of his crucifixion: a feature Bacon had not included in his initial sketch for the monument (fig.79). It was a markedly evangelical work of art, to the point of neglecting Freke's own identity: someone, we can perhaps imagine, who piously considered himself 'rubbish... compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord'.<sup>23</sup>

The association of funerary art with that 'Great day! for which all other days were made; for which earth rose from chaos, men from earth', was a suitably dramatic and optimistic subject matter and one commonly considered in the writings of the graveyard poets.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, as George Wright concluded, after taking a contemplative walk amongst the tombs at Westminster, his only hope after viewing the 'storied urn and animated bust' was to see Christ's

banner in the clouds display'd,  
 And the world's Saviour, from his throne on high,  
 Descend in purest robes of light array'd.  
 Great day of gladness to the good and just,  
 When they shall taste the wonders of his love,  
 And rising joyful from their beds of dust,  
 Ascend triumphant to the realms above.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Philippians, 3:8.

<sup>24</sup> Edward Young, *An Extract from Dr. Young's Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality* (Bristol, 1770), p.193.

<sup>25</sup> Wright 'Evening Reflections', in *Roach's Beauties*, I, p.1 & p.5.

Bacon's depiction of the triumphant Christ defeating Death, complete with worshipping angel, was certainly intended to direct viewers to Freke's piety and his eventual resurrection from the dead. However, it was also, perhaps more than Roubiliac's earlier creation, designed to proclaim the supremacy of Christ and, as George Wright described, to allow spectators to 'taste the wonders of his love'.<sup>26</sup> As such, Bacon's monument appeared to be answering very specific pleas in the period for monuments which were more devout in sentiment and that forsook classical allegory in favour of Christian symbolism. Thus, 'Mr Town' (Bonnel Thornton or George Colman), in 1755 suggested that,

If Socrates, or any other of the ancient philosophers could revive again and be admitted to *Westminster* Abbey, he would be induced to fancy himself in a *Pantheon*. The modern taste, (not content with introducing *Roman* Temples to our churches, and representing the Virtues with allegorical images) has ransacked the fabulous accounts of Heathen Theology, to strike out new embellishments for *Christian* monuments. We are not in the least surprised to see *Mercury* attending the Tomb of an orator and *Pallas* and *Hercules* supporting that of a warrior. If there is not a stop put to this Taste, we may soon expect our churches, instead of being dedicated to the services of religion, to be set apart for the reception of Heathen Gods.<sup>27</sup>

It was a concern the devout Bacon seems to have shared; having claimed that he would not make any monuments which had 'an unchristian tendency'.<sup>28</sup>

### *Monument to Lord Tracton*

The influence Roubiliac had on the designs Bacon created for the funerary trade was marked. Indeed, Bacon appears to have positively embraced the legacy left by his predecessor, emulating Roubiliac's ingenuity with animation and expression. Even in subject matter for his first funerary monument Bacon chose a narrative which had a comparable sense of dramatic energy and emotional involvement for spectators. However, perhaps the most eloquent example of Bacon's enthusiasm for the art of his predecessor is noted in his 1782

<sup>26</sup> Wright 'Evening Reflections' in *Roach's Beauties*, I, p.5.

<sup>27</sup> 'Mr Town', 'No. LXXIII, Thursday, June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1755', in *The Connoisseur*, by George Colman, III, p.168.

<sup>28</sup> Cecil, *Memoirs of John Bacon*, pp.37-38.



monument to Lord Tracton (James Dennis) in St Nicholas' church, Cork (fig.80).

Tracton had been a successful barrister and magistrate before being made Lord Chief Baron of the Court of Exchequer in 1778 and member of the King's Privy Council in Ireland. His monument, commissioned by his 'disconsolate widow' out of 'indissoluble tenderness', clearly highlighted the progress Bacon had made as a sculptor during the 1770s.<sup>29</sup> Bacon arranged the figures in the monument in a more formal and balanced manner than he had done for the Freke commission and was careful to emphasise the personal emotions of both Tracton's widow and the impact of his loss on polite society.<sup>30</sup> As in Bacon's Westminster monument to Lord Chatham, the sculptor avoided 'riddles' by separating the composition of the work into two clearly defined realms: the public, expressed at the top of the monument through an allegorical figure of Eloquence, and the private, articulated in the relief carved on the pedestal base.<sup>31</sup> Such distinctions, however, did not subdue the emotional or animated impact of the work; rather they helped spectators to read the monument's compelling narrative in an ordered and rational manner.

Bacon had based the allegorical figure at the top of the sepulchre on Roubiliac's 1749 depiction of Eloquence (fig.81), from the Duke of Argyll's monument in Westminster Abbey (see fig.69).<sup>32</sup> The similarities between the two messengers are marked. Like Roubiliac's earlier work, Bacon accompanied his figure of Eloquence with an opened scroll and caduceus, placed between the figure's feet. Bacon also mimicked the dramatic forward movement of Roubiliac's figure, by showing his personification of Eloquence stepping forward with great urgency and raising her arm in the air; a rhetorical action which the artist similarly used to stop passers-by and invite them to consider Tracton's worthiness. Although Bacon's figure does not intrude into the spectator's space in the same manner as Roubiliac's, being positioned on a higher level, the experience for the spectator of being confronted by the

<sup>29</sup> From inscription on the monument.

<sup>30</sup> From inscription on the monument.

<sup>31</sup> Spence, *A Guide to Classical Learning*, p.xxvi-xxvii.

<sup>32</sup> The monument to Argyll was commissioned in 1745 and erected in 1749.

personification was comparable. Indeed, in being positioned above the clutter of pews and pulpits in the smaller space of the St Nicholas' parish church, Bacon's figure occupied an especially commanding position, being perhaps more visible and eye catching than Roubiliac's at Westminster.

Bacon paid further homage to Roubilliac's sense of animation in the Tracton commission in the narrative he depicted on the roundel relief at the base of the monument (fig.82). Positioned below the inscription and framed on either side by weeping willows and burning urns, the low bas-relief depicted the grim arrival of Death. In design the piece strongly recalled Roubiliac's 1761 monument to Joseph and Elizabeth Nightingale, in Westminster Abbey (fig.83). The Nightingale monument depicts Death emerging from his dungeon and preparing to strike Elizabeth on her open chest, whilst her husband attempts to fend off his poisonous lance. It was an encounter tinged with an affecting sense of hopelessness as spectators of the work would have been only too aware of the futility of his efforts. Following Roubiliac, Bacon's relief shows Tracton collapsing on his deathbed as his widow, in a gesture of desperation which mimics Joseph Nightingale's, attempts to fend off Death's fatal arrow. Although the roles are reversed, wife defending husband rather than *visa versa*, the relief nevertheless explores similar notions of interrupted domestic intimacy. Tracton's loose toga and exposed chest, however, subtly reaffirmed his masculinity, a factor perhaps essential given that it was left to his wife to defend him from Death's poisonous arrow. Like the emerging figure of Death in the Nightingale monument, Bacon highlights the unexpected and unannounced arrival of the King of Terror in the Tracton commemoration by a loathsome skeletal arm which creeping out from behind a curtain intrudes upon the couple's private scene.

The depiction of Death shockingly interrupting the Tractons' intimacy was perhaps appropriate given Lord Tracton's sudden death in 1782 whilst taking a walk through his estates: an echo of Elizabeth Nightingale's equally unexpected death in childbirth. Like Roubiliac, Bacon re-enacted this death by creating a fictional scene in which he fused the figural and the allegorical. In doing so, Bacon exchanged Tracton's lonely death on his estates for one of domestic

intimacy and marital support. Bacon also chose to depict both Tracton and his wife Elizabeth in classical dress, the drapery confirming the fictional and idealised nature of the scene. In relocating the death of Tracton to the comfort and security of the bedroom, Bacon was able to both emotionalise the nature of the judge's last moments but also give his wife, the patron of the monument, an active presence in the design. In this way Bacon not only commemorated Tracton's death but also immortalised his wife's compassion and devotion.<sup>33</sup>

Whilst all the active roles in the monument were taken by women, Bacon carefully addressed any sense of gender imbalance by pointedly emphasising Tracton's worldly successes. Located in the middle of the composition and on the viewer's eye level, Tracton's epitaph recounted his position as an 'upright and intelligent judge... affectionate husband and an honest man'. The motto inscribed on Eloquence's scroll 'Be Just and Fear Not' was a further reference to Tracton's integrity and position as a magistrate. However, such sentiments were also applicable to those viewing the monument and contemplating, with a sense of pleasing melancholy, their own mortal condition. The proclamation to 'Be Just and Fear Not' was a pertinent reminder to viewers that the innocent had little to fear in death.

Although Bacon's work offered reassurance through the words on the scroll, his grim panel relief offered spectators an unequivocal invitation to vicariously partake in the spectacle of death. Indeed, the horrific appearance of Death, his skeletal form eerily contrasting with Tracton's muscular body, had the potential to strike viewers with a paralysing sense of terror. As the experience of Grimoald and his companions in the 1798 gothic horror *The Animated Skeleton* suggests, the appearance of a skeletal form could arouse extreme emotional turmoil. Whilst ghost hunting, the impetuous Grimoald felt 'the hand of a Skeleton fasten upon his arm', and whilst pulling away 'found the hand unfasten from something, and fall upon the ground'.<sup>34</sup> Although a grisly and shocking

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<sup>33</sup> In the absence of any children, Tracton bequeathed his estates in County Kerry to his nephew Meade and those in Counties of Cork and Dublin to his other nephew John. In return the brothers were obliged to adopt the name and arms of Dennis and to pay his widow, Lady Tracton, a substantial annual jointure of £1800.

<sup>34</sup> Anon, *The Animated Skeleton*, 2 vols. (London, 1798), I, pp.122-123.

event, it was nonetheless appropriately exhilarating and thrilling. Raymond, Grimoald's companion ironically professed that ghost hunting was a 'pleasant affair' and were it not 'for our participation of it, I should like to see a little of it every night'.<sup>35</sup>

The perverse pleasure gained from such shocking and terrifying encounters was a staple of the Gothic novel in the period and a narrative technique Bacon similarly utilised in the design of his monument to Tracton. The location of the monument in the old medieval parish church of St Nicolas's, Cork, can only have helped to magnify the dark and exciting emotions generated by the presence of the skeleton in the monument. Indeed, for the true connoisseur of the macabre, a pleasing terror could be enhanced, as graveyard poets and their exponents advocated, by viewing the work at night. Elizabeth Carter's *Ode to Melancholy* aptly highlighted the conjunction of night and death:

Ye Midnight Horrors! Awful Gloom!  
 Ye Silent Regions of the Tomb,  
 My future peaceful Bed:  
 Here shall my weary Eyes by clos'd,  
 And ev'ry Sorrow lie repos'd  
 In Death's refreshing Shade.<sup>36</sup>

It was a theatrical conceit Bacon appears to have readily acknowledged. The shadowy arm of Death, cast in low relief, coupled with the heavy curtains of the deathbed scene, strongly suggests that the dramatic death of Tracton also occurs at night.

The theatricality of Bacon's monument to Tracton, its animated narrative and vivid sentiments, owed a considerable debt to the creations of Roubiliac. Indeed, Bacon appears to have been gesturing to his predecessor in the Tracton commission in both design and concept. Certainly this affinity might well have been encouraged by Tracton's widow and family. Roubiliac's monuments to the Duke of Argyll and the Nightingales were well known in the period and it is

<sup>35</sup> Anon, *The Animated Skeleton*, I, pp.129-130.

<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth Carter, 'Ode to Melancholy', *Poems on Several Occasions* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., London, 1776), p.80.

possible that Bacon was asked to incorporate elements of their designs into his monument to Tracton, although there are no surviving records to verify this. Yet, whilst a likeness might have been encouraged by the patron, the sophistication and skill with which Bacon merged the differing narratives is revealing. Bacon was evidently confident in referencing his most renowned predecessor and, as previous chapters have considered, eager to be associated with Roubiliac's art. Moreover, in doing so, he was emphasising a sculptural vocabulary which, despite the Academy's best efforts, still had considerable currency in the period.

### *Bacon and classicism*

Although Bacon had evidently striven to emulate the dramatic sentiments of predecessors such as Roubiliac, the sculptor also experimented with more restrained and academic forms of expression in his funerary creations. His 1787 monument to Matthew Ridley in Newcastle Cathedral is a clear example of this (fig.84). Indeed, in subject matter and style the monument in many ways pre-empted the famed simplicity of John Flaxman's later designs.<sup>37</sup>

The monument depicts Ridley in seated profile, his state dress and opened scroll indicating his position in public office. Underneath Ridley's 'cerule' chair, a 'seat of magistracy', Bacon included the fasces and scales, symbolic of authority and justice, in reference to Ridley's position as a city magistrate.<sup>38</sup> The inscription on the base of the monument informed viewers that Matthew Ridley was

Senior Alderman of the Corporation of this Town,  
and Governor of the Company of Merchant-Adventurers.  
He four times served the Office of Mayor, in which Station in  
the Year 1745, he rendered essential Service to his Country;  
averting, by his Prudence and Activity, the Attack meditated  
against this Town by the Enemies of the House of Brunswick;  
and thereby materially checking the Progress of their Arms. He  
was unanimously elected by his Fellow Burgesses, to represent

<sup>37</sup> See Flaxman's monuments to: William Collins, Chichester Cathedral (1795), John Sibthorpe, Bath Abbey (1799), Joseph Warton, Winchester Cathedral (1800)

<sup>38</sup> *Newcastle Courant* (September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1787), no pagination.

them in five successive Parliaments. And retired from that Situation when the declining State of his Health rendered him incapable of conscientiously fulfilling the Duties of it.

The quote 'Constans Fidei' (Steady and Faithful) at the top of the work further complimented Bacon's characterisation of Ridley.

The Ridley monument was a classical creation in perhaps the fullest sense, the linear folds employed by Bacon for the drapery coupled with the expanse of blank space behind the magistrate, giving the work a bold and static presence. It was a crispness that reflected the 'precision of contour' promoted by Winckelmann in his 1755 *Thoughts on the Imitation of the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks*.<sup>39</sup> The regulated folds of Ridley's drapery contrast with that employed by the sculptor in his monument to Tracton; the intricacy and energy Bacon employed in Eloquence's drapery being exchanged for simple, regular and angular folds. In leaving almost half of the main entablature free of ornament Bacon further gestured to the restraint and economy of Grecian art promoted in the period. The blank expanse not only reflected the intrinsic value of marble but also suggests that there was an aesthetic worth in the absence of detail.

In his portrayal of Ridley Bacon also avoided the temptation to sentimentalise his death. Bacon depicted the magistrate as a man of stoic contemplation, with 'a serious, but placid countenance, as considering of the general welfare of the people over whom he presided'.<sup>40</sup> From his profiled position, Ridley makes no visual contact with spectators, his gaze is withheld and his emotions muted. In comparison to the almost hysterical spectacle Bacon created for the Tracton commission, the sculptor's depiction of Ridley's appears restrained and austere. It followed the type of aesthetic James Barry had been eager to advocate in the lectures he delivered to the Royal Academy between 1782 and 1799; claiming in his fourth lecture that

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<sup>39</sup> Winckelmann, 'Thoughts of the Imitation of the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks', in *German Aestheticism and Literary Criticism* ed. by H. B. Hisbet, p.39.

<sup>40</sup> *Newcastle Courant* (September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1787), no pagination.

One cannot without some astonishment reflect on the ridiculous allegoric absurdities which have been so frequently committed in sepulchral monuments; the place of all others where we might expect to find something solemn, direct, pathetic; of a plain manly sense; useful, exemplary, and utterly devoid of fripperies and impertinence of mere wit.<sup>41</sup>

The 'solemn, direct and pathetic' qualities Barry referred to in his lecture clearly echoed Reynolds' pleas that modern sculpture should aspire to be 'formal, regular and austere'.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, the desire to limit theatricality and manage the level of sensibility was, as Barry continued to argue, considered to be of particular importance in funerary art:

Sepulchral monuments being a kind of affectionate conversation, and embalming of the dead, in order to retain as much as may be their character and memory still with us; from the sums expended in erecting them, the publicity of their situations, and durability of their existence – from all of these considerations united, it would seem a matter of much importance, that they should be executed in the best, and most adequate manner, and not afford subject for ridicule and contempt, in that these monuments are more easily accessible, than anything else in the country, to the inspection of strangers, who may be utterly unacquainted with the influence, and jobbing, by which the doing of them is obtained.<sup>43</sup>

The design of Bacon's monument to Ridley followed Barry's advice. Bacon cast the whole monument in low relief, the flatness of the piece again emphasising the work's linearity and sense of abstraction. A fine outline, as George Cumberland's account of Grecian sculpture concluded, 'may possess grace, action, expression, character and proportion', a perception which in theory rendered the theatrical narratives of Roubiliac redundant. The only animated element Bacon includes can be found in the roundel relief at the base of the monument (fig.85). In 1745 Ridley, as his inscription informs us, had 'averted, by his Prudence and Activity, the Attack meditated again this Town by the Enemies of the House of Brunswick; and thereby materially checking the

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<sup>41</sup> James Barry, 'Lecture IV', (1782-1799), in *Lectures on Painting by the Royal Academicians: Barry, Opie and Fuseli*, ed. by Ralph N. Wornum (London, 1889), pp.165-166.

<sup>42</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse X' (1780), p.185.

<sup>43</sup> Barry, 'Lecture IV', in *Lectures on Painting by the Royal Academicians*, p.166.

Progress of their Arms'. Though no battle actually took place, the Jacobites diverting their troops away from Newcastle, Bacon nevertheless depicts an invasion in the medallion relief at the base of the monument. Imagined in a decidedly heroic and classical manner, the scene, as a reviewer for the *Newcastle Courant* explained, showed the town of Newcastle

represented by a female figure, crowned with turrets, having a shield by her, bearing the arms of the town; near her is an urn, from which are seen issuing salmon, the peculiar attribute of the river-Tyne, attacked by Rebellion, who, treading on the crown and sceptre (ensigns of royalty), bears in one hand the torch of sedition, in the other the sword of destruction: in an attitude of supplication, she inclines herself towards an armed figure, who protects her with his shield, and with a sword in his right hand resists the figure of Rebellion. On the shield are represented the arms of the family of Ridley; the helmet is ornamented with a bull, which is the crest. As a finishing, under the medallion two cornucopias are introduced, representing the general effect of plenty (attendant on the care of active magistrates), connected by a civic crown, the reward amongst the Romans of civil virtue.<sup>44</sup>

Bacon uses the active and heroic actions of the figures in the relief to complement the introspective depiction of Ridley at the top of the monument. It was a linkage of opposites which not only emphasises Ridley's meditative state but also is suggestive of the magistrate's thoughts. In the relief the valiant defender, forcefully battling against Rebellion, appears only just to have arrived - his left foot still hovers over the edge of the frame. It is an appropriate addition which reinforces Ridley's quick and decisive action in preparing the city for invasion after the defeat of General Sir John Cope at Prestonplans. It is also a gesture, even in this more austere work, to Bacon's interest in stretching the boundaries of aesthetic decorum; the foot we might conclude acting as a form of artistic signature.

### *Dialects of Classicism*

Bacon's commemoration to Ridley highlighted the sculptor's capacity for working in the Grand Manner, fulfilling Barry's plea that sepulchres be solemn and direct. Yet whilst the Ridley commission eloquently typified the type of

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<sup>44</sup> *Newcastle Courant* (September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1787), no pagination.



classicism promoted by the Academy, the piece was not singled out for praise in reviews of Bacon's work.<sup>45</sup> Instead, for James Dallaway, discussing Bacon's sculptural output in 1800, the work which had secured him 'a lasting fame for originality and classical taste' was the sculptor's 1799 monument to the poet William Mason in Westminster Abbey (fig.86).<sup>46</sup>

The monument depicted a muse gently supporting Mason's profile on a medallion, whilst leaning against an altar sculpted with a lyre, laurel wreaths and tragedy masks, all of which according to Dallaway were 'of the most correct form, as seen on ancient sarcophagi of the pure ages'.<sup>47</sup> The inscription written in Latin, also looked to the classical past:

Optimo Viro  
Gulielmo Mason, A.M.  
Poetae,  
Siquis alius  
Culio. casto. pio.  
Sacrum.

However, whilst Bacon was clearly eager to reference the antique in the design of his monument to Mason, in contrast to the Ridley commission the piece appears profoundly sentimental. Indeed, the muse, with her left hand pressed to her forehead in deep contemplative mourning, closely followed and satisfied melancholic expectations.

The classicised figure Bacon used in the Mason monument paralleled the type of character conceived of by George Wright in his *Evening Reflections*:

Hail, sacred fame! amidst whose stately shrines,  
Her constant vigils, Melancholy keeps,  
(Whilst on her arm her grief-worn cheek reclines)  
And o'er the spoils of human grandeur weeps.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> It was an absence which perhaps reflected the work's location in the north of England, its distance from London making it an unlikely candidate for review. However, equally it was an expression of the classical which the sculptor did not repeat, making the piece something of an anomaly when viewed in context of the rest of the sculptor's body of work.

<sup>46</sup> A pen and pencil preliminary drawing of the monument can be found in the National Portrait Gallery's archival collection. NPG2629.

<sup>47</sup> Dallaway, *Anecdotes of the Arts*, p.407.

<sup>48</sup> Wright, 'Evening Reflections', in *Roach's Beauties*, I, p.1.

Wright's female mourner also appears on the frontispiece to his 1793 collection of poems, entitled *Pleasing Melancholy or a walk among the tombs in a country churchyard* (fig.87). The image is accompanied by lines from Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*,

We Read their monuments; we sigh, and while  
 We sigh we sink, and are what we deplor'd;  
 Lamenting or lamented all our lot.<sup>49</sup>

This shared image of mourning successfully linked Bacon's monument to the literary traditions of the Graveyard school; his delicately wrought figure speaking directly to an audience receptive to the language of sentimental pathos. The weeping muse was a simple yet evocative rhetorical device, conveying a sense of grief without delving too deeply into personal distress, essentially bridging the gap between public and private feeling.<sup>50</sup>

Where Ridley's passive and serious gaze minimised opportunities for spectators to enjoy any emotional responses to his image, the characterisation of Mason's muse positively promoted an affecting encounter throughout the work. Indeed, Bacon wraps the poet in feminine sensibility: the muse engulfs the medallion of Mason with her introspective grief. Here the emotions and design of the monument were not those of a 'plain manly sense', but rather of a more feminised and delicate nature. Whilst Bacon depicted Ridley as a contemplative civil servant, his world within the monument clearly defined by masculine duty and activity, Mason has feminine sentiment almost literally pressing down upon him.

Bacon may have made such contrasts to reflect the differing professions of the two men. Ridley was a politician and magistrate, whilst Mason was a poet, cleric and gardener. Indeed, there is a degree of correlation between the design of Bacon's monument and the methodological techniques Mason used in his

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<sup>49</sup> George Wright, *Pleasing Melancholy or a Walk Amongst Tombs in a Country Church Yard, In the Stile and Manner of Hervey's Mediations; to which are added Epitaphs, Elegies and Inscriptions, in Prose and Verse*, (London, 1793).

<sup>50</sup> It was a device Bacon had also used in his earlier 1778 monument to Thomas Gray, also in Westminster, and commissioned by Mason, James Brown and Richard Stonehewer.

poetry. The writer claimed that he meant to pursue ‘the ancient method, so far as it is probable a Greek poet, were he alive, would do now, in order to adapt himself to the genius of our times, and the character of our tragedy’.<sup>51</sup> It was an approach to literature which echoed Bacon’s use of classical vocabulary in the monument, adapting the styles of the ancients to match modern sensibilities. Mason’s attempts to ‘steer between the irregularity of Shakespeare, and the classical severity of Milton’ similarly had much in common with Bacon’s own desire to unite the great expression of modern sculptors with the great beauty of the ancients.<sup>52</sup> As such Bacon’s less rigid articulation of classical values in the Mason monument was perhaps a type of compromise between what was considered to be classically beautiful and what was relevant to modern audiences, as well as being an approach which echoed Mason’s own literary style.

Whilst the sculptor employed a less robust rhetoric to articulate the tragedy of Mason’s death, he was nevertheless careful to differentiate such sentiments from his actual portrayal of the poet. Indeed, represented by a simple portrait medallion which rests on a sparsely adorned altar, Bacon made Mason’s presence in the work passive; his emotions, like those of Ridley, reserved and indwelling. In this manner Bacon was able to emphasise that Mason was not the perpetrator of the intense emotions on display, but rather the recipient. Indeed, it was the medallion and the altar which Dallaway singled out as being ‘of the most correct form, as seen on ancient sarcophagi of the pure ages’, rather than the female mourner.<sup>53</sup> This arrangement of parts in the monument created a sense of balance between the values and aesthetics of classical stoicism and modern sensibility. However, interestingly it also suggested that such expressions were gendered, the simple and abstract being associated with the masculine, the detailed, animated and sentimental with the feminine.

Whilst the plain manly qualities, expressed in monuments like Ridley’s, eloquently articulated the deceased’s civic achievements and masculine

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<sup>51</sup> Mason quoted in, Anon, *The Annual Necrology for 1797-8, including, also, Various Articles of Neglected Biography* (London, 1800), pp.305-306.

<sup>52</sup> Anon, *The Annual Necrology*, p.306.

<sup>53</sup> Dallaway, *Anecdotes of the Arts*, p.407.

authority, it was Bacon's softer, more sentimental, mode of classicism which was to find repeated expression in the period. The feminised version of classicism he used in monuments such as the Mason commission was eminently suitable for funerary art: grief and solitude being perhaps more pertinently conveyed through female figures.

*A sentimental monument to Eliza*

Bacon was undoubtedly aware that monuments such as the Mason commission deviated from the austere and manly classicism encouraged by leading sculptural theorists in the period. Indeed, Bacon had proven he could work in a more refined and stoical manner in his monument to Ridley. However, the sculptor was a shrewd businessman and acutely aware of patronal tastes. Although the 'formal, regular and austere' was strongly advocated as a purer form of sculpture, as Bacon had evidently grasped, patrons of the arts continued to prefer a looser application of classicism infused with sentimental pathos.<sup>54</sup> It was a conflict the ever pragmatic Vicesimus Knox also recognised in 1782, claiming in his essay on funerary art that

the imitative arts are capable of conveying moral instruction in the most effectual manner, as their operation is instantaneous. They require not the deductions of logic, which can only be made by cultivated intellects; but by appealing to the senses, which are sometimes combined in great perfection with the rudest minds, they strike immediately and irresistibly on the susceptible heart.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> The contrast between Academic tastes and patronal demands had long been voiced; the classicist James Atkinson claiming that 'The depravity of taste among the affluent is the evident cause of that disgraceful insensibility, which takes from the power of discrimination'. James Atkinson Esq, *A Letter to a Royal Academician: containing a Review of the Fine Arts in Greece; Compared to their State in England* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Edinburgh, 1800), p.10. It was a complaint shared by Valentine Green who similarly claimed that works 'wholly directed to local purposes, and the gratification of private taste... assist not towards forming an object, to which the general eye can be again turned'. Green, *Review of the Polite Arts*, p.35.

<sup>55</sup> Vicesimus Knox, 'Essay LXVIII' – That the English possess a fine taste for Sculpture and that it ought to be encouraged for its moral effect' in *Essays Moral and Literary*, 2 vols. (new ed., London, 1782), I, p.297.

Bacon produced numerous monuments in this sentimental version of classicism, all of which were designed to 'strike immediately and irresistibly on the susceptible heart'.<sup>56</sup> Perhaps the earliest example of this type of funerary art can be found in the monument the sculptor created for Elizabeth Draper in Bristol Cathedral in 1780 (fig.88).<sup>57</sup> The commemoration to the 'Eliza' of Lawrence Sterne's letters included two female allegories. On the left hand side of a large ornamental urn Bacon positions Genius holding a blazing torch while on the right Benevolence supports a nesting pelican feeding its young. The design of Bacon's monument to Draper closely follows the sentiments of the Mason commission and the melancholy figures convey a comparable sense of feminine devotion and emotion. The lingering and solitary contemplation of such figures also created an elegiac mood comparable to the verses of the graveyard poets. The piece was even singled out by George Wright in his 1793 melancholic walk amongst the tombs:

Let nature plead, parental fondness mourn,  
Or friendship bathe with tears *Eliza's* Urn;  
While the superior to the world like this,  
With choirs angelic shares immortal bliss.<sup>58</sup>

The inscription on the monument claimed that 'Genius & Benevolence Were united' in the person of Elizabeth Draper. Bacon is careful to emphasise these qualities in his commemoration through subtly interconnecting the two allegorical figures. Although both figures appear to internalise their emotions and maintain a sense of solitary meditation, Bacon links the allegories together through the folds of their draperies, which gently lift upwards towards the centre of the work. The garland on the urn similarly promoted a sense of unity. Even the tilt of the floral ensemble, raised up on Genius's side and falling downwards on the right, mirrors the gazes of the two figures. As in other works

<sup>56</sup> Vicesimus Knox, 'Essay LXVIII', in *Essays Moral and Literary* (1782), I, p.297.

<sup>57</sup> Dallaway, *Anecdotes of the Arts*, p.407.

Bacon exhibited a model of the Draper monument in 1780 at the Royal Academy, where one reviewer similarly praised the work claiming that the 'Design of this is very fine, and it executed with great taste'. By An Artist, *A Candid Review of the Exhibition (being the Twelfth of the Royal Academy MDCCCXXX)* (London, 1780), p.32.

<sup>58</sup> George Wright 'On a YOUNG LADY in Bristol', *Pleasing Melancholy*, p.155.

produced by the sculptor in this period, Bacon created a delicate sense of contrast across the surface of the work. In the monument Genius, looking upwards to her flaming torch, clutches her chest as if to maintain the swell of pride she feels towards Draper whilst Benevolence, pointing to Elizabeth's inscription with her right hand, looks down at the birds she nurtures.

In the absence of an actual representation of Draper in the monument, the female allegories Bacon employed became the primary means by which Eliza's identity, character and worthiness were conveyed to spectators. Yet, although Genius and Benevolence created an undeniably feminine presence, it is clear that the sentiments they expressed and the values they embodied were transferable. Bacon repeated the success of the Draper monument with an almost identical sepulchre to James Marwood in 1781, in Widworthy Devon (fig.89). The design was again highly praised for its elegance, one contributor to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1791 stating that the

delicacy and expression of their [the allegorical figures] countenances, attitude, and drapery, and the harmony and just proportions of the whole rank it with the first performances of its artist.<sup>59</sup>

For this monument Bacon replaced the figure of Genius with an allegory of Justice, maintaining the balance of the composition by similarly directing the figure's gaze upwards and away from that of Benevolence. The flexibility of Bacon's initial design for the Draper monument led to it becoming one of Bacon's favourite and most replicated designs.<sup>60</sup> As James Dallaway noted when considering the sculptor's use of allegorical figures,

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<sup>59</sup> Anon, *The Gentleman's Magazine* (July, 1791), p.609.

<sup>60</sup> Repeated in his monuments to Ann Whytell in Westminster Abbey (c.1788), John Bentley Ashley in Northamptonshire (1784), the Egerton family at Rostherne, Cheshire (1792) and Sarah Winford in Astley, Worcs (c.1793). The same was true of the simple design Bacon chose for the Mason monument. The representation of a melancholic allegory, draped over an altar or urn, piously mourning the loss of the deceased was repeated in commemorations the sculptor designed for General Hope in Westminster Abbey (1793), Captain Josias Rogers, Lyminster, Hampshire (c.1795), John Dalton, Great Stanmore, Middlesex (1791) and Rosa Palmer Montego Bay, Jamaica (1794) amongst others.

Bacon has adapted this mode very happily, though not without repetition of his first thoughts; and has attained to nearly an equal degree of perfection in several of his emblematical figures...<sup>61</sup>.

His simple female motifs were used to commemorate men, women, children and family groups and to express the sincere emotions of grieving parents, children, siblings and spouses. Indeed, Bacon's sentimental female allegories appear to have been particularly suitable for manipulation and modification: the swelling bosom of a Genius being easily altered to become a proud figure of Justice, if that is what the character of the commemorated individual required.

The success of the Draper design testifies to the currency that Bacon's loose interpretation of classical vocabulary had in the period. As in larger public commissions, Bacon's funerary art appeared to bridge the gap between the intellectualised classicism promoted at the Academy and the sympathetic encounters purchasers demanded. In this manner his designs gestured to elite taste without compromising or diminishing popular sentimental appetite; as such, the sculptor created a stylistic formula and mode of expression which had broad appeal in the period.

### *Bacon and Methodism*

Although Bacon, most probably because of his early experience in industry, was able to create an effective monopoly on the trade of sepulchres in the 1780s and to a lesser extent in the 1790s, not all his works were designed to appeal to as broad an audience as was possible. Indeed, perhaps one of the most personal areas in which he looked to 'strike immediately and irresistibly on the susceptible heart' was in the evangelical monuments he was commissioned to create for individuals associated with the Methodist chapel on Tottenham Court Road.<sup>62</sup> Bacon regularly attended George Whitefield's Tabernacle, and his own simple epitaph was placed under the North Gallery in the church. The tablet stated his faith plainly:

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<sup>61</sup> Dallaway, *Anecdotes of the Arts*, p.406.

<sup>62</sup> Knox, 'Essay LXVIII', *Essays Moral and Literary*, (1782), I, p.297.

What I was as an Artist  
 seemed to me  
 of some Importance  
 While I lived;  
 But  
 What I really was,  
 as a Believer in Christ Jesus,  
 is the Only Thing  
 of Importance to me now!<sup>63</sup>

A review written after Bacon's death similarly emphasised his evangelical leanings, claiming that

Religion to him was not the Sunday coat of the formalist; much less was it the vile cloak of the hypocrite. It was *neither a system* of mere opinions, nor the coat of a party: but a change of heart, and a *hope full of immortality*, grounded alone on the work of a Redeemer; Religion was, with him, a grand concern.<sup>64</sup>

Whitefield's Chapel, no longer remains and the sculptures Bacon created for this environment have largely been lost. This is a great shame for between 1780 and his death in 1799 Bacon was repeatedly commissioned to design monuments for those associated with Whitefield's ministry. Known only through surviving sketches and drawings, these works must have originally formed an important and unique part of Bacon's sepulchre output, designed as they were for the artist's friends and family.

The monuments seem to have given Bacon the opportunity to produce some profoundly pious designs, mixing the evangelical message he first explored with the Langton-Freke monument with the refined emotions and sentiments he had explored in pieces such as the Draper monument. In his monument to Anna Cecilia Rhodes, commissioned in 1796, the sculptor chose to animate the biblical story of the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years (fig.90).<sup>65</sup> It was an appropriate narrative of healing and faith for Anna Rhodes who, as her

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<sup>63</sup> Walter H. Godfrey & W. McMarcham eds., *London County Council Survey of London*, Tottenham Court Road and Neighbourhood [The Parish of St Pancras III], 21, (London 1949), p.71.

<sup>64</sup> Anon, *Gentleman's Magazine* (September, 1799) p.808.

<sup>65</sup> Mathew, 9:20-22.



inscription recounts, at the age of 21 ‘was seiz’d with an uncommon Nervous Affection, which continued the remaining eleven years of her Life’.<sup>66</sup> Complete with the accompanying lines ‘While I touch I feel within, Death expire and Heaven begin’, Bacon depicted the faithful woman reaching out to touch the hem of Christ’s robe whilst raising her other hand to her mouth, as if to utter the words from Matthew’s Gospel ‘If I only touch his cloak I will be healed’.<sup>67</sup> It was an unavoidably sentimental and poignant narrative, especially in light of the fact that Rhodes had never received an earthly healing. However, as her epitaph informed viewers, although ‘The disorder which had so long afflicted her, broke the Bands which held her here’ she was going to heaven ‘where every mystery of Providence is explained’ and ‘the Inhabitants whereof shall no more say they are sick’.<sup>68</sup>

Rhodes’ restoration in heaven, referred to by the biblical narrative, embodied a typical evangelical view of death.<sup>69</sup> Death for the mourner was, as Daniel Webb claimed in a 1781 sermon delivered at Whitefield’s Moorfield’s Tabernacle, ‘a wide and irreconcilable breach between the dearest friends... the tears of love and friendship may a little relieve the mourner, but can never heal the wound’.<sup>70</sup> However, for the victim death was the moment when ‘we may have it [life] more abundantly than we had it in Adam’: a notion perhaps of particular pertinence for the afflicted Rhodes.<sup>71</sup> The relief Bacon created for the Rhodes’ monument emphasised Christ’s compassion, but perhaps more profoundly highlighted the woman’s faithfulness, ‘take heart, daughter... your faith has healed you’.<sup>72</sup> Unlike the passive allegorical figures of melancholy used by Bacon in his commemorations of Mason and Draper, the sculptor chose

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<sup>66</sup> Inscription in Godfrey & McMarcham eds., *London County Council*, 21, p.71.

