

*American Women Sculptors in Rome in the Mid-Nineteenth Century:
Feminist and Psychoanalytic Readings of a Displaced Canon*

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of PhD

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

*American Women Sculptors in Rome in the Mid-Nineteenth Century:
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Abstract

Henry James's phrase, 'white, marmorean flock', has become the defining image for the American women sculptors who worked in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century at the height of neoclassicism, subsuming their works and histories under the connotations of its words. Instead of simply permitting us to name these sculptors, 'white, marmorean flock' raises both a problem of historiography, as a study of the exclusion of the women sculptors from questionable canons, and, more importantly, a problematic of the feminine and subjectivity in the context of artistic Symbolic activity.

Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1860 novel about expatriate artists in Rome, *The Marble Faun*, is a primary site for the excavation of the foundations of our contemporary understanding of the American women sculptors in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century. Conflated with the objects of her creative production in a 'Pygmalion effect', the woman sculptor is figured in Hawthorne's novel as a limit, embodying an impossible (for phallic cultural discourses) coincidence of femininity and creativity. Read through a matrixial lens, sculptures by Edmonia Lewis intrude uncannily in these canonical narratives of the nineteenth century, as the woman sculptor of colour in the studio destabilises and unfixes gender, race, and class identities. Here too the Sadean 'nothingness' of the neoclassical sculpture emerges as a limit in our understanding of nineteenth century modes of seeing – a limit which is perhaps best approached 'through the defiles of the signifier', photography. For although the flat, white, ideologically-laden surfaces of American history sculpture are now articulated by the spaces of the modernist white cube gallery, the woman sculptor remains a 'strange and estranged' stain on the screen of American art, 'rather out of place in the picture'. By focussing on the margins of American art history, this study deploys the anamorphic effect in an attempt to 'hallow the hollow and to hollow the hallow': to move towards reading the works and histories of the American women sculptors who worked in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century in a symbolic register in which white is also black, and sculptors are also women.

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for Titus
with whom all things are possible

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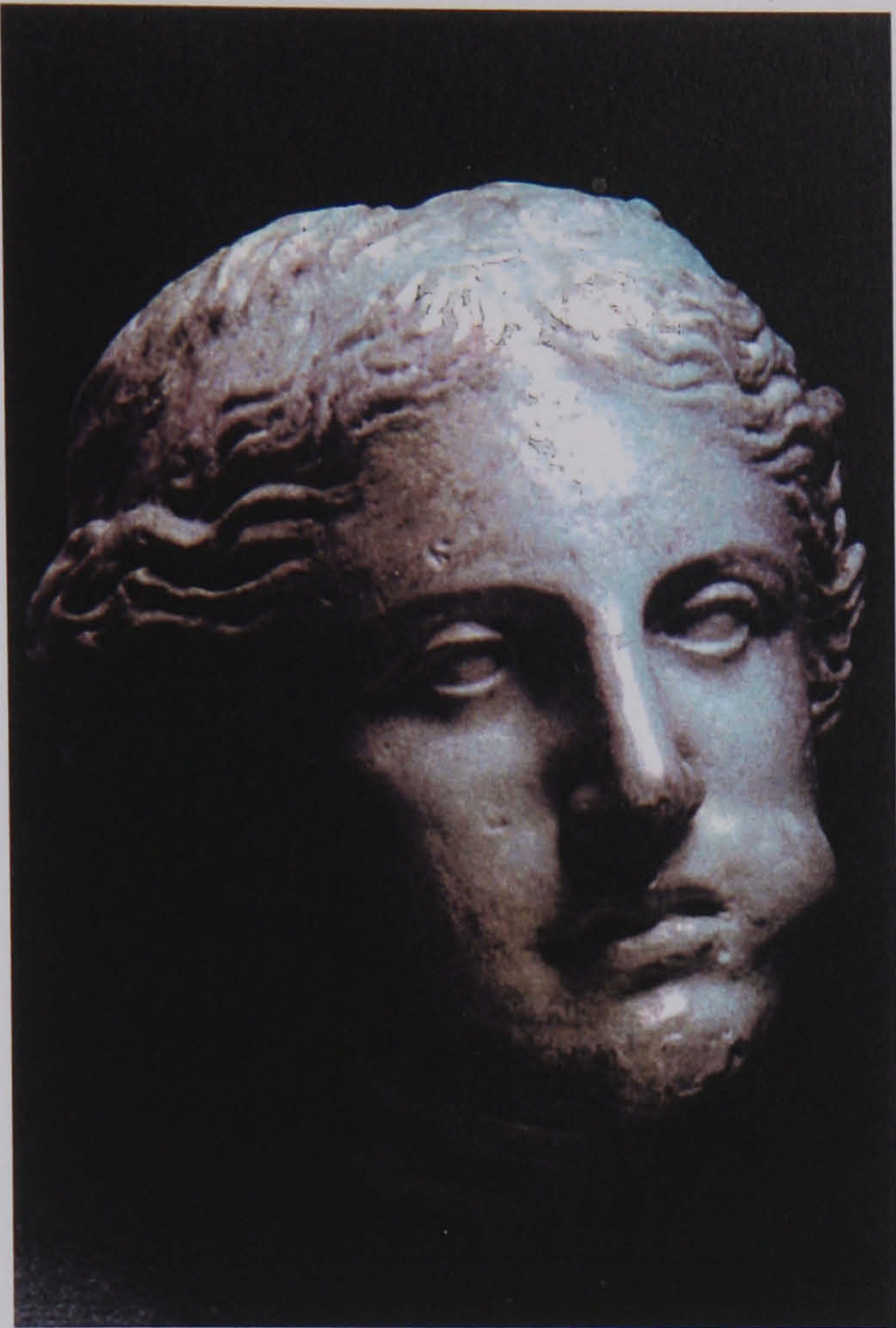
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An Introduction to

It is a literary commonplace in discussions of the neoclassical American women sculptors who worked in Rome in the 19th century, for an encounter with Venus to precede a visit to the sculptor and her work, so I begin with a Venus appropriate to this occasion, Clive Barker's bronze *Venus with Tongue in Cheek* of 1990.

fig. 1 Clive Barker, *Venus with Tongue in Cheek*, 1990, bronze, 29x23x32cm

conceit n. **1** orig. a) an idea; thought; concept b) personal opinion **2** an exaggerated opinion of oneself, one's merits, etc.; vanity **3** a) a fanciful or witty expression or notion; often, specif., a striking and elaborate metaphor, sometimes one regarded, esp. formerly, as strained and arbitrary b) the use of such expressions in writing or speaking **4** a flight of imagination; fancy **5** a small, imaginatively designed item

– *Webster's New World Dictionary of American English* Third College Edition, ed. Victoria Neufeldt, (Webster's New World: Cleveland & New York, 1991), p. 287.

Art Hysteria

Poor Cupid, a 'conceit' or 'fancy-piece' by Edmonia Lewis (1843 – ? after 1910); 'conceit' was the name given to un-heroic or non-ideal works, usually intended for display in Victorian parlors as conversation pieces.

fig. 2 Edmonia Lewis, *Poor Cupid*, 1876, marble, 13x27x35cm
National Museum of American Art, Washington D.C.



PROLOGUE:

Rattling the Sardine Canon

i.1 A Conceit (figs. 1 & 2)

In a series of lectures that begins with 'Excommunication', addressing the analyst's recent expulsion from the International Psychoanalytic Association and Saint Anne's Hospital,¹ Jacques Lacan includes his most explicit address to the artist and art historian: four presentations, collectively entitled in the printed edition of Seminar XI as, 'Of the Gaze as *Objet Petit a*'.² At the heart of Lacanian theory, as it were, for Seminar XI is 'The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis', and at the heart of a treatment of that theory that emerged precisely from Lacan's professional exile, we find the intersection of the basic ground and material of psychoanalytic and aesthetic practices, mapped out in one month of Lacan's first lectures as an exile, a stranger on the philosophical territory of the *École Pratique des Hautes Études*.

In the preface to the English language edition of *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, Lacan writes, 'Now, a little late in the day, I add my pinch of salt: a fact of history, or hysteria: that of my colleagues, as it happens, a case of no importance, but one in which I happened to find myself implicated....'³

At the risk of conceit in comparing myself to Lacan, I too find myself here, a little late in the day, in the rather dangerous position of trying to 'add my

¹ - Lacan was expelled from the International Psychoanalytic Association and Saint Anne's Hospital on 11 December, 1963, and began lecturing at the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* in January, 1964.

² - Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis, Seminar XI, 1964*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (NY and London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1978), pp. 67-119.

³ - *Ibid.*, p. vii.



fig. 3 Barbara Kruger, *Your Fictions Become History*, series 1979-1983

*The Illustrated Guide
to Art History*

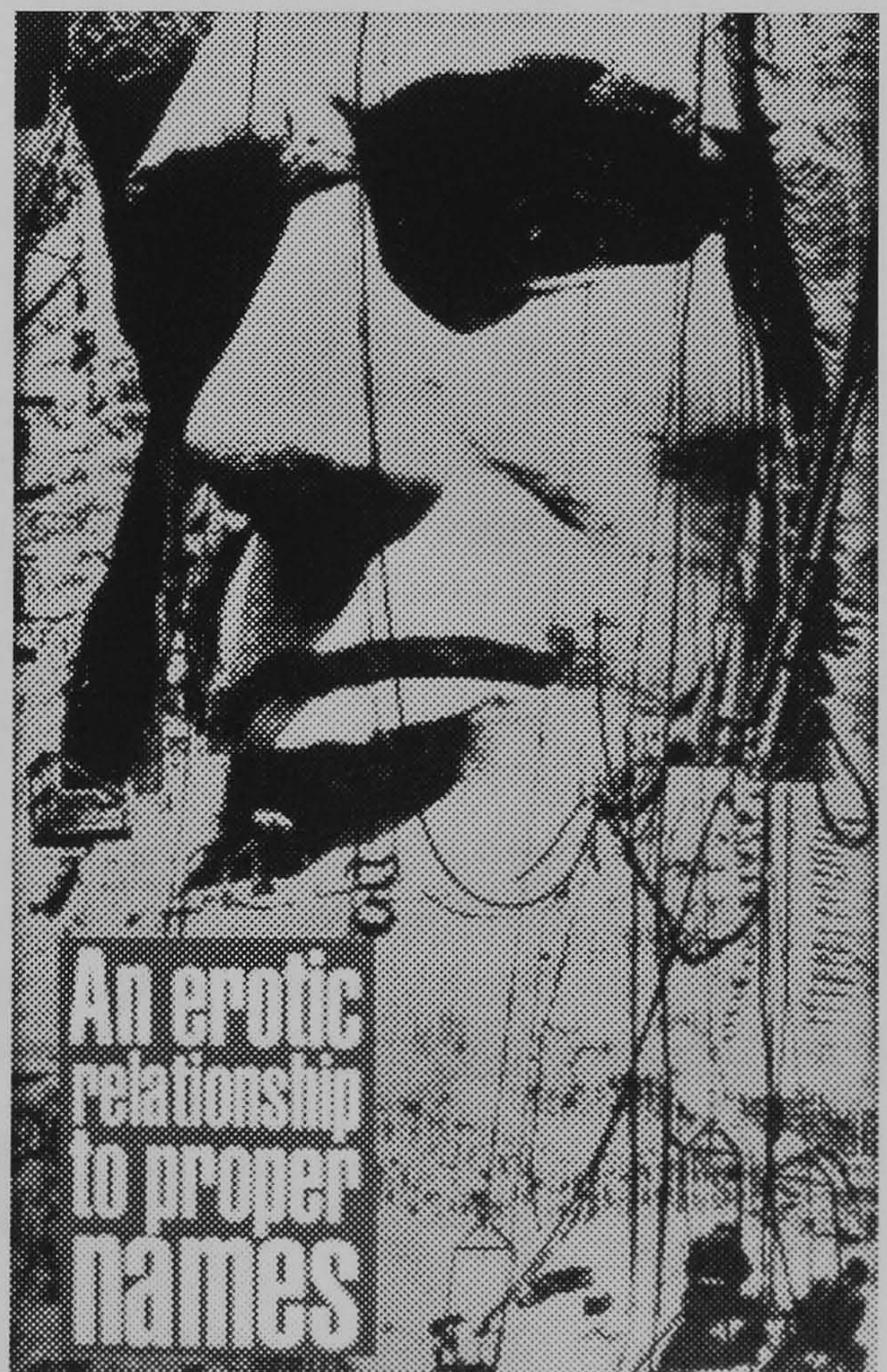
~
by *Barbara Kruger*

All Barbara Kruger illustrations and accompanying quotations are taken from *We won't play nature to your culture, Works by Barbara Kruger*, exhibition catalogue, London: ICA and Basel: Kunsthalle, 1983

**I am a foreigner to
myself in my own
language and I
translate myself by
quoting all the
others.**

– Madeleine Gagnon

fig. 4 Barbara Kruger, *An Erotic Relationship to Proper Names*, series 1979-1983



pinch of salt' to art 'hystory', truly a hysteric's endeavour if there ever was one. And if, at the end of this trajectory, I 'pass' – that is, my colleagues have not found my analysis too salty – I too shall be able to call myself an 'art hystorian'.

But that is the easy part. The difficult question seems to be, rather, as what sort of 'art hystorian' shall I be recognised – or rather, *méconnaissée*? Am I an Americanist? A sculpture 'hystorian'? A nineteenth century specialist? A feminist? A women's studies specialist? A pupil, or a teacher? A plagiarist?
(fig. 3)

To paraphrase Lacan, from this same introduction to the English edition, 'What hierarchy could confirm me as an art hystorian, give me the rubber-stamp? A certificate tells me that I was born. I repudiate this certificate: I am not a poet, but a poem. A poem that is being written, even if it looks like a subject.'⁴

I shall persist in the arrogance of this Lacanian analogy by placing myself in the position of the 'hystoric' who is 'prepared to run the risk of attesting at best to the lying truth' about the praxis of what is popularly known as American Art History.⁵ (fig. 4)

For some three years now, I have found myself – at the hands of precisely those who, in relation to me, are colleagues or even pupils – to be the object of what is called a deal.⁶

For what was at stake has been the extent to which the concessions made with respect to the validity of my teaching could be traded off with the other side of the deal, namely, the international affiliation of [Art History]. I do not wish to forgo this opportunity... of indicating that the situation can be experienced at the level of the comic dimension proper.⁷

No doubt, being the object of a deal is not a rare situation for an individual – contrary to all the verbiage about human dignity, not to mention the Rights of [Woman]. Each of us at any moment and at any level may be traded off – without the notion of exchange we can have no serious insight into the social structure. The kind of

4 - Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. viii.

5 - Ibid., p. ix.

6 - Ibid., p. 4.

7 - Ibid.



fig. 5 Barbara Kruger, *You Make History When You Do Business*, series 1979-1983

The Lying Truth



fig. 6 Barbara Kruger, *You Invest in the Divinity of the Masterpiece*, series 1979-1983

exchange involved here is the exchange of individuals, that is, of those social supports which, in a different context, are known as 'subjects', with all their supposed sacred rights to autonomy. It is a well known fact that politics is a matter of trading – wholesale, in lots, in this context – the same subjects, who are now called citizens, or students, in hundreds of thousands. There is nothing particularly exceptional, then, about my situation, except that being traded by those whom I referred to just now as colleagues, and even pupils, is sometimes, if seen from the outside, called by a different name.... (*figs 5 & 6*)

This remark is not without relevance to my subject – the fundamentals of [American Art History] – for fundamentum has more than one meaning, and I do not need to remind you that in the Kabbala it designates one of the modes of divine manifestation, which, in this register, is strictly identified with the pudendum. All the same, it would be extraordinary if, in ['art hystorical'] discourse, we were to stop at the pudendum.

In this context, no doubt, the fundamentals would take the form of the bottom parts, were it not that those parts were already to some extent exposed.⁸ (*figs 7 & 8*)

These words, of course, are not original. They are translated – 'carry-overs', as it were – from Lacan's 'Excommunication'.

'In order to give you some idea of the question posed by this relation between the fundamentals of Art Hystory and Lacan's concept of the subject and the gaze in his *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, in order to show you that the place of my particular study of expatriate neoclassical American women sculptors is something other than the place of a mere specialisation typical of a Ph.D. project, I shall now tell you a little story.'

'It's a true story. I was in my late 20s or thereabouts – and at that time, of course, being a young intellectual, I wanted desperately to get away, to see something different, throw myself into something practical, some teaching, in another country, say, across the sea. (*figs 9 & 10*)

'One day, I was in a small office, with a few people from a department in a small university. At that time, the University wasn't as corporate as it is now. The part-time lecturers, usually Ph.D. students, went out with their esoteric course proposals at their own risk. It was this risk, this radicalism, that I loved

⁸ - Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 5.

The Fundamenta



fig. 7 Michelangelo, 'The Creation of the Sun and the Moon', Sistine Ceiling

of Art History

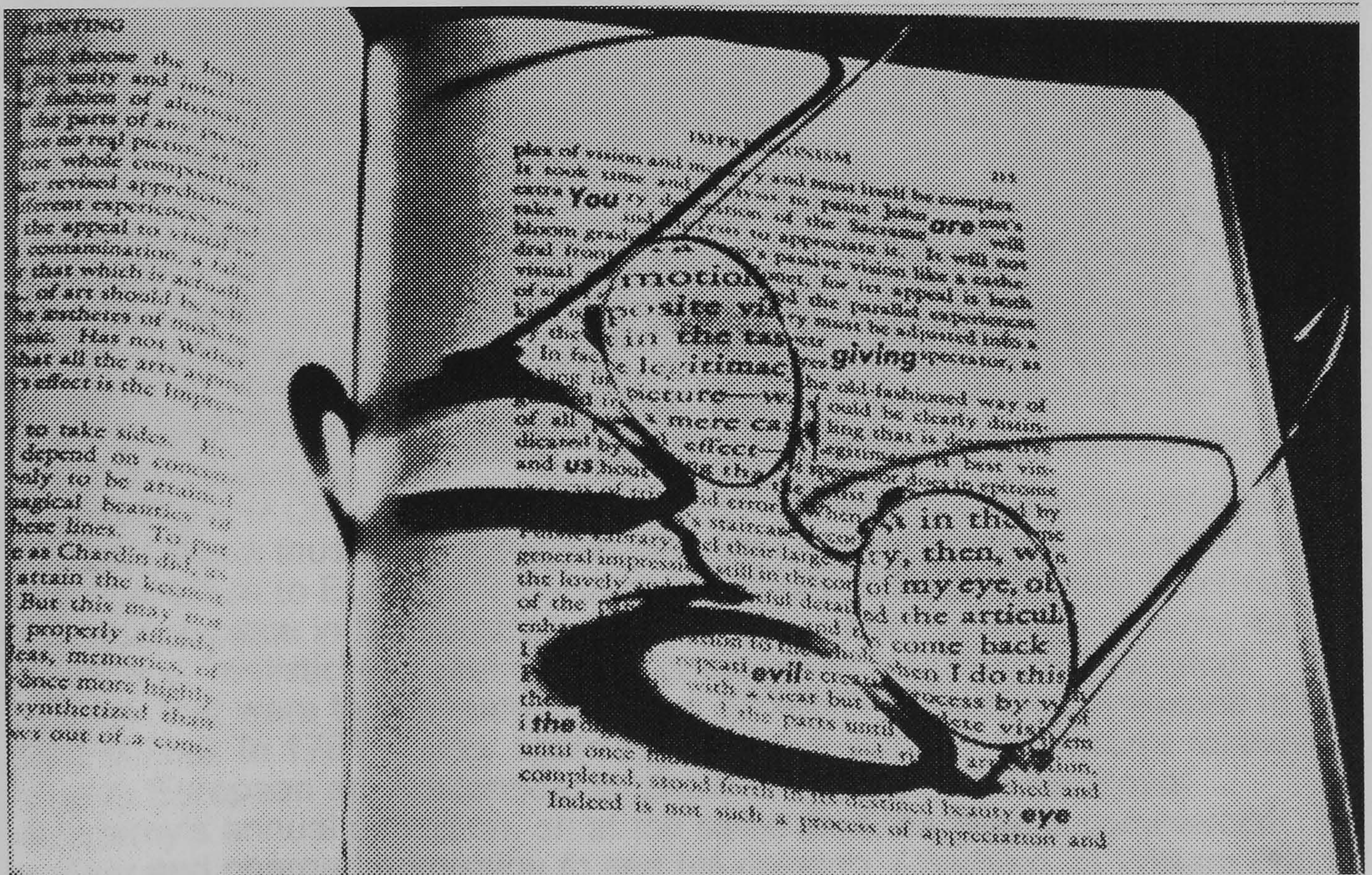
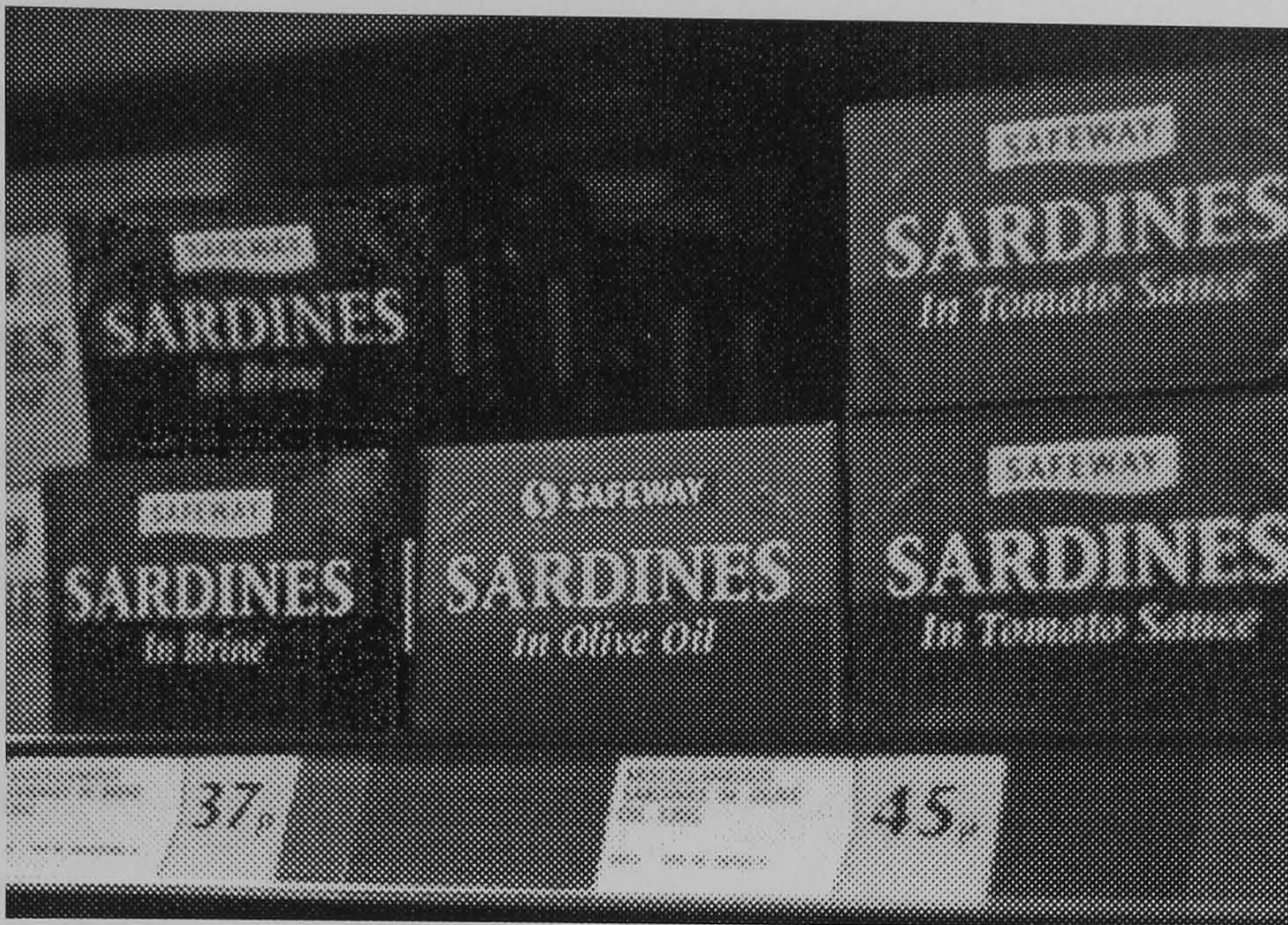


fig. 8 Barbara Kruger, *You Are Giving Us the Evil Eye*, series 1979-83



What liberates metaphor, symbol, emblem, from poetic mania, what manifests its power of subversion, is the preposterous. The logical future of the metaphor would therefore be the gag.
 – Roland Barthes

fig. 9 Nancy Proctor, *Sardine Cans*, 1996, Safeways, Leeds

Sardine Canons

Boston-born painter and entrepreneur, John Singleton Copley, moved to London in 1775, where he exhibited this painting in 1778 at the Royal Academy as a representation of 'a fact which happened'. The painting was commissioned by London merchant, Brook Watson, to depict a real event from his youth in which he lost part of a leg to an attacking shark in Havana harbor in 1749. Referencing satirical cartoons of the day, *Watson and the Shark* has been read as a 'real



fig. 10 John Singleton Copley, *Watson and the Shark*, 1778, oil on canvas, Boston Museum of Fine Arts

allegory' (pace Courbet) of Britain's loss of the American colonies. *Watson and the Shark* thus holds the place of a synecdoche, marking the importance of expatriation to Europe for the early American artist, particularly in terms of the artist's place in the international art market, and the rising concerns for 'truth' and 'realistic' representation of contemporary rather than classical themes that were to dominate American debates on European influence in the new school. In 1781 Copley again figured the expatriate American's relationship to European art academies: in direct competition with the Royal Academy's annual exhibition, on at the same time, he hired a commercial gallery and charged admission to see his painting, *Chatham*, of William Pitt the Elder's collapse in the House of Lords as he pleaded the case of maintaining ties with the rebellious American colonies. In ten weeks, some twenty-thousand visitors paid admission to see the work. [Robert Rosenblum, *19th-Century Art*, NY: Harry N. Abrams, 1984, pp. 16-17]

to share. But it wasn't all danger and excitement – there were also fine days, when one's proposals were accepted, incorporated into the core curriculum even. One day, then, as we were waiting for the moment to enrol the students, an individual known as Petit-Académie, that's what we called him – like all his kind, he died an intellectual death very young from the 'publish or perish' syndrome, which at that time was a constant threat to the whole of his professional class – this Petit-Académie pointed out to me something floating in the University Prospectus. It was a small canon, a sardine canon. It floated there on the stark white page, a witness to the canon industry, which we, in fact, were supposed to supply. It glittered in the lamp light. And Petit-Académie said to me – *You see that canon? Do you see it? Well, it doesn't see you!*

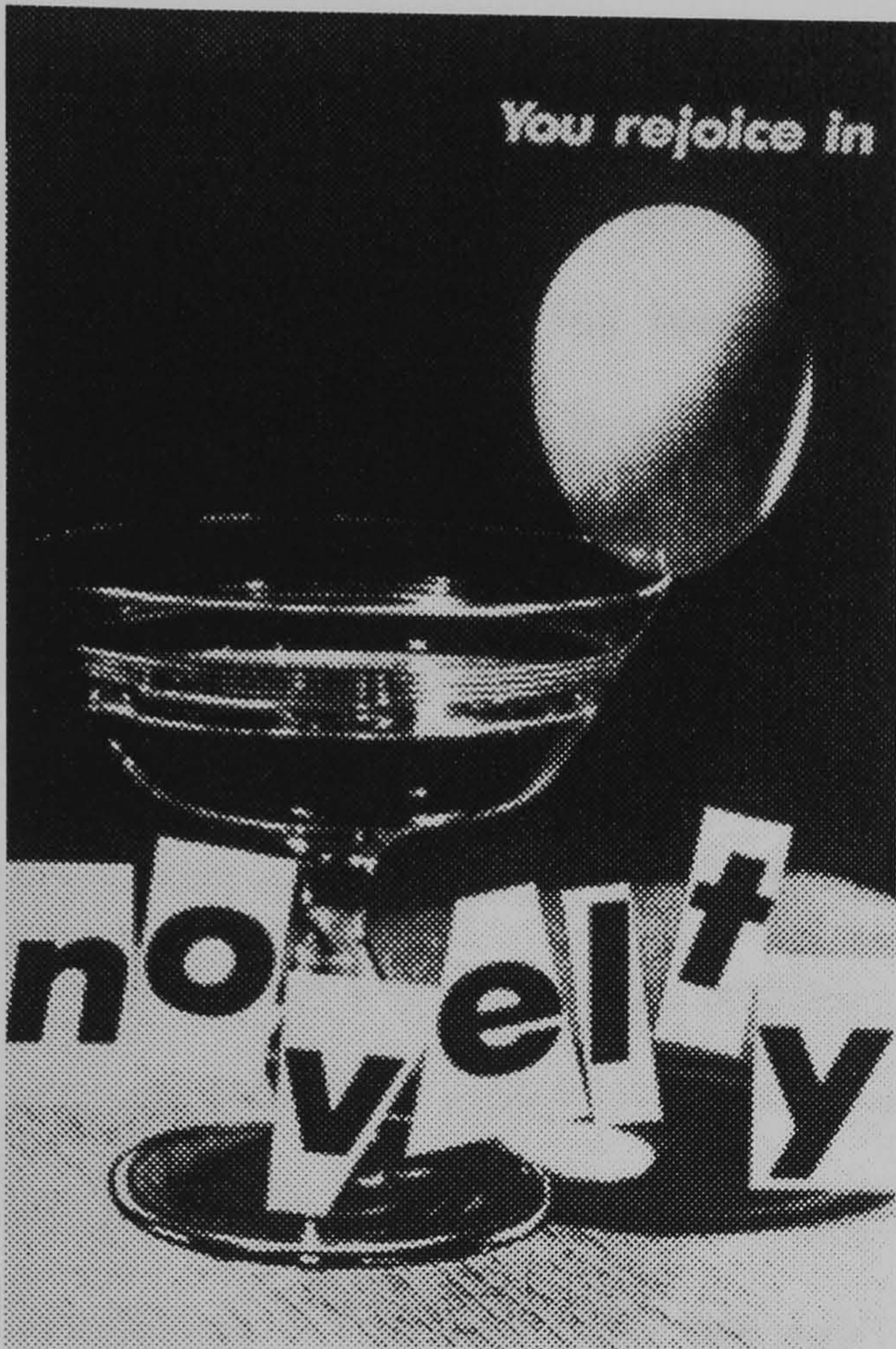
'He found this incident highly amusing – I less so. I thought about it. Why did I find it less amusing than he? It's an interesting question.

'To begin with, if what Petit-Académie said to me, namely, that the canon did not see me, had any meaning, it was because in a sense, it was looking at me, all the same. It was looking at me at the level of the point of light, the point at which everything that looks at me is situated – and I am not speaking metaphorically.

'The point of this little story, as it had occurred to my partner, the fact that he found it so funny and I less so, derives from the fact that, if I am told a story like that one, it is because I, at that moment... looked like nothing on earth. In short, I was rather out of place in the picture of the University painted by the Prospectus. And it was because I felt this that I was not terribly amused at hearing myself addressed in this humorous, ironical way. (*fig. 11*)

'... And if I am anything in the picture, it is always in the form of the screen, which I earlier called the stain, the spot.' (*figs 12 & 13*)

No one likes being called a 'stain' as Lacan freely admits, and perhaps I



Rattling the Can-on

fig. 11 Barbara Kruger, *You Rejoice in Novelty*, series 1979-1983

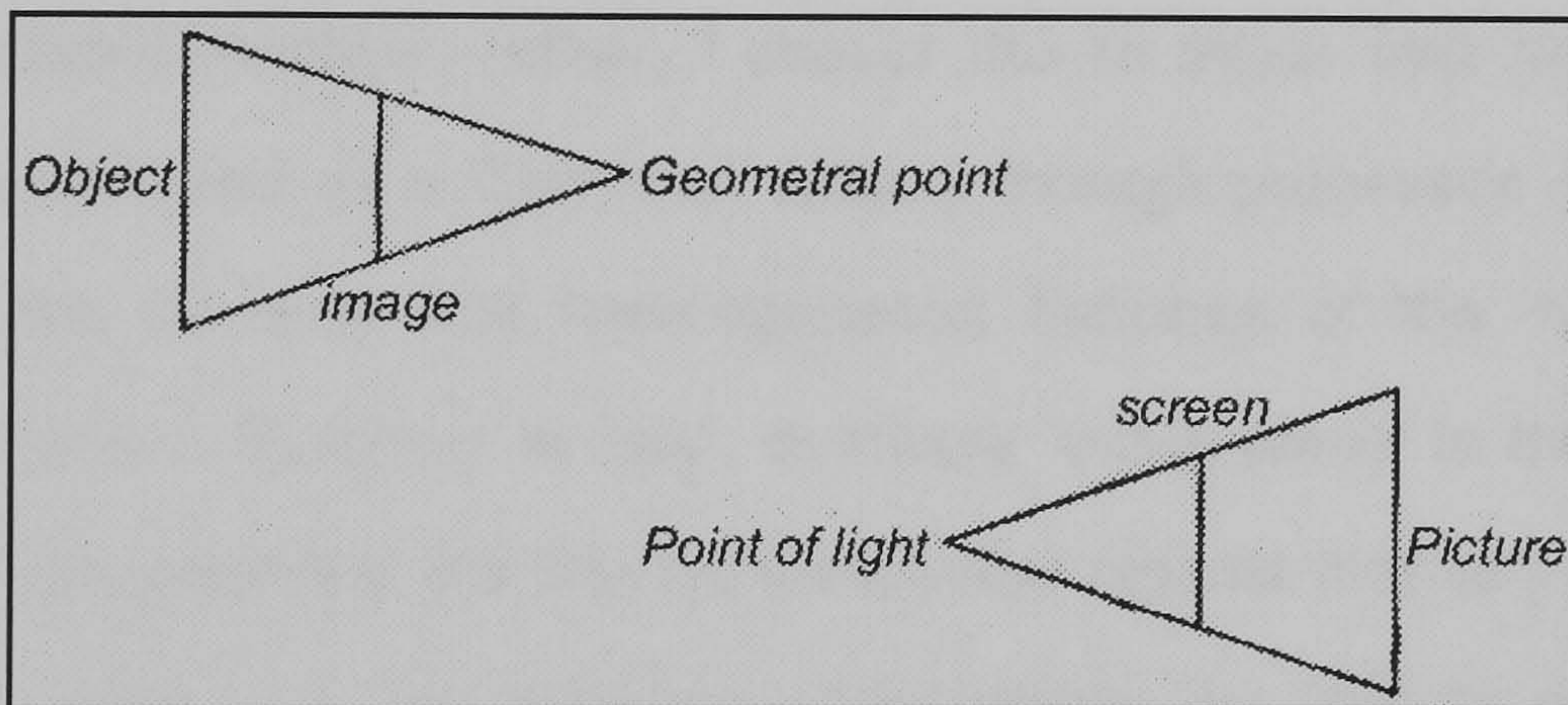


fig. 12 'Jack La-Can', *Schema of the Function of the Eye and the Cartesian Subject*, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 91



fig. 13 Barbara Kruger, *You Destroy What You Think Is Difference*, series 1979-1983

am indulging in a bit of ego-salving or ‘reclaiming the stain’ when I compare the internal exile of my own area of study within the field of American Art History to Lacan in his famed story of Petit-Jean. People tend to smile indulgently when I tell them the topic of my dissertation research; ‘nineteenth century neoclassical American Women Sculptors in Rome’ sounds terribly specialised and esoteric, even irrelevant and self-indulgent, if not downright perverse. It is about sculpture, not painting; neoclassicism, not modernism; American art, not European; but American art made in Europe, not in America; in Rome, not Paris; and by women, not men – all categories that produce an almost uncanny effect in their narrowly but persistently missing the topics central to the canons of late twentieth century art history. But I am not interested in romanticising the topic of my studies, or in casting myself as a heroic academic outsider; rather, I should like to argue that American Art History is constituted as a Cartesian subject through processes of exile and exclusion; the complex and heterogeneous histories of the ‘neoclassical American Women Sculptors in Italy’, quintuply ‘out-of-place’ in the picture of Art History, are precisely the internally-excluded objects that can produce an anamorphic effect on the discipline of American Art History as a whole, revealing its Sardine Canon as a split and unstable subject. (*figs 14 & 15*)

i.2 ‘Rather Out of Place in the Picture’

One of the most salient, exciting, and usually frustrating characteristics of studying the neoclassical American women sculptors who worked in Italy is that their histories and careers do not easily fall into art historical or even feminist theoretical paradigms for talking about nineteenth century women artists. If this is true of each sculptor individually, it is even more so of them as a group. Although Henry James dubbed them ‘the white marmorean flock’, beyond a common stylistic heritage and experience of working in Rome, there



fig. 14 Barbara Kruger, *Who Is Bought and Sold?*, 1990

Rather Out of Place in the Picture



fig. 15 American sculptor Harriet Hosmer with her studio workmen in Rome in 1867, a photograph she called 'Hosmer and her men', taken 'by way of a joke', but a 'great success'. [letter from Hosmer to Wayman Crow, 'At Lady Marian's' November 10, (1867), quoted in Sherwood, *Harriet Hosmer*, p. 257].

Hosmer employed up to 40 workmen in her studios at the peak of her career. The highly-skilled sculpture artisans were one of the main attractions of Rome to American sculptors in the nineteenth century, as they could be employed at a fraction of the cost of American workmen, and were generally found to be much more able than their American counterparts.

was nothing flock-ish about the neoclassical American women sculptors at all. They had no common class, race, or even native nationality. Only two, Elisabet Ney and Edmonia Lewis, had a close relative who was an artist – Ney’s father was a stone carver, and Lewis’s mother a Native American weaver and beading pattern designer. Very few were independently wealthy, and several were from the working class. The formal art training of these women sculptors – when they had it – was as varied as their names. And they were active in Rome from 1848 until after 1887, for periods of time which ranged from 20 months to over 20 years, some becoming permanent expatriates, others remaining little more than brief tourists on the Italian peninsula.

It is a common practice in historical methodologies either to simplify difficult diversities such as those of the women neoclassical sculptors who worked in Italy – reducing them merely to James’s ‘white, marmorean flock’, for example – or to exclude them from the discipline’s canonical texts entirely.⁹ Leaving the history of nineteenth century American artists abroad out of the picture of Art History is a well-established practice, with only recent academic needs for ‘new territories to conquer’ readmitting certain nineteenth century art histories to the journals and conference circuits. Noting the paucity of university courses in American art and architecture at the time, Russell Lynes writes of American Victorian art, in speaking of the first symposium on nineteenth century American art, held in 1962:

... what we are pleased to call, however inaccurately, the American Victorian arts remained unbefriended in what might be said to be their gingerbread dog house.... The generation... called “The Genteel Tradition”... were looked upon as having been quaint if not downright dim-witted where their artistic enthusiasms were concerned.¹⁰

⁹ - See Part 1, Chapter 1.ii ‘Reframing the Name: The “White, Marmorean Flock”’ for a thorough discussion of this phrase and its impact on the subjects of my study.

¹⁰ - Russell Lynes, ‘Viewpoints: “The Genteel Tradition”’, *The American Art Journal*, (November 1974), pp. 73-83 (p. 73).

Similarly, despite the primacy of sculpture as an art form in nineteenth century America, the medium has been largely neglected both in American art history and in art history on the nineteenth century in general, which has instead focused on painting. But twentieth century prejudices in favour of painting give a mistaken impression of the value accorded sculpture in the nineteenth century. Even a painter of such prominence and international repute among his contemporaries as Thomas Cole expressed his displeasure at the short shrift painting got in comparison to sculpture in the period of American neoclassicism:

It seems to me that sculpture has risen far above par of late: painters are but an inferior grade of artists. This exultation of sculpture above painting, which in this country has prevailed, is unjust, and has never been acknowledged in the past.... He who cannot distinguish one colour from another may be a sculptor. I only intend to say that undue importance has been given lately to sculpture.¹¹ (*figs. 16 & 17*)

In 1986, Jacques Thuillier called the historian of nineteenth century sculpture 'a happy historian', because, extraordinarily in comparison with the nineteenth century painting historian, for example, 'he [sic] finds before him a field of research which is not yet structured',¹² unprejudiced by the figurations of entrenched stylistic classifications, progressively and linearly conceived, and less subject to the exigencies of an art market which by and large thrives on two-dimensional works, at least where the nineteenth century is concerned.¹³ Thus, Thuillier concluded, the historian of nineteenth century sculpture is in a situation at once rich and dangerous, in a field whose relative youth carries with it an enormous responsibility as well as unparalleled opportunities.

One of these responsibilities is for the historian of nineteenth century

¹¹ - Quoted in Russell Lynes, *The Art-Makers* (NY: Dover Publications, 1970), p. 191.

¹² - Jacques Thuillier, 'A Propos de L'Histoire de la Sculpture du XIXe siècle: Réflexions sur le bonheur de l'Historien', in *Rencontres de l'École du Louvre – La Sculpture du XIXe Siècle, une Mémoire Retrouvée. Les fonds de sculpture* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1986), pp. 9-16 (p. 11).

¹³ - *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

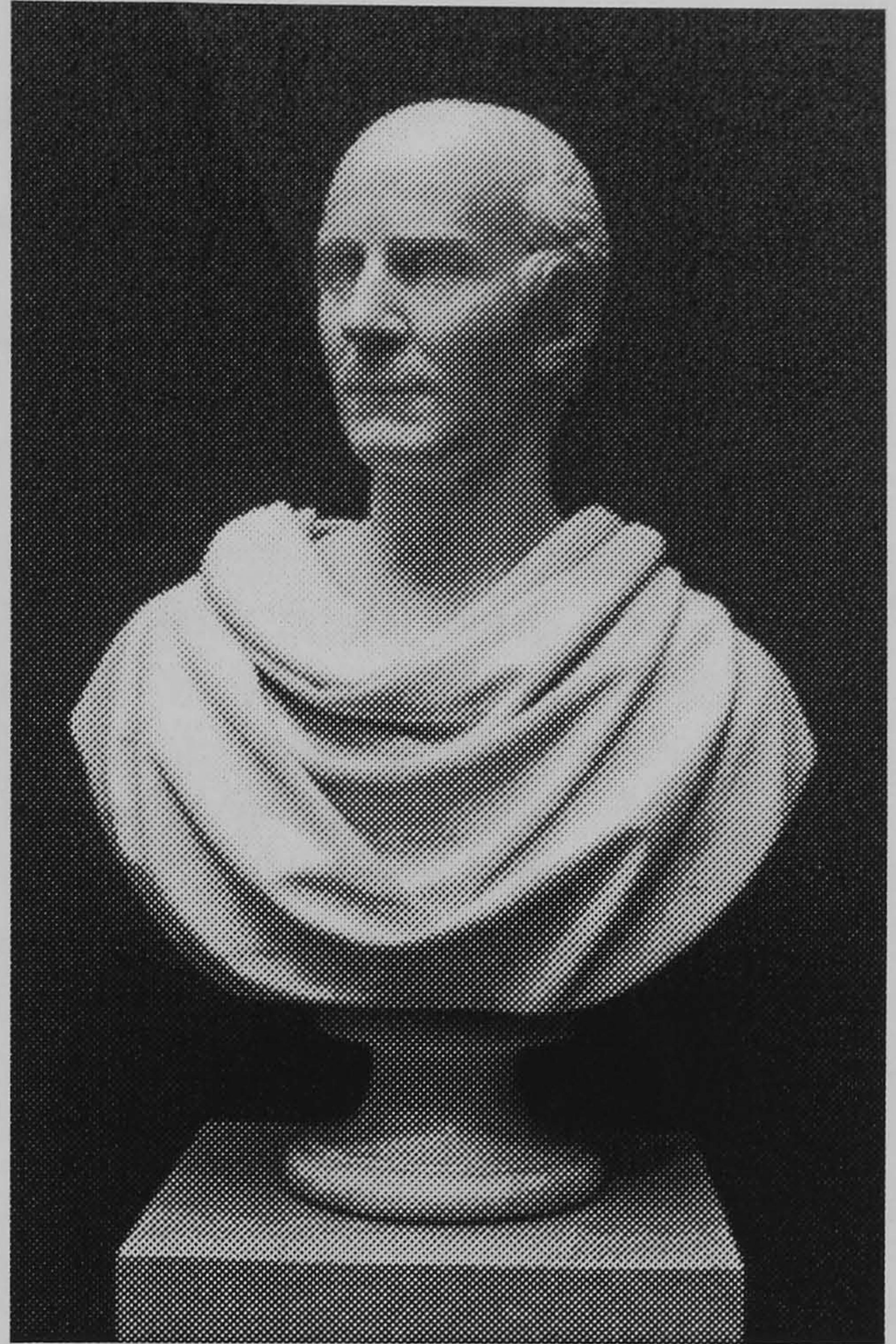


fig. 16 Henry Kirke Brown, *Thomas Cole*, before 1830

You Become What You Behold



fig. 17 Barbara Kruger, *You Thrive on Mistaken Identity*, series 1979-83

American sculpture to divest the study of the nationalistic and xenophobic agendas that have prevailed in most writings on early American art – a task all the more difficult because these agendas were already present from the revolutionary period, as Erik Amfitheatrof notes:

Because Italy had acquired, in the Renaissance, a gothic romance aura of sinfulness and lust, the relatives back home were usually scandalised when Uncle Edward or Aunt Sally sank into expatriation in a Tuscan villa or a Roman palazzo and stubbornly turned away from the challenges of nation-building....

Most Americans were skeptical of the country, wary of its morals, and in love with the ruins and the picture galleries.... Nearly every American painter from West and Copley to Samuel F. B. Morse, the inventor of the telegraph, spent a year or two copying Old Masters.¹⁴

Subscribing to Blake's maxim that 'You became what you beheld', many American visitors to Europe considered looking at art – and especially art made in Europe – a dangerous activity, in a literalisation of how, in Emerson's words, 'perception is not whimsical, but fatal'.¹⁵ American sculptor John Quincy Adams Ward spoke of the dangers of Rome to an interviewer from *Harper's Monthly*, saying, 'There is a cursed atmosphere about that place which somehow kills every artist who goes there. The magnetism of the antique statues is so strong that it draws a sculptor's manhood out of him.' He went on to advocate that American artists reside in the U.S: 'A modern man has modern themes to deal with,' he explained, 'and if art is a living thing, a serious, earnest thing fresh from a man's soul, he must live in that which he treats. Besides, we shall never have good art at home until our best artists reside here.'¹⁶

Holly Pinto Savinetti, curator of the 1985 Nassau County Museum of Fine Art exhibition, *American Artists Abroad: The European Experience in the Nineteenth Century*, confirms:

¹⁴ - Erik Amfitheatrof, *The Enchanted Ground: Americans in Italy, 1760-1980* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown & Co., 1980), p. 4.

¹⁵ - Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Self-Reliance', in *Selected Essays*, ed. by Larzer Ziff (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), p. 188.

¹⁶ - Quoted in Lynes, *The Art-Makers*, p. 298.

The emphasis on specifically “American” accomplishments in art, since the nineteenth century, primarily instigated in order to establish an equilibrium of native output with that of Europe, has (to a much lesser degree today) eclipsed a fair assessment of the role of European prototypes in the nineteenth century not only in the art but in the cultural choices of America. The nineteenth century becomes a pivotal period in the American artists’ endeavours to master and then supersede the accomplishments of Europe, particularly because this goal was initially set against a pastiche of conflicting ideals concerned with America as a “virgin continent” “threatened by an incursion of history”, an America morally and physically superior to Europe, views supported by the strong ascendancy of a nationalistic press and literary community.¹⁷

John Wilmerding also notes, ‘For each generation, however, the lure of Europe often involved mixed sentiments – to seek advancement in foreign academies and in a long tradition of art non-existent at home, while also remaining faithful to one’s national impulses and aspirations.’¹⁸ The identity constructed for the ‘American School’ by nineteenth century American critics to secure the uniqueness and validity of American art practice was necessarily nationalistic and, therefore, inconsistent; it presaged the problems encountered by American artists who expatriated or even just studied abroad in justifying their foreign experience while claiming their art as ‘American’. The critic identified as ‘A.’ in the article, ‘The Arts in the United States’, published in *The Art-Journal* of 1851 bespeaks the anxiety around European influence confronting American artists in the nineteenth century:

...separated from the influence of Schools, and left to the unassisted study of nature, there must be originality of treatment and conception; and so far as the imperfect development of an American School has gone, these characteristics are visible. We have done little to compare with the Art-products of the Old World, it is true; but if progression is an evidence of vitality, we possess it, for in no school has greater advancement been made in the last half century.¹⁹

Following the logic that America’s most significant quality and contribution to

17 - Holly Pinto Savinetti, *American Artists Abroad: The European Experience in the Nineteenth Century* (exhibition catalogue, Nassau County Museum of Fine Art, June 2 – September 2, 1985), p. 6.

18 - John Wilmerding, *American Art* (NY: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 61.

19 - ‘The Arts in the United States’, *The Art-Journal*, n.s. 3 (1851), p. 191.

Art is its naive originality, the author is forced to abandon any possessive nationalistic pride in the United States' most famous native artists:

Of West and others who are virtually expatriated by a want of public appreciation here, I will not speak. The accident of birth is little; the parents who have sent their children from the hearthstone, either from neglect or unkindness, resign for ever all claim on them to those in whose hands they have found support and sympathy. So we, though we may regret deeply the encouragement our own tardy taste did not give, as candid and liberal men, must forego all claim to West, Leslie, Newton, and others.

The production of an artist is involuntary, and the country producing him can therefore claim no credit; the supporting of him is voluntary, and the country giving it may well call him her own. We cannot, with any justice, consider as American artists those who, though of American origin, derived their motives, their sustenance, and their fame from the sympathy and appreciating taste of the English nation.²⁰

This American desire for cultural independence from Europe meant that by leaving the United States, the American artist risked losing her or his membership in its national school in a way which movement among nations by European artists rarely threatened. At the same time, the expatriate American artist, and particularly the American in Rome, could not claim rights to the School of their host country.²¹ In addition, there were economic reasons beyond nationalistic indoctrination for the Americans in Rome to cling to their American identities: the majority of their clients were Americans on the Grand Tour, who often preferred to buy their souvenir artworks from fellow English-speaking, Protestant Americans than from alien Europeans, and there was some hope of receiving more sympathetic treatment – or at least special recognition – from American critics than from European critics who were

²⁰ - Ibid., p. 191.

²¹ - Not surprisingly the integration into the national school seems to have been rather easier in the case of American artists expatriate to England, particularly in the years immediately before and after the American War of Independence, thanks to a common language and cultural base. Contrast Benjamin West's easy assimilation into the British School, for example, with West even rising to the presidency of the Royal Academy in 1792-1820, despite his political support for the American Revolution, with the criticism William Wetmore Story received for having exhibited his *Cleopatra* in the Italian Pavilion of the 1862 Great Exhibition, when no American sponsors for the shipment of his work to London from Rome were forthcoming. Story was reprimanded not just for having exhibited with another national school, but specifically for having exhibited with the *Roman* school, associated with the papacy and corrupt government by the American press.

unlikely to recognise American natives as belonging to European national schools. In the case of expatriate American women artists in Rome, their national identity carried with it an additional, gendered stake, discussed further in Part 1, 'Stranger Subjects'. (*fig. 18*)

Few would deny the importance of European precedents in the development of the American Schools in painting and sculpture. 'Any chapter which should attempt to chronicle the American sculptors who have made their temporary or permanent home abroad would be indefinitely prolonged,' wrote Radcliffe at the end of the nineteenth century.²² And yet reflecting this early ambivalence in American sentiment about its artists' expatriation, American art's debt to the Old Country, and particularly the periods of expatriation to Rome in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that were central to the foundation of American art, before the rise of Paris as Europe's artistic centre, rarely attain the status of more than quaint anecdote in the major accounts of American Art History. (*fig. 19*)

Almost all American artists of the nineteenth century travelled to Europe and studied there, just as European artists travelled, as they were able, to study famous artworks and collections. But the move to Europe by American artists during the nineteenth century gains a particular significance in light of the contemporary struggle to define America and American art. Holly Pinto Savinetti notes that the definitions of America and American art arose directly from their juxtaposition with European precedents:

The myth of America as the "hideous wilderness" ran parallel with the vision of it as an Arcadia.... The key to such connotations surrounding the American landscape in the nineteenth century... is that without comparison with Europe these mythic characteristics associated with America had no rule of measure.²³

E.P. Richardson similarly recognises this quest for the true and purely

22 - A. G. Radcliffe, *Schools and Masters of Sculpture* (NY: D. Appleton and Company, 1894), p. 22.

23 - Savinetti, *American Artists Abroad*, p. 11.

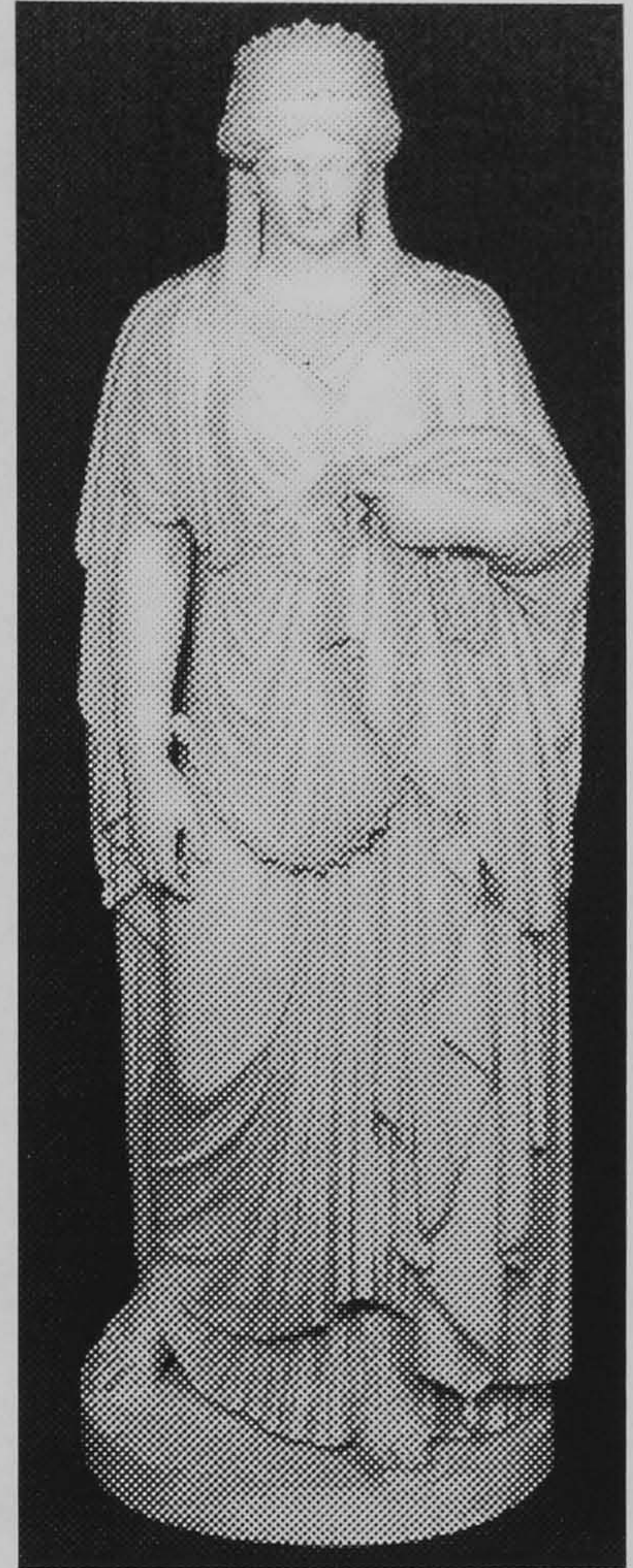


fig. 18 Harriet Hosmer, *Queen Zenobia in Chains*, 1859, marble, 122.5x40x52.5cm, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT; the original monumental version (ca. 2.5m) is lost

Ms. Identification



fig. 19 Barbara Kruger, *We Don't Need Another Hero*, series 1979-83

American quality in painting, terming it the 'frontier fallacy':

European historians have tended, owing to an understandable but almost total ignorance of America, to limit their sympathies to the American artists closest to European life.... From this limited perspective, however, American painting appears a marginal phenomenon, hardly continuous or abundant enough to be considered.

Perhaps in reaction, recent American writers have often seemed to resent any connection with Europe and have emphasised the opposite end of the scale: the untaught, the naïf, the artists who never studied or journeyed abroad. This produces what I call the *frontier fallacy*, which tries to identify a "truly American" note in our art by identifying it with the sturdy, self-taught independence of the frontiersman. This note exists, and lends its flavour to our history. Yet the imaginative life of a whole nation is a vast chorus of a thousand voices, not to be reduced to a single note. American culture is neither a raw new product nor a borrowed old one....²⁴

American art and culture, however, are not exclusively the products of men, obviously. The refusal to acknowledge the primacy of the relationship between American art and the European study of its artists may at first appear to be merely chauvinism of a nationalistic sort. But there is an additional, and more serious, effect of this occlusion. In addition to being the period of the greatest expatriation among American artists, the pre-modernist nineteenth century, relative to the population of American artists then active, is also the period of American women artists' greatest visibility and international professional renown before the late twentieth century. The neoclassical American women sculptors were probably the most successful population of women artists anywhere in Western Art Markets before recent times. In searching for the founding fathers of American art, we find that nearly half of them are actually founding mothers. Why has this 'herstory' been repressed? (figs 20 & 21)

Significantly, the emergence of nineteenth century American art as a legitimate field of study coincided with the height of feminist and women's

²⁴ - E. P. Richardson, *Painting in America from 1502 to the Present* (NY: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1965), p. 2.



fig. 20 Barbara Kruger, *Your Gaze Hits the Side of My Face*, series 1979-83

Your Gaze

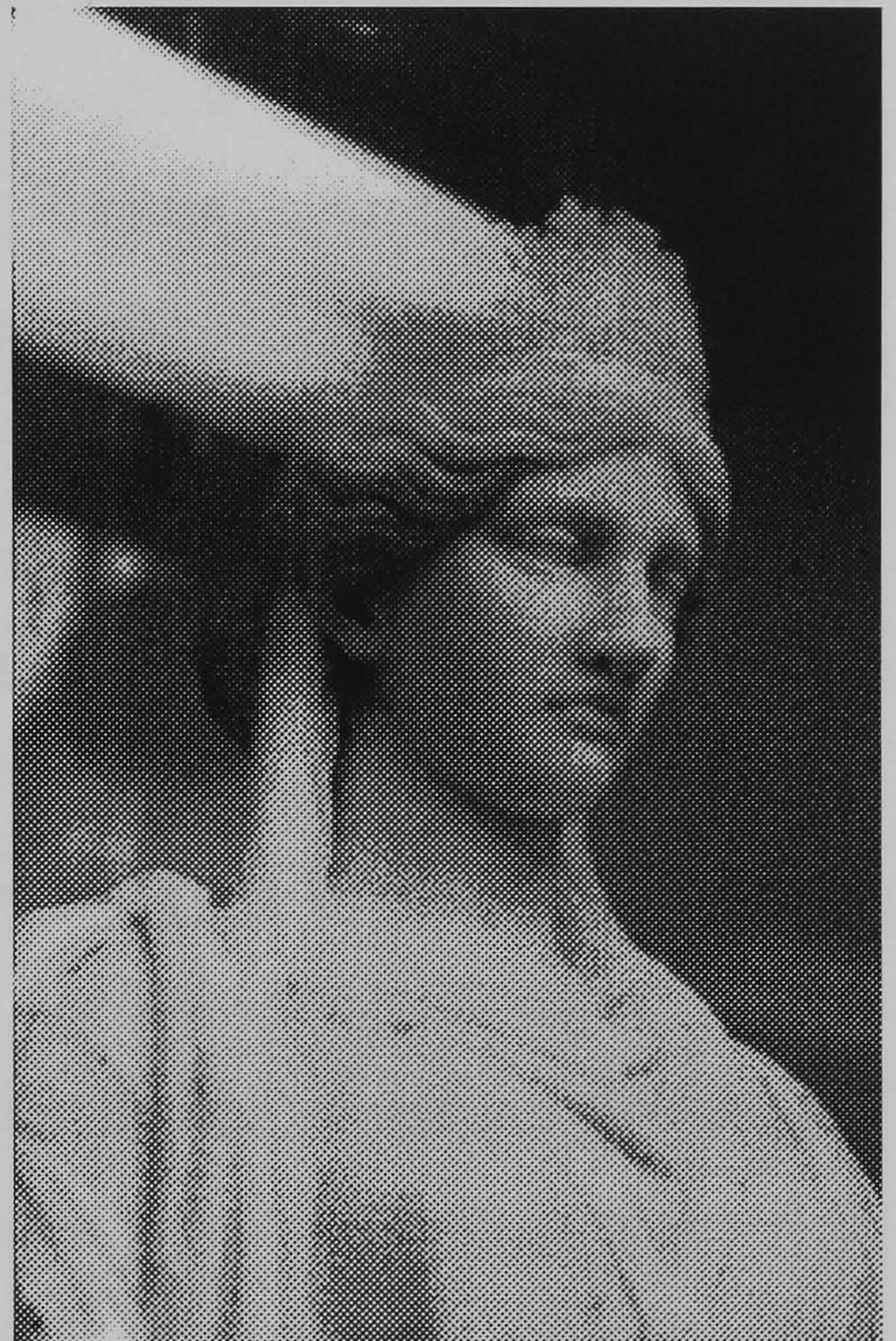


fig. 21 Harriet Hosmer, *Queen Zenobia in Chains*, c. 1862, marble, Watertown Public Library, MA

Hits the Side of My Face

movement critiques of academic institutions in the USA. The seminal 1972 exhibition on the nineteenth century American women sculptors in Rome, *The White, Marmorean Flock: Nineteenth Century American Women Neoclassical Sculptors*, betrays the influence of this historical moment.²⁵ The potential radicality of this entry of American women sculptors into the annals of Art History, however, has been severely limited by permitting their 'additive' introduction as heroised historical exceptions and/or tokenistic proof of the art historian's 'sensitivity' to 'women and minority artists', rather than as interventive forces that call attention to the hegemonic structures of art history itself.²⁶

The histories of the neoclassical American women sculptors abroad, with their works effectively excluded at five levels of discourse from the canons of art history as Victorian sculpture made by American women in Italy, is one which challenges the cultural hegemony of American Art History and its twentieth century practice of excluding women artists from the canon as anything but the exception that proves the rule of 'male genius'. Theirs is the exile that reveals the 'deal' that is at the bottom, that is, the fundamentum – or should I say, pudendum, for this erasure is indeed a cause for shame – of the Sardine Canon, a deal in which the picture is framed so as to produce the

²⁵ - Nicolai Cikovsky, Jr., Marie H. Morrison and Carol Ockman, eds., *The White, Marmorean Flock: Nineteenth Century American Women Neoclassical Sculptors*, with an introduction by William H. Gerds, Jr. (exhibition catalogue, Vassar College Art Gallery, April 4-30, 1972).

²⁶ - Two anecdotal examples, though by no means conclusive, illustrate the two principle ways in which the nineteenth century American women sculptors have been allowed to enter recent academic discourse: the work of Edmonia Lewis has been added to an 'Introduction to Art History' course at a university in Massachusetts as part of the 'African-American and African Art' section, but no other American women sculptors of the nineteenth century are taught in the survey. In an unspoken appeal to race as a unifying factor among artists of otherwise hugely diverse African-American and African origins, this course presents Edmonia Lewis as an emblem of the colour of her skin and indirectly confirms the centrality of the histories of white, European, male artists. In a similar vein, a 1998 conference on nineteenth century Americans in Rome witnessed an enthusiastic trumpeting of Harriet Hosmer's greater prowess as a sculptor over her contemporary, William Wetmore Story. As a white sculptor, Hosmer can perhaps more easily be rehabilitated in American art history as an 'honorary male' by reframing her work in the modernist terms of greatness and innovation. Thus these essentially additive strategies leave the traditional structures of Art History not undermined but confirmed, simply with different people in power.

subject of American Art History as a unary, Cartesian one, by casting an-other as that which is 'rather out of place in the picture'. This is a foreclosure of the feminine, a refusal to see the period of American women artists' greatest international professional prominence, because this stain on the picture of American art history challenges not only the presumptions upon which Art History founds its national schools, but also the gendered assumptions about who a sculptor is. (*fig. 22*)

To the I/eye of the Petit-Académie, the histories of the neoclassical American women sculptors are a blind spot; they 'look like nothing on earth'. But that is not the w/hole picture, for 'Art Hystory' is hysterical. Its desire is sustained as unsatisfied and unsatisfiable by means of the absence to which it attempts to relegate its 'no-things', out of place in the picture. With the anamorphic glint of the fool's gold of the Sardine canon, the field of the visible opens up into a privileged terrain from which the desire of the subject of art history winks ironically back in a gleam of light, and frames Petit-Académie as a split and unstable subject. What is the source of this desire? An empty and discarded sardine can, La can-on its head, an object, an *objet a*; a symbol of lack, of loss – nothing: not the American women sculptors themselves, for they are easily excavated, polished and propped up in the revisionist canons as the badges of liberal academic policy, but rather the thing perceived to be in them that stains the screen onto which we project our fantasy images of American art.

'Art hysteria places us, I would say, on the track of some kind of original sin in analysis.... The truth is perhaps simply one thing, namely, the desire of Freud himself, the fact that something, in Freud, was never analysed.'²⁷ focusing on the stain in American Art History puts us on the track of an "original sin in analysis", something that was never analysed in "Art Hystory", an oversight, perhaps. The poet nodded; a lapsus.

²⁷ - Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 12.

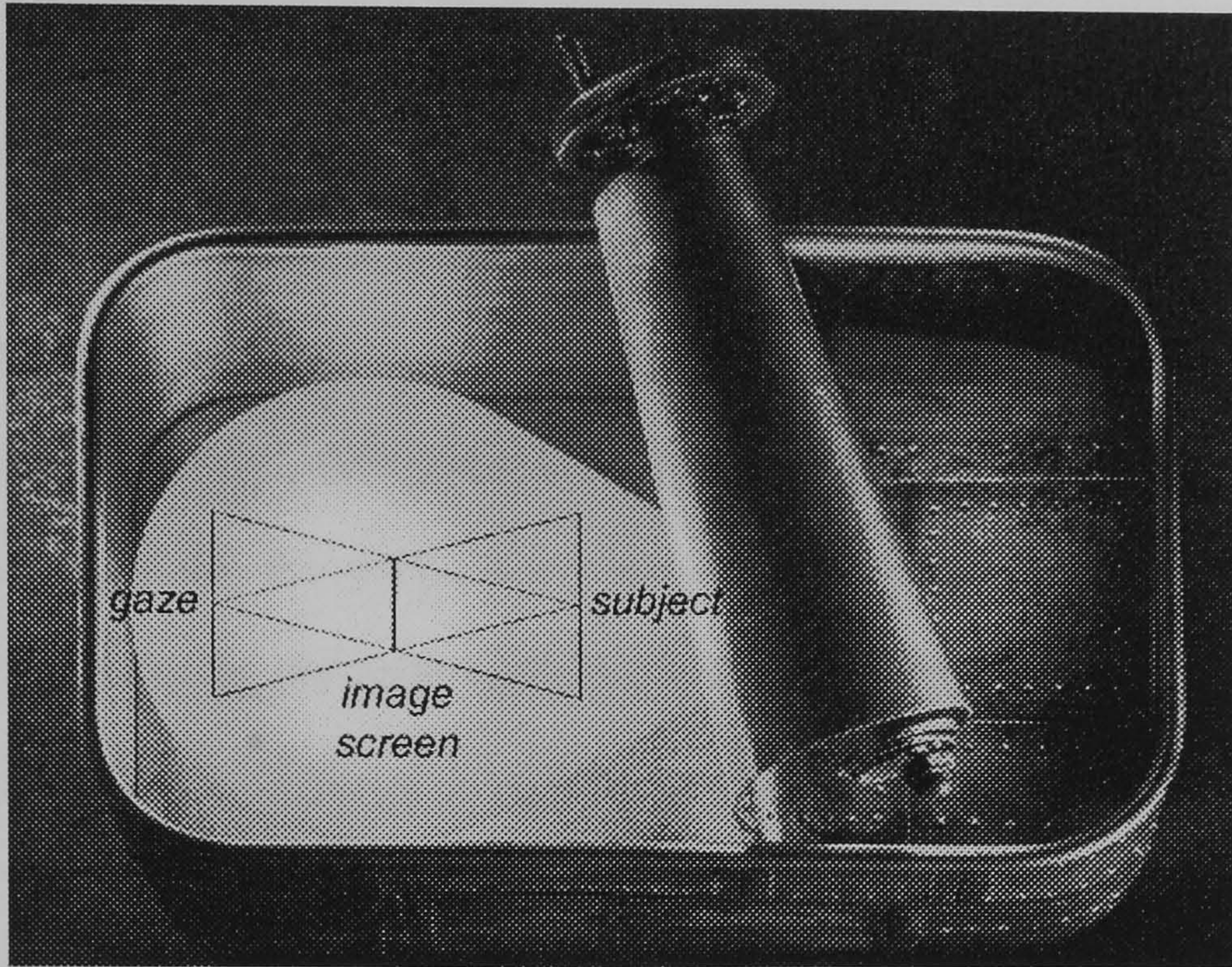


fig. 22 'Jack La-Can', *Schema of the Gaze and the Subject of Representation*, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 106

La-Can on Identification

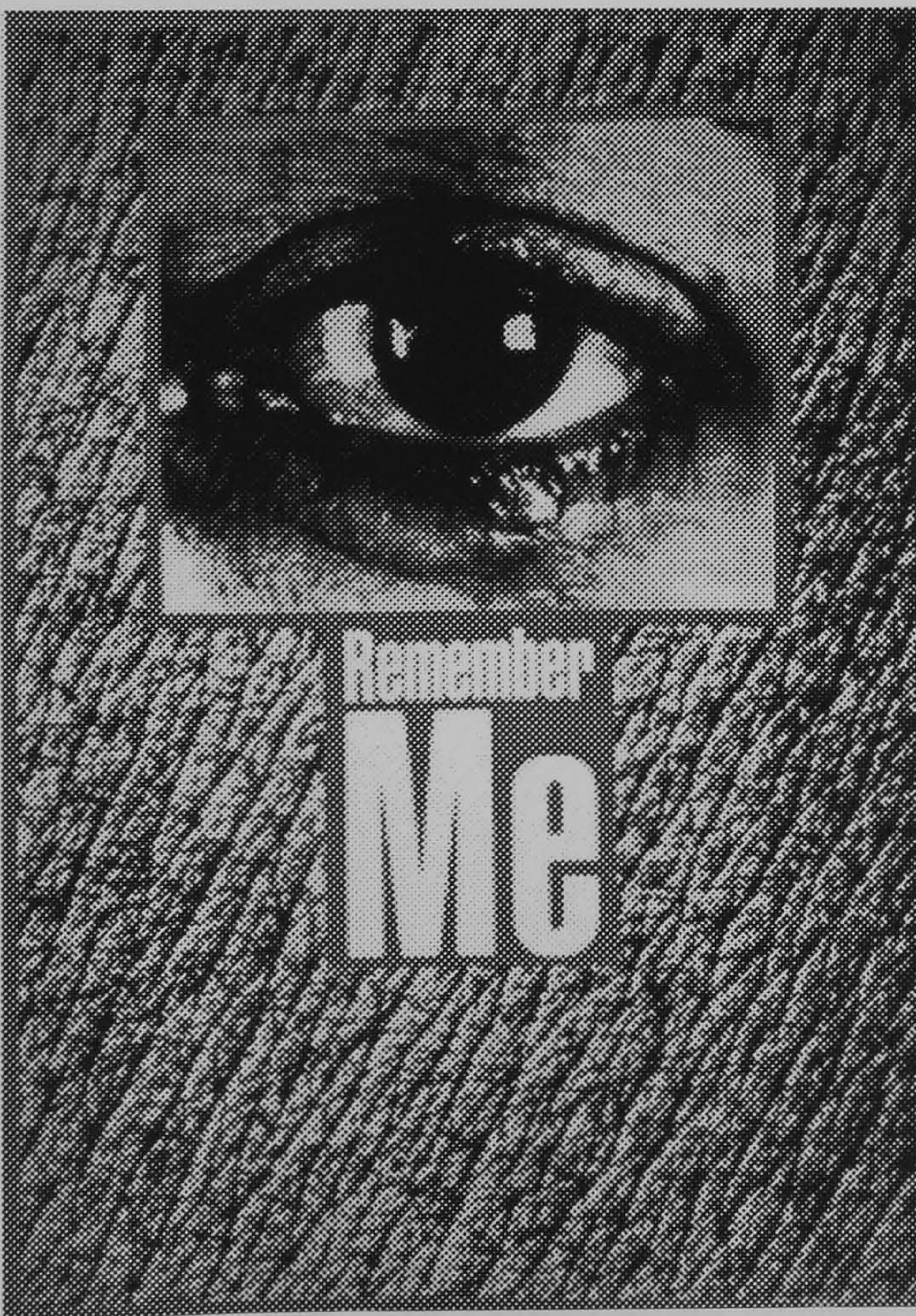


fig. 23 Barbara Kruger, *Remember Me*, series 1979-83

'When the space of a lapsus no longer carries any meaning (or interpretation), then only is one sure that one is in the unconscious. *One knows.*

'But one has only to be aware of the fact to find oneself outside it. There is no friendship there, in that space that supports this unconscious.

'All I can do is tell the truth. No, that isn't so – I have missed it. There is no truth, that, in passing through awareness, does not lie.

'But one runs after it all the same.'²⁸ (*fig. 23*)

PART I: *Stranger Subjects*

Chapter 1: *Methodologies*

1.i 'What makes this possible?':²⁹ Reading the Sardine Canon

In 1513-15, Michelangelo made this: In 1875, Edmonia Lewis made this:

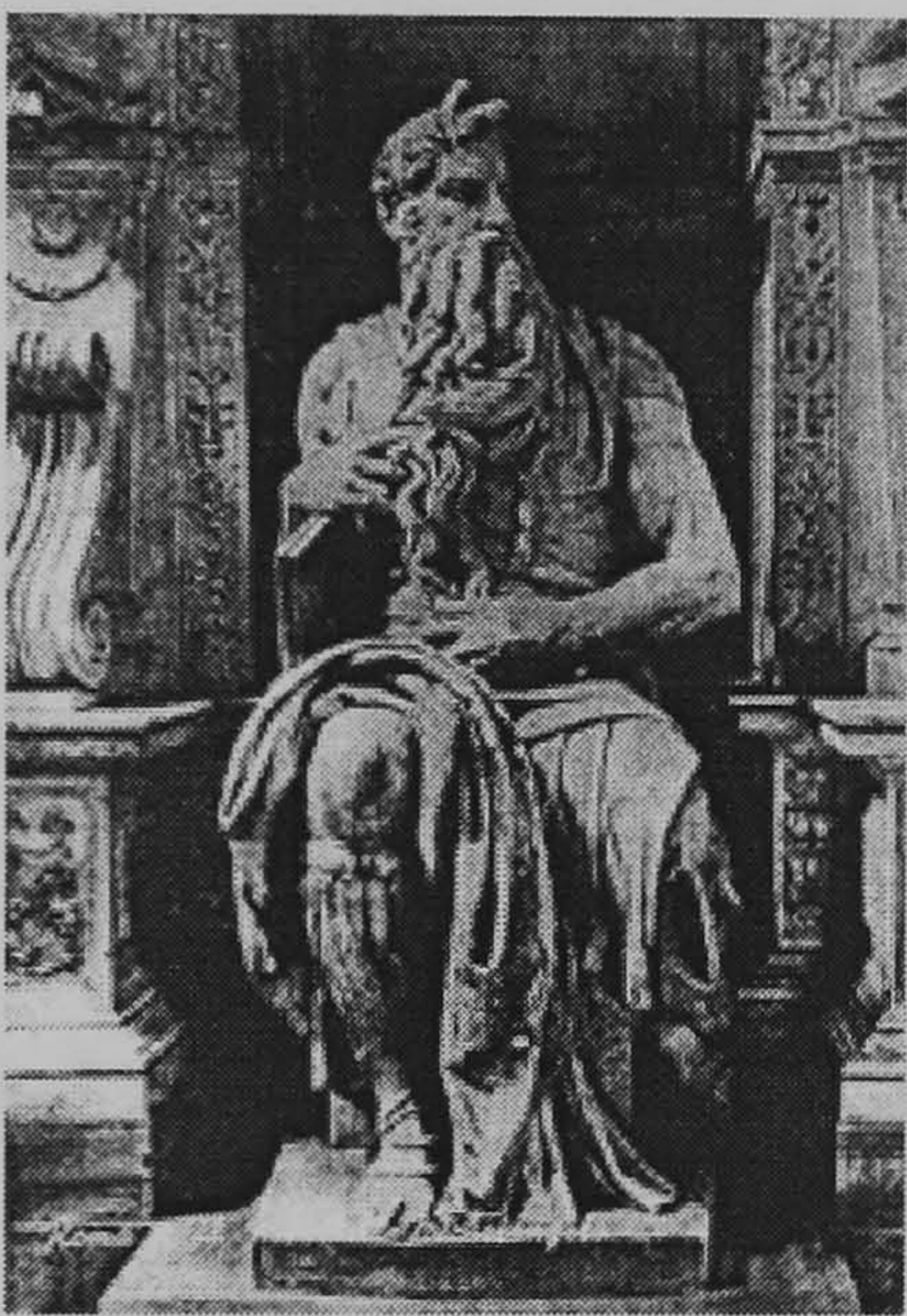


fig. 24 *Moses*, marble, 235cm high, San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome



fig. 25 *Moses (after Michelangelo)*, marble, 68x28x43.2cm, National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C.

'Sculpted in the sixteenth century by the "genius-sculptor" Michelangelo, this "portrait" of Moses is a mere rhetorical praise of the biblical figure.

'Lewis, on the other hand, sculpts "Moses, (*after Michelangelo*)": the idea is astounding. Lewis, a contemporary of William James,³⁰ does not define Moses as an inquiry into Michelangelo but as the sculpture's origin. Michelangelo's Moses, for her, is not the biblical figure; he is what we judge Moses to have been. Lewis's rendering of the famous knotted beard is brazenly pragmatic.'

²⁹ - Mieke Bal's present-tense reposing of Griselda Pollock's 'questions of the social history of art', in 'Reading Art?' in *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings*, ed. by Griselda Pollock (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 25-41 (pp. 39-40).

³⁰ - William James (1842-1910), US psychologist and philosopher, exponent of pragmatism; brother of the expatriate writer, Henry James. Source: *Webster's New World Dictionary of American English*, ed. by Victoria Neufeldt (Cleveland & NY: Webster's New World, 1991), p. 722.

'The contrast in style is also vivid. The archaic style of Lewis – quite foreign, after all – suffers from a certain affectation. Not so that of her forerunner, who handles with ease the Carrara marble of his region.'

In her sculptural masterpiece, Edmonia Lewis has 'enriched, by a new technique, the halting and rudimentary art of sculpting: this new technique is that of the deliberate anachronism and the erroneous attribution.'³¹

Concluding her inquiry into 'Reading Art?', Mieke Bal uses Jorge Luis Borges's story, 'Pierre Menard, Author of the Quichote', paraphrased above, to illustrate the relationship between writing and reading. 'Writing, and by extension, painting [and sculpting], is an act of reading, and reading is a manner of rewriting or repainting [or resculpting]. And such acts, Benjamin knew, don't occur in "empty" time but in a time filled by the present.'³²

If, as Benjamin proposed and Bal confirms, 'history is inevitably altered by our memorisation of it', then the sculptures under investigation here are not just the objects of my study, but as 're-sculptings' – rereadings of the sculptures which are themselves readings – they figure my relationships as a historically-situated viewer with these objects that also have historically-specific pasts and presents in their own right.³³ The exploration of these relationships entails the adoption of many theoretical and historical frames in this dissertation, and confers on me the responsibility for the analysis of those frames. At times the number and dissonant diversity of frames required by this reading threaten to overwhelm my study, but this is a risk I deem essential, since the image too, when 'read' in the manner Bal proposes, is revealed to be so 'saturated with meaning' that it 'loses its apparent coherence'.³⁴ But a radical result can emerge from such strategic failures, which Bal describes: 'Small elements turned into signs can subvert the overt,

³¹ - A paraphrasing of Jorge Luis Borges's 'Pierre Menard, Author of the Quichote', in *Labyrinths* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962), pp. 62-71 (p. 69), suggested by Mieke Bal's discussion of this text in her essay 'Reading Art?', p. 40.

³² - Mieke Bal, "Reading Art?", p. 40.

³³ - Ibid., pp. 39-40.

³⁴ - Ibid., p. 39.

overall meaning so as to inscribe something that didn't seem to be there, yet appropriates the image for a counter-message, a counter-coherence'.³⁵

For Lacan as well, the moment of failure is an ethical one, in which the subject confronts the split nature of his or her subjectivity in the decentering of his or her imaginary identifications and dissolution of 'consciousness-of-self'.³⁶ The psychoanalytic direction of this study leaves me in an impossible position, in which I must both assume the discourse of mastery within the structure of the University, and accept that, in the final analysis, this subject, the subject of my desire, 'isn't it'.³⁷ Ultimately, the University and the ethical moment of analysis, in which desire emerges into the nothingness of full speech, are incompatible.

In an attempt to simultaneously succeed and fail, I have come to think of the 'resculpted' objects of my study as 'meeting grounds where cultural processes become *intersubjective*'.³⁸ My re-visions of the histories of American women sculptors in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century read their works and the art historical discourses from which they emerge for precisely the elements that art history 'considers not-fitting' and 'tends to construct... as alien, a later addition'.³⁹ Against the symbiotic traditions of celebrating and denigrating the American women sculptors who worked in mid-nineteenth century Rome, this reading seeks neither to heroise nor to blaspheme, but rather to empty the Sardine Canon that lies at the heart of these stranger subjects of American art history.

35 - Bal, p. 39.

36 - Jacques Lacan, 'The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis', *Écrits*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (NY and London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1977), pp. 30-113 (p. 80).

37 - Jacques Lacan, 'The direction of treatment and principles of power', *Écrits*, pp. 226-280 (p. 277).

38 - Ibid.

39 - Ibid.

1.ii Reframing the Name: The 'White, Marmorean Flock'

Story's "Hatty" is of course Miss Harriet Hosmer, the most eminent member of that strange sisterhood of American "lady sculptors" who at one time settled upon the seven hills in a white, marmorean flock. The odd phenomenon of their practically simultaneous appearance would no doubt have its interest in any study of the birth and growth of taste in the simmering society that produced them; their rise, their prosperity, their subsidence, are, in presence of some of the widely scattered monuments of their reign, things likely to lead us into bypath queer and crooked, to make us bump against facts that would seem only to wait, quite in a flutter, to live again as anecdotes. But our ramifications might at such a rate easily become too many. One of the sisterhood, if I am not mistaken, was a negress, whose colour, picturesquely contrasting with that of her plastic material, was the pleading agent of her fame. Another was a 'gifted' child (speaking by the civil register as well as by nature) who shook saucy curls in the lobbies of the Capitol and extorted from susceptible senators commissions for national monuments. The world was good-natured to them – dropped them even good-naturedly, and it is not in our fond perspective that they must show for aught else than artless. Miss Hosmer had talent (it would be to be remembered that her master, John Gibson, dedicated her to renown, were it not that John Gibson's own renown has also by this time turned so to the ghostly), and she was, above all, a character, strong, fresh and interesting, destined, whatever statues she made, to make friends that were better still even than these at their best.⁴⁰

In his 1903 biography of expatriate American sculptor, William Wetmore Story (1819-1895), Henry James coined the phrase, 'the white, marmorean flock', referring to the American women sculptors who had worked in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century, at the height of neoclassicism. (*figs 26 & 27*) Since the mid-twentieth century, this phrase has been used as a convenient shorthand to refer to the American women sculptors who had worked in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century, and at times even to name the entire

40 - Henry James, *William Wetmore Story and His Friends* 2 vols (1903; London: Thames and Hudson, 1957) I, pp. 254-255.

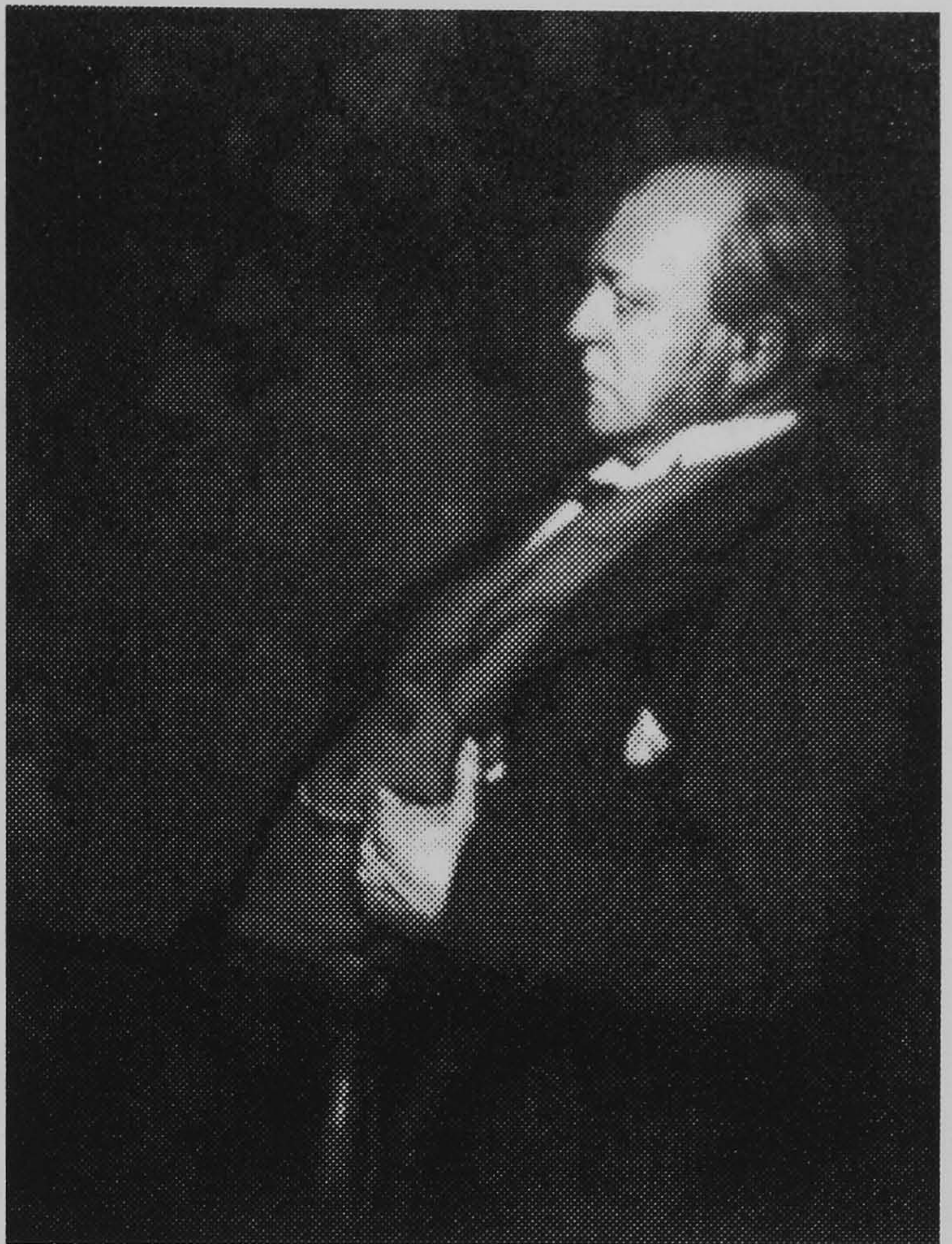


fig. 26 Jacques-Enule Blanche, *Henry James*, 1908,
National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC



fig. 27 William Wetmore Story in His Studio,
unidentified photographer, Rome, ca. 1855

group of American sculptors, male and female, of the period and style.⁴¹

Although many recent writers acknowledge the patronising and dismissive tone of James's nickname, only Griselda Pollock and Jane Mayo Roos have so far seriously questioned the impact of its continuing use on scholarship in the field.⁴² Roos comments:

On a first reading, perhaps the most astonishing thing about this sentence is the poetic beauty of the final metaphor – the lovely, natural after-image of clouds of white birds landing softly on the hills of Rome. But while the sentence is a highly evocative one, it is also a killer: the inevitable implication is that these birds are women – tiny, anonymous, hapless creatures who traveled *en masse* and whose accomplishments were diminutive in scale.⁴³

Indeed, in addition to giving the inaccurate impression that the American women sculptors immigrated to Rome as a group and nested there together, the phrase, 'white marmorean flock', is an oxymoron, an impossible name for a conjuncture of femininity and creativity that remains impossible to phallic Symbolic systems. Instead of permitting us to name the American women sculptors in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century, 'white marmorean flock' subsumes their histories and works under the resonances associated with these words. 'White, marmorean flock' is therefore more than a patronising, misleading, racist and misogynistic nickname: it becomes the defining image and means of not pursuing any other way of reading of the American women sculptors in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century and their works. 'White,

⁴¹ - The first twentieth century use of the phrase to entitle an art historical text about the nineteenth century American women sculptors seems to have been Margaret Farrand Thorp's article, 'The White Marmorean Flock', *New England Quarterly*, XXXII (June 1959), 147-169, which became a chapter of the same name in her 1965 book, *The Literary Sculptors* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1965). The first exhibition dedicated to the works of American women sculptors in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century was the 1972 Vassar College Art Gallery exhibition, 'The White, Marmorean Flock: Nineteenth Century American Women Neoclassical Sculptors'; catalogue by Nicolai Cikovsky, Jr., Marie H. Morrison, and Carol Ockman; introduction by William H. Gerdtz, Jr. The phrase was used again as a section title in Wendy Slatkin's *Women Artists in History* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1985). Both Oliver W. Larkin, in *Art and Life in America* (NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1960), and Russell Lynes, in *The Art-Makers* (NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1970), use the expression as the title of chapters on American neoclassical sculpture in general, including the sculptors who were men.

⁴² - I am grateful to Griselda Pollock for bringing to my attention the importance to this study of a deconstruction of James's phrase.

⁴³ - Jane Mayo Roos, 'Another Look at Henry James and the "White, Marmorean Flock"', *Woman's Art Journal*, 4.1 (Spring-Summer, 1983), 29-34, p. 32.

marmorean flock' raises not just a problem of historiography, as a study of the exclusion of the women sculptors from questionable canons, but rather a problematic of the feminine and subjectivity.⁴⁴

The women sculptors are marked in Henry James's phrase as white, in an anxious repetition of the marble's colour that could have gone unremarked, as 'marble' in the context of American neoclassicism would simply have been understood as being white. But the reason for the tautology and emphatic comma after the word, which encourages us to linger on the idea of 'white' as we read the phrase, emerges further down the passage when James returns to the issue of colour in order to cast the woman sculptor of colour, Edmonia Lewis, as the negative to her sculptural material. White even if black, James conjures up images of the women sculptors as pure, virginal, naive, simple, youthful even. A 'white flock' instead of black sheep, the women sculptors pose no challenge to the *status quo*.

The word, 'flock', signals that the travelling and expatriation of the American women sculptors are not the results of considered, subjective decisions but rather obey the natural rhythms of birds of passage, or the herd mentality of a flock of sheep. Their movement is neither professionally-

motivated nor permanent, as they 'settle' lightly in Rome. 'Artless' in both

⁴⁴ - I was brutally reminded of how entrenched the pernicious imperialism of this phrase is when interviewed on my dissertation topic by a journalist for the *Times Higher Education Supplement* (August 21, 1998, pp. 16-17). When asked how my work differed from that of previous scholars in this field, I tried to explain the subsumption of most work on the American women sculptors in Rome under the terms of James's phrase, and the importance of deconstructing and shifting this pattern to reveal the problematics of the feminine that lie at its epicentre. My amazement and delight that this topic would actually get some contemporary press coverage was quickly turned to dismay when, upon opening the paper, I found the section on my work entitled, 'A flock of sculptors'. Beneath my photo was the caption, 'Nancy Proctor: "I was surprised to find American women sculptors in Rome between 1848 and the 1880s"'. Despite my best efforts and careful explanations, once again James's phrase had taken over, twisting my words to render the American women sculptors in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century a marginal, freakish aberration in history. I was even alleged to have said that most people think these women sculptors' works were 'crap'; for my discussion of the continual return of neoclassical sculpture in twentieth century art historical discourse as the *objet petit a* 'shit', see Part II, 'In/Between the Studio', Chapter 8, *Beatrice Cenci, "Between Two Deaths"*. And finally, I was aligned with the Sadean position, 'preferring not to make value judgments' on these sculptors and sculptures, having abdicated 'the morality of the master, created for the virtues of the master and linked to the order of powers' [Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-1960: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, Book VI, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Dennis Porter (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 315].

senses of the word, the women sculptors are unprepossessing, flighty, lightweight, small and fragile. This flock has the potential to have its wings clipped, be caged – hunted, even.

And yet this is a ‘marmorean’ flock. Stone birds can’t fly. Rather, they are ‘dropped’ by history, however ‘good-naturedly’, and presumably fall heavily from their dizzying heights. The impossibility of a ‘marmorean flock’ flying to settle anywhere indexes the impossibility, for James and the art historical discourse he represents, of a woman being a sculptor. In what I have termed, the ‘Pygmalion effect’, James’s phrase conflates the woman sculptor with the material of her artistic production to render her a woman sculpture instead.⁴⁵ For James and many critics since him, a woman in the sculptor’s studio can only be the passive, cold, carved object of sculptural production. Represented as animal figurines, the American women sculptors are ‘fancy-pieces’ or ‘conceits’ in James’s expression: ‘artless’ conversation-pieces for the Victorian salon, rather than the more important ‘ideal’ or monumental statues. The women sculptors and their works are presented as quaint decorations in history, rather than as art and artists. The choice of the latinate adjective ‘marmorean’ over ‘marble’ both suits James’s metre and evokes a ponderous, funereal classicism that marks the women sculptors for twentieth century readers as belonging to a musty, lifeless and irretrievable past. Irrelevant to contemporary concerns, they are cozily domesticated in a mythic space and time, settling down as one to nest in a Rome that is similarly marked by the ancient Roman republican phrase, ‘the seven hills’.

