

Locating cosmopolitanism within a Trans-Atlantic interpretive frame: the critical evaluation of John Singer Sargent's portraits and figure studies in Britain and the United States from c.1886–1926.

Andrew Stephenson, University of East London.

Standpoint:

This article examines how questions about John Singer Sargent's American nationality, his Anglo-American expatriate experience and his works cosmopolitanism were evaluated differently by British and American art writers in relation to his portraits and figure paintings in the period from c.1886–1926. Born in Florence to expatriate American parents, American by nationality, trained in Paris, largely resident in London and working successfully in an expanding trans-Atlantic art economy encompassing London, Paris, Boston and New York, Sargent was revered as the archetypal 'cosmopolitan' artist. Yet in spite of his technical brilliance, professional success, the high prices paid for his work by private collectors and museums, and the publication of many complimentary critical evaluations and memorial essays, British and American art writers throughout his life and afterwards remained conflicted about the nature of Sargent's cosmopolitan sensibility, and they openly disputed claims for his positioning within British or American schools of modern art.

Key words:

John Singer Sargent, cosmopolitanism, portraiture, figure painting, aestheticism.

Text:

In November 1903 the art writer Evan Mills penned 'A Personal Sketch of Mr [John Singer] Sargent' photographed in the same year by James E. Purdy (fig.1) and published it in *World's Work*:

Mr John Singer Sargent is a typical example of the modern cosmopolitan man, the man whose habits of thought make him at home everywhere and whose training has been such as to preclude the last touch of chauvinism. Such a man has only become possible during the last fifty years and then only in the case of an occasional American ... In the case of an American born and bred abroad, the only feelings that can possibly arise are those that come of cold selection [since] he is unattached to anything.¹

In his three volume study of *The History of Modern Painting*, published in Munich 1893–94, and translated into English in 1896, the German Professor of Art History at Breslau University and Keeper of Prints at the Munich Pinakothek, Richard Muther tried to locate Sargent's place as an American artist within the development of modern art. He concluded that:

Sargent is one of the most dazzling men of talent of the present day ... He is the painter of subtle and often strange and curious beauty, conscious of itself and

displaying its charms in the best light – a fastidious artist of exquisite taste ... Sargent is French in his entire manner.²

At the 1900 Paris *Exposition Universelle*, Sargent, like his compatriot artists James McNeill Whistler, Edwin Austin Abbey, Mark Fisher and Frank Millet, although resident in the United Kingdom, elected to exhibit in the United States section. As a result the British authorities registered a fierce complaint about their positioning within the American section contradicting the artist's express wishes. Refuting the final decision of the French organising committee, the British committee believed that domicile overrode nationality.³ Stoking American outrage, the art critic Royal Cortissoz in the *New York Tribune* in July 1900 responded that whilst Sargent's art might not seem 'American', it had 'the freshness and sincerity' and 'sanity as well as vigour' that characterised the emerging American School; an art devoid of any of the 'over-civilised' and 'over-sensitive' signs of European assimilation.⁴ Providing visual reinforcement for claims about American racial distinctiveness, Cortissoz proclaimed that 'the [paintings] have nothing to identify them with any other school. They are original works of genius, their authors are American'.⁵ Later citing evidence that Sargent's Yankee forebears had provided him with 'his keen objective vision ... and expertness of ... hand', he concluded that Sargent's cold 'detachment' was proof that he 'belongs to us, and there's an end to it'.⁶ The American art writer Christian Brinton in his survey of *Modern Artists* published in New York in 1908 went even further arguing that 'Sargent's art is neither Gallic nor British, it is American' and 'so dazzled has the majority been by its cosmopolitanism that the real racial basis of his nature has been overlooked'.⁷

In 1910, the British-Jewish artist of Anglo-German descent William Rothenstein, considering the English sculptor Eric Gill's decision to decline the German aristocrat Count Harry Kessler's offer of help in arranging for him to study in Paris with the important French sculptor, Aristide Maillol, wrote to Gill that Kessler 'is such a keen & such a good fellow, but still he is cosmopolitan, & cosmopolitanism has not been good for Germans, & I don't think it is a good thing for us'.⁸

Lastly, the British artist and art critic Walter Sickert, reviewing the 'Third Exhibition of Fair Women' organised by the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers at the Grafton Galleries in London in the *New Age* in June 1910, recognised the growing trans-national currency which French-derived impressionism had achieved. Impressionist style as adopted by a range of international artists, led Sickert to declare, 'How far we have travelled in our ideals of portraiture! ... Alas! We are all cosmopolitanised'.⁹

These six quotes from c.1893–1910 open out onto a revealing if contested, historical critical terrain between cultural nationalists and internationalists, in which the term cosmopolitan and its interconnection with national and racial identities, cultural stereotypes, citizenship and domicile is complicated, shifting and confusing.¹⁰ When deployed to try and explain the correlation between Sargent's expatriate experience and his works perceived sense of 'detached' mental estrangement, these quotes seem at odds with each other and strangely contradictory. For Mills, Sargent is the modern cosmopolitan American man, well-travelled and highly cultivated, but whose lack of familiarity with American culture produces a cold, detached sensibility. For the German Muther, Sargent, American by nationality if not by

birth, although trained in Paris, produces modern art that is really French in its cultural affiliation but characterised by a 'fastidiousness' and an often 'strange and curious beauty'.¹¹ For the Americans Cortissov and Brinton, it is the sense of physical and mental detachment evident in Sargent's work that distinguishes it as racially American and that validates his inclusion in the American section in the Paris Universal Exposition in 1900. By contrast, for the Anglo-Jewish painter Rothenstein, cultural cosmopolitanism is to be avoided at all costs since it is detrimental to German (and British) national self-determination and undermines any sense of national character in modern art. Kessler's 'cosmopolitanism' threaten to undermine his admirable German aristocratic character making Gill's refusal to travel to Paris to learn French sculptural techniques and entertain Francophile aesthetics undoubtedly, in Rothenstein's eyes, the correct decision. And for Sickert, any signs of cosmopolitanism in portrait painting signalled a commitment to a jaded artistic *lingua franca* in which younger artists had imported powerful pictorial styles from Paris that were detrimental to localised British traditions and undermined the valued conventions of portraiture.

What this article will examine is the problematic status of cosmopolitanism as it was applied by British and American commentators to Sargent's portraits and figure paintings. I will argue that these differences in approach vividly expose the altering transnational dynamics of the art market and its shifting critical terrain between c.1886–1926; the period from March 1886 when Sargent made his home permanently in London and the British art market became his main focus, to the year after Sargent's death on 15 April 1925 when large memorial exhibitions and the opening of the Sargent Galleries at the Tate Gallery in London in June 1926 forced a re-evaluation his artistic legacy and his art's national allegiance.¹² My article will demonstrate that these questions about Sargent's national positioning and the contested value of 'cosmopolitanism' in art emerged most forcefully at the 1900 Paris *Exposition Universelle* as American writers aggressively inserted Sargent's work into a founding and celebratory, if eclectic, American art historical narrative that British reviewers disputed. Moreover, this critical scepticism about Sargent's works worth and its contested cultural affiliation resurfaced again at the time of the three large memorial exhibitions in 1925–26 at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Royal Academy, London when critics in both countries re-evaluated Sargent's posthumous artistic legacy, the artist's cultural identity and his art's national allegiance.

Initially, I want to investigate how Sargent's background, personality and eclectic tastes presented difficulties for English and American art writers as they evaluated the new type of artist he represented; one actively working in the 1880s strategically across the London and Paris art markets and exploiting the commercial opportunities that these rapidly changing transnational art economies presented. What emerges is how the formal and technical features of Sargent's portraits from the artist's permanent relocation to London from Paris in 1886 were seen to register unsure and divergent national allegiances derived from his expatriate experience that, depending upon the context of their display and the cultural contingencies of their reception, were either critically praised or severely criticised.

