

A Crusader Duel at the Crystal Palace: The statues of Godfrey of Bouillon and Richard the Lionheart at the Great Exhibition*

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the display of two sculptures of medieval figures at the Great Exhibition in 1851. Those sculptures – Carlo Marochetti’s *Richard Coeur de Lion* and Eugène Simonis’ *Godefroid de Bouillon* – both honoured figures remembered as crusaders, and are better known in their permanent bronze versions that stand today in London and Brussels respectively. However, it is often overlooked that both works appeared at the exhibition, with Marochetti displaying his work on behalf of England, and Simonis exhibiting his on behalf of Belgium. Their appearance in 1851 stimulated a multi-faceted national rivalry, evidently encompassing both the two sculptors and the respective heads of state, Victoria and Leopold I of the Belgians. Drawing from written evidence and visual culture, this article traces the shared history of the sculptures at the Great Exhibition, before exploring contemporary responses to their appearance there. Its findings contribute to scholarly debates over the status of the Great Exhibition as either a peace congress or the catalyst for international competition, as well as to discussions over the cultural impact of the medieval past in the nineteenth century.

KEYWORDS: Great Exhibition, medievalism, art, sculpture, Queen Victoria, Belgium, Leopold I of the Belgians, Richard I (‘the Lionheart’), Godfrey of Bouillon, Eugène Simonis, Carlo Marochetti

1. INTRODUCTION

On public display in present-day London and Brussels are statues that commemorate medieval figures who were renowned as crusaders. In London, outside the Palace of Westminster, stands an 1860 statue of Richard I ‘the Lionheart’ (d.1199), the king of England who gained legendary status on the Third Crusade (1190–1192).¹ Titled *Richard Coeur de Lion*, it was created by the Italo-French sculptor Carlo Marochetti (d.1867).² In Brussels’ Place Royale, close to the homes of the Belgian monarchy and federal parliament, is an 1848 statue of Godfrey of Bouillon (d.1100), a leader of the First Crusade (1096–1099), and a figure widely regarded as the first king of crusader Jerusalem.³ This statue, titled *Godefroid de Bouillon*, is by the Liège-born sculptor Eugène Simonis (d.1897).⁴

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¹ On the statue, see Philip Ward-Jackson, *Public Sculpture of Historic Westminster*, vol. 1 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), pp. 167–72. On its subject, see John Gillingham, *Richard I* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999).

² Marco Calderini, *Carlo Marochetti: monografia con ritratti, facsimile e riproduzioni di opere dell'artista* (Turin: Paravia, 1928); Philip Ward-Jackson, ‘Carlo Marochetti: Maintaining Distinction in an International Sculptural Market’, in *Material Culture and the History of Sculpture in England and Italy, c.1700-c.1860*, ed. by Cinzia Sicca and Alison Yarrington (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), pp. 174–90.

³ Simon John, *Godfrey of Bouillon: Duke of Lower Lotharingia, Ruler of Latin Jerusalem, c.1060–1100* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018). While Godfrey had in reality not taken the title of king of Jerusalem, within a few years of his death, observers began to assert that he had.

⁴ Chantal Jordens-Leroy, *Un sculpteur belge du XIXe siècle: Louis-Eugène Simonis* (Brussels: Academie Royale de Belgique, 1990).

Scholars have sometimes associated the two statues, presenting them as examples of the cultural resonance of the crusades in nineteenth-century Europe.⁵ Beyond that, though, they share much in common. Both are large-scale bronze equestrian sculptures depicting crusading warrior kings in emotionally charged poses, and they honour figures who were revered as national heroes in England and Belgium respectively in the nineteenth century.⁶ What has been less commented upon is that, in addition to sharing these commonalities, the histories of the two statues are closely interwoven. Crucially, temporary plaster versions of both sculptures were displayed at the Great Exhibition, held at the Crystal Palace in London's Hyde Park from 1 May to 15 October 1851.⁷ Marochetti seems to have created his *Richard* in response to Belgium's plans to display at the exhibition a copy of Simonis' *Godefroid*, the permanent version of which had been inaugurated in Brussels in 1848. Drawing from written sources and visual culture, this article offers the first detailed study of the shared history of the two statues. It firstly considers the creation of the two sculptures for the Great Exhibition and the settings in which they were displayed there. It then explores the rivalry that developed around the display of the two works at the exhibition. Lastly, it investigates contemporary responses to the display of the two works, considering the reactions that they evoked among visitors.⁸

The article suggests that Marochetti and Simonis likely felt a sense of direct competition in 1851. While Marochetti's *Richard* was installed in a more aesthetically amenable location outside the Crystal Palace's western entrance, Simonis' *Godefroid* evidently made a greater impression upon visitors, if only because it had been placed inside the building (in the eastern or 'foreign' nave), in a location that experienced greater footfall. The article shows that, whatever the two sculptors felt, contemporaries believed that there was a rivalry between the statues of the two crusading icons respectively exhibited on behalf of England and Belgium. This perceived rivalry was no esoteric matter confined to the art world, but one that extended to the political elite of both nations. The respective heads of state – Queen Victoria (along with Prince Albert) and her uncle King Leopold I of the Belgians – both took personal interest in the two statues, and apparently engaged in a good-natured rivalry over them.

By exploring the competition surrounding the statues, and the exchanges they stimulated between England and Belgium, the article engages with discussions on the nature of the nineteenth-century Universal Expositions. While some regarded them as peace congresses that signified the cultural and political progress of the era, by bringing nations into direct contact, they served at one and the same time to underscore national differences, and ultimately, to encourage competition.⁹ Moreover, the article interrogates the 1851 incarnations of Marochetti's *Richard Coeur de Lion* and Simonis' *Godefroid de Bouillon* as symbols of the

⁵ E.g. Elizabeth Siberry, 'Images of the Crusades in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades*, ed. by Jonathan Riley-Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 365–85 (pp. 379–81).

⁶ On nineteenth-century interest in the Middle Ages in the two nations, see respectively Mike Horswell, *The Rise and Fall of British Crusader Medievalism, c.1825–1945* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), and Jo Tollebeek, 'An Era of Grandeur: The Middle Ages in Belgian National Historiography, 1830–1914', in *The Uses of the Middle Ages in Modern European States: History, Nationhood and the Search for Origins*, ed. by R. J. W. Evans and Guy P. Marchal (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011), pp. 113–35.

⁷ Cf. Horswell, *Rise and Fall*, p. 32, which does note the appearance of both statues at the Great Exhibition.

⁸ In general, see Geoffrey Cantor, 'Emotional Reactions to the Great Exhibition of 1851', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 20 (2015), 230–45.

⁹ Geoffrey Cantor, *Religion and the Great Exhibition of 1851* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 166–87.

medieval past for their respective nations. It demonstrates that some critics believed that the two statues embodied an artistic shift from the neoclassical sculpture of the eighteenth century to the ‘Romantic’ or ‘Gothic’ style, thereby engaging in debates over the influence of medieval traditions in nineteenth-century art. Above all, the article suggests that the appearance of the two statues of crusading icons at the Great Exhibition underlines the importance of the Middle Ages in national self-imaging in that era. At the exhibition – as in the nineteenth century more broadly – the Middle Ages was imagined as a safer, simpler and more pious time, and symbols of the medieval past were used to counteract the profound anxieties that industrialization had wrought upon contemporary society. By exploring responses to the statues of these two crusading icons in 1851, then, this article unlocks a new vantage point on the reception of the Middle Ages in that era.

