

MARMOREALITIES: CLASSICAL NAKEDNESS IN BRITISH SCULPTURE AND
HISTORICAL PAINTING 1798-1840

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ABSTRACT

Exploring the fortunes of naked Graeco-Roman corporealities in British art achieved between 1798 and 1840, this study looks at the ideal body's evolution from a site of ideological significance to a form designed consciously to evade political meaning. While the ways in which the incorporation of antiquity into the French Revolutionary project forged a new kind of investment in the classical world have been well-documented, the drastic effects of the Revolution in terms of this particular cultural formation have remained largely unexamined in the context of British sculpture and historical painting. By 1820, a reaction against ideal forms and their ubiquitous presence during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wartime becomes commonplace in British cultural criticism. Taking shape in a series of chronological case-studies each centring on some of the nation's most conspicuous artists during the period, this thesis navigates the causes and effects of this backlash, beginning with a state-funded marble monument to a fallen naval captain produced in 1798-1803 by the actively radical sculptor Thomas Banks. The next four chapters focus on distinct manifestations of classical nakedness by Benjamin West, Benjamin Robert Haydon, Thomas Stothard together with Richard Westall, and Henry Howard together with John Gibson and Richard James Wyatt, mapping what I identify as the increasing aestheticisation and eroticisation of the naked figure onto the changing political milieu.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own and has not been submitted for examination at this or any other institution for another award.

INTRODUCTION

CLASSICAL NAKEDNESS AND THE REVOLUTIONARY CONTEMPORARY

This thesis traces the shifting currency of naked Graeco-Roman corporealities in British sculpture and historical painting realised between 1798-1840, from Thomas Banks's *Monument to Captain Burges* (1798-1802, St. Paul's Cathedral) to the work of Henry Howard, John Gibson and Richard James Wyatt at the advent of the Victorian era. In the course of the following chapters I will argue that this period witnesses the contemporary representation of the classically ideal human form evolve from an ideologically-invested symbol shaped by the on-going reception and re-interpretation of revolutionary rhetoric, in particular the poetics of universal human rights, to the mechanism for an escapist denial of meaning altogether. From around 1820 onwards, though originating as early as 1802 when Royal Academicians in Paris come into contact with the marmoreal figures dominating contemporary French historical painting, a tide of reaction against classical forms in art developed in British cultural criticism. Implicit in this backlash is at once an indictment of the political tumult of preceding decades, a charge against social upheaval, failed efforts to realise revolutionary principles and the bloodshed caused by battles fought against them and their aftermath, and a desire to instate a divide between fine art and political engagement.

The widespread desire for antiquity characterising the cultural moment commonly referred to as "neoclassicism", a term to which I will return to in due course, allowed the classical ideal to be claimed as a propagandistic emblem on both sides of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic conflicts. Consequently, in Britain throughout the period

1798-1840, but most intensively during its war-torn and immediately post-war first half, this body operates as what I term a “polysemic image”. The many uses, meanings and contexts of its manifestations cannot be aligned with a distinction as legible as that between the historiographies of Greece and Rome, though this difference as we shall see, becomes increasingly significant in its implications over these years.

Although not confined to a single one of these manifestations, or ontologies to use an unpleasant but useful word, this study is chiefly concerned with the fortunes of a hitherto uncharted signification of the classical body in the British context: its capacity to represent the ideologies attached to what was a pervasive sense of newness and possibility generated by an actual Revolution in the neighbouring nation, concepts such as individual liberty and fundamental equality, in the words of Thomas Paine, “the universal cause of human nature”.¹ Among certain figures in Britain of the 1790s and into the first decade of the nineteenth century, classical bodily idealism could evoke the clean break with the modern past essential for the realisation of these concepts, even when the situation in France had mutated into a regime virtually unrecognisable in terms of its original promises.² By 1802, the counter-cultural capacity of classical nakedness optimistically to evoke radical meaning was complicated by the apparent failure of Jacobin ideology, crystallised by Napoleon’s rise to absolute rule and the impending reinstatement of slavery in the French colonies. Yet in Britain the universalist dreams

¹ I define the word “ontology” with reference to Ian Hacking’s definition of the word: “what makes it possible for (all types of objects) to come into being.” (2002: 1). Paine, 1795: iv.

² For insight into the discrepancies between Revolutionary republicanism and Napoleon’s regime see Rowe, 2013.

inscribed upon the classical body took time to fade away, and it is only when the aesthetic integrity of the ideal is called into question that this body started to shed the meaning it had garnered during the Revolutionary episode.

Naked corporeal perfection was poised to symbolise an ideal of civic subjectivity based upon these emergent ideologies, one totally divorced from British constitutionalist models of collective and commercial liberty that had also, in what was now a bygone era, claimed the classical body as a kind of visual metaphor for its various nuances.³ Though the vocabulary used to expound this powerful new sense of human potential was informed by earlier philosophical texts, from those of Rousseau, of course, to Winckelmann's connection between Hellenic republicanism and the beauties of ancient sculpture, this democratic ideal, when put into real life practice, became detached even from the various initial stirrings of radical thought published throughout Europe earlier in the eighteenth century. Several scholars, including James Epstein who explores this moment in terms of the history of English radicalism, emphasise the peculiar novelty of

³ David Solkin's discussion of John Closterman's 1702 portrait of Maurice Ashley-Cooper and Anthony Ashley-Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury touches on the use of classical sculpture as a corporeal template designed to convey the type of parliamentary liberty promised by the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the constitution it initiated (1993: 3-13). See also, among other such works, Joshua Reynolds's portrait of Henry Fane, Charles Blair and Inigo Jones, a conversation piece in which a painted classical sculpture blends into the distinctly English landscape behind the figures in order to honour a more general, less overtly political sense of distinctly British liberty (1761-66, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, oil on canvas). For an exploration into the nuances of this ideology and its relationship to both contemporary painting and antiquity in eighteenth century Britain see Barrell, 1986: 33-40.

this phase in both British and French history, in which “the force of events” shattered “all precedents and models.”⁴

Despite the subsequent undermining of the Revolution’s classical trappings by Marx and his adherents, in the context of French art the deployment of ancient culture to conjure an unknown future and lend stability to the pursuit of this new democratic vision has been well-documented, so much so that scholars, understandably, are now able to take this connection for granted and gravitate towards its dissolution, on the one hand, and on the other, less obvious visual and discursive formations.⁵ By contrast, politicised visual classicism in Britain remains under-researched, even given the clear relationship between the liberalism of eighteenth century Whigs and the collecting and connoisseurship of antiquities.⁶ Yet more obscure are the impressions made on the form and the content of British sculpture and historical painting by the French Revolutionary art and ideology

⁴ Epstein, 1994: 6-7. See also Hampsher-Monk, 2005: 1-2; Hunt, 1984: 2-3.

⁵ See Marx, 1978: 8-10. Friedrich Antal’s “Reflections on Classicism and Romanticism” stands as a representative Marxist reading of French Revolutionary painting (1935). For a classic exploration into the relationship between Revolutionary politics and classical literature see Talbot, 1937. For a study on the role of classical art in Revolutionary festivals see Ouzuf, 1991. Scholars that focus on the dissolution of classicism (rather than its strained endurance) are Bryson, 1984; Crow, 1995; Lajer-Burcharth, 1999. Satish Padiyar eloquently asserts that as synecdochic Revolutionary classicist, Jacques Louis David “has come to represent the paradigmatic art/politics relation, the breakdown of classical language and vision, and the inauguration of a certain modernist art practice” (2007: 1). For an example of a text that ventures further afield, Darcy Grigsby’s fascinating *Extremities: Painting Empire in post-Revolutionary France* uses Anne-Louis Girodet’s classical idealism of the 1790s as a point of departure for an investigation of not only the limits of this mimetic mode, but also its application to corporeal types encountered via imperial expansion (2002).

⁶ It is important to note that in 1758 leading proponent of universal manhood suffrage Charles Lennox, 3rd Duke of Richmond was the first to open up his collection of casts after antiquities for the benefit of British artists. See Kenworthy-Browne, 2009; Baird, 2007/8; Coutu, 2000.

that sought to harness this sense of complete renewal, and moreover the interplay between contemporary fine art in Britain and radical discourse of the 1790s. Along with literary “romanticism”, prints have seemed to offer more immediate gratification when navigating the potential for social criticism during these years.⁷ An understanding of the obvious restraints imposed on artists associated with the Royal Academy, symbolically a monarchic institution whose auspicial legitimisation from the mentally unstable George III was as fragile as it was seen to be necessary at the time, has helped lend support to the view that Academic sculptors and painters simply could not have been able to produce works that affirm or congratulate the socio-political watershed characterising this era, however subtly put across.⁸

Herein lies the power of the polysemic image. The classical body’s capacity to evoke a contemporary political ideal *and* be understood solely as the most elevated aesthetic ideal, among countless other semblances and mutations, provided Thomas Banks and Benjamin West, the subjects of Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 respectively, the terrain for mobilising the (radical) symbolism of this form largely undetected by their contemporaries and, consequently, the majority of scholars to date. As I show below, Banks’s ideological transgressions were/are obscured by the nature of the commission in which he drove them to their limits, while West’s experimentation with this charged style

⁷ For insight into radical print culture of the period see Wood, 1994.

⁸ There is also a sense in which ancient art in Britain was claimed by the well-travelled connoisseurs, the Grand-Tourists, in particular the Society of Dilettanti, many of whom were both members of parliament and the nobility. Although the foundation of the Royal Academy involved a conscious detachment from connoisseurial authorities like the Dilettanti, several of their leading members were enlisted to supervise designs by Royal Academicians for monuments and other state-funded projects. For insight into the proximity of the Dilettanti to the Royal Academy’s founding see Smith, 2012.

drowns itself in its formal opposite: rich Venetian colour. The arrival of the Elgin Marbles to British shores during the latter stages of the Napoleonic wars was the circumstance for Benjamin Robert Haydon's disavowal of the type of ideal corporeality enlivened by the French Revolutionaries, Banks and West, in favour of the authentically Greek figures straight from the Parthenon. In his mapping of anatomical science onto the newly-transported, un-restored sculptures, the antique for Haydon became a question of style in isolation from meaning, of technicality rather than symbolic resonance, a move symptomatic of the declining authority of the antique in Britain during the milieu upon which Chapter 3 centres. For Thomas Stothard and Richard Westall, the subjects of Chapter 4, the classical body had always been a matter of the aesthetic alone, and thus in their commercially successful historical paintings, the human form deviates from the more austere, cerebral conceptions of Graeco-Roman idealism that had been infused with urgent purpose during the Revolutionary period. The final chapter looks at the painter Henry Howard in conjunction with the Anglo-Roman sculptors John Gibson and Richard James Wyatt, examining the way in which during the post-war decades, amid the tide of reaction against classical forms, the ideal human form comes to embody an explicit rejection of the classical body's wartime syntaxes, and more generally, the taint of all kinds of political activity. Overtly erotic themes and personages from antiquity were the vehicle for this process.

Before each chapter can be introduced in greater detail, it is necessary to explain the angle from which I introduce my argument. Martin Myrone's *Bodybuilding: Reforming Masculinities in British Art 1750-1810* deftly navigates the rise and fall of the spectre of

the hero in British art of the long eighteenth century, allowing this thesis to take for granted the presence of this particular idea in search of more abstract, less coherent symbolisms embedded in manifestations of classical nakedness, both male and female, in the period under consideration here.⁹ Widely mobilised throughout the period that precedes this study, the figure of the hero exists in this thesis as a kind of backdrop, even in the context of the war monument examined in Chapter 1, a statue that manipulates and re-casts heroic convention to impart radical meaning, and in Chapter 5, in which a monument emblematic of this convention (or rather, by this time, its legacy) is posited as the diametric antithesis to an entire branch of sculptural practice. While in these cases the ideal male body carries out its traditional function as the carrier of value, the philosophic significance of this form is not the essence of its mobilisation.¹⁰ With West, female and

⁹ Myrone, 2005.

¹⁰ It is not the purpose of this introduction to outline the Platonic concept of ideal beauty, its adaptations by later ancient writers and rhetoricians, and its receptions, often conflicting, by modern artists and art theorists across the continent. Yet it is crucial to mention that the ideal in its philosophical capacity had always been handled as somewhat of an alien concept in relation to the eighteenth century's burgeoning British art culture, something that could only encourage its mobilisation as a political emblem. In due course we will touch on Barry's reaction to Winckelmann's claim that artists in Britain would remain distanced from the achievement of ideal art due to the nation's cold climate. For Joshua Reynolds, who when formulating his *Discourses* was clearly avoiding Winckelmann while navigating the works of continental theorists such as Gian Pietro Bellori and Charles Du Fresnoy, the ideal could be achieved in practice via a method of generalising the corporeal and facial features of the represented subject, so that in this state of abstract, standardised uniformity, individual nature is elevated to ideal nature as it comes to align with the objects physically closest to a material embodiment of this divine concept: classical statuary, the antique. Yet in various (conflicting) instances, the word "nature" in Reynolds's schema can mean both this process of idealisation and the local, the particular, the uninterrupted mimetic encounter. See Reynolds, 1905: vii-xxi; Bullitt, 1945: 350. Picking up on these inconsistencies a generation later, William Hazlitt presents the notion that the ideal is not about generalisation but about intensification; each divine, desired quality, be it beauty, strength or grace, should be heightened to celestial limits, so that distinct incarnations of given ideals are produced. But, and here is Hazlitt's own inconsistency, these quintessential manifestations of ideal form become un-

male bodies become largely interchangeable in their symbolic appropriation. Due to the proscribed nature of the Revolutionary antique, the British reception of which this thesis takes for its point of departure, it is the classicising of bodies rather than their gendering that conveys meaning, and thus it is that classicism, visible in contours, outlines and smooth, uninterrupted surfaces, which are central focus of these chapters. This being said, because of the elevated worth of the male ideal in traditional historical painting and monumental sculpture, as examined by Myrone and, in the French context, Abigail Solomon Godeau and Satish Padiyar, the significance of gender repeatedly surfaces, particularly in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.¹¹ As this is a study not of the representation of lived corporeality but a mimetic abstraction, gender operates not in any theoretical capacity, but in terms of its invocations during the period.

Lynn Hunt's concept of the "mythic present" serves to distinguish the French situation from the rhetoric of English radicalism which, as she and Epstein both note, often "referred to the purer community of (England's) Saxon and dissenting pasts" when

ideal if in the process of intensification, in his own words "purification" and "perfection", Hazlitt's version of nature, that is, veracity, reality, comes under threat. This is why, as we shall see in Chapter 3, Hazlitt abhors the exaggerated musculature of works praised by Reynolds, such as the *Farnese Hercules* and certain statues by Michael Angelo (which Reynolds preferred to the antique), and is quick to point out that the goddess of love's "golden" hair ought never actually to resemble the precious metal, much as the "ivory skin" of an ideal female beauty should never appear as ivory, lest she "be fair beyond the fairness of women". When discussing the concepts of both "nature" and the ideal, Hazlitt and Reynolds are alike in their imprecision, both acknowledging in separate ways the difficulty of articulating these concepts in relation to artistic practice: "It is not easy to define in what this great style (the ideal) consists; nor to describe, by words, the proper means of acquiring it", writes Reynolds, and later: "My notion of nature comprehends not only the forms which nature produces, but also the nature and internal fabric of organization" (Hazlitt, 1844: 349, 358; Reynolds, 1905: 53, 193).

¹¹ Solomon-Godeau, 1997; Padiyar, 2007.

encouraging visions of a revolutionary future.¹² Unable to turn to a like mythology of nationalistic free subjectivity, French radicals looked to Greece and Rome for their *tabula rasa*, linking “liberty, breaking with the past, and the model of the Ancients, which represented not so much the past as a model of a future society.”¹³ I am arguing that, due to certain artists’ convictions and contact with French art culture, this mythic present, in which classical forms were afforded new meaning, informed their representations of a particularly sharpened, intensive version of the antique, even, as is the case with West, into the Napoleonic era, when the transferral of the four most prized antiquities (in Britain during the long eighteenth century) from Italy to the Louvre: the *Venus de’ Medici*, the *Apollo Belvedere*, the *Laocoön* and the *Farnese Hercules*, intensified the primacy of ancient art in relation to this mythic present’s afterlife, in accordance with Napoleon’s break with Jacobin ideals. Indeed, though part of the purpose of this introduction is to justify my decision not to position the material examined in these chapters between the familiar categories “neoclassicism” and “romanticism”, if I were to use the former term I would locate the overarching significance of its prefix in the violent physical journey from the Papal States to Paris: the re-contextualisation of iconic and passionately revered relics of the ancient past.¹⁴ From the privileged vantage point of the twenty-first century, the classicism spawned by the Revolutionary mythic present and the dramatic detour in these objects’ provenance can be seen to be continuous only in their conception of the classical body as an emblem of both universalism and futurity.¹⁵

¹² Hunt, 1984: 27

¹³ *Ibid*: 29

¹⁴ For an exploration of the effects of the Treaty of Tolentino via Hazlitt’s visit to the Louvre see Cheeke, 2007.

¹⁵ Napoleon’s brand of universalism is examined in Woolfe, 1991.

In his essay “What is the Contemporary”, Giorgio Agamben defines contemporaneity, that is, the condition in which an individual can truly know their epoch, as “noncoincidence” or “dys-chrony”, “a singular relationship with one’s own time, which adheres to it and, at the same time, keeps a distance from it”.¹⁶ He continues, “it is *that relationship with time that adheres to it through a disjunction and an anachronism.*”¹⁷

The dependence on antiquity as a steadying force throughout the years of the Revolution and its wake, an aspect of Hunt’s mythic present, is a particularly vivid example, then, of knowing and processing the contemporary by way of an essential distance from it. Even for the antiquarian, the very idea of ancient culture, its strange, interrupted and in many ways unfathomable proximity to modern life, is always bound to be a “disjunction” and “anachronism”. The granting of new meaning to classical sculptural forms and their present day representation in the context of an unprecedented political shift is, according to Agamben’s theory, a definitively contemporary act. It is in this sense that I will refer to “contemporary classicism” throughout this thesis, demarcating both French Revolutionary classical painting and the type of representation in dialogue with the reflection of the mythic present’s culture in the mirror of British art.

Anachronism here is a positive, fruitful space. Yet when the beauty of the classical ideal is inflicted by historicisation in the form of the Elgin Marbles, the chimera of perfection is supplanted by Phidian authenticity, and the symbolical charge of the anachronistic body disintegrates. Stephen Bann’s *The Clothing of Clio* asserts that in “the early

¹⁶ Agamben, 2009: 41.

¹⁷ *Ibid*: 41.

nineteenth century, emphasis on the compositional basis of historiography is gradually replaced by a stringent concern for cognitive values.”¹⁸ Caught up in this shift, the “synchronic” perfection of contemporary classicism endures in the second half of the period as a redundant or ostensibly meaningless aesthetic, only successfully enlivened through the ahistorical iconography of eroticism.¹⁹ As an artist who did not incorporate this iconography, Howard’s commitment to contemporary classicism after both this style and the Revolutionary moment have themselves become historicised is the source of his art’s failure to appeal to his own contemporaries.

In addition to the questions of contemporaneity and historicity, there is third sense in which this type of classical ideal in British art can be seen to be anachronistic.

Geographically and governmentally distanced from the moment they touch, British representations of the classical body informed by the Revolutionary mythic present and its aftermath run contrary to what are generally perceived to be the dominant and defining trends in British art culture of the period: the flourishing of landscape and the development of genre painting. Focusing on a national narrative of classical engagement, Vicky Coltman relies on generalisations like “Early eighteenth century Britain had already appropriated the ancients” to ground her claims.²⁰ With the exception of works by

¹⁸ Bann, 1984: 6.

¹⁹ Bann, 1989: 105. Describing an eighteenth century display of restored Graeco-Roman antiquities (mentioned also in Chapter 3), the scholar here describes such an aesthetically grounded, compositional arrangement of ancient art as an “ahistorical zone of neoclassical perfection”. Following on from Bann and also Wolfgang Ernst, Vicky Coltman ventures beyond the idea that classical engagement among the nobility in eighteenth century Britain was confined to this “ahistorical zone”, arguing that it was rather “a style of thought” (2006: 11). See also Ernst, 1993.

²⁰ Coltman, 2006: 11.

Stothard and Westall which were embraced as distinctly British triumphs, much of the art examined in this thesis appears out of place and out of time. This is why, in spite of the canonised nature of other European visual classicisms of the period, so many of the works under examination here have been ignored or dismissed by scholars. This thesis argues that this irrelevance, this apparent anachronism, is not a simple consequence of a slavish, routine dedication to the relics of Rome or the casts of the Academy's plaster schools, but can be better understood by looking across the Channel. The fact that these artists lived and worked within Britain means that their engagements with the classicism of this mythic present automatically translate into statements against the battles seeking to eliminate the socio-political endurance of this break from the past. As we shall see, the objects which form the focus of the opening two chapters are rooted in critiques of the wars against France and their ravages.

The magic of the British phenomenon that is the polysemic image resides in its ability to mask any symbolic meaning it may wield in the general majesty of the antique and the desire for its grandeur. Yet it appears that, among certain canny connoisseurs in the 1790s (most likely in response to the unabashedly political ontology of the ideal in works by Jacques Louis David's and his followers), the capacity of antiquity to connote newness and possibility was something tangible enough to be guarded against.²¹ Writing to his aesthetic and political ally George Cumberland in 1798, Banks, an actively radical sculptor sympathetic to the (now dwindling) dreams of the Jacobins, describes the

²¹ In his *Letter to Society of Dilettanti*, published just prior to this expression of trepidation, James Barry had lauded David for the civic orientation of his classical painting. This was less of a political gesture than a characteristic example of Barry's obsessive devotion to the antique. See Chapter 1 n. 18.

wariness towards the representation of the antique expressed by the committee appointed to discuss designs for new gold and silver coins:

I think there is but little room for any thing like ancient art, it seems the Lords of the committee are timid that is they are afraid of innovations & that in our endeavours to produce something new we may bring forth some thing of an unpleasant nature with respect to the present times and circumstances²²

This fear of “innovations” did not prevent Banks from being selected that same year to execute a large scale public monument that managed to carry out this exact function through its use of the Graeco-Roman palette to comment on the contemporary, the subject of Chapter 1. The interlinking between “ancient art” and “the present times and circumstances” offers as a challenge to scholarly conclusions on the nature of classical reception(s) in late eighteenth century Britain such as that of Coltman, who proclaims that the “antique was never called upon as a charged ideological force from which to mount a political or cultural project as it was in contemporary France and Germany.”²³ Perhaps Coltman, whose study is limited to spheres of elite erudition, does not count as “a political or cultural project” the Revolutionary and Napoleonic war monuments and monumental historical paintings produced during the era characterised by their reliance on forms akin to (or lifted directly from) works of ancient sculpture. In any case, it is the illicit, anti-governmental usage of the antique that is the point of departure for this thesis. Rather than serving its agenda, this approach to antiquity remained deeply critical of the British state. Yet it could, through its very polysemic form, pretend to serve or at least sit

²² British Library, Add. MS. 36498 f. 239.

²³ Coltman, 2007: 9.

comfortably within that agenda, and it is by way of these complex exceptions and negations of significance that independent meaning survives. Accordingly it is only during the post-war years, when the classical body was no longer valued as a public, monumental entity, that the critical backlash against the antique in contemporary art takes hold. It is for this reason that this study focuses on individual artists rather than general themes such as connoisseurship, collecting and education, the exploration of which (to the exclusion of contemporary art) has served to obscure the depth of attitudes toward the antique during the period in question.²⁴

Banks's words in the above passage introduce dilemmas which are central to this thesis: firstly, the seemingly obvious fact that there was no one type of classicism in visual art, and secondly, the congruent observation that the more "ancient" and archaeological the representation of antiquity, the more dangerous, the more radical it could be perceived to be. The "Lords of the committee", writes the sculptor in an earlier letter, favour classicism in the style of Louis XIV as opposed to the sparse linearity of Greek and Roman design, which Banks deems the primary means to create "something new & Curious".²⁵ The relationship between competing classical traditions will be discussed later on in this introduction, but for now I want to emphasise how, due to the suppressed nature of such radical conflations of the aesthetic and the political in Royal Academic art of war-torn Britain, the yoking together of the ancient with the

²⁴ Ernst characterises the classicism of entire era by the character of individual collections, "autopoetic cosmos of their own, according to their founders' private mythologies" (1993: 483).

²⁵ Banks writes this relation to Flaxman's abilities. British Library, Add. MSS 36498, f. 235.

contemporary depended on somewhat of an arbitrary appropriation of an already abstract poetics.²⁶ Epstein's observation that there is no reason "to suppose that coherence per se renders political rhetoric more persuasive" can only be compounded when such (illicit) rhetoric is incorporated into sculpture and historical painting.²⁷ Paine's recasting of the very idea of antiquity so that it becomes an *a priori* condition of self-embodiment rather than a resource indicates the generalisations at play in Revolutionary attitudes to both time and human rights:

The error of those who reason by precedents, drawn from antiquity, respecting the rights of man, is, that they do not go far enough into antiquity: They do not go the whole way: They stop in some of the intermediate stages of a hundred, or a thousand years, and produce what was then done as a rule for the present day. This is no authority at all! If we travel still farther into antiquity, we shall find a direct contrary opinion and practice prevailing; and, if antiquity is to be authority, a thousand such authorities may be produced successively contradicting each other; but if we proceed on, we shall come out right at last, we shall come to the time when man came from the hand of his maker. What was he then? *Man*. Man was his only title, and a higher cannot be given him.²⁸

I do not hold this statement necessarily to be paradigmatic of the ideals informing contemporary classicisms in Britain; I rather cite it as a particularly extreme, widely read and internationally disseminated example of the novel connection between the urgent present, its radical future, and the most ancient past imaginable, an ancient past that casts off its degenerate, modern appropriations in order to carry out an ideological function.

²⁶ Many studies of the French Revolution, its international impact, and 1790s radicalism in Britain acknowledge the primacy of language in inciting political action. For a discussion of verbal expression with regard to British radical thought see Hampsher-Monk, 2007.

²⁷ Epstein, 1994: 10.

²⁸ Paine, 1795: 5.

Paine's re-conception of antiquity not only ruptures the canon of classical rhetoric, it ruptures history itself. Nakedness implicitly emerges as a state of universal ideological truth: ideal Man in a state of quintessential freedom. Thus of course it was the archaeological aesthetic of the Graeco-Roman ideal that was ready to give form to this revaluation of time in the name of human rights, rendering any precise phase of antiquity subordinate to the overarching universalism it was summoned to symbolise. This is why the more ancient antiquity of the Elgin Marbles, their fifth century purity, could instantly eradicate the meaning of contemporary classicism. Upon the Jacobin victory over the Girondins in the summer of 1793, Maximilien de Robespierre's challenge to artists of the *académie* to "paint in a noble and energetic manner all that has happened in the last four days" attests to the role of contemporary classical art, the purified forms of the Davidian school specifically, in the instantaneousness of the Revolutionary project.²⁹

This thesis does not dwell on specific French discourses and their reception, but rather takes for its starting point the most general impression of the Revolution's ideologically-charged temporality and the capacity of classical nakedness to evoke it. In his now classic *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History*, Alex Potts examines the connection between Winckelmann's Hellenism and the Davidian deployment of the sculptural (male) ideal to symbolise individual liberty, the grounding concept of the Revolutionary mythic present.³⁰ What urged the relevance of these writings to the

²⁹ Grigsby writes of Girodet's reaction to this moment: "For a history painter like Girodet, trained in the academic classical tradition, Robespierre's call was daunting, perhaps exhilarating, for the most part problematic. Four days? Was this history now? How could an artist script, shape, even find history as it transpired?" (2002: 12).

³⁰ Potts, 1994: 223-238.

Revolution, in particular, David's heroic iconography of the 1790s and beyond, was Winckelmann's crediting the cultivation of ideal beauty's teleological canon to the inherent freedoms granted to citizens of classical Athens.³¹ The capacity of the ideal male form to connote these inherent freedoms intertwined with the idea that the greatest, purest art could not flourish within a monarchic state.³²

Davidian corporeality, conditioned as it was, according to Potts, by Winckelmann's prose, could provide a paradigmatic model of contemporary classicism, particularly for West, as we shall see. But while works by David can be seen to be directly and intimately in dialogue with the German author, the relationship between British artists and Winckelmann had long been complex. In addition to the political factor, Winckelmann's

³¹ Winckelmann writes that in fifth century Athens "where after the expulsion of tyrants, a democratic form of government was adopted in which the whole people participated, the spirit of every citizen soared and the city rose above all the Greeks. As good taste was not widespread, and as wealthy citizens sought by means of splendid public buildings and works of art to inspire the respect and love of their fellow citizens and to pave the way to honor, everything flowed into this city, with its power and greatness, like rivers into the sea" (Potts, 2006: 121).

³² In the context of Britain in the 1790s, this idea is exemplified in a letter written by an anonymous correspondent to the *New Monthly Magazine*, who uses the compositional historiographies of Greece and Rome as evidence for their opinion that "Liberty is Favourable to the Arts", stating that "revolutions of empires, no doubt, frequently alter national characters; but mankind are not yet so depraved, nor so destitute of reason, as to be deaf to the voice of liberty. And in that state where true freedom exists, the fine arts will increase in perfection, in a much greater degree, than where the gorgeous palace and splendid equipage, alone are permitted to demand the most servile respect" (December, 1798: 4: 429). A contrary view was that fine arts tend to flourish under despotic leadership because such systems provide "stimulatives to exertion". In his "On the State of Arts in England", the German writer Friedrich August Wedeborn argues that "liberty has not always promoted arts and sciences. They began to flourish most among the Greeks when the republics fell into decay, and when tyranny lifted up its head. The times when Rome began to lose its freedom, were the most favourable to the arts, and the reign of Augustus is justly celebrated for them. Art and sciences never shone with greater lustre in modern times than during the reign of Louis XIV" (1791: 2: 133).

emphasis on “the influence of climate”, by which he means “the way in which countries’ differing localities, their particular weather patterns and foods, affected their inhabitants appearance” and thus the quality of their art, automatically undermines attempts on the part of British artists to recreate the ideal, simultaneously suggesting that physical beauty could never be an innately British quality because the region’s rain, clouds and mist negated free display of the naked body.³³ Several artists, most notably the Irish painter James Barry who had trained in close proximity to Winckelmann in Rome, set out to attack this environmental determinism.³⁴ Due in no small part to Barry’s *Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions to the Acquisition of the Arts in England* (1775), a lengthy manifesto that, if only in a slightly rough fashion encapsulates this strand of discourse, Winckelmann became known as one who had scorned the prospects of a thriving British art culture. Rather than simply limiting the appearance of the classical body in art and informing, as it certainly did, the sense that classical beauty was definitively at a distance from British national identity, this disconnection from

³³ For insight into this tension via both Barry’s and Edmund Burke’s responses to Winckelmann see Sarafianos, 2012.

³⁴ Barry groups the three (in actual fact very different) best-known proponents of the idea that the climate of a given land should be afforded some credit (always along with other factors like religion, laws, government etc.) for the quality of culture produced by its inhabitants: Montesquieu, du Bos and Winckelmann. The painter indicts these three figures at once, accusing them of arguing: “that (the British) climate is so distempered, that we disrelish every thing, nay even life itself; that we are naturally and constitutionally addicted to suicide; that it is a consequence of the filtration of our nervous juices; that it is consequence of a north-east wind, that our poets cannot arrive at their particular kind of delicacy that springs from taste; that they cannot arrive at any true imagery; that they strike the ear with a great noise, and present nothing to the mind; and that our natural capacity for the fine arts, amounts to very little, to nothing at all” (Fryer, 1809: 2: 177). While in Rome, busy studying ancient sculpture by day and living models by night, Barry, by far the nation’s most vocal champion of strict, archaeological classicism in contemporary art of the late eighteenth century, conceived of his manifesto on the doctrines that placed such stigma on figures like himself, both those that had been published and those experienced first hand.

Winckelmann could also invigorate the symbolic appropriation of the ideal as a radical, new, contemporary entity. Breaking with Winckelmann could only strengthen the capacity of classical nakedness to stand for a break with the past. It is crucial to note that Gibson, consciously an apolitical artist who abandoned Britain for Restoration Rome in order to create, expresses great admiration for Winckelmann.³⁵ Distanced from their heavy implications during Revolution and its aftermath, Winckelmann's writings can now be enjoyed simply for their aestheticist poetics and also, arguably, the erotic foundation of this poetics.³⁶

The main achievement of Winckelmann's writings was their positing of the antique as a monolithic, universal art form. While the specific conditions of life in republican Greece were responsible for the greatness of Hellenic painting and sculpture, the ideal and its materialisation are projected as transcendent in their perfection. Naomi Schor defines universalism as "the opposite of particularism, ethnic, religious, national or otherwise".³⁷ The tensions between universal and particular art that come to light during the course of these chapters (such as the way in which religious subjects are exhibited more and more during the Napoleonic wars as a kind of chauvinistic challenge to the continental antique) demonstrate a competition between different types of meaning, a competition rendered inevitable by the interplay between the wars with France and the formation of British nationalism, as traced by Linda Colley and others.³⁸ But the narrative of this thesis is not

³⁵ See Eastlake, 1870: 93, 188, 190, 191, 210.

³⁶ The erotic element of Winckelmann's prose is explored at length in Potts, 1994. The eroticism of Gibson's sculpture is examined in Chapter 5.

³⁷ Schor, 1997: 344.

³⁸ Colley, 1992. See also Craske, 1997; Hooock, 2010.

the conflict between meanings but the transition from meaning to unmeaning, and there is sense in which, beyond the polysemic image, the dialectical opposites contained within Schor's definition come to be consecrated within a single idea—not in terms of “ethnic, religious (or) national” particularism, but in terms of the individual human model. The move toward local and specific forms in classical painting and sculpture, what I term the “everyday body”, and away from the human form's most general invocations, both illicit and state-serving, relates not so much to the introduction of life-like corporeality and the overturning of idealising abstraction, but rather, as we shall see, the rejection of the antique as any kind of ideologically-charged entity.

In an issue of *The Quarterly Review* from 1822, an anonymous author provides a particularly articulate account of this process of unmeaning, offering a characteristic example of the critical backlash against classical forms I have identified:

In historical and monumental sculpture a very questionable taste has been fostered by an ill-directed study of the remains of antiquity. Symbolical representations were employed by the ancients, who always understood their work, with a thorough propriety of invention and conception. Symbolical figures form as definite a mode of conveying ideas as letter of the alphabet: when combined they form a word and impart a notion. But the symbols of the classical age are grounded upon a creed wholly foreign to us, and which has reached us only in disjointed fragments. The alphabet has gone out of use, and the language is a dead language; and in its place we mock the ancients by substituting allegorical representations, that is to say, by hewing metaphors in stone, vague, strained, and bombastical, affording no satisfaction to the learned, and no instruction to the vulgar.³⁹

³⁹ *Quarterly Review*, 1822: 27: 324

Caught in the shadow cast by the war monument and, more generally, the memory of the classical body's various mobilisations in both Britain and France during the wartime, the antique in post-war British sculpture and painting subsists as an empty vessel from which all meaning has been purged irrecoverably in exchange for, as we shall see, sensuality and eroticism. The author's dismissal of "the symbols of the classical age" on the grounds that they are "foreign" to the British national character introduces the closing section of this thesis, which presents the idea that classical nakedness goes into a condition similar to that of the exile.

By the mid 1820s, the veteran Academician James Northcote could describe the antique as anything but a locus of possibility:

We are tired of the Antique; yet, at any rate, it is better than the vapid imitation of it. The world wants something new, and will have it. No matter whether it is better or worse, if there is but an infusion of new life and spirit, it will go down to posterity⁴⁰

The "We" assumed by Northcote in this passage betrays the popularity of such unforgiving sentiment towards classical forms in Britain at this time. The "vapid imitation" of the antique, by which the painter, in this instance, implies the works of Bertel Thorvaldsen, Danish teacher of Gibson and Wyatt, is invoked as out-of-date, indicating the status of this essentially ahistorical body to endure within its own appropriately aesthetically retrograde niche in Rome.

⁴⁰ Hazlitt, 1830: 52. First printed in *New Monthly Magazine*, 1826 inclusive, 2: 476.

Why was it during the 1820s that changing attitudes toward the classical body such as those expressed by Northcote and the author of *The Quarterly Review* become widespread? In this thesis, I have viewed this cultural shift largely through the lens of the wars with France, grounding it in the “politics of reaction” understood to be characteristic of post-war European international relations. An alternative conception of this shift lies in another approach. In his essay “The Sense of the Past: Image, Text, and Object in the Formation of Historical Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century Britain”, Bann locates the refashioning of history to match needs unique to “19th century man”, that is, the move toward cognitive historicity (at the expense of aesthetic appreciation in isolation from its precise origins and context), also in this same decade.⁴¹ One could argue then, that this developing historical sensibility, the feel for authenticity increasingly prevalent during the 1820s and beyond, was an equally significant (and related) factor in the classical body’s loss of meaning. However, this study centres on symbolisms inextricably attached to the drama and iconography of Revolution and war, and thus it is the duality of war and politics that emerged during the course of my research as the most visible structuring framework.

As part of a Collaborative Doctorate Award shared between the Tate Britain and the University of York, my project was organised in order to investigate an apparent gap in art historical scholarship: the classical nude in so-called “Romantic Britain”. I soon

⁴¹ Bann, 1989.

realised that this “classical nude” did not actually exist during the majority of the period in question, and that the very word “nude” only acquires its present-day artistic usage when classically ideal bodies in contemporary art have shed their intellectual and political charges, their capacity effectively to be mobilised in order to impart meaning. When confronted with undraped or lightly draped human figures of ancient, earlier modern or contemporary art objects, artists, critics and connoisseurs in early nineteenth century Britain tended to refer to the “naked figure” rather than the “nude” (Fig. 1).

Accordingly, this thesis departs from Kenneth Clark’s hallowed distinction between the conditions of nakedness and nudity, a model that, though undeniably dated and, thanks to Lynda Nead and more recently, Helen McDonald, challenged for its sexist implications, still manages to serve as the conventional pedagogic model for comprehending the appearance of the unclothed human form in art.⁴² Having proved so enduringly authoritative, Clark’s dichotomy manifests a distinctively modernist, hedonistic approach to the consumption and appraisal of art objects.⁴³ The words “nude” and “nudity” gradually start appearing more and more in English writings on art toward the end of the period 1798-1840, and though not necessarily employed to distinguish a different kind of body, have direct correlations with the decline of classical idealisation and the emergence of more life-like modes of corporeal representation, particularly with regard to the female form. The concept of the “nude” not only bears associations with the development of

⁴² Nead, 1992: 2; McDonald, 2001: 7-10, 57-70.

⁴³ Clark writes: “To be naked is to be deprived of our clothes and the word implies some of the embarrassment which most of us feel in that condition. The word nude... carries... no uncomfortable overtone. The vague image it projects into the mind is not of a huddled and defenceless body, but of a balanced, prosperous and confident body: the body re-formed” (1960: 1).

what Pierre Bourdieu has termed a “pure theory of art”, that is “art as art” or “art-for-art’s sake”, but also, ironically when considered in conjunction with Clark’s model, with the moral and legislative anxieties surrounding the exhibition of rendered exposed flesh, dilemmas that surface out of the move toward life-like corporeality and that Alison Smith centres on in her book *The Victorian Nude: Sexuality, Morality and Art*.⁴⁴ The following chapters stand apart from the narratives of both Clark and Smith, and tell a story of the ideal in contemporary British art of the early nineteenth century, a form less morally and more politically subversive in its distance from individual nature and its connection to the ancients. “Classical Nakedness” is a term my thesis coins in order to acknowledge the difference between bodies of meaning (naked) and bodies of pleasure (nude).

This series of chronological case studies takes for its subjects some of the most conspicuous and well-known sculptors and historical painters in Britain during the period working with classical forms, to the exception of four key figures whose comparative marginalisation will be explained shortly. Banks’s monument operates as the point of departure because it simultaneously provides evidence of the status of the Graeco-Roman ideal as symbol of Revolutionary human rights, and the propagandistic reliance on classical imagery to serve the agenda of the British state in opposition to these rights. Julius Bryant’s essay “The Royal Academy’s ‘violent democrat’: Thomas Banks” stands as the only full length extant scholarly attempt to align the sculptor’s art with his politics.⁴⁵ Taking cues from David Bindman, Bryant confines his investigation to the sculptor’s choices in subject, particularly in terms of his early works, affording little

⁴⁴ Bourdieu, 1985: 31; Smith, 1996.

⁴⁵ Bryant, 2005.

significance to the question of form. Though he mentions Banks's *Monument to Captain Burges*, Bryant's attempt to chart the continuity between the sculptor's radicalism and practice makes reference to Banks's archaeological aesthetic as merely "an appropriately simpler visual form of expression".⁴⁶ Chapter 1 will include a discussion of why it is all too easy to dismiss the political significance of Banks's classical style. While Bryant's essay makes clear that the sculptor's work had long incorporated the theme of liberty, I am arguing that the concepts of individual human liberty and equality introduced by the Revolution in the 1790s supplied the marble ideal with a renewed sense of purpose. John Barrell has recently assessed the extent of the sculptor's politics, and, helpfully for my purposes, identified the sculptor as the "radical activist" that, when the evidence is meticulously consolidated, it becomes clear that he was.⁴⁷ Yet Barrell makes a point of excluding the sculptor's art from this discussion. I posit ideal form as the basis of Banks's political self-expression.

It will become clear over the course of the following chapters that the legacies of certain canonical old masters (Raphael, Titian, Rubens etc.) provided early nineteenth century British cultural discourse with a critical vocabulary for appraising various elements of contemporary art. As a painter whose works were almost always interpreted by way of this vocabulary, Benjamin West is an artist whose presence in scholarship has suffered in the hands of art historians who cannot refrain from aesthetic judgements when evaluating material for research.⁴⁸ His works generated harsh criticism for their perceived

⁴⁶ *Ibid*: 53. See also Bindman, 1989: 67.

⁴⁷ Barrell, 2013: 3. DRAFT.

⁴⁸ My position in relation to scholarly material on West will be included in Chapter 2.

shortcomings during his own lifetime (an example being Lord Byron's famous slight: "the flattering feeble dotard, West, Europe's worst dauber, and poor Britain's best"), and this has only continued throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries into the present day, with resounding consequences, as the conservation reports discussed in Chapter 2 will indicate.⁴⁹ Darcy Grigsby's brilliant essay "Nudity à la grecque in 1799" uses David's *The Intervention of the Sabine Women* to examine the reception and conceptualisation of classical nakedness in *fin de siècle* French culture. Chapter 2 centres on West's appropriations of Davidian corporeality following his trip to Paris in 1802, not in terms of specific French works, though this painting by David is mentioned, but in terms of this conceptualisation. Padiyar's case that into the Napoleonic period, contrary to most historiographies of the Revolution and its aftermath, David "continued to work through, and respond to, problems originally opened up by that utterly transforming event of the French Revolution" helps establish the endurance of certain ideologies and their confluences with contemporary images of the classical body.⁵⁰

Liz Prettejohn's *The Modernity of Ancient Sculpture: Greek Sculpture and Modern Art from Winckelmann to Picasso* sets up a distinction between the Elgin Marbles and the antiquities transported to the Louvre under Napoleon's command, exploring the way in which following their removal from Greece and arrival in Britain, the Parthenon's pediments came to assume the "aesthetic potency of the fully developed classical ideal", and in the process, relegated works such as the *Venus de' Medici* and the *Apollo*

⁴⁹ See "The Curse of Minerva" in Byron, 1840: 2: 129

⁵⁰ Padiyar, 2007: 3.

Belvedere to the status of a Roman copy.⁵¹ Prettejohn does point out that this shift undermined the capacity of these last objects to embody “a fully achieved, harmonious human subjectivity”, yet her chief concern is the way in which the Elgin (and Aegina) Marbles undergo a kind of ontological transformation in their re-contextualisation from architectural ruin to museum artefact and exhibited sculpture. This thesis does not follow the teleology of ancient sculpture’s reception that accepts the inferiority of the Roman copy in favour of the Elgin or Aegina Marbles, but rather stays with the body that is outed, so to speak, for its inauthenticity. Yet Chapter 3 does acknowledge an aspect of this development, and focuses on Haydon’s burgeoning theory of the “great Greek standard of figure”, a model he develops in order to apply to artistic practice the historical authenticity of the Elgin Marbles, an authenticity knitted together with the Marbles’ condition of corporeality. Via Haydon’s theory, I depart from accounts such as Prettejohn’s in my emphasis on the effects of the Elgin’s acquisition on earlier symbolical deployments of the human form. A black model whom the artist drew and cast in plaster in 1810 helps illuminate how the classical body, as it underwent a period of intensive scrutiny, no longer interpolated the ideologies of human rights.

Chapter 4 is somewhat of a deviation in the chronology of this thesis, and examines manifestations of classical nakedness entirely independent from the body in sculptures by Banks, paintings by West and Haydon’s theory. Stothard and Westall produced diverse bodies of work that were consistently in demand for all kinds of commissions, and Shelley M. Bennett’s *Thomas Stothard and the Mechanisms of Art Patronage in England*

⁵¹ Prettejohn, 2012: 39-57.

circa 1800 outlines this aspect of the former's legacy.⁵² Though only one other full-length book has been written exclusively on Stothard, he is nowhere near as marginalised in scholarly literature as Westall.⁵³ Classical paintings by these two artists are especially overlooked, I would argue, for the same reasons they are held to be anomalous in the context of this thesis. What sets Stothard and Westall apart is that in their respective oeuvres we see classical nakedness folded into a diverse variety of subject material, both ancient and modern; Stothard was and still is best known for works like the celebrated 1807 Chaucerian panel *The Pilgrimage to Canterbury* and his and *Fêtes galantes*, such as the Watteau-inspired *Sans Souci* exhibited at the Academy in 1817.⁵⁴ Of the pictures displayed in Westall's 1814 solo exhibition, a rare opportunity for a living British artist, only about a third involve some degree of classical nakedness, the majority being scenes that necessitate clothing.

In addition to this shared reputation for versatility, Stothard and Westall are also alike in their tendency toward sentimental, idealised portrayals of peasant and domestic life, themes that could be received as more appropriate to the age in which they lived than grander subjects.⁵⁵ Having purchased Westall's most famous painting *Harvesters in a Storm* in the mid 1790s, prominent connoisseur Richard Payne Knight lauded this fantasy of rusticity as one of "the most interesting and affecting pictures that the art has ever

⁵² Bennett, 1988.

⁵³ Coxhead, 1906.

⁵⁴ Thomas Stothard. *The Pilgrimage to Canterbury*, 1806-7, oil on oak, London, Tate Britain; *Sans Souci*, 1817, oil on wood, London, Tate.

⁵⁵ An exploration of Westall's rustic pictures is included in Garside, 1994: 145-174.

produced”.⁵⁶ In subject, *Harvesters in a Storm* anticipates Westall’s later watercolours of doe-eyed beggar children produced in abundance toward the end of his career when, between 1827 and 1836, he worked as Princess Victoria’s drawing master.⁵⁷ Ever sensitive to their patrons, Stothard and Westall explored trends in costume and concept, and did not bestow upon classical nakedness any kind of discursive authority. I go far as to suggest that for Stothard and Westall classical nakedness was fashion.

Chapter 5 looks at three artists whose commitment to the body of contemporary classicism endures throughout its changing fortunes, charting the ways in which this body is refashioned according to the aesthetic and political conditions of the post-war period. Yet more so even than Westall, ardent classical painter Howard remains neglected in scholarship, while studies of Gibson and Wyatt are always confined to the separate sphere of “neoclassical” or Victorian sculpture.⁵⁸ Wyatt’s art is often absorbed into Gibson’s, as if the fact that they were friends in Rome, “rivals” even, renders them essentially one and the same.⁵⁹ While in this chapter the continuity between their sculpture is acknowledged on the basis of their training under Canova and Thorvaldsen in Rome (which, in addition to their British origins, is responsible for their conflation), it is grounded primarily in the relationship between their sculpture and the monumental syntax of the classical body. One of the main objectives of this thesis is to mend the gap

⁵⁶ Knight, 1805: 304-5.

⁵⁷ *Westall’s Sketches Vol II*: Royal Collection.

⁵⁸ See for example Trusted, 2008.

⁵⁹ Wyatt is described as Gibson’s “rival” in Eastlake, 1870: 130 and Matthews, 1911: 111.

in British art studies between the study of sculpture and the study of painting, and I hope to widen the space in which this kind of analysis can continue.

An additional reason why I focus on individual creators rather than themes relates to the relatively fledgling nature of the Royal Academy during the period, certainly in relation to the schools of France and Italy. The diversity of styles unique to each of the nation's foremost artists during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, even as regards something as fundamental as the classical body, was frequently observed towards the end of the period, when the formative members of the British school could be reflected upon with necessary distance.⁶⁰ When one's subject is an area as vast as the fortunes of the classical body during the overlapping period not only between late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but also the Regency and Victorian eras, the most difficult task resides in the carving out one distinct narrative from a plethora of images. Though I have chosen to focus on historical painting and sculpture, inevitably, much is left out. Two sculptors and two painters have not been afforded their own chapters: the aforementioned Barry, as well as Henry Fuseli, John Flaxman, and Richard Westmacott.

⁶⁰ For example, Haydon states that never "were four men so essentially different as West, Fuzeli, Flaxman, and Stothard. Fuzeli was undoubtedly the man of the largest capacity and the most acquired knowledge; West was an eminent artist in the second rank; Flaxman and Stothard were purer designers than either; Barry and Reynolds were before all the others" (1846: 33). Similarly, Charles Robert Leslie writes: "A striking peculiarity of the British School, in its most palmy days, is the remarkable diversity of powers into which it branched. When we turn from Fuseli to Stothard, it is difficult to believe that Art so contrasted as theirs should have been contemporaneous. In nothing were these two extraordinary men alike save in being extraordinary" (1855: 138).

As the most vocal champion of ideal forms in late eighteenth century British art, Barry's literary and artistic contributions function in each chapter as a necessary example of the philosophical and theoretical understanding of the antique at its most bold and impassioned, and the differences between this more traditional type of artistic classicism and the achievements of the artists making up the subjects of each chapter will be discussed throughout. Flaxman, without a doubt the most accomplished sculptor based in Britain during the period in question, serves as a kind of medium by which images are passed from one artist to another; these images emerge, as we shall see, entirely transformed. Flaxman's nationalism, his anti-Jacobin views and his Swedenborgian religiosity, ensured that his works, though highly influential and moreover, touched by the art of others, established themselves as their own world, at least in relation to the story told by this thesis, in which Antonio Canova too, Flaxman's counterpart in many ways, is put to one side. Likewise, it is the way in which Fuseli creates his own deeply personalised imaginary that is purposefully withdrawn from ideological engagement, certainly from the 1790s onwards, that allows his sculptural bodies an immunity from the process of unmeaning this thesis traces. Following on from Eudo Mason's statement that Fuseli did not share the "optimistic faith in the future" of his radical friends and acquaintances, Barrell has written of Fuseli's "studied cynicism", his lack of interest in political ideals on the basis that they necessitated a "false-consciousness".⁶¹ Finally, Westmacott is not the subject of his own chapter because his sculpture attests to the state-serving capacity of the classical ideal, its capacity to align with the propagandistic

⁶¹ Mason, 1951: 179-80; Barrell, 1986: 259.

demands of the British state, even after the classical body has fallen out of public favour.⁶²

Before moving on to the final section of this introduction, it seems necessary to point out the seemingly obvious fact that as adjective, in keeping as much as possible with the language of these decades, the word “antique” is used in the following chapters interchangeably with the word “classical”, both categories describing a basic physical relation to ancient sculpture rather than indicating a specific phase of ancient history.

Without making this transition the basis of their studies, both Simon Goldhill and Jerry Toner acknowledge the “increasing institutionalization” of classicism as the nineteenth century progressed, its evolution into a discipline, discrete from the visual arts, largely confined to the “corridors of power”.⁶³ In separate ways, both scholars suggest that the formation of associations between the classical world and the privileges of Oxbridge erudition was in part a response to the radical deployment of antiquity during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. What Goldhill has in mind is the philhellenism of Shelley and his circle, while Toner loosely names “the disquieting middle-class desire

⁶² For a comprehensive account of Westmacott’s life and work see Busco, 1994.

⁶³ Goldhill, 2012; Toner, 2013.

for progress and meritocracy” as a catalyst for the crystallisation of classicism’s synthesis with “the virtues of the aristocracy”.⁶⁴

The tide of reaction against classical forms in contemporary art I have identified as becoming prevalent around 1820 stands apart from this precise move (to put it in the most general terms) from liberal to conservative spheres, yet the idea that the privatisation, so to speak, of classicism was a direct response to more wayward appropriations of antiquity produced during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries matches the founding claim of this thesis: that classical nakedness at the turn of the nineteenth century was symbolic terrain in the eyes of certain figures sympathetic to the original Revolutionary project. It is crucial to note that none of the artists looked at in this thesis come from financially privileged backgrounds, even the figures who vehemently reject the political ontologies of the antique.

Goldhill’s confinement of the radical potential of classicism to literary romanticism, a *topos* that, due to the fundamental discrepancies between the rigidities of Academic art culture and the possibilities of poetry is not a part of this thesis, allows me to explain why

⁶⁴ Goldhill writes: “It is simply not the case that Classics is inevitably linked to empire or to conservative values in the nineteenth century. Rather, for many, especially at the beginning of the century, Classics was a visionary, revolutionary subject...It is not clear in the first years of the century where Classics will end by the last years of the century” (2012: 3-4). Toner is less reluctant to acknowledge the elitism of nineteenth century classical erudition: “if classics benefited during this period from liberalism, its survival at the core of English liberal education in the nineteenth century was a function of political conservatism. In response to this middle-class challenge, elite institutions...all tried to raise their collective drawbridge and maintain upper-class status by making it academically harder to get in. This they achieved by placing great emphasis on knowledge of Greek and Latin” (2013: 9).

I have chosen not to use the terms “neoclassicism” and “romanticism”, the latter being an idea that implies something much more concrete in the context of verbal expression.

Matthew Craske likens scholars’ adherence to these categories to a kind of spiritual devotion. “Appropriately for the study of a period in which ‘great art’ began to assume the aura of religion” he writes, these categories “like gods in an era of agnosticism”, have become a question of faith:

Scepticism within the context of a priori belief can be reduced to a rhetorical exercise. It has, accordingly, become a veritable generic characteristic of books on ‘the romantic movement’ or ‘neo-classicism’ that they should begin with a few pages of rigorous sceptical examination of terms so that the same terms can be used with impunity thereafter.⁶⁵

In *Neo-classicism: Style and Civilization*, Hugh Honour evidences the tendency identified by Craske. Noting that the works of certain figures resist the “decorative straight-jacket” by which the concept of “neoclassicism” has come to be constricted, Honour asserts that their art has “tended to be absorbed into Romanticism or proto-Romanticism or into a hybrid Romantic-Classical style excogitated by art historians solely in order to cope with them.”⁶⁶ Yet mere paragraphs later, the author states that into the early nineteenth century, many elements of “Neo-classicism” were “transmuted into Romantic art”, suggesting that this “hybrid Romantic-Classical style” is very much an actual phenomenon.⁶⁷ In the context of this thesis, faith in the tangibility of these movements,

⁶⁵ Craske, 1997: 10.

⁶⁶ Honour, 1968: 14.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*: 15.

even in terms of their forced fusion, would greatly undermine the complexities at work in the varying treatments of classical nakedness that comprise each case study.⁶⁸

While art historians are fond of reminding their readers that the word “neoclassicism” first comes into use in the late Victorian era as a dismissive classification of a long-gone era’s blind passion for the antique, assessing the precise beginnings of the multidisciplinary re-investment in classical art and literature across Europe during the second half of the eighteenth century has proved inconclusive in scholarship. Overlap between the long-standing international authority of Graeco-Roman culture since the middle ages and this refined, renewed vision of the ancient culture ensures that the type of art commonly cited as “neoclassical” often struggles to be distinguished from its equally classically-attuned antecedents. Honour goes out of his way to acknowledge again and again the distinction between “classicism” and “Neo-classicism”, and does this by linking the latter style, a “*risorgimento* of the arts” as he terms it, with the path-breaking discursive activity of the French *philosophes*. For Honour, this movement originates in the self-conscious break with the “Rococo” in Parisian salons, both art-critical and art-practical. Yet his essentialist reliance on the term “Rococo”, a category he does not pause once to subject to any kind of scrutiny, de-stabilises his rigorous attempt to construct a clear demarcation between traditional and “*avant-garde*” classicisms. Rather than “neoclassical”, “neo-archaeological” might be a more apt word to describe this shift in aesthetic terms. Indeed, the word archaeological is referred to frequently in the opening chapters of this thesis to designate the divergence between traditional visual

⁶⁸ Another example of the propensity to blend these movements while still committing to their discrete implications is Rosenblum, 1960.

classicisms and antique revival. As Chapter 3 will show, this concept of an archaeological aesthetic is easily disrupted.

In his collection of essays titled *On Neoclassicism*, Mario Praz, by contrast to Honour, eloquently reflects on the movement as a purely sensory narrative, largely ignoring the *philosophes* (despite the rather misleading title of his essay on gothic-classical architecture, “Revolutionary Classicism”), and naming seventeenth century figures Milton and Poussin the initiators of this new approach, a pairing that I will revisit in Chapter 5’s discussion of Howard’s Miltonic paintings.

Other scholars such as Robert Rosenblum and Ann M. Hope begin their analyses with works of art in dialogue with the wall paintings excavated at Pompeii and Herculaneum.⁶⁹ Rather than positing “neoclassicism” as simply a reaction against the “Rococo”, Rosenblum’s brilliant dissection of the style renders it a “coloration” rather than a cohesive movement.⁷⁰ Still, like Honour, abiding by the concreteness of the latter category, Rosenblum does not see the shift from one aesthetic to another as a clean break, but instead acknowledges the endurance of “Rococo” themes and their adaptation into the emergent archaeological style. Setting out to ease the difficulties of defining the movement, Rosenblum confronts head-on its pluralistic nature. His study splits “that unwieldy corpus of art... created from about 1760” into separate camps: the “Neoclassic Horrific”, the “Neoclassic Erotic”, the “Neoclassic Stoic” and the “Neoclassic Archeologic”, pan-European manifestations of visual classicism grouped primarily their

⁶⁹ Rosenblum, 1967; Hope, 1988.

⁷⁰ Rosenblum, 1967: 4.

content, their recurrent themes that once identified, ease the “problems of definition.”⁷¹

But where Rosenblum’s concerned with bringing art objects from Naples to Copenhagen into his account of “transformations in late eighteenth century art”, this thesis stands apart from the relative cornucopia of scholarly work orbiting around the eighteenth century, focusing instead on British visual classicisms produced during the liminal, elusive temporal space that is the early nineteenth century.

To consolidate the multifarious definitions of “neoclassicism” and “romanticism” with the dream that somehow these words might illumine the conflicted cultural landscape of the post-Revolutionary era, though tempting, immediately proves both unsatisfactory and confusing. In the context of scholarship on Britain especially, largely due to the overwhelming dominance of literary romanticism and the uneven bias towards landscape painting and the anti-establishment Blakean anomaly, applications of these terms often serve to obscure the scope of art produced during the nineteenth century’s opening decades. And when one begins with the unclothed body rather than the natural world or scenes of everyday life, these macro-conceptions of mimetic agenda instantly emerge as inappropriate. That the ideal human form is considered the “proper” methodological domain for studies in “neoclassical” art is fair enough, but the urge to align specific artists to either one category or the other, or, as Honour puts it “a hybrid Romantic-Classical style”, testifies to what Judith Butler identifies as the “mundane violence” of the “proper object”:

⁷¹ *Ibid*: 3-49.

The institution of the “proper object” takes place, as usual, through a mundane sort of violence. Indeed, we might read the moment of methodological founding as pervasively anti-historical acts, beginnings which fabricate their legitimating histories through a retroactive narrative, burying complicity and division in and through the funereal figure of the “ground”.⁷²

Butler’s argument is based on the paradox inherent in the division between feminist and queer studies within the Academy. But the “moment of methodological founding” that relies on “neoclassicism” and “romanticism” either to conflict or synthesise into a muddy amalgamation so that works of art and their makers are folded into a “retroactive narrative” with frustratingly pliant historical fidelity and haunting exceptions, is also a dual process of fabrication and legitimisation.