Born in Florence on 12 January 1856 to expatriate American parents of independent means who travelled extensively throughout Europe, Sargent trained at the École des Beaux Arts in

Paris from October 1874 studying under Emile Carolus-Duran. Despite having sent important works to the Royal Academy shows before coming to London, namely *Dr. Pozzi* in 1882, *Mrs Henry White* in 1884 and *Lady Playfair* in 1885, it was only in March 1886 that Sargent moved permanently in London and that the British art market became his main focus although Sargent continued to show regularly in Paris.¹³ As Sargent clearly recognised, his use of continental typologies and his Beaux-Arts style were seen as a liability by British critics since although: 'there is more chance for me ... as a portrait painter [in London] ... it might be a long struggle for my painting to be accepted. It is thought beastly French'.¹⁴

Crucially, this relocation to London gave British art critics the opportunity to learn more about the man himself and they characterised him as an odd, multicultural melange having a chameleon-like ability to fit in to London life. For Americans such as the historian Henry Adams, Sargent was also seen as a curious expatriate amalgam and 'one of those Americans who catch English manners'.¹⁵ Even his life-long friend Violet Paget, better known as the writer Vernon Lee who Sargent had painted in 1881 (fig.2) recalled that at first meeting Sargent seemed more French than English: he was 'very stiff, a sort of completely accentless mongrel ... [with] rather French faubourg sort of manners'.¹⁶ Other contemporaries acknowledged that Sargent was difficult to fathom seeming as 'a sepulchre of dullness and propriety' who in public presentation reminded them of 'a character [somewhere] between General Kitchener and a superior mechanic'.¹⁷

Sargent's residency in London allowed English art critics to see his work at first hand in order to evaluate its particular cultural attachments. The initial critical reception focussed on the artist's French training and his study with Carolus-Duran and, in particular, they assessed Sargent's technical dexterity and his paintings bravura stylistic manner. As a result, many English commentators felt his work was more French in style than English and they mistrusted its non-exclusive attachment to either culture. This conflicted interpretation was confirmed in British evaluations when Sargent exhibited six portraits and six subject paintings at the Paris Salon between 1877 and 1882 to great acclaim.¹⁸ As the English art critic Claude Phillips reviewing 'The Americans at the Salon' in 1887 acknowledged, Sargent's artistic francophilia was not always applauded in London: 'Mr J.S. Sargent, so lately an idol of the fickle Parisians ... has migrated to England where, as will be the recollection of all, he has clearly 'imposed' himself with surprising success considering the uncompromising character of his style'.¹⁹ For his English supporters, however, Sargent's 'uncompromising style' was a praiseworthy and sophisticated art of technical brilliance derived from his Paris training that embodied what the *London Illustrated News* praised as the 'Franco-American school at its best'.²⁰

For his detractors, Sargent's fashionable portraits with their dazzling French handling and continental models were considered suspect and criticised as 'too risqué', 'slick', and 'flashy' and flaunting an especially dubious, foreign-inspired aestheticism when practiced on British sitters.²¹ For example, when Sargent's portrait of *The Misses Vickers* (1884) was displayed at the Royal Academy that year, it was disparaged by the *Spectator* critic Harry Quilter as overly dispassionate and superficial: 'the French method as learned by a clever foreigner, in which everything is sacrificed to technical considerations ... [The artist] seems never to have felt at all that there was anything more in its subject than a good opportunity of displaying

the painter's power.²² Alongside Sargent's continued showing at the Paris Salon, the regular exhibition of his work at the New English Art Club (NEAC) from 1886–1894 and at the New Gallery – major venues for the display of work by young Anglo-French artists in London – confirmed this Francophile alliance, even though Sargent's work suggested less formal affiliations than they often perceived.²³

These claims and counter-claims over Sargent's cultural attachments shifted in 1887, when Sargent's Royal Academy submission, *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* (1885–86, fig.3) met with critical applause from many English critics and the work was bought by the Chantrey Bequest, substantially raising the artist's public profile in Britain. The year 1887 marked out a positive turn in attitudes in England towards French Impressionism since as *The Artist* critic recognised 'Impressionism in some form or another is becoming the central idea in a very large proportion of modern pictures production'.²⁴ In May 1889, Sargent showed his *A Morning Walk* (1887) and *St Martin's Summer* (1888) at that year's NEAC exhibition where their close relationship to works by Claude Monet registered.²⁵ Although set in an English, not French, landscape setting, as Elaine Kilmurray has noted, *A Morning Walk* more than any other painting signalled Sargent's indebtedness to Monet's work by making direct reference in subject, viewpoint, colouring and handling to two recent works by Monet: *Essai de figure en plein air, vers la droite* and *Essai de figure en plein air, vers la gauche* both painted in 1886.²⁶ The *Magazine of Art* critic declared rather obviously that both the Sargent works were 'painted under the direct inspiration of Claude Monet', whose paintings, exhibited at a solo show in London at this time, supported this direct allegiance.²⁷ Not unsurprisingly, the 'New Critics' such as R.A.M. Stevenson, George Moore and D.S. MacColl, who actively supported French Impressionism and its British supporters applauded Sargent's surface effects, looser handling and heightened colouring that, in their eyes, explicitly confessed his cosmopolitan aesthetic.²⁸

If Sargent's standing in Britain was more secure by 1887, from 1886 he had begun exploiting the sales opportunities provided by the growing trans-Atlantic art market for Impressionism. Alert to these commercial openings, French dealers had opened galleries on the East Coast and American dealers started to negotiate Franco-American commercial alliances in the second half of the 1880s. Most prominently, the Paris dealer Paul Durand-Ruel went to New York in March 1886 and launched his gallery at 28 West 23rd Street in Manhattan in April 1887.²⁹ Similarly, the French dealer Bousson, Valadon & Co. established a gallery in New York a year later in 1888 to sell French impressionist paintings. Alert to such commercial opportunities, Knoedler in New York also tried to establish a Franco-American partnership with Alphonse Legrand in 1886.³⁰ Awareness of this trans-Atlantic demand for Impressionist work led to American dealers such as the American Art Galleries entering the market and displaying works by leading French artists in New York. The gallery's opening show from 10–25 April 1886 was 289 'Works in Oil and Pastel by the Impressionists of Paris'.³¹

Sargent's more sustained engagement with buyers and dealers on the East Coast marked out a savvy trans-Atlantic strategy that was in part a response to the French art market collapse from c.1882–83. Consolidating his growing reputation in London, Sargent, at the same time, exploited his contacts in Boston and New York and he began exhibiting more work in prestigious art circles in the United States.³² For example, in 1886 Sargent had been

elected to the selection committee of the Society of American Artists and he exhibited at its Ninth Annual Exhibition in New York from May–October two American portraits *Mr and Mrs W. Field* (1882) and *Mrs Wilton Phipps* (c.1884). In August 1887, the influential New York banker and collector, Henry G. Marquand, whose portrait Sargent was to paint later in 1897 (fig.4) had invited the artist to paint his wife’s portrait.³³ This request led to Sargent’s first trip to the United States in the following month which Sargent saw as ‘a turning point in my fortunes’ there and facilitated his first successful solo exhibition at the St. Botolph Club in Boston from 28 January to 11 February 1888 in what was one of the most influential private members clubs devoted to the Fine Arts in the United States.³⁴

Yet American critics also remained unsure about Sargent’s ‘paternity’ and why it had taken the artist so long to return to his native land. The *Art Amateur* critic reviewing Sargent’s showing at the Portrait Exhibition in Boston in 1888 questioned:

Mr. Sargent, everyone knows, is a distinguished painter, even in Paris ... But it does not follow that Boston, which prides itself on an art culture very different from that of the contemporary Salon ... will think more of him for that. [He] is the member of one of the most distinguished of old Boston families, but he has had the temerity to absent himself from his native country from the day he was born up to within two months of this exhibition.³⁵