2. THE CREATION OF SIMONIS’ *GODEFROID* AND MAROCHETTI’S *RICHARD FOR THE GREAT EXHIBITION*

The Belgian national government formally commissioned Simonis to create his statue of Godfrey of Bouillon in 1843, and the completed monument was inaugurated in Brussels on 15 August 1848. Simonis may have drawn inspiration for it from earlier equestrian sculptures by Marochetti, especially his 1838 statue of the sixteenth-century figure Duke Emanuele Filiberto of Savoy for Turin, a work that had made an impression across Europe.¹⁰ Like many other monuments commissioned in nineteenth-century Belgium, Simonis’ statue was created to lay national claims to the memory of a historical figure, and formed one dynamic of a wider state-building programme aimed at stimulating feelings of national solidarity among the inhabitants of the fledgling nation of Belgium.¹¹ Reports of the monument’s inauguration circulated across the continent, reaching England soon after.¹² Hence, Simonis’ reputation among his compatriots was significantly bolstered just as planning for the Great Exhibition was underway across the Channel. As part of the preparations, delegates were despatched from London to raise interest among foreign governments and manufacturers. Belgium received word early; a representative of the organizers, John Scott Russell, visited Brussels in autumn 1849.¹³ Belgian political elites responded enthusiastically, discerning an opportunity to showcase their young nation at an event with global reach.¹⁴ In February 1850 Charles Rogier, the head of the national government, established a commission to organize Belgium’s participation.¹⁵

¹⁰ Jordens-Leroy, *Un sculpteur belge*, pp. 76–77; Jana Wijnsouw, *National Identity and Nineteenth-Century Franco-Belgian Sculpture* (Routledge: Abingdon, 2018), pp. 71–72.

¹¹ For comments on the creation of public monuments and statues in nineteenth-century Belgium, see Jo Tollebeek and Tom Verschaffel, ‘Group Portraits with National Heroes: The Pantheon as an Historical Genre in Nineteenth-Century Belgium’, *National Identities*, 6 (2004), 91–106. The present author’s forthcoming study of the creation and reception of Simonis’ 1848 statue will examine this subject, as well as the imaging of Godfrey of Bouillon as a national hero in nineteenth-century Belgium.

¹² E.g. *Art Journal*, 10 (1848), 285; *Morning Post*, 19 August 1848, 5.

¹³ Russell also visited Cologne, Berlin, Leipzig, Munich and Frankfurt; John R. Davis, *The Great Exhibition* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), p. 38.

¹⁴ On the Belgian participation in the Great Exhibition, see the documents collected in *Recueil de documents officiels concernant l’Exposition Universelle de Londres et l’Exposition Générale des beaux-arts de Bruxelles* (Brussels: Delevingne & Callewaert, 1852). On artistic exchanges between Britain and Belgium in the era of the Great Exhibition, see Jan Dirk Baetens, ‘The Belgian Brand: Ernest Gambart and the British Market for Modern Belgian Art, c. 1850–1870’, *Revue belge de Philologie et d’Histoire* 92 (2014), 1277–310.

¹⁵ *Recueil . . . Bruxelles*, pp. 3–4.

Ultimately, almost 600 Belgians – among them agriculturalists, manufacturers and artists – contributed to the nation's display.¹⁶

As part of Belgium's keen response to the Great Exhibition, the national government requested Simonis, the creator of one of the most significant monuments unveiled in the nation's capital in recent years, to contribute to the nation's display.¹⁷ He accordingly produced a copy of his *Godefroid* to be exhibited at the Crystal Palace. Though it was in plaster rather than bronze, in all other respects including its immense size, it was an exact replica of the version inaugurated in Brussels in 1848. Simonis also submitted for the Belgian display a pair of smaller marble sculptures, entitled *Le bambin malheureux* ('the Unhappy Child') and *Le bambin heureux* ('the Happy Child'), and a plaster piece entitled *La Vérité* ('Truth').¹⁸ Simonis' sculptures, including the component parts of his *Godefroid*, were likely transported in the 289 packages from Belgium that had arrived at the Crystal Palace by early March 1851.¹⁹ The sculptor himself visited the Crystal Palace in April, as he himself put it, 'pour y réparer le grand modèle en plâtre de ma statue de Godefroid de Bouillon, que j'avais expédié de Bruxelles sur l'invitation du Gouvernement belge.'²⁰ A contemporary reporter seems to have glimpsed him assembling the statue a few weeks before the opening, writing that they had seen 'the artist or some one of his assistants . . . quietly building up the shoulders and chest of the first Christian King of Jerusalem.'²¹

The Belgian display was located about halfway along the eastern (or 'foreign') side of the Crystal Palace, between those of France and Austria. The exhibits of Britain and its empire occupied the western half of the building. Objects intended to attract particular attention were placed in the nave on both sides of the building. Simonis' *Godefroid* was given pride of place in the centre of the nave in the Belgian section, with several smaller sculptures (including Simonis' other works) placed around it on columns. A photo taken during the exhibition captures this arrangement (Figure 1). Soon after the exhibition opened, the *Illustrated London News* (ILN) printed an engraving of the sculpture; this image omits the smaller pieces placed nearby, but captures its immense scale, showing that even its pedestal was taller than most visitors (Figure 2). An illustration of the Belgian display in the eastern nave is provided in a watercolour by Joseph Nash, published in *Dickinsons' Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851* the following year. Commissioned by Victoria and Albert, this volume became one of the best-known visual records of the exhibition. Nash's painting is framed around Simonis' statue, presenting it as the centrepiece of the Belgian display (Figure 3).

In contrast, Marochetti sculpted his *Richard Coeur de Lion I* specifically for the Great Exhibition, and only completed the permanent bronze version of it years later. After leaving Paris for London in the wake of the revolutions of 1848, Marochetti gained influential patrons including Victoria and Albert.²² When he learned of the plans for the exhibition soon after his arrival, he regarded it as an opportunity to advance his profile in England. He thus resolved to create a striking work for display on behalf of his adopted nation. Ward-Jackson has

¹⁶ For the full list of contributors, see *Recueil . . . Bruxelles*, pp. 31–37.

¹⁷ The organizers' representatives specifically targeted artworks that they thought had the potential to stimulate interest in the exhibition. For example, in Berlin, John Scott Russell made a point of securing a copy of August Kiss's 1842 sculpture *The Amazon*: Davis, *The Great Exhibition*, p. 104.

¹⁸ *L'Indépendance Belge*, 1 March 1851, 2; Jordens-Leroy, *Un sculpteur belge*, pp. 162, 170.

¹⁹ *Evening Mail*, 5 March 1851, 6.

²⁰ Archives générales du Royaume, Brussels, Acquisition, 4^e section, no. 326 (letter of Simonis dated 9 January 1865).

²¹ *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, 14 April 1851, 3.

²² Calderini, *Carlo Marochetti*, pp. 29–30.



