**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON**

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# Striking an Attitude: *Tableaux Vivants* in the British Long Nineteenth Century

by Elena Stevens

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**ABSTRACT**

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This thesis examines one instance of the long nineteenth-century's engagement with the Antique: the medium of entertainment known as *tableaux vivants*. In *tableau vivant* performances, men, women and children were arranged into motionless (or near-motionless) configurations, and presented to audiences in parlour rooms, pleasure gardens, circuses, public houses, exhibition halls, variety theatres and music halls. Many performances derived inspiration from Antique statues or classicising paintings, although some captured elements of distant cultures. All performances collapsed distances in space and time, permitting spectators to view – with arresting immediacy – both human bodies and the ideals or ideas which these bodies represented. Performances worked to consolidate the notion of a correspondence between ancient Greek and Roman societies and modern British society, as critics and impresarios proclaimed *tableaux* performers to represent vessels through which an impression (or a 'sense') of Antiquity was conveyed. Even those *tableaux* performances which instantiated 'foreign' peoples served to underline this correspondence, representing the inverse of the 'civilised' ancient societies to which modern British society aspired. For contemporaries, the same *tableaux* seemed to contain within them the promise of 'the ideal' and the threat of viewers' and performers' debasement; indeed, it was the latter threat which underpinned social purists' anti-*tableaux* campaign towards the end of the nineteenth century. This thesis argues that *tableaux vivants* ought to be acknowledged as a fundamentally neoclassical phenomenon. Like visits to the British Museum or the Crystal Palace's Greek and Roman Courts, *tableaux vivants* offered spectators the opportunity to engage with the classical past. For many working-class men and women, Antiquity was accessible *only* by virtue of these 'popular' exhibitions. As such, the thesis is situated within the field of Reception Studies, and explores responses to – and the broader impact of – a medium of entertainment which has hitherto been overlooked by historians of Classical receptions.

**Illustrations**

**Academic Thesis: Declaration of Authorship**

I, Elena Stevens, declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

**Striking an Attitude: *Tableaux Vivants* in the British Long Nineteenth Century.**

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. Either none of this work has been published before submission, or parts of this work have been published as: [please list references below].

Signed:

Date:

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**List of Abbreviations**

The following abbreviations are used in the footnotes:

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| BI | London, Bishopsgate Institute. |
| BL | London, British Library. |
| *HNP* | Alfred Morrison, ed., *The Hamilton and Nelson Papers*, 2 vols. (London: Strangeway & Sons, 1893). |
| HTC | Cambridge, Harvard Theatre Collection. |
| ICA | London, Imperial College Archives. |
| LMA | London, Metropolitan Archives. |
| ML | London, Minet Library. |
| SA | London, Society of Antiquaries. |
| VATC | London, V & A Theatre and Performance Archives. |
| WL | London, Women's Library (London School of Economics). |

## Introduction

> The history of the *tableau vivant* as a form of nineteenth-century entertainment has yet to be written. It had a curiously multiple ancestry, part theatrical and part social. In one way, the device of freezing a group of performers in expressive poses represented the principle of the waxwork tableau turned inside out… These [waxwork shows] were waxen representations of real human beings; now, in *tableaux vivants*, real human beings resembled waxen effigies.[1]

Richard Altick's assertion of 1978 still holds true; no historian has yet charted the development of *tableaux vivants* (or 'living pictures') from an intimate form of female exhibitionism to a medium of mass entertainment practised, in the years after 1820, by both male and female performers. Altick apportioned only a few pages of his seminal work *The Shows of London* (1978) to the *tableaux*, although by considering the *tableaux* alongside waxwork exhibitions, automaton displays, panoramas and freak shows he was able to situate the medium within the context of a broad taste for novelty and spectacle. This thesis represents the first comprehensive historical account of *tableaux vivants*. Taking London as its geographical focus, it charts the evolution of the *tableaux* medium from 1780 to 1914 (or the 'long nineteenth century'), and it reflects, too, upon the ways in which *tableaux* performances anticipated the twentieth-century cinematic experience. Whereas Altick was concerned to identify links between the *tableaux* and other contemporary forms of popular amusement, this study concentrates upon the relationship between *tableaux vivants* and neoclassicism, indicating the diverse and changing ways in which *tableaux* performances revived and reinterpreted Antiquity for audiences in the long nineteenth century.

During *tableaux* performances, spectators encountered Antiquity in the form of 'living pictures' inspired by ancient history and classical mythology. Male and female performers were presented to parlour-room, pleasure garden, circus, public house, exhibition hall, variety theatre and music hall audiences in (very often immobile) configurations. In each 'picture', the performer's stance, expression and costume served to evoke a particular character or painted figure. Some *tableaux* were modelled upon ancient artworks, artefacts or mythological accounts, whilst others derived inspiration from classicising paintings and sculptures by Frederick Leighton, William-Adolphe Bouguereau, Solomon J. Solomon, Robert Gibb, Johann Heinrich von Dannecker, John Gibson and others. Most *tableaux* performances involved the successive enactment of five or more 'pictures', and typically a curtain or revolving stage mechanism was

[1] Richard Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 342.

employed to conceal the transition between one *tableau* and the next. For an age enthralled by the culture of Antiquity, *tableaux* performances permitted spectators to scrutinise three-dimensional adaptations of Antique and neoclassical art. In a reversal of the myth of Pygmalion (featured in Ovid's narrative poem *Metamorphoses*), performers retreated into states of petrification on the stage.

Antiquity was repeatedly evoked in the *tableaux* medium, with most *tableaux* projecting 'classical' themes and images. For the purposes of this thesis, 'Antiquity' should be taken as shorthand for 'Classical Antiquity', the period of cultural history whose commencement is usually aligned with the earliest recorded poetry of Homer (in the eighth or seventh century BC). The age of Classical Antiquity continued through the emergence of Christianity and the decline of the Roman Empire, ending – according to the retrospective demarcations of archaeologists – with the dissolution of 'classical' culture at the close of 'Late Antiquity' (around 300-600 AD). This is the point at which the 'Middle Ages' are thought to have commenced. Classical Antiquity encompassed the empires of ancient Greece and ancient Rome, although certain periods or cultural patterns within the age of Classical Antiquity influenced long nineteenth-century writers, artists and antiquarians more than others. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, for example, contemporaries associated themselves and their nation rather more with the people and polity of ancient Greece than ancient Rome, keen to avoid for Britain the kind of cultural and political decline that had befallen the Roman Empire.

The manner in which the Antique was brought to bear upon *tableaux vivants* altered from one performance to the next. Simon Goldhill's *Victorian Culture and Classical Antiquity* (2011) forewarns against the presumption that Antiquity was conceived by members of contemporary society in a straightforward or uniform manner. Focusing upon the Victorians' engagement with the classical past, Goldhill points out that contemporaries' relationships with Antiquity were 'fissured'. 'Classics' is not a 'single block of cultural knowledge', but 'a multiform construction, criss-crossed by ignorance as much as knowledge, pretension as much as privilege, anxiety as much as idealism.'[2] Many *tableaux* directors and troupe leaders made tokenistic allusion to Antiquity, simply dressing performers in 'classical' costume and billing them as living reincarnations of 'Venus' or 'Hercules'. Others impersonated classicising artworks; some even performed imaginative reconstructions of statues which had been excavated as fragments. *Tableaux* performers' and managers' engagements with Antiquity were diverse and contingent

[2] Simon Goldhill, *Victorian Culture and Classical Antiquity: Art, Opera, Fiction, and the Proclamation of Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 63.

upon various factors (including level of classical education and the nature of the performance venue). As such, they reflected the 'multiform' manner in which contemporaries engaged with the classical past in the long nineteenth century.

Focusing upon the manner in which *tableaux* performances conceived – and helped audiences to conceive – of Antiquity, the thesis is intended as a contribution to Reception Studies. This is a relatively new area of historical interest. Though Hans Robert Jauss and other literary historians had called in the 1960s and 1970s for scholars to adopt a 'poetics of reception' which acknowledged reader responses to historical texts, it was not until the 1990s that 'reception theory' was aligned with the study of the Classics.[3] In recent years, however, scholars who have identified their research as belonging to the field of Reception Studies (including Goldhill, quoted above) have sought more systematically to illuminate the ways in which ancient culture has resonated in various 'modern' societies. As Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray noted in the introduction to *A Companion to Classical Receptions* (2008), contributors to the field have typically been interested in 'the ways in which Greek and Roman material has been transmitted, translated, excerpted, interpreted, rewritten, re-imaged and represented.'[4] This thesis conceives of the *tableaux* medium as an important and under-studied instance of classical 'reception'. As such, it aims primarily to disclose the myriad ways in which Antiquity was represented and reimagined in long nineteenth-century *tableaux* performances. It notes, too, the manner in which *tableaux* representations of the 'Other' (or the 'native') worked to bolster – through their illustration of an inverse or a counterpoint – notions of Britain and the British as descendants of ancient Greece and/or Rome.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the *tableau vivant* as 'a silent and motionless person or group of people posed and attired to represent a well-known character, event or work of art.' The earliest recorded use of the term is in 1821. In January of that year, the weekly magazine *The Kaleidoscope; or, Literary and Scientific Mirror* published an account of a fête held at the Castle of Berlin for members of the Prussian Court, during which performers had appeared in *tableaux vivants* inspired by

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[3] According to Charles Martindale and Richard F. Thomas, scholars in Britain and North America responded to Jauss' call for a 'turn to the reader' with enthusiasm, although it was not until 1990 that 'Reception Studies' was acknowledged as an all-encompassing rubric for scholars working on the history of scholarship, performance history, translation studies, the history of the book, and various aspects of film and media studies. See Martindale and Thomas, eds., *Classics and the Uses of Reception* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), pp. 1-3.

[4] Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray, eds., *A Companion to Classical Receptions* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p. 1.

Thomas Moore's 1817 poem *Lalla Rookh*.[5] *Tableaux vivants* were certainly performed prior to 1821, although they are likely to have been termed 'attitudes' (reflecting the influence of Emma Hamilton who, as this thesis will suggest, was one of the earliest and most important performers of the *tableau vivant*). The 'attitude' is, of course, assigned various definitions by the OED, although the most relevant for the purposes of this thesis is that which relates to the human form: 'a posture of the body proper to, or implying, some action or mental state… *to strike an attitude*: to assume it theatrically, and not as the unstudied expression of action or passion.'[6] This definition captures the deliberate, consciously-affected quality of the 'attitude' or '*tableau vivant*'. Performers adopted predetermined physical and facial expressions; performers' countenances did not reflect – as 'natural' expressions tend to do – the individuals' 'true' physical and mental states. The OED's definitions of both '*tableau vivant*' and 'attitude' also convey the referential nature of the medium, as performers tended to arrange themselves into configurations inspired by paintings, sculptures and mythological accounts.

However, these definitions do not sufficiently capture the fleeting quality of *tableaux* performances. Whilst performers sometimes held their poses for up to thirty seconds (during the *fin de siècle* fashion for music hall *tableaux vivants*, the *Strand Magazine* suggested that performers ought to maintain their immobility 'for fifteen to twenty-five seconds, or even more'), *tableaux vivants* were fundamentally ephemeral.[7] Once the performer had shifted his or her pose to represent a new character or 'passion', the previous characterisation had been lost, never in its precise form to be retrieved. Unlike painting or sculpture, the *tableau vivant* was a momentary medium of representation. Even photography – when it was applied to the recording of theatrical performances after 1850 – could not capture for posterity the essence of the *tableaux* performance. The photograph compressed the *tableau vivant* into a flat image, suppressing the interplay between life and lifelessness, animation and de-animation, that was essential to the format and appeal of *tableaux* performances. Additionally, these definitions fail to convey a sense of the cultural and political functions which long nineteenth-century *tableaux vivants* fulfilled, and the ways in which performances served to justify and confirm certain perspectives, perceptions and biases.

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[5] Oxford English Dictionary, '*tableau vivant*': http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/271457?redirectedFrom=tableau+vivant#eid [accessed 16 August 2016].
[6] Oxford English Dictionary, 'attitude': http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/12876?redirectedFrom=attitude#eid [accessed 16 August 2016].
[7] Quoted in Joseph Donohue, 'W.P. Dando's Improved Tableaux Vivants at the Palace Theatre of Varieties, London', available online: http://www.thefreelibrary.com/W.P.+Dando's+improved+Tableaux+Vivants+at+the+Palace+Theatre+of...a0226634238 [accessed 13 April 2016].

In this thesis, the *tableau vivant* is therefore defined as a configuration of male and/or female performers which instantiates 'Antiquity', 'civilisation', or a lack thereof.[8] In the long nineteenth century, performers' instantiation (or, representation by an instance) of mythological events, classicising paintings and excavated sculptures permitted spectators the opportunity for close and yet fleeting encounter with Antique culture: it was in this interaction between tangibility and elusiveness that much of the appeal of the medium lay. *Tableaux* performances worked (perhaps imperceptibly) to align Britain with Antiquity, and with the high degree of 'civilisation' which Antique culture was thought to have boasted. *Tableaux* reinterpretations of ancient themes helped to sustain the notion – increasingly prevalent in long nineteenth-century culture – of a direct link between contemporary Britain and ancient Greece and/or Rome, as Antiquity was literally 'brought to life' on the popular entertainment stage.

However, *tableaux vivants* were also arranged as a means of demonstrating the *lack* of 'civilisation' (and thereby the absence of a link with 'Antiquity') of certain peoples and cultures. As the third chapter of this thesis will indicate, the mid nineteenth century saw anthropologists and imperialists organise for 'natives' to be arranged into 'living pictures' supposedly indicative of their (uncivilised) ways of life. Taking the form of anthropological photographs and imperial exhibition displays, these *tableaux vivants* placed 'natives' before the 'scientific' world and sometimes the wider British public, permitting spectators the opportunity for first or second-hand scrutiny of 'Other' peoples and cultures. In the long nineteenth century, *tableaux vivants* instantiated both 'Antiquity' and its inverse, the latter loosely understood as a fundamental lack of 'civilisation'.

'Instantiation' should not be taken necessarily to infer prolonged or even absolute immobility. Emma Hamilton incorporated her attitudes into a fluid and near-continuous act, using representations of ancient and mythological characters as a means of illustrating the most significant episodes or emotions associated with each character. Hamilton was only immobile for a few seconds at a time, at the most. In the imperial exhibitions organised in the wake of the 1851 Great Exhibition, men and women 'imported' from the British Empire were displayed in 'villages' performing tasks apparently indicative of their 'native' customs. These performers are unlikely to have been truly motionless, though the deliberate arrangement of the costumed peoples amidst 'village' scenery would have created memorable 'living pictures' in onlookers' minds. However, during those performances in which statuesque immobility *was* required of

[8] For the definitions and usage of 'instantiation' see Oxford English Dictionary, 'instantiate': http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/97048?redirectedFrom=instantiate#eid [accessed 16 August 2016].

performers – in variety theatres and music halls, in particular – a sense of tension and expectancy would have gripped spectators, as they scrutinised performers for signs of 'life'. The viewing of *tableaux vivants* could be a truly 'affective' experience, as spectators were induced to tense their own bodies in rapt (and perhaps unconscious) imitation of performers' efforts on the stage.

The paintings and sculptures from which many *tableaux* derived inspiration were themselves reinterpretations of 'life', inspired by scenes, episodes or individuals encountered in 'Nature' or the 'real world'. *Tableaux vivants* modelled after ancient statues and classicising paintings therefore represented doubly-mediated reinterpretations of the 'original' material. As poet and cultural commentator Arthur Symons noted in 1894, 'A picture, for the most part, is an imitation of life, and a living picture is life imitating an imitation of itself, which seems a little roundabout.'[9] *Tableaux* performers mimicked lifelessness as a means of recreating images and paintings, the creators of which had themselves captured episodes from 'life'.

In the essay 'Simulacra and Simulation' (first published in 1981), philosopher Jean Baudrillard defined 'simulation' as 'the generation of models of a real without origin or reality.' For Baudrillard, the process whereby a 'simulacra' was produced represented the converse of that by which a 'representation' was produced. Whereas the latter resulted in a mediation of reality, the former resulted in merely a simulacrum of reality, having been founded not upon an 'original' but upon an imitation of something that had not been 'real' in the first place.[10] Baudrillard was particularly interested in the contemporary manifestations of these simulacra, and his essay reflected upon the prevalence of 'false', constructed realities in popular and political culture.[11] However, the philosopher's account of the simulacra-producing process seems to apply to artistic reproductions – and, specifically, to the reproductions 'performed' in long nineteenth-century *tableaux* productions. Encompassing reinterpretations of paintings and sculptures, *tableaux vivants* represented simulacra in the sense articulated by Baudrillard. The 'original' paintings or sculptures from which the *tableaux* derived inspiration were the products of the artists' imaginations: in many cases, they were distortions of 'reality' which owed their existence to the creativity of the painter or sculptor. *Tableaux vivants* were simulacra of simulacra,

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[9] The Living Pictures', in *The New Review*, 2.11 (1894), pp. 461-70 (p. 464).
[10] Jean Baudrillard, 'Simulacra and Simulations', in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), pp. 166-84 (pp. 166-70).
[11] Baudrillard argued, for example, that the 'simulation' encompassed by Disneyland was presented as 'imaginary' in order to make Americans believe that the 'reality' from which it derived – Los Angeles – was 'real', when in fact it was anything but. See Baudrillard, 'Simulacra and Simulations', p. 172.

and performers founded their immobile configurations upon artworks which were themselves constructions or reinterpretations of 'real' life. Baudrillard may well have condemned *tableaux vivants* for the manner in which they (mis)led spectators into viewing the simulacra instantiated as 'originals', when these too were mere creative distortions.

In Walter Benjamin's view, the dislocated nature of reproductions (separated as they were from the unique circumstances of conception) meant that reproductions lacked an essential 'aura'. For Benjamin, the 'age of mechanical reproduction' was characterised by the detachment of reproduced objects from the 'domain of tradition'. In photography and other forms of nineteenth- and twentieth-century reproduction, a plurality of copies substituted the 'unique existence' of the original work of art. Through the act of reproduction, the original context for the work of art was misplaced, and the work's essential authenticity was thereby conceded.[12]

Certainly there was a fundamental distinction between 'original' artworks and *tableaux* 'reproductions', as the employment of living (though immobilised) men and women to represent painted or marble figures ensured that the character of the *tableaux vivants* was somewhat different from that of the paintings or sculptures from which inspiration had derived. However, *tableaux vivants* did not aim for reproductive exactitude in the same way that photographs did. *Tableaux vivants* were reinterpretations rather than reproductions, and performers rarely attempted to offer precise facsimiles of paintings or sculptures.[13] *Tableaux* performers worked to convey a 'sense' or 'feel' of Antiquity – or, in the case of imperial exhibitions and anthropological photographs, a 'sense' of 'native' customs and lifestyles. Though 'authentic', *tableaux vivants* were not necessarily 'accurate'. For many spectators, this sense was enough to lend them a feeling of having been 'transported', whether to 'Antiquity' or to the indiscriminate 'native' village of the imperial imagination.

Contemporary accounts indicate that the 'reproductions' staged in *tableaux* performances tended to be both imaginative and stimulating, with spectators engaged in the process of 'restoring' or 'completing' the representations in their minds. These

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[12] Presumably Benjamin was referring to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as this is when the medium of photography emerged as an important form of 'reproduction'. Benjamin's essay was originally published in 1936. See Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 211-44 (pp. 214-5).

[13] As Yopie Prins has pointed out, many of the reconstructions of Antique culture exhibited in the long nineteenth century – including panoramas and dramatic productions – appealed to the popular imagination 'as an experience of history in quotation marks, as "authentic" rather than authentic.' See Prins, 'Classics for Victorians: Response', in *Victorian Studies*, 52.1 (Autumn 2009), 52-62 (55).

accounts – taken alongside evidence of the continued popularity of the *tableaux* medium – lend little credence to Benjamin's thesis that reproductions were necessarily 'mechanical'. On the contrary, it seems that *tableaux vivants* (or, perhaps more accurately, the immobilised men and women to which the *tableaux* owed their realisation) projected a particularly engaging and in some cases indefinable sense of 'aura'. Recognising original or surprising elements in *tableaux* performances, many spectators identified the *tableaux* medium and its proponents as not simply imitative but as independently creative. The *tableaux* medium serves therefore to challenge Benjamin's claim for the inadequacy of works of 'reproduction', standing as an important and previously neglected instance of imaginative 'reinterpretation' in the realm of long nineteenth-century popular culture.

The first chapter of this thesis journeys to Naples, as this was the city in which British-born Emma Hamilton performed her attitudes for artists, politicians, scholars and Grand Tourists. Aside from this, however, the thesis focuses upon *tableaux* performances in London (whether delivered by British or foreign-born performers), or upon projects which stemmed from London (such as Thomas Henry Huxley's scheme for the production of anthropological photographs which, it was hoped, would further the research of the Ethnological Society of London). Regional and international performances are introduced only for the purposes of comparison, or because the material pertaining to a particular performer or amusement venue offers unique insight into the *tableaux* medium. For example, the thesis refers in the fourth chapter to records held by the Harvard Theatre Collection concerning the Brighton Aquarium, and in particular to a series of contracts which were drawn up between variety performers and the music hall's management in the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s. These are amongst the only surviving sources which indicate the wages paid to *tableaux* acts. By comparing the nature of *tableaux* performers' contracts with those of other variety performers, it is possible to draw conclusions regarding the relative value and appeal of *tableaux vivants* in the latter years of the nineteenth century.

The metropolitan focus of the thesis is somewhat regrettable as, in the course of my research, I have uncovered a wealth of material relating to *tableaux* troupes and performers based in various cities and countries, and it would be interesting to chart the movements of these acts as they toured the entertainment venues of Europe, America and Australia. However, the adoption of a case-study method will permit a much closer focus upon the metropolitan venues at which the *tableaux* featured. Throughout the thesis, it will be possible to scrutinise the relationship between the *tableaux* performance, the

character of the venue and the nature of critics' responses. Had the focus of the thesis been split between a number of cities or countries, it would have been impossible to track the evolution of spectators' responses to the *tableaux* medium with any degree of detail.

In the article 'Edward Kilanyi and American Tableaux Vivants' (1975), Jack W. McCullough made use of a case-study method. For McCullough, this involved charting the movements of a single *tableaux* troupe: namely, the troupe managed by Hungarian-born impresario Edward Kilanyi. By focusing upon just one exponent of the *tableaux* medium, McCullough was able to examine the act and its reception in great detail. He was also able to make a number of general comments regarding *tableaux vivants* as a form of popular amusement. For example, McCullough used the objections raised by Kilanyi's detractors as a means by which to discuss the various, often interlinked campaigns mounted against the *tableaux* on both sides of the Atlantic.[14] Similarly, this thesis aims to use London as the lens through which to evaluate the significance of, and response to, the *tableaux* medium more broadly. Many of the *tableaux* troupes which toured Europe, North America, Australia, or indeed the British provinces seem at some point to have exhibited their acts in London. London *tableaux* performances may be considered indicative, to some extent, of *tableaux* performances staged across these three continents in the long nineteenth century.

With London representing the geographical focus, it will be possible to consider a great number and variety of metropolitan venues – or, for the purposes of this thesis, sites of Antique reception – in the course of the thesis, including circuses, pleasure gardens, public houses, exhibition halls, variety theatres, music halls, museums and art galleries. The two latter spaces have been studied in the context of Antique reception in great detail. Ian Jenkins' *Archaeologists and Aesthetes in the Sculpture Galleries of the British Museum 1800-1939* (1992) charts the growth of the British Museum's sculpture collections, focusing upon the ways in which a desire to map the 'Progress of Civilisation' from Antiquity to modernity shaped the Museum's acquisition and arrangement policies.[15] Susan P. Casteras and Colleen Denney's edited volume *The Grosvenor Gallery: A Palace of Art in Victorian England* (1996) explores the history of the Grosvenor Gallery (a Bond-Street exhibition space open from 1877 to 1890), noting the Gallery's frequent exhibition of classicising paintings by Lawrence Alma-Tadema

[14] Jack W. McCullough, 'Edward Kilanyi and American Tableaux Vivants', in *Theatre Survey*, 16 (1975), 25-41.
[15] Ian Jenkins, *Archaeologists and Aesthetes in the Sculpture Galleries of the British Museum 1800-1939* (London: British Museum Press, 1992).

and Edward Burne-Jones.[16] Works by Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny (1981), Donna Kurtz (2000) and Viccy Coltman (2009) have traced the history of classical collecting in Europe, and Stephanie Moser's *Wondrous Curiosities: Ancient Egypt at the British Museum* (2006) offers a case study in the reception of ancient Egypt at the British Museum.[17] The Grand Tour – another important 'site' of Antique reception – has also been well studied. Works by Edward Chaney (1998), Chloe Chard (1999) and Rosemary Sweet (2012) have considered the ways in which artists, antiquarians and aristocrats encountered Antiquity whilst undertaking the Continental trip customary for young, upper-class British men.[18]

Recent work in Reception Studies has begun to supplement this focus upon 'elite' sites of Reception with research into other, more 'popular' arenas that worked to disseminate an impression of Antiquity, and it is to this area of Reception Studies which this thesis aims to contribute.[19] In *Greece and Rome at the Crystal Palace: Classical Sculpture and Modern Britain, 1854-1936* (2015), Kate Nichols argues that men and women from various classes encountered the material remnants of Antiquity in various sites or spaces in the mid nineteenth century. The Victorians were able to engage with the Antique past not only through theatrical productions and literary works (largely the preserve of the 'elites'), but also through forms of amusement accessible to 'popular' audiences, such as the Greek and Roman Courts at the Crystal Palace. Drawing upon diary entries, pamphlets and personal letters, Nichols suggests that the displays were conceived as a means of furthering curiosity and knowledge about ancient history. However, the representation and reception of Greece and Rome at the Crystal Palace ought, Nichols argues, to be understood as a 'two-way conversation'. Antiquity did not

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[16] Susan P. Casteras and Colleen Denney, eds., *The Grosvenor Gallery: A Palace of Art in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

[17] Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); Donna Kurtz, *The Reception of Classical Art: An Oxford Story of Plaster Casts from the Antique* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 2000); Viccy Coltman, *Classical Sculpture and the Culture of Collecting in Britain Since 1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Stephanie Moser, *Wondrous Curiosities: Ancient Egypt at the British Museum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). Works by Eileen Hooper-Greenhill and Sharon MacDonald have acknowledged the importance of museums in the shaping of knowledge. See Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1992); Macdonald, *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture* (London: Routledge, 1998)

[18] Edward Chaney, *The Evolution of the Grand Tour* (London: Frank Cass, 1998); Chloe Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour: Travel Writing and Imaginative Geography, 1600-1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Rosemary Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour: The British in Italy, c. 1690-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[19] Edmund Richardson has noted the pervasiveness of a classical 'enchantment' across Victorian society. For Richardson, classicism was recalled by 'scholar and murderer, bankrupt and aristocrat'. The 'enchantment of the classical' was such that 'there was no part of life which…did not become bound up with the pursuit of the ancient world.' See Richardson, *Classical Victorians: Scholars, Scoundrels and Generals in Pursuit of Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

simply 'influence' passive spectators, and nor did spectators necessarily comprehend the displays in the manner which organisers had hoped.[20] Nichols' sources indicate that upper-, middle- and working-class men and women formed opinions about the artworks and archaeological remnants on display at the Palace, however ill-informed these opinions might have been. Antiquity was a topic of debate not only in universities, public schools and country houses, but at venues of 'popular' amusement.

Museums, art galleries and the Grand Tour – collectively, 'elite' sites of Antique reception – have therefore been examined in some detail, and Nichols has supplemented a substantial body of research relating to nineteenth-century imperial exhibitions with a renewed focus upon the ways in which 'popular' visitors encountered remnants of the ancient Greek and Roman empires at Sydenham's Crystal Palace.[21] However, circuses, pleasure gardens, exhibition halls, public houses, variety theatres and music halls have been little scrutinised for the manner in which Antiquity was exhibited to spectators therein. This thesis goes some way towards correcting this deficiency, surveying the *tableaux* performances organised at venues which encompassed a wide social span.

In the long nineteenth century, there were a great many more of these 'popular' spaces of entertainment than there were museums and art galleries. Warwick Wroth's *The London Pleasure Gardens* (first published in 1896) charted the fortunes of over sixty pleasure gardens or tea-rooms located within or just outside the metropolis, whilst Peter Bailey has estimated that, by 1870, there were thirty-one music halls in London (and over three-hundred in the rest of Britain).[22] Many of the rather ephemeral public houses and music halls have left no archival record, although it is clear that nineteenth-century London abounded with these popular entertainment venues. Many of the venues set admission and alcohol prices low enough to entice working-class men and women, and changing work regulations (including, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the introduction of Saturday half-holidays and of nationwide patterns for the working week) allowed increased opportunity for 'leisure time'.[23] Collectively, then, the London pleasure gardens, public houses, variety theatres and music halls welcomed far greater numbers

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[20] There was certainly ample scope for influencing contemporaries' conceptions of the ancient past, as the Sydenham venue welcomed over 3.1 million visitors on an annual basis, many of whom hailed from the working class. See Kate Nichols, *Greece and Rome at the Crystal Palace: Classical Sculpture and Modern Britain, 1854-1936* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 5.

[21] For imperial exhibitions, see Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The* Expositions Universelles*, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); Peter H. Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

[22] Peter Bailey, *Music Hall: The Business of Pleasure* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986); Warwick Wroth, *The London Pleasure Gardens of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1979).

[23] Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), pp. 143-7.

than did museums and art galleries. Through *tableaux* performances, Antiquity reached many men, women and children for whom a visit to the museum or art gallery was unlikely (perhaps even impossible, given the strict entry regulations in place at the British Museum for much of the long nineteenth century, and the limited opening hours at all other London museums). Such 'popular' spaces of entertainment are therefore recognised in this thesis as important sites of Antique reception.

Historians working in the field of Victorian Studies have made a number of important contributions to Reception Studies. Vanessa Brand's *The Study of the Past in the Victorian Age* (1998) and Billie Melman's *The Culture of History: English Uses of the Past 1800-1953* (2006) have examined the ways in which the Victorians engaged with history in a broad sense, whilst Richard Jenkyns' *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (1980) and G.W. Clarke's edited volume *Rediscovering Hellenism: The Hellenic Inheritance and the English Imagination* (1989) focused specifically upon the Victorians' relationship with the Antique past.[24] Examining the ways in which an understanding of Antiquity impacted upon nineteenth-century poetry, novel-writing and classicising art, Jenkyns indicated that comparisons between the British and ancient Greek and Roman empires became 'inescapable' after 1850, as the increasingly 'anxious' mood of the *fin de siècle* encouraged contemporaries to draw parallels between imperial Britain and Classical Antiquity.[25] Essays in Clarke's volume also explored the impact of the Hellenistic ideal upon various aspects of Victorian culture, including painting, public school education and cast-collecting. For both Jenkyns and Clarke, Hellenism represented a pervasive force in nineteenth-century Britain. Conceptions of the ancient heritage (especially Greek) helped to define the Victorians' own self-image, with many contemporaries identifying themselves as descendants of the Hellenic age.[26]

Art historians have contributed to the study of Antique reception by examining artistic renderings of classical subjects. Much attention has focused upon the manner in which the nude figure was represented by classicising painters in the nineteenth century, with historians frequently indicating that classicism served as a form of justification for

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[24] Vanessa Brand, ed. *The Study of the Past in the Victorian Age* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1998); Billie Melman, *The Culture of History: English Uses of the Past 1800-1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980); G.W. Clarke, ed., *Rediscovering Hellenism: The Hellenic Inheritance and the English Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). See also Frank Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

[25] Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*, p. 335.

[26] This tendency was particularly prevalent among poets; Percy Bysshe Shelley claimed 'We are all Greeks', whilst Algernon Charles Swinburne referred to ancient Greece as the 'mother country of thought and art and action.' See Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*, p. 15.

the depiction of the nude (especially female) body. For example, Alison Smith's essay 'Nature Transformed: Leighton, the Nude and the Model' (included in Tim Barringer and Elizabeth Prettejohn's 1999 volume *Frederic Leighton: Antiquity, Renaissance, Modernity*) indicates that Frederick Leighton attempted to introduce 'a more elevated concept of high art' to the English exhibition scene. Leighton evoked classical themes as a means by which to align his paintings with an established, respected tradition of artistic production, and to thereby avoid censure on the grounds of indecency. According to Smith, Leighton's project proved to be a great success. The painter came increasingly to be identified with such 'masters' of Antiquity as Apelles and Praxiteles, both of whom were judged to have elevated the depiction of the nude above baseness, and to have approximated the 'ideal' in their representations of the female form.[27]

Lynda Nead indicates in *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality* (1992) that the female body has long been situated on the border between art and obscenity, though nineteenth-century artists were able to lend depictions of the female body respectability through an evocation of the Antique. Classical forms and motifs performed 'a kind of magical regulation of the female body, containing it and momentarily repairing the orifices and tears'. For Nead, 'Antiquity' lent artworks prestige, definition and order, effectively working to conceal any aspects which might be interpreted as 'obscene'.[28]

Artistic interpretations of classical themes and subjects certainly helped to familiarise contemporaries with the Antique past, although Smith and Nead suggest that edification was not the sole objective of Victorian classicising painters. Wishing to depict the female body in nude or erotic configurations, artists aligned their paintings with Antique precedents: Antiquity worked to circumvent contemporaries' condemnation of artworks which might otherwise have been considered 'obscene'. As Nead points out, however, Antiquity was only required to 'shore up' representations of female nudity due to the particular values (of, for example, purity and respectability) which contemporaries aligned with 'ideal' femininity. If feminists could have reclaimed the female body as a site of potential eroticism, artists would not have needed to shroud their depictions of female nudity behind the enabling cloak of Antiquity.[29]

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[27] For Smith, this technique rendered Leighton's works 'pure' yet somewhat 'soulless'. See Alison Smith, 'Nature Transformed: Leighton, the Nude and the Model', in *Frederic Leighton: Antiquity, Renaissance, Modernity*, ed. Tim Barringer and Elizabeth Prettejohn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 19-48 (pp. 22-5).
[28] Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 7.
[29] Nead, *The Female Nude*, p. 103, 107.

Antiquity figured in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century film as prominently as it did in nineteenth-century painting, and film historians have discussed the manner in which Antiquity was evoked by early filmmakers in some detail. In *Projecting the Past: Ancient Rome, Cinema and History* (1997), Maria Wyke has shown that early twentieth-century cinema was crucial to the formation and dissemination of a 'historical consciousness' of ancient Rome. Cinema, Wyke suggests, worked alongside and in opposition to other routes of access to Antiquity (including monuments and literary texts), resurrecting a past which was often intimately connected with present concerns.[30] Filmmakers deployed Antiquity for various reasons: Roman history provided the film industry with a narrative of 'cultural prestige'; with a biography that worked to shape or enhance the 'public personae' of cinema's early stars; and with a justification for eroticism, the spectacle of the female body and the presentation of transgressive female sexuality.[31] In *Ancient Greece in Film and Popular Culture* (2006), Gideon Nisbet focused on representations of Hercules in film, suggesting that Hercules has often functioned as an exemplar of 'high camp' and 'body beautiful' forms of masculinity.[32] Finally, Michael Williams' *Film Stardom, Myth and Classicism: The Rise of Hollywood's Gods* (2013) has shown that classicism was instrumental in the burgeoning film industry's strategy for self-representation.[33]

Historians have therefore emphasised the diverse nature of contemporaries' engagements with the past, pointing out that Antiquity was invoked with specific – though contrasting – purposes. As Miriam Leonard and Yopie Prins noted in the foreword to a special issue of the journal *Cultural Critique* devoted to classical receptions, contemporaries' evocations of Antiquity did not simply reflect a 'regressive, nostalgic backward gaze', but very often amounted to 'a progressive and active mobilisation of the past in the present.'[34] Artists, filmmakers and (as this thesis aims to demonstrate) popular entertainment impresarios did not invoke Antiquity merely for the purposes of a kind of indulgent wistfulness. Rather, they made allusion to the Antique past as a means by which to situate contemporary representations and cultural forms within a broader historical framework, and to lend these representations authority and prestige.

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[30] Maria Wyke, *Projecting the Past: Ancient Rome, Cinema and History* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 1-3.
[31] Wyke, *Projecting the Past*, pp. 86-9.
[32] Gideon Nisbet, *Ancient Greece in Film and Popular Culture* (Exeter: Bristol Phoenix Press, 2006), p. 45.
[33] Williams notes, for example, that the classical world was conducive to representations of heroism in film around the time of the First World War. See Michael Williams, *Film Stardom, Myth and Classicism: The Rise of Hollywood's Gods* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 2, 43.
[34] Miriam Leonard and Yopie Prins, 'Foreword: Classical Reception and the Political', in *Cultural Critique*, 74 (Winter 2010), 1-13 (1).

*Tableaux* performers and managers evoked Antiquity for a number of different reasons. Firstly, an alignment with the classical tradition lent performances respectability and credibility; facing condemnation from social purists, entertainment impresarios sought to justify the presentation of 'nude' bodies through the citation of Antique artworks. By alluding to classical culture, performers and managers aligned the *tableaux* medium with the 'Rational Recreation' movement, indicating that performances conveyed 'High Art' to members of the working-class. Secondly, the pursuit of a classical education had become fashionable among eighteenth- and nineteenth-century elites, and *tableaux* performances responded to this new fashion through the reinterpretation of ancient sculptures. The prestige with which Antiquity had come to be associated appealed to working- and lower-middle-class spectators, too, many of whom would have enjoyed the sense of 'distinction' which accompanied the recognition of 'elite' cultural forms (such as Antique figures and artworks). Performers and managers no doubt had financial incentives in mind, as they capitalised upon this contemporary enthusiasm. Finally, the possibility that political or nationalistic aims underpinned the performances ought not to be overlooked. *Tableaux* featuring both British and 'foreign' performers were conceived in the context of heightened imperial anxiety, and seem to have been intended to illustrate the relative superiority or inferiority of the figures or cultures represented on the stage.

*Tableaux* performers and managers did not necessarily exploit Antiquity as a convenient 'alibi' for the exhibition of the 'nude' body. Whilst this thesis will follow Nead in acknowledging Antiquity as a useful means by which performers and directors 'shored up' representations of 'nude' bodies, bringing the *tableaux* in line with expectations which governed the staging of 'rational' entertainments, it will lend greater focus to the other, much more longstanding functions which 'Antiquity' fulfilled in *tableaux* performances. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, performers and directors evoked the purity and integrity of the Antique as part of a defensive strategy against a new generation of social purists; however, before this point the *tableaux* had already enjoyed a lengthy association with Antiquity, performers having drawn upon Antique motifs in a number of active (not reactive) ways. Antiquity was not merely an alibi according to which entertainment impresarios justified *tableaux* performances: it was integral to the very conception and development of the *tableaux* medium.

For many, Antique art represented an 'ideal' by virtue of its apparent artlessness: the masters of ancient painting, sculpture and architecture were thought to have produced unmediated, universal representations of 'Nature'. Yet, in the long nineteenth century

Antiquity was often identified as an 'elite' source of 'distinction'. Its achievements could only be appreciated by those educated in the 'Classics', and could certainly only be approximated by a nation which was fully 'civilised'. Antiquity was the birthright and inheritance of Britain precisely because Britain and the ancient empires had in common certain advantages and achievements in which 'uncivilised' nations or cultures were deficient. *Tableaux* performances may for some have exemplified the unmediated, universal qualities of the Antique, and for others its distinction and exclusivity.

Historians have traditionally focused upon fairly compressed time periods in their own studies of Victorian popular culture. For example, Peter Bailey's *Leisure and Class in Victorian England* (1978) and Hugh Cunningham's *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution* (1980) – both foundational texts in the field of social history – concentrated upon various forms of recreation available in Victorian England. Neither strayed far into the eighteenth or twentieth centuries, preferring instead to survey the new or transformed leisure patterns of the nineteenth century. Cunningham justified his decision to focus upon the period 1780 to 1880 by claiming that this century set the standards for 'leisure' in Britain's advanced capitalist society, with the Industrial Revolution impacting as much upon the practices of leisure as it did upon those of labour.[35] Bailey focused upon an even shorter time period (1830 to 1885), noting that leisure assumed different forms and meanings in his chosen era. The mid nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of innovative technologies of entertainment. Consumers were free – perhaps for the first time – to patronise new forms of amusement within clearly demarcated hours of freedom, as Britons enjoyed increasingly compartmentalised work/leisure time.[36]

In their studies of the *tableaux* medium, Brenda Assael and Susan Pennybacker focused upon the 1890s, the period during which the most indignant and sustained exception was taken to the *tableaux*. Assael examined the campaign mounted by the National Vigilance Association in the article 'Art or Indecency? Tableaux Vivants on the London Stage and the Failure of Late Victorian Moral Reform' (2006). Pennybacker's *A Vision for London 1889-1914: Labour, Everyday Life and the LCC Experiment* (1995) concentrated upon the responses of the London County Council to social purists' attempts to have the *tableaux* prohibited. As such, their studies made extensive use of the London County Council records held at the London Metropolitan Archives, as these contain the testimonies of social purists who appeared at the Theatres and Music Halls Committee's

[35] Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, p. 14.
[36] Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885* (London: Routledge, 1978), pp. 3-4.

licensing sessions to object to the renewal of music hall licenses.[37] Studies by Assael and Pennybacker therefore offer valuable insight into 'Naughty Nineties' culture and into 'official' responses to the perceived loosening of moral restraint in the sphere of popular entertainment. However, this focus upon just one decade tends to give the impression that the *tableaux* produced in the *fin de siècle* represented an aberration. In fact, there was nothing fundamentally different about late nineteenth-century *tableaux* performances: it was the manner in which the medium was received which shifted. This thesis suggests that it is only possible to understand the reasons for this shift by undertaking a more comprehensive, longitudinal study of the *tableaux*.

The thesis therefore emphasises continuity across the Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian periods in terms of both the format and style of *tableaux* performances. Here, Altick's *The Shows of London* provides a model for this study. Altick surveyed exhibitions put on in London between 1600 and 1862, arguing that this rather unconventional timespan, beginning in the 'afterglow of the Middle Ages' and ending in the decade following the Great Exhibition of 1851, allowed him to reveal 'the unfolding story of popular taste itself'.[38] The thesis draws inspiration from the work of Altick, exploring the ways in which the 'popular taste' for the Antique became manifest in one, enduring medium of entertainment. Situated within the long nineteenth century, the thesis will chart the development of the *tableaux* phenomenon from its origins to the point at which the medium (in its purest form) began to lose its grip upon the popular imagination. The thesis will suggest that, despite the myriad political, economic and cultural changes that swept Britain, the appeal of *tableaux vivants* endured from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century.

In his seminal study of modern-era popular amusement, Altick was concerned to identify relationships and continuities between various forms of entertainment. For example, in the chapter 'The Waxen and the Fleshly' Altick examined mid nineteenth-century *tableaux* performances alongside waxwork exhibitions and anatomical displays, indicating that these three forms together represented a sub-division of Victorian entertainment.[39] This thesis acknowledges concurrences between various forms of contemporary amusement, and reflects upon some of the links between *tableaux vivants*

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[37] Brenda Assael, 'Art or Indecency? Tableaux Vivants on the London Stage and the Failure of Late Victorian Reform', in *Journal of British Studies*, 45.4 (October 2006), 744-58; Susan Pennybacker, 'The Appetite for Managing Other People's Lives,' in *A Vision for London 1889-1914: Labour, Everyday Life and the LCC Experiment* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995), pp. 158-240.
[38] Altick, *The Shows of London*, p. 3.
[39] See 'The Waxen and the Fleshly', in Altick, *The Shows of London*, pp. 332-49.

and two closely allied forms of representation: painting and photography. These two forms are lent particular emphasis partly because, in some cases, spectators encountered Antiquity through a thrice-removed process of mediation involving painting, *tableaux vivants* and photography: an 'original' sense or notion of Antiquity was captured by the painter or sculptor; this impression was reinterpreted by the *tableaux* performer; and an image of the *tableaux* performance was captured for posterity through photography. Photographers were also responsible for the creation of their own *tableaux vivants*, as they captured images of those 'natives' arranged for the purposes of anthropological research. A lack of space dictates that the thesis does not explore affiliations between the *tableaux* and other forms of long nineteenth-century entertainment.

This thesis is divided into four chapters which, taken as a whole, elucidate the manner in which *tableaux* performances revived, reimagined or offered a counterpoint to 'Antiquity' for audiences in the long nineteenth century. The imposition of a (loosely) chronological chapter structure should not be taken to indicate that the *tableaux* medium developed in strictly demarcated 'periods' or 'stages'. Nor should it be presumed that the performances discussed in the fourth chapter of the thesis represented the culmination of a process of evolution and continual improvement. Rather, the chronological structure is employed as a means of highlighting the divergent ways in which proponents of the medium engaged with Antiquity, bringing changes in the understanding and interpretation of the classical past to bear upon *tableaux* performances. Some performers and directors were influenced by earlier proponents of the medium, whilst others introduced original performance elements, drawing upon untested mythological and artistic sources or making use of lighting and stage technology to 'frame' performances in new ways.

The first chapter of the thesis focuses upon early manifestations of the *tableaux* medium. In contrast to studies by Brenda Assael, David Huxley and Martin Meisel – all of which emphasise Hamilton's role as originator of the *tableaux vivants* – this chapter suggests that earlier precedents might be sought for the *tableaux*.[40] The 'postures' performed by young women (often prostitutes) at Covent Garden's Rose Tavern were, like Hamilton's attitudes, based upon the premises of voyeurism and exhibitionism; it is possible that Hamilton viewed postures during her time in London, and drew upon the entertainment in her conception of the attitudes.

[40] Assael, 'Art or Indecency?', 746; David Huxley, 'Music Hall Art: La Milo, Nudity and the Pose Plastique 1905-1915', in *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 11.3 (2013), 218-36 (220); Martin Meisel, *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 47.

It was in Hamilton's attitude performances that the medium truly acquired its 'Antique' character. Hamilton moved through poses inspired by mythological figures and classical sculptures, holding each attitude just long enough for spectators to determine the source of the pose before she shifted her stance and expression to represent another figure or artwork. Hamilton seems to have encouraged spectators to identify the inspiration or character of her attitudes verbally. By virtue of this charade-like arrangement, spectators were permitted to demonstrate their knowledge of the 'Classics', and to thereby display what sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has termed 'cultural capital'.[41]

Following Emma Hamilton's lead, a number of female society figures (including Henriette Hendel-Schütz and Elise Bürger) performed versions of the attitudes in German salon gatherings. However, the most prolific performer of *tableaux vivants* in the first half of the nineteenth century was Andrew Ducrow, an equestrianist associated for much of his career with Astley's Amphitheatre. Ducrow penned and starred in *Raphael's Dream*, a dramatic piece in which Ducrow impersonated, in *tableaux* form, various mythological figures, whilst a narrator described the praiseworthy attributes of each. *Raphael's Dream* worked to abridge the Classics, facilitating broader access to ancient and mythological works. Whereas Hamilton's performances had permitted elite spectators to parade their knowledge to like-minded Classical enthusiasts, Ducrow's served to instill in spectators a rudimentary and rather diluted understanding of the major Classical texts, catering to those members of the working and lower-middle classes whose social and economic circumstances had impeded the prior cultivation of a 'Classical' education. The Antique, which had in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries been the near-exclusive preserve of the aristocratic connoisseur, was made accessible by virtue of Ducrow's performances. At this point, it appealed to a lower class of audience partly because it retained its status as an 'elite' source of 'distinction'.

The second chapter will therefore examine Ducrow's *tableaux* performances of the 1820s and 1830s, as well as the *tableaux* organised by such impresarios and troupe leaders as Renton Nicholson, Madame Warton and 'Professor' Keller. It will consider these *tableaux* performances alongside other forms of classicising amusement available in the first half of the nineteenth century, arguing that these amusements helped to consolidate the 'Rational Recreation' project by disseminating 'useful' knowledge to the circus- and theatre-going public. Further, the chapter will examine the manner in which Antiquity was presented to visitors at the British Museum, an 'elite' site of Antique

[41] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1984).

reception which exhibited several of the artworks from which Ducrow derived inspiration. It will indicate that campaigns for broader public access to the Museum had at their root a desire to inculcate the values and aesthetic principles of the scholarly elite into the working and lower-middle classes. The *tableaux* medium may well have represented an untapped resource for those politicians and cultural commentators wishing to 'improve' the 'uneducated' masses.

In the third chapter, focus shifts towards presentations of the 'Other', as the thesis seeks to illustrate the disparity between contemporary depictions of 'white' and of 'foreign' figures. Through examination of the *tableaux vivants* exhibited to spectators in public performances, imperial exhibitions and anthropological photographs, the chapter indicates that the 'Other' represented a counterpoint to the 'civilisation' apparently embodied by Western Europeans.[42] In nineteenth-century Britain, conceptions of modern civilisation owed a considerable debt to Antiquity, with many contemporaries identifying themselves as descendants of ancient Greece and/or Rome. Representing the antithesis of modernity, the 'Other' was entirely disassociated from any heritage or history, Antique or otherwise. I will argue that the *tableaux* medium helped to sustain this perception of the 'Other', as performances reinforced the notion that foreign peoples were both rootless and fundamentally distinct from white, Western Europeans.

In this chapter, the 'natives' photographed by anthropologists and displayed at imperial exhibitions during the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s are referred to as 'performers'. The epithet 'performer' applies, this thesis suggests, to the 'native' as readily as it does to the *tableaux* artiste. Both 'natives' and *tableaux* artistes assumed 'roles', appearing in such a manner that they and their bodies were viewed by a section of the public (the 'natives' having, in many cases, been coerced into assuming these roles). Additionally, the production of anthropological photographs required 'natives' to hold their poses for an extended period of time. Though advances had been made in reducing photographic exposure time by Hippolyte Bayard and others, in the mid nineteenth century subjects were still obliged to pose for several minutes, in order that the 'image' might be captured for posterity.[43] 'Native' men and women 'performed' extended immobility, posing whilst the camera worked to doubly-freeze the *tableau vivant*, and to extend the life of the image beyond the immediate moment.

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[42] Though anthropological photographs would have been circulated almost exclusively amongst 'men of science', imperial exhibitions were accessible to diverse audiences: the imperial exhibition therefore represents another space for the 'popular' engagement with Antiquity.

[43] See John Hannavy, ed., *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 122.

The third chapter will therefore discuss *tableaux vivants*, imperial exhibitions and anthropological photographs which exhibited 'Other' peoples, as it aims to expose the complicated and often conflicted manner in which contemporaries defined 'decency' and 'civilisation'. This discussion will lay the foundations for the fourth chapter of the thesis, which focuses upon *tableaux vivants* produced in the *fin de siècle* period. At this time, the arguments made by *tableaux* detractors often centred upon the probable loss of performers' dignity as they posed 'nude' on the stage, and upon the broader threat which the *tableaux* apparently posed to Britain's national and imperial prestige. Taken together, chapters three and four indicate the discrepancy between attitudes towards the public presentation of the white body, and those towards the public presentation of the foreign or Other body. Symbolising the purity and racial strength of the British nation, the white body – especially female – was thought to require concealment and protection. The foreign body represented little more than a scientific specimen; as such, it could be unproblematically exposed to the scrutiny of the British entertainment public.

Late nineteenth-century *tableaux* performances attracted an unprecedented amount of disapprobation, with social purists (self-appointed guardians of 'decency') disputing the link between the *tableaux* and 'High Art'. However, the performances themselves were not dissimilar from those produced earlier in the long nineteenth century. Certainly the element of 'nudity' was not unusual, as a number of mid-century *tableaux* performers had also worn skin-coloured body stockings in order to lend the impression of bare skin. The thesis is therefore critical of the approach taken by Kirsten Gram Holmström in the monograph *Monodrama, Attitudes, Tableaux Vivants* (1967) and by Karin A. Wurst in the chapter 'Spellbinding: The Body as Art' (2002). Both Holmström and Wurst focused in their studies upon late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century manifestations of the *tableaux* medium, and both dismissed late nineteenth-century *tableaux* performances as distinct and valueless forms of entertainment.[44] Contrary to Wurst's claim that the 'aesthetic experiment' of the attitudes was proven by later *tableaux* interpretations to have failed, this thesis suggests that *fin de siècle* performances were remarkably similar in character to those produced in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. It argues, too, that Holmström's identification of a diminution in the 'artistic' character of the *tableaux* medium is exaggerated.

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[44] Kirsten Gram Holmström, *Monodrama, Attitudes, Tableaux Vivants: Studies on Some Trends of Theatrical Fashion, 1770-1815* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1967), p. 242; Karin A. Wurst, 'Spellbinding: The Body as Art/Art as Body in the Cultural Practice of Attitüden', in *Lessing Yearbook XXXIII*, ed. Herbert Rowland and Richard Schade (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2002), pp. 151-81 (p. 165).

The thesis makes use of a range of primary sources, though the availability of resources varies according to the time period and the nature of the performances. Documents relating to Georgian-era *tableaux* performances are extremely sparse. This is partly due to the private nature of the medium in this period; *tableaux* performances were organised for the amusement of friends and family members, and advertisements were therefore unnecessary. However, numerous accounts of Emma Hamilton's attitudes have survived. Hamilton's act was viewed by scholars, antiquarians, artists and Grand Tourists, many of whom were eager to record their impressions of Hamilton's attitude performances and of Hamilton herself, a woman who had attained a certain degree of 'celebrity' by the turn of the nineteenth century.[45] These accounts were often detailed and reflective, although their authors struggled to comprehend the unique and surprising appeal of Hamilton's classicising performances: the experience of viewing *tableaux vivants* seems to have been difficult to put into words.

Some primary source material relating to nineteenth-century circus, pleasure garden and music hall *tableaux* performances has been preserved, although a great deal has inevitably been lost. The main repository for London-based *tableaux* performances is the Victoria and Albert Museum's Theatre and Performance Archives. This collection is formed of the archives of theatre enthusiasts, and reference to *tableaux* performances may infrequently be discovered amongst theatrical ephemera, newspaper cuttings, sketches and business papers. The Harvard Theatre Collection (HTC) in Houghton Library, founded by Harvard Professor and playwright George Pierce Baker in 1901, holds ephemera relating to over two-hundred British theatres, music halls and amusement halls. Amongst this extensive collection, it is possible to locate a (relatively small) number of playbills relating to those venues which exhibited *tableaux vivants* in the long nineteenth century. The Harvard Theatre Collection has been a particularly important archive for this thesis, as not only does it hold various private theatricals guidebooks (including Josephine Pollard's *Artistic Tableaux* and Sarah Annie Frost's *The Book of Tableaux and Shadow Pantomimes,* both of which contained instructions for the staging of domestic *tableaux* performances), but it holds a short pamphlet attributed to William Brent, *A Visit to the Walhalla*. This valuable pamphlet describes the exhibitions of Madame Warton, a little-researched performer whose mythological *tableaux* were staged at Leicester Square's disreputable Walhalla Theatre in the mid nineteenth century.

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[45] According to Rachel Cowgill and Hilary Poriss, there developed around Emma Hamilton a 'cult of celebrity': Hamilton was able to use her attitude performances to shape her own public reception. See Cowgill and Poriss, eds., *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. xxvii.

Local libraries and archives hold some relevant primary source material. The Minet Library in Lambeth was originally formed of a single personal collection of papers (that of philanthropist William Minet), although now encompasses a disparate collection of documents and ephemera relating to the boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark. The Minet Library's Vauxhall Gardens Collection consists of cuttings, bills, manuscript journals (listing performers, receipts and expenditure at the Gardens) and advertisements. *Tableaux* troupes and performers having appeared occasionally at the Gardens in the mid nineteenth century, it is possible to identify some relevant material within the Library's Vauxhall Gardens Collection. The Museum of London's Warwick Wroth Collection includes additional and unique material relating to Vauxhall Gardens. Clearly the possessor of a curatorial mindset, Wroth – a numismatist and Senior Keeper of Coins and Medals at the British Museum – accumulated a large number of posters, handbills and clippings as a means by which to satisfy his own interest in Vauxhall and the other London pleasure resorts. Finally, the Bishopsgate Institute holds a collection of photographs, sketches and playbills relating to former Bishopsgate entertainment venues. In most cases, a great volume of theatrical ephemera must be carefully sifted for allusions to *tableaux* performances. Only one repository – namely, the HTC – holds a folder dedicated exclusively to *tableaux vivants*.[46]

The views of journalists and cultural commentators who witnessed *tableaux* performances firsthand were recorded in entertainment industry newspapers such as *The Era* and *The Stage*. As the *tableaux* medium came under the scrutiny of social purity organisations in the late nineteenth century, a number of anti-*tableaux* tracts were published. For example, secretary of the National Vigilance Association William Coote described the group's sustained opposition to the medium in his fiercely moralistic *A Romance of Philanthropy* (1916). These tracts offer insight into the ways in which one indignant quarter of the public received the *tableaux*, although they cannot be relied upon to give an accurate representation of the medium: doubtless the campaigners made use of sensationalism and hyperbole in order to attract numbers to their cause. Of course, the entertainment impresarios and performers would have been correspondingly keen to exaggerate the respectability of the *tableaux*, the fortunes of their businesses depending in some part upon the continuation of the medium. This thesis is careful to present as balanced a view of the *tableaux* as possible. As such, it considers detractors' condemnations of the medium in conjunction with the views of those music hall

[46] The HTC holds a small 'Theatrical Miscellaneous' folder entitled 'Tableaux'. This folder contains playbills, programmes and cuttings relating to nineteenth-century British *tableaux* performances.

managers and performers who spoke out in defence of the *tableaux*.

The format of *tableaux* performances remained remarkably consistent, even as the venues of performance changed. The *tableaux* survived the demise of pleasure gardens and circuses, and continued to thrive in the new, purpose-built variety theatres and music halls which emerged after 1850. This thesis argues that long nineteenth-century *tableaux* performances were characterised – to a greater or lesser extent – by tendencies towards voyeurism, exhibitionism, expressionism and antiquarianism. Performances offered the spectator the opportunity to scrutinise the posed or photographed human body. Suspending his or her disbelief to conceive of performers as lifeless, the spectator placed him or herself in the position of the voyeur, examining the body of the performer whose own 'gaze' had apparently been disabled through the act of 'petrification'. Contemporary reports and social purity accounts presumed that the spectator's scrutiny was sexualised, although many spectators perhaps simply enjoyed the opportunity to view the unclothed human form (rarely seen in long nineteenth-century Britain), and to compare these bodies with their own. Exhibitionist tendencies also characterised *tableaux* performances, as performers used the medium to parade their classical knowledge, their proficiencies in the skills of stagecraft and their barely-clothed bodies. The use of precise bodily and facial expression helped performers to approximate the appearance of classical statuary or neoclassical paintings. Finally, performances helped to sustain the contemporary fashion for the study of Antiquity. These four elements – voyeurism, exhibitionism, expressionism and antiquarianism – form the basis of sections within the first chapter of this study, and inform discussions in the remainder of the thesis.

*Tableaux* performances provoked a range of spectator responses: different commentators responded to the medium with admiration, astonishment, confusion, disapproval and outrage. Many struggled to articulate their own impressions of the *tableaux*, so overwhelmed were they by the novelty and power of the performances. In their responses to the *tableaux*, spectators revealed (sometimes unwittingly) broader attitudes towards a range of social, cultural and political issues. For this reason, the *tableaux* medium offers a useful and as yet unexploited lens through which to view shifting responses to the body, gender and the 'Other' in 'modern' society and culture. Perhaps most importantly, the medium offers an almost unparalleled opportunity to examine a great many 'sites' of Antique reception in conjunction with one another, and to gain new insight into the ways in which contemporaries consumed, interpreted and harnessed 'the Antique' in the long nineteenth century.

## Chapter One: *Iphigenia* on the Grand Tour, 1780-1815

In 1788, German artist Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein painted Emma Hamilton in the guise of the ancient Greek mythological heroine Iphigenia. Recalling the occasion on which Hamilton had sat for him, Tischbein wrote in his diary:

> The face of Lady Hamilton remained always beautiful, as it was; yet with the slightest movement, say of her upper lip, she was able to express contempt which made her beauty fade away. I have painted the face of Iphigenia as faithfully as possible from hers… As I was painting Lord Hamilton came in and gave her a letter announcing the death of a friend. She was so taken by pain and grief that she burst into violent movements. But in sorrow, crying with her arms over her head, falling and lamenting over her friend, then over herself, all the Attitudes she took were for a painter well worth seeing.[1]

By 1788, Emma Hamilton was entertaining visitors to her husband William Hamilton's Neapolitan residence with her 'attitudes', in each performance adopting poses inspired by Antiquity. She also sat as a model for artists such as Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, Angelica Kauffman and Nathaniel Marchant, a role for which she had been prepared by several years' service as George Romney's muse in London. Tischbein's diary entry intimates a degree of overlap between Hamilton's roles as artist's muse and attitude performer. Hamilton's appeal as an artist's model lay in her ability to vary her expression (both facial and physical), just as her success as a performer of attitudes depended upon her effective embodiment of various characters or 'passions'. Tischbein even referred to Hamilton's spontaneous expressions of grief as 'Attitudes'; perhaps he had witnessed a performance of her Antique attitudes, and identified similarities between the staged and (apparently) unstaged performances. The connection between painting and the attitudes was to become even more explicit in later decades, as *tableaux* performers participated in living reconstructions of famous canvases. From the beginning, though, the attitudes were rooted in 'art', with their earliest protagonist borrowing for her performances a vocabulary of expression cultivated by many years' experience as an artist's model.