Similar confusion was expressed about his works’ perceived allegiances as the critic Clarence Cook noted: ‘whatever he exhibits becomes at once the centre of interest and is discussed with energy, often with heat, alike by artists and laymen ... and yet, for an artist so strong in his technique, his pictures show a singular lack of individuality ... We wish we knew what Mr. Sargent really is as a painter. He wears so many masks, and plays, with ill-concealed delight, so many tricks.’³⁶ Nevertheless, appreciated at first hand, many American critics applauded Sargent’s American portraits, and his Venetian scenes and landscape studies were seen as part of a growing interest in Impressionist landscape painting and shifting light effects, but practiced by an American painter. Such cultural attachment was confirmed by Sargent’s close friendship with Monet and by him showing *A Morning Walk* at the St. Botolph Club’s winter exhibition in January 1890. Equally, paintings by Sargent that depicted the French artist at work such as *Claude Monet Painting by the Edge of the Wood* (1885?, fig.5) exhibited at Boston’s Copley Gallery in 1899, further reinforced his affiliation with Monet and Impressionist circles in France.³⁷

Moreover, the timing of Sargent’s reorientation towards American exhibition circles and galleries and his ten month visit to America from December 1889 until November 1890 could not have been more opportune since between 1889 and 1892 an ‘astounding number’ of paintings by Monet were exhibited in the United States. Bought by local New England collectors, many of these purchases were displayed at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston from 1891 and favourably reviewed.³⁸ This growing interest in the French artist was launched by Monet’s first exhibition in the United States at the Union League Club in New York in February 1891 with many works lent by Durand-Ruel. This show was quickly followed by Durand-Ruel’s acclaimed March 1891 exhibition at the Eastman Chase Gallery in Boston of ‘The Impressionists of Paris from the Galleries of Durand-Ruel Paris and New York’ where Monet’s paintings featured alongside canvasses by Camille Pissarro and Alfred Sisley.

Furthermore, in February 1895 twenty seven of Monet's canvasses were exhibited to critical acclaim at the St. Botolph Club in Boston with the show being a reduced version of the French artist's first retrospective held in the previous month at Durand-Ruel's Gallery in New York.³⁹

Apart from capitalising upon American collectors and museum directors' fascination with modern French art, Sargent's family connections in America, and especially in New England, were invaluable in furnishing him with introductions to important collectors and facilitating portrait commissions.⁴⁰ Sargent's paintings also conspicuously aligned him with an increasingly visible Franco-American school of artists who had been trained in France, and who were now returning to the USA and painting American landscape subjects in an updated impressionistic manner. Sargent's artist friends Dennis Miller and Frederic Porter Vinton were both keen advocates of the new style of painting American subjects in an appropriated impressionistic technique, but approached from a distinctly American perspective.⁴¹ Growing American support for cultural cosmopolitanism in art was signalled by the speed at which American collectors, galleries and museum collections bought modern French and French-inspired impressionist works by younger American artists.⁴² This success was highlighted by the 'burgeoning demand for American art among museums, galleries and collectors in the 1890s' and the style's promotion at the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition when American critics enthusiastically heralded such work and its patronage as constituting 'a new American School' and demonstrating 'feelings of an intense Americanism' validating the nation's cultural ambitions.⁴³

Nevertheless, while visiting Boston and New York, Sargent also became aware of the growing demand for modern portraiture and witnessed the high prices that European-based artists could command by undertaking fashionable portraits of American sitters. It has been estimated that during his visit in 1889–90, he executed more than forty portraits with twenty-five of them commissioned.⁴⁴ Building upon the later 'cracking success' of *Mrs. Hugh Hammersley* (1892, fig.6) and *Mrs. George Lewis* (1892) shown in the spring 1993 show at the New Gallery in London alongside *Lady Agnew of Lochnaw* (1892) exhibited at the Royal Academy in May 1893, Sargent was well placed to exploit the strong colonial heritage in the United States that looked to Britain as part of a shared Anglo-American culture and trans-Atlantic Anglophile kinship.⁴⁵ As a consequence of Sargent's growing success, English critics had revised their critical positions and whilst some like Roger Fry saw Sargent's *The Duchess of Portland's* (1902) 'self-assertive bravura of pose' as showing 'the effrontery of the arriviste',⁴⁶ many now applauded Sargent's portraits as ravishing 'pieces of well engineered impressionist painting [that] top everything in the Academy'.⁴⁷ In particular, the Agnew portrait was seen as 'not only a triumph of technique but the finest example of portraiture, in the literal sense of the word that has been seen here for a long time. While Mr Sargent has abandoned none of his subtlety, he has abandoned his mannerisms'.⁴⁸ By the time of the series of Portrait Loan Exhibitions at the National Academy of Design in New York in 1894, 1895 and 1898, Sargent's portraits' style with their francophile manner and startling colour contrasts was seen as a praiseworthy and innovative updating of the eighteenth-century British grand manner portraiture of Thomas Gainsborough, Thomas Lawrence, George Romney and Joshua Reynolds, and for American critics, to have remarkable alliances with the work of the Boston artist, John Singleton Copley.⁴⁹ Indeed from 1894, Sargent's

standing as a society portraitist on both sides of the Atlantic was firmly established and 'he was the unchallenged leader among American portrait painters'.⁵⁰

By 1900 in an ironic reversal of fortune, many English critics now interpreted Sargent's remarkable standing as a fashionable portraitist as indebted to his cosmopolitan background arguing that the artist's sense of detachment gave him a privileged and seemingly thoroughly modern insight into capturing the sitter's 'inner life' and complex psychology. Moreover, as Elizabeth Prettejohn has shown, by this date Sargent had become incorporated into a privileged circle of patrons and collectors: 'the portraitist of choice... for the more artistically minded amongst the [British] aristocracy' and nouveau-riche American plutocracy'.⁵¹ Demand soared as these portraits registered as the 'ultra-modern' updating of British grand manner portraiture involving the use of 'advanced compositional techniques and broadly impressionistic brushwork' and were applauded for their subtlety, depth and beauty.⁵² Between 1900 and 1907, Sargent's international reach was at its peak as over 130 portraits were produced with thirty portraits being exhibited at the 1902 Royal Academy exhibition in London alone.⁵³

However, the phenomenal rise of Sargent's artistic output and the scale of these expansive trans-Atlantic operations opened Sargent's creative aesthetic up to more conservative approaches to cultural cosmopolitanism that were gaining ground in Britain and which, in the United States, were being re-shaped according to shifting national social and political agendas. Not least, this re-evaluation of artistic and national identities in the arts was directed by the fact that the United States after 1898 was itself positioned as an imperial rival to Britain and France. Across the Atlantic, such an internationalist outlook in an American artist became increasingly suspect in the light of growing American political and imperial aspirations leading to a revisionism that heightened during Theodore Roosevelt's presidency from 1901 and was fired by his 1904 extension of the Monroe Doctrine from a western hemisphere to a global American 'spheres of influence' in foreign policy.⁵⁴

In particular, by operating between and across these dynamic transnational art economies and negotiating the very different segregated art markets, professional associations, exhibition networks and nationalistic art policies developing in London, Paris, Boston and New York, Sargent had to manoeuvre the intense and growing imperial rivalries that were emerging between Britain, France and the United States. The complexity of his situation in relation to this resurgence of imperial claims was highlighted at the international exhibitions in Paris in 1889 and 1900, and in Chicago in 1893, when anxieties about Sargent's placing within different national submissions emerged most forcefully. Arguably, the most extreme divergence in English and American critics' estimations of Sargent's national affiliation surfaced at the 1900 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, when American writers applauding Sargent's participation in the American section had no difficulties in claiming him as one of theirs.⁵⁵ As Diane P. Fischer has shown in her detailed study entitled *Paris 1900. The "American School" at the Universal Exposition* (1999), the American Department of Fine Arts, supported by a well-funded, ambitious and politically motivated campaign, promoted 'a new position for the United States as an art producing nation [free of] foreign trammels'.⁵⁶ Sargent, situated alongside Whistler, was claimed as one of the chief founders and a major exponent of this new American school. Moreover, the sense of an integrated