Figure 1. Claude-Marie Ferrier's photograph of the plaster version of Eugène Simonis' *Godfroid de Bouillon*, as displayed at the Great Exhibition in 1851. Claude-Marie Ferrier, 'Godfrey de Bouillon by Simonis', Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 2800147 <<https://www.rct.uk/collection/2800147/the-great-exhibition-1851-godfrey-de-bouillon-by-simonis>> [accessed 17 March 2021]. Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2021.

suggested that Marochetti was aware that Belgium was sending a copy of Simonis' statue of Godfrey of Bouillon to be displayed at the Great Exhibition, and hence that it 'was probably in a spirit of competition with the Belgian that Marochetti embarked on his statue of Richard I'.²³ Certainly, Marochetti sculpted his *Richard* in haste, producing a bronzed plaster cast of it by mid-March for inclusion in the exhibition.²⁴ There was some discussion about where to

²³ Ward-Jackson, *Public Sculpture*, p. 169.

²⁴ *Carlisle Journal*, 14 March 1851, 2, notes that the cast was complete by this point.



Figure 2. Simonis' Godefroid de Bouillon, on display at the Great Exhibition, from the *Illustrated London News*, 10 May 1851, 32 (consulted and photographed at Swansea University's Singleton Park library, March 2021).

1.—CARTON BOOKCASE. BY THE SOCIÉTÉ DES DÉCORATEURS. A very beautiful design, very successfully carried out; speaking highly for the taste of our French neighbours in the decorative art.

2.—ORISON FOR A DECORATIVE PANEL. BY W. A. FAWCOTT. 4.—ANOTHER. BY J. W. FAWCOTT. Two very rich and elegant designs for panelling, the one in the Fane Greek, the other in the more florid Roman style. These are in the Fane Court.

3.—TREN DE COLOGNE. BY MESSRS. BOULLAÏE, HINGELAN, AND CO. 8.—BRACELET. BY THE SAME. 9.—BROOCH. BY THE SAME. Three very tasteful articles of jewellery, displayed amongst various other costly productions by this celebrated house.

10.—LAMP. BY M. SEBÈ. This lamp exhibits much more of design than the common run of ornaments in which crystalline are employed.

11.—KETTLE'S SILK TROPHY. For description see article on Silk Manufacture, page 234.

12.—MESSRS. JAMES HOUNDWORTH'S BLUE AND GOLD DAMASK. Of silks we have not been able to say anything in our glance at the textile fabrics, except in noticing the trophy in the central avenue. The illustration of this department is from a very admirable brocade manufactured by Jas. Houndworth and Co., of Manchester and is a really effective and excellent example of the skill of this house. The arrangement is full and complete, and the colour well distributed.

13.—FURNITURE IN BRONZE. BY VIGNOT. Complete a variety of exquisite subjects, finished with the most artistic skill. Prominent in the centre of the group is a statuette of Athena.

14.—CENTRE-PiECE. BY SMITH AND NICHOLAN. A striking evidence of the progress which the pure principles of art, as applied to decorative purposes, have made in this country.

15.—A GROUP OF BRONZE. BY VIGNOT. Complete a variety of exquisite subjects, finished with the most artistic skill. Prominent in the centre of the group is a statuette of Athena.

16.—CENTRE-PIECE. DESIGNED BY SEAR. The base of the magnificent candelabrum is of a regular form, with lines at each corner, supporting a shaft for ornamental branches. On the base, the group of six figures and the Dragon are defined round the shaft. The knight, having wounded his reptile opponent with his spear, is about to deal the deadly blow with his sword.

17.—FRAME FOR A LOOKING-GLASS. BY HANCOCK. This elegant production is of oval form, richly carved in wood, with devices in flowers, fruits, birds, squirrels, &c.

18.—BOOK-COVER IN CARTON DE PIERRE. BY JACKSON AND SON. A very elegant production in carton de pierre, painted, and varnished. The composition is the cinque-cento style.

19.—BLOWING-BOOK COVER. BY C. ASHBY. This is one of the richest specimens of pressed work, in its own proper velvet, we have ever witnessed. The details are of infinite and beautiful variety. It is a composition from a gentleman, whose arms are most ingeniously displayed in the centre.

20.—A GROUP OF BRONZE. BY F. J. KEEL. This group comprises the following subjects—Duke of Lorraine, a horse, a plowman, a dog, a lion, &c. The second-horse was exhibited at the Louvre in 1844, and the third was exhibited at the same place in 1848, where it obtained a gold medal; and at the exhibition at Rouen, where it was rewarded with a silver medal.

21.—SE. GODEFROID DE BOUILLON. This is a work of extra-colossal dimensions, by M. Simonis, the original of which, in bronze, was inaugurated at Brussels in 1848. The knightly Crusader before a warfare of somewhat heavy armour, which he has suitably retired in, as he wears on his shield as a rallying sign for his comrades in arms. There is considerable energy and spirit in the whole composition, which can but be appreciated more sensibly from the extreme east end of the gallery.

Godefroid de Bouillon, Duke of Lorraine, was one of the principal leaders of the Crusades, and the following brief account of a passage in his romantic career, from Mackay's "Memoirs of Extraordinary Popular Delusions," will be read with interest in connection with the present subject.

"Godefroid de Bouillon traversed Hungary in the most quiet and orderly manner. On his arrival at Brestlay he found the country strewn with the mutilated corpses of the Jews, and demanded of the King of Hungary for what reason his people had so been treated. The latter detailed the atrocities that had committed, and made it evident to Godefroid that the Hungarians had only acted in self-defence, the high-minded leader declared himself satisfied and passed on, without giving or receiving satisfaction. On his arrival at Philippopolis, he was informed for the first time of the imprisonment of the Count of Flanders. He immediately sent messengers to the Emperor, demanding the Count's release, and threatened, in case of refusal, to lay waste the country with fire and sword. After waiting a day at Philippopolis, he marched on to Adrianople, where he was met by his messengers returning with the Emperor's refusal. Godefroid, the bravest and most determined of the leaders of the Crusade, was not a man to swerve from his word, and the country was given up to pillage. Alexis here committed another blunder. No accident did he learn from this experience that the Crusader was not an idle fellow, though, that he committed in the second instance. He hastened cowardly in the second and sought to remember to his cost, that they could have done nothing from his sense of justice, but everything from his force. Godefroid remained unmoved for several weeks in the neighbourhood of Constantinople, in the great annoyance of Alexis, who sought for every means to extort from him the homage he had expected from Vernandine. Sometimes he acted as if at once and declared war with the Crusader, and sent his troops against them. Sometimes he refused to supply them with food, and ordered the markets to be shut against them, while at other times he was all for peace and goodwill, and sent costly presents to Godefroid. The honest, straightforward Crusader was at last so wearied by his false kindness, and so grieved by his tricks, that, allowing his indications to get the better of his judgment, he gave up the country around Adrianople to the mercy of Alexis, but, as Godefroid anticipated, they convinced him of his error. Fearing that Constantinople itself would be the next object of attack, he sent messengers to demand an interview with Godefroid, and at the same time to leave his camp as hostage for his good faith. Godefroid agreed to meet him, and, under no pretence as to these useless diabolical, or for some other unexplained reason, he returned to Bouillon as Alexis at his high lord."