Take for example, the subject of Chapter 3, Haydon, a literary figure as well as painter whose professional and social affiliations with figures such as Leigh Hunt, Keats, Wordsworth and Goethe, his alienation from the Academy and other establishments as well as his eventual suicide, ensure that he is usually aligned with the dominant retroactive narrative of romanticism complete with its myth of the tragic genius. Yet Haydon’s relentless faith in the authority of the hero’s image and large-scale public historical painting, his polygenist theories on race and his promotion of science as the leading aspect of artistic practice, divorce him from the mystical, private, self-contained connotations of the paradigmatic “romantic”. His art is yet more difficult to discipline. What his paintings and drawings do make evident is the instability of prioritising the human figure at a time when landscape and genre painting have usually been considered

⁷² Butler, 1994: 3.

better poised to answer to the demands of British national identity. Though not a subject of one particular chapter, Haydon's exact contemporary William Etty expounded the notion, as we shall see in Chapter 5, that art should be kept away from politics at all cost. Although this view adheres to what Barrell terms a "simplified Romanticism, which measures the value of art by the degree of its elevation above the merely political and social", surely Etty's enduring, almost obsessive allegiance to the Royal Academy and its life school renders him less of a "romantic" proper than the rebel Haydon, who rendered himself entirely independent from that institution in order to be freed from its hierarchies.⁷³ Taxonomy very quickly proves impossible when dealing with British sculptors and painters active during the nineteenth century's first forty years, and it is through a confrontation of the space-outside, while still acknowledging the self-aware nature of aesthetic choices, that the most original observations can come into their own.

⁷³ Barrell, 1986: 314.

CHAPTER 1

CLASSICAL NAKEDNESS AS SYMBOLIC EXPRESSION: THE LOST MEANING OF THOMAS BANKS'S *MONUMENT TO CAPTAIN BURGES*

Given their relative obscurity and remoteness from present day life, it is surprising that the series of marble monuments in St. Paul's Cathedral dedicated to a selection of military heroes from the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars are mentioned in *The Rough Guide to London*'s most recent edition.¹ The author includes the monuments only to dismiss them as “overblown”, merely an “unfortunate” response to the “intolerable” overcrowding of Westminster Abbey. In particular it is Thomas Banks's *Monument to Captain Richard Rundle Burges*, executed between 1798 and 1802 and currently in the nave of the Cathedral, that provokes this negative response (Fig. 2). The figure of Burges is deemed “simply ludicrous” as it stands tall, erect and “virtually naked...holding hands with an angel over a naval cannon”.² Sense cannot be made of the statue. It is assumed by this author that the classical-allegorical figure of Victory, common to many war monuments in and beyond the sculptor's lifetime, is a Christian angel. Captain Burges does not hold the hand of this figure but rather gestures to receive a sword she is passing to him. Yet what seems to be the point of contention, what renders the statue “ludicrous”, is the hero's exposed body. It is significant that a popular guide book written from a functional and disinterested subject position would relate to Banks's work in this way, or rather not be able to relate to it. Forgetting for a moment that this is St. Paul's, “the great Cathedral Church of London”, part site of worship and a large part tourist destination, the wilfully accessible episteme from which publications such as *The Rough Guide* are issued

¹ Humphreys, 2012: ebook.

² *Ibid.*

is not equipped to understand in positive or historically grounded terms the appearance of a naked form such as that afforded to Captain Burges.

There are two issues underpinning the disparity between Banks's sculpture and this author's interpretation. Firstly, there is the basic dilemma surrounding the idea of urban nakedness, a problematic that long predates the sculptor's lifetime, but that, during the final decades of the eighteenth century when the revival of archaeological classicism was at its height, posed less of a threat to the appearance of monuments and other art objects than it had hitherto and increasingly would as the nineteenth century progressed. In his essay "Nudity", Agamben identifies the "theological signature" that haunts all public encounters with the unclothed body in European and Atlantic modernity:

To eyes...profoundly (albeit unknowingly) conditioned by the theological tradition, that which appears when clothes (grace) are taken off is nothing but their shadow. To completely liberate nudity from the patterns of thought that permit us to conceive it solely in a privative and instantaneous manner is a task that requires uncommon lucidity.

In our culture...nudity is not actually a state but rather an event...nudity belongs to time and history, not being and form. We can therefore only experience nudity as a denudation and a baring, never as a form and a stable possession. At any rate, it is difficult to grasp and impossible to hold on to.³

Agamben has more recent art in mind. His essay pivots around a 2005 performance piece by Vanessa Beecroft involving a multiplicity of real women installed naked, still and statue-like, in a Berlin gallery space. But his words resonate with Banks's *Monument to Captain Burges*, the statue's reception by scholars and the passage by author of *The*

³ Agamben, 2009: 65.

Rough Guide. In the little literature that touches on the monument, the nakedness of Burges is isolated as “an event”, a “baring” rather than a stable, intelligible feature of a historic object: both Margaret Whinney and Alison Yarrington present the work as a failure, citing other critics’ reactions to Burges’s body as testament to the sculpture’s unsuccess.⁴ Holger Hoock cannot help but refer to Banks’s Burges as “a strange naked man”.⁵ Though he is able to hint that there might be a political dimension to the work grounded in the sculptor’s beliefs, Bryant elsewhere feels the need to pardon the statue, claiming that it makes manifest “a neoclassicist’s apparent naivety”.⁶ Together these criticisms show how monumental statuary, more than other forms of figural sculpture or two dimensional modes of art production, has the capacity to approach the residual Judeo-Christian codes attached to lived, animate corporeality. In turn, the reception of this monument can be read as evidence for Agamben’s theological continuum, what guarantees the drama of nakedness in “our culture”.

Yet is not just Banks’s decision to portray this naval captain without clothes that has resulted in such misinterpretation, confusion and aversion. The monument and its critics also present the question: why and at what point was the once powerful meaning(s) of classical nakedness not only lost, but transformed into a dearth, “ludicrous”, a body void of legible meaning? As stated in the introduction, this development became prevalent in Britain from around 1820 onwards, precisely the moment at which the expensive, large-

⁴ Whinney, 1988: 332; Yarrington, 1988: 69.

⁵ Hoock, 2010: 165.

⁶ Bryant, 2005: 56; 2005: 60.

scale monumental scheme for which this work had been one of the first additions itself had “faded into obscurity”.⁷

Looking at the monument, we get a sense that the identity of Captain Burges, the man who died on the 11th of October, 1797 in the North Sea during the Battle of Camperdown while commanding the ship *HMS Ardent*, is secondary to the immortal form the sculptor has afforded him. One of the ways in which this statue departs from the established conventions of the modern monument is that the captain is not figured as a disembodied cameo, as in some late seventeenth and earlier eighteenth century works, a conceit began by Gian Lorenzo Bernini in Rome and continued in Britain by Banks’s contemporary Joseph Nollekens and others, including Banks himself in his *Monument to Sir Eyre Coote*, completed in 1789 (Fig. 3).⁸ By converting the hero into an object, a legacy contained neatly inside an oval frame, this approach to commemoration displaces the humanity of the subject, so that the statue carries out its posthumous tribute undisturbed. Nor does Burges languish in the arms of an attendant or an allegory, as in Joseph Wilton’s *Monument to General Wolfe* and other groups in both Westminster Abbey and St. Paul’s (Fig. 4). The fact that figures such as Wilton’s Wolfe or Charles Rossi’s Lord

⁷ Yarrington, 1988: 66.

⁸ Joseph Nollekens, *Monument to Colonel Alexander Champion*, c. 1797, Bath Abbey, Bath, marble. As Banks’s first public commission, the *Monument to Sir Eyre Coote* demands to be re-examined both in terms of the sculptor’s radical beliefs and capacity to produce works of art that manage to convey these orientations undetected by his patrons. The naked figure of a “Mahratta” captive at the bottom right hand corner is inserted to represent Coote’s legacy in the East India Company’s war against the Maratha Empire during the 1770s, yet the forlorn appearance of this idealised naked figure simultaneously suggests liberty in crisis. Bryant speculates that when viewing the monument, “Our sympathies are with the captive, who steals the show, surely mourning the fate of India rather than the General” (2005: 54).

Faulknor are depicted in the process of dying serves to legitimise their classical guise; they are presented between life and death, earth and heaven, and thus their representation in the theologically ambiguous guise of the ancients is coherent on both conceptual and visual planes.⁹ Their semi-recumbent forms ensure that the exposure of their bodies communicates appropriate degrees of pathos for the monumental genre. By contrast, the small chlamys that falls from its fibula down the centre of Captain Burges's torso landing just at the very top of his inner thigh appears all the more negligent, contrasted with his upright stance, his body measuring larger than life at seven feet and eight inches high. In subsequent monuments at St. Paul's in which the war hero appears straight and fully resurrected, such as Flaxman's 1803 *Monument to Admiral Earl Howe*, his famous 1818 *Monument to Admiral Earl Howe*, Rossi's 1811 *Monument to Marquis Cornwallis* or his 1815 *Monument to Lord Rodney*, the subject is clothed in modern dress, more often than not a military uniform, in order to convey the dignity of his demise and honour the institutional hierarchy.

While both the cannon's aim and the hero's body are frontally projected from Banks's *Monument to Captain Burges*, the exchange of glances between Victory and the hero seems intimate in its exclusion of the spectator. Presented as such in profile, there is a tension between the striking attention given to the specificities of Burges's face and head and his ideal body. Burges is "practically nude, but be-whiskered" writes Whinney, making reference to early nineteenth century poet and Banks biographer Allan Cunningham's 1832 verdict that naked naval officers "destroy historic probability" ... for

⁹ Rossi's *Monument to Captain Robert Faulknor* will be discussed later on in this chapter.

their “heads are modern and their bodies antique”.¹⁰ Though a negotiation between individuality and idealism is central to all portrait mythology, the contrast between Burges’s Graeco-Roman body and the naturalistic realism of his head is extreme.¹¹ We see similar objects only in Roman portrait statuary. Canova had at least idealised the Consul’s head in his *Napoleon as Mars the Peacemaker*. Moreover, the fact that Canova’s most infamous monument was a tribute to a living figure, a global conqueror at that, renders the artist’s decision to refract his subject through such a grandiose classical prism more legitimate in terms of early nineteenth century portraiture conventions, despite Napoleon’s well-documented concern that it was “too athletic” and the subsequent hiding of the statue.¹²

With Banks’s *Monument to Captain Burges*, dialectical opposites universalism and particularism are forced together in an uneasy amalgamation.¹³ This aspect of the monument turns Captain Burges’s heroic classical form into naked corporeality, and in doing so suspends Clark’s distinction between nakedness and nudity, an art historical model I venture beyond in this thesis, but that is nonetheless a useful point of reference in the analysis of this particular statue. The individuality of the head destabilises the classical form to which it is attached, making what ought to appear a “balanced, prosperous and confident” figure, Clark’s definition of the term “nude”, appear “defenceless”, Clark’s synonym for the term “naked” or, in the words of the other authors

¹⁰ Whinney, 1988: 332; Cunningham, 1832: 3: 114.

¹¹ For a study on early nineteenth century portrait mythology via the Canova’s portraits of the Bonapartes, see Johns, 1995.

¹² Napoleon’s concerns about the statue were expressed via Vivant Denon in a letter to Canova himself shortly after the completion of the work. Quoted in Johns, 1998: 101.

¹³ See Naomi Schor’s definition of the word “universalism” in the introduction.

who have judged Banks's figure, "ludicrous", "strange", "naïve".¹⁴ The waves of hair smoothed back behind Burges's ears from his receding hairline reveal him as a typical late eighteenth century British gentleman. His face is a locus of vitality without beauty, full cheeks and soft folds of flesh underneath the chin. The likeness Banks would have used to produce such a depiction of the captain remains untraced, though an edition of *The United Service Journal* reports that in April, 1840, an "Engraving of a portrait of Capt. Richard Rundle Burgess (*sic*), of H.M.S Ardent, who was killed at Camperdown" was exhibited at the evening meeting of the Members of the United Service Institution.¹⁵

The negotiation between ordinary head and naked ideal body contained within the single figure of Burges, and the parallel tension between the actual fate of the naval captain and the artist's symbolical deployment of antiquity, infuse this statue with an ambiguity unprecedented in British public monuments. From the neck up, the reality of war and the reality of death are made immediate in the identifiable features of a known individual whose life has been lost, and from the neck down these actualities are diffused. That the conflict between individual, particular experience and universal beauty takes place upon consecration of a dead war hero calls to mind Emmanuel Levinas's statement on the antipathy between heroic masculinity and the experience of mortality: "My mastery, my virility, my heroism as a subject", he writes, "can be neither virility nor heroism in relation to death."¹⁶ But I am not claiming that to make an overt statement on the vulnerability of Captain Burges was the sculptor's intention. Through an investigation of

¹⁴ Clark, 1960: 1.

¹⁵ *United Service Journal*, 1840: 3: 135.

¹⁶ Hand, 1989: 41.

the symbolism of this much misunderstood manifestation of classical nakedness in relation to the duality of Banks's political beliefs and his reputation for mastery, I make the case that the *Monument to Captain Burges* is, in ways more subtle and elusive, at once rooted in the ideological promises of the Revolutionary mythic present and, because it was commissioned by the state opposing these promises, simultaneously an anti-war work. As we shall see, following the sculptor's death in 1805, these two interpolating meanings were folded into the wider cultural shift that sees the classical body in contemporary art losing its value and significance.

But before Banks's monument can be posited as a synecdoche of this process, it is important to acknowledge the reasons why, as mentioned in the introduction, the task of assessing the politicised dimension of Banks's use of form is easily disrupted, causing scholars either to wrench apart the sculptor's beliefs from his art or delimit this question to his choice in subjects, particularly of his early works produced in Rome long before 1789.¹⁷ Firstly, there is Banks's professional antipathy with Barry, discussed recently by Barrell.¹⁸ Unlike Banks, Barry put in print his own belief that "the sublime, venerable, majestic, genuine simplicity" of the ideal archaeological body (for which the body of Captain Burges is a prime specimen) could serve a civic purpose, most notably in his *Letter to the Society of Dilettanti*, also composed and circulated in 1798, this being the document that sealed Barry's fate as the Royal Academy's first ejected member the

¹⁷ The limits of Bryant's interpretation of Banks's art in the context of his radicalism is discussed in the introduction. While acknowledging that the sculptor's "political radicalism, bound up with his interest in antiquities...affected his output", M.G Sullivan limits the material vestiges of Banks's politics to the array of portrait busts executed after figures with similar politics to his own (2007: 411 n.65).

¹⁸ Barrell, 2013: 1-2.

following year.¹⁹ When Barry's controversial championing of the antique as a universal, socially ameliorating force is considered in the context of sculptor's apparent hand in this expulsion (which took place while the sculptor would have been working on the monument), it would be easy to assume that these two artists held conflicting views on whether or not classical nakedness could or should possess the capacity to perform a function beyond the aesthetic. Banks was present when Joseph Farington brandished Barry's *Letter to the Dilettanti Society* at the hearing that brought about Barry's ejection from the institution, and, according to Barry, Banks had actively prevented the Irish painter from obtaining a written copy of the charges against him.²⁰

Yet while Barrell is able to underplay the role of politics in the disagreement between these artists, crediting the sculptor's support for Barry's expulsion to the painter's campaign to spend profits from annual exhibitions on master works rather than distribute them for pensions, he makes no mention of the fact that Banks had, prior to Barry's expulsion, voiced sympathy for the painter and his devotion to the antique as expressed in

¹⁹ This quotation is from Barry's lecture on colouring, reprinted in Fryer, 1809: 2: 521. As Barrell has shown, Barry was not an artist who aligned himself with a particular political faction. But in the eyes of the Academy elite, his salutes to well-known regicide and former Revolutionary propagandist Jacques-Louis David in his *Letter to the Society of Dilettanti* could signify a dangerous blurring of the division between the aesthetic and the political, a division integral to the stability of the institution: "With hands lift up to heaven, and a heart full of exultation, I then hail the generous exertion of David and his noble fellow-labourers in their glorious undertaking, wishing it a long and prosperous career. How happy am I to think that they have a public who will meet their work with correspondent feelings" (Barrell, 2010: 127-141; Fryer, 1809: 2: 522; Barry, 1798).

²⁰ Barry describes Banks's conduct as such: "Mr. Banks some little time after observed, with other matter, ridiculously malignant, that as I had said I would ask no favour from the meeting, so it was not necessary to give me any copy of that paper" (Fryer, 1809: 2: 628).

the *Letter to the Society of Dilettanti*.²¹ Writing to his dear friend Cumberland, the sculptor, again lamenting the prejudice against contemporary representations of Greek and Roman forms among certain connoisseurs, relays a meeting that had taken place the previous evening at which Barry's epistolary defence of the antique had been discussed. Describing Barry's treatise as "a paper which he had Compos'd for the purpose of proving the superior excellence of every thing of Greek & Roman Art in this way to any thing Modern", Banks tells Cumberland of his own "Mortification to find (Barry's) propositions rejected & himself treated with some degree of Contempt".²² Greek and Roman art and its preservation among Academicians emerges as a basis for solidarity between these two figures. Barry's vocal commitment to the antique was defended by Banks against the main proponents of his professional ruin, indicating the sculptor's equally impassioned conception of ideal corporeality and its powers.

The classicisms of Barry and Banks are indeed different, as are their relationships to socio-political and artistic climates of their shared lifetime. Unaligned to a particular political faction, Barry held ancient sculpture to be coextensive with the entire corpus of Italian cinquecento art and everything in its wake, including such un-sculptural, tactile forms in two-dimensional art by Titian and even Rubens.²³ Banks's classicism draws its power from its "innovations", and thus is contemporary, according to Agamben's model

²¹ Barrell, 2010: 140; 2013: 2.

²² British Library Add. MS. 36498 f. 235.

²³ Barry's writings consistently communicate his reverence for Titian. To name but one example of his more ambivalent attitude towards Rubens, in his lecture on colour, the artist praises the Flemish painter's "general knowledge...vigour of mind (and)...elegant classical taste", regretting that his "style of design" has yielded a "false system" (Fryer, 1809: 1: 549).

of the concept discussed in the introduction, in that it was designed to speak directly to the events and circumstances of his own epoch through a “noncoincidence”, a “dyschrony”.²⁴ His *Monument to Captain Burges*, as we shall see, mobilises the antique so that it becomes a vehicle for his engagement with the extremely eventful years that witnessed its commission, design, and execution. For Barry, the antique was valued for its capacity to transcend time and place altogether, not to address current events from a politically active, unabashedly radical subject position.

Bindman concludes that Banks’s *oeuvre* is “hard to read in the light of his political convictions”.²⁵ This alleged discrepancy between Banks’s art and his politics emerges as particularly obstructive when one looks at the relationship between Banks and Flaxman, the latter being an established point of interest for Bindman that inevitably conditions the angle from which the scholar views the elder sculptor’s artistic achievements. Though their political identifications lay at opposite ends of the spectrum, these two sculptors both departed from ancient precepts, creating similarly original ideal forms that influenced one another throughout their careers. Their consistent pairing together, both in and beyond the period, has contributed to the obfuscation of the radicalism of Banks’s style.²⁶ It is only by separating Banks’s art from Flaxman’s that we can begin to

²⁴ Agamben, 2009: 41. As discussed in the introduction, Banks conflates to his own approach to Greek and Roman art with the desire for “innovations” and “endeavours to produce something new”. British Library, Add. MS. 36498, f. 239.

²⁵ Bindman, 1989: 166.

²⁶ There are countless examples of Banks and Flaxman being paired together, some of which will be addressed in Chapter 5. C.F Bell goes as far as to suggest that the two sculptors ought to be considered one and the same, aligning Banks with Flaxman in order to undermine the elder sculptor’s politics: “Banks’s historical position, as a member of a group, a link in a chain, is not difficult to fix. His ideas were so completely in harmony

comprehend how for Banks, those same re-casted ideal forms could be a powerful political mode in touch with the contemporary, albeit a mode readily incorporated into the cultural regime of the war-torn British state.

Also drawing attention away from the political nature of Banks's classicism is the legacy of the aforementioned Nollekens, another sculptor working with ideal forms at the same time as Banks. Although they were reportedly on friendly terms, works by Banks and Nollekens have only in common their shared investment in the archaeological aesthetic. Having left England in 1760, Nollekens had studied in Rome earlier than Banks, and on the continent his creative work as an artist remained secondary to his occupation as a restorer and copier of antiquities, a practice stigmatised by Banks and Barry as well as both Flaxman and Canova.²⁷ Once he had returned to England, little interested in politics, Nollekens was content to make a living as a portraitist, carving busts for the British elite and scarcely venturing to execute freshly conceived mythological or poetic subjects. Having won premiums from the Society of Arts in 1763, 1765, 1766 and 1769, Banks's mastery of the art had afforded him recognition before the Academy had been established. Nollekens and Bacon (a sculptor who shunned the archaeological aesthetic) were also awarded premiums, but it was Banks alone who received the first Academy

with those of Flaxman, and the career of the younger sculptor was in so many respects a counterpart and continuation of the elder's that it is scarcely paradoxical to think of the two men as if they had been one artist. Banks developed late, Flaxman was precocious, and the twenty years which separated their births were in this way to some extent annihilated" (1938: viii).

²⁷ Barry's attitude towards the economy of restored antiquities will be discussed in Chapter 2 n. 6. Flaxman laments that "many noble works (have) been miserably restored." Johns discusses Canova's refusal to make copies and his utter distaste for restoration (1998: 37).

scholarship to Rome in 1772, making him absolutely pivotal to the development of British Academic statuary in a way that Bacon and Nollekens were not.

This chapter will begin by providing background on the development of the British school of sculpture and its collision with the state's desire for new kinds of war monuments, and suggest that only during this phase in the late 1790s, and only by an artist with Banks's training, connections and convictions, could a work such as the *Monument to Captain Burges*, commissioned, authorised and funded by the national treasury, be erected. I will then examine more closely the sculptor's political orientations at the time the monument was installed, bringing to light his changing relationship to Jacobin ideals following Napoleon's rise to absolute rule. Post-Waterloo, leading up to the 1820s and beyond, we see a re-engagement with Banks's statue. Naked Burges assumes a different character during these years when the classical body has become wholly alien to Britain's domestic and international self-image. I will close this chapter with a consideration of Banks's relationship to Flaxman in an attempt to unearth to what extent Banks's singularity in the history of British art was reclaimed through the textual efforts of the younger, better-known sculptor.

For a brief period the wars with France had the effect of checking some of the negative assumptions which underpinned discourse on the British school. While the general tendency was to complain that the arts suffered from a lack of interest and support from

the government, sculptors in particular were now in demand.²⁸ In 1805, the year of Banks's death, an author in *The Gentleman's Magazine* made this clear: "War, while it depresses the power of painting and engraving, elevates the efforts of the chisel".²⁹ For its direct associations with the military achievements and monumental iconography of Rome in particular, the sculptural incarnation of the polysemic image was positioned as vital in the face of Gallic triumphs both militarily and in the fine arts. As Craske has suggested, notwithstanding the claims made by or on behalf of the Royal Academy, it was only during the Revolutionary wars that a unified British school of sculpture first came into being.³⁰

Between 1798 and 1823, thirty two contracts were voted upon for monuments to be placed in St. Paul's. Together these statues were intended to form a "Temple of British Fame", a collective commemorative scheme devoted to an array of fallen heroes based conceptually on Graeco-Roman military pantheons and with ambitions to rival the Revolutionary Panthéon in Paris.³¹ Banks's *Monument to Captain Burges* was one of three monuments in the first round of commissions. Because a selection of connoisseurs that would eventually be known mockingly as the "Committee of Taste" had not yet been appointed by the government's treasury to oversee and keep in check the design of groups, procedures for subsequent statues would never again be as free from state intervention as they were in 1798. Headed by the king's art advisor and member of parliament Charles Long, the committee was not formed until 1802, after the completion

²⁸ See Eaves, 1992: 3-10.

²⁹ *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1805: 75: 2: 795.

³⁰ Craske, 2006: 29.

³¹ See Hoock, 2010: 134-35.

of Banks's monument.³² Appointed to the committee were such powerful, wealthy collectors and antiquarian authorities as Charles Townley and Richard Payne Knight, both members of the Society of Dilettanti. Knight was a figure who would continue to be openly at odds with the notion that art, especially historical painting, should carry out any kind of political function or convey any kind of meaning beyond pleasure.³³

Other works in this round were Bacon's *Monument to Major General Thomas Dundas* and Rossi's *Monument to Captain Robert Faulknor* (Figs. 5, 6). Costing the government £5250, Banks's monument was the most expensive by as much as £1050. Although designs for each of the three statues in this round had all been chosen by the monarch and the treasury out of a selection of drawings, all by members of the Academy, the discrepancies between Banks's, Bacon's and Rossi's preliminary designs and the finished statues testify to the fleeting artistic autonomy granted to the artists involved in these commissions.³⁴

Prior to the introduction of monuments, the body of St. Paul's was itself a kind of *tabula rasa*, a vacant space. "Naked" was the word chosen by Thomas Secker, the Archbishop who appointed as the cathedral's dean in 1750, who is said to have lamented the "advantages (of) foreign churches", stating that "St. Paul's was too naked and bare for

³² Wrigley and Craske, 2004: 101.

³³ Knight's anonymous review of Barry's *Works* in an 1810 edition of *The Edinburgh Review* will be discussed in Chapter 4. See also, Myrone, 2010: 23-24.

³⁴ Yarrington notes that this first round of commissions was the only phase of the project in which the artists themselves were to exercise full determination over their own works (1988: 68).

want of monuments”³⁵ The still relatively new cathedral possessed nothing like the interior-architectural richness of Westminster Abbey, no mosaic floors or gothic cream fan vaulting, textured like honey comb, like that of Henry VII’s chapel. When Joshua Reynolds, Benjamin West, James Barry, Angelika Kaufmann, Nathaniel Dance and Giovanni Battista Cipriani made their plea in 1773 to decorate the space with a cycle of biblical paintings, they had been famously denied by the Archbishop Frederick Cornwallis and Bishop Richard Terrick on the grounds that religious imagery was Popish terrain.³⁶ Following the installation of Banks’s *Monument to Captain Burges*, the first of the three to enter the cathedral, an author writing in the *European Magazine and London Review* noted that many attempts had been made by “the artists of this country, to introduce both painting and sculpture into St. Paul’s; but the Dean and Chapter had strongly resisted every effort of the kind, till the present occasion calling for situations for large national monuments.”³⁷ Thus the 1798 St. Paul’s commissions not only signified the opening up of unprecedented possibilities for British sculptors, the introduction of emergent kinds of classical imagery into a space of fiercely guarded Protestantism was itself a momentous shift.

The emptiness of St. Paul’s fostered the incorporation of styles that were at the time new to the British monumental tradition. Farington writes that Bacon appealed to his friend the king to try and claim all of the 1798 commissions, but was turned down so that variety could be introduced into the scheme, seeing as Bacon had executed the first

³⁵ Newton, 1782: 121.

³⁶ For an account of this failed attempt see Aston, 2004: 241-242.

³⁷ *European Magazine and London Review*, 1803: 44: 29.

monuments to be installed in the cathedral since the fire, statues dedicated to Samuel Johnson and John Howard, a philanthropic educator, both installed in 1796.³⁸ The king's alleged interest in variety indicates that at this time, before the interventions of the "Committee of Taste", the visual language of war heroism was undergoing a transformation. Though, as Banks had indicated to Cumberland, a tendency to hold the antique at arms length was prevalent among certain connoisseurial authorities, Banks's monument managed to evade such wariness precisely because it embodied the present state of British sculptural practice rather than its past, and thus stood for exactly the kind of variety the king would have had in mind.

An unrelenting patriot in the original, pre-Revolutionary sense of the term, Bacon was the Georgian establishment's preferred sculptor, and had by this time acquired a fortune unusually vast for a British artist.³⁹ He had never been to Rome and his works adhere to the ornate, "modern" style that the Flemish sculptors Peter Scheemakers and Johannes Michel Rysbrack and the French Louis-François Roubiliac had introduced to England earlier in the eighteenth century. In this context, the word "modern" can be confusing, as during the 1790s this style was anything but cutting-edge. In terms of sculpture, it is modern only in the sense that it originates from a time in which the art of the ancients

³⁸ *The Farington Diary*: 3: 1119 (December 24th, 1798).

³⁹ Epstein contrasts the conservative significations of the word "patriot" with its altered implications in the 1790s, noting that in Revolutionary terms to "be a 'patriot' in the narrow sense of mere loyalty to one's own nation possessed no claim to virtue; it was a 'contemptible and illiberal' feeling. There was a shifting away from older chauvinistic and imperialistic associations with radical constructions of patriotism. 'Patriot' did not mean love of country per se, but allegiance to universal principles of reason, liberty, and human fellowship." (1994: 8). Bacon was a patriot in the former sense, in that he remained loyal to king and country until his death. Bacon's anomalous professional situation is discussed in Groseclose, 1995: 11.

was mediated by the resounding influence of Bernini. Having executed the majority of groups in Westminster Abbey, these few foreign sculptors were at this point largely responsible for the appearance of monumental statuary in Britain.⁴⁰ Their achievements are characterised by naturalism on the one hand, and virtuosically carved illusions of depth, motion and dramatic variations in surface texture on the other. In his youth Banks had frequented the studio of Scheemakers.⁴¹

This theatrical style of sculpture bears more affinity with seventeenth century painting than with ancient marbles. Driven to excess in the form of what is now commonly referred to as the “Rococo”, the undulating, voluptuous lines and copious draperies that characterise this aesthetic were driven from the French salons during the Revolutionary period.⁴² Amid the revitalised turn to ancient art and literature that came to replace the modern style as the dominant mode of contemporary continental fine art, Rome rather than Paris became the capital of the fine arts, something that would shift back again following Napoleon’s troops’ pillaging of Europe’s most prized art treasures and their transportation to the French capital.⁴³ As previously stated, Banks left Britain on his Academy scholarship in 1772, staying in Rome until 1779 and thus absorbing at its relative beginning this renewed continental investment in the archaeological body. With only a few exceptions, such as his 1789 *Shakespeare Seated between the Dramatic Muse and the Genius of Painting*, Banks’s sculptures rarely deviate from the linear clarity and

⁴⁰ This trinity of sculptors is mentioned in Bindman and Baker, 1995.

⁴¹ See Bell, 1938: 11.

⁴² For an enlightened discussion of this well-documented overturning of aesthetics see Lajer-Burcharth, 2006: 229; For a helpful assessment of the anachronistic term “Rococo” see Craske, 1997: 7-9.

⁴³ See McLellan, 1994.

unadorned corporeal idealism that had caught the attention of Reynolds, who is said to have deemed him the first British sculptor to achieve “classic grace...worthy of an ancient Greek”.⁴⁴

In his first lecture to students of the Royal Academy after his appointment to Professor of Sculpture in 1827, Westmacott invokes Banks as the saviour of British sculpture from the contamination of foreign-born artists working in the modern style such as Rysbrack, Roubiliac, and Scheemakers. According to Westmacott, the domestic tradition only began when “Banks...corrected the grosser impurities, and successfully stemmed the torrent of false taste”.⁴⁵ Myrone has illuminated the significance of Banks’s relationship to Fuseli while both artists were in Rome, an intimacy that is credited for cultivating both Banks’s lauded approach to the human form and his politics.⁴⁶ Although there is no textual evidence that directly links Banks to the writings of Winckelmann, it has been credibly deduced that it was Fuseli, first translator of some of Winckelmann’s works into English and the cousin of one of Winckelmann’s protégées, “imparted the theories and principles” of the German author to his friend the sculptor.⁴⁷ Yet, for reasons outlined in the introduction, it is reductive to identify Banks’s sculpture too completely with the

⁴⁴ Quoted in Cunningham, 1830: 3: 87. Thomas Banks, *Shakespeare Seated between the Dramatic Muse and the Genius of Painting*, 1789, New Place, Stratford, marble.

⁴⁵ An excerpt from this lecture is included in the second edition of Flaxman’s *Lectures on Sculpture*, 1838: vi.

⁴⁶ Myrone, 2005: 163-190. See also Irwin, 1966: 6-58. Bryant forges a link between Fuseli’s politics to Banks’s radicalism; however I am arguing that in isolation, such a connection overlooks the primacy of the Revolutionary moment in Banks’s ideological world view (2005: 54).

⁴⁷ Bell, 1938: 17. The complexities of Winckelmann’s influence on both British visual classicism are discussed in the introduction.

positions laid out in Winckelmann's writings, which would have meant something different to a British idealist like Banks than they would have for Fuseli.

By the mid 1790s, the sparse, linear aesthetic of Banks and Flaxman had become the definitive mode of British Academic statuary. Monuments, however, would prove more resistant to this advance. Bacon had nothing to do with the artistic communities in Rome and sought to dissociate himself from the cult of ancient art with all of its various lofty philosophic, poetic, political and pagan connotations.⁴⁸ Richard Cecil, whose *Memoirs of John Bacon* was first published in 1801 before the first round of monuments were installed in the cathedral, writes that the sculptor "often remarked on the affectation of many with respect to the antique", a stance similar to the one held by the younger sculptor Francis Chantrey.⁴⁹ Bacon's *Monument to Major Dundas* is a quintessential late example of the modern sculptural style. The hero is presented in the form of a portrait bust atop a thick columnar plinth decorated by a relief of Liberty guarding Britannia against Anarchy and Hypocrisy, an explicitly anti-Gallic choice of allegorical scene. A large, heavily draped figure of Britannia at the composition's centre crowns the bust with laurels while a lion sits at her feet. Holding the hand of Britannia is a personification of Sensibility and to the far left is a putto brandishing an olive branch. The artist's rejection of the archaeological aesthetic is exemplified by the complexity of composition and its varieties in surface texture. The intricate folds of fabric, particularly those that shroud figure of Sensibility, make explicit a circumspection toward the naked, with the exception of the chubby putto that appears in this particular monument as an icon of the more

⁴⁸ Bacon was a devoted Methodist. See Cecil, 1801: 22.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*: 30. Chantrey's take on classical antiquity is mentioned in Chapter 5 n. 90.

playful modern style. Bacon passed away in 1799, leaving the completion of this group to his son. It was not until 1805 that the *Monument to Major Dundas* was complete and antithetical styles were placed directly adjacent to one another.

In 1785, Rossi had won the same scholarship to Rome as Banks, and had stayed on the continent for a total of three years. His *Monument to Captain Robert Faulknor*, the third statue in this first round of commissions, straddles the divide between the poles of Bacon and Banks. Covered by a Roman tunic, Faulknor is depicted dying in Neptune's arms. The god is draped from the waist down and does not embrace the hero but rather props him up, trident in hand, against blocks of marble ocean that in their roughness pronounce the delicacy of Faulknor's idealised limbs. A calm and detached Victory stands to the right poised to crown Faulknor with a wreath. She is in the same position as Bacon's Britannia, but in reverse. In this work we see the modern style negotiated with more recent developments in contemporary Academic sculpture. With her long, large wings, the fully draped Victory does not challenge the continental eighteenth century monumental tradition, and the contrast between the hero's smooth skin against the chunky, textured marble ocean bears traces of Bernini himself.⁵⁰ Derived originally from Far Eastern art, the fish emerging between Neptune's legs smacks of painterly exoticism, the colossal koi in oceans by Boucher and Zoffany. But Rossi's choice to depict the hero dying peacefully and thus convey heroism and grace in suffering upholds the most important concept in Winckelmann's reading of Hellenic art, that of "noble simplicity

⁵⁰ This contrast, for example, can be seen in Bernini's *Truth Unveiled by Time*, 1645, Villa Borghese, Rome, marble.

and sedate grandeur” (*eine edle Einfalt und eine stille Größe*).⁵¹ Likewise, the soft transitions between muscles on the bodies of both Faulknor and Neptune leave modern irregularity behind. The overall staging of the tableau calls to mind sculptural painting in the vein of Poussin, works that influenced David’s most dramatic productions in the 1780s, the very opposite of Bacon’s style and royalist orientations.⁵²

With the exception of Westmacott’s bronze *Monument to Lord Nelson* which was placed in Liverpool’s Exchange Flags in 1813, and his 1822 colossal *Wellington Monument* on Hyde Park corner (to which I will return in Chapter 5), a British war hero would never again be portrayed in such complete nakedness as Banks’s Burges. After the appointment of the “Committee of Taste”, the St. Paul’s monuments start generally to assume a hybrid character combining antique grandeur, pathos and simplicity of composition, offset by elements belonging firmly to the former tradition: heavily draped allegories, lions, detailed modern dress and exotic details relating to specific battles, such as palms and sphinxes.

It would be reductive to assume that the “Committee of Taste” had been organised because of the distinct appearance of Banks’s work alone. Farington reports that after the *Monument to Captain Burges* and the *Monument to Lord Faulknor* had been installed in

⁵¹ Fusseli, 1767: 30. See Cheeke, 2009.

⁵² Rossi’s *Victory* bears something of Poussin’s depiction of the same figure in his *Triumph of David*, 1630, Museo del Prado, Madrid, oil on canvas. Additionally, there is a definite similarity between the manner in which Rossi’s Neptune holds the hero, and the principle pair in Gavin Hamilton’s *Juno and Jupiter*, date unknown, private collection, oil on canvas. Hamilton’s series of oath paintings are artist said to have informed David’s Revolutionary works (Johnson, 2006: 82).

the cathedral, the gem engraver Nathaniel Marchant dismissed them both as “ill drawn and finished without care.”⁵³ Thus it was not necessarily the nakedness of Banks’s figure that may have urged the formation of the “Committee of Taste”, but that Banks’s and Rossi’s works could generate harsh criticism for perceived formal infelicities alone. Though it is significant that Banks’s *Monument to Captain Burges* evaded the constraints that were soon to be enforced by the connoisseurs appointed on behalf of the state, the artist would probably not have been awarded another commission, as he was in 1803, if the monument had at the time been so immediately alarming as it would appear to later audiences.

Finished by a group of studio assistants because he was too sick to work in the final year of his life, Banks’s second St. Paul’s commission, his *Monument to Captain George Blagdon Westcott*, a naval captain who died in the Battle of the Nile, would be his second to last artistic effort before his death (Fig. 7). In this monument, we see the sculptor retreating from the extremes of his previous St. Paul’s group into more conventional territory. Westcott is depicted either just dead or dying, carried by Victory as if she is about to take flight and carry him heavenwards. The action of the figures is based on a drawing after Raphael that was in Banks’s personal collection (Fig. 8).

Beyond the domain of sculptural practice, the idea of the Hellenic body was experiencing a particular resurgence in the 1790s. By this time, Tommaso Piroli’s engravings of Flaxman’s Homeric *Outlines* had swept through the continent and become fashionable,

⁵³ *The Farington Diary*: 7: 2606 (25th of August, 1805).

captivating fellow artists, patrons and the emergent consuming public alike.⁵⁴ It is likely that the cosmopolitan popularity of these engravings (the originals of which were intended for execution in marble as bas-reliefs) contributed, in combination with the desire for any object calling to mind the general ascendancy of classical culture, to the approval of Banks's design, his polysemic image, by the king and the Tory treasury. There are as yet no records of the other rival designs for the Burges commission, but Banks's drawing is rendered in a reduced linear style that, particularly in the sparsely detailed yet refined, geometric musculature of Burges's body, the dimensions of Victory's wings and the graceful, air-born flutter of her drapery, echoes Flaxman's *Outlines* potentially enough to have helped Banks secure this prestigious commission (Fig. 9).

In 1796, Cumberland, with whom Banks was especially intimate with during the time of the monument's commission and execution, had published his *Thoughts on Outline*, a book solely dedicated to the Graeco-Roman "art of linear perspective".⁵⁵ In this text, Cumberland stresses the primacy of line drawing: "there is as much harmony to be produced by lines" he writes, "as by colour, or sound, or figure".⁵⁶ His treatise is illustrated by a selection of classical designs, all his own, some of which were engraved by William Blake who deemed it a "beautiful book" (Fig. 10).⁵⁷ In spite of Cumberland's preoccupation with the importance of the line, both the originals and the engravings of

⁵⁴ For insight into the international acclaim of Flaxman's *Outlines*, see Symmons, 1984.

⁵⁵ Cumberland, 1796: 27.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*: 5.

⁵⁷ Letter from Blake to Cumberland dated from the 23rd of December 1796 included in Erdman, 1982: 670.

these designs present faint, uniform delineations that remain subordinate to the forms they describe.⁵⁸ Their appearance is distinct from both Piroli's engravings and Flaxman's original drawings for his *Outlines*, in which the width and concentration of the line is varied, providing some depth and contour to the figures and a disciplined rhythm to each composition.⁵⁹ Banks's wispy black ink design lacks this discipline. His design bears a closer resemblance to Cumberland's inventions.

Differences aside, it is hard to imagine that the gentle lyricism shared by Flaxman's and Cumberland's designs could have anything in common with a 22 foot war monument. Yet the form of Banks's drawing makes clear that they all originate from a shared investment in delineation as the foremost component of the design process. Banks's work in marble influenced Flaxman's *Outlines* just as much if not more than these drawings directly influenced Banks. The sculpture by Banks which Flaxman admired the most and which arguably exerted the most visible influence on his *Outlines*, was his bas-relief *Thetis and her nymphs rising from the sea to console Achilles for the loss of Patroclus*, a work that the elder artist had begun in 1778 while in Rome and continued to work on after his return to England (Fig. 11). This relief was never exhibited, but after the Bishop of Derry cancelled his commission for the sculpture Banks kept it in his studio and it became known as one of his finest works. Flaxman's portrayal of *Thetis ordering the Nereids to descend into the sea* shows the presence of Banks's relief in the imagination of the younger artist. A preliminary sketch for the finished outline shows two drawings,

⁵⁸ See Rosenblum, 1967: 166-167.

⁵⁹ For a discussion of the distinctions between engravings of Flaxman's designs and the originals see Petherbridge, 2011.

both clusters of naked female forms cross-cutting horizontal planes, led by a slightly larger leader, the nymph Thetis, mother of Achilles (Fig. 12). The drawing at the top of the page shows Thetis with her arms raised upright over her head as she is in Banks's relief, though in the finished outline her arms are down by her sides. The stream of elongated bodies intertwined with their own draperies traversing the border between aquatic depths and the mortal realm is derived from Banks's relief.⁶⁰ The relationship between these artists is a crucial part of this thesis, and I will return to it later in this chapter and in Chapter 5.

In the *Outlines*, Flaxman created a potent new visualisation of his ancient literary source material. In his *Monument to Captain Burges*, Banks produced an antique form that was largely his own conception. As previously stated, the capacity for originality and invention was one aspect of Banks's practice that separated him from the likes of Nollekens and other statuaries of his generation working in Rome.⁶¹ He refused to copy directly any works in the canon of classical statuary, choosing instead to compose his own figures using the basic proportional templates provided by works of ancient sculpture. This was a tenet to which Canova also adhered, perhaps best illustrated by the differences between the *Venus de' Medici* and the Venetian's *Venere Italica*, the latter executed to hold the place of the former after the Treaty of Tolentino stripped the Uffizi of its prize possession.⁶² Had Banks made a direct quotation from a pre-existing work of art for the body of Burges, be it an ancient sculpture or even an old master work, the

⁶⁰ See Flaxman, 1838: 292; Myrone, 2005: 181. The originality of this relief will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

⁶¹ See Myrone, 2005: 163-190

⁶² See Honour, 1972.

naked statue would at least fit in line with the convention of emulation that usually justified the appearance of a naked figure in historical painting of the era. The looping of the chalmys and the position of the bent arm bear something of the *Farnese Hermes*, a statue known in Banks's lifetime as the *Antinous*, which the sculptor would have seen in Rome (Fig. 13). This similarity was picked up on by a contributor to the 1815 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Londinensis*, who described the figure as "Antinous-like".⁶³ But it can in no way be called a source. Not only is the *contrapposto* and bent arm of Burges in reverse to that of the *Farnese Hermes*, the captain's buttocks are markedly more rounded and pronounced. The stiff captain does not possess the relaxed yet contemplative attitude of the leaning ancient figure.⁶⁴ It becomes clear that Banks produced this peculiarly upright heroic naked ideal specifically for his first St. Paul's commission.

The fabrication of Banks's Burges, its severance from artistic precepts, is the basis for its symbolic meaning, what the next part of this chapter will investigate. As we know from the introduction, contemporary classicism, in which antiquity is mobilised to engage the present and the future, conjures Graeco-Roman nakedness not as a historical idea but as a timeless imprint. Ahistorical through its radical break with the modern past and its embodiment of an ideal future, the body of contemporary classicism may channel the perceived purity of ancient Greece, its republicanism, or that of ancient Rome; yet the

⁶³ Wilkes, 1815: 13: 409.

⁶⁴ Banks's Burges also bears some similarities to a pencil drawing made by Flaxman in Rome after an antique statue, potentially of Hermes, now in a folio at the Victoria and Albert Museum, B.2.C, p. 276.

meaning of this body remains fundamentally rooted in the futurity of the mythic present rather than a precise evocation of one specific historiography.⁶⁵

Projecting Banks's legacy as a nonconformist sculptor, an article from 1811 in *The Gentleman's Magazine* pays tribute to Banks as "one of the greatest ornaments of our country", noting that since the sculptor's death this widely-read publication had not yet acknowledged his "superior abilities, as well as moral worth":

In the line which the profession of Sculptor chiefly embraces, that of monumental subjects, there is not so much scope for fancy and variety, as in the productions of an Historical Painter, who, in his groupes or single figures, is not tied down to the unvarying form of the sarcophagus, or circumscribed by the walls and pillars of a church, or, what is even worse, by the obdurate taste of its regulators. But whenever an opportunity offered of deviating the established rules usually adopted in these cases, our Artist did not omit to avail himself of it⁶⁶

This excerpt offers insight into how Banks's originality was viewed in terms of both the St. Paul's project and the wider British monumental schema; "the obdurate taste of its regulators" is surely a scathing reference to Long's "Committee of Taste". Although the author has a very different agenda than the writer who proclaimed in the 1805 edition of

⁶⁵ Chapter 3 will discuss the interruption of this type of ideal corporeality by the arrival of the Phidian Elgin Marbles to Britain, sculptures that threw into relief the chimeric nature of the ideal manipulated and reimagined in contemporary classicism, the fact that as artistic template, this body was inherently corrupted by its modern restorations. In his 1895 essay "English Sculpture from Roubiliac to Flaxman" Edmund Gosse scoffs at Banks's singular relationship to the classical body while hinting that one should be wary of Banks's sources: "In all Banks's poetic figures we see the reconstituted ideal made up of recollected fragments of antique statuary, and it is dangerous to praise his work without being certain where he obtained the beauty of it" (Smith, 1894: 15).

⁶⁶ *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1811: 81: 2: 617. This author is drawing from Reynolds Discourse X on the subject of sculpture (1780).

the same journal that the sculptor rather than the painter is best positioned to make art in the time of war, their arguments are not as unrelated as it might seem. The author of the above passage argues that it is precisely because statuaries are summoned by the state to create works that meet official requirements, both practical and conceptual, that painters are the freer artists. Though the “Committee of Taste” was not established until after the *Monument to Captain Burges* had been installed, he is remembered as one whose art still flourished, against all odds, inside oppressive institutional frameworks.

Having outlined the context for its design, I will now explore the intersection between the monument and the sculptor’s beliefs, starting from the moment at which the finished group was installed in the cathedral. On the morning of Sunday the 9th of January 1803 during the first service to be held at St. Paul’s since it had closed almost six months earlier for repairs to the edifice and the organ, the statue was first revealed to the public. By the time of this “very crowded” event, Britain and France were enjoying a period of peace, the first in a decade, that had been settled by the Treaty of Amiens signed in March of 1802.⁶⁷ Writing to Cumberland in May that year, Banks appreciated that his work was to occupy the “best place in the cathedral” with a “very good light”.⁶⁸ His letter begins with some thoughts on the recent treaty, the nature of Napoleon’s leadership and war itself, and is necessary to quote at length:

⁶⁷ *Bury and Norwich Post*, 12th of January 1803.

⁶⁸ British Library Add. MS. 36499, f. 89. Quoted in Bell, 1938: 148.

I rejoice with you that an end is put to the Warhoop of European savages & that the thread of proud Ambition is spun to the last; but I differ from you that any feelings of humanity Actuated our rulers to induce them to give repose to 30 Millions of their innocent Neighbours—No their end in carrying on the war was answer'd, which was that of rendring themselves despotic over their own people, which they have most Completely & effectually done by this War—They have effected that which in the beginning of their Career they declar'd they wou'd effect which was to give their Neighbours either a dictator or President or Protector or Consul or any thing else that bears some resemblance to a King however distant & may hereafter without much difficulty be turn'd into one—this is what they have for these Nine years past been shedding the blood of some Millions of their innocent Neighbours about—however as peace is come to us we must rejoice & I do rejoice at the peace but sorrow for the Oppres'd African; for I rather doubt whether the time for his deliverance is yet come—as Mr. Buonaparte is become a Governor & his Government a regular one like all others, he will have the Assistance of all the regular Governments in this quarter of the Globe, shou'd he not be able to Compleat the enslaving the blacks himself—this is my Opinion of the Matter & if you reflect a little I believe you'll find reason to be something of the same yourself—if Mr. Buonaparte was a well wisher to humanity he ought to give the Blacks their liberty (as the first republicans in France were doing) instead of endeavouring to rivet their chains the closer in order to continue them in their enslaved State—But—Tempora mutantur & *he* is chang'd & I have done with him⁶⁹

Encompassing each of the nations, republics and imperial states participating in the treaty, the phrase “Warhoop of European savages” reduces both sides of the conflict to a single tangled web of gratuitous violence. The Treaty of Amiens is viewed as little more than perpetuation of the type of despotic power the Revolution had set out to eradicate, but should be “rejoiced” because it is a treaty of peace nonetheless, and has suspended the plight of “30 millions of (Britain’s) innocent Neighbours”. Banks does not attempt to obscure the passion and extent of his anti-war, anti-establishment, almost anarchic beliefs, which he notes are more extreme than those of Cumberland, who we can gather

⁶⁹ *Ibid*: 148-49.

had celebrated the “humanity” of the nation’s leaders in signing the treaty. The sculptor’s noting of the prominent, well-lit place afforded to his statue flows seamlessly from his attack on various forms of authority and on African enslavement, separated by some routine paragraphs on mundane business matters and the health of their mutual friend, the English politician and philologist John Horne Tooke.

In May 1798, before he had submitted his design to the competition, Banks informed Cumberland that he had received a summons from the Academy requesting his presence at St. Paul’s “to consider on three places for so many Monuments to be erected...to the memory of some of our Naval Heroes who have been kill’d in attempting to kill Others.”⁷⁰ The emphasis here on the multiplicity of deaths that have already occurred to bring about the commemoration scheme shows the extent of his sensitivity to actual warfare. Before Banks had even designed the monument he was able to acknowledge the connection between the forthcoming statues and death, moreover the actual feat of killing. In her recent work on the Napoleonic wars, Mary Favret states that in “the work of war, the necessity of killing means killing must not be pathologized. That a soldier kills himself can have nothing to do with the fact he has been trained to kill.”⁷¹ Banks’s definition of the “Naval Hero” as one who has been killed “in attempting to kill others” drains the heroic element from the idea of war, making death and war interchangeable while rendering the death of the killer-soldier reciprocal, suicidal. Like his “Warhoop of European Savages”, both sides of the conflict are united rather than separated by the act of killing. In this letter, Banks undoes the mythology of war, of which monuments, along

⁷⁰ British Library Add. MS. 36498, f. 229. Quoted in *Ibid*: 118.

⁷¹ Favret, 2012 (lecture).

with medals, were the primary material substance during his lifetime, refashioning this mythology as the physical, indiscriminate reality of men dying in battle. The head of Banks's naval captain embodies an acknowledgement of this indiscriminate reality. Yet, as we shall see, the body to which it is attached betrays the sculptor's faith in humanity and its future.

By 1798 the radical ebullience, riots and other modes of civic unrest that had taken place regularly in Britain throughout the preceding decade had been suppressed by the state's efforts to reassert monarchic and governmental supremacy.⁷² Four years earlier, as Barrell has investigated, the sculptor's ties to radical individuals had led to suspicion on the part of the state, and in the spring of 1794 he was called in for interrogation by Pitt and the Home Secretary, among other administrators.⁷³ What aroused suspicion first and foremost was the fact that Banks was a member of the Society for Constitutional Information, a relatively genteel organisation founded in 1780, stimulated by the American Revolution, by John Cartwright, a political reformer and ex-naval officer who very much unlike Banks was ardently pro-war and a nationalist, having in 1802 published his own treatise on military monuments: *The Trident: or, the National Policy of Naval Celebration: Describing A Hieronauticon, or Naval Temple*.⁷⁴ Banks's fellow Academicians George Romney and William Sharp were also aligned with this group, the

⁷² See White, 2012: 543-552.

⁷³ Barrell, 2013: 3.

⁷⁴ Cartwright, 1802.

activity of which was afforded a renewed sense of purpose in the advent of the Revolution in France.⁷⁵

Committed to halting even the most polite expressions of democratic sentiment, Pitt's government dissolved the SCI the year of Banks's interrogation. Tooke, a founding member of the SCI and Banks's comrade, was arrested along with the radicals Thomas Hardy and John Thelwall, and detained in the Tower of London in a highly publicised trial for high treason. Several months after Banks had been called in for questioning, Farington notes that the sculptor's receipt of an earlier monumental commission destined for Westminster Abbey would be "out of the question" due to "some political circumstances".⁷⁶ This was for the *Monument to Captain James Montagu*, a commission won by Flaxman. Banks's contract for the most expensive and prestigious of the new St. Paul's project demonstrates the changed nature of the political milieu between 1794 to 1798, and again, the increasing demand for able statuaries as the wars progressed and the indispensable role this particular sculptor had long played within the Academy.

Since 1783, when George III had intervened in the parliamentary process by terminating the short lived Fox-North coalition and appointing the young William Pitt to prime minister, a clear distinction between Whigs and Tories had been somewhat blurred.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ In his article "The Royal Academy's 'violent democrat' Thomas Banks", Bryant attempts to examine the nature of Banks's political engagement as it relates to his sculpture. The scholar stops short of incorporating Banks's classicism into his comprehension of the sculptor's politics. I am arguing that this is crucial to their interpretation (2005).

⁷⁶ *The Farington Diary*: 1: 208 (July 2nd, 1794).

⁷⁷ See Wilson, 1995: 206-209; Hampsher-Monk, 2005: 11-15.

This is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that, although technically a Tory initially disliked by the Whig majority in the House of Commons, Pitt termed himself an “Independent Whig”.⁷⁸ The Revolution would become the new dividing line, separating Pitt’s royalism from Charles James Fox’s support for Jacobin convictions.⁷⁹ Tooke was known as a figure whose allegiances had oscillated from actively democratic in his youth, to a supporter of Pitt, to a kind of political ambiguity loosely labelled radical. James Gillray’s satirical print entitled *Two Pair of Portraits*, published in the *Anti-Jacobin Review* the exact month Banks signed the contract for his *Monument to Captain Burges*, seeks to capture this oscillation, presenting Tooke at an easel gesturing with a paintbrush at two portraits, one of Fox, the other of Pitt. (Fig. 14). A speech bubble issuing from his mouth reads: “Which two of them will you choose to hang up in your Cabinets: the PITTs or the FOXES?—Where on your Conscience should the other two be hanged?”. The “other two” refers to Lords Holland and Chatham (Henry Fox and William Pitt the elder), the famous fathers of the rival leaders, long since dead, whose portraits Gillray has placed on the ground to the right of the easel. The title of the print is derived from a pamphlet Tooke had published a decade earlier in 1788, in which he championed the honesty and virtue of the Pitts, presenting Fox and his lineage in an unflattering light.⁸⁰ However, the outbreak of the Revolution had distanced Tooke from Pitt’s pro-war policies, and the denouncing of his former allegiance allowed him to be cast as a hypocrite, making him an easy target for anti-Fox propaganda such as Gillray’s print.⁸¹ Tooke’s acquittal in the 1794 treason trial reveals the limits of his turn to radicalism: he

⁷⁸ Quoted in McCormack, 2005: 119.

⁷⁹ See O’Gorman, 1967; Mitchell, 1971.

⁸⁰ Tooke, 1788.

⁸¹ See Beedell and Harvey, 1995.

was a literary figure, opposed to aristocratic supremacy, but also strongly opposed to violence. In 1790 and again 1796, he ran against Fox for the Westminster Constituency and, though he lost spectacularly in both instances, made a considerable impression for a controversial, outsider politician with a following now comprised mainly of those seeking parliamentary reform and those actively opposed to war.⁸² Winning votes from men alienated by the corruption of Fox and his aristocratic Whiggism, he advertised himself as “the candidate most hated by Pitt”.⁸³

In his lengthy philological treatise *The Diversions of Purley*, also published in 1798, (of which the sculptor ordered a copy of the third volume, the author making out a receipt signed to “Citizen Banks”) Tooke justifies his political endeavours as attempts “to prevent the effusion of brother’s blood”.⁸⁴ Yet while the anti-war sentiment Banks expresses to Cumberland seemingly mirrors his comrade Tooke’s public stance against violence, the sculptor’s convictions are coextensive with his enduring adherence to Revolutionary principles, made clear by his praising of (imminently overturned) Jacobin abolitionism in his 1802 letter, and his newfound dissatisfaction with Napoleon, whom he had previously admired not for his military prowess, but for his personification of

⁸² See Bewley, 1998: 87.

⁸³ Quoted in the entry “John Horne Tooke” Stephen and Smith, 1909: 972.

⁸⁴ This receipt is in the National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum; Tooke, 1798: 1. Iain Hampsher-Monk notes the multiple implications of the word “citizen” during this phase in British history, that it was at once “a perfectly well recognized status within the urban communities of Britain—but it could be used in critical opposition to the royalist term ‘subject’, just as it could be used with reference to a universal community of radical democrats rather than with reference to a particular nation state—both politically momentous polarities” (2004: 21).

democratic possibilities.⁸⁵ Tooke, on the other hand, did not wholeheartedly approve of the situation in France from 1789 onwards.⁸⁶ Thus, though the relationship between Tooke and Banks is helpful in discerning Banks's involvement in the SCI and his political affiliations more generally, the ideological bent of Banks's *Monument to Captain Burges* breaks with Tooke's world view.

Tooke's disapproval of the Revolution in France did not prevent Gillray from suggesting otherwise. In *Two Pair of Portraits*, a folio labelled "Studies from French Masters" rests on the bureau behind the easel, and protruding are some leafs of paper onto which the satirist has written "From Robespierre", "From Tallien" and "From Marat". By the time

⁸⁵ Banks's disillusionment with Napoleon in the 1802 letter to Cumberland is based on the hypocrisy of the Corsican's move toward despotism, suggesting that his former admiration for Napoleon had been based on his status as an upholder of Revolutionary principles rather than his military achievements. In August 1798 Banks signed off a letter to Cumberland with the following statement: "I believe Buonaparte has given them to *Go by* compleately." British Library Add. MS. 36498, f. 239. In response to this cryptic expression of support for Napoleon's entry into Egypt before Nelson, C.F Bell condemns the sculptor's "unpatriotic satisfaction" (1938: 127).

⁸⁶ In 1794 the Irish playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan was called upon to testify to the extent of Tooke's treasonous activity. His response to the lawyer Thomas Erskine's question (also the defender of Paine), "did Mr. Tooke object to the revolution", reveals Tooke's reticence toward the Revolutionary moment: "Horne Tooke did not immediately object to the revolution, but when he rose he first of all proposed an amendment to it...I recollect perfectly well Mr. Tooke's...arguing the necessity of qualifying our approbation of the French revolution, and establishment of liberty in France, with a declaration in favour of the principles of our own constitution...I remember perfectly well his speaking in a figurative manner in describing the form of government in France as a vessel so foul and decayed, that no repair could save is from destruction" (Blanchard, 1795: 2: 79). It is clear that, in contrast to Banks who admired the "first republicans" and their ideals, Tooke remained committed to the specifically English narrative of liberty centring on the constitution of 1688. Related to this distance from Jacobinism and human rights, Tooke does not appear to have taken much interest in the abolition of slavery, as indicated by his friendships with various slave-owners, an apparent inconsistency between conceptions of liberty and equality that again points to the slippery nature of his beliefs (Bewley, 1998: 79).

of this print's publication and Banks's signing of the contract for the monument, Robespierre and Jean-Paul Marat had both been dead for several years while Jean-Lambert Tallien had broken away from the Jacobins to which he had formerly been aligned and France settled under Napoleon's military regime.⁸⁷ The inclusion of this detail accuses Tooke of a superficial interest in the Revolution, simultaneously hinting of the mythologisation of these three French figures among the community of British radicals of which Tooke was at the centre and Banks was associated. With the now infamous David recently having been released from prison, perhaps this folio also mocks Tooke's associations with radical British artists such as Banks, Cumberland, Sharp and Smirke.

In 1798, Banks's interest in French Revolutionary art was serious. When he designed his *Monument to Captain Burges*, French art produced at the height of the Revolution, before the deaths of Robespierre and Marat and the changing allegiance of Tallien, was a direct source of inspiration. Bryant has traced the basic figural arrangement of Banks's group to what would have been, in the eyes of Pitt's administration, an extremely polemical source in the late 1790s: French artist Guillaume Guillon-Lethière's 1793 *Liberty and Equality United by Nature*, a drawing commemorating the summer festival of the Republican Reunion, an engraving of which Banks acquired for his personal collection (Fig. 15).⁸⁸ Lethière was David's younger rival and, like David, had served as an official propagandist for the Jacobins. In his monument, Banks exchanges Lethière's female

⁸⁷ For a discussion of Tallien in relation to David see Lajer-Burcharth, 1999: 16.