American school was achieved at the Paris Exposition by showing the work of expatriate Americans – so called ‘Paris Americans’- alongside US-resident artists in order ‘to create the illusion of solidarity in American art’.⁵⁷

In summary, as Sargent’s work traversed the Atlantic between London, Paris, Boston and New York there were at least five major areas of conflict in the estimation of the perceived national identity and cultural affiliation of Sargent’s portraits and figure studies. The first dispute focussed on the differing forms of English and American self-presentational models that critics perceived in the portraits. For example, between 1897 and 1901 Sargent had undertaken a number of ambitious portraits of rich American families, such as *Henry G. Marchand* (1897, fig.4), *Mrs. Charles Thursby* (c. 1898) and *Mr. and Mrs. I. N. Phelps Stokes* (1897, fig.7).⁵⁸ Art critics in the United States interpreted their confident presentational modes and francophile painterly style as, at once, the marker of a sophisticated American cosmopolitanism that came from one of their own compatriots’ modern experience of living and working in Paris and London.⁵⁹ In Paris in 1900, Sargent had included his *Portrait of Miss M. Carey Thomas, President of Bryn Mawr College (1899–1924)* painted in 1899 and showing the sitter dressed in black academic robes edged with dark blue velvet stripes and hood. The artist had adapted the distinctive forms of Anglo-English aristocratic presentational modes and grand manner art historical referencing, but in this case to represent a PhD. educated, independent, professional American ‘new woman’ who was a prominent suffragist and pioneer in women’s education. For English critics, this appropriation constituted yet another example of misplaced sophistication with the signs of aristocratic breeding ill-applied to a well-educated and overly confident American educationalist. The portraits American assurance was seen by English critics to embody a distinctive overly-confident American manner of self-presentation reflecting not an aristocratic lineage, but a more plutocratic American society that was itself becoming a colonial power.⁶⁰

A second area of anxiety emerged when Sargent’s portraits of well-bred members of the British aristocracy were exhibited in the United States. American critics, due to their unfamiliarity with the historical nuances in Anglophile class distinction and social manner in Britain, were unconvinced about the conviction of such portraits. Consequently, they often found the refined self-presentational models of the British aristocratic portraits as lacking in vivacity and forcefulness.⁶¹ For example, when the portrait of *Colonial Ian Hamilton, CB, DSO* (1898, fig.8) was shown at the New Gallery in London in 1899, the *Art Journal* critic applauded Sargent’s depiction of ‘the muscular jaw and throat’, and applauded the way ‘the chin shoots out in challenging disdain’ as being an appropriately impressive, manly pose for a leading British military figure.⁶² By contrast, when exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1901, American critics complained about the sitter’s lack of masculine authority jibing that the portrait conveyed merely ‘the pathetic force of the gaunt, sickly subject’.⁶³

Thirdly, similar differences in approach surfaced when Sargent painted portraits of the plutocratic urban elites referencing aristocratic codings and using earlier Anglo-English ‘Grand Manner’ styles of modelling. In particular, Sargent’s portraits of nouveau-riche Jewish patrons evoked differing responses as attitudes towards immigration and its benefits

and questions of race, breeding and new money were evaluated differently on either side of the Atlantic.⁶⁴ For example, Sargent's portrait of the London art dealer Asher B. Wertheimer painted in 1898 (fig.9) and *Mrs Carl Meyer and her Children* (1896, fig.10) comprised one in a series of portraits of the wealthy and prominent Jewish family completed by Sargent between 1898 and 1906.⁶⁵ As Kathleen Adler has demonstrated, when exhibited in London their reception had been negatively framed by anti-Semitism arising from the social changes from land ownership taking place in Britain and the contentious practice of giving honorary titles to the industrial and corporate rich.⁶⁶ These debates also openly exposed the conflicting attitudes amongst English upper and middle class audiences towards 'Jewishness'.⁶⁷ As a result, English critics felt that the portraits of Jewish sitters had a 'lush quality [and] an immediacy and intimacy which commentators even recently have found 'quite different from the reticent formality of the [Anglo] aristocratic or Colonial portraits'.⁶⁸ Moreover, they condemned the paintings perceived 'overt sensuousness, improper eroticism and excessive energy' as highlighting not only Sargent's, but the sitters, lack of understanding of English codes of restraint and decorum. Indeed, Sir Charles Oman castigated the portraits including *Portrait of Ena and Betty, Daughters of Asher and Mrs. Wertheimer* (1901, fig.11) as 'clever but repulsive pictures' and the art critic of the *Spectator* saw the portraits as carrying the marker of 'over-civilised Orientals' as painted by unknowing foreigners.⁶⁹ And when they were donated by Asher Wertheimer to the Tate Gallery in 1923, similar reservation re-emerged about Sargent's commercial motivations and his wish to fulfil the social ambitions of his sitters by portraying the rich and parvenu Jewish sitters in such a professionally skilled and masterful way by suggesting an assured historical pedigree for such newly affluent sitters.⁷⁰

A fourth area of dispute focused on the differing estimations by critics on either side of the Atlantic of the value of and motivation for Sargent's mural commissions in the United States. From 1895 until 1925, Sargent had been working on three monumental mural commissions for the Boston Public Library (1895–1919), the Widener Memorial Library at Harvard University (1921–22) and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (1918–25).⁷¹ Positioning himself within the influential and growing grand-scale mural movement gaining momentum in the United States, these commissions marked out Sargent's commitment, alongside that of other American artists, to a distinctively American mural practice that was committed to a high-minded civic endeavour as a sign of the progress of American civilisation.⁷² The extraordinary popularity of Sargent's elaborate mural paintings at the Boston Public Library and the Museum of Fine Arts in particular was seen by British critics as a sign of their lack of serious artistic merit and they were derided as populist and overly 'decorative'. Fry argued that they were more like 'literature' than art, and that the complex symbolism of Sargent's MFA designs was lamentably 'literal', requiring 'annotations' for the contemporary viewer to make its aesthetic fully understood.⁷³ Bernard Berenson dismissed them outright as decidedly 'lady-like'.⁷⁴

Lastly, there were contested views over the artistic worth of Sargent's watercolour works, notably at the time of the Carfax & Co. Gallery exhibition in London in April 1905 when *The Piazzetta, Venice* (c. 1904, fig.12) and *Riva degli Schiavoni, Venice* (c. 1904, fig.13) were shown. This exhibition was followed by enormous shows of watercolour works at Knoedler's in New York in February 1907 when eighty-three watercolours were bought by the Brooklyn

Museum and later, in March 1912 when forty-five watercolours were purchased by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.⁷⁵ These substantial sales of watercolour paintings to major American museums not only attracted large commercial success, but it gained for Sargent important American institutional recognition, which many English critics believed was unjustified. When displayed again at the Carfax & Co. Gallery in London earlier in 1908, Sargent's watercolours although favourably reviewed had attracted some sceptical responses. For the *Evening Post* critic although Sargent's skill was self-evident, its purpose was often unclear as 'one cannot discover what he finds beautiful ... Everything seems to be represented with an equal vividness and skilled indifference'.⁷⁶ The *Builder's* critic went even further condemning the watercolours as 'too offhand and careless in manner', more like 'artist's memoranda than pictures'.⁷⁷ Seen as commercially motivated and 'touristic', the watercolours, some English critics argued, never delved below superficial appearances of the places visited and sights seen. As such, they failed to respect the cultural authority and technical sophistication required by the English watercolour tradition. For example, Roger Fry reviewing Sargent's watercolours concluded that Sargent's works offered no profound artistic insights:

What [Sargent] saw was exactly what the upper class tourist sees ... As an illustrator, then, Sargent's evaluation of phenomena is almost always that of the average cultured Anglo-Saxon ... He reveals no vivid personal response; he is satisfied with what is immediately striking to all eyes [and] he has the undifferentiated eye of the ordinary man trained to its finest acuteness for observation and supplied with the most perfectly obedient and skilful hand ... Sargent was striking ... as an illustrator and non-existent as an artist ... his values are never aesthetic values.⁷⁸

