

**Geographies, Networks and Ambition: the Works of William
Goscombe John, 1888–1942**

Volume I of II

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Abstract

This PhD thesis expands sculptural debates on the imperial, geo-political and art historical relations of British New Sculpture at the turn of the twentieth century. In re-evaluating the works of the patriotic Welsh New Sculptor, William Goscombe John, in line with theories of the agency of his works, John's sculptures take us from London to Paris, Wales, India and the Congo. The circumnavigation of these works map national and international geographical boundaries to chart John's expanding networks of connections. Within this, John simultaneously confronted the thorny issues of the problems of sculptural form and the need to tactically make a space for himself and his work within the fiercely competitive sculptural world of the Royal Academy.

In re-centring John's career, this thesis' unique perspective considers how he not only consolidated his New Sculpture practice with national identity, the plurality of sculptural modernisms, and artist and artisan, but his roles at the National Museum of Wales in terms of collection building and the reception of Rodin. Through John, this thesis re-evaluates his contributions to cast new light on the roles of elite Royal Academicians, notions of national (Welsh) identity, and what it meant to be a son of Empire, within a cultural, geographical and professional networking framework.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Publications arising from the thesis:

Melanie Polledri, “Framing Networks: The Artist’s Studio”, *British Art Studies*, Issue 9. <https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-09/conversation/017>.

Melanie Polledri, ““Sacred stones guarded about with dragons”: Welsh national identity in William Goscombe John’s *Corn Hirlas* (1898)” in Claire Jones and Imogen Hart, eds., *Sculpture and the Decorative in Britain and Europe, 17th Century to Contemporary* (forthcoming under contract with Bloomsbury Academic Publishing).

Introduction

Framing Networks: John After Leighton, Gilbert, Whistler and Burne-Jones¹

Networking *The Elf*

In 1888, as William Goscombe John (1860–1952) was about to start the *Parting* (1890), the most important work of his fledgling career, the Welsh sculptor and Royal Academy (RA) student posed for a photograph (fig. 1). It shows the sitter, aged twenty-eight, in an undisclosed outdoor location poised between student and professional artist.² John knew he was creating a stir amongst his peers and those in authority; just two years later he would be recognised as “one of the most remarkable artists” at the RA.³ He established a long highly successful career, garnering esteem and international recognition. Yet, despite such lofty aspirations, he is now almost forgotten. In focusing on his career from 1886 to 1942,⁴ this thesis re-evaluates his contributions and casts new light on the tactical career politics he adopted through his roles as an elite Royal Academician, patriotic Welshman, and son of Empire, within a cultural, geographical and professional networking framework.

John’s fashionable masculine appearance suggests a tough, “don’t mess with me” determination that underpins the ambitions of a young man who took himself and his art seriously.⁵ Wearing fashionable swanky dress, he looks directly at the camera. While it is significant that his pose is similar to near contemporaneous photographs such as Cyril Flower (fig. 2) and Ralph Winwood Robinson’s photographs of the first generation British New Sculptor and jeweller, Alfred Gilbert, John is more likely toying with a popular genre, recalled in J.P. Mayall’s studio photograph compilation, *Artists at Home* (1884).⁶ Produced in the year John became an RA student, this

¹ I borrow the title from Jason Edwards’ seminal work on Alfred Gilbert, *Alfred Gilbert’s Aestheticism: Gilbert Amongst Whistler, Wilde, Pater and Burne-Jones* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2006).

² Unknown photographer, NMW archive.

³ “Sculpture at the Royal Academy”, *The Saturday Review* (June 28 1890), 794.

⁴ John continued to send works (mainly versions of older works) to the RA summer exhibitions until 1948. Although the RA was the most important place for a sculptor to exhibit, John also exhibited his works elsewhere, in Britain and internationally.

⁵ On artistic masculinity, self-fashioning and dress see *Visual Culture in Britain*, special issue, “Visualizing Identities: The Male Artist in Nineteenth-Century Britain”, Vol. 16 No. 2, 2015.

⁶ F.G. Stephens (ed.), *Artists at home photographed by J.P. Mayall* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1884).

volume features twenty-five esteemed artists, the majority of whom sit crossed-legged in their studios, including the RA president, Frederic Leighton (fig. 3).⁷

Given that these examples place the sitters in their studios, and while John was renting a studio at this time, it was unusual that he chose an outdoor setting. The *sfumato* background and horizontal line of the field and hedge above his head, recall James McNeill Whistler's Thames scene paintings such as *Nocturne: Blue and Silver – Cremorne Lights* (1872, fig 4). While John's checked trousers and lace blanket emphasise his interest in surface and texture, the strong horizontal and vertical lines of the gate and horizon, that contrast with the curved legs of the chair, John's arms and his precisely placed legs point to his compositional attentiveness. Despite his alignment with high profile artists, such as Leighton and Gilbert, John, it appears, intended to differentiate himself. While his self-conscious pose demonstrates his acknowledgement of Gilbert in Flower's portrait, John asserted his self-image in a less foppish way that loosely recalls Walter Sickert. John's hat and collar, combined with his de-dandifying tough demeanour and direct outward stare anticipates Sickert's less-feminine self-assertions such as his 1907 self-portrait *Juvenile Lead* (fig. 5).⁸

While John flirted with Aesthetic notions of the artist, his work demonstrates the influence of one of the most masculine of sculptors, Auguste Rodin. Yet, like many of his generation, he greatly revered Gilbert as the artist that he and many of his contemporaries believed changed British sculpture.⁹ In 1888, before Gilbert's self-positioning and sculptural practices became problematic,¹⁰ John freely assimilated Gilbert-esque elements into his manlier self-presentation. Within a competitive environment, making such a claim was John's way of distinguishing himself from his

⁷ Similar poses are also evident in images of individuals from other professions such as businessman Viscount Lever and statesman David Lloyd George. While this suggests an opportunity to explore professional representations of the individual, this thesis focuses on artists.

⁸ These assertions remain visual; no evidence to date, suggests John was an admirer of Sickert's work.

⁹ John, letter to Isaac Williams (Keeper of Art), May 1938, NMW A581.

¹⁰ While Gilbert's extraordinary talents were widely recognised, he was a perfectionist whose many commissions were frequently delayed. Following a debacle over the *Shaftsbury Memorial Fountain* in Piccadilly, his reputation finally unraveled in 1901 over *The Tomb of the Duke of Clarence* commission. Facing bankruptcy, he sold statuettes from this prestigious commission without seeking permission from his patrons, the Royal Family. Facing royal wrath, he fled to Bruges until 1926. For more on Gilbert see Edwards, *Alfred Gilbert*, and Richard Dormant, *Alfred Gilbert* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1986).

contemporaries; his self-fashioning at the start of his career posited a tougher, more imperial New Sculpture masculinity.

In contrast, professional 1930s artist-at-home/studio photographs (figs. 6,7,8) held at the Amgueddfa Cymru, National Museum of Wales (NMW) assert John's status at the culmination of his career. Rather than looking to his future, he now looks towards posthumous recognition. In bookending his long career, these photographs chart his self-positioning, from young and ambitious to the reflective, but still productive, statesman-sculptor. In looking at the intervening years, this thesis aims to re-address John's scholarly neglect, re-centring John and his contribution to New Sculpture practice through four particular areas, in no particular order: national identity; the plurality of sculptural modernisms; artist and artisan; and his roles at the National Museum of Wales in terms of collection building and the reception of Rodin.

The later photographs show John in his upper and lower studios at his home, 24 Greville Road, St John's Wood in London.¹¹ The upper studio image, which significantly recasts Mayall's photographic collections, initiates my methodological argument. We see John centre-stage, sitting nonchalantly with crossed legs and reading a book. Devoid of any workman-like paraphernalia, this hallowed space was reserved for hosting auspicious social events, such as the John family music evenings attended by the great and the good. It also recalls Robert William Buss's unfinished watercolour, *Darwin's Dream* (1875), in which Charles Dickens sits cross-legged in his study, dreaming of the characters he created, that float around him. Based on Luke Fildes's *The Empty Chair*, a popular engraving made following Dickens's death and published in *The Graphic* in 1870, it establishes an important connection, as Fildes's son, Luke Val Fildes, married John's daughter, Muriel in 1914.

¹¹ For more on artists' studio-homes see Elizabeth Prettejohn, Peter Trippi, "Laboratories of Creativity: The Alma-Tadema's Studio-Houses and Beyond", *British Art Studies*, Issue 9, <https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-09/conversation>; Melanie Polledri, "Framing Networks: The Artist's Studio", *British Art Studies*, Issue 9, accessed August 10. <https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-09/conversation/017>.

The companion photograph of the ground floor studio shows John posed working on the *Lord Davies* presentation bust (1937).¹² With full-length double doors in the background, this practical space is crammed with plaster casts and clay models. John stands in front of the plaster *Drummer Boy* (1905), around him are a mix of ideal, memorial and portrait works. From left to right, these include his bust *Audrey, A Young Actress* (1934);¹³ on the wall, the relief *The Glamour of the Rose* (1896); Liverpool's *Edward VII* equestrian model (1911); the *Andrew Carnegie* bust (1914);¹⁴ and, far right, the head of his future wife, Marthe Weiss (1888). While John demonstrates the diversity of a studio that acknowledges celebrity and family, these works reflect the post WWI mood for peace and reconciliation from Wales to the United States through the philanthropy of Davies and Carnegie. While both images register John's career, selecting key works from the upper studio photograph offers an opportunity to chart the networks and geographies that spanned and supported the sculptor's long career. These range from early works through prestigious commissions to sculptures and paintings by individuals John esteemed. As I argue, his arrangement of the sculptures, paintings, and tapestries staged specific meanings within the boundaries of the photograph, the studio and beyond. John places himself as part of an artistic framework that spanned the British Empire, from his Welsh homeland through booming provincial cities in England, Scotland and Ireland, to imperial cities such as Calcutta (Kolkata) in India and Cape Town in South Africa.

While the studio photographs may have been intended to form part of John's posthumous legacy, they were taken several years before his death in 1952 (aged ninety-two). On his death, *The Times*' obituary pages noted the sculptor's passing on two occasions. Described as the "sculptor of statesmen and politicians", the first obituary condescendingly described John as a "lively little Welshman, entertaining in conversation, and fond of dwelling upon his alleged humble origin".¹⁵ As the author is

¹² David Davies of Llandinem. His grandfather amassed a fortune developing rail networks from the South Wales' coal mining valleys to the docks at Barry and Cardiff. Davies' sisters, Gwendoline and Margaret bequeathed their major art collections to the NMW in 1951 and 1963. See Oliver Fairclough ed., *"Things of Beauty": what two sisters did for Wales*, (National Museum Wales Books, 2007).

¹³ John's granddaughter, Audrey Fildes, appeared in the 1949 film, *Kind Hearts and Coronets*.

¹⁴ The marble is at the Carnegie Endowment for Peace, Washington and the Peace Palace, The Hague. Fiona Pearson, *Goscombe John at the National Museum of Wales* (National Museum of Wales, 1979) 82.

¹⁵ "Sir Goscombe John" *The Times*, December 16, 1952, 10.

anonymous suggests a superficial acquaintance if at all, and, by the 1950s, the now unfashionable nature of John's work. Nevertheless, in listing prestigious key works in Britain and the Empire, the obituary writer reminded readers of John's contributions; that, while "once called in jest the sculptor of the parliamentarians", he had been "rather versatile". In singling out John's "small works" that successfully "combined [the] symbolism and decoration" of the "kind relating to the goldsmith's craft", he tacitly, given Gilbert's importance to John's generation, acknowledged the continuing relevance of Gilbert's decorative New Sculpture legacy. The works mentioned, John's medal for George V's Silver Jubilee, the Prince of Wales Investiture insignia and medal in 1911 (held at Carnarvon Castle, where John was knighted) and "the new Great Seal for George VI in 1937"(figs. 9,10,11), further placed John as the sculptor of officialdom. Yet, these references also elevated the role of craft worker in relation to materials, commission and patron. From an artisanal background in Wales, John maintained a focus on craft throughout his career. His Welsh heritage was also acknowledged through "some charming works of an imaginative character" such as *The Elf* (1898), discussed below, that expressed his "Celtic fancy".¹⁶

Two days later, *The Times* printed the Welsh scholar and writer, Tudor Edwards's "personal tribute" to John. While Edwards, in claiming that John's "works in his native Wales [were] comparatively little known", and not, as John insisted, "representative of his best" contradicted John's own statements on the works he gave to the NMW, he did acknowledge that "they were "original", "forceful" and "skilfully designed". Edwards reminded readers that, in old age, John enjoyed recalling his "student days in the age of [...] Leighton, [...] Gilbert [, ...] Burne-Jones [and] the Paris of Rodin, whom he saw at work and by whom he was certainly influenced."¹⁷ This thesis revisits this age, during the 1880s to the early twentieth century, to understand how John navigated art historical and socio-cultural imperatives informed through his contact with Leighton, Gilbert, Burne-Jones and Rodin. Before this, I turn to how my methodological approach organises and clarifies my argument.

¹⁶ "Sir Goscombe John", *The Times*, 16 December.

¹⁷ Tudor Edwards, "Sir Goscombe John", *Times* 18 Dec. 1952, 8.

In line with the recent work of environmental scientist, Martin Muller and Bruno Latour's pioneer work on the Actor-Network-Theory,¹⁸ my approach selectively adopts elements to extract and unlock meaning located within these objects. Their arrangement within the upper studio photograph forces me to question how they relate to each other within and beyond the image's borders, thus contributing to John's extensive networks that both challenged and endorsed assumptions of sculptural practices in London, then the centre of the Empire, if not the world.¹⁹ As such, within this photograph, the artworks as non-human actors become what Muller terms "actants". That is, they generate their own agency as sites of production, exhibition, and representation, to form networks that frame and articulate John's imperial career,²⁰ pointing to connections with royalty, other sculptors and painters, political figures and institutions. For example, as we shall see, the commissioning and locations of the statuette-sized model of the *Drummer Boy*, part of the King's Regiment monument in Liverpool (sketch model 1904, left of the crouching female nude, *The Elf*), connects John with the South African Wars, the Belgian Congo, Empire, and Welsh nationalism. Not to mention the soap magnate, William Hesketh Lever, the first Viscount Leverhulme,²¹ and the ethnographic sculptor and traveller, Herbert Ward. Of the two equestrian models, the *Tredegear Monument* (1906–10, centre), a launch pad for works such as the *Viscount Minto* (left of the *Drummer Boy*), takes John on an imperial journey from Cardiff via London to Calcutta. The *St John the Baptist* (1894, centre) forges links to Rodin, Paris, and the Marquess of Bute's London home in Regents Park. Gilbert's prominently placed *Icarus* (far left) and *Head of Girl* (left of *Viscount Minto*, both 1884), reflect Parisian and neo-Renaissance influences. As these early works by Gilbert were created while he lived in Italy, they also tie John to New Sculpture developments in London and the continent.

In conceptually condensing space, this photograph maps John's career within a nexus of objects, establishments, and places. Such a concentration of space, as Latour and

¹⁸ See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor–Network–Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), and Martin Muller, "Assemblages and Actor-networks: Rethinking Socio-material Power, Politics and Space", *Geography Compass* 9 (1) (2015), 27–41, accessed September 10, 2017. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/gec3.12192>.

¹⁹ See A. Dunstan, "Reading Victorian Sculpture", *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 2016(22).DOI: <http://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.776>

²⁰ Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 8.

²¹ I return to John's relationship with Lever at various points throughout this thesis.

Muller have observed, makes everything local, including the transnational and global.²² Through John's mediation, these actants' agencies become sites for contestation;²³ their subsequently derived meanings break through and extend the framework. Simultaneously their forces bring together objects that incorporate and allude to national or global imperial destinations. Their geo-political distances are drawn centripetally into the space photographically portrayed in John's studio. As such, the photographed studio space creates a local basis bringing the works together into the framing fold of Empire's imperial capital, London. Yet, conversely and centrifugally, the connecting "embranchments" radiate outwards, connecting wider national networks, from cities such as Liverpool, Glasgow, and Cardiff, to international platforms in countries such as France, Switzerland, Italy, India, and the Congo (to name just a few). These objects' alliances articulate and disseminate specific national and international knowledge, politics, and power relations that establish John's interwoven connections with peers, patrons, friends, and others.²⁴

Positioned in relation to each other, these objects are arranged around John's central position. Often thematically unrelated, their arrangement permits a collective ordering and interpretation that develops meaning within a concrete imperial order.²⁵ John, then, both challenged and negotiated from within the existing political power order of the British Empire. His *Boy Scout* (1910, centre-right in the photograph, fig. 12), for example, evokes Empire, World War I, and Wales. While it formally mirrors Gilbert's *Icarus*, it also refashions it, and other icons such as Donatello's *David* (1330-40) and Marius-Jean-Antonin Mercié's *David and Goliath* (1872), into an imperially appropriate 'manly' version. The central subgroup, including John, the *Tredegar Monument*, the *St John*, and John Singer Sargent's watercolour, *Reclining Male Nude* (c.1900, fig. 13), suggests that the *Boy Scout* contributes to debates on imperial masculinities. This, along with notions of Symbolism, Decadence and

²² Latour and Muller's examples offer a closer proximity to my argument than Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's "rhizome theory". While this process opposes rational approaches to thought making by rejecting hierarchies, it makes connections based on multiplicity rather than qualitative differences. Muller and Latour's theory allows for a focus on the material object, whereas Deleuze and Guattari's seminal work does not. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (London; New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd, 2004).

²³ Muller, "Assemblages", 31.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

Aestheticism, draws on late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century debates on masculinity and national identity.²⁶

Since the 1860s (John's birth year), as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick elucidates, effeteness or dandyism was especially common.²⁷ For John, artistic effeteness was, if not entirely normalised, then a fashionable expression of homosociality and artistic individuality for heterosexual young men. Such "heavily freighted bonds between men" underpinned male social behaviour within a patriarchal society that offered a "powerful instrument of social control".²⁸ John's self-assertions, then, started as youthful confident manliness before he developed into a conservative establishment figure. The period of his professional ascendancy coincides with Oscar Wilde's trial and subsequent imprisonment for "acts of gross indecency" with the result that London imploded into a surge of "homosexual panic".²⁹ Through John's arrangement, the *Boy Scout* partially obscures Sargent's reclining Hellenistic *Barberini Faun*-type nude. As it now both alludes to and obscures homoeroticisms, the *Boy Scout* suggests John's acknowledgement of the market for different homoerotic sensitivities.³⁰ It also obscures the nude's classicism; in calling attention, through concealment, John simultaneously rejects and references this soft neo-Renaissance version of classicism. Throughout his career, John continually affirmed his preference for the Gothic, despite continually referencing the classical, as the *Boy Scout* demonstrates through its formal references to Gilbert, Mercié and Donatello's *David*. Just as John placed manly masculinity over Gilbert's foppish version, John's intentional placement of the *Boy Scout* before classical sculpture and homoeroticism, suggests that he identified with this imperial version deliberately.

While other works such as the equestrian monuments and the model for the *Drummer Boy* asserted British imperial strength in England, at the height of Welsh national revivalism, John gave a bronze *Drummer Boy* to the National Museum of Wales

²⁶ See Edwards, *Alfred Gilbert's Aestheticism*.

²⁷ Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, especially chapter 5, "Towards the Gothic: Terrorism and Homosexual Panic" (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 83-96; and Jason Edwards, *Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick* (Oxford:Routledge, 2008).

²⁸ Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 86.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 89-90.

³⁰ This was a gift from Sargent to John.

(NMW) in time for George V's official opening. As I argue in Chapter 2, this work represented a Welsh cultural call to arms, as well as an English one. Within this photograph, the political is staged as a form of visualising power through objects; yet, as I discuss later, meaning is transferable and location dependent. As such, the scope of these connections, and John's associations, become broader.

In untangling these complex connections, through which new relationships emerge, I trace John's tactics that testify to his successes at the culmination of his career. This thesis is not an exhaustive survey, but an exploration of works at key points throughout his career. It is not intended to tell a chronological or biographical account (although Chapter 1 starts at the beginning of John's career), but, as a platform for further studies, to demonstrate how he articulated and negotiated the dominant art-historical and geo-political ideologies of his time.³¹ John's works are a conduit that articulate and disseminate power relations. In navigating these entangled associations, I demonstrate not only that the interwoven connections of place, works and meaning uncover how and why John achieved his ambitions, but also that the relationships that emerge help us consider the broader implications of late-nineteenth-century imperial networking practices that connected people, places, and institutions. Before we consider the wider implications of this, I turn briefly to John's "alleged humble origin[s]", to provide the necessary context in understanding his career and this thesis.

John was born into an artisanal family in Cardiff in 1860. His father, Thomas John, was a master woodcarver who worked for the Marquis of Bute during the 1880s, on William Burges's architectural gothic revival fantasy for Cardiff Castle.³² Since the 1830s, the tradition of woodcarving had distinct national overtones that stemmed from interest in Grinling Gibbons, the Dutch émigré master. The "Lincolnshire Gibbons", Thomas Wilkinson Wallis's *Partridges and Ivy* (1871) demonstrated to

³¹ Since Fiona Pearson's exhibition catalogue, *Goscombe John at the National Museum Wales*, is the only in-depth work on John, a revision, as this thesis demonstrates, is well overdue.

³² John consequently grew up within a Celtic arts and crafts milieu bathed in the reflected light of the Pre-Raphaelite influence. For more on Burges see J. Mordaunt Cooke, *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream* (London: Francis Lincoln, 2013); on Cardiff Castle, see Mathew Williams, *The Essential Cardiff Castle* (London: Scala Publishers Ltd., 2008); on Nicholls, see Benedict Read, Benedict, *Victorian Sculpture* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1982), 263–265.

many the standard of British woodcarving.³³ Similarly, the pride John took in his father's work echoes this tradition. Until he was fourteen, John studied at the Cardiff School of Art, before working for his father in the Bute workshops, where he was followed by his two younger brothers.³⁴ In December 1881, through his father's friendship with Burges and stonemason Thomas Nicholls, responsible for the architectural schemes at Cardiff Castle (including the famous *Animal Wall*), John was sent to Nicholls' London studio as a "pupil assistant".³⁵ This marked the next step for John and his exposure to a wide range of sculptural theories and practice just as the crucial gothic revival architectural matrix of the New Sculpture was reaching new heights.

Edmund Gosse first coined the term "New Sculpture" retrospectively in 1894 in a series of articles for the *Art Journal*.³⁶ He claimed Leighton's *Athlete Wrestling with a Python*, shown at the RA in 1877, transformed British Sculpture.³⁷ Challenging the supposed stasis of the dominant neo-classical works,³⁸ the first generation of New Sculptors, including Gilbert and Hamo Thornycroft, created a new sculptural idiom to express dynamic realistic modelling based on the particularity of the model and close attention to the expressive qualities of surface. The New Sculptors often took mythological subjects as their sources through which they explored symbolist notions of inner thought or emotion. In 1882, shortly after

³³ See Edwards in Martin Droth, Jason Edwards and Michael Hatt eds., *Sculpture Victorious: Art in an Age of Invention*, (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2014), 284.

³⁴ The decorative arts, so crucial to the New Sculpture remit, have also gained academic attention at the expense of the now considered overdone themes of Symbolism, Decadence and Aestheticism. See Imogen Hart, *Arts and Crafts Objects* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010); Droth, Edwards, and Hatt, *Sculpture Victorious*; Claire Jones, *Sculpture and Design Reform in France* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2014), as well as Hart and Edwards, eds., *Rethinking the Interior: Aestheticism and the Arts and Crafts Movement, 1867-1896* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2009), and Martina Droth's *Taking Shape: Finding Sculpture in the Decorative Arts* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2009). These scholars have done much to align the New Sculpture with the Arts and Crafts aesthetic.

³⁵ Newspaper cutting, "Sir Goscombe John Remembers", *Western Mail*, 1931(?), MMS ID: 99192867702419, National Library Wales (NLW) Archive.

³⁶ Edmund Gosse, "The New Sculpture 1879-1894", *Art Journal*, 1894.

³⁷ Gosse "The New Sculpture", 140. In the same year, at the Paris Salon, Rodin showed the *Age of Bronze*.

³⁸ Elizabeth Prettejohn and Edwards's recent work has done much to reclaim the neo-classical from Gosse's claims. Elizabeth Prettejohn, *The Modernity of Ancient Sculpture* (New York & London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2012], 1; and Edwards, "'By Abstraction Springs Forth Ideal Beauty?': John Gibson's Modernity", in Sarah Monks, Mark Hallett and John Barrell, eds., *Living with the Royal Academy: Artistic Ideals and Experiences in Britain, 1768-1848* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2013), 195-220.

John arrived in London, Gosse noted, “the critics and the general public woke up to the fact that English sculpture was revolutionised.”³⁹ As one of the youngest (and therefore one of the last) New Sculptors, John entered an educational system in which this movement had set a new course for British sculpture, challenging established systems of representation through which the object became imbued with new meaning to exemplify late-nineteenth-century ideals.⁴⁰

While John continued to develop his stone carving skills during the day, he attended modelling night classes at the South London Technical School of Art in Kennington, Lambeth. In the wake of the legacy of French sculptor, Jules-Aimé Dalou, who taught there briefly in 1880, his successor William Silver Frith instructed John.⁴¹ The school’s ambitious head, John Sparkes, secured its financial future by developing close ties with the nearby Doulton Potteries and merging school with the City and Guilds of London Institute. In 1884, Sparkes recommended John for the RA schools, where he received lectures from Thornycroft, Edward Poynter in 1884, J. Edgar Boehm, Thornycroft and R. Stuart Poole, the latter on medals in 1885, and A.S. Murray on bas-relief in 1886, as well as Gilbert in 1888, due to the vacancy for Professor of Sculpture.⁴²

In 1886, John left Nicholls’ studio to join the studio of C.B. Birch, before he embarked upon two European trips funded through Welsh support. While contemporary critics were quick to acknowledge his success in combining artisanal skills with academic training, he claimed that he “blossomed forth” when he won the RA Landseer scholarship; the accompanying grant meant he could afford to rent his own studio in Elizabeth Street, Pimlico. To claim that this location was “then, like Chelsea, a favourite abode of artists”⁴³ demonstrates that John was strategically aware

³⁹ Edmund Gosse, “The New Sculpture”, *Art Journal*, (May 1894), 202.

⁴⁰ See Getsy, *Body Doubles*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 5.

⁴¹ Dalou introduced his dynamic modeling techniques to British sculptural practices, during his exile from the Paris Commune 1871 – 1880. See Amélie Simier, “A French Demonstration: The Pivotal Roles of Jules Dalou and Edouard Lantéri in British Sculpture”, in Caroline Corbeau-Parsons ed., *The EY Exhibition Impressionists in London: French Artists in Exile 1870–1904*, exhibition catalogue (Tate: London, 2017).

⁴² For more see G.D. Leslie, *The Inner Life of the Royal Academy*, London: John Murray, 1914; and Sarah Monks, John Barrell, and Mark Hallet, eds., *Living with the Royal Academy: Artistic Ideas and experiences in England 1768–1848*, Farnham; Burlington: Ashgate, 2013.

⁴³ “Sir Goscombe John Remembers”, *Western Mail*.

of location in furthering his career. In one of his sketchbooks, John also sketched a London borough sign; instead of the borough name, he inserted his initials, 'W.G.J.' in the diamond lozenge between 'LON' and 'DON' (fig. 14).⁴⁴ While this may have been an exploratory signature mark, it does not appear on any of his works. It is clear that John was aware of his place at the centre of London, the most powerful and wealthy city in the world. With the ambitious young sculptor in the 1888 photograph in mind, his visual conceptualisation clearly articulates his self-conscious aspirations through a geographical gesture of self-assertion. In intentionally establishing himself as an artist within a nucleus for aspiring and ambitious young artists, he could extend his networks and associations.

If Chelsea was an important first step, St John's Wood proved to be John's ultimate artist-hub destination. This area attracted many artists; his first studio in Woronzow Road backed onto fellow sculptor George Frampton's house, while the sculptor and adventurer, Ward (discussed in Chapter 3), moved into the next-door studio. In 1901, John moved to the former home and studio of the sculptor, Edwin Roscoe Mullins, at 24 Greville Road where John remained until his death. As part of a sculptor-artist community in St John's Wood, he enjoyed membership of the St John's Wood Art Club and regular social events including the "Bohemian supper parties of the fraternity of artists in St John's Wood".⁴⁵

As John's career "blossomed", his busy studio, which supplied works nationally and internationally for wealthy patrons and institutions, required apprentices. From the early twentieth century, he employed young sculptors including Leonard Merrifield, Arthur Clapperton, Harold James Youngman and Louis Read Deuchars. With distinguished wealthy patrons, from Leverhulme and Lloyd George to celebrities and royalty, John's early works gave way to numerous commissions for portraiture and monuments and, at the close of the First World War, memorials. Yet, to demonstrate my approach, one ideal work, *The Elf* (figs. 15 and 16), prominent in the upper studio photograph remained central to John and his career. In 1882, shortly after John arrived in London, Gilbert, as Richard Dorment observes, caused a sensation,

⁴⁴ John sketchbook NMWA 13095, NMW Print Room archive.

⁴⁵ Leslie, *The Inner Life*, 186.

showing off his modelling and carving skills by exhibiting his marble *Kiss of Victory* at the RA and his bronze *Perseus* at the Grosvenor Gallery.⁴⁶ Possibly in emulation, John also showed off his mastery of materials and techniques by producing *The Elf* in bronze and marble.⁴⁷

The Elf is, perhaps, John's most representative work. Like the photographs, it registers the beginning and end of his career and its connections form networks that link the sculptor with the RA, London, the NMW, the 1901 Glasgow International Exhibition, and Paris during the early 1890s. In addition, it was shown at the Paris International Exhibition in 1900, the 1905 Venice Biennial (fig. 17) as well as the Rome International Exhibition in 1911.⁴⁸ *The Elf* was included in several portraits of John,⁴⁹ on his Greville Road address cards (fig. 18), and etched in outline onto the wood base of his 1942 bronze *Self-Portrait* bust (discussed below). Considering *The Elf* as a case study demonstrates how the agency of a work from the upper studio photograph contributes to debates on issues such as the artist and artisan, French poetry, and Gothic revivals. It also reveals John's intersecting networks with the people he met such as Rodin, and how he demonstrated his loyalties and tactical motivations.

The Elf, on the far right of the photograph, offsets Gilbert's *Icarus* on the opposite side, while the central *St John* counterbalances the two. Since both *Icarus* and *The Elf* have equal prominence, it suggests the value John placed on his own work in relation to Gilbert's. Exhibited at the RA in 1898, a year before his ARA election, John included lines from, Victor Hugo's *Odes and Ballades*, "La Fée et la Péri" (1824):

C'est nous qui, visitant les gothiques églises.
Ouvrons leur nef sonore au murmure des brises;
Quand la lune du tremble argente les rameaux,

⁴⁶ Richard Dorment *Alfred Gilbert*, 40.

⁴⁷ While it was exhibited in marble in 1899, bronze versions were at the NMW, and the "Diploma Gallery" at the RA, Pearson, *Goscombe John*, 80. Glasgow City Council bought the marble in 1901, following the International Exhibition for which John's friend and fellow sculptor, George Frampton oversaw the choice of sculptures. The marble version was placed at the Kelvingrove Art Galleries until being moved to its present location in the 1930s. It is now on display in the Kibble Palace in Glasgow's Botanic Gardens (Reg. no. S.77).

⁴⁸ Pearson, *Goscombe John*, 35.

⁴⁹ These included Simon H. Vedder's (c.1905) at NMW and Erich Wolsfeld's (1944) at the National Portrait Gallery, London.

Le pâtre voit dans l'air, avec des chants mystiques,
Folâtrer nos chœurs fantastiques
Autour du clocher des hameaux.⁵⁰

This highlighted a romantic Gothicism that connected it with nature and the outdoors. While John explained, these “most lovely” lines matched his “ideas”,⁵¹ he did not elucidate further, although it seems he had an outdoor location in mind. Displayed at the 1905 Venice Biennale’s “English Room”, *The Elf* was raised on a plinth and framed with foliage from a nearby pot plant. This further connects it with nature and, forty-five years later, John was pleased to know that bronze versions of *The Elf* and *Joyance* (1899) were installed in the water-gardens at St. Fagans Castle, now the Museum of National History near Cardiff.⁵² Photographs I took of it there recently illustrate how environment and location affect the way the spectator perceives the sculpture (figs. 19, 20).⁵³

The Elf: Object and Reception

The crouching nude tilts forward on her toes; leaning on her hands she is poised for movement. This references classical works such as the Roman *Lely Venus* (fig. 21) at the British Museum. John was following a long tradition of the ‘Crouching Venus’ types that had inspired generations of sculptors including Carpeaux’s *Crouching Flora* (1873, fig. 22), Alfred Stevens’ Dorchester House chimneypiece nudes (ca. 1873),⁵⁴ as well as Rodin’s aggressively modelled caryatids intended for the *Gates of Hell* from 1881.⁵⁵ John owned and later donated a *Fallen Caryatid*, “one of [Rodin’s] most noteworthy smaller works” to the NMW in 1934.⁵⁶ Yet, as I discuss below, it also moves away from such prototypes to recall Rodin’s crouching *Tragic Muse*

⁵⁰ *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy 1898*, 63. “La Fée at La Péri” (1824) “It is we who, visiting the Gothic churches. /Let us open their nave to the murmur of the breezes; /When the silver moon trembles the twigs, /The shepherd sees in the air, with mystical songs, /To play our fantastic choruses /Around the bell tower of the hamlets”, author’s translation.

⁵¹ John, letter to Ballinger, 3 May 3, 1898 underlining original.

⁵² *Joyance* was originally intended as a fountain. John produced several versions including a *Hermes*, with wings on his feet, and a *Pan*, with panpipes on the base, of which a version dated 1901, is at Tate Britain.

⁵³ I return to this in chapter 2.

⁵⁴ Now located in the Gamble Room at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

⁵⁵ Many of the influences John absorbed into his work became motifs upon which he regularly drew for subsequent works; the motif of the crouching nude explored in his sketchbooks for example, is found in the 1893 relief the *Crouching Nude* before taking on three dimensions in *The Elf*.

⁵⁶ John, letter to Cyril Fox, February 12, 1934. NMWA 2625.

(1890). Despite these subtle classical influences, that, according to critic Alfred Lys Baldry were John's "occasional digression into the methods of other schools", John claimed he preferred the "severity and dignity of the [Gothic] style".⁵⁷ Ostensibly, this permitted wider explorations of inner feeling.⁵⁸ Consequently, the idea of an elf removes *The Elf* from conventionally established formats of classical myth, Biblical or sentimental sources. The usual Venus-type titles associated with the female nude suggest specific ideas on beauty and nudity based on classical mythology. Through *The Elf*, John, as we shall see, challenged what he considered Italian "sensuousness" and Greek "realism",⁵⁹ leaving the spectator to focus on the female body. Thus, while John's search for ways to express what he called "truer meaning" may be somewhat ambiguous, *The Elf* is the first example of his endeavour to express it.⁶⁰ This work's significance as the sculptural signifier of his academic success remained with him throughout his career.

Formally, *The Elf*'s sensuously idealised, yet realistically treated, complex spiral of juxtaposed limbs and enclosed spaces invites engagement with the varied configurations within the composition.⁶¹ The NMW holds sketches and a red wax model (fig. 23), nodding both to Alfred Stevens and before him Michelangelo, demonstrate how John developed the closed, compressed and twisted form. Small pencil sketches of female heads with long angled necks and a seated nude with a heavily outlined silhouette are then realised in miniature three dimension through blobs of softened red wax pressed over the armature of the model (height 8.9cm).⁶² The finished works in bronze and marble show that John was evidently satisfied with details such as the hands that retained the unusual contrasting configuration of backward and forward extension.⁶³

⁵⁷ A. L. Baldry, "A New Associate of the Royal Academy: W. Goscombe John", *The Studio*, March 15, 1899, 116.

⁵⁸ See Dorment, *Alfred Gilbert*, 38.

⁵⁹ Baldry, "A New Associate", 116.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ See David Getsy, *Body Doubles: Sculpture in Britain, 1877-1905* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press and the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2004), for the spectator's encounter with the sculptural object.

⁶² John sketchbook NMWA 13095, NMW Print Room archive.

⁶³ While this allowed John to display his technical ability, it prompts comparison to nudes such as Edward Onslow Ford's *Folly* (1886). The young female nude has similarly articulated toes that extend over and clutch the rocky base. Although they do not quote one another, they highlight the interest in details such as these.

Some areas were more problematic and needed further work. On a practical level, the wax model reveals that John needed to revise the proportions of the woodblock base and adapt the figure; using the wax, he extended the base to accommodate the hands and achieve balance. The completed versions are closer to the vertical axis; the lengthened thighs and straighter arms provide physical support while suggesting potential movement. Other elements also underwent revision, the wax model's rounded back now evokes the heavily outlined drawing, and presents an exaggerated landscape of sharply angled bony projections of vertebrae, ribs and hips. In line with the musical evocations of Hugo's prose, the figure's downward gaze that permits the viewers' scrutiny appears to be a study in listening that contrasts with the multi-layered acts of looking. John has explored the visual representation of listening. As an example of what John Ballinger called the "freer scope" of John's "poetical imagination",⁶⁴ *The Elf*, caught mid-movement, listens to the murmuring breezes of the trees and leaves that as Hugo described, filled the air with "chants mystiques".

John's subtle imagination, Ballinger claimed, had "already enriched the world of art". He continued, as Wales' "distinguished son" was "still young", Ballinger believed John "may one day produce a masterpiece which shall rank his name amongst the highest".⁶⁵ Following *The Elf*'s reception at the RA, John may have hoped it would elevate him into that category. While the academy still centred on ideal figures over the decorative, John expected his other contribution that year, the *Corn Hirlas* (horn of plenty, fig. 24), a materially expensive decorative sculpture commissioned by the Gorsedd of Bards for the National Eisteddfod ceremonies, to overshadow *The Elf*.⁶⁶ Writing to Ballinger, he claimed, "I have never had such a success [...] it seems to be quite the work of the year." John was especially pleased to "score well" as the timing, he noted, "could not have been more opportune [,] for all the men have shown a very

⁶⁴ John Ballinger, "A Welsh Sculptor", *Wales*, July 1894, 120.

⁶⁵ Ballinger, "A Welsh Sculptor", 120. Ballinger's article was published in the same year, 1894, that Gosse published his *New Sculpture* articles.

⁶⁶ John, letter to Ballinger, April/May 1898. The National Eisteddfod, an important Welsh-Celtic art and culture festival, played important roles in nationalist revivals and the establishment of the NMW and NLW. The *Corn Hirlas* model can be seen on top of the corner cupboard in the upper studio photograph. For more on the *Corn Hirlas*, see Polledri "'Sacred Stones Guarded about with Dragons": Welsh National Identity in William Goscombe John's *Corn Hirlas*", in Claire Jones and Imogen Hart eds., *Sculpture and the Decorative in Britain and Europe, 17th Century to Contemporary* (forthcoming under contract with Bloomsbury Academic Publishing).

strong hand this year”.⁶⁷ While John once again identifies with the “strong” masculine contribution, important (male) figures were taking notice. Amongst the many congratulations he received, there was critical speculation over the idea. While George Clausen claimed *The Elf* was “the work of the whole show!” and “perfectly beautiful”,⁶⁸ Baldry believed it “curiously fanciful”.⁶⁹ Marion Spielmann described it as “weird, eerie, quaint in feature, form, and attitude, twisted yet graceful”, before adding it was “a perfect embodiment of the idea to which the sculptor aimed”.⁷⁰ Spielmann continued, with John’s “main quality [being] the conscientious love of the purity and refinement of nature”, who, he wondered, would “deny these qualities in marked degree to *The Elf*, with its originality and its delicious quaintness?”⁷¹ Responses such as these, just before his ARA election, influenced John’s decision to present it as his diploma work upon election as Royal Academician (RA) in 1909.⁷² Within the upper studio photograph, *The Elf*’s prominence recalls important events, especially John’s RA election that cemented his career within the British art establishment, wider imperial platforms and, more specifically, as I now discuss, within the milieu of Rodin’s Paris.

Poetry, Hugo and Rodin

While Hugo’s poetry fuelled John’s “poetic imagination”, its significance resonates on a wider scale. This French quotation, included in the Academy exhibition catalogue, further linked *The Elf* with the RA, nature, French Gothic, and Rodin. John was a great admirer of the sculptor and met him in Paris during his scholarship year in 1890 (of which, more in Chapter 1).⁷³ Hugo, meanwhile, a republican, vociferously campaigned on social issues such as poverty, improving education, universal suffrage

⁶⁷ John, letter to Ballinger, April/May 1898.

⁶⁸ Letter from Clausen to John, September 23, 1898, NLW GB 0210 MSGOSCOMBE (15), NLW Archive.

⁶⁹ A. L. Baldry, “A New Associate, 119.

⁷⁰ Marion H. Spielmann, *British Sculpture and Sculptors of To-Day* (London; New York: Cassell’s and Co., 1901), 130.

⁷¹ Spielmann, *British Sculpture*, 131.

⁷² John’s ARA election filled the vacancy left by the death of Harry Bates, while his RA election in 1909, followed Gilbert’s resignation.

⁷³ John owned a bronze mask of Rodin’s *Head of Victor Hugo* (1883) that he presented to the MNW in 1934 (NMW A 304). This was possibly cast from the 1884 head or from a cast of it. With no founder’s mark or signature it suggests that this is an unauthenticated version. There is speculation Rodin may have given John a plaster that he later had cast in bronze by the bronze founders, Cresswick in Scotland. The Cresswick family possesses a plaster cast of the mask. None of this however, is substantiated and the Museum conservator’s report was inconclusive.

and ending the death penalty. Yet, *Odes and Ballades* was written before this in 1824 while he was at his most Royalist and Catholic. For John this quotation is fitting in asserting his self-perceived place at the RA and within the Empire, yet, given Hugo's political campaigns, there is also an almost imperceptibly subtle resistance.⁷⁴

Following Hugo's vociferous opposition to Napoleon III's Government in 1851, he fled to Brussels before heading, in exile, to Guernsey where he stayed from 1855 to 1870.⁷⁵ Here he wrote pamphlets denouncing Napoleon as a traitor to France. When he returned, he was treated as a national hero. At his death in 1885 (aged 84), approximately two million people paraded through Paris to pay their respects.⁷⁶ Rodin knew Hugo, and, in 1883, made sketches of him for a bust he then gifted to the poet. While there are several versions, Rodin's gift pays homage to Hugo through the inscription on the base, "The Bust to the Illustrious Master".⁷⁷ In 1884, Rodin exhibited another bronze version inscribed with a quote from Hugo's *La Légende des siècles* (1859), "Un poète est un monde enfermé dans un homme", on the base.⁷⁸ Thus, exhibited at the 1884 Salon, Rodin publically and emphatically announced his admiration of the poet.⁷⁹ Rodin may have introduced Hugo's ideas to John. By 1905, he was explicitly aligning Hugo's "great genius" with the "vast poems" of Gothic cathedrals, just as John had already subtly alluded to through allusions to "gothic churches" in his quotation of "La fée et la Péri".⁸⁰

Hugo's Gothic affiliations align with Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*, especially the "Nature of Gothic" and William Morris's famous "Introduction" published in 1851-3. John's alignment reveals his use of Gothic was comparatively late. Rodin's explicit reference to mediaeval architecture as a call for French nationalism or patriotism changed the usefulness of Gothic references. The concept of national identity would

⁷⁴As I discuss in relation to the *Drummer Boy* in Chapter 2, John's almost-subversive tactics would become part of his *modus operandi* throughout his career.

⁷⁵Hugo's exile to Brussels and Guernsey aligns with Gilbert fleeing to Bruges.

⁷⁶Jane Mayo Roos, "Rodin's Monument to Victor Hugo: Art and Politics in the Third Republic", *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 68, No. 4, December 1986, 632-656, accessed May 16, 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3051045>.

⁷⁷Musée Rodin, accessed March 20, 2018. <http://www.musee-rodin.fr/en/collections/sculptures/victor-hugo-known-bust-illustrious-master>.

⁷⁸"A poet is a world confined in a man", author's translation.

⁷⁹Antoinette le Normand-Romain, *The Bronzes of Rodin: Catalogue of Works in the Musée Rodin*, (2 Vols. London: Lund Humphries Publishers Ltd, 2007), 433. My thanks to Anne Pritchard, Historic Art Curator, NMW, for pointing this out to me.

⁸⁰See Rodin, "The Gothic in the Cathedrals and Churches of France", *North American Review* 180, no. 579, 1905, 219-29. Accessed September 20, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25105356>.

have an impact on John both as a tool for self-identification and as a tool to differentiate his work from the classical references of his peers. Despite this, as we shall see, he continued to use and reference classical idioms. Furthermore, while Rodin merged Gothic, Romanesque, and Renaissance influences, Hugo prior to his activism, provided a link to Rodin through Gothic cathedrals, architecture, religion, and notions of collective or collaborative working and national pride.

Rodin went on to claim that Hugo was the first “among his fellow-countrymen” to “understand the ancient [Gothic] cathedrals and churches of France”,⁸¹ especially as “[o]ur French cathedrals are superior to the English [...] by the greater sculptural expression displayed in them”.⁸² French Gothic architecture had, Rodin claimed, “unquestionably influenced [his] sculpture, giving more flexibility, more depth, [and] more life in [his] modelling”.⁸³ Rodin clearly admired Hugo, and linked his work with Hugo’s love of ecclesiastical Gothic architecture. With Rodin’s assertion that “[p]rofound knowledge” was “needed to produce the real Gothic”,⁸⁴ John, as I discuss below and, like Gilbert in the 1890s, also described his work as gothic.

While Rodin also looked to classical and Renaissance influences, he nevertheless claimed that Gothic cathedrals were “an epitome of nature [...] reproduce[ed] [...] by artistic compression”. Features such as vaulted roofs and spandrels, when looked at from below, echo the treetop canopy of a forest, thus filling the cathedral with its “mysterious life”.⁸⁵ These “ancient edifices” Rodin continued, “gained their beauty through the faithful study of Nature”.⁸⁶ Aligned with Gosse and late-Victorian philosophical interests in the importance of nature, John claimed his “creed” was to “stick to nature” that, at its “best [was] better than the finest art”, thus permitting John to realign with Leighton at the RA.⁸⁷ While the title reinforces John’s ideas, *The Elf*’s outdoor setting supports a nature-sculpture relationship encouraging the viewer to

⁸¹ Ruskin, Rodin believed, was “the first among foreigners”, see Rodin, “The Gothic in the Cathedrals” (1905), 219.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 223.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 220.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Arthur Fish, “One of Our Sculptors: A Chat with Mr W. Goscombe John, A.R.A.”, *Cassell’s Magazine*, 1899, 496.

engage in a romantic woodland fantasy. In the gardens at St Fagans, the now resplendently verdigris *Elf*, half-hidden in the overgrowth, becomes a creature that might dart away at any moment (see fig. 19).

While Hugo's quotation aligned Gothic church architecture, nature, music, and Rodin's love of all three, John's Gothic affiliations permitted a biographical context. In 1899, the year he became an ARA, he recalled, in an interview for *Cassell's* magazine, that he was a choirboy at Cardiff's twelfth-century Llandaff Cathedral (fig. 25).⁸⁸ It was here, he claimed, that he "acquired the bias for gothic [sic] work that had always clung to" him.⁸⁹ During the 1850s, the Cathedral underwent restoration work; the architects, J.P. Seddon and John Pritchard, employed Pre-Raphaelite artists such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown, Edward Burne-Jones (whose father was Welsh) and sculptors Thomas Woolner, Henry Hugh Armstead and Mile ap Griffith. While John was linking his Gothic interests with his Celtic-Welsh identity, and Rodin's "real Gothic",⁹⁰ he also imbued his childhood "Gothic" exposure with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Through *The Elf*, John identified his boyhood Christian values and musical background with Welsh and French medieval Gothic, Pre-Raphaelitism, Hugo and Rodin.⁹¹

In 1899, John claimed, as mentioned, that "Northern European Gothic ruggedness [had] a truer meaning than the sensuousness of the Italian School or the sublime realism of the Greeks".⁹² In making this point John not only echoed Rodin's (and as we shall see, those of Burges) claims for the Gothic, but, crucially, it offered him the opportunity to differentiate himself and his work from the New Sculptor's affinity

⁸⁸ This is the earliest photograph of John, just visible in the lowest row of boys between the two men standing either side of the wall. Of these, the closest to John is his father, Thomas, who, according to the inscription on the reverse, was a baritone.

⁸⁹ Fish, "One of Our Sculptors", 492. John owned three medieval devotional statuettes: a fifteenth-century Flemish or British *St Nicholas* in oak with traces of paint (NMW A48); an early fourteenth-century French walnut *Virgin and Child* (NMW A 46); and a boxwood sixteenth-century century *Virgin and Child* (NMW A47). He gave these to the NMW in 1929. As discussed later, their impact can be seen in some of John's works.

⁹⁰ Rodin, "The Gothic in the Cathedrals", 220.

⁹¹ For more on ecclesiastical sculpture see Claire Jones, "Nathaniel Hitch and the Making of Church Sculpture", 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*. 2016 (22).

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.733>.

⁹² Baldry, "A New Associate", 116. For more on John and Gothic, see also Fish, "One of Our Sculptors", 492.

with the Renaissance and Classical schools. I say ‘crucially’, as John’s tactical self-fashioned masculinity becomes, in the Gothic context, “rugged” and therefore, “truer”. Thus, John asserted both a more masculine New Sculpture and a manly, moral and religious Gothic Artisan. Through Hugo, he also declared his loyalty to Rodin, at a difficult time for the French sculptor.

Four years after Hugo’s death, in 1889, Rodin was awarded the commission for Hugo’s monument; fraught with problems this commission ultimately failed to materialise. The Parisian press publically chronicled the poor treatment Rodin received from the intractable organising committee. This debacle would destroy his friendship with Jules Dalou who was a vociferous member of the committee.⁹³ Rodin’s initially rejected design however, eventually found refuge in the Palais-Royal gardens (1890, fig. 26). Cast in bronze, it features a nude Hugo seated on the Guernsey rocks with arm outstretched. At the poet’s shoulder, a female crouching nude, *The Tragic Muse*, leans forward as if whispering in his ear. It is likely that John saw the model for this in Rodin’s studio, especially as *The Elf*’s forward and twisted angles recall the *Muse*. Along with the quotation from Hugo’s poem, these formal similarities suggest John’s support for Rodin and, just as he incorporated elements of old masters into his own work as evidence of being at key locations (as Chapter 1 considers), so John, through *The Elf*, placed himself in Paris with Rodin at a particular time early in his career.

Towards the end of his career, in 1942, John returned to *The Elf* in his *Self-Portrait* (1942, fig. 27). Presented to the RA at the invitation of the President, Edwin Lutyens, the *Self-Portrait* indicated the alpha and omega of John’s Academy career. Thus it marks his status, networks and place, intrinsically acknowledging Celtic Welsh revivals, the role of the artisan, and John’s Lambeth and RA education, all of which will be considered in the following chapters. Probably produced after the studio photographs, the *Self-Portrait* shows the bronze head of the aging sculptor mounted on a simple wood base that bears the carved outline of *The Elf*.⁹⁴ Following its

⁹³ Roos, “Monument to Victor Hugo”, 649. This may explain why John was later reluctant to comment much on Dalou during his 1906 “Modern Sculptors” lecture.

⁹⁴ The eighty-two year old sculptor exhibited this *Self-Portrait* six years before sending his last work to the RA summer exhibitions.

exhibition in 1943, John responded to the invitation, saying that he now “had it cast in bronze”, and would feel “pleased & honoured [...] if the Royal Academy would accept it.”⁹⁵ As there was not a tradition of Senior Royal Academician sculptors donating self-portraits, John’s invitation was unusual.⁹⁶

As the sculptural (self-) portrait’s durability was intended to preserve and commemorate the sitter’s reputation for as long as his or her likeness lasted,⁹⁷ John clearly intended his *Self-Portrait* as a closing statement at the RA even before Lutyens’ offer. As John regularly targeted particular individuals to secure commissions, it is likely he sought the Academy President’s attention in the hope he would want a version permanently at the RA.⁹⁸ This permanent likeness, in the “unsettling convention of the decapitated head”,⁹⁹ with the elimination of a Chantrey-esque head turn, he faces forwards, the determined upward tilting chin slightly alleviates the rigidity. With jowls and bags beneath his eyes, John’s distinguished, yet realistic, interpretation of his aged image suggests dignified self-fashioning intended to immortalise himself in keeping with the status he wanted to convey. While this portrayal is in keeping with the period, Henri Gaudia-Brzeska’s *Bust of Horace Brodsky* (1913, fig. 28) may (even subliminally) have affected John’s portrayal. With a creeping nod to modernism, John, as I discuss below, is considering his relevance in the place of future sculpture theory.

Given John’s age, the *Self-Portrait* naturally reflects his past. Although autobiographical, this is not soul searching. Instead, the bust reflects his professional success. *The Elf*’s inclusion retrospectively acknowledges John’s youthful aspirations and draws on personal motivation and pride. Its internal juxtapositions are symbolised through John’s head and *The Elf*’s outline; materially through bronze and wood; and technically through modelling and carving or etching. John’s modelled bronze head

⁹⁵ John, letter to Lamb, January 7, 1943. RAC/1/JO 33, RA Archive.

⁹⁶ The Academy refused (it still does) to accept artists’ self-portraits as Diploma Works on their election to the position of Royal Academician. Andrew Potter, Royal Academy Library, email to the author, October 26, 2017.

⁹⁷ For more on portrait busts, see Penelope Curtis, Peter Funnell, and Nicola Kalinsky, *Return to Life: A New Look at the Portrait Bust* (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2000), exhibition catalogue.

⁹⁸ There are two known *Self-Portraits* in bronze: one is currently in storage at the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff and the RA holds the other in its permanent collection.

⁹⁹ Curtis *et al.*, *Return to Life*, 37.

represents fine art at the Academy and contrasts with *The Elf*'s carved-out distinct outline and wood base. Together, as I now consider, they mark his long relationship with the Academy spanning his life as an Academician.

The wood base is literally and metaphorically, a support, acknowledging his father's artisan career, John's artisanal beginnings and the support of his Welsh family.¹⁰⁰ As he recalled, "[w]hatever success I have achieved in art [...] is due to the influence and encouragement of my father."¹⁰¹ Techniques, such as carving or engraving, also signified the role of artisan and artist and were closely associated with the New Sculpture; here it plays a supportive role. While this contrasts with John's personal pride as an artisan, it should be acknowledged that this alignment of professional identity was intended for the RA and its audiences.¹⁰² While *The Elf* is an academic work, its carved or etched outline while academic through its use of outline, mitigates this gap through technique at the Academy. Its distinctive contours suggest a particular modernist style more in keeping with Pablo Picasso's 1930s *Vollard Suite* etchings, or those illustrating Alfred Skira's publication of Ovid's *Les Metamorphoses* (1931, fig. 29), that, as we shall see, suggests a link with *Morpheus*.¹⁰³ Through this abstracted outline, John, not only reflected on his past, but looked to the future of sculpture.

In bringing together the technical, ideological and material, John's *Self-Portrait* offers a visual *apologia*, a retrospective self-justification of his position and his life's work, asserting his self-perceived status as a distinguished sculptor who made an outstanding contribution to the future of British sculpture. Through these juxtaposed self-fashioning vocabularies in the photographs and *Self-Portrait*, John charted his long and successful career to retrospectively perpetuate his image as Royal Academician. In contrast to his gradual fall from fashion, these works assert his desire to perpetuate his memory as an elite sculptor. As a self-identified "modern" sculptor, John, ironically given my reading of the *Self-Portrait*, refused to embrace the avant-

¹⁰⁰ John rarely used wood bases. The only other example is an oak pedestal carved by his brother Thomas, for a bust of his daughter, Muriel (c.1896). This further reinforces the family connection to wood. (NMW A 374).

¹⁰¹ *Western Mail*, "Sir Goscombe John Remembers".

¹⁰² John gifted a bronze version to the NMW in 1937 (NMW A 2562).

