Gareth Lloyd Roderick

Kyffin Williams Online at the National Library of Wales: presenting and interpreting art in a digital context.

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Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships

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Abstract

This thesis presents the research undertaken to develop a prototype digital resource to display a fine art collection at the National Library of Wales. The thesis first presents art historical investigations into the work of Kyffin Williams: the work of Kyffin Williams and his relationship with the National Library of Wales; the artist's position within the canon of Welsh art history; and how ideas around space, place and landscape can contribute towards a fresh understanding of the artist's work. This art historical inquiry is then used to develop a digital resource, called *Kyffin Williams Online*, to display the digitised Sir Kyffin Williams Bequest Collection of the National Library of Wales.

The thesis addresses the incongruity of a large art collection being held in a library rather than museum or gallery and the restrictions of using reproductions of works of art. These restrictions are acknowledged and used to provide ways in which digitised works of art can be used for research for their own sake, rather than only as facsimiles or reproductions. This has been achieved by using the focus on space, place and landscape in the art historical investigation has been used to develop a geo-spatial presentation of content which is relevant to the art collections of the National Library. The thesis closes by using the resultant digital resource to show examples of how these methods can be used to further art historical investigation, and how the knowledge, expertise and methods used can be transferred to the National Library in its work with digitised collections.

Notes

- All images Kyffin Williams unless otherwise stated
- The word ‘library’ refers to libraries in general. ‘Library’ or ‘the Library’ refers to National Library of Wales.
- List of figures summarises captions and page references. Captions refer to digitised works of art. For full details on dimensions/media of works of art discussed, please refer to *Kyffin Williams Online*.
- All works illustrated are National Library of Wales unless otherwise stated
- *Kyffin Williams Online* can be viewed at the National Library of Wales NLW Research webpages.
- All translations my own.

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Introduction

This thesis has two primary outputs: one written, one digital. The written thesis comprises two sections. The first presents art historical investigations into the work of Kyffin Williams: his work and relationship with the National Library of Wales; the artist's position within the canon of Welsh art history; and how ideas around space, place and landscape can contribute towards a fresh understanding of the artist's work. The second uses this art historical inquiry to develop a digital resource, called *Kyffin Williams Online*, to display the digitised Sir Kyffin Williams Bequest Collection of the National Library of Wales. The development and construction of the digital resource is described in Chapters 4 and 5, although it can be used in tandem when reading the preceding chapters of the thesis.

Project context and remit

When Kyffin Williams died in September 2006, a large section of his estate was left to the National Library of Wales. The Bequest represented the culmination of a relationship that had begun at the start of the artist's career. The Bequest included:

> all of the artist's own works of art then owned by him, his extensive collection of art by others, his prints, his archives, his medals and a small collection of bronzes of animals and birds. Together with all the objects came funds of just over £400,000 ensuring resources for storing the pictures, the cataloguing of all the material and the digitising programme. ("The Kyffin Williams Bequest Project")

The Kyffin Williams Bequest Project began in early 2008 to digitise, catalogue and ingest materials into the National Library's digital repository. Some of these materials were made available through the library catalogue; others were digitised but not made immediately publically available.

At this point, this doctoral study has was developed as a collaborative project between the National Library of Wales and School of Art at Aberystwyth University, and funded through the European Social Fund via a Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarship (KESS). KESS supports collaborative research projects in the convergence area of Wales (an area including 15 local

authorities across west Wales and the Valleys) providing funding for students and aims to match academic expertise with institutions and workplaces. Collaborative KESS projects have been developed to "prioritise projects linked to the Welsh Government's new priority R & D [research and development] sectors within the Economic Recovery Plan, which are as follows: Digital Economy; Low Carbon Economy; Health and Bioscience; Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing" (Higher Skills Wales) and aim to develop a research culture in host companies and allow universities to develop long-term relationships with external institutions.

This project fits within the digital economy priority sector. The first goal of the project is practical: to make the digitised content of the Kyffin Williams Bequest accessible in an integrated, user-friendly way by identifying existing tools not currently used by the National Library to develop a prototype digital resource on behalf of that institution. This has been achieved by using the open-source content management system, Omeka, to make the whole collection available in a resource that has been called *Kyffin Williams Online.* Of equal importance to this practical goal is the transfer of knowledge developed as part of the research to the Library, so the methods, approaches, skills and systems used can be adapted by the Library and re-used in future projects.

Research questions: art history

The combination of national identity or nationhood and visual images has long been part of art historical discourse. This is particularly true of images of landscapes, and the question of what makes a landscape particularly indicative, symbolic or important to a given nation is an established mode of inquiry in different visual cultures. This is especially true in the history of Welsh art, where the identification of a Welsh School of Painting or the location of a specifically Welsh visual culture is a dominant theme. Cultural heritage institutions also focus on the national. 'National' denotes the largest or most significant collection in a particular country, and collection development policies often specify that works collected must be of 'national', or 'international' significance; works of local,

parochial, or regional importance are collected by smaller non-national institutions. Including artworks that have a 'national' quality in a major ‘national’ collection reinforces the ‘national’ status of both artist/artwork and institution/collection.

Kyffin Williams in many ways is the archetypal painter of Wales. Undoubtedly the most commercially successful Welsh artist of the twentieth century, his paintings have become part of the visual iconography of the nation. In a popular sense, he is *the* ‘national’ painter. His status as the most well-known Welsh artist is also somewhat incongruous when considering his upbringing, education and that half of his career was spent in London. There is also oddness in the fact that images of upland hill farming in sparsely populated Snowdonia became so commercially successful when sold at the artist’s galleries in Cardiff and London. Despite these apparent contradictions, it is Williams who has the most elevated position of any artist in the Welsh popular consciousness. The paintings for which he is most known – rugged, mountainous scenes of north-west Wales – have become part of the iconographic lexicon of Wales and have contributed to the continued concentration on landscape in discussion of Welsh visual culture. This thesis explores Williams’s position within and contribution to the visual culture of Wales.

The largest publically owned collection of Kyffin Williams’s work is held by the National Library of Wales, an institution unusual among libraries in having a remit set out in its charter of incorporation to collect works of art. Access to these collections emphasise this incongruity. Works of art are exhibited occasionally, but the diverse nature of the wider collections of the Library means that gallery space is insufficient for a permanent display of art. Artworks can be requested for study in the reading rooms of the Library in the same way as printed, archival, or manuscript material, suggesting that the importance of artworks for the Library lay in their research, rather than display value. In the absence of a dedicated National Gallery of Wales, the National *Library* (whose collection remit includes works depicting the people and landscape of Wales, works by Welsh artists and portraits of notable Welsh figures) could be said to contain the *de facto* national art collection.

The relationship between Kyffin Williams and the National Library of Wales spanned the entirety of the artist's career. The Library purchased a drawing (*Tre'r Ceiri*) in 1949 and oil painting (*Llyn y Cau, Cader Idris*) in 1950, shortly after Williams completed his training at the Slade School of Art. At the time, Williams was at the beginning of his career as an art master at Highgate School, London. The relationship was maintained by consistent purchases, donations and hosting of exhibitions and culminated with the artist bequeathing a large section of his estate to the Library upon his death in 2006. This thesis explores the relationship between artist and institution. The Welsh landscape is of equal importance to Williams and the art collecting practice of the Library. Interrelationships between space, place and landscape are used to understand the positions of artist and Library in a wider conception of the visual culture of Wales.

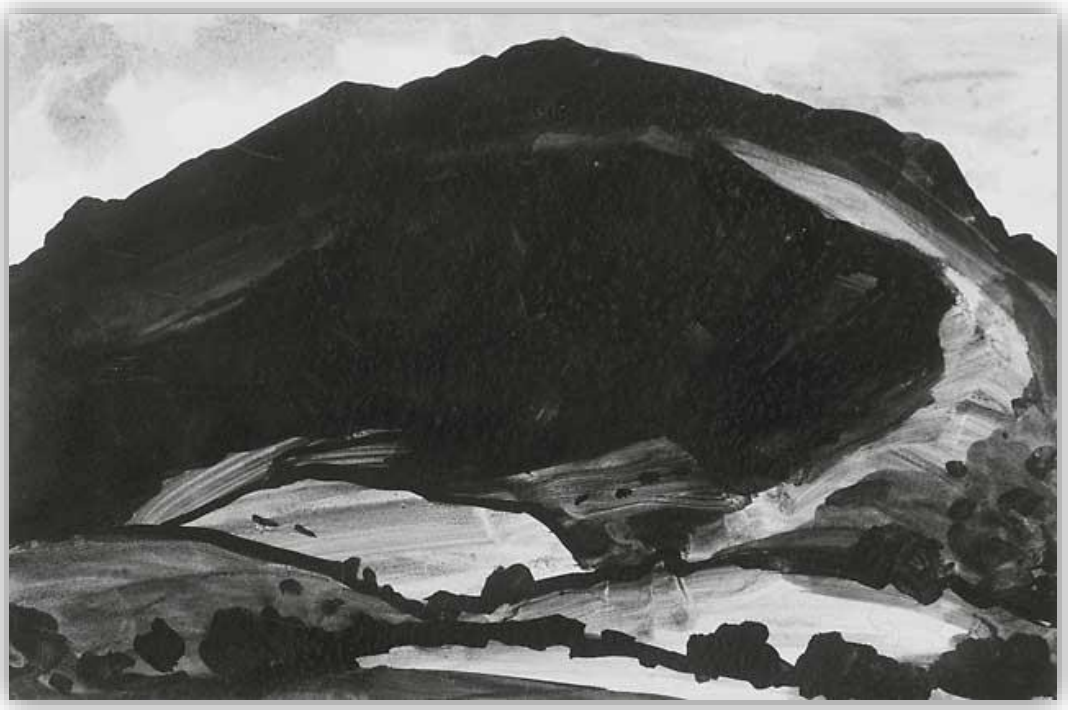

Figure 1: *Tre'r Ceiri from the North*, [1940s] National Library of Wales

The art historical aim of the thesis is to trace the development of the relationship between Kyffin Williams and the National Library of Wales, to understand in what ways a sense of national identity is depicted in his works, especially his landscapes. In doing so the thesis aims to develop an

understanding of how the support (or, perhaps, patronage) of a cultural heritage institution can contribute to the special, national status of an artist, and how this relationship mutually reinforces the national status of each party. The second half of thesis focuses on the creation of a digital resource to display the contents of the Sir Kyffin Williams Bequest Collection on behalf of the National Library of Wales. The art historical investigation into the importance of landscape in Welsh visual culture informs how the collection of Kyffin Williams's work can be represented digitally. Analysis of the resulting resource is then used to conclude the art historical investigations into the relationship between artist and Library. Case studies provide conclusions on how *Kyffin Williams Online* can be used by the Library to curate digitised art collections, and as a tool for users researching the collection. The development of the digital resource has been informed by the art historical research outlined above.

Physical Bequest, digital access

Kyffin Williams's bequest has been said to be "equal to any other received by the Library in its hundred year history" (Joyner 2). Its presence in a *library* rather than a gallery or museum collection means that there are limited opportunities for the work to be displayed. The Library's digitisation programme has making collections more accessible at its core. Despite having exhibition spaces at the Library, these are not large enough to allow a continuous display of artworks. These spaces are also shared with other media: the exhibition programme of the Library features a wide range of thematic exhibitions drawing on its diverse collections. The physical location of the Library, in Aberystwyth, Ceredigion is also considered a barrier to accessing the collections; its remoteness from other towns or cities is compounded by poor transport links. Andrew Green, Librarian at the National Library of Wales between 1998 and 2014 humorously summarised how location was one of the factors that makes digitisation essential to ensure access in a lecture to the SCONUL (Society of College, National and University Libraries) Autumn Conference at the British Library in 2007

> The first [factor] is obvious enough to those of you familiar with our location, well populated with animals but less well endowed with humans. There are about 4.5m sheep in our hinterland, compared with only 180,000 people, and to make matters worse not all of the sheep are yet fully literate. We're seventy miles from any major town or city. The attraction of technologies that offer access to our assets via the internet is overwhelming. (1)

The second factor that made digitisation of crucial importance was the diversity of media held at the Library: Green noted that "of all the national libraries in the world, the National Library of Wales has perhaps the widest range of media represented in [its] collections." The diversity of the collections contributed to "a highly attractive and varied pool of material for digitisation." In addition to printed books, maps and manuscripts, the collections include archives, photographic collections, audio and visual material, and Wales's "second largest art collection" (2).[1] The effect of mechanically, and digitally reproducing art work is a familiar theme in visual cultural discourse. However, collecting works of art as *library* objects affects our understanding of them as *art* objects. In addition to limited opportunities for physical display, the imposition of systems developed primarily for textual sources on artworks has consequential effect on how they can be accessed, researched and understood for the user, and how collection practice continues for the institution.

The traditions, processes, and nature of the institution have had a significant impact on the methodological approach of this project. The varied, multi-media collections of the National Library provide a physical rebuttal of the simplistic notion that libraries deal only in textual or documentary materials; however, a library's approach to the collection, cataloguing, classification and especially display of the objects in its care differs significantly from a museum or gallery. In this thesis, I suggest that in the National Library, works of art *are* documents. This is not to be dismissive of their qualities as art, but a simple acknowledgement of the organisational framework in which they exist and the limited opportunities for displaying the physical art collections at the Library. The Bequest collection contains a variety of media: oil paintings, works on paper, prints and drawings, in addition

[1] The largest art collection in Wales is at the National Museum in Cardiff, although its role in collecting a wide variety of works from the history of European art in addition to Welsh works means that the National Library's collection is arguably the largest collection of Welsh art, or art of Welsh subject matter.

to written, archival, manuscript and three-dimensional objects. Considering the entire collection (and its digitised version) as documents removes a hierarchy of media. An oil painting and its associated metadata have no more privileged a position within a digital repository than a fragment of a pencil drawing. Referring to the discourse around the meaning of the terms 'document' and 'documentation', Michael Buckland notes that:

> there was (and is) no theoretical reason why documentation should be limited to texts, let alone printed texts. There are many other kinds of signifying objects in addition to printed texts. And if documentation can deal with texts that are not printed, could it not also deal with documents that are not texts at all? (216).

The concept that a document could be something other than a written text has a long history in the field of information science. Paul Otlet suggested objects can be regarded as documents if the user is informed by their observation. As such objects such as art work, archaeological discoveries, objects from the natural world, etc. can be considered *documents* (153, 197). Suzanne Briet in her essay *Qu'est-ce que la documentation* concluded that a document was "evidence in support of a fact" and that "any physical symbolic sign, preserved or recorded, intended to represent, to reconstruct, or to demonstrate a physical or conceptual phenomenon,"(qtd. Buckland 217) could be considered a document. Understanding all items in the collection as *documents* (rather than 'oil painting,' 'watercolour,' 'print', etc.) equalises the status of different media. Seeing all of the content of the Library's collection as equal documents has resonance with George Kubler's formulation of the *history of things*, coined to supplement the study of *material culture*. Kubler explains that a *history of things*

> is intended to reunite ideas and objects under the rubric of visual forms: the term includes both artifacts [sic.] and works of art, both replicas and unique examples, both tools and expressions – in short all materials worked by human hands under the guidance of connected ideas developed in temporal sequence. From all these things a shape in time emerges. A visible portrait of the collective identity, whether tribe, class, or nation, comes into being. This self-image reflected in things is a guide and a point of reference to the group for the future, and it eventually becomes the portrait given to posterity. (8)

The art collections at the National Library of Wales form one such set of *things*.

Holding art works in a library has obvious restrictions: access to art works is limited, and not all works can perennially be on display. Access to materials is conducted in the same way as textual material. However, calling large canvasses to a reading room for inspection in the same way as one would request a book is often an impractical and unwieldy process. Digitisation of works of art is often seen as a way of overcoming some of the impracticalities of access. However, this is itself problematic. Digitising a painting and making it available online does not make it accessible, but makes available a new digital item that somehow resembles that painting. To suggest digitisation in this way makes works of art universally accessible is misguided, and ignores the fact that a painting is not an image that can be captured in a flat digital photograph, but a three-dimensional object. The heavy impasto from thickly applied paint in Kyffin Williams's paintings exemplifies this fact. In the same way, using digital reproductions of art for research does not involve works of art, rather, digital images of works of art. The creation of the digital component of this thesis is based upon accepting these issues and using the digital surrogates of art works for their own intrinsic qualities, rather than expecting them to replicate the qualities of an original art object. Instead of focusing on the restrictions of housing an art collection in the Library (access, display, etc.), seeing all items in the collection as documents of equal value offers the possibility of developing unique research and curatorial approaches for art in the Library collection. In addition to the digitised image, the extensive metadata applied to library documents can be mined and exploited to enhance research or suggest innovative research approaches. Considering all items as digital documents, can also allow traditional display and exhibition practices to be challenged, especially the privileging of particular media. These considerations also contribute to the malleability of the collection; digital documents can be arranged, displayed and curated in flexible ways without the formal or administrative complexity of arranging a physical exhibition.

The intention of *Kyffin Williams Online* is to produce a resource that acknowledges the difference between works of art and their digital counterparts and to accept their different qualities.

The aim is accept the differences of format, and offer a way of investigating the collection that would not have been possible with the original works alone, and to go some way to overcome the feeling that using a digital facsimile is second-best to using the 'real thing'. That is, it aims to facilitate digitally-specific research by considering what *can* be achieved using digitised collections, rather than dwell on the absence of the particular qualities of an original object.

Research methods: physical and digital

The art historical research that opens this thesis used both the physical Kyffin Williams collection and their digitised counterparts. This work informed the ways in which the content can be represented and used in the *Kyffin Williams Online* digital resource. Primary resources including original artworks, archival material relating to the Kyffin Williams Bequest and other printed material such as the annual reports of the National Library were used to build a picture of how an institution developed such a significant collection of fine art, and to trace the development of the relationship between artist and the Library. Using the physical resources in this way developed a familiarity with the collections, and having original artworks available for research informed how their digitised counterparts could be used. Having access to, and being in the presence of, unique artworks lent itself to a close reading of artistic material, with notions of *aura* (see: Benjamin 216), uniqueness and authenticity being inextricably linked to the research experience. Using original artworks in this way also emphasised the exclusive nature of such research. To use works of art in research is dependent on the researcher being *in situ* with the collections. If the objects of research are not on display special permission to access non-public areas of the Library may be required, or works of art have to be requested to the reading rooms using the same access mechanisms for other library document.

The digitisation and cataloguing of the Kyffin Williams Bequest Collection was begun on 2008 and completed by 2011 ("The Kyffin Williams Bequest Project"). These digital resources and their associated metadata were also used extensively as part of the research. Using this content led

to two realisations regarding the nature of digital research: firstly, that for the study of the iconographic content of a painting, a digital image is perfectly adequate, and the ability of transmitting digital images across networks can vastly increase the accessibility of the content of works of art. A flat, digital photograph of a painting does not however give a sense of the materiality of the painting as a three-dimensional object. In using the digital images there remained for this researcher a (perhaps retrospectively romanticized) sense of having lost a sense of the work of art's history as a *thing* (in the sense that Kubler describes). Reflections of this sort have been commonplace in the history of art since the publication of Walter Benjamin's essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.* However, this instance led to a realisation that rather than being frustrated at having to use a digital facsimile, digitally reproduced artworks can allow research to be conducted in a different way. This can also be problematic: in using thousands of digital images of artworks in research, there is a danger of forgetting that their associated unique and tangible objects even exist. Douglas Davis's summary of how ideas around reproduction of art and the destruction of *aura* are relevant in the digital age is useful here:

> [t]he fictions of "master" and "copy" are now so entwined that it is impossible to say where one begins and the other ends. In one sense, Walter Benjamin's proclamation of doom for the aura of originality, authored early in this century is finally confirmed by these events. In another sense, aura, supple and elastic has stretched far beyond the boundaries of Benjamin's prophecy into the rich realm of reproduction itself. Here is the realm, often mislabelled "virtual" (it is actually a realer reality, or RR), both originality and traditional truth (symbolized by the unadorned photographic "fact") are being enhanced, not betrayed. (381)

Davis's reference to virtual reality is a reflection of the period in which his essay was written – 1995 – but the statement is useful if transferred from the idea of making digital art, to using digital art resources for research. Digitising art works should expand and enhance their research potential rather than simply replicate an original. Doing so acknowledges that "the work of art in the age of digital reproduction is physically and formally chameleon" (ibid.). Rather than seeing the digital reproduction of works of art as compounding the erosion of the *aura* of an artwork initiated by the process of mechanical, and later photomechanical reproduction, if using digitised content, research

methods should be employed in which the process of digitisation is essential. That is, when using digitised works of art, focus should be placed on what a digital replica *can* do for research and curation, rather than what it cannot.

Using digital approaches research and curate art historical content

If using individual, original work of art lends itself to close analysis leading to an awareness of the aura of originality and an acknowledgement that artworks are not images but objects, using large digitised collections allow many items to be used at once. A mass of content and associated metadata can be considered together to identify patterns and trends in artistic practice in a way that is not possible when using individual, original objects. This understanding has led to the main methodological framework of the thesis: an adaptation of Franco Moretti's idea of *distant reading* in literary history to a *distant viewing* of art collections. Moretti notes: "Distant reading, where distance, let me repeat it, *is a condition of knowledge:* it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes – or genres and systems" ("Conjectures on World Literature" 48-49). This thesis uses the condition of distance to inform the digital representation of the Kyffin Williams Bequest Collection.

Distant reading provides a methodological counterpoint to close reading, often using critical or interpretative apparatus usually associated with other disciplines (such as graphs used in economics, maps in geography and evolutionary trees in biology) in relation to large collections of literary data ("Graphs, Maps, Trees" [1]-[2]). In this thesis, I suggest that this approach can be adapted for use with large collections of digitised artworks to develop a digitally specific methodology to enhance the art historical research into Kyffin Williams's relationship with the National Library, and for use as a curatorial approach in presenting the Library's art collection online.

Put simply, distant viewing approaches have been used to consider different attributes of hundreds of digitised artworks at once, allowing trends to be recognised, and more importantly,

allowing works which are unusual or untypical to become apparent. This has been achieved by using mapping methodologies common in the geo-humanities to plot the locations of the landscapes painted by Williams. These visualisations have an effect on the art historical inquiry, allowing an assessment of the extent to which Williams's aesthetic approach changed depending on the landscape he was depicting, and to draw attention to works depicting areas away from his 'home' landscapes of north-west Wales and Anglesey. Taking a distant view of hundreds of works according to their spatial attributes allows 'outliers' in the collection to become visible.

This approach is also used to understand how the location of Williams's landscapes formed the basis of his relationship with the Library and contributed to his commercial success, but also to challenge the notion that the artist focused solely on specific areas. Despite his commercial success, Williams's painting has been accused of lacking any significant development:

> The paintings of Kyffin Williams are undoubtedly the equivalent of male voice choirs; skilfully put together, they are inspirational, iconic, and accepted as such in Wales and outside, but as landscape paintings, as art, the have been stuck in the same groove since 1950. (Bala, Here + Now 24).

Identifying the outliers or untypical works using mapping techniques can be used to consider the accusations of artistic stagnation are fair and to further investigate the importance of landscape to Welsh visual culture. Mapping the digitised artworks in this way also has practical implications on how the collections can be searched, organised and presented digitally. The majority of the works bequeathed to the Library in 2006 lack accurate dates. However, a large number of items (1,169 of 3,469) in the collection depict real places, identifiable through the titles of the work, or their pictorial content. The process of geo-location of items and their presentation on an interactive map creates an additional access point for the collection. While it is not possible to search for items according to *when* they were created, it is possible to search and browse according to *where* they depict.

The art historical outcomes of using a distant viewing methodology are used to contribute towards the ultimate goal of the thesis: to create a digital resource for the National Library that

foregrounds the specific digital qualities of the collections. The art historical outcomes are used as case studies to demonstrate the benefits of the distant viewing approach for digitally displaying Library art collections. In addition to its use as a specifically digital mode of inquiry, the outcomes of these case studies could be used as the basis for curating physical displays of the collection. Repurposing and re-use of content in the resultant digital resource addresses the challenges created by holding a large art collection in a library context. Digital exhibitions can be created as easily as writing a blog post. While issues remain regarding the space available to display original artworks, the simplicity of the administrative interface allows new presentations to be made quickly, increasing awareness of the contents of the collection.

The nature of the Library's collection development policy regarding art means that art is treated as a document. A negative view of this approach is that artworks are collected by the Library for illustrative or documentary content and act as a visual supplement to the written collections instead of their aesthetic qualities. This is a perhaps unavoidable result of art being collected by an institution whose primary concern is written material. Considering digitised works of art in a variety of media as documents of equal value removes the hierarchy of media associated with art display. A large oil painting, a watercolour and a preparatory sketch have equal value when displayed as a web-ready JPEG image. *Kyffin Williams Online* aims to use the challenges of an art collection existing in a library and use them to create a digitally specific curatorial tool.

Outcomes: art historical, digital, library practice

This thesis has general and specific implications for three related fields: the use of digital humanities approaches in relation to the study of art history; the understanding of visual culture and art history in Wales, and the practice of collecting and displaying art (both digitally and physically) in a library context. Digitising an art collection does not make it any more accessible. The experience, methods, and type of research that can be conducted using digitised resources are different to those associated with original, physical objects. In this project, the use of methods influenced by distant reading and methods common in spatial humanities are shown to be useful as tools for art historical research. The distant viewing approach employed here differs from Moretti's notion of distant reading as it focuses solely on the work of one artist, whereas distant reading often involves the simultaneous analysis of entire genres of literature. The thesis suggests that in addition to being a research methodology, distant viewing can be used as a curatorial tool that helps lesser-known objects to be uncovered.

In art historical terms, the main implication of this work has been that if the format of an artwork has been changed, so to should the expectations of the researcher. That is, if digital images of artworks are being used, the research methods employed should be digitally specific. Digitally specific approaches are used in this project to suggest that Kyffin Williams's landscape work was more diverse in practice than generally understood, used a wider variety of media and depicted a wider variety of places. Taking a distant view of how and when different works became part of the National Library's collection establishes the importance of the relationship for both artist and collection, and emphasises the importance of the relationship to both parties: ensuring the elevated position of Williams in the canon of Welsh art, and the status of the Library's art collection. This in turn contributes to the continued dominance of landscape in discourse around Welsh visual culture. These art historical conclusions of the thesis show how *Kyffin Williams Online* can be used for art

historical research and how this research can be applied practically by the Library to display other digitised collections. As such this work has been an exercise in art historical practice-as-research: art historical inquiry informed the development of a digital resource which in turn can foster further research into the collection. This research aims to turn the restrictions of housing a large art collection in a library, rather than museum or gallery, into opportunities for innovative digital display.

Chapters 1 and 2 investigate the relationship between Kyffin Williams and the National Library of Wales, the development of an art collection at the Library, and the position of Williams in a wider framework of Welsh visual culture. Chapter 3 is in two parts; the first develops the theme of the importance of space, place and landscape to Welsh art history. The second explores the application of digital mapping approaches to landscape works. The research in Chapters 1-3 is used to construct the *Kyffin Williams Online* digital resource. This process is described and discussed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 provides guidance in using *Kyffin Williams Online* and Case Studies demonstrating how the digital resource can be used for further art historical research. Chapter 6 closes the thesis with a discussion of how knowledge and expertise developed in this research can be embedded into the Library's work and practice.

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Chapter 1a: National collection, 'national' artist

> I've got one in the Walker; I've got some very bad ones in the National Museum of Wales; I've got bad ones in the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea; I've got one bad one in Newport Art Gallery. But all my best works are in the National Library of Wales. (Williams, *Artists Lives,* 148)

Kyffin Williams occupies a unique position within the canon of Welsh art. Augustus John, Gwen John or Ceri Richards may be more internationally renowned, but it is Williams who figures most prominently in popular consciousness as the most typically 'Welsh' painter. It is not solely a parochial popularity: Williams was made a Royal Academician in 1973 and the popularity of his exhibitions his London galleries have become the stuff of anecdote; nonetheless, it is Wales in which he remains most well-known.

Williams is also the best represented artist in the collections of the National Library of Wales. The visual materials at the Library encompass work by Welsh artists, works that depict Wales and Welsh life and portraits of prominent Welsh people. The prominence of Williams, whose work primarily depicts the mountainous landscape of Snowdonia and his home county of Anglesey, is one of the reasons why he is so well represented in the Library's collection. The process by which Williams became one of the most well-known of twentieth-century Welsh artists and the reasons behind his significant representation in the National Library's collection forms the theme of this chapter. Why is it Williams who holds this position? Why not Evan Walters, or Josef Herman, whose scenes of industrial labour in south Wales may have been more recognisable to the majority of the Welsh population throughout the mid twentieth century than the sparsely populated regions depicted in Williams's most celebrated works? Before describing the process of how the Kyffin Williams collections at the National Library can be presented digitally, it is necessary to contextualize Williams's work, both in terms of its presence in that institution's collections and in terms of visual culture in Wales. This chapter aims to answer two research questions: why was there such a relationship between artist (Williams) and institution (National Library of Wales)? And, why does Williams hold such a prominent position within Welsh visual culture?

The Kyffin Williams collections at the Library are made up from material bequeathed to the institution upon his death in 2006 and materials that had been accessioned (through donations from the artist, or bought by the Library) to the collections since the purchase of its first Williams painting in 1949. The collection is therefore representative of the entire span of the artist's career. The contextualisation of artist, collection and institution found in this chapter has four main aims:

- To introduce the contents of the Sir Kyffin Williams Collections held at the National Library of Wales;
- to explain why this rich collection of visual materials is held in a Library, rather than museum or gallery, and to explore the position of the National Library as curator of visual materials within the context of its role of "safeguarding the cultural memory Wales" ("About Us").
- to discuss the tradition of display and interpretation of collections at the National Library – in both physical and digital form;
- and to discuss how digitally curating this material fits within the historic framework of the institution and its current policies, situation and commitment to access.

To achieve these aims, I shall briefly describe the collections under discussion and the process of their acquisition, storage, and digitisation. This will include a discussion of the Sir Kyffin Williams Bequest Collection and selected other material acquired by the Library since 1945. I shall not give a full biography of Kyffin Williams – his life has been thoroughly reported, in his autobiographies (*Across the Straits* and *A Wider Sky*), biographical interviews with the British Library and several other biographies already published or in preparation (Meredith & Smith, Rian Evans, Ian Skidmore, etc.). Some biographical contextualisation is however provided before focus is shifted to the relationship between the artist and the National Library of Wales. I shall explore the National Library's remit for collecting visual materials, highlighting important acquisitions which demonstrate a change in collecting practice, from a seemingly *ad hoc* approach as a young institution to the focussed collection development policy (CDP) currently in place. The receipt of the Kyffin Williams

Bequest will then be analysed in relation to this policy. I shall then discuss some of the curatorial and museological approaches to displaying the collections at the Library, in order to contextualise how a digital resource fits in with the tradition of display and interpretation of the institution's collections. The chapter will conclude by returning to Kyffin Williams's work and considering the position of visual collections in a multi-media repository and establishing the importance of digital display to a collection of this kind. The aims of this chapter sit within two overarching themes: a description of the history of the collection presented in the *Kyffin Williams Online* web resource, and a reiteration of the collection's place within the wider holdings of the Library. There is also a practical reason for this contextualisation: to see the Bequest Collection as a discrete corpus of work within the Library's collection but also as work connected to other collections and works in the Library. Identifying this connectedness allows the opportunity to see how the digital outputs of this project could be used as a framework or template for the digital presentation of other collections.

Kyffin Williams Collections at the National Library of Wales

John Kyffin Williams was born on 9th May, 1918, at Llangefni, Anglesey. From the outset of his memoir, *Across the Straits*, Kyffin (as he was almost universally known in Wales) stresses his connection to the history and landscape or north-west Wales and Anglesey (the importance of specific places in his biography is analysed in depth in Chapter 2). Educated at Shrewsbury School before working as a land agent, Williams joined the Royal Welch Fusiliers, receiving his commission as a lieutenant in 1937. He was invalided out of the Army in 1941 on account of epilepsy, the condition causing his persistent seizures. This event had a profound effect on his subsequent vocation; Williams recalls in his memoir an army doctor's hurtful recommendation: "as you are, in fact, abnormal… I think it would be a good idea if you took up art" (136).

After enrolling in the Slade School of Art (at the time evacuated to Oxford) in 1941, Williams studied under Randolph Schwabe (Waters 357) and was awarded the Robert Ross Leaving Scholarship. He developed a style characterised by a thick impasto, with paint applied almost

exclusively with palette knife. Continuing to paint professionally while employed as an art master at Highgate School, Williams exhibited at a selection of London galleries in small individual and group exhibitions in the late 1940s and early 1950s. *An Exhibition of Welsh Landscape Painting by Kyffin Williams* was held in spring 1948 at P & D Colnaghi's Galleries, London: from the start of his career, the words "Wales/Welsh" have had a prominent position in the titles of his exhibitions. In February 1952 his paintings were exhibited at the Leicester Galleries, alongside watercolours and drawings by Merlyn Evans. Williams and Evans's work was exhibited in conjunction with "an important exhibition of paintings and water-colours by J.D. Innes, 1887-1914." He and Evans may have been seen as a continuation of the tradition of painting the Welsh landscape, although convenience or coincidence may have contributed to the grouping in addition to their Welsh connections. Future exhibitions at the Leicester Galleries saw Williams exhibiting with a more diverse set of artists. In 1954 Williams exhibited with Henry Trivick and a selection of works from the British School at Rome from the previous year; in 1957, Williams exhibited at the same venue with Ronald Searle and Anthony Fry, and in 1961 his landscape paintings provided a contrast to watercolours by Averil Lysaght and Anne Madden. Kyffin Williams had solo exhibitions at P & D Colnaghi's in 1962 (drawings) and the Leicester Galleries in 1966 (recent drawings and paintings), his renown possibly having been raised by his inclusion in a touring exhibition with John Petts and Jonah Jones, organised by the Welsh Committee of the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1961. The relative frequency of exhibitions at private galleries during the early stage of his career (when still working full time as a school master) is indicative of the artist's growing popularity and a commercial appeal that reached a peak by the mid-1980s.

Williams and was later represented by the Thackeray Gallery for over forty years until his death in 2006. The Thackeray Gallery in London and Albany Gallery in Cardiff continues to represent Williams's work (Thackeray Gallery, "Sir Kyffin Williams RA OBE (1918-2006); Albany Gallery, "Sir Kyffin Williams"). Williams worked as art master at Highgate School, north London from 1944-1973, where future Royal Academicians Patrick Procktor and Anthony Green were two of his pupils (Curtis

75). Williams was elected Royal Academician in 1974.[2] He was a prolific painter, and claimed to have painted "two pictures per week when in London, and three per week when in Wales" (*Across the Straits* 209).

Kyffin Williams's work is well represented in public collections in Wales; apart from the National Library of Wales, the National Museums and Galleries of Wales and Oriel Ynys Môn, Llangefni have significant collections. His pictures, often depicting the landscape and people of north-west Wales were also tremendously popular with the art buying public: there are anecdotal accounts of collectors camping overnight outside the Thackeray Gallery in order to secure a purchase at exhibitions. Williams died on 1 September 2006 and remains one of the most well-known and collected artists from Wales. Williams is often referred to as one of the greatest Welsh painters of the second half of the twentieth century – a typical description of his work in the press might be: "one of the great Welsh artists, he captured the majestic landscapes of his native land" (Evans). The evocation of *Welshness* in landscape painting and the artist's position in the canon of Welsh art will be explored further in Chapter 2.

Upon his death, Williams bequeathed a large section of his estate to the National Library of Wales. Other institutions that received material included the National Museums and Galleries of Wales, the Royal Academy of the Arts, Bangor University and a monetary bequest to the private press, Gwasg Gregynog. The National Library's portion of the bequest included: all of the artist's own works owned by him at the time; his collection of works of art by other artists, prints, archives, medals and awards and a collection of bronzes of animals and birds. In addition to this, the Library received funds of £400,000 which has gone towards storage, maintenance, cataloguing, and a digitisation programme (Joyner 1-21).

[2] Williams was elected Associate member of the Royal Academy in April 1970, full RA in April 1974 and Senior RA in October 1993. ("Sir Kyffin Williams RA" *Royal Academy of the Arts Collections*)

The Bequest at the National Library contains: 1,200 works on paper, approximately 200 oil paintings and over 300 original prints. In addition to the art works, the Library also received a comprehensive archive of correspondence, diaries, manuscripts, slides and photographs. The Bequest's presence in a *library*, rather than a *museum* or *gallery* collection affects how it can be presented, both digitally and in the round. There are gallery spaces at the National Library that are used for temporary exhibitions throughout the year. There is not, however, enough space to allow continuous access to a collection of this size and variety. The digital presentation of the work will go some way to offering access to the collections. *Kyffin Williams Online* presents a prototype of a digital resource which integrates all the contents of the Bequest Collection. A consideration of three aspects of the connection between Williams and the Library: the early acquisitions of Williams's work; notable donations made by the artist during his lifetime (such as his collection of drawings produced in Patagonia in 1968/69); and retrospective exhibitions held by the Library later in his career, offer some insight into the relationship between artist and institution and suggest approaches for the digital display of his work.

Relationship with the Library

The relationship between Sir Kyffin Williams and the National Library of Wales goes back almost to the very start of the artist's career. The *Annual Report* for 1949-50 includes a note on the purchase of *Tre's Ceiri,* a view in Carnarfonshire in ink and wash and the oil painting *Llyn-y-Cau, Cader Idris* in its list of Principal Accessions for that year (38). The section for the Department of Prints, Maps and Drawings in that report lists other notable acquisitions:

> The collection of original water-colour and other drawings of Welsh interest was enriched by the acquisition of several works by contemporary artists such as Kyffin Williams, Brenda Chamberlain and M.E. Thompson, as well as by such artists as John 'Warwick' Smith, William Howell, William Turner, William James Muller, Christopher Williams and R. Thorne Waite (15).

This period also marked a greater inclusion of contemporary artists in the collections – through purchase directly from the artist (as in the case of *Tre'r Ceiri* and *Llyn-y-Cau, Cader Idris*), or through

donation from the Contemporary Art Society of Wales (including in 1951, the water-colour *Old Harbour, Portsoy* by W. Grant Murray, the gouache drawing *Disused Tin-Works, Aberdulais* by William Roberts, and nineteen watercolour drawings of Wales by Kenneth Rowntree). The relationship between CASW and the Library was recorded by Megan Ellis in the *National Library of Wales Journal*:

> The Librarian recently received from the Secretary of the Contemporary Art Society for Wales the welcome information that at its Annual Meeting in July the Society authorised its Executive Committee to distribute, in accordance with previous practice, the pictures acquired by the Society in recent years, and that the Executive Committee was prepared to offer several pictures as a gift to the National Library. (156)

While the collection began to diversify and include work by contemporary artists in this period, inclusion was on the basis of subject matter (Welsh scenes and landscape), rather than as part of a concerted effort to build a collection of contemporary Welsh art. The acquisition of further works by John 'Warwick' Smith was of equal importance in the Reports of the Library as of the purchase of works by Kyffin Williams or Brenda Chamberlain.

The initiation of the relationship between the National Library and Kyffin Williams is worth reflecting upon in order to contextualise today's holdings and to establish the unique position of Kyffin Williams within the wider collections of the institution. The purchase of the two works in 1949 is significant for how early it happened in the career of the artist. Williams wrote:

> I had started to paint landscapes at the beginning of 1945, but as I was teaching full-time it wasn't a serious occupation, and was mainly confined to such few weeks as I had at home in Caernarvonshire. It wasn't until the summer of 1947 that I first painted pictures which gave me some belief in my abilities […] My vast energy was beginning to be harness to something worthwhile and it was during this summer that painting took obsessional hold on me. (*Across the Straits* 122)

It was only shortly after the artist began to paint landscape works and after only a single solo exhibition (at P&D Colnaghi's, 1948) that the National Library bought works from Kyffin Williams. While the Library's policy to concentrate on topographical, landscape and other Welsh views

undoubtedly contributed to the attractiveness of the artist as one to collect by the Library, the proactive attitude of Sir Llywellyn Davies in developing this relationship continued with successive Librarians and has culminated in the extensive Kyffin Williams collections at the Library today. The nature of Kyffin Williams's work suited the institutional policies regarding the collection of art. However, there is also an element of good fortune in that the individuals who interpret such policies also unavoidably impose their own taste and preferences. The relationship between the artist and institution began with the purchase of *Tre'r Ceiri*, continued throughout his lifetime. He told David Meredith in 2002:

> I was extremely lucky getting in touch with the National Library. I think in the forties a man called Sir William Llywellyn Davies, he was the Librarian and he came up and bought a drawing and ever since they have continually supported me and I've had exhibitions there. (Wales Video Gallery)

Williams was appreciative of Library activities relating to his work, such as curating touring exhibitions of drawings in a way he perceived would never had happened with the National Museum (*Artists' Lives*, 149). While the policies of collecting at the Library may have been a 'perfect fit' for Williams, if National Museum had directors and keepers more sympathetic to his work and the institution had a collection policy that emphasised collecting work relating to Wales, his works may have been better represented there. From almost the start of his career, Williams was 'courted' by the Library, and the enthusiasm for his work shown by William Llywellyn Davies was continued with subsequent exhibition officers, curators and keepers of art. It was also a mutually beneficial relationship. The artist had, to a certain extent, a national, institutional patron. In return, the Library received (through gift or purchase) a link to the best-known Welsh artist of the later twentieth century. For an artist who placed great importance on his family history, connection with Wales, and tradition in art, having a prominent position in the largest collection of Welsh art may also have appealed – especially given the absence of a dedicated National Gallery of Wales/ National Gallery of Welsh Art, a subject Williams raised on many occasions. Aside from the gifts and donations the artist

made throughout his career, it was also a materially beneficial relationship. As the artist noted in 1995, “they’ve [the National Library] been very good at buying my work” (*Artists Lives* 149).

A description of the collections and work of the Department of Prints, Maps and Drawings published in 1974 following the significant gift of Williams’s Patagonian works, states:

> Today, collections of graphic material of all kinds, forming a valuable supplement to the printed and written sources found in the other Departments. The collections cover a wide field of interest although, naturally the emphasis is placed on collecting material illustrating every aspect of Wales and Welsh life. (25)

The work of this collection, with its emphasis on illustrating the land and people of Wales is reflected in Kyffin Williams’s own thoughts on creating landscape pictures. In the introduction to the catalogue of the *Landscapes* exhibition at Oriel Ynys Môn, the artist notes: “Even though I say to myself how much I love what I paint, nevertheless I must know deep down that I am indulging in a life-long crusade to record the land in which I was born and brought up”(11). The statement suggests that in addition to creating artworks, the artist saw his work as recording or documenting Wales and the Welsh. Both Library and artist place great importance on the notion of art recording or documenting the land and people. While the places of art are significant for understanding artistic priorities of Williams and collecting practice of the Library, it can also provide a means of organising digital content for research. The map below visualises locations shown in works by Kyffin Williams in the Bequest collection. The biggest cluster of works, as expected, is around north Wales and Anglesey. However, the number of works showing scenes in France, Austria and Switzerland show that the artist’s visual ‘recording’ stretched beyond his native Wales. The Library’s policy of collecting works can also be geographically extensible depending on the artist.

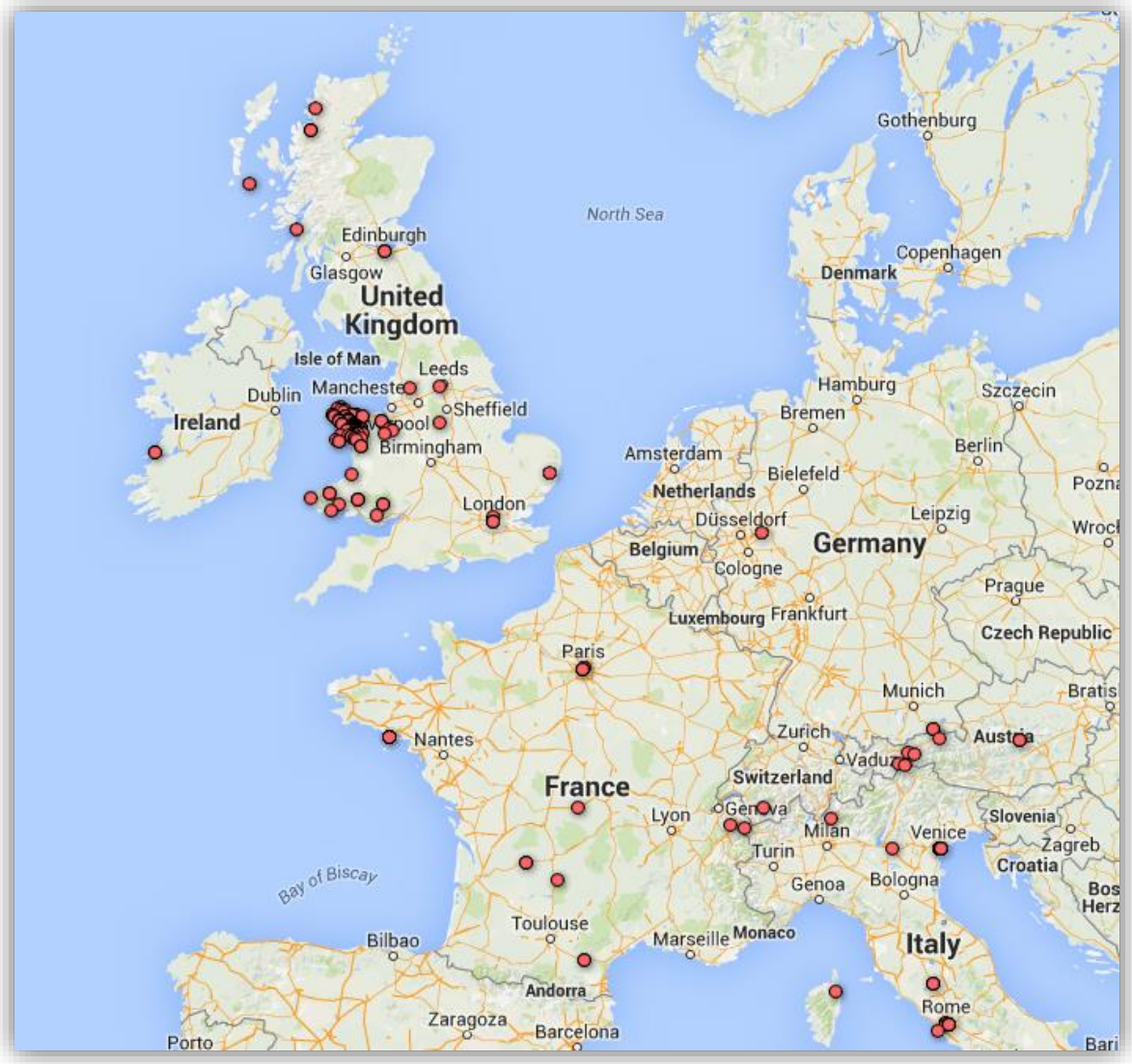

Figure 2: Works by Kyffin Williams in NLW collection according to location depicted

The emphasis on recording place rather than the aesthetic quality of a picture is evident in the early approaches to collecting visual material at the National Library. The term 'graphical material' is used often in Annual Reports and other literature produced by the Library. Graphic or graphical material as a term is problematic when discussing terms in art historical contexts as it suggests material relating to graphic art/design, whereas the Library literature uses this term to encompass collections of paintings, maps, photographs, drawings, etc. For the purposes of this project, graphic/graphical materials will be used when quoting from Library literature, but a more general 'visual materials' will be used otherwise, unless referring to a specific medium (e.g. painting,

drawing, etc.). Although Williams is not a topographical artist, even his most expressionistic works often refer to specific places, making his landscape work obvious candidates for inclusion in the Library's collection.

In 2002, Williams explained his relationship with the Library and hinted at a strained relationship with the National Museum and Galleries of Wales, saying that the Library had "done a tremendous amount for art in Wales, and the best collections of Welsh art are in fact in the National Library not in the National Museum" (Wales Video Gallery). In the same interview, the artist identified the collection policy as perhaps the reason why it was the National Library rather than National Museum of Wales where his work is most represented, while also being appreciative of the National Museum's dilemma when it came to collecting Welsh art while developing a parallel collection representative of a wider European tradition:

> […] because you have to remember the NM has two jobs, to buy the best Welsh art and also to make out that they are to a certain extent a top European gallery so they spend £5 million on a Dutch seascape, a Claude, a Poussin, and they've got to do that, to get these top works for the Welsh public to see. But they are in a difficult position. But the Library is not in that position, but they have been wonderful to me and to other artists. (Wales Video Gallery)

Kyffin Williams is currently represented in the collection of the National Museum and Galleries of Wales by fifteen oil paintings, acquired variously through bequest, gift, and purchase. The earliest acquisitions, *Snowdon from Llyn Nantlle*, a gift from the Contemporary Art Society of Wales to the National Museum in 1947, and *Farmers, Cwm Nantlle*, purchased in 1948 pre-date the purchases of *Tre'r Ceiri* and *Llyn Cau* by the National Library in 1949 ("Art Collections Online").

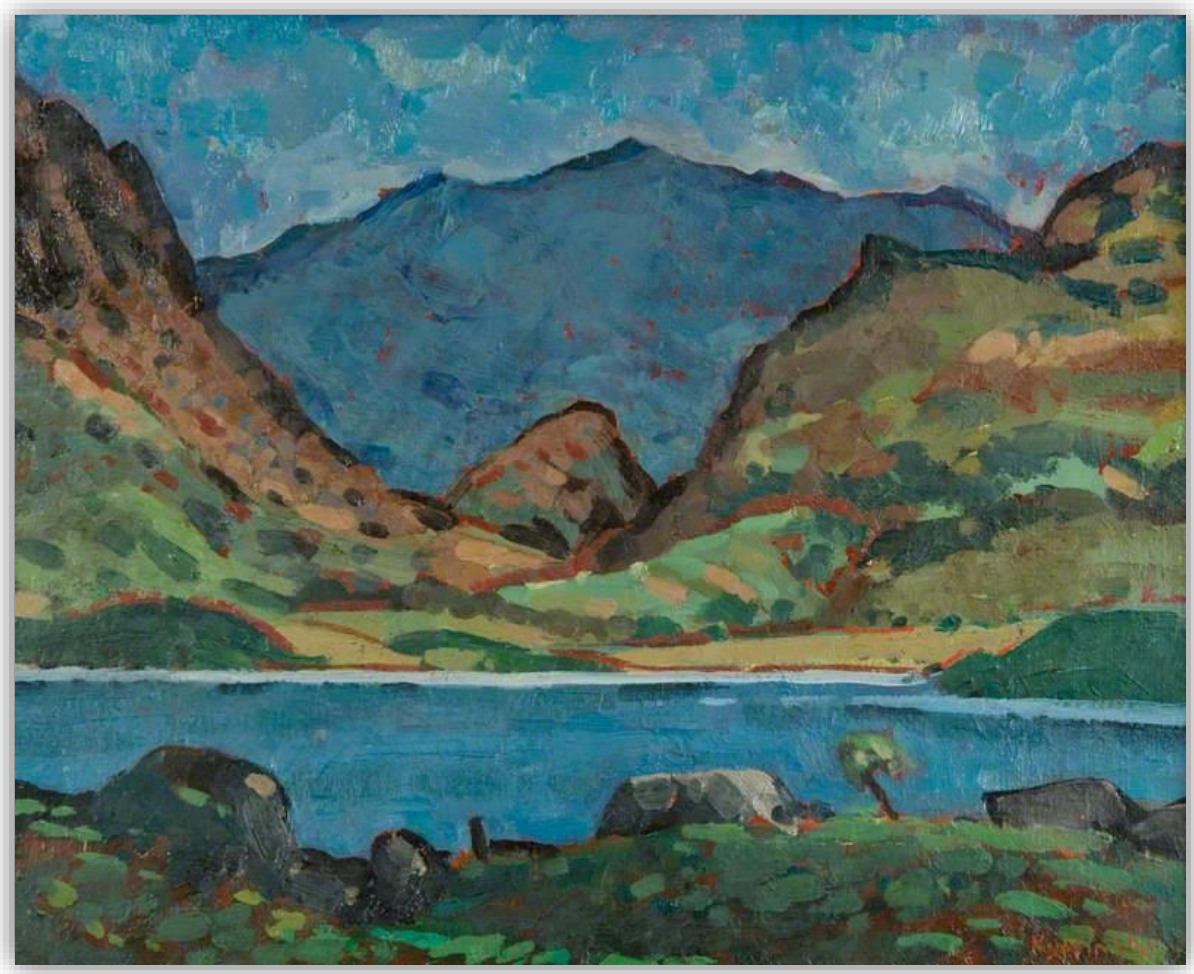

Figure 3: Snowdon from Llyn Nantlle, c.1945, National Museums and Galleries of Wales

However, the relationship between the National Library and the artist remained consistent, with the Library acquiring artworks and other material through purchase, donation and gifts throughout Williams's life. Material donated by the artist was not restricted to his own artistic or archival output. The first mention of Kyffin Williams in the National Library of Wales *Journal* occurs in 1951. It does not concern one of his own paintings but his presentation of a volume of drawings, including a panoramic view of the Caernarfonshire Mountains with a table denoting the names of each of the peaks by Frances Lloyd, a relation of Kyffin Williams. The description of the volume is followed by a detailed account of the family tree of the Frances Lloyd, and an explanation that she was the mother-in-law of Sir Andrew Ramsay, an eminent geologist, elements of whose works were already in the National Library's collection. Kyffin Williams is significantly known as a painter to be

referred to in the article as "Mr J. Kyffin Williams, the artist," although the significance of his gift to the Library appears to be its connection to other collections, and Andrew Ramsay, rather than its aesthetic qualities.

> A recent addition to the Department of Prints, Drawings and Maps, is a volume presented by Mr J. Kyffin Williams, the artist. It contains a panoramic view taken from Treffos, Llansadwrn, Anglesey, of the Caernarvonshire mountains, with a reference table giving the name of each peak. The drawing is the work of Frances Lloyd of Glangwna, Caernarvonshire, and Whitehall, Shrewsbury, who, in 1922, married James Williams (1790-1872), rector of Llanfairynghornwy, and Chancellor of Bangor Cathedral. One of their sons, the Reverend Owen Lloyd Williams, rector of Llanrhyddlad, became connected with the family of Kyffin of Bangor through his marriage with Margaret (d. 1902), daughter of John Kyffin, rector of Llanystumdwy.
>
> The younger daughter of James Williams and Frances Lloyd, Louisa Mary Williams, married in 1852 Sir Andrew Crombie Ramsay, the geologist. Snowdonia, the National Park of North Wales, by F.J. North, Bruce Campbell and Richenda Scott, published in 1949, contains references to the work of Sir Andrew Ramsay in North Wales at this meeting in 1850 with Miss Williams, daughter of the rector of Llanfairynghornwy.
>
> Material already in the National Library relating to the eminent geologist includes geological maps of South Wales and correspondence between members of the Ramsay and Johnes of Dolau Cothi families between 1842 and 1921. This material was presented in 1934 and 1935 by the Misses Dorothea and Violet Ramsay, the daughters of Sir Andrew and Lady Ramsay. (Lewis 155)

The detail of the family connections provided is typical of any discussion of relatives of Kyffin Williams – the opening chapters of his first volume of autobiography consist mainly of detailed descriptions of his family tree, establishing the connection to Anglesey and Gwynedd that would become so significant in his artistic output. Given his thorough knowledge of his ancestry, the description would, presumably, have been provided to the National Library by Kyffin Williams himself. While this item may not be as significant today as his own work, it further emphasises the relationship between institution and artist, and demonstrates Williams's understanding of the collecting priorities of the institution.

Recording the *Welsh* landscape: Patagonia

Collections relating to Kyffin Williams at the National Library of Wales grew significantly in 1969-1970 when the artist donated 60 drawings in gouache and watercolour made during visit to

Patagonia. The artists made the journey after winning a Winston Churchill Foundation scholarship to document the Welsh communities in South America. As Williams recalled:

> When I got back from Patagonia with my 700 drawings I offered them to the National Museum of Wales, and I wrote to the keeper and I arranged to go down and see him, and I drove down from Anglesey and found he wasn't in, he turned up an hour late, and he said he was too busy to see me, and I said I had come down to offer him any of the drawings I had done, and he said, `Well now you're here I might as well see them'. So he looked at the drawings for a bit, and I said, `You don't want any, do you?' He said, `No. Good day.' And so, I drove back to Anglesey, and I offered them to the National Library, who said thank you very much. (*Artists' Lives* 146, see also Wales Video Gallery)

Material relating this Patagonian visit has since grown through acquisition and the Bequest collection to include eleven oil paintings, the original 60 drawings, over 700 photographs in addition to other miscellaneous items such as sketch books, a *maté* jug given to Williams and various other material including a puma's claw, native south American arrowheads and the light denim jacket worn by artist during his travels.

Reports on the accession of this collection in 1970 show how the artist's stature had developed since the first purchases by the Library. The *Annual Report* of 1969/70 records the donation of the Patagonian drawings as one of two major donations received by the Department of Prints, Maps and Drawings, the other being "a large collection of early editions of the O.S. maps presented by the Ordnance Survey" (20). The language used by artist and institution about this collection further emphasises the importance of recording or illustrating Wales and Welsh life even thousands of miles from Wales itself. The same *Annual Report* quotes Williams's intentions in visiting *y Wladfa* in 1968 enabled by his Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowship: "As Mr. Williams says, his purpose was 'to record the land, people, and the natural history [of the country] much as an eighteenth century watercolourist would have done'"(20). Such a statement places the artist not only among contemporary practitioners being collected by the National Library, but of the likes of Thomas Jones, JMW Turner and Thomas Rowlandson, whose books of views of north and south Wales had previously been acquired by the institution as visual records of Wales. The entry

continues, emphasising the importance of these drawings for visually documenting and recording for posterity:

> Anxious that a permanent home should be found for a representative selection of the drawings he generously offered them to this Library, an offer which was gratefully accepted. This means that a record of the community, made approximately a century after the first landings, will be available for posterity in the custody of the National Library. (*ibid.*)

Ninety Patagonian drawings were exhibited at the Library in October 1969, including the sixty donated to the institution. The description in the Annual Report of the drawings in the exhibition reiterates the importance of the 'recording', stating that the drawings: "illustrate graphically the land, its people, and the flora and fauna of the country" (21). The acquisition of Kyffin Williams's Patagonian material emphasises the National Library's policy on collecting visual material relating to Wales and the Welsh extended beyond Wales's national borders and reiterates the recording/documenting aspect to Williams's own work. Most importantly it demonstrates the continued relationship between institution and artist.

