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**BODIES OF EVIDENCE: MAKING NEW HISTORIES
OF 20TH CENTURY BRITISH SCULPTURE**

SARAH CRELLIN

**A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy by publication**

September 2015

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ABSTRACT

This thesis includes a monograph, *The Sculpture of Charles Wheeler* (London: Lund Humphries in association with the Henry Moore Foundation, 2012), and a catalogue essay 'Let There Be History: Epstein's BMA House Sculptures', in *Modern British Sculpture*, ed. by Penelope Curtis and Keith Wilson (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2011). The book is the first study of Wheeler, an important but neglected sculptor who was President of the Royal Academy from 1956-66; the Epstein essay looks anew at a notorious episode in the career of one of modernism's canonical practitioners, coming to radically different conclusions to the accepted narrative. The accompanying analytical commentary reflects on the complex research journey towards understanding and articulating hidden histories of modern British sculpture. Deploying traditional methodologies of archive exploration and making connections between divergent critical and artistic groupings has enabled the construction of new histories. Disrupting the appropriation and elision of 'modern' with 'modernist' and 'avant-garde' restores the work of non-canonical practitioners to the historical moment of the first half of the 20th Century, while historical analysis draws mythologised artists into the contingencies of the real world. These publications offer original insights and their impact is becoming evident in the fields of British sculptural and architectural history.

Beginning in the recent past as I prepared to write this thesis, the commentary moves into the deeper history of the research journey, considering my theoretical approaches, the initial difficulties of writing against the prevailing academic fashion, the serendipities of a supportive scholarly milieu and the details of making Wheeler's history. The value of the monograph itself is discussed. Reviewing Epstein's modernist *cause célèbre* proved the transferable value of dispassionate archival research. The commentary finally comes full circle, concluding in October 2014 when I found myself, unexpectedly, implicated in the very history to which I have contributed.

KEY Terms:

Charles Wheeler; Jacob Epstein; 20th Century British Sculpture; Architectural Sculpture; Monograph

Acknowledgements

To name everyone who contributed to the evolution of this PhD by publication I would need to reprint the lengthy acknowledgements in my book, *The Sculpture of Charles Wheeler*, and I heartily reiterate my thanks to all those individuals. In the making of this PhD submission I particularly wish to express my deep gratitude to four scholarly guides. My mentors and referees, Ben Read and Penelope Curtis, whose names recur throughout my text, have provided guidance and support without which my work would have been impossible. And I want to thank my advisors at the University of Huddersfield, Rowan Bailey and Alison Rowley, for their interest, encouragement, insightful advice and diligent assistance in the execution of this project. Our regular discussions have made me think more clearly and their support has made the rigours of the writing process more enjoyable than I dared expect. Finally, I must declare my profound gratitude for the indispensable domestic comforts of a room of one's own, a companionable dog and, most important of all, an endlessly patient and supportive husband.

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Andrew Lambirth
- 91 8. *Sculpture Journal*, Volume 23.1, 2014, pp. 103-105, review by Ian Leith
- 95 9. *Burlington Magazine*, 156, no. 1340, (November 2014), p. 766, brief review
by Ayla Lepine
- 97 10. Book's impact on *Art and the War at Sea 1914-1945*, Lund Humphries,
October 2015. E-mail exchange with editor, Christine Riding, Head of Arts,
Royal Museums Greenwich, August 5 2015.

Analytical Commentary (pp. 12-49), 12,200 words, including notes.

References and bibliography follow MHRA conventions.

Academic Biography: The Formation of a Sculpture Historian

It began in 1994. With a degree in ancient and medieval history (UCL 1980) and having been at home for nearly ten years with a family, I was eager for a new intellectual challenge. The unique local opportunity offered by the Leeds University MA in Sculpture Studies (MASS) was intriguing, and I joined the 1994-95 cohort alongside five students with recent art and cultural history degrees and two practising sculptors. The interdisciplinary group was designed to stimulate discussion, sharing experiences and varied expertise to make the whole greater than the sum of its parts. Coming *tabula rasa* into the field I had little expectation that this might be the beginning of a new scholarly life.

The core focus of MASS was 20th Century sculpture, with opportunities to study other topics in the latter half of the year. As course director Benedict Read demonstrated that there was plenty of scope for scholarship and historical interest beyond the fashions of the academy and the limitations of a canon. Read had a degree in Classics, was the author of a major book on Victorian sculpture¹ - researched when few were interested in the subject - and his 1986 essay 'Sculpture in Britain Between the Wars' confirmed his authority on 20th Century sculpture in both the margins and the mainstream.² Read was a powerful advocate for writing history of modernities beyond the cult of high modernism that his father, Herbert Read, had done so much to promote from the 1930s onwards. I had begun to notice that sculpture of the first half of the twentieth century surrounded us on buildings and in public spaces and that this physical evidence of the past was bafflingly underserved by the interpretative historical or critical literature. In one of his MASS course lectures, 'Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About

¹ Benedict Read, *Victorian Sculpture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

² Read, introductory essay in Benedict Read and Peyton Skipwith, *Sculpture in Britain Between the Wars* (London: Fine Art Society, 1986). Exhibition, Fine Art Society, 10 June to 1 August 1986.

British Sculpture, But Were Afraid to Ask', Read alluded to the lacunae in this 'hidden' history. The possibilities of this subject attracted me: I liked a sleuthing challenge, and was feeling my way in a new discipline.

Studying ancient and medieval history involves assimilating not just a wide range of secondary historiography and primary documentary sources (in the original languages or in translation), but understanding and 'reading' material remains as evidence – buildings, domestic ephemera, public inscriptions, images, monuments, and so forth. All are examined, compared, contrasted and subject to critical scrutiny in developing a coherent judgment. When evidence is fragmentary and disparate (usually the case in ancient and medieval studies) the historian proceeds with caution and lateral thinking to make reasonable, informed steps towards understanding. History allows us to place stories in context, to study events and individuals and to cast a critical eye over the evidence and the implications of source material. Historiography itself is called into question as we consider what to write about and how to write it.³ The silent and the silenced may not figure much, if at all, in written accounts, but their presence must be acknowledged and understood if a broader context is to be developed and historical justice served. Immersion in wider evidence can enable us to demur from what has gone before and to argue a case for change.

Read asserted in his 1986 essay that Charles Wheeler was the chief representative of an important artistic creed contrasting that of Henry Moore.⁴

³ Historiography is a vast subject. An engaging brief guide to the study and writing of history is John H. Arnold's *History: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) which traverses the subject from ancient times to the end of the twentieth century. Arnold cites Arnaldo Momigliano's important *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990).

⁴ Read, *Sculpture In Britain Between The Wars*, p 21.

Wheeler, therefore, seemed to be an inescapably key figure for re-evaluation in any expansion of the history of twentieth century British sculpture. After completing the MA, I began PhD research on this neglected individual.⁵ It was my hope that meticulous archival exploration, wide-ranging reading and the pursuit of any available leads, clues and sources might yield connections to complicate and re-populate the received 'history' of British Sculpture.

PUBLICATIONS

'Hollow Men: The Masks and Memorials of Francis Derwent Wood 1915-25', *Sculpture Journal*, 6, 2001, 75-88

'Infrastructures, 1925-50: Architecture, Artisans and Applied Sculpture', in *Sculpture in 20th Century Britain*, edited by P. Curtis, D. Raine, M. Withey, J. Wood, V. Worsley, 2 vols (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2003), 1, 88-100

'Charles Wheeler', in Curtis, Raine et al, 2, 358-359

Five entries for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004):

'William Reid Dick.'

'Alfred Hardiman.'

'Captain Adrian Jones.'

'Charles Wheeler.'

'Francis Derwent Wood'.

'Let There Be History: Epstein's BMA House Sculptures', in *Modern British Sculpture* edited by Penelope Curtis and Keith Wilson, (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2011)

The Sculpture of Charles Wheeler, (London: Lund Humphries in association with the Henry Moore Foundation, 2012)

⁵ PhD later suspended, as the commentary will explain.

'We Will Remember them', review for Public Monuments and Sculpture Association (PMSA) online journal, *3rd Dimension*:
 3rd-dimensionpmsa.org.uk/reviews/2014-11-07-we-will-remember-them-quadriga-gallery (unpaginated, accessed August 2015)

LECTURES

1996: Invited speaker, 'The sculpture of Hermon Cawthra', PMSA AGM, Meeting room, The Marble Arch, London.

1997: 'Advanced Academician and Moderate Modernist: The case of Charles Wheeler', conference paper, *Rethinking Englishness 1880-1940*, University of York.

1998: (1) 'A Truly Plastic Art: Sculptors and facial prosthetics in The Great War', symposium, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, February 1998.

(2) 'Raising Interest: Charles Wheeler and the Bank of England', PhD upgrade lecture, Department of Fine Art, University of Leeds, October 1998.

1999: 'Raising Interest: Charles Wheeler and the Bank of England' (paper developed from lecture above), *Association of Art Historians Conference*, Southampton.

2002: (1) Invited speaker, Lunchtime Lecture, Leeds City Art Gallery, on Derwent Wood's facial masks, to coincide with *Saving Faces* exhibition.

(2) Invited speaker, 'Plastic Arts: Sculptors and Surgeons in the Great War', *War, Art and Medicine*, international conference, Slade/ UCL.

2003: Invited speaker, 'That's the way to Do it: Peeps at Plinths in *Punch* 1841-1930', One Day Symposium, Courtauld Institute of Art, *Sculpture and the Pedestal*, June 10 2003.

2006: 'Saul Hath Slain his Thousands, but David his Ten Thousands': Unmasking Francis Derwent Wood's Machine Gun Corps Memorial', *The First World War and Popular Culture*, international conference, University of Newcastle.

2007: Invited speaker, Society of Portrait Sculptors Annual Lecture, National Portrait Gallery, 'A Tribute to the Advance School: Putting Charles Wheeler on the Map'.

2009: Invited Speaker and panel discussion participant, Royal Academy Architecture Forum, November 2009.