Perhaps prompted by Tischbein's decision to cast her in the role of Iphigenia, Emma Hamilton included the personation of this particular figure in her repertoire of attitudes. Hamilton's 'Iphigenia' attitude is depicted in Plate VII of *Drawings Faithfully Copied from Nature at Naples* (a collection of etchings by Tommaso Piroli, after sketches

[1] Quoted in Lori-Ann Touchette, 'Sir William Hamilton's 'Pantomime Mistress': Emma Hamilton and her Attitudes', in Clare Hornsby, ed., *The Impact of Italy: The Grand Tour and Beyond* (London: The British School at Rome, 2002), pp. 123-45 (p. 129).

made by Friedrich Rehberg in 1791) [Fig. 1.1]. This attitude was inspired by an episode from Euripides' play *Iphigenia in Aulis*.[2] Representing Iphigenia sitting in fearful contemplation, the attitude depicts the heroine in the moments before her father Agamemnon would attempt to sacrifice her to the goddess Artemis. In contrast, Tischbein's painting took inspiration from one of Euripides' later plays*, Iphigenia in Tauris*, as the painter represented Iphigenia alongside her brother Orestes [Fig. 1.2]. According to Euripides, Iphigenia had been saved from her father's attempted sacrifice to become a priestess, and hoped to uncover the truth behind a dream that had foretold Orestes' death.[3] Whilst sitting for Tischbein and, indeed, performing her 'Iphigenia' attitude, Hamilton would have arranged her features into an expression of fearful anguish; posing for both, she was required to convey a sense of the threat of imminent death. The effective performance of 'Iphigenia' – as Tischbein's muse, and in the context of the attitudes – therefore required at least cursory knowledge of Euripides' ancient tragedies.

Artists and playwrights frequently explored the exploits of Iphigenia in the long nineteenth century. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Iphigenia auf Tauris*, a reworking of the second of Euripides' 'Iphigenia' plays, was first performed in 1779; this was swiftly followed by the performance of operas by Christoph Willibald Gluck and Nicolò Piccinni. Simon-Louis Boizot created a bust of Iphigenia in 1775, and paintings by Benjamin West (*Pylades and Orestes Brought as Victims Before Iphigenia*, 1766), Angelica Kauffman (*Orestes and Iphigenia*, 1771), John Everett Millais (*Cymon and Iphigenia*, 1847) and Frederick Leighton (*Cymon and Iphigenia*, 1884) also depicted aspects of the mythology surrounding Iphigenia. Perhaps most (in)famously of all, Elizabeth Chudleigh, Duchess of Kingston and maid of honour to the Princess of Wales, appeared at a 1749 masquerade as 'Iphigenia ready for the sacrifice'. According to contemporary depictions, Chudleigh was unclothed from the waist up.

Such sustained and varied engagement with the plight of Iphigenia reflected a broad eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fascination with the culture of Antiquity. This chapter focuses upon the manner in which Emma Hamilton engaged with the Antique in her attitude performances. It situates the attitudes within the context of the neoclassical movement, which enjoyed early ascendancy in the eighteenth century as young, upper-class men (and some women) undertook Grand Tours encompassing visits to 'classical'

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[2] Friedrich Rehberg's sketches showed Hamilton posing in several of her attitudes. The sketches were completed during Rehberg's trip to Naples in 1791, and subsequently engraved by Tommaso Piroli. See Rebherg, *Drawings Faithfully Copied from Nature at Naples* (London: S.W. Fores, 1797).
[3] For summaries of both plays, see Edith Hall, *Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris: A Cultural History of Euripides' Black Sea Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. xxv-xxxii.

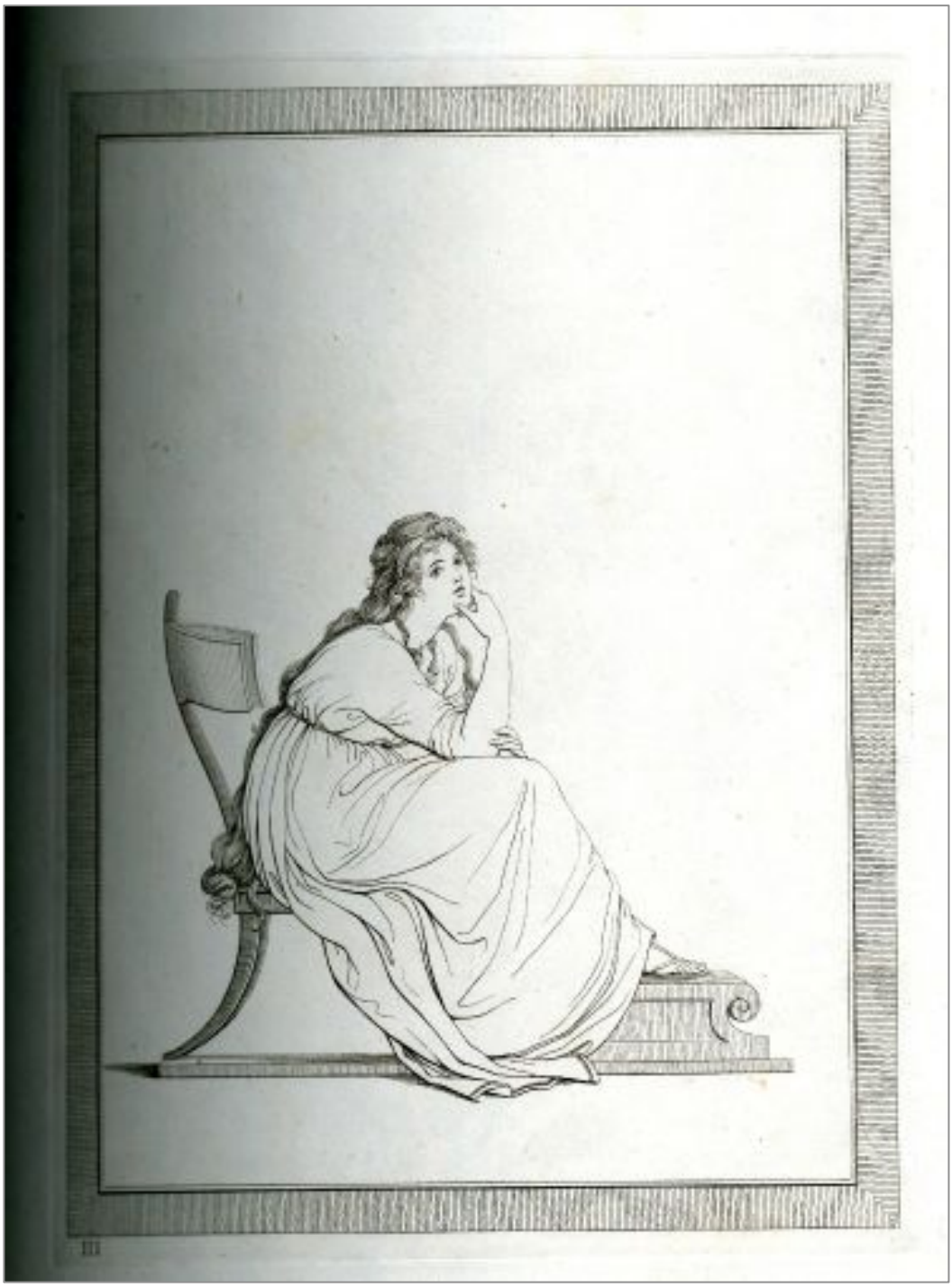

Figure 1.1: Friedrich Rehberg, Plate VII, from *Drawings Faithfully Copied from Nature at Naples* (1791).

Figure 1.2: Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein, *Iphigenia and Orestes* (1877).

European ruins, and archaeological discoveries continued to be made at Herculaneum and Pompeii. However, whilst acknowledging the fundamental impact of antiquarianism upon the conception of Hamilton's act, this chapter argues – in divergence from several historical accounts – that the neoclassical movement was not the sole context in which the attitudes were devised and performed.[4] Aside from presenting apparent revivifications of Antique artworks, the attitudes also lent spectators the somewhat voyeuristic opportunity to view the scantily-clad female body. With Hamilton appearing to retreat into a trance-like state during the attitudes, spectators' observation of the performer's body was especially voyeuristic: Hamilton seemed to be less than fully 'present', having perhaps relinquished some awareness of the audience's presence as a means by which to allow the Antique 'in'. The attitudes were also, however, conceived with a degree of exhibitionist intent, as they allowed the performer to display her physical beauty, unique personality and classical knowledge to spectators: prior and subsequent to her performances, Hamilton seems to have been fully aware of the effect which she and her body were likely to have upon spectators.[5] Finally, the attitudes reflected advancements in the scientific and artistic study of expression, with many of Hamilton's techniques seeming to correspond with principles expounded by leading theorists of expression.

Sections within this chapter will examine each of these contexts in turn. The chapter – and the thesis more broadly – will argue that tendencies towards voyeurism, exhibitionism, antiquarianism and expressionism may be identified in the attitude performances, just as they may be identified in almost all *tableaux* performances of the long nineteenth century: Emma Hamilton's attitudes laid the foundations for the *tableaux* phenomenon in a number of ways. Before examining these contexts, though, the chapter will explore the pre-history of the attitudes. Whilst most studies of the *tableaux* posit Hamilton as the originator of the medium, this chapter will look beyond Hamilton to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, identifying the 'postures' performed by

[4] For example, Chloe Chard interprets Emma Hamilton as a vehicle for the revivification of the Antique past, arguing that Hamilton, like eighteenth-century travel writing, was able to 'map out the relation between the ancient past and the present.' See Chard, 'Spectator and Spectacle', in *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour: Travel Writing and Imaginative Geography, 1600-1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 126-72 (p. 140).

[5] A key distinction between voyeurism and exhibitionism lies with the individual or individuals whose desires or needs are brought into relief: 'voyeurism' indicates a focus upon the sexual gratification of the spectator, whilst 'exhibitionism' relates more closely to the conduct of the performer (in this case, Hamilton) who typically engaged in 'extravagant' behaviour. This chapter indicates that both voyeurism and exhibitionism represented important impulses in the conception of the attitudes. For the definitions of 'voyeurism' (or 'voyeur') and 'exhibitionism' see OED: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/224799?rskey=MD2ovD&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid; http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/66185?redirectedFrom=exhibitionism#eid [accessed 22 August 2016].

women in Covent Garden's Rose Tavern as important and unacknowledged predecessors to Hamilton's attitudes.[6]

### 1.1 Voyeurism: A Pre-History of the Attitudes

The Rose Tavern, situated in Covent Garden's Russell Street, had been known since at least the seventeenth century as a den of iniquity; in June 1665 Samuel Pepys reported that he had acquired a prostitute – 'one of their fairest flowers' – at the Tavern, with whom he had subsequently passed the day.[7] However, in the mid eighteenth century the Tavern hosted a new form of amusement, as 'posture girls' or 'posture molls' entertained patrons by performing routines and 'tricks' designed to exhibit various parts of the female anatomy. There is some confusion over whether or not these posture girls were prostitutes. A contemporary description of one posture girl, Elizabeth Mann, indicates that this particular performer was a notorious 'Lady of Pleasure' and was indeed 'addicted' to a 'loose Life'.[8] However, the author of an account from 1749 went to great lengths to convince readers that posture girls had 'as great an Aversion to Whoring… as some Women who are nicely scrupulous in every other Respect.'[9] Whether or not the posture girls doubled as prostitutes, it is clear that the postures were intended to incite desire amongst male spectators, as performers exhibited themselves in an explicitly sexualised manner.

The account of Elizabeth Mann, who was known as the 'Royal Sovereign', represents a rare insight into the practices of a posture girl. According to the anonymously-penned broadside – which was presumably intended to commemorate the life of Mann, as it was written after her death – the performer was named after the battleship the 'Royal Sovereign' because 'as this Ship is the largest in all the British Navy, so she was reckoned the Bigest [sic] Woman that ever plyed [sic] in the Hundreds of Drury'. Like a ship, Mann was 'little or no Service but when she is well Mann'd'. The female Royal Sovereign had been, the broadside's author claimed, a 'Professor of Mathematics', and 'by her Study and Practice therein had learned so many Shapes and

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[6] In her study of late nineteenth century *tableaux vivants*, Brenda Assael notes that 'living pictures can be traced to the eighteenth-century Neapolitan drawing room displays by Lady Emma Hamilton.' See Assael, 'Art or Indecency? Tableaux Vivants on the London Stage and the Failure of Late Victorian Reform', in *Journal of British Studies*, 45.4 (October 2006), 744-58 (746).

[7] Pepys is quoted in E. J. Burford, *Wits, Wenchers and Wantons. London's Low Life: Covent Garden in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Robert Hale, 1986), p. 89.

[8] The Whole Life and Character Elegy of the Celebrated Royal Sovereign', in Dyson Perrins, vol. 4, p. 136. SA.

[9] 'Ibid., p. 136. SA; Anon., *The History of the Human Heart; or, The Adventures of a Young Gentleman* (London: J. Freeman, 1749), p. 130.

Figures, that I have seen her turn herself almost inside out.' Though Mann had not invented 'Postures', she was apparently highly skilled in the 'Art'. Mann was always prepared 'to Perform before Gentlemen, and to accommodate them in the best manner', whether at the Rose Tavern, in the apartments of the 'gentlemen' or in her own lodgings.[10] This account indicates that posturing predated Mann. Sarah Toulalan notes that a number of seventeenth-century 'pornographic' texts reveal instances of 'the deliberate exposure of female genitals'.[11] Perhaps sexually explicit poses had formed part of the repertoire of prostitutes as early as the seventeenth century, although the postures only became codified as a distinct genre of performance in the mid eighteenth century, with Mann and others helping to popularise the art of posturing.

Extolling the unique talents of the 'Royal Sovereign', the broadside's author declared that 'Mr. Fawks and His Little Boy are meer [sic] Pretenders to what this Miraculous Woman could have done.' Here, the author referred to Isaac Fawkes (c. 1675-1732), a magician who appeared on the entertainment circuit in the early eighteenth century. An advertisement from London's Haymarket Theatre from 1722 claimed that the 'Little Boy, of 12 Years of Age' displayed 'the surprising Activity of Body… turning his Body into so many various Shapes, that surpasses Humane [sic] Faith to believe without seeing.' The performance of the 'Little Boy' was immediately followed by that of Isaac Fawkes himself, who supplanted his son's performance of physical dexterity with one of great mental deftness, displaying card and magic tricks.[12] The author of the 'Royal Sovereign' broadside indicated that the performances of 'Mr. Fawks and his Little Boy' represented a source of inspiration for Elizabeth Mann's postures, although her own performance apparently surpassed theirs in terms of quality. The acts of the Little Boy and of Mann featured a good deal of physical contortionism, as both performers assumed implausible 'Postures' and 'Shapes'. However, whilst the Little Boy performed at open-air fairs and in theatres, Mann privately exhibited her postures before 'gentlemen', probably as a prelude to sex.

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[10] Anon., 'The Whole Life and Character Elegy of the Celebrated Royal Sovereign', in Dyson Perrins, vol. 4, p. 136. SA.

[11] As Sarah Toulalan notes, the term 'pornography' can only be problematically applied to describe the erotic writing produced in different historical periods, as its definition and nature shifted considerably over time. Early modern pornographic literature did, however, consistently provide readers with both intellectual and erotic entertainment: it is not helpful to abandon the term 'pornography' altogether. See Toulalan, *Imagining Sex: Pornography and Bodies in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 36.

[12] The advertisement is quoted in Philip H. Highfill, Jr., Kalman A. Burnim and Edward A. Langhans, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800*, vol. 5 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), p. 206.

Indeed, the fictional, anonymous *History of the Human Heart; or, the Adventures of a Young Gentleman* (1749) claimed that the purpose of the postures was to 'raise debilitated Lust' amongst male spectators. In the account, the protagonist Camillo visited a London 'bagnio' (brothel) to view a performance of postures by 'Miss M----- the famous Posture Girl.' Camillo and his friends watched as Miss M----- and several other women 'stripped naked, and mounted themselves on the middle of the Table.' According to the author:

> They [the performers] had very good Faces, and the natural Blush which glowed on their Cheeks in spite of the Custom of their Trade… rendered them in Camillo's mind finished Beauties, and fit to rival Venus herself, who could not appear more lovely, had she thus sat for her Pictures to Apelles. From viewing their Faces, he bashfully cast his Eyes on the Altar of Love, which he never had so fair a View of as at this present time… the Parts of the celebrated Posture Girl, had something about them which attracted his Attention more than any thing he had either felt or seen.

Having exposed their 'Altars of Love', the posture girls filled glasses of wine, laid themselves 'in an extended Posture' and 'placed their Glasses on the Mount of Venus'. Spectators were invited to drink from each performer's wine glass 'as it stood on that tempting Protuberance.' All the while, the posture girls continued their 'lascivious Motions', going through 'several Postures and Tricks' for the entertainment of audience members.[13]

According to the author of the *History*, this performance inflamed spectators to such a degree that some proposed that each man choose one of the 'postures' – and presumably one of the posture girls – to 'go through what they had seen only imitated before.' This indicates that the postures were akin to sexual positions, and that spectators (at least in this fictional account) understood the performances as a prologue to sex. However, the performers rejected this suggestion, 'it being the Maxim of these Damsels, never to admit of the embraces of the Men, for fear of spoiling their Trade.'[14] The evening concluded with Camillo and his friends adjourning to an alternative location, wherein they were to be found 'lying in State, that is, each with a Brace of Girls'. Clearly, prostitutes were easily acquired to perform those services to which the posture girls had been opposed.[15]

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[13] Anon., *The History of the Human Heart*, pp. 126-8.
[14] One of the performers claimed that her refusal to comply with the men's wishes stemmed from the advice of a former 'rope dancing' mistress, who had instilled in her an aversion to prostitution. Anon., *The History of the Human Heart*, pp. 131-3.
[15] Ibid., p. 141.

E. J. Burford and Joy Wotton and Fergus Linnane have identified the third plate of William Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress* (1732-3) as a depiction of the Rose Tavern, wherein a posturing performance was about to take place [Fig. 1.3].[16] The plate represents a busy scene: men and women are gathered around a table, drinking and soliciting. Linnane suggests that the woman slipping off her shoes on the right side of the image is a posture girl, and that the print depicts the woman preparing to perform. A man just visible behind this woman carries a large pewter plate and a candle, both of which the posture girl would apparently have used in her performance. Laying on the pewter plate, she would have brought her knees up to her chin and clasped her hands around her thighs, permitting spectators to view her waist-down nudity. The lighted candle was, according to Linnane, eventually snuffed out by the posture moll 'in an obscene mockery of sex'.[17]

Linnane, too, suggests that posture girls were averse to 'whoring'. However, his only professed evidence for this claim is the fictional account in *History of the Human Heart*, which Linnane seems to equate with historical reality. The 'Royal Sovereign' broadside suggests differently – as does the *Catalogue of Jilts*, which was first printed in 1691. The *Catalogue* provided details of prostitutes who could be located in the cloisters of St. Bartholomew's Church during the Bartholomew's Fair (an annual fair, originating in the twelfth century, organised in London's Smithfield district). It described the physical characteristics of twenty-one such women, and noted the price for which their favours might be acquired. The seventh woman listed, 'Posture Moll', was described as 'a plump brown Woman, but so very well known, that… she needs no description.' The 'usual price' for one of her 'shows' was 2s. 6d. – a good deal less than the amount sought by many of the other prostitutes listed.[18] Another catalogue, *Harris' List of Covent Garden Ladies*, featured 'Miss Molesh__w', a 'mistress of attitudes' who apparently knew 'all the workings of *human nature*.' Patrons interested in soliciting Miss Molesh__w were recommended to enquire at an address in London's Oxendon Street, wherein the woman herself would offer 'a more full and better satisfaction as to her

[16] E. J. Burford and Joy Wotton, *Private Vices – Public Virtues: Bawdry in London from Elizabethan Times to the Regency* (London: Robert Hale, 1995), p. 138; Fergus Linnane, *Madams: Bards and Brothel Keepers of London* (Stroud: The History Press, 2009), p. 48.
[17] Linnane, *Madams: Bards and Brothel Keepers of London*, p. 48. It is certainly feasible that the plate depicts a posture girl preparing for a performance, although the plate itself is generally known simply as 'The Orgy' or 'The Orgy at the Rose Tavern'.
[18] Anon., *A Catalogue of Jilts, Cracks, Prostitutes, Night-walkers, Whores, She-friends, King Women, and others of the Linnen-lifting Tribe*, available online: http://eebo.chadwyck.com/search/full_rec?SOURCE=pgimages.cfg&ACTION=ByID&ID=V152609 [accessed 28 January 2016].

abilities *in bed*.'[19] Advertisements in the *Catalogue of Jilts* and *Harris' List* indicate that the term 'posture' was replaced (or at least supplemented) by 'attitude' in the second half of the eighteenth century. This semantic shift is probably attributable to the influence of Emma Hamilton, who had been performing 'attitudes' in Naples since 1787. Contemporaries perhaps identified similarities between the performances of Hamilton and the 'posture girls'.

Hamilton aligned her attitude performances with the neoclassical movement, performing poses inspired by ancient and mythological characters. Indeed, though the poses exhibited by posture girls seem rarely to have been 'classical', one of the possible sources for the postures – the images in *I Modi – had* been inspired by the classical world. *I Modi*, also known as *Aretino's Postures*, contained sixteen engravings after paintings by Giulio Romano: each depicted a different sexual position, and was accompanied by a sonnet written by Italian author Pietro Aretino. *Postures* first appeared in 1524, and the text was reprinted throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[20] Many of the reprinted engravings featured famous classical lovers, including Antony and Cleopatra and Mars and Venus; as Bette Talvacchia has shown, even the earliest editions were inspired by the erotic images from ancient 'spintriae' (small, ancient Roman coins which depicted sexual acts). The engravers' selection of classical paradigms is hardly surprising, Talvacchia points out, as most Renaissance erotica purloined its subject-matter from ancient art and mythology, finding in this visual tradition 'a plethora of lascivious satyrs, seductive nymphs, and mischievous *amorini* as a colourful supporting cast for every sort of sensual encounter.'[21] The posture girls' poses were perhaps inspired by the sexual positions depicted in *Aretino's Postures*. Like the images in *Postures*, posturing performances licensed the voyeuristic examination of bodies in sexual positions. In both cases, the apparent passivity of (female) performers was emphasised, and onlookers' voyeuristic examination was intended to rouse (male) desire.

Viewers of posturing performances were sometimes invited to interact with the posture girls. For example, in an entertainment known as 'chucking' (popularised in the

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[19] Original emphasis. This entry featured in the 1793 edition of the list, and is reproduced in Hallie Rubenhold, *Harris' List of Covent Garden Ladies: Sex and the City in Georgian Britain* (Stroud: Tempus, 2005), p. 52.

[20] In his study of eighteenth-century erotica, Peter Wagner notes that justification for the re-publication of *Aretino's Postures* was partially sought in the burgeoning science of archaeology. Erotic artworks were unearthed and published by d'Hancarville, Richard Payne Knight and others, and republications of the *Postures* could be situated within this trend for erotic art. See Wagner, *Eros Revived: Erotica of the Enlightenment in England & America* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1988), pp. 266-9.

[21] Bette Talvacchia, 'Classical Paradigms and Renaissance Antiquarianism in Giulio Romano's *I Modi*', in *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 7 (1997), 81-118 (82).

Figure 1.3: William Hogarth, *A Rake's Progress*, plate III (1732-3).

1660s by Priss Fotheringham), performers would lie, naked from the waist down, encouraging spectators to 'chuck' coins in to what Fotheringham referred to as her 'commoditie' (which became subsequently known as 'Priss Fotheringham's Chuck Office').[22] In general, however, posturing performances were based upon the premise of looking but not touching, with audience members permitted to undertake intimate anatomical scrutiny of female performers. The lewd nature of these inspections was parodied in sketches by Thomas Rowlandson: one sketch depicted a woman reclined on a sofa, all-but-fully exposed to a group of men (one of whom uses a looking-glass to get a closer view) [Fig. 1.4]; another represented a woman sitting on a bed with her legs spread wide. The latter of these images seems to anticipate James Gillray's *Dido, in Despair!* (1801), a print which depicted an overweight Emma Hamilton mourning the departure of Nelson to sea [Fig. 1.5]. In both prints, busts of the *Venus de Milo* and other Antique statues appeared to watch over the image's protagonist. Perhaps Rowlandson and Gillray hoped to draw attention to the wide gulf which they identified between the chaste Antique statues and the performances of Hamilton and the posture girls. In both sketches, the juxtaposition of Antique statues with contemporary performers serves to accentuate the vulgarity of the animate women.

Burford and Wotton have suggested that Emma Hamilton was inspired to develop her attitudes by her own experiences as a 'posture girl'. Hamilton was, according to Burford and Wotton, 'one of the best known of such striptease artists' in the second half of the eighteenth century.[23] There is certainly evidence that Hamilton spent some months working as a prostitute in the Covent Garden area. Henry Angelo, owner of a fashionable fencing academy in Bond Street and a friend of Thomas Rowlandson, reported in his *Reminiscences* (1830) that Hamilton had been living at Mrs. Kelly's on Arlington Street.[24] Mrs. Kelly owned a number of brothels and, if Hamilton had been lodged with the woman, it is very likely that she was working as a prostitute. There is, however, no evidence that Hamilton was employed as a posture girl. Hamilton was probably familiar with the postures by virtue of her proximity to Covent Garden's Rose Tavern; perhaps she was also familiar with some of the pornographic engravings in circulation in the eighteenth century.

As this section has shown, Hamilton's performances belonged to a long tradition whereby the female body was exhibited for the entertainment and titillation of spectators.

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[22] Evidence of this practice is to be found in a contemporary text called *The Wandering Whore*, which is quoted in Toulalan, *Imagining Sex*, p. 186.
[23] Burford and Wotton, *Private Vices – Public Virtues*, p. 138.
[24] Henry Angelo, *Reminiscences of Henry Angelo* (London: Colburn and Bentley, 1830), pp. 236-45.

Though eschewing the posture girls' displays of sexual positions in favour of poses derived from Antiquity, Hamilton developed an act which centred upon the exhibition of the body in a series of striking postures: in this sense, her performances were not unlike those of eighteenth-century posture girls. Like the posture girls, Hamilton would have held each pose for a number of seconds before she moved skillfully and in full view of the audience into her next pose. The attitude performances permitted spectators to scrutinise Hamilton – clothed in relatively insubstantial, 'classical' drapery – as she moved through her act. Spectators were able to gaze upon the female body, observing as Hamilton embodied passions and femininities that would have held almost sensual appeal to eighteenth-century antiquarians.

### 1.2 Exhibitionism: Shawls, Teeth and Broken *Jougs*

Born in 1765 and raised in the Welsh village of Hawarden, Emma Hamilton (née Lyon) had moved to London in 1778 to work, variously, as a maid at the Drury Lane Theatre, a prostitute, and as a 'Goddess' at James Graham's Temple of Health (a venue at which the self-styled doctor displayed his electromagnetic apparatus, and 'treated' patients for nervous diseases). Lyon had become M.P. Charles Greville's mistress in 1781, and Greville commissioned the artist George Romney to paint his new charge as the embodiment of such mythological characters as Circe and Cassandra. Lyon was clearly encouraged by Greville to improve her manners; in a letter to Greville in 1784, Lyon reported that she had developed 'eveness [sic] of temper and stedinss [sic] of mind', imploring Greville not to 'think on my past follies; think on my good – little as it has been.'[25] Greville, however, hoped to further his burgeoning political career through an advantageous marriage, and to this end he convinced his uncle William Hamilton to assume responsibility for Lyon. Greville promised that Lyon was 'naturally elegant, & fits herself easily to any situation', reminding his fifty-four-year-old uncle that 'at your age a clean & comfortable woman is not superfluous.'[26] The recently widowed ambassador was pleased at the prospect of 'possessing so delightfull [sic] an object under my roof', and Emma Lyon travelled to Naples in the summer of 1786, eventually marrying the ambassador in September 1791.[27]

William Hamilton encouraged his charge to assist in the hosting of diplomatic occasions; antiquarian John Morritt described Emma Hamilton's 'beautiful' interpretation

[25] Emma Hamilton to Charles Greville, 22 June 1784, in *HNP*, I, p. 87.
[26] Charles Greville to William Hamilton, n.d. [c. January 1785], in *HNP*, I, p. 101.
[27] William Hamilton to Charles Greville, 25 April 1786, in *HNP*, I, p. 114.

Figure 1.4: Thomas Rowlandson, untitled (c. 1780).


Figure 1.5: James Gillray, *Dido, in Despair!* (1801).

of verses from the opera *Nina*, and noted, too, that Hamilton was a proficient performer of the 'tarantella' dance [Fig. 1.6].[28] After 1787, however, the attitude performances took precedence. In the eighteenth century, the word 'attitude' was used primarily to describe the disposition of a figure in statuary, painting or dance. For example, choreographer John Weaver used the term in his treatise *Anatomical and Mechanical Lectures upon Dancing* (1712), defining dance as 'an elegant, and regular Movement, harmonically composed of beautiful Attitudes.'[29] For Weaver, the attitude was not necessarily static, but it was a discrete element of a larger performance which could be scrutinised in isolation from surrounding movements, shapes or postures. Perhaps Hamilton had heard the term during her time at the Drury Lane Theatre, as dancers were taught to assume the 'attitude' of, for example, grief or anger. Alternatively, Hamilton's use of the term may have harkened back to her time in Covent Garden, when prostitutes seem to have used the word 'attitude' as a synonym for 'posture'. Consistent with Weaver's interpretation of the term 'attitude', Hamilton's attitudes formed part of a larger whole. Each attitude was akin to a segment of the performance, and Hamilton strung together her segments with graceful, 'elegant' and 'regular' movement.

The attitudes were generally performed once darkness had fallen. In preparation for the act, the room's ordinary lighting was extinguished and several candles were lit. According to Goethe, William Hamilton himself held a 'torch' for the duration of the performance. Emma Hamilton initially performed the attitudes within a purpose-built black box. On a visit to Naples in 1787, Goethe was granted access to William Hamilton's 'secret treasure vault', wherein the collector stored 'oddments from every period, busts, torsos, vases, bronzes.' Goethe noticed an upright chest, which had been painted black and set inside a gilt frame. He noted, 'It was large enough to hold a standing human figure, and that, we were told, was exactly what it was meant for.'[30] However, it seems that the chest soon became impractical, as the apparatus was retired within a year of the act's inception. Free from the confines of the chest, Hamilton

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[28] The tarantella was a traditional Italian dance, thought to have originated in ancient Greek exorcism rituals: the performance of the dance's rhythmic movements was intended to prevent death from 'tarantism', a hysterical condition induced by the bite of a poisonous spider. For Morritt's description, see Morritt, *The Letters of John B. S. Morritt, of Rokeby: Descriptive of Journeys in Europe and Asia Minor in the Years 1794-1796*, ed. G. E. Marindin (London: John Murray, 1914), p. 267, 282.

[29] John Weaver, *Anatomical and Mechanical Lectures Upon Dancing* (London: 1721), p. 137. In the eighteenth century, the attitude was not expected to represent a direct expression of the emotions; attitudes were contrived, choreographed arrangements of the body, intended to produce a theatrical effect. The word 'attitude' was not used in its modern sense, to describe a habit or mode of thought, until at least 1830.

[30] Goethe, *Italian Journey*, trans. W.H. Auden and Elizabeth Mayer (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 311.

probably held each pose for a matter of seconds before she moved gracefully to a different part of the floor in order to assume a new characterisation.

Hamilton's basic costume for the attitudes was a white tunic and a shawl. To signal the beginning of the performance, Hamilton threw the shawl over her head and, with a swift motion, she 'raised the covering, either throwing it off entirely or half raising it, and making it form part of the drapery of the model she represented.'[31] Diarist Melesina Trench elaborated upon Hamilton's use of the shawl: 'She disposes her shawl so as to form Grecian, Turkish, and other drapery, as well as a variety of turbans. Her arrangement of the turbans is absolute sleight-of-hand, she does it so quickly, so easily, and so well.'[32] The shawl seems to have fulfilled several functions. First, it helped to distinguish one pose from the next, serving variously as head-scarf, turban or drapery. Second, and perhaps most importantly, the shawl helped to maintain the fluidity of the performance. Hamilton did not use a curtain to separate one characterisation from the next, instead shifting her pose in full view of spectators. She relied upon the shawl – and her skillful manipulation of it – to capture audience members' attention. Spectators would have focused upon the shawl rather than upon Hamilton herself while the performer arranged her body and features to represent a new character.

Perhaps overwhelmed by the extent of Hamilton's repertoire, contemporary diarists were generally unable to record the sequence in which the attitudes were performed. However, John Morritt's list of Hamilton's representations seems to correspond roughly with the sequence of Friedrich Rehberg's sketches in his *Drawings Faithfully Copied from Nature*. This suggests that Hamilton performed the attitudes in a predetermined order, at least in the early 1790s: Rehberg made his sketches in 1791, whilst Morritt visited the Hamiltons in 1795. According to Morritt, Hamilton's opening pose was an imitation of a sibyl. Rehberg's first sketch depicts Hamilton sitting on a chair, her head resting on one hand and a scroll held in the other. She wears a long-sleeved dress, with the shawl draped over one of her arms. Her turban-like headwear is reminiscent of the costume in Vigée-Lebrun's *Lady Hamilton as the Persian Sibyl*, a painting for which Hamilton sat in 1792 [Fig. 1.7]. Spectators would probably have identified Hamilton's 'Sibyl' pose by virtue of the performer's choice of headwear, or the

[31] Adèle d'Osmond, *Memoirs of the Comtesse de Boigne, 1781-1814*, ed. Charles Nicoullaud (New York: Charles Scribener's, 1907), p. 100.
[32] Quoted in Hugh Tours, *The Life and Letters of Emma Hamilton* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963, p. 156. In a letter to Greville, Emma Hamilton reported that 'Sir William' was 'miserable' as she had 'worn out' her first consignment of shawls. Presumably, the ambassador was distressed because the attitude performances could not continue until his wife had acquired new shawls, so central were they to the attitudes' success. See Emma Hamilton to Charles Greville, 4 August 1787, in *HNP*, I, p. 133.

Figure 1.6: William Lock, *Emma, Lady Hamilton Dancing the Tarantella* (1796).

Figure 1.7: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Lady Hamilton as the Persian Sibyl* (1792).

thoughtful, faraway expression on her face; in writings from Antiquity, the character of the sibyl was typically identified as a woman able to predict the future.

Vigée-Lebrun's rendering of Hamilton as the Persian Sibyl was potentially controversial, as it depicted Hamilton with a partially open mouth. In portraiture, open mouths had traditionally connoted plebeianism, low-breeding and even madness, as subjects appeared in trance-like states; only one who had not been touched by the age of reason, it was thought, would be painted with an open mouth. For Colin Jones, it is significant that Vigée-Lebrun – a French artist – would choose to depict her female subjects with open mouths. The French had invented scientific dentistry in the eighteenth century, and prided themselves on the care of their teeth. On the eve of Revolution, France was an 'open-mouthed society', and Vigée-Lebrun belonged to a culture which valued healthy, white teeth as a symbol of wealth and refinement.[33] In the case of the *Persian Sibyl*, it seems unlikely that Vigée-Lebrun was concerned to align Emma Hamilton with either wealth or refinement. Perhaps the artist wished, instead, to call attention to Hamilton's humble beginnings, and to suggest that, though Hamilton was able to assume the role or 'attitude' of the ambassador's wife, she could not entirely suppress her 'natural' behaviours. The open mouth was, according to this reading, symbolic of Hamilton's *lack* of refinement, although perhaps Vigée-Lebrun intended to make a virtue of this: Hamilton's open mouth may have indicated her openness or artlessness, qualities which set her apart in the Neapolitan court.

In the course of her attitude performances, Hamilton also imitated Niobe, Sophonisba and Agrippina.[34] Niobe had appeared in Homer's *Iliad* and in the works of Sophocles and Aeschylus, generally identified as a mother mourning the death of her fourteen children. The characters of Sophonisba and Agrippina were drawn from ancient history: Sophonisba was a Carthaginian noblewoman who famously poisoned herself, whilst Agrippina was a Roman Empress known for transporting her husband Germanicus' ashes from the Middle East to Italy. This sequence of attitudes required Hamilton to move between sitting and standing several times, adapting her expression as swiftly as she did her pose. The 'Sophonisba' attitude appears to have been particularly challenging. Hamilton leaned precariously against a fragment of Doric column, whilst holding a goblet

[33] During the tumultuous 1790s, however, mouths acquired new symbolic meaning; the characteristic French mouth was now gaping and maimed, evinced by the mutilated face of Marie Antoinette's confidante, the Princesse de Lamballe. See Colin Jones, 'Incorruptible Teeth, or, the French Smile Revolution', available online: http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/17/jones.php) [accessed 7 September 2013].
[34] Morritt, *The Letters of John B. S. Morritt*, p. 281.

in one outstretched hand. During the time for which Hamilton held the pose (perhaps five or ten seconds), her features were set in the expression of anguish, her mouth slightly open and her eyes wide. The hand holding the goblet had to remain perfectly still, in order that the sense of grace and repose fostered throughout the attitude performances was maintained.

Hamilton used various other props as aids to her representations. Melesina Trench catalogued some Antique vases, a wreath of roses and a tambourine, whereas Adele d'Osmond noted Hamilton's use of an urn, a scent-box and a lyre.[35] These objects would have helped spectators to identify Hamilton's characters: for example, the goblet held in the performer's right hand would have supported Hamilton's imitation of Sophonisba, the poison-drinking noblewoman. Larger props were presumably arranged across the performance space in advance, allowing Hamilton to move between them as required. This rotation of props was a skill in itself; heavy, awkward objects needed to be handled gracefully, in order that the fluidity of the performance was maintained. Hamilton also employed objects from her husband's art collection as props. Elizabeth Holland recalled that, as the performer reclined against an Etruscan vase in imitation of a water-nymph, she reassured her husband, 'Don't be afeard, Sr. Willum. I'll not crack your *joug*.'[36] For Holland, this interjection – and the unexpected reminder of Emma Hamilton's provincial background – spoiled the 'illusion' of the performance. Hamilton does not seem to have made a habit of speaking during her act, as no other spectator recorded her making a comment midway through a performance.

Hamilton sometimes invited audience members to play the role of subsidiary characters. D'Osmond recalled playing the part of the child in Hamilton's 'Medea' and 'Niobe' attitudes:

> One day she placed me on my knees before an urn, with my hands together in the attitude of prayer. Leaning over me, she seemed lost in grief, and both of us had our hair disheveled. Suddenly rising and moving backward a little, she grasped me by the hair… she was brandishing a dagger. The passionate applause of the artists who were looking on resounded with exclamations of "Brava, Medea!" Then, drawing me to her and clasping me to her breast as though she were fighting to preserve me from the anger of Heaven, she evoked loud cries of "Viva, la Niobe!"

[35] Tours, *Life and Letters*, p. 156; D'Osmond, *Memoirs of the Comtesse de Boigne*, p. 100.
[36] Elizabeth Holland, *The Journal of Elizabeth Lady Holland, 1791-1811*, ed. Earl of Ilchester (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908), p. 243.

D'Osmond presumed that Hamilton had selected her to play the role because her own fair hair contrasted with Hamilton's 'magnificent black hair.'[37] This suggests that d'Osmond was not the only child among Hamilton's spectators; the Hamiltons clearly did not conceive of the attitudes as 'adult' entertainment, as audience members of varying ages were permitted at the Hamiltons' villa. The two attitudes in which d'Osmond participated both represented a mother and child. Medea was the mythological goddess who killed her own sons to punish an unfaithful husband, whereas Niobe's children were killed by Apollo and Artemis as punishment for their mothers' sins. This section of the attitude performance was clearly not rehearsed. When Hamilton brandished a dagger, d'Osmond was apparently transported 'precisely into the spirit of my part', and the expression of terror on her face was 'real'.

Once Hamilton had completed her final attitude, she may have thrown the shawl over herself, covering her body as one might a sculpture in a disused museum or gallery. It is possible that Hamilton's spectators experienced a sense of disorientation as the act ended. During the performance, audience members had been transported to Antiquity. They may, too, have been held in their own, unconscious stasis, tensing their bodies in recognition of Hamilton's efforts.[38] By stepping away from the performance space, Hamilton broke the spell, resuming her ordinary deportment. Adele d'Osmond noted that, once Hamilton had exchanged her classical tunic for ordinary dress, she 'lost all distinction'. Aside from her unique artistic talents, the attitude performer was, according to d'Osmond, 'entirely vulgar and common.'[39] Like Elizabeth Holland, d'Osmond was disappointed that Hamilton had allowed her own personality to resurface after – or, in Holland's account, during – the attitude performance. Both d'Osmond and Holland identified a significant discord between Hamilton's own character and those which Hamilton represented in her performances. Both women would, it seems, have preferred Hamilton to have remained permanently 'in character', thereby quashing her own disagreeable personality.

Elizabeth Chudleigh, Duchess of Kingston (1720-1788) also famously imitated an Antique character in a public 'performance', though Chudleigh did not attempt to conceal

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[37] D'Osmond, *Memoirs of the Comtesse de Boigne*, pp. 100-1.
[38] As philosopher Adam Smith noted in *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, it is common for men and women, when watching a tightrope walker, to 'writhe and twist and balance their own bodies, as they see him do, and as they feel that they themselves must do if in his situation.' The same may well have been true of Hamilton's spectators, who recognised her efforts to maintain poise and temporary immobility. See Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982), p. 10.
[39] D'Osmond, *Memoirs of the Comtesse de Boigne*, p. 101.

her own character behind the mask of Antiquity. At a masquerade held in May 1749 at Ranelagh Gardens, Chudleigh appeared as 'Iphigenia', apparently claiming that she was, like Iphigenia, 'ready for the sacrifice!' Judging by a contemporary illustration, Chudleigh wore a skirt of near-translucent material, with the top half of her body almost entirely uncovered [Fig. 1.8]. The Princess of Wales, whom Chudleigh served as maid of honour, reportedly threw a cloak over Chudleigh in an attempt to conceal Chudleigh's nudity. Chudleigh, however, responded, 'Those who have parts not fit to be seen, do well to conceal them; that is not my case. It is the blackest ingratitude to bountiful nature not to display the beautiful limbs she has formed.'[40]

As Gillian Russell has pointed out, the depiction of Chudleigh as Iphigenia in contemporary prints extended Chudleigh's notoriety beyond aristocratic circles. Such prints served to identify Chudleigh as an individual 'willing to play up to the theatricality and sexualised corporeality associated with women of her class.'[41] Like Hamilton, Chudleigh had risen from relatively humble beginnings to assume a prominent place in royal and aristocratic society. Unlike the ambassador's wife, however, Chudleigh was unconcerned that her public performance might serve to degrade her in the eyes of influential men and women. Indeed, Chudleigh seems to have been eager to attract infamy, whether or not this infamy was achieved through triumph or (as proved to be the case) disgrace.[42] By identifying herself as the mythological Iphigenia, Chudleigh mocked her contemporaries' infatuation with Antique culture. As she herself had vaguely aligned herself with the Antique in apparent justification for the exhibition of her nearly-nude body, so too could contemporary scholars rationalise the study of erotic or sexual material by claiming it as a contribution to the understanding of Antique culture.

As later chapters will demonstrate, critics of *tableaux vivants* towards the end of the nineteenth century claimed that *tableaux* performers alluded to the Antique simply as a means by which to justify the presentation of nudity in public spaces of performances. For these critics, the Antique was nothing more than a 'silly lie', or a barely-veiled excuse

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[40] Chudleigh is quoted in Betty Rizzo, *Companions Without Vows: Relationships Among Eighteenth-Century British Women* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), p. 67.
[41] Gilliam Russell, *Women, Sociability and Theatre in Georgian London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 154.
[42] One of her biographers presumed, rather generously, that Chudleigh had revealed herself 'almost in the unadorned simplicity of primitive nature' as a means by which to 'demonstrate how nearly she was allied to her ancestress, Eve', although admitted that this performance invited the disgrace of many of her contemporaries. See Chudleigh, *The Life and Memoirs of Elizabeth Chudleigh, Afterwards Mrs. Hervey, and Countess of Bristol, commonly called Duchess of Kingston* (Dublin: H. Chamberlaine et al, 1789), pp. 56-7.


Figure 1.8: Anon., *Miss Ch_ly* (c. 1749).

for the indecent exhibition of female bodies.[43] There is no evidence, however, that Emma Hamilton's spectators interpreted the attitudes along similar lines: no surviving account of the act suggests that Hamilton associated her performances with Antiquity as a means by which to lend respectability to the attitudes. Perhaps Hamilton simply did not exhibit her body in a manner which contemporaries considered 'indecent'. 'Classical' fashions were, after all, increasingly popular among European women, with a reaction against the extravagant ornamentation and tightly-laced dresses which had characterised the Rococo period. Hamilton's sheer, unstructured and 'natural' costume was not entirely unprecedented, and she certainly did not expose herself to the same extent as Elizabeth Chudleigh.[44] It is likely, too, that the setting chosen for the attitudes – one of the grandest rooms in William Hamilton's ambassadorial residence, replete with antiquities and artworks – helped to convince Emma Hamilton's spectators that they were witnessing a revivification of Antiquity. If spectators did indeed glimpse in Hamilton's performances the reawakening of ancient and mythological figures, then all concerns for the propriety of the act would, it seems, have fallen away, so keen was contemporaries' desire for Antiquity to be brought 'to life'.

### 1.3 Antiquarianism: Emma Hamilton and the Restoration of Antiquity

In his seminal work *Ancient Marbles in Great Britain* (1882), the German scholar Adolf Michaelis identified three phases in the development of classical dilettantism in Britain. Michaelis, a pioneering figure in the field of Antique connoisseurship, argued that the first phase began in the seventeenth century. A small number of private collectors began to acquire objects of art including bronzes, coins and gems, focusing their attention upon those objects which were easily attainable and transportable. The second phase represented the 'heyday of dilettantism'; during the second half of the eighteenth century, a large number of ancient marbles were imported from Rome and various excavations were instituted as a new generation of dilettantes afforded themselves the opportunity to gratify artistic tastes or to indulge in the fashion for Antique connoisseurship. The third phase saw something of a decline of classical dilettantism in Britain as, in the early years of the nineteenth century, the importation of antiques was disrupted by the lengthy war against Napoleon, and other fashions and tastes took precedence. At this time, the state's

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[43] 'The Living Pictures', in *The Woman's Signal*, 2 August 1894, p. 63.

[44] As Aileen Ribeiro has pointed out, 'natural' clothing came to predominate towards the end of the eighteenth century, with the 'chemise à la reine' (a simple, unstructured dress which derived its name from a costume worn by Marie-Antoinette in 1783) representing the dress of choice for society women in the 1780s and 1790s. See Ribeiro, *The Art of Dress: Fashion in England and France 1750 to 1820* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 66-72.

zeal for collecting replaced that of individual amateurs to some extent, as institutions such as the British Museum amassed large collections of Greek and Roman antiquities.[45] Increasingly, the state was held responsible for facilitating public education through the establishment of museums, and many collections which had once been 'private' (including those of William Hamilton, Charles Townley and others) were donated to the nation for 'public' instruction and amusement.

Michaelis' account has remained influential in the field of Reception Studies. As Viccy Coltman has pointed out, *Ancient Marbles* served to clarify the shift in the nature of dilettantism which occurred in the eighteenth century, whereby the pursuit of classical knowledge and objects became a scientific and archaeological – rather than a leisurely – pursuit.[46] Michaelis' work also underlined the contrasting motives which lay behind the acquisition of Antique objects and marbles. Whilst some connoisseurs possessed a genuine antiquarian interest in classical art and culture, others established collections of Antique objects simply because dilettantism had come to represent a fashionable diversion among British aristocrats, and they wished to emulate or outdo their peers in the procurement of rare and beautiful antiquities.

It was during Michaelis' 'heyday of dilettantism' that Emma Hamilton developed her attitudes. Some of Hamilton's spectators – including her husband William Hamilton, Goethe and the connoisseur Horace Walpole – were scholars of Antique art; many others were well-versed in ancient culture, though these individuals' pursuit of classical knowledge was impelled rather by the dictates of fashion than by those of antiquarianism. This section will situate Hamilton's performances within the context of 'classical dilettantism' in the late eighteenth century, as it seeks to determine the precise appeal of the attitudes to connoisseurs of Antiquity. It will explore some of the 'classical' sources upon which Hamilton drew, noting possible correspondences between items in William Hamilton's vase collection, contemporary paintings and the attitudes. Finally, it will assess the extent to which the attitudes reflected advances in the understanding and reception of Antique art and culture, focusing particularly upon eighteenth-century attitudes towards 'restoration'.

Admiration for Antiquity had permeated British culture since the Renaissance, as the humanist writings of Adam Ferguson, Edward Gibbon and others indicated links

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[45] Adolf Michaelis, *Ancient Marbles in Great Britain*, trans. C.A.M. Fennell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1882), pp. 2-3.
[46] Viccy Coltman, *Classical Sculpture and the Culture of Collecting in Britain Since 1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 21.

between the Roman state and modern British political culture. However, towards the end of the eighteenth century there was a perceptible shift in interest away from ancient Rome and towards ancient Greece. As Frank Turner has noted, no major studies of the Roman Republic were written in the nineteenth century and, where the Roman writers Virgil and Horace had been regarded as literary models for much of the eighteenth century, an interest in the writings of the Greek author Homer came to predominate in the nineteenth century. For Turner, this shift is partly explained by a change in notions of the political ideal. Whereas the Roman Republic had seemed a fitting model for Britain in the years after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, with commentators identifying resemblances between early republican Rome and England freed from the absolutism of the Stuarts, it was the Greek system – regarded as less austere and more creative – that appealed to the Victorians, dedicated as they were to improvement and economic growth.[47]

For many young men – and some young women – of the gentry and aristocracy, the 'Grand Tour' afforded an opportunity to visit Europe's 'classical' sites and ruins, and to cultivate a fashionable taste for Antique art and culture. Traditionally, the itinerary of the Tour took travellers through France, over the Swiss Alps and into northern Italy. Rome represented the principal destination for most Tours and, after spending several months in the Italian capital, British travellers often journeyed to Naples and Paestum in the south, before heading back to England. In the early eighteenth century, publishers responded to an increasing demand among prospective tourists for travel guidebooks. Joseph Addison's *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy* (first published in 1705) provided one of the first and most popular summaries of Italy's major attractions, and the book helped to establish the itinerary for numerous Grand Tours in the following decades.[48] Addison, an English writer and the co-founder of *The Spectator*, claimed that 'there is certainly no place in the world, where a man may travel with greater pleasure and advantage, than in Italy.' Having noted the attractions of Milan, Brescia, Verona and

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[47] Frank M. Turner, 'Why the Greeks and not the Romans in Victorian Britain?', in G. W. Clarke, ed., *Rediscovering Hellenism: The Hellenic Inheritance and the English Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 61-78 (pp. 65-70). Studies by Simon Goldhill and Richard Jenkyns have explored the nineteenth-century engagement with classical Greece from a British perspective, whilst K.J. Dover's edited volume adopts a more comprehensive approach, with a particularly useful essay by Joachim Wohlleben examining German philosophers' engagement with ancient Greece. See Goldhill, *Victorian Culture and Classical Antiquity: Art, Opera, Fiction, and the Proclamation of Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980); Wohlleben, 'Germany, 1750-1830', in Dover, ed., *Perceptions of the Ancient Greeks* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992), pp. 170-200.

[48] For the influence of Addison's travel writing, see David Irwin, *Neoclassicism* (London: Phaidon, 1997), pp. xv-xvi.

Venice, Addison afforded lengthy descriptions to Naples and Rome, as he extolled the virtues of the artworks and antiquities on display in the cities' museums.[49]

Addison's responses to the attractions of modern Italy were shaped almost entirely by the writer's understanding and profound appreciation of classical culture. Writing in the early eighteenth century, Addison was especially impressed by the achievements of the ancient Romans, and was disappointed to find that modern Rome failed to live up to its ancient precedent. He noted, 'It is indeed an amazing thing to see the present desolation of Italy, when one considers what multitudes of people it abounded with during the reigns of the Roman emperors.' Addison blamed recent governments and their engagement in civil wars for this depopulation, lamenting the loss of the once grand Roman imperial seat.[50] Indeed, the majority of Addison's observations of contemporary Italy were tinged with a sense of regret: though the essential beauty of the countryside remained, the present-day inhabitants seemed to represent a blight upon it, as though Addison considered them unworthy of inheriting this hallowed, 'classical' ground. The greatest productions of ancient Rome had been ill-preserved, and cities once 'adorned by the greatest of the Roman commonwealth, embellished by many of the Roman Emperors, and celebrated by the best of their Poets' now lay in disorder and confusion.[51]

Educated in the Classics from a young age, Addison and his fellow Grand Tourists were keen to identify traces of the ancient world in the modern topography of Europe. Italy – and particularly Rome – was held to represent the pinnacle of classical perfection, and the most patent illustration of the Antique legacy. The Tour permitted Tourists the ideal opportunity to learn from the ancients; having taken in the Roman Forum, the Coliseum and the Capitoline Hill, many Grand Tourists spent several weeks or months studying at Rome's art galleries and museums. Painter George Romney stayed in the Italian capital for over a year in order to study the work of the Old Masters, whilst lawyer and diarist James Boswell undertook a six-day 'Course in Antiquities and Arts' in Rome.[52] In a letter to his friend Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Boswell noted that he had viewed the city's 'classical sites' and 'remains of the grandeur of the ancient Romans' with

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[49] Joseph Addison, *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy in the Years 1701, 1702, 1703* (Dublin: T. Walker, 1773).
[50] Addison, *Remarks*, p. 112.
[51] Ibid., p. 135.
[52] James Boswell, *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica and France, 1765-1766*, ed. Frank Brady (New York: McGraw Hill, 1955), p. 60; John Romney, ed., *Memoirs of the Life and Works of George Romney* (London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1830), p. 103.

enthusiasm. By virtue of his study of Antique architecture, statues and paintings, Boswell claimed to have 'acquired taste to a certain degree.'[53]

Increasingly, the artworks thought to have been created by the ancient Greeks were upheld as models for emulation by modern artists, reflecting the broader trend towards the veneration of ancient Greek culture at the expense of ancient Roman. German art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) helped to confirm the exemplary status of Greek art in the second half of the eighteenth century. Winckelmann, who had arrived in Rome in 1755 in order to study from the Vatican's library, attempted to distinguish between the artistic techniques of the Romans and the Greeks. Through his extensive writings on the subject, he advanced the view that Greek art was of a much finer quality than Roman art. In the essay 'Reflections on the Imitation of the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks' (1755), Winckelmann argued that the ancient Greeks had been responsible for the invention of 'taste', and that the only means by which modern artists could achieve greatness was to imitate the style and techniques of prolific Greek artists.[54] Winckelmann recommended that modern artists pay close attention to the ancient Greeks' use of contour, drapery and expression, and that three 'inimitable pieces' of ancient art discovered at Herculaneum – the ancient city which had been destroyed by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD, and which was being excavated during the time of Winckelmann's stay in Italy – should be upheld as particular models.[55]

Emma Hamilton's attitudes were devised in the midst of this nostalgic admiration for the Antique past. In her performances, Hamilton alluded to such mythological and ancient characters as would have been familiar to a late eighteenth-century audience, encouraging spectators to participate in the charade-like identification of each attitude. For spectators such as Italian scholar Carlo Gastone, it was the closeness with which Hamilton approximated the appearance and character of ancient figures – and the seamlessness with which she moved from one attitude to the next – that particularly appealed. Praising the act as 'fluid and graceful… sublime and heroic', Gastone noted

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[53] See Boswell, *Boswell on the Grand Tour*, p. 81. Boswell, too, was disappointed by the state of modern Rome. Viewing the Roman Forum, he wrote 'I experienced sublime and melancholy emotions as I thought of all the great affairs which had taken place there, and saw the place now all in ruins.' See Boswell, *Boswell on the Grand Tour*, p. 60.

[54] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, 'Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks', in *Essays on the Philosophy and History of Art*, ed. Curtis Bowman (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 2001), pp. 1-64 (pp. 1-2). According to Winckelmann, the figures of ancient Greek men and women were naturally more beautiful than those of the 'moderns'. Though the moderns could not achieve this physical beauty in ordinary life, they could at least 'ennoble the more scattered and weaker beauties of our Nature' through art. See Winckelmann, 'Reflections', p. 19.

[55] Winckelmann, 'Reflections', pp. 25-6.

that Hamilton 'single-handedly created a living gallery of statues and paintings' in her performances. Gastone went on to identify the origins of each pose:

> At one moment I was admiring her in the constancy of Sophonisba in taking her cup of poison… at another the desperation of Gabriella de Vergy, on discovering the heart of her warrior lover still beating in the fatal vase; afterwards, changing countenance at a stroke, she fled, like the Virgilian Galatea who wishes to be seen among the willow after she has thrown the apple to the shepherd.[56]

Among Hamilton's repertoire, Gastone also identified the Roman marble *Medusa Rondaninni* and a bacchante. Such identifications would only have been possible with the support of an extensive knowledge of Antique art. For a spectator less secure in the Classics, the attitudes might have been somewhat bewildering, as Hamilton altered her pose and expression to represent numerous unfamiliar characters. The attitudes should, therefore, be interpreted as a neoclassical phenomenon, having been designed to appeal to a particular late eighteenth-century fascination with Antiquity. Hamilton's performances permitted spectators the opportunity to measure, extend and exhibit their knowledge of ancient art; they perhaps even allowed spectators to suspend their disbelief, and to imagine that much-admired Antique statues had been temporarily brought 'to life'.

In the attitudes, Hamilton often represented characters which had been depicted in contemporary artworks. For example, Plate VIII of Rehberg's *Drawings* depicts Hamilton performing her 'bacchante' attitude, holding a tambourine and wearing an expression of contentment as she glanced down at a small child [Fig. 1.9]. Bacchantes, also known as maenads, were the female followers of Dionysus (the Greek god of wine), and had featured in Euripides' play *The Bacchae* as Dionysus' intoxicated worshippers.[57] Jean-Baptiste Greuze painted a smiling bacchante in his *A Bacchante* (c. 1780), and both Joshua Reynolds and Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun depicted Hamilton herself as a bacchante in paintings of 1784 and 1790. In Vigée-Lebrun's painting, Hamilton wore a loose dress with her long hair flowing down her back. The grape leaf on her head cemented the painting's Bacchic connotations, as the bacchantes were supposedly freed from their earthly bodies through the consumption of wine. Reynolds' painting depicted the

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[56] Quoted in Ian Jenkins and Kim Sloan, *Vases and Volcanoes: Sir William Hamilton and His Collection* (London: British Museum Press, 1996), p. 260. For the original text, see Carlo Gastone, *Opere del Cavaliere Carlo Gastone, Conte della Torre Rezzonico VII*, ed. Francesco Mochetti (Como: Carlantonio Ostinelli, 1819), pp. 247-8.

[57] Dionysus, keen to prove his divinity to the people of Thebes, apparently 'stung these women into madness', driving them to the mountains where they danced, drank and performed 'sacred cleansing' in honour of their god. See Euripides, 'The Bacchae', in *Electra, Phoenician Women, Bacchae and Iphigenia at Aulis*, trans. Cecelia Eaton Luschnig and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2011), pp. 143-208 (p. 148).

Figure 1.9: Friedrich Rehberg, Plate VIII, from *Drawings Faithfully Copied from Nature at Naples* (1791).

bacchante – Hamilton – looking directly at the viewer, pointing to her own mouth.[58] Perhaps William Hamilton was dissatisfied with Reynolds' suggestive rendering of the theme, as the ambassador also commissioned George Romney to depict Emma as a bacchante in 1784.[59] A comparison between Rehberg's sketch and the three paintings reveals, however, that Hamilton diverged somewhat from the renderings of Vigée-Lebrun, Reynolds and Romney in her 'bacchante' attitude, as she included a child and a tambourine in her own representation. Clearly, Hamilton did not merely copy from existing renderings of her chosen characters, but reflected upon the most interesting and appropriate manner by which to convey the characters' unique personalities in her act.