<sup>67</sup> Matthew, 9:20

<sup>68</sup> Inscription in Godfrey & McMarcham eds., *London County Council*, 21, p.71.

<sup>69</sup> Bacon used the narrative of healing shown in the Rhodes’s monument to make a design for a Tassie sulphur gem, which served as a signet ring for the Revd. John Newton. The gems were mass produced by James Tassie (1735-99) and a cast of the gem is in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

<sup>70</sup> James Webb, *God’s Faithfulness a Sure Ground of Hope and Comfort to Believers, both Living and Dying. A Sermon Occasioned by the Much Lamented Death of Rev. John Conder D.D* (London, 1781), p.3.

<sup>71</sup> W. Bromley Cadogan, *A Sermon on Sunday August 9<sup>th</sup> 1795 in the Parish Church of the United Parishes of St Andrew Wardrobe and St Ann Blackfriars upon the Death of their Late Venerable Rector W. Romaine* (London, 1795), p.19.

<sup>72</sup> Mathew, 9:22.

a more active form of female agency to narrate the story. In focusing on the woman's faithfulness Bacon was able to speak directly to the Methodist congregation, strongly asserting the sect's belief in justification by faith alone.<sup>73</sup>

As was true of some of his more flamboyant public commissions, the sculptor ran the risk of making his monument to Rhodes appear overly animated and theatrical. Indeed, the Methodists were heavily criticised in the period for their often misplaced and dangerous enthusiasm. As one commentator stated, 'Pure Methodism... seems to place Religion wholly or chiefly in certain inexplicable impulses, or movements of the mind; and requires of its votaries to commit themselves to the guidance of the Spirit, with an utter contempt of reason, and all human learning'.<sup>74</sup> The preaching style of George Whitefield was particularly criticised. Referred to as 'Squintum', on account of his lazy eye, one 'Regulator of Enthusiasts' described how Whitefield alternatively 'changed from his theatrical astonishment into violent enthusiastical agitations and distortions; accompanied with weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth'.<sup>75</sup> The healing services promoted at Methodist churches were also similarly criticised, as Evan Lloyd's satirical verses from 1766 implied:

*Tottenham's the best accustom'd Place,  
There Magus [Whitefield] squints Men into Grace,  
Wesley sells Powders, Draughts, and Pills  
Sov'reign against all sorts of Ills,  
Assurance charms away the Fit,  
Or at least makes it intermit  
Madan the springs of Health unlocks,  
And by his Preaching cures the Pox.*<sup>76</sup>

Whilst much of the controversy surrounding the Methodist's healing services was in reality mere speculation and hyperbole, Bacon's monument to Rhodes

<sup>73</sup> Romans, 5:1. 'Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand'.

<sup>74</sup> John Mainwaring, *An Essay on the Character of Methodism* (Cambridge, 1781), p.7.

<sup>75</sup> John Harman, *The Crooked Disciples Remarks upon the Blind Guide's Method of Preaching, for Some Years: Being a Collection of the Principle Words, Sayings, Phraseology, Rhapsodies, Hyperboles, Parables. And Miscellaneous Incongruities of the Sacred and Profane, Commonly Repeated and Peculiarly made use of by the Reverend Dr Squintum*, (London, 1761), p.1.

<sup>76</sup> Evan Lloyd, 'The Methodist' (London 1766) as quoted in Albert M. Lyles, *Methodism Mocked: The Satiric Reaction to Methodism in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1960), p.146.

was nonetheless explicit in its emphasis on miraculous healing. It strongly linked the modern gifts of the spirit practiced during healing services with biblical precedent. Indeed, given that the monument was located on the walls of Whitefield's chapel, where healing services regularly occurred, this association seems to have been purposeful; offering hope to those who were afflicted and testifying to the power of faith for those who persevere.<sup>77</sup>

For his 1795 monument to William Romaine, at St Ann's Blackfriars, Bacon offered another specifically evangelical design (fig.91, 92 & 93).<sup>78</sup> Romaine, though not a Methodist, was a close friend of Whitefield and John Wesley and similarly renowned in the period for his enthusiastic preaching style. As one commentator noted, 'His words were thunder, and his life was lightening' a preacher 'with all the commanding energy of Divine authority; and the holiness of his life was a shining commentary of the truths he taught'.<sup>79</sup> His epitaph was equally as forceful. Having raised a multitude 'from Guilt and Ruin to the Hope of endless felicity', he was commended as

A PREACHER of peculiar Gifts and Animation:  
 Conservating all his Talents to the Investigation of Scared Truth.  
 During a MINISTRY of more than Half a Century  
 He *lived, conserved, and wrote*, only to exalt the SAVIOUR.  
 Mighty in the Scriptures;  
 He ably defended, with Eloquence and Zeal,  
 The *equal Perfections of the TRIUNE JEHOVAH*, exhibited in  
*Man's Redemption*  
 THE FATHER'S everlasting Love:  
 The *Atonement, Righteousness, and Complete Salvation*, of the SON:  
 The *Regeneration Influence* of the ETERNAL SPIRIT;  
 With the *Operation and Enjoyments* of a *purified faith*.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Another monument was erected to Anna Rhode, commissioned by her sister, in a similarly evangelical manner by Bacon's son, John Bacon Jnr, in 1796 at St James' Church, Hampstead. The monument, now in the V&A, was probably commissioned because Whitefield's chapel stood on unconsecrated ground, and indeed Rhodes' body was buried in the crypt of St James'.

<sup>78</sup> The monument is no longer at St Ann's and its location is unknown, but fig.93 shows the work in its original location at the front of the church.

<sup>79</sup> *The Gospel Magazine and Theological Review*, no.xvi (April, 1797), p.165.

<sup>80</sup> From inscription which can be found in *The Gospel Magazine*, no.xvi (April, 1797), p.169.

Bacon's monument matched the pious sentiments of Romaine's inscription. Taken from the apocalyptic words spoken by John the Baptist, the monument consisted of, what a writer for the *The Gospel Magazine* described as

a bas-relief in elegant statuary marble, of a blunted pyramidal form, which contains a beautiful figure of FAITH, with a TELESCOPE in one hand, pointing to the SAVIOUR in his state of exaltation, and sitting on a RAINBOW, and the BIBLE open in the other, exhibiting the following text "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*". On one side of the figure of Faith is an ALTAR with a SLAIN LAMB burning on it, and on the other the SACRAMENTAL SIGNS; behind which is a FOUNTAIN issuing from a ROCK. Underneath this bas-relief is the INSCRIPTION TABLET, and above it is placed the BUST, being a striking likeness, of the SUBJECT of the Monument. The whole of this is elevated to about the height of the pews by a pedestal of black and yellow marble, resting on a plinth of dove marble, and this raised on a Portland step, in which the iron railing is fixed.<sup>81</sup>

As the contemporary account suggests, the Romaine monument was an iconographically rich and complex creation. It offered a deeply theological account of the evangelical faith, typically emphasising Christ's death, his resurrection and man's salvation by grace. The symbolism Bacon used to articulate his redemptive narrative was profoundly biblical and undoubtedly chosen to match the pious tastes of the patrons of the monument - Romaine's congregation and friends.

The depiction of Faith quite literally magnifying the arrival of the Son of God with her raised telescope was an eminently suitable subject matter for Romaine's commemoration, given the preacher's evangelical impulses. Indeed, the type of powerful imagery which often accompanied descriptions of Christ's return was given forceful expression in a sermon Romaine gave in 1762, where at the end of time,

The soul will be terrified with the thoughts of meeting an offended God, of standing at his awful bar to be tried for the breach of his holy

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<sup>81</sup> *The Gospel Magazine*, no.xvi (April, 1797), p.168.

and just law... Oh! death! how inexpressibly terrible is thine approach to such an unpardoned sinner.<sup>82</sup>

Though death, as Romaine suggested, was a terrifying experience for the unsaved, for those in Christ it was a joyful occasion: 'to be with Christ... was far better than to abide in the flesh'.<sup>83</sup> Bacon emphasises this sense of redemptive hope by depicting Christ on a rainbow, symbolic of God's grace, and reinforcing the message that 'it is by grace you have been saved through faith' through the assertive presence of Faith in the centre of the composition.<sup>84</sup> In line with this sense of hope in death, Bacon does not include any melancholy weeping figures in his monument to Romaine. Instead Faith appears jubilant at Christ's return and confident of Romaine's salvation. Indeed, given the preacher's stated preference for heaven, it is implied that there was no need to be melancholy at his death.

Bacon makes further allusions to the hope Christians had in their salvation by including references to Old Testament theology. The lamb burning on an altar, on the right hand side of the monument, appears to have been included by Bacon in order to remind viewers of the traditional sacrifices made by the Hebrews according to the law of Leviticus.<sup>85</sup> However, as if to emphasise that this type of offering could never achieve full atonement, Bacon linked the lamb's death to Christ's later sacrifice through the words 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world' inscribed in the opened Bible Faith holds above the altar. Here Bacon unequivocally emphasised the idea of succession, old covenant to new, and boldly asserted the notion that Christ's sacrifice was 'once for all'.<sup>86</sup> On the opposite side of the monument Bacon further stressed the importance of Christ's sacrifice by including a chalice and plate of bread, the sacramental symbols of the new covenant. The depiction of a 'fountain issuing from a rock' was also symbolic of God's grace and mankind's

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<sup>82</sup> William Romaine, *The Blessedness of Living and Dying in the Lord: Proved in a Sermon Preached upon the Death of the Rev Mr Thomas Jones, Chaplain of St Saviours Southwark* (London, 1762), p.1.

<sup>83</sup> William Romaine, *The Knowledge of Salvation Precious in the Hour of Death, Proved in a Sermon, preached January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1759. Upon the death of Rev. James Hervey* (London, 1759), p.3.

<sup>84</sup> Ephesians, 2:8.

<sup>85</sup> Leviticus, 23:9-14.

<sup>86</sup> Hebrews, 9:25-27.

hope. The fountain was presumably a reference to the account in Exodus of when Moses struck a rock at Horeb to provide water for the Israelites, providing those in exile with water and importantly proving that the 'Lord is among us'.<sup>87</sup>

The evangelical sentiments Bacon expressed through his monument to Romaine, coupled with the somewhat obscure references he made to covenantal doctrine and Old Testament theology, reflected the type of audience Bacon anticipated for such works. As such, the monument was perhaps, in the most accurate of senses, a sermon in stone, which emphasised the eternal joy to be realised after death rather than the temporary melancholy it also promised. Indeed, the depiction of Romaine at the top of the monument confirmed this sense of the sermonic. Although Bacon's bust of Romaine showed the preacher to be somewhat disconnected from the drama unfolding beneath, the sentiments detailed in the relief strongly accorded with the brand of theology he preached. The location of the bust, neither fully in the viewer's space nor entirely incorporated into the narrative below, suggests Romaine's role as an intermediary figure, a guide to the redemptive events unfolding. It was a position which in many ways eloquently reflected his role as a preacher; his mission being to teach and guide others to salvation, in this case apparently from beyond the grave.

Although the Romaine monument was explicit in its evangelical message and iconographical language, Bacon was nonetheless careful to avoid over theatricality and any sense of hysteria. Indeed, Bacon appears to have specifically avoided the type of drama he had explored in his earlier monuments to Freke and Tracton: he uses a veil of feminine sensibility to soften the impact of his redemptive narrative. Whilst Faith was central to the message of the monument, she was also a familiar figure in Bacon's work, closely following the type of classicised characters Bacon had included in monuments such as Elizabeth Draper's. By using such fashionable female figures Bacon did not diminish the impact of his monument but crucially managed to subdue its expression.

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<sup>87</sup> Exodus, 17:1-7.

Towards the end of the century Bacon began to find more patrons for this pious style of sepulchre outside of Methodist circles; the optimistic vision of death his evangelical monuments promoted resonating with the grief and hopes of many patrons. His monuments to Catherine Willett in Great Cranford, Dorset (1799), and Samuel Thomas in Tregolls, Cornwall (c.1799) carefully reused motifs from the Romaine commission (fig.94 & 95). The Willett monument depicts Faith leaning against the same altar as that used in the Romaine commission. The figure is shown gently wafting burning incense, whilst gazing heavenwards to the celestial burst of rays which Bacon positioned at the top of the work. Faith's introspection and quiet reverence echoed the sentiments of the weeping figures Bacon included in some of his more secular commissions. The precise meaning of this monument is ambiguous, although the opened but blank bible, altar and incense all seem to point to the importance of prayer for thanksgiving and worship, 'May my prayer be counted as incense before you; the lifting up of my hands as the evening offering'.<sup>88</sup> However, given Bacon's previous choice of apocalyptic imagery the figure of Faith could also be a reference to the prayers of the saints from the book of Revelation;

Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar, he was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints...the smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand.<sup>89</sup>

For the Thomas commission Bacon similarly incorporated elements from the Romaine monument; the bas-relief depicting Faith with accompanying telescope, supporting a collapsing figure of Hope. The anchor concealed behind Hope's dress was a reminder of St Paul's words of encouragement in his letter to the Hebrews that God's promises were like 'an anchor for the soul, firm and secure'.<sup>90</sup> Bacon positioned Hope gently balanced between Faith and the stability of the anchor, a poignant metaphor for the Christian walk of faith: a message one can imagine equally relevant in death. The Thomas monument was commissioned, as the inscription informs us, by the deceased's 'affectionate and

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<sup>88</sup> Psalm, 141:2.

<sup>89</sup> Revelation, 8:3-5.

<sup>90</sup> Hebrews, 6:19.

afflicted sister', a factor which perhaps explains the choice of imagery: the feminine sentiments Bacon explored being in keeping with the patron's grief.<sup>91</sup>

### *Conclusion*

During his thirty years of professional practice Bacon created a diverse array of sepulchre commemorations. Informed by his own religiosity and a climate hungry for sentimental encounters, the sculptor's monuments testified to the diverse preferences of patrons in the period. However, there was an increasingly strident voice of dissent being raised against such liberalities. In his 1798 *Letter to the Dilettanti Society* James Barry stated such objections plainly, arguing that funerary art should be regulated as it had been in France under Louis XIV<sup>th</sup>. Retrospectively considering the freedoms British sculptors were afforded, Barry claimed that had George III been more decisive,

the Public would find less matter of allegorical, tasteless rubbish to criticise, and more of interest, pertinence, and dignity, in some of the fine mechanical sculptures, on which so much money has been expended.<sup>92</sup>

Whilst Barry's ambition was to see sepulchres more closely governed, the implementation of this was difficult to achieve, given that most funerary monuments were privately commissioned. Indeed, Bacon had been able to experiment broadly in the designs he made for the sepulchre trade, suiting the style of his monuments to the tastes of his patrons and to the characters of the individuals he was commemorating.

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<sup>91</sup> Whilst Bacon began to find a broader audience for his devout designs, it was his son John Bacon Jnr who, after his father's death in 1799, truly explored the full potential of religious allegories. Modifications were of course made, the type of complex allegory used in the Romaine monument often being avoided to ensure clarity in meaning. However, the sentiments of hope, in opposition to the type of fear and desolation noted in Roubiliac's earlier works, prevailed.

<sup>92</sup> James Barry, *A Letter to the Dilettanti Society, Respecting the Obtention of Certain Matters Necessary for the Improvement of Public Taste* (London, 1798), p.284.



## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONFLICTING IDEALS: THE HOWARD AND JOHNSON MONUMENTS IN ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL 1784-1796**

In March 1796 the first two monuments ever permitted into St Paul's Cathedral were unveiled to the public, heralding 'a grand epoch to the Professors of the Imitative Arts'.<sup>1</sup> Commemorating the philanthropist and prison reformer John Howard (1726-1790) (fig.96) and the philosopher and writer Dr Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) (fig.97), the monuments, both designed by Bacon, were positioned on opposing piers under the cathedral's central dome (fig.98). Classically dressed and raised on simple geometrical pedestals, the monuments created an imposing approach to the choir.

The unity Bacon established between the two figures, balancing the introverted and reticent portrayal of Johnson against the more animated representation of Howard's active philanthropy, is however misleading. The monuments were initially intended for quite different locations, commissioned by separate committees and governed by divergent aims. This chapter will consider in the detail the development of the two schemes, the factors which brought them together and Bacon's innovative response to the demands placed upon him by the committees charged with overseeing both projects.

### *The Johnson commission*

The death of Johnson in 1784 prompted a small group of his closest friends to set about commissioning a statue in his honour. Led by Reynolds and Sir William Scott, the committee established to oversee the production of the monument envisaged a semi-personal commemoration, paid for by the writer's friends and acquaintances.<sup>2</sup> The monument was to be placed in Westminster Abbey, in Poet's Corner, between Roubiliac's monuments to Handel (fig.99) and the Duke of Argyll (see fig.68), and was intended to celebrate the writer's moral, philosophical and creative character.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, it seems likely that it was

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<sup>1</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* (March, 1796), p.179.

<sup>2</sup> Other members of the committee included: Sir Joseph Banks. bart., The Rt.Hon. W. Windham, the Rt. Hon. Ed. Burke, Edmond Malone esq., Philip Matcalf esq., James Boswell esq. Many of the subscribers to the Johnson monument were members of the Literary Club of which Johnson had been a member. See Anon, *Subscribers to Dr. Johnson's Monument. September 1790* (London, 1790).

<sup>3</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* (December, 1789), p.1064.

for this very reason that Bacon was chosen for the Johnson commission, his known preference for the art of Roubiliac coupled with his expressive style making him an ideal choice to complement the designs of the pre-existing sculptures.

By the time of his death in 1784 Johnson had secured his status as one of the eighteenth century's most significant literary figures. Works such as his 1755 *Dictionary of the English Language*, his philosophical novel *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* (1759), his poetry, his political pamphlets, and his essays for *The Rambler* and *The Idler*, had immortalised his irrepressible character and genius.<sup>4</sup> In his first letter for the *Idler* Johnson had vividly revealed his tenacious and self-deprecating character in his description of the 'Idler', claiming,

The Idler, though sluggish, is yet alive, and may sometimes be stimulated to vigour and activity. He may descend into profoundness, or tower into sublimity, for the diligence of an Idler is rapid and impetuous, as ponderous bodies forced into velocity move with violence proportionate to their weight.<sup>5</sup>

Johnson was famous for the apparent contradictions in his character and for his combination of both sluggishness and sublimity of thought. Indeed, his close friend Reynolds had claimed that 'were I to write the life of Dr. Johnson, I would labour this point, to separate his conduct that proceeded from his passions, and what proceeded from his reason'.<sup>6</sup> Writing towards the end of the century one poetic commemorator was equally as cogent in describing the contradictions and complexities in Johnson's character:

Herculean strength and stentorian voice.

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<sup>4</sup> For modern scholarship on Johnson's character and his works see Robert De Maria, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, (Oxford & Cambridge Man., 1993). John Wiltshire, *Samuel Johnson in the Medical World: The Doctor and Patient*, (Cambridge & New York, 1991). Roy Porter, "The Hunger of Imagination": Approaching Samuel Johnson's Melancholy', *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry*, eds, William F. Bynum, Roy Porter & Michael Shepherd, I, (London, 1985-88), pp.63-88.

<sup>5</sup> 'No.1, Saturday April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1758', in Samuel Johnson, *The Idler: by the Author of The Rambler*, 2 vols. (London, 1793), I, p.3.

<sup>6</sup> Joshua Reynolds, 'Samuel Johnson', in *Portraits of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, ed. by Frederick W. Hilles (Melbourne, London & Toronto, 1952), pp.73-74.

Of wit a fund, of words countless choice:  
 In learning rather various than profound,  
 In truth intrepid, in religion sound:  
 A trembling frame and a distorted sight,  
 But firm in judgement and in genius bright;  
 In controversy rather known to spare,  
 But humble as the publican in pray'r:  
 To more than merit his kindness, kind,  
 And, tho' in manners harsh, of friendly mind.  
 Deep-ting'd with melancholy's blackest shade,  
 And tho' prepar'd to die, of death afraid –  
 Such Johnson was – of him with justice vain,  
 When will this nation see his like again?<sup>7</sup>

Johnson had suffered throughout his life from bouts of melancholy and was plagued by an obsessive fear of death.<sup>8</sup> The writer had notoriously poor eyesight, the consequence of catching scrofula in childhood, whilst his 'trembling frame' is now thought to have been the result of Tourette's syndrome.<sup>9</sup> Whilst Reynolds had suggested separating Johnson's 'passions' from his 'reason', in his 1772-1778 portrait of Johnson, the painter had created a characteristically idiosyncratic portrayal of the lexicographer (fig.100). In this intimate portrait, Reynolds depicted Johnson nervously fiddling with the buttons on his jacket, whilst straining out into the darkness to look at the viewer. His intense expression, emphasised particularly through his furrowed brow, highlights the vigour of his thinking, whilst his partially opened mouth indicates that he about to say something. As spectators we appear to have disturbed Johnson from his musings, momentarily breaking his reverie as he turns to face us. However, in continuing to play with the buttons on his jacket Reynolds suggests that Johnson still remains, on a deeper level, engrossed by his previous thoughts.

In contrast to Reynolds' portrayal of Johnson, Joseph Nollekens' 1777 marble bust, known today through a copy made by Edward Hodges Baily in

<sup>7</sup> Anon, *The Britannic Magazine or Entertaining Repository of Heroic Adventures. And Memorable Exploits*, X, (London, 1805), p.188.

<sup>8</sup> Roy Porter, "The Hunger of Imagination": Approaching Samuel Johnson's Melancholy', pp.63-88.

<sup>9</sup> Donald R. Glopper, 'The Eighteenth-Century Touretter', *Science News – The Weekly Magazine of Science*, 138, no.9 (September, 1990), p.131 & p.139.

1828 (fig.101), offers a more idealised depiction of the lexicographer. Nollekens casts Johnson in the guise of a classical philosopher. Abandoning contemporary clothing and a wig, Nollekens instead wrapped Johnson in a loose fitting robe, to reveal his upper chest, and framed his face with soft all'antica curls. His expression, however, similarly seems to suggest a figure who has been engaged in deep thought. As in Reynolds' portrait, Johnson's brow is furrowed and the muscles of his eyes characteristically strain to correct his vision. Whilst Johnson appears to be on the verge of speaking to spectators in Reynolds' painting, in the bust he remains consumed by thought; the gentle downward tilt of his head and unfocused gaze making it appear as if he is looking past the beholder.

Amongst the multiple accounts of Johnson in the period it is, however, James Boswell's biographical works which have done the most to immortalise Johnson's identity. Writing in 1785, in his *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, Boswell described Johnson as being

hard to please, and easily offended; impetuous and irritable in his temper; but of a most humane and benevolent heart; having a mind stored with a vast and various collection of learning and knowledge, which he communicated with peculiar perspicuity and force, in rich and choice expression... His person was large, robust, in many ways approaching to the gigantic, and grown unwieldy from corpulency. His countenance was naturally of the cast of an ancient statue, but somewhat disfigured...<sup>10</sup>

Boswell followed the success of his unabashedly honest account of Johnson in 1791 with his *Life of Samuel Johnson*, a work which has immortalised the author's pithy aphorisms and irrepressible character.<sup>11</sup> Both of Boswell's books on Johnson were published after his death in 1784. Indeed, the writer's death had provoked considerable literary reaction. Odes, elegies and countless epitaphs appeared in newspapers and journals of the period, celebrating his abilities as a lexicographer, biographer, critic, and poet, and, in particular, the

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<sup>10</sup> James Boswell, *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, with Samuel Johnson L.L.D.* (London, 1785), p.7 & p.9.

<sup>11</sup> James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson LL.D. Comprehending on Account of his Studies and Numerous Works.* 2 vols. (London, 1791).

moral tenor of his life. As one anonymous contributor to *The Gentleman's Magazine* declared,

His imagination was bold, rich, and sublime;  
His judgement clear and comprehensive,  
Penetrating and profound...<sup>12</sup>

Whilst Johnson continued to be a source of significant interest to the public, insufficient funds meant progress on his monumental scheme was slow. Bacon had been asked to design a monument in December 1788, but by January 1790 only £200 had been raised for the scheme. Writing to *The Gentleman's Magazine* the pseudonymous 'Johnsoni Philo' declared his mortification that 'the subscription itself should not have advanced more speedily', declaring that it was

a national reproach; and that it should be only supported by the *personal acquaintance* of that great man, casts an imputation, in ye opinion, much stronger on the generosity of the literary and of the noble world. Heavens! Sir, five years elapsed, and the paltry expense of 500L not yet defrayed towards the erecting of a monument to him, whose works have contributed so much to the precision and energy of language, and so much to the interests and diffusion of morality! Are all our Dukes so needy, that not one can display esteem for Literature by so trifling a mark?<sup>13</sup>

To rectify the situation a crisis meeting of 'the friends to the memory of the late Dr. Samuel Johnson' was held to Thomas's Tavern, Dover-street, to 'consider the most proper measures to be taken to procure contributions to effectuate so

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<sup>12</sup> Anon, 'Epitaph for Dr. Johnson's intended Monument', *The Gentleman's Magazine* (June, 1785), p.412.

<sup>13</sup> Johnsoni Philo, *The Gentleman's Magazine* (February, 1790), pp.207-208. The laboured progression of the scheme was also lamented by Bryan Waller, in his December 1791 poem, 'On the Delay in the Erection of Dr. Johnson's Monument' in his *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1796), p.197:

And shall the *Poet, Moralist, and Sage,*  
Obscurely sink in an enlightened Age?  
Perish the thought, dishonest as tis' rude,  
Forbid it shame, forbid it gratitude!

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Oh! would his skill some PHIDIAS might employ,  
Whose work nor time, nor ravage might destroy!  
Whose happy art might teach the bold relief,  
With eloquence to speak our lasting grief!...

desirable an object'. At the meeting it was resolved that members of the committee would 'be requested to apply, by letter... to such persons as may be thought likely to aid and patronize this undertaking'.<sup>14</sup> By the following September the committee had raised £809. However, it was not until July 1791, almost seven years after Johnson had died, that the committee finally managed to secure sufficient financial backing for their commemorative endeavour after receiving a grant from the Royal Academy.<sup>15</sup>

### *The Howard commission*

The laboured progress of the Johnson commemoration contrasted with the speed and interest generated by the proposal to erect a monument to John Howard. The desire to commemorate the prison reformer, famed for 'having given himself up to softening the sorrows and sufferings of some of the most unfortunate of our race', was first voiced in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in May 1786 when a letter, written under the pseudonym 'Anglus', proposed the erection of such a statue.

Suppose Mr. Urban, you were to erect a statue to him? Entertaining as great an opinion of the glorious possibilities of the English character, as Lord Chatham could do for those of the English constitution, I persuade myself that you would be quickly furnished with the means, in only calling, by the publication of the hint in your next magazine but for a few guineas (though the opulent need not be stinted) upon those of the just, generous and humane, amongst us, who can easily afford themselves the pleasure of giving a testimony to their exalted sense of what our nature owes to Mr Howard...<sup>16</sup>

The suggestion was greeted with great enthusiasm; the anonymous writer's initial hint promoting a flurry of correspondence on the subject.<sup>17</sup> One contributor claimed that 'if ever mortal man merited such a mark of distinction, it is due to that good and great man' whilst another asserted that the British

<sup>14</sup> 'Dr Johnson Monument', *Annual Register for the Year 1790*, p.247.

<sup>15</sup> *Subscribers to Dr. Johnson's Monument*, p.7. Also see John Ingamelis and John Edgecumbe eds., *The Letters of Joshua Reynolds* (Yale, 2000), no.218, pp.219-220.

<sup>16</sup> Anglus, *The Gentleman's Magazine* (May, 1786), p.360.

<sup>17</sup> Between June and September (1786) the journal printed twenty one letters on the subject.

nation was ‘very properly consulting its own honour by perpetuating that of Mr Howard’.<sup>18</sup>

Howard, the second son of a wealthy London merchant, had not begun his philanthropic work in prisons until the age of 43.<sup>19</sup> However, between 1773 and 1790 he had managed to visit numerous prisons throughout Britain and Europe seeking to quell, with missionary zeal, the spread of disease and improve the lives of those he described as the ‘emaciated and dejected’.<sup>20</sup> The Author of *The State of the Prisons in England and Wales* (1777) and *An Account of the Principal Lazarettos in Europe* (1789), Howard’s dedication helped to ensure the passage of parliamentary reform designed to relieve innocent prisoners of the liability of a discharge fee. He was also instrumental in the passing of a ‘Penitentiary House Act’ in 1779, which sought to radically improve conditions within British prisons.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, unlike Thomas Guy, who was criticised fifty years earlier for his deathbed bequest, which for some was ‘no charity’ at all, Howard was described as the ‘Consummate philanthropist’ and ‘a true vicar of the God of Mercy’.<sup>22</sup> For many, he came to embody the model of a charitable citizen, sacrificing his own health out of a desire to help strangers less fortunate than himself.

To ensure the smooth running of the commemorative scheme the ‘Howardian Committee’ was founded in the summer of 1786 and, within two months of Anglus’ initial suggestion, it was able to boast that its 240 subscribers

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<sup>18</sup> ‘S.P.’, ‘Recommendations of the statue for Howard’, *The Gentleman’s Magazine* (June, 1786), p.485. ‘B.N.T’, ‘Letter of humanity, encouraging and supporting the plan for a statue to Mr Howard and the fund for prison charities’, *The Gentleman’s Magazine* (August, 1786), p.627.

<sup>19</sup> For a more comprehensive background to the life and works of John Howard see Hepworth Dixon, *John Howard and the Prison World of Europe* (London, 1849) or John Field, *The Life of John Howard; with Comments on his Character and Philanthropic Labours* (London, 1850).

<sup>20</sup> John Howard, *The State of the Prisons in England and Wales; with some Preliminary Observations, and an Account of Some Foreign Prisons and Hospitals* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Warrington, 1777), p.7.

<sup>21</sup> For a full account of Howard’s involvement in the Parliamentary reforms see Robert Alan Cooper, ‘Ideas and Their Execution: English Prison Reform’, *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 110 (Autumn, 1996), pp.73-93.

<sup>22</sup> John Dunton, *An Essay of Death-bed Charity Exemplify’d*, p.5. Anglus, *The Gentleman’s Magazine* (May, 1786), p.360.



had collectively raised £500 for the scheme.<sup>23</sup> This was a remarkable achievement, especially considering the pitiable response the Johnson monument had generated just one year earlier. Indeed, it took nearly five years for the same amount of £500 to be raised for the monument to the literary legend.<sup>24</sup> Certainly, the popularity of the ‘Howardian Scheme’, as it came to be known, owed a great deal to the priority extended to the project by *The Gentleman’s Magazine*. The magazine printed letters that sung the scheme’s virtues, alongside numerous accounts of Howard’s heroism and benevolence.<sup>25</sup>

For many Howard’s charity stood as an example of the improvements which had been made to the British nation. As George Dyer claimed, in 1795 on *The Theory and Practice of Benevolence*, philanthropy ‘in a steady and pure government... becomes a principle consideration of national regard’.<sup>26</sup> Dyer linked the prevalence of charitable acts to the evolution and improvement of society, concluding his philosophical essay by suggesting that ‘the patriot and the philanthropist must be willing to be moral martyrs; must persevere amidst reproach, and be deaf to the voice of malevolence’.<sup>27</sup> It was a sacrificial view of philanthropy similarly endorsed by Evangelical writers in the period, who aimed to change the ‘manners and morals’ of society through ‘Divine Benevolence’; an attribute the devout prison reformer seemed to exhibit in abundance.<sup>28</sup>

Whilst Howard was seen to be a private man fulfilling his civic obligations in the very fullest sense, the decision to erect a monument to his honour was also viewed as a significant patriotic achievement. Indeed, unlike the small group of individuals dictating the progress of the monument to Dr Johnson, the

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<sup>23</sup> Samuel Jackson Pratt, *The Triumph of Benevolence; Occasioned by the National Design of Erecting a Monument to John Howard Esq* (London, 1786), pp.44-45. By September 1787 £1497 had been raised by a total of 609 subscribers. See *Correspondences and Papers Relating to the Monument of John Howard 1786-1796*, British Library, London, Additional Ms. 22005, f.43.

<sup>24</sup> *The Gentleman’s Magazine* (February, 1790), pp.207-208.

<sup>25</sup> See Anon ‘Recommendations of the Statue for Howard’, *The Gentleman’s Magazine* (June, 1786), p.485. *The Gentleman’s Magazine* (July, 1786), pp.535-537. *The Gentleman’s Magazine* (August, 1786), pp.627-631.

<sup>26</sup> George Dyer, *A Dissertation on the Theory and Practice of Benevolence* (London, 1795), pp.5-6.

<sup>27</sup> Dyer, *A Dissertation*, p.16.

<sup>28</sup> See Thomas Rennell, *Benevolence Exclusively an Evangelical Virtue; a Sermon Preached before the Governors of Addenbroke’s Hospital, at St. Mary’s church Cambridge 1795* (Cambridge & London, 1795).

Howard commemoration came to represent a shared cultural enterprise. Developed through the journalistic forum of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, the desire to celebrate Howard's achievements not only reflected positively on the readers and contributors to the periodical, but, by extension, also appeared to be suggesting that civic society was coming of age. Writing to the June edition of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Dr John Coakley Lettsom, a leading London physician, echoed these sentiments, suggesting that the Howardian scheme represented 'the highest honour on the community; for to reward virtue is a pleasing proof of its prevalence'.<sup>29</sup> Another letter, printed in the September 1786 edition of the magazine, reiterated these thoughts, suggesting that a 'plan so truly national' may come to represent 'an epoch in the moral history of mankind; and that, under such auspices, the public man may henceforth become what he always ought to have been *uni aequus virtuti atque ejus amicis*' (one equal in valour and friendship).<sup>30</sup>

In the spirit of civic celebration contributors to *The Gentleman's Magazine* made additional suggestions on how best to commemorate Howard. James Hedger proposed a new urban development, 'The Howardian Crescent', after a plan which had already been drawn up by George Dance, with a large obelisk, 'Howard's Column', at its centre (fig.102.).<sup>31</sup> Another reviewer suggested that a pyramid would be the most suitable means of celebrating Howard's achievements. Outlining the design to the readership of the magazine, the contributor described how the pyramid would have four tablets in alto relievo on each side of the base, by 'four different sculptors, Bacon, Banks, Nollekens, and Flaxman, representing the scenes visited by Howard in different countries'.<sup>32</sup> Other suggestions included an asylum with an annual provision, a chapel 'to bear the name of Howard, in which a charity-sermon should frequently be preached' and a 'whole length portrait to be taken by Sir Joshua Reynolds' from which

<sup>29</sup> Anon, *The Gentleman's Magazine* (June, 1786), p.447.

<sup>30</sup> Anon, *The Gentleman's Magazine* (August, 1786), p.627.

<sup>31</sup> Anon, *The Gentleman's Magazine* (August, 1786), p.628.

<sup>32</sup> Anon, *The Gentleman's Magazine* (September, 1786), p.727.

a metzotinto and engraving may be taken, that it may be in the power of every one, who thinks highly of his zeal and benevolence, to have in their closets, at no great expense, a representation of a man who has deserved so greatly of humanity.<sup>33</sup>

However, before the Howardian Committee could make any final arrangements, Howard himself put a stop to the scheme by refusing to offer his consent. Writing from Vienna in October 1786 he stated his opposition to the idea, claiming

It is with real concern I see by the papers, as well as by letters, what is going on in London; it mortifies, humble[s] and distresses me; persons far overrate my performances... I know myself too well, to take any pleasure in such undeserving praise; the Gentlemen will I hope defer everything till my Death.<sup>34</sup>

The Howardian Committee was thus forced to disband. They returned donations to those subscribers wishing to withdraw their support from the scheme and, to ensure that their efforts had not been completely in vain, established a small subcommittee fronted by John Boydell and Sir Joshua Reynolds to oversee the production of a commemorative medal.<sup>35</sup>

Although the desire to celebrate Howard was put on hold until after his death, the philanthropist's benevolent endeavours continued to command considerable interest from contemporaries. Samuel Pratt poetically eulogised Howard's Christ-like charity in his 1786 *The Triumph of Benevolence*, describing how

Ev'n at this moment, into dungeons drear,  
The Prisoner's guardian, and the Mourner's friend.  
Ev'n now, perchance, he bears some Victim food,

<sup>33</sup> Anon, *The Gentleman's Magazine* (September, 1786), p.727.

<sup>34</sup> *Correspondences*, B.L., Add. 26055, f.43. *Correspondences*, B.L., Add. 26055, f.23.