2012: 'Permanence in Progress: the symbolic architecture and sculpture of Herbert Baker and Charles Wheeler', architectural history strand, *Association of Art Historians Conference*, Open University.

2013: 'The Writing on the Wall: Aspects of Architectural Sculpture and Arnold Whittick's *Symbols for Designers* (1935)', Symposium, *Stylistic Dead Ends? Fresh Perspectives on British Architecture between the Wars*, St John's College, Oxford, June 2013.

2014: Invited speaker, 20th Century Society Autumn Lecture Series, 'Architecture and Personalities: Charles Wheeler and Architectural Sculpture 1919-1960', November 20 2014.

2015: Invited speaker, PMSA Conference *Sculptors and War*, March 24 2015, 'Masks, Memorials and Anniversaries: thoughts on researching and revisiting Francis Derwent Wood's Great War work 1915-2015'.

2016: Invitations received from the Henry Moore Institute and the Church Monuments Society.

Analytical Commentary

Part 1: Setting the Scene

1.1 Introduction

Lecturing in 1987 on the literature of the 1930s Frank Kermode asserted:

Some workable notion of canon, some examined idea of history, [...is] necessary to any concept of past value [...] necessary even to the desired rehabilitation of the unfairly neglected. [...] The tradition of value, flawed as it is, remains valuable. Certainly it should be constantly scrutinised, so that the past, already diminished by our selective manipulations, is not reduced even further by unnecessary compliance with fashion or prejudice.⁶

This reflective analytical commentary shows how my work on Charles Wheeler, originally a PhD project, transformed into a lengthy research and writing process that has sought to redress some of the ‘selective manipulations’ of the sculptural past. A monograph, *The Sculpture of Charles Wheeler*, and an essay, ‘Let There Be History: Epstein’s BMA House Sculpture’, emerged from this metamorphosis and are submitted in this PhD by publication to complete the cycle.

In accepting and resisting the canon, I took my lead from Benedict Read and made the hidden histories of early 20th Century British sculpture my own terrain. I will show how the obscured histories of the ‘unfairly neglected’ Charles Wheeler and the canonically ‘valued’ Jacob Epstein can be revealed and disentangled by the same traditional historical methodologies. Using the theories and approach of literary and cultural critics to support my ideas I immersed myself in archival research, scrutinising the specifics of individuals and their wider historical context. I will refer to my work on other artists and aspects of sculpture, showing how it contributed to the wider field of sculpture studies and fed into the Wheeler and

⁶ Frank Kermode, *History and Value: The Clarendon Lectures and The Northcliffe Lectures 1987*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p.108

Epstein projects. I discuss the contested form of the art monograph, defending its role as a vehicle for deep historical research.

In setting the scene for 'making new histories' of Wheeler and Epstein, I allude to auditory cues and visual imagery that have metaphorical and literal connections to my modes of thinking and methodologies. The text is written as a discursive narrative, the lion's share devoted to the exploratory nature of my thoughts about writing this analysis and the long 'working out' of the Wheeler project. A more concise description of my thinking and approach to the Epstein essay reflects how my methodology was applied with focus and intensity to that shorter project.

Like my subjects, I too am subject to the forces of a specific historical moment. My work gained momentum in the peri-millennial years, inspired and propelled by individuals who inhabited the particular intellectual atmosphere in which I was fortunate to find myself. This reflective commentary analyses the processes and consequences of researching outside 'unnecessary compliance with fashion or prejudice.' These new histories now take their place in the literature of 20th Century British sculpture and architecture.

1.2 Small Thoughts on Writing a PhD by Publication: a Minimalist Musical Canon and a Box of Dinosaur Bones

Two 'small thoughts' struck me as I contemplated writing a review and analysis of my publications and intellectual formation – a history of the histories, as it were. The first was a persistent 'earworm' recollection of a piece of music and its text; the second was prompted by a newspaper article, about fossils discovered on the Isle of Skye. Together they bizarrely encapsulate the actual and metaphorical nature of my work in formulating new histories of sculpture in 20th Century Britain.

Steve Reich's composition 'Proverb' takes as its single line text an aphorism of Ludwig Wittgenstein: 'how small a thought it takes to fill a whole life'.⁷ Reich's minimalist canon circles and returns in mesmerising, repetitive loops and variations. The thought and musical idea expand in a quasi-liturgical chant, resonating in the acoustic space of performance and in my head. Small thoughts in the mind of an historian can unexpectedly fill if not a whole life, then a significant proportion of one. Ideas accrue grains of material reality (evidence), fragment into major and minor components and seek other ideas, more evidence. The nature of making a history is a process of searching, finding, analysing and synthesising. It is not just a process of detection – though sleuthing is an essential component – but of bringing what has been detected through to trial. Truth can be told only when 'facts' have been scrutinised in a context of meaning, interpretation and finally, of judgment. Reich's piece resonates, I think, because I see that my work has required a persistent - even dogged - attempt to be rigorous in expanding ideas through themes and variations, ultimately coming back to seeking a satisfactory resolution of the initial enquiry: why were there so many gaps in the history of British figurative sculpture in the first half of the 20th Century, and how could they be filled?

The second small thought arose from a recent news story.⁸ In 1959 Brian Shawcross discovered fossilised bones in the rocks on a beach in Skye. He donated them to the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow where they lay unexamined for over fifty years. They were finally analysed in 2014 and found to be the remains of an ichthyosaur, the first found in Scotland and of a hitherto unknown species to boot. The parallels between the work of palaeontologists reconstructing and reinterpreting a set of disarticulated remains that were disregarded for decades,

⁷ Steve Reich. Proverb. Composed 1995. CD 4, Nonesuch 7559-79962-2. 2006.

⁸ 'Overlooked Fossil is New Marine Species', *The Times*, 12 January 2015.

and my own interests in neglected areas of British sculpture seem beguilingly apposite. Some colleagues thought that uncovering less charismatic dinosaurs was precisely what I was about when I began research in the late 1990s. It has been interesting reassembling those scattered skeletons to flesh out the wider ecosystem of British sculpture.

1.3 Foundation Literature Review: The Expanding Field of 20th Century British Sculpture Studies and Cultural Criticism in the 1980s and 1990s

Sculpture

The expansion and revision beyond the modernist canon of the history of sculpture in 20th Century Britain began in the 1980s, gained momentum in the late 1990s and accelerated after the millennium. In the early 1980s Read was among a handful of scholars bringing important but unsung figures into the narrative. Two exhibitions, at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1981 and at the Fine Art Society in 1986, generated key texts that began to fill the lacunae. In the foreword to their Whitechapel catalogue *British Sculpture in the Twentieth Century*, Sandy Nairne and Nicholas Serota explained their motivations and objectives:

The achievement of a small number of individual British sculptors has been widely recognised and exhibited. Moore, Hepworth, Caro and Long have a place in every history of twentieth century western art. But others, including such major figures as Alfred Gilbert, Jacob Epstein, Henri Gaudier Brzeska, and Eric Gill are much less well known. Furthermore the rare one-person exhibitions that have taken place have never been matched by that presentation of the work of contemporaries, which would disclose the full pattern of connections within a period [...] The book and the exhibition are designed to complement each other; to open up an area for discussion rather than to define or limit it.⁹

⁹ *British Sculpture in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Sandy Nairne and Nicholas Serota, (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1981).

Of the seventeen thematic catalogue essays I found the chapters by Farr, Read and Cork the most salient.¹⁰ The book included 126 brief biographies on sculptors working in Britain, born between 1845 and 1945. The paucity and age of the literature cited in these entries was notable, even for artists we now regard as key figures. Of Jacob Epstein's (1880-1960) eight citations, nothing was more recent than Richard Buckle's *Jacob Epstein's Sculpture* of 1963; Eric Gill (1882-1940) had seven texts from 1929-1969. Cork's catalogue essay on the sculpture of the London Underground headquarters was therefore a vital new assessment of a major project involving these two sculptors – crucially, an architectural one. Charles Sargeant Jagger (1885-1934) had just two references, of which the latest was his own manual *Modelling and Sculpture in the Making*, of 1933. Wheeler's list cited only his autobiography, *High Relief*, of 1968, and a *Studio* article by Thomas Bodkin from June 1956.¹¹ The Whitechapel catalogue's compendious bibliography offered a vital initial resource for researchers like me.

In 1986 Peyton Skipwith and Benedict Read curated an exhibition at the Fine Art Society, whose ground-breaking catalogue, *Sculpture in Britain Between the Wars*, revealed a rich variety of work by forty-seven artists, many hitherto relatively unknown.¹² Read's introductory essay opened up the arguments and surveyed the sculptural scene:

The canonical version of the development of modern sculpture in this country sees the emergence of the moderns (led by Moore) from a background wasteland of the debased end of a degenerate tradition.¹³

¹⁰ Dennis Farr, 'The Patronage and Support of Sculptors', pp. 9-37; Benedict Read, 'Classical and Decorative Sculpture', pp. 39-47; Richard Cork, 'Overhead Sculpture for the Underground Railway', pp.91-101, in Nairne and Serota.

¹¹ Charles Wheeler, *High Relief*, (London: Country Life, 1968)
Thomas Bodkin, 'Charles Wheeler CBE RA', *Studio*, 151, 759 (1956), 161-5

¹² Read and Skipwith, *Sculpture In Britain Between The Wars*, 1986.

¹³ Read, *ibid.*, p. 4.

While there was some truth in the simplistic vision, it was by no means the whole truth: 'for if one alters the focus to a wider, less partisan view, it is possible to detect other features of quite distinct vitality.'¹⁴ Read showed there was 'a quite distinct school of moderns' at the Royal Academy in the 1920s, 'with their own styles, principles and heroes. Kineton Parkes was their main chronicler.'¹⁵ Parkes made the point that carving had long been neglected while modelling held sway, but young sculptors were now being taught and encouraged to carve. Writing in the June 1933 edition of *Apollo* he reflected on a decade of this process of change, attributing to carving 'the revolution in sculpture at the Royal Academy'.¹⁶ The revolutionaries, Read tells us, 'are not those that normally figure in the histories of modern British Sculpture – they are William Reid Dick, William McMillan, Charles Wheeler, Gilbert Ledward and Richard Garbe.'¹⁷ The strength of these artists' presence in the interwar period must not be underestimated.