Seeking to unearth the inspiration behind the attitudes, historian Alicia Craig Faxon has attempted to establish correlations between William Hamilton's collection of antiquities and Emma Hamilton's attitudes. For example, she points out that the sixth plate from Rehberg's *Drawings*, which features Emma Hamilton in the pose of a dancer, resembles a plate from William Hamilton's first published vase catalogue. This catalogue, edited by Pierre d'Hancarville, features on its thirteenth plate a detail from a vase depicting two women dancing on either side of a lute-playing faun.[60] Certainly, there is a resemblance between Rehberg's depiction of Hamilton and one of the dancing women from d'Hancarville's catalogue: both have shawls draped around their bodies as they dance with one foot raised in the air. However, the notion that there existed a causal connection between the two seems rather a stretch. Had Emma Hamilton wished her attitude to be identified as a 'quotation' from her husband's Antique vase, she might have imitated the dancer's leaping stance more precisely, or called upon a male assistant to assume the role of the lute-playing faun. In his sketch, Rehberg probably in fact intended to capture Hamilton in the performance of the 'tarantella', a southern-Italian dance which Hamilton is known to have imitated on several occasions, rather than Hamilton's representation of a vase from her husband's collection.

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[58] Marcia Pointon suggests that Reynolds failed to achieve the desired respectability in many of his female portraits. Though inviting viewers to behold fashionable ladies and to 'glimpse Graces', Reynolds' paintings tended to express passion, disequilibrium and excess. See Pointon, 'Portraiture, Excess, and Mythology: Mary Hale, Emma Hamilton, and Others… "in Bacchante"', in *Strategies for Showing: Women, Possession, and Representation in English Visual Culture 1665-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 173-228 (p. 178).

[59] In his diaries from 1783 and 1784, Romney recorded a large number of sittings with 'Mrs Hart', particularly in December 1783 and early 1784. On the twenty-first of April, Romney wrote 'Mrs Hart 10 Edgeway Row' in his diary, suggesting that she visited Greville's house on Edgware Road. This was, of course, before Emma Hamilton had moved to Naples to become William Hamilton's wife. See Romney diaries, 1782-1786. BL, Add MSS 38083-38084. For 1784, see BL, Add MSS 38084.

[60] Alicia Craig Faxon, 'Preserving the Classical Past', in *Visual Resources*, 20.4 (2004), 259-73 (266-8).

Indeed, the seeking of models for the attitudes in William Hamilton's catalogues seems to encourage a rather simplistic interpretation of the act. According to this view, the ambassador is upheld as the creative and intellectual force behind the attitudes, and his wife presumed to represent merely the canvas upon which a series of artistic 'types' were projected. This was certainly not the case. William Hamilton may have introduced certain Antique artworks to his wife, but Emma Hamilton was already familiar with many classical figures by virtue of her role as a muse for Romney, Reynolds, Vigée-Lebrun and others; her talent for the impersonation of recognisable characters predated her marriage to the ambassador. Further, Emma Hamilton represented her chosen characters in attitudes which diverged considerably from renderings of these characters by contemporary artists. Hamilton selected moments from the characters' stories which were 'pregnant with meaning', in the sense articulated by the eighteenth-century philosopher Gotthold Ephraim Lessing.

In his *Laocoön: An Essay upon the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766) Lessing had argued that, whilst painting and poetry had distinct aims, a potential drawback of painting was that it was able only to depict single moments. Poetry, on the other hand, could describe objects and moments in succession. In order to counter this potential limitation of painting, Lessing encouraged artists to represent moments which were 'sufficiently pregnant with meaning.'

> Nothing however can possess this important qualification but that which leaves free scope to the imagination. The sight and fancy must be permitted reciprocally to add to each other's enjoyment. There is not, however, throughout the whole process of a mental affection, any one moment less favourable for this purpose than that of its highest state of excitement… to exhibit the extremity of expression to the eye is to chain down the pinions of fancy beneath the range of the given effect.[61]

If the artist depicted the most dramatic moment of the story on the canvas, he or she would compromise the creative process by which a spectator interpreted and enjoyed a work of art. Painting should represent moments which were 'at once expressive of the past, and pregnant with the future.'[62]

Emma Hamilton seems to have fulfilled Lessing's brief in her attitude performances. For example, Francesco Novelli's sketch indicates that Hamilton enacted the story of Medea by standing imperiously above a kneeling child, brandishing a dagger

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[61] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay upon the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, trans. Ellen Frothingham (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1887), p. 29.
[62] Lessing, *Laocoön*, p. 152.

in her raised right hand whilst restraining the child with her left. In Euripides' play, Medea exacted revenge upon her unfaithful husband by murdering his heirs, her own two sons.[63] Hamilton seems to have represented the moment just before Medea committed this act of filicide, leaving her spectators to imagine the dagger coming down upon the terrified child. In Novelli's sketch, Hamilton's body is twisted theatrically away from the child, as though the performer aimed to emphasise the force with which the dagger was to be wielded. Hamilton's embodiment of such 'pregnant' moments allowed for the possibility (albeit slim, in the case of Medea) for alternative outcomes. Hamilton injected an element of suspense into familiar stories, allowing spectators to speculate upon the course which the narrative might take. Incidentally, Hamilton's depiction of Medea contrasted with those of Corrado Giaquinto, an Italian artist who painted Medea twice in the second half of the eighteenth century. In the first piece, Giaquinto showed Medea attempting to rejuvenate Aeson (whom Medea had herself killed), and in the second he represented Medea gazing mournfully at the bodies of two children. Presumably the latter piece related to the episode from which Emma Hamilton drew her 'Medea' attitude; however, Giaquinto represented the moments following the story's climax, whereas Hamilton focused upon Medea's murderous, 'pregnant' intent.

Many of the antiquities that came to be admired by antiquarians in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had been excavated only as fragments; perhaps the best known of these, the Venus de Milo, was discovered without its arms, a fact which caused scholars to disagree over the correct identification of the piece.[64] In the second half of the eighteenth century, however, new emphasis was beginning to be placed upon the restoration of Antique statuary. Restoration tended to be a fluid, cumulative process, with amateur and professional restorers reuniting (and in some cases simply uniting) torsos with heads and limbs, and reworking marble surfaces through polishing. Bartolomeo Cavaceppi (1715-1799) and Carlo Albacini (c. 1739-1807) were amongst the most sought-after restorers in eighteenth-century Italy, although the student and his pupil adopted different approaches to restoration. Cavaceppi gave his statues a contrived 'Antique' appearance with visible cracks in the marble, whilst Albacini attempted to

[63] The play was first performed in 431 BC at the annual Athenian festival of Dionysus. For a translation of the original text, see Euripides, *Medea*, trans. Michael Collier and Georgia Machemer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[64] Discovered on the island of Melos in 1820, the Venus de Milo was thought by some Louvre scholars to be a 'Victory' rather than a 'Venus'; others thought the statue had originally depicted Venus holding a bow, or perhaps gazing at her reflection in a mirror. Eventually, the scholars agreed not to restore the arms, although such restorations were common at the beginning of the nineteenth century. See Gregory Curtis, *Disarmed: The Story of the Venus de Milo* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2003).

create the illusion of perfection by disguising any alterations he had made to the pieces.[65] It was in the context of this growing taste for 'restored' antiquities that Emma Hamilton devised her attitudes, some of which – including, for example, her 'Venus' poses – represented 'restorations' of fragmented Antique statues.[66]

William Hamilton's attitude towards restoration was somewhat ambiguous. When the Warwick Vase (which became one of the ambassador's most prestigious acquisitions) was discovered at Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli, William Hamilton bought the piece for £300. He reported in a letter to nephew Charles Greville that he had been obliged to 'cut a block of marble at Carrera to repair it, which has been hollowed out & the fragments fixed on it, by which means the vase is as firm & entire as the day it was made.'[67] Hamilton's treatment of the Warwick Vase seems, however, to have been inconsistent with the attitude towards restoration which he expressed in his published works. In the introduction to a 1791 catalogue of his vases, Hamilton wrote:

> It is well known that Antiquarians have been often mislead [sic] by drawings from Statues, Bassorilievos [bas-reliefs] and Vases that had been modernly repaired, and their Dissertations have turned entirely upon certain attributes and Additions that did not exist in the originals… Few statues are found with the hands, and feet entire, and the modern restorations of those parts, often with false attributes, have been the occasion of great confusion and error.[68]

Hamilton suggested that the 'false attributes' assigned to antiquities in the process of restoration were particularly troubling because they obscured the original workmanship, leading antiquarians towards incorrect conclusions regarding the object's provenance. Aiming to satisfy those connoisseurs who preferred 'complete' vases and sculptures rather than fragments, however, Hamilton supervised the restoration of his acquired pieces. Clearly, he wished to profit from his collections, and was willing to put aside his own reservations concerning 'false' restorations.

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[65] Seymour Howard has pointed out that the study of restoration practices can reveal much about the ideologies of restorers, dealers and antiquarians; restorations are 'examples of projected fancy and interpretation.' See Howard, 'Restoration and the Antique Model', in Janet Burnett Grossman, Jerry Podany and Marion True, eds., *History of the Restoration of Ancient Stone Sculptures* (Los Angeles: Getty, 2003), pp. 25-44 (p. 25).

[66] After the turn of the nineteenth century, the process by which sculptures were returned to their 'original' state was increasingly seen as deceptive. This was exemplified in attitudes towards the restoration of the Elgin Marbles (discussed in Chapter Two).

[67] Carrera (or carrara) marble was quarried in Tuscany, and had been used in ancient Roman sculpture, as well as in Renaissance works including Michelangelo's *David* (1501-4). For the letter, see William Hamilton to Charles Greville, n.d. [c. June 1775], in *HNP*, I, p. 37.

[68] Quoted in Nancy Ramage, 'Sir William Hamilton as Collector, Exporter, and Dealer: The Acquisition and Dispersal of His Collections', in *American Journal of Archaeology*, 94.3 (July 1990), 469-80 (476).

William Hamilton was certainly pleased with his wife's 'restorations' of Antique artworks and characters. According to Goethe, it was at the ambassador's insistence that Emma Hamilton performed the attitudes in Naples, as 'not content with seeing his image of beauty as a moving statue, this friend of art and girlhood wished also to enjoy her as an inimitable painting.'[69] Goethe claimed that William Hamilton 'idolises her and is enthusiastic about everything she does'; in Emma Hamilton, the ambassador had found 'all the antiquities.'[70] It seems that, for William Hamilton, Emma Hamilton represented more than the vehicle by which ancient artworks were exhibited for a modern audience. During the attitudes, Hamilton *became* the Antique, eliding all time and space between Antiquity and modern-day Naples. In William Hamilton's eyes – and, perhaps, in those of her antiquarian spectators – Emma Hamilton *was* a 'statue' or an 'inimitable painting'. She managed even to disengage her own personality and 'life' for the duration of the performances, reconfiguring herself as a series of images. Emma Hamilton did not simply 'restore' the Antique: she became it.

Hamilton's spectators did not need to be 'experts' on Antiquity in order to appreciate her performances: the attitudes would have been striking even for those spectators who took only a perfunctory interest in Antique art and culture. However, for those antiquarians who pursued classical learning in the scientific, archaeological manner identified by Michaelis as typical of connoisseurs during the 'heyday of dilettantism', the attitudes offered an opportunity to review, test and perhaps extend one's knowledge of Antiquity. For Grand Tourists disappointed to discover the desolation and ruin of modern Italy, the attitudes offered an antidote, as Hamilton presented 'restorations' of figures from ancient art and mythology. Hamilton's attitudes responded to – and promoted – the neoclassical movement, serving to reassure spectators that something of the beauty and grace of Antiquity had survived, or had at least been reincarnated in the person of a contemporary performer.

### 1.4 Expressionism: The Signs of Sympathy

Historians have tended to situate the attitudes almost exclusively within the context of the neoclassical movement. They have explored the extent to which Hamilton and her attitudes reflected developments in William Hamilton's understanding of Antiquity; restored elements of the classical past for Grand Tourists heavily invested in the Antique

[69] Goethe, *Italian Journey*, p. 311.
[70] Goethe, *Italian Journey*, p. 200.

ideal; and compared with other 'women who resemble or imitate antiquities'.[71] As the above section has shown, it is indeed productive to consider the relationship between the attitudes and antiquarianism, not least because it partly explains the appeal of Hamilton's performances. However, this focus upon the neoclassical movement has led historians to overlook another important context for the attitudes: namely, that of the philosophical and physiological contemporary interest in 'expression'.

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, theorists and practitioners in both the arts and the sciences placed increasing emphasis upon the study of expression, as they sought to better understand the relationship between the 'passions of the soul' and the facial and bodily gestures by which emotions were communicated. Critics in the fields of painting, rhetoric and dance debated the ways in which their respective arts might be improved in order to more accurately convey the sentiments of the artist, orator or performer. Scientists, meanwhile, explored the anatomical principles of expression; many claimed that it was possible to 'read' character in the facial features, and to thereby comprehend and classify human temperament according to physical appearance. Such debates assumed new significance in the eighteenth century, as artists and performers attempted not merely to contrive powerful expression, but to use this expression to elicit emotional and physical responses amongst their respective audiences. During the Romantic period (which peaked in the years 1800 to 1850), the genuine and natural expression of emotion was highly valued, its artistic, literary, musical and theatrical exponents reacting against the *ancien régime* focus upon rank, affectation and stiff deportment.

Emma Hamilton's attitudes depended upon expressive fluidity. Selecting 'pregnant' moments to represent in individual poses, Hamilton attempted to capture a kind of concentrated 'essence' of each ancient or mythological character; each attitude allowed spectators to perceive a different passion or experience in pure, distilled form. Having identified the passion or experience depicted in the attitude, spectators might enter into what moral philosophers David Hume and Adam Smith referred to as 'sympathy' with Hamilton's characters. This section is concerned to elucidate the extent to which Hamilton's attitudes facilitated this process of sympathetic identification between ancient and mythological characters, and contemporary spectators. Having

[71] For William Hamilton's influence upon the attitudes, see Jenkins and Sloan, *Vases and Volcanoes*, pp. 18-22. For Emma Hamilton and the Grand Tour, see Lori-Ann Touchette, 'Sir William Hamilton's 'Pantomime Mistress'. Finally, for a comparison between Emma Hamilton and other female revivifications of Antiquity (including the protagonist of Germaine de Staël's novel *Corinne*), see Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour*, pp. 133-72.

outlined some of the leading theories in the burgeoning field of expression studies, the section will therefore consider whether or not Hamilton's attitudes did indeed express passions that might have been universally comprehended. If they did, Hamilton's attitudes may be considered to have fulfilled the expectations of contemporary theorists, many of whom presumed that effective painting or performance was capable of communicating legible expressions of emotion between 'agent' and 'spectator'.

French Court painter Charles Le Brun (1619-1690) was one of the first theorists in modern Europe to attempt a comprehensive classification of the supposed correspondence between the passions and the facial expressions. In 1668, Le Brun delivered a lecture to the French Royal Academy entitled *Conférence sur l'expression générale et particulière*, which was subsequently published as a handbook for artists. In the lecture, Le Brun argued that expression in painting should serve to reflect the 'movements of the heart'. He wrote:

> Expression, in my opinion, is a simple and natural image of the thing we wish to represent; it is a necessary ingredient of all the parts of painting, and without it no picture can be perfect; it is this which indicates the true character of each object.[72]

Le Brun suggested that any object or experience which induced a 'passion in the soul' would produce a physical expression of some kind, as the soul was 'linked' to all parts of the body. He divided the passions into two categories: the 'simple' passions and the 'wilder and mixed' passions. The simple passions generally derived from the imagination, and included love, hatred, desire and sorrow, whilst the wilder and mixed passions often represented an appetite or physical aversion relating to the body. Passions in this category included fear, courage, despair and fright.[73] Having detailed the typical causes of these passions, the artist used a series of his own sketches to illustrate the alterations in countenance occasioned by each. For Le Brun, the eyebrows played the most important role in expression – and not, as many ancient philosophers believed, the eyes themselves. The eyebrows tended to rise in the expression of the milder passions, and to slope downwards when the individual experienced 'the wildest and cruellest passions'.[74] For Le

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[72] Le Brun's lecture on expression, '*Conférence sur l'expression*', translated by Jennifer Montagu in *The Expression of the Passions: The Origin and Influence of Charles Le Brun's Conférence sur l'expression générale et particulière* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 126.
[73] Le Brun, *Conférence*, p. 126.
[74] Le Brun, *Conférence*, pp. 128-39. Other parts of the body might aid the expression; in esteem (a simple passion), the shoulders would be bowed and the hands open, whereas in horror (a wild passion), the whole torso would recoil from the object of disgust. See Le Brun, *Conférence*, p. 139.

Brun, it was critical that artists understood the physiology of expression, in order that they were able to depict the human emotions in their work.

Le Brun's theory of expression was discussed frequently in the early lectures of the French Academy, an institution which had been founded twenty years before the delivery of the *Conférence*. Though impressed by Le Brun's meticulously observed passions, the first academicians preferred the more practical approach of artist Roger de Piles (1635-1709).[75] De Piles championed the benefits of 'general expression', arguing that all aspects of an artwork, including composition, colour and figures, should work to convey one principal emotion. He wrote:

> There is one thing of great consequence to be observ'd in the *Oeconomy* of the whole work, which is, that at the first Sight we may be given to understand the quality of the subject: and that the Picture at the first Glance of the Eye, may inspire us with the principal passion of it… if the subject which you have undertaken to treat be of joy, 'tis necessary that everything which enters into your Picture should contribute to that Passion, so that the Beholders shall immediately be mov'd with it.[76]

According to de Piles, a painting should not only depict a particular passion, but should evoke in the viewer a corresponding sentiment or emotion. This was possible only if the artist concentrated upon the representation of one passion; multiple or contradictory passions could not co-exist within one piece. De Piles seems to have demanded very little imagination or creativity from his artistic audience. Whilst Le Brun suggested that the figures' facial expressions might 'indicate' the passions which the artist intended to convey, for de Piles one glance was expected to 'inspire' the viewer with a sense of the painting's expressive purpose. Viewers were to be 'immediately' moved by the passion which the artist had depicted on the canvas; de Piles made no concession to the possibility of viewers failing to be stirred by the appropriate sentiment.

When the British Royal Academy of Arts was founded in 1768, Academy President Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) encouraged students to emulate Antique and Renaissance art, which had been characterised by strong use of light and shadow, 'nicety

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[75] Though Le Brun's lecture had provided a valuable foundation for the study of expression, it was increasingly criticised for the limited range of passions it seemed to acknowledge. Critics worried that Le Brun's pictorial catalogue of passions offered too narrow a set of patterns to aspiring artists, and that the copying of these facial expressions might encourage artists to fall into a 'manner' instead of taking inspiration from nature.

[76] Roger de Piles reflected upon the theory of general expression in the notes for his friend Charles Alphonse Dufresnoy's *Art de peinture*, which was first published in 1668. For a translation of de Piles' notes, see Montagu, *The Expression of the Passions*, p. 82.

of taste in colours' and beautiful expression.[77] Reynolds' thinking owed much to the canon of theory which had been codified by the French Academy – and by Le Brun, de Piles and others – in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Reynolds, however, was concerned that powerful expression might be incompatible with beauty. He criticised the work of Guido Reni on the grounds that the Italian Baroque painter had tended to select subjects which required 'great expression'. Attempting to 'preserve beauty where it could not be preserved', Reni had produced artworks which failed to accurately convey the emotions of his principal figures. Reynolds concluded, 'If you mean to preserve the most perfect beauty *in its most perfect state*, you cannot express the passions, all of which produce distortion and deformity, more or less, in the most beautiful faces.'[78]

Indeed, before the end of the eighteenth century there was a widespread reaction against the kind of intense expression advocated by Le Brun and de Piles, with art critics suggesting that the portrayal of some passions might compromise other elements of the painting or sculpture. Winckelmann was particularly outspoken in his condemnation of the early eighteenth-century enthronement of expression. He pointed out that an expressive countenance 'changes the lines of the face, and the stance of the body; it alters forms that constitute beauty, and the greater that alteration, the more prejudicial it is to beauty.'[79] Winckelmann pointed out that, in the most successful Antique works, expression had been tempered in order to preserve beauty. The ancient Greeks had proven that a neutral or gently suggestive countenance could in fact be more expression than an impassioned, animated one. Winckelmann encouraged modern artists to emulate Greek painting and sculpture, which was characterised by a 'noble simplicity and sedate grandeur in Gesture and Expression'.[80]

It was in the context of this intense discussion on the role of expression that Hamilton performed her attitudes. Whether consciously or not, Hamilton seems to have adhered more closely to the teachings of the early French academicians than to those of Reynolds, Winckelmann and other critics of powerful expression. The attitudes embodied many of the characteristics of de Piles' 'general expression', with Hamilton representing single passions or characters in succession. Judging by Piroli's engravings after

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[77] See in particular Joshua Reynolds' fifth discourse, which was delivered to the Academy in December 1792, in Reynolds, *Discourses on Art: Sir Joshua Reynolds*, ed. Robert R. Wark (London: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 77-90.
[78] Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, p. 78.
[79] Winckelmann, quoted in Montagu, *The Expression of the Passions*, p. 97.
[80] Winckelmann, *Essays on the Philosophy and History of Art*, p. 30.

Rehberg's sketches, Hamilton's expression was exaggerated almost to the point of caricature: in her representation of Medea, for example, Hamilton covered her face with one of her hands, conveying the intense despair of a mother who had resolved to kill her own child. In another of her attitudes, Hamilton imitated Terpsichore, the ancient Greek Muse of the Dance, by balancing in a loose arabesque pose. According to Le Brun, joy might be expressed through open eyes, motionless eyebrows and upturned lips.[81] Hamilton's 'Terpsichore' attitude was the embodiment of Le Brun's conception of joy, as Hamilton gazed downwards, smiling to herself. Even in the portrayal of this 'simple' passion, Hamilton's expression was powerful, the arrangement of her facial features and limbs contributing to the overall impression of contentment. Indeed, judging by spectators' accounts, Hamilton was able to maintain the kind of elegance and beauty which Reynolds and Winckelmann had worried might be lost in the portrayal of the most powerful emotions.

Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun was particularly impressed by the fluidity of Hamilton's expression, and by the range of passions her features were able to support. In the course of the 1790s, Vigée-Lebrun painted Hamilton as Ariadne, a Persian Sibyl and a bacchante. In her memoirs, the artist wrote, 'Nothing, indeed, was more remarkable than the ease Lady Hamilton acquired in spontaneously giving her features an expression of sorrow or of joy, and of posing marvellously to represent different people.' Hamilton's face had 'much animation'; Vigée-Lebrun clearly enjoyed painting the ambassador's wife more than she did many of her commissioned subjects.[82] During her time in Naples, Vigée-Lebrun also witnessed several attitude performances. In this theatrical context, Hamilton's expressions served as indicators of the characters she intended to represent. With Hamilton's 'eyes-a-kindle' and her hair flying, it was clear to Vigée-Lebrun that the performer was imitating a bacchante, and with Hamilton's face contorted into the expression of grief, the artist recognised Mary Magdalene as the source of the representation.[83]

Around the mid eighteenth century, philosophers and art critics came to recognise that painting could evoke a 'passion' in the spectator which corresponded with the sentiment or emotion represented in the artwork. In his *Elements of Criticism* (1762), Henry Home, better known by his legal title Lord Kames, examined the ways in which

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[81] Montagu, *The Expression of the Passions*, p. 137.
[82] Vigée-Lebrun had recently painted the Countess Skavronska's portrait, and she noted that Hamilton's face 'was a complete contrast to the Countess's'. See Vigée-Lebrun, *Memoirs of Madame Vigée Lebrun*, p. 67.
[83] Vigée-Lebrun, *Memoirs of Madame Vigée Lebrun*, p. 67.

spectators responded to the passions expressed in the arts. Echoing the sentiments of Le Brun almost a century before him, Kames argued that the fine arts opened 'a direct avenue to the heart of man.'[84] As the soul and the body were 'intimately connected', it followed that every 'agitation' of the soul produced a visible effect upon the countenance. These external effects, or 'signs', were to be considered 'a natural language, expressing to all beholders emotions and passions as they arise in the heart.'[85] Such signs provoked a predictable set of emotional and physical responses in the viewer.

> None of these signs are beheld with indifference; they are productive of various emotions… each passion, or class of passions, hath its peculiar signs; and… these invariably make certain impressions on a spectator: the external signs of joy, for example, produce a chearful [sic] emotion; the external signs of grief produce pity; and the external signs of rage, produce a sort of terror even in those who are not aimed at.[86]

According to Kames, these responses were 'produced' independently of the viewer's will, just as the initial passions (experienced by the artistic subject, or by the individual upon which the artist based his representation) were the involuntary result of a particular emotional stimulus. Expression on the part of both subject and spectator was natural and spontaneous, directly reflecting the emotion or passion of which it was the product.

Kames' presumption that all expressions depicted in painting might be 'invariably' comprehended by viewers is somewhat problematic. Scientists today recognise that expression does not function as a universal, 'natural language'; research has shown that facial expressions do not convey the same 'meaning' across different cultures, and that individuals within these cultures may express emotions in highly-contrasting ways. The correct identification of emotions is further complicated by the fact that the emotions are not often displayed in isolation, but tend to be expressed in combination with other emotions. Indeed, individuals may even choose to complicate or undermine the ability of onlookers to 'read' their emotions, by clouding their genuine sentiments with neutral or contrived expressions.[87]

However, perhaps the unique appeal of Hamilton's attitudes lay in the opportunity the performances lent for the observation of singular, 'pure' passions; emotions could not

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[84] Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, ed. Peter Jones (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005), p. 32.
[85] Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, p. 211.
[86] Ibid., p. 215.
[87] Susanne Niemeier discusses factors which influence the universality of emotional expression in 'Nonverbal Expression of Emotions in a Business Negotiation', in *Language of Emotions: Conceptualization, Expression, and Theoretical Foundation*, ed. Susanne Niemeier and René Dirven (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 1997), pp. 277-305 (pp. 291-93).

be 'read' in quite so neat, simple a manner in 'real' life as they could in the attitudes. To this end, Hamilton perhaps worked to render her attitudes legible, focusing upon the exhibition of the one 'passion' with which each of her characters was particularly associated – for example, 'despair' for Medea and 'joy' for Terpsichore. This permitted spectators the opportunity to identify and perhaps even experience the 'impressions' of these emotions for themselves.

The process by which sentiments might be shared between subject and spectator was identified by several of Kames' contemporaries as 'sympathy'. In his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1741), moral philosopher David Hume described sympathy as the 'communication' of an agent's inclinations and sentiments to the spectator. He argued that the propensity to sympathise was common to all men, no matter how stark the contrast between the sentiments of the agent and those of his spectator. Hume outlined the means by which the spectator came to possess an impression of the agent's passion:

> When any affection is infus'd by sympathy, it is at first known only by its effects, and by those external signs in the countenance and conversation, which convey an idea of it. The idea is presently converted into an impression, and acquires such a degree of force and vivacity, as to become the very passion itself, and produce an equal emotion, as any original affection.[88]

Like Kames, Hume indicated that the spectator's emotions were 'produced' in automatic response to the external signs of the agent's passions. For Hume, 'resemblance' and 'contiguity' dictated the degree to which the spectator was able to sympathise with these passions. The strongest sympathy was likely to be invoked when there was a general resemblance between the manners, character and language of the agent and the spectator, and when the two individuals existed in close proximity to one another.[89]

Adam Smith, a moral philosopher and economist best known as the author of *The Wealth of Nations*, elaborated upon the principle of sympathy in his first published work, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). Smith argued that it was possible for the spectator to enter into sympathy with the agent only if the agent maintained a 'certain mediocrity' in the display of his or her passions. The point at which this mediocrity was located varied depending upon the passion; whilst it was indecent to express certain passions too strongly, the expression of others could be 'extremely graceful', and enabled a high degree of sympathy to be enjoyed or experienced by the spectator. For Smith,

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[88] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), pp. 316-7.
[89] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, p. 318.

nature herself had determined the extent to which the spectator would sympathise with each passion, rendering some easier to 'enter into' than others. Smith explained, 'if we consider all the different passions of human nature, we shall find that they are regarded as decent, or indecent, just in proportion as mankind are more or less disposed to sympathise with them.'[90] Like Le Brun, Smith distinguished between those passions which derived from the body (such as violent hunger or lust) and those which derived from the imagination (such as disappointment in love). He argued that it was almost always 'indecent' to express the passions relating to the body, as the spectator could not be expected to sympathise with them. However, the agent could reasonably anticipate a much greater degree of sympathy in the case of passions deriving from the imagination:

> [M]y imagination is more ductile, and more readily assumes, if I may say so, the shape and configuration of the imagination of those with whom I am familiar… our imaginations can more readily mould themselves upon his imagination, than our bodies can mould themselves upon his body.[91]

In the above passage, Smith employed a sculptural metaphor to indicate the manner in which the spectator came to experience the passions of the agent. Emma Hamilton's attitudes represented the literal realisation of this 'moulding' process, as her body assumed the 'shape and configuration' of the historical or mythological figures upon which she based her representations. Hamilton entered into a kind of sympathy with her characters, in turn facilitating the activation of her Neapolitan guests' sympathy with the experiences and emotions of these ancient and mythological figures.

According to Smith, the spectator was generally able to sympathise with the 'social passions' (including generosity, humanity, kindness and compassion), and was almost always pleased to see these passions expressed in others. He pointed out that spectators also sympathised with the 'unsocial' and 'selfish' passions, including hatred and resentment.[92] Uniquely among the eighteenth-century philosophers, Smith recognised that the sharing of passions or sentiments – even those of an unpleasant nature – between agent and spectator was itself a source of pleasure for both parties. He wrote:

> We run not only to congratulate the successful, but to condole with the afflicted; and the pleasure which we find in the conversation of one whom in all the passions of his heart we can entirely sympathise with, seems to do more that compensate the painfulness of that sorrow with which the view of his situation affects us.[93]

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[90] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 27.
[91] Ibid., pp. 27-8.
[92] Ibid., pp. 34-40.
[93] Ibid., pp. 15-6.

Smith pointed out that spectators were generally more disposed to sympathise with 'great sorrows' than with small vexations; it was easier to sympathise with disaster, disease or a deep affliction than it was to sympathise with minor misfortunes or setbacks.

For Smith, grief was an 'unsocial' or 'selfish' passion and, as it was often accompanied by sorrow, the display of grief was likely to inspire great sympathy on the part of the spectator.[94] Emma Hamilton embodied several heroines whose lives had been tainted by grief: in two of her most easily identifiable attitudes, she represented Medea and Niobe, mothers from classical mythology who had lost their children. Medea exacted revenge upon her unfaithful husband by murdering his heirs, whilst Niobe was punished for her pride when Artemis and Apollo killed her fourteen children. Medea – a morally contentious character – clearly inspired a degree of sympathy; Hamilton's spectators perhaps recognised the desperation from which Medea's vengeful act had been borne. According to Adele d'Osmond, the audience exclaimed 'Brava, Medea!' whilst Hamilton posed in the attitude. As she assumed the Niobe pose, drawing a child protectively to her breast, the audience cried out, 'Viva, la Niobe!'[95] Spectators were not simply identifying the source of the attitudes as they called out the characters' names: they were offering encouragement to the women, as though lending support to their causes. Spectators entered into a kind of sympathetic identification with 'Medea' and 'Niobe', able in both cases to 'condole with the afflicted'. In the former case, it seems clear that the spectators entered into identification with *Medea's* resentment and grief rather than with the fear of her children, as Medea's passions were lent greater emphasis by Hamilton than were those of her 'children' (played by d'Osmond and others). Hamilton's characterisations seem to have ensured that Medea remained a sympathetic character in spite of the murderous consequences to which the character's passions led.

Drawing upon Hume's theory of sympathy, historian Andrei Pop has suggested that Hamilton's attitudes promoted a kind of 'sympathetic spectatorship'. This enabled onlookers to enter into Hamilton's sentiments, as she assumed the attitudes of historical and mythological women. For the duration of the performance, both Hamilton and her spectators were apparently held in a dream-like state, which heightened the propensity of audience members to identify with such characters as Medea and Niobe. Spectators inferred the sentiments and motives of these classical characters, and an impression of their passions was thereby created in spectators' minds. This process matched Hume's

[94] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, pp. 40-43.
[95] D'Osmond, *Memoirs of the Comtesse de Boigne*, pp. 100-1.

elucidation of the process of sympathy in his *Treatise of Human Nature*. Much of Pop's argument is based upon a passage from Goethe's memoirs, in which the German writer described a performance of Hamilton's attitudes from 1787. Goethe wrote, 'she [Hamilton] looses her hair, takes a pair of shawls, and makes such an alteration of stance, gesture, and countenance that one finally thinks one is dreaming.'[96]

Hamilton may have been transported (or at least have given the impression of transportation) into a trance-like state: by helping to foster an atmosphere of unreality, Hamilton would have heightened the sense of the Antique having 'materialised' before spectators. However, audience members did not necessarily enter into their own dream-like states during performances: indeed, spectators were able to enter into sympathy with Hamilton's characters much more readily than Pop suggests. According to d'Osmond, spectators made frequent interjections of congratulation and encouragement: this indicates a degree of lucidity which would have been near-impossible if spectators really were 'dreaming'. Adam Smith's conception of sympathy therefore offers a more appropriate account of the manner in which spectators identified with Hamilton's ancient or mythological characters. For Smith, there were very few checks upon the deployment of the spectator's sympathy. The spectator's imagination naturally assumed the 'shape and configuration' of those minds with which he or she was adequately acquainted: certainly sympathetic identification did not depend upon the spectator's transportation to a 'dream-like' state. Indeed, Smith's conception of sympathy as a ready, almost automatic process seems more accurately to describe the process by which Hamilton's spectators entered into sympathy with her ancient or mythological characters than does Hume's earlier theory. Sympathy did not depend upon contiguity, or upon a 'general resemblance between the manners, character and language' of the agent and the spectator'; sympathy was easily cultivated through Hamilton's portrayal of the intense emotions of her ancient and mythological characters.

It is clear from d'Osmond's account that spectators became emotionally invested in the lives of Hamilton's characters, sympathising with the passions expressed in the attitudes. Still, spectators did not truly believe that 'Medea' and 'Niobe' had materialised before them; if they had, they would surely have intervened to save Medea and Niobe's children, rather than applauding the representations. Spectators indulged in the fantasy that the mythological heroines had been 'brought to life', yet remained simultaneously aware that they were witnessing a re-performance of mythological or historical events. In

[96] Quoted in Andrei Pop, 'Sympathetic Spectators: Henry Fuseli's *Nightmare* and Emma Hamilton's Attitudes', in *Art History*, 34.5 (November 2011), 934-57 (940-1).

her attitudes, Hamilton was therefore able not only to convince spectators that ancient or mythological characters had been rejuvenated before them, but to activate spectators' sympathy for these characters – even in those cases when the characters displayed 'unsocial' or 'selfish' passions.

Hamilton's success in promoting spectators' sympathetic identification with figures from ancient art and mythology stemmed partly from her allocation of singular passions to each of her characters. Hamilton rendered her characters' sentiments legible by assigning each figure just one passion, such as 'grief' or 'joy'. The attitudes offered spectators the rare opportunity to view such passions in 'pure' form, as Hamilton isolated sentiments which tended to overlap and become confused in everyday interactions. Spectators were able to sympathise with these isolated sentiments – and with the character(s) who expressed these sentiments – through a simple and automatic process of sign-reading and interpretation. Hamilton's attitudes represented the corporeal realisations of Le Brun's sketches. Indeed, the attitudes perhaps served the same kind of didactic function as the sketches, presenting artists and scholars with a catalogue of undiluted expressions of the human passions.

### 1.5 Conclusion

In her position of influence in Naples, Hamilton helped to popularise the *tableaux* genre, inspiring a generation of attitude performers in Britain and on the continent. Between 1810 and 1830, German actress Henriette Hendel-Schütz performed a version of the attitudes, deriving inspiration for her poses from Christian art and classical mythology. Sophie Schröder and Elise Bürger attempted to capitalise upon Hendel-Schütz's success in Germany, although neither woman dedicated her career to the exclusive performance of attitudes; Schröder was better known as a tragic actress and Bürger as a playwright. Danish performer Ida Brun was perhaps Hamilton's most famous successor. Brun interspersed her attitudes with segments of ballet dancing. According to Kirsten Gram Holmström, Brun based her poses upon 'classicising sacrificial themes', avoiding the bacchantic motifs for which Hamilton had become (perhaps unjustly) renowned.[97] Attitudes were also popular in Britain as a form of parlour charade, lending middle and

[97] Kirsten Gram Holmström, *Monodrama, Attitudes, Tableaux Vivants: Studies on Some Trends of Theatrical Fashion, 1770-1815* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1967), p. 176.

upper-class women the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of fashion and classical culture.[98]

Emma Hamilton had developed her attitudes within the context of a widespread European taste for the artistic and cultural products of Antiquity. However, the neoclassical movement was not the sole context in which the attitudes were devised and performed. Hamilton seems also to have drawn upon advances in the understanding of expression: exhibiting various 'passions' through minor adjustments in posture and countenance, Hamilton encouraged the sympathetic identification of spectators with ancient and mythological characters. On a more fundamental level, the attitudes also reflected a much longer tradition whereby the female body was exhibited for the entertainment of (largely male) spectators. Perhaps unsurprisingly, however, this element of the attitudes' spectatorship was unacknowledged by the authors of contemporary accounts.

The attitudes lay at the intersection of sculpture and drama. Like the most effective artworks, Hamilton's characterisations halted time; spectators were given the opportunity to scrutinise the female body in some detail. However, Hamilton's poses were held together through movement, and often represented multiple, successive events in the manner of a play or an opera. Hamilton invested well-known stories and historical episodes with new intrigue, unsettling spectators' sense of the familiar by freezing 'pregnant' moments which seemed to contain within them the possibility of alternative outcomes. Hamilton also held a mirror up to spectators' own passions. By identifying 'Medea' or 'Niobe' as the sources of the attitudes, spectators were, in effect, identifying sentiments of which they had personal experience. In her kaleidoscopic presentation of the human passions, the past and the present were elided. Hamilton reassured antiquarians and Grand Tourists that the classical past had not been entirely lost, and that the ruling passions of Antiquity remained relevant and exciting in the modern age.

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[98] For a discussion of these parlour charades in an American context, see Karen Halttunen, 'Disguises, Masks, and Parlor Theatricals: The Decline of Sentimental Culture in the 1850s', in *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 153-90.

## Chapter Two: *Raphael's Dream* at the Circus, 1815-1840

In the autumn of 1830, equestrianist and circus performer Andrew Ducrow introduced a new living statuary act entitled *Raphael's Dream! Or the Mummy & Study of Living Pictures* at Astley's Amphitheatre in London. This was an 'entirely New Classical Historical Entertainment' which, the circus management promised, would bring both canvas and marble to life. Playbills heralding the act's early performances tended simply to outline the programme of 'living pictures' presented in the piece [Fig. 2.1]. A bill from September 1830 indicated that the *tableaux* were divided into four series, the first of which featured representations of 'The Rude Specimens of Ancient Art', the second 'The Stone Statues of the Grecian and Italian Schools', the third 'Imaginary Moving Forms of Sculpture', and the fourth 'The Colored Specimens of Art.'[1] However, when Ducrow performed the act at the Drury Lane Theatre in 1834, a full account of the piece was deposited in the Lord Chamberlain's Office.[2] It is clear from this account that *Raphael's Dream* departed significantly from Emma Hamilton's attitudes. Though Ducrow exhibited a similarly dizzying repertoire of classical, mythological and biblical characters, he marshalled the *tableaux* into a single narrative. Immobility was a much more conspicuous aspect of Ducrow's performances than of Hamilton's. Hamilton's performances had been fluid, her characterisations appearing to emerge out of one another by virtue of the graceful movements by which she transitioned between them. In contrast, Ducrow used *tableaux* to halt his performances, permitting spectators to scrutinise his Antique embodiments as discrete segments within a carefully-planned narrative.

According to the account prepared for the Lord Chamberlain, *Raphael's Dream* was set in the studio of Raphael. Actor Edward Gomersal, who played the part of the artist, told the audience that the previous night he ('Raphael') had seen the statues in his collection 'performing all the functions of life.' Inspired by this recollection, 'Raphael' proceeded to evaluate the statues (including those representing Prometheus, Hercules and the Dying Gladiator), whilst Ducrow personated them in immobile *tableaux* on the stage. At one point in his monologue, Raphael was distracted by a group of minstrels, whose music lulled him to sleep. The artist, however, continued to describe the classical statues in his sleep. Having awoken, Raphael was visited by a servant, who informed the artist

[1] Playbill for 21 September 1830. VATC, 'Astley's Amphitheatre'.
[2] Under the Licensing Act of 1737, the Lord Chamberlain had been empowered to prohibit the performance of new plays at London's theatres. Consequently, the proprietors of the major theatres deposited copies of their plays with the Lord Chamberlain's Office, hoping to prove the integrity of their acts and thereby avoid censorship. For *Raphael's Dream*, see BL, Add MS 42925, ff. 462-8.

that a large frame had arrived. This frame was used to 'contain' the next series of *tableaux*, which included Ducrow's interpretations of Mercury, Atlas, Apollo, Pan and Sampson. Raphael concluded the piece by addressing the audience directly: 'From your silence so profound/And the smiling looks around/May I then most humbly deem/That you're content with Raphael's Dream.'[3]

*Raphael's Dream* drew upon the theatrical genre of melodrama, which enjoyed particular popularity in the first half of the nineteenth century. Exponents of melodrama used *tableaux* as a means by which to punctuate broader narratives, and to lend emphasis to significant or illustrative moments within them. Similarly, in *Raphael's Dream* Ducrow adopted motionless poses on the stage, suspending the action in order that his spectators might identify the classical, mythological or biblical figures which he personated. Ducrow's *tableaux* served to familiarise audiences at Astley's circus and the Drury Lane Theatre – audiences which would have included working and lower-middle class spectators – with episodes and characters from Antiquity, mythology and the Bible, rendering these episodes and characters 'readable' by freezing them and presenting them in isolation from the rest of the narrative. Like melodrama, Ducrow's performances were highly pictorial. At certain points, they rejected narrative in favour of image as the most effective method by which to convey meaning and create striking effect.

By 1830, patterns of exchange and reciprocal influence between theatrical, artistic and literary genres were well-established. In the second half of the eighteenth century, a number of writers had encouraged actors to draw inspiration from other arts. In his *Dramatic Genius* (1770), for example, playwright Paul Hiffernan wrote, 'From *Sculpture* performers are to learn pleasing attitudes, and how to stand with firmness and grace: from *History-Painting* the diversified energy of the passions in the human countenance, with the body's suitable action to each.'[4] Martin Meisel has argued that the 'narrative pictorial style' which characterised fiction, painting and drama in the first half of the nineteenth century depended upon a 'promiscuous and adulterate habit in the various arts of borrowing from each other.' Recognising the benefits of 'pictorial realisation' for the achievement of spectacle and effect, exponents of painting and theatrical performance incorporated *tableaux* and other 'pictorial illusions' into their works.[5] Ducrow was influenced by contemporary theatrical, literary and artistic genres in the conception of

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[3] *Raphael's Dream*. BL, Add MS 42925, ff. 462-8.
[4] Quoted in Anne Patricia Williams, 'Description and Tableau in the Eighteenth-Century British Sentimental Novel', in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 8.4 (July 1996), 465-84 (473).
[5] Martin Meisel, *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 433.

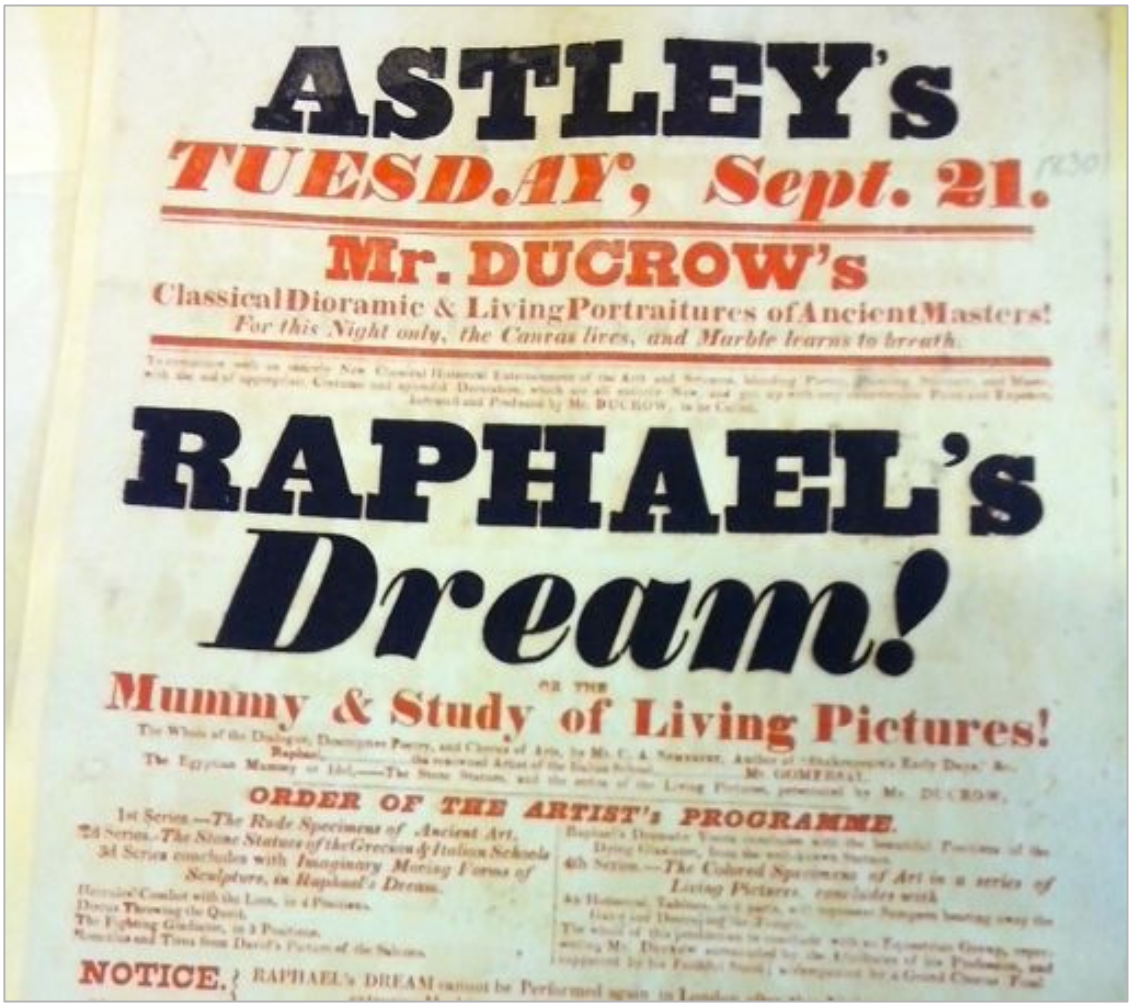


Figure 2.1: Playbill for 21 September 1830, VATC, 'Astley's Amphitheatre'.

*Raphael's Dream*. This chapter will suggest that Ducrow in turn influenced the course which the *tableaux* medium would take, as exponents increasingly favoured discrete, frozen configurations of the kind found in early nineteenth-century melodramas and theatrical productions, rather than the fluid streams of characterisations which Emma Hamilton had performed in Naples.

*Raphael's Dream* and other early nineteenth-century *tableaux* performances represented important channels through which working and lower-middle class men and women were familiarised with the exploits of mythological characters, and with some of the Greek and Roman figures who had been represented (and subsequently re-presented) in ancient sculptures and contemporary artworks. However, the *tableaux* medium was not the only classicising performance genre popular in the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1831, dramatist James Robinson Planché exhibited his *Olympic Revels* at London's Olympic Theatre, and this 'mythological burlesque burletta' inaugurated a new sub-genre of classical burlesques (essentially parodic reinterpretations of episodes from classical history and mythology).[6] Such productions served, like *tableaux* performances, to extend an impression of Antiquity to members of the working and lower-middle classes.

In this chapter, I will argue that 'popular' engagements with Antiquity – in the form of *tableaux* performances and classical burlesques – helped to consolidate the 'Rational Recreation' project, reflecting the interests of those organisations (such as the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge) whose members desired the extension of a 'Classical' education to working and lower-middle class men and women. The early years of the nineteenth century had seen the consolidation of several important collections of Antique sculpture and classicising artworks, the British Museum having erected a new 'Antiquities' wing in 1807 to display its burgeoning repository of terracottas, statues, vases and coins. However, many of these collections remained virtually inaccessible to members of the lower classes. As the SDUK and other societies worked to promote easier access to these storehouses of culture and knowledge, *tableaux* performances and classical burlesques presented audiences with reinterpretations of the same episodes and characters which had been depicted in the artworks exhibited at museums and galleries. In doing so, they promulgated the notion that the Classics remained both decipherable and pertinent to members of the working and lower-middle classes.

[6] Jeffrey Richards, *The Golden Age of Pantomime: Slapstick, Spectacle and Subversion in Victorian England* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), p. 69.

## 2.1 Image versus Narrative: Pictorialism in the Nineteenth Century

Andrew Ducrow, manager and chief performer at Astley's Amphitheatre between 1825 and 1841, included living statuary in his programme of entertainment from early 1828. In August 1828, Ducrow's 'Venetian Statue' act (billed to follow the evening's main entertainment, a hippodramatic piece entitled 'Invasion of Russia') saw Ducrow represent 'a Series of the beautiful Compositions of Ancient Sculpture.' Characters personated included Cincinnatus, the Fighting Gladiator, Ajax, Romulus and Remus. Ducrow also represented Hercules twice in the programme, first in battle with the Nemean Lion and second 'throwing Lysimachus into the Sea.' The latter delineation was, according to the playbill, based upon Antonio Canova's *Hercules and Lichas*, a sculpture which had been completed in 1815.[7] Hercules' clash with the Nemean Lion had been depicted on a number of surviving ancient vases and in a painting by Peter Paul Rubens (c. 1639), although Ducrow's representation of Hercules defeating the lion narrowly predated the excavation of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, where the twelve labours of Hercules (of which the killing of the Nemean Lion was the first) had been portrayed by ancient sculptors in a series of metopes.[8]

Like Emma Hamilton, Ducrow selected characters with whom many of his spectators would have been familiar. For example, Hercules was part of the 'general cultural imagination' of the nineteenth century. As Simon Goldhill has pointed out, Hercules would have been recognisable even to those with no first-hand knowledge of the 'Classics'. Hercules was frequently represented in painting, sculpture and in broader popular culture, his nudity and robust musculature featuring prominently in most depictions.[9] Andrew Ducrow's father, Peter Ducrow, had performed at circuses and theatres as the 'Flemish Hercules' (a name which paid tribute to the family's Belgian heritage), entertaining audiences with feats of strength and agility. In a performance at the Olympic Circus in Glasgow in 1805, Peter Ducrow balanced 'Three Coach Wheels on his Chin' and carried 'a Stage of Boards, with Nine Persons on his Hands & Feet.' According to the *Caledonian Mercury*, Peter Ducrow's young son Andrew had taken part in the act, standing 'on his Head on Chairs, Candlesticks, &c, also on a ladder 12 feet high, when it

[7] Programme for 25 August 1828. VATC, 'Astley's Amphitheatre'.
[8] Metopes were the rectangular, recessed spaces in Doric-order friezes. The Temple of Zeus was excavated in 1831, so it is possible that Ducrow's later personations of Hercules and the Nemean Lion were influenced by the discovery of the friezes at Olympia. For a discussion of the excavations, and the original significance of the statues, see Judith M. Barringer, 'The Temple of Zeus at Olympia, Heroes, and Athletes', in *Hesperia*, 74.2 (April-June 2005), 211-41.
[9] Simon Goldhill, *Victorian Culture and Classical Antiquity: Art, Opera, Fiction, and the Proclamation of Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 50. For a survey of representations of Hercules, see Emma Stafford, *Herakles* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

will break to pieces, leaving him on his head on one side of it, where he will turn round several times.'[10] Peter Ducrow had aligned himself with the ancient figure of Hercules as a means by which to underline his own physicality. For the circus performer and, no doubt, for many of his spectators, 'Hercules' was simply a byword for corporeal strength.[11] Andrew Ducrow, however, drew out a much more complex web of connotations through his delineations of the mythological character, thereby using the 'Hercules' moniker in a much more sophisticated manner than had his father.

As the narrator of *Raphael's Dream*, 'Raphael' tended to communicate the qualities with which each of Ducrow's characters could be associated: in the case of Hercules, Raphael noted the mythological character's physical strength, bravery, resolution and obstinance. According to Raphael, Hercules approached the encounter with the Nemean Lion 'heroically', exhibiting 'defiance' towards 'the savage Brute.'[12] For Judith Barringer, Hercules' association with both physical and mental resilience had already been established in the classical period of ancient Greek history. In the Temple of Zeus (built between 472 and 456 BC), Hercules was depicted in a series of twelve metopes completing his 'labours' with dexterity and courage. Barringer argues that the metopes offered 'positive models of heroism, *arête* [moral virtue], and glory'. Such models were intended to inspire the competitors at nearby Olympia, indicating to athletes that their own physical exploits might grant them immortality of the kind achieved by Hercules.[13] Hercules had stood as an exemplar of physical strength and resolution for thousands of years by the time that Ducrow came to personate him on the Astley's stage.

The quality of courage was lent particular emphasis in *Raphael's Dream*, as Ducrow represented Hercules not in the midst of battle with the Nemean Lion but 'waiting to encounter' the 'savage Brute.' As Lessing had noted in his *Laocoon* essay, ancient Greek sculptors had tended to represent those moments which were especially 'pregnant with meaning'. Such moments were not necessarily those of the greatest intensity or passion, but were those which lent 'free scope to the imagination.'[14] This

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[10] 'Olympic Circus, College Street', in *Caledonian Mercury*, 28 November 1805, n.p.
[11] Adopting the moniker of 'Hercules' was common practice; a Mr. Graham performed as the 'British Hercules', going through 'the whole of his wonderful Feats of Strength' at the Eagle Tavern and Grecian Theatre in Shoreditch in June 1828. See programme for 23 June 1828. BI, 'Eagle Tavern and Grecian Theatre'.
[12] *Raphael's Dream*. BL, Add MS 42925, ff. 462-8 (f. 464).
[13] As Barringer notes, several Greek writers had described Hercules' mortal exploits, which suggests that subsequent mythologies might have been attached to a living man. For example, both Pausanias and Pindar claimed that Hercules had founded the Olympic Games. Barringer, 'The Temple of Zeus', 221, 237.
[14] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay upon the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, trans. Ellen Frothingham (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1887), p. 19, 29.

dictum was observed by Ducrow just as it had been by Emma Hamilton. In *Raphael's Dream*, Ducrow represented a moment 'pregnant with meaning' in the story of Hercules' encounter with the lion. By depicting Hercules just before he made contact with the lion, Ducrow was able to demonstrate the mythological hero's extreme courage. 'Hercules' would in this moment have to come realise the enormity of his task, not only in his present encounter but in the remaining labours set for him by King Eurystheus.

Ducrow's living statuary was discussed in John Wilson's *Noctes Ambrosianae*, a fictional account of seventy-one imaginary 'meetings' which appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* between 1822 and 1835. Having claimed that Ducrow was 'a man of genius', the character 'North' (modelled upon Scottish author Wilson himself) was described as having removed his coat and waistcoat to pose, like Ducrow, as Hercules. North did not draw inspiration from traditional understandings of the mythological character, but from the tragedy *Hercules Furens* by Euripides, the Greek writer who had also penned *Iphigenia in Aulis* and *Iphigenia in Tauris*. In this tragedy (first performed around 416 BC), Hercules attempted to save his father, wife and children from murder, only to be driven mad and led to kill his family himself. Euripides' Hercules was martial and heroic, though the protagonist was ultimately defined by his madness. This madness seems to have been effectively conveyed by 'North' in his reinterpretation of Ducrow's living statuary. 'Shepherd' and 'Ticker' (characters based upon the writers James Hogg and Robert Sym) praised North for the manner in which he appeared to foam 'at the mouth like a mad dowg', his hands 'quiverin' and his eyes 'flickerin'. Shepherd claimed that North had even managed to 'out-hercules' Hercules himself.[15]

Originally a Greek hero but adapted by the Romans for their own mythological purposes, Hercules had featured in a great variety of tales and tragedies in Antiquity and beyond. Indeed, as Wilson's account indicates, Hercules was a character with which various characteristics and exploits could be associated. Ducrow's personations of Hercules emphasised the mythological figure's physical strength, bravery and resilience. If Ducrow was familiar with Euripides' *Hercules Furens*, he chose not to embody the quality of madness in his interpretations of the character, preferring instead to represent Hercules as an exemplar of physical and mental fortitude. It is clear, too, that Ducrow's 'Hercules' *tableaux* was a 'living picture' in the truest sense, as Ducrow personated the character 'waiting to encounter' the Nemean Lion. Ducrow captured the story of Hercules' battle in one, static 'freeze-frame'. A moment which might in a continuous

[15] J.F. Ferrier, ed., *The Works of Professor Wilson of the University of Edinburgh: Noctes Ambrosianae*, 12 vols. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1865), III, p. 151.

narrative have simply passed by was drawn out in some detail, and spectators were lent the opportunity to appreciate Hercules' courage and heroism, to anticipate the subsequent action, and perhaps even to draw their own conclusions regarding the nature of Hercules' encounter with the lion.

In his two *Raphael's Dream* personations of 'Mercury', Ducrow represented the Roman god in similarly 'pregnant' poses: 'preparing/Homeward-bound to pierce the skies' and stood 'on the mountain summit… Ready to take his flight.' In both, 'Mercury' was apparently 'light as air in Beauty bright'. These *tableaux* were consistent with Mercury's role as heavenly messenger. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Mercury (known as Hermes) possessed wings in order that he could mediate between ordinary men and the gods. Though Ducrow's *tableaux* were themselves static, no attempt seems to have been made to conceal the transitions between the poses. There was no recorded pause in the action of the piece; Ducrow must have altered his poses in view of the audience, just as Emma Hamilton had done in her Neapolitan performances.

An ability to effect fluid transitions may well have been honed in the late 1820s, as Ducrow performed horseback *tableaux* at venues across Britain. According to a correspondent for the *Caledonian Mercury*, Ducrow's personation of the 'dying gladiator' was substituted, through 'a sudden transformation, effected on horseback', by the performer's characterisation of Mercury. Ducrow 'accelerated the speed of his course to the utmost pitch' and proceeded to throw himself into 'those beautifully classical attitudes of which he is so great a master.'[16] Ducrow was able to move between his attitudes in sharp, clean movements, keeping his spectators' attention on the poses themselves and not on the transitions between them. As he perfected his equestrian and non-equestrian *tableaux* in the course of his circus career, Ducrow would have built up a repertory of facial expressions and gestures relevant to each of his personifications, which allowed him to exemplify the distinctions between the characters. Indeed, reviewers often commented upon the graceful character of Ducrow's *tableaux*. When Ducrow performed *Raphael's Dream* at the Royal Theatre in Liverpool in February 1832, a correspondent from the *Liverpool Mercury* recommended that 'artists and admirers of art, or indeed all who have a taste for beauty, grace, truth, and skill united' should 'seize the opportunity of

[16] 'Ducrow's Amphitheatre', in *Caledonian Mercury*, 19 November 1827, n.p.

witnessing the piece entitled Raphael's Dream, in which Mr. Ducrow personates in the most just and beautiful manner several celebrated pieces of sculpture.'[17]

Ducrow's immobile, 'pregnant' poses, incorporated into a broader narrative through graceful transitions, were reminiscent of the *tableaux* used in melodramatic productions contemporaneous to Ducrow's performances. Melodrama emerged as a theatrical genre around the turn of the nineteenth century, although its origins remain somewhat contested. Jacky Bratton has linked melodrama to the new Romantic sensibility, arguing that melodramatic performances represented one manifestation of the Romantic understanding of humanity; melodramas dramatised elements of the 'subconscious', its exponents exhibiting 'a marked idealism and optimism about human potentiality.'[18] Peter Brooks, in contrast, has argued that melodrama represented the creative expression of revolutionary culture, and that its emergence ought partly to be attributed to the social and aesthetic shifts which occurred in Europe towards the end of the eighteenth century.[19] Theatre historians agree that nineteenth-century melodramas 'framed and reflected, captured and distorted' elements of modern life in a manner which exponents of 'legitimate' theatrical productions were either unable or unwilling to do.[20] One of the most effective ways in which melodramas reflected modern life was by introducing the elements of oscillation, disruption and disintegration, and the achievement of all of these elements relied upon the frequent use of expressive *tableaux*.