<sup>35</sup> As noted in the minutes of the Howardian Committee: 'That the sub-committee be directed to request His Majesty's Gracious Acceptance of a Medal in Gold; also that they present one in Gold to each of the Sovereigns of those Dominions in which any remarkable Protection or favour has been shown to MR HOWARD; by which this memorial, diminutive as it may appear will operate extensively, through every Clime and Age, to the Honour of the Object of our Admiration, to the Glory of our Country, and, what is still greater, to the Interests of Humanity'. *Correspondences*, B.L., Add. 26055, f.43.

Or leads him to the beams of long-lost day;  
Or from the air where putrid vapours brood  
Chases the *Spirit of the Pest* away.<sup>36</sup>

Elizabeth Inchbald's 1787 play *Such Things Are* similarly endowed the philanthropist with a divine form of compassion. Basing her character 'Mr Haswell' on Howard, Inchbald proceeded to recount a tale in which the prison reformer managed, in one short visit to India, to emancipate a number of innocent captives, to negotiate a programme of prison reform and to reunite the Christian Sultan with his long lost and imprisoned English wife.<sup>37</sup>

Howard's benevolence was also explored as a subject by artists. Francis Wheatley's, *Mr Howard Offering Relief to Prisoners*, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1788, depicted the prison reformer confronting a jailer over the condition of a dying man (fig.103).<sup>38</sup> Howard is shown stepping into the centre of a gloomy space accompanied by two men, one carrying a bundle of blankets, the other lowering a basket of bread. Howard's arrival amongst the inmates is greeted as an answer to prayer; the old woman and young mother situated around the invalid's bedside raise their arms heavenwards in thankful praise. The other inmates crowded around the sick man's bedside appear to emphasise the injustice of their dying companion's situation. Wheatley depicts Howard responding with paternalistic sympathy to their pleas, his open handed gesture rhyming with those made by both the sick man and the young child positioned at the end of the invalid's bed.

Though an affecting representation of Howard's philanthropy, the menagerie of delicately painted women and young children offered a rather sanitised vision of Howard's work. Indeed, in comparison to the state of many of the prisons Howard had encountered on his tour throughout Europe, the cell in Wheatley's painting appears to be positively appealing. Describing some of

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<sup>36</sup> Pratt, *The Triumph of Benevolence*, p.10 & p.11.

<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Inchbald, '*Such Things Are*'; *As Performed at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden in 1787* (London, 1787).

<sup>38</sup> Wheatley's image shares strong affinities with Jean Baptiste Le Greuze's paintings *Le Paralytique* (1763). For a more detailed discussion on the influence Le Greuze had on Wheatley's work see Anita Brookner, 'Greuze's Influence and Posterity', *Greuze; The Rise and Fall of an Eighteenth-Century Phenomenon* (London, 1972), p.151.

the most pitiable examples in his *The State of Prisons in England*, Howard offered a more compelling and grim picture of the reality, in which 'some are seen expiring on the floors of loathsome cells, of pestilential fevers, and the confluent small pox' and where

one may judge of the probability there is against the health, and life, of prisoners crowded in close rooms, cells, and subterraneous dungeons, for Fourteen or Fifteen hours out of the Four and Twenty.<sup>39</sup>

An artist who focused more intensely on the horror and drama associated with Howard's activities was the sculptor John Flaxman. His sketch for a monument to the prison reformer, designed as a bas-relief and possibly meant to adorn a pedestal base, vividly conveys the subterraneous dungeons Howard so passionately described in his writings (fig.104). Unlike Wheatley's canvas, Flaxman's portrayal of the philanthropic reformer is generalised and abstract - Howard is given a slight build and wears a loose robe.<sup>40</sup> The prison reformer leans compassionately towards a mother and her child, a woman whose heavenward gaze offers the viewer an unambiguous reflection of her impending fate. In his right hand Howard offers a small bowl of sustenance or medicine, whilst his left hand appears drawn to his mouth and nose, seemingly shocked by the wretched scene and the smell he encounters. Whilst Howard's entire body wants to recoil from the desperate scene of the dying mother and child, it is significant that he is depicted moving forward, his philanthropic resolve intact. Accompanying Howard, in the upper right hand side of the image, is a winged angelic presence, added to indicate the divine protection and strength which Howard professed lay behind all his endeavours. A Baptist dissenter, Howard attributed his protection against the disease ridden lazarettos and prisons to

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<sup>39</sup> John Howard, *The State of the Prisons*, p.7 & p.14. Discussions of Howard's endeavours in the Press also sought to foster an emotive rhetoric, emphasising the significance of his actions where 'many a weary prisoner whom he came unto had been bound to bless him for the removal of at least some Horror'. Unnamed source, *Newspaper Cuttings (August, 1786)*, B.L., Add. 26055, f.1.

<sup>40</sup> Richard W. Ireland highlight the difficulty artists had in producing an accurate representation of Howard in his essay, 'Howard and the Paparazzi: Painting Penal Reform in the Eighteenth Century' *Art, Antiquity and Law*, 4, no.1 (1999), pp.55-62.

the *free goodness and mercy* of the *Author of my being*...Trusting in *Divine Protection*, and believing myself in the way of my duty, I visit the most noxious cells; and while thus employed, "*I fear no evil*".<sup>41</sup>

To either side of the expiring mother Flaxman includes other collapsed and contorted figures. Unlike the sense of unity fostered in Wheatley's portrayal, Flaxman's captives sit in isolation, introverted and despondent, seemingly unaware of Howard's arrival. Flaxman's drawing suggests how he was going to exploit sculptural space. His use of heavy shade behind the figure of Howard indicates that Flaxman intended to emphasise the centrality of the prison reformer to the narrative by figuring him almost completely in the round. The relative three-dimensionality of the philanthropist contrasts with the lighter application of ink surrounding the corpses, which suggests a different sculptural plane. Indeed, the slumped form to the right of Howard, distinguished by a single fine line, appears to recede from the viewer, a withdrawal that echoes his crouched and isolated form. Flaxman's design has been dated c.1800 by David Bindman, however, it seems more likely that the work was created before the artist left for Rome in 1787, and more specifically at the time when 'Anglus' made his initial suggestion to *The Gentleman's Magazine* in the summer of 1786.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, in the summer of 1786 *The Gentleman's Magazine* had noted Flaxman's request for anyone 'intimately acquainted' with Howard's features.<sup>43</sup>

While Howard's benevolent deeds continued to enthral contemporary audiences, the desire to erect a statue to the philanthropist remained unfulfilled during his life-time. However, when news of his death in Russia on 20 January 1790 reached London in March of that year, the Howardian Committee immediately remobilised. Fresh calls for funding were printed in *The Gentleman's Magazine* and two months later, on 10 May, Bacon was officially named as the sculptor destined to complete the commission.<sup>44</sup> By March 1791 a location in St Paul's Cathedral had been confirmed and by May 1791 the Howardian Committee could proudly report that the monument would,

<sup>41</sup> Howard, *The State of Prisons*, p.3.

<sup>42</sup> Bindman, *John Flaxman*, p.117.

<sup>43</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* (August, 1786), p.632.

<sup>44</sup> *Correspondences*, B.L., Add. 26055, f.53.

consist of a figure (7 feet 8 inches high) of Howard relieving a prisoner, to be placed on a pedestal (7 feet high) with proper emblems and inscription, so that the expense does not exceed 1800 guineas and that the work be executed with all dispatch, this being the first monument which the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's have ever permitted to be placed in that Cathedral.<sup>45</sup>

The resurrection of the Howardian scheme, four years after the prison reformer's modest refusal, seems to have also stimulated the Johnson scheme. Indeed, a month after the Howard commission was granted a location in St Paul's, the Johnson monument was also granted permission to use the cathedral: the 'Friends of Johnson' evidently preferring the unadorned space of St Paul's to the cluttered interior of Westminster.<sup>46</sup> The decision to place Johnson's commemoration on the pier opposite Howard's, however, was not welcomed by the Howardian Committee. Their unsuccessful request in June 1791 that 'the monument of Mr Howard should be opened at least one month before that of Dr Johnson' reflected their competitive, even antagonistic attitude to the location of Bacon's other sculpture.<sup>47</sup>

### *The Johnson Monument*

Bacon, under the supervision of Reynolds, completed the design for the Johnson monument first (see fig.97).<sup>48</sup> Reynolds had written to Bacon in December 1788 and requested

a whole length statue of Johnson, the figure to be near naked in the manner of Pithagoras of which we have a cast in the Royal Academy.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> *Correspondences*, B.L., Add. 26055, f.62.

<sup>46</sup> Letter from Reynolds to John Bacon (December 25<sup>th</sup> 1788), in *The Letters of Joshua Reynolds*, no.186, p.192. For the decision to move the monument to St Paul's, see Letter from Reynolds to Edmond Malone (April 9<sup>th</sup> 1791) in *Letters of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, (eds.), no.218, pp.219-220.

<sup>47</sup> *Correspondences*, B.L., Add. 26055, f.64.

<sup>48</sup> 'Dr. Johnson's Monument', *The Annual Register for the Year 1790*, (London, 1793), p.247.

<sup>49</sup> 'Joshua Reynolds letter to John Bacon' (25<sup>th</sup> December 1788), in *Letters of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, no.186, p.192. In his letter to the sculptor Reynolds also presumed that the monument would include 'accompaniments [sic] of Books &c'.

The cast Reynolds refers to in his letter to Bacon was probably that now known as *Demosthenes*, which still remains at the Royal Academy (fig.105).<sup>50</sup> In his initial sketch for the Johnson monument Bacon emulated the folds of the Greek philosopher's toga, revealing the subject's chest and right shoulder (fig.106). Both figures clutch manuscripts reminding viewers of their respective intellectual pursuits. Bacon, however, does not imitate the classical statue in its entirety. Whereas Johnson rests his elbow on his blank manuscript, 'Pithagoras' holds his work in both hands, gently unrolling his papers, suggesting that his work, unlike Johnson's, has been completed and is ready to be presented. Bacon further distinguishes his portrayal of Johnson by accentuating the downward tilt of writer's head, his figure consumed by the introspective world of thought, whereas 'Pithagoras' gazes forward, his stance being that of a man about to present his findings to an audience.

The differences between the figures of 'Pithagoras' and Johnson were marked and clearly reflect Bacon's wish to offer a more compelling and realistic depiction of Johnson, recalling aspects of both his public and private character. Writing about the monument after its erection in 1796, Bacon described how he had

attempted, in this work, to unite (what is indeed difficult to effect) that *ease*, which is so proper for a figure engaged in study, with the energy which was so universally acknowledged to belong to him who is the subject of it. I have also aimed that a magnitude of parts, and grandeur of style, in the statue, should accord with the masculine sense with which his writings are so strongly impregnated, and the nervous style in which it is conveyed to mankind.

His complexional character, and that of his works, I hope, will justify my having given him an expression tinged with severity, to which his vigour of thinking must ever contribute.

By making him lean against a column, I suggest his own firmness of mind, as well as the stability of his maxims.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> 'Joshua Reynolds letter to John Bacon' (25<sup>th</sup> December 1788), in *Letters of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, no.186, p.192.

<sup>51</sup> John Bacon, *The Gentleman's Magazine* (March, 1796), p.180.



Although confined to a classical vocabulary Bacon, as his letter suggests, was eager to animate his characterisation of Johnson. The ‘complexional’ character Bacon referred to in his letter echoes accounts of Johnson’s personality from the period, including Boswell’s description of Johnson as both ‘impetuous and irritable’ and as ‘most humane and benevolent’.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, much like Reynolds’ portrait of Johnson discussed at the start of this chapter, Bacon intended to create a vivid and recognisable account of the author, using the classical statue recommended by Reynolds as a frame upon which he could develop a more vivid and animated representation of Johnson’s intellectual genius.

As his letter on the subject describes, Bacon depicted Johnson in the pose of a man engaged in private study, leaning against a column with an opened scroll. The gentle curve of Johnson’s body towards the column, designed to reflect the ‘ease’ of a person engaged in study, is complemented by the figure’s profound sense of introspection. With his left arm raised to his forehead, his fist clenched, Bacon suggests the intensity of Johnson’s thoughts. His facial expression, ‘tinctured with severity’ and reflective of ‘his vigour of thinking’, similarly highlights the depth of Johnson’s intellect but also appears to protect the writer from any potential interruptions. The spectator is unable to penetrate Johnson’s downcast gaze and Johnson’s sense of interiority is secured by the shielding that his arm folded across his body establishes. In comparison to Nollekens’ 1777 bust of Johnson, the facial expressions in Bacon’s figure appear almost exaggerated. This in part reflected the higher positioning of Bacon’s work. Indeed, when Bacon created a bust of Johnson after the completion of his monument, the sculptor was able to subdue the intensity of Johnson’s ‘vigour of thinking’, by making the bust stare outwards instead of downwards (fig.107).<sup>53</sup> However, even in this later bust the sculptor’s passion for animation stands in contrast to his contemporary’s more passive portrayal.

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<sup>52</sup> Boswell, *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, p.7 & p.9.

<sup>53</sup> The bust was presented to Pembroke College in 1796 by Samuel Whitbread M.P in accordance with the wishes of his father who had recently died. I am indebted to Amanda Ingram (archivist at Pembroke College, Oxford) for her help in researching the history of the bust. Also see Douglas Maclean, *A History of Pembroke College, Oxford, Anciently Broadgates Hall, in which are Incorporated Short Historical Notices of the More Eminent Members of this House* (Oxford, printed for the Oxford Historical Society, 1897).

Bacon complements the 'ease' of Johnson's contemplative pose with 'the energy so universally attributed' to the writer by giving his subject an overtly masculine quality. Indeed, although Bacon had been asked to base his figure of Johnson on that of 'Pithagoras', his representation is also clearly informed by the *Farnese Hercules* (fig.108).<sup>54</sup> The similarities between the two works are striking. Johnson shares *Hercules'* weighty musculature, whilst the positioning of his feet and bend of his body towards the column, mimics the curvature of the antique figure's body. The comparisons Bacon made between Johnson and the *Farnese Hercules* obviously stood at odds with the reality of Johnson's rather portly and clumsy stature in life. However, Johnson's weighty mass was perhaps more appropriately idealised through the heavy form of the *Farnese Hercules* than the slimmer body of 'Pithagoras'. The choice of Hercules for the Johnson figure gave Bacon's portrayal, as one reviewer noted, a 'grandeur and elevation of mind, such as posterity will expect to find in the characteristics of this sublime Moralist'.<sup>55</sup> It also keenly reflected the nature of Johnson's writings. Horace Walpole, a critic of Johnson's, had claimed in his 'General Criticism on Dr. Johnson's Writings' that the author's arguments were often 'too forceful for ordinary occasions. They form a hardness of diction and a muscular toughness that resist all ease and graceful movement'.<sup>56</sup> It was a perception which corresponded with Bacon's understandings of Johnson's works when he declared that the 'magnitude of parts, and grandeur of style' of his sculpture were designed to reflect the 'masculine sense' and 'nervous style' of his writings; his 'penetrating and profound' texts being aptly recalled through his imposing form.<sup>57</sup>

To further emphasise Johnson's 'energy', Bacon creates a strong sense of unresolved tension in his depiction of the figure. The writer's body appears to be unusually coiled given his contemplative pose. As such, spectators encounter

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<sup>54</sup> Bacon also studied from life in preparation for his portrayal of Johnson (fig.109). His observations suggest that whilst the sculptor used the antique as his primary source of inspiration for the monument, he nonetheless remained committed to his 'mistress Nature'.

<sup>55</sup> *The European Magazine* (March, 1796), p.160.

<sup>56</sup> Horace Walpole, 'General Criticism on Dr. Johnson's Writings', *The Works of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Orford*, 5 vols. (London, 1798), IV, p.362.

<sup>57</sup> Anon, 'Epitaph for Dr. Johnson's intended Monument', *The Gentleman's Magazine* (June, 1785), p.412.

a figure who is in flux, neither entirely static nor shown in movement. Bacon exploited this sense of conflict to not only to suggest ‘that *ease*, which is so proper for a figure engaged in study’ but also ‘the energy which was so universally acknowledged to belong to him who is the subject of it’. This sense of flux, of coiled energy, stresses the strenuous nature of intellectual exercise. In this manner, the writer’s overtly muscular body appears to highlight the power and strength of Johnson’s thinking, confirming, like the column he leans against, the ‘firmness of his mind’

In using the *Farnese Hercules* as his model for his work, Bacon was not only able to suggest Johnson’s ‘vigour of thinking’, but also more pertinently to link his statue with the typologically significant *Judgment of Hercules* by Simon Gribelin after Paolo de Matteis (fig.110). This image, commissioned by Shaftesbury in 1712 and printed in his 1714 edition of *Characteristicks* complemented the author’s discussion on the ‘Judgement of Hercules’, in which he described ‘Hercules’ as the embodiment of a classical hero. In recalling the *Judgment* in the design of his statue Bacon was able to suggest that Johnson had made a Herculean choice of his own, linking the lexicographer with the culture of polite masculinity. Hercules had to make the difficult choice between vice and virtue, a judgment which Shaftesbury declared had left the hero, ‘wrought, agitated, and torn by contrary Passions... He agonizes, and with all his Strength of Reason endeavours to overcome himself’.<sup>58</sup> Despite his urges to the contrary, Hercules made the moral choice, picking the ‘life full of Toil and Hardship, under the conduct of virtue’.<sup>59</sup> In designing his statue of Johnson to recall the *Farnese Hercules* Bacon thus also implied that the lexicographer had faced a comparable struggle, making in turn the Herculean decision to choose virtue.

In referring to the *The Judgment of Hercules* Bacon was able to bring to viewers’ minds the lexicographer’s frequently discussed battle against idleness, or what he called the ‘natural indolence of his constitution’.<sup>60</sup> For Johnson, the ‘listless torpor of doing nothing’ was a source of continual anxiety and moral

<sup>58</sup> Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks*, III, p.351.

<sup>59</sup> Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks*, III, p.351.

<sup>60</sup> Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, I, p.167.

ambivalence. Boswell claimed that Johnson had a 'dismal inertness of disposition' and that nothing 'could oblige him more than by sauntering away the hours of vacation in the fields, during which he was more engaged in talking to himself than his companion'.<sup>61</sup> Johnson was acutely aware of his failings and concluded that the only way to banish laziness was to

Let all such fancies, illusive, destructive, be banished henceforward from your thoughts for ever. Resolve, and keep your resolution; choose, and pursue your choice. If you spend this day in study, you will find yourself still more able to study tomorrow; not that you are able to expect that you shall at once obtain a complete victory.<sup>62</sup>

In characterising Johnson as a Herculean figure, Bacon strongly suggested that the writer had, like Hercules, battled against his natural inclination for vice and laziness and submitted instead to the 'Toil and Hardship' of virtue.<sup>63</sup>

### *The Howard monument*

In contrast to the guidance Bacon received from Reynolds regarding the nature of the Johnson monument, the Howardian Committee appears to have left the design of their monument to the artist's own discretion. The decision to depict 'Howard relieving a prisoner' closely followed the type of imagery which had proliferated in the 1780s, highlighting Howard's active and divine compassion. This original design is now lost. However, we can gain some indication of what the piece might have looked like from the sculptor's own comments on the work.

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<sup>61</sup> Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, I, p.15.

<sup>62</sup> Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, I, p.259.

<sup>63</sup> On a more speculative level, in linking the design of his statue with the choice of Hercules Bacon was perhaps also suggesting that Johnson had come to possess a degree of control, not only over his will, but also over his body. Throughout his life Johnson had struggled to conceal the erratic twitches which as Boswell described had been brought about by a 'defect in his nervous system' (Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, I, p.27). The depiction of Johnson, in the guise of a Herculean figure, thus offered to reconcile this absence of control. Where in life Johnson had been unable to suppress his erratic tics, in the monument Bacon created a figure who, though coiled and tense, was in control of both his intellect and his body: his musculature subduing and containing any potential outbursts.

Discussing the commission some years later, in 1796, Bacon offers a description of his ambitions for the original piece, claiming that it was his

earnest wish to have made this monument with a groupe of two figures, Mr. Howard raising up a prisoner from the ground; which, from a natural inflexion of the body, and engagement of the arms with the distressed object, towards whom the tender expressions of the countenance would all have been directed; and this, with the sentiment of gratitude in the prisoner would... [have] forcibly impressed the character of benevolence on the subject of the monument.<sup>64</sup>

Bacon intended to create a highly sympathetic and rhetorical sculptural display, with Howard's benevolence amplified through the movement of his body and his interaction with the prisoner. It was a design which clearly shared many similarities with Bacon's 1779 monument to Thomas Guy, in that it depicted Howard as another Good Samaritan. Indeed, Bacon's description of the monument suggests the two works would have been strikingly similar in style and sentiment.

The nature of Bacon's original design can also be pieced together by considering the bas-relief on the pedestal of the monument to Howard which now stands in St Paul's (fig.111). The relief depicts the philanthropist in antique dress, bending over and scooping his right arm under a prisoner's body, whilst pointing to the bread and water being delivered to the cell by two aides. A compassionate exchange can be observed between the liberator and the afflicted. Howard gently cradles the inside of the prisoner's upper arm, having just removed the chains which bound him, whilst his left leg is intimately placed next to the captive's thighs. The sensitivity of this exchange is reinforced by the positioning of the prisoner's right arm which gently rests against Howard's abdomen. The tender relationship Bacon explores between the two central figures creates a striking contrast to the sculptor's depiction of the jailer who, standing at the top of the dungeon staircase, folds his arms as if to emphasise his lack of empathy and his refusal to fulfil his duty. Bending down and gently lifting the prisoner to his feet, Bacon shows Howard passionately responding to the needs of the prisoner: the movement of his whole body articulates his

<sup>64</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* (March, 1796), p.180.

mission of mercy. The intimacy shared between Howard and the prisoner contrasts with the polite distance Bacon maintained between Thomas Guy and the Lazar. It was a difference which Bacon perhaps used to emphasise the extraordinary sacrifice of the prison reformer. Indeed, whereas Thomas Guy's philanthropy comprised of a deathbed bequest, Howard's *active* benevolence was perhaps more compelling and, as Bacon evidently reasoned, therefore demanded a more powerful and poignant characterisation.

Whilst Bacon intended through 'a natural inflexion of the body' to distinguish the extraordinary sacrifice Howard made in visiting prisons and Lazarettos throughout Britain and Europe, he clearly idealised the depiction of the prisoner in the relief. Indeed, the muscular bodies of the two prisoners shown in the relief stand in stark contrast to the gruesome realism Bacon used for the body of the Lazar. Certainly the depiction of a convict could, as Laurence Sterne imagined in his 1768 *Sentimental Journey*, be an affecting experience:

I beheld his body half-wasted away with long expectation and confinement, and felt what kind of sickness of the heart it was which arises from hope deferr'd. Upon looking nearer I saw him pale and feverish: in thirty years the western breeze had not once fann'd his blood – he had seen no sun, no moon in all that time. – nor had the voice of friend or kinsman breathed through his lattice...<sup>65</sup>

It was a deeply moving encounter for Mr Yorick, who declared that his 'heart began to bleed' and 'I burst into tears'.<sup>66</sup> However, the depiction of a convict was, for many, profoundly problematic, as Lord Kames suggested:

A criminal... who brings misfortune upon himself, excites little pity... His remorse, it is true, aggravates his distress, and swells the first emotions of pity: but then our hatred to the criminal blends with our pity, [and] blunts its edge considerably.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy by Mr Yorick* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Dublin, 1768), p.23.

<sup>66</sup> Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey*, pp.23-24.

<sup>67</sup> Henry Home (Lord Kames), *Elements of Criticism*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1762), III, p.227.

The ambivalent feeling contemporaries had towards the representation of criminals echoed the difficulties Bacon had faced in his depiction of the Lazar ten years earlier. Remembering the criticisms that his animated figure of the Lazar had received in 1779, Bacon perhaps opted to depict a less abject figure. Equally, Bacon may have recognised that the depiction of a full sized convict was just too indecorous for the public nature of the commission and for the refined space at St Paul's.

Bacon's initial design for the Howard monument, rather predictably given the changing tide of taste in the period, did not receive universal acclaim. Writing to the May 1791 edition of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, the Marquis of Lansdown, a subscriber to the Howardian scheme from its inception in 1786, criticised key aspects of the sculptor's original design. After forcibly highlighting the importance of public sculpture for 'complimenting or commemorating any great character', Lansdown concluded that he favoured a single statue of Howard over a 'mere massy monument'. He refers to a recently exhibited statue to Lady Orford to make his point:

Let any person of the least feeling, not to mention taste in Art, unprejudice his mind, and he must find himself more interested in viewing the Single Statue erected by Mr. Horace Walpole, to his mother Lady Orford than with any of the piles erected to great men.

For Lansdown, a single figure monument to Howard was likely to establish 'an Association of Ideas, which may tell themselves in Honour of the Persons intended to be remembered', and ensure that St Paul's was reserved 'from being disfigured or misapplied in the Manner of Westminster Abbey'.<sup>68</sup>

The overcrowding in Westminster and the eclectic array of designs which filled its aisles had long been criticised. Bacon himself declared in the late 1780s that, although 'Westminster is the most famous repository of Sculpture in England... the figures lose much of their effect by being crowded together, without order'. Bacon accordingly proposed that

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<sup>68</sup> Lansdown, *The Gentleman's Magazine* (May, 1791), p.395.

If ever St. Paul's cathedral should be embellished with Sculpture, it will afford the most noble opportunities and situations for capital groups &c. especially in the circumference of the dome.<sup>69</sup>

Although Lansdown shared Bacon's enthusiasm for utilising St Paul's as an exhibition space for British sculpture he specifically warned against the employment of 'groups':

In Architecture, the Greatness of the Mass sometimes imposes, even when the structure is barbarous; but in Sculpture, the Mass becomes an intolerable Enormity; when it is not highly executed and imagined.<sup>70</sup>

Lansdown's preference for a 'Single statue' reflected his opinion that a statue, as opposed to a group, would be more easily understood, take up less room and have greater simplicity in style.<sup>71</sup> It was an aesthetic which directly contradicted the type of work Bacon was intending to create for Howard. Indeed, as in the Guy commission, Bacon's design for the Howard memorial contravened some of Reynolds' key ambitions for the British School of Sculpture, exhibiting as it did a contrast between a seated figure and an upright one, and incorporating a narrative which emphasised 'sentiment and character' over 'beauty of form'.<sup>72</sup>

Lansdown's concern that Bacon's design for the Howard monument would 'disfigure' the space at St Paul's, however, seems to have initially caused little impact. On 6 June 1791, the Howardian Committee approved Bacon's design of 'Howard relieving a Prisoner', and on 27 June Bacon received his first payment of £500.<sup>73</sup> However, before Bacon could begin the lengthy task of sculpting the design in marble, the Howardian Committee took the highly unusual step of reversing their decision, requesting on 19 July that Bacon modify the design of the monument, using just one figure to articulate the sculpture instead of two.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Bacon, 'Of Sculpture', *The Artist's Repository*, (1784-1794), III, p.128.

<sup>70</sup> Lansdown, *The Gentleman's Magazine* (May, 1791), p.395.

<sup>71</sup> Lansdown claimed that 'fifty Statues and a Hundred Busts will be bespoke where one group now is...'. *The Gentleman's Magazine* (May, 1791), p.395.

<sup>72</sup> Reynolds, 'Discourse X' (1780), p.176 & p.177.

<sup>73</sup> *Correspondences*, B.L., Add. 26055, f.64. For Bacon's first payment see *Correspondences*, B.L., Add. 26055, f.74.

<sup>74</sup> *Correspondences*, B.L., Add. 26055, f.75.



This unexpected decision was, according to the minutes of the Howardian Committee, the consequence of suggestions made by the recently formed Committee of Royal Academicians. Established one month earlier, in June 1791, under the direction of Reynolds, the Committee brought together Benjamin West, Thomas Banks, William Chambers, Richard Hamilton, Joseph Nollekens and George Dance to oversee the erection and placement of monuments destined for St Paul's cathedral. The Committee of Academician's primary objection to Bacon's design rested upon the supposition that it would not complement the single figure of Johnson, as it was their desire to establish 'a complete effect to the approach of the choir'. A resolution from the Academicians followed in which it was 'the unanimous opinion of this Committee that a Single Statue (or figure) be erected to the Memory of Mr Howard'.<sup>75</sup> The Howardian Committee followed the authority of the Royal Academy and, despite his strong objections, Bacon had to submit a new design.

The Academicians' claim that they were responsible for ensuring that the space at St Paul's remained unified, rested upon the belief that 'they had a great deal to answer to the Public in as much as it was delegated to them what might or might not be proper to the ornamentation of the cathedral'.<sup>76</sup> A review of the Howardian scheme's transactions, written to accompany the unveiling of the monument in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1796, reported that one of the Dean and Chapter's original conditions in opening up the Cathedral to sculpture was that

no monument should be erected without the design being first approved of by a Committee of the Royal Academicians, whom the Dean and Chapter have requested to take upon themselves the trouble of being arbiters of the public taste.<sup>77</sup>

However, this claim appears to have had no substance, with no such agreement ever having been made. It was Bacon, perhaps still embittered at having his design rejected so late in the proceedings, who highlighted the fact during a

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<sup>75</sup> *Correspondences*, B.L., Add. 26055, f.75.

<sup>76</sup> *Correspondences*, B.L., Add. 26055, f.75

<sup>77</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* (March, 1796), p.179.

meeting of the newly founded St Paul's Committee in December 1796. The meeting, recounted in Joseph Farington's diary, reported that

On enquiring into the appointment of the Committee it was found that the *council book* only contained a letter to the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's offering the services of the Academy to superintend any decorations but no reply from the Dean and Chapter was found; Bacon said that in the books of the Dean and Chapter no entry had been made or notice taken of the letter from the Academy. – Thus the committee appeared to have acted without authority.<sup>78</sup>

The Royal Academy's authority, it would seem, was assumed rather than granted and was based on the presumption that as an institution they were responsible for the display of public art. At the same time it is clear that the individuals who made up the philanthropist's committee felt unable to reject the aesthetic opinion of the country's leading artistic institution. Why, however, did key figures in the Royal Academy seek to extend their jurisdiction at this time?

Certainly, the decision to limit Bacon to just one figure reflected the aspirations of the Royal Academy in their ambition to facilitate a return to aesthetic order in public art. Plans had been made in 1773 to utilise St Paul's as an exhibition space for the display of British art, an opportunity which it was hoped would facilitate a growth in public patronage and, perhaps more significantly, encourage the development of an 'British School of Art'. This request by leading academicians was, however, unceremoniously rejected by the Dean and Chapter.<sup>79</sup> Thus, when the doors of St Paul's were opened to the Howard and Johnson monuments twenty years later, it must have appeared as if the British School was coming of age. Despite the Academicians' previous requests, control over the space in St Paul's was not handed directly to the Royal Academy. It is perhaps, therefore, unsurprising that a new committee, which included some of the original advocates of the 1773 proposal, was hastily formed to claim authority over the Cathedral's interior.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Joseph Farington, (Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 1796), in *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, ed. by K. Garlick and A. Macintyre, 16 vols. (New Haven & London, 1979), III, p.117.

<sup>79</sup> Figures involved in the 1773 request included Joshua Reynolds, Benjamin West, George Dance, Angelica Kauffman, Giovanni Cipriani and James Barry.

<sup>80</sup> Joshua Reynolds, Benjamin West and George Dance had all been involved in the earlier plan.

With the British school coming of age, it was vital that the style of that school should follow expectations. As such, if the Howard and Johnson monuments were to be the first works of sculpture of the British School, they needed to embody the kind of sculptural theory Reynolds had promoted in his tenth discourse. Given the asymmetrical and unbalanced nature of Bacon's original design to Howard, its emphasis on sympathy and its use of animation, it is clear to see why, on aesthetic grounds alone, the Committee of Academicians would have wanted to request an alternative design.

It was the first time Bacon's sentimental and expressive style had been directly challenged. Whilst his transgressive approach to the theory of the Academy and his reluctance to observe the restraint of Grecian sculpture had been noted, the sculptor had never been forced to radically alter a design. Bacon defiantly disputed the Committee of Academician's claims and forcefully argued that he 'could not well delineate the character of Mr Howard without a secondary figure'. Just as Wheatley and Flaxman used additional figures to emphasise Howard's benevolent actions, so the sculptor claimed he too relied on the interaction of a secondary figure to delineate the prison reformer's philanthropic identity. However, Bacon's objections were flatly rejected, the Committee of Academicians declaring that they held 'no weight', as it had been

justly observed by the Committee that public characters require no embellishments, that an exact representation of Mr Howard with no other inscription than John Howard, The Visitor of Prisons, would convey a full Idea to succeeding generations.<sup>81</sup>

### *Dissent at the Academy*

Whilst the rhetoric employed by the Committee of Academicians to denounce Bacon's design implied that they were predominantly concerned with matters aesthetic, their dogmatic intervention so late in the proceedings and their unyielding response to Bacon's objections suggests their reactions might have

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<sup>81</sup> *Correspondences*, B.L., Add. 26055, f.75.

also been governed by additional anxieties. Indeed, the Committee of Academicians' decision to challenge Bacon's original design reflected an important opportunity for them to assert authority after a period of intense institutional conflict.

1790 had been particularly problematic year for the Academy. In February 1790 Reynolds had resigned from the presidency over the Giuseppe Bonomi affair. Reynolds favoured Bonomi for the post of Professor of Perspective after the death of Samuel Wade. However, Edward Edwards had already been filling the post and most Academicians, Bacon included, appeared to have considered him to be the more logical choice.<sup>82</sup> When it was requested that both candidates produce a drawing, the Academy split. Edwards had been an Academician for more than fifteen years and thought that complying with such requests was beneath his dignity, and he was not without his supporters in this regard.<sup>83</sup> The vote did not go Reynolds' way and with his resignation came the criticism that a 'wild faction' had insulted the 'father of the modern school':

From him the Academicians boast a name,  
He led the way, he smooth'd their path to fame:  
From him th' instructive lore the pupils claim'd,  
His doctrine nurtur'd, and his voice inflam'd!  
Oh! and is all forgot? – The sons rebel,  
And, REGAN-like, their hallow'd fire expel.<sup>84</sup>

Reynolds returned to the presidency half a year later, but soon found himself embroiled in further controversy, this time regarding the election of Thomas Lawrence, in November 1790. When Lawrence, a candidate recommended by

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<sup>82</sup> For a more complete account of the Bonomi affair see Ian McIntyre, *Joshua Reynolds: The Life and Times of the First President of the Royal Academy* (London, 2003), pp.492-503.

<sup>83</sup> Bacon apparently supported Edwards in this stance, Reynolds writing to the sculptor in January 1790 declaring that, 'There is a report circulating by busy people, who interest themselves about what is going on in the Academy with which they have no business That you have declared your intention of giving your vote for Mr. Edwards whether he produces a drawing or not. This report I have treated with the contempt such a calumny deserves, that neither yourself Mr Hodges nor any of the rest of the Council were capable of such duplicity of conduct I repeated to my informer, the letter which was sent to Mr Edwards That it was the unanimous opinion of the Council that he could not be a candidate unless &c. The Gentlemen still preserving in his opinion, I beg you would give the means of confuting him under your own hand...'. 'Reynolds to Bacon', (January 1790), in *The Letters of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, no.192. p.200.

<sup>84</sup> Edward Jerningham, *Lines on a Late Resignation at the Royal Academy* (London, 1790), p.6.

the King and supported by Reynolds, was rejected by the popular consensus of the Academy in favour of Francis Wheatley, the authority of the Academy's leadership again seemed to have been critically challenged. Even more than this, it appeared that the Academy was choosing to directly attack the King.<sup>85</sup> The Lawrence debacle again spilt opinion within the institution, and the episode was alternatively celebrated as 'truly honourable... as it manifests the proper Independence of the National School' and vilified as an example of contemporary revolutionary defiance. As one journalist noted,

this venerable institution seems to present to us a perfect picture of Paris: For here may be seen a strange revolution of *unsettled principals* and *contending interests*, all aiming to resist Authority and pull down talents, and then set up *extraordinaries* in the room of them.<sup>86</sup>

Given the spate of disagreements and challenges which had undermined the standing of both Reynolds and the King, it is perhaps unsurprising that the Committee of Academicians, made up of senior members of the institution, took the rather dogmatic decision to seize control over the exhibition of work in St Paul's. Indeed, the opportunity to dictate the type and style of sculpture permitted in the Cathedral represented a palpable opportunity for the institution's ruling body to publicly re-assert its authority. However, although troubles within the Academy may have been a key factor in pushing the Committee of Academicians to demand a new design from Bacon, political events at home and abroad may have also influenced their decision. By the summer of 1791, revolutionary events on the continent and domestic concerns regarding the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts had created a tense political climate, one in which the depiction of Howard, tenderly and sympathetically reaching down to the aid of a prisoner, may have appeared controversial, even subversive.

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<sup>85</sup> *The Public Advertiser* (Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> November, 1790), p.3.