These conflicting estimations of Sargent's work and its disputed cultural affiliations were repeated in many reviews, articles and studies published in the first two decades of the twentieth century when Sargent's reputation as a fashionable portraitist, impressive muralist and accomplished watercolour painter was reinforced by his receipt of international honours and growing trans-Atlantic status. The rising demand and prices paid for his portrait paintings completed until 1907 when he largely stopped producing, was, however, seen by many English reviewers as evidence of Sargent's commercial motivation. As art writers increasingly employed broadly based 'national' characteristics to evaluate artistic worth and designate allegiances, so Sargent's Italian birthplace, American nationality, French training and British residency were differently accentuated and evaluated by British and American commentators. In spite of the artist's technical brilliance, his sustained sales and the publication of many complimentary critical evaluations and memorial essays, both British and American art writers remained conflicted about the seemingly detached nature of Sargent's cosmopolitan sensibility and they questioned any claimed positioning of his work within British and American national schools.⁷⁹ As the *Manchester Guardian* art critic queried in May 1903 when reviewing the Carfax & Co. show in London, 'Mr Sargent's work is to most of us a puzzle. It is difficult quite to see where it stands in modern painting'.⁸⁰

These anxieties resurfaced most prominently at the time of three extensive posthumous exhibitions organised after the artist's death on 15 April 1925 and again at the opening of the Modern Foreign and Sargent Galleries at the Tate Gallery in June 1926. Faced with large

scale exhibitions in Boston, New York and London, and Sargent's placing within a gallery layout distinguishing between modern British and foreign schools of painting, critics on both sides of the Atlantic published posthumous reassessments of Sargent's legacy. On 3 November 1925, the first memorial exhibition opened at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston followed the next year by one at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.⁸¹ These exhibitions in the United States sought to emphasize Sargent's American credentials by reinforcing his 'American blood' and New England ancestry, and by searching for conspicuous signs of 'American-ness' in his art. In the foreword to the Boston catalogue, J. Templeman Coolidge once again highlighted Sargent's 'degree of reticence and impersonality' as a marker of a disengaged American expatriate experience and in the catalogue introduction to the Metropolitan Museum's retrospective, Mariana van Rensselaer quoted the artist's own words in support of its claim to Sargent as an American artist: 'I have never considered anything but my American citizenship'. Yet the fact remained that Sargent 'had spent practically all his life in Europe', and his works cosmopolitan alliances were recognised by van Rensselaer as undermining this American nationalist agenda since 'Sargent the artist was not an American ... his affiliations were with France'. He was 'cosmopolitan for the France that taught him [and that] was teaching half of the world'.⁸² Other American critics recognised that claiming Sargent as a distinctively 'American' artist was fraught with difficulties considering his time lived abroad and his works lack of adherence to any national style arguing that it was 'fortunate [for Sargent] to have lived in an age devoted to artists' biography. Had he lived in an age willing to leave [artists] in anonymity his work might well have come to be set down merely as part of the diffusion of the French school'.⁸³

In 1926, a third memorial exhibition opened at the Royal Academy in London, allowing English critics to re-evaluate posthumously Sargent's reputation and assess his legacy as a Royal Academician.⁸⁴ Clive Bell, reprinting an earlier estimation of Sargent's art, noted that he was 'a brilliant observer and a dextrous craftsman, but not a great artist'. Lamenting that he 'could have been a Degas or a Lautrec', Sargent's works were seen to repeat well-worn formulae and as a result of his commercialism, he was 'sold out by 30'.⁸⁵ Raymond Mortimer in the *New Statesman* rounded that Sargent's paintings were decidedly 'un-modern' and merely a 'mirror reflection of the Edwardian bankruptcy of taste'.⁸⁶ And in Fry's review in the *Nation and Athenaeum* published on 23 January 1926, the critic went even further openly vilifying Sargent's work as retrograde and condemning it as a weak and 'feeble echo ... of what Manet and his friends had been doing with a far different intensity for ten years or more'. Sargent's art was dismissed by Fry as 'an emasculated version' of French painting marking out 'a feeble search for aesthetic values', but showing 'no talent as a draughtsman' and having 'no visual passion'. Sargent, Fry concluded, 'was striking and undistinguished as an illustrator and non-existent as an artist'.⁸⁷

Finally, these issues resurfaced forcefully at the sale of the contents of Sargent's studio in London in July 1925 and at the opening of the Modern Foreign and Sargent Galleries at the Tate Gallery on 26 June 1926 depicted by Sir John Lavery in his painting *King George V Accompanied by Queen Mary, at the Opening of the Modern Foreign and Sargent Galleries at the Tate Gallery, 26 June 1926* (1926, fig.14).⁸⁸ These events generated even more publicity about Sargent's diverging reputation, further stoking Anglo-American rivalry about

his legacy and where his work should be located within the development of modern art. At the Christie's sale, English critics expressed surprise at the prices that Sargent's works achieved, particularly when purchased by American buyers.⁸⁹ At Millbank, the Sargent room was located next to a suite of galleries showing 'recent ... continental art' by mainly French artists, notably Monet, clearly suggesting that it was amongst such 'Modern Foreign' art that Sargent's works proper affiliations lay. And in these art galleries, funded to the tune of £30,000 by the art dealer Sir Joseph Duveen, who had recently and somewhat contentiously been knighted in 1919 and made an Associate of the National Gallery, there was the Sargent room where prominently displayed was Sargent's *Claude Monet Painting at the Edge of a Wood* (fig.5) and the nine portraits of the nouveau-riche Jewish Wertheimer family (including figs.9,10,11) that had been bequeathed as a gift to the nation by Alfred Wertheimer in 1922: a donation framed according to shifting post-war attitudes to Jewishness and which 'had given rise to a considerable amount of antagonistic feeling and criticism in certain artistic circles'.⁹⁰ Writing in the *New Statesman*, Fry once again took the opportunity to criticise Sargent's lack of artistry and questioned in an ironic tone the motivation for the donation: 'Throwing over as irrelevant the purely aesthetic point of view, I can see and rejoice in Mr. Sargent's astonishing professional skill ... I for one welcome the bequest by which the National Gallery becomes the trustee of Sir Asher Wertheimer's fame'.⁹¹

To conclude, throughout his career Sargent's figure paintings drew mixed and divergent critical responses when it was displayed in Britain or the United States. On the one hand, progressive and supportive English critics embraced the sophisticated cultural cosmopolitanism that they detected in his art. They admired Sargent's swift technical assurance and the work's clever impressionistic updating of Eighteenth-century British portraiture allowing for a renewed and intense psychological enquiry. On the other hand, for his detractors, Sargent's paintings were criticised for their French fashionability, passionless detachment, commercial appeal and intellectual vacuousness. Think of the British painter Edward Burne-Jones's damning rebuke in 1896 when he declared that Sargent's portraits with their impressionist technique and elevated colour palette were not at all to his taste: 'The dabs are all that I hate in execution – and the colour is often hideous - & not one faintest glimmer of imagination has he'.⁹²

At the time of the 1900 Paris *Exposition Universelle*, American critics and American patrons of French and American Impressionism located Sargent's work and its high prices as evidence of the emergence of an eclectic 'American School' of which Sargent alongside Whistler was a 'founding father'. Yet in 1900, the British organising committee saw Sargent's appropriation into the American section as a disrespectful disregard of his London residency and a blatant insult to his British collectors and patrons. For English critics, Sargent's American allegiance, like the burgeoning demand from American buyers for his grand manner portraits, from American public patrons for elaborate mural programmes and from American public art museums for his watercolours, signalled how modern art was being used by the United States to validate its own cultural aspirations and to underpin its growing economic and imperial ambitions.