In his study of *The Black Crook*, a melodrama produced by Henry Jarrett and Harry Palmer at New York's Niblo's Garden Theatre in the 1860s, Bradley Rogers notes that melodramas were characterised by rapid alternations between scenes, songs, dances and *tableaux*. In *The Black Crook*, 'painterly effects' were introduced as a means of calling spectators' attention to several of the production's more 'spectacular' moments, and *tableaux* scenes expressive of characters' intense emotions punctuated the narrative. The melodrama culminated in a 'Grand Transformation Scene' which, set in a 'subterranean gallery of emeralds and crystal stalactites', featured fairies, sprites, water-

[17] The reviewer noted that the attitudes of Mercury, Apollo and Pan were 'most graceful and correct', and that Ducrow 'well deserved the plaudits which greeted his finished and excellent performance.' See 'Royal Theatre', in *Liverpool Mercury*, 10 February 1832, p. 46.
[18] Jacky Bratton, 'Romantic Melodrama', in *The Cambridge Companion to British Theatre 1730-1830*, ed. Jane Moody and Daniel O'Quinn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 115-27 (p. 116).
[19] Peter Brooks, *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 65. See also Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).
[20] Bratton, 'Romantic Melodrama', p. 126.

nymphs and gnomes posed in an elaborate arrangement illuminated by 'calcium lights'.[21] Author Mark Twain recalled this Transformation Scene in his memoirs, noting that the *tableaux* arrangement encompassed:

> beautiful bare-legged girls hanging in flower baskets; others stretched in groups on great sea shells; others clustered around fluted columns; others in all possible attitudes; girls – nothing but a wilderness of girls – stacked up, pile on pile, away aloft to the dome of the theatre… all lit up with gorgeous theatrical figures, and witnessed through a great gauzy curtain that counterfeits a soft silver mist! It is the wonders of the Arabian Nights realised.[22]

In their conception of *tableaux* scenes, Jarrett and Palmer anticipated late nineteenth-century *tableau vivant* performances in several ways. Not only did they introduce immobile *tableaux* as a means by which to lend emphasis to emotive scenes and episodes, but the producers of *The Black Crook* – like those of *tableau vivant* performances – permitted spectators the opportunity for extended scrutiny of the barely-clad (and suggestively-arranged) female body.

Though Ducrow's performances were not especially suggestive or erotic, they certainly featured immobile *tableaux* interjections. Ducrow introduced the element of stasis as a means by which to halt the forward momentum of the narrative, allowing spectators to absorb the full meaning and implications of the moments which he chose to 'freeze'. In Ducrow's performances and in melodramatic productions, *tableaux* afforded what Martin Meisel has termed the 'pleasures of "realisation"', as 'pictures' resembling artworks materialised in the midst of dramatic action.[23] Though the inspiration for the melodramatic *tableaux* and Ducrow's *tableaux vivants* differed somewhat (the former having been derived from the circumstances of 'modern' life, the latter from the realms of classical history, mythology and the Bible), both forms of *tableaux* exemplified key, expressive moments drawn from a broader narrative. Both reflected exponents' desire to generate tension and a sense of expectancy, as the interjection of immobile scenes obliged spectators to anticipate the resumption of moving action.

Ducrow often employed *tableaux* as a means by which to emphasise the courageous, 'manly' qualities of his characters. Indeed, Ducrow's performances inspired a number of other male-led living statuary acts in the 1830s and 1840s, many of which

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[21] Bradley Rogers, 'Redressing the Black Crook: The Dancing Tableau of Melodrama', in *Modern Drama*, 55.4 (Winter 2012), 476-96 (483).
[22] Mark Twain, *Mark Twain's Travels with Mr. Brown*, ed. Franklin Walker and G. Ezra Dane (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1940), pp. 85-6.
[23] Meisel, *Realizations*, p. 49.

also exhibited 'martial' characterisations. In September 1845, 'Professor' Keller's '*troupe plastique*' personated a gladiator, as well as the combat between Romulus and Latinus (an episode which had featured in both ancient Greek and ancient Roman mythology) as part of their 'successive groups of heroes and demigods' at Vauxhall Gardens.[24] The 'Poses Academiques' troupe also performed at Vauxhall, personating the '7 Labours of Hercules' in August 1846.[25] Ducrow and other performers' frequent depictions of martial heroes on the stage reflected contemporary interest in the nature of 'heroism'.[26] Spectators were presented with carefully-selected 'snapshots', which emphasised the heroic, praiseworthy aspects of the ancient and mythological characters.

By virtue of melodramatic productions, a number of Ducrow's spectators would have understood that the scenes, episodes or emotions which had been 'stilled' ought to be regarded as especially significant. However, Astley's spectators for whom frequent visits to the theatre were impossible may have found the frequent interjection of immobile *tableaux* somewhat bewildering. Martin Meisel has argued that in theatrical productions there emerged a 'severe tension' between 'picture and motion', or between:

> the achievement of a static image, halting (and compressing) time so that the full implications of events and relations can be savored, and the achievement of a total dynamism, in which everything moves and works for its own sake, as wonder and "effect."

For Meisel, producers did not manage to actualise 'a fully adequate transforming synthesis'. In fact, this 'tension' was only fully resolved in the twentieth century with the emergence of film.[27] Spectators may have been surprised to find the narrative of *Raphael's Dream* suspended, the protagonist stilled on the stage for a number of seconds.

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[24] Vauxhall Gardens', in *The Morning Post*, 12 September 1845, p. 5. According to a newspaper cutting preserved in the HTC, Keller had originated from Poland, and had worked as an apprentice to Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen in Rome. Having abandoned his early dream of becoming a sculptor, Keller had determined to offer 'living incarnations of the inanimate marble.' See newspaper clipping, undated. HTC, 'Theatrical Miscellaneous – Tableaux'.

[25] Poster for 10 August 1846. ML, 'Vauxhall: Cuttings', volume 3, IV/162/14. *Tableaux* interpretations of martial characters were not exclusive to London. In September 1859, a *tableaux* troupe presented a reinterpretation of Ducrow's *Raphael's Dream* at the Odd Fellows' Hall in Temple Street, Birmingham; the programme consisted of 'twelve highly interesting Tableaux Vivants' including a representation of a heroic 'Greek Slave'. See 'Odd Fellows' Hall, Temple Street', in *Birmingham Daily Post*, 5 September 1859, p. 3.

[26] In 1751, Jean-Jacques Rousseau had distinguished between the hero and the warrior, suggesting that the 'true hero' was defined not by his character in battle but by his ordinary behaviour. However, later writers were unable to eliminate the martial element of heroism: Thomas Carlyle contended that each individual must strive to be 'brave' and 'valiant', marching forward 'like a man.' Rousseau is quoted in David R. Cameron, 'Rousseau's Political Thought', in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 45-3 (July-September 1984), 397-419 (401-2, 404). For Carlyle, see Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (New York: Macmillan, 1905), p. 42.

[27] Meisel, *Realizations*, p. 50.

However, surprise would no doubt have been a reaction which Ducrow and other producers aspired to generate, as they competed for patronage in an increasingly-saturated entertainment market.

The structure of *Raphael's Dream* therefore owed a good deal to that of melodrama, exponents of the latter form having used *tableaux* as a means of drawing attention to significant episodes or emotional states within a broader narrative. Exchange between theatrical, literary and artistic genres was both frequent and multi-faceted; *tableaux* scenes represented just one of several instances of overlap between drama and painting in the nineteenth century.[28] Writers, playwrights and theatrical producers seem to have recognised that particular signification and effect could be achieved through the conjunction of story and image. For this reason, 'painterly' effects appeared in theatrical productions and *tableaux* performances alike.

The significance of *Raphael's Dream* lay not only in the contribution which it made to early nineteenth-century styles of pictorial representation. Ducrow's performances were fundamentally neoclassical in character, featuring reinterpretations of tales from classical history and mythology. The next section of this chapter will therefore consider Ducrow's *tableaux vivants* alongside other 'classicising' performances of the early to mid nineteenth century. It will consider these *tableaux* performances alongside classical burlesques, arguing that *tableaux vivants* and classical burlesques together played a key role in fostering the development of 'classical' knowledge among nineteenth-century spectators. Such knowledge was rather diluted, yet performances nevertheless allowed members of the working and lower-middle classes to access stories, tales and traditions which may otherwise have seemed somewhat remote from the concerns of modern life.

### 2.2 Turning the Classics 'topsy-turvy'[29]: Antiquity on the Popular Stage

*Olympic Revels* (1831), identified as the earliest 'classical burlesque' to be performed on the English stage, was a parodic reinterpretation of the ancient story of Prometheus, Zeus and Pandora.[30] In Hesiod's *Theogony* (c. 700 BC), Prometheus had tricked Zeus, the king of the Mount Olympus gods, into accepting an inedible sacrificial offering; by accepting this offering, Zeus inadvertently set a precedent for future human sacrifices, which no

[28] Meisel, *Realizations*, p. 433.
[29] 'Planché's Extravaganzas', in *Literary Examiner*, 31 January 1880, p. 144.
[30] Richards, *The Golden Age of Pantomime*, p. 69; Laura Monrós-Gaspar, *Victorian Classical Burlesques: A Critical Anthology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 8-9.

longer included proper meat but rather bones wrapped in fat. In retribution for these insufficient sacrifices, Zeus withheld the element of fire from humans – although Prometheus stole this element back from the king of the gods, restoring it to humans. It was at this point that Zeus sent Pandora, the first woman, to live with humanity. In his *Works and Days*, Hesiod had expanded upon the story of Pandora. Pandora was sent to earth with a jar which, when opened, exposed humanity to various evils. The quality of foresight remained in the jar, denying humanity any 'hope' for the future. Other ancient writers had also referred to the story of Prometheus and Pandora. In Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* (c. 430 BC), Prometheus' transgressions against Zeus were even more significant, the former having stolen for humanity not only fire but the skills of writing, mathematics and science. Pandora again appeared in connection with the fateful jar, and humanity was deprived once again of 'hope' in consequence of Prometheus' earlier sins.

The author (or collaborative author) of nearly two-hundred extravaganzas, comedies, burlettas, operas and melodramas, James Planché was a particularly influential figure in the early nineteenth-century theatrical world. Planché is credited with having instituted a reform in theatrical dress, having introduced historically-accurate costume into British theatre, and his succession to a post in the College of Arms in 1854 reflected Planché's sustained interest in genealogical and heraldic research.[31] Planché's interpretation of the ancient story focused upon the 'creation' of Pandora, with the burlesque's opening scene featuring Jupiter (the Roman equivalent of the ancient Greek Zeus) plotting to 'annoy' Prometheus. Jupiter orders Mercury to fly to Mount Etna to enquire about the progress of Vulcan's project, as Vulcan, the god of fire, has been tasked with the creation of the 'lady' (Pandora) who will be sent to disturb Prometheus. Jupiter subsequently praises Vulcan for having moulded Pandora 'as life like as any thing can be', and Jupiter instructs Mercury to deliver Pandora to Prometheus. Subsequently, Pandora is left alone with her 'box', which she has been instructed to leave closed. Judging that no real harm could come of it, Pandora opens the box. Jupiter appears and vows vengeance on both Pandora and Prometheus, although ultimately 'hope' rises out of the box and erases Pandora and Prometheus' transgressions.[32] The classical burlesque therefore concludes on an altogether more optimistic note than had the epic poems from which Planché had derived inspiration, with 'hope' rather freed from the 'box' than trapped within it, and both Pandora and Prometheus pardoned by the king of the gods.

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[31] Sally Mitchell, ed., *Victorian Britain: An Encyclopedia* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 606.
[32] J.R. Planché, *The Extravaganzas of J.R. Planché*, ed. T.F. Dillon Croker and Stephen Tucker, 5 vols. (London: Samuel French, 1879), I, pp. 39-60.

Planché's *Olympic Revels* reinterpreted, revised and embellished various aspects of Hesiod's and Aeschylus' 'original' accounts of Prometheus, Zeus and Pandora. In the opening scene, Jupiter is unable to locate many of the 'immortals': Apollo is 'at the Glee-club, at the Cat and Swallow', and Bacchus is 'at the Punch Bowl, drunk as David's sow.' Later, when Mercury delivers Pandora to Prometheus, Mercury and Pandora discuss methods of travel. Mercury notes that much discussion had recently centred upon the effectiveness of 'steam' travel, and that Juno has also vowed to build a 'railroad'. Finally, Pandora considers the possibility that the box with which she has been entrusted is filled with lollipops, peppermint drops or even 'Lundyfoots' (an eighteenth-century variety of snuff). By inserting these anachronistic allusions to contemporary culture into the burlesque, Planché 'updated' Hesiod's and Aeschylus' stories, making it easier for spectators to identify some of the themes – anger, revenge, temptation and hope/hopelessness – which had characterised the ancient works. Depicting Apollo and Bacchus as susceptible to the seductions of alcohol, Planché rendered the mythological characters rather more 'mortal' than 'immortal', indicating to spectators that parallels between the lives and experiences of the 'moderns' and the ancients might be identified.

*Olympic Revels* set the standard for the classical burlesque genre in various ways. As Richard Schoch has pointed out, Planché's use of rhyming couplets, puns and musical interludes, his transposition of characters 'from high to low' through the contemporisation of past events, and his use of 'spectacular' stage effects (such as claps of 'thunder' to accompany significant moments) came to be typical of mid nineteenth-century classical burlesques.[33] In burlesques, dialogue, song, dance and special effects combined to produce frenetic performances, as exponents of the genre derived inspiration from various theatrical and literary sources. Planché himself credited the influence of both Italian opera and poetry upon *Olympic Revels*, though admitted that the main impetus behind the conception of his burlesques lay in the 'peculiar fascination' which ancient history and mythology exerted over him.[34]

Though he had apparently 'devoured' the works of Homer, Herodotus, Ovid and Virgil from a young age, Planché had not benefitted from a traditional, upper-class education in the Classics. In the third volume of his collected works, Planché noted to the irony of his influence upon popular understandings of Antiquity. He wrote:

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[33] Richard Schoch is quoted in Monrós-Gaspar, *Victorian Classical Burlesques*, p. 9.
[34] Planché, *The Extravaganzas of J.R. Planché*, I, p. 41.

> I am not a classical scholar, and have been as much amused as surprised to find that I had as unconsciously as undeservedly acquired the reputation of being one in the estimation of some of the most erudite in our great Universities and public schools, from the manner in which I had treated mythological subjects.

Planché admitted that he 'knew little Latin and less Greek', having managed only barely to master the Greek alphabet during his four years of 'common boarding-school tuition.' However, by virtue of his own passion for the Classics – and his influence within the theatrical world – Planché considered himself uniquely positioned to effect the adaptation of ancient epics and tragedies for the popular stage. Planché undertook this 'hazardous experiment' in the hope that the Classics would prove adaptable 'to the modern and local circumstances requisite to interest and amuse London playgoers of the nineteenth century'.[35]

Andrew Ducrow's 'Classical' education was even less extensive than that of Planché. Ducrow had spent his formative years travelling with his circus-performer father, before he had established himself as a touring equestrianist in his own right; there had been little opportunity to undertake education in the Classics. However, Ducrow seems (like Planché) to have drawn upon a personally-cultivated interest in ancient poems and tragedies in the conception of performances which worked to transmit an impression of Antiquity. In *Raphael's Dream*, Ducrow simplified and abridged the ancient and mythological tales upon which he based his characterisations. Gomersal's narration tended to give the impression that each of Ducrow's characters was linked with, or exemplified by, one particular character trait, and Ducrow's immobile representations corroborated this impression. In his description of Hercules, for example, Gomersal noted that the mythological figure had been 'heroic' and 'defiant', and Ducrow substantiated this description by representing 'Hercules' preparing to encounter the Nemean Lion. Similarly, Gomersal linked the figure of Mercury with beauty, grace and lightness, and Ducrow 'performed' these qualities by posing in the act of preparing to take flight. Ducrow granted his spectators access to 'Antiquity' by abridging ancient stories and, perhaps, by caricaturing the figures upon which his characterisations were based.

In their assessments of both Ducrow's *tableaux* performances and Planché's classical burlesques, critics judged the productions to have conveyed attractive and valuable impressions of the works of Antiquity. *The Spectator* praised Ducrow's 'striking personifications', noting that the performer's interpretations of 'Prometheus' and the

[35] Planché, *The Extravaganzas of J.R. Planché*, IV, pp. 81-2.

'Vulture' communicated 'an extremely vivid idea of the poetry and nature of the sublime originals.'[36] A critic from *The Times* noted that Ducrow 'described' and 'personated' the deities of Mars and Mercury with great success, and that the performances worked to 'put in action' various episodes of historical and mythological import.[37] Reflecting upon the significance of Planché's classical burlesques in 1880, a critic from the *Literary Examiner* noted that the playwright effectively 'took the classical story and modernised it', and that this 'modernising effect' elicited 'hearty laughter.' Other exponents of the classical burlesque genre had, according to the *Literary Examiner*, been less effective in conveying an impression of Antiquity. For example, Jacques Offenbach's experimentations in the *opéra bouffe* genre (the French equivalent of the English classical burlesque) – including his *La belle Hélène*, a parody of the story of the Trojan War – were somewhat 'topsy-turvy'. Offenbach's revisions were too extensive, and it was disconcerting to see Achilles represented as a 'violent buffoon' and Calchas as 'an old humbug.'[38]

Responses to Ducrow's *tableaux* also reveal a preoccupation with historical accuracy and correctness. The *Caledonian Mercury* was impressed that Ducrow appeared 'master' of his act, able to effect transformations whilst travelling around the ring 'to the utmost pitch'.[39] The *Liverpool Mercury* commended Ducrow's characterisations as 'most graceful and correct.'[40] Critics were impressed by the closeness with which Ducrow seemed to approximate the appearance of ancient statues. Indeed, though the adjective 'correct' had not been employed to describe Emma Hamilton's performances, a comparison might be drawn between nineteenth-century critics' emphasis upon 'correctness' and those assessments of Hamilton's act which admired the performer's ability to 'revive' ancient artworks. Though neither performer professed to offer accurate reproductions of ancient artworks, the ability of both Ducrow and Hamilton to convey an authentic 'sense' of Antiquity led many spectators to conclude that the *tableaux* or attitudes represented convincing 'restorations' of Antiquity.

Like Planché's classical burlesques, Ducrow's *tableaux* presented audiences with stories and episodes drawn from Antiquity, retaining elements of the 'original' narratives in order to aid spectators' recognition and comprehension. However, other *tableaux* performers and troupe leaders exercised somewhat greater artistic license in their own 'revivifications' of Antiquity. For example, self-proclaimed 'rogue' Renton 'Lord Chief

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[36] 'Ducrow's Benefit', in *The Spectator*, 18 September 1830, p. 15.
[37] 'Drury Lane Theatre', in *The Times*, 15 November 1831, p. 2.
[38] 'Planché's Extravaganzas', in *Literary Examiner*, 31 January 1880, p. 144.
[39] 'Ducrow's Amphitheatre', in *Caledonian Mercury*, 19 November 1827, n.p.
[40] 'Royal Amphitheatre', in *Liverpool Mercury*, 10 February 1832, p. 46.

Baron' Nicholson introduced *tableaux vivants* at the Garrick's Head Hotel (a supper-room exclusively for male patrons on Westminster's Bow Street) in 1846, indicating that the *tableaux* were presented as 'illustrations' of poetry and song.[41] Playbills proclaimed that the performers were of the 'most exquisite Forms and Beauty', worthy of 'brighter, holier admiration'.[42] Neither Nicholson's autobiography nor the Garrick's Head playbills described the 'pictures' in any detail, although it is likely – given Nicholson's own, self-proclaimed ignorance of the Classics – that performers stood in poses only loosely 'classical' in inspiration. Nicholson's *tableaux* performers wore close-fitting body-stockings, which permitted the close emulation of ancient marble, although (by design or coincidence) also gave the impression of near-nudity.

Under Nicholson's management, the Garrick's Head and Town Hotel was best known as the venue for the 'Judge and Jury Society'. During 'sittings' of the Society, Nicholson assumed the role of 'Chief Baron', presiding over mock trials based upon celebrated court cases of the day.[43] The interior of the venue resembled a courtroom, with a raised desk installed on one side of the room from which Nicholson delivered his 'verdicts'. Perhaps there was another raised platform on which members of the 'jury' stood, which could have been adapted for the presentation of Nicholson's *tableaux*. The *tableaux* portion of the entertainment preceded sittings of the Judge and Jury Society. The *tableaux* 'illustrated lectures' ran from three-thirty to five o'clock in the afternoon, and seven-thirty to nine o'clock in the evening, and the sitting of the Judge and Jury Society commenced at nine-thirty. Admission to the Garrick's Head cost one shilling, with reserved seating priced at a half-crown. Presumably the payment of a shilling or half-crown permitted spectators to view the entire evening's entertainment, with Nicholson's income further supplemented through the sale of alcohol.[44] Having achieved some success at the Garrick's Head, Nicholson went on to manage the Coal Hole Tavern on the Strand and the Cyder Cellars on Bow Street. He continued to offer patrons the opportunity to view both 'trials' and *tableaux vivants* until his death in 1861.

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[41] Renton Nicholson, *Rogue's Progress: The Autobiography of "Lord Chief Baron" Nicholson*, ed. John L. Bradley (London: Longmans, 1966), p. 298.
[42] According to one playbill, Nicholson was the first 'Public Lecturer' to have 'embodied the themes of Poetry, Sculpture, Painting, and Music, in one attractive whole.' See playbill, Garrick's Head Hotel, undated. HTC, 'Printed Ephemera Relating to Theatre'.
[43] The trials were humorous, but apparently contained 'matter sufficiently grave for the exercise of serious eloquence, as well as the lighter *badinage* of flowing repartee and fluent satire.' See Nicholson, *Rogue's Progress*, p. 245.
[44] Information on pricing and programme was printed on the playbill for the Garrick's Head Hotel. See HTC, 'Printed Ephemera Relating to Theatre'.

Another mid-century *tableaux* manager – known as 'Madame Warton' – seems to have aimed for closer correspondence between her troupe's *tableaux* and their 'classical' precedents. According to an 1851 playbill from the 'Walhalla' entertainment hall, Warton's *tableaux* programme featured representations of such artworks as Titian's *Venus Rising from the Sea*, Rubens' *Education de la Reine* and Panormo's statue *The Liberation of Caractacus*. Some *tableaux* were based upon ancient characters but 'arranged' by a modern director: on the playbill, *Hector Reproving Paris* and *Acis and Galatea* were credited to 'Professor Warton' (perhaps the troupe leader's husband or father). Several of the *tableaux* would have required multiple performers: it is likely that the interpretations were personated by a troupe of artistes, with Madame Warton representing the figurehead. The *tableaux* were arranged into two acts, with an interval of ten minutes scheduled to take place after the first nine representations. All of the pictures were accompanied by 'descriptive Music', and the band also led 'Overtures, Quadrilles, Waltzes, Polkas' in the course of the evening. Admission prices were tiered, with general admission costing one shilling, reserved or balcony seating priced at two shillings, and a seat in the stalls costing two pennies.[45]

Richard Altick has argued that the name 'Walhalla' is likely to have conjured 'timeless' associations in the minds of Warton's public. The best-known 'Walhalla' to nineteenth-century patrons would have been the memorial erected between 1830 and 1842 by Ludwig of Bavaria in south-east Germany, which housed the busts of numerous 'great men' from history. This building was itself a replica of the ancient Parthenon temple. Warton therefore performed her *tableaux* within an exhibition space whose very name was laden with historic significance. Patrons could be reassured that the *tableaux* performed in such a venue were every bit as dignified and 'classical' as the appellation assigned to the building itself.[46] The pagan associations of the name (the 'Walhalla' of Norse mythology having represented a resting place for those who died in combat) may have been more difficult for spectators to overlook than Altick acknowledges. However, perhaps these mythological connotations lent the venue an intriguing, otherworldly quality, which served to attract yet more spectators to Warton's *tableaux* productions.[47]

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[45] See playbill for 24 March 1851, Walhalla. HTC, 'Theatrical Miscellaneous – Tableaux'.
[46] Richard Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 346.
[47] Warton's 'Walhalla' had previously been the exhibition space of needlewoman Mary Linwood, whose particular talent had lain in the copying of Old Master paintings in needlework. By noting the pre-history of the 'Walhalla' on her playbills, Warton emphasised the virtuous nature of the *tableaux*, indicating that one exhibition of art had simply been replaced by another.

Judging by the vociferous defence mounted on the part of one critic, however, Warton received some criticism for the character of her troupe's performances. In the pamphlet *A Visit to the Walhalla*, William Brent wrote that he had been induced to recommend Warton's performance out of a sense of 'fair play'. He implored his readers:

> Strike not a felon's blow, assail not Mrs. Warton, spit not your filth on a woman, pollute her not with your pestiferous breath; say that she squints, that she has false teeth… heap on her person all the most striking defects; all this is fair criticism, and cannot be objected to; but do not strive to injure her character; consider her as a woman, endeavouring by unceasing labour and energy, to earn an honest livelihood, and support not only herself, but all her performers.[48]

Brent noted that many of the troupe's *tableaux* were original compositions, though inspired by pictures or ancient statues, and that all benefited considerably from the 'beauty of her [Warton's] countenance'. In particular, Warton's personation of the battle between Romulus and Latinus, in which Warton played 'the Sabine wife', presented Warton's beauty to great advantage. For Brent, Warton possessed not just talent but 'genius'.[49] The critic concluded that it was 'a happy and singular idea thus to have reproduced the principle scenes of mythology and history, and to have designed, with a rare perfection, the graceful groups, of which the great masters of antiquity have left us the delicious models.'[50]

The comparative cheapness of admission to Nicholson's and Warton's performances meant that audiences are likely to have been constituted largely of working-class men and women. Admission to London's popular playhouses was increasingly expensive in the first half of the nineteenth century, meaning that a visit to the theatre was out of reach for most working men and women. In 1809, the proprietors of the Covent Garden Theatre (refurbished after a fire in 1808) raised admission prices from six to seven shillings for a seat in one of the boxes, and from three shillings and sixpence to four shillings for a place in the pit or the third tier of seating. Even the lowest of these new prices was four times the cost of admission to Nicholson's Garrick's Head and Warton's Walhalla. On the first night of the refurbished Theatre's opening – and on each night during the following week – spectators condemned these raised prices, shouting 'Old Prices!' throughout the performance. Victor Emaljanow has indicated that this 'riot' represented an occasion upon which spectators were empowered to voice concerns about 'autocratic government, aristocratic privilege, or the capitalist appropriation of popular

[48] William Brent, *A Visit to the Walhalla*, p. 23. HTC, THE GEN TS 560.60.2.
[49] Brent, *A Visit to the Walhalla*, p. 17.
[50] Ibid., p. 8.

rights in the theatre.'[51] It is certainly clear that dissatisfaction with the rising cost of admission to popular playhouses reached new heights in the first half of the nineteenth century. Working-class men and women would have found it almost impossible to afford a visit to the theatre, obliged to seek amusement in such lower-priced venues as the Garrick's Head and the Walhalla.

In order to appeal to a working-class audience, Nicholson, Warton and other *tableaux* impresarios would have abridged the 'Classics' to a considerable extent. The impresarios could not have expected spectators to identify the sources of their *tableaux* representations with the same ease as had Emma Hamilton's audience members. Perhaps this explains why Warton, at least, indicated the sources of her troupe's *tableaux* characterisations on programmes and playbills. Without this written aid, spectators may not have been able to appreciate the range of her troupe's representations – and the dexterity with which performers conveyed an almost unnerving 'sense' of Antiquity on the modern entertainment stage.

The next section of this chapter will focus upon the British Museum, a space which, in the course of the nineteenth century, became particularly renowned for its antiquities collection. The British Museum has been the subject of detailed monographs by J. Mordaunt Crook, Edward Miller, Joanna Caygill and Ian Jenkins.[52] Unexplored by historians, however, is the relationship between the Museum and *tableaux* performances. The British Museum and the *tableaux* medium both worked to transmit Antiquity to the nineteenth-century public. In some ways, the *tableaux* medium was parasitic upon the Museum and other sites of 'elite' Antique reception, as *tableaux* performers and impresarios frequently derived inspiration from the museums' collections. The next section of this chapter will therefore indicate parallels between the ways in which the British Museum acquired and exhibited its burgeoning collection of antiquities, and the ways in which Ducrow and other *tableaux* performers selected and 'exhibited' the kinds of ancient Greek and Roman artworks on display at the Museum.

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[51] Victor Emaljanow, 'The Events of June 1848: The "Monte Cristo" Riots and the Politics of Protest', in *New Theatre Quarterly*, 19.1 (2003), 23-32 (24).

[52] J. Mordaunt Crook, *The British Museum* (London: Penguin Press, 1972); Edward Miller, *"That Noble Cabinet": A History of the British Museum* (London: Deutsch, 1973); Joanna Caygill, *The Story of the British Museum* (London: British Museum Press, 1981); Ian Jenkins, *Archaeologists and Aesthetes in the Sculpture Galleries of the British Museum 1800-1939* (London: British Museum Press, 1992).

**2.3 Packaging the Past at the British Museum**

The original contents of the British Museum derived largely from the collections of naturalist Sir Hans Sloane. Sloane, keen for his extensive accumulation of coins and medals, books and manuscripts, drawings and paintings, and classical, medieval and oriental antiquities to be preserved and exhibited wholesale, bequeathed his cabinet of curiosity to George II (and hence to the nation) for the sum of £20,000. The naturalist hoped that the collections might 'be rendered as useful as possible, as well towards satisfying the desire of the curious, as for the improvement of knowledge, and information of all purposes.'[53] When Sloane died in January 1753, the executors of his will appealed to Parliament for the funding necessary to purchase Sloane's collections. By the time that the newly-conceived British Museum received Royal Assent in June 1753, the Museum's board of trustees had been additionally entrusted with the preservation of three major libraries: that of antiquarian and M.P. Sir Robert Cotton; the Harleian Library (encompassing the manuscript collections of the Earls of Oxford); and the Old Royal Library (which comprised a number of important medieval manuscripts). The contents of these three libraries were installed alongside Sloane's collections at Montagu House, a seventeenth-century converted mansion in Bloomsbury which was bought for the sum of £10,250. The British Museum finally opened to the public in 1759.

Originally, the Montagu House collections were divided into three departments: Manuscripts, Medals and Coins were displayed in six rooms on the main floor; Natural and Artificial Productions on the west side of the same floor; and Printed Books, Maps, Globes and Drawings in twelve rooms on the ground floor. However, new acquisitions served to stretch the capacities of Montagu House to breaking point. Amongst the most significant purchases of the late eighteenth century were the antiquities of William Hamilton, collected during the ambassador's lengthy residence in Naples. These were purchased for the British Museum by a Parliament-approved grant of 1772, for the sum of £8,410. This collection included 730 vases, 175 terracottas, 14 bas-reliefs, over 200 specimens of sacrificial, domestic and architectural instruments, and various gems, gold ornaments and coins. A second collection of Hamilton's antiquities perished in a shipwreck *en route* to the British Museum in 1799, although the contents of the first collection – together with a number of gifts and bequests which Hamilton made in the

[53] Sloane is quoted in William Jardine, ed., *The Naturalist's Library. Mammalia*, 40 vols. (Edinburgh: W.H. Lizars, 1836), V, p. 91.

1780s and 1790s – bolstered the Museum's collection of ancient Greek, Roman and Etruscan antiquities significantly.[54]

According to Thora Brylowe, the significance of the Hamilton collection lay in the influence which it subsequently exerted upon eighteenth- and nineteenth-century neoclassical art and design. When combined with the catalogues of his collections which Hamilton published in collaboration with Pierre d'Hancarville, the antiquities housed at the British Museum propounded certain forms of ancient (especially Greek) art as 'ideal'. For Brylowe, Parliament's approval of the acquisition effectively confirmed the notion that these 'physical pieces of Greek history' were part of Britain's national legacy. When designs from Hamilton's vases were subsequently incorporated into the decorative arts (especially into the work of Josiah Wedgwood), aspects of ancient art were transported into the domestic sphere.[55] Significantly, many of the items in Hamilton's collection had been heavily restored: for Hamilton – and for those designers whose works bore the imprint of Hamilton's collections – the 'ideal' was never broken or partial but was complete, formed in a manner intended to please the eye. On a more fundamental level, it seems that the Hamilton collection permitted new insight into not only the artistic practices but the lives of the ancients. Many of the items sold or bequeathed by Hamilton to the British Museum were of a domestic nature (some having been discovered in the ruins of Pompeii or Herculaneum). Their exhibition at the Museum worked to convey an impression of the ancients' beliefs, customs and collecting habits.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, *tableaux* performers and troupe leaders tended on the one hand to represent well-known artworks, and on the other to conceive of scenes which exhibited the heroic and noteworthy deeds of ancient and mythological figures. Ducrow represented such martial, masculine heroes as Hercules and Sampson, whilst Madame Warton's *tableaux* programme consisted of reinterpretations of such paintings as Titian's *Venus Rising from the Sea* and Rubens' *Education de la Reine*. Performers and troupe leaders rarely formulated 'original' *tableaux*, and scenes of a 'domestic' nature seldom graced *tableaux* programmes. This trend reflected contemporaries' lingering tendency to idealise ancient Greece and Rome, and to conceive of the ancients rather as vessels of 'ideal' physical forms and 'original' artistic genius

[54] Charles Greville reported, however, that many of these items – including a 'head of Hercules' – were hidden in the basement. Greville (perhaps hoping to bolster his own inheritance from his uncle) recommended that Hamilton suspend his gift-giving. See Nancy Ramage, 'Sir William Hamilton as Collector, Exporter, and Dealer: The Acquisition and Dispersal of His Collections', in *American Journal of Archaeology*, 94.3 (July 1990), 469-80 (477).
[55] Thora Brylowe, 'Two Kinds of Collections: Sir William Hamilton's Vases, Real and Represented', in *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 32.1 (Winter 2008), 23-56 (39).

than as ordinary men and women. Whilst the British Museum presented visitors with evidence of the unremarkable domesticity of ancient Greeks and Romans, *tableaux* performances worked concurrently to underline the uniqueness of ancient artistic and physical achievement. *Tableaux* performances thereby helped to sustain the impression of an almost insurmountable gulf between ancient Greece and Rome, and subsequent societies.

After the Hamilton antiquities, the next significant collection to be acquired by the British Museum encompassed a large number of ancient Egyptian artifacts, captured after the British defeat of the French at Alexandria in 1801.[56] Egyptian antiquities at the British Museum were regarded for much of the nineteenth century as inferior in style and appearance – and therefore in value – to the productions of ancient Greece and Rome. Though the workmanship of the Egyptian sculptors was (rather reluctantly) admired, it was felt that Egyptian antiquities lacked the 'ideal' forms and elevating moral effects by which the artistic and archaeological productions of the Greek and Roman empires were characterised. Egyptian antiquities tended to be regarded by Museum trustees and cultural commentators as predecessors of Greek and Roman antiquities. For many, a line of development could be traced from the primitive productions of ancient Egypt to the increasingly 'civilised' works of the Greek Empire, with the period ranging from the time of Pericles to that of Alexander the Great (which encompassed the productions of Phidias and Praxiteles) representing 'the most perfect age of art'.[57]

In *Raphael's Dream*, Ducrow reflected and helped to sustain the notion that ancient Egyptian art was inferior to that produced by the ancient Greeks and Romans. According to the account deposited in the Lord Chamberlain's Office, the first series of *tableaux* personated by Ducrow represented the 'Rude Specimens of Ancient Art', and encompassed characterisations of Egyptian statues found chiefly in Italian collector Giovanni Battista Belzoni's antiquities collection (much of which had been deposited in the British Museum after Belzoni's death in 1823). Gomersal, narrating from the perspective of 'Raphael', described this series as a 'rudely chisl'd mass of Egyptian art'. Viewing three Egyptian artworks in his collection entitled *The Idol Bearing the Book of*

[56] This collection included the Rosetta Stone, a rock slab inscribed with a decree issued in 196 B.C. on behalf of King Ptolemy V. Inscribed in three texts (ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, Demotic script and ancient Greek), the Stone provided the key to the decoding of Egyptian hieroglyphs, and had been much valued by Napoleon before it had been transferred to the British as part of the terms of the Capitulation of Alexandria (February 1802).

[57] See Charles Newton, 'Remarks on the Collections of Ancient Art in the Museums of Italy, the Glyptothek at Munich, and the British Museum', in *The Museum of Classical Antiquities; being a Series of Essays on Ancient Art*, ed. Edward Falkener (London: Longman, Green et al, 1860), pp. 205-27 (p. 209).

*Fate, A Prophet to the People* and *A Warrior* (embodied on the stage by Ducrow), Raphael denounced the pieces as 'ungraceful', and declared that they did not please him. Raphael yearned for 'a magic pencil/To catch the glories of the setting sun/At once, ere they do dwindle into night'. Subsequently, the artist declared himself 'overcome' by the sight of artworks deriving from the 'Grecian and Italian Schools', which together formed the second series of Ducrow's *tableaux* representations.[58] *Raphael's Dream* exemplified the perceived dichotomy between the artworks of the ancient Egyptians and those of the ancient Greeks and Romans. According to *Raphael's Dream* – and according, even more specifically, to the sequence in which Ducrow's *tableaux* were organised – the 'rudely chisl'd' productions of the ancient Egyptians had been supplanted in the history of art by the exquisite productions of the ancient Greek and Roman artists. The former were characterised by crudeness of form and production, whereas the latter were defined by an almost transcendent sense of grace and beauty.

The notion of a hierarchical as well as chronological relationship between the productions of the ancient Egyptians and those of the ancient Greeks owed a good deal to the writings of Johann Joachim Winckelmann. In his *History of Ancient Art* (1764), Winckelmann had situated the rise of Greek art within the framework of the development of Egyptian (and also Phoenician, Persian, Etruscan and Roman) civilisation. For Winckelmann, the history of art paralleled the growth of humanity:

> In the infancy of art, its productions are, like the handsomest of human beings at birth, mis-shapen, and similar to one another, like the seeds of plants of entirely different kinds; but in its bloom and decay, they resembled those mighty streams, which, at the point where they should be the broadest, either dwindle into small rivulets or totally disappear.[59]

Winckelmann suggested that, just as humans and plants developed from simple, undifferentiated beginnings towards increasing states of refinement, the progress of civilisation was characterised by a development from crudeness to sophistication. The history of humanity could be mapped like the course of a stream. Some of the most promising tributaries flourished and broadened, while others dwindled and disappeared: history was turbulent and capricious and, Winckelmann implied, the realisation of the greatest human and artistic achievement presaged inevitable decay (perhaps exemplified by the decline of the Roman Empire). Whilst Winckelmann had himself stopped short of suggesting that the origins of Greek art were to be found in ancient Egyptian art, others

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[58] *Raphael's Dream*. BL, Add MS 42925, ff. 462-8.
[59] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *A History of Ancient Art among the Greeks*, 2 vols. (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1873), I, p. 2.

had developed this argument. For example, in his *Recueil d'Antiquités Égyptiennes, Étrusques, Grecques, Romaines et Gauloises* (1752-67) French antiquarian Anne Claude de Caylus had described a chain of art, whose links led from the ancient Egyptians through the Etruscans to the ancient Greeks (with the ancient Romans having subsequently plundered the best of ancient Greek art).[60]

The arrival of the Egyptian antiquities in 1802 – and of another substantial collection of antiquities in the form of Charles Townley's marbles, purchased for the Museum in 1804 – necessitated the building of a new wing for Montagu House.[61] This wing, opened in 1808, was devoted to the exhibition of ancient objects and sculptures; as such, it was given the status of a new Museum department, 'of Antiquities'. The new wing – christened the Townley Gallery – originally contained thirteen rooms: four were devoted to Roman terracottas, sepulchral antiquities and coins and models; five to Greek and Roman sculptures; two to Egyptian antiquities; another one to the Hamilton vase collection; and a final room to drawings and engravings. This arrangement served to underline the distinctions which trustees and contemporaries had identified between the productions of the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. By dividing the sculptural works of these ancient civilisations into separate rooms, trustees were able to lend subtle preference to those objects which were considered to possess the greatest value. For example, the decision to forego top-lighting in the 'Egyptian' rooms worked ostensibly to enhance the sense of 'funereal gloom' with which many contemporaries associated Egyptian sculpture, although – as Ian Jenkins points out – the denial of advantageous lighting essentially amounted to a denial of the 'artistic' status of Egyptian antiquities.[62]

Soon after the Townley Gallery opened, a number of new collections swelled the Museum's holdings further. The most significant of these were the Elgin Marbles, so named because it was largely through the energies of Thomas Bruce, the seventh Earl of Elgin, that the sculptures were eventually installed in the Museum.[63] Giving witness at a Parliamentary Select Committee held in March 1816 to decide whether the Marbles ought to be purchased for 'the nation', a number of contemporary artists indicated that the value

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[60] Jenkins, *Archaeologists and Aesthetes*, p. 60.
[61] The Townley Marbles had been gathered from around 1767, mainly through the work of Townley's agents in Rome, Thomas Jenkins and Gavin Hamilton. For the history and significance of this collection, see Jenkins, *Archaeologists and Aesthetes*, p. 106.
[62] Ibid., p. 41.
[63] A collection of marble sculptures now known to have been built under the supervision of the sculptor Phidias, the Marbles were originally part of the temple of the Parthenon in Athens. Following the collapse of Napoleon's campaign in Egypt, Elgin (the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire) removed around half of the remaining sculptures from the ruins in the years 1801 to 1805, and organised their transportation to Britain.

of the ancient sculptures lay in their potential transmission of an artistic 'ideal'. Sculptor Antonio Canova noted that the Marbles were characterised by a 'truth of nature combined with the choice of the finest forms', whilst Joseph Nollekens, another renowned British sculptor, claimed to have identified in the Marbles 'ideal beauty *and* closeness of study from nature.' Painter Thomas Lawrence argued that the Elgin Marbles were superior even to the Apollo Belvedere, as in the former there was 'a union of fine composition, and very grand form, with a more true and natural expression of the effect of action upon the human frame.'[64] Such attitudes are entirely consistent with the reverence which the productions of ancient Greece had been accorded since the time of Winckelmann. The Museum's purchase and exhibition of the Elgin Marbles would, these artists indicated, permit members of the public to commune with the productions of the ancient Greeks. The Marbles' exhibition might also serve as an impetus to modern art, with the statues offering exemplars after which sculptors could model their own works.

Christopher Casey has argued that the decision to purchase the Elgin Marbles reflected the continued impact of the French Revolution upon British society. News of turbulent events across the Channel had provoked a sense of unease amongst British elites, causing many to 'look backward' as a means by which to forestall the materialisation of similar upheavals in Britain. Napoleon had frequently aligned France with the ancient Roman Empire, styling himself as an 'emperor' along the lines of Caesar. Consequently, the British – seeking to distance themselves from the revolutionary and later despotic French – chose instead to emulate ancient Greece. The earlier, more 'democratic' administration of Periclean Athens was considered an appropriate model for nineteenth-century British polity, and the purchase of the Marbles represent an important means by which contemporaries were able to 'anchor' the present in the ancient Greek past.[65]

The process whereby ancient Greece came to represent an 'ideal' after which Britain modelled itself was perhaps rather more organic than Casey has suggested: the writings of Winckelmann and other late eighteenth-century writers and antiquarians had helped to ensure that the cultural productions of the ancient Greeks were already revered above those of the ancient Romans or the Etruscans. What is clear, however, is that the purchase of the Elgin Marbles 'for the nation' helped to consolidate the development of neoclassical taste in Britain, and to secure the status of ancient Greek artworks as

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[64] Canova, Nollekens and Lawrence are quoted in Jenkins, *Archaeologists and Aesthetes*, p. 25.
[65] Christopher Casey, '"Grecian Grandeurs and the Rude Wasting of Old Time": Britain, the Elgin Marbles, and Post-Revolutionary Hellenism', in *Foundations*, 3.1 (2008), 31-64 (58).

exemplars for contemporary sculptors. As the Select Committee concluded in its meeting of 1816, in Britain the Marbles were certain to 'receive the admiration and homage to which they are entitled', serving in return 'as models and examples to those who, by knowing how to revere and appreciate them, may learn first to imitate, and ultimately to rival them.'[66]

By the time of the Elgin Marbles' installation at the Museum in 1816, it had already been agreed that the sculptures would not be restored. In 1803, Elgin himself had consulted Antonio Canova, an expert in sculptural restoration, on the possibility of restoring the Marbles. Canova's response was recorded in Elgin's *Memorandum*:

> Canova declared, That however greatly it was to be lamented that these statues should have suffered so much from time and barbarism, yet it was undeniable, that they had never been retouched; that they were the work of the ablest artists the world had ever seen…and had attained the highest degree of perfection… it would be sacrilege in him, or any man, to presume to touch them with a chisel.[67]

As Mark Jones has noted, the decision not to restore the Elgin Marbles underlined the new significance of the 'fragment' as, increasingly, 'beauty' and 'truth' were identified in broken or fragmented examples of Antique sculpture.[68] This development reflected the influence of Romanticism, a cultural movement which had emerged in the latter part of the eighteenth century in partial response to the upheavals of the Industrial Revolution. Exponents of Romanticism valued the productions of nature above those of man and the machine, with many coming to admire ruins as evidence of the transient character of man's life and works. For Romantic writers, the fragmented, imperfect Elgin Marbles served to exemplify the impact of time and nature upon the creations of man. They also offered a valuable means of communication with the ancient Greek spirit. As poet William Haygarth noted, 'In them [the Elgin Marbles] a spirit still survives, in them/The soul of Athens seems to live again.'[69]

This assumption that a form of access to the ancient 'spirit' might be engendered through communication with the fragment underpinned long nineteenth-century *tableaux* performances. In these, the body of the performer – illustrative of the 'fragment' –

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[66] Anon., 'Extract from the Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Earl of Elgin's Collection of Sculptured Marbles', in *The Museum of Classical Antiquities*, ed. Edward Falkener (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860), p. 403 (p. 403).
[67] Thomas Bruce, *Memorandum on the Subject of the Earl of Elgin's Pursuits in Greece* (London: William Miller, 1811), pp. 39-40.
[68] Mark Jones, ed., *Fake? The Art of Deception* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 14.
[69] Quoted in Casey, '"Grecian Grandeurs and the Rude Wasting of Old Time"', 56.

offered spectators the opportunity for a kind of communion with the ancients. According to Romantic writers, the wholesale survival of ancient relics was unnecessary: indeed, the imperfect, time-worn fragment was preferable, permitting onlookers to reflect upon the rather melancholic notion that the much-admired past could never be fully reinstated. In this sense, it is possible to identify the impact of the Romantic sensibility upon the *tableaux* phenomenon, the former's enshrinement of the fragment giving *tableaux* spectators cause to celebrate not the accuracy with which ancient artworks and mythological episodes were recreated, but the 'feel' of 'the past' which performances helped to foster. *Tableaux* spectators enjoyed the 'sense' of ancient Greek and Roman society which performances engendered, yet may well have derived equal satisfaction from their nostalgic, melancholic and 'Romantic' reflections upon the fact that the ancient past lay tantalisingly close, but just beyond reach.

The Elgin Marbles remained the centrepiece of the British Museum's collection of antiquities despite a new influx of acquisitions in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.[70] Increasingly, the over-stretched Montagu House seemed an inadequate storehouse for such riches, and a plan for the rebuilding of the museum was submitted by architect Sir Robert Smirke. By early 1855, new accommodation for the Museum's antiquities was completed. Sculpture was to be exhibited in four rooms, and it was decided that a chronological arrangement would best exemplify the 'progression' of art. As many of the Roman sculptures were (correctly) held to represent copies of ancient Greek works, the sculptures were arranged first according to the estimated year in which the 'original' Greek works were conceived, and second according to subject. The first Graeco-Roman Saloon contained examples of the twelve Olympian deities as represented by both Greek and Roman sculptors; the second room contained Greek and Roman representations of human personages; the third, heroic figures as conceived by Greek and Roman artists; and the fourth room contained miscellaneous sculptures 'of subordinate rank' such as decorative pieces. This arrangement – whereby Greek 'originals' were placed alongside Roman 'copies' – underlined the presumed superiority of ancient Greek sculpture. By attempting a chronology based upon the date in which the 'original' works were conceived rather than one based upon that in which the Roman 'copies' were produced, trustees conveyed a clear sense of hierarchy. Trustees impelled visitors to critique the Roman works not as unique works of art, but according to their success in approximating the 'original' Greek productions.

[70] New acquisitions included the Phigaleian Marbles (bas-reliefs discovered in 1812 in the ruins of an ancient Greek temple), and the extensive collections of antiquarian Richard Payne Knight, who had been a trustee of the British Museum from 1814 until his death in 1824.

*Tableaux* performers and troupe leaders were rather less discriminating in their selection and organisation of Greek and Roman material than were the Museum trustees, tending to exhibit reinterpretations of Greek and Roman figures in an arbitrary and overlapping manner. By inducing Gomersal ('Raphael') to denounce ancient Egyptian bas-reliefs, Ducrow's furthered the notion of a hierarchical relationship between the artworks of the ancient Egyptians and those of the ancient Greeks and Romans, though Ducrow failed to draw any further distinctions between ancient Greek and Roman artistic prowess. If *tableaux* programmes recognised ancient Greek and ancient Roman artworks as discrete from one another, they tended to do so simply as a means by which to emphasise the *tableaux* medium's historical authenticity. Announcing his troupe's appearance at Vauxhall Gardens in September 1845, Professor Keller proclaimed the troupe's performance of 'successive groups of heroes and demigods, heroines and divas', noting that troupe members would embody 'living representatives of the Greeks, Romans, and deities of classic ages'.[71] Nowhere on the programme – or, presumably, within the performance itself – did Keller further distinguish between the Greek, Roman and 'classic age' figures which performers embodied.

In a small number of instances, *tableaux* performers embodied specifically 'Roman' (and not simply 'classical') figures as a means by which to illustrate ancient episodes in British history. For example, in 1851 Madame Warton included a *tableau* entitled 'Ancient Britons Defending their Wives and Families against the Romans', based upon a painting by Australian artist Marshall Claxton.[72] Native British resistance to Roman rule and invasion was an increasingly popular theme among Victorian artists and writers. As Marina Warner has shown, the 'Boadicea and her Daughters' statue – conceived and sculpted by Thomas Thornycroft in the years after 1856, and eventually installed on Westminster Pier – reflected a concern to illustrate native Britons' defiance of Roman authority: Boadicea had famously led the British Celtic Iceni tribe in an uprising against the occupying Romans, and was depicted in Thornycroft's statue on a chariot, a spear in her right hand and her left hand raised aloft. Warner indicates that the Victorians 'rediscovered' Boadicea as an 'imperial icon' in the context of a 'renewed patriotic inquiry into the pre-Roman – and therefore specially "native" – past.'[73] Like the

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[71] 'Vauxhall Gardens', in *The Morning Post*, 12 September 1845, p. 5

[72] See playbill for 7 August 1851, Walhalla. HTC, 'Theatrical Miscellaneous – Tableaux.' Two similar scenes were included in a *tableaux* programme of 25 May 1909, performed in Penshurst. The *tableaux* were entitled 'The Roman Encampment at Penshurst' and 'Britons attacking the Roman Encampment'. See 'Penshurst Village Tableaux', in *The Times*, 25 May 1909, p. 13.

[73] Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 51.

Boadicea statue, Warton's 'Ancient Britons' *tableau* functioned as a celebration of British resistance to ancient Roman governance. It reflected, too, the disdain in which contemporaries held ancient Roman society, as artists, writers and Museum trustees came increasingly to favour the ancient Greek empire as a model for the modern British polity.

In its arrangement of classical antiquities, the British Museum therefore advanced a hierarchical understanding of ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman productions. *Tableaux* performers and troupe leaders tended not to differentiate as clearly between the ancient societies as did the Museum trustees, though *Raphael's Dream* in particular endorsed the notion that certain ancient peoples (namely, the Egyptians) had produced art of a measurably inferior quality. Ducrow's perception of a gulf between the productions of the Egyptians and of the Greeks and Romans is likely to have been shaped by the narrative of Greek excellence and Roman decadence which had been propounded by Winckelmann, Caylus and others, and subsequently imbibed by the trustees of the British Museum and other 'elite' sites of Antique reception. Elite and scholarly understandings of ancient culture thereby impacted upon 'popular' conceptions of Antiquity, by virtue of *tableaux vivants* and other media of entertainment.

For much of the nineteenth century, the British Museum's collections were accessible only to an 'elite' class of visitors. The trustees were only latterly – and almost always reluctantly – concerned to promote the development of knowledge and 'taste' amongst members of the working and lower-middle classes. The next section of this chapter examines the debates surrounding public access to the Museum, focusing upon the campaign for the relaxation of Museum entry regulations mounted by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK). It suggests that *tableaux* performances consolidated the work of the SDUK, serving to extend a 'Classical' education (albeit a rather diluted one) to circus and theatre-going audiences. However, the SDUK failed to harness the *tableaux* medium, and thereby overlooked a key opportunity for the dissemination of 'Classical' knowledge amongst ready-made 'popular' audiences.

### 2.4 The British Museum and the Diffusion of 'Useful' Knowledge

Though the 1753 Act which had established the British Museum had recommended 'free access' to the Museum's collections, it is clear that the early trustees were keen to deter certain members of the public. As Museum trustee Sir John Ward had put it in 1759:

> a general liberty to ordinary people of all ranks and denominations, is not to be kept within bounds. Many irregularities will be committed that

> cannot be prevented by a few librarians who will soon be insulted by such people, if they offer to control or contradict them… If any such people are in liquor and misbehave, they are rarely without their accomplices… A great concourse of ordinary people will never be kept in order.[74]

The trustees had quickly introduced regulations which restricted public entry to the collections. The Museum had been open for just three hours each day, and was closed at weekends, on Easter Sunday and for a week at Christmas. Those seeking admission were required to present themselves at the porter's lodge, pass the scrutiny of the librarians and await the formal issuing of a ticket. These factors had combined to discourage – and in some cases, to prohibit – members of the working and lower-middle classes from accessing the Museum's collections in the second half of the eighteenth century.

In anticipation of the opening of the Gallery of Antiquities, a sub-committee of trustees was formed in 1807 to decide upon the terms of access to this new department. The report produced by the sub-committee acknowledged the increasingly vocal demands for broader access to the Museum, its authors noting that 'the public' would be satisfied 'with noting short of immediate free admission such as they are told is allowed at Paris.'[75] According to the sub-committee's report, Joseph Planta, Principal of the British Museum from 1799 to 1827, proposed to improve access to the Museum by increasing the daily admittance limit from 360 to 480 people, and by arranging simultaneously-conducted tours of the Museum's departments.[76] The sub-committee ultimately recommended the implementation of Planta's suggestions, although ruled that the collections housed in the Gallery of Antiquities required somewhat stricter policing. Access to the Gallery was to be limited to Royal Academy members and students, all of whom would be obliged to apply for a ticket from the President and Council of the Royal Academy; only on rare 'Public Days' would the Gallery would be open to all. Aiming ostensibly to protect the contents of the Gallery of Antiquities from damage, the trustees had effectively reconfirmed the division between aristocrats or scholars and 'ordinary people' upon which Sir John Ward had founded his censure of the notion of 'free access' in 1759.

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[74] Ward is quoted in Altick, *The Shows of London*, p. 26.

[75] The signing of the Treaty of Amiens in 1802 (which suspended hostilities between the Britain and the French Republic during the Revolutionary Wars) resulted in an upsurge of British tourism in Paris. Many travellers returned to London with admiring accounts of the Louvre's ticketing system, which allowed visitors to acquire tickets on the morning of desired entry (and not weeks in advance, as was the case in London). See Derek Cash, 'Access to Museum Culture: The British Museum from 1753 to 1836', PhD thesis, University of Oxford (1994), p. 69.

[76] Planta additionally recommended that five 'wardens' be stationed around the Museum to prevent loitering and untoward behaviour, and that these wardens be drawn from the ranks of the well-respected Chelsea Pensioners. See Cash, 'Access to Museum Culture', p. 70.

In the early part of the nineteenth century, the question of access to the British Museum was debated in Parliament. The parliamentary proceedings were recorded in the pages of *The Times*, which served to enlarge the debate from an internal, institutional concern to a public dispute. Following the acquisition of various antiquities appropriated from the defeated French armies in 1804, Museum trustees petitioned Parliament for £16,000 to house the new collection. Whig politician Richard Brinsley Sheridan argued that, should such a 'liberal' grant be approved, 'the public ought in return to have greater facility of access to the curiosities which the museum contained.' The following day, George Rose, M.P. for Christchurch, responded to this suggestion by enumerating the ways in which Museum trustees had already accommodated 'the public'. Rose noted that admittance figures were rising each year; that it was increasingly possible for members of the public to access the Museum's reading rooms; and that 'even those who applied [for entry] in the morning might be admitted in the course of the same day.'[77] This exchange indicates that, for Sheridan at least, the British Museum owed 'the public' some form of debt (the Museum having been established by government lottery), and that this debt might have been repaid in the form of unrestricted access to the Museum's collections.

Parliamentary debates reveal a significant discrepancy between the ways in which M.P.s and Museum trustees conceived of the British Museum and its function. In 1805, Henry Bankes, M.P. for Corfe Castle, urged the trustees to allow the institution to become 'what it was originally intended it should be.' He argued that the Museum existed 'purely for national purposes, and for the benefit and instruction of the public at large', and that such aims might only be realised through 'ready and uninterrupted access to the valuable matter it contained.'[78] For Bankes, the trustees had caused the Museum to veer away from the course upon which it had been set by its founders; the institution needed to be rejuvenated in order that 'the public at large' might enjoy the Museum's educational benefits. Trustees continued, however, to regard the British Museum as an institution for scholarly research alone. Whereas a number of M.P.s desired the broadening of Museum access for the purposes of public instruction, trustees continued to operate upon the presumption that only the elite and the educated could glean any form of meaning or message from the sanctified objects on display. Members of the wider public – who would presumably distract the scholars and damage the collections – ought to be allowed only limited entry to the Museum.

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[77] T.C. Hansard, ed., *The Parliamentary Debates From the Year 1803 to the Present Time*, 41 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst et al, 1812), II, p. 902, 933-4.
[78] Hansard, ed., *The Parliamentary Debates*, III, pp. 409-10.

*The Times* recorded the difficulties which working men had in accessing the Museum's collections. In a letter addressed to the editor, a 'livery servant' reported that he and two friends had attempted to visit the Museum on an 'open or public day'. The servant found, to his 'surprise and very great mortification', that he was not permitted entry. He presumed that access to the Museum had been denied to him based upon his uniform, which identified him as belonging to a particular (apparently undesirable) class of workers. The servant alluded to the selective entry process which the Museum's keepers employed, noting that he had seen a number of sailors and soldiers enter the Museum during the three hours in which he had awaited the return of his friends.[79] This letter suggests that entry regulations were maintained even on 'public days'. Museum keepers seem to have been guided largely by physical appearance, denying entry to individuals whose dress rendered them incompatible with certain standards of 'decency'.

Indeed, keen surveillance would have characterised a visit to the British Museum in the nineteenth century. Even on 'Public Days', when all members of the public were ostensibly admitted to the Museum, warders (often Museum librarians) patrolled the galleries, ensuring that visitors did not depart from their tours. As Michael Shapiro has pointed out, even those museums which purported to open their doors to an indiscriminate public (including the British Museum, on Public Days) tended to estrange visitors, who would have been unable to 'decipher the complex codes by which museums selected, displayed, and interpreted objects.' Moreover, established, unspoken norms of public comportment, dress, and speech pervaded many museums in the nineteenth century, 'serving as subtle but forceful barriers to participation.'[80] Those visitors to the British Museum admitted on Public Days would have struggled – without adequate labelling – to comprehend objects in the collections.[81] Visitors are likely to have been made to feel somewhat uncomfortable by norms of behaviour and appearance which permeated museum culture in the first part of the nineteenth century. Such norms would not have been in place at the venues in which *tableaux vivants* were performed, which perhaps rendered Ducrow and other performers' exhibitions a more appealing option for working and lower-middle class patrons.

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[79] 'To the Editor of *The Times*', in *The Times*, 1 March 1832, p. 5.
[80] Michael Steven Shapiro, ed., *The Museum: A Reference Guide* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), p. 239.
[81] Alma Wittlin has suggested that, without clues to museum objects, visitors tend to 'rush around from one thing to another and hunt for meaning', in many cases lacking 'a background of specific knowledge into which the new experiences could be fitted.' See Alma Wittlin, *Museums: In Search of a Usable Future* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970), p. 71.

Claiming to reflect the interests of the working and lower-middle classes, the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK) campaigned for freer public access to the British Museum. The SDUK had been founded in 1826 by Lord Brougham. A Whig politician who served as Lord Chancellor from 1830-4, Brougham believed that social and cultural improvements could be made through improved education opportunities for adults and the poor. This belief had led Brougham to support the London Mechanics Institution and the London University, and to chair a Select Committee on the Education of the Lower Orders. The establishment of the SDUK therefore represented one aspect of a (broadly Whig) programme of mid-century educational reform.[82]

In April 1832, an article in the SDUK publication *The Penny Magazine* urged readers to take advantage of the opportunities for learning and pleasure afforded by the British Museum. Addressing itself to the 'artisan or tradesman, who can sometimes afford to take a holiday, and who knows there are better modes of spending a working-day…than amidst the smoke of a tap-room, or the din of a skittle-ground', *The Penny Magazine* anticipated the reader's concerns:

> "But hold," says the working man, "I have passed by the British Museum: there are two sentinels at the gateway, and the large gates are always closed. Will they let me in? Is there nothing to pay?" That is a very natural question … But *here* there *is* nothing to pay. Knock boldly at the gate; the porter will open it… Do not fear any surly looks or impertinent glances from any person in attendance. Your are upon safe ground here. You are come to see your own property. You have as much right to see it, and you are as welcome therefore to see it, as the highest in the land.