⁸⁸ Despite making this important identification, Bryant does not consider what made Lethière unique in relation to other French artists. (2005: 56).

figure of Liberty with his winged Victory, while the British naval captain stands in the place formerly occupied by a Phrygian-capped male Equality. In the original French picture, the two principal figures hold hands, and with her remaining hand Liberty holds a balance scale, Equality a club. Nature presides over their meeting with god-like authority.⁸⁹

Lethière's image is of two allegories brought together under the providential auspice of another, and at first, Banks's monument appears like a cynical perversion of the symbolism of this source: Victory and a naval captain distinguished for excellence in the wars against the Revolution separated, rather than united, by the sword and cannon that take over Nature's role. On the ground, weapons assume the inverse function of the elevated allegory, are Thanatos to Lethière's Nature-Eros. But knowing what we know about the conflation between Banks's anti-war convictions at the time he designed the monument, his radical activism during the 1790s and his support for the Revolution, further communicated his disenchantment with Napoleon in 1802 ("*Tempora mutantur & he is chang'd & I have done with him*"), it becomes evident that in 1798 Banks subverted Revolutionary source material to convey his commitment to the ideals invoked by Lethière's work, ideals which by this point had fused with his awareness and acknowledgement of the mass loss of life caused by the wars fighting against them. Banks's monument uses emblems of battle—the sword, cannon, and cannon balls—to objectify the very idea of war, so that it becomes something material, external to the universal, beautiful human form. As stated earlier, Burges's hand does not quite touch the

⁸⁹ For a discussion of a compositionally-similar work by Lethière as well as insight into his identity see Grigsby, 2001.

sword Victory passes to him, but rather, its handle is left hovering just out of his reach, separated from the captain's palm by mere inches.

If we recall how Banks's letter to Cumberland dating from the time of the monument's installation positively acknowledges the efforts made by "the first republicans in France" to abolish African enslavement, we are offered yet more insight into Lethière as a choice of source. Born in the French colony at Guadeloupe to a creole mother, Lethière was a fierce abolitionist, exactly the kind of "first republican" Banks implies. In 1794, and only following intensive debates on the question, the National Convention abolished slavery in France, Saint-Domingue and other colonies, asserting the notion of individual freedom across perceived racial categories.⁹⁰ As much as the physical realisation of this movement within Saint-Domingue would not be achieved until 1800, the fact that Lethière produced *Liberty and Equality United by Nature* in 1793 resonates with the triumph this amendment would have been for a figure such as Lethière, who, when he first arrived in France in the late 1770s, would have risked deportation under the Ancien Régime.

The Haitian Revolutionaries' victory in 1800 over British and Spanish troops seeking to seize the opportunity to claim the colony as their own, following the abolitionist settlement, served to strengthen anti-slavery campaigns in Britain, for which Banks, with his lamenting the suffering of the "Oppres'd African", was clearly in support, as was

⁹⁰ For an enlightened examination of this achievement and its separation from previous debates around/philosophical models of slavery see Buck-Morss, 2000: 832-33.

Cumberland.⁹¹ As Susan Buck-Morss has argued, “events in Saint-Domingue were central to contemporary attempts to make sense out of the reality of the French Revolution and its aftermath.”⁹² Much of Banks’s criticism of Napoleon in 1802 stems from the fact that following the Treaty of Amiens it became clear that Napoleonic officials intended to resume colonial slavery, repealing the abolitionist settlement agreed by the Jacobins.⁹³ Through its connections to Lethière’s picture, Banks’s design incorporates the legacy of the National Convention’s (short-lived) triumph against slavery, which in 1798 could still be held as one of the foremost assurances that the bloodshed of the Revolution had in the end benefitted humankind.

If we now compare Bacon’s *Monument to Major Dundas* with Banks’s *Monument to Captain Burges* in light of both Banks’s choice of source and the specificities of Lethière’s identity inside French society, the content of the former work, rendered in the modern style, holds yet more significance. Bacon’s intricate relief depicting Liberty protecting Britannia against Anarchy and Hypocrisy is, like Banks’s source, related to the impression made by the situation across the Channel in the mid to late 1790s (Fig. 16). Hoock notes that Bacon’s relief “fed into Revolutionary reportage in Britain which had begun to dehumanise the French”, a trend which, having reached great heights during the Seven Years War, again intensified in the early 1790s.⁹⁴ Bacon’s figure of Liberty on his monument’s relief and the same personage presented in Lethière’s image have wholly

⁹¹ For information on Cumberland’s involvement with abolitionist groups see: Coleman, 2005: 47-54.

⁹² Buck-Morss, 2000: 836.

⁹³ See Grigsby’s discussion of the fortunes of black Jacobin Jean-Bapsite Belley (2002: 56-63).

⁹⁴ Hoock, 2010: 178.

separate meanings. Bacon's Liberty is Britain's defence, like the military, making clear this is a monument completely and explicitly at one with the war. His allegory also evokes the more conservative mythology of liberty surrounding the British constitution of 1688, the traditional conceptions of commercial freedom and respectful parliamentary independence from the crown.⁹⁵ This Liberty is thus another character entirely from the abstract idea of individual freedom incarnated by Lethière's version of the same personification.⁹⁶ Lethière's universalism surfaces as the converse of Bacon's nationalism, and thus it becomes all the more apparent that Banks's statue radically and self-consciously breaks with British national identity. With its residual adherence to the ideals of human rights temporarily realised in the 1790s, the *Monument to Captain Burges* is grounded in a rejection of the local and the particular, a universalism inspired by Revolutionary possibility.

A mutual warmth marks the correspondences between Cumberland and Banks around the time of the production of the *Monument to Captain Burges*. As previously stated, traces of Cumberland's manner of outline drawing on Banks's design indicate that the bond between these two figures extended to aesthetic understanding as well as general political consensus. The month Banks signed the contract for the monument, Cumberland prepared his first novel for publication, *The Captive of the Castle of Sennaar*, a book that

⁹⁵ For a recent discussion of the development of English national identity in relation to the constitution see Mandler, 2006: 14-16.

⁹⁶ For an exploration of the role played by such female allegories in the French Revolution see Landes, 2003.

would shortly be withdrawn due to its polemical content. Though Cumberland's marginalia states that Tooke had read a manuscript copy, apparently staying up until 2 o'clock in the morning to finish it, it remains unclear whether or not Banks ever read his friend's novel.⁹⁷ Yet embedded in this utopian story is a conception of the human form bearing striking affinities with the way in which Banks uses classical nakedness to communicate the beliefs shared by both these figures.

Set in the chamber of a Northeast African prison "constructed of Egyptian granite, high suspended above the earth, and too strong to nourish any hope of escape", *The Captive of the Castle of Sennaar* is told in fictional memoir form, recounted from one inmate, a Greek named Lycas, to another, named Memmo.⁹⁸ Lycas recounts to Memmo his time among the Love-worshipping Sophians, inhabitants of a fictional island in a lake somewhere in central Africa. Upon his first morning waking up among these peaceful, uncorrupted people, Lycas finds himself confronted with their free and uncorrupted attitude towards the display of the naked body:

soon the whole hall was filled with groups of naked figures, very few of which might not have formed a model for the heroes of former times...Like the ancient statues, which still remain, they appeared to glory in the form the Creator had assigned them; and would have spurned at the unnatural depravity that affixed ideas of shame to the most necessary, wonderful and noble organs of the human superstructure.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Tooke's interest in the novel is noted by Cumberland in the annotated copy of the novel at the Beinecke Library BEIN 1996 248: 171.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*: 1.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*: 83.

The freedom and innocence with which the Sophians regard the human form synthesises “the Creator”, freedom, and nakedness, re-naturalising man in his unclothed state.

Christianity, original sin and the Genesis story in particular, are referenced subtly as “the unnatural depravity” which interrupted this natural harmony and order. Cumberland was not necessarily an atheist, and the paganism of his novel is more of a form of experimentation, an exploration of ontological alternatives to the constraints and inequalities underpinning urban British life during the war-torn 1790s, including the religious tensions that ran parallel to the culture of reform during this phase.¹⁰⁰ Given what we know of their aesthetic and political affinities, we can begin to conflate Cumberland’s Sophians and their free displays of the liberated human form with Banks’s Burges.

When Pitt’s treasury and George III selected Banks’s design, they clearly approved of the fact that the sculptor portrayed Burges like “the heroes of former times” referenced by Cumberland in the above passage, something encompassed in the polysemic image’s capacity to signify both the “purity” of ancient Greece and the imperial grandeur of ancient Rome. Cumberland’s Sophians and their beautiful uncorrupted nature, their nakedness, are in dialogue with the (deeply politicised) bodily freedoms attached to the historiography and the fantasy of ancient Greece, or rather, the fantasies bound up with the historiography of the classical Hellenic rather than that of the latter civilisation. Yet, like the body of Banks’s naval captain, they are an ancient people of entirely the author’s own invention, and thus their ideological connection to the contemporary is stronger than

¹⁰⁰ For a discussion of the relationship between dissenting protestants and British radicals see Hampsher-Monk, 14-22.

their continuity with Greece's historiography. In the way it adapts and refashions the idea of antiquity to comment on the present, *The Captive of the Castle of Sennaar* can too be said to be a work of contemporary classicism. These two contemporaneous but seemingly disparate works of art, a novel banned from publication and a marble monument funded by the British state, are both utopian statements that harness the beautiful human form to indict the socio-political circumstances in which they were conceived, and also, more generally, the condition of life in 1790s Britain. In contrast to the mortal head of Burges, the figure's ideal body is transcendent in its utopianism.

G.E Bentley asserts that the suppression of Cumberland's novel was twofold. Firstly, there was the lawyer Henry Erskine's fear, noted by Cumberland himself in the marginalia of another manuscript copy, that publication of the book would be "dangerous, under Mr Pitt's maladministration".¹⁰¹ Intriguingly, there is a second, less predictable explanation for why the book was not published in 1798. In another copy of the text, Cumberland writes that Edgerton, the publisher, "was a military Bookseller and feared his customers".¹⁰² Bentley confirms that Edgerton "was afraid of offending his best customers from the army and navy because of the outspokenly anti-militaristic content of the book."¹⁰³ When *The Captive of the Castle of Sennaar* finally resurfaced in 1810, it was almost entirely ignored by critics. Inevitably, much of the novel's anti-militaristic potency was now lost, the ideological charge of the text belonging irrevocably to the era in which Banks produced his statue of a naked naval captain. I want to suggest

¹⁰¹ Bentley, 1997: 156. This annotated copy is held in the Bodelian Library ESTC T85705.

¹⁰² Bieneke Library BEIN 1996 248: title page.

¹⁰³ Bentley, 1997: 157.

that Cumberland's banned novel renders explicit much of the symbolical, radical meaning of the monument, that through its very form and content, Banks's polysemic image at once visualises and obscures the openly anti-war, counter-cultural content of the book.

Though the suppression of the book stands in sharp contrast to the pride of place afforded to Banks's sculpture in St. Paul's, the fortunes of Cumberland's novel are not unlike the changing reception of Banks's monument. Reflecting on Banks's achievements in the early 1830s, Cunningham could mock "those perilous days, when 'revolution' and 'liberty and equality' were putting wise men mad".¹⁰⁴ Numerous instances start to emerge of authors balking at the now "incongruous" nakedness of Captain Burges, something that, as we know, scholars perpetuate to this day.¹⁰⁵ In 1814, the author of a guide book titled *The Beauties of England and Wales: or, Delineations* could describe Banks's "brave Burgess (sic)" as "finely expressive of heroic animation, but almost literally naked, a state by far more befitting the Goddess herself than the representation of a Naval Officer."¹⁰⁶ This statement anticipates the fate of classical nakedness in British sculpture and historical painting, the imminent eroticisation of the feminine form that Chapter 5 will discuss.

¹⁰⁴ Cunningham, 1832: 3: 95.

¹⁰⁵ This is the word chosen by the American author Josiah Holbrook in his baffled description of Banks's monument. in *A familiar treatise on the fine arts, painting, sculpture and music* (1834: 181).

¹⁰⁶ *The Beauties of England and Wales: or, Delineations*, 1814: 11: 2: 285.

After England's victory had been sealed by the Battle of Waterloo a year later, the significance of Banks's monument steadily continued to decline. The first post-war edition of the *Encyclopaedia Londinensis* deems Burges "too naked for an English protestant church."¹⁰⁷ A letter published in 1819 in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* responding to another reader's plea for a Greek temple to be erected in the Scottish capital cites Banks's monument as a merely another symptom of the nation's stagnant preoccupation with the ancients:

It is the taste of men like your correspondent which has filled our churches with monuments of British heroes, sages, and bards, in the garb of Greece and Rome—that has given Samuel Johnson a Roman toga and sandals—and an antique shield and helmet to Lord Chatham—that has sent Captain Burgess stark naked with a sword in his hand to gain the weather gage and break the French line¹⁰⁸

What is most compelling about the above passage is that it makes no distinction between the conservative classicism of Bacon, who was responsible for another quintessentially modern statue, the aforementioned heavily draped *Monument to Samuel Johnson* flagged up by the author, and Banks's simple, "stark naked" hero. The contrasting aesthetics of these statues become one in their mutual use of classical imagery alone, a shift that reveals the generalising nature of the backlash against of the classical body. With their differences eradicated, both modern classicism, a style rendered nationalistic in Bacon's sculpture, and the linear approach to antiquity that becomes radically universal in Banks's monument, are now illegible, nonsensical, utterly meaningless.

¹⁰⁷ Wilkes, *Encyclopaedia Londinensis*, 409.

¹⁰⁸ *Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine*, 1819: 6: 77.

More examples of increasingly shocked responses to Burges's nakedness emerge during the 1820s, when, as previously noted, the St. Paul's project had collapsed into obscurity while the widespread reaction against classical art was becoming commonplace in cultural criticism.¹⁰⁹ Cunningham makes myth out of the statue's appearance, telling a story that, I venture to suggest, must partly be an invention, as surely such a controversial occurrence, if not at least mentioned by Farington, would have been recorded elsewhere.

Cunningham writes:

Having offended alike the lovers of poetry and the lovers of truth, he next gave offence to certain grave divines, who voted that the small line of drapery with drops over the shoulder as far as the middle of Captain Burgess (sic), 'In longitude was sairly scanty,' ...Banks added a handbreadth to it with no little reluctance. When churchmen declared themselves satisfied, the ladies thought they might venture to draw near—but the flutter of fans and the averting of faces was prodigious. That Victory, a modest and well-draped dame, should approach an undressed dying man, and crown him with a laurel, might be endured—

¹⁰⁹ One author writes, "Is it not a libel on national taste to observe, in the Cathedral of the metropolis, the statue of Captain Burgess, exposed at full length as a naked figure? Surely this is not the costume of the navy. Did the hero tread the quarter-deck in this state, during the engagement, when he fell? we should suppose not, and therefore the artist has sinned at once against the naval order, correct taste, and even national decorum. Mr. Pitt, or Mr. Fox, so represented, would look ridiculous: then why not Captain Burgess?" (*Recreative Review, or, Eccentricities of Literature and life*, 1822: 2: 396). Likewise, an article entitled "Canova—British Sculptors" documents a similar reaction: "Only think of Victory, a modest well dressed lady, presenting a sword to a naked gentleman!—historical truth and national delicacy are alike wounded. He thought that dress concealed sentiment, and that his hero had only to be naked to be heroic. He was ever aspiring after simplicity and loftiness—had a profound contempt for all that was modern, and thought that the charm of the antique arose from its nudity. The present costume of our country is much more comfortable than poetic, nor is it to be compared for a moment with the flowing robes of the Asiatic Greeks. Yet in a moment which pretends to record history, there should be some little attempt at historical accuracy. No British warriors carry antique shields—wear sandals—go naked into battle. Bankes, however, did sometimes condescend to court British nature" (*Quarterly Review*, 1826: 34).

but how a well-dressed young lady could think of presenting a sword to a naked gentleman went far beyond all their notions of propriety.¹¹⁰

I have found no other record of the sculpture causing this kind of scandal among the “grave divines”, nor Banks being ordered to increase the length of the captain’s chalmys. Moreover, the length of the drapery is the same in Banks’s design as it is in the finished monument. Surely Cunningham’s account speaks more for the discourses of sexuality and art around 1830 rather than during the sculptor’s lifetime. For the purposes of this study at large, the implications of circulating this story in retrospect are far more profound than the veracity of the alleged event itself.

While the factors we have so far been exploring contributed to the integration of a clandestinely radical monument into St. Paul’s Cathedral, it appears that after Banks’s death in 1805, the sculptor’s reputation could be a grave source of concern. To mark the death of the sculptor, Flaxman composed a heartfelt eulogy titled *An Address to the President and Members of the Royal Academy on the Death of Thomas Banks, Sculptor*, which was prevented from being read aloud by West and Farington on the grounds that, due to Banks’s past activity, such a special tribute might appear in the eyes of George III to be honouring the sculptor’s known views and affiliations.¹¹¹ At this point, West himself was insecure about his own reputation due to his recent falling out of favour with the royals who had long provided his main source of income, the moment at which

¹¹⁰ Cunningham, 1832: 3: 101-102.

¹¹¹ *The Farington Diary*: 7: 2511 (February 6th, 1805).

Chapter 2 will commence. Flaxman's treatise on the deceased artist "whose talents (had) been familiar to (him) for 40 years" would not re-appear until 1838, when the second edition of his *Lectures on Sculpture* was published, and the author himself dead for over a decade.¹¹²

According to the memoir on Flaxman's life included in the introduction of the first edition of these *Lectures*, when the Treaty of Amiens allowed him and some fellow artists, including West, to visit Paris, the sculptor separated himself from his companions by refusing to meet both Napoleon, "the man who was the enemy of his country and his King!", and David "whose talents he admired, but of whose political conduct and principles he had an abhorrence".¹¹³ In 1796, Farington wrote that after he had suggested that Banks's "conduct with regard to Politicks had done him harm" Flaxman agreed, adding that "his indiscretion in that respect both in Italy and in England had hurt his interest".¹¹⁴

Much of the content of Flaxman's eulogy to Banks takes the form of an account of British and continental sculpture produced the years before Banks was active, in which Flaxman condemns "the bizarre and childish" creations of Bernini, presenting his style like an aesthetic malady, an infectious disease contracted by weak, inferior sculptors.¹¹⁵ According to Flaxman, Banks and his his commitment to the "beauty and propriety" of the antique appeared just in time to rescue British statuary from "the low state of the

¹¹² Flaxman, 1838: 271-294.

¹¹³ Flaxman, 1829: xxvi.

¹¹⁴ *The Farington Diary*: 2: 636 (August 9th, 1796).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*: 279.

Arts” that characterised the decades of his youth. But it is precisely by affording Banks the credit for these improvements that Flaxman prizes Banks’s use of the classical body apart from the symbolical meanings this chapter has explored. This desire to cleanse Banks’s legacy, to turn it into a purely aesthetic narrative, is also perceptible in Flaxman’s first lecture, entitled “English Sculpture”, in which the author forges a connection between the patronage and auspices of “gracious sovereign George III” and “the late Mr. Banks, whose works have eclipsed the most, if not all, of his continental contemporaries.”¹¹⁶ In this loaded sentence, Banks’s Revolutionary sympathies are likewise eclipsed.

In 1806 Flaxman told Farington that he thought Banks’s *Monument to Captain Burges* embodied a synthesis of “beams of light...mixed with much imbecility”.¹¹⁷ I would like to conclude this chapter by suggesting that this statement acknowledges the radical charge of the statue. The “beams of light” indicate Banks’s career-long commitment to the archaeological aesthetic epitomised in this work: simplicity of composition, a type of ideal corporeality original and inventive enough to place the artist as a kind of father-figure to the national school of sculpture. The “imbecility” is not so much a formal criticism, but a charge against what Flaxman likely knew to be the political implications of Banks’s use of this naked ideal in relation to the epoch witnessing its commission, design, and execution. Flaxman could perceive that Banks’s mobilisation of the classical body, as well as the canon, canon balls and sword that stops short of uniting the naked Burges with Victory, were intended to make, as I have argued, a statement against the

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*: 51.

¹¹⁷ *The Farington Diary*: 7: 2761 (May 14th, 1806).

wars seeking to eliminate Revolutionary ideals, a statement in dialogue with the mythic present, both its universalist triumphs and the catastrophic losses bound up with the battles that it stimulated. Banks's artistic influence lives on in both the art and the writings of Flaxman, allowing the politics of this artist-activist to remain forever at one remove from his sculptural style. The *Monument to Captain Burges* is the work that proves most strikingly, that for Banks, classical nakedness was specific in its relationship to the contemporary, an association that would soon disintegrate in the wake of wider cultural, artistic and political shifts.

CHAPTER 2

CLASSICAL NAKEDNESS AS PUBLIC FORM: BENJAMIN WEST'S "RADICAL REDIRECTION"

According to Farington it was Benjamin West who first expressed hesitation over whether or not Flaxman ought to read his "Address on the Death of Thomas Banks" to the public.¹ Four months earlier, suspicions on the part of George III that West himself possessed radical sympathies led the sixty-seven year old painter to resign from his Academy presidency, a position he had held since 1792 following the death of Reynolds. Having begun his career in England as a court favourite, the first (and last) official Historical Painter to the King, West's falling out of favour with the crown appears to have been somewhat of a mysterious process, shrouded in paranoia and hearsay. In the second (posthumous) edition of his biography *The Life, Studies and Works of Benjamin West*, the Scottish novelist John Galt states his intention to break "an obligation" which he had "promised to respect during (West's) life", by discussing the moment when the artist's decades of royal patronage were abruptly terminated.² Galt shares an episode West had confided in him during the composition of the biography's first edition, published in 1816—that in 1801 fellow Academician and royal architect James Wyatt called on the artist to inform him that the cycle of scriptural paintings intended for a new private chapel at Windsor Castle, a commission West had been working on since the 1780s, was to be suspended until further notice. Queen Charlotte appears to have been the

¹ *The Farington Diary*: 7: 2511 (February 6th, 1805).

² Galt, 1820: 188.

monarch issuing these orders to Wyatt.³ Upon West's resignation four years later, it was Wyatt who would take up the presidency for a brief period before West was re-elected in 1806.

According to Galt, the painter, confused at this news, appealed to the king who permitted him to continue the commission as before. However, months later the cessation of patronage was officially announced, and West's direct, individual ties to the monarchy were severed. Galt concludes this account with a rhetorical trope indicating that in the wake of this professional crisis, West resolved to shift his artistic orientation away from the command of regal taste: "having thus lost the patronage of the King, he determined to appeal to the public."⁴ The seeds of this change had been sown with his remarkably popular *Death of General Wolfe* back in 1771, but significantly for the purposes of this thesis, at the centre of West's very real, self-conscious reorientation from royal to public interest, rhetorical and grandiose as it is presented in Galt's retrospective account, is classical nakedness.⁵

In their colossal study *The Paintings of Benjamin West*, Alan Staley and Helmut von Effra mention the "radical redirection" West took in the years following this change in professional fortune without going into much detail on what exactly this might mean.⁶

³ *Ibid*: 192. Benjamin Robert Haydon writes that it was Queen Charlotte whose "hatred" of West arose from the artist's "honour" by the French elite, her dramatic change in sentiment becoming somewhat of an open secret (Elwin, 1950: 195).

⁴ Galt, 1820: 199.

⁵ Benjamin West, *Death of General Wolfe*, 1770, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, oil on canvas. For a recent analysis of this landmark painting see Hoock, 2010: 163-164.

⁶ Staley and von Effra, 1986: 403.

The work they cite as evidence is his 1803 *Venus Lamenting the Death of Adonis*, a painting which, in comparison with his 1768 version of the same subject, reveals a dramatic change in style rooted in the cold, sculptural outline of the naked Venus at the composition's centre (Figs. 17, 18). The arrangement of the figures in the later work is artificial: the train of equally sculptural graces, swans and putti flowing toward Venus from the top left corner seeming more appropriate for the design of a marble relief. In the earlier work, a chaste, fully draped Venus gazes down at the dead huntsman beneath her. Her profile darkened by shadow, she leans on Cupid, his chubby arm resting on Adonis's neck. It is a solemn, intimate composition dominated by the pale, moonlit flesh of the dead male form. Staley and von Effra are correct in flagging up the 1803 version as exemplary of a "radical redirection"; this chapter takes this assertion a step further by defining it as the artist's short-lived but concentrated investment in a new kind of classical corporeality between 1802 and 1809.

Following on from Banks and his symbolical mobilisation of the ideal in his *Monument to Captain Burges*, this chapter will look principally at one of the works in this demarcated series, an 1808 painting known today as *Cupid and Psyche* (Fig. 19). I will explore how, following his falling out of favour with the royals, the representation of the sculptural body for West became a form of ideological engagement shaped by the Revolution and its aftermath. Monumental in scope and its direction toward a wider audience, this painting and the others in this series strain to render the ideal human form the carrier of humanitarian meaning that is abstract, elusive and consistently compromised by the singularity of West's position and changing attitudes toward the

classical body within British culture. West's deployment of the ideal to engage the contemporary is strained because, unlike Banks, he was not politically active. Moreover, West produced these works during a time in which the wars had intensified to unprecedented levels of bloodshed, technological advancement and global reach.⁷ Aesthetically continuous with French Revolutionary classicism, his monumental paintings speak out in opposition to the wars against France.

West's status as a transatlantic artist in a rare position of self-made authority and influence ensures that his proximity to George III has been and continues to be a point of interest for scholars.⁸ Yet the painter's written inarticulacy and the corresponding lack of a substantial personal archive means that when it comes to gauging his own beliefs in the context of his multiple revolution and war-torn lifetime, historians tend to speculate, to fill in the gaps with assumptions and suggestions about West's allegiances both in terms of Anglo-French and Anglo-American relations, more often than not focusing on biographical information and overlooking his extensive body of work, much of which is all too easily dismissed as bad art despite West's status as the most famous painter working in Britain during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁹

⁷ For a discussion on the modern technology of Napoleonic warfare see Kittler, 2008: 43. For the impact of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars on the development of early nineteenth century literature see Favret, 2009.

⁸ See Hooock, 2003; Black, 2006; Cartwright, 2004.

⁹ Such a tendency to avoid West's paintings is manifested in Rather, 2004; Marks, 1977. David Watkin is quick to point out West's "lack of technique", his "shrill emotionalism and nasty anatomy" (1968: 45). C.F Bell excuses the king's approval of West's talents, dismissing it as an "aberration of taste" shared by "the majority of his subjects, even some of the more intelligent of them." (1938: 170). Stephen Bann refers to West as a "staunch Bonapartist", but I would argue that, based on West's trepidation about being considered radically inclined in the eyes of his former patron and the ambivalent

As with Banks and his monument, West's dependence on classical nakedness as a source of meaning can only be understood through its relation with the ideologies attached to the mythic present, albeit their evolution at a later, Napoleonic stage. In the autumn of 1802, not long after the final decision was made regarding the Windsor commission and only several months prior to the installation of Banks's group in St. Paul's, the Treaty of Amiens allowed West to join Flaxman and the other Academicians on their trip to the newly accessible city of Paris. Here West was received as a celebrity, readily embraced by the post-Revolutionary cultural and political elite. The great respect and honour bestowed upon West by both Napoleon and the French art establishment was well-publicised in Britain, and served only to alienate the artist further from his former patrons, the British monarchy. With many of the looted works of art having recently arrived from elsewhere on the continent and arch-classicist David being at the height of his fame, official and high French culture continued to be steeped in the nation's claim over the classical world that had come into being during the Revolutionary moment.¹⁰ No

presentation of Napoleon's regime in the collaborative biographies, things were more complex (2003: 29). For example, Galt writes, "During the Peace of Amiens, Mr West, like every other person who entertained any feeling of admiration for the fine arts, was desirous of seeing that magnificent assemblage of paintings and sculptures, which constituted *the glory and the shame* of Buonaparte's administration." The author then takes great care in justifying West's decision to go to Paris, presenting the trip not so much as an active choice, but a matter of circumstance and obligation (1820: 177-180, my italics). This suggests that West's positive feelings toward Napoleon's regime had at least altered by the time he jointly composed this biography. West's reputation among his contemporaries as an admirer of Napoleon seems to be based on his activities during his trip to Paris in 1802.

¹⁰ I do not mean to suggest that David's classicism was coextensive with the arrival of the looted antiquities in the French capital. In fact, David, along with Quatremère de Quincy, the scheme's most vocal opponent, greatly disapproved of the plan. See Rosenberg, 1995: 148; de Quincy, 2012.

longer necessarily a futuristic *tabula rasa*, this claim, still unconfined to a specific historiography, now extended to the material as well as the mimetic, the actual objects of Greece and Rome.¹¹ West's altered professional circumstances back in Britain threw into relief the stark contrast between British and French artistic cultures.

Though they stop short of venturing beyond a basic affinity between West's post-Paris paintings and works by Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, a painter in David's circle for whom West verbally expressed admiration, Staley and von Effra do hint at the connection between this "radical redirection" and West's exposure to French contemporary classical painting. Focusing on *Cupid and Psyche*, the first part of this chapter will dwell on the way in which the painter updates his usual old-masterly eclecticism with the type of corporeality he encountered in Paris in 1802. In this work, West does not invent bodies and re-cast them in this style, but instead translates figures sourced from elsewhere into this new visual language. Rather than attempting to navigate the vast array of contemporary classical paintings West would have viewed in France, this chapter considers Davidian corporeality primarily through the lens of its reception among the British Academicians in Paris, but also in terms of its precise cultural significations in France at the turn of the century. Shaped as it had been by his training in 1760s Rome, the connoisseurial knowledge he had developed across the continent during these years, and the tradition put forth by Joshua Reynolds in his *Discourses* (a tradition that West was trying to sustain in a nation without state patronage or governmental support for

¹¹ See Mclellan, 1994.

historical painting, their and his preferred art form), West's style undergoes a transformation that results in a singular blending of techniques, traditions and nations.

Although for now I will continue to refer to *Cupid and Psyche* by this title, the one by which it has been known from West's death to the present day, the second part of this chapter will introduce the case that this work is actually another by West, *The Harmony of Affection*, also of 1808, an object presumed to have "disappeared completely" in 1809.¹² This alternative allegorical title complicates how we view the painting, bringing to light its direct, monumental allusions to the on-going wars while placing additional emphasis on the meaning with which the idealised naked figure is infused. The final part of this chapter will look at the British reception of West's interactions with the French cultural elite, interactions that are preserved in this series of works.

In late May, 1809, West prepared to part with a masterpiece from his personal collection, a *Venus and Adonis* by Titian (Fig. 20). This was his personal favourite cinquecento master besides Raphael, the Venetian whose style and "splendid colouring" evoked an "inexplicable mystery".¹³ The subject of "Venus and Adonis" also appears to have held a particular fascination for the artist. By 1806 he had already produced numerous paintings

¹² Staley and von Effra, 1986: 403.

¹³ Galt, 1820: 54.

depicting various moments in the myth, two of which have already been discussed.¹⁴ In 1798 the Duke of Bridgewater offered the Titian to West as compensation for his help in sorting through the contents of the Duke's recently acquired bounty of (mostly Italian) paintings from the collection of Philippe d'Orléans. The artist was honoured to possess what he considered "one of the most perfect and beautiful works of the Master."¹⁵ Yet barely a decade later, West wrote to a Mr Richard Hart Davis, an MP from Bristol with an ample country seat, stating his "intention to part with the picture... having a wish that so perfect a picture by that great master should make a part of (Davis's) collection in the Italian school".¹⁶ If we are to isolate this sale, the transaction between West and Davis is evidence of a potential rupture in West's enduring interest in both Titian and this particular myth, even if he was forced to sell it for financial reasons. But a year before West decided to get rid of the work, he was already, in a sense, finished with it.¹⁷ In March of 1808 he began the painting known today as *Cupid and Psyche*, a work that transforms Titian's *Venus and Adonis* into a work of contemporary classicism, a

¹⁴ West cited both the Greek pastoral poet Bion and the Latin poet Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as textual sources for his depictions of the myth. His various takes on the myth are as follows: *Venus Relating to Adonis the Story of Hippomenes and Atlanta*, 1767, private collection, oil on canvas; the two versions of *Venus Lamenting the Death of Adonis* already discussed, as well as a version 1772, private collection, oil on canvas; *Venus and Adonis with Cupids Bathing*, 1799, Alexander Gallery, New York, oil on canvas; *Adonis with his Dogs*, 1800-6, Dayton Art Institute, Dayton, oil on canvas.

¹⁵ Young, 1822: 4.

¹⁶ Benjamin West collection: box 1, folder 2 (May 23rd, 1809).

¹⁷ In 1802 before the Treaty of Amiens was signed and thus before his trip to Paris, West painted another scene from the fable of Cupid and Psyche, his *Eagle Bringing the Cup of Water to Psyche* (Princeton University Art Gallery, Princeton, oil on canvas). Here Psyche is dark haired and the length of her body concealed under full drapery. There is less emphasis on outline and the surface of the skin, making the painting exemplary of the artist's pre-Paris old masterly eclecticism. We can see just how much West was affected by contemporary French painting by comparing the depictions of this same figure from classical literature. Calling it a "document of Romantic Classicism", Rosenblum has discussed the earlier work (1960).

classicism that, in its most general conception, is the same type of purified idealism that Banks had been credited by Flaxman (and later Westmacott) for introducing to the British school of sculpture. Since his training on the continent, West had long been connoisseur of ancient marbles and a painter of perfected human forms both naked and draped. Yet the artist had always rendered the idealism gleaned from statuary but one element of his painterly process, one that was always subordinate to his methodical emulation of the most revered old master works, in particular those by Raphael, Michelangelo, Correggio, and, as already mentioned, Titian for his colouring. With its manifestations in painting, contemporary classicism makes the sharply delineated sculptural body the most prominent, significant and active feature of the work. West's turn toward this style was influenced not directly by the relics he had come to know in Rome in his youth, but mediated by the recently produced paintings he saw on his third trip to Paris in the autumn of 1802.¹⁸

The pose of Psyche's upper body, the way her arms encircle Cupid's neck, is sourced from a reclining Bacchant in a wall painting unearthed at Herculaneum (Fig. 21). West was one of the few individuals with a subscription to the first available book of engravings from the site in English, *The Antiquities of Herculaneum*.¹⁹ Although far from a work of marble sculpture, this Roman wall painting is still an archaeological point of reference that contributes to the contemporaneity of West's classicism, its departure from the "modern" classical style discussed in the previous chapter. This wall painting was also Canova's source for the figures in his famous sculpture *Psyche Revived by Cupid's*

¹⁸ West's first trip to Paris was in 1763. He went again in 1785.

¹⁹ Bayardi, 1773: 68.

Kiss, a work West saw while in Paris and that may have also influenced *Cupid and Psyche*, despite his claim in 1806 that he thought Nollekens the far superior sculptor based on his inspection of that very work.²⁰

Yet it is the previously unacknowledged relationship between West's painting and Titian's *Venus and Adonis* that tells us most about the artist's altered approach to the human form. In both paintings, the side view of the naked female body is the focal point of the canvas. Yet while West's *Psyche* is based compositionally on Titian's *Venus*, right down to the diaphanous swathe of drapery that falls in both works down the left side of this central figure, *Psyche* possesses flesh as smooth and cold as marble. Addressing Academy students on December 10th, 1807 just before he began this work, West had eradicated the division between the study of painting and the study of sculpture, urging his audience not to lose sight of those four hallowed precepts the *Farnese Hercules*, *Laocoön*, *Apollo Belvedere* and the *Venus de' Medici* and proclaiming "the impossibility of giving such decided excellence to the Human Figure, unless the expression of character be accompanied by correctness of outline, whether in Painting or Sculpture".²¹ West has sharpened the outline of *Psyche* so that her contours conform to the ideals of the *Venus*, yet he has exceeded the sculpture by eliminating even the fleshiness of this marble precept.²² As we know from the Chapter 1, outline was held by Flaxman and also

²⁰ Fernow, 1806: 89; *The Farington Diary*: 7: 2796 (June 25th, 1806).

²¹ Hoare, 1809: 19.

²² The inconsistencies at play in appropriating the body of the *Venus de' Medici* will be discussed in Chapter 3. In an address to students of the Royal Academy given in 1794, West had presented the *Apollo Belvedere* and the *Venus de' Medici* as archetypes of physical perfection, indicating that at this point his conception of these particular ancient sculptures, though elevated, is confined to their function as points of departure for

Cumberland to be one of the chief principles of ancient artists, and in this painting we are able to see just how much emphasis West placed on the delineation of his figures by the dark, unbroken lines describing each form that, now that the painting has been restored, are highly visible. West had a tendency to apply finishing touches over the varnish of his works, meaning that when cleaned his canvases are often stripped back a degree and aspects of his process are revealed, in this case the strong, simple outlines of the two embracing figures.²³

Reduced to a plastic silhouette, the profile of Psyche's face has been purified to the point where it looks like a piece of ancient cameo jewellery. Her nose adheres to the "nearly straight or gently concave line" Winckelmann specifies as "the chief characteristic of a high beauty... especially (in the) female".²⁴ From underneath the drapery Psyche shares with Titian's Venus, only a small delicate foot is visible, planted on the ground from beneath added folds of fabric. With its flesh now refined and contained by a sharp line, the motion of Psyche's legs appears unconventional when not anchored by the life-like corporeality of Titian's "Poesie", the series of poetical paintings from which *Venus and*

depicting the human form in historical painting, and has not developed to the extent that we see the sculptural body rendered and afforded meaning in his "radical redirection" phase. Of the *Venus* he writes: "Were the young artist... to propose to himself a subject in which he would endeavour to represent the peculiar excellences of woman, would he not say, that these excellences consist in a virtuous mind, a modest mien, a tranquil deportment, and a gracefulness in motion? And, in embodying the combined beauties of these qualities, would he not bestow on the figure a general, smooth, round fullness of form, to indicate the softness of character; bend the head gently forward, in the common attitude of modesty?...and such is the *Venus de' Medici*" (Quoted in Galt, 1820: 101).

²³ Examination Report: *Cupid and Psyche* by Benjamin West. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth Texas. July 6th, 2010, Bentonville, museum records: Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art.

²⁴ Potts, 2006: 210.

Adonis originates. The pose of the legs in both works is a recurring element in Venetian painting, a motif that begins with the enigmatic woman in Giorgione's *The Tempest* (Fig. 22). To name just a few more examples, we see figures with knees bent to form similarly distinctive shapes in Veronese's *Jupiter and Venus* and his own *Venus and Adonis*, as well as Tintoretto's *Susanna and the Elders* (Figs. 23, 24, 25). West's adaptation of this Venetian pose into a contemporary classical style is the source of much of the strangeness of *Cupid and Psyche*. For all its marble uniformity of bodily surface and sharp, sculptural delineation, Psyche's body radiates limp awkwardness as it draws the spectator to it with almost voyeuristic immediacy like a sculpture glimpsed from the wrong angle. As such, West's painting exposes the cavern between Revolutionary classicism and the voluminous softness of sixteenth century Venetian painting, differences which West negotiates principally on the spectacle of the female form.

The malleability of Titian's flesh evokes the sense of touch. His Venus's life-like form invites the spectator to think beyond the painting, beyond the soft, irregular, yielding flesh of her body. Psyche is distilled, the smooth, un-mortal envelope of her skin offering barely a hint of the subject's eroticism. In this loss of flesh and texture, Psyche is androgenized. She seems adolescent, like the object of her gaze, the winged, ephebic Cupid who holds her.²⁵ The bodies of Adonis and Cupid share the same left leg, angled away from that of their female counterparts, and both wear carmines. Their semi-draped forms contrast with the almost total exposure of the females, much as their rustic brown curls illuminate the lightness of their lovers' golden-blond hair, both accented with

²⁵ For a now classic investigation of the ephebic male body in contemporaneous French art see Solomon-Godeau, 1997.

pearls and in Psyche's case, a delicate sky blue fillet. Though painted in a slightly warmer shade to Psyche's cool pallor, the bare chest and arms of West's Cupid are also smooth, sealed and marmoreal.

The most significant link between West's work and Titian's, more so than their compositional affinities, is the rich, deep palette that they share. A combination of Venetian-style colouring and sharply rendered sculptural corporeality characterises all of the paintings that form part of West's "radical redirection" series.²⁶ As we shall see, this combination was praised by some commentators during the painter's lifetime, but since the steady decline of West's reputation from his death in 1820 this synthesis has come to be seen as more of a clash than a manifestation of learned, masterly eclecticism.

Although not aware of its direct link with Titian's *Venus and Adonis*, William Vaughan's brief analysis of *Cupid and Psyche* argues that the sculptural delineation of West's figures and the work's Venetian-style colouring combine to "cancel (each other) out".²⁷ He continues, "in the place of a respect for subject there is an abstracted formalism providing visual effect for its own sake." Emulation of Titian's palette pronounces West's self-conscious investment in the sculptural line, and for Vaughan this is a tension that results in a kind of void, an empty aesthetic neutrality. The judgement that cold, clear descriptions and marble flesh are not suited to the deep warmth of the colourist tradition

²⁶ Additional examples (besides his 1803 *Venus and Adonis*) are *Cupid Releasing Two Doves*, begun in 1798 and retouched in 1803 and 1808, private collection, oil on canvas; both the 1804 and 1805 versions of *Thetis bringing Armour to Achilles*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles and New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain respectively, both oil on canvas; *Omnia Vincit Amor*, 1809, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, oil on canvas. Some of these works will be discussed later on in this chapter.

²⁷ Vaughan, 1993: 141.

is arguable. The French painters that influenced West's new radical classicism were not interested in trying to reproduce these kinds of tints, and such vivid colouring did not emerge in French historical painting until later on in the century when the sculptural ideal was no longer the dominating form.²⁸ Vaughan's accusation of "abstracted formalism" underscores the conspicuous appearance of West's ideal bodies; this "visual effect" is not insignificant, "for its own sake", but rather, as we will explore later in this chapter, in touch with a singular array of meanings.

The Titian-esque richness of *Cupid and Psyche* is not, as Vaughan implies, a vapid gesture towards Italianate mastery, but rather can be seen to be reigning in the hardened classicism of his figures by keeping them inside the old master framework upon which the (fragile, inconsistent and in many ways non-existent) British Academic tradition had been formulated by Reynolds in his *Discourses*. Though Reynolds's theory in his "Discourse IV" was that Venetian art was too sensuous, that "an excessive absorption with colour had led the Venetians to neglect ideal beauty of form and propriety of expression", Titian was held at an elevated distance from the rest: "when I speak of the Venetian painters", he writes, "I wish to be understood to mean Paolo Veronese and Tintoret, to the exclusion of Titian".²⁹ Reynolds does state that like his fellow Venetians, Titian's "style is not so pure as that of many of the other Italian schools" particularly with regard to the human form.³⁰ Thus the study and adoption of Titian's colouring was actively recommended to young painters of the Academy. The allure of Titian was keenly

²⁸ For a discussion of the role of colour within French Academic art at this time see O'Brien, 2006: 113.

²⁹ Smith, 1996: 88; Wark, 1997: 67.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

felt by established artists too. In 1796 West had been centrally involved in the infamous scandal of a counterfeit recipe for Titian's pigments, being one of the several prominent painters led astray by their hopes of emulating the Venetian master.³¹

In West's painting, rich colouring detracts from the marble quality of his figures, making them appear less French than they would have done if the artist had been influenced by the colouring as well as the forms of the contemporary classicists he had been exposed to in Paris. A precise inverse of the discourse around Titian and colour was the idea that Revolutionary French painting lacked sensuality, that it was too dry and too artificial in its sculptural idealism. In one of his lectures to Academy students, delivered in 1807, Professor of Painting John Opie proclaimed:

Formerly (the French school) were tawdry coxcombs; now they affect to be the plainest quakers in art; formerly they absurdly endeavoured to invest sculpture in all the rich ornaments of painting; now they are for shearing painting of her own appropriate beams and reducing her to the hard and dry monotony of sculpture;...now they glue their draperies to the figure, paste the hair to the head in all the lumpish opacity of colored plaster, nail their figures to a hard unbroken ground and, avoiding everything like effect and picturesque composition, often place them in a tedious row from end to end of the picture, as nearly like an antique bas-relief as possible. In short, it seems to be the principal aim of the French artist to rival Medusa's head, and turn every thing into stone.³²

This lecture is discussed in an article celebrating Opie's achievements in *The Anti-Jacobin Review*, the same paper that had printed Gillray's *Two Pair of Portraits*, an ultra-conservative, royalist journal that ran from 1798 throughout the Napoleonic conflicts

³¹ This episode is the subject of Lavorgna, 2008.

³² *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*, October, 1809: 135-138: 124.

until 1821, notably the time in which the backlash against the antique takes becomes commonplace in British cultural discourse. The article expands upon certain sections of Opie's writings, exploring in a cursory fashion the history, merits and shortcomings of the different national schools of painting. The above passage is prefaced by a vicious attack on the "beautiful ideal", a concept held to be a "monstrous" force, destructive of the progress of civilisation.³³ This author takes their cue from Opie himself, who in the same lecture had also attacked the ideal citing "the barren coldness of David, the brick-dust of the learned Poussin" as the prime examples of this perceived unnatural artistic folly.³⁴

The propagation of such a stance in a pro-war, nationalistic British newspaper the year before West painted *Cupid and Psyche* indicates that classically ideal beauty was acknowledged to be a point of political as well as aesthetic contention. In 1805 future Academy president and staunch royalist Martin Archer Shee railed against the French school for their "frost, and phlegm of timorous detail", their "dry, sapless statue-like insipidity."³⁵ In 1802 both Opie and Shee had joined West in the galleries of the Louvre. Though Farington reports that West himself claimed while in Paris that "the French paint Statues", the extremities of the reactions of Shee and Opie contrast with the sculptural forms in works by West produced during the years after these artists returned to London, forms whose own statue-like idealism is muted by their Venetian-style palette.³⁶

³³ *Ibid*: 123.

³⁴ Opie, 1809: 18.

³⁵ Shee, 1811: 5.

³⁶ *The Farington Diary*: 5: 1820 (September 1st, 1802).

The object that conditions much of the intensity of Opie's and Shee's critiques on French art is David's *Intervention of the Sabine Women*, a highly sensational historical painting the Academicians had all been to see while in Paris (Fig. 26). It is well-known and well-documented that David conceived of this work while imprisoned for his prominent role in the Revolution, and it is not the purposes of this chapter to re-hash the arguments surrounding David's politics as it relates to this painting and others, or his status as a propagandist for both the Jacobins and Napoleon following his release.³⁷ It is important, however, to emphasise that David was powerful, the painter who had given Revolution antique form, the leader of the French school whose investment in the sculptural body came to contour three overlapping phases in French cultural history: the years leading up to the Revolution, the mythic present and its Napoleonic aftermath.³⁸ It was David who was chiefly responsible for affording this new classicism a political ontology in painting, one that was forced to adapt and eventually become obsolete in accordance with the fluctuations of his country's sovereign ban. Apart from West who socialised with the artist, for the British Academicians in Paris David would remain an elusive, intimidating figure. Farington's frequent references to the French master are marked by a fascination masked by contempt. This trepidation surrounding David is often supplanted by warnings of the consequences of an unbridled interaction between art and politics, typical of Farington's and Shee's conservative alignments.³⁹

³⁷ See Crow, 2006; Lajer-Burcharth, 1999.

³⁸ Writing exclusively on French art culture, Grisby states: "David's very success in giving revolution antique form ultimately led to classicism's loss of authority (1998: 312-313). See also Rosenberg, 1995: 136-137.

³⁹ The following extract is characteristic of Farington's wariness toward David: "a more violent Republican than himself (David, the artist) did not exist during the period of the revolution. He associated much with Robespierre, and after the death of that dreadful

Vaughan summarizes the general consensus of British artists regarding David's

Intervention of the Sabine Women:

Painting has betrayed its true nature by becoming too much like sculpture. Colouring and chiaroscuro have been ignored. The composition is artificial and contrived. There is also a suggestion of heartlessness in the hardness of effect. The turning of forms into statues also turns them into something hard and inhuman.⁴⁰

Vaughan articulates how the seemingly unnatural and thus morally and politically corrupt precedence afforded to the delineation and surface of the human form is the font of outrage in attacks on early nineteenth century French painting such as those by Opie and Shee. But West's case exposure to this particular work by David was productive on both professional and stylistic levels. This was exactly the kind of art he wanted to make following the king's change in sentiment: monumental public painting, large-scale spectacles that audiences would flock in droves to see. Grigsby explores the rhetoric of nakedness in David's "box-office success", arguing that as "classical ideal, nudity held out a promise to transcend the messy particularities of actual social relations." She continues, "For David, nudity was the guarantor of art's aesthetic power to ameliorate a

Character would himself have been executed for the part He acted in the days of terror while Robespierre had the rule, had not a consideration for his great ability in the art He professed operated on the minds of those who then had the power... The very active part which He took in effecting the Revolution, and his violent Zeal for Republicanism, caused me to enquire a little into his character in private life. The answers I recd. were of a very unfavourable kind. His conduct in his family, and his persecution of many of his own profession, as well as others, proved him to be a man of very unamiable disposition." (*The Farington Diary*: 5. 1861, 1863 (September 20th, 1802)).

⁴⁰ Vaughan, 1993: 145.

stratified and fractured society.”⁴¹ By this point, David’s use of ideal corporeality was not necessarily an overt political statement (as it had been in some of his earlier works such as the 1794 *Death of Joseph Bara*), but rather, in this refined hyper-sculptural incarnation, classical nakedness becomes a metaphor, however unstable, for renewal, the future of the French nation.⁴² Though West was not politically active like Banks, nor intellectually coherent in his artistic self-awareness like David or Barry (or such a competent draughtsman as these last figures) the newfound investment in sculptural corporeality that characterises the paintings he produced in the phase following this trip to Paris was instigated by a desire to speak directly to a multifaceted populous independent from a traditional form of authority.

A pen, ink and pencil study for West’s 1804 *Thetis Bringing Armor to Achilles* dates from 1802, and looking at the drawing it is extremely likely that West completed it either while in Paris or shortly after his return (Fig. 27). Though the figure of Achilles is not a direct quotation of David’s figure of Tatius to the left of *The Intervention of the Sabine Women*, the frontal, wide-legged stance of West’s hero, left knee bent and right leg extended, possesses the same broad, muscular energy as David’s. Decades later, the novelist William Makepeace Thackeray would target these “stretched” legs in a satirical essay, going as far as to include a diagram in his *Paris Sketch Book* (Fig. 28).⁴³ David’s

⁴¹ Grigsby, 1998: 313.

⁴² For a discussion of the political content of David’s *Death of Joseph Bara* see Potts, 1994: 223-238. David’s changed relationship to ideal nudity can be gleaned from his accompaniment to the *Death of the Sabine Women*, “On the Nudity of my Heroes”, an English translation of which is reprinted in Holt, 1986: 11-12.

⁴³ Writing under his pseudonym Michael Angelo Titmarsh in 1839, Thackeray wrote: “For a hundred years, my dear sir, the world was humbugged by the so-called classical

Tatius takes its form from a Roman monument, the same figure that Westmacott would reproduce on a colossal scale for his bronze Duke of Wellington, discussed in Chapter 5. Commissioned by Thomas Hope, the cosmopolitan writer, art collector and patron who funded several of West's endeavours around this time, the second oil on canvas version of *Thetis Bringing the Amour to Achilles* was engraved by William Bond and included in John Britton's *Fine Arts of the English School*, sealing its status as a work of art destined for a different kind of consumption (Fig. 29).⁴⁴ Both versions of this subject present adaptations of this distinct wide-legged pose, indicating that, as public painter of intensively sculptural bodies mobilised to perform a civic function, David provided a model for West following his return to England.

As suggested in the context of Barry and Banks's relationship, what separates Barry from a contemporary classicist like Banks, and also David and West, is that for these latter artists, the beauty of antiquity is symbolical, the universal mode of communication relating to a specific moment in time rather than the international, transcendent, "eternal" message in and of itself.⁴⁵ In West's case, this becomes all the more apparent upon the observation that his move toward new type of body was relatively short-lived. The artist's

artists, as they now are by what is called the Christian art (of which anon); and it is curious to look at the pictorial traditions as here handed down. The consequence of them is that scarce one of the classical pictures exhibited is worth much more than two and sixpence. Borrowed from statuary in the first place, the colour of the paintings seems as much as possible to participate in it... There are endless straight noses, long eyes, round chins, short upper lips, just as they are ruled down for you in the drawing-books, as if the latter were the revelations of beauty, issued by supreme authority, from which there was no appeal? Why is the classical reign to endure? Why is yonder simpering Venus de Medicis to be our standard of beauty?" (1869: 80).

⁴⁴ Britton, 1812: 17-18.

⁴⁵ See Antal, 1935.

return to religious subject matter from 1809 onwards manifests a different form of public engagement, one that, though it did not strive to be in dialogue contemporary events and circumstances, spoke directly to the new sense of national and ecclesiastical identity that surfaced during the final stages of the wars, and also, as the next chapter will investigate, the arrival of the Elgin Marbles to London. The proliferation of large-scale religious historical paintings at Academy exhibitions during the period immediately after West's "radical redirection" can be seen as another symptom of the tide of reaction against the universality of the antique.

It should now be clear that introducing statue-like precision to Titian obscured the French-ness of West's figures, and was thus a consciously political gesture during the period witnessing the first decade of Napoleon's leadership. This idiosyncratic blend allowed the artist to carve out a space both inside and outside traditions, essentially inventing his own. Indeed, this is how positive reviewers of these post-Paris works saw it: not that he was merely blending two incongruous schools or just painting naively (a view expressed in more recent criticism), but that this was West's strength as an artist, that he could improve upon Titian's weaknesses creating something new and potentially better.⁴⁶ To illustrate this point it is at this stage it is necessary to introduce the claim that *Cupid and Psyche* is actually West's lost work from the same year, *The Harmony of Affection*. Not only are there no records of *Cupid and Psyche* ever having been on display, there is

⁴⁶ John Canaday describes what he calls the "peculiar innocence" of West's style (1968: 20).

also no literature produced during the artist's lifetime affirming its existence. Rather, it only emerges in the first catalogue for West's Gallery, the posthumous exhibition of his works that ran from 1822-28 in London.⁴⁷ This is suspicious because the large, highly finished canvas seems no minor achievement to remain concealed in the artist's studio until his death.

In April 1809, *The Examiner* reviewed the British Institution exhibition at which *The Harmony of Affection* made its first public appearance. The paper's editor Leigh Hunt was a cousin of West's wife Elizabeth and, as well as being extremely liberal in their political identifications, Hunt and his circle, including other regular contributors to *The Examiner*, were all advocates of an artistic classicism that was open and accessible to a non-specialist audience.⁴⁸ With untroubled appreciation for the painting, this particular review of *The Harmony of Affection* constructs a rivalry between West and Titian from which West emerges as the greater master:

This highly poetic picture elegantly and allegorically elucidates its title by a playful association, in pairs, of the different species of organic life, especially the human species in the emblematic figures of Cupid and Psyche. The ardent love of Psyche shines in her animated eye and action while she throws her arms round the neck of Cupid, and they gaze with mutual fondness on each other in the rapture of refined love. We do not hesitate to say that TITIAN, the greatest master of colouring, never surpassed this piece in the chaste, but lively bloom, the transparent hue, delicate gradations and harmonious arrangement of its clare obscure and colour, for which it might be justly called the harmony of colour and effect. The warm hues of the flesh and other parts, are, as was the practice of TITIAN, heightened by the blues of the

⁴⁷ No. 132 or 73 in the *Catalogue of pictures and drawings by the late Benjamin West, 1822*.

⁴⁸ For insight into Hunt's cultural proclivities see Cox, 2003.

sky and a few other cold tints. TITIAN and most other admirable colourists were radically defective in anatomical science; but here are united the perfections of colour with those of drawing, set off by enchanting graces of form, vivacity and amiableness of mental expression, so productive of the harmony of affection. For the attitude of Psyche Mr. West has however been indebted to a picture of a Satyr and Nymph found in the ruins of Pompeii, but he has made it his own by his tasteful adaptation of it to his subject.⁴⁹

Here, the word “effect” points to the smooth luminosity of Psyche’s naked flesh, its pale relief against the “warm hues” of the background scenery. *The Harmony of Affection* has out-Titianed Titian: the “greatest master of colouring” has been “surpassed” by West’s integration of the “perfections of colour with those of drawing”. It was generally conceded among artists, connoisseurs and critics in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that the French were far superior to the British when it came to drawing, so the ability to render accurately the human form was considered high praise for any artist of the British school. Added to this is the assertion that Titian was “radically defective in anatomical science”, suggesting that West is demonstrating the extent of his skills as a draughtsman, and that he has corrected Titian’s great flaw. An 1811 article on the present state of the Royal Academy in *The Tradesman* offers a similar verdict, recalling that “the colouring of (*The Harmony of Affection*) was equal to the best of the renowned Titian, and far superior in drawing to any of that master”.⁵⁰

Tensions between anatomy and classical statuary will be addressed in Chapter 3; ironically, the bodies in *Cupid and Psyche* possess the bare minimum of anatomical detail in keeping with the templates provided by the statues consistently praised by West at this

⁴⁹ *Examiner*, April 2nd, 1809: 222.

⁵⁰ *Tradesman*, Feb 1st, 1811: 6: 119.

point in time, the *Apollo Belvedere* and the *Venus de' Medici* in particular. This author also mentions a wall painting of a Satyr and Nymph found at Pompeii. As we know, a wall painting of a Bacchante cavorting with a Faun unearthed at Herculaneum was one of West's sources for this work. Pompeii and Herculaneum could easily be confused, as those two sites were excavated at the same time and were often twinned in archaeological discourses. Likewise, Nymphs and Bacchantes, Satyrs and Fauns, are very similar mythological beings, and could casually or unknowingly be used as synonyms for one another.

A year earlier, *The Harmony of Affection* had been displayed at the Royal Academy's annual exhibition and on June 5th *The Examiner* had printed a similarly enthusiastic review, most likely written by the same author:

This fanciful and classical picture most beautifully illustrates its title. The male and female of different species of organic life are harmoniously consorting together, and possess a vigour of handling and of character so peculiar to this master's genius. The soul of love sparkles in the eye of Psyche while she unites in the fond salute of her Cupid. Her attitude is highly original, and the even but delicately varied fleshy tone of colour throughout her *Grecian* form, is equal to Titian, as well as the picture's depth of shade and brilliancy. Above all, the great end of painting, that of captivating the imagination, is here accomplished by a display of the principles that form the grand style; beauty, simplicity, nobleness of conception, and a *delicate firmness and correctness of outline*. We mean the imagination as it is refined by education and an intimate acquaintance with the best masters. We rejoice that this great painter, venerable in years, enjoys a vigour of health that promises a long perspective of life, resulting from a dignified composure of mind, and a regular, well spent life.⁵¹

⁵¹ *Examiner*, June 5th, 1808: 366.

This passage informs us that *The Harmony of Affection* is actually a depiction of the figures of Cupid and Psyche. In the Academy exhibition catalogue the work had no textual accompaniment, and we can infer from this allegorical title that West wanted the picture to stand at a distance from the literary source implied by the easily identifiable pair of lovers. A popular subject among artists since the sixteenth century, the fable of “Cupid and Psyche” originates from the outer limits of classical antiquity, forming part of a book entitled *The Golden Ass* written by Latin author Lucius Apuleius from a Roman colony in North Africa. In 1795 a new English edition of the “Cupid and Psyche” story had been published separately and dedicated to “The President, Council, and Members of the Royal Academy” by its translator, the classical scholar Thomas Taylor.⁵² In isolating the fable from *The Golden Ass* and dedicating it to the Academy, the enduring interplay between the story and the visual arts was acknowledged and encouraged in British Academic art. Deemed “the English Pagan” by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Taylor was well-known, and it is very likely West would have been aware of this dedication.⁵³

The Edinburgh Annual Register, a publication edited by that symbolic figurehead of the evolving counter-classical aesthetic, Walter Scott, also reviewed *The Harmony of Affection* at the Academy exhibition of 1808. This article begins with the declaration that this year’s exhibition, marking the Academy’s fortieth anniversary, “was graced by an assemblage of talent which had been surpassed in no former display.”⁵⁴ Yet while the author approves of William Beechey’s portraits and Samuel Drummond’s spirited genre

⁵² Taylor, 1795: title page.

⁵³ From a letter to John Thelwall Quoted in Campbell, 1894: 58.

⁵⁴ *Edinburgh Annual Register*, 1808: 1: 326.

scenes, his attack on Fuseli's *Cardinal Beaufort terrified by the supposed Apparition of Gloucester* makes clear an uncompromising opinion with regard to corporeality and the artistic imagination: "these things are not only distant from actual nature, but from the ideal excellence of nature: they are not the visions of genius, but the dreams of disease."⁵⁵ The author drives home their opinion that idealisation is permissible, so long as it uses nature's own perfections as its primary substance.