In fashioning his phrase, James took his cue from Nathaniel Hawthorne’s novel, *The Marble Faun*. The ‘marble faun’ was at the end of the nineteenth century the most famous stone animal/human in Rome known to the American readership. (figs 28-30) As Hawthorne’s most successful book

⁴⁵ - The ‘Pygmalion effect’ is discussed at length in Part II, Chapter 6, ‘The Pygmalion Effect’.



fig. 28 *Faun in Repose*, known as 'The Faun of Praxiteles', Roman copy of Greek original of 350-30 BCE, marble, 1.705m high, Capitoline Museums, Rome

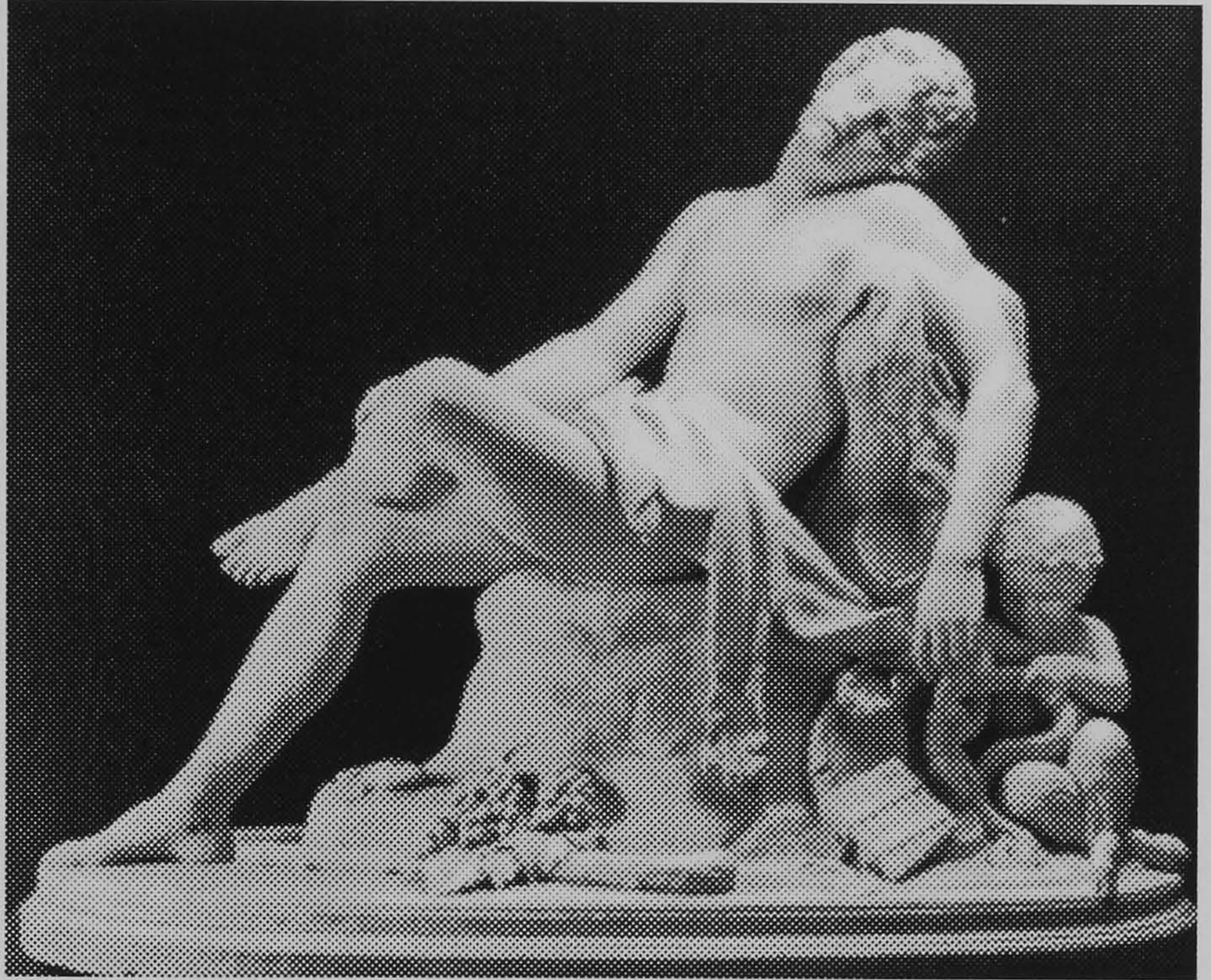


fig. 29 Harriet Hosmer, *Sleeping Faun*, 1865, marble, 125x155x65cm, The Forbes Magazine Collection, NY

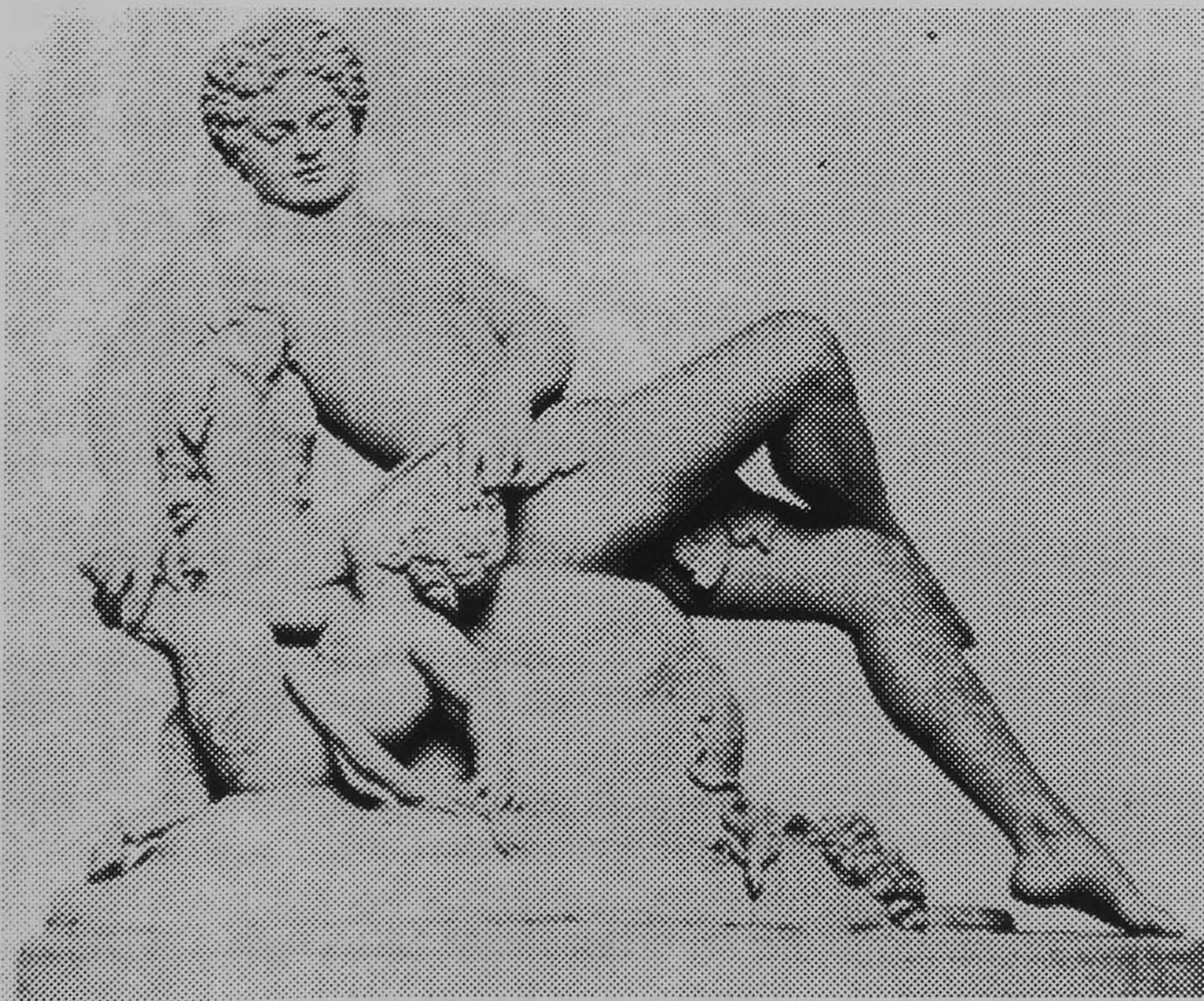


fig. 30 Harriet Hosmer, *Waking Faun*, 1866-67, plaster or marble, life-size, current location unknown; photograph in the Harriet Hosmer collection of Watertown Free Public Library, MA

during his lifetime, *The Marble Faun* educated nineteenth century Americans about the studios of expatriate artists in Rome, and the contemporary and ancient masterpieces found there. Both the novel and most of Hawthorne's contemporaries were personally known to Henry James. Dolly Sherwood, the most recent biographer of Harriet Hosmer, notes that Henry James had met Harriet Hosmer and Fanny Kemble, among others of the American expatriate set, at a dinner party held in the Story's Barberini rooms in 1873. 'As the woman whose studio Hawthorne had visited fifteen years before and whom he had immortalized in *The Marble Faun*, she was an object of particular interest to James', Sherwood adds.⁴⁶

Like James's 'white, marmorean flock', Hawthorne's *Marble Faun* is haunted by racist concepts of whiteness, written as it was on the eve of the American Civil War.⁴⁷ Among the artists portrayed by Hawthorne in his novel was the woman painter, Hilda, a copyist of old masterpieces, whose studio was a dove-cote at the top of a tower just above the Spanish Steps. Outside the studio's window was a shrine to the Virgin Mary. Hilda tended both the doves and the 'eternal flame' of the lamp in the shrine, and is herself described by Hawthorne in terms that associate her with their ideologically-inflected whiteness, brightness, fluttering light-weightedness, bird-like simplicity, and virginal innocence.

Instead of being a sculptor herself, Hilda is the beloved of the male sculptor-character, Kenyon. Kenyon is largely based on William Wetmore Story, who was a good friend of Hawthorne's. Kenyon's masterpiece in the

⁴⁶ - Dolly Sherwood, *Harriet Hosmer, American Sculptor 1830-1908* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1991), p.321, citing Henry James, *Letters*, ed. Leon Edel, vol 1, 1843-1875 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1974), p. 339. Cornelia Carr, Hosmer's school friend and daughter of Hosmer's patron, Wayman Crow, published an epistolary biography of the sculptor just after her death: *Harriet Hosmer, Letters and Memories* (NY: Moffat, Yard and Co., 1912).

⁴⁷ - As Richard Brodhead has pointed out, *The Marble Faun* 'was contemporaneous with the Lincoln-Douglas debates and John Brown's planning of his famous raid – a history so thoroughly absent from the book that one might regard its exclusion as one of the book's active aims. 'Introduction' to Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, (1860; NY: Penguin Books, 1990), p. xi.

fiction was in fact Story's statue, *Cleopatra*. The male character's creativity is thus distinguished from Hilda's in the narrative by being original, unlike her faithful reproductions of ancient Masters' inventions.

When Kenyon works as a copyist, his act is burdened with sexual guilt and connotations of rape. In a scene set in the sculptor's studio, Kenyon shows his visitor, Miriam, a sculpted copy of Hilda's hand, stolen into white marble without Hilda's knowledge by the amorous sculptor. Miriam recognises the model: 'There is but one right hand, on earth, that could have supplied the model... so small and slender, so perfectly symmetrical, and yet with a character of delicate energy! I have watched it, a hundred times, at its work.'⁴⁸ But we do not see Hilda's hand at work. The reader is instead shown the hand of the woman artist frozen in marble: an art object rather than an art maker. (see *figs 115 & 116*)

At this point, the conversation turns to Kenyon's love for Hilda. Miriam wishes for Kenyon that he may take Hilda's hand in marriage, some day, rather than just in marble. Kenyon despairs:

Hilda does not dwell in our mortal atmosphere; and, gentle and soft as she appears, it will be as difficult to win her heart, as to entice down a white bird from its sunny freedom in the sky. It is strange, with all her delicacy and fragility, the impression she makes of being utterly sufficient to herself! No; I shall never win her. She is abundantly capable of sympathy, and delights to receive it, but she has no need of love!⁴⁹

The bird-woman artist with a heart of stone, Hilda is indeed the prototype for the 'white marmorean flock'. By linking the American women sculptors with Hawthorne's novel, which was in fact largely based on their professional activities and creativity, James inverts the creative genealogy and encourages us to read the women sculptors as characters in a fiction. Yet again the women sculptors are conflated with the objects of creative activity rather than identified with the subjective production of such objects. Yet both Hawthorne

⁴⁸ - Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, p. 120.

⁴⁹ - *Ibid.*, p. 121.

and James domesticate their sky-dwelling, virginal women artists; Hilda does eventually marry Kenyon in *The Marble Faun*, and as we have seen James's 'white, marmorean flock' does in fact bring the women sculptors down from their other-worldly freedom to 'settle' the hills of Rome like colonising pioneer wives.

In his biography of William Wetmore Story, James coins 'white, marmorean flock' to rephrase Story's own descriptive words for the American women sculptors in Rome. Writing to his friend, the writer, James Russell Lowell, just three months after Harriet Hosmer had arrived in Rome, Story refers to the coterie in Rome around actress Charlotte Cushman, which included Hosmer, as a 'harem (scarem)':

And apropos of your Poems, you are creating at this time a furore in 28 Corso, Wood's harem (scarem) as I call it – among the emancipated females who dwell there in heavenly unity – viz the Cushman, Grace Greenwood, Hosmer-Smith & Co – not forgetting the Bayne (who is here without his antidote) – and for fear I should forget them let me tell you of them. They live all together under the superintendence of Wood – who calls them Charlotte, Hatty &c, & who dances attendance upon them every where, even to the great subscription ball the other evg – & I could not help thinking what a pity it was that he could not dance polkas & waltzes as well as he stumbles through his speech. Hatty takes a high hand here with Rome, and would have the Romans know that a Yankee girl can do anything she pleases, walk alone, ride her horse alone, and laugh at their rules. The police interfered and countermanded the riding alone on account of the row it made in the streets, and I believe that is over, but I cannot affirm. The Cushman sings savage ballads in a hoarse, manny voice, and requests people recitatively to forget her not.⁵⁰

Hosmer had arrived in Rome on November 12, 1852, in the company of her father; actress Charlotte Cushman; Cushman's companion, Matilda Hayes, who was a writer and later known as the translator of George Sand; Cushman's personal assistant, Sallie Mercer; journalist Sara Jane Clark, whose pen name was Grace Greenwood; and Hosmer's school friend, Ginny Vaughan. Perhaps Shakespeare Wood, a young English sculptor, came in for

50 - William Wetmore Story to James Russell Lowell, February 11, 1853, quoted in James, *William Wetmore Story and His Friends* I, pp. 254-255.

special criticism from Story because, as Story saw it, he [Story] had 'got Miss H[osmer] a place in Gibson's studio, but Wood took the credit of it.'⁵¹ Or perhaps he incurred Story's dislike by crossing gender lines and trying too hard to fit in with the 'emancipated females', as Hosmer's father had done. Hiram Hosmer was reported by Story to have 'answer[ed] quite seriously to the soubriquet "Elizabeth" when thus addressed by his "emancipated" female companions'.⁵² For Story, the group of single, independent professional women was a scary, gender-bending inversion of a group of women kept for men's sexual pleasure.⁵³ The men in this harem do not possess the women, but rather 'dance attendance upon them', and even align themselves symbolically with the women by adopting feminine names.

Charlotte Cushman, a famously successful businesswoman and considered by many to be the leading international actress of her day, had been instrumental in encouraging Harriet Hosmer's career and move to Rome, and offered the young sculptor both friendship and guidance on being a single career woman in mid-nineteenth century Europe. (*fig. 31*) Later, Cushman directly sponsored and assisted the careers of other American women sculptors, including Emma Stebbins, Florence Freeman and Edmonia Lewis, while they were in Rome. Clearly the other professional women in the 1852-53 party provided similar examples to Hosmer, as did the British musician, Adelaide Sartoris, and her sister, Fanny Kemble, an actress, writer and civil rights activist – both friends of Cushman whom the group joined in Rome. Also preceding Hosmer and her friends to Rome was a long tradition of women intellectuals and artists working there that included the American feminist writer, Margaret Fuller, and sculptor Sarah Fisher Clappitt

51 - William Wetmore Story to James Russell Lowell, February 11, 1853, quoted in Sherwood, p. 54.

52 - *Ibid.*, p. 65.

53 - For a longer discussion of nineteenth century perceptions of the American women sculptors as gender-transgressive amalgams of masculine and feminine attributes, see Part I, Chapter 4.ii 'Doubled Identifications in Phallic Discourse'.

fig. 31 *The Daily Graphic* Memorial Cover to Charlotte Cushman, 4 March 1876, showing Cushman in her most famous roles; the bust of Cushman at the centre top is by Emma Stebbins, 1859, Handel & Haydn Society, Boston



fig. 32 *Charlotte and Susan Cushman as Romeo and Juliet*, from a drawing by Margaret Gillies in *The People's Journal* (London), 18 July 1846; 'a Staffordshire figurine was modeled after this drawing between 1846 and 1852, copies of which are in the Mander and Mitchenson collection, London, and the Folger Shakespeare Library' (Joseph Leach, *Bright, Particular Star*, n.p.)

Ames as well as earlier European women such as Angelica Kauffmann and Mme de Staël, whose works the mid-nineteenth century American women would have known. These women, contemporary and historical, provided an essential identificatory network through which the younger American women could figure their own professional and personal identities.⁵⁴

At the age of 36, Cushman was wealthy enough to retire from the stage, and this was the intention of her move to Rome after a farewell tour of the United States. Story would have remembered Cushman's voice, perhaps despite his antipathy, from an 1844 performance in Boston which he attended with poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.⁵⁵ Cushman was 'of masculine appearance' and known for performing male roles, particularly Hamlet and Romeo, hence, presumably, the reference to her 'manny voice'.⁵⁶ (*fig. 32*)

Henry James had not forgotten Cushman either. He follows his description of the 'white, marmorean flock' with a personal reminiscence about another performance of Cushman's in Boston. While James was a child, his parents had gone to see Cushman in 'Henry VIII'. James recalls that his father was so impressed by her performance that he returned home to take William back to the theatre, leaving the younger James feeling 'inadequately estimated' and harbouring a resentment against the 'paternal discrimination' which he still recalled at 60 years old.⁵⁷

In her day, Cushman was described as a 'bright, particular star' of the

⁵⁴ - The space constraints imposed on this dissertation do not permit me to delve into the extensive archives on the many women artists and intellectuals who worked in Rome in and before the nineteenth century, but it is important to note that both the direct support of Hosmer's older contemporaries, such as Cushman, Sartoris and Kemble, and the precedents provided by Fuller and earlier women played a crucial role in developing a discourse on women's independence and professionalism which enabled the careers of Hosmer and the other American women sculptors in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century. On American women intellectuals in this period see Susan Phinney Conrad, *Perish the Thought: Intellectual Women in Romantic America, 1830-1860* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1976).

⁵⁵ - William T. Price, *A Life of Charlotte Cushman* (NY: Brentano's, 1894), p. 54.

⁵⁶ - Dumas Malone, ed., 'Charlotte Saunders Cushman', *Dictionary of American Biography* (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932) V, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁷ - James, *William Wetmore Story and His Friends*, I, pp. 254-255. This passage is discussed in Jane Mayo Roos, p. 33.

international stage.⁵⁸ The use of the word, 'star' to describe a celebrity and particularly a performer originated in the early nineteenth century.⁵⁹ It is perhaps this meaning of the word, influenced by the association of Charlotte Cushman with encouraging the careers of at least four of the American women sculptors who worked in Rome, that led a journalist for *The Art-Journal* of 1866, reporting from Rome, to describe the women sculptors working there as 'a fair constellation... of twelve stars of greater or lesser magnitude, who shed their soft and humanising influence on a profession which has done so much for the refinement and civilisation of man.'⁶⁰

While undoubtedly relying on the nineteenth century ideology that positioned white, bourgeois, European women as guardians of the moral and spiritual well-being of 'civilisation', this journalist's phrase both groups the women sculptors and permits a sense of the difference and specificity of each individual in the 'constellation', in contradistinction to James's homogenising 'flock'. Influenced by the neoclassical era in which he or she was writing, this journalist has chosen a classical motif that places the women sculptors among the stellar heroes, monsters, tragic heroines, and ex-lovers of the gods, for whom being made a constellation was largely a consolation for some great injustice brought upon the human by a vengeful god or goddess. Nonetheless, being a star is being something people look up to, a spectacular and nomadic representative of shining brilliance and illuminating light in the midst of a great, dark theatre: the signs by which travellers have been guided for millennia, and an immortal position to which humans can aspire. Stars in a constellation are both mobile and permanent, and literally 'astronomical' in their size and importance. As their gravity draws

58 - This phrase then became the title of Joseph Leach's 1963 biography of Cushman, *Bright Particular Star: The Life and Times of Charlotte Cushman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963).

59 - Lesley Brown, ed., *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973; repr. 1993), p. 3031.

60 - H.W., 'Lady-Artists in Rome', *The Art-Journal*, 5 (1866), 177-178 (p. 177).

other heavenly bodies towards them, stars are also points of intersection for trajectories to other stars and other constellations. Autonomous, stars generate their own light, even as astrography acknowledges the role of the fantasy of the viewer in reading and interpreting the 'picture' drawn by their constellation. Moreover, constellations don't look to us today like the objects they were supposed to represent to previous generations. Already in the concept of the constellation persists the sense of intersections and dissonance among the historical and discursive frames in which they have been described.

While the representation of the American women sculptors in Rome as a 'constellation... of stars' is by no means a feminist one, its terms exist within a framework that is more open to discursive and psychoanalytic intervention than James's 'white, marmorean flock'. As the historiography of the American women sculptors in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century has revealed, James's phrase effects a hegemony on criticism of their lives and works, insuring that they can only enter historical and artistic discourses under the terms evoked by 'white, marmorean flock'. The concept of the constellation, on the other hand, invokes resonances that, lying on axes separate from but contingent to the nineteenth century term, provide a 'way in' for my late twentieth century criticism.

The interplay of connotations of the term makes 'constellation' a word ripe for reinvestment as icon of the 'dialectical image' of Walter Benjamin's historical materialism. 'Blasted... out of the continuum of history's course' and 'saturated with tension', Benjamin's historical objects are 'constellations' of a politically-charged, dialectically polarised fore- and after-history. Following Benjamin, my engagement with the American women sculptors in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century and their sculptures adopts a visual rather than a linear logic, in which concepts are constructed according to the cognitive

principles of montage. 'Construction' presupposes 'destruction' in the Benjaminian project: 'In order for a piece of the past to be touched by present actuality, there must exist no continuity between them.' 'Blasted' out of the developmental logic of art history that seeks to fix the American women sculptors in its biographical and developmental narratives, these sculptors and their works are reframed here as 'flashing images' within a 'charged force field of past and present'. If I am successful in my failure, these histories will 'decompose into images, not into narratives.'⁶¹

In this reframing of the 'white, marmorean flock', I should like *not* to replace the Jamesian phrase with the earlier notion of the women sculptors as a constellation, but rather to *pivot* the idea of a 'constellation' of American women sculptors in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century.⁶² By using this concept both metonymically and metaphorically, I suggest that the American women sculptors in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century are both Benjaminian constellations in historic discourses and, in a Lacanian reading, anamorphic points of light – flashes off the sardine canon – that engender failure in those discourses. Thus this study seeks to intervene in and against certain ideological and psychic fields of discourse on nineteenth century culture and sexual difference at the level of their strange/estranged subjecthood, intruding uncannily in the frames that have structured these discourses.

⁶¹ - All quotations of Walter Benjamin in this paragraph are from Susan Buck-Morss's discussion of his historical materialist methodology and the concept of the constellation/dialectical image in her book, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1989; repr. 1995), pp. 218-220.

⁶² - As in Elsa Barkley Brown's concept of 'pivoting the centre', articulated in her essay, 'African-American Women's Quilting: A Framework for Conceptualising and Teaching African-American Women's History', in *Black Women in America* (Chicago, 1991), ed. by Micheline Malson et al. Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger has also described the matrixial as a small 'pivot' from the phallic Symbolic, as in rotating a prism (in conversations with the author, but see also Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'The becoming thresholds of matrixial borderlines', in *Travellers' Tales*, papers of the conference at Tate Gallery, London, 20 November, 1992 (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 38-62 (p. 43): 'under a certain prism, the breast may be perceived as either phallic or matrixial.'

1.iii Making Strange(rs)

In a sense, then, this is a project structured like the uncanny: it is an attempt to 'make strange(rs)' the familiar histories of the American women sculptors in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century by first calling attention to the discourses in which they have been framed, and then intruding, perhaps unexpectedly, in those frames. The uncanny has been described as the aesthetic effect of a disturbance in the narcissistic field: something contingent to the field of the image, but outside its frame, unexpectedly intrudes.⁶³ The uncanny is thus a point of intersection of two separate but contingent axes, which can be geometrically conceived as analogous to the function of a star within a constellation. As members of a constellation, rather than of a flock, the histories and works of the American women sculptors in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century are linked insofar as they point to one another and can be read as forming a larger picture that will be differently described by successive generations, but they also remain as separate and individual as the points along Ursa Major, each a star at the centre of its own solar system. My task is to pick out a few points of light and attempt to convince the reader of the trajectories that connect them across vast spaces of empty or obscured archives. But as with teaching someone to recognise the ancient constellations in the night sky, there is always the possibility that those looking at this screen will fail to see the picture thus described, and might choose instead to inscribe other ones with new readings, or even just to turn away, finding the whole field dark and meaningless.

The aesthetic experience of the uncanny is predicated on the introduction of a related but alien element to the subject's narcissistic field, hence the emergence of the opposite but not contradictory meanings of 'familiar' and 'unfamiliar' – 'homelike' (*heimlich*) and 'unhomelike'

⁶³ - As Darien Leader has described the uncanny at the discussion of the exhibition, 'Disquieting Strangeness' held at the Centre for Freudian Analysis and Research, London, 27 May, 1998.

(*unheimlich*) in the English and German words for 'uncanny'. Freud describes this phenomenon in his essay, 'The "Uncanny"':

What interests us most in this long extract is to find that among its different shades of meaning the word "*heimlich*" exhibits one which is identical with its opposite, "*unheimlich*". What is "*heimlich*" thus comes to be "*unheimlich*". (Cf. The quotation from Gutzkow: 'We call it "*unheimlich*"; you call it "*heimlich*".') In general we are reminded that the word "*heimlich*" is not unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas, which, without being contradictory, are yet very different: on the one hand it means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight. "*Unheimlich*" is customarily used, we are told, as the contrary only of the first signification of "*heimlich*", and not of the second. Sanders tells us nothing concerning a possible genetic connection between these two meanings of *heimlich*. On the other hand, we notice that Schelling says something which throws quite a new light on the concept of the *Unheimlich*, for which we are certainly not prepared. According to him, everything is *unheimlich* that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light.⁶⁴

Like the very concept of the uncanny, 'for which', Freud comments, 'we are certainly not prepared', the uncanny is the emergence of something where we expected something else, lending a sense of autonomy to the image and our separation from it. This division in the subject's narcissistic field gives rise to confusion over who is being interpolated by the image. We are startled to discover not the eyes of our own fantasy image looking back at us from the mirror of our narcissism, but rather the gaze of something else which has suddenly opened its eyes and looked in its own way. Inevitably, the uncanny touches the body as the frame *par excellence* of the subject's narcissistic field, and the site of construction of the subject's first illusions of wholeness and mastery.

Within the frame of the narrative, the uncanny is the sense that 'there should be a story where there isn't one'.⁶⁵ Finding myself in this study in the uncanny space between 'there isn't a story' and 'there should be a story' of

64 - Sigmund Freud, 'The "Uncanny"' (1919), *Art and Literature* (The Penguin Freud Library), (London: Penguin Books, 1985; repr. 1990) 15 vols, 14, p. 345.

65 - Forbes Morlock, speaking at the discussion of the exhibition, 'Disquieting Strangeness' held at the Centre for Freudian Analysis and Research, London, 27 May, 1998.

the American women sculptors in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century, I should now like to use that uncanny effect to make the objects of my study look back in their own way from the images I'm reflecting here.

Freud notes that there are two different sources for the experience of the uncanny: castration complexes and womb phantasies.⁶⁶ I follow Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger in acknowledging that this dual structure mounts my project on two separate but related tracks: the phallic and the matrixial.⁶⁷ Sometimes the emergence of this disquieting strangeness will index the track of castration anxiety, revealing the emptiness of the 'everyday speech' of neoclassical sculpture. At other moments the uncanny points to the presence of an intimate stranger who has emerged into visibility within the space of our narcissism, but without engendering a separation from that frame. Such 'in-between' moments participate in the matrixial sphere of becoming and 'wit(h)-nessing', linking back to womb fantasies and the Moebius-strip architecture of the 'inside which is also outside'.⁶⁸

'[W]e must not', however, as Freud warns, 'let our predilection for smooth solutions and lucid exposition blind us to the fact that these two classes of uncanny experience are not always sharply distinguishable.'⁶⁹ In addition to moving between discursive and psychoanalytic interpretational frames, therefore, this study draws on an expanded field of psychoanalytic theory, rather than pitting differing thinkers against one another in a move that could only generate new dogmas, new doctrines, and new illusions of mastery.

66 - Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', pp. 368, 372, discussed in Lichtenberg Ettinger, *The Matrixial Gaze* (Leeds: Feminist Arts and Histories Network, 1995), p. 7.

67 - Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger's reinterpretation of Freud's concept of the uncanny is discussed at length in Part I, Chapter 2.iii 'The Inverted Exile'.

68 - Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'Transgressing with-in-to the feminine', unpublished manuscript of a paper presented at the symposium, 'Leonardo's Glimlach (The Smile of Leonardo)', Gent University, Belgium, December 16, 1997, pp. 1-20 (p. 11).

69 - Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 372.

1.iv The Woman Artist as Art History's Failure and Limit

As the point of failure of the ideological and discursive formations that try to contain and describe them, the American women sculptors in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century both signpost the limits of what can be represented in discourse, and point beyond that limit to something that lies beyond language and presents an entirely different field for analysis. Joan Copjec has argued, following Lacan, that sexual difference is not definable by positive characteristics within language, but instead is the very 'structural incompleteness of language' itself. Without contesting the importance of cultural discourse to subject formation, and hence the value of political action in the discursive sphere, Copjec warns against attributing too wide a scope to the cultural domain: '*sex, sexual difference, cannot be deconstructed*, since deconstruction is an operation that can be applied only to culture, to the signifier, and has no purchase on this other realm'.⁷⁰ In her critique of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, Copjec argues that Butler's thesis stems from a historicist view that unwittingly accords the category 'Woman' a positivist existence. Copjec's review of Butler's position can be summarised as follows.

Faced with the antinomies of reason posed by Simone de Beauvoir, 'Woman is born' and 'Woman is made', Butler chooses 'skepticism's sunny flipside: a confident voluntarism' and reasons that 'if sex is something that is "made up", it can also be unmade.'⁷¹ 'In other words,' Copjec continues, 'Butler concludes from the changing *concepts* of women something about the *being*, the *existence* of women.'⁷² Butler assumes, Copjec argues, that behind any performativity, 'Woman is'.

Copjec then offers the example of Kant's refutation of the 'skeptical

⁷⁰ - Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), p. 210. Emphasis Copjec's.

⁷¹ - *Ibid.*, p. 202.

⁷² - *Ibid.*, p. 204.

impasse' as a similar problem: 'Is the world finite or infinite?' Kant refuses to answer this question, and instead rejects 'the assumption implicit in the question: the world *is*.' His solution to this antimony, Copjec relates, is that:

...rather than despairing over the fact that we cannot choose between the two alternatives, we must come to the realisation that we need not choose, since both alternatives are false. That is to say, the thesis and antithesis statements, which initially appeared to constitute a *contradictory* opposition, turn out upon inspection to be *contraries*.⁷³

Rather than ruling out one another, as a contradictory opposition would, the thesis, 'Woman is born' and its antithesis, 'Woman is made' do 'not exhaust all possibilities but [leave] behind something on which [they] do not pronounce. For this reason', Copjec concludes, '*both* statements may simultaneously be false.'⁷⁴ 'Woman' is not a category whose meaning is incomplete, unstable, but rather 'Woman' is the impossibility of completing meaning: 'not an *incomplete* entity but a totally empty one'.⁷⁵

Kant's proof of the non-existence of the world demonstrates the same structure that Lacan was later to use for his mathemes of subjective sexuation. Copjec recognises that the priority given by Lacan to the right-hand side of his table is also present in Kant's privileging of the structurally symmetrical mathematical antinomies over the dynamic ones in his own analysis. The left hand is implicitly presented as the consequence of the right in the formulae, demonstrating that within the phallic symbolic, the empty-category of woman is structurally essential to the functioning of all other categories. As will be discussed at greater length in Part III.3, 'The Purloined Studio', 'Woman' is the category, conceived of as the unthinkable, which allows a limit to be imposed on phallic symbolic categories to guarantee the finiteness of their identities. The category of 'Woman' as an empty set creates the logical possibility of all other identities.

73 - Copjec, p. 218.

74 - Ibid., p. 219.

75 - Ibid., pp. 206-207.

Although, as Copjec acknowledges, the ‘uncontestable value’ of Butler’s strategy ‘lies in the way it deftly shakes off all the remaining bits of sleepy dogmatism that continue to attach themselves to our thinking about sexual identity’, a truly radical feminist intervention must go beyond performatively revealing and shifting the gendered codes of a given discourse. The significance of Copjec’s elucidation of the Lacanian formulae of sexuation for what Griselda Pollock has termed, ‘feminist interventions in art’s histories’, is that it reminds us to avoid confusing the ‘rules of art history’ with the ‘Thing-in-itself’ *as an impossibility*.⁷⁶ That is to say, the important project of debunking any ideas of gender and creativity as ‘abiding, *a priori* substances’ should be accompanied by analyses of ‘the woman artist’ as the point of failure of art historical discourse. For while ‘artist’ is a cultural signifier, and as such is subject to deconstruction, ‘woman’ as marker of sexual difference represents ‘the unsurpassable limit, the impossibility that hamstring every discursive practice.’⁷⁷ Art historical discourses, then, can be read not only deconstructively, but also from a Lacanian point of view with a sensitivity to the gaps in art historical signification. Adopting this methodology, this dissertation reads the histories of nineteenth century American women artists for the moments at which ‘the woman artist’ engenders a failure in phallic meaning.

Conceiving of the subject as the gendered failure of language locates her at the same level as language, neither above nor absolutely subjected to its law. Thus this Lacanian formulation of sexual difference also implies its distinction from other terms of difference which are present in my study. Because it sees sexual difference not as a positive term that describes the subject, but rather as precisely the failure of signification, psychoanalysis posits sexual difference as ‘not equatable with other kinds of difference’.⁷⁸

76 - Copjec, p. 206.

77 - Ibid., p. 210.

78 - Ibid., p. 212.

Accordingly, my analysis of the histories of nineteenth century American women sculptors will consider their discursive differences in terms of racial, class, and regional identities to function within systems of symbolic signification, in contradistinction to sexual difference which ‘is a real and not a symbolic difference.’⁷⁹ This is not to mitigate the impact of discursive differences on the lives of these women sculptors, but rather to insist that, ‘It is always a sexed subject who assumes each racial, class, or ethnic identity.’⁸⁰ Following Copjec, my methodology attributes this distinction an ethical purchase that accords the subject sovereignty as *incalculable* from any discursive identifications she might also carry. The nineteenth century American women sculptors examined here are not the consequence of their discursive positionings as women, as Americans, as sculptors, as neoclassicists, as expatriates or travellers, as black or white, as working class or bourgeois. Nor are they the *cause* of the failure of these identifications. Instead, in part what this dissertation concludes from the impossibility of encountering ‘woman as such’ among these ‘[phallic] discursive constructions of woman [as] a series of differences’, is that the nineteenth century American women sculptors in Rome *are* the very failure of these symbolic limits that seek to define them.⁸¹

1.v A Matrixial Gaze on Art History

I have said that ‘in part’ the methodology of this dissertation aims at elucidating the impossibility of the subjects of its study: ‘in part’ because, as I described earlier, the ethical dimension of this project demands the recognition of the sovereignty of the subject. And herein lies the limit of the Lacanian formulation of sexuation as it is generally understood today – a limit recognised by Joan Copjec in the conclusion of her analysis of the Lacanian

79 - Copjec, p. 207.

80 - Ibid., p. 208.

81 - Ibid., p. 226.

antimonies of sexual difference:

Yet once we establish that this logic of the limit or exception defines the dynamical antinomies, the male subject, and the superego, we have a problem, or so it seems on first blush. For we now appear to lend support to the notorious argument that presents woman as constitutionally indisposed to developing a superego and thus susceptible to an ethical laxity. In response to this, all we can suggest at this point is that the field of ethics has too long been theorised in terms of this particular superegoic logic of exception or limit. It is now time to devote some thought to developing an ethics of inclusion or of the unlimited, that is, an ethics proper to woman. Another logic of the superego must commence.⁸²

This perhaps surprising conclusion to a quintessentially Lacanian discussion of sexual difference admits the possibility of reworking the concept of ethics by way of the late Lacanian understanding of feminine *jouissance*. Copjec's concern with the logic of the superego returns us to Lacan's description of the superego in Seminar XX, *Encore*, which is cited by Copjec as the equivalent of 'the commandment "Enjoy!"'⁸³ But if the specificity of the feminine *jouissance* defined by Lacan is a surplus beyond phallic *jouissance*, a '*plus-de-jouir*', this formulation, as Jo Sessions has argued, would also suggest a superego, untheorised within Lacan's writings, whose commandment is distinct from the 'Enjoy!' imposed on the male subject.⁸⁴ When Copjec calls for 'another logic of the superego' and 'an ethics of inclusion or of the unlimited, that is, an ethics proper to woman', would this not also entail the elaboration of a symbolic register structured around a different relationship to difference than that admitted by Lacan's (primarily earlier) formulations?

For Lacan, the superego is a symbolic structure insofar as it is a law alongside which the subject lives.⁸⁵ Another 'logic of the superego' would suggest another symbolic order, one based on 'inclusion' or 'the unlimited',

82 - Copjec, p. 236.

83 - Ibid.

84 - Jo Sessions, of the London Circle of the École Européenne de Psychanalyse, in conversation with the author, 29 March, 1998.

85 - See Jaques Lacan in his first seminar, for example; I am indebted to Jo Sessions for this reference.

perhaps, 'proper to the woman'.⁸⁶ If 'woman' in the phallic system 'is a product of a "symbolic without an Other"' as Copjec demonstrates, for Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger there is also another symbolic register, a symbolic without an (one) Other, but instead with 'more than one and less than one', in which the specificity of a feminine relationship to sexual difference 'finds symbolic expression'.⁸⁷ Rather than debating questions of essence or the existence of alternative 'super-egos', Lichtenberg Ettinger's matrixial theory allows us to focus immediately on the ethical sphere, for it is from the hypothesis of a feminine ethics that the matrixial theory of Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger departs.

Although matrixial theory itself has been subject to charges of utopianism, we could respond as Lichtenberg Ettinger has, that any discussion of ethics will partake of a utopian desire.⁸⁸ Furthermore, within the possibility of another Symbolic, the inability to imagine an alternative to the *status quo* becomes emblematic of the myopia and tautological premises of phallogocentric theory, described by Lichtenberg Ettinger:

For Lacan, *phallus* equals *symbol*: what doesn't obey the phallic principles cannot be apprehended or recognised. I would suggest that we do not accept the axiom *phallus* = symbol and that some paradigmatic changes are in order: the *symbolic* is wider than the *phallus* and non-phallic processes do find symbolic expression. In the existing paradigms, however, these are not recognised as such: they are ignored or rejected. If, according to Lacan, the human being is trapped in language, I would like to add that the human being is trapped in *the language of the phallus*.... This trap attests to a lacuna in psychoanalytical theory, to the incapacity to distinguish the *matrix* and to account for it. Symbolic disavowal of matrixial elements in favour of phallic elements repeatedly occurs in analytical interpretations.⁸⁹

Such a 'symbolic disavowal of matrixial elements', I would argue, is at

86 - Copjec, p. 236.

87 - Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'The becoming threshold of matrixial borderlines', pp. 43, 48.

88 - Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, in e-mail correspondence with the author, 5 April, 1998.

89 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'The becoming threshold of matrixial borderlines', p. 48.

play in nominally 'feminist' canons that attempt to repeat the same old art historical hierarchy with new, female faces in the positions of power. Not surprisingly, the advocates of the new canons are happy to call an end to the revolution once their hegemony has been established. An example of this early ideology is Anne Sutherland Harris's project as stated in her catalogue for the exhibition, *Women Artists: 1550-1950*:

For too long [women artists] have either been omitted altogether, or isolated, as even in this exhibition, and discussed only as women artists, and not simply as artists, as if in some strange way they were not a part of their culture at all. This exhibition will be a success if it helps to remove once and for all the justification for any future exhibitions with this theme.⁹⁰

Although this is an early text, its desires and vision for the future of art historical research on women artists have by no means been entirely abandoned. Indeed, it can be argued that the question of the legitimacy of selecting an artist or group of artists for study on the basis of their gender is one that every feminist has to answer afresh with each new research project, if only to the institutions and funding bodies that make the research possible. Without a psychoanalytic understanding of the primacy of gender in subjective formation, any response to such challenges runs the risk of becoming entrapped in the very cultural discourses it seeks to subvert.

In her essay, 'The becoming threshold of matrixial borderlines', Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger discusses the figure of Moses and his meeting with God during the Exodus 'behind the desert'. Both Egyptian and Hebrew, both lawgiver and exile from the promised land, Moses is presented as a multi-faceted character, reflecting the multiple layers of meaning attributable to God from the name with which he declares himself to Moses: 'I will be/become that I will be/become....' – a name that has undergone violent reduction in

⁹⁰ - Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists 1550-1950* (exhibition catalogue, Los Angeles Country Museum of Art, December 1976-March 1977), p. 44. Griselda Pollock recognised the lack of commitment to an ideological feminism in Harris's project and has repeatedly objected to uncritical acceptance of art history itself implicit in Harris's statement and later echoings of its position.

translations, becoming a tautological insistence on presence and static meaning, 'I am that I am' in the Latin, Greek, French and English versions.⁹¹

According to Lichtenberg Ettinger, Freud, like the translators of the Bible, had difficulty not only with the multiplicity of God's nature, but also with that of Moses:

Freud deals with the ambiguity in the figure of Moses, with the duality of God's name *Ihva* (Yehova) and *Elohim* (Freud doesn't deal with *Ehie*) and with the regrouping tribes of vagabonds and migrants, which will be the people of Israel, by means of the mechanism of a split: splitting the people into two kinds of tribes; splitting god into two different Gods; and mainly, splitting Moses into two different persons – an Egyptian and a Hebrew, the first of them being the 'true' Moses and the other one being denied. The Egyptian Moses penetrated, 'stooped to the Jews' and 'forced his faith' upon them. Freud sees the text of Exodus as a 'piece of imaginative fiction', a cover-up story, and looks for a truth that is not included in the story's signifiers but in historical research; a truth that was hidden there before the text covered it up.⁹²

This pattern of splitting the object of one's study, discarding that which is ideologically incompatible with one's agenda, and looking for a preferable 'truth' in historical research is relatively common in all fields of scholarship, and, I would suggest, is more frequent in feminist interventions in art history than is desirable. In my research on nineteenth-century American women sculptors in Italy, I have been frustrated by the manner in which art historical texts, perhaps especially 'reformist' feminist ones, seem to aim at the recovery of a very specific historical 'truth': those parts of the artists' biographies that fit into the historian's ideological project are enthusiastically repeated from one art historical text to another, while incongruous but equally pertinent material is lightly passed over, rendering the artists' lives neo-heroine myths. Such art histories remain entranced by the illusory images of completeness and mastery they construct for themselves, like Lacan's infant

91 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'The becoming threshold of matrixial borderlines', pp. 39-40.

92 - *Ibid.*, p. 51.

caught in the mirror stage.⁹³

There is a need to recognise, then, in the structure of the split subject in phallic discourse, the tendency for one side to collapse into the other; identifiatory processes inevitably intervene to suture the fractured subject, rendering it whole and palatable again. As discussed above, this propensity is elucidated in Joan Copjec's critique of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, where even 'performative subversion' is revealed to contain an unspoken appeal to 'woman' as a positivist identity. But confronted with two false statements, the Lacanian theorisation of sexual difference permits us to understand that neither side of that particular split need be chosen. The failure to 'solve the riddle' of how effectively to add women to art history and shift its paradigms has been in part a result of 'Ms-reading' the question, assuming however obliquely that 'women' constitute an all whose existence is determinate. A Lacanian intervention in art history is therefore an essential first step to a feminist re-phrasing of the question of femininity in art historical discourses.

But a different eye on the refuse and fragments of the art historical archive permit the recovery of a different sort of subjectivity as well. In a 'matrixial gaze', these 'left-overs', the 'threatening, psychotic *objet a*, the frightening encounter with feminine difference' can represent a lack that becomes a creative principle.⁹⁴ Rather than inducing a fear of lack, incompleteness, and incoherence in the subject, these seemingly incongruous elements can be read as markers of creative difference in a matrixial art historical practice – as thresholds and borderlines across which the historian can become aware of 'a borderspace shared with an intimate stranger and of a joint co-emergence in difference with the subject of her

93 - On the mirror stage, see especially Jacques Lacan, 'The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I' in *Écrits*, pp. 1-7.

94 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'The becoming threshold of matrixial borderlines', p. 58.

study'.⁹⁵ The matrixial relation offers the feminist art historian a model for her *rappor*t with the subject of her study in which 'a meeting occurs between co-emerging *I* and unknown *non-I*. Neither of them assimilates nor rejects the other, and their energy does not consist in either fusion or repulsion.'⁹⁶ The relationship between the feminist art historian and her subject becomes covenantal rather than mastering, fusing, or rejecting.

The Lacanian feminine is 'not-all', then; in light of Lichtenberg Ettinger's matrixial theory, it is now possible to hypothesise a feminist practice that neither postulates a fantastic and utopian 'outside', nor remains locked in an ultimately self-defeating dialectic with patriarchal discourses. Consequently the choice is no longer simply between adding to the canon or subversively repeating it. Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger has suggested that such debates are short-sighted and thus ultimately of limited value:

Questions of nature, essence and truth (e.g. "are there or not any essential feminine qualities?") can, in my opinion, be postponed to a later date [...] In any case, I believe that this is one of those questions with no real answer, that lose their force in time, and are then replaced by new questions without answers.⁹⁷

Departing from Copjec's method of 'questioning the question rather than choosing between two false statements', it is similarly necessary to question the basic assumptions of Lacanian theory, to take seriously the objections raised by Lichtenberg Ettinger that: 'If, according to Lacan, the human being is trapped in language, I would like to add that the human being is trapped in *the language of the phallus*.'⁹⁸ Lichtenberg Ettinger does not, however, propose the matrixial as a substitute for, or whole-scale refutation of, Lacanian theorisations of the subject in the symbolic system. Rather, she argues that the phallic symbolic system should be understood as a partial account of the

95 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'The becoming threshold of matrixial borderlines', p. 41.

96 - Ibid., p. 42.

97 - Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'Matrix and Metramorphosis', *differences* 4.3 (1992), 176-207 (p. 180), and e-mail correspondence with the author of 2 April, 1998.

98 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'The becoming threshold of matrixial borderlines', p. 48.

symbolic field – a symbolic field, furthermore, which is not to be considered as necessarily any more ‘complete’ with the additional understanding of the matrixial stratum of subjectivisation: ‘The *matrix* is not the opposite of the *phallus*, it is just a slight shift from it, a supplementary symbolic perspective. It is a shift aside the *phallus*, a shift inside the *symbolic*.’⁹⁹

99 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, ‘The becoming threshold of matrixial borderlines’, p. 49.

PART I: *Stranger Subjects*

Chapter 2: *Ways of Travelling*

2.i The Nomadic Ego Ideal

Among the many resurgences of Romantic interests in the late twentieth century is the fascination with travelling. There are few hotter topics in postmodernist cultural discourse than nomadism, travelling, wandering, exile, expatriation, migration and the concurrent concepts of the foreigner, the stranger, the alien. As early as 1987, Caren Kaplan warned of the potential for the romanticisation of these terms in cultural theory.¹⁰⁰ A perhaps cynical but not altogether inaccurate view might suggest that in response, most theories of the nomad *et al.* begin with the disclaimer that the author 'resists romantic temptations', and then proceed to romanticise the terms of nomadism anyway.¹⁰¹

The root of this problem in the work of Rosi Braidotti, for one, seems to be the desire to claim psychoanalytically that 'nomadism' is a subject position that produces 'the nomadic subject'. What is distinctly lacking in this analysis, however, is any theory of the subject as such. Within Lacanian psychoanalytic theory the subject is defined as a radically split and unstable entity, and thus any idea of a positive subjective identification such as 'nomadic subject' is a contradiction in terms.

Braidotti, of course, is not ignorant of psychoanalysis, and attempts to evade this problem by defining the 'nomadic subject' as an innately fluid

100 - Caren Kaplan, 'Deterritorializations: The Rewriting of Home and Exile in Western Feminist Discourse', *Cultural Critique*, 6 (Spring 1987), 187-198 (p. 197).

101 - Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 5.

and/or constantly changing entity, inherently unstable like the psychoanalytic subject. But if the adjective 'nomadic' is simply there to reassert the unstableness of the term, 'subject', what does it add to the psychoanalytic concept of the 'subject'? Further, whereas the Lacanian term 'subject' signals the imbrication of the human being within a network of language and its very dependence on that network for its identity, Braidotti's addition of the adjective 'nomadic', or indeed her simple use of the noun 'nomad' to denote the subject of her study, constructs the subject with reference to an external term that is conceived of as a nameable, locatable 'entity', however fluid and/or changing its definition might be. Its implicit oneness and stasis suggests that the 'nomad' is more often an ego-identification – an imaginary formation – than a newly-recognised 'subject position'. The very proliferation of the terms of nomadism and travel, their semantic interchangeability and the impossibility of authoritatively concluding a list of such terms points to their functioning as signifiers in cultural discourse, rather than as markers of subject positions.

There is a tendency in contemporary theorisations of travel and 'nomadism' to promote as 'radical', categories that are simply fashionable imaginary identifications. If being a nomad is theorised as little more than a succession of stamps in one's passport, it is no different from any of our ego-ideals – and is one of understandable appeal to an increasingly cosmopolitan intellegentsia, who might prefer to misrecognise their economic and cultural privilege as radical agency.

Inge Boer's review of Rosi Braidotti's book, *Nomadic Subjects* offers a particularly useful analysis of the romanticisation of wandering in contemporary theories of the nomad. Departing from a consideration of the status of boundaries in 'travelling theories', Boer notes that 'boundaries tend to be dismissed as signs of fixity and eternal presence or are absent

altogether.’¹⁰² In relation to boundaries thus conceived or occluded, the nomad is a ‘rhapsodic, open and joyous’ figure, ‘crossing boundaries, about the act of going, regardless of destination.’¹⁰³

By placing Braidotti’s text in dialogue with Nina Bouraoui’s *La voyageuse interdite*, a novel about a young girl’s life in an Algerian harem, Boer’s critique demonstrates that we are:

...*only* able to contemplate the world beyond [our] window as adventurous and boundaryless by turning a blind eye to a major boundary, to [our] perspective being from the inside. Therefore, what renders the outside into a beyond without boundaries is exactly the boundary operating between ‘our window’ and the outside, or maybe ‘our window’ is, metaphorically, a boundary itself.¹⁰⁴

As Boer demonstrates, there is a danger in western ‘travelling theories’ that, ‘[t]he nomad becomes the noble savage functioning as the identificational knot, as the mirror image, of what one wants to critique in the West.’ It is ‘only from the perspective of the inside’ of Orientalist romanticisations of ‘boundaryless’ existences that it is ‘possible to postulate the freedom of the nomad, intellectual or otherwise.’¹⁰⁵

Boer’s essay is not strictly psychoanalytic, but because it is constructed as a topological model rather than a structural one, its terms lend themselves to psychoanalytic re-interpretation.¹⁰⁶ By recognising that Braidotti’s text posits the nomad as ‘errant’ but ‘also fixed in the trajectories followed’, Boer reveals the nomad to be a term of identification, an imaginary construct in Lacanian terms, essentially

102 - Inge Boer, ‘The World beyond our Window: Nomads, Travelling Theories and the Function of Boundaries’, *parallax*, 3 (September 1996), 7-26, (p. 7).

103 - Ibid., pp. 7-8, quoting Braidotti, pp. 22-23.

104 - Ibid., p. 12.

105 - Ibid.

106 - The significance of the topological model to Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory is revealed first in Freud’s topological schema of the unconscious, and is reiterated in Lacan’s Seminar 11, where, in discussions of aphanisis, Lacan advances his famous thesis that ‘the unconscious is structured like a language’. ‘From this’, he continues, ‘I have deduced a topology intended to account for the constitution of the subject.’ Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, p. 203.

narcissistic and functioning as an ideal ego.¹⁰⁷ The 'blindness' Boer sees as necessary to the illusion of 'freedom' offered by the nomadic figuration is analogous to the necessary fiction of completeness and mastery offered by the specular image, discussed by Lacan in his seminal text on imaginary identification, 'The Mirror Stage'.¹⁰⁸ The narcissistic identification with the ideal ego is possible only because of a wilful blindness to our experiences of ourselves as fragmentary, impotent beings.

Boer underscores the *as if* advocated by Braidotti in her 'philosophy of *as if*', encouraging 'feminists and other critical intellectuals to cultivate a nomadic consciousness' – *as if* they were 'real' nomads. In a passage which appeals to the external, regulatory 'truth' of the 'real nomad' to confirm and affirm the 'nomadic subject' in its positivist existence, Braidotti advocates the use of the figuration of the nomad as 'a myth, that is to say a political fiction, that allows me to think and move across through established categories and levels of experience: to blur boundaries without burning bridges.'¹⁰⁹ Again, the rhetorical 'as if' is, within Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, recognised as the hallmark of phantasy and disavowal: the obsessional lives *as if* dead; the phallic identification allows the subject to speak *as if* they have the phallus. These are not subject positions, however, but rather imaginary identifications constructed by means of a logic of semblance.

Rather than postulating the nomadic subject as boundaryless, Boer recognises that as subjects we are all subject to boundaries, and, like Lacan, she finds the movement of subjectivity to operate in the space of the boundary itself. In Lacanian terms we might describe this as the split or bar inherent in subjectivity, and the movement of desire in that gap.

107 - Boer, p. 20.

108 - Lacan, 'The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I' in *Écrits*, pp. 1-7.

109 - Boer, p. 9, quoting Braidotti, p. 4.

The violent rape of the nomad/maid Ourdhia who is the young girl protagonist's ideal ego in Nina Bouraoui's novel is interpreted by Boer in terms that lend themselves to a Lacanian understanding of the anamorphic moment. Witnessed by the young girl who watches her heroine go out into the city from behind a barred window, her vulnerability to the aggressions of the men and boys outside represents for the young girl an event that 'rattle[s] our window onto the world' and allows her – and us – to glimpse, for a moment, the boundary or bar that induces subjectivity.¹¹⁰

The example of Rosi Braidotti's *Nomadic Subjects*, then, is an important reminder that even imaginary identifications that celebrate transience and instability can function as a 'one', as an image in which the subject can find an illusion of completeness in the specular other. Braidotti's proposal of the nomadic subject as an alternative figure of identification runs the risks of any imaginary identification, of fixing the subject in a phantasy formation whose necessary underside, as Boer has demonstrated, is the colonisation of an 'other' (in this case, the orientalist figuration of the nomad).

2.ii The Uncanny Stranger

A more radical and ethical project than the proffering of yet another ideal but alienating image in which to 'find' our 'selves' would seek to understand the ways in which the 'stranger' functions as an affect or effect of unconscious processes. This is the hypothesis behind Julia Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves*.¹¹¹

Kristeva uses Freud's theory of the uncanny to posit the stranger as 'extimate' – an object internal to but forever occluded and therefore

110 - Boer, p. 24.

111 - Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (NY: Columbia University Press, 1991).

unknowable to conscious processes. She goes so far as to suggest that the foreigner is the unconscious itself: 'And when we flee from or struggle against the foreigner, we are fighting our unconscious – that "improper" facet of our impossible "own and proper."' ¹¹² This proposition differentiates the 'stranger' dramatically from the Braidotti-style ego identification, and begins to touch on subjective formation itself. If the 'stranger' is the unconscious, it cannot be posited as knowable or masterable in any way. Rather than a 'rhapsodic, open and joyous' identification, it remains a deeply disturbing, unpredictable presence, if anything mastering the subject and directing him/her through forces largely beyond his/her control.

Kristeva's formulation of the 'stranger' suggests that if the stranger is the unconscious, then it is not an 'identity' that one can live or even be. Thus we cannot discuss 'being a foreigner' as if it is an essential and positive term. Such a move is analogous to trying to equate women with Woman. But this is not just to advocate a deconstructivist/pluralist position that tries to recognise the multifarious manifestations of individual women. Rather, being a foreigner, like being a woman, is a radical psychic structure, much deeper than a cultural identity; like the unconscious, 'the foreigner' (another word for the unconscious, in fact?) structures subjectivity.

Even here, however, there is a danger of the identification of the uncanny with the unconscious becoming once again the theoretical support for the deployment of another ideal ego. By appealing for 'a mankind whose solidarity is founded on the consciousness of its unconscious – desiring, destructive, fearful, empty, impossible', ¹¹³ Kristeva seems not only to be reifying the 'foreigner' as a unary term of identification, but also proposing a possibility of somehow grasping the unconscious consciously, which is so curiously un-Freudian as to negate her immediate disclaimer, 'Here we are

112 - Kristeva, p. 191.

113 - Ibid., p. 192.

far removed from a call to brotherhood....' Granted, as Lacan says, we run after truth all the while knowing it is unattainable, but still this is an ambiguous formulation, and one that does not produce a viable ethical methodology in negotiating relations with strangers within and without. Indeed, the call for 'raising awareness' of the other is the rock upon which liberal projects to resuscitate racial relations, relations to foreign others, has always stumbled: by treating these differences as merely cultural ones, to be addressed within discourse, such political moves can only fail, revealing themselves as impractical as Freud demonstrated the commandment to 'love one's neighbour as oneself' to be.¹¹⁴

2.iii The Inverted Exile

Unlike Kristeva, Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger's engagement with Freudian concepts of the uncanny interrogates Freud's description of the sources of the aesthetic experience of the uncanny, and draws out a hitherto neglected facet to this theory: intrauterine fantasies as a source of an experience of the uncanny. As was briefly noted earlier, Lichtenberg Ettinger underscores Freud's positing of two '*different kinds* of sources of awe and strangeness, for the (same class of) "uncanny" anxiety.'¹¹⁵ 'The uncanny comes from infantile complexes, from castration complexes, womb-fantasies etc.', Freud wrote in his essay on 'The "Uncanny"', expanding on this latter term to describe it as 'the phantasy [...] of intrauterine existence.'¹¹⁶ Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis has elaborated upon the first source of the uncanny as 'spring[ing] from its proximity to the castration complex.'¹¹⁷ Matrixial theory now allows us to 'differentiate between a castration-type repression

114 - Sigmund Freud, 'Civilization and Its Discontents' (1930 [1929]), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955) vol. 21, pp. 57-145.

115 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, *The Matrixial Gaze*, p. 7.

116 - Ibid., p. 8, quoting Freud, 'The "Uncanny"' (1919), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 17, pp. 248-249, 244.

117 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, *Matrixial Gaze*, p. 6.

and a matrixial type'. Arguing that 'Freud did separate the castration complex and the maternal womb/intrauterine complex', Lichtenberg Ettinger identifies 'the matrixial phantasy (-complex)' as a source of fantasy material for the matrixial subjectivising stratum.¹¹⁸ Indeed, Lichtenberg Ettinger chose the term 'matrix' to represent this subjective stratum in part to echo the intrauterine phantasy described by Freud.¹¹⁹

As 'the intrauterine or womb phantasy is not retroactively folded into the castration phantasy but they co-exist', so the matrixial symbolic co-exists with the phallic, neither its replacement nor its complement, but rather its supplement.¹²⁰ The matrixial stratum of subjectivisation is described by Lichtenberg Ettinger as a 'beyond-the-phallus feminine field'. In contrast to phallic symbolic structures which operate on the basis of binary processes of rejection of or fusion with the other, in the matrix 'difference [is] articulated as "swerve" and "rapport" neither a social-gender construction nor an "essence" inaugurates feminine difference.' Rather, matrixial relations operate 'as connections (borderlinking) that produce/interlace "woman" [who] is not confined to the contours of the one-body with its inside versus outside polarity, and indicates a sexual difference based on webbing of links and not on essence or negation'.¹²¹ As was indicated earlier, matrixial theory then has offered a response *avant la lettre* to Copjec's call for the theoretical elaboration of 'another logic of the superego'.¹²²

In the phallic system, Lichtenberg Ettinger explains, '[t]he super ego is a result of Oedipal sublimation.'¹²³ Copjec notes that, insofar as the outcome of the Oedipalisation of the female subject is doubtful, within the Freudian and

118 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, *Matrixial Gaze*, p. 7.

119 - *Ibid.*, p. 22.

120 - *Ibid.*, p. 7.

121 - Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, 1995, 'moto' on page 1 of M. Catherine de Zegher, ed., *Inside the Visible*, exhibition catalogue, The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, and The Kanaal Art Foundation, Kortrijk, Flanders (Boston: MIT Press, 1996) and e-mail correspondence with the author, 2 April, 1998.

122 - Copjec, p. 236.

123 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, e-mail correspondence with the author, 5 April, 1998.

(early) Lacanian constructs woman is 'constitutionally indisposed to developing a superego and thus susceptible to an ethical laxity.'¹²⁴ Lichtenberg Ettinger, however, 'questions the terms of the question' of woman's 'ethical laxity', preferring to speak of ethics rather than become embroiled in debates about an Oedipal superego whose construct is contingent upon a phallic subjectivising process that occurs *subsequent* to matrixial formations.¹²⁵ '[W]hen I speak of a "matrixial non-Oedipal sublimation"', writes Lichtenberg Ettinger:

...this means that the matrixial articulations of subjectivity lead to another aesthetics and ethics: both considered results of sublimation... the aesthetics and ethics of differentiation-in-jointness, distance in proximity, fragilization of the I and the dispersion with the non-I, and more generally matrixial non-Oedipal sublimation.¹²⁶

Within matrixial non-Oedipal subjectivisation Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger recognises the position of the 'inverted exile'. She gives the example of Moses, discussed earlier, in the biblical tale of his meeting with God 'behind the desert', to illustrate the subjective position of the inverted exile in contrast to Freud's figuring of Moses in his essay, 'Moses and Monotheism'.¹²⁷ For Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, Freud's splitting of Moses into two – the Egyptian Moses and the Hebrew Moses – and abjection of the Egyptian as 'a piece of imaginative fiction' repeats the phallic banishment of the feminine dimension from the symbolic and psychoanalytic theory and clinical practice, and is analogous to the reduction of God, in translations of the biblical text, from one who speaks with a polyvalent verb in the Hebrew 'I will be/become that I will be/become', to a phallic One who asserts tautologically, 'I am that I am'.

As an alternative to this phallic reduction, Lichtenberg Ettinger describes

124 - Copjec, p. 236.

125 - Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, e-mail correspondence with the author, 5 April, 1998.

126 - Ibid.

127 - Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo, Moses and Monotheism, and Other Works*, vol. 13, trans. by James Strachey (1934; London: Penguin Books, 1985).

Moses as 'a matrixial figure, doubly a stranger' with a 'double internal and external foreignness.'¹²⁸ Rather than sustaining a singular and unified identity:

The borderlines of [Moses's] double internal and external foreignness, and of his double internal and external affiliation pass through metamorphosis: these two identities partly melt away, their borderlines become thresholds for a nomadic 'becoming' identity that assembles together different *I – non-I* aspects.¹²⁹

Lichtenberg Ettinger identifies Moses's position as that of an 'inverted exile', on 'a migration towards an unknown desired destination', in contrast to those of the 'return' (a migration 'towards a known destination') and the 'exile' (a movement 'of expulsion and casting out from a desired place, abandonment of the desired place for an anywhere, like the movement of a refugee in a time of emergency') – both phallic positionalities related to the 'split' employed by Freud to manage Moses's complexity.¹³⁰

Another possibility, then, is offered by matrixial theory to the field of 'travelling theories'. In a subtle shift from the phallic identifications with the terms of nomadism as 'ideal ego' or anxious uncanny, the matrixial stratum opens up the possibility for charting the topography of the matrixial non-conscious as the trajectory of the 'inverted exile'. Most travelling subjects will indeed occupy all of these positions, often concurrently or in quick alternation, for the duration of their subjective journeys.

128 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'The becoming threshold of matrixial borderlines', p. 51.

129 - Ibid.

130 - Ibid., p. 38.

PART I: *Stranger Subjects*

Chapter 3: '*Travellers' Tales*'¹³¹

3.i Tourists, Natives and Other Women Travellers in Rome

In *Viaggio e Scrittura: Le straniere nell'Italia dell'Ottocento*, the authors advance the hypothesis that 'a feminine specificity existed in the [nineteenth century] journey'. While specifically rejecting an essentialist opposition between masculine and feminine, the authors insist that a feminine specificity is to be found in the woman traveller's 'double and multiple sense of belonging', where 'the metaphysics of presence and, by extension, of the fixity of sexual identity are put into question'.¹³² This multiple identity is implicit in the case of women constructed under the sign of the feminine in patriarchal society, and also aligned under the sign of the masculine in their professions, their nationalities, or their travels.¹³³ Inge Boer puts it thus: 'Both subject and object, foster-mother *and* touristic folder... Negotiating subjectivity implies taking object-positions as well....'¹³⁴ The question then becomes how to account within a matrixial methodology for more aspects of the woman

¹³¹ - I adopt this title from Routledge's excellent collection of essays published under the same name in 1995 in order to invoke the fictive nature of travellers' accounts of their journeys and the American use of the concept of the 'tall tale' which was codified in nineteenth century literature and folk tales. We might think of the 'travellers' tales' described here as similarly fantastic structures, in the Lacanian sense.

¹³² - '...la nostra ipotesi di partenza: che esisteva nel viaggio una specificità femminile.... Se mai, la specificità andava cercata in un duplice e molteplice senso di appartenenza, in un accesso non ideologico al reale, nel concetto di 'soggetto debole' drammatizzato dalla figura di una viaggiatrice spaesata, incerta, non sincronica. Il nostro tipo di viaggiatrice potrebbe mettere in questione il concetto dell'io unitario e integrato, quindi la metafisica della presenza e, per estensione, della fissità dell'identità sessuata.' Liana Borghi, Nicoletta Livi Bacci, Anna Luppi, Milly Mazzei, Piera Palandri, 'Viaggio intorno al Viaggio', in *Viaggio e Scrittura: Le straniere nell'Italia dell'Ottocento* ed. by Liana Borghi, Nicoletta Livi Bacci, Uta Treder (Firenze: Libreria delle Donne, 1988), pp. 9-19 (p. 11). Translation mine.

¹³³ - Liana Borghi et al., *Viaggio e Scrittura*, p. 11.

¹³⁴ - Boer, p. 24.

traveller's subjectivity without resorting to a split structure that produces a unified but reduced figure for yet another history of the Cartesian subject.

Just such a doubled social positioning is at work for the women sculptors who were active in Rome for varying periods of time from 1848 until after 1887. To date we know of the following American women sculptors who had a significant measure of professional success (but to their number should be added semi-professionals, amateurs, and those whose traces are until now still obscure), listed in order of their first arrival in Rome (*figs 33-48*): (Mrs) Sarah Fisher Clampitt Ames (1817-1901; in Rome 1848-probably before 1852), Harriet Hosmer (1830-1908; in Rome 1852-1875), (Maria) Louisa Lander (1826-1923; in Rome 1855-1858), Emma Stebbins (1815-1882; in Rome 1857-1874), (Mrs) Horatia Augusta Latilla Freeman (born in London, married American Painter James Edward Freeman, who was also American consul at Ancona 1840-1849; 1826-?; in Rome ca. 1845-after 1887), (Mrs) Caroline Davis Wilson (1810-1890; in Rome ca. 1860), Margaret Foley (ca. 1827-1877; in Rome 1860-1877), Florence Freeman (1836-1883?; in Florence 1861; in Rome 1862-after 1884), Mary Edmonia Lewis (ca. 1843-after 1909); in Rome 1865-after 1911), Franzisca Bernadina Wilhelmina Elisabeth 'Elisabet' Ney (1833-1907; in Rome ca. 1865), Anne Whitney (1821-1915; in Rome 1867-1871), Vinnie Ream (later Mrs Hoxie; 1847-1914; in Rome 1869-ca. 1871), Blanche Nevin (1841-1925; in Rome ca. 1877 and periodically in Italy throughout her career), and (Mrs) Mary Ann Delafield Dubois (1813-1888), whose dates in Rome are unknown.¹³⁵

For over 40 years there was at least one American woman sculptor in Rome at any given time. The number of professional women sculptors in the period of their greatest prominence, from ca. 1852 to 1876 and shortly after,

¹³⁵ - I illustrate here just one work by each sculptor, as the scope of this dissertation does not permit me to treat all of their sculptures individually. As I was unable to locate works or reviews of Caroline Wilson's sculptures, I have reproduced instead in the accompanying figures a short passage on Mary Ann Delafield Dubois. Also illustrated are works by Patience Wright, the first American woman sculptor of international repute to expatriate (to London), and Joanna Quiner, who did not to my knowledge ever work abroad.

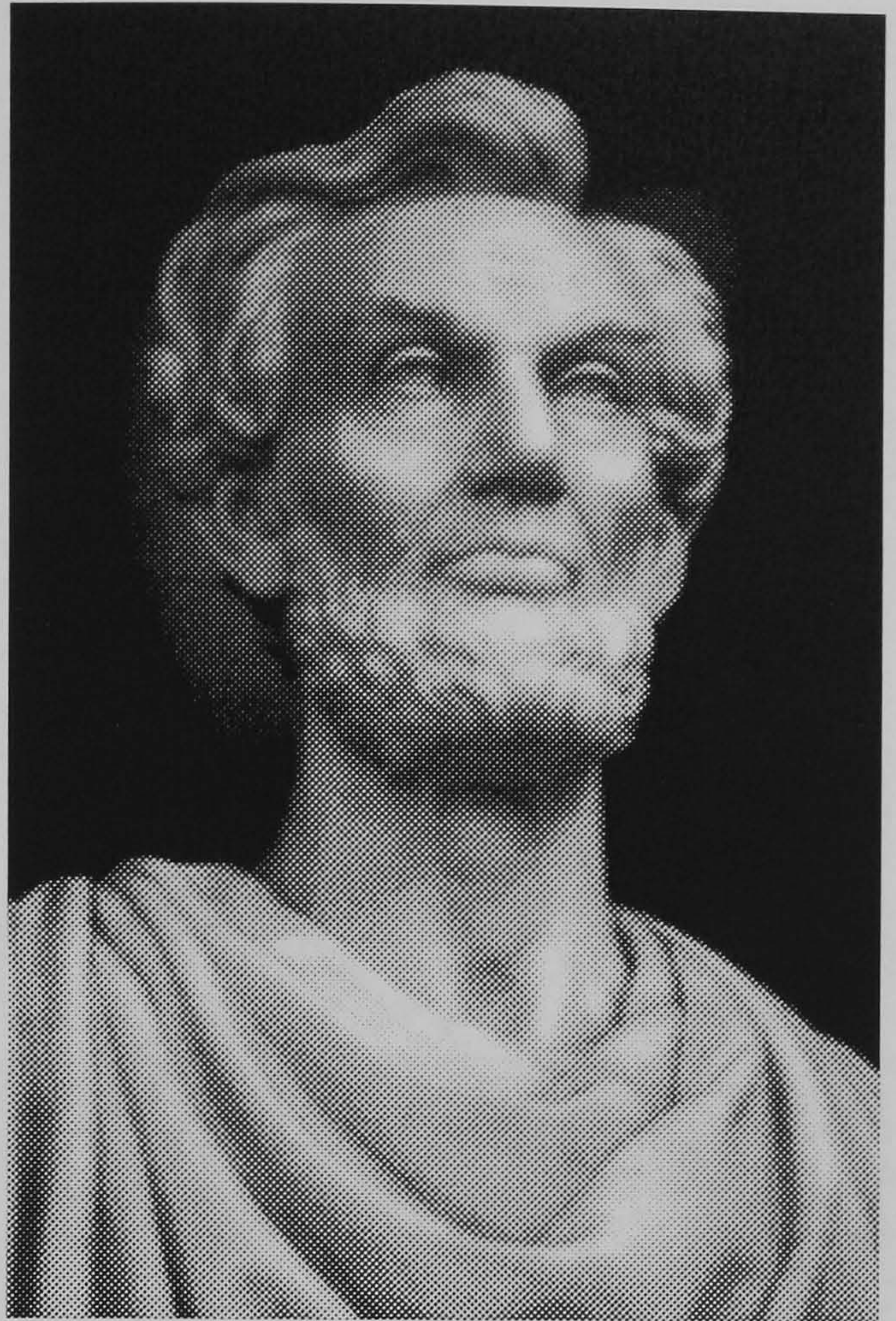


fig. 33 Sarah Fisher Clampitt Ames,
Lincoln, after 1865, marble,
Massachusetts State House, Boston



fig. 34 Harriet Hosmer, *Freedmen's Monument to Abraham Lincoln*, maquette, ca. 1868; current location unknown, photograph in the Harriet Hosmer Collection of the Watertown Free Public Library, MA



fig. 35 Louisa Lander, *Virginia Dare*, 1860, marble, life-size, Elizabethan Gardens, Manteo, NC



fig. 36 Emma Stebbins, *Angel of the Waters* (Bethesda Fountain), 1868, bronze on blue stone basin, monumental, Central Park, NYC

fig. 37 **MRS. J. E. FREEMAN**, a lady whose works in sculpture are well known and highly estimated in Rome, where she resides, has brought to England several models of very great excellence, of Ceramic Art and of works in silver. They are principally groups of children, auxiliaries to vases, &c., modelled with great ability, and arranged with rare skill, being in all varieties of attitude. Her chief production is a large vase, at present in wax; it consists of about thirty figures surrounding a vine, the little ones having partaken freely of the juice of the grape, and exhibiting its effect – from the external signs of mere joyousness, to the influence that extends the drinkers at the foot of the tree; thus teaching a lesson somewhat akin to that of the helots of ceeding merit, modelled with a free hand, and exhibiting rich fancy as well as thorough knowledge of Art. We know of no artist so perfect in delineating children.

The Art-Journal, n.s. 2. (1863), 231

fig. 38 **DuBois, MARY ANN DELAFIELD** (1813-1888). A.N.A. Amateur sculptor and cameo-cutter. Born in NYC on November 6, 1813, daughter of John Delafield; married Cornelius DuBois, merchant of NYC, in 1832. She took up sculpture about 1842 and produced a number of busts, ideal figures, and cameos before ill health forced her to give up her modeling about ten years later. Her cameo self-portrait is reproduced in the Delafield family history. Mrs. Dubois died October 27, 1888.

Groce & Wallace, *The New-York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America*, p. 190



fig. 39 Margaret Foley, *Cleopatra*, 1876, marble, 59.4x49x29.7cm, National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC



fig. 40 Florence Freeman, *Sandalphon*, after 1865, marble, life-size, Longfellow House, Cambridge, MA



fig. 41 Edmonia Lewis, *Hagar*,
1870-75, marble, National Museum
of American Art, Washington, DC

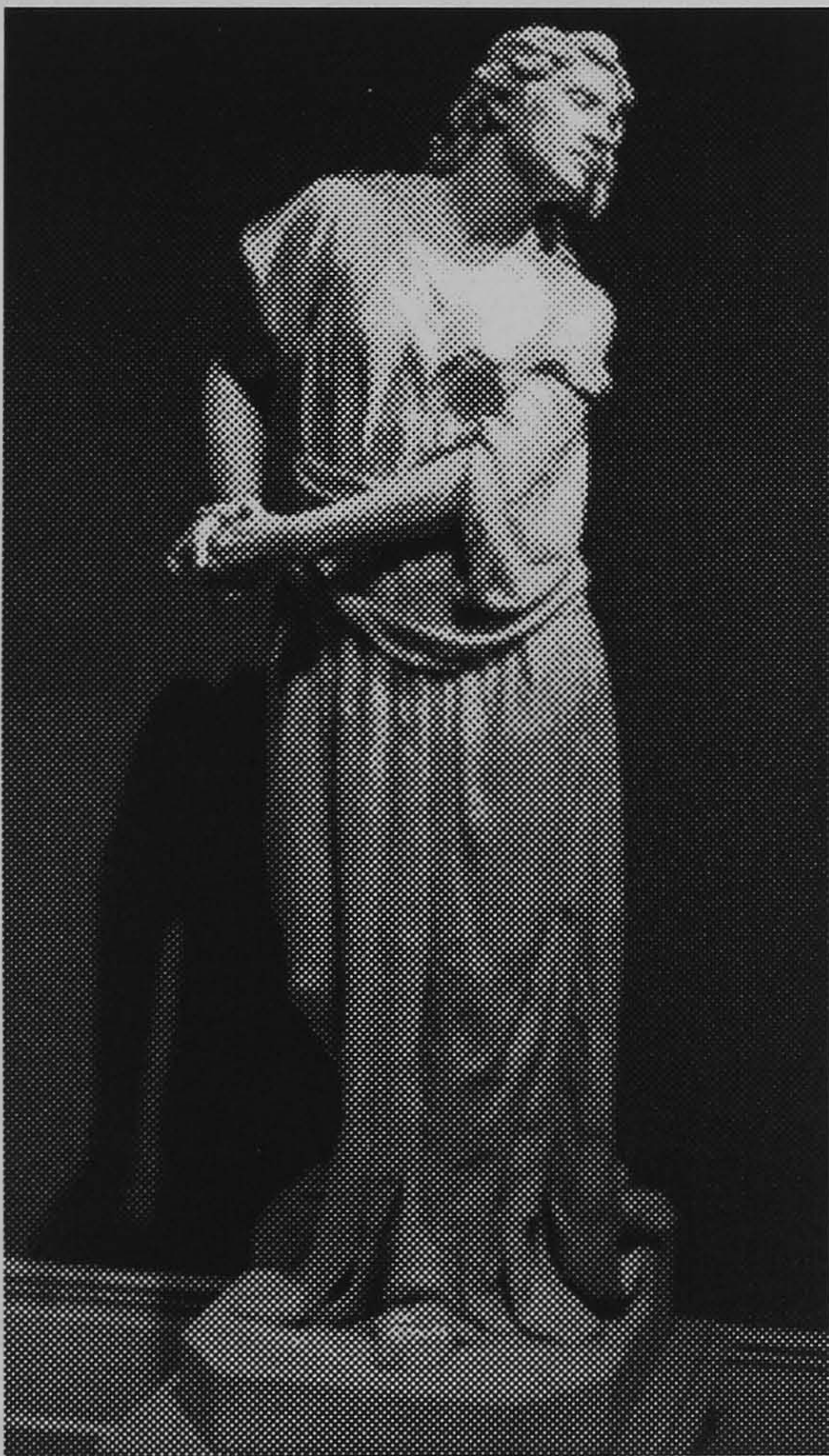


fig. 42 Elisabet Ney, *Lady MacBeth*,
1905, marble, life-size, National Museum
of American Art, Washington, DC

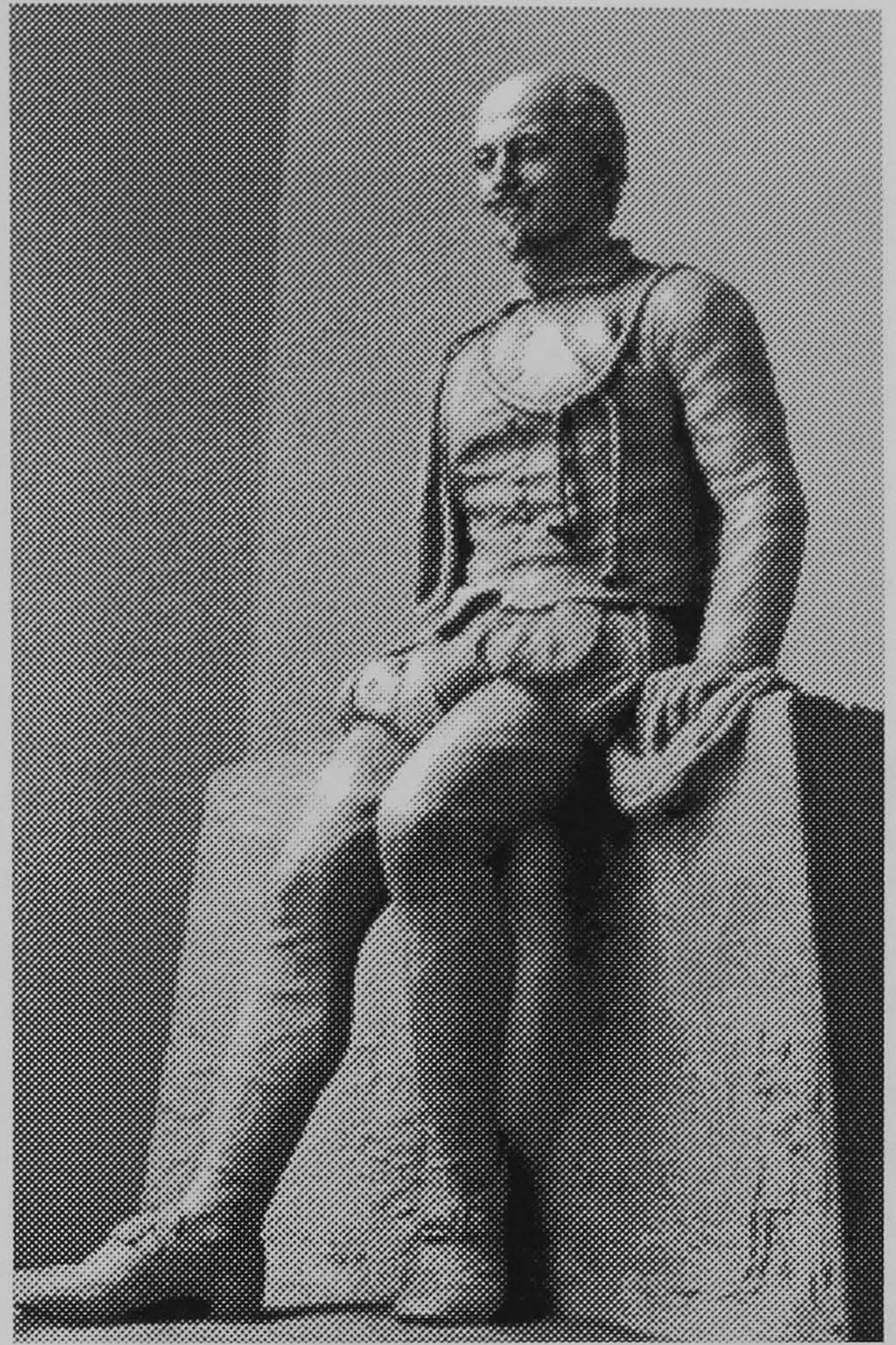


fig. 43 Anne Whitney, *Shakespeare, A Midsummer Night's Dream*, cast in 1897, plaster, 77.5cm high, Watertown Free Public Library, MA



fig. 44 Vinnie Ream (Hoxie), *Sappho*, c. 1870, marble, 166x60x52.5cm, National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC



fig. 45 Blanche Nevin, *J.P.G. Muhlenberg*, 1884, marble, life-size, United States Capitol Rotunda, Washington, DC

fig. 46 **Reed, Helen.** (*Am.*) A Boston artist. She began her professional career in that city by the drawing of portraits in crayon. Later, she went to Florence, where she studied sculpture under Preston Powers, sending to America bas-reliefs in marble, which have been exhibited at the Boston Art Club, in New York, and elsewhere.

Artists of the Nineteenth Century, p. 203

Helen Reed, dates unknown (active 1870s); sculptural works unknown, though records of drawings and paintings exhibited by Reed survive.



*fig. 47 Patience Wright,
Earl of Chatham,
William Pitt, 1775, wax,
clothing, wig, life-size,
Westminster Abbey,
Undercroft Museum,
London*



*fig. 48 Joanna Quiner, Bust of Robert Rantoul,
c. 1841, plaster, 73.8x50.2x31.2cm, Boston
Athenaeum, MA*

was a source of surprise to contemporaries, and they were frequently written about in art journals and periodicals of the day, both as individuals and as a group phenomenon. Although many women had achieved international prominence in painting and other arts prior to this period, it was not until the nineteenth century that a substantial number of US and European women gained international professional recognition in the field of sculpture. As American women produced sculptures for public sites and major collections in the country's first century, they both shaped the founding moment of American history in the plastic arts and introduced their field as a legitimate profession for women.

Like most sculptors of their period, American women artists established themselves in Rome ostensibly to participate in the art industry that was centred there. At the height of Neoclassicism, when there were as yet no art schools in the United States, a period of study in Italy and specifically in Rome was almost obligatory for the completion of an American artist's education. Sculptors in particular found Italy an advantageous site to establish their studios, since, in addition to proximity to the world's most important museums of classical statuary, it afforded easy access to superb marble quarries, expert workmen to execute the transfer of clay maquettes into large-scale marble statues, and a class of professional models – all of which came at prices substantially lower than in the United States. Liana Borghi illustrates the cheapness of Italian labour via the example of American sculptor Hiram Powers (1805-1873), resident in Florence, who unashamedly paid his best carving artisan \$4.00 a day – 'half of what a man could make cutting tombstones in New York City.'¹³⁶ In 1871, Anne Whitney also recognised the financial and professional benefits of establishing a studio in Rome in a letter

¹³⁶ - Liana Borghi, 'Anne Whitney: Letters Home' in *Italy and Italians in America*, ed. by Alfredo Rizzardi (Catania: Università di Catania, for the Associazione Italiana di Studi Nord-Americani, Acts of the Seventh National Convention, 1983), pp. 115-121 (p. 117), referencing Henry W. Bellows, 'Seven Sitzings with Powers the Sculptor', *Appleton Journal*, 1, (1869), p. 470.

to her sister, Sarah Whitney: 'Can I live in Boston for somewhat over 6 fr. a day the mere living & have a studio for \$12 a month with all the help that free galleries can give & the criticism of brother artists?'¹³⁷

Maria Mitchell, America's first woman astronomer, writing about Harriet Hosmer also affirmed the exigency for American sculptors to expatriate, with the benefits to the artist again articulated in terms of the availability of Italian labour and skills:

When Harriet Hosmer knew herself to be a sculptor, she knew also that in all America was no school for her. She must leave home, she must live where art could live. She might model her busts in the clay of her own soil, but who should follow out in marble the delicate thought which the clay expressed? The hard-handed men of Italy worked in marble from the designs put before them; one copied the leaves which the sculptor threw into the wreaths around the brow of his heroes; another turned with the tool the folds of the drapery; another wrought up the delicate tissues of the flesh; none of them dreamed of ideas – they were copyists – the very handwork that her head needed. And to Italy she went...¹³⁸

Perhaps ironically, at the precise moment when the United States was trying to separate itself from Europe and its colonial past; when the majority of its population was struggling to survive in rural communities and frontier conditions; when Americans first and most emphatically defined themselves as different from – and even jingoistically better than – their European cousins and forbearers, American artists and writers began flocking to the ancient cities of Europe. For decades they reversed the original colonisers' tide, crossing the Atlantic in slow and cramped sail-driven boats, enduring weeks of discomfort, risking shipwreck and even piracy for the opportunity to rediscover their 'fathers' lands'. Even when steamers regularly made the journey from America to Europe later in the nineteenth century, travellers complained loudly and often of the dangers and discomforts of journey, of

137 - Anne Whitney papers, Wellesley College Archives. Anne Whitney to Sarah Whitney, 12 February, 1871, quoted in Liana Borghi, p. 116.

138 - Phebe Mitchell Kendall, *Maria Mitchell, Life, Letters and Journals* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1896), quoted in Susan van Rensselaer, 'Harriet Hosmer', *Antiques*, 34 (1963), pp. 424-428 (p. 424).



fig. 49 Angelica Kauffmann, *Benjamin West*, 1763, graphite on paper, Victoria and Albert Museum, London

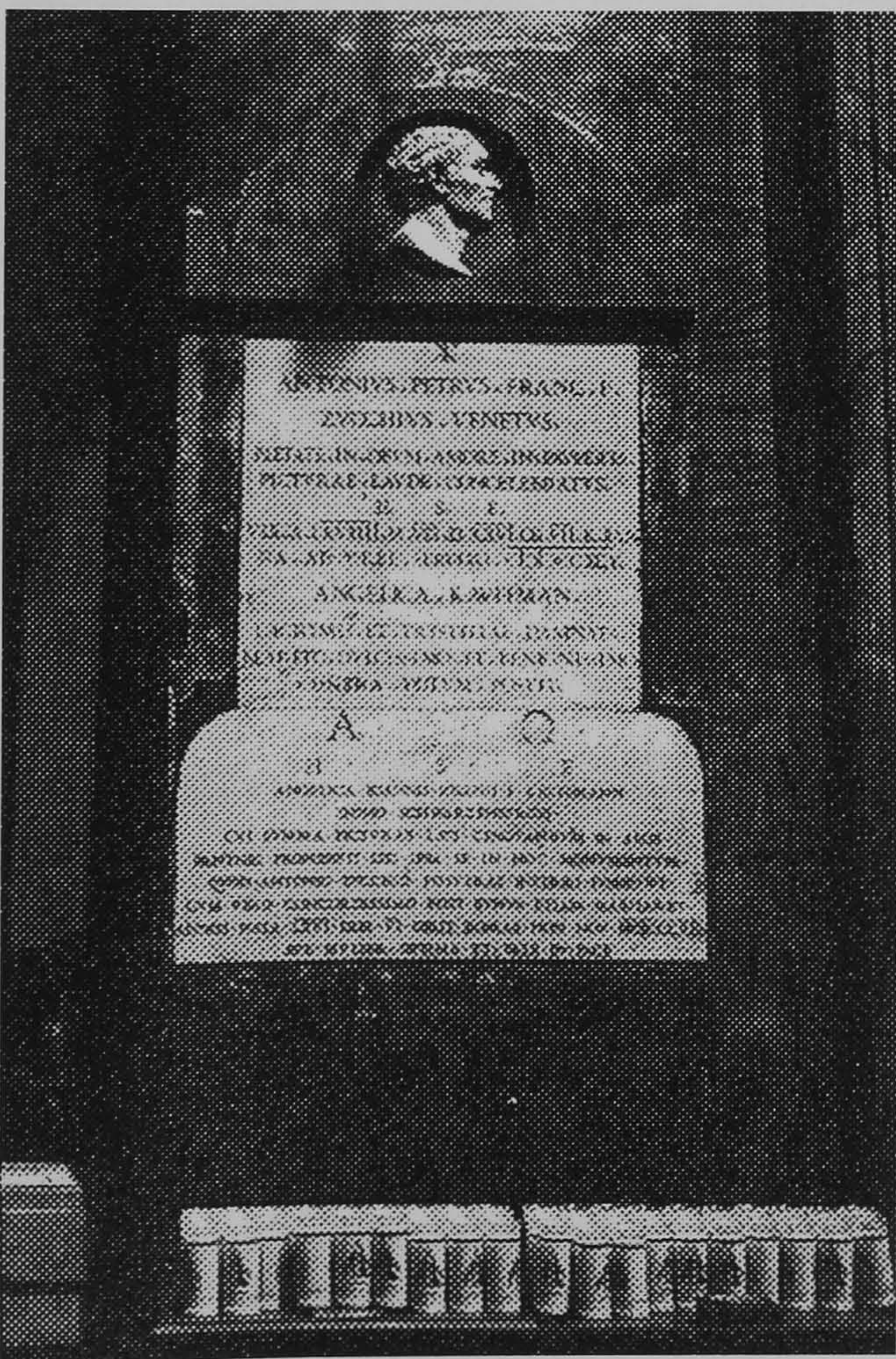


fig. 50 Angelica Kauffmann's Funerary Monument in Sant'Andrea delle Fratte, in the heart of Rome's foreigners' and artists' quarter. Harriet Hosmer's monument to Judith Falconnet (see fig. 96) lies in a niche on the opposite side of the nave. Kauffmann is buried with her second husband, the Italian painter Antonio Zucchio. Her inscription relates that though she was offered a tomb in the Pantheon - 'the highest praise to a painter' - she chose to be buried here 'in order to live with her husband (that "most agreeable man") even after death'.

strange food and foreign tongues, of the vulnerability of the tourist abroad – and yet still they came.

In fact, American artists began travelling to Italy before the federation of the United States was even founded. Benjamin West was the first to arrive in 1760, for the purpose of studying art. (*figs 49 & 50*) Italy and particularly Rome was then the artistic centre of the western world, and remained such until the end of the nineteenth century when the honour was transferred to Paris. Many American artists came to Italy with the expressed intention of learning all they could from the 'cradle of art' and bringing it back to the United States, to 'add a bit of culture' to the then frontier land and ultimately – true to the American spirit of progress and national mission – to develop an American art that had a character of its own, all American, and far superior to that of the 'old world', which the European immigrants to America had specifically rejected.

They came for the art – for the museums and galleries that were lacking in their own country – and for the international artistic community that was gathered there. Sculptors came to study at the feet of recognised masters: the Italian Canova (1757-1822), the Dane Thorwaldsen (1770-1844), and later, their students, while enjoying easy access to the world's most prized Italian marbles, and the relatively inexpensive assistance of a professional class of Italian marble craftspeople. (*figs 51 & 52*) As sculptor William Wetmore Story testified to the US government as late as 1878, 'The American artist, having but restricted opportunities to educate himself in his own country, is forced to expatriate himself for the purpose of study.'¹³⁹

Further, the ever-increasing stream of affluent 'Grand Tourists' into Italy afforded a steady supply of potential clients, who might want to memorialise their visit with the commission of a classicising sculpture or bust. William Cullen Bryant, writing in 1859, commented on the sudden surge of interest in

139 - William Wetmore Story, quoted in Otto Wittman, Jr. 'The Italian Experience (American Artists in Italy 1830-1875)', *American Quarterly* (Spring 1952), 3-14 (p. 5).

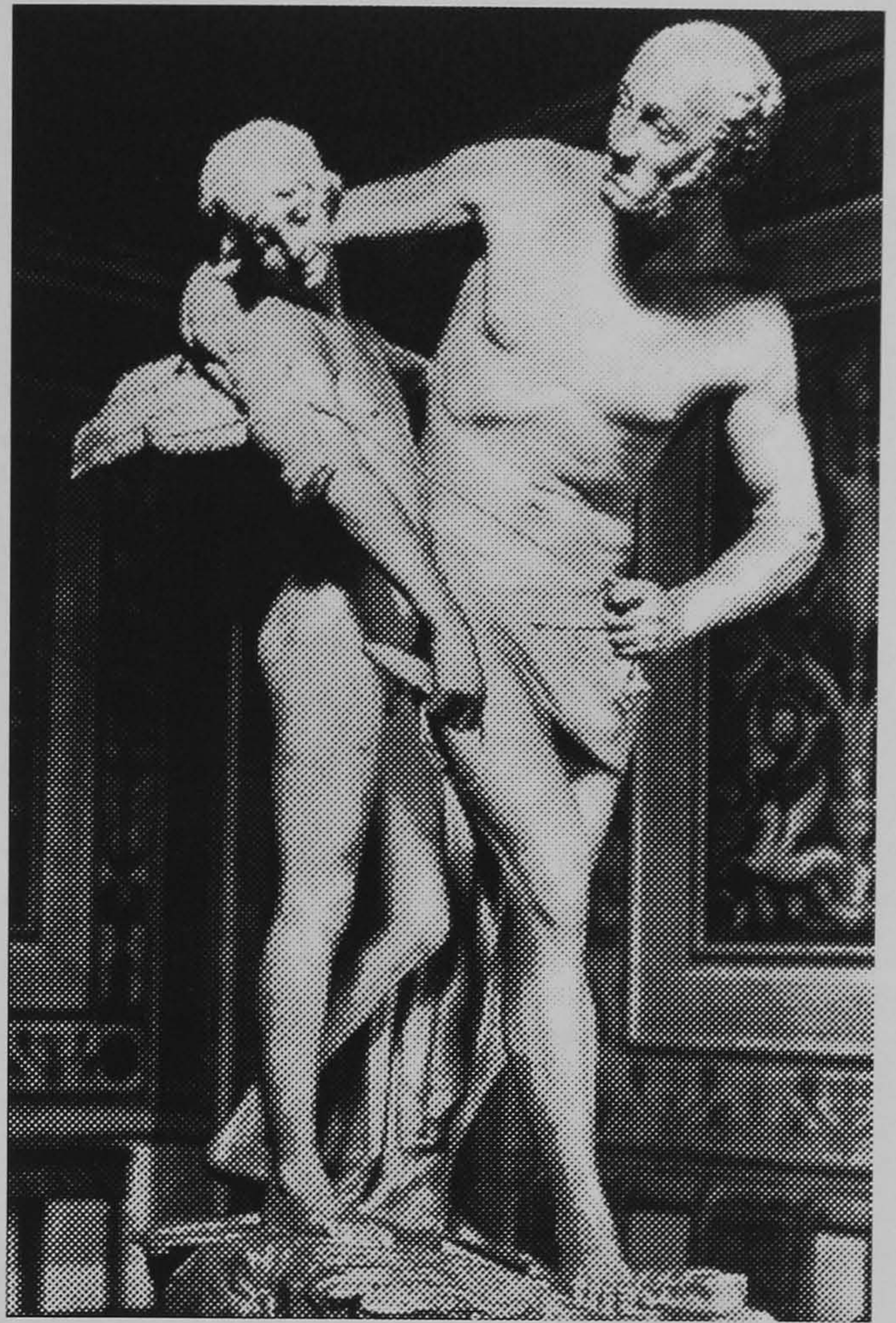


fig. 51 Antonio Canova, *Daedalus & Icarus*, 1779, marble, life-size, Museo Correr, Venice



fig. 52 Bertel Thorvaldsen, *Ganymede with Jupiter as Eagle*, 1817, Thorwald's Museum, Copenhagen

art-collecting manifested by Americans visiting Italy:

It is remarkable that [artists] find Rome a better place for obtaining orders from their own countrymen than any of the American cities. Men who would never have thought of buying a picture or a statue at home, are infected by the contagion of the place the moment they arrive. No talk of the money market here; no discussion of any public measure; no conversation respecting new enterprises, and the ebb and flow of trade; no price current, except of marble and canvas; all the talk is of art and artists. The rich man who, at home, is contented with mirrors and rosewood, is here initiated into a new set of ideas, gets a taste, and orders a bust, a little statue of Eve, a Ruth, or a Rebecca, and half a dozen pictures for his luxurious rooms in the United States.¹⁴⁰

And yet, Hawthorne might have replied, as he noted in his journal of February 15, 1858, the experience of Rome was more than just a practical necessity for the artists who travelled there:

This is a strange fascination that Rome exercises upon artists; there is clay elsewhere, and marble enough, and heads to model; and ideas may be made sensible objects at home as well as here. I think it is the peculiar mode of life, its freedom from the enthrallments of society, more than the artistic advantages which Rome offers; and then, no doubt, though the artists care little about one another's works, yet they keep each other warm by the presence of so many of them.¹⁴¹

Clearly there were other, less pragmatic but no less compelling reasons to travel to Rome as well. Nor was it the case that only American artists who travelled abroad became successful: Erastus Dow Palmer (1817-1904) doggedly resisted foreign travel, and yet became one the United States' most famous and accomplished sculptors. (fig. 53) William Rimmer (1816-1879), who taught Anne Whitney, never went abroad himself. Though he garnered little acclaim for his sculpture in his own day, he is now practically the only American sculptor of the neoclassical period whom late twentieth century critics regard as a 'real sculptor'.¹⁴² (fig. 54)

140 - William Cullen Bryant, *Letters of a Traveller*, 1859, quoted in Oliver W. Larkin, *Art and Life in America* (NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1960), p. 179 and Detroit Institute of Art, *Travellers in Arcadia: American Artists in Italy, 1830-1875* (Detroit, 1951), p. 12.