*The Penny Magazine* insisted that, since the 'working man' had assisted in paying for the purchase of the Museum, he ought to 'go boldly forward' and enjoy the sight of 'some of the most curious and valuable things in the world.' The article did, however, recommend that the reader adopt a certain standard of behaviour on his visit, noting that it was prudent to avoid obtrusiveness. Visitors would encounter many things in the Museum which they did not understand, but it would be advisable 'to make a memorandum of these, to be inquired into at your leisure', rather than troubling members of Museum staff or other visitors with questions.[83]

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[82] For Brougham's role in the Whig project of educational reform, see T. McManners, 'The Work of Lord Brougham for English Education', PhD thesis, University of Durham (1952).
[83] 'The British Museum', in *The Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*, 7 April 1832, p. 14.

In 1826, the SDUK published *A Guide to the Beauties of the British Museum*, hoping that the guidebook would alleviate the discomfort experienced by patrons unfamiliar with the artworks and antiquities on display in the Museum (discomfort which would have been intensified by the scarcity of labels at the Museum for much of the nineteenth century). Further, the guidebook might extend an introduction to the Museum's collections to those individuals for whom a visit to the Museum itself was not possible.[84] To these ends, the guidebook offered descriptions of the 'peculiar beauties' contained within the Museum's Gallery of Antiquities, lending particular emphasis to those works of sculpture which exemplified the unique artistic talents of the ancients. Describing a full-length statue of a 'Venus or Nymph' contained within Room II of the Gallery, the guidebook's author noted that ancient sculpture was characterised by 'severe beauty of expression, and rich purity of style'. 'First-rate' ancient Greek sculpture conveyed a 'perfect *naturalness*, which is absolutely incompatible with anything like a *studied* grace of action and deportment.' Echoing the sentiments of Canova and others, the author deplored the restoration of the female figure's left arm, suggesting that the repair, if not quite amounting to a 'disfigurement', nevertheless compromised the 'unaffected air of nature' of the piece.[85]

Parroting the claims of Winckelmann and others, the guidebook suggested that ancient Greek art bespoke a rational control of sexual desire. Emphasising the purity of ancient art, and especially of Greek depictions of the female form, the author noted:

> Even their Venus – the goddess of mere mortal love – might have stood naked beside Eve in Paradise, and not been ashamed. And yet their beauty… was no less natural and unrestrained in its character, than it was chaste and severe. The Greeks were in fact a people so wholly intellectual, that their idea of voluptuousness itself was an imagination rather than a sentiment.

The guidebook claimed that there had not survived one instance of a female figure which might be considered voluptuous.[86] Certainly this was a bold claim to make on the part of the guidebook's authors, as was their repeated assertion for the 'severity' of ancient Greek art: the chasteness and severity of the works seems rather a matter of interpretation than one of uncontestable truth.

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[84] According to the guidebook, 'the class of visitors above alluded to, for want of some Guide of the kind now offered to them, are but too apt to pass a whole morning amidst the almost unrivalled riches of this spot, and to leave it without having gained any distinct or permanent impressions of what has been presented to them.' See Anon., *A Guide to the Beauties of the British Museum* (London: J.M. Kimpton, 1826), pp. iii-iv.
[85] Anon., *A Guide to the Beauties of the British Museum*, pp. 8-9.
[86] Ibid., pp. 13-14.

As Inderpal Grewal has pointed out, museum guidebooks worked – like the museums themselves – to promulgate a 'selective, dichotomised view of the world.' Though produced with the ostensible aim of educating the public, guidebooks very often disseminated 'a schematic aesthetic that inculcated class, gender and racial difference.'[87] Guidebook authors described and interpreted museum objects for a public with limited artistic or 'Classical' knowledge, encouraging museum visitors to 'read' the displayed objects in a particular way. The author of *A Guide to the Beauties of the British Museum* was, for instance, particularly keen to negate erotic or sensual interpretations of ancient Greek art. Though aiming to broaden public access to the British Museum and other sites of 'elite' Antique reception, the SDUK hoped to inculcate certain principles and values into working and lower-class men and women. The SDUK was committed to ensuring that spectators were not only exposed to revered antiquities, but that they 'read' these antiquities in the 'correct' manner.

Herein, perhaps, lies the reason that the SDUK and other organisations failed to exploit the *tableaux* medium as a means by which to disseminate 'Classical' learning amongst a broader audience. Had the SDUK organised *tableaux* performances encompassing representations of selected figures and artworks from Antiquity, it would have been almost impossible to ensure consistent responses on the part of all spectators. Whilst several audience members may have 'read' the *tableaux* in the intended manner, imbibing moral, artistic and political lessons from the immobilised characterisations, others may have been rather more preoccupied by the appearance of 'nude' men and women on the stage. Though the ostensible appearance of the *tableau vivant* was consistent with that of the museum sculpture, the employment of 'living' men and women to represent the sculptural figures altered the nature of the display, generating a sense of tension and expectancy that the marble sculpture or painted figure simply did not.

### 2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the *tableaux* performances of Andrew Ducrow and others complemented the work of classical burlesque writers like James Planché, transmitting an impression of Antiquity to members of the working and lower-middle class public. *Tableaux* performances and classical burlesques served to broaden the audience for the classical past beyond the (traditionally-elite) museum-going public, permitting members

[87] Inderpal Grewal, 'The Guidebook and the Museum: Imperialism, Education and Nationalism in the British Museum', in *Culture and Education in Victorian England* (London: Bucknell University Press, 1990), ed. Patrick Scott and Pauline Fletcher, pp. 195-217 (p. 197).

of the working and lower-middle classes to access the cultural productions of ancient Greece and Rome, in particular. Ducrow's performances presented 'living' (though immobile) reinterpretations of figures more commonly depicted in classical statues.

Through the *Penny Magazine* and museum guidebooks, the SDUK attempted to mould members of the working and lower-middle classes into 'desirable' Museum visitors, instilling in them the lessons and values which scholars had previously gleaned from the Classics. Without sufficient evidence of popular responses to these repositories of Antique sculpture, it is impossible to determine whether or not members of the working and lower-middle classes were convinced by the guidebooks' claims for the moral purity and chastity of ancient artworks – and whether, indeed, the guidebooks exerted any influence upon the manner in which the public viewed and interpreted Antiquity. However, Ducrow's *tableaux* performances offered spectators an opportunity to encounter 'Antiquity' in a much less inhibitive environment than did the British Museum. It is possible that the greatest educational benefit and enjoyment was derived not from the 'original' pieces exhibited in the Museum, but from the reinterpretations performed by Ducrow. Indeed, Ducrow and other *tableaux* performers may be seen to have executed the edifying, instructional work traditionally associated with the Museum – and perhaps even to have made a more effective job of it.

In the next chapter, focus will turn to representations of the 'Other' in *tableaux* performances, imperial exhibitions and anthropological photographs. By the mid nineteenth century, reverence for the polity and cultural productions of the ancient Greek Empire had encouraged the British to view themselves as 'descendants' of the ancient Greeks. An important element of the new, 'scientific' research into the physical and psychological characteristics of the 'Other' was the presumption that 'foreign' peoples possessed no heritage of their own: the 'Other' was conceived as fundamentally rootless and uncivilised. As the next chapter will demonstrate, this presumption manifested itself in a number of disturbing ways. In particular, entertainment impresarios seem to have assumed that 'dignity' and 'decency' – so highly-valued among British men and women – were simply incompatible with the circumstances of 'Other-ness'. 'Other' men and women could therefore be exhibited in ways which would have been considered highly objectionable had the performers been white or British.

## Chapter Three: *The Three Graces* at the Museum, 1840-1860

In December 1869, biologist Thomas Henry Huxley complained to the British Colonial Secretary Lord Granville that, though many photographs of 'native' men and women existed, such photographs lost a great deal of value 'from not being taken upon a uniform and well-considered plan.' According to Huxley:

> The result is that they are rarely either measurable or comparable with one another and that they fail to give that precise information respecting the proportions and the conformation of the body, which… [would be of inestimable] worth to the ethnologist.[1]

Huxley, serving at the time as president of the Ethnological Society of London, proposed that a series of photographs be taken by administrators stationed at imperial outposts. In 1870 the project was commissioned by the Colonial Office, and Huxley oversaw the distribution of instructions and sets of specimen photographs to colonial officials in Australia, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), China, India, New Zealand and parts of Africa. Though Huxley stipulated that the 'natives' should be photographed standing, unclothed, next to an anthropometer (a measuring stick), some officials overlooked or exceeded this brief, capturing their subjects in varied arrangements and in various states of (un)dress. In a photograph recorded to have been sent from Hawke's Bay, a region of New Zealand on the eastern coast of the North Island, three women were depicted entirely naked. An administrative error (on the part of Huxley, or of subsequent cataloguers of his photographic collection) presumably led the subjects of this photograph to be falsely attributed as indigenous Maori people, when they were in fact aboriginal Australian: perhaps the photograph was wrongly inserted into the Hawke's Bay folder, as Huxley was inundated with poorly-labelled images from the various colonial outposts. Still, this image is of particular relevance to this thesis, as the *tableau*-like configuration is highly reminiscent of Antonio Canova's famous *Three Graces* statue (sculpted between 1814 and 1817).[2]

In the photograph, the central figure stands with her arms by her sides, facing the camera. The other two women stand on either side of this figure. These women encircle the central figure, linking hands in front of her and holding what appears to be a wreath above her head. The image is symmetrical, with the woman on the left side standing with

[1] Quoted in Alison Griffiths, 'We Partake, as it were, of his Life: The Status of the Visual in Early Ethnographic Film', in *Moving Images: From Edison to the Webcam*, ed. John Fullerton and Astrid Söderbergh Widding (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2016), pp. 91-110 (p. 106).
[2] The photograph is available to view at Imperial College Archives, Huxley Collection, box H, folio 24.

most of her weight on her left leg, and the woman on the right in a *contrapposto* stance whereby most of her weight would have been balanced on her right leg. Indeed, it is clear that the photographer worked consciously to achieve this symmetry, as the two women flanking the central figure were slightly shorter than the other woman, lending the effect of a triangle with the central figure and her halo-like wreath forming the highest point. All three women stared directly into the camera lens, wearing expressions of such blankness that they appear almost statuesque.

Having failed to pose his subjects alongside a measuring stick, the photographer produced an image of little immediate use to Huxley's anthropometric project. The photograph offered little insight into the culture and customs of 'native' peoples, as the three women were not posed alongside any recognisable signifiers of 'indigenous' culture. No evidence of Huxley's response to this photograph survives; it is unlikely that he ever undertook a systematic analysis of this and the other photographs requested. The fact remains, however, that the photographer and, presumably, the Colonial Secretary responsible for overseeing the photograph's creation saw fit to arrange three 'native' women into a *tableau* redolent of Canova's *Three Graces*, impelling members of the aboriginal population to evoke a Western artistic trope of which they themselves had little – if any – knowledge.

Today, the analysis of historic photography depicting indigenous peoples and communities raises a number of complex and emotive issues, not least because this analysis forces us to confront the fact that these staged photographs inflicted 'physical and psychological injuries on the participating individuals, their numerous descendants and the communities from which they were drawn.'[3] Increasingly, indigenous communities assert their right to control the display of photographs depicting their ancestors: not only might the indiscriminate reproduction of such photographs reproduce the historical degradation experienced by the subjects, but there are particular protocols and traditions amongst many indigenous communities (particularly in Australia) that limit

[3] Anne Maxwell, *Picture Imperfect: Photography and Eugenics, 1870-1940* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2010), p. ix. In another work, Anne Maxwell discusses photographic representations of colonised peoples from Australia and New Zealand specifically: see 'In the Shades of Imperialism', in Maxwell, *Colonial Photography and Exhibitions* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999), pp. 133-64. A growing body of scholarly research now works to 'reclaim' the indigenous body, interrogating the varied and problematic constructions of the 'native' in photography and other media. For example, see Jacqueline Fear-Segal and Rebecca Tillett, eds., *Indigenous Bodies: Reviewing, Relocating, Reclaiming* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013); Joy Hendry, *Reclaiming Culture: Indigenous People and Self-Representation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

knowledge and disclosure.[4] At the time of its production, the photographic interpretation of Canova's *Three Graces* would have served to sustain imperialist notions of Western authority, through the (immensely problematic) staging of indigenous peoples in a configuration which served to remove all sense of individual or cultural agency and identity. Such notions were, of course, founded on the presumed racial and cultural superiority of the Western producers over the native subjects.

Canova's *Three Graces* statue (and many Renaissance and Neoclassical interpretations of it) was highly eroticised, positing the three figures as idealised Western, white bodies. If the photographer and Colonial Secretary intended to replicate this eroticism in the configuration, they were unsuccessful: instead, they produced an image of three emotionally-detached, apparently lifeless women. If, on the other hand, they intended not to arouse but to amuse the viewer, enjoining him (or her) to mock the 'natives' as they, the 'uncivilised', aped a 'civilised' artistic trope, the photograph is perhaps even more disturbing. In the latter case, three aboriginal women were exposed and exploited simply for the purposes of a condescending, racist form of entertainment.

Whether conforming to a monogenetic or a polygenetic view of human origins (adherents to the former positing a common descent for all of mankind, the latter positing different origins for different 'races'), a great number of natural scientists and philologists were committed to the study of 'natives' as a means by which to further understanding about humanity. In the mid nineteenth century, a comparative approach was held to represent the most effective means of developing this understanding, and contemporaries tended to conceive of indigenous peoples as specimens indicative of a broader 'race', 'culture' or 'nation'. As this chapter will demonstrate, the study of 'foreign' peoples and customs contributed to the ingraining of a presumed hierarchical relationship between the 'civilised' (white) cultures of Britain and Europe and the 'uncivilised' (black) cultures of 'foreign' nations and regions. 'Scientific' study impacted significantly upon popular conceptions of the 'Other'.

Edward Said's pioneering work *Orientalism* (originally published in 1978) has helped to make clear the constructedness of 'Otherness'. Said noted that neither the 'Orient', 'the East' nor indeed 'the West' ('the Occident') has any 'ontological stability', each concept having been fabricated simply through continued identification of 'Eastern'

[4] Jane Lydon, *The Flash of Recognition: Photography and the Emergence of Indigenous Rights* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2012).

lands, peoples and cultures as 'Other'.[5] Said also elucidated the central role played by the institutions of imperialism in upholding this artificial division between the 'Occident' and the 'Orient' (or between the colonising powers and the colonised). Said argued that, in the course of the nineteenth century, 'Orientalism' developed as a Western style for 'dominating, restricting, and having authority over the Orient.'[6] Said likened the Orient to a 'theatrical stage affixed to Europe': the language and practices of Orientalism ensured that Orientals were envisioned as actors playing roles, held as representatives of 'the larger whole from which they emanate.' The Orient and Orientals were thought to exist '*for* Europe, and only for Europe'; they had no individual identities or purposes of their own.[7] In 1983, literary theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak followed Said in concluding that the 'subaltern' (or colonial subject) could not 'speak'. He or she was continually constructed by the West, denied the opportunity for self-definition.[8] Huxley's anthropometric project appears to represent one of the mechanisms which worked to uphold and propagate this artificial division between the colonising British and the colonised 'natives'.

It was not only photographs which posited the 'Other' as diametrically opposed to white men and women. In the years after 1840, *tableaux* performances and imperial exhibitions helped to consolidate the notion that foreign peoples were fundamentally distinct from those of Britain and parts of Europe. The performances and exhibitions bespoke various agendas, although this chapter will suggest that amongst these spectacles it is possible to identify three different – yet overlapping – trends in the conception and representation of the 'Other'. Some of the earlier spectacles represented little more than fancy dress, as British performers (including Andrew Ducrow) organised exotically-costumed displays which, though intended to evoke distant lands, were based upon only rudimentary understanding of foreign peoples. As the public appetite for a more exhaustive understanding of the 'Other' grew, imperial exhibitions reflected the approach – taken in the first instance by the Ethnological Society of London – whereby material cultures were studied as a means of gaining insight into different 'races'. Displays at Sydenham's Crystal Palace and South Kensington's Colonial and Indian Exhibition promulgated the assumption that 'racial' groups could be classified according to their customs and lifestyles. Finally, a more 'scientific' method for furthering understanding of

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[5] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. xiii.
[6] Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 3-7.
[7] Ibid., p. 63, 71-2.
[8] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 271-313.

the 'Other' was exemplified by Huxley's anthropometric project. As the final section of this chapter will demonstrate, this 'scientific' insight into the 'races' of mankind was variously (though controversially) applied to discussions concerning the political and moral value of slavery. By including such 'pictures' as Jean-Léon Gérôme's *Moorish Bath* in their *tableaux* programmes, entertainment impresarios reflected contemporary interest in the plight of slaves, and perhaps even endorsed an allegiance with the abolitionist cause.

Though these trends exemplified different approaches to the study and exhibition of foreign peoples, exponents of all three approaches held the 'Other' to represent a counterpoint to the 'civilisation' embodied by European peoples. Inherent to the study and exhibition of both 'civilised' (white) and 'non-civilised' (black) peoples was the presumption that Britain and certain parts of the Western world had derived their cultural heritage from the ancient Greek and Roman empires, and that 'native races' had not. In fact, the 'Other' was commonly held to possess no such history at all. The 'native' *Three Graces* image is instructive in this respect. Exemplifying the assumption that aboriginal people enjoyed no artistic heritage of their own, the image seems to intimate that the 'natives' – lacking in 'civilisation' – were unable even to replicate an established 'Western' artistic trope without appearing ill-at-ease.

By examining *tableaux* performances, imperial spectacles and 'native' photographs, this chapter will therefore explore some of the ways in which the 'Other' was represented in the mid to late nineteenth century. Indicating the patronising, problematic and sometimes contradictory manner in which notions of 'civilisation' and 'decency' were discussed in relation to 'foreign' peoples, the chapter will lay the foundations for the fourth chapter of the thesis, which examines the (contrasting) manner in which the same notions of 'civilisation' and 'decency' were raised in connection with British *tableaux* performers. Significantly, the chapter will also consider the ways in which 'native' peoples resisted the definitions imposed upon them by imperialists and entertainment impresarios, subverting expectations by turning their own, critical gazes upon the 'civilised' British.

### 3.1 Fancy Dress

Curiosity about 'foreign' peoples and cultures had been fostered by the 'age of exploration'. From the sixteenth century onwards, travellers had undertaken voyages to parts of Asia and Africa, returning with 'Eastern' goods (including spices, chintz,

porcelain and indigo) which were seized upon by members of the British aristocracy as markers of luxury and exotic, fashionable taste. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed an 'intensifying consciousness' by the British of cultures beyond Europe, and by the early nineteenth-century encounters between the British and 'the East' encompassed the scholarly study of ancient civilisations and contemporary 'Eastern' cultures; the evocation of 'exotic' lands and peoples in poems and novels; the flourishing of a market for literary accounts of such lands; and the representation of 'Eastern' or 'Oriental' themes in painting, interior design, product manufacture and dress.[9]

The approach whereby foreign peoples were broadly conceived as 'Other' had been exemplified by several of Andrew Ducrow's horseback characterisations, most of which predated his conception of *Raphael's Dream*. When, for example, Ducrow personated 'Le Chausseur Indien' ('The Indian Hunter') on horseback at Astley's Amphitheatre in 1824, little effort had been made to recreate the conditions of India in the circus ring, or the physical appearance of Indian people.[10] A print circulated to commemorate the performance showed Ducrow wearing a tunic, sandals and feathered headdress, while a goat and leopard lay dead in the foreground; vague signifiers of 'Indianness' were employed at the expense of geographical, archaeological or cultural detail [Fig. 3.1]. During his lengthy association with Astley's Amphitheatre, Ducrow also personated a 'Chinese Enchanter'[11], a 'Tyrolean Shepherd'[12], a 'Polish Lancer'[13] and a 'Turkish Horse Trainer'[14], in each case reducing the nation or culture impersonated to little more than a caricature.

George Catlin's exhibitions of 'American Indians' similarly revelled in the exhibition of the exotic 'Other', although Catlin – a painter and travel writer as well as an entertainment impresario – boasted a much more extensive, first-hand understanding of the peoples he represented on the stage. According to his autobiography, Catlin (born in Pennsylvania in 1796) had undertaken various trips into American Indian territory in the 1830s, visiting tribes clustered around the Mississippi, Missouri and Arkansas Rivers. There, he painted portraits of men and women apparently indicative, in physical appearance and habits of dress, of each of the major American Indian tribes. Catlin claimed that this project was conducted as a means of producing 'a fair and just

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[9] John Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession: Islamic Inspiration in British and American Art and Architecture 1500-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 73.
[10] See, for example, programmes for 21 April 1824 and 17 June 1824. VATC, 'Astley's Amphitheatre'.
[11] Programme for 29 May 1826. VATC, 'Astley's Amphitheatre'.
[12] Programme for 1 July 1833. VATC, 'Astley's Amphitheatre'.
[13] Programme for 31 March 1834. VATC, 'Astley's Amphitheatre'.
[14] Programme for 1 September 1834. VATC, 'Astley's Amphitheatre'.

Figure 3.1: Theodore Lane., *The Unparalleled Feat of Mons. Ducrow in the Character of the Wild Indian Hunter* (c. 1830).

monument, to the memory of a truly lofty and noble race.'[15] The American Indians were 'a subject of great interest and some importance to the civilised world' – all the more so, Catlin argued, because their numbers were in rapid decline, the tribes having been unable to keep apace with 'advanced' nations in the fields of defence, enterprise, craft and education. By painting these portraits and, later, by exhibiting 'American Indians' in spaces of popular entertainment, Catlin hoped to undermine prejudices held in regard to the 'honourable, contemplative, and religious' peoples of North America [Fig. 3.2].[16]

Catlin exhibited his portraits in New York, Boston and Philadelphia, before crossing the Atlantic in 1839 to lease a room in Piccadilly's Egyptian Hall. In the hundred-foot-long 'Indian Gallery', Catlin arranged six-hundred of his portraits along with a collection of 'American Indian' objects (including jewellery, animal skins and weapons). A large wigwam made from buffalo skin served as the exhibition's centrepiece. This paraphernalia must have appeared somewhat out of place when viewed in conjunction with the venue's neoclassical exterior and Egyptian décor, yet the critical response was favourable. A correspondent from *The Times* praised the exhibition, noting that the portraits had benefitted from Catlin's 'having actually beheld what he transmits to canvas.' The correspondent judged that the Gallery offered 'a vast field for the researches of the antiquary, the naturalist, and the philosopher.'[17] At this point, it is clear that the study of foreign peoples was thought to fall under the remit not of 'ethnologists' or 'anthropologists' but of antiquaries, naturalists and philosophers. The Ethnological Society of London had not yet been formed, and its predecessor – the Aborigines' Protection Society, established in 1837 – was concerned, much like Catlin, with the dissemination of knowledge about 'uncivilised' peoples, and with the (partially humanitarian) question of securing rights for the 'Native Inhabitants of Countries where British Settlements are made.'[18] Catlin's Egyptian Hall exhibition was valued for the 'insight' it offered into the exotic and 'endangered' American Indian population, although this insight was rather more antiquarian and philosophical than 'scientific'.

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[15] George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Willis P. Hazard, 1857), I, p. 21.
[16] Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, I, pp. 27-8.
[17] 'Mr. Catlin's Indian Gallery', in *The Times*, 3 February 1840, p. 5.
[18] The Aborigines' Protection Society aimed to determine the measures which ought to be adopted 'with respect to the Native Inhabitants of Countries where British Settlements are made, and to the Neighbouring Tribes, in order to secure to them the due observance of justice and the protection of their rights: to promote the spread of Civilisation among them, and to lead them to the peaceful and voluntary reception of the Christian religion.' Quoted in George W. Stocking, 'What's in a Name? The Origins of the Royal Anthropological Institute (1837-71)', in *Man*, 6 (1971), 369-90 (369-70).

In a lecture given at the Royal Institution of London in 1840, Catlin employed British men and women to dress in 'American Indian' costume and pose in *tableaux* arrangements. Catlin was at this time attempting to canvas financial support (which never materialised) for a 'Museum of Mankind' which would 'contain and perpetuate the looks and manner and history of all the declining and vanishing races of mankind.' Catlin's lecture and the accompanying *tableaux* were apparently well-received; according to Catlin's account of the event, the British performers helped him to 'delineate the true native character.'[19]

Catlin went on to exhibit British men and women as 'American Indians' at Vauxhall Gardens in August 1841. According to the programme, twenty performers were first arranged into a *tableau* entitled 'A Beautiful Group of Warriors and Braves in full-dress', which featured a 'Chief' smoking a pipe while 'several Indian women, in fine dresses of skins' sat in the background. Subsequent *tableaux* depicted the progress of war. 'Warriors Enlisting' was followed by scenes entitled 'Council of War', 'Foot War-Party on the March', 'War-Party encamped at Night', 'An Alarm in Camp', 'Battle and Scalping', 'Scalp Dance' and, finally 'Pipe of the Peace Dance'.[20] For this exhibition and similar displays at the Indian Gallery, Catlin chose men and women whose facial features resembled 'Indian' physiognomies, and instructed his performers in the 'Indian mode of walking with their "toes in".' Catlin claimed that the resulting *tableaux* represented 'the most faithful and general representation of Indian life that was ever brought before the civilised world.'[21] Catlin – unlike Ducrow – was concerned to present as 'accurate' a picture of the peoples whose likenesses he arranged on the stage, taking pride in the extensive research which had enabled the production of such likenesses.

The impersonation of American Indians by white men and women was a well-established form of entertainment by the mid nineteenth century. As Rayna Green has shown, American Indians had been personated by non-Indians in dramatic performances since at least the eighteenth century.[22] Green has argued that the performance of 'playing

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[19] George Catlin, *Catlin's Notes of Eight Years' Travels and Residence in Europe, With his North American Indian Collection*, 2 vols. (New York: Burgess, Stringer & Co., 1848), I, pp. 61-2.
[20] Three domestic *tableaux* were also included in the programme, titled 'Ball Play', 'Game of Tchung-kee' and 'An Indian Wedding'. See 'Tableaux Vivants of the Red Indians', a special sheet describing the Red Indians performance which probably accompanied the ordinary programme for 9 August 1841. ML, 'Vauxhall Cuttings'.
[21] Among the scenes represented by British performers at the Indian Gallery were those entitled 'Wrestling' and 'The Night Dance of the Seminolees' (a dance which was traditionally conducted around a fire, and involved a song directed to the 'Great Spirit'). See Catlin, *Catlin's Notes of Eight Years' Travel*, I, pp. 96-7.
[22] Rayna Green, 'The Tribe Called Wannabee: Playing Indian in America and Europe', in *Folklore*, 99.1 (1988), 30-55.

Figure 3.2: George Catlin, *Meach-o-shín-gaw, Little White Bear, a Konza Warrior* (1842).

Indian' by non-Indian peoples entailed 'the physical and psychological removal, even the death, of real Indians.' Performances may ostensibly have been conducted out of respect for American Indians, but more often than not they in fact constituted 'the obverse of another well-known cultural phenomenon, "Indian hating".'[23] Catlin's British-performed 'American Indian' *tableaux* can certainly be aligned with this long tradition of employing white performers to recreate 'native' scenes or episodes, yet 'Indian hating' was hardly at the root of Catlin's exhibitions. The 'American Indian' displays at Vauxhall Gardens and the Indian Gallery were staged as a means of eliminating negative stereotypes concerning American Indians. Though 'real' American Indians were not at this point representing themselves on the stage, Catlin hoped to engender an understanding of the (very real) plight of North American Indian tribes in the modern, industrialising world.

Aiming to broaden the appeal of his exhibitions beyond 'the antiquary, the naturalist, and the philosopher', Catlin sought out 'native' American Indians to participate in his *tableaux* arrangements. In the course of the 1840s, Catlin exhibited three different parties of American Indians: two groups of Ojibwe Indians (originating from the Lake Superior region, which straddles modern-day Canada and the United States) and one group of Iowa Indians (originating from Iowa). All three groups had already been engaged by other travelling showmen; Catlin had not plucked the American Indians from their 'tribal' homes in North America. The American Indians were familiar with the practices of touring and exhibition – and, significantly, with the wonder and mystification which accompanied their appearance in spaces of public entertainment.[24]

The American Indians' 'native' customs featured prominently in their performances. At the Indian Gallery, Catlin encouraged the American Indians to enact the 'Scalp Dance' (which involved the carving of a cut around the crown of the head, whereupon the scalp could be pulled off by the hair: this effected the painfully – and humiliatingly – slow death of the victim, and also produced a portable trophy for the American Indian victor), whilst Catlin lectured on the cultural peculiarities of the different American Indian tribes.[25] When one of the Ojibwe groups was invited to meet Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle, its members were introduced by their native names. According to *The Times*, the 'war chief' was presented as 'Pattana-quotto-weebe' (a name

[23] Green, 'The Tribe Called Wannabee', 31.
[24] Robert M. Lewis, 'Wild American Savages and the Civilized English: Catlin's Indian Gallery and the Shows of London', in *European Journal of American Studies*, 3.1 (2008), 2-18 (9).
[25] Catlin, *Catlin's Notes of Eight Years' Travels*, I, p. 34. In order to arouse the presumably-desired responses of shock and disgust among spectators, the American Indians must have feigned the process fairly convincingly, perhaps exaggerating their movements and exclamations in order to disguise the lack of 'real' blood and severed scalps.

which translated as 'the swift-driving cloud') and the only English-speaking member of the group was introduced as 'Nottena-akm' ('the strong wind'). As they performed the 'war dance', the Indians wore 'the costume of their country', and carried such 'native' weapons as clubs, spears and tomahawks.[26]

Though Catlin's understanding of American Indian customs is likely to have prevailed in the arrangement of the *tableaux* enacted by both British and American Indian performers, the 'real' American Indians were not stripped of all agency. During the time of the American Indians' residence in London, journalists developed a keen interest in the responses of the American Indians to Britain and the British people. Catlin encouraged this interest, including in his autobiographical writings of 1848 and 1852 the observations of the Ojibwe and Iowa Indians as they encountered various aspects of British life.[27] With Catlin and the journalists as their mouthpieces, the American Indians thereby acquired a degree of subjecthood, and were able to ensure that their own personalities and viewpoints were not entirely subsumed by Catlin's philanthropic-cum-commercial enterprise. The American Indians made astute, humorous and sometimes offensive observations, drawing the kinds of comparisons between their own and British society that would soon be institutionalised into the new 'science' of anthropology.

The Ojibwe Indians were particularly surprised by the manner in which 'fine ladies and gentleman' lived in such close proximity to drunkards and 'poor and ragged people.'[28] They had apparently never seen any American Indians 'in the wilderness' half as poor and sickly-looking as the 'famishing creatures' that populated London's streets. One of the Ojibwe Indians (referred to in Catlin's accounts as 'Jim') suggested that missionaries, instead of travelling to North America to work with the American Indians, should have concerned themselves with the men, women and children who were dying in Britain 'for want of food and knowledge.' The Ojibwe 'War-chief' was particularly quick to pass judgement on the drunkards who 'every moment abuse and insult the Great Spirit' by leaving their children to fend for themselves. American Indian society, according to the War-chief, had 'no such drunkards or people who abuse the Great Spirit.'[29]

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[26] 'The Ojibbeway Indians at Windsor Castle', in *The Times*, 22 December 1843, p. 4.
[27] Catlin claimed that, though viewing the world through 'unenlightened eyes', the American Indians 'saw and correctly appreciated many things' which Londoners themselves overlooked. See Catlin, *Adventures of the Ojibbeway and Ioway Indians in England, France, and Belgium, Being Notes of Eight Years' Travels and Residence in Europe with his North American Indian Collection*, 2 vols. (London: published by author, 1852), II, pp. 306-7.
[28] The Ojibwe Indians saw some Indian Lascars sweeping the streets, and resolved to return another day with some money for them. See Catlin, *Catlin's Notes of Eight Years' Travel*, I, pp. 129-30.
[29] 'Savage Views of Civilisation', in *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, 24 June 1848, p. 408.

Comparing American Indian and British ways of life, the American Indians judged that, in some respects at least, their own were superior.

Catlin also recorded some of the American Indians' more trivial remarks. The American Indians, perhaps realising that they were the objects of scrutiny themselves, turned their own inquisitive eyes upon the British, making probing (and sometimes cruel) observations about the physical appearances of the men and women they encountered. Aboard an omnibus, the Ojibwe Indians saw a man who had 'a remarkably big nose' which, according to the American Indians, 'looked like a large potato (or *wapsapinnakan*).' One of the Ojibwe women claimed 'that it was actually a *wapsapinnakan*, for she could distinctly see the little holes where the sprouts grow out.' The omnibus passed the man too quickly for the American Indians to 'have a fair look', but they expressed a keen desire to see the man on another occasion so that they could 'take a good look at him.'[30]

Whether or not the American Indians' judgements regarding British society were favourable, British commentators seem to have been pleased to obtain the insights of the American Indians. In an article entitled 'Savage Views of Civilisation', a correspondent for the *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* (possibly Robert Chambers, one of the journal's editors and the author of the influential 1844 work *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*) argued that the presence of the American Indians in Britain offered the British an unprecedented opportunity for the furthering of self-knowledge. In an age of 'remarkable' advancement in which it became increasingly possible to monitor the progress of peoples globally, British society still lacked the faculties 'for observing *ourselves*.' Consequently, the British were blinded by 'self-esteem' and 'the glare and glitter' in which they lived. The 'savage' (or American Indian) could, however, observe the British with 'ingenuous eyes', judging with an 'untutored' mind and reporting his or her findings with 'truthful lips.'[31]

Catlin's readers may well have considered the American Indians' observations somewhat quaint. Yet, despite their humourous comments about British beauty (or lack thereof), many of the American Indians' observations were tinged with a very real sense of moral judgement. Shocked by the level of deprivation which they witnessed on London's streets, the American Indians judged the British welfare system to be severely lacking. Surely a nation that prided itself on its high degree of 'civilisation' ought not to

[30] Catlin, *Adventures of the Ojibbeway and Iowa Indians*, I, p. 11.
[31] 'Savage Views of Civilisation', p. 406.

allow ordinary people to suffer such poverty and shame. According to Said's formulation, the objectified 'Other' was lent no opportunity for the critical evaluation of 'civilised' man, judgment and condescension being the exclusive preserve of the 'civilised'. However, it is clear that, in reality, judgements were made by individuals originating from both 'Orient' and 'Occident'. The American Indians' statue-like poses must have offered ideal vantage points from which to observe their observers, enabling the American Indians to assume – if temporarily – the privileged position of 'subject'.

Ducrow's horseback personations and Catlin's British-performed 'American Indian' *tableaux* therefore represented a form of fancy dress, with performances tending – in somewhat totalising, reductionist terms – to conceive of 'Other' peoples and cultures as the counterpoint to 'Western' culture. Though Catlin's 'real' American Indian exhibitions continued to posit American Indians as spectacles for public consumption, it is clear that Catlin was additionally (and somewhat honourably) concerned to promote the interests of the American Indians. Ojibwe and Iowa Indians were employed as a means of familiarising British people with tribes whose traditional ways of life were endangered. Indeed, Catlin's aims were aligned to a significant extent with those of the Aborigines' Protection Society (APS), which had endeavored to further the understanding of 'uncivilised' peoples and to secure improved rights for 'native' groups under British imperial control.

As the next section of this chapter will demonstrate, the organisers of imperial exhibitions at Sydenham and South Kensington enlarged upon the approach taken by Catlin in the display of 'foreign' peoples, although the humanitarian urges of Catlin and the APS had by this point been somewhat diminished. Consistent with the approach endorsed by the new Ethnological Society of London, all aspects of the material culture of 'natives' were now scrutinised and displayed. Exhibition organisers and 'ethnologists' hoped that this exhaustive insight into the character and customs of foreign peoples might throw light upon the origins of mankind itself.

### 3.2 Ethnology

The Crystal Palace at Sydenham Hill (opened in 1854) represented the first international exhibition to display 'foreign peoples', its predecessor – Hyde Park's Great Exhibition of 1851 – having been dedicated to the display of manufactures and machinery. In the Crystal Palace's court of 'Natural History', visitors encountered life-sized models of men and women from various nations and cultures. These models were lent an uncanny

realism through the addition of artificial hair, eyes and fingernails, as well as individualised facial expressions. According to the official guidebook for the 'Natural History Department' (written by Robert Latham, the display's curator), the visitor was able to 'place himself in respect to the objects before him in the same relation as he would be to a map of the world.' The 'New World' lay on one side, and the 'Old World' on the other; meandering through the exhibits, the visitor was greeted with a group of Papuans, two Australian men, three Javanese people, a group of Hindus and a number of 'Negroes' differentiated according to nation of origin and degree of skin pigmentation. Both the guidebook and the displays themselves emphasised the physical and cultural characteristics which distinguished these peoples from one another (and, implicitly, from those observing the displays), such as religion, social customs, language and facial features. Many of the models were, according to Latham, 'taken from life', worked up from casts made of foreign peoples encountered either in London or in the 'Old World'.[32]

The 1854 Crystal Palace was conceived by its organisers in didactic terms. The exhibition was a 'three dimensional encyclopedia of both nature and art', intended to 'help visitors to understand evolution and civilisation in relation to their own times.'[33] A theme of progress was inherent to the arrangement of the exhibits. The route laid out in Latham's guidebook encouraged visitors to pass by early Biblical scenes, before entering the Palace (by means of an inclining hill) and moving through the court of Natural History. The tour concluded with displays of modern industry. As Sadiah Qureshi has pointed out, visitors did not necessarily heed Latham's advice; it is possible that they took the opposite route, and were confronted with a narrative charting the decline of empires, rather than the march from savagery to civilisation.[34] Nevertheless, the Crystal Palace set a new standard for 'ethnological' displays. Henceforth, the organisers of major exhibitions would tend towards the 'scientistic' presentation of foreign peoples. The exotic beauty of the conquered world was celebrated, but placed in a firmly hierarchical relation with the 'civilised' imperial power.

However, it was not until the Paris *Exposition Universelle* of 1867 that living peoples were displayed at a major international exhibition. Here, North African men and

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[32] Robert Latham noted that the Zulu group was modelled on casts taken from the men recently exhibited at St. George's Hall; the Bushmen were modelled on two African children residing in England at the time; and the Indian models were casts taken from life during the expedition of Sir. R. Schomburgk to British Guiana. See Latham, *The Natural History Department of the Crystal Palace Described. Ethnology* (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1854), p. 60.
[33] Jan R. Piggott, *Palace of the People: The Crystal Palace at Sydenham, 1854-1936* (London: C. Hurst, 2004), p. v.
[34] Sadiah Qureshi, 'Robert Gordon Latham: Displayed Peoples, and the Natural History of Race, 1854-1886', in *The Historical Journal*, 54.1 (March 2011), 143-66 (151-2).

women were presented in the form of mobile *tableaux vivants*, instantiating aspects of 'native' life. Craftspeople demonstrated their handiwork in an Egyptian Bazaar; a Tunisian barber shop served real customers; and a number of Egyptian, Tunisian and Algerian cafés were operated by waiters 'imported' from the French colonies.[35] The displays must have lent spectators the impression that they had been granted access to the daily machinations of ordinary 'African' life. No matter how realistic the Crystal Palace waxwork models had been, there was no doubting that these were simulacra of 'reality', presented in the museum setting. Now, at the *Exposition Universelle*, spectators might suspend their disbelief, and imagine that they had been transported to the streets of a broadly-defined 'Africa'. In the years after 1867, the organisers of large-scale British exhibitions began to follow the example set by Paris, and the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition at South Kensington represented the climax of this 'ethnological' living pictures tradition.

The Colonial and Indian Exhibition was conceived as a means by which to 'stimulate commerce and strengthen the bonds of union now existing in every portion of her Majesty's Empire.'[36] Each colony's display was arranged by the colony itself (or, more accurately, by the officers charged with overseeing that colony), and the Exhibition was intended to illustrate the history of each colony, as well as its natural products, commerce, political and social life and unique 'ethnography'.[37] Officially opened by Queen Victoria in May 1886, the Exhibition featured Art-ware, Economic and Administrative courts, as well as Agricultural and 'Ethnological' exhibits. Though India was the major contributor to the Exhibition, colonial administrators from Canada, Australia, Africa and the Mediterranean colonies also sent wares for display.[38]

Living peoples from the various colonies formed an important part of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. Queen Victoria was greeted at the opening ceremony by various 'Indian subjects', including a 'large group of Parsees' and 'representatives of various other Indian types.'[39] At the 'Indian Palace', a huge structure set in the Exhibition grounds, thirty-four Indian artisans could be observed at work, plying their trade as weavers, coppersmiths, seal engravers, potters, clay figure makers and calico printers.

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[35] Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibition and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 86.
[36] Quoted in Saloni Mathur, 'Living Ethnological Exhibits: The Case of 1886', in *Cultural Anthropology*, 15.4 (2001), 492-524 (495).
[37] 'The Colonial and Indian Exhibition', in *The Times*, 1 April 1886, p. 3.
[38] The exhibition catalogue described the wares of each contributing colony in detail. See Anon., *Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886. Official Catalogue* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1886).
[39] 'Opening by the Queen', in *The Times*, 5 May 1886, p. 11.

Saloni Mathur has identified one of these tradesmen as Tulsi Ram, who, having travelled to London to seek justice for a land dispute in the Punjab region, had been detained in various London prisons and workhouses before being employed as a *tableau* exhibit in 1886. Mathur suggests that the decision to employ Ram and other petty criminals in major exhibitions was justified in both pragmatic and moralistic terms. As marginalised individuals, these men were unlikely to attract sympathy among the Indian public back home, and exhibition organisers could demonstrate to the British public the ease with which criminals might be disciplined through hard, productive labour.[40]

A number of 'native villages' featured at the 1886 Exhibition, including an Afghan *Kabitka* (tent), a Malay House, a British Guianan *Benab* (hut), a Maori Storehouse, a Bushman's Hut and several Burmese Pavilions.[41] In order to prepare for these displays, 'natives' were imported to Britain and settled in the 'villages'. According to the exhibitions' promotional material, they were given the raw materials to prepare food and offer demonstrations of their crafts and trades. The 'natives' were expected to 'perform' their daily lives in (presumably uncomfortable) juxtaposition to other 'native' communities, whose 'villages' neighboured their own in the cramped exhibition space. Members of the public were thereby enabled to view snapshots of each of the British colonies, savouring the romantic nature of these primitive lifestyles whilst observing for themselves the economic expediencies of imperial control.

According to one observer, the 'native villages' permitted those Britons interested 'in the progress of their brethren beyond the seas' to view examples of the different 'races' of man.[42] Organisers of the 'native villages' seem to have presumed that viewing aspects of the daily routines of 'native' groups lent observers important insight into the various races of mankind. By viewing the domestic and ritualistic customs of different peoples in juxtaposition with one another, it was thought that contemporaries might be permitted to compare the races of humanity, and to perhaps draw conclusions concerning the relationship between these seemingly distant, exotic 'races' and the British 'race'.

In this respect, the Colonial and Indian Exhibition reflected the interests of the Ethnological Society of London. Founded in 1843, the Society aimed to expand upon the researches into the natural history of man undertaken only tentatively by the Aborigines' Protection Society. The Ethnological Society's professed purpose was to inquire 'into the

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[40] Mathur, 'Living Ethnological Exhibits', 494.
[41] Frank Cundall, ed., *Reminiscences of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1886), p. 5.
[42] Cundall, *Reminiscences*, p. viii 5.

distinguishing characteristics, physical and moral, of the varieties of Mankind which inhabit, or have inhabited, the Earth, and to ascertain the causes of such characteristics.'[43] Essentially, the Society was concerned to determine whether mankind derived from a single origin (and, in which case, the distinguishing characteristics of various 'native' groups were modifications of one type), or whether there had been multiple sources of origin – although, as George Stocking has pointed out, the ESL's founding members had little doubt that the former hypothesis was the correct one.[44] In the years after 1843, 'ethnologists' advanced a form of enquiry which encompassed the study of the linguistic, physical and cultural characteristics of various 'races'. Judging by the Colonial and Indian Exhibition's 'native villages', the Society's approach was embraced by those working in the field of popular entertainment.

Physician James Cowles Prichard set a precedent for the 'ethnological' approach in his *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind*, a two-volume work which had been published in 1813. Prichard adopted a diachronic method to the study of human variability, describing the ways in which such factors as climate and environment impacted upon the development of various characteristics attributed to the different 'races' of mankind. Arguing that 'sufficient and conclusive' evidence could not be obtained 'from researches merely historical', Prichard noted that it would only be possible to determine whether or not the 'races' of men were the 'offspring of a single stock' through the study of 'a variety of particulars connected with the history of living species.'[45] Having examined the 'psychical characters' and the physical forms of the 'Hottentots', the 'Esquimaux' (or 'Eskimos') and the 'Negroes', Prichard claimed that he had gathered sufficient evidence to support the claim that the various 'races' of mankind belonged to one species. Despite the widely-varying climates in which these 'races' lived, their physical, moral and intellectual properties were strikingly analogous. Prichard dismissed the claim that any one race enjoyed intellectual superiority over the others: it was possible to find men and families in Britain that were 'intellectually weaker' than Africans in general. Prichard argued that there was no evidence to support the notion of a 'diversity of species', as this hypothesis required the constant transmission of such distinguishing characteristics as intelligence.[46]

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[43] Quoted in Stocking, 'What's in a Name?', 172.
[44] Ibid., 172.
[45] James Cowles Prichard, *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind*, 2 vols. (London: Sherwood, Gilbert and Piper, 1836), I, p. 2, pp. 8-9.
[46] Prichard, *Researches*, pp. 215-6.

The ESL entered a period of heightened activity during the 1840s. Between 1846 and 1851, 'ethnology' encompassed a sub-section at the British Association's annual meetings; in 1851, it was granted status as a joint section, which it shared with 'geography'. Public interest in ethnological study was fostered by the Crystal Palace's court of 'Natural History' (organised by Robert Latham, a key member of the ESL) and by subsequent exhibitions of 'living' men and women. The French *Exposition Universelle* and the British Colonial and Indian Exhibition featured displays of foreign peoples, organised – much like the chapters of Prichard's *Researches* – according to 'race'. At these exhibitions, members of different nations or cultures were shown in the process of completing tasks conceived as 'typical' of their 'race': Tunisian men exhibited their skills as barbers, and Egyptians and Indians as craftsmen. Further, the Colonial and Indian Exhibition's catalogue encouraged spectators to identify the 'natives' according to their physical, intellectual and personal characteristics. Individuals belonging to the Fijian 'race' might have been recognised by their 'reddish-brown' complexions, and were distinguished from many other 'races' by their 'free and easy' dispositions; natives of St. Helena bore 'naturally indolent' dispositions; whereas natives of Ceylon possessed strong religious convictions, exemplified by the 'Model of a Buddhist Priest' which was included in the 'Ethnological' exhibit dedicated to that colony.[47]

However, the men and women presented at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition were not simply passive objects of display. T. N. Mukharji, an upper-class Bengali deputed to London to assist in the Exhibition's planning, formed part of Queen Victoria's reception committee. Upon his return to India, Mukharji documented his experiences in the book *A Visit to Europe* (1889). It is clear that, at the Exhibition itself, Mukharji was made to feel his 'Otherness' very keenly, 'pierced through and through by stares from eyes of all colours.'[48] After the 'Indians' had been presented to the Queen, the group, not knowing how to proceed, followed the Queen through the Australian and Canadian Courts. Sir Phillip Cunliffe-Owen, director of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 'came running to us and with a face full of concern said "What are you doing!"' Mukharji noted with some bitterness that, then, 'we realised our actual position.'[49] However, there were other occasions during his visit to London on which Mukharji challenged his 'object' status, placing himself in the privileged position of 'subject'. Indeed, Mukharji's descriptions of the people, places and customs of Britain effectively turned the British into the spectacle – and object of display – of the Indian.

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[47] Anon., *Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886*, p. 287, 319, 334.
[48] T.N. Mukharji, *A Visit to Europe* (Calcutta: W. Newman & Co., 1889), p. 100.
[49] Mukharji, *A Visit to Europe*, pp. 65-7.

Studying the visitors at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, Mukharji commented that British standards of female beauty differed considerably from those of the 'oriental':

> Unless keen in observation, he [the oriental] sees nothing in English beauty to admire except the complexion. He likes a symmetrical face, chiselled out to geometrical nicety… The defects in her [the English woman's] beauty are in her eyes which might have been a little blacker, in her hair which were not golden might have been a little darker… and in the expression of her face which might have had a little more mildness and less of that rebellious spirit which seems to lurk within.[50]

Mukharji thus scrutinised British visitors' appearances in the same manner that the British had scrutinised him. Mukharji was even able to appropriate – and thus undermine – some of the stereotypes surrounding the 'primitive' Indian way of life. The number of wives retained by Indian men was, according to Mukharji, a theme of constant speculation, 'and shrewd guesses were sometimes made on this point, 250 being a favourite number.' Mukharji recounted that one of his companions had once responded to a waitress' curiosity with an invitation for her to assume 'the fortieth wifeship in my household'. When the waitress asked what had happened to his former 'fortieth wife', the Indian replied – effectively undermining the clichéd assumption of Indian polygamy – '"I killed her, because one morning she could not cook my porridge well."'[51] Mukharji ultimately excused the demeaning attitudes held by the British, acknowledging that these attitudes were founded upon a long-held assumption of British superiority. The Indians' 'low organisation' had caused the entire population to be reduced in the British imagination 'to the position of cattle'.[52]

Colonial exhibitions exerted an important influence upon popular conceptions of 'native' peoples under British imperial rule. The displays constructed a dichotomous view of the West and the East, placing the West (and its customs, manufactures and people) in a position of superiority over the primitive, uncultured East. In some cases, even the physical arrangement of the exhibits confirmed the gulf between 'coloniser' and 'colonised'.[53] As Peter H. Hoffenberg has noted, the *tableaux* displays of living peoples in 'native villages' transformed the Eastern world into a 'series of images expressed in an

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[50] Ibid., p. 92.
[51] Ibid., p. 100.
[52] Ibid., p. 118.
[53] One of the main exhibition spaces at the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition featured a large map of the world, on which was marked the countries of the British Empire. Mounted underneath were charts offering information on area, population and trade of each of the colonies, and surmounting all of this was a figure of Britannia: British authority was made patently clear. See Cundall, *Reminiscences*, p. 6.

aesthetic grammar for observation and consumption.'[54] Each show offered a sequence of readily-comprehensible 'living pictures' of empire. These pictures allowed the British visitor to view once-disparate parts of the vast empire within the space of a few minutes, and to thereby feel a certain authority over distant lands and their inhabitants.

However, Mukharji's writings – like Catlin's recorded observations of the American Indians – serve to challenge the assumption made by Said and Spivak that the 'Other' could not 'speak'.[55] Mukharji's *Visit to Europe*, published in Calcutta and probably intended for an Indian public, contained several judgments about Britain and the British people. In an inversion of Said's formulation, *Europe* was staged for Asia, and the *British* were envisioned as representatives of 'the larger whole from which they emanate.'[56] Clearly the gaze of the British onlooker – which in Said and Spivak's theses was one-directional – was returned by the native subjects, who cast judgment upon the British in the manner that the colonising powers had traditionally cast judgment upon them.

### 3.3 Anthropology

In the years after 1850, the Ethnological Society of London experienced a period of decline. This decline was attributed by the ESL's secretary to the disruptive effects of the Crimean War, yet some contemporaries noted the impact which an increasingly widespread religious scepticism had upon the ESL, many of the Society's original members having clung to the notion that mankind was 'created' in the aftermath of the biblical flood.[57] Indeed, various events combined to cast doubt upon the monogenetic theory of human origins espoused by many ESL members, and to lend apparent weight to the alternative, polygenetic interpretation. The issue of black slavery had been brought to increased prominence at the end of the 1840s with the outbreak of the American Civil War, which prompted some to identify – apparently with renewed clarity – the deep-seated differences between 'Negroes' and 'whites'. Similarly, the Indian Mutiny of 1857 (which had seen the outbreak of widespread rebellion against the rule of the British East

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[54] Peter H. Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 71.
[55] Mukharji resisted the definitions imposed upon him by 'the European'; he even suggested that Indians might appropriate and re-assign the derogatory term 'native', as 'if we cannot cease to be "native"… we can now make "native" command respect.' See Mukharji, *A Visit to Europe*, pp. 133-5.
[56] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 63, 71-2. Several historians have recently challenged the assumption that the nineteenth-century 'subaltern' was unable to 'speak'. Saloni Mathur and Antoinette Burton have recovered the efforts made at self-definition by Indian travellers in Britain in the nineteenth century. See Mathur, 'Living Ethnological Exhibits'; Antoinette Burton, 'Making a Spectacle of Empire: Indian Travellers in Fin-de-Siècle London', in *History Workshop Journal*, 42 (1996), 127-46.
[57] Stocking, 'What's in a Name?', 373.

India Company in India) led many Britons to reject the notion of common Aryan brotherhood with Hindus.[58] These and other factors led, in the first instance, to the overhauling of the ESL's approach towards the study of 'native' peoples and, in the second, to the establishment of a rival organisation for the conducting of research into the origins of mankind: the Anthropological Society of London.

Although the observation and measurement of human 'types' had been carried out since the late eighteenth century – and Prichard, too, had conducted such study as part of his 'ethnological' research – by the late 1850s a more strictly 'anthropological' approach had come increasingly to dominate the researches of ESL members. Attending this shift in approach was an increased concern to delineate the quantifiable, physical characteristics of the human 'races'. No longer were environmental and social factors accorded such prominence in the advancement of knowledge about mankind. In the wake of the claim made by Robert Knox that the differences between these 'races' were such that these races ought to be considered separate 'species', physicians Joseph Barnard Davis and John Beddoe influentially argued that the evidence of craniological variation among different 'races' was strong enough to indicate that mankind was indeed formed of not one but several biological species. Finally, speech therapist James Hunt determined that the most expedient means for advancing this 'anthropological' approach – and for discrediting the outmoded 'ethnological' method – was the establishment of a new organisation. To this end, Hunt resigned from the ESL in 1863, and founded the Anthropological Society of London.[59]

Defining anthropology as 'the science of the whole of man', Hunt suggested that the researches of the Anthropological Society (to be conducted in a strictly empirical manner) would encompass the question of man's relation to animals, man's connection with the 'physical universe', and man's psychological characteristics. Particular emphasis would be placed upon the ascertaining of those traits which distinguished the human 'races' from one another.[60] Hunt's own writings revealed a preoccupation with this latter concern. In the lecture 'On the Negro's Place in Nature' (delivered to the Anthropological Society in November 1863), Hunt described the 'anatomical' differences 'between the Negro and the ape on the one hand, and between the European and the Negro on the other.' Hunt noted that the 'Negro' was of shorter stature than the European; that the bones of the 'Negro' were 'thicker and heavier', and the pelvis narrower; and that the

[58] George Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987), p. 63.
[59] This tumultuous period in the history of the ESL is described in Stocking, 'What's in a Name?', 374-6.
[60] Hunt's aims, laid out in an essay of 1863, are quoted in Stocking, 'What's in a Name?', 377.

brain of the 'Negro' was smaller than that of the European. There was, Hunt argued, a greater correspondence between the 'Negro' and the ape than between the 'Negro' and the European. In fact, there was as good a reason for classifying the 'Negro' as a distinct species from the European as there was for classifying the European as a distinct species from a zebra. Finally, Hunt suggested that the 'Negro' was more 'humanised' when living in 'natural subordination' to the European: the practices of slavery were therefore beneficial to the 'Negro' population.[61]

With Hunt's 'anthropological' method enjoying increased popularity among biologists, Huxley circulated the request for the taking of anthropometric 'native' photographs. The nature of the request – and the impulses that lay behind it – reflected the influence which the 'anthropological' approach had exerted upon Huxley. Huxley informed administrators stationed at imperial outposts that subjects were to be posed for two photographs each. In the first they were to stand with the right arms outstretched and the palms of their hands turned towards the camera, and in the second they were to stand so that the left sides of their bodies faced the camera. In the case of female subjects, Huxley specified that the arms should not interfere with the view of the breasts. According to Anne Maxwell, this stipulation reflected the contemporary belief that the contour of the 'Negro' breast was highly characteristic of the 'race'.[62] Huxley hoped that the photographs would provide empirical data which would facilitate the drawing of anatomical comparisons between the different 'races' of man. Such comparisons would serve to discredit – or indeed to support – the notion that all 'races' originated from a common source.[63]

Huxley was not the first to use photography in an attempt to catalogue the different 'races' of man. In 1865, Swiss-born zoologist Louis Agassiz had travelled to Brazil, aiming to document a particular 'race' of Indians living in the city of Manaos. Agassiz photographed female subjects in three stages of undress – fully clothed, bared to the waist, and completely naked – hoping that this visual record of mixed-race descent would support his polygenetic view of human origin.[64] Many others were motivated to

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[61] James Hunt, 'On the Negro's Place in Nature', in *The Journal of the Anthropological Society of London*, 2 (1864), xv-lvi (xv-xvi).
[62] Maxwell, *Picture Imperfect*, p. 30.
[63] Huxley, a staunch advocate of Darwin's theory of evolution, wrote in a letter of 1863 that there was 'no evidence whatever for saying, that mankind sprang originally from any more than a single pair'. Distinct 'races' and 'varieties' may well have arisen through the operation of natural selection, the mechanism of evolution proposed by Darwin. Huxley's letter is quoted in Frederick Burkhardt, ed., *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin*, 23 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), XIII, p. 298.
[64] For Agassiz's project, see Maxwell, *Picture Imperfect*, pp. 22-9.

photograph 'natives' by the conviction that certain 'races' were dying out before the onslaught of 'civilisation', and that their distinct characteristics ought to be recorded for posterity. Francis Nixon, the Bishop of Tasmania, photographed the few remaining Tasmanian 'aboriginals' in Hobart in 1858, and Charles Woolley was commissioned to photograph the same Tasmanians for display at Melbourne's Intercolonial Exhibition in 1866.[65] Huxley's institutional background probably served to recommend the biologist's project to the British Colonial Secretary. Having initiated the project through 'official' channels, Huxley was able to request photographs from administrators stationed at colonial outposts, and to thereby amass a relatively comprehensive photographic record.

As the *Three Graces* image exemplifies, responses to Huxley's request were mixed: some colonial administrators photographed the colony's 'natives' in accordance with Huxley's requests, others with a lesser degree of precision. Sir Henry Barkly, governor of the Cape of Good Hope and British High Commissioner in South Africa, carried out Huxley's instructions with scrupulous attention to detail. As Barkly noted in a letter of December 1871, he had given directions 'to have a certain number of Convicts of the various Native Races photographed in the style suggested by Professor Huxley.' Barkly thus sent 'a set of photographic portraits illustrative of the three distinct races of men and families of language – Kafir, Hottentot, and Bushman – existing in South Africa.'[66] Barkly included a letter from German linguist Dr. Wilhelm Bleek in his reply to Huxley's request, which offered details on each of the subjects photographed. According to this letter, Barkly and Bleek went beyond Huxley's remit to photograph subjects which they considered to be of 'great ethnological interest', including prison inmates categorised as either Bushmen, Korannas, Namaguas or Kafirs. Bleek also proffered information relating to the subjects' places of residence; their 'Dutch' names and 'Native' names; their inmate identification numbers; and their (probable) ages.[67]

Barkly regretted, however, that the photographic collection was not 'complete', his having been unable to obtain photographs of women, children or representatives of the 'Bechnana' people. Barkly and Bleek had only managed to photograph prison inmates; it seems that the local women had refused to submit themselves and their children as subjects. Barkly was not sanctioned – nor perhaps willing – to compel these

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[65] James Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualisation of the British Empire* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), p. 140.
[66] Sir Henry Barkley to Thomas Henry Huxley, 30 December 1871, Cape Town. ICA, 'Thomas Henry Huxley Collection', Series 4 – Anthropology and Ethnology, 1866-1890.
[67] Dr. Bleek to Thomas Henry Huxley, 25 September 1871, Cape Town. ICA, 'Thomas Henry Huxley Collection', Series 4 – Anthropology and Ethnology, 1866-1890.

individuals to pose for photographs. Indeed, a number of colonial administrators reported that they had been unable to obtain photographs of the precise nature requested by Huxley. Sir Anthony Musgrave, governor of British Columbia, noted that no '[American] Indians here will consent to be photographed in a state of nudity, although reward has been offered.' The 'natives' possessed 'a superstitious dread of some hidden purpose which they do not understand', and 'it would be impossible to explain to them the scientific object of the proceeding.'[68] The Viscount Canterbury, serving as Colonial Secretary in Melbourne, reported that the objections made by 'aborigines' in response to requests to photograph them naked 'would be still more weighty in the case of half castes and others.'[69] Anticipating that these 'half castes' would not consent to being photographed, it seems that the Viscount did not even submit the request to certain quarters of the 'native' population.

