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‘The Child is Father of the Man’: Alfred Drury and Temporality

Ben Thomas

Writing to William Hamo Thornycroft in 1917 to congratulate him on his knighthood, Alfred Drury exclaimed: ‘I am sure that every sculptor is saying “Vive la Sculpture”’.¹ This generous reflex betrays Drury’s profoundly French conception of sculpture, as might be expected from an artist who had been trained by and worked alongside the great Aimé-Jules Dalou.² For the purposes of this article, however, Drury’s expression can be read literally (‘let sculpture live’) to indicate the sculptor’s concern for his works to suggest a living presence. As the poet William Wordsworth put it in his *Prelude*, describing Roubiliac’s statue of Isaac Newton at Trinity College, Cambridge, sculpture provides ‘the marble index of a mind for ever voyaging through strange seas of thought alone...’³ In order to survey Drury’s sculpture as a pensive and living presence, the theme of temporality – the passage of time – and the poetic associations his work suggests will be explored here. An interesting fact in this context, bringing together poetry and sculpted heads, is that Drury took the death mask of the poet Algernon Charles Swinburne: an anecdote related by William Rothenstein in his memoirs, but also reported in the press at the time. For example, the *Manchester Courier and Lancaster General Advertiser* reported in 1909 that ‘Mr Alfred Drury took the plaster cast of Mr Swinburne’s head’ and that he commented ‘it is a classic head – one of the finest I have ever seen’.⁴

¹ Leeds, Henry Moore Institute, Thornycroft Papers, 4.86/211, Alfred Drury to William Hamo Thornycroft, 6 June 1917.

² For Alfred Drury see most recently: B. Thomas (ed.), *Alfred Drury and the New Sculpture* (exh. cat.), Studio 3 Gallery, Canterbury, 2013, and in particular pp. 11-17 for B. Landy’s essay on Drury and Dalou. The only monograph dedicated to Alfred Drury remains C. J. Mitchell (now J. Winfrey), ‘A Notable Sculptor: Alfred Drury R.A. (1856-1944)’, unpub. MA dissertation, University of Leeds, 1993. On the New Sculpture movement see: S. Beattie, *The New Sculpture*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1983; D. J. Getsy, *Body Doubles: Sculpture in Britain 1877-1905*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2004.

³ W. Wordsworth, *The Poetical Works*, W. M. Rossetti (ed.), London, Moxon, 1870, p. 369. M. Baker, *The Marble Index: Roubiliac and Sculptural Portraiture in Eighteenth-Century England*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2015.

⁴ W. Rothenstein, *Men and Memories*, London, Faber & Faber, 1931; *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 19 April 1909.

The death mask of a poet is an eloquent object: it fixes in enduring form the physical traits of a singular mind continuously reflecting on eternity. The cast of an individual head at the time of its owner's passing, it is paradoxically both the indexical sign of a particularly fateful moment and its memorial for all time ('a classic head'). Although a limit case, Swinburne's death mask does reveal a characteristic quality of the 'realistic allegory' typical of Drury's art, and of the broader New Sculpture of which he was a key exponent. This effect of realistic allegory is achieved through the combination of momentary likeness with universal meaning in a single form – a form both fixed and persistent, yet also suggesting a passing instant. Of course, at a theoretical level, these points can be said to be generically true of the art of sculpture as a whole, and not particularly notable in themselves. However, they are given a specifically poetic treatment by Drury, both in his smaller works intended for the home and in larger public memorials, that merits further interpretive enquiry in order to elucidate levels of subtle meaning previously unsuspected in his art.

The article will proceed, therefore, firstly by examining Drury's best known works, his pensive heads of girls such as the famous *Age of Innocence* (fig. 1), and relating these to the theme of temporality through the visual resemblances that connect them to Drury's sculptural groups at Barrow Court and in Leeds City Square whose explicit content is the passage of time. Next a memorial to heroic youth aimed at schoolboys, Clifton College's *St. George* (fig. 2), will be examined for the debates concerning anachronism that surrounded it, and for the poetic meditation on temporality that it inspired. Finally, Drury's plaque of *Philanthropy* on Sheffield's monument to King Edward VII (fig. 3), and its connection to the project to found a care home for disabled children, will be explored in detail for its temporal complexities as a memorial to what at the time of the work's unveiling was an as yet unrealised scheme. It is also a case where the artist once more reflected on childhood in order to produce an allegorical relief that realistically represents the social care of children as a form of living memorial (while also manifesting certain political tensions in British society on the eve of the First World War). Here the archival sources reveal Drury's work to be deeply embedded in a network of social

forces quite unlike the private concerns of the sculptural works that he intended for the home.

Methodologically it will be necessary, therefore, to attend to both the formal properties of Drury's sculptural works, in order to attempt to describe how they achieve their temporal effects as 'living presences', and also to analyse the iconographical content of those works where temporality is directly addressed by the artist as a theme. In all of these cases, Drury manifests a Wordsworthian sensibility in his poetic treatment of childhood and youth – where, to quote that poet's well-known lines, 'the child is father of the man' in providing a bittersweet and poignant lesson in temporality to the viewer by representing an awareness of the end of life at its beginning. We know that the sculptor was a life-long reader of Wordsworth: as a schoolboy he received a copy of his *Poems* as a prize for an essay on 'Music and Nature', a book which is still a treasured possession of the Drury family (fig. 4).