These differences in approach became particularly acute in the years from 1908–1910 when more markedly nationalist frameworks, voiced for instance in Brinton’s 1908 survey of *Modern Artists* and underpinning Rothenstein’s comments about Kessler, were employed that saw cosmopolitanism in modern art as suspect, dissipated and flawed: what Percy Wyndham-Lewis castigated as that ‘cosmopolitan sentimentality’ which is a ‘feeble European’ marker of a ‘miserable intellectualism’ perniciously spreading abroad from Paris and its art schools.⁹³ What a closer examination of the complex trans-Atlantic reception history and competing critical reactions to Sargent’s cosmopolitanism underscores is how, as modern art became subject to the expanding interpretational possibilities and competing critical frameworks powered by a rapidly expanding global art economy and a growing network of publishing syndicates, the work of a leading international portraitist now consumed in ever more distant geographical contexts, and by a wider range of socially, ethnically and racially diverse audiences, accrued meanings and shades of interpretation according to shifting national political imperatives.

As a consequence, Sargent’s reputation was substantially recast in the decades of 1910s and 1920s when his works’ perceptual naturalism and impressionistic handling was praised by his many American supporters as a distinctively American version of French Impressionism. For them, Sargent’s was a praiseworthy modern and sophisticated art of technical brilliance and artistic distinction. For his British detractors, notably art writers who adopted increasingly formalist approaches that underpinned later modernist epistemologies, Sargent’s fashionable portraits with their dazzling technique were suspect as superficial and compromised, market-driven virtuoso ‘performances’ with a dubious ‘foreign’-inspired aesthetic quality that was castigated as illustrative and unconvincing. Moreover, the high prices paid for his commissioned society portraits of wealthy American and Jewish nouveau-riche sitters and by American museums for his watercolours, and the popularity of his elaborate mural programmes for the Boston Public Library and the Museum of Fine Arts damned Sargent’s style as too commercially-orientated. Indeed, what my paper has revealed is that when seen within a trans-Atlantic interpretive frame, the complications and contradictions attendant upon evaluating cosmopolitanism when perceived as part of Sargent’s national identity, or detected by critics in the artist’s coldly selective and detached approach, were themselves signs of the accelerating pace of change and major structural changes taking place in the trans-Atlantic art economy framed according to the shifting Anglo-American geo-politics between c.1886 and 1926.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank David Peters Corbett and Martin Hammer for inviting me to participate in their session on ‘Trans-Atlantic Exchange: US and British Art 1880–1980’ at the Association of Art Historians 41st Annual Conference in April 2015 and for their advice and encouragement, and acknowledge research support from the University of East London.

Andrew Stephenson is Principal Lecturer in Art History and Visual Theories at the University of East London.

Notes:

-
- ¹ Evan Mills, 'A Personal Sketch of Mr Sargent', *World's Work*, November 1903, p.4116.
- ² Richard Muther, *The History of Modern Painting*, originally published in Munich 1893–94, translated into English London 1896, 3 vols. Quote from vol. 3, book 4, pp.475–76
- ³ See Diane P. Fischer, 'Constructing the "American School" of 1900', in Diane P. Fischer (ed.) *Paris 1900. The "American School" at the Universal Exposition*, Montclair Art Museum, New Jersey and Rutgers University Press 2000, pp.6–7.
- ⁴ Royal Cortissoz, 'American Art in Paris', *New-York Tribune*, 22 July 1900, p.1.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Christian Brinton, *Modern Artists*, New York 1908, p.157.
- ⁸ Letter from William Rothenstein to Eric Gill, 1910, Gill Correspondence, R846L, William Clark Library, UCLA. I am indebted to Anne Helmreich for this source.
- ⁹ Walter Sickert, 'Wriggle and Chiffon', *The New Age*, 9 June 1910 in Anna Gruetzner Robins (ed.), *Walter Sickert. The Complete Writings on Art*, Oxford 2000, pp.243–47. Quote p.244.
- ¹⁰ The literature on cosmopolitanism is extensive and recent publications have engaged with it in terms of a growing literature on post-imperial theory, trans-cultural politics and trans-globalism. My understandings in relation to Sargent's 'cosmopolitanism' draw on David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, London and New Haven 1990, James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, MA, 1997, John Brewer and Frank Trentmann (eds.), *Consuming Cultures, Global Perspectives, Historical Trajectories, Transnational Exchanges*, Oxford and New York 2006, Mark A. Cheetham *Artwriting, Nation and Cosmopolitanism in Britain. The 'Englishness' of English Art Theory since the Eighteenth Century*, Farnham 2012 and Julie F. Codell (ed.), *Transculturation in British Art 1770–1930*, Farnham 2012. Also see my 'Edwardian cosmopolitanism c.1901–1912' in Morna O'Neill and Michael Hatt (eds.), *The Edwardian Sense. Art, Design and Performance in Britain 1901–1910*, New Haven and London 2010, pp.251–284. More recent studies on contemporary art and 'cosmopolitanism' include Marsha Meskimmon, *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, London 2010 and Nikos Papastergiadis, *Cosmopolitanism and Culture*, London 2012. In literary studies, important work on the impact of globalism on literary and political theory include Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (eds.), *Cosmopolitics. Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, Minneapolis 1998, Carol A. Breckenridge, Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, Dipesh Chakrabarty (eds.), *Cosmopolitanism*, Durham N.C. 2002, and Rebecca L. Walkowitz (ed.), *Cosmopolitan Style. Modernism Beyond the Nation*, New York 2007.
- ¹¹ Muther 1896, p.475.
- ¹² Elaine Kilmurray and Richard Ormond (eds.), *John Singer Sargent*, London 1998, p.28. This move was also strategic following on from the *Madame X* debacle in 1884.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Letter from Sargent to John Russell, September 1885, Tate Gallery Archives, London quoted by Richard Ormond, *John Singer Sargent. Paintings, Drawings, and Watercolours*, London 1970, p.39.
- ¹⁵ Henry Adams, letter to Elizabeth Cameron, 1 March 1903 and quoted by Trevor J. Fairbrother, *John Singer Sargent. The Sensualist*, Seattle 2000, p.214, fn.20.
- ¹⁶ *Vernon Lee's Letters*, London 1937, p.63 quoted in *John Singer Sargent and the Edwardian Age*, exhibition catalogue edited by James Lomax and Richard Ormond, Leeds City Art Galleries, National Portrait Gallery and Detroit Institute of Arts, 1979, p.9.
- ¹⁷ Elizabeth R. and J. Pennell, *The Whistler Journal*, Philadelphia 1924, p.34.
- ¹⁸ Richard Ormond has demonstrated that Sargent sent twelve paintings to the Paris Salon between 1877 and 1882 of which six were portraits and six subject pictures. See Ormond, 'Sargent's Art' in Elaine Kilmurray and Richard Ormond (eds.), *John Singer Sargent*, London 1998, p.25.
- ¹⁹ Claude Phillips, 'The Americans at the Salon', *Magazine of Art*, vol.10, 1887, p.90.
- ²⁰ *London Illustrated News*, 15 May 1886 quoted in Marc Simpson, *Uncanny Spectacle*, New Haven and London 1997, p.168.
- ²¹ *Art Amateur*, vol. 3, no. 2, July 1880, p.26 and the *Spectator* no.60, 1 May 1886, p.580 quoted in Andrew Stephenson, "A Keen Sight for the Sign of the Races": John Singer Sargent, whiteness and the Fashioning of Anglo-performativity' in *Visual Culture in Britain*, vol.6, no.2, 2005, pp.210–11.

