

‘A baby’s unconsciousness’ in sculpture: modernism, nationalism, Frederick MacMonnies and George Grey Barnard in *fin-de-siècle* Paris

In 1900 the French critic André Michel declared the US sculpture on view at the Exposition Universelle in Paris as ‘the affirmation of an American school of sculpture’.¹ While the sculptors had largely ‘studied here and ... remained faithful to our salons’, Michel concluded, ‘the influence of their social and ethnic milieu is already felt in a persuasive way among the best of them’.² How did Michel come to declare this uniquely American school? What were the terms around which national temperament – what Michel describes as a ‘social and ethnic milieu’ – was seen as manifest in art?

Artistic migration to Paris played a central role in the development of sculpture in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Hundreds of US sculptors trained in drawing and modelling the human figure at the Ecole des beaux-arts and other Parisian ateliers.³ The circulation of people and objects incited a widening dialogue about artistic practice. During the emergence of modernism, debates arose about the relationships between tradition and innovation.⁴ Artists were encouraged to adopt conventions from academic practice, and subsequently seek an individuated intervention that built on and extended that art history.

Discussions about emulation and invention were buttressed by political debates about cultural nationalism that constructed unique national schools.⁵ In 1891, for example, a critic bemoaned that US artists were imitative in their ‘thoughtless acceptance of whatever comes from Paris’.⁶ By this period, US artists were coming under fire for so fully adopting French academic approaches that their art seemed inextricably tied to its foreign model. In response, reviewers encouraged artists to seek a unique style that seemed to be tied to national tradition.

Frederick MacMonnies (1863–1937) and George Grey Barnard (1863–1938) were both mentioned in Michel’s celebration of a burgeoning school of American sculpture.⁷ Large-scale sculptures by both appear in an extant photograph of the International Sculpture Decennial in the Grand Palais at the Universal Exposition of 1900, which showcases Barnard’s *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man* at far left and one of MacMonnies’s *The Horse Tamers* to its right (fig. 1).⁸ Both artists, exact contemporaries and arriving in Paris one year apart in 1883–84, used foreign study as career springboards. They met in Paris and made drawings together in preparation for admission to the Ecole des beaux-arts.⁹ Although their sculptures differed stylistically and MacMonnies spent a longer period abroad, their careers indicate how the production and reception of US sculpture in Paris became linked to discursive

constructions of US character. Both artists moderated concerns about French influence by downplaying their training; both emphasized instead aspects of their work that highlighted their youthful and individual perspectives. In their portraits made in France, both sculptors fashioned themselves as naïve. In tandem, critics linked their sculptures to stereotypes of US character as youthful and innocent, a claim that dodged French artistic influence. In this way, MacMonnies's and Barnard's sculptural practices interwove ideals of individual style and national character.¹⁰

While Franco-US artistic exchange enacted a dialectical tension that polarized French and US cultures, the relationships between individuals and constructions of national character reveal a more layered exchange, as suggested by theories of cultural transfer, consisting of 'vectors' of interaction.¹¹ This article argues that the discourse of the innocent eye – a metaphor for unmediated experience that was central both to modernism and to notions of US cultural character – was a vector shaping US sculptural practice in Paris in the 1890s. While artistic migration spurred training, claims to innocent vision encouraged the inverse – the forgetting of artistic knowledge. MacMonnies's and Barnard's careers offer a point of entry into that relationship between aesthetics and social discourse. The terms that critics employed to discuss their work – 'nervous force' for MacMonnies and a 'baby's unconsciousness' for Barnard – indicate the roles of self, nation and artistic migration in sculptural practice.

Modernism and nationalism intertwined: the innocent eye

Some *fin-de-siècle* artists expressed anxiety about the negative implications of modernity, seeking instead the idea of innocent experience as a return to authenticity.¹² This concept implied relinquishing history and tradition in favour of the present. For example, critics of Impressionism celebrated forgetting as a modernist strategy. As French writer Jules Laforgue explained in 1883, 'The Impressionist is one, who, forgetting the pictures amassed through centuries in museums, forgetting his optical art school training ... has succeeded in remaking for himself a natural eye, and in seeing naturally and painting as simply as he sees.'¹³ This notion of forgetting an artistic past highlights the artist's focus on the immediate encounter with the subject, creating a present within the object that continually repeats for its viewer. As the art historian Joel Isaacson has argued, forgetting functioned as a 'theory' that allowed artists to claim that they had relinquished art history and their own previous visual experiences.¹⁴ For example, Claude Monet explained to the US painter Lilla Cabot Perry that 'he wished he had been born blind and then suddenly gained his sight so that he could have begun to paint in this way without knowing what the objects were that he saw before him'.¹⁵ The idea of a 'naïve impression' implied relinquishing knowledge of landscapes and paintings already viewed in favour of approximating individual, embodied human experience. With an

1. International Sculpture Decennial, Grand Palais, Paris Exposition 1900, in *Paris Exposition Reproduced from the Official Photographs Taken Under the Supervision of the French Government for Permanent Preservation in the National Archives*, New York: R.S. Peale, 1900. Thomas J. Watson Library, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
(photo: Galina Mardilovich)



emphasis on unmediated encounters between artist and subject, the concept reinforced the discourse of the artist genius.

In sculpture, a turn to symbolism and the *non-finito*, exemplified by the French sculptor Auguste Rodin, can be read through a similar expressive discourse. As the art historian David J. Getsy has argued, the deliberate textured surfaces of Rodin's sculptures registered to viewers as authentic, unconventional and anti-academic.¹⁶ With dynamic, twisting figures and surfaces left notably unpolished, such as in *Eternal Springtime*, modelled in 1884 and cast in 1885 (fig. 2), Rodin's sculptures often read as contingent and fleeting. With his emphasis on building a momentary quality, his artistic practice seemed to belie the large scale and technical processes that militated against speedy production and required the intervention of studio assistants. In *Eternal Springtime*, the intertwined figures remain largely embedded in the material from which they are modelled to construct a sense of quick finish. Only the man's left arm and right leg project from the central form in their dynamic gestures. As art historians have suggested, Rodin's perceived liberation from academic convention earned him a particular following in the United States from the 1890s until his death in 1917.¹⁷

In the context of nationalist competition, the notion of artistic forgetting became more than a modernist strategy. Rather, the construction fed into larger cultural myths about the American as lacking in history and tradition. Tapping into the currency for artistic forgetting, critics suggested that through a national character of youth, unencumbered by tradition, US artists could more completely enact artistic forgetting. As a result, the claim of an *a priori* lack of history overlooked French art education, and turned the liability



2. Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), *Eternal Springtime*, modelled 1884, cast 1885, plaster, painted white, 66 × 70.2 × 42.2 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of Paul Rosenberg, 1953-26-1 (photo: Philadelphia Museum of Art Library and Archives)

of being a so-called young nation into an asset. For example, in 1891, Gilbert Parker, a Canadian critic for London's *Independent*, explained that modern French art privileged naïve vision that replicated a first encounter with nature. He declared, 'Be naïve! That is the key-note of French art; it is the primal chord of naturalness, the final touch of individuality, the power behind achievement, the secret of genius.' For Parker, displays of naïvety in art signalled authenticity in modernist artistic experience. Parker then turned to cultural politics, arguing that it was the contingent of US artists in Paris, not the French, who offered the most extreme sense of naïvety. 'What command better suited to the American temperament?' Parker asked, continuing, 'If it has any quality which is conspicuously eminent, it is *naïveté*, it is a habit of

looking at things as if they were seen for the first time.' Parker argued that US art results from an inherently naïve position; the American 'sees things with no intervening veil of convention and tradition; he is bade to be independent and free from his youth up; he is impelled to think things out for himself; he is told, in effect, from his cradle to be naïve'.¹⁸ Parker reveals the discursive interweaving of modernism and nationalism in his assessment of how American culture shaped US art production.

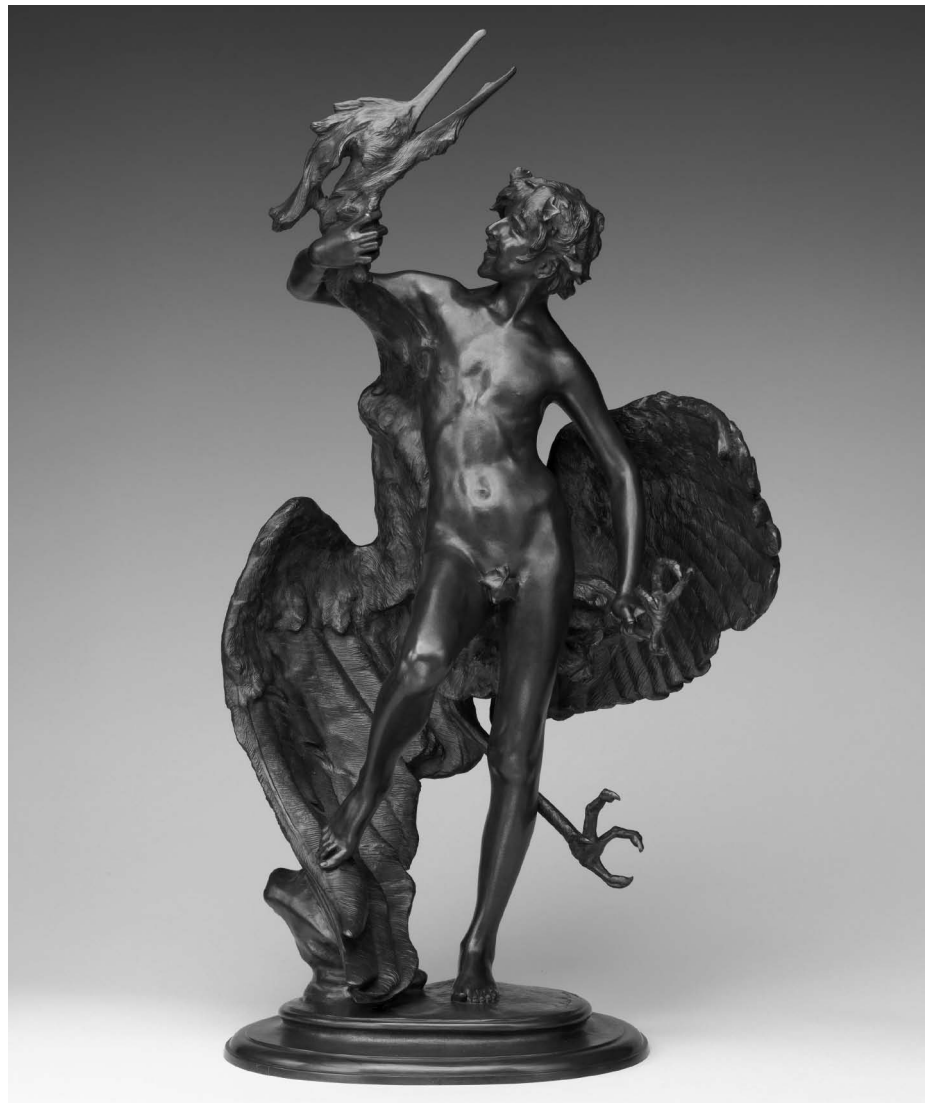
As earnest as these ideas were, they were paradoxical. Artists could not forget the past and tradition any more that nations could be innocent. As the art historian E. H. Gombrich has argued, 'the innocent eye is a myth'. Gombrich was fascinated with the stylistic aspects of representation that offer the illusion of 'the suppression of conceptual knowledge', or feigned forgetting.¹⁹ Neither an individual – nor a nation – can be innocent when they are self-consciously declared to be so. MacMonnies's and Barnard's Parisian sculptural practices reveal the contradictions within artistic innocence in the age of nationalism. In addition to contributing to the discourse of the innocent eye that linked modernism and US nationalism, their careers underscore the paradoxical combination of unencumbered experience and large-scale sculpture.

'Nervous force' – MacMonnies and the discourse of US character

In 1890 MacMonnies submitted a plaster version of *Young Faun with Heron* (fig. 3) to the Salon des artistes français. A studio assistant in New York with US sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens in the early 1880s, MacMonnies moved to Europe in the autumn of 1884. By 1886 he had joined the studio of Alexandre Falguière at the Ecole des beaux-arts.²⁰ The sculpture was commissioned for an outdoor fountain at a home in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. As the

art historian Thayer Tolles has observed, *Young Faun with Heron* highlights ‘MacMonnies’s full comprehension of the Beaux-Arts aesthetic’ with its balance of figures and contrast between the texture of the feathers of the bird and the smooth skin of the young faun.²¹ The male figure stands in a moderated *contrapposto*. The bodies of animal and faun are intertwined, as the latter holds the leg and neck of the huge bird, and nestles a few toes on the bird’s wing. The outstretched wings enfold the body of the faun who looks at the grinning bird.