The presence of an active mind is suggested in Drury's sculptural works through a subtle disequilibrium of form. A good example from the artist's maturity is the monumental portrait of *Spencer Compton, 8th Duke of Devonshire* (1910) on the seafront at Eastbourne (fig. 5). At first glance, a simple and static rendition of a standing, robed man, the work reveals itself under sustained contemplation to contain a quiet dialectic between action and reflection: the active right hand firmly punctuating a point ultimately deriving from the learning contained in the left hand's casually held book. The slight imbalance in the expression on each side of the face amplifies the hands' dialogue conveying an impression of alert intelligence. The commemorative prose of these sculptural passages, expertly manipulating a conventional visual rhetoric of praise, is distilled to a genuinely poetic ambiguity in Drury's more celebrated heads of young girls: the busts *Griselda* (1896) and *The Age of Innocence* (1897), and the reliefs *My Queen* (1896) and *The Little Duchess* (1900). Here the sparse attributes of costume and hairstyle frame the thoughtful expressions of the girls' faces within a generically 'historical' time period (owing as much to Jean-Antoine Houdon as to Antonio Rossellino). Modelled by the sisters

Clarrie and Gracie Doncaster, the heads, while likenesses of particular girls, are not intended as portraits. Rather they convey moods of interiority whose calm and harmonious chords are rescued from bland prettiness by dissonant notes of nervous if unspecific anxiety. Once again the means by which this is achieved is an elusive asymmetry: the head in *The Age of Innocence* turns to the right and slightly upwards, the eyes not quite aligned and lacking near focus. Lorado Taft, somewhat literally, put this down to the model suffering from a squint: 'one always recognizes [Drury's children] by a slight congenital strabismus – a regrettable little weakness which could be so easily cured'.⁵

The Age of Innocence was certainly Drury's best known work and many versions of it exist in different sizes in plaster, bronze and marble.⁶ In addition to being a popular and commercial success, this study in child psychology had a personal significance for the artist himself. At his marriage in 1900 to Phoebe Turner at the Algernon Road Congregational Church in Lewisham, Drury gave small bronze versions of *The Age of Innocence* to the three bridesmaids.⁷ Writing in 1901 to Herbert Thompson, barrister and music critic for the Yorkshire Post, about his recent purchase of a copy of the work, Drury remarked 'I hope the little girl will meet with your approval'. Hearing back in the affirmative, Drury then replied 'I am so glad that you like it so much. Among my smaller works, it has certainly given me the most pleasure'.⁸ Certainly part of its appeal for the artist lay in the affectionate relationship he had with Gracie Doncaster, the daughter of family friends known through musical circles, with whom the artist behaved rather like a godfather prior to starting his own family (two photographs of Gracie Doncaster and four postcards written by her exist in the Drury family archive).⁹ That, in addition, the charming simplicity of the state of childhood

⁵ L. Taft, *Modern Tendencies in Sculpture*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1921, p. 78.

⁶ See J. Winfrey's catalogue entry in Thomas, as at note 2, pp. 44-45.

⁷ *The Oxford Journal*, 21 July 1900, p. 7.

⁸ Leeds, University of Leeds, Brotherton Library, Special Collections, MS.361/77, Alfred Drury to Herbert Thompson, 4 December 1901; MS.361/78, Alfred Drury to Herbert Thompson, 9 December 1901.

⁹ These links were explored by E. McCormick, particularly in relation to the Doncaster family photograph album, in the Henry Moore Institute's exhibition *The Age of Innocence: Replicating the Ideal Portrait in the New Sculpture Movement*, Sculpture Study Galleries, Leeds Art Gallery, 25 July – 20 October 2013.

that Gracie Doncaster represented was a source of artistic inspiration for Drury, as it had been for his master Dalou, is hinted at by a detail in the 1907 statuette of *Inspiration* (conceived as a pair with *Knowledge* for the decoration of the Cromwell Road entrance to the Victoria and Albert Museum). The female figure representing *Inspiration* holds a laurel branch for art and literature, and a book signifying learning, the ribbon seal of which carries a small oval version of *The Little Duchess*, also modelled on Gracie Doncaster (fig. 6).

Drury's more direct sources of inspiration for his works include poetry and art, but also the world of theatre and popular song. *Griselda* (fig. 7), for example, alludes by title to the story told by Boccaccio and Chaucer (among others) of the long-suffering wife of the Marquis of Saluzzo who endures separation and the apparent loss of her children with fortitude. Winfrey suggests that Drury may also have had in mind Edward Walford's *Patient Griselda and other Poems* published in 1894. The girl represented by Drury hardly seems old enough to have known such sorrow; therefore, rather than illustrating a text, perhaps she better epitomises the sentimental moral that Walford derives from the story of Griselda: 'There is a silvery lining to each cloud / And who "in patience doth his soul possess" / Or soon or late he shall the victor be'.¹⁰ Patient self-possession certainly seems the dominant quality of this work praised by the critic Marion Spielmann as 'an exquisite study of childhood, fine as sculpture, elegant and beautiful as decoration' and by *The Builder* as 'remarkable not so much for its physical beauty as for its expressive character'.¹¹ Drury included a short line of text on the relief profile *My Queen* (fig. 8): 'pure in her spirit, this maiden I love'. Again, this identifies the prevailing allegorical quality represented by the work – the purity of character that inspires true love – and with it the textual source used by the artist. In this case he has responded to the lyric of a popular song also titled 'My Queen' and used in the enormously successful farce *Charley's Aunt* (1892) by Brandon Thomas:

¹⁰ E. Walford, *Patient Griselda and other poems*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1894, p. 18.

¹¹ M. Spielmann, *British Sculpture and Sculptors of Today*, London, Cassell, 1901, p. 112; *The Builder*, 66, 1896, p. 493.