- ²² Harry Quilter, *The Spectator*, 1 May 1886, p.580 quoted by Anne L. Helmreich, 'John Singer Sargent, *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* and the Condition of Modernism in England, 1887' in *Victorian Studies*, vol.45, no.3, Spring 2003, p.436.
- ²³ See Kenneth McConkey, *The New English. A History of the New English Art Club*, London 2006, pp.49–53.
- ²⁴ *The Artist*, August 1887, no. viii, p.258. Quoted in Kate Flint, *Impressionists in England: The Critical Reception*, London 1984, p.8.
- ²⁵ Sargent had first met Claude Monet in April 1876 when he went with the painter Paul Helleu to an Impressionist exhibition where both were introduced Monet and were invited out to dinner with him. For the NEAC show, see McConkey 2006, p.53.
- ²⁶ See Kilmurray and Ormond 1998, pp.122–23.
- ²⁷ *Magazine of Art*, 1889, p.xxix, quoted in Kilmurray and Ormond 1998, p.124.
- ²⁸ By 1890s, these pro-French British critics began to develop advanced terminology around 'handling' to positively evaluate the looser painting styles and enhanced light and colour effects associated with French Impressionist styles and their international artist supporters.
- ²⁹ See National Gallery, London: *Inventing Impressionism. Paul Durand-Ruel and the Modern Art Market*, London and New Haven 2015 p.218.
- ³⁰ Ibid. p.148. John Ott notes that rich West Coast collectors such as Charles Crocker, Leland Stanford and Collis Huntington also patronised Michael Knowdler in New York as early as 1870 and frequented the American Art Galleries auctions. See John Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron in Victorian California. Cultural Philanthropy, Industrial Capital, and Social Authority*, Farnham 2014, p.73.
- ³¹ The American Art Galleries initially chartered in 1879 changed its name to the American Art Association in 1883 and aimed its exhibitions at the luxury end of the New York art market by particularly dealing in French artworks. See John Ott, 'How New York Stole the Luxury Art Market. Blockbuster Auctions and Bourgeois Identity in Gilded Age America', *Winterthur Portfolio*, vol.42, no. 2/3, Summer-Autumn 2008, pp.133–58.
- ³² Sargent had earlier exhibited at the annual shows of the Society of American Artists in New York from March 1878. He also exhibited at the annual exhibitions of the National Academy of Design in New York from April 1879, at the Inaugural Exhibition of the Metropolitan Museum of Art from April–October 1880 and at the Philadelphia show of 'Works of American Artists Abroad: The Second Exhibition' from 8 November 1881–early January 1882. In commercial galleries, Sargent displayed *El Jaleo* (1882) at the Schaus Gallery in New York (7–17 October 1882) and at the Williams & Everett Gallery in Boston (22–29 October 1882). See 'Appendix: Sargent's Exhibition History, 1877–1887' in Marc Simpson, *Uncanny Spectacle. The Public Career of the Young John Singer Sargent*, London and New Haven 1997, pp.172–85.
- ³³ See Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray (eds.) *John Singer Sargent. The Early Portraits. Complete Paintings Vol.1*, New Haven and London 1998, no.192. Quote from Ormond and Kilmurray 2002, p.129.
- ³⁴ See Trevor J. Fairbrother 'Notes on John Singer Sargent in New York, 1888–1890', *Archives of American Art Journal*, vol.22, no.4, 1982, pp.27–32 and his *John Singer Sargent and America*, New York 1986, pp.40–42.
- ³⁵ Greta, 'Art in Boston. The Sargent Portrait Exhibition, etc.', *Art Amateur*, vol.18 no.5, April 1888, pp.110–11.
- ³⁶ Clarence Cook, *Art and the Artists of Our Time*, 3 vols. New York 1888, quote vol. 3, p.288.
- ³⁷ Ormond and Kilmurray 1998, pp.110–11.
- ³⁸ For the reception of Impressionism in Boston and its promotion at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, see *Impressionism Abroad. Boston and French Painting*, exhibition catalogue, Royal Academy of Arts, London 2005, p.37.
- ³⁹ See Jennifer A. Thompson, 'Durand-Ruel and America' in National Gallery, London 2015, pp.142–52.
- ⁴⁰ See 'Sargent and America' in Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray (eds.) 'Introduction', *John Singer Sargent. The Later Portraits. Complete Paintings Volume 3*, New Haven and London 2003, pp.12–18. Carter Ratcliff characterises the Sargent family as 'American, but not provincial. They had no claim to high birth, yet they were irreproachably proper' in Carter Ratcliff, *John Singer Sargent*, Oxford 1983, p.33.
- ⁴¹ See *Impressionism Abroad* 2005, pp.32–33, and Christopher Riopelle, 'American Artists in France / French Art in America' in *American Artists in Paris 1860–1900*, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery, London, February–May 2006, pp.211–12.
- ⁴² See Ormond and Kilmurray 2003, p.14.
- ⁴³ See Linda J. Docherty, "Why Not a National Art?": Affirmative Responses in the 1890s' in Fischer 2000, pp.95–99. Quotes pp.114, 122.
- ⁴⁴ Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray (eds.), *John Singer Sargent. Portraits of the 1890s*, London and New Haven 2002, p.11.

- ⁴⁵ The quote comes from an undated letter from Clementina Anstruther-Thomson to Vernon Lee [1893] where she notes Sargent's success at the Royal Academy and New Gallery shows. Ormond and Kilmurray 2002, p.66. For Anglo-American heritage, see Barbara Dayer Gallati 'Gilded Age Portraiture: Cultural Capital Personified' in *Beauty's Legacy. Gilded Age Portraits in America*, exhibition catalogue edited by Barbara Dayer Gallati, New York Historical Society, 27 September 2013–9 March 2014, p.14.
- ⁴⁶ Roger Fry, 'Fine Arts: The Royal Academy', *Athenaeum*, no.3889, 10 May 1902, p.600.
- ⁴⁷ R.A.M. Stevenson, 'General Impressions of the Royal Academy of 1893', *Art Journal*, 1893, p.242, quoted in Ormond and Kilmurray 2002, p.66.
- ⁴⁸ 'The Royal Academy (First Article)', *The Times*, 29 April 1893, p.13, quoted by Ormond and Kilmurray 2002, p.66.
- ⁴⁹ Ormond and Kilmurray 2003, p.13. For the Portrait Loan shows, see Gallati 2013, pp.19–21.
- ⁵⁰ Gallati 2013, p.43.
- ⁵¹ Elizabeth Prettjohn, *Interpreting Sargent*, London 1998, p.32.
- ⁵² *Ibid.* p.37.
- ⁵³ Ormond and Kilmurray 2003, p.30.
- ⁵⁴ See Docherty in Fischer 1999, pp.96–99.
- ⁵⁵ See Robert W. Rydell, 'Gateway to the "American Century": The American Representation at the Paris Universal Exposition of 1900' in Fischer 1999, pp.119–44.
- ⁵⁶ John B. Cauldwell, 'Report of the Department of Fine Art', *Report of the Commissioner-General for the United States to the International Universal Exposition, Paris, 1900*, vol.2, Washington D.C. 1901, pp.513–14 quoted in Fischer 1999, p.1.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p.19,
- ⁵⁸ These patrons were either expatriate American families resident in Europe or following his trip to the United States from 18 January-May/June 1903, firsthand contacts made in the States through his family and friends.
- ⁵⁹ See Ormond and Kilmurray 2003 pp.123–24.
- ⁶⁰ The *International Studio* critic reviewing *Mr and Mrs I.N. Phelps Stokes* (1897) when shown at the Society of American Artists in 1898 noted that Edith Stokes was depicted 'smiling at her audience with all the confidence of American assurance. It is more than an individual portrait – it is "The American Girl" herself', *International Studio*, no.4, 1898, p.x. Quoted Ormond and Murray 2002, p.124.
- ⁶¹ See Andrew Stephenson, "Wonderful pieces of stage-management": Reviewing Masculine Fashioning, Race and Imperialism in John Singer Sargent's British Portraits, c.1897–1914' in Julie F. Codell (ed.), *Transculturation in British Art 1770–1930*, Farnham 2012, pp.221–41.
- ⁶² 'The New Gallery Summer Exhibition', *Art Journal*, vol. 38, 1899, p.187.
- ⁶³ 'Philadelphia Art Exhibition', *Brush and Pencil*, no.7, February 1901, p.264.
- ⁶⁴ For an examination of the rapidly changing social attitudes towards wealth and plutocracy in England, see Harold Perkin *The Rise of the Professional Society in England since 1880*, London 1989, pp.67, 121.
- ⁶⁵ The other works in the Wertheimer series include *Hylda, Daughter of Asher and Mrs. Wertheimer* (1901), *Ena and Betty, Daughters of Asher and Mrs. Wertheimer* (1901, fig.11), *Alfred, Son of Asher Wertheimer* (c.1901), *Edward, Son of Asher Wertheimer* (1902), *Essie, Ruby and Ferdinand, Children of Asher Wertheimer* (1904), *Mrs. Asher Wertheimer* (1904), *Portrait of Ena Wertheimer: A Vele Gonfie* (1905) and *Hylda, Almina and Conway, Children of Asher Wertheimer* (1905). Besides these Wertheimer works, there were many portraits of other Jewish sitters completed in the period under examination, notably *Mrs. Carl Meyer and Her Children* (1896, fig.10). See Kathy Adler, 'John Singer Sargent's Portraits of the Wertheimer Family' (1995) reprinted in Norman L. Kleeblatt, *John Singer Sargent. Portrait of the Wertheimer Family*, New York 1999, pp.21–33.
- ⁶⁶ Adler, *Ibid.* pp.30–31.
- ⁶⁷ See Stephenson 2005, pp. 217–18. For the broader history of anti-Semitism, see David Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews. Social Relations and Political Culture 1840–1914*, New Haven and London 1995, pp.264–65.
- ⁶⁸ Joan Rosenbaum, 'Foreword to Kleeblatt 1999, p.5.
- ⁶⁹ Quoted in Kleeblatt 1999, pp.25, 30–31.
- ⁷⁰ See Roger Fry, 'Wertheimer Portraits', *New Statesman*, vol.20, no.509, 13 January 1923, pp.429–30.
- ⁷¹ The decorative scheme for the Boston Public Library was initiated in 1890. For a detailed account, see Sally M. Promey, *Painting Religion in Public. John Singer Sargent's 'Triumph of Religion' at the Boston Public Library*, Princeton, NJ, 1999, pp.4. 12ff. For Sargent and the MFA murals, see Jane Dini, 'The Artist as Choreographer: Sargent's Murals at the Museum of Fine Art, Boston', *American Art*, vol.6, no.3, Autumn 2002, pp.10–29.