<sup>86</sup> Both references taken from Holger Hoock, *The King's Artists: The Royal Academy of Arts and Politics of British Culture 1760-1840* (Oxford, 2003), p.184.

Attempts to repeal the Corporation Act of 1661, which excluded membership of town corporations to anyone unprepared to take the sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England, and to repeal the 1673 Test Act, which imposed the same test on anyone hoping to secure a civil or military office, had initially caused little disagreement. However, as revolutionary events on the continent took their course, debates about whether to repeal this discriminatory legislation had become increasingly contentious. The rhetoric of Dissenters, eager to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts, was denounced by conservatives as possessing the dangerous taint of revolutionary zeal.<sup>87</sup> Tensions surrounding the matter reached a fever pitch in the Birmingham riots of 14 July 1791, which saw the house of the radical dissenter Joseph Priestly burnt to the ground by an angry mob.

John Howard, himself a Baptist dissenter, had been absent from Britain since 1788 and stood outside the debate.<sup>88</sup> However, his close association with key radicals such as Richard Price, William Hayley and Priestly saw him retrospectively allied with their cause after his death. In particular, the fact that Howard had concealed his nonconformist ideals in order to accept the position as Sheriff of Bedfordshire, presumably by taking Anglican communion and in so doing defying the Test Act, confirmed for radicals his affiliation to their cause.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, Samuel Palmer's 1790 sermon *The True Patriot: A Sermon on the Much Lamented Death of John Howard*, was less a compelling eulogy and more an opportunity to identify the Baptist prison reformer with Dissenting demands for civil equality. Palmer even went so far as to use the occasion to challenge Edmund Burke's opposition to the repeal of the Test Act claiming that an essay written in 1781 by the politician in celebration of Howard was 'Strange!' given that he

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<sup>87</sup> Richard Price, *A Discourse on the Love of our Country – Delivered on November 4<sup>th</sup> at the Meeting House in the Old Jewry, to the Society for Commemorating the Revolution of Great Britain* (London, 1790).

<sup>88</sup> Although Lansdown, in his essay on the Howard monument, does note the fact that the prison reformer was a dissenter, claiming that, 'The Liberality shewn in first opening the Door of St Paul's to the Monument to Mr. Howard, who was a Dissenter, already gives the Assurance that Difference of Religion will not deter from doing Honour to striking Worth...', Lansdown, *The Gentleman's Magazine* (May, 1791), p.395.

<sup>89</sup> John Aikin, *A View of the Character and Public Services of John Howard Esq* (London, 1792).

should have since employed his eloquence against the repeal of a law, the tendency of which was to have excluded this friend of mankind from that very office in which all his benevolent exertions originated, and to have punished him with fines and outlawry.<sup>90</sup>

In addition to domestic concerns, events in France had further politicised Howard's reputation. The content of the reports that streamed in from Paris after the fall of Bastille in July 1789 dramatised the types of penal distress and squalor so associated with the philanthropist's work. It was a link pointedly emphasised by the artist George Romney after his return from Paris in 1790. Fuelled by the revolutionary activities he had observed in France, Romney became for a short time consumed with the depiction of Howard liberating prisoners and captives of lazarettos.<sup>91</sup> His various sketches focused on the prison reformer entering dark and confined cells, in which a mass of contorted and entwined bodies were nearly always overseen by the macabre figure of a jailer. One of Romney's more complete drawings, *Howard Visiting a Lazaretto* shows Howard with his arms raised in a gesture of compassion, as he surveys a mass of bodies, some of whom are physically chained whilst others are in various forms of mental bondage (fig.112). The jailer, hooded and dressed completely in black, stands to the right of the painting representing, as David Bindman has suggested, 'superstition and despotism in contrast to the suffering humanity of the victims'.<sup>92</sup> Given Romney's support for recent events in France, the imagery he created around the character of Howard presented an unambiguous criticism of traditional authority: a rich and disturbing rhetoric, given the domestic debates regarding the disenfranchisement of dissenters and the increasingly vocal challenges from radicals.

The posthumous alignment of Howard with radical expression had ensured that by 1791 the depiction of 'Howard relieving a prisoner' had developed

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<sup>90</sup> Samuel Palmer, *The True Patriot: a sermon on the much lamented death of John Howard* (London, 1790), p.42.

<sup>91</sup> Alex Kidson, *George Romney 1734-1802* (London, 2002), p.212.

<sup>92</sup> David Bindman, *The Shadow of the Guillotine: Britain and the French Revolution* (London, 1989), p.170.

deeply subversive undertones. Events leading up to the July edict from the Committee of Academicians generated a climate in which the expression of conservative tastes and the exertion of institutional authority would have appeared prudent. The capture of the French royal family at Varennes in late June 1791, followed by the Massacre at the Champ de Mars on 17 July, saw France in constitutional meltdown: a factor which, in combination with political disturbances such as the Birmingham riots, left the nation anxious about its own stability. Within this context the depiction of Howard gently and intimately reaching down to the aid of a prisoner - whose guilt or innocence remained uncertain - not only extended the boundaries of aesthetic decorum but also created an image dangerously eloquent in the rhetoric of liberation that emerged from Paris: a subject matter which was perhaps too controversial to endorse by the summer of 1791.

### *The second Howard monument*

Grudgingly accepting the Committee of Academicians' demands, Bacon altered the original design, and five years later, in March 1796, the Howard monument was jointly unveiled with the monument to Dr Johnson. The works were widely praised by contemporary reviewers, for both their craftsmanship and their portrayal of personality. However, although Bacon followed the suggestions of the Committee of Academicians, limiting his depiction of Howard to just one figure, it is clear that he was not prepared to entirely sacrifice the basis of his original design. Writing on the completed monument in the year of its unveiling, Bacon described how

My principal object, in composing the statue of Mr. Howard, was to present as much of the character of *active benevolence* as a single figure would afford.

The right foot being placed considerably forward, and the body advancing upon it, it is intended to give motion to the figure; while the expression of benevolence is attempted in the several features of the face, and the inclined air of the head.

He holds a scroll of papers in his left-hand: on one is written, "Plan for the Improvement of Prisons;" and, on a corner of another, the word *Hospitals* is introduced, pointing out the principal objects of his exertions. Another paper, at the foot of the statue, has the word



*Regulations* written. In his right-hand he holds a key, by which is expressed the circumstance of his *exploring* the dungeons; and the rings and chains, among which he stands, are designed to interest the feelings of the spectator in the misery of the inhabitants of those wretched abodes: while his trampling on some fetters, which lie on the ground, suggest the hostility of his sentiments to their sufferings.<sup>93</sup>

Although prevented from using a secondary figure, Bacon appears to have remained eager to create an animated and sentimental expression of Howard's philanthropy. Indeed, the sculptor subtly refers to the absent prisoner by the placement of broken shackles and chains at Howard's feet, a detail designed to succinctly symbolise the horrors of captivity to viewers.

Bacon also referred to the lost figure through the narrative of emancipation on the pedestal. Indeed, the sculptor clearly suggests a dialogue between the two representations of Howard in the monument. The full length figure of Howard, shown stepping forward, key in hand, implies that the philanthropist is rushing to the aid of a prisoner. The expectation that Howard is about to provide help is visually resolved for spectators by the depiction of the philanthropist gently reaching down and raising a prisoner to his feet in the relief on the pedestal. However, Bacon does not end his narrative of benevolence here. Indeed, the depiction of Howard gently loosening and removing the chains of the prisoner on the base of the monument is used by the sculptor to eloquently prefigure the empty chains placed around the feet of the statue above, returning the viewer's gaze to the life-sized figure of Howard. In this way, Bacon positions Howard in an endless cycle of benevolence, which continually reiterates the prison reformer's philanthropic endeavours.

Whilst this circular narrative articulated Howard's character of *active benevolence*, the limitations imposed on Bacon by the Committee of Academicians prevented him from exploring the intimate exchange he had envisaged between the figures of Howard and the prisoner on a full scale. In his 1796 letter, Bacon claimed that the compassionate interaction, now relegated to the bas-relief, 'would more forcibly have impressed the character of

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<sup>93</sup>John Bacon, *The Gentleman's Magazine* (March, 1796), p.180.

benevolence on the monument'.<sup>94</sup> However, Bacon compensated for the loss of the secondary figure by contriving an intimate dialogue between his sculpted hero and spectators. Whereas in the first design Howard's benevolent gaze was reserved for the prisoner, in the revised commission the philanthropist's compassionate expression is directed towards the spectator. Thanks to this, viewers themselves become the recipients of the prison reformer's Christ-like charity. It was a rhetorical approach which not only fully engaged spectators with Howard's compassion but also asked them to identify with the position of the prisoner: an interaction which enabled viewers to reflect upon both the giving *and* the receiving of philanthropy. Indeed, there is a sense in which the single figure of Howard, in contrast to the use of two figures, was able to communicate this dialogue more intimately. The philanthropist's gaze in the second commission is obtained directly, without being transferred through an intermediary figure.

### *Johnson and Howard*

Aware that his monument to Howard would be unveiled at the same time as his commemoration to Johnson, Bacon looked to further compensate for the loss of his secondary figure by exploiting the Committee of Academicians' request that the Howard monument complement that dedicated to Dr Johnson. In design the monuments share a visual and formal unity. Both figures are dressed in classical clothing, Howard wearing the robes of a citizen, Johnson those of a philosopher. Bacon gave both figures a contrapposto stance and made each, in his own way, look downwards. However, whilst Bacon ensured that his depiction of Howard complemented that of Johnson in a formal sense, the sculptor appears to have extended the Committee of Academicians' demands. Indeed, perhaps in order to overcome the restrictions placed on the Howard monument, the sculptor seems to have designed the prison reformer's commemoration to act as a specific rhetorical counterbalance to that of Dr Johnson.

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<sup>94</sup> John Bacon, *The Gentleman's Magazine* (March, 1796), p.180.

Considering the two monuments together, Bacon's desire to emphasise Howard's 'active benevolence' becomes clear. The movement of Howard and the open form his body takes contrasts with the static, contemplative pose of Johnson. Where the prison reformer's outward expression invites engagement, the Johnson statue positively rejects any such exchange. However, it is in the faces of the two figures that Bacon truly emphasised their contrasting characters, playing their identities off against each other (fig.113 & 114). The gentle tilt and sympathetic gaze of Howard encourages spectators to approach his monument - his compassionate expression emphasises his benevolent nature. In contrast Bacon depicts Johnson consumed in his own thoughts, his severe expression rejecting the viewer's attention. In comparison to Howard, Johnson's gaze cannot be penetrated; his intense downward stare reinforcing the isolated nature of a writer's profession.

Bacon further abstracts his rendering of Johnson through the piece of paper he holds. Apart from a short indecipherable quote on the scroll, for which I can find no translation, Bacon had left the page tantalisingly empty. This absence of detail encourages a sense of expectancy; however, spectators are unable to imagine what it is that he is about to inscribe, something that in turn reinforces the unique nature of the philosopher's genius. By contrast, the scrolls Howard carries, which include the words *Hospitals* and *Prisons* in the top corners, pointedly refer to his success in changing penal legislation. Viewed together, the two figures essentially presented two very different modes of ideal masculinity - Howard is the eminent man of action and Johnson is the sublime man of thought.

Such differences continue on the pedestals, where the use of a Latin quote on the Johnson monument stands in stark contrast to the illustrative and emotive image of Howard tending to a captive on the base of his monument. In his *Essay on Epitaphs* Johnson had claimed that the most perfect epitaphs were those 'which set virtue in the strongest light, and are adapted to exalt the reader's ideas, and rouse his emulation'.<sup>95</sup> Johnson's epitaph recorded his position as a

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<sup>95</sup> Johnson, *The Idler*, II, p.213.

‘Grammatico et Critico’ and as the writer of the English dictionary, a poet, philosopher and a model gentleman.<sup>96</sup> Given the Herculean depiction of Johnson’s intellect and the classical nature of the monument, it was an appropriately austere and concise insight. It was one, moreover, which reflected the type of elite and exclusive individuals Reynolds had initially wanted to sponsor the monument. Indeed, whilst the inscription may not have been legible to the multitudes it clearly distinguished the elevated aspirations of the individuals who had commissioned it. In contrast, the bas-relief on the Howard monument was eminently accessible, the visual epitaph vividly and immediately conveying to spectators the basis of Howard’s fame. The written epitaph for Howard, relegated to the side of the monument, was equally as illustrative; recording in English how Howard had travelled to ‘every part of the civilised world... to reduce the sum of human misery’ and how his ‘modesty alone defeated various efforts which were made, during his life, to erect a statue’, concluding by stating that he had died

a victim to the perilous and benevolent attempt  
to ascertain the cause of, and find an efficacious remedy for,  
the Plague.

He trod an open, but unfrequented path to immortality,  
in the ardent and un-intermitted exercise of Christian charity:  
may this tribute to his fame  
excite an emulation of his truly glorious achievements.<sup>97</sup>

Together the two works create a mutually supportive dialogue. In viewing them simultaneously, spectators would have been able to reflect upon the differing achievements of the two great men, contemplating Howard’s benevolence and compassion and Johnson’s strength and intellectual sublimity. It was an account of British success which interestingly, did not focus on military figures, politicians or great leaders. Both figures, despite the differing characteristics of their fame, had acquired their positions through independent action and self determination. They stood as paradigmatic examples of the modern civic man

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<sup>96</sup> For full Johnson epitaph see Appendix 3.a. of this thesis.

<sup>97</sup> For full Howard’s inscription see Appendix 3.b. of this thesis.

and, in a society recently rocked by revolutionary events in France, offered a heroic counterpart to the language of revolution.

*New demands, old expectations*

In forcibly uniting the two commemorative schemes, the Committee of Academicians set a unique precedent in British Art. Whilst the Royal Academy had been given ownership over other monumental schemes, they had never directly interfered with the patronage of a work which fell outside their jurisdiction.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, in their desire to rectify the mistakes made at Westminster and herald the beginning of a new era for the British School of Sculpture, the Committee appears to have acted on its own authority. For Bacon, the intervention of the Committee represented the most significant attack the sculptor had received for his art. In rejecting Bacon's complaint that he 'could not well delineate the character of Mr Howard without a secondary figure', the Committee of Academicians struck a direct blow at the very core of Bacon's artistic identity.<sup>99</sup> Undermining his self professed interest in a union of 'great expression' with 'great beauty', the Committee of Academicians sought to impose an alternative sculptural aesthetic upon the interior of St Paul's: an aesthetic which was informed less by the animated and sympathetic narratives Bacon endorsed, which had become increasingly open to politicisation, and more with the 'neo-classicism' promoted by the embryonic British School.<sup>100</sup>

Bacon, however, used such restrictions to his advantage and capitalised upon the new format and location of the Howard monument. Through this he was able to create a mutually supportive dialogue between his two monuments, which convincingly characterised the philanthropy of Howard and the intellect of Johnson. The works boldly marked Bacon's presence in the hitherto empty

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<sup>98</sup> Most recently for the Rodney monument, intended for Spanish Town, Jamaica (1786), designed by Bacon. See 'Letter from John Bacon to Royal Academy' (11<sup>th</sup> June, 1784), *Minutes of the Council of the Royal Academy*, II, p.362 (RA archives).

<sup>99</sup> *Correspondences*, B.L., Add. 26055, f.75.

<sup>100</sup> The success the Committee of Academicians had in influencing the design of the first two monuments permitted into St Paul's led them to oversee the erection of three further public commissions in the Cathedral and later to the establishment of a 'Committee of Taste' in March 1802.

space of St Paul's and perhaps, more shrewdly, continued to promote a mode of sculpture which was expressive, animated and, in the case of the Howard monument, profoundly sentimental.

## **CONCLUSION**

In 1796 Henry Singleton exhibited his painting *The Royal Academicians in the General Assembly of 1795* at the Academy's annual exhibition (fig.115). The work depicted the members of the institute's general council against a backdrop of paintings and antique sculptures. On the right hand side of the painting Singleton inserted a revealing portrait of Bacon (fig.116). Though dwarfed by some of the most important works of the classical past, Bacon's attention appears to be focused instead on the small *Ecorche* statuette which he holds in his left hand.<sup>1</sup> Bacon does not look directly at the model but stares pensively into space, lost in a type of artistic reverie. Seated alone, the sculptor is left to his own thoughts, apparently oblivious to the lively group of fellow Academicians which surrounds him, many of whom have their backs to Bacon.

It is an evocative portrayal of the sculptor. Indeed, in giving Bacon the small *Ecorche* statue to hold, Singleton eloquently emphasised that it was the forms of nature and the musculature of the human body which had been the guiding force behind his genius. In recording Bacon's interest in the human body Singleton emphasised the methodological approach the sculptor had persuasively advocated throughout his career. It was an aesthetic which Bacon had pioneered from within the parameters of the Royal Academy, complicating the institution's ambitions for his medium and generating an alternative vision for an English School of Sculpture.

In positioning Bacon in an isolated corner on the edge of the main group, Singleton's work also gestures, however unconsciously, to the marginalisation such values began to experience towards the end of the 1790s. Whilst the sculptor's aspirations to modify Academic theory and taste had been tolerated in the 1770s and 1780s, by the late 1790s they were deemed to be outmoded, as the controversy over the Howard monument indicated. Indeed, following Bacon's death in 1799, the once prolific artist's preference for 'great expression' and 'great beauty' saw him sidelined and forgotten in accounts of the period; a neglect which has continued to this day.

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<sup>1</sup> The small statuette was a reduced copy of William Hunter's c1750 *Ecorche* figure, which the professor used for teaching anatomy at the Academy during the 1770s (see fig. 53).



To exclude Bacon from discussions on the creation of an English School of Sculpture in the eighteenth century is, however, to negate the complexities of the development of the medium in the period. Throughout his career Bacon had passionately and persuasively advocated an alternative set of aesthetic values for sculpture. In defying and, indeed, in some cases undermining key aspects of Academy theory, Bacon had attempted to open up a new field of debate at the institution, in which the value of the arts of the ancients was questioned and in which the benefits of nature as a source for both beauty and expression were valorised. Ultimately, however, his voice seems to have become a lonely and embattled one, whilst his works, which displayed this alternative aesthetic, came to suffer an undeserved neglect; many slipping almost entirely from art historical consciousness. In addressing this neglect and reconsidering Bacon's contributions to Britain's sculptural tradition, we can begin to gain a deeper, more nuanced understanding not only of Bacon's pivotal role in the period, but also of the complex dynamics of late eighteenth-century sculptural practice.

**APPENDIX 1**

**Bacon, John, 'On Sculpture', from Cyclopaedia: or Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences containing an explanation of the terms and an account of the several subjects in the Liberal and Mechanical Arts, and the Sciences, Human and Devine, ed. by Abraham Rees, 4 vols. (London, 1783), IV, under (S), no pagination. (All spellings are as in the original).**

“The antiquity of this art is past doubt; as the sacred writings, the most ancient and authentic monuments we have of the earliest ages, mention it in several places: witness Laban’s idols stolen away by Rachael, and the golden calf which the Israelites set up in the desert, &c. But it is very difficult to fix the origin [sic] of the art, and the first artists, from profane authors; what we read thereof being greatly intermixed with fables, after the manner and taste of those ages.

Some make a potter of Sicyon, named Dibutades, the first sculptor: others say, the art had its origin in the isle of Samos, where one Ideocus, and after him Theodorus, performed works of this kind, long before Dibutades’s time. It is added, that Demaratus, father of Tarquin the Elder, first brought it into Italy upon his retiring thither; and that by means of Eucirapus and Eutygrammus, two excellent workmen herein, who communicated it chiefly to the Tuscans; among whom it was afterwards cultivated with great success. They add, that Tarquin sent for Taurianus, one of the most eminent among them, to Rome, to make a statue of Jupiter, &c. of baked earth, for the frontispiece of the temple of that deity. Soon after this time, there were many sculptures, both in Greece and Italy, who wrought altogether in earth, some of the most noted were, Chalcosthenes, an Athenian, who made himself and his house famous by the great number of earthen figures he adorned it with; and Domophilus and Gorsanus, two painters, who enriched the temple of Ceres with great variety of painting, and earthen images. In effect, all the first statues of the heathen deities were either of earth or wood; and it was not so much any frailty of that matter, or unfitness for the purpose, as the riches and luxury of the people, that first induced them to make images of marble, and other more precious stones.

Indeed, how rich soever the matter were, whereon they wrought, yet they still first used earth, to form models thereof; and to this day, whether they be for carving marble statues with the chissel, or for casting them in metal, they never

undertake the one, or the other, without first making a perfect model thereof in earth, wax, plaster, &c. Whence, doubtless, arose the observation of Praxiteles, that the art of moulding earthen figures was the natural mother of that of making marble and metalline ones; which last never appeared in perfection, till about three hundred years after the building of Rome; though the first was at its height long before.

Phidias of Athens, who came next, surpassed all his predecessors, both in marble, in ivory, and in metals; and about the same time appeared several others, who carried *sculpture* to the highest perfection it ever arrived at; particularly Polyceltus at Sicyon; and after him Myron; Lysippus, who alone was allowed the honour of casting Alexander's image in brass; Praxiteles and Scopas, who made those excellent figures, now before the pope's palace at Montecavallo; Briaxis, Timotheus, and Leochares, who, with Scopas, wrought at the famous tomb of Mausolus, King of Caria; Cephissodotus, Canachus, Daedalus, Buthieus, Niceratus, Euphranoy, Theodorus, Xenocrates, Pyromachus, Stratonicus, Antigonus, who wrote on the subject of his art; the famous authors of the Laocoon, viz. Agasander, Polydore, and Athenodorus, and many others, the names of some whereof have passed to posterity; while those of others have perished with their works, for though the number of statues in Asia, Greece, and Italy, was so immense, that in Rome alone, as we are informed, there were more than there were living persons, yet we have but few now left at least very few of the finest.

When Marcus Scurus was aedile, his office obliging him to provide what was requisite towards the public rejoicings, he adorned the stately theatre which he erected with three thousand brazen statues; and though L. Mummius, and Lucullus, brought away a great number out of Asia and Greece, yet there were still above three thousand remaining in Rhodes, as many at Athens, and more at Delphi.

But what is most extraordinary, was the bigness of the figures, which those ancient artists had the courage to undertake. Amongst those Lucullus brought to Rome, there was one of Apollo, thirty cubits high; the Collossus of Rhodes,

made by Cares of Lyndos, the disciple of Lysippus, far exceed this; Nero's statue, made by Xenodorus, after that of Mercury, was also of an extraordinary size, being a hundred and ten feet high.

*Sculpture*, however, which, as we learn from Pausanias, was brought to the highest perfection between the fifty-second or fifty-third Olympiad, and the eighty-third, i.e. in about an hundred and twenty years from Daedalus to Phidias, continued in this state no longer than to the time of Alexander the Great, during the period of about a hundred and ten years; and then it began insensibly to decline; not but that there were still some fine pieces of workmanship made both in Greece and Italy, though not performed with so good a fancy, and such exquisite beauty, as some of the former works. Besides that the Greek statues are most esteemed for the workmanship, there is a special difference between them, and those of the Romans, as the greatest part of the first are naked, like those who wrestle, or perform some other bodily exercise, wherein the youth of those times placed all their glory; whereas the others are clad and armed, and particularly have the toga on, which was the greatest mark of honour amongst the Romans.

Although the arts had lain dead for many centuries, they no sooner felt the genial warmth of protection in the generosity of Lorenzo de Medici, Leo X., Cosmo, grand duke of Tuscany, &c. than they started into being, like a man awoke from sleep, and appeared in their maturity, as it were, instantaneously. The truth of this remark will appear in an enumeration of some of the chief productions of several eminent modern artists. Lorenzo Ghiberti produced the fine gates of St. John the Baptist at Florence; Donatelli executed the group of Judith and Holoserne in the great square of that city, and a bas-relief in the church of St. Croce; Michael Angelo formed the statue of Moses in St. Peter's de Vinculies, at Rome, a Bacchus in the gallery of Florence, and some figures on the monuments of the sepulchral chapel in that place; John of Bologna produced the rape of the Sabines in the great square at Florence, the large fountain in the great square at Bologna, and the fine horse at the Pont Neuf at Paris; Rosconi and Algardi formed many statues and monuments of popes, &c. in St. Peter's, and the latter executed a large bas-relief in the same church,

representing Leo I. going out to meet king Attila, whereby he saved the city of Rome from destruction, about the year 450; to Bernini we are indebted for the chair of St. Peter, supported by the four fathers of the church; the monuments of the popes Urban VIII. and Alexander VII. and the large fountain in the Piazza Navone; and to Francis Quefnoy, surnamed the Flemish, for a beautiful statue of Christ, another of Susanna, and a fine one of St. Andrew, in St. Peter's; the reputation of this artist for boys is unparalleled both among the ancients and moderns.

In France, the principal artists in *sculpture* have been Jean Gujoin, contemporary with Michael Angelo, who formed the fountain in the Rue St. Denis, at Paris, some fine caryatides in the Louvre, and the *Sculptures* at the gate of St. Anthony; Puget, celebrated on account of the *sculptures* at the gate of the town-house at Marseilles; the statue of St. Sebastian, at Genoa, and that of Milo, at Versailles; and Girardon, for the monument of cardinal Richelieu, at the Sorbonne; the equestrian statue of Louis XIV. at Paris, and the rape of Proserpine, at Versailles. For these last sculptures we are indebted to the munificence of Louis XIV.

We are not without some excellent specimens of *sculpture* in England. The statues of Phrenzy and Melancholy on the piers before Bethlehem hospital, deserve to be ranked among the first performances in this art; they were executed, in the reign of Charles II. by Cibber, the father of the poet-laureat of that name. There is also a most elegant statue of king Edward VI. in bronze, which stands in one of the courts of St. Thomas's hospital in Southwark, by Sckeemaker; and one of Sir Isaac Newton, at Cambridge, by Roubiliac. Westminster abbey is the most famous repository of *sculpture* in England; but the figures that are here preserved lose much of their effect, by being crowded together, without any orderly arrangement: the monument of the duke of Argyle, and one of Mrs. Nightingale, both by Roubiliac, and Dr. Chamberlain's, by Sckeemaker, seem to stand highest in the public opinion.

It is probable that *sculpture* is more ancient than painting; and if we examine the style of ancient painting there is reason to conclude, that *sculpture* stood first

in the public esteem: as the ancient painters have evidently imitated the statuaries, even to their disadvantage; since their works have not that freedom of style, more especially with respect to their composition and drapery, which the pencil might easily acquire to a greater degree than that of the chissel; but as this is universally the case, it cannot be attributed to any thing else besides the higher estimation of the works on which they formed themselves. Which is the most difficult art has been a question often agitated. Painting has the greatest number of requisites, but at the same time her expedients are the most numerous; and therefore, we may venture to affirm, that, whenever *sculpture* pleases equally with a painting, the sculptor is certainly the greatest artist. *Sculpture* has indeed had the honour of giving law to all the schools of design, both ancient and modern, with respect to purity of form. The reason, perhaps, is, that being divested of those meretricious ornaments by which painting is enabled to seduce its admirers, it is happily forced to seek for its effect in the higher excellencies of the art: hence elevation in the idea, as well as purity and grandeur in the forms, are found in greater perfection in *sculpture* than in painting. Besides, whatever may be the original principles which direct our feelings in the approbation of intrinsic beauty, they are, without doubt, very much under the influence of association. Custom and habit will necessarily give a false bias to our judgement: it is, therefore, natural, and in some measure reasonable, that those arts which are temporaneous, should adapt themselves to the changes of fashion, &c. But *sculpture*, by its durability, and consequent application to works perpetuity, is obliged to acquire and maintain the essential principles of beauty and grandeur, that its effect on the mind may be preserved through the various changes of mental taste. It is conceived, that it will scarcely admit of a question, whether the ancients or moderns have most excelled in this art; the palm having been so universally adjudged to the former. To determine in what proportion they are superior is too difficult an attempt. Wherever there is a real superiority in any art or science, it will in time be discovered; by the world, ever fond of excess, never stops at the point of true judgement, but dresses out its favourite object with the ornaments of fancy, so that even every blemish becomes a beauty. This it has done by ancient *sculpture* to such a degree as not to form its judgement of *that* by any rules, but to form an opinion of *rules* by the example. As long as this is the case, modern art can never have a fair

comparison with the ancient. This partiality to the ancients is so strong as to prevent almost all discrimination; and is the sole reason, why many antiques, that now stand as patterns of beauty in the judgement of most connoisseurs, are not discovered to be copies. This is not more important than it is easy to be perceived by a judicious eye; for wherever there is a grandeur or elegance to an eminent degree in the idea and general composition of a statue, and when the execution of the parts (called by artist the treating of the parts) betrays a want of taste and feeling, there is the greatest reason to conclude, that the statue is a copy, though we were ever so certain of its antiquity. And surely if evidence of a picture's being a copy proportionably diminishes its value, the same rule of judgement may be no less properly applied to a statue. Modern and ancient art can never, therefore, be fairly compared, till both are made to submit to the determination of reason and nature. It may be observed, that the ancients have chiefly confined themselves to the sublime and beautiful; and whenever a pathetic subject has come before them, that have sacrificed expression to beauty. The famous group of Niobe is one instance of this kind; and, therefore, however great our partiality to the ancients may be, none can hesitate to affirm, that, whenever the moderns shall unite great expression with great beauty, they will wrest the palm out of their hands.

The Editor is indebted for the preceding ingenious remarks to Mr. Bacon, an artist of very distinguished eminence in his profession."



**APPENDIX 2**

Anon, 'Modern Improvements in the Arts', from *The British Magazine and Review: or Universal Miscellany of Arts, Sciences, Literature, History, Biography, Entertainment, Poetry, Politics, Manners, Amusements and Intelligence Foreign and Domestic*, I, (October, 1782), 252-257.

## MODERN IMPROVEMENTS IN THE ARTS.

### MONUMENT

OF THE EARL OF CHATHAM,  
IN GUILDHALL, LONDON.

**B**EFORE we proceed to describe this elegant tribute of the gratitude of the citizens of London for the important services which this distinguished statesman rendered to his country in the course of a life almost wholly dedicated to public offices and employments, it may not be improper to recapitulate some of those services; and, in doing this, to give a short sketch of the life of a minister whose powers were dreaded by all the states of Europe, and whose death, at the critical moment in which it happened, proved a loss to Great Britain, already severely felt, and which, in its consequences, threatens to circumscribe the extent and lessen the power of this once-flourishing empire.

It will be unnecessary to say more of this nobleman's birth and early life, than that he was the second son of Robert Pitt, of Boconnock, in the county of Cornwall, Esq. by a sister of the Earl of Grandison; and was designed for the military line, having entered into the service at twenty-one, as a cornet of horse.

But his abilities were too conspicuous to be lost in a profession where many years must have elapsed before they could have been called into eminent service. He soon obtained a seat in parliament; and displayed such powers of oratory, such force of argument, and such knowledge of the policy, jurisprudence, and commercial interests of his country, as created at once astonishment, respect, and veneration.

At a time when the most able and virtuous men of the kingdom constituted the court of Frederick Prince of Wales, he was appointed a groom of the bed-chamber to that prince, and held that employment from 1737, to 1745. In February 1746, the office of joint vice-treasurer of Ireland was conferred on him; in May 1746, he was made treasurer and pay-master-general of the army; and, in the course of the same month, was sworn of the privy-council.

Having resigned this employment, he was, in December 1756, appointed secretary of state for the southern department; and executed that office till the 9th of April 1757, when he gave up the seals, but resumed them on the 29th of the following month of June, and continued to hold them till the 5th of October 1761, being four years and ten months, except the above little secession: a period which exhibits the most glorious page in the historic annals of Great Britain; for under his patriotic administration, an union of opinions in council produced measures so happily planned, and so successfully executed, as to confer happiness on the sovereign and his people, and reflect the highest honour on the wisdom, sagacity, fortitude, and spirit, of this enterprising and popular minister.

At the time Mr. Pitt first took the reins of government, the nation was involved in distress, and the spirits of the people were reduced to despondency. The defeat of Braddock in America, the misconduct of Byng, and the loss of Minorca, were the dispiriting consequences of a weak, timid, and incapable administration; but

but no sooner did Mr. Pitt take the lead, than every nerve was braced up, and the British arm was extended in full and compleat vigour. Under Boscawen and Amherst, Louisburgh was reduced to yield obedience to Great Britain; Saunders and the immortal Wolfe triumphed at Quebec; Senegal and Goree were annexed to the British crown; all the possessions of the French in the East Indies fell into the hands of the English forces, or were totally ruined and destroyed; their armies on the continent of Europe were disgracefully defeated, Belleisle subdued, the fleet of England rode triumphant on the seas, whilst that of France was weakened by perpetual captures, and at length compelled to lie inactive in her ports; her coasts being in the mean time insulted and ravaged, her commerce annihilated, and her trade, as well as her finances, in a state of actual bankruptcy. And when the other branch of the House of Bourbon gave this wise and vigilant minister reason to suspect that she meant to engage in the quarrel, he adopted measures which, though unhappily for his country he was not permitted to pursue, were yet productive of the capture of the Havannah, and of such checks to the power of Spain, as soon rendered her inclinable to embrace a plan of pacification.

On the 5th of October 1761, Mr. Pitt resigned the seals as secretary of state; at which time his lady was created a peeress of Great Britain, by the title of Baroness Chatham; and a pension of three thousand pounds a year was granted to him for his own life, and the lives of his lady and their eldest son.

For several years after this resignation, he remained unconnected with administration, though he still attended his duty in parliament, and took a zealous, active, and decisive part, in the great questions which were agitated there respecting general warrants, and the repeal of the American stamp-act. His conduct

on these, and all other occasions of the like kind, being strictly governed by those principles which had ever actuated him to stand foremost as the friend of the people and the champion of constitutional liberty.

On the 30th of July 1766, his Majesty was pleased to create Mr. Pitt a Peer of Great Britain, by the titles of Earl of Chatham and Viscount Pitt; and at the same time he was appointed keeper of the privy-seal, which office he held till the 2d of November 1768, when he resigned it, and never after accepted any other.

From this time to his death, the fits of the gout, to which he had been many years subject, grew so violent and so frequent, that he was confined the greatest part of his time, and his constitution considerably impaired; yet, notwithstanding these bodily infirmities, his mind was still tenacious of the most fervent zeal for the welfare of his country; and he was several times carried to his seat in parliament covered with flannels, and exerted his still unrivalled abilities in her service, though he was obliged to be supported by crutches whilst he delivered his opinion and afforded his advice.

It was on one of those occasions, upon a motion of the Duke of Richmond for an address to his Majesty to dismiss his present ministers, and withdraw the troops from America, that Lord Chatham, though then labouring under a severe indisposition, with irresistible argument, and enthusiastic energy, opposed the latter part of this ill-timed motion. He declared he was exceedingly ill; but as long as he could crawl down to that house, and had strength to raise himself on his crutches, or to lift his hand, he would vote against giving up the dependency of America on the sovereignty of Great Britain; and if no other lord was of opinion with him, he would singly protest against the measure.

These may be considered as the dying words of this exalted patriot; and

and we trust no minister of this country will ever be found daring enough to adopt measures contradictory to this opinion, or any parliament be base enough to sanction them.

Unfortunately for his country, these were indeed the dying words of Lord Chatham: for the Duke of Richmond having spoken in reply, his lordship attempted again to get upon his legs, but he was immediately seized with convulsions; and being carried to his house, he languished till the 11th of May; when, to the irreparable loss of his country, a loss heightened by the present alarming state of public affairs, he expired, universally lamented by every friend of Great Britain!

On the very day of his death, motions were made and carried in the House of Commons, that an address be presented to his Majesty, requesting that he would be graciously pleased to give directions that the remains of the Earl of Chatham be buried at the public expence; and that a monument be erected in the collegiate church of St. Peter at Westminster to the memory of that great and excellent statesman, with an inscription expressive of the sentiments of the people on so heavy and irreparable a loss: and on the 13th of the same month, a motion was made and carried, that his Majesty should be addressed to make a lasting provision for his family; in consequence of which, an annuity of 4000l. per annum was granted by his Majesty out of the civil list revenue to his successor, and confirmed by an unanimous resolution of parliament, in perpetuity to the heirs of the deceased earl who should inherit that title; which resolution was afterwards passed into a law.

Nor were the citizens of London backward in bearing testimony to the unequalled merits of this consummate statesman and truly patriotic senator: they petitioned his Majesty that his remains might be deposited in the cathedral of St.

Paul; and as the address of the House of Commons had rendered it impossible for his Majesty to comply with this request, a court of Common Council was assembled, and a committee appointed to take into consideration the most proper method of conveying to posterity the respect of the citizens of London for the memory of the lately deceased Earl of Chatham; who determined to apply to the two most eminent artists in history-painting and sculpture, Benjamin West, and John Bacon, Esqrs. and request each of these gentlemen to prepare a design in the art he professed; and these designs having been laid before the committee at a future meeting, their choice fell, with only one dissenting voice, on that for sculpture.