Although Kyffin Williams had been represented in the collections of the National Library for over twenty years by this point, the acceptance of his Patagonian work came at a significant point for the artist. Williams publicly retold the story of how this work came to the National Library several times (*Artists' Lives,* Wales Video Gallery) and has gone on to say that some of his best work is in the collections of the National Library and Oriel Ynys Môn, highlighting in particular *The Gathering, or Farmers on Glyder Fach* (1980s, National Library of Wales), his two pictures of *Llyn Cau* in the collection (1950 and 1990) and a portrait of Keith Andrew (1980s, National Library of Wales, see Gruffydd, *"*Foreword*"*). Williams has also commented: "It's nice to know that certain of my pictures are in accessible public collections, but the Tate would not be interested in any of my paintings, I don't think" (*Artists' Lives* 146) indicating the importance of the relationship with the National Library and his perception of his standing in the wider art world.

The Library's holdings of work by Williams relating to Patagonia were further enhanced by the inclusion of photographs from his journey in the Bequest. Mapping some of these photographs is a method that can be beneficial for analysing the works in an art historical sense and in terms of structuring digital content. Kyffin Williams is not known as a photographer but distances he travelled restricted the amount of drawing and painting materials he could carry.

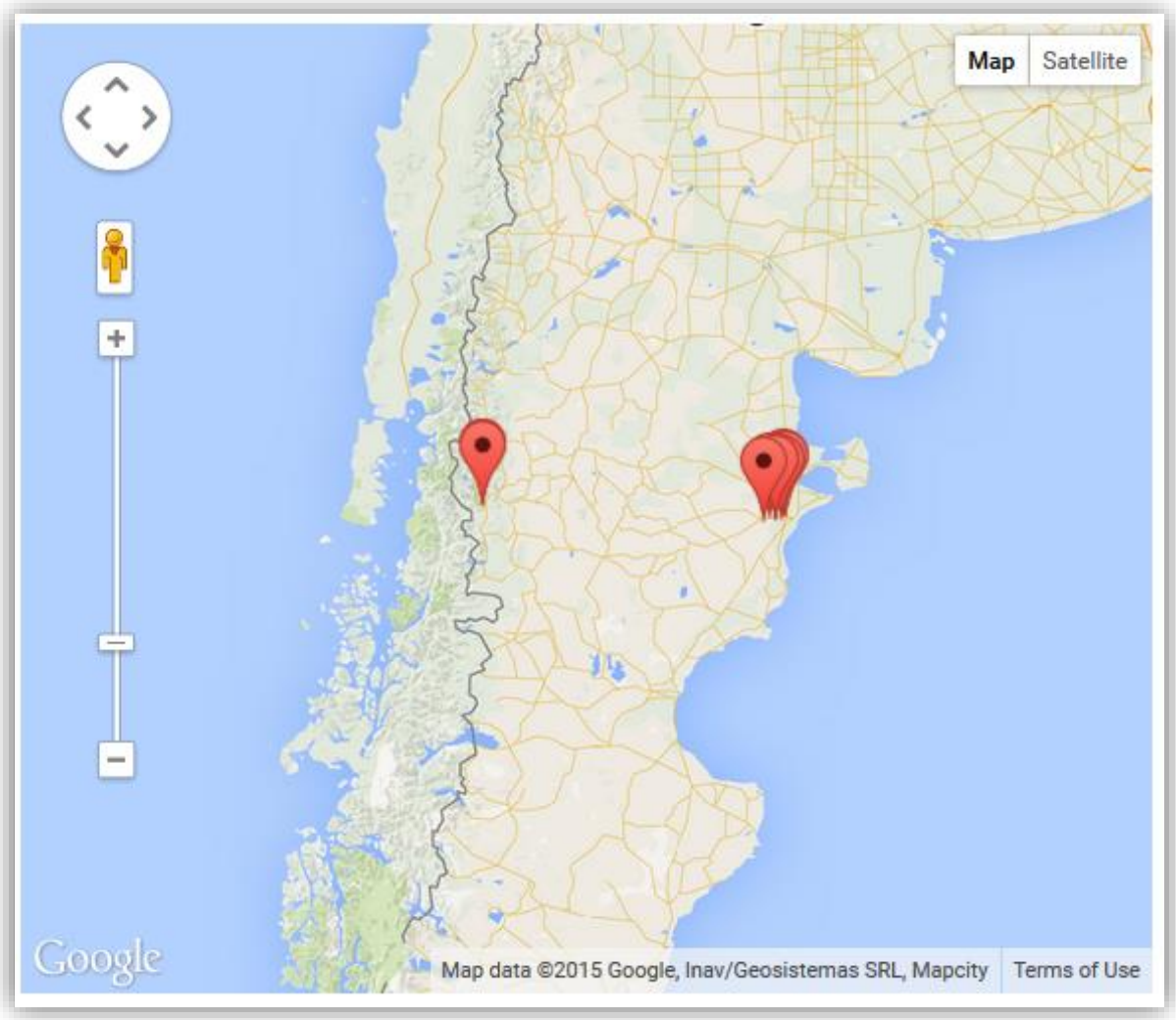

Figure 4: locations of Welsh chapels photographed by Kyffin Williams in Patagonia

As a result, a camera became a necessity to his goal of making a pictorial record of the people, land, flora and fauna of Patagonia (*A Wider Sky* 128). He recalled that "[i]n the past I had only taken a few photographs with a box brownie, but I felt it would be perverse to travel to such an exotic land and

not make a photographic record. I asked advice and bought an excellent Polish camera and an exposure meter which I had great difficulty in understanding" (*ibid.* 128-9).

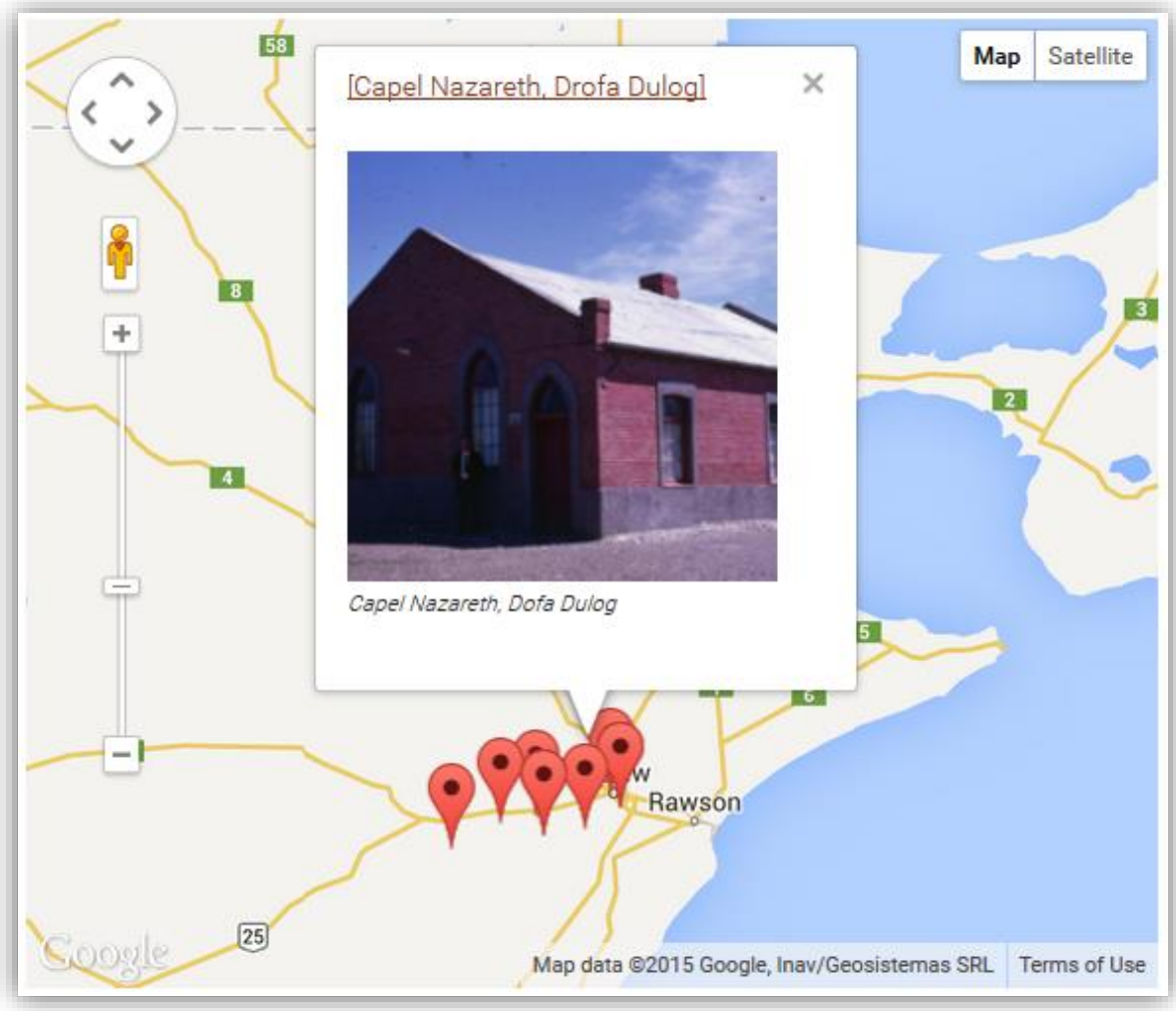

Figure 5: Photographs by Kyffin Williams of Welsh Chapels, Patagonia (detail)

While the number of technical failures in the collection gives some credence to Williams's claims of photographic ineptitude, many of the photographs are successful. The map above shows the location of Welsh chapels in Patagonia photographed by Williams. The locations of the chapels act as a snapshot of the major Welsh settlements in Patagonia and indicate the distance travelled by the artist, from Trelew, Gaiman and Dolavon in the east, to Trevlin and Esquel in Cwm Hyfryd in the west. Acknowledging the importance of place to the artist and the Library can suggest ways in which

digital content can be organised to draw attention to the diversity of media in the collection. This approach also allows comparison with works in the collection that have similar subject, but are located in Wales.

Figure 6: photograph of Pentrepella. Slide: National Library of Wales;

original painting: Oriel Ynys Mon, Llangefni

The similarity of the Patagonian chapels to photographs of chapels in north Wales, or Capel Tabor in in the painting, *Pentrepella* (above) creates a sense of the uncanny. Familiar Welsh chapels are transported from surrounding quarry tips under heavy clouds to a desert setting in bright sunshine. The example shows the significance to both Williams and the Library of place as a means of organising disparate (in terms of geography and media) digital content and shows how the Library's policy of collected works that depict the Welsh people and landscape are sometimes not restricted by the borders of Wales.

Figure 7: Chapel and Slate Tips, 1968

Exhibitions at the National Library of Wales

Subsequent Librarians maintained the relationship initiated by Sir William Llywellyn Davies in 1949. Keepers of art, curators, exhibition officers and others (including Donald Moore, D. Michael Francis, Paul Joyner and Lona Mason) also maintained a link between institution and artist right up to Kyffin Williams's death (Joyner 1-21). While Davies showed his support by first buying work from the artist, the Library continued this support by frequently exhibiting work from its collections, curating exhibitions at the National Library's galleries, or providing a venue for travelling exhibitions. Three of the most significant exhibitions include the large retrospective exhibition of 1981; the *Kyffin at 80,* 1998 (both held at the National Library) and the *Gwladfa Kyffin*/ *Kyffin in Patagonia* exhibition held at Bodelwyddan Castle between October 2004 and January 2005, organised by the National Library. In the foreword to the catalogue of the 1981 exhibition, the Librarian, R. Geraint Gruffydd

introduced Williams as “one of the great Welsh artists of this century” (1). The exhibition built upon a previous exhibition organised at University College Swansea, adding materials from the Library’s own collections and loans from the artist. These loans are significant in tracing he relationship between artist and institution; several exhibits (e.g. *Miss Parry,* 1979; *Farm, Llanfairyngorwy*, c.1975; many prints and illustrations) would later become part of the Library’s collection, either donated by the artist during his lifetime, or as part of the Bequest in 2006.

Kyffin at 80 was perhaps the most comprehensive exhibition of work by Williams held during his lifetime. The introduction to the catalogue emphasises once again the relationship between the artist and Library, their mutual support and the “privilege to celebrate this special year in his life by staging this important retrospective exhibition representing the best of his output since 1944, selected by the artist himself” (*Kyffin Williams RA OBE, Retrospective Exhibition*). The special year referred not only to the artist’s eightieth birthday, but the fact that the exhibition opened shortly after Williams had been knighted for his contribution to art in Wales. While there are some 325 oil paintings by Williams in public collections in the UK (“Your Paintings”), the prolific output and commercial success of the artist means that the majority of his work is in private collections. *Kyffin at 80* drew heavily from private collections and offered an opportunity to see works not often seen in public. As in 1981, some works loaned by the artist for the exhibition would later become part of the National Library’s collection through his Bequest. For example, an early picture listed in the catalogue of *Kyffin at 80* as *Old Conservatory* (1944), would later be bequeathed to the Library and catalogued as *Conservatory, Highgate (Athlone House).*

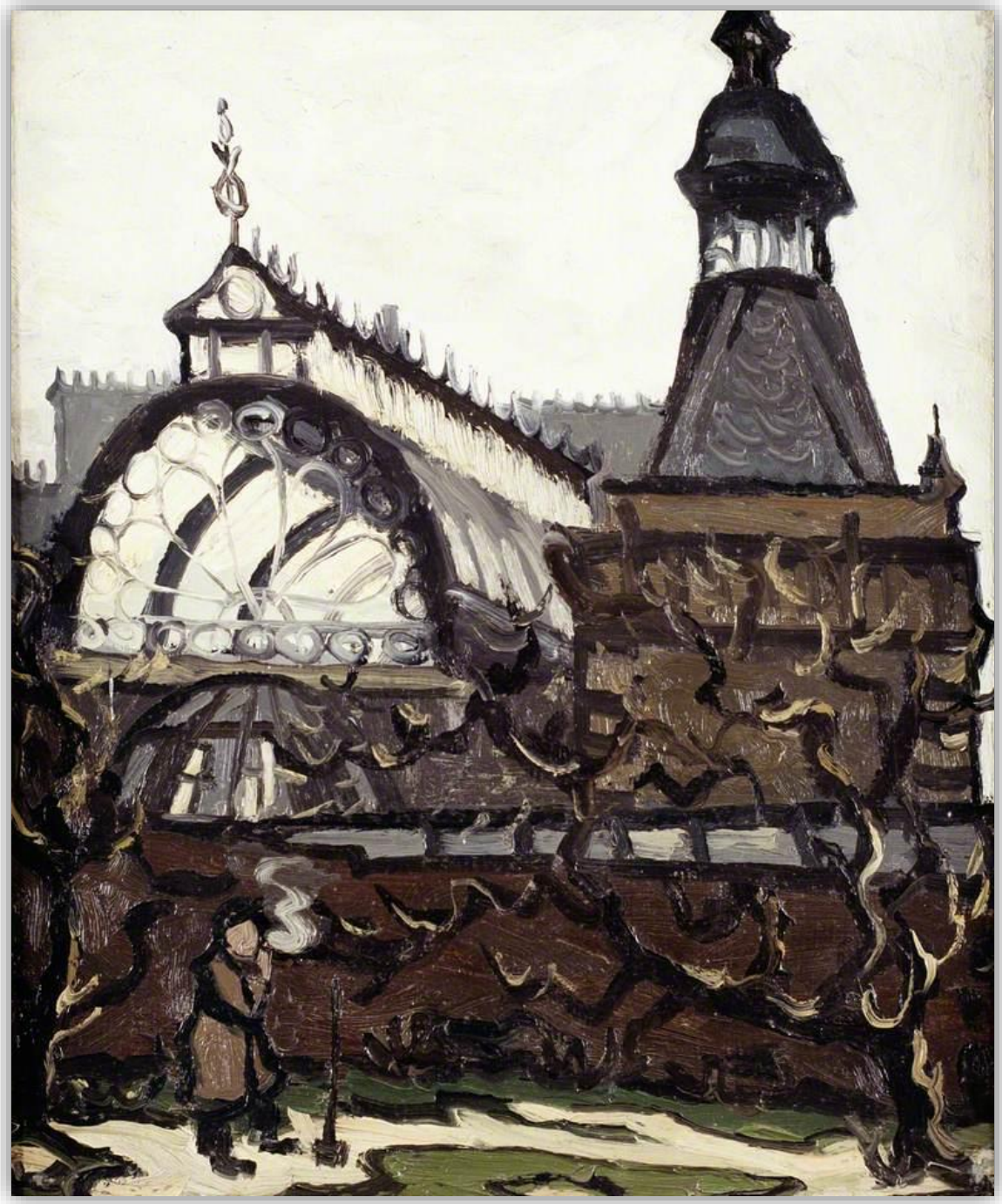

Figure 8: Conservatory, Highgate, [n.d]

The final significant joint undertaking between the National Library and Kyffin Williams was the *Gwladfa Kyffin/Kyffin in Patagonia* exhibition at Bodelwyddan. Drawing from the Library's significant holdings relating to the artist's journey to Patagonia, the exhibition presented a full archive of the journey, including drawings, watercolours, works in gouache, oil paintings as well as photographs, tools, palettes and even clothes worn by the artist on his journey. Andrew Green,

Librarian at the time of the exhibition notes in his foreword to the exhibition catalogue: "[Kyffin] presents a strange landscape with his familiar style. He helps us to see that Y Wladfa and Wales are part of a collective heritage, whether we have visited the land or not" (7). The exhibition reiterates the importance of this journey away from Wales in the development of his career, his relationship with the Library in terms of their acceptance of his drawings, and the institution's role in collecting material depicting Wales and the Welsh, even away from Wales itself. Given the issues around accessibility and exhibition spaces for the collections, the digital presentation of the collection takes on added significance as the *de facto* entry point for the bequest collection: the objects themselves are kept in a specially designed store in a non-public area of the Library and are available by special request.

The preparation of a prototype digital resource is the main focus for the second half of this study. The position of an artist's collection in a Library setting creates a dual role. On one hand the resource will function as any other digitized library collection with *conservation of* and *access to* materials being the primary purpose of the digitization (Deegan & Tanner 32-33). The unique position of such an extensive art collection in a library context extends the notion of access: such a large collection cannot be continually displayed in the exhibition spaces available to the Library. If digital images will be acting as surrogates for the content of the Kyffin Williams collections, this prototype digital resource must also act as a surrogate for its display, enabling both interpretive exhibitions expected from art collections and providing the archival function of a library/archive collection. In this respect it is useful to provide some context of the function of the National Library of Wales, not only as a repository of a nation's written heritage, but as venue of interpretive exhibitions. Since its inception the Library has displayed its collections, the next section of this chapter discusses the development of art collections at the National Library and their display and dissemination, in both physical and digital form.

Chapter 1b: Art in the Library

The National Library of Wales was founded in 1907 following the establishment of other *national* institutions: University College Wales, Aberystwyth founded in 1872, became the first college of the federal University of Wales in 1894; the National Museum of Wales was also founded in 1907 following a long gestation. Gwyn Jenkins has explained the establishment of the National Library as *"*a direct consequence of the flowering of a Welsh national consciousness which had manifested itself during the second half of the nineteenth century*"* (140). Conspicuous in its absence in this set of national institutions is a dedicated National Gallery. From the outset however, visual arts have been included in the collecting remit of the National Library. The Charter of Incorporation states that the nation:

> had long been desirous that a National Library of Wales should be established therein with a view to the general improvement of the intellectual and moral and aesthetic conditions of the people of Wales and to granting greater facilities and opportunities for education in all branches of science and art and more particularly with a view to the collection, preservation, and maintenance of manuscripts, printed books, periodical publications, newspapers, pictures, engravings and prints, musical publications[…]. (5-6)

Although the initial inclusion of 'pictures' as a type of material to be collected is ambiguous, the Charter is more clear regarding subject matter: "works which have been or shall be composed in Welsh or any other Celtic language, literature, philology, history, religion, arts, crafts, and industries of the Welsh or other Celtic peoples […]"(6). The national character of the institution and its collection has remained. As Librarian Andrew Green stated in his lecture at the National Eisteddfod marking the Library's centenary in 2007:

> Amcan cyson dros y blynyddoedd yw ceisio casglu'r gwaith gorau gan lenorion, cerddorion ac artistiaid gorau'r wlad. Un o'r egwyddorion pwysig yn y polisïau casglu drwy'r blynyddoedd yw y dylai'r Llyfrgell gasglu'r hyn sydd yn genedlaethol ei

> arwyddocâd, yn hytrach na deunydd sy'n lleol neu'n blwyfol neu'n ymylol. ("Diwylliant Cenedlaethol a'r Llyfrgell Genedlaethol" 1)[3]

The collections of the National Library are varied, and encompass printed books, archives, manuscripts, and 'graphical' material, and were initially organised into departments of Printed Books; Manuscripts and Records; and Maps, Prints and Drawings. Given its significance to today's collection of artworks, it is worth charting the development of this collection. The Report of the Council of the Library in 1909 describes the beginnings of this department:

> A beginning has been made with a Department of Prints and Drawings. This will include original drawings, engraved prints, photographs, picture postcards, and every other form of graphic delineation of matters concerning Wales and the Border Counties. Portraits of men and women, not only celebrities, but racial types and interesting characters; views of scenery, buildings, towns and villages, places of worship, bridges, and any other topographical pictures; illustrations of natural history, geology, domestic life, the arts and industries, customs, games, pastimes, religious observances, the Gorsedd, the Eisteddfod, and other national gatherings; all these and many other phases of Wales and Welsh life should be represented in this department. The pictures need not necessarily be of value as works of art, so long as they illustrate the subject. The collections in this department will be mounted and arranged according to subject. The value of such a collection for reference will be great, and become of increasing importance. (27)

The inclusion of visual material within the Library collection is significant: from the outset, the Library had a remit to collect prints, drawings and other material, although "like the Museum, it was only partly concerned with art" (Moore 106). This 'partial concern' and relationship to the art collections at the National Museum is important when considering what or where is the 'home' of art works collected for the nation in the absence of a dedicated National Gallery.

The development of the Department of Prints and Drawings can be traced through accession and donation records, with particularly notable acquisitions recorded in the Annual Reports of the institution. Since the start of the Library's collecting activities, topographical prints, drawings and landscapes in oils are emphasized in these reports. The *Annual Report* for 1909-1910 lists a range of

[3] Trans: 'a consistent aim over the years has been to collect the best works in the country in literature, music and art. One of the important principles in collecting has been the need for materials to be national in their significance, rather than material that is local, to the parish, or peripheral.

donations to the Department of Prints and Drawings, listing donations from Sir John Williams including portfolios of drawings depicting every county in Wales and original drawings by Thomas Rowlandson from his 1797 tour of the country. Also listed are various collections of drawings of places in south Wales, *Views in Wales* by Sir Richard Colt Hoare (1806, see fig.9, below) and "a large volume of original sketches by Richard Wilson." Other 'graphical' materials acquired are not listed in this early Report, although a brief note: "Portraits and Maps are included in this department and also Picture Postcards, Brass Rubbings and all other types of pictorial representations of Wales and its life"(9-10).

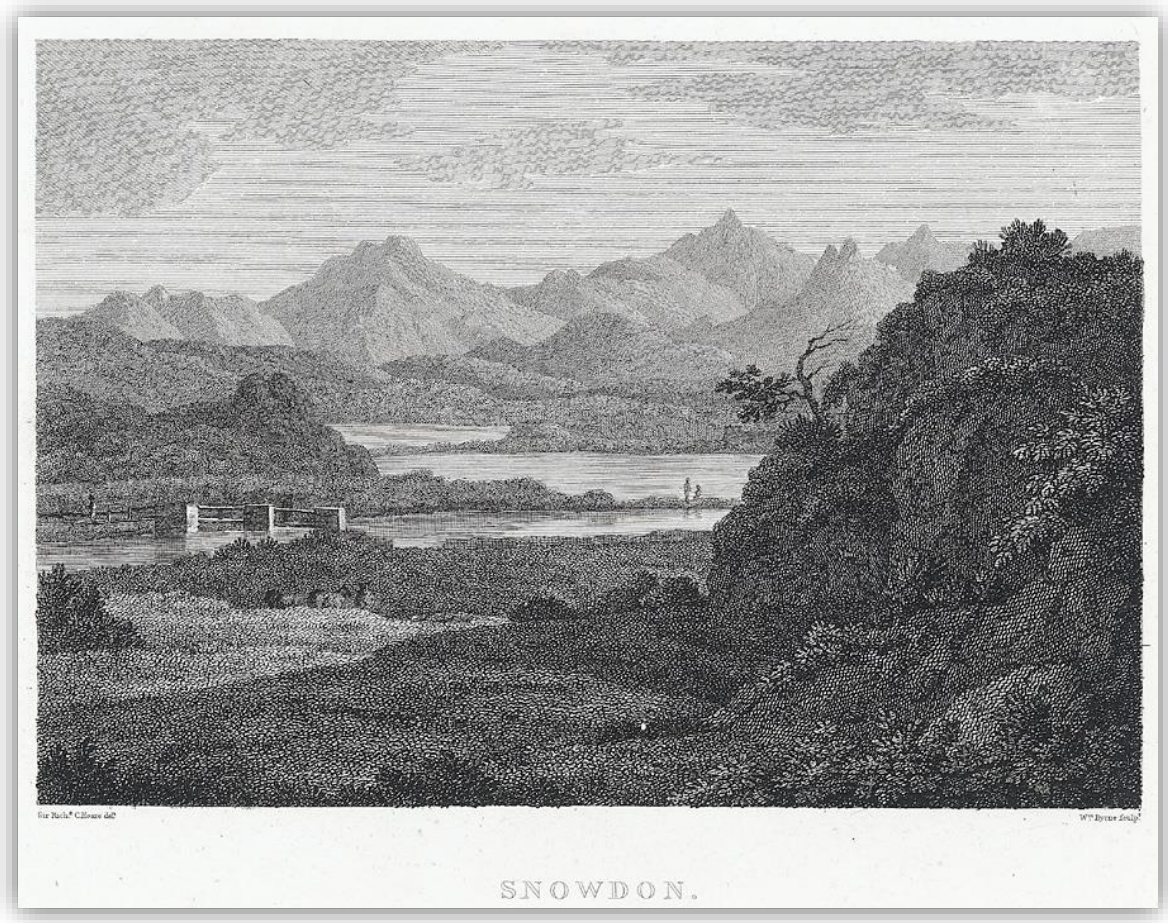

Figure 9: Sir Richard C. Hoare (drawing), William Byrne (engraving), Snowdon, 1806

The early Annual Reports suggest a weighting towards depiction of the land, landscape and places of Wales over other pictorial representations of Welsh life. This has several implications for

the collection and display of art works at the National Library as well as the understanding of the visual culture of Wales. Firstly, it emphasises the importance of depictions of the land to the collection, and upholds the centrality of landscape to Welsh visual culture, working as a practical demonstration of D. W. Meinig's belief that "[e]very mature nation has its symbolic landscapes. They are part of the iconography of nationhood, part of the shared ideas and memories and feeling, which bind a people together" (164).

Landscape is often seen as the main thread running through histories of Welsh visual culture. This is reflected in the collection of art works at the National Library. From the incorporation of Welsh views in the European Romantic tradition (for example in the works of Welsh artists Richard Wilson and Thomas Jones and JMW Turner on his visits to Wales) to the use of Wales as a surrogate to the Grand Tours in the nineteenth century and the work of tourist artist, Thomas Rowlandson, the land of Wales has been established as a landscape to be depicted visually. Each of these examples has contributed to the contemporary association of landscape, especially the mountain landscape, with national identity in Wales (Hourahane 53).

Figure 10: Richard Wilson, *Kilgerran Castle*, 1800

All of the above examples are represented in the art collections at the National Library. The *Report on the Progress of the Library* during its first year of existence, published together with the charter of incorporation in 1909 established a remit to collect visual material of all kinds, from paintings to postcards. It continues, stating that "[all] phases of Wales and Welsh life" should be represented in the Library's collections. The aesthetic quality of materials was less important "so long as they illustrate the subject" (27). Green has suggested that the diversity of materials collected by the Library was a direct result of the influence of the first Librarian, John Ballinger. Green discussed Ballinger's eclecticism as a collection builder in 2007:

> Ballinger may have been responsible for the remarkably broad and eclectic collecting policy adopted by the Library almost from the start. His words about the collecting of art, 'the pictures need not necessarily be of value as works of art, as long as they illustrate the subject', are not far from the Library's contemporary policy. It was his idea to create a portrait collection, and to collect picture postcards for the evidence they contained about Wales. ("John Ballinger" n.p.)

This enlightened approach to library collection building has ensured that 'ephemeral' media such as postcards have been kept by the Library from its start, ensuring that the institution maintains a more complete record of a material culture (or history of things, to use Kubler's phrase) of Wales than if it had restricted its collecting practice to text-based media. This approach also emphasises the way visual material is collected for its illustrative function, establishing that postcards, oil paintings or photographs are valued equally as *documents*, rather than their aesthetic qualities as might be the case in a gallery context.

The emphasis on subject matter in the wording of collecting of visual media ('graphical materials') reiterates the importance of the topographical, and places visual materials in a cartographical context. Images are collected as information carriers, records or depictions rather than for the aesthetic qualities. Paintings, drawings and other visual media were the responsibility of the Department of Prints and Drawings which was to become the Department of *Maps* and Drawings, later Department of Pictures and *Maps* (my emphases); by 2012, paintings and other art works fall into the care of the more descriptive 'Manuscripts, Visual Images, Maps and Music Unit' within the Collections Department. The placement of art within the wider administrative structure of the Library is due to change again following the comprehensive restructuring process begun in January 2015.

Material documenting Welsh subject matter rather than material by Welsh artists took precedence in the original policies of the Library. The initial collection policy reiterates this idea of Wales and its landscape as somewhere to be documented and recorded: the National Library collected the results of these observations. It should be mentioned also that the Charter creates no specific remit to collect works by Welsh artists, but rather the graphic depiction of Wales and Welsh life in all its forms. The lack of a dedicated National Gallery of Wales containing work by Welsh artists has had a serious effect on the understanding of Welsh visual culture. The lack of such an institution has also contributed to the perceived lack of interest in the visual at a national level. For

example, David Bell's statement of 1957 is typical of writing on Welsh art in the middle of the twentieth century: "[w]e must admit, at the beginning of a book on artists in Wales, that the genius of the Welsh people has expressed itself primarily in literature and in poetry and not in the visual arts" (16).

"Works of art by Welsh artists" are now specified as a type of work to be collected by the Library, the term being included in the revised Collection Development Policy from 2010. The current Policy simplifies the remit for collecting visual material at the National Library, clearly listing the kinds of art works that should be collected. This is in contrast to the original declaration in the Charter, which although listed a variety of media which could be collected, left much of the aesthetic consideration open to the interpretation of those making purchases and building the collection. The CDP of 2010 is much more succinct:

> The Library selectively collects works of art, portraits and photographs on the basis of historical, documentary and explanatory content, whilst also taking the research potential into consideration, in the following areas:
>
> • Welsh landscapes.
>
> • Welsh portraits and works of art by Welsh artists and works showing significant Welsh events.
>
> • Three-dimensional art works are only collected in very exceptional circumstances.
>
> • Photographs relating to Wales or by Welsh photographers.
>
> • In dealing with graphic works in digital formats, consideration must be given to the extent to which they are unique (especially when purchasing such materials). (16)

The inclusion of "works of art by Welsh artists" and photographers goes some way to correcting the previous anomaly by clearly specifying works by Welsh artists as well as Welsh-subject matter within its collecting remit. However the CDP is still somewhat problematic in terms of the reasons why an art work could be selected for inclusion in the collection. Landscapes are still of primary importance, and "historical, documentary and explanatory contexts" form the main criteria for collection. This suggests that visual materials collected should operate as illustrations of Wales/the Welsh, rather

than as works of fine art chosen for aesthetic purposes. Although this is perhaps understandable in terms of the library function of the institution, a tension exists if the Library is discussed as the largest collection of Welsh art: art works here, are documents.

The collection has not always developed according to a succinct outline as shown in the current CDP. The following brief description of how the collection has developed intends to show how despite initially developing in an *ad hoc* manner, the theme of "historical, documentary and explanatory contexts" (*ibid.*) has been evident throughout the development of visual media collections.

The concentration on collecting for documentation's sake raises the notion of works being collected to be stored and retained, but not necessarily displayed regularly. This raises two questions. Firstly, if art works are collected for documentary purposes, would not an image of the artwork suffice? The Warburg Institute for, example, houses a photographic library (currently in the process of being digitised) that is arranged according to the unique classification system of that establishment. Similarly, the Witt and Conway Libraries at the Courtauld Institute of Art contain photographs and images cut from published material (often sale catalogues) of architecture and art works respectively for the use and study by researchers, scholars and students. In both instances, photographic reproductions are deemed sufficient for the specific research undertaken at those institutions.

Secondly, given that paintings held at the National Library of Wales are displayed irregularly, does the value of the art work for the Library come solely from its documentary function rather than its display value? The presence of art works in the Library gives value to the institution by emphasising the diversity of the collections. The value of the originals to the Library is also shown in the readiness to loan material for exhibition, mount their own exhibitions from their collections, and function as a repository of Welsh art in the absence of a dedicated National Gallery of Wales.

The digital reproduction, storage and display of artworks compounds the issue, especially when for the general user curious about how a particular artist painted a Welsh landscape, a digital image may provide sufficient information. Before ubiquitous networked communications, the only way a Library user could see the collections would be through their physical exhibition, through photographic reproduction in catalogues or by visiting the Library and requesting to see a specific painting. Despite digitisation projects and initiatives and the popularity of remote access to collections, the collection of original works of art remains important to the Library: "50,000 art treasures" are advertised on the opening page of the Library's website ("Home page"). In a list of its most significant collections, the Library claims to have "the most comprehensive collection of paintings and topographical prints in Wales, a total of over 60,000" and "the biggest collection of portraits of Welsh people, comprising 15,000 portrait paintings and drawings" ("Collection Development Policy" 5). This suggests a tacit acknowledgment of the primacy of the object, and a residual respect for the *aura* of the painting as an object. Paintings are not two-dimensional images, but objects containing physical information that is lost when presented as a digital image on a flat screen.

While an image of a painting may provide sufficient information about the subject/content of a painting, its physical information is more difficult to encode in digital form. This has implications for the development of the *Kyffin Williams Online* resource. Two clarifications are important in discussing digital collections: firstly, collections of digital images are not synonymous with their analogue counterparts. Secondly the presentation of a digital collection should make these differences clear. There should be different expectations of physical collections and their related digitised versions. The presentation of a digital collection should then concentrate on what research can be conducted digitally that could not be conducted with the object itself.

Notable acquisitions

Initially, collections of visual materials developed largely according to donations. Between 1 July 1912 and 31 October 1913, the Library accepted 530 maps, plans, drawings and engravings, (*Report 1910-1913* 27). It is notable that visual material such as drawings of landscapes are treated almost as documentary texts and grouped with maps suggesting that graphical materials were kept to document the people and land rather than as *art works*. The collection also included paintings from the outset, including donations of portraits such as one of historian, cartographer and antiquary, Humphrey Llwyd, 1527-1568 (69). Also in this period, the Library received gifts of portraits of notable Welsh figures such as "Ceiriog", The Rev. William Harris of Aberdare and the Rev Josiah Thomas Jones, often received from the subjects' families, *(Report 1918-1919* 5). This aspect of the collection has developed to the point where the Library also has an implied function as a national portrait collection. While the portraits listed above indicate that collecting practice for portraits initially tended towards notable or historic figures, the impetus behind the collecting this kind of material also had a documentary focus. The first report of progress of the Library notes that the Department of Prints and Drawings will collect "[…] portraits of men and women, not only celebrities, but racial types and interesting characters" (*Report* 1909 27), suggesting that pictures of the people of Wales as well as landscape images were collected for who or what they showed, rather than for aesthetic or curatorial purposes.

The documentary tendency stresses the difference of purpose between the Library's collecting practice and that of a gallery. Views of landscape in drawings, engravings, prints and paintings and portraits (collected because of the sitter, rather than artist) are accepted as representations of Wales and Welsh life that document, record and illustrate the people and country. Art works function as visual supplements to the printed collections. Art objects become *documents*; the content of artworks becomes *evidence*.

The Library's involvement with art occasionally involved safeguarding collections from other institutions. In 1919, Ballinger reported that during the years of the First World War, the Library had been used secretly for the "storage of national treasures of Art and Literature," including works from the British Museum, the National Portrait Gallery and the Corporation of London. While the collection of visual materials at the National Library was in relative infancy, the fact that "treasures which if destroyed would have robbed not only Great Britain but the civilised world of some of its greatest possessions" (*Librarian's Report* 1919 5) were transferred to Aberystwyth for safe-keeping suggests that the facilities for the care of such collections were present from the early years of the Library. Staff travelled from London to ensure the safekeeping of the treasures. Ballinger continues:

> The whole of these valuables were removed, stored and returned without a single mishap. The care of them naturally involved some responsibility, but this was reduced to a minimum by the residence in Aberystwyth throughout the period when the property was there, of Officers of the British Museum, a Keeper of Assistant Keeper from one of the departments, with three other officers, being always in residence. (*ibid.*)

The collection of visual materials diversified further in 1920, with a collection of photographic negatives known as the Cambrian Gallery from John Thomas of Liverpool, sent for preservation by Sir Owen M. Edwards. John Thomas was "a photographer with a great love for Welsh history and literature, so wherever he went, he took historical scenes, and important living persons, especially litterateurs" ("Collection of Photographic Negatives" 7). The relevance of the collection to the National Library is in its observational qualities, as documentary of Wales and Welsh people in the late nineteenth century. It is also an indication of how the Department of Prints and Drawings encompassed a wider range of media than its name suggested. It also suggests the importance of the subject/content of material dictated whether or not items were relevant to the collection, rather than adherence to Print or Drawing media. This variation of media is relevant when considering the development of the collection of visual materials and the policies that govern the collection.

In his report of September 1921 John Ballinger draws attention to the purchase of the *Atlas Theatrum Orbis Terrarum,* dated 1595. The significance of this atlas to the National Library is described as "of exceptional interest to Welsh people because it contains two maps by Humphrey Llwyd of Denbigh (1527-1568), these being the first modern maps of England and Wales, and of Wales separately" (12-13). A reproduction of a portrait of Humphrey Llwyd, already in the National Library's collection is described in the report: "A painting of Llwyd is preserved at Aston Hall of which a reproduction presented to the National Library some years ago by Lieut. General Sir Francis Lloyd, G.C.V.O., K.C.B., D.S.O., is included in this year's Exhibition*"* (*ibid.*). The reporting of the acquisition of these maps and the related portrait is indicative of the relative status of visual materials at this stage in the development of the Department of Maps, Prints and Drawings: it demonstrates the diversification and variety of material collected by the Department, but also shows that the portrait is supplementary to the maps. The importance of the picture lay in its subject – that of a notable early Welsh cartographer – rather than as a painting. Despite this, it is an important example to illustrate how the Department approached creating a complete visual archive of Wales and its history, rather than adhering strictly to materials listed in its name.

The diversity of art works in terms of media and subject matter received, collected, and accepted as gifts by the National Library of Wales in this early period is striking compared to the focussed collection development policy currently in place. The Librarian's Report of September 1921 for instance records a Mr Richard Wheatley of Birmingham presenting the Library with "a striking piece of sculpture entitled "The Sons of Posseidon"[sic], being a bronzed plaster cast of an important work by his brother, Mr. Oliver Wheatley, the original in bronze being in the Birmingham art gallery" (11). Oliver Wheatley has no obvious Welsh heritage ("Oliver Wheatley"), the subject is classical rather than specifically Welsh, and its medium – a cast of a bronze sculpture would only be accepted under exceptional circumstances today ("Collection Development Policy" 16). *The Sons of Poseidon* was exhibited at the National Library of Wales Exhibitions in 1927, 1928, 1930 and 1931 ("Oliver

Wheatley"). While this suggests that accumulation of art at the National Library collections was much more *ad hoc* in manner in its early years, it also demonstrates a commitment to a wide variety of artistic media, and as John Ballinger reported "[t]he constant flow of gifts is a sure indication of the good-will towards the Library which is felt throughout Wales, while the increasing number of important additions from beyond Wales shows recognition of the position which the Library has reached as a national institution*"* (*Report 1922* 4).

Display, exhibitions and the National Library of Wales

> Although Wales enjoys a lively artistic culture, the provision of public space for the exhibition of art has been consistently inadequate […] Aberystwyth has two galleries used for teaching and research; together with its arts centre, the Ceredigion Museum and the National Library, it probably has more gallery space pro rata than any other Welsh town. One gallery without a permanent base, and the most representative and influential of them all, is the arts and crafts pavilion at the peripatetic National Eisteddfod. ("Art Galleries")

Following the development of an art or "graphical materials" collection at the National Library, it is logical to question how these collections have been displayed. The major national art collections in Wales are dispersed through several institutions, and as previously noted, the National Library and National Museum's *partial* concern for art means that much of their collections of Welsh art are not on display regularly, and have to fit in with exhibition programmes encompassing the varied collections of those institutions. As Moore's observations illustrate, Aberystwyth, home of the Library, has a range of exhibition spaces, including the Gregynog Gallery, which David Bell described in 1957 as "The most handsome single exhibition gallery in Wales […] Whatever is said about the exterior of the building, this gallery has been a magnificent setting for the great pictures it has from time to time housed"(185-6). However, its presence in a Library reiterates the unique challenges of collecting art/ "graphical materials" in a repository for (predominantly) written books, archives and manuscripts. Donald Moore's 1979 statement is still largely true today: "[t]he Library differs from most repositories of art material in that it has no items on permanent exhibition, apart from a few portrait busts and bronzes in the Central Hall. Its pictures are kept in store, mostly

unframed, until a requirement arises for study or exhibition." He continues, noting that not displaying a permanent collection has some advantages. For example, from a conservation point of view watercolour and works on paper are protected from decline and damage by "over-long exposure." Conversely, the lack of a permanent display of the Library's art collections can be problematic for visitors: it is difficult for the Library to establish an artistic identity with the visiting public, who cannot make "regular visits in the expectation of seeing some old favourite in a predictable location" (108).

This balance again emphasises that the exhibition spaces in the Library are not there to solely serve the needs of the art or "graphical materials" collection, but rather the art collections contribute towards the exhibitions programme of the Library which includes all collection, including books, manuscripts and archives:

> A significant contribution is made by the Department [of Pictures and Maps] to the exhibition programme of the Library, especially in view of the visual appeal of many items. A number of works are regularly loaned to other institutions provided that they are able to meet the required conservation and security standards. Photographic reproductions of items in the collections often appear in publications and attention is thereby also drawn to the holdings of the Department. (*Guide to the Department of Pictures and Maps* 10)

The exhibitions programme covers not only art works and other visual material, but also attempts to be representative of the diverse collections of the National Library. As such, despite having a physical space capable of accommodating large-scale art exhibitions, the galleries are also used to present a wide range of exhibitions such as *Dot-Dot-Dash*: *Communicating in Wales* between 3 November 2012 and 14 September 2013 tracing the history of communications technology and methods through the twentieth century, or *Dylan*, a large, multi-media exhibition celebrating Dylan Thomas's centenary (at the Library between 28 June and 20 December 2014). This thematic approach developed throughout the Library's history and suggests an attempt to display a wide range of collections and appeal to the varied interests of its users. In the 1920s, exhibitions were assigned generic titles such as the "*Exhibition of Paintings, Drawings, Maps, Manuscripts, Rare*

Books, Fine Bindings, Etc." By 1939 however the Annual Exhibition had discrete thematic 'features' such as "How we obtained our Bible" displaying material related to the translation of the Bible into Welsh and English and a display related to the centenary of the Chartist movement (*Report 1938-39* 21-22).

Exhibitions at the Library have ranged from selections of rare books, manuscripts and visual material from its own collections to accepting loans of pictures from other institutions to form summer exhibitions. After the Library offered safekeeping of collections from the National Gallery and other institutions during the years of the Second World War, "as a gesture of thanks permission was given for pictures from the Royal and other collections to be shown to the public in the reading room of the Library during the summer following the end of the War" (Bell 185-6). Subsequently, the Library's Council began arranging summer exhibitions at the Gregynog Gallery and reading rooms. This activity indicates the esteem in which the exhibition space was held, and the public appetite for exhibitions of art works at the institution. The summer exhibition, reinstated in August 1945 after a break in activities during the war years, included "a representative selection of paintings illustrating the development of European art from Botticelli to Cézanne," drawn from the Royal Collection, the collection of Dulwich Picture Gallery and the Gregynog Collection of G.E. and M.S. Davies. The Annual Report of 1945-46 notes that the "exhibition proved a great success, being visited by more than twelve thousand persons between August 10, on which date it was formally opened by the Vice-President (Lord Harlech) and the end of November" (16).

The Library has been a significant exhibitor and distributor of cultural materials throughout its history, with statistics relating to attendance of exhibitions in its early years showing how popular a venue the Library has been from its beginning. The Librarian's report of May 1920 registers the preparations being made for an exhibition of books, paintings and manuscripts to open in early June of that year. The exhibition, which showed '*Books, Manuscripts and Paintings,'* indicated the variety of exhibitions which has continued in the exhibitions programme. While the books and manuscripts

were sourced from the Library's own collections (including books published up to the year 1700, and selections from the Peniarth and Mostyn manuscripts), paintings were supplied through a variety of loans (1-2).[4] The exhibition opened on 5 June 1920 and received 19,136 visitors by 30 September of that year; 3,538 copies of the catalogue produced by the Library were sold indicating the popularity and interest in the exhibition. The exhibition was re-opened the following year, with a new selection of paintings from other lenders,[5] and a revised catalogue produced. These exhibitions are worth noting to contextualise the early commitment of the institution to the display and presentation of art works, even in a period when its own collections of art consisted of material within the Department of Prints and Drawings outlined above.

The material exhibited at the National Library's annual exhibitions included works loaned to the institution as well as examples from its own collections. While material from the National Library's own burgeoning collection features heavily in the exhibitions, it is notable that paintings were often borrowed for inclusion. This could perhaps indicate a feeling that an exhibition would not be 'complete' without paintings and indicates the importance of including visual materials in the Library's work from the outset. These exhibitions are relevant to contextualise the position of the library as an exhibitor of materials in addition to its role as custodian of historical materials, and guardian of a nation's' memory. The exhibition activities of the Library: creating an exhibition showing the development of European painting from "Botticelli to Cézanne" and consistently borrowing from the renowned Gregynog Collection of the Davies sisters, shows an acknowledgement of aesthetic issues when dealing with visual materials and its position as an

[4] "Paintings have been lent by Sir Alfred Mond, Bart., Lord Howard de Walden, Mrs. Herbert Lewis, Sir Leverhulme, M. Cecil Wright, Major Mathias, Sir John Williams, the National Gallery of British Art, Mr. Sheringham, Mr. Mark Fisher, RA. Mr Herbert Vaughan, of Llangoedmore, has presented a portrait of an American gentleman, painted in 1865 by Thomas Sully, which will be included in the exhibition." (*Librarian's Report 1920,* 1-2)

[5] "The exhibition was reopened to the public on Whit-Monday, with a collection of modern paintings, including some of those exhibited last year, and some lent by Mrs. Edward Davies of Plas Dinam, by Mrs. Beer's Trustees, and others." (*Librarian's Report 1921*, 6)

exhibitor of art works, even when its collection was more focused on collecting work as a visual record of the country, rather than as art for its own sake.

Bell draws attention to the collaboration between the Arts Council and Library in arranging an exhibition of works by Augustus John in 1948, and David Jones in 1954, before suggesting that the Library's contribution to the visual culture of Wales came by providing a venue for loan exhibitions, rather than exhibiting its own collection. Bell acknowledged that "[a]lthough the Library has only a few pictures of its own the generosity of the Misses Davies and the work of the Arts Council have enabled it to make this Gallery a centre of art which has been enjoyed each summer by people from a wide area" (185-6). Many of the touring exhibitions that the Library hosted were the result of collaboration between the Arts Council, Contemporary Art Society for Wales and the Library, while loans between the Library and National Museum provided the content for several exhibitions during this period. Modern art was included in the Library's Annual Exhibition for the first time in 1933, recorded in that year's annual report with the simple note: "An entirely new feature is a selection of oil paintings, water-colours, and etchings illustrating the work of modern Welsh artists. These have been lent by the Council of the National Museum of Wales" (*Report 1933* 31). Despite the diversification of material on display, the conservatism shown in selecting works for exhibition by the Library and other institutions has been criticised by Peter Lord who wrote that

> The National Eisteddfod exhibitions were in severe decline through the 1930s, and the two national institutions with permanent galleries – the National Museum and the National Library – presented very limited and conservative programmes to the public. The 1933 exhibition of Works by Modern Welsh Artists at the National Library, for instance, showed the familiar canon of Christopher Williams, Margaret Lindsay Williams, Frank Brangwyn and Augustus John, with a younger generation represented by Evan Walters. The National Museum's record was even more dismal: D. Kighley Baxandall's catalogue of the etchings of Augustus John was the only exhibition or publication about a living Welsh artist or artists generated between the great 1913 exhibition and the Second World War. (380)

While the lack of a national platform for modern art was arguably detrimental to the recognition of a distinct visual culture in Wales, the conservatism of these curatorial choices

however must be viewed in the context of the Library as a repository for a diverse range of collections, and not only art works. The intention of the 1933 Annual Exhibition was to "show a representative selection of material from the various departments of the Library." The works of modern artists were exhibited together with "books and manuscripts of 'Tomos Glyn Cothi […] topographical prints […] illustrations of Welsh and Breton costume; and a selection of broadsides, including some dealing with education and agriculture" (*Report 1933* 31). In this respect it is unfair to expect this kind of exhibition to push the boundaries of contemporary art display. Rather, it shows the readiness of the institution to partake in the display of art works in addition to its other collections.

The Library was also venue to a temporary exhibition organised by the Contemporary Art Society of Wales for six weeks in 1933, including "paintings, engravings, architects' drawings, and sculpture by twenty-six Welsh men and women, among them being J. D. Innes, Augustus John, Gwen John, David Jones, Cedric Morris, and Evan Walters" (Ellis 160). While this exhibition may not have included the most avant-garde selection of work it is notable for the way in which the work of each of the artists listed would have fitted in with the collection policy of the Library, with many of the artists exhibited eventually having work purchased by the Library. The institution's policy on collecting "graphical materials" at the time – as documentary or illustrative of Wales and the Welsh – had the effect of creating a naturally conservative collection. The illustrative quality of the image was important, rather than visual experimentation.

The Library's association with the Contemporary Art Society of Wales was also important in terms of a young institution developing its collection. Many commentators on Welsh art have described at length the effect of the lack of a metropolitan centre on Welsh visual culture, the touring exhibitions of the CASW provided one of the ways in which the Welsh public had some opportunity to see contemporary art. As Meyrick has noted

> The Arts Council, the National Eisteddfod, the National Museum of Wales' Art Department, the Society for Education through Art, and the Contemporary Art Society for Wales were all active from the late 1940s staging touring exhibitions of contemporary art. It was hoped that their combined efforts would improve the cultural climate for artists, to initiate and nurture an artistic community, and ultimately a "Welsh School of Painting." (65)

By being a co-host of some of the touring exhibitions of the Contemporary Art Society for Wales, the National Library not only acted as host and exhibitor, but also had the opportunity to have contemporary works in its care for the duration of the exhibitions. Several works were later acquired by the Library, either through purchase or donated by CASW. This was in addition to the continued practice of loaning art works for the annual summer exhibition. The summer exhibition of 1948 again borrowed heavily from the Gregynog Collection of Gwendoline and Margaret Davies, the selection "included over thirty oil-paintings ranging from Botticelli, El Greco, Frans Hals, and Wilson to Millet, Monet, Renoir and Cézanne, and forty-six etchings by Augustus John" (*Annual Report 1947-1948*, 16).

By 1969, the *Exhibition of Pictures from the Library's Collections* was representative of the Library's collection policy, and exhibited the full range of material from its "graphical" collections. The exhibition catalogue states that the aim of the exhibition was to "give visitors some idea of the wealth and variety of material included in the Department of Prints and Drawings," and the timing of the exhibition chosen as "a larger number of visitors that usual, particularly from overseas, may be expected to visit the library during the summer of 1969." The exhibition catalogue lists works by JD Innes, Moses Griffith and John Ingleby as well as "internationally famous English artists as Thomas Rowlandson, Paul Sandby, and David Cox" (*Exhibition of Pictures 1969*, [1]). Also included were works donated by the JB Williams Bequest Fund, the Contemporary Art Society of Wales, and a portrait of David Lloyd George by Augustus John purchased by the Friends of the National Library. Also included were engravings by Dürer, etchings by Rembrandt, Whistler, Augustus John, Forain and Zorn from the gift of Margaret Davies of Gregynog, as well as lithographs by John Piper and Ceri Richards's lithographs inspired by Dylan Thomas poems (*ibid.*). While the exhibition offered a wide

variety of visual material (amongst the art works was a special section dedicated to Welsh costume, sport, and "rural crafts and industries" (ibid.)), its selection of art works demonstrated the concentration on landscape, including a section for topographical works, reiterating the collection as one which illustrates or documents the land. Even the modern and contemporary painters were included where their work depicted recognisable people and places of Wales.

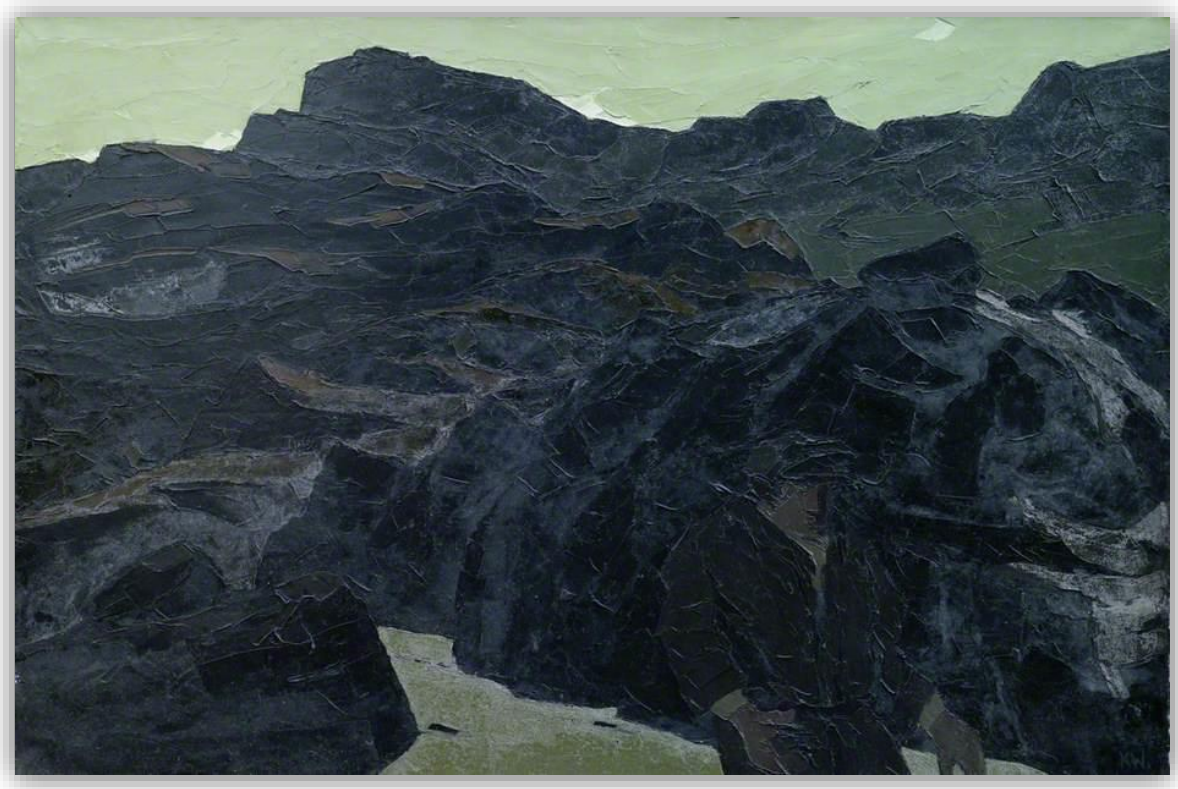

Figure 11:*Cwm Hetiau*, [1970-1981]

This pattern is replicated in exhibitions of Kyffin Williams's work. The 1981 retrospective exhibition of Kyffin Williams's work held at the National Library and at University College Swansea, showed work by a contemporary artist whose familiar, recognisable and understandable subject matter was a primary concern, rather than pushing boundaries of display. This exhibition, staged in the middle of Williams's painting career also shows how the relationship between the artist and the Library had developed since the purchase of *Tre'r Ceiri* and *Llyn Cau* in 1949. Of the 41 oil paintings exhibited, 13 were then owned by the National Library, with others being loaned by Aberystwyth

University, the Royal Academy, All Souls College, Oxford, various private collections and 10 pictures from Kyffin Williams himself. Of these eight pictures, four eventually became part of the National Library's collection, including *Miss Parry, Cloud above Crib Goch, Cwm Hetiau* (above) and *Cloud on Cnicht.*

Digital presentation of content

The geographical location of the Library has had an effect on its exhibitions. As Donald Moore summarises:

> [t]he Library's role as an exhibition centre is bound to be conditioned by its accessibility. Sadly, this is not improving. The rail link between Aberystwyth and Carmarthen has been severed; rail connections with the north and east have deteriorated. Roads, though better, have scarcely kept pace with increasing traffic, and there is none of motorway standard within a radius of fifty miles. (110)

The accessibility of the Library's collections in Aberystwyth has been questioned since its founding, and its transport links remain similar to those described by Moore in 1979. In the advent of digital reproduction, the Library became an early advocate of the digital reproduction and dissemination of its collections, in doing so acknowledging Deegan and Tanner's view that:

> […] there are considerable benefits of digital access to library collections. The digitization of resources opens up new modes of use, enables a much wider potential audience and gives a renewed means of viewing our cultural heritage. (32)

Arwel Jones points out that the start of the Library's programme of digitisation "was first discussed at the Library in the mid – to – late 1990s. Some exhibitions and a selection of their most prominent treasures were digitised from 1995 onwards and four pilot projects were undertaken in 1999. Two digitisation policies have since been produced, the first in 2001 and the second in 2005"(101-102). A third *Digitisation Policy 2008/9-2010/11* has since been produced. The Library is in the process of updating this policy (as of 2015). While the Library has a stated aim of making as much of its collections available digitally, the first items to be digitised were prioritised according to exhibitions: from the outset, digital reproduction and publication of Library materials has been a

curatorial exercise in addition to one of preservation and access to surrogates. Initial digitisation projects related directly to exhibitions, and acted as online 'versions' of those exhibitions. These included the exhibition relating to David Lloyd George and made use of the audio/visual material used at the exhibition, but did not include digitised versions of manuscript material. The digital exhibition is still live on the Library's website, and is very dated in appearance and functionality.