Read writes:

It was the Wheeler/McMillan group, whose modernism allied truth to material with a formalisation of the classical/baroque language of sculpture, who were the least subject to temptation from the call to abstraction, and indeed as abstraction to some extent removed its adherents to a (for the moment) minority Promised Land they were able to consolidate their position further [...] In the post Second World War period, Henry Moore won international acclaim and first prize at the Venice Biennale in 1948, while Charles Wheeler became president of the Royal Academy in 1956. As we now look back and begin, as every succeeding generation must, to sift out a different historical viewpoint from that of their contemporaries, while the twin honours of these two sculptors may seem to symbolise irreconcilable artistic creeds, it is hard not to allow that these also marked the culmination of a period when sculpture in this country had a range and vitality that none in that period need regret.¹⁸

In the decade following the Whitechapel exhibition, the group show *Sculpture In Britain Between The Wars* narrowed the timeline of attention and broadened the

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁶ Kineton Parkes, 'Sculpture at the Royal Academy', *Apollo*, June 1933, p. 246.

¹⁷ Read, *Sculpture In Britain Between The Wars*. P. 15.

¹⁸ Read, *Sculpture In Britain Between The Wars*, pp. 20, 21.

range of artists represented, while one of the most significant one-man exhibitions was *Charles Sargeant Jagger: War and Peace Sculpture, Centenary Exhibition*, at the Imperial War Museum in 1985.¹⁹ Other writers and curators worked to reanimate the reputations of Epstein and Gill, whose importance had been eclipsed by the dazzle of abstraction. The nature of their work also served to bring modern architectural sculpture to the fore, and Cork's *Art Beyond the Gallery in Early Twentieth Century Britain*²⁰ was a landmark. In the opening chapter 'Epstein's Statues in the Strand', Cork wrote comprehensively about Epstein's outstanding architectural figures for Holden's BMA House. As his advocate, Cork promoted Epstein's version of the events surrounding the statues' destruction, reinforcing to a new readership the perception that this 'scandal' had caused an irreparable rupture between the moderns and the Royal Academy in the mid 1930s.²¹ In a later chapter Cork revisited the protagonists of 'Overhead Sculpture for the Underground Railway', first described in the Whitechapel catalogue.²² Here Cork focused on Gill, Epstein and Moore. Moore's contribution to the ensemble occupied no more prominent a position than those of four other sculptors, Alfred Gerrard, Allan Wyon, Eric Aumonier and Samuel Rabinovitch, but Cork treated them as foils to his three 'heroes' rather than as key players in architect Charles Holden's plan to represent the whole gamut of modern sculpture on his building. The notion of this 'whole gamut' particularly interested me. In 1986 Evelyn Silber's monograph *The Sculpture of Epstein* confirmed that Epstein's star was in the

¹⁹ Also shown at the Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield, 1985-6. See A. Compton, editor, *Charles Sargeant Jagger: War and Peace Sculpture*, (London: Imperial War Museum, 1985).

²⁰ Richard Cork, *Art Beyond the Gallery in Early Twentieth Century Britain*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

²¹ 'Epstein's Statues in the Strand', *ibid.* pp. 9-60. Cork's (and Epstein's) version of the fate of the BMA House figures was widely accepted and unchallenged for over 20 years, and reiterated in Cork's catalogue essay 'Scandal on the Strand', in *Wild Thing: Epstein, Gaudier-Brzeska, Gill*, editor Richard Cork, (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2009), pp. 11-17.

²² 'Overhead Sculpture for the Underground Railway', Cork, *Art Beyond the Gallery*. pp. 249-326.

ascendant.²³ Two more Epstein publications followed.²⁴ In 1992 Judith Collins examined the career of that other pioneer of modern sculpture, Eric Gill, in the first major study of Gill's sculpture.²⁵ Despite these welcome contributions, in the mid 1990s the field of 20th Century British sculpture studies offered considerable scope for expansion. I looked to cultural critics for theoretical guidance.

Cultural Criticism

Raymond Williams's 'When Was Modernism?' was published in 1989 as a rebuttal of post-modernism.²⁶ Williams's rejection of this term as an ideological construction was predicated on what he saw as an undesirable formation, and his critique of the problems of conflating time with a narrow definition of what constituted the 'modern', was a rallying cry for the need to 'break out of the non-historical fixity of *post-modernism* [...] to a modern future in which community may be imagined again'.²⁷ Despite the differences in our intentions, I found this essay offered useful insights into the problems I faced as an investigator of what Williams called 'neglected works in the wide margins of the century'. In the early 1990s literary criticism began to expand beyond the celebrated minority modernist writers such as Joyce, Eliot and Woolf to encompass contemporary popular works by the likes of J. M. Barrie, G. B. Shaw, John Galsworthy and Arnold Bennett.²⁸ In the inter-war and post Second World War period a few renegades of the British

²³ Evelyn Silber *The Sculpture of Epstein with a Complete Catalogue*, (Oxford: Phaidon, 1986).

²⁴ Evelyn Silber and Terry Friedman, *Jacob Epstein: Sculpture and Drawings*, exhibition catalogue, (Leeds: Leeds City Art Gallery, 1987); Terry Friedman, *The Hyde Park Atrocity: Epstein's Rima Creation and Controversy*, (Leeds: Henry Moore Centre for the Study of Sculpture 1988).

²⁵ Judith Collins, *Eric Gill: Sculpture*, (London: Lund Humphries, 1992).

²⁶ Raymond Williams, 'When Was Modernism?' *New Left Review*, 175, May/June 1989, 48-52.

²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 27.

²⁸ Nigel Wheale, 'Modernism and its consequences: continuity or break?' in *The Postmodern Arts: An Introductory Reader*, editor Nigel Wheale (London: Routledge, 1995), 15-32, p. 26.

sculptural avant-garde became the focus of the dominant critical and art-historical discourse while the majority ‘insiders’ of the tried and tested professional and academic ‘establishment’ were critically regarded as operating ‘outside’ the highest intellectual and cultural sphere. If they were referred to at all it was as shadowy ciphers of reactionary philistinism. Major figures in this milieu (like Wheeler) became both marginalised and marginalia. As in literary criticism, the expansion of sculptural literature aimed to resist an ideologised history that required art forms to conform to particular criteria in order to be included - what Williams called a ‘highly selective version of the modern which [...] offer[ed] to appropriate the whole of modernity’.²⁹ Re-reading Williams has reminded me that one of his attractions is his insistence on the contextual precision of language. I needed to validate the ‘modernity’ of my artist subject(s) and saw the sense in Williams’s demand that we take into account the historical uses and evolutions of the terms ‘modern’ and ‘modernism’. Williams described how, after Ruskin’s *Modern Painters* was published in 1846, ‘very quickly [...] “modern” shifted its reference from “now” to “just now” or even “then”, and for some time has been a designation always going into the past with which “contemporary” may be contrasted for its presentness’.³⁰

Nigel Wheale echoed Williams in his objection to the reductive use of the term ‘modernism’:

The notion of a monolithic modernism creates false dichotomies between ‘formalist-progressive’ art and ‘conventional-realist’ work in the period, imposing categories that exclude, or lead to the denigration of, un-modernist works, and which are unhelpful in thinking about the complex liaisons between works and their social contexts. And too often the period immediately prior to the heroic phase of experimental cultural production is vilified, as false dichotomies are created between nineteenth-century and

²⁹ For a sculptural parallel see P. Curtis, ‘How direct carving stole the idea of modern British sculpture’, in *Sculpture and the Pursuit of the Modern Ideal in Britain c. 1880-1930*, editor David J. Getsy, (Aldershot: Ashgate 2004).

³⁰ Williams, op. cit., p. 23.

early twentieth-century production, leaving significant figures stranded as 'transitional' or 'failed' formalists.³¹

These were the conditions surrounding Charles Wheeler and his like-minded contemporaries that I wanted to challenge and disrupt. Strange bedfellows as they may seem, interesting connections may be made between Williams's terminological analysis and Wheeler's earlier wrestling with language in a *Times* article in 1954:

[Wheeler] described how it was now "necessary to write "modern" and "contemporary" as adjectives to the Fine Arts, both with and without inverted commas". The words now had a double meaning. Modern or contemporary sculpture was mostly understandable to the average man, whereas 'modern' or 'contemporary' sculpture, produced at the same time, was often obscure.³²

In 1997 David Peters-Corbett's *The Modernity of English Art* was published.³³

Although the book focused on painting, I found helpful parallels with my aim to understand 'modern' British sculpture: 'What is relevant to the art of a period like the 1920s in England is not so much the productions of modernism as the constitution of modernity under which all art was produced.'³⁴ To coincide with this publication, Peters-Corbett organised the conference 'Re-thinking Englishness 1880-1940', held in July 1997 at the University of York. The meeting covered many aspects of the English art scene over the period, aiming to widen the understanding of both 'Englishness' and modernity. It was here that I delivered my first lecture on Charles Wheeler, to which I refer later.

³¹ Wheale, op.cit., pp. 27-28.

³² Charles Wheeler 'Modern Sculpture: Revolutionary Trends in the Last Fifty Years', *The Times*, 24 November 1954, quoted in Crellin, *The Sculpture Of Charles Wheeler*, p. 92. I did not allude to Williams in my commentary.

³³ David Peters-Corbett, *The Modernity of English Art*, (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1997).

³⁴ Ibid. p. 14.