When and how shall I earliest meet her? ...
But she must be courteous, she must be holy,
Pure in her spirit, this maiden I love;
Whether her birth be noble or lowly
I care no more than the spirits above...

An enigmatic reference in a later letter to Bradfords' chief librarian Butler Wood in 1922 associates *The Age of Innocence* with what was clearly one of Drury's favourite theatrical entertainments: 'You shall certainly have a cast of "Innocence". I will have one or two done when the weather is not so hot. The gelatine won't set properly this weather. So many thanks for the delightful P.P.C. [picture post card] of "Innocence". It seems that it is like "Charley's Aunt"¹². Unfortunately, the sculptor does not expand on this tantalising remark. *The Age of Innocence* takes its title from a painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds of a little girl (c. 1788) now in the Tate collection, which in turn only acquired its title through its subsequent reproduction in prints which carried this inscription. While there is no particular visual indebtedness to Reynolds' painting, the generic similarity of Drury's children's heads and the 'fancy pictures' of child subjects by Reynolds is clear.

It is at Barrow Court, near Bristol, that Drury's concern with the pensive head and the passing of time finds its most complete expression, and also where interesting connections with *Griselda* and *The Age of Innocence* can be made. Drury's decoration of the exedra in the formal garden designed by Inigo Thomas for Henry Martin Gibbs at Barrow Court in 1898 exemplifies his awareness of site and ability to collaborate with architects (fig. 9). The garden, with its prominent sundials, was designed to be 'a monitor of the passage of time' and Drury's *termini* for the exedra chart the progress of the year through a series of twelve female heads representing the months at different stages of an individual life.¹³ The sun sets behind the exedra which frames a view of the main Gibbs family home, Tyntesfield House, across the valley. Like the sundials, Drury's heads witness the passing hours and the changing

¹² Leeds, University of Leeds, Brotherton Library, Special Collections, Wood Papers, Drury 2, Alfred Drury to Butler Wood, 6 June 1922.

¹³ 'Country Homes and Gardens Old and New: Barrow Court, Somerset, the seat of Mr. H. M. Gibbs', *Country Life*, 18 January 1902, p. 84.

seasons within the garden, while less abstractly they measure nature's immensity against the span of a single life. Marking the boundary between the garden and the valley, man's habitation and nature, they ponder on time's transitions with patient fortitude registering what Wordsworth described as 'a presence that disturbs me with joy of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused, whose dwelling is the light of setting suns'.¹⁴ The critic Alfred Lys Baldry, probably writing after having seen the terracotta models for the heads in his friend Drury's studio rather than the carved stone *termini* in situ, praised this poetic quality of the work:

Drury has used the occasion to introduce a touch of poetic originality into what, with less intelligence, might easily have been allowed to degenerate into mere perfunctory ornamentation... he conceived the happy thought of treating the busts in sequence to illustrate the progress of an individual from youth to age... He has accentuated his idea by the small accessories which accompany each bust: by the early spring flowers lying on the drapery of February, the wind-tossed locks of March, the corn and fruits given to August, September, and October, and by the heavy wrappings that shroud the head of December; but the story that he wished to tell is clear enough even without these clues.¹⁵

If the Barrow Court heads are conceived to illustrate the ageing process of a single individual then it is certainly not a progress punctuated at regular intervals (for example, each head notionally advancing by six years to the age of 72). Rather the emphasis is on childhood and youth, with only *December* appearing really aged, and *November* suggesting advanced middle age. It is also clear that Drury used different models for each month, with *January* and particularly *February* (fig. 10) resembling Gracie Doncaster who modelled for *The Age of Innocence*, and *April* (fig. 11) strongly recalling her sister Clarrie who was the model for *Griselda*. Other correspondences can be found with Drury's contemporary works: *August* (fig. 12), for example, resembles the head of the nude lamp standard *Morn* (fig. 13) in Leeds City Square, while *October* (fig. 14) employs the same model used for *Morn's* partner figure of *Even* (fig. 15). The bronze lamp standards in Leeds are dated 1903 but were actually

¹⁴ W. Wordsworth, as at note 3, p. 127.

¹⁵ A. L. Baldry, 'The Art Movement: Decorative Sculpture by Mr Alfred Drury', *Magazine of Art*, 1898, pp. 442-45

conceived at the same time as the Barrow Court heads, with *Even* being exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1898. This suggests that these figures of young women (rather than girls) could not have been modelled by either of the Doncaster sisters, as has sometimes been suggested, but must have been based on professional models (the same is presumably true of *The Spirit of Night* a bust Drury exhibited in 1905 based on the head of *Even*). In a letter to William Hamo Thornycroft in 1905, Drury recommended the Mancini family – respected technicians known for their expertise in sculptural processes – as being also a good source of models: ‘Why good Mrs Mancini has children of all ages in stock! The family is worth knowing’.¹⁶

Given these formal correspondences, *The Age of Innocence* is perhaps best contextualised in the Wordsworthian frame of reference suggested by Barrow Court where the confrontation of childhood and youth with nature’s limitless immensity underlines the poet’s moral: the freedom and joy with which the child experiences nature is an example to adults - ‘the child is father of the man’ – but *The Age of Innocence* is equally one touched by the melancholy thought of inevitable decline, and disturbed by the first stirring intimations of mortality and even immortality. Wordsworth’s own poem for his daughter urges her to consider the Eternal, and this is what Drury depicts Gracie Doncaster as starting to do.¹⁷ *The Age of Innocence* is, therefore, a work of sentiment in a Romantic sense, but not sentimental in our current usage of the term. In the form of a bronze bust, the pensive girl brought a refined poetic meditation on the Sublime indoors, perfectly performing the New Sculpture’s ambition of providing ‘sculpture in the house’.¹⁸ According to this reading, therefore, drawing on the artist’s scattered references in his letters, and on his known reading of Wordsworth’s poetry, the ‘age of innocence’ represented by Drury was not intended to be the ‘age of consent’. However, it is certainly probable that broader cultural concerns about preserving the purity of childhood from sexual exploitation – the age of consent had been raised from 13 to 16 in 1885 as a result of

¹⁶ Leeds, Henry Moore Institute, Thornycroft Papers, 4.86/208, Alfred Drury to Hamo Thornycroft, 1 February 1905.