But, on the report of the committee to the body of the Common Council, they thought fit to differ in opinion from their committee, and to adopt the idea of a painting: nor will we suppose they were actuated to make this determination by any sordid motives; since, on a reconsideration of the matter at a subsequent court, the judgment of the committee was unanimously confirmed; and Mr. Bacon was appointed to execute that monument, which he hath since completed, and an account and description of which we now mean to offer to our readers.

On the first inspection of this excellent piece of sculpture, it is difficult to determine whether the obvious simplicity of the composition, or the striking effect it immediately produces, is most the subject of admiration. The whole is one grand group in *alto rilievo*, composed of many compleat statues, and is intended to convey the idea of the universal prevalence of national prosperity under the auspices of this celebrated statesman. To this end, Lord Chatham is represented as the Pilot of the State, resting on a Rudder; his arm supports Commerce, who sits by his side, attended by the Four

Quarters.

Quarters of the Globe, in the act of pouring the contents of a capacious Cornucopia into the lap of Britannia, who is seated on her Lion. The City of London is happily introduced as a capital figure; her attention seems directed to Lord Chatham; and her finger, extended towards Commerce, seems to bespeak that protection which the position of his arm shews him already inclined to afford her. Various emblems are properly introduced in different parts of the work; such as a Mariner's Compass, a Top-mast in the hands of Commerce, an Anchor, a Sail furled to a Yard, a Bee-hive at the feet of the City of London, and the Insignia of that City: in all which, elegance of execution, and propriety of application, have been evidently and successfully consulted.

That the artist hath represented his principal figure in a dress of fancy, will not be regretted by those who recollect the clumsy weight of the modern tight garments, and the fluctuating state of fashions in this country. This work is designed for ages yet to come; and the absurdity of studying the dress of the times for such a purpose, will be best discovered by inspecting the monument of Sir Cloudesley Shovel, and some others in the same taste in Westminster Abbey, and comparing them with those in which ancient or imaginary garments have been adopted.

The following Inscription is inserted on a Tablet at the foot of the Monument.

IN grateful acknowledgment to the Supreme Disposer of events, who intending to advance this nation, for such time as to his wisdom seemed good, to an high pitch of prosperity and glory; by unanimity at home—by confidence and reputation abroad—by alliances wisely chosen, and faithfully observed—by colonies united and protected—by decisive victories by sea and land—by conquests made by arms and generosity in every part of the globe—and by commerce, for the first time united with and made to flourish by war—was pleased to raise up, as the principal instrument in this memorable work—

WILLIAM PITT!

The Mayor, Aldermen, and Common Council, mindful of the benefits which the City of London received in her ample share in the general prosperity, have erected to the memory of this eminent statesman and powerful orator this monument in her Guildhall; that her citizens may never meet for the transaction of their affairs, without being reminded, that the means by which Providence raises a nation to greatness, are the virtues infused into great men; and that to withhold from those virtues, either of the living or the dead, the tribute of esteem and veneration, is to deny to themselves the means of happiness and honour.

This distinguished person, for the services rendered to King George the Second, and to King George the Third, was created—

#### EARL OF CHATHAM.

The British Nation honoured his memory with a public funeral, and a public monument, amongst her illustrious men in Westminster Abbey.

Beneath the Tablet is a Medalion, containing the Cap of Liberty, and ornamented with branches of Laurel.

To say generally that this Monument is well executed, will be to fall infinitely short of it's deserved praise; to point out all it's beauties, would be a task much above our abilities; but among them we cannot forbear to mention the drapery, which is executed in a stile of infinite ease, elegance, and propriety.

The defects are so few, that it would be equally displeasing and invidious to point them out; and so trifling, that they only serve to shew the imperfection of human excellence: it may be, on the whole, pronounced a work of the highest merit, reflecting an equal degree of honour on the patrons and the artist. We wish it was in our power to bestow the same praise on the Inscription; which is, in our opinion, a dull, inanimate composition, very unworthy both of the subject and the Monument; though it hath been attributed to the celebrated pen of Edmund Burke, Esq.

But we apprehend it will be highly acceptable to our readers to receive  
some

some account of the admired artist to whom we are indebted for this elegant proof of taste and ingenuity, and we are happy in an opportunity of gratifying them from very authentic intelligence.

John Bacon, Esq. member of the Royal Academy, was born in London in the year 1740, and his early destination in life was very different from that in which he has since attained such a superlative degree of excellence. In the year 1755, he was placed with Mr. Crispe, of Bow Church Yard; who having a manufactory of china at Lambeth, which Mr. Bacon sometimes attended, he had an opportunity of observing the models of different sculptors, which were frequently sent to a pottery, on the same premises, to be burnt. The sight of these models inspired him with an inclination for this art; and how happily Nature had prepared his mind for this favourable impulse, is evident from the reputation which he has now so very deservedly acquired.

And that his progress in the study of this art was as rapid as his turn for it was sudden and unpremeditated, will appear from an inspection of the books published annually by the Society for the Encouragement of Arts; in which it will be found, that between the years 1763 and 1766, (these years inclusive) the first premiums in those classes in which he contended for them, were no less than nine times adjudged to this rising and then promising artist.

In 1768, the Royal Academy was instituted; and in the following year the Gold Medal for Sculpture, the first ever given by that body, was decreed to Mr. Bacon; and about two or three years after, his reputation was publicly established by his exhibition of the statue of Mars, which drew on him the attention of all the virtuosos of the kingdom, and particularly recommended him to the present archbishop of York; who having designed to place a Bust of his present Majesty in the Hall of Christ Church

College, in the university of Oxford, presented Mr. Bacon to his Majesty, who was pleased to sit to him for this purpose; and his execution of this work, added to the fame he had already acquired, procured him the royal patronage, and an order from his Majesty to prepare another bust, which he intended to present to the University of Gottingen. Her Majesty, his royal consort, was also pleased to give directions for a third; and Mr. Bacon has since executed a fourth, which has been placed in the hall of the Antiquarian Society. And he soon after obtained the favour of the dean and fellows of Christ Church, by whom he has been employed in forming several marble busts, and in particular those of the late General Guise, the late Bishop of Durham, and the present Primate of Ireland.

In 1777, he was directed to prepare a model of a Monument, to be erected in Guy's Hospital, Southwark, to the memory of the founder; and on it's being compared with another, which had also been composed by a sculptor of the first eminence, the preference was given to Mr. Bacon's, who accordingly finished after it that monument in the chapel of the hospital which has so justly excited general approbation and praise.

In 1778, Mr. Bacon presented to the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, two statues in plaiter; which, by a vote of that society, were directed to be placed in their great room. On which occasion the artist addressed the following letter to them.

GENTLEMEN,

THE honour you have done me, in your acceptance of my statues of Mars and Venus, affords me an opportunity, which I gladly embrace, of acknowledging the many obligations I have to the Society. It was your approbation which stimulated, and your encouragement which enabled me to pursue those studies which had a disadvantageous

‘vantageous situation had otherwise made difficult, if not impossible. Believe me, gentlemen, I never think of the Society without gratitude, and without the highest idea of the principles on which it is formed, which justly place it among the institutions that do most honour to human nature, raise the glory of a nation, and promote the general good of mankind.’

To this letter the Society sent a polite answer, accompanied with their Gold Medal, on the reverse of which is inscribed—*EMINENT MERIT.*

In the north aisle of Westminster Abbey is a Monument erected by Mr. Bacon, to the memory of the late Earl of Halifax; and a marble Urn, executed by him, has, by the direction of Lady Chatham, been placed in the gardens at Burton Pynsent, Somersetshire, sacred to the memory of the Earl of Chatham.

The inhabitants of Jersey having determined to perpetuate the fame of the gallant Major Pierson, who nobly fell in the defence of that island against the French, the execution of a Monument for this purpose hath been committed to Mr. Bacon; and the Society of All Souls, Oxford, having agreed to erect a statue of the late Sir William Blackstone, one of the members of that college, has conferred the honour of that work on this great artist.

In thirteen different competitions with rival artists, Mr. Bacon has twelve times had the extraordinary happiness to bear away from his competitors the prize of preference; a decisive and unequivocal proof of superior and uncommon merit.

The following works of this gentleman have been at different times exhibited at the Royal Academy.

Statues of Mars and Venus; Colossal Bust of Jupiter; Colossal Statue of the Thames; several small figures in marble; and a Monument, since placed in the Cathedral of Bristol, to the memory of Mrs. Draper, celebrated by Sterne under the name of Eliza.

We shall finish our account of this celebrated artist with a circumstance which cannot fail of being highly pleasing to the public—That Mr. Bacon having been appointed by his Majesty to execute the Monument intended to be placed in Westminster Abbey, at the public expence, to the memory of the same illustrious statesman, the Earl of Chatham; that work is now in great forwardness, and will, in all probability, about this time in the ensuing year, exhibit a fresh instance of the unrivalled abilities of this truly British artist; and an additional proof, that excellence in the polite arts may be acquired without foreign instruction, or study in the schools of Italy; and that genius, in it's most exalted state, is the growth of the British Isle.

**APPENDIX 3**



**a. Epitaph from the monument in St Paul's Cathedral to Samuel Johnson.**

Samuel Johnson  
 Grammatico et Critico  
 Scriptorum Anglicorum Litterate Perito  
 Poetae Luminibus Sententiarum  
 Et Ponderibus, Verborum Admirabili  
 Magistro Virtutis Gravissimo  
 Homini Optimo Et Singularis Exempli  
 QUI VIXIT ANN LXXV MENS II DIES XIII  
 DECESSIT IDIB DECEMBER ANN CHRIST CLO IOCC LXXXIII  
 SEPULT IN AED SANCT PETR WESTMONASTERIENS  
 XIII KAL JANUAR ANN CHRIST CIO IOCC LXXXV  
 Amici et Sodales Litterarii  
 Percunia Conlata  
 H.M Faciund Curaver.

**b. Epitaph from the monument in St Paul's Cathedral to John Howard.**

This extraordinary man had the fortune to be honoured whilst living,  
 in the manner which his virtues deserved.

He received the thanks  
 of both Houses of the British and Irish Parliaments,  
 for his eminent services rendered to his country and to mankind.

Our National Prisons and Hospitals  
 Improved upon the suggestions of his wisdom  
 bear testimony to the solidity of his judgement,  
 and to the estimation in which he was held.

In every part of the civilised world,  
 which he traversed to reduce the sum on human misery  
 from the Throne to the Dungeon his name was mentioned  
 with respect, gratitude, and admiration.

His modesty alone  
 defeated various efforts which were made, during his life,  
 to erect this statue,

which the publick had now consecrated to his memory.

He was born at *Hackney*, in the county of *Middlesex* Sept 11, MDCCXXVI.

The early part of his life he spent in retirement,  
 residing principally upon his paternal estate,  
 at *Cardington*, in *Bedfordshire* in;  
 in the year MDCCLXXIII

He expired at *Cherson*, in Russian *Tertiary*, on the XXth of Jan MDCCLXXIII.

a victim to the perilous and benevolent attempt  
 to ascertain the cause of, and find an efficacious remedy  
 for, the Plague.

He trod an open, but unfrequented path to immortality,  
 in the ardent and unremitting exercise of Christian Charity:  
 may this tribute to his fame  
 excite and emulation of his truly glorious achievements!.

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**John Bacon**  
**1. Monument to Samuel Whitbread, 1799.**  
**St Mary's Church, Cardington, Bedfordshire.**



**Francois Girardon**  
**2. Monument to Cardinal Richelieu, 1675-94.**  
**Church of the Sorbonne, Paris.**



**John Bacon**  
**3. *Aeneas Escaping from Troy*, 1769.**  
**Foundling Hospital, London.**  
**(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**





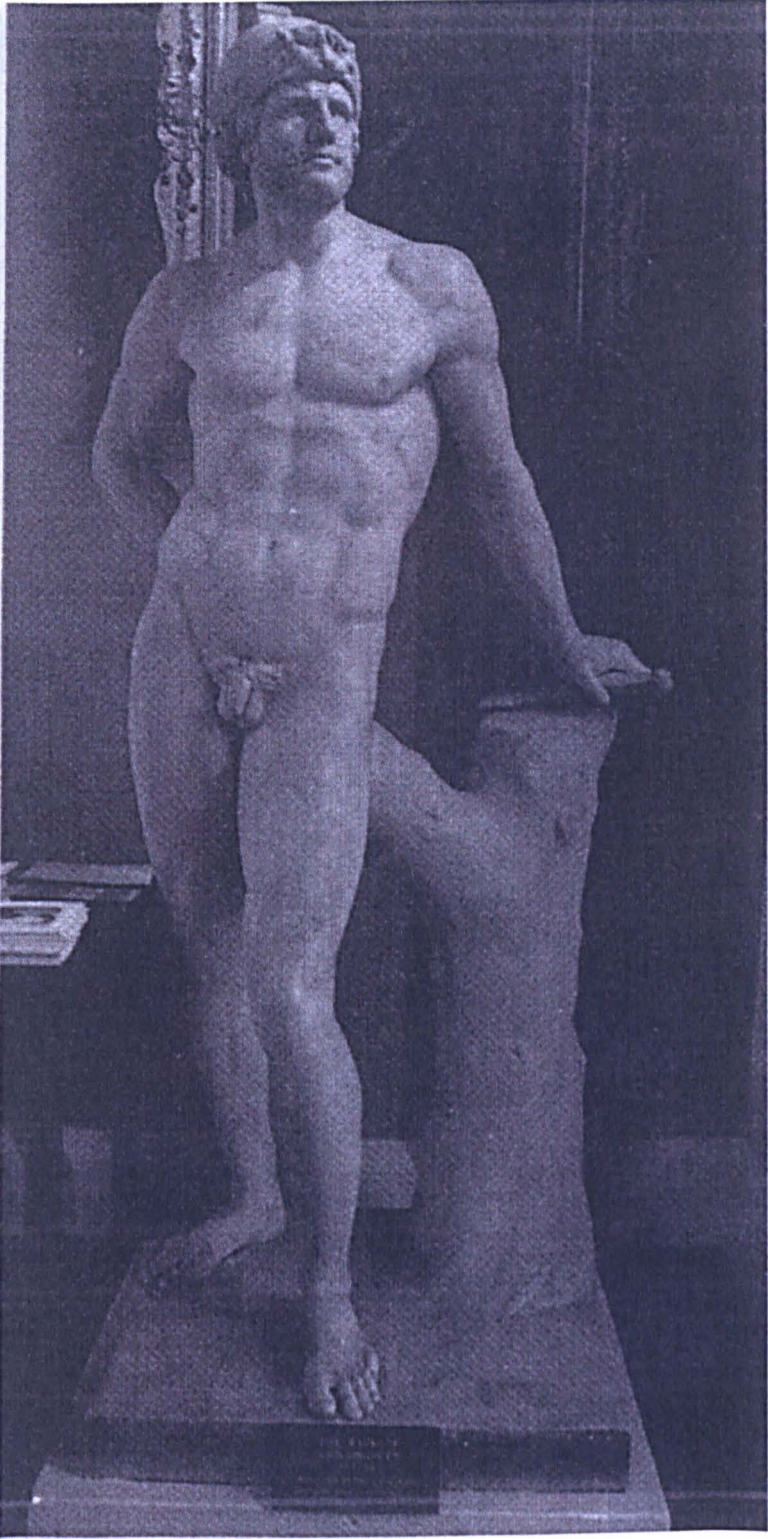
Gianlorenzo Bernini  
4. *Aeneas, Anchise and Ascanius*, 1618.  
Galleria Borghese, Rome.



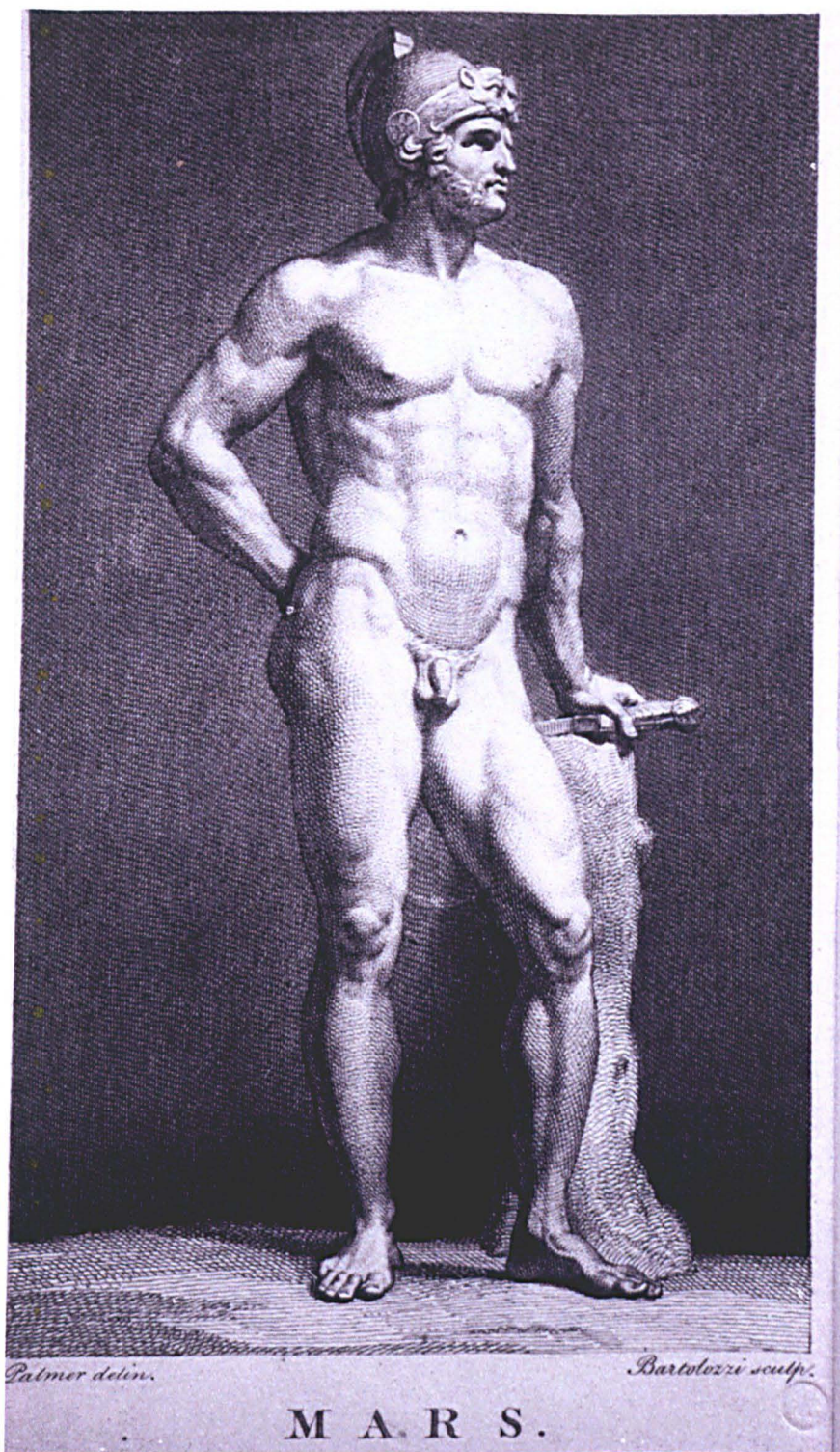
Frederic Barocci  
5. *Aeneas fees Burning Troy*, 1598.  
Galleria Borghese, Rome.



Agostine Carracci after Frederic Barocci  
6. *Aeneas and his Family Fleeing Troy*, 1595.  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



**John Bacon**  
**7. *Mars*, 1771-1772.**  
**Usher Art Gallery, Lincoln.**



Francesco Bartolozzi

8. *An Engraving of Mars by John Bacon, 1787.*

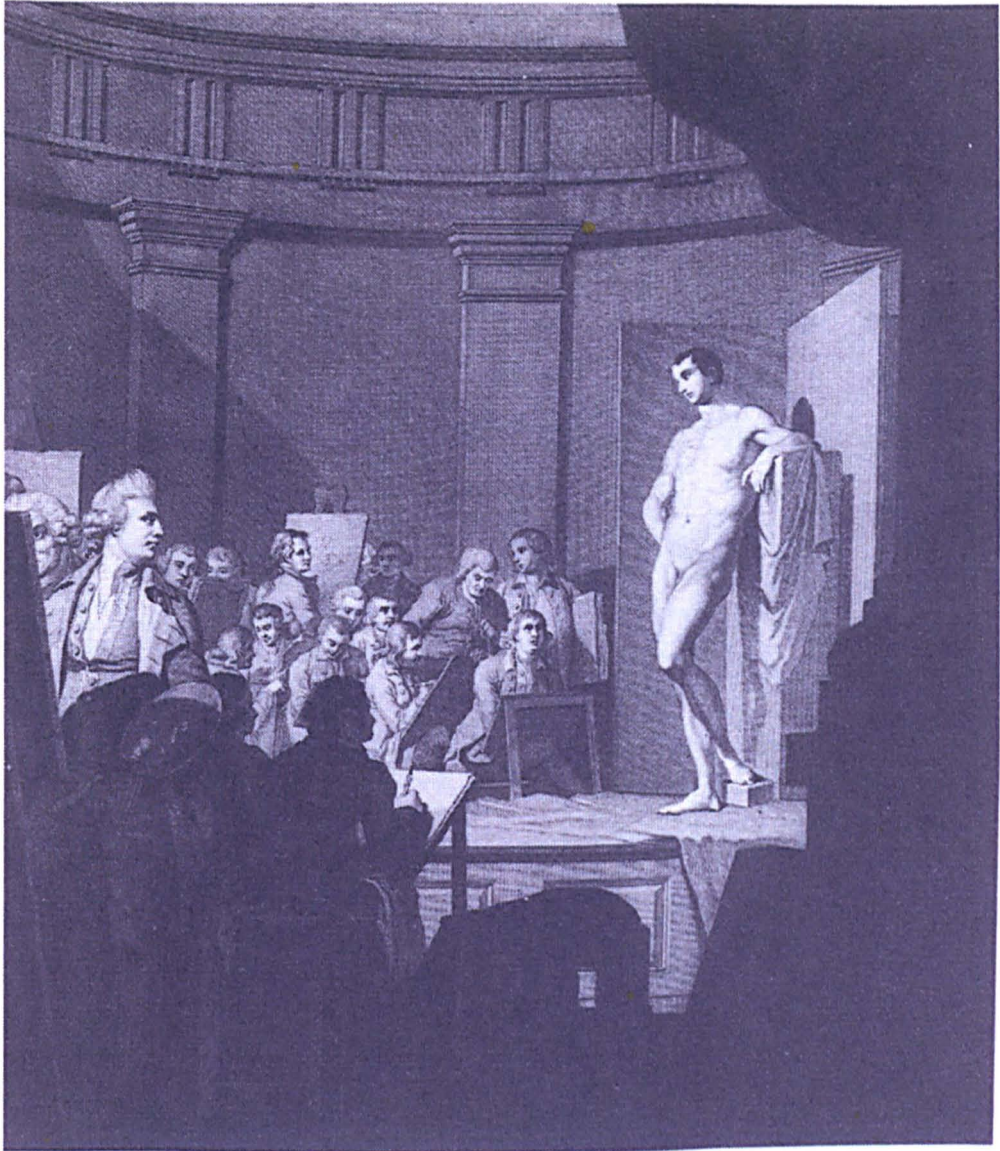
*From the frontispiece to the Transactions of the Society Instituted at London for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce, with the premiums offered in that Year 1787, V (1787).*



*9. Terme Ruler.*  
National Museum, Rome.

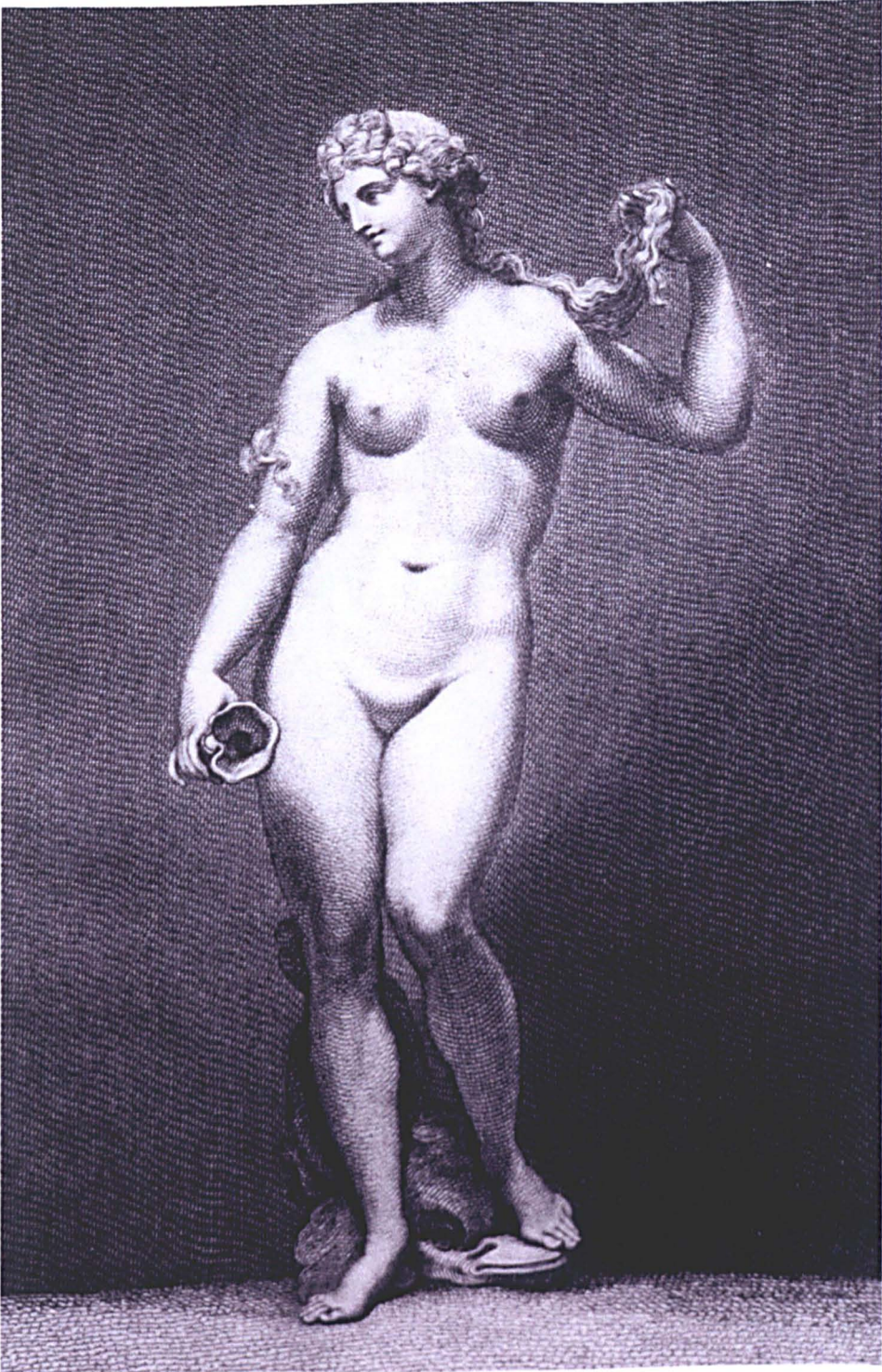


**10. *Meleager.***  
**Vatican Museum, Rome.**



S. F. Ravenent after John Hamilton Mortimer  
11. *A Life Class*, 1771.  
Wellcome Institute Library, London.

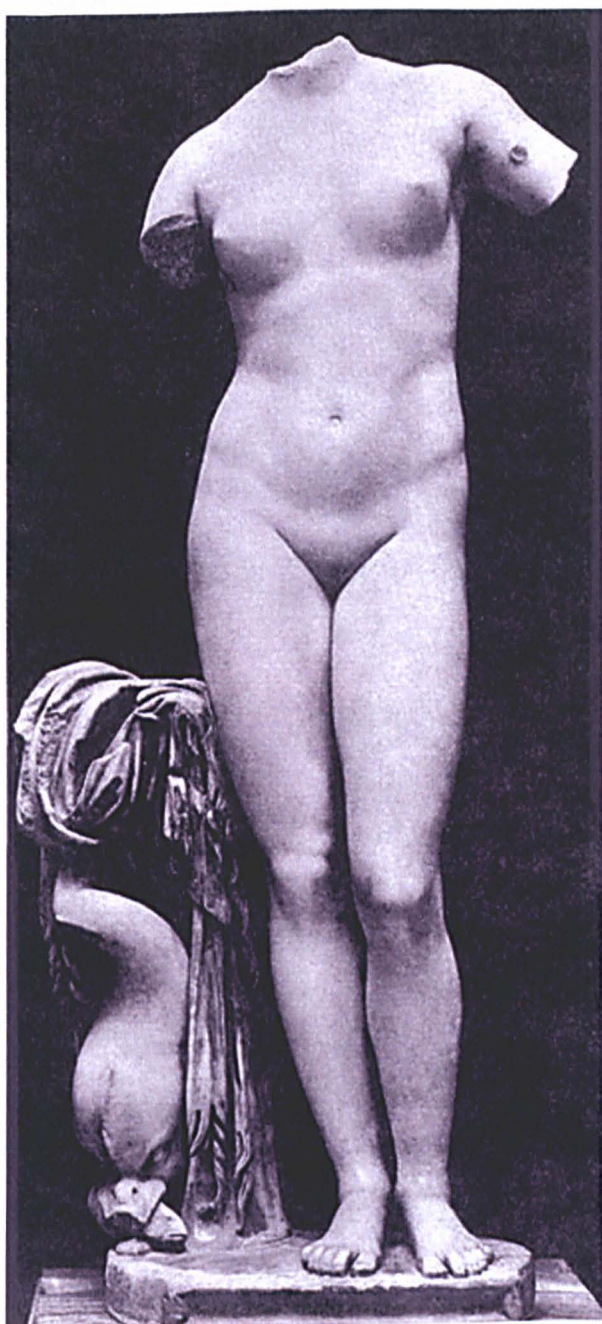




Francesco Bartolozzi

12. *An Engraving of Venus by John Bacon, 1789.*

*From the frontispiece to the Transactions of the Society Instituted at London for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce, with the premiums offered in that Year 1789, VII, (1789).*



Cleomenes  
13. *Venus Anadyomene*.  
Louvre, Paris.



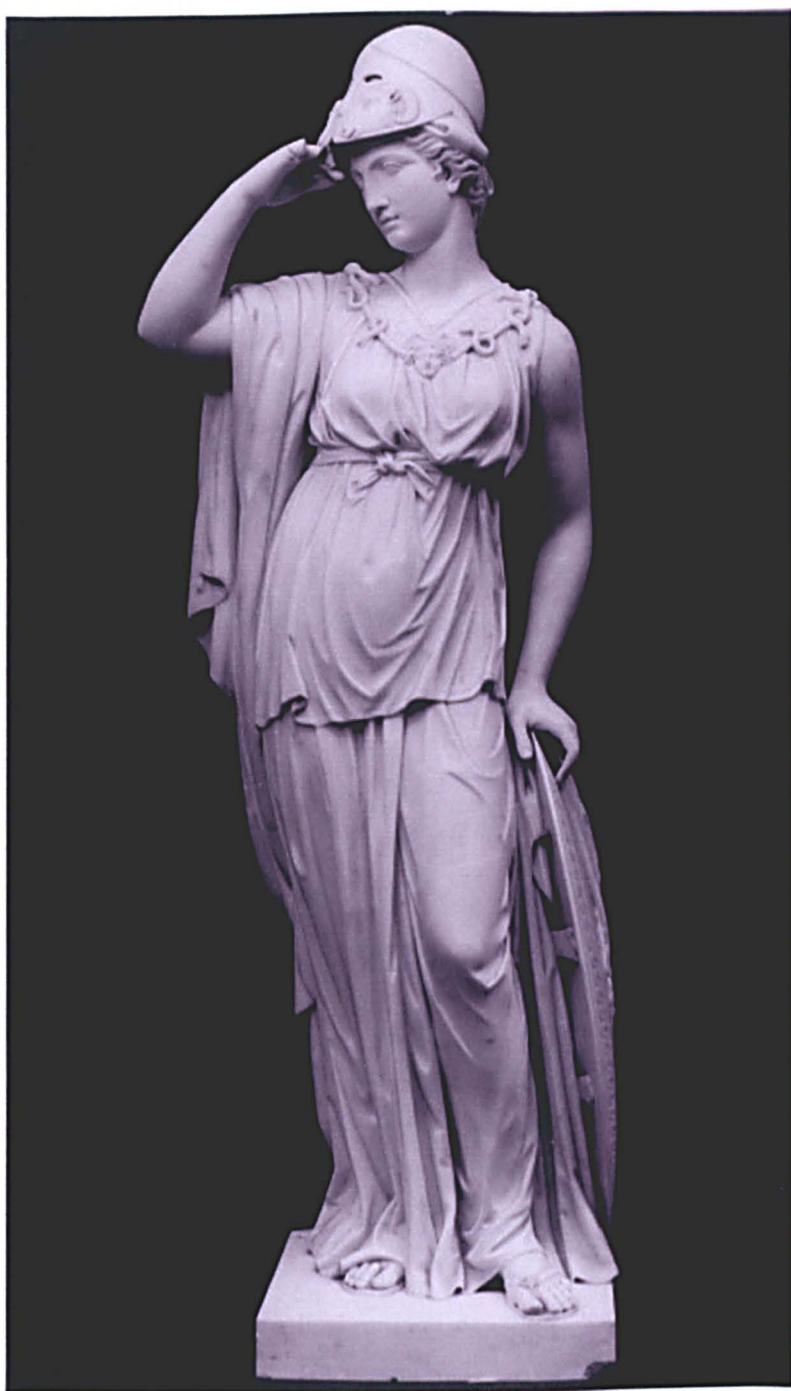
Francesco Bartolozzi

14. *An Engraving of Narcissus by John Bacon, 1796.*

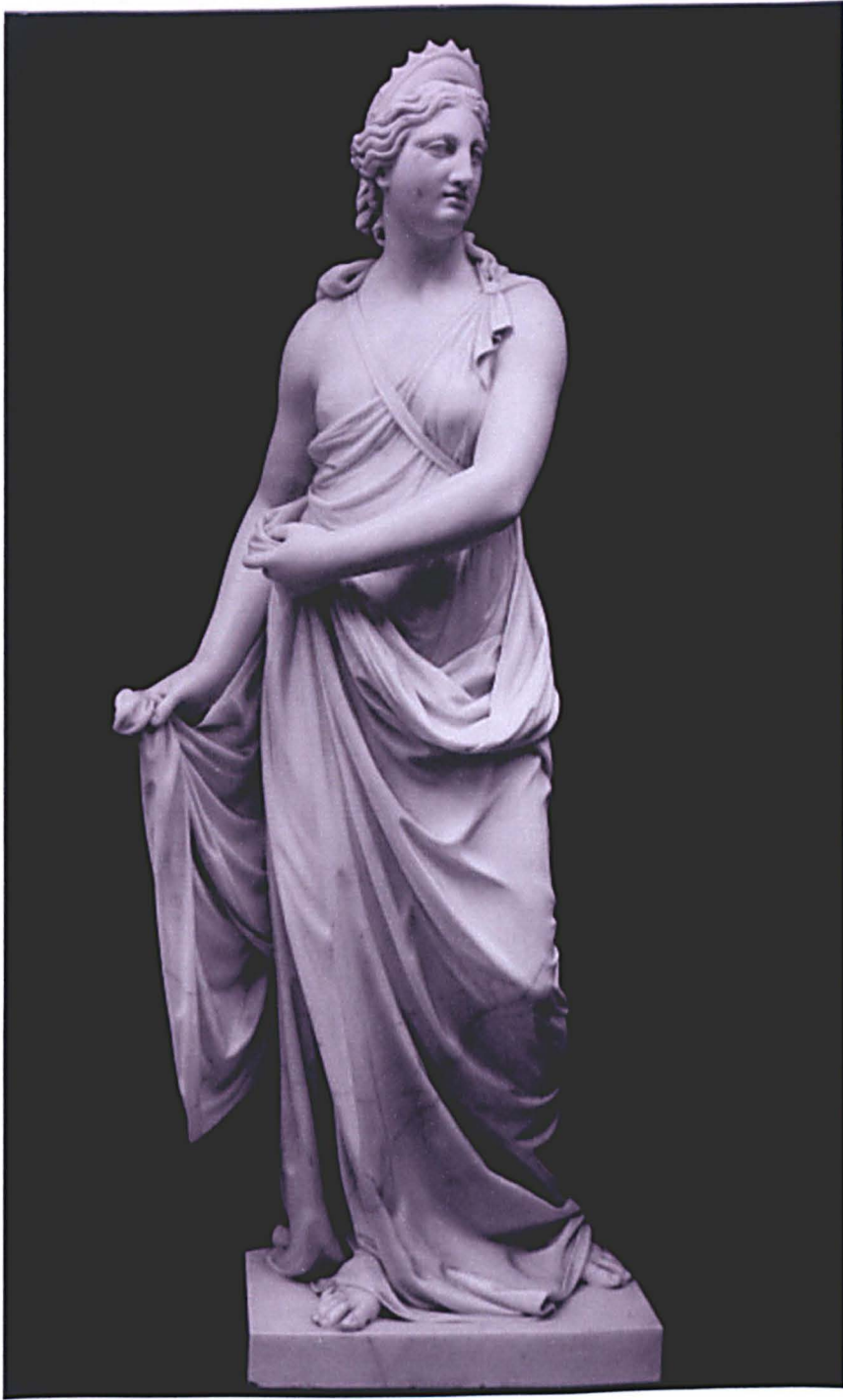
*From the frontispiece to the Transactions of the Society Instituted at London for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce, with the premiums offered in that Year 1796, XIII, (1796).*



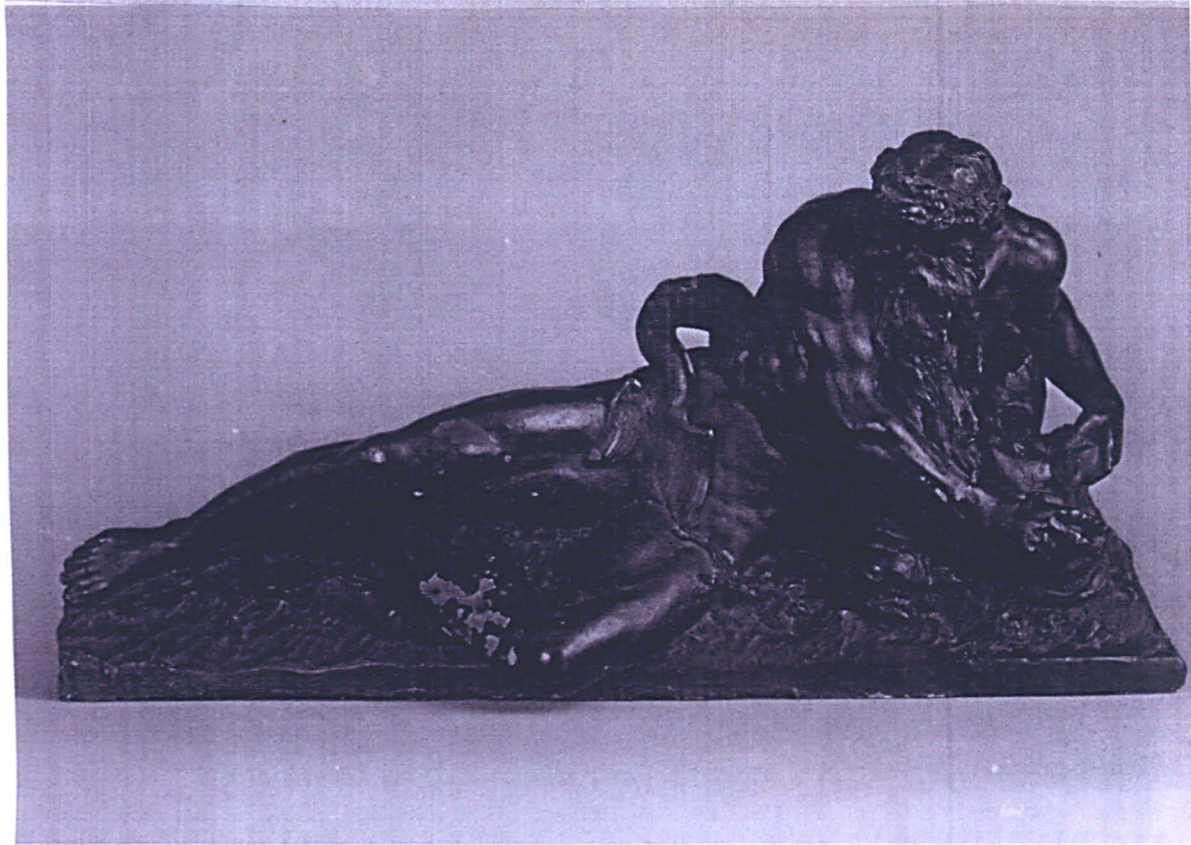
Joseph Nollekens  
15. *Venus*, 1773.  
J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.