While MacMonnies highlights his academic training in the sculpture, his handling is sometimes visible in the texture in parts of the faun’s skin, and in the rough modelling of feathers. The energy and dynamism resulted in perceptions of the boyish vigour of the sculpture, which some US critics used in order to connect MacMonnies with the youthful emergence of a US art practice. The sculpture was shown in 1891 at the Art Institute of Chicago’s fourth annual exhibition of American painting and sculpture, along with



3. Frederick William MacMonnies (1863–1937), *Young Faun with Heron*, 1889–90, cast 1890, bronze, 69.2 × 38.1 × 23.5 cm, Gift of Edward D. Adams, 1927. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 27.21.8 (photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art)

reductions of *Pan of Rohallion* (1890) and *Diana* (1888–89), a triad that he consistently exhibited in the 1890s, perhaps to advertise for small-scale bronze sales. The grouping, among a few other examples by other artists, inspired a critic to define American art as embedded in a discourse of the new:

There is ample evidence here of the alertness of the American artist: one finds him quick to receive new impressions, eager to test the merit of an unusual doctrine, determined to master the resources of his art, and awake to many forms of beauty. He is keen, impulsive, ambitious and unaffaired, and it is from qualities like these that American art will one day draw inspiration to compose a new, strange melody.²²

This unnamed critic used these representations to characterize US art as new and non-formulaic. In the jovial youth of the figure and the textured handling, MacMonnies became an exemplar of absorbing but also surpassing academic practice.

The most frequently repeated phrase in the *fin-de-siècle* criticism of MacMonnies's sculptures is 'nervous force'. This term highlighted a perception of MacMonnies's practice as uncontrolled. In 1895 his fellow artist Will Hicock Low characterized his 'nervous force' as 'an incentive to put by each accomplished work and seek in fresh fields new problems ...'²³ After quoting from Low, H. H. Greer repeated the phrase in the same vein: 'The nervous force that is in him has acted as an incentive to tempt new achievements in plastic art.'²⁴ Another contemporary, Edith Pettit, linked this idea to virility: 'Inexhaustible vigor and nervous force ... is shown in all his work – an eagerness and determination to try a fall with every problem.'²⁵

MacMonnies's monumental pendant *The Horse Tamers*, which was commissioned for Prospect Park in Brooklyn and exhibited in plaster at the Universal Exposition in Paris in 1900 (fig. 1), visualizes this discourse. Its content highlights 'the Triumph of Mind over Brute Force'.²⁶ Two rearing horses enact a struggle by breaking out of sculptural stasis as a nude, classicized, male figure straddles one and tries to subdue the other. Dynamic from every direction, the sculpture seems ungrounded in its vigour and with its spirited, unencumbered subject. Paradoxically, the character that gives the sculpture its 'nervous force' drew from the very academic training that MacMonnies sought visually to obscure. Critics suggest that these qualities informed MacMonnies's teaching; for instance, Pettit stated that MacMonnies instructed that the artist must negotiate the 'problem of reproducing the thing actually at the moment seen, not a thing imagined or guessed at or already partly formulated by experience'.²⁷ The artist's rhetorical link between 'nervous force' and art as immediate experience suggest his attempts to deflect perceptions of Parisian influence. Michel's attention to the artist's role in shaping an American school of sculpture indicates his success.

The concept of being anti-formula is tied to a discourse about US cultural character as without history and tradition. Thomas Couture, a French painter who taught many American students in Paris, remarked, 'the American seems

to hold the principle not to take what's offered to him; going continually to discovery, he takes only that which he thinks he has discovered'.²⁸ These ideals aligned with wider cultural constructions about an American penchant for discovery; Alexis de Tocqueville had commented in the 1840s:

No craftsman's axiom ever makes an American pause; all professional prejudices pass him by; he is not attached more to one way of working than to another; he has no preference for old methods compared to a new one; he has created no habits of his own, and he can easily rid himself of any influence foreign habits might have over his mind, for he knows that his country is like no other and that his situation is something new in the world.²⁹

4. Frederick William MacMonnies, *The French Chevalier*, 1901, oil on canvas, 89 × 50 1/2 in. Palmer Museum of Art of the Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Melvin S. Frank, 97.71 (photo: Palmer Museum of Art)



This stereotype of US ingenuity and unwillingness to be trammelled by formula informed the critical response to US art in the period, and became a way for critics to mitigate concerns about foreign influence. For example, in reviewing both MacMonnies's submissions to the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900 (fig. 1), and his exhibition at the Salon des artistes français in 1901

(in which he showed his full-length sculpture of General John Blackburne Woodward), a reviewer reiterated the concept of 'nervous energy' and 'nervous vitality' as 'native American qualities'. These elements, made visible in the dynamic energy of the work according to this reviewer, enabled critics to 'freely admit that American artists receive their training in Paris ... without giving up our claim to do something distinctive and national in their work'.³⁰ For these writers, innate national character superseded foreign influence.

The nativist art critic Royal Cortissoz reframed MacMonnies's engagement with Beaux-Arts practice via an American lens. Turning a potential liability into an asset, Cortissoz used MacMonnies's career to declare that compared with a long 'unbroken development' in painting in the United States, American sculpture exhibited 'a growth whose roots are scarcely fixed at all in the past'. Anticipating Michel's language, Cortissoz gives US sculpture a youthful quality to argue that 'from the soil there has sprung a new kind of plastic art in America, a kind extremely personal, extremely independent of foreign schools in its temper, yet nourished by contact with the best work of old and modern Europe, and expressive of an eclectic impulse ...' For Cortissoz, MacMonnies had succeeded in balancing tradition with

'qualities which seem to me to be some of the most excellent in American art'.³¹ He later described these as 'temperament ... idiosyncrasy ... individual charm'.³²

Some evidence suggests that MacMonnies performed a child-like persona, which reinforced constructions of the relative youth of US sculpture. Students of MacMonnies in Paris, the Emmets, frequently commented on MacMonnies's boyishness. Jane Emmet wrote, 'He is so young, really almost a boy and yet so distinguished ... He is very funny and you never have any idea of what he is going to say or do next.'³³ Her cousin Lydia Field Emmet reinforced this claim:

MacM with his shock of blond curls, like a stage child, and thin throat in the middle of a collar six sizes too loose ... He is the youngest and most ungreat seeming thing to have attained so much ... you have to pinch yourself to remember it, he is so childish and in some ways inexperienced.³⁴