¹⁷ W. Wordsworth, as at note 3, p. 103.

¹⁸ E. Gosse, ‘The Place of Sculpture in Daily Life’, *Magazine of Art*, 1895, pp. 368-72, 407-10; 1895-6, pp. 9-12.

the publication of *The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon* by William Thomas Stead – played a part in the successful reception of the work.¹⁹

The sensibilities of some members of the public were certainly alarmed by the overtly sensual figures of *Morn* and *Even* in Leeds, with the *Yorkshire Evening Post* referring to a ‘Puritanical crusade’ against Drury’s work ‘to spare the blushes with which a false modesty colours the cheeks of Mrs Grundy and her twin sister, the British matron’.²⁰ The patron of the Leeds City Square project, the prominent industrialist Colonel Thomas Walter Harding, felt the need to defend them on aesthetic grounds at the official opening of the square on 16 September 1903, while a lengthy article in the *Yorkshire Post* defended the nudity of the lamp standards stating that ‘we cannot believe that the public morality of Leeds will be one whit worse than it is from contemplation of figures which are absolutely pure in intention and expression’.²¹ Adapting the idea of the caryatid figure to the modern task of supporting an electric light, Drury’s four pairs of contrasting figures were principally concerned, however, with marking the passing of time in allegorical form, although here each pair encompasses a day rather than the full year as at Barrow Court. To some extent Drury was responding to the twenty-two nudes holding gas lamps surrounding the Opera House in Paris by Louis-Félix Chabaud. These too come in pairs representing the morning and evening stars, although by comparison with Drury’s *Morn* and *Even* they perform their task a little prosaically. While designing his figures very much with their function in mind, Drury could be said to have added ‘a touch of poetic originality’ – as we have seen Baldry wrote of his contemporaneous work at Barrow Court near Bristol – to a commission that otherwise may have seemed a gratuitous affront to public morality and not just ‘mere perfunctory ornamentation’.

¹⁹ Winfrey has argued, for example, that ‘the combination of the sensuous and innocence perhaps explains her immense appeal to an audience who were prudishly getting over the scandal of Oscar Wilde’s trial in 1895’, Thomas, as at note 2, p. 45.

²⁰ *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 6 January 1897, ‘Yorkshire Echoes’ column.

²¹ *The Statuary of Leeds City Square*, Leeds, 1959, p. 1; ‘Leeds City Square: The Decorative Scheme Complete’, *Yorkshire Post*, 3 September 1903.

As we have seen, therefore, like the Barrow Court heads, the Leeds *Morn* and *Even* are concerned with temporality. The great sculptural precedent for this theme treated through the female nude is Michelangelo's Medici Chapel in Florence, where the figures of *Aurora* and *Notte* symbolize time's inexorable passing through their contrasting bodies and poses, the one virginal and fresh the other maternal and fatigued. Similarly, Drury's *Morn* stands erect with open eyes, holding her light up straight with her right arm, while her left hand clasps roses and a billowing swag of drapery. She is 'rosy fingered', just as Homer had described Dawn (Drury had previously referred to Homer's poetry when his *Circe* was exhibited at the Royal Academy with verses from the *Odyssey* in 1893). By contrast *Even* seems weighed down by the passing of time and the cares of the day, lost in reverie with closed eyes, her right hand supporting her drooping head. If *Morn* is a more restrained take on Dalou's *Abundance* from the *Triumph of the Republic* monument in Paris, is it too fanciful to see in *Even* Drury's homage to Rodin? The closed eyes, the languorous, vanquished air, the telling detail of the head held up by the right hand, are all similar to Rodin's early masterpiece, the male nude, *The Age of Bronze* (c.1876, but first cast in bronze in 1884).

By contrast with the Leeds City Square project, where Drury was working for an admiring patron of romantic and aesthetic tastes, the commission to produce a memorial to the fallen in the South African or Second Anglo-Boer War for Clifton College in Bristol was one in which he was required to encapsulate the feelings of loss and pride of a whole community, and also to sum up the chivalric ethos of one of England's leading public schools. The idea for a memorial emerged from the Old Cliftonians network, and the alumni of the school were balloted on its form and location. It was only at a later stage that Drury became involved: 'on the suggestion of the architects [W. S. Paul and R. C. James of Bristol], the Committee then approached the well-known sculptor, Mr. Alfred Drury, A.R.A., and at their request he submitted two sketch models, one being of St. George, the other of a modern soldier in Khaki'.²² Drury's production of two very different sketch figures to embody

²² *The Cliftonian*, XVIII, June 1904, pp. 190-91.

'Patriotism' reflected debates within the memorial committee and the wider body of Old Cliftonians about the most appropriate form of commemoration.