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Figure 3. The Belgian display at the Great Exhibition, as shown in Joseph Nash's watercolour in *Dickinsons' Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851*, 2 vols in 1 (London: Dickinson Brothers, 1854), I, VI. This is the original watercolour, which is held by the Royal Collection Trust. Joseph Nash, 'The Great Exhibition: Belgium', RCIN 919948 <<https://www.rct.uk/collection/919948/the-great-exhibition-belgium>> [accessed 17 March 2021]. Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2021.

place Marochetti's sculpture at the Great Exhibition. A report in March suggested that it was the only work that had been earmarked by then to be placed in the 'British nave', that is, the central aisle in the western side of the building.²⁵ Ultimately, however, Marochetti's *Richard* was given a unique spot *outside* the Crystal Palace, some distance away from the western entrance. Another contemporary photograph shows Marochetti's *Richard* in its exterior location, framed by the open air (Figure 4). In late June the *ILN* printed an engraving showing Marochetti's oeuvre from a wider perspective, with the western end of the Crystal Palace in the background (Figure 5).

3. THE RIVALRY BETWEEN SIMONIS' *GODEFROID* AND MAROCHETTI'S *RICHARD*

Before 1851, both Simonis and Marochetti were members of an international art market in which sculptors competed to win lucrative commissions. In a wider sense, then, they were already rivals before the Great Exhibition.²⁶ Beyond this, though, it seems likely that they felt a particular sense of competition over the sculptures of crusading icons that they displayed in 1851. While the two sculptors presumably took pride in all their work, both men knew that displaying their work at the Great Exhibition had the potential significantly to boost their

²⁵ *Evening Mail*, 5 March 1851, 6. The correspondent had seen this provisional location marked in Owen Jones' plan for the Crystal Palace.

²⁶ On this competitive market, see Ward-Jackson, 'Carlo Marochetti'.



Figure 4. Claude-Marie Ferrier's photograph of the plaster version of Carlo Marochetti's *Richard Coeur de Lion*, as displayed at the Great Exhibition in 1851. Claude-Marie Ferrier, 'Richard Coeur de Lion by Marochetti', Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 2800103 <<https://www.rct.uk/collection/2800103/the-great-exhibition-1851-richard-coeur-de-lion-by-marochetti>> [accessed 17 March 2021]. Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2021.

international profiles, as well as to enhance their reputations in their respective homelands. Moreover, both men felt an affinity with the medieval figure whom they had chosen as the subject of their sculptures. In 1848, the year in which the bronze version of Simonis' statue of Godfrey of Bouillon had been inaugurated in Brussels, he celebrated the birth of a son whom he named Godefroid.²⁷ Likewise, in 1854, Marochetti named his new-born son Riccardo, doubtlessly in honour of Richard I.²⁸

²⁷ Jordens-Leroy, *Un sculpteur belge*, pp. 25–26.

²⁸ Calderini, *Carlo Marochetti*, p. 54.



Figure 5. Marochetti's *Richard Coeur de Lion* at the western end of the Crystal Palace, from the *Illustrated London News*, 28 June 1851, 24 (consulted and photographed at Swansea University's Singleton Park library, March 2021).

While Simonis' *Godefroid* possibly owed a stylistic debt to Marochetti's 1838 statue of Emanuele Filiberto for Turin, any direct sense of competition between the two sculptors over the display of their works in 1851 was evidently felt at first more by Marochetti. As noted above, his choice of Richard I as the subject of his statue may well have been influenced by the knowledge that Belgium was sending a copy of Simonis' sculpture of Godfrey of Bouillon. While it is unclear when Simonis first learned that Marochetti was creating his *Richard*, he did so at the latest during his visit to London in April 1851. Simonis later claimed that during that visit, he viewed an incomplete version of *Richard Coeur de Lion* in Marochetti's workshop in Brompton.²⁹ The Belgian may have felt in 1851 that another colossal equestrian statue of a crusading icon had the potential to divert attention from his own work. Certainly, the commissioners in charge of Belgium's display in the Crystal Palace were concerned when they heard about Marochetti's plans to exhibit a statue of Richard I. According to a Belgian newspaper, when the commissioners learned of those plans shortly before the exhibition opened, they feared that it might harm the reception of Simonis' *Godefroid*, and so attached a sign to the front of its pedestal indicating that the original bronze version had been inaugurated in Brussels in 1848. Their aim was expressly to affirm that Simonis' statue predated Marochetti's *Richard*.³⁰ The sign is visible in some contemporary images of the work (e.g. [Figures 1](#) and [3](#)) and was noted by at least one visitor.³¹

²⁹ Simonis affirmed this in the letter cited, in note 20, above.

³⁰ *Journal de la Belgique*, 30 April 1851, 1.

³¹ 'We gather from the label affixed to [the pedestal] that a bronze cast of the same statue has been set up at Brussels.' *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, 19 May 1851, 3.

The exhibition's prize jury for 'sculpture, models and plastic art' evidently preferred Marochetti's work. At the end of the exhibition, the jury commended Simonis with a Prize medal for his *Godefroid* (along with the smaller sculptures he had exhibited), but accorded Marochetti with the higher honour of a Council medal for his *Richard*.³² Although the jury of 15 consisted of eight English jurors and seven foreign (among them a Belgian), Marochetti evidently benefitted from his status as a 'native' artist.³³ At a reception for the contributors to Belgium's display held in Brussels in November 1851, the city's mayor asserted that the jury had erred by overlooking Simonis for a Council medal.³⁴ Whatever lay behind the jury's decisions, though, the outcome was that Marochetti emerged from the exhibition with a higher artistic honour than Simonis.³⁵

Beyond any personal rivalry that may have existed between Marochetti and Simonis, there developed a perception that their sculptures were in competition in 1851. *The Spectator* explicitly described Simonis' work as an 'overgrown rival' to Marochetti's statue, before comparing the merits of the two.³⁶ One journalist compared how the two works were displayed at the exhibition. This figure asserted that the cluttered background of the eastern nave compromised views of Simonis' piece, and affirmed that it would be better viewed in the open air, as Marochetti's statue could be. Accordingly, this observer advised 'all those who desire to obtain the best view of [Simonis' *Godefroid*] to recede as far as possible into one of the side courts' of the Crystal Palace in order properly to examine it. This writer also affirmed that in contrast to Simonis, 'Baron Marochetti, favoured by Prince Albert, has been more fortunate in the choice of a situation for his splendid statue of Richard Coeur de Lion'.³⁷ By implication, then, Marochetti's sculpture had been granted a more advantageous position than Simonis' owing to his connections to Albert.

Simonis' work was indeed set up in an ostensibly less prestigious location than Marochetti's. While Simonis' *Godefroid* dominated the part of the eastern nave allotted to Belgium, viewed in a longer perspective along the whole nave, it competed with myriad other exhibits from different nations to catch the eye. One visitor to the Crystal Palace reported that, if one stood in its central transept and looked along the eastern nave, 'a combination of splendours bursts upon the sight of overpowering magnificence', among them several colossal sculptures. This writer identified Simonis' *Godefroid* along with several other pieces by different sculptors.³⁸ One lithograph depicts the bewildering array of exhibits arrayed along the eastern nave. Showing the vantage point from the Crystal Palace's upper gallery close to the eastern entrance, it captures the view along the nave to the central transept. Simonis' *Godefroid* can just about be identified among the panoply of objects along the nave vying to catch the gaze.³⁹

³² *Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, 1851: Reports by the Juries on the Subjects in the Thirty Classes into which the Exhibition was Divided* (London: Clowes & Sons, 1852), pp. cxvii–cxix, 684–85, 704–5.