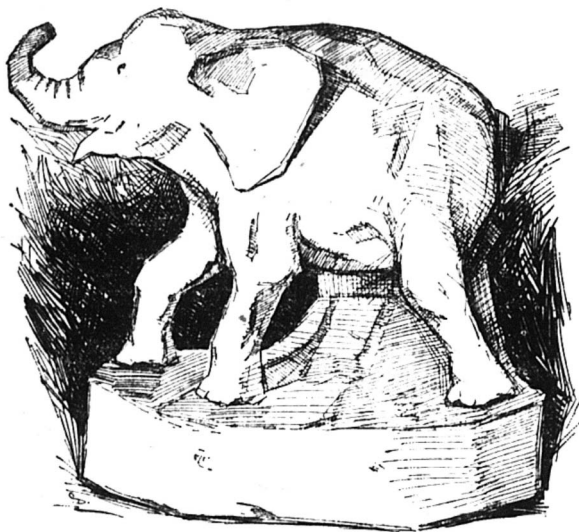
In calling him a 'stage child', Lydia seems to see through this persona as performance. This guise reinforced MacMonnies's practice, especially given his turn to painting in 1897 as a way of renewing his artistic identity.³⁵ In his self-portrait included in the mirror in the background of *The French Cavalier* (fig. 4), the artist mimics the pose of his daughter Bertha in the foreground, creating a visual parallel to suggest that he had adopted a child-like perspective akin to hers.³⁶

US critics propelled interest in the youthful artist with Vasari-style claims about MacMonnies's artistic origin story that declared him an untutored genius. In 1896 the *New York Tribune* printed a drawing of a clay elephant remembered from a Barnum circus performance that MacMonnies had modelled as a six-year-old in Brooklyn (fig. 5). By 1896 MacMonnies had had a long apprenticeship and active career, but the article, which was

picked up by other US newspapers, distanced his academic training and emphasized his innate and child-like artistic abilities by discussing his humble groups made of chewing gum. In discussing the artist's turn to painting, the article also insists that MacMonnies 'never had a lesson in painting'.³⁷

Critical responses to MacMonnies emphasize his childishness and unencumbered practice, implying it to be untrained. In spite of his technical mastery, demonstrated to viewers in sculptures such as *Young Faun with Heron* and *The Horse Tamers*, the undergirding critical reception to his sculptures highlighted a 'nervous force' in depicting youthful and original subjects. Critics attributed this character to the artist's national origins, despite his extended residence in France.

5. Drawing of Frederick William MacMonnies, 'The Sacred White Elephant', in 'A boy sculptor's work: MacMonnies's first attempts were in dough and chewing gum', *New York Tribune*, 28 February 1896, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, MacMonnies Papers, Reel D-245, Frame 168 (photo: Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution)

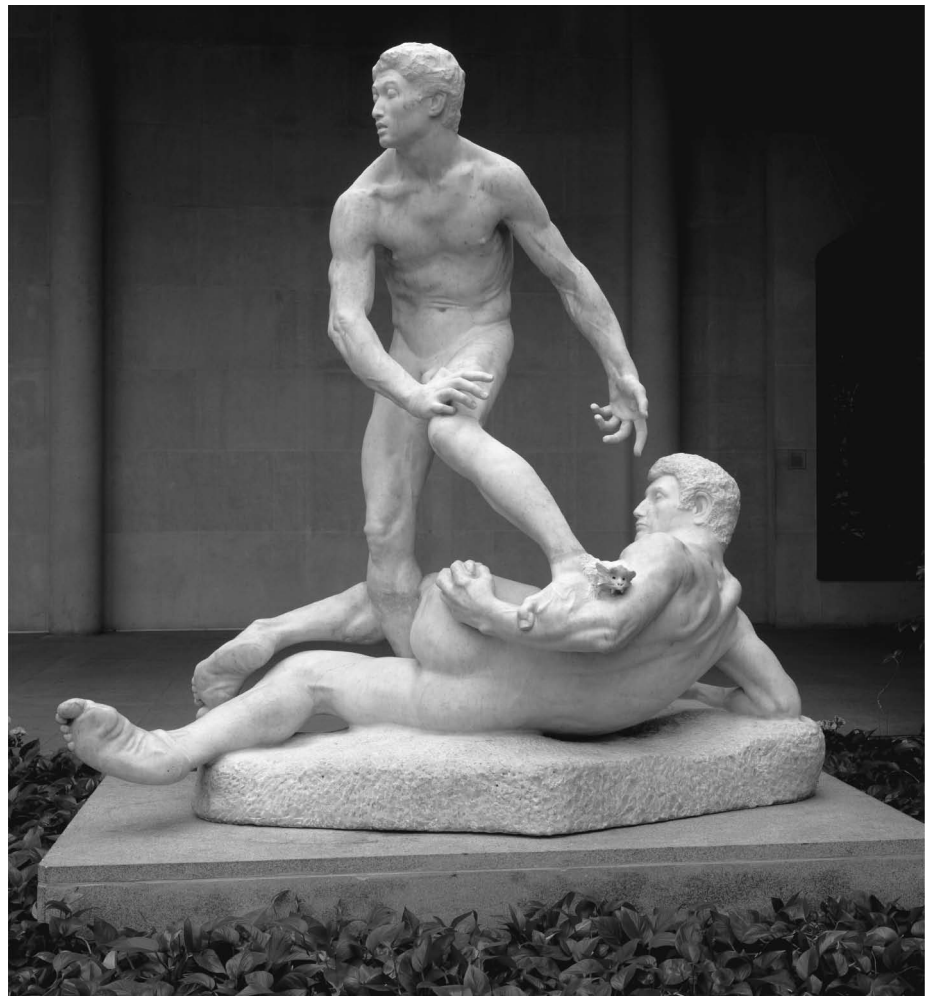


THE SACRED WHITE ELEPHANT.
(Modelled by MacMonnies at the age of six years.)

‘A baby’s unconsciousness’: George Grey Barnard in Paris

After leaving his native Bellefonte, Pennsylvania for study at the Art Institute of Chicago, Barnard began his training in Paris with the neoclassical sculptor Pierre Jules Cavalier from 1883 to 1887.³⁸ When he exhibited for the first time in 1894, at the Salon of the Société nationale des beaux-arts, he sent six sculptures, including the monumental *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man* (fig. 6). Barnard’s sculpture mediated between emulating academic practice and evolving an individuated style; the artist responded to the styles of the Renaissance master Michelangelo and his contemporary Rodin while engaging the myth of the innocent eye to eschew the spectre of influence. Critics used this discourse to claim that Barnard’s oeuvre epitomized their constructions of American character as younger than Europe, both when it was first seen in 1894 and in 1900 at the Universal Exposition.