The 'realist' point of view was put forward in a letter published in the school magazine under the pseudonym 'O'erpeering Truth'. Although jocular in tone – armour might be necessary for a figure that ran 'the risk of being peppered by stray cricket balls' – it did make serious points about the anachronistic effect of patriotic virtue being represented by a medieval knight 'clad in the obsolete panoply of a bygone generation'. 'Was there any occasion during the late war', asked the writer while pleading for a more truthful and contemporary treatment of the theme, 'on which a kopje was scaled, a river forded, or a withering fire endured by warriors who were encumbered by heavy defensive armour? The "patriotism" of which the figure is to be symbolic is that of 1900 A.D., not that of 1300'.²³ In the end the alternative point of view supporting a medieval figure of St. George prevailed, perhaps because of the advocacy of the poet Henry Newbolt who was on the committee.²⁴

It was certainly Newbolt who provided the inscription on one of four bronze plaques on the gothic pedestal in Portland stone (the other three plaques record the names of the forty-three Old Cliftonians who died during the South African War). The commemorative verse provided by Newbolt reads: 'Clifton remember these thy sons who fell fighting far over sea / For they in a dark hour remembered well their warfare learned of thee'. This distils the essence of Newbolt's best known and most quoted poem, *Vitai Lampada* of 1902 (the torch of life), which also equates sporting behaviour in 'the Close' of Clifton College with heroic valour on the battlefield with its repeated refrain: 'Play up! play up! and play the game!' The Clifton *St. George* is one of the few works by Drury for which we have the artist's own explanation of his work:

The armour is of the period of the late fourteenth century; the shield is Gothic, with the cross of St. George on it; the handle of the sword is surmounted with a figure emblematical of Love; the figure of Christ is

²³ *The Cliftonian*, XVII, April 1903, pp. 377-79.

²⁴ D. Winterbottom, *Henry Newbolt and The Spirit of Clifton*, Bristol, Redcliffe, 1986, pp. 54-56.

surmounted by a symbol of the Holy Ghost, intended to represent the descent of the Spirit of God or the Word of God; the hilt takes the form of an anchor representing the anchor of Hope. In the head of St. George I have endeavoured to express his character of Fortitude and Virtue without effeminacy.²⁵

The Christian symbolism of St. George's sword, the romantic spirit of the description and also the elaboration of detail suggest the influence of Alfred Gilbert who produced a figure of St. George for the tomb of the Duke of Clarence in 1895 (and variants and casts after it). Drury would also have been aware of the Renaissance precedents that had inspired Gilbert, such as the figure of San Liberale in Giorgione's Castelfranco altarpiece or Donatello's figure of St. George at Orsanmichele in Florence. However, in spite of the gothic detail and its symbolism, Drury's figure does not have much in common with the ethereal, dreamy imagery of Gilbert or even of Burne-Jones. He seems a modern figure, closer in character to heroic standing male figures of Hamo Thornycroft or Dalou. It is certainly interesting in the context of this article to have Drury's statement of intent regarding the head of St. George, which – like the heads of pensive girls discussed above - aimed to express a predominant characteristic understood in a gendered manner: 'Fortitude and Virtue without effeminacy'. Viewed in situ, across playing fields and against the impressive backdrop of the Victorian gothic buildings of the school, the St. George appears to fulfil completely the brief given to Drury. As the Headmaster Canon Glazebrook said at the unveiling ceremony: 'he did not think it was possible to imagine a figure more suitable for their purpose, which was that the School should have before it a continual reminder that chivalry was one of the first duties of life'.²⁶ Chivalry had, however, been conspicuously lacking in a war where the British employed concentration camps and scorched earth tactics against the civilian population. Nevertheless, Drury's statue epitomising virtuous fortitude provided an enduring reminder to the schoolboys rehearsing through sport in the fields beneath it the heroism required for war. As such *St. George* represents in Drury's oeuvre another

²⁵ *The Cliftonian*, XVIII, June 1904, p. 194. This is presumably taken from a letter to Clifton's Headmaster Canon Michael George Glazebrook. There is a letter from Glazebrook in the Drury family archive.

²⁶ *The Memorial to Old Cliftonians who fell in the South African War*, Bristol, J. W. Arrowsmith, July 1904, p. 11, pp. 12-13.

characteristic moral concerning youth to be drawn from the passing of time – as was noted in an anonymous poem entitled ‘Looking South’ printed in the booklet accompanying the unveiling ceremony (which incidentally also notes the statue’s function, like the Barrow Court heads, as a ‘a monitor of the passage of time’):

High o’er the College Close it stands
Fronting the scenes they loved so well
And – far away – those southern lands,
Where for the right they fought and fell:
“Thus shall ye”, it seems to say,
“Go forth, when’er your country call
Quit ye as nobly in the fray,
And if God will, as nobly fall...

Here now once more – though gone are they –
I, the own image of their love,
While the old pastimes yet ye play,
Watch from my columned height above;
Watch through the quiet summer eve
Your white forms moving on the green,
And, when for House and home ye leave,
Stay sent o’er the sacred scene –

And mark the well-remembered chimes
Toll the dim quarters as they pass,
And see the shadows of the limes
Grow longer on the yellowy grass:
Till from high Tower and Chapel die
The last flush-hues of rosy light,
And the gloom gathers round, and I
Stand looking Southward through the night.²⁷

Public sculpture of this type is a particularly social form of art, with the commission of a statue providing the locus for various forms of cultural exchange, between patrons and artists, and within larger communities interested in the project. The resulting monument, in a sense, represents the culture formed by these interlocking forces, but can never fully bridge the incommensurable gap between the artist’s creative work and the complex of social realities that ‘caused’ it – the ‘patterns of

²⁷ Ibid, pp. 15-16.