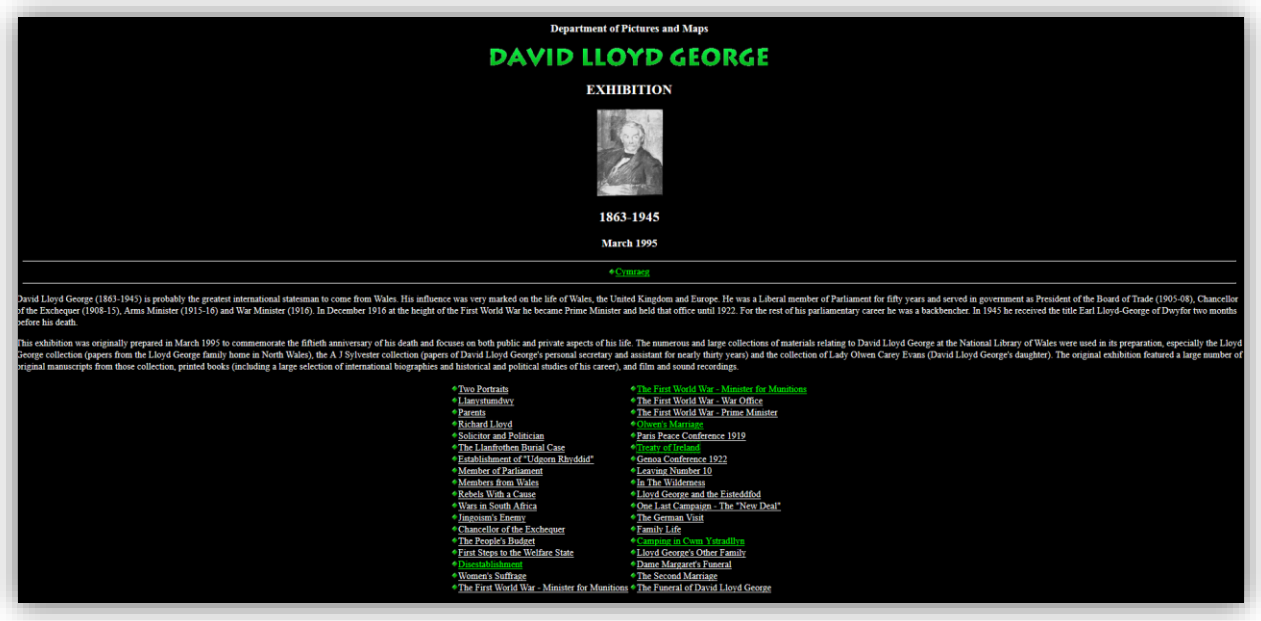

Figure 12: David Lloyd George exhibition, 1996, National Library of Wales

Later, the *Ymgyrchu! Campaign! Campana!* exhibition, which focussed on protest in twentieth-century politics and their relation to Wales, had a more expansive digital supplement.

Figure 13: Ymgyrchu! Campaign! Campana! website, National Library of Wales

This resource indicated an increased usability compared to the David Lloyd George material, allowing users to search material, and an interactive timeline was included to facilitate temporal browsing. While the online exhibition looks very dated by contemporary standards, Jones notes that "its continuing success, constantly appearing among the [L]ibrary's most popular sites, goes some way to proving that content can overcome presentation" (102).

The *Framed Works of Art* resource attempted to provide a digital catalogue of art works in the Library's collection, using bibliographic records and digital images. This approach differed from the two previously noted projects: rather than using the online platform as an interpretive exhibition, it functions as an on-going catalogue of art works. Digital images are not included where copyright holders have refused permission to do so. While the development of the World Wide Web and the age of digitisation of cultural collections meant a shift in how these collections are accessed by users, the development of online resources such as those listed above also fits into the wider context of the Library's activities. Alternative access to collections (i.e. through the duplication of collections) and offering interpretive exhibition programmes have been part of the Library's work for much of its history. Parallels can be drawn between this curatorial aspect of the Library's work and today's web resources. The Library has been consistent in its use of technology and mechanical reproduction to facilitate distance learning as well as remote access to collections. Ballinger, Librarian reported to the Court of Governors on 17 May 1920 that

> There is a growing demand upon the Photostat as a means of copying MSS. and other things for people at a distance […] The facilities of the Photostat are almost unlimited. Old deeds and other documents, old and rare maps, pedigrees, and anything in the nature of writing, printing, or drawing, can be reproduced. (3)

The use of Photostat technology shows how the use of reproductive technology has been to allow access to collections has been consistent throughout the twentieth century. Hughes has stated that:

> The use of digitisation technologies to increase and enhance access to the collections of Wales can be seen as a continuum of the enthusiasm and innovation attached to the adoption of new technologies – be they Photostat or microfilm – throughout the history of the National Library of Wales, and as a pragmatic response to particular issues associated with the Library's mission, collections, history and location. ("Live and Kicking")

The Photostat process was not the only method for duplicating material held at the Library. The Annual Report of 1923 discusses the process and rationale for the creation of picture postcards of items in the National Library's collection for sale to the public. By 1923, pictorial postcards included "19 new cards containing reproductions from a series of drawings in water-colour and

monochrome made by the famous artist Thomas Rowlandson during a tour in Wales in the year 1797" (Ballinger*, Librarian's Report 1922* 2). The original drawings belonged to Sir John Williams, and were part of the founding collection of the National Library. The decision to create postcards of Thomas Rowlandson's work, and the method for doing so is explained in the report:

> The drawings are of special importance because they are examples of Rowlandson's work as a topographical artist. He is best known as a caricaturist, but these drawings represent another side of his work, a skilful treatment of picturesque scenery and historical buildings, with here and there a hint of that special way of drawing trees and people which he developed in his caricature work.
>
> Six of the post cards will be in colour, and twelve in monochrome, in the collotype process, recently developed by the Oxford University Press. This is the most satisfactory method for post card work, and is extensively used by the British Museum and other national institutions. (*ibid.*)

The importance of reproductions to the dissemination of and access to cultural artefacts was therefore recognised at an early stage in the Library's history. In the case of the production of picture postcards of a variety of different collections, it indicates a recognition of the commercial benefits of the reproduction of collections. The process of this reproduction however, from mechanical Photostat copies to digitisation, has changed significantly.

"Curatorial crossover"

The creation of picture postcards and use of the Photostat machine offered either a memento of an exhibition or an opportunity for those unable to attend to have a glimpse of the collections at the Library. By contrast, the Library has by now ceased the practice of digitising its physical exhibitions in every instance – apart from selected exhibitions, such as the Library's Centenary exhibition in 2007 (Jones 105). An acceptance of the fundamental difference between digital and analogue exhibitions that ended the practice of

> […] incorporating the digitisation of the items into the workflow of the exhibition proved challenging for the curators, but this in itself would not have brought about a change in policy. However, the distinct difference in presentation and more importantly interpretation did prove to be insurmountable, as the amount of effort needed on behalf of the metadata team to recreate an exhibition in a digital

> context, while ensuring consistency and contextualisation, proved unviable. Bridging the gap between the digitised and the digital called on more and more resources that could be prioritised elsewhere. (105-6)

This acceptance has important outcomes. Firstly it shows that digitisation is not a simple process of creating a digital snapshot of an exhibition or collection and 'putting it on the internet': digitisation and digital curation involves a different set of interpretive approaches and contextualisation to an analogue exhibition. Secondly it places the creation of digital resources at the National Library at the intersection of library and museum practice, embodying what Gerald Beasley calls the "curatorial crossover." He argues that "libraries impose systems in and on their materials while museums, by contrast, build exhibition and educational programs around their materials" (24). Using this definition, it can be said that the Library undertakes both activities. It collects and systematises collections for discovery from the repository, and curates and exhibits this material according to an exhibition programme. As noted above, digital exhibition of library materials offers different challenges to their physical exhibition. These differences informed the approach taken in creating *Kyffin Williams Online*. The intention is not to present a *digital version* of an exhibition of Kyffin Williams material held by the National Library of Wales, but rather to create tools which facilitate research that would not have been possible by using the actual art objects alone. In order for the digital resource to be a success, digitisation must be crucial to the research enterprise rather than simply being a means of showing an image of an item in the collection. Doing so acknowledges that a digitised painting is not a *version* of the original but a new and different digital object that presents its own unique research possibilities.

The art and other collections of the National Library have been exhibited in a variety of ways since its foundation. When works are not on display, artworks can be accessed by making a request at the reading rooms in the same way as requesting manuscript, archive or printed material. For users who do not go through this process the display of reproductions of art materials takes on an

added significance as a means of allowing access to images of works which are stored in non-public areas of the institution.

Access and preservation are often the drivers for the use of reproductions of Library collections. Digitisation can preserve content by providing a facsimile to library users to decrease the use of an original, or to 'save' the content of a rapidly deteriorating work. The Library has also used a variety of reproductive technologies to allow use of its collections by remote users throughout its history. The use of a Photostat machine in the 1920s was a mechanical precursor to contemporary mass digitisation projects such as *Welsh Newspapers Online*. The inaccessibility of collections, especially given that access to Aberystwyth itself via road and rail has scarcely improved in the 'digital age', has meant that remote use of collections has become even more of a priority. In an article in 2002, Andrew Green wrote that "the geographical location of the Library, in a relatively small town in mid-Wales, 70 miles from the nearest sizeable centre of population, has also pointed to the potential of using remote methods, especially the Web, to reach these new audiences" ("Digital Library, Open Library" 3). Two of the sections in Green's article were titled "Opening the Temple" and "Abolishing Distance," underlining the importance of digital resources for access. The *Kyffin Williams Online* project fits within this context of abolishing distance between user and collection. The project also acknowledges how the National Library exists at what Beasley has described as the *curatorial crossover* – organising material according to its systems or order, but also allows these systems to be used as part of an interpretive or educational programme.

While digitisation programmes increase access to digital surrogates, it must be kept in mind that this does not mean access to the original object, a point which is especially pertinent when considering the differences between viewing artworks – paintings, drawings or three dimensional works in 'person' compared to a reproduction on a computer screen. With this in mind, this project will attempt to consider the digitised collections as separate entities to the originals, and the resource attempt to play to the strengths of digital images of Library collections. The goal is not to

simply “increase access” (as access to digital images does not mean access to the original works themselves), but to acknowledge the difference and offer a different research tool to analogue resources. The next chapter elaborates on this point. In Chapter 2, I shall elaborate upon the Kyffin Williams works in the National Library and beyond, and through a discussion of his connection to the Welsh landscape, discuss how ideas of a ‘geography of art’ rather than a biographical history of his works can be an appropriate means of presenting this collection. I shall also place his work within the context of twentieth-century Welsh art. I will also apply Benedict Anderson’s ideas of the *imagined community* in the context of a Welsh visual culture, and to discuss how landscape, and specifically mountain landscapes have become so important to Welsh visual culture. The second section of the chapter will introduce how ideas of landscape and identity can be used to formulate a digital resource for this library collection.

Chapter 2: Kyffin Williams and Welsh art

The purpose of this chapter is to present a literature review specific to placing Kyffin Williams's life and work within the wider context of Welsh art, and collections of Welsh art. The intention of this chapter is not to give a comprehensive historiography of Welsh art, but rather examine how one artist fits within conceptions of the visual culture in Wales. This chapter will also operate as a continuation of the previous chapters which explored the artist's relationship with the National Library of Wales in fleshing out the position Williams holds in the popular consciousness in Wales, and why his collection occupies such a privileged position within the Library's collections. To do this, I will first discuss literature directly concerning the artist. Starting at the end, I shall offer a comparison of obituaries of the artist, to demonstrate how he came to be seen as the 'epitome' of Welsh art. The nature of Williams's work in public collections in the UK, with particular reference to their digital presentation on the Public Catalogue Foundation/BBC Your Paintings website is discussed before an analysis of the content of selected major solo exhibitions.

Williams's two volumes of autobiography – *Across the Straits* (1973), and *A Wider Sky,* (1991) – are considered in depth, as is the extensive biographical interview with Williams conducted by the British Library as part of their *Artists' Lives* project in 1995. In this section I shall pay particular attention to Williams's discussion of place as a way of introducing the importance of particular landscapes to his work, and this project. Williams has been the subject of several biographies already (Meredith & Smith, 2012, Skidmore, and many biographical essays in periodicals) and another is apparently in production: Rian Evans, co-author of *The Art of Kyffin Williams* (2007, published by the Royal Academy) is noted in the press release for that volume as "currently working on William's[sic] biography" ("Press Release, *The Art of Kyffin Williams"*). This work has not been published as of March 2015. Many of the published biographies draw heavily on Williams's autobiographical writing, and so these will only be given a cursory review.

Kyffin Williams and twentieth-century Welsh art

If any confirmation was needed of Kyffin Williams's place in the popular consciousness as the most notable of Welsh artists, it can be found in obituaries of the artist in newspapers and other news sources. Taking obituaries from UK broadsheets, national newspapers (published for north and south Wales), the BBC and Royal Academy together as a dataset, the most commonly used words after the artist's name are 'Wales'/ 'Welsh' with 91 occurrences across the 10 obituaries examined. By contrast, 'paint' is mentioned 12 times, and 'family' only 11. This analysis of text is useful to show the extent to which Williams is seen as a figurehead of Welsh art and the importance of the national to writing about his life and work.

Obituaries from the UK newspapers emphasise this point particularly, with Meic Stephens in the *Independent* calling Williams partly responsible for the stereotyped image of Wales as a land of rain-lashed hillsides ("Sir Kyffin Williams: Painter of iconic mountain landscapes of North Wales"). Rian Evans in the *Guardian* states that the artist has become as iconic as his "monumental landscapes of Snowdonia" ("Sir Kyffin Williams: one of the great Welsh artists, he captured the majestic landscapes of his native land"). Welsh newspaper the *Western Mail* provides a more specific obituary, including tributes from politicians and a variety of other public figures including singer Bryn Terfel and athlete Lynn Davies ("Sir Kyffin Williams, 1918-2006"), while the north Wales *Daily Post* concludes with the statement that the painter was a genius (13). Bernard Dunstan and Diane Armfield writing for the *Royal Academy Magazine* concentrate on the artist's practice more than the other obituaries, describing Williams's palette knife technique and use of heavy impasto but also call him "the best loved artist in Wales, and the most distinguished"(93). All of the obituaries draw heavily upon Williams's extensive biographical writing, with the effect of his epilepsy on his vocation being noted in 6 of the obituaries. All of the obituaries and tributes emphasise the subject's connection with Wales (aside from the repetition of the terms 'Wales' and 'Welsh', specific places such as Anglesey, Llangefni, Pwllheli are also consistently mentioned). Only three of the

obituaries – in *The Times* (70), the *Guardian* and BBC website ("Top Welsh Artist") – raise Kyffin Williams's travels to Patagonia, despite the visit and its resulting pictures often being seen as a discrete collection within his oeuvre and forming a natural marker in the middle of his career. Discussion of paintings of South America as well as his working visits to Venice would perhaps have disrupted the narrative of a specifically Welsh artist. Taken as a whole, the obituaries celebrate his life and achievements, but as with much of the literature about the artist and his work, fix his practice to specific places.

Gallery representation

The Albany Gallery in Cardiff and Thackeray Gallery in London represented Williams during his lifetime. Both continue to represent his work and a biography and information about the artist feature prominently on their websites and promotional material. Both emphasise the importance of Williams in the field of Welsh art. The purpose of this material remains to sell pictures, and so is somewhat hyperbolic in tone. However, both also contextualise Williams as a specifically Welsh painter, and emphasise the importance of Wales and the Welsh landscape to his work.

The Albany Gallery notes that "Kyffin was without doubt the figurehead of contemporary Welsh art. He was widely viewed as the first artist to truly connect with the Welsh people – a tribute to the authenticity of his artistic vision" ("Sir Kyffin Williams"). The suggestion that Williams was the first artist to "connect with the Welsh people" perhaps alludes to the assumption in early writings of Welsh art history that Wales is a distinctly un-visual culture in which literature and music took precedence over visual arts. This notion will be further explored below, and while Kyffin Williams is one of the most well-known Welsh artists from the late twentieth century, to suggest he single-handedly connected Wales to the world of art is exaggeration. The Thackeray Gallery's description also stresses the importance of Wales/Welshness, but also makes an attempt to contextualise Williams within the field of British landscape painting:

> Kyffin Williams has become known as an artist who took Wales and her people as his inspiration. In remaining true to subjects offered by his native land, he has undoubtedly made a unique contribution to the tradition of British landscape painting, and has become the adopted father of contemporary Welsh art. ("Sir Kyffin Williams RA OBE 1918-2006")

The way the galleries describe Williams as the 'father' and 'figurehead' of contemporary Welsh art is problematic at best, and misleading at worst. It can only be assumed that the galleries used the word 'contemporary' to mean being produced in the present day or in very recent past, rather than contemporary or modern art. Williams's relationship with contemporary art was fraught, and the artist made several scathing public statements about contemporary practice. In a lecture given in Caernarfon at the North Wales Art Association in 1986, Williams is reactionary and resolutely conservative in his assessment of contemporary art practice. Performance art is glibly condemned as "bad amateur dramatics with a desire to shock." Other avant-garde practices which have subsequently been enmeshed into the canon are also attacked. Photography ("at its worst [when it is] trying to be artistic"), abstract painting of all kinds ("Abstract painting appears to have been a worthwhile experiment that failed") and conceptual art ("Today it appears that it is the thought that counts, and not the execution") are derided as tools of the destruction of tradition in art, while art education is similarly attacked, with uncited anecdotes explaining how representational art of any kind is outlawed in several of Britain's most respected art colleges (*Is tradition in Danger* n.p.).

If the suggestion that Williams was the father of "contemporary Welsh art" has an unintentional irony, the emphasis on Wales/Welshness for a commercial purpose is more understandable. The artist's connection with Wales in these descriptions is best understood in terms of its commercial value – the perceived or real national identity of artist/art work may contribute to its sales potential. This is especially true given the locations of these galleries, with the anecdotal popularity of Kyffin Williams with the London-Welsh diaspora and development of the cliché that success in Wales meant "house in Pontcanna [middle-class area of Cardiff], a Volvo in the

garage and a *Kyffin* on the wall" (Meredith, "Modest master" 18) the *Welshness* of the pictures could make a viable selling point for the galleries.

Williams's work sold well; the artist claimed in his autobiography to have painted approximately two paintings per week when living in London and three per week when living in Wales (*Across the Straits* 136). There are currently 325 pictures by Williams in public collections in the UK, which if Williams's estimate is to be believed would only represent a little over two years' worth of artistic output. Much of the remainder would presumably be in private collections. This suggests that the *Welshness* described by these galleries proved very popular indeed. It has been suggested that the popularity of Williams's work in terms of sales was built upon an easily understood depiction of Welsh identity through paintings of mountainous landscape. Shelagh Hourahane speculates that

> the initial success of Kyffin Willliams's career is closely connected with the fact that in his paintings from the 1950s and 1960s he provided a modern and easily understood interpretation of the Snowdonia landscape. This was at a time when the growth of national feeling among the Welsh middle classes meant that some of them also responded to images which re-affirmed their inherited idea of a national landscape iconography. (53)

The importance of landscape to the understanding of Welsh visual culture and Williams's position in the canon of Welsh art history will be discussed in a later section. Hourahane's statement is useful here, however, to show how emphasising an artist's connection to particular places may have commercial as well as aesthetic implications.

Public collections

Kyffin Williams is well represented in public galleries in Wales, with the National Library and Oriel Ynys Môn having the most significant collections of his work. Both institutions regularly publicise their links to Williams, display their collections, facilitate loans of material to other public galleries and host talks and events relating to the artist. Oriel Ynys Môn is home to Oriel Kyffin Williams which opened in 2008 the plans for which were approved by the artist before his death and

described on the gallery's website as a "a permanent and fitting tribute to one of Wales' most celebrated and respected artists." The perceived importance of the connection to Kyffin Williams in the statement that "the new gallery will also provide a major boost for the arts on Anglesey, and allow the people of Wales and beyond to share and enjoy Kyffin Williams' work" (BBC, "Art gallery for Sir Kyffin opens").

The National Library of Wales also stresses the importance of their Kyffin Williams holdings. In a lecture on the Bequest given at the Library in 2009 and available as a sound recording and in full text on the Library's website, Dr Paul Joyner, Head of Legacy Acquisitions at the Library calls the Williams Bequest as significant a bequest as any that the institution has received, emphasising the fact that the bequest not only included art works and archives, but funds for the conservation, preservation, cataloguing and digitization of the material (2). Information on the bequest contents is given a prominent page on the Library's website, presented as a discrete collection of interest, apart from other more general collections such as 'Pictures', 'Maps', 'Music', etc. While the language of these websites is less hyperbolic than the commercial galleries, their purpose is essentially the same– to emphasise the importance of their connection with the artist and the cultural value of their holdings.

This 'value' can be demonstrated by the popularity of Kyffin Williams-related events at each institution. The summer of 2013 alone saw two separate exhibitions in Wales which drew heavily on the Kyffin Williams collections of both institutions– *Venezia: Drawn to the Light, Kyffin Williams and Venice* at Oriel Ynys Môn (20 July 2013 – 4 February 2014, which also included works by Monet, Sickert, Canaletto and Turner) and *Kyffin Williams A Life in Pictures* at, Cyfarthfa Castle Museum, Merthyr Tydfil (1 July – 31 August 31 2013) ("A Life in Pictures"). Other events at the National Library concerning the Kyffin Williams remain extremely popular with the public: two lunchtime lectures at the Library's Drwm theatre in 2013 attracted large audiences *The Kyffin Williams Bequest:*

digital approaches talk on 3 April 2013 sold out all 98 seats in theatre, while the *Kyffin Williams Bequest: the story so far* talk (4 September 2013) sold 90 tickets.[6]

Other public institutions that received material as part of the Bequest draw less attention to their connection with Kyffin Williams. Bangor University note the receipt of "a substantial gift[,] including important works of art, books and furniture," in their *Roll of Donors 2006-2009* publication (21). The National Museum and Galleries of Wales website makes no specific reference to the Bequest, nor do material received as part of the Bequest appear in the NMGW's online catalogue (as of 17th September 2013). The Royal Academy includes a brief biography in its information about past Academicians and an obituary, but no information about the receipt of Bequest material. Gwasg Gregynog, a private press with which Kyffin Williams had close ties notes the artist's generosity, ("History of Gwasg Gregynog") and the Museum of Modern Art, Wales makes no reference to Williams on its website other than including an image of one of six Kyffin Williams paintings in its collection, *Cilgwyn*. The prominence of information about Kyffin Williams provided by institutions which received material as part of the Bequest could be read as indicative of the relative importance to those collections. However, the fact that the National Library also received funds to be used in conjunction with the paintings, drawings and other materials is more likely to have led to their more proactive approach to these materials.

Autobiography

Kyffin Williams's life story is well reported, in both autobiography and biographies. First published in 1973, Williams's first volume of autobiography, *Across the Straits,* tells his life story from childhood, school experiences, military career and subsequent discharge owing to epilepsy, his training at the Slade School of Art, and career as a teacher at Highgate School. Throughout the narrative the influence of the land of his upbringing on his work is described, as well as accounts of

[6] An edited version of this talk is available through the National Library of Wales's You Tube channel: *The Kyffin Williams Bequest – Lloyd Roderick.* Ticketing data was gleaned from the internal National Library of Wales Event Manager system

his practice of painting. Throughout the text Williams emphasises his connection to, and detailed knowledge of, the landscape of northwest Wales and Anglesey. This knowledge came from childhood experiences of visiting parishioners with his grandfather (32), his early work as a land agent around the Lleyn peninsula (100-102), and by exploring the land on foot as part of the Ynysfor hunt (62-67, 93-96). Later in the text, the influence of these landscapes on his work is described and closes with a description of the "colours of Wales" and how despite painting in many countries across Europe it is the Welsh landscape that the artist feels he has painted most successfully (210-212).

Figure 14: *The Gathering* [n.d]

Williams's connection to Anglesey and north-west Wales is made clear by his extensive tracing of his family history in the opening chapters of *Across the Straits.* While the memoir opens by jokingly tracing a connection to Lludd ap Beli Mawr (King Lud) who it is "[said] to have built London in 120 B.C." (1) the connection specifically to the parish of Llansadwrn is traced to Wmffre ap William John ap Rhys (d. 1666). The Williams family's connection to north-west Anglesey, including Amlwch, Llangefni, Holyhead and Llanfair-yng-Ngornwy began with John Williams (great-great-

grandfather of Kyffin) becoming rector of Llanfair-yng-Ngornwy from approximately 1821, later succeeded by his son (great-grandfather of Kyffin), James (10-11).

Family members and other people featured in the book are often described according to where they are from and the emphasis on specific places is consistent throughout the text. Descriptions of the work of his grandfather and father's parishes (16-17), family homes (57-58) and school at Shrewsbury (84-86) are rich with descriptions of specific places – villages, towns and mountains. Williams even attributes his formative years in these areas as having a significance for his future vocation: "near the north-east shores of Cardigan Bay, surrounded by some of the most glorious landscape in Britain, I began to assemble unknowingly a vast library of feelings, sensations and knowledge that were to form the foundations of my future life as a landscape painter" (46).

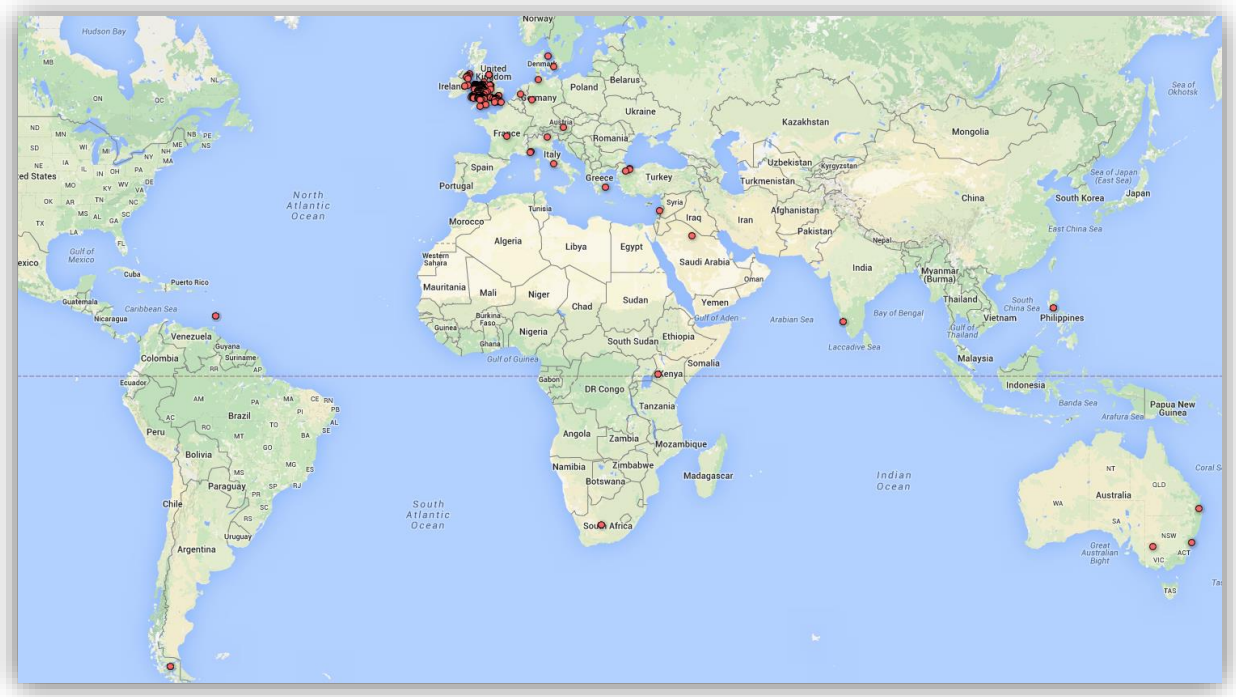

Figure 15: Places named in *Across the Straits*

The above map shows all of the places named by Williams in *Across the Straits.* As expected, places that are described in the text are densely centred on Gwynedd and Anglesey, but the map also shows how London features just as prominently (see also Figure 3). There are flourishes of

activity in Italy and France mirroring places the artist visited during the years recounted in this volume of autobiography, but most striking is the activity in the United States, Egypt and central Africa. Looking at all the instances as a whole, it becomes obvious that while his painted work is inextricably linked with Gwynedd, Anglesey and a working life in London, his written work indicates a much more international flavour. Looking at each entry individually provides a different insight into the nature of Williams's autobiographical writing: that much of the text is not about himself, but relays anecdotes about distant family members and their travels, or the exploits of others around the world. Kyffin Williams was renowned for being a gregarious and vivacious raconteur; the visualisations of the text suggests that anecdote and storytelling were equally important in his written work, while also emphasising how much of the artist's autobiography is focussed on others, rather than himself.

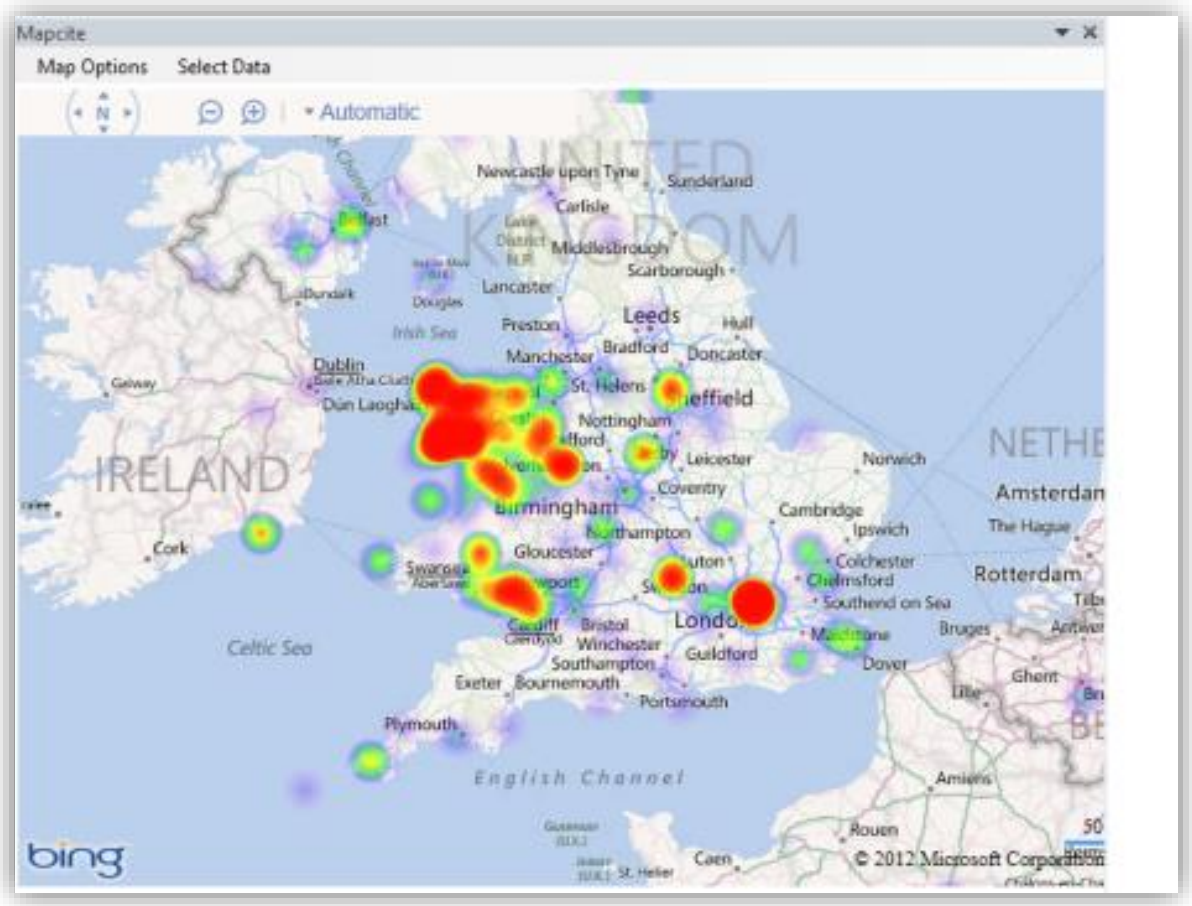

Figure 16: Places names in Across the Straits, detail

Williams's own movements beyond Wales are equally detailed. His period of work as a land agent is described in detail, with favourite estates and specific farms listed (100-101). Similarly, descriptions of his movements around the UK while awaiting deployment with the Royal Welch Fusiliers (120-123), studies at the Slade School of Art (evacuated to Oxford), and anecdotes from his time living and working in London are hung upon detailed, often exact locations (172-181). In London however, it was the landscape of Wales, and its memory that inspired his practice. He recalled that:

> Living on the edge of Waterlow Park and close to the Heath, I had plenty to paint, but did very little. Once in my room, my thoughts returned to Wales, and I found myself making pictures of the landscape I knew so well. Mentally I ceased to be in London; the room became peopled with farmers and sheepdogs, and bounded by stone walls and rocky cliffs. (173)

As a text, *Across the Straits* is firmly grounded in its places. Specific places are not only the setting for the stories told, but have other functions, to act as descriptors of characters and to establish how rooted Williams is to his particular landscapes. Barbara Prys-Williams in her study of Welsh autobiography in English found a similar tendency of attachment to "physical landscape of a dear part of Wales, an area perceived as native patch of landscape of the heart," in most of her subjects, with the Wye Valley being a 'landscape of security and joy' for Margiad Evans, R.S. Thomas focusing on the changes wrought by time on different areas of Wales, Ron Berry's focus on the mountains surrounding the Rhondda Valley or Gwyn Thomas's discomfort when travelling far from home (6-7). In Kyffin Williams's autobiographical writing and writing on his practice as an artist, this focus is perhaps even more acute. Place-names or locations are mentioned almost 800 times in the text of *Across the Straits*, ranging from general descriptions of the colours of different countries' landscapes (211-212), places explored on foot as part of hunting activities (93-96), to the locations of mountains that the artist painted after beginning to paint more seriously from 1947 onwards (159). Almost everything recounted in the text is contextualised by reference to places, such as Gegin – the cottage in the village of Boduan where Williams drew and painted a portrait of farmer Ellis Evans, or a detailed description of the funeral procession of his landlady Miss Mary Josling, from his lodging in

Bisham Gardens, Highgate through London and east to Essex through Castle Hedingham and on to Romford and Illford.

Place is equally significant in Williams's second volume of autobiography, *A Wider Sky*. Recollections in this volume are arranged according to location, with chapters recounting visits to other countries, including Scotland, Ireland, Austria[7], France, Greece and Italy, two chapters documenting the artist's travels in Patagonia as well before closing with chapters about 'home' territory – Bolton Studios in London and Pwllfanogl, Williams's home on Anglesey from 1973 until his death in 2006.

Figure 17: *Austria*, [n.d.]

While *A Wider Sky* can be read as an expanding of horizons and looking further afield than the more domestic *Across the Straits*, the importance of Anglesey remains. In the closing chapter,

[7] *Across the Straits* was illustrated by linocuts at the start of each chapter. In *A Wider Sky*, marker and wash drawings were used throughout. It is possible that this is a proposed, unused illustration for *A Wider Sky*. Similar lino prints in the Bequest collection showing scenes of corresponding chapters in A Wider Sky, including Ireland, Scotland and Bolton Studios, suggests that a set of lino-prints were proposed to illustrate his second volume of autobiography before wash and marker drawings were chosen. An example of one of these prints is illustrated above.

Williams notes that “during the many years I spent in London, my mind was never far away from the island and the shining water that surrounds it. In some strange way, the strength of the land, as it stands resolute against the fury of the elements, has always given me a sense of security” (254). It is appropriate that Anglesey bookends the two-volume memoir. Williams’s relationship with London is also significant. A detachment from the ‘native patch’ presents an interesting proposition – how does an artist create a painting of real places, but filtered through memory, and how do his works painted *en plein air* compare to these ‘detached’ paintings? In discussing his relationship with the Thackeray Gallery, Williams notices the difference between the places he depicts and where these pictures were sold: “Incongruously, the walls of the Kensington Gallery have been hung with paintings of Cwm Idwal, Arddu, Cnicht and Snowdon” (251), suggesting an acknowledgement of the difference between those who exist in a particular land, and those who consume the landscape (one of the many works depicting Cnicht in the Library’s collection is illustrated overleaf). The focus on places in Williams’s writing suggests the importance of travel – both real and imaginary – on the construction of landscape, and how it is to be understood.

Figure 18: *Cnicht*, [1960-1970]

The artist's link to his native area is obvious upon opening *Across the Straits*. Maps of Anglesey and north-west Wales focusing on Snowdonia and the Lleyn peninsula are printed on the front and back end papers. On these maps, towns and villages are marked, as are the locations of family homes – Craig-y-don, Trescawen, Brynhyfryd, Treffos, and Brynhyfryd on Anglesey, Nanhoron, Plas Gwyn and Glasfryn on the Lleyn peninsula, as are mountains mentioned in the memoir, paintings of which eventually became part of the National Library's collections (Gyrn Ddu, Yr Eifl, Carnguwch, Moel Hebog and Yr Wyddfa/Snowdon). Certain other features are included giving spatial context to Williams's recounting of his family history: Parys Mine (site of copper mining on Anglesey, an industry which Williams's ancestor, Thomas Williams controlled much of by the late eighteenth century (4-5)); South Stack off Holy Island and near Trearddur Bay (where Williams spent

happier school years prior to attending Shrewsbury (47), and the Harry Furlong reefs off Cemlyn, site of Williams's grandfather's lifeboat which he had previously established to operate from Porthdinllaen (18-19).

The detail of the spatial context of his life makes up for the lack of detail about specific timing of events. Williams includes dates for specific events in the lives of his ancestors, but the temporal context of his own life is less detailed, apart from the occasional noting of the year a particular event happened. Precise dates of birth and death for ancestors are provided in family tree diagrams, but the telling of his life story is more generalized and is written outside of a definite temporal framework. Even Williams's birth only occurs in chapter three of his autobiography. His biography is structured in its places, rather than in chronology. This has the effect of creating a timeless quality, the places discussed remaining constant. This is in contrast to a biography such as *The Man Who Went into the West*, Byron Rogers's biography of R.S. Thomas, where the poet's journey through Wales throughout his life is used to structure the narrative of the text.

Barbara Prys-Williams in her collection of essays on Welsh autobiographical writing in English makes a valid point about the reliability of autobiography as a historical record. Describing the autobiographies of Ron Berry, Gwyn Thomas and Lorna Sage, Prys-Williams notes how autobiography can "provide intense and emotionally convincing pictures of what it felt like, as individuals, to experience particular Welsh cultures at particular moments in history," but they should not be taken as factual, objective truth and "should not be mistaken for accurate historical record" (1). Nor can the autobiography be used as an indicator of a particularly Welsh experience, especially as the details of Williams's life can be seen as idiosyncratic in comparison with the majority of Welsh life. In relation to her work on the writing of R.S Thomas, B.L. Coombe, et al Prys-Williams cites Buckley in identifying a "calculated self portraiture" and "unintentional self betrayal" (3); this notion is useful in considering Williams's autobiographies.

Across the Straits is perhaps better considered as an act of written self-portraiture. It is understood that in a self-portrait an artist may exaggerate certain aspects of their image in order to emphasise particular characteristics, emotional states or qualities. An analysis of a self-portrait would also take into account the tripartite relationship between the artist (as creator), artist (as sitter) and the viewer's knowledge of the artist. Kyffin Williams's autobiographical writing however is often not afforded the same consideration, and aspects of his life-writing are taken at face value in writing by others. The repetition of anecdote across autobiographical writing, interviews and articles is problematic when repeated by third parties. The artist almost creates a public persona built on (often comical) anecdotes, while remaining more guarded about personal matters. It is a failing of biographies of Williams that much of this anecdote is taken as fact without a consideration of the reliability of his claims. Renowned as an entertaining and engaging raconteur, there is no reason to doubt whether certain events Williams reported actually happened, but they may have been exaggerated or adapted for comic or literary effect. Peter Lord's recollection summarises the opacity of Williams's autobiographical writing:

> He was an outgoing man in public, but he communicated little of his inner life through his public engagement, or even in his autobiographical writing. To his close friends he may have done so – but I was not among them and so, to me, there was a contradictory mystery about him. I remember a dinner, following the opening of an exhibition, when he must have been well into his eighties. He kept the company entertained with hilarious anecdotes for several hours, then suddenly decided it was time to go. He stood briskly up, his bask as straight as a guardsman's, and strode off alone in the night. (*Relationships with Pictures* 187)

Meredith and Smith's *Obsessed: the Biography of Kyffin Williams*, and Skidmore's *The Man who Painted in Welsh* (later republished as *Kyffin Williams: a Figure in the Welsh Landscape*) in particular rely heavily on Williams's own autobiographies, often uncritically and without questioning their veracity, or for the most part without citations.[8]

[8] Meredith and Smith refer to *Across the Straits, A Wider Sky* and other writing by Williams, but their text also includes many statements which lack clear citation that appear to be presuppositions. For example, they note that "Kyffin claimed he experienced greater emotional sensations than any religious feeling when he developed epilepsy in later years" (46), or "Another incident during a shooting trip in the 1930s, involving

The much-repeated story that on being diagnosed with epilepsy by an army doctor, Williams was advised that since he was "abnormal" then he should take up art (*Across the Straits* 136, *Artists' Lives* 33) has even resulted in an article in *Clinical Medicine*, the journal of the Royal College of Physicians. John P Griffin (a former professor of University of Surrey Postgraduate Medical School) opens his article "Epilepsy – the making of a painter: Sir (John) Kyffin Williams" with the bold assertion "[i]f Kyffin Williams had not developed epilepsy he might never have become a painter" (91), and recounts Williams's descriptions of attacks of *grand mal* from his autobiographical writing.

The article is an example of an over-reliance on autobiography without critical inquiry. The artist's condition doubtless had an effect on his life – an effect he described at length in his autobiographies, but the quotation ascribed to the army doctor has developed an almost mythical status in the history of Kyffin Williams and is often repeated without a consideration of how an artist/writer may adapt a real situation for literary effect. Griffin's conclusion that the army doctor's insensitive comment combined with Williams's determined nature meant "[a]s a result, Welsh painting has received a great talent" (92) ignores a variety of other factors which may contribute to a person developing as an artist and demonstrates the tendency in writing about Williams to take his autobiographical writing as historical fact without a consideration of its veracity and reliability.

For an artist who has offered many accounts of his own life – across the two volumes of autobiography; the exhaustive *Artists' Lives* interview for the British Library; at least two television films about his life and practice (John Ormond's *Horizons Hung in Air* and *Land Against the Light*); several contributions to other television programmes; media profiles; appearances on Radio 4's *Desert Island Discs* – it is surprising about how little of the artist's personal thoughts are published, and how often particular stories are repeated but also go on to form a canon of anecdotes, the majority of which will be known to many people who have even a faint interest in the man. The canonical anecdotes create a public image of Kyffin the artist, creating an almost 'mythic' persona.

Kyffin and his brother Dick, changed the relationship between the two brother and may have persuaded Kyffin to give up shooting…" (55).

This begins to create the idea of 'the man and the work' – with the mention of 'Kyffin' or '*a Kyffin*' enough to signify his particular kind of picture making. Analysis of Williams's painting is often dependent on this repetitious biography. The persona of *Kyffin* becomes conflated with the paintings. Meecham and Sheldon succinctly explain the phenomenon identified by Roland Barthes in his essay "The Death of the Author":

> To regard a work of art as the 'personal vision' of its maker has led art historians to conclude that there must be a significant link between the biographical details of an artist's life in his or her work. We have substituted a focus on what the artist *does* for who the artist *is*. (53)

This becomes problematic when the reliability or validity of the biography is not fully acknowledged, and is often done in isolation to contemporary art practice in Wales.

Kyffin Williams in art historical context

Given the importance of Wales to Williams, and his position as one of the most prominent Welsh artists of the twentieth century, it is necessary to understand the art historical context in which he practised. There are surprisingly few monographs that deal with Welsh art as a discrete unit within the canon of art history. In his essay "The Map of Art History", Robert S. Nelson notes that the discipline:

> wends its way from moments in the present and the lived past to distant pasts dimly remembered in a discipline that typically studies the histories of everything but itself, conveniently forgetting that it, too, has a history and is History. (28)

Nelson continues, explaining that as Michel Foucault suggests Order, History, Space and Time are the key ingredients to the study of history. Art history is then created by "objects, narratives and peoples" but it is worth remembering that "what is made can be unmade or re-sited, re-structured, and re(-) formed" (*ibid*.).

Although texts about Welsh art are few, each demonstrates a re-siting of their subject, and they often provide a telling indication not only of the state of art in Wales, but of conceptions of national identity. Each is indicative of the political contexts of their writing. The earliest texts

include David Bell's *The Artist in* Wales (1957), which attempts to provide the first history of Welsh art on one hand, yet dismisses the notion of an indigenous Welsh art on the other. Eric Rowan's *Art in Wales 1864-1950* (1984) identifies significant institutions, exhibitions and works from this period, but demonstrates a suspicion of a specifically Welsh art owing to connotations of nationalism. Rowan instead sees art in Wales during this period as contributing to a wider international modernism. Both received a fierce rebuttal in Peter Lord's essay *The Aesthetics of Relevance* (1992). Although this polemical text is not a 'history-of-Welsh-art' as such, it is discussed below as it directly answers several points in Bell and Rowan's texts, making an attempt to re-site discussion of Welsh visual culture in postcolonial terms. Lord followed this essay with the three-volume *Visual Culture of Wales* series (2000). The 1990s and 2000s saw an increase in publications about art in Wales, most significantly works edited by Iwan Bala, Tony Curtis and others, the increase of publications concerned with art in Wales coinciding with the development of Welsh governmental apparatus and an increased awareness of Welsh nationhood-in a small way enacting the link Lord made between a nation's politics and visual culture in *The Aesthetics of Relevance.*

What *is* Welsh art:

The question of what makes art 'Welsh', and therefore to be collected by the Library owing to this categorisation is more problematic than it would first seem for the earliest texts on art in Wales. The lack of an indigenous "Welsh School of Painting" as distinct from a British or English school is a common theme, and this lack of distinction creates a confusion of 'what is Welsh art.' In general surveys of Wales and Welsh history, the visual arts are given minimal attention. In Wyn Griffith's *The Welsh*, first published by University of Wales Press in 1950 (with further editions in 1964 and 1968) with the intention "not to explain the Welsh to themselves, but to other nations who come into contact with them in Wales or out of it" (n.p, Back Cover), the visual arts in Wales are discussed over two pages within a chapter entitled "Music and Some Other Arts." The title provides an appropriate summary of where the visual features in the hierarchy of arts in writing on arts in

Wales for most of authors of the twentieth-century. Griffith's discussion itself focuses on the lack of a Welsh School ("We have no 'primitives', no 'Welsh Style' in our history,") and the activities of the Arts Council to encourage interest in art in Wales (134-135). Dr Llewelyn Wyn Griffith was, coincidentally the Chairman of the Welsh Committee of the Arts Council of Great Britain from 1949 to 1956. A portrait of him by Kyffin Williams is in the collection of the National Library of Wales.

Of texts relating specifically to art in Wales, Bell takes a broad approach to their subject and include artists who were either Welsh or have spent a considerable amount of their practice in Wales or engaged with Welsh subjects. Eric Rowan is more critical of such an approach using the example of Frank Brangwyn being featured in previous discussions of Welsh art. The artist was born in Bruges, Belgium, who worked and lived mainly in London but of Welsh parentage. There are further connections with important works and murals being in Swansea and the National Museum in Cardiff, but his is a useful example of the diversity of what is meant by 'Welsh artist' in several texts. Each text raises the question of whether there is a specifically Welsh visual culture and the identification of a tradition of art in Wales. To differing degrees the texts also address the position of the visual in the Welsh artistic canon in comparison to literature and music, the state of art education in Wales, and the effect the lack of a metropolitan centre and the 'draw of London' has had on Wales, especially in the twentieth century. The resurgence of a Welsh identity and interest in Welsh nationhood in the late nineteenth century, manifested in the establishment of institutions such as the University of Wales, the National Library and Museum are also considered for their effect on visual culture in Wales, especially in the third volume of Lord's *Visual Culture of Wales* series, *Imaging the Nation.*

With the publication of *The Artist in Wales,* David Bell (at the time, Curator at the Glynn Vivian Gallery, Swansea) sought to rectify what he saw as a lack of interest in the visual arts in Wales. The description on the dust jacket notes:

> In Wales the visual arts have been neglected as compared with literature and poetry. This deficiency lies not so much in their practice as in the popular reaction to them even among educated Welshmen and the lack of awareness both of what is being done to-day, and of the fine threads of tradition which are the links to the Wales of the past. (n.p)

This establishes one of the major tendencies in writing on art in Wales – that visual arts have a secondary place in the hierarchy of cultural production in Wales and that Wales is, or has a distinctly un-visual culture, with poetry and music being the most valued art forms. Rowan continues this theme, identifying a specific Welsh literature on account of language, but a Welsh School in the visual arts is absent as a result of the lack of a "pool of indigenous professional artists" or sufficient mature art establishments (educational, gallery, patronage) (13).

As one of the first authors to attempt a history of Welsh art, Bell's attitude towards the subject– to which he claims to have "devoted the last few years of my life, the years which are normally regarded as the best years of a man's life" (198) – it is surprising that he is often ambivalent, and occasionally dismissive of the talents and products of his subject. In his preface, Bell notes that

> For the last ten years I have devoted most of the energy which nature has vouchsafed me to the encouragement of just these [artistic] interests in Wales and have tried to link an interest in painting in Wales in the past with the work of our contemporary artists; in that perhaps lies my excuse for writing this book. (6)

The paternalistic tone is perhaps a product of the time of its writing. It is confusing, however, to find a consistently dismissive attitude towards much of his subject after expending so much energy on it in the previous decade. In discussing his methodological approach, Bell notes that it might have been possible to trace the histories of many Welsh artists, but this would have made "poor reading, and would reveal little in common among the artists concerned apart from the sentimental link of their Welsh connexion," and that such an approach would amount to "a play with a few stars but without cast or script" (17). The reader is presented with a text that attempts to invigorate interest in the visual culture of Wales, but is simultaneously dismissive of the importance of

Wales/*Welshness* on artistic output. This methodological problem was identified in contemporary critiques of *The Artist in Wales*. Maurice Levy, in a scathing review of *The Artist in Wales* wrote:

> if, instead of adopting a quasi-critical, carping, and self[-]righteous attitude he had confined himself to the relatively simple problem of preparing a *catalogue raisonné* of Welsh artists, and artists who have worked in Wales, he might conceivably have produced a handy, and much needed reference book(68).

The 'stars' Bell alludes to include Richard Wilson and Augustus John, with Wilson's work afforded more extensive discussion (125). While Bell includes this "handful of great painters" (16) he is indifferent towards, or unwilling to accept any effect or influence Wales or Welsh identity may have had on the artists:

> Both are great artists; both have an indisputable Welsh origin; but equally the achievements of each owe far more to an English or European tradition than they owe to a birth in the Rectory at Penegoes or a home in Tenby, even if these have anything in common. (*ibid.*)

Dismissing the effect or influence a connection to a nation or national identity may have had on an artist prompts the question: who or what *is* the subject of the book? Bell treats Wales "not as a people, but as a country, a geographical entity" (17). For an author who does not see Wales as having any visual tradition or canon, his definition – of Welsh art as defined by arbitrary lines on a map rather than any inherent national or aesthetic qualities – allows the inclusion of artists who have worked in or visited Wales; hence Bell's discussion of the work of Salvator Rosa and his influence on Wilson. In this respect, Bell's book lives up to its title and is a consideration of the artist *in* Wales, rather than an identification or evaluation of distinctly Welsh artistic practice. Bell's book provoked critical reaction within Wales, most scathingly in Mervyn Levy's review of the book (quoted above). The review itself prompted correspondence to the publishing journal, *Wales,* which in turn led its editor to defend Levy's review:

> Mr David Bell, ex-Arts Council and currently keeper of the paintings at the Glynn Vivian Gallery, Swansea, is a sort of small Sacred Cow. His is part of the Welsh Establishment. He can criticise all and sundry, he can be biased, rub people's backs up, be downright unfair and rude and arrogant, but no, oh no, you mustn't answer him back, though some of us may think that criticism brings a breath of life into

> these weak, colourless and stuffy spheres. Mervyn Levy certainly was hard-hitting. But I am convinced he took Bell's book on its merits. ("Editorial Comment" 14)

A review of Bell's work in *Yr Arloeswr* saw the book only as a historical starting point and lacking in critical insight.

> Y mae'r llyfr hwn yn fan cychwyn i'r gwaith o drin y celfyddydau i gyd ar bapur. Y mae'n gloddfa hwylus am ffeithiau i'r sawl sy'n ceisio gwneud hynny. Yn hyn o beth y mae'n werthfawr, ond ni chredaf i David Bell lwyddo yn y gwaith o greu gwell dealltwriaeth a gwerthfawrogiad o ymdrechion cyfoes yn y celfyddydau. I wneud hyn y mae angen rhywbeth mwy na ffeithiau hanesyddol. (44)[9]

Despite this reaction and the continued activity of the Contemporary Art Society (CASW), Welsh Committee of the Arts Council of Great Britain, etc., there was a significant gap between Bell's book and the next attempts to examine Welsh art as a discrete unit within the canon of art history. In 1964, the National Museum of Wales hosted the exhibition *Art in Wales, 2000BC-AD1850*. In 1978 its catalogue was updated and revised for publication as a survey of almost 4,000 years of Welsh visual culture. This book, containing five short essays covering diverse topics was edited by Eric Rowan and published as the first of two volumes. The second volume, published jointly by the Welsh Arts Council and the University of Wales Press in 1985 updated the story of Welsh art and covers the years between 1850 and 1980.

The historical scope of each text – almost 4,000 years against a century and a half reflects the interests of the editor. Both volumes are approximately the same physical size, and taken on a superficial level, this would suggest that according to the subject of these volumes, art in Wales only began as a subject of interest in 1850. Such a focus would subsequently be dramatically rebutted by Lord's *Visual Culture of Wales* series. The second volume of Rowan's work (given more consideration here for its publication during the mid-career of Kyffin Williams) continues Bell's narrative of Wales lacking a distinct visual culture. Rowan places successful "star name artists" (such as Wilson, John and Ceri Richards) within a wider European context, rather than as 'Welsh' artists.

[9] *Trans:* "This book offers a starting point for treating the subject of art in Wales. It is a useful source for mining facts for those who are interested in that activity. In this respect it is valuable but I do not believe David Bell has succeeded in the work of creating a better understanding and appreciation of contemporary efforts in the arts. To do so, historic facts alone are insufficient."

He also notes the reliance on outside artists to staff art schools and makes the bold statement that "there was no pool of indigenous professional artists that could form a 'School of Wales' or could be drawn upon to meet important commissions" (13).