141 - Nathaniel Hawthorne, 'Rome, February 15, 1858', *French and Italian Notebooks* (manuscript version), quoted in Otto Wittman, Jr. 'The Italian Experience', pp. 5-6.

142 - Lynes, *The Art-Makers*, p. 153.



fig. 53 Erastus Dow Palmer, *Indian Girl, or the Dawn of Christianity*, 1856, marble, life-size, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY



fig. 54 William Rimmer, *Dying Centaur*, 1869, marble, over life-size, Boston Museum of Fine Art, MA

For the woman sculptor, her added stake in the professional gambit rendered the Rome experience practically indispensable to her *curriculum vitae*. Unlike the case among male sculptors, no American women sculptors who did not work abroad ever achieved national or international recognition as professional sculptors. But the demands of practical needs are never the extent of the subjective experience. The imaginary identifications on offer in Rome to the visiting artist were many and powerful, and such journeys tend to be mapped more by the vagaries of desire than by the demands of utilitarianism.

3.ii Return/Recognition/Introjection

In many cases, the journey to Rome for the 'Grand Tourist' lent itself to Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger's paradigm of the 'return', a migration to a known destination.¹⁴³ Indeed, in their works, actions and letters, nineteenth century American sculptors in Rome demonstrate themselves to have most often inhabited the city as tourists and colonists, operating almost exclusively from the security of their 'English ghetto'. In this mode, their identifications with their foreignness were rarely any more radical than twentieth century theory's ecstatic celebration of the 'nomad' as ideal ego. Occasionally there is evidence of the uncanny effects of Rome, and on even rarer occasions, moments of inverted exile registered in art practices, in the 'in between' spaces of the studios.¹⁴⁴

'My presentiment of the emotions with which I should behold the Roman ruins, has proved quite correct', wrote Niebuhr. 'Nothing about them is new to me; as a child I lay so often, for hours together, before their pictures, that their images were, even at that early age, as distinctly impressed upon my mind,

¹⁴³ - Lynes, *The Art-Makers*, p. 153.

¹⁴⁴ - These will be examined at length in Part II, Chapter 9 'The Colour of Sculpture'.



fig. 55 Jasper Francis Cropsey, *Roman Forum*, 1849



fig. 56 Thomas Hicks, *Margaret Fuller*, 1848,
oil on canvas, 40x32.5cm, private collection

as if I had actually seen them.’¹⁴⁵ (*fig. 55*) Similarly Rome as ‘a fatherland lost in the distance of time and memory’¹⁴⁶ could be fetishised as a return to a lost age of plenitude: ‘It restores to us in the highest degree that which we have lost’, exclaimed the painter, Rogers, to Byron.¹⁴⁷ ‘Italy receives me as a long lost child’, was the American Margaret Fuller’s impression.¹⁴⁸ (*fig. 56*) In all of these texts, the journey to Rome is figured as a Socratic ‘learning’ – a return via remembrance to a formerly known site. Troubling strangeness, discordant differences, and fragmentary understandings are subsumed under the illusory completeness of Rome as ideal ego, which is incorporated into the writer’s fantasy in an act of phallic fusion as an originary space of love and plenitude, identified with the mother.¹⁴⁹ For such tourists, explains Renato Mammucari, ‘it was not they who entered into the “journey” but the journey which entered into them’.¹⁵⁰ From an imaginary relationship of erotic attraction, these travellers assimilate the Roman other.

3.iii Aggression/Rejection

There is a second possible effect associated with identification with the ideal ego: instead of fusing with the loved object, the subject can reject it. This violent separation of subject from object is manifest in an aggressive desire for mastery of Rome. Some travellers, for example, resented the overwhelming evidence of having been preceded in their journeys by other

¹⁴⁵ - Quoted in Augustus J.C. Hare, *Walks in Rome* (London: Strahn & Co., 1871), pp. 10-11.

¹⁴⁶ - Frederick Meyer (1879), quoted in Renato Mammucari, *Ottocento Romano* (Rome: Newton Compton, 1993), p. 36: ‘una patria perduta nella lontananza dei tempi e della memoria’; translation mine.

¹⁴⁷ - Mammucari, p. 27.

¹⁴⁸ - *Travellers in Arcadia*, p. 38.

¹⁴⁹ - D. Lagache, cited in Laplanche and Pontalis’s *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac Books, 1988 [1973]), p. 202, associates the ideal ego with maternal identifications: ‘The Ideal Ego, understood as a narcissistic ideal of omnipotence, does not amount merely to the union of the Ego with the Id, but also involves a primary identification with another being invested with omnipotence – namely, the mother.’ ‘La psychanalyse et la structure de la personnalité’, *La Psycanalyse*, VI (1958), p. 43.

¹⁵⁰ - Mammucari, p. 36: ‘Questi artisti, è bene tener presente, non avevano fretta, non erano loro ad entrare nel “viaggio” ma era questo a penetrare in loro...’; translation mine.

Grand Tourists. Perhaps, as William Dean Howells asserted in his *Italian Journeys* (1867), ‘the “privilege” of travel is to make the traveller “forget whatever other travellers have said or written” about the places and things encountered.’¹⁵¹ But the sheer abundance of images of Rome over the centuries could make having a unique perspective on the city seem impossible – and the marks left on the site of one’s ‘discovery’ by other explorers could be particularly detrimental to fantasies of the exotic city as ‘blank page’. Flaubert, for example, complained of his Egypt having been scribbled on by others – not just graffiti artists, but even advertisers:

One is irritated by the number of imbeciles’ names written everywhere: on the steps of the Great Pyramid there is a certain Buffard, 79 Rue Saint-Martin, wallpaper-manufacturer, in black letters; an English fan of Jenny Lind’s has written her name; there is also a pear, representing Louis-Philippe.¹⁵² (*fig. 57*)

In the same spirit, Mark Twain claimed in *Innocents Abroad* that:

The ‘noblest delight’ that a man can experience is that of ‘Discovery!’... to be where no one has been before. To be the *first* – that is the idea.... Columbus, in the *Pinta*’s shrouds, when he swung his hat above a fabled sea and gazed upon an unknown world! What is there in Rome for me to see that others have not seen before me?

Twain concluded dismissively, ‘What can I discover? Nothing. Nothing whatsoever.’¹⁵³ (*fig. 58*)

Indeed, the desire to discover something new was overwhelming in the United States of Twain’s age. The western frontiers were being relentlessly pushed towards the Pacific. American industry raced forward in technological and commercial innovation, seeking to secure a position as first among nations by being the first to ‘build the better mousetrap’. The young nation’s

¹⁵¹ - Boston Museum of Fine Arts, *The Lure of Italy*, exhibition catalogue, 1992-1993 (Boston: Boston Museum of Fine Arts, in association with Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1992), p. 94.

¹⁵² - Francis Steegmuller, *Flaubert in Egypt: A Sensibility on Tour* (Chicago: Academy, 1987), p. 54, quoted in Inge E. Boer, ‘The World beyond our Window: Nomads, Travelling Theories and the Function of Boundaries’, *parallax* 3 (September 1996), pp. 7-26, (p. 21).

¹⁵³ - Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* (London & Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.), p. 209.



fig. 57 George P. A. Healy, Frederic Church and Jervis McEntee, *Arch of Titus*, 1871, oil on canvas, 183.75x122.5cm, The Newark Museum, NJ

This painting represents a striking record of 'artistic' American tourism in Rome: Longfellow and his daughter, Edith, are pictured under the Arch of Titus, being sketched by painter Sanford R. Gifford as Launt Thompson and George P. A. Healy look on. The painting was in fact produced jointly by Healy, Church and McEntee from a photograph, with the artists to the right being their later addition. As Vance remarks, the Arch of Titus is a 'glorified equivalent in oil to the naively composed tourist photograph that says, "We were there!"'

(Vance, I, p. 58)



fig. 58 Emma Stebbins, *Christopher Columbus*, ca. 1893 (installed 1934), marble on limestone pedestal, monumental, Cadman Plaza, NYC

gaze was firmly fixed on self-improvement, on progress, on the future, and yet many Americans of the nineteenth century still betrayed an overwhelming fascination with and even need for the past symbolised by Rome.

3.iv Uncanny Topographies

Occasionally, visitors to Rome admitted that they found the experience of the city itself disorienting, or even threatening, as it dislodged the binary certainties and teleological projects upon which their ego-identities were formed. For Paola Ludovici, the city is predisposed by its architectural topography to conjure a sense of the *heimlich*:

Rome... does not lend itself easily to... polarised topography: even the imposing dome of St. Peter's or the architecture of the Capitol seem, in context, too diminutive for unquestioned loftiness. Rome remains inescapably intricate, horizontal, constraining at times, and yet soothing with her 'sad embrace'.¹⁵⁴ (*fig. 59*)

But as Freud demonstrated, that which is familiar and home-like often turns strange, *unheimlich* or uncanny. Augustus Hare evokes the strangeness of knowing so well a city that one has never visited:

An arrival in Rome is very different to that in any other town of Europe. It is coming to a place new and yet most familiar, strange and yet so well known. When travellers arrive at Verona, for instance, or at Arles, they generally go to the amphitheaters with a curiosity to know what they are like; but when they arrive at Rome and go to the Coliseum, it is to visit an object whose appearance has been familiar to them from childhood, and, long ere it is reached, from the heights of the distant Capitol, they can recognise the well-known form; – and as regards St. Peter's, who is not familiar with the aspect of the dome, of the wide-spreading piazza, and the foaming fountains, for long years before they come to gaze upon the reality?¹⁵⁵ (*fig. 60*)

Describing the phantasy of intrauterine existence, Freud too evoked the experience of geographical places at once familiar and strange:

Whenever a man dreams of a place or a country and says to

¹⁵⁴ - Paola Ludovici, Biancamaria Pisapia, eds. *Americans in Rome: 1764-1870*, compiled by Alessandra Pinto Surdi with an introduction by Michèle Rivas (Rome: Centro di Studi Americani, 1984), p. 15.

¹⁵⁵ - Hare, p. 9.



fig. 59 George Inness, *St Peter's, Rome*, 1857



fig. 60 William Page, *Mrs William Page*,
1860-61, oil on canvas, 151x91cm,
Detroit Institute of Art

himself, while he is still dreaming: 'this place is familiar to me, I've been here before', we may interpret the place as being his mother's genitals or her body. In this case too, then, the *Unheimlich* is what was once *heimisch*, familiar; the prefix 'un' is the token of repression.¹⁵⁶

Freud's identification of phantasies of intrauterine experience with dream images of places suggests the potential for Rome to be experienced as uncanny, both from within a matrixial phantasy, and a phallic one. From the phallic perspective, a visitor's response can be an attempt at imperialistic mastery and colonisation of the city – the sort of journey for which Edward Gibbon describes his ideal Grand Tourist, who should:

...be endowed with an active and indefatigable mind and body, able to take any means of transport whatsoever and endure with an indifferent smile every discomfort of the road, weather, or tavern. He should be prompted by an unflagging curiosity, indifferent to comfort and jealous of the time, possess an abundant supply of classical and historical learning, but also be a botanist and a mechanic. A musical ear will multiply the pleasures of his travel in Italy, but a correct and acute eye, that knows how to dominate the landscape, distinguish the qualities of a painting, measure the proportions of a building, is even more closely tied to the finest sensitivities of the soul.¹⁵⁷ (*figs 61 & 62*)

Though superficially antithetical, the masterful response is simply the screen for the intrusion of castration anxiety which can produce sensations of the uncanny in the wake of the subject's failure at mastery. Mastery and its failure remain in a dialectical relationship at the heart of the phallic subject's constitution, described by Walter Benjamin in the context of the exploration of another city in his *A Berlin Chronicle*:

It is likely that no one ever masters anything in which he has not known impotence; and if you agree, you will also see that this impotence comes not at the beginning of or before the struggle with the subject, but at the heart of it. Which brings me to the middle period of my life in Berlin, extending from the whole of my later childhood to my entrance at the university: a period of impotence

156 - Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 245, discussed in Lichtenberg Ettinger, *The Matrixial Gaze*, p. 7.

157 - Mammucari, p. 37.



fig. 61 John Singleton Copley, *Mr and Mrs Ralph Izard*, 1775, oil on canvas, 172.5x221.25cm, Museum of Fine Art, Boston



fig. 62 Albert Bierstadt, *The Arch of Octavia (Roman Fish-Market)*, 1858, oil on canvas, 71.25x93.75cm, Fine Art Museums of San Francisco

This painting's satirical mixture of ancient Roman grandeur and modern squalor, with a liberal sprinkling of 'picturesque' Alban maids, sprawling Italian men, and bewildered American or English tourists (entering the market at the right), is typical of nineteenth century American representations of Rome.

before the city.¹⁵⁸

From the phallic side, the struggle with impotence is 'at the heart of the subject'. In his defiance of castration anxiety before the city, Benjamin records that he refused all identification with the feminine, represented by his mother, during their walks through the city: 'in my manner, already described, of walking in the city, in the stubborn refusal under any circumstances to form a united front, be it even with my own mother.'¹⁵⁹

Alternatively, access to matrixial phantasies of intrauterine existence provoked by the city of Rome might lead to a different experience, one 'also informed by *touching, hearing and moving* that are not "plainly connected with particular erotogenic areas" or uniquely connected with bodily orifices.'¹⁶⁰ In the matrix, Rome becomes an encounter rather than an object, and one that undermines all pretence at phallic mastery, even if only for a brief moment before phallic mastery reasserts itself.

Sir George Head, author of the memoir/travel guide, *A Tour of Many Days*, wrote in the late 1840s of his abandonment of mastery in his encounter with Rome:

For Rome, and all that it contained, which, until a few months before, I had never expected to see, being now before my eyes in reality, the objects to be visited so infinitely exceeded in multitude and variety all that I had anticipated.... Accordingly, [I] discard[ed] all manner of design or system in my operations, [was] taken by surprise by the objects that came in my way, and allow[ed] my sense to riot at ease, as it were, amongst the *embarras des richesses* that surrounded me....¹⁶¹

Overwhelmed by the diversity of objects and experiences in Rome, Head abdicates the masterful position of the 'return' towards an imaginatively 'known' Rome and takes up the aimless wandering of the 'inverted exile',

158 - Walter Benjamin, 'A Berlin Chronicle', in *One-Way Street*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London and NY: Verso, 1979), p. 264.

159 - Benjamin, 'A Berlin Chronicle', in *One-Way Street*, pp. 300-301.

160 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, *The Matrixial Gaze*, p. 8.

161 - Sir George Head, *A Tour of Many Days* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longman, 1849), quoted in *The Art-Journal*, n.s. vol. 1, (1849), p. 232.

migrating towards an unknown but desired destination. This is an approach to wandering described in the work of Walter Benjamin on his cultivation of 'the art of straying'. It is not the practice of getting lost en route to a known destination: 'Not to find one's way about in a city is of little interest,' writes Benjamin, 'but to lose one's way in a city, as one loses one's way in a forest, requires practice.... I learned this art late in life: it fulfilled the dreams whose first traces were the labyrinths on the blotters of my exercise books.'¹⁶²

'A Labyrinth is a place where one gets lost', writes Benjamin in his *Berlin Chronicle*.¹⁶³ It is a 'standard of difficulty and complexity' for Susan Sontag, 'suggesting a notion about the forbidden, and how to gain access to it'.¹⁶⁴ Far from reducing difference to the self and the same, as in a teleology of exploration of surface/depth, inside/outside, the labyrinthian wandering of the inverted exile allows for the complex interrelating of relationships, histories, and ideas to be conceived spatially rather than in terms of linear time and progression with a predetermined end. Susan Sontag explains:

[T]ime is the medium of constraint, inadequacy, repetition, mere fulfillment.... Time does not give one much leeway: it thrusts us forward from behind, blows us through the narrow funnel of the present into the future. But space is broad, teeming with possibilities, positions, intersections, passages, detours, U-turns, dead ends, one-way streets.¹⁶⁵

As in the baroque *Trauerspiel*, Benjamin's wandering autobiographical writings convert memory into a staging of the past as a *tableau vivant*. 'Benjamin is not trying to recover his past', with this model, explains Sontag, 'but to understand it: to condense it into its spatial forms, its premonitory structures.... To understand something is to understand its topography, to know how to chart it. And to know how to get lost.'¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² - Walter Benjamin, *A Berlin Childhood Around the Turn of the Century* (unpublished), quoted in Susan Sontag, 'Introduction' in *One Way Street* (London: Verso, 1979), pp. 7-28 (p. 10).

¹⁶³ - Benjamin, *One Way Street*, p. 11.

¹⁶⁴ - Sontag in Benjamin, *One Way Street*, p. 11.

¹⁶⁵ - *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁶⁶ - *Ibid.*

The Rome of Sir George Head recalls Benjamin's concept of the baroque, 'a world of things (emblems, ruins) and specialised ideas ("allegories are, in the realm of thought, what ruins are in the realm of things").'¹⁶⁷ The nature of the baroque is to juxtapose heterogeneous elements, almost recklessly.¹⁶⁸ Sometimes the shock of these elements' disjunctive jarring reveals something unexpected: a difference emerges. The art of the inverted exile as discovered this traveller to Rome is to 'discard all manner of design or system in [one's] operations', and to allow oneself to be 'taken by surprise by the objects that came in [one's] way, and allow [one's] sense to riot at ease'.

Freud, too, engaged the metaphor of the 'Eternal City' as a spatial model for time and the preservation of memory in the unconscious. He argued that as in the 'remains of ancient Rome' which 'are found dovetailed into the jumble of a great metropolis which has grown up in the last few centuries since the Renaissance', so:

...in mental life... nothing that has once come into existence will have passed away and all the earlier phases of development continue to exist alongside the latest one... the observer would perhaps only have to change the direction of his glance or his position in order to call up the one view or the other.¹⁶⁹

Sculptor Emma Stebbins also wrote of the miracles of Roman excavations as a baroque *Trauerspiel*-like re-enactment of history, or Freudian model of memory:

Ever new and constantly recurring surprises of this kind belong to Rome alone, where the long-buried past rises up to confront the present, and, ghostlike, 'In their habit as they lived,' the actors in a remote antiquity stalk again across the stage. Other civilisations we know lie buried; we know that the earth teems with them; but they lie in barren desolation, save where individual effort and enthusiasm brings them with difficulty to the light of day; but in Rome the foot unearths them, the common way is strewn with them, the earth is

¹⁶⁷ - Sontag in Benjamin, *One Way Street*, p. 16.

¹⁶⁸ - 'It is common practice in baroque literature to pile up fragments incessantly', Benjamin writes; *Ibid*.

¹⁶⁹ - Sigmund Freud, (1930) 'Civilization and Its Discontents', *The Freud Reader*, ed. by Peter Gay (NY and London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1989), pp. 722-772 (pp. 725-726).

hollow with their crumbling remains, the river rolls its yellow tide over them, and the very air is full of their suggestions. In Rome alone the old and the new exist together and can never be disunited.¹⁷⁰

Stebbins's account of the archaeological relationship between the past and the present in Rome resonates with the matrixial structure of memory recognised by Rosi Huhn in Walter Benjamin's aesthetic:

The structure of memory is visualized in this aesthetic structure as if its multiplicity of passages had been created through individual memories, instances of forgetting and repression but also through corrections added during the *après-coup*. The aim is neither a faithful reproduction nor a conservation but rather – by dissolving this material again in the 'now' (*Jetztzeit* – W. Benjamin) and through the play of unusual relations thus multiplied – one aims at letting the metramorphosis be constructed... Deviation, disruption, fissures determine the aesthetic structure, ... the principle of dream-creation is visualized, ... centrifugal and centripetal powers act simultaneously... to direct the gaze toward the inside and the outside. In this way, centre and periphery, in constant exchange, occupy, one after the other, the place of off-centred viewing. The gaze is sent from the work (conceived as multiplying the eye) to the spectator – which contributes to an experience of reciprocal gazes... In this "perpetual passage" an expression of the reality of modern nomadism and exile – the encounter with the unknown, the anonymous, the stranger, chaos and the unconscious – is given form.¹⁷¹

By figuring the nomad as a *modern* matrixial subject in an encounter with memory, Rosi Huhn's reading of Benjamin's text raises the question of the historical specificity of these two twentieth century theoretical constructs. To what extent can 'matrixial grains' of experience have preceded the formulation of the matrix after the *shoah*? Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger acknowledges that 'a sensitivity of/to the matrixial sphere and to metramorphic processes always existed', but that even beyond the question

170 - Emma Stebbins, *Charlotte Cushman: Her Letters and Memories of Her Life* (Boston: Houghton, Osgood and Co., 1878), p. 138.

171 - Rosi Huhn, 'Das problem der Entsorgung in Kunst und Kulture als Passage zum "Positiners Barbarentum"/"Le problème du traitement des résidus dans l'art et dans Late culture, en tant que passage vers la "barbarie positive"' in *Passages d'après/Passagen. Nach Walter Benjamin, Textes sure l'actualité de l'esthétique de Walter Benjamin* (Mainz: Verlag Herman Schmidt, 1992), pp. 98-102, quoted in Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, *The Matrixial Gaze*, op. cit., p. 49.

of whether other periods had either an interest or a need to engage with these, it was not previously possible to formulate matrixial experiences as *such*.

Once we discover the matrixial sphere, maybe we can find it in different intensities and variations and by different means in other periods as well; it is a matter of searching and bringing into light. However, for me it seems that the questions for which the attempt to formulate the matrix became urgent arose in all their ampleur in the last 50 years and maybe, to be more broad, we can trace its grains from postmodernity that begins, like Lyotard claims, at the same time as modernity.¹⁷²

However, Lichtenberg Ettinger adds, just as 'once the postmodern was formulated, we can research and show postmodern traits in works of classical artists', without trying to demonstrate that classical artists were actually postmodern, so we might now discover that 'a sensitivity which we can today qualify as postmodern was well present and hidden in their work, unreadable before'. In pre-twentieth century periods, 'we shall find disparate grains of [the matrixial] appearing indeed', argues Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger. I shall also suggest in Part III that the tragedies of slavery in the United States and the Civil War of 1861-1865, coincident with the Italian wars of unification that were not concluded until 1871, amounted to a surplus of traumatic experiences that were largely unsymbolisable for expatriate American artists in Rome through the phallic processes of metaphor and metonymy, and therefore subsist in certain works from this period as glimmerings of metamorphic processes. Specifically, this study explores the possibilities for matrixial readings of Edmonia Lewis's celebrated sculpture, *Forever Free* (1867; see fig. 99). Nevertheless, it is important to recognise the specificity of the period in which the matrix was formulated as distinct from others: 'Our erotic antennae capture today a world they couldn't capture before, and they have to transfer to and transmit from and metamorphose

172 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'Open Letter' of November 19, 1997, sent to the author among others by e-mail.

with this world, where catastrophe is not anymore an isolated event. This makes a difference.¹⁷³

A Benjaminian journey, of which some testimony survives *avant la lettre* from nineteenth century travellers, sets out the ruins of Rome as 'ideas and experiences'¹⁷⁴ on the baroque stage – or the excavation site. Accordingly, this study of Rome and its histories seeks to establish the terrain in which particular representations of history unfold and intersect, rather than an interpretative model, in which evidence is mounted to argue for a common 'truth' that unifies various elements. By allowing history to be read as a space, rather than as linear time, the need to establish chronology and hierarchy among aspects of the subject's life is removed.¹⁷⁵ The subject becomes an archive, a topography rather than a singular identity constructed through the elision of contradictory or distasteful evidence. David Nye describes this historical methodology in his 'anti-biography' of Thomas Edison.

The anti-biography assumes that there are no primary sources and that therefore there are no 'secondary' sources. It decenters the entire notion of source – itself necessary as a mythic underpinning to writing a life – and reconnects documents to the cultural systems that produce them. These systems – expressed as structures in the documents – become the subject of the anti-biography. The individual ceases to exist as a unitary object and becomes only a series of meeting points, a pattern of possibilities.... [Thus the subject] can be mapped, but there is no single way to follow the lines of connection on that map. The reader must grasp the work as a set of relationships, not as a sequence of events.¹⁷⁶

Any analysis of texts or 'ruins' in the archives should embrace a critical stance that resists, as Nye explains, a simple 'recovery' of the unitary self, in which 'all contradictions must be overcome rather than explored in the [con]quest.'¹⁷⁷

173 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'Open Letter' of November 19, 1997.

174 - Benjamin, *One Way Street*, p. 13.

175 - David Nye, *The Invented Self* (Odense, Denmark: Odense University Press, 1983), pp. 12-13.

176 - *Ibid.*, p. 11.

177 - *Ibid.*, p. 74.

PART I: *Stranger Subjects*

Chapter 4: *American Women Sculptors in Rome*

4.i Not a Flock

The large number of American women in Rome in the nineteenth century might suggest that somehow Rome, or the mere fact of being abroad, effected a sort of feminist liberation for the American women who worked abroad, or that women venturing into traditionally male professions were more accepted in Italy than at home. In conjunction with a James-inspired grouping of the American women sculptors as a mass-movement, such assumptions can lead to an erasure of their differences and individual specificity, rewriting their histories as the single history of a 'proto-women artists' support group, to reflect more the feminist desires of the historian than of the history.

While the need to establish female genealogies and 'matrilines' is real and pressing, it is essential not to choose, as an opposite extreme from the age-old art historical rejection of women artists, to fuse with the subjects of our studies in a 'Ms-identification'.¹⁷⁸ It is not sufficient simply to resuscitate women artists as long-lost heroines and add them to the art historical paradigms that have long privileged the masculine narratives of 'artist as hero'. Lacking in criticality, and ultimately reinforcing the paradigms of canonical modernist art history, such 'reformist' art history runs the risks described by Griselda Pollock and Rozsika Parker in setting out the project of *Old Mistresses* :

...to see women's history only as a progressive struggle

¹⁷⁸ - The terms of 'rejection' and 'fusion' are specifically deployed by Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger in her critique of phallic symbolic operations.

against great odds is to fall into the trap of unwittingly reasserting the established male standards as the appropriate norm. If women's history is simply judged against the norms of male history, women are once again set apart, outside the historical process of which both men and women are indissolubly part.¹⁷⁹

Studies of American women artists abroad frequently ignore the complexity of their positioning within structures of gender and nationality: not only did American women artists face disadvantages in their profession because of their race and gender, but many of them also enjoyed specific privileges abroad because of their race, nationality and class. And while several of the American women sculptors in Rome in the nineteenth century were aware of the sex-discrimination to which they were subject, none commented on the problematics of the labour hierarchy that permitted them to exploit highly-skilled, Italian workmen and the cheapness of life in Italy in order to produce their works at a higher profit. At the distance of more than a hundred years, feminist art historians studying these nineteenth century American women sculptors repeat the myopias of the artists themselves all too frequently. Even as we excavate the forgotten and ignored histories of women artists, we must identify and challenge the gendered stratigraphies of art and art history – even and especially when the women artists themselves have been accomplices in the ranking of masculine over feminine, artist over model, tourist over native.

Another tendency of the lionising mode in feminist art history uses legends about the women sculptors to sculpt the artists themselves, rendering them little more than characters in their own *oeuvres*. For example, the uncritical repetition of anecdotes about Edmonia Lewis in recent art historical writings – despite our knowing that both she and nineteenth century reporters writing about her had a propensity for telling 'colourful' but

179 - Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses* (NY: Pantheon Books, 1981), n. 2, pp. xviii-xix.

contradictory stories about her past – points to a myth-making around her person that is not far from the nineteenth century fascination with the exotic and the picturesque. Lynda Roscoe Hartigan notes:

Anecdotal accounts of Lewis's background appealed to her audience but have hampered attempts to establish an accurate biography. She was born in 1843 or 1845, perhaps in Ohio or near Albany, New York (where she said her mother was born); according to one source, she was born on July 4, 1845, in Greenbush, New York. Lewis herself complicated matters by stating that she was born in 1854 (impossible because she enrolled in Oberlin College in 1859) and by naming both Greenhigh, Ohio, and New York State as her birthplace.... She delighted in recounting her life as the Indian maiden "Wildfire," fishing, swimming, and making baskets and embroidered moccasins, which she sold in cities while traveling with the Indians.¹⁸⁰ (*figs 63 & 64*)

Though we cannot be sure if such inaccuracies and romanticisations are to be attributed more to Lewis's interviewers or to herself, now as in the nineteenth century, the first aspect of Lewis's life and work that is mentioned after her gender in most art historical texts is her race. While not intending that Lewis's race would not have affected her career, it does seem appropriate to consider whether there is such an enormous difference between nineteenth century remarks on the 'exoticism' of Edmonia Lewis as a 'coloured' sculptor, and twentieth century eulogising of Lewis as more heroic than the other women sculptors since she had the additional 'handicap' of race to overcome. For example, Nancy G. Heller's *Women Artists: An Illustrated History* introduces Lewis thus:

Most remarkable of all the expatriate sculptors was Edmonia Lewis. Born near Albany, New York, to a Chippewa Indian mother and a black father, Lewis had to deal with racial prejudice in addition to all the other problems facing any nineteenth-century American woman without financial resources who wanted to be a professional sculptor.¹⁸¹

In the same vein, despite its great usefulness as a resource on women

180 - Lynda Roscoe Hartigan, *Sharing Traditions: Five Black Artists in Nineteenth-Century America* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985), pp. 85-86.

181 - Nancy G. Heller, *Women Artists: An Illustrated History*, revised and expanded edition, (New York: Abbeville Press, 1987), p. 86.

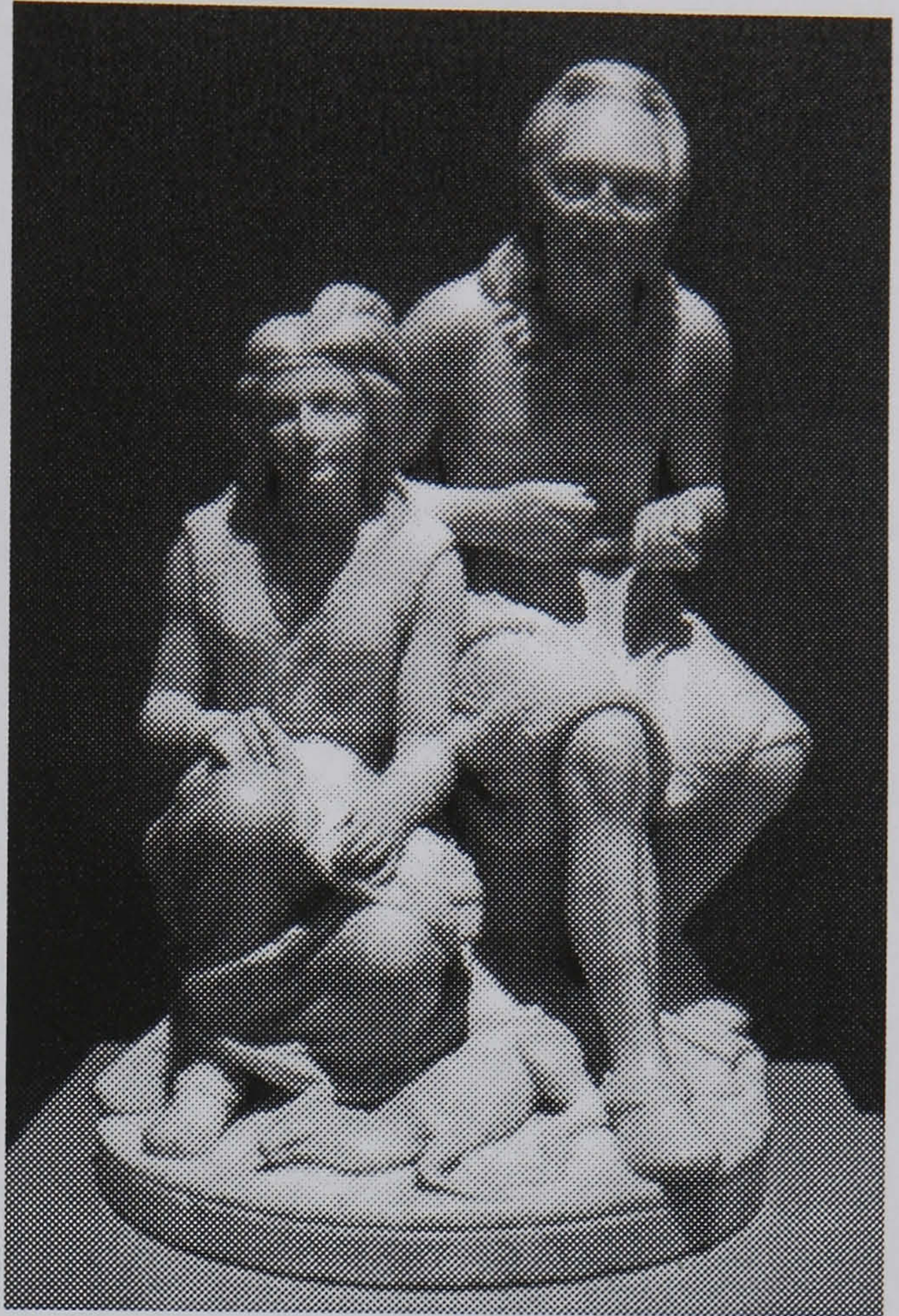


fig. 63 Edmonia Lewis, *Old Arrow Maker and His Daughter*, 1872, marble, 53.75x39x33.4cm, National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC



fig. 64 Edmonia Lewis, *Minnehaha*, c. 1865, marble, Kennedy Galleries, NYC

artists, is Charlotte Streifer Rubenstein's entry on Lewis in *American Women Sculptors*:

(Mary) Edmonia Lewis (1844? – c. 1911), the first American sculptor of color to win an international reputation and deal with themes of racial oppression, was another member of the 'white marmorean flock.' She overcame all the obstacles that faced a woman of mixed African American and native American heritage around the time of the Civil War.¹⁸²

After the debatable assertion of Lewis's primacy in her field (see *figs 65 & 66*),¹⁸³ Rubenstein next proceeds to relate a highly anecdotal account of Edmonia Lewis's childhood, using to the sculptor's alleged childhood name of 'Wildfire' to refer to Lewis in this passage – a curious choice in light of Rubenstein's highly appropriate criticism of Dolly Sherwood's biography of Harriet Hosmer for precisely the use of a nickname instead of the sculptor's professional name: 'Most egregious, however, is Sherwood's continuous referral to the artist as Hatty. The use of the diminutive of her name into her maturity, while endearing from a friend, has the effect of diminishing her accomplishments.'¹⁸⁴ Whatever the translation of Lewis's Ojibwa name into English might be, it is undeniable that Lewis's professional name was (Mary) Edmonia Lewis as this is the name with which she signed her works; to refer to her as 'Wildfire' in an essay on her professional life is yet again to invoke

182 - Charlotte Streifer Rubenstein, *American Women Sculptors* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1990), p. 51.

183 - Our archives on American artists of colour are so fragmentary and serious research into this area still so rare that such assertions of 'the first' and 'the only' are dubious in the extreme, and again betray a 'revisionist' or additive approach to the canons of Art History rather than a radical critique of its racist paradigms. In this particular case, we should consider the history of New Orleans sculptor, Eugène Warburg, who worked in France, England, and Italy after establishing a solid reputation in New Orleans. While in London in 1856, Warburg was commissioned by Harriet Leveson-Gower, the duchess of Sutherland, to execute a series of bas-reliefs based on Harriet Beecher Stowe's abolitionist novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. [Patricia Brady, 'A Mixed Palette: Free Artists of Color of Antebellum New Orleans', *The International Review of African American Art*, 12.3 (1995), pp. 5-14, 53-57, (pp. 14, 53).] The absoluteness of the claim that Edmonia Lewis was 'the first American sculptor of color to win an international reputation and deal with themes of racial oppression' runs the risk of discouraging the search for earlier American sculptors of colour, and encouraging historians to overlook sculptors such as Warburg as they date the origin of sculpture by Americans of colour to Edmonia Lewis.

184 - Charlotte Streifer Rubenstein, 'Review', *Woman's Art Journal*, (Spring/Summer 1994), pp. 38-42 (p. 40).

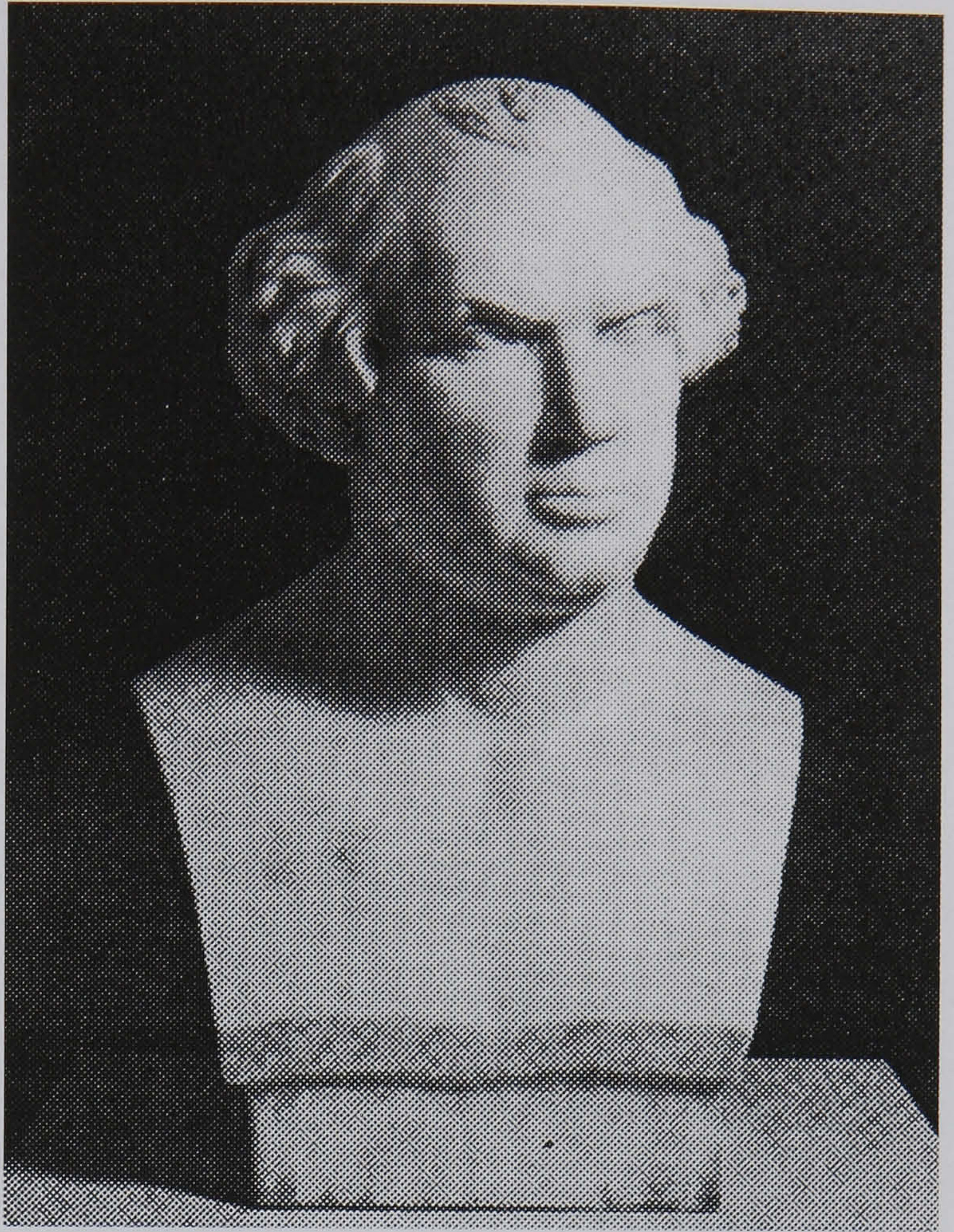


fig. 65 Eugene Warburg, John Young Mason, 1835, marble, Collection of the Virginia Historical Society

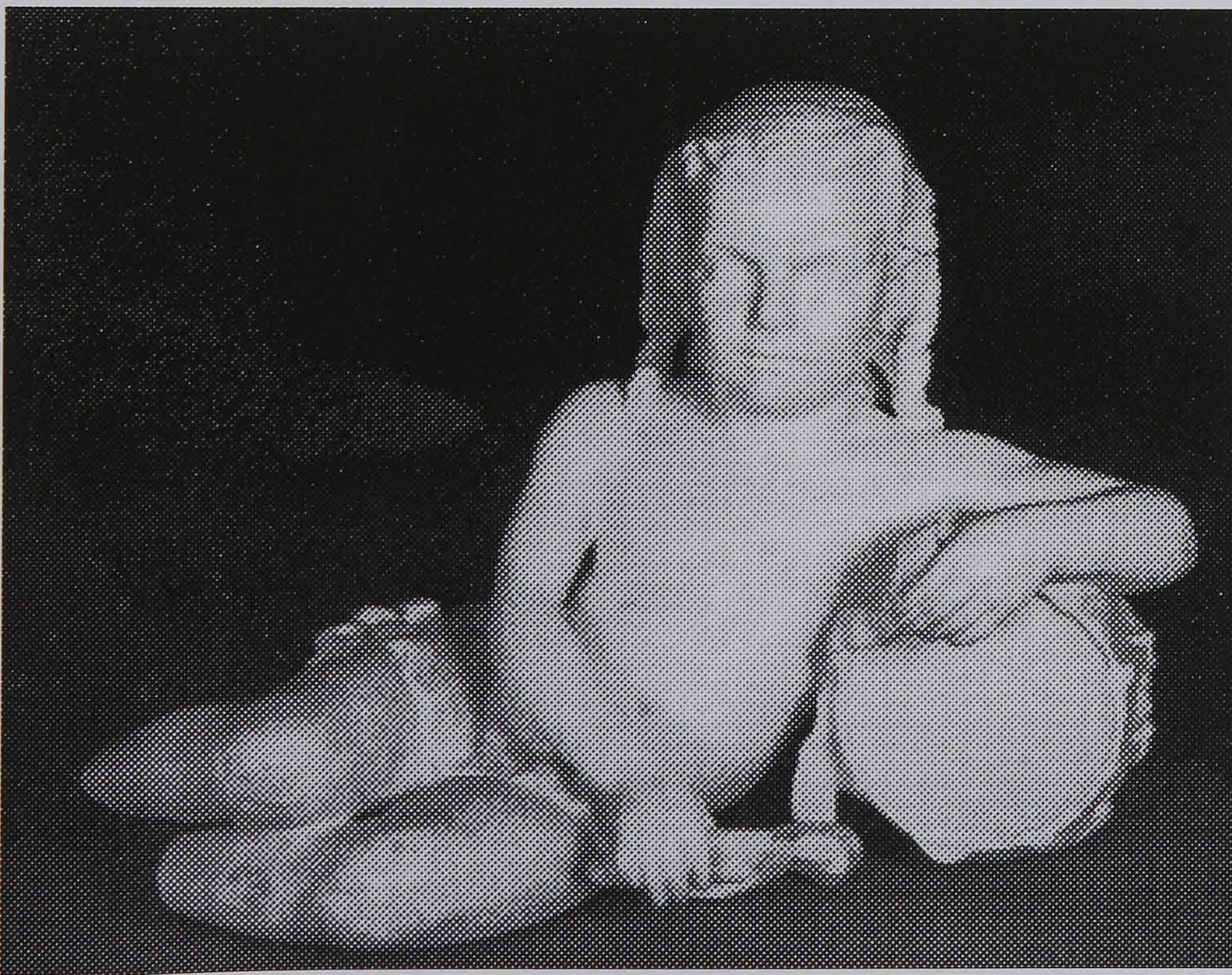


fig. 66 Florville Foy, Child with Drum, marble, Collection of the Louisiana State Museum

the exotic and strange for an implicitly colonialist audience.¹⁸⁵

Most texts then proceed to interpret Lewis's work within the context of race alone, forgoing almost entirely formal, stylistic, or aesthetic analyses that are standard in art historical treatment of white male artists. Charlotte Streifer Rubinstein uncritically relates one such example in her bibliographical dictionary, *American Women Artists*:

A sensitive awareness of her own racial origins and an unending desire to expose the inequities of American society were basic elements in the work of this independent, rather caustic young woman.... Perhaps it was her works that first expressed the themes of racial injustice that would become the core of black American art in the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁸⁶

While offering much-needed information on this artist, both Rubinstein and Driskell are repeating long-standing patterns of identifying artists whose gender, race, or other social positioning has traditionally amarginated or excluded them from art historical discourse, only with the conditions of that amargination or exclusion. Lewis's place within art history is then read as the origin of a linear art historical development that runs parallel to, but on the margins of, mainstream art history; she is constructed as the founder of black American art, and attributed desires perhaps more easily demonstrated to be those of the critic than of the artist.

What is needed in scholarship about the early American women sculptors is a greater recognition of the singularity and specificity of each of these women's careers and journeys to Rome, without assumptions of a feminist herd mentality on their part, such as have been derived from James's

¹⁸⁵ - Bearden and Henderson discuss the problematics of the name, 'Wildfire' in their study of Lewis, pointing out that 'the Chippewas had no concept of "wild," at least in terms of plants, places, or animals.' They cite Basil H. Johnston, an Ojibwa linguist at the Royal Ontario Museum, as suggesting that an Ojibwa woman's name could have been *Naning-au-koane* ('Sparkling Fire') or *Ish-scoodah* ('Fire Flower'), but also comment that the name, 'Wildfire', was 'apparently designed to fascinate the white people with whom she had to deal.' Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson 'Edmonia Lewis', in *A History of African-American Artists from 1792 to the Present* (NY: Pantheon Books, 1993), pp. 54-77 (p. 55, n. 12-13).

¹⁸⁶ - David C. Driskell, quoted in Charlotte Streifer Rubenstein, *American Women Artists from Early Indian Times to the Present* (Boston: G.K. Hall/Avon Books, 1982), p. 79.

defining phrase, the 'white, marmorean flock'.¹⁸⁷ As was discussed earlier, the American women sculptors arrived in Rome over a period of 15 years, remained for periods that ranged from 20 months to over 20 years, and departed over an equally long span of time. This alone raises the question of who is an expatriate: when were these sculptors expatriates, when tourists, when exiles? The diversity of responses to this and other questions regarding the neoclassical American women sculptors who worked in Rome underlines that they were not 'birds of a feather', and they did not come to Rome to enjoy each other's feminine or feminist society. They came to Rome, like their male peers, to stake their own claims in the very masculine worlds of sculpture and the international art market. However, unlike the men, the women sculptors had an added 'stake' in the gambit of working abroad.

The women sculptors came, for the most part, from the New England middle and upper classes of European extraction. Edmonia Lewis was one exception to this pattern, as was Margaret Foley who came from a farming-class family and began her career in sculpting while working in a textiles factory. Yet even Lewis and Foley, like the other women sculptors, enjoyed the generous support of family and/or a wide circle of politically progressive men and women who helped to launch their careers. For example, feminist and abolitionist Lydia Maria Child was just one of the prominent progressive social leaders who encouraged Edmonia Lewis's entry into the sculpture profession, and helped to sponsor her travel to Rome.¹⁸⁸ None of the American women sculptors can be adequately described as purely and simply victims of their gender or race.

¹⁸⁷ - This phrase is discussed at length in Part 1, Chapter 1.ii 'Reframing the Name: "The White, Marmorean Flock"'.
¹⁸⁸ - This is not to say that even well-intentioned support could not be problematic; Child's abolitionism did not preclude a latent racist and patronising view of Edmonia Lewis, for example (discussed further in Part III), and her conservative views of acceptable behaviour from women were also provoked by Harriet Hosmer on occasion. See Sherwood, *Harriet Hosmer*, p. 37 on Child's criticisms of Hosmer, and on Child's relationship with Lewis, see Bearden and Henderson, pp. 61-63, and Lynda Roscoe Hartigan, *Sharing Traditions*, pp. 88-89.

A surrogate support network, albeit on a much smaller scale, was provided in Rome by a handful of more-established professional women who took it upon themselves to promote women artists largely because they were women. More than one of the women sculptors owed not only the impetus to come to Rome but also a significant amount of support while she was there – monetary, artistic, and moral – to other, usually older, women. And while the women sculptors did not work together, they were known to offer a friendly welcome to new women arrivals in Rome and to assist in the location of housing and instruction for their female peers. When Vinnie Ream came to suffer the allegations of being unable to sculpt and of having put her name to work actually done by a workman – charges born out of a deep-seated belief in the impossibility of women being creative artists and a misunderstanding of the ‘workshop’ method of sculpture production then predominant in the field – Harriet Hosmer, who had responded to similar charges in the past, quickly jumped to Ream’s defence as the scandal unfolded in art periodicals and daily newspapers.¹⁸⁹ (*fig. 67*)

In contrast to the hearty endorsements the women artists received from friends and family at home – the very support, I would argue, that gave them the confidence to make the move to Rome, their unchaperoned and independent lifestyles were frequently a source of anxiety to even their friends in the expatriate community. Consider, for example, the almost apologetic tone of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s defence of Hosmer’s eccentricity in a letter to a friend describing the expatriate circle in Rome: (*fig. 68*)

I should have mentioned, too, Miss Hosmer... the young American sculptress, who is a great pet of mine & of Robert’s, and who emancipates the eccentric life of a perfectly “emancipated female” from all shadow of blame by the purity of hers.¹⁹⁰

189 - Sherwood, *Harriet Hosmer*, p. 288.

190 - Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Mary Russell Mitford, May 10, [1854], in Meredith B. Raymond and Mary Rose Sullivan, eds., *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Mary Russell Mitford, 1836-1854*, 3 vols. (Winfield, KA: Armstrong Browning Library of Baylor University, the Browning Institute, Wedgestone Press, and Wellesley College, 1983), p. 409.



fig. 67 Vinnie Ream (in an Alban maid costume), ca. 1870, oil on canvas by an unidentified painter, in the Collection of the National Association of American Pen Women, Washington, DC

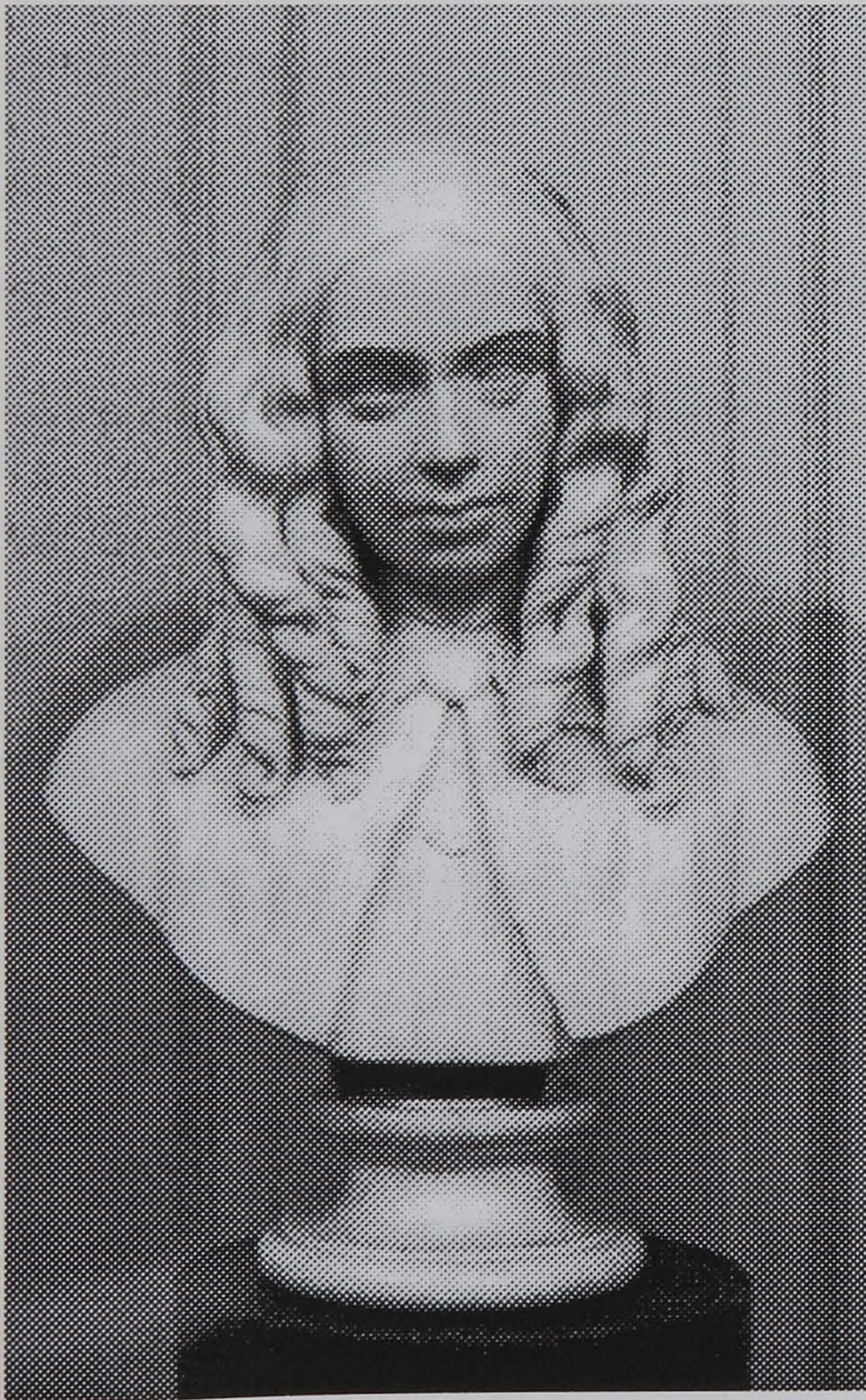


fig. 68 William Wetmore Story, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, ca. 1866, marble, Wellesley College Library Special Collections, MA

Similarly, Nathaniel Hawthorne's ultimately approving description of Louisa Lander was not without its hesitant notes:

...a young woman, living in almost perfect independence, thousands of miles from her New England home, going fearlessly about these mysterious streets, by night as well as by day; with no household ties, nor rule or law but that within her; yet acting with quietness and simplicity, and keeping, after all, within a homely line of right.¹⁹¹

In striking contrast is Lydia Maria Child writing about young Harriet Hosmer before the artist left for Rome. This text reads much more as an attack on patriarchal society than as a defence of Hosmer's 'emancipated life': 'Here was a woman who, at the very outset of her life, refused to have her feet cramped by the little Chinese shoes, which society places on us all, and then misnames our feeble tottering, feminine grace.'¹⁹²

The legacy of their feminist tutelage in the United States was a definite awareness on the part of all of the women sculptors of the difficulties that their gender imposed on their professional lives. However, these difficulties were not necessarily mitigated by being in Rome. Certainly there was no overt women's movement among the native Romans, as the papal regime, in control of Rome until 1870, did not even permit the existence of state-funded schools for girls. Nor were the American male sculptors necessarily more progressive in their attitudes towards the women. Recalling Nathaniel Hawthorne's reference to his female professional peers as that 'mob of scribbling women', William Wetmore Story wrote to a friend about Harriet Hosmer, saying, 'She is doing very well and shows a capital spirit, and I have no doubt will succeed. But it is one thing to copy and another to create. She may or may not have inventive powers an artist, but if she have will not she be

191 - Nathaniel Hawthorne, 'The French And Italian Notebooks' in *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, ed. by Thomas Woodson, vol. 14 (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1980), pp. 740-742.

192 - Lydia Maria Child, 'Harriet Hosmer', *Littell's Living Age* 56: 720 (March 13, 1858), pp. 697-98; quoted in Sherwood, p. 13.

the first woman?'¹⁹³ Yet here too, attempts at generalisation about Hosmer's oppression are quickly frustrated by a closer examination of the archive: Hosmer became close friends with both Story and Hawthorne, and enjoyed their moral support and approbation despite her career choice.

If anything, the opinions of their co-nationals had even more weight with the Americans in Rome than they would have had in the US, for the expatriate community was the only social possibility for its members. With few exceptions the expatriates could not break into what they considered desirable Italian society, and would not deign to consort with most other Italians on a social level.¹⁹⁴ Thus when a member of the expatriate community dared to step too far 'beyond the pale', the force of the censure that followed could be so fierce as to ruin a career. When rumours began to fly that Louisa Lander had not only posed as a model so as to 'astonish all modest Yankees', but had even 'lived on uncommonly good terms with some man here', fellow artist, John Rogers, commented that if he had experienced, 'such a loss of reputation, it would have killed me I believe, but she snaps her finger at all Rome and has not the least desire to leave.'¹⁹⁵ Nathaniel Hawthorne revoked his good opinion of Lander and suddenly balked at paying for a bust he had commissioned from her and of which he had originally expressed extremely high praise. Within the year, Lander had returned to the United States, reportedly with intentions of serving as a nurse in the then unfolding Civil War. Not even Harriet Hosmer was above adding her comments to Lander's departure. Writing to her patron, Wayman Crow, in the US, Hosmer snipped that the nursing profession was 'between ourselves a more

193 - William Wetmore Story, letter to poet James Russell Lowell (1852), quoted in James, *William Wetmore Story and his friends*, p. 257.

194 - The Storys and the Crawfords were among the few American families to have been accepted by the Roman aristocracy. See Van Wyck Brooks, *The Dream of Arcadia* (NY: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1958), p. 172.

195 - John Rogers, Jr., to Henry Rogers, Rome, February 13, 1859, Miscellaneous MSS, Rogers, John, Jr., Manuscript Department, Library, New-York Historical Society, quoted in Sherwood, *Harriet Hosmer*, p. 214.

appropriate occupation for her than sculpture.¹⁹⁶

The move to Rome should be described less as a 'flight' from a sexist United States to an Italian feminist commune, than as a sacrifice of the security, support and acceptance that these emerging women sculptors enjoyed within their circle of friends at home, for the harsh realities of a competitive professional ambience in Rome. At the same time, however, the anglophone 'colony' in Rome did operate to make the journey to Rome as much a 'return' to a familiar environment as possible, with the expatriates resident there living in close proximity and engaging in regular social and professional contact, usually conducted in their native tongue and according to American and British customs. Thus identifications with inside and outside their native sphere alternated for women artists in Rome, as they did for all expatriates resident there, problematising any attempts to construct Rome as a space of pure freedom and independence for the American women sculptors who lived there.

4.ii The Touristic Gaze¹⁹⁷

Sometimes the 'emancipated lifestyle' came into direct conflict with the mores and authorities of Italian Rome as well as that of the expatriate circle. In a letter from William Wetmore Story, quoted earlier, he recalls one particular incident, occurring in Hosmer's first year in Rome:

Hatty takes a high hand here with Rome, and would have the Romans know that a Yankee girl can do anything she pleases, walk alone, ride her horse alone, and laugh at their rules. The police interfered and countermanded the riding alone on account of the row it made in the streets, and I believe *that* is over, but I cannot affirm...¹⁹⁸

196 - Harriet Hosmer to Wayman Crow, [1861(?)], letter in the Harriet Goodhue Hosmer Collection, the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, MA, quoted in Sherwood, p. 215.

197 - This is not the Lacanian concept of the gaze, but rather a discursive one, signifying more common understandings of the gaze as 'look', as in Laura Mulvey's 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' *Screen*, 16.3 (Autumn, 1975), 6-18. I make the distinction here to signal that the following is a discursive, rather than psychoanalytic, analysis.

198 - Story to Lowell, quoted in James, pp. 255-257.

In addition to Story's attitudes towards Hosmer and her expatriate women friends, discussed earlier, there is another aspect of the commentary worth noting here: the insinuation that Hosmer cared nothing for the Roman law and its representatives.¹⁹⁹ While both charges to some extent could be the result of professional envy as much as puritan misogyny, attitudes towards Roman society on the part of the expatriate community in general manifested a condescending disregard similar to that reported of Hosmer. Consider, for example, Emma Stebbins' sweeping characterisation of 'the Italians' in her biography of Charlotte Cushman, made in nearly the same terms as American racists referred to African Americans – as harmless and as unable to control their 'natural' impulses as children, and even described with the metaphors of natural phenomena:

The noise that Italians can make upon very slight provocation is something incredible. They get up with the suddenness of tropic tornadoes, and subside as quickly, leaving little or no destruction in their train, seldom bearing malice, or feeling in the least ashamed of their outbreaks. What nature prompts them to do or say seems to them the right thing, and they go in for it with simple straightforwardness. This seems to be one of the products of the priestly system, which tickets conscience and lays it away upon a shelf, to be taken down and overhauled only upon stated occasions. So poor easy conscience gets much out of practice, and can only be scared into action occasionally by the thunders of the Church.²⁰⁰

Phrenology was used by Anne Whitney's teacher, Dr. William Rimmer, to explain the inferior and even evil nature of Italians, quoted by William Vance in *America's Rome*: 'The aggressive or conquering races have convex faces, retreating foreheads, Roman noses, and prominent chins, as the English, old Roman, and the majority of Americans.' For Rimmer modern Mediterranean faces, in contrast, betrayed a nature 'fickle, insincere, artistic – in short,

199 - Story's letter is quoted from and discussed at length in Part 1, Chapter 1.ii 'Reframing the Name: "The White, Marmorean Flock"'.
200 - Stebbins, p. 120.

Mephistopheles.’²⁰¹ Ironically, Rimmer’s phrenological racism could be a double-edged sword, working in some respects to the advantage of his female students. Vance suggests that Rimmer’s belief in phrenology was the reason he ‘preferred to teach only women and to draw and model only men’, since he perceived in women an ‘arrest of development’ fixing women with ‘childlike and infantile peculiarities’. This infantilised state, however, meant that for Rimmer women were ‘the highest representative, not only of emotion and sentiment, but of intellect also’, because ‘in men the continued development of shoulders and limbs and the growth of a beard results in a proportionately smaller brain and an increase of “the animal”’.²⁰²

In her essay, ‘Scrittura al Femminile negli Stati Uniti e in Italia’, Mary Russo makes an analogy between the foreigner’s view of Italy and a hologram; both are reproductions of an original, ‘simulat[ing] the intervention and the originality of the artist’, but lacking its luminosity and depth.²⁰³ Considering the impact of the hologram on those captured within it, Russo goes on to note that:

Italian women, for example, were ignored [by nineteenth century women writers visiting Italy], both as authors and as political activists; rhetorical interest focused on the image of Italy as a feminine space. And the Italian women lived their ‘Italy-as-woman’ as much as the contemporary women of some Caribbean islands live their existence in the terms of the romantic escape to the Tropics promoted by tourist agencies.²⁰⁴

201 - William L. Vance, *America’s Rome*, 2 vols (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), vol. 1, p. 339, quoting Truman H. Bartlett, *The Art Life of William Rimmer, Sculptor, Painter, and Physician* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1890), pp. 67-70, 103-104.

202 - Ibid.

203 - ‘...una sorta di oleografia, la riproduzione di un dipinto a cui mancasse la luminosità e la profondità dell’originale. L’oleografia, che simula l’intervento e l’originalità dell’artista, è stata paragonata storicamente all’immagine che dell’Italia e della cultura italiana hanno gli stranieri; immagine che ha subito ben pochi mutamenti dalla fine dell’Ottocento a oggi.’ Mary Russo, ‘Oleografia: scrittura al femminile negli Stati Uniti e in Italia’, in *Immaginari a confronto: I rapporti culturali tra Italia e Stati Uniti: la percezione della realtà fra stereotipo e mito*, ed. by Carlo Chiarenza and William L. Vance, 2nd ed. (Venezia: Marsilio Editori, 1993 [1992]), pp. 99-112 (p. 101). Translation mine.

204 - ‘Le donne italiane, per esempio, venivano ignorate, sia come autrici che come attiviste politiche; l’interesse retorico si focalizzava sull’immagine dell’Italia come spazio femminile. E le donne italiane vivevano l’ “Italia-intesa-come-donna” tanto quanto le attuali abitatrici di alcune isole dei Caraibi vivono la loro esistenza nei termini della romantica fuga ai Tropici suggerita dalle agenzie turistiche.’ Russo, p. 105. Translation mine.

The touristic 'hologram' is most often manifest today in the snapshot, but, as will be discussed in Part II, the photographic nature of the American approach to history in nineteenth century ideal sculpture finds its prototype in the touristic uses of Roman sights/sites. Indeed, this hierarchised division of the elements of the travel narrative into active and passive, subordinating the sites visited to the ego and identity formation activities of the traveller, is, as Mary Russo notes, a model that can be said to lie at the root of imperialism and colonialism not to mention most of modern tourism. In her study, *Avant-garde Gambits 1888-1893: Gender and the Colour of Art History*, Griselda Pollock considers the role of tourism in modernity, asking, 'What else is it but tourism that takes us to the place of the "other" and subjects it to our "othering" gaze, where we are geographically distant from home, but also ideologically distanced from the 'other' despite actual proximity.'²⁰⁵

As a specifically classed activity, Pollock argues, tourism 'is initially a product of the leisure practices of the middle classes who invented leisure in its modern form as a kind of consumption practised in regulated antithesis to the disciplines of productive labour.'²⁰⁶ One of the sights on offer to tourists is the work of the natives. Again, Pollock remarks, this follows the hierarchising, binary logic of the opposition, tourist/native:

People from a certain class and culture have time and the surplus money to travel to other places where other classes and peoples are watched *while they work*. But what they do does not signify 'work', in its modernised, capitalist sense. It is not waged labour; it seems to obey other rhythms and necessities. It is therefore not perceived as work but as seasonal tasks, obedient to natural cycles rather than to social relations.²⁰⁷

Returning to Story's comment on Hosmer's riding, then, the insistence on her as a 'Yankee girl' thumbing her nose at the Italian police and social

205 - Griselda Pollock, *Avant-Garde Gambits 1888-1893: Gender and the Colour of Art History*, 24th Walter Neurath Memorial Lecture (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), p. 60.

206 - *Ibid.*, p. 62.

207 - *Ibid.*, p. 65.

customs can be read in two ways within the tourist paradigm. As a 'Yankee', and therefore part of the 'modern world', the rules and social expectations of the primitive, 'traditional' Italian society do not apply to Hosmer. Indeed, the laws of Rome do not figure as authorities, and the officials who are employed to enforce them are not actually performing work when they try to impede Hosmer's riding alone; rather, they are acting out a kind of primitive, native ritual, performing a spectacle for which Hosmer feels entitled to write her own script. Such an arrogation of modernist agency aligns Hosmer on the side of a masculine subject, and is symptomatic of what the American women in Rome were, perhaps even primarily: tourists. A direct effect of tourism is the casting of the territory of the journey as the feminine space of the other, against which the masculine subject of the tourist shores up a national identity both hierarchised and gendered. Against the *topoi* of Rome, a feminine space in the gendered narratives of tourism, the women sculptors could be positioned as masculine subjects.

4.iii Doubled Identifications in Phallic Discourse

The story of modern tourism, then, bears a striking resemblance to the mythological hero journeys of Western literature. In her essay, 'Desire in Narrative', semiotician Teresa de Lauretis follows the narratological analyses of Propp and Lotman in asserting that the elements of the journey myth are invested with gendered meaning: the hero is identified as the discursively active, masculine figure who penetrates and overcomes the passive, feminine landscapes and obstacles of his journey.²⁰⁸

Interpreting Lotman, de Lauretis points out that 'The work of the

208 - It should be noted that this is a discussion of the *discursive* identifications available in Western narratives and to the American women sculptors in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century; I shall not be speaking here of the psychoanalytic subject at the level of the gendered failure of signification, treated in Part 1.4. Similarly, 'masculine' and 'feminine' are here narratological rather than psychoanalytic concepts. Despite this distinction, however, the term 'identification' can be understood throughout as the Lacanian concept and the Cartesian subject's '*méconnaissance*'.

narrative, then, is a mapping of differences, and specifically, first and foremost, of sexual differences into each text....²⁰⁹ Nor do the repercussions of this gendered terrain remain within the narrative; on the contrary:

...the productivity of the text, its play of structure and excess, engages the reader, viewer, or listener as subject in (and for) its process.... each reader – male or female – is constrained and defined within the two positions of a sexual difference thus conceived: male-hero-human, on the side of the subject; and female-obstacle-boundary-space, on the other.²¹⁰

Thus we must ask ‘how or with which positions do readers, viewers, or listeners identify, given that they are already socially constituted women and men? In particular, what forms of identification are possible, what positions are available to female readers, viewers, and listeners?’²¹¹ And if the storyteller, or sculptor, is in fact the narrative representation’s first audience, then we must also ask what forms of identification are possible in the case of women modelling stories in their sculptures, where the woman in question has a double agency – both in the production of the representation and in the production of her personal reading of that narrative.

De Lauretis argues that the effect of a hero narrative on a female audience ‘effects a splitting of the female subject’s identification into the two mythical positions of hero (mythical subject) and boundary (spatially fixed object, personified obstacle).’²¹² From this gendered distinction between protagonist and environment, de Lauretis proposes the ‘double identification’ of women spectators of cinema, both with the feminised terrain and resisting characters or elements of the narrative, and, in an act of discursive transvestism, with the active, masculine hero.

Similarly, it can be argued that expatriate women artists had a ‘double-dose’ of identification within patriarchal discourse: on the one hand,

209 - Teresa de Lauretis, ‘Desire in Narrative’, in *Alice Doesn’t: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 103-157 (p. 121).

210 - Ibid.

211 - Ibid.

212 - Ibid., p. 123.

nineteenth century discourse on gender had indelibly marked the women sculptors as women. On the other, the American women sculptors in Rome functioned as masculine hero-tourists, journeying to prove themselves in a male-dominated profession. The artists who were men can be seen as having made a career move in coming to Rome and thereby choosing an environment more conducive to their work both in practical terms of study, economy, and artistic production, and in terms of societal 'moral' support and acceptance of their professions. In the 'old world' environment of Europe, great artists could also be great heroes, and therefore great men, whereas a less appreciative art public in the United States frequently saw art-making as a singularly frivolous and even feminine activity.²¹³ By moving to Rome, the American *women* sculptors were demanding for themselves the same privileges accorded men in their day, moving very deliberately out of the world of women and the domestication of private spaces, into the public and discursively 'masculine' sphere. Thus the 'freedom' they discovered in Rome was not necessarily that of a feminist Mecca, but rather the public space of independent travel and professional life which until this point had been available for the most part only to men.

This is a subtle shift away from more common interpretations of the role of expatriation among the American women sculptors in Rome, but an important one. I should like to frame the view of Rome as a utopic space of freedom and independence for the women sculptors as a fantasy, belonging perhaps even more to the historians who study these women sculptors than to the sculptors themselves. To this I would add that on a discursive level the move to Rome inserted the women sculptors in the 'masculine' spheres of independent foreign travel and public careers. The 'freedom' they might have discovered in these discourses was certain of the privileges enjoyed by the male subjects who predominated in these spheres in the nineteenth century,

213 - Lynes, *The Art-Makers*, pp. 9-11.

not a 'feminine' or feminist utopia. Neither they nor the expatriate artists who were men 'had it' – the absolute mastery attributed to the phallus in phallic fantasy – in nineteenth century Rome.

For most of the American women sculptors in Rome, sympathies with women's rights movements were closely intertwined with the abolition movement, with abolitionist figures and issues usually featuring more prominently in their *oeuvres* than feminists or suffrage issues. Anne Whitney was the most explicitly linked with organised feminist groups and known suffrage authors, as is reflected in the large number (at least 11) of international suffragists and reformers she sculpted. (figs 69-72) Sarah Fisher Clampitt Ames, Margaret Foley, Vinnie Ream, and Harriet Hosmer all made busts or monuments to famous abolitionists or were otherwise involved in the movement, while Edmonia Lewis linked her abolitionist works to a sense of women's rights in an interview for the feminist paper, *The Revolution*, professing a, 'strong sympathy for all women who have struggled and suffered'.²¹⁴

As Dolly Sherwood has noted, 'Harriet Hosmer's concern with feminine injustice began chiefly as a personal, rather than a social, concern.'²¹⁵ She does not seem to have been particularly interested in abolition until the commission for a Freedman's monument became available in 1867. While a student at Elizabeth Sedgwick's school in Lenox, Massachusetts, Hosmer met a great number of professional and feminist women, including Lydia Maria Child, Fanny Kemble and Harriet Martineau, as well as Elizabeth Sedgwick's sister-in-law, Catharine Sedgwick. Yet Hosmer's views on both women's rights and abolition remained conservative until she was a well-established and mature sculptor. In 1859 she wrote to her patron, Wayman Crow, justifying her choice of a profession over matrimony:

214 - Laura Curtis Bullard, 'Edmonia Lewis', *The Revolution*, (April 20, 1871), quoted in Hartigan, p. 94.

215 - Sherwood, p. 288.



*fig. 69 Anne Whitney, Mary Tileson Hemenway, 1892-94, bronze relief, life-size, Wellesley College Archives, MA
 Founder of schools for both black and white students after the Civil War; patron of education for freed African American slaves; pioneer in introducing vocational and physical education into public schools.*



*fig. 70 Anne Whitney, William Lloyd Garrison, 1878, marble, 61.8cm high, Massachusetts Historical Society, MA
 Abolitionist, suffragist, temperance and human rights activist; founder of the abolition journal, the Liberator, and the New England Anti-Slavery Society; agitator on behalf of Native Americans' rights.*



*fig. 71 Anne Whitney, Alice Freeman Palmer, 1878, marble, 61.8cm high, Massachusetts Historical Society, MA
 Educator and proponent of women's higher education; dean of women at the University of Chicago; manager for the Massachusetts exhibit of the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893.*



*fig. 72 Anne Whitney, Lucy Stone, 1893, marble, 57.5cm high, Boston Public Library, MA
 Feminist and social reformer, organiser of the first national women's rights convention in 1850; founder of the American Woman Suffrage Association in 1869.*

I don't approve of bloomerism and that view of women's rights, but every woman should have the opportunity of cultivating her talents to the fullest extent, for they were not given to her for nothing, and the domestic circle would not suffer thereby, because in proportion to the few who would prefer fighting their own way through the world, the number would be great who would choose a partner to fight it for them; but give those few a chance, say I. And those chances will be given first in America.²¹⁶

But perhaps as a result of the professional discrimination she and other women sculptors she knew had endured because of their sex, while visiting New York in 1868, Hosmer went into the offices of the feminist paper, *The Revolution*, and took out a subscription from Susan B. Anthony. In the following year, more than 17 years after Hosmer's arrival in Rome, she penned her now famous letter to the Rev. Phebe Hanaford, championing opportunities for women in the United States:

...what country is mine for women! Here every woman has a chance if she is bold enough to avail herself of it; and I am proud of every woman who is bold enough. I honour every woman who has strength enough to step out of the beaten track if she feels her walk lies in another; strength enough to stand up and be laughed at if necessary. That is a bitter pill we must all swallow at the beginning; but I regard those pills as tonics quite essential to one's mental salvation... But in a few years it will not be thought strange that women should be preachers and sculptors, and everyone who comes after us will have to bear fewer and fewer blows. Therefore I say, I honour all those who step boldly forward, and, in spite of ridicule and criticism, pave a broader way for the women of the next generation.²¹⁷

'Hers was not a voice of the people', comments Sherwood. 'She was an elitist and remained politically conservative.' But much as the examples of other women such as Charlotte Cushman and Margaret Fuller had 'paved the way' for Hosmer and other American women travellers to Rome, the increasing visibility of women's movements and the large number of American women practising sculpture in the mid-nineteenth century lent discursive support to the explosion of women who entered the profession at

216 - Harriet Hosmer to Wayman Crow [1859], quoted in Sherwood, pp. 170-171.

217 - Phoebe A. Hanaford, *Women of the Century* (Boston: B.B. Russell, 1877), pp. 268-72.

the end of the century.

Initially women's entry into what was perceived as a men's profession seems to have been received as a bizarre hybridisation of the masculine and feminine on the level of a crude montage of two different species. It was not 'natural' for bourgeois women to operate in the public sphere, therefore women who did were not 'natural' women. Even sympathetic descriptions of the American women sculptors thus tended to present them as a perverse combination of the male and the female.²¹⁸ At times this perception was reinforced by the woman sculptor's gender-transgressive attire. Nathaniel Hawthorne described Harriet Hosmer's curious costume:

She had on petticoats, I think; but I did not look so low, my attention being chiefly drawn to a sort of man's sack of purple or plum-colored broadcloth, into the side-pockets of which her hands were thrust as she came forward to greet us.... She had on a male shirt, collar, and cravat, with a brooch of Etruscan gold, and on her curly head was a picturesque little cap of black velvet...²¹⁹

At first glance, the woman sculptor is half-man, half-woman, with the top half, featuring, presumably, the head of reason, given over to the male garb. But as Hawthorne contemplates Hosmer and reconciles himself to her eccentricity, the description is concluded instead in terms of inside/outside, surface/depth, with the masculine clothing concealing the true, 'inner woman':

...she was indeed very queer, but she seemed to be her actual self, and nothing affected nor made-up; so that, for my part, I give her full leave to wear what may suit her best, and to behave as her inner woman prompts.²²⁰

Like their often masculine attire, expatriation helped the women sculptors in Rome assume the masculine roles that their profession demanded. The charge of frivolous femininity against the artist, when placed against an artist who was also a woman and therefore already identified

²¹⁸ - See also William Wetmore Story's description of Harriet Hosmer and her women friends in Part 1, Chapter 1.ii 'Reframing the Name: "The White, Marmorean Flock"'.
²¹⁹ - Hosmer's melange of male and female dress was not unique among the women sculptors; a photograph shows Edmonia Lewis wearing a similar cap, cravat and jacket to the one described by Hawthorne. (see fig. 76)

²²⁰ - Nathaniel Hawthorne, 'The French And Italian Notebooks', p. 158.

with femininity in patriarchal discourse, would have a posed doubled obstacle to women sculptors in the nineteenth century who laboured under the rhetoric that femininity was antithetical to creativity. Indeed, the response of the critic, James Jackson Jarves, to the relatively high numbers of women entering the sculpture profession was to redefine sculpture as a 'woman's art':

While few, if any, American women, have won a reputation in painting, several have acquired some distinction in sculpture. This would indicate that a superficial success is more feasible in the latter than even the former, as regards the effect on the common mind, and that it necessitates less preliminary training and manipulative skill.... Few women as yet are predisposed to intellectual pursuits which demand wearisome years of preparation and deferred hope. Naturally they turn to those fields of Art which may seem to yield the quickest returns for the least expenditure of mental capital. Having in general a nice feeling for form, quick perceptions and a mobile fancy, with, not unfrequently, a lively imagination, it is not strange that modelling in clay is tempting to their fair fingers.²²¹

This explanation for the women's success as sculptors relies on the feminisation and consequent denigration of sculpture. Further, it emphasises what are perceived to be 'natural' attributes of women, such as 'a nice feeling for form', 'quick perceptions', and 'a lively imagination', as being particularly compatible with the production of 'fanciful and sentimental' sculpture, as opposed to the 'absolute creative imagination' required by the more masculine area of 'realistic portraiture'. When Jarves did praise Hosmer's work, he described it as being 'all of a robust, masculine character, even in details, as if wrought out by hard headwork and diligent study of models by a mind that had forced itself, as with a manly energy, to achieve a mechanical mastery of a profession for which it has no supreme æsthetic predilection...'²²²

The 'manliness' of Hosmer's work is contrasted by Jarves in this article with the 'femininity' of William Wetmore Story's works, on the basis of the male sculptor's 'excess of fancy, accurate taste as to accessories, and prevailing

221 - James Jackson Jarves, 'Progress of American Sculpture in Europe', *The Art-Journal* 10 (1871), 6-7 (p. 7).

222 - James Jackson Jarves, 'Progress of American Sculpture in Europe', p. 7.

atmosphere of good society and nice culture.'

The description of the American women sculptors in Rome as a 'fair constellation', discussed in Part 1, Chapter 1.ii 'Reframing the Name: "The White, Marmorean Flock"', located femininity within sculptural practice, describing the 'civilising' influences of women artists:

One or two [lady artists in Rome] indeed of distinguished talent have made themselves a name.... Yet we have a fair constellation here of twelve stars of greater or lesser magnitude who shed their soft humanising influence on a profession that has done so much for the refinement and civilisation of man.

When women's ability in the arts was recognised, it was generally framed in terms provided by contemporary discourse concerning women's 'natural', 'feminine' dispositions and social roles.

Working abroad was no guarantee of a woman sculptor's success, but not going seems to have been practically a recipe for failure: the few American women sculptors of the nineteenth century of whom we know and who never spent time in Europe had short careers, produced few works, and are almost completely absent from the archives of American art history. Rome provided a unique combination of essential professional and economic advantages to the women sculptors, enjoyed also by their male counterparts, with the opportunity for occupying a discursively 'masculine' position with respect to the feminised landscape and population. In America, among other American women, the women sculptors would have remained, above all, identified with the feminine roles accorded women in American society, roles which precluded artistic creativity and professionalism.

But it must be remembered that at the same time as they could be cast as masculine agents against the femininity of the Italian terrain, the American women sculptors in Rome sustained a particular identification with that landscape since they too, as socially constituted female subjects, were discursively positioned under the sign of the feminine. The anxiety of

nineteenth century discourse around their curious gender-transgressive dress and activities betrays the inadequacy of the cravat and the studio in Rome to secure the women sculptors' position in the masculine sphere. In the gendered terms of narratological identities, the woman traveller to Italy was at once both masculine hero and feminine *topos*, sustaining a 'double and multiple sense of belonging' – both to the masculinised, American expatriate anglophone community and to the feminised spaces of Rome in which they worked.

4.iv A Matrixial Methodology

By 'making strangers' of these American women sculptors, both in Rome and in art history, Part I of this study has attempted to demonstrate the number and variety of frames demanded by the complexity of their 'extimate' position. Like the mythological and legendary women they modelled, the stories of the early American women sculptors 'have survived', as Teresa de Lauretis says, 'inscribed in *hero* narratives, in someone else's story, not their own'.²²³ But in the case of women artists, the hero narratives are those of art history. For too long only two positions have been available in art history to the early American women sculptors: either a negated feminine one, as representatives of a sentimental art practice in the inferior nineteenth century neoclassical style; or the more heroic but problematically masculine one, as 'worthy nineteenth-century prototype[s] for America's liberated women'.²²⁴

Drawing an analogy with Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger's classification of migration and migrants, the history of women artists in art history is either the heroic 'return', of 'migrations towards a known destination', or the pathetic 'exile', of 'movements of expulsion and casting out from a desired place, abandonment of the desired place for an anywhere, like the movement of a

²²³ - de Lauretis, p. 109.

²²⁴ - Eleanor Tufts, 'Margaret Foley's Metamorphosis: A Merrimack "Female Operative" in Neo-Classical Rome', *Arts Magazine* (January, 1982) 88-95 (p. 88).

refugee in a time of emergency'.²²⁵ A similar choice between inside and outside the dominant discourse has been imposed on feminists working in art history, where fears of utopianism or theoretical heresy have severely limited the ability to hypothesise constructs outside of the phallic system. When even formulating challenges to established phallic theory is immediately dismissed as fantastic, established theory is able to entrench itself in a nearly unassailable defence, not even being called upon to debate alternative possibilities.

The paradigms of subversive insider or utopian dreamer, of inferior feminine artist or returning heroine, are equally reductive and unsatisfactory for what Griselda Pollock has termed, 'feminist interventions in art's histories', which seek a more comprehensive and complex treatment of the biographies and *oeuvres* of women artists. Lichtenberg Ettinger's matrixial theory suggests a new paradigm for understanding women artists in history, via the interpretation of Moses as an inverted exile – doubly a stranger. By leading the Jews to the promised land into which he would not be allowed to enter, Moses enacts the feminine relationship to the other described by Levinas as 'the possibility to think that there is 'a reality without me'.'²²⁶ This lack then becomes a creative principle in the matrixial dimension, via a metamorphic 'circulation of a lack, a lack of speech'.

God would like Moses to speak to the people as God speaks to Moses, but Moses doesn't know how to speak. This lack becomes a creative principle through relational analogy. That which lacks in Moses will be expressed through Aaron, who joins the matrix through this lack... and by virtue of his difference from Moses. Aaron will be in the same position with respect to Moses as Moses is to God, and the lost speech finds its place in a matrix at the same time that it participates in its emergence.²²⁷

Lichtenberg Ettinger explains that as in the emergence of the phallic 'I', the co-emergence of the matrixial 'I and non-I' also entail loss. But in

²²⁵ - Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'The becoming threshold of matrixial borderlines', p. 38.

²²⁶ - Ibid., p. 52.

²²⁷ - Ibid., pp. 58-61.

contradistinction from the phallic symbolic system, these losses are not occluded but rather are inscribed as traces in the network of partial subjects, 'the borderlines between what one has and what one has lost, becoming, therefore, thresholds'.²²⁸ Lichtenberg Ettinger uses the Biblical expression, 'behind the desert', to represent the matrixial space in which such 'leftovers' meet and the inverted exile of the 'double foreigner' is initiated 'for future metramorphoses.'²²⁹

Like Moses, the woman artist is doubly a stranger in art history, simultaneously negotiating the often antithetical discursive identities of 'woman' and 'artist' in both her professional practice and subject positions. The matrixial figure whose 'inverted exile' is 'a migration towards an unknown desired destination, towards a promised Jerusalem that you do not know', offers an important paradigm through which to think other possibilities for reading the histories and works of the expatriate American women sculptors. While the phallic positions of 'exile' and 'return' were also available as subject/object identifications for the women artists in this study, an approach to these disparate identifications that is sensitive to the matrixial subjective configurations as well allows for the possibility that these women artists practised their art from the positions not only of the 'return', in a masterful dialectic with the sites of their expatriation, but also as inverted exiles, in a complex relation of difference, rather than a selective reduction to the one. The matrixial themes of the inverted exile and of the wanderer offer an additional layer of theoretical discourse specifically addressing the situation of 'expatriation' that is the criterion of selection for the artists of my study, while admitting that the specificity of their expatriate experiences could be registered in a fully symbolised form in their art practices conducted in Rome. Further, 'thinking matrixially' offers my project a way in which to account for

228 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'The becoming threshold of matrixial borderlines', pp. 58-61.

229 - Ibid.

both disadvantage and privilege in the careers of the women sculptors, and for the resulting ambiguities in their biographies and artistic production, without reducing the sculptors' lives and their works to effects of a singular social identity.

As was discussed earlier, Lichtenberg Ettinger notes that 'the matrixial and phallic strata do not only moderate each other, they also alternate constantly in relation to the same objects or events, and the same object can be phallic at one moment and matrixial in the next.'²³⁰ Having read the nineteenth century American women sculptors in Rome severally as 'exiles', 'returns' and 'inverted exiles' in Rome, in the next two major sections of this study I consider ~~the~~ the woman sculptor as 'lack' and 'limit' in the phallic sphere, and also as working in practices which permitted at times the grains of matrixial subjectivity to register in their works. As a series of 'estrangements' – first from reframing the nineteenth century American women sculptors as 'strangers in art history' and 'strangers in Rome', to reading them as 'strangers in the studio' and their works as 'stranger sculpture', estranged even from the materials of their production – the strategy of this study is to effect shifts 'from separate elements or subjects towards the *borderlines*, the *borderspace*, and the *borderlinks* between part-objects and partial subjects, and towards the processes of transformation which take place jointly by means of these *borderlines/space/links*'.²³¹ After the fantastic and Symbolic spaces of Rome, the *borderlines*, *borderspaces* and *borderlinks* to be considered next are those of the art practice itself: the studio and the bodies of and at work in them. In these inter-subjective frames, this attempt at a 'matrixial' intervention in art history aims at a 'matrixial alliance or covenant... between the / and the unknown stranger(s)' in their studies, where 'their fields change and expand *via* their *borderlinks*'.²³²

230 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'The becoming threshold of matrixial borderlines', p. 41.

231 - Ibid., p. 42.

232 - Ibid., p. 44.



fig. 73 Louis Moeller, *The Sculptor's Studio*,
ca. 1880, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY

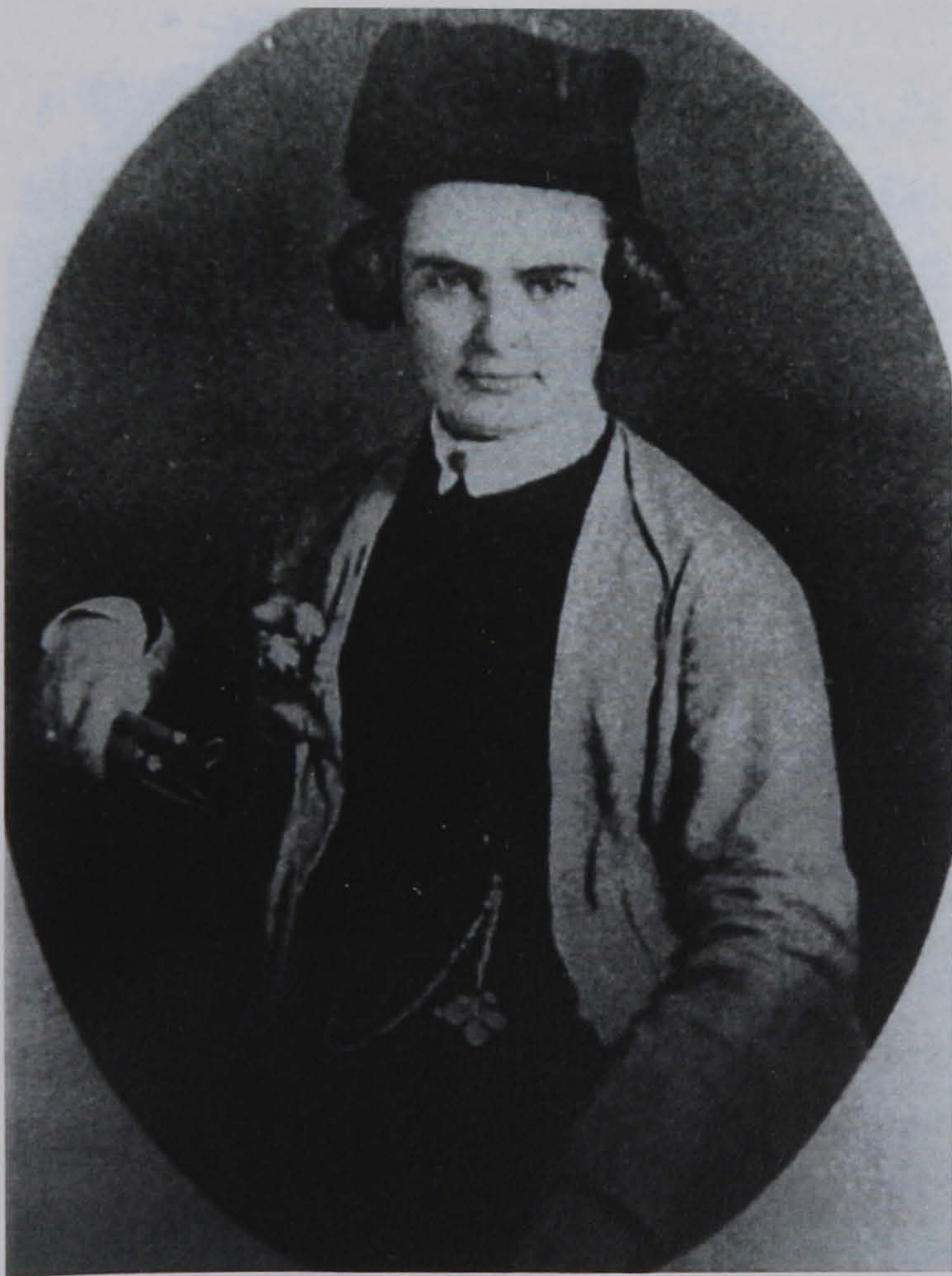


fig. 74 Harriet Hosmer, unidentified
photographer, ca. 1855, National
Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC

PART II: *In/Between the Studio*

Prologue: *Reading Women Sculptors and Women Sculptures* with Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*

... a curtain across the left hand corner of the studio is lifted, and the attendant enquires if "la signorina" will receive visitors. The permission given, we ascend a steep flight of stairs, and find ourselves in a small upper studio, face to face with a compact little figure, five feet two in height, in cap and blouse, whose short, sunny brown curls, broad brow, frank and resolute expression of countenance give one at the first glance the impression of a handsome boy rather than that of a young woman. It is the first glance only, however, which misleads one. The trim waist and well-developed bust belong unmistakably to a woman, and the deep, earnest eyes, firm-set mouth, and modest dignity of deportment, shew that woman to be of no ordinary character and ability.

Thus, reader, we have at last brought you face to face with the subject of this memoir, Harriet Hosmer, the American sculptress, whose Beatrice Cenci you will remember at the Royal Academy last year.²³³ (*figs 73 & 74*)

With these words, after a two and a half page preamble describing the route to Harriet Hosmer's studio in meticulous detail, a journalist for the *English Woman's Journal* lifts the veil on a new social phenomenon in 1858: the woman sculptor. As the first publication dedicated to the life and work of one of the American neoclassical women sculptors, the *English Woman's Journal* article played a seminal role in defining 'the woman sculptor'. Its striking narrative structure is repeated in first in Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1860 novel about expatriate artists in Rome, *The Marble Faun*, and 130 years later in Dolly Sherwood's 1991 book-length biography, *Harriet Hosmer, American Sculptor, 1830-1908*.

The narrative structure employed by all three of these authors offers a complex literary form for investigating and representing the sculptor.

²³³ - M.H.H. 'Harriet Hosmer', *Englishwoman's Journal*, 1 (July 1858), 295-306 (p. 298).

Essentially functioning as a guidebook, these texts treat the journey to the artist's studio as the exploration of a virgin continent, recording every step scrupulously. The object of the visit is concealed and postponed by the lengthy preamble like some precious fresco hidden beneath centuries of whitewash that must be removed, carefully, one-by-one, in order to reveal the treasure beneath.

At the end of the journey to the woman sculptor's studio, the sculptor herself is discovered as a limit: embodying an impossible (for phallic cultural discourses) coincidence of femininity and creativity, she ultimately defies categorisation as a subject within available paradigms. The woman in these narratives of the artist's studio can only be recovered for representation on the level of an Imaginary identification, as an uncanny harbinger of and defence against castration. Accordingly, the woman sculptor is conflated by these authors with the object of her creative activity, mortified in what I have termed a 'Pygmalion effect': a narratological identification and equivalence drawn between the woman artist and her art object that renders the woman sculptor a woman sculpture.²³⁴ Woman in these narratives can 'be' the phallus, but she cannot 'have' it.

Such narratives not only ossify the woman sculptor and conflate her with the objects of her art practice, but also reveal the equivalences between the artist and the artwork – particularly in the case of women artists – that were endemic to nineteenth century art criticism. Ironically, though, these elisions of artist and artwork could be trivialising and even despotic with regard to women sculptor's professional lives, this same 'Pygmalion effect' could also enable American women's entries into the sculpture field, and for a while served as the guarantee of the legitimacy of their presence there. The strategic use of the 'Pygmalion effect' by nineteenth century American women

234 - The 'Pygmalion effect' is discussed at length in Part II, Chapter 6, 'The Pygmalion Effect'.

sculptors is an example of the 'masquerade' of femininity providing a 'safe haven' and Imaginary cover, for a while at least, for the phallic activities of women artists who transgressed hegemonic gender norms.²³⁵

Nathaniel Hawthorne's tales of journeys to the artist's studio in *The Marble Faun* betray many of the same structures as the 'Pygmalion effect' texts, but with important, added dimensions since they are part of a longer and, therefore, more developed narrative of nineteenth century American artists in Rome. Thus Hawthorne's fictional journeys to spaces of artistic activity are fruitfully read alongside the more journalistic accounts of visiting Harriet Hosmer's studio because they not only manifest the 'Pygmalion effect' observed in the *English Woman's Journal* prototype, but also offer a view beyond this Imaginary/cultural discursive level towards the trajectories of desire that configured relations of gender, race and creativity in the nineteenth century American studios in Rome. In the artists' studios of *The Marble Faun* we can read signposts to experiences of femininity both as a limit for the representations of the traveller-artists' own artistic and profession journeys, and as a 'beyond-the-limit' of phallic discourse, that can, at times, be registered in the artworks of these sculptors in a matrixial Symbolic form.