¹⁰³ Ovid, *Les Métamorphoses* trans. George Layfette (Lausanne: Alfred Skira, 1931).

garde direct-carving generation. As an accomplished carver, he believed they “deliberately refrain[ed] in their timidity from putting their materials to the fullest and most characteristic use”,¹⁰⁴ that is, they failed to use the material to reflect the material object they were intending to represent. This demonstrates that the ageing John was out of touch with current developments, as a result, he came to be regarded as one of the old school and, by the 1930s old fashioned.¹⁰⁵ In antithesis to what John imagined he and his contemporaries would become, and as Martina Droth and Peter Trippi argue, the growing “compulsion” since the early twentieth century “to erase or minimise Victorian debts [in] art of the twentieth century” has further pushed John into obscurity. In terms of periodisation, notions of the “Victorian” have, until recently, come to be positioned as diametrically oppositional to “modernism”.¹⁰⁶ Yet, as I discuss in the following chapters, John’s essential belief he was a “modern” artist encourages us to re-evaluate what modernism meant to John’s generation.

As well as addressing notions of modernisms, John and his work, as this thesis demonstrates, uniquely contributed to the role of New Sculpture in shaping Welsh national identities within the British Empire. Furthermore, from an artisanal family, John’s continued pride in his role as artisan blurs the boundaries between the centre and periphery and artist and artisan at the Royal Academy. Meanwhile, as a patriotic Welshman, his roles at the NMW enrich our understanding of the reception of Rodin there and in Britain (beyond London) more broadly. Through John’s work and his negotiation of institutional, political and social contemporary networking practices, this thesis develops the work of art historical scholars in these fields, such as David Getsy,¹⁰⁷ Droth,¹⁰⁸ Edwards, and Michael Hatt.¹⁰⁹ While all have published widely on

¹⁰⁴ John, *The Influence of Material*.

¹⁰⁵ Yet, as John was also a carver, he may have had more of an influence on other sculptors than is presently known.

¹⁰⁶ For more on notions of the modern, see David Getsy, ed., *Sculpture and the Pursuit of a Modern Ideal in Britain, C. 1880-1930*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); Prettejohn, *Modernity of Ancient Sculpture and Modern Painters, Old Masters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017); Paul Barlow, *Time Present and Time Past: the Art of John Evert Millais* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), and “Fear and Loathing of the academic, or just what it is that makes the avant-garde so different, so appealing?” in Rafael Cardoso Denis, Colin Trodd, eds., *Art and the Academy in the Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

¹⁰⁷ For David Getsy see: *Rodin: Sex and the Making of Modern Sculpture*, (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2010); and *Body Doubles*; and *Sculpture and the Pursuit of a Modern Ideal*. It is surprising that John does not feature in the latter, given that, minus the last ten years, the volume spans his career.

late-nineteenth-century British sculpture, including the recent *Sculpture Victorious: Art in an Age of Invention, 1837-1901* exhibition and catalogue, they significantly fail to consider John.¹¹⁰ The Symbolism catalogues also largely overlooked John. While Robert Upstone's chapter, "Symbolism in Three Dimensions" in *The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Watts: Symbolism in Britain* mentions John, he merely places him within an "homogeneous group" of New Sculptors before turning his attention to the work of Gilbert, Watts, Bates and Frampton.¹¹¹

In terms of key texts, the only and so far most thorough work on John is Fiona Pearson's 1979 exhibition catalogue, *Goscombe John at the National Museum of Wales*.¹¹² This biographical account of his life and career offers an extensive illustrated catalogue of many of his works, including those he did and did not exhibit at the RA, as well as works he donated to the NMW. As the main source of information on John, Pearson's catalogue has usually been cited where John has been mentioned by sculpture writers including Benedict Read, *Victorian Sculpture*, 1982,¹¹³ and Susan Beattie *The New Sculpture*, 1983. Beattie argues that the changes brought about in British sculpture stemmed largely from Alfred Stevens' work, rather

¹⁰⁸ For Martina Droth see: "Taking Shape"; *The Cult of the Statuette in Late Victorian Britain*, (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2000) and edited with Sebastian Clerbois, *Revival and Invention: Sculpture through its Material Histories* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011).

¹⁰⁹ For Michael Hatt see: with Charlotte Klonk, *Art History: A Critical Introduction to Its Methods*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); *The Edwardian Sense: Art, Design, and Performance in Britain, 1901–1910* (Yale Center for British Art, 2010); (Editor), *Sculpture Victorious: Art in an Age of Invention, 1837-1901* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014). And articles: "Uranians and Imperialists", in eds. Timothy Barringer, Douglas Fordham, and Geoffrey Quilley, *Art and the British Empire*, (Manchester University Press, 2007); "Space, Surface, Self: Homosexuality and the Aesthetic Interior", *Visual Culture in Britain*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Summer 2007, 105–128; "A Great Sight: Henry Scott Tuke and His Models", in eds. Jane Desmarais, Martin Postle, and William Vaughan, *Models and Supermodels: The Artist's Model in Britain* (Manchester University Press, 2006) 89–104; "Near and Far: Hamo Thornycroft's Mower and the Homoerotics of Labour", *Art History*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 2003, 26–55. For more on masculinities and sexualities see Edwards, *Anxious Flirtations: Homoeroticism, Art and Aestheticism in Victorian Britain*, special issue of *Visual Culture in Britain* 8.1 (Spring 2007); "A Queer Variety of Natural History"? Staging the Mid-Victorian in Edmund Gosse's Sculptural Criticism, c.1890-1907, in Martina Droth and Peter Trippi, eds, *Change/Continuity: Writing about Art in Britain Before and After 1900* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2014).

¹¹⁰ The exhibition ran from 25 February to 25 May 2015.

¹¹¹ Robert Upstone, "Symbolism in Three Dimensions" in *The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Watts: Symbolism in Britain 1860–1910*, (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1997) exhibition catalogue, 83.

¹¹² Fiona Pearson, *Goscombe John*.

¹¹³ Read's contributions include: *Victorian Sculpture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); *Pre-Raphaelite Sculpture* (London: Lund Humphries, 1991). "Edwardian" Sculpture" in *The Edwardians: Secrets and Desires* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Australia, 2004) exhibition catalogue; Benedict Read and Peyton Skipwith, *Sculpture in Britain Between the Wars* (London: Fine Art Society, 1986).

than, as Gosse claimed, Leighton's *Athlete*.¹¹⁴ It is surprising that three years after Pearson, Beattie is able to dismiss John so thoroughly even as she recognised that he was "by no means [...] peripheral to the main stream of the New Sculpture movement". Referring to his "sprite-like" child nudes such as *Boy at Play* (1895), she castigated John as having a "strong tendency to confuse symbolism with sentimentality and whimsy". This work, as I argue later, is a far cry from "whimsy". *Childhood/A Maid so Young* (1897), a bust of John's daughter, Muriel, taken from a full-length statue, had, Beattie believed, "a place in the sequence of mood portraits" following Gilbert's influential *Head of a Girl* (1883). Yet, this, she claimed, was "an isolated experiment",¹¹⁵ as John's "pretty conceits", *The Elf* and his boy nude, *Joyance* (1899), "hark dully back" to well-known salon works such as Hippolyte Moulin's *Une Trouvaille à Pompéi* (1863, fig. 30).¹¹⁶ This thesis challenges Beattie allegations that John's "failure", stemmed from his inability to "fully [...] comprehend or follow [...] symbolist implications".¹¹⁷ Similarly Read, who mentioned John briefly in *Victorian Sculpture*, frequently cited Pearson's catalogue. While he incorrectly claimed John's father was a "stone-mason", he did acknowledge John in relation to Rodin, the breakdown of barriers between the fine arts and craftsmanship,¹¹⁸ "local patronage of national artists",¹¹⁹ and the display of "nationalist" sculpture; all points I return to throughout this thesis.¹²⁰

John's work is more comprehensively covered in the *Public Sculpture in Britain* series. The series so far offers an account of some of John's public memorials around the UK. The London editions cover monuments from the *Viscount Wolseley* equestrian statue (1920), to the *Sullivan Memorial* in the Embankment Gardens (1903). The Liverpool volume includes detailed accounts of the *Edward VII* equestrian monument (1911), the *King's Regiment* (1905) and the *Engine Room*

¹¹⁴ Susan Beattie, *The New Sculpture*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 180. See also Edmund Gosse, the "New Sculpture, 1879–1894", *Art Journal*, 1894.

¹¹⁵ Beattie, *The New Sculpture*, 179.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Read, *Victorian Sculpture*, 308.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 348.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 368.

Heroes memorial (1918).¹²¹ To the writers of these volumes, John's relevance is evident through the considerable detail given to his monumental works.

Following Beattie and Read's minor mentions, and Pearson's catalogue, John has since fallen from the scholarship. Despite a major revival of Victorian sculpture studies John remains absent. Of those revived, Thornycroft, Leighton, Gilbert, and Harry Bates are all first generation New Sculptors. Notwithstanding the relatively small age differences (Gilbert was only seven years older than John), and that they all exhibited their works simultaneously, the next wave, or second generation, is largely missing. The exceptions being Kirsty Breedon's work on Ward, Andrew Jezzard's on Frampton, Nicola Capon's *John Tweed: Sculpting the Empire* (2013), Getsy's inclusion of James Havard Thomas in *Sculpture and the Pursuit of a Modern Ideal*, and the *Sculpture Victorious* exhibition.¹²² On a wider British and post-colonial platform, John has, nevertheless, been forgotten for nearly forty years.¹²³

In terms of Empire and nationality in relation to John and this thesis, Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich's *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity* articulates the processes that underpin the attainment, organisation and exploitation of the "nonwhite Empire" and its "subsequent decolonization".¹²⁴ In particular Bridge and Fedorowich's chapter, "Mapping the British world" and Aled Jones and Bill Jones, "The Welsh world and the British Empire, c.1851–1939: An exploration", explore the dynamics of Empire's "multiplicity of Metropoles and

¹²¹ Philip Ward-Jackson, *Public Sculpture of the History City of London*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), Ray McKenzie, *Public Sculpture of Glasgow* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), and Terry Cavanagh, *Public Sculpture of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997).

¹²²See Kirsty Breedon, "Herbert Ward: Sculpture, Exploration and Politics in the Atlantic World, 1878-1919" (Ph.D. Thesis University of York, 2014) and "'A Voice from the Congo': Herbert Ward's Sculptures in Europe and America" in Julie F. Codell ed., *Transculturation in British Art, 1770–1930*, (London: Routledge, 2012); Andrew Jezzard, "The Sculptor Sir George Frampton", (PhD dissertation, University of Leeds, 1999); Nicola Capon, *John Tweed: Sculpting the Empire*, (Reading: Spire Books, 2013); Getsy, "The Lycidas 'Scandal' of 1905: James Havard Thomas at the Crux of Modern Sculpture in Britain", *Sculpture and the Pursuit of a Modern Ideal*.

¹²³ John's career was regularly charted during and after his life, in journals and newspapers. *The Studio*, *Wales*, *Cassell's Magazine*, *The Saturday Review*, *The Art Journal*, *The Athenaeum*, *The Magazine of Art*, *The Strand Magazine*, the *Builder* and *The Architect* all commented on his work. The principal public archives on John can be found in Wales at the NMW in Cardiff, National Library of Wales (NLW) in Abersytwyth, Cardiff Central Library, and in London, the Royal Academy (RA), Tate Britain and the National Archives at Kew.

¹²⁴ Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich, *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity* (Abingdon, Oxford; New York: Routledge, 2003), 1.

peripheries”.¹²⁵ As Bridge and Fedorowich claim, Marxist historians’ “narrowly elitist [...] focus” and economic determinism has “downplayed the crucial human dimension of Empire”.¹²⁶ The result is an “England – centric” perspective that failed to take “the rest of the peoples of the home islands and of the British overseas into their accounts.” Consequently, national historians from the British dominions have deliberated on what constitutes Britishness. The value of which originally developed as eighteenth-century “English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish colonists” arriving in North America needed a shared expression of identity that not only “describe their heritage” but their “common allegiance to the British crown.”¹²⁷

Thus, individual coexisting identities “did not contradict or undermine Imperial Britishness”. Just as “a Liverpudlian” could also self-identify as “a Lancastrian, Englishman and Briton”, in New Zealand, for example, an individual could be an “Aucklander, North Islander, New Zealander and Briton”. In Wales, I might add, one could be Welsh (from the north, south etc.), Celtic, and British (especially in the south), but not English.¹²⁸ While Bridge and Fedorowich focus on notions of the British Empire “as a phenomenon of British migration and mass settlement”, this thesis looks at Welshness as simultaneously opposing and aligning with Britishness from within and without Wales.¹²⁹ John’s diplomatically crafted Welsh identity allows for a wider consideration of how the Welsh reconciled their national identity in Wales and London.

Julie Codell’s edited book, *Transculturation in British Art, 1770–1930*, explores imperial relations and cultural hegemony against concepts and methodologies of key figures such as Edward Said, Michel Foucault and Homi Bhabha.¹³⁰ Codell and the other authors provide a valuable framework through their explorations of transculturation and transnationalism, both of which inform my argument in Chapters 2 and 3. As Codell notes, while “nations are ideologically presumed to be fixed and

¹²⁵ See Bridge and Fedorowich, “Mapping the British world”, 1-15, and Aled Jones and Bill Jones, “The Welsh world and the British Empire, c.1851–1939: An exploration”, 57-81, in Bridge and Fedorowich, *The British World*.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2–3.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹³⁰ Griselda Pollock, *Avant-garde Gambits, 1888-93: Gender and the Colour of Art History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992).

homogeneous, cultures are often and invariably transcultural, shifting and inconstant”.¹³¹ Transculturation, then, is “the praxis of existing cultures that produce constant cross-cultural and subcultural assimilations into new forms on macro (cultural) and micro (individual) levels”. This leads to “transnationalism”, the ideological and geographical cross-border “borrowing” of other cultures’ “ideas or goods”.¹³²

Codell and the writers contributing to her volume, including Breedon on Ward’s sculptures in America and Europe and Edwards on Harry Bates’ Lord Roberts’ Memorial,¹³³ explore the conceptual “Imperial roots” from which “cultural exchanges” happen. While many occur in the “context of unequal power relations”, they open up “opportunities for exchange and interactions” creating “space” as “a work of art or an encounter [that] momentarily suspended these imbalances.”¹³⁴ With relevance to John’s work, this leads us to notions of uncertain hybridity. This is always ambivalent, “since its elements are not always combined in the same proportions”. Simultaneously, hybridity acknowledges the Imperial “privileged space of hegemonic power relations” to “endorse or obstruct colonial social, political and economic hierarchies.”¹³⁵

Another key post-colonial text is Griselda Pollock’s 1993 book, *Avant-garde Gambits, 1888–93: Gender and the Colour of Art History*. Pollock’s arguments radiate from Paul Gauguin’s painting, *Manao Tupapau* (1892) and the tactical “gambits” of “reference deference and difference”. Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Karl Marx, and Claude Lévi Strauss, Pollock aptly sets the scene for these “new strategies”, that were “symptomatic of the economic modernisation of artistic practice by capitalist forms of production”. That is, artworks perceived as commodities created for a market within expanding systems of “circulation and publicity”. As she argues, to “become cultural capital and make cultural profit”, the

¹³¹ Julie F. Codell (ed.), *Transculturation in British Art, 1770–1930* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), 2.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ See Breedon “A Voice from the Congo”: Herbert Ward’s Sculptures in America and Europe” and Jason Edwards, “War and Peace: Harry Bates’s Lord Roberts Memorial in London, Calcutta, and Glasgow” in Codell, *Transculturation*.

¹³⁴ Codell, *Transculturation*, 2.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 3.

product – the artwork – must be recognised as part of the “public discourse” within the “critical framework”.¹³⁶ As we shall see in Chapter 1, John adopted this policy throughout his career.

While John’s use of this “gambit” marked his place in RA circles, as anthropological art portraying colonised people (including ‘colonies’ such as Wales) they differed from those by other artists and anthropologists (see Chapters 2 and 3). Pollock offers a post-colonial theory based on reception and interpretation within wider colonial discourses that, as I argue at various points throughout the thesis, concerns location-dependent meaning. As Pollock notes, Gauguin’s works when displayed in Paris “were read according to local ideological – aesthetic and colonial – frameworks.”¹³⁷ Pollock’s heavy reliance on psychoanalysis to “illuminate the construction of sexual and racial difference” is not explicitly applicable within the context of my argument,¹³⁸ nonetheless, her influential argument on Imperial relations, acknowledging that “colonial domination is not only economic and political” but psychological, has affected my reading of several of John’s works under investigation here. While Pollock is often concerned with notions of male desire of the colonized female body, the relationship between coloniser and colonised, the “distorted figurations [...] in which the personality and the body is literally colonised by [...] the dominating group”, is relevant on a broader level.¹³⁹ In counterpoint to the dynamic coloniser/colonised relationships with indigenous people bought to Britain for entertainment, Pollock argues that “under the colonists gaze, Tahiti’s cultural and historical specificity was frozen as a mise-en-scene [...] fantasy” to signify “temporal, sexual, cultural, racial” difference.¹⁴⁰ While Pollock focuses on the French colony of Tahiti, scholarship on Wales as an English colony is small. The legacy of Welsh artists or Welsh identity in visual culture is exceedingly under researched.

Other than Peter Lord’s vast three-volume millennial project, *Imaging the Nation* (2000), that sporadically (given the volumes’ vast time span) considers John and his

¹³⁶ Pollock, *Avant-garde Gambits*, 15.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

role in Welsh art and culture, as well as brief mentions of Welsh sculpture (many by non-Welsh sculptors), there is virtually nothing on Welsh nineteenth-century sculpture;¹⁴¹ a fact emblematised by the *Sculpture Victorious* catalogue. While the neo-Classical Welsh sculptor John Gibson is acknowledged, John and Welsh sculptors more generally fail to gain recognition. Indeed, Elkington's electroplated *Death of Tewdric* (1848-56) is credited to the English sculptor John Thomas, rather than its rightful author, the Brecon sculptor John Evan Thomas.¹⁴²

One essay (other than Jones and Jones) outlines the problems of the legacy of Welsh artists is Matthew Potter's "Struggling with the Welsh masters, 1880-1914".¹⁴³ Potter links the Welsh debate for a national school of art or a national museum with its "inchoate" institutional and art historical weaknesses. While Potter rightly observes that "the regional divisions within Wales" impeded "the creation of a nationalist sensibility" for art students, he does not, given the limited space of his essay, emphasise enough the significance of these divisions within Wales.¹⁴⁴ My thesis draws out the subtleties and the effects of these divisions within the growing nationalistic cultural-political environment and the development of NMW.

John's Welsh origins play a crucial role in my discussions of his work, especially through negotiations of centre and periphery. Many Welsh artists had looked to London as well as their homeland to gain success in their careers; while John looked in both directions, he also attempted to bridge the gap between.¹⁴⁵ As Lord, Kenneth O. Morgan and M. Wynn Thomas all acknowledge, this was a period of growing nationalisms. Against the backdrop of rising unrest in Ireland and India, many nationalists, including the future liberal Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, were

¹⁴¹ *Public Sculpture* volumes on Welsh monuments are long over due.

¹⁴² Hatt, Droth, and Edwards, "Introduction", *Sculpture Victorious*, 33.

¹⁴³ In Matthew C. Potter (ed.), *The Concept of the 'Master' in Art Education in Britain and Ireland, 1770 to the Present* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013).

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁴⁵ An exception to this is the Irish sculptor Oliver Sheppard (1865 – 1941) who, following his studies at the National Art Training School in South Kensington and in Paris, successfully focussed on Irish works for Irish commissions whilst living and teaching in Nottingham before he returned to Ireland. See Paula Murphy, *Nineteenth-century Irish Sculpture: Native genius Reaffirmed* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2010), 214.

calling for Welsh home rule.¹⁴⁶ Beyond this, the importance of place is key to John's early career; we have seen that Paris played a major role not only in terms of his contact with Rodin.¹⁴⁷ While in Britain, as Claudine Mitchell notes, following Rodin's presidency of the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers in 1903 and its policy of decentralisation in 1905, he became "physically present" through his works at art institutions across Britain.¹⁴⁸ In listing the locations of his works, Mitchell includes Scottish as well as English cities; that Wales is conspicuously missing highlights the gap that John was keen to address, especially through his involvement with the NMW, the National *Eisteddfodau* and the Cymmrodorian Society in London. Not only second generation New Sculptors, such as John, but Wales too, is overlooked in British scholarship.

Following what Gosse termed, the "first flush" of the "enthusiasm" of the New Sculpture "young masters" (who taught those that followed), scholarly interest in John has since waned, despite the fact that critics such as Gosse saw his "genius".¹⁴⁹ Even though John caused a stir at the RA in the early 1890s, and received high praise, scholars assume that, as one of the second generation, he was not breaking new ground. Despite, many positive comments, the negative reviews he received may have affected later scholarly interest. Yet, as this thesis has found previously unexplored primary sources, new statements can be made that challenge previous assumptions. Gosse, who professed he was 'one of [John's] warmest admirers',¹⁵⁰ believed, in 1894, that although he was still "to assert himself", he possessed an "absolute mastery of technique". Gosse was so impressed with John's "skill and his extraordinary learning" that he proclaimed, "outside the Royal Academy" John was "without a rival, the most distinguished sculptor".¹⁵¹ When John was elected to Associate Royal Academician five years later, Gosse wrote to John claiming that "[n]o election for a

¹⁴⁶ For more on Welsh art, history, politics and identity see, Peter Lord, *The Visual Culture of Wales: Imaging the Nation*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000); Kenneth O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); M. Wynn Thomas, *Nation of Wales: 1890–1914* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016); and Elaine Davey, "A National Architect? The Percy Thomas Practice and Welsh National Identity" (PhD Thesis, University of Cardiff, 2013).

¹⁴⁷ See Getsy's work on Rodin's materiality, surface and sexual desire, including the homosexual from the male heterosexual sculptor's perspective, in *Rodin: Sex and the Making of Modern Sculpture* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2010).

¹⁴⁸ Claudine Mitchell ed., *Rodin: Zola of Sculpture* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 3.

¹⁴⁹ Gosse also singled out fellow student George Frampton. Gosse, "The New Sculpture", 306.

¹⁵⁰ Gosse, letter to John, February 3, 1899. NLW GB 0210 MSGOSCOMBE (17), NLW Archive.

¹⁵¹ Gosse, "The New Sculpture", 307.

very long time has given me more satisfaction”.¹⁵² Spielmann, meanwhile, was not as enthusiastic. He believed John’s works were “perhaps not very decorative” and “tend[ed] towards realism”. Yet, Spielmann added that John’s “main characteristic” was the “conscientious love of the purity and refinement of nature [and] the beauty and delicacy of the drawing”, through which his works were “always executed with good taste, and [were] delicate to a degree”.¹⁵³

Given the paucity of scholarship on John, it is perhaps ironic that he was the first of his generation to be accorded, not one but two exhibitions in his own right. Held at the NMW, the first occurred in 1948 and the second, in 1979, led to Pearson’s catalogue. These exhibitions placed John at the forefront of New Sculpture scholarship, yet, staged in Cardiff, the intention to raise awareness of the important late-nineteenth sculptor failed to gain wider scholarly attention. This was due, in part, to the London-centric perception of ‘provincial’ locations, as demonstrated by Dorment’s widely acclaimed 1986 retrospective exhibition on Gilbert at the RA in London that launched further scholarship such as Edwards’s work on Gilbert, and Gilbert’s on-going reputation. By the last quarter of the twentieth century, then, the gulf between centre and periphery, a theme I return to in Chapter 2, was still prevalent despite previous attempts from those, like John, to elevate awareness of art in the provinces, or, as some believed in late-nineteenth-century Wales, the Celtic nation attached to the English mainland. The following chapters demonstrate that many nineteenth century concerns are still relevant and that John’s geographical networks had far reaching effects.

The Thesis

Consisting of three chapters, this thesis looks at John’s networks through the agency of objects in the upper studio photograph. The first chapter considers three of John’s early ideal bronze works: the *Parting* (1889), *Morpheus* (1890), and *St. John the Baptist*. The latter two, like *The Elf*, owe their existence to the success of the career-launching *Parting* that won John the RA student Gold Medal and two-year travel

¹⁵² Gosse, letter to John, February 3, 1899.

¹⁵³ Spielmann, *British Sculpture*, 131-2.

scholarship. All exhibited at the RA, they chart John's transition from outstanding student to professional sculptor. In doing so, the first chapter contributes to our understanding of John's connections through his student days at the artisanal Lambeth School before studying fine art at the Academy. John's travels both influenced his work and demonstrated his loyalties, as they take us to cities such as London and Paris as well as countries such as Wales, Italy, Greece and Africa. This chapter establishes John's links with Rodin, his attention-gaining tactics in London, and portrayals of masculinity before and after Wilde's 1895 notoriety, and ties in with the broader issues of late-nineteenth-century sculpture and male sexuality.

While Chapter 2 considers a bequest John made to the NMW in 1924, in memory of his late wife,¹⁵⁴ the chapter initially investigates, through John, notions of Welsh art and its contributions to rising nationalism and Celtic revivals in Wales during the early twentieth century. In so doing, my focus centres on the newly established NMW, John's role as a founding Council member and his collection building policies. His contribution raises awareness of the plurality of cultural nationalisms in Wales and the British Empire, thus, this is the first in-depth exploration of New Sculpture's contribution to Welsh nationalisms. The Museum's gratitude to John and his contributions is evident in the many letters held in its archive; the director, Cyril Fox claimed that without John's "personal gifts, and those which [he] influenced, we should make a poor show".¹⁵⁵ Within an institutional network that included club affiliations (such as the St. John's Wood Art Club), John used his wide-ranging connections to encourage friends and peers to donate or bequeath works. Yet, in recommending that the Museum purchase some of their work, he was also helping his friends financially. Through his bequest, that included *The Elf*, the marble bust, *Age* (1892) and *The Drummer Boy* (1907) featured in the upper studio photograph and exhibited at the RA, and other early prominent pieces, such as *The Parting* and *Morpheus*, John was looking to his own legacy at the NMW. On a personal level he positioned himself as the Welsh Rodin, while, through his insistence on building a national Welsh collection, he posited the Museum as a National Gallery for Welsh

¹⁵⁴ Several Welsh museums are now amalgamated under the umbrella title of National Museums Wales. While the Cardiff Museum is now the National Museum Cardiff, I to refer to it in its original form as the National Museum Wales (NMW).

¹⁵⁵ John, letter to Cyril Fox, June 9, 1927. NMW A 2627, NMW Archive.

Art, following the founding of its British forerunner in London, the National Gallery for British Art (now Tate Britain).

Finally, Chapter 3 further develops a theme that runs throughout this thesis: Empire and imperialism. Getsy argues that the complexity of Victorian sculpture's relationship "with empire, colonialism and race" has, until recently, been largely overlooked.¹⁵⁶ I consider John's New Sculptural interpretations during the even more overlooked turn-of-the-twentieth-century period amidst tensions prior to World War I. Considering three of John's explicitly colonial works (as they appear in the chapter), the *Viscount Minto Memorial* (1914), *Sir Digbijai Singh of Balrampur* (1907), and *Bokani, A Pygmy Chief* (1906), offers a unique cross section of early twentieth-century imperial sculpture through the lens of John's Welshness. Many of John's works, from equestrian statues to memorial plaques, were sent around the world, to India, America, Canada, Iraq, and South Africa. In light of Mark Stocker's work on Victoria's Memorials in New Zealand and Edwards' on Harry Bates' *Lord Roberts Memorial* in Calcutta (1898),¹⁵⁷ the juxtapositional relations of these works offers a unique opportunity to study in depth different aspects of visual colonialism by the same sculptor within an eight-year span. This includes the elevated portrayal of British dignitaries against the backdrop of socio-cultural and political tensions within the British Raj and its subaltern people, including the sculptural treatment of wealthy high-status Indian subjects rewarded for their loyalty. The sculpture of a non-British colonial treated in Britain as both an anthropological specimen and a figure of popular entertainment explores prevalent attitudes and tensions. In contrast to these, John's patronage of Indian sculptor, Fanindranath Bose demonstrates his support for a young expatriate and colonial citizen at a time of increasing pro-Indian Independence activism. John's support for Bose highlights parallels to Wales and John's relationship with his homeland.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Getsy, "Afterword: Victorian Sculpture for the Twenty-First Century." *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*. 2016 (22). DOI: <http://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.777>.

¹⁵⁷ See Mark Stocker, "'A token of their love'": Queen Victoria Memorials in New Zealand", *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*. 2016 (22). DOI: <http://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.724>. For Edwards see footnote 132.

¹⁵⁸ Bose is also represented at the NMW through John who donated the statuettes, *Boy in Pain* (NMW A 287) and *The Hunter* (NMW A 322) in 1928.

Chapter One

A “Harmonious Consensus of the Component Elements”: London and Paris, c. 1886–1894

It is in ideal work that the sculptor shows best what is in him. [...] his imaginative faculties, his sense of poetry, his power of composition, his elegance of handling – in short, the qualities which make the sculptor a great artist – these can only be seen in ideal work.¹⁵⁹ (Marion H. Spielmann)

Art [...] [is] not an isolated phenomenon tossed on the hands of chance, but a phenomenon organically developed and closely interwoven with the inner life of the races in whose midst it grows or fails.¹⁶⁰ (Frederic Leighton, PRA)

As these quotations imply, ideal works and the origin of art were important considerations for young artists establishing their careers. As influential art critic, Marion Spielmann noted, for the 1901 RA exhibition, the quality of a sculptor’s “imaginative” ideal work signalled “his” (very rarely, *her*) potential. Ideal works were produced for gallery exhibition and allowed artists to demonstrate their “imaginative faculties” that included poetry, composition, and “elegance of handling”. For each new generation displaying these qualities was vital to gain attention. Meanwhile, sixteen years earlier, Leighton, by then President of the Royal Academy stated, in his bi-annual Academy *Addresses*, that this was achieved through a sound (Academic) art education that fundamentally included student travel. As they advanced from the plaster reproductions at the RA, the South Kensington Museum, and the extensive collection at Sydenham (a necessary base from which to start), Leighton advocated that students should then experience first hand the “closely interwoven” political, environmental, and socio-cultural conditions gained in visiting the place from which “the races” had originally produced their work. As Prettejohn argues, rather than an artificial second-hand encounter with a reproduction, an unmediated first-hand one permitted the student a “spontaneous response” to the original works.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Marion H. Spielmann, “At the Royal Academy exhibition, 1901. VI – Landscapes, sea-pieces, and sculpture”, *Magazine of Art*, 25, 1901, 503.

¹⁶⁰ Frederic Leighton, “Address December 10th 1885”, in *Addresses Given to the Students of the Royal Academy By the late Lord Leighton* (New York: Longmans Green & Co., 1897), 98.

¹⁶¹ See Elizabeth Prettejohn, *The Modernity of Ancient Sculpture*, 13.

The early ideal works, *Parting*, *Morpheus* and *St. John the Baptist* (figs. 1.1–1.3) were intended to demonstrate John’s first-hand encounters with works in their original locations and comparatively demonstrate his growing maturity as a sculptor. Whilst the latter two appear in the upper studio photograph (not always as sculpture, the *Morpheus* is a framed drawing or lithograph displayed on the wall adjacent to the fireplace, fig. 1.4), they, like *The Elf*, owe their existence to the success of the *Parting* at the Academy. They were exhibited at the RA between 1890 and 1894 and span the early years of his professional career. They draw on John’s travels, experiences at the RA in London, and his loyalty to his Welsh homeland, charting his transition from promising student to successful professional sculptor prior to his election as an RA in 1909. Themes of masculinity and identity can also be traced in these works’ complex layers of homosocial meanings.

In addition to the homosocial, this chapter endeavours to disentangle further questions these works raise. What, for example, do their connections tell us about John as a young student transitioning from the Lambeth School of Art to the Royal Academy Schools? How did his travels affect his work and demonstrate affiliated loyalties? What do these works tell us about John’s absorption of practices and the strategies he developed to further his career? Finally, what do they and his career trajectory tell us about late-nineteenth-century sculptural education and practices more generally?

In looking at these questions, one certainty emerges: all three works were a showcase in which John displayed his “imaginative faculties”, drawing attention to his “power of composition”, “poetry” and “elegance”. Thus, they provide an insight into the strategies young sculptors adopted to gain the attention of particularly influential Academicians and critics. Through these, John demonstrated the RA’s educational position on two counts. Firstly, in Getsy’s terms, that the formal “emulation” of important artists was fundamental,¹⁶² and, secondly, under Leighton’s presidency, that travel was essential to a young artist’s career. Tracing the course of John’s works demonstrates his approach to then current theoretical debates of sculptural verisimilitude through surface effects, materiality, and, to borrow from Getsy,

¹⁶² Getsy, “Privileging The Object of Sculpture: Actuality and Harry Bates’s Pandora of 1890” in *Art History*, Volume 28, issue 1, February 2005, [74–95] 76.

“corporeality” to assert his own unique place within an intensely competitive realm.¹⁶³

In these early years, before the demand for lucrative portraiture and memorial commissions dominated his studio, John produced several ideal works. His esteem for first generation New Sculptors, especially Gilbert and Leighton, is evident through the references he made to them in various journals, newspaper articles and letters produced throughout his long life. As Beattie contradictorily observed, by the turn of the twentieth century New Sculpture was entering “the phase of its highest achievement”,¹⁶⁴ yet, by 1901, it was entering its “most insidiously” imminent “decline”, as the second generation New Sculptors, who were “destined to fail”, were then “still the focus of hope and excitement”.¹⁶⁵ Despite her observations, John, as one of the second generation, remained, in his terms, a “modern” artist still influenced by the first generation, who, to achieve success, knew he had to negotiate his role and style within contemporary sculptural practices.

To both align and differentiate himself from his peers and predecessors, John’s travels through Europe and the Near East were vital in allowing him to explore countries and cultures other than his own and to incorporate them into his work. Such “imitation” was, as Prettejohn puts it, “a genuine road to originality” if students were encouraged to engage with and learn from works by the important “old masters”, the Ancient Greek and Renaissance sculptors, as well as more recent ones.¹⁶⁶ Discussing *Parting, Morpheus* and *St. John*, however, not only demonstrates an interest in artists of the past, it establishes that in Britain New Sculpture continued its interest in French sculptural developments into the early twentieth century. While the manoeuvres John deployed to advance his career are discussed in depth, this does not underplay the importance of the study of “old masters” and the issues this raises. These elements should be interrogated within the contextual plurality of art-historical narratives during this period.

¹⁶³ Getsy, *Body Doubles*, 1.

¹⁶⁴ Beattie, *The New Sculpture*, 180.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 231.

¹⁶⁶ Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Modern Painters, Old Masters*, 15. While, with the exception of Michelangelo, “old master” sculptors do not figure in the same sense as painters. Yet, as this also ties in with Richardson’s comments below, it is a helpful methodology to think about sculpture.

For young sculptors entering the RA Schools, the annual exhibition held at the Academy would have significant impact.¹⁶⁷ For sculptors, the RA's exhibitions were the major annual event, not least because Burlington House could display large works.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, sculptors could exhibit strategically high-profile works competing for the favourable critical attention that was so crucial in furthering their careers. 1884 was an important year for John as he enrolled at the RA schools; the exhibition that year was also significant as several key sculptors showed their works. These included Thornycroft's *Mower*, Gilbert's *Icarus* and Rodin's *Âge d'Airain*, first exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1877.¹⁶⁹ Exhibiting works from 1877 and 1884 at the RA was significant as two seminal important and controversial works, that changed the face of sculptural practice, were shown in London and Paris in 1877. Leighton showed *Athlete Wrestling with a Python* at the RA, and Rodin showed *Âge* at the Paris Salon (figs. 1.5 and 1.6). While John's early works appear to show an overwhelming dependence on Rodin, as the *Morpheus* and *St John* will shortly testify, this exhibition had a profound effect on John.

Individually, the *Parting*, *Morpheus* and *St John the Baptist*, like *The Elf*, navigate between the ideal and real, evoking gritty emotion and dream-like imagined states as they map John's early career. The *Parting* won John the RA Gold Medal and Travel Scholarship, and depicts a seated old man with lifeless child across his lap. This work marks the successful culmination of John's student days, drawing on his arrival in London, his early travel experiences and attendance at the City and Guilds Art School at Lambeth and the RA schools before 1889. His iconographical language and the sources he referenced demonstrate his pre- and post-RA training, including his Dalou-influenced French modelling training at Lambeth and his growing knowledge of Ancient Greek, Gothic and Renaissance sculpture gleaned through his student travels.

¹⁶⁷ John first exhibited there in 1886, showing *Study of a Head – Girlhood* (John's cousin) and *A Study of a Head* (school study) both in terracotta.

¹⁶⁸ Not always successful, the sculpture exhibition spaces were constantly criticised for overcrowding and restricted viewing positions.

¹⁶⁹ *Âge* was illustrated in the *Magazine of Art* in 1883-4. See Mitchell, "Zola of sculpture", 21.

The *Parting*

Sign-Posting John's Career: Travel, "Turning Point" and "Landmark"

While not appearing in the upper studio photograph, the *Parting*, as a launching pad for other works, is nevertheless important. It marks John's emergence from a student into the competitive realm of professional sculpture practice. It also reveals two of his key strategies developed at the RA from 1884: the importance of demonstrating through his work that he had taken advice and that flattery went far in gaining favourable attention and future commissions. To reach this stage, as we have seen, John's career stemmed from his artisanal roots in Cardiff, before moving to London as stonemason Nicholls's assistant in 1881,¹⁷⁰ and then joining Birch's studio. John believed the "turning point" in his career came when he won the RA Landseer Scholarship in 1887;¹⁷¹ the ensuing two-year grant meant he could end his apprenticeship and, as he recalled "blossomed forth" with his own studio in Pimlico.¹⁷² Two years later, he achieved his "first important landmark", winning the "blue ribbon" Gold Medal and Travel Scholarship.¹⁷³ With his sound technical background, John had soon learnt that at the RA emulation of French and Renaissance sculptors (especially once he had travelled) meant he could demonstrate through the synthesis of wide-ranging influences in his work, his growing art historical knowledge. Following two foreign trips, the *Parting*, a collection of "cut and paste" sources, was intended to signal John's progression from the plaster casts that he may have relied on for an earlier unsuccessful Gold Medal attempt in 1887 prior to

¹⁷⁰ Nicholls had been responsible for much of the decorative stonework undertaken for the restoration of Cardiff Castle, including the famous Animal Wall.

¹⁷¹ In 1884, former Keeper of the Royal Academy, Charles Landseer, bequeathed ten thousand pounds for the funding of students. George Frampton was awarded the first Landseer prize in 1895. For more see 'Landseer Scholarships (Royal Academy of Arts), 1884-1950', Mapping the Practice and Profession of Sculpture in Britain and Ireland 1851-1951, University of Glasgow History of Art and HATII, online database 2011, accessed 16 Aug 2017.

http://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/view/event.php?id=msib4_1257848771.

¹⁷² The Elizabeth Street studio was just over a mile from the site intended for the new Gallery of British Art. Although John placed value on the importance of neighbourhoods, it unlikely that this was a reason John moved there. Whilst debates on a new national gallery for British art had been circulating for some time, Henry Tate did not offer his works until 1889 and the Milbank Penitentiary, formerly on the site, was not demolished until 1890. For more see Braden Taylor, *Art of a Nation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); and Francis Spalding, *Tate: a History* (London: Tate Publishing, 1988)

¹⁷³ Western Mail, "Sir Goscombe John Remembers".

travelling.¹⁷⁴ Alongside this, as we shall see, John also targeted influential individuals. In tactically demonstrating his admiration, he appropriated aspects of their work into his own. His intentional flattery, in Prettejohn's terms, his "generous imitation",¹⁷⁵ especially in a successful work, ensured attention. The *Parting* is an early example of this. Through the inclusion of elements from Lawrence Alma-Tadema's painting, *The Death of the First Born* (1872, fig. 1.7), John gained the Royal Academician's attention. Alma-Tadema recognised John's exceptional ability to express emotional depth in the *Parting*,¹⁷⁶ and "at once" commissioned a bronze version.¹⁷⁷ As the *Parting* remained displayed in Alma-Tadema's Grove End Road studio in London until his death, its significance to him is clear (fig. 1.8).

The title, *Parting*, was set by the RA Schools and John's response consists of a complex two-figure group, a study of life, death, youth and age, demonstrating his ability to convey pathos and sentiment within the New Sculpture remit of surface expressiveness.¹⁷⁸ For the students, the biennial award ceremony, the highlight of the RA's year, was the culmination of nine months work. Following the announcement of the set theme, works were submitted anonymously for adjudication. The judges faced "numerous Partings in immaculate plaster" that included "old men taking tearful farewell of their sons, maidens parting from their lovers, [and] wives bidding adieux to their husbands."¹⁷⁹ The ceremony, always held on 10th December in the council room, was crowded with "literary and artistic celebrities, Academicians' wives and daughters" as well as students and their families. The President, before announcing

¹⁷⁴ The plaster model was subsequently destroyed. See Pearson, 1979, 79, transcription of a manuscript by the artist listing John's work exhibited at the RA.

¹⁷⁵ Prettejohn, *Old Masters Modern Painters*, 15.

¹⁷⁶ Something John continued to develop especially in some of his most prestigious WW1 memorial commissions that have sensitively modelled figures of soldiers, wives and children evident in the *Defence of Home* (1916) at Port Sunlight and *The Response, 1914* (1923) at Newcastle.

¹⁷⁷ "The Royal Academy Election", *Art Journal*, March 1909, 71.

¹⁷⁸ The contrast of age and youth occurs in several of John's works, such as the clay sketch model *Old Man and Angel* and the bronze statuette, *Merlin and Arthur* (both NMW). John also produced individual studies of old age and youth: the detailed character analysis in *Age*, for example as well as the anatomical study of *Boy at Play* (1896) and the unusual composition of *The Elf*. These suggest a new focus of attention placed on the physicality of the object, particularly of the body through an imaginative ideal that echoed the New Sculpture's interest in a new range of subjects. See also Solicari on the use of children to denote sentimental, "social or moral commentary". Sonia Solicari, "Selling Sentiment: The Commodification of Emotion in Victorian Visual Culture", *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*. (2007). DOI: <http://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.458>.

¹⁷⁹ *Strand Magazine*, 1903, 718. It was also noted that the sculptor of "the victorious "Parting" [...] Mr W. Goscombe John [...] was made an Associate just ten years later".

the winner and delivering his famous *Address*, would lead the Academicians and Associates, known as the “faithful Forty and the trusty Thirty”, into the room to hear the results that would “determine [...] the future of English Art [sic.]”.¹⁸⁰ While the Academy recognised and celebrated the remarkable achievement of one of its own, the *Parting* demonstrates the successful amalgamation of John’s education and travel experiences before he embarked on the next stage of his career.

Before commencing work on the *Parting*, John followed Leighton’s advice and undertook a series of “[s]pecial studies” trips between 1888-89.¹⁸¹ The first, through Welsh funding,¹⁸² saw John departing from Cardiff via a tramp steamer bound for Naples, along with Australian sculptor, C. Douglas Richardson and the English painter and sculptor, A. G. Walker.¹⁸³ After seeing Italy’s “galleries & sculpture”, their tour culminated three months later in Paris where they visited the Salon.¹⁸⁴ In his journal, Richardson recorded their adventures through Naples, Rome and Florence, before reaching Paris. At the 1888 Salon, Richardson expressed his disappointment in contemporary French sculpture that seemed “cheap and thin and potboilerie”. Since visiting the “Old Masters”, the Salon sculpture he had seen “so far”, lacked “dignity or repose [...] everything looks flighty and claptrap”.¹⁸⁵ Anticipating Spielmann’s 1901 quotation that started this chapter, for Richardson, and possibly John, these works failed to demonstrate the “qualities” of “great” artists.¹⁸⁶ The second trip, in 1889, again courtesy of Welsh support, covered Italy and Greece. Ballinger had set up a travel fund for John through the Free Libraries Committee. This included a substantial donation from the Marquis of Bute who recommended John visit Athens. Armed with a letter of introduction from Cardiff’s mayor,¹⁸⁷ John headed for the British School at Athens where he modelled a medal.¹⁸⁸ As he recalled, whilst there, he saw “the remains of ancient sculpture”, then in Cairo he visited the Bulak Museum

¹⁸⁰ *Strand Magazine*, quoting Zangwill’s novel, *The Master*, 715.

¹⁸¹ John, letter to Ballinger, 6 July 1894. Cardiff Library MS 3 565 GJ:10.

¹⁸² This was a commission for a bust from Alderman Daniel Jones.

¹⁸³ Chapter 3 considers matters imperial in more detail.

¹⁸⁴ Transcribed in Margaret A Rose, *Victorian Artists: Margaret Baskerville (1861 – 1930) and C Douglas Richardson (1853 – 1932)*, (Melbourne: Margaret A. Rose, 1988), 24.

¹⁸⁵ Rose, *Victorian Artists*, 42

¹⁸⁶ “The Royal Academy Election”, *Art Journal*, March 1909, 71.

¹⁸⁷ NLW holds John’s passport and a letter from the Mayor approving John’s travel as student to further his education as a sculptor. NLW MS 23750E.

¹⁸⁸ The fund also contributed towards Cardiff Museum’s purchase of the *Morpheus*.

and saw “Egyptian sculpture, and Arabian Art at Constantinople & Cairo.”¹⁸⁹ It becomes apparent that, in addition to encouraging a wider understanding of art produced within different cultures, travel also offered opportunities for ambitious students to gain commissions and forge international connections.

Ambition: From Failure to Distinction

The *Parting* was not John’s first attempt at the Gold Medal; prior to travelling, he had made an earlier attempt. As the *Art Journal* noted, “[d]espite a successful career” at the RA schools, John’s 1887 Gold Medal entry was unsuccessful. Nonetheless, as he narrowly missed out, he “leapt at once to a place among the very few best modellers in the country.”¹⁹⁰ Moreover, coming so close to the victor, Frampton, his “friend and fellow student”, made the “coveted prize” even more desirable for John.¹⁹¹ The *Parting* draws attention to both Frampton’s successful work, *An Act of Mercy* (1887, fig 1.9), and his previous two unsuccessful attempts, *Cain the Outcast* (1885) and *The Brazen Serpent* (1886–7, fig. 1.10).¹⁹² The similarities even suggest a lack of imagination on John’s part through formal configurations of seated figures, including a child and older man. All these works owe a debt to Carpeaux’s *Ugolino and Sons* (1865–67, fig. 1.11), illustrated in *The Building News* in 1886.¹⁹³ John believed that Carpeaux was “the first of the distinguished band of modern sculptors who had shed the lustre of France” on British sculptors.¹⁹⁴ Yet, the differences, outlined in turn-of-the-century sculpture manuals, discussed below, indicates that John was strategically recalling Frampton’s work in an attempt to improve upon it, thus offering an example of non-generous imitation. While Frampton’s figures are horizontal, John may have believed his horizontal and vertical format provided stronger contrasts for a greater harmonious impact. As John’s *Act of Mercy* no longer survives, and with no pictorial record, it is impossible to analyse why it may have failed. The fact that his technical

¹⁸⁹ John, letter to Ballinger, 7 May 1894. Cardiff Library MS 3 565 GJ:9. Chapter 3 on Empire returns to these issues although it focuses on a different part of Africa, the Congo. With little to no work, other than my own on this, it is a key area for future research.

¹⁹⁰ “W. Goscombe John, Lecture by Mr David Francis”, *Guardian* 28 February 1907. NLW MS 23750E.

¹⁹¹ *Western Mail*, “Sir Goscombe John Remembers”

¹⁹² Images sourced from Jezzard, “The Sculptor Sir George Frampton”, Vol II, 2/4 and 2/5.

¹⁹³ Jezzard, “The Sculptor Sir George Frampton”, 286. Frampton’s 1886-7 attempt, *The Brazen Serpent*, also references the *Ugolino*; furthermore the similarities to John’s *Parting* indicate that Frampton’s earlier work had an impact on John, accessed February 10, 2017. etheses.whiterose.ac.uk.

¹⁹⁴ “Modern Sculpture”, *Morning Post*, February 26, 1906.

skills were acknowledged as exceptional, and that Leighton suggested he travel before his next attempt, suggests that John needed to develop a deeper understanding of the ideal qualities found in Antique and Renaissance sculpture in order to enrich his own work. John had to demonstrate that he had followed Leighton's advice; the obvious way to do this was to incorporate and, more significantly, adapt details of the works he studied in Europe and beyond. In doing so, the *Parting* pinpointed his presence at these locations. John was setting the stage to attract both Leighton's and wider critical attention.

If narrowly missing out on such a prestigious award garnered interest, then winning secured both press and critical acclaim. *The Saturday Review* reported that there were

many excellent statuettes and small groups, displaying the fine qualities [that] animate our new school of sculpture. Among the latter, the first place is easily won by [...] "Parting" [...]. We have drawn attention before to the extraordinary merit of Mr John as a modeller. For perfection of surface work in detail he has no living superior.¹⁹⁵

Yet, despite recognising John's success amongst stiff competition, few artists could go without some censure, and John was no exception. As the *Review*, anticipating Spielmann, continued to note, "almost the only fault in his work which we can suggest is a little timidity, or perhaps it would be more fair just to say the signs of a little [...] anxiety."¹⁹⁶ Notwithstanding this, he continued that John was "one of the most remarkable artists that the Royal Academy schools have turned out, and if he is true to his genius, his technical skill ought to carry him far."¹⁹⁷ John took his reviews to heart, referring to *The Saturday Review* as the "oracle".¹⁹⁸

Winning awards was a sure sign that attention-seeking strategies were working. While, as I argue throughout this thesis, John continually asserted his artisan credentials, as an ambitious young sculptor he was also keen to emphasise his

¹⁹⁵ "Sculpture at the Royal Academy", *The Saturday Review*, June 28, 1890, 794.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ John, letter to Ballinger, March 20, 1895. MS 3 565 GJ:13, Cardiff Library. Writing on "Natural Enemies of the Academy", Leslie acknowledged the double-edged power of the critics. Their "advantageous" reviews brought young artists to professional notice, yet, he conceded that to an artist already developing a good reputation, "defamatory ones [...] do but little harm" and "at any rate, they are an advertisement" often offset by other more praiseworthy reviews. Leslie, *Inner Life*, 267.

academic connections. John recollected that the Academy had meant “his association with famous academician sculptors”, including Boehm, Armstead, Thornycroft, and Thomas Brock, from whom he gained “the advantage of [their] tutorship”.¹⁹⁹ Through contacts such as these, John gained the initial attention of Thornycroft, who was important in relation to the Chantry Bequest, and Armstead, whose background in artisanal silverwork further linked arts and crafts with the RA (see Chapters 2 and 3).²⁰⁰

While John’s superior modelling skills were already being noted and the influences from his travels further elevated his work, considering turn-of-the-century sculpture manuals contextualises the extent of his technical abilities within the educational institutions at Lambeth and the RA. The important sculptor-authors, Edouard Lantéri and E. Rosco Mullins’s work stemmed from Dalou’s late nineteenth-century French modelling methods.²⁰¹ Lantéri’s 1902 book, *Modelling the Human Form*, built on Mullins’ earlier 1889 work, *Primer of Sculpture*. The *Parting* demonstrates John’s understanding of the teaching practices expounded in these manuals, bridging the gap between his early apprenticeships, his studies at Lambeth and the RA schools.²⁰²

The Parting: Influences and “individuality”

The play of artistic quotations, citations and influences is a subject that has interested scholars such as Harold Bloom, Pollock (see introduction and discussed below),

¹⁹⁹ Thornycroft showed Teucer at the RA, 1881 the same year John came to London.

²⁰⁰ For Armstead, see Edwards, “The Relief of Lucknow: Henry Hugh Armstead’s Outram Shield (c. 1858–62)”, *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 2016(22).

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.734>; Ingrid Roscoe, Emma Hardy and M.G. Sullivan, *A biographical Dictionary of Sculptors in Britain, 1660–1851* (New Haven; London: Yale University press, 2009); Spielmann, *British Sculpture*, 13–18; and *Sculpture Victorious*, 22, 36,43,44 & 413. Armstead would have taught John silver working that would prove significant in connection to important silverwork commissions such as the 1898 *Corn Hirlas* and the *Prince of Wales* insignia for the Investiture in 1911. For more on the Chantry Bequest see Amy Harris, “Forming a National Collection: Sculpture in the Chantry Bequest 1875–1917” (PhD dissertation, University of York, 2018).

²⁰¹ Lantéri’s book, which is still in use, became the seminal book on modelling for sculpture students. Lantéri taught John’s contemporary, Albert Toft, and the Welsh sculptor, Gwendoline Williams. French-born Lantéri was encouraged to come to London by his friend, Dalou. Lantéri first assisted Boehm, where he met Boehm’s pupil, Alfred Gilbert. Twelve years John’s senior, Lantéri taught at the RA and became Professor of Modelling at the National Art Schools in Kensington, although he never taught John. John purchased Mullin’s home at 24 Greville Road, following his death in 1901.

²⁰² For more on Dalou and Lantéri in London see Amélie Simier, “A French Demonstration: The Pivotal Roles of Jules Dalou and Edouard Lanteri in British Sculpture” in *Impressionists in London: French Artists in Exile 1870 – 1904*, Tate Exh cat. 2017, 145 – 170.

Edwards and Prettejohn.²⁰³ While John's work aligns with Prettejohn's recent argument that modern artists' study of ancient or antique art not only shaped modern art, but also modern perceptions of the "old masters", a selectively brief consideration of Bloom's earlier (1967) "anxiety of influence" elucidates John's use of influences and networks.²⁰⁴ Bloom proposed that the act of incorporating influences stems from an "anxiety" that resulted in "a complex act of misreading". The outcome of which is "a creative interpretation" that "implicate[s] a matrix of relationships".²⁰⁵ Like a good strong poet,²⁰⁶ John's "misreading" is partly an act of ambition, but, like Prettejohn's more "generous" examples, John used influences in various ways within individual works.²⁰⁷ Within the *Parting*, he intended to prove that he could improve his peer and rival Frampton's Gold Medal work, while simultaneously demonstrating his esteem for Alma-Tadema. John was not intending to improve or compete with Alma-Tadema's original work, but tactically signalling his deference to the senior artist.²⁰⁸

While "imitation" was an accepted, if debated, part of the curriculum, Lantéri was keen to point out that "individuality [made] the artist". While this should evolve along with the students' judgements of their own work, it was not a straightforward process. Lantéri argued that as "few [had] this supreme gift", struggling for individuality would only gain "deplorable" results.²⁰⁹ Emerging as one of the "few", John began to synthesise his travel experiences with the continental art he encountered into his work. John, on the verge of his professional career, was, as Mullins clarified, now "decid[ing] upon what lines [...] individuality can best develop itself." As a "modern sculptor", and having learnt the artisanal and Academic "technique of his art", John's

²⁰³ See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, (Oxford University Press, 1975); Edward's "By Abstraction Brings Forth Ideal beauty? The 'Real Academy' and John Gibson's Anglo-Roman Modernity", in *Living with the Royal Academy: Artistic Ideals and Experiences in England. 1768–1848* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2013); and Prettejohn, *Modern Painters, Old Masters*.

²⁰⁴ Prettejohn, *Modern Painters, Old Masters*, 19–39; Bloom, *Anxiety of Influence*, xxiii.

²⁰⁵ Bloom, *Anxiety of Influence*, xxiii.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁰⁷ Prettejohn, *Modern Painters, Old Masters*, 20.

²⁰⁸ Bloom proposed six developmental stages of "anxiety", including "Clinamen", the initial misreading or "misprision"; "Kenosis", discontinuity from the original; and ultimately "Apophrades", when the original work becomes so overpowered by its imitation that it informs subsequent perceptions of the original. Bloom, *Anxiety of Influence*, 1997.

²⁰⁹ Lantéri *Modelling and Sculpting the Human Figure* (New York: Dover Publications Inc. [1902] 1986) Kindle edition, chapter II, subheading "Composition of Groups".

student ability to “interpret” through the *Parting* “the thoughts and requirements of his age” was widely recognised by his peers.²¹⁰

Compositionally, the *Parting* as a two figure group both avoided and conformed to “one of the most difficult tasks in sculpture”.²¹¹ The pyramidal pietà-type configuration alleviated the problems encountered with standing figures, offering a traditional visual vocabulary through the successful relation of two figures. John demonstrated his absorption of teaching practices through the contrasts of age, size and height, and contrasts between skin and drapery that, according to Lanteri “avoid[ed] [...] monotony”.²¹² As the 1888 photograph hinted, John’s attention to precise form and angles is continued in the *Parting*’s composition. The seated, hunched forward old father figure provides vertical height and concave curves in contrast to the son whose smooth slender legs lean vertically against the father as his body extends in a convex 45-degree angle across the father’s knees. A configuration of interjecting angles and enclosed spaces radiate out from the held hands, arms and bodies of both figures. John demonstrates his understanding of the New Sculpture’s surface expressiveness through the contrasting facial expressions, surface textures of smooth young skin, deeply undercut expressive ‘wrinkles’ of old skin, beards, rocks and fur, that provides contrasts and enriches the emotional narrative. John was showing off his modelling abilities, creating and juxtaposing complex textures, not possible in marble, reflected the RA’s teaching aligning the New Sculpture with the Academy.