Read in the light of political developments such as the devolving of power from Westminster to the Welsh Assembly Government and the changes in the understanding of a Welsh national consciousness or identity allied to this, or readings of Welsh cultural activity in a post-colonial light (Lord, Bohata, etc.) it is confusing to continue the narrative of 'no art in Wales' in a book titled *Art in Wales*. However, the lack of tradition, canon, institutions or interest for a flourishing visual culture is a common theme in early writing on art in Wales. While this thinking has been vigorously challenged in the last two decades, even some of the greatest exponents of art in Wales occasionally identify a lack of interest in art. Gwendoline Davies of Gregynog's disappointment that her and her sister's efforts to stimulate interest in the visual arts in Wales had been less effective than she had hoped is evident in a letter to Dr Thomas Jones from 1923:

> We have led the Welsh horse to the clearest brook we could possibly get, yet he has only tossed his head and walked straight through, stirring up all the mud and stones he could in doing so– he is so self-complacent, so self-sufficient, so ignorant– how are we ever going to convince him that he is thirsty. That is the difficulty. (qtd. McIntyre 17)

David Bell's discussion of the National Eisteddfod – Wales's major cultural institution – is also ambivalent. The author understands the importance of the event where a different venue each year "becomes the centre of Wales for a week," and states that the art competition at the Eisteddfod might offer more exposure for modern art than an exhibition elsewhere lasting several weeks. However, he warns against the danger of celebrating and rewarding second-rate work, and identifies in the Welsh a tendency to celebrate sub-standard art as masterpieces on the basis of their being Welsh (5). Bell's treatment of the Eisteddfod's relationship with visual art is reminiscent of Gwyn Jones's earlier statement that

> Heaven knows Wales needs exhibitions of good paintings, if only that as a people we may at last realise there are standards in the arts higher than those of the

> Cwmscwt eisteddod […] for never was there a people more ready to take the third rate for the best and to compliment itself on the mediocre as though it were the superb. (qtd. Meyrick 65)

However, Jones's point although scathing has a kernel of encouragement. Bell is critical of the effect that the National Eisteddfod being the "Cinderella" of Welsh artistic (primary literary, but also visual) life, noting that work exhibited at the National Eisteddfod had long been "unworthy and unrepresentative. This is regrettable because the exhibition commands a larger public and more attention than any other exhibition in Wales lasting a month or more" (194-195). The popularity of exhibitions held at the National Library of Wales in the late 1940s alone (discussed in Chapter 1B) contradicts this notion. Gold Medal Award winners at the National Eisteddfod contemporaneous to Bell's book, such as Charles Burton's *Back from the Club, Rhondda* (1954), D. C. Roberts's *Wrth y Ddaear* (1955), John Elwyn's *The Meadow* (1956), and George Chapman's *View in Merthyr Tydfil* (1958) have been said to demonstrate how "the Eisteddfod exhibitions championed those who made 'pictures which are sincere comments on the contemporary scene" (Meyrick 65), and seemingly well to the primary goal of much contemporary writing on art in Wales during this period – that of identifying a specifically Welsh School of Painting.

The concentration on identifying a specific Welsh School of painting was a consistent theme of the discourse around art in Wales during this period, not only in Bell's writing, but in the activities of agencies such as the Arts Council and the Contemporary Art Society of Wales one such activity was the Welsh Committee of the Arts Council arranged open exhibition of Welsh painting and sculpture held at the National Museum of Wales in October 1953, which had the intention of introducing contemporary art to the public and encouraging sales for the exhibited artists (65). The panel of selectors, which included David Bell noted in the catalogue that

> [A] feeling is conveyed in many of the pictures of love and compassion for humanity and a consciousness of the relations of men and women to nature, buildings, and everyday life in Wales. This concern with the environment seems to auger well for the future of a Welsh School of Painting. (qtd. Meyrick 67)

Despite these efforts and activities a National School of Wales failed to take root. However, as Meyrick notes, "for the individual artists, native or immigrant, living and working throughout

Wales they provided a focus and an outlet," and while the Welsh School remained elusive, the Welshness of a picture came to be signified by a concentration on landscape and the Welsh experience of life (68). Elwyn's rural chapel gatherings, Chapman's pictures of the industrial south, and Kyffin Williams's mountainous north, sometimes populated with individual, stoic and faceless hill farmers contribute towards a pictorial language signifying Welshness in mid twentieth century picture making. While work of this kind by Elwyn and Williams began to provide the iconographic basis of what could be understood as 'Welsh painting', other contemporary practitioners in Wales began to be more internationalist in outlook, such as the 56 Group (later 56 Group Wales).

Both David Bell and more recently Eric Rowan identify the lack of established art education institutions in Wales as a contributing factor in Wales being an 'un-visual culture'. This, they see, is one of the reasons for the "lack of an indigenous pool of talent" (13) to staff existing art schools, fulfil commissions and resulted in the drain of young artistic talent to London (which acts as the *de facto* metropolitan centre as Cardiff had not developed into a cultural capital in the way Dublin or Edinburgh had for Ireland and Scotland respectively). Rowan notes "striking discrepancy in achievement" between Cardiff and Dublin or Edinburgh: "most national art groups have a nucleus within a large capital city which maintains an established cultural tradition– and Wales had no such city" (*ibid*.). Bell raised similar concerns some 30 years previous to Rowan, identifying the draw of London as a contributing factor in the lack of art education in Wales, culminating in a lack of a specifically Welsh visual identity. He also claims that Wales was deficient in the economic and cultural apparatus for a flourishing art scene, claiming a lack of museums, municipal galleries, commercial galleries and dealers at the time of writing contributing to the migration of artists from Wales. Rowan surveyed a similar scene noting "no national institution for art education, no established class of patrons, no dealers or private galleries and no public gallery of any consequence until the opening of the National Museum in 1927" (13). While acknowledging some development in education and public museums and galleries, Rowan is scathing in considering notions of

Welshness or a Welsh identity in art, stating that the arts in Wales during the previous half-century "[were] collectively, hermetic and inward looking" (15).

The viewpoint that the Welsh (i.e language or temperament) are not disposed to the visual arts is something occurs prior to Bell and Rowan's texts. In his essay "John Gibson and Hugh Hughes – British Attitudes and Welsh Art" (in the collection, *Gwenllian*) Peter Lord cites Evan Williams, who in several essays in *Y Traethodydd* ("The Essayist") in the mid nineteenth century stated that he was unprepared/unable to discuss visual art through the medium of Welsh (12). Over a century later, David Bell retained this attitude, making the spurious claim in the preface that "Half the terms which are commonly used in art criticism have no parallel in the Welsh language" (6).

These attitudes are robustly countered by Lord who notes that Evan Williams's and others' lack of confidence in Welsh discourse on visual culture "was not a denial of the value of Welsh, but an expression of the idea that it was an ancient and literary language and that visual art belonged to another world – the modern world of English" (12). (Bell presumably believed his own claim). Lord's major publications have all sought to overturn this perception and to identify and examine the Welsh visual tradition absent from previous scholarly investigations into art in Wales. In *The Aesthetics of Relevance*, Lord establishes the historical and political context around Bell's conclusion that Wales lacks a distinct visual culture and sees a fundamental error in Bell's thesis: a lack of art works (a canon) does not necessarily mean a lack of a *tradition* (7-8). Lord makes an explicit link between the lack of visual culture (or the lack of awareness of a visual tradition) and the lack of independent political institutions, stating: "The visual image is an essential medium for the assertion of national identity: the denial of the aesthetics of the one is the denial of the politics of the other" (8).

He continues, explaining that without a separate national identity and development of independent government, a knock-on effect is felt on the understanding of a visual culture. Put simply, without government, there is no urban centre for the country, which means no patronage,

and a lack of governmental institutions (education, museum, gallery etc.) and leaves artists looking toward England.

> The position has not changed and will not change until we overcome our uncritical acceptance of the virtues of English government and accept that an indigenous culture and a particular identity are not sustainable without parallel political expression. (18)

By establishing that a culture needs to be understood on its own terms, rather than the terms of neighbouring or dominant cultures, Lord adopts a postcolonial tone with regards to Welsh art. This postcolonial approach is indicative of the political and cultural situation that has developed over the last decades. Since Peter Lord wrote *The Aesthetics of Relevance*, there has been a marked change in the nature of Welsh nationhood, conceptions of national identity and development of institutions such as the Welsh Assembly Government. Such developments on conceptions of national identity therefore have an effect on the history (or art history) that is being written.

A rare instance of agreement between Lord and previous writers on art in Wales is the importance of London to Welsh visual culture in the absence of an historic urban, metropolitan centre within Wales (or its own capital city until 1955). However, the understanding of the effect of the influence of London differs. Rowan may have seen the activities of Welsh artists in London as a contribution to a wider modern European art, and the influence of London as a surrogate art-capital as necessary in the absence of established art schools and other institutions (11-13). It is possible to extend this thought that practising or being recognised in London rather than Wales is one part of making a contribution to a wider European art world. By contrast, Lord notes that an understanding of visual culture developed in the nineteenth century onwards from London did not translate to the Welsh situation, and was destructive for the development of Welsh art:

> The home was London, and this phenomenon is the main source of our difficulties with visual culture. It was in London that the taste of our intellectuals was formed, outside the language wall and according to contemporary English values, and their ideas filtered through to their brothers and sisters resident in Wales itself. (*Gwenllian* 15)

Discussing art criticism in Wales in the nineteenth century, Lord identifies a lack of confidence in writing about art in Welsh, a lack of confidence that stemmed from an assumption that "visual art belonged to another world – the modern world of English" (13). Lord dismisses however that there was a genuine lack of interest in the visual arts in this period, citing Paul Joyner's research into art and artists in Wales c.1750-c.1850 which identified an extensive list of artists working or patronised in Wales up through the nineteenth century, establishes that the focus of London created a commentary on art in Wales "entirely inappropriate for a positive assessment of the needs and products of a largely rural nation rooted in a cultural tradition different from that of England" (13). Lord's debunking of the notion that Wales lacks an artistic tradition has continued with extensive studies on Winifred Coombe Tennant's activities as a patron to the arts (2008) and an evaluation of some lesser-known Welsh painters of the twentieth century as part of his autobiography, *Relationships with Pictures* (2013).

While the search for a visual tradition or School of Welsh Painting is a common theme across writing on art in Wales, the purposes of this for Bell, Rowan and Lord differ greatly. While Bell states his intention to write the first comprehensive history of Welsh art, he paradoxically sees English dominance over Wales– political, linguistic and cultural– as something to be grateful for in visual terms:

> Whatever the Welsh tradition has suffered from the English as neighbours and masters in terms of language and tradition, from the point of view of the artist it had much to be thankful for. In architecture, most of the castles and abbeys in Wales are clearly the legacy of English conquerors [...] (18)

Bell then states that if distinctions of nationality in art are to be made, Welsh artists should note "how great is the debt of Wales to England and how tardy the Welsh have been to take advantage of their wealthier, if not naturally more artistic neighbour" (*ibid*.). Such statements are in contrast to the optimism Bell shows in discussing the potential for a Welsh School of Painting and the activities of the Contemporary Art Society of Wales (188) and the Welsh Committee of the Arts Council (189),

and seem bizarre when considering that his was the first monograph dedicated to Welsh art as a discrete unit of art history.

These subservient statements are almost certainly the target in Lord's call for a postcolonial understanding of aesthetics in Wales, warning against assessing the merits of a culture against other dominant cultures: "Making a virtue out of the negative consequences of colonialism in a culture simply confirms the culture in its colonized condition" (*Aesthetics of Relevance* 24). Lord states that for the likes of Bell and Rowan: "the most appealing and prestigious tradition for Wales would be a tradition of contribution to the great English art culture" (27), and advocates a move towards an appraisal of Welsh art on its own terms rather than on the terms of neighbouring, culturally hegemonic traditions. This is in stark contrast to Rowan, who perhaps ironically for an author writing a history of art in Wales published jointly by the Welsh Arts council states that there was no "conclusive evidence" to support the idea that there was actually a "school of modern art that can be unequivocally labelled as Welsh in an international context" (15) and more generally:

> Nor could any common identity for Welsh art be based on characteristics of the typical Welsh temperament (if such a thing exists), since many artists in Wales are not of Welsh origin. Neither is Welsh subject-matter, as a whole, adequate to sustain a separate category. (*ibid*.)

According to Rowan, while there is a specifically Welsh literature because of a different language, there is no such collective identity in the visual culture of Wales as art "operates without the restrictions of national language barriers […] and in contemporary Western art, it is not usually possible to determine the origin of a work of art." For him, the successes of art in Wales/Welsh art are not in, and of themselves, but as contributions to the wider development of Western Art: "So, until time and effort and imagination might identify a recognisably national style, we should regard Welsh art as a small but vigorous tributary to the mainstream of modern art" (15-16).

The above statement is a perfect illustration of the kind of subservient attitudes refuted in Lord's *Aesthetics of Relevance*: that a visual culture might be judged according the high art critique of hegemonic or dominant cultures, which in turn devalues the indigenous art of the culture and

results in the undermining of self-confidence and then starts again with 'looking up' to the dominant culture. In the case of Wales, this often means looking for 'approval' from England, as Lord identified in the writing of Evan Williams. Lord proposes a different approach to understanding Welsh art in a wider context: "Aesthetics of relevance is not an aesthetics of style. An object is not assessed according to its position in the story of the evolution of Western art but by its position in the story of the evolution of a Welsh consciousness" (48).

As an artist who practised throughout the second half of the twentieth century, and considered in the popular consciousness as the epitome of Welsh painting, Kyffin Williams's work never quite fits within the critical framework of Welsh art as described by Bell, Rowan or Lord. Bell acknowledges Williams's contribution to Welsh cultural life, stating that Kyffin Williams "[is] a Welshman to whom the mastery of his craft and the widening of his artistic horizon have meant no loss of his native loyalties and heritage" (170), but does not engage critically with his work save for descriptions of some landscape paintings. Given the internationalist outlook and dismissal of any notion of a Welsh visual language, Williams's dedication to representational landscapes means that he does not warrant significant critical attention in Rowan's writing and is perhaps in danger of signifying a parochialism antithetical to Rowan's conception of the function of Welsh art (i.e. to contribute to a wider European tradition). Nor does Williams's work fit in with the politicised structure of Lord's argument for an understanding of Welsh art in revised terms relative to the historical, cultural and social conditions of the country of their construction. Furthermore, Williams is seen by some as occupying the same cultural pedestal as other stereotypes of Welsh culture (having been described by Iwan Bala as the visual "equivalent of male voice choirs" (*Here + Now* 24).

Other views on Kyffin Williams are developing, although he remains a polarising figure in the Welsh art scene. In a review of Meredith and Smith's book, Jonathan Glasbrook-Griffiths notes that "*Obsessed* provides a refreshing antidote to the usual socio-political orthodoxy of Welshness as defined by a resilience against the colonial ambitions of those on the other side of Offa's Dyke,"

(*Wales Arts Review*, "Obsessed"). The statement is useful to consider how the designation of Williams as a figurehead of Welsh art, and some of the tensions of the 'Welshness' of Williams's work. Williams, while not from an aristocratic family, could certainly be deemed of the rural squirearchy, and of a different social category to the tenant farmers with whom he interacted while painting in north-west Wales and Anglesey.

The work of Kyffin Williams – privately educated, commissioned army officer, public school master, tenant of Lord and Lady Anglesey – does not fit with contemporary readings of Welsh art in post-colonial terms as discussed by Peter Lord or Iwan Bala. His landscape works can also be seen to be deeply apolitical in comparison to contemporary Welsh practitioners in the mid decades of the twentieth century (the Beca Group, 56 Group, Ivor Davies, etc.). Williams was most explicitly political in his discourse against contemporary art practice and what he saw as the destruction of tradition in art, the funding of contemporary art by the Arts Council and other agencies and the direction of national institutions such as the National Museum and Galleries of Wales (see *Is Tradition in Danger?*). It is difficult then to understand how an often visually conservative painter who made reactionary statements about other art practice in Wales, whose family was "totally, irrevocably and utterly Tory" (*Artists' Lives* 50) and who claimed in 1995 that he "will always be a royalist" (*ibid*. 162) holds such a revered position in the Welsh popular consciousness.

Within the context of discourse on Welsh art in the twentieth century, Kyffin Williams exists at a contradictory apex. Early in his career Williams garnered significant critical praise. Mervyn Levy wrote in 1958 that

> Unlike [Ceri] Richards and [Merlyn] Evans, Kyffin Williams is not concerned with abstraction. He is a painter of mountain and stream. The growling black skies of Snowdonia, fat with rain. Granite and flint – the bustle of wind and the crash of water. Green and grey and black under the drifting tongues of mist. The ripe smell of damp earth. Williams is perhaps the greatest British landscape painter at work today. ("The Art of Ceri Richards and Welsh Painters on the London Scene" 49)

His relationship with Wales has also been a consistent factor in critical discussion of his work; David Bell wrote that Williams was one of the few painters who had "given back as much as he had taken

from Wales" (168). The relationship between landscape painter and native land featured in the discourse around his work throughout his career, though its impact changed. Later in his career Williams was seen either as the epitome of Welsh art and praised unreservedly[10] or seen as an artist who had failed to develop, or had struck on a formula to sell pictures to the Welsh middle class and stuck to it (see Bala, above). By the late 1990s, Williams occupied an unusual position of being at once the quintessential Welsh artist, but also above (or below) serious critical engagement by a reinvigorated Welsh art history, save for occasional interviews or cursory comments about *the grand old man* of Welsh art. Alastair Crawford, writing in the catalogue for Williams's *Landscapes* exhibition at Oriel Ynys Môn in 1995 succinctly writes:

> There is no doubt that in the post war period Kyffin is the highest regarded and most successful living Welsh artist in Wales, in terms of both recognition and sales, that is by the public, not the art establishment. In spite of – perhaps because of – his recognition, there have been many occasions during this period when his name was either never mentioned, written out of history, or dispatched in a few lines. (26)

Similarly, discourse on Welshness or Welsh identity in relation to Williams is challenging. As Bala notes, Williams's landscapes have become iconic, imagined reminders of an old Welsh identity retained by the urban middle class who purchased his work (especially from the Albany Gallery in Cardiff). This prompts the question of why do pictures– usually depicting mountainous scenes, and often including imagery of solitary rural labour– come to epitomise Wales and Welshness when since the early nineteenth century, the majority of the Welsh population lived in the industrial south, where scenes by Will Roberts, Evan Walters or Josef Herman may have more adequately visualised the Welsh experience for many of the population.

[10] For example David Meredith opens a lengthy interview with Williams conducted as part of a BBC Wales programme in 2004, later published in one of the few monographs about the artist, *Kyffin in Venice* with the comment: "Kyffin, people say that you are Wales' greatest artist, and I agree…" (13)

Figure 19: *Farmer on the Mountain*, [between 1984-1990]

A consideration of why landscape becomes synonymous with Welsh art is necessary. In presenting and assessing Williams's work according to location depicted, there is an opportunity to move away from seeing the art work as simply *a Kyffin* to seeing landscape filtered through imagination; and to return the focus on what the artist *does* rather than simply who the artist *is* (Meecham & Sheldon 53). It is for this reason that *Kyffin Williams Online* uses landscape, space and place as its framework. An overdependence on biography in the analysis of Williams's work has led to a subjective understanding, incompatible with the documentary focus of the collection development policy of the Library. Despite the abundance of information about Williams's life, his biography remains somewhat opaque. Information on the places of Williams's life however, is clear and well reported and offers a way with which to structure and analyse his work as an alternative to an over-reliance on biography in the presentation and analysis of his work. As such, an understanding of

where is depicted inform the curatorial choices of the digital display – moving away from who depicts the Welsh landscape and towards an idea of how or why that artist depicted it. This is itself a re-siting of the understanding of Kyffin Williams's practice – shifting the focus onto the subject and location of the work in order to understand how the artist's depiction of Wales relates to a wider Welsh visual culture and the viewer, rather than attempting to find the artist himself in those landscapes.

It is striking that in the introduction to *Art in Wales 1870-1950* Eric Rowan sets out the futility of identifying a specifically Welsh school, and uses the internationalist outlook associated with abstract expressionist painting in America to support his claims. Rather than find a 'Welsh art' he claims that it

> would be more reasonable to paraphrase Jackson Pollock's celebrated dictum about the art of America: ' the idea of an isolated [Welsh] painting… seems absurd to me, just as the idea of creating a purely [Welsh] mathematics or physics would seem absurd. (15)

Rowan here demonstrates his allegiance to the high-modernist ideal of the international style, as also indicated in his statement that Welsh art should aspire to contribute to a wider European art. Where Pollock was referring specifically to abstract expressionism, itself the painterly evocation of high modernism, it seems unfair to deploy this statement in a dismissal of the idea of a particularly Welsh visual culture in general. This is especially true as the art he goes on to discuss dates from 1850 to the present day, with few if any artists discussed associating with the ideals of abstract expressionism, save for the internationalist outlook of some of the 56 Group. Peter Lord has also used the model of America to describe the position of a Welsh visual culture, but in contrast to Rowan, for the purpose of identifying a national tradition in art in postcolonial terms. In closing his essay "John Gibson and Hugh Hughes – British Attitudes and Welsh Art" (discussed above), Lord cites an American art historian who claims a "slavish imitation" of England leading to a lack of confidence in America's own national artistic identity, and suggests replacing the word 'America' for Wales to explain the relationship with the neighbour:

> in our slavish imitation of England – the only country in Europe of which we have any intimate knowledge – we have de-Americanised ourselves to such an extent that there has grown up in us a typical British contempt for our own native achievements, (qtd. Lord, *Gwenllian* 15)

While concerned for the position of Welsh art, especially in terms of lack of a dedicated National Gallery, and a patron of several institutions, Kyffin Williams was not forthrightly political in a nationalist sense as explained by Lord. Nor can it be said that Williams's work contributes particularly to a postcolonial narrative of Welsh art (key elements of Williams's career reflect themes which Lord believes compromised the idea of a specifically Welsh visual identity – training in England, working in London, acceptance into the English art establishment by being made a Royal Academician, etc.). The understanding of America as having a distinct visual identity however can be useful when considering Welsh art, especially in regards to depictions of landscape. Mark Rawlinson has written (in relation to images of the American landscape) that "images, especially landscape are riddled with contradictory narratives, which in turn problematize the existence of a distinct national 'American' identity" (6). That is, rather than look for a single unifying pictorial idiom, differing responses to the Welsh land and landscape can build a constellation of images using a variety of visual languages unified by the land itself. Concentrating on land and landscape avoids a convoluted political narrative of nationalism inappropriate for use with regards to Kyffin Williams's work. The land itself – concrete, definite, real – can act as an appropriate gallery on which to display the Kyffin Williams Bequest and wider art collections of the National Library of Wales.

Chapter 3a: Welsh place, imagined space, Romantic landscape

Several writers and theorists in the fields of cultural geography, art history and visual culture have discussed how depictions of landscape – in literature or the visual arts come to embody a national or cultural identity. Given that much of the literature relating to Kyffin Williams focuses on his position as one of the most eminent Welsh artists, and the importance of the landscape to his work and the collections of the National Library, it is worthwhile to consider how Williams's painting fits within the context of landscape theory. In this section, I will explore some ideas from key figures in landscape theory and ask why Williams's mountainous landscapes have become such important symbols evoking Wales and *Welshness*. These ideas are used to inform how geo-humanities methods, including spatial representation of sources using Geographic Information Systems (GIS), can be used in conjunction with library collections to create innovative digital representations of these collections in Chapter 3B.

Figure 20: Thomas Jones, The Bard, 1774

As Stephen Daniels points out: “National identities are co-ordinated, often largely defined, by ‘legends and landscapes,’ by stories of golden ages, enduring traditions, heroic deeds and dramatic destinies located in ancient or promised home-lands with hallowed sites and scenery,” (5). This description of the link between landscape and national identity is visualized in a painting such as Thomas Jones’s *The Bard* (1774, fig.20, previous page, National Museum and Galleries of Wales). The painting is based on Thomas Gray’s poem of the same name, refers to the invasion of Wales by Edward I in 1282 and the legend of the subsequent massacre of Welsh bards. The painting shows the last remaining Welsh bard cursing the invading forces of Edward I before throwing himself to the River Conwy. The bard is shown in a rough and craggy Welsh landscape, with a Snowdonian ridge framing the action of the picture. The weather and perilous position of the central figure mirror the political and social turmoil of Wales following its conquest.

The massacre of the bards is the kind of legend to which Daniels refers. Jones’s placement of the bard in a dramatic Welsh scene conflates the ‘legend and landscape’. The picture evokes the traditions, heroic deeds and dramatic destinies Daniels discusses and the setting begins its transition to a “hallowed site”; a site that while dramatized refers to a real geographical space. Richard Wilson had also by this point also created “the most significant contribution to British historical landscape so far with his *Destruction of Niobe’s Children*,” (Reynolds 40). This picture, in the collection of the National Library of Wales (illustrated overleaf) uses the same device of placing a legendary/classical narrative within a recognizable, if romanticized British landscape.

Figure 21: Richard Wilson, *The Destruction of Niobe's Children*, c.1768

The example of *The Bard* shows how images of landscape can become striking symbols of national and cultural identity. This is complicated however when considering what a landscape actually *is*. It is at once a depiction of a specific piece of land and an interpretation of particular elements for inclusion in a framed view of that space by an artist (or author, photographer, etc.). Landscape then operates as a binary – at once a real space and an edited image. Dennis Cosgrove's view that "[l]andscape is not merely the world we see, it is a construction, a composition of that world. Landscape is a way of seeing the world, " (13) succinctly summarizes the notion of landscape being an image of a space filtered by the artist and constructed subject to ideological, aesthetic or imaginary conditions – landscape as idea. Landscape is also subjective, symbolic and ideological. Landscape does not only mean 'the

painted landscape' – landscape can be created and formed through all manner of media, or landscape enacted on the physical land itself:

> Landscape may be represented in a variety of materials and on many surfaces – in paint, on canvas, in writing on paper, in earth, stone, water, and vegetation on the ground. A landscape park is more palpable, but no more real, nor less imaginary, than a landscape painting or poem. (Cosgrove & Daniels, 1)

Given the symbolic and ideological possibilities of landscape as a genre, it is understandable how it can be understood as visualizing the qualities or attributes of national identity: landscape imagery is part of the iconographic canon of countries the world over. Don Meinig has written: "[e]very mature nation has its symbolic landscapes. They are part of the iconography of nationhood, part of shared ideas and memories and feelings which bind people together," (164) although it is worth remembering that the kind of landscape that develops symbolic weight differs from nation to nation. An outcome of this thinking is the phenomenon of the painter of the 'national' landscape. Benjamin West, Claude Lorrain and John Constable could each be said to have created landscapes indicative of the national in the United States, France and England respectively. Each created landscapes that came to represent the nation at key historical moments – whether intentionally or not. The shift towards painting *en plein air* in the work of the Barbizon group including Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, Theodore Rousseau and Charles-Francois Daubigny influential on Claude Monet and other Impressionist painters also contributes to a visual repository representative of a specifically French landscape scene. Paul Cézanne's series of paintings of Mont Sainte-Victoire continued this contribution, with Provence and surrounding areas becoming an important destination and subject in the development of modernist painting. The development of landscape painting of the British school after Wilson, from Thomas Gainsborough to the more obviously Romantic paintings of JMW Turner and more nostalgic scenes of landscape by Constable, shows how the national scene can be depicted in different ways. Constable's depictions of the Stour Valley, most notably in *The Hay Wain* (1821) became elevated above their provincial settings and become iconic images of the nation.

Kyffin Williams has arguably a similar status in Wales, although no individual painting has the elevated status of a *Hay Wain* in the public consciousness, replaced instead by the familiar generic term 'a Kyffin,' for a picture which is instantly recognisable as his work because of its style and content. The question remains as to how and why it is Williams's work that occupies this position and how this can be examined through the collections at the National Library by returning the landscape paintings to the land itself.

While landscape and national identity can be linked, what is meant by the nation is tricky to define, especially when the nation under consideration exists in a less politically distinct way to the nation states (England, France, United States of America) discussed above. Pyrs Gruffudd notes that discourse on the nation being "fluid, contextual" means that "[n]o longer, therefore, can we talk of fixed identities or of stable definitions of 'the national heritage'" (49). When considering Wales, Benedict Anderson's idea of the 'imagined community' is particularly pertinent. Anderson explains that even the smallest nation is imagined as it is impossible to have personal contact with every member of that society "yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." The nation is imagined according to three central tenets: it is *limited* because it "has finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lay other nations. No nation imagines itself as coterminous with mankind;" the nation is *sovereign* because "nations dream of being free […] the gage [sic] and emblem of this freedom is a sovereign state;" and finally the nation is imagined as a *community* "because regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship." (5-7). While Anderson wrote in reference to the idea of nations in general, Gruffudd (among others) understands the importance of the idea for Wales: since being assimilated into the political framework of England by way of the Act of Union, 1536, Wales has lacked political recognition and is "confined to the status of an 'imaged nation'" . Part of this imagining has come from the development of a culture and protection of heritage, an "all-encompassing concept that applies equally to landscapes, customs and narratives of identity." Landscapes are

important factors in the "construction of national identity. Their preservation can therefore assume wider symbolic significance," (50-51).

The lack of an independent political apparatus and the position of Wales within the United Kingdom also confuse matters: as Gwyn A. Williams wrote "Welsh identity has constantly renewed itself by anchoring itself in variant forms of Britishness" (194). The creation of Welsh national identity has been the result of the imagining or re-imagining by the Welsh in Wales, the Welsh diaspora, and others external to Wales: "In the case of the Welsh (as with any national or ethnic group), it is not just those within Wales who have shaped the multiple Welsh identities – Wales has also been made and remade by peoples other than the Welsh," (Pritchard & Morgan 113). Parsons's statement that Wales "has long existed not as a distinct *nation state* […] so much as a *state of mind*," is explained by Pritchard & Morgan: partial self-government has contributed somewhat to an expanded sense of a distinct national consciousness, but the idea of Wales as a state of mind is still pertinent. This state of mind is illustrated by images, and these images develop their own iconographic weight: "repeated (often mundane) visual images culminate in an enhanced sense of identity, history and community, those representations privileged in visual texts emerge as central to the continuous remaking of Wales as a state and a state of mind" (114).

Stephen Daniels also alludes to Benedict Anderson's notion that conceptions of national identity are the result of an *imagined community*: "The symbolic activation of time and space, often drawing on religious sentiment gives shape to the 'imagined community' of the nation" (5). This is particularly pertinent when considering the creation of visual depictions of landscape. Often referring to specific places, it is important to remember that the landscapes are not simple depictions of places, but are created by an author and informed by a range of cultural, social and political conditions. Landscapes can have a symbolic quality and come to represent a national identity or sentiment. Similarly they are often created, or interpreted in terms of a particular

ideological formulation of the 'nation.' Anderson recognizes the symbolic link between nations and the territories they inhabit, stating that the nation does not only exist in relation to physical space, but: "rather they explicitly claim particular territories and derive distinctiveness from them. Indeed nationalists typically over-emphasize the particular uniqueness of their own territory and history." (18).

Gruffudd argues convincingly that the focus on the landscape and its preservation contributed to the political development of a Welsh identity in the first half of the twentieth century. The challenges of "readings of landscape which claimed cultural 'authenticity'" and how ideas of 'authenticity' were constructed became central to the development of the Welsh national folk museum. The authentic landscape becomes enmeshed in a history and heritage that in turn becomes part of an understanding of modern Wales. He notes, "in Wales, the national past is enlisted as dynamic legitimation or as a blueprint for the future," before citing Wright (1985): "the national past is a *modern* past" (51).

Landscape painting has long been understood to be an important component of an understanding of Welsh heritage/history. An important aspect of this is the 'discovery' of the Welsh landscape by the Romantic painters of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The Welsh landscape was not always admired for its rugged, picturesque or sublime qualities, and the understanding of the landscape is often informed by cultural factors. Jane Zaring's study of responses to the Welsh landscape in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century emphasizes this point. Understanding that "an important part of the landscape lies in the eye of the observer," landscape is perceived, and knowledge of the conditions of these perceptions is needed to understand depictions of that landscape:

> [a] knowledge of the filter through which impressions of the real world are sifted to form our view of that world is the key to understanding those views. It is also the key to an awareness of the ways in which perceptions can be altered or even manipulated. (397)

Zaring traces the shift in perception of the Welsh landscape from being a country "long ignored, thought to be all that was ugly became the very standard of beauty for some fifty years, until tastes again changed and she became invisible once more" (398). The shift is marked. She cites the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1747 which describes "shocking deserts […] one mountain is rudely piled upon another," and Daniel Defoe's description of the Brecon Beacons: "a ridge of horrid rocks and precipices between, over which if we had not had trusty guides, we should never have found our way; and indeed, we began to repent our curiosity, as not having met with anything but trouble in a country so full of horror" (qtd. Zaring 398-399). Such descriptions are indicative of the perception of beauty in landscape in the early eighteenth century. During this period, Zaring writes, "beautiful landscapes were well proportioned, cultivated areas…. The wilderness held no attractions for the rational eighteenth century man." So much so, Daniel Defoe could not wait to leave Wales: "In passing Montgomeryshire […] we were so tired with rocks and mountains, that we wish'd heartily we had kept to the seashore […] The River Severn is the only beauty of this country" (qtd. Zaring 401).

Such attitudes are in marked contrast to the perception of the Welsh landscape in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, by which time Richard Wilson had claimed "everything the landscape painter could want was to be found in Wales" (Gaunt, qtd. Zaring 404). The popularity of accounts of tours of Wales in the 1770s shows how far perceptions of the Welsh landscape had changed; including accounts by Thomas Pennant, William Gilpin and Samuel Johnson that confirmed "Wales provided all the ingredients of romantic landscape in abundance. Mountains were in vogue and it is a mountainous country" (403). The influence of Romanticism was also felt in the visual arts. Richard Wilson had painted the Welsh landscape before and after his travels to Italy, notably works produced under the patronage of Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn, including *Castle of Dinas Brân from Llangollen* (1770-1771, Yale Centre for British Art), a later version of which is in the collections of the National Library of Wales (*Castell Dinas Brân*, c.1780).

Figure 22: Richard Wilson, *Castell Dinas Bran*, c.1780

However, the publication of his Welsh landscapes in 1775 and the "aquatints of the English painter Paul Sandby helped encourage a flood of tourists to Wales that lasted for many years; these included nearly all the important artists working in the English landscape tradition." These included Thomas Pennant, David Cox and Thomas Gilpin, among others. JMW Turner visited on several occasions between 1792 and 1799. Some products of these visits now feature in the National Library's collections: the watercolour, *Aberdulais Mill, Glamorgan* (c.1796-7), painted following his third visit to Wales in 1795, and *Dolbadarn Castle* (1799-1800, exhibited, Royal Academy, 1802) painted from sketches taken at Dolbadarn on his visit in 1798. John 'Warwick' Smith painted an extensive catalogue of watercolour pictures of Wales between 1784 and 1806, 162 of which are held by the National Library. As Zaring notes, "the Romantic tourists saw, and approved of, Wales as a wild and uncultivated country" (413).

The Romantic quality of the Welsh landscape has arguably been retained into the twentieth century. John Piper, in his *British Romantic Artists* establishes the 'Romantic' as picture making that deals with a particular moment or detail "that for a moment seems to contain the whole world" (8). William Vaughan identifies two tendencies in Romanticism: "one to explore the dramatic and fantastic, the other to become immersed in the minutiae and in a sense of the local and particular," ("Romanticism"). The first tendency is inadequate when considering most of Kyffin Williams's work. While pictures such as *Winter at Fachwen* (1967, Government Art Collection, below) convey a sense of drama in the landscape and weather, the element of the 'fantastic' is missing.

Figure 23: *Winter at Fachwen*, 1967, Government Art Collection

The second tendency is also problematic when considering Williams as a Romantic painter; Williams' gestural approach and application of thick, impasto paint are incompatible with a discussion of the "minutiae" of Turner's paintings of waterfalls or Bewick's illustrations of birds' wings cited by Piper (7). It is in the "sense of the local and the particular" however, that Williams' work takes on characteristics of Romanticism. Peter Lord notes that a picture such as *Ogwen* (1966), for example, continues in a "tradition of painting lyrical depictions of the

mountain areas" ("Wales") and it is through this lyricism that Williams' painting can begin to be seen in the context of Romantic art.

A consideration of Kyffin Williams' work in the context of Romanticism becomes clearer when considering Piper's statement that a component of Romantic art is a concentration on the "drama in the weather and seasons" (7-8). Paintings such as *Storm, Trearddur* (1996), or *The Dark Lake*, (1951) emphasise the importance of the power of natural elements in his work. Such pictures also allow for an appreciation of Williams' landscapes as meditations on the Romantic interpretation of the *sublime*. Vaughan stated that Romanticism depended on a shift in aesthetic experience and understanding the sublime: "From being a rather mystical image of 'supreme beauty', it became a dynamic and powerful force" ("Romanticism"). Such a description presents an appropriate description of the ominous and foreboding mountains and conditions present in many of Williams' Snowdonia landscapes.

Superficially, it is easier to consider the second tendency of Romanticism outlined by Vaughan, that of the importance of the 'sense of the local and particular' in relation to Kyffin Williams's landscapes, given the importance the landscape of north-west Wales to his painting. I would like to suggest however, that beyond this superficial reading of the importance of the local and particular, it is important to consider the interrelationship of elements of abstraction and specific locations indicated in the titles of Williams' work when placing it within the Romantic tradition. A picture such as *Ceg y Ffôs* (1969, National Library of Wales, above), a small study conducted following Williams's journey to Patagonia seems to be as concerned with the application of paint as it does with a specific location. The abstraction of the work is also in apparent contradiction of Williams's own statements with regards to abstract painting and his own emphasis on tradition in art. The gestural application of the paint and lack of recognizable subject suggests that the work is as much 'about' the paint itself as the irrigation channels of Welsh Patagonia from where it takes its title. When considering the image in conjunction with

the place name of the title however, the image takes on the conditions of the local and the particular. Put in spatial context, the image instead becomes an evocative and expressive gesture rooted to a particular place.

Figure 24: *Ceg y Ffos*, 1969

Space and place

Attaching landscape images to real places allows the opportunity to consider how or why an artist chose to construct a landscape in a particular way. The relationship between space and place is crucial to understanding the production of landscape and the depiction of real places filtered through the artistic imagination. The terms ‘space’ and ‘place’ have been used somewhat

interchangeably, but following what has been called the *spatial turn*[11] in the humanities, it has been necessary to be more specific in defining these terms. W.J.T. Mitchell notes that until the relationship between *space, place* and *landscape* is considered:

> a landscape just is a space, or the view of a place. In both the phenomenological and historical materialist traditions of this subject, space and place are the crucial terms, and landscape is taken for granted as an aesthetic framing of the real properties of space and places, (viii).

In his preface to the second edition of *Landscape and Power,* Mitchell offers a useful précis of some important theories of space, place and landscape that are worth expanding upon as a means of defining terms. Such definition is useful when considering how specific *space* – that is, practiced *place* are depicted in *landscape*. Michel de Certeau defines place (*lieu)* as being stable and linked to a "specific, definite location,"(viii); space (*espace*) is less tangible and dependent on velocity and directional or temporal factors: "in short, *space is a practiced place.* Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers," (117). Space is then created by the experience of a specific place. De Certeau invokes Merleau-Ponty's dualism that "space is existential" and "existence is spatial." This phenomenological understanding of being as "a being in relationship to a milieu," (Merleau-Ponty qtd. de Certeau 117) culminates with the awareness that "there are as many spaces as there are distinct spatial experiences." While du Certeau's conception of *lieu* and *espace* follow one another, Henri Lefevbre's contribution to thinking on space and place features a tripartite relationship between perceived space (*le perçu*), conceived space (*le conçu*) and lived/representational spaces (*le vécu*) that are dependent on one another. These concepts roughly match du Certeau's terms, with representational space being added, often as images of these spaces. Mitchell's summary is useful: "perceived space corresponds roughly to what de Certeau calls "spatial practices", the

[11] Bodenhamer's description of the etymology of the term is useful: "The phrase 'spatial turn' has a murky lineage but it has become a common shorthand for the revival of interest in space as a way to understand society and culture. This reintroduction to space first occurred in the 1970s and 1980s, when a new critical geography began to emerge." (23). Edward Soja provides a comprehensive description of this reintroduction in his *Postmodern Geographies: the Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. Hess-Lüttich's article "*Spatial Turn:* On the Concept of Space in Cultural Geography and Literary Theory" offers a further comprehensive etymology and background to the term in terms of its impact on literary studies.

daily activities and performances that "secrete" a society's space[;]"conceived space is curated intellectually, the "consciously constructed terrain of engineers, city planners, and architects," (ix) The final part of the triad – lived or representational space – refers to images of other constructions of space: "this is the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate" (39).

Representational or lived space imagined in art or literature "not only transcends but has the power to reconfigure the balance of popular 'perceived space' and official 'conceived space'" (Shields 281). The interdependent, three-way relationship between perceived, conceived and representational/ lived space provides a model for understanding the depiction of landscape. Llyn Cau at Cader Idris is a space perceived by the visitor, conceived by its placement on an Ordinance Survey map, and represented/ lived in the paintings *Llyn Cau Cader Idris* (c.1950) and *Llyn Cau* (1990) by Kyffin Williams. The representations do not signify a realistic representation of the perceived space, but rather are an imaginative depiction of that space interpreted by the artist. One of the obstacles in presenting a collection of landscape paintings according to geographic location is the fact that landscapes are simultaneously real and imagined spaces. The notion of representational/ lived space presents an opportunity to understand the imaginative process in the creation of landscape.

Understanding the importance of individual perception on the process of creating landscape images returns us again to Cosgrove's idea of landscape being a construction and a "way of seeing the world." Christopher Neve summarises the subjectivity of creating landscape paintings: "The painter goes through the land and sees what nobody else has seen because painting comes from inside and not out. It depends entirely on who he is" (vii, qtd. Wakelin 25). Accessing the motivation behind the choice of scene, or whether or not to include specific details has perhaps led to the concentration on biography in the critical literature on Kyffin Williams's work discussed in the previous chapter. While wanting to avoid this kind of speculative-

biographical analysis, some consideration of the subjective choices made by the artist in the production of landscape, or how the artist has processed space and place are needed to understand how these landscapes are subsequently consumed. Some choices are simply aesthetic. Writing a 'lives remembered' note in *The Times* following the publication of Williams's obituary, J. Parry Lewis recalled deciding which of two pictures by Williams to buy following a solo exhibition in Cardiff in the late 1950s. One was a study in black ink wash, the other the completed work:

> a larger dark and threatening range of peaks, that puzzled me. On the back of the smaller picture he had written "Pen yr Oleu Wen 15 gns". My choice was made and I took the study. I knew Pen yr Oleu Wen quite well. But Kyffin was no photographer. Not totally pleased with Nature, he had moved the mountain. (58)

The example demonstrates how although Williams created landscapes (often *en plein air*) that were recognisable enough to apply the real place name or location as a title, topographical accuracy could be foregone in favour of a more pleasing composition. Real places are used to construct the landscape. A spatial consideration of art works offers the chance to analyse the decision making process in the creation of landscape paintings. While topographical correctness is often subject to aesthetic decisions, the decision of whether or not to include figures within depictions of specific places also has an effect on the understanding of landscape. Raymond Williams in *The County and the City* writes:

> A working country is hardly ever a landscape. The very idea of landscape implies separation and observation. It is possible and useful to trace the internal histories of landscape painting, landscape writing, landscape gardening and landscape architecture, but in any final analysis we must relate these histories to the common history of a land and its society. We have many excellent internal histories, but in their implicit and sometimes explicit points of view they are ordinarily part of that social composition of that land – its distribution, its uses, and its control – which has been uncritically received and sustained, even into our own century, where the celebration of its achievements is characteristically part of an elegy for a lost way of life. (120)

Williams's analysis of the relationship between working land and landscape has been used several times in discourse around landscape painting that includes labour activity. Mitchell

observes that “the invitation to look at a view is thus a suggestion to look at nothing – or more precisely, to look at looking itself” (viii). The difference between land (as working, material environment to be mined, farmed, etc) and landscape (as act of looking at space) is marked. Elizabeth Helsinger has written insightfully on J.M.W. Turner’s *Picturesque views of England and Wales* which was published in sections between 1826 and 1835 in the context of widespread agitation for political and social reform during the period, focusing on the depiction of the national scene and the disruption of the conventions of landscape in the drawings (103). The discussion raises pertinent questions when considering the importance of landscape imagery in the Welsh national consciousness and landscape painting of Kyffin Williams. Helsinger asks: “Was England rural or urban, local or national, agricultural or industrial? In this competition to define the national and claim the right to represent it, literary and artistic depictions of England were, not surprisingly, often understood as part of the debate” (103). The same questions could be asked of Welsh painting in the twentieth century – how and why images of rugged landscapes of north-west Wales and Anglesey, sometimes populated with figures indicative of rural labour came to be an important symbol of Wales and *Welshness* at a time when the majority of the Welsh population lived in the industrial south. Ideas of *circulation* and *possession* are also important: when Helsinger states that the purchaser of volumes of drawings “is offered visual possession of an England that has been placed in circulation” (105) we are again reminded of the potential difference between the figures in Williams landscape, and the eventual purchaser of those paintings.

Insiders and outsiders in the landscape

The notion of those who possess a landscape being different from the figures that populate that landscape again raises Cosgrove’s idea of the ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ of the landscape. While Kyffin Williams himself has been discussed in a previous chapter as being simultaneously an insider and outsider in his landscapes, it is worth reiterating the difference

between the figures in a landscape and those who purchase those landscape depictions, often from the galleries that represent Williams, The Albany in Cardiff, and Thackeray in London. Helsinger emphasizes this difference between viewers of landscape and "those who can only be imagined as subjects in it." She continues in reference to Turner's *Picturesque Views*:

> Only the first group enjoys the linked privileges of possession and circulation represented by the book of picturesque views. To be the subject, and never the viewer, of these landscapes means to be fixed in place like the rural laborer, circumscribed within a social position and a locality, unable to grasp the larger entity, England, which local scenes can represent for more mobile picturesque viewers. (105).

As Tony Curtis indicates, referring to Kyffin Williams's appearance on BBC Radio 4's *Desert Island Discs* in 1999, "Kyffin Williams acknowledges his rise to pre-eminence in the field to the rise of the middle classes, professional, bourgeois, buying public in Wales and the London Welsh" (125, BBC). In short, those who bought his landscapes are usually very different to the figures within them. The figure of the farmer in Williams's paintings remind the viewer that the landscape, as Helsinger explains with regards to Turner's drawings "is never empty; the tourist will discover it is already occupied" (110). However, the purpose for including these figures in the landscape is different. Whereas "Turner's views represent, as it were, the coexistence in the same space of multiple cultures, undermining the concept of a single aesthetic nation constituted through landscape viewing" (118) the anonymous, unnamed and often singular figures in Williams's paintings (such as *Farm, Llanddona* (Oriel Ynys Môn, c.1958; *Farmer Amongst the Rocks*, National Library of Wales, c.1990-2006 or *Farmer and Cottages*, National Library of Wales, c.1940-1950) cannot be interpreted as related to any specific social or political upheaval.

Figure 25: *Farmer Amongst the Rocks*, [between 1990-2006]

Rather, these faceless and often nameless (with the exception of some specific pictures such as *Dafydd Williams on the Mountain*, Royal Academy, 1969 or *Euros Rowlands Irrigating his Fields*, National Library of Wales, 1969) figures act on a symbolic level, and are indicative of a particular kind of Wales and *Welshness*. Curtis summarises:

> There is a clear appeal to connections of sentiment, our forefather worked the land; they are heroically determined against the unforgiving hillsides, the slate-cold rain. However, in the landscape work of Peter Prendergast and his contemporaries David Tress and Brendan Burns there are no figures […] There may well be a sense that the reception of such work by the new art buying public is located in feelings of empathy for the land, ecological issues and a wish to locate in images of rural Wales, wild Wales […] Taking into one's home a Kyffin, Tress, Burns or Prendergast is accepting something elemental about the land of Wales; … one may wish to locate one's roots, one's identity, because for most of us there is little or no direct connection with the land as a work-place. Rural Wales is a landscape we travel to and through. (125-6)

While Williams's pictures do not demonstrate a "nostalgia for a pre-war rural arcadia" as has been suggested by Catherine Jolivette of other landscape painters practicing in the 1950s

and onwards (8), buying pictures of the figure in the (north-west) Welsh landscape is perhaps indicative of a specifically Welsh yearning for a connection to an ancestral *bro* and an attachment to the land itself. The inclusion of individual hill-farmers in the landscape pictures of Kyffin Williams contribute to this link to the land and provide a human proxy to labour in the landscape. Helsinger invokes Spivak in discussing the figures in Turner's drawings: "the portrait and the proxy are not the same, as Gayatri Spivak reminds us; depicting is not speaking for." Rather than depicting the tensions within the "contested land; […][and] the imminent collapse of the very idea of landscape as an adequate representation of the nation" (119), the figures in Williams's pictures become part of the visual language of Welsh painting in the twentieth century. Prys Morgan explains: "As the Welsh became more and more industrialized, so they came to cherish the image of the Welshman as a sturdy tough Hillman, free as mountain air"(89). For buyers of Williams's work in the increasingly post-industrial though predominantly urban Welsh society of the late twentieth century, this symbol takes an even more nostalgic weight, and epitomizes the real/imagined nature of landscape painting.

Peter Davies, writing on Peter Prendergast has stated that unlike Kyffin Williams, Will Roberts, John Elwyn or David Carpanini, Prendergast "does not present or interpret the landscape in terms of human or labour themes" (59). Kyffin Williams certainly has an interest in the human in the landscape, but no labour is denoted in the paintings. Farmers, shepherds, or farm hands are depicted on paths, roads or tracks, travelling through the landscape, rather in an act of labour.[12]

[12] See: *The Way to the Cottages*, National Library of Wales, 1990-2006; *Snowdon from Gelli Iago*, National Library of Wales, 1960-1970

Figure 26: *The Way to the Cottages*, [between 1990-2006]

The figures become symbols, and in some cases caricature, a feature of the landscape rather than being indicative of the human labour. Raymond Williams's statement that a working land is rarely a landscape is appropriate for Kyffin Williams's paintings. These landscapes then show a *labourless-labour* which contributes to the sentimental or nostalgic link to the land for the urban, middle class buyers, an authentic link to *bro a chynefin*, and one that like the landscape itself is simultaneously real and imagined.

In his introduction to the Welsh Arts Council-published text *The Arts in Wales 1950-75,* Raymond Williams explains the difficulty of understanding a culture which at once seems small yet expansive, varied and diverse in landscape and people. Williams explains the variation in terms of landscape:

> Thus, we see Wales as a small country, but even standing on the Brecon Beacons, looking south to the valleys and the seaboard where most of us live, looking west and north to the pastoral uplands, remembering beyond the far

> mountains another crowded coast, it is not smallness we see; it is land and distance, familiarity and strangeness. (ii)

This description prompts thoughts of pictures that visualise this range of landscape and setting – Kyffin Williams's *Blaen Ffrancon* (1985) held at the National Museum in Cardiff, John Elwyn's chapel attendees in west Wales in *Bore Sul* (1950, also NMW) or images of miners, terraced housing and the Rhondda valley by George Chapman. All three images might be said to use particularly Welsh imagery, yet demonstrate that this *Welshness* can be visualised in very different ways. While all three may have Welsh subjects, they present a different Welshness to each other. Such differences at first complicate the search for a specifically Welsh visual language – complicating the narrative of a distinct national visual identity. If a national character exists in visual art, it is necessary to examine the history of art in Wales in the twentieth century simultaneously, and as containing a mixture of these qualities.

In this respect Walter Benjamin's idea of the constellation is useful as a way of understanding history rather than the linear concept of progress. In his *Arcades Project* Benjamin argues that the historian should resist the ideology of linear 'progress', and instead: "root out every trace of 'development' from the image of history and to represent becoming […] as a constellation in being." The constellation links historical events to each other or to the present, rather than evaluating history as a linear narrative so "what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation" (462). Christopher Rollason provides the following useful example of this approach: "The French revolutions of 1789, 1830 and 1848 and the Paris Commune of 1870 would all be placed in a constellar relation, as events separated in time but linked by a common insurrectionary consciousness" (283). In studying the history of art in Wales in the twentieth century it is difficult to formulate a linear development of a specifically Welsh visual culture. The lack of a specifically Welsh School of painting, the changeable nature of art education, the draw of London as a metropolitan centre and the subsuming of Welsh artists into the English academy and schools have all contributed to this disjointed 'progress'. The dual-

linguistic nature of Welsh cultural life and the variety of landscape described by Raymond Williams adds further complexity to the notion of a Welsh visual culture. Rather than thinking that the work of Kyffin Williams, George Chapman or John Elwyn present irrevocably different visions of Wales, the Welshness of the disparate visual works becomes fuller and more understandable when viewed in constellation rather than isolation.

In formulating a digital presentation of the Kyffin Williams collections at the National Library, it is necessary to acknowledge that his presentation of the Welsh landscape uses representational strategies that are both uniquely his, but also existing in relation to other collections and iterations of Welsh visual culture within the Library's collections. The importance of the work as part of a national collection can only begin to be fully understood by linking with other elements. As explored in the previous chapter, writing on Williams has often relied heavily on biography which has resulted in at best, the domination of the artist's public persona on understanding his work, and at worst, hagiography. Hinging the presentation of the Kyffin Williams collections in spatial (with specific places being a constant factor in his work) rather than in biographical terms is a strategy for a re-evaluation. While not dismissing the importance of the narrative of Williams's life, a display of the collections along spatial lines would be a new contribution to the understanding of his work and potentially facilitate further inquiry and analysis of the collections by Library users.

Much of the writing on art in Wales is focused on landscape. While this may be negative in the sense that it may overshadow other work in the visual arts, it is also inescapable. The intention here is to explore some common theoretical themes in landscape art. While Williams's work has been contextualized in terms of Welsh art it is now necessary to place the National Library's collection within the theoretical context of landscape, to begin considering specifically how a collection can be presented.

Chapter 3b: 'Towards' distance

Given the importance of space, place and landscape to the collections at hand, a spatial presentation of the Sir Kyffin Williams Bequest collection at the National Library of Wales has several advantages. This section will discuss validity and usefulness of digital mapping techniques used in the Spatial Humanities as a methodology for the presentation of a digitized art historical collection. This Chapter elaborates on how distant reading approaches in literature have been adapted to achieve the aims of *Kyffin Williams Online* by using mapping approaches: to offer research possibilities that are specific to digitised collections, rather than attempting to mimic the use of original works of art, and offer a visual means of browsing a visual collection.

Distant Reading

Presenting digitally reproduced works of art online is problematic. A digital exhibition can be constructed to mirror a physical exhibition, but details of individual works are lost when they are digitised. The understanding of scale, depth and texture of a painting, or the fact that the display of a picture differs every time it is reproduced on a different computer, tablet or other device. The scale, shape or display properties are changed, emphasizing the point that it is not the original work that is displayed differently, but a new digital object that is created every time it is loaded on a web page. Aside from these practical display issues, the digital reproduction of art works has the potential of changing our understanding of the works themselves. The success of a display of a digitally reproduced artwork is dependent on the quality of the reproduction, but also its discoverability through correct metadata, cataloguing and importantly, an acknowledgment that the digital object is not the object itself. As Rimmer et al. state: "If digital and physical resources are to be developed to complement each other, their different properties and

potential values and uses need to be well understood" (1375). Rather than replace access to original works of art, *Kyffin Williams* Online aims to compliment the collections by offering research options that would not have been possible using the original works alone.

An example of how digital methods can complement analogue research is offered in Franco Moretti's notion of the distant reading of literature. Moretti has suggested that in order to get a full view of literary history, corpora must "undergo[es] a process of deliberate reduction and abstraction" (*Graphs, Maps, Trees* 1). Distant reading as a methodology suggests that an individual scholar would never be able to conduct close analysis of entire corpora of texts. By accepting this, the scholar can use the distant reading (generally speaking using computational text analysis, data mining, or methodologies associated with economics, geography, evolutionary science or the handling of larger data sets rather than individual texts) of many texts to study entire genres or periods, rather than developing a generalized understanding of literary history by concentrating on the close reading of 'representative' canonical texts. Moretti has been aware of the perceived deficiency of an over-reliance on close analysis of texts throughout his career, comparing the study of individual, unique, or canonical texts in the wider literary corpus to colonial mapping practices:

> [a]t present, our knowledge of literary history closely resembles maps of Africa of a century and a half ago: the coastal strips are familiar but an entire continent is unknown. Dazzled by the great estuaries of mythical rivers, when it comes to pinpointing the source we still trust too often to bizarre hypotheses or even to legends. ("The Soul and the Harpy" 14-15)

Interconnection and interrelationships between texts are the focus of distant reading – the means to fill in the blanks on the map of literature. Moretti suggests "a trio of artificial constructs – graphs, maps, trees" could be used to identify such interrelationships across large corpora, with a focus on "[f]ewer elements, hence a sharper sense of their overall interconnection. Shapes, relations, structures. Forms. Models[.]" rather than a

close reading of "concrete, individual works." He is convincing in his argument on the usefulness of such an approach in conjunction with literary history, noting that such a large field "cannot be understood by sticking together bits of knowledge about individual cases, because it isn't a sum of individual cases: it's a collective system, that should be grasped as such, as a whole" (*Graphs, Maps,* Trees 4). Nor is he alone in identifying the usefulness of this approach. Mathew L. Jockers uses the term *macroanalysis* for studying entire corpora of works through their interrelationships, and advocates a reversal of traditional modes of literary analysis (24).

Rather than study an individual, canonical novel and make generalizations about literature of its period, it is "less problematic, though, to consider how a macroanalytic study of several thousand texts might lead us to a better understanding of the individual texts" (Jockers "On Distant Reading and Macroanalysis" n.p.). Discussion around distant reading and macroanalysis also draws attention to the inherent contradiction of using individual, canonical texts as representative of a particular genre or period. Individual 'great' works are indeed exceptional and *not* representative of the wider canon, and a study of these individual works fails to contemplate the majority of other contemporaneous works or the "wider context in which literary change occurs" (Bode 8). It is not only Moretti who has identified the problems of studying literary history using a canonical model. Bode cites Robert Darnton's questioning of a canonical approach, who calls the majority of the study of literary history as: "an artifice, pieced together over many generations, shortened here, lengthened there, worn thin in some places, patched over in others, and laced through everywhere with anachronism. It bears little relation to the actual experience of literature in the past" (qtd. Bode 9). Darnton instead suggests working "through theoretical issues by incorporating them more thoroughly in more research of a concrete, empirical nature" (*ibid.*).