PART 2: Making New Histories 1: Charles Wheeler

2.1 Introduction: Looking at British Sculpture

Two pieces of optical equipment are essential, both literally and metaphorically, when seeking to change perceptions of the history of modern British sculpture: a magnifying glass and a pair of binoculars. The magnifier allows us to focus on small details in the background of images or texts, such as items on the studio wall, the floor, or the mantelpiece; to decipher handwriting, dates, or signatures. Binoculars permit a close-up view of distant real-world objects, pulling into view the remote carving on a building, the detail of a lofty finial bronze, the subtle reliefs of a plaster corbel or ceiling. Reversed, binoculars will distance an overwhelming object projecting a more proportionate image on the retina, adding perspective and contextual scale. This visual imagery and methodological practice has been key to my work; changing the depth of field substantially alters how we view the work of individual sculptors. The submitted publications represent contrasting approaches to the monograph. *The Sculpture Of Charles Wheeler* uses the form to open up a wider view of twentieth-century art to new perspectives, focusing closely on an artist who was a contemporary of Henry Moore but whose presence in the history was marginalised by Moore's dominance (not least in cogent monographs). This new monographic treatment of a historic figure does not set out narrowly to promote the career and individual exceptionalism of the artist, but places him back in his context, with the catalogue acting as the first quasi-retrospective exhibition of his work. By contrast, 'Let There Be History: Epstein's BMA House Sculptures' expands the discourse by resisting the restrictive monographic (and autobiographic) cult of personality of Epstein and his BMA project, whose repetition over decades has ascended to mythology and all but eradicated the historical context. With Wheeler I zoom in; with Epstein I zoom out.

2.2 Finding my Way and Modelling a Method

In my lecture at ‘Re-thinking Englishness 1880 – 1940’, University of York, July 1997, I opened my talk, ‘Advanced Academician and Moderate Modernist: the case of Charles Wheeler’, with a slide of Tenniel’s engraving of Alice conversing with the Cheshire Cat, and the following quotation:

‘ “Cheshire Puss,” Alice began, rather timidly... “Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”

“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to”, said the Cat.

“I don’t much care where,” said Alice.

“Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,” said the Cat.”³⁵

I used this passage to illustrate that there were many choices to be made on the career path for sculptors at the end of the Great War. But Alice’s worry about direction was also very much my own as a researcher. I concluded thus: ‘To bring an artist from the edges of peripheral vision into sharp focus requires only a slight turn of the head’. I needed to move into that peripheral space.

Despite the validation of cultural critics to explore the curious margins beyond the category errors and limitations of modernism, it felt somewhat alarming to embark on studying the work of a man with no known archive. This might seem odd bearing in mind my early immersion in the essentially fragmentary and provisional world of classical and medieval history, but it was unusual to begin a 20th Century topic like this with such scanty documentary fuel. This lack seemed surprising given the recent date of Wheeler’s work, but with the array of 20th Century print media, photography and institutional archives I could at least hope that a paper chase might expand what could and could not be known. Despite the scale and

³⁵ First published 1865, my edition is Martin Gardiner, *The Annotated Alice. Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass by Lewis Carroll, Illustrated by John Tenniel*, (New York: Bramhall House, 1960), p. 88.

presence of Wheeler's work, what was fragmented was not the materiality of the sculpture but the integrity of a comprehensive or comprehensible historical record.³⁶ (This was in stark contrast to my later work on Epstein, where quasi 'medieval' sculptural remains were highly documented). To follow a traditional historical path towards understanding the wider modern sculptural eco-system and its forgotten fauna was a marginal activity in late-1990s academic circles.³⁷ For me, an urgent primary requirement was the development of a diverse archive beyond my sole direct resource, Wheeler's autobiography.³⁸ Aware of the Foucauldian 'archaeology of knowledge', and how my explorations might seem fitted to this theoretical frame, I was concerned that to be taken seriously I might have to become more of a critic or philosopher than my instincts and intellectual powers could sustain. It was interesting, but I had no wish to pursue this route. (Rereading *Archaeology of Knowledge* while planning this reflective commentary, I had completely forgotten that it is itself a retrospective review and analysis of Foucault's intellectual and writing process).³⁹ My small archive of HMI Newsletters from the late 1990s to 2004/5 provides a reminder of the conflicted terrain surrounding the methodologies of art history at that time. Jonathan Harris's HMI newsletter report of the conference 'Theory in Art History 1960-1999', held at the Courtauld Institute 22-23 October 1999, encapsulated the discomfort I felt about the validity of my proposed method. Harris was dismayed to find that papers presented by PhD students:

³⁶ In resonant and stimulating contrast, Fred Orton, (modernist art historian) and Ian Wood (medieval historian), with Clare Lees (medieval literary scholar) offer a transdisciplinary reading of two pre-Viking standing monuments in *Fragments of History. Rethinking the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Monuments*, (Manchester; Manchester University Press, 2007). See also review by Stacy Boldrick, 'Out of Place', *Oxford Art Journal*, 31.3.2008, pp. 431-435.

³⁷ See, for example, A. L. Rees and F. Borzello, editors, *The New Art History*, (London: Camden Press, 1986). Essays range from the 'fervent to the sceptical' (p. 10). It is interesting to reread this snapshot of a contentious discipline in 2015.

³⁸ Charles Wheeler, *High Relief*, (London: Country Life, 1968). (HR).

³⁹ Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, (London: Routledge 2002).

Overwhelmingly indicated that theories and methods relating to academic Marxism, Feminism, Postcolonial theory, Psychoanalysis, Structuralism and Semiotics have moved into the mainstream of art historical practice and debate since the early 1980s, and, to a certain extent, become institutionalised [...] Disappointingly the conference only really managed to attract speakers who understood theory to mean the train of isms mentioned above. Other PhD students, using *traditional* art-historical methods [...] sadly failed to show an interest in the event, even though the publicity material specifically invited them. This is a serious problem: the term 'theory' has become damagingly synonymous with only a limited range of art-historical arguments, methods and interests. If theory was redefined as simply a generic term for all kinds of reflexive thought and practice in the discipline then many more people would perhaps take part in this kind of event in the future and so enrich the debate.⁴⁰

The impulse to frame all art-historical research within newer theoretical matrices was strongly felt, and could become something of an anxiety particularly in relation to unfashionable topics.⁴¹ I decided to carry on quietly with my traditional approach and I was fortunate that Leeds, with the University and the HMI, was the right place - and the few years either side of the millennium the right time - for me to press on and accept the help and opportunities my supporters offered. Read's reputation was founded on his credentials as an archival scholar, and the irony was lost on no one that this son of sculptural high-modernism's greatest advocate, Herbert Read, was instrumental in gradually releasing modernism's grip on sculpture studies. Crucial too, and increasingly important, was the changing direction at the HMI's Centre for the Study of Sculpture. In 1994 Penelope Curtis was appointed Curator and Tim Llewellyn became Chairman of the Henry Moore Foundation (HMF). Over the next few years they jointly engineered a significant shift in the expansion of sculpture scholarship, supporting new work on Moore's

⁴⁰ Jonathan Harris, report on Courtauld conference 'Theory in Art History 1960-1999', *Henry Moore Institute Newsletter*, 29, April/May 2000.

⁴¹ In the introduction to his book *Body Doubles: Sculpture in Britain 1877-1905*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) David Getsy explained that he took an art-theoretical approach to the New Sculpture because: 'many readers will be unsympathetic to these sculptures because of their lack of fit with...modernist narratives'. In his positive review of the book, Mark Stocker feels 'Getsy sometimes strains too hard' with the theoretical framework, revealing 'more about current art-historical agendas than about what was said or thought in the late nineteenth century.' M. Stocker, *Victorian Studies*, 47, 2, (2005), 312-315, (p.312).

lesser-known contemporaries particularly in the British Sculpture and Sculptors Series (BSS) of monographs.⁴² Curtis's ambition to develop and consolidate the Institute as a centre of information for sculpture-related activity and the varied exhibitions curated during her tenure made it a place of open-minded scholarly enterprise.⁴³ Curtis would become a vital supporter and mentor in the years that followed.

2.3 First, Catch your Archive

I began my work with Read's 1986 essay and Wheeler's autobiography. Acquiring a Wheeler archive was a lengthy process, and I often wished it had been a singular, comprehensive entity, envying colleagues working on papers lovingly preserved by their subject's descendants. Moreover, because the careers of many of Wheeler's contemporaries were also in eclipse, I faced having to research this context too. Analogue research, trawling through microfilm and periodical stacks, was a far cry from current digital access to historical sources. It was, in retrospect, optimistic folly to hope to find sufficient cogent material in the timescale of a PhD project. Time seemed the enemy when material was thin, but on reflection the lengthy gestation of my researches benefited my writing. I developed as a researcher and writer while the other BSS publications on Wheeler's contemporaries emerged, and explorations beyond a narrow individual archive immeasurably enriched the research. Cumulative assimilation of knowledge and immersion in the material improves the chances of the forensic eye spotting a telling detail or lacuna.

⁴² Four monographs in the series (London: Lund Humphries in association with the Henry Moore Foundation) appeared in two years: Vanessa Nicolson and Klio Pangourias, *The Sculpture of Maurice Lambert*, 2002; Jonathan Black, *The Sculpture of Eric Kennington*, 2002; Catherine Moriarty, *The Sculpture of Gilbert Ledward*, 2003; Ann Compton, *The Sculpture of Charles Sargeant Jagger*, 2004.

⁴³ For details of HMI exhibitions see www.henry-moore.org/hmi/exhibitions/archive (accessed September 2015).

I have forgotten who gave me her address, but I first visited Wheeler's daughter, Carol, at home in Sussex sometime in 1996. Diplomacy and tact are vital and I hoped Miss Wheeler would trust me with any material she had and support my interest in her father. Without her cooperation the project would have been doomed, and I needed to allay her concern that I might do a hatchet job on her father's reputation.⁴⁴ Fortunately she was satisfied. Her collection of her father's (and mother's) sculpture was limited to a few small pieces, and the papers she had were chiefly photographs from the 1910s to the 1970s. Many had been pulled from annotated albums and put into envelopes. Like many in their position, Wheeler's family faced the daunting task of dealing with the studio contents after his death in 1974. The remaining collection contained no drawings relating to sculpture. The studio was sold and many objects were dispersed as unrecorded gifts or sold gradually over the years. With little sense that Wheeler might have an important archival legacy, much was jettisoned.⁴⁵ On my first visit Miss Wheeler lent me a press cuttings album, which I copied and returned to her. To encourage her trust and to confirm the scholarly interest and importance of her father's work, I took Ben Read to meet her. We discussed a possible loan of the archive to the Institute for me to work on; Carol found it surprising that the HMI, of all places, was interested in her father's work. We reported back to Penelope Curtis. At this time Curtis was interested in acquiring the collection as an historian, but did not expect to be interested in Wheeler's work. When she and I visited Carol Wheeler together and collected boxes of material on loan, she was impressed at the variety of work the photographs revealed. Further loans and acquisitions gradually unfolded and

⁴⁴ Carol Wheeler trained as a painter at the RA Schools in the 1950s and was aware of Wheeler's reactionary status among many modern British artists and critics.