This analysis of nineteenth century textual visits to the artist's studio begins with an account of the impact of the 'Pygmalion effect' on nineteenth century American women sculptors. It then moves to an examination of the two visits to the fictional artists' studios in Hawthorne's *Marble Faun* for traces of the real woman artist, Harriet Hosmer, on whose studios and practices, I shall argue, Hawthorne's narratives are modelled. The 'detective' methodology established in reading Hawthorne's novel then enables an imaginative reconstruction of the studio of Edmonia Lewis, where some of the first matrixial images of inverted exile were produced in American sculpture.

²³⁵ - The idea of the strategic use of a 'feminine masquerade' is famously elucidated by Joan Riviere in her article, 'Womanliness as a masquerade', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 10 (1929), 303-313.

PART II: *In/Between the Studio*

Chapter 5: *Mapping the Dark Continent*

The line between 'non-fictional' guide-book and fictional accounts of travels abroad was less strictly drawn in the nineteenth century than today.²³⁶ Though the tour-book industry experienced significant growth after mid-century with the popularisation of the Grand Tour among bourgeois travellers, novels still informed travellers' sojourns abroad as much as 'real' guidebooks. By adopting the guide-book format also employed in the more strictly journalistic account of Hosmer's studio in *The English-Woman's Journal*, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Marble Faun* anticipated this market and non-fiction use of his novel. Consequently, *The Marble Faun* :

... became a book Americans going to Europe had to have read, and so formed part of a cultural apparatus telling others how they should see the sights of Rome. When, in later editions, publishers began to illustrate *The Marble Faun* with the art works Hawthorne mentions in the text, the book even became a kind of portable museum, bringing certified Italian masterpieces into the American home.²³⁷

As important as the historical art works on exhibit in *The Marble Faun* are the contemporary ones and the studios of their makers. By describing his characters' studios in geographic and particular detail, and by using actual American sculptures which he had seen in Rome as figures in his story, Hawthorne adopted features common to the guidebooks of Rome in his day, and typical of the *English Woman's Journal's* reportage style as well. Listed by medium and sometimes also by nationality, Roman studio addresses were painstakingly recorded in the most popular guidebooks and periodical

236 - Vance, p. 52.

237 - Brodhead, Introduction to *The Marble Faun*, p. xxvii.

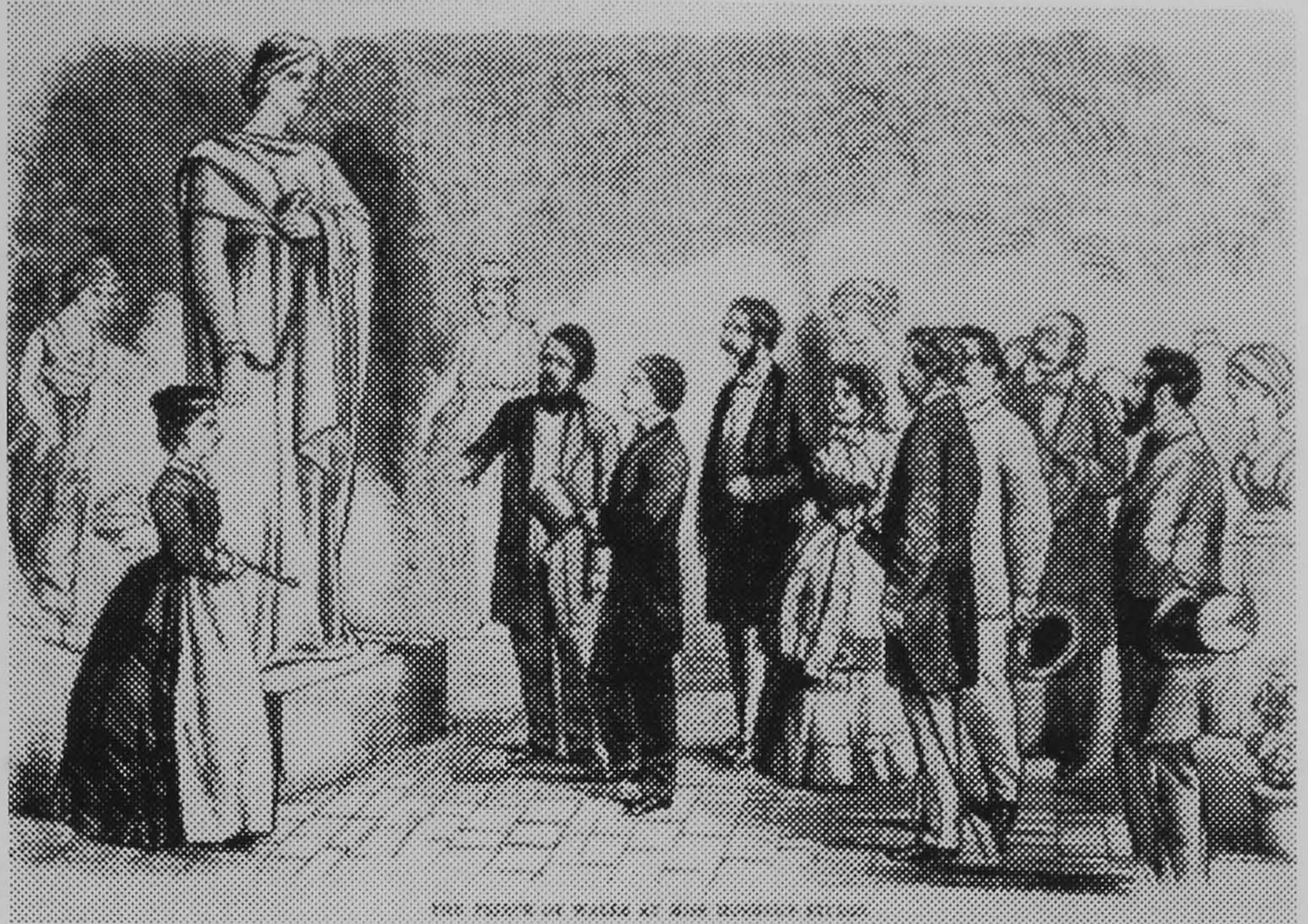
articles on travel, and were thereby a major source of advertising for resident artists. But while visits to artists' studios in Rome might have been a common trajectory in nineteenth century touristic Rome, the status of the figure discovered within the studio varied dramatically according to the gender and race of the artist.

For the Hosmer biographies, the woman sculptor herself is the goal of the visit. Transformed into a sculptural object by the language used to describe her, Harriet Hosmer was, for the journalist from *The English Woman's Journal*, a curious, gender-ambiguous sight, more that of 'a handsome boy rather than that of a young woman'. As if anticipating Freud's reading of the female's pre-Oedipal identity, this author, like so many to follow, determined that the essence of the 'little woman' was that she was, in fact, a 'little man'.²³⁸

The year after the publication of this article, this cartoon was published describing a visit to Hosmer's studio by Prince Edward VII of Wales. (*fig. 75*) The Prince and his entourage stand to the right of the studio as John Gibson, Hosmer's teacher and in whose studio Hosmer had her own studio space at this time, gestures towards Hosmer's most recent work, the monumental *Zenobia in Chains*, explaining it. Next to the sculpture, as still and passive as her work, stands the sculptor herself – Galatea-like, turned into a sculptural presence in this image.

This sort of reduction of woman artist to artwork is by no means unique to Victorian attitudes towards women artists. Sherwood's biography echoes the *English Woman's Journal* article closely in a tone that both mocks the Victorian visitors' surprise at discovering a woman sculptor behind the curtain, and yet is complicit with constructing 'the female sculptor' as another species, a queer spectacle unveiled in a setting that rather evokes a freak

238 - Sigmund Freud, 'The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex' (1924), in Peter Gay, ed., *The Freud Reader* (NY and London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1989), pp. 661-666.



*fig. 75 'The Prince of Wales at Miss Hosmer's Studio',
Harper's Weekly 3 (May 7, 1859), 293; Kanawha
County Public Library, Charleston, WV*



*fig. 76 Edmonia Lewis, unknown
photographer, ca. 1870(?), Boston
Athenaeum, MA*

show's theatricality:

Then they inquire discreetly if they may see "la signorina."... [T]he studio boy Pietro pulls aside a curtain that screens the studio from view. There at work is Harriet Hosmer, a girl in her twenties, at once woman and *wunderkind* – of all things, a female sculptor.²³⁹

Perhaps the only sight stranger to visitors to the nineteenth century sculptor's studio than the white woman artist was the woman artist of colour. Although Edmonia Lewis was not yet practising as a sculptor at the time of the nineteenth century texts cited above, it is tempting in light of their treatments of the sculptor's studio to pose the question of how a visit to a woman sculptor of colour, such as Edmonia Lewis, might have been portrayed.

Reflecting on nineteenth century descriptions of Edmonia Lewis, Juanita Holland remarks that:

... most of her interviewers perpetuated an image of this adult artist as a kind of gifted child, describing her as "naive in manner, happy and cheerful, and all unconscious of difficulty... because obeying a great impulse she prattles like a child, and with much simplicity and spirit pours forth all her aspirations."²⁴⁰

An anonymous writer recorded by American artist and critic, Henry Tuckerman, found Lewis as childlike as Hosmer was seen to be by her nineteenth century visitors, describing her '[i]n her coarse but appropriate attire, with her black hair loose, and grasping in her tiny hand the chisel...'.²⁴¹

This infantilising view resolved anxieties not only about Lewis's gender transgressions, but also her race, as seeing 'her large, black, sympathetic eyes brimful of simple, unaffected enthusiasm',²⁴² appealed to stereotypes of African Americans as 'simple' and naive, as innocent as children. Hosmer

239 - Sherwood, p. 3.

240 - Juanita Marie Holland, 'Mary Edmonia Lewis's *Minnehaha*: Gender, Race, and the "Indian Maid"', *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*, 69.1/2, 27-35 (p. 29); quoting H.W., 'A Negro Sculptress', *The Athenaeum*, 2001 (March 3, 1866), p. 302.

241 - Henry T. Tuckerman, *The Book of the Artists: American Artists Life* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Son, 1867), pp. 603-4. As Hartigan notes, this passage from a letter from Rome to Tuckerman is often erroneously attributed to Tuckerman himself: Hartigan, p. 97, n. 4.

242 - Tuckerman, pp. 603-4.

and Lewis's unconventional profession, dress, and demeanours could be accepted only as the eccentricities of 'playful child-women with a chaste dedication to their art.'²⁴³

In his 1904 biography of William Wetmore Story, Henry James also offers an imaginative glimpse of Lewis at work: 'One of the sisterhood... was a negress, whose colour, picturesquely contrasting with that of her plastic material, was the pleading agent of her fame.'²⁴⁴ (*fig. 76*) While James's vision of Lewis elides her with the Italian landscape, converting her into a 'picturesque' Roman view to be consumed touristically, it also casts her as the photo-negative of the sculptures she produced. As her *oeuvre* included images of African Americans and of Native Americans, so Lewis was variously described as having 'facial features and "crisp" hair' that 'suggested her black paternity', and as having hair 'black and straight like an Indian's' depending on which of her works the critic was reviewing at the time.²⁴⁵ Rather than a creative agent, Lewis is portrayed as the mould or matrix from which her work is cast in a manifestation of the 'Pygmalion effect' more akin to bronze casting processes than the pointing techniques of white marble sculpture production. Indeed, for many nineteenth century critics of Lewis's work, her sculptures bore the print of her race, and in nineteenth century criticism she was aligned with what was recognised as a new 'realistic' style in American art, dismissed by Harriet Hosmer as 'bronze photographs'.

The trajectory taken by Hawthorne's narratives to the space of artistic activity is no less a prolonged journey to a cloaked and enigmatic 'dark continent' than those in the *English Woman's Journal* article and its imitators. But in the visit to Hawthorne's *sculptor's* studio, the artist is a man, while the woman *painter's* studio is the object of the novel's other studio visits. Further,

243 - Holland, p. 29.

244 - James, *William Wetmore Story and His Friends*, p. 357. This passage is discussed at length in Part I, Chapter 1.ii 'Reframing the Name: The "White, Marmorean Flock"'.
 245 - Hartigan, p. 88.

the visitor to each studio is given a clear figuration as a woman in the character of Miriam, a painter.

In the sculptor's studio of Hawthorne's novel, we do indeed find a woman of colour; but she too is a sculpture. This 'female sculpture', unlike the female sculptor, is discovered to be a 'real woman', and in particular a real African woman: the sculptor is commended for the realism of his *Cleopatra's* 'full Nubian lips, and other characteristics of the Egyptian physiognomy.'²⁴⁶ (see fig. 93) Thus the exploration of Hawthorne's sculptural 'dark continent' has as its goal an object both gendered and 'raced'.

While the 'women' found in the sculptor Kenyon's studio – the statue of Cleopatra and a sculpture of the hand of his beloved Hilda – are fetishised and petrified in their femininity, their object-hood is in no way antithetical to Kenyon's subjective position. Not surprisingly, masculinity and creativity are not considered within this phallic paradigm to be in any conflict. Kenyon can occupy the position, however illusory, of 'having' the phallus. Miriam, on the other hand, as the woman visitor to the studio, undergoes a violent and ambivalent identification with the split femininity represented by Kenyon's sculptural objects: the 'dark' character of Cleopatra, and the morally and racially 'white' imago of Hilda, metonymically present in the sculpture of her hand. (see fig. 115)

In these images, textual and visual, there is a conjuncture of women, sculpture, femininity, race, and a theatrical narrative structure or staging of the woman sculptor in her studio. The American women sculptors became 'Galateas' in texts written about them from their day to the present. Like Marlow's journey into the 'dark continent' in Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness*, these texts interrogate the gender and race of the woman sculptor/sculpture

²⁴⁶ - Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, p. 126. William Wetmore Story, the actual sculptor of the *Cleopatra* on which Hawthorne based his fictional scene, encouraged such readings of his work as a 'real African woman' according to contemporary racial stereotypes in a poem he wrote about the work, in which Cleopatra is represented in terms of 'animalistic' and 'natural' sexual voraciousness. See Appendix 2 for this text.

through a single, linear, and exploratory trajectory. In both the journey to Hosmer's studio and the visit to the *Cleopatra* statue, the primacy of sight is emphasised in establishing the 'true' identity of the object of the quest. The visitor to the sculptor's studio has only to see the essential meaning of the work of art play across its surfaces to understand the essential nature of the biographical subject, which is always in some measure a reflection of the fantasies of the viewer.

PART II: *In/Between the Studio*

Chapter 6: *The Pygmalion Effect*

In a final journey to the sculpture studio, this time one made by Hawthorne on Tuesday morning, 15 March 1859, and recorded in his notebooks, we are able to move immediately to a description of the artist's studio and herself without the tantalising delay tactics used in the 'dark continent' narratives. First he describes Harriet Hosmer at length, presaging if not directly inspiring Henry James's figuration of the nineteenth century American women sculptors in Rome as a 'flock':

We found a bright little woman hopping about in her premises, with a birdlike sort of action. She has a lofty room, with a sky-light window; it was pretty well warmed with a stove; and there was a small orange-tree in a pot, with the oranges growing on it, and two or three flower shrubs in bloom. She herself looked prettily, with her jaunty little velvet cap, on the side of her head, whence came frizzling out her short brown curls; her face full of pleasant life and quick expression; the upper half of her person, as usual, having quite as much the aspect of male juvenility as of young womanhood. If you look at her as a woman, you see that her face is somewhat worn with time, thought, and struggle; but it would look very handsome and spirited as the face of a young man of twenty. She told us, the other day, by-the-by, that "her wig was growing as grey as a rat."²⁴⁷

Hawthorne then moves to a description of the studio's contents. Typical of the mode of reading neoclassical sculptures employed in the day, Hawthorne is reading the *Zenobia* not only for its formal qualities, but also for its approximation of an *ideal*. The work is judged successful for its 'self-sustained sanctity' and 'native pride', for its 'soul, so much above her misfortune' and is ultimately deemed a 'high, heroic ode', more impressive than any modern work Hawthorne has yet encountered: (figs 77-79)

²⁴⁷ - Hawthorne, *French and Italian Notebooks*, pp. 508-10.

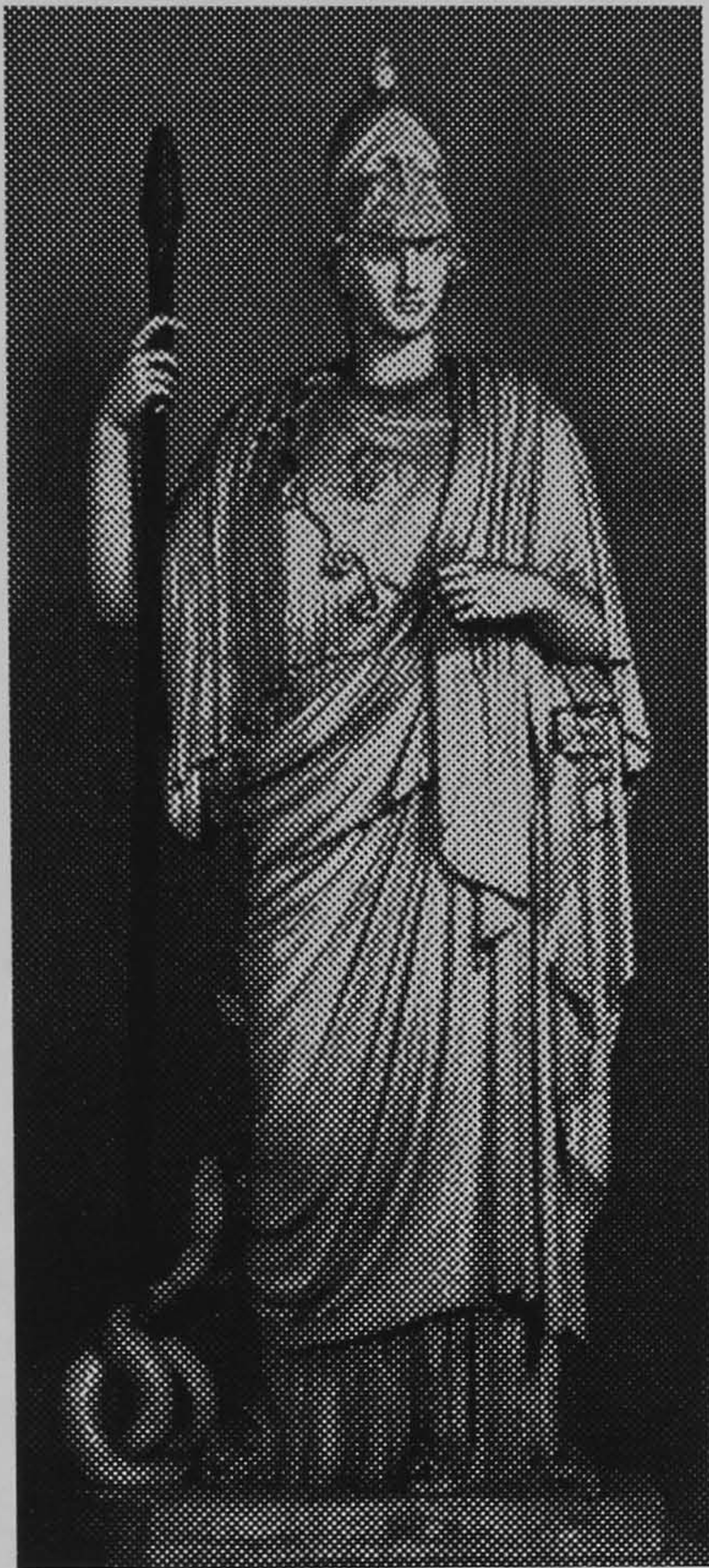


fig. 77 Minerva Medica, Roman copy of Greek original of ca. 350 BCE, marble, 2.23m high, Vatican Museums, Rome

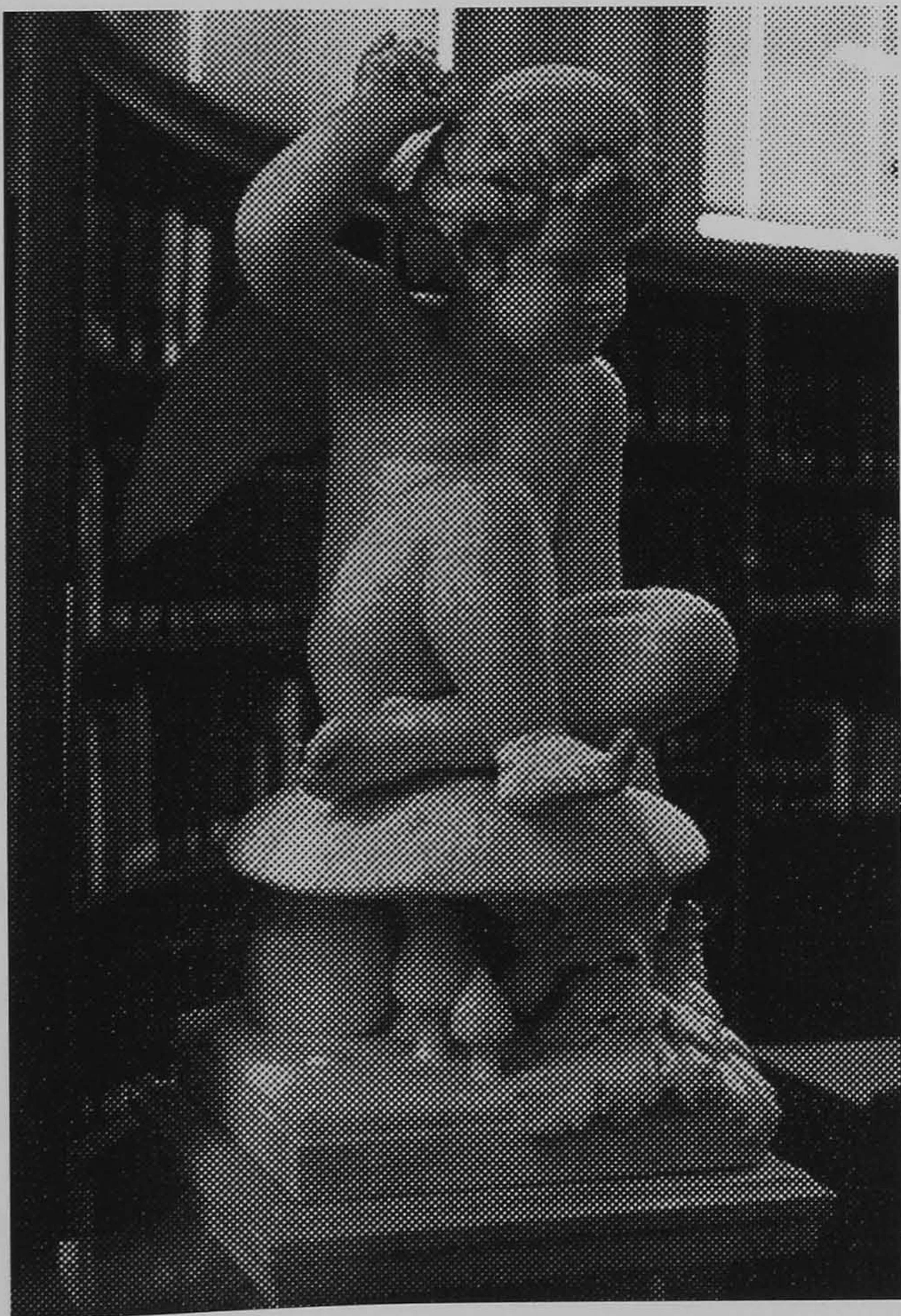


fig. 78 Harriet Hosmer, Puck, 1855, marble, 77.5cm high, Watertown Free Public Library, MA

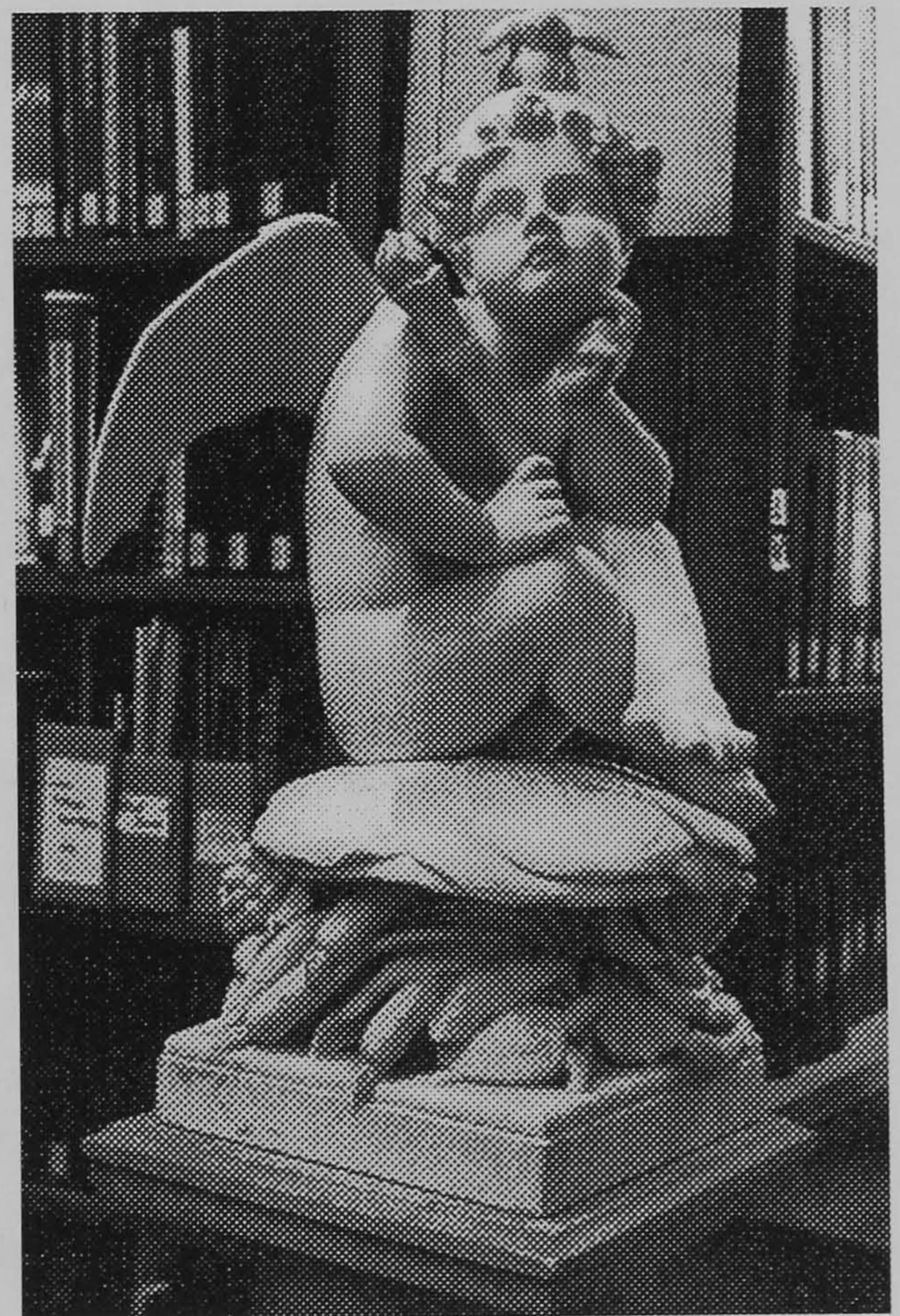


fig. 79 Harriet Hosmer, Will O' the Wisp, 1858, marble, 81.25cm high, Watertown Free Public Library, MA

There were but very few things in the room; two or three plaster-busts, a headless cast of a plaster statue, and a cast of the Minerva Medica, which perhaps she had been studying as a help towards the design of her Zenobia; for, at any rate, I seemed to discern a resemblance or analogy between the two. Zenobia stood in the centre of the room, as yet unfinished in the clay, but a very noble and remarkable statue indeed, full of dignity and beauty. It is wonderful that such a brisk little woman could have achieved a work so quietly impressive. She is supposed to be moving along as a captive in Aurelian's triumphal procession; and there is something in her air that conveys the idea of music, uproar, and a great throng, all about her, while she walks in the midst of it, self-sustained and kept in a sort of sanctity by her native pride. The idea of motion is achieved with great success; you not only perceive that she is walking, but know at just what tranquil pace she steps, amid the music of the triumph. The drapery is very fine and abundant; she is decked with ornaments; but the chains of her captivity hang from wrist to wrist, and her deportment (indicating a soul so much above her misfortune, yet not insensible to the weight of it) makes those chains a richer decoration than all her other jewels. I know not whether there is some magic in the present imperfect finish of the statue, or in the material of the clay, as being a better medium of expression than even marble; but certainly I have seldom or never been more impressed by a piece of modern sculpture.²⁴⁸

Finally, Hawthorne concludes with an almost phrenological comparison of Hosmer with her sculptures:

She showed us photographs of her Puck (which I have seen in the marble), and likewise of the Will o' the Wisp, both very pretty and fanciful. It indicates much variety of power, that Zenobia should be the sister of these, which would seem the more natural offspring of her quick and vivid character. But Zenobia is a high, heroic ode.²⁴⁹

At this point, the underlying goal of the author's description emerges as that of a comparison and contrast between the sculptor who made the work and the work itself. Hosmer's manner is found more congruous with the 'pretty fancy' of the Puck and Will o' the Wisp conceit figures than with the high ideals of the Zenobia, and this conditions Hawthorne's surprise at the strength of his appreciation for the piece. But that the comparison between the sculptor and the sculpture should have been made at all is the most striking feature of this passage for my focus here.

248 - Hawthorne, *French and Italian Notebooks*, pp. 508-10.

249 - *Ibid.*

Certainly when William Wetmore Story made his *Medea*, critics did not remark on how unlike the sculptor was the figure of the murderous mother. (fig. 80) Nor was Hiram Powers's masculinity questioned because of the dainty femininity of his *Greek Slave*, though undoubtedly the gender of these sculptors was not considered irrelevant to the qualities embodied in their works. (fig. 81) But the female sculptor sustained a particular identification with her works in art criticism and theory of the nineteenth century. This manifestation of the 'Pygmalion effect' in the American art world of the neoclassical period demonstrates that the artist's – and particularly the woman sculptor's – character and moral, spiritual, and intellectual values were considered to be the most powerful influences in determining an artwork's cultural value and critical success. Liana Borghi notes:

We may no longer consider an unblemished "character" a requirement for good painting and sculpting, but the Victorians, people without frontiers, considered morality a prerequisite for placing a painting or a bust in the parlour, or for allowing a full statue on the Common. If this rule could be relaxed when the artist was a man, it was always remembered when the artist was a woman.²⁵⁰

Perhaps surprisingly, this particular form of the 'Pygmalion effect' was both an enabling and limiting feature in the careers of American neoclassical women sculptors, but ultimately laid down the conditions for their near-invisibility in present-day American art history. Because of very particular configurations of femininity and the role of sculpture in US culture before the 1870s, the double-edged sword that was 'the Pygmalion effect' actually worked, for a while, to the advantage of American women who wanted to become sculptors, promoting their activities and supporting their careers, rather than simply and exclusively defining them as aberrant and unnatural women. Further, the lack of a codified training regime for sculptors in the US in this period also worked in women artists' favour, as very few American

250 - Liana Borghi, 'Anne Whitney: Letters Home', p. 118.



fig. 80 William Wetmore Story, *Medea*, 1866, marble, life-size, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC

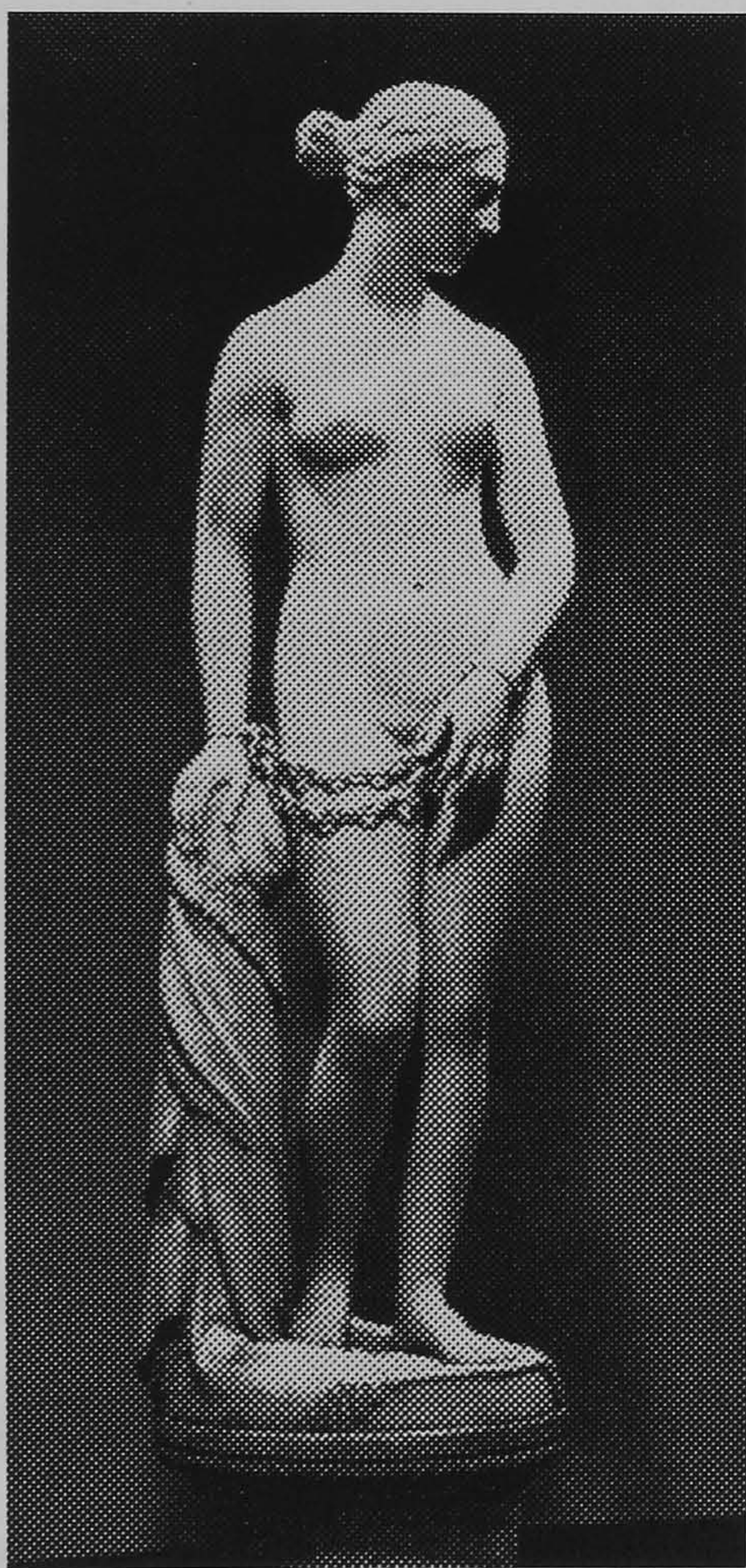


fig. 81 Hiram Powers, *The Greek Slave*, 1844..., marble, life-size, National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC

sculptors, male or female, had a rigorously formal training in anatomy, the nude, or the techniques of sculptural production as might be expected in Europe with its well-established Academies and art markets. Because few American men artists were academically trained, women's art training in America was not subjected to the same sorts of scrutiny that it was in Europe, where a lack of accepted training could mean that an aspiring woman artist was dismissed out of hand, even if she had managed to cultivate through other means the skills that formal training was intended to inculcate.

The decades of the 1840s and 1850s in the United States saw a significant increase in monument building and public statuary commissions. John Higham has attributed this phenomenon to a generational malaise after the revolutionary period, a sense that the younger, wealthier generation of Americans had lost touch with its revolutionary republican past and was sinking into a decadent, materialist selfishness that could be compared to contemporary notions of the Roman Empire's decay.²⁵¹ Public monuments, and commemorative statuary to American heroes and ideals, past and present, offered both an affirmation of the values of the founding fathers and a reminder to younger Americans of their history and continuing responsibility to the safeguarding of the moral and spiritual health of the nation. Thus public and monumental statuary had a particularly didactic political and cultural function in the United States of the 1840s and 50s. As Albert Elsen has argued, 'sculpture was thought to give the man on the street, preoccupied with petty affairs, the shock of great ideas, usually by showing the men and women who had thought of them. It not only provided models of ethical conduct, but good physical posture' as well.²⁵²

There was great deal of sympathy between the sense of the importance

251 - John Higham, *From Boundlessness to Consolidation: The Transformation of American Culture, 1848-1860* (Ann Arbor: William L. Clements Library, 1969), p. 18.

252 - Albert Elsen, *Origins of Modern Sculpture: Pioneers and Premises* (NY: George Braziller, 1974), quoted in Robert H. Byer, 'Words, Monuments, Beholders: The Visual Arts in Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*', in David C. Miller, ed., *American Iconology* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 163-184 (p. 167).

of the *idea* behind the sculpture and the ethos of neoclassical sculpture. As a style whose proponents emphasised using the visual vocabulary of a canon of past masters in order to articulate works of 'ideal' proportions and ennobling meanings, neoclassicism was a style ripe for investment by American cultural and political propaganda. Sculpture in particular lent itself to the development of a national artistic programme, as it tended to be public rather than private, and its white marble forms could be invested with resonances of purity and nobility of thought. Nor would the United States be the last government to put neoclassicism's clear forms and 'confident self-containment' to use as an apt vehicle for political propaganda.

The simplicity of the neoclassical style, and its concern with the *ideal* in human thought and action, overcame reservations about art corrupting its viewers by arousing the base passions. Even the stark nudity of Hiram Powers's *Greek Slave* could be read as 'clothed with chastity' by H.S.C. of *The Knickerbocker Magazine* thanks to the happy marriage of the figure's white marble purity – compared to a 'lily' and a 'pearl' in another poem on the work by W.H. Coyle – with the political and ideological sentiment behind the work.

Thus sculpture – and particularly that made in Rome – became the primary art form in the pre-modernist US, having greater prestige than painting or the other artistic media.²⁵³ The landscape painter, Worthington Whittredge (1820-1911), in Rome from 1854-59, wrote of the economic division between painters and sculptors in the expatriate Roman community:

The artists residing in this far-off region looked upon winter as the time when they were most likely to sell their works or get orders from the art-interested strangers visiting Rome at that season. The sculptors were much less fidgety about selling their works than the painters were. They often had large orders on hand and could easily afford to keep cool. But the painters who had come to Rome, expecting to find sales for their works there, often manifested

253 - Lynes, *The Art-Makers*, p. 191.

considerable uneasiness.²⁵⁴

1859, the year of Hawthorne's first visit to Harriet Hosmer's studio, was a difficult year for the expatriate artistic community, largely due to economic troubles brought to Europe by the Crimean War and the resulting panic in the American markets. William Henry Rinehart, an American sculptor resident in Rome, wrote in the winter of 1859:

... there has not been a single new artist English or American this winter which is very unusual. Visitors are also scarce particularly buyers. I am very much mistaken if the artists don't have another hard winter of it and if so I think there will be more of them leave next spring. There are but few painters here now and some of them are starving and would leave immediately but cannot on account of their debts.²⁵⁵

The particular difficulty experienced by painters in selling their works in Rome, coupled with the fast rise of Paris as the centre of modern painting, seems to have left Rome to the sculptors in the second half of the nineteenth century, as Rinehart noted:

I am not much astonished to find few painters here when Paris offers so much finer field for study. There are a great many fine pictures here in Rome but they are so scattered about that it takes so much time to see them. In Paris they are all concentrated nearby in one place, besides modern painting is so far ahead of any other place I have seen.²⁵⁶

Art was perceived in this period of American history, much as today, as powerful and potentially very dangerous to the moral well-being of the nation. It was seen to encourage effeminacy and aristocratic pretensions in those who indulged. European art and the wealth of aristocratic and public architecture in Europe were frequently taken as symbols of the oppression of European peoples by their governments and monarchs, who exacted taxes and even lives to pay for their luxurious living.

254 - Worthington Whittredge, in his autobiography, quoted in Detroit Institute of Art, *Travellers in Arcadia*, p. 60.

255 - 'William H. Rinehart's letters to Frank B. Mayer', *Maryland Historical Magazine* XLIII (1948), letter of December 9, 1859, quoted in Detroit Institute of Art, *Travellers in Arcadia: American Artists in Italy, 1830-1875*, p. 13.

256 - Ibid.

Like relations with 'morally corrupted' people, vision of corrupt images could also be corrupting so it was of paramount importance that art *and its makers* be morally upstanding.²⁵⁷ As Henry Tuckerman wrote in his praise of the American painter, Kensett, for 'infusing his personality into his work':

Perhaps some of our readers will think all this is quite irrelevant to the present object, which is to define Kensett's position in art, where with personal qualities, it may be argued, have nothing to do. But we are of a contrary opinion. The disposition and moral nature of an artist directly and absolutely influence his works.²⁵⁸

Similarly, in a posthumous review of British sculptor Mary Thornycroft's life and works, *The Lady's Realm* of October 1897 attributed the sculptor's success in portraits of children to her own moral qualities which mirrored those of her subjects:

In her portraits of children, in which she excelled, Mrs. Thornycroft has left an unconscious reflection of her own lovely character; for who could so successfully portray the beauty, the trustfulness, the single-mindedness, the purity of childhood, unless they possessed the heart of a little child?²⁵⁹

Within readings of the art object as a reflection of the maker's character, Edmonia Lewis's African American ancestry could be interpreted in the racist United States as a stain on her moral character. Certain interviews with Lewis seem to indicate an awareness of this fact. Lewis was widely reported as desiring to use her sculpture to support the cause of African American accession to full human citizenship rights in the United States, but in at least two published texts she is also reported as having distanced herself from

257 - Byer, p. 167.

258 - Tuckerman, pp. 512-514.

259 - *The Lady's Realm*, (October 1897), n.p., transcription from 'Aunt Helen's book of cuttings' in the Thornycroft Archives of the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds.

African Americans.²⁶⁰ In one, an interview for the feminist journal, *The Revolution*, in 1871, she is recorded as referring to her, 'poor father's people, how I could do them good in my small way'.²⁶¹ The note of condescension to African Americans is also implicit in a letter by abolitionist Lydia Maria Child to the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, in which Lewis is quoted as identifying more strongly with her Native American heritage: 'My mother's people never submitted to slavery; and I honor them for that.'²⁶²

At the same time as the moral dangers and benefits of art were debated in the American press, femininity and the role of women in American society were being defined as central to the American public virtue mission. As defenders of 'home, Christ, and morality', some women were able to take up a public role as critics and reformers of American culture.²⁶³ In this context, the moral mission attributed to women in American society was coincident with that of American sculpture. And in particular, it was coincident with ideal neoclassical sculpture. The ideal figure, as the purest embodiment of a noble idea, was considered the pinnacle of artistic production insofar as it had the most didactic utility and effect. In contrast to the situation in painting, then, where women were considered, by definition of their femininity, incapable of participating in history painting, recognised as the highest form of painting in the nineteenth century, in America definitions of femininity were ironically

²⁶⁰ - As was discussed in Part I, Chapter 4.i 'Not a Flock', it is important to note that the interviews with Lewis published in the nineteenth century tend to be very inconsistent and even contradictory about Lewis's biographical information. As quotations of Lewis were invariably used in the context of powerful political and/or ideological agendas on the part of the interviewers, these inconsistencies might indicate that the authors or indeed Lewis herself edited her words to support their programmes. Rather than presenting these quotations as any 'truthful' or unequivocal expression of Lewis's views, I read them as indexes to nineteenth century American ideologies regarding race. The subject of these quotations should then be read as 'Edmonia Lewis', the 'invented self' rather than the self-identical Cartesian subject, in the mode suggested by Nye in his methodology of the 'anti-biography', discussed in Part I, Chapter 3.iv 'Uncanny Topographies'. David Nye, *The Invented Self: An Anti-biography, from documents of Thomas A. Edison* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1983).

²⁶¹ - Bullard, quoted in Hartigan, p. 93.

²⁶² - Lydia Maria Child, 'Letter from Mrs. Lydia Maria Child: A Plea for the Indians, No. II', *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, (April 18, 1868); quoted in Holland, p. 28.

²⁶³ - Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct* (NY & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 16.

congruent with artistic production in the most respected medium, sculpture, and in the most respected mode of that medium, the ideal figure. But at the same time, the more dependably lucrative but less prestigious activities of portraiture were also open to women sculptors as bread and butter work. American women, however, were suited for the making of ideal sculpture only as long as they remained, like Caesar's wife, above moral reproach and even suspicion.

In this respect, the nude posed particular problems for American women sculptors. On the one hand, study of and proficiency at representing the nude human body was indispensable to a classicising art practice. On the other hand, it was not considered entirely respectable even for artists who were men to study the nude. Russell Lynes records that when the 'Columbianum' Association of Artists opened in Philadelphia to provide classes in painting, perspective, anatomy, and paint chemistry, its small cast of the *Venus de Medici*, was, because of its nudity, kept in a cupboard and made available only to professional artists.²⁶⁴ As William Gerdtz has commented:

The problem of nudity in historic statues seldom came up in American sculpture. If it did, the example of Horatio Greenough and his disparagingly received *Washington* – heroic and half-naked – was enough to dissuade other sculptors from the European temptations offered by Antonio Canova's even more heroic and totally nude *Napoleon*.²⁶⁵

Condemned by everyone from Davy Crockett to the cultivated, retired mayor of New York, Philip Hone, the popular joke about Greenough's *Washington* at its dedication was that the figure was announcing, 'Here is my sword – my clothes are in the Patent Office yonder.'²⁶⁶ (*fig. 82*)

If access to the nude for study and work could be difficult for artists who were men, artists who were women faced particular hurdles as often even the

264 - Lynes, *The Art-Makers*, pp. 15-16.

265 - William H. Gerdtz, 'Marble and Nudity', *Art in America*, 54.3 (May/June 1971), 60-67 (p. 60).

266 - Lynes, pp. 119-121.

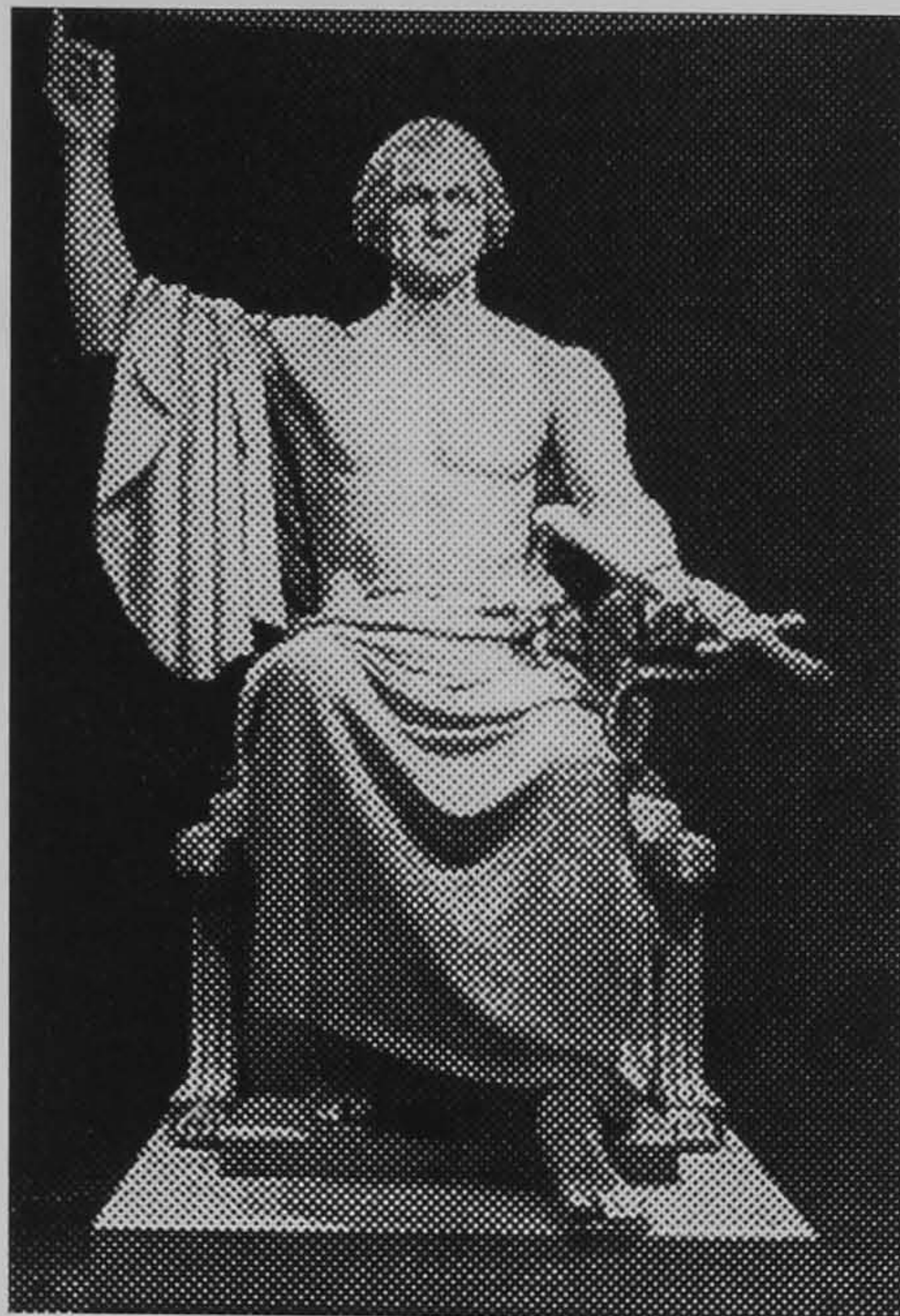


fig. 82 Horatio Greenough, *George Washington*, 1832-40, marble, 3.4m high, National Museum of American History, Washington, DC



fig. 84 John Gibson, *The Tinted Venus*, 1854, marble, life-size

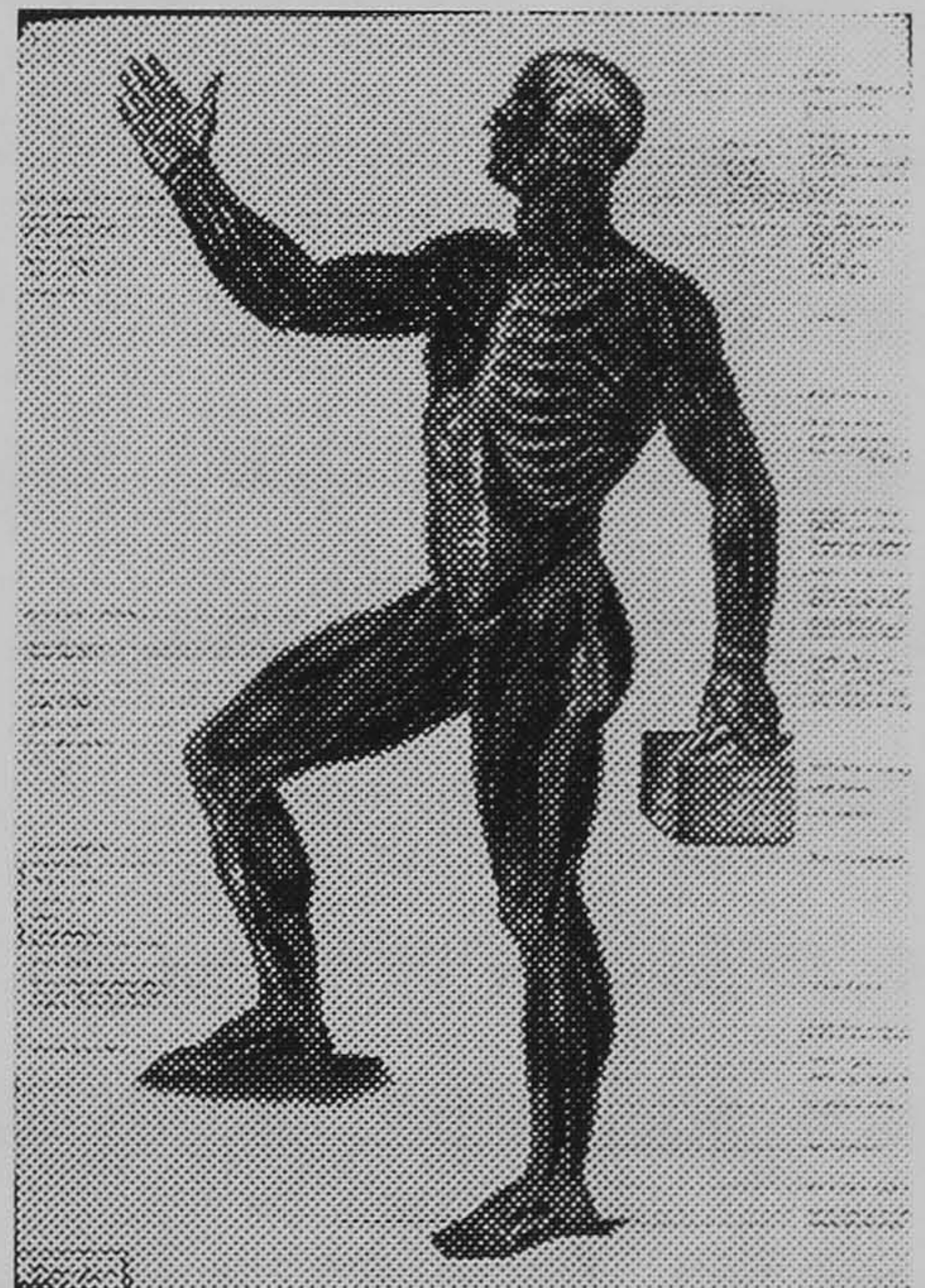


fig. 83 Harriet Hosmer, anatomical drawing of the human muscle system, produced while Hosmer was a student at Missouri Medical College, 1850, pen and wash, 85x60cm, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, MA

study of anatomy was closed to them. In this respect, at least some of the American women who worked in Rome in the nineteenth century represent fortunate exceptions, as they were able to obtain some training in human anatomy, albeit generally through circuitous routes.

After being rejected by the Boston Medical Society on the grounds of her gender, Harriet Hosmer was able to enter the anatomy course of Dr Joseph Nash McDowell at the Missouri Medical College, thanks to the intercession of her patron and best friend's father, Wayman Crow who was an influential businessman in St. Louis. McDowell taught another woman, Jane Peck, in chemistry, and was perhaps particularly disposed to train sculptors as he had already taught the world-renowned Hiram Powers and Shobal Clevenger when he was teaching in Cincinnati.²⁶⁷ Lady Eastlake, however, suggested that Hosmer was only under McDowell's tutelage for one-half year.²⁶⁸ (*fig. 83*)

Anne Whitney is reported to have studied anatomy for some time at a hospital in Brooklyn, NY, in 1860.²⁶⁹ Upon her return to Boston, in 1862 she established a studio next door to Dr William Rimmer, who gave her both critiques in sculpting and anatomy lessons.²⁷⁰ Rimmer had given up a successful medical practice to devote himself to sculpture. While his sculpture was reviled by contemporary critics, he did become famous as a teacher of drawing and anatomy, and lectured widely at the Lowell Institute in Boston, Yale, Harvard, as well as the National Academy of Design and the Cooper Union in New York, where he was director of design for four years and taught free, day-time classes for women only.²⁷¹

²⁶⁷ - Sherwood, pp. 23-25.

²⁶⁸ - Lady Eastlake, *Life of John Gibson, R.A. Sculptor* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1870), pp. 226-231.

²⁶⁹ - Eleanor Tufts, 'An American Victorian Dilemma, 1875; Should a Woman Be Allowed to Sculpt a Man?', *Art Journal*, 51 (Spring 1992), 51-56 (p. 51). Tufts also records that Whitney studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts after leaving New York, but women were not permitted to attend life classes at the Academy until 1868, nor at the New York National Academy of Design until 1871.

²⁷⁰ - Wayne Craven, *Sculpture in America* (NY: Thomas Crowell, Co., 1968), p. 229.

²⁷¹ - Lynes, *The Art-Makers*, p. 155; Beatrice Gilman Proske, 'Part 1: American Women Sculptors', *National Sculpture Review*, 24.2-3 (Summer-Fall 1975) 8-15, (p. 12).

Emma Stebbins does not appear to have received any formal training in anatomy, but in Rome sculptor Paul Akers agreed to tutor her in both sculpture and anatomy.²⁷² Similarly, Edmonia Lewis had some guidance in sculpture from Edward Brackett in Boston, but as for most American women sculptors and many American sculptors who were men, before moving to Rome her minimal training did not include lessons in anatomy or life-drawing.²⁷³ Once in Rome, the galleries and museums offered classical nudes from which artists could study, models were plentiful and cheap to hire. There were also small independent life-schools to which artists could subscribe, and drawing from live models at the Academy of St. Luke, the British and French Academies.²⁷⁴ Leland records that women artists were permitted and present in at least some of the Roman life schools, but that the government prohibited female – though not male – models from posing nude; as a result, the female nude was studied primarily in private studios.²⁷⁵

Despite the opposition to nudity encountered by artists both male and female, nearly all American sculptors of the period, women included, produced at least one nude figure, of which Hiram Powers's *Greek Slave* represents one striking success story. Thus nudity in art could be tolerated and even celebrated by American audiences, but it seems that there were certain conditions that generally had to be met first: the work's nudity had to be provided with a *context*, usually involving a specific narrative that justified the figure's nudity, and/or literary apologies and interpretations by respected

272 - Elizabeth Milroy, 'The Public Career of Emma Stebbins: Work in Marble', *Archives of American Art Journal*, 33.3 (1993), 2-12 (p. 4).

273 - Hartigan, p. 88. William Wetmore Story, for example, had no formal training, either in anatomy or in sculpture, when he moved to Rome at the behest of a Boston committee which had commissioned him to produce a memorial statue of his recently-deceased father. This is a striking example of the character and social position of the sculptor being identified with those of the sculpture – not quite the 'Pygmalion effect' witnessed in the cases of the women sculptors, but a related phenomenon. See Lynes, *The Art-Makers*, pp. 126-129.

274 - Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr., *The Lure of Italy: American Artists and the Italian Experience, 1760-1914*, exhibition catalogue (Boston and NY: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in association with Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1992), p. 49.

275 - Henry Perry Leland, *Americans in Rome* (NY: Charles T. Evans, 1863), pp. 105-106.

writers; the figure had to be an ideal one, preferably from myth, legend, contemporary fiction or biblical themes as opposed to modern historical narratives; the figure had to be pure white marble, uncoloured by tints or paints of any kind; and the sculptor had to be of respected moral character, of whom the work could not be easily said to represent a prurient sexual interest in nudity. Finally, if the sculptor was a woman, only the fully-nude male figure seems to have been a viable or desirable subject.

Horatio Greenough failed to precede the unveiling of his *Washington* with the publication of his defence of nudity, despite warnings from his friend, Senator Charles Sumner, that such preliminary propaganda would be indispensable.²⁷⁶ Perhaps learning from Greenough's failure, Hiram Powers in contrast paved the way for his *Greek Slave* with an elaborate programme of laudatory and apologetic texts, including rave reviews by British critics of the 1851 Great Exhibition, the blessing of Reverend Orville Dewey, and a sonnet about the work by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. The intimately connected worlds of nineteenth century literary and art criticism undoubtedly worked to secure the American public's acceptance of this inaugural American semi-nude.

But if the right *context* could ease anxieties about a figure's nudity, the wrong *colour* could insure a work's rejection by American audiences. German sculptor Johann Heinrich von Dannecker's *Ariadne on a Panther* was one of the works most admired and visited by nineteenth century American travellers in Europe. Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote that in its presence she was, 'under a spell in the transfigured world of art where passion ceases, and bestial instincts are felt to be bowed to the law of the mind, and of ideal truth.'²⁷⁷ The only problem with the figure was, in fact, the panes of rose-coloured glass above it, which cast a vaguely (caucasian) 'flesh-coloured' light upon the white marble, enhancing the 'life-like' qualities of the rendering of the stone.

276 - Vance, I, p. 342.

277 - Gerds, 'Marble and Nudity', pp. 60-62.

'For color,' explains Gerdts:

...even when introduced vicariously as here, violated the concept of abstraction, which was one of the justifications for sculptural nudity or, for that matter, for the existence of sculpture itself, at least for Americans. Painting was color, sculpture was form; and, as Margaret Fuller said, "solid sculpture appeals to the positiveness of his [the American's] nature."²⁷⁸

The rejection of colour in sculpture for Americans was not, I would argue, just a matter of formalist debates, however; in America associations of colour with the human body would always be ideologically laden with concerns about manifestations of sexuality and – as I shall discuss at length in Part III.5 – racial impurity. Frequently, the two categories overlapped; when George Hillard wanted to praise Harriet Hosmer's work, he did so in terms of sexual and racial purity:

Black upon white – *my* art no higher goes
 No better skill my pen prosaic knows.
You need not stain the virgin page, who write
 So fine a hand in lines of purest white.²⁷⁹

As Gerdts acknowledges, Nathaniel Hawthorne's objection to colour in sculpture was the sexuality it introduced into the figure: 'Thus it became a sin and a shame to look upon [Gibson's] nude goddesses.'²⁸⁰ In *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne has Miriam declare to Kenyon:

Now-a-days, people are as good as born in their clothes, and there is practically not a nude human being in existence. An artist, therefore, – as you must candidly confess, – cannot sculpture nudity with a pure heart, if only because he is compelled to steal guilty glimpses at hired models. The marble inevitably loses its chastity under such circumstances.²⁸¹ (*fig. 84*)

Thus the 'Pygmalion effect' brought the sexuality (and race, as I shall argue below) of the sculptor into play as a determining factor in the morality and sexuality of the work. When Anne Whitney entered her maquette for a public statue of the recently deceased Senator Charles Sumner in a blind

278 - Gerdts, 'Marble and Nudity', pp. 60-62.

279 - George Hillard, 'To Harriet Hosmer', quoted in Sherwood, p. 230.

280 - Gerdts, 'Marble and Nudity', pp. 60-62.

281 - Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, p. 123.

competition in Boston, the judges were sufficiently impressed to award her first place and the commission. (*fig. 85*) But upon discovering that the artist was a woman, the judges decided that it would be improper for a lady to model a man's legs; they withdrew the commission from Whitney and conferred it on Thomas Ball.

As Lydia Maria Child pointed out in a satirical verse, published in the *New York Evening Telegram* when the Sumner maquette was exhibited at the Union League Club in New York in 1879, there had been no such objections to Boston's public statue of Samuel Adams, for which Whitney was awarded the commission by the state of Massachusetts two years before the Sumner scandal. (*fig. 86*) Child attributes the inconsistency to Boston narrow-mindedness, personified in an imagined conversation with 'progressive' New York:

New York

Yet under the dome of the Capitol
Stands Samuel Adams erect and tall,
As free as his namesake before the fall;
And though the image was carved by a woman
Rarely is marble so grandly human.

Boston

But we Boston wise men known by heart
All that is possibly known about art,
And we have decided that only a man
Can know how a masculine statue to plan.²⁸²

At least in the case of the Ericson statue, unlike the Sumner memorial, the figure was a legendary one and hence closer to the *ideal*. Perhaps at the time of the commissioning of the Samuel Adams statue, this historical figure was similarly distant in memory, and hence enjoyed the sanctity of the ideal more easily than the recently-deceased Charles Sumner. While portrait busts were perfectly acceptable subjects for women sculptors, anything remotely

²⁸² - Lydia Maria Child, *Evening Telegram* (New York), March 1, 1879. Clipping, preserved in Anne Whitney's scrapbook, Wellesley College library archives; quoted in Eleanor Tufts, 'An American Victorian Dilemma, 1875: Should a Woman Be Allowed to Sculpt a Man?', *Art Journal* 51 (Spring 1992), 52-56 (p. 54).

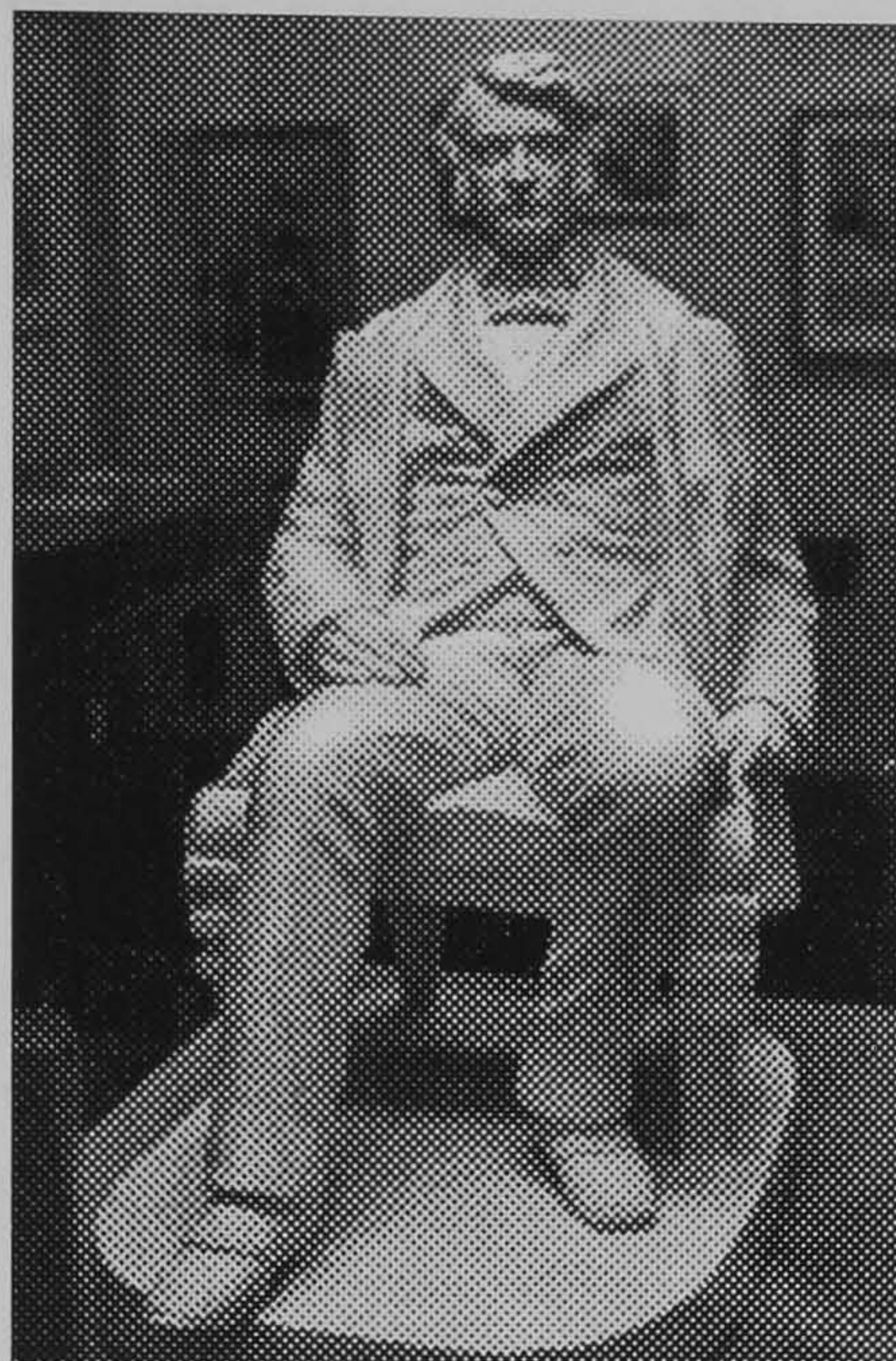


fig. 85 Anne Whitney,
Charles Sumner, 1878,
plaster, 72.5 cm,
Watertown Free Public
Library, MA



fig. 87 Anne Whitney,
Charles Sumner, 1900,
bronze, heroic,
Cambridge, Harvard
Square, MA

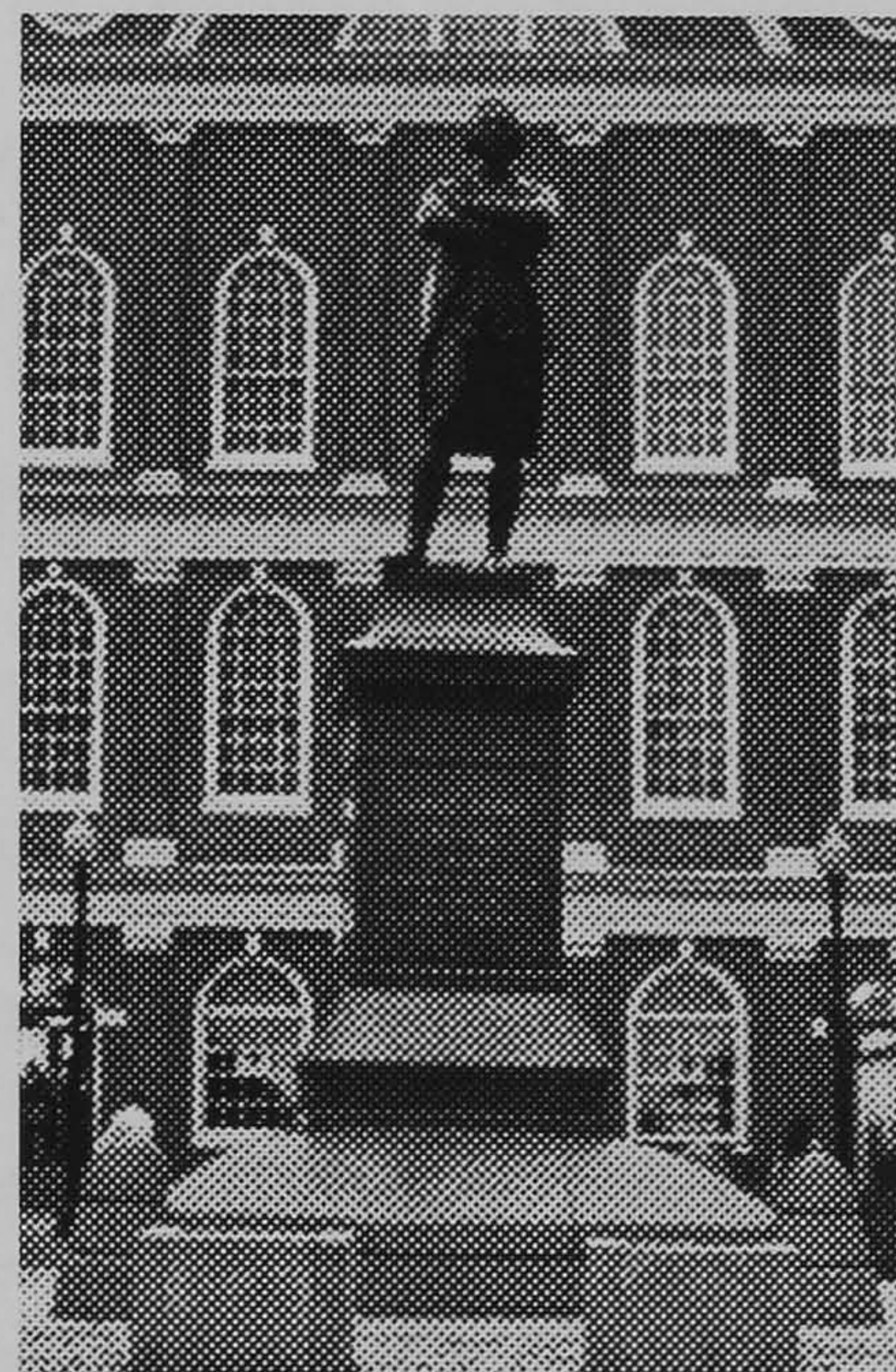


fig. 86 Anne Whitney,
Samuel Adams, 1876,
bronze, heroic, Boston
State House, MA

resembling a contemporary, living male body was not; the less ideal the figure was, the less appropriate it was for a women to sculpt it.

The injustice of the Sumner committee's decision rankled, and Whitney refused ever to enter another competition. She was at last vindicated, however, in 1898 when, at the age of 77, she translated her original design into a monumental clay figure, from which a bronze statue of the seated senator was cast. Today Anne Whitney's bronze of *Charles Sumner* occupies one of the most public and prestigious positions in Cambridge, Massachusetts, at the centre of Cambridge Square, while Ball's statue is nearly invisible and forgotten, hidden in a leafy corner of Boston common, one dead white man among the many statues there. (*fig. 87*)

The policing of the morality of the American women sculptors extended, though on less easily quantifiable levels, to strong pressures for conservatism in stylistic choices in their work. With their very presence in the professional sculpture community so contingent upon their maintaining moral irreproachability, one can understand why, for example, Harriet Hosmer never chose to colour her statues as did her teacher, John Gibson, despite his renown and her admiration for his work. Even Gibson, the foremost and most respected British sculptor of the day, was widely questioned as to the morality of his work and practice when he produced the *Tinted Venus*. (*see fig. 84*) It is not difficult to imagine that such charges would have destroyed the career of a woman sculptor, as had been the case with Louisa Lander.²⁸³

In addition to Harriet Hosmer's two male nudes, the *Waking* and *Sleeping Fauns*, both Emma Stebbins and Anne Whitney produced an ideal nude male after Tennyson's poem on the Homeric theme, *The Lotus Eater*; however, no American woman sculptor ever attempted a full female nude such as Powers's *Greek Slave*. Considering the plethora of female nudes on

283 - See Part I, Chapter 4.i 'Not a Flock' on the scandal preceding Louisa Lander's departure from Rome.

display in the Roman galleries and museums, not to mention what one might imagine to be the women sculptors' greater accessibility to nude female models, this appears at first a remarkable statistic.²⁸⁴ As Louisa Lander's experiences reveal, however, any evocation of the woman sculptor's own nudity could be fatal to her career. Perhaps, then, the fear among the women sculptors was that any full female nude they made would be read as, on some level, a representation of their own bodies and sexuality.²⁸⁵

In the case of Edmonia Lewis, the ideological force of the 'Pygmalion effect' was multiplied. As Lynda Roscoe Hartigan remarks, Lewis was seen as 'triple disadvantaged as a black, Indian woman', and 'offered a tempting opportunity to those eager to demonstrate their support of human rights'.²⁸⁶ Thus Lewis's works have typically been read, both in the nineteenth century and today, through a 'trivialising elision' with both her racial background and her gender, a phenomenon in art criticism of women artists which is elucidated by Claudine Mitchell in the case of Camille Claudel.²⁸⁷ As if 'transmuted' from the fingers of the sculptor, Lewis's works are 'coloured' with the racial characteristics observed by critics in the sculptor herself.

Interviews with Lewis confirmed the impetus to confuse her artistic production with her autobiography according to racial stereotypes of both the Native American and African American races held by white liberal Americans. While tracing the roots of her creativity to her Ojibwa mother's inventive embroidery patterns, for example, Lewis is reported to have qualified this

284 - That Hosmer at least used women models is certain: as Dolly Sherwood has remarked, having her friend and client, Adelaide Talbot, a non-professional model, pose for the *Beatrice Cenci* 'in partial dishabille gave a "sculptress" the edge over her male colleagues'. Sherwood, p. 134.

285 - Kirsten Buick has made a similar argument, discussed below, about Edmonia Lewis's work, reading the lack of any specific ethnicity in the female figures in Lewis's *oeuvre* as an attempt on the sculptor's part to impede any reading of her work as autobiography. Kirsten P. Buick, 'The Ideal Works of Edmonia Lewis: Invoking and Inverting Autobiography', *American Art*, 9.2 (Summer 1995), pp. 5-19. See Part III.12 for my response to this theory in Lewis's case.

286 - Hartigan, p. 88.

287 - Claudine Mitchell, 'Intellectuality and Sexuality: Camille Claudel, the Fin de Siècle Sculptress', *Art History* 12.4 (December, 1989) p. 419+.

heritage by suggesting that, 'perhaps the same thing is coming out in me in a more civilized form'.²⁸⁸

Lewis's relationship with abolitionist patrons could also be a double-edged sword. As Hartigan points out, 'The encouragement that she received ranged from genuine belief in her potential to well-meant but misguided indulgence.'²⁸⁹ Mentors such as Lydia Maria Child expected their advice to be followed when given, yet all too often Lewis followed her own counsel. When Lewis conceived a plan to model a bust of Civil War hero, Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, Child discouraged her, thinking the untrained sculptor could only fail at such a prestigious task. Child even refrained from sharing her photographs of Shaw with Lewis. Lewis proceeded nonetheless, and Child had to admit that she was, 'very agreeably surprised'.²⁹⁰ Lewis's bust of Shaw also won the approbation of the Shaw family, and Harriet Hosmer praised the work as 'finely molded', while Anna Quincy Waterston wrote a verse ode to the work.²⁹¹ In fact, the bust turned out to be so popular that the sale of plaster copies of it and Lewis's medallion portrait of John Brown financed her trip to Italy in 1865. (*figs 88-90*)

It is easy to see how this early success, achieved by Lewis directly against the wishes of Child, would encourage Lewis to take her own business sense very seriously, even in the face of opposition from her benefactors. Indeed, Lewis's highly unorthodox practice of having her works cut in marble on credit, without having secured a buyer beforehand, was considered pure folly by most. When she shipped her hallmark work, *Forever Free* (originally titled, *The Morning of Liberty*), to the wealthy abolitionist lawyer, Samuel E. Sewell, in the States without warning and with bills for the

288 - Lydia Maria Child, 'Edmonia Lewis', *Broken Fetter* (March 3, 1865) p. 25, quoted in Hartigan, p. 88.

289 - Hartigan, p. 88.

290 - Lydia Maria Child to Sarah Blake Sturgis Shaw, November 3, 1864; Houghton Library, Harvard University, bMS Am 1417 (93); quoted in Hartigan, p. 89.

291 - Anne Quincey Waterston, quoted in Hartigan, p. 89.

fig. 88 Edmonia Lewis,
Col. Robert Gould Shaw,
1867, marble, Museum of
African American History,
Boston, MA

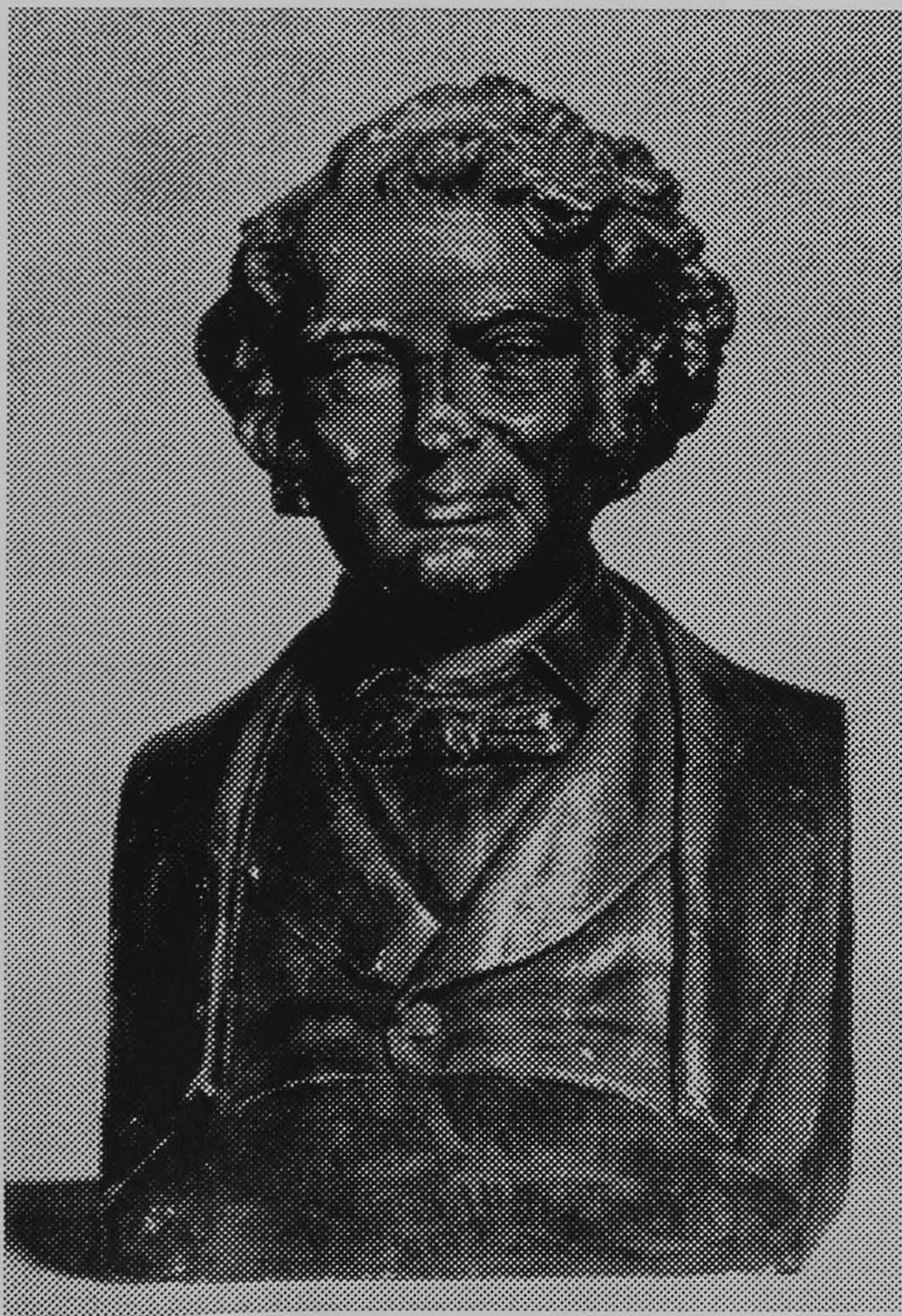
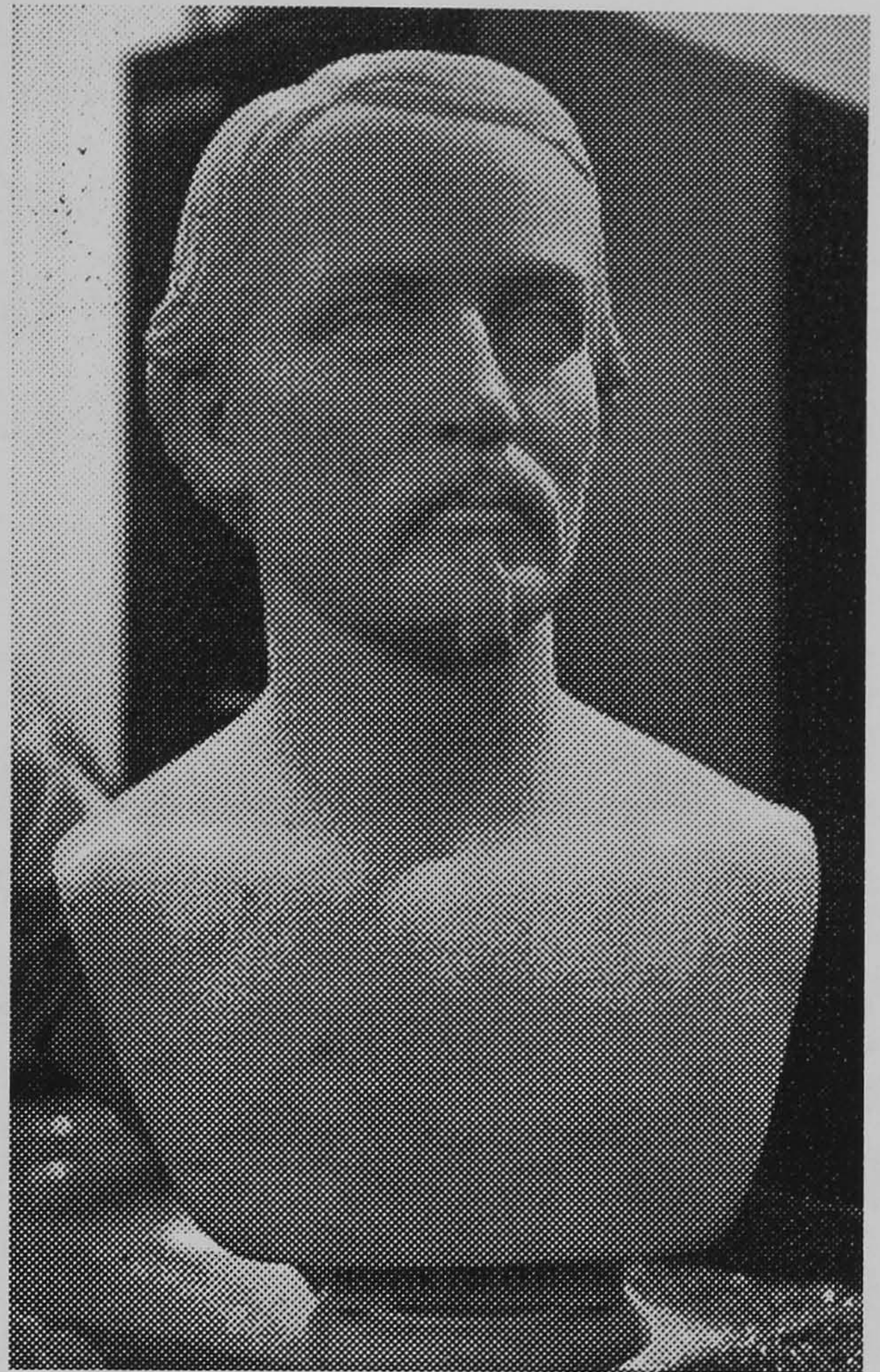


fig. 89 Edmonia Lewis, *Charles Sumner*,
by 1876, plaster, private collection

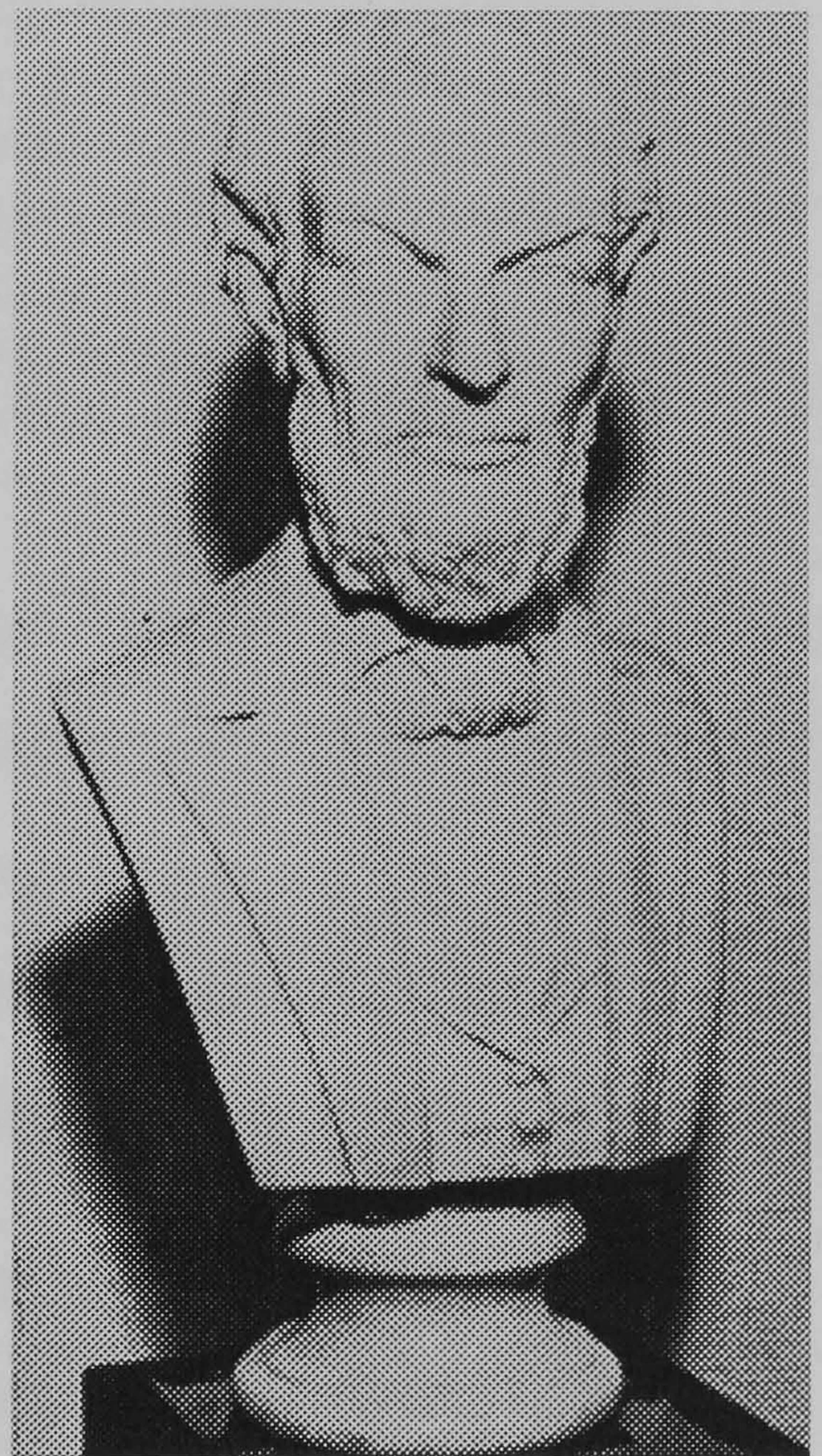


fig. 90 Edmonia Lewis,
Abraham Lincoln, by 1876,
marble, San Jose Public
Library, CA

shipping, customs, and the work itself, the 'Garrisonian' abolitionists were startled, but did attempt to raise the necessary funds. (see *fig. 99*) Child apologised on Lewis's behalf, attributing her actions to her 'restless energy, which makes her feel competent for any undertaking, coupled with her want of education and experience, which makes her unconscious as a baby of the difficulties which lie in her way.'²⁹² To Lewis, Child was less forgiving; she sent Lewis a letter 'which she compared to having a tooth pulled' and 'bluntly told Lewis to stop cutting marble and shipping it with the bills.'²⁹³

When payment for *Forever Free* was not quickly forthcoming, Lewis wrote Maria Weston Chapman, assistant to William Lloyd Garrison, publisher of the abolitionist paper, *The Liberator*:

Dear Mrs. Chapman,

It seems almost I was going to say, impossible that not one of my many kind friends have not written to me some word about the group *For ever free* – Will you be so kind as to let me know what has become of it and has Mr. Sewall got the money for it yet or not. I am in great need of the money what little money I had I put all in that work with my heart and I truly hope that the work of two long years has not been lost. Dear Mrs Chapman I been thinking that it may be that you have met with some who think that it will ruin me to help me – but you may tell them that in giving a little something towards that group – that will not only aid me but will show their good feeling for one who has given all for poor humanity....²⁹⁴

Whatever her business acumen, Lewis displays here a keen understanding that she had to contend not only with the racism and patronising of her patrons, but also the powerful American ideology of the 'self-made man' and Horatio Alger-style self-reliance, which dissuaded people from giving charity for fear of its corrupting influence on the recipient.²⁹⁵

292 - Child to Shaw, 1870 (*Collected Correspondence of Child*, 74/1958); quoted in Bearden and Henderson, p. 65.

293 - *Ibid.*, citing Child to Harriet W. Sewall, June 6, 1868 (*Collected Correspondence of Child*, 69/1839).

294 - Edmonia Lewis to Maria Chapman, letter dated Rome, May 3, 1868, photocopy in the Archives of the Centro Studi Americani, Rome. Portions of this letter are also quoted in Bearden and Henderson, p. 65.

295 - On the radical defence of market forces against corrupting influences such as charity in the nineteenth century, see G. R. Searle, *Morality and the Market in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Identifications with her race also seem to have enabled Lewis, however, to move beyond strictly neoclassical visual vocabularies and narratives to include representations of Native American and African American subjects in her *oeuvre*. Edmonia Lewis's distinctly un-classicising representations of racial features in works seem to have been endorsed as 'authentic' because of their sculptor's mixed racial heritage, and therefore accepted as a matter of course.

Lewis produced a cycle of works representing Native Americans from Longfellow's *Hiawatha* poem, largely responsible for the romanticisation of the Native American in US culture. (see *figs 63&64*) Lewis's racial heritage seems to have lent legitimacy to the ballad of Native Americans written by a white, urban author, but based on original experiences of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, a historian, explorer, and geologist, superintendent of Indian affairs for Michigan from 1836 to 1841, and married to Jane, O-bah-bahm-wawa-ge-zhe-go-qua Johnston, an Ojibwa woman.²⁹⁶ Progressive journalist Laura Curtis Bullard praised the realism in Lewis's treatment of the *Hiawatha* and *Minnehaha* figures in a letter to the *New National Era* in May of 1871, reporting that, 'In both, the Indian type of feature is carefully preserved, and every detail of dress, etc., is true to nature; the sentiment is equal to the execution. They are charming bits, poetic, simple and natural, and no happier illustrations of Longfellow's most original poem were ever made than these by the Indian sculptor'.²⁹⁷

Albeit in a similarly patronising vein, an American correspondent from Rome quoted in Henry Tuckerman's *Book of the Artists* also recognised something distinct from the dominant sculptural vocabulary of the time in Lewis's work, saying that Lewis was 'unquestionably the most interesting

296 - Woodrow W. Morris, 1991 Introductory Note to *The Song of Hiawatha*, InterGO Free Library, www.teachersoft.com/library/poetry/Longfellow. The significance of Hawthorne's poem to Lewis is discussed at length in Chapter 9 'The Colour of Sculpture'.

297 - Bullard, quoted in Craven, *Sculpture in America*, p. 334.

representative of our country in Europe':

Interesting not alone because she belongs to a condemned and hitherto oppressed race, which labors under the imputation of artistic incapacity, but because she has already distinguished herself in sculpture – not perhaps in its highest grade, according to the accepted canons of the art, but in its naturalistic, not to say the most pleasing form. The undoubted criticism to be made on most American sculptors in Europe is that they gravitate too much toward what is called the "classical" in style, with a constantly increasing tendency. It may be reserved for the youthful Indian girl in the Via della Frezza, which, as I have intimated, is quite an aside and by no means aristocratic street in Rome, through a success that may be well founded, and which certainly will be well earned, to indicate to her countrymen, working in the same field, a distinctive, if not entirely original style in sculpture, which may ultimately take high rank as the 'American School.' Has sculpture no new domains to occupy, no new worlds to conquer? Have Greece and Rome exhausted every combination of form and lineament, so that nineteenth century life, and its loftier achievements and grander aspirations, can find no expression?²⁹⁸

Thus the advent of Lewis's representations of race on the American sculptural scene was timely not only in its political resonances for abolitionist Americans after the Civil War, but also insofar as her departures from the neoclassical ideal could be read as part of the late nineteenth century aesthetic shift towards greater naturalism. Unlike many of her contemporaries, Lewis could be read as being in the vanguard of the American style.

But to twentieth century critics, Lewis's works have posed considerable difficulty of interpretation because of the very inconsistency of her use of 'naturalistic' and 'neoclassical' facial features in her representations of ethnicity. Kirsten Buick has argued that Edmonia Lewis enacted a complex interweaving of identification with the white ideals of the 'cult of true womanhood' and mythologies drawn from notions of the 'Noble Savage' and the 'naturally Christian' African American to provide similar ideological support for her sculptural activities.²⁹⁹ Buick's compelling thesis is that on one

298 - Tuckerman, pp. 603-4.

299 - Kirsten P. Buick, 'The Ideal Works of Edmonia Lewis: Invoking and Inverting Autobiography', *American Art*, 9.2 (Summer 1995), pp. 5-19.

hand, Lewis 'invoked her autobiography', playing to her viewers' racial expectations of her in the racially-based narratives she chose to sculpt, the detailing of costumes and the scene, and the rendering of her male figures' emphatically ethnic physiognomy. But in the same works Lewis simultaneously distanced herself from autobiographical identification with her sculpted figures by representing her female figures with highly classicising features. Thus the female figures' incongruity with the male figures, the narrative and its details forestalls Lewis's female figures' being read as self-portraiture, identifying them instead with the ideals of white Victorian femininity. Works such as Lewis's *Forever Free* and *The Old Indian Arrowmaker and His Daughter*, usually considered highly problematic for their 'misegenation' of styles and ethnicities, can be understood instead as an ingenuous negotiation by Lewis of the double-edged 'Pygmalion effect' to which she was subject in nineteenth century American culture. This thesis is discussed further in Part III.5, 'The Colour of Sculpture'.