It is the advent of digital libraries, mass scanning of texts, corpus analysis, optical character recognition and full text searching that has enabled these approaches,[13] but the desire to do so has long existed in the field of literary theory and history. Jockers refers to Juri Tynjanov who wrote in 1927 of the importance of considering the interrelationships between literary phenomena and the futility of literary inquiry without an acknowledgment of such interrelationships. However, as Jockers notes, "the multitude of interrelationships far exceeded his ability to study them, especially with close and careful reading as his primary tools" (*Macroanalysis: Digital Methods & Literary History* 9). Jockers is also explicit in his view that technological advancements which allow the handling of larger bodies of data mean that the micro/macro analysis of literary texts is no longer an either/or question; there is an expectation that literary scholars engage with larger bodies of data:

> [l]ike it or not, today's literary-historical scholar can no longer risk being *just* a close reader: the sheer quantity of available data makes the traditional practice of close reading untenable as an exhaustive or definitive method of evidence gathering. Something important will inevitable be missed. The same argument, however, may be levelled against the macroscale; from thirty thousand feet, something will inevitably be missed. The two scales of analysis, therefore should and need to coexist. (*ibid.*)

Distant reading/macroanalysis has significant attractions when considering a methodology for the study of a library art collection. As discussed in Chapter 1, the collection development policy of the National Library of Wales treats visual materials primarily as documents illustrative of Wales and Welsh life rather than as art objects. Art works are catalogued as items within a library collection and as such have thorough textual metadata that could be harvested in order to explore the interrelationships between items. The cataloguing of the Kyffin Williams bequest collection material as library items has an

[13] These technologies and approaches have also arguably complicated historical scholarship. Writing about the impact on scholarship of vast volumes of texts being available electronically, Tim Hitchcock notes: "For the historian, this development has two significant repercussions. First, the evolution of new forms of delivery and analysis of inherited text problematizes and historicizes the notion of the book as an object, and as a technology. And second, in the process problematizing 'the book', it also impacts the discipline of history as it is practiced in the digital present" ("Academic Writing and its Disconnects" n.p).

equalizing effect on search and retrieval. Without applying specific filters to searching, a simple keyword search for ("Menai straits" AND "Kyffin Williams") would retrieve catalogue records for oil paintings, drawings, autobiography and associated manuscripts. Media is not hierarchical, which could lead to problems with users who in the first instance want to access images of oil paintings. Displaying search results visually, by mapping geo-referenced digital images could quickly demonstrate to users why material is collocated together.

The treatment of this variety of media as documents rather than art works means that the inter-relationships between items from a diverse range of media can begin to be explored. Unless specific filters are applied, an oil painting has no higher status in search results than a sketch or page from a notebook. In a simple catalogue, this may be problematic for some users who may want to access higher profile items initially – oil paintings, for example. However, displaying large sections of the digitized collection together has the possibility of highlighting under accessed material, and drawing attention to outliers from the 'canonical'.

Taking a 'distant view' in this way of the Kyffin Williams bequest collection does not offer the same opportunities as Moretti's suggestion of a distant reading of all novels published in Great Britain in the nineteenth century. It is a distant view of an individual collection, rather than a distant view of Welsh art generally. Focusing on an individual artist – Kyffin Williams problematizes the notion of a genuine distant reading/viewing. In order to practice a full distant viewing (reading) methodology, it would be necessary to apply these methods to a wider range of material – all twentieth century Welsh landscape painters for example. However, as Tynjanov was frustrated at the lack of ability to study the interrelationship between textual corpora in the 1920s, the ability to undertake a full distant view of this genre is perhaps still impossible. Many works are digitized, and most oil paintings in public collections in the United Kingdom are available in digitized form through

the BBC/Public Catalogue Foundation's *Your Paintings* resource.[14] However, differences in digitization protocols, the problems inherent in working with digitized art works, and the disparate locations of paintings (the vast majority of Kyffin Williams's oeuvre is in private collections, and possibly lost to digitization/reproduction/study) mean that such a full distant reading is a different proposition to studying published novels. Some novels may be out of print but are still mass-produced objects whose textual content is available is of primary importance rather than the object itself.

Kyffin Williams is arguably one of the most 'canonical' of twentieth century Welsh artists. Using this approach to a single artist's work is not the same as assessing an entire genre or school. However, instead of considering how distant reading can expand research opportunities and interrelationships at a genre or period level, it is reasonable to use the methodology to identify trends within the oeuvre of one artist. This could then be used as a starting point to begin using the same methodologies with other collections of landscape art in the National Library's collections, building together a constellation of distant views of the Welsh landscape. If distant reading proposes a methodology for literature that moves away from a focus on a distinct set of canonical works and towards examining literary production as an over-arching phenomenon, the distant viewing proposed in the *Kyffin Williams Online* project does not fulfil this criterion. It remains focused on an individual, 'canonical' artist. However, adapting this approach could allow interrelationships between diverse media to become apparent – levelling the viewing playing field, and allowing outliers or anomalies to come to the fore within a distant view of an individual collection and promote a use and awareness of materials within the collection away from the obvious. One of the abstractions Moretti uses in distant reading – maps – can be used as a way to analyse the Kyffin William Bequest Collection according to its spatial attributes.

[14] At the time of writing, the PCF / BBC resource is called *Your Paintings*. The project is expanding to include sculpture, and will imminently change title to *Your Art.*

Spatial Humanities

The spatial turn,[15] which means a consideration of the effect of space on the understanding and analysis of different disciplines and cultural output, has had a dramatic effect on the study of the humanities. This coincided with the development of a critical, alternative geography, which "rather than being seen only as a physical backdrop, container, or stage to human life, space is more insightfully viewed as a complex social formation, part of a dynamic process" (Soja, qtd Ayers 1). This not only had an effect on the practice of geographers, but opened up geographical methodologies and thinking on cultural geography to other disciplines. As Ayres notes, outside of the field of geography, "the spatial turn has been largely defined by a greater awareness of place, manifested in specific sites where human action takes place" (1), and cites Haltutten's observation about the development of spatial analysis in the humanities which, initially "tended to the metaphorical, as we adopted the idiom of borders and boundaries, frontiers and cross-roads, centers [sic] and margins. In literature, the new regionalism and the booming field of ecocriticism foreground what had been considered mere background or setting" (qtd. Ayres 1-2). Spatial attributes have long been accepted as an important part of the study of history, which, like geography:

> reduce[s] the infinitely complex to a finite, manageable, frame of reference […] Both involve the imposition of artificial grids – hours and days, longitude and latitude on temporal and spatial landscapes, or perhaps I should say timescapes and landscapes. Both provide a way of reversing divisibility, of retrieving unity, of recapturing a sense of the whole, even though it can not be the whole. (Cosgrove, qtd. Ayres 3)

Denis Cosgrove's use of the term *timescapes* suggests that an historian's telling of a particular event in history has a similar relationship as the constructor of a landscape in relation to the real space being depicted. Both refer to real events/places but both the history and the landscape (representational space) are also constructed and subject to

[15] See the section *Space and place* in Chapter 3A for background to this term.

external influences on the author/artists/painter, etc. D.W. Meinig explains the similarities between historian and geographer:

> geography, like history and unlike the sciences, is not the study of any particular thing, but a particular way of studying almost anything. Geography is a point of view, a way of looking at things. If one focuses on how all kinds of things exist together spatially, in areas, with special emphasis on context and coherence, one is working as a geographer. (18)

The statement that geography is a 'way of looking at things' has particular resonance for the art historian familiar with John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, which questioned singular interpretations of art works and other visual materials and emphasized how an understanding of a particular image will be influenced by the viewer's knowledge, beliefs or prejudices. The construction – of landscape images, descriptions in literature, or of cartographic representations of data should be understood as a way of looking at a collection, in one of many possible configurations. Digitally mapping the locations depicted by Kyffin Williams offers the opportunity to take a 'distant view' of the Bequest Collection. Hundreds of disparate items could be drawn together according to their spatial attributes, allowing patterns and themes to emerge through the close study of an individual, original object.

Maps and distant viewing

Basic mapping tools can be used to demonstrate these possibilities. The below image shows a selection of paintings by Kyffin Williams in the Library's collections mapped using Google Earth, with the detail overleaf showing an individual item with associated image in its spatial context.

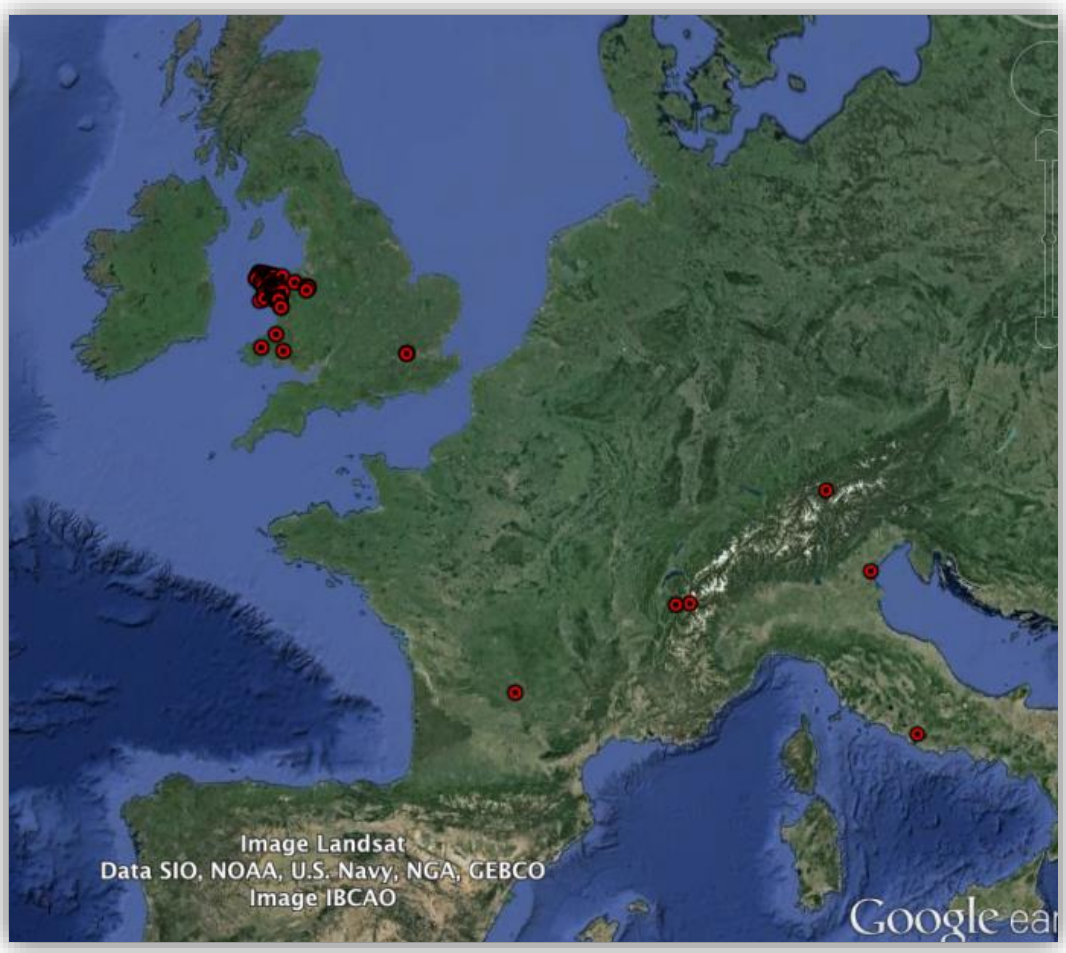

Figure 27: Kyffin Williams in NLW collection mapped

This basic visualisation shows how attributes relating to a large selection of items can be displayed at once. This can allow the outliers, or items within a collection that do not fit the general trend of the collection to become more recognisable. In the above example, the majority of works are situated around north-west Wales, and as a result the points in central France, Switzerland and Italy become more apparent. Williams's travels in Italy, particularly in Venice are well known, and have been discussed at length in David Meredith's 2004 text *Kyffin in Venice*. The point in central France refers to the painting, *Rocamdour* (c.1960-1970) that came to the Library as part of the Bequest collection in 2006. The map draws attention

to a picture, unusual in the Williams's oeuvre because of it setting that otherwise might have been 'buried' in a simple catalogue of the collection.

Figure 28: Location of *Rocamdour*

Taking a distant view of the collection has several advantages for research and presentation of content. Disparate data sources (oil paintings, preparatory sketches, verbal descriptions of the area, narrative or biographical information) once geo-referenced can be presented together allowing patterns, themes, or trends to emerge.

The ability to integrate disparate sources through the connection of their location/ geographic data means content can be studied more holistically – for example, considering a landscape picture in relation to information about its locale, but also in relation to other pictures from the collections. The application of geographic data, and geo-locating

landscape pictures opens up the possibility for the collection to be considered as a whole. Examining a larger set of pictures in spatial terms allows different questions to a close, formal analysis of an individual picture. For example: where are the landscapes they depict? Were they painted in situ or away from the landscape? How does one area differ in its artistic representation to another? We move closer towards applying what Nicholas Pevsner called the *geography* rather than the *history* of art to the Kyffin Williams Bequest Collection, asking "[...] what all works of art and architecture of one people have in common, at whatever time they may have been made. That means that the subject of a geography of art is national character as it expresses itself in art" (15).

From an art historical perspective, combining geographic information of locations painted with pictures themselves could help understand what it was that made an attractive subject for Kyffin Williams, and establish whether there are beyond-visual interconnections behind choice of subject; whether there is a particularly Kyffin-like landscape or area, or what geographic features are most suited to this kind of picture making. Presenting data in this way could encourage research question around what it is in physical geography that contributes to a sense of place or identity in the landscape painting.

Although *Kyffin Williams Online* is not a GIS tool, some theories behind GIS and experimentation with GIS tools have informed its development. As Ian Gregory has pointed out, the power of GIS comes not simply from its cartographical function, but through the combination of "mapping functionality with a form of *database management system* (DBMS)" (*A Place in History,* section 1.2). A GIS allows combination of *attribute* data (which refers to data that would be presented in a traditional database) and *spatial* data (which assigns each datum to a location). Spatial data is represented by co-ordinates and can be presented in several ways – as *points, lines,* or *polygons* (areas or zones). 'GIS' is used here to denote any system in which digitised content is presented according to its spatial

attributes for the purposes of research and display, rather than referring to a specific piece of software.

Gregory and Ell identify the ability to structure, integrate, visualize and spatially analyse data as the primary advantages of using GIS with digital collections (*Historical GIS*, 10). GIS provides a way for comparing how geographically encoded data varies from location to location. It combines both a spatial (location, town name, area, co-ordinates) with qualitative or quantitative data that is usually thematically based, (e.g. data from census returns, hospital admissions, relief data) as well as texts or images that refer to specific places (e.g. paintings of Snowdon, descriptions of places in an autobiography). This approach to layering different spatially encoded data can prompt unexpected research outcomes. Kyffin Williams is renowned as a painter of landscapes, although the notion of the 'beautiful landscape' is complicated when considering the artist's style and choice of palette – landscape paintings of Wales often have a dark, possibly foreboding quality, which may evoke the Romantic notion of the sublime, but would not be considered beautiful or picturesque. Aside from artistic ideas of what makes a landscape 'beautiful', other official definitions exist. The concept of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was defined in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949. There are currently five designated AONBs in Wales (including the Wye Valley which is partly in England). The National Association of AONBs describes the qualities of a landscape needed to attain the designation as:

> a precious landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them. AONBs are designated in recognition of their national importance and to ensure that their character and qualities are protected for all to enjoy […] They are living, working landscapes, much loved and valued by all who enjoy them. They are powerful symbols of our national pride: places of motivation, inheritance, excitement, pleasure and profit. The flora, fauna, history and

> culture of our AONBs' lowland heath, wild moor, towering peaks, dramatic gorges, sheer cliffs, gently rolling hills, sandy beaches, spectacular cliffs, quiet coves, rocky shores, sand dunes, saltmarsh and shimmering estuaries ensure they remain Landscapes for Life. (National Association of AONBs)

By using the shapefiles (.SHP, the proprietary file format used in ArcGIS) outlining Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty it is possible to compare how many paintings by Kyffin Williams in the Library's collection are of subjects in these officially designated 'beautiful' landscapes. The map overleaf indicates designated AONBs (in yellow), and the Snowdonia National Park (in green) with locations of paintings by Kyffin Williams in public collections in the United Kingdom (approximately two-thirds of which are in the Library's collection) marked by red points.

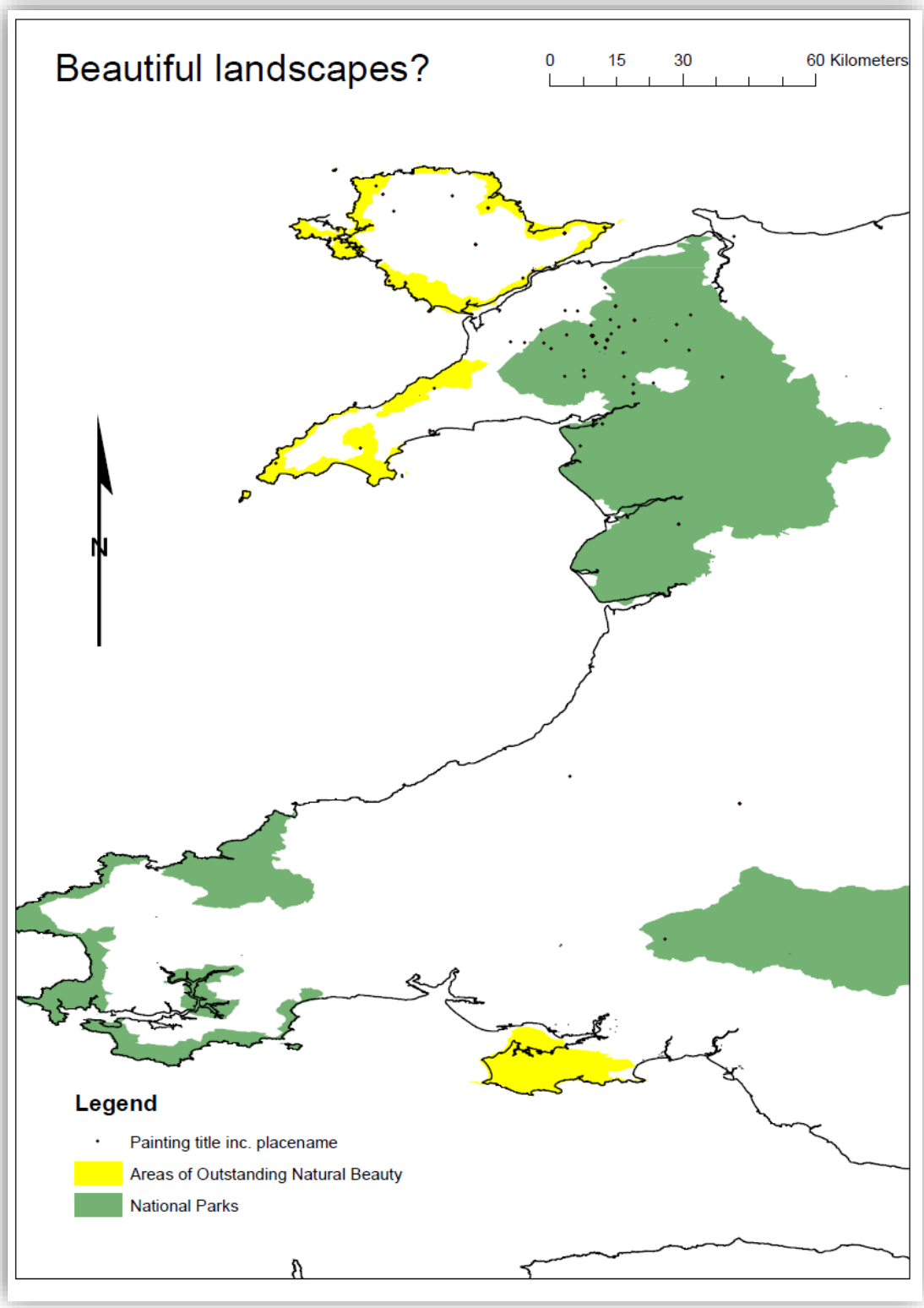

Figure 29: Location of KW oil paintings in relation to National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

There are several points within AONBs on the Anglesey and Lleyn Peninsula coasts. However, many of the paintings represented by these points do not show traditionally 'beautiful' landscapes, or in some instances, landscapes at all. *Bryn yr Hen Bobl*, (1970-1990, National Library of Wales) and *Penmôn Cross* (n.d. Oriel Ynys Môn, Llangefni) show specific details at these locations – a tree and the 10th century cross which stood at a deer park in Penmon until 1977 when it was moved to St Seiriol's Church respectively.

Figure 30: *Bryn yr Hen Bobl*, [between 1970-1990]

Many of the other points within the AONBs on Anglesey are semi-abstract seascapes such as *Snowstorm off Penmôn* (1961, Oriel Ynys Môn, Llangefni). The points situated in the Snowdonia National Park however show scenes more typical of Kyffin Williams's work, such as *Cwm Hetiau* (1970-1990, National Library of Wales) or *Snowdon from Tŷ Obry* (c.1960s, National Library of Wales). The differences between these examples suggest that rather than looking for 'beautiful' landscapes as subjects, the artist instead favoured more active, rugged landscapes for his larger scale work. The combination of datasets corroborates the notion that Williams's work could be seen as a continuation of the search for the Romantic notion of the sublime rather than the pure beauty of a landscape. In addition to the research potential of the spatially encoded Kyffin Williams Bequest Collection, another attraction of using mapping approaches and methods in this project is the way maps can be used to browse collections of landscape works using visual means.

Using visual means to access visual documents

The development of the Internet has primarily been concerned with the communication and use of text across networks (Pringle 11-13). This presents an inherent problem for those whose primary research texts are images. The problems of sharing images across a network comes from the reliance on textual metadata to catalogue, describe and discover individual items as a means of partially overcoming the difficulty of machines interacting with images: "information, knowledge, thoughts and abstract concepts all wrapped up in an ever changing gossamer web of emotional responses. Text, by comparison, is a simplistic shorthand for communicating the basics of what we see and feel" (14). Words –in the form of descriptive metadata– are needed to discover visual content.

The result of this is the necessity for every image online to be thoroughly annotated through formal and consistent cataloguing/metadata application or through the application of user-generated metadata: tags and folksonomies. Such user-generated tags are occasionally open to misuse. In the BBC/Public Catalogue Foundation *Your Paintings* resource, users are invited to tag digital images of paintings in public ownership in the UK according to the content of the pictures. There are 60 tags associated with the 325 paintings by Kyffin Williams in these collections, 25 are associated with a single painting: *The Old Soldier* (1951) in the Arts Council Collection. The over tagging of a single painting does not help information retrieval – over a third of the tags associated with an individual artist direct the user to a single picture, and the tags used (including 'man', 'portrait', 'hat', 'cap', etc.) while not inaccurate, are so general as to compromise the usefulness of the whole process[16].

A system in which images can be found using visual means would be useful for collection users who lack expert knowledge of, or are unable to describe the images they seek in the same terms by which they have been catalogued. The development of Content Based Image Retrieval (CBIR) for use with cultural collections has been slow. While Gudivada and Raghavan in 1995 listed twelve fields in which CBIR would have significant uses, including crime prevention, the military, intellectual property, architectural and engineering design, fashion and interior design, journalism and advertising, medical diagnosis, geographical information and remote sensing systems, cultural heritage, education and training, home entertainment and world wide web searching (18-22), its use in conjunction with searching and browsing significant painting collections has stalled.[17]

[16] As with any user-generated content, these tags are subject to change from the time of writing.
[17] The State Hermitage Museum at St. Petersburg, Russia is one of the only large national collections to incorporate content-based image retrieval in their online catalogues. The IBM developed Query By Image Content (QBIC), begun in 1997 and noted as © 2003 on the Hermitage website allows users to search digital images from the Museum collection according to the properties of the image. QBIC Colour Search "locates two-dimensional artwork in the Digital Collection that match the colours you

More generally, aside from the application of over-arching themes to digitally curated collections, even where authoritative subject headings/keywords are used, a catalogue user wanting to find objects according to qualities less easily defined by textual surrogates (such as works which suggest a particular atmosphere or mood) may find difficulty in creating a representative search string. Van den Broek et al. suggest that these difficulties "call[s] for systems that are not confined to verbal expressions alone and CBIR techniques may provide a much richer vocabulary to express an information need" ([4]). The dependence on 'words representing pictures' is especially acute when considering visual collections as "by virtue of their visual nature, and current limitations of technology, they come without significant 'searchable' information. Without significant metadata we are left with a world full of images that are unsearchable, unidentifiable and in many ways, unusable" (ibid.).

The accessibility of a digital image is therefore dependent on its associated textual description. If failings are present in this description, its accessibility is compromised, prompting the question, "what's the point of *the image* existing if it cannot be accessed[?]" (AHDS Visual Arts Survey qtd. Pringle 23). In the absence of a readily available and usable CBIR, accessing digital images remains reliant on textual metadata and other verbal expressions. The use of a known, subject specific classification system for images, such as *Iconoclass* can add granularity to the cataloguing process, but does not overcome the issue

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specify. You select colours from a spectrum, define proportions, then execute the search" (n.p.). The QBIC Layout Search searches the collection according to geometric shapes drawn by the user in a 'virtual canvas'. Search results are then displayed according to how closely the coloured shapes match the images in the collection. The fact that the user chooses a colour from an RGB spectrum can affect the precision of the search, and many more images are often returned to the searcher than intended. This could be the result of the system discerning a high frequency of pixels of a given colour throughout an image, as opposed to a single block of colour. Similarly, drawing geometric, coloured shapes on a 'virtual canvas' lacks the precision needed to return a manageable number of images in the search output. The result is often a large number of false-positive returns illustrating Pringle's statement that "[the] difference between a computer's understanding of pixels and a human's capacity for understanding images is vast" (17).

of using more and more text to access images. In the paper "Visualization for Media Studies", Manovich asks whether visualisation as a method in humanities can "support – and hopefully augment – the key methodology of humanities: systematic and detailed examination of *cultural artifacts* [sic] *themselves,* as opposed to only the *data about the social and economic lives of these artifacts* [sic]*?"* (n.p.}.

Using textual metadata to find a work in *Kyffin Williams Online* is also unavoidable. Using this metadata in a visual sense, such as mapping locational information does not avoid the textual dependence, but does offer a visual means for accessing a visual collection. Using mapping technologies and methods to present digitized collections online has the potential for re-visualizing visual collections in two ways. Firstly, a spatial visualisation/map of a collection can present a large number of items according to the location of their subject allowing the researcher to compare images of different locations. Secondly, being able to browse a collection through an interactive map (an image) allows the researcher to use a visual tool to browse content, rather than being dependent on inputting textual search strings

The spatial presentation of the collection has an additional, pragmatic advantage. The majority of works in the Kyffin Williams Bequest collection have not been accurately dated. The artist did not date paintings and his work lacks major stylistic shifts that would allow easily categorisation into periods. The collection has been catalogued with vague date ranges – unless provenance research has indicated a specific year of creation (most notably works relating to Patagonia which were all created in 1968/69), artworks are generally have been catalogued with date ranges (such as: *Valley with the Sea Beyond*, [between 1970 and 1990]). This complicates the process of browsing by date, and by extension a temporal examination of the development of the artist. Assigning a geographic location to items

provides an additional access point, allowing the user to browse by the spatial, rather than temporal conditions of the item.

Kyffin Williams Online offers the means to interrogate and analyse work in its own digital right, rather than simply reproduce or represent the physical collection. In addition to the advantages offered by web-based resources in terms of preservation, overcoming physical distance of users from Library materials, round-the clock, instantaneous access to collections over the internet, it is the intention of the *Kyffin Williams Online* resource to provide tools which facilitate research hitherto not possible using physical resources alone. These include taking a macroanalytic approach, with disparate media and documents considered together (acknowledging the influence of distant reading of literary history, and developing a distant viewing approach to Kyffin Williams's work).

The investigation into the art holdings of the Library in relation to visual materials has identified the importance of landscape to its collection practice. Given the inherent spatial qualities of landscape paintings, mapping approaches allow a visual presentation of content and offer alternative research possibilities that complement rather than replace access to, and research with original works of art. *Kyffin Williams Online* is a spatially enabled collection that allows a distant view of the content the presents this singular artist in a wider Welsh, European and international visual cultural context.

While Kyffin Williams is known for his depictions of the Welsh landscape and his work has played a significant part in the formation of an understanding of Welsh visual culture. Williams is also known for his Patagonian landscapes. His work in other parts of Britain and Ireland and continental Europe is less well-known. A spatial presentation of the work will draw attention to these geographic anomalies and highlight the 'outliers' from in the collection. Works previously unseen, overlooked or ignored for a variety of reasons –

that they are not indicative of his work, have yet to be seen or have been treated as library or archive documents in the cataloguing process – will become more obvious and could gain more use by being presented in a non-hierarchical fashion according to the locations they depict. Similarly, by drawing attention to works that depict places unusual in Williams's oeuvre, new and more varied art historical research could be produced, to reinvigorate research in his work and challenge the notion in some critical spheres that: "Wales' greatest exponent of the landscape […] produced a short hand image of Wales with his palette knife rendition of the dark brooding mountains of Snowdonia" (Bala, "Wales made visible" 5). Opening up the lesser-known works in a non-hierarchical presentation, in a way which highlights the unusual, outlaying, or anomalous works will hopefully show a more nuanced and diverse side to the artist and encourage an equally diverse range of critical interpretations.

In summary, using maps to present content in the Kyffin Williams collections has several primary benefits. A spatially presented collection offers a visual means for exploring a primarily visual collection, removing some of the dependence on text for accessing content. The spatial presentation of content offers an alternative means of accessing the collection where accurate dates are unavailable. The spatial presentation of large sections of the collections offers a range of digitally specific research possibilities for the researcher/user. This addresses the primary aim of the project to develop a resource that will encourage the use of digital content in its own right and facilitate innovative research that would not be possible using the original, analogue collection: mapping hundreds of items and allowing users to compare works according to their location moves towards a distant viewing of the Kyffin Williams collection. The application of geographic information to digital content also creates another access point to content for users, meaning disparate material from different collections can be drawn together using the connection of their shared spatial attributes. A

spatially encoded catalogue of work would be most appropriate given the importance of the Welsh landscape to the work of Kyffin Williams and Welsh visual culture in general[18].

[18] Appendix 1 reviews a large range of digital humanities projects and cultural collections that have used mapping approaches in their representation and analysis. This review of digital resources encompasses projects beyond art and visual culture and aims to tease out the benefits of using GIS for cultural heritage collections users and to identify examples of best practice in the field. This review has informed the development of *Kyffin Williams Online* and has been included as an appendix so not to disrupt the narrative of the thesis and to operate as a standalone document that can be used by the National Library of Wales to inform future developments of geographically encoded digital collections.

Chapter 4a: Art in reproduction

Chapter 1B discussed how the National Library of Wales has used reproductive technology to disseminate the contents of its collections, from early use of a Photostat machine in the 1920s, to web-based developments from the 1990s onwards. The first half of this chapter explores the importance of reproductive technology to the study of art and its history in order to place digital resources relating to art in a longer context and offers a broader consideration of the effect of reproducing individual, original works of art. The second half of this chapter considers the digital presentation of collections relating to three artists – Edvard Munch, Vincent Van Gogh and L.S. Lowry to examine how collections relating to an individual artist have been presented. The website of the Whitney Museum is also considered to evaluate the features and designs of a recently re-launched website for a significant art collection.

Art in reproduction, art as digital documents

> "Slides, even more than photographs, change artworks into what Fawcett correctly termed "visual facts" or what Lady Eastlake described as "facts of the most sterling and stubborn kind." (Nelson, 433, citing Fawcett, 442-460)

The technological development linked to art historical pedagogy provides a useful timeline for understanding the ways in which art has in the main been studied – in reproduction. This has implications for the creation of a digital resource. The identification of areas in which the mechanical or digital reproduction of artworks has been successful can inform the development of the *Kyffin Williams Online*. Noting the perhaps insurmountable deficiencies in reproductions of artworks can also focus attention onto developing functionality that cannot be achieved using the original artwork alone. This will serve as an introduction to the choice of Omeka as a content management system for displaying the Kyffin Williams collection, explaining why this system was chosen, its benefits and how it can

be used in conjunction with other systems to offer a geographically structured web resource for the art collections at the National Library of Wales.

The study of art relies on access to art works. Similarly, the study of the humanities relies on all manner of documents – as historical evidence or as literature as the foundation of the humanist or scholar's work. While the scientist generates their own data through experimentation and observation, the study of the past – in terms of history, art or literature – relies on data in the form of documents. The validity and reliability of these documents has a direct effect on the veracity of the claims of the humanist. If the validity of the sources consulted is doubted, the research project itself is compromised. Access to manuscript and archive material is often a benchmark for verifying the quality of research presented. As discussed in the previous section, this is complicated somewhat when thinking about printed books. Although mass-produced objects, the rarity, value, or previous ownership by a notable figure can elevate a book to special collection status. Annotations, notes or other marginalia added by users of that individual copy of a book can also be of interest to the researcher, although such ephemera could push that copy of a printed book into manuscript territory.

While access to original documents as part of archival research may add validity, in work where only the 'raw' data of textual content is needed, a digital reproduction, transcription or translation may be sufficient. This changes when the physical manifestation of a work is central to the researcher's work. For example, an historian conducting a content analysis study of journalistic descriptions of the Rebecca Riots could gather much of their data from the *Welsh Newspapers Online* resource created by the National Library of Wales, using the cross-lingual search function enabled by the digital image capture and subsequent optical character recognition processes; the format change does not impede access to the intellectual content under scrutiny. A researcher investigating the printing

practice and methods of regional newspapers in the nineteenth century may be able to gather data from the digital reproductions and associated metadata, but may be inclined to visit the National Library of Wales in order to compare the physical qualities of the newspapers as objects. These may include the properties of the paper, quality of type, evenness of composition or standard to which any illustrations have been reproduced. The example of newspapers as object emphasizes the inherent flatness of the digital reproduction, and while this may appear to be accurately rendered on a screen, additional information can be garnered from inspection in person.

Using digital surrogates in the study of art history makes these issues more acute. It is feasible that a student of art history at a regional university away from a metropolitan centre and national art collections may study and write about canonical art works that they have never seen 'in person.' They would instead rely on reproductions: in books, slide projections, or digital media. This kind of reproduction can affect both the meaning and teaching of the subject. John Berger summarises the practical issues this raises: "The uniqueness of every painting was once part of the uniqueness of the place where it resided. Sometimes the painting was transportable. But it could never be seen in two places at the same time[.]" This can raise interpretive challenges when working with a reproduction rather than an original work: "When the camera reproduces a painting, it destroys the uniqueness of its image. As a result its meaning changes. Or, more exactly, it meaning multiplies and fragments in to many meanings"(12). This is compounded by digital reproduction.

Teaching in reproduction

Discussions of the *aura* of an artwork aside, the fact that an individual object can only exist in one place at any one time has meant that the study of the History of Art may well be better called the study of the History-of-the-Photography-of-Art. The link between

art history and technological developments in displaying photographs is inextricable. As Witcombe observes "[t]echnology has not only shaped and guided the discipline in the past, it continues to do so. Much of what art historians do today in the study and teaching of art history is due to (and is done at the mercy of) technology" (Witcombe 16). Discussion of the changing use of technology in the discipline is a mixture of nostalgia for old, and scepticism of new technology underpinned with a sense that no technological advancement will ever be adequate in order to recreate artworks. Lantern slides were used in the early half of the twentieth century lacked colour but often presented a better quality than contemporary textbook illustrations. The availability of manual 35mm projectors meant that lanternslides began to be superseded in the 1960s. The development of the remotely controlled Kodak carousel projectors meant that 35mm slides were a common feature of art history teaching throughout most of the twentieth and in some departments into the twenty-first century.

Some institutions maintain extensive slide collections. The Slide Library at the Courtauld Institute of Art "contains more than 200,000 slides covering a range of subjects from painting, sculpture and architecture to illuminated manuscripts, prints and decorative arts." In addition to the 35mm slide holdings, the Witt Library contains of 1.8 million "photographs of reproduction of Western paintings, drawings and engravings from c.1200 to the present day[;]" and Conway Library of "photographs of architecture, architectural drawings, sculpture and illuminated manuscripts" ("Image Libraries"). Mark M. Braunstein's essay "Eulogy to a Slide Library" offers a nostalgic view of the shift at the Art History department from 35mm slides to the use of digital equivalents. Although presented with a tongue-in-cheek tone, the closing statement demonstrates the romantic attitude shown by some art historians towards the by now archaic technology which for decades had a fundamental role in teaching practice:

> In another few years, the professors born of the digital generation that never pulled slides will want to dump the remaining collection and to cart away the empty cabinets. That inevitable event of the total erasure of the slide library will provide a sobering lesson in the ephemerality of all existence. Because a scan stands to a slide, as a slide stands to art, as art stands to life. (4)

The description is as rose-pink-tinted as many 35mm slides used in teaching until their obsolescence, suitable for the sentimental tone of the article. In another self-consciously sentimental article, Elizabeth Williams provides a vignette that summarises the failings (and simultaneous attractions) of 35mm slides as a medium for displaying reproductions of art works:

> *Clunk*. On your left – I'm sorry, no, you're right. *Clunk.* Winslow Homer's *The Coming Storm,* a watercolor [sic] from 1901. I really must apologise for this slide; it is much pinker than I remember it being. The watercolor [sic] really looks nothing like that in person, I can assure you this was the best image we had in the collection. Last time I checked. There was a better slide but it seems to have wandered off. You'll have to take my word for it, but to give you an idea, perhaps I should show you what a digital reproduction of this piece might look like. Left, please. *Clunk*. Yes, that's better […] (51).

Using digital, as opposed to mechanical reproductions for the teaching and research of the history of art does not overcome the theoretical issues involved with working from surrogates; on the contrary, the ability to digitally reproduce images of art works a potentially infinite number of times arguably compounds issues around the aura or authenticity of an artwork. On a more practical level, however, high quality digital images produced in a consistent manner across a collection allows for works to be consistent in their reproduction when used in teaching and research, avoiding the degradation which often beset 35mm slide collections.

Pictures of pictures

Robert S. Nelson has written convincingly on the effect of slide projections on the development of art history as an academic discipline, and the importance of understanding the effect of pedagogical media. He asserts that "the history of past technological revolutions – whether roll to codex, manuscript to printed book, or manual typewriter to computer keyboard – suggest that prior customs often continue, even as they cease to be understood" ("The Slide Lecture […]" 415). Although the audience for a digital resource for a National Library differs from that of a university lecture theatre, his insights into the reaction to projected slides is useful for understanding the interaction between user and reproduced artwork. The interaction is to some extent dependent on a suspension of disbelief – that the reproduction/projection *is* the artwork itself. This effect becomes possible because of the tripartite relationship between teacher, audience and projected slide: "[t]ogether they create narratives and social bonds and transform shadows into art, monument, symbolic capital or disciplinary data" (*ibid.*). He cites several examples where the language of art history lecturers illustrating their lectures with slides uphold the illusion that the projection is the picture, making art historical analyses and statements that "are only possible if the slide is taken not as shadow, projected photograph, or copy of an original, but as the object itself" (*ibid.* 417).

Continuing his analysis of the rhetoric of the art historian, Nelson sees a projection of an image as "less a sign and more a simulacrum of the art object, an entity that in some way is that object itself, a past made present, even as it is understood to be past – hence the rhetorical utility of the forensic and the epideictic" (*ibid.* 418). The study of art history then depends on the acceptance of a lie – that the slide *is* the artwork under consideration, a lie which is assisted if the argument of the teacher delivering the lecture: "if slides are accepted as paintings, the normal state of affairs, then arguments based on slides alone are

persuasive, even if the evidence only exists within the rhetorical/technological parameters of the lecture itself" (*ibid.* 422). This notion can be transferred to the digital presentation of a painting from the National Library's collection: the digital image (simulacrum of art objects) is dependent on the parameters of its online display in the absence of a permanent exhibition space large enough to accommodate the collection. The digital slide allows the artwork to be distributed and studied in a much wider range of contexts, although this wider dissemination of images can also make the problems of reproducing artworks more acute for some scholars. Nelson's discussion of the photographic slide is again useful: "ironically the photographic slide's very power to make art present in the lecture hall distorts it at the same time because, to state the obvious, the original is not present" (*ibid.* 423-433).

For some researchers, the presence of the original artwork is always essential for study, as with the study of other 'special' collections at other institutions. A perception remains in some quarters that special collections are for the use of experienced researchers, or professional scholars, rather than for the use of all students at an academic library (Auchstetter 224). This could be even more acute in the case of the National Library, when even non-rare, legal deposit material is closed-access, and paintings especially, unless coincidentally displayed at the time of visit, have to be requested using appropriate forms and having received correct permissions. This process has caused some frustration even among experienced researchers familiar with the collection. Peter Lord has written of his frustration at the ubiquity of digital resources:

> Ordinary members of the public […] are now often denied the experience of contact with the relics of our heritage, including artefacts that are not rare or fragile – artefacts that are our property and not that of the curators and conservation officers who meanly appropriate them as vehicles for the expression of personal and professional power in some institutions. The inspiration that direct contact provides can deeply enrich writing and making that is concerned with the expression of cultural identity. The electronic media that nowadays mediate the experience of the artefact degrade and dehumanise our perception of the reality of the past, as also they do of the present. (*Relationships with Pictures* 95)

Lord appears here to agree with the notion that the act of reproducing an artwork means that "[t]he artwork is not only detached from history, as Grimm favoured; it is also divorced from neighboring [sic] images, attendant sights, sounds, or smells, and the community, traditions, and functions of the original" (Nelson 432-433)[19].

The effects of digitisation of text on their use by scholars have been written about extensively. The increased use of digitised or born-digital material in research has meant a certain amount of homogenization in the look of texts. While interfaces differ, a digitised page of text often appears in a very similar way to other materials. If the researcher is only interested in the textual content, or the data contained within an article or report, then this is adequate. However, a subject-specific consideration of the users of candidate material for digitisation is required. As Pearson notes:

> People working in a library supporting pharmaceutical research may feel the future has already taken a fairly stable shape, as the documentary environment has become almost wholly electronic, but for someone working in an art library, or any other humanities based or more generalist library, it's a more messy set of horizons. (13)

The 'messy set of horizons' includes the desire of some Library users to experience extra-textual information – ephemeral material, annotations, the feel or scent of the paper. This is even more apparent when considering artworks, especially oil paintings that include heavy impasto such as Kyffin Williams's. This messiness complicates the widely repeated

[19] Although the reproductive technology is a long-established facet of art historical discourse, art history as a discipline has in some respects been slower to adapt to more general digital shift in the humanities. On July 14 2014, the *Zurich Declaration on Digital Art History* (developed at the *Digital (from prev.) Art History: Challenges and Prospects* conference, 26/27 June 2014 at the Swiss Institute of Art Research (SIK-ISEA), Zurich) was circulated using the H-NET List on Art History encouraging its community to develop approaches to digital methodologies, authority data, archives and collections, big data, digital workspaces, open access, legal matters and sustainability of digital projects. ("ANN: Zurich Declaration on Digital Art History"). Such topics have been discussed, argued and agonised over and culminated in many digital humanities manifestoes ("Manifesto for the Digital Humanities," "Young Researchers in Digital Humanities: a Manifesto," "A Digital Humanities Manifesto "v.1 and v.2), declarations ("Paris Declaration for the Progress of the Digital Cultural Heritage") and textbooks (Burdick et al., Gold; Warwick, Terras & Nyhan, etc.) in the last decade. The fact that *Declaration on Digital Art History* has taken until mid 2014 suggests that concerns and suspicions around digital research methodologies, the collaborative research prompted by those methodologies and concerns over the digital reproduction of art works raised by several respondents to the Kress Foundation's report, *Transitioning to a Digital World, Art History, its Research Centers and Digital Scholarship* (Zorich) have lingered longer than in other disciplines.

idea of a library being the humanist or scholar's laboratory (see Aboyade 20-28; Burchard n.p.; Stone, 292-313); if a researcher of Welsh art needed to consult simple digital images of the Kyffin Williams collection, then a catalogue entry with attached thumbnail image could provide sufficient data. However, paintings and other artworks are three dimensional objects and not simply images. The data is more complex than a two-dimensional presentation on a computer or tablet screen can allow. Comparing digitised material against its original source object is an unsophisticated and unhelpful dialectic. This failing becomes especially acute when considering the textural qualities of many of Williams's paintings, or one of the three dimensional objects in the bequest collections. Without the financial means to employ three-dimensional imaging, or RTI imaging, for the photographic reproduction of paintings (through both analogue and digital means) renders a three-dimensional object locked into a two-dimensional plane where differences of scale, size, angle of viewing and exhibition context are homogenized.

The challenge of assembling a digital resource for the collection is to maintain the 'messiness' and variety of interpretation of artworks, avoiding turning digital reproductions of artworks into "visual facts." The choice of system and structure in the presentation of the digitised collection of Kyffin Williams's work should embrace the multiple meanings that the reproduction of artworks allow and to offer not concrete facts of art, but a malleable means of juxtaposing, re-ordering and re-interpreting the digital collection. The choice of platform for displaying the digitised content should reflect this need to interrogate the material using a variety of search and browse techniques, and allow for the spatial presentation and interpretation of the collection.

Other artist websites: lessons learned

Collections of art relating to individual artists are presented online in a variety of ways: through national museum or gallery websites; the personal websites of artists or fan-websites. The organization, presentation and upkeep of these websites vary greatly. The Munch Museum, Oslo is a useful comparison to *Kyffin Williams Online* owing to its foundation following a bequest directly from the artist. Following Munch's death in 1944, all works in his possession (including over 1000 paintings, 500 drawings and 18000 prints) were left to the city of Oslo and are housed in a specially designed museum that opened in 1963. Having sufficient space to permanently display the physical exhibition may have had an impact on the design of its website. While there is a wealth of information, online essays and other research material on the Munch Museum's website, its digital display of content mirrors its physical exhibitions:

> The Munch Museum has presented Internet exhibitions in connection with some of its exhibitions. These mini-sites document and in some cases expand on the material in the museum. The Internet exhibitions continue to be available after the exhibitions have closed. ("Internet Exhibitions")

These Internet exhibitions take different formats, are somewhat inconsistent and in practice do not use the digital material in any significantly different way to standard exhibition information, with content remaining static. The digital *catalogue raisonné* of Munch printed works is a useful tool ("Edvard Munch: Prints, The Complete Graphic Works"), although the museum's collection itself cannot be searched in any meaningful way through the website. Rather than functioning as a digital research tool independent of the physical collection, the website acts (at best) as a supplement and (at worst) only as an advertisement for the physical collection.

The website of the Van Gogh Museum offers a similarly basic introduction to the work of that artist. Both figures occupy a significant place in their respective country's art

history but the institutions differ in the nature of their collections. While the Munch Museum collection was established from the bequest of the artist directly to the city of Oslo, the Van Gogh Museum was established after works not sold during the artist's lifetime were passed to his brother, Theo, then to his wife Johanna van Gogh-Bonger, to her son, Vincent Willem van Gogh before being loaned to the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, transferring to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation in 1962. A permanent home for the collection was built and opened in 1973 (de Leeuw 9). The collection contains over 200 paintings (of 864 known to have been created by van Gogh), 437 drawings and 31 prints (of approximately 1,200 known in existence) making the museum home to the largest collection of his work and comparable in size to the Kyffin Williams collections at the National Library of Wales. The website presents only a selection of these works ("Vincent's Life and Work"). Digitised content is arranged according to categories (such as *Landscape, Self-Portraits*, etc.), and Periods – relating to the time and place in which a work was created (e.g. *Paris 1886-88, Arles 1888-89*). The museum also houses van Gogh's letters, which are available in print and iPhone application format and as a web edition (available free of charge from vangoghletters.org) and have previously been presented as *Van Gogh's Blog*, which was updated as if by van Gogh himself, using text from his letters as part of *The Artist Speaks* exhibition in October 2009-10. Users were invited to "Follow Van Gogh on the Van Gogh Blog: read his descriptions of his daily activities, accompany him to places he visits, and share his opinions in art and literature" ("Van Gogh's Letters: The Artist Speaks"). This blog is no longer available, being rendered obsolete by the comprehensive web edition (Jansen, Luijten and Bakker) and perhaps trivialising the letters of an artist known for his emotional letters to his brother, Theo.

Given its relatively small size, it is surprising that the art collections have not been presented in full on the website. Digital versions of all known works by van Gogh have been collated at another website – *The Vincent van Gogh* Gallery (vggallery.com) created by an

individual, David Brooks, of Toronto, Canada. Although this website looks dated, it is very comprehensive, with references, images and location/collection information for all known works by the artist – the Van Gogh Museum website even provides a link ("Vincent Van Gogh, Van Gogh's Work"). The non-comprehensive nature of the digital presentation could also be some sort of an attempt protect visitor numbers – in 2013 the Van Gogh Museum attracted almost 1.5 million visitors ("Numbers of Visitors"). With the exception of the web edition of Van Gogh's letters, the website (as with the Munch Museum,) functions mainly as a supplement to the physical collection. The Kyffin Williams Collections have no such dedicated home with the space to display a permanent collection with a programme of temporary exhibitions. With no such permanent exhibition space, its digital display must be comprehensive.

The LS Lowry collection at the Lowry Centre, Salford Quays, Manchester is similar to the Kyffin Williams collections at the National Library of Wales in several respects – a discrete collection at an institution holding wider collections, and a collection that is 'closed' in the sense that new work can only be added if 'discovered' or sold/loaned to the institution. The make-up of the collection is also similar to that of the Kyffin Williams Bequest, including: "over 400 art works, 57 of which are oil paintings. Alongside the works of art is an archive containing thousands of items ranging from photographs to press cuttings and exhibition catalogues" ("Lowry Favourites: a permanent display of the best of LS Lowry"). The web page is simply arranged, with sections including essays and images relating to L.S. Lowry's life navigable through a timeline and the collection, separated into Art and Archive sections. The Art section is subdivided thematically ('Landscapes', 'Industrial Scenes', etc.) allowing access to selected digitised works. The *Archive* section is under construction and promises access to photographs, objects, films, letters and books/catalogues. The web page also links to the institution's participation in the Google Cultural Institute's Art Project, offering a Museum View (similar to Google's Street View) of

the display and high resolution scans of 44 paintings and drawings from the collection. The value of participation in the Google Art Project may be the increased visibility of the collection by its association with Google and other participating institutions.

Some other institutions, whose collections have a more general scope, have used innovative approaches to website redesign. The website of the Whitney Museum of American Art was launched in its current form in May 2013 ("About Whitney.org") following on from a major website overhaul around 2010-11. Not all of the extensive Whitney collection of over 21,000 works is digitized, and works are added to the website on an on-going basis ("Collection"). In addition to the administrative functions of the website (visitor information, location, etc.) the website acts as a developing catalogue of works, and integrates some simple features which contribute greatly to the functionality of the site. Rather than simply allowing comments at the end of pages/articles, users can 'curate' their own collection of images/ audio/ video from the Whitney's collection. This can then be shared with others. Prior to the major overhaul of the website in 2010, Helai, Henslee and Michaelson wrote:

> Visitors to the site can register for personal accounts allowing them to create a collection of their favourite works of art, exhibitions, or pages on the site. Users can add captions, rearrange page elements via a drag-and-drop feature, create their own slideshows, and share links to their collections. ("Barn Raising: Building a Museum Web Site using Custom Wiki Tools")

The second phase of the web redevelopment has added further user functions. User collections can be shared with one another and (with permission) displayed on the public website. The data associated with users collections could also be used to provide notifications of future museum activities. Writing in 2010, Helai et al noted: "a future goal for custom collections is that they may serve as hubs for managing communication from the Museum, such as e-mail notifications of upcoming events or exhibitions related to artists that a user has collected" (*ibid.*). This goal has now been realised in the subsequent phases

of the website overhaul. While user-collections are a simple and useful tool to encourage 'use' of the digital collection encouraging engagement and active participation in the work of the museum rather than passive looking or browsing digital content, users must also be made aware that their use of collection tools could also be used for marketing purposes. The institution's own intellectual output is also available through the website. An extensive selection of video recorded talks, audio recordings, museum guides and other video material is available, and arranged in a similar style to the digital images of the collection itself, with similar browsing/searching facilities. This content can also be added to user collections. The website is also notable in using adaptations of already existing platforms to present the content. Helal et al. have listed the benefits of using adaptations of already existing platforms for ease of use by museum staff:

> The qualities that comprise "wiki-ness" (or the "WikiWay", in the medium's own lingo,) can usefully be separated into two sets: first are the qualities of wikis' visible, two-dimensional form: primarily textual, built using a markup language. Second are qualities of wikis' social and organizational form, or network form: easy to edit and expand, to work well on smart phones, such as the iPhone and as a result of its basic design and approach to universal accessibility, it displays legibly on some low-end cell phones. (*ibid.*)

The resultant website is clear and uncluttered. The design is utilitarian, mirroring its custom Wiki platform, with content (i.e. videos, images and audio) are raised to the 'surface' of the interface to avoid having to work through many layers of explanatory text, signposts and links, although advance searching and introductory texts are available to users. This approach also has a technical function – avoiding unnecessary functions and processes mean the focus of the website is on the digital images:

> The site is designed to provide equal functionality and information to all users through unobtrusive technologies and choices. As a general rule of thumb, it is programmed mainly in simple, text-based HTML, with no decorative graphic element except the museum's logo, a dot at the bottom of each page, and a background fill. Flash is used only for streaming video. The saved bandwidth is used for larger, higher quality art images. (Ibid.)

Choosing not to adorn the website with various digital accoutrements returns the focus to its primary function – to present high quality digital images from the museum's collection with appropriate and useable research functions. This acknowledgment of the *raison d'être* of a web resource relating to art works – to show images as clearly and in as high quality as is practical must is a target for *Kyffin Williams Online*. The following Chapters discuss the reasoning behind choosing Omeka as platform for *Kyffin Williams Online* and how its features address the goals of this thesis.

Chapter 4b: Digital theory, digital practice

Kyffin Williams Online presents the Bequest Collection in a catalogue format, with high quality images and metadata, with advanced search and browse capabilities. The chosen platform, Omeka, includes basic web publishing functions useful for including introductory texts and discussions, and case studies demonstrating the functions of the resource. It is extensible in the sense that additional features or functions can be added to it as and when time allows. The choice of content management system for this collection again reflects the unusual nature of an art collection within a library context. Institutional repositories, integrated library management systems, museum content management systems, and web publishing platforms all have some features and functions which would be useful for the presentation of the collection, but none of these system types fully meet the needs of this digital collection. Sustainability has been an important factor in the choice of platform – in terms of cost, but also in terms of staff-time for upkeep and be relatively easy to use in order to allow a variety of staff to update or maintain the resource with little training. The knowledge transfer aspect of this project has also influenced the choice of platform, *Kyffin Williams Online* is seen as an output of this project, but also a model from which the methods and approaches used can be adapted for use with other collections at the National Library.

The National Library has stated that the Bequest collection forms a valuable resource for all users of the Library, including "pupils and their teachers, higher education students, lifelong learning students, researchers, staff of galleries and public and national collections, individuals interested in Welsh art, individuals who collect or own works by Kyffin Williams, [and] the media in Wales and worldwide" ("The Kyffin Williams Bequest Project"). Its digital iteration, *Kyffin Williams Online* offers access to the Bequest Collection using a variety of user friendly search and browse techniques.

In addition to this, *Kyffin Williams Online* aims to enable research that is not possible using the original, physical collection alone and aims to: provide a platform for the *distant viewing* of the collection, allowing the user to compare and contrast properties of a large number of items at once; enable digital research to contribute to the art historical understanding of Kyffin Williams's work not previously available by using only the original, physical objects; and overcome the problem of the majority of items in the Bequest collection lacking basic date information. In place of the date of a painting or drawing being a primary access point for content, a spatial descriptor (location depicted in the work) could be used to retrieve items from the collection. For example, a user may wish to browse all the works from the collection created in 1965; such a request may not be possible without accurate date information (the majority of works have been assigned a date according to the decade of creation, assigned at the cataloguing stage). However, a user would alternatively be able to search the collection according to places depicted, for example requesting all items depicting Snowdon, London, or France.

Platform choice

Omeka, developed by the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University has been selected as the platform to present the Kyffin Williams collections. The goal of this project is to create the resource/tool in a heuristic fashion, using art historical research to inform the way in which the collection could be presented, organised and displayed in such a way as to encourage further use, study and analysis of the collection. A number of factors had to be considered before choosing which platform to use to ensure its suitability, and several different platforms reviewed before a selection was made. This section briefly outlines some of the options available and indicates how the functions, plug-ins and usability of Omeka (both from an administrator and user perspective) mean that it is an appropriate choice for this collection. This section will also describe how

Omeka is a suitable platform for meeting some of the aims set out in the Digitisation Strategy of the National Library of Wales (2010/11-2014/15), meets key objectives of the Library's digital media strategy (*The Digital Face of the Library* 2012/15) and how the resource can contribute to the wider institutional goals set out in *Knowledge for All: NLW Strategy 2014-17*).

A key element in the decision to use Omeka as the underlying structure of this resource was cost. As a collaborative project between university (Aberystwyth University School of Art), institution (National Library of Wales) and researcher, support is provided by in-kind contributions of staff time, expertise and supervision. Some budget was available for equipment and research travel, but the researcher did not have the budget or authority to implement a costly, proprietary content management system to complete the project. Indeed, a goal of this project is to create a resource that avoids such external expense and would be sustainable beyond initial set-up costs. With this in mind, an open-source system has been preferred, with some conditions: that the platform is sustainable, has evidence of a support system if necessary (through contact with developers and a wide user-forum of existing users prepared to participate in reciprocal troubleshooting and assistance) and evidence that the platform has been used in a range of reputable institutions in projects and resources relating to digitised cultural heritage, scholarly or archival collections.