In addition synthesising elements of the European works he had encountered into the *Parting*, John tactically alerted Leighton to his endeavours. Just as his understanding of Mullins and Lanteri’s manuals demonstrated that he was a good student at Lambeth, embracing Leighton’s *Addresses* emphasised that John was a good RA student. Leighton’s 1885 *Address* informed an audience, including John for the first time, that travel was essential. While we know students were familiar with the plaster facsimiles in London, Leighton emphasised the integral “relation of Artistic Production to the moral and physical conditions” from which these works

²¹⁰Roscoe Mullins, *Primer of Sculpture* (Cassel & Co. Ltd., 1889), 95.

²¹¹Lanteri *Modelling and Sculpting the Human Figure*.

²¹²Ibid.

“evolved”.²¹³ With Leighton’s quotation that started this chapter in mind, the study of plaster casts, while useful, could be considered as “isolated phenomen[a]”, removed from their original locations, having been “tossed on the hands of chance” at the RA and the South Kensington Museum. While the plaster casts represented a necessary and practical stage in sculptural education, as facsimiles of the originals they offered an artificial encounter.²¹⁴ The next stage of the student-sculptor’s education required visiting these works in their original environments to provide a deeper comprehension of the social, political, and cultural context from which they were produced.

Richardson’s comment on the 1888 Salon shows how travel encouraged young artists to make their own judgements on the works they experienced. The Salon provided a platform upon which they could weigh up the merits (or not) of the exhibited works against “Old Masters”, further encouraging their critical approach to their work. As the working designs and preparatory sketches for the *Parting* demonstrate, John referenced the classical and devotional sculptures he saw with his ideas for the *Parting*. While mediated through Rodin, visual permeations of works such as Michelangelo’s *Pieta* (1498) at the Vatican, and the *Deposition of Christ* (c.1550) at the Museo dell’Opera del Duomo, Florence, point to John’s presence at these locations. The *Parting*’s emotional depth owes much to the *Deposition*’s compositional elements. The vertical and horizontal forms of the bearded male figure that supports and holds the dead Christ (albeit aided by two female figures), is reconfigured in John’s father figure. John, already aware of Carpeaux’s *Ugolino*, would most likely have encountered it in Paris at the Petit Palais in 1888. The pyramidal composition with centrally placed father figure with bony knees and large feet, and the younger standing son’s limp body and thrown-back head are similarly echoed in the *Parting*. The *Parting* also references John’s interest in contemporary artists; Constantin Meunier’s *The Puddler*, a bronze portrayal of a seated and exhausted hunched male figure (exhibited from 1884, fig. 1.12) may well have inspired John, especially as *The Times*’ obituary claimed that John greatly admired the

²¹³ Leighton, “Address 10th December 1885”, 97-8. The RA President always delivered his *Addresses* at the biannual award ceremonies.

²¹⁴ Prettejohn discusses this in relation to Winckelmann’s ekphrasis of the Laocoon that is “a literary artifice” as its reproduction relied on descriptions from ancient texts. Prettejohn, *Modernity of Ancient Sculpture*, 15.

Belgian sculptor. Incorporating these elements into his own work mapped John's travels, providing proof for those expecting it. It also permitted him to explore alternative ways of conveying pathos and sentiment other than through the established Victorian conventions.

By definition of its title, the *Parting* embodies notions of emotion or sentiment. The contrast of the bent old man and the child's outstretched smooth body, gives as Lanteri asserted, "life to Art" through which "human passions [...] appeal to the eye and the emotion of the spectator."²¹⁵ John's sketchbooks contain developmental drawings revealing the processes through which he worked out the configurations best suited to convey the emotional qualities and grim realities of loss and suffering. Victorian notions of sentiment, as Sonia Solicari puts it, of "tender feeling" were epidemic during the mid-nineteenth century.²¹⁶ When exhibited at the New Gallery in 1891, *The Saturday Review* remarked that, "[t]he only important work in the round" was John's "beautifully finished bronze group, called "Parting" ", a work of "pathetic sentiment and admirable in technical execution."²¹⁷ Death and its specific ritualised responses during the Victorian period were stereotypically familiar through deathbed scenes, funerals, mourning, and "saintly characters" removed prematurely from a brutal world. This preserved both sentimental culture and its moral incentives. In visually recalling the emotional impact of the *Deposition*, John pitted the romanticised sentiment of saintly figures in a ruthless world against the father's grim predicament. The *Parting* is a psychological exploration of disturbing bleakness, highlighted through surface details such as the lifeless smooth and unblemished peaceful face of the son against the father's animated tormented expression, wrinkles and beard. Visual conceptions of tragedy and pathos, then, came with a set of performative and assumed responses from viewers within the parameters of specific social expectations.²¹⁸ Through a feeling of the viewer's own helplessness and the discomfort of witnessing a distressing tragedy, pleasurable viewing is diminished and only slightly relieved through classically derived influences of the Greek tragedy and

²¹⁵ Lanteri *Modelling and Sculpting*, chapter II, subheading "Composition of Groups".

²¹⁶ Solicari, *Selling Sentiment*.

²¹⁷ "Sculpture in 1891", *The Saturday Review*, June 1891, 779.

²¹⁸ For more see Solicari, *Selling Sentiment*; and Miriam Bailin "Dismal Pleasure: Victorian Sentimentality and the Pathos of the Pavenu" *ELH* Vol. 66 No. 4, *The Nineteenth Century* (Winter, 1999), 1015–20. <https://doi.org/10.2307/30032106>.

notions of the purity of anguish. At the RA, the judges recognised that John had successfully modelled a composition that conveyed exceptional emotional depth.²¹⁹

By 1906, John, now an Associate Academician, was able to voice his opinions on the influence of foreign sculptors. In his only, well-received and well-attended RA lecture on “Modern Sculpture”, while prohibited from mentioning living artists, he delivered a brief evaluation of influential sculptors and their work.²²⁰ His clichéd description of Canova’s legacy, whose influence of the “antiques [...] led him to make slavish copies”, through which “the effect of his art had gone forever”, derives from New Sculpture’s resistance to the Neo-Classical.²²¹ For John, Canova demonstrated that unless the individual artist used such sources with originality, the results were mere imitation. John’s opinion of French sculptors reveals the values he placed on their work, while integrating elements of their work into his Anglo-Welsh works. While Dalou’s introduction of dynamic modelling was regularly acknowledged in British sculpture history, John did not enlarge on his impact nor mention his Parisian social realist worker-peasant sculptures. Instead, he referred to Dalou’s imaginative capacities that related to his London works such as *Avant Le Bain* (1870s). It was Alexandre Falguière, rather than Dalou, that John nominated as “essentially a modern”, whose “teaching more than any other [...] had produced the wonderful modelling now common among the younger French sculptors.”²²² John’s reference supports Peter Fusco’s claim that Falguière exemplified the “successful academic artist” during the late nineteenth century.²²³ Indeed, John may have aligned himself with the sculptor who also came from provincial roots, rose rapidly to prominence

²¹⁹ The portrayal of children was a theme that John continued to develop throughout his career. From works such as *Joyance*, to the anatomically precise *Boy at Play*, purchased for the nation through the Chantrey Bequest, and memorial works such as the effigies of Lord and Lady Leverhulme in Port Sunlight and in WW1 memorials *Defence of Home* (1916) in Port Sunlight and *The Response, 1914* (1923) at Newcastle.

²²⁰ John was not allowed to mention his living contemporaries. According to the “Abstract of the Constitution and Laws”, 1860, “no comments or criticisms on the opinion or productions of living artists in this country, shall be introduced into any of the Lectures delivered in the Royal Academy”. ‘Royal Academy Schools’, *Mapping the Practice and Profession of Sculpture in Britain and Ireland 1851 – 1951*, University of Glasgow History of Art and HATII, online database 2011, accessed August 18, 2017. http://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/view/organization.php?id=msib2_1208275295.

²²¹ “Modern Sculpture”, *Morning Post*, 26 Feb 1906.

²²² *Ibid.* If he had wanted to, John could have mentioned Dalou as he died in 1902, four years before his lecture.

²²³ Peter Fusco, *The Romantics to Rodin: French nineteenth-century sculpture from North American collections*, (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1980), 255.

and gained many awards, such as the Prix de Rome. Whilst John demonstrated his broad knowledge and admiration for these French sculptors, his attention, as we shall see, would focus on another sculptor entirely, Rodin, who, as he was still living, remained unmentioned.

The *Parting* marks the start of John's fascination with the sculptor. In 1881, the same year John came to London, Rodin first arrived at the invitation of his friend Alphonse Legros.²²⁴ The following year, Rodin showed his *St John* bust at the RA, and the *Alphonse Legros* bust and *Man with a Broken Nose* (see fig. 3.56) at the Grosvenor Gallery. The deeply textured and expressive modelling of the latter is recalled in the similarly textured face of the *Parting*'s father.²²⁵ Showing works at the RA and that Leighton, as PRA, purchased *Man with a Broken Nose*, signals support for Rodin had reached the country's highest art establishment.²²⁶ In 1883, Rodin showed *Saint John the Baptist* and the *Carrier-Belleuse* bust at the Dudley Gallery. These led Gosse to comment on Rodin's techniques. While he compared Rodin's handling of "the modelling tool" to the way a painter used his brush, Gosse felt that Rodin's "picturesque manner" with "broken lines and exaggerated forms" should be "tempered by sobriety".²²⁷ This view, as discussed below, resonated with John. His selective absorption of Rodin's work into his own did not extend to "broken lines", as John preferred smooth surface finishes. At this stage, John's engagement with Rodin and his works, despite success at the RA and elsewhere, was tempered with ambivalence from conservative academicians and critics towards Rodin. This reached a peak when, under Leighton's Presidency, the RA council rejected Rodin's *L'Idylle* (c. 1875–1885), of two kissing children, for its 1886 exhibition.²²⁸

Tactics

Although Leighton's admiration for Rodin may have stimulated John's interest prior to his time in Paris, at this stage, his focus remained within the RA, as his quotation of

²²⁴ Benedict Read, "The Royal Academy and the Rodin Problem", in Claudine Mitchell ed., *Rodin: The Zola of Sculpture*, 2004. 45 -57: 47.

²²⁵ In 1883, the Dudley Gallery also displayed Rodin's *Saint John the Baptist* and the *Carrier-Belleuse* bust.

²²⁶ Read, "The Royal Academy and the Rodin Problem", 45.

²²⁷ Quoted in Read, "The Royal Academy and the Rodin Problem", 47.

²²⁸ Read, "The Royal Academy and the Rodin Problem", 45.

Alma-Tadema's *Death of the First-Born* demonstrates.²²⁹ Taking this as a model of influence was complementarily tactical;²³⁰ gaining the attention of an important figure within the RA was key. It was imperative that Alma-Tadema saw John as a deserving protégé. Just as Leighton had focussed on Gilbert (although John received advice and support from Leighton), and Gosse had adopted Thornycroft, successfully gaining Alma-Tadema's attention would help John position himself within the RA elite.²³¹

With this in mind, Pollock's "play of reference, deference and difference", the "finely calibrated" "game-play" in understanding avant-gardism, permitted the artist to "mark" his or her work within the avant-garde community. To ensure recognition, artists *referenced* their work with that of the latest artist or artistic developments. The next step involved *deferring* to the referenced artist, the "leader" within the Avant-garde field, before establishing a *difference* understandable within "current aesthetics and criticism" that was "a definitive advance on the current position".²³² While this "gambit" was risky, as Pollock notes, it both epitomised and generated the "intense competitiveness, antagonism and ambition" within a shared tradition. This complex practice aided the artists' construction and promotion of their professional identity and the increasing significance of their work.²³³ John was not, in today's sense, "avant-garde"; as this was a subsequent label, the term, "new art" described the latest developments. As John believed he was at the forefront of new art in London, his "game-play" operated initially within the RA.

²²⁹ Following the recent, above mentioned, Alma-Tadema exhibition, Prettejohn has written extensively on the painter. Her contributions include: Prettejohn, et al., Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema exhibition catalogue. (Swale: Waanders, 1996); with Peter Trippi eds., *Lawrence Alma Tadema: At Home in Antiquity*, (London and Munich; New York: Prestel, 2016); "Lawrence Alma-Tadema and the Modern City of Ancient Rome", *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 84, No. 1 (Mar., 2002), 115-129; and with Trippi, "The Alma-Tademas' Studio-Houses and Beyond", *British Art Studies*, Issue 9, accessed August 15, 2018. <http://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/issues/issue-index/issue-9/beyond-studio-houses>.

²³⁰ For a reading of strategy and tactics see Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (California: University of California Press, 1984). De Certeau argues that strategies, power and rules, are created by institutions in which individuals, "consumers", use "tactics", that are influenced, but not totally determined, by strategies within the organisation's rules to navigate how they live their lives.

²³¹ John used this model to attract patronage outside the RA, ensuring, for example, the significant patronage of the Sunlight Soap magnet, William Hesketh Lever (Viscount Leverhulme) following the early death of his former protégé, Onslow Ford in 1901.

²³² Pollock, *Avant-garde Gambits*, 14.

²³³ Pollock, *Avant-garde Gambits*, 16.

John's "gambit" succeeded. He recalled, "the same night that I was awarded the medal", Alma-Tadema immediately commissioned "the group in bronze for his studio".²³⁴ To achieve this, John had tapped into something that resonated powerfully with the painter, especially as this work remained in his studio until his death in 1912, as we have seen (fig. 1.8). Comparatively, the *Pharaoh*, like the *Parting*, portrays a father figure that bears the lifeless body of his young son across his lap.²³⁵ This allusion went beyond flattery: John not only paid homage to the artist, but exploited an emotional vulnerability. As Alma-Tadema's first-born child, a son, had died in infancy this may explain his immediate response to John's work. Having bought the painting back from the art dealer, Ernest Gambart (who originally commissioned it), the *Parting* joined Alma-Tadema's painting in his studio. Beyond the formal and conceptual similarities, Alma-Tadema clearly attached emotional significance and personal meaning to the *Parting* through the father-son symbolism.

John's exploration of this in the *Parting* challenges later Freudian Oedipal readings of the psychosexual challenges of the son to the father, since Alma-Tadema's painting is about the loss of a son, and John's statue is about the desire for a father figure. In line with Bloom's "clear[ing] imaginative space[s]", John articulates a new father-son symbiosis that simultaneously opens new imaginative spaces, through which his intentional misreadings gained effective results. Both works portray the effects of tragedy. Alma-Tadema's work, through the prostrate grief-stricken mother, suggests grief as feminine and submissive, while the fearful obeisant servants contrast with the powerful young pharaoh who emanates anger and strength. The *Parting* demonstrates universal grief regardless of wealth, status, gender, or power. Yet it also focuses on what Alma-Tadema's work does not: grief's destructive power. The lonely father has lost everything, his sight, money, status and family; he is defeated, deprived not just of wealth and power but a future through the loss of this child. He peers blindly up to some unknown power, or the viewer, for redemption. The bowed and broken old

²³⁴ *Western Mail*, "Sir Goscombe John Remembers". In 1891, it was shown in bronze at the New Gallery, described as "the beautifully finished bronze group" indicates that this was Alma Tadema's commission before being installed at his studio. "Sculpture in 1891", *The Saturday Review*, June 1891, 779.

²³⁵ Whilst John visited Cairo, he did not engage in Egyptian style works, possibly as Onslow Ford was already doing this with his *The Singer* and *Applause* 1889–93. See Jason Edwards Tate Research Publication, "*The Singer* and *Applause* by Edward Onslow Ford", accessed 10 June 2017. <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/edward-onslow-ford>.

father, sightless, powerless, and poor, contrasts with the passionately stoic, upright, handsome young Pharaoh. The ruler heroically internalises his feeling, only the moist glimmering eyes betray emotion, in contrast the old man's sightless eyes which convey emotional depth through the creases and folds of eyelids and brows as they implore the viewer to respond to his plight. John's pathetic father figure reveals his strategic artistic "personality" with specific meaning in relation to Tadema's father-Pharaoh. John's father-son thematic has become a call to his sculptural 'fathers'. In looking to Alma-Tadema, John used the *Parting* as a metaphor to seek a non-aggressive, non-competitive relationship; he is deferential to the 'past', to Alma-Tadema's status and achievements. Unlike the next generation of direct carvers, John was not just attempting to challenge his forebears. Rather, in looking for guidance and protection, he preferred to foster a relationship based on respect through deference.

Given that Alma-Tadema was acknowledged as popular, jovial, and considerate, John's choice was wise. We can see this in a letter he wrote to John concerning the *Parting's* copyright:

When I expressed to you a wish to have a copy of your group it was in case you should make some bronze casts [. . .]It must be well understood that I do not buy the copyright of it. By all means sell as much of it as you can. The more the better as it will repay you for all your trouble and encourage you to proceed on the difficult path of sculpture you so well started upon which I sincerely hope you may go very far for everybodys (sic) sake.²³⁶

As Alma-Tadema's final comment implies, the breadth of support John garnered at the RA demonstrates he was not the only one who wanted to see John's career flourish. Yet, losing the copyright that often came with the purchase of a work was a real issue for many artists and Alma-Tadema's response was generously reassuring. As their friendship developed, over the years, they judged National Eisteddfod competitions together, Alma-Tadema attended The Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion meetings with John, and they were both colleagues together on the French National Institute, as well as members of the St. John's Wood Art Club, not to mention John's familiarity with the family.

²³⁶Alma-Tadema, letter to John, 5 September 1890. NLW GB 0210 MSGOSCOMBE (77).

The *Parting*, then, demonstrates the culmination of John's education, travels and strategic approaches up to 1889 when he emerged onto the wider professional arena. It was at this time, in bringing the above criteria together, that John combined his exceptional technical skills with his distinctive ability to convey emotional depth. In looking to the next stage of John's career, the *Morpheus*, the result of his travel scholarship and year in Paris, demonstrates the turn his work was about to take. Its strategic composition marked John's position as a modern artist who not only subscribed to the modernity of French art but also remained embedded within an academic and classical heritage. Modelled in Paris, but cast in Britain, it needed to validate the benefits of his scholarship. In short, John had to demonstrate that his work had matured since the *Parting*.

Morpheus

John told Ballinger, in 1894, that he was proud of the standing male nude *Morpheus* especially as it received a "Mention honourable" at the Paris Salon of 1892 and a medal at the "Chicago business" (Chicago International Exhibition) the following year.²³⁷ John exhibited the plaster at the RA in 1891; it was then cast in bronze for the Cardiff Museum in 1894.²³⁸ In the same year, a decade after John started at the RA Schools, it was exhibited there in bronze, along with the plaster model of *St. John the Baptist*. In 1911, *Morpheus* received a bronze medal at the Rome International Fine Arts Fair. It was sold to the NMW for the price of its bronze casting.

Although the work was modelled in Paris, John included his adaptation of lines from Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590) to reaffirm English affiliations at the RA,²³⁹

²³⁷ John, letter to Ballinger, May 7, 1894, Cardiff Library MS 3 565 GJ:9.

²³⁸ In an 1893 Report to the Free Libraries Committee on the Goscombe John Travel Fund, Ballinger (friend, librarian and secretary to Cardiff School of Art) recommended that they approach the Cardiff Museum Committee to see if they were prepared to commission a work for the museum; if so, the Library Committee would add the remains of their fund. The funding committee "expressly stated" that any remaining money should be allocated towards "secur[ing] for the town [Cardiff] some work of Art by him". With this in mind, John offered the Museum the *Morpheus*, (modelled during his RA travel scholarship in Paris) if they were prepared to cover the cost of having it cast in bronze (£150.00). *Report to the Free Libraries Committee*, 1893, MS 3 565 GJ:62 Cardiff library. Spielmann wrote of John's "return from a long "gold medal" journey abroad [that] was signalled by the scholarship work "Morpheus," which was acquired by the Art Gallery of his native town." Spielmann, *British Sculpture*, 131.

²³⁹ The Chantrey bequest (discussed in detail in Chapter 2) insisted that eligible works were cast in Britain. This suggests that being too European was not tactically beneficial, as Gilbert's *Icarus* will demonstrate.

“Drown’d in drowsy sleep of nothing he takes keep”.²⁴⁰ The *Morpheus* signals the conclusion of John’s two-year Travel Scholarship and the start of his professional and international career. His residency in Paris between 1890 and 1891 gave John the opportunity to become acquainted with Rodin and other, so far unnamed, French sculptors.

The *Morpheus* draws on Symbolist, Decadent and Aesthetic expression.²⁴¹ Extensive scholarship in these areas has meant that scholarly interest has moved on. While Edwards, Getsy, and Upstone’s chapter for Tate’s *Symbolism in Britain* exhibition catalogue demonstrate, much has been done on New Sculpture’s articulations of the male body and the female figure,²⁴² yet, in bringing a new focus to the male nude, I demonstrate that there is still mileage left in Symbolist studies. Returning to Symbolism provides a meaningful context through which ideas of the male form can be taken beyond Edwards’ generation of scholarship. While Edwards, Getsy, and Michael Hatt’s debates on masculinity focus primarily on the first generation of Gilbert, Thornycroft and Leighton, this new focus extends the debate to the second generation. My consideration of the sculptural representation of masculinity, sexuality and the homoerotic body takes us from Paris to London and British male heterosexual portrayals of the homoerotic body.²⁴³

In Paris

This section considers John’s creation of *Morpheus* modelled in the hedonistic Paris of the 1890s and the statue’s subsequent display at the RA in London. Ballinger described *Morpheus* (fig. 1.2) as a “magnificent piece of sculpture” depicting “the son of Sleep and the god of dreams [who] mould[s] the dreams that visit the sleeper”.²⁴⁴ While clearly alluding to what he considered John’s superhuman modelling abilities,

²⁴⁰ The original lines being: “drown’d in drowsy sleep of nothing he takes keep.” [Canto I, XL 359-360].

²⁴¹ For more on Decadence see, Charles Bernheimer, T. Jefferson Kline, and Naomi Schor, *Decadent Subjects: The Idea of Decadence in Art, Literature, Philosophy, and Culture of the Fin De Siècle in Europe. Parallax*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), and Foster, Edward, ed., *Decadents, Symbolists, & Aesthetes in America: Fin-De-Siècle American Poetry: An Anthology* (Jersey City, N.J.: Talisman House, 2000)

²⁴² The exception being Gilbert’s *The Kiss of Victory* (1878-9), see Upstone, “Symbolism in Three Dimensions”, 83 – 92.

²⁴³ See Getsy, *Rodin: Sex and the Making of Modern Sculpture* that discusses Rodin as a heterosexual man and his expression of the homoerotic.

²⁴⁴ Ballinger, *Wales*, 119.

Ballinger continued that John “portray[ed] with great force the sleepy, dreamy attributes of the subject”.²⁴⁵ The somnolent god of dreams stands *contrapposto* with the weight on the left straight leg, the raised arms evoke a hedonistic sensual languid indolence. As if just waking, his arms fold over his Gilbert-inspired helmet-covered head, partially obscuring his face. The action of raising the arms exposes the undulation of the ribs and the smooth taut expanse of stretched abdominal muscles. This recalls the treatment of female nudes; the naturalness of this “casual pose” reinforced notions of female acquiescence.²⁴⁶ The (assumed male) viewer is permitted an unrestricted encounter with her body. With no sharply defined muscle definition, the corporeal undulating planes and angles of the surface reflects light-creating details. The smooth fluid surface, again a conventional treatment of female nudes, encourages the viewer’s eyes to flow across the languorous surface of his body.

Being a life-size, ideal, male nude, the *Morpheus* adheres to the “canonical authority” of the classical nude genre.²⁴⁷ Other artists have portrayed similar versions of this minor mythological figure. Pierre-Narcisse Guérin’s painting, *Morpheus and Iris* (1811, fig. 1.13) demonstrates the effectiveness of the arm-raised recumbent figure in horizontal format, as the sleepy nude Morpheus lying on a cushioned bed is about to be woken by Iris (the messenger of the Gods). Other sculptors were also attracted to Morpheus, Jean-Antoine Houdon produced a marble prostrate winged figure in 1777, whilst Léo Laporte-Blairsy produced a white stone, *Le reveil de Morphée* (1894), located at the Grand Rond in Toulouse. This bears a striking similarity to John’s *Morpheus* (fig. 1.14).²⁴⁸ Laporte-Blairsy, who studied under Falguière and Mercié in Paris, would have seen John’s award-winning *Morpheus* at the Paris Salon in 1892.

While the *Parting* indicated the end of John’s student days, the *Morpheus* launched his international career. Having modelled and exhibited *Morpheus* in Paris and London, it symbolically pivoted between the two cities. In turning to Paris, John set his sights on Rodin to develop a distinctive sculptural style through which he asserted his version of modern sculpture at the start of his career. In targeting Rodin, John circumvented the footsteps of the previous Gold Medal winner, Frampton, who

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Getsy, *Body Doubles*, 57.

²⁴⁷ See Getsy, *Body Doubles*, 83.

²⁴⁸ The plaster (RA 970) is at the Musée des Augustins in Toulouse.

attached himself to Mercié's studio during his travel scholarship. For the New Sculptors, Mercié's *David* (c. 1872) was an influentially important work, to which the sculptural postures of Gilbert's *Icarus*, Thornycroft's *The Mower* and the formal configurations of *Morpheus* all testify (albeit John's references are mediated through Rodin and Gilbert). These works return us to 1884, the year John enrolled as an RA student. All exhibited at the RA that year alongside Rodin's *Âge*, and Gilbert's *Head of a Girl*, illustrates their significance to John who synthesised these cross-channel influences. Drawing out the subtle differences found within this synthesis takes *Morpheus* from a Rodin imitation to a work that demonstrates John's growing sculptural maturity and his ambitions.

While the *Morpheus*'s Rodin-esque influences demonstrated his first-hand encounter with the sculptor, it also recalled the positive reception of *Âge* at the RA in 1884. While acknowledging Rodin's Academic success in London, its formal qualities also referenced Gilbert (discussed below), Leighton, and Burne-Jones to demonstrate John's understanding and fusion of modern British sculpture with important British artists and French avant-garde practices. Using Spenser's quintessentially English text to accompany the *Morpheus* at the RA meant John could align it with the Academy in London rather than the Parisian Salon. The Spenserian quotation patriotically rooted John within an English context and appealed to a British intellectual audience. In terms of artistic distinctiveness, as Mullins noted, of "the English classics," it was "Spenser and Shakespeare, who broke through rules and worked out their own individuality".²⁴⁹ Through Spenser and the "charm" of the English classics "that no time will obliterate", John paradoxically asserted his individuality.²⁵⁰ The impact of Rodin, Gilbert, Thornycroft and, as I discuss below, just as he enrolled as a student there, may explain why, through his rendering of the *Morpheus*, John chose to return to their influences six years later.

Despite this impact on John, *The Magazine of Art* (possibly Spielmann) accused the RA, in patriarchal terms, of "fathering" a "plentiful" supply of "feeble and inept" works in 1884.²⁵¹ French sculpture, in the shape of Rodin's *Âge*, provided some

²⁴⁹ Mullins, *Primer*, 12.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ "Current Art I", *The Magazine of Art*, 1884, 347.

consolation. Despite being badly placed, it was “incomparably the best thing of all”, and “the only work [...] which exhibits the true sculptural quality in perfection”.²⁵² Notwithstanding the coarse treatment of the hair, “the modelling of the thing [was] like a Donatello [,] its style is charged with originality and distinction, it reveals a great master in every line.”²⁵³ In London, John would have been aware that Rodin’s success lay in his ability to take “the thing”, the material object, and transform it through the vitality and originality of his modelling. Yet, *Âge* was sometimes misunderstood: *The Magazine of Art*’s critic claimed that the “action and gesture”, although “expressive”, presented neither an accurate nor appropriate response to the Bronze Age period,²⁵⁴ then considered the first “wakening of culture”.²⁵⁵ Furthermore, the critic believed “a man stricken and wounded in the head” was “scarcely heroic” nor appropriate for a “figure [that] symbolise[d] a heroic age”.²⁵⁶ Nevertheless, *Âge* did convey a sense of vitality through the “[r]eserved force and energy [...] expressed with wonderful skill and reticence”.²⁵⁷ Rodin’s “extraordinary” modelling imbued *Âge* with “suavity, force, and fidelity”, to which “the pose of nobility, and the poise of the head [was] remarkable for its antique character, its simplicity, and impressive grandeur”. Whereas Rodin’s success, at the “front rank of modern sculptors” in Paris and London, was a major influence on John, he remained rooted within British, or English, sculptural practices of Gilbert and Leighton.²⁵⁸

As testament to John’s admiration, he acquired *Head* and *Icarus* as well as statuettes of the *Sluggard* and *Mower* and later donated them to the NMW.²⁵⁹ Gilbert’s *Head*, the *Magazine of Art* noted had “extraordinary merit” as “a masterpiece of realism”. While the *Icarus* was appreciated for its technical qualities, as “an admirable, but faulty, essay in the ideal”,²⁶⁰ it was overshadowed by the “breadth and dignity and

²⁵² Ibid., 351.

²⁵³ Ibid., 352.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 352.

²⁵⁵ In conversation with David Getsy, April 20, 2017.

²⁵⁶ “Current Art II”, *The Magazine of Art*, 1884, 396.

²⁵⁷ “Current Art II”, 396.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Between 1928 and 1938.

²⁶⁰ This may stem from the critic’s opinion that it “was only graceful from certain points of view, and moreover, considered as an heroic figure, [was] deficient in structural beauty.” See “Current Art I”, 352.

style” of the *Head*, that was “far and away the better” (figs. 1.15 & 1.16).²⁶¹ Both works appear in the upper studio photograph before John gave them to the Museum. Thornycroft’s *Mower* (of which John donated a statuette in 1928), was a “very happy outcome” that “ennoble[d] the facts of common English life” and “transfus[ed] everyday English faces and figures with something of the eternal interest of art.” In searching for “English” sculptural identity, Thornycroft nostalgically elevated rural workers against an increasingly mechanised modern life.²⁶² He was not alone in working out fitting ways to articulate a sculptural response to these changes.²⁶³ Whilst some critics thought the *Mower* had raised the status of the common man, others, as Getsy observes, were concerned that established sculptural traditions, foundations, and boundaries were being challenged too much.²⁶⁴ Despite this, Thornycroft, had “gone as near to success as was possible” by touching “the reality of fact [...] with the majesty of art.”²⁶⁵ While, as discussed later, John was a vociferous defender of Welsh artisanal skills against increasing mechanisation, his work never suggested contemporary social realism, nor was it as evocative as the *Mower*. John’s realism stemmed from modelling works that, like Gilbert, focussed on the particularity of the model, rather than the portrayal of ‘English’ working class ‘types’.

From Student to International Sculptor

While sculptors in London sought ways to express Englishness, they nevertheless sought continental influences through which to do so. Many, as we have seen, considered travel essential for a sculptor’s education. Leighton and Burne-Jones helped plan John’s travel itinerary.²⁶⁶ As John recalled, this included the study of “Gothic Sculpture” in Southern France and Spain, the study of Greek sculpture in Sicily, “Arab types in Tunis, Algeria & Tangier” and “[f]inally residence & study in

²⁶¹ “Current Art I”, 352.

²⁶² The term “English” was often used indiscriminately to encompass Great Britain more generally. See Chapters 2 and 3 that develop notions of national identity in relation to ideas of Welshness and within the British Empire. See Getsy, *Body Doubles* 78, Hatt, “Near and Far: Homeroticism, Labour and Hamo Thornycroft’s *Mower*”, *Art History*, (26) 2003, 26–55; Jane Thomas (2018) “*The Mower, The Sower, and The Mayor*: Thomas Hardy and Hamo Thornycroft, encounters and affinities”, *Word & Image*, 34:1, 7-15, DOI: 10.1080/02666286.2017.1327306

²⁶³ Getsy, *Body Doubles*, 84.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 83.

²⁶⁵ Current Art I”, *The Magazine of Art*, 1884, 352.

²⁶⁶ In addition, the link to Burne-Jones becomes more significant, as John purchased three Burne-Jones drawings illustrating scenes from Spenser’s poem *the Faerie Queen* (1872) and given by John to NMW following his purchase of them at Lever’s posthumous sale in 1923. Within these sketches is an apparently floating figure in similar raised arm pose to John’s *Morpheus*.

Paris of modern sculpture.”²⁶⁷ Possibly under Burges’ guidance, John’s earlier travel itineraries included “Egyptian sculpture, and Arabian Art”.²⁶⁸ By 1894, John was becoming more interested in the people. Juxtaposed within the pages of John’s sketchbooks are individuals he met, or saw, from the “skipper” of the *Dauntless*, through his travel companion, Walker, to monks in Tangiers (fig 3.53), all juxtaposed amongst Michelangelo’s *David*, and Morpheus-type figures.²⁶⁹ John’s analysis of his travel itinerary implies that art was central to his European and Greek destinations while North Africa offered its people, as “types” for study, rather than its ancient Islamic art. John’s subsequent works show that he was far removed from such influences, despite the period’s interest in Islamic decoration, Leighton’s Arab Hall completed in 1881, for instance, and Leighton and Burne-Jones’s opinions at the RA. John’s scholarship itinerary was more reflective of Leighton’s *Academy Addresses* between 1883 and 1889, in which, with archaeological detail he expanded on the art-historical impact of Ancient Egypt, Assyria and Greece, the early Italian works of Etruria and Rome, the Italian Renaissance and Spain.

While Leighton addressed London, sculpture at the 1890 Salon, observed “C.W.” in *The Art Amateur*, was “admirable and worthy of the high renown of the French school.” Despite showing the *Danaïd*, Rodin was noticeably not mentioned; instead, the “latest works of such masters as Falguière, Delaplanche, Cain, Frémiet, [and] Chapu” caught the critic’s attention.²⁷⁰ While many paintings depicted everyday “misery”, “[m]ystical subjects [also] abound[ed]”; these denoted “a curious state of mind among many of the younger men”.²⁷¹ Although talking about painters, John’s “state of mind” should also be considered, as he was then exploring ways to express mysticism through realistic work. While he believed in the inspiration of nature, his interest in naturalism in the early 1890s led to hyper-realistic styles, such as *Boy at Play* (discussed in Chapter 2), and first explored through the sensual configuration of *Morpheus* and the mystical *Elf*.

²⁶⁷ John, letter to Ballinger, July 6, 1894. Cardiff Library MS 3 565 GJ:10.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Sketchbooks RA 07/840 and RA 07/846. RA Archive.

²⁷⁰ The Musée du Luxembourg purchased the *Danaïd* following its exhibition at the Salon.

²⁷¹ “C.W.”, “The Paris Salon of 1890”, *The Art Amateur*, Vol. 23, I June 1890, 22-23.

The formal composition of the *Morpheus*, at least initially, refers, as we have seen, to John's association with Rodin in Paris; even when exhibited at the RA in 1891, it generated substantial critical interest, not least for its similarity to *Âge*. Despite this, the exhibition that year was, however, dulled by the sudden loss of Boehm, who had died unexpectedly the previous year. In addition, "the three most popular sculptors", Thornycroft, Gilbert and Edward Onslow Ford failed to contribute "anything of special moment". Furthermore, as *The Saturday Review* observed, whilst the "work of the younger English sculptors is now in earnest, refined, and we think very sound, [...] specimens of it shown this year are not of a sensational character."²⁷² With little "new talent of much force [...] the honours of the year fall mainly on those who were but promising students three or four years ago."²⁷³ With no competition from the major players, and little recognition for aspiring newcomers, the critics were left to contemplate John's generation. Consequently, the *Morpheus* made "the greatest demand on [their] attention". Placed adjacent to Leighton's marble *Athlete*, the *Morpheus* was described as "a remarkable beauty" and "very delicately modelled throughout."²⁷⁴ This critic even noticed that it "challenge[d] comparison with a well-known figure of Rodin". Recognising John's analytical engagement with Rodin's work, suggests John may have tactically chosen to model *Morpheus* this way to generate attention and stimulate debate. Especially when the critic provocatively claimed, "we may dare to say [,...] if the Frenchman displays more style, Mr John's [British] transcript of nature is more faithful".²⁷⁵ John's naturalism highlights the fine line dividing Marion Spielmann's later term, "poetic realism" and Gosse's 1894 condemnation of "crude realism".²⁷⁶ John's British sculptural truthfulness was more acceptable in London than Rodin's flamboyant French flair. Given the controversy surrounding the 1877 Paris exhibition of *Âge* and accusations that Rodin took life casts of his model,²⁷⁷ illustrates that in London surface finish was understood as

²⁷² "Sculpture in 1891", *The Saturday Review*, 27 June 1891, 778.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Despite such praise, *Morpheus* was not quite "the finest piece of sculpture of the year"; it was "equalled in modelling and surpassed in style by Mr Brock's admirable "Genius of poetry"". See "Sculpture in 1891", *The Saturday Review*, 1891, 778.

²⁷⁵ "Sculpture in 1891", *The Saturday Review*, 27 June 1891, 778.

²⁷⁶ Marion H. Spielmann, *British Sculpture*, 60; Gosse, "The New Sculpture" (September 1894), 277. The concerns between realistic and naturalistic are also discussed in Chapter 2.

²⁷⁷ Outraged, Rodin strenuously denied these accusations.

vulgarly realistic (even with “French flair”), or poetically naturalistic, within which, John carefully situated his own work.

Not all critics made the Rodin connection, the Magazine of Art critic, Claude Phillips, an admirer of Rodin, neither connected the *Morpheus* to *Âge*, nor, in elevating it to marble, did he realise the *Morpheus* was plaster.²⁷⁸ Given Phillips’ standing this was unusual, and, while it questions the level of his scrutiny, it suggests the high quality of the plaster finish. This may have been John’s intention. Bronze casting was expensive, usually undertaken once the work was commissioned. While it was common practice to exhibit works in plaster, they were often painted to look like bronze (as John did with the plaster *Parting*).²⁷⁹ As I argue below, *Morpheus* exhibited in plaster to mimic marble and placed adjacent to the marble *Athlete*, evokes a marble version of the 1877 and 1884 RA Exhibitions.

Although Phillips neither recognised Rodin’s influence nor the plaster, he did register the Spenserian reference that, he claimed, inferred the antique rather than the modern. For Philips, the *Morpheus*

excel[ed], nevertheless, in certain rare qualities peculiar to Greek rather than modern art. The whole undraped figure, not less than the half-hidden face, expresses, with a harmonious consensus of the component elements, this main motif of drowsiness, and does so with a reticence and a rhythmical balance evidently derived from classical example.²⁸⁰

Phillips’ “rhythmical balance” refers to the *contrapposto* stance made famous in Ancient Greek works such as Polycleitus’s *Doryphoros*, Lysippos’s *Apoxyomenos*, and *Hermes with the Infant Dionysus*, discovered in 1877 and attributed to

²⁷⁸ Claude Phillips, “Sculpture of the Year”, *Magazine of Art*, January 1891, 403.

²⁷⁹ By 1894, the *Morpheus* had been cast in bronze, *The Saturday Review*, through it “beautiful and now familiar”. The different materials divided opinion. Phillips claimed it had “a certain vagueness of modelling in some passages”, and while this may align with the sensations of induced sleep, for Phillips it resulted in less detailed definition.²⁷⁹ *The Saturday Review* critic considered the bronze a “delightful statue, strongly and adequately modelled; the drawing of the crushed pectoral muscles is excellent. [...] The work of Mr John is second to none in its truth of anatomical construction.” See “Sculpture in 1894”, *Saturday Review*, 1894, 125.

²⁸⁰ Claude Phillips, “Sculpture of the Year”, 403. Bates’ *Hound in Leash*, and Frampton’s *Caprice* also received mixed reviews.

Praxiteles.²⁸¹ Despite John's "choice of the model", that resulted in "meanness of proportion [that] militated against [its] complete success", and given the *Morpheus*'s "harmonious consensus of [...] component elements" it successfully aligned Rodin with the Academy, Leighton, and the classical. Yet, this work was conceived and modelled in Paris. As such, John's experiences of the city had an impact on his work.

The Paris Effect

The *Morpheus* demonstrates that Rodin and *Âge* were influential, and that aligning the two works ensured critical attention in London. John's admiration of Rodin influenced John's work and, as discussed in Chapter 2, his self-perceived role at the NMW.²⁸² Considering Rodin and other Parisian sources permits a contextual background in which to locate John. *Âge* demonstrated Rodin's early interest in life-like portrayals of the human form. Prior to its Salon exhibition, Rodin removed the original spear and, while previously known as *The Awakening Man* and *The Vanquished One*, he officially confirmed the title, *L'Âge d'Airain*. With no visual clues through which viewers can comprehend the work, they contemplate the naked body of the particular studio model (Auguste Neyt). At the Salon, one anonymous critic wondered, possibly with the former title in mind, if *Âge* was "a statue of a sleepwalker?"²⁸³ Whilst there is no evidence John knew this, the notion of sleep connected to *Âge* had been publically aired. Just as the meaning of *Âge* to the critics and its audiences was ambiguous, so was the *Morpheus* minus its title and Spenserian text.

For John, the *Morpheus* had to make a statement that justified to his peers the benefits of his scholarship in continuing his career trajectory since the *Parting*. Rather than take the expected route and join an academic atelier in Paris, John followed Bates' example. Following his Gold Medal win in 1883, Bates rented a studio,²⁸⁴ sought contact with Rodin and modelled the *Aeneas* and *Dido* reliefs in Paris.²⁸⁵ John also

²⁸¹ See PretteJohn, especially Chapter Two, "The Artist, Ancient and Modern", *The Modernity of Ancient Sculpture*, 104 -170.

²⁸² Chapter Two considers John self-styled position as the 'Welsh Rodin' at the National Museum of Wales.

²⁸³ W.H. Hale, *World of Rodin*, (Nederland, N.V.: Time Life International, 1972) 51.

²⁸⁴ On the advice of Dalou.

²⁸⁵ These reliefs were considered for the Chantry Bequest however, as they were not executed in Britain, they were disqualified. See Getsy "Privileging the Object: Actuality and Harry Bates's Pandora

rented a studio and as he recollected, his “stay in Paris” consisted of frequent visits to Rodin’s studio, where the “kindly man” allowed him into his studio to observe him at work.²⁸⁶ During this time, John modelled the figures of *Morpheus* and the draped female figure, *Grief*.

As John claimed in his 1906 “Modern Sculpture” lecture, Rodin “was a fighter against much that was conventional in sculpture” and that it was a “matter for regret that his work had been the subject of so many polemics”.²⁸⁷ He continued, “Rodin is a great artistic personality of whom we should all be proud. The author of the St Jean needs no eulogy; he has written his name in the annals of sculpture”.²⁸⁸ Referring to Rodin’s *St John* by its French title, John was showily demonstrating his cosmopolitan flair. His encounters with the work of Carpeaux, Falguière and Mercié remained largely confined to the visual impact of their work. Yet, he engaged deeply and theoretically with Rodin, as he critically evaluated the sculptor’s work. As Rodin, he claimed, transcended international boundaries, all sculptors should take pride in his achievements. So when he continued that “time would separate the gold of his work from the dross,”²⁸⁹ John was recognising Rodin was a modeller rather than a carver, and possibly responding to Rodin’s later more controversial works rather than his earlier naturalistic ones. By 1933, an elderly John commented on Rodin’s “disregard for the limitation of marble” in a lecture he gave at the NMW. Rodin’s controversial *Monument to Balzac* (1898) may have been one of those works.²⁹⁰ John’s generation, with the exception of Bates’ reliefs that come closest to Rodin’s broken surfaces, largely favoured smooth naturalistic finishes.²⁹¹ Thus, the remarks he makes on Rodin adhered to the New Sculpture emphasis on nature and surface particularity. For John, Rodin’s early works reinforced his own endeavours in expressing through the

of 1890”, *Art History* Vol. 28 No. 1 February 2005, [74–95] 77. John later gifted the *Dido* to the NMW. On Bates see also Edwards, “‘A Curious Feature’: Harry Bates’s Holy Trinity Alter front (1890)”, *Sculpture Journal*, Vol. 17 Issue I. 2008, and “War and Peace”.

²⁸⁶ “Sir Goscombe John Remembers”, *Western Mail*.

²⁸⁷ “Modern Sculpture”, *Morning Post*, 26 Feb 1906.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid*.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid*.

²⁹⁰ *The Influence of Material Upon Form and Design in Sculpture*, from an unpublished transcript of a lecture on the history of sculpture given by Goscombe John in 1933. NMW Artist, People, Places Archive.

²⁹¹ However, in 1943, John exhibited, *Head of an old man* (c.1893) at the RA, with rough surfaces that bear the marks of the sculptor’s tools, John claimed it was a “study rapidly seen and characterised. Three short sittings [...] two hours work”. John, letter to Fox, 1934, NMW 2724.

material's potential a full exploration of the subject he was depicting. As he claimed, "the imagination of the artist appears to function more happily when hedged in by certain limitations [... that] have been both rightly understood and faithfully observed on the material and imagination". Furthermore, it was "a matter for the artist himself to decide where this limit shall be fixed, for upon him the responsibility will rest".²⁹²

In comparison to the *Parting*, the *Morpheus* was proof that John's exceptional skills and his "individuality" had continued to develop during his time in Paris. During which, John returned briefly to London to marry his Swiss wife, Marthe Weiss, the daughter of engraver, Paul Weiss, before returning to Paris with her.²⁹³ John recalled that those were "very happy days", living and working within an international artistic community who were "all then happy and impecunious." He continued, "[t]he memory of those friendly gatherings in my studio, with my wife as hostess, is very dear to me."²⁹⁴ John's fond recollections reveal that during those "friendly gatherings" discussions on contemporary events probably took place. John could not have failed to notice the avant-garde trends dominating the French capital. In this light, the *Morpheus* offers an intertextual sub narrative that explores the darker psychosexual narratives of some avant-garde writers and poets within artistic Parisian circles.

Although John cannot, yet, be explicitly linked to radical French literature, we can make connections through Rodin who deeply admired Charles Baudelaire and read *Les Fleurs du Mal* in 1885. This, as Mitchell argues, influenced Rodin's visual conceptualisation of despair for the *Gates of Hell*.²⁹⁵ While, as discussed, John's quotation from the *Faerie Queene* firmly placed the *Morpheus* within a traditional English context, the work of French poets, including Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine, and Stéphane Mallarmé, and artists Edgar Degas, Toulouse Lautrec and Rodin, found new

²⁹²John, *The Influence of Material*.

²⁹³ John's father-in-law, engraver Paul Weiss, offers an artisanal parallel to John's father.

²⁹⁴ "Sir Goscombe John Remembers", *Western Mail*.

²⁹⁵ Mitchell, *Rodin: The Zola of Sculpture*, 25. Based on Dante's epic poem *Divine Comedy* (c. 1308–1320), the *Gates of Hell* were commissioned by the French government for the entrance to a proposed museum of the decorative arts in 1880. Never finished, as the museum never materialised, Rodin took elements from the *Gates* and made them up into individual works.

appreciation in London's intellectual circles.²⁹⁶ Furthermore, as Mitchell notes, writers such as Arthur Symons, Wilde, and Will Rothenstein self-consciously associated themselves with French avant-garde poets and artists.²⁹⁷ By the late 1890s, many British artists revered Rodin,²⁹⁸ as one of these, John would have been keen to assert his personal association within a specifically New Sculptural remit. Life drawings John undertook in Paris demonstrate that he already had the theme in mind as one standing male nude has "Morpheus" pencilled in by its side (Fig. 1.17).²⁹⁹ This heavily outlined figure stands with weight on the left leg. The raised arms that partially obscure his face evoke Rodin's *Age* and his 1887-8 illustrations for Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal* that took three-dimensional form as Rodin's *Kneeling Fauness* in 1889.

Yet, on a wider imperial scale growing colonial rivalries meant this was a period of increasingly poor Anglo-French relations.³⁰⁰ By 1904, in the face of a rising and commonly shared German threat, Britain and France signed the *Entente Cordiale* that devised cultural programmes to create better understanding between the two countries.³⁰¹ In light of this, Rodin's foreign influences were not universally accepted in Britain. Some within the RA feared his anarchic popularity could not only have a negative effect on British art, but encourage avant-garde anti-Academy feeling.³⁰²

Back in London

The Spenser quotation then suggests that the *Morpheus*'s influences were not purely French. The Paris sketch with taut abdomen and overall muscular definition recalls

²⁹⁶ Mitchell, *Rodin: The Zola of Sculpture*, 4.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Mitchell, *Rodin: The Zola of Sculpture*, 4.

²⁹⁹ Dated, "Paris Oct. 90". RA 07/554.

³⁰⁰ Mathew Potter expands on Britain's "conditional" tensions towards Germany and 'proto-Symbolist British art', in "British Art and Empire", *Media History*, 13:1. 2007. 1-3. DOI: 10.1080/13688800701264876.

³⁰¹ In 1908, John was a member of the Royal Society of British Sculptors' sub-committee of selection for the Franco-British Exhibition, a product of the 1904 Entente Cordiale to improve Anglo-French relations. He exhibited the plaster versions of *Drummer Boy*, *St John the Baptist* and *Boy at Play* and *The Elf* in bronze.

³⁰² Many hoped that when Rodin was elected president of the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers (ISSPG) in 1903, that he would challenge and even undermine British art establishments. The ISSPG had a transnational approach to art and organised retrospective exhibitions of Beardsley, Whistler, Meunier, Dalou, and Saint Gaudens. See Mitchell, *Rodin: The Zola of Sculpture*, 5.

Leighton's *Sluggard* and early Burne-Jones' sketches for an unfinished mural base on Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, the *Masque of Cupid* (1872, fig. 1.19), also suggest affiliation with the RA. Despite his admiration for French modernity, John was still looking to Leighton and Burne-Jones at the Academy and alleviating the *Morpheus*' foreign French origins through Spenser. Thus, acknowledging traditionalists' beliefs that British art needed to play a role in promoting conventional imperial values even before the *Entente Cordiale*.

While Leighton and Rodin were exhibiting their seminal works in London and Paris, it was not until 1894 that Gosse, as we have seen, retrospectively acknowledged the impact of the *Athlete* on British sculpture, signalling it as the start of the New Sculpture movement. The *Athlete* caused a sensation at the RA for its lifelike, yet still idealised, presentation of the male body. The iconographical narrative appears to interrupt voyeuristic contemplations through the symbolic narrative of good versus evil through the athlete struggling with the biblical snake that asserts moral agency.

In 1886, two years after *Âge* was exhibited at the RA (also the first time John exhibited his work there), Leighton exhibited the *Sluggard* (fig. 1.18).³⁰³ While it recalls classical examples of Ancient Greece such as Praxiteles' *Hermes*, Leighton recalled, with Rodinesque claims of capturing models in movement, that inspiration for the *Sluggard* came when the model, Giuseppe Valona, stretched during a break.³⁰⁴ Originally intended as a companion to the *Athlete*, the *Sluggard*'s modernity comes from Leighton's suggestion of capturing the momentary action of stretching tired muscles.

The *Sluggard*'s title once again recalls Leighton's 1885 Presidential *Address*. Speaking on the "art and temper" of the Etruscans, Leighton described these Greek and Roman "prototypes" as laid-back "obese and unattractive male personages" who "toy with their prodigious necklaces" and "lolling ladies [...] lazily curled in their last slumber [that] by no means belie [...] the character bestowed [...] of gluttons and of

³⁰³ Leighton produced clay models of works for his paintings; this work may have been modelled for *The Daphnephoria* (1874-6) as several versions of the *Sluggard*'s pose appear in it.

³⁰⁴ Robert Bowman, *Sir Alfred Gilbert and the New Sculpture* (London: The Fine Art Society, 2008), 76-77.

sluggards”.³⁰⁵ While the “lazily curled” slumbering ladies anticipate paintings such as *Flaming June* (1895), Leighton’s late-nineteenth-century modern male sluggard is upright, healthy and desirable, contradicting his decadent and gluttonous descriptions of classical sluggards.

Yet Leighton’s reference to the stretching model as his inspiration reminds us that, like Rodin’s *Age*, there was an alternative title for the *Sluggard*: “Athlete awakening from Sleeping”. This draws on notions of athleticism, drowsiness and reluctant awakening. Thus, John, in adopting the theme of sleep inducement in his work, may have been attempting to forge elite associations with both Leighton and Rodin.³⁰⁶ Moreover, these reluctantly waking figures share a homoerotic leitmotif. The *Sluggard* and *Morpheus*’s arched backs suggest reclining nudes that recall the erotic agony of Leighton’s *Elijah in the Wilderness* (1878, fig. 1.20), the Barberini *Faun* (fig. 1. 21),³⁰⁷ or the arched back of Sargent’s nude in the studio portrait, as well as Burne-Jones’s *Briar Rose* knights (1885–1890).³⁰⁸

While John makes little mention of him, Burne-Jones was nevertheless important to John’s career especially as we know he helped plan his Gold Medal travel itinerary. In 1926, John acquired some Burne-Jones drawings from the Leverhume sale.³⁰⁹ Of these, three 1872 sketches explore the *Faerie Queene*, one in particular is significant as it reveals a Morpheus-type figure. With arms raised over his head, he appears to float off the ground in a dream-like state. Given this link, it is possible that John was aware of and acknowledged Burne-Jones’ early interest in Spenser’s work.³¹⁰

³⁰⁵ Leighton, “Address 1885”, 104.

³⁰⁶ In Symbolist terms, the association of sleep often symbolised death, as these works explore notions of awakening, in rejecting deathly associations they look to the future.

³⁰⁷ John Singer-Sargent later gave John his watercolour of a reclining nude that also adopts the Barberini *Faun* pose (after 1926). This too, depicts a sleepy model reclining on a bed in the artist’s studio, that, like the *Morpheus* has a stretched concave belly as the left arm is raised and bent to allow the hand to rest behind the head.

³⁰⁸ See Edwards, *Alfred Gilbert’s Aestheticism*, 120.

³⁰⁹ Following Lever’s death in 1925, sales were held at his London house, “Mill Hill”. John purchased (possibly on behalf of the NMW) several Burne-Jones’ sketches, including the *Faerie Queene*.

³¹⁰ In the early 1870s, Burne-Jones created a number of designs before abandoning the project, he returned to them shortly before his death in 1898, accessed May 19, 2018.
<http://www.preraphaelites.org/the-collection/1927p459/the-masque-of-cupid-final-portion-part-ii/>.

While information on John and Burne-Jones is at present vague, John frequently and emphatically asserted his admiration of Gilbert. Whilst Chapter 2 considers John's friendship with Gilbert, John's distillation of these works in the *Morpheus* is relevant to this chapter.³¹¹ John reworked his 1890 sketch for the lithograph, exhibited at Robert Dunthorne's Rembrandt Gallery in 1895 (fig. 1.4).³¹² The detailed upper half of the figure, with covered head and facial features emphatically evokes Gilbert's *Icarus* and *Head*. Within John's generation, Gilbert was widely respected; following his death, John purchased both works. John believed Gilbert was "our greatest name in plastic design and one of our greatest artists" and the *Icarus* was the "most noble and beautiful [work] done by a British sculptor". Echoing Gosse on the *Athlete*, in 1894, John claimed Gilbert signalled "a new outlook in sculpture". He continued that he knew of no other work of "greater distinction [...] by any [British] sculptor" for its "remarkable sentiment and nobility of conception".³¹³ Although John was endorsing Gilbert's importance for the Museum's collections, his possessive admiration for "our" Gilbert, not only reflected current thinking, but, as they were exhibited in 1884, once again highlights the importance of this year for John at the RA. As *Icarus* and *Head* are further discussed in Chapter 2, it is significant here that this mythical character, *Icarus*, represents a narrative subject with meaning enriched by Gilbert's ability to convey inner emotion through the modelling, bodily configurations and facial details. John was also considering this in relation to the *Morpheus* and poetic narrative. Thus, as the product of the RA and the Salon, the *Morpheus* can be seen as an Anglo-French child; in appealing to both 'parents', John could pursue a reputation in Paris and London.³¹⁴

Poetry

³¹¹ Gilbert's covered head acknowledges the *Ignudi* of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel at the Vatican in Rome.