Eventually the author arrives at *The Harmony of Affection* and ridicules both painter and painting. The canvas is seen as exemplary of West's general failure as an artist, one who "by some accident or other...has acquired a considerable reputation". Stark descriptive affinities begin to emerge between this unforgiving appraisal of *The Harmony of Affection* and the content of work known as *Cupid and Psyche*:

In the picture, called *The Harmony of Affection*, are represented two genii, one male, and the other female, in the act of embracing each other. We have always been accustomed to believe, that these genii, these beings one step above men and women, in bodily appearance at least, with this single advantage over us mortals, that they ordinarily enjoy the convenience of wings. But Mr. West has now added another privilege, which was never before considered indispensable, or even proper, for these aerial gentry, the privilege of surpassing mortality in the dimensions of the head. The female has a rim of crimson round her eyes, extremely disgusting to those who think no beauty is to be bloodshot. As the arm of her companion is very closely twined about her neck, nothing but the title of the work, "The Harmony of Affection," prevents us from believing, that the unusual redness and choking expression are the consequence of an attempt, on the part of the suitor, to strangle the unfortunate fair.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *Ibid*: 328.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*: 336.

Two embracing “genii”, both with heads perhaps a little weighty for their frames—this could certainly be describing the work known as *Cupid and Psyche*. Arguably the reason why author of this review is so preoccupied with the redness around Psyche’s eyes and on her cheeks is because the work’s warmer tints stand out against her sculptural qualities, the flush of her face brought into incongruous relief by the cold outline and marmoreal surface of her body. This is something West does with all of his sculptural figures produced during this phase: temper their sculptural frigidity with warm blushes. Cupid’s hand does linger around Psyche’s neck in a manner potentially redolent of suffocation to the sceptical spectator, and upon closer inspection of what is West’s attempt at an ideal Greco-Roman head, the artificiality of her face could be read as a look of discomfort, a “choking expression”, with eyes wide and vacant, mouth sealed and lips curving downward.

The reviewer terminates their evaluation by calling the work “an eccentric subject with adjuncts and accidents of correspondent eccentricity.” We have already touched on the sources of *Cupid and Psyche*’s strangeness, the blending of Venetian colouring and distinct angled knee posture with contemporary classical nakedness. Earlier on the same review features a condemnation of what can only be the Davidian school of painting. For the “laboured bombastic nothingness” of their style “the French, in the earlier stages of the revolution”, are cast as a bad influence on the development of the British school. Again, the drive to render classicism meaningless is exemplified. The force of these words is quite typical, and provides yet another instance of the pervasive anti-Gallic thread in more conservative art criticism. This aspect of the review further illuminates the

way in which West's emulation of Titian's warmth conceals his foray into icy Davidian corporeality. In his 1815 *Guide to Burghley House*, Thomas Blore implies that the sculptural qualities of West's figures were not always insulated by their Venetian colouring. Encapsulating what we now know to be both the liberal and the conservative perspectives on this painting, Blore cites *The Harmony of Affection* as one of several works by West that has been compared to "the best works of the old masters, for colouring, anatomical science, and variety and dignity of expression"; "Other critics", Blore continues, "have considered his style as hard and frigid, and that he by no means merits the praises thus lavished on him."⁵⁷

Staley and von Effra were clearly unaware when writing their monograph that as well as being shown at the Royal Academy and British Institution in 1808 and 1809 respectively, *The Harmony of Affection* was also lent by West to the Liverpool Academy for their first exhibition in 1810, and thus was not actually missing in 1809 as they claim.⁵⁸ Oblivious to these reviews and potential case of mistaken identity, these scholars speculate that the reason why West did not exhibit *Cupid and Psyche* was "probably because of its erotic content".⁵⁹ This is a manifestation of a pervasive tendency to apply notions of Victorian prudishness onto other periods in British social and cultural history. Overlooked entirely is the fact that naked forms, both painted and sculpted, were exhibited at the Academy

⁵⁷ Blore, 1815: 289.

⁵⁸ Morris and Roberts, 1998: 640.

⁵⁹ Staley and von Effra, 1986: 243.

throughout West's career, both bodies of meaning and, increasingly toward the end of the painter's life, bodies of pleasure.⁶⁰

How far West's *Cupid and Psyche* eschews direct eroticism is made clear through comparison with another work that was exhibited at the Royal Academy's 1808 exhibition: a *Venus and Adonis* by Thomas Phillips, a younger painter who had assisted West in his studio (Fig. 30). This was Phillips's Diploma Piece and like West, he here used Titian as an emulative pattern. His *Venus and Adonis* builds upon Venetian sensuality, augmenting rather than re-casting those yielding, tactile qualities. In placing his Venus on a bed with disarrayed white sheets and providing her with long, undone, honey-coloured tresses that tumble over her breasts, Phillips calls to mind another well-known painting by Titian, his *Danaë and the Shower of Gold*.⁶¹ All drapery has been removed from Phillips's Venus so that her gesture and expression of languid desire is laid bare, dominating her encounter with Adonis. Like Titian's Adonis, this male figure is presented fleeing from Venus's advances rather than embracing his love, an aspect that pronounces the playful, un-meaningful nature of the work. Although the modelling of Venus's form is not exactly sculptural, her white flesh radiates with a luminosity that exceeds the flesh of both Titian's Venus and West's Psyche. Phillips's Venus has a similar angle of the knee to West's and Titian's figures, but with her right foot tucked underneath her on the bed appears less awkward than Psyche. Because he intensified

⁶⁰ Chapter 5 will concentrate on the increasing legitimacy of erotic subject material during the post-war years.

⁶¹ Titian, *Danaë and the Shower of Gold*, 1544-6, Museo di Capodimonte, Naples, oil on canvas.

rather than deviated from Venetian sensuality, Phillips's *Venus and Adonis* can be seen to anticipate the bold sensuality of Etty's nudes, discussed in Chapter 5.

For the purposes of this thesis, the key distinction between West's painting and those by Phillips and Titian emerges when we recall that the *The Examiner's* 1809 review begins by noting that *The Harmony of Affection* "allegorically elucidates its title by a playful association, in pairs, of the different species of organic life". The conservation report of *Cupid and Psyche* conducted by its former owners includes some important information that explains how *The Harmony of Affection*, an allegorical subject, might have, over time, morphed into the conventional depiction of Apuleius's fable that, according to the evidence explored in this chapter, it has long been mistaken to be. At an unknown point when West's reputation was shrinking (most likely during the late nineteenth or early twentieth century) four areas of overpaint were applied to the painting, all of which would disrupt the allegorical content of the alternative (original) title. The various pairs of creatures surrounding the lovers had all been eliminated from the canvas: the couple of baby lions to the left of the composition and the two large fish that mingle with the putti at the ocean's shore. In addition, the black bird that intercepts the pair of doves at the top right of the painting had been concealed.⁶² While it obscured West's intentions, this overpaint reduced the object to a more conventional portrayal of a familiar classical literary source. Unaware of the evidence suggesting that this work is *The Harmony of Affection*, conservators have tried to align the formerly hidden elements, these pairs of creatures, with Apuleius's literary narrative. One conservation report states that the bird

⁶² Examination Report: *Cupid and Psyche* by Benjamin West. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth Texas. July 6th, 2010.

“obviously was a symbol of Venus coming between the two lovers” and that “the lion-like heads at the lower left are probably intended to represent Cerberus, the watch-dog of Hades”.⁶³ Likewise, the fish are misinterpreted as sea monsters also symbolising Psyche’s venture into the underworld.

When its alternative title is taken into account, it transpires that this painting is an allegorical world of West’s own creation, one that borrows the figures of Psyche and Cupid for their affectionate narrative alone. Accordingly, in conjunction with the secondary pairs of creatures that frame their embrace, these figures emerge as vehicles for a statement on the primacy of love throughout the universe, a statement that in a large-scale historical painting produced in 1808 was invented not only to address the wars that overshadowed this exact moment in time, but, like David’s *Sabines*, also actively to direct this address to the general public. The marmoreality of the principal figures struggles to ensure that this in no way can be construed as erotic love, but rather a love that is celestial, abstractly spiritual, universal.⁶⁴ When applied to a work that seeks to convey such meaning during a time of war, this strange extended metaphor of embracing partners renders the ideological orientation of West’s painting uncomfortably tenuous. As Potts writes of David’s more Winckelmannian depictions of male corporeality, “some

⁶³ Conservation Report: *Cupid and Psyche* by Benjamin West, date unknown, Corcoran Gallery, Washington DC. (museum records: Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art).

⁶⁴ The inclusion of this fable in Walter Pater’s novel *Marius the Epicurean*, published in 1885, points to the capacity of these lovers symbolically to evoke a kind of love alternative to the traditional model of eroticism associated with hetero-normative relations. While in West’s case this is related to the world of war and thus essentially political in its separation from carnal love, in the case of Pater, the isolation of this story could speak for the author’s own non-normative subject position. This is terrain for further study (1900).

rather intense and potentially disturbing complexities are inevitably introduced when...ideas of virtue, of political heroism and freedom, are being projected onto and through images redolent of desire.”⁶⁵ Though normative, heterosexual desire here is but a faint imprint of its physical experience, West’s decision to mount ideological meaning on embracing couples undermines the charge of his image. In the wake of contemporary classicism’s loss of meaning, as we shall see in Chapter 5, erotic and political approaches to the human form emerge as fundamentally incompatible in British historical painting and sculpture.

After the completion of *The Harmony of Affection*, West began another work of a related allegorical subject, his *Omnia Vincit Amor* (Fig. 31).⁶⁶ If we assume that *Cupid and Psyche* and *The Harmony of Affection* are the same painting, we can assert that the theme of love’s dominance over all creation was important to West at this point, when not only had he fallen out of favour with the monarchy and been embraced by the French, the

⁶⁵ Potts, 1994: 233

⁶⁶ Sourced from Virgil’s “Tenth Eclogue”, this Latin title had recently been associated with a widely-read satirical poem published anonymously in 1791 by the prominent writer and lawyer James Boswell entitled “No Abolition of Slavery: or The Universal Empire of Love”. Virgil’s phrase is an epigraph to Boswell’s poem, which, as its title indicates, attacks the abolitionist movement and various anti-slavery members of parliament using the voice of a man who in love with a woman to whom the poem is addressed. The satire suggests that all beings are naturally intended to experience various forms of slavery, and that the white man’s slavery is his love for womankind, while the “negro”, happy in the condition of subordination, is destined by nature to remain enslaved. The poem is openly Tory, royalist, and anti-French. In its vicious indictment of the French Revolutionary ideals of universal fraternity and moreover human rights, Boswell’s satire shows how the allegorical idea of Love could be implicated in the political narrative out of which West’s historical paintings from this radical series develop. In the next chapter, as part of a discussion of the classical body losing its symbolic associations with these civic ideals, West’s own abolitionist sympathies will be mentioned in the context of Benjamin Robert Haydon’s racist treatment of the black body.

artist had resigned from and then resumed his presidency due to the political tensions within the Academy mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. With the composition centring on an ephebic Cupid akin to the one that holds Psyche, *Omnia Vincit Amor* presents the same characteristic fusion of sculptural figures reined in by warm Venetian colouring, the dark, red-inflected wings we see in both paintings having been modelled on a wing of a Macaw parrot West reportedly kept in his studio.⁶⁷

In the later work the allegory is not illustrated by pairs of lovers, but by a young adult Cupid wielding his power over the physical universe.⁶⁸ With the thumb and forefinger of his right hand Cupid holds a red strand with which he tames the elements: the large lion at his feet an allegory of the land, the Hippocamp the sea, the bald eagle above them the air, while the torch the god holds in his left hand symbolises fire.⁶⁹ The wide-legged stance of this sculptural figure is not the taut stretch of West's Achilles or David's Tatius, but a more relaxed, dynamic action, exactly the same as that of West's younger Cupid in his *Cupid Releasing Two Doves*, another painting in the post-Paris series, begun in 1798 but significantly re-touched in 1803 and 1808 (Fig. 32). The relationship between *Omnia Vincit Amor* and war is more immediate than in the case of *The Harmony of*

⁶⁷ Dunlap, 1834: 262.

⁶⁸ Earlier depictions of the theme "Omnia Vincit Amor", such as that of (Agnostino) Carracci (1599, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, engraving) or even Caravaggio's (1601-02, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, oil on canvas) are overtly amorous works portraying devious young Cupids ready to wield their erotic power. West's re-casting of this subject on a politically-motivated scale was unprecedented in the visual arts.

⁶⁹ An 1840 political print by John Doyle, *Cupid Taming the Elements*, takes its composition from West's painting, replacing Cupid with Lord Palmerston and Venus with Queen Victoria. In the distance are Benjamin Franklin, King Louis-Philippe of France, and allegorical personifications of Russia and China (British Museum, London, lithograph).

Affection/Cupid and Psyche, but it is through the correlations between these two paintings that the wider implications of their coextensive allegories come to light. With the pairs of affectionate creatures on the one hand and the commanding figure of Cupid urged by the draped figure of Venus at his side on the other, love and tenderness are rendered equivalent to the dream of peace between Europe's warring nations.

Instead of depictions of specific scenes from classical literature or history, the fact that the arrangement of these allegories is largely the artist's own conception likens them to Banks's marble monument. As with each of the statues destined for the St. Paul's Pantheon, *The Harmony of Affection/Cupid and Psyche* and *Omnia Vincit Amor* present distinct units of classical figures. In the former work, Psyche assumes the place of the resurrected war hero and Cupid the resuscitating role of Victory, the latter allegory being, as we know, the most common female fixture of the new wave of British Revolutionary and Napoleonic war monuments. In *Omnia Vincit Amor*, Cupid stands stall, erect and naked like Banks's Burges, while the goading figure of Venus at his side carries out Victory's supplementary function. The general audience to whom West intended these works to appeal, separate from both the court and the government, would have been the same public who might encounter monuments in their everyday lives, whether in St. Paul's, Westminster Abbey, or the promenade by Hyde Park Corner.

The period of peace initiated by the Treaty of Amiens had been fleeting, and from May, 1803, Britain and France were again at war. The years between 1803 and 1808 witnessed a harrowing intensification of the battles between all nations involved, and the message

imparted by West in these allegories would have been less controversial at the time of their production than Banks's more illicit intentions in his state-funded statue. While David's sculptural aesthetic gave form to West's "radical redirection", the wars provided him with the drive to forge his own brand of monumental classical painting. West's view of his role in relation to the conflicts is made clear by the fact that in 1805 he expressed the desire to donate his small painting *The Fatal Wounding of Sir Philip Sidney* to a wounded soldier.⁷⁰ Though it is unclear whether or not West had actually been born into a Quaker community in Pennsylvania, the artist's wish to be identified with Quakerism during the wartime should also be considered in the light of the anti-war meaning communicated through these allegories.⁷¹ Because of its monumental compass, *The Harmony of Affection/Cupid and Psyche* left the Royal Academy, British Institution and Liverpool Academy exhibitions unsold, as did *Omnia Vincit Amor* following its Academy exhibition in 1809.

While in Paris, one of the honours Napoleon had bestowed upon West was the granting of twenty-four hour access to the Louvre. For his renowned connoisseurial knowledge, the artist was apparently enlisted to quell rumours that the *Apollo Belvedere* that had recently arrived from Rome was not a fake copy.⁷² Farington reports that West joined the Consul as he descended into the halls designated for the looted statues. The *Apollo*, like

⁷⁰ Benjamin West collection: box 1, folder 2 (December 18th, 1806).

⁷¹ For a discussion of this element of the artist's self-fashioning see Rather, 2004.

⁷² Alberts, 1962: 262; *The Farington Diary*: 5: 1850 (September 12th, 1802).

the *Laocoön*, was already housed in a specially designated area, the *Salle D'Apollon*. Here, enclosed in a marble temple adorned with intricate reliefs, the *Apollo* was placed on a newly fashioned pedestal decorated with red granite sphinxes.⁷³ Amid the evolving exhibition of the continent's most prized objects both ancient and modern, Napoleon informed West and the others present that the “Apollo would soon be accompanied by the *Venus of Medicis*, as the Statue was on the road”.⁷⁴ Soon after this encounter, West was made an honorary member of the *Académie des beaux-arts* of the *Institut de France*. A letter he wrote in 1804 to the American Minister in Paris enquiring as to the whereabouts of the “medal and diploma” awarded to him by that institution shows that even with Britain and France back at war the artist enjoyed the cachet of being linked officially with the French art establishment.⁷⁵

The introduction to this thesis acknowledges the view that the fine arts are more likely to flourish in a republic rather than in a system of monarchical government, an argument that surfaced frequently in late eighteenth century British cultural discourses all essentially responding to Winckelmann's theory that the beauties of ancient art can be credited in part to the political conditions of their production. For West, Paris in 1802 offered an ideal art culture starkly opposite to the situation of perpetual financial insecurity and struggle for artists in Britain, circumstances consistently lamented by the artist from his arrival in England in 1763 until the final years of his life.⁷⁶ This was

⁷³ Planta, 1816: 79.

⁷⁴ *The Farington Diary*: 5: 1872 (September 22nd, 1802).

⁷⁵ Benjamin West collection: box 1, folder 2 (June 6th, 1804).

⁷⁶ Only three years after West arrived in Britain from Italy, he wrote to a friend back in North America lamenting the “great necessity a man is under (in Britain) to have money

especially the case now that he was no longer an anomaly within this milieu, his long-standing professional alliance with the king being lost irrecoverably. In France, he expressed the opinion to his fellow British Academicians that the Parisians seemed to be “in a much better state since the Revolution”, a view he shared with the openly radical engraver Sharp who too had come to Paris.⁷⁷

The embracing of West not only by Napoleon himself but by the Louvre’s director at this time, Dominique Vivant Denon, was a crucial moment for the painter, so much so that their conversations went on to become a substantial portion of Galt’s 1820 biography, which, as we know, was a collaborative effort between West and the Scottish novelist. In Galt’s anecdotal account of their interactions, West’s sentiment toward Denon is made clear by his invocation as an “accomplished enthusiast”.⁷⁸ Galt writes of the great care taken by Denon in explaining to West Napoleon’s undying investment in the arts, which included, “several of the superb schemes which were formed by the First Consul for the decoration of the capital.” Galt provides additional evidence for what David O’Brien specifies as the “shameless sycophancy toward Bonaparte that characterized Denon as an administrator”, the director’s duality as “the friend of the artist capable of securing unprecedented funding, and the clever propagandist enlisting art in the service of the empire”:⁷⁹

in his pocket”, how a mercantile economy “often directs the studies of youths contrary to their geniuses.” (Benjamin West collection: box 1, folder 2 (September 10th, 1771).

⁷⁷ *The Farington Diary*: 5: 1853 (September 14th, 1802).

⁷⁸ Galt, 1820: 179.

⁷⁹ O’Brien, 2006: 112, 114.

This information made a very deep impression on the mind of Mr. West, and he felt extremely sorrowful when he reflected, that hitherto the British government had done nothing decidedly with a view to promote the cultivation of those arts, which may justly be said to constitute the olive wreath on the brows of every great nation.⁸⁰

One of the first full-length dissertations on the artist's life had been published as a supplement to the London based magazine *La Belle Assemblée* in 1808.⁸¹ In this biography, the specificities and grandiose nature of which indicate that it was composed with direct input from the artist himself, West's acceptance by the French establishment interpolates his capacity to produce historical pictures that "promote virtue", I would argue, not the traditional civic humanist virtue associated with earlier pictures in the grand style, but the kind of independent monumentalism that informs *The Harmony of Affection/Cupid and Psyche, Omnia Vincit Amor* and the other paintings in this series.⁸² The author dwells on West's reception by the French "as a man who had conferred an honour on his country", stating that the (now enemy) nation bestowed upon him the appellation of the "Reviver of Dignity of Historical Painting". This was hardly an exaggeration. Indeed, while the artist was in France a banquet had been held in celebration of his presence by the administrators of the Louvre, at which the curator Joseph Lavallée read out loud a highly complimentary and respectful poetic greeting he had composed in West's honour.⁸³ In what was possibly the highest compliment, French artists nicknamed West the "Vien of the Thames", a title that inserts him into the

⁸⁰ Galt, 1820: 180.

⁸¹ *Belle Assemblée or, Court and Fashionable Magazine*, January 1808: 4: 197-98.

⁸² *Ibid*: 188. See Barrell, 1986.

⁸³ *Vers lu au diner donné par l'administration du Musée central des arts de la 7 vendémiaire an XI a Monsieur West, directeur de l'Académie royale de Londres par Joseph Lavallée*. Paris: Imprimerie des Sciences et Arts vendémiaire an XI. Bibliothèque Nationale. Cab. Est. Yd. 2609/8 o.

comparative sophistication and refinement of the French painterly tradition.⁸⁴ Having replaced François Boucher as the leader of the French school, Joseph-Marie Vien, who, aged 86 in 1802 West had also met in Paris, was David's former master. As Martin Rosenberg asserts, Vien was generally considered "the father of the return to antiquity in France".⁸⁵ The nickname "Vien of the Thames" thus acknowledges West's connoisseurial prowess and his formative role in the progress of the British school while anticipating the artist's turn to a more intensive type of classicism following his return. Such ardent praise and acceptance in Paris emerges as one of the contributing factors that led the artist to a harder, sharper approach to antique corporeality than ever before.

Back in Britain, it was the parallels that would begin to be drawn between West and David himself that confirm how for West, painting the sculptural body was a public, monumental endeavour. In 1815, the first solo exhibition of David's paintings was held in London in the headquarters of a wine importer, the only one to take place during West's lifetime. Due to the fact that this display was exclusively of portraiture, the exhibition was somewhat of a critical failure among audiences seeking the thrill of David's more controversial historical paintings.⁸⁶ One author writing for *The Morning Herald* uses an analogy between the two painters to drive home this disappointment: "As well might we estimate WEST by his portraits as DAVID."⁸⁷ Earlier that same year, the *New British Lady's Magazine* similarly aligned the two painters in order to proclaim the

⁸⁴ *Lavallée's* verses had been translated into English and published in the *Monthly Magazine and British Register*, November 1st, 1804: 18: 2: 322-333. The nickname "Vien of the Thames" is afforded to West in the final line of the poem.

⁸⁵ Rosenberg, 1995: 117.

⁸⁶ For description and insight into this solo exhibition see Lee, 2007.

⁸⁷ *Morning Herald*, May 4th, 1815: 330.

marvelousness of another, whose fashionable feminine classicism will be discussed in Chapter 4: “though France may set off her DAVID against our WEST, yet she has no artist who exhibits the touching sensibilities, the nature effusing tenderness of our STOTHARD.”⁸⁸ As for decades West and David had occupied the authoritative position within their respective academies, the assumption of such affinities might seem inevitable. But it is important to observe that, as far as my research shows, these connections only begin to be acknowledged from around 1815, and rely on a certain distance from the Revolutionary polemics of David’s artistic identity.

A month later, the *New British Lady’s Magazine* published an essay exclusively on West, in which the artist’s trip to Paris was discussed with candour:

During the short cessation of the war with France, subsequent to the treaty of Amiens, Mr. West visited Paris. The most distinguished French artists immediately hastened to honour him with their welcome, and the acknowledgement of their esteem; public dinners were given him; a poem was composed in eulogy of his talents; and the emperor by appointment met in the famous gallery of the Louvre, to be gratified with an inspection, in his company, of the works of the renowned masters. Would such unusual distinctions have been conferred by judges so competent, with the emperor at their head, had the object of them been so undeserving of regard as his enemies assert?⁸⁹

This passage betrays an awareness of West’s changed professional circumstances in England, his rejection by the monarchy, his loss and regain of the Academy presidency. Also hinted at is the idea that West is overrated, an artist not worthy of his international fame, something that is also put across in the review of *The Harmony of Affection* in *The*

⁸⁸ *New British Lady’s Magazine, and Monthly Magazine*, Dec 15th, 1815: 40.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, Jan 15th, 1815: 45-46 .

Edinburgh Annual Register and other critiques included in this chapter. The question posed by the above passage contains the difficulties that shaped West's life and informed his art following his trip to Paris, difficulties that, from 1803-1809 found expression in his turn towards contemporary classical paintings suffused with his own anti-war convictions, articulated through abstract allegories and awash in Venetian colour.

Élie Faure writes that in 1816 when David first laid eyes on the Parthenon marbles, “he felt that his career was a long misunderstanding, a permanent confusion between the truth he encountered and the life which he had believed himself to be seizing.”⁹⁰ Though hardly as poetically relayed, a not dissimilar reaction on the part of West was noted by Farington. Not long after the arrival of these sculptures to London, West is said to have stated that these “sublime specimens of the purest sculpture” made him “wish to be again only 20 years of age & that He might labour to profit by them.”⁹¹ The incorporation of these Greek sculptures into the creative and critical landscapes of British painting and sculpture would challenge the supremacy of the antiquities that had been brought to Paris from the continent, the four statues West had urged Academy pupils to ground their practice upon in 1807: the *Apollo Belvedere*, the *Venus de' Medici*, the *Farnese Hercules* and the *Laocoön*. West first saw the Marbles later in the year he painted *The Harmony of Affection/Cupid and Psyche*. Upon their arrival in Britain, the seventy year old painter was one of the artists immediately convinced of their superiority, and though too sick later in 1816 to appear in person to defend their purchase by the nation at the Select Committee, his views were made clear in his answers to a set of interview questions that

⁹⁰ Quoted Faure, 1924: 250. Faure does not provide the source for this quotation.

⁹¹ *The Farington Diary*: 9: 3250 (March 30th, 1808).

were sent to him to be read aloud at the inquiry.⁹² Proximity to these sculptures terminated his “radical redirection” and indeed his investment in all other works of ancient sculpture.

⁹² *Select Committee Report: Elgin Marbles*: 148-154.

CHAPTER 3

INTERVENTIONS INTO CLASSICAL NAKEDNESS: THE THEORY OF BENJAMIN ROBERT HAYDON

When considered in conjunction with the material explored in the previous chapter, West's written answers to the questions sent to him by the Select Committee appointed to discuss the nation's acquisition of the Elgin Marbles betray another drastic change in the artist's attitude towards the depiction of the human form. The speech in which he had stressed the fundamental necessity of continuous study of the *Farnese Hercules*, the *Laocoön*, the *Apollo Belvedere* and the *Venus de' Medici* in all areas of fine art production, "whether History, Landscape, Portrait, or Familiar Life", reminding assembled pupils of the Royal Academy that these particular antiquities "unite the requisite excellences, joining appropriate character with correctness of outline", had been given in December 1807, mere months before the painter glimpsed for the first time the recently arrived Athenian sculptures on the corner of Park Lane and Piccadilly.¹ As we know, the artist's renewed investment in ancient statuary took shape beyond the praise of these formal "excellences", and was realised in a series of paintings produced following his return from Paris: among others, the 1803 version of *Venus Lamenting the Death of Adonis*, the 1804 and 1805 versions of *Thetis Bringing Armour to Achilles*, the 1808 *Cupid Releasing Two Doves* and *The Harmony of Affection/Cupid and Psyche*, and the 1809 *Omnia Vincit Amor*. Yet seven years after the completion of this last work, when asked how the *Theseus* and the *Illissus* (known today as the *Dionysus* and the *River-God*) from the east and west pediments of the Elgin Marbles compare with the *Apollo*, the

¹ Hoare, 1809: 19.

Laocoön, and the *Belvedere Torso* (a famous ancient fragment that remained in the Vatican during the Napoleonic reign) West responded, “The Apollo of the Belvidere (sic), the Torso, and the Laocoon are systematic art; the Theseus and the Illissus stand supreme in art.”² When asked if the “close imitation of nature” that characterises the Elgin Marbles takes from or adds to their excellence, West responds, the “close imitation of nature visible in these Figures, adds an excellence to them which words are incapable of describing, but sensibility feels, and adds to their excellence.”³

The binary opposition between “systematic” and “supreme” or “pure” art that West constructs in this interview indicates that the artist has retreated from his commitment to the encoded perfection of the type of statuary he had previously based his practice upon in favour of yet another state of corporeality: the rugged grandeur of the Elgin Marbles, sculptures whose appearance I will refer to as “ideal naturalism”. In comparison with the smooth, sealed, static condition of the more familiar works of ancient sculpture, the visible tendons, veins, joints and flexed, irregular muscles characterising the Elgin Marbles did not initiate a distinction that can be interpreted as simply “ideal” vs. “naturalistic” or “real”. Rather, what they offered was a new kind of idealism, an idealism fused with instantaneous, spontaneous action, in the words of West, figures that appear to be captured the instant “they were converted into marble”.⁴

² *Select Committee Report: Elgin Marbles*: 151.

³ *Ibid*: 152.

⁴ Quoted in Hamilton, 1811: 55.

In addition to the physical discrepancies between contrasting manifestations of the classical body, the Elgin Marbles could be seen to possess an extra appeal that conditioned the interpretation of their ideal naturalism. So far, we have been using the term “archaeological” to describe an aesthetic: the sparse, seamless envelope of the hitherto most valued relics of the ancient world in comparison to the fluttering lines and excesses of the modern style that it supplanted. But what the arrival of the Elgin Marbles instigated among West and others was, to borrow a term from Shawn Malley, an “archaeological consciousness” hitherto largely absent from rhapsodic adherences to the four most prized works of ancient sculpture, the works until this point tacitly understood to be the most authentically Greek, and thus “pure”.⁵ As stated in the introduction, contemporary classicism, in which ancient forms are summoned to signify the dreams and lost dreams attached to the mythic present, depended on an ahistorical conception of the Graeco-Roman body in order to conflate corporeal idealism with ideologies rooted in the now. Indeed, Banks’s *Monument to Captain Burges* and West’s series of contemporary classical paintings both rely on a whole, intact, implicitly restored model of the antique in order to inscribe meaning upon the spectacle of the ideal. Damaged, weathered, and most importantly unmediated by modern restoration, the Elgin Marbles, presented as products of the great Phidias and his workshop, introduced a new conception of ideal purity, throwing into relief tensions between established aesthetic authorities and historical authenticity. Hitherto, discussions of this problem had bubbled away under the

⁵ Malley begins his study in the 1840s, and by this time the precise origins of the Elgin Marbles are wholly understood to ground their significance and condition their aesthetic value (2012: 65). For insight into the suppressed nature of the question of authenticity with regard to Graeco-Roman sculpture among certain literary figures in nineteenth century Rome see Cheeke, 2009.

surface of artistic discourses, exerting comparatively little pressure on the development of Royal Academic artistic practice, which looked to the sculptural cast, the shadow of the shadow of an unknowable ancient whole, to ground its rubric of the human form's most elevated and thus correct mode of representation.⁶

It was the combination of “individual grandeur and abstracted excellence” that, following his exposure to the viable authenticity of the Elgin Marbles, West came to believe embodied the “nearest to perfection in refined and ideal art”.⁷ The “unerring truths” of nature surface as the correct basis for depicting the ideal figure, as opposed to the “mechanical principles” of “systematic characters”, in other words, the restored, conventionally beautiful, even, predictable version of ideal corporeality that had informed

⁶ In late eighteenth century Rome the debate over restorations was consistent, yet it remained focused on the question of collecting rather than the production of original art. A letter from James Barry to Edmund Burke in 1766 describes vividly the haphazard approach to the reconstituted marble body: “As the English have much money to lay out on Vertù, and have, perhaps, a greater passion for the ancients than they have, generally speaking, judgement to distinguish among them; those in whose hands they fall here, and to whom their commissions are sent, take care to provide heads with bodies and legs, and vice versa. Fragments of all the gods are jumbled together, legs and heads of fairies and the graces, till, as when the gods p—d into the cow's hide, a monster is produced neither human or brutal. There are instances of some things being sent over, but the multitude of bad ones make us the amazement and ridicule of French, Germans, and all other indifferent people. It is a pity to see our gentlemen, who come out of England with the best intentions, and with a national spirit, so duped, and even made instruments of dissension betwixt the artists” (Fryer, 1809: 1: 71). Myrone quotes the letter from which this passage is extracted, describing what was a pervasive anxiety surrounding the dealership of badly restored sculptures masquerading as authentic antiquities: “If the ‘jumble’ of parts undeserving of preservation and inappropriately joined under the direction of commercially motivated dealers was monstrous in character and effect, this was not merely an offence to taste or scholarship. Through these procedures the representational body failed to be organized into a signifying totality by a sole author; it assumed, though merely manual and thoughtless operations, a false sense of wholeness while retaining the multiple, perhaps contradictory signification of its individual parts and diffuse origins” (2005: 80).

⁷ *Ibid*: 50.

so many of his canvasses, most intensively and conspicuously during the phase from 1803 to 1809.

This change in attitude had been no long, gradual development across the period between 1808 when he first saw the Marbles and 1816 when the Select Committee sent West his interview questions; Farington reports that as early, as May, 1808, West stated his opinion that the Elgin Marbles were the embodiment of absolute “perfection of art, where *nature* predominated every where.—and was not resolved to be obedient to system.”⁸

Clearly it was West’s initial exposure to the Marbles that forced the artist to reassess his commitment to the original sculptural precepts, the expressions and outlines of which he had long been emulating and so recently been lauding to Academy students. He resolved to begin a concentrated period of studying the Marbles during the coming summer, and when later asked by the Select Committee whether he thought drawing from them had benefitted his practice, he cited his 1811 *Christ in the Temple* and his 1814 *Christ Rejected* as evidence, leaving it up to the public to decide whether or not the new course of study he began back in 1808 had “added any celebrity” to “the productions of (his) pencil”.⁹ What is significant is that these works are religious, not classical, mythological nor allegorical in subject, and moreover do not involve the naked figure to any major degree.¹⁰ West’s return to religious subject material in the wake of his exposure to the

⁸ *The Farington Diary*: 9: 3282 (May 21st, 1808).

⁹ *Select Committee Report: Elgin Marbles*: 152.

¹⁰ In February, 1809 West wrote a letter to Lord Elgin thanking him for the opportunity to view and draw from the Marbles, taking the opportunity to outline the studies he had made from thus far and relay their impact on his paintings *The Battle of the Centaurs*, *Theseus and Hercules in triumph over the Amazons*, and *Alexander and his Horse Bucephalus*. However, in March, 1811 West wrote another letter informing Lord Elgin

Marbles is not so much related to the character of these newly-arrived figures, reliefs and fragments, but rather provides further evidence of the declining authority of classicism within contemporary art as the century progressed. This great shift, the context for the narrative of this thesis, can be viewed as a symptom of increasing aversion to French art and universalist ideologies in Britain. As Craske has noted, the rejection (across the continent) of Revolutionary thought, dressed up as it had been in the imagery of the classical world, “brought about a strong revival in religious art.”¹¹ When it came to the portrayal of classical nakedness, the cause of championing this new “pure” over the “systematic”, ideal naturalism over the previous conceptions of ideal sculptural beauty, would be taken up by another painter, just twenty-two years old in 1808, Benjamin Robert Haydon.

Though Haydon, a staunch Christian, would also produce large-scale religious paintings, positing himself as an opponent of many of the ideals and tenets of 1790s radicalism and universalist culture in general, the classical naked figure would remain an indispensable aspect of his practice and his widely-disseminated theory of the true Greek method for

that it was his *Christ in the Temple* that best manifests his own “ambition (though at a very advanced period of life) to introduce those refinements in art, which are so distinguished in” the Elgin Marbles. West also acknowledges indirectly the allegations against his style’s alleged unnatural, sculptural artificiality in works produced when the former examples of the antique were the only ones available to him: “Had I been blessed with seeing and studying these emanations of genius at an earlier period of life, the sentiment of their pre-eminence would have animated all my exertions; and more character, and expression, and life would have pervaded all my humble attempts in Historical Painting.” The artist states that only after encountering the Elgin Marbles does he feel in possession of “a true notion of what is classical in art” (Hamilton, 1811: 47-56). Photographs of West’s letters in Haydon’s own copy of this book, complete with largely indecipherable marginalia written by the younger painter, can be found in the British Library Rare Books Collection, 144.b.10. The originals were destroyed in 1940.

¹¹ Craske, 1997: 97.

delineating the human form.¹² Ostracised, destitute and even imprisoned on two occasions, Haydon would suffer for his investment in what was, as we know, an increasingly unstable foundation for the production of fine art in Britain at this point in the nineteenth century.

This chapter will not dwell on Haydon's misfortunes or simply focus on the artist's relationship to the Elgin Marbles, an intersection that has been well-documented by both scholars and biographers.¹³ Instead I will look at how Haydon, an outspoken artist and journalist whose nationalistic, pro-war, and white supremacist inclinations render him distinct from the other figures explored in this thesis so far, repositions the domain of the antique as part of a new academic and stylistic methodology for the representation of the human form.¹⁴ In this process, the type of classical nakedness offered by the Elgin Marbles, both their ideal naturalism and their historical authenticity, becomes an agent of

¹² For example, see Haydon's *The Raising of Lazarus*, 1821-3, Tate, London, oil on canvas; *Christ Entering into Jerusalem*, 1814-20, Mount St. Mary's Seminary, Cincinnati, oil on canvas.

¹³ Among many examples, see Cummings, 1967; O'Keefe, 2011: 69-100; Gurstein, 2002; Rothenburg, 1977: 231-246.

¹⁴ Haydon's political identifications are not easily recoverable. Though he associated with the "Examiner clique" (as he called them), the circle of liberal thinkers united by their radical inclinations and corresponding cultural interests, his autobiography and diary both make evident his ardent support of the wars against France, an aspect of his unrelenting nationalism discussed in the introduction. Yet he labelled his friend David Wilkie a "the cautious Tory" and remained invested in the idea of parliamentary reform. Upon the fall of Napoleon in 1815, Haydon and Hunt fell out over their conflicting sentiments toward his defeat. Though fascinated by the French leader, Haydon saw the British victory as a resounding triumph over an enemy nation. Hunt was reportedly overtaken with grief at the news (Pope: 3: 236; O'Keefe, 2011: 147). In this chapter I focus on the artist's artistic endeavours rather than his politics, as it is in the distinction the artist forges between these modes of engagement that the discontinuity between his art and the (ideologically-motivated) art of Banks and West can be conveyed. It is interesting to note that Haydon expressed dislike for Percy Bysshe Shelley because of the poet's atheism (Taylor, 1853: 1: 334).

the crusade at the centre of Haydon's writings on art, his teachings and his own artistic practice: the study of dissection and the promotion of anatomical accuracy in drawing and painting. For Haydon first and foremost came the interior of the body as opposed to its surface, and the antique was valued solely for its practical applications rather than its lofty and evocative possibilities. Indeed, this had been the function of ancient sculpture in relation to artistic practice for over a century on the continent, until the revived interest in the archaeological aesthetic blossomed and the sculptural body in turn came to be supplied with a powerful political ontology.

The preceding chapters have shown the capacity of the ideal to convey anti-war and universalist meaning in contemporary monumental art, whether the actively radical utopianism of Banks's naked hero or the inventive rhetorics at play in West's series of allegories. That an absence of the type of idealism that had been rendered symbolic through its (now "systematic") appearance (the body of Banks's Burges or of West's various Cupids, for example) marked the Elgin Marbles meant that the symbolic charges of Graeco-Roman forms could instantly be rendered obsolete, contributing to the depreciation in value of the antique in contemporary art. When the antique becomes again principally a locus of or a tool for technical mastery, albeit now infused with the authority it had acquired over the course of the preceding decades, the abstract power of its image evaporates. Meanwhile, as this new condition of corporeality, this new ideal of (damaged) purity, becomes prized for its authenticity, any meaning attached to the (ahistorical) ideal is instantly rendered false, itself out-dated. In the wake of the arrival of the Elgin Marbles, recalling Agamben's theory of contemporaneity as knowing ones own

epoch by way of a “dys-chrony”, anachronism no longer had a positive role to play in the production of images through which the contemporary is understood and managed. For Haydon, historical authenticity becomes aesthetic substance, thus denying the classical body the capacity to enter into a dialogue with the present moment and dreams of the future.

In Haydon’s school of thought, the *Apollo*, *Venus*, *Laocoön*, *Hercules* and other canonical antiquities came to be viewed as corrupted, effeminate, the antithesis of true Phidian art.¹⁵

¹⁵ It was following the Select Committee that the Elgin Marbles were concluded to be the work of Phidias. The report of the debated acquisition was organised into four separate heads, the third of which was concerned with both the aesthetic worth and the historical integrity of the Marbles in relation to other works of classical sculpture, now rendered coextensive. The general conclusion of the third component of the proceedings includes the following affirmation: “The general current of this portion of the evidence makes no doubt of referring the date of these works to the original building of the Parthenon, and to the designs of Phidias, the dawn of every thing which adorned and ennobled Greece” (1816: 6). Prettejohn uses Hegel’s interpretation of these sculptures to explore the evolution from architectural fragment to aesthetic object, a shift that parallels and interpolates the emergent historicisation of the antique in the context of Haydon’s theory of art (2012: 41-49). In *History of the Art of Antiquity*, Winckelmann posits Phidas (spelt Pheidias in its original Greek form) as the kernel of the great “improvement of Greek art” responsible for the most beautiful relics of the ancient world, including the more corrupted imitations they stimulated over the course of subsequent centuries and into the Hellenistic and Roman eras (Potts, 2006: 171). Potts summarises Winckelmann’s schema, in which Greek art is envisaged as developing “from an archaic phase to an early, austere or ‘rectangular’ classical phase associated with the fifth-century B.C masters Pheidias and Polykleitos... to a later, refined or graceful phase identified with the fourth-century B.C masters Praxiteles and Lysippos, and finally into a long period of imitation and decline” (*Ibid*: 28). While Winckelmann, following Pliny, was responsible for establishing Phidias as the quintessential master of fifth-century classicism, Haydon consistently expressed disdain for the German author and his writings. In 1815 the painter wrote to William Wordsworth, “Your notions of Winkelmann appear to me quite true. He was, I believe, well versed in antiquity, but very superficial in his own conclusions in everything that required thinking- out. Such men are but useless rhapsodists, who turn off the minds of all from the beauty and raciness of nature” (Haydon: 1877: 2: 22). Later, Haydon concludes a letter to his friend Miss Mitford about the dire state of the Royal Academy with the following promise: “there remains to us (Historical painters) one

By 1812, Haydon had formulated a diametric opposition between sculptural types that split the very idea of the antique into two disparate parts: the “old antique” signified the *Apollo, Venus, Laocoön, Hercules*, et al., everything conventionally ideal and with minimal or inaccurate traces of anatomical understanding, while the “new antique” signified the paradoxically more ancient Elgin Marbles.¹⁶ As part of what became his relentless campaign for Marbles’ supremacy, the painter would continually rebuke the “old antique” until his suicide in 1846.

As with West and his relationship to both antiquities and old master works, the Elgin Marbles functioned for Haydon as an instrument of professional self-fashioning used to assert, elevate and define his artistic selfhood and disseminate his own importance in the public sphere. Yet Haydon’s estrangement from the Royal Academy from 1812 onwards, and later the British Institution, meant that both his commitment to anatomy and his lifelong attempts to preserve and to cultivate the genre of historical painting involved an independence that resulted in both singular infamously and, as previously stated, disastrous financial debt. It was West’s perfectly-timed continental travels in the early 1760s that afforded him the connoisseurial authority that would land him the position of official Historical Painter to the King and place him as the logical successor to Reynolds for the Academy presidency, and likewise, Banks’s Academy scholarship to Rome that facilitated his heralding as the leader and saviour of the burgeoning British school of

chance, through the House, or the Sovereign. Let that be tried, and then indeed, if in twenty-five years more we remain in the same condition, I will agree with Winkelmann (sic) and Du Bos, that Englishmen are incapable of such efforts” (*Ibid*: 135). Barrell has examined the question of climate in Haydon’s late encyclopaedia entry (1986: 279-312).

¹⁶ Pope, 1960: 1: 96.

sculpture. Haydon's prioritisation of anatomical science presented a self-conscious rupture of the extant dependencies of continental training and ideal art.¹⁷

Furthermore, since the founding of the Academy, it was a drawing after the "old antique" that had to be submitted as part of the admission process. Successful applicants then began their studies by drawing from casts in the Plaister Academy, only allowed to graduate to the living model once they showed sufficient mastery of the sculptural body. With distinguished surgeon William Hunter appointed as the first Professor of Anatomy in 1768, the science continued to be an important but still auxiliary component of the curriculum.¹⁸ At the (short-lived) private art school Haydon established in 1815, the artist taught his pupils to begin with the study of a selection of anatomical textbooks, taking his band of young followers to surgical theatres to draw from dissected corpses.¹⁹ Following this course in anatomy, Haydon's students then made copies from Raphael's Tapestry Cartoons, and were only taught to draw from the antique, that is, the Elgin Marbles, once their drawings after Raphael were satisfactory. This reversal and reduction of the Academic pedagogy was in itself radical, but in this alternative schema the politically revolutionary resonances of classical nakedness were lost. What replaced these already

¹⁷ At this time, continental training was not necessarily essential for artistic success in Britain. The next chapter will look at two Academicians who evaded these privileges while still acquiring an unprecedented popularity that did not compromise their claim to the revered title of "historical painter" nor prevent them from being elected Royal Academicians. Yet theirs is a type of historical painting, as we shall see, that did not strive to be part of the same grand, large-scale tradition to which West and Haydon saw themselves as Britain's leading living contributors.

¹⁸ For insight into Hunter's professorship see Bynum and Porter, 2002.

¹⁹ Cummings, 1963: 367

increasingly fragile resonances was Haydon's vision of his own worth as a professional artist and above all, genius.

In discussing an eighteenth century private classical sculpture display, Bann notes that the juxtaposition of a contemporary bust of its collector next to works cherished, organised and restored to show off their "flawless and timeless perfection" (rather than their historical identity) disrupts the continuity of the exhibition "because it lends a note of inappropriate subjectivism."²⁰ The introduction of the specific collector's image seems misplaced in this context because the perfection of such statues relies on the generality of their classical origins, their lack of context and author, their essential timelessness. The Elgin Marbles allowed Haydon to infuse the very concept of the antique in relation to contemporary art with his own artistic subjectivity, rendering his subject position coextensive with that of Phidias and throwing into relief the anonymity of the ahistorical antiquities that, in another life so to speak, could form an aristocratic collection.

In a not dissimilar vein to the complementary interplay between authenticity and subjectivity, Bourdieu's suggests that modernity's increasing emphasis on technique and/or the style in which a work of art is rendered, rather than the subject of the work or the symbolism of this subject, re-orientates the value system used to receive and interpret the work, so that the individual maker is elevated to the position of (great, powerful) subject/master:

²⁰ Bann, 1989: 105.

the affirmation of the primacy of the mode of representation over the object of representation is the most specific expression of the field's claim to wield and to impose the principles of a properly cultural legitimacy regarding both the production and the reception of an artwork. Affirming the primacy of the saying over the thing said, sacrificing the 'subject' to the manner in which it is treated, constraining language in order to draw attention to language, all comes down to an affirmation of the specificity and the irreplaceability of the product and the producer.²¹

In his self-imposed isolation from London's art establishment, Haydon, armed with anatomical science and an impassioned claim that the Elgin Marbles were the finest specimens of ancient sculpture, was essentially competing against the Academy, the British Institution and Knight of the Society of Dilettanti (with whom he would also fall out) for "cultural legitimacy". With the contemporary classical bodies in the monumental art thus far explored, the mode of representation, the technicalities of their idealism, remain subordinate to the connotations and symbolism of that idealism, something that, for example, eases comparisons between the art of West and the art of David, painters whose obvious discrepancies in levels of skill are rendered irrelevant in such a discussion; clearly, to look at the ontological continuities of something so fundamentally academic as the human form in the contemporaneous works of West and David, while overlooking their differences in ability, has proved impossible for scholars. Barrell argues that despite his ardent pursuit of commissions and opportunities to produce such works, Haydon was unable to envision a public function for historical painting, and was "reduced to defending it simply as a *style*".²² This chapter will consider the ways in which artist's reformed take on the antique, its anatomy and its authenticity, embodies the

²¹ Bourdieu, 1985: 20.

²² Barrell, 1995: 62, 308-314.

move toward style over symbolism. Classical nakedness mutating into a question of style is the essential precondition for the other ideal body, the “old antique” becoming an unmeaningful idea. Firstly I will first provide some background for the tensions between anatomy and the antique in British Academic painting and sculpture. I will then look at the artist’s employment of one model in particular, a black sailor named Wilson whom the artist drew and cast in plaster in 1810. Wilson’s “perfect” physique aided the artist’s theoretical valuation of the Elgin Marbles, and in turn provided a point of departure for his theory of true, Phidian form. As we shall see, Haydon’s usage of Wilson drives home more than any other aspect of the artist’s practice or copious body of both visual and written material the fact that at this stage, towards the culmination of the wars with France and into the Restoration period, classical nakedness was rapidly shedding its capacity to evoke Revolutionary ideals.²³

In 1807, the surgeon Anthony Carlisle published a manifesto entitled “On the Connexion between Anatomy and the Arts of Design” in *The Artist*, a short-lived weekly collection of essays edited by Prince Hoare. In this article, Carlisle argues that an advanced level of

²³ It is important to acknowledge that in his autobiography, Haydon reflects on the British victory in 1815 with a vehement condemnation of the French national character, describing the nation as “vain insolent, thoughtless, blood-thirsty, active, & impetuous by Nature, so susceptible as (to) have the little reason always blinded by the bubble of Glory held before the minds eye, a People who are brilliant without intensity” (Taylor: 1: 270). Likewise, the phrase “David’s Brickdust”, borrowed by Vaughan in his essay discussed in the previous chapter, was Haydon’s invention. The painter writes of British art’s avoidance of the “contagion of David’s brickdust which infected the continent”, mocking the dry, lack-lustre colouring of the Davidian school, a pervasive opinion also outlined in the previous chapter (*Ibid*, 3: 171).

anatomical knowledge is not only “over-rated” in the context of the fine arts, but “totally useless”, inimical to the production of historical painting and sculpture.²⁴ As both surgeon and classical art enthusiast, the surgeon seeks to impose a limit on the scope of his profession within the Academy, and posits the Greeks as principle evidence for the idea that the science threatens the beauty and unity of the human form in representation. Ancient Greek artists, he writes, “succeeded in giving soul and sentiment to the imitations of flesh and bones, without exposing the bare mechanism of our animal nature.”²⁵ It is the fact that the naked figure was “continually before them” that allowed the Greeks to study, to perfect and to reproduce the beautiful forms that artists in the present day are taught to emulate. Citing Pliny and Galen in a concise, cursory fashion, Carlisle stresses that medicine fell into decline during the period separating Homer from Hippocrates, and that this decline actually fostered rather than prohibited the flourishing of the greatest art the world has ever known. British artists are held to be better off drawing from the antique and above all, from finely formed living models, than to any great extent adhering to the inner-workings of the body.

In December 1808, Carlisle won the Academy’s Professorship of Anatomy upon the death of John Sheldon. *The Monthly Magazine* reported on his inaugural lecture, emphasising the zeal with which he appeared to have taken up the position and noting his dual capacity as both qualified surgeon and art theoretician. The author’s account of Carlisle’s lecture, which itself unfortunately was never published, reveals that after

²⁴ Carlisle, 1807: 2.

²⁵ *Ibid*: 7.

paying tribute to his deceased predecessor, the surgeon put forth the same argument he had had published in *The Artist* just over a year previously:

(Carlisle's) eulogium on the Greeks and their Style of Sculpture was as justly delineated as it was true. He apologized to the Professor of Painting if he should appear to make inroads on his province, and by a poetical simile, added, that if he was prevented from occasionally skirting his lines of demarcation, he should scarcely know how to accommodate the science of anatomy to the studies of artists... Professor Carlisle has wisely promised to abandon technical terms as much as possible, which will certainly make the science more easy of acquisition.²⁶

Evidently, Carlisle straight away adopted the mission of de-mystifying anatomical science, presenting a simplified version of it to Academy students in order to direct them away from the incorporation of such details into their developing practices. His salute to Henry Tresham, who at the time occupied the position of Professor of Painting, suggests that the possibility of his encroaching too far into the domain of fine art could be viewed by the majority of Academicians and Associates as somewhat of a welcome challenge to disciplinary frontiers.

The author reporting on the lecture goes on to relay how Carlisle then “described the geometrical diagrams on the body of the model, the celebrated Gregson, who is reckoned to approach nearer to the proportions of Lord Elgin's admirable Theseus than any other known model”.²⁷ Even before Carlisle's election, pugilist Bob Gregson had been enlisted as part of the surgeon's campaign to reign in study of anatomy in Academic art, his over

²⁶ *New Monthly Magazine*, March 1st, 1809: 27: 179.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

six foot tall form providing a visual supplement to the case that the Greek artists relied on nothing more than a simple synthesis of beautiful models and geometry.²⁸ Carlisle does not appear to have been a particular devotee of the Elgin Marbles over other antiquities, and it remains unclear at what point he himself first saw them. When on the 30th June, 1808 Gregson was brought to the Marbles and asked to pose amongst them for the benefit of invited guests, the majority of them artists, Carlisle had not been present.²⁹ Yet earlier that month, Farington had visited Carlisle's house for breakfast, where, after they had eaten, a large gathering of men were led into his drawing room, where they found Gregson "stripped naked" and put on display. Farington describes this encounter:

all admired the beauty of His proportions from the Knee or rather from the waist upwards, including His arms, & small head. The Bone of His leg West sd. is too short & His toes are not long enough, & there is something of heaviness abt. the thighs,—Knees, & legs—but on the whole He was allowed to be the finest figure the persons present had seen.—He was placed in many attitudes.³⁰

West's participation in the debate over Gregson's proportions is intriguing, as at this point the painter would have been in the throes of the new course of study he had promised to take up upon initial exposure to the Marbles. Carlisle's employment of Gregson also served to defend the nation against the lingering legacy of eighteenth century discourses claiming that Britain could not produce beautiful art because the cold climate inhibited the public exhibition of the naked body, an idea outlined in the

²⁸ Farington writes, "Carlisle, this evening, talked a great deal abt. the Greek sculptors not producing their admirable works by means of *anatomical knowledge* but their knowledge of *Geometry*" (*The Farington Diary*: 9: 3293 (June 11th, 1808).

²⁹ *Ibid*: 3306 (June 30th, 1808).

³⁰ *Ibid*: 3301 (June 20th, 2808).

introduction to this thesis. In his article in *The Artist*, Carlisle had acknowledged that the climate of Greece “allowed of a more considerable exposure of the human body than the climate of Northern Europe.”³¹ By incorporating Gregson into his general project and his Academy teachings, Carlisle could overshadow Winckelmannian environmental determinism that uses climate as a register of the quality of a nation’s art. Gregson was presented as a living, breathing British specimen of beauty nearing Grecian perfection.

John Bell, a distinguished Scottish surgeon and artist slightly Carlisle’s senior known into the twentieth century as “the father of surgical anatomy”, also adopted the argument that the perceived perfection of Greek sculpture is credited in a large part to their sparse and disorganised understanding of the interior of the human body.³² Published by his wife in 1825 after his death in 1820, Bell’s *Observations on Italy* is largely a conventional appraisal of the art treasures and curiosities encountered during his tour across various Italian cities during the summer of 1818, albeit infused with the less routine insight of a medical doctor. Though commentary on the question of art and anatomy is littered throughout the text, passages in his chapters on Florence and Rome deviate into focused discussions on the ancient sculptors and their epistemic distance from the science.

Acknowledging the on-going nature of this particular debate, Bell notes that “the subject, with its various bearings, has been much and keenly agitated by the learned”, generating an inconclusiveness which he sees as yet more solid proof of the fact that the Greeks

³¹ Carlisle, 1807: 6.

³² Bell is referred to as such in many sources, including the *Edinburgh Medical Journal*, 1958: 120; Bell, 1968: 12.

certainly were not acquainted with anatomy.³³ “Anatomy is to a statuary what compasses are to an architect” he writes, and the definitively modern advancements made in the comprehension of the human body’s internal workings are “useful as a corrector, but no more”.³⁴ Bell cites the “exaggerated” *Farnese Hercules* as the prime example of an ancient sculptor’s fallacious, unsuccessful foray into anatomically-attuned art:

His coarse, clumsy, vast trunk, loaded with superfluous masses of muscle, his knotted calves, and long ankles, designate the strength of a heavy cumbrous body, calculated to work the lever, or sustain the ponderous weight, which the gift of rude material forms enables it to raise, but without any proportion of energetic powers of action, to struggle, throw, or strike. The stooping head and lowering ferocious eye of this Hercules, his long round forehead, divided across the temples, and separated from his flat, coarse, unexpressive countenance, mark as little of the spirit of grace and animation appertaining to an heroic character, as his bulky fibres do of the first principles of anatomy.³⁵

Bell did not actually view the *Farnese Hercules* on this trip, as he did not make it as far as Naples where the sculpture had only relatively recently returned from Paris. But the statue is key point of reference because it is the one ancient work celebrated during the period the outline and contours of which are interrupted by the protrusion of musculature, a musculature that ventures beyond a general ideal of a more mature male form, such as characterises the *Laocoön*, into excessive, un-mortal strength. In a discussion on Michael Angelo’s works in marble, Hazlitt condemns the *Hercules*’s “ostentatious and over-laboured display of anatomy...so overloaded with sinews, that it has been suggested as a

³³ Bell, 1825: 257.

³⁴ *Ibid*: 258, 334.

³⁵ *Ibid*: 258.

doubt, whether, if life could be put into it, it would be able to move.”³⁶ Hazlitt agreed with Haydon on the primacy of the Elgin Marbles over all other works on sculpture, but unlike Haydon, Hazlitt did not view them through a lens of science. Hazlitt considered the prioritisation of anatomy to be detrimental to the work of art, seeing Michael Angelo’s fusion of abstract grandeur with “scientific knowledge of the structure of the human body” as the folly that led him into caricature “extreme...massy, gigantic, supernatural”.³⁷ Yet, unlike Bell, for Hazlitt ideal works such as the *Apollo Belvedere* were also deeply flawed, unnatural in their “theatrical” appearance.³⁸ Hazlitt’s writings instead consistently promote attention to the living model above all, the eye rather than the mind, believing a degree of idealism to be necessary in historical painting and sculpture, but always subordinate to the life. It becomes clear in Bell’s *Observations on Italy* that the author prefers what Haydon annexed as the “old antique”, works such as the *Venus de’ Medici* and the *Antinous*. He sees these statues and their counterparts in Florence and Rome as “beautifully clothed with skin” for the very purpose of hiding “the interior mechanism, and render the form attractive”.³⁹

Thus, in the most basic sense, Bell’s view was that of Carlisle’s. Along with the anatomist Joshua Brookes, John Bell’s younger brother Charles had lost out to Carlisle in the 1808 Academy elections for Professor of Anatomy. The extent to which the Bell brothers differ in their takes on the question of anatomy in art is striking. While John

³⁶ Hazlitt and Haydon, 1838: 14.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ As well as using this word to describe the *Apollo* in this essay, in his *Notes of a Journey through France and Italy*, Hazlitt refers to the *Apollo* as “positively bad, a theatrical coxcomb” (1826, 260).

³⁹ Bell, 1825: 333.

dismissed both ancient and modern sculpture and modern painting in terms of the extent to which the artist appeared to be “straining after anatomical precision”, Charles sought to assist the reform of art with advanced scientific understanding.⁴⁰ In his 1806 publication *Essays on the Anatomy of Expression in Painting*, Bell warned against “blind and indiscriminate imitation” of both the antique and the living model, offering his particular application of anatomy onto the fine arts as a remedy for these “errors into which a young artist is most likely to be seduced”.⁴¹ According to Bell, if what he calls “the anatomy of expression”, in other words, scientifically precise renderings of the effects of various emotions and physical experiences on the human corporeal and facial musculature, is not the very foundation of corporeal design, the “pursuit of ideal beauty” will corrupt all kinds of contemporary painting.⁴² While West had rendered painting and sculpture coextensive in his 1807 speech on the merits of the antique, for Charles Bell, the study of anatomical expression wrenches apart the two art forms:

The statuary must exercise his genius on the more sublime and permanent emotions, as characterized in the countenance and figure; and much of the difficulty of his art consists in preventing the calmness and repose which ought to be preserved in attitude and expression, from extinguishing all character, and degenerating into indifference and insensibility.

But this rigid principle does not apply to the painter; and to transfer to painting those rules of composition which flow from the study of ancient sculpture, threatens the loss of all that is peculiarly excellent in the art.⁴³

⁴⁰ *Ibid*: 335.

⁴¹ Bell, 1806: 3.

⁴² *Ibid*.

⁴³ *Ibid*: 6.

A footnote further on in the text informs us that Bell was familiar with the French edition of Winckelmann's complete works, and thus would have been consciously challenging the German author's passages on the idea that true beauty consisted in the absence of "passions of the soul and their expression".⁴⁴ Charles Bell had been in attendance when Gregson was employed to pose among the Elgin Marbles.

The arguments for and against the utility of anatomy in relation to contemporary art signify both an opening up and a closing down of artistic and critical spaces: on the one hand these discourses are indicative of a productive new interrogation of what the antique actually means in terms of contemporary artistic practice, and on the other, offer yet another manifestation of ideal art's slipping out of public and Academic favour, which as we know became widespread by around 1820.⁴⁵ Haydon's position in relation to both of

⁴⁴ Potts, 2006: 196.