Other available platforms

Several studies have been undertaken to evaluate the usefulness of different open source digital library packages. Goh, et al.'s 2006 article, "A checklist for evaluating open source digital library software" (360-379) provides a comprehensive methodology for assessing the benefits of different packages. Many of the systems reviewed in this article (such as Greenstone, CDSware, Fedora and EPrints) have the organisation of textual documents in an online repository at their core, rather than the digital display of image-

based collections. After establishing the meaning of 'open source' in reference to definitions from the Open Source Initiative (OSI) as software which allows " free distribution and redistribution of software and source code; licenses that allow distribution of modifications and derived works and non-discrimination against persons, groups or fields of endeavour," (362) the benefits of open source software are explained: users can change or adapt source code for their own purposes, as this activity would be completed by a diverse range of practitioners, meaning more varied functions can be developed. Referring to Von Hippel and von Krogh (209-223) Goh et al. note that "open source software tends to have more functions, being developed by the users of the software themselves, as compared to commercial software, where a vendor's priority is in profit generation that may not be inline with the needs of users." In the same way, updates to software can be produced and distributed at a lower cost, avoiding the need for royalties or additional licensing costs (362). Open source software by its nature lacks some of the support structures that would be available through the purchase of proprietary software, such as formal technical assistance from the manufacturers/developers or in recognised training activities. One of the primary advantages of open source software – that it is developed collaboratively by many interested parties working on additional functions, plug-ins and other bespoke elements – can also lead to a distinct disadvantage in terms of usability. Goh et al. reiterate their point that "open source software is also not known for ease of use as the focus is usually on functionality. Consequently, open source adopters will have to take greater personal responsibility in terms of leveraging staff expertise to implement and maintain their systems, including hardware and network infrastructure" (362, referring to Poynder 66-69).

History of Omeka: development, standards, application

Omeka was developed with the intention of providing collecting institutions (libraries, archives, museums or university collections), and individuals with the means of publishing digital collections. In addition to providing a user-friendly way of doing so with attractive design features, the intention was to also use critical standards (such as using Dublin Core in metadata) to ensure the interoperability of the platform with existing collections (Cohen 1-2). The prohibitive cost of creating and maintaining digital presentations of collections was also a factor in the development of Omeka. Cohen writes that collaborations between the CHNM and other institutions on digital collection projects demonstrated the need for such a readily available platform:

> Projects such as the September 11 Digital Archive and associated work with institutions such as the Smithsonian and the Library of Congress made us realize how much work – and how much money – it takes for institutions (and individuals) to mount high-quality and flexible exhibits online, and to manage the underlying collections. (*ibid.*)

From the outset, a range of institutions were involved in pre-beta testing, using the platform to provide a digital presence for small, temporary exhibitions (Cohen notes the *Catawba River Docs* exhibition at the Light Factory and North Carolina Cultural Heritage Museums between November 2007 and February 2008– see Lambla) to major, blue-chip institutions, such as the New York Public Library using Omeka as a way of exhibiting their digital collections (which currently uses Omeka for its *Treasures of the New York Public Library, Eminent Domain* and *Yaddo* exhibitions). Omeka has maintained its popularity due to its user-friendly interface and emphasis on its use by librarians, museums professionals, scholars and students of the humanities rather than experts in web design or coding. As with Zotero (the CHNM designed browser-based bibliographic citation tool) Omeka "enable[s] users to employ the tools easily and effectively without advanced training or technical skills," (Morton 952). Whereas Zotero primarily benefits the individual user (with

sharing functions), Omeka operates as web publishing tool that also has archival, organizational and advanced metadata application functionality.

Omeka has since been used by a wide range of institutions, scholars and other individuals to present archival material, special collections, historical data, art collections and other cultural heritage material. The platform is very popular for presenting collections relating to a single historical event, period or individual topic. The interoperability of the platform with other systems, a quality made possible by its use of Dublin Core as a metadata standard means that Omeka can be used to present a stand-alone, discrete collection from the wider holdings of an institution, while also allowing these items to be found in a separate full catalogue. An example would be *Treasures of the New York Public Library* , which makes digital images of art collections (and other material) available through simple exhibitions and category browsing, while items themselves are also available in the wider catalogue. This approach has significant benefits for the general user – the curated sub-collections are available are brought 'to the surface' without having to use advanced searching in the full catalogue, and can be presented in an attractive, image-based presentation with introductory texts. The centrality of images in the items record in Omeka means the platform lends itself to presentations of art and visual culture collections. For example, *Thrill Seekers – The Rise of Men's Magazines* (Lacerte *et al.*) offers a compact, concise presentation relating to an individual collection gives primacy to digital images but offers numerous signposts to other more varied and wide-ranging digital collections.

This Kiss to the Whole World – Klimt and the Vienna Secession draws together resources from the New York Art Resources Consortium (which includes the libraries of the Frick Collection, Brooklyn Museum, and the Museum of Modern Art) and demonstrates the power of Omeka to create a lasting research tool related to a temporary exhibition. The Omeka powered site offers digital exhibitions relating to Kilmt with a special focus on his

Beethoven Frieze and makes available digitised catalogues, posters and postcards from the contributing collections. This resource the potential of Omeka to be used collaboratively across institutions and collections – by ensuring the consistency of metadata standards disparate items can be drawn together into a single resource. Such an approach would be attractive if *Kyffin Williams Online* was to be extended to create a digital *catalogue raisonné* for the artist by collaborating with other institutions with significant Kyffin Williams holdings, most notably Oriel Môn, Llangefni or the National Museum and Galleries of Wales, Cardiff.

Alternatives to Omeka

Omeka is a combination of a web-platform for interpretive content and a content management system for digital collections. In this respect the system mirrors the mixture of target users – the library, museum, academic and individual scholar. Each constituent part of the target user base has a selection of systems traditionally associated with its work. The development of digitised cultural collections has meant that while the defined role of users has become more fluid (perhaps epitomised in the case of the Kyffin Williams collections at the National Library of Wales, where an art collection is housed in a library context), the associated technical apparatus has remained distinct. As Scheinfeldt notes:

> Library and archives professionals operate in a world of institutional repositories (Fedora, DSpace), integrated library systems (Evergreen, Ex Libris), and digital collections systems (CONTENTdm, Greenstone). Museum professionals operate in a world of collections management systems (TMS, KE Emu, PastPerfect) and online exhibition packages (Pachyderm, eMuseum). The humanist or interpretive professional's online tool set is usually based around an off-the-rack web content management system such as WordPress (for blogs), MediaWiki (for wikis), or Drupal (for community sites). ("Omeka and its Peers")

Omeka defines itself at the centre of a technology ecosystem – a point of convergence for the above listed systems and software – with a user ecosystem, where the roles of librarians and archivists, cultural content curators (including scholars, historical associations,

community groups, teachers and students) and museum professionals (including curators, web designers, educators and vendors) merge together ("Omeka: Serious Web Publishing"). In addition to the core functionality of Omeka – of uploading and organising digital collections in a variety of ways and presenting those collections in narrative exhibitions, its additional features make it particularly well matched for operating in conjunction with metadata standards in use at the National Library of Wales. Additional data migration tools such as CSV Import, OAI-PMH Harvest and OAI-PMH Repository mean that material already digitised and catalogued in other systems can be easily transferred to Omeka and its use of Dublin Core metadata standards should ensure that digital content and additional metadata can be migrated little further troubleshooting or adaptation. Once content and associated files have been migrated they can then be arranged into exhibitions using the Exhibition Builder plug-in, introductory texts can be added, to create an operable catalogue and attractive digital display quickly and simply, before adding advanced tools to improve the site as a research tool such as geo-location of content, user log-in capabilities.

Comparison: Drupal

The administrative structure of Omeka, where applying additional plug-ins can extend core functions is similar to the modular approach taken by the open source web-publishing platform, Drupal. Reviews of using Drupal for building a digital collection generally indicate that while the platform is incredibly powerful for a free, open source product, its learning curve is steep for the individual user and additional technical support is often needed: "[w]hile Drupal offers quite a bit of control in building and maintaining websites via its admin GUI, it's got a steep learning curve and customization (not to mention debugging) often requires help the help of an experienced developer" (Johnson). Reviews of Omeka by contrast indicate that the server installation is perhaps too complex for an individual user without more advanced technical skills or support, but once installed has an

intuitive interface which is easily operated by the general user (Yeo and Gehrels). Drupal's modular structure means additional functions can be added when necessary with each operated through its advanced graphical user interface, meaning that little custom coding or direct user manipulation of the underlying code is necessary to accomplish most activities. While initially attractive, the click-based graphical user interface has been a cause of frustration for some more advanced users: "Tasks which would be relatively trivial to implement in a custom application can take monumental amounts of work and add up quickly enough to affect the project's timeline, budget and end-of-the-day feasibility" (Babenko).

The prospect of a comprehensive graphical user interface is attractive initially from the perspective of an individual researcher, but when considering that *Kyffin Williams Online* is a prototype resource that can be built upon, adapted and grown, some element of customization and manipulation of the underlying code of the platform is required. Some reviews note that the barriers to customization in Drupal are compounded by a lack of documentation, especially in user-contributed modules. Mike Crittenden's article in which he lists both the powerful functions of Drupal and his frustrations with the platform ("Drupal's Golden handcuffs") raises a point which would be a significant cause for concern for new users of the platform – that of little, or scattered documentation. "Documentation is a mess, despite a huge community-wide effort to improve" (n.p.) he notes, before specifying that many contributed modules do not have documentation, and even Drupal core documentation is dispersed across several publications with many documents not being updated. Referring to Crittenden's article, Phil Johnson notes that some of the problems related to further development within Drupal go beyond limited documentation: "[h]e also makes a good point that when you do dig into Drupal code or write your own, in can be really painful due to complex layers of core and contributed modules, poor or non-

existent documentation, a database abstraction layer that's more trouble than it's worth, etc[...]" ("Drupal: So powerful it's…boring?").

As with Omeka, Drupal is a platform which cannot be defined as having a single purpose, and its power lay in the flexibility of its modular structure, allowing a variety of different functions to be presented together with the same administrator graphical user interface. Babenko explains:

> Many people mistakenly equate Drupal with a CMS (Content Management System); while this may have been accurate in the very early days, it has not been so for quite a while. Drupal is primarily a framework, one that can be used to build a CMS, but out of the box it is nothing more than a toolset with some basic functionality – a codebase and some interface forms. Drupal is not a blogging platform, not an ecommerce store, not a forum, and not a social network, but it can be used to build all of these (and then some). (n.p.)

Omeka also combines functions of web publishing, exhibition building and organisation with its core content management function. However, for the purposes of this project, Omeka's *raison d'etre* – a platform with which to provide access to and organisation of digital collections is clearer. This is, in essence its single general function, rather than the diverse ways in which Drupal can be applied. While Drupal could arguably provide the basis for an elegant presentation of the digitised Kyffin Williams content, Omeka's focus on the library, archive, museum and digital humanities communities, extensive documentation and implementation by many reputable institutions in presentation of digitised cultural content have made it the preferred choice of platform.

National Library of Wales strategies

In addition to the presentation of digitised content, *Kyffin Williams Online* should also demonstrate adherence to the criteria set out by the National Library of Wales's digitisation and digital media strategies. The Library's *Digisation Strategy 2011/12-2014/15* offers a guide on the selection, methods and standards to which the digitisation process is

undertaken. It will be used here to assess to what extent the chosen platform contributes to the aims of this digitisation, and draw attention to features which will aid the presentation of the digital collection. In essence, the strategy presents a series of best practices on the preparation and administration of digitised material for online display. *The Digital Face of the Library – NLW Digital Media Strategy 2012-15* presents guidelines on how this content should be presented following its preparation. This is consulted in order to assess how the Omeka platform is used to meet the digital media presentation standards expected from the institution.

The Library's *Digitisation Strategy 2011/12-2014/15* includes primary aims of continuing mass digitisation of collections, making this digital content available to "existing and new users regardless of their location," and encouraging and enabling the use of innovative and original research and learning methods through making the digitised content available (4). Its digitisation programme is made up of three main elements: digitisation for access to the collections; digitisation for preservation of materials "to provide permanent surrogate copies of fragile materials and to migrate at risk content to digital formats to ensure its long-term security" while continuing to emphasise the preservation of original, analogue collections; and, digitisation for users and external customers to use digitisation resources and skills to increase Library income (5-6).

The strategy document continues, noting that the digitisation practice of the Library is guided by thirteen principles "relating to access and preservation, and also practical issues relating to the digitisation process," and that whenever possible, these principles should be addressed and implemented in the creation, organisation and provision of digital content.[20]

[20] The thirteen principles listed: *Building the national collection; Large scale digitization; Standards; Technology; Intellectual property rights and licensing; Resource discovery; Marketing and branding; Interpretation and exhibitions; Research and learning; Digital preservation; Efficient and effective working; Reprographic services and digitization on demand; Review of projects and produce from the past.* (7-10)

The choice of Omeka as the basis of the *Kyffin Williams Online* resource addresses several of these principles. The original collection is unique and of national importance, avoiding duplication of effort with other institutions, adhering to the principle of *Building the National Collection.* It is large scale and represents the complete holdings relating to Kyffin Williams. The principle of *Standards* indicates that "[t]he Library will work in accordance with the generally adopted standards in the fields of digital data capture, cataloguing and creation of metadata, data storage, undertaking preservation actions on digitised data and in providing access to them" (7). Omeka's use of Dublin Core as a metadata standard, and the CSV Import facility means that the digitised, catalogued collection can be easily converted from the MARC21 record to Dublin Core format and mass-imported into the Omeka system, avoiding a duplication of cataloguing effort. A clause in the strategy's *Technology* principle specifies: "Applications and tools will be developed to enable interpretation, repackaging and re-purposing of digitised resources" (*ibid.*). The flexibility of Omeka, which allows digital exhibitions to be added to, changed and subject to a variety of additional tools means that following digitisation, the collection can be remixed and adapted into a variety of presentations swiftly, without the need of extensive training of staff. This flexibility and extensibility also addresses the principles of *Interpretation and Exhibitions* ("[t]he Library will provide interpretation for a selection of its collections that are digitised. It will also create virtual exhibitions based on those collections and will develop the tools to enable that to happen" (8)) and contribute towards the principle of *Efficient and effective working.*[21]

[21] "We will continue to develop an agile workforce that will be able to undertake various elements that are part of the digitization process. The Library will review its digitization processes carefully in order to ensure that they work in the most efficient and effective manner by examining them regularly for further time efficiencies and in order to ensure that they deliver the best value for money. We will look at the use of digitisation as a means of undertaking other activities in the Library in a more effective manner, especially in the fields of acquisition and cataloguing. Projects will be managed following recognised methodologies and the Library will work towards accreditation for its digital services to ensure quality in order to meet the requirements of users and customers." (9)

The final section of the *Digitisation Strategy* relates to access and reuse of digitised resources. The strategy specifies that such resources should maintain *Equality and democratic access* and ensure *Accessibility*, meaning that collections should be accessible to all users, and reminding the reader: "[t]he Library is a public library that gives its users access to its collections for reference purposes without demanding payment" (15) and that this principle is applicable to digital and analogue collections. As such, digital presentations should ensure "accessibility for all groups of users and [guarantee that digital content] conforms to the relevant legislation and guidelines" (*ibid.*). The strategy's approach to *Discovery and use* (of digitised collections) make the choice of Omeka particularly appropriate.

> Access to all of the digitised resources will generally be available through the Library's common search interface. We will also enable separate searching on specified collections as required and that might include the development of specific interfaces in order to provide these services. Access will also be available to the resources from outside the Library's own systems through merged catalogues and aggregation services to which the Library contributes. Resources will also be accessible through internet search services. (*ibid.*)

Elements of the Bequest Collection are available through full library catalogue, in addition to *Kyffin Williams Online*. However, as previously noted, the sheer scale of content within the full catalogue can mean that simple searches can yield many pages of results, including many false positives and irrelevant materials. Organising the content into an Omeka platform is a means collating Kyffin Williams-related material in a single interface. This does not mean that the material should be kept completely separate – users should be able to link to the full catalogue from the *Kyffin Williams Online* resource, possibly using tag, subject headings or keyword descriptors to link to other materials in the Library collections which may be of interest and encourage use of other collections.

The strategy's approach to *Open data* and *User contributions* must also be kept in mind when implementing the Omeka powered resource. The strategy notes that where

possible, digital content should be open to re-use by others and that the Library will "encourage others to develop new discovery and access services based upon the resources that the Library has digitised" (15). The copyright for all Kyffin Williams related material held at the Library belongs to the institution, which removes an administrative and legal barrier to making the content as open as possible. Functions including making the API of the Omeka site open and available for others to reuse should be investigated to make the resource as 'open' as possible. Similarly, functions where users can use, adapt or create new works based on the digitised content and share this material back with the institution, similar to the *Rijksstudio* system at the revamped Rijksmuseum website should be investigated as a possible additional feature as the resource develops. Such an approach will go even further than the digitisation strategy's goal of encouraging user contributions of descriptive metadata, although this could presently be addressed by allowing users to tag digital content and add comments to items and exhibitions using currently available Omeka plug-ins.

The digital face of the Library

The overarching corporate plan of the Library, active at the time of writing the current digital media strategy – *The Agile Library: The Library's Strategy 2011/12-2013/14* notes: "[t]he Library has a duty not merely to 'hold its doors open', but to encourage awareness and use of its collections and services, by all the means at its disposal" (3). The strategy that replaces *The Agile Library* offers a more practical suggestion of how this will be undertaken:

> The Library will assemble as complete a collection as possible, in all media, of material relating to Wales and our neighbours, including printed and electronic publications and sound and moving image material, to help ensure that Wales's analogue and digital memory is accessible, we will provide free access to our core collections, and will further enhance the interfaces that make it possible for users to access and benefit from these materials. (6)

The Library's approach to digital media contributes to this overall goal. *The Digital Face of the Library: NLW Digital Media Strategy 2012-2015* addresses how digital media created by the Library and its digitised collections should be presented. The strategy is arranged according to four main themes that act as useful guidelines on how digital content from the Library should be presented. The four themes are: *Users, Platforms, Content* and *Technology.* The first theme acknowledges that "users are at the heart of the Library's digital provisions, whether they are returning users who regularly visit its sites, or one-off users who happen to come across a tweet by the Library. All users are equally important, and the Library strives to develop services that best meet their needs" (3.3). The primacy of Library users is reflected in the approach to platforms – acknowledging the fact that users use digital content through a variety of devices (computer, tablet, smart phone, etc.) and that digital media produced by the Library content should be equally accessible through these platforms. In its prototype form *Kyffin Williams Online* has been developed for desktop use, however adaptation for other platforms should be included in the work-plan for the resource if implemented.

Content is defined in the digital media strategy as all media created and published online by the Library, including digitised collections: "Digitisation plays an important role in the creation of the Library's digital content, and the main Library website is central to how these digitised collections are shared with users" (*ibid.*). This attitude towards collections as content is perhaps indicative of the change initiated by an all-pervasive online world – the collections of the National Library are no longer the preserve of researchers, academics and users familiar with library searching techniques. The online presence of a library no longer means a full catalogue populated with MARC21 entries, but an active online presence rich with curated digital content. This general shift has perhaps also begun to erode the notion of the surrogate (be it digital photographs, catalogue records or other reproductions) where the digital content of an institution is sufficient for the research and other uses of many

users. As such digital content and the technologies employed to present it must also be made sustainable and keep pace with changing user expectations.

The digital media strategy acknowledges the importance of using technology which maintains the *openness* of Library data (reflecting the principle of open data in the digitisation strategy): "the Library is committed to releasing data where possible in order for users to re-use this content, where rights allow, to create their own digital projects" (3.4). This is particularly pertinent for the *Kyffin Williams Online* resource, which, as has been discussed, is a research tool rather than a static online exhibition.

Contribution digital media strategy

The *Digital Media Strategy* sets out a number of key strategic objectives that should be kept in mind when producing a new digital content outlet under the Library's rubric. Although *Kyffin Williams Online* is a prototype resource that the Library can then adapt and publish as it sees fit, the objectives of the Strategy have been kept in mind to help transition from prototype to a publicly available presentation of the Kyffin Williams Bequest. The strategy states "At present the Library's portfolio is somewhat disjointed with separate developments built in isolation. One of the central aims of this strategy is to build a better relationship between these developments in order to offer a significantly enhanced user experience"(4.1).

Initially, it would seem that using Omeka for *Kyffin Williams Online*, which has not been used previously, has compounded the issues of fragmentation and lack of cohesion between digital presentations. However, should the *Kyffin Williams Online* prototype be successful similar resources could then be implemented with other collections – specifically in relation to other art collections, making a suite of presentations of Welsh art at the National Library linked by a common interface, tools and functions. The Key Strategic

Objectives relating to digital media lists a series of deliverables relating to a variety of themes (content, social media and online marketing, design and brand cohesion, mobile and apps, amplifying events, development based on statistical analysis and user feedback, and training and sharing with the community). One such deliverable related to 'content' states that the Library should "develop central guidelines detailing high level requirements for project/microsites in order to ensure cohesion across the Library's online presence. Also [to] establish a central group which decides on what content should have a microsite, and what should be incorporated into the current online provisions" (4.1). *Kyffin Williams Online* contributes to this discourse and provides an example of how microsites relating to a variety of projects could be presented in future.

The strategy's approach to social media and online marketing indicates a shift from using third party websites as a means of sharing information about collections and events to a platform to encourage interaction and use of the collections, noting that "currently the social media channels are used solely as ways of sharing information, but it is hoped that over the next three years the will develop more into tools to engage with new audiences and ways of encouraging users to interact with our exhibitions and events" (4.2). *Kyffin Williams Online* can contribute to this goal by incorporating functions which allow the easy sharing of digitised content through social media platforms. The Social Bookmarking 2.0 plug-in for Omeka, allows administrators to add a customizable list of social media websites with which to share items from the digitised collection. This additional function can allow users to share an item through social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, Orkut and LinkedIn, social bookmarking sites including Digg, Delicious, Pinterest, StumbleUpon, and Yahoo Bookmarks as well as through email directly from the item record in Omeka. Although common on many websites, the function could be of particular use for online marketing of the Kyffin Williams collections and other projects at the Library. Kyffin Williams's continued popularity in Wales and abroad, combined with the fact that the

majority of the approximately 4,000 items in the Bequest collection (not including works purchased by or donated to the Library during the course of the artist's lifetime) would not have been seen apart for users requesting material in the Library building and not previously exhibited, could be used as a social media event at the time of the resource's launch. A co-ordinated social media approach with carefully chosen hash-tags and links to other Library activities, projects and events could be used as a means of disseminating the collection, while the ability of users to share individual items will allow the content of the collection to be opened up to a wider, more general online audience.

Space, place, landscape in practice

Methods and approaches in the geo-humanities influenced the development of *Kyffin Williams Online*. A variety of tools and methods have been considered, to demonstrate the usefulness of an emphasis on place in the presentation of the Bequest Collection. *Kyffin Williams Online* does not use or constitute a specific GIS tool, but rather relies on geo-humanities methods. This has contributed to one of the core features of the *Kyffin Williams Online* resource will be the ability to project the collection spatially, marking points on a map depicted in the landscape works in all media by the artist. Tools, in the form of plug-ins for Omeka allow content geo-referenced content to be presented on a map. Neatline is one such plug-in. The plug-in allows the content of an Omeka powered web site to be visualised using the DC: Coverage elements of a collection, allowing nuanced and richly annotated narratives to be created using the spatial and temporal data associated with collection items. Nowviskie et al. note:

> Neatline's geo-temporal visualizations are built using open-source software and standards-based approaches to geo-spatial data, and they allow scholars to illustrate collections they have independently digitized or to draw on open-access archival content and standardized metadata created by cultural heritage institutions. (692)

The plug-in compromises a suite of functions creating a powerful visualisation tool. This suite include an EAD Importer allowing the import of standardized metadata between Neatline and Omeka; Neatline Maps for geo-spatial presentation of content, Neatline Features; which allows users to add polygons, lines, encoding and other geospatial shape information; and Neatline Time which allows mapped content to be displayed in conjunction with its temporal data in the form of timelines and other combinations of visualisations (694). One of the most attractive features of Neatline is the way that not all elements of the suite must be used; different elements of the package can be selected for specific purposes dependant on the purposes of the use of Neatline, the nature of the content, and the fullness of its metadata. For example, the lack of accurate dates for much of the content in the Kyffin Williams Bequest collection means that it would be difficult to use the Neatline Time function in conjunction with this collection. Many of the date ranges applied in the cataloguing stage of digitisation include 20-year spans (e.g. *Farmer in Eryri* (National Library of Wales, [1970-1990]). Despite Neatline Time including "the ability to express temporal ambiguity, uncertainty and nuance" (*ibid.*) would create an unclear and unhelpful visualisation of the collection. The temporal function of Neatline however could be useful to provide background information on the artist, note the dates of major exhibitions with links to the wider Library catalogue holdings of their respective exhibition catalogues, or plot major biographical instances in the life of Kyffin Williams.

The particular strength of Neatline comes in the way it can present a variety of different themed maps, or Neatline Exhibits. These can be used to emphasise specific elements of the collection, highlight themes that emerge as a result of the geo-coding process and demonstrate to users the kind of research possible when using a GIS in conjunction with a cultural collection. This means a series of maps with some analysis can be presented to the public user through the Omeka powered web site. The Geolocation plug-in, developed by

Roy Rosenzweig Center for New Media and the Humanities has some benefits over Neatline for basic mapping approaches particularly in terms of interface and administration:

- a thumbnail map showing the 'location' of an item appears in the Dublin Core record of that item;
- base maps are provided by Google Maps which would be familiar to most users;
- geo-location data is requested in WGS1984 latitude/longitude form as opposed to the WKT Point format of Neatline which requires additional processing at the geo-coding stage.

When using the Geolocation plug-in, all locatable items are plotted on a single map. While this is a useful feature for the purposes of 'distant viewing' of an large selection from the collection, it would be preferable to be able to make several themed maps demonstrating the kind of research and interpretation possible with when using a spatial approach to this collection.

By using the Geolocation plug-in as the primary mapping function in association with Neatline, it is possible to create thematic maps that form a series of visual vignettes demonstrating the possibilities of a spatial approach to art historical inquiry. The theoretical underpinning of Neatline outlined by Nowviskie et al. states that an iterative, sketch-like approach is often used in humanities research, and in developing the plug-in, the Scholars' Lab team stress the importance of "analog [sic] sketching and graphical storyboarding," and that Neatline is an attempt to "re-insert the visual, incremental knowledge production manifested in visual form – particularly in fields like history and literary studies in which this interpretation of visual artefacts is rarely taught" (693). The Kyffin Williams Collections at the National Library of Wales are an inherently visual collection, although one whose graphic and physical qualities (which would form the basis of scholarly inquiry in analogue art history) are changed in the process of digitisation. In reproducing this collection digitally, a

spatial humanities approach has been used to re-visualise visual culture (to use Mike Pringle's term) and offer alternate, specifically digital tools for use with a digitised collection. Doing so reiterates the notion of the Library as a major collector of art, whose services, tools and resources are specifically shaped by the collections themselves. Libraries collect documents. Re-visualising the digitised collections means that an art collection in the Library will not have to be treated and studied using tools and methods reserved for documents, but use visual presentations of the collections to encourage and support their use in research.

Summary

While the development of *Kyffin Williams Online* has been influenced by methods and theories in the spatial humanities, the digital resource is not in itself a GIS; rather it uses mapping approaches and tools to develop the understanding and presentation of the digitised collection. In the same way, the project as a whole has been influenced by theories and methods of a more general 'digital humanities'. Waters's definition of digital humanities as the "application of digital resources and methods to humanistic inquiry" (4) has been useful in forming an approach to the level of interpretation presented in *Kyffin Williams Online*. Schnaffner and Erway expand on this, explaining that some digital humanists "consider the 'process' of DH to be part of scholarship, while other see published outcomes as the only true coins of the realm" (7). In this sense, it is a preparation of digital resources rather than the application that Waters defines. A digital resource presenting the subjective interpretations of an individual researcher would be inappropriate in a resource intended to encourage use, inquiry and scholarship in the Kyffin Williams collections. *Kyffin Williams Online* is a tool for further research, not a definitive research outcome.

Not all of the features discussed are completely new, and many will involve adapting and modifying existing technology to create the resource. However, the combination of

such features with high quality digitised images and associated metadata will create the most complete digital collection of the work of an individual Welsh artist available online. The resource should also have functions to examine paintings of Wales and the Welsh in their spatial context, and allow comparisons of works depicting different geographical areas, encouraging a wider use of the material and offering the use of specifically digital research methods. Ayres's statement that "another way of approaching place and space, event and process, involves pulling the camera back to see larger patterns in motion. This strategy, useful for looking across broader arrays of space and time, draws more on the machine-aided capacities of GIS and other digital tools," (9) encapsulates the intention of *Kyffin Williams Online*. The spatial presentation of content is one way of 'drawing the camera back' to allow a distant reading, or *distant viewing* of the collections. The distant view is not an outcome on and of itself. After drawing the camera back, unusual or novel details become apparent.

Chapter 4c: Implementation and workflow

Omeka installation

One of the primary forms of support given to this project by the institutional partner has been in the form of computing and information technology expertise. Once Omeka had been selected as the preferred content management system/web platform for the Kyffin Williams collections, the operations team conducted installation to the server, with some settings amended and plug-ins installed at the installation stage to ease data import issues that were noted as being a potential problem at the start of the process. Omeka software was downloaded as a .zip file, its files extracted and saved to the *Mawddach* server at the National Library of Wales. Additionally, the MySQL connection setting needed to be added to the database file, allowing Omeka files to connect to the database.

Plug-in installation

The Omeka comma separated value (.CSV) Import plug-in was also installed at this stage. As the initial dataset included 3,585 items it would have been highly impractical to add individual items to Omeka, as would be the case with a small collection that had not been catalogued by that stage. Once data had been converted from MARC XML format to Dublin Core (see below section – Metadata Preparation) it was recognised that a batch import of the entire collection was a much more time-efficient way of populating the Omeka site with the digitised content[22]. While the .CSV Import allows a more time-efficient method for populating Omeka, it also necessitated an additional stage to the process of building the

[22] Neatline was also installed at this stage for similar reasons. Preparatory research had indicated that Neatline would use the first DC: Coverage element in the item record of the item to plot its point on the map. This data was added to all items before the batch import to avoid having to manually open each Omeka record and add a Coverage element. This process is explained fully in the Geolocation section, below.

resource – converting the metadata for each item from its original format (MARC XML) to Dublin Core format used by Omeka.

Metadata preparation: MARC XML – Dublin Core

The next stage in creating the resource was taking the metadata and associated digital images for each item and converting them to an appropriate format for use with Omeka. Metadata for the Kyffin Williams Bequest collection had already been created using the cataloguing module of Virtua, the LMS (Library Management System) used by the Library. The physical items of the collection had also been digitised in preparation for ingest to the Library's digital repository, Fedora. The metadata for all items from the Kyffin Williams Bequest collection was requested from the Systems team of the Library and provided as 'raw' MARC XML.

This data needed to be converted to Dublin Core format and then saved as a .CSV file to be operable in Omeka. This conversion was done using a specific extensible stylesheet language transformation (XSLT) from the Library of Congress. Once converted, MARC fields were replaced by the relevant Dublin Core elements (for example MARC fields 100, 110, 111, 700, 710 or 711$e being converted to DC element, 'Creator' or 'Contributor' where appropriate; MARC field 260ab, for DC element 'Publisher'; or MARC field 260$c converted to DC element 'Date' where appropriate, etc.). The unique identification number assigned to each record by the Virtua system (known as the VTLS number) entered in the 001 Control Number field of the MARC record became the non-DC element 'Identifier.'

Metadata preparation: Dublin Core – .CSV

In order to work on the metadata for the entire collection, it was necessary to convert the Dublin Core XML into a format that was human readable and could be edited easily by the researcher. A further XSLT was written by NLW Research Group staff member

Paul McCann to convert the Dublin Core XML to .CSV format. This .CSV file was then imported to MS Excel enabling the data to be viewed and edited easily. Each row in this sheet represented a single item from the collection, with the column headings representing the Dublin Core element set (see below). Having the metadata in this format meant that spatial data could be applied to the entire collection (where applicable) before importing the .CSV file into Omeka, again avoiding the need to manually add this field to each individual item through the Omeka interface.

Metadata preparation: linking metadata to images

The Identifier element proved to be essential in the next stage of content preparation – that of linking item metadata to digital images of the items. At the time of the installation of Omeka, all items had been digitised, but digital images had not been linked to the MARC records. A list of digital images of the Kyffin Williams Bequest collection was obtained from the Systems team and the VTLS number used to match the metadata to the images (specifically by ordering the items in the two datasets by their identifier/VTLS number, then merging the datasets together. The metadata then had associated images in the form URLs under the DC element 'Files').

Matching images with their metadata in this way had some other useful outcomes: item records which had metadata but were missing an image, or conversely images which had no related metadata because of minor errors in the process of digitisation and cataloguing became obvious and these problems could addressed. Items that had multiple images (such as three dimensional works, or works on paper which had drawings on both sides of the paper) also became obvious within the data set. It was important to recognise these items as image URLs were separated by a comma which could have led to problems when converting the spreadsheet data into .CSV (comma separated value) format and thus caused Omeka to recognise the comma between images as a new DC element.

Populating Omeka: .CSV Import

Before exporting the dataset as a .CSV file, two administrative details needed to be addressed. Firstly the MARC XML fields that were converted needed to have column titles that matched exactly the protocol specified by the .CSV Import plug-in of Omeka. This meant ensuring element titles had the format "Dublin Core: Element" (e.g. "Dublin Core: Title") at the head of each column so element content could populate the appropriate fields when imported into Omeka. Secondly, images had to be made available to the Omeka server and a path to the images added to the .CSV.

Three additional stages of data preparation specific to this collection were also undertaken. Recognising that tags are often used as a means of browsing content on Omeka powered sites, but lacking the time to apply tags to all items in the collection, subject entries in the MARC record were copied and converted into tags. Using the subject entries had the additional benefit of using tags that had been subject to a controlled vocabulary (Library of Congress subject headings) that should have ensured consistency in tags. This would also circumvent the need to have user-generated tags, which although desirable in terms of inviting users to participate in the process of organising the material, would mean a lengthy process of moderation and an unnecessary duplication of effort as subject headings were already in existence.

This process eventually caused some problems. The detail in the classification process meant that there were over 1,000 tags applied to the collection, many of which to a single items. The volume of tags associated only with a single item rendered the use of tags as a method of collocation/browsing essentially meaningless. The process also highlighted a number of instances where subject headings had been misspelt or included other errors and lacked consistency in abbreviation, syntax, grammar or the use of punctuation at the cataloguing and classification stage as a result of human error. By copying the subject

headings into the DC: Tags element these mistakes were duplicated and in some instances resulted in several tags being created all expressing a single concept (for example one item would include the subject heading 'Antiquities & Archaeological Sites', whereas another included 'Antiquities and Archaeological Sites.'). A lack of consistency in terms of the granularity of classification also resulted in excess tags – one cataloguer may have applied the subject 'Birds' to an item, whereas another added several tag for a drawing of a bird (such as 'Animals', 'Birds' 'Birds of Prey' and 'Eagles'.) After content had been imported into Omeka, the tags were edited to remove any tag that applied to only one item; spelling and syntax were edited for consistency.

Secondly, embargoed material was removed from the dataset. The Kyffin Williams Bequest Collection includes some material (mainly manuscript material) that requires users to obtain permission from the Library and to sign a non-publication agreement prior to use. These items are still available by request to the reading rooms at the National Library provided the user signs a written disclaimer agreeing not to publish any such comments. Works in Williams's collection by other artists were only included if the Library had received permission from the copyright holders to digitally reproduce the work (this was undertaken during the digitisation process).

Finally, several DC: Coverage fields were added to the dataset. These included an element for the place name of the place depicted in the painting/drawing/photograph described in the metadata; the geographical co-ordinates of that place in WKT Point format (for use with Neatline, discussed below); and the longitude/ latitude co-ordinates (WGS1984 projection) of the places for use with the Omeka Geolocation plug-in. The dataset was saved as a .CSV file that was then imported to Omeka, forming the primary content of the resource.

Troubleshooting

Some problems were identified in the course of the .CSV import. One issue was that when an error occurred in the process of importing the .CSV, the process failed but no reason given in the administrative interface of Omeka. In order to discover the problem, there was usually a need to go through server logs to identify which item did not import, assess that item for any errors, then start the import process again (the errors usually involved an incorrect keystroke in the Files element, meaning a broken URL to the image file). The size of the Bequest collection affected how the items could be imported into Omeka. The concept of 'collections' within the Omeka platform also had an effect on how and in which order items were imported. In order to keep the import manageable, the dataset was broken into several sub-collections (Pre-Bequest Material, Bequest Collection, Artist's Collection, Photographs, Mechanically Reproduced Work). Importing datasets from smaller original .CSV files meant that when errors did occur they could be found and corrected more easily. This process also created several sub-collections that had an impact on how material was organised and displayed in Omeka. This is described in the section 'Organising the Material,' below.

Geolocation process

The distinctiveness of the *Kyffin Williams Online* resource relies on its use of geographic information to plot the locations of the subjects of the artist's work and allow users the opportunity to assess, compare or identify patterns in the collections according to their spatial context. This depends on the application of accurate and consistent location data to the metadata of individual items. This location data was not added at the cataloguing stage, instead being added by the researcher as the result of a lengthy process of identifying places in paintings, drawings, photographs or writing. Spatial data was added

to the master .CSV file before import into Omeka, to avoid having to manually add a DC: Coverage element to every applicable item individually through the Omeka admin interface.

Throughout this thesis references have been made and works analysed according to the location of their subjects. Of the 3,359 items included in the resource from the Bequest collection, 1,169 items have explicit place names included in their titles, or descriptions. This was the starting point of the geo-location process. This section will describe the process used to identify the locations of works, and the process in which location data has been represented as geographical co-ordinates, explaining the choice of gazetteers, co-ordinate system and method of using this data in the Omeka and Neatline platforms.

Identify places depicted

The first stage in geo-coding the dataset involved identifying the items that explicitly named its subject (place). This was conducted manually by going through every item in the Bequest collection and adding an additional column with the place name included in the title, or the description of the item. Many of the items in the bequest collection feature cataloguer-given titles (noted in the MARC record in square brackets). Some feature details which combined with the research conducted in the cataloguing process make a positive identification of the location – such as [The Giudecca, Venice], (vtls004696785) or, [Bethel, Gaiman], (vtls004636320). In these instances, the cataloguing research has been trusted and the location used for geo-coding. A minority of items (such as *Rottenberg Station* (vtls004610324)) include a title written in the artist's hand on the reverse of the item. Other items, which lack explicit place names in their titles have elements which indicate a particular location. For example, [Desert Landscape] (vtls004639145) when considered in conjunction with the artist's biography and other documentary information has enough evidence to indicate that it depicts a scene from the artist's journey to Patagonia in 1968-

1969. Where enough evidence exists, these locations have been used in the geo-coding process, even if no place name is included in the title.

Ensuring consistency

The list of place names contained in the dataset then had to be normalised, taking in to account variations of punctuation and spelling by the artist (for example Llanfairynghornwy sometimes being called Llanfair-yng-Ngornwy); consistency in language (for example, when 'Snowdon' is applied to some works, but 'Yr Wyddfa' to others); and most challengingly, when commonly used Welsh names are applied to places, rivers, valleys and regions of Patagonia but do not appear in official Argentinian gazetteers (for example, Afon Camwy was replaced by Rio Chubut, etc.).

Gazetteers

Once a list of place names had been made and authority versions identified, the next stage was finding their co-ordinate information. The Geonames geographical database was used to find this information. Gazetteers for Great Britain and Ireland, Argentina and Italy were downloaded in the first instance (as the countries most represented in the Bequest collection). Place names were found in these gazetteers then co-ordinate information copied across to the master .CSV file containing the metadata of all items in the collections. Many locations in Wales were not found in the Geonames gazetteer for Great Britain, such as [Cwm Idwal] (vtls004933871). It was for this reason that this process was conducted manually, one location at a time, rather than using the merge table function within ArcGIS or other GIS (where a table containing a list of place names can be merged with another dataset – for instance the Geonames_GB.txt file.) In these cases, co-ordinate data was found using the GeoHack wiki Toolserver, then checked against Google Maps to ensure the co-ordinates provided referred the correct location. An additional stage was necessary with

some of the Argentinian place names. As many of the commonly used Welsh place names are not used officially in Argentina, place name thesauri and other resources such as the *Andes Celteg* website were used to match Welsh names of locations in Patagonia ("Maps of the Welsh Region in Patagonia"). The *Andes Celteg* resource was also particularly useful for indicating the location of a number of Welsh chapels in Gaiman, Trevelin and Trelew, a number of which Kyffin Williams photographed on his journey to *Y Wladfa*. These co-ordinates were then checked against Google Maps and the Geoname_AR.txt file to ensure accuracy. The process was then repeated with the remaining items with named locations, using Geonames gazetteers for the Netherlands, Germany, France and Greece.

The resulting additional data varied in terms of granularity – some items were geo-coded to address level (such as named buildings, usually chapels in Wales, Patagonia and famous landmarks such as Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris). Others were located to village, town, or valley (cwm) level. The vaguest of the geo-coding data are those items that name only the province or area of their subject (such as *Patagonian Landscape*). In presenting the digitised collection it is necessary to indicate this uncertainty, or mark items that refer to a general area rather than a specific point. The variety of accuracy of geo-coding does however offer an additional art historical research question– as to whether the formal qualities of a work differ when the subject is known or named when compared to works that have only a general indication of the location of their subject.

Converting co-ordinates: WGS1984 – WKT Point

The dataset now contained additional DC: Coverage elements for every item in which a specific place was named. The first Coverage element provided a human-readable place name, and the second provided longitude and latitude co-ordinates in WGS1984 format. These co-ordinates now had to be converted to the WKT Point data format (Google Transverse Mercator (SRID=900913)) used by Neatline. This conversion was made using a

converter available at *Co-ordinates transformation online* ("MyGeodata"). Once converted, the WKT Point data was put into the correct format for use with Omeka and added as a DC: Coverage element for each of the applicable items. The fact that Dublin Core allows elements to be repeated is particularly useful at this point. Neatline reads the first DC: Coverage element to plot items on its maps; the data in this form however is not human readable (for example, the WKT Point for Valle Crucis Abbey appears thus: 'POINT(-354366.674627 6979915.01664)). Adding a second Coverage element allows a human readable place name to be included in the item record. (Meaning 'Valle Crucis Abbey' appears in the Coverage field of the item record while the WKT Point data is used to plot the item on the Neatline visualisation).

Organisation of material

Once geo-location information was added to the appropriate items, the organisation the collection within the Omeka platform has been subject to an iterative curatorial process to discover the most flexible and clear ways for researchers and other users to find and use the digitised collections. To create a flexible browsing experience, content has been arranged within the framework of 'items', 'collections' and 'exhibits'. These terms are used within the Omeka platform to describe the collocation and organisation of the contents of the web resource, and are defined here with reference to the Omeka documentation for clarity.

Items

Items are the individual source materials that make up the content of the web site. Items are displayed as a "browsable list of items sortable by type of item and tags" ("Site Planning Tips"). This means item level descriptions of an object, catalogued according to Dublin Core metadata standards. In this respect, an Item within the Omeka platform

corresponds to the term 'resource' as described by Glushko in *The Discipline of Organization*:

> Resource has an ordinary sense of "anything of value that can support goal-orientated activity." This definition means that a resource can be a physical thing, a non-physical thing, information about physical things, information about non-physical things, or anything that you want to organize. Other words that aim for this broad scope are *entity, object, item* and *instance*. (8)

The difference between a physical and non-physical thing has an impact in how we understand digital resources. In a web site whose content presents digitised versions of art objects, the physical (original) and non-physical (digital) are often conflated in discourse. As previously discussed, if the goal of using that object can be achieved using a digital surrogate, then this alone will suffice. Similarly, if the original object is not on display, its digital surrogate then undergoes an existential shift within the mind of the user– the digital record *becomes* the object of study. This conflation of physical and non-physical underpins the creation of a web site containing digitised content. Glushko explains:

> Instead of emphasizing the differences between tangible and intangible resources, we consider it essential to determine where the tangible resource has information content – whether it needs to be treated as being "about" or "representing" some other resource rather than being treated as a thing in itself. (8)

The example Glushko uses to illustrate this point: "whether a book is printed or digital, we focus on its information content, what it is about; its tangible properties become secondary" (8) is rendered moot when considered in conjunction with art object whose three-dimensional physical properties. These properties, which can be negated in the act of digital photography, are sometimes essential to the study of that artwork. The Items that populate the Omeka powered site must be considered new digital objects that bear resemblance to an analogue original and their organisation into collections and exhibits must be handled in such a way as to promote their use for their own innate qualities rather than as lacking the properties of the related original artwork. In short, the digital Items must be organised and displayed on their own alternative terms, according to their own

information content and not simply as a substitute to the original object. A range of file type (image, video, text) can be attached to each item record, with the metadata and file combining to form the digital iteration of an object in the physical collection. In the case of the *Kyffin Williams Online* resource, items include digital images of paintings, drawings and other media. The process of harvesting this metadata from the Library's catalogues and combining their images from the institution's digital repository is described above.

Collections

Collections are groups of items, arranged by the administrator of the Omeka site so that the "public can dig through collection[s] to find items" ("Site Planning Tips"). This is often at a high level in the organisational hierarchy of the collection, possibly by item type, or item creator. It is important to understand the difference between a collection (where items share a specific objective commonality) and an exhibit (in which items are collocated on an interpretive level). In this respect the term 'Collections' used in Omeka partially corresponds with the term 'Collection' commonly used in library and information science or the study of organisational systems, where "a collection is a group of resources that have been selected for some purpose. Similar terms are set (mathematics), aggregation (data modelling), dataset (science and business), and corpus (linguistics and literary analysis)" (Glushko 10). It only partially corresponds as this definition could describe the entire contents of the Omeka powered web site, or the individual 'Collections' which form the first stage of organisation of content within Omeka. By arranging/uploading the content according to the medium of the original work, an Omeka 'collection' also has a degree of intentional arrangement meaning that there is an element of subjective curatorial influence at the higher levels of organisational hierarchy. The process of this selection must be made clear to users throughout the site.

Exhibits

The Americanised term 'exhibits' is used for the presentation of interpretive, digital exhibitions of selections of items within the collection: "Exhibits contain interpretive text and rely on items/ sources/ objects as their building blocks" ("Site Planning Tips"). The term 'Exhibits' within the Omeka framework relates to specific sets of resources that have been subject to intentional arrangement, a concept to "emphasizes explicit or implicit acts of organization by people, or by computational processes acting as proxies for, or as implementations of, human intentionality" (Glushko 10). As previously indicated, the purpose of the resource is not to provide a subjective interpretation of the work of Kyffin Williams through digital exhibitions by a single researcher, but rather to provide a research tool providing optimal access options to the collections for the users of the National Library. Exhibits will be used however to provide brief introductory texts showing the main themes of the collection, and to offer case studies demonstrating how users can use the collections for their own research.

Collections in practice / alternate browsing strategies

An additional benefit of the Item-Collection-Exhibit collection hierarchy is the ability to offer a range of browsing strategies for the end user. Items can be found using quick search and advanced search techniques, where all fields (or combinations of fields) can be searched; or browsed according to tags applied from an edited list of subject headings applied to items at the cataloguing stage. Items were imported into Omeka using the .CSV Import plug-in discussed above. As the import procedure was often halted when an error was identified in the .CSV, the process was made more manageable by splitting the 'master' .CSV file (including 3,569 items) including all items into collections at the pre-import stage. This resulted in a series of .CSV files split according to the nature of the original, analogue

item. For example, individual .CSV files featuring the item records for all pre-bequest acquisitions, photographs, slides and works by other artists, etc. were created. As each of these individual .CSV files were imported, they were assigned an appropriate Collection title. This means that in addition to the browse-by-tag functions users can quickly filter all items by media. This is of particular benefit for users who for instance wanted to quickly see all of the oil paintings by the artist in the Library's collections but wanted to exclude photographs or slides. Alternatively, these discrete collections have the additional advantage of drawing attention to works in media for which the artist is less well known: a user may use the resource to examine the oil paintings held by the Library and be surprised by the extent of the photography or print holdings.

Exhibits in practice: *Bro Kyffin a Phobl Kyffin*.

All items can be searched using the Omeka quick and advanced search interface. Collections can be sorted and browsed according to the media of the original work. 'Exhibits' can then be used to draw together disparate works to introduce important themes in the life and work of the artist, or offer an interpretive viewpoint on aspects of the collections. Exhibits can also draw attention to individual works and provide additional text and resources to illuminate the collections with additional annotation. The exhibits in the *Kyffin Williams Online* resource are divided into three separate categories: *Kyffin a Chelf* ('Kyffin and Art'), *Bro Kyffin* ('Kyffin's Land') and *Pobl Kyffin* ('Kyffin's People'). As previously noted, it is not the intention of this resource to provide a comprehensive history or interpretation of Kyffin Williams's life and work. Rather, exhibits are here used to draw out important themes in his work, highlight lesser-known works, and provide general, introductory information on the collections. The two broad categories are subdivided into individual exhibitions relating to a particular theme. *Kyffin a Chelf* draws together self-portraits, early work and work related to the practice of art. In the *Bro Kyffin* section

includes exhibits focusing on the Williams's work in Wales and Patagonia, and in other areas less associated with the artist, including London, continental Europe and beyond. *Pobl Kyffin* focuses on the artist's relationship with others in the form of portraits and his collection of works by other artists. Of particular note is the range of self-portraits by Williams in a variety of media ranging in date from the 1950s to 2000. Other categories of *Pobl Kyffin* have been created to match different stages of his biography. Portraits of clergymen and others associated with religion; soldiers; artists and authors; and farmers have been organised together to represent Williams's family's association with the church, his military career, life as an artist and his focus on rural and agricultural life respectively. A full description of the structure of the Exhibits in the Omeka powered site, as well as the introductory texts provided with each section is provided in the next chapter.

Geo-spatial presentation of resources

Not all items in *Kyffin Williams Online* have a geographic location associated with them. Of the 3,569 items in Bequest collection, approximately 1,200 have a geographic descriptor in the DC: Coverage element. Neatline, like Omeka, allows administrative users to develop exhibitions that plot selected items from the collections on a map. One map is provided with all locatable items displayed. The intention here is to show the full geographical range of Kyffin Williams's work and collection, dispelling the idea that the artist worked solely in northwest Wales and Anglesey and drawing attention to works which fall outside of areas traditionally associated with his work. This interactive map allows user to browse the entire locatable collection, hopefully aiding research by allowing new patterns to be identified when examining a large section of the collection at once. A further set of Neatline exhibitions act as case studies in order to demonstrating how the master map can be used in conjunction with the Omeka catalogue to analyse the collection. These maps include short essay/ case studies on mapping Williams's drawings/ paintings of buildings;

mapping the artist's photographic work; mapping seascapes; and mapping the artist's collection, showing how while Williams was artistically invested in northwest Wales, his collection of work by other artist included many works of scenes from around the world. These thematic maps are shown with brief art historical essays featuring examples from the collections, demonstrating how a map of a large selection of works can be used to hone in on unusual, interesting or little-known works.

Potential additional functions: plug-ins

Additional functionality can be built in to the Omeka platform by using a variety of plug-ins developed by Roy Rosenzweig Center for New Media and the Humanities and other Omeka users. The below plug-ins could be applied to *Kyffin Williams Online* to enhance user experience when the prototype resource becomes publically accessible. These plug-ins had to be chosen carefully to ensure interoperability with the correct version of the base Omeka platform, and that they are widely used enough to ensure some technical support through the various Omeka forums should any assistance be needed. In addition to this, version numbers should be checked to ensure that plug-ins had been updated and if there are any potential security issues associated with the plug-in. The Social Bookmarking 2.0 plug-in allows content from the Omeka site to be shared across a range of social media platforms. Such sharing should contribute towards the awareness of the collection amid users, use of external website to boost the dissemination of digital Library content, and be a means of encouraging user discussion and engagement with the collections and would be a useful addition to a publically accessible version of the resource.

The Catalog Search (sic) plug-in developed by Lincoln A. Mullen adds the useful additional feature to Omeka item records where a search terms is taken from a DC: element from the item record and is used to automatically search the catalogues of a selection of other libraries. The plug-in was developed for the *American Converts* web site created by

Erin Bartram (University of Connecticut) and Lincoln A. Mullen (Brandeis University). When an item is selected, the contents of its subject field are used to search the catalogues of the Library of Congress, Digital Public Library of America, Google Books, Google Scholar, etc. Administrators can adapt the Catalog Search (sic) plug in to search user defined catalogues. By adapting the plug-in to search the catalogue of the National Library of Wales, it will help ensure that the *Kyffin Williams Online* resource is not in a vacuum, separated from the wider holdings of the Library, and will provide a way of 'linking-back' to the full catalogue. The results of these searches are provided in links embedded at the end of each Dublin Core record. The benefit of the plug in is the ability to automate the process of finding associated materials and encourage users to use materials from different collections within the Library ("How to Hack URLs").

A final plug-in that would be useful to use in conjunction with the *Kyffin Williams Online* web site is MyOmeka: a data-sharing plug-in which allows public users to log-in to the web site, save items to a list of favourites, annotate items, and share these lists with other users should they want to. The usefulness of this function for researchers is clear: lists could be created and annotated in the research process, or used as study aids for students using the online resource. This function would be particularly useful given that *Kyffin Williams Online* features a large collection of little known works, a log-in/ save function would help users keep track of their inquiry and research. MyOmeka or similar plug-in could also have the benefit of assisting staff of the Library who have a curatorial function. Items could be saved to a list and manipulated into specific orders to help with the curatorial process of any future Kyffin Williams exhibitions. The MyOmeka plug-in itself has not been updated since July 2012 and is not currently compatible with the version 2.0 onwards of Omeka installed at the Library. Having such a long gap between updates causes concern about the security of the plug-in, and emphasises some of the negatives of using open source software in this

way. However, plug-ins with similar functionality will be researched and added to the resource when available.

Chapter 5: *Kyffin Williams Online* User Guide

This chapter has two intentions: to provide a guide on how to use the prototype Kyffin Williams Online web resource, and to integrate the themes of the written thesis with the digital output. The chapter describes the content of the resource and how it can be used by users for research, and by staff of the National Library to curate exhibitions of the digitised collection, and demonstrates how distant viewing can be used for art historical research and as a curatorial tool. Case studies (electronic versions of which are contained within the resource) demonstrating how the Neatline plug-in for Omeka are in included in the digital component of this thesis, and are adapted in Chapter 6 of this thesis in the sections *Kyffin Williams: a distant view* and *National collection, 'national' artist*..

General /Introduction pages

Kyffin Williams Online is introduced by three *About* pages: a brief biography of the artist and description of the relationship between Williams and the National Library; background information on the development of the resource as a collaboration between the Library, research student and School of Art at Aberystwyth University; and a glossary of terms used in the resource, most importantly the relationship between *items, collections,*[23] *exhibitions* and *Neatline*. The layout of the pages has used the *Emiglio* theme for Omeka developed by the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media. This minimal theme has been selected for clarity: its uncluttered appearance does not detract from the visual images contained in the resource. As this is a prototype resource, which primarily intends to provide access to digital content rather than the subjective interpretation of and individual researcher, some explanatory notes for the purpose of examination are included throughout the resource's pages. These are indicated by: ***Note***. It must be stressed here that the exhibitions included in *Kyffin Williams Online* have been arranged to demonstrate the kind of digital

[23] For a full analysis of these terms, see Chapter 4C

displays that can be created using the Omeka platform, and contain minimal examples of interpretive text. The *Neatline* case studies include further interpretation to further the art historical arguments of this thesis and to demonstrate the research that can be undertaken using a combination of methods and approaches raised in this thesis.

Figure 31: Kyffin Williams Online home page

Browse Items

The *Browse Items* tab allows the entire digital contents of *Kyffin Williams Online* to be browsed according to their tags. Items that refer to specific, 'real' locations can be searched spatially using the *Browse Map* function. Tags for items were adapted from the subject headings applied to items during the cataloguing process. This caused some problems – items that were catalogued by different members of staff during the digitisation and application of metadata process (prior to the start of this project) varied greatly in the number, accuracy and granularity of classification. Metadata for the entire collection was 'cleaned' using Open Refine software to ensure consistency across names, dates and the format of descriptions, and elements were removed where data was repeated. For example, subject headings relating to individuals (for example in portrait work) were removed as the set of tags, as these tags would often only appear once. The more general tags 'portrait' and 'men' or 'women' have been applied to help browsing, while the names of sitters can be searched by searching the titles of items using the search facility.

Browse Map allows users to select an item from a point displayed on a world map. This feature is a simple iteration of a distant viewing approach to landscape works. By plotting the locations of the subjects of paintings and drawings, untypical or unusual subjects become more obvious. This application of the *Gelocation* plug-in for Omeka is used only as a browsing tool, and has some restrictions. In its current form, only 50 items can be displayed on the *Browse Map* at once. Users must click-through to the next page of the map to discover the next 50. The *Browse Map* would be improved by being able to display all 1,169 geo-located items from the collection on a single map. In its current form, the *Browse Map* at least offers a visual method for browsing content. The most powerful function of the *Geolocation* plug-in is the ability to search according to location. This process is detailed with examples below.

Search Items

The search function of *Kyffin Williams Online* allows a variety of traditional search approaches to be used. Keyword, Boolean and advanced searching are supported. Its most innovative feature is being able to search content according to spatial attributes associated with items. Three types of spatial data are displayed in each item record. The 'Geo-location' (an additional, non-Dublin Core element) field shows the latitude and longitude of the subject of the work in WGS84 format. This is used to generate a thumbnail-map on the item record, showing the location of the subject. Two Dublin Core: Coverage elements are included on each locatable item record. The first shows the latitude and longitude in WKT Point format – this is used to display the location of items in the *Neatline* exhibits. The second Dublin Core: Coverage element shows a human-readable version of the location, that is, the place name or region that has been used.

Being able to search the collection according to location provides and additional access point in the absence of accurate temporal data. The majority of items do not have dates of creation, and have instead been assigned estimated date ranges in the cataloguing process. Users can request items whose subjects fall within a given radius of that point. Searching for all works whose subject falls within ten miles of Snowdon yields 283 results. A search for works that fall within one mile of Snowdon yields 24 results. Works in oil, watercolour, pencil, print, and photography are returned, allowing the user to compare how the artist treated the same familiar location in a variety of media. By treating all items as equal digital documents rather than within a traditional hierarchy of art objects, disparate works and media are drawn together by the shared location of their subject. Locatable items are presented with a thumbnail map showing their location, allowing the item to be viewed in its spatial context.