A further example of nineteenth century concern for the accuracy of ethnically specific features in sculptural works is demonstrated by the case of Anne Whitney's 1864 work, *Africa*, a reclining female figure shown 'waking from "a sleep of centuries"'.³⁰⁰ The work, now destroyed but surviving in a photograph, was a powerful re-writing of the *grand odalisque* form, with thick, highly textured locks of hair pulled to the back of the figure's head, and deeply-set eyes under a strong brow ridge that resist the idealising tendencies and Anglo-Saxon imperative of the neoclassical style. Nevertheless, after seeing the figure on exhibit at the National Academy of Design, Col. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, leader of the first black regiment during the Civil War, wrote to Whitney suggesting that the features of the figure were not African enough. Whitney did try to alter the features several times, with her critiques

300 - Elizabeth Rogers Payne, 'Anne Whitney: Art and Social Justice', *The Massachusetts Quarterly*, 25.3 (1971), 245-260 (p. 248).

wavering between 'too realistic' and 'not realistic enough'; finally entirely frustrated with the results of her attempts, Whitney destroyed the plaster original after her return from Europe.³⁰¹

The acceptance accorded by nineteenth century audiences to Edmonia Lewis and Anne Whitney's departures from strict neoclassical vocabularies in order to represent ethnic specificity reveals that romantic notions of the spiritual purity of the 'natural' (wo)man, the 'noble savage', could also be congruent with the mission of the neoclassical ideal. In this one important way, femininity and even racial otherness were not counter to nineteenth century American sculptural creativity, but actually suited for it. However, with the demise of the cult of true womanhood, the notional alliance of femininity with neoclassical sculpture's ennobling mission was at an end. In a tragic irony, the very conditions and conjunctions of ideologies earlier in the century which had permitted American women to enter the sculpture field in unprecedented numbers were also the preconditions for their near-complete erasure from twentieth century American art history.

301 - Rogers Payne, 'Anne Whitney: Art and Social Justice', p. 248.

PART II: *In/Between the Studio*

Chapter 7: *The Purloined Studio*

Functioning on the limits of phallic symbolisation, the troubling presence of sculptures such as the *Zenobia* in the annals of American art history has already been indicated by the absence from those annals to which they have largely been consigned by the twentieth century. Contemporary critics also, however, expressed their ambivalence about certain nineteenth century American sculpture. The candid criticism of Lorado Taft, a contemporary of Henry James, of a slightly younger generation than most of the American women sculptors who worked in Rome, articulates the problematic most clearly as one of identification: some artists seemed to get the distance of representation wrong, making works that were either too like their referent, or not like enough – and sometimes both in the same work! Taft suggests that though William Rimmer ‘never missed a muscle nor forgot an attachment’ in his nudes, his not working from models rendered his work ‘curious’ and ‘valueless as sculpture.’ Rimmer’s sculpture was thus both too life-like – he ‘never missed a muscle’ – and not faithful enough to nature – he ‘insisted on not working from models’.³⁰²

Similarly, Edmonia Lewis’s *Cleopatra* was ‘striking’ and ‘original’ for contemporary critic William Clark, but ‘reproduced by a sculptor of genuine endowments’ (emphasis mine). (figs. 91 & 92) It is easy to be distracted by the left-handed complement to America’s first renowned nineteenth century sculptor of colour. Clark’s choice of verbs here – *reproduced* rather than *produced* – makes Lewis’s work a snapshot of nature, rather than a synthesis

302 - Lorado Taft, quoted in Lynes, *The Art-Markers*, p. 153.

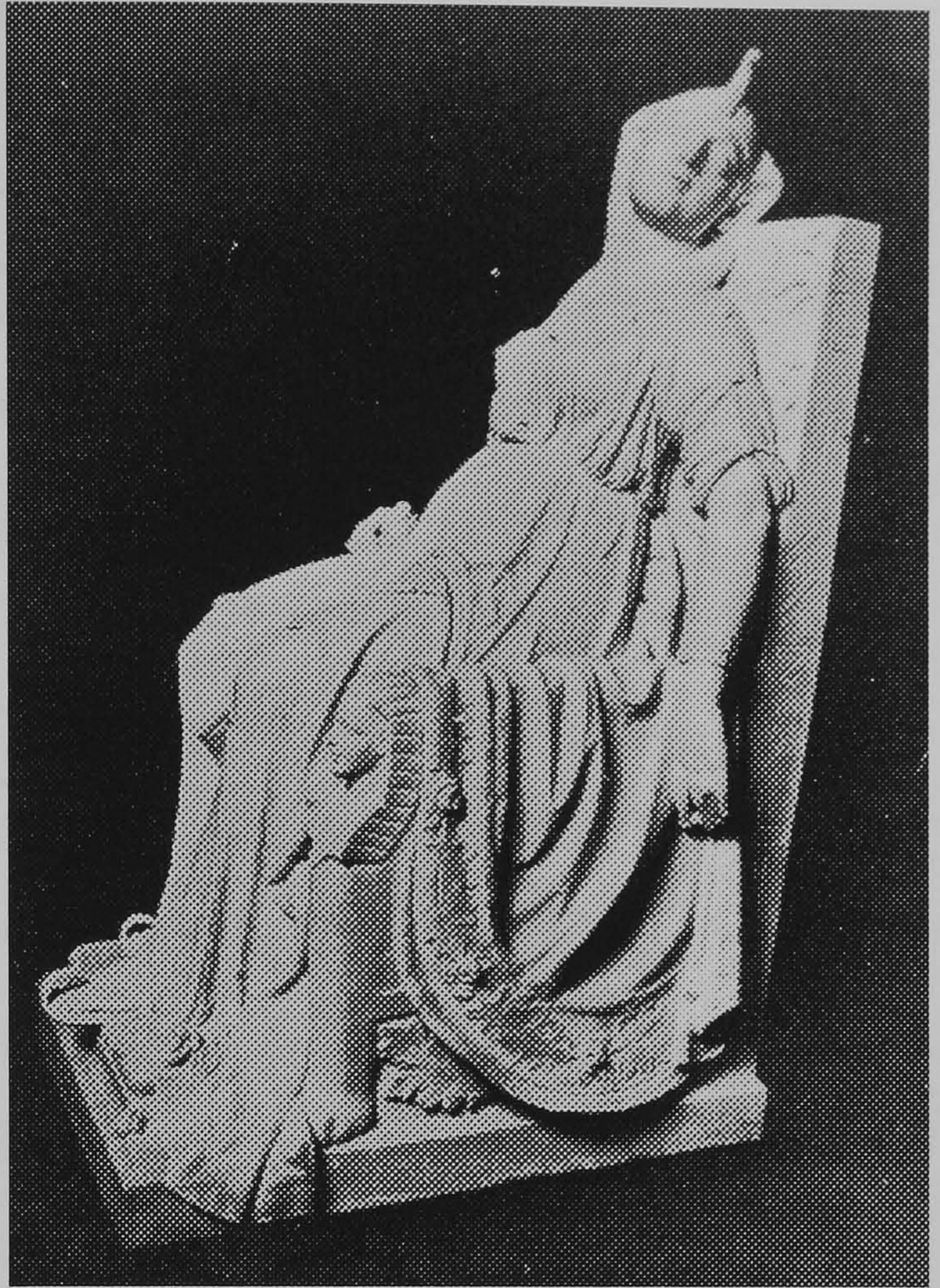


fig. 91 Edmonia Lewis, *The Death of Cleopatra*, 1876, marble, 150x107.5x82.5cm, National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC photograph taken at the turn of the century



fig. 92 Edmonia Lewis, *The Death of Cleopatra*, 1876, marble, 150x107.5x82.5cm, National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC photograph after restoration, 1996

of the ideal, and hence 'repellent' and tasteless in the naturalistic representation of the 'effects of death'. These nineteenth century criticisms do not, however, simply reflect the old debates about realism versus idealism – the collapse of distance between signifier and signified, but instead point to a problem of ideology, in which 'objects are defined as logical entities as opposed to things, which are empirical'.³⁰³ As a symbolic activity, ideology requires the 'abolition of the thing, the suppression of all its attributes, to give rise to a logical object – to something that can be substituted for another without loss of truth'.³⁰⁴ The metaphoric nature of ideological representation requires objects to be identical to concepts *as concepts* – as signifiers referring to other signifiers, rather than to the 'putative signified'. The problem with these works of Rimmer, Lewis, and Hosmer for American art critics might then be seen to lie in their failure to uphold the ideological mission prescribed for them by art historical discourses.

Taft objected not only to the 'realism' of Rimmer's work, but also to Hosmer's *Zenobia*, a quintessentially 'ideal' neoclassical sculpture. He did not expect Hosmer's *Zenobia* to be a portrait, but rather to represent the *ideal* of the captive queen. The sculpture failed for Taft, precisely because the marble figure hewn by the 'pitiless Italian carver' was not the same as the clay figure modelled by Hosmer and described by Nathaniel Hawthorne, and neither 'lay figure' was identical to the 'haughty captive' herself. As a result of this equivocal identification, Harriet Hosmer's *Zenobia* was not 'sculptural' at all in Taft's eyes. Either too much like the 'thing' that is expelled by ideology, or too little like the signifier of the ideological ideal, certain works by Rimmer, Lewis and Hosmer functioned at the wrong distance from – or on the wrong plane of, we might even say – Symbolic activity.

Thus it is not just Clark and Taft's stylistic liminality – straddling the

303 - Copjec, p. 171.

304 - Ibid., p. 172.

generational border between 'idealism' and 'realism' in American art – that allows them both to condemn Rimmer for being 'too naturalistic', express reservations about Lewis's realism, and blame Hosmer's *Zenobia* for being too abstracted from its referent. Indeed, a twentieth century observer might have great difficulty seeing the startlingly 'life-like' qualities Clark found in Lewis's *Cleopatra*, while Rimmer's muscular ideal is seen today as less real than classically 'ideal' in the mode of the Belvedere torso. Rather, what these criticisms reveal is 'one of the most fundamental questions of political modernism', as Copjec puts it. Insofar as American sculpture in the nineteenth century was a major tool in national identity formation, the pertinence of this question to the ideologies of the 'melting pot' nation is clear:

How, after destroying the body of the king, which had formerly defined the boundaries of nations and thus closed the set of subjects belonging to them, how does one then constitute a *modern* nation? What is it that allows the nation to collect a vast array of people, discount all their positive differences, and count them as citizens, as members of the same set, in logical terms as *identical*?³⁰⁵

All of the various manifestations of 'the neoclassical ideal', or even 'sculpture' and 'art' can be subsumed under the same categories because they are conceived of not as identical to empirical objects themselves, but as identical to the 'concept of identity-to-a-concept.' In Copjec's example, 'members of a modern nation do not fall under the concept "citizens of X"', but under the concept 'identical to the concept "citizens of X."' This 'redoubled concept gathers by reducing individuals to their identity to themselves', rather than by simply grouping individuals under categories based on the attributes they have in common.³⁰⁶ Thus the object of ideology is not defined by a set of pre-existing attributes, but rather is conferred a retroactive identity of belonging *in the very act of numeration* as part of a set.

Nineteenth century critics, however, did not have to be proficient in set

³⁰⁵ - Copjec, p. 172.

³⁰⁶ - Ibid.

logic in order to sense that something about these works by Rimmer, Lewis and Hosmer didn't quite fit. For what creates the possibility of tautological closure where objects 'perform' their identities received from an *après-coup* denomination as part of a category, is the category that allows a limit to be applied to the series of numeration in all other categories. This is the category of the 'not-identical-to-itself': a category inside the series of categories (i.e. not exterior to signification, as the 'empirical' object has already been banished in its reduction to the concept).³⁰⁷ The category of the 'not-identical-to-itself' creates the logical possibility of all other categories of 'identical-to-a-concept':

That which is unthinkable within the logical functioning of numbers has to be conceived as unthinkable for the set of numbers to be closed or, as Miller says, *sutured*. The fact that this suturing concept does not subsume any objects should clarify any ambiguity that may persist. *What is thought is not the unthinkable but the impossibility of thinking it*. The suturing concept is empty of content.³⁰⁸

During the preparation of his novel, Nathaniel Hawthorne spent substantial amounts of time in the studios of Harriet Hosmer and Louisa Lander, and recorded these visits in his diaries as research material. While the Hawthornes mixed socially with Harriet Hosmer as well, Nathaniel had ample occasion to observe a woman sculptor at work as he sat for his portrait bust to be modelled by Louisa Lander. In addition, his wife, Sophia Peabody Hawthorne, was both a painter and a sculptor. She had supported the Hawthornes by her painting – primarily working as a copyist of old masterpieces for American clients – at times when Nathaniel's work as an author was unable to pay the family bills. Of the two, Sophia was far more interested in the artistic sights of Rome, and was Nathaniel's primary goad and guide to experiencing the museums and artworks of the city.

Thus *The Marble Faun* is deeply informed by actual experience of women artists' creativity, interest in art, and the spaces of their work and

307 - Copjec, p. 173.

308 - Ibid., emphasis mine.

works. As semi-fictional, 'mythological travellers' tales', the journeys to the artists' studios in *The Marble Faun* are able to evoke 'real' 'psychological experiences, identity transformation, artistic processes and works, aesthetic experiences and patterns of cognition'.³⁰⁹ Hawthorne's narratives of the studio are sites of intersection between feminine creativity and nineteenth century cultural discourses on gender and race, where these discourses both encounter ~~the~~ Woman artist as limit in phallic discourse, and point beyond that limit along the trajectory of feminine desire. Re-reading these texts today with our 'erotic antennae' tuned for the grains of matrixial symbolic activity, we can glean traces of nineteenth century feminine creativity from Hawthorne's story of race and gender, exile and expatriation in the in-between spaces of femininity and creativity of the artist's studio.

In the novel there are three visits to artists' studios, but only two belong to women artists, and both of these are painters, while the third is to the studio of the male sculptor, Kenyon – or so it seems from the evidence in the text. But when we read Hawthorne's novel as a detective might, taking its desire literally, it becomes increasingly clear that this is a text shadowed by the all-too present absence of ~~the~~ Woman sculptor. Like Hamlet's father, ~~the~~ Woman sculptor assumes the figure of a phallic ghost who haunts Hawthorne's narrative speaking only of desire, and whose absence returns with the insistence of the inadequately repressed.³¹⁰

To arrive at the studios visited in Hawthorne's novel, his narratives take us on the long journey through the dark and dirty lanes of the foreigners' and artists' quarter of mid-nineteenth century Rome which we now expect of the nineteenth century visit to the artist's studio. The neighbourhood is described, the door to the palazzo in which the artist resides is pictured down to its frayed rope door latch, the courtyard, stairwell, antechambers and their contents are

³⁰⁹ - Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'The becoming thresholds of matrixial borderlines', p. 38.

³¹⁰ - Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, p. 88.

enumerated. Following the guidebook formula, Hawthorne's narratives describe every topographical feature passed on the way to the studio in careful detail, savouring the anticipation and postponing our arrival.

But finally, in the visit to Kenyon's studio, we come face to face with the sculptor. There are no more thresholds to cross, no more limits to overcome; we have come – to the end. When Kenyon casts off the veil that covers his work of sculpture, we will have reached the goal: the sculptural object. Or rather, we will merely have arrived at another sort of limit, one which cannot be overcome, even by all the skilful writing and rhetorical power at the author's command.

Hawthorne speaks of just such an unthinkable, untraversable limit in the Preface to the novel, where he confesses that the fictional sculptor's works have been pilfered from the studios of Rome. He names the artists and artworks he has borrowed for his narrative, concluding by confessing that:

Having imagined a sculptor, in this Romance, it was necessary to provide him with such works in marble as should be in keeping with the artistic ability which he was supposed to possess. With this view, the Author laid felonious hands upon a certain bust of Milton and a statue of a Pearl-Diver, which he found in the studio of Mr. Paul Akers, and secretly conveyed them to the premises of his imaginary friend, in the Via Frezza. Not content even with these spoils, he committed a further robbery upon a magnificent statue of Cleopatra, the production of Mr. William W. Story, an artist whom his country will not long fail to appreciate. He had thoughts of appropriating, likewise, a certain door of bronze, by Mr. Randolph Rogers, representing the history of Columbus in a series of admirable bas-reliefs, but was deterred by an unwillingness to meddle with public property. Were he capable of stealing from a lady, he would certainly have made free with Miss Hosmer's noble statue of Zenobia.³¹¹

Thus Hawthorne's preface evokes a crime scene, a scene where crimes have both been committed, and from which they have been abstained because they would require the breach of unthinkable limits: meddling with public property, stealing from a lady.

311 - Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, p. 4.

In the work of art, all sorts of limits are posited, defended, played with, transgressed: limits between the art object and other sorts of objects, between artist and audience, between signifier and signified, for example. Similarly, every crime is made possible only by the precondition of a limit. How, without a law, a limit, asks Joan Copjec, 'is crime possible? How is it possible to transgress territories that have no private boundaries, to steal something that belongs to no one?'³¹²

The Marble Faun is in fact a novel constructed around a crime; we can read it as a sort of detective novel or game of Cluedo, in which the mystery is not just around who committed the crime, but also who the victim was, and even what the weapon and crime were. In fact, I shall argue that the reason why the ostensible murder in *The Marble Faun* remains largely arcane, even after Hawthorne's allegedly explanatory postscript, is that the murder committed by Miriam and Donatello on the Tarpeian Rock masks the novel's other, far more central crime, a crime whose identity is even more obscure, whose presence is even more ghostlike, than that of the ambivalent artist's model/monk who is both persecutor and victim in *The Marble Faun*.

This hidden crime, *The Marble Faun's* purloined letter, is equally a crime of passion, a crime of desire. The reason why this crime has so far not been discovered by the literary police is that they 'busy themselves with the senseless task of ignoring desire and taking the *evidence* literally, conflating signifiers and signifieds.'³¹³ We are all familiar with the standard detective narrative: the evidence is all there, the police have all the evidence, and yet they still fail to see the clues that point to the criminal. When the detective intervenes and reveals all in the final analysis of the crime, we think, 'oh, yes, it was there all the time, obvious and yet I didn't see it.' It took the intervention of the detective's interpretation to find the purloined letter, to solve the mystery:

312 - Copjec, p. 169.

313 - Ibid.

'interpretation that, Lacan says, *is* desire.'³¹⁴

Desire, explains Joan Copjec, 'is not an impurity that threatens the "objectivity" of the detective, but the quasi-transcendental principle that guarantees it.'³¹⁵ Because the detective knows how to take her/his own desire literally, s/he is able to 'read between the lines', to recognise 'a gap, a distance, between the evidence and that which the evidence establishes ... the principle by which the trail [of clues] attaches itself to the criminal.'³¹⁶ As 'desiring detectives', in order to discover the crime, we must 'take the culprit's desire literally,' learn to read the space between the evidence and the criminal's desire, 'seeing the way it manifests itself in the clues', rather than becoming blinded by the textual evidence.

The difference between the police and the detective therefore lies in how they read space. The police see the locked room in which the corpse has impossibly appeared as a finite and bounded space. The crime becomes impossible for the police without the supposition of a hidden depth to the space, a trap door, a sliding panel, something outside the limit. But in his 'Seminar on "The Purloined Letter"', Lacan 'argues that those who consider concealment simply a matter of depth, those who think that that which lies hidden must lie *underneath* something else, subscribe to "too immutable a notion of the real," since what is concealed may just as easily lie on the surface.'³¹⁷ As Joan Copjec explains, 'Lacan, then, like Foucault, believes there is nothing but surface, but he maintains, nevertheless, that the corpse, the private "self," the purloined letter are not simply fictions; they are real.'³¹⁸

A successful analysis of the crime scene, then, requires us to read the limits of the space as internal to it: not below, behind, beyond, or in any way

314 - Copjec, p. 169.

315 - Ibid.

316 - Ibid., p. 177.

317 - Jacques Lacan, 'Seminar on "The Purloined Letter"', *Yale French Studies*, 48 (1972), p. 54. Quoted in Copjec, p. 170.

318 - Ibid.

external to the space; again the line-drawing offers a useful visual metaphor: the limits of this figure are not external to the space they define, but are continuous with that space, and on the surface, part of the same structure, as the line is part of the drawing.

The boundaries of the locked room are precisely the space in which the movement of the criminal's desire occurs, and by which the trail of clues attaches itself to the criminal.³¹⁹ The positing of a limit, then, a limit that is neither beyond nor below the space of signification but rather is continuous with that structure and *on its surface*, is as necessary to desire as to the crime and the work of art.

The Marble Faun, both crime scene and work of art, is a story highly structured by limits and boundaries of all sorts. Not only are there the moral and aesthetic limits posited and transgressed by the plot, but also rhetorical boundaries such as those that mark trajectories to the artist's studio with frequent delays and mounting anticipation. All of these, however, are ultimately overcome as we discover the artist and work of art at the journey's end. Hawthorne also draws a boundary around the tale itself, flanking it with both a preface and, in his revised edition of 1860, a postscript. Yet these external textual limits are blurred too as the author 'interviews' his characters in his afterward, and in the preface addresses a 'public' readership whose apocryphal presence he analyses. Beginning by referring to himself in the third person as 'the Author of this Romance', Hawthorne proceeds in his preface to the first edition of 1859 to create himself as a dual character: the 'prim, old author' who naively 'had always a sturdy faith' in the 'actual existence' of the 'Kind Reader', the 'Gentle Reader,' the 'Beloved,' the 'Indulgent,' or, at coldest, the 'Honoured Reader', and the new, more humble and disabused 'I' who no longer has the 'heart or confidence (especially,

319 - Inge Boer proposes the concept of the movement being in the boundary in her essay, 'The World beyond our Window: Nomads, Travelling Theories and the Function of Boundaries', discussed in Part I, Chapter 2.i 'The Nomadic Ego Ideal'.

writing, as I do, in a foreign land, and after a long, long absence from my own) to presume upon the existence of that friend of friends, that unseen brother of the soul...'³²⁰

But by the postscript, the capitalised 'Author' returns in full force, to respond to 'many readers of the foregoing pages' in their 'demand for further elucidations respecting the mysteries of the story.' Taking his characters to the top of the Saint Peter's, 'the Author' proceeds to address Hilda and Kenyon individually, quoting their cryptic answers to Donatello and Miriam's fates and identities and other 'unresolved mysteries' of the tale as dialogue. Thus fiction and 'reality' intermingle as freely on the borders of Hawthorne's text as they do at the heart of the novel. Through the preface and postscript in *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne demonstrates that what happens beyond the strict limits of the fictional narrative is neither unrelated to, nor entirely separate from, the tale itself. Rather, the limits of the novel, as demarcated by the preface and the postscript, should be read as continuous with the surface structure of the novel itself – not separate from, not beyond, before or below a central narrative we might wish to privilege as the 'true' novel.

So when, in the preface to *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne evokes the potentiality of a crime – draws a limit and then claims not to have crossed it – we can be justifiably suspicious. After all, there is not a single other boundary posited, either in the central body or its textual 'frame', which is not subsequently transgressed.³²¹

We might begin by asking, what relation do these limits have to desire? How can we verify Hawthorne's claim not to have crossed the limit of 'stealing from a lady'? The direction of such an investigation must lie by way of the work

320 - Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, p. 2.

321 - There are actually two such unbreechable limits posited in Hawthorne's preface: in addition to that of 'stealing from a lady' there is the 'meddling in public property'. It is beyond the scope of this argument to discuss the latter here, but the direction of such an analysis would also lie in the direction of Joan Copjec's question: 'How is it possible to transgress territories that have no private boundaries...?' This impossible crime against public property takes as its precondition the limits of private property. Copjec, p. 169.

of art which Hawthorne admits to have stolen, which we might say is both a limit and a crime. In Kenyon's studio, under the veil, lies one of the works that Hawthorne 'stole' from a studio in Rome to use as his character's masterpiece. So 'Kenyon's' sculpture is framed in Hawthorne's preface as a purloined sculpture. But this is a red herring which distracts us from the fact that the purloined sculpture is also a criminal in its own turn, an impostor standing in the place of the thing Hawthorne would have used if it weren't impossible, that is, if he were 'capable of stealing from a lady'. To be more accurate, the *Cleopatra* stands in the place of ~~the~~ Woman artist herself, conflated in phallic discourse by means of the 'Pygmalion effect' to become coincident with the object of her sculptural practice. In the phallic Symbolic order as described by Lacan, in which ~~the~~ Woman is positioned as 'being' rather than as 'having' the phallus, the terms of femininity are antithetical to those of artistic creativity. Confronted with the impossible figure of ~~the~~ Woman sculptor, phallic discourse renders the woman sculptor a woman sculpture. The discovery of the woman sculptor as a sculpture at the end of the journey to her studio is a symptom of a failure of the narrative to approach a certain limit. It is a turning away from femininity which takes refuge in the imaginary formation of woman being the phallus rather than having it. The woman artist rather than the clay model is the object beneath the veil, petrified in the medium of her work.

To understand better the nature of this crime, we must look for it at the limit within the crime scene, the limit within the studio that is in the same structure as the studio. By 'limit' I do not mean the many thresholds and limits crossed on the way to the studio, but rather the point at which movement stops in the narrative and we come up against something hard and immovable: the thing that Kenyon hides under a veil when he goes to admit his lady visitor to the studio; the thing, in fact, that is the object of her journey to

the studio: the statue of *Cleopatra*, by the real-life sculptor, William Wetmore Story. (fig. 93)

In the moment in which the *Cleopatra* is revealed to us, Kenyon has nearly forgotten it, so absorbed was he in thinking of the distant, unattainable woman he loves, whose hand he has managed to sculpt – has ‘stolen’ into stone. Presuming that the marble hand was made from a cast of its living model, Miriam, the visitor to the studio, asks Kenyon, ‘How have you persuaded that shy maiden to let you take her hand in marble?’³²²

“Never! She never knew it!” hastily replied Kenyon, anxious to vindicate his mistress’s maidenly reserve. – “I stole it from her. The hand is a reminiscence. After gazing at it so often – and even holding it once, for an instant, when Hilda was not thinking of me – I should be a bungler indeed, if I could not now reproduce it to something like the life.”³²³ (see figs 115 & 116)

Where the author had drawn the line, his character didn’t hesitate to ‘steal from a lady’. The two artists then discuss the likelihood that Hilda, also a painter – a copyist of Old Masterpieces – might marry. Kenyon agrees with Miriam that it is as slim as the painter’s hand: ‘When women have other objects in life, they are not apt to fall in love. I can think of many women, distinguished in art, literature, and science – and multitudes whose hearts and minds find good employment, in less ostentatious ways – who lead high, lonely lives, and are conscious of no sacrifice, so far as your sex is concerned,’ Miriam reasons. To comfort the despondent Kenyon, Miriam then evokes the possibility that Hilda’s creative abilities will someday be – shall we say, castrated:

“Well,” said Miriam smiling; “perhaps she may sprain the delicate wrist which you have sculptured to such perfection. In that case, you may hope! These Old Masters to whom she has vowed herself, and whom her slender hand and woman’s heart serve so faithfully, are your only rivals.”³²⁴

322 - This passage is also discussed in Part I, Chapter 1.ii ‘Reframing the Name: The ‘White, Marmorean Flock’.

323 - Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, p. 121.

324 - *Ibid.*, pp. 121-122.

The trajectories of phallic desire thus mapped into the narrative, Miriam bids Kenyon, ‘And, now, ... show me the new statue, which you asked me hither to see.’³²⁵

‘My new statue!’ exclaims Kenyon.... ‘Here it is, under this veil.’

Rightfully suspicious of veiled objects, Miriam warns, ‘Not a nude figure, I hope!’³²⁶

After some discussion of nudity in sculpture, Kenyon replies, ‘No; my statue is intended for Cleopatra’.³²⁷

He drew away the cloth, that had served to keep the moisture of the clay-model from being exhaled. The sitting figure of a woman was seen....

A marvellous repose – that rare merit in statuary, except it be the lumpish repose native to the block of stone – was diffused throughout the figure. The spectator felt that Cleopatra had sunk down out of the fever and turmoil of her life, and, for one instant – as it were, between two pulse-throbs – had relinquished all activity, and was resting through-out every vein and muscle.... The repose, no doubt, was as complete as if she were never to stir hand or foot again; and yet, such was the creature’s latent energy and fierceness, she might spring upon you like a tigress, and stop the very breath that you were now drawing, midway in your throat.

... In one view, there was a certain softness and tenderness, how breathed into the statue, among so many strong and passionate elements, it is impossible to say. Catching another glimpse, you beheld her as implacable as a stone, and cruel as fire.

In a word, all Cleopatra – fierce, voluptuous, passionate, tender, wicked, terrible, and full of poisonous and rapturous enchantment – was kneaded into what, only a week or two before, had been a lump of wet clay from the Tiber. Soon, apotheosized in an indestructible material, she would be one of the images that men keep forever, finding a heat in them which does not cool down, throughout the centuries.

“What a woman is this!” exclaimed Miriam, after a long pause. – “Tell me... Were you not afraid to touch her, as she grew more and more towards hot life, beneath your hand?” (*fig. 94*)

If this tumescent clay sculpture, ‘sunk down... between two pulse-throbs... and... resting throughout every vein and muscle’ and yet ‘smouldering’ with ‘latent energy’, ‘in one view’ impossibly soft and tender,

325 - Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, p. 123.

326 - Ibid.

327 - Ibid., p. 125.

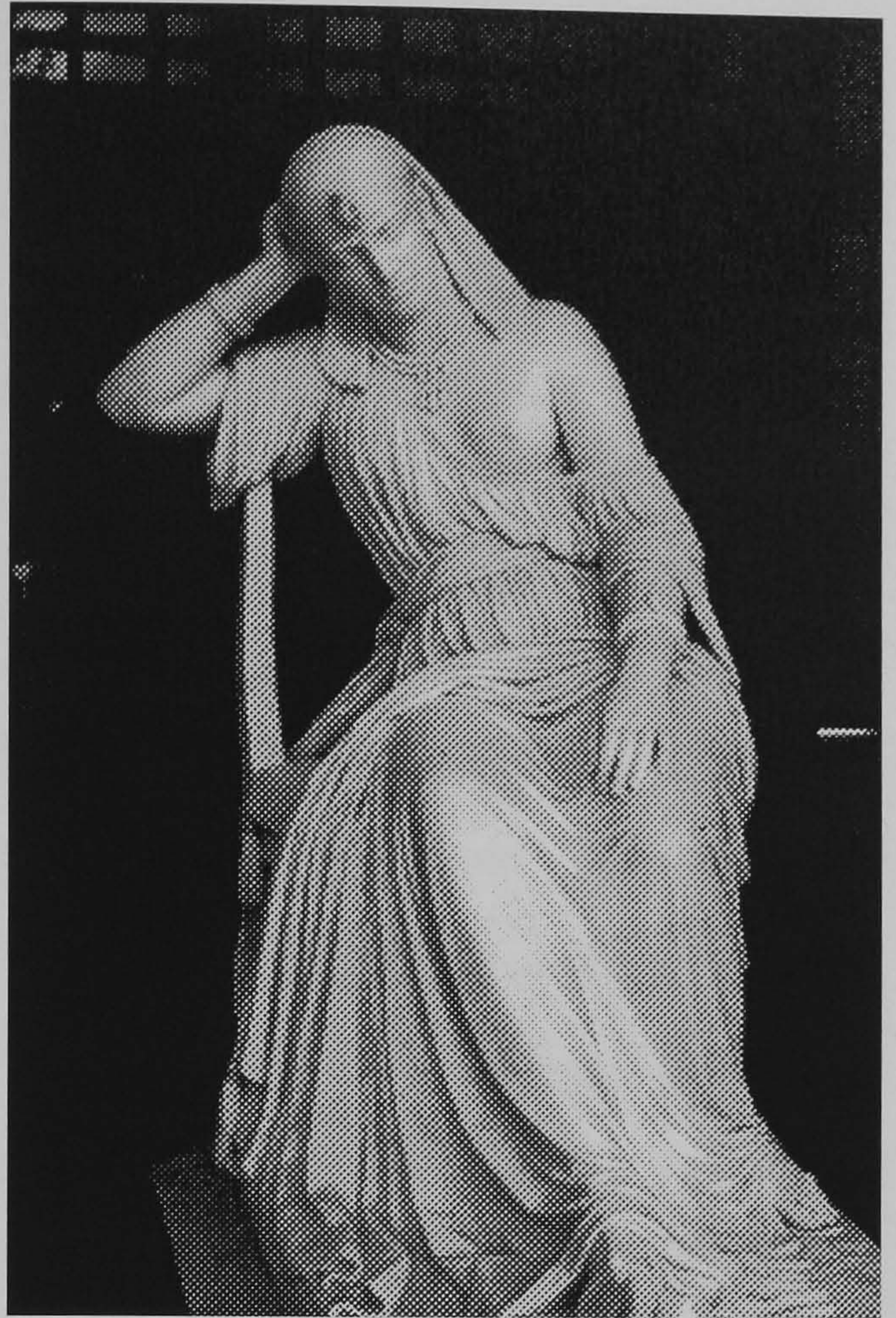


fig. 93 William Wetmore Story, *Cleopatra*, 1860, marble, larger than life-size, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC

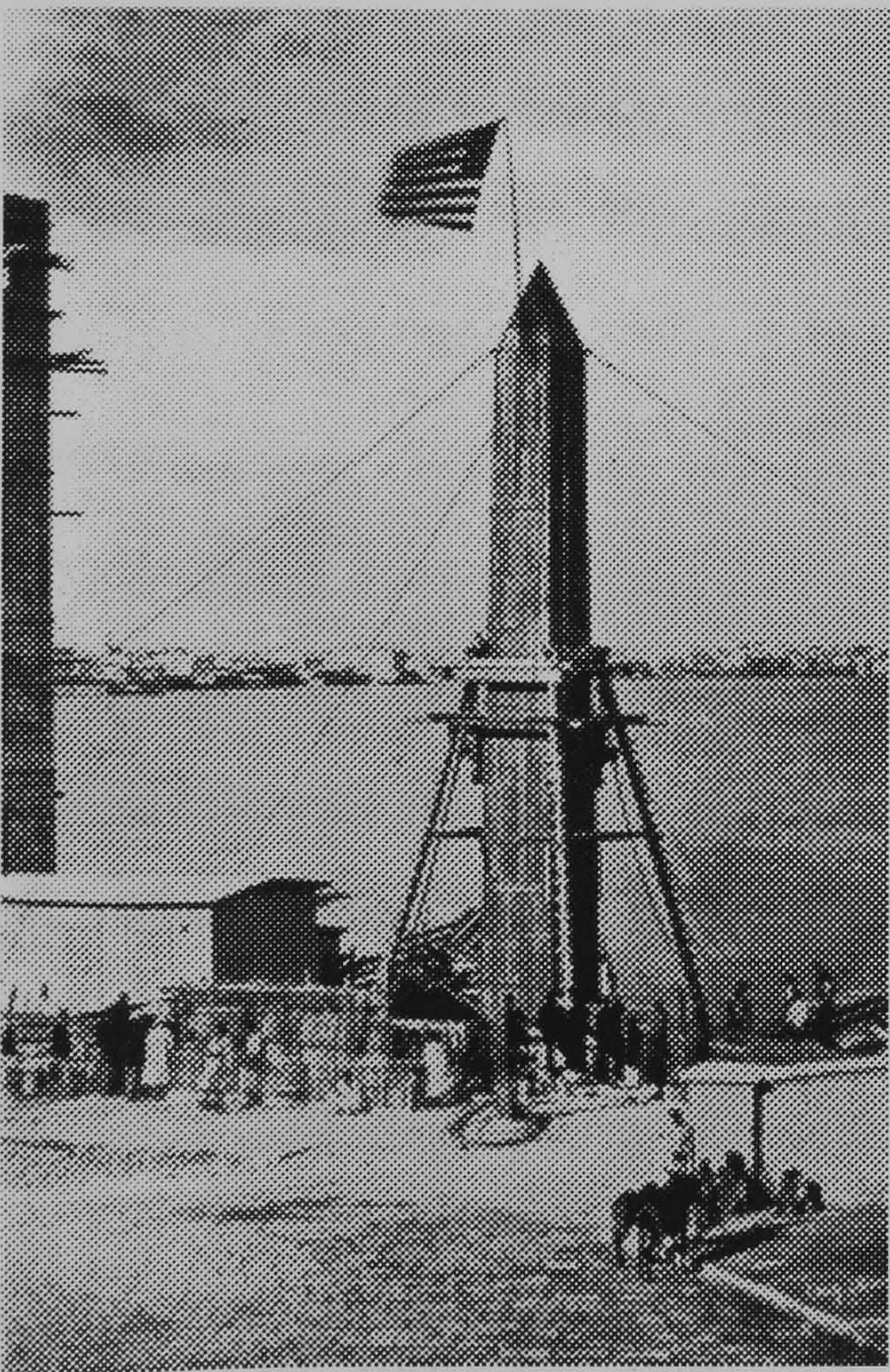


fig. 94 *Cleopatra's Needle* being erected in front of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC, November, 1879
Martina D'Alton reports that the New York Herald commented on November 1, 1879: 'the gallant Commander Gorringer shows himself alive to his duties as an American naval officer. He has hoisted the American flag over the granite column... and threatens to shoot on the spot any sacrilegious creditor who proposes to haul [it] down. In other words, the obelisk is now surrounded with a blaze of glory, and Commander Gorringer the central figure in defending the flag. This is an inspiring spectacle.' [*The New York Obelisk or How Cleopatra's Needle Came to New York and What Happened When It Got Here*, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* (Spring, 1993), 1-73 (23).]

and yet in another glimpse ‘as implacable as a stone’ strikes you as rather phallic, ‘one of the images that men keep forever’, it is nothing more than what one should expect of an artwork. For no matter how disingenuous his confession might have been, Hawthorne’s preface to *The Marble Faun* posits the works used in his novel, such as Story’s *Cleopatra*, as substitutes, proxies, for what he could not ‘steal from a lady’. In this respect the *Cleopatra* fulfils the function of the art object recognised within Lacanian theorisation of the processes of art as that of a proxy – the *suppliance* or supplementary object which stands in the place of the phallus, and is also its excess. Story’s soft but stony, reposeful yet throbbing *Cleopatra* points beyond itself to a supplementary jouissance prohibited by the limit articulated in the text: stealing from a lady. How can he steal something she doesn’t have? ‘How can any One steal something that belongs to No One?’³²⁸ The visual image that marks this impossible limit is Harriet Hosmer’s statue of *Zenobia*.

We might think that the *Zenobia*, signifier of ~~the~~ Woman sculptor in Hawthorne’s text, is beyond the limits of the novel’s narrative, not to mention outside the limits of the fictional sculptor’s studio. But as Lacan demonstrated in his seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’, this is to subscribe to too immutable a notion of the real, to look at Hawthorne’s text in terms of surface/depth, inside/outside, rather than admitting that there is no outside to the text, that its empty limit is always by definition internal to the text, and is that in fact which guarantees the text’s closure, which renders the artist’s studio a detective fiction’s ‘locked room’.

The position of the *Zenobia* with respect to the *Cleopatra* in Hawthorne’s narrative is not unlike that accorded to it at the 1862 Great Exhibition. The *Zenobia* was displayed in a four-sided ‘temple’ structure, designed by Owen Jones to house three of John Gibson’s coloured statues: *Pandora*, *Venus* and *Cupid*. (fig. 95) Gibson’s biographer and Hosmer’s friend, the

328 - Copjec, p. 169.



fig. 95 Owen Jones's 'Temple' at the 1862 Great Exhibition, housing John Gibson's *Tinted Venus, Cupid, and Pandora*, and Harriet Hosmer's *Queen Zenobia in Chains* on the back side of the Temple. Photographed at the left of the Temple are Gibson and the owners of the *Tinted Venus*, Mr and Mrs Prescott of Liverpool.



fig. 96 Harriet Hosmer, *Judith Falconnet Memorial*, 1857-58, marble, life-size, Sant'Andrea delle Fratte, Rome

photographer Lady Elizabeth Eastlake, reported:

It was in the Great Exhibition of 1862 that the world had an opportunity of inspecting Gibson's new heresy. In a light, quadrangular temple, constructed with the utmost judgment and taste by Mr. Owen Jones, three of his tinted statues – the Venus belonging to Mrs. Preston, the Pandora to Lady Marian Alford, and the Cupid to Mr. Holford – were seen to the utmost advantage; the fourth place being occupied by Miss Hosmer's Zenobia, a finely draped figure guiltless of any stain. This was truly, as Gibson expressed himself, 'A bone for the scribblers to pick.' And not for the scribblers only, but for the talkers too. And those perhaps talked most who knew least. For every young lady at dinner-table or in ballroom in that London season of 1862 felt herself called upon to tell her partner what she thought of 'Gibson's coloured Venus,' ...³²⁹

As in Jones's sculpture 'temple', the position of Hosmer's *Zenobia* in the field of neoclassical sculpture is 'just around the corner' from the 'masterpiece', the *Cleopatra*. Although both of these co-exist under the same roof, as it were, seeing the *Zenobia* might require a slight shift in perspective, turning a corner in our mode of reading the text.³³⁰ (see fig. 96) The *Zenobia* thus occupies an anamorphic position in Hawthorne's *Marble Faun*. As Lacan famously observes in Holbein's *The Ambassadors*, we might ask of the *Zenobia* what this strange object is, as we stand before 'this display of the domain of appearance in all its most fascinating forms,'³³¹ that is, as our gaze is focused on the central romance of the text, bedazzled and mortified as was Miriam by the hardened, shining example of the sculptor's mastery, that is represented by the *Cleopatra*. 'You cannot know – for you turn away, thus escaping the fascination of the picture,'³³² for the *Cleopatra* is 'a trap for the gaze'³³³ in which Miriam recognises her self, and with which she identifies as with the specular image of the Gorgon in Perseus's shield.

But turning back as we leave the presence of the *Cleopatra* – perhaps

329 - Lady Eastlake, p. 221.

330 - This anamorphic effect is also discernible in the placement of Hosmer's monument to Juliette Falconnet in the church of Sant'Andrea delle Fratte in Rome, in whose Baroque interior Hosmer's statue is both 'a little out of place in the picture' and obliquely positioned 'just around the corner' from the main visual axis of the church. (fig. 96)

331 - Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 88.

332 - Ibid.

333 - Ibid., p. 89.

flicking back through the pages after we've read the last page – we can apprehend this strange form. Hawthorne, like Holbein, 'makes visible for us here something that is simply the subject as annihilated – annihilated in the form, that is, strictly speaking, the imaged embodiment of the *minus-phi* of castration.'³³⁴

'But it is further still that we must seek the function of vision.' Lacan warns. 'We shall see then emerging on the basis of vision, not the phallic symbol, the anamorphic ghost, but the gaze as such, in its pulsatile, dazzling and spread out function, as it is in this picture.'³³⁵ Hosmer's anamorphic *Zenobia* in *The Marble Faun* is a phallic ghost who has nothing to do with vision; rather, it is apprehended in a side-long glance, in the moment of an almost-missed encounter, as 'something symbolic of the function of the lack, of the appearance of the phallic ghost.'³³⁶

To restate the analogy with Holbein's painting, then, the *Cleopatra* functions as the visual lure of the Ambassadors themselves, in all their finery and detailed interior. The anamorphic skull is representationally continuous with the same painted surface as the Ambassadors, but also participates in an oblique perspectival system which can only be apprehended if we lose sight, momentarily, of the 'lure'. In the same way, the representation of Hosmer's *Zenobia* is materially continuous with the text in which the *Cleopatra* is portrayed, and yet 'just around the corner' from the central image of the novel. The *Zenobia* makes visible the gaze of 'a quite different eye', one which is no longer 'a question of the geometral eye-point' but rather 'flies in the foreground'³³⁷ of *The Marble Faun*, as easily overlooked as the Purloined Letter in the novel's preface.

The reason why the anamorphic image can disorganise the novel's

334 - Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 89.

335 - Ibid.

336 - Ibid., p. 88.

337 - Ibid., p. 89.

perspectival system, its 'field of perception', is because the eye/I in question is that of the subject of desire.³³⁸ The subject of desire is the barred subject and it is in fact this barring, this unique subjective cut, that instigates desire at the point of this limit. By reading Hawthorne's novel literally, we can see in the limits of the text, the space of the author's desire, that Harriet Hosmer is the impossible Woman in the text, and the thing that Hawthorne cannot steal from her, marked by her sculpture of *Zenobia*, is the internal limit and guarantee of the text's closure, which renders the artist's studio a detective fiction's 'locked room'. To put it another way, the *Cleopatra* is the proxy for the work of this woman sculptor, and Kenyon the phallic substitute for ~~the~~ Woman sculptor herself.

But this is not to say that ~~the~~ Woman sculptor is hidden beneath or beyond the studio and the figure of the male sculptor, for the feminist art historian to uncover like Kenyon lifting the veil from his *Cleopatra*. I am not saying that Harriet Hosmer, her studio and her *Zenobia* are the 'truth' that lies behind the deceitful facade of Hawthorne's fiction. Rather, I am talking about that impossible figure, ~~the~~ Woman sculptor, who does not exist and does not signify anything. The woman sculptor, Harriet Hosmer, and her sculpture, *Zenobia*, stand in for and point to this impossible signifier at the limits of the text, as Kenyon and the *Cleopatra* point to them in turn. ~~The~~ Woman sculptor is the internal limit of Hawthorne's fictional studio, the Thing that allows us to open the door and cross its threshold. She is the studio's purloined letter, its central absence, the corpse around which the characters' identities in the detective novel are constituted. ~~The~~ Woman sculptor is the 'gap that necessitates interpretation, that prevents the signifier from signifying itself',³³⁹ and the space around which the work of art turns in Hawthorne's novel. She is 'the trace of the unnarrated', the unspoken yet present absence without which

338 - Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 89.

339 - Copjec, p. 178.

everything else would cease to exist, without which Hawthorne would not have been able to write, 'in a word, Cleopatra'.³⁴⁰ She is the absent signifier that would, if it existed, make the sexual relation possible. But a sexual relation with ~~the~~ Woman sculptor is as impossible for Hawthorne as it is for the detective: thus, although Hawthorne loved Hosmer's *Zenobia*, she could not be the response to the quest and journey to the artist's studio, as William Wetmore Story's fetishistic *Cleopatra* pretends to be the answer to the riddle of femininity. Rather, Harriet Hosmer's *Queen Zenobia in Chains* is precisely the question of femininity posed by Hawthorne in *The Marble Faun*.

At the limit of the journey to the sculptor's studio in Hawthorne's novel, we discover that ~~the~~ Woman sculptor rather than the clay sculpture is the object beneath Kenyon's veil; petrified like the material of her work in the 'Pygmalion effect', she is rendered as dead as a signifier, a marker for the hard kernel of the real where 'the symbolic visibly *fails* to disambiguate itself'.³⁴¹ But like the phallus, ~~the~~ Woman sculptor/sculpture is also nothing, no more than an empty signifier: 'In a word, all Cleopatra.' In the final analysis, the *Cleopatra* both stands in the place of ~~the~~ Woman sculptor, and indexes the impossible point, at the limit of the text, where the real thing makes itself felt in the symbolic space of the narrative. No wonder Kenyon throws a veil over It, before coming to the door of the studio to receive his lady visitor.

Hawthorne's attempt, however, to cover up ~~the~~ Woman in his text, to seal up this narrative and give it closure, inevitably fails. The gap that he tries to fill by substituting Story's *Cleopatra* for Hosmer's *Zenobia* reappears elsewhere in the narrative: in the confrontation between Miriam and Hilda over Hilda's painting of *Beatrice Cenci* the lack of ~~the~~ Woman artist reappears like a ghost from the Real. The trail of clues remains stubbornly attached to the purloined studio by means of the author's desire.

340 - Copjec, p. 174.

341 - Ibid.

PART II: *In/Between the Studio*

Chapter 8: *Beatrice Cenci, 'Between Two Deaths'*³⁴²

The *Zenobias* and the *Nydias* deserve no extended comment in our time. Nearly devoid of personal style, alike in size, shape, and proportion, plagiarisms from inferior ancient models, they represent an empty victory of “mind” over matter. In their capacity to see what was not there, and to ignore what was, the people who called them masterpieces were like those who admired the emperor’s new clothes. The men who made them were caught in an aesthetic dilemma which they were powerless to resolve.³⁴³

Oliver Larkin’s *Art and Life in America*, published in 1960, signals the position of the Cartesian subject of American Art History. The chapter from which this quotation is taken uses James’s phrase, ‘The White Marmorean Flock’, as its title.³⁴⁴ But in Larkin’s text, this phrase denotes the entirety of the American neoclassical period, thereby feminising the male masters of its style as well as dismissing their work.

Ironically, there were not *Zenobias*, but a single *Zenobia* figure sculpted by an American in this period – Hosmer’s *Zenobia in Chains*. As an honorary man in Larkin’s passage, she too is seen to have had the ‘capacity to see what was not there, and to ignore what was.’ I couldn’t agree more, but am perhaps more interested in the possibilities of seeing what is not there than Larkin is. To explain what I mean, I shall return to the question of the story of art, via the story of another sculpture by Hosmer, her *Beatrice Cenci*.

Henry James, in the same biography in which he coined the phrase, ‘the white, Marmorean flock’, wrote of the neoclassical period that ‘[i]t was still an

342 - I am grateful to Pete Ridley for our many helpful discussions of de Sade during the writing of this section.

343 - Larkin, p. 180.

344 - This phrase is discussed at length in Part I, Chapter 1.ii ‘Reframing the Name: The ‘White, Marmorean Flock’.

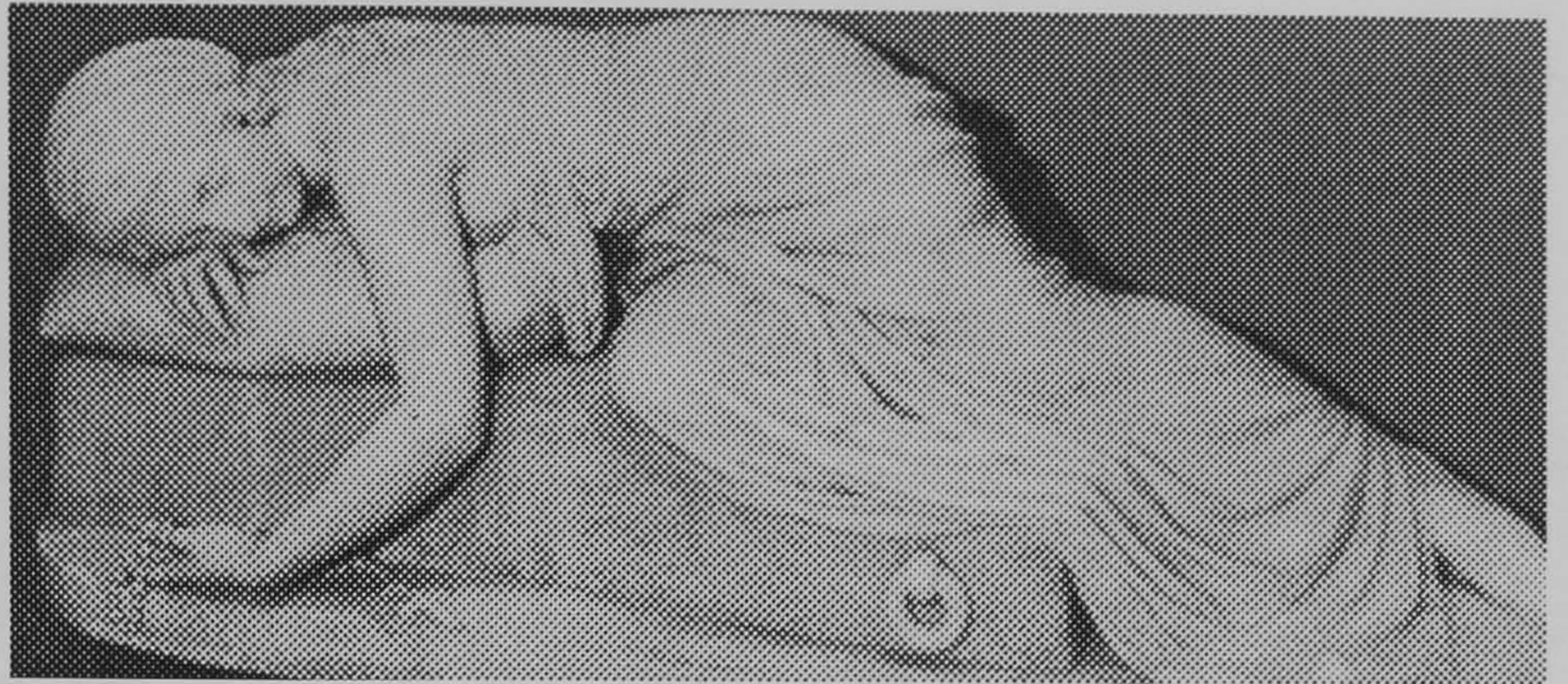


fig. 97 Harriet Hosmer, *Beatrice Cenci*, 1856, marble, life-size, St Louis Mercantile Library, MO



fig. 98 Guido Reni, att'd., *Beatrice Cenci*, oil on canvas, 73.75x50cm, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Palazzo Barberini, Rome

age in which an image had, before anything else, to tell a story...³⁴⁵ In our age, Laura Mulvey has found a similar imperative for 'the story'. In her seminal work, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', she wrote that 'Sadism demands a story, depends on making something happen, forcing a change in another person, a battle of will and strength, victory/defeat, all occurring in a linear time with a beginning and an end.'³⁴⁶ Teresa de Lauretis queries this link between narrative and sadism in her essay on 'Desire in Narrative': 'Is a story, are all stories, to be claimed by sadism?'³⁴⁷ I might similarly ask, is narrative neoclassical sculpture inherently sadistic?

To invoke but one example, that of Harriet Hosmer's sculpture of *Beatrice Cenci*, a first glance may suggest that this thesis is more than probable. But a more considered examination of this work first requires a rather lengthy detour. (*fig. 97*)

Harriet Hosmer's life-sized marble sculpture of 1856, entitled *Beatrice Cenci*, is drawn from a story now little known, but immensely popular in the nineteenth century. It was retold to Victorian audiences by the Genevan historian Jean-Charles Sismondi in 1840, and sensationalised in Italian in 1851 by Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi. In the same year, expatriate British poet, Walter Savage Landor, an acquaintance of Hosmer's, published his *Beatrice Cenci* as one of his *Five Scenes*. But perhaps most popular of the published English texts of the Cenci story was also the first – Percy Bysshe Shelley's verse tragedy, *The Cenci*.

The story is one of patricide and was widely used as a vehicle for anti-papal sentiments. The corrupt and violent Count Francesco Cenci, guilty of countless murders and the rape of his own daughter, is killed. His daughter, Beatrice, who may or may not have ordered his murder, is imprisoned by the

345 - James, p. 169.

346 - Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 22.

347 - de Lauretis, p. 103.

Pope for the crime, and ultimately put to death. The wealthy Cenci estate reverts to the possession of the Vatican.

In his verse tragedy, 'The Cenci', Shelley has the evil Count Cenci describe his greatest pleasure:

When I was young, I thought of nothing else
 But pleasure; and I fed on honey-sweets;
 Men, by St. Thomas! cannot live like bees,
 And I grew tired; yet, till I kill'd a foe,
 And heard his groans, and heard his children's groans,
 Knew I not what delight was else on earth,
 Which now delights me little. I the rather
 Look on such pangs as terror ill conceals:
 The dry fix'd eyeball; the pale quivering lip,
 Which tells me that the spirit weeps within
 Tears bitterer than the bloody sweat of Christ.
 I rarely kill the body, which preserves,
 Like a strong prison, the soul within my power,
 Wherein I feed it with the breath of fear
 For hourly pain.³⁴⁸

Lacan recognises this infinite prolonging of pain – as Cenci avows, 'I rarely kill the body, which preserves,/Like a strong prison, the soul within my power,/Wherein I feed it with the breath of fear/For hourly pain' – as a quintessentially Sadean motif. He notes:

In the typical Sadean scenario, suffering doesn't lead the victim to the point where he is dismembered and destroyed. It seems rather that the object of all the torture is to retain the capacity of being an indestructible support.³⁴⁹

For Lacan, the Sadean phantasm is one in which 'the object [i.e. the victim]... is no more than the power to support a form of suffering, which is in itself nothing else but the signifier of a limit. Suffering is conceived of as a stasis...' ³⁵⁰ This view of the sadistic narrative, however, somewhat differs from that outlined by Mulvey: 'Sadism demands a story, depends on making something happen, forcing a change in another person, a battle of will and

348 - Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Cenci, a Tragedy in Four Acts* (London: 1821) I.1 ll. 103-117.

349 - Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-1960: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, Book VI, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Dennis Porter (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 261.

350 - Ibid.

strength, victory/defeat, all occurring in a linear time with a beginning and an end.³⁵¹ Rather, Lacan's understanding of the Sadean narrative suggests that there is no change, no battle, no victory or defeat, no beginning and no end to the suffering. Indeed, nothing happens in the Sadean text – and that no-thing is precisely its point.

The precondition that makes the delineation of a limit possible is the positing of a beyond to the limit, of a death beyond death. Christianity posits Hell as the guarantor of what Lacan calls 'the second death': after the death of the body lies the death of the subject, the spectre of its disappearance from the signifying chain, 'the essential articulation of non-knowledge as a dynamic value'. In the Christian religion, it was the crucifixion of Christ that guaranteed the beyond of biological death in the Christian religion. The image of the crucifixion functions as a representation, then, of 'the limit that Christianity has erected in the place of all the other gods, a limit that takes the form of the exemplary image which attracts to itself all the threads of our desire'.³⁵² The Sadean discourse engages the concept of Hell to enable the infinite prolonging of suffering beyond death. One of de Sade's characters indeed goes so far as to try to achieve the damnation of his victim's soul, so that his torture can continue after the body succumbs to its mortality.

As signifiers of the most extreme limit of human experience, the crucifixion and the Sadean phantasm also stand as markers of the trajectory of radical desire at the point where that desire crosses the limit of that which can be represented in language and aims beyond the Symbolic order towards the Real, the domain of non-knowledge. They are representations in the symbolic of an extreme pleasure, termed *jouissance* by Lacan, which operates in a field beyond the reach of symbolic representation.

Behind both the image of the crucifixion and that of the Sadean

351 - Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', p. 22.

352 - Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 262-3.

phantasm, we find the precondition of the crime. '[T]he traditional moralist,' notes Lacan, 'always falls back into the rut of persuading us that pleasure is a good, that the path leading to good is blazed by pleasure.'³⁵³ But what Freud discovers in *Civilization and its Discontents* is the possibility that '*jouissance* is evil.'³⁵⁴ Freud explains that, 'Man tries to satisfy his need for aggression at the expense of his neighbor, to exploit his work without compensation, to sue him sexually without his consent, to appropriate his goods, to humiliate him, to inflict suffering on him, to torture and kill him.'³⁵⁵ Suffering is suffering, Lacan posits, because it involves suffering for my neighbor.³⁵⁶ 'It isn't for nothing that crime is one boundary of our exploration of desire or that it is on the basis of a crime that Freud attempted to reconstruct the genealogy of the law.'³⁵⁷

Freud's genealogy of the law is set forth in the form of a myth of origin, 'perhaps the only myth that the modern age was capable of',³⁵⁸ according to Lacan: *Totem and Taboo*. In the beginning there was the Law of the Father, and the sons rose up and killed him. But this crime did not provide the easy access to *jouissance* that they desired. On the contrary, the prohibition was reinforced, revealing the first great paradox of human pursuit of desire and *jouissance*. Sin needs the law in order to become a great sinner, for 'without a transgression there is no access to *jouissance*.'³⁵⁹ But at the same time, '[w]hoever enters the path of uninhibited *jouissance*, in the name of the rejection of the moral law in some form or other, encounters obstacles whose power is revealed to us every day in our experience in innumerable forms....'³⁶⁰

The 'bond between desire and the law' is 'tight'; one cannot move without the

353 - Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 185.

354 - Ibid., p. 184.

355 - Freud, *The Standard Edition*, XXI, p iii.

356 - Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 184

357 - Ibid., p. 260.

358 - Ibid., p. 176.

359 - Ibid., p. 177.

360 - Ibid.

other.³⁶¹ This relationship is clearly signalled in de Sade's texts, where the pleasures of the libertines are taken according to a strict schedule and programme: all debauchery ends precisely at 2 a.m. The desire of the sadist needs the limits of the Law in order to aim at the beyond of those limits. Similarly, the sons of Freud's mythic Original Father establish, in the wake of their failed *jouissance*, proscriptions on sexual relations and ritual obeisance to the murdered Father.

A particular phenomenon emerges with the coincidence of the Law and Desire, at the limit of the second death, where pleasure is so extreme it becomes pain – or pain so extreme it becomes pleasure: this is the phenomenon of the beautiful.³⁶² For Lacan, it is 'precisely the function of the beautiful to reveal to us the site of man's relationship to his own death, and to reveal it to us only in a blinding flash.'³⁶³ The conjunction between pain and the beautiful is so obvious in the example of the crucifixion that we almost do not notice it: how else, indeed, can an image of an emaciated, bloody, male corpse – hardly an image of ideal human beauty – be described as beautiful, and inspire such passionate devotion, even to the point of erotic ecstasy? In the Sadean example, Lacan points out that '[t]he victims are always adorned not only with all kinds of beauty, but also with grace, which is beauty's finest flower.'³⁶⁴ The beauty of which Lacan speaks is not, as is the case with many of the terms of his psychoanalytic theory, precisely that which we might intend when we use the word in everyday speak. He warns, '...the beautiful has nothing to do with what is called ideal beauty'; however, he continues:

It is only on the basis of the apprehension of the beautiful at the very point of the transition between life and death that we can try to reinstate ideal beauty, or, in other words, the function of that which sometimes reveals itself to us as the ideal form of beauty,

361 - Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 177.

362 - Ibid., p. 260.

363 - Ibid., p. 295.

364 - Ibid., p. 261.

and in the first place the famous human form.³⁶⁵

It is beauty which enables the signifier – otherwise confined within the limits of the symbolic order – to cross the limit of desire; ‘The beautiful in its strange function with relation to desire doesn’t take us in, as opposed to the function of the good. It keeps us awake and perhaps helps us adjust to desire insofar as it is itself linked to the structure of the lure.’³⁶⁶ Historically, the ‘lure’ – the image or phantasm, such as the crucifixion or the Sadean phantasm, which represents but does not satisfy our desire – takes the form of ideal human beauty. This is not the only form it can take, but it is a privileged one in the history of representation, and not just by chance. Thus we find that the conjunction of law, desire and beauty is perhaps most perfectly represented in the art object and its economy. Freud recognised early on that ‘...in the activity of the artist...man has the possibility of making his desires tradeable or salable in the form of products.’³⁶⁷ ‘The artist, [Freud] says, gives a beautiful form to the forbidden object in order that everyone, by buying his little artistic product, rewards and sanctions his daring.’³⁶⁸ ‘Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do.’ We have stumbled upon the unconscious – ‘it is literally there’: a crime, with, at its centre, a beautiful image in human form – like the painting commonly believed in the nineteenth century to be of Beatrice Cenci by Guido Reni.³⁶⁹ (*fig. 98*)

For Nathaniel Hawthorne, this painting, ‘had a life and consciousness of its own.’³⁷⁰ The overwhelming experience of the gaze of the picture is evoked in Hawthorne’s description of the painting:

The picture represented simply a female head; a very youthful, girlish, perfectly beautiful face, enveloped in white drapery, from beneath which strayed a lock or two of what seemed a rich, though

365 - Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 297.

366 - *Ibid.*, p. 239.

367 - *Ibid.*, p. 293.

368 - *Ibid.*, p. 238.

369 - *Ibid.*, p. 295.

370 - Hawthorne, ‘The French and Italian Notebooks’, pp. 520-21.

hidden luxuriance of auburn hair. The eyes were large and brown, and met those of the spectator, but evidently with a strange, ineffectual effort to escape. There was a little redness about the eyelids, very slightly indicated, so that you would question whether or no the girl had been weeping. The whole face was quiet; there was no distortion or disturbance of any single feature; nor was it easy to see why the expression was not cheerful, or why a single touch of the artist's pencil would not brighten it into joyousness. But, in fact, it was the very saddest picture ever painted or conceived; it involved an unfathomable depth of sorrow, the sense of which came to the observer by a sort of intuition. It was a sorrow that removed this beautiful girl out of the sphere of humanity, and set her in a far-off region, the remoteness of which – while yet her face is so close before us – makes us shiver as at a spectre.³⁷¹

The qualities which Hawthorne admires in this painting are typically neoclassical: the 'quiet, undisturbed' expression, the pathos that 'removed this beautiful girl from the sphere of humanity'; indeed, the ideal beauty of the figure itself reflects one of the central concerns of the neoclassical period. While a rigorous modernist might dismiss such works as '[n]early devoid of personal style, alike in size, shape, and proportion, plagiarisms from inferior ancient models...', a more fruitful reading might be a Lacanian-Sadean one, which recognises the stasis, grace, and remoteness of this figure from the human sphere as being essential characteristics of the tragic figure of Antigone through which Lacan articulated his theory of the ethics of psychoanalysis.³⁷²

In the background of the figures of both Beatrice Cenci and Antigone, there is the precondition of the crime: first the crime of the father, followed by that of the uncle, in Antigone's case, and then followed by the crime of the daughter in response. At the centre of the tragedy is the figure of the daughter herself: 'inhuman but not monstrous'³⁷³, startling, intimidating: 'this terrible, self-willed victim disturbs us,'³⁷⁴ while attracting and fascinating viewers such

371 - Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, p. 64

372 - Hawthorne's use of this legend as basis for his 'Rappaccini's Daughter' in *Mosses from an Old Manse* (Boston 1882) is discussed in Robert L. White, "'Rappaccini's Daughter', 'The Cenci' and the Cenci Legend", *Studi Americani*, 14, 63-86.

373 - Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 263.

374 - *Ibid.*, p. 247.

as Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Crucial to the narrative behind this image is the information that the painting was made from sketches made by Guido Reni of Cenci on the night before her execution. Thus she emerges, like Antigone, as a figure 'between two deaths' – her biological death now inevitable, she is a figure whose has focused on the second death, 'the one that you can still set your sights on once death has occurred...'³⁷⁵ As Hawthorne writes, 'There was a little redness about the eyelids, very slightly indicated, so that you would question whether or no the girl had been weeping. The whole face was quiet; there was no distortion or disturbance of any single feature....' Lacan comments that, 'Only the martyrs know neither pity nor fear.'³⁷⁶ Cenci has been reconciled to her fate to the point of it no longer producing affect – Hawthorne could not even be sure if she had been weeping. Her eyes 'met those of the spectator, but evidently with a strange, ineffectual effort to escape', as if impatient with her prolonged existence in the realm of the biological death, her vision is firmly fixed on the beyond of death. For Beatrice Cenci's, as for Antigone, 'life can only be approached, can only be lived or thought about, from the place of that limit where her life is already lost, where she is already on the other side.'³⁷⁷ Thus this representation becomes, for Hawthorne, a symbol of desire, of that which lies beyond the realm of conscious knowledge – of *jouissance* and the limits of the Law.

And insofar as Beatrice Cenci's gaze takes Hawthorne's vision beyond that which is immediately before his eyes, i.e. the painting, we can see that this flimsy spectacle of oil on canvas is actually quite marginal to Hawthorne's experience of the work. 'Technique is not without significance, but it is not essential; it plays the same role as elocution in rhetoric. The spectacle here is a secondary medium,' a mere *mis en scène*. 'The importance of *mis en*

375 - Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 294-5.

376 - *Ibid.*, p. 267.

377 - *Ibid.*, p. 280.

scène should not be underrated.... But we shouldn't forget that it is only important – and I hope you will forgive the expression – if our third eye doesn't get a hard-on; it is, so to speak, jerked off a little with the *mis en scène*.³⁷⁸

Indeed, what is important here is not even the narrative of the Cenci tragedy to which the painting refers; a bit melodramatic for today's taste, like the Sadean phantasm it may appear shallow and predictably monotonous to those whose fantasies gravitate elsewhere. But again, as with the Sadean fantasy, such a view is to miss the point, to focus on the signifier as referent to an external, verifiable, reality, rather than on the structure in which the fantasy evolves. As Barthes wrote of de Sade, 'It often happens that the moral reprobation aimed against Sade is expressed in the form of aesthetic disgust: we declare that Sade is monotonous.' But, as Barthes continues:

... the Sadian combinative... can seem monotonous to us only if we arbitrarily shift our reading from the Sadian discourse to the 'reality' it is supposed to represent or imagine: Sade is boring only if we fix our gaze on the crimes being reported and not on the performances of the discourse.... [The society that bans de Sade] sees in Sade's work only the summoning forth of the referent; for it, the word is nothing but a window looking out onto the real; the creative process it envisions and upon which it bases its laws has only two terms: the 'real' and its expression.³⁷⁹

The art object can be at once both a figuration of desire, as we see the 'Cenci' painting functioning here for Hawthorne, and a 'lure', a simple phantasm which enables us to believe that we are looking at a pure reflection of reality. And, as techniques, rhetorics, and vocabularies of the *mis en scène* change, our anger at the representation for not adequately representing what we feel to be the 'true' reality – even if it is an abstracted reality – is most often expressed, in the realm of art history and criticism, as aesthetic disgust: 'Now that's NOT what I call Art.'

But Art the 'Cenci' painting was for Hawthorne and his contemporaries.

378 - Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 252-53.

379 - Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, trans. by Richard Miller (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1976) pp. 36-37. N.B.: Barthes's reference is not Lacan's Real, but the more popular notion of 'reality'.

In his 1860 novel, *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne has his two main female characters, both painters, discuss a copy of this painting that has been made by one of them, a young American named Hilda. At the time, the painting hung in the Barberini Palace in Rome. Hawthorne would have seen it there on his way to visit his sculptor friend, William Wetmore Story, who lived and worked on the top floor of the palazzo for almost all of his expatriate career in Rome. Prince Barberini forbade copyists to set up their easels in front of this work, so in the novel, Hilda has been compelled to, 'sit down before the picture, day after day, and let it sink into [her] heart.... I do believe it is now photographed there,' she confides to her friend, Miriam.³⁸⁰

As is argued in the prologue to this dissertation, the process Hilda is describing here is that of the canonical art historian: she sits in front of the painting, and if she sits there long enough and looks well enough – indeed, if she has enough faith in the miracle that is art appreciation and has prayed long enough at the canonical tomes of Art History, then she will get it: she will capture the essence of the painting, it will be photographed in her heart. Hilda is making an imaginary identification with the painting, and has been fooled by the lure of its image into believing that 'she sees it, therefore she is' a painter, an art historian, or any number of Cartesian identities we flatter ourselves with. And behind this representation lies the thing itself – the real Beatrice Cenci, or the real painting of Beatrice Cenci – as guarantor for the status and validity of both the copy and its painter.

But, as Lacan notes in Seminar 11:

What is at issue here is not the philosophical problem of representation. From that point of view, when I am presented with a representation, I assure myself that I know quite a lot about it, I assure myself as a consciousness that knows that it is only a representation, and that there is, beyond, the thing, the thing itself. Behind the phenomenon, there is the noumenon, for example. I may not be able to do anything about it, because my *transcendental categories*, as Kant would say, do just as they please and force me

380 - Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, p. 65.

to take the thing in their way. But, then, that's all right, really – everything works out for the best.³⁸¹

What Hilda, the Cartesian art historian, does not admit to, is that, in fact, it is she who is photo-graphed.³⁸² 'I am not simply that punctiform being located at the geometral point from which the perspective is grasped,' explains Lacan.

That which is light looks at me, and by means of that light in the depths of my eye, something is painted – something that is not simply a constructed relation, the object on which the philosopher lingers – but something that is an impression, the shimmering of a surface that is not, in advance, situated for me in its distance. This is something that introduces what was elided in the geometral relation – the depth of field, with all its ambiguity and variability, which is in no way mastered by me. It is rather it that grasps me, solicits me at every moment, and makes of the landscape something other than a landscape, something other than what I have called the picture.³⁸³

Miriam, on the other hand, is troubled by the glint of light on the Sardine Canon, and confesses her complete lack of ability to know in the face of its gaze: 'And now that you have [copied] it, Hilda, can you interpret what the feeling is, that gives this picture such a mysterious force? For my part, though deeply sensible of its influence, I cannot seize it.'³⁸⁴

Hilda concedes that her gaze was not able to be so masterful either, and here we can hear Hawthorne as narrator of *The Marble Faun* reminding us of his experience of the painting:

"Nor can I, in words," replied her friend. "But, while I was painting her, I felt all the time as if she were trying to escape from my gaze. She knows that her sorrow is so strange, and so immense, that she ought to be solitary forever, both for the world's sake and her own; and this is the reason we feel such a distance between Beatrice and ourselves, even when our eyes meet hers. It is infinitely heart-breaking to meet her glance, and to feel that nothing can be done to help or comfort her; neither does she ask help or comfort, knowing the hopelessness of her case better than we do. She is a fallen angel, fallen, and yet sinless; and it is only this depth

381 - Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 106.

382 - Ibid.

383 - Ibid., p. 96.

384 - Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, p. 65.

of sorrow, with its weight and darkness, that keeps her down upon earth, and brings her within our view while it sets her beyond our reach."³⁸⁵

When Hilda replies, describing the figure as 'a fallen angel, fallen, and yet sinless', Miriam challenges her confident interpretation:

"You deem her sinless?" asked Miriam. "that is not so plain to me. If I can pretend to see at all into that dim region, whence she gazes so strangely and sadly at us, Beatrice's own conscience does not acquit her of something evil, and never to be forgiven."³⁸⁶

Reminded of the 'history' behind the figure, Hilda quickly concedes:

"Ah," replied Hilda shuddering. "I really had quite forgotten Beatrice's history, and was thinking of her only as the picture seems to reveal her character. Yes, yes; it was terrible guilt, and inexpressible crime, and she feels it to be so. Therefore it is that the forlorn creature so longs to elude our eyes, and forever vanish away into nothingness! Her doom is just."³⁸⁷

For a moment, Hilda too, describing the painting with words from Hawthorne's notebooks, was seized by the painting, moved out of the space of diachrony, of history, into synchrony, of desire. But then, reminded of the Law, she pulls back, demanding '[t]he cleaning up of desire, modesty, temperateness, that is to say, the middle path we see articulated so remarkably in Aristotle.'³⁸⁸ As Lacan puts it, 'The morality of power, of the service of goods, is as follows: "As far as desires are concerned, come back later. Make them wait."³⁸⁹

Hilda's moralising, however, is ineffectual against Miriam's passionate identification with the painting:

"Ah,... if I could only get within her consciousness! If I could but clasp Beatrice Cenci's ghost, and draw it into myself! I would give my life to know whether she thought herself innocent, or the one great criminal since time began!"

As Miriam gave utterance to these words, Hilda looked from the picture into her face, and was startled to observe that her

385 - Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, pp. 65-66.

386 - *Ibid.*, p. 66.

387 - *Ibid.*

388 - Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 314.

389 - *Ibid.*, p. 315.

friend's expression had become almost exactly that of the portrait; as if her passionate wish and struggle to penetrate poor Beatrice's mystery had been successful.³⁹⁰

Indeed, we might ask if it was not in fact Hilda's enunciation of the prohibition against Beatrice Cenci's crime which incited Miriam's identification with the figure. In the moment of her desire to grasp the signified of the painting, the signifier seizes Miriam – 'the word is made flesh'. The desire signified by the painting for Hilda moves out of the realm of representation and is incarnated in the Real by Miriam. Miriam literally becomes the embodiment of the object of Hilda's desire. Understandably, being face-to-face with the object of her desire terrifies Hilda:

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, Miriam, do not look so!" [Hilda] cried. "What an actress you are! And I never guessed it before! Ah; now you are yourself again," she added, kissing her. "Leave Beatrice to me, in future."³⁹¹

Leave the 'service of goods', of the painting, to those who can keep it in their power. Like Aristotle, Hilda's morality 'is the morality of the master, created for the virtues of the master and linked to the order of powers.'

Hilda's fear, on the other hand, stems from a different but related field – that of desire. The role of the Other is to host the object of our desire for us, but to keep it veiled so we won't have to witness its unbearable *jouissance*. Sometimes we might catch a glimpse of it out of the corner of one eye, but its unmasking creates an unbearable anxiety, so we quickly turn away. Miriam, as Beatrice Cenci, 'reveals to us the line of sight that defines desire' – as does Antigone. Lacan describes this effect with respect to the tragic heroine:

This line of sight focuses on an image that possesses a mystery which up till now has never been articulated, since it forces you to close your eyes at the very moment you look at it. Yet that image is at the centre of tragedy, since it is the fascinating image of Antigone herself. We know very well that over and beyond the moralising arguments, it is Antigone herself who fascinates us, Antigone in her unbearable splendor. She has a quality that both attracts us and

390 - Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, p. 66-67.

391 - *Ibid.*, p. 67.

startles us, in the sense of intimidates us; this terrible, self-willed victim disturbs us.³⁹²

Famously, Lacan has described this effect of the 'splitting of the subject' in the experience of anamorphosis, citing examples such as the glint of light on the sardine can in his fable of Petit-Jean, the skull in Holbein's painting of *The Ambassadors*, in neoclassical architecture and Baroque fancy. But whereas the representation of desire is sublimated in these examples, in Miriam's incarnation of Hilda's desire the object thrusts its way into the Symbolic with all the destructive force of the Real at its command. Who ever said that *jouissance* is fun?

For Miriam's part, her impulse is a masochistic, perverse one: by becoming the object of Hilda's desire, she fills in the 'gap' in the signification of Hilda's desire; instead of an empty signifier, she offers Hilda herself as a fetish for disavowing the central lack of her subjectivity.³⁹³ First, she identifies with Beatrice Cenci on the basis of their shared gender in a manner not unfamiliar to certain movements of feminism: 'Poor sister Beatrice! For she was still a woman, Hilda, still a sister, be her sin or sorrow what they might.' Then Miriam erects femininity as the privileged site/sight of the 'subject supposed to know' with the comment, 'After all, if a woman had painted the original picture, there might have been something in it which we miss now. I

392 - Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 247.

393 - In "'Father, can't you see I'm filming?'" Parveen Adams expands on the process of fetishistic identification with the object of the Other's desire: 'Or the relation to the object can be one of identification as in the perversions where it is most clearly exemplified in masochism where the masochist becomes or rather therefore *is* the object which ensures the *jouissance* of the Other; you are, in other words, that which ensures that the Other has the object. ... in acting out, you can seek direct access to the object and to *jouissance*, seeking to have the object in reality. This differs from merely hankering after the object in reality because it partakes of that strangeness that made Lacan identify the presence of the Real in the Symbolic.' Parveen Adams, *The Emptiness of the Image* (London and NY: Routledge, 1996), pp. 109-122, (pp. 92-3).

have a great mind to undertake a copy myself, and try to give it what it lacks.'³⁹⁴

A maelstrom of desire is circulating among these three women: Hilda, Miriam, and Beatrice Cenci. For them all, as for Antigone, 'desire is the desire of the Other... linked to the desire of the mother. The text alludes to the fact that the desire of the mother is the origin of everything. The desire of the mother is the founding desire of the whole structure... but it is also a criminal desire.'³⁹⁵ At the end of the stories, '[t]here is no one to assume the crime and the validity of the crime apart from Antigone,'³⁹⁶ Beatrice, and, in Hawthorne's novel, Miriam. The painting of Beatrice Cenci represents here not only the Oedipal desire to kill the father, but behind that, the desire of the mother.

The *pas de deux* of Hilda and Miriam around the painting of Beatrice Cenci illustrates the inevitable intertwining of the Law and Desire, of the canon and the tenuous, evanescent possibility of the ethical art historian. 'One shouldn't be contemptuous of the order of powers', warns Lacan, for in this Symbolic order we cannot take a step without the Cartesian subject and its illusions of mastery and completeness.³⁹⁷ Nor should we deceive ourselves, as did those original sons, that by killing off the Father we'll have all the *jouissance* to ourselves. Even less helpful is the perverse path suggested by Miriam, in which we might try to engage some notion of phallic femininity to complete the picture, fill in those spaces in the Sardine Canon,

³⁹⁴ - Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, p. 68. We might ask to what extent this desire in feminist art history to 'give the canon what it lacks' is a perverse one, aimed at guaranteeing the *jouissance* of the [m]Other ('...the scene ensures the *jouissance* of the Other, which is the aim of all perversion.' Adams, p. 94). Adams writes of perversion, 'For the disavowal that is at the heart of all perversion, as Freud showed, is not just a disavowal of the fact that the mother does not have the penis. It is also a disavowal of the lack of knowledge that preceded the sight of that absence. Jean Clavreul has elaborated this with care in his article, 'The Perverse Couple' (1980). He argues that a lack of knowledge causes the child to look in the first place; the lack of knowledge as the cause of the scopophilic drive. What is disavowed is that the child did not know and wanted to know. Which in turn means that the father is not recognised as having the knowledge before the child. This is how the pervert occupies the position of one who will never again be deprived of knowledge, particularly knowledge about eroticism. Then, as Clavreul says, "This knowledge about eroticism feels assured of obtaining the other's *jouissance* under any circumstances"' (ibid.: 224)." Adams, p. 105.

³⁹⁵ - Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 283.

³⁹⁶ - Ibid.

³⁹⁷ - Ibid., p. 315.

give it what it lacks, or create yet another canon, another moral order – same structure, different people in power. Nevertheless, Lacan identifies some possibility of ethical praxis in the articulation of the figure of Antigone, insofar as she is the one who has acted in conformity with the desire that is in her.

The same could be said not only of Hawthorne's Miriam, but also Beatrice Cenci. Guido Reni's portrait of Beatrice Cenci is the only influence that Harriet Hosmer ever cited for her life-sized marble statue of the figure. Although this work was well-received in both the UK, where it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1857, and on its US tour to Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and finally, St. Louis, Nathaniel Hawthorne did not particularly care for the statue on seeing it in Hosmer's studio; nor did he appreciate a related work, the monument to a young woman, Judith Falconnet, that Hosmer made for the Roman church, S. Andrea delle Fratte, shortly after completing the Cenci figure.³⁹⁸ (see fig. 96)

As Larkin has pointed out:

The sculptor's art obsessed Hawthorne, and several of his tales played variations on the Pygmalion idea: "The miracle of imbuing an inanimate substance with thought, feeling, and all the intangible attributes of the soul." [He was] ...tormented by the doubt whether marble was ever anything but cold limestone with a beauty merely physical.³⁹⁹

It would seem that Hosmer's *Beatrice Cenci* and Judith Falconnet monument fell in this category for Hawthorne. He wrote that the *Beatrice Cenci* 'did not very greatly impress me', and described the Falconnet as 'a monumental design, a female figure – wholly draped, even to stockings and shoes, – in a quiet sleep. I liked this last.'⁴⁰⁰

The *Beatrice Cenci* was Hosmer's first work to be commissioned by someone other than her patron, Wayman Crow, so it was a 'coming of age' work for the young sculptor, an entry to the real art market. Alfred Vinton,

398 - Hawthorne, *The French and Italian Notebooks*, pp. 157-58.

399 - Larkin, p. 180.

400 - Hawthorne, *The French and Italian Notebooks*, pp. 508-10.

chairman of the board of directors of the St Louis Mercantile Library, who commissioned the *Cenci*, did not specify the subject of the work. Hosmer's choice of the Cenci legend also represents her first attempt at a non-classical subject.

In Hosmer's *Beatrice Cenci*, a draped young woman lies on her right side on a narrow stone bench. (*fig. 97*) The bench is cracked and has an empty iron ring at one end. Her head rests on her right arm, which is folded beneath her on a large cushion. Her left arm falls off the bench, resting palm-upwards on the floor. A rosary lies across her open palm. With her right leg bent up under her, her left leg stretches out to rest on the floor. While her foot is shod with a delicate slipper, her garb is classicising, and slides off at the front to reveal her left breast. It is knotted low at the back where the drapery is rendered in the 'wet cloth' technique so as to appear almost translucent. Her long, thick hair falls over her shoulder down her back from under a turban, modelled on the Reni painting.

In September of 1856, Hosmer wrote to her friend, Anne Dundas, about the progress of the work:

I made several changes in her after you went away, for instance gave her a vast quantity more hair, putting very sizable locks over the raised shoulder, made a cushion of the upper stone (which was a great improvement), and put on (I'm sure you will say, 'Oh horror!') a slipper!!!... From that arrangement of drapery I was afraid it might look like an affectation of the antique unless I had something to modernize it a bit.⁴⁰¹

The exclamation 'Oh Horror!' with respect to the slipper indexes Hosmer's awareness of having moved beyond the strict neoclassical vocabulary that she had been studying with her mentor and teacher, the Welsh sculptor, John Gibson. Today, the slipper, the cushion, the rosary, even the subject of this sculpture may seem overly sentimental: typical Victorian

401 - Harriet Hosmer, letter to Anne Dundas, December 13, 1857, quoted in Carr, pp. 116-118.

kitsch. Thus it appeared to Hosmer's younger contemporary, Lorado Taft.⁴⁰²

Taft wrote of Hosmer's *Beatrice Cenci*:

It can hardly be claimed that this is a great work, but it has much grace, and its beauty is of a very intelligible kind. The pose is an expressive one, ... and the long line of the back and of the left leg, which extends to the floor, is admirable; it could scarcely be improved. The figure is as well modelled as it is composed, and the carving of the drapery is very refined. The accessories are annoyingly pronounced; the pillow, the beads, the large ring in the stone slab, and the dainty slipper, all being too sharp and insistent for modern taste. But the conception, and in the main the execution, could hardly have been surpassed in the Roman colony of the fifties.⁴⁰³

Like that of his peer, Henry James, Taft's praise of Hosmer and sculptors of her style and age was always tinged with condescension. Coming of age in the wake of the Civil War, James and Taft's generation of artists and critics had been, in Taft's words, 'aroused ... by the drama in which they lived. Classic themes gradually receded into pale obscurity.'⁴⁰⁴ It became less important to 'tell a story' and celebrate the ideal, as James saw the neoclassical imperative to be, than to emphasise contemporary concerns and 'reality'.

Hosmer's *Beatrice Cenci* is represented as frozen in this moment before her death, in deep sleep. She may be able to forget her fate and its pain in this seemingly peaceful recess from consciousness, but we, as observers who are aware of the frame of the narrative, know that death is just around the corner. The inevitability of her biological death secured in the narrative in which this figure exists, *Beatrice Cenci*, like the figure in Guido Reni's painting and *Antigone*, now sleeps 'between two deaths', facing the possibility of the

402 - 'After Lorado Taft began to teach at the Art Institute of Chicago in the 1880's, girls from the Middle West and West no longer had to travel to New York for professional instruction. Taft encouraged young women to study sculpture and employed some of his women students on his commissions for the Columbian Exhibition. They became known as the "White Rabbits." A former pupil of Taft, Evelyn Beatrice Longman, was the only woman Daniel Chester French admitted to his studio.' Proske, p. 14.

403 - Lorado Taft, *The History of American Sculpture* (NY: The Macmillan Company, 1930), pp. 204-5.

404 - *Ibid.*, pp. 256-57.

second death – the death of the subject – the moment of her disappearance from the signifying chain. ‘How can man, that is to say a living being, have access to knowledge of the death instinct, to his own relationship to death?’ asks Lacan. ‘The answer is, by virtue of the signifier in its most radical form. It is in the signifier and insofar as the subject articulates a signifying chain that he comes up against the fact that he may disappear from the chain of what he is.’⁴⁰⁵ We encounter the signifier in its purest form in the unconscious, to which our most direct access is sleep and the dream. The other place is in anamorphosis, where the signifier is opened up before our eyes to reveal its essential emptiness.

Like Daphne, Beatrice Cenci has been transformed – petrified – by Hosmer as though ‘under the pressure of a pain from which she cannot flee’; this stone does not ‘roll’, as Lacan might put it, but rather has been erected, fixed, made into an ‘actualisation of pain’ like the monolithic Sadean narrative.⁴⁰⁶ This relationship to being of the play of pain elides any notion of ‘transformation, generation, or decay’ – indeed, it is entirely beyond history, frozen in time. Hosmer’s *Beatrice Cenci*, then, like the Sadean phantasm, is located in a space of synchrony in opposition to diachrony, at a limit where, according to Lacan, the phenomenon of the beautiful emerges.⁴⁰⁷

We might also compare its tortured style to the Sadean one – more properly termed neo-baroque than neoclassical, with the curious additions of the rosary, cushion, and shoe to an otherwise classical figure. On the level of content, this reckless juxtaposition of heterogeneous elements in the

405 - Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 295.

406 - Ibid., p. 60.

407 - ‘Antigone with relation to Creon finds herself in the place of synchrony in opposition to diachrony,’ Lacan explains. ‘The limit involved, the limit that it is essential to situate if a certain phenomenon is to emerge through reflection, is something I have called the phenomenon of the beautiful, it is something I have begun to define as the limit of the second death.’ Ibid., p. 285. On the limit, he adds, ‘I first brought this to your attention in connection with Sade as something that sought to pursue nature to the very principle of its creative power, which regulates the alternation of corruption and generation. Beyond that order... Sade tells us that there is something else, that a form of transgression is possible, and he calls it “crime.”’ Ibid., p. 260.

signifying chain functions in the *Beatrice Cenci*, as in de Sade's texts, to deny difference, producing the seamless surfaces and flawless completion of the Other which Lacan recognises as the fundamental structure of perversion.⁴⁰⁸ But on the level of the structure of this sculpture as a text, something more interesting is going on as well, that actually opens up a gap, reveals the void that is at the centre of neoclassical sculpture.

Like architecture, painting is something that was originally organised around emptiness. Then perspective was invented to organise, to discipline, to define that emptiness. But rather than submit entirely to this discipline, we find that neoclassical architecture, for example, 'submits itself to the laws of perspective, plays with them, and makes them its own. That is, it places them inside of something that was done in painting in order to find once again the emptiness of primitive architecture.'⁴⁰⁹

The neoclassical sculptor would have experienced the literal emptiness of the images she produced almost daily as the bulk of her work was in the design and production of the clay prototype; despite its final seamless appearance, her sculpture was initially modelled around a hollow armature, in clay. Even in subject matter, neoclassical sculpture referenced classical prototypes themselves missing, fragmentary, or available to the sculptor only in copies. At the origin of the neoclassical sculpture lies an essential emptiness, and the act of sculpting is aligned with creation *ex nihilo* – out of nothing.⁴¹⁰ It is this limit which Sade seeks when he posits the endlessly extreme violation of the law, pushing its boundaries towards the nothingness beyond. The tragic figure whose story is centred on crime then functions as a representation of that limit – the limit of the second death where the beautiful emerges.⁴¹¹ Lacan also associates this limit with metamorphosis, with the

408 - Adams, pp. 67-68.

409 - Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 136.

410 - Ibid., p. 196.

411 - Ibid., p. 265.

possibility of spontaneous generation, *ex nihilo*, from the limit:

The limit we have reached here is the one where the possibility of metamorphosis is located – metamorphosis that has come down through the centuries hidden in the works of Ovid and that regains its former vitality, its energy, during that turning point of European sensibility, the renaissance, and bursts forth in the theater of Shakespeare. That's what Antigone is.⁴¹²

Thus it is not by chance that we find Hosmer's *oeuvre*, as indeed that of many of her peers, returning endlessly to classical and post-classical themes of metamorphosis. Like the baroque response to perspective, neoclassical artists used the prescriptive and limited classical visual vocabulary to introduce a play of forms and artistic devices in order to 'make something emerge that is precisely there where one has lost one's bearings or, strictly speaking, nowhere.' In other words, what we see in the neoclassical – or should I say, neo-baroque – sculpture is '... something in which the illusion as such in some way transcends itself, destroys itself, by demonstrating that it is only a signifier.'⁴¹³

One example of the empty signifier offered by Lacan is that of the shoes of a professor he knew. Encountering these shoes in the hallway of a sort of academics' hotel in London, Lacan's wife announced that 'Professor D...' was also in residence. A bit dismayed since this particular professor was not a great friend of Lacan's, Lacan scoffed at the possibility of identifying an individual on the basis of a pair of anonymous, mass-produced, 'clodhoppers' lying around in a hallway. The next day, of course, Lacan encountered 'Professor D...' in his dressing gown and 'highly academic drawers.'⁴¹⁴ What Lacan had discovered in these seemingly innocuous shoes was 'an experience in which the universality belonging to the shoes of an academic was intimately joined to whatever it was that was absolutely

412 - Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 265.

413 - *Ibid.*, p. 136.

414 - *Ibid.*, p. 296.

specific to Professor D...'⁴¹⁵ He explains that 'any object may be the signifier by means of which that reflection, mirage, or more or less unbearable brilliance we call the beautiful starts to vibrate'⁴¹⁶ – even a pair of old shoes:

They are simply there; they communicate a sign of understanding that is situated precisely at equal distance from the power of the imagination and that of the signifier. This signifier is not even a signifier of walking, of fatigue, or of anything else, such as passion or human warmth. It is just a signifier of that which is signified by a pair of abandoned clodhoppers, namely, both a presence and a pure absence - something that is, if one likes, inert, available to everyone, but something that seen from certain sides, in spite of its dumbness, speaks. It is an impression that appears as a function of the organic or, in a word, of waste, since it evokes the beginning of spontaneous generation.⁴¹⁷

Pre-eminent among the figures that are able to stand in the place of ideal beauty is that of the human form. Hosmer's *Beatrice Cenci* is precisely this: a figure of ideal beauty in human form, bearer of the Crime, situated at the point of transition between life and death, at the limit of metamorphosis and spontaneous generation.

And what of Cenci's shoe? The slipper that Hosmer added to the *Beatrice Cenci* doesn't fit; it is 'rather out of place in the picture'; it sticks out, 'too sharp and insistent for modern taste', demanding our attention away from our fantasies about the story of Cenci or the figure itself like a whiny child. It does exactly what neoclassicists feared the addition of 'modern' dress to ancient prototypes would do: it dates the piece. It erects an insurmountable distance between us and it, marking it as irrevocably Other against any identifications we might be inclined to make with the figure as beautiful, the figure as the human form, or the narrative surrounding the figure.

Here Hosmer's sculpture is vastly different from the *Beatrice Cenci* portrait by Guido Reni; as we saw in Miriam's narcissistic absorption in the painting, there is nothing there to ruffle the seamless mirror of the painting's

415 - Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 296-7.

416 - Ibid., p. 297.

417 - Ibid.

surface and in anyway impede or discourage such total identifications. This painting threatens to unleash the Real.

But Hosmer's *Cenci* is no Cinderella story: the shoe simply doesn't fit. Against the strictly masochistic possibilities for feminine identification with the image on offer in Hawthorne's text, Hosmer has, by means of this recalcitrant shoe, negotiated a representation which allows the viewer – be s/he the artist or an audience – a subjective position with respect to the *Cenci* narrative. That incongruous shoe and the other 'annoyingly pronounced accessories: the pillow, the beads, the large ring in the stone slab' open up a gap between the viewer and the figure of *Beatrice Cenci*. The figure becomes, like Sade's work, a witness to its age, irreducibly distant and other to ours, an empty signifier of both the absence and the presence of this artist and the society in which she worked.⁴¹⁸ Hosmer's *Beatrice Cenci* 'is simply there', a lump of marble, inert, available to everyone, dumb – precisely what Hawthorne feared of sculpture, and perhaps the reason why he didn't like it. But it speaks to us insofar as its impression appears as a function of the organic – as a waste product. Indeed, critics of neoclassical sculpture have not hesitated to call it shit. But we should not underestimate the importance of shit, as *objet petit a*, the little object that precedes and unleashes desire.

A twentieth century reading of neoclassical sculpture that dwells on the lack of realism of neoclassical forms and narratives comes to resemble Andrea Dworkin's perverse reading of pornography as described by Parveen Adams and Mark Cousins; this sort of text is itself a form of '[c]ontemporary fundamentalism [that] seeks to abolish the difference between a representation and an event.'⁴¹⁹ Larkin both gets and misses the point in his criticism of neoclassicism: neoclassical sculptors were indeed capable of seeing the emperor's new clothes, of seeing what wasn't there; instead of

418 - Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 199-200.

419 - Adams, p. 58.

looking for a direct and literal representation of 'reality' in the image, the neoclassical eye aimed at recognising desire in what it saw beyond the image.