⁴⁵ Not long before I contacted her, Carol had discarded the plasters of Wheeler's Great War medal designs (see *The Sculpture of Charles Wheeler* catalogue nos. 12-16, 19).

by the mid 2000s the Wheeler collection at the HMI was secure.⁴⁶ Leeds City Art Gallery bought two small pieces of sculpture from Miss Wheeler.⁴⁷ More recently I secured from Wheeler's niece, Jill Dodds, the gift to the archive of press cuttings from local and national newspapers and magazines collected by her mother, Wheeler's sister Evelyn, from the 1910s to the 1970s.

An active researcher can prompt archive deposits, particularly if a publication is on the horizon. Donors are stimulated by the immediate reanimation of the material. Possession of an archive does not, however, mean that it 'speaks' coherently, as I described in some detail in the introduction to Wheeler's catalogue.⁴⁸ Only by looking outside his papers and by setting archives and texts in dialogue with each other did Wheeler's career and milieu emerge.⁴⁹ Much of Wheeler's work is, of course, attached to London's buildings and in its public spaces and these 'sites as archives' led me to the papers of the architects.

The RIBA library, archive and photographic collections have been fundamental resources. I consulted holdings on, among others, Giles Gilbert Scott, Oliver Hill, Charles Holden and Edward Maufe, but the collected papers of Herbert Baker, Wheeler's most important patron, chiefly drew my attention. Early on I discovered that archives are not neutral spaces; cataloguing individual accessions seemed to be subject not only to the costs of personnel but also to fashion in architectural history. The vast Baker archive had been donated in about 1990, but was still not formally catalogued when I first visited Portland Place to look at the Bank of

⁴⁶ Miss Wheeler still has the press cuttings album. Many of the HMI photographs are copies made from originals in her possession.

⁴⁷ Crellin, *The Sculpture of Charles Wheeler*, catalogue nos. 46 (fig.56) and 69.

⁴⁸ Crellin, *The Sculpture of Charles Wheeler*, pp.108-109.

⁴⁹ For example, Wheeler's and Herbert Baker's autobiographies need to be read in parallel as the latter greatly amplifies the former. Wheeler, *HR*; Herbert Baker, *Architecture and Personalities*, (London: Country Life, 1944). I consulted 51 organisations and institutions during my research.

England material in 1996-7. Papers and photographs arrived loosely collated in provisionally numbered folders inside cardboard boxes. Where possible everything I found had to be triangulated against the meticulous Bank of England archive. The RIBA Baker catalogue took some years to complete. (I will discuss the revisionist expansion of 20th Century architectural history later). Beyond the RIBA, the RA archive and the photographs at the Courtauld Institute's Conway Library were vital, as were the compendious brains of archivists like Philip Ward-Jackson. Increased exposure to architectural sculpture deepened my interest in the interrelationships of sculpture, architecture and the public sphere. I felt sure that understanding more about the infrastructures of sculpture - the connections between the micro economies of artist, studio, and sculpture businesses with the macro economies of the metropolis and the empire – would greatly enhance the history. The complex relationships between these and social, professional and educational networks all contributed to sculptural life.

Alongside the Wheeler research I pursued parallel work, some self-generated and some as part of projects to which I was invited to contribute. In 1997 preparation of the New Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB) gave me a chance to write for publication.⁵⁰ My five commissions to re-write existing entries were opportunities to re-assess the place of these sculptors in their historical context.⁵¹ The short essays required substantial new research to make them interesting as stand alone articles, to correct errors and to make them small works of history rather than obituary. By this time I had already become very interested in the career of Francis Derwent Wood, and presented a paper on his Great War work in

⁵⁰ The New Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford, 2004.

⁵¹ Commissioned 1997, Charles Wheeler and William Reid-Dick; 1999, Francis Derwent Wood and Alfred Hardiman; 2000, Captain Adrian Jones.

facial prosthetics at the HMI in the spring of 1998.⁵² These diverse elements contributed context to the Wheeler project.

The advertisement for an author to write a BSS monograph on Charles Wheeler appeared in the HMI newsletter in autumn 1999 and I was interviewed in February 2000. But the time was not yet right for this book. Curtis wrote to tell me she was disappointed not to get the idea past the board at the HMF – ‘Tim tells me I should not expect to win all my battles at once’ – but she would continue her advocacy of Wheeler.⁵³ She reported that Llewellyn’s interest in my interview comments on the importance of Charles Sargeant Jagger had prompted Jagger’s inclusion on the BSS list.⁵⁴ The serious possibility of a Wheeler monograph, a request to write a substantial article on Derwent Wood for the *Sculpture Journal*, and increasing complexities in family life, finally led me to renounce the PhD project.⁵⁵ In 2002 I participated in a workshop at the HMI to discuss making a new thematic history of sculpture in twentieth-century Britain to mark the tenth anniversary of the HMI, and was invited to write on ‘Infrastructures 1925-50’ for the resulting publication.⁵⁶ This project enabled collaborative discussions with a network of scholars, and it was here I met Ann Compton for the first time. She was invited to write the parallel chapter on ‘infrastructures’ for the period 1900-25. We found we shared many interests and bounced ideas around with abandon. Compton was a curator and

⁵² Wood’s great granddaughter contacted me following my BBC Woman’s Hour interview about Wood’s and Kathleen Scott’s Great War work with the facially injured. The family were very helpful.

⁵³ Letter, Curtis to Crellin, June 7 2000. David Sylvester resisted the idea that Moore’s legacy should fund a book on Wheeler, but reluctantly agreed if Curtis would write it herself. She refused, saying she already knew who should write it.

⁵⁴ There were three BSS monographs on ‘soldier sculptors’: Jonathan Black, *The Sculpture of Eric Kennington*, 2002; Catherine Moriarty, *The Sculpture of Gilbert Ledward*, 2003; Ann Compton, *The Sculpture of Charles Sargeant Jagger*, 2004.

⁵⁵ Sarah Crellin, ‘Hollow Men: The masks and Memorials of Francis Derwent Wood 1915-1925’, *Sculpture Journal* VI, 2001, pp. 75-88 (published winter 2002).

⁵⁶ Sarah Crellin, ‘Infrastructures 1925-50: Architecture, Artisans and Applied Sculpture’, *Sculpture in twentieth-century Britain*, 2 vols, (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2003), 1, pp. 88-100. Crellin, ‘Charles Wheeler’, *ibid.*, 2, 358-359.

our shared background in history made us sympathetic companions and helpful commentators on each other's writing. I was first reader of the draft of Compton's Jagger monograph, and she reciprocated for Wheeler. The 'infrastructure' chapters for the HMI publication contributed to Compton's inspiration for the project *Mapping The Practice and Profession of Sculpture in Britain and Ireland 1851-1951*, which has proved to be one of the most significant contributions to sculpture studies in recent decades.⁵⁷ As a proxy for potential users of such a resource I was invited to join early discussions at the Paul Mellon Centre in 2005. By the mid 2000s I was finally working towards the book that Curtis wanted for the BSS series. The research and writing took considerably longer than I had foreseen, for various reasons.⁵⁸

2.4 The BSS and the Monographic Form: Concepts and Practice

At this point I will step outside my narrative to discuss the art monograph as a form before returning to the practicalities of producing the Wheeler book.

Concepts

In the preface to *Constantin Brancusi: Shifting the Bases of Art*, Anna Chave describes how, as 'a feminist at work on a monographic study of a canonical male modernist' she had been forced to recognise a division between her female colleagues.⁵⁹ Some agonised over the apparent incompatibility with their feminist politics of such a subject and form of historical enquiry, devoting themselves 'to reviving marginalized female artists', while others, like herself, 'had become preoccupied more with the marginalized messages within those art works at the

⁵⁷ This large online database can be accessed at www.sculpture.gla.ac.uk.

⁵⁸ For example, the RIBA archive was closed for over a year as they moved from Portland Place to the V & A.

⁵⁹ Anna Chave *Constantin Brancusi. Shifting the Bases of Art*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

culture's very center'.⁶⁰ Chave's position was critically ambivalent: 'I am bent partly on showing how a body of work that has reflexively been considered progressive, because avant-garde, may betray some conservative or complicit impulses. For the most part, however, I am concerned with demonstrating how a canonical body of work may yet have a critical potential that is diminished or repressed in canonical accounts.'⁶¹ Chave accepts the 'abiding influences of the canonical narratives to those of us who do not answer to the description of their assumed readers and viewers: those white, heterosexual males of a certain class', nevertheless, viewing canonical works of art 'by artists who largely fit the same description can afford considerable satisfactions to audiences for whom they may or may not have been intended'. She refuses to deny herself the opportunity to study Brancusi in a contentious literary format and is determined to do so through her feminist and psychoanalytical lens. Her approach chimes with Harris's observations about the dominance of 'isms' within academic circles.⁶² Reading this again, I see that I might simply reverse Chave's intentions in the case of Charles Wheeler: *I am bent on showing how a body of work that has been seen as conservative or complicit, because not avant-garde, may betray some progressive impulses. Chave is concerned with how 'art historians have customarily read abstract art with and not against its grain, presenting it in terms of its own high ideals, claims and pretensions', but we might easily substitute 'high modernism' here.*

Two essays addressing the monographic form in sculpture studies, by Sue Malvern (2005) and Ann Compton (2013), represent two kinds of art-historical thinking that do not merely reflect the passage of time. These essays appeared in

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. ix

⁶¹ Ibid., p. xii.