³³ In Marochetti's commendation, it is noted that he was 'now of London': *Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations*, p. 684. On the political dimensions of the prize-giving in 1851, see Davis, *The Great Exhibition*, pp. 163–66.

³⁴ *Recueil . . . Bruxelles*, p. 58.

³⁵ After the exhibition, Marochetti remained a royal favourite. His *Richard* boosted his reputation in his adopted homeland, and effectively became his calling card. Ward-Jackson, *Public Sculpture*, pp. 169–70. Likewise, Simonis was garlanded for his contribution to the Belgian display at the exhibition. At the November reception in Brussels, Leopold I appointed him as an officer in his Ordre de Léopold/Leopoldsorde: *Journal de Bruxelles*, 5 November 1851, 2–3; *Recueil . . . Bruxelles*, p. 70.

³⁶ *The Spectator*, 12 July 1851, 14.

³⁷ *North Devon Journal*, 15 May 1851, 2.

³⁸ *The Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue: The Industry of All Nations, 1851* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1851), p. xxv.

³⁹ 'The Foreign Department, viewed towards the transept', by J. McNeven, Victoria and Albert Museum, 19625: <<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O85649>> [accessed 22 January 2021].

While Marochetti's sculpture occupied a more prestigious and aesthetically conducive site outside the western end of the Crystal Palace, however, the choice of location ultimately weakened rather than enhanced its impact on visitors. Many entered the Crystal Palace through its main entrance at the south of the central transept, rather than through the western entrance.⁴⁰ Contemporary reports suggest that the statue's location was rather out of the way. One observer noted that it had been installed 'at some distance outside the western entrance of the building', while another asserted that it stood 'considerably beyond the recognised precincts of the Exhibition.'⁴¹ The *ILN* stated that the statue stood near 'the large space appropriated to the carriages of the visitors' – in modern-day terms, the car park.⁴² Visual culture conveys a sense of the statue's physical removal from the Crystal Palace. Another of Nash's watercolours for *Dickinsons' Comprehensive Pictures* captures the scene outside the western end of the building, where a display of assorted building materials and minerals had been set up. Marochetti's *Richard* features in the image, but only as a minor element, standing distantly in the background.⁴³

Of the two sculptures of crusading icons, it was Simonis' that made the greater impact on visitors. This was not because visitors regarded it as artistically superior to Marochetti's oeuvre, but because it stood in a better-frequented location inside the Crystal Palace. Visitors were simply more likely to encounter Simonis' *Godefroid* than Marochetti's *Richard*, even if the former competed with other objects in the eastern nave for attention. Several catalogues produced for use at the exhibition list Simonis' *Godefroid* among the exhibits, but pass over Marochetti's *Richard*.⁴⁴ The *Art Journal's* catalogue commented that Simonis' oeuvre 'has attracted . . . marked attention' at the Crystal Palace, and noted that 'we should most assuredly have omitted one of the *greatest* features of the Exhibition had we neglected to introduce [it] into our Catalogue'.⁴⁵ In contrast, this catalogue treated Marochetti's work more briefly.⁴⁶ Some guides included plans of the Crystal Palace that indicate where the Belgian's sculpture stood in the eastern nave, but omit the location of Marochetti's.⁴⁷ This disparity is also reflected in visual culture. As already noted, Marochetti's *Richard* appears in the background of Nash's watercolour of the objects displayed at the Crystal Palace's western end, while Simonis' *Godefroid* dominates the same artist's painting of the Belgian display. A pictorial record featuring '25 of the most interesting Views in the Interior of the Crystal Palace' includes one showing Simonis' *Godefroid* in the Belgian display.⁴⁸ While this volume included no exterior views, this underscores the fact that the decision to install Marochetti's work outside the building lessened its impact on visitors.

Some visitors to the Great Exhibition recorded encountering *Godefroid* but not *Richard*. One reported that the statue 'of the well-known Godfrey of Bouillon was the subject of general

⁴⁰ Davis, *The Great Exhibition*, p. 136.

⁴¹ *Carlisle Journal*, 9 May 1851, 6; *Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue*, p. xxiii.

⁴² *Illustrated London News*, 28 June 1851, 24.

⁴³ *Dickinsons' Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851*, 2 vols in 1 (London: Dickinson Brothers, 1854), II, XXIV.

⁴⁴ E.g. *Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, 1851*, corrected edition (London: Spicer Brothers, 1851), p. 15.

⁴⁵ *Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue*, pp. 185, 298.

⁴⁶ *Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue*, p. xxiii.

⁴⁷ E.g. *Popular Guide to the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations: With a Plan of the Building, Rules for Visitors, and Suggestions for the Guidance of Large Parties visiting the Exhibition* (London: Spicer Brothers, 1851), pp. 16–17.

⁴⁸ *Recollections of the Great Exhibition, 1851* (London: Lloyd Brothers, 1851), n.p.

admiration', but made no mention of that of Richard I.⁴⁹ A visitor from Exeter who spent just one hour at the Crystal Palace wrote a letter to their local paper describing their 'scamper through the exhibition'. This writer entered the building through the eastern entrance, and evidently did not venture outside the western entrance where Marochetti's sculpture stood. This writer was particularly fascinated by the exhibits that stood the eastern nave, writing that they halted to examine Simonis' *Godefroid*, a work that they affirmed impressed 'the spectator with a kind of awe'.⁵⁰

The editors of a North Wales paper spent a week at the exhibition and published a report listing the most memorable items they had encountered, including several that were on display in the eastern nave. The report states that during one visit they had 'scarcely examined' another sculpture before they were 'attracted by Eugene [Simonis'] noble equestrian figure of "Godfrey de Bouillon [sic]"', before affirming that Godfrey's 'horse is worthy of him; and horse and man are two mighty achievements of genius'.⁵¹ While the authors of this report mentioned dozens of other objects in their long report, Marochetti's *Richard* was not among them, strengthening the sense that, of the two, Simonis' oeuvre made a greater popular impact.

During the Great Exhibition, its star attractions – the most novel items that made the greatest impression on visitors – came to be known collectively as 'the Lions of the Exhibition'.⁵² These included objects contributed by both 'British' and 'foreign' exhibitors. As one contemporary account put it, the 'Lions' were the exhibits that were 'long remembered . . . by most of the visitors', and which merited inclusion in the popular pantheon because of 'the great share of attention they have attracted'.⁵³ While the list varied from writer to writer, no figure included Marochetti's *Richard* among them. There was, it seems, no place among the 'Lions' for the Lionheart. In contrast, Simonis' *Godefroid* was regularly listed among the 'Lions' alongside exhibits including August Kiss's sculpture *The Amazon* (displayed by the German Zollverein), the Koh-i-Noor diamond (mined in India and displayed in Victoria's honour), and the towering glass fountain by Osler of Birmingham, which stood in the Crystal Palace's central transept.