intention' to use Michael Baxandall's phrase.²⁸ Even in such remarkably well-realised works as the Leeds statues, or the Clifton *St. George*, tensions are apparent – between the 'aesthetic' taste of a wealthy individual and the puritanical or utilitarian tendencies within the wider community at Leeds, for example, or between romantic or realistic styles of remembrance at Clifton College. Perhaps the most complete in this respect, because the most fully documented, of Drury's public works is the memorial statue to King Edward VII in Sheffield (fig. 16). Here the archive reveals the story of a sustained campaign of fundraising across Sheffield that resulted not only in the commission of a statue from Drury but also in the creation of a medical home for disabled children. Documents record Drury's close involvement in the development of the project initiated by Sheffield's Mayor Henry Kenyon Stephenson, visits by the sculpture committee to his studio in London, the artist's own visits to Sheffield, and even a site report that he wrote. In the process he devised new relief panels commemorating the virtues of Edward VII – alluding in one representing *Unity* to Rudyard Kipling's elegiac poetry - and in another representing *Philanthropy* to the people of Sheffield's efforts to found a hospital.²⁹

The plan to build a Crippled Children's Home - 'where such children may receive both curative treatment and elementary and industrial education' - answered a real need in Sheffield, where a 1911 report from the Education Committee pointed to the prevalence of tuberculosis of the joints in children, and addressed the well-known concerns of the late King whose own sympathies attracted him to 'the cause of helpless little children'. The documents preserved by R. M. Prescott, the town clerk, tell in great detail the story of fundraising through a city-wide public subscription promoted through the local press, with each donation scrupulously recorded from a 'workman's contribution' of £5 to the owner of the Bassett works Samuel Meggit Johnson's donation of £5000 amounting eventually to a grand total of £19448. Subsequently the records tell of the careful consideration of comparable institutions and what could be learnt from them in terms of staffing levels and medical

²⁸ M. Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1985.

²⁹ The remarkably rich archival sources for Sheffield's Edward VII memorial (Sheffield Archives, CA456 and CA658) are discussed in Thomas, as at note 2, pp. 22-33.

treatments, the architectural design of the building to be sited on land in the Rivelin Valley donated by the Duke of Norfolk, and the protracted negotiations with the Treasury and Board of Education to secure its long-term funding. Many of the details of this complex narrative found their way into the design of Drury's remarkable *Philanthropy* relief on the pedestal of his memorial statue – notably the architecturally accurate model of the hospital presented by the figure of Philanthropy to a representative figure of Sheffield's working poor.

The unveiling ceremony for the Edward VII memorial in Fitzalan Square took place on 28 October 1913, when Drury's statue was unveiled by the Duke of Norfolk, with the Duchess of Norfolk laying the foundation stone of the Crippled Children's Home in the Rivelin Valley on the same day. The 'picturesque ceremony' was witnessed by 'dense crowds' and accompanied by speeches in praise of the 'great statue of a great man'.³⁰ While Drury's achievement was praised and his reputation noted (a student of 'the great sculptor M. Jules Dalou'), much of the coverage in the local press of the unveiling understandably focused on the cherished memory of the late King, whose influence in Sheffield had done much to ward off the rise of republicanism according to the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*.³¹ The epideictic oratory in praise of Edward VII during the ceremony accompanied and at times responded directly to the allegorical imagery of the bronze panels on the pedestal, particularly in the speech of Henry Kenyon Stephenson, the one man who had done so much to see through the project and who the documents reveal had taken such a close interest in Drury's execution of it. Photographs of the bas-reliefs were reproduced in the *Sheffield Daily Independent*, and an account of their iconography based on Stephenson's speech was printed in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*:

THE STORY OF THE PANELS

The four panels of the statue pedestal, which Colonel Stephenson in his statement described in detail, are of unusual interest. The front panel consists of two figures – 'Fame' and 'Truth' holding the inscription 'Edward VII 1841-1901'. The majestic figure of Fame is portrayed with wings, as

³⁰ *The Sheffield Daily Independent*, Wednesday 29 October 1913, p. 5

³¹ *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, Wednesday 29 October 1913, p. 6.

fame flies through the length and breadth of the land. Truth is represented by a serene figure with eyes uplifted to the source of Truth.

The back panel represents Peace – ever the great aim of the late King – being crowned by Gratitude who bears in her left hand an olive branch. Behind Gratitude is a woman holding a small winged figure of Liberty which should be the outcome of Peace. The other two figures express the idea of Rest and Contentment brought about by Peace.

One of the side panels represents Philanthropy in the graceful and stately figure of a woman presenting the Crippled Children's Institution to a finely built man typical of Labour. Near to him is a group of interested spectators, one of these being a poor little cripple who is evidently anticipating benefit from the Institution. Behind him is a poor mother and her babe and an old man, all delightedly interested in what promises to be of great service to the class they represent. Behind the central figure of Philanthropy are two nurses and to the left a mother and the babe she has gratefully received back from the Institution cured. Thus are depicted on this panel Anticipation and Realisation.