⁴⁵ In his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, first published over ten years before the foundation of the Royal Academy, Edmund Burke posits the technical knowledge of the anatomist as excrescent to the innate powers of imagination that characterise his archetype of the ideal artist. He recalls an anecdote by Pliny involving a shoemaker's intervention with a painting by Apelles, on which the former could identify a fault with the technical veracity of the artist's rendering of a shoe. In Burke's version, Pliny's shoemaker is an anatomist: "Let us imagine, that an anatomist had come to the painter's working-room. His piece is in general well done, the figure in question in a good attitude, and the parts well adjusted to their various movements; yet the anatomist, critical in his art, may observe the swell of some muscle not quite just in the peculiar action of the figure. Here the anatomist observes what the painter had not observed; and he passes by what the shoemaker had remarked. But a want of the last critical knowledge in anatomy no more reflected on the natural good Taste of the painter, or of any common observer of his piece, than the want of an exact knowledge in the formation of a shoe" (2008: 18-19). Here Burke is trying to communicate the idea that the specific knowledge of a working professional like an anatomist is incompatible with the superior imagination and "natural sensibility" of the painter or poet. The arguments (such as that of Charles Bell) for a renewed attention to anatomical science in the fine arts at the expense of ideal beauty, show a significant rupture with Burke's theory of the imagination and his influential hierarchy of the legitimate authorities on the aesthetic.

these shifts is distinct, in that he considered it his life's mission to preserve the tradition of historical painting, yet simultaneously to overturn the "false beau-ideal" or "old antique" in favour of the true Greek body.⁴⁶ It was John Bell's 1793 *The Anatomy of the Bones, Muscles & Joints* that first acquainted the artist with the scientific knowledge he would wield to supplant the conventions of an already definitively conventional genre. This book of engravings became for Haydon one of the central sources for his burgeoning theory and his draughtsmanship.⁴⁷ The artist had also read *Essays on the Anatomy of Expression in Painting* by the time Charles Bell ran in the Academy election for Professor of Anatomy, and had voted for him.⁴⁸ Careful reading of both these texts

⁴⁶ When Haydon, in retrospect, describes his first encounter with the Marbles, he writes of this shift like a prophecy: "I foretold that they would prove themselves the finest things on earth, that they would overturn the false beau-ideal, where nature was nothing, and would establish the true beau-ideal, of which nature alone is the basis." (Taylor, 1853: 1: 85).

⁴⁷ In the preface to this book, John Bell writes of the tensions between contemporary artists, ancient sculpture and anatomical science, which at this point was a thread of discourse not nearly as developed as it would be by the time he wrote his *Observations on Italy*. While exalting ancient Greek corporeal nature, Bell makes the case that emulating ancient statuary is a "cold", fallacious activity for present day artists, and that the study of anatomy cannot make up for this barren coldness: "The Greeks lived in the most delightful countries of the world; the most beautiful people; sometimes happy, and always free. Among them the arts grew and flourished, and were to all ranks the chief business and pleasure of life... Their artists needed no helps of anatomy; but in those delightful spectacles collected all the modes and forms of beauty, to combine them into one high ideal form. The moderns have come poorly after, in this great career copying coldly those half-animated forms, which are seen in our schools of the arts fixed in laborious postures... Sensible of this great defect, our artists have taken up the help of anatomy to correct this tame unmeaning form; studying it with a noble perseverance... but with poor success. They study each muscle; they note down its direction and use, they guess at its office and power in certain postures of the body; and try to mark it in its just place. The modern statuary, is like one wondering among the ruins of some noble city, who finding the remains of a temple, traces its lines among the ruins, and, upon this slender knowledge, tries to imagine and coldly represent to us its lost form and ancient grandeur" (1793: xviii-xix).

⁴⁸ In an entry from his diary dating from March, 1810 following the dissection of a lion's corpse, Haydon writes: "I have gained great knowledge of the animal—to which I am

provided the aspiring historical painter not only with a basic understanding of the human structure, but also the conviction that such knowledge should be the foundation of an artist's training.

When Haydon first glimpsed the Elgin Marbles in the spring of 1808, his conversion to their majesty was not as immediate as he would go on to claim in his autobiography.⁴⁹ Cummings has argued that Haydon was the “first modern critic to grasp the special character and significance” of the Elgin Marbles, and the figure “foremost in finding these fifth-century works superior to Hellenistic productions”.⁵⁰ Yet we know from both Farington's diary and West's letters to Lord Elgin that the aging Academy president was actually quicker than the young Haydon in setting up an explicit division between the “systematic” ideal, what Cummings refers to as Hellenistic productions, and the ideal naturalism of the Phidian sculptures. The artist laid the ground for the formulation of his new theory of art while drawing regularly from the Marbles, first at Park Lane, then at the coal shed of Burlington House where they were moved in 1811 before their acquisition by the nation.

indebted to Charles Bell, as I am for many other opportunities of information, and knowledge... The Artists will one day know the extent of the loss in selecting him for their professor at the Royal Academy. A man so adapted, so delighted with art, with such a picturesque mind, so anxious to acquire and to communicate what he acquires, with such an exact estimation of what an artist wants—that his failure of success is in my estimation a Public misfortune to the Art—He is truly the Painter Anatomist” (Pope, 1960: 1: 130).

⁴⁹ Taylor, 1853: 82-89.

⁵⁰ Cummings, 1964: 323.

As Cummings has clarified, Haydon's first intensive period of drawing from the Marbles ran from March 1808 to some unknown point in 1809.⁵¹ With no extant drawings of these sculptures that can be dated from 1810, from January 1811 to January 1813 he was again regularly before them. Haydon's diary reveals how the process of his falling out of love, so to speak, with the "old antique", the *Apollo Belvedere* in particular, spanned several years. In November 1809, Haydon still considered the *Apollo* to possess a "manly vigour and youthful grace", praising the "elevated character" of that statue.⁵² However, very soon after, the artist describes the *Apollo* using West's term "systematic", stating that the work is "by no means in the highest style" and does not compare favourably with various figures and fragments brought from Athens.⁵³ Here the question of historicisation emerges for the first time in the artist's writings as a divisive aesthetic factor: the "Apollo is a fine production" he writes, but the Elgin Marbles "are finer—ten thousand times finer... The one is all vigorous activity, beauty, and nature, the other all poverty, system, and ugliness—large ankle, large knee, and bow-legged, actually the Apollo has a Roman air—the other, all the beauty and style of Grecian refinement." Driving a wedge between "Roman air" and "Grecian refinement" heightens the significance of both style and subjectivity with regard to the classical body. Though he changes his mind again in the next few weeks, between the end of 1809 and autumn of 1812 the *Apollo* is discussed little in his diary; yet when the discussion is taken up again, other works of ancient sculpture are posited firmly as anathema to the *Theseus* of the Elgin Marbles. The *Apollo* emerges as a "marbly puffed figure", the *Antinous* "muzzy"; reduced to mere examples of

⁵¹ *Ibid.* See also Taylor, 1853: 1: 15-39.

⁵² Pope, 1960: 1: 104-105.

⁵³ *Ibid.*: 116-117.

“the myriads of fragments that have inundated Europe for the past 300 years”, these works are indicted for their lack of authenticity and true Greek beauty.⁵⁴ Later on in life, Haydon would state that “Genius is the basis of excellence; form, the basis of art; and dissection the basis of a knowledge of form”.⁵⁵ The anatomical accuracy that the artist gradually perceived more and more to characterise what he came to see as the only true Greek sculptures is what lent the necessary authority and cultural legitimacy to Haydon’s elevation of dissection in relation to the study and mastery of form.

Haydon’s fixation upon anatomy was the first major sustained challenge to the supremacy of the antique in historical painting; the figures in West’s *Death of General Wolfe* had been traditional in all but their clothing, and moreover, the maverick renovation of the genre signified by this work had been an event in and of itself rather than a call to revise the very appearance of the human body in such large-scale works. In Haydon’s theory, the Elgin Marbles become evidence of the primacy of anatomy in the depiction of ideal figures, whereas for West and other supporters of their acquisition, the ideal naturalism of these sculptures had merely provided a greater, more sublime version of the antique, keeping ancient sculpture at the apex of the Academy’s curriculum.

Though Haydon’s valorisation of science was not politically radical, but rather, stylistically radical, in terms of artistic practice the “old antique” now took on a new life as the more conformist, reactionary approach to the human form, living on principally through the small-scale mythological cabinet pictures (still included under the category of historical painting during the period) by one of the subjects of Chapter 4, Richard

⁵⁴ *Ibid*: 247-248.

⁵⁵ Haydon and Hazlitt, 1838: 21.

Westall. Several of these pretty, feminine, and for a period fashionable, pictures were patronised by Knight, the greatest opponent of the Elgin Marbles and Haydon's soon to be nemesis.

Though there are no drawings by Haydon of the Elgin Marbles that can be dated from 1810, this was the year that the painter employed a model who would turn out to be just as significant in the development of his new theory of true Greek beauty as the Elgin Marbles would continue to be.⁵⁶ Wilson, a five foot eleven inches tall sailor from Boston, had been discovered in August of that year by Carlisle in St. Bartholemew's Hospital, Smithfield, the surgeon having treated him for a minor injury. Carlisle brought Wilson before West and Thomas Lawrence as a finely formed living embodiment of corporeal perfection, who like Gregson, approached the antique in his beauty. Lawrence is said to have pronounced him "the finest figure he had ever seen, combining the character & perfection of many of the Antique Statues." Farington reports Lawrence's claim that when Wilson's arm was "suspended it appeared like that of the Antinous; when contracted for exertion it was like the Farnese Hercules."⁵⁷

⁵⁶ It is important to note that this was the same year that Sara Baartman, otherwise known as the "Hottentot Venus" was put on display as a circus curiosity. The term "Hottentot Venus" shows a collision of pastiche classicism and raced physicality, starkly opposite to the truly antique value of Wilson's form.

⁵⁷ *The Farington Diary*: 10: 3713 (August 18th, 1810).

Haydon borrowed £30 from Leigh Hunt to employ Wilson as a model for the month of September. In his diary, the artist describes him using the same language with which he would consistently praise the Elgin Marbles for the duration of his career:

Such was his beauty and power that whether in action or relaxation, his forms expressed either more perfectly than I ever before saw them in Nature—the moment he moved, his intentions were evident—this great principle was more strongly than ever impressed upon my mind—*that the form of a part depends on the action*—he had that perfect suppleness that one felt but never saw—his joints were exquisitely clear—every head of bone, having insertion of tendon—but marked by delicacy and feeling—in repose they became undulating beauties & in action vehicles of energy and refined activity...*I was now convinced from Nature that one great cause of action & strength as I had before observed in the antique was the parts to be moved always to the smaller and depending on the parts moving.*⁵⁸

In 1816, around the same time the Select Committee was engaged in its inquiry into the purchase of the Marbles, Haydon published an article in both *The Examiner* and *The Champion* that, while passionately defending the Marbles and attacking all opponents of their acquisition, introduces readers to his rearranged hierarchy of anatomy, the living model and the antique with regard to the study, reception and above all the appearance of the body in art. We know from the above extract that it was Wilson's form that had “strongly impressed” on the artist the basic tenet “that the form of a part depends on the action”. In his 1816 article, a manifesto he would again and again refer to throughout his career, Haydon outlines the “great Greek standard of figure” as

First, to select what is peculiarly human in form, feature, and proportion; then to ascertain the great causes of motion; to remember

⁵⁸ Pope, 1860: 1: 183-185.

that the opposite contours of a limb can never be the same from inherent formation, nor a trunk if the least inclined from the perpendicular; that the form of a part varies with its action or its repose; and that all action is by the predominance of some of the causes of motion over the others, for if all were equally to act the body would be stationary.⁵⁹

Clear correlations emerge between the language Haydon (privately) uses to describe Wilson's body and that with which he explains his new theory of the principles behind authentic Greek art to a public readership, indicating that Wilson's combination of "beauty and power", so rarely perceptible in living nature, had not only facilitated the artist's comprehension of the anatomical veracity of the Elgin Marbles, but had also helped him lay claim to the discovery of an authoritative new notion of how true classical Greek art had actually been produced by Phidias.

In one of his several life drawings of Wilson, Haydon places him in the pose of the *Theseus* (Fig. 33). The naked model is depicted leaning back against a wall, his repose rather more exhausted than the alert recline of the statue, and his musculature settled accordingly into the stillness of this position. His affinity with the *Theseus* is achieved mainly by his open legs, knees bent outward to form the same angle, and the fact that Haydon has intentionally left out Wilson's hands and feet like the ancient *Theseus* in its damaged condition. The decision to represent Wilson in this incomplete state indicates the unprecedented premium placed by the artist on the unrestored authenticity of the

⁵⁹ Haydon, 1844: 335. In addition to its inclusion in his own *Lectures on Painting and Design*, this manifesto had been printed in *The Examiner* and *The Champion* in March 1816, this manifesto entitled "On the Judgment of Connoisseurs being Preferred to that of Professional Men—The Elgin Marbles, etc." The artist also included it in his autobiography (Taylor, 1853: 306-312).

Athenian sculptures. The contours of Wilson's thigh and gluteal muscles are pronounced by shading in black chalk against the thick width of his legs. Viewed from a different viewpoint than the one from which Wilson is drawn, this is a very different type of image than one of his 1808 studies after the *Theseus* (Fig. 34). Yet in comparing these images we can see similarities in the way the convex of certain muscles as they catch the light are heightened by white chalk. This is a technique Haydon uses often, but in these two particular drawings the integration of light and shade on muscle renders the drawn bodies alike in their distinctly firm, powerful solidity. Wilson's dense trunk and legs appear with the plasticity of marble, and likewise there is a human vitality in Haydon's tender shading of the Marbles' surface and the relaxed air he has granted the statue.

Though, as well as revealed through the language of his 1816 manifesto, physical and theoretical connections between Wilson's form and the Elgin Marbles are communicated both in the artist's diary and the later drawing in particular, just one year after he employed Wilson, the artist promoted a disturbingly contradictory view of black physicality in public. During the summer of 1811, the artist placed himself at the centre of a heated month-long debate in *The Examiner* on the limits and possibilities of "Negro Civilization".⁶⁰ Writing under the pseudonym "An English Student", a title many knew to be the artist, Haydon argued throughout the debate that the mental and physical inferiority of black people could be proved by the study of anatomy, the skeletal system

⁶⁰ *Examiner*. 4th of August, 1811: 491-3. The debate had been instigated by an editorial written two weeks earlier by Hunt, praising the black sea captain Paul Cuffee for his ability to rise above the prejudice and hardship unique to the "Negro" condition.

in particular.⁶¹ During his time spent drawing Wilson, Haydon had noted some of the “defective parts” of his body, as well as stating that the “principle is to consider all animals as inferior to human beings in the gradation of creation”, this last statement hinting at a familiarity with the racial-scientific texts he would go on to cite in *The Examiner*, such as *An Account of the Regular Gradation of Man* by the British physician Charles White.⁶² But his argument in the journal is so extreme as to not accommodate any of the positive and informative characteristics he had gleaned from Wilson, the “perfect model of beauty and activity” whose body he had studied for a month the preceding autumn.⁶³ In the debate, Haydon pits “the divine works of the inspired ages of Greece” against the “flat noses... flat hands, short thumbs, long forearms, narrow pelvises, slender wrists, receding foreheads and chins, large under jaws, black skins, woolly hair, lobeless ears” that he now argues characterise black people.⁶⁴ The artist presents the phantom notion of the “negro” as a species wholly distinct from the archetypal ancient Greek: “oppression and brutal habits can no more make a Greek a negro”, he writes, “than education can elevate a negro to a Greek.” He even goes as far as to compare this distinction to that which separates animals, minerals and vegetables.⁶⁵

From the beginning, Wilson’s physique was valued by the Academic elite for its resemblance to ancient statuary. Recalling Lawrence’s opinion that Wilson could call to mind both the *Antinous* and the *Farnese Hercules*, in addition to the connections Haydon

⁶¹ Aris Sarafianos terms Haydon’s specific use of anatomy in this debate “osteological formalism”. 2006: 81.

⁶² Pope: 1: 188.

⁶³ *Ibid*: 183.

⁶⁴ *Examiner*. 1st of September, 1811: 567.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*: 22nd of September, 1811: 612.

had forged between Wilson's body and the *Theseus*, Haydon's insistence that "negro" and ancient Greek physicality are fundamentally incompatible and genetically disparate makes little sense unless the fortunes of black people in Britain during these years are considered, to which I will return in due course. The other participants in the debate were the periodical's editor, Leigh Hunt (who we recall had lent his friend Haydon the money to employ Wilson), and two otherwise anonymous contributors writing under the names "Niger" and "A Friend of Human Improvement". With different tactics all three took turns in challenging Haydon's uncompromising conviction that black people are not only "beings of degraded intellect", of "unintellectual brutality" but that their very physical forms prove their innate "incapabilities".⁶⁶ For scientific authority, Haydon refers to the writings of Charles Bell, the German naturalist Johann Blumenbach, Dutch anthropologist Petrus Camper and Charles White. It was largely due to White's *An Account of the Regular Gradations in Man*, that Camper's famous "facial angle theory" was misinterpreted in Britain (in and beyond Haydon's lifetime) as an explicitly racist diagram that positioned people of African descent as the link between brutes and Europeans, which is the essence of the stance Haydon assumes in *The Examiner*. Based on the drawings of Albrecht Dürer, Camper's facial angle theory (which Charles Bell also claimed to have invented independently), presents a spectrum of profiles organised by the slant of the forehead as it intercepts the nose and jaw, from a tailed monkey to the head of the *Apollo Belvedere* standing in for the Greek ideal (Fig. 35). In between the monkey at 42° and the *Apollo* at 100° are the profiles of an orang-utan, 58°, an African, a "Kalmuck", both 70°, and a European at 80°. Based in Amsterdam, Camper was an

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

amateur artist himself, and his national identity certainly betokens his gestures toward the extremities of naturalistic precision. As Miriam Claude Meijer has explored, Camper designed his facial angle theory to assist artists in the portrayal of various facial types (in a similar vein to Charles Bell's *Essays on the Anatomy of Expression in Painting*) and not to promote the explicit scientific racism of White's writings.⁶⁷ By bringing Camper's name into the debate, Haydon exemplifies the process explored by Meijer, in which the facial angle theory was received in Britain and elsewhere as an index of mental capacity rather than a disinterested tool for draughtsmen. Despite the artist's reference to it in *The Examiner* debate, in the study where he is placed in the position of the *Theseus*, the only one of Haydon's drawings of Wilson in which the model's face is shown in profile, there are no traces of Camper's facial angle theory.⁶⁸

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, largely due to the work of Camper, Hunter, Charles Bell and the Swiss theorist Johann Kaspar Lavater, placing the African and the *Apollo* on opposite ends of physiognomic and anatomical spectrums had become a familiar way to map ideas of beauty and explore human variety.⁶⁹ Without mentioning the artist's employment of a black model nor his new theory of art, Aris Sarafianos has discussed *The Examiner* debate in the context of the type of polygenist anthropology Haydon is in dialogue with throughout the debate.⁷⁰ When considered in the context of

⁶⁷ Meijer, 1999.

⁶⁸ In fact, Wilson's face, like many of Haydon's faces in both drawings and paintings, vaguely resembles the features of the artist himself. For a discussion of this tendency see: Pidgley, 1986.

⁶⁹ See Bindman, 2002.

⁷⁰ Sarafianos, 2006. See also Higgins, 2004. Both Sarafianos and Higgins have written insightful articles on Haydon and race. While Sarafianos focuses on the interplay

the artist's employment of Wilson, the opposition Haydon constructs between the "old" and "new" antiques, the corrupted "Roman" *Apollo* and the authentically Greek *Theseus*, disrupts the spectrum that links the "negro" to the Greek ideal, not only because it dislodges the *Apollo* from its position of supremacy, but also because its former opposite, the figure of African descent, is aligned, albeit in private, with the Elgin Marbles, the statues that in Haydon's theory supplant the *Apollo*'s claim to aesthetic and historical legitimacy. However, *The Examiner* debate took place the year before Haydon's rejection of the *Apollo*, the *Antinous* and other manifestations of the "old antique" had become final, and as "An English Student" the artist adheres to the dominant eighteenth century model that places the "negro" and the *Apollo* at opposite poles.

Haydon's only full-frontal drawing of Wilson shows a tall naked figure outlined with geometric symmetry, his body measured in "seven heads", the lower end of the average proportions of a life-size ideal male classical statue (Fig. 36). In this image, there are no visible traces of racialised stereotyping, no caricature or inferiority marked out either of mind or of body, just the broad, still vigour of his developed frame. With the musculature of his torso and arms relieved with careful black chalk shading, Wilson stands straight, his form easily supplying the fantasy of what a more robust ancient Greek athlete might have looked like. Though this time he is not posed like a particular statue, this drawing

between science and professionalism in the early nineteenth century, arguing that the artist used both anatomy and racial science as a mode of distinguishing himself and his practice from the kind of aristocratic connoisseurship embodied by figures such as Knight, Higgins looks at Haydon's entire career, mapping his racism onto a plethora of external influences: "nationalism, xenophobia, religious belief, personal ambition, and artistic ideals" (2004: 36).

captures the model's sculptural traits which had compelled Carlisle, the other artists and Haydon.

However, when black figures actually make it to Haydon's finished canvasses, their appearances are markedly different to drawings such as this. The most conspicuous example of this stark slippage is his 1829 work known as *Punch or May Day*, a genre painting on a historical scale (Fig. 37). Two black figures appear in this work, one in an admiral's hat elevated above the tumultuous crowd, gazing off to the top right of the composition, the other striding across the bottom right corner of the foreground with a face that appears to be blackened, a black figure in black face. The darkness of the first figure's skin is brought into relief by the pale grey marble pillars of the Palladian church behind him and the stiff white collar around his neck. The features of both are not portrayed in profile, so we are unable to assess the pronunciation of their facial angles. But these two figures do appear to have more in common with Hogarth's blacks, which is to say that they embody a higher degree of stereotyping than naturalism.⁷¹ It is as if both of Haydon's black figures in *Punch or May Day* are themselves a separate species to the black sailor he had drawn back in 1810. This inconsistency becomes all the more extreme upon the assertion that Wilson's body had not only helped the artist identify exactly what it was that made the Elgin Marbles superior to the *Apollo*, but also had informed the appearance of the non-black figures in several of his historical paintings, most directly his 1810 *Macbeth*, now lost, the work he resumed just after his employment of Wilson.

⁷¹ For a classic discussion of Hogarth's black figures see Dabydeen, 1987.

It is clear that Haydon privately sketched and studied Wilson largely outside the terms of both the racial scientific texts he had engaged with in *The Examiner* debate and the mode of racialised representation that we see in the Hogarthian tradition of genre painting he draws from in the 1829 work. But this cannot be put down to questions of style or emulation alone; the black figure at the left of the artist's 1814 Poussin-inspired *Judgement of Solomon* also appears as more of a stereotypical take on black physicality, certainly when we consider it in relation to the artist's drawings of Wilson. The facial angle of this figure is visibly more acute than those lighter-skinned around him.⁷²

Another intriguing element of *Punch or May Day* is the man at the centre of the composition carrying statuettes of the *Apollo* and the *Theseus* on top of his head (Fig. 38). As we know, genre painting was not Haydon's preferred mode, and it is likely that the artist felt compelled to insert these two synecdoches of the "old" and "new" antiques into the painting to afford it some kind of classical significance, again relating to the artist's orientation toward the aesthetic in isolation from the symbolic. It is a mysterious detail that adds further insight to the artist's fixation on these two corporeal types and the diametric opposition Haydon constructs.

In *Black Personalities in the Era of the Slave Trade*, a book that catalogues the lives of a selection of notable black figures in eighteenth and early nineteenth century Britain, Paul Edwards and James Walvin unfortunately do not mention Wilson, and still nothing is known of his life in London beyond his employment as a model. But Edwards and

⁷² This painting is on loan to Plymouth Art Gallery from in the collection of J.B Gold, Richmond, Surrey.

Walvin do place emphasis on one key fact which aids understanding of Haydon's contradictory approaches to black physicality, his drawings of and diary entries about Wilson, his stance in *The Examiner* debate, and the black figures in the finished oil paintings *Punch or May Day* and the *Judgement of Solomon*. These authors state that

arguments whether blacks were things or humans were no mere abstractions, debated in the rarefied atmosphere of the courts. Blacks were...treated as objects in everyday social practice...as long as slavery continued to survive in the British colonies, the view of the black as less than human would persist with the support of the law⁷³

In his employment of Wilson specifically, Haydon makes manifest the problem that Edwards and Walvin identify: that, because of Britain's leading role in the slave trade and the haunting presence of African enslavement in major British cities until its abolition in the colonies in 1833, within British society black people could readily be treated as commodities during the early nineteenth century. And if these authors are correct in their assertion that "in the late eighteenth century slavery had become synonymous with blackness", then both Haydon's use of Wilson as a kind of real life cast after the antique and his subsequent pursuit of a racially-scientific agenda in *The Examiner*, the same agenda that was used to justify African enslavement, can be seen to sustain the ideology of the slave trade that facilitated and authorised the commodification of people of African descent.⁷⁴ Haydon employed Wilson three years after the Slave

⁷³ Edwards and Walvin, 1983: 40.

⁷⁴ In the *Examiner* debate Haydon's language recalls another text, one that was relied on in the late eighteenth century to justify the mistreatment of slaves, Edward Long's widely read *The History of Jamaica*, in which the author writes, "Africans "are void of any genius, and seem almost incapable of making any progress in the civility of science" (1774: 2: 353). Haydon states that "Men of genius are always born with views beyond

Trade Act of 1807 made the trading of Africans illegal across the Atlantic. But the fact that African enslavement was still extant in the British empire until 1833 urges Haydon's practical reliance on the black body to be considered in the context of this history.

In her discussion of the Senegalese-born Revolutionary Jean-Baptise Belley, Grigsby describes a similar problem prevalent around a decade earlier across the Channel:

Because abolitionist prints were the most prominent depictions of blacks, they inadvertently perpetrated a visual conflation of black bodies with bondage. The premise of abolitionist prints was that black bodies were slaves' bodies: chains corroborated that bondage and could implicitly be removed, but emancipation was nonetheless construed in the future tense, as a desired possibility not a self-evident condition. In the most famous and repeated of these images, the shackled black man was depicted in a beseeching stance, nude and on his knees...Chains or no chains, black bodies, these images suggest, were destined to remain subordinate until the question was finally answered in the affirmative by the white respondent.⁷⁵

The "most famous and repeated" image Grigsby flags up is the French version of Josiah Wedgwood's anti-slavery cameo featuring an enchained figure, his kneeling body silhouetted, framed by the text, "Am I not a man and a brother?". Even in the context of abolitionism and solidarity, evocations of black physicality were often fastened to images of violence, subjugation and captivity. That Haydon's exposure to the Elgin Marbles took place exactly a year after the Slave Trade Act indicates the legal, moral, professional conditions, and also the visual cultural regime under which Wilson's body formed a part

their time...But (negroes have) never given birth to great lawgivers...never produced astronomers from contemplating the heavens" (*Examiner*. 15th of September, 1815: 598).

⁷⁵ Grigsby, 2002: 28

of his evaluation of the Marbles and his corresponding theory of anatomy in relation to the “great Greek standard of figure”.

Connections between slavery and Haydon’s employment of Wilson are yet strengthened by the observation that the use of this model’s physique as a tool for comprehending the Elgin Marbles and developing a new theory of art yielded capital for the artist, in this case “cultural capital”, to follow Bourdieu, rather than goods such as sugar, tobacco or cotton.⁷⁶ Most ironically of all, perhaps, is the fact that in *The Examiner* debate, though he had not quite yet completely rejected the *Apollo* and published his theoretical manifesto on the Elgin Marbles, the artist cites these sculptures as illustrative of the polygenist distinction between the “negro” and the ancient Greek. In a complete break from the affinities he had described between Wilson’s anatomy and the form of the *Theseus*, he commands readers to investigate for themselves “the standard of Greek form...the exquisite, unrivalled, inspired Elgin Marbles” for proof of the innate superiority of European physicality.⁷⁷

Looking again at the drawing of Wilson in the pose of the *Theseus* we can see how the model appears to be pacified in order to be objectified. Though he was paid for his time modelling for the artist, his closed eyes and bowed head convey the inactivity and lack of communication necessary for the material usage of his body. A disengagement from the spectator is conveyed, in this case the artist, conjuring the power relations inherent in the

⁷⁶ Bourdieu, 1986.

⁷⁷ *Examiner*. Sunday 22nd of September, 1811: 613. For a path-breaking intervention into the inherent eurocentricity and racism of classical reception see Bernal, 1991.

relationship between master and slave.⁷⁸ In his autobiography, Haydon recounts the process of moulding one final cast of the sailor, claiming in retrospect to have almost killed him by asphyxiating him with plaster. He writes that after he recovered Wilson's consciousness after several minutes of "senselessness", he now possessed in his own words "the most beautiful sight on earth...the impression of his figure (taken) with all the purity of a shell".⁷⁹ In this anecdote, Wilson is suffocated, is physically held in captivity, so that his figure can be converted into a smooth, sealed, and above all a white cast, a legitimate fragment of true Greek corporeality.

Acknowledging the factual unreliability of such retrospective anecdotes, there is another moment in which Haydon folds Wilson into both a narrative of pain and his vision of the classical world. In 1813 at the height of the Napoleonic conflicts, Haydon finds himself imagining the experience of Homeric warfare:

Homer raises you by degrees to the fury of battle! When the Greeks first prepare for fighting they eat and refresh themselves, fall into ranks clean and invigorated, and beaming with the cool effulgence of the morning sun. They meet, they fight, and in the war and clash of battle they kill each other till midday arrives. As the sun reaches the meridian all is confusion, roaring, clashing, and heat; the horses panting, whitened by dust; the heroes fainting, exhausted by slaughter...I never read Homer without longing to run somebody through for a week afterwards. I remember once darting up and seizing a pole; I dashed it through a study of Wilson, the negro, saying to myself, "bite the earth you Dog!"⁸⁰

⁷⁸ For a theoretical model of this relationship see Patterson, 1982: 172-182. Hegel's master-slave dialectic is positioned in relation to early nineteenth century abolitionism in Buck-Morss, 2000: 845-860.

⁷⁹ Taylor, 1853: 1: 138.

⁸⁰ Haydon, 1876: 1: 274.

This passage informs us first and foremost that at least one of Haydon's drawings of Wilson was hanging in his studio several years after the artist had employed the model and participated in *The Examiner* debate, suggesting the covert yet enduring presence of his form within Haydon's theory and practice. Secondly, another link is forged between Wilson and ancient Greece, with Wilson is positioned as an enemy soldier. Haydon employed many models, several of whom were soldiers recently returned from battle or preparing to go back and fight against French troops.⁸¹ But his naming of this model in particular holds Wilson in a position of violence, pain and abjection that *The Examiner* debate informs us is as much related to his African descent as it is to the topical nature of battle in 1813.⁸²

⁸¹ Around this time, Haydon employed several soldiers as models, most notably one by the name of Sammons who he would later describe as "a living Ilissus" (Taylor, 1853: 2: 286). While Banks and West had used art to criticise both war and slavery, Haydon used war and the culture of slavery (soldiers' bodies, Wilson's body) to promote and lend authority to art.

⁸² In 1814, when Haydon had visited Paris for the first time, Vivant Denon appears to have paid particular attention to the British painter, not dissimilar to the adulation with which he had treated West in 1802. Haydon mentions their interactions in his autobiography, revealing a conversation which provides a compelling supplement to the content of this chapter: "On the morning I left Paris, in taking leave of Denon (from whom I had received the greatest attention), I had a long and interesting conversation with him about the original country of the inhabitants of Egypt, he maintaining they were negroes, because, in all representations of battles in their temples, it was a copper-coloured hero trampling on negro necks. I maintained this was no evidence at all. Why might not the copper-coloured be trampling over the neighboring nations? According to himself he had found no negro mummy. He then attacked Lord Elgin...I said that if Lord Elgin had not interfered, the Turks would have destroyed the marbles: '*Mon cher,*' said Denon, 'the Turks destroy nothing.'" (Taylor, 1853: 1: 260). Here Haydon's consistent need to undermine the black body's will to power and enclose that body in the experience of physical pain, is congruent with his defence of Lord Elgin's acquisition.

By 1817, Haydon had succeeded in positioning himself as the foremost advocate of the Elgin Marbles, a feat proved by the fact that this year, the president of the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg, Aleksei Nikolaevich Olenin, wrote to the artist commissioning casts of the pediments to be sent to Russia.⁸³ With typical enthusiasm, Haydon seized the chance to expound in great detail on his theory of the “great Greek standard of figure”. The artist also took the opportunity to ship to Russia some casts he had made of Wilson’s body back in 1810: “several casts from the knees and joints” and a “fragment of (his) chest” (potentially the one he would go on to claim involved risking the model’s life).⁸⁴ In a letter to Olenin from the 10th of August, 1818, Haydon mentions the link between the “negro” and the Elgin Marbles. As far as his literary output informs us, this is a connection he had never before stated publicly in Britain:

In the fragment of the Negro’s chest which I sent you, under the left arm-pit you will see the wrinkle of the skin. It is for this reason I cast the Negro, because in the movement of his body he developed the principles of the Elgin Marbles...what other artist but Phidias would have ventured to put the wrinkle of human skin in the form of a God! On the sides of the ribs of the same fragment you will also find the veins marked, which Winkelmann (sic) and other theorists have ever considered as incompatible with the form of a Divinity. But Phidias knew that, as we could only represent a God by a human form, the finest human form, even if for Jove himself, must have had a heart, liver, and bowels, bones, muscles, and tendons, and a skin to cover all...Now, Sir, you will find none of these effects of action or repose on the skin of the Apollo, or any other antique figure that we have hitherto admired; and it is this union of the truths and probabilities of common life, joined to elevated and ideal nature, that goes at once to our hearts and sympathies in the Elgin Marbles, and makes them superior to all the works of art hitherto known in the world.”⁸⁵

⁸³ Haydon, 1876: 324-329.

⁸⁴ Elmes, 1819: 3: 326.

⁸⁵ Haydon, 1876: 2: 329.

Revealed in this passage is the newfound primacy of the author in establishing and lauding the unique qualities of these objects, qualities grounded in their historical authenticity. Claimed by Haydon through his self-imposed position as the principal advocate and specialist of the Greek sculptor's approach to the human form, Phidias's singular vision is presented as the basis for the conception of anatomical veracity as its own viable aesthetic. At the same time, in a different capacity, Haydon again profits from the objectification of the "negro" by attaching his own subjectivity to the innovations of Phidias. An impression of Wilson's body is sent overseas among the casts of actual Greek figures, and Haydon in the process asserts internationally his claim to cultural legitimacy.

In his diary, the artist describes his interactions with the Russians as "the greatest glory" sealing his identity as a centrifugal agent in the global development of artistic pedagogy:

the Elgin Marbles have been through me introduced into the vast Empire of Russia—Thank God! Those divine things which I & I alone studied in a damp outhouse, when they were covered with dust & filth, & a gloom hung over their fate, which pressed with malignant hue upon their glory. I have lived to see (them) felt with enthusiasm by the whole of civilized Europe and received with rapture by a city—Petersburgh (sic)—where a hundred years ago stood a damp and swamy marsh! To have lived in such times of Art is glory, but to be a prime mover and agent of them is immortality—huzza! –huzza! –huzza!⁸⁶

The Examiner and *The Annals of the Fine Arts* both published the same article by James Elmes, Haydon's friend, describing the shipment to Russia, in which an extract from a

⁸⁶ Pope, 1960: 3: 211

letter allegedly from Olenin is reprinted.⁸⁷ In the quoted letter, Olenin expresses gratitude for the casts of “the famous negro”, which he reports to have “placed close to those of the Elgin Marbles”.⁸⁸ Reduced to an anonymous set of fragments, Wilson survives as an instrument of reformed artistic technique. Elmes suggests that the juxtaposition of Wilson’s body “by the side of those from the Elgin Marbles...will do the utmost to purify Russian taste.”⁸⁹ At the time of this shipment to Russia, Haydon’s private art academy would have still been in operation, an endeavour that saw itself carrying out the same stylistic “purification” in Britain.

In return for the casts of the Marbles and the “negro”, Olenin shipped three from the Imperial Academy, intended for Haydon’s own use. These were after a bust of *Achilles* from the Hermitage Collection, and a *Silenus* and a *Venus* from the Palace de la Tauride. When it came to thanking Olenin for the casts, Haydon could not help but offer his critical opinion on their appearance. We can deduce from comparisons made by Haydon between this *Venus* and the *Venus de’ Medici* that that this was likely a cast of the statue known as *Venus Taurida*, a statue that was kept in the Russian Palace for the duration of Haydon’s career (Fig. 39). The *Venus* is praised for its “singularly beautiful” trunk enveloped in a skin that Haydon deems tighter and therefore younger than that of the *Venus de’ Medici*. The artist deems the Russian *Venus* more beautiful than the latter, stating that it “has all the air of a fresh and pure Virgin, young, elastic and lovely,

⁸⁷ The authenticity of this particular letter from Olenin is debatable; for a discussion of Haydon and Elmes’s fabrications of authorship see Kearney, 1978. Cummings notes how anonymous collaborations in the public journals between Elmes and Haydon served to supply the artist “tasteless publicity” (1963: 373).

⁸⁸ *Examiner for the year 1818*, 730-731; Elmes, 1819: 3: 565.

⁸⁹ Elmes, 1819: 565.

uninjured by the passions of our nature, and without having suffered from the anxieties of life.”⁹⁰ While in terms of imagery this echoes Winckelmann’s metaphorical flourish that the *Venus de’ Medici* is “like a rose that after a beautiful dawn, unfolds at sunrise”, it also goes against Winckelmann by applying this quality to another statue and explicitly denying floral freshness to the *Venus de’ Medici*.⁹¹ Haydon alludes to Barry, who was the first to make the case that *Venus de’ Medici* is relatively defective because it bears traces of childbirth, an argument that I will revisit in Chapter 4.⁹² In spite of this praise, Haydon still lets his Olenin know that he finds the legs, feet, and head of the *Venus* cast “very inferior”, not truly Greek.⁹³

The free-standing statue of *Silenus* now in the Hermitage Museum would have been in the Palace de la Tauride at the time of Haydon’s exchange with Olenin (Fig. 40). Its left-leaning posture, relatively corpulent torso and delicate hands are all specified by the artist in his thank you letter to his Russian correspondent. Out of the three casts sent to Britain, this was the one Haydon could appreciate the most because, in accordance with his new theory of the “great Greek standard of figure”, he was able to perceive scientific accuracy at work on the body of this statue, “the protrusion of the bowels from the action of leaning, the pressure of the muscles” and “skin...filled out with fat” where appropriate. No fault could be found with the *Silenus* cast because it seemingly embodied the central tenet that “the form of a part varies with its action or its repose”. With typical hyperbole Haydon calls the *Silenus* “one of the finest specimens...of Greek sculpture”, stating that

⁹⁰ Haydon, 1876: 1: 29.

⁹¹ Potts, 2006: 203.

⁹² Fryer, 1809: 2: 314.

⁹³ Haydon, 1876: 1: 327.

it is “universally admired, and has made a great noise among those whose judgment (he) estimates.”⁹⁴ Haydon makes no mention of the bust of *Achilles*, probably because, if it is the bust still in the Hermitage collection, it definitively belongs to the category of the “old antique” (Fig. 41). In this work, the face is left blank, staged and vacant, with absolutely no anatomical detail visible whatsoever.

Banks and West had explicitly engaged with the abolitionist cause, both artists supporting the legal motions toward its achievement in the British and French colonies and, in the case of West, the United States, the country of his birth.⁹⁵ This engagement indicates that their symbolic deployments of the ideal figure were in dialogue with this particular *topos* of human rights, despite West’s fraternising with Napoleon, who as we know had overturned the abolitionist triumph of 1794. By contrast, the inextricable relationship between African enslavement and black identity in Britain (and also France) during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries facilitated Haydon’s private material objectification and commodification of Wilson, whose physique, along with the Elgin Marbles, had provided the basis for his theory of the “great Greek standard of figure” and helped project internationally the artist’s reputation as a master and genius. As the idea of

⁹⁴ *Ibid*: 330.

⁹⁵ Banks’s opposition to African enslavement in British and French colonies is expressed one of his letters to George Cumberland quoted in the first chapter of this thesis. In George Galt’s collaborative biography, West presents abolitionism as a part of his family heritage, relaying several episodes that deal with the eradication of slavery among the Quaker community in Philadelphia into which the artist claimed to have been born (Galt, 1816: 7-9). See also the discussion of West in Field, 2005: 15-17.

the antique morphs into a contest between the artificial “old” and the anatomical “new”, corrupt Roman and true Greek, the capacity of the classical body to harbour ideological significance is overshadowed by the subject position of the artist, both that of Haydon and that of Phidias.

At the beginning of his career, just after his initial encounter with the Elgin Marbles, the young Haydon had asserted his mission to produce great historical paintings that could “excite pity...terror...love or benevolence”, that could lift man’s “soul above this world by sublime, heavenly fancies” or carry his “mind to Hell by grand, furious conceptions”, large-scale works with the power to “stimulate...Heroism, or urge...Repentance, or excite...virtue.”⁹⁶ Yet with a staunch resolve to reform the method of depicting human form in the ambitious, large-scale canvases he had long aspired to produce, the artist soon confined his ambition to the question of style alone, promoting the inclusion of accurate anatomical detail as the most important element of the contemporary historical painter’s process. Yet his identification of the “great Greek standard of figure”, informed as it had been by a synthesis of anatomical science, Wilson’s form and the Elgin Marbles, did not exert any major influence in either theoretical or practical spheres during his lifetime. Rather than fostering the development of historical and monumental painting in Britain, this theory only succeeded in helping to render meaningless the “old antique”, the body at the centre of Banks’s and West’s contemporary classicism.⁹⁷ By rendering this type of

⁹⁶ Pope, 1960: 1: 5.

⁹⁷ The impact of Haydon’s scientific naturalism on later nineteenth century artists, the pre-Raphaelites in particular, is terrain for further study.

ideal body illusionistic, historically inauthentic in its wholeness and perfection, Haydon's theory anticipates the survival of this type of ideal form as a locus of meaning's evasion.

CHAPTER 4

THE CHARM OF CLASSICAL NAKEDNESS: THOMAS STOTHARD AND RICHARD WESTALL

So far we have seen the ideologies informing Banks's and West's appropriations of classical nakedness in certain monumental works of art compromised by both an increasing wariness toward the antique, congruent with the widespread backlash against universalist culture, and the arrival of the Elgin Marbles to London, sculptures that, in the eyes of West and later Haydon, supplanted all other known works of ancient statuary with their anatomically precise ideal naturalism and claim to an authentic "pure" Greek origin. Haydon's schema ruptures the antique into two disparate camps, a move that reduces the representation of classical nakedness to question of style and technique rather than symbolic significance, contributing to the negation of the classical body's capacity to engage the contemporary socio-political milieu.

These developments, along with the emergence of religious historical pictures by members of the Academy in the second decade of the nineteenth century, point to an increasingly concentrated sense of nationalism within artistic discourse, something that within the sphere of British collecting, as Hock has explored, was cultivated by international competition, mainly but not exclusively with France, grounded in the wars, of course, but also with a significant degree of independence from them.¹ The aesthetic and political discrepancies between the patriotic sculptor Bacon's explicitly pro-British, anti-Gallic *Monument to Major General Thomas Dundas* and Banks's *Monument to*

¹ Hock's *Empires of the Imagination* orbits around what he terms the "culture wars of informal empire", 2010: 7; see also Craske, 1997: 50.

Captain Burges combine with the affinities between West's 1803-1809 sculptural series and post-Revolutionary Davidian painting, to show that for Banks and West, leading artists working in Britain during what was still the relatively immediate aftermath of the Revolution, the symbolism of the classical naked figure, rather than shaped and constrained by notions of national identity, was consciously universal in its emphasis on individual liberty, humanity, and the other concepts we have seen inscribed in their monumental ideal figures. Haydon's placing of his own (British) subjectivity at the forefront of his revision of the antique, injected with the re-constituted subjectivity of Phidias, presents a break with the universalising scope of the type of classical body his theory seeks to overturn.

But as we know, before Haydon, it was West who put himself forward as the foremost champion of the Elgin Marbles, and in turn it was this Academy president who first explicitly relinquished the universality of classical nakedness. Following his initial encounters with the Elgin Marbles, a newfound potentiality that could link British artists directly to fifth century Greece allowed West to integrate the British national character with the antique with a legitimacy hitherto unimaginable. In his first letter to Lord Elgin in 1809, West states that

unless England establishes the means of cultivating the exalted class of art within herself, she will never be entitled to participate with Greece and Rome in the honour they acquired in the fine arts. Yet I know no people, since the Greeks, so capable, as the inhabitants of this island, of emulating them in art, if rightly directed and patronized—For the British are a scientific and reasoning people in all matters which they undertake to investigate: and I hope the time is not far distant, when a

right direction in the fine arts will not only be attained, but consolidated on true and permanent principles.²

This passage is a far cry from the “radical redirection” the Academy veteran had taken following his trip to Paris, and imagines a distinctly British art culture as a *tabula rasa*, a vision detached entirely from the continent that had fashioned his own career and identity as an artist and connoisseurial authority. National traits (“scientific”, “reasoning”) align with the form of the Elgin Marbles, their rugged ideal naturalism and anatomical vitality. Upon the future acquisition of the Marbles by the nation, West envisions London becoming “a new Athens for the emulation and example of the British student.”³ Yet even before Haydon’s financial ruin, institutional alienation and overall professional failure would ultimately prove the country’s fundamental aversion towards the idea of large, grand canvasses littered with consummately designed heroic ideal bodies with proportions akin to the figures from the Parthenon’s pediments, the basic impossibility of this genre ever having a viable public presence in Britain had essentially been determined, despite the unrelenting efforts of Haydon and William Paulet Carey, a prolific defender of historical painting whose writings will be mentioned later on in this chapter.⁴

² Hamilton, 1811: 56.

³ *Ibid.*: 48.

⁴ This period is generally credited as the phase witnessing the birth of English landscape painting. See Kriz, 1997. *The Monthly Magazine* summed up this shift by positing historical painting as the inferior art form in Britain, landscape the superior: “The progress of the British school may be thus estimated:—To be retrograde in historical and poetical composition; to be increasing in correct drawing and chaste colouring; eminent in portrait; and beyond competition in landscape” (1810: 29: 577). Carey’s pamphlets from 1819 onwards make it clear that the British Institution’s competition for ‘Grand Historical Painting’ in 1816 was connected to the shift signified by the victory over France rather than a newfound investment or public interest in the genre. Chapter 5 will

Although from the decade following the arrival of the Marbles there are countless examples of what was already an on-going conversation, Knight's condemnation of historical painting in his anonymous review of Barry's posthumously published *Works* in an 1810 edition of *The Edinburgh Review* provided the springboard for Haydon's bombastic attacks not only on Knight and the Society of Dilettanti, but also on the Academy, a series of articles that led to his professional alienation mentioned in the introduction and Chapter 3.⁵ Knight's review masks its scathing indictment of Barry's preferred type of art and his personal character in aloofness and condescension. As a socially and financially privileged cultural commentator, Knight communicates his belief that paintings should only be produced in order to arouse pleasure in the spectator, to delight the senses "with the greatest possible degree of skill, judgement, taste and effect."⁶ This well-known connoisseur's view of the classical body is wholly separate from the attacks mounted against the concept of ideal beauty discussed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2. The low opinion with which he regards present-day attempts at grand historical painting does not consist in a rejection of the antique, but rather a conviction that classical nakedness should never be mobilised to command intellectual authority and, though his critique does not extend to the artists that are the subjects of this thesis, a

acknowledge William Etty's status as the foremost historical painter in Britain. Yet, crucially, Etty's works are rooted in the erotic and do not seek to promote any of the values associated with traditional historical painting.

⁵ For a discussion of this review in the context of Barry's art in the 1770s, see Myrone, 2010. In his 1816 article "On the Judgement of Connoisseurs Being Preferred to that of Professional Men—Elgin Marbles &c" Haydon addressed this review, and claimed later to have "demolished Payne Knight" (*Examiner*, 17th of March 1816: 162-4; Pope, 1960: 2: 282).

⁶ *Edinburgh Review: Or Critical Journal*, August, 1810: 32: 300

symbolical meaning that is politically attuned.⁷ Knight takes issue with Barry's wariness toward small-scale cabinet pictures, Dutch and Flemish painting, still lifes especially, a stigma that fits within the established art-theoretical genre hierarchy that places realistic painting at the bottom and historical painting at its apex.⁸ Knight's defence of pictures by Rembrandt, Van Dyck and Rubens against what he presents as Barry's ignorant marginalisation of these artists is his leading case against the Irish painter and his legacy. As well as a collector of such master works and of diminutive antiquities, most of which were bronzes, the author of this review, as we shall see, was a patron of works that adhere to what he satirically refers to as the antithesis of Barry's art: "the fashionable scale of a frivolous age".⁹

Contained within this point of contention—large scale vs. small scale, intellectual vs. delightful, the classical body as a source of meaning vs. the classical body as a site of pleasure—is the argument that in the context of painting and sculpture, fashion is a potent, destructive force, the force most capable of the obliteration of the kind of true fine

⁷ Knight states his opinion that the "principal benefit... that a student of painting can derive from copying antient (sic) statues, is, accustoming his hand to obey the eye and his imagination in delineating chaste and beautiful forms, with fidelity, promptitude and facility... We conceive, likewise, that the mode of study by which a young painter may gain most instruction and improvement from the works of his predecessors, is not so much by copying them (unless for mere memorials), as by painting from nature while they are before his eyes, fresh in his recollection, or within reach of his constant recurrence" (*Ibid*: 301). It is also worth pointing out that Knight held West's *The Death of General Wolfe*, a historical painting with figures in modern dress, in high regard.

⁸ For a reassessment of this hierarchy in the context of British art see Lippincott, 1995.

⁹ In an unpublished diary entry from December 22, 1795, Farington writes, "Flaxman has seen Mr. Knight's collection of small Bronzes, among which are 5 or 6 good ones, among many very indifferent. He said that modern artists, Banks he particularly named, could execute so much better than what makes up such a collection as this, that it excites impatience to hear so much said about it" (Quoted in Bell, 1938: 107). For a discussion of Knight's preference for small-scale antiquities see Penny, 1982: 73.

art Barry sought to create and that Knight belittles. Although by no means an apologist for fashion, in 1816 Knight could be described, albeit mockingly, as an “arbiter of fashionable virtue” (an insult satirising his superficial relationship to classical art), and certainly shunned the discourses that encompass vehement arguments against fashion’s infringing on the sphere of contemporary art.¹⁰ Maintained by Reynolds throughout his *Discourses*, this negative conception of fashion haunts several of the texts that seek to promote historical painting in England, including some of Barry’s writings, as well as texts by Carey.¹¹ In Reynolds’s account, his own unstable and unclear conception of “nature” relies on the idea of fashion for its antithesis: “I again repeat, you are never to lose sight of nature” he warns in his “Discourse XIII”, “the instant you do, you are all abroad, at the mercy of every gust of fashion, without knowing or seeing the point to which you ought to steer.”¹² Reynolds’s status as the very definition of a fashionable painter, a portraitist at that, contributes to the inconsistencies permeating these Academy addresses.¹³

For Barry, it is the permanence and universality of the antique that necessitates its constant definition in relation to fashion’s fickle, protean character:

There is, then, a *beautiful* which is positive, essential and independent of national or temporary institutions or opinions. This immutable, and (if I may be allowed the expression) eternal beauty is widely different

¹⁰ *Quarterly Review*, 1816: 533.

¹¹ Though, for reasons stated in the introduction, he is not centered on in this thesis, Fuseli, in addition to the art theorists discussed in this section, also made the case that if contemporary painting and sculpture adhere to “the dictate of fashion...then (their) dissolution is at hand” (1830: 127) .

¹² Wark, 1975: 111.

¹³ Reynolds’s being in fashion, his celebrity, is documented in Hallet and Postle, 2005.

from those arbitrary, local, temporary notions of beauty which have a kind of occasional currency under the terms *ton*, *fashion*, or *mode*; and, like particular languages, are ever fluctuating and unstable, always different amongst the different nations, and in the different ages of the same nation. This *false* beauty, which roots itself in affectation, has nothing to do with genuine, legitimate art...It cannot therefore be too studiously avoided, for though a conformity with those temporary modes may gratify our employers, and the circle around them, and consequently be advantageous to what we may call our interest, yet it must lose us the admiration of men of sound judgment in all times; and the future frivolities will have fashionable affectations and beauties of their own, quite different from those upon which our attention had been wasted.¹⁴

Barry's dialectical opposition between types of beauty posits the ahistorical nature of the antique as the basis of its superiority, with fashionable elegance prosecuted for its ephemerality. As "*false* beauty", fashion is conjured as constant motion, productive of its own fleeting temporal classifications, such as seasons, for example, which, though they are not named here, stand in sharp contrast to the antique's "eternal" power.

In his pamphlet *The National Obstacle to the National Public Style Considered*, a lengthy appeal seeking the help of George IV in preserving "the public style" (that is the same "genuine, legitimate", ideal art exalted by Barry in the above passage) Carey "anxiously" repeats his "well-matured conviction, that unless the domestic style be derived from the public style, and chastened by it, the former must be moulded by the uncultivated taste of the million, and be obedient to the heartless and frivolous caprices of fashion."¹⁵ Written as late as 1825, Carey's exhaustive attempt to champion the domestication of the "public style" is couched in crisis, and constantly betrays the author's awareness that his efforts

¹⁴ Fryer, 1809: 2: 102-103

¹⁵ Carey, 1825: 27.

are essentially a lost cause.¹⁶ Considering this pamphlet in conjunction with Barry's earlier exaltation of "immutable" beauty not only indicates their shared fear of fashion's influence; it also provides an additional example of the shift centred on in the previous chapter: the permutation of the antique's representation into a matter of style alone. Intriguingly, Haydon's writings diverge from these texts, in that they refuse to hold fashion at arm's length, pointing again to the artist's total departure from classical nakedness as a universalising ahistorical force.

In the cases of Reynolds, Barry and Carey, "fluctuating and unstable", "heartless...frivolous" and capricious, fashion functions as the foil for the constancy of the classical body and its preservation in contemporary historical painting and sculpture. This conflict, then, between fashion and ideal beauty, becomes less polarising at a time when the universality of the antique is coming under threat, on the one hand by the creeping backlash against the classical body and its political connotations, and on the other by the arrival of the Elgin Marbles and their precise historical genesis. However, this opposition between fashion and the antique also overlooks another ontology of classical nakedness in British art and in European culture more generally, one that, from the final decades of the eighteenth century had run parallel to the revival of archaeological forms: the antique itself as fashion. This chapter will deviate somewhat from the chronological narrative of this thesis, and look at two artists, both of whom were successful in cultivating their own distinct approaches to the classical body that were a

¹⁶ The subtitle of Carey's text: *Observations on the Probable Decline or Extinction of British Historical Painting* places dramatic emphasis on the idea that historical painting is a dying art, one that is "tottering on the brink of extinction" (*Ibid*: 98).

part of this separate ontology, and thus at a distance from the symbolical deployment of ideal corporeality, the historical and ideological coherence of which was, at the height of their careers, challenged by the Elgin Marbles.

At a time when the dominion of French fashions in Britain was reigned in by the wars, Thomas Stothard and Richard Westall were able to develop popular modes of visual classicism that on material and stylistic levels could be held to embody distinctly British models of beauty. During their lifetime, these artists could lay equally legitimate claims to the title of “historical painter” as their loftier-minded predecessors, contemporaries and antecedents, and were both considered leading members of the Academy and the British school in general. Yet theirs is a different kind of historical painting, a branch of the art that in essence was incorporated into that category for lack of a better term. Usually small-scale, always (striving to be) pleasurable and not necessarily oil on canvas, this type of historical painting both became fashionable and remained in contact with the fashions of the day.

The British fashionable antique has been documented by historians, particularly a decorative mode adorning objects such as Wedgwood Jasperware pottery and cameo jewellery.¹⁷ Yet the classical body as a fashionable element of fine art, and this type of less austere, accessible historical painting, remain areas virtually untouched by scholarly literature. Indeed, as mentioned in the introduction, only two art historical books to date have been published exclusively on Stothard, while Westall’s classical paintings remain

¹⁷ For recent accounts of such decorative, fashionable manifestations of classicism see Roberts, 2011; Fay, 2010.

overlooked in scholarship. Perhaps the neglect of historical pictures by these artists can be credited in part to the fact that, having both provided illustrations for countless contemporaneous novels and poems, new editions of ancient texts such as *Pope's Homer*, the Bible and selected works by Shakespeare and Milton, both painters left behind a substantial legacy of literary images that have come to speak more for their careers and achievements.¹⁸ In this chapter, I will set aside their copious bodies of illustration and design work and focus on their Academic art, their oil paintings, watercolours and life studies. Like literary illustration, this type of historical painting does not seek to address independently nor impart meaning to the spectator.

In the context of a discussion of French Revolutionary painting, Padiyar offers a helpful distinction between “the ‘ancients’ as other-worldly and the ‘ancients’ as politically recuperable”.¹⁹ Embracing the aerial, the remote and the other-worldly, the tradition developed by Stothard and Westall makes manifest a conscious detachment from its political milieu, becoming contemporary nonetheless through its proximity to fashion. As a fashion trend valued for its charm alone, the classical body in such works is immune to historicisation—as previously suggested, fashion is productive of its own microcosmic histories. Agamben posits fashion as an alternative example of the “noncoincidence”, the “dys-chrony” that is the state of contemporariness, defining it as “the introduction into time of a peculiar discontinuity that divides it according to its relevance or irrelevance, its

¹⁸ Bann notes that a “culture of illustration, employing a range of different strategies for complementing word with image” grew rapidly during the early nineteenth century, and had significant impact on French Academic painting of the Restoration period (2003: 29). As will be observed later in this chapter, prints after works by these two artists were noted by Etty to be popular among Parisians during this phase.

¹⁹ Padiyar, 1998: 275.

being-in-fashion or no-longer-being-in-fashion.”²⁰ This definition applies primarily to the domain of clothing, but can be related to the present discussion through its supposition of a consuming public, the “people of flesh and blood” who “recognize (fashion) and choose that style”, the same public who purchased in droves the rapidly and widely circulated prints after works by these two painters, the central source of their being-in-fashion. As John Brewer, J.H Plumb, and especially Neil McKendrick have shown, this public as an instrumental force only came into being during the phase these painters began their careers, with Britain setting the precedent for the commercialisation of all other European nations and across the Atlantic.²¹ Though once their reputations had been established as historical painters and leaders of the British school their works could lay equally justifiable claims to artistic greatness as that of the continentally trained, both Stothard’s and Westall’s lives as professional artists took shape not in Paris or Rome, but in London as apprentices in the capital’s booming world of commercial fashion, with Stothard drawing patterns for silk brocades in Spitalfields and Westall designing chic heraldic silverware on Cheapside. Stothard entered the Academy schools in 1778, Westall in 1785, and in 1794, both were elected Royal Academicians.

Doris Langley Moore has identified Stothard as the anonymous artist behind the vast majority of fashion plates in various popular women’s magazines, such as *The Lady’s Magazine* and *La Belle Assemblée*, that surfaced in final decades of the eighteenth century and blossomed during the period in question, going as far as to pronounce him

²⁰ Agamben, 2009: 47.

²¹ See McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb, 1983, in particular McKendrick’s “The Commercialization of Fashion”: 56-80.

the “foremost of all the English fashion plate artists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries”.²² Most likely because these images were anonymous, this aspect of Stothard’s professional life remains at a distance from the few studies of his life and art.²³ His historical paintings were fashionable in two senses; firstly, in that reproductions after them became desirable as commodities among the fashion-conscious public, particularly with female consumers. Secondly, these works themselves respond to the fashions of the day through their eclectic variations in subject and, by extension, costume, something that would have been facilitated by his consistent employment as a delineator of new styles for magazine plates. Indeed, classicism functions in Stothard’s art as a kind of clothing or a veil for the human figure in representation, pronouncing its departure from lived corporeality. Though like his peers he had studied from casts and the living model as well as learning some anatomy as a student, his are classical forms that are never contained by a strict, sculptural outline or strive after anatomical precision.²⁴ Stothard’s success was unique during his lifetime, in that the appeal of his manner, his being-in-fashion, lasted a remarkably long period despite the constantly evolving turnover of modish imageries. As an author in *La Belle Assemblée* reflected in 1832, “Stothard, like his tutelary angel Boccaccio, seems as though he would never grow old.”²⁵

Westall was an artist whose immense popularity and being-in-fashion is summed up in one of the recorded conversations between Hazlitt and Northcote that were published in

²² Moore, 1971: 14.

²³ Coxhead mentions these fashion plates in passing (1905: 49). Bennett makes no mention of this aspect of Stothard’s professional life.

²⁴ In her biography of Stothard, Eliza Bray writes, “It is generally known that he never painted from a model” (1851: 15).