³¹² This was even more evident in the 1895 lithograph undertaken for the *Exhibition of Original Lithographs* at the Rembrandt Head Gallery. Leighton and Gilbert were contributors and keen to show off British contributions they encouraged several artists to contribute including Sargent, Alma-Tadema, and John. The lithographs were first shown in Paris. A limited number of proofs were taken before the stones were destroyed. In 1906, seventy-six signed proofs were presented to the Victoria and Albert Museum. See Anna Gruetzner Robins (ed.), *Walter Sickert: the Complete Writings on Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 291.

³¹³ John, letter to Williams, May 1938 NMW A581.

³¹⁴ Just as artists such as Whistler had done.

While John's use of Spenser, may initially seem a mood-setting device rather than meaningful allusion, *Morpheus*, like Frampton's *Dame Alice Owen* (1897) and William Reynolds-Stephens' *A Royal Game* (1906–11) asserted a specifically Elizabethan English context. We have seen that John specifically turned towards England for the RA exhibition through his indirect Spenserian quotation that evokes the character of Morpheus. This minor mythological figure first appeared in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.³¹⁵ Morpheus, a derivative of Ovid's title, was a winged demon, a shape-shifting god of dreams that mimicked the human form, and, as Ballinger acknowledged, could "mould" the dreams of the sleeper. As a type of professional sculptural self-portrait, John aligned his modelling powers to that of Morpheus; yet, Spenser's morality poem has a darker subtext. Written in tribute to Elizabeth I, it tells of the Arthurian knights' battle against the seven deadly sins. The principal characters are allegorically representational: the Christian knight, Redcrosse, represents holiness; Una, truth; and Redcrosse's enemy, the evil sorcerer, Archimago, who signifies deceitfulness. Within the plot, Archimago sends a sprite messenger to wake Morpheus with instructions to send a false dream to deceive Redcrosse. This dream showed Una, Redcrosse's betrothed, in "wanton lust and leud [*sic*] embracement" with another knight.³¹⁶ Through Morpheus' character, John points to an alternative moral compass through which he explored an unconventional scheme of good and evil that aligned more with Baudelaire's poems and Leighton's *Sluggard* than the moral *Athlete*.

While John may have echoed Spenser's flattery of Elizabeth with Leighton at RA, in taking a little-known figure from Spenser's work, he further asserted his individuality and his intellectual credentials. As Cambridge scholar, John W. Hales explained in 1905, the *Faerie Queene* was "one of the greatest poems of English literature, which for all its greatness, is but little read and known."³¹⁷ He highlighted the inaccessibility of elite art and literature, as "its archaisms of language" and "exquisite melodies" could only be caught and appreciated by a "cultivated ear". Consequently, many "suffer[ed] the loss of such high and refined literary pleasure" that "Spenser's

³¹⁵ A reminder of the *Self-Portrait's* outlined *Elf* and and Picasso's illustrations.

³¹⁶ Canto II, V, 41.

³¹⁷ John W. Hales, "Introduction", Mary Macleod, *Stories from the Faerie Queene*, (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1905). John's travel companion and fellow sculptor, A.G. Walker, illustrated the 1905 edition.

masterpiece can certainly give”.³¹⁸ Within this rarefied world, Spenser, “the poet’s poet”,³¹⁹ amassed “devotees” including John Milton, William Wordsworth, John Dryden, Alexander Pope, John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelly, and George Gordon Byron, as well as “many of high eminence in other departments of literature and of life” including John Ruskin.³²⁰

The poem’s length contributed to its inaccessibility; it was eventually anthologised into the most well known episodes. This “incomplete or fragmentary” retelling resulted in “everybody [being] familiar with the story of Una and the Lion”, but little else. As John Bell demonstrated thirty years earlier when he set the Spenser sculptural precedent, choosing *Una and the Lion* for his sculpture group, exhibited at the Great Exhibition in 1851. Through the *Morpheus*, John once again establishes his tactical self-positioning. As he did with Frampton and the RA Gold Medal, in choosing Spenser’s lesser-known character, he both recalled and attempted to out-do Bell’s earlier work. As Hale notes, statistically “not one in ten reaches the end of the first book, and not one in a hundred perseveres to the end of the poem.”³²¹ Portraying a character left out of popular anthologies, John asserted his knowledgeable status as, at least, one of the “one in ten” who had read the first book. In contrast, the critics’ negligible response to Spenser suggests they were of the majority who relied on the anthologies. John tapped into a broadly popular theme that also appealed to an intellectual audience.³²²

There is, however, another element to this quotation. John portrays the *Morpheus* not fully awake. The raised arms indicate the stage in the narrative in which the messenger had “rudely thrust [...] and pusht” the sluggish Morpheus until he “gan to

³¹⁸ Hales “Introduction”, vii.

³¹⁹ Ibid., viii.

³²⁰ Hale “Introduction”, ix.

³²¹ Hale quoting Thomas Macaulay. Ibid., x.

³²² In terms of the colonial themes that run through this thesis (especially Chapter 3), it should be noted that while Spenser lived for many years in Ireland, he held strong English anti-Irish views. These were made explicit in his seminal tract, *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (1598). He stressed that the Irish should be forcibly subjugated to England. The English colonisation of Ireland under Elizabeth I was also an opportunity to make a fortune. Whether or not John was aware of Spenser’s political views, he is, nevertheless alluding to an emphatically English, not British canon. See Christopher Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser and the Crisis in Ireland*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Bruce Avery, “Mapping the Irish Other: Spenser’s *A View of the Present State of Ireland*.” *ELH* 57, no. 2 (1990): 263-79. doi:10.2307/2873072.

stretch”, this recalls Leighton’s *Sluggard* that, according to Leighton, stretched up his arms at the end of a sitting.] where upon “[h]e mumbled soft, but would not all his silence breake”.³²³ Morpheus wants to surrender his consciousness to the sensual desire of drowning in sleep. Marion Wells argues that Spenser’s Morpheus denotes sluggishness, melancholia, lust and despair. The poetic false dream and the fantasy spirit underworld produce complex meanings of an over-riding erotic “love-melancholy” encompassing desire, fantasy, bitterness, and jealousy.³²⁴ Furthermore, before Freud’s work on the unconscious and dreams, and following Friedrich Sertürner’s discovery of morphine in 1804 (Sertürner named the substance after the god) leads us to consider an additional element to John’s *Morpheus*: Baudelaire’s *Les Paradis Artificiels* (1860).³²⁵ This work of drug-addled “states of ecstasy” in which “reality itself is only found in dreams”,³²⁶ reminds us of the quotation, as “of nothing he takes keep”. Whether John used barbiturates is unknown. *Morpheus*’s ecstatic state, however, explicitly explores notions of “drowning” in sensual desire through levels of consciousness that may include the drug’s side effects. John interrogates notions of “reality” and consciousness, and the state between sleep and wakefulness (like Rodin and Leighton) that stemmed from the Elizabethan writers.

During this period, there was considerable interest in sixteenth-century writers. In 1889, Wilde relied heavily on Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* for his short novella, *The Portrait of Mr W.H.*³²⁷ John’s reference to Spenser, meanwhile also places him within the same historical period. Both Shakespeare and Spenser used literary sexual puns, and John’s indirect quote is no exception. In this context, the term “nothing” acquires further meaning as a pun on vagina (“O”) as well as no penis, literally “no-thing”.³²⁸ With this in mind, the above phrase takes on new meaning, references to female genitalia simultaneously points to both the emasculated male and the apparent

³²³ Canto XL II 374–378.

³²⁴ Marion Wells, *The Secret Wound: Love-Melancholy and Early Modern Romance* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2007), 184.

³²⁵ See Tord Adjanki, *Medicinal Reading: Of Genius, Pure Chance and Dedicated Hard Work* (Stockholm: Swedish Pharmaceutical Press, 1995), Chapter 6, “Lighting quick knives and fields of morphine”, 79–98.

³²⁶ Charles Baudelaire, “Les Paradis Artificiels”, *Baudelaire, Prose and Poetry*, translated Arthur Symons (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1926), 235.

³²⁷ Wilde, *The Portrait of Mr W.H.* (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1921).

³²⁸ Gordon Williams, *Shakespeare’s Sexual Language: A Glossary* (London & New York: Continuum, 1997, 2006), 219.

overpowering nature of male desire. In Paris, where homosexuality had been decriminalised since 1791,³²⁹ John had more freedom to explore visually the homoerotic, if not specifically the homosexual. For the newly married, and thus apparently respectable, young sculptor, *Morpheus* represents John's legitimate sexual coming of age. Alongside professional notions of self-portraiture, this eroticised fantasy self-portrait explored the effects of "drowning" in sexual desire not upon the male body in general but John's particular eroticised bodily experiences. The theme of *Morpheus*, the imaginer of bodies and dreams, portrayed as an ideal nude provided the perfect vehicle for this expression. This became more ambivalent especially, as I discuss below, after 1894.³³⁰

John had a further lucrative incentive for embracing and visually articulating the homoerotic. Exhibiting *Morpheus* in both London and Paris at the height of Oscar Wilde's fame fed into a market-led opportunity to gain attention and future commissions. Prior to his notorious trial and downfall in 1895, Wilde's Aesthetic circle, as Edwards argues, was at the height of its commercial and discursive power.³³¹ In addition to Gilbert, John's peers, including Pomeroy's *Perseus* (1898) and Sargent's male reclining nude watercolour,³³² continued to explore the market for male bodily desire through portrayals of classically inspired male nudes within Symbolist and Decadent vocabularies.³³³

Consequently, in renting his own studio in Paris, John was now free to absorb wider bohemian and cosmopolitan influences. These offered alternatives for conceptualising visually sexual desire. While the *Morpheus* signalled his sexual and sculptural maturity, his tactical mediations located his work within specific sculptural canons and current commission-attracting trends. John's synthesis of Rodin, Leighton, Gilbert, Wilde and Baudelaire demonstrates his negotiation of Parisian modernity, avant-garde literary London, and the Academy. Following its success at the Salon,

³²⁹ See David F. Greenburg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1990), 352. In the UK, homosexuality was not decriminalised until 1967.

³³⁰ The other works being *Perseus Arming* (1883) and *Comedy and Tragedy* (1891), Jason Edwards set the precedent for reading these autobiographically in *Alfred Gilbert's Aestheticism*.

³³¹ Edwards, *Alfred Gilbert's Aestheticism*, 127. Wilde received a sentence for two years hard labour.

³³² This was a gift from Sargent to John.

³³³ *The Age of Rossetti*, exhibition catalogue, 246.

John then exhibited it at the RA at the height of Aesthetic Symbolism. We have seen, that in recalling the works of the 1884 exhibition, his first as an RA student, and his emergence as an award-winning professional sculptor, *Morpheus* autobiographically celebrated John's return to London and continued his links with the Academy. As he built his career, these experiences would continue to inform his work. The *St John the Baptist*, one of his last ideal works, demonstrates this as it points to John's continuing development as well as continuing the Anglo-French connections. While these demonstrate his continued admiration for Rodin, they draw on additional complex Anglo-Irish-French literary references that infer further intertextual narratives, challenging its explicitly religious and geographical meanings.

St John the Baptist

Cast in block tin (a type of pewter amalgam), the *St. John the Baptist* was an ambitious project. It was commissioned by the third Marquess of Bute for his London home, St John's Lodge in Regents Park, and intended for the centre of a large pond in Bute's recently landscaped gardens. As well as signalling John's training in Bute's Cardiff Castle context, the statue was fashioned with the intention of creating a night-time extravaganza. Bute's later architect, following Burges, R. Weir Schultz was experimenting, in May 1894, with electric light effects for the statue and the matching block-tin entrance doors.³³⁴ Within such a theatrical spectacle, the burnished silvery *St John* would become an ethereal centrepiece. Whilst John's use of block tin was unusual in London, it was, as Claire Jones points out, fashionable in France in the 1890s for small-scale decorative sculpture.³³⁵ John was involved in an impressive project to create a large-scale work in an unusual material, just as Gilbert used platinum for his *Eros* (1892) in Piccadilly. Unlike *Morpheus*, which was modelled in Paris but tied to particularly English sources, the *St John*, modelled in London, demonstrates Rodin's sculptural French influences and, I argue, reflects the popularity of decadent literature in Paris and its gaining popularity in London at a particularly

³³⁴ Pearson, *Goscombe John*, 12.

³³⁵ See Jones, *Sculpture and Design Reform in France*, 140 -151. There are no known miniatures of *St John* in pewter (or ivory) although he produced a small copper panel relief, the *Youthful St John* (1912). This was possibly a study for his memorial relief for W.S. Gilbert at St Paul's Cathedral and the Rev. Canon Guy, 1897.

sensitive time concerning homosociality and the homoerotic.³³⁶ Wilde's *Salomé*, an important Anglo-Irish-French text, written in French in Paris in 1891, demonstrates how important cross-media interconnections articulated socio-cultural anxieties; this, as I now argue, is especially so with the *St John*, of which the plaster version features prominently in the upper studio photograph.

Larger than life size, *St John* stands with head bent forward and raised hands. In the photograph, it gazes down upon his namesake, the sculptor John seated below him, as if in blessing. With right foot planted firmly on the ground supporting the straight leg, the left heel is raised and rests on the toes. With bent left knee, the weight is shifted to the right hip in gentle *contrapposto* providing asymmetrical balance to the extended arms. The left arm is bent forward at the elbow and stands out slightly from the body. The bent right arm is raised higher and further forward. Both hands are flexed slightly up with fingers gently extended as if in blessing or preaching. The long hair has a centre parting and extends down and back behind his shoulders. The face's finely modelled calm features belie a sense of inner emotion. The eyes resolutely look to the ground as if having baptised or blessed someone, presumably John in this case, kneeling before and below him. The figure wears the traditional costume of camel skin, tied at the waist with leather belt. It hangs over the left shoulder extending over the body to the legs; the ragged strips both cover and reveal the thighs.³³⁷ The surface has varied textures; recalling the *Parting*, the rough uneven animal skin contrasts with smooth taught skin on the arms, chest, legs, and feet.

At first glance, the symbolism and setting endorse the biblical narrative of the New Testament prophet and preacher who foresaw the arrival of Jesus and baptised him in the river Jordan before being captured and beheaded under King Herod's orders. Bute, who had converted to Roman Catholicism in 1868, may have been inspired by

³³⁶ Arthur Symons, quoting Carlyle, claimed that a symbol "is concealment and yet revelation, hence [...] a double significance". Furthermore, symbolism "has now become conscious of itself, in a sense in which it was unconscious of itself" in the past. The "contemplation" of the soul now becomes "a literature in which the visible world is no longer a reality, and the unseen world no longer a dream". See Arthur Symons, *The Decadent Movement in Literature to The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1919), 2,3,5.

³³⁷ *St John*, the desert dweller wearing a camel skin, recalls John's travels and his sketchbooks containing Egyptian and Middle Eastern figures. While space does not permit enlargement, this anticipates the discussion on western animals stereotyped to represent the exotic colonised in Chapter 3.

Christ's biblical description of St John the Baptist, as "a burning and a shining light",³³⁸ which may have inspired the setting for the pond. It is also significant that St. John is both the Freemasons' patron saint and Bute's patron saint,³³⁹ which visually nods to Bute's St John's Lodge in London. John later restaged the *St John* (his own creation) in the upper studio photograph to suggest a kind of self-blessing from the saint. While this work too plays on his name and his home in St John's Wood, thus, in his photograph John puts himself on a par with Bute as part of the aristocracy, other meanings as I now consider become apparent through closer examination of the work.

It is significant that the idea for the *St John* germinated in Paris. At the same time as he worked on figure studies for the *Morpheus*, he produced several life drawings of other male nudes, one of which evokes the *St John* (fig. 1.22).³⁴⁰ Dated "June 29th", the model's haunting beauty is conveyed through the Leonardesque pencilled *sfumato* and heavy outline. The standing nude raises his left heel, the curve of his back, reminiscent of Rodin's *St John*, is exaggerated as his clasped hands held in front just above his genitalia, bring his shoulders forward; the hands appear tied as if he were a captive or prisoner. Whilst the features of the down-turned head are indistinct, we can see his centre-parted long hair and beard. Adjacent to this is a more detailed study of the head. With eyes closed against high cheekbones, it recalls St John's decapitation and symbolic male emasculation. Given John's relationship with Rodin at the time, it suggests Rodin's *Head of Saint John the Baptist on a Platter* (1887). We can see then that John was exploring two different moments in the plot: the captive St John that, as I discuss below, relates to Wilde's character, Jokanaan (John the Baptist) in *Salomé* and notions of undefiled pure masculinity, and the decapitation, the climax of the play, that also that links to Rodin.

In terms of sculptural precedents for John, Rodin's *Head of Saint John* and *St John the Baptist Preaching* (1880), and Leighton's *Sluggard* again factor significantly. Through the similarly configured legs, John once again quotes Leighton's *Sluggard*. Yet, unlike the *Morpheus*, the *St John* is not an erotic nude. Compositionally, the

³³⁸ John 5:35 (King James Version).

³³⁹ Pearson, *Goscombe John*, 12.

³⁴⁰ RA 07/609. RA Archives.

upper body configurations are the opposite of *Morpheus*. Rather than arching backwards, he leans slightly forward and his face, following this angle, looks downwards. This and the expressive forward extension of his arms appear to suggest a pious rejection of the sensual decadence evoked in the *Morpheus*. When exhibited at the RA, critical responses focused on its bodily composition, rather than connections to Leighton or Rodin. The *Magazine of Art* believed the *St John*'s rigid appearance was not suggestive enough "of the suppleness which belongs to the living organism" and that "the anatomy in certain passages require[d] explanation."³⁴¹ For this anonymous critic, this "fine, austere conception of the Precursor in manhood" suggested that "Donatello and Michelozzo [had] been in the artist's mind" especially as the body was "appropriately meagre and emaciated". Thinking about these Renaissance sculptors,³⁴² John's wax model for *St John*, with its austere and "appropriately" lean body recalls the stance of these earlier works. Yet, through the *Sluggard*'s *contrapposto* and slender form that, as Prettejohn argues, draws on the Ancient Greek sculptor, Lysippos ("Lysippan"),³⁴³ and, I suggest, the Praxitelean *Hermes*, the *St John* fuses Ancient, Renaissance, and nineteenth-century French and British sculpture, as well as Franco-Anglo-Irish literature as we shall see.

While the religious aspect was important to Bute, this commission was a piece of theatre, a material spectacle bathed in electric light and reflective water. Bute enjoyed role-play and theatre, dressing up with Burges at Cardiff Castle in rooms creatively designed for different purposes.³⁴⁴ In comparison to Rodin's *St John* (fig. 1.23), John's imaginative synthesis of both "generous" and "competitive" imitation becomes more apparent.³⁴⁵ John would have seen Rodin's *St John* at the RA the year after he arrived in London, and two years before he was accepted at the RA schools in 1882. While John re-clothed Rodin's nude, possibly with Bute's Catholicism in mind, both works are approximately the same height, with animated poses. Rodin's *St John*, a

³⁴¹ "Sculpture of the Year", *The Magazine of Art*, 1895, 68-69.

³⁴² Donatello's polychromed wood, 1438, Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice and Michelozzo's silver altar, 1452, Baptistery of San Giovanni, Florence.

³⁴³ Prettejohn points out that influences such as these are "not obedient to a single prototype". Prettejohn, *Modernity of Ancient Sculpture*, 149.

³⁴⁴ Contrastingly, Bute's richly decorated bedroom that housed innovative plumbing contained only a small single bed and statuette of a St John that bore no similarity to John's.

³⁴⁵ These works in bronze are currently placed adjacent to each other at the NMW in Cardiff, providing the ideal opportunity for comparison.

standing nude, turns his head to the left preaching with open mouth. He strides forward with straight legs, his right arm extends out at a 90-degree angle to his body, the left is slightly bent by his side. The left hand is clenched near his thigh with forefinger extended downwards. The forceful forward shoulders and the structure of the back is exaggerated, the deep groove of the spine emphasised by the force of the adjacent tensed muscles and ribcage.

In recalling the *St John* life model, Rodin claimed his inspiration came from the striking machismo spirit of “an Italian peasant [...] called Pignatelli”. He continued that

As soon as I saw him, I was filled with admiration; this rough, hairy man expressed violence in his bearing [...] yet also the mystical character of his race. I immediately thought of a Saint John the Baptist, in other words, a man of nature, a visionary, a believer, a precursor who came to announce one greater than himself. The peasant undressed, climbed onto the revolving stand as if he had never posed before; he planted himself firmly on his feet, head up, torso straight, at the same time putting his weight on both legs, open like a compass. The movement was so right, so straightforward and so true that I cried: ‘But it’s a man walking!’ I immediately resolved to model what I had seen.³⁴⁶

Although greatly oversimplified for the purposes of this chapter, Rodin’s masculine “rough, hairy” *St John* is an essay in describing violent pent-up energy within the body, through which Rodin explored the complexities of the “compass” leg movement and outward gesture. In contrast, John avoided the violent “bearing”, which Rodin admired, through his *St John*’s *contrapposto*. The result is a sensitive, cosmopolitan articulation of inner feeling. As a Symbolist work of internalised emotion, it indicated an alternative meaning that appears to resonate more with Wilde’s evocation of Jokanaan.

Wilde, *Salomé* and Paris

Having identified that Rodin and Leighton were principal visual sources, and that John’s Parisian sketches attest to the sculptor’s idea for the figure, further underlying

³⁴⁶ Dujardin-Baumetz (1913), quoted on the Musée Rodin website, accessed 3 May 3, 2016. <http://www.musee-rodin.fr/en/collections/sculptures/saint-john-baptist>.

connections to the late-nineteenth-century literary circles of Gustave Flaubert, Stéphane Mallarmé, J.K. Huysmans, Maurice Maeterlinck and especially Wilde become valid. Like the *Morpheus*, John's ideas sprang from his experiences of Bohemian Paris. In 1891, four years before Wilde's notorious downfall, his fame and popularity were reaching unprecedented heights there and in London.³⁴⁷ Wilde's play, *Salomé* embellished the Jokanaan narrative through its focus on Herod's stepdaughter, Salomé and her obsessive erotic desire for Jokanaan, Herod's prisoner.³⁴⁸ Salomé makes advances to Jokanaan who repeatedly rejects her. In revenge, Salomé agrees to perform the "Dance of the Seven Veils" for Herod on the condition he grants her any reward she wishes. Salomé then demands St John's execution and his severed head served to her on a silver (or pewter) platter. Wilde wrote his play in French in Paris at the same time John was there. Although there is no evidence that John and Wilde met, given the publicity he generated, John would have been aware of him and his work not least through his social gatherings with other artists.

Just as sculpture is concerned with looking and the gaze, so Wilde's play is a spectacle that explores the destructive power of the male and female eroticised gaze. This ranges from Herod's incestuous gaze on Salomé, Salomé's desire to look at Jokanaan, and Jokanaan's refusal to look at her. Anticipatorily evoking the *St John*'s intended night-time spectacle in Regents Park, Salomé demands to meet Herod's prisoner. When she does, she exclaims "[h]ow wasted he is! He is like a thin ivory statue. He is like an image of silver." She continued, "I am sure he is as chaste as the moon is. He is like a moonbeam, a shaft of silver. His flesh must be cool like ivory. I will take another look at him."³⁴⁹ Salomé views Jokanaan as an object, an ivory or more aptly in this context, silver, statue, to be looked at, an object upon which she asserts her desires. In response, Jokanaan asks, "Who is this women looking at me? I will not have her look at me. Wherefore does she look at me with her golden eyes

³⁴⁷ Although in Paris homosexuality was decriminalised in 1771, in 1895 London it was still a criminal act. Wilde was embroiled in scandal when arrested and charged in London for acts of gross indecency with other men. He was subsequently imprisoned for two years hard labour.

³⁴⁸ Aubrey Beardsley illustrated Wilde's first English translation in 1892 and published in 1893. For Wilde and Beardsley's relationship see Linda Gertner Zatlin, *Aubrey Beardsley: A Catalogue Raisonné* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2016).

³⁴⁹ Oscar Wilde, *Salomé: A tragedy in One Act, translated from the French of Oscar Wilde, with Sixteen Drawings by Aubrey Beardsley* (London: John Lane, 1912), 22-23.

under her gilded eyelids?”³⁵⁰ Within this visual contrast of silver and gold, Wilde portrays Jokanaan as a “silver”, chaste, yet phallic “shaft” in danger from the perilously gold-covered threat of “gilded” feminine desire. These terms are both sculptural and gender divisive, suggestively invoking female and male qualities to direct the narrative, from an admirably masculine “shaft of silver” to the misogynistic concealment of Salomé’s duplicitously gilded eyes, her superficial golden beauty conceals her emasculating ‘evil’ interior that threatened men.

Following her declarations of desire for Jokanaan’s body and hair, Salomé finally sets her sights on his mouth. Jokanaan demands that she seeks God for redemption but she persists, imploring, “Let me kiss thy mouth”, and then defiant, “I will kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan”.³⁵¹ Jokanaan responds, “I do not wish to look at thee. I will not look at thee, thou art accused, Salomé, thou art accused.”³⁵² Like the blind man in the *Parting*, he also does not look back. Following his execution, Jokanaan’s head, with closed eyes, is delivered to Salomé; she kisses his dead mouth. Whilst John’s sketches portrayed bearded heads, his now clean-shaven *St John* reveals a full-lipped sensuous mouth. Through the lens of Wilde’s *Salomé*, the *St John* becomes an exploratory essay on looking, objectification and moral dilemmas.³⁵³

Whilst it cannot be proved that Wilde’s play directly influenced John, circumstances suggest that John enjoyed life in Paris during the so-called ‘naughty nineties’. While no further documentation has yet emerged to shed light on John’s time in the city, we know that he was sociable, spoke French, enjoyed the theatre, and derived pleasure from entertaining his fellow artists and student friends in his Paris studio. With this in mind, John would certainly have been aware of events, especially as artists were interested in avant-garde literature and the codified suggestions of underlying or alternative meanings.³⁵⁴ As Edwards’s argument on Gilbert and *Eros* demonstrates, allusions to Wilde were not unusual.³⁵⁵ The *St John*’s iconography, beyond the

³⁵⁰ Wilde, *Salomé*, 23.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

³⁵² *Ibid.*

³⁵³ Chapter 3 discusses this further through John’s portrayal of the bronze head of a Congolese pigmy, *Bokani, a Pygmy Chief*.

³⁵⁴ For more on homosexual codes, see Linda Dowling, “Ruskin’s Pied Beauty and the Constitution of a ‘Homosexual’ code”, *Victorian Newsletter*, 75 (Spring 1989).

³⁵⁵ See Edwards, *Alfred Gilbert’s Aestheticism*.

intended location at St John's Lodge, could recall works such as *Salomé* to some, during the late nineteenth century.

London Post 1895

In 1894, John exhibited *St John* at the RA, the year before Wilde's trial for public indecency. For Wilde's Aesthetes in London it was now becoming a dangerous time as interest in aesthetic decadence was waning and public opinion becoming less lenient. John had moved from Parisian liberality to growing tension and animosity towards non-conformity in London. Consequently, the female gaze perceived as dangerous in the play can also be read as homosexual male desire. The resolutely downcast gaze of *St John* in London during the late 1890s and the studio portrait, may offer a cautionary subtext to those who needed it. Aligned with *Salomé* and notions of objectification, the viewers for both the *Morpheus* and the *St John* come to represent either the decadent sprite that attempts to wake Morpheus or Salomé as she scrutinises Jokanaan. While the ideal viewing position for the *St John* is kneeling before it and looking up, as if receiving baptism or blessing, this also puts the viewer at groin height that could conversely be considered as sexually vulgarised. The *St John* no longer appears to bless those below him; especially, given that viewers have to contort themselves, bending and twisting to look into his eyes: the *St John* does not invite our gaze.³⁵⁶ Just as Jokanaan rejected Salomé's gaze, so our gaze is similarly treated, the raised arms now become self-defensive, shielding him from her, and our advances. As Edwards argues on Gilbert's *Eros* in Piccadilly, for nineteenth-century viewers familiar with works such as *Salomé*, this may offer a warning to those who embraced Wilde's "risqué lifestyles".³⁵⁷ In portraying *St John* at his most chaste, and, as the *Magazine of Art* critic noted, lacking "the suppleness" of the "living" (or sexual) "organism", John was conceivably making a similar statement as the arms push against previous homoerotic sculptural idioms. As a possible reaction to the liberality of Gilbert and Thornycroft's generation, and in contrast to the *Morpheus*'s

³⁵⁶ In 2017, as part of a programme to introduce visually impaired people to sculpture at the NMW, the role of touch played a key role to visitor encounter and engagement. Not since John modelled the *St John* has it undergone such a tangible examination. The resulting responses were interesting: some felt that the raised hands were "warnings"; no one felt they had received a blessing; and others, who wanted to know what was beneath his robes, were, with some humour, disappointed to find no genitalia. While this was a pragmatic measure to save bronze, the *St John*'s de-sexing serves to reinforce the warning.

³⁵⁷ Edwards *Alfred Gilbert's Aestheticism*, 129.

erotic ambivalence, John referenced the fate of St John to signal his disengagement with the increasingly hazardous, and now potentially career damaging, homoerotic market.

To sum up, it is fitting to consider John's last word on the *St John*, its inclusion in the upper studio photograph. While it is emblematic of John and his home in St John's Wood, it also contributes to debates on imperial masculinities. By the late 1930s, the time of this photograph, the central subgroup consisting of John, the statuette/model for the equestrian monument to Viscount Tredegar, the *St John*, the *Boy Scout* and Sargent's *Barberini Faun*-type reclining male nude watercolour (see fig. 13) contributes to debates on late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century imperial masculinities.³⁵⁸ Within this configuration, John appears blessed by the saint who, alongside the *Boy Scout*, obscures Sargent's watercolour.³⁵⁹ Signalling their importance to John, he nostalgically re-invoked the homoerotic connection through the inclusion of both works. The *Morpheus*'s relegation to the background and its reduced hedonism reflects its diminished erotic significance for John towards the end of his career.

While Sargent's gift may be included more for the status of its maker than its homoeroticism, this obfuscation along with the two-dimensional *Morpheus*, now reduced to an upper body version, indicates John's homoerotic sensitivity. The *Morpheus* and *St John* demonstrate John's overt and subliminal use of poetic texts. Whereas John looked to French literature to associate his female nude, *The Elf*, with France in a post-Wildean safely heterosexual era, these pre-1895 works span his progressive and regressive exploration of the homoerotic. The *St John* combined Paris and London, marrying decadent literature with both cities. Yet, this was a crucial time, following Wilde's trial and the ensuing "homosexual panic",³⁶⁰ John asserted the patriarchally "powerful instrument[s] of social control",³⁶¹ to pivotally reposition the homoerotic for a post-Wildean heterosexual era.

³⁵⁸ For an exploration on anxious masculinities, of which the *Boy Scout*, can be included see, Edward', *Alfred Gilbert's Aestheticism*.

³⁵⁹ Inscribed "To my friend Goscombe John. John S. Sargent", this was a gift from Sargent to John.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 89–90.

³⁶¹ Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 86.

John's later-in-life conservatism obscured both Sargent's nude's and the *Morpheus's* soft-classicism to reinforce his growing preference for the Gothic, despite his continual visual references to the classical. Within the upper studio photograph, these works through their diverse masculinities and autobiographical suggestions assert John's concerns for his legacy. The imperial figure, the *Boy Scout*, and devout stoicism in the *St John*, came before classical sculpture and homoeroticism.

In mapping John's early career from student to professional, national and international sculptor and his absorption of these practices into his work, this chapter throws light on late-nineteenth-century sculptural education and sculptural practice more generally. The *Parting* provides the key to understanding John's ambitions and tactics. The ultimate sign of this working, and that tactical manoeuvres did not diminish John's popularity, came through his election as Royal Academician, notably filling no less than Gilbert's shoes. John not only "won by a big majority" but, as Clausen informed John, "the result was greeted with applause".³⁶² Having considered the decadence of Paris and the homoerotic sensitivities in London, I now turn to Wales to consider John's activities in his homeland and his contributions to Welsh art, national collections and national identity.

³⁶² Clausen, letter to John, February 2, 1899. NLW GB 0210 MSGOSCOMBE (17). NLW Archive.

Chapter Two

Avoiding the “*Omnium Gatherum*”:³⁶³ Sculpture, Collections, and (Welsh) National Identity.

“Our [Welsh] attitude to a national art will be largely determined by the side we take in the controversy between nationalism and Imperialism”.³⁶⁴

In her 1906 article, ‘Welsh Art’, for the *Welsh Review*, Iona Williams succinctly summed up the predicament of Welsh art and nationalism in the early twentieth century. Having considered John’s negotiation of his London and Paris experiences, the works discussed in this chapter while still radiating from John’s upper studio, offer a Welsh context. Proudly patriotic, Wales is crucial in understanding this Welsh sculptor, his works and his legacy from which his long-term role at the NMW is fundamental, not only through the works he donated and their connections, but his contributions in establishing the new Museum in the first place. John’s relationship with the NMW, and subsequent legacy at it, reveals his approach to Iona Williams’ “controversy”. His role as a founding Council member and regular benefactor continues debates on the diversity of cultural nationalisms within the British Empire. In addition, the chapter demonstrates that John’s Welsh loyalty was complex and interdependently revolved around networks that extended well beyond Wales.

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first focuses on the NMW, its history and Welsh events more broadly during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, and the second, through John’s 1924 bequest, considers his collection and legacy building policies.

John’s contribution towards the development of the Museum and its collections provides a unique opportunity to explore notions of nationalism and New Sculpture. Whilst Edwards and Mary Ann Steggle have done in-depth work on British New Sculpture in India, Breedon has focussed on Ward’s Congolese works and *Sculpture Victorious* devotes a chapter to imperial English national identity, no one has yet

³⁶³ John, *Method of Purchasing Works of Art*, 1913, NMW People, Places Archive.

³⁶⁴ Quoted in Lord *Imaging the Nation*, 312.

undertaken to think about the New Sculpture's contribution to Nationalist sculpture, especially not on a Welsh level.³⁶⁵ Considering John's concerns for Welsh art offers a debate with broader analytical scope, his strategic negotiation of the complexity of meanings emerging from the tide of Welsh revivals, illustrates how John positioned his version of Welsh nationalism within the Empire.

More specifically, the NMW was an institution fundamentally intended to clarify and disseminate notions of Welsh national identity through its collections. While this offered John an opportunity to build his legacy, it highlights his concerns that the NMW's "existing haphazard methods of [...] acquiring works of art" would hinder the growth of the nation's collection. In 1913, he submitted a policy to the Museum Council, *Method of Purchasing Works of Art*, to counter what he termed, the "*omnium gatherum* of works of art of all kinds". He argued that implementing his policies, placing Welsh art within an international context and the British Empire, would create an organised system that concentrated on building a characteristically Welsh collection of art and artefacts of the highest standard and of national importance.³⁶⁶

In terms of early-twentieth-century museology, and as the only Royal Academician on the Museum's council, John's standing as *the* Welsh sculptor of distinction opened valuable links for the Museum with influential Academicians in the royally sanctioned art world. In Wales, his status as a specifically Welsh artist at the Royal Academy meant John acquired marketability. In London and on a wider imperial platform he was acknowledged through the common misappropriation as an 'English' sculptor whose artistic successes as an artisan-artist was more broadly perceived.³⁶⁷ Beyond this, John ambitiously negotiated a role for modern Welsh and continental art at the new National Museum along the lines of the National Gallery for British Art (Tate Britain) through his own donations,³⁶⁸ as the inclusion of his Chantrey Bequest work attests. Furthermore, through his commitment to Welsh arts and crafts, John

³⁶⁵ See Mary Ann Steggles and Richard Barnes. *British sculpture in India: new views and old memories* (Kirkstead, Norfolk: Frontier, 2011) and Steggles, *Statues of the Raj*, (Didcot: British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia, 2000); Kirsty Breedon, "Herbert Ward" and "A Voice from the Congo"; "Sculpture and National Identity", *Sculpture Victorious*, 148–175.

³⁶⁶ John, *Method*, 1.

³⁶⁷ Lord, *Imaging the Nation*, 228.

³⁶⁸ The Tate started purchasing modern continental art in 1917.

simultaneously positioned the Museum in relation to institutions such as the recently renamed Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) formally the South Kensington Museum.

The NMW was recognised beyond the Empire as contributing towards a wider international museology. In 1925, it was featured in the American publication *Museum Work*. The article carried a photograph of the entrance hall dominated by Rodin's *The Kiss*. Behind this, Gibson's *Narcissus* (1838) intercedes between it and John's *St John the Baptist* on the stairway.³⁶⁹ Allegorically, the *Narcissus*, in line with John's own position, suggests the dangers of introspection, in this case, Welsh nationalism. Wales could not afford only inward contemplation of its Welshness, particularly as an international platform offered wider recognition of Welsh culture. Underpinned by the photographic evidence, American museologists recognised that the NMW's prestigious building housed a collection of internationally important works. In order to attract such attention, Welsh art, represented by John, appeared to be part of a continentally biased scheme dominated by the strength of French sculpture and reinforced by earlier-nineteenth-century English neo-classicism.

Despite national assertions, museums within Britain cooperated, sometimes competitively, with each other. The NMW was on the British Museum's list of institutions to receive duplicate selections of natural history specimens, and the V&A offered a reproduction service on items of interest such as the Dolgellau Chalice and Paten (the original is now at the Museum). In addition, journals such as the *Museums Journal* regularly presented updates on worldwide museum practice, links and news.³⁷⁰

Beyond John's contribution to the Museum's collections, his bequest invites an examination of how his personal relationships tactically shaped his role there. As Museum director, Fox, acknowledged, John not only enriched the collection through the donation of his own works (one hundred and twenty-seven in total), he made the

³⁶⁹ The *Narcissus* was lent to the Museum, through John's intervention, by the Royal Academy during the early 1920s. Although Gibson was Welsh, he was recognised as a key sculptor of the English Academic Neo-Classical style. John presented his *St. John* to the Museum in 1904.

³⁷⁰ First published in 1901.

most of his extensive connections and contacts. In influencing the decisions of friends and colleagues to donate, bequeath, or sell works to the Museum, he shaped the art collections; yet, he also continued helping his friends and colleagues. John used the museum as an extension of the well-established club networking system that, alongside art dealers, became a phenomenon of Edwardian Britain and represented the machinations of the art world more broadly.

As a Royal Academician, John believed he was well placed to make recommendations on Museum purchases through his self-perceived “discriminating judgement”,³⁷¹ endorsed further through his numerous connections with many eminent artists and institutions on a wider national and international scale.

Furthermore, aware of the buoyant art market for British art, particularly in America, and despite the Museum’s poor funding status, John persuaded the council to pay the considerable amount of four hundred and fifty pounds for Clausen’s *In the Fields in June* (1914). Clausen finished this work specifically for the Museum’s purchase.³⁷²

London dealers working for wealthy American companies, such as Knoedler in New York, were eagerly seeking works by elite Academicians. Selling to American dealers meant that works were often sold at high prices; John’s friends Clausen and fellow academician John Macallan Swan, for example, were popular with American collectors.³⁷³ All three enjoyed membership of the RA, the Athenaeum, the St John’s Wood Art Club, and now, through John, were represented in Wales’ national collections.

Welshman, Artist and Artisan

While club affiliation was important, John continually aligned his professional identity with his Welsh heritage, a point that Welsh journals emphasised. Although born, as we saw in the introduction, during a period of heightened national awareness into an artisanal family background, London was never far away. John, immersed in Welsh craft, grew up alongside the influence of London artists. We have seen, that, in 1894, his close friend, advisor and supporter, Ballinger, wrote an article on John.

³⁷¹ John, *Method*, 1.

³⁷² This was the highest price so far paid for a single work of art by the Museum.

³⁷³ See Anne Heimreich, “Circulation and Exchange in Edwardian Art”, *Visual Culture in Britain*, vol 14, no.1, (March 2013), 36-54.

Following the recent death of John's father, this article is a tribute, yet, in celebrating John's workman-like approach through his heritage, and asserting his national and artisanal roots, Ballinger sets him up as patriotically Welsh and loyal to the background that shaped him.³⁷⁴ He asserted that the "refined though simple tastes" of John's childhood home, and the workshop that "produced some of the most exquisite work in wood to be found anywhere",³⁷⁵ had fostered John's ambitions, so that "[w]ithout rank or influence, and with no means except [...] his daily toil [...] he had climbed the ladder entirely through his own energy".³⁷⁶ While this piece of puffery is ironic, given that John's whole career thus far had been supported through Welsh networks, stemming from his father's artisanal and aristocratic connections with Burges at Bute's Cardiff Castle workshops, it does demonstrate the importance given to artists 'rising' from artisanal backgrounds.

Artisanal skills continued to be important to John; as discussed below, this was evident through his later concerns for museums and education in Wales. Upon his 1899 election as ARA, Baldry was enthusiastic about John's technical skills. These, he claimed had made him a "capable workman", an opportunity that

so few artists are fortunate enough to receive [...] before the wider fancies and deeper speculations of the more mature intelligence came to complicate his view and to urge him to attempt those flights of fancy which need in realisation an unhesitating grasp of technical methods. When the time arrived for mental expansion he had at his fingers' ends the devices by which his thoughts could be made credible; he knew not only what he wanted to do but how he had to do it [... .T]here was in his case no need for that painful struggle between mind and hand which so often makes ineffectual the happiest intentions of an artist.³⁷⁷

Yet, despite movements that elevated the Arts and Crafts,³⁷⁸ persistent notions continued to endorse the hierarchical distinction of artist over the craftsman. Baldry, however, considered such notions came from "artists [that] were afflicted with a kind

³⁷⁴ John wrote, "thanks for all the good things said & thought in your most appreciative article [...] the way you touched upon Father, we all think it so nice of you". John, letter to Ballinger, 6 July 1894. MS 3 565 GJ:10.

³⁷⁵ John Ballinger, "A Welsh Sculptor", *Wales*, (July 1894): 115.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 117.

³⁷⁷ A. L. Baldry, "A New Associate of the Royal Academy: W. Goscombe John" *The Studio*, (March 15, 1899), 119.

³⁷⁸ For more on artists, "art workers" and the status of "craft", see Hart, *Arts and Crafts Objects*, and "Art and Craft" in *Sculpture Victorious*, 370–411.

of false pride”.³⁷⁹ Moreover, as demands from changing fashions meant a decline for conventional sculpture, sculptors belonging to the “honourable” profession were financially obliged to engage and compete “with the stonemasons whom they had so long looked down upon”. This led to a new generation of sculptors “extremely well versed in all the details of their craft” to prepare the way for New Sculptural developments.³⁸⁰

As the Lambeth School had a reputation for training craftsmen, it suggests that the artist/artisan distinction did not restrict outstanding artisan workers ascending to the so-called higher ranks of the Royal Academy. Baldry asserted that John had “aspirations beyond supplying the mere needs of the moment”, as he “set himself to strive with all his energies to prove that he had qualifications for the higher walks of art.”³⁸¹ John was aware that, within the generation since his father, he had successfully bridged the span of artisan and fine artist. Since coming to London, he had achieved his ambition; he was asserting himself as an elite sculptor and Academician, a fact that his Welsh supporters and the NMW were aware of.³⁸² John, through Ballinger, made sure that the strategic conflation of his Welshness, his artisanal Welsh-based background and the RA in London were clearly recognised in Wales, if not further afield.

Questions of Welshness: A New National Museum

To understand John’s contribution better, I include a brief, much-simplified, background to the events leading to the establishment of the new Museum amidst the complexities of Anglo-Welsh relationships and Irish and Indian unrest. Throughout Europe during the latter half of the nineteenth century, many small nations asserted their national identities. In Wales, a major, and galvanising, catalyst occurred in 1847, with the publication of an English government review on poor schooling provisions for Welsh children, *Reports of the Commissioners of Enquiry into the State of*

³⁷⁹ Baldry quoted in Read, *Victorian Sculpture*, 308.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Baldry, “A New Associate”, 118.

³⁸² For a parallel discussion on the perceptions of the “artist to artisan” trajectory in relation to Rodin, see Claire Jones, “The False Separation of Fine and Decorative Sculpture: Problems with the Rodin Scholarship for the study of French Sculpture” in *Sculptors and Design Reform in France, 1848–1895* (London: Routledge, 2014), 1–16.

Education in Wales.³⁸³ In what became known as the “Treachery of the Blue Books”,³⁸⁴ the report provoked outrage. Its conclusions not only condemned Welsh education, but labelled the Welsh as backward, and its women as immoral.

Whilst, ostensibly, the report was concerned with educational standards in Wales, it undermined the strength and dominance of the Welsh-speaking Nonconformists. The inability of the English commissioners to understand Welsh meant they relied on Conformist Anglican clergy; their frequently biased accounts contributed towards this damning report.³⁸⁵ Essentially, English fears sparked by Welsh riots and unrest during the first half of the nineteenth century, aligned with escalating Irish nationalist provocations, were a concern that could not be overlooked by the government. The report, in recommending and promoting the English language and supporting conformist Anglicanism, enabled the government to assume control and destabilise potential acts of Welsh sedition. This strategy continued into the twentieth century, as Balfour’s 1902 Education Act for Wales demonstrates through its proposal to fund and support conformist Anglican and Catholic schools. This sparked further Welsh fury as, in effectively opposing non-conformist education, it standardised English over Welsh education.³⁸⁶

Welsh campaigners were determined to redeem their reputation and sought ways to promote, encourage and assert positive Welsh perceptions. The National *Eisteddfodau* were an important platform from which to disseminate notions of Welshness,³⁸⁷ and, as other small nations, Finland for example, had successfully done, the establishment of national museums and libraries. In the late 1880s, especially in rural areas of north and west Wales, Welsh Nationalism was gaining a political foothold. Aware of developments in adjacent Ireland, Welsh fundamentalists campaigned for increased

³⁸³ The following year, 1848, not only marked a spate of European revolutions, it also saw revolutions associated with the Irish Famine.

³⁸⁴ In Welsh, *Brad y Llyfrau Gleision*, a term first used by the author Robert Jones Derfel in response to the Report that was published in blue-covered files.

³⁸⁵ See Prys Morgan, “From a Death to a View: The Hunt for the Welsh Past in the Romantic Period” in Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, [1983] 2012), 92.

³⁸⁶ See Prys Morgan, “From a Death to a View”, 43–100.

³⁸⁷ *Eisteddfodau* had been taking place in Wales since the twelfth century, and the National Eisteddfod gained heightened momentum during the middle of the nineteenth century. The 1858 eisteddfod in Llangollen, was significant for John Ceiriog Hughes’s prize winning poem, *Myfanwy Fychan of Dinas Brân*, that told of Welsh women as “deserving, beautiful, moral, [and] well-mannered”, a direct retort to the account in the Blue Books.

rights concerning their language, education and religion. However, this worried those in the South, an anglicised and comparatively cosmopolitan region that wielded considerable power through its booming industries.

Economically, Cardiff was thriving, as a somewhat glossy and biased account of Cardiff, *The Illustrated Guide to Cardiff* (1897), illustrates. Claiming the town was “one of the handsomest and most salubrious of the commercial centres of the kingdom”, it continued that while “[s]trangers marvel at the docks and shipping” tourists “delighted at its broad busy streets, its fine buildings, its noble castle, its pleasant parks [...], and] the general air of ‘rus in urbe’ that pervades this most cosmopolitan of towns.”³⁸⁸ The guidebook continued, “[t]he advance made by the town and port [...] is little short of marvellous.” This account confirms that those in the South were reaping the benefits of the vast profits brought about by the abundant coalfields in the industrialised Valleys north of Cardiff. This wealth was further compounded by the contingency of geography. Early entrepreneurs such as Bute and David Davies (grandfather to later Museum patrons, Margaret and Gwendoline Davies) recognised these opportunities and developed docks and railway systems, from Swansea in the west to Newport in the East that made ideal ports for shipping coal and iron.³⁸⁹

Naturally, this led to a rapid rise in population, further contributing to the growing imperial and cosmopolitan nature of the city. As the guidebook asserts,

[c]osmopolitan indeed, for – especially in the neighbourhood of the docks – all maritime nations may be seen [...] from our Gallic neighbours to the more recondite dialects of the Far East, and, added to and better than them all, our wholesome English speech, and (notably on Mabon’s Day) the expressive tongue that enthusiasts declare was first uttered in the groves of Paradise.³⁹⁰

While the guide is keen to elevate the superiority of the sensible, healthy English language, it clearly distinguishes itself from the patriotic nationalist and romantically Godly, Welsh “enthusiasts” and their utopian ideals for the “expressive” Welsh

³⁸⁸ *The Illustrated Guide to Cardiff and the Neighbourhood*, (Cardiff and London: Western Mail Limited, 1897) 3-4.

³⁸⁹ David Davies, grandfather to the Davies sisters and their brother amassed his fortune by developing rail connections between Cardiff and Barry docks and the coalfields in the Valleys.

³⁹⁰ *The Illustrated Guide to Cardiff*, 4.

language. In contrast to the middle-class “rus in urbe” idyll, the guidebook’s reference to “Mabon’s Day” patronisingly reveals wider underlying class tensions as it underpins that the docks were working-class. Welsh Trade Unionist and Liberal-Labour MP, William ‘Mabon’ Abraham campaigned for the coalminers, who were subjected to harsh working conditions by the mine owners. He won them a short-lived monthly holiday, known as Mabon’s Day.³⁹¹ This was later retracted following the 1898 miner’s strike, the year after this guide was published.

Broadly speaking, in Wales, two Liberal MPs led the divided Welsh factions: Lloyd George (later British Liberal Prime Minister 1916–22) headed up the North and West Walian contingent, whilst the Liberal politician, coal owner and industrialist, David Alfred (D.A.) Thomas (Baron in 1916 and Viscount Rhondda in 1918) looked after interests in the South. By 1896, a crisis point was reached when, at a Liberal meeting held in Newport, South Wales, Lloyd George suffered defeat as the South rebelled against Welsh ideas of separatism and home rule.³⁹² From this point, Welsh national revivals continued on a more cultural level emphasising Welsh parity with, rather than separation from, England.³⁹³

Many in the South recognised that Welsh socio-cultural distinctness could still operate through the incorporation of Wales within the United Kingdom and its Empire. Furthermore, in accepting their British and Welsh identities, they could acquire the benefits of operating within an enterprising and prosperous system of manufacturing and business. This was something they would surely risk if they strove for separation. Moreover, Welsh culture received English support as it strengthened the United Kingdom. By the early twentieth century, Wales was experiencing a golden age of national, economic and political optimism,³⁹⁴ just as John’s work was gaining critical attention on a national and international scale.

³⁹¹ Abraham was a well-known orator in Welsh and English; Mabon was his Bardic name.

³⁹² After which, Lloyd George focussed on British Liberal matters leaving aside matters of Welsh home rule.

³⁹³ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 120.

³⁹⁴ For more see Kenneth O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation* and M. Wynn Thomas, *The Nations of Wales: 1890-1914 (Writing Wales in English)*, (Cardiff: University of Wales, 2016).

One aim, the desire to establish a national museum and library, both united factions and highlighted antagonisms. The museum and library were considered essential, but deciding upon the ideal location resulted in competitive heated debate throughout Wales. Movements toward a museum in Cardiff had been gathering momentum since at least the middle of the century, and, in 1870, Cardiff held its first large-scale *Fine Art and Industrial Exhibition*. Two prominent campaigners for a Welsh institution and principal members of Cardiff Naturalists' Society were artist and future Museum council member, T.H. Thomas and architect Edwin Seward. In 1861, temporary museum rooms became available and bequests were sent out to prominent candidates for works of art, including the sculptors, Griffith and Thomas. As it turned out, the sculpture collection was stronger than the other visual arts represented in Cardiff's fledgling museum.³⁹⁵

To realise a Welsh museum of national significance, turn-of-the-twentieth-century campaigners needed to tap into government funds from London. These funds had already been made available to the national museums in Edinburgh in 1866, and Dublin in 1877. Yet, as it considered Wales another English *county*, rather than a separate *country*, the Government was initially hostile to the Welsh bid.³⁹⁶ Believing the British and South Kensington Museums were well placed to represent Welsh interests, the Government considered the proposed Welsh museum as a potential rival. They may have been correct. As the Nationalist historian, Prys Morgan, argues Welsh historians had feared the neglect of Welsh language manuscripts at non-Welsh speaking English institutions. The National Library and Museum were, in part, founded to rival these institutions to protect Welsh heritage, especially 'problematic' ancient Welsh-language manuscripts.³⁹⁷

Whatever the reasons, campaigners had to negotiate judiciously Government assumptions to avoid hostility and isolation. In aligning themselves within the Empire, they convinced English MPs that Wales should be represented, not as an

³⁹⁵ Peter Lord, *Imaging the Nation*, 301.

³⁹⁶ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 93-4.

³⁹⁷ Prys Morgan, "The Creation of the National Museum and National Library", Osmond, *Myths, Memories and Futures: The National Library and National Museum of Wales in the Story of Wales*, (Cardiff: Institute of Welsh Affairs, 2007), 20.

English county, but as part of the all-encompassing “Imperial, British nation”.³⁹⁸ Yet, as Lord notes, support was articulated in both nationalistically Welsh terms and as part of the British Empire that also coincided with Welsh fury against Balfour’s act.³⁹⁹ With Welsh nonconformist backing and unrelenting pressure from MPs, including Lloyd George, and local authorities, government attitudes began a more favourable funding policy.⁴⁰⁰ By 1903, the unionist government was conceding and, in 1907, royal charters were drawn up for two separate institutions: the National Library in Welsh-speaking rural Aberystwyth and the NMW in cosmopolitan Cardiff.⁴⁰¹ Wales had succeeded and the British government accepted that Welsh heritage and culture was nationally distinct from, whilst still being integrated within, the rest of Britain.

Early Patrons, Networks and Career Development

Whilst John was instrumental, he did not, of course, single-handedly develop the Museum’s art collections. Several individuals and groups strongly supported the idea of a national institution for Welsh art, and the establishment of the earlier Cardiff Museum and Art Gallery, and the Free Library. Situating John within this milieu contextualises his role and asserts his competitive nature. In 1870, Griffith, for example, gave Cardiff Museum five sculptures following the *Fine Art and Industrial Exhibition*. In 1882, William Menelaus (1818 -1882), the managing partner at Dowlais Steel works in Merthyr Tydfil, bequeathed thirty-six paintings, including James Tissot’s *Bad News (The Parting)* (1872), just as the new premises of the Free Library and Museum in Trinity Street, Cardiff, opened. In relation to John, the most significant patrons were James Pyke Thompson and the Davies sisters.

Thompson was a Unitarian corn merchant who collected mainly nineteenth-century watercolours; he opened Turner House Art Gallery adjacent to his home in Penarth.⁴⁰² In 1895, as a member of the Fine-Art Sub-Committee, he lent Cardiff Museum a large portion of his collection. Following his death in 1897, he bequeathed many works, including some by Rossetti and Joseph Mallord William Turner. He also donated ten

³⁹⁸ Rhiannon Mason, “Representing the Nation”, Osmond, *Myths, Memories and Futures*, 26.

³⁹⁹ Lord, *Imaging the Nation*, 305.

⁴⁰⁰ Prys Morgan, “The Creation of the National Museum and National Library” 17. This was based on existing important manuscript collections and the promise of Sir John Williams’s Peniarth collection.

⁴⁰¹ Prys Morgan, “The Creation of the National Museum and National Library”, 17.

⁴⁰² This became part of the NMW in 1912.

thousand pounds to fund a new art gallery, and was an early advocator of the Charter's dual collecting policy of Welsh and non-Welsh works. The executor to Pyke Thompson's estate, Sir Frederick Wedmore, an English art critic for the *London Standard*, also supported this policy. The Council authorised Wedmore to utilise the interest from Thompson's fund to compensate the underrepresentation of modern works at the Museum. Despite the small amount of money available to him, he managed to purchase works from artists such as Gustave Courbet, Philip Wilson Steer, John Lavery, and Laura Knight.⁴⁰³ Despite, or because of, this Wedmore and John did not always see eye to eye on collecting policies.