One contemporary text identifies the 'Lions' by imagining a scene in which a father prompts his children to recall the exhibition's most memorable items. The children proceed to list them, including Simonis' *Godefroid*. After they name the Belgian's sculpture, the father affirms that 'Godfrey was a great crusader: he was the leader of the second crusade [sic], and was proclaimed King of Jerusalem, A.D. 1099. There was also a giant statue of Richard I...outside the building'.⁵⁴ While the father mentioned Marochetti's work, then, it came only as an afterthought in connection to the more memorable sculpture of a crusader, that by Simonis. It was as one of the 'Lions of the Exhibition' that Simonis' *Godefroid* featured in the children's book *Little Henry's Holiday at the Great Exhibition*. In the passage in question, Henry and his family encounter the statue in the eastern nave. Henry initially mistakes the figure for Goliath, while his sister Rose wonders whether it represents Alfred the Great. Their father then reveals the figure's true identity:

⁴⁹ *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald*, 2 August 1851, 6.

⁵⁰ *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 14 June 1851, 6.

⁵¹ *North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality*, 7 June 1851, 3.

⁵² Davis, *The Great Exhibition*, p. 172.

⁵³ *Fireside Facts from the Great Exhibition* (London: Houlston & Stoneman, 1851), p. 230.

⁵⁴ *Fireside Facts from the Great Exhibition*, pp. 230, 234.

Papa: . . . It is a representation of GODFREY OF BOUILLON. Look at him Rose! He has a bold determined countenance. What a heavy looking war-horse he strides! What a strong arm he must have had to have reined in so powerful an animal! With what energy he is holding up the standard, and calling his companions in arms, 'Ho, to the crusades!

Henry: Was he a *crusader* papa?

Papa: Yes, he was one of the leaders of the second crusade [sic]. Here is a leader of the ancient gathering for war, come forward in the midst of the gathering for *peace*, Henry: That is not right. Ho! GODFREY OF BOUILLON! Go home again. You are out of your place.⁵⁵

Though fictional, this account exemplifies the impact of Simonis' sculpture at the Great Exhibition. If there was a duel between the two crusaders at the Crystal Palace, then, it was – in popular perception, at least – Godfrey of Bouillon who won it.

4. RESPONSES TO THE DISPLAY OF SIMONIS' *GODEFROID* AND MAROCHETTI'S *RICHARD* IN 1851

Several reports from the Great Exhibition that refer to the two statues shed light on contemporary ideas about the influence of the Middle Ages upon nineteenth-century art. Some observers asserted that the statues of the two crusaders – along with certain other works displayed at the Crystal Palace – embodied the new 'Romantic' style of sculpture that had superseded the neoclassical style prevalent in the eighteenth century. The 'Romantic' style prized the portrayal of historical figures with period-appropriate clothing and accessories, and in energetic, emotional poses. As part of this shift, sculptors also produced far larger works than in the previous century.⁵⁶ 'Romantic' works that portrayed medieval figures, or somehow channelled the spirit of the Middle Ages, were sometimes described as examples of 'Gothic' sculpture.⁵⁷

Several critics believed that Simonis' *Godefroid* in particular embodied this stylistic shift. Hence, one reviewer commented upon 'the gothic appearance of the rider'.⁵⁸ The *ILN* asserted of it that both 'horse and rider [are] equally far removed from the classic mould'.⁵⁹ Another critic spoke of its 'grandiose style', and commented that, 'in selecting a subject from the period of the 11th century, [Simonis] seems, perhaps unconsciously, to have adopted that mid-style in which classical is ready to yield to gothic forms'.⁶⁰ Another report emphasized its 'colossal' scale, asserting that it is 'so large in its dimensions that more space than even this enormous building affords is requisite to view it with proper effect'.⁶¹ In 1854, the *Art Journal* affirmed that Marochetti's *Richard* and Simonis' *Godefroid* (along with Kiss' *Amazon*) had made an impact at the exhibition because 'such works, on so large a scale, were new to England, and apart from their merit, their novelty attracted much attention'.⁶²

⁵⁵ *Little Henry's Holiday at the Great Exhibition* (London: Houlston & Stoneman, 1851), pp. 66–70.

⁵⁶ On the 'Romantic' style, see Ward-Jackson, 'Carlo Marochetti', 174.

⁵⁷ On the use of this term, see Wijnsouw, *National Identity*, p. 73.

⁵⁸ *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 6 December 1851, 3.

⁵⁹ *Illustrated London News*, 17 May 1851, 18.

⁶⁰ *London Daily News*, 2 May 1851, 5.

⁶¹ *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, 19 May 1851, 3.

⁶² *Art Journal*, 1 March 1854, 89; Jordens-Leroy, *Un sculpteur belge*, pp. 77–83.

Responses to Simonis and Marochetti's sculptures at the Great Exhibition suggest that the fact that they honoured famed medieval figures bolstered their appeal to visitors. On one level, the two works served the broader nineteenth-century interest in the medieval past. In that era, European states looked to medieval history for figures, precedents and traditions that could serve contemporary agendas.⁶³ Richard I and Godfrey of Bouillon had already been established as national heroes in England and Belgium respectively. Yet, these statues had a particular resonance at the Great Exhibition. While it may seem counterintuitive that two statues connoting the Middle Ages should even have featured at the exhibition – after all, the event was primarily a celebration of modernity, as symbolized by industrialization and the rise of mechanical production – along with certain other exhibits that invoked the Middle Ages, the two statues served a vital purpose in 1851.⁶⁴ Industrialization had wrought profound and unsettling changes in society, fuelling deep spiritual anxieties among some. This essential tension was apparent from the very start; although the archbishop of Canterbury gave a sermon at the state opening on 1 May praising the exhibition as a sign of God's order in the world, it nevertheless provoked deep spiritual concerns, with some even interpreting it as the harbinger of an impending apocalypse.⁶⁵ Since many in the nineteenth century imagined the Middle Ages as a simpler, more pious age, artefacts that invoked that era provided some at least with a measure of relief from the uncertainties besetting their own age.⁶⁶

The wider nineteenth-century tendencies to search for both national symbols and spiritual consolation in the medieval past provided the framework within which many visitors to the Great Exhibition would have interpreted Marochetti's *Richard* and Simonis' *Godefroid*. Hence, contemporaries praised both for evoking the crusades as well as impulses including chivalry, nobility and piety, that is, qualities that conjured up the Middle Ages. One commentator, for instance, asserted that Marochetti's *Richard* 'points his ponderous sword to heaven with such colossal strength and devout energy'.⁶⁷ Another wrote that the sculpture 'charms by its grand features of nobility. Courage, firm resolve and dignity, are truthfully embodied [in it]'.⁶⁸ The *Art Journal* praised Simonis' *Godefroid* as a 'work conceived in a noble spirit'.⁶⁹ Another reporter affirmed that Simonis had sculpted the face of the crusader in a manner that was 'finely expressive of heroic devotion'.⁷⁰ A reporter for the *London Daily News* recounted how Simonis' work depicted 'the massive broad-chested and bearded crusader, who admirably answers to all preconceived standards of chivalry, and it is difficult to conceive how the infidels, be their scymitars [sic] ever so broad, could resist the onslaught of such antagonists as these . . . The uplifted head of Godfrey . . . is expressive of religious ardour'.⁷¹

The impulses evoked by the statues resonated with contemporary concerns and ideas. Some in the nineteenth century believed, for example, that chivalry, bequeathed by the Middle

⁶³ On nineteenth-century interest in the Middle Ages in England and Belgium, see the works cited in note 6.