²⁵ *Belle Assemblée* December, 1832: 14: 202

1830 but can be dated to the early to mid 1820s. Upon the latter's comment that "the provoking part in Westall and some other painters" is their "taking advantage of the externals and accidents of their art" and running "away with nearly all the popularity of their time", Hazlitt responds with a confession that he never could see the merit in Westall's art.²⁶ To this Northcote replies, "Then you must have the satisfaction of seeing a change of opinion at present?", to which Hazlitt retorts:

Pardon me, I have not that satisfaction; I have only a double annoyance from it. It is no consolation to me that an individual was over-rated by the folly of the public formerly, and that he suffers from their injustice and fickleness at present... The world (whatever in their petulance and profligacy they may think) have no right to intoxicate poor human nature with the full tide of popular applause, and then to drive it to despair for the want of it.²⁷

Going on to suggest that Westall had been one of "the world's idols" before "the full tide of popular applause" turned against him, Hazlitt defends Westall against the "injustice and fickleness", "petulance and profligacy" of the public—that is—in this case—the consuming public whose taste adheres to the dictate of fashion. Taken for granted by both Hazlitt and Northcote is the fact that Westall's art had been desirable among this public, and was no longer.

Much of the success of Stothard's and Westall's paintings was due to the fact that, as arguably the most popular artists during this extended phase of international conflict, their charming, elegant historical pictures were embraced as a source of national pride at

²⁶ Hazlitt, 1830: 242.

²⁷ *Ibid*: 243.

a time when the British school of historical painting was struggling to assert its abilities in relation to the long-standing painterly traditions of other nations, particularly that of France. As their versions of classical nakedness were not seen to be in dialogue with the contemporary continental approach to the ideal (again, the polysemic image exerts its power) their treatments of subjects, themes and personages from antiquity were not subject to the same degree of scrutiny as those by other artists. The separate ontology of the antique within the sphere of fashion permitted new appropriations of classical forms to surface that did not threaten the idea of British national character, but rather appealed to it.

Related to this idea of a distinctly British fashionable classical art is the fact that the wars with France disrupted the dominance of Parisian styles in Britain.²⁸

Though it is significant that Stothard's and Westall's paintings were wilfully detached from their political milieu, the still nascent condition of the commercial fashion industry during the early nineteenth century allowed popular styles to be more sensitive to occurrences outside their domain than one might imagine, political and cultural affairs included. In essence, the nationalism fostered by the wars authorised contact between "high" and commercial culture that in turn contributed to the unprecedented success of these two painters and their

²⁸ Moore states that during the Napoleonic wars, "most countries yielded to Parisian fashions, but England from about 1808 held aloof and managed to maintain some distinct differences" (1971: 56). Mary Ann Bell, the editor of *La Belle Assemblée*, strove to compete with French fashions throughout the wartime and post-Waterloo. Moore asserts that from 1814 "her creations, delineated by Thomas Stothard, R.A., also associated with *The Ladies Magazine*, were as stylish as those of her Parisian counterparts" (*Ibid*: 22).

treatments of the classical body.²⁹ Ann Bermingham's observation that "the emergence of the commercial fashion industry coincides with women's increasing exclusion from institutions of high culture" indicates the formation of a dialectical relationship between the (feminine) sphere of fashion and the (masculine) sphere of fine art production during the time in which these painters rose to prominence.³⁰ The conflation of femininity with fashion is another current underlying the opposition constructed in artistic discourses between false and true beauty.³¹ Yet because Stothard and Westall were already consciously withdrawn from all discursive ontologies of classicism, their brand of historical painting offered a viable manifestation of high culture that did not define itself against female influence.³²

Although Stothard and Westall were dissimilar on biographical levels that are not the concern of this thesis, the popularity of the genre they carved out allowed them to be

²⁹ By "high culture" I mean what Bourdieu has posits as "the field of restricted production" responsible for works that "are 'pure' because they demand of the receiver a specifically aesthetic disposition in conformity with the principles of their production. They are 'abstract' because they call for a multiplicity of approaches, in contrast with the undifferentiated art of primitive societies... They are 'esoteric' for all of the above reasons and because their complex structure continually implies tacit reference to the entire history of previous structures. This is only accessible to those who possess practical or theoretical mastery of a refined code, of successive codes, and of the code of these codes" (1982: 23).

³⁰ Bermingham, 1994: 105.

³¹ Kriz hints at the tension between the woman as consuming subject and the woman as depicted object: "if women were an index of civilization, they were also firmly associated with a commercial world of fashion that feeds on the pursuit of vain and selfish pleasures" (2001: 57).

³² Patrick Noon notes how different media could also be gendered, quoting Delécluze's famous statement that watercolour is "for the ladies" and oils "for posterity" (2003: 232). Both Stothard and Westall were pioneers of figural watercolour painting in Britain.

frequently compared to one another during the period. Toward the end of Westall's life and after Stothard's death, *The Literary Souvenir, and Cabinet of Modern Art* noted the high visibility these artists shared: "With the exception of the late Mr. Stothard, there is no artist after whose productions so many prints have been engraved as from those of Mr Westall."³³ With both painters now deceased in 1837, *The Gentleman's Magazine* reflects similarly: "Westall was, perhaps, second only to Stothard in the abundance and popularity of his productions."³⁴ Kriz writes that "the process of translating historical painting into a less expensive, more marketable commodity called into question the high-minded claims of professional "liberality" which the title "Royal Academician" implied."³⁵ While I do not dispute this conclusion, I want to emphasise that, due to the heightened sense of nationalistic feeling during the Napoleonic wartime, Stothard and Westall were able to defy it, and indeed Kriz's coextension of high mindedness with the Royal Academicians' professional self-positioning. Not only were affordable versions after their works reproduced and consumed by the fashionable public, their paintings, always exhibited in the most prominent and distinguished places in the annual exhibitions, were lauded by the Academy elite and the connoisseurs of both the British Institution and the "Committee of Taste".³⁶ Herein lies perhaps another reason for the scholarly neglect of both painters—that they go against the accepted art historical

³³ *Literary Souvenir, and Cabinet of Modern Art*, 1835: 62.

³⁴ *Gentleman's Magazine*, January to June, February, 1837: 7: 214.

³⁵ Kriz, 1997: 20.

³⁶ In a similar vein to Kriz, Myrone notes that during the 1780s popular prints could be seen as a threat to the historical painter's noble intentions: "what concerns there were about the print market and public exhibitions were most often about their luxuriance and degeneracy, focusing attention on the excesses of contemporary cultural consumption rather than its paucity" (2005: 295). Clearly by the time Stothard and Westall reached the height of their successes during the Napoleonic wartime, such anxieties had subsided.

narrative of the period, which as we know, tells a story of perpetual hardship for the artist in Britain seeking to make a living from anything but portraiture. Additional proof of their versatility and the esteem in which both figures were held is the fact that, though this was not the kind of art either painter sought to produce, both artists were summoned on behalf of the state to submit designs for various monumental statues, in addition to the Wellington shield in 1814 (won by Stothard), and medals to commemorate the Battles of Quatre Bras and Waterloo.

Ostensibly uninfected by the recent artistic and political developments on the continent (but with appropriate conceptions of ideal beauty and seemingly enough relation to the greatest of old masters), their works could be held as a source of national pride. Yet at the same time, the inclusivity of their styles should be considered in the context of both painters' remoteness from the masculine sphere of politics. Though, unlike Banks the radical, the political orientations of West and Haydon are difficult to pin down in terms of partisanship, the king's suspicion of West's true allegiances, the painter's fraternising with Napoleon, Denon and others, and Haydon's prodigious and controversial journalistic output, integrate these figures into a network from which both Stothard and Westall stood apart. As both Bennett and Bryant have noted, Stothard appeared "on the fringe" of some radically-aligned organisations early in his career but seems to have withdrawn completely from this kind of engagement, certainly after the Revolution in France.³⁷ Westall steered clear of political activity but made his sentiments clear elsewhere. The volume of his own poetry he had published in 1808, *A day in spring, and other poems*,

³⁷ Bennett, 1988: 4; Bryant, 2005: 51-52.

includes an indictment of the Revolution in lyric form, with an “Ode, on the victory of the first of June” presenting “furious Anarchy” reigning over the enemy republic “On a hell-constructed throne”.³⁸ Although this is clearly the expression of a conservative, royalist stance and thus an undeniable form of engagement, his paintings refuse to render explicit any such orientations. What differentiates these figures from someone like Flaxman, whose (also once-fashionable) *Outlines*, despite his vocal distancing from French republicans, were formally influenced by his radical predecessor Banks while also providing models for some of the post-Revolutionary era’s most dramatic French historical paintings, is that the former artists did not define their practice in relation to the antique.³⁹ Sculptural corporeality is not at the core of their respective practices, and when their paintings call for the depiction of the classical body, they remain within a realm of classicism that is already, inherently de-politicised.

This chapter will present what can be said to be these artists’ alternative approaches to classical nakedness, styles of corporeality that are wholly separate from the manifestations of the antique this thesis has thus far been exploring. Affirming the aim of this chapter to re-position these figures as initiators of the same tradition, an 1822 article in *The London Magazine* cites Stothard and Westall as stylistically reciprocal. As part of a description of Westall, this author labels Stothard his counterpart:

(Westall is) an artist who has touched every species of composition, and seldom failed to add some delicacy unknown before. If the various self-styled Stothard, our Raffaele, has been more successful in catching the

³⁸ Westall, 1808: 73.

³⁹ For a discussion of Flaxman’s influence on French painters such as David, see Symonns, 1984.

evanescent graces of every-day life, he must yield to his rival in high and more poetical inventions...Stothard looking to his humanities, is rather the intenser of the twain; Westall the more universal.⁴⁰

This passage points to what is the central divergence between these two “rival” painters, one that is crucial to this chapter. While I make the case that the similarities between Stothard and Westall lie in their alternative approaches to classical nakedness, their individual appropriations of the antique bear some significant differences with one another. In his finished paintings calling for naked forms, Stothard tended to manipulate the ideal body, so that such forms, as suggested earlier on, appear as if they are in costume. Consequently, though they do not strive to be life-like, the majority of classical figures by Stothard do not possess the strictest conception of Graceo-Roman idealism, rendering him a painter, as we shall see, easily aligned with continental artists of earlier modern ages. The above author’s suggestion that Westall’s style is the “more universal” refers to the fact that his naked forms offer a more straightforward regard for classical idealism, one that could be invoked as “universal” not for its ideological bent, but for its compatibility with ancient sculpture. As stated in Chapter 3, Haydon’s campaign against the smooth, sealed “old antique” could serve to establish this type of sculptural corporeality the reactionary mode of portraying the naked human figure. Knight, the great sceptic of Barry, Haydon’s nemesis and the chief opponent of the Elgin Marbles acquisition, was Westall’s close friend and patron.⁴¹

⁴⁰ *London Magazine*, January to June, June, 1822, 7: 252-4.

⁴¹ Six years after the publication of his attack on Barry, Knight would undermine the historical legitimacy of the Elgin Marbles’ claim to Phidian authorship by claiming that they are Roman from the era of Hadrian’s emperorship, a conclusion that enraged Haydon (*Select Committee Report: Elgin Marbles*: 93).

The opinion that Stothard was the less remote, more local, “every-day” artist was not necessarily that of the majority during the period. In one of his late essays, Haydon reflects on the “beautiful and angelic spirit that breathed on everything (Stothard) did”, writing, ever-prone to vivid hyperbole, that it seemed as if “in early life (Stothard had) dreamed of an angel, and...passed the remainder of his days trying to endow every figure he designed, with something of the sweetness he had seen in his sleep.”⁴² Mrs Charles Heaton praises Stothard’s “delicate feeling for ideal loveliness”, the “dim borderland of ideal beauty” that his figures seem to occupy.⁴³ While Haydon’s rhapsody makes evident that Stothard was not an upholder of what he held to be the malignant “old antique”, Heaton’s abstraction reveals the lack of vocabulary readily available to describe Stothard’s figures, relating again to the way in which his approach to classical nakedness is characteristically his own and not theoretically nor ideologically recoverable.

A poem entitled “The Eminent Painters” in an 1819 edition of *La Belle Assemblée* addresses both painters in succession of one another, beginning with Stothard:

Whether man’s vigor, female sweetness claim
 Thy pow’rful pencil, they appear to sooth
 Or raise the mind with energy and grace—
 The charms which warm the soul, and animate
 the face.

Westall! the splendid one! thy works delight
 The eye untutor’d, and the feeling heart.⁴⁴

⁴² Haydon and Hazlitt, 1838: 216.

⁴³ Heaton, 1880: 152.

⁴⁴ *Belle Assemblée*, July 1st, 1819: 33.

The following year, this poem was reprinted in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, suggesting that the positioning of these painters as formative members of the British school was not limited to the female-oriented fashion press. The poem also underscores the accessibility of their branch of historical painting: Stothard's "charms... warm the soul" while "splendid" Westall's works resonate even with the "untutor'd" spectator. Misleading, but perhaps also telling, is this anonymous poet's insistence that Stothard excelled at both "man's vigor" and "female sweetness" in equal measure. Indeed, when it came to the selection of mythological themes and personages from ancient literature, the tradition initiated by these artists is marked by its preference for subjects prioritising the female form.

The next part of this chapter will explore the origins and context of these artists' type of historical painting and complementary approaches to classical nakedness. I will then look at a selection of their works so that their significant, hitherto uncharted contributions not just to the fortunes of classical form, but to British Academic art in general, can be illuminated.

Especially when one considers the fact that these artists were summoned on behalf the state to submit designs for monuments and medals, to limit the definition of Stothard and Westall's branch of historical painting simply as the feminized other to the varieties of art this thesis has thus far been exploring would be reductive, though tempting. Yet their

orientation away from the traditional themes and subjects that in the previous century had become the conventional terrain of the genre allows for the assertion of the fundamental femininity of their works.⁴⁵ “Hermaphroditic softness” was the phrase used by Hazlitt to describe Westall’s figures.⁴⁶ As observed in a Chapter 2, in 1815 the *New British lady’s magazine* could boast that “though France may set off her DAVID against our WEST, yet she has no artist who exhibits the touching sensibilities, the nature effusing tenderness of our STOTHARD.”⁴⁷ The urgency of incorporating “touching”, tender Stothard and his “rival” Westall back into the scholarly account of historical painting in Britain is urged by the introduction of Stothard’s name into this nationalistic statement. This task demands that the various conceptions of female corporeality in British ideal art of the early nineteenth century first be outlined.

Continental aesthetic discourses and the traditional canon of historical painting that developed in accordance with their mandates had always prioritised ideal male nakedness, something that in terms of French art increased dramatically during the Revolutionary period.⁴⁸ Embedded in many of the texts written by British artists and art-theorists orbiting around the concept of ideal beauty is a slippage when it comes to the

⁴⁵ As stated in the introduction, this thesis takes for granted the conventions grounding the recurring figure of the hero in traditional historical painting of the long eighteenth century. See Myrone, 2005.

⁴⁶ Ernst, 2010: 23.

⁴⁷ *New British lady’s magazine, and monthly magazine*, December 15th 1815: 51.

⁴⁸ The most conspicuous manifestation of this discursive tendency are of course the writings of Winckelmann. For insight into the primacy of the male form in late eighteenth century French painting and aesthetic discourse see Potts, 1994: 233-237.

female form, for which the writings of Barry serve as a particularly outspoken example.⁴⁹ Though Barry's conception of the antique operates as a standard to which both male and female bodies are held, the painter frequently articulates a discrepancy between their appearances. As part of his description of the sixth picture in his cycle *The Progress of Human Culture* (a series of six large canvasses Knight mentions with special disgust in *The Edinburgh Review*), Barry makes clear that the female corporeal ideal, still "eternal", should look different, and thus, serve a different function than the male:

There is... a general character distinguishable in the sexes, as contrasted with each other. The whole and every part of the male form, generally taken, indicates an aptness and propensity to action, vigorous exertion, and power. In the female form the appearance is very different, it gives the idea of something rather passive than active, and seems created not so much for the purposes of laborious utility, as for the exercise of all the softer, milder, qualities.⁵⁰

Here, the female form is rendered as little more than the flaccid, passive appendage to a powerful male physicality. Barry's system makes the aesthetic and the empirical one and the same: he does not just describe how the female body should look, but also confines it to "softer, milder" experiences, implicitly, the sphere of domesticity.

All scholars, artists and connoisseurs who studied ancient history and literature at this time were aware of the fact that the male body stood at the centre of the development of figural sculpture, and that the female classical naked statue was a much later invention,

⁴⁹ For an earlier example see the works of the Scottish philosopher George Turnbull, in particular his *Treatise on Ancient Painting*, 1740.

⁵⁰ Fryer, 1809: 2: 102.

introduced by Praxiteles to a long-standing tradition of kouroi, naked gods and athletes.⁵¹ Both figures in Barry's etching after his own work *The Temptation of Adam* make visible, even more than in the original oil painting, this difference with regard to the appearance of gendered forms (Figs. 42, 43). Eve's rounded abdomen, as seen on the *Venus de' Medici* and other sculptural paradigms of female beauty, is her most classically ideal characteristic. It is the uneven line of her almost hunching back and shoulders, the fact that she seems to droop, to slump towards her partner, that affirms her essential handicap. Any power promised by her form's idealism is weakened by her status as the body designed to bring into relief Adam's musculature, rendered taut and lean by cross-hatching, contrasting with the swell of Eve's belly and pubis.

In his most conspicuous manifesto on the civic value of the antique, his *Letter to the Dilettanti Society* mentioned in Chapter 1, Barry pays respect to a woman whose life's work had been to eradicate this kind of limitation mapped onto the female body: his recently deceased contemporary Mary Wollstonecraft:

If any one should start a query, why the ancients, who reasoned so deeply, should in their publications of the sovereign wisdom, have chosen Minerva a female; why the Muses, who preside over the several subordinate modes of intelligence, &c. are all females; and why the conversation of the serpent was held with Eve, in order that her influence might be employed in persuading Adam; such queries could have been well and pertinently answered, by the eloquent, generous, amiable sensibility of the celebrated and long-to-be-lamented Mary Wollstonecraft, and would interweave very gratefully with another edition of her Rights of Women. Her honest heart, so estranged from all selfishness, and which could take so deep and generous an interest in whatever had relation to truth and justice, however remote as to time

⁵¹ For a recent re-examination of this development within the history of ancient sculpture see Squire, 2011.

and place, would find some matter for consolation, in discovering that the ancient nations of the world entertained a very different opinion of female capabilities, from those modern Mahometan, tyrannical and absurd degrading notions of female nature, at which her indignation was so justly raised.⁵²

This passage seems to revise Barry's conception of female ideal beauty as "softer, milder" in the earlier description of his own work, something that points to the fact that for this painter, representing gendered ideals was a problem that threatened to strip the antique of the universality that motivated its public defence. Minerva, the Muses, and even Eve are evoked as intelligent, powerful and active agents, the precise opposite of the "passive (rather) than active" manner in which, according to the earlier text, they ought visually to be portrayed.⁵³

The *Venus de' Medici*, the work that as we know was the most familiar female classical sculpture in Britain of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, is form marked

⁵² Fryer, 1809: 2: 68.

⁵³ In her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft does offer an alternative model of female beauty that goes against the subordinate model of femininity "I know that libertines will also exclaim, that woman would be unsexed by acquiring strength of body and mind, and that beauty, soft bewitching beauty! would no longer adorn the daughters of men. I am of a very different opinion, for I think that, on the contrary, we should then see dignified beauty; and true grace; to produce which, many powerful physical and moral causes would concur. Not relaxed beauty, it is true, or the graces of helplessness; but such as appears to make us respect the human body as a majestic pile fit to receive a noble inhabitant, in the relics of antiquity." What is compelling about this passage is that Wollstonecraft's wish to overturn "relaxed beauty" and "the graces of helplessness" does not eliminate altogether the possibility of female beauty and its elevated and even essential role in everyday life. The compulsion toward physical beauty and the primacy of desire are allowed rather than indicted. A new ideal of "true grace" is envisioned, in which the archetypal female is permitted to be "dignified" and "powerful" in her beauty. With this new model, activity is what will align the female body with the "relics of antiquity", not her suitability for "the exercise of all the softer, milder, qualities" as in Barry's model of the two gendered ideals (1792: 205).

by relative inactivity (Fig. 44). But with the exception of West, whose high evaluation of this particular lasted through most of his career until his encounters with the Elgin Marbles, Academic artists seem to have been more hesitant than connoisseurs and Grand Tourists in affording this statue the title of most beautiful ancient female. Though Banks approved of this “love-inviting”, “divine” work’s status as the principal feminine ideal, he noted the defects of her modern restoration, her too small arms, wrists and fingers.⁵⁴ As part of his campaign against the “old antique”, Haydon dismissed the *Venus de’ Medici* for its lack of anatomical precision. His claim in a letter to Olenin that the statue was the body of a woman post-pregnancy and not the representation of a youthful, virginal female fit into an extant art theoretical thread running through the writings of Barry, Flaxman, and later Henry Howard. Barry had, in his description of Correggio’s *Danaë*, stated that the *Venus de’ Medici* is “heavier, more maternal character, less of the virgin” (than the painted *Danaë*).⁵⁵ In his “Fragment on the Story and Painting of Pandora”, he extends this notion, writing that when he looked at the *Venus de’ Medici*, “something of the mother was perceivable about the breasts and abdomen of this admirable piece of Greek workmanship”, and that in his own *Venus Rising from the Sea* he “was resolved to bestow somewhat more freshness, and the virginal character” apparently absent in the sculptural precept.⁵⁶ Both Flaxman and Howard express a preference for the *Venus Braschi*, a statue Howard describes as “more delicate and youthful” than “the Medicean” (Fig. 45).⁵⁷ The frontal torso of the *Venus Braschi* is indented with rivets marking abdominal muscle, still appropriately soft, which the *Venus*

⁵⁴ Cunningham, 1830: 3: 92.

⁵⁵ Fryer, 1809: 2: 104.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*: 145.

⁵⁷ Howard, 1848: xxix.

de' Medici possesses only slightly. On the latter statue, there is a greater bulge linking the pubis with the belly button. Though she is taller, the *Venus Braschi*'s waist is smaller, her stomach flatter, and her overall appearance less round. In keeping with the wariness toward the *Venus de' Medici*'s perceived sexual maturity, Flaxman dismisses the statue as “insinuating”.⁵⁸ That the *Venus de' Medici* was deemed by Barry, Haydon, Flaxman and Howard to be a body corrupted, so much so that it prevented the work from truly being ideal, demonstrates a pervasive crisis surrounding what actually constituted the ideal female form to begin with. Her body was marked by appropriate signs of inactivity, but at what point did this softness of flesh translate into a post-natal taint of temporality, stripping her of the elusively nubile quality necessary for her appropriation in modern art?⁵⁹

Essentially, the very notion of the ideal naked female form in British art discourses of the period remained unstable. *The Triumph of Beauty*, painted by Edward Dayes in 1800, is an allegorical work that encapsulates this instability, presenting an undraped Venus forcibly removed from the economy of sexual desire through its claim to this tenuous female idealism (Fig. 46). Dayes's Venus is of similar proportions to Barry's in his *Venus Rising*, but is rendered even softer through her warmer, rosy flesh-tint and her slightly less sharp (yet still sculptural) outline. Primarily a landscapist and topographical draughtsman rather than an ardent classicist, Dayes accepted the *Venus de' Medici* as the central female ideal, and in this work he has not shunned the fuller aspects of her form

⁵⁸ Flaxman, 1838: 26.

⁵⁹ For other responses to the *Venus de' Medici* see Gilroy-Ware, 2011.

other artists had deemed too mature, particularly around the abdominal region.⁶⁰ Standing upright yet fleshy in her exclusion from “action, vigorous exertion, and power”, there is a tension between the power and authority commanded by the presentation of this body and its soft appearance. At a time when the naked body in Academic art still necessitated a degree of idealisation, Stothard and Westall were able to capitalise on the space opened up by this instability. From outside the discourses of the antique they crafted their own vernaculars of the classical corporeality rooted in the open-endedness of the female form.

One of the ways in which Stothard did this was by placing less emphasis on the outline of his naked figures than the contemporary classicists, an element of Stothard’s style dismissed by Blake as “blundering blurs” that could not be “delineated by any Engraver”.⁶¹ Heaton writes that Stothard appears not “to have purposefully studied the antique, though he was undoubtedly gently influenced by its spirit.”⁶² Correct is the observation that Stothard chose not to ground his approach to the human form solely on rigorous study of statuary or casts, but that his works make clear that the rendering of classical forms was still an important element of his practice, as was the harnessing of more pleasurable aspects of the classical imaginary. The disparity between the naked figures in his finished paintings (mostly female figures) and his careful, expertly rendered pencil studies after the living model in the collection of the Royal Academy (also mostly female figures), reveals the technical extent of the artist’s mimetic mastery, that he was capable of producing highly realistic bodies (Fig. 47). Perhaps it is these life drawings by

⁶⁰ Dayes, 1805: 222.

⁶¹ Erdman, 1981: 572.

⁶² Cunningham, 1832: 3: 161.

Stothard which best illustrate his use of classical nakedness as a kind of costume in his exhibited paintings.

One of Stothard's most vocal admirers, the younger painter Charles Robert Leslie, details an aspect of Stothard's singular approach to the sculptural body. In his 1855 *Hand-book for young painters*, Leslie reports,

Stothard showed me some exquisite drawings of his own from the antique, with pen and ink only, the shadows being beautifully hatched in the manner of line engravings. He told me he adopted this method because, as he could not obliterate a line, it obliged him to think before he touched his paper; and no doubt it contributed to that certainty of hand and accuracy of eye which was so valuable to him in after life.⁶³

While the forms in Stothard's finished pictures can be characterised by their soft, undulating outlines, the method of sketching described by Leslie prioritises the definite description of the studied figure's shape. According to Stothard's biographer, his niece Eliza Bray, Stothard applied this continuous line technique to both drawings after the antique and the living model.⁶⁴ In one of the artist's preparatory studies for the Wellington shield he has added a wash of watercolour to the background, bringing into

⁶³ Leslie, 1855: 88.

⁶⁴ Unfortunately, I have not able to find any of Stothard's drawings after statuary that attest to this exact technique in any of the museum archives that house his works nor photographic libraries. In her biography of the artist, Eliza Bray references the same mode of sketching: "Stothard's method of study was peculiarly his own; he adopted not the practice so general with the students, to sit down and draw from a single figure for six or eight weeks. He would place himself opposite to it, and in a small sketch-book would make a careful outline in pen and ink, about five inches in height. He said that he had recourse to this method, because it obliged him well to consider the lines and the proportions before they were drawn, and that thus they became strongly impressed upon the memory. He disapproved of the practice of rubbing out, and maintained that an eye and a hand well trained in making pen and ink outlines would be characterised by truth, carefulness, and a good flow of line; in short, would be masterly" (1851: 14).

relief the uninterrupted ink contour of the naked male model and the delicate hatching that affords volume to this figure's lean upright stance (Fig. 48). Like Stothard's more voluptuous colour studies of female models, this drawing stands in sharp contrast to the naked figures that populate his depictions of classical subjects, signalling the extent and character of his mannerism and his departure from the traditional mode of representing the human form in historical painting.

Stothard's *Design for the Wellington Monument* is another key document of his singular approach to classical nakedness (Fig. 49). Intended but not chosen for realisation in marble, this graphite and brown wash drawing places a fully draped Britannia at the left of the composition while a similarly covered Victory crowns Wellington with laurels from above her. But it is the naked allegory of Peace kneeling at the bottom left of the drawing, brandishing her cornucopia and caressing the arm of the war hero, that speaks the most for Stothard's manipulation of the marble antique. Her pose is adapted from one of the first Graeco-Roman sculptures to appear in modern Britain, the statue known as the *Lely Venus*, now in the British Museum (Fig. 50). What makes this work distinct from the *Venus de' Medici* or the *Venus Braschi*, is that due to its crouching position, the curves of the abdomen we see to varying degrees in these other antiquities are amplified, and the stomach cross-cut by rolls of marble flesh. Although not a work Haydon would have deemed sufficiently anatomically correct (or historically pure), her already much broader form is yet widened by the contact of her thighs against her calves and the protrusion of her rear as she crouches. Stothard has embraced the flesh of his sculptural model, and with arms open rather than wrapping around the torso, Peace's abdominal softness is

modelled in gentle watercolour shading. It is important to consider this design alongside that for Banks's *Monument to Captain Burges* (see illustration Chapter 1, Fig. 8).

Stothard's monument concentrates on the volume of each of the forms, rather than the simple, sparse relief cut by their outlines. Obviously Stothard was not a sculptor like Banks, and Banks not an accomplished draughtsman, but in these designs both Academicians handle ideal forms for prestigious commemorative projects. In Stothard's *Design for the Wellington Monument*, the marble body, its idealism already compromised by its gender, is absorbed into the painter's own manner. A three-dimensional marble statuette (*Lely Venus*) is appropriated into this small graphite drawing, proposed to be translated back into a three-dimensional object once more.

Westall's vernacular of classical nakedness however does embrace the outline. His singularity resides in the ability to temper the severity of a cold, clear contour with bold, unabashed sensuality mainly through his use of vivid colour, but also through the absence of intellectual or symbolical intentions. Westall's figures are more systematically ideal than Stothard's, but unlike Barry, Dayes, West, Haydon and others, the painter does not aim to convey anything beyond delight through his precise representations of sculptural forms. The reception of his 1807 cabinet picture *Flora Unveiled by the Zephyrs*, painted for Knight, illustrates Westall's unusual capacity to render conventional antique idealism overtly sensual (Fig. 51). At just 767 x 591 mm, *Flora* conforms to its patron's taste for small-scale works, and is tiny compared to Barry's *Venus Rising*. Exhibited at the Academy in 1807, the work elicited mixed responses. Farington reports that Sir George Beaumont commented on the "gaudiness of it", while the poet Samuel Rogers (one of

Stothard's most reliable sources of employment) held it as an example of Knight's increasingly "bad taste", proof that the connoisseur "was becoming an Old Woman."⁶⁵ Rogers's misogynist statement is a manifestation of woman's coextension with fashion, and her perceived inclination toward indulgence, frippery and excess. The poet is suggesting that works such as these, if currently clinging on to their fashionable status, will soon no longer be popular, hence the indictment that Knight's taste is that of an "Old" woman. Rogers's words are a charge against the femininity of Westall's style, perhaps even of Westall himself and his ambiguous close relationship to Knight, which I will touch on later in this chapter.

The two clusters of pink, dimpled putti swirling around the light rose-crowned goddess, retrieving the diaphanous drapery in which she has been veiled, are the main source of this feminine "gaudiness" and alleged "bad taste". At best, the passionflowers, bursting white lilies, hollyhocks, roses, foxgloves, single drooping sunflower and tumbling cascades of foliage accentuate the classical simplicity and sculptural outline of Flora's nakedness, and at worst, they detract from it. Flora's proportions are remarkably similar to those of Barry's Venus, and it is hard not to assume that had he been alive, the lineaments of her form would have complicated Barry's clear distinction between fashion and the antique. But, in combination with the frontal display of Flora's body, the

⁶⁵ *The Farington Diary*: 8: 3041 (May 8th, 1807) 3081 (July 7th, 1807). Farington states that making fun of Westall's style was somewhat of a routine among certain artists and Academicians: "To express His desperate dislike of Westalls art, Hoppner said to Sir George, in allusion to its vicious quality, 'Aye He'll take to the road soon'. This bitter dislike of Westalls practise in art, and such like expressions of Hoppner are propagated by Sir George & relished by others as entertainment" (*Ibid*). This "vicious quality" potentially suggests a perceived conflation of Westall's paintings with allegations of a non-normative sexual identity, discussed later on in this chapter.

prettiness of the scenery, this Eden populated with chubby babies, mutates into a kind of decadent eroticism which collapses any potential function of her beauty beyond delight, rendering it beauty for pleasure's sake alone. It is a synaesthetic, fragrant scene that glows from its panel. Unlike Beaumont, Rogers, and the Italian archaeologist Giuseppe Marchi who pronounced it “fiery & poor”, *The Monthly Magazine and British Register* approved of *Flora* as “very brilliant, and rich in the colouring.”⁶⁶ It is intriguing to note the stark similarity between Westall's figure of *Flora* and *Titania* in Joseph Noel Paton's 1847 *The Reconciliation of Titania and Oberon* (Fig. 52). Though not a cabinet picture, this is another small-scale work that can be considered a later incarnation of the painterly tradition for which Westall and Stothard set precedents.

In an 1814 article in *The Champion*, Hazlitt sought to make sense of the inherent contradictions embedded in Westall's feminine, hedonistic usage of the classical ideal. He posits Westall's art as “the elegant antithesis to the style of Hogarth”, except that,

instead of (Hogarth's) originality of character which excluded a nice attention to general forms, we have all that beauty of form which excludes the possibility of character; the refined essence and volatized spirit of art, without any of the caput mortuum of nature; and where, instead of her endless variety, peculiarities and defects, we constantly meet with the same classical purity and undeviating simplicity of idea—one sweet smile, one heightened bloom diffused over all.⁶⁷

Hazlitt comes to terms with Westall and his fixation on “classical purity” only by equating his small-scale works with the local, characteristically British particularity of

⁶⁶ *Ibid*: 3054 (June 2nd, 1807); *Monthly Magazine and British Register*, June 1st, 1807: 23: 1: 484.

⁶⁷ Ernst, 2010: 29.

Hogarth's paintings, demonstrating indirectly how, despite its classical idealism, Westall's art could be viewed as separate from the continent, thus facilitating its status as a source of national pride during the Napoleonic wartime. Ever adamant in his stance against the ideal and preference for the Elgin Marbles and living models, in Hazlitt's view Westall's forms are saccharine in their perfection and thus nullify the "refined essence and volatized spirit" that defines paintings by the earlier artist, whose genius he holds elsewhere to be "confined to the imitation of the coarse humours and broad farce of the lowest life".⁶⁸

In 1794, the year both Westall and Stothard were elected Royal Academicians, the former painter exhibited a picture of *Minerva* at the Academy's annual display.⁶⁹ This work had been commissioned by the Corporation of London for their council chamber and is now lost. Writing under the pseudonym "Anthony Pasquin", the satirist John Williams reviewed this work for his publication *Memoirs of the Royal Academicians; being an attempt to Improve the National Taste*. He writes of Westall's goddess:

This lady I do affirm does not beam a divinity: she is all legs and thighs... To be brief, it is a brazen, forward minx, unknown to Jove, to Prometheus, an Alma Mater: the goddess it may be presumed, is so offended, that she will have no influence whatever in Mr. Westall's affairs, much less bear him to heaven upon her shield, that he might steal some necessary fire.

(...) there may be a licentiousness of manner in painting, as destructive to the necessary fame of genius, as licentiousness of manners on a moral scale, would be to the required reputation of a member of the social system; each may be partially respected, even under this drawback upon propriety, but neither can be uniformly

⁶⁸ Hazlitt, 1856: 182.

⁶⁹ This work was presumably lost in World War II.

esteemed, without a rigorous observance of every prescribed duty annexed to the situation.⁷⁰

Unfortunately we cannot consider *Minerva* in conjunction with this passage to test Williams's accusations. Yet this critique still manages to disclose that the absence of heroic grandeur in Westall's classicism, what I have identified as the femininity, sensuality and hedonism of his style, could be interpreted as morally dubious or "licentious", a word that carries with it strong sexual implications. Williams goes on to expound his conviction that the painted and sculpted works of Michelangelo, the artist considered the most masculine of all the old masters, ought to be the cornerstone for all artists' renderings of the human form. Again, the femininity of Westall's approach is a source of critical scepticism.

Westall's rendering of classical nakedness appear to have become more refined in the first decade of the nineteenth century, as evidenced by a comparison between his 1796 watercolour *Nymph and two Satyrs* and *Flora Unveiled by the Zephyrs*, the later work betraying an advancement in mastery of the delineation of the human form (Fig. 53). Bent sideways around the back of an exaggeratedly rippled, muscular Satyr, the body of the nymph in the earlier work is classical certainly, and obviously intended to be an ideal figure. Yet her body is too general, too undefined, as if her shape is merely embossed onto the composition. For all this doll-like lack of detail, her body matches the playful nature of the work, the fact that, again, this is not supposed to be powerful, charged classicism. The development of Westall's technique cannot necessarily be attributed to

⁷⁰ Pasquin, 1794: 25.

differences in material. Westall's 1799 watercolour *The Boar that Killed Adonis Brought to Venus* presents a similarly consummate figure as his Flora (Fig. 54). The goddess that semi-reclines across this watercolour has a delicate, expertly modelled form pronounced by a clear outline and marmoreal flesh.

One of the central aims of this chapter is to show how both Stothard and Westall, in separate ways, were the co-founders of a new tradition of historical painting, one that was nurtured by the emergent fashion industry but could still be considered a legitimate form of culture. In a letter from Paris written in 1823, Etty informs Lawrence that prints after both these artists “are not only admired but imitated” there.⁷¹ Thirty-two years Stothard's junior and twenty-two years Westall's, Etty was a painter who justified basing his own practice on the individual particularities of the female life model with an argument that “all human beauty had been concentrated” in the female body.⁷² Although he qualified this statement with the observation that “the great painters of Antiquity had become thus great through painting great Actions and the Human Form”, Etty separated himself from both antiquity and “great Actions” by pioneering the presentation of languid, non-ideal nakedness in British historical painting.⁷³ What likens Etty to his predecessors Stothard and Westall is that in works by each of these artists, the strained discourses of ideal beauty, rife with inherent contradictions, are bypassed. It is in this sense that these artists

⁷¹ Royal Academy Archives: LAW/4/6. For a discussion of the popularity of British prints in France at this time see Bann, 2003.

⁷² Quoted in Gilchrist, 1855: 1: 36.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

opened up the space for a figure like Etty, who has received far more credit for his formative role in the history of British art and historical painting than either of these artists.⁷⁴

In the autumn of 1814, a retrospective of Westall's works was displayed at the New Gallery at Pall Mall, a rare opportunity for a living British artist that testifies to his public favour at the time, and also bears some continuity with the cultural shift signified by the British Institution's major group exhibition of works by Hogarth, Zoffany, Gainsborough and Wilson that had run early that summer, another symptom of the coextension between art and heightened nationalistic feeling.⁷⁵ One visitor cites Westall's solo display as proof that "English genius can achieve ancient excellence", while another was pleased to have the additional chance to view Westall's 1811 *Helen on the Scaean Gate come to view the Combat between Paris and Menelaus*, recalling it from the Royal Academy's display from that year as "one of the most attractive historical pictures in an exhibition more than usually fruitful in productions of that class."⁷⁶ This same reviewer acknowledges the benefits of viewing Westall's works in this focused format:

Mr. Westall's reputations and style of art are so well known, that it will be needless to expatiate on them; and on the propriety of exhibiting the works of one artist collectively, and by themselves, there can be but one opinion, as they form in this way a better whole, than in the motley groupings of pictures opposite or different styles⁷⁷

⁷⁴ As stated in the introduction, there has been a recent surge in scholarly interest in Etty following the recent monographic exhibition of the artist's works. See Burnage, 2011.

⁷⁵ Anon, 1814.

⁷⁶ *Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce*, January, 1814: 334; *New Monthly Magazine*, September 1st, 1814: 2: 141.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Indirectly, the singularity of Westall's classicism surfaces in this passage. His ideal forms demand to be viewed in the context of his other works, and away from grander historical paintings that potentially mobilise sculptural forms to rhetorical ends.

Included in the display was his 1809 *Vertumnus and Pomona*, a pendant piece to *Flora Unveiled by the Zephyrs* (Fig. 55). This cabinet picture, also commissioned by Knight, presents an even more intense blending of icy corporeal idealism and sensuality, with the sculptural forms of the principal figures diffused by the passion evoked by the scenery. A cloud of putti preside over an erotically charged encounter between the nymph Pomona and Vertumnus, who in the depicted moment has just cast off his disguise as an elderly woman and revealed his true male form. Instead of *Flora's* explosive floral festoons, a luxurious cornucopia of pineapples, mangos, plums, apples, melons and other delectable fruits rests on the verdant pasture on which the lovers sit gazing into each other's eyes. Westall's diminutive *Leda and the Swan*, originally known as *Jupiter disguised as a Swan, pretending to seek the protection of Leda from the attack of an Eagle*, was also displayed at the New Gallery (Fig. 56). In this work, the figure of Leda is so statue-like that, against her breast, the downy swan appears as if it is the painting's only organic form. Displayed alongside these works was *The Bower of Pan* from 1800, a larger but still relatively small historical painting that presents Westall's masterly deployment of light and shade to contour the three naked nymphs and the muscular Pan who nestles between them (Fig. 57). In each case, the overtly erotic content of each of these works is calmed and muted by the mathematical unity of Westall's sculptural bodies.

In this chapter, I have made a conscious decision not to posit an analysis of Westall's classicism as part of an attempt to "out" the painter.⁷⁸ John Clubbe hints at this conclusion in his reference to Westall and Knight as "two lifelong bachelors" who shared "an aesthetic rapport."⁷⁹ In the catalogue for the Whitworth Art Gallery's 1982 exhibition on Knight and his collection, *The Arrogant Connoisseur*, Michael Clarke suggests that the relationship between Knight and Westall "could almost be described as paternal."⁸⁰ This reads as an attempt to cleanse the queerness from their friendship's ambiguity: lifelong patronage (Knight commissioned a total of nine paintings by Westall, more than any other living artist) and personal familiarity seemingly independent from their different social backgrounds, which, in combination with the particularity of Westall's approach to classical nakedness, could lead one down the complicated, somewhat precarious road of speculation.

Hazlitt's allegations of the "hermaphroditic softness" of Westall's figures, Williams's indictments of a certain stylistic "licentiousness", the "want of vigour" by which the

⁷⁸ Lee Edelman posits the emblematic figure of the child as the embodiment of socio-political futurity, the opposition to which structures his model of queerness. For Edelman, "the queer comes to figure the bar to every realization of futurity, the resistance, internal to the social, to every social structure or form" (2004: 4). In keeping with this notion, Westall's denial of the political, discussed in the next chapter, may also be interpreted as terrain for investigating further his potentially sexually dissident subjectivity. Furthermore, the effects of the difference between Westall's status as a "lifelong bachelor" and Stothard's reputation as a family man attest to the significance of the emblematic child in reconstructing the art-historical legacies of artists, which is also, in its most conservative form, an aspect of the social order holding normative identities in place.

⁷⁹ Clubbe, 1988: 41.

⁸⁰ Clarke, 1982: 107.

author of the catalogue for the 1858 exhibition of John Cassell's art collection defines Westall's style: all of these criticisms communicate a tacit consensus that Westall's art betrays something of his sexual orientation.⁸¹ An etching in the British Museum, also of *Leda and the Swan* but from 1792, might be taken to illustrate such claims (Fig. 58). Unlike the forms works depicted in the works we have so far been discussing, this etching presents a naked Leda, viewed from behind, stroking a large swan whose penile neck arches and curves so that its beak meets her lips. It is safe to assert with some assurance that the body of this Leda is not that of a female. Ironically when we recall Williams's advice to Westall that he follow the example of the most masculine of masters, this figure is Michaelangellesque, and absent entirely is Westall's characteristic smooth idealism expertly designed to bring out all the softness of form visible in the female classical sculptural precepts. The bulge of this figure's right buttock transitions into what appears to be tough blocks of back muscle, brought into relief by cross-hatching. Just a hint of a breast surfaces from underneath Leda's thick right arm, and this could easily be mistaken for a developed pectoral muscle. When Hazlitt accuses Westall of "hermaphroditic softness", he means that the painter's male forms appear feminized, hence "softness". But this etching presents hermaphroditic hardness in the extreme, intensified by Leda's cropped hairstyle and androgynous facial features. As previously stated, it is not the aim of this thesis to view Westall in light of this dimension of his reception and identity; yet this 1792 etching offers potentially concrete visual evidence that could be used as a starting point to investigate it further.

⁸¹ Anon, 1858: 148-49.

Although a journalist could reflect toward the end of the painter's life that there "is no living painter who has enjoyed a larger share of public favour than Mr Westall", this popularity was short-lived.⁸² Subsequent to his appointment to the position of Drawing Master to the young Queen Victoria, the artist died in poverty after being duped out of his small fortune by his purchase of fake old master works.⁸³ By contrast, Stothard's status as the father of a large family was well known throughout and beyond his lifetime. These are some of the biographical details that disrupt the connection I have forged between these artists. For the purposes of this thesis, their popular, alternative historical paintings are what link them. But it should be noted that it was Stothard more than Westall who was held by many to be Britain's most prized historical painter, something undoubtedly facilitated by the absence of overt sensuality in his works, the fact that his classical naked forms appear as if they are clothed in the grace of his own painterly manner.

Frequently referred to as "the English Rafaele", associations of this type were not confined to one master.⁸⁴ Stothard could also be "our English Watteau", and according to Turner, "the Giotto of England".⁸⁵ In 1812 an author writing in *The Examiner* proclaimed that "Mozart has not more melody and elegant spirit than is often seen in Mr Stothard's colouring", and in 1827, the travel writer Maria Graham noted from Italy, "Botticelli is so

⁸² *Literary souvenir; or, Cabinet of poetry and romance*, 1835: 61.

⁸³ Anon, 1858: 148.

⁸⁴ See for example *Gentleman's Magazine* (U.S edition), July to December, September, 1840: 7: 111; *Art-Union*, 1840: 2: 15. There are numerous other articles in which Stothard is described as such.

⁸⁵ *London Literary Gazette and Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts, Sciences, Etc*, 1830: 675; *Gentleman's Magazine*, February, 1852: 191: 144; Quoted in Leslie, 1860: 87.

like Stothard that one might fancy the old Tuscan's spirit had taken its abode in our veteran.”⁸⁶ In addition to proving the high regard in which he was held, comparisons with masters as chronologically and formally diverse as Giotto, Botticelli, Raphael, Mozart and Watteau, point above all to the lyricism and timeless charm (paradoxical in relation to his being-in-fashion) held to be characteristic of Stothard’s style during his lifetime.

As late as 1905 John Evan Hodgson and Frederick Alexis Eaton describe Stothard as “the most eminent English painter of the eighteenth century in the department of historical painting”.⁸⁷ This is extraordinary praise for an artist with no continental training, who never made it to Rome and visited Paris only once in 1815, where, once inside the Louvre he was captivated not by the ancient sculptures or hoard of old master works that were about to be shipped back to the Papal States and elsewhere on the continent, but with “some Gothic pictures of no name”.⁸⁸

Yet Stothard’s works did remain in touch with a simple yet sophisticated array of ancient and old master material which the artist had no problem with quoting directly, in contrast to the overlapping inventiveness of Banks and Flaxman. At the Academy exhibition in 1820 he exhibited his small oil painting *The Triumph of Amphitrite*, a work that not only confirms his stylistic independence when portraying mythological subjects, but also, as

⁸⁶ *Examiner*, 12th of May, 1816: 43. Graham is quoted in Powell, 1998: 113.

⁸⁷ Hodgson and Eaton, 1905: 196.

⁸⁸ Excerpt from a letter from the painter to his son included in Bray, 1851: 72. Like his relationship to classical mythological imageries, Stothard’s interest in “gothic” art, that is art from the Medieval period, informs the endless variety that characterises the style and subject matter of his paintings, illustrations and design work. Flaxman too was interested in this type of art, but in terms of his sculpture this interest remains subordinate to the formal properties of the antique.

the positive reception of this work shows, the fact that this independence protected him from the backlash against the antique which, as we know, took hold from around the time this work was shown (Fig. 59).⁸⁹ Amphitrite herself is a refashioned *Townley Venus* in the diagonal slant of her dark drapery and raised right arm bent toward her head (Fig. 60). One might assume that Stothard also had in mind the large Roman mosaic *Neptune and Amphitrite* now in the Louvre, had this work not been unearthed as late as 1842 (Fig. 61). This mosaic possesses some compelling similarities to Stothard's work in oil, not just in the rearing grey horses of equal proportion to Stothard's (Stothard has adapted these horses to appear Rubensian) but also in the red banner waved by winged putti over the central figure(s). There must be a work, ancient or early modern, that connects Stothard's *Amphitrite* with this mosaic but unfortunately I have not come across it in my research thus far.

Stothard's watercolour *Venus Rising*, also from 1820, sources the pose of the central figure from Titian's classically ideal *Venus Anadyomene*, fusing it with elements from Raphael's *Galatea*, such as the sporting couple at the bottom left which is an exact quotation from the Raphael (Fig. 62). Another watercolour, known as *Girls Bathing*, sources its mirror-like bathing pool from Titian's *Diana and Actaeon* (Fig. 63). *Girls Bathing* is most likely related to Stothard's illustration for Alaric Alexander Watts's

⁸⁹ For example, in reviewing *The Triumph of Amphitrite* along with the five additional pictures submitted by the artist to the Academy exhibition of that year, one journalist writes, "There is quite a reviving delight in the contemplation of these works;—they transport us entirely to the scenes which they represent, and give a local habitation to things which hitherto floated in indistinct visions upon our fancy. Assuredly, this painter is the painter to the imagination, and one of the greatest artists of his country and age" (*London Literary Gazette and Journal of Belles Lettres*, for the year 1820: 300).

poem “The Painters’ Dream” which in his monograph on Stothard, A.C Coxhead describes as a “bevy of fair maidens bathing”, and is elsewhere described as “from Titian’s *Mirror of Diana*.”⁹⁰ The figure in *Girls Bathing* holding her towel over her head with arms up-stretched is after the famous statue known as the *Callipygian Venus* (familiar to Stothard through numerous reproductions), while the crouching figure by her side in the foreground is yet another appropriation of the *Lely Venus*.

In *Amphitrite, Venus Rising* and *Girls Bathing*, exposed flesh, translated from ancient marble or early modern oils, masks its nakedness in the distinctive form of drapery that is the artist’s style. These soft, delicate female figures possess none of the erotic charge infused into Westall’s classical scenes. Where Westall converts sculptural idealism into a sensuality that is carnal in its colouring and (often) the implications of its subject matter, Stothard rejects the cold, hard perfection of the ideal, choosing instead to take advantage of the voluptuousness of the precepts from which he sources his poses.

Just as the tradition these artists initiated stood and continues to stand apart from the contemporary classicism of Banks, West and the anatomical aesthetic of Haydon, this chapter, a deviation in the chronology of this thesis, posits Stothard and Westall in a league of their own, so to speak. Ironically, in Britain during the final stages of the wars

⁹⁰ Coxhead, 1906: 58. Stothard often used his literary illustrations as starting points for other paintings, or used parts of his paintings in his illustration commissions; *Dublin University Magazine*, January to June, June 1851: 37: 238.

with France, fashion emerges as a more stable foundation for visual classicism than the discursive formations of the antique and its (separate though not unrelated) symbolical appropriations. Protected by the ephemeral temporality of fashion, their works, though claimed as particularly British, could be seen favourably to compete with continental masters. In essence, their works embody a resistance to changing attitudes toward the antique. And because of the conflation between fashion and femininity and womankind's increasing exclusion from the domains of politics and high culture, the femininity of Stothard's and Westall's art can be said to be the central source of their unprecedented level of success. Where Stothard is mild and gentle, Westall intoxicatingly sensual; but these artists ought to be brought back into association with one another, like they were during the period in question, because they paved the way for other painters, most notably Etty and his followers such as Edward Frost, to venture beyond the cult of the ideal in pursuit of more immediate, life-like conceptions of beautiful nakedness.

CHAPTER 5

CLASSICAL NAKEDNESS IN EXILE: HENRY HOWARD, JOHN GIBSON AND RICHARD JAMES WYATT

An analogy can be drawn between the classicisms of the artists featured in the previous chapter and some passages in the first of Fuseli's *Lectures on Painting*, delivered in 1801, in which the Academician describes the destiny of the ideal body in the hands of post-republican ancient Greek painters, namely Eupompus and his circle. "When the spirit of liberty forsook the public, grandeur left the private mind of Greece", writes Fuseli, a shift that led Eupompus to gravitate toward a mode of representing the human form "less lofty, less ambitious than what the departed epoch of genius (of Phidias and Polycletus) would have dictated, but better suited to the times".¹ Through its relation to the works explored in the first three chapters—the symbolic function of the ideal in the contemporary classicism of Banks and West, the anatomical aesthetic promoted by Haydon (linked explicitly to Phidias)—this notion of an alternative type of painted nakedness, or multiple types, bodies still in touch with the ideal yet speaking more to the exigencies of everyday experiences and desires in a changing political milieu, on a structural level can be aligned with Stothard's and Westall's appropriations of the antique and the mimetic possibilities these artists can be credited with fostering. Barrell summarises Fuseli's reading of this phase in ancient art: Eupompus and his circle "melted, they softened, they familiarised the ideal, but never entirely obliterated it".² Keeping the design of their figures inside the limits of established convention and without compromising their shared status as historical painter and Royal Academician, Stothard and Westall manipulated classical

¹ Knowles, 1831: 2: 60.

² Barrell, 1995: 272.

nakedness so that it could conform to the demands of fashion-conscious consumers, the majority of whom were female. This analogy is also apt in the sense that the overlapping popularity of these artists not only reached its height when universalist ideologies such as fundamental human liberty and equality were being marginalised in the British public domain; the particularly intensive character of this popularity, congruent with the absence of heroic grandeur in their renderings of the human form, stems precisely from this marginalisation, itself a symptom of heightened nationalistic feeling in Britain during the Napoleonic conflicts.

In the aforementioned volume of his own poetry published in 1808, Westall includes odes dedicated to Homer, Hesiod, Alcaeus, Sappho, Anacreon, Pindar, Theocritus, Virgil, Horace and Ovid (as well as Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton) suggesting a deeper investment in the classical world than the fashionable variety of his paintings might seem to allow.³ But these odes, and indeed his entire foray into the sister art, retain the ancients in a distanced, other-worldly realm. Similar to the way in which his paintings of classical subjects offer sculptural forms confined within the sphere of pleasure and sensory delight, Westall does not seek to mine the ancient literary canon for commentary on epochal realities. Yet his aforementioned “Ode, on the victory of the first of June”, written twelve years before the anthology was published, apparently, in 1794 upon Britain’s naval victory in the Third Battle of Ushant, and his “Ode, written in the year 1793”, both reveal the primacy of the war in the artist’s imagination, and, when their content is read in conjunction with his paintings examined in the previous chapter, add a

³ Westall, 1808: 147-219.

sense of purpose to the remoteness of his classicism. As poetry was not a significant source of income for the painter and essentially a form of experimentation secondary to his already successful career as a painter, these two odes offer more immediate insight into the relationship between Westall's paintings of classical subjects and his own lifetime than, for example, his series of oil paintings documenting Nelson's command over various battles of the American Revolutionary, French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars that were commissioned by the officer's biographer.⁴

Halfway through the first section of "Ode, on the victory of the first of June", an allegorical personification of Anarchy symbolising the present state of France mocks "the firm set Continent" who

Hardly lifts her ancient shield,
Hardly dares the falchion wield;
And aghast with growing woe,
Waits the mediated blow.⁵

In an instant, Anarchy is frustrated by "yon Island" that "scorns (her) power", and swears to conquer it with her "mighty fleet".⁶ In the next section, allegorical Freedom is afforded a voice of her own to counteract these threats: "British sons to you is given, Fierce to hurl the bolts of heaven".⁷ Having thus constructed an image of a nation geographically and

⁴ A series of five in total, these paintings were commissioned by John McArthur, exhibited at the Academy in 1807, and later engraved by E. Goulding. (National Maritime Museum, London, oil on canvas). In 1819 a book of illustrations depicting Wellington's victories, all by Westall, was published in London.

⁵ Westall, 1808: 73.

⁶ *Ibid*: 74.

⁷ *Ibid*: 75.

morally independent from weak, inert Europe and galvanised by an allegory equipped with holy authority, the poem ends on a strange interrogative note:

Who inspir'd with noble rage,
 Shall to every future age,
 Tell how Biscay's rolling flood,
 Dreadful, roll'd a sea of blood?
 How beneath its whelming wave
 Many a hero found his grave,
 Till within its stormy womb,
 Gallia's pride had found its doom;
 Till at every vein she bled,
 Horror struck, and fill'd with dread,
 Ceas'd to fight, and turn'd, and fled,
 Rout, and ruin, and despair,
 Hanging on her troubled rear,
 While upon the British crest,
 Mighty victory joy'd to rest?

While the emphasis here on documentation points to the author's identity as a historical painter, the urgency of chronicling this particular naval victory for future generations soon becomes subordinate to imagery that cannot be represented in a work of art, a visceral evocation of chaos in battle: dead heroes sinking to the bottom of a "sea of blood", Gallia's bleeding veins. The question posed at the opening of this stanza seems irrelevant by the time the poem draws to a close upon another jarring rhetorical question mark.

The graphic, sanguine content of these lines is an echo of the less triumphant "Ode, written in the year 1793", in which "war, the pride of death" ensures

Golden harvests wave no more,

Lost in floods of human gore;⁸

While contemporary classicism subsists in the mobilisation of the ancient to engage the present and the future, Westall's odes process the Revolution and the wars directly, with no distanced vantage point from which these events can be better comprehended, no "dys-chrony". Conversely, his paintings of ancient subjects forcibly evade the contemporary. Favret describes British cultural production of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a "wartime phenomenon", giving "its distinctive voice to the dislocated experience that is modern wartime: the experience of war mediated, of time and times unmoored, of feeling intensified but also adrift."⁹ While these two poems by Westall confront the spectre of war, bringing it closer to home, so to speak, with their violent battle imageries both jubilant and pathetic, his contemporaneous classical paintings, the early watercolours from the 1790s for example, two of which, *A Nymph and Two Satyrs* and *The Boar that Killed Adonis Brought to Venus*, have been discussed, along with his later cabinet oil paintings dating from around the time this volume was published, consciously hold war at a distance, so much so that they come to stand for world that is the very opposite or antithesis of war. Cultivated by an artist whose nationalism and reactionary impulses are evidenced by these poems, one that paints as well as writes from within this distinctively modern wartime identified by Favret: "the

⁸ *Ibid*: 68. These lines ought also to be considered in relation to a non-mythological painting by the author/artist, his 1795 *Harvesters in a Storm* (private collection, oil on canvas), which was owned by Knight (who frequently lauded its content and execution, as mentioned in the introduction). At first this work seems like little more than an idealised conception of rustic life, yet contextualising it in terms of his first war ode reveals the anti-Revolutionary sentiment informing the artist's choice of subject.

⁹ Favret, 2009: 9. Favret grounds her interpretation of modern wartime in the idea of "Romanticism", a word that I have chosen to avoid in this thesis, see introduction.

experience of war mediated”, the denial of war contributes to the excessive sensuality of these paintings, something that is thrown yet further into relief by the gruesome language of his odes.

I dwell on Westall because in his classical paintings, the negation of war relies on the erotic to take its place, and this exchange between seemingly disparate realities and fantasies to varying degrees informs works by the three artists whose post-war achievements will be centred on in this concluding chapter. Patrick Noon attributes the dramatic increase in erotic subjects within the French school of the Restoration period to a waning in state commissions for large-scale historical paintings in the heroic tradition.¹⁰ While British Academic art as a totality can not necessarily be said to demonstrate a cohesive proliferation of erotic themes at this point in time, at least not in comparison to the well-documented increase in landscape and genre scenes, as well as an escalation in the number of exhibited religious paintings (yet to be accounted for), the rise of Etty as the nation’s most prominent, if not the most distinguished historical painter during the post-war era points to a parallel development across the Channel that cannot, for obvious reasons, be attributed to questions of a state patronage that never was.¹¹ I present the case then, that the newfound legitimacy afforded to historical paintings of amorous mythological or literary subjects in the post-war decades originates from the status of eroticism as a site not only of limitless bodily enjoyment, but as a space that shuns the political, and perhaps, in the context of British art of the Restoration era, emerges as far

¹⁰ Noon, 2003: 139.

¹¹ For a study on the rise of landscape painting in Britain see Kriz, 1997. For a thorough exploration of genre painting in the nineteenth century see Solkin, 2008.

more powerful than the straightforwardly political, the political being, in the most general sense, the domain in which the war had been agreed, challenged and negotiated. Though Etty is not one of the principal subjects of this thesis, the bold eroticism of his paintings serves as an avenue into the art of his more reticent contemporaries on whom this chapter will focus.

In 1857, Richard Redgrave reflected on what he posited as the unique qualities of British art, establishing its character as not only (finally) recognisable and well-defined in relation to other European schools, but also shaped by its relationship, or lack of relationship, to war. “Our insular position has, under providence”, he writes, “protected us from actual contact with war and its terrors, and thus has had some share in the subjects of our choice.”¹² After describing the merits of genre painting, the leading mode at this point in the century that, along with landscape, in Redgrave’s opinion, speaks so much for the national character, the author comments with pride on the nature of the divergence between British painting and works by other European schools, made apparent at the 1855 Exposition Universelle:

The contrast between the British and Continental artists in their choice of subjects was singularly apparent in the vast gathering in Paris in 1855. To pass from the grand salons appropriated in the Palais des Beaux Arts to French and Continental works, into the long gallery of British pictures, was to pass at once from the midst of warfare and its incidents, from passion, strife and bloodshed, from martyrdoms and suffering, to the peaceful scenes of home;—it was said of our pictures that they reflected the life of a people who had long been permitted to dwell safely.¹³

¹² Redgrave, 1857: 11

¹³ *Ibid*: 12.