Perhaps the best known of all the Museum's patrons are the Davies sisters who inherited a fortune from their entrepreneurial grandfather. Along with their brother David (who funded the *Welsh Outlook* magazine), they contributed several thousand pounds to the building fund. The shy sisters avoided the limelight, anonymously funding and loaning the majority of works for the Museum's first art exhibition, the *International Loan Exhibition* in 1913. Whilst they were committed to engaging philanthropic causes, they lived quietly and left much of the arranging to their advisors, including Hugh Blaker, curator of the Holburne Museum in Bath. In 1925, (two years before the official opening) they enriched the collections through long-term loans of nine works by Augustus John, and one by Frank Brangwyn. These supplemented Rodin's *The Kiss* (1882) and *Illusions Fallen to Earth* (before 1900), previously lent to the Museum following the exhibition in 1913. In 1940, all these works, plus Rodin's *Saint John the Baptist Preaching* and *The Earth and Moon* were gifted to the Museum. In 1952 and 1963, the sisters bequeathed to the Museum, as the website claims, possibly the greatest collection of French Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art in the country.⁴⁰⁴

Whilst these contributions, specifically those of the Davies sisters, have been well documented, John's now largely overlooked role needs reconsidering. Although once he moved to London, he never returned to live in Wales, he maintained close links not only with Cardiff, but other Welsh expatriates in London. This was not purely

⁴⁰³ See Mark Evans and Oliver Fairclough, *National Museum of Wales: a Companion Guide to the Art Gallery*, (Cardiff: National Museum Wales, 1993).

⁴⁰⁴ "The Davies Sisters [*sic*] Collection", www.museumwales.ac.uk, accessed 20 March 2015.

altruistic. Whilst Welsh developments were important to him, furthering his early career was a prime motivation. The Cymmrodorian Society, for example, provided a link for the Welsh in London and Wales. It was through the affiliated National Eisteddfod that founding opportunities for many national institutions, including the Museum, were first raised. In 1894, with his student days behind him, John re-connected with Bute, then Cymmrodorian president in London. As discussed in Chapter 1, Bute, who knew John's father and helped fund his early travels, was an early supporter of the ambitious young sculptor.⁴⁰⁵ Unsure of the best professional direction, John wrote of this meeting to Ballinger, seeking advice on whether, "for professional reasons", he ought to join the society or, he added, "is it no good"? Towards the end of the nineteenth century, John was not looking yet to explicitly promote ideas of Welsh national culture. Whilst he was happy for Ballinger to portray him as such for Welsh publications, his overriding concerns in London, suggested in this personal letter, were purely ambitious. For example, in the same letter, John weighs up the advantages to club affiliation, concluding that his membership of the Society of Welsh Arts was "no good [...] I think I shall chuck it". Clearly, it was not beneficial in developing his career in London.⁴⁰⁶ By the turn of the twentieth century, John had decided the Cymmrodorian Society was definitely "good". Ultimately, he became a life-long member, serving on the council and as one of the vice-presidents. From the mid 1880s to 1914, the Society's secretary, and influential Welsh campaigner, E. Vincent Evans, encouraged John, now part of the "London-Welsh circle", to take an interest in Welsh matters.⁴⁰⁷ Evans who was also secretary of the National Eisteddfod Association (with whom John regularly judged Eisteddfod competitions) and Museum council member, linked John with Wales and London well into the twentieth century.

Building and Controversy

With the Museum now assured, the task of designing a building fit for a national Welsh collection began with a competition, launched in 1909, to find suitable

⁴⁰⁵ John was not the only Welsh young talent supported by Bute. At the 1893 National Eisteddfod in Cardiff, Welsh artist Edgar Thomas impressed the art competition judge, Alma-Tadema, and Bute. Through Bute's support, Thomas gained sponsorship to further his education and worked for Alma-Tadema in London before travelling to Antwerp and Paris. See Lord, *Imaging the Nation* 302.

⁴⁰⁶ Letter from John to Ballinger, July 6, 1894. Cardiff Library MS 3 565 GJ:10.

⁴⁰⁷ Lord, *Imaging the Nation*, 316.

architects.⁴⁰⁸ The building needed to celebrate its prestige, particularly as the new site was adjacent to the recently completed City Hall, Law Courts and University. Cardiff Castle's gothic fantasy was now out-dated, the new Museum's architecture needed to convey grandeur and proclaim national pride on an internationally acknowledged scale. The winners, Smith and Brewer, ironically of London, created an imposing Beaux-Arts design that merged the academic grandeur of the neoclassical with the imperialistic associations of the neo-baroque (fig. 2.1).⁴⁰⁹ Whilst the Council would hire London architects, their minutes reveal that they avoided turning to London institutions for advice. Rather they looked to emphatically northern European influences, taking tours of institutions such as the National Gallery in Berlin as well as institutions in Stockholm, Copenhagen and Denmark. John accompanied the director for part of the tour, giving advice on lighting and display schemes.⁴¹⁰

Along with the architects, John proposed the scheme for the Museum's architectural sculpture. Initially, his plan met some opposition as it avoided representations of mythical Welsh histories.⁴¹¹ Fellow council member, Thomas, put forward an alternative Welsh scheme that the Sculpture Sub-Committee, "after talking over the matter very fully with Sir Goscombe", rejected. They reasoned that "the subjects should be [...] monumental and symbolic, rather than pictorial [...] and that, too much must not be sacrificed to historical accuracy and attempted realism." The committee feared it was dangerous to attempt "any such history of Wales in sculpture [...] on a monumental building" and that Thomas's scheme was better suited to "painted decoration or bas-reliefs in the interior of the buildings." Aware of the proposal for a *Pantheon of Welsh Heroes* at the City Hall, they concluded that John's scheme, whilst "less attractive than Mr Thomas' Welsh Walhalla, [...] holds out a better prospect of obtaining sculpture that will complete and emphasise the design of

⁴⁰⁸ Sir Aston Webb was a chief assessor, accessed September 7, 2015. <http://www.mackintosh-architecture.gla.ac.uk/catalogue>.

⁴⁰⁹ That year, Edwin Seward (1853-1924), a Cardiff architect who campaigned for the National Museum, surveyed the new site at Cathays Park, and proposed designs. He had complained that the NMW development was "getting into the hands of a new body" [the Council of the National Museum of Wales of which John was a member] – a few of whom immediately want to wipe me out". Quoted in Lord, *Imaging the Nation*, 306.

⁴¹⁰ "Minutes of Council Meeting 1910", NMW Library Archive, 49.

⁴¹¹ Lord, *Imaging the Nation*, 360.

the building”.⁴¹² Within this nationalist middle-class rabble rousing, John had his way and, minus obvious nationalistic representations, Wales now had its own symbolic temple, enshrining its erudite cultural sophistication to declare its national pride.⁴¹³

The scheme proposed eight single figures surrounding the dome and four themed groups on each elevation. These themes considered the wider universal meanings of broadly western historic and philosophical concepts: the Arts, Sciences and the Ages, with one elevation devoted to Welsh productivity. These comprised of the four ages of *Stone, Bronze, Iron and Coal* for the “South Front”, and the “Industries of Wales”, *Agriculture, Mining, Shipping, Iron and Steel* on the “West Front”. The arts of *Literature, Music, Graphic Arts and Architecture*, and *Sculpture* would grace the “North Front”, and the Sciences, *Astronomy, Chemistry and Physics, Biology*, and *Geology and Archaeology* were designated for the “East Front”. An initial list of sculptors for the competition was drawn up. Three women were nominated, “Miss Griffiths”, “Miss Keast” and “Miss Gwendolen Williams”, amongst names such as John’s former pupils, Leonard Merrifield and Arthur Clapperton; as well as Gilbert Bayes, Alfred Bertram Pegram.⁴¹⁴ While John’s determination to reject ancient mythological iconography on a new national building devoted to all things Welsh, reflects accelerative middle-class nationalist thinking. In focussing on industrial output and rejecting backward looking associations of myth and legend, John (who was not averse to myth and legend *per se*) also posited Wales as a progressive and productive nation. This architecturally imperialist scheme would assert Wales’s wider valuable contributions to the Empire.

Whilst the Museum was undergoing construction, its recently completed neighbour, Cardiff City Hall, offered temporary exhibition space for its early exhibitions.⁴¹⁵ As debates over the theme for the Museum’s architectural sculpture continued, the interior sculptural schemes to fill the empty niches of the City Hall’s grand neo-Baroque marble hall were initiated with unforeseen consequences. The furore this

⁴¹² “Building Committee Minutes”, August 28, 1914, NMW Library Archive, 121-2.

⁴¹³ Mason, “Representing the Nation”, 29.

⁴¹⁴ “Building Committee Minutes”, 28 August 1914, NMW Library Archive, 121-2. The chosen sculptors were Clapperton, Bayes, Pegram, Richard Louis Garbe, and David Evans.

⁴¹⁵ This included the *International Exhibition* in 1913, and the *Exhibition of Works by Certain Modern Artists of Welsh Birth or Extraction* in 1914, discussed below.

project generated exposes the interconnectedness between organisations, John's celebrated position in Cardiff, and his role in national and local institutions. Furthermore, it demonstrates that John was not averse to controversy, and that his decision-making influences extended beyond the Museum and RA.

The *Welsh Heroes* project developed after Baron (later Viscount) D.A. Thomas promised funding following consultations with John on price and suitable materials. Cardiff Council then launched two competitions, one for the subjects and another for the sculptors. The Cardiff-based newspaper, *Western Mail*, polled its readers to find historic Welsh heroes that instilled patriotic pride encouraging united national identity. The results, rather than representing "the whole field of Welsh characteristics and aspirations" from poetry, culture and religion, to national unity, leadership, heroism, sacrifice, and valour, were lukewarm and confused. This reflected the public uncertainty regarding Welsh nationality.⁴¹⁶

The completed, and officially amended, line-up consisted of Wales's patron saint, Dewi Sant (Saint David); archdeacon of Brecon, Giraldus Cambrensis; William Morgan, the Bishop of Llandaff and St Asaph who translated the bible into Welsh; medieval poet Dafydd ap Gwilym; and poet and leader of the Welsh Methodist Revival, William Williams. Heroic leaders consisted of Owain Glyndŵr, Welsh Prince of Wales who organised an unsuccessful revolt against England from 1405–1414; Hywel Dda (the Good), medieval Welsh king; Llewellyn ab Gruffudd, king of Wales in 1258; and Boadicea (*Buddug*), defender of the Ancient Britons against Roman invasion. In addition, the Welsh-born Tudor king Henry VII and Welsh-British Army officer, General Thomas Picton (1758 – 1815), killed at the Battle of Waterloo were controversial nominations. The inclusion of Henry VII was criticised for being as much French as Welsh, and Thomas Picton for controversial associations of brutality and torture.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁶ Quoted in Angela Gaffney, "A National Valhalla for Wales", *Transaction of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1998, New Series, Vol. 5 (1999), 153.

⁴¹⁷ For more see Gaffney, "A National Valhalla for Wales", 131-144, and Fiona Pearson, *Goscombe John*, 15.

Nevertheless, with subjects now established, Cardiff Council moved to select the sculptors. What ensued caused a national public scandal widely reported throughout the United Kingdom. Having approached the recently formed Royal Society of British Sculptors (RSBS), of which John had been a council member, to direct the decision-making process, Frampton, then the Society's president, informed the Council that James Havard Thomas (of Welsh parentage) would act as advisor. The original idea of a competition was then abandoned for fear the best sculptors would not enter, therefore creating further expense.⁴¹⁸ This controversial decision was further compounded when it emerged that D.A. Thomas had offered commissions to John, Frampton, and Havard Thomas. Some RSBS members vehemently objected, claiming it had not been reported to the Society, although Havard Thomas had recorded the events.

Council member Paul Montford, was vociferous in his opposition and, with support from Lynn Jenkins, Francis Derwent Wood, and Albert Hodge, he called for action "as some members of the society [had] not receive[d] that consideration which they [had] a right to expect".⁴¹⁹ This led to the calling of extraordinary meetings with angry outbursts, accusations, resignations, and threats. As Montford had recently contributed work for the exterior of the City Hall and Law Courts, he probably felt a claim to the Welsh commission. His exclusion could have been a reason for his anger. The press, relishing this undignified scandal, reported the tumultuous meeting in February 1914, when John, Frampton, Pomeroy, and Havard Thomas resigned in protest at accusations that Havard Thomas pursued personal motivations.⁴²⁰ John, "the great Welsh sculptor", "whose view will be accepted without reserve in South Wales" was reported to support fully Havard Thomas, who had acted "in a most disinterested way [...] to select the best artists".⁴²¹

The City Hall commission continued regardless, and, in addition to the three sculptors already mentioned, those finally selected were: W.W. Wagstaff, Alfred Turner, E.G. Gillick, Pegram, Pomeroy, Henry Poole, T. Mewburn Crook, and, again, John's

⁴¹⁸ "Welsh Statues Sensation", *The Western Mail*, February 28, 1914.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

former pupils, Merrifield and Clapperton. In 1926, however, it emerged that D.A. Thomas had specifically requested that the Council abolish the idea of a competition and insisted that Havard Thomas contribute a statue. Following this, Havard Thomas and Frampton were invited to re-join the RSBS. Although John did not receive the same invitation, he was eventually honoured with a Gold Medal for services to sculpture in 1942, the same year he showed his *Self-Portrait*.⁴²² The *Western Mail*'s esteem for John's credibility as "the great Welsh sculptor" both steered and reflected public opinion. Such respect contributed towards his self-assumed responsibility to build the strategically important national Welsh collection.

Aims for the Collection: Papers, Motions, and the Arts and Crafts

In defining its credo, the new Museum council ceremoniously declared that all departments would be "primarily and essentially National in character [...] to teach the stranger about Wales and the Welsh about their own country. Above all things it must not attempt to be a copy of the British Museum."⁴²³ The emphatic distancing from the British Museum recalls the Council's insistence on continental museum models to avoid potential rivalries and justify claims to house Welsh artefacts in Wales. Whilst it was clearly not setting itself up as a world museum, it did not intend to display only Welsh objects. On the contrary, examples outside Wales, the Council reasoned, were required to contextualise and clarify what they believed qualified Welsh distinction. Nevertheless, the new Museum was offering the Welsh equivalent to the British Museum, and thereby challenging the authority of the British and the South Kensington Museums, through a proposed unified notion of Welsh national identity, conveniently coalesced through late-nineteenth-century romantic visions of Empire.⁴²⁴

In approaching the task of building a national collection, the contentious debate over what actually constituted Welsh art was an issue that further complicated John's Welshness. As is becoming apparent, his view of a nationally Welsh collection was firmly based within cosmopolitan frameworks under the aegis of Empire. Alongside

⁴²² Pearson, *Goscombe John*, 16.

⁴²³ *Programme of the ceremony of the laying of the Foundation Stone* (Cardiff: National Museum Wales, 1912), 8.

⁴²⁴ See Kenneth O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 18.

Council aims, John tacitly sought, for over forty years, to emulate the concept behind the National Gallery of British Art. In 1938, looking back at the development of the art collection, he noted, with satisfaction, the enduring significance of these aims that had set “the seal of truly national importance”.⁴²⁵

Well before the City Hall controversies, John had outlined his concerns for Welsh art in general and at the Museum. In 1901, as a recently elected Associate Academician, he delivered a paper, “Art and Handicraft in Wales”, before the Cymmrodorian Society in London. Here, he first publicly developed his motives through his inextricable relationship between personal legacy building and a genuine desire to raise awareness of Welsh art to equal, or rival, regional English art institutions. Alma-Tadema chaired this session. He had earlier been a key patron for John, as we have seen, and both were members of the St John’s Wood Art Club, and adjudicated together at many *eisteddfodau*.⁴²⁶ Whilst focussing on education, John’s paper demonstrates that he had been concerned with disorganised collecting since his role as “Honorary Curator” at the Cardiff Museum between 1887 and 1899. He condemned curators whose “sole idea” was to “get as great a variety of objects as possible into the narrowest space”,⁴²⁷ and proposed, instead, that museums use their expertise (helped by appropriate expert opinion such as his) to avoid “hap-hazard” displays “of curiosities and bric-a-brac arranged without sequence order or intention”.⁴²⁸ In recalling a visit to the Berne Historical Museum in Switzerland,⁴²⁹ he described how chronologically ordered rooms contained specific objects associated with designated historical periods; unlike the “old things in many English museums [that] appear like dead things, [these] seemed to live again”. This, he observed, created a “wonderfully real and instructive” visitor experience.⁴³⁰ The Museum Council later implemented these observations. In adopting the examples of continental models, John emphatically rejected some English practices.

⁴²⁵ John, letter to Williams, Keeper Of Art, 1938. NMW A 116.

⁴²⁶ Pearson, *Goscombe John*, 11.

⁴²⁷ John, “Art and Handicraft in Wales”, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorian*, (1900-1901), 5.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.* This may have been John’s response to Wedmore’s administrations of the Pyke Thompson fund for purchases of art.

⁴²⁹ Originally conceived as the Swiss National Museum.

⁴³⁰ John, “Art and Handicraft”, 6.

John also touched on an area close to his artisanal roots in this paper, when discussing what he believed was the declining interest in “honest and through craftsmanship”, particularly as roles in education and training were changing. In patriarchal terms, he personally lamented the demise of “the greatest and most valuable factor in the training of craftsman”: the “handing down from father to son, or master to apprentice, generations of learnt techniques”.⁴³¹ He acknowledged that technical schools taught important skills; but museums were now “the custodians of tradition”.⁴³² Rather than a concern for national imagery, John focussed on the importance of providing the best facilities. As discussed below, this may have been in response to those who called for national art schools rather than a museum, his argument stemmed from collective collaboration between technical schools and museums, through which subsequent generations of Welsh artists could learn.

Twelve years later, shortly after George V laid the Museum foundation stone and construction work had begun, John submitted his important 1913 motion *Method of Purchasing Works of Art* to the Council. Continuing his concerns of 1901, he challenged the Museum’s collecting policies, condemning haphazard collecting policies prevalent in many institutions. John stressed that “a plan for future guidance” was vital to establish collections that would comprehensively represent Wales.⁴³³ John’s legacy at the Museum lay in building and putting this plan into action. This, and the works he gave, demonstrates the emerging complexities in building a collection that was intended to articulate Welsh identity. His views highlight his self-asserted role as the Museum’s chief art advisor and his proposal for a national contemporary art collection.

Wedmore, active in the London art market, differed from John’s conservative views on modern art, and encouraged the purchase of more advanced and sometimes controversial works, from artists such as, non-Welsh, Sickert. This, as we shall see, inevitably led to strains in their relationship. The problem of “haphazard” purchases and acquisitions was still pressing, and John argued for the implementation of specific purchasing policies in line with the Museum’s charter. Additionally, the lack of “a

⁴³¹ John, “Art and Handicraft”, 4.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ John, *Method*, 2.

competent and watchful Art Keeper” contributed to the disorganisation. Until one was employed, John, keen to offset Wedmore’s influence, offered his own discriminating evaluations.⁴³⁴

Despite John’s keenness to align his identity with his artisanal background, his decorative works, such as the *Corn Hirlas* (1898), remained formally separate from his ideal sculpture. This contrasted with Frampton, whose works such as *Lamia* (1899–1890) incorporated ivory, metal and precious stones within a decorative-ideal scheme (1899–1890).⁴³⁵ In 1913, while pursuing his cause to elevate arts and crafts, John recommended, “one of the [MMW’s] most interesting and educational departments should be devoted to the arts and crafts”.⁴³⁶ Whilst his interest in “highly developed” artisan skills coincided with contemporary thinking regarding national folk culture and tradition in line with the V&A, it also reflects a personal investment. John was asserting a sense of urgency, when he expressed his concerns that Welsh cultural artefacts were being “scattered” by unscrupulous antique dealers and that, without delay, the Museum needed to collect “what little [was] left”.⁴³⁷

Concerns for the loss of Welsh tradition and its cultural artefacts eventually led to the opening of the National History Museum at St Fagans just outside Cardiff in 1948. This was an extension to the National Museum and, as we know, home to two of John’s 1924 Bequest works *The Elf* and *Joyance*. As the first national folk museum in Britain, it was constructed in and around an Elizabethan castle donated by the Earl of Plymouth. Tony Bennett argues that these museums sentimentalised traditional folk cultures;⁴³⁸ the fact that this branch of the museum stemmed from the fancifully named “Bygones” gallery in Cardiff supports this theory. Consequently, within a Gothic arts and crafts microcosm, the insertion of John’s works in the castle grounds, with original fishponds, rosery and Italian garden, romantically synthesises John at his most Welsh. While supporting an artisanal ethos, in contrast to John’s architectural sculptural scheme for the city centre’s NMW, John’s sculptures also evoke ancient

⁴³⁴ John, *Method*, 1.

⁴³⁵ The *Corn Hirlas* can be seen on top of the corner cupboard in the upper studio photograph.

⁴³⁶ John, *Method*, 2.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁸ Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum* (London: Routledge, 1995), 110.

Welsh myths and mystical elements within the castle's fairy tale setting. Thus, two articulations of Welshness are emerging: the progressively modern, and the mythically reflective. How then did Welsh artists such as John, negotiate these polar concepts?

Celtic Art, Welsh Art or Welsh Artists?

Idealist emblems revived through the Celtic Welsh Revivals and Romantic Nationalisms remained popular. They were largely constructed through nation-building devices such as language, and Celtic folklore tales of the ancient nation that were passed from generation to generation. Many subjects were considered appropriate for the expression and location of Welsh identity. Tales from the *Mabinogion*, Druid and bardic legends and, occasionally, Merlin and Arthur – although this tale was widely shared, especially with the English⁴³⁹ – were all usually set within archetypal Welsh landscapes of ancient rugged geological formations, and wild mountainous terrains. Bardic tales were especially popular; particularly those of the first bard, Taliesin Penbeirdd, a sixth-century poet, and the last bard, a mythical martyr-hero who recalls Edward I's legendary massacre of all the Welsh bards.

Whereas positive assertions of Welsh identity were clearly fundamental at such a nationally important institution, and, as discussed below, John privileged Welsh artists over dogmatic Welsh-art symbolism, educational facilities at the NMW were also important and contentious. The need, as I touched upon above, for a Welsh School of Art had been discussed in Wales since the second half of the nineteenth century. Yet, by the early twentieth century, many believed that the future for the visual arts in Wales was at best uncertain, if not already a hopeless cause. In response to the 1913 *International Exhibition*, the *Western Mail* reporter, T. Mathews, whilst not intending to diminish the exhibition's strengths, for "nowhere outside London or, perhaps, Liverpool [had] a better collection been open to the public", issued "[a] plea for the native artist" in an article entitled, "Future of Art in Wales".

Mathews's argued that "a collection of pictures, especially of foreign artists" did not necessarily mean an advance in culture. In discriminatory terms, he questioned how

⁴³⁹ John produced a bronze statuette, *Merlin and Arthur*, exhibited at the RA in 1902.

Welsh culture would benefit if its citizens were encouraged to support “the Popocatepeplian painter, Xchtizo [*sic*] in preference to one of their own people”.⁴⁴⁰ He proceeded to accuse those in Cardiff of losing an opportunity “to foster culture” by prioritising “a decent art gallery” over an art school. An art school similar to the Glasgow School of Art that, in 1885, commissioned Charles Rennie Mackintosh to design its buildings is probably the type of school he had in mind. Such a school he argued was “immeasurably more important” on a global or imperial scale, and “infinitely more [valuable] than all the coal [...] exported from [Cardiff’s] ports”.⁴⁴¹

Whilst Mathews’ article, written shortly before the *Welsh Artists Exhibition* had opened, was somewhat premature, his views on the essential nature of a national art school were particularly relevant at a time of heightened national awareness. It further suggests that some were critical of the funding for an art gallery at the expense of educational facilities. Although John had attended the Cardiff School of Art, he was not, as his 1901 paper demonstrates, calling for a national school. Overall, general opinion recognised a national system would promote and support native talent. John’s later pragmatic remarks on Welsh patronage for Welsh artists supersedes many abstract ideals, as without such patronage, Welsh artists would not survive in Wales alone. As Gibson’s *Narcissus* portended, Wales could not afford insularity but needed to reach out to broaden its scope.

John, Welsh Imagery and the Gothic

While, as the *Drummer Boy* will demonstrate, John produced works with location dependent meanings and interpretations, yet for specifically Welsh commissions he cautiously embraced Welsh motifs, channelling meaning into his objects for specific purposes, most notably commissions for Welsh events or ceremonies. The National Eisteddfod medal (1899) reveals his imaginative approach to such commissions and the level of meaning he invested. Using Taliesin (signalling Wales before Edward I’s English conquest) indicated an endorsement of the honourable tradition of Welsh

⁴⁴⁰ “Future of Art in Wales”, *Western Mail*, April 1, 1913.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*

culture,⁴⁴² the legendary last bard, however, implied political subversion, particularly as it came to be associated with Hungarian, János Arany's poem *The Bards of Wales* (1857).⁴⁴³

The medal (still in use) portrays Taliesin holding a harp against a background of rising sun and cromlech, with the Welsh dragon on the obverse (fig 2.2).⁴⁴⁴ The cromlech, a circle of standing stones symbolising ancient Celtic myth, is a sacred gathering place for druids. Lord claims that John was symbolising the “rebirth of Wales in the new age”,⁴⁴⁵ a new age, that, for John, was confined to the cultural not the political, and apparently located in the past not the future. Yet, furthermore, as John's use of Celtic or Welsh imagery was minimal, choosing Taliesin, for example, to convey a collective sense of national identity was not a purely patriotic expression; he understood its commercial value for particular patronage. In contrast to the progressive forward-thinking architectural sculpture theme, this version of a Welsh imaginary aligns with the second, mythically reflective strand of Welsh nationalism that corresponds with the cultural aims of the Eisteddfod. The decorative and materially glamorous *Corn Hirias*, replete with dragons, castles, bard and harp, was commissioned by Lord Tredegar for the Gorsedd of Bards at the National Eisteddfod in 1898 (fig. 24). John was “irritated” when the *Western Mail* suggested that T.H. Thomas, who drew a preliminary sketch for the *Horn*, should be credited with the design. John wrote to Ballinger as he was concerned that the “other side” [would] be quick to take advantage of this” error. He emphatically explained that with Thomas's blessing, he “cast aside” the earlier sketch, stressing that the “conception, design & carrying out were all mine”.⁴⁴⁶ Whilst the identity of the “other side” remains unclear, John revealed underlying tensions within the NMW and Eisteddfod Councils, and that he did not like to be “done out of the credit” for his work. He suggested Ballinger,

⁴⁴² Taliesin (c534-599) was connected with the Arthurian legends, whose poems, following his mythologizing in the seventeenth century, prophesied important events. The earliest volume dates from the mid-fourteenth century and is held at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

⁴⁴³ As this was published in 1857, the same year as the Indian Mutiny discussed in Chapter 3, it highlights the global increase in small nation colonial unrest.

⁴⁴⁴ Exhibited at the RA in 1899.

⁴⁴⁵ Lord, *Imaging the Nation*, 316.

⁴⁴⁶ John, letter to Ballinger, May 5, 1898. Cardiff Library MS 3 565 GJ:21. Underlining original.

who looked after John's public profile in Wales, should "correct these matters in any future account".⁴⁴⁷

The imperially sourced materials of ox horn, silver and precious stones that comprised the *Corn Hirias* is, nevertheless, a symbolically important Welsh work. As John explained to Ballinger, he designed it to embody the medieval Gothic Gorseddic idea, that "within an embattled & turreted wall are the sacred stones guarded about with dragons[;] in the centre [...] stands a [...] bard, harp in hand & singing".⁴⁴⁸ These emblems romantically align with John Parry's *Welsh Melodies* (1822), which popularly revived the twelfth-century poet, Cynddelw's poem of the Horn's legendary status.

In 1911, John was awarded a knighthood at the Investiture of the Prince of Wales in Caernarfon, for which he designed the ceremonial regalia, the Chaplet, Verge, Sword, and Ring (fig. 2.3).⁴⁴⁹ While these are interspersed with English and Welsh symbols such as roses, daffodils and dragons, the discourse extends to French and German through the inclusion of fleurs-de-lis and the Prince of Wales motto in German. The gold chaplet, embellished with pearls and amethysts, follows the traditional Imperial Crown style, with four alternating crosses-patees and four fleurs-de-lis but varies with the addition of roses within the crosses to symbolise England and daffodils within the fleurs-de-lis, these being synonymous with the Prince of Wales and Wales. The gold ring has a large amethyst set between two intertwining dragons. The head of the Verge comprises of three circumscribed amorini, supporting an amethyst-topped crown; below them, the Prince of Wales feathers encircle the rod with the motto, 'Ich dien', "I serve". Although this phrase is of ancient family lineage, the fact it is in German is paradoxical given Anglo-French concerns of the German threat (see Chapter 1).⁴⁵⁰ These details demonstrate that despite John's tendency towards verisimilitude, he was equally capable of imaginative and decorative work, although within traditionally recognised visual vocabularies.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Letter, John to Ballinger, April/May 1898, Cardiff Library MS 3.565.

⁴⁴⁹ Made from John's models in Welsh gold by Garrards, the royal jewellers.

⁴⁵⁰ This is an example, as Potter highlights, of the enduring and shared Anglo-German "world views" and "aristocratic outlook", "British Art and Empire", 3.

John also received several commissions through the Museum, such as the design for the Museum's Common Seal and the ceremonial tools used by George V for the 1912 Foundation Stone Ceremony (fig. 2.4). The Trowel and Mallet, in silver and ebony, match each other, embellished with interlacing open-mouthed dragons and daffodils interspersed between the words.⁴⁵¹ On the silver spirit level, seahorses at both ends are depicted swimming on a sea of waves implied by the undulating surface of the sides, their tails, visible through the waves, coil together to form a rounded boss, in the centre beneath the spirit level window on the top surface.⁴⁵² Whilst these pieces reinforce John's Welsh cultural presence, like many New Sculptors, they also illustrate his wide-ranging skills in understanding the practices of working with metals and precious stones. He probably learnt these skills from Henry Hugh Armstead who, from a silversmith background, taught John at the R.A. His connection with Armstead was one John later emphasised, as in 1906, when he encouraged Armstead's daughter, Charlotte to donate to the NMW the marble relief, *The Sculptor's Daughter* (c.1889).⁴⁵³

Ceremonial events such as these were, and are, particularly important for nations without a political state. The Welsh *Eisteddfodau* are a platform upon which Welsh nationality is articulated, visualised, and staged. The creation of shared national emblems to unify diverse regions and religions was most commonly endorsed amongst Welsh expatriates.⁴⁵⁴ However, expatriate John recognised that it was far more beneficial for him to create works that took on meaning through location and title. He continued to embrace the neo-gothic art and architecture influences of his formative years that allowed him to distinguish his sculptural identity and infuse works with Celtic significance outside the specific traditions of Welsh iconography.

⁴⁵¹ Made from John's models by the Artificer's Guild.

⁴⁵² Pearson *Goscombe John*, 45–7.

⁴⁵³ To the Cardiff Gallery prior to the new Museum's completion.

⁴⁵⁴ See Prys Morgan, "From a Death to a View: The Hunt for the Welsh Past in the Romantic Period" on Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, 89, 92.

As we have seen, John's boyhood recollections as a chorister at Llandaff Cathedral gave him the "bias" for (Welsh) Gothic,⁴⁵⁵ while the Pre-Raphaelite renovations ensured the Cathedral became a satellite for artistic distinction that showcased English Pre-Raphaelite and Arts and Crafts styles.⁴⁵⁶ Not only was John's exposure to key London artists, within a Welsh hub, critical to his stylistic development, it establishes an early link with London. We know John was keen to establish this link at the Museum through his legacy-building programme. In acquiring Armstead's relief for the Museum, John claimed, it was of considerable interest to Wales as Armstead had contributed important works, such as the *Bishop Ollivant Memorial* (1887), at Llandaff Cathedral. This donation further demonstrates how John used his social circles in St John's Wood to enrich the Museum's art collections.⁴⁵⁷

John's exposure to Gothic influences was further sustained on his travels, from which he returned with devotional medieval wooden statuettes that he later gave to the Museum.⁴⁵⁸ As Baldry observed, despite John's "occasional digression into the methods of other schools", he (appeared) to remain working in the "severity and dignity of the [Gothic] style" seeking an integrity he believed was no longer available in the conventions of the neo-classical system.⁴⁵⁹ Just as John had previously, geographically and tactically, signalled the Gothic as French, here is another indication of his intentional networking at particular stages in his career.

In addition to the *Corn Hirlas*, many of John's works echo, his idea of Gothic "dignity". The R.A.'s lithe bronze female version of *The Elf* crouching on an ancient classical architectural plinth overgrown with foliage is an interesting example that we encountered in the introduction. Through John's tactical adaptations, the marble version, exhibited at the 1901 International Exhibition at Glasgow, had changed: a clearly etched Celtic quaternary knot design, a visual example of historic Welsh decorative art, had replaced the antique ruins (compare figs.15 and 16) This display of

⁴⁵⁵ Arthur Fish, Arthur, "One of Our Sculptors: A Chat with Mr. W. Goscombe John, A.R.A.", *Cassell's Magazine*, (1899), 492.

⁴⁵⁶ Pearson *Goscombe John*, 9, 10.

⁴⁵⁷ This is another example of John's social circles enriching the Museum's art collections. John approached Charlotte Armstead through their shared connection as part of the St John's Wood circle.

⁴⁵⁸ *St. Nicolas* and two *Virgin and Child* statuettes, NMW A 48; 47; 46.

⁴⁵⁹ Baldry, *A New Associate*, 116.

inter-Celtic identification was an astute gesture. Without reducing its mysticism, John had subtly changed the meaning from the neo-classical associations of the Academy (for which the original version was intended), to the symbolic linking of two Celtic nations. As Glasgow Council, under Frampton's supervision, then purchased it for the new sculpture court at the Kelvingrove Museum, John, as he did for the Chantrey Bequest, discussed below, was targeting his work for specific markets.

Another specifically Welsh work is John's contribution to the City Hall's *Pantheon of Welsh Heroes*, the marble *Dewi Sant* (*Saint David*, 1916, fig. 2.5).⁴⁶⁰ The saint is portrayed preaching at the Synod of Brefi in approximately 560AD in Ceredigion, Mid Wales. It was here that his eloquence first overwhelmed and humbled the bishops and inspired the faithful. Whilst John's bearded figure is reminiscent of the Taliesin figure, and, as we shall see, is heavily draped like the Liverpool *King's Regiment* "Britannia", it also suggests John's fifteenth-century souvenir, the oak Saint Nicholas statuette, mentioned above, with hand raised in blessing.⁴⁶¹ Just as *The Elf* is open to Celtic, not merely Welsh, mystical interpretation, the *Dewi Sant*, other than the title, offers no specifically Welsh symbolism. These examples indicate John's version of romantic nationalism; he was a proud Welshman loyal to the land of his birth and, perhaps more significantly, loyal to those who helped and supported him, yet he recognised the value for his work was its ability to maintain a neutral or open interpretation. As he targeted his works for particular markets, niche Welsh commissions such as the *Corn Hirlas*, with specialised audiences, are his only works explicitly evoking Welsh symbolism. As the *Corn Hirlas*, anglicised for its exhibition at the RA to "A Drinking Horn and Dragon Stand" demonstrates,⁴⁶² an exclusively Welsh visual vocabulary could lead to confusion. In this case, removed from its intended ceremonial context, *The Athenaeum*'s anonymous critic recognised its "energy and spirit" but thought the "most furious" dragon was "quasi-Chinese".⁴⁶³ While reminding us of Mathews' pro-Welsh discriminatory comments on the fictitious painter Xchtizo, in London to appeal to the widest audience for patronage

⁴⁶⁰ Other works such as *Bishop Lewis*, 1909, at Llandaff Cathedral, and *Seal of the Represented Body of the Church in Wales* (exhibited at the RA in 1923) bear formal similarities to the *Dewi Sant*.

⁴⁶¹ Donated in 1929 (NMW A 48), John used this motif in several works such as *Merlin and Arthur* (1902). See also footnote 85.

⁴⁶² Pearson, 80.

⁴⁶³ "Opening Ceremony", *Cardiff Times*, 5.

and critical recognition, ambiguously Welsh-orientated works allowed him to demonstrate his skills and imply broader meanings. Even if, in London, the Far East was noticeably a closer stylistic reference for a dragon than John's Welsh homeland. This suggests that his Welsh nationality was also not widely acknowledged at the RA.

By 1928, John was disseminating his ideas on Welsh art more broadly. In an article for the progressively liberal *Welsh Outlook* magazine, which promoted nationalism through cultural links, he provocatively and unequivocally claimed that "Welsh Art" was a meaningless and misleading term.⁴⁶⁴ In particular, he singled out efforts to "revive so-called 'Celtic Art' " in the belief that it has some special connection with Wales". He continued " 'Celtic Art' is no more traditional and characteristic of Wales than Gothic or Renaissance Art, for it is characteristic more of an age than [a] particular country". Ironically, as John had travelled extensively as a student, he blamed a system that he also took advantage of, claiming that "[e]asy travel [... had] broken down the national boundaries [...] and robbed Art of its national character".⁴⁶⁵

We know that John used Celtic-Welsh iconography for specific commissions, yet, as nationalist Celtic revivals were slowly subsiding, his double-bluff argument had a particular purpose. For "Art in Wales [to be] truly national", he claimed, its architects, sculptors and painters should be supported by "enlightened and generous patronage [...] by the people of Wales."⁴⁶⁶ Therefore, it was not the style or iconography of a work that made it distinctly Welsh but rather the artist's nationality and that of their patrons. Returning briefly to the quotation from Iona Williams's article reveals that twenty-two years before John's article, and with no room for fence sitters, she claimed "national art" was part of the debate between nationalism and Imperialism. John's work and his self-positioning suggest that ideologies such as hers were unworkable. A false dichotomy through which she failed to acknowledge the innate contradiction: to achieve national recognition, Wales had to position itself within an imperial scope. Amalgamating Williams's opposing forces and placing Welsh nationalism within the British Empire, was not purely ideological but a lucrative economic option.

⁴⁶⁴ William Goscombe John, "Art in Wales", *Welsh Outlook*, Vol.15, No.8, (August, 1928), 216.

⁴⁶⁵ John, "Art in Wales", 216.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

Modern Art Collection

Whilst these debates continued, the new Museum offered the opportunity to evaluate the state of Welsh art. Despite challenges from Wedmore, John was at the heart of this with his proposed scheme that was instrumental in shaping the early collections. As mentioned, his motion aimed to establishing the collections and represent Wales comprehensively. While John recognised the significance of building an art historical Welsh collection of what he termed “pre-eminent” artists such as Gibson, Burne-Jones, Inigo Jones, and Richard Wilson,⁴⁶⁷ he, too, recognised that the underrepresentation of “modern” Welsh artists was a key issue that needed addressing, not least, as he included himself a modern Welsh artist.⁴⁶⁸ John’s idea of modernism in art was not the means and materials of production, but the contemporaneity of the artist. He did not support the avant-garde primitives, as we have seen, and advocated contemporary ‘conservative’ works by living artists for the Museum. In arguing that a modern artist was one living or recently deceased, John reiterated the acquisition policies for the new National Gallery for British Art in London.

To initiate John’s proposals, a Keeper of Art was required. The first Keeper, Isaac Williams, was appointed in 1914. John played a part in his selection and ensured that the staunchly conservative Keeper would remain “in touch” with his “professional and expert opinion”.⁴⁶⁹ The finalists for selection were Williams, curator at Cyfartha Castle Museum in Merthyr Tydfil, and John Witcombe, part of the Davies sisters’ advising coterie and curator of the Victoria Art Gallery in Bath. Witcombe was marginally involved with the hastily organised *International Loan Exhibition*, possibly staged as the *Welsh Artists Exhibition* was running behind schedule.⁴⁷⁰ The Council, appearing to favour Welshman, Williams, sent Council members John, T.H. Thomas and W.H. Renwick,⁴⁷¹ to visit Cyfartha Castle prior to their next meeting.⁴⁷² John and Williams developed an enduring friendship through which John maintained

⁴⁶⁷ John, *Method*, 2.

⁴⁶⁸ John, *Method*, 1.

⁴⁶⁹ John, *Method*, 2.

⁴⁷⁰ In conversation with Oliver Fairclough, Keeper of Art, NMW, 2015

⁴⁷¹ Renwick’s brother, Sir George Renwick, commissioned John for the Newcastle memorial, *The Response, 1914* (1923); John probably received this commission through this connection.

⁴⁷² *Meeting of the Management Committee*, 12 June 1914, NMW Library Archives.

some control over the NMW's art acquisitions. Works purchased during the years of the First World War illustrate not only John and Williams's collaborative relationship, but also the underlying tensions with Wedmore. The NMW, as we have seen, purchased Clausen's *In the Field in June*, through John's intervention. This major work cost the considerable amount of four hundred and fifty pounds.⁴⁷³ To acquire the funds, the museum's first director, W. E. Hoyle, without wishing to "tie [Wedmore's] hands in the slightest degree", asked him to recommend that the fund purchase this work.⁴⁷⁴ Wedmore, however, could only offer "a small contribution" due to purchases he had already made. Challenging John's role and views, Wedmore declared that whilst he was "in general sympathy" with Clausen's work, the sum requested was high for a living artist. He continued, "I would venture to advise [...] that a sum substantially lower should alone be entertained." Moreover, as they had "no thought of tying [his] hands" and as they had already taken "the initiative" of requesting the painting, they must already have sufficient funds, "perhaps [...] from some rich patron".⁴⁷⁵ Whilst he probably realised this was not the case (the funds to complete the purchase may have been taken from the following year's allowance),⁴⁷⁶ it is possible he believed that John was helping his friends in London, as much as the Museum.

In 1918, Williams vehemently opposed Wedmore's proposed purchase of Sickert's *Eglise Saint Jacques, Dieppe (c. 1900)*. This, he argued, was an example of Wedmore's progressive unconventional tastes, and "was unsuitable for an important public collection" as it only excites the "eccentric imagination of a very small number of people who mistake their unhappy affliction for genuine artistic perception."⁴⁷⁷ John and the staunchly conservative Williams shared views on art that they believed were appropriate for a national collection. Whilst Williams's relationship with John and his appointment as Keeper suggest John's influence then, over the Council, Englishman, Wedmore and the Davies sisters' advisors, John would have felt the

⁴⁷³ Clausen claimed he was selling this work to the Museum for one hundred pounds less than he asked for at the RA exhibition. NMW A 176

⁴⁷⁴ Hoyle, letter to Wedmore September 5, 1914. NMW A 175.

⁴⁷⁵ Wedmore, letter to Hoyle, September 9, 1914., People, Places File, NMW 14.346.

⁴⁷⁶ John, letter to Dilwyn John, Director, 1928. NMW A 2628.

⁴⁷⁷ The 1918 official report on Wedmore's recommendation of purchase of a "Picture by Walter Sickert" from Isaac Williams. NMW People, Places File.

rivalry of Wedmore's financial authority and his position as art critic. John, as we have seen, recognised the power of art critics, including Wedmore's, over an artist's career.⁴⁷⁸ While Wedmore's choices may now seem more art historically significant, they did not comply with Museum policy. Yet, as Clausen was also not Welsh suggests that the underlying rivalry between John and Wedmore was played out on national level through NMW collecting policies. Despite these grievances and John's preference for appointing Welsh individuals, it was widely agreed that to raise awareness of modern Welsh artists, the NMW needed to stage an exhibition.

Exhibition

The NMW's second art show, held at the City Hall's temporary exhibition space, was the *Exhibition of Works by Certain Modern Artists of Welsh Birth or Extraction*.⁴⁷⁹ John would later claim that many doubted an exhibition of Welsh artists was possible. He recalled that it was considered "ill advised" and "impossible", the question "was quite seriously asked, 'Are there any Welsh artists of repute?'"⁴⁸⁰ Nonetheless, a considerable list of exhibitors was garnered from Augustus John to animal sculptor Adrian Jones.⁴⁸¹ Primary sponsorship for the exhibition came from Lord Howard de Walden, a patron of Welsh art and ardent supporter of the bohemian Welsh artist Augustus John,⁴⁸² whose works *The Fisher-Boy* and *In the Sandpit* (both 1912) were included in the exhibition.⁴⁸³ Deemed a success, Murray Urquhart, one of the Davis sisters' advisors, claimed in the *Welsh Outlook*, that the exhibition had answered those who asked why had Welsh artists "made no remarkable contribution to the world of art?" He proposed that this was a "striking vindication" for Welsh artists.

⁴⁷⁸ Letters to Ballinger reveal John took a keen interest in reviews of his and others' work.

⁴⁷⁹ From December 5, 1913 to February 28, 1914.

⁴⁸⁰ John, "Art in Wales", 216.

⁴⁸¹ As Pearson notes, Captain Adrian Jones was originally favoured for the *Viscount Tredegar* equestrian monument. John's wife, Marthe, however, suggested a "rival scheme"; John used friends and supporters both in Wales (Ballinger) and in Paris (Herbert Ward) to support his bid for this commission. Ballinger wrote a long document in support of John, who then amended it before submitting it to ensure a successful outcome for his first equestrian monument. Jones later wrote bitterly in his autobiography of the poor treatment he received from "his fellow sculptors". Pearson, *Goscombe John*, 14.

⁴⁸² De Walden probably insisted on the inclusion of Augustus John's vanguard work in the exhibition.

⁴⁸³ Lord, *Imaging the Nation*, 370.

Wales, he claimed, was producing “eminent men in the world of art today” and “making important contributions to the art of our time”.⁴⁸⁴

The Council sought John’s advice on subsequent purchases from the exhibition. Reflecting Urquhart’s claims, his recommendations to Hoyle on the sculptors Gwendolen Williams and Havard Thomas are revealing. While John’s nominal support for female artists was demonstrated with the NMW’s external architectural sculpture scheme, while Williams’s works, he opined, were “pretty feeble”, it would be proper to “acquire a specimen of it” as “there are not very many Welsh sculptors”.⁴⁸⁵ Moreover, he considered it “far more important” to purchase works by Havard Thomas, who was being represented in significant collections, such as the Manchester City Art Gallery. He added, “it is our duty to get, without delay, an important specimen of his work.”⁴⁸⁶

Although no major work was then purchased, Havard Thomas’s widow lent the *Lycidas* (1905) in 1922, which was still on display in the entrance hall in 1927. This represented an interesting choice given the highly publicised controversy surrounding its original exhibition and initial rejection from the 1905 RA Exhibition seventeen years earlier. John, at the time, wrote to Havard Thomas congratulating him on his work, claiming that the RA Council’s decision was “incomprehensible” and “beyond belief”.⁴⁸⁷ Whilst the controversy had died down, the inclusion of Havard Thomas’s work suggested support from Wales and established links to avant-garde sculptors such as Jacob Epstein, who had sought Havard Thomas’s advice regarding techniques before embarking on the practice of direct carving.⁴⁸⁸ As we saw in the introduction, John did not embrace the “squareness and blockiness” of direct carving.⁴⁸⁹ Nevertheless, John did support controversial and Academically challenging work,

⁴⁸⁴ Murray Urquhart, “Art and National Life”, *Welsh Outlook*, Vol.1, No. 1 (Jan 1914), 25.

⁴⁸⁵ John, letter to Hoyle, January 30, 1914, NMW A 292.

⁴⁸⁶ John, letter to Hoyle, January 30, 1914, NMW A 292. John also added “The same applies to Captain Adrian Jones”. John’s competitive streak that served him well throughout his career is evident, he could also be ruthless, and this purchase may well be a reconciliatory gesture following John’s successful campaign over Jones, the royal favourite, for the Viscount Tredegar commission.

⁴⁸⁷ John, letter to Havard Thomas, April 27, 1905, TGA9 24 I. Tate archive.

⁴⁸⁸ For more see David Getsy *Body Doubles*.

⁴⁸⁹ John, *The Influence of Material*.

especially if the sculptor had Welsh connections. Havard Thomas was born in Bristol of Welsh parents.

John admired and supported Havard Thomas and his approaches to sculpture making. Yet, in displaying the bronze at the Museum, John recognised that Thomas's status as a well-known and once controversial sculptor would not only stimulate debate but attract visitors. As he declared the comprehensive representation of Welsh artists would give "our gallery [...] a character that will be unique amongst art galleries". With little local competition, he was referring to regional galleries outside Wales; as such, this distinction was crucial. John was determined to elevate the Welsh collection to compete with institutions such as those in Manchester and Liverpool as well as London. The Museum's collection had to offer something that other institutions could not. For John this meant the representation of Welsh artists rather than vague ideas on Welsh art. Until that had been achieved, John declared, "our collection cannot claim to be representative of Wales, nor be called national".⁴⁹⁰

Non-Welsh Works

In line with the NMW's earlier criteria, John's motion also stipulated the "occasional" acquisition of "outstanding" non-Welsh works. "Discriminating judgement" he continued, would be "specially needed [as] they [must] be of the highest artistic value and bought with definite purpose [to] add distinction and value to the collection". The market, especially the buoyant London art market, depended on the connoisseurship of professional artists, dealers and critics. John negotiated the market as an artist, a patron and as an advisor, and many of the purchases he made, such as works from Clausen and Swan, reflected current demands.⁴⁹¹ John believed that an important role

⁴⁹⁰ John, *Method*, 1.

⁴⁹¹ Clausen and John together acted as advisors for the purchase of Swan's drawings. Clausen also advised Council members on works coming onto the market in sales and auctions in London, for example, Croal Thomson's McCulloch Sale in 1913 attended by Council members R.W. Renwick and T. Treharne James. Letters: NMW A 5250 and NMW A 208.

for the NMW was offering visitors and students the opportunity to study comparative works by Welsh and non-Welsh artists, an idea that is still relevant at the Museum.⁴⁹²

In terms of John's self-perceived roles at the Museum, his implicit assertion of overriding authority is significant. As the only Academician on the Council, the "discriminating judgement" he considered so important could only be his own. We have seen how John overrode challenges and asserted his authority over Welsh and English competition from T.H. Thomas and Wedmore. Over the years, John's contributions as Council member and patron have been overshadowed by the Davies sisters' extraordinary bequests. Yet, John saw them as separate from his role; they were important benefactors whose donations could be directed to advance the Museum and its collections.

John's life-long commitment to the Museum remained consistent to this policy and he ensured that his contribution became part of his legacy. In 1938, aged seventy-eight, he donated his swansong and ultimate prize, Gilbert's "noble & beautiful" *Icarus*. Following Gilbert's death and its rejection for purchase by the Chantrey Bequest, John had purchased the statuette.⁴⁹³ Some in London were disappointed, believing this crucial work was lost to the nation. John, however, made the most of this opportunity, knowing that, ultimately, Wales would benefit from London's loss, and the NMW would be owners of a key New Sculpture work. He confided to Williams that the *Icarus* gives "our collection unique distinction and sets the seal of huge national importance upon it".⁴⁹⁴ He continued, "we have a masterpiece of the first rank which will give the museum great prestige".⁴⁹⁵ As it had been in two private collections, John claimed that despite its fine reputation, few had seen it during the previous fifty years;⁴⁹⁶ now on public display it would draw visitors to the Museum.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹² In conversation with Oliver Fairclough, Keeper of Art at NMW. 2015.

⁴⁹³ Margaret Hadley, letter to Spielmann 5 Jul 1935, RA Archive SP/19/17 J.

⁴⁹⁴ John may have felt that he had trumped the Davies sisters' loan of Rodin's *Kiss*.

⁴⁹⁵ John, letter to Williams, May 17, 1938. NMW A 116.

⁴⁹⁶ Following Leighton's death in 1896, the *Icarus* was brought by the London dealer, Robert Dunthorne, in 1899. Dunthorne sold it to Colonel Valentine Vivian, former vice chief of the newly formed MI6. NMW A 116.

⁴⁹⁷ John, letter to Williams, May 17, 1938. NMW A 116.

John believed, correctly, that his efforts had elevated the NMW's collections. The personal significance of the *Icarus* was substantial and, although he declared that it tore his heart out to part with his treasure, he found solace that it was now in its permanent home at the Museum.⁴⁹⁸ In donating such a significant work, he had not forgotten the importance of a Welsh connection, as Gilbert's mother, he claimed, was Welsh.⁴⁹⁹ In 1934, shortly before Gilbert's death, *The Times* reported that Gilbert's friends, including John, had hosted a tribute dinner at the Cafe Royal. John, "a boyhood friend of the sculptor", made a speech that recalled the excitement Gilbert first caused at the Academy in 1882, from which he produced a "succession of masterpieces". In response, Gilbert spoke of tradition in art, concluding that he "gloried" in being labelled a "back number", "because he belonged to a generation that saw no virtue in making a plum-pudding, tying it up, and calling it a statue."⁵⁰⁰ While these aging New Sculptors recognised they were now considered dated, they shared a resistance to the next generations' sculptural developments.

Whilst John did not embrace avant-garde arts, he continued to ensure the donations of works by major names he termed "modern". Constantly looking for opportunities to benefit the collections, he encouraged friends, colleagues and widows to donate works. These bonds of friendship further advanced his legacy-building policy, as a student, his old friends such as Gilbert, Frampton, Armstead, Pomeroy, and Havard Thomas, as well as many academic painters for example Clausen, Sidney Curnow Vosper, and Fildes had become prominent artists. As discussed in Chapter One, all of these, bar Rodin, were connected with John through the RA, the Athenaeum Club, or St John's Wood Art Club.

Notions of Welshness, then, during the early twentieth century varied widely. John posited Welsh culture firmly within a British Royalist dialogue.⁵⁰¹ His 1913 motion

⁴⁹⁸ John, letter to Williams, May 15, 1938. NMW A 116.

⁴⁹⁹ John, letter to Williams, May 28, 1938, NMW A 116.

⁵⁰⁰ "Tribute To Sir Alfred Gilbert." *Times*, May 17, 1934, 14. *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 13 May 2015.

<http://find.galegroup.com/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroupName=uniyork&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=&docId=CS151188133&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0>

⁵⁰¹In Wales there very few royal works. In Wrexham, Henry Price gifted to his hometown a replica of a bronze statue of Victoria (1905) originally from the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich.

underpins his determination to assert his control over others on the Council, especially concerning the suitability of modern works. Turning to look at his own works in the bequest demonstrates the complexity of ‘Welshness’ within the Anglo-Welsh debate.

The Bequest and Networks

John’s bequest in memory of his late wife,⁵⁰² intended for permanent display, provides evidence of his sustained commitment to his policy, legacy building and underwrites his vision for the Museum in shaping the art collections and its display. Of the works in the bequest, three are included in the upper studio photograph and all were exhibited at the RA. The first four were already on loan to the Museum. These were a version of *Boy at Play* (fig. 2.6),⁵⁰³ *Childhood* (fig. 2.7), *The Elf*, and the marble bust, *Age* (1892, fig. 2.8).⁵⁰⁴ John promised two further additions,⁵⁰⁵ the ideal nude boy, *Joyance* (fig. 2.9) and *The Drummer Boy*, a monumental sized bronze cast taken from the *King’s Regiment Memorial* in Liverpool that, as I argue, was nationally strategic.

Individually, these works chart moments in John’s life and career; collectively they forge connections that clarify his approach to “nationalism and Imperialism”. The bequest added to a number of John’s early notable pieces, including *The Parting* and *Morpheus*, both from the early Cardiff Municipal Museum’s art collection. Museum director, Fox, was enthusiastically grateful, as we have seen, in acknowledging the Museum’s indebtedness to John’s generosity.⁵⁰⁶ Through the works he gave, John reinforced his status as the munificent great Welsh sculptor, and specifically his self-positing role as the Welsh Rodin.

<https://www.pmsa.org.uk/pmsa-database/11334/>, accessed March 12, 2018; Mario Rutelli’s *Edward (VIII) Prince of Wales* (1922) is at Aberystwyth. While John received several royal commissions including Edward VII in Liverpool and Prince Christian Victor in Windsor, he only produced one Queen Victoria, a copper medallion for Caterham Hospital, date unknown. Pearson, *Goscombe John*, 91.

⁵⁰² Marthe John (nee Weiss) had suffered ill health for several years.

⁵⁰³ The bronze original was exhibited in 1896 and purchased by the Chantrey Bequest and will be discussed later, in relation to establishing a canon of British fine art at the NMW.

⁵⁰⁴ These were collectively valued then at £2,250.

⁵⁰⁵ John was probably still deciding on specific pieces. In terms of timing, following his wife’s death, he needed to make the bequest when he did.

⁵⁰⁶ Cyril Fox, letter to John, June 9, 1927, NMW A 2627.