⁶⁴ Other exhibits invoking the Middle Ages featured at the exhibition. One gallery in the western nave was dressed as a 'Medieval Court', decorated with furniture and other items by Pugin. While some admired the court, though, others decried it as inimical to the exhibition's ethos of industrial development and cultural progress: Jeffrey Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 115–16.

⁶⁵ Cantor, *Religion*, pp. 19–40.

⁶⁶ Davis, *The Great Exhibition*, pp. 139–40.

⁶⁷ *Evening Mail*, 5 May 1851, 3.

⁶⁸ *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 6 December 1851, 3.

⁶⁹ *Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue*, p. 185.

⁷⁰ *North Devon Journal*, 15 May 1851, 2.

⁷¹ *London Daily News*, 2 May 1851, 5.

Ages, provided a moral and ethical framework that remained vital in the present.⁷² This is exemplified in the aforementioned passage in *Little Henry's Holiday at the Great Exhibition* concerning Simonis' *Godefroid*. After Henry exclaims that Godfrey of Bouillon did not belong at a peace congress because he had been a crusader and a man of war, his father affirms that:

[Godfrey] is better here. His days of glory are not yet gone by, and never will be . . . [He] not only represents war but *chivalry*. He declares, as he holds up his standard, "I will stand firm and will fight, for all that is good and right." That is '*chivalry*.'⁷³

Though Godfrey belonged to the distant medieval past, then, the statue of him that was displayed in London in 1851 evoked impulses associated with the Middle Ages for which there was a contemporary affinity.

The efforts of Simonis and Marochetti in 1851 on behalf of Belgium and England respectively also articulate concepts of national identity in that era. Every nation that participated in the Great Exhibition crafted an image of itself through the contents of its display. That Marochetti, a sculptor born in Italy and raised in France, was counted as an 'English' artist at the exhibition is noteworthy.⁷⁴ His political connections no doubt had a bearing on his adoption as a native. Some contemporaries approved of the arrangement. One writer discussed Marochetti's new status as a representative of 'English sculpture', and described him as 'one who, though not of us, is with us', before remarking that his 'advent to the country we cannot but hail with pleasure and satisfaction.'⁷⁵ Another praised *Richard Coeur de Lion* as 'the finest equestrian statue which has been modelled in this country', before lamenting that its 'sculptor is not an Englishman.'⁷⁶ Marochetti evidently benefitted from the welcoming, internationalist spirit held by at least some in his adopted nation in the era of the Great Exhibition.⁷⁷ In contrast, the fact that Simonis was a 'foreign' artist evidently conditioned some of the responses to his work. The *Art Journal's* catalogue for the exhibition included a short but laudatory description of his *Godefroid* that highlights its national importance in Belgium, describing it as 'the principal public work in Brussels.'⁷⁸ One reviewer who praised Simonis' *Godefroid* regarded it as typical of Belgian art, noting that 'the frequent recurrence of festivals' there helped 'Flemish sculptors [to develop a] great freedom of execution and general grasp of their subject.'⁷⁹ It may be debated how Simonis, a Francophone from Liège who received much of his training in Italy, would have greeted this praise.

The display of the two works in 1851 also stimulated exchanges between England and Belgium. In October, one English critic who had visited the recently closed exhibition bewailed the fact that London could not boast a statue '[like the *Amazon* that] Kiss has planted at Berlin; or the *Godefroi de Bouillon* at Brussels.'⁸⁰ In contrast, in May the *ILN* published a highly critical review of the Belgian's sculpture, dismissing it as 'vulgar and exaggerated', and

⁷² Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), remains influential on this subject.

⁷³ *Little Henry's Holiday at the Great Exhibition*, pp. 66–69.

⁷⁴ E.g. *Carlisle Journal*, 14 March 1851, 2.

⁷⁵ *Morning Chronicle*, 9 October 1851, 3.

⁷⁶ *North Devon Journal*, 15 May 1851, 2.

⁷⁷ Conversely, the Great Exhibition also occasioned much xenophobia in England: Cantor, *Religion*, pp. 21–27.

⁷⁸ *Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue*, p. 227.

⁷⁹ *London Daily News*, 2 May 1851, 5.

⁸⁰ *Morning Advertiser*, 31 October 1851, 5.

asserting that it ‘has no pretensions to take rank as a work of high art.’⁸¹ Later that year, an art critic in Brussels responded to this very review. This author noted that the *ILN* – ‘un . . . organ distingué de la critique anglaise’ – had heaped opprobrium on Simonis’ work, and translated the offending passage from English into French for their readers.⁸² The Belgian writer agreed with some of the criticism of Simonis’ oeuvre levied by the English critic, and did not seek to defend *Godefroid* simply because it was the work of a compatriot. However, this author exhibited rather less forbearance toward a critique of the statue by another English observer, apparently prompted by the heavy-set frame of the rider: ‘lorsque cette statue parut à la grande exposition de Londres, un critique anglais demanda . . . quel était ce brasseur à cheval. Sans doute, c’était là presque une impertinence.’⁸³ With this particular critique, then, international exchange almost escalated into outright enmity.

The significance of Marochetti’s *Richard* and Simonis’ *Godefroid* as national symbols of England and Belgium at the Great Exhibition is articulated most clearly through the exchanges that they stimulated between the respective heads of state, Victoria and Leopold I. These interactions were one dynamic of the wider spirit of national competition occasioned by the exhibition. The two were aware that the exhibition had stirred national rivalries; four days after its opening on 1 May, Leopold wrote from Brussels to Victoria to send his congratulations, noting that he had made a point to do so because ‘human nature is always inclined to vilify and render perilous . . . such undertakings [as the exhibition], from that pretty generally diffused disposition to enjoy the non-success of one’s neighbour.’⁸⁴

Nevertheless, there was still room for some friendly rivalry between the two heads of state over the statues of Godfrey of Bouillon and Richard I. Underpinning this rivalry was the fact that the statues mattered a great deal to the respective monarchs. Victoria had taken a personal interest in Marochetti’s work. As already noted, she and Albert had become his patrons soon after he arrived in England.⁸⁵ Simonis’ *Godefroid* was arguably even more significant to Leopold. The Belgian government had commissioned the statue of Godfrey in the king’s name in 1843.⁸⁶ At its inauguration in Brussels in August 1848, Leopold and his family had been the guests of honour.⁸⁷ That ceremony represented a pivotal moment in his reign. When Belgium experienced revolutionary unrest earlier in 1848, the king had raised the prospect of abdicating. By the summer, however, his position was secure, and the inauguration of the monument – one symbolizing a historical figure regarded as a robust, pious Belgian monarch – afforded him the chance publicly to display his renewed authority as king.⁸⁸

During the opening ceremony for the Great Exhibition on 1 May 1851, Victoria encountered Simonis’ *Godefroid*. After the opening speeches, she and her retinue formally processed through the Crystal Palace in front of the assembled crowds. Its route took her along the eastern nave, past Simonis’ sculpture.⁸⁹ Nash painted a watercolour of the scene, showing

⁸¹ *Illustrated London News*, 17 May 1851, 18.

⁸² *Revue de l’exposition générale de Bruxelles* (Brussels: Imprimerie et Lithographie des Beaux-Arts, 1851), pp. 139–40.

⁸³ *Revue de l’exposition générale de Bruxelles*, p. 139.

⁸⁴ Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851, RC/H/1/7/42 (copy of a letter from Leopold I of the Belgians to Queen Victoria, dated 5 May 1851).