The remaining panel is symbolic of Unity – a woman in the prime of life holding by each hand figures representative of India and China: the idea of Unity is further carried out most convincingly by the presence behind these figures of the North American Indian, the Maori of New Zealand and the Aborigine of Australia.³²

There was clearly a somewhat insistent emphasis on explaining the message of the panels, which had been the element of the commission which Stephenson and his committee had taken greatest care over and where Drury had 'put a good deal more work in them than I intended at the outset'.³³ To a large extent this message consisted simply of the conventional view of Edward VII as 'the peacemaker', based on his diplomatic contribution to the Entente Cordiale with France, and which was reflected widely in other memorials to the King. Similarly the racial unity supposedly achieved through Edward's exercise of imperial power, celebrated in the relief at the back of the pedestal (and not to the side as reported in the newspaper), is a theme of Rudyard Kipling's elegiac poem *The Dead King* written in 1910 where the poet refers to the 'marvel of world-gathered armies – one heart and all races', and concludes that 'these were the works of our King; Earth's peace was the proof of them'. Drury would quote Kipling's lines, or rather slightly misquote them, when he

³² *Sheffield Daily Independent*, Monday 27 October 1913, p. 9 for photographs, and *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, Wednesday 29 October 1913, p. 5 for the explanation.

³³ Sheffield, Sheffield Archives, CA 658 (27), Alfred Drury to R. M. Prescott, 20 May 1913.

exhibited the models for the Sheffield panels shortly afterwards at the Royal Academy exhibition in May 1914: 'Unity. "One heart of all races." – Kipling'.

In the panels, therefore, female allegorical figures articulate the virtues of the departed monarch making his public memorial a symbol of peaceful unity and social cohesion. Interestingly, peace, unity, education and philanthropy were some of the distinctive qualities that pro-suffrage voices claimed that women could bring to politics, as reported in the Sheffield press at this time. For example, the Sheffield Independent reported a speech made by Clara Rackham ('Mrs Harris Rackham') at a meeting of the Sheffield Women's Suffrage Society where she argued that:

One heard people talk sometimes as if the fact that men and women were different was a reason against women having the vote. This was the reason why the National Union thought women's suffrage was going to be of some good to the nation. Because men and women were different, therefore, women were going to bring into politics something that was not there already, and which men could never bring. That was their womanhood and their motherhood and their special knowledge as to home and children.³⁴

As we have seen, Drury was particularly fluent in a style of realistic allegory deriving from Dalou where the gracious influence of female beauty and the pacifying and unifying effect of images of motherhood formed an integral part of his public sculpture – from the enlightening nudity of the Leeds lamp standards to the monumental maternity of the Vauxhall Bridge figure of *Education* (of which Drury said 'I think it is one of my best groups').³⁵ In transferring to the public sphere the domestic forms of maternity and childhood developed in earlier works on a smaller scale, where the artist could be said to have demonstrated a 'special knowledge as to home and children', Drury's public sculpture aimed to perform a similarly cohesive social role to that claimed for women by moderate suffragists. It is interesting, therefore, to note that the same Royal Academy exhibition at which Drury exhibited the models for the Sheffield panels was disrupted several times throughout May 1914 by attacks on art works by militant suffragettes, including pictures by John Singer-Sargent, Herbert Herkomer and George Clausen; and that at

³⁴ *Sheffield Independent*, Friday 1 May 1914, p. 1

³⁵ London, National Art Library, 86.PP.2, MSL/1972/4950/47, Alfred Drury to A. L. Baldry, 2 May 1907.

the same time that Drury was exhibiting in the Municipal Art Exhibition in Sheffield his *Lilith*, *Griselda* and *Head of a Baby*— ‘which the sub-title aptly describes “Charming with Childhood’s sweet Simplicity”’; the head is modelled from Mr. Drury’s own child’ – the columns of Sheffield’s newspapers bristled with headlines about ‘Women’s War on Art Treasures’ and ‘Picture Outrages’ from ‘Women Who Defy Everybody’.

In this context it is interesting to compare the elegant, symbolist treatment of the *Peace* panel (fig. 17), with the more complex and original *Philanthropy* relief (fig. 3). In the first, elongated and beautiful allegorical figures, that show Drury at his most Pre-Raphaelite, enact the crowning of Peace by Gratitude in a composition that closely adapts the artist’s previous relief of the Fine Arts from the base of the Queen Victoria memorial of 1905 in Wellington, New Zealand – transforming the iconography of the sister arts into a hymn to peace by removing a palette, replacing a book with a scroll inscribed ‘Peacemaker’, a violin with an olive branch, and giving a statuette representing sculpture the wings of liberty. The Wellington panel was itself an adaptation of an earlier bas-relief for the statue to Sir Thomas Elder in Adelaide, Australia, set up in 1903, the model for which Drury can be seen discussing with his Australian patrons in his Gunter Grove studio in a photograph (fig. 18).³⁶ Here we see Drury the accommodating and successful artist, fluently adapting his repertoire of forms to the circumstances of each commission and the requirements of his patrons. Alfred Gilbert’s uncompromising pursuit of an artistic ideal, with the frequent conflicts with patrons that accompanied it, was not Drury’s way. To note this does not diminish, however, the subtle poetry of Drury’s art in translating his patrons’ unformed wishes into agreeable forms – or in the case of commissions like the Sheffield memorial to orchestrate the numerous and sometimes conflicting voices revealed by the archive into a harmonious whole.

By contrast the *Philanthropy* relief does not deal solely with an abstract virtue in a purely allegorical manner, but with the specific circumstances of the city-wide

³⁶ Thomas, as at note 2, p. 48.

fundraising and planning for the, as yet, unrealised project of a medical home for disabled children. At the time of the statue's unveiling this panel served to advertise what some subscribers saw as the true memorial to Edward VII – not the statue in bronze, but an institution actively addressing social problems and improving life for the people of Sheffield (interestingly photographs of the finished hospital in Sheffield's archive show that plaster versions of Drury's relief panels were displayed in its entrance hall, presumably to represent the values the institution embodied and to influence the education and treatment of the children it served). The fact that this goal had not yet been achieved is reflected in the complex narrative structure of Drury's relief: on the one hand, the composition can be read from left to right as a story of philanthropic donation from the upper classes to the labouring poor ('all delightedly interested in what promises to be of great service to the class they represent'); on the other, from right to left, as a narrative of anticipation and realisation from the 'poor little cripple who is evidently anticipating benefit from the Institution' to the 'mother and the babe she has gratefully received back from the Institution cured'. This double narrative movement creates a visual balance at the centre of the composition around the architectural model, together with a certain equality of status between the priestess-like figure of Philanthropy and the semi-nude and muscular figure of Labour.