The bequest works collectively chart time and life, from childhood innocence and pleasure, to notions of duty and the inexorable decline into old age. The two girl sculptures offer models of idealised femininity. Contrastingly, the boy sculptures, an essential benchmark to the nation's welfare, both anticipate and reject Seth Koven's argument on social problems of urban working-class boys.⁵⁰⁷ While, the *Drummer Boy* holds complex meanings for John and the Museum, it is also a model of the ideal young citizen, developed from healthy boy nudes, such as *Boy at Play* and *Joyance*. In contrast to Morpheus and the St John, these works, then, are a measure of the imperial propaganda assumed through a particular type of masculinity that reinforced a specific type of national identity.⁵⁰⁸ As optimistic versions of the nation's future, they represent the Empire's future model citizens; installed at Cardiff, they offer a Welsh version.

As John's *Boy at Play* was purchased for the nation through the Chantrey Bequest (now at Tate Britain), the Bequest's version, a replica of the original bronze, explicitly asserts his intentions to align the NMW with London's National Gallery for British Art. Through the narrative guise of playing a physical game, the *Boy's* precise anatomical modelling documents bodily configurations required to maintain balance.⁵⁰⁹ This work also suggests that John was now seeking to address the problem in *contrapposto* posed by Rodin's *St John* that he had avoided with his *St John*. This work showcased John's exceptional technical skills through an intricate study of the counterbalancing mechanisms of arrested motion. Despite John's claims otherwise, this dynamic and complex sculptural configuration draws on classical traditions. As an inverted *Borghese Gladiator*, it recalls Prettejohn's "competitive" imitation, in which John both recalled and attempted to adapt this venerated "old master" for a nineteenth century audience.⁵¹⁰ Offering a more realistic natural portrayal, with less exaggerated muscular definition was something he could get away with given the age

⁵⁰⁷ Seth Koven, "From rough Lads to Hooligans" in *Nationalism and Sexualities* (Routledge: London, 1992), 381.

⁵⁰⁸ See also John's *Boy Scout*, 1910.

⁵⁰⁹ This work bears formal similarities with J.M. Swan's silver statuette, *Orpheus* (1895/6), adapted, according to Spielmann, from the painting, *Orpheus*. Spielmann, *British Sculpture*, 67 & 71.

⁵¹⁰ Prettejohn, *Modern Painters Old Masters*, 34. See chapter, "The Victorians and the Masters", 18–57.

of his subject.⁵¹¹ On close observation, starting from the focus of the boy's attention to the knucklebone placed before him on the ground (the bronze base), a concentrated line of potential movement can be traced. From the pointed right toe, the tension of taught muscles spreads through the extended leg and torso, towards the head that, brought forward to the chest, effectively alters the energy's course turning it back upon itself. The angled body offsets this, as it slants to the right through the shoulders and bent supporting left leg. For balance, the wide-open arms, like wings, occupy the space at the sides and accentuate the tension between movement and balance. The suspended right foot adds dynamic potential as it hovers just above the knucklebone enclosing a triangular space between the legs and base. Like Rodin's *St John*, the *Boy* is poised at the point of movement. The muscular pull and stretch of potential movement is reinforced, as the *Boy* is about to pick up the knucklebone with his toes.

The statue was recently displayed at Tate Britain alongside another Chantrey purchase, Henry Scott Tuke's painting *August Blue* (1893-4) (fig. 2.10), depicting pubescent nude boys enjoying the boats and sea on a summer's day in Cornwall.⁵¹² These works collectively evoke the last idyllic throes of boyhood freedom, before the inevitable onset of manhood and Imperial responsibilities.⁵¹³ This is not merely to anticipate World War I; *Boy* was exhibited at the RA in 1896, three years before the onset of the second South African War.

As an ideal work, typical of the New Sculpture's interest in verisimilitude, the *Boy*'s critical reception acknowledged John's attention to what Getsy describes as the equivalence of representation rather than "mimetic fidelity".⁵¹⁴ While Victorian critics used terms such as "actuality" and "vitality" to describe the corporeal presence of accurate or life-like sculptures, Spielmann, possibly in response to Ford and Frampton's highly decorative styles, claimed it was more a "realistic study than [...] a

⁵¹¹ For more on *Boy* see Polledri, "Sir William Goscombe John: Sculptural Identity and Poetic Realism in his Early Works", (masters dissertation, University of Bristol, 2010).

⁵¹² Purchased in 1894.

⁵¹³ John's later *Boy Scout* (1910) serves as a pertinent reminder of these impending roles. The bronze statuette of Basil Webb in imperialist scout uniform is a portent of the First World War uniform in which he was killed.

⁵¹⁴ Getsy "Privileging the Object", 88.

sculptural conception”.⁵¹⁵ He acknowledged that it was a “nude carefully modelled and skilfully poised”, and that John’s technical refinement, precision and unconventionality resulted in a high degree of verisimilitude. As we have seen, in using the term “realistic” Spielmann could, according to Getsy, be evoking “polemical” social realistic art that depicted the working classes.⁵¹⁶ Nevertheless, more generally, Spielmann stated that the way movement is created in sculpture enhances the “beauty of form”. This applies to John’s *Boy*, especially as he claimed that expressive “new beauties” are then “developed in the play of muscle, joint and bones”.⁵¹⁷

John’s technical achievements were widely recognised; Phillips, writing for the *Magazine of Art*, claimed John “shows a great capacity for taking pains, and a delight in overcoming difficulties, in a nude statue.”⁵¹⁸ While for the *Athenaeum* critic this was his most technically accomplished work, in comparison to the “sincere and modest” *Childhood*, the *Boy*’s “so very ugly”, “expressive face” was problematic (see detail in fig. 3.52).⁵¹⁹ This demonstrates how the popularity for idealised child images coloured perceptions of New Sculpture’s preference for individual particularity. Such sculptural honesty made the *Boy* challenging viewing for some who were reluctant to cast aside reassuring notions of narrative that imbued works with moralising sentimentality, pathos or drama. In contrast to the *Parting*, John’s attention to anatomic accuracy, with a poetic narrative rejected, leaves the viewer, despite its title, to contemplate the body of a particular naked boy; its extreme truthfulness unsettling the then-normative viewing experience.

In 1894, Gosse highlighted the precarious division between realism and the “learned [...] eye”. According to Gosse, Thornycroft’s *Putting the Stone* (1880), a “classic of the English school” that surely influenced the *Boy*, “required an eye more learnedly trained than that of most artists to appreciate its value.”⁵²⁰ Yet, the apparently “crude realism” of Thomas Stirling Lee’s recumbent female nude *Dawn of Womanhood*

⁵¹⁵ Marion H. Spielmann, *British Sculpture*, 130.

⁵¹⁶ Getsy “Privileging the Object”, 88.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵¹⁸ Claude Phillips, “Sculpture of the Year”, *Magazine of Art*, January 1895, 443.

⁵¹⁹ “The Royal Academy”, *The Athenaeum*, July 11, 1896, 70.

⁵²⁰ Gosse, “The New Sculpture”, June, 200.

(1883) “had been carried [too] far.” Gosse misogynistically continued, “like an absolute cast from the flesh [with no] selection of type, no striving after beauty of line; the figure was a literal copy of an ugly naked woman”: “[w]ithout style”, Gosse concluded, “Art does not exist.”⁵²¹ Spielmann, too, as I suggested above, favoured the more sympathetic, “poetic realism” he recognised in Ford’s ideal works.⁵²² John intended that his realism should appeal to a connoisseurial audience who would not fail to comprehend artistic “style”. To aid this, and possibly mediated by Gilbert’s *Putting the Stone*, he ensured a level of New Sculptural classical narrative through the game of “knucklebones”, and allusions to the Borghese Gladiator, derived from Ancient Rome and Greece (figs 2.11, 2.12).

Aware of potential controversy, the depiction of a child playing a physical game would, at least nominally, restore to the general viewer notions of childhood games and innocence, while the action-nudity referenced ancient Greek homosocial athleticism.⁵²³ Scholarship has subsequently aligned boy nudes with a latent pederastic gaze, and, as Emmanuel Cooper argues, the portrayal of innocence in the depiction of young male nudes, also seen in *Joyance*, establishes a channel to admire ostensibly the work “from a safe distance”.⁵²⁴ Yet, while masking sexual veracity through a veil of innocence would enable certain viewers to look without circumspection, John’s nude could also support a social concern.⁵²⁵ In the wake of the social deprivations of poverty, disease, and malnourishment, notions of play aligned with nineteenth-century opinion that exercise countered the weakening effects of disease. This was further compounded by efforts from individuals such as the Victorian body builder Eugene Sandow who exalted the status of the healthy body. His pursuit of the ideal body, attained through weight lifting, led to exhibitions in which he exhibited his body, dusted in white powder and adorned with a fig leaf, to resemble ancient Greek sculptures.⁵²⁶ Despite some critical opinion, the *Boy* offers a

⁵²¹ Gosse, “The New Sculpture”, September, 277.

⁵²² Marion H. Spielmann, *British Sculpture*, 60.

⁵²³ George Frampton owned a bronze version of “knucklebones”; his described of a boy playing a game of knucklebones, suggests this is a *Boy at Play*. “Bronzes For An Art Gallery.” *Times*, January 6, 1930. The Times Digital Archive, accessed 14 May 2015.

⁵²⁴ Emmanuel Cooper, *The Sexual Perspective*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1984), 34.

⁵²⁵ See Polledri, “Sir William Goscombe John”, 32-34.

⁵²⁶ Sandow staged a much-acclaimed demonstration at the 1893 Chicago Exhibition in the same year that John won the Gold Medal for the *Morpheus*.

version of an archetypal healthy body-type symbolically countering the effects of malnourishment and debilitation, a sculptural antidote to the deprivations of the urban working classes.⁵²⁷ There is another potential reason for *Boy at Play*'s accurate anatomical articulation as it, in part, responds to Roscoe Mullins' *Boy with Peg-Top* (1895). This "pleasing study in the nude", claimed the *Saturday Review*, was let down as the work was "imperfectly finished" and "in some places [...] no more than a sketch."⁵²⁸ With his eye on the Chantrey Bequest, John may have been seen an opportunity to target *Boy at Play* towards the selectors, as it developed the thematic and formal qualities of Mullins' work to an exacting level of finish and realistic detail.

During the early decades of the twentieth century, John was the only living Welsh sculptor to have a work purchased for the nation through the Chantrey Bequest. His inclusion of the *Boy* in the NMW bequest emulates, on a smaller scale, the collecting policies of the Gallery of British Art, and reveals John's scheme for a national art for Wales. He took a keen interest in the Chantrey Bequest purchases and found their selection policies discouraging. He emphatically condemned the 1894 Chantrey Bequest purchase, H.C. Fehr's *Perseus Rescuing Andromeda* (1893), as "a big commonplace thing" that had been chosen over more "distinguished" works. Frustrated, he confided to Ballinger that "really" the adjudicators "are hopeless where real art is concerned". Moreover, as "the good men [...] shrug their shoulders or stay away", Fehr's selection proved to John that the selection committee were encouraging the wrong candidates, that is "the duffers" who "push & have power".⁵²⁹ Critics shared John's disappointment. The *Saturday Review* of 1894 believed Fehr's *Perseus* "errs in the heaviness of the male type, suggesting weight where the composition demands elasticity and lightness";⁵³⁰ while in 1895, it made an "indefinite impression".⁵³¹

These frustrations culminated with D.S. McColl's accusation that the RA was deliberately misusing Bequest funds and privileging works from its own exhibitions,

⁵²⁷ The Tate gallery also connects John's nude with the healthy ideal body type. See "A Boy at Play", www.tate.org.uk. Accessed October 12, 2010.

⁵²⁸ "Sculpture 1894", *Saturday Review*, 125.

⁵²⁹ John, letter to Ballinger, May 7, 1894, Cardiff Library MS 3 565 GJ:9.

⁵³⁰ "Sculpture 1894", *Saturday Review*, 125.

⁵³¹ "Sculpture of the Year 1895", *Saturday Review*, 68.

when he was appointment Keeper of Art at the Gallery of National Art in 1904.⁵³² The Chantrey purchases were widely acknowledged as contentious. For example, Phillips assumed that Fehr “based [his work] on a well-known picture of Sir Frederic Leighton’s”,⁵³³ suggesting that Fehr intentionally sought the Academy president’s favour by paying homage to his recent painting *Perseus and Andromeda* (1891).⁵³⁴ This practice was not confined to Fehr; John also went to considerable effort to encourage the trustees to purchase *Boy at Play*. Adopting tactical moves, that may have included John’s condemnation of Fehr’s “commonplace” group, in which Fehr overlooked New Sculpture values of surface detail and individual particularity,⁵³⁵ signalled John’s bid to negotiate a purchase.⁵³⁶

Believing he was one of the “good men”, John decided to “push” to rectify what he saw as the problem. In another letter to Ballinger, he revealed that, as works in plaster did not qualify for purchase, he had *Boy at Play* cast in bronze, “as a bid” for the Chantrey purchase. John had set the bait; he wrote to Ballinger hoping it was enough for a “bite”, the trustees, he felt, “ought to for they have nothing better”. Nonetheless, evaluating his odds, John was concerned, as Ford, “whose taste [did] not run in [his] direction”, was on the council. John continued that had Gilbert been a selector he would have been “safe”,⁵³⁷ yet, as “Leighton likes the “Boy” much, & Gilbert is a strong influence outside the council”, he felt he had a good chance.⁵³⁸ *Boy at Play*, then, was created to appeal to Leighton’s academic classicism and some of Gilbert’s New Sculpture principles. John’s calculations proved fruitful.

⁵³² “The Chantrey Trustees and the Nation”, *Burlington Magazine* Vol.5, Issue 19, 1904, 116. See also D.S.McColl, *The Administration of the Chantrey Bequest*, (London: Grant Richards, 1904).

⁵³³ Claude Phillips, “The Royal Academy”, *The Academy*, June 9, 1894, 482.

⁵³⁴ Heather Birchall suggests Leighton encouraged Fehr to have the *Andromeda* cast in bronze. See Birchall, “The Rescue of Andromeda”, *Tate*, accessed March 10, 2015.

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/fehr-the-rescue-of-andromeda-n01749/text-summary>.

⁵³⁵ Birchall, “The Rescue of Andromeda”.

⁵³⁶ Six years later John expressed interest in obtaining sculpture commissions for the new City Hall, (John, letter to Ballinger, May 28, 1900, Cardiff Library MS 3 565 GJ:32.) Fehr, who contributed the Welsh Dragon that tops the Hall’s dome, trained at Thomas Montford’s studio. As discussed, his son, Paul Montford later fell out with John over commissions for the Marble Hall at the City Hall.

⁵³⁷ John wrote to Ballinger that Gilbert had been to “see my figure & was loud in his praises”, before adding that “he invited Martha and myself to supper”. John, letter to Ballinger, March 20, 1895. Cardiff Library MS 3 565 GJ:13.

⁵³⁸ John, letter to Ballinger, January 21, 1896. Cardiff Library MS 3 565 GJ:15A.

The other boy nude, *Joyance*, contrasts sharply with the *Boy*'s severe anatomical realism. Beattie considered it a "pretty conceit" (see figs. 2.9 and 20).⁵³⁹ As a replica from an original commission for a fountain centrepiece in Charles Thompson's recently donated park in Cardiff, *Joyance* unequivocally links John with his hometown; it also establishes further links for the Museum with the RA and Gilbert. This statue was first exhibited at the RA in 1899, the same year that John was elected Associate Royal Academician. John exhibited an impressive seven works that year including the marble version of *The Elf*. Along the lines of Frampton's female nude, *Caprice* (1891), John's full-length male nude youth stands on tiptoes, the arms are wide and elevated, the head tilts back turning to the left, the smiling face gazes up to the butterfly resting on the left hand. In doing so, the theme recalls the neo-classical Welsh sculptor Gibson's *Cupid Tormenting a Butterfly* (1839). John's composition was adaptable; another version, *Hermes*, with wings on the ankles, signals Gilbert's *Perseus Arming* of 1882, and was exhibited in the St. Louis Exhibition in 1904,⁵⁴⁰ and recalls his *Comedy and Tragedy* (1890-2).⁵⁴¹ Whilst Gilbert's boy's downward glance and allusions to pain evoked personal pessimism, *Joyance*'s youthful sunny optimism, whilst less profound, appears an appropriate component for a civic work in the recreational family space of the park and Museum before another version was installed with *The Elf* at the outdoor museum at St Fagans. In restaging Gilbert's boys, John's *Boy at Play* and *Joyance*, as familiar robust outdoor-types superficially, at least, resisted poetic homoerotic associations.

Childhood, the most intimate of his child sculptures, offers John's personal tribute to his wife, Marthe, as it is a portrayal of their four-year-old daughter, Muriel, (see figs. 2.7 and 2.13). Like others of John's generation who were becoming parents (Frampton's son was born in 1894), John was not alone in portraying his child. Thornycroft produced a relief of his young daughter, Jean, in 1897. As John produced most of his child nudes, including *Joyance* and *Boy*, whilst Muriel was still young, the statues indicate a personal and paternal vested interest in exploring childhood.

⁵³⁹ Susan Beattie, *The New Sculpture*, 180.

⁵⁴⁰ Fiona Pearson, *Goscombe John*, 36.

⁵⁴¹ John donated a bronze statuette to the Museum in 1938.

In the form of a bronze bust, *Childhood* was exhibited at the RA in 1897 under the title *A Maid So Young*. The latter is not a quotation but ties in with ideal works such as Alfred Drury's *Age of Innocence* (1897), which became popular for its evocation of a type of idealised childhood rather than the individual expressions of portraiture.⁵⁴² Works like these extolled poetically, notions of youthful purity and potential. With her chin slightly tilted inward, Muriel's large round eyes gaze innocently at the spectator. The 1897 bronze version is from a four-foot, full-length, original plaster, exhibited at the RA in 1896, in which Muriel wears a long voluminous embroidered dress, a cap covering most of her hair is tied beneath her chin and exposes a bow just visible that covers part of her forehead.⁵⁴³ She holds a Japanese doll that again symbolically points towards wider influences that, as the next chapter considers, contrapuntally weave together material inspiration and politically racist fears. Here, however, this doll references Victorian Aestheticism and its interest in Japanese wares. By the late nineteenth century, Japan had responded to the expanding European demand for Asian artefacts and objects and took advantage of lucrative trade opportunities. The symbolism in the full-length *Muriel* was reduced in subsequent versions that were also reduced in size.

That John produced three versions of *Childhood* suggests he felt compelled to keep developing his original idea. The subsequent, smaller versions suggest commercial imperatives. The Bequest bust, cut off at the chest and arms, was originally set upon a marble base that repeated the cross-section footprint of her torso and arms. While evoking Frampton's *Mother and Child* (1894-5), it follows in the tradition of Italian renaissance portrait sculpture such as Rossellino's bust of *Giovanni di Antonio Chellini da San Miniato* (1456).⁵⁴⁴ The third version, at the Lady Lever Art Gallery, has been further reduced to Muriel's head and neck; now gilded, it rests on a serpentine socle (fig. 2.13). While the gilding recalls the religious veneration of symbolically important objects produced in precious materials, and Italian

⁵⁴²The *Academy Architecture and Architecture Review 1897* places adjacent photographs of both works on the same page. Ed. Alexander Koch, *Academy Architecture and Architecture Review 1897*, No. 2073 (London: Academy Architecture, 1897), 97, accessed June 25, 2015. <https://archive.org/stream/academyarchitect>.

⁵⁴³ A studio photograph, published in Luke val Fildes, *Muriel. A Memento* (Stratford Staples Printers Ltd., 1958) shows the four-year-old Muriel wearing these clothes.

⁵⁴⁴ Both works are at the V&A.

Renaissance sculpture such as Donatello's *Dancing Angel* (1429) for the Siena baptistery, this version also hints at links with the first modernist generation. Epstein's portrait, *Romilly John* (1907, fig 2.14) of Augustus John's son with stylised hair and outward stare, resembles *Childhood*, as does the bronze on marble.⁵⁴⁵ This suggests that Epstein must have been interested in works such as this. The golden aura of this head represents John's interpretation of the preciousness of his only child.⁵⁴⁶ John's piece may also have influenced Welsh artist Tom Mostyn, who exhibited his painting, *Childhood* (c. 1900), featuring a child in similar clothes and pose for the *Modern Artists of Welsh Birth or Extraction* exhibition. As Mostyn's painting is visible on the wall above the mantelpiece in the upper studio photograph, suggests that John later owned it.

While *The Elf* has been discussed in detail in the introduction, within the bequest it contributes towards John's biographical narrative. As *Boy at Play* aligned John with the Museum and the Chantrey bequest, so *The Elf* signalled John's relationship with the R.A.

The only marble work, *Age*, is the second piece with a direct connection to Marthe as it portrays her mother, Clara Weiss. Like *Childhood*, this work focuses on a generic type and was exhibited at the RA in 1892 as "Study of a Head" (see fig. 2.8). Like *Boy*, this is an unflinchingly realistic study, in which John scrutinised the aging face. While this indicates the New Sculptural interest in surface particularity, in exploring human ageing it contrasts with the other youth focussed works. In contrast to the warm glow of *Childhood*'s smooth bronze surface, the cold white marble of the *Age* evokes pale deathliness. Comparatively, this stark portrayal of a grandmother and her granddaughter references the ages of woman.⁵⁴⁷

As with *Childhood*, John experimented with variations and surface textures. He coated a bronze version of the head with linseed oil to create an additional textural

⁵⁴⁵The two Johns were not related.

⁵⁴⁶Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight.

⁵⁴⁷ As both NMW and Lady Lever collections hold a bust of Marthe, this strengthens the representations of the ages of woman theme.

layer that further emphasised notions of surface, suggesting the ravages of time.⁵⁴⁸ The marble version at the Museum retains the original rectangular block evocative of classical herms such as Lysippos' Roman copy, *Hermes Azara* (fourth century BC) (fig. 2.15), from which emerge the head and neck.⁵⁴⁹ The partial shoulders and chest are clothed in a plain V-necked garment that stands away from the base of the neck exposing a small triangle of skin. Anticipating his *Self-Portrait*, its uncompromising scrutiny evokes a pre-death mask that portends the inevitable consequences of old age. Rendered through an aura of dignity for his sitter, John visually recorded the effects of flaccid muscles, wrinkled skin, and toothlessness on the aging human face. John was not unique in exploring this theme; *Age* reflects influences from Ford's *Irish Peasant Woman* (1881, fig. 2.16) that also unflinchingly explores old age. These works offer an example of the range of John's ideal pieces that assert his presence at the NMW. In contrast, the *Drummer Boy*, the only monumental piece included in the Bequest, brings us back to Empire and national identity.

Drummer Boy, Strategies and Rodin

The last addition, *The Drummer Boy*, John's first large-scale public memorial, was, he claimed, one of his "best and most popular works" (fig. 2.17).⁵⁵⁰ First exhibited at the RA in plaster in 1905, it was, as John explained, subsequently "done several times in bronze". While "Queen Mary bought one at a War exhibition at the Royal Academy", several others "perhaps half-a-dozen altogether" were in private collections.⁵⁵¹ Having been almost continually displayed at the NMW since 1924, its striking formal qualities and strong narrative means it has become synonymous with the Museum. Here it articulates John's reconciliation of Welsh identity within the British Empire.

Through the *Drummer Boy*, John posits Wales as a loyal colony over disloyal ones such as South Africa, represented, as I discuss below, in the original King's Regiment memorial, 'suppressed' by English military might. Following years of Welsh campaigning, the Museum's *Drummer Boy* symbolised a victory for national Welsh culture the institution fought so hard for. It also provides a point at which Welsh

⁵⁴⁸ Muriel donated this version to the Lady Lever Art Gallery at Port Sunlight along with the gilt *Childhood* and a head of her mother, in 1953 following John's death.

⁵⁴⁹ Recalling Ancient Greek traditional busts such as *Hermes Azara*.

⁵⁵⁰ John, letter to Hoyle, December 31, 1925. NMW A 2627.

⁵⁵¹ Quoted in Pearson, *Goscombe John*, 81.

nationalism intersected wider Imperial concerns; the timing of John's donation, the year before George V officially opened the Museum, is significant. This was a fact Fox clearly appreciated, declaring that this "magnificent bronze [...] graces the central position in the Entrance Hall".⁵⁵²

Strategically, the *Drummer Boy* exemplifies how meaning is conveyed through display. It expands Codell's transculturation theories "on space, place, time, culture [and] nation", and Edwards's on site specificity to include Anglo-Welsh imperial debates.⁵⁵³ In doing so, it challenges Tony Bennett claim that artworks removed from their original locations lose political momentum and relevance, particularly in the museum where they become depoliticised.⁵⁵⁴ I suggest that these meanings, once relocated, are not lost but offer potential for revival and reuse within a new context. The *Drummer Boy*, in its original context and at the NMW, illustrates the multi-variant meanings of objects, locations and histories. In Liverpool, as part of the King's Regiment memorial group, it forms a narrative commemorating soldiers who fought in the Regiment's early battles in Afghanistan, Burma, and the South African Wars.

This group memorial radiates from the centrally placed bronze personification of the Empire, "Britannia", pedastalled on a stone base. On either side, leaning against a stone wall, are two bronze soldiers representing the regiment, from 1685 to the early-twentieth century (1902, figs. 2.18 and 2.19). At the rear of the monument, between the soldiers and behind "Britannia", the seventeenth-century *Drummer Boy*, portrayed at the Battle of Dettingen, sits on an earthwork with raised arms about to beat his drum.⁵⁵⁵ To accommodate his large drum, his knees are at an acute angle to his shoulders, as he twists his body to look out above the viewers' heads. As a Janus-type presence, he not only mediates between the past and present but looks towards the future. As he honours the soldiers who fought in the past, he continually calls to arms future generations.

⁵⁵² Fox, letter to John, June 9, 1927. NMW A 2627.

⁵⁵³ For more on meaning and location see, Codell, *Transculturation*, 2; and Edwards. "War and Peace".

⁵⁵⁴ Tony Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, (London: Routledge, 1995), 92.

⁵⁵⁵ This victorious battle against the French army was the last led by a reigning monarch (George II) during the War of Austrian Succession in which most of Europe became involved.

In terms of networking, it is significant that this work was a Liverpool commission. The city was strategically important to John as testified by his other commissions there: the equestrian monument to *Edward VII* (1916, fig. 2.20) and the *Engine Room Heroes* (1918, fig. 2.21).⁵⁵⁶ The *Drummer Boy* asserts inter-regional identification with Liverpool, another city with a high proportion of Welsh migrant workers and, by the mid-nineteenth century as people fled the famine, an increasing Irish population, with strong Celtic connections. In donating this work to the NMW during a period of heightened Welsh nationalist feeling, John simultaneously placed Wales within the wider Imperial community, sanctioning Welsh patriotism while circumventing explicit visual notions of Welsh nationalism. Within the Museum, the *Drummer Boy*'s original meaning is transferred; it now becomes an icon of Welsh nationality beating his call to arms to visitors without ostracising non-Welsh support. Historian, Peter Stead, recalling his childhood visits, remembers being "confronted" at the entrance by the *Drummer Boy*; he came to regard it as "a personal icon defining [his] cultural identity".⁵⁵⁷

For some, the *Drummer Boy* can be read as a subversive political emblem of victory for Welsh nationalism. Within the neo-classical Museum building and the boundaries of the British Empire, it mobilises Welsh support, mediating between past struggles, the present visitors at the Museum, and the future of Welsh culture. The *Drummer*'s welcome rallies and unites visitors not only through a communal engagement with Welshness, but through Liverpool, with regional English, Welsh and pan-Celtic, cross-Irish-sea connections. Yet, these were tempered through warnings of imperial might over insubordination. The fact that Stead recognised the *Drummer Boy*'s relevance several generations later confirms the significance of this work at the NMW where it represents the cultural spirit of the Welsh people, merging nationalism with the past, present and future.

⁵⁵⁶ This apparently the most modern-appearing of John's works has figures that were based on John's sketchbook drawings were inspired by the Ancient Greek funeral monument of Dermys and Kitylos at Tanagra, RA (07/1112). Just as Picasso's modernist *Vollard* and *Les Métamorphoses* returned to Ancient Greece so John did.

⁵⁵⁷ John Osmond, *Myths, Memories and Futures*, 8.

In relation to John's legacy, the *Drummer Boy* has further implications. We know that John greatly admired Rodin and spent considerable time with him in his Paris studio. The Museum already owned two of John's Rodin inspired pieces, *Morpheus* and *St. John the Baptist*. Compositionally, the NMW version of the *Drummer Boy* completes John's implicit self-assertion as the Welsh Rodin, demonstrates that John continued contradicts this order, showing *The Kiss* in pride of place. While the brochure acknowledges this as a view of the west wing, the statue's prominent placement on the cover reinforces its importance as an influential continental work. Behind it, elevated in the niche of the half-landing on the stairs leading to the first-floor galleries, is John's *St. John*, itself influenced by Rodin's *St John*. Although raised and visible, its size is reduced as it hovers in the background above *The Kiss*. This positioning establishes a different visual priority; its apparent diminutive size reduces Welsh art as secondary to continental art. Furthermore, the *St John*, in relation to the modern French art below him, appears to bless this implied relationship. Contravening NMW policy, the photograph places Welsh art and artists as subordinate to Continental art, and, perhaps significantly, John in relation to the Davies sisters who owned this work. Although the multiple references to a St John diplomatically keep John's name central.

While the actions and narrative of the *Drummer Boy* and *The Kiss* could not be more different, it is no coincidence that John's enthusiastic *Drummer Boy* was "worthy" for the central position and appeared a more appropriate, less sexually provocative theme than Rodin's entwined adulterous lovers, Paolo and Francesca from Dante's *Inferno*. Whilst the lovers were still displayed, John's work, as Hoyle acknowledged, took pride of place at the entrance to the Museum. With the official opening ceremony so close, John would have been aware of the brochure's inconsistent agenda. In conclusion, with his Motion in mind, he was keen to assert Welsh artists, including himself as the modern Welsh sculptor.

Official Opening

With Queen Mary in attendance, King George V performed the NMW's official opening. Despite the Council's care to avoid comparison with the British Museum, the King's speech made a direct link to it. According to *The Times*, he informed those

present that having been “a trustee of the British Museum in London” he had “followed with lively interest [...] the inception and development of the National Museum of later in his career to find Rodin inspirational and expressed this in ways that were more complex. Minus its original banners and laurel branches, the *Drummer* bears formal similarities with Rodin’s *The Kiss* (1887, NMW version cast after 1902). Both works are in bronze and possess roughly similar dimensions. Their pyramidal forms encourage visitors to circumambulate their perimeters, to view the dynamic seated figures with sharply articulated limbs (See figs. 2.22 and 2.23).

The grateful director wrote to John that the *Drummer Boy* was “worthy” of the central position, to which “higher praise [was] impossible”. Yet, his slightly odd description, as “not very large in size but [...] vigorous in design” seems unusual as it avoids any mention of narrative. In line with the Museum’s Welsh artists’ policy, he appreciatively added that if “the work [is] one of yours all our needs will be met”.⁵⁵⁸ Following building delays during World War I, the NMW unofficially opened its doors in 1922.⁵⁵⁹ In anticipation of the later official royal opening, a brochure published in 1926 appraised the collections (fig. 2.24). The Art section’s introduction stated, once again, the museum’s primary objective: “to illustrate the artistic achievements of the Welsh people”, “to make known their contributions”, and finally to “works [that were] representative of the principal English and Continental schools”.⁵⁶⁰

The cover photograph, however, like the American journal, *Museum Work, Wales*” from which “the whole Principality benefit[ed]”.⁵⁶¹ He clearly considered that Wales, as the Principality, was part of an English Britain. While touring the Museum, other than John, he overlooked Welsh artists. However, since he owned the original, the king noticed a replica of Frampton’s *Head of a Woman*. He also “admired” John’s *Drummer Boy* and Pomeroy’s *Perseus* (1898), works that John had ensured were visible for the opening. The King did not mention any foreign works of art. He singled out English Academicians, Frampton and Pomeroy, placing the Museum’s

⁵⁵⁸ Hoyle, letter to John, December 29, 1925, NMWA 2627.

⁵⁵⁹ 1922 was also the year of the Constitution of the Irish Free State.

⁵⁶⁰ *Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Cymru, National Museum Wales: Some of its Contents*, 1926, 6.

⁵⁶¹ “King And Queen At Cardiff.” *The Times* 22 Apr. 1927: 12.

collection within an English Royal Academy framework. In the Zoology section, the King was particularly pleased to see a “tiger he had shot in Nepal in 1911”. This, he thought “had been very well set up” following his donation of it to the NMW.⁵⁶² Concluding his visit with a thinly veiled threat, the King’s remarks placed Wales, through its principal cultural institution, as a constituent part of the British Empire. The ominous shot tiger suggests an attitude of well-done Wales, but don’t forget your place.

John’s “attitude” to Welsh art, then, negotiated nationalist and Imperialist “controversy”, revealing how he manipulated late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century networking practices during a period of national self-interest and Celtic revivals. His networks, however, extended well beyond the Welsh borders, aligning with Irish, Scottish, and Belgian Celticisms, as well as smaller European national rebellions. Yet, as *The Drummer Boy* illustrates, Welshness for John was complex and confined within the protectorate of a wider British aesthetic through which Wales connected with other Celtic fringes and English regions, that crucially continued to align with the authority of the Royal Academy and loyalty to the King.

Nevertheless, whilst many of John’s letters reflect debates that had taken place in recent years in London, particularly concerning the National Gallery for British Art, there is no doubt he was committed to the NMW. Fildes, John’s son-in-law, summed up John’s single-minded determination to develop the Museum’s art collection, when he recalled his fondness for his favourite work, John’s marble bust of Muriel, *Thirteen* (1906). He recalled he first saw it “on a marble pedestal in the Top Studio” at Greville Road. John subsequently gave it to him, and, as Fildes ironically recalled, “it stood for years in the window of our Drawing Room until he took it away and gave it to the National Museum in Cardiff!”⁵⁶³ The exclamation mark suggests that John’s exasperated family tolerated his obsession with the Museum, contending with his lifetime allegiance that occasionally transgressed family loyalty.

⁵⁶² “King and Queen at Cardiff.”, 12.

⁵⁶³ Fildes, *Muriel. A Memento*, 24.

John's bequest articulates his desire for recognition through his proposed vision for the Museum. His canon of work contributed towards the distinctiveness of the collection. At the turn of the century, he was ambitious and largely concerned with developing his career; by the time he wrote his 1913 motion, his ambition had not waned, but his concern for nation building was evident. His bequest reflects the significance of the Museum to him; collecting art was competitive and John was determined that the Museum should not miss opportunities.

Yet, the spasmodic examples of underlying tensions between individual egos (including John's) and factions within the Museum, demonstrate that defining national identity was not unanimously harmonious. As an elite Academician with prestigious connections, John's continual, and implicit, reference to his professional opinion and discernment, implemented not only through his own activities but also through Williams, suggest his desire to assert his status over others such as Wedmore, and perhaps 'provincial' Welsh peers such as the Davies sisters.

The art collections at that time were considerably enhanced through John's contributions, his work and those whom he encouraged to donate. Letters at the Museum suggests he and Williams's enduring friendship and their satisfaction in building the art collections. In 1935, John wrote

My dear IJW, It is good to have your warm appreciation[.] I wish I could do even more than I do[,...] for the [Museum...] is very near my heart. The art side owes much to your keen interest and it will ever be associated with your name as the organizer of the collection.⁵⁶⁴

The emphasis on recognition by future generations is clearly on John's mind, and, over the years, he and Williams probably colluded on various policies and acquisitions.⁵⁶⁵ At the age of seventy-five, John talked with authority in declaring that Williams's legacy at the museum was assured, confident in the assumption that his own legacy as benefactor and sculptor was just as certain. During his lifetime, his contribution was widely acknowledged. Today, his role has been largely overshadowed, in part through the Davies sisters' unparalleled bequests. Yet it is testimony that, as a part of John's legacy policy, the *Drummer Boy*, with bronze label

⁵⁶⁴ John, letter to Williams, May 17, 1935. NMWA 116.

⁵⁶⁵ In conversation with Oliver Fairclough, Keeper of Art, NMW, 2013.

stating his bequest intent, reinforces his contribution recalling his commitment to Wales, his loyalty to London, and the Empire. Those visiting the Museum today recognise the *Drummer Boy* and its relationship with the Museum and Welsh national and cultural identity.

Given what we learned in Chapter One, John, as the self-proclaimed Welsh Rodin, asserted his value as a modern sculptor unique to Wales aligned with continental, and especially Parisian, art practices to a pre-direct-carving generation. His contribution to Wales and the Museum begin to illustrate his commitment to wider issues of Empire. Unlike the Indian and South African colonies, monumentally put down in the *King's Regiment* memorial, John's concept of Welsh nationalism remained cultural and largely avoided political activism. He determined that his version of cultural Wales at the Museum should be a meritorious colony that asserted national identity whilst reaping the benefits of Empire. Having now examined his contribution to Wales, the final chapter considers **John's** relationship with two very different colonies: India, the jewel in the British imperial crown, and Belgium's notorious Congo Free State.

Chapter 3

The Imperial Stage: The Empire's Jewel and the "African Savage"⁵⁶⁶

This chapter turns to three of John's early twentieth-century unequivocally colonial works: *Viscount Minto Memorial* (fig. 3.1), *Sir Digbijai Singh of Balrampur* (fig. 3.2), and *Bokani* (fig. 3.3). Organised into four case studies, the first three focus on India, *Minto* and *Singh*, and the Indian sculptor Fanindranath Bose. The fourth case study considers the *Bokani* in relation to science, art, popular entertainment and the non-British colony, Belgium's Congo Free State. In looking at John's works and the contexts in which they are situated, this chapter compares Britain's imperial attitudes to its own colonies and those of others, alongside monuments and monumental-type portraits. While separately these have previously been considered, they have not been comparatively discussed in this way before. This chapter considers the wider collective impact of these works, providing a platform for further research on attitudes to empire.

Notions of the British Empire permeate the upper studio photograph. While the *Minto* is represented in model form (on the sideboard with Gilbert's *Head* and John's *Drummer Boy*), the other two are not. That the *Singh* is not represented suggests John's value of it compared to other works, that the *Bokani* is not there raises questions on the contentious practice of displaying indigenous African people. Looking at works explicitly destined for British colonies, or works depicting, and by, non-white non-Europeans in Britain, acknowledges the way the imperial questions hang over many of his other commissions. While their juxtaposition in this chapter teases out new relationships, viewed through the lens of imperial academicism these works reflected, shaped and challenged assumptions of colonial "authority and order".

John's Empire commissions were sent around the world and ranged from equestrian statues to memorial plaques, disseminating his reputation in countries as far apart as

⁵⁶⁶ Herbert Ward, *A Voice from the Congo*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 319. The popular press, in particular, used this term.

India, the United States, Canada, Iraq, and South Africa.⁵⁶⁷ His works remain central to a now controversial imperial network. As such, their meanings continue to matter. As demands for the removal of monuments to imperialism continue, it is significant that John's *Edward VII* (1904) is still in its original location in Cape Town,⁵⁶⁸ as is his other commission, the *Cape Town Volunteers*. Their longevity is not due to Cape Town's citizens acceptance of them, rather, as recent photographs such as those taken by *Google Earth*, it appears that they remain, at least in part, because no one notices them anymore.⁵⁶⁹ Their increasing invisibility rather than their on-going relevance is the reason for their survival. This chapter concentrates on the debate around John and turn-of-the-twentieth-century politico-imperial relationships amidst tensions prior to World War I. In doing so, the chapter uniquely and simultaneously opens up New Sculptural approaches to the articulation and interpretation of racial and imperial difference in India and Africa.

While initially little appears to differentiate John's works from the countless other monuments in India, closer examination allows an exploration of such visual representations aligned with the historical context in which they were produced. In India, the monument to Minto celebrated his position and power; upon closer examination, fissures of social unrest begin to emerge through the figures portrayed in the pedestal reliefs. In contrast, the *Sir Digbijai Singh* considers the complex relationship of aristocratic Indian wealth and the Empire. My focus on *Singh*, a privileged Indian prince marked out by his exotic sumptuousness, demonstrates that, after the 1857 Mutiny, many statues of the Indian elite showcased their wealth rather than power. Comparatively, they draw on socio-cultural and political tensions of the British Raj's relationship to its subaltern people. Within this mix, John's patronage of Indian sculptor Fanindranath Bose draws parallels with John's relationship to Wales. Like Bose, John also left his homeland to further his career. Yet Bose, with pro-

⁵⁶⁷ This included works such as the marble bust of *Sir Chunder Madhub Ghose* and *Sir Patrick Playfair* memorial tablet in Calcutta; the marble bust, *Andrew Carnegie*, Endowment for Peace Washington, USA; the *Capetown Volunteers*, in South Africa; a commemorative tablet of a bronze group of "Electra" and "Mercury" for the opening of the Royal Hospital for Tuberculosis in Montreal Canada; and a bronze bust of Lord Kitchener in Khartoum (1917). Pearson, *Goscombe John*, 87–90.

⁵⁶⁸ It should be noted that *Edward VII* is listed in *LiveSA* magazine as one of the seven problematic statues in Capetown "from our colonial past", 27 March 2015, accessed July 10, 2016. <http://livemag.co.za/featured/statues-colonial-past-found-cape-town/>.

⁵⁶⁹ <https://www.google.co.za/maps/>, accessed July 21, 2016. John's equestrian monument, *Sir General Stanley Maude* (1923) in Baghdad however, proved far more unacceptable and was destroyed in 1957.

independence tendencies, eventually settled in Scotland, another Celtic state. While pro-Independence was significant, John's patronage of a British colonial artist rather than a non-British one, aligned with his preference for Indian art education based on British academism.

In contrast, African sculpture, as we shall see in Ward's *Idol Maker* (1890), a bronze depiction of a Congolese tribesman carving a wooden idol, remained resolutely 'primitive' and non-western. While these qualities inspired the direct carving generation, pioneered by sculptors such as Epstein and honed by Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth by the middle of the twentieth century, such avant-garde direct carving remained a practice John, an accomplished carver, would never embrace. The carefully modelled head, *Bokani*, elucidates both John's and wider British attitudes to non-British colonies. His remarkably perceptive and individualised rendering acknowledges universal humanity at time when European so-called sciences questioned this in people who came from sub-Saharan Africa. John's *Bokani* offers a sharp contrast to most western sculptures of African people that were either life casts or portrayed as so called, racial 'types'. Bought to Britain they underwent intrusive examination as so-called 'popular' entertainment and scientific 'specimens'.

Together these works by an Anglo-Welsh sculptor, illustrate the insecurities embedded within the all-invasive imperial power frameworks. Yet, as Pollock, through John-Paul Sartre, notes, such insecurities were not based on notions of racial hierarchy, as "identification of the racist world" was "ambivalent".⁵⁷⁰ As part of an imperial strategy asserting the Empire's increasingly shaky power, these works draw parallels that synecdochally question how, on grounds of assumed difference, the Indian works stood for India, and the *Bokani* for the Congo. As Homi Bhabha notes, from the coloniser's perspective, a small group or an individual, "the colonialist foreign body", came to represent the whole "conquered country".⁵⁷¹ The following case studies unpick racial and cultural discriminatory stereotypes, to question whether these works did or did not represent their "conquered" countries.

⁵⁷⁰ Pollock, *Avant-garde Gambits*, 43.

⁵⁷¹ See Homi Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders", *Post Colonial Reader* (London; New York: Routledge, 2nd ed, 2006), 34.

India: *Viscount Minto Memorial*

John's commissions intended for Britain's key colony, India, formed part of an imperial, pre-First World War view that endorsed an idealised socio-political landscape that largely, although not entirely – as registered in small details in the *Minto* – ignored developing moves towards independence.⁵⁷²

The Indian works conform to an often-perceived generic formula built on the prolific mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth-century demand for monuments. From the Indian Mutiny towards Indian Independence in 1947, these works by British artists were also becoming increasingly unacceptable to the Indian people, as demonstrated by their subsequent removal after Independence (discussed below). Before this, however, subscriptions for commissions continued apace.

The Fourth Earl of Minto, the former Governor-General of Canada (1898–1904), was the Viceroy and Governor-General of India from 1905 to 1910. The public subscription in funding this monument was generous; *The Times* remarked that the “manner in which the Indian princes and gentlemen are subscribing to the fund for the *Minto* statue, started by the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, is unprecedented.” In Calcutta, *The Times* calculated, Rs. 70,000 (£4,666 and today over £37,000), had been collected five years before its unveiling.⁵⁷³ By 1913, *The Times*, reporting on “Calcutta Memorials to Indian Viceroys”, claimed that £9,400 had been raised. This sum, the article claimed, was “the largest amount ever subscribed in India for a personal memorial to a Viceroy”. Whilst these funds were primarily “devoted” to John's equestrian statue, royal portrait painter and Hungarian-born British citizen, Philip de László was also commissioned to paint the Countess of Minto for the Calcutta Town Hall.⁵⁷⁴

Following the Mutiny,⁵⁷⁵ Minto and his predecessor Lord Curzon were part of the administrative re-organisation that saw a growing rise in Indian nationalism. The Indian National Congress Party (still functioning as the Indian National Congress),

⁵⁷² I use “British” to take into account John's Welsh birth right and perspective.

⁵⁷³ *The Times*, 30 Sept. 1910: 5.

⁵⁷⁴ “Calcutta Memorials To Indian Viceroys”. *The Times*, Thursday March 20, 1913: 5.

⁵⁷⁵ The Mutiny is also known as the Sepoy Mutiny and, now in India, the First War of Independence.

formed in 1885, played a pivotal role in the rise of nationalist politics and continued after independence as a major political party. In 1905, Curzon implemented his “divide and rule policy”; he partitioned Bengal and effectively separated the mainly Hindu areas to the west (including Calcutta) and the Muslim areas to the east. This further provoked mutual Hindu and Muslim suspicions, resulting in violent protests from some minority strands of Congress. These reprisals included terrorist acts and the economic policy of *swadeshi*, the boycotting foreign (mainly British) goods in favour of Indian products. New constitutional reforms were introduced to dissipate growing Muslim fears for their future within the majority Hindu areas. This led to the establishment of the Muslim League in 1906. In an attempt to soothe the resulting uprising, Minto co-authored the Indian Councils Act (also known as the Minto-Morley Reforms 1909). Both Minto, and John Morley, Secretary of State for India, believed reforms would restore stability and calm the growing radical nationalist spirit within the Congress party.⁵⁷⁶ The Reform aimed to tackle this unrest by giving Indians voting and legislative powers. These were, however, largely ineffective, as only the wealthiest and most educated Indians could vote. It thus offered little more than lip service to any notions of effecting change. In 1911, the Bengal partition was rescinded; Minto’s Reform had unwittingly signalled the start of Indian self-government. Prior to this, under the East India Company’s (EIC) control, its military, religious and economic strategies contributed to the Mutiny. Considering events leading to the Mutiny is necessary to understand the significance of the works under discussion.

The EIC’s army employed Indian soldiers (sepoys) of mixed castes and multiple religious identities including Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim. To appear beneficent and tolerant it observed religious and cultural festivals yet, as it failed to understand religious tensions and cultural traditions, EIC risked provocation and rebellion. The EIC’s 1856 annexation of Awadh (Oudh) increasingly alarmed landowning soldiers who lost their privileges and faced increased land taxes from the Company. Perhaps the ultimate indignity was the furore over cartridge cases allegedly greased with animal fat for the new Enfield guns. As Muslim and Hindu soldiers were expected to

⁵⁷⁶ S. N. Sen, *History of Modern India* (Wiley Eastern Ltd: New Delhi, 1979), 143.

bite the cartridge seals open, the practice contravened their deeply held religious laws that forbids the consumption of pork or beef.

In addition, there were growing suspicions that the increasingly expanding British Christian missionaries would force Indian populations to convert to Christianity to overthrow India's politically active Hindu, Muslim and Sikh activists. Lion Agrawal observes that many Indians resented and feared the rapidly expanding and oppressive British rule. While the EIC looked to their soldiers' cultural backgrounds, more generally, westernisation policies catered little for Indian cultural and religious traditions.⁵⁷⁷ Furthermore, the British justice system was unfavourably partial against the Indians. In parallel to the Welsh Blue Books (discussed in Chapter 2), the Colonial Blue Books, *East India (Torture)* (1855 and 1857), revealed that Company officers accused or convicted of brutality towards Indians were repeatedly allowed to appeal.⁵⁷⁸ Furthermore, the Company's economic policy was increasingly problematic for the Indians as it shipped most of the country's gold, silver, jewels, and silk to Britain as tax, leaving India bereft of its precious resources.⁵⁷⁹

To collect taxes, the British continued the traditional Zamindari collection system. Local Zaminadars (landowners) collected the taxes before paying them, formerly to the EIC, and following the Mutiny, to the British Government. This was a tough regime; some subsistence farmers had no choice but to grow commercially dictated crops.⁵⁸⁰ Not only the farmers and landowners suffered; local industries and silk producers (especially in Bengal) were also affected. Low import tariffs imposed by the British meant that India was inundated with cheap British clothing. India's production could not compete. In addition to supplying Britain with fine silks, as taxed exports, it was reduced to producing cotton that was sent to Britain only to be returned to India transformed into cheap clothing for the Indian market.⁵⁸¹ The huge wealth this created for the British funded further expansion into Africa and Asia as well as financing public and private infrastructure at home.⁵⁸² Amongst this growing

⁵⁷⁷ Lion M.G. Agrawal, *Freedom fighters of India Vol 4*, (Isher Books: Delhi, 2008), 30.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵⁸⁰ Agrawal, *Freedom fighters of India Vol 4*, 31.

⁵⁸¹ Agrawal, *Freedom fighters of India Vol 4*, 31.

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*,

discontent, Lucknow was a hugely important city. As an emblem of supremacy and authority for both the Indian rebels and the British, retaking control of the city after 1857 was of great significance.⁵⁸³ This strategically important city suffered the worst atrocities on both sides during the brutal Mutiny, of which more later.

The *Minto*, then, is a complex and ambitious tour-de-force that serves to underline the hierarchical divisions at work, not only sculpturally, but socially and politically. As an amalgamation of classical, French, British, Welsh and Hindu influences, meaning was comprehended and circulated not only for its intended location on the busy Red Road in Calcutta, but also audiences at the RA.

The equestrian Minto sketch model (see fig. 3.1) was exhibited at the RA in 1913 and the models for the pedestal relief panels or frieze, *An Indian Procession*, were exhibited the following year in 1914. According to the *Athenaeum*, the 1913 RA exhibition was disappointing, “more crowded, and worse arranged than usual”.⁵⁸⁴ On sculpture in general, *The Times*’ critic regretfully noted that while “one of the greatest of the arts” that was “capable of giving an intense delight [as] music”, the RA could only manage an exhibition of the “stone dolls” a misplaced public wanted “erected in vacant spaces in memory of distinguished people.”⁵⁸⁵ It is worth noting that whilst the *Minto* equestrian model would be cast in bronze, the photograph in the exhibition catalogue shows a pale plaster model against a darkly lit background suggesting the statue was marble. These remarks set the tone for the critical responses, including to the *Minto*, which reached as far as India.

Indeed, the *Indian Times* reported that the London *Times* was “not pleased with the [Minto] model”.⁵⁸⁶ In the eyes of the critic, John’s exceptional verisimilitude once again caused concern. Compared to the true master of the genre, Andrea del Verrocchio, whose bronze fifteenth-century equestrian monument to Bartolomeo Colleoni, was an example of “the typical free-captain”, the “likeness of Lord Minto sitting on horseback [was] nothing more [than] what he has produced.” *The Times*

⁵⁸³ Rudrangshu Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt 1857- 1858*, (Anthem: London, 2002), 90.

⁵⁸⁴ “Sculpture at the Royal Academy”. (1914). *The Athenaeum*, (4519), 800-801.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁶ “West and East: India At The Academy”, *The Times of India*, Jun 2, 1913, 6.

critic continued, “[t]he sword, the boots, the helmet, the face, are all quite good imitations of the reality; nothing is wanting but that music of form without which sculpture is far less interesting than reality.”⁵⁸⁷ In comparison, the critic continued, “Mr. John Tweed has done better with his statue of Captain Cook [...] because the navigator makes some appeal to the imagination; but this again, is too like a real man to be a good imaginary portrait.”⁵⁸⁸ Monuments in the early twentieth century then, were not supposed to recreate imitative likeness, but imaginatively, and harmoniously, recreate the sitter’s superior qualities.

While John, and to a lesser degree Tweed, failed as they had presented men without imaginatively alluding to their achievements, heroism or status, or offering a more abstract formal beauty, the Minto relief panels, *An Indian Procession*, also came under fire. As the only works to survive the post-Independence sculpture removal, they were signalled out, before Independence, for their ordinariness. *The Saturday Review* critic, C.H.C. Banker, evidently did not admire the sculpture at the RA. Claiming the 1914 exhibition was “worse than usual and hideously numerous”, before adding, “I must deplore the pedestal [...] that is to be put up in Calcutta in the Minto monument.” He continued, “more meaningless photographic collection of figures taking dull poses cannot be seen outside [Augustus] St. Gaudens’s worst work. All that I said the other day about frozen everyday actions applies to this.”⁵⁸⁹ Despite such censure, John’s reliefs are extraordinary for the depth of modelling, vitality and originality of composition.

Of John’s five equestrian statues, two went to the colonies and three were installed at British sites. The first, Cardiff’s *Viscount Tredegar* (1909, seen on the centre table next to John in the upper studio photograph), ultimately led to the *Viscount Wolesley*, unveiled in Horse Guards Parade in 1920. John exhibited the Liverpool *Edward VII* at the RA in 1911, followed by the *Minto*, unveiled in 1915. The *Sir Stanley Maude*, unveiled at Baghdad’s British Embassy in 1923, bears formal similarities to the

⁵⁸⁷ “The Royal Academy.” *The Times*, May 14, 1913, 9.

⁵⁸⁸ “The Royal Academy.”

⁵⁸⁹ C.H.C Banker, “The R.A.” *Saturday Review* 117 (3054). Banker was probably referring to *The Robert Shaw Memorial* (1884), the first to honour the African American 54th Regiment, an apt comparison given the remit of this chapter.

Viscount Wolseley. John also produced a memorial with equestrian portrait-statue of Colonel Algernon Thynne (after 1918), for St. James the Great parish church, Kilkhampton, Devon.

The precedents for Minto astride his horse may be seen in two of J. Edgar Boehm's equestrian works in London: the *Duke of Wellington* (1888), in Hyde Park Corner,⁵⁹⁰ and the *Lord Napier of Magdala* (1890, installed 1921), at Queen's Gate. The attention to details of uniform and horse tackle are also similarly and accurately treated, although Minto's Arab is daintier than Boehm's horses.⁵⁹¹ In a nod to G.F. Watts's *Physical Energy* (first cast in 1902), the *Minto* base is gently elevated beneath the horses' front hooves.⁵⁹² The horses of Boehm and John with jaunty heads and swishing tails (echoed by the horses in the relief below) add animation. Whilst the riders sit in similar erect fashion, Minto's booted feet in the stirrups are sharply angled. The raised toes create tension in the taught muscles of his legs against the Arab's flanks. His skilful control of the spirited animal beneath him becomes a metaphor symbolising his supposed control of the Indian people.

The monument's formal composition hierarchically endorses British supremacy: Minto sits on an Arab horse presiding over the people beneath him, British, Muslim, Sikh and Hindu. Joined by J.H. Foley's *Lord Hardinge* (1857) and Bates's *Roberts Memorial*, it overlooked the busy Red Road thoroughfare. Constructed on the Maiden (open field), used as a British army parade ground, Europeans were drawn to live there, consequently pushing Indian people out.⁵⁹³ Red Road, one of the main routes linking the outer areas of the city to the centre, occupies the mainly White town area. The Black town, where the Indian population, lived was further north. Consequently, depending on the nationality of those passing below them, these statues were either imperially reassuring or authoritative. Sanctioning the strategic all-seeing imperialist

⁵⁹⁰This was based on Matthew Cotes Wyatt's earlier *Duke of Wellington* 1846, for Constitution Arch before Adrian Jones *Quadriga* replaced it in 1912.

⁵⁹¹The Arab horse was a favourite of Muslim leaders; the British cavalry also considered these horses the best for their purposes. For more see, Peter Upton, *The Arabian Horse: History, Mystery and Magic*, ed. Hossein Amirsadeghi (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005).

⁵⁹²Stephanie Brown, *G.F. Watts, Physical Energy, Sculpture and Site* (Watts Gallery, 2007).