⁸⁵ Ward-Jackson, *Public Sculpture*, pp. 168–69. Victoria and Albert later supported the campaign to finance the creation of a permanent version of Marochetti’s statue in bronze.

⁸⁶ *Moniteur Belge*, 23 November 1843, 1.

⁸⁷ *L’Indépendance Belge*, 16–17 August 1848, 1–2.

⁸⁸ Gita Deneckere with Bart de Wilde, ‘(Dis)Remembering the 1848 Revolution in Belgium. How an Important Historical Rupture Got Forgotten’, in *1848: Memory and Oblivion in Europe*, ed. by Charlotte Tacke (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 57–78, esp. 63.

⁸⁹ Davis, *The Great Exhibition*, pp. 126–28.

Victoria, Albert and their retinue moving eastwards along the nave, just after they passed Simonis' *Godefroid*, and shortly before they reached Kiss' *Amazon* in the Zollverein display.⁹⁰ Victoria herself likely did not pay *Godefroid* much heed on this occasion, since – as Nash's painting shows – she was the focus of the public's attention during this important state event. One observer who was present that day, however, was struck by the juxtaposition between the monarch and Simonis' sculpture:

As she passed the gigantic equestrian figure of Godfrey de Bouillon, by the Belgian sculptor, Simonis, which seems the very impersonation of physical strength, we could not but be struck by the contrast, and by the reflection how far the prowess of the crusader is transcended by the power of well-defined liberty and constitutional law.⁹¹

Although the statue originally redounded to the Belgian monarchy, Leopold would surely have been content that this observer had interpreted it as a testament to his niece's monarchical authority in 1851.

Exchanges between Victoria and Leopold over the two sculptures of crusading icons occurred in person during the latter's visit to London in June 1851. During that visit, Victoria and Albert took Leopold and his children on several trips to the Great Exhibition. On their visit there on 20 June, the two royal parties briefly viewed the Turko-Egyptian display and the Sèvres porcelain in the French section, before spending the remainder of their time 'in the Belgian goods department, all the contents of which were minutely examined by his Belgian Majesty'.⁹² Though the report did not specify which objects they viewed, they would surely have examined Simonis' *Godefroid*, the centrepiece of the Belgian display. The next day, according to the *ILN*, 'the Queen and Prince Albert, accompanied by the King of the Belgians, visited the west end of the Crystal Palace, for the purpose of viewing . . . Baron Marochetti's colossal statue of Richard Coeur de Lion . . . and other objects of interest appertaining to the [exhibition] which are placed in the open air'.⁹³ As Ward-Jackson has posited, the two monarchs must have visited this area of the exhibition specifically to view Marochetti's statue so that they could weigh it against Simonis' work, and thus compare the statues of crusading icons exhibited by their respective nations.⁹⁴ Within the warm, familial relationship shared by Victoria and Leopold, then, there was evidently scope in 1851 for some good-natured competition around Marochetti's *Richard* and Simonis' *Godefroid*, two statues of medieval kings that respectively symbolized their kingdoms in the present.

5. CONCLUSION

This article has traced the connection between Carlo Marochetti's *Richard Coeur de Lion* and Eugène Simonis' *Godefroid de Bouillon*, two sculptures better known today in their bronze incarnations that have respectively stood in London since 1860 and Brussels since 1848. Yet, as this article has shown, the histories of the two works interlocked at the Great Exhibition in 1851. The display of both sculptures there conditioned a multi-faceted rivalry, stemming from

⁹⁰ *Dickinsons' Comprehensive Pictures*, I, XXVI.

⁹¹ Edward Walford, *Old and New London: A Narrative of its History, its People, and its Places*, 6 vols (London: Cassell, 1878), V, 38.

⁹² *London Daily News*, 21 June 1851, 3.

⁹³ *Illustrated London News*, 28 June 1851, 24.

⁹⁴ Ward-Jackson, *Public Sculpture*, p. 169.

Marochetti's apparent decision to create a statue of Richard I in the knowledge that Belgium was sending a copy of Simonis' statue of Godfrey of Bouillon to London. While Marochetti's political connections and status as a 'native' artist evidently secured a prestigious location for his work outside the Crystal Palace's western entrance, his sculpture ultimately had less of a popular impact than the more easily accessible *Godefroid* by Simonis, a fact exemplified above all by the inclusion of Simonis' sculpture among the 'Lions of the Exhibition'. Yet, the display of the two works in 1851 had a cultural and political significance that far transcended any personal rivalry directly between the sculptors. They stimulated wider Anglo-Belgian interchanges, evidently including a friendly competition between Victoria and Leopold I, who seem to have made a point of comparing the merits of the two statues displayed by their respective nations.

This article's findings speak to scholarly debates over the meaning of the Great Exhibition. They underline the essential difficulty of interpreting that event as a peace congress or as a catalyst for intense international rivalry. This fundamental tension shaped both the subsequent memory of 1851 as well as the Universal Expositions that followed it.⁹⁵ Viewing the exhibition through the prism of the rivalry sparked by Marochetti's *Richard* and Simonis' *Godefroid* emphasizes the fact that it was at once both of those things. As much as the fictional Little Henry could exclaim that Godfrey of Bouillon as a man of war had no place at a 'gathering for *peace*', given the commonalities of style and subject between the sculpture of this figure and that of Richard I, and the fact that both works functioned as symbols of the nations that displayed them, it was perhaps inevitable that their appearance alongside each other in 1851 precipitated competitive feelings in England and Belgium. This fundamental duality of competing but co-existing meanings is exemplified in the exchanges that the two statues provoked between the two heads of state. The two monarchs shared a close relationship before, during and after the exhibition, and yet were evidently able to engage in a good-natured rivalry over the display of the two works in 1851.

These findings also shed new light on the cultural impact of the medieval past in the nineteenth century. As the article has demonstrated, some in 1851 regarded the two sculptures (especially Simonis' *Godefroid*) as representative of a shift from neoclassical forms to the 'Romantic' or 'Gothic' style. Whether this truly was the case is beside the point; what matters is the perception among contemporaries that the two works connoted the Middle Ages. This perception evidently shaped wider cultural responses to the two works. Observers praised both works for symbolizing qualities including chivalry, nobility and piety, all of which had contemporary relevance. As Little Henry's father put it, as an icon of chivalry, Godfrey of Bouillon still had a battle to wage in the present for 'all that is good and right'. By invoking these notions, the statues acted as stabilizing icons of the past, providing an antidote to the deep socio-cultural anxieties created by industrialization and progress, the forces chiefly symbolized by the Great Exhibition.

After the exhibition closed on 15 October 1851, and the Crystal Palace and its contents were removed from Hyde Park, it would be widely forgotten that for about five months that year, Richard I and Godfrey of Bouillon, two medieval figures represented in their permanent bronze incarnations today in London and Brussels, were locked in a duel of national significance to both England and Belgium. In a sense, however, during those months, the two crusaders had also fought together in a shared battle against the uncertainties of the modern age.

⁹⁵ Jeffrey Auerbach, 'The Great Exhibition and Historical Memory', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 6 (2001), 89–112.

By harnessing the memory of the Middle Ages at the Great Exhibition, an event dominated by ideas of cultural progress, the statues of the two crusaders served to reconcile the future with the past, and mediate between them the place of the present.

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