In the work of Harriet Hosmer and her contemporaries, fundamentally, *nothing* happens; the phantasm, as in the writings of de Sade, is of itself not important, and even becomes tedious in its repetition; what counts is the structure and process of desire set in motion by means of the content. The function of the story in neoclassical art was 'not in fact to create "fear, shame, envy, an impression," etc., but to conceive the inconceivable, i.e., to leave nothing outside the words and to concede nothing ineffable to the world.' Neoclassical sculpture, like de Sade's Château of Silling, is 'the sanctuary not of debauchery, but of the "story."' ⁴²⁰ The story of neoclassical art, like a Sadean text, is at once seamless and empty, absent and present, a pure signifier that 'looks like nothing on earth'. But, as Lacan comments:

If you don't find this example convincing, find others. What I am, in effect, attempting to show here is that the beautiful has nothing to do with what is called ideal beauty. ⁴²¹

420 - Barthes, p. 37.

421 - Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 297.

PART II: *In/Between the Studio*

Chapter 9: *The Colour of Sculpture*

Although Edmonia Lewis was still only in her teens when Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote his *Marble Faun*, Kenyon's fictional studio intersects with the real studio in which Lewis worked in her early years in Rome, nearly a decade later, in both its location in the former studios of Canova, and its sculptural contents – a statue of Cleopatra which was considered by many critics to rival the earlier treatment of the tragic queen by William Wetmore Story. As the myth of the historical woman, Cleopatra, is articulated within Kenyon's fictional studio, itself based on the studio of actual women sculptors as well as that of the semi-legendary Canova, so 'Edmonia Lewis' has become largely an imaginative art historical representation of a real life. The patina of fiction, myth, and real women's lives layering the Canovian studios of Rome suggest the question: what would nineteenth century visitors to the studio of a woman sculptor of colour have found at the end of their journeys there?

Sculptor Anne Whitney described Lewis's studio in a letter to her sister: 'In the inside wall there is a marble tablet to the effect that Canova occupied it. I should not care to do so for all its traditions.'⁴²² Hawthorne too identified

Kenyon's studio as originally belonging to the not-quite mythical Canova, and

⁴²² - Anne Whitney to Sarah Whitney, May, 1867, Anne Whitney papers, Wellesley College; quoted in Marilyn Richardson, 'Edmonia Lewis' *The Death of Cleopatra, Myth and Identity*, *The International Review of African American Art*, 12.2 (1995), 36-52 (p. 52, n. 29). This passage continues, '...Her rooms are in the via Gregoriana, parallel with our street and very near.' It would appear, then, that Lewis lived in Via Gregoriana, but worked in Via Frezza, a distance of only a few blocks. An anonymous writer, quoted in Tuckerman's *Book of the Artists*, pp. 603-4, also refers to Lewis as working in Via della Frezza, and its 'by no means aristocratic' neighbourhood. Indeed, Via della Frezza was in the flood zone of nineteenth century Rome, and the studio was across the street from the a syphillis and foundlings' hospital. Like Canova, Lewis was clearly taking up these studios primarily for their affordability, not for their historical connotations.

suggests why Whitney might not have found the area to her taste.⁴²³

Kenyon's studio was in a cross-street, or, rather, an ugly and dirty little lane, between the Corso and the Via di Ripetta; and though chill, narrow, gloomy, and bordered with tall and shabby structures, the lane was not a whit more disagreeable than nine-tenths of the Roman streets. Over the door of one of the houses was a marble tablet, bearing an inscription, to the purport, that the sculpture-rooms within had formerly been occupied by the illustrious artist Canova. In these precincts (which Canova's genius was not quite of a character to render sacred, though it certainly made them interesting) the young American sculptor had now established himself.⁴²⁴

Hawthorne's comment on Canova's stature – 'not quite sacred' – is indicative of how the 'father of neoclassicism' was seen by American audiences: although respected, 'Canova's libidinous misuses of marble' were 'well known', and thus not to be emulated uncritically.⁴²⁵ By establishing the American Kenyon in Canova's studios, Hawthorne rewrites the ambivalent (for American audiences) Canova as neoclassicism's New World heir, 'at once the most Classic and the most Christian' sculptor.⁴²⁶

We could interpret Lewis's occupancy of the putative Canovian studios as yet another instance of Lewis 'wrap[ping] herself and her work in the cloak of Anglo-European art, literature, religion and cultural traditions...'⁴²⁷ But such a reading implies that Anglo-European art and culture were alien to Lewis, that she was a foreigner in the Canovian territory, in contrast to unnamed others – presumably white, likely male – who were 'natives' in European cultural discourse, native to the studio. While nineteenth century discourse did indeed expect sculptors to be white and male, and, therefore, offered greater

423 - In the introduction to *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne tells us that this cross-street was Via Frezza, in fact parallel to a street now called Via Canova, where a marble plaque such as that described by Hawthorne now hangs on the *outside* wall of the studio. Consistent with the 'guide-book' use to which his novel was put by Americans visiting Rome (discussed earlier), we can assume that Hawthorne would have described the actual street and historical plaque he saw. This block of buildings was completely restructured in the late nineteenth century, leaving only the back portion of Canova's original studios intact.

424 - Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, p. 114.

425 - Vance, I, p. 218.

426 - Ibid., quoting Hillard, *Six Months*, vol. 2, p. 198.

427 - Richardson, 'Edmonia Lewis' *The Death of Cleopatra, Myth and Identity*, p. 50.

representational support in American cultural discourses to those artists who fitted these descriptions, we would be mistaken to conclude from these discursive inequalities that Edmonia Lewis could only ever be an interloper in the domain of American art, as does Alain Locke when he postulates: 'The white artist was a voluntary expatriate; whereas the Negro artist was an embittered exile, or else, if less fortunate, a circumscribed, half-smothered talent.'⁴²⁸

Joan Copjec has noted a similarly binaristic eye at work in criticism of Lacanian theorisation of the position of ~~the~~ Woman with respect to the Symbolic order. She remarks that the Lacanian 'relegation of the woman to the outside of language and the social order' has frequently been misread as 'one more attempt to banish her to some 'dark continent' (as if any form of life had ever been found to survive within the dead structures of language!).'⁴²⁹ Against the simplistic oppositions of inside/outside, native/alien, male/female, white/black, Lacanian theory opens a more complex view of the subject as only ever a masquerade of mastery, of 'having it (the phallus)' or belonging to cultural discourse. If anything, we would have to conclude that no one, male or female, black or white, could be a 'native' in the discursive terrain of American art.

Such notions of unary, singular subjects are the 'mythic underpinnings' of a biographical methodology described by Nye, which posits its subject as native to his or her 'self' as well as to the discourses in which her or she unfolds.⁴³⁰ The structures that privilege some subjects over others within discourse are more accurately understood as systems of extimacy, of *internal* exclusion. The uncanny image of Edmonia Lewis sculpting in Canova's studio is one of an internal exile, of 'the stranger within' American art. While

428 - Alain Locke, ed., *The Negro in Art* (NY: Hacker Art Books, 1979), p. 9.

429 - Copjec, p. 225.

430 - Nye, p. 74.

Edmonia Lewis was, as a woman of colour, structurally positioned as 'other' and alien to the racist and sexist discourses of nineteenth century America, this otherness was no more external to such systems of power and privilege than the negative is distinct from the photographic positive print; on the contrary, such 'others' are the absences on which certain groups are able to define themselves as 'self' and presence in discourse. At the same time, however, Lewis's 'otherness' is complexly overdetermined as her racial identifications are also the basis on which reviewers have seen her works as reflecting a native 'truth': be that truth the 'truth to nature' of 'the Indian type of feature' which Laura Curtis Bullard found to be 'carefully preserved' in Lewis's work,⁴³¹ or the artist's truth to herself in her refusal 'to be victimised by her own hand' such as that discovered by Kirsten Buick in her reading of Lewis's sculptural 'invoking and inverting autobiography'.⁴³² In none of these discourses can Lewis be located as an exile. Rather, hers is the impossible position of an internal exclusion that facilitates and makes structurally possible the discursive illusion of mastery of certain social groups, positioned as 'the subject supposed to know'.

As has been discussed above, two images of the black woman in the studio were offered by nineteenth century authors: that of the woman sculptor as a precocious child, imprinting her sculpture as a dark, photographic negative might (re)produce a positive image in white marble in an inversion of the 'Pygmalion effect'; and that of the foreign exotic, the 'dark lady' in which the visitor to the studio recognises the reflection of her own, dangerous desire. But what happens if we superimpose these two images, and create a 'double exposure' in which the woman sculptor of colour is, literally, that: creating in her studio a statue of a woman of colour?

In accounts of Lewis's work from the nineteenth century to today, most

431 - Craven, *Sculpture in America* p 334.

432 - Buick, pp. 5-19.

images of her and her sculptures of women of colour have been figured through a 'Pygmalion effect' imposition of the critic's historically and culturally contingent preconceptions about what what a sculptor and sculpture of colour should be. While the 'Pygmalion effect' meant that nineteenth century critics were happy to accept Lewis's sculptures of Native and African Americans as authentic, validated simply by the sculptor's own ethnic background, in the twentieth century Lewis's female figures have not fitted so easily into accepted ethnographic representational categories. Lewis's male-female pairs, such as the *Old Indian Arrowmaker and His Daughter* (1872) and *Forever Free* (1867), have particularly troubled Lewis's twentieth century critics, because the female figures are seen as much less 'marked' by the visible signs of their race than their male companions. (*fig. 99; see also figs 64 & 65*) Many critics have been disturbed, as was Freeman Murray, 'to find that the physiognomy of Lewis's kneeling female more closely resembled a white person than that of the standing male.'⁴³³ These female figures have been read as more 'white', more classicising or European, than we might presuppose from their narrative identities and treatment of the accompanying male figures. As Boime has explained, Murray termed this 'toning' – 'the attempt on the part of some blacks to lighten their complexion in identification with their oppressors, or the predominant social group.'⁴³⁴ The implication of such criticisms is that Lewis is either an incompetent sculptor, unable to maintain a consistent standard of representational accuracy, or a 'traitor to her race', aesthetically colonised by Anglo-European representational practices and 'white' standards of female beauty.

A similar ambivalence is found by many critics in Lewis's choice of narratives for her works, who lament Lewis's use of Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha* poem to represent Native Americans, for example. Why did she not

433 - Albert Boime, *The Art of Exclusion: Representing Blacks in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990), pp. 169-170.

434 - *Ibid.*

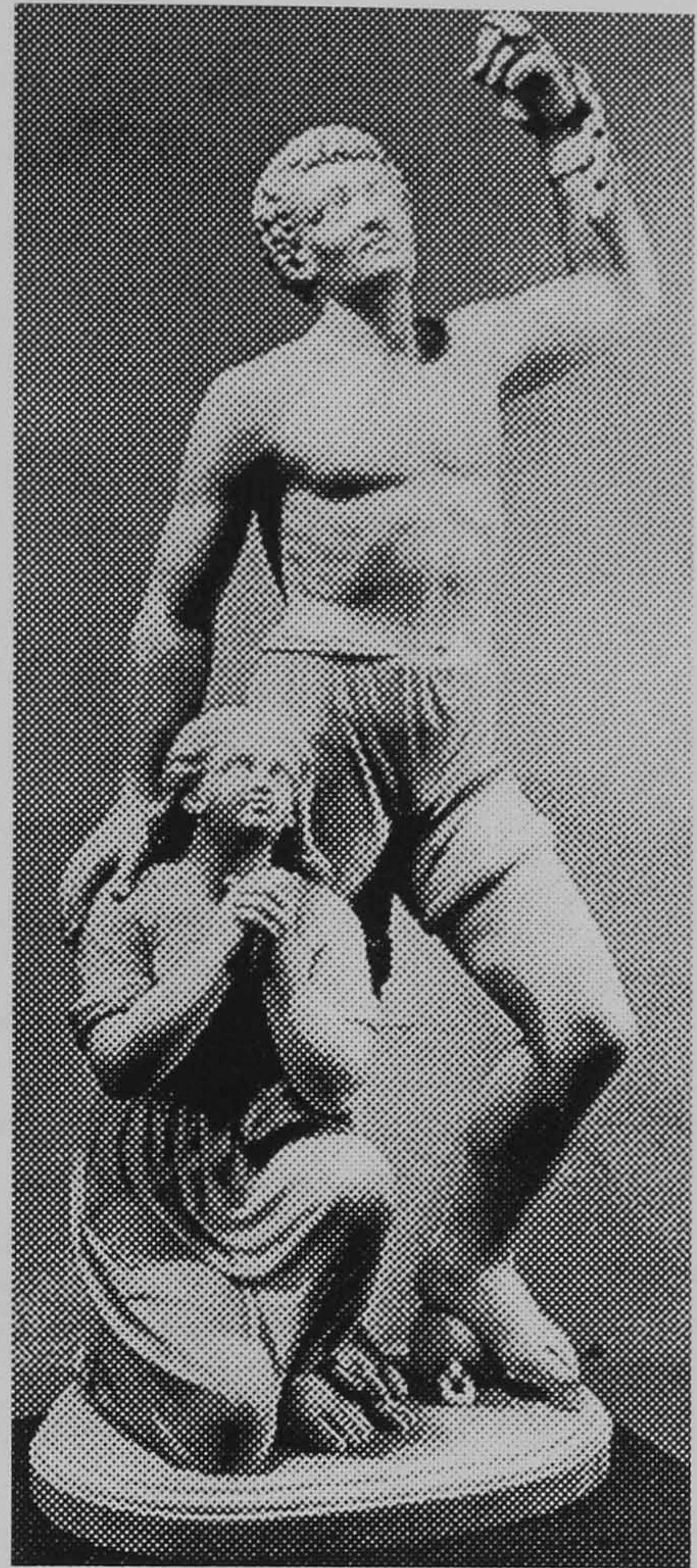


fig. 99 Edmonia Lewis, *Forever Free*, 1867, marble, heroic, Howard University Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

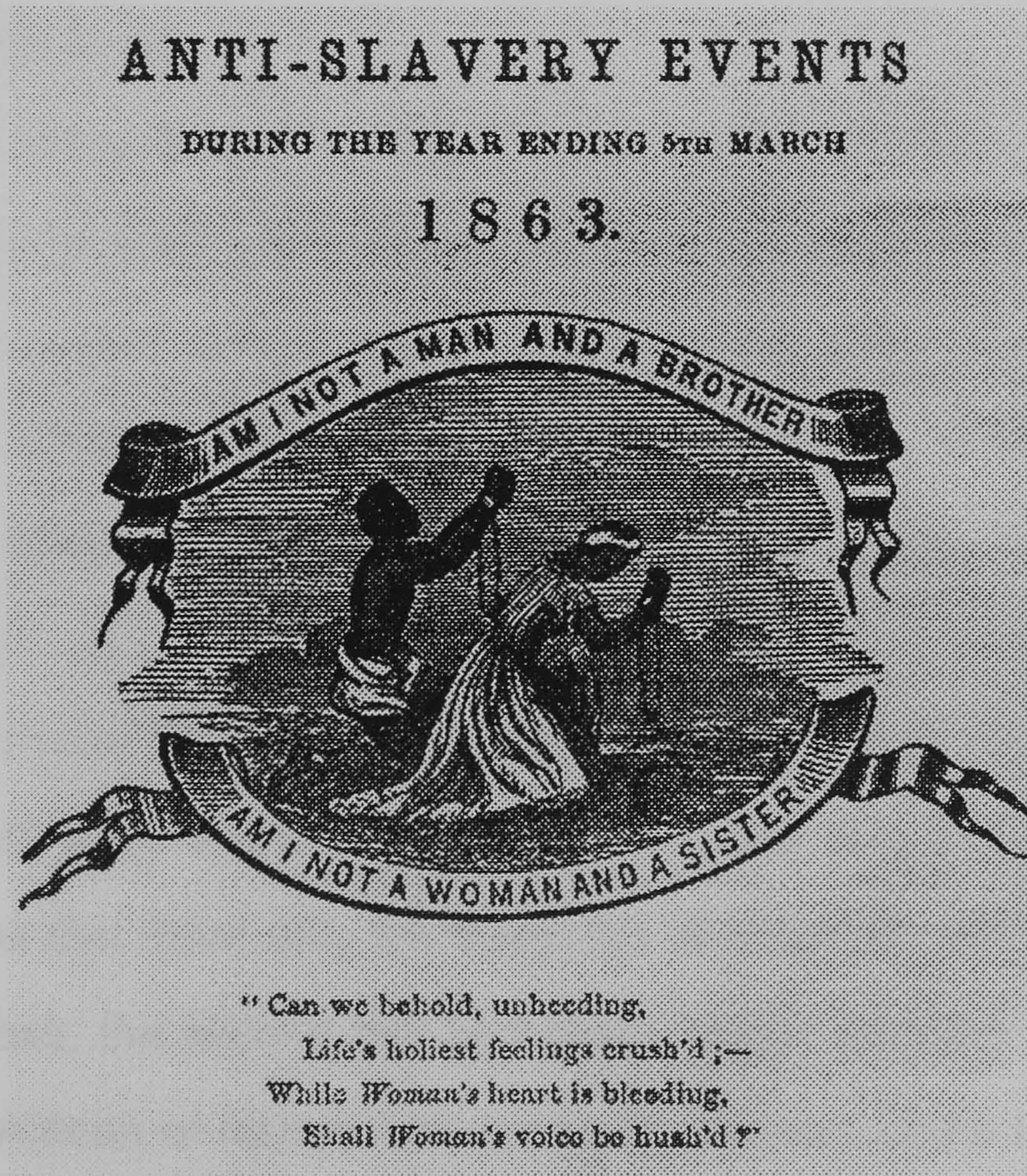


fig. 100 'Am I Not a Man and a Brother', 'Am I Not a Woman and a Sister', anti-slavery image originating in 1820, Boston Athenaeum, MA

choose a more 'accurate' and 'native' narrative source, one more indelibly stamped with the mark of her personal experiences of being a Native American? Presupposing that racial biases and hence 'inaccuracies' inherent in the poem would devalue it in the eyes of a 'real' Native American, it has been suggested that Lewis did not in fact have any Ojibwa background at all:

It should be noted, however, that there is little documentation, other than these anecdotal accounts, of any actual links between Lewis and the Ojibwa. No mention of her Native American heritage appears prior to her arrival in Boston. Considering all the facets of her public identity – her willingness to embroider a colorful but vague Indian past with no examples of Ojibwa culture or language in any of her accounts, that all of her Indian subjects are based on Longfellow's epic tale presented in neoclassical garb – it does seem likely that Lewis created or greatly embellished her Indian past to enhance the public's interest in her life and work.⁴³⁵

Juanita Marie Holland suggests that perhaps Lewis chose the Longfellow poem to represent because for her, as for the majority of non-Native Americans in her day, it was the most representative narrative of Native Americans she knew.

Without commenting directly on the status of Lewis's Ojibwa origins, Kirsten Buick instead attributes Lewis's use of Longfellow's narrative to a desire on the artist's part to avoid her work being read as autobiography – as a conscious strategy against the 'Pygmalion effect'. Asking, 'What would Lewis have risked if she had sculpted obviously black or obviously Indian women?' Buick argues that 'the risk was that the public would view the works as self-portraiture.'⁴³⁶ Thus Lewis's ambivalent representations of race in her sculpture work against the elision of the sculptor with her work. By creating female figures that 'bear only the trappings of a specific ethnicity' – the Native American dress, the slave's ball and chain, rather than the hallmark physical attributes of African or Native Americans, Buick sees Lewis as identifying 'with her freedwomen, with Hagar, and with Minnehaha on the level of discourse

435 - Holland, p. 34.

436 - Buick, p. 14.

only'. Lewis 'suppressed "autobiography" so that she could not be read into her sculptures.' For Buick, Lewis's representations of women of colour are analogous to her decision to represent Native Americans through Longfellow's popular *Song of Hiawatha* epic, rather than offering any more personalised images of her own Ojibwa family. 'Quite literally,' Buick notes, 'Lewis placed herself on the periphery of the action', and 'remains a presence that is absent in her work: she is present as an "artist," as the creator of art, but she is absent as the "subject" or "object" of her art.'⁴³⁷

While there is no doubt merit to this argument, I would also note that of the American neoclassical sculptors of the nineteenth century, Lewis's works play most easily into autobiographical interpretations. Harriet Hosmer, for example, whose biography is filled with colourful anecdotes of her 'wild' Missouri upbringing never sculpted any figures representative of autobiographical narratives, although her heroic female figures have been read by critics then and now as reflecting the artist's feminist political sympathies. The avoidance of autobiographical subjects by a nineteenth century American neoclassical sculptor is likely more indicative of the standards of sculptural practice in the day than of any personal aversion to autobiography on the sculptor's part.

Rather – and the narrative positioning of Hosmer's heroines bear this out as well – what mattered in nineteenth century American neoclassical sculpture was the ideal represented. The machinations of the 'Pygmalion effect' worked only to associate the sculptor's *character* and inherent moral nature with her work's narrative figures; specific details of the sculptor's autobiography were never read into her sculptural productions. Thus Hawthorne commented on the contrast between Hosmer's light and spirited character and the tragic melancholy of her sculpture of *Queen Zenobia in Chains*, writing 'It indicates much variety of power, that Zenobia should be the

437 - Buick, p. 15.

sister of these, which would seem the more natural offspring of her quick and vivid character';⁴³⁸ at no time did Hawthorne try to compare the particular incidents of Zenobia's biography with those of Hosmer's.

A more useful framing of Lewis's *oeuvre*, therefore, would be one that allows a more explicit intersection of the exigencies of Lewis's position within nineteenth century American neoclassicism with her role in abolitionist discourses. Whatever debates were on-going in the nineteenth century as to the degree of idealism versus naturalism that made a representation 'art' rather than 'ethnography' or 'archaeology', narrative demands were always for the ideal over the personal, the heroic over the particular or genre subject, although the 'naturalistic' should always inform the ideal representation as well. Working within the cultural and stylistic parameters of nineteenth century American neoclassicism, Lewis could not have even considered representing narratives from her personal experiences of Native American and African American life. What was far more likely, and indeed is borne out in Lewis's *oeuvre*, was the choice of famous heroic narratives that also represented Native and African Americans, which allowed personal interests to be presented in the garb of the neoclassical ideal. We can see the decision to sculpt figures from Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha*, then, as almost inevitable: there were simply very few other canonical literary narratives concerning Native Americans that also portrayed them as heroic figures appropriate to the neoclassical ideal. Furthermore, Longfellow's poem was in fact based on an Ojibwa legend. The *Song of Hiawatha* was, literally, an ideal vehicle for Lewis's personal identification with the Ojibwa.

A more fruitful interrogation of Lewis's narrative choices might therefore lie in considering why she chose Longfellow's poem, for example, rather than

438 - Hawthorne, *The French and Italian Notebooks*, pp. 508-510.

the legend of Pocahontas.⁴³⁹ As almost all nineteenth century American ideal works were drawn from recognised literary masterpieces, Longfellow's status as the American *poet laureate* of Edmonia Lewis's generation would clearly have been a significant factor influencing Lewis's decision. The praise of Longfellow's epic by a critic for *Chamber's Journal* of 1856 is strikingly similar to Henry Tuckerman's evaluation of Edmonia Lewis's contribution to the American school of sculpture:

In *Hiawatha*, Longfellow has gone right away from European subjects and their second-hand influences, which have hitherto mingled largely in American poetry, and struck out a new and rich vein in the poetic mine. He has turned to the past of his country, as it peers out of the backwoods and hunting-grounds of the red man – to the past, so fertile in legend and mystery. He has endeavoured to give the world America's first written epic...⁴⁴⁰

In his *Book of the Artists*, Henry Tuckerman also lamented the American artistic dependence on Europe and classical precedents, and found Lewis's work laudable precisely for its departure from strict neoclassicism to work in 'a distinctive, if not entirely original style in sculpture, which may ultimately take high rank as the 'American School.'"

But are we not guilty of yet another conflation of the author with his racial identification in presuming that because *The Song of Hiawatha* was written by a white man, it could not have value as a representation of 'real' Native Americans? That if Edmonia Lewis somehow identified with the Native Americans portrayed in Longfellow's poem, this is evidence of her 'colonisation' by racist preconceptions of Native Americans?

In fact, Longfellow's *Hiawatha* epic, not unlike Lewis's *Death of*

439 - As did Joseph Mozier. Inspired by Erastus Dow Palmer's *Indian Girl, or the Dawn of Christianity* (1856), Mozier produced his *Pocahontas* in 1859 with its pendant figure, *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish*. The subject of this latter work was taken from the 1829 novel of the same name by James Fenimore Cooper. Hiram Powers also created a work called *The Last of the Tribes* (1873) based on Cooper's other classic work on Native Americans, *The Last of the Mohicans*.

440 - Review of *The Song of Hiawatha* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Chamber's Journal*, January 5, 1856, p. 7, quoted in Cynthia D. Nickerson, 'Artistic Interpretations of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*, 1855-1900', *The American Art Journal* (Summer, 1984), 49-77 (p. 50).

Cleopatra and Hosmer's *Queen Zenobia in Chains*, was heralded for the extensive research and effort that the author put into portraying the figures of his chosen narrative accurately.⁴⁴¹ The writings of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft were principal among the many first-hand accounts of Native American life that Longfellow studied. Schoolcraft was a historian, explorer, and geologist, as well as superintendent of Indian affairs for Michigan from 1836 to 1841. More importantly, Schoolcraft was married to Jane, O-bah-bahm-wawa-ge-zhe-go-qua (The Woman of the Sound Which the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky), Johnston. Jane O-bah-bahm-wawa-ge-zhe-go-qua Johnston was, like Lewis, the daughter of an inter-racial marriage; she was 'a daughter of John Johnston, an early Irish fur trader, and O-shau-gus-coday-way-qua (The Woman of the Green Prairie), who was a daughter of Waub-o-jeeg (The White Fisher), who was Chief of the Ojibway tribe at La Pointe, Wisconsin.'⁴⁴² Woodrow W. Morris records that:

Jane and her mother are credited with having researched, authenticated, and compiled much of the material Schoolcraft included in his *Algic Researches* (1839) and a revision published in 1856 as *The Myth of Hiawatha*. It was this latter revision that Longfellow used as the basis for *The Song of Hiawatha*.⁴⁴³

Himself descended from Chief Waub-o-jeeg, Morris adds that when he was a child his mother used to rock him to sleep by singing lines from Longfellow's poem.

So the suggestion that Longfellow's epic was an inappropriate narrative of Native American life for Lewis's representation is ill advised. Instead, *The Song of Hiawatha* can be seen as a perfectly logical and even fortuitous source for Lewis, who could, by sculpting its characters, achieve several ends simultaneously: adhere to the neoclassical dictum that ideal works be drawn from literary masterpieces; benefit from the popularity of the poem and thus

441 - Nickerson, pp. 49-77.

442 - Morris, *The Song of Hiawatha*, www.teachersoft.com/library/poetry/Longfellow

443 - Ibid.

the demand for representations of it to which so many other American sculptors responded at this time; and encourage a critical identification of her sculptural style with the new 'American school' of which Longfellow was recognised as a leading exponent. Perhaps most importantly for Lewis, *The Song of Hiawatha* was an acknowledged masterpiece in dominant American culture in which Lewis could also recognise herself, both as Ojibwa and as part-Ojibwa, and thereby find through this identification a unique place in the American cultural canon, not despite, but because of her race.

The same paucity of heroic narratives confronted any search through representations of African Americans in the nineteenth century American literary canon: Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* tends to portray African Americans as pathetic, simple, and childlike rather than as heroic ideals, for example, though bas-reliefs representing its characters were commissioned of New Orleans sculptor, Eugène Warburg, by the Duchess of Sutherland, Harriet Leveson-Gower, who was an abolitionist and friend of Harriet Beecher Stowe's.⁴⁴⁴ Indeed, Lewis's *Forever Free* is partially derived from the emblematic emancipation image used in the anti-slavery campaign from 1820, which portrays African Americans as suppliant rather than heroic. (fig. 100)

The African American engraver, Patrick H. Reason, reworked the female figure of this pair singly in an image that was used for abolitionists' letter heading from the mid-1830s, its caption asking, famously, 'Am I not a woman and a sister?' Reason also produced a male version of the figure, annotated

'Am I not a man and a Brother?' for the heading of the membership

⁴⁴⁴ - Eugène Warburg (1825/26-1859) was perhaps the first American artist of colour to work in Rome. The son of a German Jew, Daniel Warburg, and a Cuban mulatto, Marie Rose Blondeau who had initially been a slave belonging to Daniel Warburg, Eugène Warburg was trained initially in New Orleans by Philippe Garbeille, a French sculptor and student of Bertel Thorvaldsen. Warburg went on to work and study sculpture in France for four years, exhibiting in the 1855 Exposition Universelle a bust of John Young Mason, US minister to France and co-author of the Ostend Manifesto, a US plan for the acquisition of Cuba to 'avoid a feared influx of free blacks to the island and its 'Africanization.' After the exhibition, Warburg worked in London for the Duchess of Sutherland, and then went to Florence in the autumn of 1857. Sometime later Warburg resided in Rome in the 'artists' ghetto' of the Spanish steps area, dying there on January 12, 1859. Brady, pp. 13-14, 53.

certificates of Philadelphia's Vigilant Committee, 'a group of young, primarily African American male, activists who helped escaped slaves find lives of freedom.'⁴⁴⁵ Steven Loring Jones notes that Reason's kneeling male was a less threatening representative image than 'the portrait of Amistad uprising hero Cinque by Nathaniel Jocelyn, a white artist', also commissioned by the committee president but 'refused public display in Philadelphia in 1841 for fear it might antagonise a white male population particularly riot-prone at the time.'⁴⁴⁶ Thus the rarity of heroic images of African Americans was in part engineered by white Americans fearful of their power to incite African slaves to revolt.

Lewis's combination of the kneeling female figure of *Forever Free* with the standing, triumphant male figure is therefore a daring move in African American iconography. With few if any direct representational precedents of a powerful African American male, Lewis appears to have done the logical thing for a neoclassical sculptor: she looked to classical figures for prototypes. However, as John S. Crawford has noted, she appears *not* to have drawn her male figure from a classical sculpture whose narrative echoed the themes of emancipation and triumph over slavery. Instead, Crawford argues, the male of the *Forever Free* pair is modelled on the struggling Trojan priest, Laocoön, from the Montorsoli restoration that was on display in the Vatican museums at the time of Lewis's residency in Rome. Thus Lewis's male figure can be read as both triumphant and, in its classical derivation, a pitiful victim as enchained by the serpents of Apollo as Patrick H. Reason's suppliant African American man was by American slavery.⁴⁴⁷ Similarly, Lewis's decision to portray figures such as Cleopatra and Hagar, Abraham Lincoln and William Lloyd Garrett,

445 - Steven Loring Jones, 'A Keen Sense of the Artistic: African American Material Culture in 19th Century Philadelphia', *The International Review of African American Art*, 12.2 (1995), 4-29, (p. 15).

446 - Ibid.

447 - John S. Crawford, 'The Classical Tradition in American Sculpture: Structure and Surface', *The American Art Journal*, (July 1979), 38-52 (pp. 49-50).

represents a strategy of using canonical narratives and historical figures to introduce topics of race, gender and emancipation into discourses of the American neoclassical ideal.

It is curious that the male of the *Forever Free* pair remains largely absent in most twentieth century interpretations of the sculpture. Passed over as self-explanatory – he is the ‘unproblematic’ figure in the pair for Boime – he actually functions in these readings as the coloured negative that makes the female figure ‘white’. As the internally excluded ‘other’ of the pair, he is aligned with the sculptor herself, whose ‘colour picturesquely contrast[s] with the material’ of the sculpture, as Henry James described Lewis at work. For these critics, the racial features of the female figure in *Forever Free* make her ‘whiter’ than the male.

Conversely, Edmonia Lewis is framed in this interpretation as bearing the meanings that are present in her male figure, but absent in the female one. Like the Woman sculptor’s presence in Hawthorne’s *Marble Faun*, Edmonia Lewis emerges in this analysis as a phallic ghost that haunts the art critical narrative. However, also like Hamlet’s father’s ghost, the desire she speaks of in this narrative is not her own, but that of the art historical narrative voice. To discover, then, that Edmonia Lewis is ‘on the periphery’ is a reflection of the position to which she has been consigned, as a woman sculptor of colour, in art historical discourse, rather than evidence of any intentionality on her part. To discover Edmonia Lewis as a ‘present absence’ in her sculpture is to recover her as not the subject, but the object of her work, and to conflate her with the objects of her practice under the rubric of race, in accordance with our own fantasies of her life and work.

What is both implicit and maintained in such analyses of Lewis’s work is the incompatibility of the male and female figures under the binary terms ‘black’ and ‘white’. In particular, certain facial features and hair-styles are read

as antithetical to white or black skin. But these again are preconceptions that reflect more about their twentieth century adherents than nineteenth century representational practice. If we consider most representations of Africans and Native Americans made prior to the late nineteenth century, for example, it becomes more remarkable that Lewis gave any of her figures non-classicizing features within the context of her historical position as part of the American neoclassical school, than that her female figures are more 'white' in comparison to her male ones.⁴⁴⁸ As Deborah Cherry has pointed out, we do not remark that Harriet Hosmer's *Zenobia* presents the standard 'European' features, though some might argue that there could have been scope within Hosmer's extensive research into the Palmyran Queen to portray her as racially other than Carrara-white. Cherry's reading presumes that Hosmer's whiteness has been mapped onto that of her figure, much as readings of Lewis's work seek to read her 'blackness' onto the sculptures.⁴⁴⁹

Clearly Hawthorne's praise of William Wetmore Story's *Cleopatra* for its 'Nubian' features demonstrates the influence of phrenology in this period beginning to translate into interest in ethnographic accuracy of images. But contemporaneous with this work were many other, even more classicising representations of Native Americans, which did not have to evidence raced facial features in order to be read as representatives of a particular race. (*figs 101 & 102; see also fig. 53*) Indeed, Hawthorne's description of the *Cleopatra* also suggests how a veering towards greater 'realism' in racial and historical representation can take the art work towards ethnography and archaeology, away from art:

448 - It was only at the turn of the century that facial features signify race as much as skin colour and details of cultural trappings; early representations of other races use classicising features because they signify 'representation of human'; to emphasise non-classical features is to produce a caricature or scientific/ethnography observation. Consider Anne Whitney's frustration with her attempts to find the right balance between portrait-like accuracy and artistic idealism in her figure, *Africa*, discussed in Part II, Chapter 6 'The Pygmalion Effect'.

449 - Deborah Cherry, comments on the occasion of the 'Alba Conference', University of Leicester and the Harris Museum, Preston, 1995.

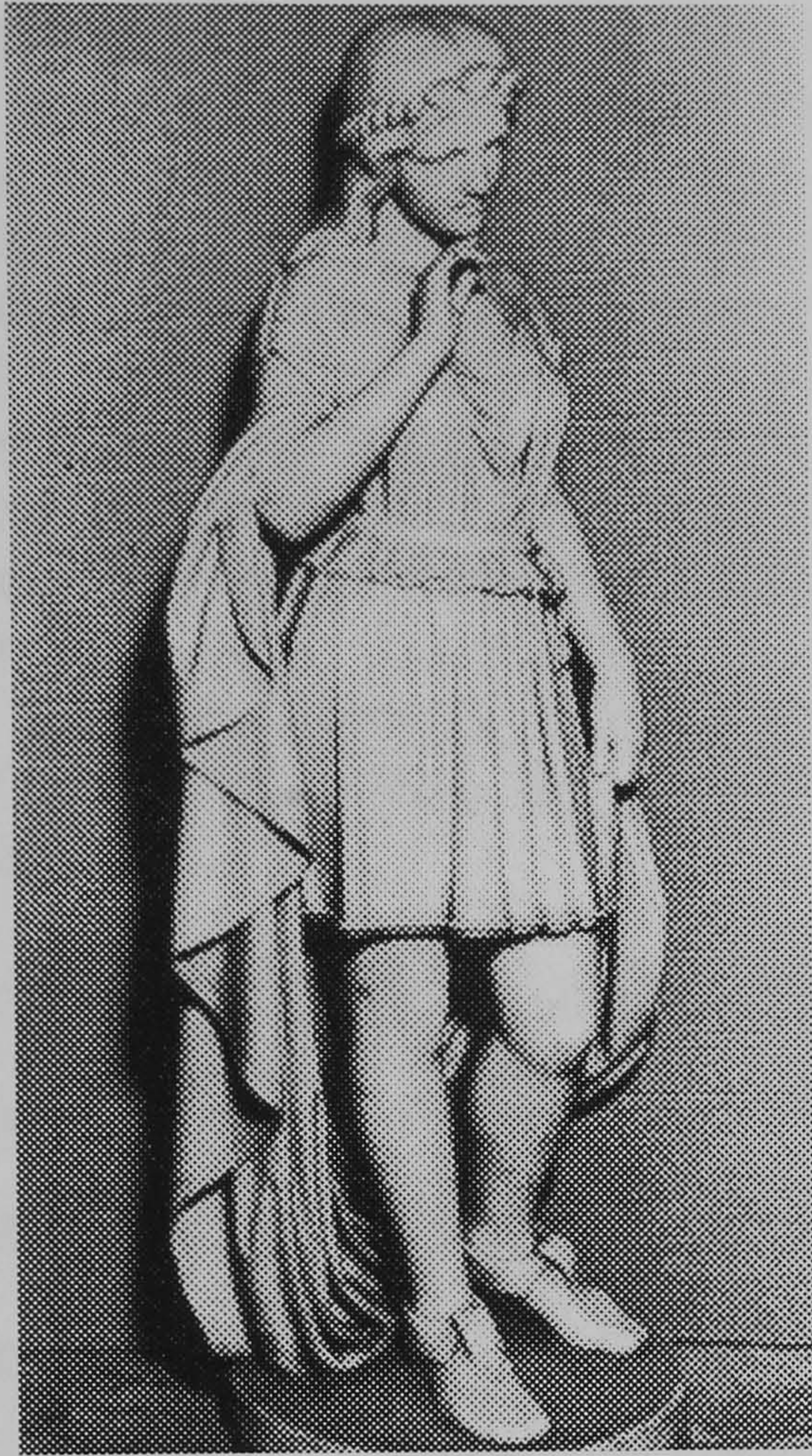


fig. 101 Joseph Mozier, *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish*, 1859, Hirschl & Adler Galleries, NY



fig. 102 Hiram Powers, *The Last of the Tribes*, 1873, National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC

The sitting figure of a woman was seen. She was draped from head to foot in a costume, minutely and scrupulously studied from that of ancient Egypt, as revealed by the strange sculpture of that country, its coins, drawings, painted mummy-cases, and whatever other tokens have been dug out of its pyramids, graves and catacombs. Even the stiff Egyptian head-dress was adhered to ... so that Cleopatra sat attired in a garb proper to her historic and queenly state, as a daughter of the Ptolemies....

The sculptor had not shunned to give the full Nubian lips, and other characteristics of the Egyptian physiognomy. His courage and integrity had been abundantly rewarded; for Cleopatra's beauty shone out richer, warmer, more triumphantly, beyond comparison, than if, shrinking timidly from the truth, he had chosen the tame Grecian type.⁴⁵⁰

Such gestures towards 'ethnographic accuracy', however, could also be construed as a challenge to the Eurocentric and racist presumptions of the neoclassical style. James Jackson Jarves, writing in *The Art Idea* of 1864, initially found Story's work to reflect a 'generous idea... to bestow upon one of Africa's daughters the possibility of intellectual powers and physical attractions of the Grecian siren.'⁴⁵¹ Later, Jarves was to upbraid Story for his historical inaccuracies: 'Story has forgotten that [Cleopatra] was wholly Greek in race and culture; her face has no ethnological decisive type,' and 'the mouth is vulgar.'⁴⁵² In light of historiography around Cleopatra, William Clark was to read Story's *Cleopatra* as more fanciful, and hence more artistic, than Lewis's portrayal:

Story gave his Cleopatra Nubian features, and achieved an artistic if not a historical success by doing so. The Cleopatra of Gould suggests a Greek lineage. Miss Lewis, on the other hand, has followed the coins, medals and other authentic records in giving her Cleopatra an aquiline nose and a prominent chin of the Roman type.... This Cleopatra, therefore, more nearly resembles the real heroine of history than either of the others...⁴⁵³

Likewise, Lewis's 'realistic' portrayal of death in her sculpture of *Cleopatra*

450 - Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, pp. 126-127.

451 - James Jackson Jarves, quoted in Richardson, 'Edmonia Lewis and the Death of Cleopatra', p. 45.

452 - Ibid.

453 - William J. Clark, Jr., *Great American Sculptures* (Philadelphia: Barrie, 1878), pp. 141-142.

made the work not 'beautiful', but nonetheless a compelling display of representational skill – technically, if not artistically, proficient.

Lewis's works did not pose the problem of ethnographic accuracy for nineteenth century audiences that has troubled twentieth century critics primarily for three reasons: firstly, because the 'Pygmalion effect' meant that her 'sculptures of colour' were automatically authenticated by their 'sculptor of colour'; secondly because of the nineteenth century practice of reading meaning in the details of the figure's costume and setting. As Hawthorne somewhat resentfully noted in *The Marble Faun*, the 'large share of the renown' accorded sculptors in his day was for 'their buttons and button-holes, their shoe-ties, their neckcloths' – the details of the narrative representation.⁴⁵⁴ And finally, Lewis would never have been expected by nineteenth century audiences to represent either Native American or African American subjects that were not also ideal figures from either a specific, canonical literary source or other contemporary iconographies. Instead, the choice to sculpt Hiawatha and Minnehaha, Cleopatra and Hagar allowed Lewis's work to be read as art rather than as ethnography.

But if Edmonia Lewis's narrative and representational choices, read in their historical context, are less strange than twentieth century critics have found them to be, I would also like to argue for the critical strangeness of certain of her works, in particular the 1867 piece, *Forever Free*.

Forever Free is an early work. Made in her second year in Rome, the piece betrays the young sculptor's struggle with issues of proportion and composition. The female figure, for example, is strikingly small in comparison with the standing male figure. Both figures' ankles, feet, and forearms are massive in proportion with the rest of their bodies. Two years later, in her *Hagar*, we can see that Lewis had resolved her difficulty with feet and ankles, but the forearms remain larger than proportions dictated by classical

⁴⁵⁴ - Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, p. 115.

paradigms would ordinarily accept. The *Freedman's Record* of 1867 also recognised the development of Lewis's ability to portray figures according to the neoclassical canon in its review of the *Forever Free*:

Many of our readers will be glad to hear from Edmonia Lewis. She sent us a photograph of a new design for a group called "The Morning of Liberty," [Lewis's original title for the work, later changed to *Forever Free*] representing a standing male figure, casting off his chains and a young girl kneeling beside him. The design shows decided improvement in modelling the human figure, though the type is less original and characteristic than in the "Freedwoman," [Lewis's 1866 work, now lost] which she sketched in the Spring. Her next step will be to combine the merits of the two and give us a really valuable group.⁴⁵⁵

It is important that we, like this critic, understand that Edmonia Lewis was a very young sculptor at this stage and, like so many of her contemporaries, largely unschooled in her art in comparison to European artists. Although she had trained in Boston under Edward Brackett, she did not enjoy, as did Harriet Hosmer for many years under John Gibson, the constant supervision and instruction afforded by working within the studio of a more experienced sculptor. Thus as remarkable as it may be that Lewis was able to sculpt professionally at all in racist and sexist nineteenth century American society, her undeniable perseverance and strength of character do not necessarily mean that every one of her works were successful according to the standards placed on neoclassical sculpture at the time.

So *Forever Free* is an early work, and in many ways a very crude work. But to me it is also one of Lewis's most engaging and important works, precisely because of the challenges it poses to art historical interpretation and the discursive structures it thereby reveals. Older and more academically-trained artists have the technical and stylistic tools with which to manage problematic subjects – such as the representation of African and Native Americans in the neoclassical style – so as largely to smooth over or erase the any moments of disjuncture, rupture, or antagonism between the narrative

455 - *Freedman's Record* 3 (January 1867) p. 3; quoted in Kirsten Buick, p. 10.

content and the stylistic form.⁴⁵⁶ Indeed, Lewis's much smaller and therefore less challenging compositions in the *Hiawatha* series of the same period are more successful in blending representations of Native American ethnicity with the neoclassical style. But particularly as a young sculptor, whose career to date had been largely based on and facilitated by a series of identifications by herself and her public of her race with the subjects she sculpted, Edmonia Lewis had few resources with which to negotiate the classical model in order to represent raced subjectivity in her works. If her sculptures are marked only by a sense of distorted illusion in the otherwise bland and seamless white marble surfaces, we can read precisely this awkward approximation of the neoclassical ideal – these images that are not quite 'white', and not quite 'black' either – as the sign of a tremendous social and subjective disturbance *registered in the work*. *Forever Free*, as the least stylistically resolved of Lewis's works, is important precisely because it most clearly bespeaks this encounter between an African American social subjectivity and dominant nineteenth century American culture. As such, *Forever Free* also betrays the frames within which any interpretive analysis of the work is undertaken. In a self-conscious attempt to 'see oneself seeing oneself', I would like to position *Forever Free* as the glimmering *can* in the *Sardine Canon* that reveals the subject of Art History as split and unstable, irreconcilably unknown and unknowable to itself.

The easy Art Historical interpretation, of course, would dismiss *Forever Free* as an amateurish attempt by an artist much more interesting as an exception than as a sculptor: 'if your dog can talk, it's irrelevant whether it can quote Shakespeare or not'. The sardine can, after all, is just that: empty and

456 - See, for example, Erastus Dow Palmer's *Indian Girl, or the Dawn of Christianity*, where a classical drapery style and fillet have been easily adapted as convincing representations of Native American garb which are also not inconsistent with the overall classicising feel of the piece. The difficulty of such projects, however, is revealed in works such as Hiram Powers's *The Last of the Tribes*, where even this veteran artist renders the 'Indian' skirt on the classical female figure as little more classically or ethnographically convincing than Victorian drapery tassels. (figs 101 & 102; see also fig. 53)

discarded, it is merely 'a small can, ...witness to the canning industry, which we, in fact, [are] supposed to supply.'⁴⁵⁷ But, as Lacan observed, 'in a sense, [the sardine can is] looking at me, all the same.' *Forever Free*, the sparkling, white, empty and discarded sardine can is that which looks at me, revealing that 'I am not simply that punctiform being located at the geometral point from which perspective is grasped.' Lewis's sculpture can be read as:

... something that introduces what was elided in the geometral relation – the depth of field, with all its ambiguity and variability, which is in no way mastered by me. It is rather it that grasps me, solicits me at every moment, and makes of the [sculpture] something other than a [sculpture], something other than what I have called the picture.⁴⁵⁸

The incongruous and discordant elements of *Forever Free* are, in this interpretation, an inducement to look closer at the work, to discover something else that is registered in its white marble form.

Kirsten Buick reads Lewis's *Forever Free* in the historical context of the emerging discourse of the African American family in the nineteenth century, interpreting Lewis's *Forever Free* as 'a reconstructed image of the African American family after slavery'.⁴⁵⁹ Rather than seeing the male figure as aggressively dominant with respect to the kneeling female, Buick sees his hand, resting on the female's shoulder, as 'protective'. Freedom has brought this man his masculinity as well. Buick cites Horton:

[T]he ability to support and protect their women became synonymous with manhood and manhood became synonymous with freedom. Often slaves demanding their freedom used the term 'manhood rights.' Manhood and freedom were tied to personal power.⁴⁶⁰

Within this highly gendered ideology of liberation, Buick sees Lewis's female figure as acceding to the more passive and 'pious' feminine role urged upon white women in American society. Understood within the terms of the "cult of

457 - Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 95.

458 - Ibid., p. 96.

459 - Buick, p. 6.

460 - Ibid.

true womanhood”, Lewis’s freedwomen in this and her earlier work (now lost), *The Freedwoman on First Hearing of Her Liberty*, ‘are posed to underscore their submissive, pious character, validated by their newfound freedom to act out normalised gender roles. Both are part of a family.’⁴⁶¹

But if, in this view, *Forever Free* represents an aspiration on the part of African American families after slavery to the status and security accorded white, bourgeois society, in another it also bears witness to the failure of that ideal. In times of trauma, such as existence under slavery, ‘normalised’ family structures break down. Some family members may be lost, new members, not biologically related to the group, may enter the family sphere. Family members take on new or additional roles. Boundaries between roles are blurred and the entire concept of ‘family’ is called into question as a definable entity. The Freudian family romance becomes increasingly difficult to map onto such unstable networks.

In her introduction to *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psycho-Analysis, and Feminism*, Marianne Hirsch draws attention to the problematic of applying the classic Freudian familial model to the African American family structure of Toni Morrison’s novel, *Beloved*. ‘Familial structures in this novel,’ she notes, ‘are profoundly distorted by the institution of slavery.’⁴⁶² In her essay, ‘The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture and Black Mother/Daughter Relationships,’ Patricia Hill Collins concurs:

While slavery both disrupted West African family patterns and exposed enslaved Africans to the gender ideologies and practices of slave owners, it simultaneously made it impossible, had they wanted to do so, for enslaved Africans to implement slave owner’s ideologies.⁴⁶³

The ramifications of African American families’ adaptations to the specific conditions of existing as slaves and descendants of slaves within

461 - Buick, p. 10.

462 - Marianne Hirsch, ‘The Mother/Daughter Plot’, *Narrative, Psychoanalysis, and Feminism* (1989), p. 6.

463 - Patricia Hill Collins, ‘The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture and Black Mother/Daughter Relationships,’ *Sage*, 4.2 (Fall 1987), p. 5.

racist American culture are manifold, and extend well into the present day.⁴⁶⁴ For example, as Collins points out, 'the separate spheres of providing as a male domain and affective nurturing as a female domain did not develop within African American families.'⁴⁶⁵ Because the qualities and functions attributed to black motherhood differ so greatly from those accorded motherhood in white, bourgeois American society, Collins extrapolates that, 'the specification of the female role with which Black girls identify may be quite different than that modelled by middle class white mothers.'⁴⁶⁶ In 'Changing the Letter: The Yokes, the Jokes of Discourse, or, Mrs. Stowe, Mr. Reed,' Spillers quotes Gillian Brown on the effects of slavery on traditional bourgeois divisions between public and private, work and domesticity:

Slavery disregards [the] opposition between the family at home and the exterior workplace. The distinction between work and family is eradicated in the slave, for whom there is no separation between economic and private status. When people themselves are 'articles' subject to 'mercantile dealings,' when 'the souls and bodies of men' are 'equivalent to money', women can no longer keep houses that provide refuge from marketplace activities.⁴⁶⁷

It is, in fact, questionable as to whether or not one can speak of 'the family' in familiar Freudian terms when that family is caught in the machinations of the economic and power dynamics of slavery. Spillers relates Meillassoux's assertion that 'slavery creates an economic and social agent whose virtue lies in being outside the kinship system.'⁴⁶⁸ For neither the gendered roles of the family nor the purpose and use of reproduction within a slave economy can be aligned with those of the Freudian paradigm. The

464 - Hortense J. Spillers, 'Interstices: A Small Drama of Words,' *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. by Carole S. Vance (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 76.

465 - Collins, p. 5.

466 - Ibid.

467 - Gillian Brown, 'Getting in the Kitchen with Dinah: Domestic Politics in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*,' *American Quarterly*, 36.4 (1984), p. 505. Quoted in Hortense J. Spillers, 'Changing the Letter: The Yokes, the Jokes of Discourse, or, Mrs. Stowe, Mr. Reed,' *Slavery and the Literary Imagination*, Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1987, n.s., 13, ed. by Deborah E. McDowell and Arnold Rampersad (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

468 - Hortense J. Spillers, 'Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book', *diacritics* (Summer, 1987), p. 74.

female slave was encouraged to reproduce, and frequently forcibly impregnated, for the financial benefit of her 'owner'. Although the owner might be the father of the child, such paternity was rarely recognised so as to benefit the child. Paradoxically, the child could not be said to 'belong' to his/her mother, although this was the only acknowledged parent the child had, and instead the child 'belonged' to another who may or may not have been his/her parent.⁴⁶⁹ The slave is on the 'boundaries' of kinship, in 'another instance of vestibular cultural formation where 'kinship' loses meaning *since it can be invaded at any given and arbitrary moment by the property relations.*⁴⁷⁰ '[G]enetic reproduction becomes, then, not an elaboration of the life-principle in its cultural overlap, but an extension of the boundaries of proliferating properties.'⁴⁷¹

Accordingly, fatherhood and its role in the family becomes a matter of extreme ambiguity in a system in which 'fathers *could* and *did* sell their sons and daughters.'⁴⁷² Motherhood as well is divested of its mythical proportions where the female slave's body and her offspring become 'prime commodities of exchange'.⁴⁷³ Consequently, 'motherhood' within slavery is unable to function as a 'legitimate procedure of cultural inheritance.'⁴⁷⁴ Similarly, the African American father has been elided as a 'mimetic' partner in the 'family romance', and the African American child has been afforded no 'fatherly reprieve' in the person of the white American male who occupies the position of the Name-of-the-Father.⁴⁷⁵

The difficulties of interpretation posed by Lewis's *Forever Free* can be read as reflecting the great dis-ease of the African American family within

469 - Spillers, 'Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book', p. 74.

470 - Ibid.

471 - Ibid., 75.

472 - Spillers, 'Changing the Letter', p. 28.

473 - Spillers, 'Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe', p. 75.

474 - Ibid., p. 80.

475 - Ibid.

white society in the nineteenth century, and Lewis's inevitable encounters with that trauma as a woman of colour in America. In this frame, Lewis's own life experiences can function as evidence to support yet another reading of *Forever Free*, instead of encouraging a 'Pygmalion effect' conflation of the artist with her autobiography.

The male-female pair in *Forever Free* has been taken, without exception, by art historians to represent a husband and wife. Yet this interpretation fails to account for more than just the alleged racial and gender differences in the figures' representation: the male figure is not only much larger than the kneeling female, but appears to be older as well. Indeed, the kneeling female figure could easily represent an adolescent, and the protective, older male could be an elder brother, as was Lewis's experience of her own family.

'Family' for Edmonia Lewis at the time in which she made *Forever Free* consisted of herself and her brother alone. Although as far as we know Edmonia Lewis was not immediately part of a slave family, her family necessarily shared in the traumatic history of the African American family under slavery. Lewis reported that her father was a free man and a gentleman's servant, while her mother was a 'full-blooded Chippewa Indian'. Holland describes Lewis's father as Afro-Haitian.⁴⁷⁶ Bearden and Henderson record that Lewis's maternal grandfather, John Mike, was also an African American, possibly a fugitive from slavery. At a certain point, the Mississauga group to which Lewis's maternal line belonged banned the John Mike family from 'living on the reservation and receiving the annual government payment.'⁴⁷⁷ Bearden and Henderson explain: 'The rationale behind this ban was that if blacks, who were arriving in increasing numbers, intermarried with the Mississauga for several generations, the government might at some point declare their children were not Mississauga and deny them the annual

476 - Holland, p. 27.

477 - Bearden and Henderson, p. 54.

grants.⁴⁷⁸ Pressure from the band for the Mike family to leave may be one of the causes of Edmonia Lewis's mother's arrival in Albany, New York, where she was to meet Edmonia's father.

Orphaned by 1847,⁴⁷⁹ Lewis reported that she spent her childhood until the age of 12 among 'her mother's people', leading a 'wandering life, fishing and swimming and making moccasins.'⁴⁸⁰ By the mid-1850s, however, Lewis's elder brother, Samuel, had taken over Lewis's maintenance and paid for her education, first at a Baptist abolitionist school in New York, and later at Oberlin College in Ohio, while he worked in California. Marilyn Richardson suggests that he may have been a step-brother.⁴⁸¹ Samuel Lewis appears as a supportive but absent figure in Lewis's biography. Nevertheless, the relationship apparently held great importance for Lewis. Anne Whitney records Lewis's consternation at Samuel's marriage, and expresses the opinion that the primary motivation for Lewis's 1873 trip to California was to look for her brother.⁴⁸²

Taking Lewis's own family experience as a frame, the pair could also be read as bespeaking the racial pairing of her mother and father. Lewis described her parents thus: 'My mother was a wild Indian, ... born in Albany, of copper color and straight black hair. There she made and sold moccasins. My father, who was a negro, and a gentleman's servant saw her and married her.'⁴⁸³ Or the difference in the two figures' facial features could also lead us to conclude that they are not necessarily related at all, even by marriage. Perhaps, instead, they reflect the diversity of physiognomic types that were considered, under American law, to be 'black' even if the individual had only one African ancestor in the previous four generations. In formal terms as well,

478 - Bearden and Henderson, p. 54.

479 - Lewis was probably three years old; see Holland, p. 27.

480 - Quoted in Holland, p. 28.

481 - Richardson, *The Death of Cleopatra*, p. 44, n. 24.

482 - Anne Whitney to Sarah Whitney, February 7, 1869 (Whitney Correspondence); quoted in Bearden and Henderson, pp. 70-71.

483 - Quoted in Holland, p. 28.

the female figure's lack of a turban distances her from the iconographic tradition in representing slave women and indeed, servant women of colour of any national origin.⁴⁸⁴

In the frame of a formal, iconographic analysis, the male figure's self-evidently 'ethnic' facial features become less convincing as well. His curly hair could also recall classical hair-styles of the Flavian period, for example, or the standard representation of shepherds in a classical vocabulary, as curly-headed as their flocks. Such analyses break down as they are premised on the vague and historically-contingent stereotypes of 'what an African American looks like', and again say more about twentieth century criticism than about Edmonia Lewis's sculpture.

Another way of framing Lewis's sculpture might emphasise the processes of its production. As discussed earlier, the marble pair would have begun as a clay maquette. Early in her career, we know that Lewis had financial difficulties in Rome. These as well as a fear of being accused of not making her own sculptures may have prevented her from hiring many artisans to assist her in the many stages and different kinds of tasks involved in sculptural production: the preparation of the clay, the construction of the armature for the full-scale clay model, the casting of the model in plaster, the 'pointing' of the plaster version into the marble and the final carving of the work. The practice of sculpture in an under-staffed studio would have been physically demanding in the extreme, and it could have developed Lewis's forearms into the bulky and powerful forms which we find in her figures and, indeed, might expect from people accustomed to hard physical labour, such as slaves, as well. It was also probably expedient and economical for Lewis to use her own body as a model for parts of the work at some stages of its production. A difficulty of access to the male nude for Lewis may also have contributed to the lack of any sign of male genitals under his thin shorts.

⁴⁸⁴ - I am grateful to Griselda Pollock for pointing this iconography out to me.

But there would be other practical reasons as well for a young artist to err on the side of making a figure's extremities disproportionately large. As the missing arms and noses of ancient sculptures illustrate, the thinner and longer the figure's limbs, the more likely they were to break, both during its production and subsequent shipment or general use. Of particular difficulty are feet and ankles, as these are the points that had to support the entire weight of the figure, which would be much heavier in clay or marble than a living human body. While the stronger and more plastic – but also more expensive – bronze medium permitted the sculptor greater freedom and ambition in modelling, marble was cheaper but more fragile. The ubiquitous 'tree-stumps' and other supporting elements of classical marble statuary represent one way that sculptors attempted to overcome this problem in representing standing human figures in stone.

Lewis's *Forever Free* is conservative in its response to the problems of supporting the figures' heights. The female figure's kneeling stance gives the pair a broad base on one side, against which the standing figure can be supported as well. In addition, both figures' feet and ankles are exaggerated in size, as if to prevent their buckling at the narrowest point of support, the ankle.

There are three directions in which a sculpture is made: from the general to the specific, from the inside out, and from the ground up. That is to say, the sculptor begins in the maquette with a lump of clay which is shaped into the general form desired for the final work. In the case of *Forever Free*, this general form is that of a pyramid – an unambitious shape structurally, as its broad base easily supports the weight of the upper portion. From this general form, the specific details of the figures would be modelled and carved out.

The next stage of production required the construction of an armature or skeleton – usually of metal and/or wood – for the composition at full scale.

From this skeleton and guided by the maquette, the sculptor would have worked 'from the inside out', gradually building up clay on the skeleton until it was 'fleshed out' as generalised human forms in the basic proportions worked out in the maquette.

And finally, the sculptor modelled the full-scale clay figure from the bottom up. As it was the supporting figure, Lewis would have worked the kneeling female to a high level of completion first. With important elements such as her shoulder in place, the male figure could then be modelled at her side, resting on her shoulder. His arm would have been one of the last elements fashioned in the pair, as both his and the female's shoulders had to be in place before the delicate arm could be added. Its extreme length and bulkiness reveals that having modelled the two figures upwards separately, Lewis had to lengthen the male figure's arm out of true proportion in order to join their incongruous sizes.

Reading incongruous details of the *Forever Free* within the context of the processes of the work's production thus offers at least three frames within which we can understand the figures' largely proportioned feet, ankles, and forearms. A metaphorical frame referencing the effects of slave-labour on African American bodies might interpret the sculpture's swelling forearms as symptomatic of the toil they represent, and the large feet as bespeaking an ideology of African American 'rootedness in the land', strength and stability. The frame of Lewis's economic position during the work's production might suggest that her own body, forearms swelled by carving, was the model for her sculpture. The frame of Lewis's professional inexperience could induce us to see these large limbs as the response of a young sculptor to the structural difficulties posed by the human figure to representation in heavy clay and marble. In this light, *Forever Free* evidences a sort of 'belt and braces' construction that reassured the sculptor that her figures would not topple or

buckle at the ankles.

On their own, any one of these interpretations of *Forever Free* is so simplistic as to be absurd, and certainly would be difficult if not impossible to 'prove'. But rather than try to argue for the 'truth' of any of these or other interpretations of the relationship between the two figures, I would suggest that what is more important in the work is precisely the ambiguity of the figures – the fact that this work can give rise to so many and so varied fantasies about the life and working habits of Edmonia Lewis. In its oddly distorted proportions and lack of visual symmetry between the figures, Edmonia Lewis's *Forever Free* can be read as both betraying the traumatic legacy of slavery necessarily borne by nineteenth century African American families, and simultaneously striving to represent aspirations towards an African American familial ideal intended to erase or overcome that history. Thus the interpretation of this work need not fall into an 'either/or' binary choice; instead, its representational richness lies precisely in its capacity to signify a wide range of relationships and potential relationships after African American emancipation, which are spoken through the terms available to the sculpture as a result of a wide range of factors, including the practical exigencies of the neoclassical style and the limitations of Lewis's inexperience in the processes of sculptural production. In these many contingent but separate frames, *Forever Free* can be read as an uncanny image that manifests qualities both familiar and alien, without combining either of these different elements through a 'melting pot' miscegenation. In a period of entrenched and rigidly policed racial, sexual, and class identities, *Forever Free* unfixes all certainties about the figures' race and even gender, and proposes instead an impure and fluid network of multiple identities.⁴⁸⁵

The emphasis of Freud's discussion of the uncanny is placed on its

485 - I am grateful to Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger for pointing out the effect of the lack of any clear visual sign of the male figure's sex on destabilising the notion of sexual identity in Lewis's *Forever Free*, conversation with the author, 4 July, 1998.

'proximity to the castration complex'.⁴⁸⁶ Lacan too describes the 'strange contingency' of the gaze as 'the lack that constitutes castration anxiety.'⁴⁸⁷ The uncanny has, therefore, been primarily understood in Freudian-Lacanian terms as a harbinger of castration: 'the *Unheimlich*, which is a repressed Heimlich or Heimisch (familiar, homely), can only be repressed by the "castration" anxiety'.⁴⁸⁸

Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, however, finds in Freud a so-far neglected reference to another source of the uncanny: 'the phantasy... of intra-uterine existence' or 'womb-fantasies'.⁴⁸⁹ She references Freud's commentary (discussed earlier in the context of travellers' experiences of Rome):⁴⁹⁰

Whenever a man dreams of a place or a country and says to himself, while he is still dreaming: 'this place is familiar to me, I've been here before', we may interpret the place as being his mother's genitals or her body. In this case too, then, the *Unheimlich* is what was once *heimisch*, familiar; the prefix 'un' ['un-'] is the token of repression.⁴⁹¹

This 'phantasy of the maternal *matrice* [matrix]' as a source of the uncanny is 'excluded by inclusion within the "castration" phantasy'⁴⁹² in Lacanian psychoanalytic theory – it is an internal exclusion within a purely phallic understanding of the phenomenon. But Lichtenberg Ettinger suggests that in Freud's discussion of archaic phantasy complexes '*the intra-uterine or womb phantasy is not retroactively folded into the castration phantasy but they co-exist, contrary to other pre-Oedipal post-natal fantasies based on weaning or on separation from organs as part-object.*'⁴⁹³ Thus representations that participate in the uncanny do not necessarily have to presuppose the anxiety

486 - Sigmund Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 245, discussed in Lichtenberg Ettinger, *The Matrixial Gaze*, p. 7.

487 - Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, pp. 72-73.

488 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, *The Matrixial Gaze*, p. 6.

489 - Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', pp. 244, 248, discussed in Lichtenberg Ettinger, *The Matrixial Gaze*, p. 7.

490 - See Part 1, Chapter 3.iv, 'Uncanny Topographies'.

491 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, *The Matrixial Gaze*, p. 7.

492 - Ibid.

493 - Ibid.

of an either/or choice between the familiar and the alien, self and other. Not all experiences of the uncanny stem from castration complexes; indeed, to interpret 'uncanny' representations like Edmonia Lewis's *Forever Free* by seeking to 'cut off' one of the discordant elements in a bifurcated pair is to repeat the tautological privileging of castration as 'the prototype of just *any* separation from the bodily-archaic partial dimension, of any loss and absence that leads to an inscription in the Symbolic.'⁴⁹⁴ As Lichtenberg Ettinger points out, 'Oedipal castration focuses the sight and turns vision into an ordering, selecting, separating, or unifying function.'⁴⁹⁵ Any interpretation of *Forever Free* that reads – implicitly or explicitly – with a 'phallic eye' will necessarily produce a reductive interpretation that accounts for only part of the work's symbolic organisation.

I should like, therefore, to read *Forever Free* as an uncanny image, but one not to be explained by reference to castration anxiety. Rather, this work can be understood as the representation of a matrixial phantasy, 'linked to sexual difference "viewed in a *female's* way", to the feminine/prenatal encounter in the Real that touches its *several* partners and not only the woman.'⁴⁹⁶ This is a sculpture, then, that can only be adequately interpreted as a relational encounter with the several, rather than through the binary pairs of white/black, male/female, good/bad, and the other similarly reductive paradigms through which this work has been read.

In this respect, Edmonia Lewis's *Forever Free* can be contrasted with Harriet Hosmer's *Beatrice Cenci*. Hosmer's work operates more fully within phallic processes of signification; the figure's death is 'lived in anticipation, a death that crosses over into the sphere of life, a life that moves into the realm of death'.⁴⁹⁷ The body in the *Beatrice Cenci* is 'the frontier that separates the

494 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, *The Matrixial Gaze*, p. 7.

495 - Ibid, p. 11.

496 - Ibid., p. 8.

497 - Lacan, *The Ethics of Psycho-Analysis*, p. 248; quoted and discussed in Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'Transgressing with-in-to the feminine', p. 6.

human being from the feminine.’ As Lichtenberg Ettinger explains, ‘In the phallic structure the figure that transgresses [the frontier between the human being and the feminine] is sacrificed to death or blindness.’⁴⁹⁸ Hosmer’s *Beatrice Cenci* suffers both, awaiting her death with her eyes closed, asleep. In Lewis’s *Forever Free*, on the other hand, a matrixial structure is more easily read, as the empty, neoclassical No-Thing becomes an ethically-charged ‘wit(h)ness-thing’.⁴⁹⁹ The human bodies are not just ‘the last barrier from the Other-beyond, but the passage to a matrixial other.’ Thus in this work, ‘the question of sacrifice moves to the margins’, ‘to make place for the question of witnessing as witnessing: wit(h)nessing.’⁵⁰⁰

‘If a bird were to paint would it not be by letting fall its feathers, a snake by casting off its scales, a tree by letting fall all its leaves? What it amounts to is the first act in the laying down of the gaze.’⁵⁰¹ Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger explains Lacan’s description of the creative act:

The painter’s creative gesture does not originate in decision or will, but concludes an internal stroke, a stroke which also participates in regression, but, contrary to regression, it creates – in a backward movement, as in a reversal of the course of psychological time – a *stimulus* to which the gesture becomes a *reaction*.⁵⁰²

The creative gesture of the sculptor is similarly a retroactive conclusion to this ‘internal stroke’ which founds the sculptor’s unique subjectivity. But ‘[w]e have to distinguish between a painting and a representation, and between the activity of painting and representing.’⁵⁰³ To read a work of art as an act rather than as a representation, as process rather than product, is to analyse the work for traces of the artist’s gesture. Such an analysis is fundamentally different from looking for traces of the artist’s hand, which presumes that that

498 - Lacan, *The Ethics of Psycho-Analysis*, p. 248; quoted and discussed in Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, ‘Transgressing with-in-to the feminine’, p. 6.

499 - Ibid., p. 13.

500 - Ibid., p. 7.

501 - Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 114.

502 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, *The Matrixial Gaze*, p. 8.

503 - Ibid., p. 9.

'hand' is linked to the artist understood as a singular, unary identity. The illusory nature of both identifications is reflected in their static quality: the artist's 'hand' in such readings will only ever produce one 'brushstroke' (or a discrete palette of strokes, perhaps varying over time but nonetheless finite), by which the 'authentic' painting can be distinguished from the 'fake'. The guarantee of the authenticity of these 'brushstrokes' is the artist him or herself, also presumed to be a discrete, finite, and static identity, even if that identity, like the 'brushstroke', is organised into a series of 'periods' or 'styles' that, while changing over time, always refer to the same Cartesian subject. The unchanging, unary Cartesian subject is the premise upon which the 'Pygmalion effect' operates to conflate the sculptor and her sculptures, where the self-reflexive identification of the artist's hand with the artist herself ultimately makes the artist indistinguishable from her work, and vice versa.

If, however, the subject is understood as irreducibly divided and fundamentally unknowable to any conscious 'self', the creative gesture is, therefore, not an index to the singular truth of the artist. On the contrary, the creative gesture can only ever be a trace of the movement of subjective desire, a reaction to an internal stroke that retroactively gives meaning to that stimulus without in any way evidencing an original will or fundamental 'nature' inherent in the subject.

When Lacan gives us his interpretation of the tragedy of Antigone, he does not offer the 'key' to Antigone or the elucidation of a conscious desire which 'explains' her as a subject. Rather, Lacan reads for the movement of Antigone's desire, and indeed discovers that its trajectory is an intra-subjective one, whose movement along the generations Antigone merely incarnates, to which she gives the real support of her flesh: 'What happens to her desire?' Lacan asks. 'Shouldn't it be the desire of the Other and be linked to the desire of the mother? The text alludes to the fact that the desire of the

mother is the origin of everything. The desire of the mother is the founding desire of the whole structure...⁵⁰⁴ Thus, as Freud's methodology emphasises, a psychoanalytic reading of the creative gesture cannot be deterministic. We can trace the symptom back to its founding moment, but we cannot predict from a subject's moment of entry into language how that unique subjective cut will manifest itself symbolically, in the subject's symptoms and creative acts. The founding 'internal stroke' will only ever gain its meanings *après-coup*.

This retroactive trajectory of psychological time is no less manifest in matrixial Symbolic activity, but is broadened to include the 'in-and-future-side/site', linking via the metamorphic beautiful the 'too early' to the 'too late'.⁵⁰⁵ Matrixial *objet a* – analogous thought not identical to the symptom and work of art as understood in the phallic Symbolic system – are no more likely to lead us to discover a unified, originary Cartesian identity. In her discussion of the metamorphosis of the 'Red Cow effect', Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger similarly underscores that in the Matrix:

Wandering, scattered and sprayed, it is impossible to regather the Red Cow's ashes-traces; one can only find some of them in other additional matrixes, and follow their footsteps to a labyrinth not envisioned in advance, woven in the course of creating its route through strolling along it. My matrixial *objet a* initiates yours to join in; you proffer in it the relation that you lost together with others, you are the witness of your offering and you offer your witnessing on to further assemblages so that not in total perishing a matrixial sacrifice is inscribed in culture. Antigone's desire bears witness to that.⁵⁰⁶

Antigone's incestuous desire, configured in Lacan's reading around the body of her dead brother, with whom she shared a womb, bears witness to the desire of her mother. Antigone points to the importance of this pre-natal

504 - Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 282-283.

505 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'Transgressing with-in-to the feminine', p. 10, p. 14, p. 18. Lichtenberg Ettinger notes that 'The "too early and too late", is an expression used by the poet Paul Celan to describe poetry. For Deleuze, the time of "too late" is related to aesthetics.' n. 27, p. 20.

506 - Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'The Red Cow Effect: The Metamorphosis of Hallowing the Hollow and Hollowing the Hollow', *Act 2* (London: Pluto Press, 1996), pp. 82-118 (p. 109).

rapport when she explains that her self-sacrifice could only have been made for a sibling. 'Understand this:' she declaims in Sophocles's text:

I would not have defied the law of the city for a husband or a child to whom a tomb had been denied, because after all, if I had lost a husband in this way, I could have taken another, and even if I had lost a child with my husband, I could have made another child with another husband. But it concerned my brother, born of the same father and the same mother.⁵⁰⁷

Lacan explains, 'Now that Antigone's mother and father are hidden away in Hades, there is no possibility of another brother ever being born'.⁵⁰⁸

Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger replies to Lacan's interpretation, arguing that:

... in so referring to Antigone's hinting at the maternal womb, Lacan is folding the womb into the phallus/castration stratum. Being born of the same womb is equaled to being of the same father and leads to paying the price of the parental crimes of incest or killing by traversing beyond the human chain of exchange. The specificity of this conjunction results in representing the brother, for whose memory she is willing to die, as an incarnation of the idea of the unexchangeable One.⁵⁰⁹

Instead, a matrixial interpretation 'conveys ... a supplementary value to the figure of the brother.'⁵¹⁰ The brother and sister are linked not to the father, but to a womb fantasy that is distinct from the phallic/castration stratum. In the matrixial prism, 'The feminine/prenatal incest is ... a necessary transgression', emerging into culture neither as psychosis (Kristeva) nor as sacrifice (Lacan).⁵¹¹

In the matrixial view, Antigone's desire precedes 'Oedipalisation', and articulates an incestuous jouissance beyond the Law of the Father and prior to its founding moment, mythologised by Freud in 'Totem and Taboo' as the originary murder of the Father by the sons and subsequent prohibition of

507 - Quoted in Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 255.

508 - Ibid.

509 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'Transgressing with-in-to the feminine', p. 7.

510 - Ibid.

511 - Ibid., p. 9.

incest.⁵¹² The tragedy of Antigone is 'Not the realisation of primordial sexual rapport in an archaic *Real*, but a channel for expressing a desire that is not written in the existing Law.'⁵¹³ In an act of matrixial sublimation, Antigone:

desires to hallow the hollow and to hollow the hallow: to violate, desecrate and break the law while redeeming and hallowing the defiled and disgraced, the dead with whom she shared a maternal womb. Her incestual state of inner exile echoes residuals of her mother's. "Antigone is an exile because of the fact of incest [...] which is one and only: the return to the maternal womb."⁵¹⁴

'What in Antigone's argument is waiting to be heard and compassioned', Lichtenberg Ettinger suggests, 'is the suffering from tearing apart of one of her principle partners-in-difference separated-in-jointness into total separateness.'⁵¹⁵ In the matrixial sphere, it is not death that engenders the traumatic cut in the subject as the 'almost-impossible knowlege of the Thing', for death is already psychically constituted as a human event. Rather, non-human bestiality is the threat to the matrixial web, 'the passage to a bestiality that threatens to blow up and explode this sphere all together into separate pieces':

Non-human bestiality inflicted on my non-I(s) diminuates, and can abolish, the capacity of the matrixial web for resorption of loss, transference of memory and process mourning. Antigone's private death is less of a price for her to pay than living through an irremediable explosion of the matrixial borderspace.⁵¹⁶

The non-human bestiality of slavery can be compared to this threat to the matrixial web and irresistible impetus in the figure of Antigone. Although far less dramatic, the story of Lewis's creation of the *Forever Free* indexes an unrelenting drive on the artist's part to see the work in marble. Her mentors and critics saw Lewis as childlike and impetuous when she borrowed money

512 - This is not to reject Lacan's interpretation as entirely invalid, but simply to identify the field of its relevance; as Lichtenberg Ettinger notes, 'the link to the phallus is however always maintained through the woman's desire that is both phallic and matrixial'. Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'Transgressing with-in-to the feminine', p. 10.

513 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'The Red Cow Effect', p. 109.

514 - Ibid.

515 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'Transgressing with-in-to the feminine', p. 17.

516 - Ibid.

in order to have the work cut in marble before she had a buyer, and then shipping the work to patrons in the United States with a bill for the piece and its transport. Undoubtedly she was in the terms of the art market. But the urgency of her actions may also stem from another source, 'bearing witness' to a trauma otherwise unarticulable. 'In the matrixial stratum the artist positions herself on an-other's sides, joining-in-difference the others' traumas and webbing passage lanes from this wit(h)nessing.'⁵¹⁷

If we read Edmonia Lewis's creative gesture as the reaction to an internal stroke which is linked to the desire of the mother, her uncanny sculpture, *Forever Free*, emerges as a 'mistress-piece' based on a matrixial phantasy of a pre-Oedipal rapport. As such it bears witness to the desire of the mother, a desire of miscegenation, and the 'im-pure' act that created the potential for Lewis's subjective becoming, without 'folding' the rapport between Lewis and her brother, between the two figures in the work, between Lewis and the work back into phallic/castration relations of rejection/fusion. *Forever Free* is a work that 'hallows the hollow and hollows the hallow'; it 'violates, desecrates and breaks the law while redeeming and hallowing the defiled and disgraced'. As in the tragedy of *Antigone*, 'the *Thing-rapport* [that is *Forever Free*] resists the existing Symbolic order [and its attendant binary discourses of black or white, good or bad, male or female] and does not yield itself, while matrixial residues find sublimatory passages into [this work of] art.'⁵¹⁸

As a witness to the nineteenth century African American family, the pair of figures in *Forever Free* has a covenantal relationship to Edmonia Lewis's personal and family history as well. 'Female subjects have a "privileged" access to a paradoxical time of future-past and a paradoxical space of outside-inside,' Lichtenberg Ettinger posits:

517 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'Transgressing with-in-to the feminine', p. 17.

518 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'The Red Cow Effect', p. 109.

Males however are in contact with this time and space, as women are too, by compassionate matrixial jointing-in-difference with others and with particular art presences - whether artobjects, artactions, artgestures, music. As an aesthetic filter, the matrixial apparatus serves both males and females; various non-conscious lanes, that are opened toward and from femaleness, are not limited to women only, though they do carry a special resonance for women when they treasure and screen their bodily traces.⁵¹⁹

Read matrixially, *Forever Free* carries traces of Edmonia Lewis's own 'impure' race and her privileged relationship with the female body. Such ambiguity is not 'con-fusion'; as in 'the superposition of maleness and femaleness' in Leonardo's painting, discussed by Henry Maldiney and Lichtenberg Ettinger, it is rather as an example of a 'matrixial androgynous figure'.⁵²⁰ Maldiney describes Leonardo's *Saint Anne and the Virgin*:

The dreamlike fusion of the two figures in the drawing becomes a separation in the painting. But the separation is not complete. The image of the dream is still floating in the space of the vigil in which it is divided... the figure of Saint Anne accompanies Mary as here double – a double issuing less from a behind-world than Leonardo's before-world which remains the absolute past of his early childhood, not anterior but subjacent to his present world. [What] subsists of the first union of the two figures is not so much the vagaries of certain common contours as a strange two-on-two. They communicate with one another on a single-same plane of emanation which is tied to the global schema of their crossed forms.⁵²¹

As in Leonardo's painting, I would argue that so in Lewis's *Forever Free* the image of one figure – Mary/the female of the *Forever Free* pair – 'is detached from that of Saint Anne[/the male figure] which is both shadow and background', and the trans-gendered body of the 'male' figure in *Forever Free* 'emanates' from the pair as a 'profound and dark mirror'. In *Forever Free*, as in Leonardo's painting, 'the occult in withdrawal bears that which is manifest. The latent meaning underlies the immediate meaning. But these two

519 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'Transgressing with-in-to the feminine', p. 10.

520 - Maldiney's reading of Leonardo's painting is discussed in Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'Transgressing with-in-to the feminine', p. 18; see also below.

521 - Henry Maldiney, 'L'équivoque de l'image dans la peinture' in *Regard, Parole, Espace* (Lausanne: L'Homme Nouveau, 1970), trans. by J. Simas and quoted in Lichtenberg Ettinger, *The Matrixial Gaze*, n. 80, pp. 23-24.

meanings, without excepting the occult, are immanent in the two visible images – one subjacent to the other.⁵²² In these ambivalent, ambiguous works, ‘separation is kept in a single-same plane of union like in distance-in-proximity; it communicates a subjacenting borderlinking that incorporates without exclusion and without fusion, where an absolute “before” world is, in the same breath, once again and for the first time available.’⁵²³ The passage between male and female, ‘black’ and ‘not-black’ in *Forever Free* is analogous to Lichtenberg Ettinger’s reading of Tiresias as neither the mastering nor the foreclosure of one figure by the other, but rather ‘a specific kind of superposition-in-difference, or trans-position of maleness and femaleness.’ Such a ‘co-poietic’ sharing of meaning in the artwork ‘transmits sub-knowledge from a site of transgression, in a borderspace that contacts the surplus by borderlinking’.⁵²⁴

Thus *Forever Free* ‘bear[s] wit(h)ness and articulate[s] sub-knowledge off/from the sex[/race] of the other’, and thereby aims at the function of ‘the beautiful’ in the matrixial sphere.⁵²⁵

Metramorphic beauty is neither a romantic private overflowing, nor is it a reverberation of certain harmonies of form elected in a consensus judgment of taste (Kant). Rather, it is co-affectation’s obscure trail, skirting on sensation’s edges and becoming visible when a passion based on marks of shareability becomes transgressive *again* and labors anew in com-passion.⁵²⁶

The aesthetic effect of the beautiful in the matrixial sphere is ‘what offers whatever succeeds – as object, subject, or event – to offer re-affectation-as-redistribution of traumatic traces of encounters with and of one’s *non-I(s)*’.⁵²⁷

Metramorphic beauty is therefore a specifically trans-subjective process, and

522 - Maldiney, quoted in Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, *The Matrixial Gaze*, n. 80, pp. 23-24.

523 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, ‘Transgressing with-in-to the feminine’, p. 18.

524 - Ibid., pp. 17-18.

525 - Ibid., pp. 18, 13-14.

526 - Ibid., pp. 13-14.

527 - Ibid., p. 12.

thus cannot be claimed as an absolute essence or inherent trait:

A potentiality to make a difference with-in-for others becomes beauty when the artwork vibrates – and the spectator attracts to itself and transmits, back to it or onwards to others – availability for co-affectation. No content, no form and no image can guarantee that an event of co-affectation will take place via a particular artwork for particular viewers and that beauty will arise to attract a matrixial response.⁵²⁸

Lichtenberg Ettinger also warns that ‘our era’ today, with its ‘massive effects of such a transitive trauma’, is essential to generating the potential for the experience of the metamorphic beautiful in contemporary artworks.⁵²⁹ I do not therefore propose that Edmonia Lewis’s *Forever Free* was universally experienced as an instance of matrixial beauty in the nineteenth century, nor that it necessarily ever will function thus for anyone. I do assert, however, that just as biblical texts, myths and legends, such as the stories of Antigone and Tiresias, have provided a material ground for ‘reading matrixially’, so Lewis’s *Forever Free* offers an almost unique opportunity, because of the combination of the many conditions of its production, to ‘link the time of too-early’ neoclassicism with our own ‘too-late’ moment and ‘plant them in historical time’. *Forever Free* opens up new ways of thinking of gender and race through the context of nineteenth century American neoclassical sculpture in Rome which were not available, to me at least, prior to encountering the artwork.⁵³⁰

The circumstances of Lewis’s gender, racial background, and expatriation operate as discursive support for a matrixial awareness that ‘engenders a disturbing desire for jointness *with* a foreign world, with the unknown other, the uncognized, with a stranger who by definition is never a total stranger in the feminine when unthoughtly known.’⁵³¹ Thus questions such as those raised about Lewis’s race – whether she had Ojibwa

528 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, ‘Transgressing with-in-to the feminine’, p. 14.

529 - Ibid., pp. 12-13.

530 - On the artwork opening up previously unavailable meanings, see Lichtenberg Ettinger, ‘Transgressing with-in-to the feminine’, p. 14.

531 - Ibid., p. 10.

connections, or how much – become mute: like Ruth with Naomi, she has formed a covenantal relationship with the people she is representing, one that goes beyond eugenicist ideas of blood relations. This uncanny pair – both black and white, both ‘ethnographic’ and ‘neoclassical’ – is an uncanny witness to the trauma of the African American family, in part but not only, an attempt on Lewis’s part to normalise black familial relations as Buick argues. That is to say, this same art object can certainly be viewed from the phallic angle outlined by Buick, which neatly accounts for each figure according to one pole of the discursive binary systems of race and gender; but the uncanny elements of the sculpture that do not fit so neatly into this either/or paradigm remain in high relief, troubling art historical attempts to reduce them to ‘one’. These matrixial symbolic manifestations of a feminine rapport in Edmonia Lewis’s *Forever Free*, as in much of the histories of American women sculptors in nineteenth century Rome, can only be described as a ‘different Sublime’⁵³² from those recognised by the [Sardine] Canon: a symbolic register in which white is also black, and sculptors are also women.

532 - Lichtenberg Ettinger, ‘The Red Cow Effect’, p. 110.

PART III: *Photography in Bronze*

Prologue: *On the Flatness of American History Sculpture, from Hiram Powers's Greek Slave to Anne Whitney's Roma 1869*

'Bronze photographs' was the disdainful term Harriet Hosmer gave the new Realism that she saw as dominating American history sculpture at the end of the nineteenth century.⁵³³ Schooled in the stridently neoclassical studio of British sculptor John Gibson, Hosmer in 1894 contested the use of 'realistic' to refer to contemporary public memorial statuary such as that she had seen in the parks of San Francisco; "Realistic" I take to mean "real," "true to nature," she wrote, and consequently 'what is known as the classic school furnishes the most commanding examples of realistic art.'⁵³⁴ Hosmer penned her criticisms in San Francisco, where she attended the unveiling of her monumental figure, *Queen Isabella of Castile*, of Columbus fame. (fig. 103) Originally commissioned by the Daughters of Isabella, a Chicago Suffragist group, for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, presumably the Isabella was intended to fulfil the sculptor's call: 'Let us glorify our heroes by all means, but why may not historic and ideal art be combined in a manner which shall equally content poet and historian?'⁵³⁵ What was popularly considered 'realistic' at the end of the century was for Hosmer little more than 'Nature travestied as the result of human accident, or ignorance.' Convinced that the modern style was just a passing fad, Hosmer predicted:

Schools will arise in which grotesqueness will be called 'originality' and caricature 'nature.' But after all these schools have completed

533 - Carr, p. 332; addressee and original publication information are not given, beyond Carr's introductory comment, 'While in San Francisco (in 1894) it was objected that Miss Hosmer's criticisms upon their public statues were unjust, to this she replies...' (p. 331).

534 - Ibid., p. 333.

535 - Ibid., p. 332.

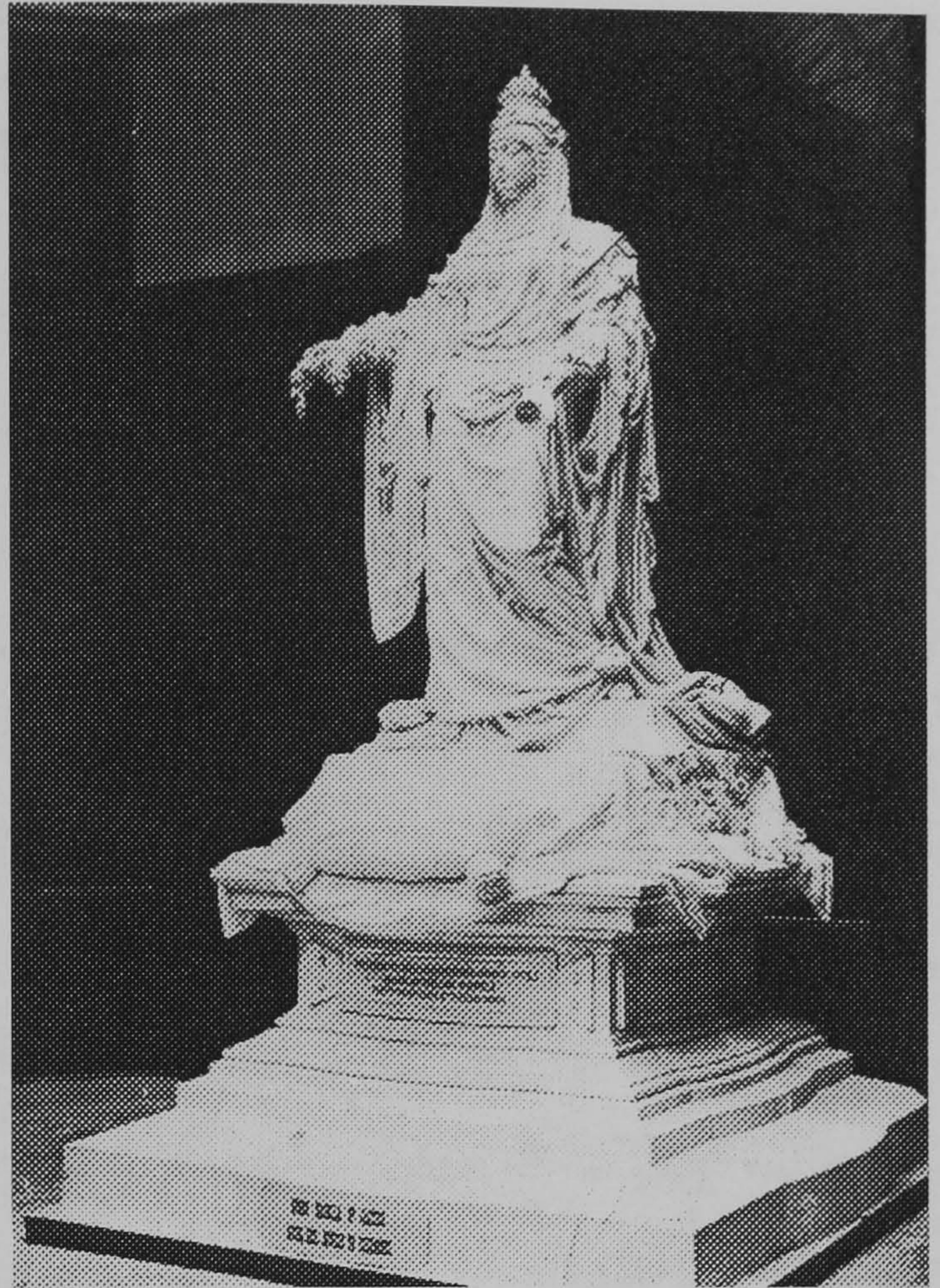


fig. 103 Harriet Hosmer, *Queen Isabella of Castile*, 1893, plaster, heroic, now lost

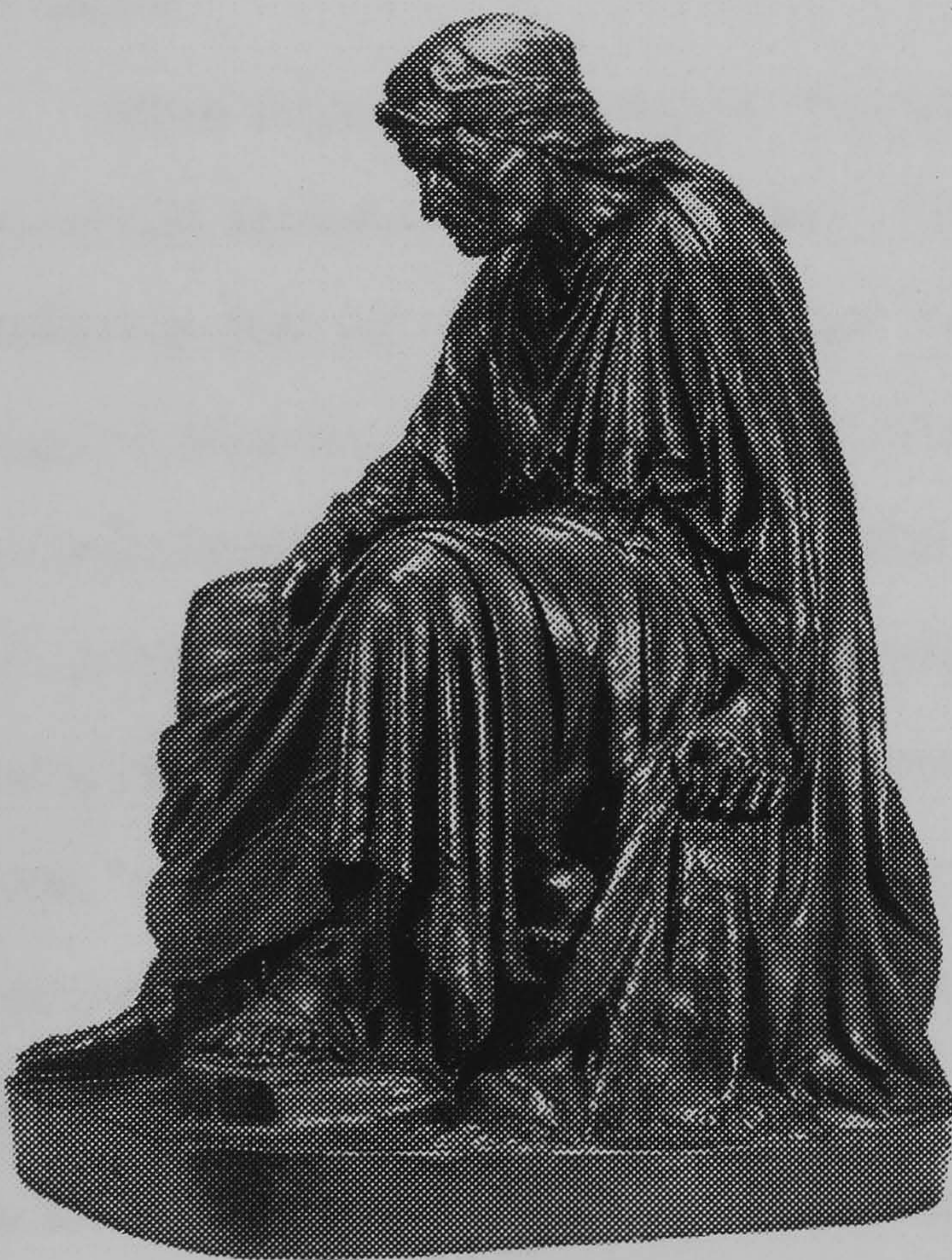


fig. 104 Anne Whitney, *Roma* 1869, 1890, bronze, 67.5x38.75x50cm, Wellesley College Museum, MA

their little cycles, lovers of all that is beautiful and true in nature will seek inspiration from the profounder and serener depths of classic art.⁵³⁶

On one level, Hosmer's comment indicates her contempt for the Realist style – perhaps not surprising, considering her own impeccable Neoclassical credentials. In this regard, 'bronze photographs' simply poses the emerging dichotomy between Realism and Idealism. There is also the implication in her phrase that for Hosmer, the photograph could not be true art. Here, 'bronze photographs' indexes debates about the status of photography among the artistic media, and the attendant issues of mechanical reproduction, the role of the artist's hand, and, again, Realism versus Idealism. Finally, 'bronze photographs' betrays Hosmer's own stylistic prejudices in the face of changing tastes at the end of the century, and in this light could be read as a stylistically reactionary statement from an outmoded and out-of-touch adherent to a form of sculptural practice long out of favour.

More importantly, however, Hosmer's turn of phrase is a snapshot of American sculpture at its centenary. Like a photograph, it may 'dupe us into believing that we have the moment, Hosmer's late neoclassicism, and the subject, Hosmer and her generation of American sculptors, readily available', encapsulated in those two words.⁵³⁷ But Hosmer's is a phrase that 'provokes an unconscious "viewing effect", prompting in its critics mis-observations, [and] optical bunglings', as these interpretations would be if we were to stop here, take Hosmer's words as merely reflective of her and her generation's perceived bad taste and naïveté, and put them all back in the basement of American art history.⁵³⁸ Such interpretations are not entirely wrong, 'not simply in error, a body of work to be swept aside by the true and final interpretation,

536 - Carr, p. 334.

537 - Peter Buse, 'Sinai snapshot: Freud, photography and the future perfect', *Textual Practice*, 10.1 (Spring, 1996), 123-144 (pp. 136-137).