The latter figure reveals Drury drawing on another side of Dalou's art: his impressive ability to convey the quiet heroism of labour without condescension or sentimentality, as in *The Great Peasant* for the planned *Monument aux Ouvriers* (cast posthumously in 1904). Wearing boots instead of clogs, Drury's labourer is industrial rather than rural, but nevertheless conveys the gravitas and some of the political associations of Dalou's *Great Peasant*, and is stylistically at variance with the other figures on the pedestal. Reading against the grain, but with the prevailing right to left rhythm of the relief (going backwards into the future as it were), it is possible to see *him* as the donor of the hospital – the 'workman's contribution of £5' – and as a type of 'ragged trousered philanthropist' who might well say, with Frank Owen the leading character of Robert Tressell's novel, 'all these things are produced by those who work. We do our full share of the work, therefore we should have a full share of

the things that are made by work'.³⁷ Certainly, when the Edward VII memorial is seen from the side in Fitzalan Square, the figure of the worker dressed only in creased and frayed trousers contrasts vividly with the profile view above of the monarch splendidly arrayed in military uniform and the elaborate folds of the cloak of the garter.

Whether or not this political reading of the *Philanthropy* relief is warranted, this work with its complex treatment of narrative, representing a moment when it provided a memorial of the future, and with its focus on the relationship between children and the wider community, provides a good point at which to conclude this discussion of Drury's concern with sculpture's living presence and its temporality. The artist's best known works created for exhibition or the home, such as *Griselda* and *The Age of Innocence*, have been associated here with poetic texts known to the artist in order to argue that they exemplify moral characteristics such as 'patient self-possession' or 'beautiful purity' as a form of realistic allegory capturing an enduring instant, and distilling universal meaning in a particular likeness. In particular, it was argued that the artist's abiding interest in childhood could be related to a Wordsworthian sensibility that gave rise to the 'touch of poetic originality' appreciated by contemporary critics like Baldry. In public works this was often aligned thematically with a subtle awareness of temporality and sculpture's role in forging collective memory, making Drury one of the most effective makers of memorials of his age, as well as one of the most psychologically insightful sculptors of children.

Illustrations:

1. Alfred Drury, *The Age of Innocence*, 1897, bronze, h: 38cm. Private Collection.
(photo: Theresa Mikuriya)

2. Alfred Drury, *St. George*, 1904, bronze, h: 2.44cm (statue), 600cm (monument).
South African War Memorial, Clifton College, Bristol.
(photo: Ben Thomas)

³⁷ R. Tressell, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* (first published in 1914), Ware, Wordsworth Classics, 2012, p. 51.

3. Alfred Drury, *Philanthropy*, 1913, bronze, h: 132cm. Edward VII Memorial, Fitzalan Square, Sheffield.

(photo: Ben Thomas)

4. William Wordsworth, *Collected Poems*, 1873. Private Collection.

(photo: Jolyon Drury)

5. Alfred Drury, *Spencer Compton, 8th Duke of Devonshire*, 1910, bronze, h: 260cm. Western Lawns, Eastbourne.

(photo: Ben Thomas)

6. Alfred Drury, *Inspiration*, 1907, bronze, h: 61cm. Private Collection.

(photo: Theresa Mikuriya)

7. Alfred Drury, *Griselda*, 1896, bronze, h: 45cm. Private Collection.

(photo: Theresa Mikuriya)

8. Alfred Drury, *My Queen*, 1896, bronze, h: 51cm. Private Collection.

(photo: Theresa Mikuriya)

9. Garden Exedra, Barrow Court.

(photo: Ben Thomas)

10. Alfred Drury, *February*, 1898, stone, h: 50cm (approximately). Garden Exedra, Barrow Court.

(photo: Ben Thomas)

11. Alfred Drury, *April*, 1898, stone, h: 50cm (approximately). Garden Exedra, Barrow Court.

(photo: Ben Thomas)

12. Alfred Drury, *August*, 1898, stone, h: 50cm (approximately). Garden Exedra, Barrow Court.

(photo: Ben Thomas)

13. Alfred Drury, *Morn*, 1903, bronze, h: 198cm. City Square, Leeds.

(photo: Ben Thomas)

14. Alfred Drury, *October*, 1898, stone, h: 50cm (approximately). Garden Exedra, Barrow Court.

(photo: Ben Thomas)

15. Alfred Drury, *Even*, 1903, bronze, h: 198cm. City Square, Leeds.

(photo: Ben Thomas)

16. Alfred Drury, *Edward VII Memorial*, 1913, bronze, h: 300cm (statue), 472cm (monument). Fitzalan Square, Sheffield.
(photo: Ben Thomas)

17. Alfred Drury, *Peace*, 1913, bronze, h: 132cm. Edward VII Memorial, Fitzalan Square, Sheffield.
(photo: Ben Thomas)

18. Alfred Drury showing the model of the Thomas Elder memorial to clients at his Gunter Grove studio, c.1900.
(photo: unknown)