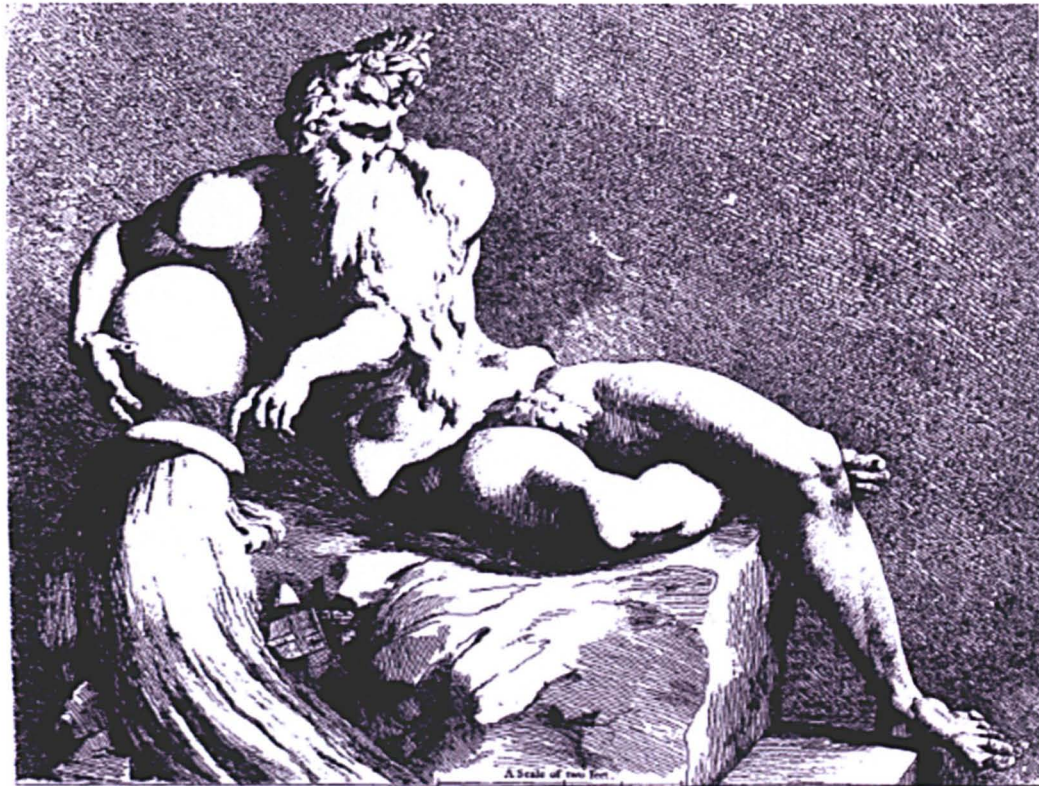
Joseph Nollekens  
16. *Minerva*, 1774.  
J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles



Joseph Nollekens  
17. *Juno*, 1776.  
J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles



**John Bacon**  
**18. *A Bronzed Terracotta Modello for the Figure of Ocean in the Chatham Monument, c.1778.***  
**Private collection.**  
**(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



*THE RIVER GOD, a 9 Feet Figure, at COADE'S Lithodipera, or Artificial Stone Manufactory, Narrow Walk, LAMBETH.*

**William Blake**

**19. Thames by John Bacon, 1779.**

**From Coad's Artificial Stone Manufactory, *Etchings of Coad's Artificial Stone Manufactory Narrow Walk Lambeth near Westminster Bridge* (London 1779).**

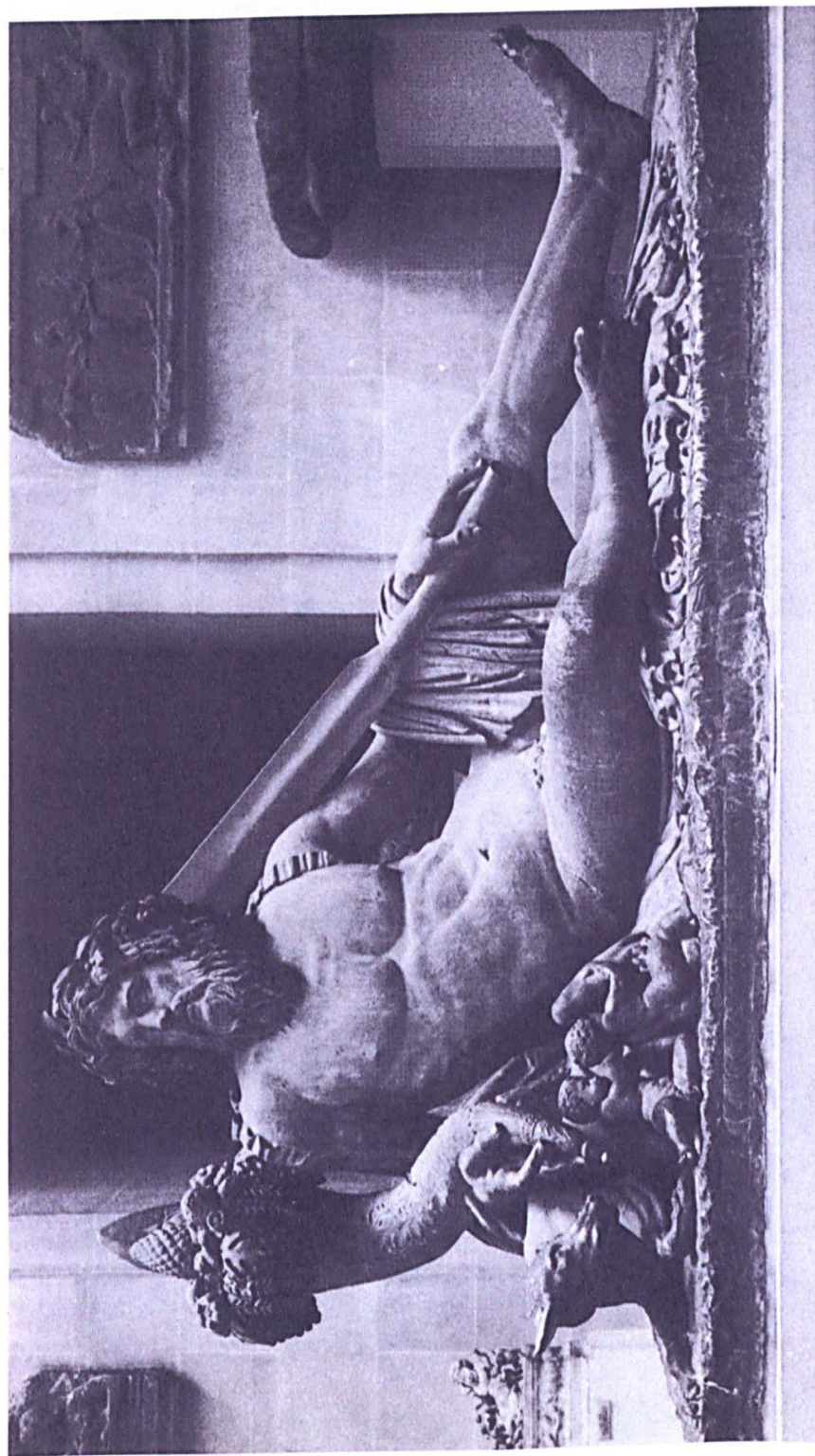




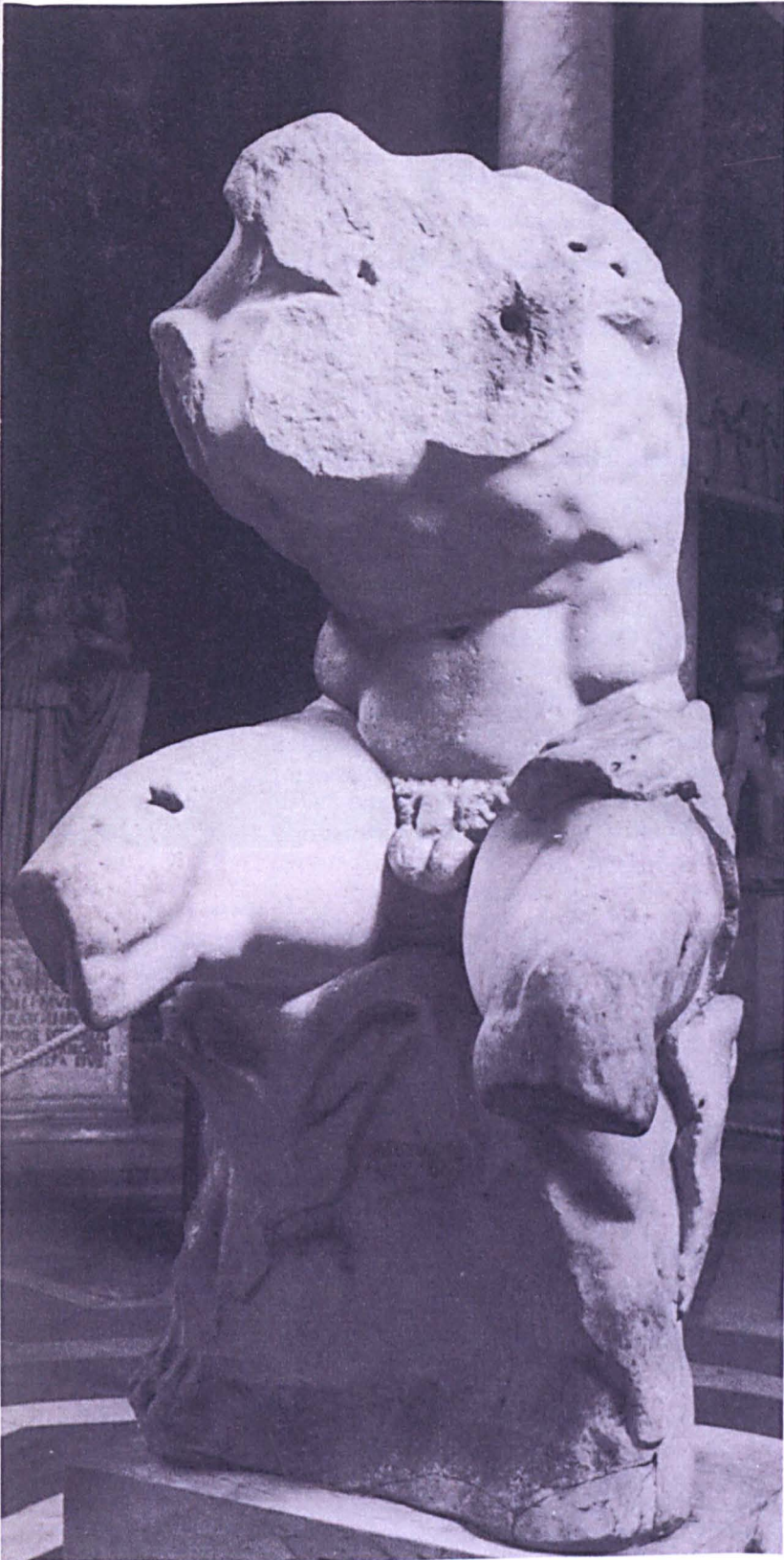
**John Bacon**  
**20. *Monument to George III*, 1789.**  
**Somerset House, London.**  
**(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



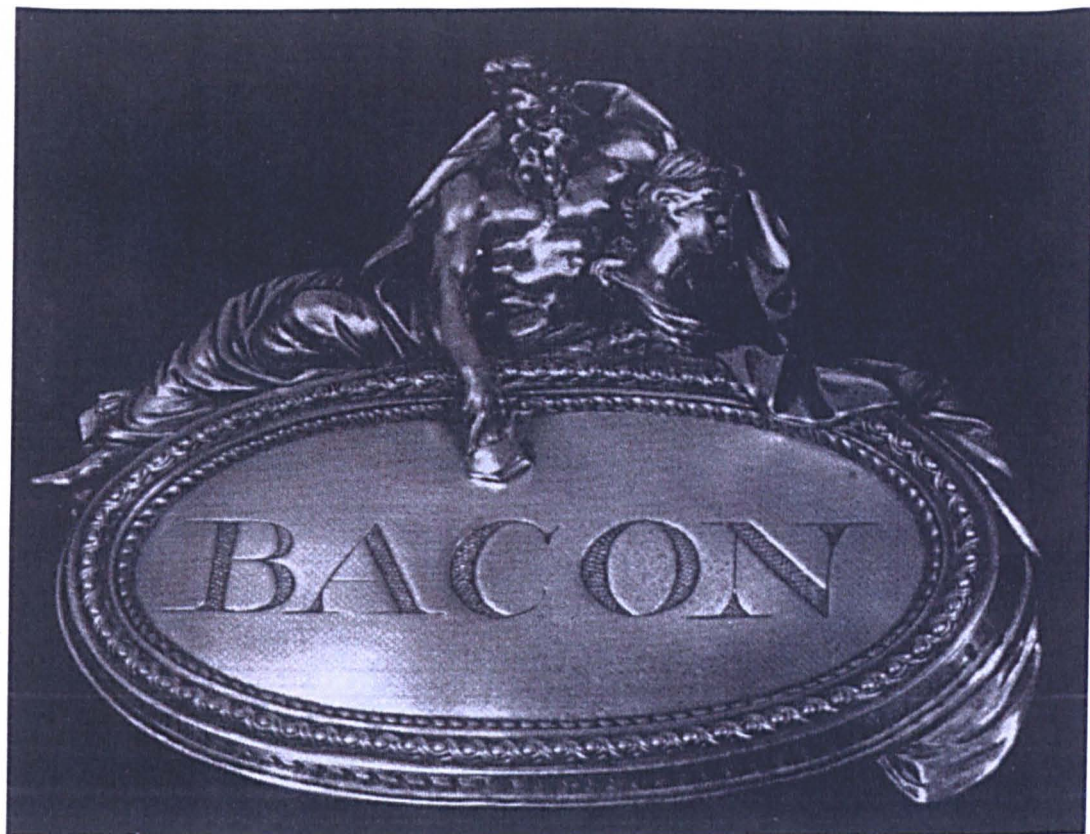
21. *Nile*.  
Vatican Museum, Rome.



22. *Tiber.*  
Louvre, Paris.



**23. *The Belvedere Torso.***  
**Vatican Museum, Rome**

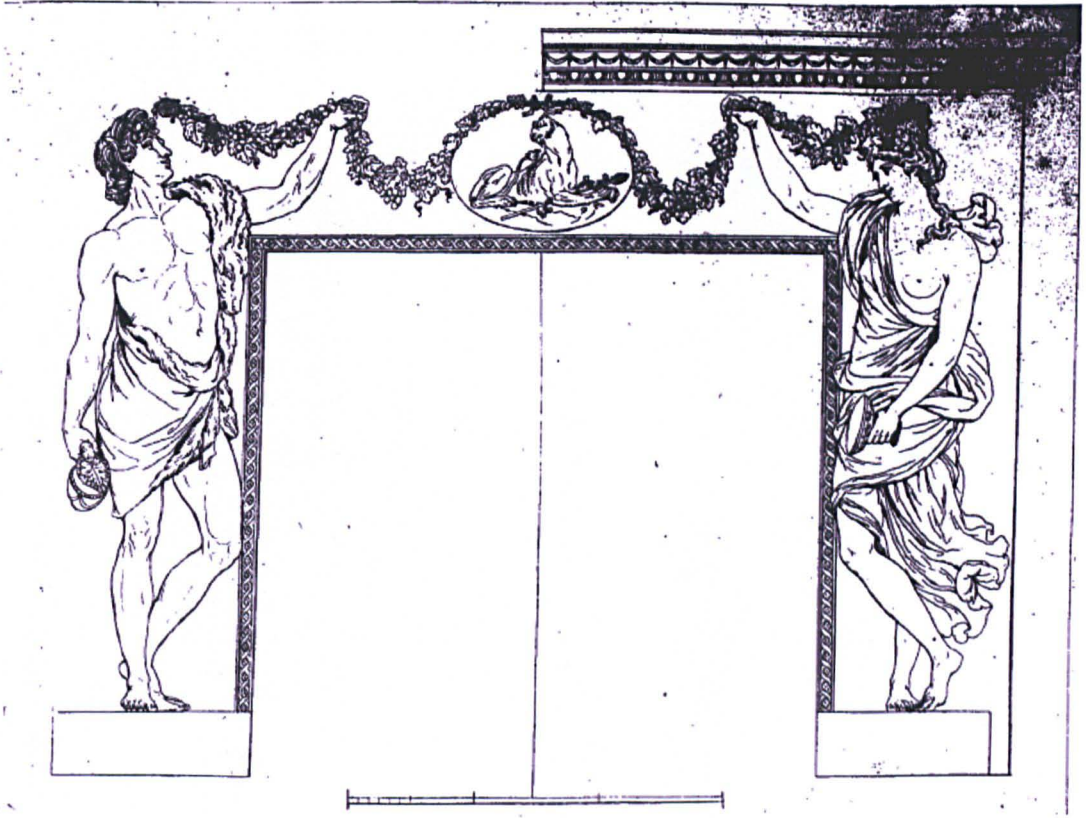


**John Bacon**  
**24. *Design for own door-plate, 1773, (19cm).***  
**Bacon Family Collection.**  
**(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



John Bacon  
25. Minerva, 1775.

From Coade's Artificial Stone Manufactory, *Etchings of Coade's Artificial Stone Manufactory  
Narrow Walk Lambeth near Westminster Bridge* (London 1779).



Coade Stone

26. *Chimney Piece*, c.1779.

From Coade's Artificial Stone Manufactory, *Etchings of Coade's Artificial Stone Manufactory  
Narrow Walk Lambeth near Westminster Bridge* (London, 1779).



**John Bacon**  
**27. Monument to Thomas Guy, 1779.**  
**Guy's Hospital, London.**  
**(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**





Peter Scheemakers  
28. *Statue of Thomas Guy*, 1734.  
Guy's Hospital, London.  
(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)



Peter Scheemakers  
29. *Statue of Thomas Guy, 1734, detail of pedestal,  
Christ healing the sick man at the pool of Bethesda.*  
Guy's Hospital, London.  
(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)



Peter Scheemakers  
30. *Statue to Thomas Guy*, 1734, detail of pedestal, *The Good Samaritan*.  
Guy's Hospital, London.  
(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)



**John Bacon**  
**31. *Charity, Madness and Sickness*, 1779.**  
**Guy's Hospital, London.**  
**(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



**John Bacon**  
**32. *Charity*, 1779, detail from pediment.**  
**Guy's Hospital, London.**  
**(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



**John Bacon**  
**33. *Madness*, 1779, detail of pediment.**  
**Guy's Hospital, London.**  
**(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



**Caius Gabriel Cibber**  
**34. *Raving Madness*, 1676.**  
**Guildhall, London.**  
**(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



Caius Gabriel Cibber  
35. *Melancholy Madness*, 1676.  
Guildhall, London.  
(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)





**William Hogarth**  
**36. *The Rake's Progress* (8), 1733-35.**  
**Sir John Soane's Museum, London.**



**John Bacon**  
**37. *Melancholy/Sickness*, 1779, detail of pediment.**  
**Guy's Hospital, London.**  
**(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



Caius Gabriel Cibber  
38. *Bas-relief from the Monument to the Great Fire of London, 1671-1677, London.*  
(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)



Caius Gabriel Cibber  
39. *Bas-relief from the Monument to the Great Fire of London, 1671-1677.*  
(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)



**John Bacon**  
**40. *Cherub holding a vase for the collection of blood, 1779.***  
**Guy's Hospital, London.**  
**(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



**John Bacon**  
**41. *Cherub with wreath*, 1799.**  
**Guy's Hospital, London.**  
**(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



**John Bacon**  
**42. *Cherub with instrument for bloodletting*, 1799.**  
**Guy's Hospital, London.**  
**(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



**John Bacon**  
**43. *Aesculapius*, 1779.**  
**Guy's Hospital, London.**  
**(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**





**John Bacon**  
**44. *Hygeia*, 1779.**  
**Guy's Hospital London.**  
**(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



**John Bacon**  
45. *Monument to Thomas Guy, 1779*, detail of hospital façade.  
Guy's Hospital, London.  
(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)



**John Bacon**  
**46. *Monument to Thomas Guy*, 1779, detail of Thomas Guy.**  
**Guy's Hospital, London.**  
**(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



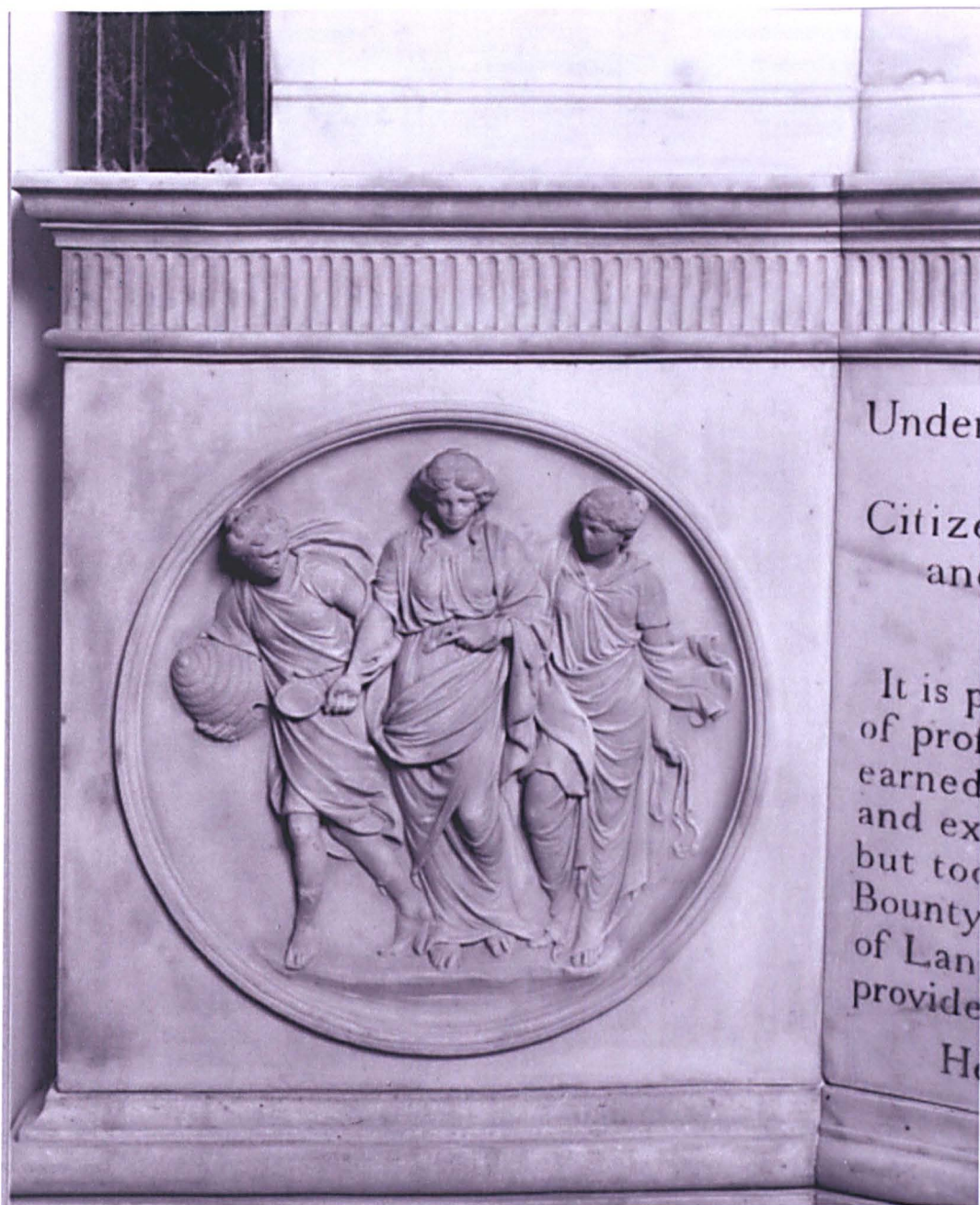
**John Bacon**  
**47. *Monument to Thomas Guy*, 1779, detail of forecourt.**  
**Guy's Hospital, London.**  
**(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



**John Bacon**  
48. *Monument to Thomas Guy*, 1779, detail of Lazarus.  
Guy's Hospital, London.  
(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)



Bonifacio Veronese  
49. *Dives and Lazarus*, c.1540.  
Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice.



**John Bacon**  
**50. *Monument to Thomas Guy*, 1779, detail of Industry, Prudence and Temperance.**  
**Guy's Hospital, London.**  
**(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**

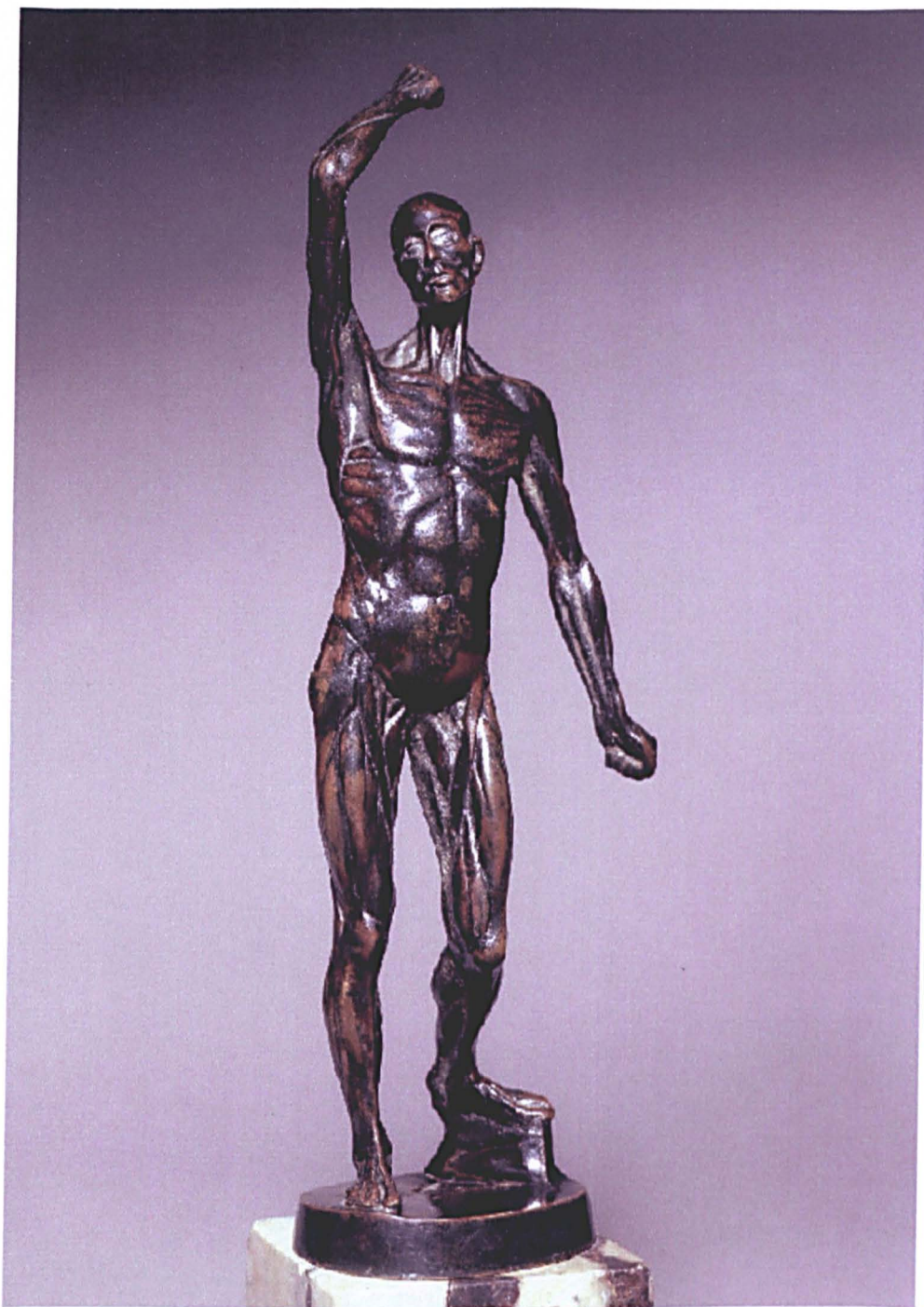


John Bacon  
51. *Monument to Thomas Guy*, 1779, detail of Charity.  
Guy's Hospital, London.  
(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)



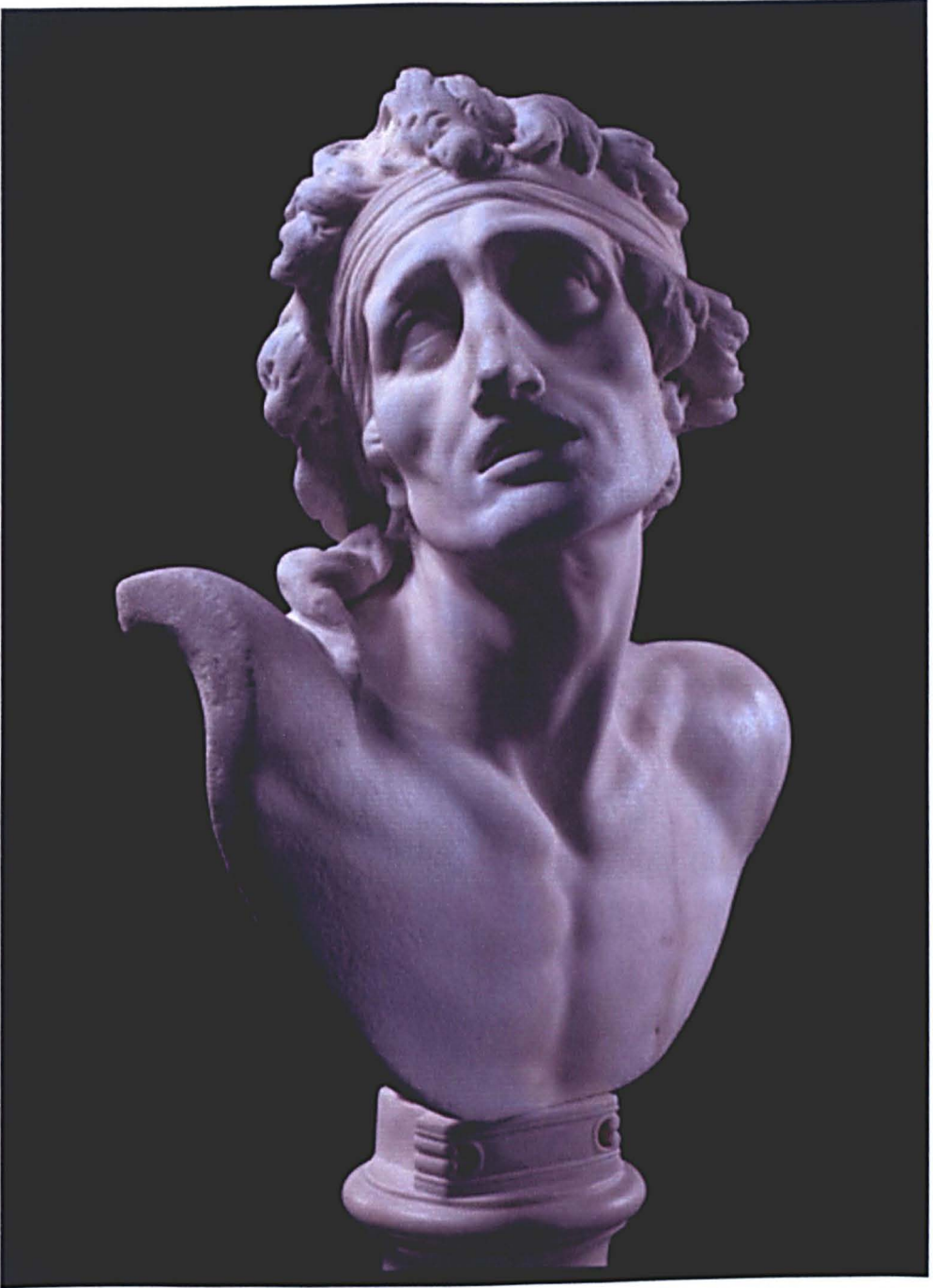


52. *The Dying Alexander.*  
Uffizi, Florence.