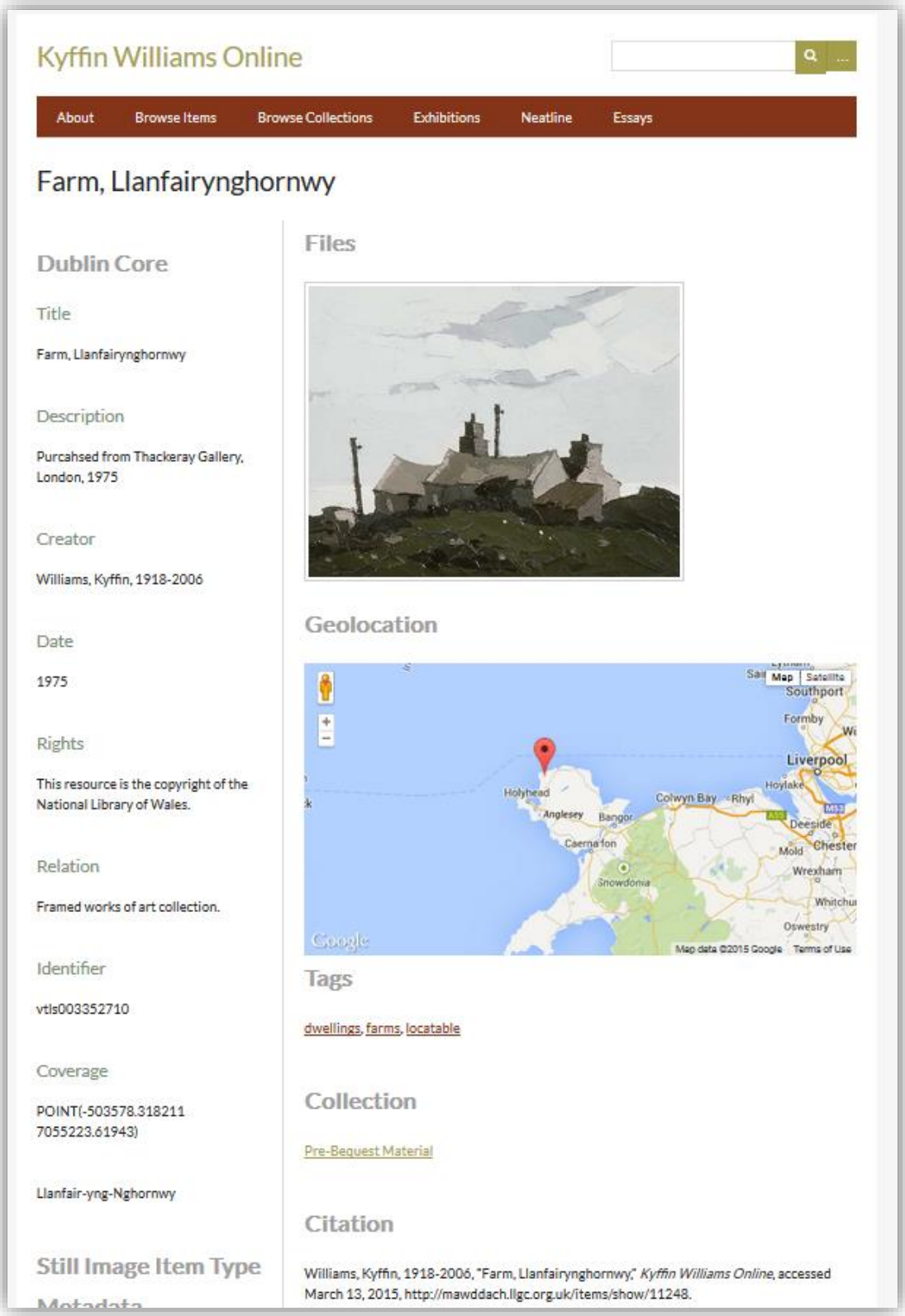

Figure 32: Item record, Farm, Llanfairynghornwy

Browse Collections

Although the curatorial premise of *Kyffin Williams Online* is to treat all items as equal digital *documents* of equal status rather than reflecting their physical status, items have also been arranged into five sub-sections to assist with browsing.

Bequest Collection collates all works by Kyffin Williams that were donated to the Library in 2006. *Artist's Collection* contains works by other artists collected by Williams, which were also donated to the Library as part of the Bequest. Only works that are out of copyright, or where the Library has received permission from the copyright holder to digitally reproduce the works are included in this collection. *Photographs* contains all of the photographs in the Bequest collection, the majority of which date from Williams's journey to Patagonia in 1968/69, but also include a significant number of photographs of the people and places of Wales, suggesting that the artist used photography as part of his practice more extensively than previously thought. The *Mechanically Reproduced Work* collection presents photographic slides of paintings and works on paper by Kyffin Williams. As a prolific and commercially successful painter, the majority of his works are not in public ownership. The items in this collection are photographs of works that the artist was commissioned to paint, were sold to private collection, or taken for exhibition catalogues or other publications. The works shown were sold or commissioned by other institutions; these photographs appear to have been kept by the artist for reference purposes when the original painting or drawing left his ownership. These items are at a tertiary remove from the original – they are digital images of photographs of paintings. As such, the standard of the photographs vary greatly – some are monochrome, others show completed paintings on easels in the artist's studio, and some include colour reference charts indicating that photographs were taken for publication. Despite the inconsistent quality of the images, this sub-collection offers a glimpse of hundreds of works that are now scattered in many different collections. The collection is particularly useful for referencing

portraits that Williams had been commissioned to paint where the sitter is a notable figure in Welsh cultural life.

Pre-Bequest Material contains the 49 oil paintings by Williams that were in the Library's collection prior to the artist's Bequest in 2006. The Library bought many other works from the artist between 1949 and 2006, however only the oil paintings have been digitised as a complete set and are therefore included in this resource. Understanding the nature of the acquisition of these works throughout the artist's career can also give an indication of the importance of the relationship between the Library and Kyffin Williams. This relationship is further explored in using the Neatline in chapter 6[24].

Exhibitions

The exhibitions section of the resource gives examples of how content can be curated by staff at the National Library to create digital exhibitions exploring particular themes in Williams's work. The exhibitions pages included in the prototype resource are not intended to give a comprehensive interpretation of the collection; these exhibitions contain short, sample texts demonstrating the kinds of digital presentation that could be used by Library staff. A variety of approaches are included: *Kyffin a Chelf* includes a page focusing on the earliest work by Williams in the collection featuring some analysis of the artist's stylistic development; *Self Portraits: Prints and Drawings* does not include any textual interpretation, instead juxtaposing a set of works showing the same subject in a variety of media. Drawings and works in ink are shown side-by-side with lino prints and the lino blocks used in their creation, showing the value on considering all items as digital documents of equal value. Preparatory materials that would rarely be shown in a physical exhibition

[24] The Neatline exhibitions in *Kyffin Williams Online* offer a curated, spatially enabled presentation and analysis of elements of the collection. These are best used in conjunction with the interactive maps and timelines in the digital component of this thesis. The art historical discussions however are included in Chapter 6.

are included to show the richness of the collection and demonstrate the processes involved in creating different works.

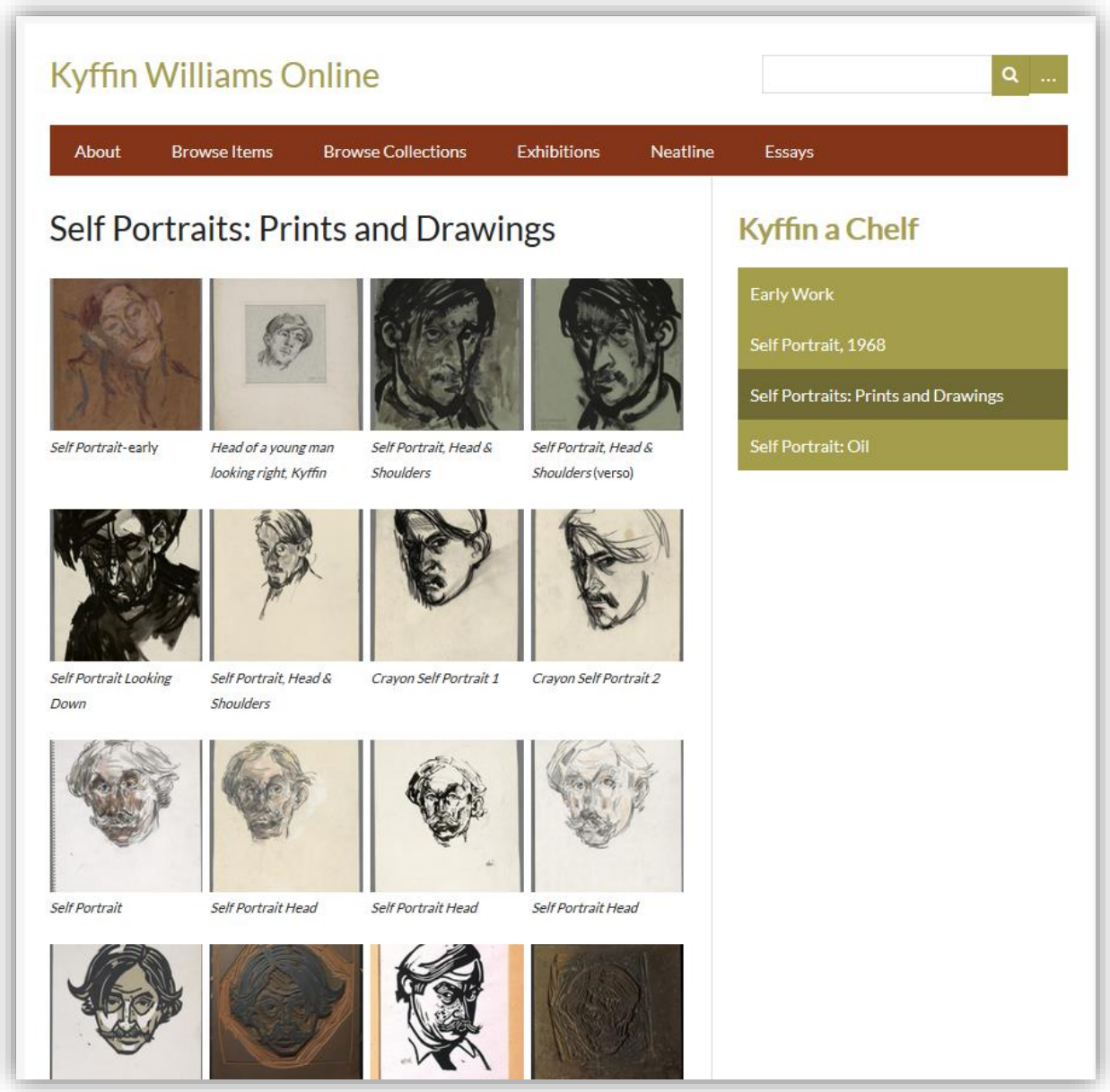

Figure 33: Example page from *Kyffin a Chelf* exhibition

Pobl Kyffin focuses on Williams's portrait work and has been divided into sections that aim to show how the artist depicted people whose vocation represents a different periods in his life. For example, *Soldiers* refers to Williams's period in the Royal Welch Fusiliers and includes a variety of

material from illustrations, cartoons to formal portraits. Kyffin Williams was descended from members of the clergy on both sides of his family, and although ambivalent about his beliefs in later life – in the extensive *Artists' Lives* interview, when asked about his religious beliefs said that he "never lost faith because I never had it" (17) –he drew and painted people associated with religion throughout his career, in Wales, London and on his travels abroad. The common subject is used on the page *Religious Figures* to draw together a selection of lesser-known, minor works to suggest that his figurative work was more diverse than the recurring motif of the lone farmer in a harsh and unforgiving landscape commonly found in his paintings would suggest.

The figure most associated with Williams's practice is shown in the page *Farmers.* The artist claimed in a documentary directed by John Ormond that he stopped adding figures to his paintings as he became more aware of the "immensity" of the landscapes he was painting: "at one time I always put the figures of farmers and their dogs in the landscape, but the longer I painted […] the farmers, the dogs, the people, they had no part" (*Horizons Hung in Air*). Douglas Iwan Dafis has correctly asserted that rather than disappear from the landscape, the figure of the farmer appeared in more and more of Williams's landscapes throughout the 1970s, 80s and 90s. The increase in inclusions of farmer figures in his landscapes corresponds with his increasing commercial success ("Kyffin Williams – a Welsh artist in a British art world" n.p). Williams himself acknowledged as much, in describing the contents of his paintings, he told Tony Curtis, "they [buyers of paintings] knew my stone cottages and the people who lived in them, and they bought my pictures because they represented what they knew and loved" (89). Williams reiterated the commercial appeal of the farm imagers in an interview on *Desert Island Discs*, claiming to fill a gap in the Welsh art market that opened up owing to the nascent art-buying middle class of Wales in the 1960s and 70s as a result of improved education and the "sons of miners, ministers" and farmers becoming "school masters, architects and engineers." He believed that his success owed much to his "pictures remind[ing] them of their homes on the farms" (BBC Radio Four).

The exhibition page, *Farmers* takes a basic distant viewing approach (that is, considering many items at once) to show that this pattern is repeated in the National Library's collection. This pattern is repeated in the oil paintings in the Library's collection: many of the landscapes include a farmer figure ('farmer' is here used in its broadest sense, meaning all farm workers, as many of the shepherds, etc. in Williams's artworks may not necessarily be the farmers themselves) in the landscape (in paintings such as *The Gathering, or Farmers on Glyder Fawr,* and *Famer on the Mountain*, but also in paintings in which the word 'farmer' or 'figure' does not appear in the title, such as *Snowdon From Tŷ Obry* and *Llwybr Iddew Mawr*). In this instance, digital exhibition approaches are used to prove the stereotype of Williams's work, providing a visual demonstration of Meic Stephens's statement that "the typical Kyffin picture shows a peak under a dark cloud, a lowering sky and perhaps a shepherd, with hazel stick and dog, making his way down a rocky slope" (Obituary, *Independent*). The exhibition also shows prints and drawings of farmers to demonstrate the notion of digitised artworks existing as documents of equal status to show a diversity of practice, showcase untypical works, and offer points of comparison between works in different media and variation on the common theme of the farmer in the landscape.

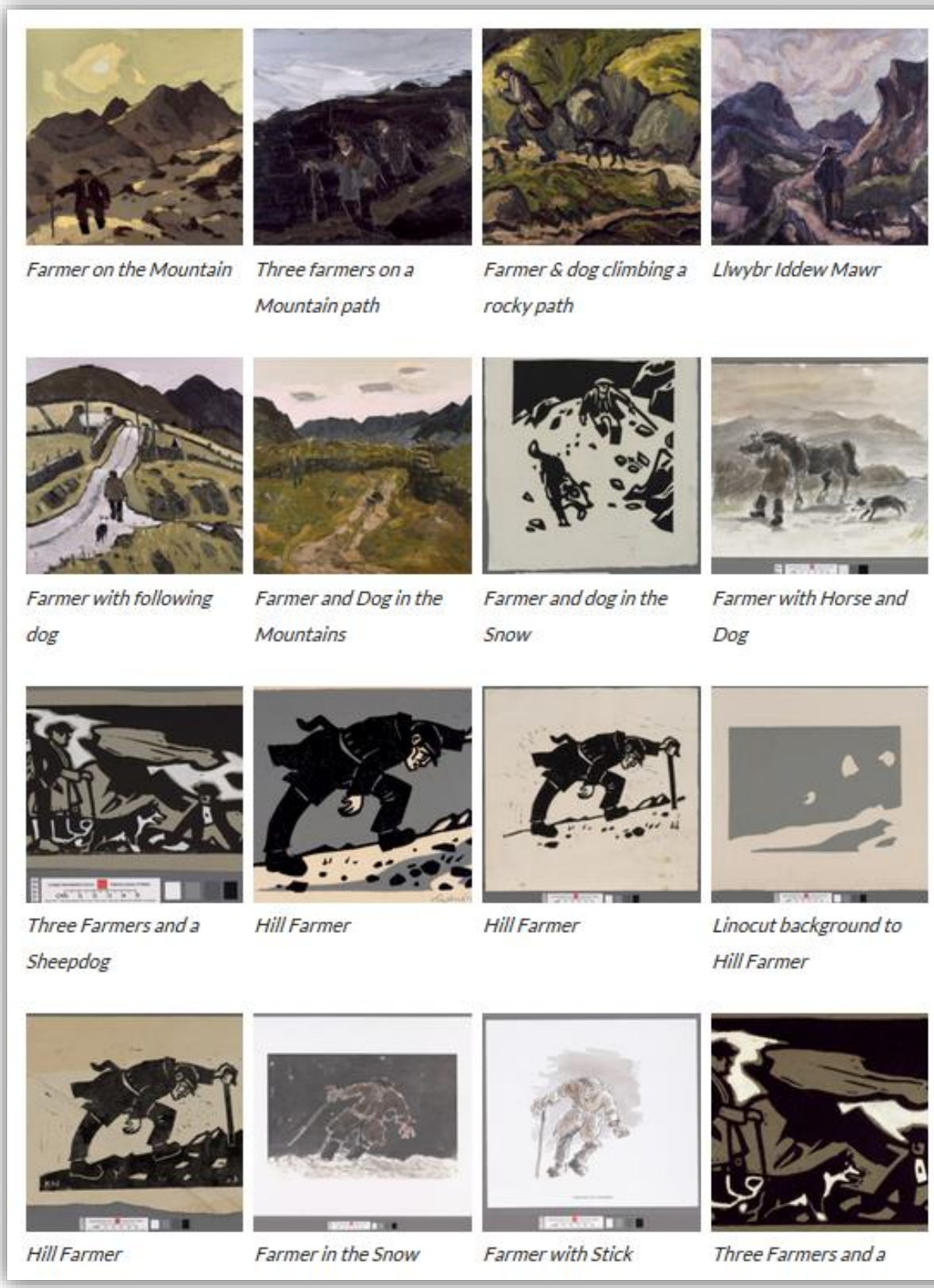

Figure 34: Variety of media displayed together as digital documents

Bro Kyffin also attempts to show a variety of curatorial approaches. A central theme of the thesis – that digitised art objects in the Library are equal documents – is again used to show variety in the collection contents and draw attention to lesser known subjects and media. Areas commonly associated with Williams are addressed: Wales and Patagonia, with the aim of showing how considering content as digital documents, rather than trying to replicate the physical display of art can uncover unexpected elements of familiar themes. For example, a set of photographs of Welsh chapels in Patagonia is compared to paintings of chapels in north Wales– discussed in Chapter 1A is given more attention to draw attention to these unusual works within the collection. Locations of the landscape works by other artists are presented on a map to show that even if his own works predominantly focussed on north-west Wales, his collecting practice was much more varied in terms of geography. The methods of digital display shown in the example exhibitions are not new. However, their value lies in the way content can be re-ordered, re-organised and juxtaposed quickly in responsive digital displays. Given the premium on physical exhibition space at the National Library, and the lack of visually focussed content currently available through its website, these exhibition approaches offer an agile means of exhibiting digital content.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

The original aim of this project was to produce a digital resource which enabled the exhibition and study of the Kyffin Williams Bequest Collection at the National Library of Wales, informed by art historical inquiry into the collection and institution. Linked to this practical objective was the idea of a transferral of knowledge in which the understanding, skills and outcomes developed as part of the research could be presented in such a way as to be of practical use to the Library in future projects and for general use with its collections.

The second aim of the project was to use the resource to further understanding of Williams's art, his position within the visual culture of Wales, and the art collections of the Library. The first section of this chapter uses *Kyffin Williams Online* to present art historical conclusions about the collection and demonstrate the viability of distant viewing as a methodology. The two discussions that follow, *Kyffin Williams: a distant view* and *National collection, 'national' artist* use Omeka and Neatline are used to generate a distant view of the Bequest Collection to suggest that the artist's relationship with the institution mutually ensured his legacy as the 'national' artist of Wales while underlining the 'national' status of the Library's art collections. These conclusions open the chapter and act as proof of concept that *Kyffin Williams Online* can be used as a tool for digitally specific research methods.

With these discussions, the thesis comes full-circle: art historical investigations informed the development of a digital research tool which has been used to produce new art historical conclusions. The Research Programme in Digital Collections at the National Library of Wales was established in order to embed digital scholarship into the development of their digital collections. This can include

> "facilitate[ing] and enhance[ing] exisiting research – by making research processes easier via the use of computation tools and methods; enable[ing] research that would otherwise be impossible – addressing research questions that would have

> been impossible to resolve without digital methods and tools; and allow[ing[reserachers to ask new research questions, i.e. questions that are driven by insights that were only achievable through the use of new tools and methods." (National Library of Wales, *What is Digital Scholarship?*)

The closing section of this chapter evaluates the practical aspects of the project in terms of how it has worked as a constituent part of the National Library of Wales Research Programme in Digital Collections and considers how knowledge and expertise developed can be transferred to the future practice of the Library. It also evaluates the methodological approaches of *Kyffin Williams Online* in terms of the Research Programme and considers how applicable these approaches are for future Library work.

Kyffin Williams: a distant view

In his text, *Graphs, Maps Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History*, Franco Moretti describes how using a set of abstract constructs common to other disciplines can be used to analyse entire corpora of literature in order to identify patterns, trends and interconnections between works. This methodological construct has been adapted in *Kyffin Williams Online* in two ways: firstly, all items in the Sir Kyffin Williams Bequest Collection as equal digital documents, rather than according to a hierarchy of artistic media. This acknowledgement of the digital reality of the collection encourages the use of the digitised collection for its own inherent qualities, attempting to overcome any sense of frustration in using a surrogate for the 'real thing'. The main advantage in using a digital collection instead of a physical one is the ability to consider many (scores, hundreds, thousands) items at once, rather than closely analysing an individual work in person.

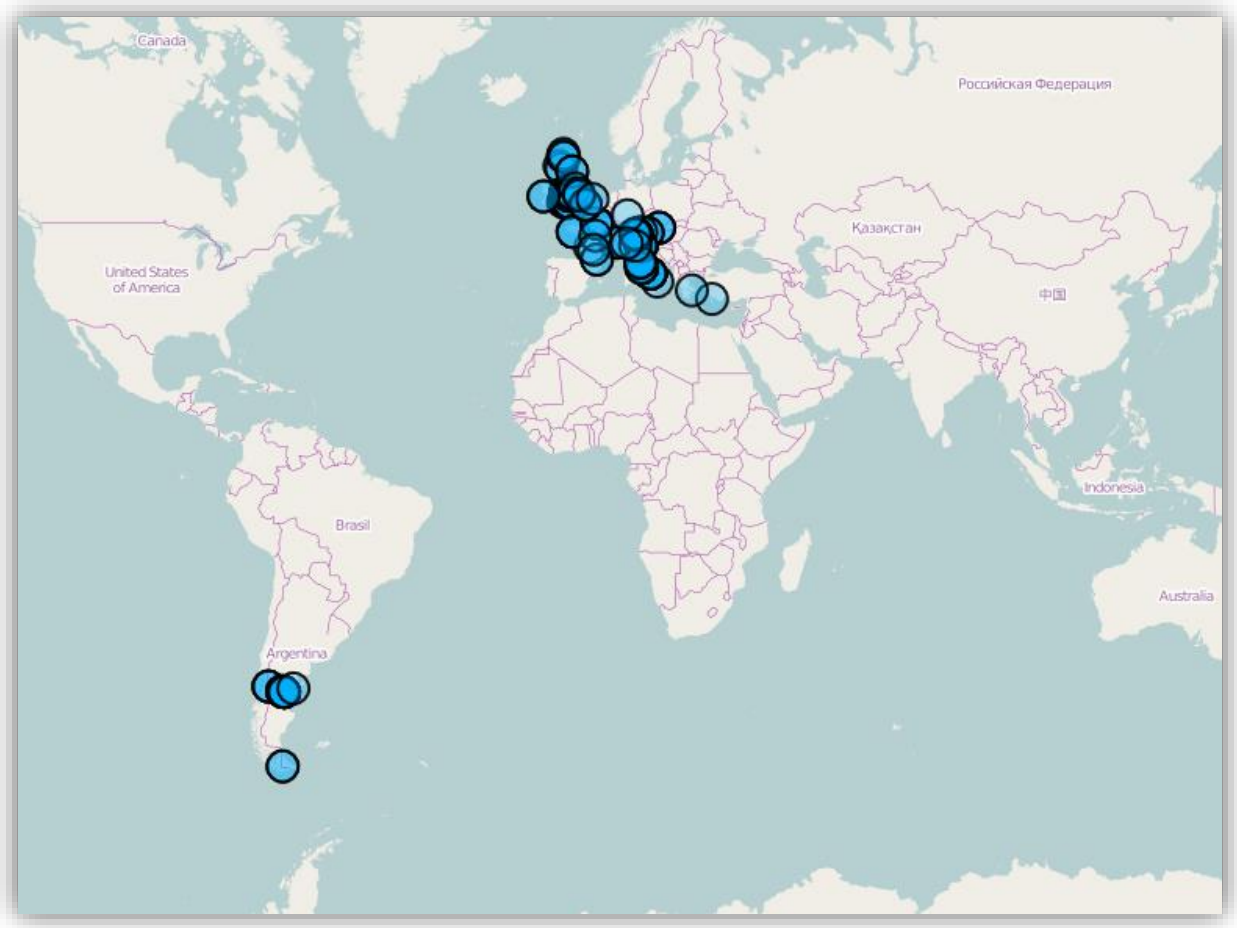

Figure 35 Neatline Map: Kyffin Williams, a distant view

The map shows points indicating locations depicted in 350 works by Kyffin Williams donated to the National Library of Wales as part of the artist's bequest in 2006 (illustrated below, interactive version available on *Kyffin Williams Online*). As expected, the majority of works are clustered around Gwynedd and Anglesey. The density of points in different areas generally mirrors notable events in the artist's life: there are also number of points in South America, related to his journey to Patagonia in 1968/69. His time in London is represented on the map by an early painting of *Hampstead Heath* and *Bolton Studios,* a lino-cut portrait of Honorine Catto, who shared studio space with Williams at that address in west London (*A Wider Sky*, 203-205). Some isolated points relate to specific journeys. A point on the west coast of Ireland refers to Williams's travels in that country, the lino-cut, *Ireland, Kilkee*, (as with the *Bolton Studios* print) was likely originally produced to

illustrate *A Wider Sky* before being discarded in favour of pencil and marker works. A selection of points around Venice remind of the several visits Williams made to that city, the most recent of which yielded many drawings, a BBC television documentary and publication, *Kyffin in Venice* featuring an extensive interview conducted by David Meredith.

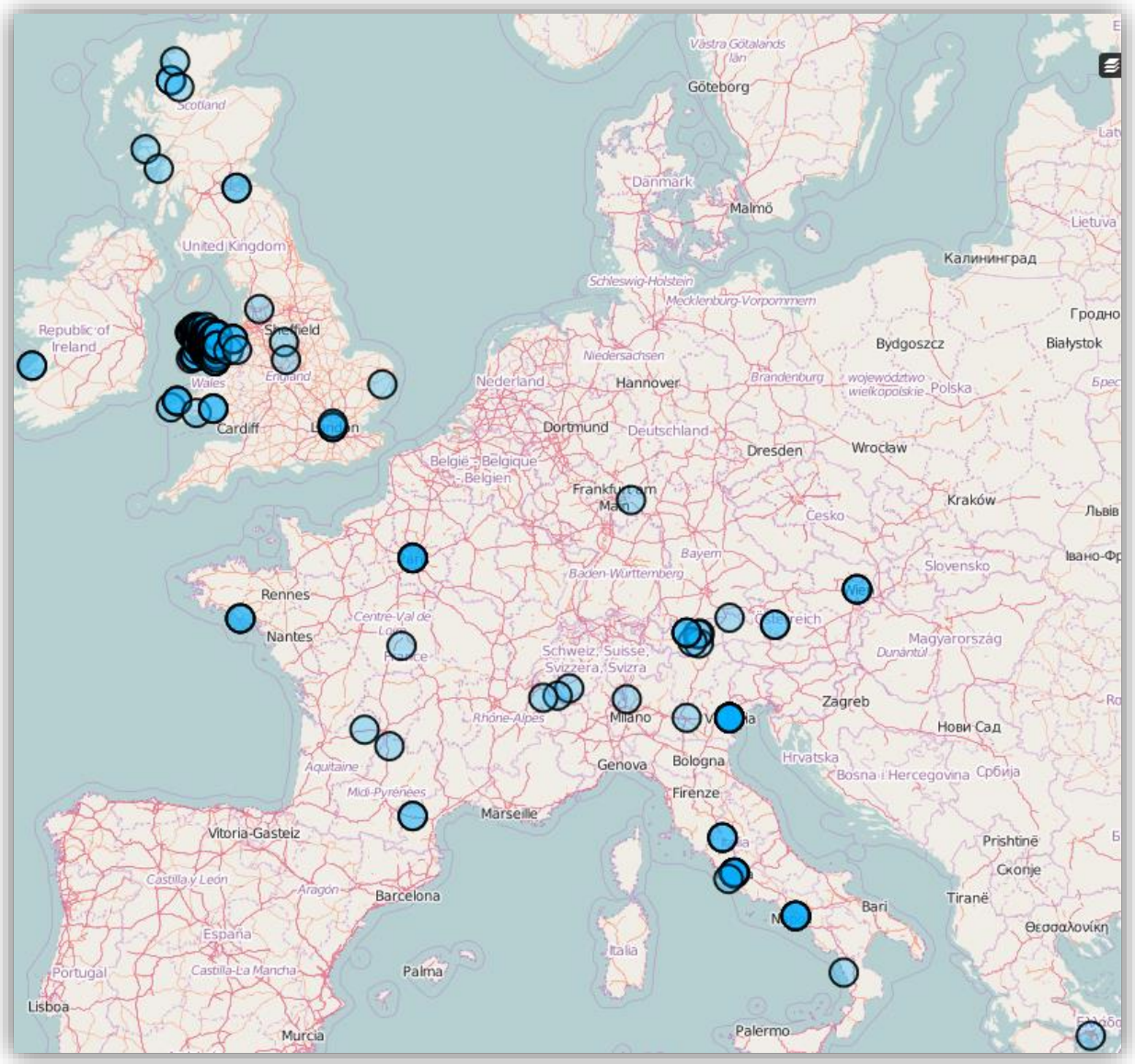

Figure 36 Kyffin Williams, a distant view (detail)

By taking a *distant view* of the collection, that is, assessing attributes associated with many items at once, unusual works, or works that do not fit the general trend become obvious. Kyffin

Williams is renowned for his landscape paintings, where the land itself, topographical details or natural forms are often the primary subjects of his work. Some of the outlying points in this map are unusual not only for the location of their subjects, but their pictorial content: urban scenes including architectural details. The most obvious 'outliers' in this set are the points on other areas on continental Europe. There is a cluster of points settled on Paris. Williams first visited Paris in the early 1950s, writing:

> I enjoyed my visit to Paris. I loved its style, its character and smell that made me aware that I was abroad […] It was autumn and the leaves were falling off the trees on the banks of the Seine […] Superficially, it was similar to the Thames and yet so different. As I walked across the bridges I sensed, for the first time, that I was in the larger world of Europe and was conscious that I came from an off-shore island. I made drawings along the Seine, in the markets and up in Monmartre […] (31-32)

This cluster of points refers to these Parisian drawings. Two of these drawings (both titled simply *Paris* on the reverse) have been executed rapidly, perhaps *en plein air*. A third, *Paris, with Notre Dame in the Distance* is a more detailed drawing in ink and watercolour and a fourth, *Notre Dame, Paris*, presents a similar scene from a different angle in ink and wash. The fourth drawing has been worked up into an oil painting. The painting *Notre Dame, Paris* not only shows an untypical location, but also demonstrates one of the more unusual (and perhaps unsettling) facet of the Bequest Collection, where the artist has deliberately mutilated or otherwise damaged the canvas.

Figure 37 Notre Dame, Paris [between 1950 and 1960]

Drawings of urban scenes did not subsequently form the basis of completed full-scale oil paintings: the architectural subjects and urban settings were perhaps unsuited to Williams's painting style. The more cluttered perspectival space and geometric shapes of bridges and spires also perhaps made them unsuited to Williams's rapid painting technique. Although it is not possible to speculate why the artist damaged but kept the canvas, it is reasonable to say that it is an unsuccessful composition. The perspectival depth of the scene is foreshortened, making the figures on the bank appear as unnaturally small; the bridge and cathedral loom unnaturally in the frame. Another drawing of Notre Dame Cathedral, drawn from the opposite bank of the Seine (*Paris, with Notre Dame in the Distance*, below) is more successful: the bridges and spire of Notre Dame de Paris indicate the accuracy of the Williams's drawing. A similar accurate, but rapidly executed style can be seen in *Corner of a Plaza,* an unused drawing of a corner in Venice, produced to illustrate the 1991 publication of autobiography, *A Wider Sky*, or in the ink-and-wash drawing, *Italian Townscape* (Fig.37, overleaf*)*, a record of which exists as a 35mm slide in the Bequest Collection.

Figure 38 *Paris, with Notre Dame in the Distance*, [between 1950-1970]

Figure 39 Italian Townscape, n.d. 35mm slide – location of original drawing unknown

Mapping these items show a concentration on the places with which Williams is most associated: north-west Wales, and to a certain extent, Patagonia. However, the number of works showing scenes in continental Europe shows that the artist did not restrict himself to these familiar areas. That these drawings of Paris remained in the artist's possession until his Bequest to the Library suggests that they were never sold, and despite the variety of places he depicted, his paintings and drawings of Wales would be most attractive to his purchasing audience.

Rottenberg Station in heavy ink and wash is more typically Kyffin-like. Unlike the Parisian drawing, it is titled on the reverse in the artist's hand, and includes the suggested sales prices of 3 guineas. A more detailed description of the place and other information is also noted on the reverse in a different hand, indicating that the drawing had perhaps been put for sale at one of the artist's galleries at some point. As the drawing came to the National Library as part of the Kyffin Williams Bequest Collection, it is fair to assume that the drawing did not sell, or at least came back into the artist's possession. A speculative reason for this might be that the work was not indicative of Kyffin Williams's work.

Figure 40 Rottenberg Station [between 1950-1970]

Although different in technique, composition and media, *Paris with Notre Dame in the Distance* and *Rottenberg Station* are similar in the way they do not depict the familiar Welsh landscape. These are also both urban scenes using different technique and media. Taking a *distant view* of the collection by mapping its spatial attribute allowed these untypical works (in technique as well as location) to stand out amongst hundreds of items making them candidates for further, close analysis. The importance of landscape to the discourse around Welsh visual culture is such that Norbert Lynton noted in 1999: "It seems to me, from repeated contacts over the years, that Wales is rich in painters, Welsh and not Welsh, and that these painters work well in Wales" (qtd. *Here + Now* 76). Reflecting on this statement, Iwan Bala asks: "Whichever way you choose to interpret that statement, do we only "work well" in Wales, do we not travel well?" and suggests wryly that the "venerable landscape painting tradition" of Wales that had reached "a kind of apotheosis in the work of Kyffin Williams"(*Here + Now* 76). Using a distant viewing approach in the form of mapping

techniques common in the spatial humanities can help consider these claims. While Williams is by far the dominant figure of Welsh landscape painting in the late twentieth century, this distant view of his work shows that he did not only depict Wales. In the most basic sense, drawings and paintings of places not commonly associated with Williams become immediately apparent and allow comparisons to be made between works related to Wales and abroad, and question whether this individual artist did "travel well". Reattaching the landscape to real places provides a tool for understanding the effect or influence of geography on artistic practice and underlines Moretti's statement that "geography is not an inert container, is not a box where cultural history 'happens', but an active force, that pervades the [literary] field and shapes it in depth" (*Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900*, 3).

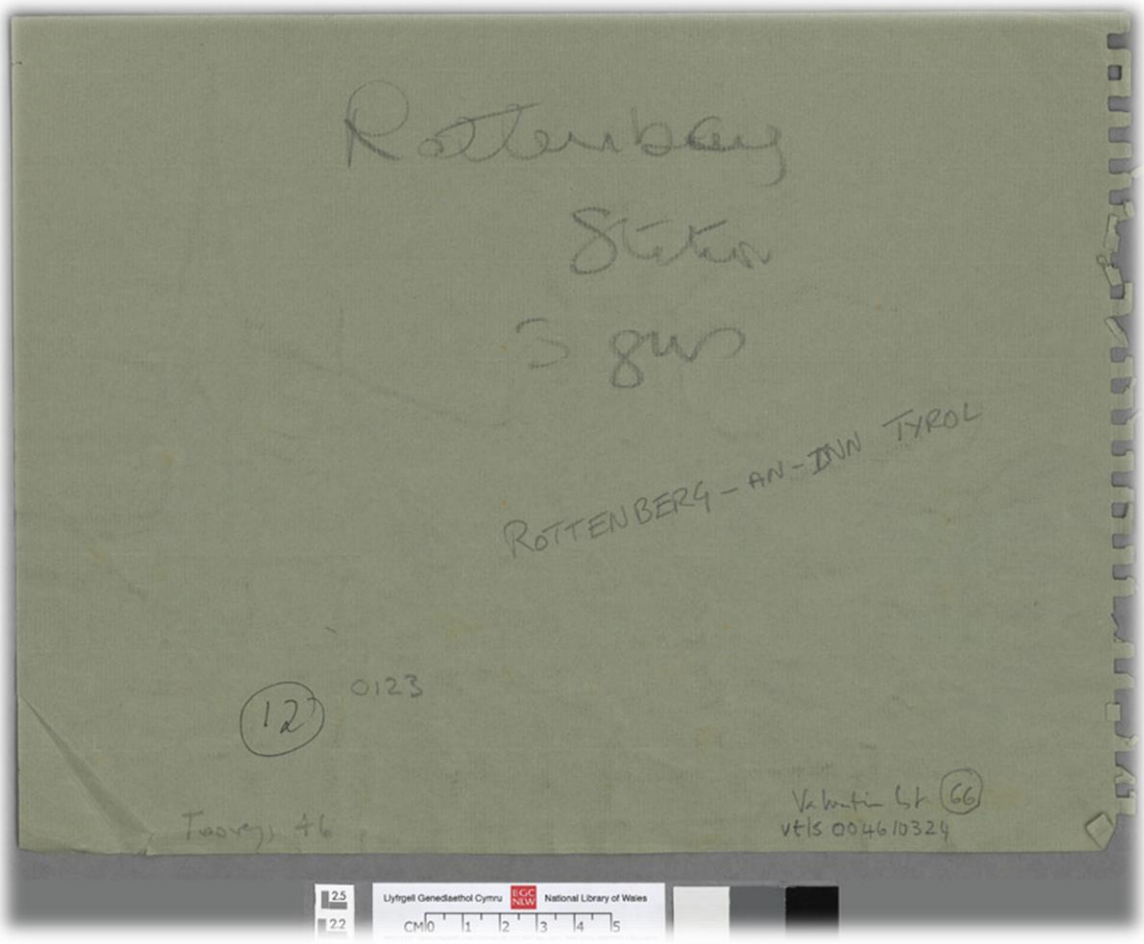

Figure 41 Rottenberg Station (verso)

National collection, 'national' artist

The lack of accurate temporal metadata has a significant impact on how a collection can be organised, displayed and explored. Most of the material in the Bequest collection has not been dated. Materials acquired by the Library prior to the artist's death in 2006 have been assigned dates, although these are usually estimates – the artist rarely wrote the date on his work, and the Library often acquired paintings many years after their creation. The Library does however have exact dates for when particular pieces entered their collection. The below map shows the location of the subjects of oil paintings by Kyffin Williams that were acquired by the Library prior to, or independent of, the Bequest in 2006. The locations shown in this map reiterate the collection practice of the National Library. An interactive timeline shows the date of acquisition using data from the National Library's accession registers. While this temporal data does not offer any significant additional insight into the development of artistic practice over time – accurate dates of creation and a larger sample set would be required for this – it does offer an insight into the Library's collecting practice with regards to art works, and most significantly the nature of the artist's relationship with the Library. The timeline shows how and when the Library acquired oil paintings by Kyffin Williams: red dots on the timeline indicate that the painting was purchased by the Library; yellow dots indicate that the painting was donated to the Library by the artist; and, blue dots indicate paintings by Kyffin Williams donated to the Library by third parties.

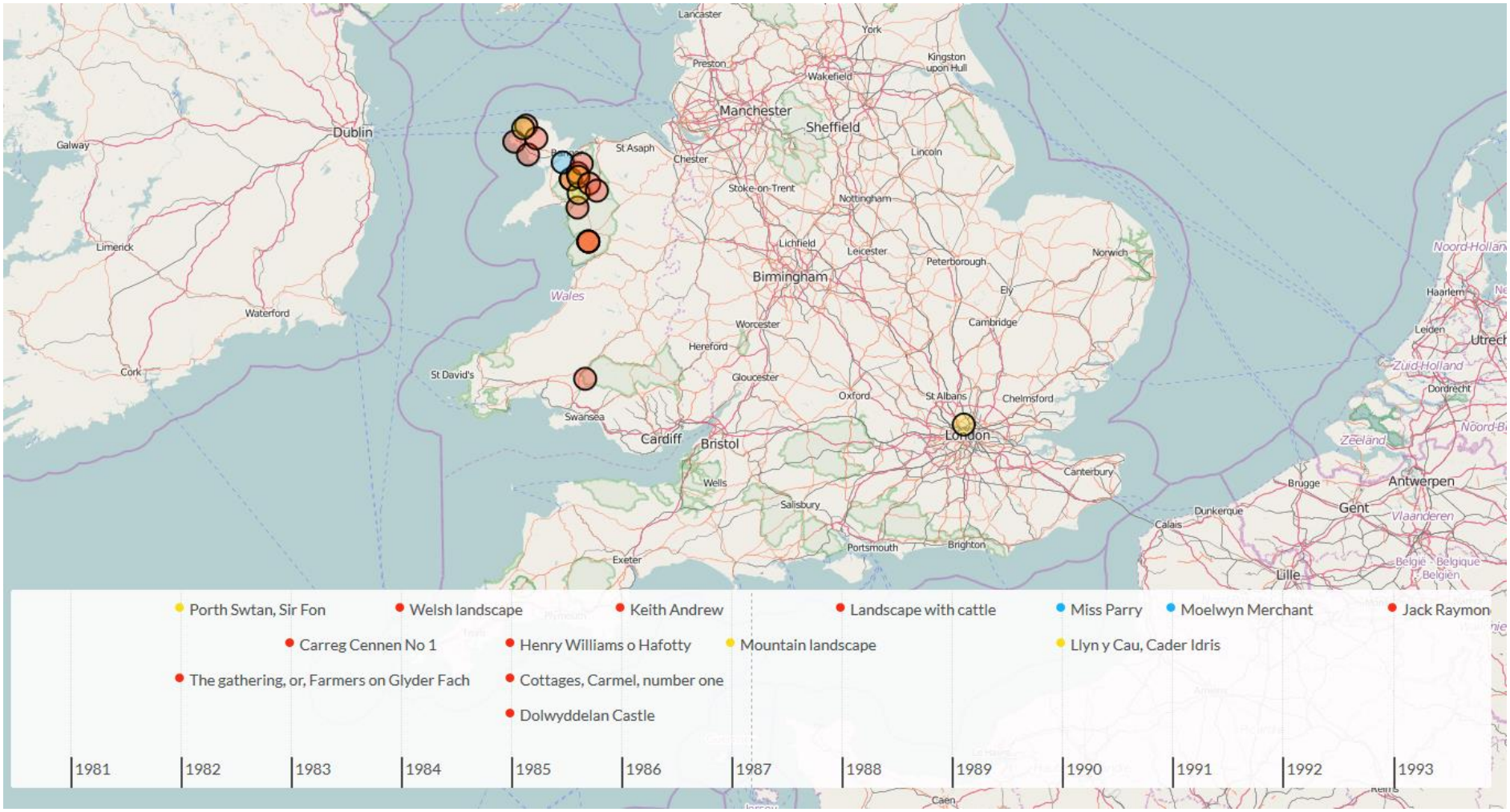

Figure 42 National collection, 'national' artist; Neatline Map and Timeline (detail)

The Library first bought an oil painting from the artist in 1950, *Llyn y Cau*, shortly after it bought the ink-and-wash drawing *Tre'r Ceiri* in 1949. The pattern of acquisition becomes more interesting by the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Following the artist's journey to Patagonia in 1968/69 he produced approximately 45 oil paintings based on his observations (in addition to the 700 or so drawings, many of which were given to the Library) and exhibited widely, most notably at the Leicester Galleries in London. *Man and a Horse in the Desert* and *Euros Hughes Irrigating his Fields* were bought by the directly from this exhibition. In 1970, the relationship between institution and artist deepened when the Williams was commissioned to paint a portrait of Sir Thomas Parry, Librarian at the National Library between 1953 and 1958 and President from 1969 (illustrated overleaf). Williams has written about the struggle he faced in capturing the personality of the sitter:

> Sir Thomas was a strong and forceful character. A man of strong principles but nevertheless a man of humanity. It was not easy to paint a portrait and bring out his essential personality. I thought I should place him in a challenging manner as if he had made an important statement, but to carry it out was more difficult. (*Portraits* 110)

Following the commission/purchase of the portrait, Williams donated another work, a portrait of Ann Griffiths to the Library. By plotting the acquisition of all pre-bequest oil paintings together, a pattern emerges: following the purchase of a painting, the artist would donate additional works to the Library. The most intense period of purchasing oil paintings by Kyffin Williams occurred in the 1980s, when the Library bought eight canvasses. The above timeline shows that after the Library bought the major work, *The Gathering, or, Farmers on Glyder Fach*, the artist also donated an older work**,** *Porth Swtan***.** In 1985/86, the Library purchased four Williams paintings in oils. Although only one of these paintings, *Dolwyddelan Castle* was purchased from the artist's London gallery, Thackeray's (the others were purchased via a third party, *Henry Roberts o Hafotty* and *Cottages, Carmel no.1* from Sotheby's, and the portrait of *Keith Andrew* from the Royal Academy), it is reasonable to suggest that in recognition of consistent purchases and the building of a significant

collection, the artist donated a further, older work, *Mountain Landscape* to the Library in 1987. The pattern continues in the late 1980s: in 1988, the Library continued building its collection by buying *Landscape with Cattle*, in 1990, the artist donated *Llyn y Cau, Cader Idris.*

Figure 43 *Sir Thomas Parry, 1970*

Following what is arguably Kyffin Williams's most commercially successful period, by the mid 1990s, works donated by the artist began to outnumber those purchased. Although the Library did not purchase oil paintings directly from the artist or his galleries in the early 1990s, its collection building continued, receiving *Miss Parry* on deposit from the Contemporary Art Society for Wales in 1990; accepting the donation of the portrait *Moelwyn Merchant* from the sitter in 1991; buying the portrait *Jack Raymond Jones* from the sitter in 1993 *and Marie Levy (née Wooler)* from Mervyn Levy in 1995. The purchase of *Miss Parry*, a portrait painted in 1984 gives an indication about the kind of

people Williams chose as sitters, and the collection practice of the Library. Williams describes how he came to paint the portrait:

> Old age has always fascinated me, especially those who sit and wait for the end to come. I saw her in an old folks home and kept her resignation in my mind until I had decided how to paint her. It was not a likeness, and even her clothes came from my mind, but I think it summed up my thought and feelings about the lives of the ever-growing number of our elder citizens who are tired and waiting for rest. (*Portraits* 28)

In addition to receiving commissions to paint notable cultural figures, the anecdote describing his choice of Miss Parry as a subject stresses the artist's interest in the people of Wales generally. This interest reflects the original intention of the 'graphical' collections of the Library as set out in its Charter: to collect portraits of the people of Wales, and not only famous or culturally significant figures. The painting is reproduced and recorded as a notable acquisition in the Library's *Annual Report* for 1989/90, however by this point it is likely that it is the artist is who makes the portrait a notable acquisition, rather than the sitter. Williams matched the acquisitions with donations: *Lle Cul, Patagonia* in 1994, *Ceg y Ffos, The New Road to the Valley* and the large *Snowdon from Tŷ Obry* in 1995. The continuing relationship between the artist at Library is commented upon in the *Annual Report:* "[o]ver the years the Department [of Pictures and Maps] has been particularly grateful for the continued interest and generosity of the artist Kyffin Williams" (36). Visualising the time and method of acquisition in the timeline shows that the relationship was reciprocal. Williams showed genuine interest and generosity, but this was matched by consistent purchase of his work by the Library.

The timeline shows how this pattern continued into the late 1990s. In 1997, the Library bought *Storm, Trearddur* and *Llyn Conwy*. In the same year Williams donated a further painting of *Lle Cul, Patagonia***,** a portrait *of Dr Alun Oldfield Davies CBE*, regional controller for the BBC in Wales between 1945 and 1967, and a portrait of north Wales-based German émigré artist *Fred Uhlman.* The following year, the artist donated two older paintings, the still life *Mackerel*, and *Conservatory,*

Highgate. The interdependent nature of the relationship between the Library and artist is epitomised in these transactions.

From the artist's point of view, the Library's career-long support is rewarded by the donations; from the perspective of the collecting institution, its already substantial collection is given greater depth by the addition of early work by the artist. The donation of *Conservatory, Highgate* provides a useful example of the mutually beneficial relationship. A small work on board rather than canvas dating to the start of Williams's career, it shows an influence of post-impressionism or the Camden Town Group, rather than the idiosyncratic use of impasto that would come to define his later work. Donating such an untypical work would not have had an effect on the market value of his later work, and the fact that the painting was still in the artist's possession over 50 years after its production shows that it either had not been sold at the time of its painting, or had not been exhibited. In the late stage of his career, the artist may also have recognised that donating unsold works to the Library's collection would be a means of securing his work for posterity in a major national collection. For the Library the importance of this minor work is in its research value and its indication of stylistic development rather than commercial value. This early, minor work has added significance when added to the collection as a whole, and contributes to the definitive collection of Williams's work.

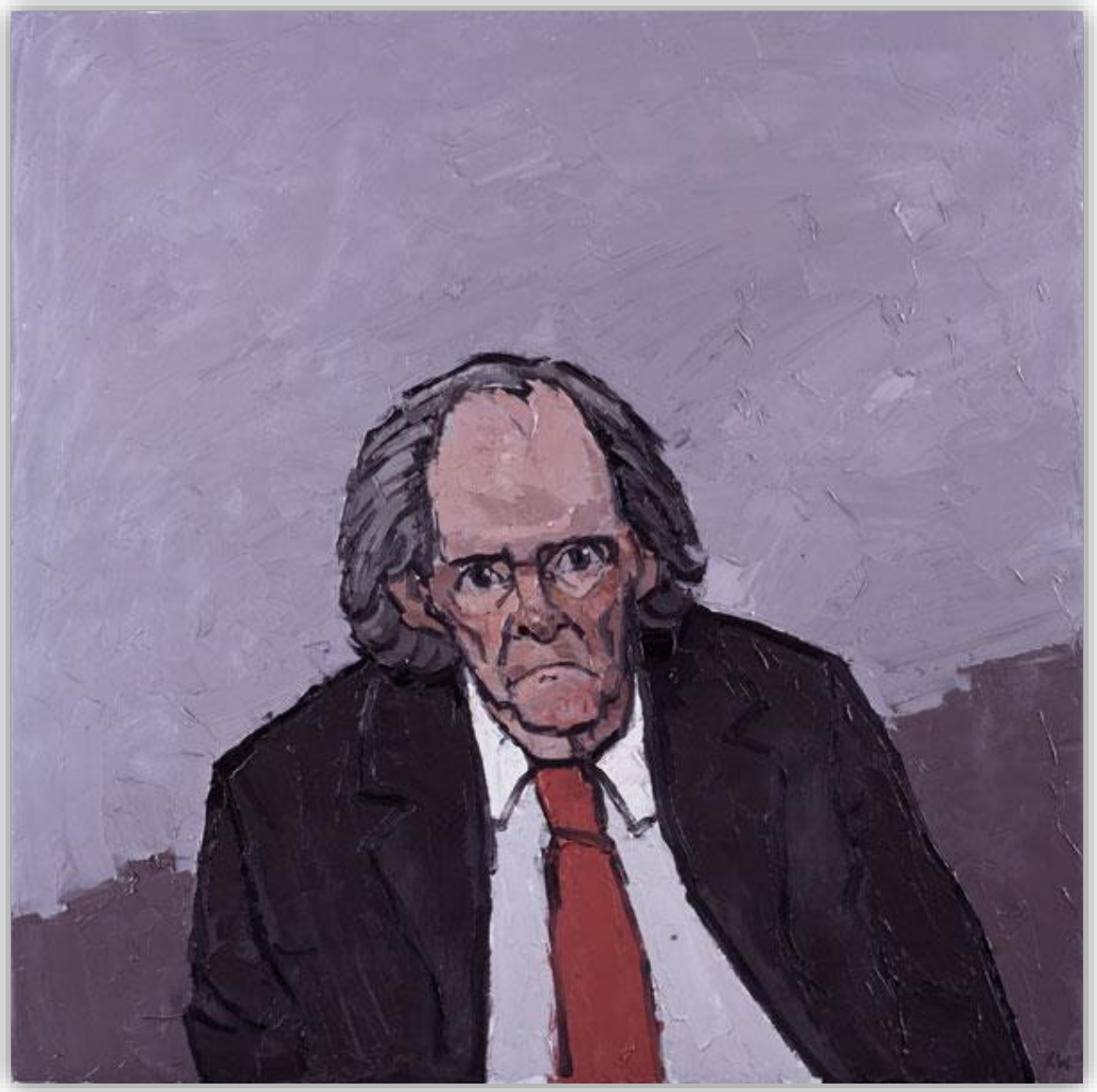

Figure 44: *R.S. Thomas*, 1980

Kyffin Williams's portrait of poet R.S. Thomas (above) represents the apotheosis of the Library's approach to collecting art works. The National Library's collection is an obvious home for a painting of one of the most well-known of Welsh poets by the most well-known of Welsh painters. The purchase of this painting in 1999 (along with the earlier purchases of portraits of Moelwyn Merchant, Jack Jones, Alun Oldfield Davies, Keith Andrew and Thomas Parry) also reiterates the way the Library's collection policy with regards to portraits creates an implied national portrait collection function. Given this function, it is logical that the Library purchased the work: the commercial

appeal (beyond the sitter) of the portrait is limited, but is of great significance for the Library's collection in its combination of two of the most significant figures in Welsh art and literature of the twentieth century. In the same year as this purchase, the Library also received a large landscape work showing Pengwyryd, continuing the pattern of receiving work by donation from the artist when a purchase is made.

Figure 45 *Henry Roberts, Bryn Gwyn, Patagonia* 1969

The donation of works painted following his journey to Patagonia (*Lle Cul, Ceg y Ffos, The New Road to the Valley* in 1995-97, and *Henry Roberts, Bryn Gwyn, Patagonia* in 2002) is significant. Although

the Library bought two such works (*Euros Hughes Irrigating his Fields, Man and Horse in the Desert*) following their exhibition in 1970 and accepted hundreds of drawings from the artist related to this trip, the donation of the paintings to the Library suggests that the artist was aware of how his intentions on that journey: "to visit my fellow-countrymen in Patagonia in order to make a pictorial record of them and their land, and the birds, animals and flowers of the country" (*A Wider Sky***,** 128) match the collection policies of the Library which specify the collection visual material depicting the people and land of Wales. The importance of the Patagonian works to the artist and institution indicate that the boundaries of the Welsh landscape are sometimes elastic, and the national character of an image can extend across the Atlantic to South America.

The lack of accurate creation dates for paintings how they can be understood in terms of their stylistic development. However, taking a distant view of the date and method of acquisition of pre-bequest material held by the Library (that is, visualising all acquisitions at once) offers some insight into how the relationship between a single artist and institution can develop into a significant collection. This relationship, which began in 1949, and culminated in the Bequest in 2006 has been made possible by a unique set of circumstances: the match between the Library's collection policy and Williams's practice; the lack of a specified National Gallery of Wales; and most importantly the development of the relationship by individuals at the Library beginning with William Llywellyn Davies in 1949. The visualisation of acquisitions in the timeline shows that rather than being act of institutional patronage, the relationship was mutually beneficial for Library and artist. As a National collection of Welsh art developed at the Library, so too did Kyffin Williams's 'national' status.

Knowledge Transfer : embedding research into practice

Kyffin Williams Online is part of the Research Programme in Digital Collections at the National Library. The programme, known as NLW Research began in 2011 with the intention of "address[ing] and develop[ing] an evidence base of the use, value and impact of the digital collections of the NLW" Its projects fall within three main areas of focus: "Understanding use: [looking at] how existing digital content is used… Enhancing content: [to] identify ways of making existing content more useful for research, teaching or community engagement and developing new digital content […] and developing new digital content […] that addresses specific research or education needs, in partnership with academics and other key stakeholders" (*Research Programme in Digital Collections*). *Kyffin Williams Online* is part of the second area of focus, enhancing already exisiting digital content. The project attempts to enable research that acknowledges the digital nature of the collections. This has been the theoretical and methodological core of the thesis: the prototype resource aims to promote the use of digital images for their own inherent qualities, rather than attempt to replicate the experience of using original artworks, or consider a digitised library item as a simple digital facsimile. The resource produced enables users (in its current form internal, staff members of the National Library of Wales): to search, organise and exhibit material from the Kyffin Williams Bequest Collection using digital mapping approaches; overcomes some of the challenges of inconsistent and incomplete metadata by focusing on spatial, rather than temporal organisation of content; and, allows materials to be presented in digital exhibitions using a simple, user friendly interface. The primary methodological and theoretical contribution of this project has been the application of distant *viewing* as a methodology to the study of Welsh art, and examining its potential not only as a means of developing research outcomes, but of exhibiting and researching digitised art collections.