By declining colonial administrators' requests for them to pose naked, 'native' men and women denied Huxley the opportunity to analyse, classify and objectify them. As Philippa Levine has pointed out, the trope of anthropological photography to which Huxley's collection of images belonged was central to the imperial project: photographing naked colonial subjects confirmed and demonstrated the authority of the colonising power over colonised peoples. Nakedness connoted 'readability and legibility', and to remove the clothes of the 'native' was to uncover the 'truth' about him or her, as well as his or her culture or nation more broadly.[70] Refusing to submit to the lens of the camera therefore signalled a refusal to submit to objectification, and a refusal to be defined by Huxley's classificatory system. In a more tangible sense, 'native' resistance served to challenge the presumption that discomfiture in nakedness was the preserve of 'civilised' nations. If the 'primitive' peoples under colonial control possessed such qualities as dignity and pride, perhaps the distinction between Westerners and 'natives' (or between 'Occident' and 'Orient') was not as great as had previously been imagined. Of course, it is unlikely that Huxley and the colonial officers valued dignity, pride or even morality among the 'natives', with such qualities having served simply to frustrate the anthropologists' efforts at 'scientific' investigation.

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[68] Sir Anthony Musgrave to Thomas Henry Huxley, 22 April 1870, Government House, British Columbia. ICA, 'Thomas Henry Huxley Collection', Series 4 – Anthropology and Ethnology, 1866-1890.
[69] Viscount Canterbury to Earl Granville, 20 May 1870, Government Offices, Melbourne. ICA, 'Thomas Henry Huxley Collection', Series 4 – Anthropology and Ethnology, 1866-1890.
[70] Philippa Levine, 'States of Undress: Nakedness and the Colonial Imagination', in *Victorian Studies*, 50.2 (Winter 2008), 189-219 (198-9).

In some cases, colonial administrators were themselves uncomfortable with Huxley's request. Robert Brough Smyth, a geologist and member of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines, argued that 'it would be unwise to ask the aborigines of this colony to submit themselves to the photographer in the manner proposed.' The Australian 'aborigines' were 'civilised as regards their habits, but they are not sufficiently enlightened to submit themselves in a state of nudity for portraiture.' Any photographer who attempted to follow Huxley's instructions would, Smyth claimed, 'offend the aborigines and meet with little success.' Photographs could only be obtained through coercive means and, if such an approach were pursued, imperial officers' authority over the 'natives' would be diminished.[71] 'Native' reluctance (in this case, presumed reluctance) to pose as subjects for Huxley's photographs was equated by Smyth with a lack of 'civilisation'. If the natives had been more 'enlightened', they would, Smyth presumed, have submitted themselves for photography in the name of science. It seems that, whether or not the 'native' men and women had allowed themselves to be photographed, they would have been thought primitive. In the context of nineteenth-century imperialism, both compliance and resistance could be held to signify a lack amongst the 'native' population.

Despite objections on the part of some 'natives' and colonial officers, Huxley received data from Australia, Barbados, Bermuda, China, the Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, India and South Africa.[72] However, though Huxley had been planning to generate 'something exhaustive and definite' as a result of this photographic survey, the idea never came to fruition, and no analysis was undertaken of the photographs. Some colonial administrators themselves drew preliminary comparisons between the physical appearances, customs and relative degrees of civilisation of the various 'races' photographed. For example, in a letter from the Falkland Islands, a colonial officer provided commentaries upon the photographs sent, detailing the particular characteristics of such 'races' as the Bushmen, Hottentots and Bantee. The officer suggested that members of the 'Betshuana' race had general 'reached a higher degree of aboriginal

[71] Robert Brough Smyth to Chief Secretary, 17 May 1870, Office of the Central Board for Aborigines, Melbourne. ICA, 'Thomas Henry Huxley Collection', Series 4 – Anthropology and Ethnology, 1866-1890.

[72] See letters in ICA, 'Thomas Henry Huxley Collection', Series 4 – Anthropology and Ethnology, 1866-1890. According to a biography written by Huxley's son Leonard Huxley, Huxley acquired 'some 400 to 500 photographs' – if this is true, some of the photographs have been lost: the ICA collection is not this extensive. See Leonard Huxley, *Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley*, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1903), III, pp. 432-3.

civilisation that their neighbours and next cousins, the Kafirs.'[73] Huxley himself did not study the photographs in any detail: by this point he was, perhaps, diverted by other institutional commitments.

Colonial photography worked to reinforce the superiority of the colonising powers over 'native' peoples, enacting a division between the spectators (the colonisers) and the objects of scrutiny (the colonial subjects). Susan Sontag has argued that the act of taking a photograph is necessarily 'predatory': to photograph people is to 'violate' them.[74] According to Sontag, the subject of the photograph is, without exception, 'depreciated into an article of consumption, promoted into an item for aesthetic appreciation.'[75] The 'native' photographs taken under Huxley's jurisdiction certainly worked to transform subjects into articles for scientific consumption. 'Natives' were compelled to assume *tableaux*-like configurations, denied agency by dint of their having been 'frozen' as illustrations of the evolutionary process (which was itself conceived by imperialists to have 'frozen', in the case of certain peoples). However, Sontag's thesis fails to account for instances of defiance. Huxley's photographic subjects were able to stare back, through the camera lens, at their photographers. Indeed, they could refuse to submit themselves for photography in the first place, thereby undermining the classificatory projects conceived by their colonial 'superiors'.

Huxley's 'anthropometric' project therefore reflected the interests of a 'scientific' milieu which had come increasingly to value empirical data as a means of furthering understanding about mankind. With European superiority taken for granted, scientists attempted to classify other 'races', using physical characteristics as indicators of their relative intelligence or degree of 'civilisation'. Many of the images produced in response to Huxley's request appear to signal the patronising – in modern terms, racist – impulses of nineteenth-century biologists. The preservation of 'native' dignity was disregarded as irrelevant. 'Native' peoples were presumed to possess no 'civilisation': perhaps, by extension, they possessed no sense of dignity, either. Foreign peoples were displayed as 'scientific' specimens – in some cases, they were simply posited as spectacles for consumption, as the *Three Graces* image indicates.

The next section of this chapter describes some of the uses to which this 'anthropological' insight was put in the second half of the nineteenth century, and

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[73] This letter was included in a package sent from Robert Henry Meade to Huxley, 27 June 1871. ICA, 'Thomas Henry Huxley Collection', Series 4 – Anthropology and Ethnology, 1866-1890.
[74] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Anchor Books, 1989), p. 14.
[75] Sontag, *On Photography*, p. 110.

examines the ways in which entertainment impresarios reflected this 'scientific' interest in 'native' peoples. It argues that the controversy which accompanied the exhibition of enslaved peoples signifies a heightened anti-slavery sentiment. This sentiment was, in many respects, antithetical to the aims of the ASL, members of which had derived their support of the practices of enslavement and subjugation from their belief in the polygenetic origins of humanity.

### 3.4 Anthropology in Application: Slavery, Eroticism and Gérôme's *Moorish Bath*

Addressing the Anthropological Society in 1864, James Hunt had dismissed the notion that 'scientific societies' ought to avoid the issues of 'politics or religion', and that 'men of science' ought not concern themselves with 'the practical application of science.' He declared:

> I contend that the science of political economy must be based simply and solely on the facts discovered by the anthropologist… Now a social science cannot be based on mere philanthropic theories. In other words, social science must be based on the facts of human nature as it is, not as we would wish it to be. We cannot assist the cause of true science by attempting to establish an artificial social system which is no part of nature's laws.[76]

Declaring that certain 'races' of man enjoyed superior intellectual, cultural and moral capacities, Hunt claimed that the inferior 'races' were more 'humanised' when subjugated by Europeans. For this reason, Hunt lent his unqualified support to the Governor of Jamaica, Edward Eyre, whose actions in the Morant Bay Rebellion had incited widespread debate. Eyre had coordinated the violent suppression of Jamaican rebels who, freed from the bondages of slavery since the passing of the Emancipation Act in 1834, had nevertheless continued to suffer political inequality and economic hardship, relations between white farmers and ex-slaves having become strained. Hunt praised Eyre for his promptness in meting out the 'appropriate' punishments (which involved the slaughtering of over 400 black Jamaicans, many of whom were not in fact rebels). He noted that Eyre's extensive knowledge of the 'negro character' had qualified Eyre to act in whichever manner he saw fit: the 'Negro' was highly dangerous when supplies of food were low, and only decisive action could quell his naturally violent instincts.[77]

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[76] Codes of morals based upon the assumption of human equality' were, Hunt argued, 'mere chimeras.' See James Hunt, *Farewell Address, delivered at the Fourth Anniversary of the Anthropological Society of London* (London: Trübner & Co., 1867), p. 18.

[77] James Hunt, 'On the Negro Revolt in Jamaica', in *Popular Magazine of Anthropology*, 1 (1866), 14-20.

Underlying Hunt and other biologists' confidence in the 'humanising' influence of white supremacy was a belief that the 'Negro' race possessed no real 'civilisation' of its own. The Europeans' plenitude of 'civilisation' – a term which was aligned with the possession of desirable mental and social characteristics, and was largely defined in opposition to those societies thought to be deficient in such conditions – apparently granted them the authority to inculcate the qualities of advanced society into 'lesser' races of man.[78] As Berthold Seemann, Vice-President of the Anthropological Society, noted at an ASL meeting, the 'Negros' had never produced a poet, an historian, a general, a lawgiver, a painter or a philosopher – nor, indeed, 'any clever thinking men under any circumstances whatever.' The 'race' 'had never been able to originate a civilisation of its own... [nor] devised an alphabet or architecture of its own.' There seemed, Seemann argued, to be a 'mental or moral blight' over the 'Negros' which had precluded their independent development. In order to 'teach' members of this race (Seemann did not specify which lessons or qualities were to be taught), the 'Negros' must be made to 'work'. Given the tendencies of the 'Negro' race towards laziness, 'flogging' represented a necessary incentive to labour.[79]

Reflecting this surge of interest in the moral underpinnings of slavery and imperial domination, the enslaved or imprisoned body became a popularly represented subject in art. French painters Eugène Delacroix and Jean-Léon Gérôme, both of whom exercised an important influence in the field of Orientalist painting, frequently depicted slaves in their works. Delacroix's *Women of Algiers* (1834) depicted three harem women being attended by a black slave, while Gérôme's *The Slave Market* (1866) featured a nude white slave being examined by a group of potential male buyers. As Malcolm Warner has pointed out, slave markets – along with harems – represented particularly fascinating 'spaces' for Orientalist painters who travelled to the East in the nineteenth century. Slave markets and harems were the only two spaces in which the strict religiosity of Islam did not seem to apply, and for this reason painters tended to depict them as sites of unrestricted eroticism.[80]

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[78] In a paper of 1873, J. Gould Avery defined 'civilisation' as 'the aggregate of those conditions of mental and social existence in which man differs from the brute', concluding that 'civilisation is humanity.' See Gould Avery, 'Racial Characteristics, as Related to Civilisation', in *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland,* 2 (1873), 63-7.

[79] Berthold Seemann's comments were recorded in Hunt, 'On the Negro's Place in Nature', pp. xvii-xxix.

[80] Malcolm Warner, 'The Question of Faith: Orientalism, Christianity and Islam', in Mary-Anne Stevens, ed., *The Orientalists: Delacroix to Matisse, European Painters in North Africa and the Near East* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1984), pp. 32-9 (p. 37).

Hiram Powers' depiction of an enslaved girl in the statue *The Greek Slave* had provoked a good deal of controversy when it was displayed at the Great Exhibition in 1851. The statue, completed in 1844, represented a young, nude woman bound in chains, her gaze directed desolately towards the ground. Elizabeth Barrett Browning composed a sonnet about the statue, praising the 'passionless perfection' of its features. She suggested that Powers had intended the statue to 'confront man's crimes in different lands' with man's ideal sense', thus appealing for slavery to be abolished globally.

The statue may well have been composed with moral and political intentions but, as Richard Jenkyns has pointed out, it contained a strong erotic dimension – a dimension which is clearly discernible to a modern audience, even if not to a Victorian one.[81] In September 1847, at the Apollo Rooms in New York, Powers' statue was represented in *tableaux* form in an act called 'Model Personification', which was organised by impresario Robert Hanham Collyer. Many Americans would have been familiar with the subject of the *tableau*, Powers' statue having been exhibited in New York earlier the same year. They would have been able to compare the original piece with its *tableau* recreation, noting the accuracy with which Collyer's model represented the statue's *contrapposto* stance, delicately-posed hands and mournful gaze.[82]

*Moorish Bath*, an Orientalising piece originally painted by Gérôme in 1870, was frequently represented in *tableaux* form, especially in the final decade of the nineteenth century. Gérôme's painting depicted a white woman seated on a ledge near a bath, whilst a black slave attended her. The bather, whose face was turned away from the viewer, was nude; the slave wore a full skirt, a turban and elaborate jewellery, though her breasts were uncovered. Gérôme depicted numerous bathing scenes in the course of his career. Like *Moorish Bath*, *Pool in a Harem* (1876), *La Grande Piscine de Brousse* (1885), *Le Marabout: In the Harem Bath* (1889) depicted black slaves attending nude white women. In each, the nude women reclined or walked languidly, while the slaves watched on, providing entertainment or physical support for the bathers. Similar depictions of black slaves attending white mistresses were to be found in Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres' *Turkish Bath* (1862), Édouard Debat-Ponsan's *Massage, Hammam Scene* (1883) and Paul-Louis Bouchard's *After the Bath* (1894). Such paintings captured the bustling,

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[81] Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p 137.
[82] Robert G. Allen has described the press response to Collyer's 'Model Personification', noting that the *Herald* found 'nothing that could offend the most fastidious' in the act. Unfortunately, however, Allen seems to think that Powers' *Greek Slave* represented a 'male nude'. See Allen, *Her Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), p. 94.

extravagant atmosphere of Oriental bath scenes which had been described by nineteenth-century travellers.[83]

A *tableau* entitled *Moorish Bath* featured at the Palace Theatre (a variety theatre first opened in 1891) in 1894.[84] According to *The Stage*, the picture represented 'the interior of an Eastern bath and a Circassian attended by slaves', which suggests that the arrangement derived considerable inspiration from Gèrôme's original painting.[85] It is unlikely that the Palace management commissioned the painting of a backdrop to match the elaborate, exotic background of Gérôme's bath scene; the *tableau* would have been presented to the audience for such a short amount of time that this kind of expense was unwarranted. However, effort would have been made to engage performers of appropriate appearance. Music hall managers and agencies advertised for *tableaux* performers in *The Stage* and other periodicals, noting the physical attributes required in some detail. Calls for 'coloured' men and women to perform in living statuary exhibitions indicate that black performers were sought to assume such roles as the black slave in the Palace's *Moorish Bath* living picture.[86]

*Moorish Bath* was one of the most controversial *tableaux* pieces in the *fin de siècle* period, and Palace manager Charles Morton came under sustained attack for his decision to include the picture in his living statuary programme. In August 1894, temperance campaigner Lady Henry Somerset published a denouncement of the Palace *tableaux* in her co-edited periodical, *The Woman's Signal*. Somerset claimed that the genre was not in the least 'artistic', as it simply involved young girls posing 'with no other clothes at all on them but tights from neck to foot.' A wide gulf separated George Frederic Watts' *Psyche* (a nude painting of 1880) from the *tableau* entitled 'Moorish Bath'; the former was a 'glorification of womanly form', whereas the latter merely served to incite 'unruly thoughts' in the minds of spectators.[87] At the meeting of the London County Council's Licensing Sessions in October 1894, various social purists objected to the renewal of the Palace license, largely on the grounds of the 'obscene and indecent'

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[83] Descriptions by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Mrs. Harvey and Julia Pardoe are included in Lynne Thornton, *Women as Portrayed in Orientalist Painting* (Paris: Pouche Couleur, 1994), pp. 68-76.
[84] For example, see programmes for 24 July 1894 and 16 August 1894. VATC, 'Palace Theatre of Varieties'. The description of the Palace's *tableaux* programme in *The Stage* indicates that 'Moorish Bath' was represented at the Theatre as early as May 1894. See 'London Variety Theatre. The Palace', in *The Stage*, 10 May 1894, p. 15.
[85] 'London Variety Theatre. The Palace', in *The Stage*, 10 May 1894, p. 15.
[86] For example, Houghton's Agency in Holborn advertised for 'Coloured Gentlemen for Tableaux Vivants, for London' in *The Stage*, 19 April 1894, p. 17.
[87] 'The Living Pictures', in *The Woman's Signal*, 2 August 1894, p. 63.

*tableaux*.[88] When called to defend the *tableaux*, Charles Morton conceded that, under the weight of public protest, he had recently removed the *Moorish Bath* picture. He claimed that 'if there was anything of the slightest objection to it, it was no advantage to us to keep it on.'[89]

It is interesting that, of all the 'nude' *tableaux* featured at the Palace Theatre, *Moorish Bath* proved the most provocative. In Gérôme's original painting (and presumably also in the *tableaux* interpretation), the female figure was not arranged in an especially suggestive pose. The white bather, who shielded her body with her own leg and arm, was turned away from the viewer and, though the breasts of the black slave were bare, there was little indication of overt sexuality as she proffered a large washbowl to her mistress. Certainly some of the other pictures exhibited at the Palace in the course of 1894 were more explicitly sexual: in both Luis Falero's *Polar Star* and William-Adolphe Bouguereau's *Aurora* (which featured on Palace programmes in March and June 1894) the female was almost entirely nude, the body – and, in the case of *Polar Star*, the gaze – of the subject directed towards the spectator.[90]

If it was not the arrangement of the female bodies in the *Moorish Bath* living picture that concerned social purists, then perhaps it was the presence of the black slave. As Linda Nochlin has pointed out, the black servants in Gérôme's Oriental bath scenes served important connotative purposes: the black body enhanced the 'pearly beauty' of the white body, as well as the passivity of the mistress when placed in juxtaposition to the weary-looking black slave.[91] Whether or not the critics and Palace spectators were aware of the full signifying power of Gérôme's original motif, the depiction of the nude black woman in the service of her luxuriating white mistress may have represented uncomfortable viewing material. It was one thing to see a black slave depicted in painted form, and to imagine that the artist had simply illustrated, in anthropological detail, the politics and customs of the uncivilised East; it was quite another to see a slave in the service of a white woman represented in the flesh.

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[88] National Vigilance Association secretary William Alexander Coote was particularly outspoken in his condemnation of the *tableaux*, arguing that the 'obscene and indecent' pictures tended to 'inflame the passions' of spectators. See Transcript from the shorthand notes of Mr Howard, 10 October 1894, p. 9. LMA, 'Sessions of the Licensing Committee, Palace Theatre of Varieties'.
[89] Transcript, 10 October 1894, p. 29. LMA, 'Sessions of the Licensing Committee, Palace Theatre of Varieties'.
[90] See programmes for 13 March 1894 and 14 June 1894. VATC, 'Palace Theatre of Varieties'.
[91] Linda Nochlin, 'The Imaginary Orient', in Joanna Morra and Marquard Smith, eds., *Visual Culture: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 28-9.

Not all members of the Anthropological Society supported the subjugation of 'native' peoples, and dissident voices within the ASL challenged Hunt's claim that the 'Negro' race ought to be dominated by the 'European' race. The Reverend J. Dingle, for example, condemned Hunt's recourse to 'science' as justification for the virtual enslavement of foreign peoples 'irresponsible', noting that Hunt's 'anthropological' doctrine had served to 'cut off a large part of the human family from the common rights of humanity', and to 'justify the most outrageous oppression… and disgusting cruelty.'[92] Thomas Bendyshe suggested that – far from the 'Negro' races being unable to 'civilise' – the long history of slavery had in fact prevented 'Negros' from developing a 'civilisation' of their own.[93]

The notion that 'Negro' peoples could claim no heritage or 'civilisation' of their own was largely of nineteenth-century invention. As Martin Bernal has shown, it was during this period that the 'Ancient' model of ancient Greek history was superseded by the 'Aryan' model. According to the former, Greek culture had arisen as a result of the colonisation (around 1,500BC) of Egyptians and Phoenicians, whereas the latter model denied the cultural influence of the Egyptians and the Phoenicians upon ancient Greece. Bernal suggests that the discarding of the 'Ancient' model reflected contemporaries' increased reluctance to accept the notion that ancient Greece – seen by many as not only the epitome of modern-day Europe but also as its 'childhood' – could have emerged as a result of the mixture of native Europeans and colonising Africans and Semites. With the rise of black slavery and racism, European thinkers were concerned to keep black Africans at as great a distance as possible from European civilisation.[94]

As the work of Diane Robinson-Dunn, William Mulligan, Maurice Bric and others has demonstrated, Britain had become strongly invested in the global abolition of slavery by the end of the nineteenth century. The British were particularly keen to bring about the suppression of slavery in Egypt and the Ottoman lands; there was a common association at this time between Islam and the oppression of women, and it was believed that the majority of slaves sold and purchased in these territories were destined for the harem.[95] Factors leading to the crystallisation of anti-slavery sentiment were multifarious. Mulligan numbers changes in religious belief (which led to missionaries viewing slavery

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[92] Dingle's speech was recorded in Hunt, 'On the Negro's Place in Nature', p. xxx.
[93] Bendyshe's speech was recorded in Hunt, 'On the Negro's Place in Nature', pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.
[94] Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, 3 vols. (London: Vintage, 1991), I, pp. 29-30.
[95] See Diane Robinson-Dunn, *The Harem, Slavery and British Imperial Culture: Anglo-Muslim Relation in the Late-Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

as a sin against God's natural order), the impact of the revolutionary wars, and a new conception of the British Empire as 'moral' among the most important of these factors.[96] It is clear that, by the time that *Moorish Bath* featured on the Palace programme, British politicians and the British public were firmly convinced that enslavement should be prohibited on a global scale.

The fermenting of this anti-slavery sentiment coincided with an important institutional change in the field of anthropology. The late 1860s had seen a number of attempts to amalgamate the ESL and the ASL, and finally in 1871 the newly-formed Anthropological Institute (a name which recognised the 'science' but not the Society of the 'anthropologicals') met for the first time. In the early 1870s, there were a number of disputes within the Institute, as members of the former ESL and ASL struggled to agree upon the approaches that the Institute would take to the study of man and his history. Exponents of the older 'ethnological' tradition continued to embrace a wide body of data (linguistic, cultural, archaeological and physical) in their researches into the origin of man, whereas advocates of the newer 'anthropological' approach insisted that a more narrow focus upon physicality was the most appropriate means by which not only to comprehend the origins of man, but to classify the different 'races' of mankind. In the wake of the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871), a new 'evolutionary' tradition was born, exponents of which were particularly interested in solving the developmental problem which had been posed by the discovery of pre-historic human remains.[97]

A survey of the pages of the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* reveals that different members of the Anthropological Institute remained committed to the approaches of both the ESL and the ASL. Members of the Institute continued to express an interest in the characteristics which defined and distinguished the different 'races' of man: articles by C. Staniland Wake and R.B. White examined the 'mental characteristics' of, respectively, the Australian aborigines and the South American aboriginals.[98] J.W. Jackson, formerly a Fellow of the ASL, delivered a paper for members of the Anthropological Institute in 1872 on the 'racial aspects' of the Franco-Prussian War. Jackson argued that the 'degeneration' of the French 'race' – which descended from the

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[96] William Mulligan, 'Introduction', in William Mulligan and Maurice Bric, eds., *A Global History of Anti-Slavery Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 1-16.
[97] Stocking, 'What's in a Name?', 384.
[98] C. Staniland Wake, 'The Mental Characteristics of Primitive Man, as Exemplified by the Australian Aborigines', in *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1 (1872), 74-84; R.B. White, 'Notes on the Aboriginal Races of the North-Western Provinces of South America', in *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 13 (1884), 240-58.

ancient empire of Greece – was becoming apparent, and that Britain was coming increasingly to assume the position of 'saviour' of Europe, having advanced furthest in political and commercial spheres. Britain's colonies far exceeded those of ancient Rome in size, population and resources, and eighty million 'civilised' men now used the English language as their native tongue; indeed, Britain had not inaptly been termed 'the Mother of Nations'.[99]

Members of the Anthropological Institute therefore continued to expound the notion that conclusions drawn from 'anthropological' studies ought to be applied to 'real' political, social and imperial scenarios. In many ways, the views of anthropologists were ill-aligned with those of the wider public as, increasingly, contemporaries campaigned for the abolition of slavery and other forms of 'native' subjugation. Entertainment impresarios rather reflected the views of anti-slavery campaigners than those of anthropologists. Through, for example, the exhibition of the *Moorish Bath* living picture, these impresarios demonstrated the impact of slavery upon vulnerable young women: indeed, the use of 'living' performers to fulfill roles within these *tableaux* exhibitions is likely to have had an even more striking impact upon spectators than did the depiction of enslaved figures on canvas or in marble. Perhaps such exhibitions might even have been taken to indicate that all existing forms of slavery ought to be abolished.

### 3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has documented the manner in which 'foreign' or 'native' men and women were represented in imperial exhibitions, *tableaux* performances and anthropometric photographs in the mid to late nineteenth century. It has identified three different trends in the conception and representation of 'foreign' peoples, and has indicated that these trends corresponded broadly with developments in the institutional approach to the study of 'natives'. The horseback performances of Andrew Ducrow predated the establishment of a formal institutional structure for research into 'native' men and women. In these performances, 'foreign' peoples were conceived in an undifferentiated manner as the exotic 'Other', reflecting a lack of knowledge about the peoples and cultures represented. Catlin's 'American Indian' exhibitions reflected the increase in humanitarian interest in 'native' peoples under British imperial control; indeed, Catlin's approach – a kind of 'rescue anthropology' – corresponded with that of the Aborigines' Protection Society. With the establishment of the Ethnological Society of London, study of 'foreign' peoples

[99] J.W. Jackson, 'On the Racial Aspects of the Franco-Prussian War', in *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1 (1872), 30-52 (42-3).

focused upon the examination of 'native' customs and cultures. This approach was reflected in the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, which displayed 'native' peoples in domestic settings as a means of furthering understanding of the British colonies. Finally, the approach of the Anthropological Society of London – which involved a more empirical study of 'native' physicalities – was reflected in Huxley's circulation of the request for anthropometric photographs.

The photographs, *tableaux* performances and imperial exhibitions discussed in this chapter worked to collapse large gaps in space, in much the same manner that the *tableaux* discussed in the remainder of this thesis collapsed large gaps in space and time – between, predominantly, Antiquity and the 'modern' day. These photographs, *tableaux* performances and imperial exhibitions lent spectators the opportunity for much closer encounter with 'foreign' peoples and cultures, which served in turn to raise new questions about 'civilisation' and 'decency'. It was presumed by 'ethnologists' and 'anthropologists' alike that 'native' peoples possessed no real 'civilisation' of their own, this being the preserve of Europeans. In consequence, the preservation of 'decency' troubled neither biologists nor entertainment impresarios. However, Catlin's recorded observations of the American Indians and Mukharji's biographical account indicate that the 'Other' turned his or her inquisitive eye upon the British; in some cases, the Other considered the British themselves to be somewhat lacking in 'civilisation' and 'decency'. Such accounts serve to challenge Said and Spivak's notion that the 'subaltern' was unable to 'speak'.

## Chapter Four: *Pygmalion and Galatea* at the Music Hall, 1860-1914

In April 1907, London-based social purity group the National Vigilance Association printed a scathing denunciation of *tableaux vivants* in its periodical, *The Vigilance Record*. The Association claimed that London was in the grip of an 'epidemic', as 'nude' *tableaux* performers appeared in music halls and variety theatres on a nightly basis. According to the report:

> Only one thing can possibly happen, and that is the demoralisation both of those who take part in it [the *tableaux* performance] and of the spectators… To state that such exhibitions are in the interest of art, is too transparent a falsehood. To say that they are in the interest of the shareholders' dividends, is the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Music hall impresarios apparently satisfied their own depraved desires by selecting paintings and sculptures which, when represented in *tableaux* form, became particularly 'indecent'. The lewd scrutiny of male audience members subjected performers to further humiliation. Spectators who formed the 'evening-dress male section' of the audience had, the NVA reporter wryly observed, already completed their art education, and were therefore unlikely to have viewed *tableaux* performances with purely academic objectives. Ultimately, the Association implored the London County Council to 'take more drastic measures' against music hall proprietors, and to protect *tableaux* performers and the wider public from the 'blighting influence' of this 'degrading form of public entertainment.'[1]

The National Vigilance Association was not alone in condemning the *tableaux* medium. In the *fin de siècle* period, a number of feminists, politicians and religious leaders petitioned the London County Council to enact anti-*tableaux* legislation. Delegates from a wide network of social purists gave sermons, penned pamphlets and appeared at the LCC's Licensing Committee meetings. Contemporary newspapers and periodicals spilt a good deal of ink recording this fervent activity, no doubt surprised that a firmly-established medium of entertainment should suddenly attract such zealous disapprobation. The abundance of *anti*-tableaux tracts (and the scarcity of speeches and publications written by defenders of the medium) tends to give the impression that social purists gained extensive support. Certainly a number of contemporaries predicted the imminent demise of the *tableaux* medium, the fortunes of which had, they presumed, been fatally damaged by social purists' efforts. This chapter suggests that the influence of

[1] 'Living Statuary as an Entertainment', in *The Vigilance Record*, April 1907, p. 31.

the anti-*tableaux* campaign was overstated by contemporary critics, and has subsequently been overstated by historians. It argues, however, that the prominence accorded to the campaign in newspapers and periodicals reflected the increasingly-contested nature of 'popular' entertainment, as contemporaries struggled to agree upon the functions which the *tableaux* and other amusements ought to serve – whether, indeed, they ought to serve *any* function, besides that of entertaining spectators.

In order to understand why the *tableaux* medium was denounced by social purists in the *fin de siècle* period, it is necessary to examine the context in which the *tableaux* were staged. This chapter will therefore consider the impact which political and cultural developments had upon responses to the *tableaux* around the turn of the twentieth century. It will situate the anti-*tableaux* campaign within the context of a broader crusade against public 'indecency', and it will argue that the heightened visibility of morally-motivated crusades reflected a pervasive sense of uncertainty regarding British imperial prowess. As Britain's ability to manage its sprawling empire was increasingly questioned, contemporaries seized upon popular entertainment as one sphere over which a semblance of control might be maintained. Regulating the exhibition of *tableaux vivants* would also entail a tighter control over the public presentation and visibility of female bodies, and this was an outcome to which a number of social purists, politicians and cultural commentators aspired in the *fin de siècle* period.

The manner in which contemporaries interpreted and utilised the classical past shifted in the long nineteenth century, and the *fin de siècle* saw the consolidation of a number of new roles for 'Antiquity'. Increasingly, the ancient Greek and Roman empires came to be regarded as 'yardsticks' against which the achievements of 'modernity' might be measured.[2] The manner in which *tableaux* performers evoked Antique art and culture was relatively unchanged. *Tableaux* performances continued to draw inspiration from ancient sculpture and classicising paintings; *fin de siècle* performers often reinterpreted artworks which had featured in displays coordinated by Madame Warton, Professor Keller and Andrew Ducrow. However, the question of whether Antiquity lent performances political, imperial and cultural import – or whether it simply served as a convenient alibi – assumed new significance in this period. Focusing upon the anti-*tableaux* campaign, this chapter will indicate that the protection of performers' 'dignity' had become so intertwined in the minds of contemporaries with the preservation of British 'civilisation' that the evocation of Antiquity no longer served to elevate and

[2] Neville Morley, 'Ancient and Modern', lecture delivered on 20 January 2010, University of Bristol, available online: http://www.culturahistorica.es/morley/ancient_modern.pdf [accessed 7 May 2016].

excuse 'nude' *tableaux* performances in the same way that it had in earlier decades. First, though, the chapter will resume the account of long nineteenth-century *tableaux* performances, outlining the ways in which the *tableaux* were adapted for exhibition in new, purpose-built music halls.

### 4.1 'After the fashion of the last generation': *Tableaux Vivants*, 1860-1914

In the years after 1850, the music hall began to take root as a distinct institution of popular amusement. Impresarios worked to distinguish their halls from the public houses and singing saloons out of which the halls had emerged, emphasising a concern to improve popular recreation and elevate public taste. The biographers of Charles Morton (an impresario who had established the Canterbury Arms in 1849, commonly identified as the first purpose-built music hall in Britain[3]) underlined the distinction between Morton's hall and such earlier 'rowdy resorts' as Renton Nicholson's Coal Hole. According to Morton's biographers, the entertainments offered at the Canterbury Arms were 'calm and utterly unsinful', and 'hundreds of rational beings' were able to enjoy 'a few hours' rational enjoyment at the smallest possible outlay.'[4] However, Dagmar Kift's study of Victorian music hall indicates that respectability – no matter how intently sought or loudly proclaimed – was not the byword of these early halls. Music halls tended to cater largely for working- and lower middle-class patrons, and for this reason they were associated in the minds of many observers with a coarse, workers' culture.[5]

The 1860s and 1870s witnessed a 'boom' in the establishment of music halls. In the metropolis, the number of halls more than trebled in the 1860s, and by 1870 there were thirty-one large, purpose-built halls in the City of London. In Greater London, there were over 300 music halls by 1875.[6] The fortunes of these halls were aided by the complicated regulations concerning theatrical licensing in London. Since 1843, metropolitan venues of amusement had been required to apply to the office of the Lord Chamberlain for either a theatre or an alcohol license: a line had been drawn between the theatre and the public house, and proprietors were obliged to choose between the exhibition of 'legitimate drama' and the peddling of liquor. As music hall impresarios

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[3] The Canterbury Arms had a capacity of 1,500, and boasted its own library, reading room and picture gallery. Admission prices started at 6d. See Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian Britain: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control* (London: Routledge: 1978), p. 148.
[4] W.H. Morton and H. Chance Newton, *Sixty Years' Stage Service, Being a Record of the Life of Charles Morton, "The Father of the Halls"* (London: Gale & Polden, 1905), p. 41, 52.
[5] Dagmar Kift, *The Victorian Music Hall: Culture, Class and Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 2.
[6] Peter Bailey, *Music Hall: the Business of Pleasure* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p. x.

were uninterested in staging complete plays (preferring instead to exhibit variety acts and sketches), a theatre license was unnecessary. Theatres lost a good deal of custom to the early music halls, which were able to offer a similar fare of entertainment at a lower cost, subsidising ticket prices through the legal sale of alcohol.

Music hall programmes often featured dance numbers and theatrical spectacles, although music hall culture was associated from the very beginning with song. Music hall songs have been subjected to extensive analysis by cultural historians. Penelope Summerfield has examined patriotic songs, and argues that the predominance of nationalistic verses reflected impresarios' pretensions to respectability.[7] Peter Bailey indicates that many music hall songs explored domestic themes (including marriage, friendship and alcohol). For Bailey, the enduring popularity of these songs reflected spectators' identification with 'the routine yet piquant exploits' expressed in the songs, with many songs serving to validate 'the shared experience of a typically urbanised, class-bound world seen from below.'[8] Many of the songs popularly performed in music halls contained elements of innuendo or sexual subtext. The particular 'knowingness' of music hall songs – and, indeed, of music hall entertainment more broadly – worked to mobilise the 'latent collective identity' of the audience; it also served to alienate that indignant portion of the press which considered the music hall a dangerous expression of unregulated working-class culture.[9] The 'knowingness' of music hall culture would have rendered *tableaux* performances – which in the late nineteenth century seemed to reside somewhere on the boundary between decency and indecency – particularly unsettling to social purists, who would have been identified as 'outsiders' simply by virtue of their self-identification as guardians of public morality.

Though many halls featured diverse and even controversial entertainments, *tableaux vivants* were not commonly exhibited in the early decades of the purpose-built music hall. For a short time, *tableaux* had fallen out of fashion. This perhaps reflected the success of various new moving picture devices, including the phantasmagoria (which used a magic lantern machine to project images – often frightening – onto a semi-transparent screen), the moving panorama (which encompassed a set of large painted canvases exhibited to spectators by virtue of revolving spool mechanisms) and the

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[7] Penelope Summerfield, 'Patriotism and Empire: Music Hall Entertainment, 1870-1914', in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. John Mackenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 17-48.
[8] Peter Bailey, 'Conspiracies of Meaning: Music-Hall and the Knowingness of Popular Culture', in *Past and Present*, 144 (August 1994), 138-70 (140-1).
[9] For the 'knowingness' of music hall song, see Bailey, 'Conspiracies of Meaning', 145.

cosmorama (an optical device which allowed spectators to view perspective images of famous scenes or landmarks). Such devices satisfied what Altick has identified as an 'insatiable appetite for novelty' and 'an increasingly restless demand for innovation' in the second half of the nineteenth century.[10] *Tableaux* performers and managers were obliged to compete for a share of the music hall programme and audience patronage in an increasingly-saturated entertainment market. Few managed to do so, at least in the 1860s and 1870s.

In July 1866, *The Era* noted that *tableaux vivants* had been 'the rage' in London some years previously. The reporter predicted that the time would come when they would 'bear repetition', as popular taste would always favour exhibitions of the 'female form divine.' The Strand Music Hall (built in 1864 on a site close to Waterloo Bridge) was presently exhibiting a *tableaux* piece, and *The Era* recommended the 'pictorial' performance to other music hall impresarios. The piece was entitled 'Raphael's Dream', although the reporter gave no indication that he or she (or indeed spectators) identified it as a reinterpretation of Andrew Ducrow's act. In the piece, 'Raphael' – played by actor Seymour Carlton – offered spectators a description of the *tableaux* presented on the stage, all of which had apparently featured in the dream of 'Raphael'. Artworks and figures depicted included *The Three Graces*, Vulcan (the Greek god of fire) and Lucrecia, an ancient Roman woman whose rape by an Etruscan prince had purportedly contributed to the fall of the Roman Kingdom. The report concluded that, as a 'revival' of an entertainment form which had once been very popular, 'Raphael's Dream' was an ideal 'pendant' to the other variety entertainments at the Strand Music Hall.[11]

Of the few *tableaux* performances staged during the 1860s and 1870s, several recommended themselves to critics on account of the innovative stage and lighting techniques which attended their exhibition. At Cremorne Gardens (a pleasure garden located on the banks of the River Thames in Chelsea) in May 1873, *tableaux* configurations were arranged on eight revolving stages, with scenes including an interpretation of Peter Paul Rubens' *The Judgment of Paris* (1639) and *Hector and Andromache*, inspired by Jacques-Louis David's *Andromache Mourning Hector* (1783).[12] Cremorne had opened in 1846 on a site flanking the River Thames, and had in its early

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[10] See Richard Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 3. Developments in moving picture technology are described by Altick on pp. 128-220.
[11] 'Strand Music Hall', in *The Era*, 1 July 1866, p. 11.
[12] 'Cremorne Gardens', in *The Era*, 25 May 1873, p. 13. Similarly, in the Strand Theatre's interpretation of 'Raphael's Dream', *tableaux* performers were posed on a 'turn-table'. According to *The Era*, this table revolved in order to present discrete *tableaux* to spectators. See 'Strand Music Hall', in *The Era*, 1 July 1866, p. 11.

years rivalled Vauxhall in terms of the variety and innovation of the attractions it offered. However, by the 1870s the site had fallen into financial difficulties, its reputation having suffered as a result of the trouble its proprietors had in renewing Cremorne's license.[13] The 1873 *tableaux* exhibition perhaps formed part of the proprietors final attempt to turn a profit at the Gardens. Presumably, the eight stages permitted spectators to view several *tableaux* simultaneously: such an arrangement would have lent the impression of an art gallery or museum, and the gaze of the spectator would have been drawn in various directions as he or she struggled to absorb each *tableau* before it was removed from view.

Innovative effects were also attempted at the Regent Music Hall on London's Mile End Road. Here, the living pictures exhibited by the 'Lawrence troupe' in 1867 were aided in their 'realism' by the use of special lighting, as beams of light were thrown upon the immobile figures 'through coloured glasses.' Limelight had first been used to illuminate public performances in the 1830s, and experimentations with lighting apparatus and lenses had led to the production of limelight bright enough to shine through coloured media; this, in turn, had enabled colour mixing effects such as those produced at the Regent in 1867.[14] With *tableaux* scenes including 'studies from heathen mythology, Roman history, and Eastern fable', alterations in the colour and quality of the light would have helped to create a sense of atmosphere. Shifting light effects would have also served to distract spectators as performers moved from one pose to the next.[15]

The 1880s saw a slight increase in the number of metropolitan *tableaux* exhibitions, although performances seem to have been confined largely to smaller venues; none of the new West End halls (such as the Alhambra, the Oxford and the London Pavilion, all of which had been built in the years 1860-1) featured *tableaux* on their programmes of entertainment.[16] During this period, directors often emphasised the close connection between *tableaux vivants* and 'art'. In May 1885, proprietors of Piccadilly's Princes' Hall engaged a *tableaux* troupe which specialised in the depiction of countries 'at a time when they were most celebrated for their art and their painters.' *Tableaux* scenes represented Italy in the time of Michelangelo and Raphael; England in the time of

[13] Kift, *The Victorian Music Hall*, p. 139.
[14] For theatrical limelight, see Dennis Kennedy, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Theatre and Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 347.
[15] 'The Regent', in *The Era*, 10 November 1867, p. 5.
[16] During this period, *tableaux vivants* were often exhibited to members of the royal family, which underlines the extent to which contemporaries viewed the medium as 'respectable'. In February 1883, for example, a *tableaux* production at St. George's Hall in Regent Street was viewed by the Prince of Wales, and in January 1888 Queen Victoria attended a *tableaux* performance at Osborne House. In the latter, Princess Beatrice personated the Queen of Sheba, and Prince Henry of Battenberg posed as a 'Toreador'. See 'Another Performance', in *The Era*, 10 February 1883, p. 8; 'Theatrical Gossip', in *The Era*, 14 January 1888, p. 8.

Van Dyck; and Germany, Holland, Greece and Spain during the periods when each had enjoyed particular artistic eminence. Following the conclusion of the *tableaux* display, spectators were encouraged to wander 'the picture galleries above' and, perhaps, to view painted reproductions of works by Michelangelo, Raphael and Van Dyck which had been presented to them in *tableaux* form.[17] Such attempts to align *tableaux* performances with 'art' perhaps reflected directors' desire to circumvent condemnation of the like visited upon Madame Warton's performances in the 1850s, although the most sustained opposition to the *tableaux* was not in fact to be mounted until after 1894.

The opening of the re-styled London Pavilion in 1885 is credited by Peter Bailey with having inaugurated the era of the 'deluxe' music hall.[18] After this date, music hall proprietors tended increasingly to adopt the physical apparatus of the theatre, discarding the open, fluid seating of the earlier halls in favour of fixed-stall seating. This compelled spectators to face the stage rather than one another, and to thereby focus their full attention upon the variety acts. With many halls introducing a new distance between the stage and the seating area, interaction between performers and spectators was reduced, and the jeering and catcalling of performers – common in the music halls of the 1860s and 1870s – was discouraged.

London's Royal Aquarium may be numbered amongst this new class of 'deluxe' metropolitan music halls. Apparently conceived with patrons' 'public instruction and education' in mind, the vast Aquarium complex consisted of a great hall, an exotic plants' conservatory, several large fish tanks, a library, a picture room and even a skating rink; variety performances took place in a 'charming little Theatre' which was also contained within the Aquarium building.[19] In 1891-3, the 'Bissmire-Grimaldi troupe' exhibited *tableaux vivants* at the Aquarium's theatre. According to an advertisement placed in *The Stage*, the 'Novel and Beautiful' act was composed of 'Dissolving Living Statuary.'[20] This 'dissolving' effect was achieved by virtue of 'spring rollers', to which were attached lengths of gauze material. The gauze was rolled in front of the posed figures, 'first in one and then in increasing number of thicknesses'. When the figures were 'dissolved' from sight, the performers altered their poses, and the rollers were once again employed to reveal the next *tableau* scene to the audience.[21] This technique seems to have anticipated

[17] All *tableaux* were, according to *The Stage*, 'suggestive of the thought that art clung more fondly to the good old days than she does at the present.' See 'Chit Chat', in *The Stage*, 22 May 1885, p. 13.
[18] Bailey, *Music Hall*, p. xi.
[19] 'Royal Aquarium', in *The Era*, 16 January 1876, p. 13.
[20] 'Eastertide Attractions', in *The Stage*, 30 March 1893, p. 14; advertisement beginning 'Beauty, Grace, and Talent combined…', in *The Stage*, 3 August 1893, p. 16.
[21] 'Theatrical Patents', in *The Era*, 29 March 1890, p. 14.

the cinematic 'dissolve', a process which was frequently used in film productions of the early twentieth century as a means of transitioning from one image to the next.[22]

In spite of the innovative – and possibly unique – method by which performers were exhibited to spectators, the Bissmire-Grimaldi troupe has been overlooked in accounts of the *tableaux* medium. It is Edward Kilanyi's *tableaux* troupe that is credited with having 'revived' the *tableaux* phenomenon in *fin de siècle* London. In his monograph of Kilanyi, Jack McCullough suggests that, prior to Kilanyi's arrival at the Palace Theatre in 1893, *tableaux* 'were not listed on any theatre bill in the city.' This was patently not the case, as the Bissmire-Grimaldi troupe had been engaged by London's Royal Aquarium since at least 1891.[23] Similarly, Barry Faulk's claim that Kilanyi's troupe 'constructed an audience' to support the exhibition of metropolitan *tableaux* is inaccurate: the Bissmire-Grimaldi troupe's extended run at the Aquarium suggests that the public was already attuned to the *tableaux* medium. Indeed, this chapter has indicated that *tableaux* performances had been staged in London music halls – albeit infrequently – since at least 1866.[24] It is, however, fair to say that Kilanyi's four-month run at the Palace Theatre from late 1893 to early 1894 helped to establish a fashion for the exhibition of *tableaux vivants*, and by early 1894 *The Stage* acknowledged that the *tableaux* medium had become 'the order of the day' in variety entertainment.[25]

Indeed, almost all of the metropolitan halls featured *tableaux* performances at some point during the final decade of the nineteenth century, the majority of which were composed primarily – although not exclusively – of female performers. The Empire Theatre's *tableaux* troupe, which included the aspiring actresses Hetty Hamer, Constance Collier and Marie Studholme, was under almost nightly obligation for all of 1894 and the first two months of 1895.[26] The Alhambra and Palace Theatres afforded *tableaux vivants* prominent position on their variety programmes in 1894, 1895 and 1896, and the Gaiety Theatre featured both 'artistic' and 'burlesque' *tableaux*, a reinterpretation of Canova's *The Three Graces* having been followed in April 1894 by a *tableau* entitled *The Three*

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[22] For the use of the 'dissolving' effect in early cinema, see Lynda Nead, *The Haunted Gallery: Painting, Photography, Film c.1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 88.
[23] Jack W. McCullough, 'Edward Kilanyi and American Tableaux Vivants', in *Theatre Survey*, 16 (1975), 25-41 (30). London's Aquarium Theatre had regularly featured *tableaux* since 1887: see playbills in HTC, pf volume 'Aquarium Theatre' (1885-1890), which featured a *tableaux* act entitled 'The Dream of Michael Angelo' – a title evocative of Andrew Ducrow's *Raphael's Dream*.
[24] Barry Faulk, *Music Hall and Modernity* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), p. 155.
[25] 'Empire Theatre', in *The Stage*, 8 February 1894, p. 8.
[26] Although there are folders in the VATC for Marie Studholme and Constance Collier, none of the collected material relates to their time as *tableaux* models. See VATC, 'Marie Studholme' and 'Constance Collier'.

*Disgraces*.[27] The latter epithet indicates that the producers of *tableaux vivants* were not averse to the kind of gentle Antique parody which had characterised the classical burlesque genre (discussed in the second chapter of this thesis).

The renewed popularity of the *tableaux* medium is illustrated by the relatively high wages which *tableaux* troupes and performers were able to command at the Brighton Aquarium in the late-1880s. According to the Aquarium's contracts (preserved in the Harvard Theatre Collection), a *tableaux* troupe known as 'The Ethairiens' exhibited their 'Classical Statuary Entertainment' entitled 'Canova's Dream or a Night in Rome' twice daily in March 1886, and the troupe was remunerated eight pounds per week. It is clear that this arrangement proved congenial to both The Ethairiens and the Aquarium management, as the troupe was re-engaged for the same figure in both May and August 1886.[28] Other variety acts and performers engaged by the Aquarium around this time received lesser sums: Nettie Keeble, a 'Transformation Dancer' who performed twice-daily at the Aquarium in December 1886, was paid five pounds per week; a 'Japanese Equilibriste' who performed twice-daily at the Aquarium in August 1885 was paid four pounds per week; and George Anderson was paid just four guineas for a week of 'Lightning Cartoon' performances in March 1885.[29]

Mark Johnson's living statuary troupe, engaged at the Aquarium in October 1885 and June 1886, was paid even more handsomely than The Ethairiens, the Aquarium management stipulating – in return for remuneration of fifteen pounds per week – that the troupe could not appear 'at any other place of amusement in Brighton during this engagement or for one month previous thereto.'[30] Clearly, the management was keen to ensure that Johnson's company appeared as a novelty, and that regular music hall patrons could not have (recently) viewed the troupe's performance at another Brighton venue. It is likely, of course, that the wages paid to *tableaux* troupes would have been split between multiple performers and/or managers, though it is clear that the Brighton Aquarium management valued the *tableaux* entertainments at least as highly as they did the other variety acts engaged in the period.

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[27] See programme for 13 April 1894. The Gaiety Theatre had also produced various 'burlesque dramas' centering upon the story of Pygmalion and Galatea, including one entitled 'The Royal Galatea Burlesque'. See programme for 31 July 1871, HTC, 'GEN Gaiety Theatre, 1880-1938'.
[28] Contracts drawn up on 16 March 1886, 27 May 1886 and 4 August 1886. HTC, 'Brighton Aquarium Records, 1883-1894'.
[29] Contracts drawn up in December 1886, on 21 August 1885 and on 28 March 1885. HTC, 'Brighton Aquarium Records, 1883-1894'.
[30] Contract drawn up in October 1885. HTC, 'Brighton Aquarium Records, 1883-1894'.

Unfortunately, the HTC's Brighton Aquarium holdings are unique: contracts relating to the acts engaged at London music halls have not been preserved, discarded by managers and impresarios whose enthusiasm for record-keeping did not match that of the Aquarium managers. However, it seems reasonable to presume that those acts which were considered especially novel, appealing and worthy of higher wages in Brighton would have been similarly valued in London. The Brighton Aquarium's contracts certainly indicate that many acts had already performed in London venues: a sketch entitled 'The Gentleman Scamp' was recommended to the Aquarium in March 1886 on account of its 'London success', and a dancer referred to in a contract of September 1886 as 'Little Rosie' had, according to her agent, recently performed on the London entertainment circuit.[31] Performers often undertook tours of 'the provinces' upon completion of a metropolitan engagement, especially if the offer of employment at a different London venue had not proven forthcoming. Given its proximity to London, Brighton would have represented an obvious provincial-tour destination. The Brighton Aquarium is likely to have possessed a rather more modest budget from which to remunerate performers than the popular West End halls, although the management's willingness to remunerate 'The Ethairiens' and Johnson's *tableaux* troupe eight and fifteen pounds respectively – a substantial sum in the late nineteenth century – indicates the popularity of the *tableaux* medium. The fact that *tableaux* troupes and other variety acts were paid on a weekly basis does, however, highlight the fleeting and changeable nature of late nineteenth-century music hall programmes: managers were unwilling to engage performers and troupes for extended periods, lest the novelty of one week had become outmoded by the next.

Sadly the playbills which would have been printed to advertise the Brighton Aquarium's variety programmes have not been preserved, although the Harvard Theatre Collection – along with a number of London-based archives – does hold programmes and playbills relating to several of the metropolitan music halls and variety theatres, a number of which indicated the 'pictures' which were recreated in *tableaux* form. Some 'pictures' were based upon military or genre paintings: a glance at the programmes from the Empire and the Alhambra reveals *tableaux* accorded such appellations as *Loves me! Loves me not!*, *The Billet Doux*, *The Wounded Comrade* and *For Queen and Country*, which indicates scenes calculated to evoke humour, nostalgia and patriotic pride.[32] However, many halls interspersed these sentimental scenes with 'nude' historical and mythological

[31] Contracts for 11 March 1886 and 10 September 1886. HTC, 'Brighton Aquarium Records, 1883-1894'.
[32] See programmes for 29 October 1894, Alhambra Theatre, and 24 December 1894, Empire Theatre. VATC, 'Alhambra Theatre' and 'Empire Theatre'.

*tableaux*. Kilanyi's *tableaux* programme featured a number of 'nude' pictures, including scenes based upon William-Adolphe Bouguereau's painting *The Abduction of Psyche* (1895) [Fig. 4.1] and Johann Heinrich von Dannecker's sculpture *Ariadne* (1810-24). The Palace Theatre continued to give prominent place to 'nude' *tableaux* even after Kilanyi's departure; in July 1894 the *tableaux* programme included reinterpretations of Jean-Léon Gérôme's *Moorish Bath* and Luis Ricardo Falero's *Polar Star*, which had depicted a woman standing on what appears to be a block of delicately-carved ice, holding a ball of light (presumably a torch, when presented in *tableaux* form) above her head.[33]

Many of the *tableaux* produced in the second half of the nineteenth century were modelled, as *The Era* noted in 1894, 'after the fashion of the last generation'.[34] The upsurge in *tableaux* inspired by 'genre' paintings reflected the heightened popularity of artworks based upon everyday, domestic scenes in the *fin de siècle* period. Broadly, though, *tableaux* performances continued to derive inspiration from classical, mythological and artistic sources, approximating the appearance of ancient statuary through the employment of skin-coloured body-stockings.[35]

In terms, therefore, of artistic provenance, costume and basic performances structure, *fin de siècle* exhibitions of *tableaux vivants* were remarkably similar to those of earlier periods. The *tableaux* produced at the Palace Theatre were highly reminiscent of those produced by Andrew Ducrow, Madame Warton and Professor Keller in the years after 1820. Indeed, though there had been a shift in the course of the nineteenth century towards more discrete and less fluid *tableaux* characterisations, several aspects of late-nineteenth-century *tableaux* performances bore the imprint of Emma Hamilton's enduring influence. The *tableaux* continued to appeal to spectators' voyeuristic impulses, as performances permitted an opportunity for unrestricted (though time-limited) scrutiny of the barely-clothed body; it also relied upon the cultivation of strong vocabularies of expression among performers; and, fundamentally, performances continued to call upon Antiquity as inspiration for the majority of poses. Though Emma Hamilton, Andrew Ducrow, Madame Warton and others had achieved greater individual infamy than did many *tableaux* troupe performers of the *fin de siècle*, exhibitionism remained a central

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[33] For Kilanyi's *tableaux*, see programme for 13 November 1893. VATC, 'Palace Theatre of Varieties'.
[34] 'The London Music Halls. The Palace', in *The Era*, 14 March 1896, p. 18.
[35] Judith Pelpola argues that the predominance of genre painting reflected Victorian society's rapid industrialisation; genre paintings constructed the world 'as many Victorians wished it to be', looking 'wistfully' to the past for an idealised image of everyday life. See Pelpola, 'British Genre Painting of the 19th Century: An Analysis of *Through the Fog* (1886) and *Innocent Amusements* (1891)', available online: http://web.stanford.edu/group/journal/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Pelpola-.pdf [accessed 10 May 2016].

tenet of performances. In the context of an increasingly-saturated and competitive entertainment market, a performer's capacity to 'sell' a performance – to appear more 'Antique' than his or her peers, or to hold a pose with particular, unnerving rigidity – is likely to have determined his or her popularity amongst music hall impresarios.

In her study *Monodrama, Attitudes, Tableaux Vivants: Studies on Some Trends of Theatrical Fashion, 1770-1815* (1967), Kirsten Gram Holmström argues that Emma Hamilton's attitude represented a 'neoclassical' genre, whilst *tableaux vivants* – which, in Holmström's view, comprised an entirely distinct form of amusement – were 'lacking in artistic value', proponents of the form having drawn upon few recognisably 'Antique' sources.[36] Karin Wurst agrees that a great chasm separated Hamilton's attitudes from nineteenth-century *tableaux vivants*, suggesting that, as an 'aesthetic experiment', the attitudes 'failed', surviving only as 'titillating entertainment.'[37] For Wurst, the 'success' of a performance genre is defined by its capacity for unchanging, stubborn durability: Wurst fails to consider the possibility that those performance genres which have enjoyed the most enduring popularity and prominence are those which have adapted slightly to meet the needs and desires of a changing entertainment market. In fact, there existed a great many continuities between the attitudes of Emma Hamilton, the *tableaux* performances of Ducrow, Warton and Keller, and the *fin de siècle* variety acts put on at the Palace Theatre and other venues. Antiquity remained central to the success and appeal of *tableaux* performances throughout the long nineteenth century. *Fin de siècle* performances may well have been comprised 'titillating entertainment' (so too might Emma Hamilton's performances, though contemporaries are less likely to have admitted it), yet the appeal to Antiquity was never reneged.

In the second half of 1894, the *tableaux* medium began to attract the sustained disapprobation of social purists. Like Holmström and Wurst, many social purists dismissed the medium's artistic and mythological dimensions. They argued that the medium's connection to Antiquity (if indeed it existed) did not excuse the lasciviousness by which performances were characterised. As the next section will demonstrate, these social purists – coordinated by William Coote, the secretary of the National Vigilance Association – inspired a great deal of press interest and public debate, ultimately

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[36] Kirsten Gram Holmström, *Monodrama, Attitudes, Tableaux Vivants: Studies on Some Trends of Theatrical Fashion, 1770-1815* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1967), p. 242.
[37] Karin A. Wurst, 'Spellbinding: The Body as Art/Art as Body in the Cultural Practice of Attitüden', in *Lessing Yearbook XXXIII*, ed. Herbert Rowland and Richard Schade (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2002), pp. 151-81 (p. 165).

Figure 4.1: William-Adolphe Bouguereau, *The Abduction of Psyche* (1895).

prompting contemporaries to reflect upon the character which 'modern' popular entertainment ought to assume.

### 4.2 The Anti-*Tableaux* Crusade

The National Vigilance Association had been established in 1886 in the wake of the scandal surrounding the publication of W.T. Stead's 'Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' (a series of sensationalist articles published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* which exposed the extent of child prostitution in London). The organisation initially focused upon ensuring the operation of the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act (which raised the age of consent from thirteen to sixteen, and made the procurement of girls for prostitution through drugs, intimidation or fraud a criminal offence); however, it soon broadened its remit. During the years 1894-1907, the NVA initiated campaigns against 'indecent' photographs, advertisements and various forms of amusement.[38] Considering *tableaux vivants* to represent a particular threat to public morality, William Coote appeared on behalf of the NVA at several meetings of the London County Council's Theatres and Music Halls Committee to object to the renewal of music hall licenses. The NVA focused its attention upon the Palace Theatre, which featured a high number of 'nude' *tableaux* on its programmes of entertainment. The manager of the Palace, Charles Morton, had become an influential figure in the field of variety entertainment since the establishment of the Canterbury Arms in 1849. Perhaps the NVA hoped that, if the LCC could be persuaded to censor the Palace's *tableaux*, the other halls might not be far behind in removing their own *tableaux* acts.

The NVA's campaign was lent additional support by temperance campaigner Lady Henry Somerset, who used her co-edited periodical *The Woman's Signal* (a suffragist publication in print between 1894 and 1899) to draw public attention to the *tableaux vivants*. In an article published in August 1894, Somerset claimed that female *tableaux* performers suffered 'the gravest insult and dishonour', which amounted to a standard of female degradation surpassing even 'Oriental' standards. Presuming that the performers were drawn from the ranks of the working classes, Somerset argued that the 'modesty and purity' of working girls was just as vulnerable and worthy of protection as that of the 'highest in the land'; their dishonour was 'as much a blot and infamy on the

[38] The NVA proclaimed its ultimate goal to be 'the suppression of criminal vice and public immorality.' See William Alexander Coote, *A Romance of Philanthropy* (London: The National Vigilance Association, 1916), p. 14. For the NVA's campaign against indecent photographs, postcards and advertisements, see WL, 'National Vigilance Association', 4NVA/1/1/04, Executive Committee Minutes, vol. 4, Box FL 194.

community' as would be the public insult of a princess. Finally, Somerset appealed to the London County Council to call a halt to the *tableaux vivants*, comparing a *tableaux* performance to a 'prize fight' in its brutalisation and degradation of humanity.[39]

In the weeks following Somerset's article, *The Woman's Signal* published letters from members of the public, all of whom declared their support for Somerset's crusade. One correspondent, who identified himself as the Archdeacon of Middlesex, thanked Somerset for drawing public attention to the 'indecent exhibition' at the Palace Theatre, noting that clergymen were largely unaware of such proceedings given their tendency to abstain from public entertainment. The Archdeacon compared the plight of *tableaux* performers to that of artists' models, noting 'I cannot but picture to myself the awful degradation of the woman who must serve as a model for the glorification of womanly form.'[40] Another correspondent marvelled that any 'civilised' nation could derive enjoyment from an entertainment form that held the 'sacred' female form up to 'the gaze and mockery of the idle crowd'; a third correspondent worried that the lives of the female *tableaux* performers were 'wrecked' by the temptations with which they were surrounded at the music hall.[41] These letters tend to give the impression that the entire readership of *The Woman's Signal* had been convinced of the 'indecency' of the *tableaux* medium – although Somerset is unlikely to have sanctioned the publication of letters which had expressed support for the medium.