The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man depicts two intertwined, larger-than-life male nude figures. One lies recumbent with the body twisting and muscles engaged, while a second figure stands. The standing figure’s legs are attached to the body of the other figure at the knee and at the arm,



6. George Grey Barnard (1863–1938), *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man*, 1888, carved 1892–94, marble, 256.5 × 259.1 × 121.9 cm. Gift of Alfred Corning Clark, 1896, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 96.11 (photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art)

where a gremlin-like creature emerges from the joint (fig. 7). The paired facial features and rough-hewn hair of the two figures suggest that they are intended as twins, though the recumbent figure has a more androgynous body. The facial expressions of the figures are neutral, but both have eyes half open, implying that they are waking or falling asleep, either way in a state of semi-consciousness. While the sculpture seems intended to present a duality, there is no consensus among scholars or in the primary sources about whether it represents a dichotomy of mind–body, conscious–unconscious, emotion–intellect, present–past, Apollonian–Dionysian, or good–evil.³⁹

As in MacMonnies's *The Horse Tamers*, the act of struggle between the two figures allegorizes the challenge of the young artist trying to develop a career in the international vetting space of the Paris Salon. Barnard likely engaged with Rodin's work because of its large scale, sense of mystery and, as with Michelangelo, his tendency towards combining finely polished surfaces with rough hewn and textured stone.⁴⁰ Like the imbricated figures in *Eternal Springtime* (fig. 2), Barnard's similarly muscular figures commingle. The *non-finito* quality builds tension between the subject and the materiality of the sculpture.⁴¹ Rodin had served on the Salon jury since 1889, and reports suggest that he did not exhibit at the 1894 Salon in order to allow Barnard's work public attention.⁴² While such altruism smacks of myth, Rodin's sculptural practice was a model for Barnard's burgeoning career.

During his training at the Art Institute of Chicago, Barnard made copies of plaster casts of Michelangelo sculptures.⁴³ In the Louvre, Barnard visited, studied and likely copied the Italian sculptor's *Rebellious Slave* (fig. 8) and

Dying Slave (fig. 9), two unfinished sculptures that had been intended for the tomb of Pope Julius II.⁴⁴ Although the pose of Barnard's figures does not draw directly from these forms, the colossal scale of the work, the focus on musculature and the carving methods are alike. Barnard referred to his group in process as *Liberty*, a term also employed by nineteenth-century writers to discuss Michelangelo's sculptures.⁴⁵ Like Michelangelo's slaves, Barnard's figures twist and contort in space as if breaking free from the marble. Critics described Barnard's piece as 'uncouth' and 'rugged', matching the rough-hewn surfaces and a *non-finito* quality alongside areas of *virtuoso* carving and polish found on Michelangelo's unfinished sculptures.⁴⁶ Yet while Michelangelo's sculptures possess rough areas because the artist did not complete them, Barnard's intentionality is seen through his carefully placed rough texture only in the hair and base of the sculpture.⁴⁷

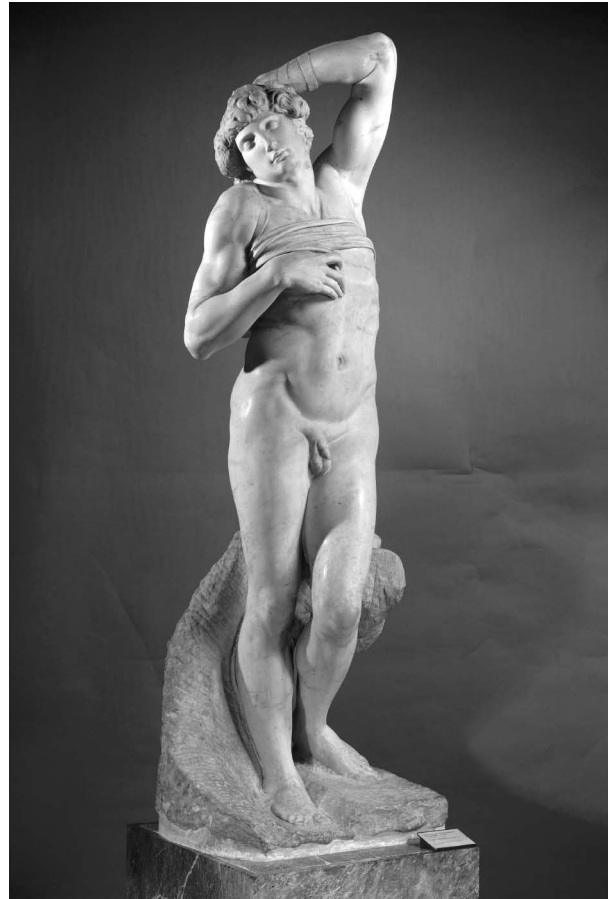
In spite of these dialogues with other sculptors, Barnard and his critics constructed a discourse

7. George Grey Barnard, *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man*, 1888, carved 1892–94, marble, 256.5 × 259.1 × 121.9 cm, detail. Gift of Alfred Corning Clark, 1896, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 96.11 (photo: Catherine Mackay)





8. Michelangelo (1475–1564),
The Rebellious Slave, c. 1513–16,
marble. Musée du Louvre
(photo: Scala/Art Resource, NY)



9. Michelangelo, *The Dying Slave*,
c. 1513–16, marble. Musée du
Louvre
(photo: Scala/Art Resource, NY)

around his sculpture that obscured these models. When he exhibited, he listed no instructor in the catalogue.⁴⁸ Michelangelo had made similar attempts with his contemporaneous biographers to downplay his artistic training during his career.⁴⁹ Visual representations of Barnard with his sculpture enhanced a similar ideal of artistic solitude. One photograph shows him carving his monumental sculpture alone (fig. 10). A portrait of the artist by Polish painter Anna Bilińska shown at the Salon in 1890 emphasizes the solitary sculptor posed on the corner of the platform on which his model sits, his arms covered with grey clay (fig. 11).⁵⁰ His left arm, bent and holding an object, echoes the elbow of the recumbent figure just over his shoulder. The comparative scale of the sculptor, who acknowledges the viewer directly, and the monumental sculpture that cannot be contained by the size of the canvas underscores the construction of Barnard's Herculean task. The shroud of drapery wrapped around the standing figure and removed from only part of the recumbent figure creates a sense of secrecy around the sculpture in process only partly unveiled. It also hides its incomplete parts, which Barnard described in the summer of 1890 as 'far from finished' and in the process of becoming.⁵¹ The photographs and Bilińska's painting advertise the young artist's Salon debut to come, and, by focusing on the solitary sculptor in the act of production, reinforce statements about his process.