In addition to the resource opening up research possibilities into the Kyffin Williams Collection, the project has two other important benefits for the Library as host institution of the KESS project: the *Kyffin Williams Online* resource can used as a template for use with other collections at the Library, to develop a suite of resources showcasing other digitised art and visual culture collections at the institution; secondly, knowledge and expertise developed during the research and development of the Kyffin Williams Online project can be embedded into the practices relating to the digital display of collections at the National Library. In addition to the research aims of *Kyffin Williams Online* in terms of art historical investigation and the digital presentation of art content, this thesis has had a practical aim: to deliver a resource for displaying and interpreting the Kyffin Williams Bequest Collection through a prototype resource that capitalises on current technical knowledge and expertise by incorporating art historical and digital methodologies. The project was developed as a collaborative Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarship within the digital economy research and development sector of the Welsh Government's Economic Recovery Plan. The benefit of the project to the National Library is not through the development of an income generating resource, but rather through the transfer of knowledge, skills and research developed throughout the course of the project to be used by the Library in future work.

The functions available in *Kyffin Williams Online* go some way in addressing the central challenges which emerged throughout the course of the research: the presence of a large art collection in a library rather than museum or gallery means that different systems of organisation, display and access are imposed on the collections. Most notably, art collections in the Library are not routinely displayed. In response to these challenges, the research has found that art and other visual materials in the Library are treated, in an organisational sense, as documents. This effects how the art collections are displayed, organised and made available to users. Gerald Beasley's statement: "[i]n brief, libraries impose systems in and on their materials, while museums build exhibition and educational programs [sic] around their materials" (24) provides a useful way of

evaluating the Library's organisation and provision of access to art collections. In Beasley's terms, the Library occupies a position between the two categories, where the majority of its activity can clearly be defined as library practice, but also incorporates exhibition programmes, an education department and public engagement activities. However, the imposition of library-specific modes of organisation and access on art collections complicates matters. By being subsumed into the wider library holdings (and initially being collected on the basis for their content, or illustrative value, rather than aesthetic qualities), the art collections of the Library act as documents, valued as information, rather than because of their display- value.

Considering an art work as a document, or information-carrier potentially removes the specialness, or uniqueness of the art object if they are collected only "so long as it illustrates the subject" (*Charter of Incorporation and Report on the Progress of the Library* 27). However, using this approach can assist the development of an alternative, digitally specific curatorial approach. By considering all items in the Kyffin Williams Bequest Collection as digital documents, the hierarchy of media associated with works of art (where a large oil painting has a more privileged status than a preparatory sketch) is removed. When viewed through an online platform, *Bryn Cader Faner* (originally a large scale oil painting, Fig.43, overleaf) and *Quarry Tip*, *Carmel* (originally a small ink-and-wash drawing on paper, Fig.44, overleaf) have the same display value: they are presented in the same resolution digital image with standardised dimensions. The digital presentation of a mixed media collection allows material to be viewed more equitably, giving the opportunity to present lesser-known works which may previously have been 'buried' in the physical collection to be discovered and used for research and display. Seeing all items as a single collection of equally valuable digital objects allows unusual, lesser-known, or forgotten works to come to the attention of users in a way that is more challenging when using the physical collection alone.

Figure 46 *Bryn Cader Faner*, 2000

The acknowledgement that digitised art works are not *versions* of an *original* but are new digital objects that have their own inherent qualities has informed how *Kyffin Williams Online* has developed. Seeing the collection as a digital-whole means many items can be considered at once, and the resource is an attempt to encourage research methodologies in which the digital object is an essential component, rather than being seen purely as a reproduction lacking the particular qualities of an original work of art. The main contribution of the project in a methodological sense is the application of *distant viewing* (as influenced by distant reading in literature) as a means of exhibiting and exploring digitised art collections.

Figure 47 Quarry Tip, Carmel: [between 1970-1990]

This is the primary contribution of the *Kyffin Williams Online* resource to scholarship on the history of Welsh art. The distant viewing approach enabled by the resource differs from the central tenets of Moretti's distant reading methodology in the way that it does not offer a distant view of an entire genre, but rather the work of an individual artist in the collections of the National Library of Wales. In doing so, the distant viewing tool provides a means of exhibiting and researching that collection in a way not possible up to this point. Although the resource focuses on an individual collection, the platform established and the use of mapping technologies means that it is a relevant and appropriate template for use with other collections at the Library. The collection development

policies of the institution (where landscape pictures of Wales are given primary importance) mean that a spatial presentation of content is particularly useful for digital display and research. In this regard, the primary contribution to the Library's work is the way in which the platform can be used to present a wide variety of Library collections, where staff can use the platform to quickly build and develop a suite of resources using the same system.

Owing to the documentary function of visual materials collected by the Library, mapping approaches are particularly useful for their display: the collection development policy means works collected usually show recognisable places, usually in Wales. However, a note of caution must be struck if fixing landscape images (which, despite their reference to real places remain essentially works of imagination) to real geographic space. In his introduction to cartographical practice, *How to Lie with Maps*, Mark Monmier writes that " [i]n showing how to lie with maps, I want to make readers aware that maps, like speeches and paintings, are authored collections of information and also are subject to distortions arising from ignorance, greed, ideological blindness, or malice" (2). Maps are an abstraction, just as landscapes are social constructions. Monmier explains the nature of this construction noting that "[l]ike verbal language and mathematics, though, cartographic abstraction has costs as well as benefits. If not harnessed by knowledge and honest intent, the power of maps can get out of control" (186). The maps contained within *Kyffin Williams Online* have not been created with any malice; however the mapping process inevitably involves a process of abstraction. The abstraction of mapping allows the Bequest Collection to be understood and presented at a distance. The distant viewing of the Bequest Collection aims to offer a complementary research approach. Abello, Broadwell and Tangherlini have summarised the benefits of using distance and a specific research approach (in this case, the application of distant reading to the study of folklore):

> Distant reading is thus a complementary approach to the close-reading approaches that have characterized humanities research for centuries. It is a particularly apt approach for folklore, since folklorists are not only interested in the particular

> features of a discrete text but also the much broader picture of how that discrete text (or performance) fits into the wide range of traditional expression through time and space. (n.p.)

Distance is used in Kyffin Williams Online for the same purpose– to take an artist whose style and technique are familiar to many and offer a way of uncovering the unusual, the quirky and the strange to allow an innovative digital presentation of content. Not to offer definitive conclusions, but to offer an alternative and complementary approach to be used in conjunction with the close reading of original works of art.

Kyffin Williams Online in its current prototype form could be made publically accessible very quickly. It would require only the application of National Library of Wales / Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru branding and translation of text. The resource represents and improvement on the accessibility of the content from its current provision through the general Library catalogue. Thousands of works by Kyffin Williams, not yet ingested into the Library catalogue would be made available with a clear, user friendly interface. The research process that led to the application of geographic data to digital content adds value to the digital collection in the way the collection can be explored spatially, offering hitherto unavailable research and display options. The spatial presentation of content also offers an alternative to the temporal presentation of content which was problematic given the lack of accurate temporal metadata for the majority of the collection. The primary benefit of *Kyffin Williams Online* to the Library, however, is general: the resource and its Omeka platform can be used by the Library as a template for the digital presentation of other collections and assist the organisational and curatorial practice of current staff members.[25]

[25] The contents of this thesis can also be used as discrete documents to assist the Library's work with other collections. Appendix 1 offers a comprehensive review of resources that use mapping approaches and Geographic Information Systems in conjunction with cultural collections. This document can be used as a guide when developing any digital resources which use geographic data in conjunction with the collections. Chapter 4b offers a detailed workflow of the process of creating an Omeka resource using materials digitised by the Library, this can be used as a guide for quickly creating pop-up exhibitions for example, at the time of writing the National Library is giving particular focus to displaying its collections relating to the centenary commemorations of World War One. Collections already digitised as part of the Library's *Cymru 1914* project could be adapted and reused to create digital exhibitions marking the centenary of specific events. Upcoming

In its present form, the *Kyffin Williams Online* digital resource is an immediately available collection organisation and interpretation tool that allows staff (internal users) at the National Library of Wales to explore, search and browse material from the Kyffin Williams Bequest Collection and selected other items. All items included in the resource have digital images associated with their metadata. At present, the digitised Kyffin Williams Collections are yet to be ingested into the wider Library catalogue, and where they have been, often lack images. All contents of the Bequest Collection, and oil paintings acquired by the Library prior to the Bequest can be accessed through *Kyffin Williams Online,* with enlarged images and added spatial search and browsing functionality.

A more general and long term benefit of undertaking the research in collaboration with the National Library of Wales has been its contribution to a wider Research Programme at that institution. Despite the negative impact of the distance from major population centres on physical access to collections discussed previously in this thesis, its unique positioning, proximity to Aberystwyth University and strong links with other universities has allowed the Research Programme to foster a culture of research at the institution, not only in terms of its users, but in its work in providing access to the nation's heritage. Support for this project (in a formal and informal sense) has come from all departments of the Library, and its readiness to engage with the research project has developed a platform from which further cross-institutional collaboration can continue. For example, over course of the research, some experimentation has taken place in collaboration with colleagues at the Computer Science department of Aberystwyth University in which a distant viewing approach was taken to use computational methodologies to attempt to assign dates to paintings which lack this piece of metadata. In "Can we date an artist's work from catalogue photographs?" it was asked whether computer vision techniques could be used to assess how

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physical exhibitions, such as an exhibition of work by Phillip Jones Griffiths planned for late 2015 could be supplemented by an Omeka-based digital catalogue/exhibition that could provide access to more material than is possible to display in its physical exhibition space and to capture the curatorial process and maintain accessibility to the exhibition after it has closed.

artistic style can develop over the course of a given artist's career. Using photographs of Kyffin Williams paintings gathered from the online catalogues of public collections and other sources, a leave-one-out methodology was used to assign a year of production to paintings (Brown et al.).

Despite inconsistencies in the photography of the paintings (the photographs of the paintings were not colour calibrated, were of varying resolution and showed significant reflection in some instances) it was possible to estimate the age of the painting within 15 years for around 70% of the dataset by comparing use of colour and application of paint across a set of 325 paintings. The experiment shows the value of taking a distant view of the collection (that is, assessing a large collection of paintings as a whole collection to identify trends) across disciplines: being able to accurately estimate the age of paintings could prompt fresh art historical analysis of the work; obtaining more accurate dates of production could assist with the curation, organisation and display of the collection from a collection management perspective; and, in terms of computer vision research, the experiment demonstrates a novel application of feature description and machine learning. Whilst a pilot study, this work indicates that automatic feature extraction may provide another useful tool for the analysis and organisation of digitised art resources. The interdisciplinary process used could be developed and systematised to assist with the research and collection management of other collections of digital images of paintings at the National Library and beyond. More generally, the process represents a way of analysing and interpreting digitised artworks using digitally specific research methodologies. Given the contemporary ubiquity of digital images (both curated collections such as digitised artworks at the National Library of Wales, and non-curated images more generally on the web), this research could be expanded to offer a means of analysing large collections in disparate locations. This collaborative pilot study was ultimately beyond the original remit of the *Kyffin Williams Online* project, however it indicates how embedding a culture of interdisciplinary research in the work of the National Library of Wales can provide innovative approaches to the study and presentation of its collections.

Appendix: Review of Resources

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and other mapping techniques and technologies have been used in a range of completed and on-going digital humanities projects in conjunction with a diverse range of literature, historical atlases, film, images, and other cultural materials. In addition to giving a spatial element to collections (which could include artistic or cultural products in addition to primary historical resources, statistical data, sociological research or material created for the purposes of that research such as oral history testimony), many resources which also include a temporal aspect which allows the user to examine change over space/time, or compare the effect of historical contexts on a given area. In this section I shall briefly review a wide range of resources created approximately in the last decade that incorporate mapping techniques in some way. In doing so, I shall identify themes in the use of GIS in digital humanities and extract qualities, attributes or functions that may be applicable for use with a library art collection.

This review is presented according to the media that is mapped. That is, in a resource such as Boston College's *Walking Ulysses*, where James Joyce's *Ulysses* is mapped according to the character Leopold Bloom's passage around Dublin on a single day, spatial data is extracted from the novel and mapped using Google Maps, while attribute data is formed from passages in the novel, or descriptions of those places. The review is arranged according to the type of texts that provides the attribute data – such as historical atlases and maps, novels, plays, film, etc. Within these sections I shall discuss how different resources focus on specific time periods, or have a wider historical range in order to present change. I shall focus on innovative or applicable functions and on occasion refer to how particular resources emphasise the theoretical issues and approaches outlined above. 'GIS' is used here to denote any system in which digitised content is presented according to its spatial

attributes for the purposes of research and display, rather than referring to a specific piece of software.

Historical Atlases and Maps

One of the primary uses of GIS in the digital humanities has been to convert historical atlases and maps into digital versions which can be interrogated and geo-referenced to allow similar inquiry to contemporary digital cartography. *Regnum Francorum Online* (Åhlfeldt) for instance presents interactive, digitised versions of early medieval maps; *Old Maps Online* (Great Britain Historical GIS Project et al) is a portal linking to a range of historical maps. While these projects in essence provide digital resources for the history of cartography, other digital atlases combine geographic data with other texts, data or historical sources to open up spatial analysis of those texts. The *Animated Atlas of African History* (Jacobs and Peñate) hosted by Brown University provides Flash-powered animated maps visualising changes in territory names, borders and boundaries, showing cites of conflict and changing economic and demographic trends. The animations provide a useful tools showing change at a continent level and are dependent on temporal data – animated maps change along a timeline beginning in 1878. Other resources demonstrate change over longer time periods: the *Digital Atlas of Roman and Medieval Civilization* (McCormick) hosted by Harvard University allows users to apply a variety of data layers relating to Culture and Religion, Economy, Military, Infrastructure, etc. to maps of Europe and North Africa to compare differences and identify trends from the Roman Empire and on through the Medieval Period. The *Digital Atlas on the History of Europe since 1500* (Kunz) has similar qualities relating to more recent European history, but relies mainly on static, thematically organised maps relating to the political, religious, dynastic and demographic changes in Europe since the early modern period.

The resources demonstrate the benefit of GIS in terms of combining a disparate range of sources, although such a combination of many sources (and exclusion of others) could prompt accusations of bias. In this respect, the *Animated Atlas of African History* notes on simplification, generalization and classification provide a useful caveat:

> Simplification is useful because it imposes order and makes processes and trends legible, but generalizations and classifications erase other realities. The categories must, therefore, be transparent and open to discussion. ("Notes of the AAAH")

China Historical Geographic Information System (CHGIS) developed jointly at Fundan and Harvard Universities (among others) began in 2001 "to establish a database of populated places and historical administrative units for the period of Chinese history between *221 BCE* and *1911 CE*" ("Intro – Summary"). It is explicit in its aim to provide tools for spatial analysis and research, rather than providing an individual interpretation: "The CHGIS aims to build a reliable database of administrative units and settlements, but does not wish to impose a closed interpretation on the relationships among those units." (*Ibid*.) As with the other digital atlases reviewed, CHGIS is a tool to facilitate research rather than a presentation of a subjectively compiled research project. This is also the intention with the *Kyffin Williams Online* project – although with significantly different datasets. Reviewing these resources is a reminder that choices made by the resource compiler must be explicitly stated as part of the web presentation. *Addressing History*, a "searchable, historical database of towns and cities in Scotland," uses data from the Scottish Post Office Directories in conjunction with contemporaneous historical maps to allow research into people, places and professions. Initially focusing on Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen, the resource demonstrates how diverse datasets can be opened up to wider research areas relating to Scottish history. The fact that the resource operates as a website and API (Application Programming Interface) emphasises the open access agenda of the creators (EDINA,

National Library of Scotland, JISC) and further promotes the free use of data for other research projects.

Atlas Cartografia Histórica hosted by Universidade Nova de Lisboa provides similar functionality but focuses solely on Portugal's changing local administrations (districts, councils, parishes, etc.) from the eighteenth century to the late twentieth century and combines a variety of census data, eighteenth century 'parish descriptions' and historical geographic dictionaries (da Silveira et al.). Historical atlases can also refer to a single source. The *Digital Atlas of Indonesian History* offers a digital version of Robert Cribb's *Historical Atlas of Indonesian History* (published 2000); the online platform offers the opportunity for a large-scale print publication to be expanded with additional chapters and analysis. Maps in this instance are static and require purchase of the print edition of the atlas to fully use the digital resource. Although not interactive, this resource demonstrates the usefulness of digital publication. The *Historical Town Atlas of the Czech Republic* (Institute of History, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, v.v.i.) offers a portal to a variety of cartographical publications, allowing the user to layer historical maps, terrain views, etc in a single frame. The resource's primary use is the ability to compare changes over time, and its focussed nature (on individual towns and cities in the Czech Republic) allows the user to focus on individual details in contrast to the broader scope of the *Animated Atlas of African History,* or the district-level scope of the *Atlas Cartografia Histórica*. *Beijing in Transition* (So) has a similarly tight focus – a single city – but introduces a specific time period (1912-37) and datasets relating to six specific cultural themes (including urban morphology, market culture, education, public health, legal and religious cultures) with the intention of presenting spatial changes in each. The *Batanes Islands Cultural Atlas* (Blundell and Buckland) focuses on a single province of the Philippines and combines maps, timelines and

images to create the 'Cultural Atlas'. The resource lacks spatial analysis functionality, but demonstrates the attractiveness of applying images to geographic co-ordinates.

Other projects that use GIS keep a tight focus on specific areas – individual cities or towns, or map industries and culture specific to particular areas. These projects also have a range of historical spans: *Mapping Medieval Chester* combines historical maps and contemporary images of the city "to explore space, place and identity in medieval Chester" (Clarke). *City Witness* is an on-going project (Clarke, *City* Witness, due for completion June 2014) which builds upon the same team's work with *Mapping Medieval Chester* to develop a hybrid digital resource combing a map of c.1300 Swansea and an electronic edition of fourteenth-century primary sources. Projected outputs include a GPS enabled mobile app and pavement signs for Swansea city centre in addition to academic publications facilitated by the GIS. *Tracks in Time: The Leeds Tithe Map Project* created by the West Yorkshire Archive Service and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund is essentially a digitisation project of historic tithe maps. Downloadable walking trails have been created from the historic sources, further indicating the public engagement possibilities of geo-referenced historic sources.

Cleveland Historical developed by the Center for Public History and Digital Humanities at Cleveland State University offers a GPS enabled mobile application to present a range of multimedia resources including video, images and oral history recordings. Media collections have been curated into 29 themed tours of Cleveland including themes relating to the American Civil War, Sports, the North Union Shaker community. The diversity of the themes demonstrates how a disparate range of materials can be presented in a single geographically based platform. The *Dictionary of Sydney* is equally diverse. A suite of applications, projects and resources forms a historical digital repository with the aim of "gather[ing] resources on every aspect of human habitation in the greater Sydney area from

the first arrival of people to the present." ("About Us") A wide range of media is represented in the collection and where applicable plotted according to location. These two resources are similar in having public engagement as the primary goal of the research while also creating robust research collections available for academic audiences. *PhilaPlace*, focusing on Philadelphia presents stories, maps, photographs and other documents arranged according to the neighbourhood (Saverino). The inclusion of historic documents from archival collections with articles created from contemporary oral testimony creates a sense of continuation rather than a city history hermetically sealed within a specific period.

Know Your Place, created by Bristol City Council also presents cultural collection in a map format, layering library, museum and archival collections over an Ordnance Survey base map for the purpose of "learning about and sharing information about historic Bristol." ("What is Know Your Place?"). Funded by English Heritage the resource demonstrates how mapping cultural collections can provide local and tourist information as well as potential use as a scholarly resource. The *Lviv Interactive Map* constructed by the Center for Urban History of Eastern Europe presents content arranged according to Themes, Events and Persons. Although more scholarly in approach, its presentation is clear and its brief, specialist-written introductions to various collections and exhibitions provide useful starting points for user research.

Virtual Morgantown uses GIS to demonstrate the effect of industrialisation and deindustrialisation, to create a digital reconstruction of the historical urban landscape of the West Virginia town that has changed significantly since the decline of various industries – the dormant project blog which provides no information on authorship or date suggests that the work on this potentially visually interesting resource has ceased (there is some suggestion that the work was begun at West Virginia University in or around 2006, see "Reconstructing an historic landscape,"). While GIS has been used to create the

reconstruction, it operates as an output to a research project, rather than a tool for users' own research projects. *Mapping Decline* (produced by University of Iowa Libraries as a digital accompaniment to Colin Gordon's book of the same title) and *Beyond Steel: An Archive of Lehigh Valley Industry and Culture* (Smith, Lehigh University Digital Library) are two other resources that focus specifically on the effects of industrial development and decline on specific areas. The former presents four interactive thematic maps to accompany the published text, while the latter is a digitisation project of letters, books, photographs, maps, essays and oral histories to "aid researchers in understanding not only the lives of railroad barons and steel titans, but also the experiences of average folks who worked and lived in the community." (Smith, "Introduction."). This pair of resources highlight three key attributes of geographically presented historical collections: the ability to combine disparate sources linked through their relevance to particular geographical areas; the way GIS can be used to present a cumulative research output, or as a tool for future research; and the particular utility for GIS in urban history research where detailed maps have been kept over time and documents refer to specific addresses. This highlights one of the main challenges in using GIS in conjunction with the *Kyffin Williams Online* resource, where the spatial data comes primarily in the form of town/village names rather than explicit addresses.

Literature

Geographic Information Systems have been used extensively in relation to literature. Many literary forms – novels, poems, plays, etc. take as their setting real geographical locations, and several projects exist in which literary texts have been plotted according to these places. The purposes, intentions, scope, creators and contributors to the below resources are diverse: some are platforms for scholarly research invested in notions of distant reading and macro-analysis covering entire continents and thousands of texts, others

refer to an individual text to create applications useful for casual readers/tourists. Some focus on individual countries, others the oeuvre of an individual author. This is an indicative review of literature-mapping projects intended to give an overview of the use of GIS in conjunction with texts which although refer to 'real' locations but are also products of the imagination of the author, to highlight useful features which can inform the *Kyffin Williams Online* project. Parallels can be drawn to the notion of mapping landscape paintings – where 'real' locations are filtered through the imagination of an artist, the below list sketches the various ways in which this has been done with literary arts.

Mapping literature: general

Placing Literature is a database created collaboratively by an author, a geographer and a software engineer, which aims to put stories '"in the context of a real physical location… placing readers in a familiar locale as the stories unfold around them." (Williams, Williams & Young, "About"). The content of the database is crowd-sourced, in order to "connect the readers to the places they are reading about, highlighting the meanings, values and emotions attached to a space." (ibid.) Coverage is worldwide, and some entries more superficial than others. Research potential relating to the resource itself is limited owing to the differing levels of granularity provided by many different contributors. However, the popularity of the resources (as indicated by the number of contributions) demonstrates the power of crowdsourcing as a means of utilising local knowledge where texts refer to specific places. Such an approach could be useful in identifying places depicted in untitled landscape paintings, although a controlled vocabulary may have to be specified when used in conjunction with a defined library collection in order to maintain consistency across entries. The *Ein Literarischer Atlas Europas / A Literary Atlas of Europe* (Hurni, Piatti et al) is equally wide ranging in a geographic sense (encompassing many texts across Europe) although is

tightly focused on the potential academic research that spatial interpretation of literature can prompt. The atlas acts as a platform for publications relating to literary geography/cartography and is a valuable resource for identifying nascent methodologies in this field, rather than providing an interactive resource relating to a specific, defined collection.

The *Digital Literary Atlas of Ireland 1922-1949* by contrast acts as a geographically encoded encyclopaedia, allowing users to begin investigation into a range of Irish literature. Entries can be searched according to their authors, related places or a time period, and are visualised through a Google Earth platform and interactive timelines. The goal of *Atlas das Paisagens Literárias de Portugal Continental* (Atlas of Literary Landscapes of Mainland Portugal) is to produce academic research and interactive digital tools to "study literary landscapes and their potential to connect literature to territory, fostering the mutual appreciation of literary works and places, and contributing to leisure and tourism." Its combination of scholarly academic outputs fed by contributions from the public further demonstrates the possibilities of academic and public engagement outputs. *The Space of Slovenian Literary Culture: Literary History and the GIS-based Spatial Analysis* project has a defined, specifically academic purpose: to test specific academic hypotheses that literary discourse in Slovenia is based on spatial factors." (Juvan). This academic project also has the parallel goals of creating a *Literary Atlas of Ljublijana* and to make research publically available for use in cultural heritage, education, tourism and planning sectors. These projects emphasise the applicability of academic research using GIS research in public engagement – perhaps more so than other research. A speculative reason for this would be the visual nature of GIS makes the data presented more accessible for non-expert users, provided they are have an understanding of using maps.

Individual author

Irish literature, especially the work of James Joyce has been mapped by several projects using methodologies involving GIS. *Mapping Dubliners* (produced by Jasmine Mulliken at Oklahoma State University) and *Walking Ulysses* (Nugent, Boston College) offer a way of reading each Joyce text through interactive maps. *Mapping Dubliners* is available online through Google Maps, or as a downloadable Google Earth file which and maps every location and route described in the various short stories. Additional interpretation and analysis is presented in the project's blog. *Walking Ulysses* also uses Google Maps as a platform, although a geo-referenced historical map contemporary to the setting of the novel is overlaid. The map can be explored according to chapter, character or area, and in addition to the maps for each chapter, detailed directions are provided to allow the user to follow Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus's journey through Dublin. Both projects act as reading aids, allowing the reader to vicariously follow in the footsteps of various characters, but balance this with additional scholarly analysis. *Joyce Ways* (developed by students at Boston College, Macomber et al.) is a mobile application that offers an introduction to *Ulysses* and guides the user to locations associated with the text. The application includes a variety of media, including excerpts from the text read by Frank Delaney, "expert criticism, quirky facts, and contemporary photos, advertisements, cartoons, and posters." ("Press Release."). The application is an indication of how applicable methods incorporating GIS in scholarly research can be adapted to for the purposes of literary tourism (or in a library sense, user engagement activities).

Many publishers/authors have made similar applications to be used as tour guides, or as multimedia companions to texts. *Ian Rankin's Guide to Edinburgh* provides guided tours of Edinburgh by the author relating specifically to his Inspector Rebus and Malcolm Fox

novels. The application's press release notes that "many of Ian's fans have never been to Edinburgh, and this app gives them the opportunity to see the actual locations that Ian uses in his plots, including the police stations, murder scenes and hidden backstreets of Edinburgh." ("News – Ian Rankin's Guide to Edinburgh"). This suggests that users may not want to actually visit the less salubrious locations, but can use the application to spatially contextualize the narrative as they read.

Other resources focus on the movements of authors themselves, rather than mapping their texts. *Mapping a Writer's World: A Geographic Chronology of Willa Cather's Life* (Willa Cather Archive and Center for Digital Research in the Humanities at University of Nebraska-Lincoln) plots the movements of the much-travelled author to attempt to identify the effect of place on the writer's work. *Mapping Memoirs of Montparnasse* takes a different approach. In mapping John Glassco's *Memoirs of Montparnasse*, Anouk Lang locates areas discussed in a single text and focuses on Glassco's interactions with other literary figures present in Montparnasse, Paris to illustrate the influence of a single locale on early twentieth century literature.

Other resources map the literary connections of different cities in a variety of ways, with a range of complexity, interactivity and degree of research focus. *Vilniaus Literatüra* explores the literary geography of Vilnia, Lithuania. The *Kansas City Literary Map* developed by Johnson County Library plots a wide variety of texts chosen for their reference to Kansas City landmarks, and includes material from pre-American Civil War period to contemporary literature. The resource is available as a downloadable map to aid a "literary ramble" (Bogart) and an online version that allows users to click on points for excerpts from texts to appear. Although not research focused, the literary map demonstrates how texts of specific local interest can be emphasized within a library collection.

Mapping Shakespeare's London uses a geo-referenced historical map as a means of accessing articles written by undergraduate students at the Department of English, King's College London to "detail the important ways in which the Early Modern city provided context for [Shakespeare's] plays." ("Home") Location data is not used as a tool for spatial analysis, but rather as an additional access point/browsing facility to access the articles.

Mapping St. Petersburg is a tool for scholarly research created by project leaders Sarah J. Young and John Levin (UCL). The project website notes that

> Setting is an essential component of literature, particularly narrative, but it has normally been conceptualized as space, and viewed in symbolic and generalizing terms. Even when considering literary models of real cities, the mythopoetic and purely spatial aspects tend to dominate, obscuring questions about the physical environment and its translation into textual form. The developing field of literary geography is beginning to examine the role of real place, as opposed to symbolic space, in literature. Understanding the representation of real geographies in literary works has the potential to explain our response to our physical surroundings and the way the landscape in which we live shapes our culture. ("The Project.").

Parallels can be drawn with the intentions of the *Kyffin Williams Online* project. Although landscape paintings operate as works of imagination, they are also rooted in real space. Similarly, *Mapping the Lakes* (Lancaster University) is a highly influential project that plots the poetry of Thomas Gray and Samuel Coleridge against locations in the Lake District. Its interactive maps visualise the travels of the poets around the Lake District and has been the catalyst for several scholarly articles exploring the spatial relationships of the texts. More generally however, the project served to develop GIS methodologies for qualitative data as opposed to the more traditional use of the technology in human geography within a social sciences paradigm (Cooper & Gregory 89).

The production of literature – through printing and other trades has also been the subject of resources using GIS technologies. The *Atlas of Early Printing* (University of Iowa Libraries) uses a Google Maps API to create an interactive tool to support the teaching on

the history of printing in Europe in the fifteenth century. The *Grub Street Project* (Digital Research Centre, University of Saskatchewan) focuses on print culture, literature and trades in eighteenth-century London. The resources further demonstrate the range of use of GIS at continent and more spatially specific levels. *The Grub Street Project* in particular, stresses how GIS can be used to combine a range of different data sources – both literally in presenting a range of data sources, texts and media, but also in an abstract sense:

> Grub Street, now subsumed by Milton Street, was both a real place and an abstract idea. For authors such as Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift, it represented base commercialization, hack writing, and the prostitution of literary ideals… Both location and metaphor, this now-vanished street represents what is largely invisible to us now, the print culture of eighteenth-century London (both high and low), and the construction of eighteenth-century London as a network of textual representations. The Grub Street Project will examine new possibilities that digital mapping provides to better understand the city as topography and as "social text". ("Topographies of Literature and Culture in Eighteenth Century London").

The combination of primary historical sources and abstract concepts presents the challenge of how to differentiate between fact and interpretation. This is especially important when considering the dual nature of landscape paintings (the primary focus of the *Kyffin Williams Online* resource,) as both 'real' and imagined spaces.

GIS have been used in a wide range of literary research contexts, from atlases outlining the literary history of continents, countries or individual cities, resources focusing on the works of an individual author, or comparative approaches to many writers. Contemporary texts and historical literature have all been mapped, as have works and stories that in one respect appear 'authorless'. *Danish Folklore Nexus* presents folk tale and their interpretation, focusing on a vast range of storytellers to explore the relationships between storytellers and collectors (Tangherlini). *Myths on Maps* plots Greek mythology using modern mapping technology (Bowman). The most successful of each demonstrates the ability of GIS to combine disparate sources unified by a spatial presentation.

Linguistics and language diversity

GIS have also been used to map linguistic diversity. The *Linguistic Atlas Project* is an enormous undertaking to visualise the diversity of American English pronunciation and vocabulary through maps. Recorded interviews began in 1929, with data collection still on-going in some parts of the United States ("About Us."). The project includes a variety of innovative features, including large corpora of data being available to download, a bespoke graphical user interface to interrogate the collections and a commons area allowing users to download or contribute their own transcriptions and analyses of content. While the nature of the collection and complex nature of the interface is somewhat restrictive (although this is perhaps to be expected from a collection requiring some amount of specialist knowledge), the two-way nature of data provision/collection is a positive approach to include a wide range of linguistics scholars in the project's activities.

Linguistic atlases, including sound maps of accents and pronunciation have been used in many projects in different countries. The inextricable link between language and geographical locations means that GIS approaches lend themselves to linguistic research. *Irish Speakers and the Empire City* (Wolf) adds a sociological perspective, mapping the Irish speakers of New York City as indicated in the 1910 US census. The website includes a crowdsourcing element, asking participants to select districts and transcribe census returns relating to that area, specifically the nativity and mother tongue of each individual. This data gathering project does not currently include a map of entries – its purpose is to gather data for use in "student research into the demographic features of New York's Irish-speaking residents in 1910," ("Introduction"). The website states that once completed, data will be available for other researchers. The use of maps here is to facilitate data collection – users can specify an area on a map to transcribe. Although the primary goal is to facilitate

research into demographics, language diversity and other sociological areas, collecting the data in this way could allow spatial analysis. Maps act as a visual entry the data for interested participants.

Linguistic research has also been used for in conjunction with exploring the development of historic maps. The *Linguistic Geographies* (Lilley) project attempts to uncover the processes of medieval cartography by analysing the textual annotations of the Gough Map (sometimes dated to the 1360s). The project combines palaeographic and linguistic research techniques in order understand how and when the map was created. Map points provide etymological data on place names, descriptions of map symbols, and are cross-referenced with contemporary maps. The project not only combines disparate data sources, but also demonstrates how diverse methodological approaches (in this case in the fields of linguistics and cartography) can be brought together to inform divergent research questions.

Changing economic, social and political contexts

Perhaps the most obvious use of GIS in the humanities has been historical inquiry data collected as part of sociological, demographic or public health research. Such data often comes ready formed with the attribute and spatial data needed for the creation of a spatially enabled database. While this data is often the most obvious candidate for GIS treatment, many projects have introduced innovative ways of visualizing and identifying changing economic, social and political contexts.

Belgisch Historisch GIS (developed by the Department of Modern History, University of Ghent) is extensive in its coverage, including digitised statistical data on population, agriculture and industry from 1800 to 1961. This is combined with a second database containing digitised historical maps related to the changing administrative structure of

Belgium between 1800 and 2000. Developed in 2003, it is no longer fully maintained, but remains online with a warning of its obsolescence as a demonstration model ("Waarschuwing"). It has now been replaced by the similar LokStat web resource (Vanhaute). The databases provide a wealth of data for use in a variety of research fields, although their real power becomes apparent when combining datasets together to allow spatial analysis, as described by Gregory and Ell (9). The website itself acts as a data store, rather than a presentation or interpretation of research findings. A similar set of data is available through GBHGIS (Southall, University of Portsmouth), which collates census reports, gazetteers, historical maps and other data. An allied website, *A Vision of Britain Through Time* (University of Portsmouth et al., funded by the UK National Lottery and JISC) presents this data in conjunction with hundreds of maps from different sources, and allows the user to explore the data through a clear graphical user interface. Statistical data have been curated according to theme (e.g. 'Industry', 'Agriculture', 'Education', etc.), which helps usability for those without expert knowledge. All data sets and historical maps (with a few exceptions) are available for download under Creative Commons licensing.

Specific topics

Other resources focus on defined places, historical time periods or use GIS in order to visualise hypotheses around specific sociological research. *Charles Booth Online Archive* presents navigable, digitised version of Charles Booth's poverty maps of London and other papers produced between 1886 and 1903. Its web version is somewhat dated, with small viewing windows for the maps of London. *Phone Booth*, the archive's mobile application (currently available in Beta format) includes an opacity slider bar allowing the user to merge a geo-referenced version of the historic map with an Open Street Map, Google Streets, Google Hybrid or Google Satellite layers. Images from Booth's notebooks can also be added

as a layer, allowing browsing of data according to the location to which it refers. Data collected by an individual relating to a specific city and set of social circumstances is also presented in *Mapping the Du Bois Philadelphia Negro* (Hillier). The resource plots data collected as part of the 1900 US census in conjunction with research conducted by W.E.B. Du Bois for his 1899 book *The Philadelphia Negro* to introduce the research possibilities in using GIS in tandem with primary historical documents and to illustrate the history of African American communities in that city.

On the Line combines specific sets of demographic data with a focussed geographic area (the city of Hartford, Connecticut) in order to examine "how schooling, housing, and civil rights shaped Hartford and its suburbs." (Dougherty, "Introduction."). The project is presented as a web-book, offering a variety of media – digital maps, video documentaries, analytical chapters, oral histories and other material. Although the web-book platform suggests a static presentation of the culmination of research, *On the Line* also includes some space for reader comments with regular replies from creators and researchers. In addition to the presentation of demographic data, *Neighbourhood Change in Connecticut, 1934-present* offers a dual-view comparison map which allows users to compare photographs from aerial surveys of the state of Connecticut from 1934, 1990, 2004 and 2006 (with the intention to add further surveys at 20 year intervals from 1934) with present day Google Maps images. Aside from the academic research potential offered by the web-book, the *Neighbourhood Change* map's potential for use in other educational spheres, particularly schools, has also been noted (Badger). One of the most useful features of *On the Line* as a reference point for other digital humanities projects is perhaps the most prosaic: the *How it Works: the web book* section provides complete listings of the WordPress themes and all plugins used in the creation of the public facing resource.

The *Urban Transition Historical GIS* project, directed by John Logan, Professor of Sociology at Brown University also presents demographic data but in a different way. Rather than a means of presenting the culmination of research, the *Urban Transition* webpage "is a first step toward wider dissemination of research material from the project," (Logan). The resource provides data from the 1880 census, historical maps and descriptions of the geo-referencing methods used by the research team. These extensive datasets are available to download on the condition that it is not distributed without permission, used commercially and cited appropriately if used in scholarly publication. The vast datasets, lack of a graphical user interface and need for associated skills in handling such data mean that the webpage would be of most use to academic researchers. However, by exposing its datasets and methodologies (both research and geo-referencing) *Urban Transition* shows how data collated for specific research projects can continue to be used after the culmination of the primary research.

Mapping Texts (University of North Texas and Stanford University) also uses a large dataset – approximately 250,000 pages of digitized historical newspapers (originally digitized as part of the Library of Congress *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers* project). Having identified that "historical newspapers are currently being digitized at such a scale that is rapidly overwhelming our traditional methods of research," the project's mission is to "experiment with new methods for finding and analysing meaningful patterns embedded within massive collections of historical newspapers." (*Mapping Texts,* "Mission"). Currently there are two interactive visualisations available, examining the quality of the digitised newspapers (the quality of the corpus is decided by the number of recognizable words in relation to the number of words scanned in total) and major language patterns plotted according to the location of the newspapers' publication. The first visualisation is compromised by a confusion of the notion of 'quality.' It is unclear whether

this is a study of the quality of printing in different areas, or the quality of the scanning process. The visualisation of major language patterns in newspapers is more successful, and succinctly demonstrates the use of GIS in collocating different datasets – corpus linguistic techniques are combined with geographical area. Users can also navigate the data according to a timeline to identify changes in patterns over time as well as space. A third research axis allows additional data manipulation by the user, and shows how a single data set (newspapers) can be used in conjunction with a wide range of digital methodologies.

Historical data

Other resources use demographic data relating to older historical periods and specific places. *Decima* – Digitally Encoded Census Information & Mapping Archive – has been created with the aim of being "an interdisciplinary research and teaching tool for scholars of early modern Europe," allowing researchers to interrogate data relating to the "social, economic and sensory life of Florence under the rule of Duke Cosimo I (1519-1574)" by geo-coding a range of contemporary census data (Terpstra & Rose, "Home."). Trinity College Dublin's *The Down Survey of Ireland: Mapping a Century of Change* takes data from the Down Survey, "the first ever detailed land survey on a national scale anywhere in the world," and geo-referenced historical maps to present an introduction to the project, research findings and interactive maps for users to use as a tool for their own research (Ó Siochrú, "Home"). *Mapping Population Change in Ireland 1841-1851: Quantitative Analysis using Historical GIS* uses a combination of many static maps to illustrate major shifts in population levels during a specific period and has some interactive WebGIS functionality allowing the user to trace changes over time (Fotheringham, Kelly & Charlton). All three resources present some research findings (using a variety of interfaces) but also act as tools for further research. These three resources use GIS as a means for encouraging further

research, rather than an end in itself, an approach encouraged by Gregory et al. (see above). This toolkit approach is useful for use in conjunction with library collections, where some amount of interpretation can be used for presentation to the casual user, but the predominant function is as a catalyst for research and use of the collection rather than a prescribed reading of texts, data, images, or other data.

Focus on specific historical periods

Geographic Information Systems can also be used successfully in relation to very specific locations and time periods. This is especially true to illustrate research, collections or data relating to war, where attribute data most often has a specific spatial component and a variety of documentary and cartographical evidence is available. Stanford University's Spatial History Project is currently developing *Holocaust Geographies* (Boem et al.) , a multi-institution examination of the "places and spaces of the Holocaust," the project description notes how the "profoundly geographical event that caused mass displacement, migration, destroyed or fundamentally changed thousands of communities, and created hundreds of new places for the concentration of population, the exploitation of labor, and the mass murder of millions of people," (Giordano, "Collaborative Research: Holocaust Geographies GIS") are to be investigated using GIS methodologies to present five interlinked case studies which involves the "spatial experiences of Holocaust victims." (Boem et al. "Holocaust Geographies GIS"). *Mapping the Gulag* (Moran, Pallot, Piacentini) is one research output of a wider ESRC funded project investigating the experience of women in the Russian penal system. The website presents many static maps showing the spread of penal institutions in Russia between 1929 and 1961 to present. The website is an example of research data being made publically available, and although not interactive or expressly for the purpose of

users conducting their own research, is indicative of research projects which use GIS making their data openly available.

In addition to being a vehicle for new scholarly research, GIS approaches have also been used in conjunction with datasets relating to World War Two for use in a more general, public sphere. *Bombsight: mapping the WW2 Bomb Census* (Jones et al.) maps the bombs which fell on London between 1940 and 1941 and combines this data with photographs, oral history and other documents from the National Archives. Its web map application is notable in that it combines memories of the period submitted to the BBC's *People's War* project and images from the Imperial War Museum Collections. Its Android mobile application includes an augmented reality function that responds to the user's location to "reveal the locations of the bombs projected into the current urban landscape." ("About"). The attraction of this approach is evident in similar (non interactive) presentations being made in a journalistic context, where historical photographs have been overlaid to Google Street View. *Bombsight* presents data with empirically recorded locations, while journalistic versions often use famous urban landmarks where the location is unequivocal. While an augmented reality application presenting geographically encoded images from the Kyffin Williams collection would be an attractive proposal, it is complicated by the imagined/real nature of landscape painting.

Whereas the purpose of *Bombsight* is to make National Archives content available to "citizen researchers, academics and students," (Ibid.) *reVilna: Vilnius Ghetto Project* (Menachem) allows users to explore geographically encoded texts (from memoirs, archives, photographs, etc.) independently or by following 'stories' – where content has been curated according to a variety of themes such as 'Art & Culture', 'Life in the Ghetto', etc.. The combination of allowing users to independently navigate content or be guided by digital curation points towards potential use by novices or those with specific research interests.

The centenary of the outbreak of World War I has resulted in an increase in interest in the conflict with a corresponding rise in number of digital resources. The nature of the war – centred mainly on Europe but global in nature has meant that some resources have used GIS methods to present archival collections. The National Archives of Australia's *Mapping Our Anzacs* (replaced in August 2014 by the *Discovering Anzacs* web site) allows users to find the service records of soldiers who served Australia during World War One by browsing records according to place of birth or place of enlistment. The scope is global – data has been sourced from the 'Place of Birth' and 'Place of Enlistment' fields on each individual service record, meaning users can trace soldiers who were born outside of Australia. The use of this for researchers of family history, or diaspora studies is clear – a user from Wales for example, would be able to trace the service record of a family member by knowing the place of birth. In a basic way, the mapping also demonstrates the use of GIS in terms of taking a distant view of a large collection to identify outliers, for example, the 19 service personnel born in South America but served in the Australian armed forces become obvious where otherwise would have been lost within the archival mass of 375,00 records contained within the resource.

Streets of Mourning, launched in August 2014 in commemoration of the centenary of the outbreak of war, takes a more local approach. It will show provide a map of Lancaster city centre populated with data about the soldiers from the area who died during the First World War. The project has been developed as part of Lancaster University's 'Campus in the City' campaign of public engagement ("Streets of Mourning Brings Home First World War Carnage") and its interest to family historians or citizen researchers is clear. One of the most potentially appealing aspects of the resource on an administrative level is that it also be extended to use the same approach on a regional or national level. Similarly, a geographically enabled database relating to the Kyffin Williams collections at the National

Library of Wales could be designed with the view to use the same framework resource for other artists/collections.

The American Civil War and slavery in North America have similarly stimulated the interest of digital humanities scholars and research centres. *Mapping Detroit Slavery* (Miles et al. University of Michigan) and the *Texas Slavery Project* (Torget, University of Virginia) similarly uses GIS to explore the inherent spatial component of slavery – including displacement of peoples, its spread and the subsequent emancipation of slaves. The variety of texts, early mass-scale photography and clear geographical components (the Mason-Dixon line forming a symbolic boundary of the Civil War, maps of battles, movement of troops, or the spatial element of Emancipation) means that it is an historical event with a clear attraction for researchers engaged in digital methodologies. *Hidden Patterns of the Civil War* (Digital Scholarship Lab, University of Richmond) presents a suite of projects arranged according to 'text' (using corpus linguistic and text mining approaches to Newspapers and other texts) or 'maps' (which presents research with spatial components, such as the spread of Emancipation, migration, the slave market in Richmond and voting patterns in the country during the Civil War). University of Virginia's *The Valley of the Shadow* (Ayres, et al.) uses the central tension of the Civil War (that of North/South) to present the history of two communities during the conflict. Animated maps of battles are used as illustrative components of the website, rather than as interactive research tools.

The ancient world has also been subject of a number of projects using spatial humanities methodologies and GIS in a variety of ways. *Hestia* (Barker et al., Open University) uses GIS technologies in conjunction with a digital text of Herodotus's histories to "investigate the cultural geography of the ancient world through the eyes of one of its first witnesses," (Barker et al., "Home"). *PELAGIOS*, (Isaksen, Barker, Simon) presents a digital map of the Roman Empire from data in historical documents and aims to introduce linked

open data to the study of the ancient world. *Geodia*, (Rabinowitz, University of Texas at Austin) combines a variety of data sources to allow users to "visualize the temporal, geographic, and material aspects of ancient Mediterranean civilizations." (Rabinowitz, "Home"). Archaeological sites, historical events and related images are presented in a clear, intuitive interface that combines MIT's open source Simile Timeline web widget with Google Maps API. The creators are explicit in their aim to provide a resource that is "heavy on facts, light on interpretation." (Rabinowitz, "FAQs"). Its amalgamation of different resources and collections using open source infrastructure and familiar mapping interface creates a tool which appears to be easily adapted by administrators and quickly understood by users. *GapVis* is a visualization interface developed as part of the Google Ancient Places project that "includes maps and visualizations that help you navigate through a text geospatially, see what locations are referred to at different points in the narrative, and dig into the details to learn more." ("GapVis"). The collaborative project between several institutions combines texts from the Google Books corpus relating to ancient Mediterranean civilisations with a Google Maps interface. Ancient place names have been extracted using the Edinburgh Geoparser, allowing locations discussed in the texts to be displayed in a map pane as the digital text is read. The project illustrates how several previously developed systems can be adapted and combined for use in new contexts. This has resulted in the development of Pleiades+, an additional output that uses data from Google Ancient Places to create URIs for ancient places. This is an example of how data collected for one project being made open to form the tools for future research.

While GIS offers the ability to visualise the spatial attributes of a dataset, displaying the temporal attributes of a collection using GIS is more complex. This is reflected in the traditional disciplinary boundaries of the humanities:

> Most information is explicitly or implicitly concerned with theme, time, and space. Much humanities scholarship is concerned with a theme and how it varied over time and/or space. Handling space and time together is difficult, and this complexity has often led scholars to focus on either change over time, the domain of historians, or variations over space, primarily studied by geographers. (Gregory "Exploiting Time and Space" 58)

Digital humanities projects which chart travel or movement of people, including post-colonial or diaspora histories often attempt to show changing spatial attributes over time. *Routes of Sefarad*, produced by Caminos de Sefarad in collaboration with Google (project director: Óscar Adàn) presents a variety of images, texts, registers and lexical terms to show the history of the Jewish community in Spain. This content is presented through two interfaces – an interactive map allowing users to explore content according to its spatial attributes, or through a timeline showing change over time. Its interfaces are easy to use but emphasise the difficulty of presenting space and time together. *Mapping the Jewish Communities of the Byzantine Empire* (de Lange, Panayotov and Rees) presents a spatially encoded dataset and allows the user to explore its content according to a variety of filters. The presentation of content in each resource reflect their intended audience; *Routes of Sefarad* has a more intuitive interface (using a Google Maps map layer) suiting its more general intended audience, whereas *Mapping the Jewish Communities of the Byzantine Empire* is more suited to a research audience.

Art and visual culture

Art, architecture and other examples of visual culture have also been mapped in a variety of ways. As previously discussed, the notion of mapping paintings which refer to real geographical locations is somewhat problematic – a landscape painting acts as representational space, but may refer to a specific place in its title or through other associated texts/field research etc. Mapping architectural features that have changed, or disappeared over time can be equally challenging and dependent on the interpretation of

many non-visual sources. *Visualizing Early Washington DC* (Bailey and Schroader,) uses a wide range of historical texts and research collaborations with architectural historian, engineers, cartographers, etc. to a virtual re-creation of Washington DC between 1790 and 1820. The virtual recreation appears as the culmination of a research project, rather than a tool for further research.

Mapping techniques are particularly well suited to studies of architecture where the buildings are still standing, as an accurate address or location is usually available. *The Falmouth Project* (Nelson) is a "geo-spatially accessible archive of information about the historic architecture of Falmouth, Jamaica," (Nelson, "About") and includes a variety of information about approximately 750 buildings in the town. This includes surveys of the building, photographs, assessments of condition and dates of construction all presented using a familiar Google Maps interface. The resource has been created with a wide range of intended users including local residents, those interested in the preservation of historic architecture, city planners, scholars and tourists planning a visit to the town, (ibid.). The data is provided with a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 license (CC BY 3.0) allowing user to download shape files (.shp) used in the *Falmouth Project*, to share and adapt the data for any purpose (including commercial use) provided appropriate attribution is provided. It is not clear how many users have adapted this data for further use, but the permissive approach to its re-use is an example of how research data can be used in an open fashion and potentially encourage further user engagement with content beyond a passive receipt of information provided by the initial resource.

Mapping Gothic France (Murray and Tallon), allows the user to explore the Gothic architecture of France according to space (the mapped locations of architectural examples), time (timelines indicated construction dates combined with appropriate historical contextual information) and narrative (stories and essays about the content, collections and

further information about writers on gothic art and architecture). Displaying content across these three 'axes' provides the user with options of how to explore the content. The inclusion of a comparison function is also particularly useful – churches are plotted as points on a map of France, once a point is clicked, a photograph appears in a separate side-bar pane; shift-clicking a further point adds the second church to the side bar pane, and the user can scroll through photographs of each building to compare facades and other details. A comparison function would be useful in the *Kyffin Williams Online* project, where the user could select paintings relating to different areas to compare how their pictorial content differs according to location. *Soviet Modernism 1955-1991* (Architekurzentrum Wien) is a database of 650 architectural and planning projects in 14 states of the former USSR (excluding Russia). The database can be filtered according to the actual or proposed location of the building or according to its use (such as Housing, Health & Social Welfare, Seat of Government, etc.). Although no interpretation is provided, the database is rich in the variety of images provided, including in some instances digitised architectural plans, historic photographs, images from government archives or contemporary photographs of the buildings, allowing users to examine the development of the design, or compare design drawings with the finished buildings in its spatial context. This non-hierarchical approach to digital media gives a sense of the development of the project, and could be replicated in the *Kyffin Williams Online* project, where preparatory or development drawings could be located with completed oil paintings, or images of lino blocks presented with the resulting prints.

Tate's *Art Maps* project is one of the most significant and far-reaching projects focussed on mapping art works. After identifying that approximately one-third of Tate's holdings had been indexed with some geographical information – some highly specific, others more general, *Art Maps* began in January 2012 with an aim to:

> improve the quality of the geographical data relating to these works, with members of the public contributing information about the specifics of the imagery and viewpoint used or associated sites. It also will allow people to record and share their memories and emotional or creative responses to the places associated with the artworks in ways that will generate learning experiences and create new communities. (Giannachi, "Projects: Tate Maps").

The resulting resource is a richly populated map of the world, with points indicating places referred to in individual art works. The crowdsourcing nature of the project, where users have been asked to provide specific locations has posed some problems of personal interpretation of what a location is or is not. Derek McAuley writing on the *Art Maps* project blog notes that the meaning of 'location' could range: "from the comparatively simple 'do we mean where the artist sat' or 'the location of the subject', to 'where has it been displayed' or 'where the artist lived at the time' and so on. Technically we could imagine providing for all of these as options." ("Tate Maps: Some Technical Challenges.") This complex ontological problem has been addressed by creating a system referred to as 'semi-structured blogs' in which curated content is presented; users make contributions via a blog format using a template that includes fields for structured information. This is then sent to curator controlled website which then processes the content. Structured information is also subject to automated processing.[26] Although the *Kyffin Williams Online* resource is not initially intended to use crowdsourcing as a means of assigning geographical data to digital content, the ontological problem raised by *Art Maps* is important to consider when

[26] Derek McAuley describes the process in a blog post about Tate maps*:* "Our design is in principle quite simple and uses what we have referred to as 'semi-structured' blogs. We start with curated content about which we seek information, with participants using a blog to make their contributions. After navigating around the content, if the contributor wishes to add to the discussion they are taken to their blog where a post has been partly constructed from a template supplied by the content curator, containing links to the original content (indeed any metadata desired can be contained in the template). The template also contains fields for contributors to add structured information (like location) according to the defined schema. They are then free to comment further and provide images, audio, and text as they would in a normal blog post to support the construction of their interpretation." *Art Maps: Some technical challenges*)

presenting digitised content spatially: it must be clear whether the location is derived from a title; cataloguer given title; field research to‘ find’ landscapes; or through other means.

In addition to mapping the subjects of art works, GIS has also been used to illustrate the economic development of the art market. The *London Gallery Project* (Fletcher & Israel) examines the shift from aristocratic patronage to commercial galleries as the financial driver for art over the course of the nineteenth century by plotting the location of dealers, galleries, artists and exhibition societies in London between 1850 and 1914. The project aims to answer the research questions:

> How did viewers' experiences of moving through these cultural spaces affect their reception of individual works and artists? Did galleries with similar specializations and/or clientele gather in certain areas? How did galleries engage (or compete) with one another, in their exhibition schedules and advertising? (“Project Description.”)

The project shows how additional market or economic data associated with the art market can be used in conjunction with GIS to build a fuller picture of artistic production of the period. The temporal aspect of a city’s visual culture is also recorded in the *New York City Graffiti and Street Art Project* (Ballantyne, McWilliams, Dehner, Watzek Library, Lewis & Clark College and Off-Campus and Study Abroad Program) where students photographed, catalogued and mapped examples of graffiti and ephemeral street art in the autumn of 2010. The value of the project comes in the way it offers a snapshot of the visual culture of a specific urban landscape at a given time, allowing analysis of patterns or trends in visual outputs that have the threat of being removed, amended or destroyed at any time. A difficulty is the subjective nature of the collection (photographs of street art taken by students at the college). Given the volume of graffito in New York, and the transient nature of the medium, a complete collection would never be possible, and users are reliant on the selections and tastes of those photographing the street art. The collection was catalogued using a metadata element set chosen from the VRA Core 4.0 data standard schema, using

only four required fields ('Work Type', 'Measurement', 'Relation', and the non VRA Core 4.0 additional element, 'Support' used to record the surface on which the graffito was applied) using an interface named *Catalogr* designed by Jeremy McWilliams at Watzek Library. The result is a concise and easily navigable database demonstrating the utility of GIS in conjunction with materials lacking a temporal access point (i.e. date of production or the work itself being transient in nature), where the location of work, rendered using basic Google Map interface acts as a way of exploring the collection. (The *Red Bull Street Art View* is a collaborative, crowd-sourced project to mark the locations of street art around the world. Although global in scope, this resource has no explicit research agenda and little to no metadata associated with collected images other than their location on the Google Maps/Street View interface).

Film has also been displayed online using GIS technologies in a wide range of digital resources. The *Cultural Atlas of Australia* demonstrates the benefits of taking a GIS approach when displaying a variety of different media. The University of Queensland developed resource offers "an interactive digital map that displays the places and locations that appear in iconic Australian films, novels and plays," ("Welcome"). The differentiation between 'shooting locations' and 'narrative locations' (where vector points showing where a film was shot or where a film was set are shown on the map using different coloured icons) could offer a useful parallel with geo-locating landscape pictures, where the location a vista was painted from is marked by one vector point, and the subject of the painting/drawing marked by another. Care would have to be taken in rendering this difference, where points could be shown so close together as to make the differentiation illegible when presented on a map. The resource is aimed at both scholarly and general users (potential users are listed as those "planning a cultural tour, researching Australian narratives, or wanting to get to know part of the country better through the fiction that represented it"(Ibid.)). The minimal

interpretation (other than case-studies in the *Showcase* section) emphasises that this spatially enabled database is a tool for research, rather than a display of the culmination of a research project.

Mapping the City in Film (Hallam, University of Liverpool) and *Manchester Time Machine* (Manchester Metropolitan University and North-west Film Archive) use geo-referenced historic film clips to present the history of Liverpool and Manchester respectively. Both use similar collections as their base – (City in Film for Liverpool, incorporating a wide range of Liverpool-related clips from a variety of archives; Manchester-related clips from the North-west Film Archive), but have taken different approaches to mapping and displaying the collections. The former uses spatial information gleaned from the *City in Film* catalogue to populate a Google Earth presentation, whereas the latter presents spatially referenced clips in the form of a smartphone application with inbuilt GPS locater, allowing the user to access material relating to their location in the city of Manchester in real time. The use of a mobile application where the collection is not only accessed remotely – but 'in the field' where the user is notified of location-specific content depending on their location in real time is a feature which could be particularly useful in relation to digital content relating to areas popular with tourists (e.g. landscape paintings depicting locations in Snowdonia National Park).

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