Although outside the chronology of this thesis by at least fifteen years, and although Redgrave here makes reference to types of art that are not the central concern of these chapters, his words illuminate what had at this time become a characteristic insensitivity of art in Britain to the duality of war and politics, and suggest that the separation of art and state, art and the mythology of war, could be considered a virtue.¹⁴ Redgrave's words imply that landscape and genre painting, by the 1850s, have come to be seen as carriers of significance, a function previously reserved for the human form.¹⁵ As the classical body loses the authority that had allowed it to be symbolically mobilised, nationalistic particularism replaces universalism as the substance of ideological engagement in British art, leaving the newly vacuous classical body to exist solely in its erotic and hedonistic capacities.¹⁶

Reflecting on Etty's life and work, Redgrave acknowledges elsewhere that as a historical painter of primarily mythological and allegorical subjects, he did little to influence the

¹⁴ Anticipating Favret's "modern wartime", Colley bases her study on the rise of British nationalism upon the acknowledgement that civilians in Britain were not forced into contact with the physical experience of war: "unlike almost every other European nation in this period—Great Britain never experienced a major invasion from without. As a result, it never had to resort (though it came close to it) to implementing mass conscription...the fact that Britain escaped a substantial invasion did not make the prolonged conflict with France seem irrelevant to the mass of its inhabitants...Singularly free from these more brutal imperatives, they were able to focus, many of them, on the broader, less material characteristics of the struggle with France, a struggle that played a crucial part in defining Great Britain through the very process of exposing it to persistent danger from without" (1992: 3).

¹⁵ Kriz, Vaughan.

¹⁶ For a study on landscape painting founded upon the shortcomings of British historical painting see Kriz, 1997. In a not dissimilar vein, a relationship between David's artificial style and J.M.W Turner's innovations in landscape is posited in Vaughan, 1993.

British school and their now typical orientation towards landscape and genre scenes.¹⁷ Yet he credits the artist for “introducing a class of subjects which had hitherto been but little attempted...by our native painters”, an acknowledgment that takes for granted the lack of continuity between Etty’s historical paintings and those by Barry, West, and Haydon, for example.¹⁸ Etty is described as the painter responsible for “(introducing) the nude” into British painting, nude being a word that, as we know, embodies the idea of nakedness for the sake of pleasure. Like Redgrave, more recent scholars seem eager to view the scandalous qualities of Etty’s figures as somewhat of a watershed, a departure evocative of a new era, but also to some extent anomalous in the wider history of the British school.¹⁹ That the unabashed sensuality of his works could be related to both Revolutionary classicism and war through its total break with recent history via the art of his predecessors remains to be suggested. While it is true that Etty’s “voluptuous” historical paintings signalled a rupture within the genre, contained within this rupture was the move from ideological nakedness to an eroticised nudity that outwardly denies the symbolical charge of the body, a transition that is beyond its most immediate visual manifestation in the formal shift from ideal to individual corporeality. As suggested in the introduction, Etty’s obsessive devotion to the living model, what I term the everyday body, is a symptom of the cleavage between his practice and the charged deployments of the ideal.²⁰

¹⁷ Redgrave, 1981: 282.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ For an example of such a tendency see Wickham, 2005.

²⁰ For a reassessment of Etty’s presence in the Life Academy see Myrone, 2011.

Etty was equally if not more devoted than West to perfecting Venetian-style colouring, an aspect of his technique that, when combined with his life-like corporeality and choice in subjects, augments the carnal quality of his works. While Westall's being-in-fashion was related to the popularity of engravings after his works among female consumers, Etty's success was not especially prevalent among any one gender, though the majority of his patrons were male. Also unlike Westall, Etty became known for his large canvasses rather than their print reproductions. During the wartime and earlier on in the eighteenth century, the eroticism that yokes together the art of these two painters would not have made sense on a large scale, when higher dimensions usually signalled the intent to address the spectator. Despite the backlash against the classical body that undermined and obscured the meaning of works explored earlier on in this thesis, the same critics who might mockingly reflect on naked forms produced by Banks and West did not necessarily view Etty's shirking of the antique as a welcome change, but rather tended to disapprove not only of his intentions, but mythological and allegorical art altogether.²¹ Yet regardless of the (well-documented) controversy surrounding the public exhibition of his paintings, Etty's rise to fame producing grand-scale erotic works at this point in time speaks for itself.

Sarah Burnage has discussed the "overnight success" of his *Cleopatra's Arrival in Sicilia* in 1821, noting how this was the work that set the artist on the path to becoming, in the

²¹ The reception of Etty's work by various critics during his lifetime is discussed in Leslie, 1855: 205-208. Leslie also notes the affinities between the "mannerism in forms and attitudes" in Westall's works and those of Etty.

eyes of many during the period, “the greatest of all our history painters”.²² Relatively small compared to his later works, the “languid and luxurious” nature of this 1065 x 1325 mm canvas seems to have been the source of its triumph.²³ Surrounding the reclining figure of Cleopatra is an abundance of naked females all engaging in activities designed to reveal the curvature of their luminously white forms: swimming, dancing, reaching, ushering in the principal figure whose vessel is followed by a stream of putti (Fig. 64). Cleopatra is an ancient character attached to the iconography of excess and unabashed sexuality.²⁴ The fact that this painting in particular captivated its audiences enough to cast the artist as one of the most promising talents in the nation is especially significant when we notice that it dates from the exact moment at which the aversion to the classical body had become commonplace in criticism and the St. Paul’s Pantheon collapsed into obscurity.

The amalgamation that is Etty’s colouring, sensual choice in subjects and pioneering move towards real life figures, is a manifestation, or rather intensification, of a emergent eroticism within British art that developed directly out of or in opposition to the role of painting and sculpture (and painters and sculptors) during the wartime. This chapter will assess this shift, and without deviating from the ideal form that is the central subject of

²² Royal Academy Critiques, May 1821. Review quoted in Burnage, 2011: 31-32.

²³ *Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review*, June 16th, 1821: 3: 109: 382.

²⁴ Around 1799, Thomas Stothard used the figure of Cleopatra in his allegorical painting *Intemperance*, an oil sketch that rehearses a large-scale decorative mural at Burleigh House, Stamford Northamptonshire (Tate, London, oil on canvas). Before Stothard conceived of this design, Joshua Reynolds had painted an infamous courtesan named Kitty Fisher as Cleopatra (Kenwood House, London, oil on canvas). These two appropriations of Cleopatra’s legacy attest to the sexuality implied by her image. See also Altick, 1985: 320.

this thesis, centre on post-war works by the committed classical painter Henry Howard, along with marble statuary produced in Rome by two British disciples of Canova, John Gibson and Richard James Wyatt, all of whom produced prolific arrays of classical naked figures contemporaneous with Etty's ascent to fame. In separate ways, works by Howard, Gibson and Wyatt all demonstrate the fundamental incompatibility between the political and the amorous in art at this point in the century. Yet, rather than facilitated by the move towards life-like corporeality, the vehicle for this process is the purified Graeco-Roman ideal, a corporeal type that is formally (but not syntactically) the same as those sculpted by Banks and painted by West during his "radical redirection" phase, Haydon's "old antique". Like the invocation of this form to speak for the mythic present, the empirical and mimetic spaces of eroticism are fundamentally ahistorical. Haydon's theory had undermined the symbolical capacity of this form by exposing its wholeness and smooth perfection as little more than a reconstituted mirage; yet, enduring within the iconography of the erotic, the questionable historicity of this form refuses to be an issue that undermines its aesthetic value.

In *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Lee Edelman conceives the Lacanian idea of *jouissance*, meaning the movement "beyond the distinctions of pleasure and pain, a violent passage beyond the bounds of identity, meaning, and law", in terms of its location outside "the framework within which politics as we know it appears".²⁵

Jouissance, with all its (not unproblematic) sexual implications, is defined as a space unstructured by "the cultural text of politics" responsible for maintaining the social order

²⁵ Edelman, 2004: 25.

(and the production of authentic historical narratives).²⁶ Politics, by which Edelman means the system of groups competing for governance to regulate the social order, remains, he argues, conservative in essence “however radical the means by which specific constituencies attempt to produce a more desirable social order...insofar as it works to affirm a structure, to authenticate a social order, which it then intends to transmit to the future”.²⁷ Though abstract when conveyed through language, *jouissance* has the power to disrupt and dismantle these affirmations and authentications.²⁸ Hunt has argued that the political as we know it today (the “cultural text” Edelman here refers to) came into being only in the 1790s as a result of the Revolution and its break with the past, and, as we know from the introduction to this thesis, in the early stages of its development this burgeoning political culture was inextricably attached to the image of the classical body.²⁹ In the mythological paintings by Westall previously mentioned, Etty’s entire *oeuvre*, and the marble Cupids and nymphs, for example, by Gibson and Wyatt, is an orientation toward this *jouissance*, an orientation rooted in a pathological denial of the political. The diametric opposition Edelman constructs between *jouissance* and the social order via the ritual of politics serves as a model for the distinction between the body in works by these artists and the body in the art of Banks, West, and Haydon. Though with his theory of anatomy and authenticity as aesthetic Haydon negated the

²⁶ *Ibid*: 3. For a feminist critique of the traditional Lacanian concept of *jouissance* see Ives, 2013. See also Jones, 2013: 33.

²⁷ Edelman, 2004: 3.

²⁸ Edelman posits queerness as a space outside the “cultural text of politics”, the definitive emblem of which, he argues, is the figure of the child.

²⁹ Hunt writes of the “turning point” initiated by the Revolution: “what would our world be like without parties, ideologies, dictators, mass movements, and even antipolitical, political rhetoric?” (1984: 3).

capacity of the ideal to convey symbolical meaning, he still saw his duty as an artist and writer to engage with the current events.

The fact that Etty proclaimed the possibility of parliamentary reform to be one of the great evils of the day along with the recent cholera epidemic, that he condemned Jacobinism and other radical identifications and in 1831 wrote a letter to a prominent public journal stating his conviction that “Arts on the broad and vulgar world, are like the sight and smell of a freshly-gathered bunch of roses”, that it is the duty of the artist to protect “their still, sweet voice from being drowned in the clamor of politics”, are but complements to the way in which the triumph of the erotic over political engagement plays out on his canvases.³⁰ In his countless depictions of Venus, for example, blonde or dark, often large-breasted with face obscured from view to steer the viewer toward her bodily contours, the sexualised female form serves as the medium for what is essentially a mode of escapism.³¹ As previously suggested, the contrast between Westall’s odes and his classical paintings points to beautiful nakedness as a form of hedonistic relief during the wartime, and statues by Gibson and Wyatt present essentially this same conscious remoteness.

Because British Academic statuary had only emerged out of the need for war monuments, their distinct type of sculpture can be said to develop out of or against the honorific

³⁰ Quoted in Gilchrist: 1855: 1: 346; Etty’s letter to the *The Morning Herald*, February 26th, 1836: 44.

³¹ Among many other works see for example his *Venus, Cupid and Psyche*, 1822, oil on canvas, Ashmolean Museum. *Venus and Cupid*, c. 1825-1830, York Museums Trust, York, oil on canvas; *The Toilet of Venus*, c. 1840, York Museums Trust, York, oil on wood.

groups mentioned in the first chapter and the culture around them (of which Banks's *Monument to Captain Burges* stands as the most ideologically independent). Indeed, Gibson too is fascinated with the everyday body; one of the rhetorical tropes in the sculptor's autobiographical passages is that the mythological personages he goes on to execute in marble are lifted from people he glimpses on the streets in Rome, from chance observations and encounters.³² Though the formal principles of Gibson's figures are the same as those comprising monumental units by Banks, Rossi and Flaxman for example, bodies such as that of Gibson's Hylas, his numerous depictions of Psyche and multiple little-boy Cupids are antithetical to the body of the war hero and the allegories that tend to accompany it. In his youth, Wyatt had been apprenticed to Rossi while the veteran sculptor would have been working on his third and final group destined for the St. Paul's Pantheon, his 1815 *Monument to Lord Rodney*. Wyatt's decision to emigrate permanently to Rome in 1821 to study under Canova's tutelage, as Gibson had done just four years earlier, appears to have been motivated in part out of a desire to abandon "the monumental class" of sculpture at precisely the time the St. Paul's project was breaking

³² Gibson describes this process in the context of many of his sculptures, including his *Narcissus*, *Nymph and Cupid*, *Bacchante and Faun*, and his *Wounded Amazon*. Discussing his *Hunter and His Dog* (c. 1838-1840, The Collection, Lincolnshire, marble) the author writes that the idea was "taken from an incident in the street. My eye had been caught by a big boy holding a dog by the collar at the moment the animal was about to fly at an object. In this I saw a composition which impressed me. . . . The streets of Rome are in this respect a real academy. The inhabitants of warm climates are more free in their movements than those of cold countries. It was among them, in all circumstances of their life, from the most pathetic to the most trifling, that the sculptor of the Dying Gladiator, and of the boy taking the thorn out of his foot, found these statues. There Praxiteles saw his young faun leaning against the trunk of a tree, and the Cupid bending his bow. It was among them that the Discobulus of Myron, and the same beautiful figure by Naucides were seen in living motion—with many other actions which live equally in antique sculpture and in the every-day life of a southern people" (Eastlake, 1870: 80-81).

down.³³ Naked nymphs, arguably the most direct material evocation of *jouissance* (in the context of mid nineteenth century painting and sculpture), were Wyatt's preferred subject. The second part of this chapter will examine the tense relationship between the art of these Anglo-Romans and British Academic sculpture's wartime past.

But first I will consider a selection of paintings by an artist who, unlike Gibson and Wyatt, experienced adult life in the 1790s, a figure that lived through the time of the French Revolution and felt a connection to its art and ideals that was compromised by the political and aesthetic transformations of the era. Based in Britain for the majority of his career, Howard was a painter who suffered more than any other from the backlash against the classical body in Britain. As Secretary of the Academy from 1811 to 1847 and Professor of Painting from 1833 to 1847, he himself did not suffer in the way that Barry and Haydon had done for their professional independence; however the reception of his works was greatly influenced by his commitment to the "old antique", both during his lifetime and into the present day. His failure to move the British public was such that his obituary in *The Gentleman's Magazine* suggests he will be remembered only by what *The Athanaeum* had once termed him, "Flaxman's friend."³⁴ Even such a pathetic prophecy as this has proved optimistic. Howard has hitherto been virtually excluded from art historical scholarship, even as regards Flaxman, with not a single book or article dedicated to the artist.

³³ In a biography of Wyatt one author writes: "At the time that Wyatt was under the tuition of Rossi, the latter executed several national monumental works which had been voted by parliament to commemorate the services of men who had deserved well of their country" (*Art Journal* for 1850: 2: 249). See also Goodman, 2008.

³⁴ *Gentleman's Magazine*, July to December, December 1847, 28: 649.

Howard painted sculptural forms long after his contemporary Westall had, according to the demands of the consuming public, abandoned subjects calling for classical nakedness and moved on to sentimental genre and religious paintings.³⁵ An entry on the painter included in an illustrated catalogue of works from the collection of Robert Vernon published in 1851 anticipates the present day lack of interest surrounding the artist, specifying his stubborn adherence to the antique as the central source of his inability to appeal to the public:

The truth is, Howard... did not succeed in attaining such a degree of popularity as would suffice to make his works covetable; he was too high for one class of collectors, not high enough for the other: his subjects were too classical to please the ordinary purchaser... Possessing a refined taste and somewhat cultivated mind, which directed his pencil to the fabulous heroes and heroines of antiquity, rather than to the truths which brings before us or the ordinary occurrences of daily life, he still was deficient in the ability to work out his ideas with certainty and success... (he) must (not) be denied the merit of persevering (sic) in a course of practice which, in itself, takes rank with the loftiest, and which, so far as his own pecuniary interests were concerned, he "loved not wisely, but too well." Had he been born twenty years earlier, his name might have been honourably enrolled among the original founders of the Academy; as it is, however, his works may be regarded as connecting links between the past and the present generation of British

³⁵ Since around 1800, Westall had regularly exhibited works of ecclesiastic subject matter, but his output of this kind of work increased substantially during the later stages of the wars and into the Restoration period when the classical body was not in fashion. Works such as his 1816 *The Presentation in the Temple*, his 1817 *Angel in the Sepulchre of Christ*, numerous works from the 1820s and his 1833 *Simon and the Prophetess Anna in the Temple at Jerusalem, acknowledging the Infant Jesus to be the Lord Christ* (all in private collections, all oil on canvas) make it seem almost as if this new wave of subject material, like classical antiquity, could be appropriated in the manner of a fashion trend. In a review of the Academy exhibition where this last painting was displayed, one author commented that "Few artists have done more for the British school of design than Mr. Westall" (*London Literary Gazette and Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts, Sciences, Etc*, 1833: 378).

artists, partaking of each, yet recognised by neither, but adding little to the reputation of our School.³⁶

This author's statement that Howard limited himself to the "the heroes and heroines of antiquity" is a sweeping oversight. As we shall see, Howard's late works are marked by an absence of the hero's image. Indeed, often filtered through English poets Spenser and Milton, Howard's classical world is inhabited almost exclusively by female forms. The application of the well-known line from *Othello* onto the artist's commitment to ideal corporeality and personages hints at the deeply personal nature of Howard's investment in the antique. Yet more telling is this author's suggestion that Howard's style belongs fundamentally to the previous generation of Academicians, that it only makes sense in the context of West's *oeuvre*, with whom he was neighbours on Newman Street, and perhaps that of Barry too. I would argue that "original founders of the academy" points in particular to the similarity between certain early works by Howard and West's paintings, the latter's contemporary classical post-Paris series in particular. Now that sculptural idealism in contemporary art has become historicised, Howard's failure interpolates the status of his art as out-of-time, aesthetically (and politically) irrelevant. It is the continuity between Howard's late works and the statuary of Banks and Flaxman that will be discussed in this chapter.

The final part of this chapter will serve as the conclusion to this thesis, and argue that the period from around 1820 to 1840 witnessed classical nakedness exiled. In *Reflections on*

³⁶ Hall, 1851: 2.

Exile, Edward Said defines concept of exile in relation to nationalism, its dialectical counterpart:

Nationalism is an assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage. It affirms the home created by an community of language, culture, and customs; and, by so doing, it fends off exile, fights to prevent its ravages.³⁷

As acknowledged in the introduction, the notion that British nationalism was cultivated by the extended conflicts against France has been argued most notably by Colley.³⁸ Widespread reactions against the transnational universalism signified by the classical body will be identified as an aspect of this nationalism's post-war condition. Exile is the inevitable site to which this body is relegated during these years, when, due to the victory over the enemy nation, nationalistic feeling, rather than proliferating as one might imagine, took on a new character that, though not necessarily as chauvinistic as it had been during the wartime, was marked by an aversion to the antique. When the mythic present, the Revolutionary moment itself, became historicised, classicism was seen as totally alien to the culture of radicalism, which, in the parallel context of increasing associations between Greek and Roman culture with the privileges of Oxbridge erudition, re-embraced the Saxon past as a source of meaning.³⁹ In Britain, the exile of Howard's art was self-contained while Gibson's and Wyatt's art consciously chooses its fate of self-imposed exile in Rome.

³⁷ Said, 2001: 181.

³⁸ Colley, 1992.

³⁹ The development of classicism into an elite discipline is acknowledged in the introduction. For a study on the Saxon elements of English radicalism in the post-war years see Epstein, 1994.

An 1814 oil painting by Howard entitled *Sunrise*, better known as *The Pleiades Disappearing*, presents a cluster of eight female figures with their limbs and draperies intertwined so that varying degrees of their ideal forms are exposed (Fig. 65).⁴⁰ Leading at the right is an allegorical personification of Dawn, and seven female forms that float behind her are the Pleiades, nymphs of Artemis. Momentarily in book seven of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, these figures dance together in front of the creator. Accompanying Howard's work in the catalogues for the 1814 Academy exhibition, the British Institution winter exhibition the following year and there again for the 1825 summer display of works by living British artists, are the following lines from that poem:

First in his East the glorious lamp was seen,
Regent of day, and all th' horizon round

⁴⁰ Although the majority of Howard's paintings are presumed lost, many of his un-located works survive in the form of prints. Like those after Stothard and Westall, engravings and etchings after Howard were often produced years after the completion of his original works, and were sometimes made to illustrate various literary anthologies, catalogues of private galleries or published by the recently established Artist's Fund society. After *The Pleiades Disappearing* there are three secondary reproductions: a preparatory pencil drawing and an etching by William Dean Taylor and another etching by John Young. It is these prints which are my only visual reference for discussing this particular work by Howard. As I will be focusing on the basic composition and design of the painting's figures, I hope that the unavailability of the oil painting will not affect my analysis of the work. I have tried to take into account as much as possible descriptions of the original work's appearance, as well as its 1118mm x 1295mm dimensions in relation to the smaller prints after it, Taylor's etching at 540mm x 615mm and his drawing at 421mm x 522mm, Young's etching at 104mm x 144mm. For a history of the Artist's Fund Society see Pye, 1845: 327. This painting by Howard was titled *Sunrise* at the Academy and British Institution exhibitions in 1814 and 1815, and became known as *The Pleiades Disappearing* after a second copy was commissioned for Sir John Fleming Leicester's gallery at Hill Street.

Invested with bright rays, jocund to run
 His longitude through Heav'n's high road; the grey
 Dawn, and the Pleiades, before him danc'd
 Shedding sweet influence.⁴¹

Howard's take on these aerial beings is such that they hang together suspended over a body of water, illuminated by, in the words of *The Examiner's* Robert Hunt, "streaky lights that dart upward from the golden lamp of day on the horizon".⁴² With its close-knit flock of bodies in motion, *The Pleiades Disappearing* is the first of several similar compositions by Howard including his 1815 *Sabrina*, his 1818 *Fairies*, his 1830 *Morning* and the mahogany panel *Night and Morning*, one of the artist's five ceiling paintings for John Soane's Museum that were commissioned in 1834 (Figs. 66, 67, 68, 69). Of these works *The Pleiades Disappearing* involves the most nakedness, designed, as we can tell from prints after the work, in the artist's characteristic sculptural style. Three of the Pleiades bear their uniformly ideal, "small, distinct and delicate", breasts to the viewer while the central Pleiade binding the group with Dawn reveals the entirety of her naked back.⁴³ Dawn's full drapery, an empire waist columnar dress that flutters out away from her, accentuates the net of bare arms, chests and shoulders that makes up her companions. Each of Howard's variations on this same basic composition offer a space that is exclusively female, the "sweet influence" of the interwoven bodies operating as an alternative to the command, agency and power traditionally associated with the heroic male.

⁴¹ Milton, 1821: 213.

⁴² *Examiner*, for the year 1815, Sunday February 26th: 142.

⁴³ This is Joseph Spence's description of the *Venus de' Medici's* breasts, which continued to be a familiar point of reference, reprinted in 1790 in *Bell's New Pantheon* and in 1825 by Elmes in his 1825 publication *The Arts and Artists* (1790: 305; 1825: 109).

In 1822 when the copy of this work Sir John Fleming Leicester had ordered from Howard was still on display at his Hill Street house-turned-gallery of contemporary British art, an author in *The Times* referenced the artist as a barometer of decency in their critique of Etty's most recent productions:

Naked figures, when painted with the purity of Raphael, may be endured; but nakedness without purity is offensive and indecent, and in Mr. Etty's canvasses is mere dirty flesh. Mr. Howard, whose poetical subjects sometimes require naked figures, never disgusts the eye or mind. Let Mr. Etty strive to a taste equally pure; he should know, that just delicate taste and pure moral sense are synonymous terms.⁴⁴

This particular section of the review has been picked up on and quoted in a variety of secondary literature, not just on Etty exclusively, but on the wider history of the nude in art.⁴⁵ Howard is consistently left out of any conclusions that can be drawn from the above passage, but it is significant that the reviewer in *The Times* renders Howard's position in relation to the naked figure in British art at this precise moment the counterpart to Etty's more controversial presence; Howard and Etty are considered opposite sides of the same coin. Now there are two types of nakedness in contemporary British historical painting: Etty is the more dangerous with his "mere dirty flesh" while Howard's delineations, "pure" like Raphael's, are praised for their neutrality. Whether or not they demonstrate mastery, inspire, move, or please the viewer is not the central issue, rather it is simply that they "never disgust the eye or mind." As "moral sense" is alone conceived of as the

⁴⁴ *Times*, January 29th, 1822. This is a review of the British Institution winter exhibition of that year, at which Etty's *Cupid and Psyche Descending* (Victoria and Albert Museum, London, oil on canvas) was displayed.

⁴⁵ See for example Bignamini and Postle, 1991: 39; Chesterman, 2002: 21.

source of Howard's superiority, his "poetical subjects" are recalled merely as "delicate", passive exercises in convention.

By 1837 (arguably the height of Etty's success), the view that Howard's works were "pleasing but not powerful", that they were "tame commonplaces", dominated his reception by the press.⁴⁶ *The Pleiades Disappearing* stands the artist's most successful work, precisely because it became familiar among the exhibition-going public right at the time when the antique was falling out of favour and fashion. Howard himself came to be known as somewhat of a guardian to the "chaste simplicity" of classical idealism and composition in painting. Having passed unsold at the Academy exhibition of 1814, the original version of the work was purchased by the Marquis of Stafford while on display at the British Institution. Although there the work had won a hundred guinea premium, the artist was not satisfied with having come second place to George Hayter in the drawing of prizes.⁴⁷ Stafford bought *The Pleiades Disappearing* for 200 guineas to ease Howard's disappointment, yet despite the pitying nature of this eventual sale, the work seems to have made more of an impact than any other work by the artist during his lifetime.⁴⁸ The fact that it left the Academy exhibition without a buyer was observed by several reviewers of its second display, including one who proclaimed that "so sweet, so original, and so elegant a personification of this heavenly description of our blind bard should remain unsold...shews a deplorable want of feeling for pure painting."⁴⁹ Leicester

⁴⁶ Royal Academy Critiques, 1837.

⁴⁷ Smith, 1860: 69.

⁴⁸ Howard, 1848: lxx.

⁴⁹ *Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufactures, Fashions and Politics*. January 1815, 13: 176.

ordered his own copy sometime between 1815 and 1818, and went on to place it in the drawing room of the Hill Street gallery, open to a select crowd on consecutive Mondays every social season from 1818 until his death. A visitor to the gallery lauded “Mr. Howard’s poetical imagination and classical taste” for producing “one of the most charming works of the British school”.⁵⁰ This author recalls seeing the painting at Somerset House: “well do we recollect the indignation and disgust with which we understood that it remained, not a day, not a month, but whole years, undisposed of! It is in good hands however at last.”

That Leicester, thought of as “the greatest patron of the native school of painting that (the) Island ever possessed”, would have requested the presence of *The Pleiades Disappearing* in his gallery is not just proof of the work’s outstanding appeal; such a specific commission hints that this particular painting, placed as it was in the mansion’s drawing room among portraits by George Romney and Northcote, and landscapes by J.M.W Turner and Belgrave Hopper, was seen as singularly representative of classicism and the ideal style.⁵¹ As we know from the author in *The Times*, ethereal, sculptural bodies like those in *The Pleiades Disappearing* offered a less offensive manifestation of nakedness in contemporary British painting at a time in which conventions of depicting the body in art were changing. But Leicester seems not to have been troubled with such concerns. Though he collected no works by Etty, in the main gallery hung an original

⁵⁰ *European Magazine and London Review*, December to July, April 1823, 83: 338. This author is evidently not aware the version exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1814 was purchased by Stafford, and that Leicester had done Howard the honour of ordering a personal copy.

⁵¹ *Gentleman’s Magazine*, July to December 1827 inclusive, 97: 273.

work that he had commissioned: Hilton's *Mermaid of Galloway*, a painting that on a large scale presents a more life-like approach to the naked female form that also attests to the newfound legitimacy of the erotic in Academic art (Fig. 70).

An unusual subject sourced from Scottish legend, Hilton's mermaid does not have the unsystematic lines and individual character of Etty's females. She is of antique proportions, but, as with the painting by Dayes discussed in the previous chapter, the idealism of her form is unstable in its softness, diffused by both the unconventional motion of her pose and the undulating pinkness of her flesh tint. Perched on the edge of a rock with arms raised above her head, the mermaid gazes down at the hunter in her lap whom, with a curl of the hair that flows wildly over her arm and out behind her, she has seduced to his death. Matching the pink tips of her knees and belly, the rosy interior of her right armpit projects itself as a focal point detracting from her pale torso. Likewise, her sitting position pronounces the soft, yielding lines of her stomach, also defined in a pink tint. Another painting by Hilton hung in the same room at Hill Street, a *Jupiter and Europa*. This is a tumultuous swirl of nymphs, putto and satyrs surrounding the central pair of Europa and the bull (Fig. 70). In the context of Hilton's contributions to Leicester's collection, Howard's *The Pleiades Disappearing* clearly would have been valued more for its stricter, sculptural corporeality than for its nakedness.

For all the "sweetness", "elegance" and "charm" it was attributed with during these years, *The Pleiades Disappearing* possesses a distinct relationship to one of the politicised dimensions of classical nakedness this thesis has so far explored. In describing the nature

of Howard's style in his obituary in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, the author notes the influence of both Banks and Flaxman on the painter's development: "Banks and Flaxman, the two great sculptors, took notice of his efforts, gave him friendly encouragement in all he did, and suggested, it is said, new subjects for his pencil."⁵² Howard and Flaxman indeed maintained a friendship and artistic rapport dating back to their overlapping stays in Rome, but there is no surviving evidence of artistic intimacy between Howard and Banks, though Howard did move into the property formerly occupied by the sculptor on Newman street after Banks's death in 1805. But the writer's yoking together of Howard's art with the legacies of Banks and Flaxman on an anecdotal level does acknowledge the aesthetic continuities between certain works by Howard and certain works by the sculptors. *The Pleiades Disappearing* reflects not just to the influence of Banks and of Flaxman, but the complex continuity between these two sculptors and their ideologically conflicting approaches to the same ideal forms.

Chapter 1 acknowledges Flaxman's debt to Banks's 1778 relief *Thetis and her nymphs rising from the sea to comfort Achilles for the loss of Patroclus*, from which the younger sculptor sourced the compositional arrangement for his outline drawing, "Thetis ordering the nereids to descend into the sea". As previously noted, Flaxman's preliminary pen, grey ink and graphite study for this outline clearly shows that Flaxman had in mind Banks's own Thetis and nereids for his depiction of the same figures from Homer's *Iliad*. Banks chose to depict them rising while Flaxman's descend (see illustration Chapter 1,

⁵² *Gentleman's Magazine*. July to December 1847 inclusive, 28: 649.

Figs. 11, 12). In his book on Michaelangelo first published in 1806, the English draughtsman Richard Duppa commends the originality of Banks's relief:

In basso-relievo, his Thetis rising with her Nymphs to console Achilles...is an extraordinary composition, and not only surpasses every thing modern, but rivals every thing ancient of the same class. I know of no work extant which possesses so much originality and harmonious combination, poetical feeling, energy, and taste. This is one of those felicitous productions, that if a parallel were drawn between poetry and sculpture might rank with the Comus of Milton.⁵³

Though this kind of perceived total innovation came to characterise the work, it is important to note that while in Florence in the 1770s before he began the relief, Banks had seen Lorenzo Ghiberti's bronze reliefs on the doors of the Battistero di San Giovanni, the *Gates of Paradise*, and that Ghiberti's *Adam and Eve* panel, with its floating and descending angels in cluster-like formations, clearly influenced the composition and overall effect produced by Banks's rising sea nymphs, which Duppa considers the embodiment of poetic harmony and artistic ingenuity (Fig. 72). With her outstretched arm and Grecian limbs flanked by cherubim, Ghiberti's Eve provided Banks with a model for his Thetis, just like the elongated ideal body of Adam at her feet resembles not only Banks's mourning Achilles, but also, quite startlingly, the dying Roman general in his earlier relief, *The Death of Germanicus* (Fig. 73).⁵⁴

⁵³ Duppa, 1806: 265.

⁵⁴ Shortly before his death Banks made several drawings from the cast of the *Adam and Eve* panel of the *Gates of Paradise* that were (and still are) in the possession of the Royal Academy.

Yet this source seems to have gone unobserved by all who lavish praise on the glorious originality of Banks's 1778 relief, and the innovations at play in the work's composition and corporealities, in spite of their relationship to Ghiberti, can be seen to pronounce the political ontology of the work, its radicalism. Though it was produced a decade before the Revolution's break with the past, *Thetis and her nymphs rising from the sea to comfort Achilles for the loss of Patroclus* anticipates the contemporary classicism of Banks's *Monument to Captain Burges*, the naked male form created specifically for the 1798 commission. In a fleeting acknowledgement of form, Bryant observes that this relief signals the sculptor "moving away from the Antique towards a more original expression."⁵⁵ As we know, the modern artist's creation of new kinds of classical nakedness can pronounce the ideal's capacity to engage the contemporary.

In his *Address on the Death of Thomas Banks* Flaxman too pays homage to the singularity of this work, writing of the statue: "the sentiment and character is beautiful and pathetic, the composition is so unlike any work ancient or modern, that the combination may be considered as the artist's own."⁵⁶ It is to this work by Banks that we can credit the recurrence of floating groups of female forms in works by Flaxman, not just in other outline drawings, but also, the figures in relief on his 1800 *Monument to Agnes Cromwell* (Fig. 74).⁵⁷ This vertical tomb depicts the deceased teenage girl raised

⁵⁵ Bryant, 2005: 53.

⁵⁶ Flaxman, 1829: 292.

⁵⁷ Flaxman can also be said to have been influenced by Ghiberti, but his tenth lecture (on modern sculpture) agrees with a criticism, first expressed by Reynolds, that Ghiberti's panels go against the principles of Grecian composition because too much spatial precedence is afforded to the landscape as opposed to the human figure (*Ibid*: 310).

heavenward by two angels guided by a third from above. From just below the waist up the angel at the right is naked, while the one above her, arms raised like both Banks's marble Thetis and Flaxman's own preliminary sketch of Thetis, is draped in an antique empire-waist dress similar to the one worn by Agnes Cromwell. The classical garb of Flaxman's angels and their lack of wings suggests not a blurring of the Hellenic with Christian mysticism, but Christian mysticism given antique form. Guardian angels that carry the dead to "the world of the spirits" are at the core of Emmanuel Swedenborg's theology and Flaxman, along with Blake, had been a key participant in London's first Swedenborgian societies since the 1780s.⁵⁸ The principal angel leads her followers from earth to sky like Thetis commands the nereids from sea to land, or, in Flaxman's case, back down again. In keeping with his cleansing of Banks's legacy, Flaxman inserts compositional and formal qualities derived from his predecessor's charged mobilisation of the antique into a context dislocated, worlds away quite literally, from the elder sculptor's intentions.

Describing another relief by Banks, *Ceyx and Alycone*, exhibited at the Academy in 1775, Myrone reduces Banks's frontal presentation of Ceyx's naked form to pure aestheticism,

Another one of Flaxman's outlines clearly influenced by Banks's *Thetis Rising* is his "Morning", which is the frontispiece for Sotheby, 1834.

⁵⁸ See Dunér, 2013. Fuseli's nickname "Rev. John Flaxman" shows that the sculptor's theological proclivities inflected his presence within the Academy (Morris, 1915: 14). Emma Major notes that "Ludwig Schorn, pioneering art historian, recorded that during his visit with Flaxman, the sculptor told him, 'with a seriousness that seemed to come from inner emotion', that 'It was the purpose of my lectures to the Academy to show that art in Christianity can rise higher than in paganism, since Christian ideas are more sublime than pagan ones'" (2012: 61).

which is exactly how Flaxman was anxious for all of Banks's works to be received (Fig. 75):

What moral value there may be to draw from the subject subsists in the perfected physicality of the protagonists, conveyed in technically consummate carved marble. Such a work does not insist on being considered anything more than decoration, ultimately.⁵⁹

I am arguing that it is by giving “perfected physicality” a “moral value”, or rather, symbolical meaning, a meaning evocative of his personal identification within the era witnessing the French Revolution and its immediate aftermath, that Banks grounds his classicism as a mode of political expression. Chapter 1 suggests that for Banks, ideal beauty is never sculpted for its own sake, but is always deeply charged. As much as his relationship to the classical body was shaped by his interactions and friendship with Fuseli in Rome, the substance of Myrone's take on the sculptor, Banks's art reflects none of the apathy of that painter, as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis.⁶⁰ In addition to the naked Captain Burges in which the ideal is enlivened in the context of a public, post-1789 work of art, utopian bodies such those of Ceyx, Alcyone, Germanicus, Thetis and her nereids, each embody the interaction between Banks's views and his sculptural practice, something that biographers and scholars all seem to want to deny, just like Flaxman upon the elder sculptor's death, or render secondary to the content of these works.

⁵⁹ Myrone, 2005: 80.

⁶⁰ Barrell, 1995: 259.

If Flaxman derives his airborne clusters of ethereally ideal female forms from the “originality” of Banks’s *Thetis Rising*, then Howard’s *The Pleiades Disappearing* is another product of the continuity, on the one hand, between the two sculptors, and consequently, on the other, the ideological tensions between their approaches to classical nakedness. The group of Pleiades led by Dawn, described by one reviewer in a language that most certainly could be referencing an outline drawing by Flaxman, “sweet stars sinking into the sea”, sources its cluster formation from the nymphs led above ground by Thetis in Banks’s relief, and the works by Flaxman thereby influenced and refashioned.⁶¹ Like Flaxman, Howard prized Banks’s relief for its originality, the “singular felicity” in his own words, that in “any era of art”, would have been considered beautiful.

Intriguingly, Howard’s description of *Thetis Rising* in his fifth Academy lecture (on composition), posits Banks not as Flaxman’s friend or mentor, but as his “rival”, going on to praise *Thetis Rising*, “that highly poetical invention”, for its “exquisite harmony of lines and graceful motion in the females.”⁶²

As stated earlier in this chapter, *The Pleiades Disappearing* is one of several compositions by Howard centring on a group of female figures moving together in a harmonious swarm of grace. Late into his career and long after the deaths of Banks and Flaxman, the celestial quality of these groups appealed to reviewers not put off by

⁶¹ *New Monthly Magazine*, June 1825: 255. Howard fuses this element with the dynamism (and the colouring also) of the procession of nymphs in Guido Reni’s *Aurora*, a fresco Howard admired and continued to study throughout his career (c. 1614, Rospigliosi Palace, Rome, ceiling painting). Howard also admired Ghiberti’s *Gates of Paradise* but seems not to have made the connection between them and Banks’s *Thetis Rising*.

⁶² Howard, 1848: 215.

Howard's staunch commitment to allegory and idealism. In 1830 *La Belle Assemblée* praised the "charming spiritual buoyancy" of his *Morning*, adding that the "the figures absolutely float in air".⁶³ The last part of this description could easily be describing Banks's *Thetis Rising*, the drawings by Flaxman it inspired, Flaxman's *Monument to Agnes Cromwell* or any of Howard's compositions in the same vein. As the first of Howard's paintings to centre on such a group, the more expansive, liquid unison of the figures in *The Pleiades Disappearing*, the way the figures traverse the horizon linking the sea with the sky, belongs explicitly to a visual trajectory, a kind of micro-tradition, begun by Banks in his *Thetis Rising*, mutated by Flaxman and developed by Howard into a recurring motif of his own. Yet what separates Banks's work from the images by Flaxman and Howard is the fact that the stream of female figures in his *Thetis Rising* are directed toward two male bodies, the body of the dead war hero and his grief-struck friend whom the nymphs seek to comfort.⁶⁴ In Flaxman's and Howard's versions, a male form is conspicuously absent.

Much like the author writing in the Vernon catalogue, Howard's obituary in *The Gentleman's Magazine* states that the painter's type of classicism, his refusal to represent the everyday body, is the source of his inability to resonate with audiences.⁶⁵ The author

⁶³ *Belle Assemblée*, January to June, March 1830, 11: 131.

⁶⁴ Bryant hints that this relief is an anti-war work, a theme that would take on a new urgency in the 1790s, as Chapter 1 investigates. 2005: 53.

⁶⁵ Howard's aversion to portraiture, a different kind of manifestation of the everyday body, is mentioned in Turner's first biography: "he laboured under the great disadvantage of having ordinary models. I have heard him bitterly complain of this. He had to paint vulgar people with disgusting features" (Thornbury, 1862: 2: 77).

of the obituary makes this point through a comparison between Howard's paintings and the art of Banks and Flaxman:

He was never much of a favorite with the public; but from his critics he obtained at least his full share of admiration. In his best pictures the leading merit is, that he never offends you—he is classically cold. This is pretty—that part is clever—and here and there are certain graceful recollections of the antique; but you pass on unwarmed with what you see, and, consequently, soon ceasing to remember what you have seen. This is not the case with Flaxman, or even with Banks; who seldom fail to impart to what they borrow from the antique an inborn vigour of their own, which lifts them up from the servile herd of mere imitators. Mr. Howard was always on the brink of doing something great but...never got beyond the line which separates imitation from original excellence.⁶⁶

Like the author in *The Times* in 1822, the inoffensive qualities of Howard's ideal style are conceived of as an endpoint, a passive form of excellence. It is strange that the above author takes for granted the fact that Howard himself is not a sculptor. That his pictures are "classically cold" does not seem to be, first and foremost, a criticism of the artist's use of oils to portray antique forms, but rather a criticism of the lack of force with which these forms populate his canvasses. Compared to those of Flaxman and Banks, Howard's sculptural bodies lack "inborn vigour", suggesting something profound is missing in his treatment of the antique. As the political intent of Banks's idealism is drained from his seemingly most original non-monumental work of art, Flaxman's quasi-religious mysticism, still powerful in its reactionary resistance to the Revolutionary capacity of the antique, alters the terms of the same forms and perceived compositional innovations. Howard picks up these elements at a time when the authority of classical corporeality in art is fast subsiding, and thus creates works in which the "sweet influence" of his nets of

⁶⁶ *Gentleman's Magazine*, July to December 1847 inclusive, December 1847: 28: 649.

female forms is their only will to power. Viewed by his admirers as a safeguard of classicism, the ability of Howard's works to "charm" and "delight" those still interested in "pure painting" is contingent upon the increasing hostility toward allegory and the ideal in Britain. Howard's commitment to the ideal is rendered "servile" at his death: it is useless with no purpose, authority or even identity of its own.

Recalling Duppa's opinion that Banks's *Thetis Rising* is the sculptural equivalent of "the Comus of Milton", it is necessary at this stage to return to the subject of *The Pleiades Rising*, and indeed many other paintings by the artist. Although one of the very few places where the artist's contributions are acknowledged in twentieth century scholarship is Marcia Pointon's *Milton & English Art*, the relationship between English poetic classicism and the fortunes of ideal corporeality in British historical painting remains to be explored.⁶⁷ Fuseli was the first to afford Milton's poetry a sculptural visual language. His Milton Gallery opened to the public in May 1799 with well-documented commercial and theatrical orientations.⁶⁸ But in Howard's case, as much as the question of wanting to appeal to British consumers for financial reasons most likely did play some part in his career-long production of Miltonic works, I would argue that his various scenes from Milton, and Spenser also, form part of an attempt to forge a connection between classical nakedness and British national identity at a time in which such a connection was proving increasingly tenuous. By casting the ideal naked form as a manifestation of British cultural heritage at the precisely this point in time, Howard attempts to make that form

⁶⁷ Pointon, 1970: 199-200, 219.

⁶⁸ See Calé, 2006.

familiar, domesticated, less alien.⁶⁹ When aligned with earlier canonical documents of English literature, classical nakedness in visual art could seem like less of a foreign import.

Howard's 1821 *The House of Morpheus* places classical nakedness at the centre of a scene from Spenser's *Fairie Queene* (Fig. 76). Unlike oil paintings by Stothard and Westall that depict the more pleasurable passages from this work of British poetry, such as the section in "Canto VI" when Spenser describes Diana bathing, *The House of Morpheus* depicts a single male body, Morpheus, draped at the waist with his naked right leg and bare chest facing the viewer. Tethys, Cynthia and an allegorical personification of Night surround him, gazing at his form as he reclines on the bed in his dwelling "Amid the bowels of the earth".⁷⁰ What is most fascinating about this work is that Howard has sourced the pose of Morpheus not from a work of ancient sculpture, nor from a work by a modern sculptor, but from a painting by another artist famous for sculptural forms rendered in oils: Girodet's 1791 masterpiece *The Sleep of Endymion* (Fig. 77).

At the very end of his father's biography that he wrote for the introduction of his published Academy lectures, the artist's son Frank Howard feels the need to explain his father's commitment to the antique, and does so chiefly with reference to the influence of French art and ideology on his father's style. Frank Howard blames his father's French tutor, said to have bestowed upon the artist "his first ideas about drawing" as well as "his

⁶⁹ A comparison can be drawn between Etty's contemporaneous uses of Miltonic subject material conversely to elevate his departure from the antique, for example, his *World Before the Flood*, 1828, Southampton City Art Gallery, Southampton, oil on canvas.

⁷⁰ Spenser, 1955: 9.

frequent visits to the French capital during the classic furore which raged in the earlier stages of the Revolution”.⁷¹ Although there is no concrete evidence to suggest that Howard saw *The Sleep of Endymion* in Paris, he was staying in Rome in 1792 when Girodet was preparing the completed work to be sent to the Salon of 1793. Compared to his time in France and other parts of Italy, there is very little information on Howard’s time in Rome, and he may well have glimpsed the painting at this stage in his youth. It is more likely that Howard came across the work via Flaxman, who in 1814 was sent an engraving of the painting directly from the artist.⁷² In 1820 the work was engraved by Swiss printmaker François Forster, and it is also possible that if Howard did not already have access to the version owned by Flaxman he obtained a copy of this engraving. For Frank Howard, his father’s “statuine predilections” could be traced back to Revolutionary French influence, and although this is not the entire story, *The House of Morpheus* provides concrete visual evidence for this aspect of his style.⁷³ The collision between the classicism of Spenser and the classicism of Girodet makes *The House of Morpheus* a far more complex and significant work of art than given credit for when exhibited at the Academy in 1821. In response to the painting one reviewer stated plainly, “We confess, we are not partial to allegorical painting... This is a pretty picture, but to use a common and very expressive term among artists, it does not read”.⁷⁴ The Spenserian subject matter seems to have insulated the work of art from its French connections. The work was

⁷¹ Howard, 1848: lxxx.

⁷² Morris, 2005: 18.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review*, 1821 inclusive, May: 334.

viewed simply as an illustration in oil, proof that Howard was continuing “to woo the muse of Spenser, and to devote his pencil to nymphs, and other ideal personages.”⁷⁵

A paragraph on Howard in *The Cabinet of Modern Art, and Literary Souvenir* for 1837 reveals how, at the height of his career as Professor of Painting, the classicism of his paintings could find more meaning in Milton:

Milton and Howard are kindred spirits, in more respects than one; and conspicuously so in that taste (the result of the scholar’s communings with the poet) which would have led the one and the other to engraft the lofty and spiritual fictions of the classical mythology upon the wild, sweet superstitions of our own, and to beautify the streams and hills and glades of green England with the poetry of graceful and immortal thought. Anglo-Greeks are they both. . . We have learnt to have a sort of religious faith in all that (Milton) has told us,—and we are very glad to have Mr. Howard with us, in our belief. . . The echoes of song can never be silent in the land where Shakspeare (sic) sang. There is no chance of extinguishing the poetic spirit in a country more rich in an imaginative literature than any other under the sun, save ancient Greece, alone. We cannot part with our mythology.⁷⁶

The term “Anglo-Greeks” sets both Milton and Howard apart from the wider historiography of classical reception in British poetry and painting, hinting at the deeper, “spiritual” relationship with the Hellenic that they both seem to share. As Howard’s taste is elevated by its affinities with Milton’s own refashioning of ancient texts, “the lofty and spiritual fictions of the classical mythology” are placed on an equal level with the “wild, sweet superstitions” native to Britain.

⁷⁵ *Magazine of the Fine Arts*, May, 1821: 1: 102.

⁷⁶ Watts, 1837: 210.

It is important to emphasise that Milton's classicism stands out from the classical elements and allusions in works by other canonical British poets such as Spenser. Praz posits Milton as the counterpart to Poussin in their mid seventeenth century investments in the (at this point still aesthetically) archaeological, marmoreal approach to antiquity that was to become, around a century after their deaths, the dominant form of classical engagement in Europe. From Praz's twentieth century perspective, as stated in the introduction, Milton and Poussin are the first true "neo-classicists".⁷⁷ Praz argues that Milton consistently "goes into raptures over the antique to the point of turning into marble, especially in his language and syntax; in this he finds no equal in the literature of his day, but only in art: in Poussin."⁷⁸ It was Milton, after all, who in his *Il Penseroso* first used the phrase "forget thyself to marble", causing "forget (oneself) to marble" to become a common literary-critical turn of phrase from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. Similarities between Milton and Poussin were also observed by Hazlitt in 1821 essay "On a Landscape by Nicolas Poussin".⁷⁹ Painterly parallels between Howard and Poussin can also be drawn, especially toward the end of Howard's career when his works start to betray a move away from the colourist tradition of the Italian masters (the interplay between deep colouring and sculptural corporeality being the source of the aforementioned resemblance between his early paintings and works by West) yet retain their strong emphasis on the precise description of forms. In his second Academy lecture (on design) Howard gets the chance verbally to articulate his approach to the human body in representation, presenting his commitment to the antique as part of a rigorous system

⁷⁷ Praz, 1969: 24.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Hazlitt, 1844: 190-202.

in which common nature must always be made more beautiful, and sculptural precepts always prioritised over the living model. For Howard, Poussin is one of the painters whose work makes manifest this kind of discipline:

As often as we observe in Nature beauty and grandeur of form, I am persuaded that we shall invariably find them in unison with the system of the Greeks; which the student, therefore, like Poussin, should labour thoroughly to acquire, that he may know how to study from casual models, without being misled.⁸⁰

Howard's investment in Milton's intensive (but British) classicism can be aligned with his exemplification of Poussin's process. The poet contemporaneous with the French painter becomes the medium for the domestication of the classical body in British Academic art, while the French painter is summoned on behalf of its pedagogy.

Howard's allegiance to the institution of the Academy, his position as Secretary and then Professor of Painting, allowed him to continue to base his practice on the antique against the grain of Britain's changing cultural climate, and his fusion of Milton's verse with a recurring composition sourced originally from Banks and filtered through Flaxman indicates the painter's efforts to preserve visual classicism, something that is undone by the continental, particularly French, implications of painting sculptural forms that, even when undetected, distanced his style from the culture in which his works were received.

⁸⁰ Howard, 1848: lxxx.

The summer of 1822, Westmacott's colossal bronze Duke of Wellington as a naked Achilles, known as the *Wellington Monument*, was installed on Hyde Park Corner (Fig. 78). The statue's full-frontal wide-legged stance and oval shield raised skywards were sourced from a warrior in the ancient group in Rome's Piazza Quirinale, the same work from which David derived the pose of his Tatius in *The Intervention of the Sabine Women*, the painting that had inspired West back in 1802.⁸¹ Boasting itself as "the largest figure which has been cast for the last sixteen centuries", the figure stands at eighteen feet high, thirty-six feet in total including its pedestal.⁸²

One of the factors that allowed a gigantic naked statue to be approved by the still active "Committee of Taste" and placed in such a conspicuous quarter of London, was that this particular sculptor's appropriation of the antique had long been continuous with the British state's self-imaging in the face of the wars. Monumental groups by Westmacott involve a type of classical nakedness that could easily be co-opted in the name of nationalism, an antique that implies Roman imperial grandeur specifically rather than the timeless universal connotations of the same ideal form. But with this bronze Achilles that from its erection forced the classical body on an indiscriminate urban public, Westmacott ended up producing a highly polemical work, the reception of which captures dramatically the shifting currency of classical nakedness in Britain during the post-war years. The public outcry against the monument was widespread, taking the shape not just of disapproval, but actual hostility. This was compounded by the fact that the citation on the statue's red granite plinth states that the monument is dedicated to the Duke and his

⁸¹ This statue is thought to be of the mythological figures Castor and Pollux.

⁸² *Morning Post*, July 13th, 1822: 31.

army “by their country women”. Although some commentators were able to discern that these “country women” most likely had little or nothing to do with the appearance of the statue, for many the notion that Wellington’s nakedness originated from female influence added to the scandal. *The English Chronicle* wrote:

The Lady Patronesses of this Statue have thus tried to cheat us into a good opinion of it, by the semblance of classical taste, and of patriotic spirit, but the people of England cannot be so deceived. They cannot, by such an artifice, be made to fall down and worship the brazen image which the Ladies of England have set up: in a gigantic naked Statue, they will see nothing that reflects honour on a military Commander, nothing that tells of the glory of his followers, but they will find in it, that which will bring a rude stare into the gaze of the forward, and a blush into the cheek of the modest.—This is the first attempt... which has been made to obtrude a naked Statue upon the People of England in their public walks.⁸³

The Worcester Journal reported that since “the exposure of this unmeaning memorial, the promenade near it has been deserted.”⁸⁴ The word “unmeaning” is particularly indicative of the discord between the idea of the classical body and both British national identity and public space at this point in time, calling to mind the enduring consensus on Banks’s *Monument to Captain Burges* discussed in Chapter 1. The *Wellington Monument* became known as “that unhappy bronze”, a work “in defiance of public taste, and public decency, (that) disgraces Hyde Park”.⁸⁵ In his guide to London published two years after the monument’s erection, John Britton condemns the sculpture in particularly clipped chauvinistic terms:

⁸³ *Worcester Journal*, August 1st, 1822.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Quarterly Review*. June to October, August 1825, 32: 347.

The appropriation of such a statue to an English Military Hero of the present age is extremely absurd, and will be a lasting reproach to the persons who chose it; for it has no analogy to England, to Wellington, to the army, to the arts, or customs of our times.⁸⁶

There are countless other examples of the almost aggressive reaction against this naked Achilles-Wellington. Classical nakedness was, from this point on, officially alien to the monumental landscape of the capital.

Gibson, though living in Rome at the time of the statue's installation, would have been aware of the negative reception of Westmacott's statue. In his memoirs, the sculptor reflects on the culture surrounding the production of monuments in Britain, proposing that it is the dictatorship of connoisseurs that inhibits British sculpture from fulfilling its potential:

I have come to the conviction that one great evil as regards the art in England arises from the class of committee to which the decision in such matters is entrusted. These committees are composed of miscellaneous individuals, united only in the common qualification of having no knowledge of or connexion with the art beyond that which most educated individuals possess. In the course of my life, however, I have never known anyone who has not been professionally engaged in the study of art capable of judging the grandeur of style, of composition, or harmony of lines, and of the intricacies of drapery. Yet the judges appointed to decide upon the models submitted for the Wellington monument had, on that important occasion, not a single sculptor among them.⁸⁷

Gibson's suggestion that the problem with British sculpture is exclusion of artists from the vetting and selecting of designs and models for monuments, as well as the process of

⁸⁶ Britton, 1826: 195.

⁸⁷ Eastlake, 1870: 203.

overseeing the execution of such works, condemns as inordinate the authority long afforded to the “Committee of Taste”. This panel was organised in 1802 following the completion of the first round of St. Paul’s groups to limit the creative agency of sculptors during the wartime, a phase in which allegiances could instantly be blurred, divided and, more dangerously, concealed from view. Gibson’s critique of the committee is essentially an expression of aversion toward the political climate in which such a system was implemented. The opposition he sets up between the connoisseur and the sculptor locates the significance of the sculptural monument entirely in its appearance rather than its honorific significance. That the *Wellington Monument* is recalled as an “important occasion” testifies to the magnitude of the episode that was this particular statue’s installation, which in Gibson’s eyes stood as the product of an “evil” indifference to the artist’s insight. The sculptor’s friend and biographer Elizabeth Eastlake reflects on Gibson’s keeping “aloof from politics and intrigues; ever communing with what he felt to be True and Beautiful, and serving Art for her own sake only.”⁸⁸ This aestheticism is also an indifference to and moreover a denial of recent historical memory.

Noting “the great outcry that was raised against the undraped figure of Achilles”, the French historian Amédée Pichot also mentions Westmacott’s statue in his 1825 *Historical and Literary Tour of a Foreigner in England and Scotland*.⁸⁹ His suggestion that Westmacott “ought perhaps to devote himself wholly to the representation of nymphs” identifies the precise inverse of Westmacott’s large-scale heroic body: the erotic incarnated by delicately beautiful feminine figures, classical forms with a history

⁸⁸ *Ibid*: 10.

⁸⁹ Pichot, 1825: 28

detached from Revolution, war, and military commemoration, and essentially outside the sphere of politics coextensive with the war monument. At precisely the same time Westmacott's colossal bronze met its outraged critics, this alternative approach to the antique was coming to define British sculptural practice in Rome. As previously stated, Gibson had been living there since 1817 and Wyatt joined him in 1821; from the death of Canova in 1822 to the height of their own successes in the 1840s, the reputations of these two British sculptors increasingly stood for the softer, sweeter, amorous side of classical nakedness pioneered by their Italian master but concentrated in their works. Though it embodies the antithesis of Westmacott's statue, this approach to statuary could only flourish at a geographical distance from the reaction against the ideal body so vividly illustrated by the reception of this monument.

Throughout the nineteenth century and in more recent scholarship, the life-like busts and funerary monuments by Francis Chantrey have been held as sculptural anathema to the classical allegorical works by these Anglo-Roman sculptors.⁹⁰ Yet the antipathy between the art of Gibson and Wyatt and the type of war monument that came into being in the 1790s reveals the dynamic, polysemic nature of the classical body, as well as bringing to light the way in which the erotic readily comes to take the place of meaning. The

⁹⁰ In his 1830 essay "English Civilization", the scholar remembered chiefly as Goethe's last American visitor at Weimar, Jesse Burton Harrison, makes a comparison between Chantrey and Gibson and Wyatt. Because are the latter artists are "among the most distinguished of the living sculptors" they somehow defy the uniquely British incompatibility with ideal forms; Chantrey however, is emblematic of this trait: "what is sculpture to-day in England, but the carving of busts and profiles? What the shelves of Chantrey's study display but mere likenesses of contemporaries, almost exclusively busts? Few candid Englishmen, perhaps none but Chantrey himself, would contradict us if we asserted that he dare not attempt a group, much less an ideal group, because he knows his incompetency" (1970: 70).

sweetness, the delicacy and the amorous nature of works produced by Gibson and Wyatt, in Gibson's case particularly during the earlier stages of his time in Rome, are cultivated by their opposite: the monumental heroism on which the British school of sculpture had been based since its incorporation into the Academy during the wartime.

Under the close guidance of Canova, Gibson began his first original life-size work, *The Sleeping Shepherd Boy* in 1818 (Fig. 79). Though the sculptor stated to his mentor William Roscoe that the composition was entirely his "own design" informed by his "studying from nature" (the everyday body), this statue possesses the same ephêbic bodily proportions and accessories (crook, sheepskin) as Thorvaldsen's *Shepherd Boy with Dog* (Fig. 80).⁹¹ As with Canova's 1819 *Sleeping Endymion*, there is an air of voyeurism about *The Sleeping Shepherd Boy* that conditions the way in which the boy's bodily beauty is offered to the spectator (Fig. 81). We are free to inspect and admire the figure undetected, without fear of him waking up or looking back. In Gibson's statue, this voyeuristic air is intensified by the immaturity of the shepherd's form influenced by Thorvaldsen's work, and also the fact that, rather than reclining in full and thus authorising the viewer's gaze, he sits upright, head drooping down toward his chest as if he has dropped off unknowingly. In the figures by Canova and Thorvaldsen, the character of the sculpture is defined either by the figure's sleep or youthful naked form. To fold one quality into the other pronounces both, and Gibson's shepherd appears vulnerable, the smoothness of his limp adolescent body pronounced by the intricately rough texture of the sheepskin.

⁹¹ Roscoe, 1833: 145.

Beneath the boy's right arm protrudes the single breast of a breastplate, hard yet curved like a human breast, and contoured with a nipple. The inclusion of this piece of armour hints at the phantom presence of the hero, or soldier, but in its rounded form the breastplate simultaneously suggests the female body. Unusual in a shepherd, this breastplate does not provide Gibson's work with a narrative, but rather makes the figure ambiguous. In combination with the armour, the stillness and youth of Gibson's shepherd combine to make this a distinctly anti-heroic work, not in the sense that the shepherd is himself a kind of anti-hero, but in the sense that the sculpture as a whole challenges classical body in its capacity to perform heroic acts, to be an agent of physical power and manly strength. Even with his delicate, immature proportions, Thorvalsen's shepherd has a boldness to his stare that is lent authority by the alert animal at his side. Hitherto excluded from descriptions of the statue, scholarly and otherwise, is the observation that the crook that protrudes from between the shepherd's legs has an undeniable phallic quality. This stiff, penile object does not serve to render the sleeping boy more masculine, but rather introduces a potent erotic element to the work that undermines the social order that holds in place the very idea of such rigid constructions of gender, the constructions responsible for the entire culture surrounding the war monument.