538 - *Ibid.*, p. 134.

but somehow on the right track without knowing it.⁵³⁹ Instead of ‘looking through [the] photograph for [its] putative signified’, we can read ‘bronze photographs’, with its concomitant investment in the future perfect, the time of desire for what will have been ‘[a]fter all schools of sculpture had ‘completed their little cycles’, as ‘a meditation on flatness, and, more importantly, on the temporality of the photographic’ in nineteenth century American history sculpture.⁵⁴⁰ I should like to propose that nineteenth century American history sculpture – especially the most ideal, marble variety, like Hosmer’s *chef d’oeuvres* – is flat, and can even be called photography.

I do not wish to be misunderstood: generally it is a slander in art to accuse sculpture of being flat, a sign of faithlessness to the medium and ineptitude in compositional conception. Nor is photography as yet entirely at ease in all art historical canons, yet I do not intend to engage in old debates about what is ‘high’ and ‘low’ art. It is not my project here to establish the ‘quality’ of nineteenth century American sculpture, but rather its sculptural qualities.

I propose to do so through a close study of American ‘ideal’ sculptures, framed by the words and works of Harriet Hosmer. The works examined here span the second half of the nineteenth century, ranging in date from Hiram Powers’s *Greek Slave* (1843-47, 1851... and after; see *fig. 81*),⁵⁴¹ the definitive nineteenth century American ideal sculpture and, significantly, made after the invention of photography, to Anne Whitney’s *Roma 1869* (1869, 1871 ca., 1882, 1890), the most radically political sculpture about Rome to be made in the nineteenth century by an American sculptor. (*fig. 104*)

While Anne Whitney’s sculpture is the more ‘modern-looking’ of the

539 - Buse, p. 134.

540 - *Ibid.*, p. 138.

541 - Powers produced six full-size marble replicas of his 1843 plaster original, 3 full-length, half-size replicas, and at least 77 busts, not counting Parian ware versions and copies by artists. William Gerdtz, ‘Marble and Nudity’, *Art in America* 54.3 (May/June 1971), 60-67, p. 62; see also Richard Carter Barret, *Bennington Pottery and Porcelain* (NY: Bonanza Books, 1958), p. 261, pl. 339.

works considered here and post-dates the *Greek Slave* by nearly 50 years in its final manifestation, both sculptures, I shall argue, as well as those made in the intervening period by American sculptors, are deeply conditioned by the advent of photographic reproduction, and index art practices dramatically different from those engaged in by American artists before mid-century. Insofar as these are among the first American sculptures to 'pass through the signifier',⁵⁴² 'photography', they exhibit in high relief the particular conjuncture of geometrical, representational, and ideological spaces made possible by photographic reproduction. When read in the light of photography, American neoclassicism's invisible surfaces and flattened historical narratives emerge not simply as evidence of amateurish and reactionary art practices, as they have been read by most twentieth century art historians, but rather as the traces of a strategic adaptation of the medium and style for specific nineteenth century American ideological and counter-ideological missions. A 'swan-song' period of 'euphoric efflorescence',⁵⁴³ American neoclassical sculpture after mid-century advanced and elaborated the concerns of American cultural discourse which would, ironically, both found a definitive American art idiom in the twentieth century, and lead to Neoclassicism's own obsolescence in the photographic age.

542 - This phrase is taken from Jacques Lacan's concept and chapter, 'Sexuality in the Defiles of the Signifier', in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 149-160.

543 - Benjamin, 'A Small History of Photography', p. 254.

PART III: *Photography in Bronze*

Chapter 10: '*Photographic Sculpture*'

10.i Michelangelo, Freud, and Benjamin

The relationship between sculpture and photography has been noted and elaborated on since the invention of the technology, even giving rise, in the second half of the nineteenth century, to the somewhat short-lived concept of 'photographic sculpture' as the distinctive art practice of photographing sculpture.⁵⁴⁴ Artists recognised its usefulness for recording scenes and figures for study, and their works for easier and wider publicity than the exigencies of shipping sculpture around the world could permit. Hosmer, like most sculptors, used photography in this manner to document both her work and herself as a sculptor. Indeed it was on the basis of seeing daguerreotypes of her marble bust, *Hesper*, that John Gibson agreed to accept Hosmer as a pupil in Rome.⁵⁴⁵ Throughout her career Hosmer published photographs of herself at work and in her studio, as well as more traditional portrait photographs, which help to produce 'Harriet Hosmer' as an internationally-acclaimed sculptor. (figs. 105 & 106) For Hosmer and her contemporaries, there was no dispute as to the usefulness of the photograph as an artist's tool. American painter Samuel F. B. Morse, speaking at the annual dinner of National Academy of Design in 1840, affirmed that the

⁵⁴⁴ - I am grateful to Jenny Jackson of Leeds University, Department of Fine Art, for introducing me to this concept in Mary Marnier Marien's book, *Photography and Its Critics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), and to Ben Read for the following references to journal articles discussing the field of 'photographic sculpture': *The British Journal of Photography* (March 15th 1864), 97-98; *The Photographic Journal* (15 April 1864), 19-20; *The Photographic Journal* (15 October 1864), 121-124. As Marian records, there was an exhibition of the Société Générale de Photosculpture in Paris in 1865, and at the 1867 Exposition Universelle there was a pavilion 'for the Exhibition and Production of Works of Photosculpture' (p. 90).

⁵⁴⁵ - Sherwood, p. 55.



fig. 105 Marianecchi Photography studios, Rome, Harriet Hosmer at work on the clay model of *Thomas Hart Benton*, ca. 1862, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, MA



fig. 106 Granfield Photography Studio, Dublin, *Harriet Hosmer*, ca. 1867, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, MA

photograph allowed the artist to:

... furnish his studio with facsimile sketches of nature, landscapes, buildings, groups of figures, etc., scenes selected in accordance with his own peculiarities of taste; but not, as heretofore, subject to his imperfect, sketchy translations... but painted by Nature's self with a minuteness of detail which the pencil of light in her hands alone can trace.⁵⁴⁶

The photograph's ability to faithfully reproduce the creator's 'hand' extended to recording the gestures of the artist, and thus it can be argued that with the first photograph of a work of art, modernist art history and criticism were born. Henceforth critics and historians would find themselves spending more time studying from photographic reproductions of art than from the artworks themselves. In the case of sculpture, photography is both a boon and a curse: it increases the audiences that can see a sculptor's work, but it often limits those audiences to a single, two-dimensional, reduced-scale representation of the original. As with the two-dimensional reproductive media that preceded it, the photograph denies the very qualities that made sculpture, sculpture, different from two-dimensional media, even as it brings the sculpture closer and allows us to 'get hold' of it.⁵⁴⁷

An example of the impact of the photograph on sculptural art criticism might be found in Sigmund Freud's critique of the *Moses* of Michelangelo. (see *fig. 24*) Peter Buse has convincingly argued that Freud's essay was, in fact, a 'meditation on flatness, and, more importantly, on the temporality of the photographic.'⁵⁴⁸ 'This flattening effect', writes Buse, 'is characteristic of Freud's entire essay: with the rendering of the statue in sketches and the subsequent analysis and solution of the statue's mystery on the basis of those sketches, Freud succeeds in obliterating its three-dimensionality. In

⁵⁴⁶ - Quoted in Lynes, *The Art-Makers*, pp. 343-44.

⁵⁴⁷ - As Walter Benjamin writes, 'Everyone will have noticed how much easier it is to get hold of a picture, more particularly a piece of sculpture, not to mention architecture, in a photograph than in reality.... In the final analysis, mechanical reproduction is a technique of diminution that helps men to achieve a control over works of art without whose aid they could no longer be used.' 'A Small History of Photography', *One-Way Street*, p. 253; see also p. 250.

⁵⁴⁸ - Buse, p. 138.

essence, he photographs Moses.⁵⁴⁹ Freud's mis-analysis, then, can be construed as an apt warning, then, for the sculptural art historian who studies from photographs.

Buse comes to his conclusion via a recognition that Freud's analysis of the *Moses* of Michelangelo 'contains the kernels of psychoanalysis' important propositions about the retroactivity of meaning.⁵⁵⁰ Freud called it *nachträglichkeit* or 'deferred action', whereby meaning is returned to the signifier retroactively. The *après coup* of meaning is a central tenet of Lacanian psychoanalysis as well, derived from the Freudian concept, and is emblemised by the future perfect tense.⁵⁵¹ Scenarios of 'what will have been' articulate our fantasies, imagining the meaning and affect of an event already completed in the future past.

Freud's reading of the *Moses* is distinguished from those of the earlier critics by locating its movement at a later point in the chain of events after Moses's descent from the mountain with the tablets of the ten commandments. But in discovering the figure's precise place in the narrative sequence, Freud also uncovers, more importantly, the structure behind the interpretations of these other critics, who were 'somehow on the right track without knowing it.' Having 'unconsciously begun an analysis of the motive forces behind' the figure, Buse notes that they 'come to their conclusions through a lengthy route, projecting into the future in order to ascertain a past event.' Reading alinearly with respect to time:

... they project backwards and describe the preceding position(s). Moses is grasping his beard in anger, the Tables are slipping from beneath his arm. They reach this conclusion by predicting Moses' next action – the 'leaping up' Freud also imagined but discounted – and working backwards from there.⁵⁵²

549 - Buse, p. 138.

550 - Ibid., p. 135.

551 - See, for example, Lacan's discussion of Freud's 'Wo Es war, soll Ich werden', in 'The Freudian Thing', *Écrits*, pp. 128-129.

552 - Buse, pp. 134-35.

Indeed, Freud uses the same retrospective temporality to determine the precise moment in the historical narrative represented by the work.

Freud's desire to thus 'fix' the Moses in time, at a specific and identifiable temporal point, is consistent with the work of the photograph, which freezes the sculpture not only in two dimensions, but in the fourth dimension as well.⁵⁵³ This leaves Freud's art historical analysis, admits Buse, 'indifferent with regard to sculpture'. But, tipped off by Freud's working methods – as much from drawings and photographs as from actual visits to the sculpture – Buse identifies a photographic quality in the temporality Freud has read into the statue. Citing Walter Benjamin from 'A Small History of Photography', Buse finds in the photograph a similar 'retrospective soothsaying power of the future perfect':

No matter how artful the photographer, no matter how carefully posed his subject, the beholder feels an irresistible urge to search such a picture for the tiny spark of contingency, of the Here and Now, with which reality has so to speak seared the subject, to find the inconspicuous spot where in the immediacy of that long-forgotten moment the future so eloquently subsists that we, looking back, may rediscover it.⁵⁵⁴

Freud, concludes Buse, has 'unwittingly written about something other than statuary: photography'.⁵⁵⁵

Is it a foregone conclusion, however, that simply because Freud's reading of a certain historical sculpture discovers in it the temporality of the future perfect, and photography captures the same future perfect, that Freud's reading is really about photography? As compelling as this hypothesis might be, we must not rush too quickly into a direct equation between the two. Moreover, Buse's conclusion neglects the drawings that Freud commissioned of the Moses in an imagined sequence of poses according to the historical narrative in favour of the photographs he studied from. (*figs 107-*

553 - I am grateful to Jenny Jackson for pointing out the 'fixed time' quality of the photograph to me in response to reading an earlier draft of this text.

554 - Benjamin, 'A Small History of Photography', p. 136.

555 - Buse, p. 136.

figs. 107, 108, 109, 110
Sketches of the Moses of Michelangelo in imagined poses commissioned by Freud for his study, *The Moses of Michelangelo*

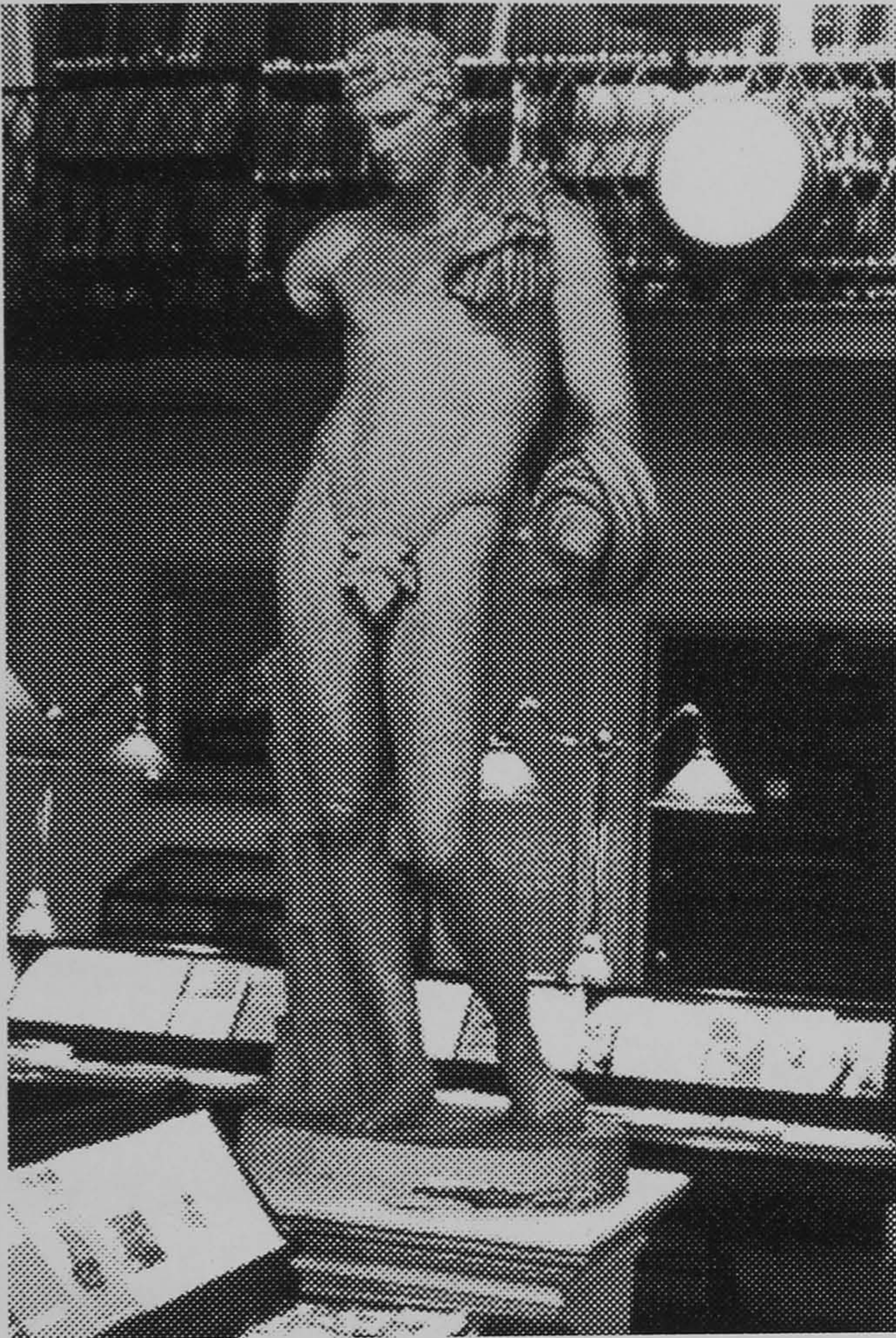
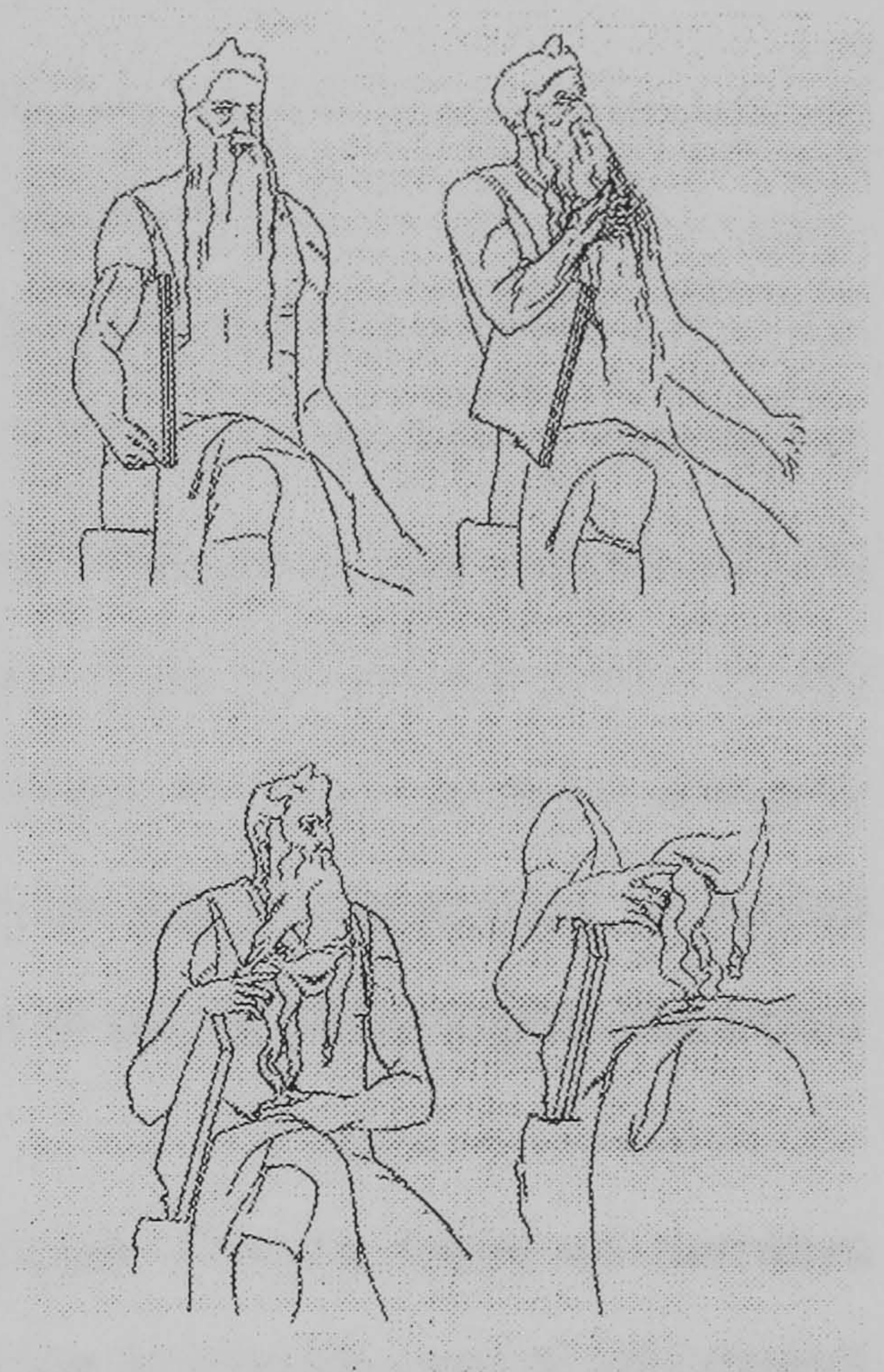


fig. 111 Cast of the *Hermes Belvedere*, donated to the Boston Athenaeum by William Wetmore Story, plaster, date unknown, life-size



fig. 112 Edmonia Lewis, *Young Octavian*, ca. 1873, marble, 42.5x21x15.7cm, National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC

110) These drawings are very rudimentary, and not all are of the statue as Michelangelo produced it; two of the drawings are instead imaginative projections of the same figure in different moments of the history, while one represents the figure as it stands, and one is a detail of the same. Nonetheless they raise the question of the different impacts made by the photographs and sketches on Freud's study: does the 'photographic' quality that Buse identifies stem from Freud's use of the *sketches*, as Buse ultimately argues, or from the photographs of the statue that Freud studied, or indeed from any of the number of engravings of the *Moses of Michelangelo* that Freud might have seen and used?

As Gombrich noted and Buse reiterates, Freud's focus on narrative content rather than form is characteristic of the nineteenth century art criticism from which Freud came. Freud himself admitted, 'I have often observed that the subject-matter of works of art has a stronger attraction for me than their formal and technical qualities, though to the artist their value lies first and foremost in these latter.'⁵⁵⁶ From this point of view, then, does it matter to Freud's analysis what form the transmission of the narrative content takes? As Buse warns of reductive uses of psychoanalytic terminology, it is important that by superimposing a photographic model onto Freud's text, we not flatten it as well into an allegory of photography.⁵⁵⁷ If Freud's essay does in fact flatten the *Moses of Michelangelo*, does that necessarily make it a 'photograph', rather than a sketch or engraving, for example, or any other one of the two-dimensional media traditionally used to reproduce images of sculpture?

10.ii Photography as Printmaking

Indeed, Anthony Hughes might fully agree that too quick a credence of Benjamin's theses on the photographic reproduction of the work of art risks

⁵⁵⁶ - Sigmund Freud, 'The Moses of Michelangelo', in *Art and Literature*, trans. by James Strachey (London: Penguin, 1985), p. 253.

⁵⁵⁷ - Buse, p. 130.

passing over the important links between photography and the other two-dimensional reproductive media. In his essay, 'Authority, Authenticity and Aura: Walter Benjamin and the Case of Michelangelo', Hughes echoes William Ivins's view that 'photography is a technology whose history should be regarded as continuous with that of printmaking', contrary to Benjamin's claims for a unique effect of photography on the work of art in the field of mechanical reproduction.⁵⁵⁸

As Hughes illustrates, in the early decades of the nineteenth century and before, engravings, lithographs, and even small-scale reproductions of sculptures filled the function later to be largely taken over by photography. Reduced-scale reproductions of sculptures, in some respects like plaster casts of famous originals, offered a less expensive and more portable way of examining and owning larger works. (*fig. 111*) These could be both *aide-mémoires* for the student, such as the cast of the *Minerva Medica* which Nathaniel Hawthorne records being in Harriet Hosmer's studio, and souvenirs for the collector, such as the Parian ware versions that were made of Hosmer's *Queen Zenobia in Chains*, or the reduced-scale marble copy of the classical head of Octavian made by Edmonia Lewis for Elisabeth Buffam Chase. (*fig. 112; see also fig. 77*) Engravings of famous works were published and purchased for similar reasons, and at even lower costs; several of Hosmer's works were engraved for the *Art-Journal*, for example, while George Baxter produced an engraving of Hiram Powers's *Greek Slave* at the 1851 Great Exhibition in London, entitling it 'The Genius of the Great Exhibition'. (*figs 113 & 114; fig. 121*) This illustration of the sculpture was central both to publicising the work as it went on tour in the United States, and was used in the pamphlet of explanatory texts that was distributed at its exhibitions. Hughes confirms:

558 - Anthony Hughes, 'Authority, Authenticity and Aura: Walter Benjamin and the Case of Michelangelo', in *Sculpture and Its Reproductions*, ed. by Anthony Hughes and Eric Ranfft (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), pp. 29-45 (p. 42).

Two-dimensional
Three-dimensional
ways that
artists use



fig. 113 Harriet Hosmer, *Beatrice Cenci*, engraving in *The Art Journal* (April 1857), 124

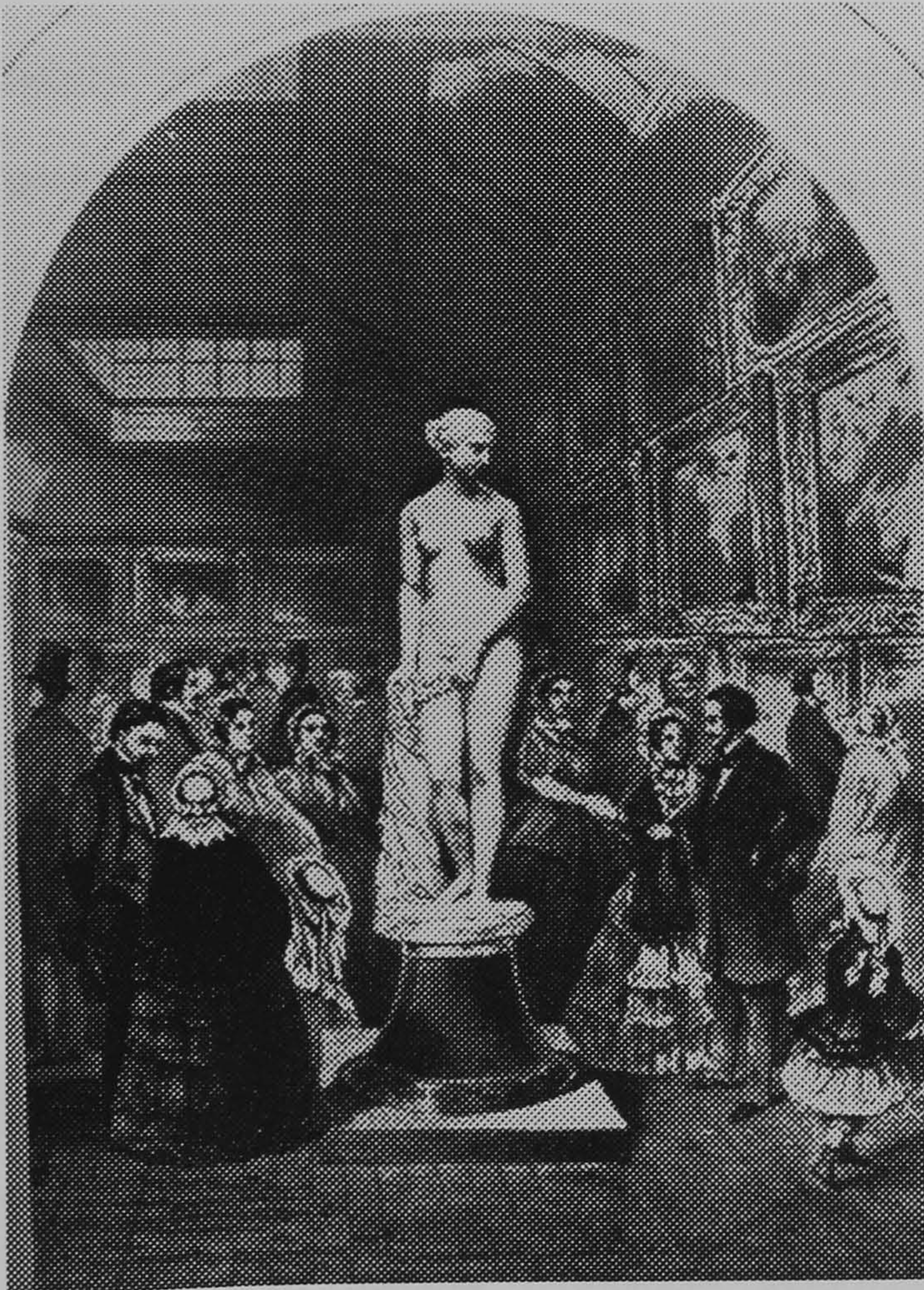


fig. 114 Hiram Powers, *The Greek Slave* (at Dusseldorf Gallery, NYC), 1857, engraving in the *Cosmopolitan Art Journal*, 2 (December 1857), 40-41

Two-dimensional reproductions were hardly as versatile as their three-dimensional counterparts, but they were cheaper and more widely distributed. Because they were accompanied by explanatory inscriptions, they were perhaps even more important a means of advertising authorship. Already by the mid-sixteenth century, the print trade existed as one of the essential institutions for the dissemination of art and the constructions of its canons of excellence.⁵⁵⁹

Initially, the photograph seems to have simply stepped into the same roles previously held by the print with respect to reproduction of the work of art. But soon the difference between the printed image and the photograph emerged as both a qualitative and an economic one. 'To reproduce well a work characterised by detail and precision, a wood engraving costs as much in both time and money as a good etching, even a copperplate engraving', wrote Alfred de Lostalot in the *Gazette des Beaux-arts* of 1878.⁵⁶⁰ As Jacquelynn Baas records, critic Philippe Burty had written in 1867 that, 'The relatively high cost of the wood engraving is the cause of its downfall; it is this which makes publishers want to look for a substitute.'⁵⁶¹

The Romantic desire for 'truth to Nature' was also a driving force behind the popularity of the photograph. In the space of a mere two sentences, Baas records de Lostalot couching his celebration of photography in the moralistic terms of honesty, vice, superficiality, seduction, coarseness, distortion, and trust:

Since photography now conveys visual information of almost infallible precision, one cannot help but notice that the wood engraving conceals under the superficial surface seductions of its velvety brilliance a fundamental vice: lack of honesty. It coarsens and distorts the images entrusted to it.⁵⁶²

559 - Hughes, p. 40.

560 - Alfred de Lostalot, 'Exposition Universelle: aquarelles, dessins et gravures', *Gazette des Beaux-arts* (November 1878), pp. 726-27; quoted by Jacquelynn Baas, 'Reconsidering Walter Benjamin', in *The Documented Image: Visions in Art History*, ed. by Gabriel P. Weisberg and Laurinda S. Dixon (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1987), pp. 337-347 (p. 343).

561 - Philippe Burty, 'La Gravure et Late photographie en 1867', *Gazette des Beaux-arts*, September 1867, p. 262; quoted in Baas, p. 343.

562 - Alfred de Lostalot, pp. 726-27, quoted by Baas, p. 343.

Janson confirms that the reception of photography in the nineteenth century turns on the aesthetic values of Romanticism:

If we try for a moment to imagine that photography was invented a hundred years earlier, we will find this to be impossible simply on artistic, apart from technological, grounds: the eighteenth century was too devoted to fantasy to be interested in the literalness of photography.... the camera's straightforward record would have been totally out of place....

The invention of photography was a response to the artistic urges and historical forces that underlie Romanticism. Much of the impulse came from a quest for the True and the Natural.⁵⁶³

Without the interpretive intervention of the engraver or print-maker's hand, the photograph was perceived to be a more faithful reproduction of the original. Ambroise Firmin Didot, writing in 1872, discussed the merits of the photograph and the lithograph (invented at the turn of the nineteenth century) for the artist, suggesting their similarity in terms of truth of reproduction:

This idea of a faithful reproduction has attracted great artists at all times. Have I not seen Girodet apply himself to drawing a large number of his compositions on lithographic stones and follow the progress of this new technique with a lively interest. Lithography fascinated him, he said, just because it allowed him to reproduce his own work without the help of an interpreter and with his own hands. Similarly, I saw my relative Hersent [a Neoclassical painter and lithographer] at the end of his career apply himself with fervor to the newborn photography, because he saw nature reproduced by herself without the help of an interpreter.⁵⁶⁴

Such comparisons between photography and other reproductive technologies might lend credence to Hughes's argument that, 'The "mechanical" part of photography may be exaggerated.'⁵⁶⁵ Mechanical processes of reproduction are not unique to photography. And as in the earlier forms of mechanical reproduction, there is always an element of interpretive intervention in the photograph on the part of the photographer and the negative printer.

To late twentieth century eyes, nineteenth century photographs might not seem terribly 'accurate' representations at all: the primitive qualities of grain,

563 - H.W. Janson, *History of Art* (NY: Harry N. Adams, 1962; repr. 1991), p. 658.

564 - Ambroise Firmin Didot, quoted in Charles Rosen and Henri Zern, *Romanticism and Realism: The Mythology of Nineteenth Century Art* (London: Faber & Faber, 1984), p. 99.

565 - Hughes, p. 43.

contrast, and lighting in the early photographs, combined with the tendency, because of the generally long exposure times, for the images to come out blurred, can seriously compromise the value of nineteenth century photographs as informative documents. Indeed, in striving after the status of art, some photographers advocated a 'soft focus' technique which blurred the image's documentary value but increased its faithfulness to the underlying character of the scene or sitter. Jennifer Green-Lewis quotes an 1853 photographer:

I do not consider it necessary that the whole of the subject should be what is called *in focus*; on the contrary, I have found in many instances that the object is better obtained by the whole subject being a little *out of focus*, thereby giving a greater breadth of effect, and consequently more *suggestive* of the true character of nature.⁵⁶⁶

A primary difference between the photograph and the lithograph, however, was that the photograph did not restrict the artist in terms of the medium of the original, and thus was ideal for reproducing 'nature', whereas the lithograph, like other forms of print-making, required the original to be physically traced in or on the medium of the print matrix, be it stone, metal plate, wood block, or similar. This relative independence of photography from the media of its subjects affected the perception of its accuracy as a reproductive medium.

Green-Lewis affirms that in the nineteenth century:

... part of the basis for [photography's] authority as a way of seeing, was due in part to its physical contiguity with those objects it represented. The consequence of the play of sunlight on chemically treated surfaces, a photograph – like a shadow's undeniable sign of presence – belonged to nature. By its very processes, a photograph affirmed a natural relation to the world and facilitated an analogical reading – assertively non-conventional, nonrhetorical, nonwritten.⁵⁶⁷

Hughes also acknowledges the authority of the photograph in the field of mechanical reproduction:

⁵⁶⁶ - Sir William J. Newton, 'Upon Photography in an Artistic View, and in Its Relations to the Arts', *Journal of the Photographic Society of London*, January 21, 1854, p. 6, quoted in Jennifer Green-Lewis, *Framing the Victorians: Photography and the Culture of Realism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996) p. 56.

⁵⁶⁷ - Green-Lewis, pp. 38-39.

Handmade artefacts can hardly be regarded as equivalents of the modern photograph. Benjamin's understanding of reproduction is closely bound to a standard of informational accuracy associated with the disinterested camera, whereas the 'copies' we have so far considered are, whether by design or default, noticeably unsatisfactory in some respect. Indeed, their reliability may be checked precisely by setting photographs of copy and original side by side.⁵⁶⁸

The 'standard of informational accuracy associated with the disinterested camera' was the avowed essential difference between the photograph and earlier forms of mechanical reproduction.⁵⁶⁹ 'Now,' concludes Jacquelynn Baas, 'the art of reproduction, which in fact had been an art of interpretation, was superseded by information.'⁵⁷⁰

But it wasn't just the relative low cost and greater accuracy of the photographic reproduction that impressed photography upon the nineteenth century mind. It was the photograph's distance from the artist's hand – read as guaranteeing the 'objectivity' and fidelity of the reproduction – as much as its highly-detailed and precise renderings, which distinguished photography from other reproductive media, and which redefined the older reproductive technologies as 'handmade' and subject to interpretive intervention. 'Logically enough,' Green-Lewis continues, 'the assertion of the natural over the conventional relationship of the photograph with the world had the result of marginalising the intermediary presence of the photographer as a creative artistic force.'⁵⁷¹ It was rather 'Nature's hand' that authored the photograph.⁵⁷² But the same aspect that constituted photography's unique position in nineteenth century discourses on representation contributed to undermining its position within the hierarchy of the representational media. If the artist's hand is the most significant defining characteristic of the art work, how could

568 - Hughes, p. 40.

569 - Ibid.

570 - Baas, p. 343.

571 - Green-Lewis, p. 39.

572 - William H. Fox Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature*, (London: 1844, repr. NY: Da Capo, 1969), I, n.p.; quoted in Green-Lewis, p. 60.

an authorless image pretend to the status of art?

It is this dialogue between photography and the earlier art forms to which Walter Benjamin alluded when he commented on the ambivalent reception accorded photography by nineteenth century artistic circles:

The nineteenth-century dispute as to the artistic value of painting versus photography today seems devious and confused. This does not diminish its importance, however; if anything, it underlines it. The dispute was in fact the symptom of a historical transformation the universal impact of which was not realized by either of the rivals.... Earlier much futile thought had been devoted to the question of whether photography is an art. The primary question – whether the very invention of photography had not transformed the entire nature of art - was not raised.⁵⁷³

There is much more to this statement than either the utopian positivism or the ‘fairly uncontentious observation that our responses are hugely determined by cultural make-up’ with which Hughes charges and dismisses Benjamin’s work on photography. To Hughes’s extraordinary claim that ‘*Contrary to Benjamin’s thesis, then, the photograph tends to emphasise the particularity of certain objects*’,⁵⁷⁴ one might respond with Benjamin’s discussion below, from his ‘A Small History of Photography’ – just one instance of his acknowledgment of precisely the power of photography to focus on the particular where other reproductive media fail:

Whereas it is a commonplace that, for example, we have some idea what is involved in the act of walking, if only in general terms, we have no idea at all what happens during the fraction of a second when a person *steps out*. Photography, with its devices of slow motion and enlargement, reveals the secret. It is through photography that we first discover the existence of this optical unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis. Details of structure, cellular tissue, with which technology and medicine are normally concerned – all this is in its origins more native to the camera than the atmospheric landscape or the soulful portrait. Yet at the same time photography reveals in the material the physiognomic aspects of visual worlds which dwell in the smallest things, meaningful yet covert enough to find a hiding place in waking dreams, but which, enlarged and

⁵⁷³ - Walter Benjamin, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (London: Fontana Press, 1970; repr. 1992), p. 220.

⁵⁷⁴ - Hughes, p. 42. Emphasis mine.

capable of formulation, make the difference between technology and magic visible as a thoroughly historical variable.⁵⁷⁵

Emerging into this dialectic with interpretive modes of reproduction, the invention of photography forced the clarification and hardening of academic debates about 'art' as the synthetic production of the artist's genius versus faithful mimetic reproduction of 'nature', as if raising them from the cultural 'unconscious' to the level of 'Symbolic repression' and 'conscious' discussion. The question of whether or not photography was art seems a confused and even tautological one today because photography was cast as the icon of the polar opposite of art in the 'synthesis versus mimesis' debates. Benjamin comments that these nineteenth century debates 'undertook nothing less than to legitimise the photographer before the very tribunal he was in the process of overturning.'⁵⁷⁶ How then, could photography be subjected to an examination for its artistic qualities, when it had already been positioned in nineteenth century discourse as the touchstone against which art was defined?

Thus the status and defining characteristics of photography did not spring, fully-formed, into a vacuum from the very essence of photography itself. Rather, 'photography' emerged in a dialectical relationship with the other reproductive media that preceded it, both being defined as 'mechanical' in contrast to their 'interpretive' natures, and redefining the very role of visual reproduction itself in the process. The ease with which photography 'became a statement that this is the way things really are', confirms Green-Lewis, 'testifies not only to the confidence photography inspired in Victorian theories of presence and subjectivity but also to that culture's doubts about the very same issues.'⁵⁷⁷

We might even argue that it was primarily the autonomous *chemical*

575 - Benjamin, 'A Small History of Photography', pp. 243-44.

576 - Ibid., p. 241.

577 - Green-Lewis, p. 31.

mechanicality of photography which separated the technology from other reproductive media and from art itself in the nineteenth century. Critically, photography is a form of mechanical reproduction in which the author's hand is so physically distanced from the process of reproduction as to leave no trace whatsoever upon the surface of the photograph. 'Somehow, absence of surface allows more room for the truth,' notes Green-Lewis, and makes way for the development of the 'documentary aesthetic' in which the photograph is framed as self-evidently 'true'.⁵⁷⁸ Even processes of 'retouching' prints which might involve painting the surface of a photograph have generally striven for the utmost transparency, blending in seamlessly with the rest of the photographic image, because if detected, they somehow undermined the 'truthfulness' of the photograph and discredited it as a fraud.⁵⁷⁹ If the print is ultimately derived from physical action first by the artist upon the print matrix, and then by the matrix on the printed material, photography is an image etched with light and elucidated in darkness. Even to those who have not witnessed the 'miracle' of an image appearing on a blank piece of paper bathed in a colourless liquid, the mechanical processes of photography can appear to be the equivalent of modern day magic.⁵⁸⁰ 'Immerse yourself in such a picture long enough', writes Benjamin, 'and you will recognise how alive the contradictions are, here too: the most precise technology can give its products a magical value, such as a painted picture can never again have for us.'⁵⁸¹

'Photographs are traces,' Hughes posits:

– indices rather than icons, in terms of Peirce's famous taxonomy - and only in exceptional cases do they seek the status of facsimiles.... But it is precisely because it is an indexical sign that the photograph can never be regarded as satisfying in itself. It points beyond itself to the original, advertises itself as a trace, exhibiting in extreme degree that transparency we noted earlier as a

578 - Green-Lewis, p. 109.

579 - See Green-Lewis, pp. 51-59, on photography figured as fraud.

580 - See Green-Lewis, p. 7, pp. 44-45, on photography figured as magic in the nineteenth century.

581 - Benjamin, 'A Small History of Photography', p. 243.

feature of the whole range of 'reproductive' types, but which is especially true of indices such as casts.⁵⁸²

The analogy with casting is apt, for it evokes the fundamental hollowness of the mould that is registered in the positive image. The image in its entirety, in the photograph as in the cast, is the trace of the artist's hand, and both the photograph and the cast point beyond the reproduction to something else whose absence is spoken in the presence of the image. Photographs are traces without marks, images without gestures. As such, the entire photographic image is imbued with the absence of the referent itself. In this view of the photograph, Hughes might find himself not so different from Benjamin after all, who similarly is compelled by the photograph to search for something beyond the image:

No matter how artful the photographer, no matter how carefully posed his subject, the beholder feels an irresistible urge to search such a picture for the tiny spark of contingency, of the Here and Now, with which reality has so to speak seared the subject, to find the inconspicuous spot where in the immediacy of that long-forgotten moment the future so eloquently subsists that we, looking back, may rediscover it.⁵⁸³

The photograph is perhaps the most ubiquitous vehicle for time travel. The purpose of the photograph is precisely to preserve a present moment for a future one. It captures a moment of the present, anticipating the time when the photographed present will be the past for a future audience, and the photograph *will have been seen* by a future audience. Thus the photograph embodies a 'future perfect' time. For the future audience, the photograph represents a present moment in the past – a 'past perfect' time. This constant oscillation between temporalities makes the photograph, more than any other reproductive technology, seem to 'capture time', to hold a little moment of the present inviolable for all eternity as a 'tiny spark of contingency'. Like the TARDIS, Dr Who's time machine whose interior is larger than its exterior, the

582 - Hughes, p. 43.

583 - Benjamin, 'A Small History of Photography', p. 243.

photograph is a concatenation of past, present, and future into a flat, finite area beneath invisible surfaces that betray no material trace of the author's hand.

10.iii Sculpture as Mechanical Reproduction

Sculpture in the nineteenth century was a medium highly organised by the processes of mechanical reproduction. The realisation of a sculpture on all but the most modest and amateur of scales required the sculptor to collaborate with a wide range of highly skilled artisans and assistants. The extreme dependence of most sculpture studios on mechanical reproduction at various stages in the realisation of a statue contributed greatly to the marginal status sometimes accorded sculpture as an art form in the nineteenth century. The 1851 Great Exhibition, for example, was intended to be what might be called today a trade fair – to exhibit only the industrial, as opposed to the artistic and cultural, accomplishments of the participating nations. Hence painting was excluded from the halls of the Crystal Palace. Sculpture, however, was permitted, on the grounds that it was as much a display of mechanical expertise as of artistic acumen.⁵⁸⁴ In this regard, sculpture exhibits another striking parallel with the reception of photography in the nineteenth century art world: in the International Exhibition of 1862, photography was classified as machinery, and, according to H. P. Robinson, 'was not well treated, but was stuck up in a damp tower, that called for much enthusiasm to visit.'⁵⁸⁵

As an artistic medium, then, sculpture's status has not been as stable as Michelangelo's enduring popularity might lead us to believe. Though most sculpture had been produced and reproduced largely mechanically in

584 - See Patricia Mainardi, 'French Sculpture, English Morals: Clesinger's Bacchante at the Crystal Palace, 1851', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (December, 1983), 215-217 (p. 215, n. 1).

585 - H. P. Robinson, 'Autobiographical Sketches', *Practical Photographer* 9:98 (1898), p. 29; quoted in Green-Lewis, pp. 39-40.

workshop settings for centuries, by and large nineteenth century publics were ignorant of the means by which sculpture was produced.⁵⁸⁶ Perhaps this ignorance, in contradistinction from the highly publicised discussions of the mechanicality of photography, was not altogether regretted by the majority of artists, for a sudden realisation that each and every statue was not the exclusive product of the sculptor's labour and chisel could not only disappoint the audience but also discredit the sculptor, or sculptors in general. Writing on a visit to a sculptor's studio in his 1860 novel, *The Marble Faun*, Nathaniel Hawthorne recorded his disenchantment with the process of sculpture:

In Italy, there is a class of men whose merely mechanical skill is perhaps more exquisite than was possessed by the ancient artificers, who wrought out the designs of Praxiteles, or, very possibly, by Praxiteles himself. Whatever of illusive representation can be effected in marble, they are capable of achieving, if the object be before their eyes. The sculptor has but to present these men with a plaister-cast of his design, and a sufficient block of marble, and tell them that the figure is imbedded in the stone, and must be freed from its encumbering superfluities; and, in due time, without the necessity of his touching the work with his own finger, he will see before him the statue that is to make him renowned. His creative power has wrought it with a word. In no other art, surely, does genius find such effective instruments, and so happily relieve itself of the drudgery of actual performance; doing wonderfully nice things, by the hands of other people, when, it may be suspected, they could not always be done by the sculptor's own. And how much of the admiration which our artists get for their buttons and button-holes, their shoe-ties, their neckcloths – and these, at our present epoch of taste, make a large share of the renown – would be abated, if we were generally aware that the sculptor can claim no credit for such pretty performances, as immortalized in marble! They are not his work, but that of some nameless machine in human shape.⁵⁸⁷

Significantly, Hawthorne describes the process of sculpture in terms of whose hands accomplish it, discovering that it is the hands of the studio artisans, not the sculptor's own, that are responsible for the bulk of sculptural production.

⁵⁸⁶ - See for example, Harriet Hosmer's article, 'The Process of Sculpture' in Appendix I, in which she discusses the general public's ignorance of the processes of sculptural production.

⁵⁸⁷ - Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, p. 115.

Though the sculptor's intervention is still a powerful one, it is relegated to the Symbolic distance of the 'word'.

Visiting the studio of Harriet Hosmer in 1859, however, Hawthorne encountered the large-scale clay version of her *magnum opus*, the *Queen Zenobia in Chains*. (see fig. 18) He recorded his delight in the work, concluding that it was 'a high, heroic ode'.⁵⁸⁸ Fifty years later, Lorado Taft was incredulous at Hawthorne's words. He seized upon Hawthorne's comment, 'I know not whether there be some magic in the present imperfect finish of the statue, or in the material of clay, as being a better medium of expression than even marble', exclaiming:

We begin to understand! This figure was still unfinished and in the clay – plastic, palpitant, and full of promise. The tools of the pitiless Italian carver had not yet done their work of sharpening and polishing the life out of it. The artist's first thought was still there – a very noble and dignified thought, by the way, though not necessarily a sculptural one, – and the enthusiastic little woman was alongside to supplement the impression; to tell what she meant to say in the work. No wonder that Hawthorne read in its sketchy lines all that she desired! No wonder that he was convinced that his thought was her own, and that he had found it in the haughty captive on the modelling stand! And besides, he liked the name of Zenobia. It is possible that another carver, one in himself an artist, could so render his figure that it might convey to us the impression of "a high, heroic ode." As it stands to-day there is not one grateful touch, not one suggestion of half-tone and tenderness of chiselling – nothing but ridges and grooves, a lay figure draped to display an antique garb.⁵⁸⁹

Conditioned by Henry James's image of the petite, bird-like and flighty women sculptors emblemised in his phrase, 'the white, Marmorean flock', Taft's description presents the *Zenobia* as a photograph: rather than plastic and palpitant, its image has 'sharpened' and given a highly-polished surface to the starkly-contrasting ridges and grooves which, with no moderating half-tones, render the figure in high-contrast. We can almost envisage Taft

⁵⁸⁸ - Hawthorne, *French and Italian Notebooks*, pp. 508-10. See Part II, Chapter 6 'The Pygmalion Effect' for the full text of Hawthorne's description of Hosmer's *Zenobia in Chains*.

⁵⁸⁹ - Lorado Taft, 'Harriet Hosmer and the Early Women Sculptors', in *The History of American Sculpture*, p. 208. Lorado Taft's reaction to Hosmer's *Beatrice Cenci* is discussed in Part II, Chapter 8, 'Beatrice Cenci, "Between Two Deaths"'.

scrutinising the *Zenobia* as he would a snapshot, rather comically demanding evidence of the artist's hand which the blank marble surfaces refuse to give up. But pure absence is intolerable; he has to generate another hypothesis, posit another existence in the place of this lack. That Hawthorne could have seen so much in Hosmer's *Zenobia* was beyond Taft's comprehension. The relative sanity and taste of the by-then canonical American author could only be recuperated by postulating that there was 'something there in the clay', some trace of the genius of the artist's conception, which had subsequently been erased by the 'merciless' Italian workmen, instead investing the sculpture with evidence of the presence of 'some nameless machines in human form'.

This scenario recalls Atget's photographs of deserted Parisian streets which Benjamin discussed as 'scenes of a crime'. However, as Joan Copjec points out:

... these photographs contain no *evidence* of crime; it is precisely of evidence that they are empty. This lack does not lessen our suspicions about the crime, rather it is the source of them or, to put it another way, it is not the evidence of suspense but the suspension of evidence that grips us in these photographs.⁵⁹⁰

For Lacan, it is precisely this ability to believe in the existence of something despite the absence of empirical evidence that characterises the human subject's imbrication in the symbolic order. 'Through language', Copjec explains, 'the human subject maintains a symbolic relation to the world, which is to say that the subject comes to believe in a real that *exceeds* all its traces.'

Copjec offers the examples:

If a friend does not show up at the appointed hour, we wait for her and wonder where she is. Our waiting does not depend on prior evidence of her existence; it is not empirical evidence – but rather the symbolic – that lends her her stability and thus leads us to expect her when there is no sign of her presence. When Parrhasios painted a veil on the wall, thus causing Zeuxis to wonder what was behind it, he demonstrated the fact that we require no evidence of a thing in order to anticipate its existence. Through the symbolic

590 - Copjec, p. 101.

relation, we are able to take a certain distance from the evidence immediately presented to us, supposing the real to have recessed from it as well.⁵⁹¹

Copjec then argues that it was precisely this symbolic relation or distance between the evidence and the supposition of reality that was in decline in the nineteenth century. Utilitarianism increasingly defined the subject as 'equal to its traces', thus collapsing the distinction between signifier and signified and instigating the crisis in representation that was articulated through the debates between idealism and realism, photography and art. Benjamin termed it the decline of the aura: 'the unique manifestation of a distance, however near [an object] might be'.⁵⁹²

For the utilitarian Taft, the work can have no 'life' if not the visible effect of some 'actually existing cause' of its production.⁵⁹³ For Taft, as for so many critics of his generation and after, no traces of sculpting meant that Hosmer's *Zenobia* could not actually be sculpture: 'The artist's first thought was still there – a very noble and dignified thought, by the way, though not necessarily a sculptural one...' The emptiness of so many neoclassical sculptures was to become an anathema to the modernist demand for presence and plenitude, and thereby function as one of the primary reasons for the relegation of this generation of sculptors and their sculptures to the deaccession lists of American art history.

Taft's desire that the sculptor's conception be the product of his or her own hand, rather than the studio assistants', had in fact been pre-empted by Hawthorne in his disappointed realisation that the majority of the actual labour of carving was accomplished by skilled workers in the sculpture studio. As was discussed in Part II, Chapter 6 'The Pygmalion Effect', the influence of the artist upon the artwork according to neoclassical ideology was such as to imbue the work with the moral qualities of the artist, as if 'transubstantiated'

591 - Copjec, pp. 101-103.

592 - Ibid., p. 103.

593 - Ibid.

from the fingertips of the artist into the material of the artwork. Copjec sees this as an inevitable effect of the crisis of the symbolic sphere within utilitarian/functional cultures, and again references Atget's photographs: 'Because the guilt has not been uncovered *in* the photographs of empty environments, the environment itself becomes guilty.'⁵⁹⁴

Thus the handling of the sculpture by studio artisans threatened the permeation of the artwork by whatever qualities the audience attributed to the artisans themselves. Frequently, in the case of American sculptors in Roman studios, these perceptions of the native Italian workmen were racist, classist, and anti-Catholic. In a more formal context, the influence of the studio artisans was seen as being less competent artistically than that of the directing artist. Taft's implicit view was that artists who handed their maquettes over to the studio assistants to be translated into marble were subjecting their unique visions to the homogenising influence of unsophisticated workmen who weren't capable of understanding the subtleties of each unique artistic conception. For Taft, as for many critics after the decline of neoclassicism, this homogenising influence was evidenced by the smooth marble surfaces that prevailed in the nineteenth century neoclassical style. Like American landscape painting in the period, which strove to remove all traces of brushwork from the canvas, the manner of finishing neoclassical sculpture permitted no chisel marks, rough edges, or otherwise dissonant traces of the sculpture's method of production to survive in the finished work.

For nineteenth century viewers, the resulting surfaces of a nineteenth century neoclassical ideal sculpture were as inscrutable as the seamless, 'invisible surfaces' of the photograph, and as transparent to the truth. In fact, in this respect the processes of production of a nineteenth century sculpture are not unlike those of photography, and can posit a very distanced relationship between the artist's design and the final image. Harriet Hosmer published an

594 - Copjec, p. 104.

explanation of the process of sculpture in her own defence, 'The Process of Sculpture' after having been accused of not producing her own sculptures, but rather signing her name to the work of an Italian carver.⁵⁹⁵ Even as it acknowledges the anxiety of her period about the centrality of authorship to guaranteeing the status of the artwork, Hosmer's description of the process of nineteenth century marble sculpture production demonstrates that the sculpture is no more imbued with the 'interpretive intervention' of the artist's hand than the photograph is. Yet, in large part because of the advent of photography and the ensuing controversy about the mechanical reproduction in art, the demand for a recognisable trace of the artist's hand in the work of art was sharpened and heightened by concern that, in light of photographic reproduction, other reproductive techniques could be equally as mechanical, but masquerade as 'real art' because of their satisfaction of the demand for 'faithfulness to nature'. Such works were considered fraudulent 'castings' from Nature, rather than artistic syntheses of nature via the artist's unique genius and 'inventio' within the agreed-upon visual vocabulary of the day.

But as Hosmer's description of the process of sculpture reveals, casting was a central feature of the production of marble sculpture as well as of bronze. In the production of a marble statue, a plaster cast was made from the artist's full-scale clay version in order to provide the template from which the full-sized marble was produced by means of a 'pointing machine'. In the case of a bronze statue produced in the 'lost wax' manner, the process described by Hosmer would vary only in that instead of 'pointing' the plaster cast into marble, a bronze version would be cast from the moulds that had been cast from the original full-scale clay model.

The positive cast, be it the bronze statue or the plaster template, is a 'photograph' of the artist's design in the clay model, as its moulds are the

⁵⁹⁵ - Harriet Hosmer, 'The Process of Sculpture', *Atlantic Monthly* 14.86 (December, 1864), 734-37.

negative; produced entirely mechanically, there is no room in this process for the interpretive intervention of the artisans whose task it is to make the cast. The sculpture shares the temporality of the photograph as the cast captures the artist's design in its present form, in anticipation of the future moment when it will have been perfected in marble or bronze. The clay model and cast plaster template may be retained for the production of further 'versions', for purely sentimental or curiosity value, or as a document of the process of production of the sculpture. But no one would argue that the clay and plaster models are the sculpture, any more than one could say that the *mise en scène* captured by the photograph is the photograph itself. And the clay and plaster models can be destroyed just as easily as the original photographic scene is dispersed after the shutter clicks. Even when a sculpture was never realized in marble or bronze, its plaster prototype would not be elevated to that of 'the work', but rather retains the status of a potentiality, a prototype, or an advertisement for the definitive sculpture. The final marble and bronze sculptures, issuing forth much later than the casts, are the 'original' works themselves, giving their preceding traces sculptural meaning only in a temporality of the *après coup*.

Reading the finished sculpture for its 'putative signified' we might try to look back on this process as Hosmer noted, and 'ingeniously discover traces of the sculptor's hand where they do not exist.' But as in the photograph, the invisible surfaces of the neoclassical sculpture will frustrate all such attempts, simply reflecting our desire for the artist back from its seamless white marble. And as in the photographic process, the resulting 'print' of the artist's design carries with it the 'hollowness' of the cast. Sculpture is thereby a trace, as Anthony Hughes argued above for the photograph: 'It points beyond itself to the original, advertises itself as a trace, exhibiting in extreme degree that transparency we noted earlier as a feature of the whole range of "reproductive"

types, but which is especially true of indices such as casts.⁵⁹⁶

And yet the nineteenth century neoclassical sculpture is a trace that bears no evidence of its production. Adapting Edward Allington's comment on sculptural reproduction, neoclassical sculpture 'may be said to have no originating centre. It issues from a type of void, not from a set of definable actions akin to those made by touches of a brush on canvas.'⁵⁹⁷ We accord the sculpture, like the photograph, the status of stemming from an origin on the basis of its position in the signifying chain alone. Like Taft inspecting Hosmer's *Zenobia*, we believe in it as 'a real that exceeds all its traces'; we doubt and distance ourselves from the empirical evidence before our eyes.

Drawing out the analogy between photography and sculpture reveals that the temporality of the sculpture is remarkably like that of the photograph, embodying as these do references to past, present, and future in a single concrete form. In part this is due to the mechanicality they share in their processes of production. Even more important, however, is the distancing effect the sculptural and photographic mechanical processes have on the relationship of the work to the artist's hand. In both media the physical trace of the artist's touch is lost beneath the seamless, homogeneous, and 'invisible' surfaces of the work. Similarly, we find in both the sculpture and the photograph an originary moment which is 'lost' to the resulting 'original'.

However apt a metaphor it might be, it would be anachronistic to describe the sculpture of Michelangelo as photography in any but an allegorical way. The question thus occurs of the extent to which the parallels I have been positing between sculpture and photography are merely rhetorical. In fact, I shall argue that Hosmer's expression, 'bronze photographs', contains the evidence that the practices of nineteenth century American neoclassical sculptors were photographic in more than name alone.

596 - Hughes, p. 43.

597 - Edward Allington, 'Venus a Go Go, To Go', in *Sculpture and Its Reproductions*, ed. by Anthony Hughes and Eric Ranfft (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), pp.152-167 (p. 161).

10.iv Truth through the Defiles of Photography

The assertion that the invention of photography profoundly influenced the entire range of social and cultural discourses in the nineteenth century is hardly controversial. What is more difficult to demonstrate, however, is the precise extent to which it impacted on any single facet of nineteenth century society, such as cultural or art practices.

Within nineteenth century discourses on realism and the truthfulness of the image, after mid-century sculpture could begin to be described in terms of photography and mechanical reproduction; Nathaniel Hawthorne's description of the 'nameless machine in human shape' who was actually responsible for executing the elements of the sculpture that brought the artist most renown, is just one example. Though Hawthorne does not specifically reference photography, it is clear that the mechanicality of the process of sculpture is what troubled him. As Jennifer Green-Lewis demonstrates, from its inception, photography was co-opted into debates about truth in representation. Precisely because of the mechanicality of their production, she writes:

... photographs were originally regarded as factual in part because they were frequently presented as apparently authorless texts, independently capable of describing and classifying human beings and human behavior. Language permitted Victorian readers (as it still permits us) to overlook the fact that photographs are not taken but made, that their collective semantic is prone to the same influences and power struggles that shape other forms of representation.⁵⁹⁸

The veracity accorded photography meant that from mid-century, photographs were used as evidence in court.⁵⁹⁹ For some, such as Ruskin, it was precisely photography's mechanicality which rendered it an unreliable witness:

⁵⁹⁸ - Green-Lewis, pp. 4-5.

⁵⁹⁹ - Ibid., p. 3.

Their legal evidence is of great use if you know how to cross-examine them. They are popularly supposed to be 'true', and, at the worst, they are so, in the sense in which an echo is true to a conversation of which it omits the most important syllables and reduplicates the rest.⁶⁰⁰

The mechanical character of photography similarly discredited the medium as an artistic one for Ruskin. Art had to be more than pure mimesis of the external world. It gained its value as art precisely from the mediating influence of the artist, who interpreted the outside world – 'Nature' – and synthesised it with a predetermined visual vocabulary and his or her own creative genius. '[A]ll those excellencies which are peculiar to the painter as such,' he asserted in *Modern Painters* in 1843:

... are merely what rhythm, melody, precision and force are in the words of the orator and the poet, necessary to their greatness, but not the test of their greatness. It is not by the mode of representing and saying, but by what is represented and said, that the respective greatness either of the painter or the writer is to be finally determined.⁶⁰¹

The German philosopher, F. W. Schelling, similarly argued that the artist must 'withdraw himself from [nature]... but only in order to raise himself to the creative energy and to seize [it] spiritually. Thus he ascends into the realm of pure ideas; he forsakes the creature, to regain it with thousandfold interest, and in this sense to return to nature.'⁶⁰²

The essential difference between art and photography as perceived by nineteenth century academicians was the inability of the camera to go beyond *mimicking* objects found in nature to *synthesise* subjects with a visual and cultural vocabulary gleaned from the classical world. Thus the photograph could be an artist's tool but not an artistic medium itself, for the neoclassical artist's merit lay in his or her unique distillation of an agreed-upon visual

600 - John Ruskin, *The Cestus of Aglaia*, in *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols (London: George Allen, 1903-12), XIX, p. 150; quoted in Green-Lewis, pp. 3-4.

601 - Quoted in Stephen F. Eisenman et al., eds., 'The Generation of 1830 and the Crisis in the Public Sphere' in *Nineteenth Century Art: A Critical History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1994), p. 188.

602 - Ibid., p. 189.

vocabulary. Dutilleux used the daguerreotype to illustrate the difference between mimesis and synthesis in 1854:

The reproduction we make of nature is never an exact, mathematically precise copy such as one can expect from a machine like the daguerreotype. It can only, and should only, be an interpretation in which the artist brings to bear his knowledge, his skill, but above all his temperament, his own ideas and inner responses; his feelings!⁶⁰³

Indiscriminately recording all details of a scene with equal attention and emphasis, the photograph was similarly seen as an intellectually empty process of reproducing whatever was set before it. Lynes observes, 'The effect of the camera on painting was not what Morse expected it to be. It turned painters away from the delineation of accurately represented minutiae of the sort the Hudson River painters had so delighted in; it was not the painter's function to rival a mechanical instrument.'⁶⁰⁴ Indeed, from the beginning photographers tried to counteract this brutal equanimity of the camera's eye by introducing the artistry of the painter's selective gaze via studio settings, often with plain backdrops, which both reproduced the painter's studio environment and reduced the extraneous details of the scene, focussing visual attention on a few selected objects. As Green-Lewis records, 'The *American Journal of Photography* went so far as to claim that not only was it acceptable to remove the distraction of unnecessary detail in photography but an absence of such detail was in fact proof of artistic worth: "Sacrifice of detail in the unessential parts of a picture, is always evidence of artistic feeling."⁶⁰⁵

Baudelaire was among the most vociferous in associating photography with poor taste and the art-ignorance of the masses who had taken the principle of faithfulness to Nature too far:

... a new industry has arisen which contributes not a little to

603 - Recorded by Le Gentil in *Notice sur Dutilleux* (1866), p. 93; quoted in Aaron Scharf, *Art and Photography* (London and NY: Penguin Books, 1968; repr. 1986), pp. 94-95.

604 - Lynes, *The Art-Makers*, p. 344.

605 - Editorial in the *American Journal of Photography*, 8.2 (1887), p. 30, quoted in Green-Lewis, p. 58.

confirming stupidity in its faith and to ruining what might have remained of the divine in the French genius. The idolatrous crowd postulates an ideal worthy of itself and appropriate to its nature – that is perfectly understandable. As far as painting and sculpture are concerned, the current credo of the sophisticated public, above all in France... is this: “I believe in Nature, and I believe only in Nature (there are good reasons for that). I believe that Art is, and cannot be other than, the exact reproduction of Nature.... Thus an industry that could give us a result identical to Nature would be the absolute of art.” A vengeful God has granted the wishes of this multitude. Daguerre was his Messiah. And now the public says to itself: “Since photography gives us every guarantee of exactitude that we could desire (they really believe that, the idiots!), then photography and Art are the same thing.” From that moment our squalid society rushed, Narcissus to a man, to gaze at its trivial image on a scrap of metal.... Some democratic writer ought to have seen here a cheap method of disseminating a loathing for history and for painting among the people.⁶⁰⁶

While Baudelaire accepts the primacy of Nature as a given in art practice, he cannot tolerate the conclusions of the logical extrapolation of this philosophy because it has the potential to eliminate the Ideal as art’s central concern and focus instead on the ‘trivial’, the everyday, the popular, by placing too much or too equal an emphasis in the reproduction of the details of the natural scene. For Baudelaire, only the sublime can offer access to the ‘divine’. Similarly, in his 1846 essay ‘Why Sculpture Is Boring’, Baudelaire rejected sculpture as an inferior art form because it was too ‘real’, functioning as a ‘fetish’ instead of as a vehicle for the artist’s singular and individual synthetic vision of the world.⁶⁰⁷

True art required the synthesis of the ideal as much as the mimesis of Nature in nineteenth century cultural discourses, and it is this to which Hawthorne alludes when he expresses his doubt that a purely mechanical sculptural process can yield a real art form. Beyond these debates strictly within the field of art, however, there was little doubt as to the benefits that mechanisation brought to the service of truth, precisely by eliminating human subjectivity from the process or representation. On photography, Lady

606 - Quoted in Sontag, pp. 189-90.

607 - Discussed in Janson, pp. 214-215.

Elizabeth Eastlake wrote in 1857, that, 'Her business is to give evidence of facts, as minutely and as impartially as, to our shame, only an unreasoning machine can give.'⁶⁰⁸ Similarly, American photographer James F. Ryder gave photography his own gender, 'personified his camera and, in so doing, ascribed moral as well as artistic purpose to his photographic work in 1850s America'.⁶⁰⁹ Green-Lewis quotes Ryder's description of his camera:

What he told me was as gospel. No misrepresentations, no deceits, no equivocations. He saw the world without prejudices; he looked upon humanity with an eye single to justice. What he saw was faithfully reported, exact, and without blemish. He could read and prove character in a man's face at sight. To his eye a rogue was a rogue; the honest man, when found, was recognized and properly estimated.⁶¹⁰

The nature of truth in representation was a central concern to nineteenth century aesthetics in Europe as much as in the United States, but it had a particular inflection in the formation of American national ideologies. Just as the figurative codes of European academism were frequently positioned in American cultural discourse as exemplars of Old World decadence and moral bankruptcy, so 'Art' in general was not entirely trusted. The Rousseauian idea that Art and Luxury were to blame for the Fall of the Roman Republic prevailed in American 'common sense', and this was taken as a strong stylistic as well as historical admonition to the nascent American Republic.⁶¹¹

The photograph's perceived 'faithfulness to Nature' resonated with values central to Romantic aesthetics, in which, it was avowed, the artist's only teachers should be 'Nature and the Greeks'. For American artists, this imperative also had a nationalistic ring. A contributor to *The Art-Journal* painted the image of the American artist in Rome, independent of

⁶⁰⁸ - Elizabeth Eastlake, 'Photography', *Quarterly Review* (London: April, 1857), p. 466; quoted in Green-Lewis, p. 3.

⁶⁰⁹ - Green-Lewis, p. 3.

⁶¹⁰ - From Richard Rudisill, 'Mirror Image: The Influence of the Daguerrotype on American Society', in *Photography in Print: Writings from 1816 to the Present*, ed. by Vicki Goldberg (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1981), p. 76; quoted in Green-Lewis, p. 3.

⁶¹¹ - Robert H. Byer, 'Words, Monuments, Beholders: The Visual Arts in Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*' in *American Iconology*, ed. by David C. Miller (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993) pp. 163-184.

contemporary academic influences, working only from ancient models and a native, 'republican' sensibility for 'truth':

The American School of Art, as developed at Rome, evinces both excellence, earnestness, and true feeling for Art; it is a school of promise, bidding fair to take its place, and hold its head aloft, in the great artistic republic.... Untrammelled by the dogmatism of any particular school, ranging at pleasure through the accumulated treasures of by-gone centuries spread before them in the wondrous galleries of Italy, they faithfully and earnestly propose to imitate all that is beautiful without considering whence it comes or whither it may lead them. They surrender up their souls to the guidance of their artistic conscience, and, like true republicans, refuse to bow down before any graven images of conventional tyranny. There is something grand and elevating, as well as fresh and enthusiastic, in this simple worship of Art for its own sake, contradistinguished to the dogmatic subjection of prescribed rules enforced by antagonistic schools. But they must beware, however, as a body, of pushing this realistic tendency too far, and take example from the gross mannerism into which the eclectic teachings of the Carracci fell, when it degenerated into the purely naturalistic treatment instead of ripening into rich and varied style, combining the excellencies of the classical schools with a more accurate attention of simple nature.⁶¹²

The 'American school' was perceived by more than just this nineteenth century reviewer as being a 'realist' one because of the rhetoric surrounding its 'faithfulness to nature', initiated by Horatio Greenough's seminal 'form follows function' thesis published upon his return from Italy in 1851.⁶¹³ James Jackson Jarves similarly described 'the sculptors who remain in America' as 'too strongly influenced by the prevailing realistic bias of the popular taste'. Even the expatriates Harriet Hosmer, Randolph Rogers, and Thomas Ball were, for Jarves, 'the most stubborn realists'.⁶¹⁴ This appellation was not

612 - 'A Sibyl' *The Art-Journal*, n.s. 5 (1866), p. 54, quoting a contributor to the *The Art-Journal* 'more than 10 years previous' (n.d.).

613 - Horatio Greenough, pseud. 'Horace Bender', *Travels of a Yankee Stonecutter*, 1851. Greenough's 'stonecutter's creed' expounded in this collection of essays was stated as follows: 'Three things, my child, have I seen worthy of thy love and thought. Three proofs do I find in man that he was made only a little lower than the angels - Beauty - Action - Character.'

'By beauty I mean the promise of function.
'By action I mean the presence of function.
'By character I mean the record of function.'

Quoted in Lynes, *The Art-Makers*, p. 122.

614 - James Jackson Jarves, 'Progress of American Sculpture in Europe', *The Art-Journal* n.s. 10 (January 1, 1871), 6-7 (p. 7).

entirely a compliment, but rather a reading largely derived from the perception that without formal academic training, an artist could be nothing but a student of 'Nature' and hence a 'realist'.

In the field of competing discourses on 'Americanness' in art produced in the nineteenth century US, 'faithfulness to Nature' was inflected with additional meanings of faithfulness to a 'true' American character, seen as 'native' as opposed to European. The 'cult of originality' found fertile soil in the US, perhaps initially to justify the paucity of art schools, which implied fewer possibilities for European 'influence' on American artists who did not study abroad. An American writer to the 1851 *Art-Journal* asserted the benefits of American art's development in a perceived artistic vacuum:

... separated from the influence of Schools, and left to the unassisted study of nature, there must be originality of treatment and conception; and so far as the imperfect development of an American School has gone, these characteristics are visible. We have done little to compare with the Art-products of the Old World, it is true; but if progression is an evidence of vitality, we possess it, for in no school has greater advancement been made in the last half century.⁶¹⁵

The tension inherent in these two disparate identifications – with European history and cultural traditions, versus with the isolationist fantasy of American uniqueness, dynamism, and moral superiority to Europe – shapes the history of American art in every period. As William J. Hennessey writes:

American sculpture in the nineteenth century is thus the product of several strong cross-influences. The remains of Roman civilization visible in Italy, combined with the rigorous doctrines of Neo-Classicism, as advocated by such men as Canova and Thorwaldsen, exerted considerable pressure in one stylistic direction. A native American directness and respect for naturalism pulled away from this tendency toward idealization. Only the most successful sculptors were able to reconcile the two.⁶¹⁶

As Hennessey's comment reveals, this narrative of 'a native American directness' struggling against the bonds of Academic style persists into late

615 - 'The Arts in the United States', *The Art-Journal* 3 (1851), p. 191.

616 - William J. Hennessey, 'White Marble Idealism: Four American Neo-Classical Sculptors', *Worcester Art Museum Bulletin* n.s. 2.1 (Nov. 1972), p. 1.

twentieth century American art historical discourse. But the antagonism posited between Academism and 'naturalism' in American cultural rhetoric was not entirely indigenous to the United States; rather, it reflected similar debates on the European continent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The rigid *cursus honorum* of Academic training was seen to strip artists of their creativity and originality, producing art that was little more than mechanical reproductions. This antagonism was crystallised in the dilemma facing the neoclassical artist: too close an approximation to the classical ideal renders the artist little more than a copyist of by-gone masters; too close an approximation to the real distances an art practice from the ideal, again rendering the artist a copyist, but this time of nature – a 'photographer' rather than an artist.⁶¹⁷

As the ideological opposite of 'Art', photography, then, could take on the aspect of objective 'Truth', representing the world with 'an eye single to justice'. 'Photographs,' affirms Green-Lewis, 'had a mission, a moral purpose, which was to relate the truth.'⁶¹⁸ This was not just a philosophical concern on the part of the Americans, however: central to its populist and democratic aspirations, 'truth' in representation bore on the formation of American national identity, and the very prospects for the country's survival:

Soon after the daguerreotype was introduced, photographic studios sprang up everywhere, especially in America, and multi-image *cartes de visites*, invented in 1854 by Adolphe Eugène Disdéri, became ubiquitous. Anyone could have a portrait taken cheaply and easily. In the process, the average person became memorable. Photography thus became an outgrowth of the democratic values fostered by the American and French revolutions.⁶¹⁹

The ability to produce cheap and accurate likenesses was the most salient feature of the new technology for Americans like photographer James F. Ryder. As the country approached its centenary, there was increasing

⁶¹⁷ - As elucidated by Griselda Pollock, tutorial session with the author, November 12, 1997.

⁶¹⁸ - Green-Lewis, p. 4.

⁶¹⁹ - Janson, p. 659.

concern to record the great people and events of the day for posterity. The invention of the photograph, then, arrived at an opportune moment in American history, as its historical self-consciousness was particularly heightened, and the need to commemorate contemporary and historical events was widely felt.⁶²⁰

The popularity and uses of the photograph after mid-century, therefore, cast a shadow over the other forms of representation currently used in the United States. In the light of the photograph, American art was demanded to be photographically truthful, honest, morally efficacious, and, above all, serve the formation of the young nation. Whether the truth represented was a 'natural' one, recorded in documentary form, or an 'ideal' one, embodied in the artist's unique synthesis of his or her character with the work's conception, would be debated without resolution for the remainder of the century. But these ideological positions would henceforth always be figured through photography.⁶²¹

Furthermore, while photography might be able to preserve the images of contemporary American heroes, it was unable to do so for those already gone. The credibility that photography lent to an image of a contemporary scene turned to patent fictionality in photographs of staged historical reconstructions. A medium seemingly more removed from the 'Here and the Now' was ironically more suited to conveying the 'truth' of a historical event than was the photograph. Neoclassical sculpture was the medium and style accorded the ability and responsibility for speaking the 'profounder truths' of American history.

Of course, this had been the case from the inception of sculptural practice in the United States. Even in the eighteenth century, the neoclassical vocabulary was imported from Europe as the style of choice for the

620 - Higham, p. 18.

621 - Green-Lewis, p. 2 and *passim*.

representation of prominent Americans, either literally in sculptures such as the *George Washington* commissioned of Antonio Canova for the North Carolina State House, or notionally in native-made neoclassical works. At mid-century, however, American neoclassical art was forced to pass through the defiles of the signifier 'photography'. This phenomenon was experienced by all representational media in all countries in which photography was taking hold. Thus, for example, a British critic was inspired to praise England's 'greatest living novelist' by calling him a photographer:

We know of few instances more marked than the resemblance between our latest developed art and our greatest living novelist; between the mirrorlike narrations of the one, and the permanent mirrors presented by the other; between what we shall venture to call the photography of Mr. Thackery [sic] and the photography of Mr. Talbot.⁶²²

For the first time, the possibility of a representational 'truth' that operated beyond the mimetic qualities of casts or direct prints from natural objects fired the imaginations of the nineteenth century:

Built into the idea of photography is the fantasy of perfect representation, a mirroring of the object which surpasses mimesis. A photograph, in theory, can more than replicate appearance. It can duplicate it.⁶²³

The almost suffocatingly intimate relationship between the photographic reproduction and its referent appeared within a realist discourse to forestall interrogations of the truthfulness of the photographic image. The photograph both incites the desire for the 'absolute representation', in which all distance between signifier and signified is occluded and the sign becomes self-identical, and masquerades as the satisfaction of that demand. Green-Lewis links the fantasy of photography as the paragon of truthfulness in representation to its indexical as well as iconic relation to the physical world. The 'apparently limited interpretive space that exists between chemically

622 - 'Thackery [sic] as Novelist and Photographer', *American Journal of Photography*, n.s. 3 (1860-61), p. 183; quoted in Green-Lewis, p. 6.

623 - Green-Lewis, p. 25.

produced image and material object' operates to affirm a perceptive accord among viewers who cannot help but recognise 'the subject depicted and accord with one's fellow human beings that this is, indeed, the way it looks.' Indeed, 'the ideal photograph, would, theoretically, eradicate dissent.' Thus the realist discourses of photography 'depend on a faith in the possibility of shared vision.'⁶²⁴

Little else could be more representative of the American Dream than this fantasy of 'shared vision'. As in Barthes's description of photographic connotation, American art of the nineteenth century 'like every well-structured signification, is an institutional activity; in relation to society overall, its function is to integrate man, to reassure him.'⁶²⁵ While European cultures in the nineteenth century were preoccupied with defining differences – between genders, classes, communities, religions, nations – American national identity was based on the principle of '*e pluribus unum*'. Certainly the American 'One' was articulated through the very differences at issue in Europe, but of the European nations only France came close, through its similar republican history, to inscribing the concept of oneness as the central tenet of its Constitution. Once the possibility of faithfully duplicating that single vision had been offered by the discourse of photography, there was no turning back, no possibility that any form of representation could escape the influence of this underlying American ideological demand.

Moholy-Nagy illustrates this structural relationship between new and old technologies in the case of film and an earlier style of painting:

The creative potential of the new is for the most part slowly revealed through old forms, old instruments and areas of design that in their essence have already been superseded by the new, but which under pressure from the new as it takes shape are driven to a euphoric efflorescence. Thus, for example, futurist (structural) painting brought forth the clearly defined *Problematik* of the simultaneity of motion, the representation of the instant, which was

⁶²⁴ - Green-Lewis, p. 26.

⁶²⁵ - Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text* (NY: Noonday Press, 1977; repr. 1988), p. 31; quoted in Green-Lewis, p. 112.

later to destroy it – and this at a time when film was already known but far from being understood.⁶²⁶

Not even an art form as seemingly antecedent and antithetical to photography as neoclassical sculpture was above photography's enthrallment. Neoclassical sculpture in white marble was particularly prone to being held to photography's standards, as it seemed particularly suited for the moral mission to which American ideology held representation. Within the racist and colour-coded ideologies of the United States, neoclassical sculpture's predominantly white marble solidity functioned as a metaphor for the American quest for purity, honesty, and nobility, in material as well as narrative form. White marble idealism was the 'euphoric efflorescence' to which American art was driven in the presence of photography.⁶²⁷

Neoclassical sculpture after the invention of photography returned to its original role of representing American history and ideals, but with an added stake. In its mechanicality, seamless surfaces, and reputation for 'white' clarity of form and purpose, neoclassical sculpture, and particularly in its white marble forms, was ideally suited to undertake the burdens of representation prescribed to photography, but without the disturbing 'newness' attendant to the photographic process. American neoclassical sculpture was enlisted not only to figure the American Ideal, but, in affirming 'a community of viewers who see in similar ways', to carry the weight of Truth itself.⁶²⁸ And confirming Moholy-Nagy's interpretation of the pressure of the new on preceding forms, it was precisely this striving after a mechanical truth that was not native to its material nature that proved too large a burden even for American marble neoclassicism's ponderous stone masses, and ultimately contributed to the destruction of the credibility of the art form, the period, and its artists.

626 - László Moholy-Nagy, quoted in Benjamin, 'A Small History of Photography', p. 254.

627 - The other refuge of American ideology after the invention of photography was, not surprisingly, American landscape painting and later, American landscape photography. See Stephen Daniels, *Fields of Vision: Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England and the United States* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993).

628 - Green-Lewis, p. 26.

PART III: *Photography in Bronze*

Chapter 11: A '*Euphoric Efflorescence*'

11.i Sculptural Currency

The question, then, is raised of the distinction between white marble neoclassicism, and bronze sculpture. Why did Hosmer make the analogy between photography and bronze in her phrase, 'bronze photographs'?

Though the majority of Hosmer's ideal works were produced in marble, she also worked in bronze. Bronze, however, was reserved primarily for portrait monuments to contemporary individuals. When her ideal work, *Zenobia in Chains*, was being carved in marble, Hosmer received word that she had been awarded the commission for a monumental bronze of the deceased Missouri Senator, Thomas Hart Benton.⁶²⁹ The Benton was shipped to Munich for casting while the *Zenobia* was on display in London at the 1862 Great Exhibition.⁶³⁰ (see *figs. 105 & 122*)

For Hosmer and most other neoclassical sculptors of her generation, bronze was not the medium reserved for the ideal; this, the artist's most 'artistic' and prestigious mode of production, was conducted almost exclusively in white marble. But while her ideal works might found the sculptor's artistic reputation, they were not necessarily the artist's bread and butter. The majority of sculptors supported themselves with portrait busts and major public monumental commissions, with the latter usually being executed in bronze. Bronze was then ambivalently both the neoclassical sculptor's 'precious metal' and workaday medium. To associate bronze with

⁶²⁹ - Sherwood, p. 190.

⁶³⁰ - *Ibid.*, p. 216.

photography is to evoke the potential for photography to encroach on the livelihoods of neoclassical artists working in more traditional media. As the relatively quick and affordable photographic portrait created a market that the portrait painter's more expensive practice could not exploit, the economic relationships of the photographic studio to its audience threatened to undermine the class system which structured the sculpture studio with the sculptor, 'inventor of the ideal', as sole author and authority, producing for an economically elite clientele. Green-Lewis describes the metaphoric power of photography for the nineteenth century class relations:

As the class anxieties charted in the journals suggest, photography symbolized change and modernity, but it was primarily the instability of its representational status which offered potent metaphors to authors preoccupied with the representational status of their own work.⁶³¹

For Hosmer as well, 'bronze photographs' was a term that signalled her own struggles with the instability of neoclassical sculpture, within the nineteenth century's rising modernity and its debates around truth in realistic versus ideal representational styles.

The problem of where the 'truth' lay – in the photographic reproduction of Nature or in the inventive genius of the artist's representation of Nature – parallels the concern in sculptural production that the studio-carved marble work was less 'faithful' to the artist's directing hand than the bronze cast. The process of bronze sculpture production could be read as translating the touch of the sculptor and the trace of his or her hand into the final work more directly. It was not as subject to the intervention of studio artisans and their potentially 'degenerative' influences, both aesthetic and moral. On the level of sculptural production, then, the bronze sculpture could be read as more definitely the original work of the artist, undiluted by the intervention of workshop carvers. But the imperative for the bronze work to remain the product of artistic synthesis rather than of mechanical reproduction retained its power. Because

of the realism of his figures, Rodin, for example, was accused of casting his works from actual bodies rather than modelling from them. Directly casting from models' bodies would constitute an act of copying or mimesis rather than synthesis, and therefore would not represent true artistic power. In such cases the sculptor was framed like the camera, charged with only mechanically reproducing from nature.

At times, however, the purely mechanical reproduction of direct casting from a living model, like the photograph, was thought to provide an object more suitable for melancholic or nostalgic contemplation than the 'artwork', which was seen to be more conditioned by the artist's vision and intervention. Elizabeth Barrett (Browning), later a friend of Harriet Hosmer's in Rome, recognised the distinction between art and photography being drawn by her contemporaries, even as she professed her pleasure in the photograph over the work of art precisely because of its unprejudiced and literal eye:

I long to have such a memorial of every being dear to me in the world. It is not merely the likeness which is precious in such cases – but the association and the sense of nearness involved in the thing... the fact of the *very shadow of the person* lying there fixed forever! It is the very sanctification of portraits I think – and it is not at all monstrous in me to say, what my brothers cry out against so vehemently, that I would rather have such a memorial of one I dearly loved, than the noblest artist's work ever produced.⁶³²

As Rosen and Zerner point out, 'Many artists and critics affected to despise the new invention until, as André James has remarked, they decided they wanted photographs of their mothers.'⁶³³ Even Baudelaire fell prey to photography's promise of 'the *very shadow of the person* lying there fixed forever!', and shortly after his 1859 condemnation of photography at the Paris Salon sent instructions to his mother to have a photographic portrait made of herself.⁶³⁴

Walter Benjamin has attributed the appeal of the photograph not to any

632 - E.B. Browning, 1843 letter to Mary Russell Mitford, quoted in Sontag, p. 183.

633 - Rosen and Zerner, pp. 99-100.

634 - Ibid.

new sensibilities cultivated by nineteenth century publics, but rather to a reactionary devotion to the image in its emphatically pre-modernist vein as a 'cult object', an object of melancholic devotion entirely consistent with Romantic aesthetics:

It is no accident that the portrait was the focal point of early photography. The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers a last refuge for the cult value of the picture. For the last time the aura emanates from the early photographs in the fleeting expression of a human face. This is what constitutes their melancholy, incomparable beauty.⁶³⁵

Against the 'faceless' massification imaginatively made possible by photographic reproduction, nineteenth century audiences mobilised a desire for the absolute specificity of the portrait, the particular detail that marked an individual as unique. Ironically, this was also the argument deployed against the photograph in favour of the painted portrait, which was reputed to be more adept at capturing the 'spirit' of the sitter, a truer rendering than mere likeness. Both lines of defence, however, were easily subsumed into the much older art theoretical paradigms of the allegorical 'type' and the historically specific 'moment' which Peter Buse finds causing Freud so much anxiety in his analysis of the *Moses* of Michelangelo:

Did Michelangelo intend to create a 'timeless study of character and mood' in this *Moses*, or did he portray him at a particular moment in his life and, if so, at a highly significant one?⁶³⁶

Indeed, Freud's entire analysis of the *Moses* can be read as an 'elaborate analysis which reclaims the ["particular moment"] interpretation' of the work.⁶³⁷ Undoubtedly conditioned by the reproductive technology he used in his tours of Rome, Freud's desire for the almost 'photographic' particular – the snapshot of the unique historical moment – over the more classically idealising 'type' finds its prototype in an earlier reproductive process of sculpture: the cast.

635 - Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', p. 219.

639 - Buse, p. 123.

637 - Ibid., p. 124.

Harriet Hosmer's bronze and plaster casts of the clasped hands of Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning are taken directly from the writer's persons. (*fig. 115*) As the purpose of this work was to provide a memento of the authors, direct casting from the models was the best process with which to imbue the work with the authenticity of the 'original'. Modelling in clay from the Brownings' hands, and then 'pointing' the clay into marble, would have involved too many intermediary stages and manifestations of the piece, each one further removed from the actual hands and hence less 'true'. What became possible in the bronze sculpture that was not possible in marble was, as in the photograph, a conjuncture between art and 'the sense of nearness involved in the thing... the fact of the *very shadow of the person* lying there fixed forever!

But at the same time, the sculptor's framing of the models' hands – her compositional decisions of where to crop the piece, the finishing of the surface and the presentation of the work – intervenes in this 'copy from nature' in much the same way as a photographer composes, crops, frames and presents a photograph as art. Originally collected by friends and admirers of the Brownings, versions of their clasped hands are now exhibited in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum in New York and the National Museum of Women in the Arts. The twentieth century exhibitions of these versions of the *Clasped Hands* illustrate the ambivalent status of the work as 'original art' and as 'photographic copy'. The bronze version owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York is presented in a reconstructed Victorian drawing room, lying on a writing table with no identifying plaque naming the artist or the work, as a generalised memento and melancholic trace presented in a 'snapshot' tableau of a lost era. (*fig. 116*) The plaster version owned by the National Museum of Women in the Art, however, is presented in a glass case as a fragile and precious sculptural object removed from its historical context

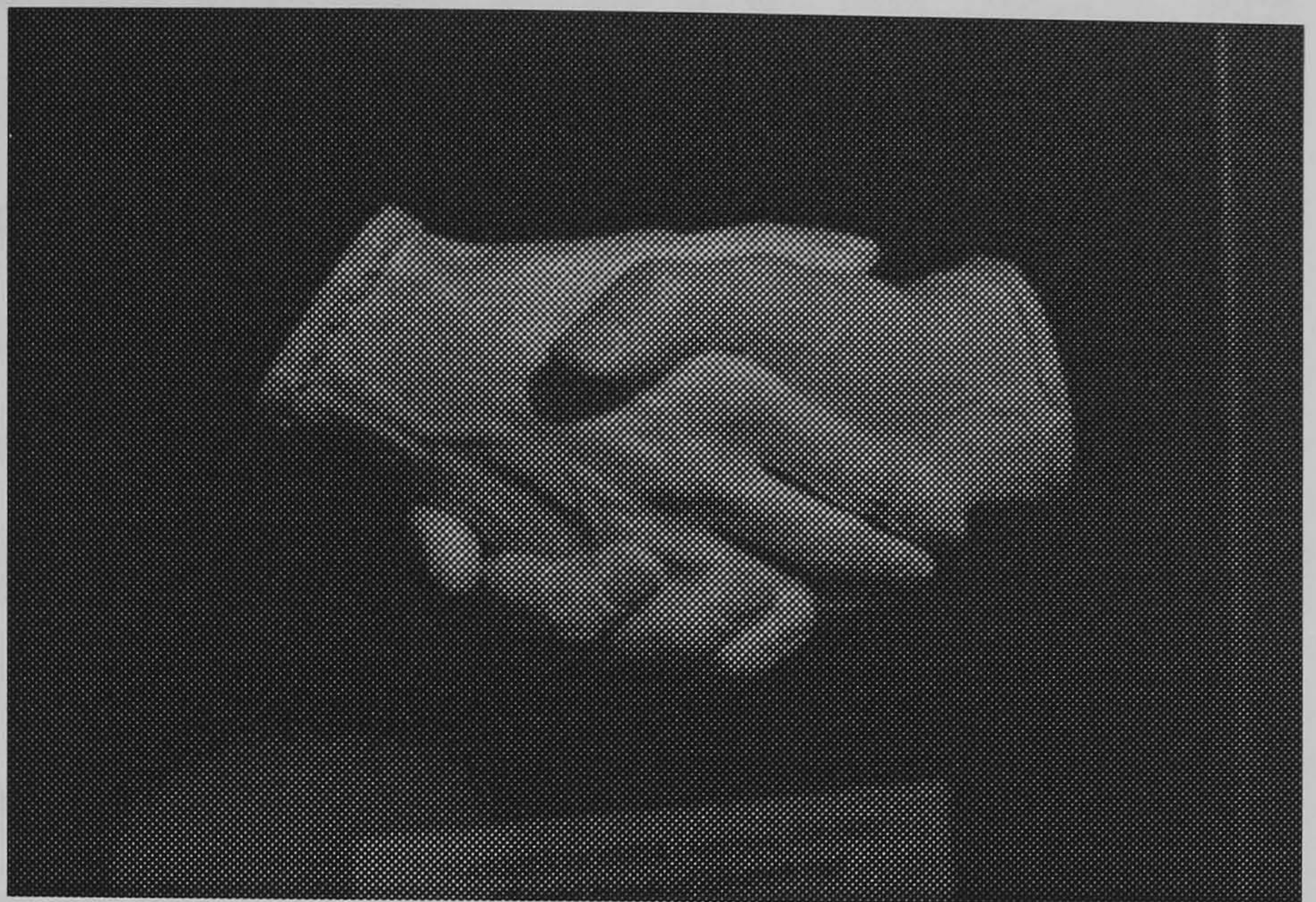


fig. 115 Harriet Hosmer, *Clasped Hands of Elizabeth and Robert Browning*, 1853, plaster casting from life, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC

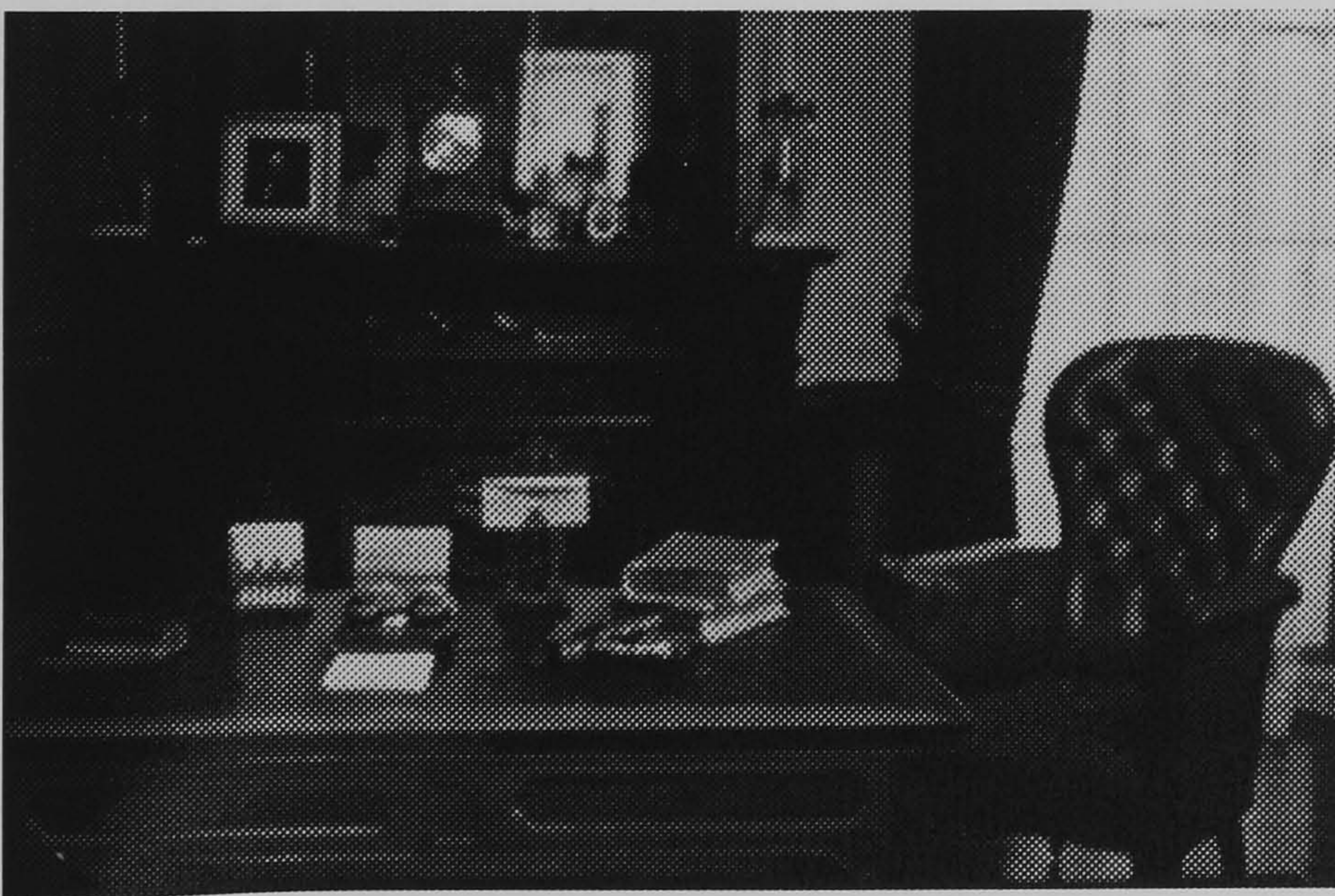


fig. 116 Harriet Hosmer, *Clasped Hands of Elizabeth and Robert Browning*, 1853, bronze casting from life, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY

but presented with the standard information on the artist, title, medium, date and place of manufacture.

Benjamin was all too aware of the potential for the photograph like any form of reproduction to increase the 'aura' of the object photographed, fixing it as a monument to tradition and embedding it in the structures of high capitalism as commodity fetish. Indeed, Benjamin notes the first response of the nineteenth century to the advent of photography in the context of the simultaneous rise of socialism was the attempt to enshroud the art object in an even more impenetrable cultic tradition: 'With the advent of the first truly revolutionary means of reproduction, photography, simultaneously with the rise of socialism, art sensed the approaching crisis which has become evident a century later. At the time, art reacted with the doctrine of *l'art pour l'art*, that is, with a theology of art.'⁶³⁸ Even in the twentieth century, he adds, 'ultrareactionary authors give the film a similar contextual significance – if not an outright sacred one, then at least a supernatural one.'⁶³⁹ Ultimately, for Benjamin, the radicality of a medium lies not in its material, but in its historical and economic uses; even film is not above falling into the trap of the commodity fetish:

The film responds to the shrivelling of the aura with an artificial build-up of the 'personality' outside the studio. The cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry, preserves not the unique aura of the person but the 'spell of the personality,' the phony spell of a commodity. So long as the movie-makers' capital sets the fashion, as a rule no other revolutionary merit can be accredited to today's film than the promotion of a revolutionary criticism of traditional concepts of art.⁶⁴⁰

Hughes quite rightly notes that the photo-archives of contemporary museum shops and art history departments all too often merely reiterate aesthetic traditions and their attendant ideologies, rather than introducing a tangibly radical effect. But what this dismissive and partial reading of

⁶³⁸ - Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', p. 218.