Campaigners' attempts to protect 'vulnerable' *tableaux* performers had a number of recent precedents, the infamous crusade against the Contagious Disease Acts having set the standard for various campaigns aiming to improve the lives of working women. Spearheaded in the 1870s by Josephine Butler and the Ladies' National Association (LNA), the crusade had focused on three statutes – passed in Britain in the years after 1864 – which recommended the sanitary inspection of prostitutes in military depots across southern England and Ireland. Butler and the LNA argued that the statutes denied poor women their constitutional rights by forcing them to submit to internal examination. Perhaps more importantly, the statutes instituted a double standard of sexual morality,

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[39] 'The Living Pictures', in *The Woman's Signal*, 2 August 1894, p. 63.
[40] The Archdeacon identified a 'growing disregard of modesty and delicacy' in various areas of modern culture. See 'Correspondence', in *The Woman's Signal*, 16 August 1894, p. 108.
[41] The first letter was published on 9 August 1894, p. 86, and the second a week later on 16 August 1894, p. 108, both in *The Woman's Signal*.

whereby male promiscuity was sanctioned and female promiscuity punished.[42] The campaign ultimately brought about the repeal of the statutes in 1886.

*Tableaux* campaigners' focus upon the protection of female performers may therefore be situated within a broader movement aiming to improve – or to regulate – the lives of women around the turn of the twentieth century. Like prostitution, *tableaux* performances effected the perceived 'ruination' of vulnerable, working-class women. Butler and the LNA approached prostitutes on a 'sisterly' basis, having identified prostitution as a 'paradigm for the female condition' and a state to which all women could be reduced in the case of serious misfortune; Butler and the LNA professed genuine concern for the plights of the young women concerned.[43] In the case of *tableaux* performers, however, social purists were concerned less for the fate of individual women and more for the impact which the *tableaux* phenomenon seemed to have upon the outward image of 'Britain', and upon the conservative narratives of decency and respectability to which social purists had subscribed.

Charles Morton appeared at the LCC's Theatres and Music Halls Committee's Licensing sessions in October 1894 to present his case (and to defend his commercial interests) against Coote, the NVA and other social purists. An elected body established in 1889 to replaced the unelected Metropolitan Board of Works, the LCC represented a somewhat experimental form of government. The LCC was composed of members from metropolitan constituencies (each district having elected two LCC councillors for three-year terms in addition to a single MP at general elections) for whom both male and female householders were permitted to vote. The LCC assumed responsibility for matters of education, city planning, housing and, significantly, popular entertainment.[44] With the formation of the LCC in 1889, the Theatres and Music Halls Committee had inherited responsibility from the Lord Chamberlain for the licensing of theatrical entertainments in the metropolis. As Susan Pennybacker has noted, several Committee members were supporters or even members of social purity groups like the NVA: Coote and his colleagues could expect a sympathetic response from many members of the Theatres and

[42] Campaigners rejected the prevailing view that prostitutes ('fallen women') were 'pollutants' of men, presenting the women instead as victims of patriarchy. See Judith Walkowitz, 'The Politics of Prostitution,' *Signs*, 6.1 (Autumn 1980), 123-35 (124-5).
[43] Walkowitz, 'The Politics of Prostitution', 125.
[44] The elected body was variously accused of liberalism and interventionism. Ultimately, LCC policies were characterised (in contemporary and retrospective accounts) by 'confusion and fracturing' caused by insufficiently determined objectives and strategies. See Pennybacker, *A Vision for London 1889-1914: Labour, Everyday Life and the LCC Experiment* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995), p. 239.

Music Halls Committee, although the newly-established LCC was perhaps unlikely to institute any radical reforms in the short term.[45]

At the licensing sessions of October 1894, Coote pointed out that, during the course of 1894 alone, between eighty and ninety *tableaux* had been produced at the Palace, and only the picture entitled *Moorish Bath* had attracted negative attention.[46] Morton emphasised the 'artistic' nature of the *tableaux*, claiming that spectators were united in viewing *tableaux* 'from the purely pictorial point'. He suggested that spectators expressed greater interest 'in the ingenuity of the effects' than 'in the fact that they are looking upon young women wearing little more than fleshings, with, in some cases, plaster moulds over the breasts.'[47] Charles Morton's claims for the respectability of the Palace *tableaux* seem to have been accepted by the LCC, as the Theatres and Music Halls Committee recommended the renewal of the Palace license in 1894. In the period 1894 to 1907 the Palace's license was never rescinded, despite the NVA's continued protestations.

After 1896, many *tableaux* troupes were obliged to travel to regional centres in order to seek engagements. *The Stage* noted that *tableaux vivants* continued to occupy a 'prominent place' in variety entertainment in the south of England, with a 'living classical statuary act' entitled 'The Sculptor's Dream' featuring at the Pier Pavilion in Hastings, East Sussex, in January 1897.[48] Advertisements for 'living picture' troupes were still frequently placed in *The Stage* around the turn of the twentieth century. In May 1900, the manager of the Assembly Rooms in Withernsea, East Yorkshire, lodged an advertisement for 'Living Pictures with Small Variety Entertainment', and in December 1906 a Reading-based *tableaux* troupe advertised for a blue or black 'gauze vision cloth' to be used in its *tableaux* production.[49] However, managers of many of the London halls had discontinued *tableaux* performances by the end of 1896, their interests having been piqued by the latest music hall novelty: the motion picture machine.

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[45] Pennybacker, *A Vision for London*, p. 214.
[46] Morton claimed that he himself had always looked upon *Moorish Bath* as a 'most beautiful picture', but explained that the management had already removed the picture from the programme in order to forestall further offence. Transcript, 10 October 1894. LMA, 'Sessions of the Licensing Committee, Palace Theatre of Varieties'.
[47] 'The Living Pictures', in *New Review*, November 1894, p. 462. In their biography of Morton, Morton and Newton underlined the refined qualities of the Palace *tableaux*, noting that the pictures were 'beautiful and faithful human realisations of many great and popular works by our leading painters, including Luke Fildes, Charles Santon… John Gibson, R.A., and Sir Lawrence Alma Tadema.' See Morton and Newton, *Sixty Years' Stage Service*, p. 187.
[48] 'Hastings. Pier Pavilion', in *The Stage*, 7 January 1897, p. 6.
[49] 'Assembly Rooms, Withernsea', in *The Stage*, 17 May 1900; 'Wanted, a Few Days Before Christmas', in *The Stage*, 6 December 1906, p. 25.

In mid 1906, Australian-born Pansy Montague arrived in Britain. Following Montague's run at the London Pavilion from August to November 1906, *tableaux* acts once again assumed a prominent position on music hall programmes. Montague posed in imitation of such figures as Psyche, Hebe, Diana and the Venus de Milo. Montague, whose stage-name was 'La Milo', applied white paint to her body to achieve the appearance of marble.[50] At various points during Montague's performances, a curtain was dropped to allow the 'living statue' to alter her pose, and in the period between each representation a cartoonist known as 'Cruickshank' projected sketches on to the curtain. Cruickshank's sketches varied according to his audience. When Montague had appeared in Australian music halls in early 1906, his figures had included Australian musicians Charles Watson and Jim Findlay; such characters would have been unrecognisable for British audiences, and Cruickshank therefore adapted the performance to encompass sketches by 'Joseph Chamberlain' and 'Winston Churchill'.[51] Montague and Cruickshank's act seems to have helped to revive the fortunes of the *tableaux* medium. Certainly Cruickshank's shrewd evocation of the film medium – as he projected sketches upon a curtain in the manner that early filmmakers projected moving images upon a screen – would have persuaded spectators that they were witnessing an entirely 'modern' form of variety entertainment.[52]

By early 1907, the London music halls were once again devoting portions of their programmes to *tableaux* performances [Fig. 4.2].[53] The Palace introduced Spanish performer Irma Lorraine in April 1907, whose programme of *tableaux* included both 'sacred' and 'humorous' subjects. The Hippodrome featured Frenchwoman Henriette de Serri's *tableaux* troupe, which embodied pictures entitled *The Shepherdess* and *The Combat of Achilles and Hector*. Simultaneously, the Hippodrome exhibited another *tableaux* act entitled 'Makers of History', which represented episodes from the lives of

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[50] The specially-made substance was considered so important to the integrity of the act that, at the height of war in 1915, she considered cancelling her contracts until she was able to obtain it from her 'German chemist'. See 'La Milo's Paint,' *Barrier Miner*, *New South Wales*, 21 March 1915, p. 2.

[51] For an account of La Milo and Cruickshank's performances, see David Huxley, 'Music Hall Act: La Milo, Nudity and the Pose Plastique, 1905-1915,' in *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 11.3 (2013), 218-36 (222).

[52] Cruickshank and Montague's roles – and the impact which each is likely to have had upon spectators – seem somewhat at odds with one another. Cruickshank's portion of the act, designed to evoke laughter, would have detracted from the reverent 'hush' which many *tableaux* performers hoped to foster. Perhaps the transition periods between Montague's representations were especially extensive: had Cruickshank not projected his sketches, the audience's attention may have been lost.

[53] The *tableaux* remained popular in regional centres. In April 1907 the *Manchester Courier* noted that 'during these last few weeks the music halls have been crowded with La Milos, La Rochelles, Venuses, Galateas, and others who ape, or try to ape, the classical marble.' See *The Manchester Courier*, 12 April 1907, p. 6.

well-known soldiers, sailors and politicians.[54] Once Montague had moved on to fulfill engagements at the Holborn Empire and the Grand Theatre of Varieties, the Pavilion engaged 'The Seldoms', advertising the *tableaux* act as a 'New Series of Fac-simile Poses of Models and Sketches by Famous European Sculptors and Painters' [Figs. 4.3 and 4.4].[55] Though the basic premise of the *tableaux* medium remained largely unchanged, it is clear that performers and troupe managers – competing for the favour of music hall audiences with an ever-expanding repertory of motion pictures machines – wished to underline the novelty of their acts.

Many *tableaux* troupes continued, however, to represent the same artworks as had their predecessors in the nineteenth century. Paintings by Frederick Leighton, one of the Victorian masters of 'classicising' art, were popular subjects for representation in both 1907 and in the period 1894-6. For example, the Palace Theatre's *tableaux* troupe represented Leighton's *Wedded* in November 1894 and his *Spirit of the Summit* in January 1895, whilst the Empire Theatre's management chose Leighton's *Bath of Psyche*, his *Wedded* and his sculpture *Athlete with a Python* to represent in *tableaux* form in January 1907.[56] Various classical nudes were embodied across both periods, with Antonio Canova's famous sculpture *The Three Graces* representing a popular picture for *tableaux* reinterpretation as well as a common epithet for *tableaux* troupes.[57] The proportion of patriotic military *tableaux* had, however, somewhat declined by 1907. Robert Gibb's *Comrades (The Last Request*) and Frank Feller's *Last Grip* (both represented at the Palace Theatre in 1894) had perhaps been of greater relevance in the 1890s, Britain having been in the grip of the Second Boer War.[58]

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[54] For Irma Lorraine, see 'Palace', in *The Manchester Courier*, 9 April 1907, p. 9; for Henriette de Serri, see 'Hippodrome', in *The Lancashire Daily Post*, 21 May 1907, p. 4; and for the 'Makers of History', see 'Makers of History', *The Stage*, 16 May 1907, p. 12. According to *The Stage*, sculptor Albert Toft was responsible for putting together 'Makers of History', making use of his talents 'to pose living models amidst appropriate surroundings in just the same way that he would chisel in granite or marble a great man in the act of making a famous utterance.'

[55] Programme for 10 July 1907. HTC, 'GEN London Pavilion'.

[56] Programme for Palace Theatre, 5 November 1894. VATC, 'GEN Palace Theatre'. See also 'Arrangements for the Production of Living Pictures at the Empire', in *The Stage*, 24 January 1907, p. 21.

[57] *The Three Graces* was represented by Hetty Hamer, Constance Collier and Marie Studholme at the Empire Theatre in 1894: see programme for 24 December 1894. VATC, 'Empire Theatre'. The statue was also represented at the London Pavilion in March 1894, although *The Stage* found the troupe's *tableau* 'disappointing'. See *The Stage*, 1 March 1894, p. 15. In 1907, a troupe called 'The Three Graces' appeared in Blackpool, Hartlepool, Colchester; see *The Stage*, 24 January 1907, p. 20. Another troupe, called 'The Golden Graces', also appeared at Edinburgh's Royal Theatre in April 1907; see *The Stage*, 25 April 1907, p. 2.

[58] For Gibb's painting, see programme for 5 November 1894. For Feller's, see programme for 24 December 1894, VATC.

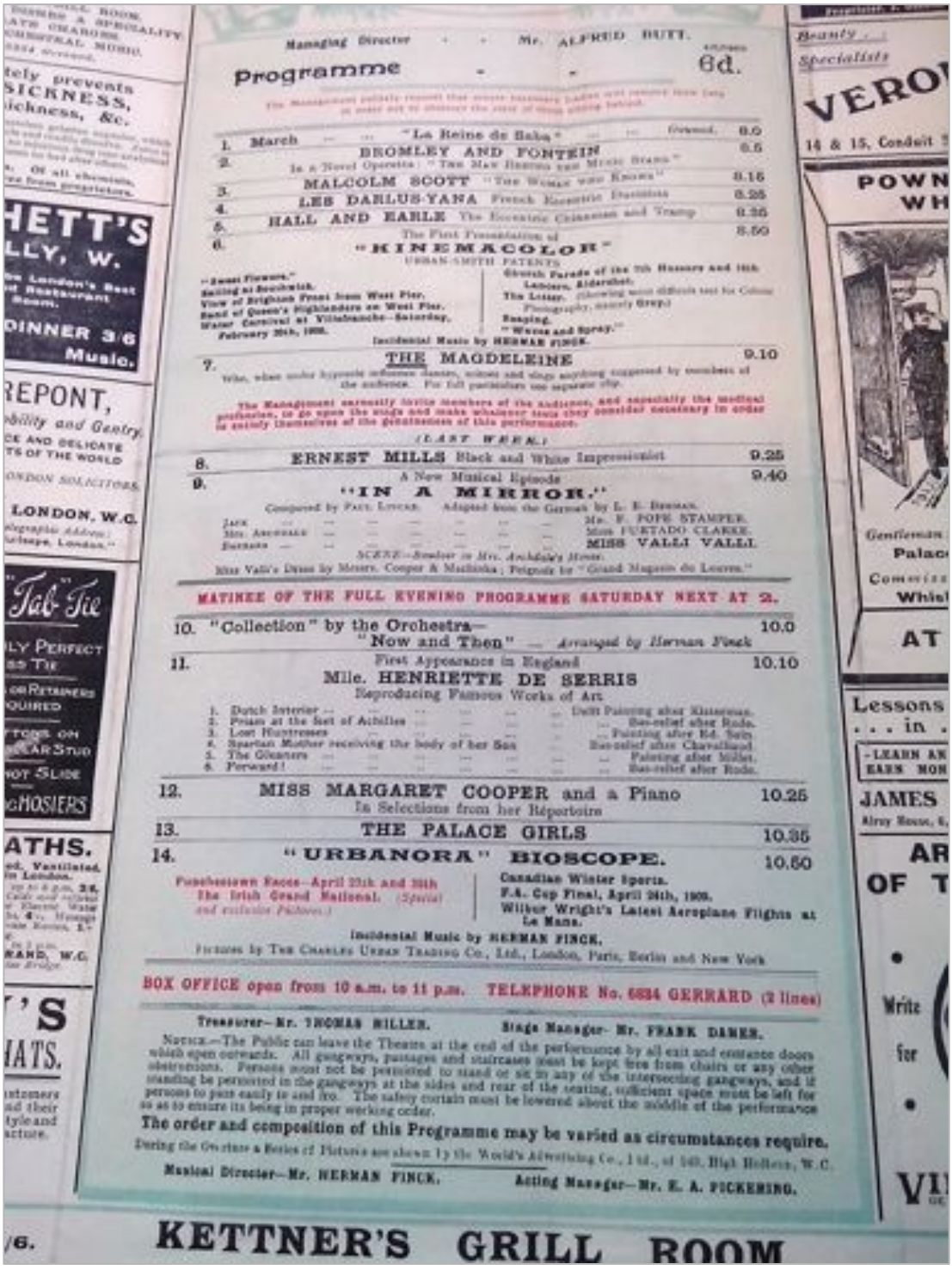


Figure 4.2: Playbill for 4 May 1909, VATC, 'Palace Theatre of Varieties'. This programme is indicative of early twentieth century variety programmes, which featured *tableaux vivants* alongside a great number of other performers and attractions: here, Henriette De Serris' *tableaux* featured eleventh on the programme.


Figure 4.3: Anon., *The Seldoms: Sabines at the London Pavilion* (c. 1907).


Figure 4.4: Anon., *The Seldoms: The Fountain at the London Pavilion* (c. 1907).

*Tableaux vivants* again inspired widespread condemnation when they were revived in the years after 1906. In early 1907, Coote notified the NVA that, having received several letters from dissatisfied members of the public, he had taken it upon himself to confront the manager of the London Pavilion (a music hall located on the corner of the West End's Shaftesbury Avenue).[59] Coote's interview failed to resolve the issue, the Pavilion manager considering the objections raised to be unjustified. On 1 May 1907, Coote therefore sent a letter to the Theatres and Music Halls Committee. He informed them that he would be objecting to various metropolitan-based *tableaux* performances, and requested that the Council receive a deputation from social purity societies interested in the question of the living statuary exhibitions.[60]

Coote managed to assemble representatives from various faith groups to join him at the Committee meeting in June 1907. The Bishop of London (representing the Church of England), Rabbi Morris Joseph (representing the Chief Rabbi) and Reverend Silvester Horne (representing the Free Church of London) addressed the Committee on behalf of the *tableaux* opponents. The clergymen began by noting that 'the exhibitions of living statuary were exhibitions of apparently nude men and women, and that such exhibitions as a form of entertainment to a mixed audience are demoralising both to the spectators and to the performers.' They claimed that the 'proper' places to study paintings and sculpture were museums and art galleries, and beseeched the Committee to protect London from this 'depraving' act. Londoners, they argued, were duty-bound to set an example to the rest of the country, and if this entertainment was sanctioned in London it would doubtless become prevalent elsewhere. They ultimately warned that the Council would have 'no logical ground for interference, however much the tendency to have nude exhibitions may grow.'[61] Perhaps the clergymen felt that, if the LCC did not legislate against the *tableaux* immediately, Londoners' standards of decency would be irrevocably lowered, and the momentum for the anti-*tableaux* campaign would be stifled by an increasing public enthusiasm for the variety act.

The British *fin de siècle* has been linked with a 'crisis of confidence', with Thomas William Heyck, Bernard Porter and others indicating that Britain suffered from a

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[59] Entries for 26 February and 26 March 1907, Executive Committee Minutes. WL, 'National Vigilance Association'.
[60] The Committee acknowledged the receipt of this letter, and declared itself pleased to receive such a deputation. Report, 1 May 1907, p. 221. LMA, 'Minutes of the Theatres and Music Halls Committee'.
[61] Letter, 5 June 1907, pp. 277-80. LMA, 'Minutes of the Theatres and Music Halls Committee'. The proceedings were reported in *The Stage*, 17 June 1907, p. 10.

sense of deep anxiety in the years leading up to the turn of the twentieth century.[62] This anxiety was multifaceted: long-standing divisions between the classes had been eroded by the gradual inclusion of the working class into the electorate, and traditional religious certainties had been shaken by the scientific developments described in the previous chapter. Perhaps most significantly, however, the final decade of the nineteenth century was marked by a sense of imperial anxiety. By 1900, the British Empire encompassed twelve million square miles, and the scope of British domination over colonised peoples had swelled almost beyond recognition. Yet politicians and cultural commentators noted the increased potency of competing European powers with alarm. They feared that, as the land surface of the British Empire continued to expand, colonialists were ever-more poorly equipped to complete their 'civilising' missions, and that rival nations were better placed economically and politically to assume control over distant lands and peoples. Rudyard Kipling's poem 'Recessional' encapsulates the pessimistic sentiment of the age. Published in *The Times* in July 1897, the poem spoke of departing captains and 'melting' navies. In Kipling's prophesied future, imperialists had become 'drunk with sight of power'. The 'pomp of yesterday' had dissolved and, Kipling implied, the British Empire itself was destined to perish, just as had the ancient empires of Nineveh and Tyre.[63]

This imperial anxiety seems to have sanctioned an increased scrutiny of male virility, as contemporaries questioned the ability of colonialists, missionaries and industrial workers to sustain the British Empire. With 'masculinity' deemed lacking in a number of important areas, cultural commentators and journalists identified the 'New Woman' as a peculiarly modern threat to male virility. The 'New Woman' was variously identified in the *fin de siècle* period as a feminist activist, social reformer, popular novelist, suffragette playwright and female poet. Defined by her perceived newness and her autonomous self-definition, the 'New Woman' was considered a disruptive, emasculating force, capable of uprooting those structures and institutions upon which Britain had founded its imperial triumph.[64]

The identification and subsequent defamation of the 'New Woman' represented an attempt on the part of patriarchal society to re-signify traditional gender roles. Indeed,

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[62] For example, see Thomas William Heyck, 'Crisis of Confidence, 1870-1914', in *A History of the Peoples of the British Isles*, ed. Thomas William Heyck and Meredith Veldman, 3 vols. (Chicago: Lyceum Books, 2002), III, pp. 23-42; Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 164-93.
[63] Rudyard Kipling, 'Recessional', in *The Times*, 17 July 1897, p. 13.
[64] As Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis have pointed out, the 'New Woman' was a shifting, contested figure in both fiction and fact, although her prominence and influence was such that she represented a 'cultural icon' around the turn of the twentieth century. See Richardson and Willis, eds., *The New Woman in Fiction and Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), p. xi, 12.

many of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century campaigns ostensibly fought in the interests of women might be interpreted as further efforts to regulate, control and thereby re-establish authority over women. In spite of the campaign's outwardly 'feminist' aims, the crusade against the Contagious Diseases Act – and social purity efforts that followed – may have been instituted with repressive aims in mind. As Judith Walkowitz has pointed out, Butler's repeal campaign 'helped to spawn a hydra-headed assault against sexual deviation of all kinds', with the campaign leading to the inauguration of further crusades against prostitution, pornography and homosexuality. The struggle against state regulation eventually evolved into a movement that used the instruments and institutions of the state for repressive purposes.[65] Agitation surrounding the Mental Deficiency Act, too, was focused upon the regulation of feeble-minded women. When it was passed in the early twentieth century, the Act essentially worked to make mentally-deficient women invisible from the view of society.[66]

Social purists' anti-*tableaux* campaign may be interpreted as a further attempt to shield 'problematic' women from the view of society, and to reassert patriarchal control in an age during which traditional hierarchies had been unmoored. A narrative featured in *The Woman's Signal* in December 1894 had underlined the dangers of stepping outside of one's established roles. The account, entitled 'Footlights: The Story of a Living Picture', saw a young female journalist, Cecil (a 'New Woman') agreeing to fill a vacant spot in a *tableaux* troupe. Prior to the engagement, Cecil noted that the *tableaux* were 'most beautiful', and that only 'depraved people' regarded the *tableaux* as indecent. Under the unforgiving glare of the footlights, Cecil realised the full 'horror' of her position, with the scanty fleshings making her 'feel her nakedness the more.' In the eyes of her admirer, Clarke, Cecil was tainted by her association with the *tableaux* medium. Clarke watched on in shame, powerless to silence the lewd jeers of excited male spectators. Cecil had plunged herself into the theatrical 'underworld' to gain insight for a newspaper article and, perhaps, to display her 'advanced' notions of womanhood. She had found herself humbled and humiliated by the experience.[67] Women should, the author implicitly

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[65] Walkowitz, 'The Politics of Prostitution,' 130. Lucy Bland disagrees with Walkowitz, arguing that the late-nineteenth-century campaigns 'were rooted in a wider feminist vision in which women had freedom of movement in all spheres of society.' See Bland, '"Purifying" the Public World: Feminist Vigilantes in Late Victorian England', *Women's History Review*, 1.3 (1992), 397-412 (409-410).

[66] Under the 1913 Act, mental defectives were categorised as either idiots, imbeciles, feeble-minded or moral imbeciles, and those considered to belong to the two former categories could be institutionalised. The Act assumed that mental deficiency was inherited, that feeble-minded women were more fertile than normal women, and that such women possessed a lack of sexual restraint. See Harvey G. Simmons, 'Explaining Social Policy: The English Mental Deficiency Act of 1913', *Journal of Social History*, 11.3 (Spring 1978), 387-403.

[67] 'Footlights: The Story of a Living Picture', in *The Woman's Signal*, 20 December 1894, pp. 391-2.

cautioned, remain firmly within their prescribed 'spheres'. Even the embodiment of Antique artworks could not represent a 'respectable' profession for women: the chastity and purity of the 'original' artworks was lost in the translation from statue to 'living statue', and performances were thereby rendered 'indecent'.

The next section of this chapter probes social purists' claims for the *tableaux* medium's indecency, focusing in more detail upon the manner in which *fin de siècle* performances evoked Antiquity. It surveys some of the other spaces which presented elements of classical culture to audiences, and notes convergences and divergences between the ways in which the gallery, the museum, the theatre and the music hall conveyed an impression of Antiquity. In the case of 'Ariadne', it is possible to identify a figure which was represented in more than one of these spaces. Analysing the different circumstances of this figure's exhibition exposes the discrepant nature of spectatorial responses, and underlines audiences' contrasting expectations of art exhibitions, theatrical productions and music hall spectacles around the turn of the twentieth century.

### 4.3 Demoralising and Disgraceful? *Ariadne* in Sculpture, Painting and Performance

In the long nineteenth century, one of the most popularly represented *tableaux* figures was Ariadne, a mythological character who had been depicted in the sculpture *Ariadne on the Panther* (1824) by German artist Johann Heinrich von Dannecker. A painting by George Romney, entitled *Emma Hart as Ariadne* (1785), indicates that Emma Hamilton had incorporated the character into her attitude performances. Theatrical posters reveal that Madames Warton and Keller had also personated the mythological figure in the 1840s, before the Palace Theatre's troupe enacted its controversial *Ariadne* living picture in the years after 1893.[68] Appearing at a meeting of the London County Council's Theatres and Music Halls Licensing Committee in October 1894, William Coote condemned the Palace's interpretation of the sculpture. Coote suggested that the *tableau* required a female performer to lie 'in such a position that had it not been for the tights, gross indecency would have been the result.' Insisting that there was no scope for aligning the exhibition with any form of 'high art ideal', Coote claimed that the *tableaux*

[68] Madame Warton personated Dannecker's *Ariadne* in around 1845 at the Walhalla Theatre; see poster, dated 1845 (although included in the folder for 1846). HTC, 'Walhalla, 1846'. Madame Keller's interpretation of the sculpture was included in the *tableaux* programme at Vauxhall Gardens in September and October 1845; see poster, dated 29 September-6 October 1845. ML, Cuttings, vol. 3, IV/162/14.

performance was 'demoralising, disgraceful and unworthy of any man who professes to cater for the ordinary public in entertainment.'[69]

In *A Romance of Philanthropy* (an autobiographical work which essentially amounted to an account of Coote's campaigning efforts for the NVA), Coote expanded upon his 'vision' for popular entertainment in the metropolis. For Coote, amusements ought primarily to educate, although such 'pictorial' entertainments as *tableaux vivants*, postcards and advertisements were additionally tasked with inculcating in London's working-classes a 'taste' for 'art'. The *tableaux*, postcards and advertisements which had recently enjoyed great prominence were antagonistic to these aims. Instead of educating, they demoralised spectators 'whose minds have not got the balance that we… can boast of.'[70] Those individuals on whose behalf Coote presumed to speak were conceived as young, poor and uneducated; according to Coote, such individuals endured 'hard & unpleasant' lives, and deserved 'healthy, good, vigorous entertainment, that will generate good thoughts, & not inflame the passions in any way whatever.'[71]

The *tableau* to which Coote particularly objected – *Ariadne* – had been drawn from the seemingly 'respectable' realm of Greek mythology, where Ariadne had appeared in a number of contexts and guises. According to Homer's *Odyssey*, Ariadne was the daughter of 'Minos the wise', who was abducted from her home on the island of Crete by Theseus, and taken to Athens. Theseus, however, had 'no joyance' of Ariadne and, when he heard about a 'tale' Dionysus told of her, he had Ariadne killed. Homer did not enlarge upon the nature of Dionysus' 'tale', although some ancient accounts suggested that Ariadne was already been married to Dionysus when Theseus spirited her away.[72] Other ancient writers expanded upon the notion that Ariadne might have been the wife of Dionysus, suggesting that Dionysus rescued her from Theseus, and that Ariadne went on to bear him a son, Oenopion (the king of the Greek island of Chios, who brought winemaking to the island, his father Dionysus having been the god of the grape harvest). In accounts which featured Ariadne as Dionysus' wife, Ariadne was often murdered by Perseus, the son of Zeus. As Nina daVinci Nichols has pointed out, there was no mythological goddess who died in as many ways as did Ariadne: whether by murder,

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[69] 'Transcript, 10 October 1894, p. 9. LMA, 'Sessions of the Licensing Committee, Palace Theatre of Varieties'.
[70] William Alexander Coote, *A Romance of Philanthropy* (London: The National Vigilance Association, 1916), pp. 62-3.
[71] Transcript, 10 October 1894. LMA, 'Sessions of the Licensing Committee, Palace Theatre of Varieties'.
[72] William Morris, ed., *The Odyssey of Homer*, 2 vols. (London: Reeves & Turner, 1887), I, p. 201. For a summary of accounts relating to Ariadne, see Nina daVinci Nichols, *Ariadne's Lives* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1995).

hanging, childbirth or 'maenadic trance', death was the striking feature in accounts relating to this particular mythological figure.[73]

Nichols suggests that Ariadne had come to represent a figure of heroine-like proportions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as translations of ancient works by Homer and other Greek writers became ever-more readily available. The emergence of the 'New Woman' in the 1890s served to undermine the importance of the biblical Eve as a role model, and effected a return to the Greek heroines: Ariadne, the 'mother goddess', rose inestimably in the evaluations of contemporaries. Her 'deaths' were assigned more positive connotations of renewal and rebirth, and she appeared in various works of nineteenth-century literature and art as a 'muse, symbol, *figura* and type for heroines in the grand style.'[74]

It was in the context of Ariadne's new-found 'heroism' that Dannecker had completed *Ariadne on the Panther* in 1824. The sculpture depicted the moment described by Homer, during which Ariadne – having been abandoned by Theseus – was transported to Dionysus to become his wife. In the sculpture, Ariadne is reclined, nude, on the back of a growling panther, her left foot tucked beneath her right leg, and her left elbow placed on the panther's head. The link to Dionysus is confirmed by the crown of grape leaves which rests atop Ariadne's coiled hair. Upon completion, the sculpture was bought by Moritz von Bethmann, and displayed in the banker's Frankfurt home until his death in 1877. British diarist Edmund Spencer was one of many writers and artists to travel to Bethmann's home in order to view the statue. Spencer noted that Bethmann had displayed the piece on a revolving pedestal. By means of this, and of the soft lighting which streamed through a pale pink curtain, 'a sort of breathing animation' was 'diffused over the whole group'. Spencer wrote:

> The ferocious expression of the leopard is admirably contrasted with the graceful figure and feminine features of the beautiful Ariadne, and taken altogether, it forms an imperishable monument to the immortality of the great artist. It is much to be regretted that Dannecker has not been as fortunate in the material as in the execution, for the whole group is streaked and spotted with blue so provokingly, that they are indeed *plague spots* to the spectator.[75]

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[73] Nichols, *Ariadne's Lives*, p. 13.
[74] Ibid., p. 1, 19.
[75] Edmund Spencer, *Sketches of Germany and the Germans, with a Glance at Poland, Hungary, & Switzerland, in 1834, 1835, and 1836*, 2 vols. (London: Whittaker & Co., 1836), I, p. 10.

Not unlike Edward Kilanyi in the 1890s, Bethmann used a revolving stage mechanism to display his statue. However, whilst Kilanyi employed partitions on his revolving stage to ensure that various *tableaux* could be presented to the audience in swift succession, Bethmann hoped that the rotating stage would allow visitors to scrutinise his solitary sculpture from every angle, admiring the expensive acquisition for its detail and workmanship. Spencer's account reveals, however, that there were some questions over the quality of the sculpture's marble: perhaps Bethmann ought to have employed more forgiving lighting to display his prized possession to ultimate effect.

Spencer's indication that the statue seemed enlivened by 'a sort of breathing animation' was echoed in the account of Anna Jameson, another prolific travel writer. In her *Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad* (1834), Jameson described a visit to Bethmann's home through an imagined dialogue between two protagonists, Medon and Alda. Medon noted that Bethmann had set an example of 'munificent patronage of art' when he purchased Dannecker's *Ariadne on the Panther*. Medon admitted, however, that he had been discouraged from viewing *Ariadne* himself by the widespread notion that the statue appeared 'as if it had been cut out of old Stilton cheese.' Alda resolved to offer Medon a 'correct idea' of Dannecker's masterpiece. The statue was positioned, according to Alda, in the centre of a large cabinet, which served to set the figure into relief and to display 'the grace and ease' of Ariadne's attitude. Jameson's Alda went on:

> There is a look of life, an individual truth in the beauty of the form, which distinguishes it from the long-limbed vapid pieces of elegance called nymphs and Venuses, which "Stretch their white arms, and bend their marble necks," in the galleries of our modern sculptors… The window of the cabinet is so contrived, that by drawing up a blind of stained glass, a soft crimson tint is shed over the figure, as if the marble blushed.[76]

Alda did not, however, enjoy this intimation of 'life'. Disapproving of all 'trickery' in art, she argued that 'the pale, colourless purity of marble is one of the beauties of a fine statue.'[77]

Dannecker's statue seems, according to the accounts of both Spencer and Jameson, to have possessed the 'look of life'. Even before it came to be represented in *tableaux* form, *Ariadne on the Panther* was 'animated', appearing to 'blush' under certain effects of lighting. Paradoxically, however, *tableaux* directors would have been concerned to eradicate all signs of 'life' from their interpretations of Dannecker's statue,

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[76] Anna Jameson, *Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad, with Tales and Miscellanies now First Collected*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1834), I, pp. 56-8.
[77] Jameson, *Visits and Sketches*, p. 58.

using skin-coloured tights, powdered make-up and plaster-of-Paris casts to achieve uniformly white, marble-like tones that worked to conceal all blemishes and blushes. The precise pose would have been fairly difficult to achieve, and even more difficult to hold. Each female performer enlisted to embody Dannecker's statue was obliged to balance in an uncomfortable position on the back of a model panther, holding her left knee to ensure that it did not drop. She would have been required to hold her body in the kind of taut, regal repose achieved by Dannecker in the original statue. Indeed, it was perhaps the difficulty of the pose which made *Ariadne on the Panther* such a frequent subject of *tableaux* representation. The greatest tension and excitement could be created amongst spectators when it was recognised that performers were most likely to drop their poses.

Early *tableaux* interpretations of Dannecker's statue had been received with acclaim. Reviewers suggested that Madame Keller's representation of *Ariadne on the Panther*, in particular, worked to highlight the beauty of the female performer. When Keller had personated Dannecker's statue at Vauxhall in May 1846, the *London Pioneer* noted that the 'elegant symmetry of her [Madame Keller's] fine form' was only matched 'by the divinity that beams in her exquisite features.'[78] In his own assessment of Madame Keller, William Brent agreed that the performer had 'a very beautiful intellectual countenance', which 'appeared to great advantage' when in the state of perfect repose required by Dannecker's *Ariadne on the Panther*. For Brent, Ariadne was the only character in whose imitation Madame Keller could rival Madame Warton.[79]

Though Dannecker's sculpture had by no means elicited universal approbation, then, spectators had not identified anything 'indecent' about the composition. Similarly, when the sculpture was represented in *tableaux* form by Madame Keller and Madame Warton, there was no indication that audience members were offended by the *tableau*; critics instead admired the performers' figures, which seem to have been exhibited to graceful effect in the *Ariadne* pose. However, when the Palace Theatre included *Ariadne* in its *tableaux* programme, Coote condemned the *tableau* as 'indecent'. Coote's description indicates that the Palace's *tableaux* director had attempted to approximate the appearance of Dannecker's sculpture as closely as possible: the performer was reclined on the back of what Coote identified as a lion (in Dannecker's version it was a panther, as this was the creature upon which the mythological Ariadne had been transported), wearing skin-coloured body stockings evocative of the sculpted figure's nakedness. The Palace's *Ariadne* picture was almost entirely analogous with Dannecker's 'original'

[78] 'Professor Keller's Poses Plastiques', in *London Pioneer*, 28 May 1846, p. 76.
[79] Brent, *A Visit to the Walhalla*, p. 17.

statue, the single difference being that the central figure was represented not in marble but in 'living' flesh. Even this deviation does not entirely account for Coote's objection, however, as Madames Warton and Keller had garnered few complaints for their own 'living' *Ariadne* pictures. Coote's objection to *Ariadne* (and to the *tableaux* medium more broadly) seems not to have stemmed from any inherent 'indecency' in the performances themselves but, perhaps, from the circumstances in which the *tableaux* had come to be viewed. Such circumstances had helped to generate new expectations and responsibilities for popular entertainment around the turn of the twentieth century.

The exploits of the mythological Ariadne had also featured in theatrical spectacles, including James Robinson Planché's *Theseus and Ariadne* (1848) and Vincent Amcotts' *Ariadne; or, The Bull! The Bully!! And the Bullion!!!* (1870). These plays belonged to the classical burlesque genre of theatrical entertainment (discussed in the second chapter of this thesis). Though few ancient dramas were produced during this period, classical burlesques ensured that audiences were familiarised with various ancient tales. Indeed, Edith Hall suggests that the genre of classical burlesque transcended class barriers to a significant extent, helping to disseminate knowledge of the Classics across the 'social strata'. By virtue of such productions, the lower-middle class, theatre-attending spectator might have been acquainted 'with the contexts of the major ancient epics, with at least some Greek tragedies, and with perhaps a dozen stories out of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.'[80]

Hall's discussion of the 'subversiveness' of the classical burlesque genre is particularly instructive in light of the objections raised by Coote and other social purists to the *tableaux*. As Hall points out, to burlesque any classical text is somewhat subversive, but 'to travesty the very content of the education which divided the classes and fostered the elite, in front of a distinctively cross-class audience, was a complex procedure of some ideological potency.'[81] Many classical burlesques parodied the arcane classical education to which the upper and upper-middle classes been subjected. In Amcotts' *Ariadne*, for instance, Theseus' friend 'Mentor' loses his treatise on Greek verbal roots, the treatise having fallen 'overboard'. Responding to this 'loss', Theseus suggests that all 'classic authors' be thrown overboard: 'Away with Latin, Greek, and all

[80] Edith Hall, 'Classical Mythology in the Victorian Popular Theatre', in *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 5.3 (1999), 336-366 (344).
[81] Hall, 'Classical Mythology in Victorian Popular Theatre', 352.

such stuff,/For I've been *over bored* with them enough.'[82] Perhaps social purists' objection to *tableaux vivants* may partly be explained by a concern that the medium amounted to a subversive, mocking parody of upper and upper-middle class education. *Tableaux* performances 'burlesqued' classical themes, performing the Classics in such a manner that the 'original' texts were almost indiscernible. Identifying with those upper and upper-middle class individuals who had been educated in the Classics from a young age, social purists wished classical knowledge to be disseminated amongst a wide audience. They were probably not especially keen for the Classics – and, by extension, the system and institutions through which they themselves had probably been educated – to be lampooned almost beyond recognition.

*Tableaux vivants* were not, however, comprehensively condemned at the *fin de siècle*. Pansy Montague, in particular, was held by some critics to represent an ideal vehicle for the re-transmission of ancient Greek art. A poem describing Montague's performance – which has been preserved alongside programmes advertising the entertainments at the London Pavilion – reveals the bewildering speed with which the performer altered her pose, 'Diana first, Pandora then, then swaying/Toward us Venus as she trod the shore/Of Cyprus, wonderful, divine, antique,/Superbly moulded, statuesque, and Greek!' The poet likened Montague to Galatea, the statue brought to life through the passion of its creator:

> A statue yet alive! Youth's vivid glory
> Pulses through that white form – through rounded arm
> And matchless side and thigh. So in the story
> That marble shape Pygmalion's prayer made warm,
> All glowing stood before his gaze, before he
> Clasped her to his hot heart 'mid whirling storm
> Of sighs and kisses; through that enamelled whiteness
> Shines all undimmed the living beauty's brightness!

Montague's beauty was, according to the poet, matched only by that of the famous ancient Greek courtesan Phryne, or the infamous Helen of Troy.[83] A note appended to the poem claimed that the 'artistic perfection' of Montague's representations 'disarmed the most Puritanical and austere censors.'[84]

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[82] Hall indicates that audiences actually enjoyed a sense of 'cultural possession' which their familiarity with aspects of the Classics – derived from or affirmed in burlesque – bestowed upon them. See Hall, 'Classical Mythology in Victorian Popular Theatre', 355.
[83] The undated poem, entitled 'La Milo. An Appreciation', is held in HTC, 'GEN London Pavilion'.
[84] The managerial note also included Montague's physical particulars, presumably as a means of proving her likeness to the statues she personated. Montague was apparently 5 feet 8 inches, had a hip circumference of 42 inches, and weighed 11 stone 8 pounds; at the time of her performance at the London Pavilion she was twenty-one years of age.

Even journalist W.T. Stead (instigator of the 'Modern Babylon' crusade) approved of Montague's act, noting that the performer appeared as though 'carved out of marble.' Each *tableau* was 'as a glimpse of the clear blue sky, or of the midnight heaven radiant with stars, suddenly visible to the gropers along a noisy tunnel.'[85] Condemning many forms of metropolitan entertainment, Stead claimed that his main objection to these amusements derived from the utter boredom which he had experienced in witnessing them. Stead wrote:

> I sat patiently listening to the most insufferable banality and imbecility that ever fell upon human ears… [What roused my indignation] was the thought that any audience would appreciate such trash. It seems intolerable that in Anno Domini 1906 the heirs of a thousand years of civilisation and the produce of 35 years of the Education Act should relish this inane drivel… It was difficult to realise that the well-dressed ladies and gentlemen who had paid 5/ to occupy the stalls, and who applauded vulgarities which might have shamed a costermonger, were citizens of an Empire on which the sun never sets.

For Stead, tedious amusements reflected poorly upon imperial Britain at large: indeed, such amusements were humiliating when the advances made by the 'civilised' British were taken into account. Popular entertainment ought primarily to entertain and, in order to do this, it needed to stimulate and surprise. Montague's *tableaux* performances had proven that 'indecency' was not a necessary component of effective entertainment. Overall, Stead judged that the audiences which nightly gathered at the London music halls were able to grasp the 'artistic' appeal of the *tableaux*. It was unnecessary to censor the *tableaux* medium for fear that spectators would 'misunderstand' the entertainment form, perceiving 'nakedness' or 'indecency' when, in fact, there was none.[86]

Yet, even Pansy Montague did not use her influence to publicly endorse the *tableaux* medium. When Montague's attack came under attack from Laura Ormiston Chant, a social purist who had been campaigning against *tableaux vivants* since the 1890s, it was Montague's co-performer 'Cruickshank' who took to the press to rebuke Chant's criticisms. In a letter addressed to Chant and published in the Melbourne newspaper *Table Talk* in November 1906, Cruickshank wrote:

> There is no suspicion even of sinister intention in any portion of the act. On the contrary, our artistic standpoint – I speak for Miss Montague and

[85] Stead did not, however, approve of music halls in general; La Milo's performance was the 'one solitary gleam in an endless procession of ugliness and vulgarity.' *The Auckland Star*, 10 November 1906, p. 9.
[86] 'Mr W.T. Stead', in *The Auckland Star*, 10 November 1906, p. 9.

> myself – is based on the fact that any suggestion or feature that might be in the least calculated to appeal to the baser minded of our audience has been carefully excised, and I claim without any fear of contradiction from any person who has seen the act that it is entirely free from offence in any particular.

Cruickshank intimated that only the 'baser minded' could identify any improper intent in the act. Chant and her fellow *tableaux* critics were thereby implicitly accused of baseness, and of possessing the kind of sordid imagination that permitted them to take issue with an 'artistic' entertainment. Cruickshank argued that Montague's act tended to exercise 'a refining and elevating influence' upon spectators whose minds were unsullied by 'base' imaginings.[87]

Montague and other performers' reluctance to speak out in support of the *tableaux* medium underlined the impression that the anti-*tableaux* campaign was widely endorsed. Social purists lent further credence to this impression by pursuing well-known artists, convincing them that the *tableaux* were antithetical to the success of their own medium and ensuring the publication of these artists' denunciations of the *tableaux*.[88] The views of sculptor Conrad Dressler (1856-1940) were published in 1907, having already been presented in a letter to the Theatres and Music Halls Committee. Judging living statues to 'lack all the essentials of the beauty of sculpture', Dressler argued that *tableaux* performers were incapable of replicating 'real' statuary on the stage:

> Nature is the source of inspiration of all the arts. But in the case of sculpture a great number of things play a part which is not quite apparent in the result. For instance, movement gives a grace of outline which the sculptor has to seize, and no sculptor will ever dream of keeping a model still because the beauty of the lines depends very much on the changes which come about from motion. All this is absent in the figures which stand in these positions on the stage, and on the other hand they do not really represent the statues they pretend they are portraying.

Dressler felt that *tableaux* performers tended to stand *too* still on the stage. Working so hard to achieve the appearance of statuary, performers could not recreate the sense of movement inherent to great works of sculpture. Dressler argued that the *tableaux* were

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[87] 'The Poses of "La Milo,"' *Table Talk, Melbourne*, 15 November 1906, p. 21.

[88] Artists' reviews reveal a greater preoccupation with the interests of 'art' than with the wellbeing of performers or spectators. However, social purists were not able to convince all artists of the threat which the *tableaux* posed to their own medium: in 1894, painter Marcus Stone argued that the *tableaux* were able to 'serve more or less those good purposes which pictorial art is fondly hoped to serve – to refine, to delight purely, to elevate, and perhaps to teach.' See 'The Living Pictures', in *New Review*, 11 (1894), 461-70.

'remote from true art; they have nothing to do with it.'[89] Dressler objected to *tableaux* performances on the grounds that the *tableaux* appeared to him somewhat artificial. Artists derived initial inspiration from 'nature', whereas the performers of *tableaux vivants* – imitating sculptures and paintings, rather than 'nature' itself – were able to produce only vague facsimiles, the contrived nature of the reproductions serving to subdue the natural movement and 'life' discernible in the 'original' artworks.

*Tableaux* performers and directors did not refute the notion that *tableaux vivants* represented reproductions of 'original' artworks: on the contrary, many emphasised the derivative nature of the medium. An advertisement placed in the *Lancashire Daily Post* indicated that a performance by Henriette de Serri's *tableaux* troupe encompassed 'reproductions of artistic bas-reliefs', all of which amounted to 'faithful and artistic representations'.[90] Similarly, proprietors of Burnley's Empire Music Hall described a *tableaux* performance as 'reproductions of the work of famous sculptures, which work is now in renowned museums and salons.'[91] In January 1907, *The Times* suggested that the *tableaux* medium in fact boasted a number of advantages over painting or sculpture. Writing in reference to a *tableaux* performance at London's Empire Theatre, the critic noted that the *tableaux* represented 'well-known pictures and statues, mainly in the Tate Gallery.' The performance was likely to appeal less to 'lovers of painting and sculpture' than to 'those who desire the added touch of actuality which flesh and blood present.' In the reproduction of Leighton's *Bath of Psyche*, for instance, the shapes of the figures distinguished themselves from the painted backgrounds in a manner altogether unlike those of the 'original'. This outcome certainly 'violated' the artist's initial scheme, yet the effect was not at all unpleasant, permitting spectators to view elements of the composition almost in isolation from one another.[92]

The predominance of anti-*tableaux* rhetoric – and the comparative scarcity of publications written in support of the medium – has led historians to presume that the anti-*tableaux* campaigners enjoyed widespread influence and support. Patricia Hollis has noted that the NVA and other social purity organisations, claiming to speak for the 'People', exerted a marked effect upon legislation, enlarging the realm of government and

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[89] Though admitting that he himself did the find performances indecent – 'merely ugly' – Dressler said that he could understand why some considered them to be morally 'detestable'. Dressler's letter was reproduced in the article 'Living Statuary', in *The Nottingham Evening Post*, 2 May 1907, p. 3.
[90] Hippodrome', in *Lancashire Daily Post*, 21 May 1907, p. 4.
[91] 'Empire Music Hall', in *Burnley Gazette*, 6 November 1907, p. 5.
[92] 'Empire Theatre', in *The Times*, 28 January 1907, p. 10.

acting as a 'continuing source of ideological change.'[93] Tracy Davis claims that social purists' campaign, rooted in 'the male hegemonic preference' for controlled female display, resulted in a 'mass movement' to lobby for stricter controls, and that the anti-*tableaux* crusade belonged to a broader 'anti-liberal backlash' in the *fin de siècle* period.[94] It is certainly clear that the anti-*tableaux* campaign and other social purity crusades obliged the LCC to reconsider its role in the supervision of public entertainment. The LCC responded to increased demands for the Council to act as 'an arbiter of taste, an agent of consolidation and a force for amelioration' by restructuring its welfare provision, and taking steps towards objectivity by ensuring that no single government party was able to force through bills which mandated the LCC's activities.[95] However, the impact of the anti-*tableaux* campaign seems to have been over-stated, and the reviews of Stead and other critics indicate that contemporaries differed significantly in their assessments of the *tableaux* medium.

Critics and defenders of the *tableaux* medium were united in their concern for the impact which popular entertainment had upon perceptions of the British Empire. Anti-*tableaux* crusaders argued that the 'indecent' *tableaux* reflected poorly upon the British, whose Empire had been founded upon 'purity' and 'righteousness'. Defenders of the medium, on the other hand, indicated that it was *tedious* amusements that reflected badly upon the British Empire: onlookers were no doubt prompted to question the 'civilisation' of a nation which indulged in 'inane drivel' for the sake of protecting spectators from imagined 'indecencies'.[96] These conflicting perspectives reflected differing notions of the role which popular entertainment ought to fulfill. Whilst Coote and other social purists insisted that amusements ought to educate spectators, inculcating a sense of 'taste' in members of the working classes, Stead argued that the primary function of entertainment was simply to entertain.

Social purists' claims for the 'indecency' of the *tableaux* seem increasingly unsubstantiated when *fin de siècle* performances are compared with earlier *tableaux* displays and other contemporary classicising genres. In terms of performers' costumes

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[93] Patricia Hollis, ed., *Pressure from Without in Early Victorian England* (London: Edward Arnold, 1974), p. ix.
[94] Tracy Davis, 'The Spectacle of Absent Costume: Nudity on the Victorian Stage', in *New Theatre Quarterly*, 5.20 (November 1989), 321-333 (330).
[95] As Susan Pennybacker points out, 'Progressives' were keen to 'purify' public entertainments, although their opponents were concerned that the LCC ought not cross the threshold into 'private' worlds. See Pennybacker, *A Vision for London*, p. 159.
[96] Canon Stott claimed that 'purity' was an 'Imperial necessity, for the one thing that would preserve the Empire was that its members did righteousness.' See 'Protagonists of Purity', in *The Manchester Courier*, 4 May 1907, p. 8. Stead's views were discussed in 'Mr W.T. Stead', in *The Auckland Star*, 10 November 1906, p. 9.

and the themes or figures selected for evocation, the performances to which social purists objected were not significantly different from earlier displays or performances within other classicising genres (none of which had attracted censure of the like visited upon late nineteenth-century *tableaux vivants*). Social purists' crusade against the *tableaux* medium derived from a concern – a misguided one, in Stead's view – to preserve a 'pure' image of Britain. In the minds of social purists, a perceived decline in the fortunes of the British Empire necessitated a tightening of domestic control. Regulating the public visibility of female performers (and of British women more broadly) would serve to demonstrate the steadfastness of male virility, indicating to Britons and to the rest of the Empire that the threat embodied by the 'New Woman' might be suppressed through the implementation of traditional patriarchal authority.

The final section of this chapter will place *tableaux vivants* and other classicising performance genres within a broader context, considering the functions which 'Antiquity' served around the turn of the twentieth century. It will suggest that the manner in which classical culture was evoked by writers and commentators in the *fin de siècle* diverged from that of earlier periods considered in this thesis. It will argue, too, that carefully-staged *tableaux* performances might have helped to consolidate the notion of an affinity between ancient and modern societies. This apparent affinity had assumed new significance around the turn of the twentieth century, as contemporaries sought inspiration and direction in the maintenance of the modern Empire. Social purists and conservative critics were, therefore, somewhat short-sighted in condemning the *tableaux*, when the medium might have been harnessed to the project of imperial consolidation.

### 4.4 'The millennium is at hand'[97]: Antiquity and Modernity at the *Fin de Siècle*

In the course of the nineteenth century, contemporaries began to identify their society as 'modern', recognising that rapid advancements had been made in economic, social, political, cultural and psychological spheres.[98] Whether attributing these advancements to the impact of the Industrial Revolution, the Enlightenment or a combination of factors, contemporaries perceived a wide, almost irreconcilable gulf between the past and the

[97] 'It is delightful to hear managers say they only put these things on in the interest of pure art, and that, for the sake of pure art, people flock to see them. If this be true the millennium is at hand, and our music hall entertainment is the first real indication of its approach.' See 'Living Statuary', in *Daily Mail*, 3 May 1907, p. 3.

[98] As Dwight Culler has pointed out, the newly 'historicist' outlook of the Victorian era nurtured the idea of 'modernity'. When the Victorian age looked into the 'mirror of history', it saw 'not merely itself reflected but also the whole panorama of the past… Indeed, in the course of looking to the past it became conscious of the distinctive characteristics of the present.' See Culler, *The Victorian Mirror of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 284.

present. Though presuming that 'modern' society was superior in almost every respect to past societies and eras, writers and cultural commentators nevertheless looked to the past – and especially to the classical periods of ancient Greece and Rome – for models and lessons relevant to their own time.

In the nineteenth century, Classical Antiquity represented the best-known and most scrupulously-studied of past ages, and many contemporaries identified parallels between nineteenth-century Europe and the ancient Greek or ancient Roman societies. Classical Antiquity was often perceived as the point of origin for 'modern' civilisation, and respect for the achievements of the ancient Greek and Roman empires was such that writers and cultural commentators often advocated these empires as 'yardsticks' against which the activities and accomplishments of modern society might be measured.[99] Towards the end of the nineteenth century, comparisons between Antiquity and 'modern' society assumed new potency: contemporaries fervently hoped that Britain's imperial fortunes might be safeguarded, and that the disastrous fate which had befallen the ancient Roman Empire might be avoided for the British Empire. The writings and cultural productions of Antiquity were now held to contain not only exemplars of cultural, economic and military policy for modern society, but – perhaps somewhat contradictorily – portents of demise and disintegration, too.

Writing in 1765, Winckelmann had attributed the 'beautiful nakedness' of ancient Greek men to their exercise regimes. According to Winckelmann, it was by virtue of their participation in the 'grand games' that the Greeks had achieved 'the great and manly Contour observed in their statues, without any bloated corpulency.'[100] The lifestyles pursued by the ancients had, therefore, been long-admired, with exemplars for modern bodies identified in the figures of both ancient men and those sculptures modelled after 'real' men. Over a century after Winckelmann had written his treatise on ancient Greek male beauty, novelist Charles Kingsley penned the essay 'Nausicaa in London; or, The Lower Education of Women' (1880), in which Kingsley advocated an ancient ideal for *female* bodies. Describing Homer's tale of Nausicaa – a goddess-like figure known for clothing Odysseus when he was shipwrecked off the island of Scheria – Kingsley argued that Homer's female character had possessed 'healthfulness' in great abundance, having derived from a culture which valued physical exercise as 'an almost necessary part of a

[99] Morley, 'Ancient and Modern', p. 7.
[100] Winckelmann, 'Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks', p. 6.

liberal education.'[101] Nausicaa was, Kingsley acknowledged, illiterate, yet 'her whole demeanour and speech show culture of the very highest sort'. In almost every respect, Nausicaa represented 'the ideal of noble maidenhood.'[102]

Like many of his contemporaries, Kingsley subscribed to the belief that there had developed a wide chasm between 'modern' society and previous ages, although Kingsley challenged the notion that 'modern' society was more 'civilised' than any of its predecessors. Instancing the attitudes of 'modern' and 'ancient' societies towards exercise, Kingsley noted that 'modern' – supposedly 'civilised' – society relied upon the writings of physiologists to remind contemporaries of the importance of physical activity, whereas the ancient (apparently 'half-barbarous') Greeks had developed the central principles of health for themselves, and had inculcated these principles into everyday life.[103] Broadly speaking, women had degraded in both 'body and brain' under the influence of what Kingsley termed 'modern barbarism', and the only salvation for nineteenth-century women lay in imitating the example set by the ancients. Women ought to engage in physical activity, expose themselves to the open air (instead of languishing in theatres and concert-rooms) and – for the sakes of their health – shun 'Parisienne' corsets and other, similarly-constrictive fashions, choosing instead loose-fitting clothing of the kind favoured by ancient Greek women.[104]

Supporters of the *tableaux* medium argued that *tableaux* performances might serve to exemplify the benefits of this 'classical' attitude towards physical health. In 1907, the *Daily Mail* published a letter from Elizabeth Moorby, a reader who had been disappointed by the propensity of the NVA to 'interfere' in the field of popular entertainment. Moorby noted that *tableaux vivants* were 'elevating, refined, beautiful, graceful and artistic', and ought to be allowed to continue on the grounds that performances tended to 'encourage physical culture among women.'

> If the sense of beauty, at present so undeveloped, in English women could be trained by seeing such superb living statues as we have had in Hull, would they not try to improve their figures, and consequently their health, by casting away, as La Milo advises, "those ridiculous corsets, which pinch the body out of its proper shape" and are such a hindrance to perfect

[101] Charles Kingsley, 'Nausicaa in London; or, The Lower Education of Women', in *Sanitary and Social Lectures and Essays* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1992), pp. 107-27 (p. 112).
[102] Kingsley, 'Nausicaa in London', pp. 113-4.
[103] Ibid., p. 113.
[104] Ibid., p. 122. Kingsley was not alone in favouring this style of dress. Anne Hollander has described the pervasiveness of 'classical' fashions in the long nineteenth century, noting that it was through contemporaries' encounters with statuesque drapery that such fashions came to the forefront. See Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

> health. Young women and girls who wish to be like La Milo would do well to follow her example.[105]

For Moorby, *tableaux* performers – especially La Milo – represented 'an ideal' after which ordinary women might aspire. Freed from their restrictive corsets, performers exhibited their 'natural' bodies (veiled only by close-fitting body-stockings), inculcating among spectators an appreciation for a 'classical' figure attained through physical activity. La Milo seems to have represented something of a model for the 'Rational Dress Movement', exponents of which worked in the late-Victorian and early-Edwardian periods to 'emancipate' women from restrictive corsets and undergarments, and to promote the wearing of comfortable clothing compatible with participation in sport and exercise.[106] Like Emma Hamilton in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, La Milo used her *tableaux* performances to model a more 'naturalistic' (and perhaps womanly) style of dress.

As Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska has pointed out, female physical culture was initially subversive, with female physical culturists identified – along with dress reformers, feminists and suffragists – as women who exceeded the boundaries of 'respectable womanhood', claiming access to 'masculine' spaces and prerogatives.[107] Yet physical culturists continued to emphasise the importance of health. They advocated participation in such sports as cycling, golf, swimming and hockey, and the adoption of 'rational dress' of a kind which permitted free movement. Both exercise and 'rational dress' were to be employed as a means of developing women who would be fit to fulfill their roles as 'race mothers'. Ultimately, the celebration of fit and beautiful women in the physical culture press (including, perhaps most prominently, the swimmers Annette Kellermann and Beatrice Kerr, both of whom had apparently balanced the attainment of physical fitness with the preservation of 'feminine' beauty) helped to transform visual representations of women. The Edwardian period thereby witnessed the emergence of a new, physically fit, feminine 'ideal'.

'La Milo' certainly aligned herself with a new feminine ideal. Montague urged women to follow her lead in adopting their own fitness regimes, taking regular walks of 'four to five miles at a brisk rate' and setting aside an hour each day for 'skipping-rope

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[105] 'Vigilance Society and Living Statuary', in *Daily Mail*, 18 June 1907, p. 7.
[106] For the impact of the Rational Dress Movement in Britain, see Jihang Park, 'Sport, Dress Reform and the Emancipation of Women in Victorian England: a Reappraisal', in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 6.1 (1989), 10-30.
[107] Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Managing the Body: Beauty, Health, and Fitness in Britain, 1880-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 106-7.

exercise'.[108] Montague made her physical particulars known, underlining the close correspondence between her own figure and that of the ancient statues which she impersonated in performances. According to a note appended to a London Pavilion programme, Montague's bust measured thirty-seven-and-a-half inches, her hips forty-two inches and her waist twenty-six inches. The ancient Venus de Milo statue had a thirty-seven inch bust, hips measuring thirty-eight inches and a waist measuring twenty-six inches: Montague's measurements closely matched those of the Venus de Milo statue, with her own hip-to-waist ratio even more pronounced than that of the statue.[109] In her performances and in her endorsement of the physical culture movement, Montague invoked the 'classical' female figure – and the exercise regime which had cultivated it – as an ideal which ordinary women might emulate. Like Kingsley, Montague and her fellow physical culturists considered the lifestyles pursued by the ancients to be congruous with the concerns of 'modern' society. Such lifestyles promoted the development of health and fitness among women whose traditional constraints – imposed by patriarchal society and, more fundamentally, by the corsets which they had been obliged to wear – had stunted their intellectual, professional and physical development.