⁶² Harris, op. cit., 2000

the *Sculpture Journal*, the core periodical of sculpture studies, established by the Public Monuments and Sculpture Association (PMSA) in 1997.⁶³ (Interestingly, neither author refers to Chave's *Brancusi*). In her review of three BSS titles, Malvern criticises the series for perpetuating the notion of the (male) canon within the retrograde format of the monograph, while grudgingly equivocating that the BSS project is nevertheless 'admirable and worthy'.⁶⁴ She rejects the 'worn apologia' of Vanessa Nicolson's definition of revisionist scholarship, in her volume on Maurice Lambert (2002), as 'an eclipsing of modernist narratives that allows what has been overlooked to be reappraised.' This, says Malvern, is a standard way of justifying interest in 'figures in twentieth-century art who have not hitherto been the subject of a monograph and leaves unanswered whether the investigation was worth undertaking.' Perhaps Malvern asks too much; indeed, she concedes it is 'perhaps not a point to make about the authors, whose books were commissioned, but it is one to ask about the series as a whole.' I find puzzling Malvern's unspoken assumption that no white male artist in Britain could be considered one of 'modernism's others'. She privileges the status of women, émigrés (of either sex) and racial minorities. Contrasting the sculptors of the recent and forthcoming BSS series with the 'major figures' who already have substantial studies and catalogues elsewhere – Caro, Chadwick, Hepworth, Epstein and Gaudier-Brzeska – Malvern relegates the BSS subjects to a 'canon of minor artists'. Effectively this declaration simultaneously rejects and asserts the existing 'canon' as the true mark of quality; if you were any 'good' as an artist - particularly if you were male - you would already have been written about. Any white male

⁶³ Sue Malvern, 'Monographs, Canons, Omissions', review of three BSS texts: Vanessa Nicolson and Klio Pangourias, *The Sculpture of Maurice Lambert*, 2002; Jonathan Black, *The Sculpture of Eric Kennington*, 2002; Catherine Moriarty, *The Sculpture of Gilbert Ledward*, 2003. *Sculpture Journal*, 13 (2005), 143-146. Ann Compton, 'Affirmative action: *British Sculptors and Sculpture* and the monographic form in twentieth-century sculpture studies', *Sculpture Journal*, 22.2 (2013), 77-88.

⁶⁴ Malvern, op. cit., p. 146.

sculptor had every chance to be in this elite cohort, so being outside it proved second-class status: if you hadn't already got your monograph, you'd blown it. Malvern does not differentiate between the abstractionists and figuratives; between high modernism and other approaches to modernity; between monographs about the living and those about the dead. She disapproves of the utility of such books to the art market.⁶⁵ It is all very well to dismiss as intellectually outmoded - even petty - the need to establish 'core data' in oeuvre catalogues before new scholarly research is possible, but it doesn't alter the fact that for any historical writing project base-line archives must be found and evaluated. It seems surprising that Malvern does not cite Chave's book as a paradigm of the art-historical virtues she advocates – 'including the social history of art, gender studies, psychoanalysis and reception theory'. The monograph itself is in the dock here, convicted by Malvern as the vehicle of historical solecisms. Yet she acknowledges that this is still the standard form of art-historical writing. In November 2014 Penelope Curtis reflected on her own approach to the BSS:

My framework [...] was to use Moore as a centre-point off which to bounce other practices, whether by artists he liked or disliked, but who helped amplify our understanding of the British sculptural context of that time [...] It seems fair enough to me that Moore's legacy should help to ameliorate the deficit that his own fame engendered.⁶⁶

In contrast to Malvern, Compton makes a strong case in her 2013 survey that the BSS monographs have, in fact, opened up the discourse to new possibilities. Compton begins by discussing the row in the correspondence columns of *The Times* in 1967 over Henry Moore's 'proposed gift of 26 major pieces of sculpture

⁶⁵ *Pace* Curtis, who believes it fair enough for commercial galleries/ dealers to benefit as they have contributed to the rescue and promotion of marginalized artists. Penelope Curtis, *Lund Humphries Landmarks – British Sculptors and Sculpture Series (1991) LH Blogspot*, <https://modernbritishartists.wordpress.com/2014/11/11/lund-humphries-landmarks-british-sculptors-and-sculpture-series-1991>. (Accessed 05/15).

⁶⁶ Curtis, *ibid*.

and other objects to the Tate Gallery'.⁶⁷ She quotes at length from my account of the rumpus, citing it as an example of the historical benefits of the series:

The description of the furore [...] fully acknowledging Wheeler's intervention, comes from the recent BSS volume on Wheeler, which counters past versions of the story that have either overlooked his role or misinterpreted it as a reactionary outburst. This more balanced account is a brief but telling illustration of the series' wider objective of revisiting twentieth-century art from a new perspective.⁶⁸

Compton acknowledges the weaknesses of the monographic form and the strengths of other approaches to the 'substantive historical problems', but concludes: 'Art history and particularly the monograph – with its incredibly rich historiography surrounding the exposition of a life in art and, through this, situating objects and production practices in the context of broader cultural and historical discourses – has much to offer at this moment.'⁶⁹

A wary historical sensibility and willingness to step beyond the subject's archive can mitigate the perceived dangers of a hagiographic and narrow art-critical monograph. This was unavoidable in Wheeler's case, where archival dialogue was imperative, but my work on Epstein proved it essential to unlocking mythology. The echoing repetitions and assumptions of the 'standard view' of the fate of the BMA House sculptures were not the fault of the monographic form itself. A writer must be aware of her subjectivity, and approach a subject with critical ambivalence, a sceptical approach to archives and a hard eye for dissonant detail.

⁶⁷ Crellin, *The Sculpture of Charles Wheeler*, pp.100-101, cited in Compton, op. cit., p. 77

⁶⁸ Compton, *ibid.* p. 78.

⁶⁹ Compton, *ibid.*, p. 87.

Practice: out of the study and into the real world

The monograph prevailed in art institutions even as its status waned within the academy. Funding through organisations like the Paul Mellon and Henry Moore Foundations has supported the costly enterprise and their financial commitment generated volumes whose commercial prospects would make publishers blanch. Costly and complex reproduction rights, permissions and copyright are a minefield for writers and financial backers, and a major impediment to publishing on paper and online. Writing about art is impaired without apposite images, and even the lowest 'academic' rates from organisations like the RIBA and the National Portrait Gallery stretch a photographic budget. For many museums and galleries reproduction charges provide valuable revenue. Fortunately the Wheeler Archive was donated to the HMI on condition that fees would be waived.

Within the BSS format, the high production values and structure have proved a relatively flexible framework. Catalogues vary in size considerably - Eric Kennington's lists 67 works in a book of 112 pages while Gilbert Ledward's contains 115 works in 136 pages. For the Wheeler volume the scale of his oeuvre was taken into account during the early stages of planning and budgeting. Confining colour to the jacket to save costs enabled a longer than usual text; the essay and catalogue occupy 200 pages. I paid particular attention to curating the images, vital to illustrate the scope of Wheeler's work and to amplify the text. Works were illustrated only once, in either the main text or catalogue, with images categorised in a hierarchy of size and importance. Primary images were the largest; secondary images were also placed within body copy and supplementary images fitted in where suitable. Catalogue images were small. Frustratingly, some works I wanted in a larger size were poorly represented in any archive – if at all – and could not be re-photographed. I wanted the jacket to reinforce my message

that sculptural modernity was not confined to carving, and as this was the only place for colour I was keen to have a striking cover image. I argued that the jacket should be part of the curated whole, and deliberately selected images of major works in bronze and stone. Although my wishes prevailed it was surprisingly difficult to resist the preferences of the designer and *vox populi* in the publishers' office. *The Sculpture of Charles Wheeler* was published on 12 December 2012, and was launched first at the HMI on 16 January 2013 and at the Fine Art Society on 19 February 2013.⁷⁰

PART 3: Making New Histories 2: Jacob Epstein

3.1 Introduction: A Challenge from Dr Curtis

In September 2009 Penelope Curtis asked me to re-examine the fate of Epstein's BMA House sculptures from the 'establishment' point of view for the catalogue of *Modern British Sculpture*, an exhibition she was jointly curating at the Royal Academy in 2011.⁷¹ It was a daunting prospect. Curtis wanted me, as someone who had not previously written about Epstein, to scrutinise this *cause célèbre* of sculptural modernism with the forensic attention I was paying to the Wheeler monograph. I did a rapid feasibility study before I committed myself - the canonical story was so entrenched I had no idea if there was any evidence whatever to refute or balance the arguments. Epstein himself instigated the story that the 'destruction' of the BMA House sculptural scheme in 1937 was the culmination of a 'thirty years' war' against him, the fault of reactionary animus at the Royal Academy and the prudishness of the current owners of the building, the South Rhodesian government. Cork's essays on the BMA House sculptures were among

⁷⁰ Over 80 people attended the London launch (see appendix 1,2 and 3).

⁷¹ Curtis and Wilson, *Modern British Sculpture*.

many reiterations of Epstein's position that formed the established narrative.⁷² In 2004 artist Neal White had been commissioned by Curtis to make a collaborative multi-media project that used the HMI's Epstein archive as the impetus for *The Third Campaign*, a new rallying cry for the sculptures to be restored.⁷³ The BMA House story was one of the 'big beasts' of British sculpture history, widely accepted as the pivotal moment for the rupture between the avant-garde and the Academy. To challenge the orthodoxies surrounding this infamous example of modernist 'direct carving' was to stick one's head firmly above the parapet. My task was not to add another art-critical or stylistic interpretation of the sculpture, but to expand the historical context. What follows briefly sets out my now 'worked out' methodology for this brief and focused study.