Barnard said that in modelling his massive sculpture at his space at 12



10. George Grey Barnard with *Two Natures*, unfinished marble, c. 1892–93, reprinted in Dickson, 'Log of a Masterpiece', 141 (photo: Centre County Historical Society, State College, PA)

rue Boissonade in the artist quarter in the 14th *arrondissement*, he would first open his eyes at a mere squint in the morning when he stood before his clay and his models in his Parisian 'semidark studio' so as to perceive 'only the essential form, the elemental vigor of the figure before him'.⁵²

Barnard argued that he lacked awareness of artistic tradition and ignored his own previous production through the daily renewal of vision. Years later, in 1930, he elevated the myth of his 'innocent eye' in his recollections about making this sculpture:

When I got up in the morning, I did not open my eyes. I dressed and had my coffee with them closed, and then I groped my way down the rickety stairs into the studio. Only one little window was open and the two models would be waiting for me. One of them would lead me to my group and then take his pose from his companion. Slowly I would then half open my lids, so that I could see points of light between the lashes, and it was with these points of light that I modeled the group.⁵³

Barnard implied that the night had relinquished his memory of the forms so his vision could be reborn in the morning. While squinting in producing a sculpture is not an unusual procedure for perceiving masses of light and shadow, Barnard romanticized the technique. He transformed it into a posture of his artistic character through the idea that he restricted his first sight each day to only his figure grouping – even as he risked falling down his studio stairs.⁵⁴ The figures in *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man* echo Barnard's narrative of modelling the sculpture 'with eyes half shut'; one critic described them as similarly 'blind and groping in their gesture'.⁵⁵ In his claims to possess an innocent eye, Barnard embraces the ideas of other modernist artists, such as Monet's comment about forgetting, in his own process of sculpting with 'eyes half shut'. But he extends Monet's wistful goal by applying that imagined primal perceptual experience to his figures, instead of to the viewer. Such conscious naïvety highlights the paradox inherent within his construction.

Critics embraced Barnard's narrative by arguing that refreshed vision informed his technique, resulting in his character as 'a primitive in his way of looking at interpreting life' applying 'a baby's unconsciousness' to his sculpture.⁵⁶ Writing in 1908, the reviewer J. Nielsen Laurvik saw Barnard's procedure as the source for the lifelikeness of the figures, stating:

it happened not infrequently, toward the completion of his task, as he walked back and forth with eyes half shut, putting on a dab of clay here,

taking away a portion there, that he would mistake the living model for the figure into which he was breathing the breath of life, so closely did he approach that outer and mysterious verge on which trembles the spirit of life: hence the energy and throbbing verisimilitude of all his figures.⁵⁷

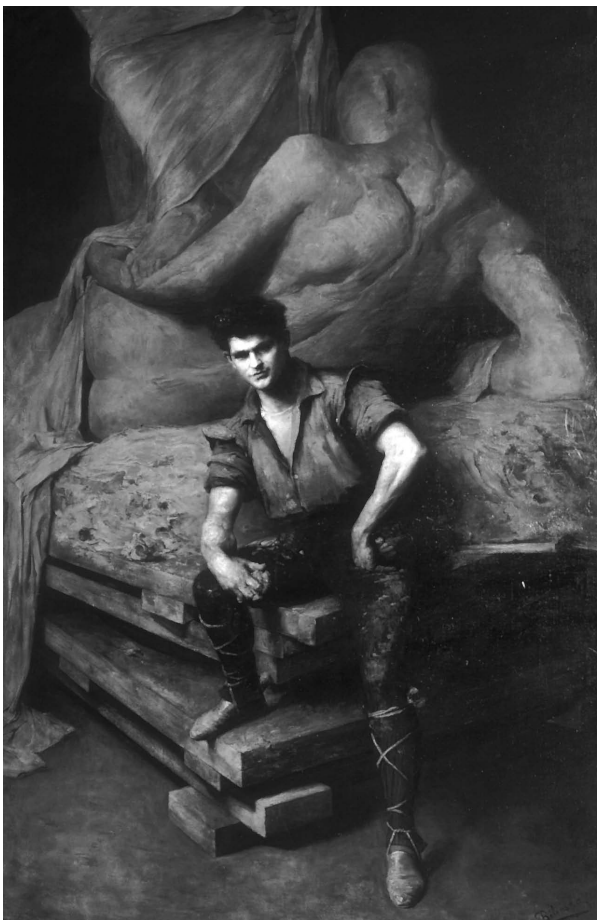
According to these critics, Barnard's process enabled him to convey the dynamic energy of the sculptural forms. Claiming Barnard's naïve experience downplays the realities of the six-year process of creating monumental sculpture, as expressed by the artist's language that it was merely 'thrown up to big size' from his original clay and plaster models.⁵⁸ Contemporary descriptions diverted attention from the parallels between Barnard's work and the sculpture of Michelangelo and Rodin.⁵⁹ The avid US sculpture critic Charles H. Caffin argued, for example, that Barnard's response to Michelangelo was 'a period of subconscious reception of impressions', as though the artist did not control or intend them.⁶⁰ Rodin had made similar attempts to dissociate himself from Michelangelo, stating in 1889, 'I had always admired Michelangelo, but I saw him at a great distance. My studies had been a blind search after the movement of figures ...'⁶¹ For Rodin as well, claims to an innocent eye detached the artist from his model. US critics similarly drew distinctions between Barnard and Rodin.

Laurvik mentioned the two sculptors' concerns with 'vital, almost consuming energy', but Frederick Coburn sought to distinguish Barnard's work.⁶² Coburn stated, 'Mr. Barnard is not at all like Rodin, let us submit emphatically, even if he does now and then leave part of his block of marble unfinished.'⁶³ Critics used cultural politics to separate Barnard from his artistic sources; Coburn concluded that, in its 'virility', Barnard's work 'most nearly conforms to the popular European conception of what an American might be expected to do'.⁶⁴

A French reviewer connected Barnard's strategies to American youth and virility, those characteristics claimed by Parker. François Thiébault-Sisson declared in 1894,

We arrive at a newcomer, George Grey Barnard, who has the makings of a master. He belongs to that young and virile America whose efforts are reflected in various unexpected forms and it makes for a singular power with his contempt for established formulas and impetuous appetite for novelty.⁶⁵

11. Anna Bilińska (1857–93), *Portrait of George Grey Barnard*, 1890, oil on canvas. State Museum of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (photo: State Museum of Pennsylvania)



This reception linked Barnard with the same discourse of American newness that framed responses to MacMonnies. This article was translated in the US press, which used it to reinforce Barnard's work as entirely new.⁶⁶ In a period in which, according to one reviewer writing in 1900, "Individuality" is the watchword ... [Barnard] has learned what Paris had to teach him, and yet withall has preserved and strengthened amid those powerful influences the gift which was his own – his own individuality and originality in the great world of Art.'⁶⁷ These commentaries suggest how reviewers enfolded constructions of national character into sculptural practice.