By evoking Classical Antiquity, contemporaries were enabled to discuss women and their bodies not only in terms of their intellectual, professional and physical prowess, but in terms of their desirability and sexual appeal. Artists, too, had often used classical themes as a means of exhibiting their subjects in provocative or sensual arrangements. As Simon Goldhill has noted, Classical Antiquity served as a kind of 'veil' which allowed desire to 'speak'.[110] J.W. Waterhouse, in particular, made reference to 'the Classics' in *Circe Offering the Cup to Odysseus* (1891), a painting which depicted the goddess of magic looking directly at the viewer, watched by the desirous Odysseus. In *Hylas and the Nymphs* (1896), Waterhouse depicted the sexual desire of both Hylas and the female nymphs.[111] For Goldhill, the depiction of 'classical' desire allowed Waterhouse to reflect upon 'modern' desire. As an artistic genre, classicising painting helped to shape Victorian discourses about sexuality. By looking at such paintings, viewers were encouraged to consider and articulate their own places in the history of sexuality.[112]

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[108] 'Vigilance Society and Living Statuary', in *Daily Mail*, 18 June 1907, p. 7.
[109] See note appended to programme for 24 September 1906. HTC, 'GEN London Pavilion'.
[110] Goldhill, *Victorian Culture and Classical Antiquity*, p. 63.
[111] In the latter, Waterhouse depicts the male body as the 'image of female desire', with female desire imagined as a 'dreamy hopefulness'. This represents something of a departure from the mythological tale upon which the painting was based, which had seen Hylas abducted by the predatory water-nymphs. See Goldhill, *Victorian Culture and Classical Antiquity*, p. 53.
[112] Ibid., p. 64.

Similarly, *tableaux* directors evoked classical culture partly as a means by which to validate the exhibition of performers in poses likely to arouse desire amongst spectators. With programmes and playbills underlining the close correspondence between performers' figures and the ancient statues from which the *tableaux* derived inspiration, critics perhaps considered the close, critical evaluation of performers' bodies justified. Such evaluation reflected an interest in 'classical' culture, rather than critics' physical attraction to the women posed in 'nude' arrangements on the stage. When, for example, a performer named 'Mademoiselle Degaby' exhibited her 'classical' poses at the Palace Theatre in 1896, the critic 'Powder Puff' (who penned a regular review column for the periodical *Saint Paul's*) judged Degaby to possess an 'assuredly fine figure'. 'Powder Puff' noted – somewhat suggestively – that he (or she) 'like[d] my "ginger to be hot in the mouth"', and therefore appreciated the traces of eroticism in Degaby's performances.[113] *The Era* agreed that Degaby was a 'fine woman', though noted that her bust might have developed 'disproportionately to the size of her hips', and that her rather 'firm' figure was not entirely suitable for the reinterpretation of Antique statues.[114] *Tableaux* performers' evocation of the Antique permitted the mobilisation of the (male) 'gaze'. Any desirous inclinations were – according to the terms expressed by Goldhill – 'veiled' by the performance's 'classical' references. Critics were empowered as connoisseurs of ancient culture, rather than vilified as licentious voyeurs.

For some, eroticism represented a barely-veiled and even dangerous element of *tableaux* performances. In an article published in the *Cincinnati Medical Journal* in 1895, a physician, Dr. L.M Phillips, discussed a case of 'nymphomania' which he had 'treated'. According to Phillips, 'Mrs. L' (a thirty-five-year-old woman, married with three children) had attended a theatrical party at which a series of *tableaux vivants* had been exhibited. Mrs. L, disgusted yet fascinated by the performance of these 'semi-nude' women, had returned repeatedly to the room where the *tableaux* were performed during the course of the evening. In the immediate aftermath of this event, Mrs. L had apparently lost interest in her husband. Finally, her sexual appetite returned with unnatural fervour, and for a period of eighteen months this appetite 'burned with such intensity that it very nearly wrecked the physical well-being of the couple.' These episodes of 'asexuality' and 'sexual pyrotechnics' had manifested themselves in cycles for six years before Mrs. L had sought medical help. Phillips determined that the 'psychosexual sphere' of Mrs. L's brain and spinal cord had been imprinted with a 'hypnotic suggestive impression' of the

[113] 'Round the Music Halls, by Powder Puff', in *Saint Paul's*, 21 March 1896, p. 568.
[114] 'The Palace', in *The Era*, 14 March 1896, p. 18.

*tableaux* performance, and that this attractive and simultaneously repellent scene had induced 'nymphomania' in its victim.[115]

In the late nineteenth century, 'nymphomania' was believed to be a specific organic disease (affecting only women), the principal manifestation of which was an insatiable sexual appetite. The term 'nymphomania' derived from classical mythology, with 'nymphs' having appeared in various mythological tales as beautiful, sexually-alluring women, although contemporaries diagnosed 'nymphomania' in those women apparently in possession of an unnatural, depraved form of sexuality. Clearly, Dr. Phillips' diagnosis owed a good deal to the burgeoning field of 'sexology' and especially to Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* which, published in 1886, had identified 'nymphomania' as a 'disease' which occurred in 'psychically degenerated' individuals.[116] Phillips conceived of the *tableaux* performance as both an incitement and a deterrent to sexual desire, his account of Mrs L.'s experiences suggesting that the erotic nature of the *tableaux* medium served principally to disturb the female spectator's sexual equilibrium. Phillips' account reflected the broader presumption that women – whether performers or spectators of *tableaux vivants* – ought to be protected from the medium's destabilising influence. Women – perhaps unlike men – were thought incapable of enduring so close an encounter with their own or others' desire without a concomitant degeneration of their own sexual morality and self-control.

For some critics, the classical period of ancient Greece was characterised by a fitting veneration of sensuality and sexual desire. In *tableaux* performances and other classicising genres popular at the *fin de siècle*, Antiquity served – as Goldhill indicates – as a kind of enabling 'veil', which allowed desire to 'speak'. In the context of an increasingly conservative, repressive society, Antiquity shored up representations of sensuality and sexuality. For other critics, however, the expression of sexual desire represented rather too conspicuous an element of *tableaux* performances; even the recourse to Antique precedents could not prevent the activation of disagreeable, base responses amongst spectators. It is an indictment of the influence which conservative critics and social purity campaigners – instigators of the project to moralise, police and 'clean up' popular entertainment – enjoyed at the *fin de siècle* that so many commentators came to vilify an entertainment medium which had for over a century been celebrated for its exhibition of idealised, healthy and desirable female bodies.

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[115] Dr. Phillips' report is quoted in Carol Groneman, 'Nymphomania: The Historical Construction of Female Sexuality', in *Signs*, 19.2 (1994), 337-67 (338).
[116] Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, ed. Joseph LoPiccolo (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1965), p. 323.

*Tableaux* exhibitions therefore 'revived' a set of ancient attitudes towards health, dress and sexuality, propagating these attitudes as ideals which modern society might aim to embrace. Performances perhaps even indicated that it was their enshrinement of such attitudes (towards physical fitness, sensuality, sexual desire and other things) that separated the ancient Greeks from other peoples and cultures, ensuring the extended propagation of their political and cultural forms. Performances thereby endorsed the writings of Kingsley and Symonds, both of whom had advocated Classical Antiquity as a culture after which 'modern' society might model itself. Fundamentally, the *tableaux* medium exemplified the notion that elements of the classical past might be rejuvenated in the contemporary world. *Tableaux* performers literally 'embodied' ancient figures and artworks, effectively withdrawing from their own bodies in order to allow for the materialisation of a 'classical' presence on the popular entertainment stage.

Social purists' continued claims for the 'indecency' of the *tableaux* seem, therefore, to have been somewhat unfounded; Antiquity clearly represented much more than a convenient alibi according to which the public exhibition of 'nude' bodies was sanctioned. *Tableaux* performances evoked Antiquity for a number of reasons and on a number of different levels, conveying to contemporaries a set of attitudes and archetypal forms. Much of the authority and appeal of the classical period of ancient Greece seemed to have been founded upon the principles of health, physical strength and beauty, and a degree of social and sexual permissiveness; indeed, these attitudes and archetypes might have been replicated in order to foster the propagation of the British imperial project. Fundamentally, *tableaux* performances indulged the notion – clung to with increasing fervour towards the end of the nineteenth century – that elements of the classical past had survived (or might at least be *revived*) in the modern age.

**4.5 Conclusion**

Ultimately, social purists were unable to effect the outright prohibition of the *tableaux* medium. The campaign of 1907 was more successful than that of the 1890s, as the LCC's Theatres and Music Halls Committee resolved in July 1907 to inform music hall managers that exhibitions of living statuary were henceforth considered 'undesirable'. The NVA celebrated this as a great triumph, noting that 'it would be difficult to overrate the importance of the victory gained in the cause of the moral well-being of the people of

London.'[117] However, the ruling proved unclear in practice: in July and August 1907, the LCC received several letters from music hall proprietors, who were uncertain whether or not the new regulations applied to *tableaux* acts engaged at their halls.[118] The Committee subsequently recommended that The Seldoms' act (which involved the reproduction of several 'nude' sculptures) be allowed to continue, yet Pansy Montague ought to terminate her performances. The 1907 ruling had fallen short of an absolute prohibition, and 'nude' *tableaux* performances had not been systematically eliminated from spaces of popular entertainment. However, the NVA's opposition to the genre seems to have dissipated after 1907, with the Association's attention increasingly focused on the elimination of the 'white slave trade' and of 'indecent' motion picture productions.[119]

As this chapter has shown, the anti-*tableaux* campaign (and, indeed, other morally-motivated crusades instituted in the *fin de siècle*) reflected rather the preoccupations and anxieties of the period than any 'indecency' inherent to the performances themselves. At a time when Britain's imperial authority appeared to be under threat from rival European powers and internal weaknesses, the 'nude' public exhibition of women was anathema. In the minds of contemporaries, the preservation of the Empire depended upon the preservation of traditional gender roles and hierarchies. In this context, women's appearance in the unpoliced environment of the music hall – as 'professional' women, earning an independent living – could not be condoned.

The failure of the anti-*tableaux* crusade may be attributed in large part to the untenability of social purists' central claim: namely, that Antiquity served merely as an 'alibi' for the public exhibition of 'nude' bodies. On the contrary, *tableaux* performances served to communicate a number of ideas and attitudes, permitting contemporaries immediate and striking access to the cultural productions of the much-revered ancient cultures. Performances diffused an impression of the 'Classics' amongst diverse audiences, familiarising members of the working-class with figures which had for many centuries been represented in the more hallowed spaces of the art gallery and the museum. Inevitably, the figures and themes conveyed by the *tableaux* medium were somewhat altered from the 'original' texts or artworks, yet *tableaux* performances – much

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[117] 'Living Statuary,' *The Vigilance Record*, July 1907, p. 50. WL.
[118] LCC Minutes from July 1907 included reference to letters received from the proprietors of the Holborn Empire, Collins's, the London Hippodrome, the Royal Cambridge, the South London and the Oxford, pp. 336-7. LMA, 'Minutes of the Theatres and Music Halls Committee'.
[119] The former campaign, which had its roots in Stead's 'Maiden Tribute' of 1885, represented another attempt to improve the lives of women at the *fin de siècle*. The NVA had identified an increase in the 'decoying of girls abroad for immoral purposes', and campaigned for legislation against it. They achieved their goal in 1912, with the passing of the Criminal Law Amendment (White Slave Traffic) Bill. For the NVA's 'white slave trade' campaign, see Coote, *A Romance of Philanthropy*, pp. 156-96.

like paintings, sculptures and classical burlesques – served to bring elements of the classical past into relief, and to heighten contemporary awareness of the divergences and convergences between ‘Antiquity’ and ‘modernity’.

## Conclusion

The *tableaux* medium suffered a decline in fortunes after 1907, and by 1914 *tableaux vivants* had all but disappeared from music hall and variety theatre programmes. Many of the central attributes of the *tableaux* performance were, however, embraced by pioneers in the field of motion picture production. For example, the creators of Mutoscope films seem to have reconciled *tableaux* directors' use of costume, props and Antique allusions to the new medium. The elements of voyeurism, exhibitionism and expressionism – fundamental to the appeal of the *tableaux* – were also characteristic of many early films. In several ways, Mutoscope productions represented a return to the origins of *tableaux vivants*, with the 'private' viewing of Mutoscope films in penny arcade machines analogous to the intimate examination of posture girls which had taken place in eighteenth-century taverns. Seemingly undeterred by its failure to effect anti-*tableaux* legislation, the National Vigilance Association found a new target in early twentieth-century Mutoscope productions, identifying the same threat to standards of public decency and morality in Mutoscope productions as it had in *tableaux* performances.

### 5.1 Penny Pleasures: Living Pictures in the Cinematic Age

The 1890s had seen the invention of various motion picture devices, although it was the Cinematograph – first patented by Léon Bouly in 1892, and finalised by the Lumière brothers in 1895 – which had enjoyed early popularity amongst music hall audiences. A device for capturing, restoring and projecting moving images, the Cinematograph was particularly suited to the music hall setting; numerous spectators could view Cinematograph films at one time and, as the first films were relatively short, the Cinematograph could be incorporated into a variety programme. The Lumières' motion picture projector – along with its operator, Félicien Trewey – was engaged by the Empire Theatre in 1896. According to contemporary reports, Trewey was paid up to £150 per week for his efforts. This was a significant sum, especially when it is considered that, ten years previously, the Brighton Aquarium had remunerated an entire living statuary company fifteen pounds for a week-long engagement.[1] Clearly, the Empire management considered Trewey and the Cinematograph a worthwhile investment. It certainly seems that the Empire's confidence in the new film medium was justified; in the years after

[1] See Michael Chanan, *The Dream that Kicks* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 128; HTC, 'Brighton Aquarium Records, 1883-1894'. The Brighton Aquarium management is likely to have possessed a more modest budget from which to pay performers than London's Empire Theatre.

1896, the London music halls clamoured to engage motion picture devices and their operators, increasingly at the expense of *tableaux vivants* and other variety acts.[2]

Unlike the Cinematograph and other music hall motion picture machines, the Mutoscope did not project moving pictures on to a screen. Providing viewing to one person at a time, the Mutoscope was a hand-cranked device: this meant that the viewer could control the speed at which images were viewed through the 'peephole'. When a handle on the front or side of the Mutoscope was cranked, the cylinder (to which had been attached card slips containing the individual frames of the film) rotated and the images were revealed to the spectator. The cranking could be paused, but the sequence could not be reversed. Typically in the early years of the Mutoscope, the reel – or the rotating cylinder – held around 850 cards. This amounted to a film of roughly one minute, although the duration of the film ultimately depended upon the speed at which the handle was cranked. According to one advertisement, this feature of the Mutoscope (whereby spectators dictated the pace of the images' progress) was particularly useful, as it permitted 'every step, motion, act or expression' to be analysed in detail. The performance was entirely under his [the spectator's] own control', and images 'at once instructive, interesting, attractive, amusing and startling' were presented for viewers' leisurely contemplation.[3]

Mutoscopes were sometimes located in penny arcades; increasingly after 1900, they could also be found at seaside piers, railway stations and in popular shopping districts. Requiring only small change (typically, they were 'penny-in-the-slot' machines), Mutoscopes were often patronised by transitory, opportunistic visitors. Indeed, the diverse nature of Mutoscope locations makes it difficult to draw conclusions regarding the nature of Mutoscope film spectatorship. Men, women and older children were able to access Mutoscope reels, with young children excluded only on the basis of height: Mutoscope peepholes were placed at 'adult' eye-level, and small children would have been unable to peer through these raised eye-pieces. Erkki Huhtamo's analysis of visual sources depicting 'peepers' viewing Mutoscope films reveals a predominance of working-class women and children. However, as Huhtamo points out, these sources do

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[2] For example, the Alhambra Theatre featured three motion picture devices – the Animatograph, the Cinematograph and the Bioscope – in the years 1896-1901, and Collins' Music Hall featured 'Edison's Life-Size Pictures' in the years 1897-9. See HTC, 'GEN Alhambra Theatre'; 'GEN Collins' Music Hall'. The Holborn Empire also featured Cinematograph pictures 'of keen public interest' – including scenes from the American-Spanish War; see programme for 5 July 1898. VATC, 'Holborn Empire'.

[3] The *New York Herald* advertisement is reproduced in Erkki Huhtamo, 'The Pleasures of the Peephole: An Archaeological Exploration of Peep Media', available online: http://gebseng.com/media_archeology/reading_materials/Erkki_HuhtamoPleasures_of_the_Peephole.pdf [accessed 17 October 2015].

not necessarily reflect actual viewing practices; prints were often satirical or political, and rarely aimed to be realistic.[4] Working-class women and children were probably depicted as Mutoscope 'peepers' because the cartoonists had aimed for sensationalism, and it was precisely the exposure of women, children and members of the working class to 'indecent' images that social purists were concerned about in the *fin de siècle* period.

In the public imagination, Mutoscope films were associated with illicit or erotic material. Mutoscopes were often nicknamed 'What-the-Butler-Saw' machines in derisive tribute to an early reel of the same name, which had depicted a woman undressing in her bedroom, viewed – the position of the camera indicated – by a voyeur peeping through the keyhole. The stereotype was justified, at least to some extent. One of the principal Mutoscope manufacturing companies, the Biograph Company (which had been founded in America in 1895, but had expanded into an international branch in Britain in 1897), produced an especially erotic Mutoscope film called *The Birth of the Pearl* in 1903.[5] The film opened with two women – both wearing elaborately-decorated leotards and plumed hats – drawing back a curtain to reveal a large oyster shell. The shell opened to expose a 'nude' female with long, dark hair, who appeared to be sleeping; the young woman subsequently woke, glanced at her surroundings and rose to her feet in a particularly languid fashion [Fig. 5.1]. Finally, the curtains were re-drawn, and the woman was once again hidden from view.[6] Elements of *The Birth of the Pearl* echoed Sandro Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* (c. 1486). This painting had similarly depicted an unclothed woman emerging from a shell, gazing idly into the distance as though she had been awoken from a long sleep [Fig. 5.2].

Several elements of *The Birth of the Pearl* were reminiscent of nineteenth-century *tableaux* performances. The sleeping female, for instance, wore skin-coloured body stockings of the kind favoured by *tableaux* performers. The stockings lent the appearance of nudity, though it is clear from the uniformity of her skin tone that the woman was not 'naked'. Further, the narrative trajectory of *The Birth of the Pearl* – simple though it was – relied upon the achievement of an interplay between hiding and revealing. The shell was first revealed by the two leotard-wearing women, whereupon the young, sleeping

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[4] Huhtamo, 'The Pleasures of the Peephole'.
[5] For the history of the Biograph Company, see Richard Brown and Barry Anthony, *A Victorian Film Enterprise: The History of the British Mutoscope and Biograph Company, 1897-1915* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 1999).
[6] According to an advertisement placed in the *Biograph Bulletin*, this Mutoscope film represented 'Moving Pictures Taken from Life'; when the viewer dropped a coin in the slot, he or she was able to witness 'The Birth of the Pearl.' See Bebe Bergsten, *Biograph Bulletins 1896-1908* (Los Angeles: Locare Research Group, 1971), p. 57. This film is available to view online: https://www.youtube.com /watch?v=5TqBvXidBcE [accessed 18 October 2015].

woman was exposed by the opening of the shell; finally, both the young woman and the shell were concealed when the curtains were re-drawn. *Tableaux* performances made similar use of curtains and other props to reveal and conceal performers' bodies. For example, in her early performances Emma Hamilton had called upon audience members to operate a curtain which, when closed, served to obscure the transitions between attitudes. In 1892, Edward Kilanyi had patented a device whereby up to eighteen *tableaux* could be exhibited in the space of fifteen minutes; in this case, the seamlessness of the performance depended upon the use of a revolving table, each section of which was fitted to accommodate one *tableau*.[7] In Mutoscope productions and *tableaux* performances, the employment of curtains and moving stage mechanisms helped to maintain suspense. It also lent performances a sense of intimacy, with the opening of the curtains or the revolving of the stage creating the impression that spectators were privy to 'secret' or 'illicit' scenes.

*Tableaux* performances were staged in well populated music halls. Spectators may well have been distracted from the on-stage proceedings by cheers and heckles, the murmur of conversation and (until the banning of music-hall alcohol licenses in 1894) the cries of liquor sellers. In contrast, Mutoscope films were intended for individual viewing. Though Mutoscope machines were sometimes located in busy commercial precincts, it seems that the machine itself would have worked to 'block out' potential distractions, as the spectator was compelled to focus his or her attention upon the eye-piece. The spectator entered a 'private' viewing realm; he or she was, in a sense, alone with the Mutoscope performer or performers, able even to exercise some control over the length of time for which this intimacy persisted. The voyeuristic scrutiny of the (female) body by the (male) observer was enabled to a considerable extent by Mutoscope productions – perhaps even more so than *tableaux* performances, which permitted spectators only limited opportunity to examine performers' immobilised bodies.

In facilitating the voyeuristic examination of performers' bodies, Mutoscope productions were reminiscent of eighteenth-century posturing performances. Having exhibited themselves in various poses designed to 'raise debilitated Lust', posture girls

[7] Kilanyi first used the new device in 1893, when his *tableaux* troupe was engaged at the Palace Theatre. The device was perfected by Walter Dando in the mid-1890s, with the addition of a 'frame' apparently aiding the realism of the pictures. See Joseph Donohue, 'W.P. Dando's Improved Tableaux Vivants at the Palace Theatre of Varieties, London', available online: http://www.thefreelibrary.com/W.P.+Dando's+improved+Tableaux+Vivants+at+the+Palace+Theatre+of...a0226634238 [accessed 13 April 2016].

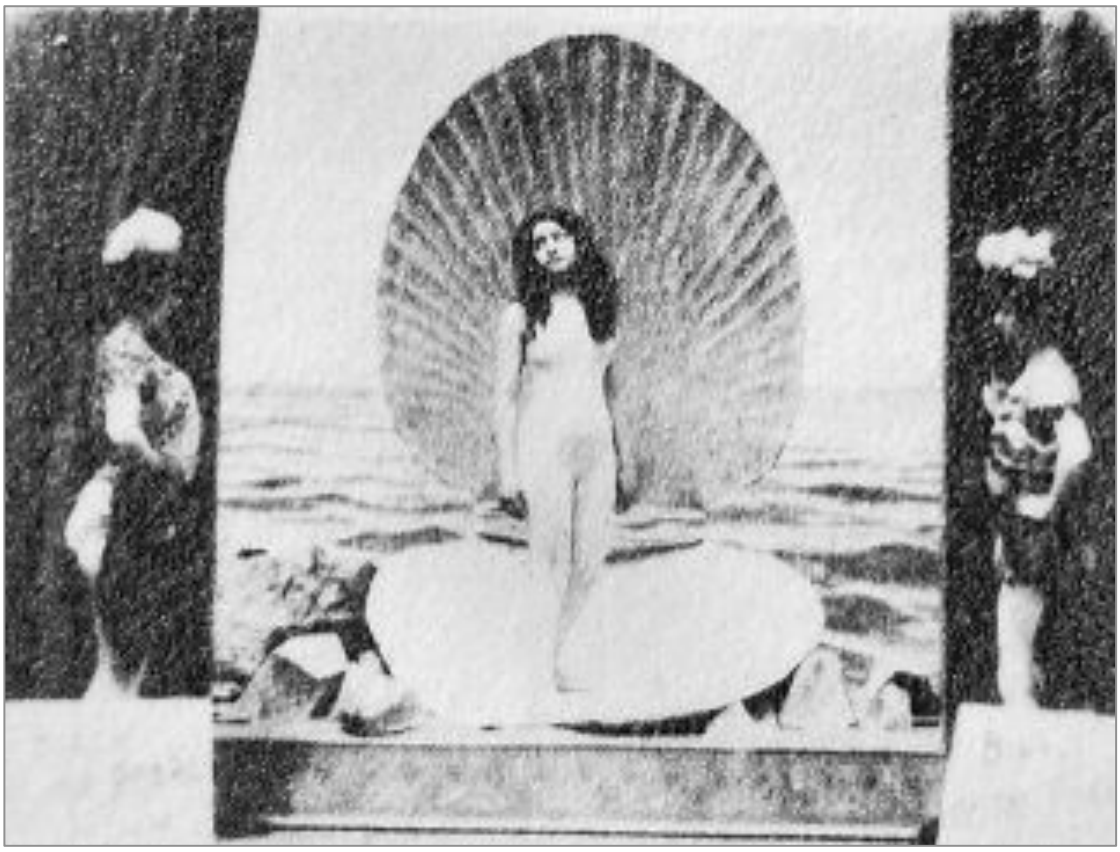

Figure 5.1: Anon., Image from *The Birth of the Pearl* (1903).

Figure 5.2: Sandro Botticelli, *The Birth of Venus* (c. 1486).

had permitted spectators to view various parts of their anatomies in close range.[8] Contemporary accounts indicate that some posturing performances resulted in sexual contact between performers and spectators. Unlike the performers exhibited on Mutoscope reels, posture girls had been physically present whilst audience members scrutinised their bodies, although the accounts of modern-day prostitutes indicate that physical presence does not always equate with 'real', emotional presence.[9] Posture girls were probably no more 'present' for posturing performances than were the performers displayed on twentieth-century Mutoscope reels.

The circumstances of Mutoscope spectatorship were closer to those of 'posturing' spectatorship than they were to those of *tableaux* spectatorship. However, Mutoscope viewers were often confronted with reinterpretations of classicising artworks and characters, just as *tableaux* viewers had been. *The Birth of the Pearl* alluded to Botticelli's famous depiction of the mythological goddess Venus, a painting which is thought to have been inspired by the ancient *Venus de Medici* sculpture. Similarly, in *A Nymph of the Waves* (1900) the Biograph Company represented a mythological nymph – typically conceived as a beautiful, carefree worshipper of various gods – dancing on the waves of Niagara Falls.[10] The short film *Cupid and Psyche*, produced by the Edison Company in 1903, drew upon Roman writer Apuleius' ancient tale. Cupid and Psyche had featured in various mythological accounts, and the lovers' story was reimagined in a number of paintings, poems and dramatic performances of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries; Edison's interpretation featured two dancing girls, the shorter of whom wore only a leotard adorned with the wings of Cupid.[11] Like *tableaux* performers and directors, it seems that filmmakers evoked well-known artworks and 'classical' themes as a means by which to align their productions with High Art.

The latter years of the nineteenth century had witnessed a proliferation of 'Pygmalion' narratives, with *tableaux* performances helping to sustain a widespread fascination with 'living statues'. In the early years of the twentieth century, filmmakers also drew upon the narrative of *Pygmalion and Galatea* in the creation of short films

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[8] The third plate of Hogarth's *Rake's Progress*, which appears to depict a posture girl readying herself for performance, indicates that the performers of postures wore long, multi-layered dresses. Perhaps the folds of material served a similar purpose to the curtains in *The Birth of the Pearl*, variously exposing and concealing performers' bodies as a means of promoting suspense and (sexual) tension.

[9] Rachel Moran writes that she learned 'to present myself as unnaturally dead and cold as a shop-front mannequin' during sexual encounters, and to repress any display of emotion. The act of prostitution is associated, Moran indicates, with 'a sense of 'otherness', at the root of which is shame. See Moran, *Paid For: My Journey Through Prostitution* (Dublin: Gil & Macmillan, 2013), p. 6, 109.

[10] The film is available to view online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQcT2AhRzTo [accessed 13 August 2016].

[11] The film is available to view online: https://www.loc.gov/item/00694186 [accessed 13 August 2016].

which explored the relationship between the artist and his model. Reels by the Biograph Company included, for example, *The Artist's Studio* (1903), *Animated Picture Studio* (1903) and *The Sculptor's Nightmare* (1908).[12] *The Model's Ma* (1907) – another Biograph Company production – opened with a mother chaperoning her daughter to an artist's *atelier*. According to the *Biograph Bulletin*:

> The girl is engaged [to sit as a model] and the mother departs, but not before warning the artist that the subject must be a draped pose. The girl changes street apparel for a Roman costume and takes the stand. The artist is so struck with her beauty that he disregards the mother's injunction, and when she returns and sees the painting, goes for him, bursting the canvas over his head.[13]

For the mother, the preservation of the young model's dignity depended upon her emulation of a recognisable 'draped pose'. Mere allusion to Antiquity through 'Roman costume' was not, it seems, sufficient, and the indignant mother punished the painter for removing her daughter's 'Antique' concealment. Parodying the outrage of anti-*tableaux* campaigners, the film illustrates the pervasiveness of *fin de siècle* debates concerning the extent to which 'Classical Antiquity' justified the exhibition of barely-clothed performers. It also calls attention to the fine distinction between 'decency' and 'indecency' – a distinction which was dependent, according to many social purists, upon the assumption of a recognisably 'Antique' pose.

Mutoscopes were the subject of sustained moral objection in the *fin de siècle* period, with social purists identifying Mutoscope productions as a threat to standards of public decency. Following Reverend J.S. Balmer's widely-publicised condemnation of a Mutoscope reel depicting 'a group of French bathers' in August 1899, complaints against 'obscene' Mutoscope pictures appeared with increasing frequency in local and national newspapers.[14] The subject of Mutoscopes was raised in the House of Commons, with Liberal M.P. Samuel Smith arguing that the majority of Mutoscope films were contrived to 'debauch the young.' Smith reminded the House that, twelve years ago, he had been responsible for carrying through the Commons a resolution to the effect that 'this House

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[12] Similarly, the Edison Company (founded in 1899 by Thomas Edison) produced *The Artist's Dilemma* in 1901 and *Animated Painting* in 1904.

[13] The advertisement claimed that this was a 'very funny short film'. The advertisement is reproduced in Bergsten, *Biograph Bulletins*, p. 311.

[14] According to the *Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, Balmer referred to the Mutoscope peephole as a 'gateway to perdition', claiming that the directors and shareholders of Mutoscope venues would be 'cursed' by their 'ill-gotten gains.' See 'The Mutoscope Denounced', in *Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, 16 August 1899, p. 3. The Mutoscope reel to which Balmer referred was held in contempt by M.P. Samuel Smith, too, who mentioned the film in his denunciation of Mutoscope productions. See Hansard online, House of Commons, 24 July 1899, vol. 75, cc. 71-2.

deplores the rapid spread of demoralising literature in this country, and is of opinion that the law against obscene publications and prints should be vigorously enforced.' Such a resolution, when passed, had a 'wonderful effect' on accelerating the work of local authorities, and offending individuals were prosecuted as a result of the Commons' vote. Smith called for a restrengthening of resolve, arguing that city councils should be lent 'discretionary authority' to keep the streets free from the 'moral poison' of Mutoscope films.[15]

Smith's impassioned speech-making coincided with the commencement of the National Vigilance Association's crusade against 'indecent' Mutoscope productions. The Association's anti-Mutoscope campaign was a much more decentralised affair than was their crusade against *tableaux vivants*, which reflects the diffuse nature of Mutoscope films' exhibition. Though controversial *tableaux* performances were confined largely to London, 'indecent' Mutoscope films were identified – and condemned – in towns and cities across the country. In August 1902, for example, the NVA's Sunderland branch reported that the North-Eastern Railway had begun letting its platforms to the proprietors of Mutoscope machines. Due to the unpoliced nature of railway stations, it was easy for vulnerable young boys and girls to 'gratify their curiosity' and peek at the Mutoscope reels.[16] The Manchester branch similarly drew attention to the 'baneful influence' of 'indecent' pictures upon the minds of young people, regretting that there continued to exist a 'certain class of people' who endeavoured 'to carry on this foul business, and who are never so satisfied with themselves as when, clandestinely or otherwise, they are prosecuting their corrupting traffic to the moral and spiritual injury of their fellows.'[17]

Exponents of the new medium argued that film productions were calculated not to debauch and demoralise, but to entertain and instruct. W.T. Stead wrote in defence of motion picture devices in an article entitled 'The Mission of the Cinematograph' (1902). Stead argued that cinematic devices presented moving images to the masses 'much more vividly and with more life-like realism than has ever heretofore been possible.' As such, they represented 'potent weapons' with which educationists might 'combat the hosts of ignorance.' According to Stead, the Cinematograph and other devices ought to be employed for scholarly and religious instruction, medical work and the dissemination of information about modern warfare.[18] Stead, however, was one of only a handful of public

[15] Hansard online, House of Commons, 13 July 1900, vol. 85, cc. 1475-572.
[16] 'Sunderland and North-Eastern Centre', in *The Vigilance Record*, August 1902, p. 57.
[17] 'Manchester and Northern Counties Centre', in *The Vigilance Record*, May 1902, p. 33.
[18] W.T. Stead, 'The Mission of the Cinematograph', in *The Americanisation of the World; or, The Trend of the Twentieth Century* (New York: H. Markley, 1902), pp. 174-82.

figures to speak out in defence of the Mutoscope, and he was unable to convince social purists and the wider public of the educational benefits of Mutoscope productions. The film productions of which Stead and no doubt many others would have approved – those depicting foreign lands or significant contemporary events – received little publicity, and the Mutoscope continued to be associated with the exhibition of controversial and 'erotic' film productions.[19]

Concern about the content of Mutoscope reels came to a head in 1904, when the films shown on Mutoscopes at the Earl's Court Exhibition in London were brought to the attention of the London County Council. According to a letter sent by William Coote (the secretary of the NVA, and seasoned anti-*tableaux* campaigner) to the Council, titles of the Mutoscope reels included *Girls Dancing French Can-can*, *Undressing – Don't Look*, *Her New Garters*, *Venus in her Bath*, and *Don't look – Naughty But it's Nice*. Advertising material attached to the Mutoscope machine revealed that one reel, entitled *French Scandal*, depicted two lovers 'having a good time' who were subsequently disturbed by the arrival of 'the husband'. Another, *Cast up by the Sea*, depicted 'an entirely naked woman lying on the shore'. Some of the machines were labelled 'Gentlemen only', 'Adults Only' or 'Private', although there is no indication that these machines were segregated, or removed from the potential view of women or children.[20] With the exception of *Venus in her Bath* (possibly a reinterpretation of the ancient Greek *Crouching Venus* sculpture), these films seem to have derived little inspiration from Classical Antiquity; the filmmakers had resolved, perhaps, to adopt a rather more upfront approach to the depiction of 'nude' and erotic material.

Despite the concerns of social purists, local authorities and politicians, moving picture censorship was not introduced in any form until 1909. Even then, the Cinematograph Act of 1909 was largely brought in to regulate fire safety in the growing number of purpose-built cinemas, rather than to monitor the content of Cinematograph or

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[19] The American Mutoscope and Biograph company produced a number of Mutoscope productions depicting foreign lands, including those entitled *A Trip on the Catskill Mt. Railway* and *The Hold-Up of the Rocky Mountain Express* (both 1906). These productions, forming part of a series called *Hale's Tours*, were shown on Mutoscope machines in Melbourne, Paris, London, Berlin and Johannesburg. See Lauren Rabinovitz, *Electric Dreamland: Amusement Parks, Movies, and American Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 78-9.

[20] Coote declared that 'a license should not be granted under such conditions as these.' See 'Earl's Court Exhibition, Mutoscopes, 1904', 12 October 1904. LMA, 'Earl's Court', LCC/MIN/10841. The NVA noted that it had received various complaints regarding the character (and especially the titles) of the reels. See 'London County Council and Mutoscopes', in *The Vigilance Record*, November 1904, p. 2.

Mutoscope films.[21] Mutoscope productions had – like *tableaux vivants* – attracted sustained 'moral' condemnation, yet the reticent LCC was not persuaded to introduce legislation aiming to prohibit or control the production of 'indecent' Mutoscope reels in the early years of the twentieth century.

It is possible, therefore, to identify several elements of continuity between *tableaux* performances and Mutoscope productions, both of which were condemned by the NVA and other social purists as 'indecent'. *Tableaux* performers' use of costume, theatrical props and Pygmalionesque themes were embraced by early filmmakers; Mutoscope machines also allowed spectators to immobilise performers on the eye-piece display, and to thereby create 'living pictures' analogous to those exhibited on the stage throughout the long nineteenth century. Though the process by which the Mutoscope and other motion picture devices captured and transmitted images was unquestionably innovative, early film productions derived considerable inspiration from earlier forms of entertainment, including *tableaux vivants*.[22]

### 5.2 An Antique Appeal, or an Appeal to the Antique?

Throughout the long nineteenth century, *tableaux* performances had conveyed a vision of Antiquity, providing contemporary audiences with a form of access to the classical past. 'Antiquity' did not merely offer a convenient alibi according to which the exhibition of the barely-clothed human body was justified by opportunistic impresarios; it underscored and enlivened performances, lending spectators of all classes the opportunity to encounter 'remnants' (or reinterpretations) of the classical past. The *tableaux* medium serves to demonstrate the universality of the long nineteenth-century classical fixation, as well as the (perhaps surprising) cross-class legibility of Antique allusions. The classical past represented a shared culture in the long nineteenth century, literacy in which was enjoyed by members of the upper-, middle- and working-classes alike.

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[21] Richard Brown and Barry Anthony suggest that ongoing criticism of the Mutoscope industry did have the effect of discouraging members of the middle and upper-classes from visiting Mutoscope parlours. Once the link between Mutoscopes and 'indecent' film content had been established, Mutoscope machines were patronised almost exclusively by working-class visitors. See Brown and Anthony, *A Victorian Film Enterprise*, p. 112.

[22] *Tableaux vivants* continued to influence the film medium even as the latter developed from short reels displayed on penny arcade machines into feature-length shows exhibited in purpose-built cinemas. According to Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs, pictorial 'attitudes' represented a popular means of expressing emotional intensity in silent film productions of the 1910s and 1920s. Poses were used to emphasise tragic, comedic and sentimental moments, drawing the audience's attention towards specific episodes within the narrative. See Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 81.

The nature of the Antique 'vision' which was conveyed by *tableaux* performances is alluded to in contemporary accounts of the entertainment form – indeed, it may even be identified in the writings of the rather more critical *tableaux* spectators. James Planché (renowned author of many of the most popular stage productions of the nineteenth century) referred to the *tableaux* in two melodramas produced at the Haymarket Theatre in the late-1840s. In *The Invisible Prince; or, The Island of Tranquil Delights* (first performed in December 1846), Planché's Princess reports an encounter with a 'living statue' to her maid, Abricotina. The Princess describes the encounter as having induced a 'horrid fright', claiming that the figure – apparently marble – 'did both sing and speak'. Abricotina realises that her mistress must have encountered not a true 'living statue' but a performer imitating a statue (a 'pose plastique'), and the maid defines this entertainment form as an 'endless exhibition'. The Princess having requested clarification on Abricotina's claim for the 'endlessness' of the exhibition, Abricotina elaborates:

> Why, how long they may open keep, who knows?
> When every day they're less inclined to *close*.
> Group nods at group – each tableau has its brother.
> Trying, the wags say, to *outstrip* the other.[23]

Abricotina's account of the 'endless' nature of *tableaux* exhibitions indicates the sense – felt, perhaps, by Planché and many of his contemporaries – that *tableaux* performances had become rather ubiquitous in the nineteenth-century entertainment world. Significantly, the dialogue also indicates the centrality of the physical 'Antique' body to the *tableaux* medium. *Tableaux* performances conveyed a set of corporeal and gender norms, the origins of which lay in the classical past. In performances, the body (usually female) was exposed to public scrutiny, and spectators were given to understand that the healthy, proportionate and assured physical forms on display represented a mediated version of the Antique 'ideal'.

Planché's melodrama *The New Planet; or, Harlequin out of Place* (performed in 1847 at the Haymarket Theatre) offered a rather more derogatory account of the *tableaux* medium. The New Planet – Planché's central character, inspired by the discovery of the planet Neptune in 1846 – notes that *tableaux vivants* 'flourish rarely', and questions whether the *tableaux* are 'fit to be seen.' Another character, Harlequin, responds:

> I should say *barely*;
> But 'tis the cheapness which secures their filling,

[23] J.R. Planché, *The Extravaganzas of J.R. Planché*, ed. T.F. Dillon Croker and Stephen Tucker, 5 vols. (London: Samuel French 1879), IV, p. 139.

They really shew you *too much* for a shilling.

The character Venus subsequently takes exception to a *tableau* interpretation of Titian's *Venus Rising from the Sea* at the Walhalla in Leicester Square (the venue for many of Madame Warton's *tableaux* performances in the mid-nineteenth century). Venus exclaims, 'How dare they take such liberties with me!' Mars promises to bring a halt to the 'scandalous' *tableaux* performances, whereupon Earth reassures the group that 'Time' – the 'great *redresser*' – will ultimately ensure the termination of the *tableaux* phenomenon.[24] This exchange again alludes to the clothing (or lack thereof) worn by *tableaux* performers. Through Harlequin's reproving remarks, Planché attributes the *tableaux* medium's popularity to the 'cheapness' of admittance to *tableaux* performances and, perhaps, to the 'cheapness' (or tawdriness) of the performances themselves.

It is interesting that Planché should have expressed such disapproval of the *tableaux*, when many of his own melodramatic productions relied, too, upon the approbation and (mis)representation of classical themes, motifs and characters. Perhaps Planché was concerned that his own project – wherein ancient and mythological accounts were adapted and translated for diverse modern audiences – was being fulfilled by too great a number of *tableaux* performers. Planché may have hoped to discredit the *tableaux* medium and thereby attract audiences to his own performances. His critical stance aside, Planché captured some of the key elements which characterised *tableaux* performances' vision of Antiquity. According to this vision, the Antique body was one of confidence, self-assurance and – as performers like Madame Wharton and La Milo exemplified – healthy proportions. In line with Antique conceptions of gender and sexuality, this body was to be publicly exhibited, traces of eroticism celebrated rather than quashed.

The derogatory view expressed by the characters in Planché's melodrama *The New Planet* was not shared by all of Planché's contemporaries. The *Morning Advertiser* (a newspaper published by the London Society of Licensed Victuallers, and intended for distribution amongst publicans) indicated that *tableaux* performances lent spectators the opportunity to study 'the human figure'. This experience had, the *Advertiser* noted, 'always been considered by the great masters one of the most important branches of an artist's education.' According to the *Advertiser*, the 'rules of true art' were 'unchangeable'. The 'grand lessons' inculcated by Raphael and other masters were simply 're-echoed' in *tableaux vivants*, and spectators might benefit from the viewing of *tableaux vivants* in much the same way that they benefitted from viewing painted or

[24] Planché, *The Extravaganzas of J.R. Planché*, IV, pp. 178-9.

sculpted representations of the human figure. Finally, the *Advertiser* addressed the claims made by social purists regarding the impropriety of *tableaux* performances, noting:

> To the pure, all things are pure, and it may be truly said that unless it were to prurient minds, the works of art [represented in a *tableaux* performance] referred to gave general satisfaction as far as mere subject and treatment were concerned… In all these [*tableaux*] there is nothing which can possibly offend even the most refined taste.[25]

According to this view – which was echoed by a number of journalists, *tableaux* performers and entertainment impresarios in the long nineteenth century – the *tableaux* performance simply represented a medium through which an impression of the 'original' painting or sculpture might be conveyed to a broader public. None of the chaste, instructive intentions which had motivated the 'original' artist or sculptor had been lost in the process of reinterpretation; *tableaux* spectatorship was akin in almost every respect to the experience of visiting the art gallery or museum.

For the *Morning Advertiser*, *tableaux* performances conveyed a vision of Antiquity which centred upon the cultural accomplishments of the ancients. Through performances, spectators were exposed to the 'genius' of classical art. Classical Antiquity was, the *tableaux* medium suggested, an era characterised by the prowess of its sculptors, whose figures ought to be employed as models for contemporary practitioners in the arts. 'Antiquity' was a byword for 'art' and 'culture', embodying the artistic and corporeal qualities of beauty, health, proportion, simplicity and balance – and these qualities could be embodied by 'living' performers as readily as they could by painted or sculpted figures.

As contemporary writers drew parallels between the cultural and political aspirations of the ancient Greek and Roman civilisations and contemporary Britain, there was very often an implicit indication that certain cultures and peoples had failed to approximate these great cultural and political heights. The 'Other' – indistinctly conceived as non-white and non-European – was installed as the foil of the British man (or woman). As the third chapter of this thesis demonstrated, the Other was exhibited in *tableaux* performances, anthropological photographs and at imperial exhibitions as a means of underlining the success with which the British, in contrast, had achieved standards of culture and 'civilisation' to rival those of the ancients. The Other was not always so readily appropriated to the purposes of imperial consolidation, however. As the

[25] Quoted in Richard Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 348.

musings of T.N. Mukharji and George Catlin's American Indians demonstrate, several of those men and women installed as objects of the British gaze turned their inquisitive eye back upon the British, thereby complicating notions of object- and subjecthood. Indeed, natives' refusal to submit themselves for photography in the name of Huxley's anthropometric project reflects the difficulty which anthropologists, ethnologists and imperial exhibition organisers experienced in attempting to contain, define and 'still' the Other.

Broadly, then, this thesis argues that the *tableaux* medium is deserving of more sustained attention from historians of classical receptions. *Tableaux* performances lend credence to the notion – proposed by Edith Hall in her study of the Victorian popular theatre, but rather overlooked by many historians of classical receptions, whose focus has been upon 'elite' sites of reception – that classical allusions were intelligible to members of the working and lower-middle classes. Hall argued that the working and lower-middle classes possessed a working knowledge of the Classics, which was derived from or affirmed by such 'popular' forms of theatre as the classical burlesque. The authors of classical burlesque liked to display their knowledge of the Classics, but audiences also 'enjoyed the sense of cultural possession which their own familiarity with some aspects of Classics…had bestowed upon them.'[26] Spectators comprehended the classical references made explicit to them in *tableaux* performances, and enjoyed the opportunity to acquire a form of 'cultural capital' by virtue of their exposure to the Classics.

Classical Antiquity figured in *tableaux* performances in various ways. Whilst many performers attempted the reproduction or revivification of ancient artefacts and classicising artworks, others alluded to Antiquity in a rather more vague, imprecise manner, simply branding performers contemporary incarnations of 'Venus' or 'Hercules', or dressing these performers in 'classical' attire. The latter kind of performance was characterised by a rather more 'thin', hollowed out allusion to Antique culture than was the former, and it would be difficult to argue that spectators enjoyed the same insight into classical culture – and into ancient notions of health, dress, sexuality, artistic prowess, gender and imperialism – by dint of this manner of performance.

However, long nineteenth-century *tableaux* exhibitions took place in a society saturated with allusions to the classical world. Knowledge of Antique culture (which was bolstered through archaeological and historical investigations) shaped the manner in

[26] Edith Hall, 'Classical Mythology in the Victorian Popular Theatre', in *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 5.3 (1999), 336-366 (355).

which contemporaries conceived of the world in which they lived. *Tableaux* performances diffused a sense of 'the Antique' to diverse audiences, working alongside classical burlesques, melodramas, museums, art galleries, exhibitions and early film productions to sustain the notion that there existed certain parallels between the ancient Greek and Roman empires and the modern British Empire. *Tableaux* performances were conceived and enacted in the context of a society which revered Antique cultural, artistic and political systems. All contributed to the proliferation of the Antique ideal in the long nineteenth century, working to sustain the circulation of a set of Antique references in mass culture.

*Tableaux* performances played a key role in transmitting an impression of Antiquity to contemporary audiences. As such, parlour rooms, circuses, pleasure gardens, taverns, music halls and variety theatres – collectively, the venues which housed *tableaux* performances in the long nineteenth century – ought to be recognised as important sites of Antique reception. If we are to approach a more nuanced understanding of the 'multiform' manner in which contemporaries engaged with Classical Antiquity in the long nineteenth century, then the conception, staging and reception of *tableaux* performances in these 'popular' venues deserves more sustained attention from historians working in the field of Reception Studies.[27]

This thesis reflects the 'democratic turn' which Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray have identified as a feature of recent work in Reception Studies, submitting the *tableaux* medium as one significant 'activator of reception' which served to establish and extend contemporaries' knowledge of Antiquity in the long nineteenth century.[28] Building upon the work of Kate Nichols (whose study explored the impact of the Crystal Palace's Greek and Roman Courts upon 'popular' conceptions of the ancient world), this thesis argues that working and lower-middle class men, women and children encountered Classical Antiquity by virtue of *tableaux* performances. Spectators were empowered to form an impression of ancient art, culture and society, in much the same way that members of the elite had been empowered to form an impression through their reading of the Classics, their viewing of re-imagined ancient tragedies, and their exploration of

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[27] It was Simon Goldhill who advanced the notion that 'Classics' is not a 'single block of cultural knowledge shared by educated viewers' but 'a multiform construction, criss-crossed by ignorance as much as knowledge, pretension as much as privilege, anxiety as much as idealism.' See Goldhill, *Victorian Culture and Classical Antiquity: Art, Opera, Fiction, and the Proclamation of Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 63.

[28] Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray suggested that the 'democratic turn' in Reception Studies was founded upon the basis that 'activators of reception are many and varied' and that 'we all gain from encountering examples from outside our immediate areas of knowledge.' See Hardwick and Stray, eds., *A Companion to Classical Receptions* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p. 4.

ancient sites on the Grand Tour. *Tableaux* performances helped to make the ancient past accessible to many individuals for whom it might otherwise have seemed somewhat remote.

Future research might trace developments in the *tableaux* medium on a larger scale than has been possible in this thesis, comparing performances in Europe, America and Australia. Closer scrutiny of American *tableaux* performances might be particularly instructive, as Andrew Ducrow, Professor Keller's troupe, La Milo and other performers known on the London entertainment circuit also exhibited their *tableaux* in New York. It would be interesting to compare the performances of these individuals and troupes in London and New York, and to determine the impact which an altered context of performance had upon the conception and reception of these acts. In his study of the history of burlesque, Robert G. Allen indicates that campaigns for the enactment of legislation against 'indecent' forms of entertainment were instigated in America in the 1840s – much earlier than concurrent campaigns in Britain – although such campaigns proved similarly abortive across the Atlantic.[29] This indicates that American *tableaux* were exhibited in a more restrictive atmosphere than British *tableaux*. A comparison of the types of figures and artworks selected for reinterpretation in American and British venues of entertainment might offer insight into the contrasting relationships which the two societies enjoyed with the ancient past.

Contrary to the claims of Karin Wurst and Kirsten Gram Holmström, then, the Antique figured throughout the long nineteenth century as much more than a 'fig-leaf', or an alibi according to which *tableaux* performances could be justified for public viewing. The *tableaux* medium presented contemporaries with 'living' (though immobilised) incarnations of classical art, which spectators interpreted as reflections of 'real' Antique figures and individuals. Antiquity – as rendered and translated through performances – represented a paradigm of health, sexuality, culture and polity after which contemporary culture was already striving to model itself. Members of all classes shared in the recognition of figures such as Venus and Hercules as exemplars of 'Antique' beauty, strength and other idealised qualities: performances thereby helped to capture and propagate the Antique 'ideal'. To a society enthralled by the age of Antiquity, the *tableaux* seemed to offer 'evidence' that the classical past had not been lost, irrevocably.

[29] Robert G. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), p. 93.

### 5.3 A Place for the Past in the Long Nineteenth Century

In the course of the long nineteenth century, the character of popular entertainment altered dramatically, and the venues which housed *tableaux* performances underwent significant changes. Emma Hamilton had offered amateur attitude performances at informal gatherings of (non-paying) friends and dignitaries at her husband's ambassadorial residence in Naples. As popular amusement developed into an increasingly professionalised industry in the nineteenth century, the men and women who participated in *tableaux* performances became 'professionals', paid for their nightly or twice-nightly appearance in public exhibitions which had been conceived and arranged not by themselves, but by entertainment impresarios or theatrical managers. Yet, the utter transformation of the entertainment world was effected without a concomitant transformation in the character of the *tableaux* medium. On the contrary, *tableaux* performances remained remarkably unchanged for the duration of the long nineteenth century.

Developing technologies of lighting and stage design did, however, impact significantly upon the manner in which Antiquity was conceived and received through *tableaux* performances. Though constrained by the nature of her venue (the attitudes having been performed on a makeshift stage), Emma Hamilton had employed innovative lighting techniques to lend her performances a hushed, almost reverential atmosphere. Lit torches – held aloft by William Hamilton and other spectators – would have thrown light around the otherwise-darkened drawing room, casting shadowed imprints of Hamilton's body onto the walls as she moved through her attitudes. The torches may have served to remind spectators of a torchlight visit to a museum which they had undertaken as part of the Grand Tour.[30] Hamilton thereby worked to augment the impression that her attitudes represented interpretations of characters or episodes depicted on vases and fragments recently discovered in the ruins of Pompeii, Herculaneum and other ancient sites, and that her performances ought to be viewed as a neoclassical phenomenon.

As the *tableaux* came to be performed in theatres and music halls in the second half of the nineteenth century, new technologies of stage design were employed by *tableaux* performers and entertainment impresarios. In some cases, these technologies worked to abbreviate and speed up performances. For example, the revolving stage

[30] For torchlight visits to museums frequented on the Grand Tour, see Claudia Mattos, 'The Torchlight Visit: Guiding the Eye through Late Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Antique Sculpture Galleries', in *Critical Exchange: Art Criticism of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries in Russia and Western Europe*, ed. Carol Adlam and Juliet Simpson (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009), pp. 129-152.

mechanisms employed by a *tableaux* troupe at Cremorne Gardens in 1873 and by Edward Kilanyi in the 1890s facilitated the neat replacement of one *tableaux* with the next, ensuring that spectators were presented only with frozen *tableaux* images and not the (inevitably untidy) transitions required to shift performers into subsequent configurations. Such technologies would have been necessary to ensure the swift enactment of multiple *tableaux*. Indeed, swiftness would have been particularly useful when *tableaux* troupes were allotted only minutes within full variety programmes.

In other cases, stage technologies lent performances a sense of anticipation. For example, the Bissmire-Grimaldi troupe used gauze attached to spring rollers to create a dissolving effect in their performances of the early 1890s, ensuring that spectators were presented with each *tableau* for mere seconds before it was hidden from view. This effect capitalised upon the interplay between hiding and revealing which was central to the enduring appeal of the *tableaux*. It served to heighten the impression that *tableaux* performances lent privileged (and time-limited) insight into Classical Antiquity. It also ensured that spectator responses were characterised by a breathless kind of expectancy, as audiences were lent only seconds to study the inanimate configurations which materialised before them.

The *tableaux* medium emerged and developed alongside a great number of other forms of amusement, as the entertainment market became an increasingly varied and saturated industry. The period saw the establishment of several important museums, including the National Gallery (1824) and the National Portrait Gallery (1856), as well as the consolidation of many others (including the British Museum). These permanent sites emerged out of the cabinets of curiosity founded by antiquarians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although attracted much more diverse audiences than had their predecessors. The long nineteenth century also saw the development of various early motion picture devices, including the Eidophusikon, the panorama and the diorama.[31] Finally, it saw the inauguration and subsequent enlargement of the variety programme, as impresarios came to understand the value of apportioning segments of their bills of entertainment to magical exhibitions, 'freaks', musical and dance numbers, displays of strength and any number of other transitory 'spectacles'.

Although the *tableaux* enjoyed a rather more enduring appeal than many other forms of amusement devised and staged in the nineteenth century, it is certainly

[31] The Eidophusikon, panorama and diorama are all discussed in Altick, *The Shows of London*, pp. 117-83.

conceivable that the medium might hitherto have been overlooked due to the great variety of entertainment forms available for historical study, many of which left a rather more organised and abundant cache of archive material than did the *tableaux* medium. It is possible, too, that the medium has been neglected due to its defiance of straightforward categorisation: historians have perhaps been uncertain in whose domain the *tableaux* lay, and whether they ought to be claimed by historians of the theatre, of photography, of imperial exhibitions or of early film. The *tableaux* might quite productively be incorporated into studies of the development of various spaces of performance (including parlour-rooms, circuses, pleasure gardens, imperial exhibitions, taverns, theatres and music halls), although historians interested in these venues have rarely undertaken more than cursory examination of the *tableaux*. This neglect of the *tableaux* medium has come at a price, and our understanding of classical receptions has been impeded by our undeveloped knowledge of the role which *tableaux* performances played in transmitting an impression of the ancient past.

Throughout the long nineteenth century and despite changing contexts of performance, performers and troupe leaders continued to appeal to Antiquity for inspiration. Viewing *tableaux* exhibitions by Emma Hamilton, Andrew Ducrow and other late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century performers, critics admitted no sense of discomfort or indignation with regard to the manner in which Antiquity figured in performances. On the contrary, spectators – Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and others included – reckoned Classical Antiquity to have underscored and enlivened performances. For these writers, artists and antiquarians, identifiable remnants of Antiquity (including paintings, sculptures and sculptural fragments) represented recognisable sources of inspiration for many *tableaux*. Objection to the *tableaux* medium – and, specifically, to the manner in which Antiquity was 'exploited' by *tableaux* performers – was only voiced in the years after 1850. Given the unchanged nature of the performances, such objection ought to be attributed to the impact which extraneous circumstances (including changing conceptions of British imperial power, uncertainties surrounding the future of the British 'civilisation' and the influence which social purity organisations came to enjoy at the *fin de siècle*) exerted upon critics, rather than any qualities inherent to the performances themselves.

*Tableaux* performances did not offer straightforward reproductions of classical artworks or figures: they worked rather to convey a 'sense' of Antiquity. Just as visitors were encouraged by the Greek, Roman and Egyptian Courts at the Crystal Palace to feel that they had been transported to (a loosely-conceived notion of) the classical past,

*tableaux* performances lent spectators a sense that they were viewing and experiencing the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome. Performances were, in this sense, 'authentic', if not geographically or historically 'accurate'.

This thesis has sought to advance understanding of the role which Classical Antiquity played in long nineteenth-century culture, exploring some of the ways in which contemporary conceptions of the ancient past figured in *tableaux* performances. It has indicated that *tableaux* performances might offer insight not only into the nature and extent of developing understanding of the classical past, but into the ways in which society interpreted and used this understanding to further certain agendas. The *tableaux* medium serves to exemplify the malleability of the Antique ideal, and the various applications to which the historical study of past ages might be put. It serves also to highlight the condition – or, more accurately, the perceived condition – of long nineteenth-century society, and the role which contemporaries assigned to Classical Antiquity in inspiring, shaping and helping to 'restore' those elements of artistic and political culture which were deemed to have veered off course.

Today, the charm of *tableaux* performances is difficult to comprehend. The classical world no longer exerts such a powerful influence upon our culture, and the static re-enactment of classicising artworks and episodes from ancient mythology does not strike the modern critic as an exciting form of entertainment. Indeed, though the majority of long nineteenth-century spectators seemed to enjoy *tableaux* performances, many struggled to identify the reason for the medium's popularity. For example, antiquarian John Morritt wrote of Hamilton's attitudes in 1796:

> Do not laugh or think me a fool, for I assure you it is beyond what you can have an idea of. As I have heard them [the attitudes] described and talked about fifty times, and had, after all, no idea of their excellence, I cannot hope for much better success.[32]

Similarly, a critic from *The Times* found it difficult to describe Andrew Ducrow's *tableaux*, noting that a performance resembled 'a kind of pantomime', although some scenes were also represented 'by a contrivance similar to that adopted for acting "the play" in the tragedy of Hamlet' and others simply imitated well-known paintings or 'pictures'. The critic concluded, 'Such meaning as there may be in it is of so profound a description, that we are wholly unable to penetrate, and are therefore not bold enough to

[32] John Morritt, *The Letters of John B. S. Morritt, of Rokeby: Descriptive of Journeys in Europe and Asia Minor in the Years 1794-1796*, ed. G. E. Marindin (London: John Murray, 1914), p. 281.

attempt to describe it.'[33] The *tableaux* medium was ineffable, its appeal often defying contemporary elucidation.

In spite – or perhaps in consequence – of the bewildering, hybrid nature of the medium, *tableaux* performances continued almost unabated throughout the long nineteenth century. The *tableaux* survived the demise of taverns, Astley's circus and pleasure gardens, and continued to thrive in purpose-built music halls and variety theatres. It was only with the emergence of the Mutoscope and other sophisticated forms of motion picture projector that the popularity of the medium began to decline, yet correspondences between *tableaux* performances and early film productions indicate that the medium's basic themes endured well into the twentieth century. For the duration of the long nineteenth century, however, the *tableaux* had proven irrepressible. *Tableaux vivants* had served to sustain the contemporary infatuation with the ancient past, broadening the reach, appeal and impact of Classical Antiquity in the 'modern' world.

[33] 'Drury Lane Theatre', in *The Times*, 15 November 1831, p. 2.

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