⁵⁹³For more on political sites see Sean Willcock, "Aesthetic Bodies: Posing on Sites of Violence in India, 1857–1900", *History of Photography*, 39:2, (2015), 142-159, DOI: 10.1080/03087298.2015.1038108].

view, Minto and his horse gaze up and out to Government House once the seat of British Raj.⁵⁹⁴

As a colonial representation of India, the reliefs, *An Indian Procession*, disseminated imperial values at home and in the colonies. For those who had never visited India, including John (not even for the unveiling ceremonies), media reports, photographs and illustrations of India provided vital visual information. Illustrators for print culture, such as Walter Stanhope Sherwill of the *Illustrated London News*, offered “panoptical representations of political hierarchies within India” (Fig 3.4).⁵⁹⁵ In the wake of the Mutiny, his works negotiated the precarious post-mutiny period, articulating, in Daniel Rycroft’s terms, the “dynamics of colonial dominance with hegemony”.⁵⁹⁶ That is, the propagandistic portrayal of apparently happy subaltern Indians acquiescing to British rule. The plethora of monuments to prominent individuals, especially Queen Victoria (Empress after 1877), were dominating colonised public spaces, in New Zealand for example, as Stocker somewhat simplistically notes, they were seen as “tokens of colonial love and loyalty”. Meanwhile with rising tensions in India, they were ominous markers of imperial dominance.⁵⁹⁷ It is significant that John’s bronze equestrian statue was mounted on a stone plinth carved by local sculptors in Calcutta, symbolically suggesting, through the material and workers, their rock-solid support of the Empire. The bronze continuous panels in high relief run around the entire plinth, while the motto engraved at the rear of the plinth: *Fortiter et Sauviter* (“With Strength and Patience”) references Minto’s Viceroy qualities. Yet, John’s sketchbook reveals that Minto had previously suggested the “Union of Races of India” or “the union of Races [...] exemplified by the Indian army and held together by the bonds of Justice and Sympathy”.⁵⁹⁸ While the photographs

⁵⁹⁴ John used a similar style for three of his equestrian works; Edward VII’s horse is reigned in to look down, and Tredegar and his mount look in opposite directions. While John was evidently influenced by the work of other sculptors, his attention to detail becomes apparent as his sketchbook includes the measurements of “Lord’s Arab horse 14.2 hands [and] Lord Minto 5-8” Sketchbook, Royal Academy, RA 07/11031.

⁵⁹⁵ Daniel Rycroft, *Representing Rebellion*, (New Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 74. While space does not permit further consideration, Sherwill’s engravings are an under-acknowledged sculptural source. For example, *The Illustrated London News* February 23, 1856, featured Sherwill’s illustrations of indigenous people of “The Santhal Insurrection”.

⁵⁹⁶ Rycroft, 2006, 74.

⁵⁹⁷ Stocker, ““A token of their love””,

⁵⁹⁸ Sketchbook RA archives 07/11031.

suggest that this was boiled down to the shorter version, the reliefs' visual idioms appear to represent the longer version.

Following Indian Independence, the *Minto* was moved to the Old Flagstaff House in Barrackpore,⁵⁹⁹ now the State Museum. Lady Minto donated the panels to the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta; the two side panels are situated in recesses on Vincent Esch's bridge beneath Frampton's statue of Queen Victoria that, as I discuss below, echo similar hierarchical relationships to that of Minto's statue.⁶⁰⁰

Minto Reliefs: *An Indian Procession*

As we have seen John's proficiency at relief work was equal to sculpture in the round. The most prominent realisation of this can be seen in his First World War memorial in Newcastle, *The Response, 1914*, (1923, fig. 3.5). Stemming from *An Indian Procession*, the larger-than-life-size bronze relief panel depicts an animated procession of fearless young men taking leave of their families to enlist at the outbreak of the War.⁶⁰¹ Unlike many relief panels usually set within specifically designated and framed spaces (including John's *Tredegar* monument) and the reliefs' later display at the Victoria Memorial, these had originally dominated and extended beyond the space they inhabited. The *Minto*'s ambitious and complex relief panels, while drawing on ancient four-sided reliefs such as the Parthenon frieze, and Thorvaldsens's *Alexander Frieze* (fig 3.6) were also indebted to Bates's *Lord Roberts Memorial* (fig. 3.7) wrap around reliefs (as I demonstrate shortly). Given John's competitive nature, the reliefs indicate that he also intended to outdo Bates and even his own earlier reliefs, *Charge of Light Brigade* for the *Viscount Tredegar* Monument. John's highly unique approach develops Bates's design of two rectangular sides panels and the two square panels running seamlessly around the perimeter of the stone plinth.⁶⁰² The *Roberts Memorial* sketch model and reduction were exhibited at the RA

⁵⁹⁹ Steggles, *Statues of the Raj*, 63

⁶⁰⁰ This may echo John's professional subordination to Frampton. Whilst this may be the case, this perception is also due to the lack of scholarship on John, to which this thesis aims to address. Compared to John's statue, in 1907, Frampton won the commission for a bronze equestrian memorial to Sir John Woodburn. This important colonial commission was the only life-size equestrian monument Frampton produced, John, however, was responsible for five. See Andrew Jezzard, "The Sculptor Sir George Frampton", 286.

⁶⁰¹ St. Gauden's *Robert Shaw* is likely to have been another influential source.

⁶⁰² Once relocated to the Victoria Memorial, the side panels were set into deep marble recesses beneath Frampton's *Queen Victoria*.

in 1896 and 1898. John's sketchbook includes drawings of details of it.⁶⁰³ Given the *Minto's* proximity to it on the Maiden, John clearly wanted his work to stand out while simultaneously recalling Bates.

Steggles refers to the *Minto's* "running tableau" as "innovative and remarkable".⁶⁰⁴ She concluded, "one can only wonder" on its impact with the complete panels.⁶⁰⁵ John's photographs and those of the unveiling ceremony recorded in *The Indian Times*, show the complete memorial at Red Road (figs. 3.8, 3.9).⁶⁰⁶ While Steggles believed they must now be considered as independent works of art beneath the *Victoria Memorial*, this chapter considers their original impact. In doing so, the reliefs reinforce, as Edwards notes on Bates's *Roberts Memorial*, the stratification of Calcutta, through its caste system, languages, gender and religion that sanctioned the control of the local population's movement.⁶⁰⁷

The relief's densely packed chaotic scenes evoke images (widely reproduced in Britain) of the infamous Hindu Juggernaut processions that honoured the god Jagannath at festivals throughout India. A sculpture of the god was placed on a large ornate wooden temple car, which was then drawn through the crowds by devotees; some sacrificed themselves beneath its wheels.⁶⁰⁸ This analogy asserts *Minto* as a British Jagannath, venerated and accepted as a Hindu god; the reliefs become a bronze puffery evoking a god-like *Minto*. Post-Mutiny, the *Minto* relief procession promulgated the divine right of regal British political power through Indian (Hindu) religious processions. The idealised presentation of happy and accepting socially stratified subaltern people reinforced this, especially following Curzon's partitioning that, while later rescinded, left Calcutta prominently Hindu.

The reliefs also draw on the visual culture of *darbar* processions (fig. 3.10 illustrates

⁶⁰³ RA 07/11031, RA Archive. See also Edwards, "War and Peace: Harry Bates's Lord Roberts Memorial".

⁶⁰⁴ Steggles, *Statues of the Raj*, 128.

⁶⁰⁵ Steggles, *Statues of the Raj*, 110.

⁶⁰⁶ Now at the NMW in Cardiff.

⁶⁰⁷ Jason Edwards, "War and Peace: Lord Roberts Memorial", 205.

⁶⁰⁸ Indra Sengupta, Daud Ali, *Knowledge Production, Pedagogy, and Institutions in Colonial India* (Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2011), 67.

the chaotic spectacle).⁶⁰⁹ In relation to Minto astride his Arab horse, they suggest a celebratory *darbar*-esque procession, such as Minto's attendance at the 1907 Durbar at Agra. The spate of British appropriated *darbars* following the Mutiny, as Julie Codell points out, were intended to demonstrate ceremoniously the subordination of India's ruling classes, legitimising British rule and endorsing cross-cultural class hierarchies.⁶¹⁰

The *darbars* began, as Veena Talwar Oldenburg describes, with a dazzling and extravagant procession. Citizens corralled into specific areas waited to "see the endless train of lumbering, caparisoned elephants, horses, and camels" that bore the elite to the designated site.⁶¹¹ The bronze *Minto*, astride his favourite Arab, permanently makes his state entry at the head of the procession beneath him. Processional order was significant as it elucidated the status of India's elite, under British control. While now behind (or below) the British Viceroy, the *taluqdars'* (Indian elite) ostentatious displays could only assert their extravagance and wealth rather than any real political power.⁶¹² Yet, as I discuss below, in blending Indian and western symbols of wealth and power, John's reliefs acknowledged British diplomatic appeasement to encourage loyalty and demonstrate the apparently successful inculcation of Indians into a British imperial system. While this appears tolerant, the inclusion of soldiers into the narrative brings a clear warning to any who challenged the post-Mutiny regime.⁶¹³

In outline, the reliefs' pyramidal profiles connect the wider base to the narrower top. Each panel was modelled, as we have seen, to fit together seamlessly around the

⁶⁰⁹ Sometimes spelt *darbars*, these were formal Indian gatherings of rulers and subordinates appropriated by the British as ceremonial displays of their imperial power. For more on the *darbar*, see Julie Codell, ed. *Power and Resistance: Photography and the Delhi Coronation Darbars*. (Ahmedabad: Mapin, 2011), and "Gentlemen connoisseurs and capitalists: Modern British Imperial Identity in the 1903 Delhi Durbar Exhibition of Indian Art," *Cultural Identities and the Aesthetics of Britishness*. Ed. D. Arnold. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004). 134-63.

⁶¹⁰ Julie Codell, "On the Delhi Coronation Darbars, 1877,1903,1911." *Branch: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History*. Ed. Dino Franco Felluga, *Extension of Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net*, accessed March 30, 2016. http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=julie-codell-on-the-delhi-coronation-darbars-1877-1903-1911.

⁶¹¹ Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow*, 251.

⁶¹² *Ibid.*, 254.

⁶¹³ See Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow*, 255.

plinth with individual figures extending from one panel into the next. These reliefs play with notions of space and time, creating the impression of a complete procession that could be viewed from all angles. As such, its complex symbolic and narrative relationships are formed in relation to each other and Minto above, reinforcing the status of the sitter within a specific location for a unique ceremony.

The composition of these crowded detailed scenes provides a dense visual rhythm conveying noise and movement amongst the crowd. Within this crush of horses and riders, musicians, men, women and children, the procession moves forward. Amongst them ceremonial elephants carry passengers in howdahs (that, as we shall see, evokes the *Singh's* elephant),⁶¹⁴ whilst camels, in shallower relief, are visible. The depiction of elephants and camels was contingently fashion dependent. As Edwards notes, Armstead avoided depicting camels and elephants in the *Outram Shield* (1858–62) to differentiate his work from the “clichéd orientalist tableaux” of the 1851 Great Exhibition. By the 1870s and 1880s, however, they were no longer considered clichéd, especially in monumental sculpture.⁶¹⁵ Notwithstanding the inclusion of such orientalist symbols, these reliefs also draw on classical antique and Renaissance antecedents such as the Ancient Greek Alexander reliefs, and Bertel Thorvaldsen’s *Triumphant Entry of Alexander into Babylon* (1812) that included horses, camels and elephants.⁶¹⁶

The front panel (figs. 3.11, 3.12, 3.13) forms the start of the procession. While this is John’s artistic interpretation, his attention to detail allows us to identify the gateway to Government House in Calcutta (the Viceroy’s official residence). As one of the four classical arched gateways, it is flanked with Doric pilasters and topped with a classical entablature, above this is a passant-type British lion with raised left paw resting on an orb. This classical idiom further linked the British with Alexander’s lion

⁶¹⁴ See Critical Past, “Thousands of devotees witness the chariot procession of Lord Vishnu in Puri, India”, 1931, for the scale of this type of procession. YouTube video posted by Critical Past 3 June, 2014, accessed March 10, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBXXcWYFHjs>.

⁶¹⁵ Edwards, “The Relief of Lucknow: Henry Hugh Armstead’s *Outram Shield* (c. 1858–62)” 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*. 2016 (22), DOI: <http://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.734>.

⁶¹⁶ Greco-Buddhist art developed from Greek culture arriving in India and India’s response to Greek sculpture.

and his pursuit of empire.⁶¹⁷ These panels demonstrate that the gateways, located on Esplanade Row, set spatial parameters that strictly controlled entry, based on status and race into Government House. The procession starts with rows of bearded and turbaned Sikh soldiers in British Indian army uniform that serve as a reminder of those defeated by the army and the rewards for those who remained loyal in times of Mutiny. Marching forward, they appear to come from inside the gateway leading to Government House. Beating a celebratory peel on their drums, rather than bearing arms, and reminiscent of the *Drummer Boy*, they rally colonial support. Behind the soldiers, flag carriers, obscured by the foreground figures, rise up and out from the crowd. In shallower relief, to suggest the distant background inside the gates, more soldiers carrying flags emerge.

The side panels add detail to the theme through depth and height. Both panels portray a lively pageant of forward-moving multitudes displaying splendour in homage to the bronze *Minto* above them. Arranged in tiers from deep, approximately three elephants and horses, to shallow relief, this complex configuration comprises, at lower levels, of feet, hooves, and legs that recess into the implied depths of the procession. At the outer edges, male pedestrians flank the elephants and camels. The top horizons undulate with two high ends that dip and rise to a centre apex of passengers transported in howdahs on the elephants' backs. In the left panel (fig. 3.14), men carry banners over their shoulders like rifles, some play drums and trumpets. Smaller groups form narrative cameos, their sub-narratives provide interest as horse-riders converse, children play hide and seek skipping between the adults and selling wares. Their dancing forms provide contrapuntal rhythms to the upright adult figures. This configuration of playful children, recalling Gibson's relief, *Christ Blessing Little Children* (1862–64), adds further meaning to Minto's role and imperial idealised perceptions of the Indian people, likened to little children.⁶¹⁸ To create a focal point and provide aesthetic balance within this sculptural conception, a central ceremonially arrayed horse and Indian rider, beneath and in front of the elephants, echoes Minto's horse above. A soldier at the front (extreme left) continues the narrative continuity between the panels as he peers around to the front of the procession (fig. 3.15).

⁶¹⁷ See Ian Worthington, *Alexander the Great: Man And God* (Abingdon & New York: Routledge, 2004).

⁶¹⁸ John would have been familiar with this work as Gibson bequeathed it to the RA in 1866.

The right panel (fig. 3.16) similarly reveals the other side to the procession. The slight variations tell a different story, with a rearing horse interrupting the rhythmic pattern and camels amongst the elephants;⁶¹⁹ Indian musicians play bagpipe-type instruments, a legacy of Scottish dominance in early Indian colonial history. Yet, within this apparently celebratory scene, undercurrents of tension begin to emerge. The contrasts of bare and booted feet are heightened through the presence of a booted Hindu soldier armed with rifle over his soldier, a reminder of British civilisation in the boots as well as martial authority in the gun. Towards the rear of the procession, a fully clothed adult places his hands protectively on the shoulders of a child before him (fig. 3.17). Unlike the others, both wear fez-type hats, indicative of another region and a modern Islamic secular state, and thus, the extent of Minto's supposed popularity.⁶²⁰ The child, in the pose of Leighton's *Needless Alarms* (1886), looks back and down at his lower leg. The adult follows this and stares at a semi-naked turbaned man who leans around and forward (interlinking with the rear panel) towards a small semi-naked urchin boy who attempts to sell wares from his basket to the crowd. Recalling Leighton's work, alongside Indian-British soldiers, suggests the alarm caused is needless; a confident Minto can rely on loyal (military) service to control incidents and maintain order. The semi-naked pedlars causing this alarm are placed at the outside of the procession, signifying Edwards's stratification of Calcutta, acknowledging the Indian caste system, Indian society, and colonial control.

The rear panel (fig. 3.18), behind Minto, depicts the less important stragglers, the lower castes, women, old men, and children. We now sense that the parade has passed. As the lion now faces the other way, we see the gate on the other side of the grounds where the poor have gathered outside the walls. The chaos and pomp are gone, while Government House with shaded windows is partially visible through the gateway, normality is returning and a group of women in saris carry their wares on their heads and small children on their hips. In the centre, a woman, helped by a small

⁶¹⁹ Between 1840-60, particularly in silverware sculpture, camels were very popular. After 1860, elephants began to signal India more than camels that held visual synonymy with North Africa, as seen on the Albert Memorial in London.

⁶²⁰ The Fez has a complex history. It initially replaced the turban but by this point in the Ottoman Empire signaled a modern Islam. For an idea of this, see Ebru Boyer and Kate Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 302–304.

turbaned boy, stoops to the ground gathering the spilt contents of her shallow basket. Beneath this bronze scene, the Minto motto was carved.

The reliefs demonstrate how the British appropriated this traditional Indian *darbar* spectacle. These ritualistic and extravagant displays of regal power helped legitimise the British administration, as represented by Minto above.⁶²¹ In strategically blending Indian and Western symbols, John implied the government's apparent tolerance, yet underpinned by its imperial strength and authority, it was also discriminatory and divisive, a subtextual warning to malcontent subalterns.⁶²²

We have seen how John interpreted the representation of western dignitaries over the Indian people. I now turn to two works that portray individual sitters: the *Maharaja Sir Digbijai Singh K.C.S.I* exhibited at the RA in 1907, and *Bokani, a Pigmy Chief*, exhibited at the RA in 1906. These portray racial distinction through western sculptural academic principles that convey different notions of race. Through my consideration of the *Singh*, I consider further presentations of subaltern wealth and social status. In contrast, I then discuss the *Bokani* in relation to scientific, popular entertainment and fine art portrayals of sub-Saharan Africans. John's hybridisation of western sculptural traditions on non-western colonised people contributes to discourses on power, difference, and control, sanctioning Empire's jurisdiction over its colonised people against a backdrop of mounting tensions and instability for the Raj and in the Congo.

Sir Digbijai Singh

The full-length, life-size marble *Singh* (fig. 3.2) a Hindu and "elite subaltern", is a product of post-Mutiny British hegemony: a process of colonial inducement and subaltern cooperation.⁶²³ Commissioned by the British India Association (originally the *Anjuman-i-Hind*) it celebrates the Association's first president, the Maharaja

⁶²¹ See Veena Talwar Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow, 1856-1877* (Princeton; Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1984) xviii.

⁶²² For more see Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow*, 255.

⁶²³ See Rycroft, *Representing Rebellion*, 2006, 54.

Digbijai Singh of Balrumpore and Bahadur.⁶²⁴ Facially echoing the photograph from which it originated (see fig. 3.19), John's *Singh* looks obliquely out towards the viewer. He stands with his left leg slightly bent and left hand resting on the hilt of his ceremonial *talwar* (sword). His breast is adorned with medals of Empire (discussed later), and his head is covered with an elaborate bejewelled turban. Behind his leg, an ornate marble elephant support is both a miniature reminder of his durbar processions and, as we shall see, his untimely death. These all symbolise Singh's wealth, fighting prowess, and his *rajadharma* (kingly duties).

Singh was a member of the Council of the Governor of India (later the Imperial Legislative Council), a law-making body of which Singh and the other elite Indian members held non-official posts. In 1861, the British India Association was formed to benefit the Indian community through the implementation of schools, hospitals and social welfare, and it amalgamated British interests with local loyal *taluqdars*.⁶²⁵ The statue was intended for the Association's headquarters at the Safed Baradari in Lucknow.⁶²⁶ This was a key part of the Kaiserbagh Palace complex and originally built as a palace for mourning by the last king of Awadh, Nawab Wajid Ali Shah (ruled from 1847–56).⁶²⁷ Literally meaning white building with twelve openings, this ornate pavilion, set in gardens at the centre of the complex, has a square inner courtyard leading to halls and arcades. Following the 1856 annexation by the British, before the Association procured it, it was used to settle petitions from the deposed king's entourage and family.

The Singh and other works of India's elite, for example, Ford's *Sir Lakshmiswar Singh Baharajah of Darbhanga* (1901) also tapped into an imperial voyeurism staged

⁶²⁴ There are several transliterations on the spelling and pronunciation of the Maharajah's name, for example Digvijai/y and Drigbijai. The latter should not be confused with a warrior of that name who vehemently opposed British rule. For convenience and clarity, I use Digbijai Singh.

⁶²⁵ The Association still exists, its website continues to perpetuate confusion regarding its name as 'India' or 'Indian' in their title. The website however, lists its aims as "charitable, cultural, social and educational". <http://www.britishindiaassociation.com/index.php>, accessed February 5, 2016.

⁶²⁶ Somerset Playne et al., *Indian States: A Biographical, Historical and Administrative Survey* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1922: 2006), 788.

⁶²⁷ Originally spelt "Qaiser", Muslim for emperor, later the German spelling "Kaiser" was adopted, meaning ruler; "bagh" means garden in Urdu.

at the RA before being sent to India.⁶²⁸ Seen amongst Colton's *Maharaja of Mysore*, at the RA, *The Building News* condemned the *Singh* as "another Indian figure [...] stiff and commonplace".⁶²⁹ While the critic, was clearly bored with these Indian figures, the perceived stiffness may result from John's use of photographs to reproduce the deceased Singh. As such, the statue conveys a likeness of the subject rather than a portrayal of his personality. Yet, in India, at its unveiling ceremony in 1909, the response was markedly different.

This grand occasion was widely reported in the press, the lieutenant governor of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Sir John Hewett, performed the unveiling.⁶³⁰ The *Singh* statue, he noted was a "just" honour and "reminder to future generations" of the Association "for whom [Singh] laboured so well".⁶³¹ *The Times of India* noted that the statue cost the Association Rs 24,000 (today, just over £21,000). The Raja (prince, or ruler) of Karputhala, the "premier noble of Oudh", spoke on behalf of the *taluqdars*. Meanwhile, Hewett's tribute to Singh was as a "man upon whose like we would not look upon again." Recalling Singh's early life, Hewitt claimed, with lofty political bias, that now British rule provided "security enjoyed" by all, it was "difficult to imagine that a taluqdar had to fight in those days to maintain his own".⁶³² Emphasising Singh's martial warrior past (that gave him his distinguished and ancient line of Indian royalty) offered Hewitt the ironic opportunity to highlight the so-called civilising power of victorious British imperial rule.

Singh's bravery and military strength saved the lives of many British citizens caught in the fighting during the Mutiny. The British diplomat, Charles Wingfield offered a first-hand account of Singh's heroic actions. He claimed that despite being surrounded by "insurgent Chiefs, mutinous soldiers", "deadly enemies" and a "rebel government at Lucknow",⁶³³ Singh contributed "in every possible way [...] to crush

⁶²⁸ See Amy Harris, "Ornamentalism: Edward Onslow Ford's Indian Portrait Sculptures" (masters dissertation, University of York, 2014).

⁶²⁹ *The Building News and Engineering Journal*, Vol 92, 1907, 607.

⁶³⁰ For more on unveiling ceremonies, see Steggles, *Statues of the Raj*, 59, and Droth, Hatt, and Korobkin in *Sculpture Victorious*, 102-147.

⁶³¹ Playne et al., *Indian States*, 788.

⁶³² "Ceremony In Oudh", *The Times of India*, Jan 21, 1909, 8.

⁶³³ Quoted in Playne et al., *Indian States*, 783.

the rebellion.”⁶³⁴ Wingfield was determined that Singh’s “unswerving allegiance” and brave loyalty should be acknowledged. He claimed he owed his life to Singh, who had risked “the vengeance of the mutineers and malcontent Rajas”.⁶³⁵ While still in danger, Wingfield vowed that if he “reached a place of safety [...] his first duty would be to bring [Singh’s] actions to the attention of the British”. If, he continued, he should not survive, the government must “bestow” a “most signal mark of favour on the Raja”. He suggested the conferring of title and the granting of confiscated lands.⁶³⁶ Wingfield did survive and Singh received honours over and above his original recommendations. Granted the title of Maharaja of Bahadur, he was given land confiscated from rebellious neighbouring rajas, as well as money, tax reliefs, and exemptions from many civil laws, effectively making Singh above the local law. As evidenced by the medal he wears in John’s statue, he was created a Knight Commander of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India (K.C.S.I.) at the 1866 Agra durbar for his loyalty and bravery. Singh even received the “principal distinction” of a nine-gun salute, an honour reserved for those of the rank of Ruling Chief or above.⁶³⁷

Following the Mutiny, the EIC’s authority was transferred to the Crown.⁶³⁸ Singh was now seen as demonstrating his loyalty to the Empire rather than the Company; many other powerful and wealthy Indian rulers who had also remained loyal were likewise recognised.⁶³⁹ Rewarding Indian princes such as Singh, at a time when the British needed to establish, recognise and incentivise Indian loyalty was intended to encourage their continued allegiance.

With increasing anti-British feeling, why would the Hindu Singh support the British? Rudrangshu Mukherjee claims that rather than a demonstration of partisan loyalty this was an expression of India’s compassion, charity and chivalric honour.⁶⁴⁰ Yet, as Singh’s loyalty had ensured his wealth and status at the cost of his Indian and Muslim

⁶³⁴ Quoted in Playne et al., *Indian States*, 783–4.

⁶³⁵ *Ibid.*, 786.

⁶³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁸ Under the government’s 1858 India Act.

⁶³⁹ Steggle, *Statues of the Raj*, 49.

⁶⁴⁰ Rudrangshu Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt 1857- 1858*, (London: Anthem, 2002), 80.

enemies, it also suggests strategic motivation. Bipan Chandra argues that religious distrust played a key role in Indian support for British rule: just as many Hindus did not want Muslim rule, many Sunni Muslim leaders supported the British to avoid Shiite or Hindu rule.⁶⁴¹ Opposing religious factions thus tactically supported British imperial rule to ensure their greater enemies did not gain power.⁶⁴²

In a number of ways, the *Singh* statue was strategically imperative, yet the man it represented did much for the community establishing several schools, hospitals and a museum in Lucknow. Nearly thirty years after the Mutiny, and two years before Singh's death, Darogha Haji Abbas Ali, Lucknow's photographer of rajas, publically claimed that Singh's "acts of beneficence and public-spiritedness" were "really appreciated by his people".⁶⁴³ Furthermore, the *Anjuman-i-Hind* was "indebted" to Singh, "for its very existence", especially as the *talukdars* appeared to owe Singh much for their "prosperity and influence".⁶⁴⁴ Despite his benevolence, Singh's renown as a generous host and keen sportsman intimates a competitive and ruthless nature. He enjoyed the hunt "by himself [or] in the company of English sportsmen", and was "constantly [...] after tigers, elephants or any other game [...] found in his rich preserves".⁶⁴⁵ It is not without irony that, in 1882, whilst on a tiger shoot, he died falling from his elephant.⁶⁴⁶

While the *Singh*, appears to represent symbolically Indian princely characteristics, being made of marble it echoes sixteenth-century Italian Renaissance practices. As John, like Michelangelo before him, visited the Carrara quarries in Italy to choose his marble, suggests that the *Singh*'s marble may have come from there.⁶⁴⁷ At its Lucknow location, the Carrara marble statue was raised on a pedestal of Jaipur marble. The *Indian Times*, supporting local trades, claimed the Calcutta sculptors,

⁶⁴¹ Bipan Chandra, *India's struggle for Independence 1857-1947*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989), 34.

⁶⁴² *Ibid.*, 417.

⁶⁴³ Darogha Haji Abbas Ali, *An Illustrated Historical Album of the Rajas and Taaluqars of Oudh*, (Allahabad, 1880), 3.

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶⁴⁵ Ali, *Rajas and Taaluqars of Oudh*, 3.

⁶⁴⁶ Singh had a son from a Muslim mistress who was not considered a legitimate heir. Singh's widow, HH Maharani Indra Kunwar, Rani of Balrampur (1882-1886), adopted Kunwar Udit Narayan Singh who succeeded as Maharaja Bahadur Sir Bhagwati Prasad Singh.

⁶⁴⁷ Fildes, *Muriel a Memento*, 22.

Gurdeen and sons had produced a “very effective piece of work”.⁶⁴⁸ Hierarchically, the *Singh*, like the *Minto* that followed it, was created by a British sculptor modelling himself on Renaissance artists, and placed upon a pedestal made with Indian materials by Indian craftsmen, and permanently placed beneath imperial, continental, cosmopolitan, and Renaissance forces. Thus, the Indian craftsman themselves had apparently raised the *Singh* on local materials above the heads that would congregate below, acknowledging Singh’s status as being above local law, and that European art and Empire were above local artisans and materials.

Despite such elevations, within a broader post-Mutiny platform, John’s *Singh* conformed to a genre of prominent Indian individuals that asserted a supposedly content and prosperous India under British sovereignty. Yet, the *Singh* appears insecure through his stance and expression. John’s other earlier work at the Baradari, the uninspiring *Sir John Woodburn* (1906) shows the British dignitary gazing confidently outwards with a determined expression.⁶⁴⁹ In comparison, the *Singh*’s diffidence suggests that he is subordinate to Woodburn’s colonial authority. As *Woodburn* and *Singh* comparatively demonstrate, London’s Academic sculpture subtly discriminated and controlled the subaltern subject. While arrayed in his “full Darbar regalia”,⁶⁵⁰ the *Singh* displays his wealth and exoticism. Yet, recalling the *Minto*, we are reminded that British officials presided over him, just as Minto did over the *Indian Procession*.

Despite this, Singh’s regalia most likely references the 1866 Agra Durbar where he received his K.C.S.I.⁶⁵¹ Close observation of the statue, reveals John’s attention to detail. The standing figure rests his left hand on the ornately jewelled hilt of his *talwar*, its distinctive long curved blade is culturally and symbolically important, a reminder of its owner’s *distant* warrior heritage. Singh wears the ceremonial *angarkha* robe typical of the Indian elite over narrow *pyjama* trousers. Distinctive for

⁶⁴⁸ “Ceremony In Oudh”.

⁶⁴⁹ This run-of-the-mill work led to John’s *Singh* Commission.

⁶⁵⁰ “Ceremony In Oudh”.

⁶⁵¹ Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow*, 253. See also Prichard, *The Administration of India*, (London: Macmillan & Co: 1869), 34.

its round neck and circular panel over the chest,⁶⁵² the robe would have been made of silk velvet with traditional heavy gold Lucknow *chikan* embroidery on the sleeves, edges and hem.⁶⁵³ In comparison to photographs of Singh wearing his ceremonial *angarkha* (see fig. 3.20), the sculptural one is plainer to emphasise Singh's medals. These visual emblems remind viewers of the honours bestowed on the loyal Singh and, as protocol dictates, John shows the K.C.S.I. badge attached to the ribbon at Singh's neck and the "Knight Commander insignia" slightly below on his left breast.

Singh's turban is also richly ornamented: the jewelled *sarpech* (fixed to the front of the turban), *sarpatti* (wings stemming from the *sarpech*) and *kalgha* (the piece that extends vertically from the *sarpech*) are made of precious gems and pearls. A plume of feathers or a mane also appears to stem from the *kalgha*. These exotic turban ornaments indicate enormous wealth, and visually signal India as the jewel of Empire. A tinted photograph of Singh's adopted son, Maharaja Kunwar Udit Narayan Singh, demonstrates that these objects were important heirlooms within the family. Sitting on an elaborately carved chair, and dressed in his full durbar regalia, he wears Singh's turban *sarpech* and rests his hand on the same *talwar* (fig. 3.21).

The elephant support behind Singh's right leg supports the statue, it both recalls Singh's death, as we have seen, and his participation in the durbar processions. At Lucknow for example, he and the Maharaja of Kapurthala led the "Indian division" on their elephants.⁶⁵⁴ Yet, as the Minton & Co.'s 1889 maiolica *Elephant*, the poster image for the 2015 *Sculpture Victorious* Exhibition, confirms, for European viewers the stereotypical elephant visualised the exotic riches and cultural spectacle of Indian royalty.⁶⁵⁵ The Minton *Elephant* further signposts the growing popularity of

⁶⁵² V&A, accessed February 18, 2016. online <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O438351/robe-unknown/>.

⁶⁵³ See Clare Wilkinson-Weber, *Embroidering Lives: Women's Work and Skill in the Lucknow Embroidery Industry*, (Alabama: State New York University Press, 1999).

⁶⁵⁴ Oldenburg also points out that the 1867 durbar was paid for entirely by the taluqdars, especially Sir Digbijai and the Maharaja of Ayodhya. As well as ostentatious displays of wealth and status, durbars were good for local business. There was intense rivalry between the Maharajas of Balrampur and Ayodhya who boosted the luxury industries in their attempts to out do each other in every element of the procession to ensure their honour and high status. Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow*, 251–4.

⁶⁵⁵ See *Sculpture Victorious*, 274–278. Other works that colourfully illustrated Indian life to a western audience include R. K. Narayan's short story collection, *Under the Banyan Tree* (Delhi: Indian Thought Publications, 1985).

decorative Indian artisan wares in Britain. The availability of sources of Indian design in London was increasing; the South Kensington Museum housed a collection of Indian artefacts following the Great Exhibition in 1851, and entrepreneurs such as Arthur Lasenby Liberty, founder of Liberty & Co in London in 1875, exploited the commercial interest in these wares. As *The Indian Times* noted, Liberty had “done so much to encourage the taste for genuine Indian artware in the decoration of English homes.”⁶⁵⁶ Numerous books were also written on Indian arms, dress, and cultural artefacts. George Birdwood’s *The Industrial Arts of India* (1884) proved to be a useful visual source for artists such as Ford who used examples in his seated sculpture of *Sir Lakshmiswar Singh*.⁶⁵⁷ Whether in exhibitions, illustrated in publications, or mediated as art objects, these accessible and contextual visualisations allowed a wider audience to map ‘their’ British Empire.⁶⁵⁸ While for some, this was a positive imperial exercise, for many Indians, pre-Independence, it further signalled their subaltern place within the Empire.

As we have seen, following Indian Independence in 1947, many now unacceptable monuments were removed from their original locations. The *Singh* (like the *Minto*) was sent to the Police District Headquarters during the 1950s. In 1981-2, it was moved to the State Museum’s underground storage at Lucknow.⁶⁵⁹ Since the 1930s, in a build up to Independence, statues of prominent Indians by Indian sculptors started to emerge alongside colonial monuments. In the wake of this, a bronze version of the *Singh* (fig. 3.22) is located at the Maharani Lal Kunwari (PG) College in Balrampur.⁶⁶⁰ While Hindu sculptors may have produced (or reproduced) this, making it acceptable post Independence, it is an example of the continued relevance of western academic art vocabularies that continued to be taught in Indian art colleges, despite earlier swadeshi resistance. The renewed bronze version of John’s original combined with additional Hindu symbolism is a “mutation” that suggests

⁶⁵⁶“West and East: India At The Academy”, Our O. C., *The Times of India*, Jun 2, 1913, 6.

⁶⁵⁷ See Amy Harris, “Ornamentalism”.

⁶⁵⁸ See also John Lockwood Kipling’s actively in India highlighted at the recent V&A exhibition, *John Lockwood Kipling: Arts and Crafts in the Punjab and London* (2017) and Julius Bryant and Susan Weber, eds. *John Lockwood Kipling: Arts and Crafts in the Punjab and London* (New York: Bard Graduate Centre Gallery; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2017).

⁶⁵⁹ Steggle, *Statues of the Raj*, 61.

⁶⁶⁰ Singh founded the college in 1883.

Bhabba's "hybridisation of power".⁶⁶¹ In the photograph, we can see it is set in a colourful architectural alcove; its contemporary Hindu relevance is immediately evident through the flower garland placed around its neck and the bindi marked on the forehead.

The differences in this statue compared to John's original are significant. With no elephant (bronze sculpture does not require such support), the base is decorated with *swastika* symbols of wellbeing. This reinforces its Hindu relevance as this symbol both charts the sun's celestial routes, and, aptly for a college, signifies Ganesh the Hindu god of wisdom and learning. This, then, also offers an alternative representation of John's original elephant.⁶⁶² Whilst Singh's medals are still evident, their arrangement differs; the belt clasp is reduced to the central circle, and the sash is now tied centrally. That the medals are still included suggests the Indian makers' ambivalence to their original meaning, as embellishments they are subordinate to the flower garland and bindi. This re-appropriated repetition, as Bhabba argues, removes both the original author and previous meaning to negate "the colonial presence".⁶⁶³ The bronze *Singh*, with John, the problematic imperial creator now removed, becomes a new hybrid work, acceptable within this educational institution in a now independent India.

The college location of this bronze flags up art education in India. In the next section, I consider John's patronage of a then famous, but now largely forgotten Indian sculptor, Fanindranath Bose.

John and Bose

In considering John's patronage of the Indian sculptor, Bose, this section questions Anglo-Indian imperialist relations. During the nineteenth century, Indian students were taught in the academic or naturalistic tradition inherited from imperial western systems in which the British "Olympians", Leighton, Alma-Tadema, Poynter and Watts, influenced teaching practice.⁶⁶⁴ An example of imperial attitudes can be seen

⁶⁶¹ Bhabba, *Signs Taken for Wonders*, 34.

⁶⁶² See Guatam Chatterjee, *Sacred Hindu Symbols* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1996), 38–9.

⁶⁶³ See Bhabba *Signs Taken for Wonders*, 34.

⁶⁶⁴ Mitter, 63.

in a speech given by Bengal's Governor, Richard Temple, at the opening of Calcutta Art Gallery in 1877. He claimed, the display of European art would supplement art teaching and "elevate the taste, refine the skill and enlighten the ideas of the native youth".⁶⁶⁵ As Edwards argues, the *Bates Memorial* frieze set the bar for Calcutta's art students, as a symbol of British imperialism's integration of local communities and their material cultures.⁶⁶⁶ Yet, this did not go unchallenged, while the European curricula remained, many Indian nationalist artists such as poet-artist Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) were developing a swadeshi opposition to academic naturalism in a bid to reclaim traditional Indian art as fine art.⁶⁶⁷

For Indian sculptors, a successful career in the west was rare. John's support for Bose, the young Bengali sculptor, led to his short but exceptionally successful career once he had settled in Scotland. Bose became the first Indian sculptor to gain academic acknowledgement in Britain when elected associate of the Royal Scottish Academy in 1926. In India, he attended the Jubilee Art Academy in Calcutta (famous for teaching academic naturalism), before attending the Calcutta Art School. He left India for Italy aged sixteen, then, having failed to secure a place at an Italian academy, travelled to London and Edinburgh, gaining a place at the Board of Manufacturers School of Art. Here he won the Stuart prize and a travelling scholarship awarded jointly from Edinburgh University and the Bengal Government. His outstanding talent for drawing and modelling was recognised by his assessors, John and Frampton. In Paris, Bose was introduced to Rodin.⁶⁶⁸ Given John had previously introduced fellow sculptor Ward (see below), it is likely that he also introduced Bose to Rodin.

On his return to Edinburgh, Bose married a local Scottish girl and opened a studio.⁶⁶⁹ In 1913, the same year John exhibited the *Minto*, Bose debuted at the Royal Scottish Academy (RSA). He also exhibited several works at the RA, two of which John purchased were *The Hunter* (1916) and *Boy in Pain* (1914, figs. 3.23, 3.24).⁶⁷⁰ After

⁶⁶⁵ Mitter, 79.

⁶⁶⁶ Edwards, "War and Peace", 205.

⁶⁶⁷ For more see Krishna Drutta and Andrew Robinson eds., *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁶⁶⁸ RSA Annual Report 1926.

⁶⁶⁹ This mixed-race marriage caused controversy in the family and local Scottish community. In conversation with Bose's great niece at the NMW, 2016.

⁶⁷⁰ John gave these to the NMW in 1928.

seeing *The Hunter* in John's collection, Sayaji Rao (Maharajah Gaekwad of Baroda), a social reformer, nationalist supporter, and keen promoter of Indian artists, commissioned a copy.⁶⁷¹ Following this, he commissioned ten sculptures, eight for the gardens at the Laxmi Vilas Palace and two for the Baroda gallery.⁶⁷² Under Sayaji Rao's rule, Baroda became a hotbed for cultural nationalism.⁶⁷³ Following Sayaji Rao's invitation, Bose taught briefly at the new Fine Arts department at the college. Finding the bronze foundries to be below standard, he returned to Edinburgh to complete the commissions.⁶⁷⁴ These experiences and contacts may have shaped Bose's nationalist views, and may explain why, for "unknown reasons" he refused work for the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta.⁶⁷⁵ Bose's success was, as Mitter claims, "the dream of Indian academic artists."⁶⁷⁶ His Scottish commission for St John's Church in Perth for a standing *St John the Baptist* (fig. 3.25), demonstrates the influence of Rodin and the New Sculpture, and particularly references John's *St John*. *The Scotsman* observed that Bose's work revealed "a subtle appreciation of Oriental character [...] expressed more or less in terms of [...] Western art".⁶⁷⁷ Whilst his ideal works often fused Western form with Indian themes, it was his group of New Testament figures (also for St John's Church) that won Bose an Associateship of the RSA. As the *RSA Annual Report* observed, Bose was the first Indian sculptor to receive official recognition in Great Britain.⁶⁷⁸ This led *The Scotsman* to declare "that art at its best transcends nationality".⁶⁷⁹

At the Scottish Arts Club dinner, Bose responded to his toast predicting this "honour [...] would have an important effect on Indian opinion", despite the "strain in relations between India and Britain". Albeit speaking during heightened Indian independence campaigning to a Scottish audience, he pointedly omitted the English when he claimed that this was "proof [...] that the Scottish people had no intention of restricting the legitimate aspirations of the people of India." His election, he declared,

⁶⁷¹ Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995), 118.

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁷ "Indian Appreciation", *The Scotsman*, March 19, 1925.

⁶⁷⁸ *RSA Annual Report*, 1926, 15–16.

⁶⁷⁹ "Indian Appreciation", *The Scotsman*.

“would [...] bring the two races into a better sympathy and understanding, the conferring of such an honour on an Indian artist would be greatly appreciated by his fellow countrymen.”⁶⁸⁰

During a turbulent time in India that had escalated since his earlier works, John helped secure a successful career for Bose. John’s personal link to the powerful, illustrious and pro-independence Sayaji Rao reveals how he worked his imperial networks that included powerful and less powerful Indian figures within London and Edinburgh, suggesting a collaborative and imperial interest in sponsoring Indian artists. Although twelve years earlier, John was endorsing Empire through imperial works such as the *Earl of Minto*, the positive Hindu remake of the *Singh* demonstrates the education policies and legacy of Anglo–Indian traditions.

Having now considered John’s engagement with Wales and India, in the final section, I consider John’s bronze *Bokani*, and how the sculptor questioned European so-called sciences and the dissemination of colonial power in a non-British colony, King Leopold II’s Congo Free State.

Africa: Bokani

In 1906, John showed a small, unassuming work at the RA. While largely overlooked, this bronze head, with its densely woven connections, encourages viewers to think about socio-political issues of racism and, as we now consider it, human rights. John came to model this unique sitter, Bokani,⁶⁸¹ through Colonel James Jonathon Harrison, a traveller and big game hunter, who earned the scorn of some as an “addlepated dwarf impresario”.⁶⁸² In 1905, he brought six Mbuti pygmies from the Ituri Forest in the Congo to Britain. In what had become a well-established practice, he profitably showed them at venues throughout Britain and Europe. In the same year, John modelled the head of their ‘chief’, Bokani. This is John’s only work to depict an

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁸¹ As the title of the work is also the name of the sitter, I refer to the person as Bokani and John’s sculpture in italics as the *Bokani*.

⁶⁸² Roger Casement (of whom more later) was responsible for exposing the plight of the Congolese under Leopold II’s rule. Quoted in Jeffery Green, “Edwardian Britain’s Forest Pygmies” in *History Today*, Vol 45. 8, August 1995 (London: Andy Patterson, 1995), 34.

African sitter.⁶⁸³ Three years later, Roger Casement would expose the Belgian King Leopold II's infamous misrule of his colony, the Congo Free State, for its corrupt and murderous exploitation of the Congolese people. The *Bokani* embodies and responds to the period's arts, sciences, and political racism and their associated art historical and socio-political networks. In 1925, John wrote to the NMW offering the *Bokani*. His letter explains that "several years ago" when the pygmies came to Britain, he "modelled the head of their chief, Bokani".⁶⁸⁴ Variations of the title reinforce an emergent tension between science and art. It was exhibited at the RA in 1906 as *Bokane. A Pigmy of the Ituri Forest, Central Africa*. It also existed as a photographic illustration of a so-called racial type, the *Head of a Pygmy Chief* in Ward's book *A Voice from the Congo* (1913).⁶⁸⁵ Currently, it is displayed at the NMW as *Bokani, a Pygmy Chief*.⁶⁸⁶ This case study explores the tensions within these titles. The bust is considered through the lens of early twentieth century developments in the so-called sciences of racial types, as part of popular culture and artistically as a portrait. Yet, problematically, as these divisions pivotally intersect within the *Bokani*, they are not clear-cut.

Described as "noble"⁶⁸⁷ by historian Jeffery Green and "contemplative"⁶⁸⁸ by Christopher Pinney,⁶⁸⁹ the *Bokani* stands out from the ethnographic sculpture of previous generations, such as Charles Cordier's mid-nineteenth-century materially glamorous complex studies (discussed below). As an evocatively dignified piece, exhibited as a work of fine art, it also challenges John's subsequent request that the Museum accept it as an anthropological piece for the Natural History department (see fig. 3.3).⁶⁹⁰ From a Eurocentric perspective, the *Bokani* articulates the changes in ideas of racial determinism taking place during this period within Britain and her

⁶⁸³ The title 'chief' is misleading, as the pygmy tribes did not have "chiefs" as such. Bokani as the eldest of the group was the nominated elder. In conversation with Norbert Mbu-Mputu, coordinator of the *Project Bamonimambo (The Witnesses): Congo and Wales Roots and Routes*, 2012. June 22, 2018.

⁶⁸⁴ NMW A 2626 letter dated 11 October 1925.

⁶⁸⁵ Written following his travels under H. M. Stanley's Emin Pasha Relief expedition (1886-9).

⁶⁸⁶ This title and the work are currently undergoing reinterpretation to align with the NMW's diversity and inclusivity vision.

⁶⁸⁷ Green, "Edwardian Britain's Forest Pygmies", 38.

⁶⁸⁸ Pinney, Video, *The Anthropological Institute*, Youtube video, posted by Source Photo Films, published 8 June, 2012, accessed 30 January, 2015.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWFKsxe4jg8>.

⁶⁸⁹ Professor of Anthropology and Visual Culture at University College London.

⁶⁹⁰ Accession number: NMW A 2626.

Empire, as early ethnological studies based on human behaviour started to merge with newer anthropological interests that focussed on supposed physical difference.⁶⁹¹

As such, the *Bokani* functioned through two conflicting institutions: the Anthropological Society, now the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI), who commissioned it, and the RA where it was exhibited as fine art. Whilst it fits within an imperial schematic – John has refashioned Bokani through his white colonial perspective – in contrast to its role as an anthropological record, the rendering of this dignified head as a work of art suggests a romanticised sympathetic view. In analysing these positions, John and Britain’s attitudes towards its Congolese visitors emerge.

Amongst these institutional and imperial interconnections lie John’s political and ethical leanings, from which two relationships with individuals who held opposing views towards the treatment of the Congolese people are relevant. His close friendship with Ward (who was probably instrumental in securing John this commission), demonstrates that anti-Belgian imperialist tendencies developed in relation to increasing concern toward the plight of the Congolese. In contrast, John’s later patron-based relationship with Lever who, in developing a monopoly on cheap palm-oil production in the Congo, endorsed the brutal policy of forced labour, reveals that there were still those unsympathetic to the treatment of indigenous people as supposed inferior humans. Whether or not John was intentionally challenging scientific, artistic or ethical practices, the *Bokani*, nevertheless, contributes towards a still relevant debate.⁶⁹² The 2014/15 Artes Mundi contemporary art competition, held at the NMW, included the Dutch artist Renzo Martens’s video installation and display of saleable palm-oil and chocolate self-portrait sculptures made by local Congolese people. While I greatly oversimplify Martens’s controversial work, he has highlighted the on-going exploitation of the Congo’s natural resources and its people. It is ironic that he, as a white European, continues nineteenth-century western interventions (discussed below) in raising awareness of this exploitation to a wider audience.

⁶⁹¹ See Charles Cordier, L.de Margerie, É. Papet, C. Barhte, M. Vigli, *Facing The Other: Charles Cordier (1827-1905), Ethnographic Sculptor*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2004), 26.

⁶⁹² John’s correspondences suggest that his political stance was carefully non-political not to alienate patrons.

In contrast to the Indian works, considering the complexities of imperial representations of colonised Africans, contemporary photographs, and sculptures produced prior to, contemporary with, and slightly later than the *Bokani*, I explore the degree to which scientific and artistic representations of indigenous peoples converged and diverged within John's piece. As a work of fine art within the RA's summer exhibition, together with its scientific and popular entertainment components, it provided a point along which the forces of class, education and political impetus collided.

Although commissioned by the RAI, the history of the *Bokani's* display from its exhibition at the RA to its arrival at the Museum in 1925 is vague. According to John, the RAI, British Museum and "other places" had copies,⁶⁹³ although today only the RAI holds the painted plaster. The bronze was exhibited at the RA in 1906 and Ward owned a bronze (possibly the same one) displayed in his studio with his works and collections. Alongside it, at the RA, John showed the marble statue of *Sir John Woodburn, Late Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal; Thirteen*, a marble bust of his daughter Muriel (another portrait allegory); *The Late Principal Viriamu Jones*, for University College, Cardiff; and the plaster bust of architect Sir William Emerson. These works link John with his family, Wales and the Empire, and reveal again the intersection of Wales and India. Emerson, for example, who worked exclusively on prestigious commissions in India, was a pupil of William Burges, who, as we saw in Chapter 2, redesigned Bute's Cardiff Castle. Of John's pieces, *The Architect* recognised that the seated statue of Jones was amongst "the most important and successful works" exhibited, he noted that the "excellent portrait bust" of Emerson must not be "overlook[ed]".⁶⁹⁴ No other, so-called, anthropological sculptures were exhibited.

While the *Bokani* was apparently "overlooked", it featured in the *Magazine of Art* illustrated supplement as already noted, "Bokane. A Pygmy of the Ituri Forest, Central Africa" and as "life size" (fig. 3.26).⁶⁹⁵ Within this volume, the bust fits alongside other works that reinforced perceptions of Britain's imperial power and

⁶⁹³ John, letter to the NMW, October 11, 1925. NMW A 2626.

⁶⁹⁴ *The Architect*, "Sculpture at the Royal Academy", May 4, 1906, 306.

⁶⁹⁵ *Magazine of Art*, illustrated supplement to the 1906 RA Summer Exhibition.

seemingly civilising role over its mysterious and glamorised colonies. Placed beneath C. Napier Hemy's watercolour, *Ironclads* (1904), of two British Navy warships flying the Union Flag,⁶⁹⁶ the *Bokani*'s sideways glance suggests his acknowledgement of Frank Bramley's neighbouring portrait of the classical scholar, educational reformist and Liberal MP, *Henry Roby Esq.*. The facing page features Arthur Wardle's antique pastoral scene, *A Sylvan God*, of a languid pan amongst a pair of fawning leopards. As discussed later, it is no coincidence that 'scientific' photographs of Bokani show him standing on a leopard-skin rug. Animals such as these were a popular metaphor that exoticised the Orient and non-modern-European races. Within the RA, the *Bokani* forms part of an imperial display that asserts colonial dogma.

Such dogma included pseudo-sciences. As this section will demonstrate the *Bokani* is rooted in embedded socio-political racism that asserted the Empire's imperial license. Social Darwinism and early ethnographic dialogues constructed an ideology of power (over African people) through European subjective and apparently intellectualised notions of scientific truth. John's keenness to support his piece as 'scientific' sanctions these policies while rejecting the circus of popular entertainment that Bokani and John were, nevertheless, a part of. In contrast to the *Bokani*, examples of individual western sculptural responses from Cordier, Malvina Hoffman and Ward demonstrate that their work, under their assumed canopies of white imperial superiority, portrays their subjects not as individuals but as racial samples. The *Bokani* problematically complicates this tradition. Through close analysis, I examine the *Bokani*'s inherent contradictions and demonstrate that considering the statue as an anthropological piece objectifies its subject, closing down wider exchanges of ideas through its non-negotiable status as an object of empirical fact. Alternatively, as an artistic portrait, it becomes a site for negotiation through formal influences and ethical alignments with other artists. While, as Breedon has shown, this is also true of Ward, John's capacity to convey the sitter's inner emotion makes the *Bokani* unique. Before continuing this debate, I turn to the events leading to the pygmies' visit.

The Arrival of the Pygmies

⁶⁹⁶ The only two armour-plated steam-propelled ships built for the Navy between 1859 and 1861.

Prior to the apogee of the European Scramble for Africa during the nineteenth century, sixteenth-century Arab slave traders had ravaged the Congo River basin. Sub-Saharan African tribes and kingdoms had been continuously exploited and ruthlessly colonised.⁶⁹⁷ The Congo was an area in which some of the most violent atrocities took place, not least under Leopold who imposed forced labour policies.⁶⁹⁸ The explorer, H. M. Stanley, led several long-term expeditions and, through Leopold's funding, was instrumental in opening up the Congo's interior to entrepreneurial speculators. Ward was an officer on Stanley's ill-fated Emin Pasha Relief Expedition (1886-9).⁶⁹⁹ Initially, with little known of the atrocities, Leopold appeared a philanthropic king. John's friendships with Ward and Lever offer an insight into those who both exposed and supported Leopold's policies.

At the time the pygmies arrived in Britain, curiosity in the Empire's far-flung colonies was at a peak as the popularity of colonial expositions and shows that focussed on displaying indigenous people demonstrates.⁷⁰⁰ Pollock considers tourism and modernity through Gauguin's display of Tahitian paintings in Paris. This, she argues, "takes us to the place of the 'other' and subjects it to our 'othering' gaze".⁷⁰¹ The reverse tourism of Harrison's pygmy troupe creates a spectacle of tourism in Britain where audiences were taken to the Congo, the place of the "other", while remaining at home. At the same time, debates over racial determinism were gaining further momentum through anthropological developments and the work of activists, such as Casement, Ward's close friend, who brought Leopold's Congo atrocities to light in 1904, two years before John exhibited the *Bokani* at the RA.

Harrison's troupe formed part of what Bernth Lindfors termed a booming "ethnological show business" phenomenon.⁷⁰² Although not new, this profit-making entertainment aimed to provide an educational function in displaying supposed physical and cultural differences to establish a fundamental knowledge that ordered

⁶⁹⁷ See Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa*, (London: Abacus, 2003).

⁶⁹⁸ For a more detailed account, see J. Marchal, *Lord Leverhulme's Ghosts*, (New York: Verso Books, 2008) viii-ix.

⁶⁹⁹ For more see Kirsty Breedon, "'A Voice from the Congo'", and "Herbert Ward".

⁷⁰⁰ See A.E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

⁷⁰¹ Pollock *Avant-garde Gambits*, 60.

⁷⁰² Bernth Lindfors, *Africans on Stage*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999) vii.

racial development. In the wake of Thomas Henry Huxley's *Evidence as to Man's in Nature* (1863) and Charles Darwin's *The Descent of Man* (1871) along with newspaper jargon, boys' own fiction, and stories of great British heroes exploring 'Darkest Africa', many believed that such indigenous people's humanity was uncertain. Consequently, they believed it reasonable to accept that they closed the evolutionary gap between mankind and primates.⁷⁰³ For two years, before they were returned to the Congo, Harrison toured Britain and Europe with the pygmies; the fascination they aroused crossed class divisions, from interest at Buckingham Palace to entertaining the masses in variety programmes at music halls and Glasgow Zoo.⁷⁰⁴ It is significant that, as a member of Harrison's pygmy troupe, Bokani garnered considerable celebrity; a familiar figure for many people given that an estimated one million people saw the shows.⁷⁰⁵

These problematic displays can be seen in the context of a range of non-traditional nineteenth-century shows such as *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* (c.1850), freak shows and travelling minstrels with actors with blacked-out faces. As Tiziana Morosetti observes, these formed the popular image of "black" people. Morosetti argues that such performances were "never exclusively about contemporary notions of the exotic, nor were they *exactly* about the empire and its history".⁷⁰⁶ Yet, along with spectacles of imperial might such as *Savage South Africa* (1899), at the start of the second South African War (1899–1902), Bokani and his group were explicitly tied to assertions of Empire. So, how was the presentation of non-white non-European people to be perceived – as scientific fact or performers of spectacle, or both? And how did John's bust contribute, challenge or clarify such views? These questions are further complicated when we realise that the pygmies were not only considered to be of inferior status in Europe but at home in the Congo. As other indigenous non-pygmy tribes regarded them as sub-

⁷⁰³ See Lindfors, *Africans on Stage*, vii-xii.