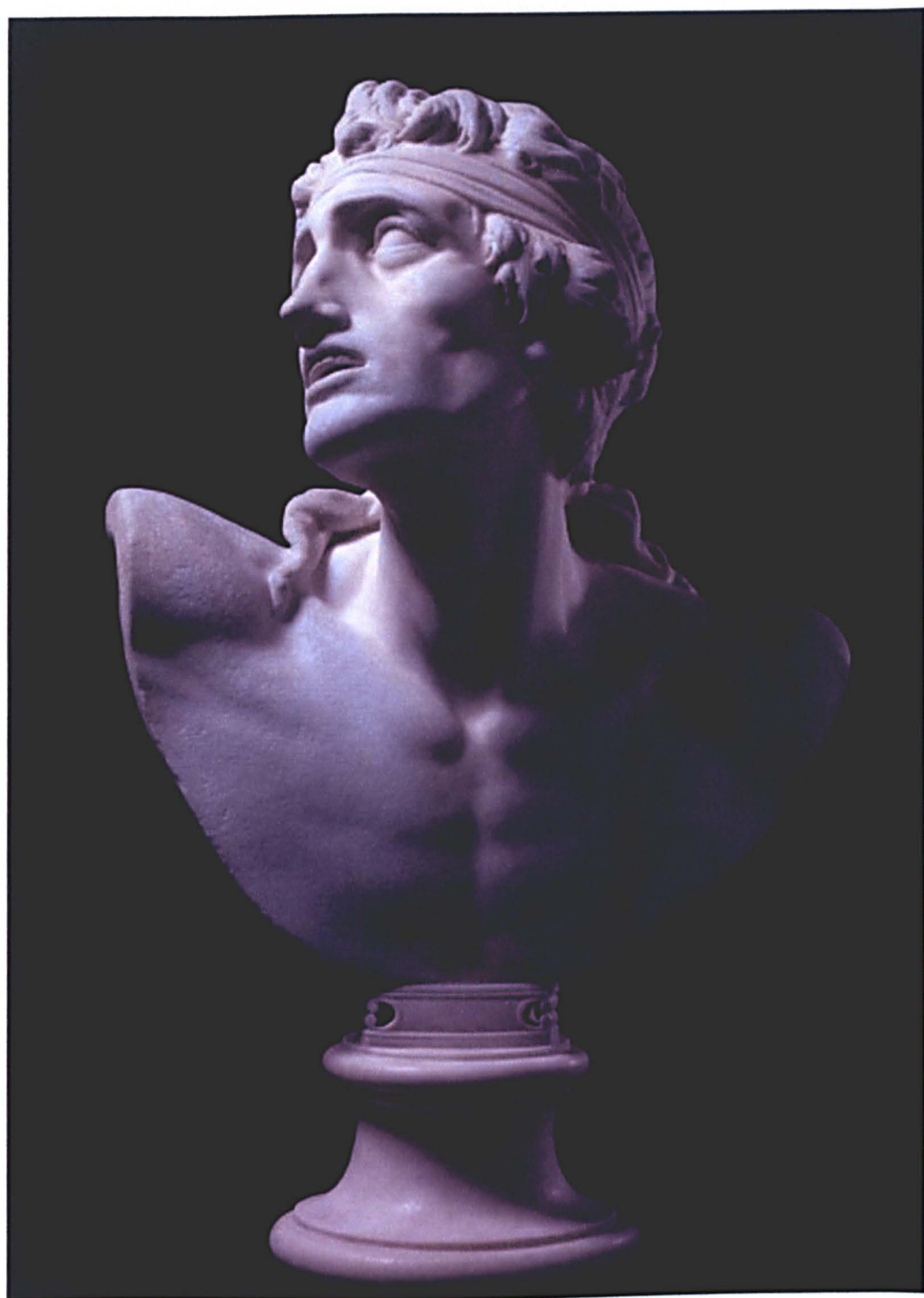


Michael Henry Spang  
53. *Ecorche*, 1761.

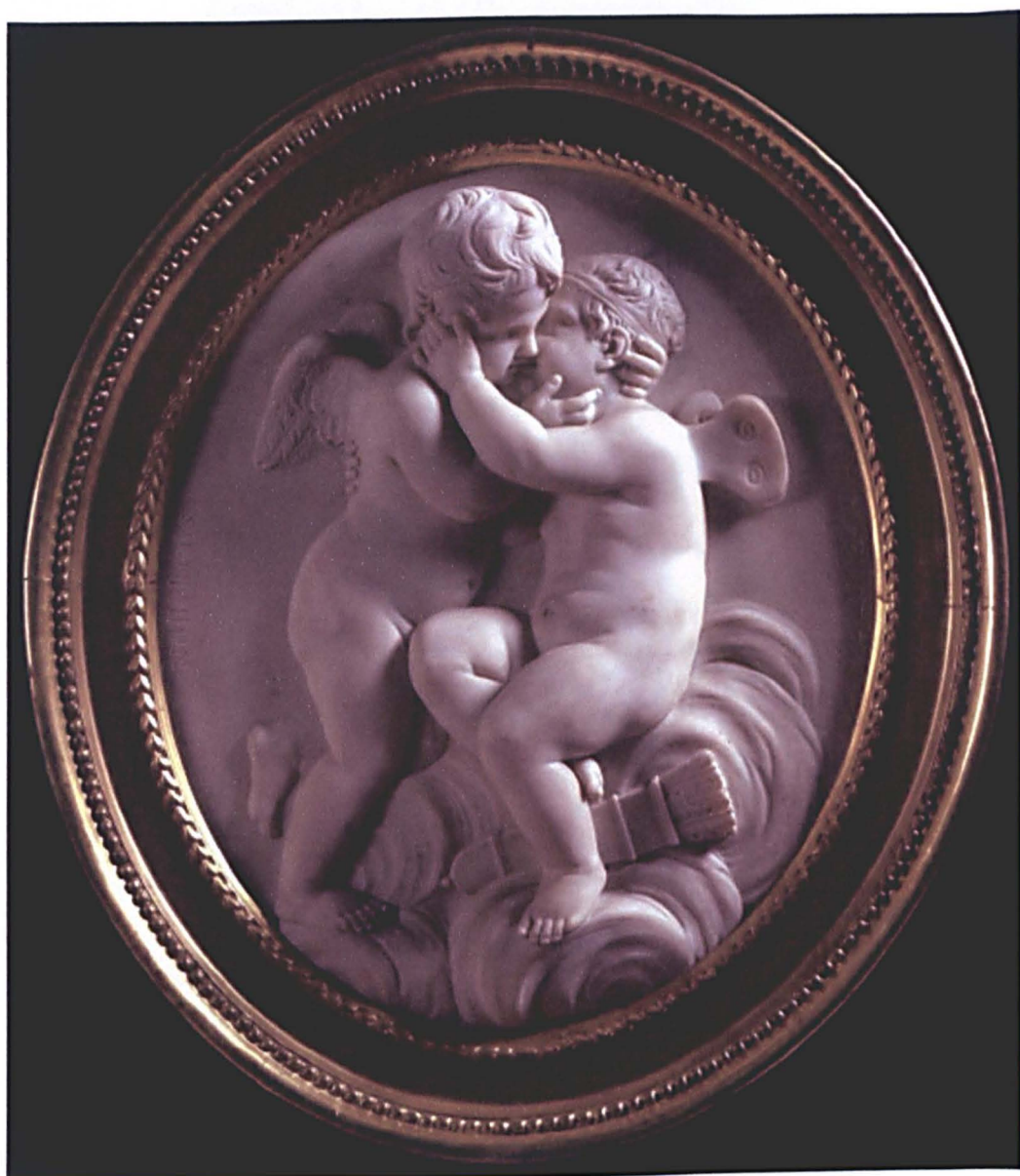
Bronze statuette after William Hunter's c.1750 plaster *Ecorche*.  
Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, Glasgow.



**John Bacon**  
**54. *Sickness*, 1778.**  
**Royal Academy of Arts, London.**



**John Bacon**  
55. *Sickness*, 1778, side view.  
Royal Academy, London.



Joseph Nollekens  
56. *Cupid and Psyche*, 1773.  
Royal Academy, London.



57. *Medici Cupid and Psyche*.  
Capitoline Museum, Rome.



**John Bacon**  
**58. Monument to the Earl of Chatham, 1782.**  
**Guildhall, London .**  
**(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



**John Bacon**  
**59. Monument to the Earl of Chatham, 1784.**  
**Westminster Abbey, London.**





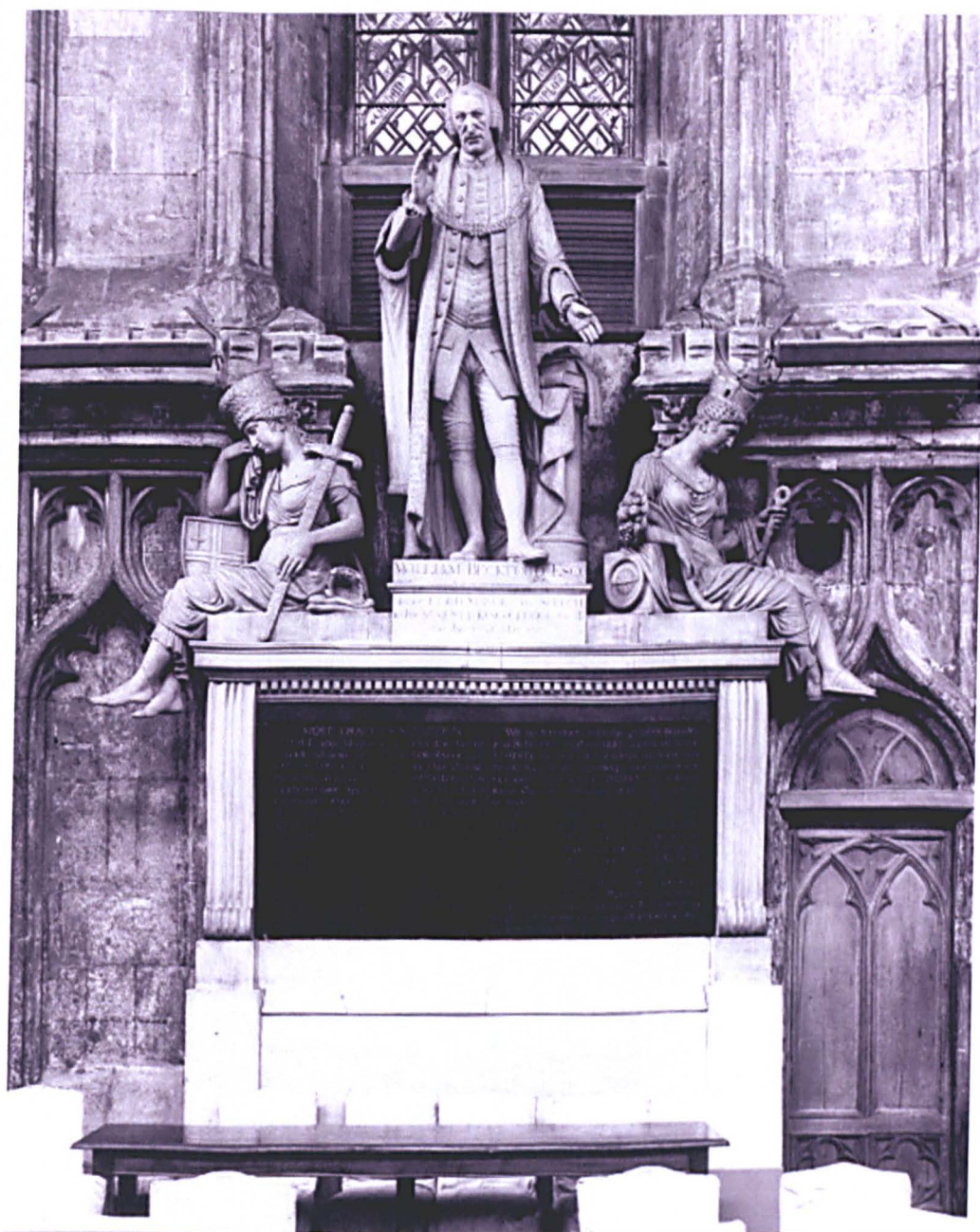
**John Bacon**  
**60. *Bust of George III, 1774.***  
**Windsor Castle, Berkshire.**



Joseph Wilton  
61. *Monument to General Wolfe*, 1771.  
Westminster Abbey, London.  
(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)



**Benjamin West**  
**62. *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770 (exhibited at the RA 1771).**  
**National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.**



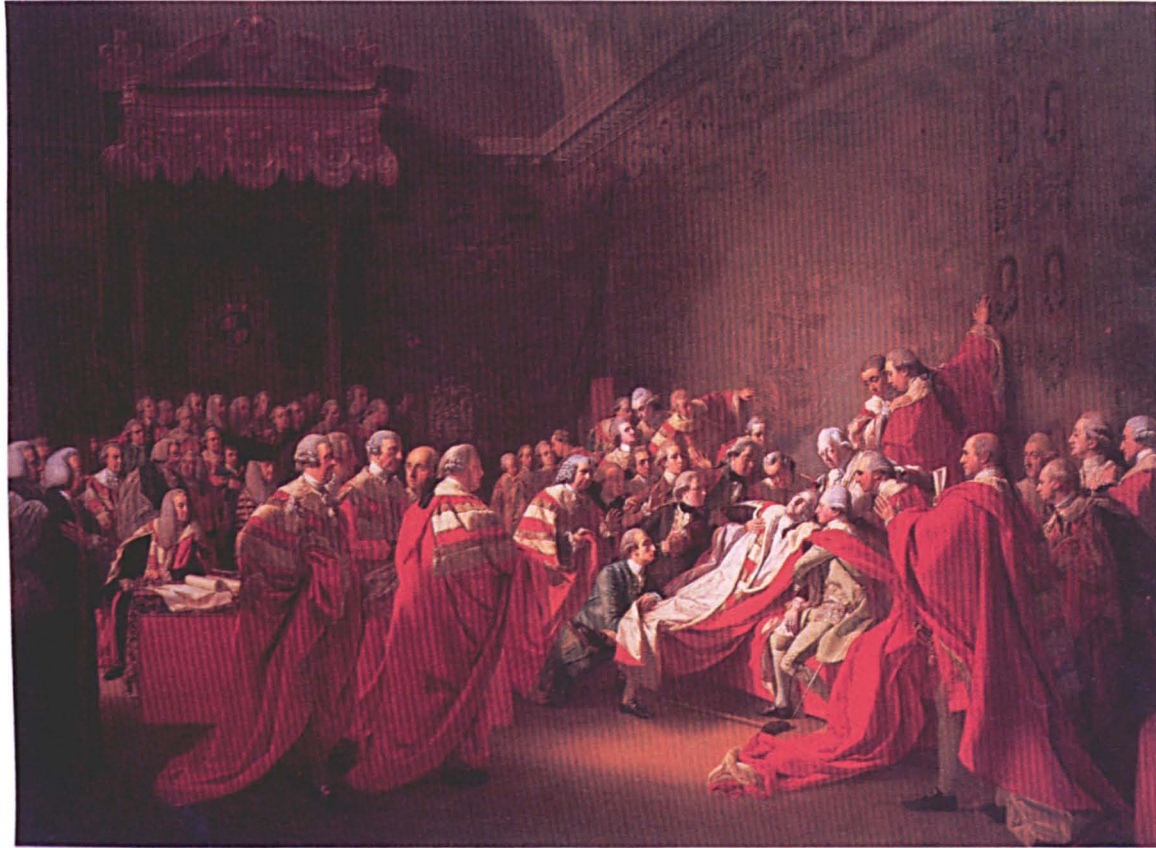
**John Francis Moore**  
**63. *Monument to William Beckford*, 1772.**  
**Guildhall, London.**  
**(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



EARL of CHATHAM'S MONUMENT,  
GUILDHALL, LONDON.

Published as the Act directs, by Harrison & Co. Nov. 1, 1782.

64. Engraving of the Monument to the Earl Chatham, 1782.  
From *The British Magazine and Review: or Universal Miscellany of Arts, Sciences...*, 3 vols.  
(London 1782-83), I, 252.



**John Singleton Copley**  
**65. *The Death of the Earl of Chatham, 1781.***  
**National Portrait Gallery, London.**



**John Bacon**  
**66. *Monument to the Earl of Chatham*, 1782, view from right side.**  
**Guildhall, London.**

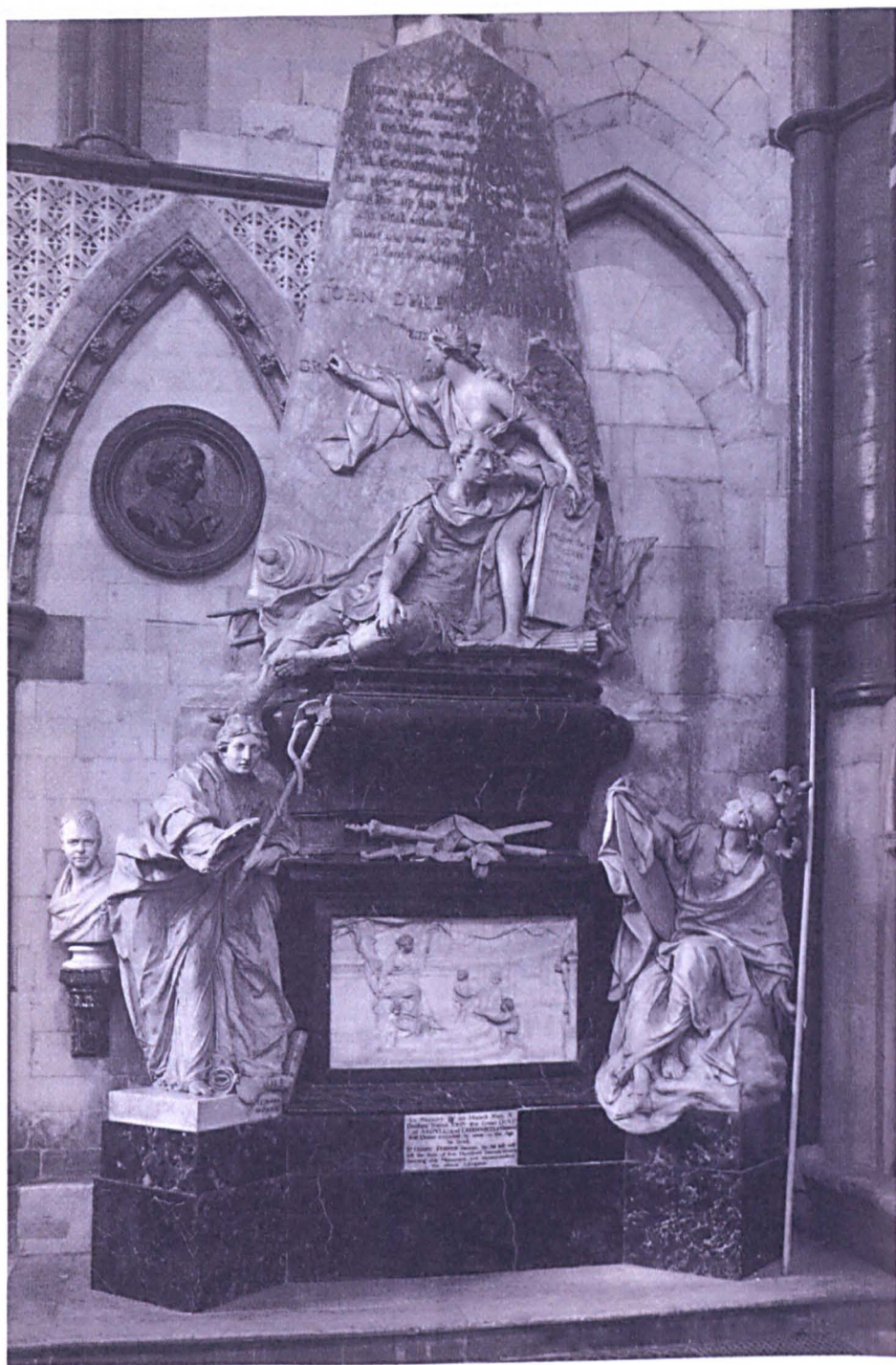


John Bacon

67. *Monument to the Earl of Chatham*, 1784, detail of the Earl of Chatham.  
Westminster Abbey, London.

(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)

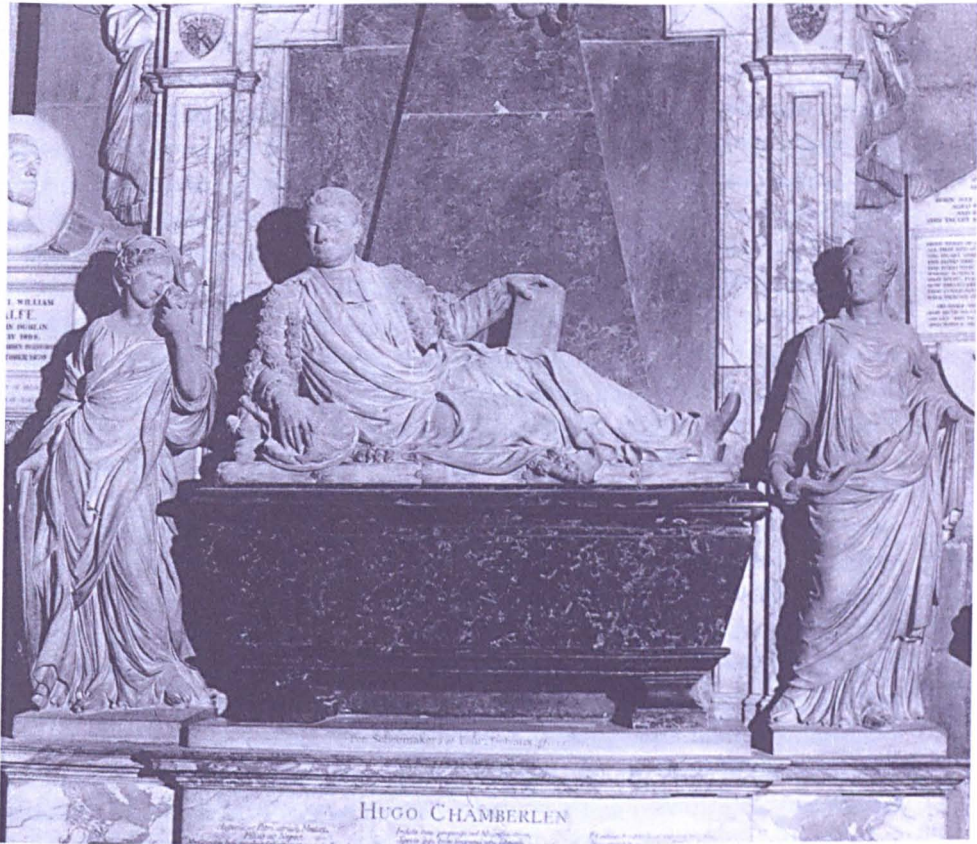




Louis Francois Roubiliac  
68. *Monument to the Duke of Argyll*, 1749.  
Westminster Abbey, London.



**Louis Francois Roubiliac**  
**69. *Monument to the Duke of Argyll*, 1749, detail of Eloquence.**  
**Westminster Abbey, London.**



**Peter Scheemakers**  
**70. Monument to Hugo Chamberlain, 1731.**  
**Westminster Abbey, London.**



G. Yates  
71. *Statue of Edward VI in St Thomas' Hospital, Southwark, 1825.*  
Guildhall Library and Print Room,  
Manning and Bray Collection,  
p540912x.



72. *Niobe.*  
Uffizi, Florence.



John Bacon  
73. *Monument to Thomas Langton-Freke*, 1769.  
Kings Sutton, Northamptonshire.  
(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)



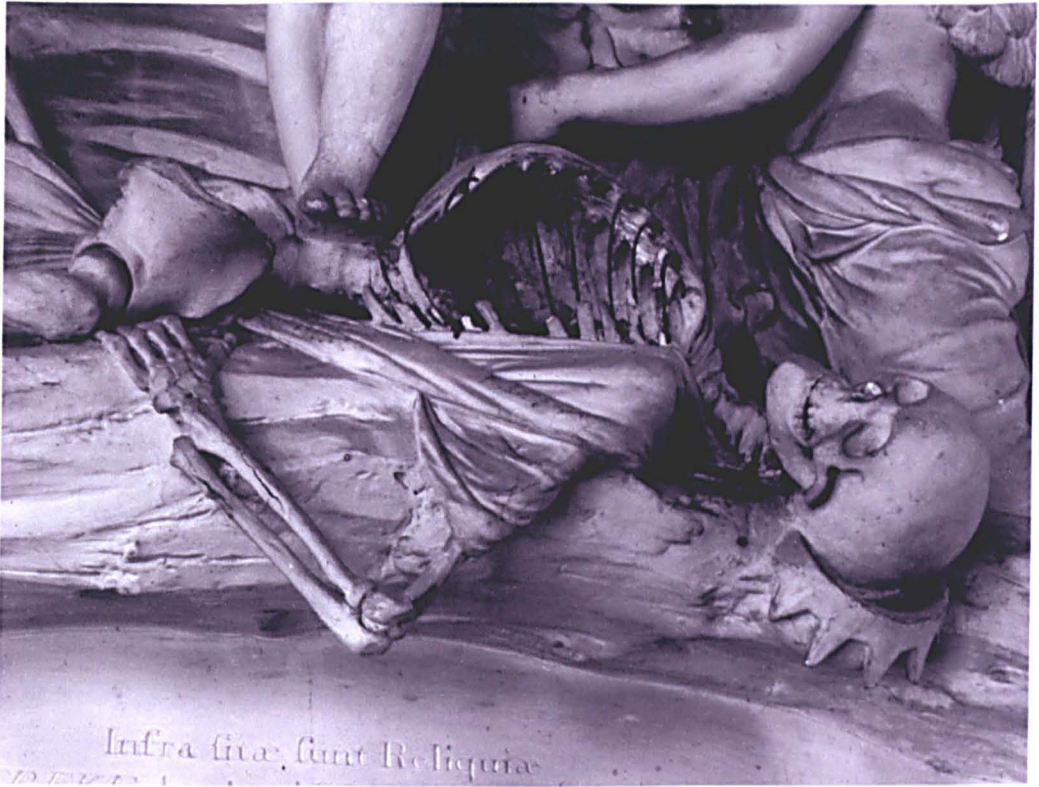
**John Bacon**  
**74. *Monument to Thomas Langton-Freke*, 1769, detail.**  
**Kings Sutton, Northamptonshire.**  
**(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



**Louis Francois Roubiliac**  
**75. Monument to General Hargrave, 1757.**  
**Westminster Abbey, London.**



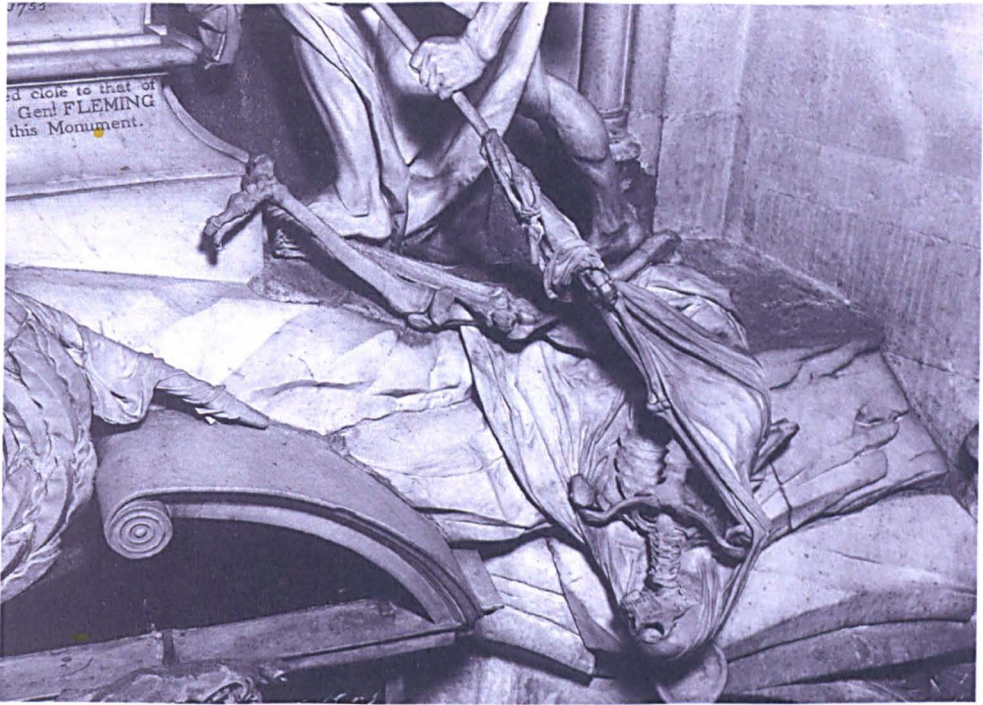




**John Bacon**

**77. Monument to Thomas Langton-Freke, 1769, detail of Death.  
Kings Sutton, Northamptonshire.**

**(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



**Louis Francois Roubiliac**  
**78. Monument to General Hargrave, 1757, detail of Death.**  
**Westminster Abbey, London**



**John Bacon**

**79. *Monument to Thomas Langton-Freke*, c.1769, sketch for monument.  
Private Collection.**

**(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



**John Bacon**  
**80. Monument to Lord Tracton, 1782.**  
**St. Nicholas' Church, Cork.**  
**(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



**John Bacon**  
**81. *Monument to Lord Tracton*, 1782.**  
**St. Nicholas' Church, Cork.**  
**(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



**John Bacon**  
**82. *Monument to Lord Tracton*, 1782, detail of roundel.**  
**St. Nicholas' Church, Cork.**  
**(Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



**Louis Francois Roubiliac**  
**83. *Monument to Joseph and Elizabeth Nightingale*, 1761.**  
**Westminster Abbey, London.**





In the Memory of MATTHEW RIDLEY Esq<sup>r</sup> of *Blagdon and Hutton* in the County of *Northumberland*.  
 Senior Alderman of the Corporation of this Town, and Governor of the Company of Merchant Adventurers.  
 He first served the Office of Mayor, in which Station in the Year 1745, he rendered essential Service to his Country  
 acting by his Prudence and Activity, the Attack meditated against this Town by the Enemies of the House of *Stuart*,  
 and thereby materially checking the Progress of their Arms. He was unanimously elected by his Fellow Burgesses, to  
 represent them in two successive Parliaments. And retired from the Situation when the declining State of his Health  
 rendered him incapable of conscientiously fulfilling the Duties of it.  
 He died afflicted and beloved, He died unfortunately on April 6<sup>th</sup> 1778, Aged 66 Years.

**John Bacon**  
**84. Monument to Matthew Ridley, 1787.**  
**Newcastle Cathedral, Newcastle.**  
 (Photo:Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)



**John Bacon**

**85. *Monument to Matthew Ridley*, 1787, detail of roundel.  
Newcastle Cathedral, Newcastle.**

**(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



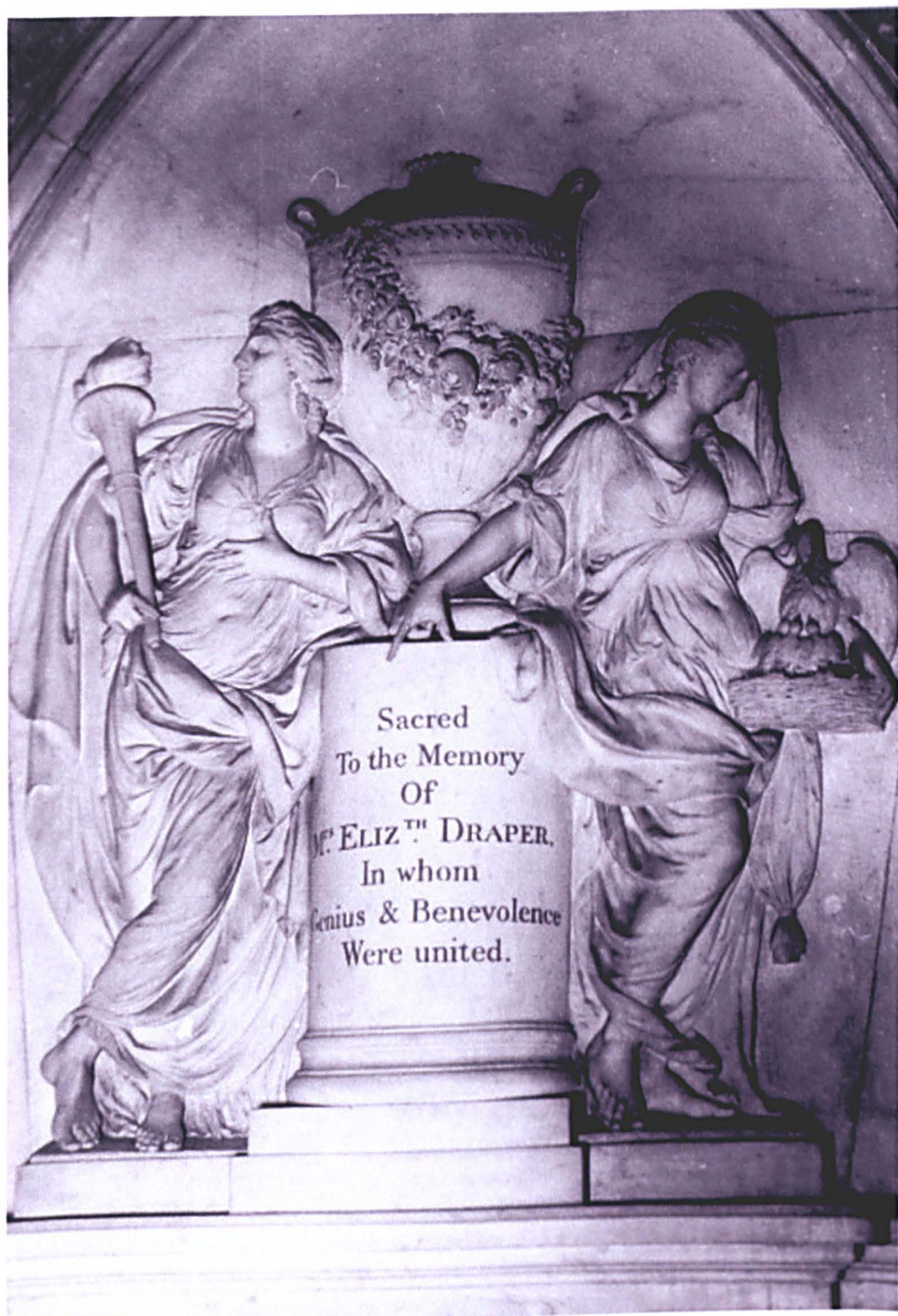
**John Bacon**  
**86. Monument to William Mason, 1799.**  
**Westminster Abbey, London.**

FRONTISPIECE.



*We read their monuments; we sigh, and while  
We sigh we sink, and are what we deplore;  
Lamenting or lamented all our lot.* Sight thought

Ed. as the 1st direct. 16. May 1723.