Conclusion

Migration incited productive tensions between nations and between the art of the past and present. MacMonnies and Barnard both achieved a level of skill, finesse and success in their international careers, but repackaged that training by paradoxically posturing as naïve. In the process they, and their critics, engaged with strategies of declaring their national identity as American by emphasizing youth, innocence, nervous force and a baby's unconsciousness. This discourse belied the realities of large-scale sculptural production, which could not be carried out in an unplanned and solitary studio environment, in favour of a nationalist and modernist agenda. Some of MacMonnies's and Barnard's sculptures allegorize struggle iconographically and stylistically, suggesting their negotiation of the anxieties around sculptural practice in an era of competition between France and the United States, and their adoption of innocence as a remedy. While artistic migration was intended to attain artistic knowledge, the ideals of modernism and US cultural nationalism encouraged the impossible inverse – the forgetting of art history.

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1. 'les sculpteurs américains tendent aussi de plus en plus à s'affirmer comme une école nationale'; A. Michel, 'Group II. Oeuvres d'arts. Classe 9. Sculpture et gravure en médailles et en pierres fines', in *Exposition Universelle internationale de 1900, Paris, Rapports du jury international*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1904, vol. 13, p. 100.

2. 'La plupart, sans doute, ont

fait chez nous leurs études ... et sont restés fidèles à nos salons; mais l'influence du milieu social et ethnique se fait sentir d'une façon déjà persuasive chez les meilleurs d'entre eux'; *ibid.*

3. L. Fink, *American Art at the Nineteenth-Century Paris Salons*, Washington, DC, National Museum of American Art, 1990; K. Adler, E. Hirshler and H. Weinberg, *Americans in Paris, 1860–1900*, London, National Gallery, 2006; K. Carter and S. Waller (eds), *Foreign Artists and Communities in Modern Paris, 1870–1914: Strangers in Paradise*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2015; and V. Wiesinger, A. Breton, P. Grunchev and I. Gournay, *Le voyage de Paris: Les américains dans les écoles d'art, 1868–1918 / Paris Bound: Americans in Art Schools, 1868–1918*, Paris, Réunion des musées nationaux, 1990.

4. P. Duro, 'Imitation and authority: the creation of the

academic canon in French art, 1648–1870', in Anna Brzyski (ed.), *Partisan Canons*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2007, pp. 95–114; and L. Fink, 'Innovation of tradition in late nineteenth-century American art', *American Art Journal*, 10, 1978, pp. 63–71.

5. For example, the French critic E. Chesneau defined separate national characters in *Les nations rivales dans l'art: Angleterre, Belgique, Hollande, Bavière, Prusse, États du Nord, Danemark, Suède et Norvège, Russie, Autriche, Suisse, Espagne, Portugal, Italie, États-Unis d'Amérique, France: l'art japonais: de l'influence des expositions internationales sur l'avenir de l'art*, Paris, Librairie Académique Didier et Cie, 1868.

6. C. H. Moore, 'Modern art of painting in France', *Atlantic Monthly*, 68, 4, 1891, p. 815.

7. Michel, as at note 1, p. 100.

8. Farther to the right are

MacMonnies's *Bacchante with an Infant Faun* (1893–94); Augustus Saint Gaudens's *The Sherman Memorial* (1900; cast 1902); and the other of MacMonnies's *The Horse Tamers*.

9. M. Smart, *A Flight with Fame: The Life and Art of Frederick MacMonnies*, Madison, CT, 1996, p. 42.

10. I follow D. Getsy's definition of sculptural practice as 'the range of negotiations made by sculptors with their own self-fashioned professional personas, with the material confines and possibilities of their technical and physical making of objects, with the conceptual frameworks through which they attempt to stage meanings for these personas and objects, with scenes of creating often ... located in the studio, and with the exhibition, reproduction, display and dissemination of these frameworks and art objects to various publics'; D. Getsy, *Rodin: Sex*

and the Making of Modern Sculpture, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2010, pp. 6–7.

11. M. Espagne, 'La notion de transfert culturel', *Revue Sciences/Lettres*, 1, 2013, pp. 1, 3.

12. T. Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1981, pp. xiv, xvii. See also R. Shiff, 'The primitive of everyone else's way', in G. Solana (ed.), *Gauguin and the Origins of Symbolism* (exh. cat.), Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, 2004, p. 76.

13. Translated in B. White (ed.), *Impressionism in Perspective*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, 1978, pp. 33–34.

14. J. Isaacson, 'Constable, Duranty, Mallarmé, Impressionism, plein air, and forgetting', *Art Bulletin*, 76, 3, 1994, pp. 427–50.

15. L. Perry, 'Reminiscences of Claude Monet from 1889 to 1909', *American Magazine of Art*, 18, March 1927, p. 120.

16. Getsy, as at note 10, pp. 7, 94.

17. B. Barryte, 'Rodin and America: an introduction', in B. Barryte, R. Tarbell and I. Fort, *Rodin and America: Influence and Adaptation, 1876–1936*, Stanford, Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts, Stanford University, 2011, pp. 21–53.

18. G. Parker, 'American art students in Paris', *Independent*, 31 December 1891, p. 6.

19. E. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1960, p. 298. See also R. Herbert, 'Naïve impressions from nature: Millet's readings, from Montaigne to Charlotte Brontë', *Art Bulletin*, 89, 3, 2007, pp. 540–61.

20. Smart, as at note 9, pp. 64–65. On MacMonnies, see also T. Tolles, 'Frederick William MacMonnies (1863–1937)', in T. Tolles (ed.), *American Sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, vol. 1. A Catalogue of Works by Artists Born before 1865*, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001, pp. 428–42; S. Fourny-Dargère and E. Gordon, *Frederick William MacMonnies et Mary Fairchild MacMonnies: deux artistes américains à Giverny*, Vernon, Musée Municipal A.-G. Poulain, 1988; E. Gordon, 'The sculpture of Frederick William MacMonnies: a critical catalogue', unpub. PhD thesis, New York University, 1998; and W. Gerds, *Monet's Giverny: An Impressionist Colony*, New York, Abbeville Press Publishers, 1993, pp. 132–40.

21. See T. Tolles, 'Young Faun with Heron, 1889–90', in Tolles, as at note 20, p. 432.

22. 'Brush and palette. Art Institute Annual Exhibition', *Sunday Herald* (Chicago), 24 October 1891, F. MacMonnies Papers, 1874–1994, Archives of American Art, Reel D-245. *Catalogue of the Fourth Exhibition of American Oil Paintings and Sculpture*, Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago, 1891, p. 13, nos. 278, 279, 280.

23. W. Low, 'Frederick MacMonnies', *Scribner's*, 18, 65, November 1895, pp. 617–28.

24. H. Greer, 'Frederick MacMonnies, sculptor', *Brush and Pencil*, 10, 1, 1902, pp. 1–2.

25. E. Pettit, 'Frederick MacMonnies, portrait painter', *International Studio* 29, October 1906, p. 319.

26. Smart, as at note 9, pp. 177–78.

27. Pettit, as at note 25, p. 324.

28. 'L'américain semble avoir pour principe de ne pas prendre ce que lui est offert; allant continuellement à la découverte, il ne prend que ce qu'il croit découvrir'; L. Fink, 'French art in the United States, 1850–1870: three dealers and collectors', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 92, 1978, p. 95.