⁷⁰⁴ A letter from John's friend, Percy Corkhill, arranging a dinner with "seats at a theatre or music hall.", indicates that, as John frequented music halls, he may have seen the pygmies on stage. Percy Corkhill, letter to John, November 30, 1912. RA 07/1105.

⁷⁰⁵ See Green, "A Revelation in Strange Humanity" in Lindfors, *Africans on Stage*, 171.

⁷⁰⁶ T. Morosetti, "'Etc. Etc.': Replicating the 'Exotic' Body on the Nineteenth-Century British Stage." *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 2017, (24). Italics original. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.780>.

species, what does this tell us about John's bust?⁷⁰⁷ Through John's *Bokani*, this section considers these questions.

The *Bokani* indicates the wider socio-political challenges facing an Empire that needed to boost its imperial prerogative, especially as entrenched imperialist certainties were destabilised following the South African Wars. The staged spectacles of ethnological shows, that included the pygmies, helped reinforce notions of British imperial power.⁷⁰⁸ Many exhibitors claimed to present so-called unmediated and truthful enactments of the perceived savagery and barbarism facing, but controlled by, imperial colonisers. Rudyard Kipling's famous poem, "The White Man's Burden", published in 1899 in response to America's imperialist war on Spain over Cuba, indicated prevalent attitudes. From the perspective of an old colonial power, Kipling's poem offered advice to best "serve" the needs of "[y]our new caught sullen peoples, half devil and half child".⁷⁰⁹ Kipling represents late-Victorian Imperialist assumptions and responsibilities through commonly held beliefs that considered indigenous cultures as inferior and morally degenerate; perceived notions of their childish arrested development served to highlight how far white European civilisation had advanced from a similarly primitive state.

In addition, the role of the sensationalist press cannot be underestimated during this period. Annie Coombes argues that the literature published in relation to international exhibitions served to fabricate an Africa for popular consumption through the adaption of familiar tropes that appeared to lend an authentic, neutral, and academically authoritative objectivity through alignment with developing disciplines such as the new anthropologies.⁷¹⁰ Further publicity in press reviews, promotional material and souvenirs widened the pygmies' fame, and endorsed the troupe's celebrity status.⁷¹¹ There were even souvenir sound recordings made of the pygmies. The Gramophone Company of London produced recordings of Bokani's deep

⁷⁰⁷In conversation with Norbert Mbu-Mputu, June 22, 2018.

⁷⁰⁸Lindfors, *Africans on Stage*, vii-xii.

⁷⁰⁹For more on Kipling, see Roger Lancelyn Green, ed., *Rudyard Kipling: The Critical Heritage*, (London; New York: Routledge, 1971).

⁷¹⁰Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, 64.

⁷¹¹The Gramophone Company of London also produced souvenir sound recordings of the pygmies, including Bokani, on shellac discs in 1905. Now held at the National Sound Archive in London.

melodic voice chanting tribal songs, whilst another recording features the women's conversation interspersed with spontaneous laughter. These recordings, in contrast to the brooding silence of John's bust and the photographs, considered below, give the pygmies a voice and emphasises their lively personalities. Souvenir photograph postcards of the group were also extremely popular; one in particular is revealing for the message written by a working-class writer: "I have sent you one of these photo (sic) to pick a nice fancy man[;] how do they suit you I thought their face would be fetching[;] what lovely faces they got (sic)".⁷¹² This mischievous message highlights their entertainment value and offers a contrasting view to both John's dignified bust and the sound recordings. While the pygmies were a subject for jokes and mockery, the *Bokani* bust, as a serious work, contradicts this.

Before looking in depth at the *Bokani*, I consider the mid-nineteenth-century work of French sculptor Cordier and the later, 1930s, work of the American sculptor Hoffman. In contrast to John's portrayal, these responses, as Pollock argues, through her analyses of Franz Fanon's *Black Skins, White Masks* (1952), contribute to "the structural depersonalisation of the colonised subject".⁷¹³ Considering examples of their work places John's bust within broader sculptural remits of assumed scientific classifications of racial difference.⁷¹⁴

Cordier's Exotic Beauty

The number of anthropological sculptors was small and John would have been aware of Cordier's earlier work. It is likely John saw *Negro in Algerian Costume*, (c.1856, fig. 3.27), for example, in the Musée du Luxembourg's collections and possibly at the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1889. Cordier's complex examples of North African subjects came from his belief that his "art incorporated [...] revolt against slavery and the birth of anthropology", a crucial sculptural development of the so-called science of mankind.⁷¹⁵ While no evidence yet suggests John took a similar view, his sensitive rendering of Bokani points to Cordier's earlier works that dignify their sitters. Yet, his use of sumptuous marble, bronze and enamel further glamorises them as objects

⁷¹² Quoted in Jeffery Green, *Black Edwardians* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 186.

⁷¹³ Franz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks*, ed. Homi Bhabha (London: Pluto Press, 1986), 42.

⁷¹⁴ Although both sculptors also considered white racial characteristics.

⁷¹⁵ Cordier, *Facing The Other*, 15.

designed for the contemplation of their external beauty. While Cordier claimed to prefer art without disregarding “scientific precision”,⁷¹⁶ these works offer a different viewing experience to the individualised *Bokani*.

Cordier’s meticulous methodological approach is worth briefly considering. Like W.R. Downey’s later photographs of Bokani covered in measurement markers (see figs. 3.35 and 3.36), Cordier’s method of taking minute measurements detailed the sitter’s features, underpinning his claim that he combined both aspects within his work. Particularly as he rejected on aesthetic grounds the common practice of life casting directly from the model, the most well known example being the painted plaster cast of Saartjie Baartman (1815).⁷¹⁷ This practice, he claimed, “weakened the flesh [and made] the body look dull”.⁷¹⁸ For Cordier, it was essential to explore the beauty of individuals that “reflect[ed] with harmony and balance the essential moral and intellectual character of [their] race”, rather than personal individuality.⁷¹⁹ Laure de Margerie argues that his scientific anthropological framework allowed him freedom from the canon of western sculptural portraits.⁷²⁰ Cordier contested the academic hierarchical notions of idealised beauty, arguing instead that difference was itself beautiful. Not everyone was convinced. One viewer concluded that Cordier’s work depicted “ugly for the sake of ugliness”.⁷²¹ Whilst Cordier intended to accurately convey different notions of beauty, looking at Hoffman’s anthropological sculpture seventy years later links the *Bokani* to imminent developments, while her contact with game hunter, Reginald Cooper, adds another dimension to racial attitudes.

Hoffman and Cooper

Whereas Cordier, Ward (as we shall see), and John’s work was mediated through notions of male European imperialism endowing them agency inaccessible to women, Hoffman’s work provides the opportunity to see how, by 1930, sculptural attitudes had ‘developed’. The Chicago Field Museum of Natural History commissioned

⁷¹⁶ Quoted Cordier, *Facing The Other*, 27.

⁷¹⁷ Baartman was formerly labelled “The Hottentot Venus”. As this is such a controversially painful work, I am not reproducing it here on ethical grounds.

⁷¹⁸ Quoted Cordier, *Facing The Other*, 27.

⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁷²⁰ Laure de Margerie quoted in Cordier, *Facing The Other*, 29.

⁷²¹ Quoted in Cordier, *Facing The Other*, 28.

Hoffman to travel the world modelling all supposed racial types for its ambitious “Hall of Mankind” sculpture project. Hoffman’s autobiography reveals her unrealistic aspiration that to “register” her subjects “accurately”, she effaced her “own personality completely”. This, she claimed, meant she was “without impediment of any subjective mood, or conscious art mannerism.”⁷²² In contrast to Ward and John, who modelled works in London or Paris, her approach reflects new anthropological fieldwork. Modelling her sitters in their own cultures was considered more accurately effective yet, despite claims of impartiality, the patronising, imperialist and racist tone in her written, supposedly, benign and amusing anecdotes reflects her entrenched imperialist outlook.

Hoffman described her encounter with the pygmies of the Ituri Forest twenty-five years after John exhibited the *Bokani* (see her “Life-size bronzes of Family Group”, fig. 3.28). Regarding their stature, she attempted to apply an explanatory pseudo-scientific rationale, reasoning their pituitary glands must be similar to those of Shetland ponies, “as they never grow up into real horses”.⁷²³ Hoffman does not register the pygmies as fully human, as, like Shetland ponies, they do not grow up into “real” people. She also recalled the story of one pygmy reservation “owned” by game hunter, Major Reginald Cooper.⁷²⁴ The pygmies were “far surpassed” by the “natural ingenuity” of the monkeys who managed to open a supply chest after the pygmies spent days trying in vain. In addition, her patronising description of pygmies feasting “until their little tummies swell up” is evidently highly problematic, as it notes how “after a good deal of scratching and chattering the happy families fall asleep”.⁷²⁵ The underlying assumption is that their “scratching” and “chattering” chimp-like behaviour verifies alleged assumptions that they filled the gap between humans and primates. Significantly, as she did not apply this to the other African races she met, this suggests pygmies were still perceived as being a “very low type”,⁷²⁶ literally and within western classification systems, and that the pygmies’ were still considered entertaining, even in their homeland.

⁷²² Malvina Hoffman, *Heads and Tales*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1936), 12.

⁷²³ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁷²⁴ Cooper, *Hunting and the Hunted in the Belgian Congo* (London: Smith and Elder & Co., 1914).

⁷²⁵ Hoffman, *Heads and Tales*, 149.

⁷²⁶ Charles Lewis Hind, ed., *The Academy*, Jan 14, 1899, 49.

Despite this entertainment, the pygmies appear in the section of Hoffman's book that deals with "physical deformation". Here she remarks that they were "not as deformed as one might suppose".⁷²⁷ Evidently, attitudes had not changed much over the intervening twenty-five years. Hoffman's work, like Ward's portrayals of racial types, inform the viewer about a particular race; her works in bronze and stone depict so-called types performing activities that explain their social status or role. Her many portrait heads consist of individuals she befriended, abstract representational types, and dignitaries who helped her during her project. Notwithstanding her pseudo-humorous racist comments, Hoffman produced these works as site-specific 'documentary' depictions intended for a museum; they were not portraits of individuals destined for an art exhibition. As a result, however illustrative and supposedly accurate her sculptures were, they do not suggest the inner expression that John achieves in the *Bokani*. Hoffman, as the project demanded, remained firmly focused on the external physicality of her subjects, despite her unconscious underlying racism towards many of those she modelled. There were also others, such as Cooper (the game keeper Hoffman met) that held so-called rational views that may approximate to John's personal outlook.

Cooper's retrospective writings on his early hunting expeditions and the indigenous tribes he met similarly reveal his imperialist racial beliefs.⁷²⁸ In contrast to Harrison, and using language commonly accepted at the time, he commented on the atrocities, acknowledging that the "terribly unjust and cruel" Belgian administration was "hated and feared".⁷²⁹ On issues of equality, he argued that

The black man, we are told, can never be the white man's equal. I agree fully with this, but there is room [...] for all, and I, in common with many others, see in the "nigger" more good points than bad. I am not one of those who worship the black man, anymore than I agree with those who would exterminate him, but I do believe in justice and fair play to the coloured races,

⁷²⁷ Hoffman, *Heads and Tales*, 148.

⁷²⁸ Cooper observed for example, that "Belgians treat their natives like vermin; the British Official, on the other hand, makes fools of them". Cooper, *Hunting and the Hunted*, ix.

⁷²⁹ *Ibid.*

whom an Unseen Power had thought fit to place under us in this world of ours.⁷³⁰

Cooper has summed up the pervading opinion of an order normalised through divine right, the same right that, as discussed below, permitted Lever to interpret his racially divine order. In some ways, John has aligned the *Bokani* with this, in following Cordier's ambition to align beauty, art and science without consciously striving for the artistic objectivity that Hoffman later insisted she achieved.

The Bronze *Bokani*

Today, viewers who encounter the *Bokani* see the carefully modelled head of a man. The accompanying label informs spectators that he was a Congolese pygmy. The realistic rendering of this head can be traced back to John's training with James Philpots, an anatomist and coach painter, under whom the sixteen-year-old John first discovered the value of close observation through detailed copying of academic images.⁷³¹ John used his realistic New Sculpture skills, essential for portraiture and anthropological precision, to portray the now well-known figure of Bokani.

While this piece operates within the academic practices of his training, it follows the nineteenth-century British tradition of Francis Chantrey. The life-sized *Bokani* head turns sharply anticlockwise in lost profile,⁷³² in contrast with most anthropological sculptures of the period that usually presented the subject facing straight ahead (fig. 3.29). Whilst John's angle may have allowed the anthropologist to study the sitter's physiognomy in profile and full-face, it creates visual interest and balance. The overall proportions form a static rectangular frame within which the sharp angle draws the eye through the piece, from the head that looks to its left with the chin inclining slightly towards its raised left shoulder. From the front viewpoint, the rotating head turns sharply away; this evokes a sense of resistance, as the eyes appear to avoid the viewer's scrutiny. Yet, through John, the *Bokani*, as Bhabha describes, has effectively turned the sculptural "gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power".⁷³³ As the viewer follows the direction of the head and eventually meets the

⁷³⁰ Ibid., xiii.

⁷³¹ Fiona Pearson, *Goscombe John*, 9.

⁷³² For more on Chantrey, see Harris, "Forming a National Collection".

⁷³³ Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders", 35.

Bokani full-face, s/he is confronted with a powerful gaze that challenges his/her own. This articulation of the human condition encourages viewers to contemplate Bokani, as he sat for John, as a sentient being with complex internalised feelings.

This configuration suggests a relationship of influences. The *Bokani* and Carpeaux's earlier *Why Born a Slave?/ La Negresse* (1872, fig. 3.30), for example.⁷³⁴ Whilst the *Bokani*'s patination is no darker than John's other bronze busts, Carpeaux's darkly patinated bronze head-and-shoulder bust of an African slave girl, also turns her head sharply to avert the viewer's frontal gaze; when the viewer eventually follows the direction of the head, they encounter an expressive and defiantly dignified gaze. Another imperially important work of John's, the *Boy Scout* (1910, fig. 3.31), offers an alternative example. While this is also a portrait of Basil Webb, Boy Scout portrayals, such as this, were instrumental in indoctrinating the Empire's youth. Whereas, the *Boy Scout* also turns his head, the angle is less sharp, and his alert and enquiring expression culminates in his eyes that welcome engagement with the viewer. This bright imperial youth represented the Empire's future.⁷³⁵

Traditional modes of sculptural expression, meanwhile, often have passive eyes that gaze towards a middle distance or, are classically smooth blank surfaces. These permit viewers an unchallenged contemplation of the sitter's identity and status. Yet, as Michael Baxandall argues our initial response to figurative sculpture is similar to the eye contact we make when meeting other people. The viewer's encounter with, what he terms, a sculpture's "arc of address" builds a relationship through the series of viewing positions revolving around the sculpture's "glance".⁷³⁶ This extensive "arc", meanwhile, implies contradictory meanings. Bokani's individual agency is suggested through his apparent reluctance to comply with this "address". Some of the photographs of him also show his apparent reluctance to face the camera. Conversely, a photograph taken of the *Bokani*, at eye level (which metaphorically raises his stature) in Ward's *Voice* (fig. 3.32), confronts the reader with an unswerving stare. As

⁷³⁴ This bust was a component taken from an earlier work, *Four parts of the World Sustaining the Globe*, commissioned for a fountain at the Luxembourg Palace in Paris in 1867.

⁷³⁵ Tragically, Webb was killed in WWI, in hindsight, an ominous portent for the Empire.

⁷³⁶ Michael Baxandall, *Lime Wood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany*, (London: Yale University Press, 1980), 166.

Ward chose this view, rather than profile, for the photograph, he evidently recognised the solemnity of *Bokani*'s direct gaze as demonstrating tribal qualities fitting for a 'chief'.⁷³⁷

To appreciate fully John's composition, the viewer must move around the *Bokani* (fig. 3.33). As Getsy argues, the contrast between the viewer's activity and sculpture's permanent immobility can be interpreted as a disconcerting sculptural act of defiance.⁷³⁸ This is especially apt, given the intense scrutiny *Bokani* underwent. Thus, to register the *Bokani*'s various meanings, the viewer forms a dynamic relationship with the defiant stationary bust. The full-face angle of the bronze *Bokani*, and the force of his penetrating gaze creates an emotional contrast with the evasive profile view, further heightening notions of our intrusive gaze. The shared sculptor/viewer connection with the *Bokani*'s powerful eyes remains in constant tension, as either sustainedly averted and refusing, or directly challenging the spectator's presence. John has heightened the self-conscious act of looking, encouraging viewers to reconsider their role in the exchange between the representative object, as well as the artist-maker. When John modelled *Bokani*, he looked into the eyes of someone far removed from his own culture, someone whom many believed to be a wild savage not fully human. The resulting work produced, as Pinney and Green both recognise, an emotional response, a dialogue that challenged common perceptions, asserting *Bokani*'s humanity.

While, through the gaze, John portrayed human feelings that, as we will see, align with Ward, and the anti-Congo campaigners, Edmund Dene Morel and Casement, it also draws parallels with anti-imperialist writing such as Joseph Conrad's novella, *Heart of Darkness* (1898). Conrad, like Ward, had first-hand experience of exploring the Belgian Congo. His fictitious narrator Marlow, the English captain of a run-down steamer on the Congo River, tells his tale of this "monstrous land" and those who lived there. The uncomfortable truth, he recalled, was that the indigenous people "were not inhuman".⁷³⁹ Later, when his indigenous helmsman is fatally wounded,

⁷³⁷ Ward, *A Voice from the Congo*, 288.

⁷³⁸ Getsy, "Acts of Stillness: Statues, Performance, and Passive Resistance", *Criticism*, Winter 2014, Vol. 56, No.1, 8.

⁷³⁹ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1899: 1975), 97.

Marlow exclaims that he “looked at me [...] in an extraordinary, profound, familiar manner”.⁷⁴⁰ Marlow’s sense of a common bond of humanity in the face of death is confirmed. In explicitly referencing the process of looking, Conrad recognised an underpinning shared human quality that connected white Europeans and indigenous tribesmen. Conrad’s short sentence suggests how a reciprocal gaze overcomes language barriers, cutting through rhetorical devices to reveal a common certainty: the potency of the visual exchange between these characters exposes the mutuality of humanity. While John also recognised this powerful connection, making it tangible through New Sculpture symbolist idioms of inner expression, we need to first examine John’s own words regarding the *Bokani*.

John’s Letter to the NMW

It was a further twenty years before John donated a bronze *Bokani* to the Natural History department of the NMW. His letter reveals contradictions inherent in the work. He recalled the visit of “certain dwarfs from the Ituri Forest, Central Africa” and that he was asked to model “their chief, Bokani” by friends of the “B.M. and the anthropological society”.⁷⁴¹ John explained that plaster casts taken from his model were at these institutions with copies at “Oxford [...and] other places”.⁷⁴² Whilst, geographically, he specifically placed the pygmies’ origins, he omitted to name the country, the Congo, from where they came. Retrospectively, John was disassociating his work from the atrocities there.

Furthermore, John’s continual reference to “little people” and “dwarfs” reflects the newspaper coverage of the pygmy shows. *The Daily Telegraph*, for example, recommended that these “curious little people” were “well worth a visit”.⁷⁴³ John’s use of these terms suggests his lack of understanding and interest in scientific terminologies as well as his familiarity with popular entertainment. Yet, specifically referring to “their chief, Bokani” establishes that John acknowledged the status of the sitter, not, like Cordier, Hoffmann and Ward’s sculptures that, regardless of their

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid., 125.

⁷⁴¹ The chairman of the council for the Anthropological Institute, Sir Harry Johnston, born two years earlier than John, studied painting for four years at the RA, he claimed that the most “most handsome men [...] from the sculptor’s point of view [were] certain types of [...] negro” quoted in Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, 205.

⁷⁴² John, letter to the NMW, October 11, 1925, NMW A 2626.

⁷⁴³ “The Hippodrome”, *The Daily Telegraph*, Tuesday June 6, 1905.

intentions, were presented as abstract racial types rather than named individuals. Ward's *Aruwimi Type* is a typical example; while he modelled a sitter in Paris, this was not the Aruwimi he met in the Congo (fig. 3.34), Ward used a model in Paris to stand in for the Aruwimi tribesmen he had met in the Congo.

Although John claimed the *Bokani* was of “considerable scientific interest”, this was more likely a ploy to encourage the NMW, especially as “the little people were [...] discovered first of all by Stanley”.⁷⁴⁴ Thus, John linked Welsh-born explorer, Henry Morton Stanley (through which he could also link Ward) to the NMW's Welsh collecting principles. Like John, Stanley's terminology was also unclear, using both “dwarfs” and “Pigmies” to describe the people he met. For example, Stanley recalled seeing his “first specimen of the tribe of dwarfs [...] north of the Ituri”. He also salaciously described a “perfectly formed young woman” who was “[a]bsolutely nude, the little demoiselle was quite possessed, as though she was accustomed to be admired, and really enjoyed inspection.”⁷⁴⁵ Bokani clearly felt differently about being watched. But not all pygmies were so agreeable to Stanley who recollected “malicious dwarfs” that raided cornfields and “planted poisoned splinters in the paths”.⁷⁴⁶

In addition to the press coverage, Stanley's travels and associated stories contributed toward the mythology surrounding the pygmies that encouraged wider interest, including, apparently, John's, given their shared vocabulary. An additional element to this association was the Emin Pasha's earlier donation of two pygmy skeletons to the Natural History Museum in London in 1887.⁷⁴⁷ This deliberate link to Stanley underlines John's position on colonial endeavours. While Ward, following the notoriety of Stanley's expedition, distanced himself from the explorer partly through his publication of *A Voice*, John was more concerned with the NMW's 1907 Royal Charter that insisted on the importance of Welsh associations for its collections (see

⁷⁴⁴ John, letter to the NMW, NMW A 2626.

⁷⁴⁵H.M. Stanley, *In Darkest Africa*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), 208. Stanley divided the pygmy tribes he met into two types: the “Akka” race was “fitly characteristic of the link long sought between the average modern humanity and its Darwinian progenitors [...] an extremely low, degraded, almost a bestial type of a human being.” The other group, he claimed had no imperfection of proportion; “it was clear to everyone that these small creatures were a distinct race” Stanley, *In Darkest Africa*, 374–375.

⁷⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 457, 355.

⁷⁴⁷ Green, “A Revelation in Strange Humanity”, 171.

Chapter 2). Any intrinsic anthropological value was an additional benefit. Establishing this important link with Wales was John's trump card. In offering the work to the Natural History section at Cardiff, he explicitly placed it as an anthropological piece akin to the London Natural History Museum, thus challenging its art status at the earlier RA exhibition.⁷⁴⁸

Anthropological Investigation: Anthropology or Art?

As the *Bokani* title suggests anthropology and portraiture, it reveals the intersecting boundaries of art and science. Location as we have seen is important and, in this case, helps classify the *Bokani*. Within the Academy's exhibition halls, individual exhibits are temporarily removed from intended locations and their proposed functions. Many display sites, such as museums, however, were intended to promote notions of empire through the validity of assumed science and nationalistic pride.⁷⁴⁹ As Sharon Macdonald argues, political policies are not only disseminated through governments, they are evident in the classification of artefacts and their juxtaposed display.⁷⁵⁰ These displays justified Britain's imperialist enterprises particularly when aligned with royal support and the escapades of its heroic explorers. John's reference to Stanley demonstrates the wide-ranging impact of an imperially created Africa that was disseminated through Victorian evolutionism and its associated quasi-sciences.⁷⁵¹ Furthermore, as Mathew Stannard suggests, during the first decades of the twentieth century, sculpture displayed in natural history museums acquired authoritative authenticity over the art gallery.⁷⁵² In 1907, the year of the NMW's Royal Charter, the RAI was also granted Royal status. This reflects the growing recognition that sciences could unlock evolutionary mysteries and enlighten European racial understanding.⁷⁵³ For John, this was a significant alignment and ties in with his keenness to see his work in the natural history section at the NMW. John's perceptions of display hierarchies may indicate a change of attitude in favour of scientific recognition. In

⁷⁴⁸ On accepting the *Bokani*, the museum placed it in the Art Department.

⁷⁴⁹ This was an important consideration for John and his collecting/donating policies for the NMW, as he was keen to link figures of national importance with Welsh connections to the NMW in his attempts to create a collection of national importance.

⁷⁵⁰ See Mathew Stannard, *Selling the Congo: A History of European Pro-Empire Propaganda and the Making of Belgian Imperialism*, (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press 2012), 90.

⁷⁵¹ Andrew Apter, "Africa, Empire and Anthropology", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 28 (1998), 582.

⁷⁵² Stannard, "Selling the Congo", 118.

⁷⁵³ See Combes, *Reinventing Africa*, 109.

targeting the natural history section and in asserting the *Bokani* anthropologically, he was retrospectively attempting to raise the credence of this piece and his role as its creator. Thus, in ignoring Leopold's Congo atrocities, he avoided the circus of popular entertainment (despite its centrality to the *Bokani*'s existence), if not the negative connotations associated with scientific displays of colonised indigenous people.

Nevertheless, in the early twentieth century, the pygmies' appearance fascinated many. Press reports, including scientific and scholarly journals, ran detailed commentaries on the group that "excited a good deal of interest".⁷⁵⁴ *The British Medical Journal* felt justified in running an article noting and categorising the physical aspects of each member. Bokani's "fairly intelligent face" made him distinctive, particularly as his skin tone, "a chocolate colour, [was] of the higher negro type". His symbols of supposed tribal savagery, "a porcupine quill through a slit in his nose, and pieces of inlaid wood [...] thrust through holes in [...] his ears" were carefully noted, as fitting for a scientific anthropological journal of this period.⁷⁵⁵ As integral to his role as anthropological specimen, many so-called scientific and souvenir photographs illustrate Bokani wearing these. In pointedly omitting them, John aligns with portraiture.

In addition to the journal articles, the group endured physically intrusive examinations and continual exposure at the shows. Whilst very little was written from the perspective of the pygmies, certain incidents demonstrate their agency. Newspapers reported occasions when they refused to perform to order. In contrast to Stanley's account of the pygmy girl he met, the *Entr'Acte* theatre newspaper reported that the "two lady pigmies modestly and flatly refused to be measured".⁷⁵⁶ William Hoffman, their interpreter, also recalled how they objected to "multitudes of doctors and dentists always asking to examine their teeth and limbs".⁷⁵⁷ As images of Bokani, including John's bust, show his mouth closed, they contrast to the auditory dynamism of the recordings. These images, along with Getsy's sculptural immotility, suggest Bokani's

⁷⁵⁴ "Dr. G.D. Macintosh of Clapham" in *The British Medical Journal*, September 9, (1905), 591–2.

⁷⁵⁵ "Dr. G.D. Macintosh of Clapham".

⁷⁵⁶ Quoted in Green, *Entr'Acte*, June 1905, 35.

⁷⁵⁷ Quoted in Green, *Black Edwardians*, 35.

silent protest while submitting to the demands of his examiners. While John captured elements of this through the *Bokani*'s averted gaze, it nevertheless contributed to what Coombes termed the "invasive violation" the pygmies endured.⁷⁵⁸

The extent of this violation is evident in a collection of photographs at the RAI of the pygmies that encapsulates Edwardian opinion.⁷⁵⁹ Taken by the fashionable royal photographer Downey, who presented the pygmies as scientific specimens, and Conservative politician Benjamin Stone, whose objectification of the pygmies made them into tools for political gain.⁷⁶⁰ While Pinney notes that these were the remains or "ruin" of earlier practices,⁷⁶¹ the "language" of the *Bokani* bust is "radically different, contemplative, in a way the photographs don't allow".⁷⁶² Commissioned by the Natural History Museum, Downey's crudely insensitive images reveal the period acceptability of such approaches (figs. 3.35 and 3.36).⁷⁶³ Bokani is photographed standing from the front, side and back. Aside from rings on his fingers, bracelets and feathers woven into his hair, he is naked. These studio photographs show Bokani placed against a painted cloudy-sky backdrop standing on a leopard skin that recalls Wardle's *A Sylvan God* and the RA. White measurement markers are placed strategically on his body, his genitalia are hidden between his legs and around his middle is tied a length of string. In two of the images, he holds a spear. All of these elements constructed and perpetuated western perceptions of the African 'savage'.

In contrast, Stone's two photographs, *Pigmies of Central Africa* (1905, figs. 3.37 and 3.38), highlight the perceived incongruities between Western and so-called primitive cultures. They either appear in western-concocted tribal attire in a dingy back yard or apparently 'tamed' in European clothes for a visit to the House of Commons. Here, Bokani and the other males are dressed in boys' sailor suits, clutching their "tiny bows [,] arrows and spears" that contrast with Singh's ceremonially ornate sword that

⁷⁵⁸ Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, 138.

⁷⁵⁹ "Batwa Pymies", RAI 35827.

⁷⁶⁰ As many of these are also held at the National Portrait Gallery in London, this highlights the way 'portraits' are classified.

⁷⁶¹ They were being replaced by 'new' fieldwork-based anthropologies. Pinney, *The Anthropological Institute*, 2012.

⁷⁶² Ibid.

⁷⁶³ Downey also produced photographs for postcards.

emphases different attitudes to India and Africa.⁷⁶⁴ They are arranged standing together framed by an ancient stone archway, representing civilised Englishness, surrounded by top-hatted Members of Parliament (including Harrison and Hoffman). In the centre, the only white woman, an MP's wife, literally looks down on the pygmies' heads. Within this awkward image, Stone saw the meeting of "civilisation" and the "primitive". Yet, their self-conscious postures and the parliamentarians' expressions, including the disdainful wife, reveal the tensions within this image.⁷⁶⁵

Originally published in his fortnightly magazine, *Sir Benjamin Stone's Pictures: Parliamentary Scenes and Portraits*, Stone's accompanying text continued to support the sailor-suit analogy. In referring to the pygmies as the "children of primitive nature", he assumed a natural predestined hierarchy and the pygmies' capacity to understand his notion of civilisation. To explain their "dim conception" of "the greatest Legislature (sic) in the world", Stone claimed, "of the human race", they were "supposed to be of the lowest type, mentally [and] physically". Yet, he admitted, in meeting them, he realised they were "bright and intelligent".⁷⁶⁶ Nonetheless, Stone asserted they were more interested in the steamboats on the Thames than intimidated by the Palace of Westminster.⁷⁶⁷ Stone inferred that it was in the pygmies' interest that the British Empire should govern these simple people, who were unable to comprehend the complexities of government. His patronising, self-serving, and elitist commentary doubtless echoed the attitudes of many of his peers who accepted pseudo-facts of child-like humanity, yet, with surprise, acknowledged the pygmies' intelligence.

These assumed documentary-style photographs published in Stone's popular volumes, manipulated viewers' perceptions. As Nicolas Peterson argues, conforming to a "'romantic' ideology" allowed "contradictory feelings" to be resolved through transformation into "aesthetic phenomena".⁷⁶⁸ Stone and Downey were clearly not

⁷⁶⁴ Benjamin Stone, *Sir Benjamin Stone's Pictures: Parliamentary Scenes and Portraits*, (London: Cassell & Co., 1905), 18.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁸ Nicholas Peterson quoted in Brian Street and Elizabeth Edwards, *Anthropology and Photography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 123.

burdened with “contradictory feelings” in recording, what we now consider unacceptable, prejudiced assumptions. This leads me to question whether the *Bokani*’s aesthetic qualities allowed for the incorporation of John’s conflicting feelings. Whilst it is not known how it was perceived at the time – it is telling that there was no critical response at its RA exhibition – the *Bokani*’s overlap between science and popular entertainment is not, like the photographs, an explicitly prejudicial statement. Rather, as I now consider, it indicates that John was aligned with the art-based instruction he offered Ward in 1900.

Ward and Lever

At the NMW, the *Bokani* is displayed adjacent to Ward’s bronze, *Idol Maker* (fig. 3.39). This juxtaposition encourages formal comparison, and highlights the two sculptors’ friendship as well as the socio-political context in which these pieces were produced. Ward returned to London from Paris in 1900. His later sculptures were exhibited in Europe (including the RA) and America. This aligned with the increasing interest in indigenous peoples that he had in part initiated through books he wrote and international lectures he gave on his experiences in the Congo and with Stanley. While John and Ward shared a close friendship, their different experiences prior to producing these works are important. As a late Victorian heroic adventurer, a product of colonial expansionist ideology, Ward realised his dreams and travelled the world. His adventures culminated in Stanley’s expedition, through which he gradually resisted Belgian (not British) imperialist principles. His encounters with indigenous cultures led him to question earlier assumptions as he gradually came to recognise common bonds of humanity that cut through racial and cultural boundaries.

In London, Ward took the lease of the studio next door to John at Woronzow Road in St. John’s Wood. Despite having now garnered celebrity status, his wife, Sarita recalled the “sheer good luck” that his neighbour was John (who was also acquiring a name for himself). Becoming “a lifelong friend”, she acknowledged John’s “advice and encouragement were of the greatest value”.⁷⁶⁹ Ward, highly motivated and ambitious, as Breedon claims, probably targeted John for his elite standing and

⁷⁶⁹ Sarita Sanford Ward, *A Valiant Gentleman, Being the Biography of Herbert Ward, Artist and Man of Action* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1937), 154.

expertise.⁷⁷⁰ The timing, just as Ward turned his attention to sculpting the indigenous peoples he had sketched whilst travelling with Stanley, certainly supports this.

Talking about his work, Ward explained that he wanted “to make something symbolical”; like Cordier who rejected life casting, he dismissed the “wax works” in anatomical museums. Ward claimed his work described “the spirit of Africa in its broad sense”,⁷⁷¹ conveying the fundamental nature of those he encountered. This culminated in a number of narrative sculptures portraying types, as the *Idol Maker* illustrates. Despite Ward’s recognition of universal humanity, this detailed work, with dynamic juxtaposed angles and textural contrasts, is nevertheless a statement of racial difference from an imperial perspective. The *Idol Maker* represents a Congolese tribesman that Ward encountered, who carved ceremonial idols. Through a closed sculptural composition, the idol maker intently focuses on carving a stiff, forward-facing wooden idol lying, in pieta-esque pose, across his knees. The implicit message here emerges through the contrast between the idol maker’s crude tools used directly on the wood and Ward’s modelling of this dynamic piece in his studio with materials and tools particular to early-twentieth-century so-called civilised academic practice. Viewed through the lens of a European audience, the *Idol Maker*, like Benjamin Stone’s photographs, reinforced notions of a so-called advanced western culture. Paradoxically, in Europe at the turn of the century, the processes of making sculpture and the forms this created were being challenged. In Paris, many avant-garde artists, including Pablo Picasso, began to explore how African artefacts (brought back to Paris by travellers such as Ward) might inspire their work.⁷⁷² In London, a new generation of sculptors, such as Gill and Epstein, as we have seen, were similarly developing an interest in direct carving that focussed on expressing truth to the

⁷⁷⁰ Kirsty Breedon, in conversation with the author, April 10, 2014.

⁷⁷¹ Ward quoted in Hugh Marles, “Arrested Development Race and Evolution in the Sculpture of Herbert Ward.” *Oxford Art Journal* 19, no. 1 (1996), 16-28. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1360648>. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1360648>.

⁷⁷² See Jack Flam, *Primitivism and Twentieth Century Art*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) and Jason Edwards (2010) “Introduction: From the East India Company to the West Indies and Beyond: The World of British Sculpture, c. 1757–1947”, *Visual Culture in Britain*, 11:2, 147-172, DOI: [10.1080/14714781003784280](https://doi.org/10.1080/14714781003784280) and Kirsty Breedon (2010) “Herbert Ward: Sculpture in the Circum-Atlantic World”, *Visual Culture in Britain*, 11:2, 265-283, DOI: [10.1080/14714781003785196](https://doi.org/10.1080/14714781003785196)

qualities of the sculptural material rather than transforming the material into a recognisably realistic object.⁷⁷³

In 1901, Ward left London for Paris where, he believed, bronze-casting facilities were better and African models “could be more easily procured”, as the *Aruwimi Type* has demonstrated.⁷⁷⁴ John introduced him to Rodin and, although the extent of their relationship is unclear, Rodin’s influence is unmistakable.⁷⁷⁵ Ward’s *Grief* (1909), for example, a symbolically emotive piece Morel used for the frontispiece of his book *A Black Man’s Burden* (1920),⁷⁷⁶ draws heavily on Rodin’s *Eve* (1881, figs. 3.40 and 3.41), whilst the strong pose of *Jean d’Aire* (1886, fig. 42) is echoed in the muscular attitude of Ward’s *Defiance* (1909, fig. 43).

John continued to advise Ward in Paris. His influence is evident in works such as *The Crouching Women* (1906, fig. 3.44) that clearly draws on *The Elf*. Ward greatly appreciated John’s opinions. In February 1901, he wrote, “Johnny came over from London yesterday and is pleased with my group [...]. Johnny’s opinion is beyond what I expected. Nothing to alter or change, only to carry out certain small detail work on hands, etc.”⁷⁷⁷ The “group” is *The Fugitives* (1903, fig. 3.45),⁷⁷⁸ a work that addresses the plight of the indigenous people. Hugh Marles argues that its theatrical execution reveals Ward’s “symbolical” ambitions, and that the spirit of the young boy provides a contrast to the abject mother figure.⁷⁷⁹ The later addition of the boy, especially significant in relation to the *Bokani*, provides an additional reading. Ward recalled his fondness for the child model Antoine who regularly visited his Parisian studio where he sat for Ward. Although he went on to use Antoine’s bronze bust as an illustration of a racial type, “A Congo Boy”, in *A Voice* (fig. 3.46),⁷⁸⁰ his personal relationship with Antoine is evident through the portrait-like detailed modelling. In the same way, that the *Bokani* is a portrait of an individual, not solely an

⁷⁷³ John, like Ward, largely continued to model in clay.

⁷⁷⁴ Sarita Ward, *A Valiant Gentleman*, 156.

⁷⁷⁵ The Rodin Museum in Paris holds a *carte de visite* from John introducing Ward to Rodin, the date is not recorded, but is likely to be around 1901.

⁷⁷⁶ Written in response to Kipling’s famous poem, *A White Man’s Burden*, (1899).

⁷⁷⁷ Sarita Ward, *A Valiant Gentleman*, 162.

⁷⁷⁸ This work may have influenced Indian sculptor, V.P. Karmarkar’s *Graceful Worry*, c.1930.

⁷⁷⁹ See Marles, “Arrested Development”, 16.

⁷⁸⁰ Ward, *A Voice*, 14.

anthropological racial description, so Ward's portrayal captures Antoine's character. Consequently, what Marles recognised as the boy's spirit in *The Fugitives* is based on Ward's ability to reveal the sitter's character through portraiture, rather than just a narrative device within the sculptural group.

John benefitted from Ward's friendship.⁷⁸¹ In May 1905, the RAI's Council appointed a committee, chaired by Sir Harry Johnston to "report upon the Pygmies" with "powers to co-opt if necessary".⁷⁸² Ward, a member who had published at least one paper for the Institute on Congo tribes, "Notes Relating to Congo Tribes" (1895), was probably "co-opted" and suggested John for the commission.⁷⁸³ While Ward was keen to promote his friend's work, just as he included the *Bokani* in *A Voice*, John also offered the RAI a link with the RA. His technical skills and realistic ability to render his subjects accurately made him an ideal candidate, especially as he was now an ARA and a rising talent within an elite circle of prestigious sculptors.⁷⁸⁴

Yet, by the early twentieth century, however, Ward was becoming increasingly concerned about the state of the brutal administration of the Congo Free State. He had developed friendships with like-minded activists such as Morel and Casement (the person who dubbed Harrison an "admitted dwarf impresario").⁷⁸⁵ Shortly after Casement's government-sponsored report had officially exposed the brutal regime in 1904, Harrison responded and published his version in *Life Among the Pygmies*, to "state the truth of how matters stand to-day".⁷⁸⁶ He claimed that as many Congolese chiefs were returning to the Belgian Congo, he always heard "the same remark – 'We are all coming back as we like the Belgian side best.'" ⁷⁸⁷ Harrison's compulsion to respond to this and reports in the "English papers" of "natives fleeing from Belgian rule" indicates that while he intended to distance himself from the reported atrocities,

⁷⁸¹ This is particularly relevant as Bokani was the only indigenous Congolese who sat for John.

⁷⁸² Council of the Anthropological Institute Minutes of Meeting 1905, RAI Archives.

⁷⁸³ Fiona Pearson also suggests Ward gained this commission for John, *Goscombe John*, 41.

⁷⁸⁴ Ward may have declined this commission as it did not contribute to his project, the documentation of the lives of the indigenous peoples he met on his travels, through which he created his sculptural autobiographic legacy.

⁷⁸⁵ Quoted in Green, "Edwardian Britain's Forest pygmies", 34.

⁷⁸⁶ James Harrison, *Life Among the Pygmies*, (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1905), 6–7.

⁷⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

this also provided an opportunity for further publicity.⁷⁸⁸ Casement's report signalled the end of Leopold's rule in 1908, although appalling conditions indeed continued under different guises. As Breedon has shown, Ward was actively involved with the development of the Congo Reform Association (CRA) founded by Morel and Casement; he contributed towards funding the campaign and in setting up their first meeting.⁷⁸⁹ As a result, Morel, Casement and Ward strongly opposed Belgian imperialism.

In contrast, Lever's interest in establishing a palm-oil monopoly in the Congo began as early as 1902. Whilst he condemned the CRA, he pursued Morel for his connections and influences. With no intention of taking Morel's advice regarding rights for the indigenous population, Lever claimed, whilst attempting to establish his plantations, that "no useful purpose" would be served should "the white man [...] reverse the Divine Order" since his, supposedly, higher "intellectual power" benefited the "inferior nations".⁷⁹⁰ In line with Stone's assumptions of British rule, and to justify his self-righteous beliefs that he and his palm-oil plantations were "wise and enlightened", Lever argued that indigenous peoples left to their own devices were uneconomic.⁷⁹¹ Yet, within a few years, John became Lever's favoured sculptor, following the death of Ford in 1901. Whilst John already had connections in Liverpool, his relationship with one of the wealthiest and most prominent men of the early twentieth century resulted in several prestigious public commissions for John including the recumbent Lady Lever Effigy (1915),⁷⁹² and his ensemble masterpiece memorial at Port Sunlight, *The Defence of Home* (1919 see figs. 47 and 48).⁷⁹³ John, we know, was linked by the marriage of Muriel to Lever's close friend the Royal Academician social-realist-turned-portrait painter Sir Luke Fildes (1843-1927), who originally came from the Liverpool area.⁷⁹⁴ Fildes' son, a lawyer and Olympic fencer, Luke Val Fildes married John's only child, Muriel, in 1914. Following active service

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid

⁷⁸⁹ Breedon, "A voice from the Congo", 185.

⁷⁹⁰ Marchal *Lord Leverhulme's Ghosts*, xxi

⁷⁹¹ Ibid.

⁷⁹² In 1925 John was commissioned to add the effigy of the recently deceased Lord Lever alongside Lady Lever's effigy.

⁷⁹³ Alan Borg, *War Memorials: From Antiquity to the Present* (London: Leo Cooper, 1991), 78.

⁷⁹⁴ Lever started collecting paintings in 1887 and became a regular visitor to the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibitions often looking for paintings to advertise his soap. He bought Millais' *Bubbles* in 1896 and Fildes' *An Al-Fresco Toilette* in 1889.

during World War I, Luke Val Fildes obtained a secretary-ship with Lever Brothers until he retired in 1946. He also served as a trustee of the Lady Lever Art Gallery and its collections at Port Sunlight between 1934 and 1967.

Lever was a gregarious and shrewd industrialist, philanthropist, colonialist, art collector and patron of the arts. The son of a grocer from Bolton in Lancashire, he embodied the Victorian principles of ‘hard work’ and ‘enterprise’⁷⁹⁵ and, influenced by models of American commerce, created one of the world’s first multinational corporations. During his lifetime, the Port Sunlight Soap Company comprised of two hundred and fifty subsidiary companies employing eighty thousand staff. He famously built and designed the model village, Port Sunlight for his employees and whilst serving as a Liberal MP introduced the Old Age Pension and the forty-hour working week.⁷⁹⁶ Lever motivated his work force through a paternalistic socio-cultural manipulation. Lever’s ‘utopian’ vision for his workforce was not merely one-way philanthropy on his part but as a means of fulfilling the potential productivity of his duty-bound employees. Lever was controversial, determined and exploitative in pursuing his goals. In 1911, in apparent conflict to his ideological philanthropy he acquired the palm oil plantations in the Belgian Congo. Here he endorsed forced labour for the production of cheap palm oil to supply his factories in Britain.

There is no evidence that John shared Lever’s, or the others’, opinions. Nevertheless, John would have been aware of public opinion following Casement’s report. Keeping his personal beliefs to himself was tactically prudent, allowing John to network successfully in diverse socio-political circles to gain the commissions he so eagerly sought. Considering the *Bokani* as a sympathetic portrait indicates his tactical response to this furore and the formal influential sources he employed.

Artistic Influences

⁷⁹⁵ Codell, 2012: 258.

⁷⁹⁶ See Oxford Dictionary of National Biography and www.thorntonmanor.co.uk/history, accessed March 25, 2013.

Despite John's anthropological assertions, within the RA and the NMW, several self-consciously artistic influences are apparent in the *Bokani*. In Britain, the most well known sculptures of colonised people during the late nineteenth century were on the Albert Memorial (1872). William Theed's group, *Africa* (fig. 3.49), for example, prominently portrays an Egyptian queen astride a decorated camel along with a sphinx, North African dealers present their packaged goods and ivory tusks, while a single Sub-Saharan African male, with tribal adornments, submits to a classicised European female figure holding a scroll. This group asserts the trade advantages that were imperative to British imperial strength. However, by the turn of the twentieth century, Rodin and New Sculpture influences were competing with Theed's earlier example, and in London, Gilbert's work was inspiring many young artists including John.

For ambitious sculptors aiming for Academy Associateship, aligning their work with Gilbert was an advantageous move. A prime example is Pomeroy's *The Spearman* (fig. 3.50), exhibited at the RA in 1900. Rather than a realistic study in the style of Ward, the covered head and downward glance of concentration of this full-length bronze suggests Gilbert's *Icarus*, whilst the extended arms and attention to anatomic detail draw on Leighton's *Athlete*. We know John greatly admired Gilbert, and, as already discussed, would own his most important small symbolist works, *Icarus* and *Head*. The "beautiful girl's head", he believed had changed British sculpture.⁷⁹⁷ John's sketchbook containing a female face with covered head and, like the *Bokani*, in Chantrey-esque head-turn demonstrates this work's impact (fig. 3.51). John's emotional attachment is further evident when, in 1938, after promising to give the *Head* to the Museum he changed his mind at the last minute claiming, "I could not strip myself quite naked & that for the time being you had plenty to go on with".⁷⁹⁸ As an ideal Symbolist piece, that, as discussed in Chapter 1, depicts a mood rather than a portrait, the inclined head and downcast eyes, that also resist the spectators' gaze, become the external expression of Gilbert's rigorous exploration of inner emotion.⁷⁹⁹ In the same way that Dormont recognised Gilbert had portrayed in the

⁷⁹⁷ John, letter to Williams, May 1938 NMW A581.

⁷⁹⁸ John, letter to Williams, 1938, NMW A116; John eventually gave *Head of a Girl* to the Museum in 1946.

⁷⁹⁹ The sitter was an Italian nurse, Michaelena, employed by Gilbert to look after his son.

Head of a Girl, a “feeling [...] for the humanity of the subject” so did John in the *Bokani*.⁸⁰⁰

While John’s meticulous attention to anatomical detail is nevermore so demonstrated than in the *Boy* (fig. 3.52), he was also interested in types. As works such as *Age* and *Childhood*, both portraits of family members, demonstrate when exhibited as realistic sculptural explorations of old age and youthful innocence (see figs. 2.2 & 2.3). John’s sketchbooks also contain images of those he met on his travels such as *Tangier 1890*, of an Algerian monk, or the Greek *Skipper* of the steamer that took them to Italy (figs. 3.53). Consequently, the *Bokani*, as a type, fits within this collection. Naming the sitter places it within the parameters of portraiture. This is especially so in comparison with other portrait sculptures evoking the personality of the sitter.⁸⁰¹

John was not the only artist to record the likeness of the pygmies, John Macallan Swan, a fellow member of the St John’s Wood Art Club, of whom John produced a bust (exhibited in 1910, fig. 3.54), also painted an oil portrait of the youngest woman, Kuarke, and a pastel of Bokani in 1905 (fig. 3.55).⁸⁰² From his elevated position, Swan portrays Bokani, smiling slightly with feathers woven into his hair, looking up and out of the picture frame. Whilst the lower positioning emphasises Bokani’s size, the position of his head and naked upper torso suggest that Bokani is sitting, relaxed, and slightly reclined. The composition and pastel media gives Swan’s work an informality not seen in John’s bronze bust.

⁸⁰⁰Dorment, *Alfred Gilbert*, 608.

⁸⁰¹The *Bokani*’s sharp turning head recalls Michelangelo’s the *Rebellious Slave* (1513), while John admired Michelangelo, it also reflects Rodin’s “love [for] the great Florentine master”. As the previous chapters make clear, the *Bokani* was not the only work to reflect Rodin’s influence. In a series of interviews with Paul Gsell, Rodin claimed, “my works have certainly felt the effects of this passion”.⁸⁰¹ Considering *Man with a Broken Nose* (fig. 3.56), suggests that there are direct Rodin influences in the *Bokani*. Modelled from a Parisian workman in 1863, the blank pupil-less eyes reference classical sculpture, along with Michelangelo-esque attention to the surface texture and detail. Features such as the deeply furrowed forehead, the vigorous beard, the irregular planes and volumes of the sunken right cheek and broken nose bring about the individual characteristics of the head. Rodin’s infusion of ancient Greek Phidian sculpture and Michelangelo meant that the model’s rough working-class features had been elevated to that of an ancient classical statesman; this draws parallels with John’s treatment of Bokani.

⁸⁰²Swan’s painting *Orpheus*, 1896, originally from Lever’s private collection, now at the Lady Lever Art Gallery in Port Sunlight, is formally very similar to John’s *Boy at Play*, 1895.

In summing up, the *Bokani*, then, clearly demonstrates a network of influences from Michelangelo, Chantry, Gilbert, Rodin, and Carpeaux, but most importantly as a portrait, the *Bokani* embodied the late-nineteenth-century New Sculptural combination of symbolist expression and naturalistic verisimilitude. As Ward publically asserted, he intended to raise “a feeling of interest and sympathy for [his] African friends”,⁸⁰³ believing that “[h]uman nature is always the same; it does not change [;...] that there are certain qualities indigenous to the human mind [... that] we share with Africans [that] should surely be regarded, more than they are at present.”⁸⁰⁴ Despite embedded racist language and assumptions, Ward recognised a universal humanity in the people he met, John’s portrayal of Bokani supports a recognition of shared humanity.

Under the umbrella of popular entertainment, science and art, the *Bokani* worked within specific contexts. John’s focus on Bokani does not negate his objectification of him, yet offering an insight into his humanity was, as Rodin claimed, to “look at a human face to decipher a soul”.⁸⁰⁵ I have demonstrated, in this section, that John, as best he could, looked at Bokani’s human face to reveal his soul to a western audience.

The three imperial works discussed, all exhibited at the RA in London, in their different ways reference place and movement, and draw on various aspects of colonialism. While we can never know for certain what it meant to John to complete these works at a time of considerable unrest and anti-British feeling in India and the Empire more broadly, the statues each posit notions of Bhabha’s “dialogues of colonial power”, as part of an attempt to continue to impose “a mode of civil authority and order”.⁸⁰⁶ John, as part of this system, saw the emerging strains and confictions. But it is perhaps to his credit that whereas a shared social history placed the Indian elite in closer proximity to British imperialists than their white working-class British contemporaries,⁸⁰⁷ John also elevated Bokani by resisting his obvious ‘exotic’ signifiers and depicted him through the idiom of New Sculptural portraiture.

⁸⁰³ Ward, *A Voice*, 323.

⁸⁰⁴ Ward, *A Voice*, 460.

⁸⁰⁵ Gsell, *Art: Conversations*, 20.

⁸⁰⁶ Homi Bhabha, “Signs Taken for Wonders”, 32.

⁸⁰⁷ See David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British saw their Empire*, (London: Penguin Books, 2002), 58.

Conclusion

John was a tactician who realised that the exceptional quality of his work was not enough to ensure his career. He recognised early that he had to make a space for himself and his work, and that the only way to do this was through differentiation. To achieve this he focused on asserting his strengths, or, to borrow a business term, his “USP” or unique selling points, namely realistic naturalism and modelling, and gaining the attention and admiration of the critics and fellow artists who had serious influence on the exhibition circuits. The same, initially successfully USP, however, ultimately led to his fall from fashion and from more recent scholarship. Like all New Sculptors, he faced the onslaught of the next generation of direct carvers who emphatically (and successfully) rejected John’s hard-worked-for values. But unlike many of his New Sculptural peers, John’s work has struggled to find a champion in early twenty-first century British art history. His was not *Sculpture Victorious*.

John, the patriotic Welshman, cosmopolitan European, and frequently imperial artist, was popular and loyal to his friends. That he enjoyed socialising, including hosting and attending many dinners and social events, with guests such as Rodin and Gilbert, demonstrated his tactical success. Affiliations and loyalty were important to him; while he enjoyed the company of men and women, he especially valued the homosocial bonds of friendship. John understood the value of self-portrayal, specifically at a time of fluid and contentious masculinities. He was also a highly literary sculptor, whose overt and subliminal use of poetic texts, in the *Morpheus*, *St John*, and *The Elf*, align him with a range of European avant-garde writers, as well as heavyweights from the British canon.

John clearly operated within conventional systems; while he kept his political views out of print to avoid hindering future commissions, he did not always avoid conflict or controversy and some of his works subtly challenged common preconceptions. In circumnavigating the works in John’s upper studio photograph, this thesis has not only mapped his national and international connections but expanded the imperial geo-political and art historical relations of the New Sculpture, from London to India, and back to Wales, that least glamorous colonial locale. Over time, the changing politics and geography of these objects has taken on new or adapted meanings. While

his work is now less widely acknowledged, it continues to have an impact. His work in former imperial locations is likely to come under increasing political scrutiny and militant action in the context of the Black Lives Matter movements and ‘all-monuments-must-fall’ imperatives. But John’s never-less-than-careful work makes his future relevance hard to evaluate. On the one hand, *Sir Stanley Maude* was destroyed in Baghdad during the 1958 Revolution and the equestrian *Minto* and the *Singh* were relocated following Indian Independence. On the other hand, the bronze *Singh* is now widely appreciated by a twenty-first century Hindu audience and in South Africa, John’s *Edward VII* and his *Capetown Volunteers* are still in the busy square in Cape Town.

The wide range of this thesis is intended to open up future scholarship. Much remains to be done. John’s prolific medal and numismatic work remains largely unexplored. The John family’s love for and centrality to nineteenth-century Gothic revival architecture also points to the way in which the field of British Medievalism has been dominated by architectural historians, leaving much yet to be understood about Gothic revival sculpture. This thesis’ major in-depth study contributes to the very small oeuvre of work on second generation New Sculptors, Ward, Frampton and Tweed, and is the only one to consider, through John, Wales and Empire together. Looking at networking and self-fashioning tactics opens up exciting possibilities for further research and potential exhibitions. For example, the second generation’s negotiations included differentiating themselves from each other while appealing to the first generation and their support. In terms of exhibitions, this might include the impact of the RA exhibitions on student sculptors; Rodin and British New Sculpture; or an exploration of rivalries and friendships through particular works, for example, those of John and Frampton.

The New Sculpture’s relation to national and imperial identities also requires significantly more research. This includes an area currently of interest: post-colonial imperialism and museums. I am currently in discussions with the NMW on the potential for an exhibition that examines Wales and empires more broadly. Amongst other works, this would include the *Bokani*, as well as those by Ward and Bose. The exhibition would reinterpret their relevance to encourage engagement with the diversity of local multi-cultural communities. As we approach Brexit, and the

potential fracturing of the United Kingdom and the European Union, John's work may never have been more important.

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