⁷² Ibid. pp.32–33.

⁷³ Roger Fry 'Watts and Whistler', *Quarterly Review*, 202, April 1905, pp.607–23. Reprinted in Christopher Reed (ed.), *A Roger Fry Reader*, Chicago and London 1996, pp.25–38. Quote p.34.

⁷⁴ Berenson quoted in the introduction by Edward J. Nygren to Corcoran Gallery of Art and Smithsonian Institution, *John Singer Sargent. Drawings from the Corcoran Gallery of Art*, exhibition catalogue, Washington D.C. 1983, p.22.

⁷⁵ See Erica E. Hirshler, 'Sargent's Watercolours: Not for Sale' in Erica E. Hirshler and Teresa A. Carbone (eds.), *John Singer Sargent Watercolours*, Museum of Fine Art, Boston and Brooklyn Museum 2013, pp.27–50.

⁷⁶ Critical responses to the 1908 Carfax show reprinted in Hirschler 2013, p.32.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Roger Fry, 'J.S. Sargent at the Royal Academy Exhibition of his works 1926 and in the National Gallery', *Nation and Athenaeum*, vol.38, no.17, 23 January 1926, pp.582–3, reprinted in Roger Fry, *Transformations*, London 1926, pp.169–82.

⁷⁹ One particularly revealing event was the Anglo-American Exposition held at the White City in London from May–October 1914, when Sargent was chair of the American selection sub-committees in Paris and London. The *Illustrated Catalogue of the American Fine Art Section* particularly fore-grounded 'the cosmopolitan nature of American art' as the marker of 'a distinctive American school' with Sargent being acclaimed as its leader and America's 'greatest living artist', pp.13–21. Citing Samuel Isham's *History of American Painting* published in New York in 1905, the catalogue argued that there were three distinct periods in the development of American painting: colonial, provincial and cosmopolitan, concluding that all works in the American section of the Exposition were now 'cosmopolitan' and part of 'a distinctive American school', p.21.

⁸⁰ 'Our London Correspondent', *Manchester Guardian*, 23 May 1903, p.6, quoted in Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray (eds.), *John Singer Sargent. Figures and Landscapes, 1900–1907. Complete Paintings vol.VII*, New Haven and London 2012, p.25.

⁸¹ *Catalogue of the Memorial Exhibitions of the Late John Singer Sargent*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston 1925 (3 November–27 December 1925) and *Memorial Exhibition of the Works of John Singer Sargent*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 1926 (4 January–14 February 1926).

⁸² 'Foreword' by J. Templeman Coolidge in Boston 1925, p.iii and 'Introduction' by Marianna Griswold Van Rensselaer, in *Memorial Exhibition of the Works of John Singer Sargent*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 1926, pp.xi, xvii.

⁸³ Miriam Flick, *The Art Bulletin*, vol.10, no.2, December 1927, p.209.

⁸⁴ *Exhibition of Works by the Late J.S. Sargent, R.A.*, winter exhibition at the Royal Academy, London 1926. The show contained 631 works and the accompanying catalogue comprised a well illustrated edition of ninety-six pages.

⁸⁵ Clive Bell, 'Sargent' first published in the *New Republic*, vol.42, no.546, 20 May 1925, p.340 and reprinted as 'Clive Bell's estimation of Sargent' in *Art News*, vol.23, no.33, 23 May 1925, p.8.

⁸⁶ Raymond Mortimer, 'Sargent', *New Statesman*, vol.126, no. 665, 23 January 1926, pp.445–46.

⁸⁷ Fry 1926, pp.133–35. Fry had first attacked Sargent's paintings as early as 1900, and in 1917 he unflatteringly compared his portraits with those of Romney and Hoppner in *Burlington Magazine*, vol.30, no.170, May 1917, p.198. See Quentin Bell, 'John Sargent and Roger Fry', *Burlington Magazine*, vol.99, no.656, November 1957, pp.380–82.

⁸⁸ See Christie's *Catalogue of Pictures and Watercolour Drawings of J.S. Sargent R.A. and works by other artists. The Property of the late John Singer Sargent R.A., D.C.L., LLD*, covering the Sargent sale at Christie, Manson and Wood in London on 24 and 27 July 1925. The Sargent Galleries at the National Gallery (Tate) opened at Millbank on 26 June 1926 and included ninety-six oil paintings, eighty-nine watercolours and drawings. It was accompanied by a fourteen page catalogue and the show was on display from June to October 1926.

⁸⁹ The Sargent sale at Christie, Manson and Wood in London on 24 and 27 July 1925 consisted of the contents of the artist's studio in London, comprising some 320 works of which 237 were by Sargent. It realised \$972,000, over £180,000, and many English critics saw this sales figure as inflated by rich American buyers who bought over-priced 'inferior' works and copies. For details of sale, see 'The Amazing Sale. The Sargents under the Hammer', *Illustrated London News*, 1 August 1925, p.207.

⁹⁰ See Brandon Taylor, *Art for the Nation. Exhibitions and the London Public 1747-2001*, Manchester 1999 pp.143, 148–154 and Frances Spalding *The Tate. A History*, London 1998, pp.45–46. For the reception of the Wertheimer donation, see Adler in Kleeblatt 1999, pp.30–31. Quote is from a letter from the Keeper of the

National Gallery, Henry Collins Baker to Conway Conway held in Tate Gallery Archives, dated 11 April 1924, and quoted by Adler in Kleeblatt 1999, p.31.

⁹¹ Fry 1923, p.381.

⁹² Edward Burne-Jones, undated letter to Frances Horner, Mells Papers, the Earl of Oxford and Asquith quoted in Ormond and Kilmurray 2002, p.161.

⁹³ Percy Wyndham-Lewis, 'Manifesto', *Blast* 1, 1914, III,2, p.34.