Alone, unprotected, unaware yet sexually invigorated, Gibson's shepherd is the first of many such forms by the sculptor. Lord George Cavendish purchased *The Sleeping Shepherd Boy* and showed it to another patron back in Britain, Lord Charles Anderson-Pelham, who then requested from Gibson a female figure in a similar vein. At the time

Gibson was working on his *Nymph Unfastening her Sandal*, which he proposed to send to the patron (Fig. 82). Exhibited at the Academy in 1830, this is another work in which classical nakedness is suspended in an instant, making the display of the body unprecedentedly intimate. Described by the artist himself as “slender and very youthful”, the figure is not asleep this time but gazing out toward her left while engaged in an act so mundane that it draws attention to the narrowness of her waist and bare breasts. This nymph is an archetype of the everyday body that rejects the human form as a site of meaning.

Inspired by some lines in Tasso’s play *Aminta*, Gibson’s *Love Disguised as a Shepherd*, begun after the *Nymph Unfastening her Sandal* was completed, goes a step further (Fig. 83). This time, the small and seemingly vulnerable figure does possess some agency, but it is of a playful and above all, erotic kind, undoing, again, the capacity of the classical body to perform heroic acts or command any kind of authority beyond the domain of desire and the emotions. Gibson’s own rhapsodic words on *Love Disguised as a Shepherd* elucidate the limitations of Cupid’s command: “The potent God, while slyly concealing behind him the back the arrow of soft tribulations advances his right hand as if to inspire confidence, and assumes an air of modesty and timidity.”⁹² Love’s “softness” conditions his “potency”, just as his “modesty and timidity” is a foil for the “confidence” he seeks to inspire.

⁹² Eastlake, 1870: 75.

When editing Gibson's memoirs for insertion amid her biographical recollections, Eastlake chose to omit a section in which the sculptor describes the god of love visiting him in the night following completion of this statue.⁹³ Gibson's encounter with Cupid takes the form of a dialogue between the artist his subject initiated by Gibson's desire for the god's approval of his latest realisation in marble. The sculptor asks,

“Oh Eros, canst thou disguise thy celestial countenance, or conceal thy ambrosial locks which wave luxuriantly round thy feminine shoulders? Thy little hands are too delicate for a shepherd, and so are those lovely limbs—will not thy god-like steps betray thee? Tell me, God of Beauty and Love, is this image, this humble mortal effort, in some degree tolerable in thy sight?”⁹⁴

After urging the sculptor to enliven the work with colour so as to afford him a “celestial glow, warm, pale and pure” (polychromy being a technique that the sculptor would soon be credited with (re-)introducing to sculptural practice), the Cupid of Gibson's dreams is eager to return to the gender-ambiguity of his body, stating to Gibson that

“No sculptor should presume to represent me without being aware of the peculiarity of my nature and form, which is androgynous, the passion of love which my power inspires being equally divided between the two sexes.”⁹⁵

⁹³ In omitting Gibson's description of the night visit, Eastlake interjects in his memoir: “Gibson was fully persuaded that the little God appeared bodily to him on this occasion, and has left a description of the interview, which draws too much upon the marvellous for insertion here” (*Ibid*: 76).

⁹⁴ Matthews, 1911: 76.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*: 77.

Cupid's night-visit to Gibson reads as an approximation of the *jouissance* that cannot be represented. For the purposes of this thesis, the narration of this fantasy is significant in terms of the primacy it places on the feminised corporeality of the sculpted object. That sexual desire takes an androgynous form again exposes the cavern between the erotic and the social order that dictates the production of meaningful, politicised, and moreover gendered classical bodies. Before he lets him depart to play in the gardens of Zeus with Ganymede, the sculptor has one final question for his subject: "Is it permitted, oh Divine Eros, to know why your Brothers keep their golden locks like virgins and their beautiful ankles adorned with gold rings?", to which the god replies, "They are...like myself, androgynous."⁹⁶

Completed in 1839, *Love Tormenting the Soul* was the tinted product of Gibson's narrated fantasy. This work, *Love Disguised as a Shepherd*, *The Sleeping Shepherd Boy*, the *Nymph Unfastening her Sandal*, his 1829 *Narcissus* and various depictions of Psyche, are all, in essence manifestations of the "nymph", the alternative classical form identified by Pichot as the exact opposite to Westmacott's colossal monument: ethereal, beautiful, feminine ideal beings who, when they do lead the way in mythological narratives, their agency is always confined to some kind of desire. Gibson's 1837 group *Hylas Surprised by the Naiades* dramatises this idea (Fig. 84). Here, the nymphs that flank the young boy are enacting an active role. Yet their power is reduced by the fact that it exists only in terms of sexuality, in the pursuit of pleasures offered by a beautiful body. This group's reversal of traditional gender roles harks back to Cupid's request that his androgyny be

⁹⁶ *Ibid*: 78.

preserved in marble, while the life-size stature of the nymphs throws into relief Hylas's vulnerability, the same as that conveyed in the sculptor's *Sleeping Sheperd Boy*.⁹⁷

The intimacy, vulnerability, voyeurism and eroticism that characterises Gibson's feminine figures, both male and female, we see too in the marble nymphs executed by his friend Wyatt, which are often portrayed in various stages of bathing. Indeed, Wyatt executed at least five versions of his *A Nymph at the Bath*, and at least seven of his *Girl Bathing* (Figs. 85, 86). His statues were consistently praised for the velvety finishing technique Wyatt was said to have learned during his stay in Paris working with the French sculptor François-Joseph Bosio in 1820 on the way to Rome.⁹⁸ *A Nymph at the Bath* offers a form with none of the narrowness and adolescence of Gibson's *Nymph Unfastening her Sandal*. Her ideal beauty is of the broad and womanly type, yet her total disengagement from the viewer, her downward gaze and sloping shoulders, make this a soft and intimate conception of classical nakedness that, like Gibson's early statues, can be said to exemplify the tradition that develops in resistance to the war monument. Wyatt's *Girl Bathing* is a smaller figure. Her pose, as if she is dipping her toe into water with her arm raised in anticipation, conjures the same self-contained intimacy that we see in Gibson's early works. As such, this anonymous bathing girl is a prime specimen of the coded representation of erotic desire.

⁹⁷ For an alternative reading of Gibson's encounter with Cupid see Arscott, 2000: 122.

⁹⁸ For example, the official *Illustrated Catalogue of the Paris International Exhibition: 1862* describes Wyatt's works as "exquisitely soft in execution" (1862: 323).

Banks's nymphs that ascend from the sea rise only to ameliorate the pain of the male protagonists, Achilles and Patroclus. The nymphs and nymph-like forms by Gibson, Wyatt and Howard too are always isolated, worlds apart from actively masculine influence. Nymphs are not Venuses, they are at most, on a literal level, her handmaidens, but in more general terms, like Gibson's shepherd and his Loves, they do not possess her physical power, a physical power that Barry and Dayes had, decades previously, strained to conflate with the goddess's ideal proportions. Gibson's most famous work, the tinted *Venus Verticordia*, tells a different story, one unrelated to the argument of this thesis as well as outside its chronology.⁹⁹ Perhaps this figure signifies the beginning of classical corporeality's next stage in European sculpture, in which the erotic that supplants the political extends to actual animation of the figure, connected, perhaps to the rich colouring of Etty's voluptuous female forms. The works I have discussed in this chapter all bear a continuity with the war monument because they issue from a time at which each of meanings contained within the polysemic image have become excrescent.

In his 1826 essay "On the English Students at Rome", Hazlitt attacks the community of British artists studying in the restored Italian city. Although no figures are named directly, both Gibson and Wyatt had been based there for several years by this time, and as prominent members of the Anglo-Roman artistic circle are most certainly implicated in the critique. For Hazlitt, the problem with Rome as a site of learning originates in its dual

⁹⁹ John Gibson, *Venus Verticordia*, c. 1851-60, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, marble.

status as “the very tomb of ancient greatness” and “the grave of modern presumption.”¹⁰⁰ Rome’s layered surfeit of ruins, relics and master works produces a warped temporality, a space that automatically negates exertion, ambition and, most significantly, progress. “After viewing some splendid relic of antiquity”, writes the author with mild contempt, “the efforts of contemporary Art sink into insignificance and nothingness”.¹⁰¹ These words point to the fact that in terms of the visual arts, the classical tradition has lost all urgency beyond the sensory (anticipating Victorian aestheticism) and all value beyond the objective. Rome becomes a synecdoche for the antique, while the English student in Rome, content “to occupy the vacant space” of inevitable inferiority, becomes a synecdoche for all present day attempts at recreating its perfection.

With the radical implications of the polysemic image and its propagandistic function relegated to historical memory, Rome, that is, the antique, can now be conceived of as a vacuum, or rather inert, a site of beautiful stagnation. Over the course of two decades, the majority of which were shaped by wars in which this image was, to varying degrees and in separate ways, claimed to advance the agenda of both sides, the futurity once attached to the classical body has been replaced by retrogression, the mythic present ceded to the dead past. Considering Hazlitt’s description of post-Napoleonic Rome in relation to Banks’s *Monument to Captain Burges* or West’s *Cupid and Psyche/The Harmony of Affection* demonstrates the extent to which the contemporary can no longer be articulated through the visual language of ancient sculptural form. Between these two bodies: the symbolically charged naked ideal and the instantaneous everyday ideal that refuses to be

¹⁰⁰ Hazlitt, 1844: 216.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*: 205.

the carrier of meaning, both Haydon's historicising theory of art and anatomy and the fashionable works by Stothard and Westall witness and facilitate this teleology.

The loss of political ideals implicated in the fate of the antique ensures that the paintings and sculptures examined in this concluding chapter involve a degree of melancholy absent in previous depictions of naked ideal forms. Freud's paradigmatic conception of melancholia defines it in relation to mourning, its more familiar counterpart; while both conditions are a "reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal and so on", mourning is not pathological, in that the patient in mourning is aware of their condition, and it is usually short-lived.¹⁰² Melancholia is characterised by an inability to mourn, that is, actively to acknowledge the loss with which one is afflicted.¹⁰³ It is stimulated by an "object-loss which is withdrawn from consciousness". This thesis has observed the way in which the loss of Revolutionary ideals and the loss of life bound up with the wars informed the classical body's unmeaning, and argued that the backlash against the antique in post-war British cultural discourse was a by-product of this socio-political development. Rather than holding onto the significance of classical nakedness as it related to this departed era, works by Howard, Gibson and Wyatt can be said to be melancholic simply in their shared inability to relinquish the idealised human form after both its symbolic resonances and public appeal have disintegrated. In the case of Gibson and Wyatt, a classical iconography of sexual desire emerges as the substance of their sculpture's melancholia: snoozing shepherd with penile crook, small deviant cupids who

¹⁰² Freud, 1953-74: 243

¹⁰³ *Ibid*: 246.

assert their own androgyny, bathing nymphs, and other eroticised forms embody a denial of the lost significance of classical nakedness, and indeed the association of this loss of meaning with other losses: ideological possibilities, human life. Indeed there is an undeniable aura of sadness about their works, an unintentional sadness that can be defined as melancholia by way of its realisation in consummately executed marble objects—loss re-incarnated into the contradiction of such loss. As an artist less phobic of the interaction between art and meaning, Howard’s insistence on classical idealisation as the only true method of depicting the human form at a time when this interaction no longer involves the classical body can be diagnosed as a less acute but still viable manifestation of the condition. Thorvaldsen, whose late works (almost always of amorous or erotically charged subject matter) also manifest the same sadness we see in works by Gibson and Wyatt, is said to have proclaimed “clay to be the life of art, plaster its death, and marble its resurrection”.¹⁰⁴ If it is true that he made this statement, perhaps it hints that the Danish sculptor’s relationship to the classical body was of a different, more self-aware nature than his British pupils, one of prolonged mourning rather than melancholic repudiation of the marble ideal’s previous lives.

The melancholia of Howard’s, Gibson’s and Wyatt’s art subsists in a state of self-imposed exile. These artists themselves are not in exile nor are they melancholic, yet their style becomes melancholy in its exile from Britain (in Howard’s case within Britain), dictated by the emergent incompatibility between the antique and British national identity. That Howard was accused by his own son of manifesting in his chosen ideal

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in Robinson, 1979: 164.

style an “antinational prejudice”, Gibson labelled an “alien competitor” following the Academy exhibition of 1828, and Chantrey campaigned not to let Wyatt receive the honour of Royal Academician because (like Gibson) he had chosen to live and work from Rome, reveal the tensions between classical nakedness in contemporary art and the very idea of Britishness post-Waterloo, something especially apparent after 1820, as the reception of Westmacott’s *Wellington Monument* helps illuminate.¹⁰⁵ We see this also in an 1826 review of John S. Memes’s *Memoirs of Antonio Canova*, in which the author, reflecting on the (now historicised) British school of sculpture, notes the infrequency with which Banks, ever “aspiring after (the) simplicity and loftiness” of the antique, did stoop and “condescend to court British nature”.¹⁰⁶ Such an accusation touches on both the universality of Banks’s sculptural practice (grounded in Revolutionary ideologies), and the antipathy between “British nature” and the antique during the 1820s and beyond. One of the main elements of Hazlitt’s indictment of Rome’s temporality is its effect on British national identity: “Everything is strange and new; we seem beginning life over again, and feel like children or rustics.”¹⁰⁷ For Hazlitt, this is an un-civilised perversion, yet it simultaneously suggests that the allure of Rome, this static location, resides in the initiation of a new future that is not political, and moreover a rejection of recent history.

Said’s reciprocal model of nationalism and exile cited at the beginning of this chapter provides a basic template for comprehending the status of these artists’ works from 1820 to 1840. If part of nationalism’s fervour derives from the necessity of protecting itself

¹⁰⁵ Howard, 1848: lxxxxi; Matthews. 1911: 69.

¹⁰⁶ *Quarterly Review*, June and September, 1826: 34: 126.

¹⁰⁷ Hazlitt, 1844: 221.

against the “ravages” of exile, what happens when the nationalism cultivated by decades of war finds itself without this driving force? Colley’s investigation into the birth of British nationalism through to its post-Waterloo condition indicates that instead of intensifying as a result of the victory against France, the terms of such sentiment were altered by the abrupt cessation of international conflict. Because of the fact that “war—recurrent, protracted and increasingly demanding war—had been the making of Great Britain”, British nationalism was forced to turn in on itself, and in the process gave way to a “high level of post-war malaise and contention”.¹⁰⁸ War leaves behind it a void that cannot be filled, and the indictments of the un-British nature of the antique during the post-war decades, like contemporary representations of classical nakedness after Waterloo, are marked by melancholia. Obviously, people in Britain were not self-conscious in their “post-war malaise”. The exile of classical nakedness is a sweeter type of exile—the exiled style goes willingly into its banished condition, where it exists peacefully in melancholic atemporality.

¹⁰⁸ Colley, 1992: 322.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- | | |
|---|---|
| <i>The Farington Diary</i> | Garlick, Kenneth and Angus Macintyre (ed.). <i>The Diary of Joseph Farington</i> , 6 vols, (New Haven and London, 1978-79). |
| Benjamin West collection: box 1, folder 2 | Benjamin West collection, 1771-circa 1879, Washington DC, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Box 1, folder 2: Letters from Benjamin West. |
| <i>Select Committee Report: Elgin Marbles</i> | <i>Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Earl of Elgin's Collection of Sculptured Marbles.</i> (London, 1816). |

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- Royal Academy Critiques, London, Royal Academy, 1821, 1837.
- Royal Academy Archives, London, Royal Academy, LAW/4/6.
- Vers lu au diner donné par l'administration du Musée central des arts de la 7 vendémiaire an XI a Monsieur West, directeur de l'Académie royale de Londres par Joseph Lavallée.* Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale. Cab. Est. Yd. 2609/8 o.

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Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine

Art Journal

Art-Union

Belle Assemblee or, Court and Fashionable Magazine

Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine

Bury and Norwich Post

Champion

Dublin University Magazine

Edinburgh Annual Register

Edinburgh Medical Journal

Edinburgh Review: Or Critical Journal

European Magazine and London Review

Examiner

Gentleman's Magazine

Gentleman's Magazine (U.S edition)

Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review

Literary Souvenir, and Cabinet of Modern Art

Literary souvenir; or, Cabinet of poetry and romance

London Literary Gazette and Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts, Sciences, Etc,

London Magazine

Morning Herald

Morning Post

New British Lady's Magazine, and Monthly Register

Monthly Magazine

New Monthly Magazine

Monthly Magazine and British Register

Magazine of the Fine Arts

Quarterly Review

Recreative Review, or, Eccentricities of Literature and life

Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufactures, Fashions and Politics

Times

Tradesman

United Service Journal

Worcester Journal

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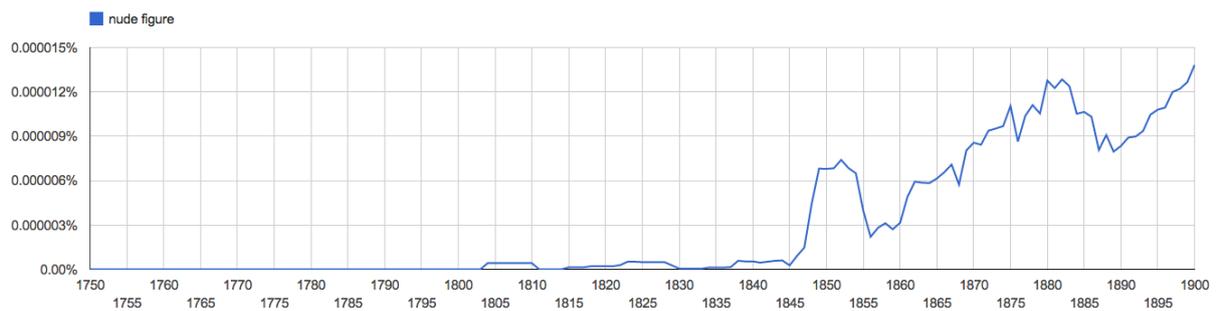
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ILLUSTRATIONS



1. Google Ngram graphs comparing usage of the phrases “naked figure” and “nude figure” from 1750 to 1900.



2. Thomas Banks, *Monument to Captain Richard Rundle Burges*, 1798-1802, St. Paul's Cathedral, London, marble.



3. John Condé after Thomas Banks, *Monument to Sir Eyre Coote*, 1790, British Museum, London, stipple engraving.



4. Joseph Wilton, *Monument to General Wolfe*, 1772, Westminster Abbey, London, marble.



5. John Bacon the elder, *Monument to Major General Thomas Dundas*, 1798-1805, St. Paul's Cathedral, London, marble.



6. Charles Felix Rossi, *Monument to Captain Robert Faulknor*, 1798-1803, St. Paul's Cathedral, London, marble.



7. Thomas Banks, *Monument to George Blagdon Westcott*, 1803-1805, St. Paul's Cathedral, London, marble.



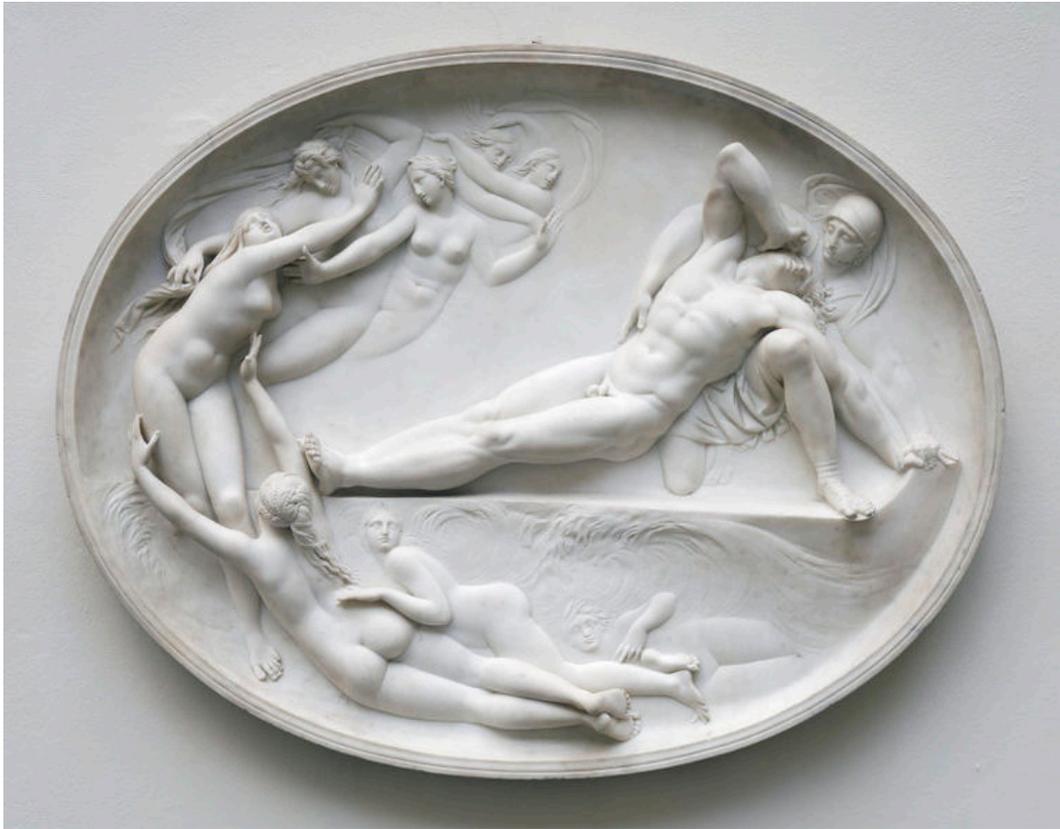
8. Anon. after Raphael, *The Dead Christ Being Carried to the Tomb*, 1483-1520, British Museum, London, pencil on paper, 271 x 192 mm.



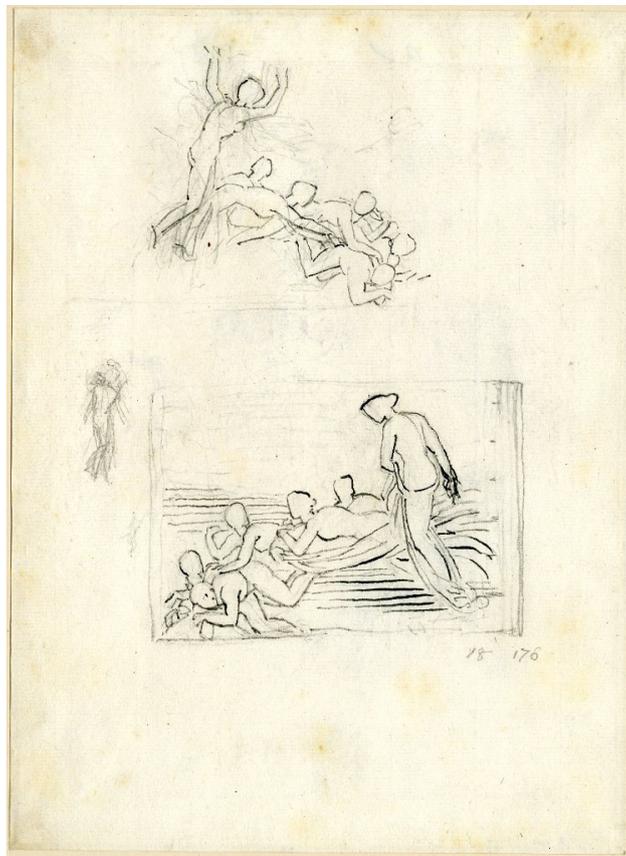
9. Thomas Banks, design for Monument to Captain Burges, 1798, National Archives, London, pen and ink on paper.



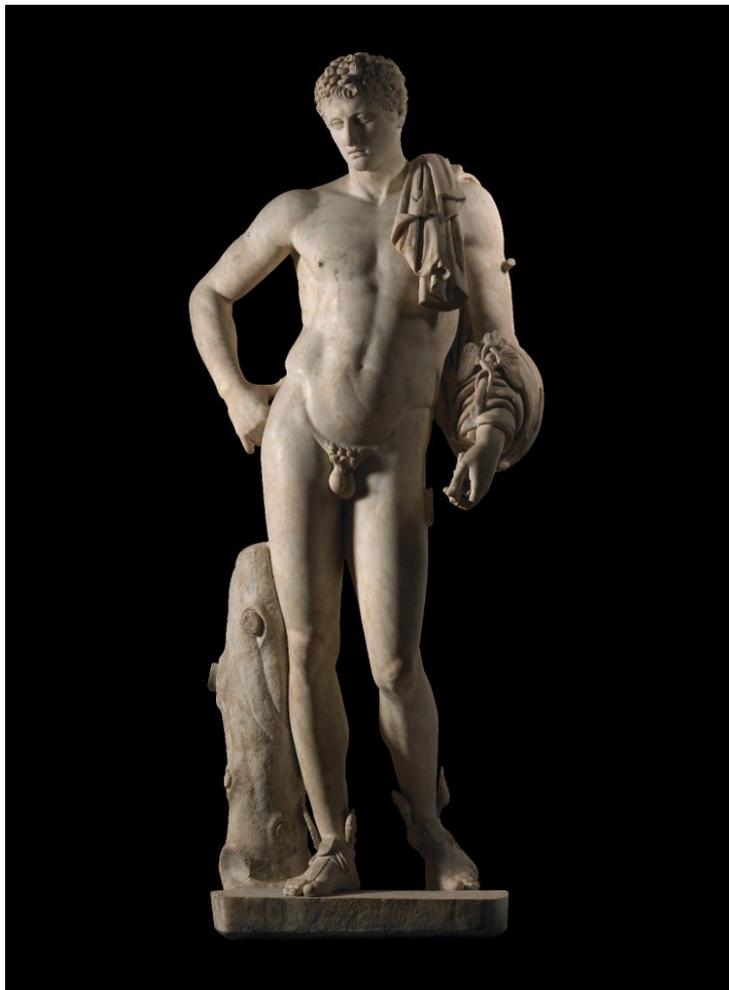
10. William Blake after George Cumberland, *Venus Counsels Cupid*, 1794 (Cumberland, 1794, Pl.14).



11. Thomas Banks, *Thetis and her nymphs rising from the sea to console Achilles for the loss of Patroclus*, 1778, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, marble.



12. John Flaxman, preliminary study for the “Iliad”; two studies for Thetis bidding the Nereids to seek their Father under the sea, 1793, British Museum, London, pen and grey ink over graphite, 264 x 190 mm.



13. *The Farnese Hermes*, Roman 1st C, British Museum, London



14. James Gillray, *Two Pair of Portraits*, 1798, British Museum, London, hand coloured etching, 196 x 259 mm.



15. Guillaume Guillon Lethière, *Liberty and Equality United by Nature*, 1793, private collection (Bryant, 2005, Fig. 10).



16. John Bacon the elder, detail from design for Monument to Major General Thomas Dundas, 1798, National Archives, London, pen and ink on paper.



17. Benjamin West, *Venus Lamenting the Death of Adonis*, 1803,



18. Benjamin West, *Venus Lamenting the Death of Adonis*, c.1763-67, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, 162.6 x 176.53 cm.



19. Benjamin West, *Cupid and Psyche*, 1808, Bentonville, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, oil on canvas, 137.8 x 142.9 cm.



20. Titian, *Venus and Adonis*, c.1485-90, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 106.6 x 133.4



21XX, engraving of Reclining Bacchante and Faun, Roman 1stC, Naples (Bayardi, 1773, Pl.X).



22. Giorgione, detail from *The Tempest*, c. 1506-08, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice, oil on canvas.



23. Veronese, detail from *Jupiter and Venus*, 1560s, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, oil on canvas.



24. Veronese, detail from *Venus and Adonis*, 1560s, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Augsburg, oil on canvas.



25. Tintoretto, detail from *Susanna and the Elders*, c. 1550, Musée du Louvre, Paris, oil on canvas.



26. Jacques Louis David, *The Intervention of the Sabine Women*, 1799, Musée du Louvre, oil on canvas, 385 x 522 cm.



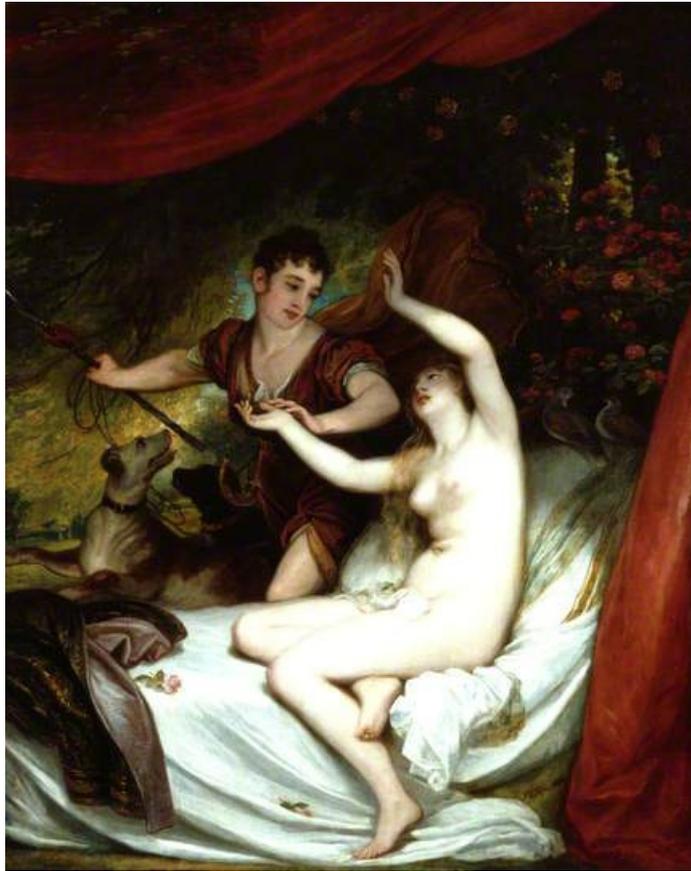
27. Benjamin West, preliminary study for *Thetis Bringing Armor to Achilles*, 1802, Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, pen, ink and pencil on paper.



28. William Makepeace Thackeray, satirical illustration (Thackeray, 1869: 51).



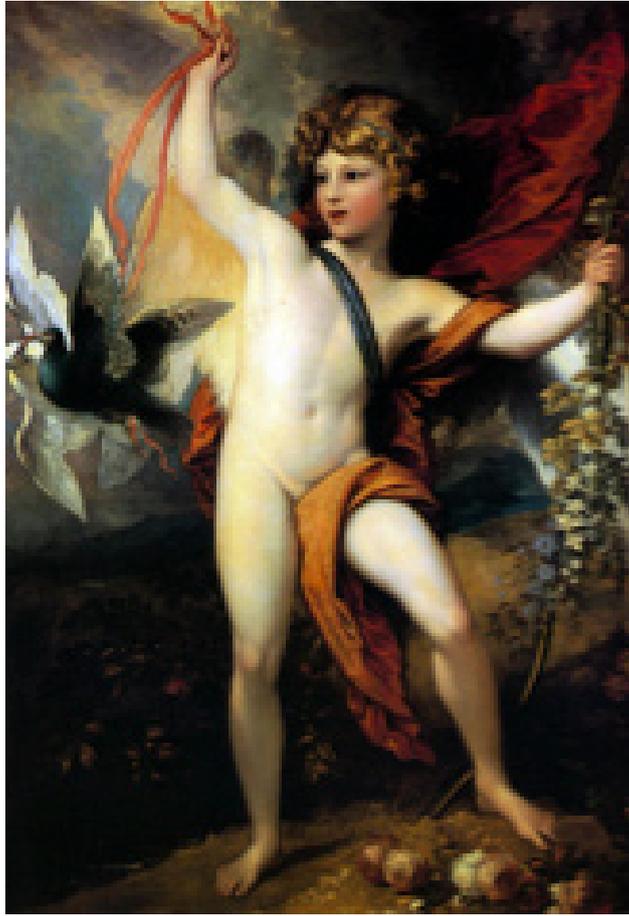
29. William Bond after Benjamin West, *Thetis Bringing Armor to Achilles*, 1809, British Museum, London, stipple engraving, 355 x 292 mm.



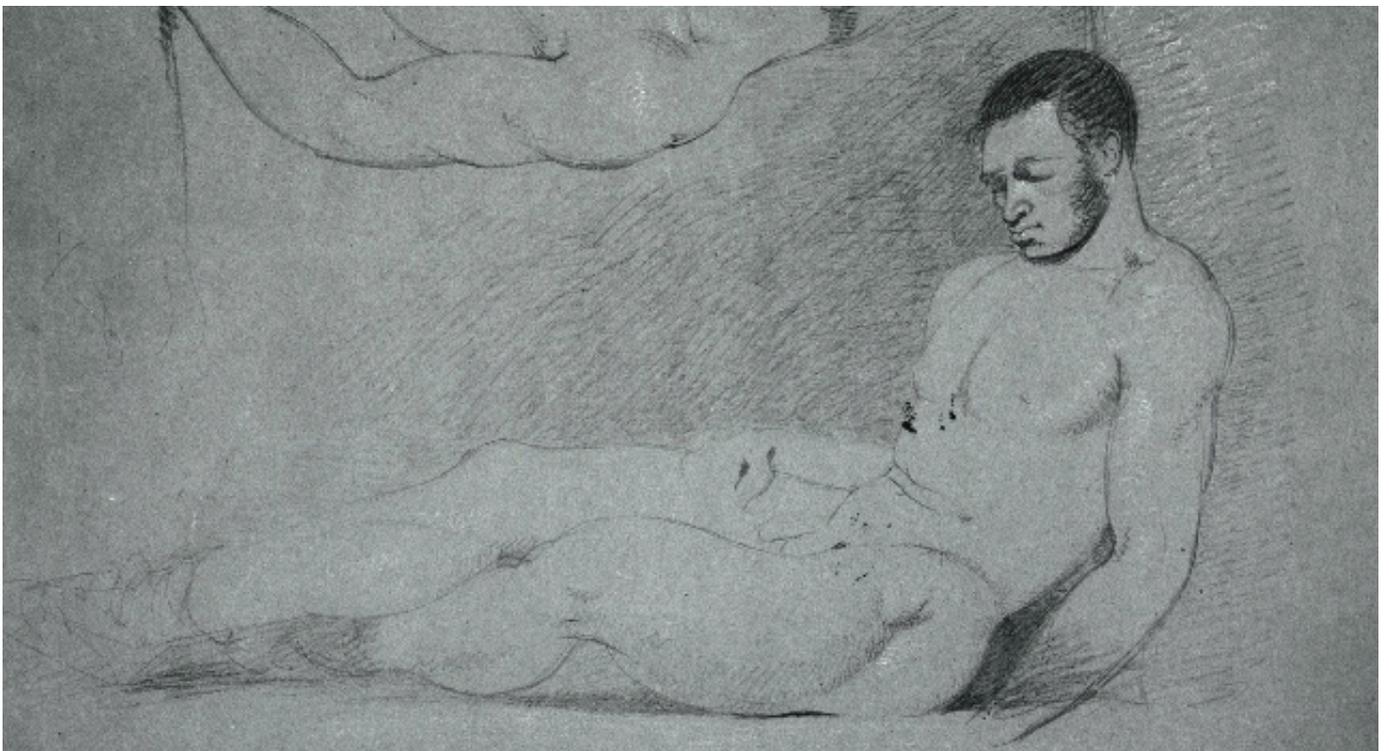
30. Thomas Phillips, *Venus and Adonis*, 1808, Royal Academy of Arts, oil on canvas, 1274 x 1019 mm.



31. Benjamin West, *Omnia Vincit Amor*, 1809, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, oil on canvas, 70.38 x 80.5 cm.



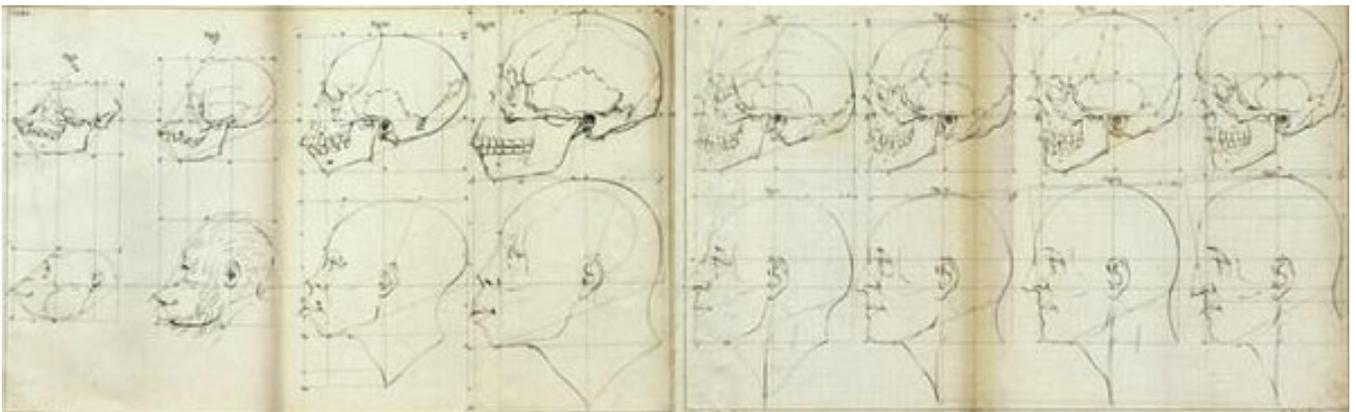
32. Benjamin West, *Cupid Releasing Two Doves*, 1798-1809, private collection, oil on canvas.



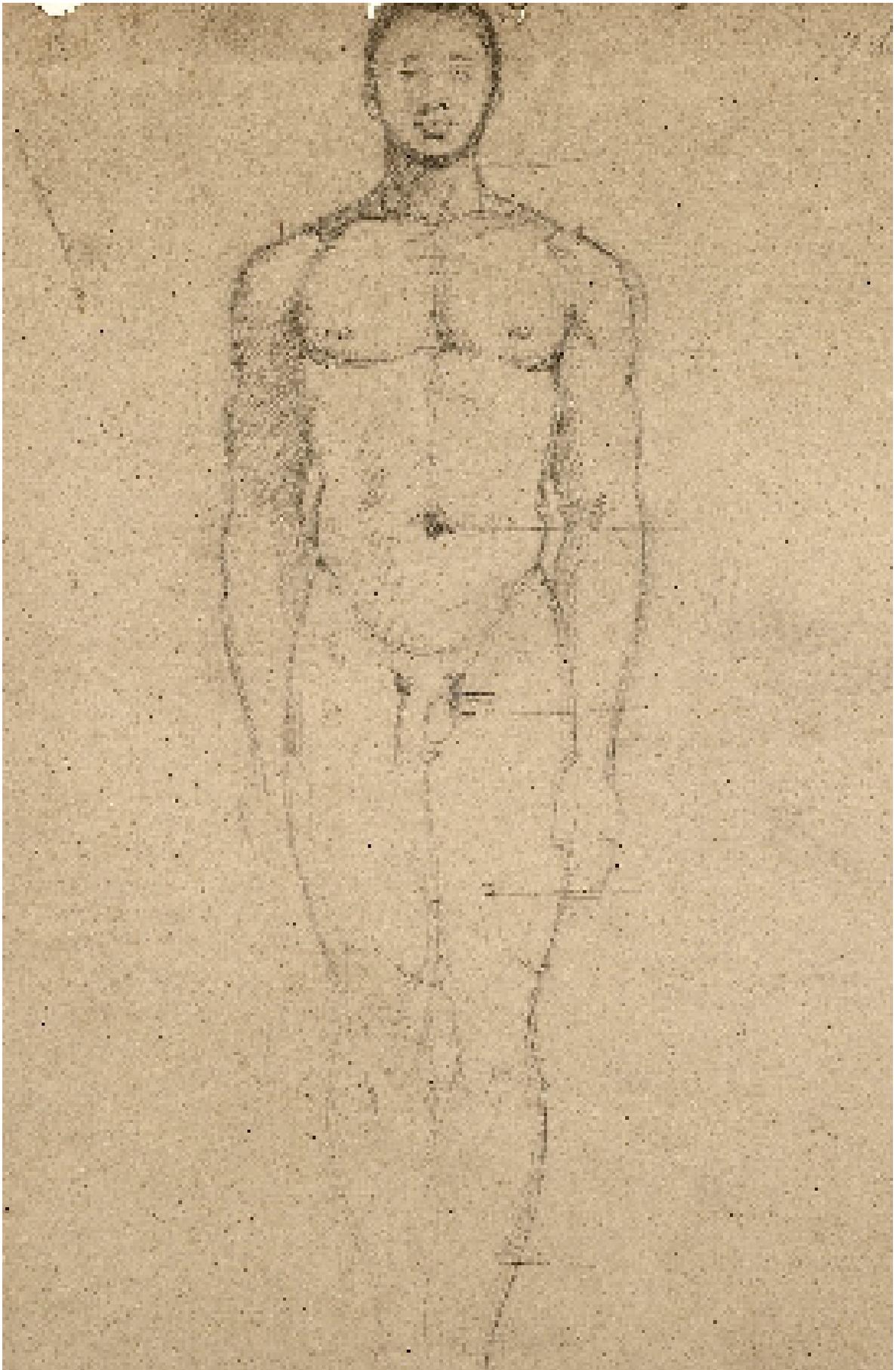
33. Benjamin Robert Haydon, study after Wilson the black, 1810, British Museum, black and white chalk on paper.



34. Benjamin Robert Haydon, study after the Theseus, 1808, British Museum, London, black and white chalk on paper, 465 x 591 mm.



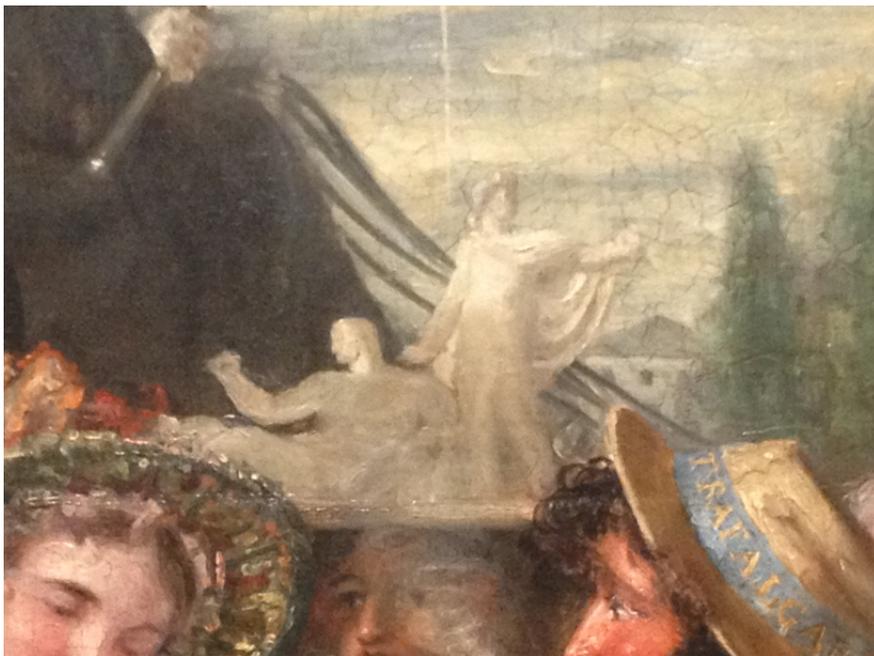
35. Petrus Camper, engravings of facial angles, 1767, (Mejer, 1999, Pl. 26-27).



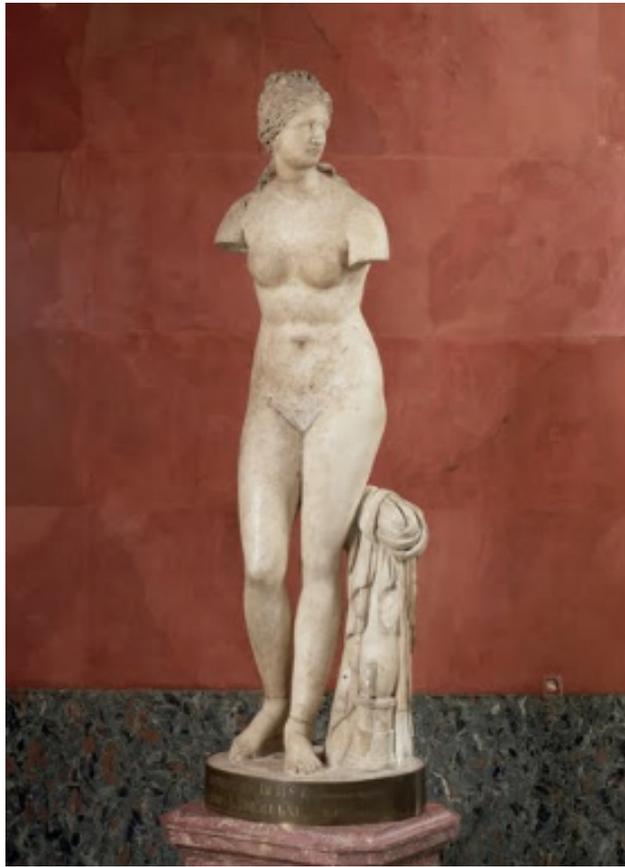
36. Benjamin Robert Haydon, study after Wilson the black, 1810, British Museum, London, black chalk on paper.



37. Benjamin Robert Haydon, *Punch or May Day*, 1829, Tate Britain, London, oil on canvas, 1505 x 1851 mm.



38. Benjamin Robert Haydon, detail from *Punch or May Day*, 1829, Tate Britain, London, oil on canvas.



39. *Venus of Taurida*, Hellenistic 2ndC, Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, marble.



41. Bust of Achilles, Roman 1stC, Hermitage Museum, Amsterdam, marble.



40. *Silenus*, Roman 1stC, Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, marble.



42. James Barry, *The Temptation of Adam*, 1776, Tate Britain, London, etching, line engraving and aquatint on paper, 633 x 404 mm.



43. James Barry, *The Temptation of Adam*, 1767-1770, National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, oil on canvas, 199.8 x 152.9 cm.



44. *Venus de' Medici*, Hellenistic 2ndC, Uffizi Gallery, Florence, marble.



45. *Venus Braschi*, Hellenistic 2ndC, Glyptoteket, Munich, marble.



46. Edward Dayes, *The Triumph of Beauty*, 1800, Lowell Libson, oil on canvas, 1270 x 915 mm.



47. Thomas Stothard, standing female figure viewed from the back, c. 1800, Royal Academy, London, pencil on buff laid paper, 182 x 75 mm.



48. Thomas Stothard, preliminary study for the Wellington Shield, c. 1815, Tate Britain, London, ink and watercolour on paper, 185 x 68 mm.



49. Thomas Stothard, study for the Wellington Monument, c. 1815, New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, graphite and watercolour.



50. *Lely Venus*, Roman 2ndC, British Museum, London, marble.



51. Richard Westall, *Flora Unveiled by the Zephyrs*, 1807, private collection, oil on panel.



52. Joseph Noel Paton, *The Reconciliation of Titania and Oberon*, 1847, Edinburgh, Scottish National Gallery, oil on canvas, 76.20 x 122.60 cm.



53. Richard Westall, *A Nymph and Two Satyrs*, 1796, Aberystwyth University School of Art, Buarth Mawr, watercolour on wove paper.



54. Richard Westall, *The Boar that Killed Adonis Brought to Venus*, 1799, British Museum, London, watercolour on paper, 406 x 477 mm.



55. Richard Westall, *Vertumnus and Pomona*, 1809, private collection, oil on panel.



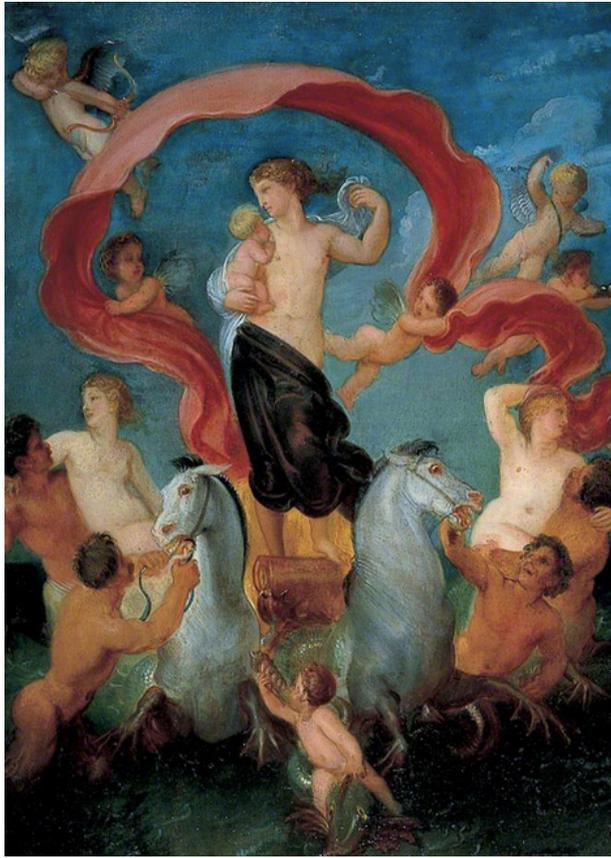
56. Richard Westall, *Jupiter disguised as a swan pretending to seek the protection of Leda*, c. 1799, private collection, watercolour on wove paper.



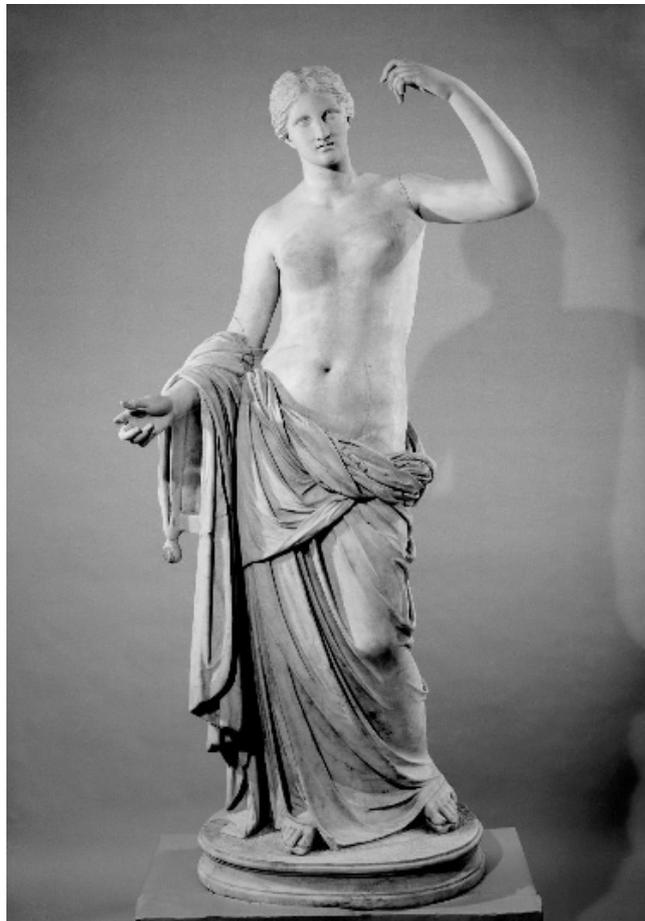
57. Richard Westall, *The Bower of Pan*, 1800, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester, oil on canvas, 88.5 x 106.2 cm.



58. Richard Westall, *Leda and the Swan*, 1792, British Museum, London, etching, 67 x 230 mm.



59. Thomas Stothard, *Amphitrite*, 1819, Birmingham Museums Trust, Birmingham, oil on canvas, 59 x 43.9 cm.



60. *Townley Venus*, Roman 2ndC, British Museum, London, marble.



61. *The Triumph of Neptune and Amphitrite*, Roman 4thC, Musée du Louvre, Paris, mosaic.



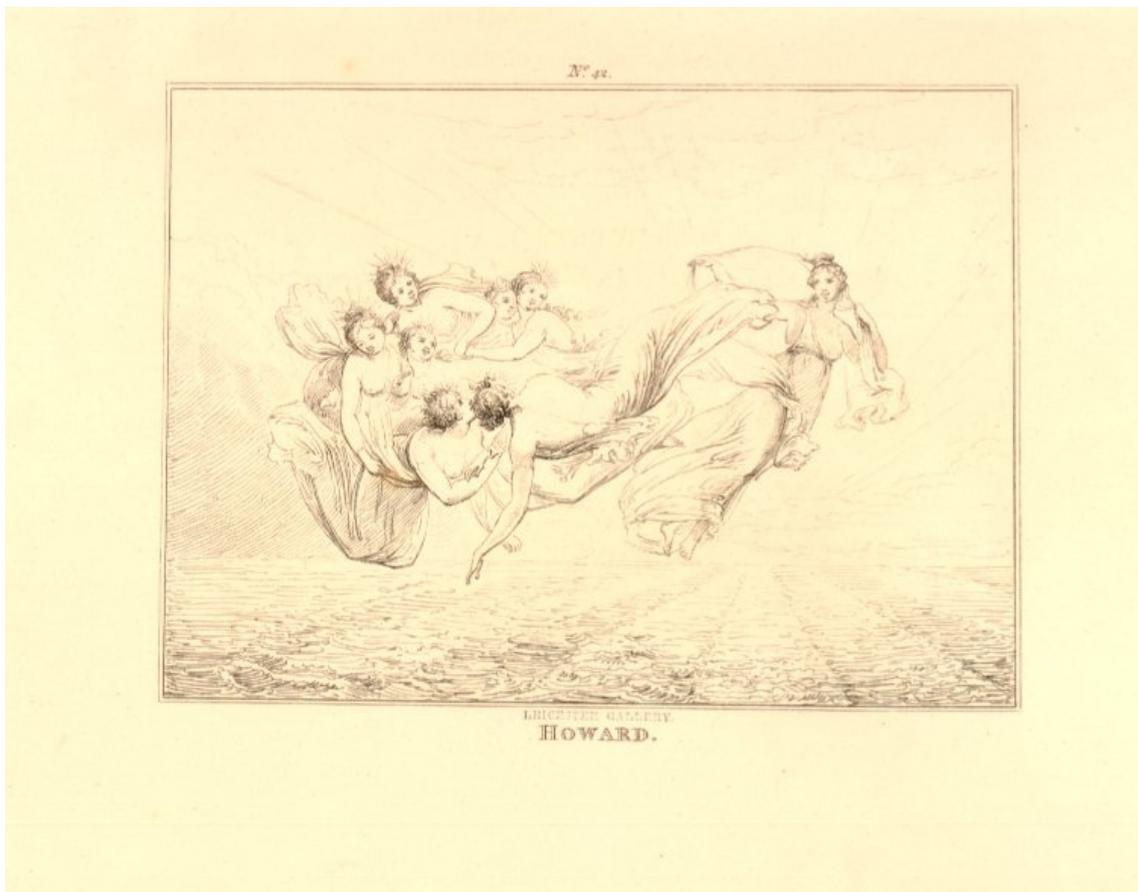
62. Thomas Stothard, *The Birth of Venus*, c. 1820, private collection, watercolour on paper, 30.48 x 38.10 cm.



63. Thomas Stothard, *Girls Bathing*, c. 1820, private collection, watercolour on paper.



64. William Etty, *Cleopatra's Arrival in Cilicia*, 1821, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Liverpool, oil on canvas, 106.5 x 132.5 cm.



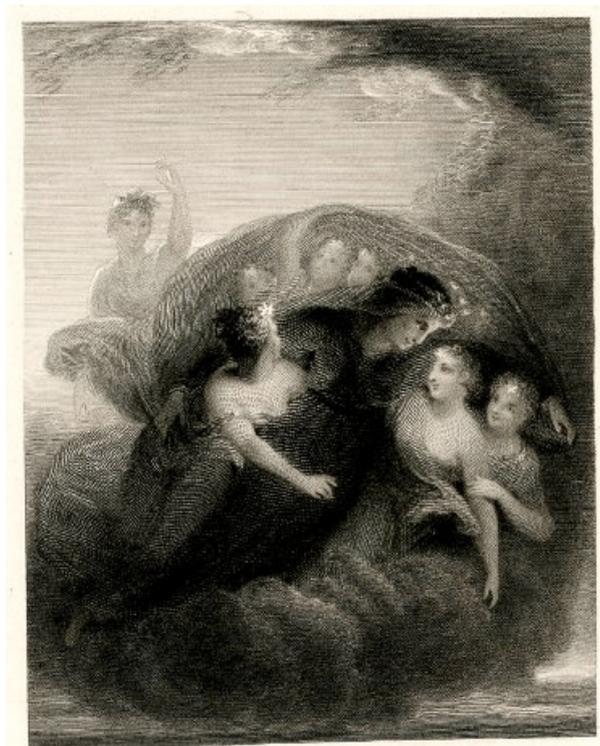
65. John Young after Henry Howard, *The Pleiades Disappearing*, 1821, British Museum, London, etching on paper, 104 x 144 mm.



66. Henry Howard, *Sabrina*, 1821, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, oil on canvas, 114.3 x 143.51 cm.



67. Henry Howard, *Fairies on the Sea Shore*, 1818, private collection, oil on canvas, 50.8 x 61 cm.



68. Peter Lightfoot after Henry Howard, *Morning*, c. 1851, etching on paper, British Museum, London, 190 x 125 mm.



69. Henry Howard, *Night and Morning*, 1834, Sir John Soane's Museum, London, oil on oak panel, 35.1 x 171 cm.



70. William Hilton, *Mermaid of Galloway*, 1821, Tabley House Collection, Leicester, oil on canvas, 122 x 101.6 cm.



71. Anon. after William Hilton, *Jupiter and Europa*, 1821, British Museum, London, etching on paper, 125 x 165 mm.



72. Lorenzo Ghiberti, *Adam and Eve*, 1400s, Battistero di San Giovanni, Florence, bronze.



73. Thomas Banks, *The Death of Germanicus*, 1773-74, Holkham Hall, Norfolk, marble.



74. John Flaxman, *Monument to Agnes Cromwell*, 1800, Chichester Cathedral, Chichester, marble.



75. Thomas Banks, *Alcyone and Ceyx*, 1775-79, Lotherton Hall, Leeds, marble.



76. Henry Howard, *The House of Morpheus*, 1821, Petworth House, Petworth, oil on canvas.



77. Anne-Louis Girodet, *The Sleep of Endymion*, 1791, Musée du Louvre, Paris, oil on canvas, 198 cm x 261 cm.



78. Richard Westmacott, Monument to the Duke of Wellington, 1816-1822, Hyde Park Corner, London, bronze.



79. John Gibson, *Sleeping Shepherd Boy*, 1818, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, marble.



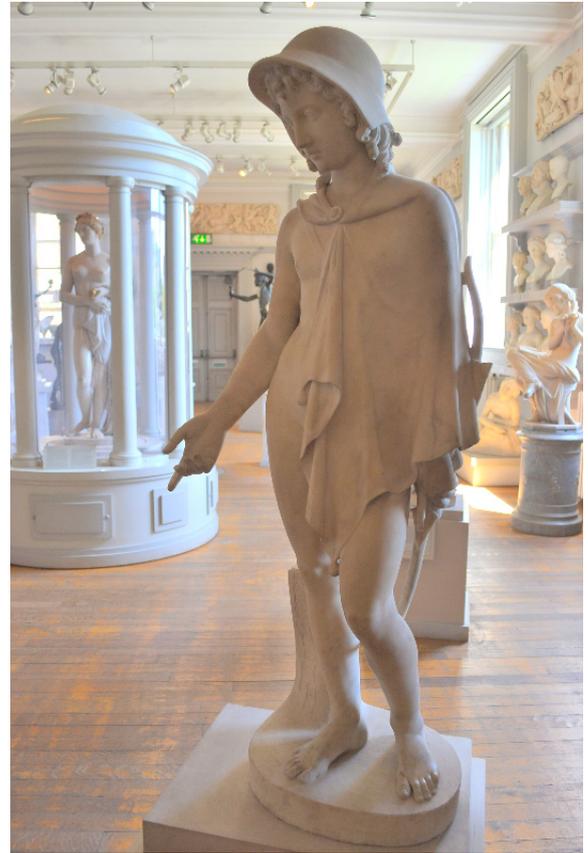
80. Bertel Thorvaldsen, *Shepherd Boy with Dog*, 1805, Thorvaldsen Museum, Copenhagen, marble.



81. Antonio Canova, *Sleeping Endymion*, 1819, Chatsworth House, Chatsworth, marble.



82. John Gibson, *Nymph Unfastening her Sandal*, c. 1830, Royal Academy of Arts, London, plaster.



83. John Gibson, *Love Disguised as a Shepherd*, 1830s, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, marble.

84. John Gibson, *Hylas Surprised by the Naiades*, 1826-1837, Tate Britain, London, marble.





85. Richard James Wyatt, *A Nymph at the Bath*, c. 1840, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, marble.



86. Richard James Wyatt, *Girl Bathing*, c. 1840, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, marble.