3.2 Making a New History from an Old Story⁷⁴

I began by re-reading Richard Cork's 1985 and 2009 essays and listed all the archive and evidentiary sources, noting that the three key figures on the 'opposing' sides were Epstein (the modernist) and Sir William Llewellyn PRA and Sir William Reid Dick RA, PRBS (the establishment). I e-mailed Dennis Wardleworth, who was then working on a biography of Reid Dick, to ask if he had found clues to any other possible version of the story.⁷⁵ Dennis indicated an interesting entry in the archives of the Royal Society of British Sculptors (RBS). Perhaps there was indeed more to be said. Epstein's autobiography, *Let There Be Sculpture* (the title reverberating with the divine creativity of Genesis 1:3), was published in 1940,

⁷² Cork, op. cit., 1985 and 2009. Anne M Wagner's highly focused essay on the scheme 'The Matter of Sculpture', in *Mother Stone: The Vitality of Modern British Sculpture*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005, pp. 31-73), briefly touches on the 1937 destructions using terms like 'ruthlessly', 'havoc' and 'Rhodesia's iconoclasm' (pp. 33-34).

⁷³ *Neal White Third Campaign Archive*, Henry More Institute Archive of Sculptors' Papers.

⁷⁴ The full exposition of my argument and additional references can be found in the PDF version of 'Let There Be History: Epstein's BMA House Sculptures' included in this PhD document.

⁷⁵ Dennis Wardleworth, *William Reid Dick, Sculptor*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013).

three years after the ‘destructions’ of 1937.⁷⁶ I observed that one fifth of its 330 pages were devoted to the BMA House ‘scandal’. Epstein’s commentary is supported with reprinted press cuttings and contemporary correspondence. Cross-referencing Epstein’s published archives with those cited by Cork I found they were identical. Therefore, errors in Epstein were often reiterated by Cork. Crucially, for example, both assumed that H. S. Goodhart-Rendel was President of the RIBA (PRIBA) when he signed the *Times* letter of 10 May 1935 supporting the retention of the sculptures, so they deduced that this indicated the institutional support of the RIBA – thus further compounding the exceptionalism of the PRA in not signing. A simple check showed that in 1935 the PRIBA was, in fact, Giles Gilbert Scott RA. Goodhart-Rendel had signed in his current capacity as Slade Professor at Oxford.⁷⁷ The RIBA therefore did *not* openly support Epstein or its own member, the architect Charles Holden. As for the Royal Academy, if one reasonably assumed that Llewellyn and other academicians were not as prudish, scandalised or antagonistic as Epstein claimed – indeed, Reid Dick had signed the letter himself - how else might one account for the destructions of 1937?

The RBS Committee Minutes were rewarding. Previous owners of BMA House, the New Zealand Government, wrote to the RBS for advice in 1928 because pieces of sculpture were falling off the building.⁷⁸ The RBS sensibly referred them back to the architect and sculptor for advice and possible remedy. In my follow-up searches I found no references to this episode in those archives. The facts of the damage were happily triangulated when a trawl through online archives of national

⁷⁶ Jacob Epstein, *Let There Be Sculpture: An Autobiography*, (London, Michael Joseph, 1940).

⁷⁷ Letter, *The Times*, 10 May 1935, signed by various art grandees: Kenneth Clarke, W. G. Constable, Lord Crawford and Balcarres, W. Reid Dick, H.S. Goodhart-Rendell, G.F. Hill, Eric Maclagan, J.B. Manson, William Rothenstein.

⁷⁸ Letter, 7 May 1928 from A. Crabbe of the New Zealand High Commission, recorded in minutes of the RBS Council, meeting no. 258, 21 May 1928, RBS Archive.

newspapers revealed a letter to *The Times* of 18 May 1935 from a man who described surveying the decaying sculptures in 1928.⁷⁹ Here was significant evidence of crumbling stonework, seven years before the RA letter debacle.

So what was going on at the RA? Why didn't the PRA sign the 10 May 1935 letter to *The Times* in support of Epstein's sculptures? Could I challenge Epstein's and Cork's claim that no special meeting was ever held at the RA to discuss the point? In the RA archives I examined the General Assembly Minutes Book in which all formal meetings should be listed, minuted and the attendees noted. I found no meeting at this date or on this topic. However, reading through the printed 1935 Annual Report I did find a record of an extraordinary meeting held on 29 May.⁸⁰ The archivist then consulted the Academy Scrapbooks and here, carefully pasted in, were the President's handwritten note to the Secretary, asking him to call a special meeting, and the formal typed notice inviting members to attend. There were no minutes or any other information, nor was the intended business of the meeting stated on the notice. The Annual Report, however, stated that Llewellyn had won a vote of confidence from the assembly at that meeting. Here was fuel for reasonable speculation.

What, then, might have caused such catastrophic damage to the Portland stone? Epstein's and Cork's versions – and Holden's too, up to a point – blame the bedding of the stone and the quarrymen. This seemed too pat and displaced blame to those unable to speak for themselves. I contacted Britain's largest Portland stone quarry to ask if wrong 'bedding' of the stone could have caused the damage and justified a claim that the quarrymen were liable; I was assured it was impossible. I then considered the effects of air pollution, which in the early 20th

⁷⁹ Letter from Hal Williams, *The Times*, 18 May 1935.

⁸⁰ Royal Academy Annual Report, 1935.

Century was well understood as a primary cause of stone erosion. I came across press photographs of disintegrating Victorian gargoyles from the Palace of Westminster lined up for sale for £1 each during the restorations in 1936.⁸¹ In the RIBA archives I searched in Herbert Baker's papers; A. T Scott, of Baker's practice, was the consulting architect to the South Rhodesian Government, the owners of the building in the mid 1930s. I found no mention of the sculptures or damage to the building, but in other folders I discovered generic articles on stone destruction by pollution and records of stone conservation processes for other buildings, like the Bank of England.⁸² There was also a copy of a 1932 government publication from the Buildings Research Institute, *The Weathering of Natural Building Stones*. This seemed to provide much of the evidence I needed, so I contacted the Buildings Research Establishment in Watford and spoke to Tim Yates, an expert on the weathering of stone. It transpired that the 1932 document is still the 'bible' for the subject and that he had contributed to the latest edition.⁸³ Yates described to me how the design of the niches and figures could have exacerbated the weathering, citing the rates of erosion of balustrades on St Paul's Cathedral, which have been monitored for decades. He also outlined the chemistry of destruction and the consequences for the stone.⁸⁴

Beyond the material consequences of air and water on stone, in order to locate Epstein's work in the socio-political and cultural milieu of the Edwardian era I read primary and secondary material about the period when the sculptures were

⁸¹ Editorial image no. 3167360, 1 December 1936, www.gettyimages.co.uk, (accessed August 2015).

⁸² Report by Noel Heaton BSc FCS, 16 October 1926, RIBA Archive BaH/62, 'Arts and Crafts – Stone'.

⁸³ R. J. Schaffer with introduction by Dr Tim Yates, *The Weathering of Natural Building Stones*, (Dorset, Donhead Publishing, 2004).

⁸⁴ For this explanation see Crellin, 'Let There Be Sculpture', p. 42.

unveiled in 1908.⁸⁵ Finally I made a large mind-map of ideas and links in order to write a persuasive essay. Playing the ball, not the man, I had no need to challenge Cork's or other interpretations. I focused on my findings and let the evidence speak for itself, calling the piece 'Let There be History', to echo the title of Epstein's autobiography.

PART 4: Contributions to Knowledge and Scholarship

In addition to my engagement with the changing discourse of British sculpture studies, my research has also contributed to the historical fields of architecture, war and medicine. The work on Derwent Wood has generated the widest interest. I was interviewed for BBC radio and television and have lectured on the subject, most recently at the PMSA 'Sculptors and War' conference, March 24 2015. In 2014 my interpretation of Wood's Machine Gun Corps memorial was promoted in English Heritage's exhibition 'We Will Remember Them'.⁸⁶ Photographs of Wood's facial masks appeared in the Evening Standard and the exhibition had 25,000 visitors.⁸⁷ Esoteric publications can have late effects.

When I first enquired about the Herbert Baker archive at the RIBA in 1996, a curator described him as 'a sort of sub-Lutyens Edwardian'. Arriving at the RIBA reading rooms in 2010, I greeted the man at the desk and requested the Baker boxes I had ordered: he instantly retorted 'Oh, dreadful architect'. It was, I realised,

⁸⁵ I consulted the archives of the National Vigilance Association at the Women's Library, London Metropolitan University. Secondary reading included Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind*, (London, Vintage, 1991); E. Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance: Purity Movements in Britain since 1700*, (London, Gill and Macmillan, 1977); G. R. Searle, *A New England? Peace and War 1886-1918*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁸⁶ 'We Will Remember Them. London's Great War Memorials', Quadriga Gallery, 16 July – 30 November 2014.

⁸⁷ Robert Bevan, 'For the Fallen', *London Evening Standard*, July 15 2014, pp. 34-35. Visitor numbers reported directly to me by the curator, Dr Roger Bowdler, Director of Designations, Historic England. 2014 audited figures not yet available.

the very curator I had spoken to in 1996. Exploring Baker's correspondence beneath the vitrine containing the scale model façade of the Bank of England, I discovered that this hierarchy of value had infiltrated the files: a letter from Lutyens was the only item preserved in a glassine bag.

The history of modern British architecture is slowly expanding into the 'margins' to examine eclipsed projects and careers. Reanimating Herbert Baker through his collaboration with Wheeler has been a significant outcome of my research. The PMSA's national recording project and the resulting regional *Public Sculpture* volumes have enhanced the understanding of the alliance of sculpture and architecture. Ward-Jackson cited my thoughts about Wheeler's Bank of England sculptures in his 2003 edition on the City of London.⁸⁸ I have given talks on Wheeler at art history conferences, including the AAH, and delivered the Society of Portrait Sculptors annual lecture at the National Portrait Gallery in 2007, but I stepped onto new terrain at the AAH conference in 2012 in Alan Powers' and Ayla Lepine's architectural history strand 'Modernism's Other: lost histories of architecture'. In my paper on the symbolic architecture and sculpture of Herbert Baker and Charles Wheeler I described Baker as suffering from 'double otherness - being neither a modernist nor Lutyens'. Powers regretted that few architectural historians had rallied to the call for papers. I suggested that sculpture historians might help to open the field because we often deal with 'modernism's other' architects; sculpture offers subtle clues to modernist intentions. In 2013 I spoke at an architectural history symposium at St John's College Oxford,⁸⁹ and following further conversations, Powers devoted the Twentieth Century Society's 2014

⁸⁸ Philip Ward-Jackson, *Public Sculpture of the City of London*, (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press 2003).