29. A. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. I. Kramnick, New York, W.W. Norton, 2007, p. 404.

30. 'American spirit and French training', *Times* (Hartford, CT), 27 February 1901, MacMonnies Papers, Reel D-245, Frame 53.

31. R. Cortisoz, 'An American sculptor: Frederick MacMonnies', *International Studio*, 6, October 1895, pp. 17–18.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

33. Jane to E. Hunter, April 1897, in E. Rand, *Dear Females*, United States, Ellen E. Rand, 2009, pp. 42–43.

34. Lydia to Julia Colt Pierson, January 1898, in *ibid.*, p. 59.

35. On MacMonnies's painting, see Smart, as at note 9, pp. 199–213.

36. On this painting, see J. Robinson, 'An interlude in Giverny: The French Cavalier by Frederick MacMonnies', in J. Robinson, D. Cartwright and E. Gordon, *An Interlude in Giverny* (exh. cat.), University Park, PA, Penn State University, 2000, pp. 7–33.

37. 'A boy sculptor's work: MacMonnies's first attempts were in dough and chewing gum', *New York Tribune*, 28 February 1896, MacMonnies Papers, Reel D-245, Frame 168.

38. On Barnard's career, see B. Hack, 'American Acropolis: George Grey Barnard's Monument to Democracy, 1918–1938', unpub. PhD thesis, City University of New York,

2007; and T. Tolles, 'The elephant in the room: George Grey Barnard's Struggle of the Two Natures in Man at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York', in Christopher Marshall (ed.), *Sculpture and the Museum*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2011, pp. 115–31.

39. On interpretations of this sculpture, see H. Dickson, 'Log of a masterpiece. Barnard's "The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man"', *Art Journal*, 20, 3, 1961, pp. 139–43; Hack, as at note 38, pp. 37–66; R. Tarbell and I. Fort, 'American sculpture and Rodin', in Barryte et al., as at note 17, pp. 87–88; Tolles, as at note 38, pp. 118–19; D. Hassler, 'George Grey Barnard (1863–1938)', in Tolles, as at note 20, p. 422; N. Weber, *The Clarks of Cooperstown: Their Singer Sewing Machine Fortune, Their Great and Influential Art Collections, Their Forty-Year Feud*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2007, pp. 81–82; G. Mauner, 'American vigor in Rodin's Paris: George Grey Barnard's "Two Natures of Man"', unpublished lecture transcript, 2003, Dickson/Barnard Collection, Centre County Historical Society; M. Leja, *Looking Askance: Skepticism and American Art from Eakins to Duchamp*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 2004, pp. 202–06.

40. On Rodin's relationship with Michelangelo, see Getsy, as at note 10, pp. 29–57; F. Fergonzi, *Rodin and Michelangelo: A Study in Artistic Inspiration* (exh. cat.), Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1997; and C. Black McCoy, "'This man in Michelangelo": Octave Mirbeau, Auguste Rodin and the image of the modern sculptor', *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 5, 1, 2006.

41. On this tension in Rodin's work, see Getsy, as at note 10, pp. 91, 94–94.

42. Tarbell and Fort, as at note 39, pp. 87–89.

43. 'Letters and art: a Symbolist in stone', *Literary Digest*, 10 January 1903, pp. 43–44, Dickson/Barnard Collection.

44. E. Motzkin, 'Michelangelo's Slaves in the Louvre', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 120, 1487, 1992, pp. 207–28; H. Hibbard, 'Michelangelo's "Slaves"', *Art Bulletin*, 66, 4, 1984, pp. 673–78; J. Gaborit, *Michel-Ange: Les Esclaves*, Paris, Réunion des Musées nationaux, 2004; and M. Ruvoldt, 'Michelangelo's Slaves and the gift of liberty', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 65, 4, 2012, pp. 1029–59.

45. Barnard to his mother, 16 April 1888 and 25 May 1888, Dickson/Barnard Collection.

46. W. Coffin, 'A new American

sculptor: George Grey Barnard', *Century Illustrated Magazine*, 53, 6, 1897, p. 878.

47. J. Schulz, 'Michelangelo's unfinished works', *Art Bulletin*, 57, 3, 1975, pp. 377–73.

48. Fink, as at note 3, p. 318.

49. W. Wallace, 'Who is the author of Michelangelo's life?', in D. Cast (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Giorgio Vasari*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2014, pp. 112–14.

50. The artist describes his transition to a plaster cast on 22 March 1891, Dickson/Barnard Collection. On this portrait, see Weber, as at note 39, p. 84.

51. Letter from Barnard to his family, 12/17 July 1890, Dickson/Barnard Collection.

52. J. Laurvik, 'George Grey Barnard', *International Studio* 36, 142, 1908, p. 40.

53. S. Woolf, 'The stormy petrel of the sea of art: George Grey Barnard, embattled sculptor, talks of his life of strife', *New York Times*, 7 December 1930, p. 11.

54. Hack, as at note 38, pp. 65–66.

55. 'Gallery and studio: the sculpture of George Grey Barnard', *Brooklyn Eagle*, 22 November 1896, p. 25.

56. Hack, as at note 38, p. 39; and C. Caffin, *American Masters of Sculpture: Being Brief Appreciations of Some American Sculptors and of Some Phases of Sculpture in America*, New York, Doubleday, Page, 1903, p. 27.

57. Laurvik, as at note 52, p. 40.

58. Dickson, as at note 39, p. 141.

59. F. Coburn, 'The sculptures of George Grey Barnard', *World To-Day*, 16, March 1909, p. 277.

60. Caffin, as at note 56, pp. 27–28.

61. Cited in Getsy, as at note 10, p. 32.

62. Laurvik, as at note 52, p. 40.

63. Coburn, as at note 59, p. 277.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 280.

65. 'Nous arrivons à un nouveau venu, M. Barnard, qui a l'étoffe d'un maître. Il appartient à cette virile et jeune Amérique dont l'effort se traduit sous tant de formes pour la plupart imprévues, et il rend avec un singulière puissance son mépris des formules toutes faites et son appétit fougueux de nouveauté.' F. Thiébaut-Sisson, untitled clipping, 7 May 1894, Dickson/Barnard Collection. The same author wrote a later extended article on Barnard: 'L'odyssée d'un statuaire américain: George Grey Barnard', *Le Temps*, 9 October 1911.

66. 'The Lawton Monument', unknown newspaper, 7 February 1900, Dickson/Barnard Collection.

67. *Ibid.*