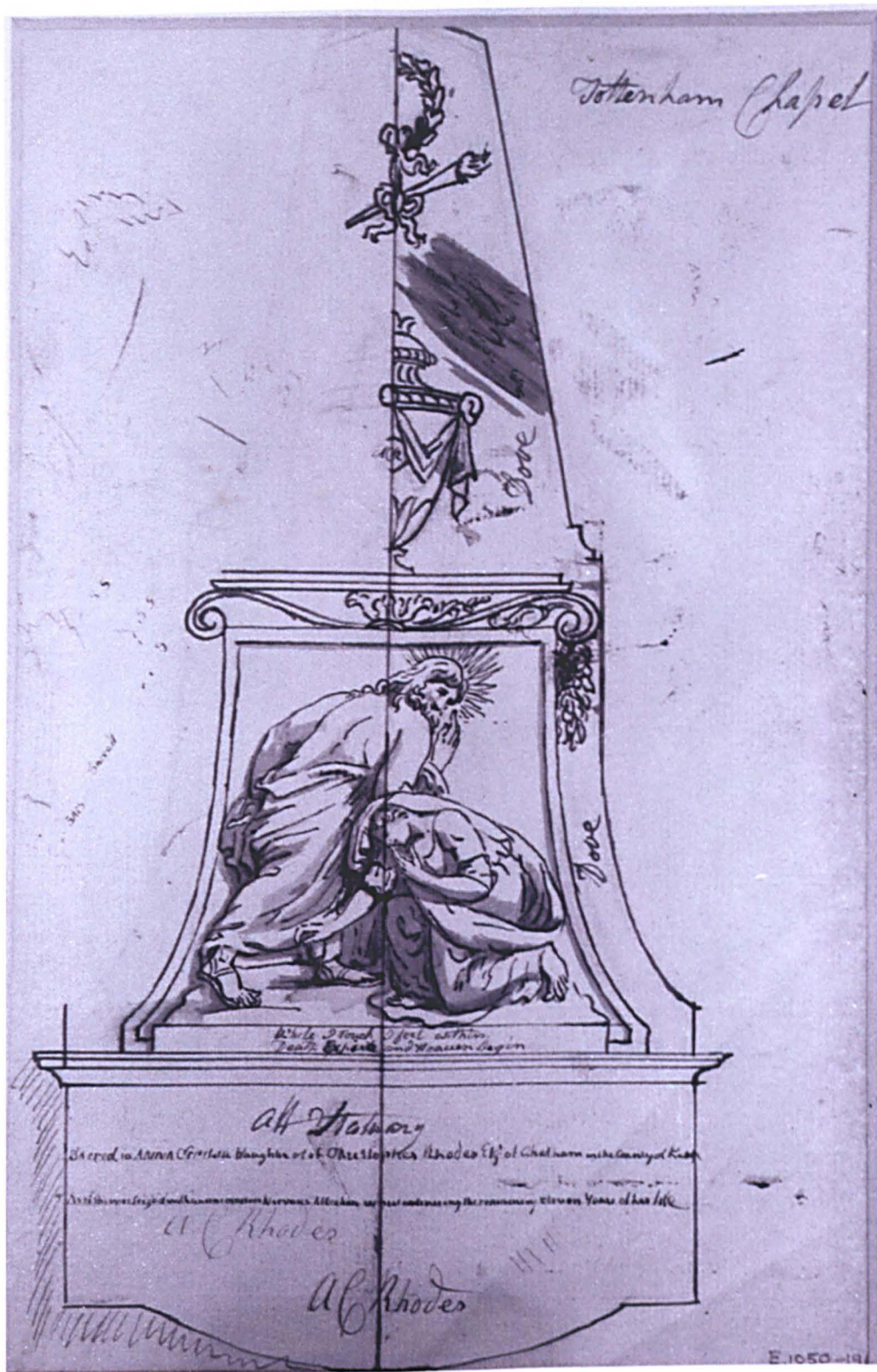
**John Bacon**  
88. *Monument to Elizabeth Draper, 1780.*  
Bristol Cathedral.  
(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)



*Monument in Widworthy Church, Devonshire.*

L. Feltham

89. Monument to James Marwood in Widworthy Church, Devonshire, by John Bacon, 1791.  
From *The Gentleman's Magazine* (July 1791) p.609.



John Bacon

90. Design for a monument to Anna Cecilia Rhodes, c.1796.

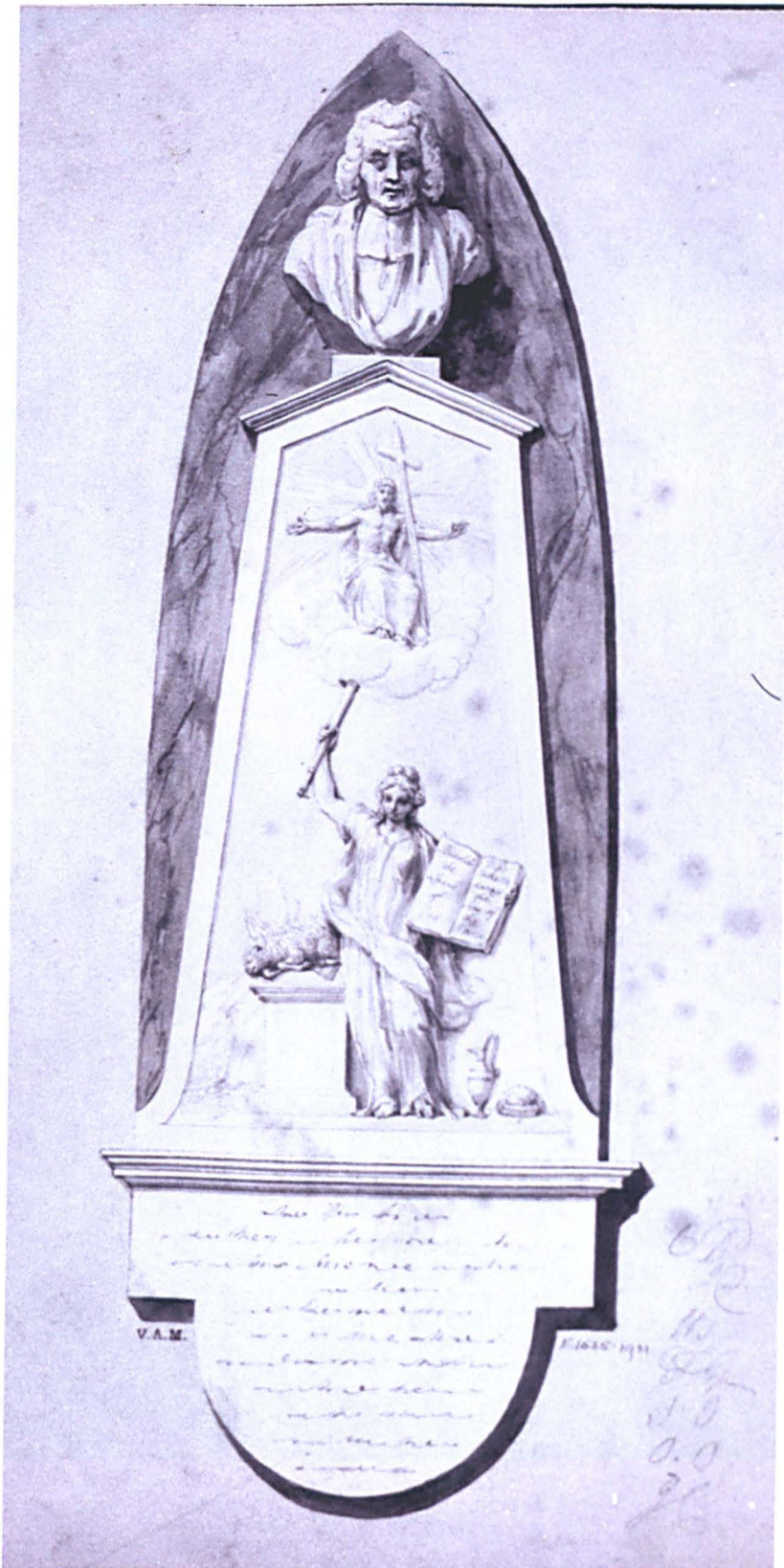
Victorian and Albert Museum Print Collection, London. (E.1050-1966)



William Steelton

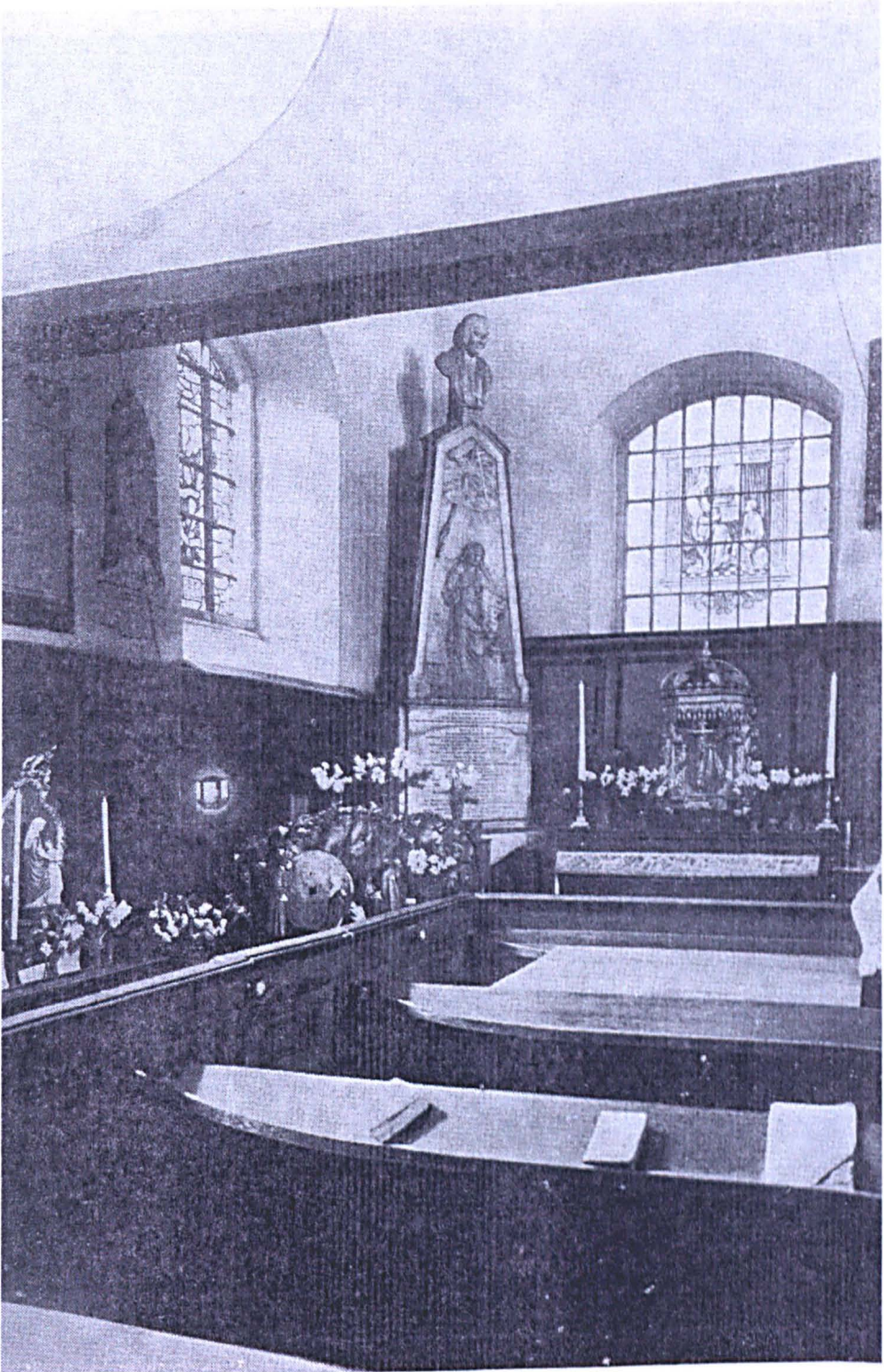
91. Monument of the late Rev William Romaine, by John Bacon RA, 1797. Engraved for *The Gospel Magazine and Theological Review* (April 1797) no.xvi p.165.





John Bacon

92. Design for a Monument to the Rev William Romaine, c.1795.  
Victoria & Albert Museum Print Collection, London. (E.1535-1931)



**John Bacon**  
**93. *Monument to Rev William Romaine, 1795.***  
**St. Ann's Blackfriars, London.**  
**(Photo: from archive collection at St Ann's Blackfriars)**



**John Bacon**  
**94. Monument to Catherine Willet, 1799.**  
**Great Cranford, Dorset.**  
**(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



**John Bacon**  
**95. Monument to Samuel Thomas, c.1799.**  
**Tregolls, Cornwall.**  
**(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



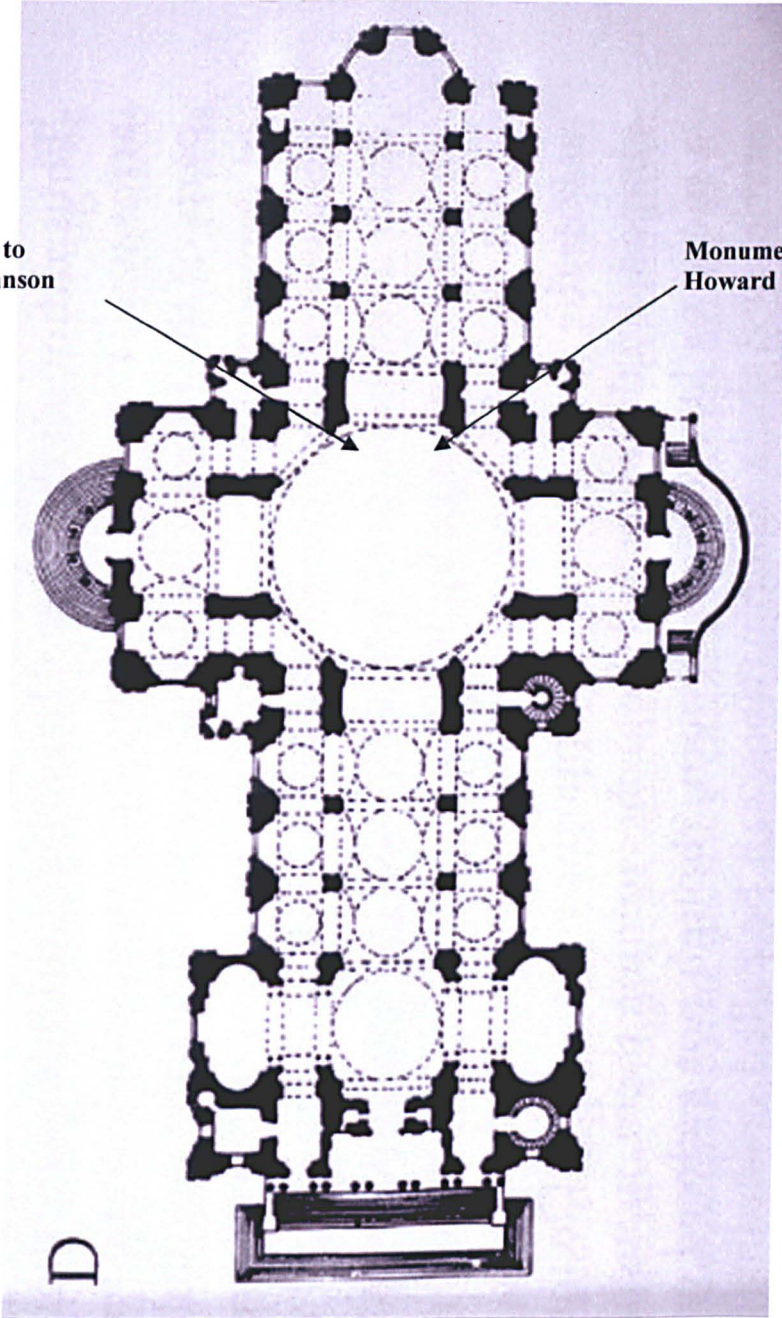
**John Bacon**  
**96. *Monument to John Howard*, 1796.**  
**St. Paul's Cathedral, London.**  
**(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



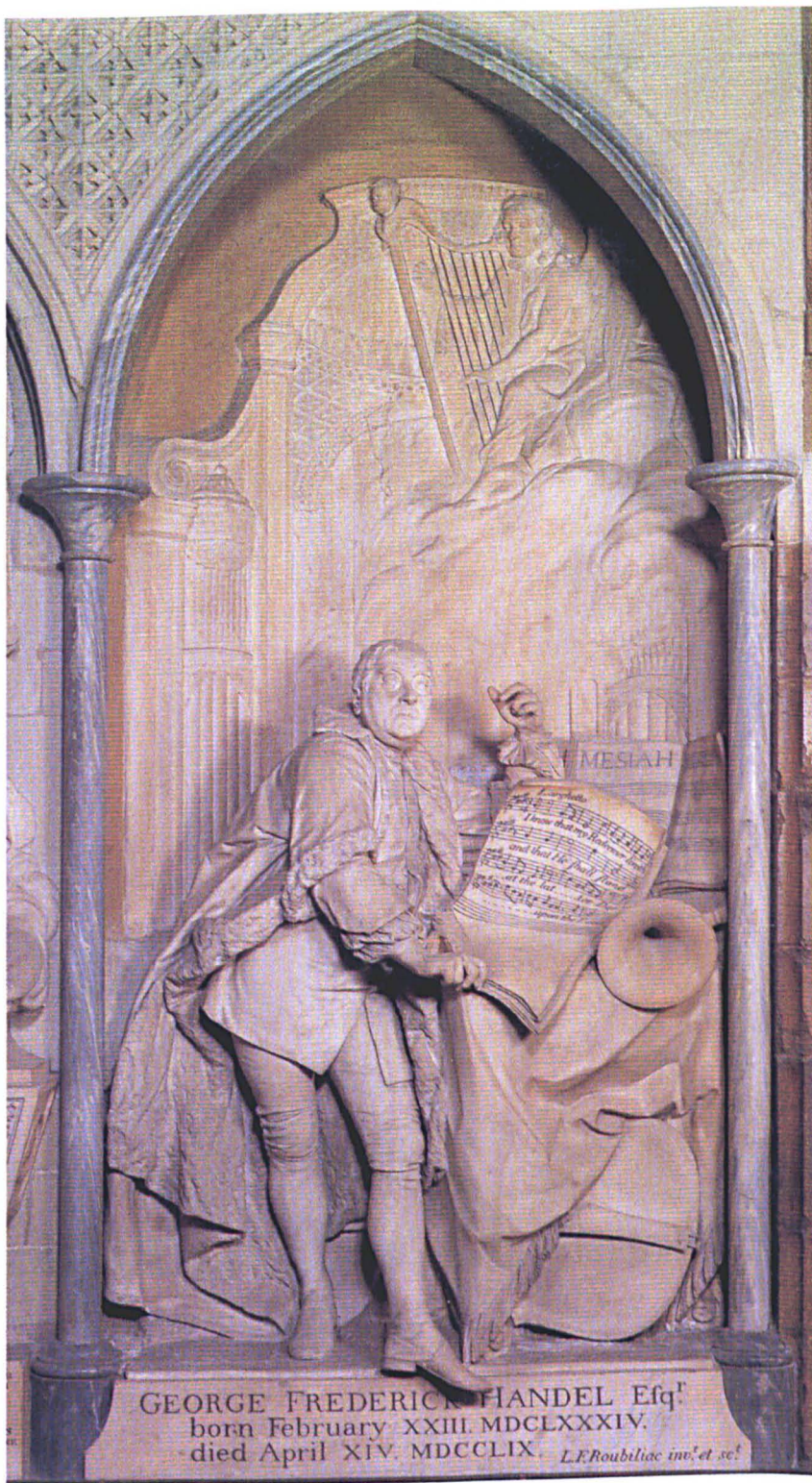
**John Bacon**  
**97. *Monument to Samuel Johnson*, 1796.**  
**St. Paul's Cathedral, London.**  
**(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**

Monument to Samuel Johnson

Monument to John Howard



98. Ground plan of St Paul's Cathedral, showing the locations of the Howard and Johnson monuments.



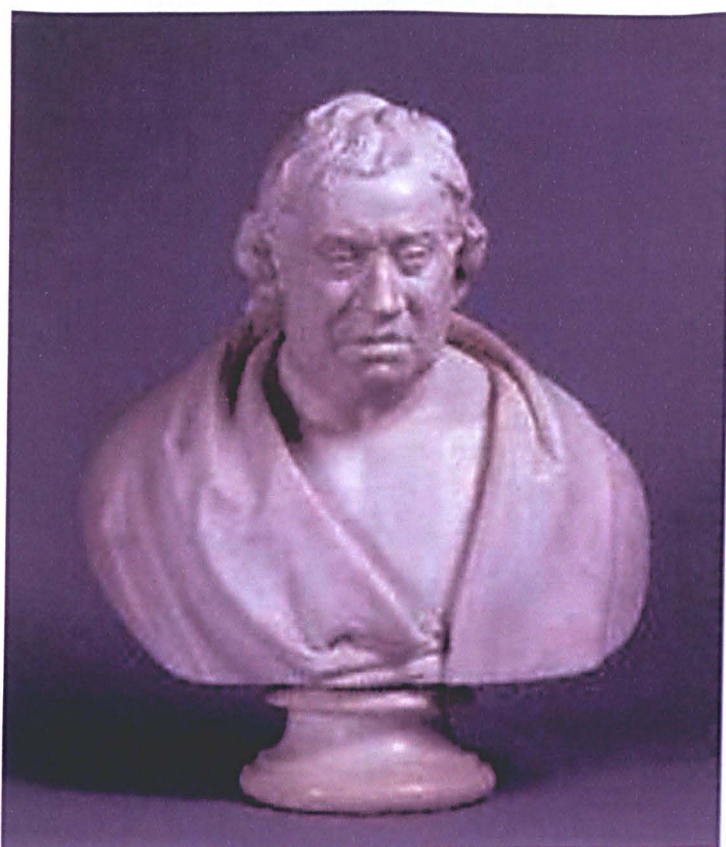
GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL Esq<sup>r</sup>  
born February XXIII. MDCLXXXIV.  
died April XIV. MDCCLXIX. *L.F. Roubiliac inv. et scul.*

**Louis Francois Roubiliac**  
99. *Monument to Handel*, 1761.  
Westminster Abbey, London.

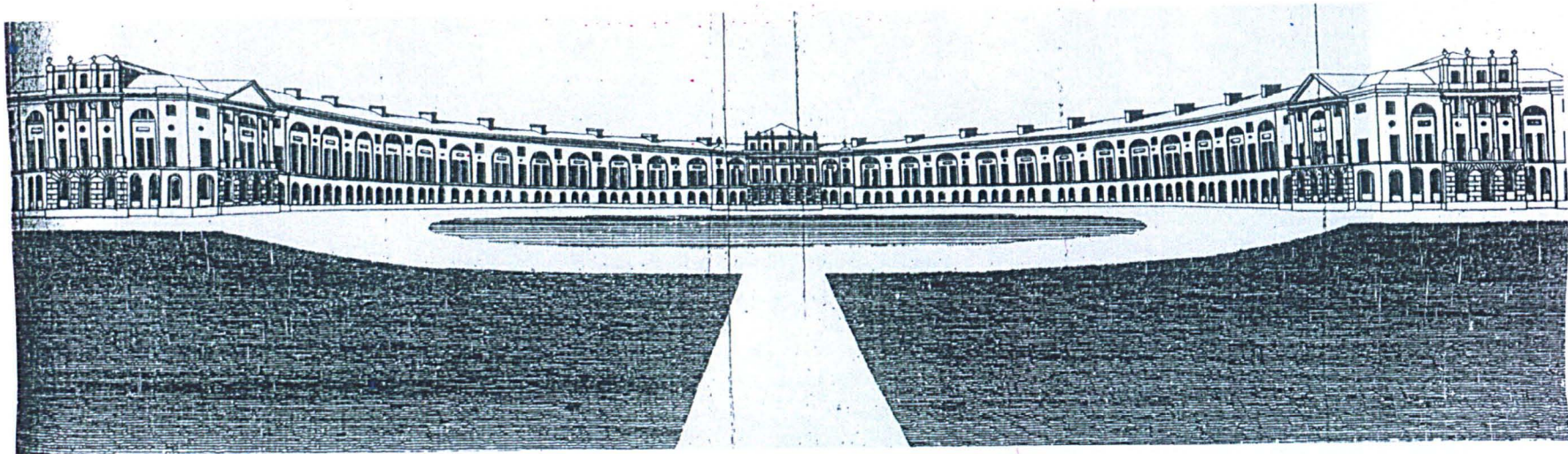




**Joshua Reynolds**  
**100. *Dr Johnson*, 1772-78.**  
**Tate Britain, London.**



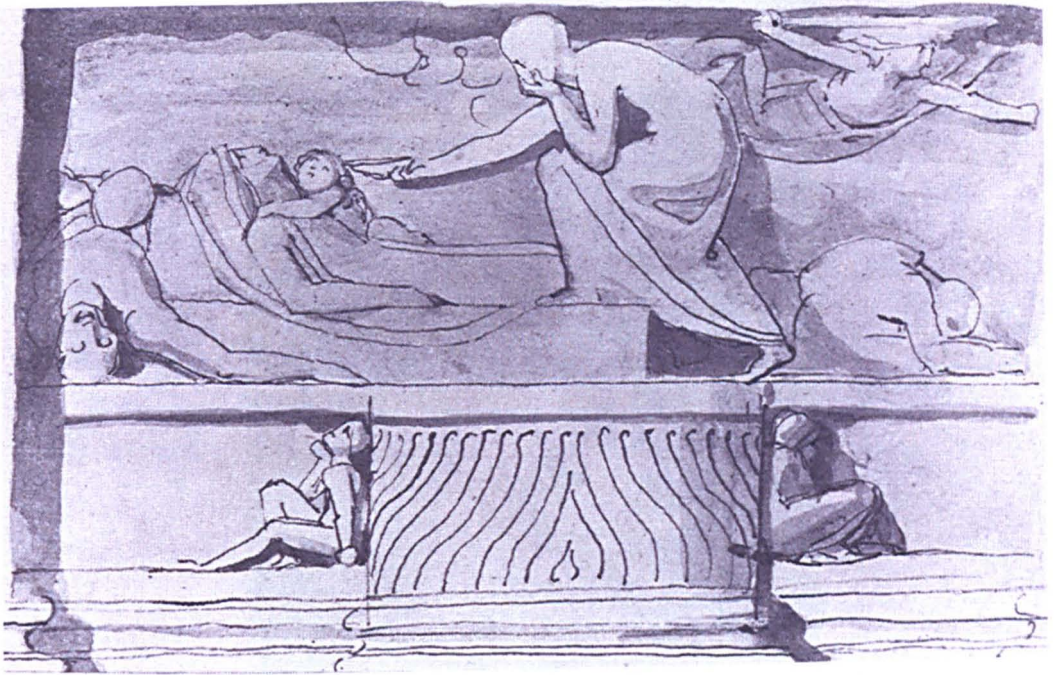
**Edward Hodges Baily after Joseph Nollekens  
101. *Bust of Dr Johnson*, 1777.  
National Portrait Gallery, on display at Beningbrough Hall, York.**



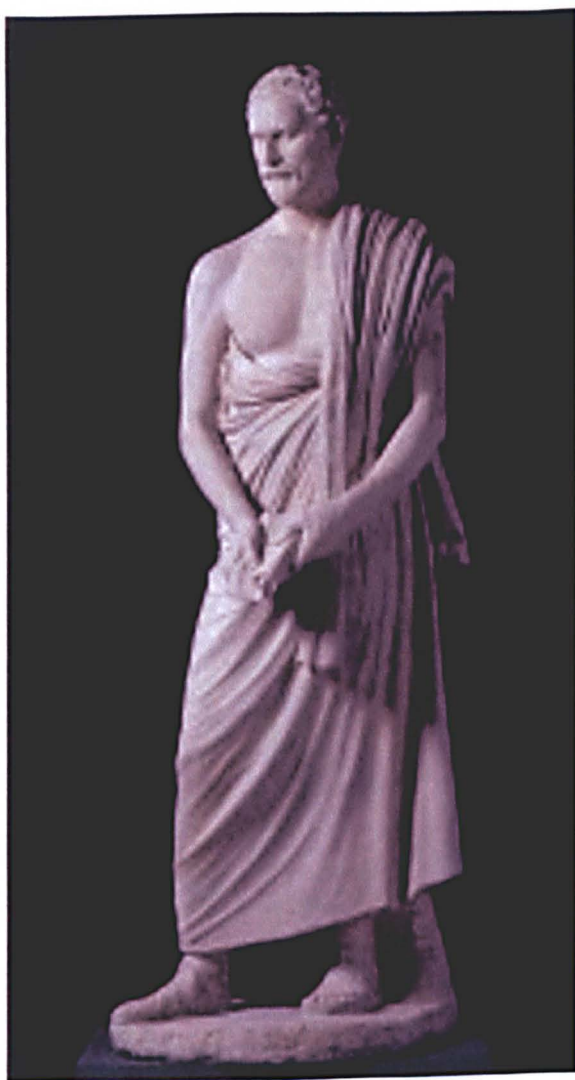
George Dance  
102. *The Howardian Crescent*, 1786.  
*The Gentleman's Magazine* (August, 1786), p.628.



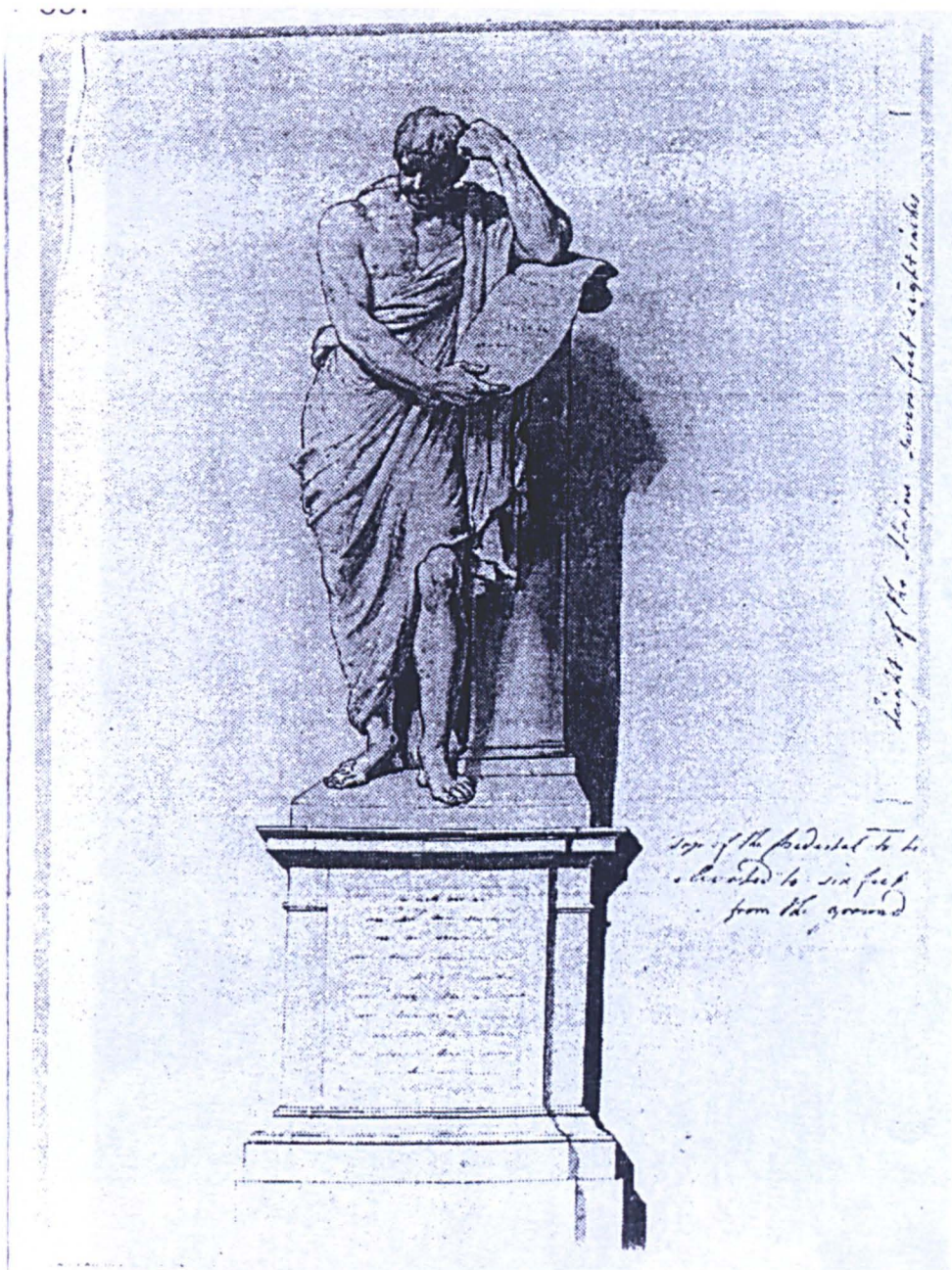
Francis Wheatley  
103. *Mr Howard Offering Relief to Prisoners*, 1788.  
Earl of Harrowby, Sandon, Staffs.



**John Flaxman**  
**104. Study for a Proposed Monument to John Howard, c.1786.**  
**Hamburg, Kunsthalle.**



105. *Demosthenes.*  
Royal Academy, London



Height of the Statue seven feet eight inches

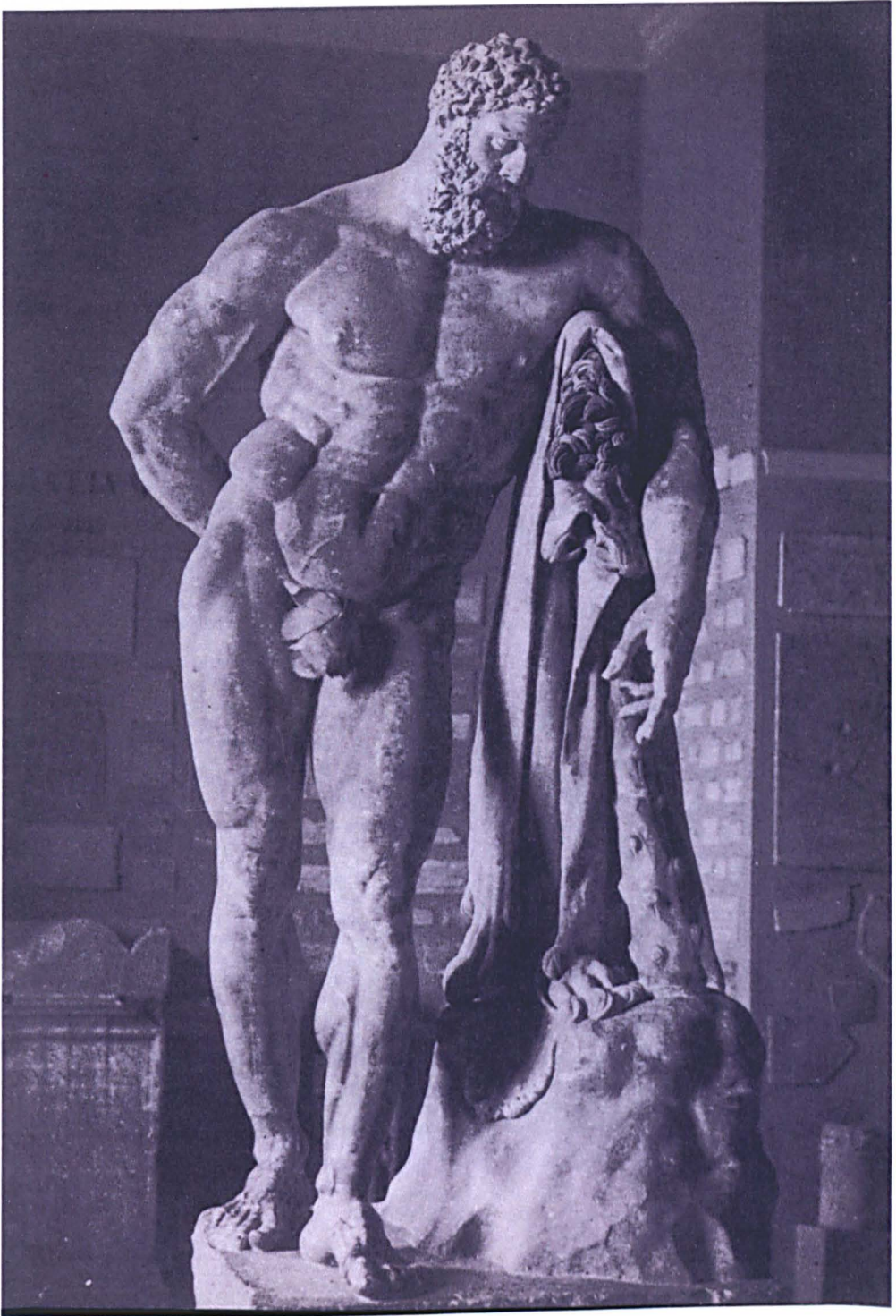
Top of the pedestal to be elevated to six feet from the ground

John Bacon  
106. Sketch for Johnson Monument.  
Ashmolean Museum, Cambridge.



**John Bacon**  
**107. *Bust of Samuel Johnson*, 1796.**  
**Pembroke College Library, Oxford.**  
**(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**





108. *Farnese Hercules.*  
Museo Nazionale, Naples.



**John Bacon**

**109. *Preparatory Study for the Statue of Samuel Johnson in St Paul's Cathedral, London,***  
**c.1789.**

**Private Collection.**

**(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



Simon Gribelin, after Paolo de Matteis  
110. *The Judgement of Hercules*, 1714.  
From Shaftesbury's *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*  
(London, 1714), III.



**John Bacon**  
**111. *Monument to John Howard*, 1796, detail of pedestal.**  
**St. Paul's Cathedral, London.**  
**(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



George Romney  
112. *Howard visiting a lazaretto*, c.1790.  
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



John Bacon  
113. *Monument to John Howard*, 1796, detail.  
St. Paul's Cathedral, London.  
(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)



**John Bacon**  
**114. *Monument to Samuel Johnson*, 1796, detail of Johnson.**  
**St. Paul's Cathedral, London.**  
**(Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)**



Henry Singleton

115. *The Royal Academicians in the General Assembly 1795, 1796.*  
Royal Academy, London.





**Henry Singleton**

**116. *The Royal Academicians in the General Assembly 1795, 1796*, detail of John Bacon.  
Royal Academy, London.**