⁸⁹ S. Crellin, 'The Writing on the Wall: aspects of architectural sculpture in Arnold Whittick's *Symbols for Designers* 1935, lecture at 'Stylistic Dead Ends: fresh perspectives on British architecture between the World Wars', Oxford, June 2013.

autumn lecture series to architectural sculpture. Introducing the six-week programme, Powers attributed the series to my persuasive insights on Baker and Wheeler. At my suggestion Ward-Jackson delivered the introductory lecture; I presented 'Architecture and Personalities: Charles Wheeler and Architectural Sculpture 1919-1960', on 20 November. In 2016 I have received invitations from the Church Monuments Society to speak about Wheeler's war memorials, and from the HMI to lecture in their 'single object' series. Most recently, Christine Riding, editor of the forthcoming *Art and the War at Sea 1914-1945* has acknowledged the contribution of *The Sculpture of Charles Wheeler* to the production of her book (see Appendix 10).⁹⁰ The book was well received by reviewers and has begun to amplify Wheeler's contribution to British sculpture.⁹¹ Surveying London's inter-war architectural sculpture in *Apollo*, May 2013, James Purdon wrote: 'Though the modernist influence in architectural sculpture was widespread [...] four men in particular played a crucial role in its dissemination and development.'⁹² He named them as Jacob Epstein, Eric Gill, Charles Sargeant Jagger and Charles Wheeler.

The work on Wheeler and Epstein came together in the exhibition *Modern British Sculpture* at the Royal Academy in January 2011, where two life-size pieces by Wheeler, in carved wood and bronze, were exhibited, and LTBH was the first catalogue essay.⁹³ My only opportunity to speak about Epstein came, unnervingly, as I was beginning my research when I was invited to speak on architectural

⁹⁰ *Art and the War at Sea 1914-1945*, editor Christine Riding, (London: Lund Humphries, 2015).

⁹¹ See Appendix 4-9 for reviews 2013-14.

⁹² See Appendix 6, James Purdon 'Unreal City', *Apollo*, May 2013, pp. 60-65.

⁹³ *Wheeler Mother and Child*, cat. 77; *Adam*, cat. 112, *Modern British Sculpture*, Royal Academy, 22 January -7 April 2011. Curtis referred to Wheeler in her introduction 'British British Sculpture Sculpture', pp. 14-27. I disagree with Martina Droth's analysis of the bronze *Adam* in her essay 'Authority figures', pp. 114-121. For my reasons see *The Sculpture of Charles Wheeler* cat. 78.

sculpture, with particular reference to Epstein's BMA House, at a Royal Academy Architecture Forum in November 2009, linked to Cork's exhibition *Wild Thing: Epstein, Gaudier-Brzeska, Gill*.⁹⁴ Cork chaired the platform discussion that followed. By approaching my topic through the wider historical context I managed to keep my powder dry and avoid direct engagement with Cork's narrative. It can take a long time for new analyses to take root, but 'Let There Be History' is 'prime evidence' in Alan Powers' teaching on BMA House at the Courtauld Institute Summer School 2015.⁹⁵ It is also cited as a new authority in the latest edition of the Henry Moore Institute's 'Essays on Sculpture'.⁹⁶

PART 5: Conclusion

5.1 Through the Looking Glass

Accepting the Cheshire cat's advice that 'it doesn't matter which way you go' led me to step through the looking glass into a topsy-turvy world of interconnections, reflections and refractions. Researching and writing against prevailing academic fashions has, in the end, brought my work back into the fold. At a particular historical moment in the late 1990s my interests were inspired by Read and serendipitously coincided with Curtis's approach to scholarship. The Henry Moore Foundation is now at the heart of the art establishment whose citadel was claimed by the modernists after the Second World War. Epstein's battle with the Royal Academy in the 1930s precipitated and epitomised a rupture in the art world whose repercussions were still felt when the HMF refused to countenance a book

⁹⁴ Exhibition, Royal Academy, October 2009 – January 2010. Richard Cork, *Wild Thing*.

⁹⁵ E-mail, Powers to Crellin, July 2015.

⁹⁶ Claire Mayoh, 'Jacob Epstein: Sculptures for the British Medical Association Building (1908) and Neal White: "The Third Campaign" (2004)', in Lisa LeFeuvre (ed.), *Sculptors Papers from the Henry Moore Institute Archive*, Henry Moore Institute Essays on Sculpture Issue 71, (Leeds, Henry Moore Institute, 2015), pp. 5-8.

on Wheeler in 2000. Curtis's convictions enabled a shift in these intransigent positions: Moore's legacy funded a reassessment that allowed Wheeler to be *both* academic *and* modern while, under the aegis of the Royal Academy, it became possible to question the mythologizing exceptionalism of Epstein. Until Curtis's interventions Moore's status was relatively unclouded by historical context and the Academy's gradual admission of the full gamut of contemporary art since the 1960s seemed to prevent the defence and acceptance of its own 20th Century history. It is ironic that Moore's foundation sponsored the publication on a Past President of the Royal Academy that is not on sale in the RA bookshop; perhaps the Academy is still not quite up to date.

On 30 October 2014, as I began to consider writing this reflective document, I went to London to meet friends, to see an exhibition and to hear Ward-Jackson's 20th Century Society lecture. After coffee with Penelope Curtis at Tate Britain I met Ben Read for lunch at the Whitechapel Gallery. I had come here to see *Sculptors' Papers from the Henry Moore Institute Archive*, a display of documents and photographs concerning six case studies for sculptures planned for public spaces in London, particularly the material relating to Epstein's BMA House and Neal White's *The Third Campaign*. In the table vitrine, among the papers from White's epistolary appeal to the art world to 'save' the ravaged BMA House ensemble, a letter dated 29.11.04 was signed simply 'Philip'. I deduced it was from Ward-Jackson. He informed White he was not in favour of restoration, and that he thought Epstein fortunate to have had a photographic record of the works. Nudity, he wrote, could hardly have been a problem in 1937 when Wheeler's naked males adorned the façade of Herbert Baker's Bank of England – indeed, he said, Baker's practice was handling the BMA House renovations at the time of the 'scandal'. If White wanted to know more about nude architectural statuary in

London in the 1930s, Ward-Jackson suggested, ‘Sarah [Crellin] is definitely the person to ask.’⁹⁷

What a strange maze this was – a shock to find oneself ‘archived’, written into a document one had never seen, in an artwork incorporating traces of the histories in which one would later play a part. This single letter had the power to explode a densely allusive nexus of personal, scholarly and artistic relationships in the mind of the reader. One fine autumn afternoon, a historian looked into a cabinet of archival curiosities and saw herself reflected in a kaleidoscopic past: a looking-glass moment indeed.

5.2 A Thesis

‘Bodies of Evidence: Making New Histories of 20th Century British Sculpture’ is a compendium thesis that makes a significant and original contribution to scholarship. Wide-ranging and detailed research has revealed important material, hitherto unknown or unregarded, contributing considerable new knowledge to the lacunae in the discourse. The resulting publications radically challenge existing preconceptions about the work of two of the 20th Century’s leading figurative sculptors. One of the most valuable outcomes has been the establishment and articulation of a coherent Charles Wheeler archive, both the ‘pure’ physical form housed at the HMI, and in the broader linking within a monograph of disparate sources from other repositories. Wheeler’s archive in Leeds is now available for other scholars and cultural stakeholders to explore. *The Sculpture of Charles Wheeler* is essential to any proper understanding of the gamut of 20th Century British sculptural practice; matters discussed within the text offer plentiful scope for future research in parallel disciplines or using other theoretical frameworks.

⁹⁷ P. Ward-Jackson, *Neal White Third Campaign Archive*, Henry Moore Institute Archive of Sculptors’ Papers, (collection ref. 2005.57).

Wheeler was elected Associate of the Royal Academy in 1934. Perceptions about his work and his long relationship with the institution of which he became President were undoubtedly coloured by the animus generated in 1935. The dominant critical view has continued to insist that the RA's 'refusal' to support Epstein in May 1935 was entirely based on artistic judgment, 'proof' that its membership was a vindictive and reactionary spent force. *The Sculpture of Charles Wheeler* contributes new knowledge about the nuanced modes of modernity that operated within the Academy; such complexity resists simplistic binaries. Epstein may never have been a member, but his contingent refusenik narrative is inextricably caught up in historical entanglement with the Royal Academy.

Looking at Epstein's BMA House ensemble from a perspective that fully accepts the fact of its fragmentary condition avoids the wistful conjuring of it as an imagined unity. Photographic records have undoubtedly enhanced the sense of loss. Like the sculptures at Souillac, however, Epstein's figures must remain 'fragments of a larger whole that can never be reconstructed'.⁹⁸ My essay 'Let There Be History: Epstein's BMA House Sculptures' is the first study to examine the social, cultural and chemical atmosphere of the sculptures' thirty-year life, and it cautions us to beware the frailties of art-historical and art-critical assumptions. Human behaviours, beliefs and critical attitudes do not, as the accepted narrative asserted, have sole agency over the longevity of sculpture, but they exert the greatest power over how we understand it.

⁹⁸ Meyer Schapiro, 'The Sculptures of Souillac', (1939), *Romanesque Art: Selected Papers*, vol. 1, (New York: George Braziller), p. 102

Wheeler and Epstein were contemporaries practising sculpture in the real world of the early 20th Century. My research publications have repositioned these artists within their milieu and questioned the preconceptions of art-historical discourse. Taken together with the accompanying analytical commentary, this thesis makes an original and significant contribution to the history of British sculpture.

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