⁶³⁹ - Ibid., p. 221.

⁶⁴⁰ - Ibid., p. 224.

Benjamin's essay regrettably passes over is Benjamin's recognition that despite the photograph's technological continuity with earlier forms of mechanical reproduction, it was the material kernel around which nineteenth century Romantics allowed a sense of discontinuity and disjuncture with the past to accrete. Thus the photograph, unlike other forms of mechanical reproduction, comes to be the bearer of ideological meanings, such as Baudelaire's 'loathing for history and for painting', which, although patently impossible in any material sense, are no less efficacious in the Romantic imaginary and its heirs.

Partly this prejudice against the photograph was bound up with its perceived impact on the availability of representation to the lower economic classes, increased precisely by photography's relative low cost, compared to painting; 'this multitude', 'the public', 'our squalid society' could have just as easy access to records of their loved ones or the great sites and works of western art as the Grand Tourist had had. Not since the invention of printing in the fifteenth century had a form of mechanical reproduction seemed to hold such promise, and such a threat, for those still working with pen and brush.⁶⁴¹ Even today a curious reasoning exists among some critics whereby the photograph, by virtue of being available to those who could not afford to have a portrait painted, for example, somehow is seen to have deprived painters of their livelihood: photography has been called a 'social calamity for artists, who for 250 years had depended on portraiture for their basic livelihood.'⁶⁴² E.P. Richardson has written, 'As the portrait painter vanished, there appeared the impoverished bohemian artist, insecure, embittered, earning his living by teaching instead of practising his art, and dependent for the sale of his work upon the whims of fashion.'⁶⁴³ Russell Lynes rejoins, however, 'The painted portrait, of course, did not vanish, any more than vanity vanished. There

641 - See, for example, Scharf, pp. 26-28.

642 - Lynes, *The Art-Makers*, p. 343.

643 - E.P. Richardson, quoted in Lynes, *The Art-Makers*, p. 343.

continued to be the rich, the official, the dominant in society or industry for whom anything less than immortality in paint was considered unsuitable.⁶⁴⁴ Similarly, the sculpted portrait bust remained the paragon of public immortality for the wealthy and prominent, and the mainstay of the sculptor's income, despite the increasing use of photography even by sculptors to represent themselves. The media simply did not prove to be universally interchangeable.

Warranted or not, many Victorians 'blamed the messenger', the photograph, for the changing economic relations between the artist, the patron, and art audiences. Thus the photograph in Harriet Hosmer's phrase, 'photographs in bronze', functioned as an allegory through which Hosmer could express her anxiety about the new technology's assault on her definition of art as principally the synthesis of an ideal rather than pure mimesis of 'reality', but also on the ideologies that structured the studio, placing the artist as capitalist boss and creative genius at the head of a team of mere artisans, and all responding to the patronage of a cultural elite.

11.ii Narrativity and the Time of the Future Perfect

If neoclassical sculpture was enlisted in the service of constructing and guaranteeing American ideologies and identities at the end of the country's first century, it was to accomplish this through the agency of the historical narrative: 'It was a time when, above all, the sculpture had to tell a story', wrote Henry James of nineteenth century American neoclassicism.⁶⁴⁵

It is opportune at this point to return to Freud on the *Moses* of Michelangelo, and the as-yet unresolved question of the essay's relationship to photography. The analogies I have traced above between sculpture and photography might imply that the form in which information was conveyed was

644 - Lynes, *The Art-Makers*, p. 343.

645 - James, p. 169.

insignificant to nineteenth century American cultural practices; that the formation of American identity through the figures of its national narratives was of primary importance, and whichever medium was deemed most efficacious in that regard – most materially disposed to carrying the weight of American ‘Truth’ – was co-opted for these purposes.

Freud too, notes Buse, ‘is notoriously silent on questions of form, brushing them aside in his rush to diagnose content, subject matter’:

This blindness to form and emphasis on the ‘spiritual content’ of works of art, E. H. Gombrich says, locates Freud in a previous generation of art criticism: in the Moses essay, ‘we are fully back in the tradition of nineteenth-century art-appreciation.’⁶⁴⁶

In the context of a pre-emptive apology for his lack of expertise as an art critic, Freud himself admits his prevailing interest in narrative, and subsequent neglect of the perhaps more artistic values of form. He opens his essay with:

I may say at once that I am no connoisseur in art, but simply a layman. I have often observed that the subject-matter of works of art has a stronger attraction for me than their formal and technical qualities, though to the artist their value lies first and foremost in these latter. I am unable rightly to appreciate many of the methods used and the effect obtained in art. I state this so as to secure the reader’s indulgence for the attempt I propose to make here.⁶⁴⁷

Freud then goes on to declare his affinities with the literary and sculptural media: ‘Nevertheless, works of art do exercise a powerful effect on me, especially those of literature and sculpture, less often of painting.’⁶⁴⁸ As Gombrich pointed out earlier, Freud’s concern with narrative places him squarely in the tradition of nineteenth century criticism. What else, after all, was Freud doing than recreating the story of Moses’s descent from the mountain in his interpretation of the statue by Michelangelo?

And perhaps by now we won’t be surprised to find that nineteenth century uses of photography also focused on their narrative power. ‘More

646 - E. H. Gombrich, ‘Freud’s aesthetics’ *Encounter* (January 1966), 30-40, p. 33, quoted in Buse, p. 127.

647 - Freud, ‘The Moses of Michelangelo’, p. 253.

648 - *Ibid.*

important than story to photography, however, was photography to storytelling itself,' writes Green-Lewis. As '[a] photograph could change the narrative status from fiction to fact,' so 'photography itself became part of a larger telling of stories in the building of institutions such as the monarchy, the medical profession, and the police force and in the building of nations, for example, through the representation of their wars.'⁶⁴⁹

But in the reciprocal process of redefinition that photography and the other representative media underwent in the nineteenth century, photography also came under the influence of preexisting discourses. 'When we press the button of a camera,' wrote Walter Benn Michaels, 'we are writing.'⁶⁵⁰ Its advent into the story-telling nineteenth century saturated the new technology with a much older desire for narrativity.

In its structure, the narrative will always include the elements of past, present and future in its telling. Historical narratives of familiar stories from myth, legend, religious texts and the like can in particular be likened to the time of the future perfect, since, in anticipating what we know will have been by the end of the story, we are propelled through the chain of events by desire for the satisfaction of their conclusion. Nathaniel Hawthorne, in his preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*, explains that the Romantic narrative is an 'attempt to connect a by-gone time with the very Present that is flitting away from us.'⁶⁵¹ Hawthorne thus describes the temporal suturing effect of the Romantic narrative in much the same way as Benjamin finds in the photograph 'the immediacy of that long-forgotten moment'.⁶⁵² 'Imagining a past, present, and future for a fictional subject,' concurs Joy Kasson, 'audiences [of nineteenth century ideal sculpture] participated in the

⁶⁴⁹ - Green-Lewis, pp. 4-5.

⁶⁵⁰ - Walter Benn Michaels, *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism: American Literature at the Turn of the Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 222, quoted in Green-Lewis, p. 5.

⁶⁵¹ - Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851; repr. NY: Penguin, 1987), p. 2.

⁶⁵² - Benjamin, 'A Short History of Photography', p. 243.

production of meaning and revealed many of their own assumptions.⁶⁵³

In this light, we might ask if the temporal similarity discovered by Buse between photography and sculpture in Freud's reading of the *Moses* of Michelangelo stems from the structural similarities of their media, or instead from their relationships to historical narrative, conditioned by wider representational practices and concerns in the nineteenth century. All of the analogies drawn above between sculpture and photography could well prove irrelevant if their underlying connection is simply that which unites almost all nineteenth century representation, regardless of media – the investment in narrative. Narrative, rather than photography, may indeed be the common feature between photography and sculpture. As I shall argue below, however, the twinned desires for narrative and history characterise the nineteenth century, and to this extent underlie nineteenth century representation regardless of media. Returning yet again, to Hosmer's expression, 'bronze photographs', I should like to elucidate the point that was asserted at the beginning of this analysis: that nineteenth century American history sculpture was flat, and can even be called photography.

Hosmer's phrase, 'bronze photographs' betrays the levelling effect of a specifically American desire for history in art. This desire for history functioned like a weight, an agent of compression on American representations of the past. Like the new contemporary technology, photography, American history sculpture – its ideal examples perhaps even more than the 'realist' ones – viewed the past with an indiscriminate eye, assembling past, present, and future in the service of a single, melting-pot ideology. Although, as Stephen Bann has argued, the incitement of the desire for history is typical of the Romantic period,⁶⁵⁴ the particularly eclectic and 'two-dimensional' figuration of historical and legendary narratives in the United States after mid-century was

653 - Joy Kasson, *Marble Queens and Captives* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990) p. 2.

654 - Stephen Bann, *Romanticism and the Rise of History* (NY: Twayne, 1995).

distinctive. In the service of a desire for the past specifically American in its mobilisation for the construction of contemporary national identity, American ideal sculpture flattened history by means of neoclassicism's homogeneous, invisible surfaces, erasing its differences in order to create the ideological illusion of seamless, timeless tradition. Tardis-like sites of desire, American history sculpture freezes time in the future-perfect tense that was discovered by Freud in his analysis of the *Moses* of Michelangelo. But there is an added 'snapshot' effect in American history sculpture, which incorporates the past into this otherwise non-Euclidean space as an emphatically two-dimensional, Euclidian plane. By repressing its fourth dimension, American history sculpture photographs history even while rendering it in a three-dimensional form. Ironically, even Harriet Hosmer's classicising marble heroines can be seen as 'photographs in bronze' – rebuses of the American Dream.

11.iii Snapshots of History

As the name 'neoclassical' suggests, a self-conscious relationship to history is a defining feature of the style and its Romantic period. Stephen Bann relates that the French historian, Prosper de Barante, summed up his own Romantic period's relationship to history with the assertion that, 'Never has curiosity been applied more avidly to the knowledge of history.'⁶⁵⁵ The incitement of the 'desire for history' in the Romantic period affected, for Bann, an 'irreversible shift' in the production and consumption of history, 'qualitatively as well as quantitatively different from what had gone before.'⁶⁵⁶ Following Michel Foucault, Bann argues that 'the role of historical consciousness was crucial in the transformation of the Western *episteme* at the outset of the nineteenth century'.⁶⁵⁷ In the Romantic period, according to Bann, 'history became over half a century or so the paradigmatic form of

⁶⁵⁵ - Bann, p. 9.

⁶⁵⁶ - Ibid., p. 6.

⁶⁵⁷ - Ibid., p. 9.

knowledge to which all others aspired.⁶⁵⁸

While to a large extent the 'desire for history' manifest in the proliferation of ideal sculpture by American sculptors in the nineteenth century is simply consistent with the heightened historical consciousness of the Romantic period in general, the particular conditions under which history was engaged in the construction of American national and cultural identity inflect the meaning of history for Americans in the nineteenth century (and since) with a unique layer of overdetermination. The United States was not even a century old at the height of Romanticism, and perhaps not surprisingly a commonplace in American cultural rhetoric during this century of historical passion was that the young nation lacked both history and culture. Indeed, nineteenth century Americans frequently admitted a sense of inferiority in comparison with the extensive histories and academic traditions in Europe. Writing from New York in 1851 for the *Art-Journal* of that year, one critic reflected on 'The Arts in the United States', recognising its 'border' position:

In historic Art we have done little. Our history is too new, and its characters too common-place and home-spun. Time has not glorified them with the heroic dignity which it alone can bring. The picturesqueness and romance our border history possesses has been ruined by its appropriation to all kinds of clap-trap and fifth-rate Art; so that no artist of genuine talent cares to touch it.⁶⁵⁹

But the perceived 'lack of history' in the United States, meaning above all a lack of national traditions, only increased the debates around the role and importance of history in American cultural practices.⁶⁶⁰ Though the United States shared with western Europe the 'sheer excess and extravagance of the Romantic investment in the past', as this critic reveals American art in the Romantic period also developed under the influence of an extreme

⁶⁵⁸ - Bann, p. 9.

⁶⁵⁹ - 'The Arts in the United States', p. 191.

⁶⁶⁰ - This acceleration of interest in history, precisely because of a perceived lack of it, might be compared with the phenomenon Stephen Bann notes as a late twentieth century response to Francis Fukuyama's 'End of History': 'It can easily be appreciated,' writes Bann, 'that a debate about the end of history, far from suspending interest in the historical estimate of events, in fact intensifies concern with this rare and distinctive property of the Western mind.' Bann, p. 5.

consciousness of the youth of the nation, coupled with nationalistic demands for American art to speak directly and distinctly to and of the 'American experience' in the nineteenth century. Joy Kasson notes that, 'The development and popular reception of the arts in nineteenth-century America became part of a larger debate over national identity.'⁶⁶¹ Against the views espoused by Europeans such as Alexis de Tocqueville that 'Americans' genius turned toward the practical rather than the spiritual and that no significant achievement in the arts should be expected in democratic society', Emerson and Melville among others called for an 'American Shakespeare' to write on 'characteristically American themes', while 'critics looked to such visual artists as Hudson River painter Thomas Cole, as well as to writers, for evidence that the American landscape would inspire art worthy of international attention.'⁶⁶² Primary among these was William Dunlap's *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* (1834), which:

... argued that the visual arts were on the rise in Jacksonian America, destined, as were other aspects of American culture, for glory.... Young Americans choosing careers in the arts were eagerly greeted by commentators like Dunlap as patriots and heroes, whose careers proved that the new nation was rising above merely material and commercial endeavors.⁶⁶³

Although no more or less lacking in history and cultural traditions than their European peers in any objective way, Americans, and perhaps particularly Americans involved in the arts, believed themselves *as Americans* to be located on the margins of European history and cultural tradition, neither entirely a part of it, nor entirely excluded from it. This perception gave rise to dual and conflicting aspirations: both to assimilate to European culture and prove Americans capable of 'beating the Europeans at their own game', and to create a unique American cultural tradition, both separate from and superior to the European one. Many American artists felt duty bound to 'do

661 - Kasson, p. 7.

662 - Ibid.

663 - Ibid.

their part' in realising this American dream, and they perceived themselves as performing a national duty by studying and even expatriating to Europe where they might perfect their art. At the same time, by doing so they risked seduction and contamination by the very European culture they were expected to master and then exceed. As the century progressed, American confidence in being able to provide adequate resources for its artists grew, giving rise to new charges of disloyalty and condescension to their native land against expatriate artists. But Europe was still the centre of the contemporary art market, so the artists continued to expatriate, and the debate around the value of Europe to the American artist persisted, with American artists being no less ambivalently positioned with respect to history and cultural tradition for the lengthening of their years.

Then, as now, an enormous cultural machine was at work on both sides of the Atlantic to create and suture the cultural gaps between America and Europe. A primary trope in this play of American identity construction was that of the European past as a warning for the American future. The United States could learn from the mistakes of its European antecedents, and in fact it was essential that the young nation study such lessons well if it were to avoid falling into the decadence that was perceived to afflict the Old World. With its Republican and Imperial histories, Rome was the 'classic' example of an American history lesson. For Henry P. Leland, writing his journal-novel, *Americans in Rome*, published in 1863, Rome was 'all of the past, and full of lessons' – a necessary antithesis for America's progress into the future.

While we in America, with our war and work, are fighting along stoutly in the advance guard of the world, let us not forget that there has been a past, by which we may still profit much, though it be only by measuring from it our onward course. Such a standard may be found in Rome, which is to the present day the most living specimen of a rapidly vanishing, yet cultivated age, in existence. In this great city and its territories, old times still weep and smile as they did in fairy tales and pictures, until the present age of steel came to improve the world. Rome is our direct antithesis. She is all

of the past, and full of lessons, even if they be only of warning for the future.⁶⁶⁴

Rome here is cast as the negative past from which America's future will be printed. The photographic metaphor is apt, as it illustrates not only the symbiosis of contemporary America and ancient Rome, but also the potentiality for America to become, when printed from its antithetical past, identical with its Other. For the anxiety in the United States was that while the country must have a past in order to have its present and future, there was always the latent possibility that the present and future could come to resemble too closely the past, be infected by its decadent example – there was the danger of too great a temporal flattening, of an erasure of difference between past, present, and future. The urgency of a past conceived as essential to survival that permeates the search for history in the young United States is simultaneously pictured as the greatest threat and benefit to the American future. Rome is thus the figure of a limit of the American desire for history. Writing one century after Leland, Jacques Lacan observed:

... in a continent where it would be untrue to say that history loses its meaning since it is there that it finds its limit – having been already formed over several centuries, it weighs all the more heavily there by virtue of the gulf that represents its all too limited horizon – but it is denied with a categorical will that gives the industrial corporations their style, a cultural ahistoricism peculiar to the United States of America.⁶⁶⁵

In a cultural ahistoricism which gives paramount importance to history, the American use of ancient Rome, though in some ways analogous to the use of Rome by revolutionary France, is distinct from the appropriation of classical imagery by French artists with their more sober flavour of a deliberate political programme. For in Europe the past is always present, whether sought after or not: it is inevitably there, recorded in the architecture, the city plans, the street names, the cuisine and the art. Perhaps more

664 - Leland, p. 3.

665 - Jacques Lacan, 'The Freudian thing, or the meaning of the return to Freud in psychoanalysis', *Ecrits*, p. 115.

importantly, the moments of disjuncture between past and present are saliently figured as well in the jumbled co-existence of relics from all ages. For Americans living in towns rarely older than a century, frequently of immigrant stock, which had jettisoned their native tongues and family histories upon embarkation, there were no such constant concrete visual reminders of the past or of its physical relationship to the present and future; thus the past relied even more on the imaginary agency of literature and art for its fabrication.

This is not, however, to cast Europe as the source of 'authentic' and stable identities against which Americans struggled to cast their own sense of nationality. Rather, American views of Europe emerged in the presence of constantly evolving European national and cultural identities as well, which could either abet or conflict with American fantasies of Europe.

The image of a Rome, for example, as quintessentially 'picturesque', existing outside of modern European social and economic structures, was the nineteenth century city's primary industry and source of income – not just a fiction of purely American authorship. According to Harriet Hosmer, Cardinal Antonelli, the *de facto* governor of Rome during the period before Italian unification and object of Anne Whitney's political satire in her *Roma 1869*, tried to undermine the new Italian government by economically strangling the city. His method was to drive away the city's tourists by forbidding all of the 'picturesque' religious ceremonies that formed a large part of the touristic appeal of the city. Hosmer wrote her patron in December, 1870:

All hope of bringing the Vatican to terms seems distant, and Antonelli, who knows the Romans, counsels general mourning, no ceremonies in the churches, not a whisk of a candle towards an illumination, nothing to attract *forestieri* [the foreign tourists], and all that touches the pocket, the seat of the Italian conscience.⁶⁶⁶

Recognising the artists' stake in preserving 'old Rome', she added in February, 1871: 'You ask about the effect of the Italian troops in Rome. The

666 - Carr, p. 286.

place will be spoiled (for artists); why not leave one little spot upon earth unmolested? Plague on the world that wants to be forever going on.⁶⁶⁷

Similarly William Wetmore Story's 1870 revision to *Roba di Roma* adds the hope that 'with the entrance of liberty, the old picturesque customs and costumes that gave so peculiar a charm to Rome will not be driven out.'⁶⁶⁸

The view of Rome as an ahistorical aesthetic spectacle is codified in the watercolours of Pio Joris and Roesler Franz. (figs 117 & 118) Although working in a 'picturesque realism' directly influenced by souvenir photographs of the city, Joris and Franz painted their watercolours in order to 'snatch from the demolishing pick-axes' of progress images of the old, 'picturesque', pre-unification Rome.⁶⁶⁹ Nostalgic and sentimental, Joris and Franz's images aestheticise the poverty and poor conditions in which 'ordinary' Romans lived in the nineteenth century, and they are sold today in much the same contexts as they were in the nineteenth century: to tourists, on postcards.⁶⁷⁰ These fetishistic 'emblems of non-modernity'⁶⁷¹ are less historical documents than anaesthesia for the social conscience, and are paralleled in photography by images of the great tourist sites and famous classical artworks of Rome which became widely available in the late nineteenth century as well. Such 'snapshots of history' freeze Rome in a mythic place of plenitude, before the castrating effect of modernity, rendering the city a nostalgic fetish that helps the subject deny rather than confront lack. Harriet Hosmer expressed her fantasy of a timeless Rome in her description of an arrival there: 'You entered its gates, they closed behind you and the nineteenth century disappeared from view. You entered upon a sphere purely ideal – the ideal of the scholar,

667 - Carr, p. 292.

668 - William Wetmore Story, *Roba di Roma*, 13th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1887) I, pp. 8-39; quoted in Vance, II, p. 146.

669 - Mammucari, p. 22.

670 - Nor are the fantasies of 'picturesque' and 'lost' Rome confined to the nineteenth century, as Renato Mammucari's description of Joris and Franz's works, quoted here, demonstrates. Ibid.

671 - Pollock, *Avant-garde Gambits 1888-1893*, p. 66.

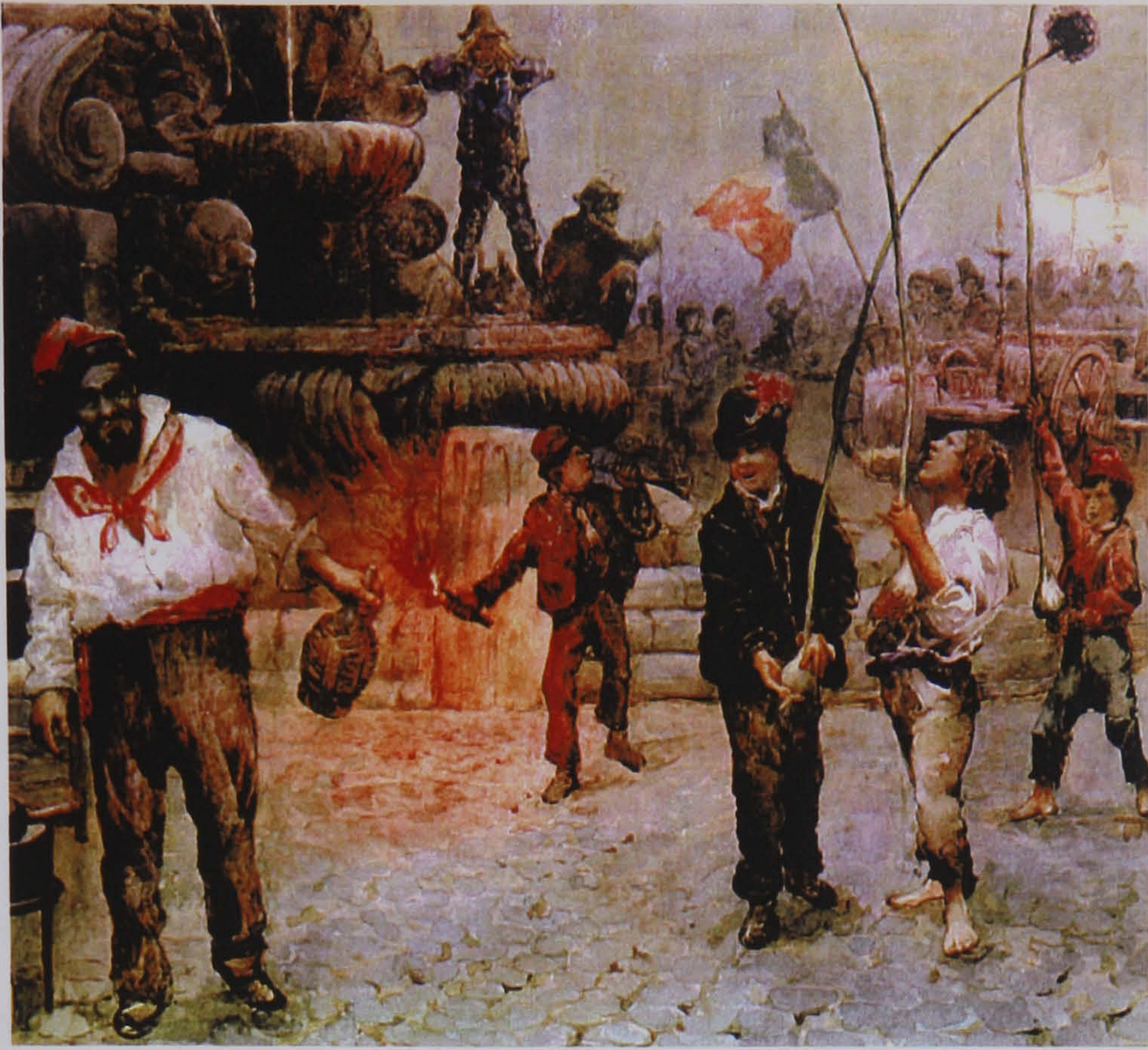


fig. 117 E. Roesler Franz, *L'alba della festa di S. Giovanni*, 1879, watercolour, 37x73cm, private collection, Rome



fig. 118 E. Nardi, *Fioraie a piazza di Spagna*, 1910, watercolour on paper, 50x34cm, private collection

the poet and the artist.⁶⁷²

In the nineteenth century, American neoclassical sculptors were among primary agents and victims of the American/European dialectic. In part because of a perceived lack of resources for the study and production of sculpture in the United States, the vast majority of American sculptors spent at least a formative portion if not the entirety of their careers abroad, usually in Italy until late in the century. One effect of their geographic and cultural liminality was that American sculptors drew their 'ideal' subject matter not only from European literature and history, but also from newly-invented American traditions. In sculpture, this included figures from American literary successes such as Longfellow's epic poem, *The Song of Hiawatha*, from legendary episodes of American history such as the Lost Colony, as well as from more generalised fantasy scenes of encounters between Native Americans and European colonists or of African-American emancipation, for example. American sculptors adopted the entire range of approaches to representing the past, portraying it as semi-fictive 'tradition' and in more historically rigorous modes with nearly equal frequency and passion.⁶⁷³ Fiction and 'reality' intermingled as freely as past and present did in the narratives of American sculpture. Hiram Powers's *Greek Slave* represented a figure invented by the sculptor but drawn from an actual and relatively recent historical occurrence – the Greek-Turkish wars of the 1820s. Anne Whitney's *Roma 1869*, on the other hand, portrayed an allegorical figure of the city, with emblems of its classical past intermingled with symbols of contemporary papal power decorating the hem of the figure's skirt.

What Janson posits in terms of formal concerns – that the Romantic 'style' is 'the revival not of one style, but of a potentially unlimited number of

672 - Harriet Hosmer, quoted in Alicia Faxon, 'Images of Women in the Sculpture of Harriet Hosmer', *Women's Art Journal* 2 (Spring/Summer 1981) 25-29 (p. 26).

673 - Stephen Bann notes a useful distinction between such 'traditions' as 'the creation of a phony past' and 'history' as the 'discipline that serves to unmask such fabrications... [t]hrough diligent inspection of the archives'. Bann, p. 8.

styles'⁶⁷⁴ – is also true of the Romantic use of history, and of American Romanticism in particular. More appropriately termed 'neo-Baroque' than neoclassical, American sculpture of the nineteenth century can be seen as the apotheosis of Romanticism in its liberal borrowing of historical and legendary narratives and their attendant stylistic vocabularies from any and all visual and literary sources. Thus such eclecticism was not necessarily a deliberate programme on the part of American sculptors but rather the effect of their ambivalent positions with respect to history, European culture, and art practices in the day.

The high rates of expatriation among American artists raised the question for more than one critic of the accuracy of identifying them with the 'American school'.⁶⁷⁵ Such doubts created some measure of anxiousness in expatriate American sculptors to prove their enduring allegiance to their American identities and publics, while at the same time justifying their foreign residence as essential to the development of their own – and thus American – art. This conflict is alluded to in the reception accorded to Harriet Hosmer's heroic sculpture, *Queen Zenobia in Chains*, upon its arrival in New York in 1864:

I only know... that it very fully expresses my conception of what historical sculpture should be.... In looking at it I felt that the artist had been as truly serving her country [in the Civil War], while working out her magnificent design abroad, as our soldiers in the field, and our public officers in their departments.⁶⁷⁶

In recognising the *Zenobia* as a truly historical piece, the poet Whittier is not just praising it by locating it within the European tradition of the hierarchy of the genres at the highest echelon, but also by attributing to the work a

674 - Janson, pp. 629-30.

675 - An example of the difficulty of locating expatriate Americans in a national school emerges in a review of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Although mistaken about Hiram Powers's birthplace, a critic for the *Art-Journal* wrote, 'Hiram Powers, the clever Irish sculptor, whom America, in virtue of his naturalisation in the United States, claims as her own, – with what right, the fact of his birth in the sister-kingdom and his education at Rome leaves somewhat doubtful.' *Art-Journal*, 3 (1851), p. 240.

676 - Quoted in Sherwood, p. 230.

responsiveness to a history that was not generally recognised as properly American. Linking American art to history for the nineteenth century critic was to link American art with Europe: an association both sought after and vilified by American artists and press alike. Following de Tocqueville's belief that true art was impossible in a truly democratic society, American artists could be presented with an impossible choice in certain narratives of the debate: either they were good artists, or they were good Americans. This ambivalent relationship to Europe and history unsettles and complicates Whittier's attempt both to praise the *Zenobia* as eminently historical – and hence European, and to praise the sculptor herself for having 'served her country' like a good American in creating the work.

James Jackson Jarves, writing of the 'Progress of American Sculpture in Europe' in 1871, asserted that 'Each race should create its own ideals out of its living present.'⁶⁷⁷ In this respect, art from the United States occupied a unique position in the western tradition: the phrase '*l'art doit être de son temps*' emerged from the particular historical consciousness of post-revolutionary France, but in the United States the imperative took on the aspect of an inevitability, as the perception was that from no other time but the present could truly American art be derived; pretence to anything else could only result in 'decided failures' 'in comparison with the perfected standard of Classical Art which [contemporary American artists] challenged'.⁶⁷⁸

Stephen Daniels has elucidated the conflicting desires for Old World-style traditions and contemporary American relevance in nineteenth century American landscape painting and specifically, the practice of pre-eminent American landscapist, Thomas Cole. The question for the nascent American school was: 'How, and to what extent, should painters of American scenes deploy European conventions of style and subject matter? Or, to put it more

677 - Jarves, p. 6.

678 - Ibid.

exactly, was it possible to raise the dignity of local, topographical traditions of view painting, with their clear delineations of vernacular enterprise, without compromising their national character?'⁶⁷⁹ Daniels goes on to explain:

While Cole's patrons wished for elegiac scenes, and often couched their landscape preferences in the language of European painting, they distrusted anything which reeked of Old World decadence. They demanded realistic scenes which were freshly, energetically, American.⁶⁸⁰ (figs 119 & 120)

Thus American critics in the nineteenth century urged:

'[L]et the new Titian touch his pencil on the Catskill Mount; or let him, another Claude Lorrain, look upon its laughing scenes of plenty' or if 'his half-savage spirit like Salvator Rosa's delighted in savage scenes there were abundant cascades and deep glens, where he might plant not Italian *banditti* lurking in caverns but 'the brown Indian, with featured crest and bloody tomahawk, the picturesque and native offspring of the wilderness'.⁶⁸¹

The differences – temporally, geographically, politically and culturally – between the US and Europe were staged, sutured, and lived by nineteenth century Americans with constant reference to European traditions both continuous with and radically heterogeneous from the nineteenth century American present. In the process, differences among past moments and cultures were smoothed over, rendering history a flat, continuous fabric from which the American sculptor could sample and combine elements at will. Like Fenton's photographs of the Crimean War discussed by Green-Lewis, American history sculpture was figured 'not within history, but as history'.⁶⁸² The specificity of the American historical narrative is this flatness: all differences are equalled when the American ideology turns its snap-shot eye on the past. Thus the same sculptural work could be both ideological *point de capiton* and bearer of the kernel of the Real of the American Dream.⁶⁸³

679 - Daniels, p. 149, with reference to William H. Gerdts, 'American landscape painting: critical judgments, 1730-1845', *American Art Journal* (Winter 1985), 28-59, pp. 37-8.

680 - Ibid., pp. 151-52.

681 - Quoted in Daniels, p. 151, with reference to John K. Howat, *The Hudson River and its Painters* (NY: American Legacy Press, 1972), pp. 34-35.

682 - Green-Lewis, p. 111.

683 - Slavoj Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London & NY: Verso, 1989), pp. 47-48, 87-89.



fig. 119 Thomas Cole, *The Dream of Arcadia*, 1838, oil on canvas, 97.5x157.5cm, Denver Art Museum



fig. 120 Jasper Francis Cropsey, *Eagle Cliff, Franconia Notch, New Hampshire*, 1858, oil on canvas, North Carolina Museum of Art

PART III: *Photography in Bronze*

Chapter 12: *The Absent Exhibition*

12.i Mechanical Reproduction and Mass Audiences: Powers's *Greek Slave*

The flatness of the American view of history is further inscribed in the media in which most representations of that history were consumed by nineteenth century Americans: as engravings or photographs of history sculpture at large public exhibitions. Another principal vehicle for the dissemination of American history sculpture were small-scale ceramic reproductions, such as the Parian ware versions of famous sculptures that were given away as *Art-Union* prizes in Britain and *Cosmopolitan Art Journal* prizes in the US throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. The growth of these industries of mechanical reproduction in the nineteenth century is the first evidence of the 'passionate inclination', Benjamin identifies, 'to bring things *closer* to us' in the age of mechanical reproduction: 'Every day the need to possess the object in close-up in the form of a picture, or rather a copy, becomes more imperative.'⁶⁸⁴ We have come to believe that we can better 'get hold of a picture, more particularly a piece of sculpture, not to mention architecture, in a photograph than in reality.' Thus 'we turn from photography-as-art to art-as-photography' in the development of American history sculpture.⁶⁸⁵

Mechanical reproduction went hand-in-hand with the explosion of the great public exhibitions – in temporary spaces and more permanent public galleries and museums – of the nineteenth century. The two-dimensional

684 - Benjamin, 'A Short History of Photography', p. 250.

685 - Ibid., p. 253.

illustrations of sculpture in periodical publications on contemporary events and the arts served as a major vehicle for drawing crowds to the exhibitions and helped to develop a market for three-dimensional reproductions of the most popular works in both full and reduced-scale versions. Although most nineteenth century American sculptors worked in Italy at some point in their careers, no Italian city was an exhibition centre in this period, so the sculptors were equally compelled to travel to France, Britain, and Germany for the International Exhibitions held there. All of the more successful American sculptors sent their major works on touring displays in the major US cities as well. These 'Great Exhibition' environments and their attendant art publications, aimed at mass-display and marketing rather than addressing the patronage of an elite few as had been the case in the studios on the Grand Tour until the nineteenth century, necessarily impacted the production of sculpture in studios in Italy. No sculptor could expect to survive on studio sales alone without the international notice that only mass-exhibition and publication could bring.

Those who could not visit the exhibitions could see and read about them in the illustrated periodicals and newspapers increasingly available in the second half of the nineteenth century. Publications such as the *Art-Journal* reproduced in engravings the most popular and critically acclaimed works of the major European and US exhibitions. The proliferation of illustrated periodicals in the nineteenth century as reproductive techniques became ever cheaper and easier was a major impetus in the phenomenon which Benjamin observed in the age of mechanical reproduction: 'To an ever greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility.'⁶⁸⁶ As the two-dimensional reproductions and large public exhibitions were the two primary contexts in which nineteenth century sculpture was experienced, it was inevitable that sculptors should respond to

⁶⁸⁶ - Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', p. 218.

this in the manner in which they both produced and marketed their work to their publics.

It should come as no surprise then, that those sculptures which translated more easily into the two-dimensional space of an engraving or photograph did their authors better credit on the international stage. Generally one view of the sculpture would be recognized as its 'best side', and it would always be portrayed from that angle in art journals and other publications. Like the *Moses* of Michelangelo, sculptures were frequently 'framed' in shallow, architectural settings of either a permanent or temporary nature while on exhibition. Engravings of Hiram Powers's *Greek Slave* on exhibition at the Crystal Palace in 1851, and of works by Harriet Hosmer and John Gibson at the 1862 Great Exhibition, show the sculptures in architectural surrounds that focus attention on the work from one side while restricting the three-dimensionality of the pieces: they become high relief, rather than fully sculptures in the round. (*figs 121 & 122; see also fig. 95*)

Also like the picture postcard of Michelangelo's *Moses* owned by Freud, some sculptures came to be known, collected and displayed primarily as photographs. Lynes records that photography was a primary agent of publicity for sculptor Erastus Dow Palmer, among many:

Like [John] Rogers[']s Groups, photographs of his work, especially his religious pieces such as "Hope," "Mercy," and "Resignation," became the ornaments of many parlors, elegantly framed and prominently displayed above the mantel. "Faith," now in Albany, was the most popular of all.⁶⁸⁷

The power of these two-dimensional reproductions has proven to be long-reaching: the points of view from which Hosmer's *Queen Zenobia in Chains*, or Hiram Powers's *Greek Slave*, were photographed and engraved, for example, have been repeated in twentieth century photographs of these works and have become the archetypal images of these works even today, as we continue to study sculpture largely from two-dimensional reproductions.

⁶⁸⁷ - Lynes, *The Art-Makers*, p. 153.

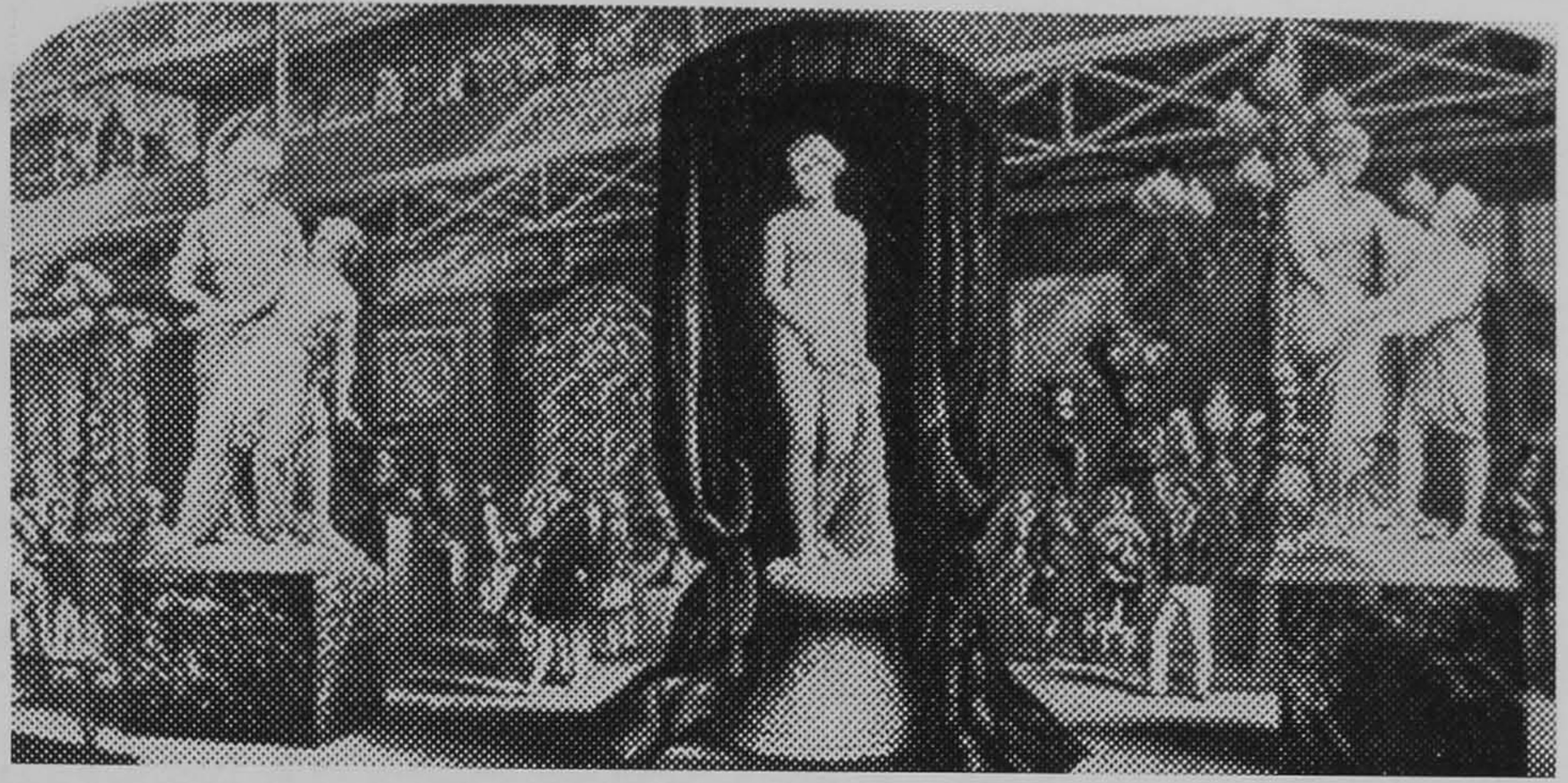


fig. 121 George Baxter, *The Genius of the Great Exhibition, Number 3*, 1851, chromolithograph, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC



fig. 122 Harriet Hosmer, *Queen Zenobia in Chains*, 1859, marble, c. 2.5m high, now lost, this photograph shows the work in its niche in the 'Temple' designed by Owen Jones to house this and works by John Gibson at the 1862 Great Exhibition in London; Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, MA

Hiram Powers's 1844 *Greek Slave* offers a useful glimpse into the intertwining of mass-exhibitions and mechanical reproduction for American history sculpture. Significantly, it was the first American sculpture to achieve international prominence after the invention of photography, and its reception and dissemination can be seen to reflect the new ways of seeing sculpture occasioned by the possibilities of photographic reproduction. One of the first great successes in the American art market, the *Greek Slave* was 'the best-known work of the mid-century, and quite possibly of the entire century, in America.'⁶⁸⁸ Also the first full-scale nude female to be accepted into American high-art culture, this piece referred to the Greek-Turkish civil wars of 1821-29 and depicted a Greek woman, classically rendered, stripped nude on the auction block of a Turkish slave market.

The *Greek Slave*'s display at the 1851 Great Exhibition was preceded by an 1850 engraving of the work published in the *Art-Journal* of that year. Of the piece on show in the Crystal Palace, American George Baxter made his chromolithograph entitled, *The Genius of the Great Exhibition*, with obvious nationalistic intentions. On the basis of the work's success in London, Powers toured the piece around the United States, collecting a further \$25,000 in admission fees to see the work.⁶⁸⁹ The state-side exhibition of the work was then recorded in 1857 by an engraving by R. Thew of the *Greek Slave* surrounded by visitors to the Düsseldorf Gallery in New York City, published in the *Cosmopolitan Art Journal* of the same year. (fig. 114)

Six full-scale replicas of the work, averaging \$4,000 each, were produced by Powers and his studio at full scale in addition to small scale and Parian ware versions. The popularity and the commodification of the sculpture can be attributed primarily to the wide-spread exposure it received, both from its mechanical reproductions and from its widespread exhibition. As the

688 - Lynes, *The Art-Makers*, p. 140.

689 - Figures on earnings from the *Greek Slave* replicas and US tour from Lynes, *The Art-Makers*, pp. 144-46.

Greek Slave illustrates, a single popular work could secure or even launch a sculptor's career.⁶⁹⁰

It was in the wake of the success of the *Greek Slave* that Harriet Hosmer came to Rome in 1852, and it was not long before she was in line to represent American sculpture at the next Great Exhibition in London. When the Prince of Wales visited Hosmer's studio, then part of the studio of British sculptor, John Gibson, in 1859, he saw Hosmer's *Puck* and ordered a copy for his rooms at Oxford. Both the visit and the purchase were reported in the *Art Journal* and *Harper's Weekly*.⁶⁹¹ (fig. 75; see also fig. 78) This cartoon records the Prince's visit while Hosmer was working on her *chef d'oeuvre*, *Zenobia in Chains*, which the Prince asked to have photographed.⁶⁹² Soon Sir Henry Layard, one of the organisers of the 1862 Great Exhibition, invited Hosmer to exhibit in London as a female Hiram Powers:

You have probably heard that there is to be a great universal exhibition in England in 1862 – upon the same principle as the previous one, at which Powers showed his *Greek Slave*. I hope you will be induced to send something, that the women and men of England may know what a young lady of genius, with the inestimable qualities of perseverance and determination, can effect.⁶⁹³

Reports such as this of the artist's favour among the art cognoscenti were extremely influential in securing the popularity of the sculptor and her *Zenobia in Chains* at the 1862 Great Exhibition, to which the Prince of Wales loaned his *Puck*.⁶⁹⁴ With the subsequent sale of over 30 copies of her 'fancy piece', *Puck*, for up to \$1000 each, Harriet Hosmer was able to become financially independent of both her father and her patron.⁶⁹⁵ Like Powers's *Greek Slave*, the *Zenobia* went on to tour New York and Boston, where it was viewed by

690 - Lynes, *The Art-Makers*, p. 140.

691 - *Harper's Weekly*, 3 (May 7, 1859), p. 293.

692 - Sherwood, p. 218.

693 - Sir Henry Layard, letter to Harriet Hosmer, 27 June, 1860; quoted in Carr, p. 159-60.

694 - Sherwood, p. 212.

695 - Borghi, 'Anne Whitney: Letters Home', p. 117; see also Sherwood, p. 119.

some 17,000 visitors – a larger audience than any exhibition in that town had yet commanded, resulting in sales of small scale copies, at least one bust, and reproductions of the piece in terra cotta and Parian ware.⁶⁹⁶ Again, strategic alliances between the artists and journalists had proved instrumental in paving the way for the popular reception of both the work and the artist, as sympathetic writers undertook not only to promote the work of American artists but to keep expatriate artists in the eye of the American public during their long absences abroad.

But the enthusiastic copying of popular pieces was not always appreciated in nineteenth century art circles. American sculptor Anne Whitney, herself from a wealthy and respected Massachusetts family, disapproved of Hosmer's mass-manufacture of the *Puck*, and remarked to her sister, 'Art becomes more and more of a trade', calling the sale of mass-reproductions 'an absolutely filthy business.'⁶⁹⁷ Like the photograph, the mass-reproduced art object smacked more of commerce and popular culture than of high art and transcendent ideals.

But clearly, in addition to acting out of their own ambitions and financial exigencies, both Hosmer and Whitney were forced to negotiate shifts in the modes of sculptural production and consumption at the beginning of the modernist period regardless of their views on commerce and the art market. The international and touring exhibitions of the nineteenth century began to open up the consumption of 'high art' to a wider public which neither necessarily knew nor cared about the literary narratives behind the majority of neoclassical works. The preferences of these mass audiences as they both shaped and were shaped by critical opinion were to become increasingly powerful in determining the artist's success. John Vanderlyn's abortive panorama painting, the *Palace and Gardens at Versailles*, exhibited in a

696 - Carr, p. 201.

697 - Ann Whitney, letter to Sarah Whitney, Rome, 17 October, 1868 (Whitney papers, Wellesley College Archives), quoted in Borghi, pp. 117-118.

rotunda constructed for the piece in New York in 1815, is a prime example of the danger of misjudging mass tastes and interests in art exhibition. As John Wilmerding notes:

While panoramic paintings were to become increasingly popular during the next decades, large-scale views of landscape appealing to a later generation, Vanderlyn's efforts seemed out of step with his time. His ventures into grand history painting did not suit the changed tastes in America for local scenery, and his later years were increasingly marked by controversy, frustration, and failure.⁶⁹⁸

Some artists gauged their markets better: more successful even than Hiram Powers's *Greek Slave* were the small sculpture groups of John Rogers, depicting comic and sentimental scenes from everyday life in rural America in anticipation of the equally-successful prints of Norman Rockwell in the twentieth century. These works required no specialist knowledge to be read by their target audience beyond an awareness of the tropes of US popular culture, and they sold phenomenally well, securing Rogers a place in American art history as one of the most successful sculptors of all time, even among critics who generally favoured more traditional themes. Recalling early reception of Impressionist painting in Paris, critic J.J. Jarves considered Rogers's anecdotal groups to be 'not high art, but genuine art'.⁶⁹⁹ Invoking again the 'realism versus idealism' dichotomy, the importance of being 'genuine', like that of being 'truthful' and morally pure in art, was not to be underestimated American cultural rhetoric as the century wore on.

Ironically, it was precisely the practice of exhibiting ideal sculpture to 'the masses' which revealed much of nineteenth century sculpture to be illegible to its target audience and irrelevant to contemporary concerns, and led the way to its abjection in the annals of art history by future generations. This paradoxical pattern has also been recognised in the reception of classicising painting such as Thomas Couture's *Romans of the Decadence* (1847), and

⁶⁹⁸ - Wilmerding, p. 64.

⁶⁹⁹ - Ibid., p. 187.

seems to characterise the effects of Romantic cultural practices: 'Yet for all its celebrity, *Romans* was as much an end as a beginning; like d'Angers's Pantheon pediment, Couture's painting was contradictory and paradoxical, and may actually have helped to destroy public, monumental, and Classicizing art in the attempt to save it.'⁷⁰⁰ Thus the Romantic period is less a victim of the incursions of modernity than unwittingly auto-destructive as its proto-modernist practices prepared the way for the obsolescence of its aesthetic forms and representations. The ambivalent effect of the nineteenth century exhibition practices is analogous to the strategic use of the concept of 'ideal womanhood' discussed in Part II, Chapter 6 'The Pygmalion Effect', both enabling American women to gain access to professional practices as sculptors in the nineteenth century, but later becoming the pretext for these same women's erasure from art historical accounts of American sculpture. Benjamin also notes the impact of mass exhibition practices in nineteenth century art:

The simultaneous contemplation of paintings by a large public, such as developed in the nineteenth century, is an early symptom of the crisis of painting, a crisis which was by no means occasioned exclusively by photography but rather in a relatively independent manner by the appeal of art works to the masses.⁷⁰¹

Benjamin speaks here only of painting, but it can be argued that sculpture in the nineteenth century, with its studios organised for the production of multiples, was better positioned for 'the simultaneous contemplation of artworks by a large public' than painting. Not only was sculpture easier to copy mechanically than painting, but it was more easily seen by large groups in the major exhibition spaces. And without overstating the case, the analogy between photography and sculpture can be extended to include film: like 'filmed behavior', sculpture 'lends itself more readily to analysis [than does painting] because of its comparably more precise

700 - Eisenman et al., 'The Generation of 1830 and the Crisis in the Public Sphere', p. 202.

701 - Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', p. 228.

statements of the situation.' It 'extends movement', like the slow-motion photograph, 'by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring common milieus... it manages to assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action.'⁷⁰² In the freeze-frame action of the nineteenth century narrative sculpture, 'we calmly and adventurously go travelling', exploring not just the spaces and movement of the sculpture itself, but also the manner in which these transform its larger exhibition environment.⁷⁰³

The incidental effects Benjamin admired in film are achieved by sculpture through its placement in three-dimensional space. Movement behind and around the sculpture on exhibition creates coincidental juxtapositions of heterogeneous elements, unexpected pastiches: 'The spectator's process of association in view of these images is indeed interrupted by their constant, sudden change.'⁷⁰⁴ Unlike the panoramic painting, whose picture is 'a total one', the nineteenth century sculpture at the great exhibitions is thrust into a scene more akin to that produced by the motion picture camera, 'consist[ing] of multiple fragments which are assembled under a new law'.⁷⁰⁵ Juxtaposed with the likes of farm machinery, medical inventions, the latest fashions, and exotica from around the world, nineteenth century sculpture at the great exhibitions became part of a bizarre neo-baroque pastiche. Once again, in their baroque art exhibition practices, the Victorians unwittingly paved the way for the demise of the very cultural values they championed of art as 'the realm of the 'beautiful semblance''.⁷⁰⁶

12.ii Focal Points in the Great Exhibitions

Discussing the exhibition of Fenton's photographs of the Crimean War in 1855, Green-Lewis notes the semantic power of the exhibition space, and

⁷⁰² - Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', p. 229.

⁷⁰³ - Ibid.

⁷⁰⁴ - Ibid., p. 231.

⁷⁰⁵ - Ibid., p. 227.

⁷⁰⁶ - Ibid., p. 224.

in particular of the blank and continuous spaces of its walls, as punctuation of the exhibition's narrative. Citing Barthes, Green-Lewis argues that this seamless backdrop presents the exhibition as being as invisible and authorless as the photograph with its equally 'transparent' and unruffled surfaces: 'Exhibition itself as a medium, therefore, has much in common with photography, being apparently invisible in its prescriptions, swallowing up the traces of its own making.'⁷⁰⁷ Also like the photograph, the 'mirror-like' narrative of the exhibition can implicitly invoke a unified, univocal, and monocular audience, whose 'shared vision' both 'collapses critical distance' between signifier and signified, and provides ideological support for the resulting unary identity.

But if the 'punctuating space' of the modernist exhibition is supplied by the ubiquitous white walls of the art gallery, where are we to find such spaces of pause in the crowded, baroque halls of nineteenth century international exhibitions and private collectors' homes? In James Brady's photographic gallery, for example, opened in New York in 1853, the display of photographs follows the pattern established in the eighteenth century of 'wall-papering' the galleries with rows of paintings, all the way up to the ceiling. (*figs 123 & 124*) Even the spectral narrowness of these black and white photographs of nineteenth century public and (semi-)private exhibition spaces are unable to dampen the cacophony of objects and textures endemic to Victorian interior decorating. The reckless heterogeneity of juxtapositions manifests the 'Victorian appetite for collecting exotica',⁷⁰⁸ and its attendant colonialist projects. As Joy Kasson notes, 'Nineteenth-century viewers valued complexity; they prized their ability to uncover layer after layer of visual pleasure.'⁷⁰⁹ Strikingly, within these crowded interiors, the only objects which do not assault the eye with flamboyant pattern, texture, and design, the only points of

707 - Green-Lewis, p. 119.

708 - *Ibid.*, p. 102.

709 - Kasson, p. 23.

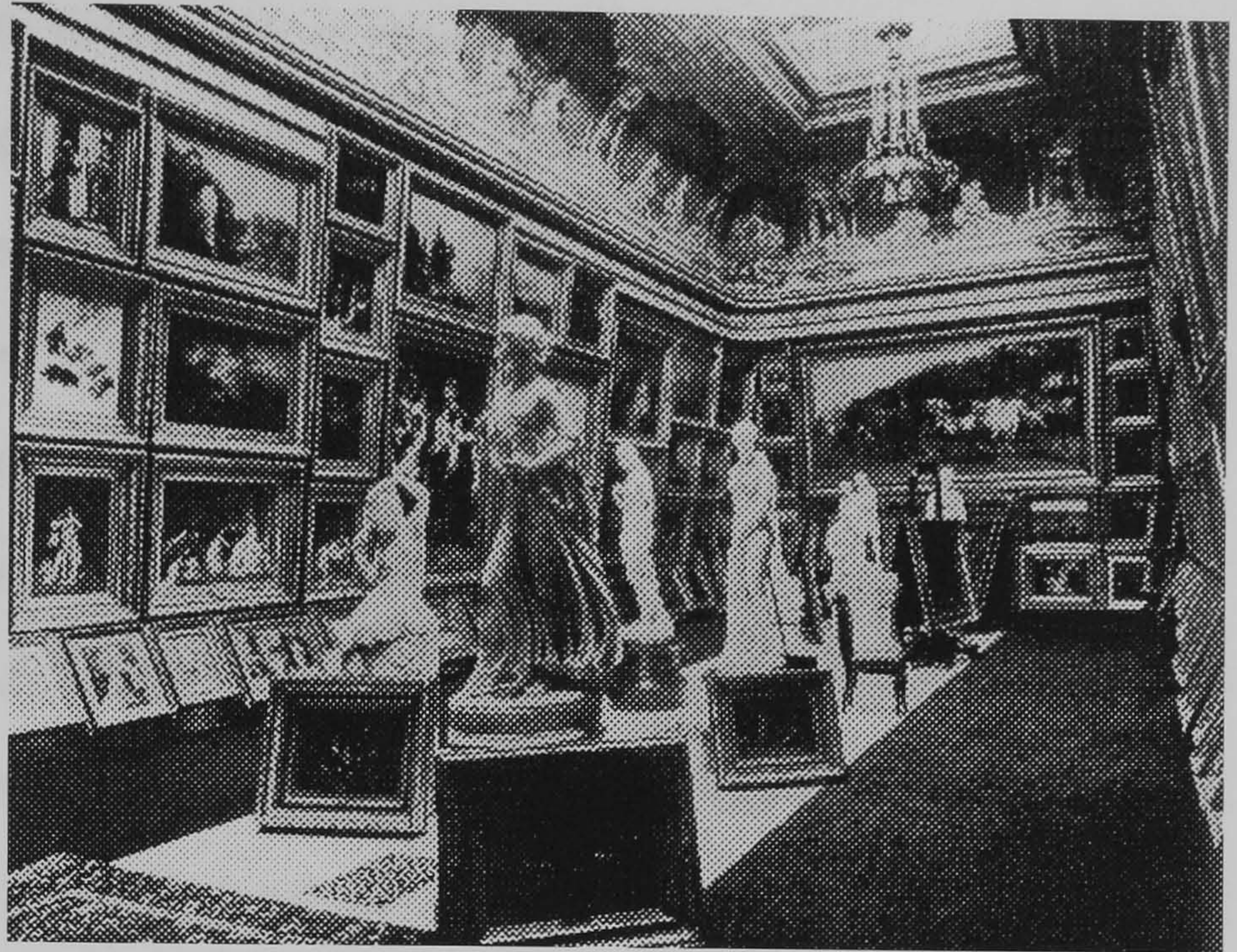


fig. 123 Mrs A. T. Stewart's Picture-Gallery, *Artistic Houses*, vol. 1, p. 14
note Hiram Powers's *Greek Slave* at the centre of the gallery; see also figs 81 & 121

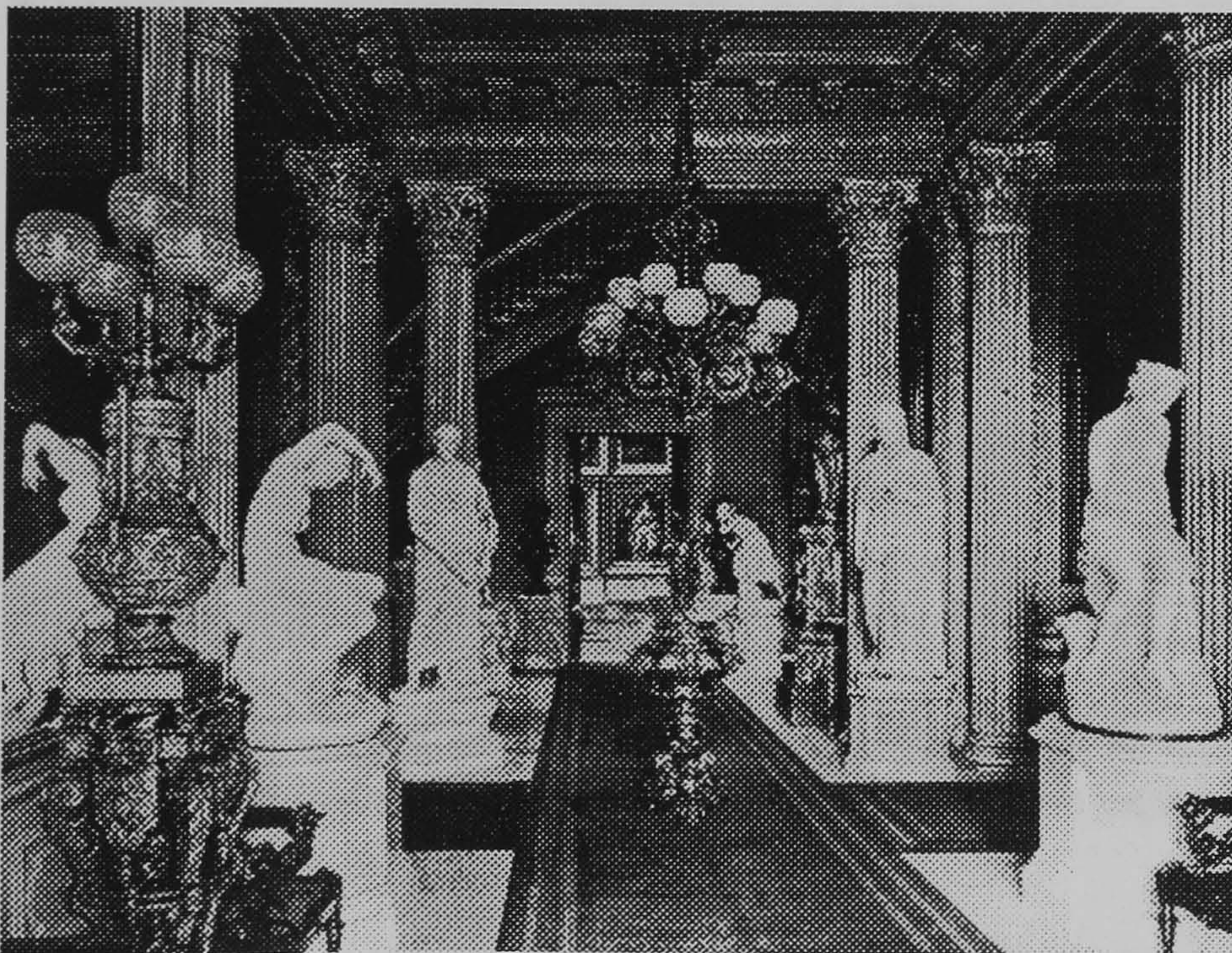


fig. 124 Mrs A. T. Stewart's Hall, *Artistic Houses*, vol. 1, p. 9
note Harriet Hosmer's *Queen Zenobia in Chains* at the centre right of the hall; directly opposite is a copy of the classical *Demosthenes*, a cast of which was imported by William Wetmore Story and donated to the Boston Athenaeum (see also fig. 111)

rest for the eye against the riotous patchwork background, are the comparatively simple white forms of the ideal marble sculpture.

The bulky forms and lack of movement in nineteenth century American ideal sculpture is consistently read by contemporary critics as communicating a desirable solemnity and monumentality. Violent movement or excessive emotion in sculptural works was not only unartistic as it came too close to 'mimicking the real', but even blasphemous in copying 'God's creations', or at the very least 'un-American' in its frivolity. The works of William Rimmer, for example, the only nineteenth century American sculptor who is viewed by twentieth century taste with a favourable eye because of its dynamic movement and anatomical precision, was described by Lorado Taft as 'valueless as sculpture. He persisted in executing nudes, and even important monumental commissions, without models, and while he "never missed a muscle nor forgot an attachment" the results are curious rather than edifying.'⁷¹⁰ Similarly, Walter J. Clark found Edmonia Lewis's *Cleopatra*, exhibited at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, to reflect both the artist's great skill and poor taste in comparison with the more placid and strictly neoclassical *Cleopatras* by William Wetmore Story and Thomas Gould:

This was not a beautiful work, but it was a very original and striking one, and it deserved particular comment, as its ideals were so radically different from those adopted by Story and Gould in their statues of the Egyptian Queen.... The effects of death are represented with such skill as to be absolutely repellent. Apart from all questions of taste, however, the striking qualities of the work are undeniable, and it could only have been reproduced by a sculptor of genuine endowments.⁷¹¹

Though it is often difficult to remember through the lens of our post-modernist tastes, sculpture for the nineteenth century audience was expected to be the 'high, heroic ode' that Hawthorne discovered in Hosmer's *Queen Zenobia in Chains*. Too much 'realism' lowered sculpture to the level of

⁷¹⁰ - Lorado Taft, quoted in Lynes, *The Art-Markers*, p. 153.

⁷¹¹ - Clark, introduction to reprint by H. Barbara Weinberg, p. 141.

mechanical reproduction of nature, in the opinion of neoclassicists such as William Wetmore Story:

The great vice of modern art is its over-fidelity to literal details.... Art is not a low, idle trade, as practical men sometimes insist. Rightly followed, nothing is nobler and higher.... It is the sister of religion.... It is the interpreter of the high and pure. Its material is humanity.⁷¹²

The stillness invested in the sculpture by nineteenth century artists and audiences also permeated the exhibition space. The 'invisible' surfaces of the neoclassical style and their 'authorless' aura introduced into the exhibition the same semantic effect as the 'continuous walls' of the exhibition described by Krauss.⁷¹³ Both punctuating and unifying the exhibition, white marble ideal sculpture was an essential narrative device in the nineteenth century gallery. As the neoclassical figures sutured, repaired and restored their fragmented classical prototypes, they also lent a wholeness and unified vision to the gallery.

Functioning as the exhibition's 'frames', white marble neoclassicism both punctuated the nineteenth century exhibition's narrative and lent it authority. In Lacanian terminology, these are the roles of the *points de capiton* of the exhibition's narrative fabric. Slavoj Žižek explains that the *points de capiton* are the nodal points of discourse that structure the multitude of 'free-floating' signifiers in any given field into a unified fabric. By 'quilting' the material of a given discourse, the *points de capiton* stop the sliding of signifiers and fix their meaning.⁷¹⁴ 'What is at stake in the ideological struggle,' explains Žižek, 'is which of the "nodal points", *points de capiton*, will totalize, include in its series of equivalences, these free-floating elements.'⁷¹⁵ Not all ideal sculptures produced in the nineteenth century had a far-reaching ideological effect. But the process of identifying the 'nodal points' of American

712 - William Wetmore Story, quoted in Lynes, *The Art-Markers*, p. 140.

713 - Rosalind Krauss, 'Photography's Discursive Spaces: Landscape/View' *Art Journal* (1982), p. 312, discussed in Green-Lewis, pp. 120-121.

714 - Žižek, pp. 87-88.

715 - *Ibid.*, p. 88.

sculpture will require us to go beyond finding ‘the “richest” word’ or the most enduring sculpted image:

the word in which is condensed all the richness of meaning of the field it ‘quilts’: the *point de capiton* is rather the word which, as a word, on the level of the signifier itself, unifies a given field, constitutes its identity: it is, so to speak, the word to which ‘things’ themselves refer to recognise themselves in their unity.⁷¹⁶

Zizek offers the example of the ‘Marlboro man’ as an advertising image: ‘the effect of “quilting” occurs only when a certain inversion takes place; it does not occur until “real” Americans start to identify themselves (in their ideological self-experience) with the image created by the Marlboro advertisement – until America itself is experienced as “Marlboro country”.’⁷¹⁷

At this *point de capiton* ‘the subject is “sewn” to the signifier’. The still free-floating signifiers in the chain of signification – in the exhibition site – prior to this punctuation point are brought to a sudden halt, and meaning is fixed retroactively over the chain of signification that preceded the *point de capiton*. The American practice of history sculpture was thus an attempt to invent *points de capiton*, to embody the imaginative projection into the future which would, looking back at the past, constitute meaning for the present. As neoclassical sculpture interpellated its viewers by ‘addressing them with the call of a master-signifier’ – the Ideal, Art, Beauty, etc. – the *point de capiton* give the illusion of a fixed identity to the subject. Quite literally, the *point de capiton* transfixes the viewer, mortifies one in the signifier, roots one to the spot in a moment of misrecognition, *méconnaissance*, imaginary identification by the subject with the idealised, specular image and its illusory promise of completion and mastery.

Certain works seem to have had a particular power to arrest the viewers in their trajectory through the exhibition, and thereby exhibit themselves as *points de capiton* of the nineteenth century exhibition. The *Greek Slave* of

716 - Zizek, pp. 95-96.

717 - Ibid., p. 96.

Hiram Powers is a particularly well-documented example of the 'mesmeric effect' ideal sculpture, like photographs, was accorded by some viewers.⁷¹⁸ Clara Cushman was sunk into 'a train of dreamy delicious revery, in which hours might have passed unnoticed', before the statue.⁷¹⁹ The sculpture could put its viewers' lives on hold for a moment; as Benjamin says of the early daguerreotype, the process of its production, with its long exposure times, similarly made sitters stop, reassess the passing of time: 'The procedure itself caused the subject to focus his life in the moment rather than hurrying past it...'⁷²⁰

A reviewer for the *New York Courier and Enquirer* wrote that the work 'subdues the whole man.... Loud talking men are hushed... and groups of women hover together as if to seek protection from their own sex's beauty.'⁷²¹ The catalogue of the *Cosmopolitan Art Association* exhibition of the *Greek Slave* at the Dusseldorf Gallery in New York City affirmed that, 'Its presence is a magic circle, within whose precincts all are held spell-bound and almost speechless.'⁷²² (*fig. 114*) Yet another critic noted:

It is most curious to observe the effect produced upon visitors. They enter gaily, or with an air of curiosity; they look at the beautiful figure, and the whole manner undergoes a change. Men take off their hats, ladies seat themselves silently, and almost unconsciously; and usually it is minutes before a word is uttered. All conversation is carried out in a hushed tone, and everybody looks serious on departing.⁷²³

Before the ideal sculptures, the viewer could take a rest from the tumultuous and fragmented 'layer after layer of visual pleasure' in the exhibition space, and instead become captivated by the imagined plenitude of a single, unary

⁷¹⁸ - On photography's mesmeric effect, see Green-Lewis, pp. 74-75.

⁷¹⁹ - Quoted in Lewis, 'Art and Artists of America', p. 399, from *Neal's Saturday Gazette*, reproduced in Kasson, p. 60.

⁷²⁰ - Benjamin, 'A Small History of Photography', p. 245.

⁷²¹ - Kasson, p. 69, quoting from E.B. Browning, 'Hiram Powers' "Greek Slave", 'Poems 1850' in *The Complete Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, ed. by Charlotte Porter and Helen A. Clarke, 6 vols (NY: Thomas Y. Cowell, 1900), III, p. 16.

⁷²² - Kasson, p. 70, quoting *New York Courier and Enquirer* (n.d.) also quoted in *Cosmopolitan Art Association Catalogue* (1854), p. 26.

⁷²³ - *Ibid.*

image.⁷²⁴ As in the child's initial captivation by its own image in the mirror, the *point de capiton* can offer the illusion of the viewer's own completeness and mastery. The process of identification with this image is one of *méconnaissance*, of misrecognition of self in the idealised other, the ideal ego.

Alternatively, the 'flattened and compressed experience of [the exhibition] space spreading laterally across the surface'⁷²⁵ of the white marble sculptures, displays the perverse 'splitting of the ego in the process of defence'.⁷²⁶ As Laura Mulvey has argued, the phallic use of curiosity turns surfaces into masks, and objects into 'Pandora's boxes' that engage the viewer in a fetishistic dialectic of absence and presence.⁷²⁷ The other side of the *point de capiton* as ego ideal is the fetish, the object through which castration is denied and the (m)other is imagined as whole, complete.

In these early days of the photographic image, the *Greek Slave* was invested with a power to capture its viewers as we might say the photograph *takes* a picture. A poet in the *Detroit Advertiser* inverted the work's narrative to express this experience of the work:

In mute idolatry, spell-bound I stood
MYSELF THE SLAVE, of her, the ideal of
The Sculptor's inspiration! For I felt
I was indeed a captive.⁷²⁸

Early viewers of daguerreotypes experienced the gaze emanating from the picture itself, inverting the subject-object positions in the schema of the look. Benjamin relays Dauthendey's recollections of seeing the first daguerreotypes:

We didn't trust ourselves at first to look long at the first pictures he

⁷²⁴ - Kasson, p. 23.

⁷²⁵ - Rosalind Krauss, 'Photography's Discursive Spaces: Landscape/View' *Art Journal* (1982), p. 312, discussed in Green-Lewis, pp. 120-121.

⁷²⁶ - Copjec, p 111.

⁷²⁷ - Laura Mulvey, 'Pandora: Topographies of the Mask and Curiosity', in *Sexuality and Space*, ed. by Beatriz Colomina (NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), pp. 53-71.

⁷²⁸ - W.H. Coyle, quoted in Kasson, p. 69.

developed. We were abashed by the distinctness of these human images, and believed that the little tiny faces in the picture could see *us*, so powerfully was everyone affected by the unaccustomed clarity and the unaccustomed truth to nature of the first daguerreotypes.⁷²⁹

This early recognition of the captivating power of the photographic image illustrates the manner in which Lacan has said we are 'photo-graphed', 'caught, manipulated, captured, in the field of vision.'⁷³⁰ While the imaginary image of the ideal ego, 'the image in which we appear likable to ourselves, ... the image representing "what we would like to be"' transfixes and pacifies, identification with the image on the symbolic level, with the ego-ideal, invokes 'the point from which we are observed' and thus the anxiety of the surveillance of the Other.⁷³¹

One response to the disturbing gaze of the Other is for the image, the *point de capiton*, to become fetish object for the viewer. In this experience of the *Greek Slave*, the viewer identifies with the gaze of the Other, makes himself the object of the other's desire, rather than the sculpture being the object of his, the subject's, desire. The classic formulation of the fetishist's logic is 'Je sais bien, mais quand même...' In the case of the *Greek Slave*, the splitting of the subject into the two 'I's – the one that knows and the one that simultaneously disavows all knowledge, is articulated as 'I know she's nude, but nevertheless she's not really nude because...' The real 'genius' of Powers's exhibition of the *Greek Slave* was the careful production of all the religious and moral rhetoric necessary for nineteenth century viewers to complete this sentence satisfactorily. (*fig. 121*)

Broadly, the figure's nudity was accepted because the figure was read as 'clothed in her chastity and Christian virtue':

For beauty of design and delicacy of execution this exquisite statue is inferior to nothing in the Great Exhibition. It represents an

729 - Benjamin, 'A Small History of Photography', p. 244.

730 - Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, pp. 92, 96, 106.

731 - Zizek, pp. 105-106.

historical fact in all but the chains, for it was the custom to expose female slaves in the bazaar of Constantinople. Observe the shame and scorn, the sad melancholy rebuke upon the face of the beautiful girl exposed to such ignominy: see with what modesty the pure high-minded Greek stands before her voluptuous purchasers; – verily, the purpose of the sculptor was aimed high when he conceived this noble idea. He has failed not in his task of reading a lesson of shame and scorn to the traffickers in the dreadful trade. Appealing to the sensibilities of our better nature, rather than to those feelings which yield delight, he has successfully overcome the difficulties of his subject, and won our admiration by the touching beauty and unexaggerated ideality of his subject. It was no easy task to place a young, beautiful, and high-minded female in such a position without a chance of offending; but the great charm of Mr. Powers' statue is, that it repels all thoughts but those of sympathy and compassion for the victim, and execration of those who could make merchandise of the beauty and innocence of the fairest of God's creatures:

'As if their value could be justly told
By pearls and gems, and heaps of shining gold.'⁷³²

An essential feature of the figure's US tour was the booklet of similar commentary on the piece which accompanied it at each exhibition venue. Prominent among the accolades is an apology by the Reverend Orville Dewey, a Unitarian minister, whose profession is called in to assure the public of the work's Christian worth. In *The Union Magazine of Literature and Art*, Rev. Dewey described the nude figure as 'clothed all over with sentiment; sheltered, protected by it from every profane eye. Brocade, cloth of gold, could not be a more complete protection than the vesture of holiness in which she stands.' The importance of the ideal to clothing the statue is underlined when he writes of the artist's ability to 'make the spiritual reign over the corporeal; to sink form in ideality; in this particular case, to make the appeal to the soul entirely control the appeal to sense.'⁷³³ A poet for *The Knickerbocker Magazine* summarised the meeting of contrary opposites in the *Greek Slave*:

Naked yet clothed with chastity, She stands
And as a shield throws back the sun's hot rays,
Her modest mein repels each vulgar gaze.⁷³⁴

⁷³² - *The Art-Journal*, 3 (1851), p. 37.

⁷³³ - Dewey, 'Powers' Statues', pp. 160-61, quoted in Kasson, pp. 58-59.

⁷³⁴ - H.S.C. in *The Knickerbocker Magazine*, quoted in Kasson, p. 61.

As in this poem, for a vast number of viewers, the *Greek Slave* was an image of fetishistic disavowal – first of the figure’s nudity, and by extension of the viewer’s own castration. It permitted a momentary suturing of the irreparable split in subjectivity occasioned by the subject’s introduction into language. Emblem, then, of the fantasy of lost plenitude, the *Greek Slave* was endowed with the power to make of the nineteenth century gallery a Garden of Eden.

Like *points de capiton*, upholstery buttons in the fabric of the exhibition’s narrative, the neoclassical ideal sculptures in the nineteenth century gallery anchor its attendant ideologies in a photographic space of seamless continuity and authorless authority. While the invisible surfaces of the photograph reflected the illusion of a shared ‘reality’ for nineteenth century audiences, the great public exhibitions provided the four-dimensional proof of those ‘universal’ experiences. As the century wore on and the routes through the fine art exhibition became well-mapped, the traceless placidity of the white marble idealism increasingly moved off the pedestal and onto the walls of the twentieth century ‘white cube’ gallery, in whose ideologically laden and emphatically flat whiteness the nineteenth century neoclassical ideal finds its apotheosis.⁷³⁵

12.iii The Caption: Anne Whitney’s *Roma 1869* as a ‘bronze photograph’

The texts that accompanied Powers’s *Greek Slave* on exhibition, then, did as much to ‘frame’ the work as the sculpture itself structured the exhibition space: ‘Thus a written or spoken title of a picture may participate in the frame’s function, identifying what lies above or below as a unified object and

⁷³⁵ - On the exhibition as map, see John Tagg, ‘A Socialist Perspective on Photographic Practice’, *Three Perspective Catalogue*, quoted in Griselda Pollock, ‘Three Perspectives on Photography’, *Screen Education*, 31 (1979), p. 49; also discussed in Green-Lewis, pp. 118-119.

allowing it to be by others so identified.⁷³⁶ Citing John Fisher, Green-Lewis notes that accompanying texts not only incite discourse about artworks, but direct our vision and our reading of those very works.⁷³⁷

Though titles and explanatory texts have always been a standard element in the presentation of visual images, Green-Lewis argues that they had a particular function in exhibitions of photography in the nineteenth century. Using the example of Fenton's exhibition of photographs of the Crimean War, Green-Lewis demonstrates the symbiosis of the photographic image and text, concluding that 'Without the text, the picture would fail to fulfil the documentary intention (it would just be a picture); lacking a picture, the text would miss any possibility of fulfilling a pictorial intention (it would just be a group of words).'⁷³⁸ By presenting Fenton's photographs as documentary images, the exhibition texts encouraged 'the Victorian audience... [to suppose] itself... to be directly witnessing the action, as though through a window or mirror.'⁷³⁹ Benjamin confirms that with photography:

For the first time, captions have become obligatory. And it is clear that they have an altogether different character than the title of a painting. The directives which the captions give to those looking at pictures in illustrated magazines soon become even more explicit and more imperative in the film where the meaning of each single picture appears to be prescribed by the sequence of all preceding ones.⁷⁴⁰

We should not, however, allow ourselves to be deceived by the 'singular and shared vision' to which the nineteenth century exhibition of photographs or neoclassical sculpture might appeal and in some way construct. The very anxiousness with which such cultural practices invoked a unified and homogeneous audience indexes the precariousness if not the complete fiction of any consensus among Victorian viewers. The captions that

⁷³⁶ - Green-Lewis, p. 124.

⁷³⁷ - John Fisher, 'Entitling', *Critical Inquiry* 11 (1984), pp. 289, 292, quoted in Green-Lewis, p. 124.

⁷³⁸ - *Ibid.*, p. 120.

⁷³⁹ - *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁰ - Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', p. 220.

accompany artworks are not necessarily successful in predetermining incontestable readings of the images. Rather, by redoubling the discursive space of the artwork, they can also expand the critical field around the work to include dissenting or subversive readings that 'brush against the grain' of any attendant ideological projects.

Even the weight of opinion mounted in favour of Hiram Powers's *Greek Slave*, for example, did not secure it an entirely unsceptical reception. Comparing Powers's *Greek Slave* to another American work, Stephenson's *Wounded Amazon*, the same *Art-Journal* reviewer who praised the *Greek Slave* above found a measure of hypocrisy in both works being claimed so jubilantly by a nationalistic American press:

Stephenson's statue of the WOUNDED AMERICAN INDIAN is a work of an entirely different character. In producing this statue, we are told, the effort of the sculptor has been to give a correct representation of the Indian races of North America. The figure is represented wounded and fallen, thereby typifying the race. While in the act of stringing his bow, he has received the wound; the moment the fatal arrow is felt he relinquishes the effort and hurriedly pulls it from the wound. In the moment that succeeds, he realises his danger, and his left hand drops powerless, partially clinging to the fatal arrow, while a faintness creeps over him. The right arm instinctively supports the body, and prevents its falling. Beneath the right hand is his own arrow, in his ears are an eagle's claw and a small shell. Sufficient ornaments and implements only have been introduced to give character to the subject. It is the first statue ever executed in American marble. It stands to the north-east of Powers's *Greek Slave*. Is it not suggestive that the American, Proverbially a 'cute' people, [sic] should have so publicly drawn attention to slavery and the extinction of the aborigines of the far west?⁷⁴¹ (*fig. 125*)

The irony of the *Greek Slave*'s inherent racism was not lost on *Punch*, which produced this caricature, 'The Virginian Slave, Intended as a Companion to Powers' "Greek Slave". (*fig. 126*)

For the critical reader, Benjamin writes, it is impossible to view a work of history without recognising 'with what a long hand the misery that befalls him [her] has been in preparation'.⁷⁴²

⁷⁴¹ - *The Art-Journal*, 3 (1851), pp. 134-35.

⁷⁴² - Benjamin, quoted in Buck-Morss, p. 287.

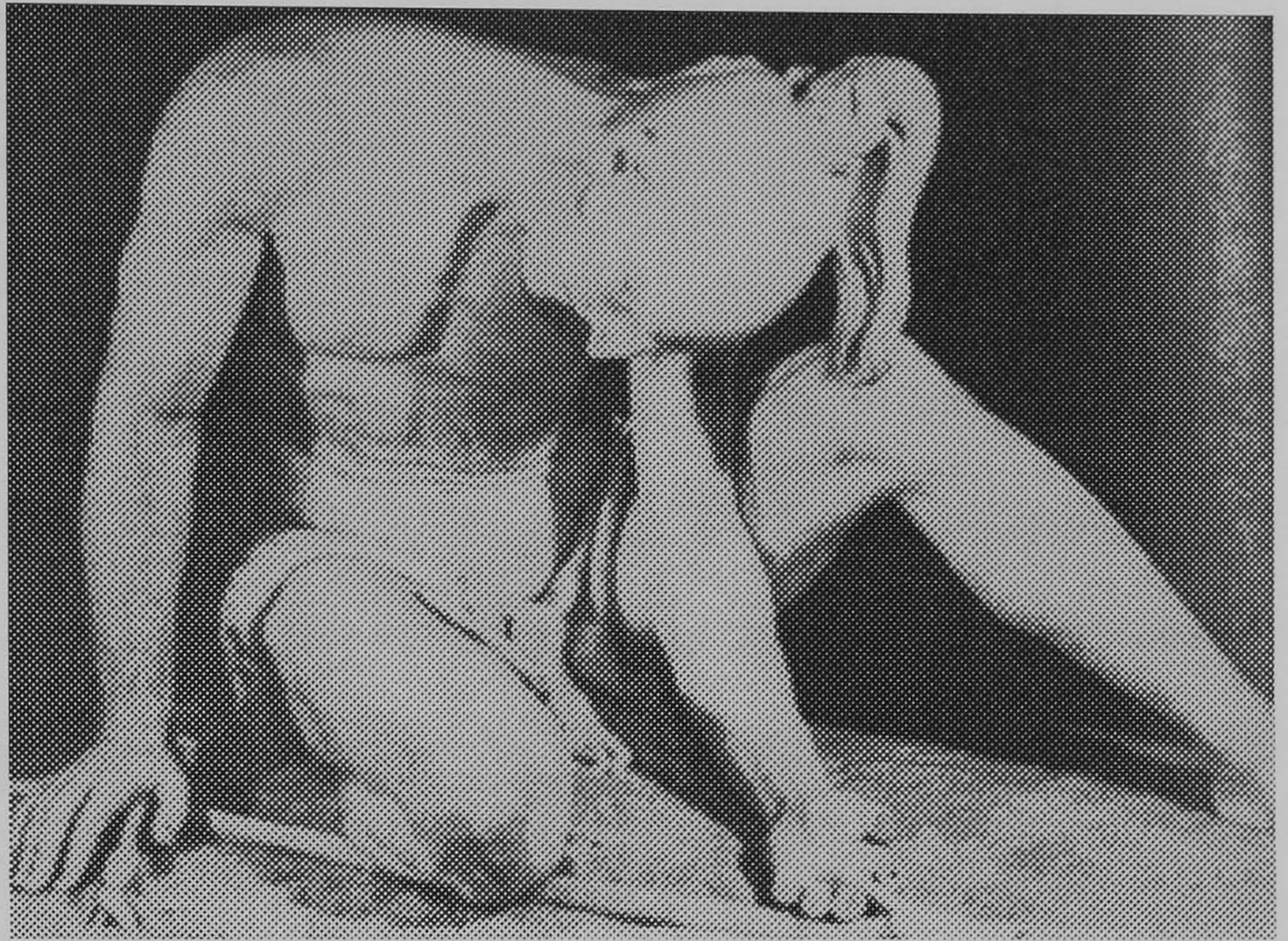


fig. 125 Peter Stephenson, *Wounded Indian*, 1850; the English-born Stephenson was Harriet Hosmer's first sculpture teacher in Boston



fig. 126 'The Virginia Slave', Intended as a Companion to Powers' "Greek Slave", *Punch*, 20 (1851), 236, engraving

For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have a lineage which he cannot contemplate without horror. They owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great geniuses who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries. There is never a document of culture that is not simultaneously a document of barbarism. And just as it is itself not free of barbarism, so barbarism taints the tradition through which it has been transmitted from owner to owner.⁷⁴³

To David Dorr, an African-American visitor to the Crystal Palace, the 'Great Exhibition' did indeed reveal itself to be 'a triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who today are lying prostrate.'⁷⁴⁴ Undeceived by the nationalistic agenda of his country's displays, he commented:

This July 28th, London is the world's Bazaar. The Crystal Palace is the aquafortis of curiosity that gives the arcadial polish to London's greatness. This is the place where every country is trying to make a pigmy of some other. In this great feast of genius no country is fairly represented. The United States has many articles of art in the palace that are not what she has ever prided herself on as her arts. One of our ordinary Steam Boats would have astonished the natives beyond the admiration of all the trumpery that we ever contemplate carrying to a World's Fair. I was, indeed, ashamed to see the piles of India Rubber Shoes, Coats and Pants, and clocks that stood out in bas relief in that part of the palace appropriated to the American Arts and Sciences – Pegged Shoes and Boots were without number. Martingales and Side Saddles, Horse Shoes, Ploughs. Threshing Machines, Irrigators, and all the most worthless trash to be found in the States. I saw everything that was a prevailing disgrace to our country except slaves. I understood that a South Carolinian proposed taking half a dozen haughty and sinewy negroes to the Fair, but was only deterred from that proposition by the want of courage to risk six fat, strong healthy negroes to the chances of escape from slavery to freedom.⁷⁴⁵

Dorr's text indicates the wealth of readings enabled by the Great Exhibitions. Even as a work like the *Greek Slave* might be presented as a fantasy of phallic femininity to the fetishist, it could also function as *point de capiton* for American ideologies of feminine chastity, loyalty, submissiveness, and Christian morality. Read in context with other works on show around it, or

743 - Benjamin, quoted in Buck-Morss, p. 288.

744 - Ibid.

745 - David F. Dorr, *A colored man round the world, by a quadroon* (Cleveland, OH: printed for the author, 1858), pp. 19-20.

in the context of contemporary political issues, it could also occasion political and cultural critiques that brushed directly against the grain of any such American ideologies. The public exhibition spaces of the nineteenth century, then, were spaces of negotiation between contesting ideologies and subject positions.

Nineteenth century American sculptures themselves could also 'become standard evidence for historical occurrences, and acquire a hidden political significance' in the manner recognized by Benjamin in Atget's photographs.⁷⁴⁶ And as in the photographic exhibition of Fenton's Crimean photographs discussed by Green-Lewis, the artwork's title is transformed into a 'caption', which can propel the viewer into a politically charged encounter with the work. Nineteenth century American sculpture, then, does not simply suture and affirm an ideological position, but also photographs the *points de capiton* of historical tradition as evidence at the scene of the crime. In works such as Anne Whitney's *Roma 1869*, this counter-ideological reading becomes more immediately available. (*fig. 104*)

Anne Whitney's *Roma 1869* depicts an elderly Roman beggar woman and is an allegorical commentary on the general state of corruption and decay in Roman society under its Papal government. In 1860 and 1861 the rest of the Italian peninsula's numerous city-states and petty monarchies had been unified under the monarchy of Vittorio Emanuele II. Though unable to match the Italian forces, the Vatican was able to exclude Rome from the unification because Napoleon III, on whose support the unification depended, could not afford politically to alienate French Catholic public opinion by being seen to condone stripping the Pope of his temporal power. Thus while the modern European nation of Italy was developing around it, Rome was seen by many to remain stuck in a mediaeval and despotic system, its poverty and other social ills a striking contrast to both the ancient glories of ancient Rome and

⁷⁴⁶ - Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', p. 220.

Italian modernisation.

Seated and haggard-looking, the figure holds her begging license (obligatory in the Roman state at the time) in one hand, as a small coin falls from the other. In detailing the sculpture bespeaks its classical influences: her garments are chiton-like in their volume and draping, and resemble a fifth century Greek statue, the *Drunken Woman*. A Roman copy of this work survives in the Glypto-thek in Munich, where Whitney may well have seen it during her first European tour.⁷⁴⁷ In particular, the figure's drapery and head scarf are quite similar in the two works. The portrayal of Roma as a seated figure dates back to antiquity as well, with numerous examples in reliefs and coins as well as sculpture in the round, such as the two seated Romas on the Capitoline Hill in Rome.⁷⁴⁸ As in the fourth century painting, the 'Barberini Roma' which Reitzes notes may have been known to Whitney in an engraving,⁷⁴⁹ the hem of the dress is adorned with small relief medallions of Rome's most famous sculptural works – the Apollo Belvedere, the Laocoön, the Dying Gaul/Gladiator, Hercules – and, originally, a portrait of Cardinal Antonelli, generally considered responsible for the worst of the Papal government's abuses. When the portrait was recognised and destruction of the work threatened by government representatives, Whitney had it smuggled to the American Minister in Florence for safe-keeping.

The self-consciousness of the medallions – both in their art historical and political references – marks the sculpture as an emphatically contemporary commentary on political and cultural values in Rome. Whitney is not merely quoting the classical sculptures which made Rome famous; by

⁷⁴⁷ - Gerdt's records that Whitney visited Paris and Munich as well as Rome during her first European sojourn of 1867-71; *The White, Marmorean Flock: Nineteenth Century American Women Neoclassical Sculptors*, Nicolai Cikovsky, Jr., ed., exhibition catalogue, (Vassar College Art Gallery, 1972). Lisa B. Reitzes also acknowledges the probability that Whitney saw the *Drunken Woman* figure in Munich, and considers numerous other classical prototypes for her treatment of the *Roma 1869* in 'The Political Voice of the Artist: Anne Whitney's *Roma* and Harriet Martineau', *American Art*, 8.2 (Spring 1994), 45-65.

⁷⁴⁸ - Reitzes, p. 49.

⁷⁴⁹ - *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

introducing a modern political figure into the classical 'sentence' along the figure's skirt-hem, Whitney interrupts any such narrative of tradition and high culture. Later, when the papacy had been deposed and Antonelli had become too historically distant a figure to read as a representative of Pius IX's court, Whitney replaced his profile with a triple mitre, the symbol for the Pope's temporal power and more universally understood but no less contemporary, thereby preserving the work's political force.

It is the conjuncture of the ancient images with the contemporary ones of the beggar woman herself, her medallion-like begging license, and Antonelli/the triple mitre that makes this work political. The contemporary images function as 'shifters' to disrupt the nostalgic image of the lost glory of Rome which otherwise could have emerged from the figure's classical references, producing instead a 'dialectical image', a 'critical constellation of past and present'. Rome as a mythical place is condensed in this figure with the city's emerging spaces of modernity, to render *Roma 1869* a politically effective image of contemporary history. Whitney has not collected the hem medallions like tourist souvenirs from her sojourn in Rome, but rather has critically selected and curated their display in the larger sculpture.

In her use of classical quotation to produce a work entirely conscious of its contemporaneity, Whitney betrays the influence of her anatomy tutor and sculpture mentor, William Rimmer. A self-taught sculptor, painter, and medical doctor, Rimmer is recorded as an eccentric genius greatly respected as an anatomy lecturer at Yale, Harvard, Cooper Union and the National Academy of Design, but practically ignored as an artist by his contemporaries.⁷⁵⁰ Anne Whitney studied sculpting and drawing with Rimmer for two years during the Civil War, starting her career, like Rimmer, relatively late in life. The lack of access to life models in Rimmer's Boston studio

⁷⁵⁰ - See Part II, Chapter 6 'The Pygmalion Effect' for a longer discussion of contemporary opinions of William Rimmer.

seems to have been a reason both for contemporary criticism of Rimmer's work and for Whitney's decision to travel to Rome in 1867. With only a half-dozen works surviving, Rimmer was rediscovered 100 years later and is now described as 'one of the very few real American sculptors of the nineteenth century'⁷⁵¹ and even 'perhaps our greatest nineteenth-century sculptor.'⁷⁵² But while Rimmer's exacting study of both anatomy and the classical casts in the Boston Athenaeum produced works more favourably received by twentieth- than by nineteenth-century audiences, Whitney's particular use of each struck a balance between 'Nature' and 'the Greeks' which ensured the legibility and hence the popularity of *Roma 1869* in both centuries.

Despite her aversion to the commerce in replicas of statues, in size, material, and treatment, Whitney's *Roma 1869* was a work 'designed' – intentionally or not – for reproduction and mass-exhibition. Originally the piece was exhibited as a small-scale plaster. Though artists sometimes modelled directly into plaster instead of clay, the plaster seems to have been a cast from a clay original in much the same way that bronze casts were made from plaster models. At only 27 inches high, it was more evocative of John Roger's narrative pieces than the later heroic plaster cast version which the artist remodelled for exhibition at the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition, but both would have retained the marks of the direct handling of the figure by the artist, unlike the typical results of neoclassical works carved in marble. At least one plaster replica was made of the original work, as well as a marble version which was probably cut in Italy ca. 1871. One bronze replica was cast 'from the first copy of the original clay' in 1890 as was, presumably, another undated 27 inch replica.⁷⁵³ The original plaster was exhibited at the 1871 International Exposition in London; this or another version – possibly the

751 - Lynes, *The Art-Makers*, p. 153.

752 - Elizabeth Rogers Payne, 'Anne Whitney, Art and Social Justice', *The Massachusetts Review*, 1971, n.p.

753 - Elizabeth Rogers Payne, 'Anne Whitney, Sculptor', *The Art Quarterly*, (Autumn 1962), 244-261 (p. 250).

marble – was shown at the US Centennial International Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876; and the heroic plaster version mentioned above was on display at the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition. In addition, a bronze cast of the 27 inch original was presented to Wellesley College by the Class of 1886, and has been on permanent public display there ever since.⁷⁵⁴

As favours a work exhibited so widely, *Roma 1869* does not require a particular education in order to be understood. In addition to the classical precedents noted above, the practice of allegorically-representing cities, and Rome in particular, as female figures and even as aged beggar-women is one which dates back to the mediaeval period. But this art historical background is unnecessary to the narrative of the piece. Rather, knowledge of contemporary political events is called for by the work's title.

Initially, *Roma* was an allegorised document of the Rome which Whitney encountered during her first journey there, and was marked '1869' as the year in which the piece was made according to standard customs of dating artworks. This has lead art historians writing on Whitney to consider the work's title to be simply 'Roma', with a manufacture date of 1869. However, the presentation of the title as '18 ROMA 69' already indicates that the presentation of the date in the initial version was as much a part of the work's title as 'Roma', and together the two located the piece in space and time like the caption under a photograph of a contemporary event in a newspaper. Further, the convention of the day was to date the work with the artist's signature, separate from the work's title, and generally in some variant of 'Anne Whitney sc. Rome 1869'. The absence of the '*sculpsit*' annotation with the date in this original work further identifies the date as part of the title rather than a mere date of manufacture.

By 1890, '1869' was unarguably presented as part of the work's title. The bronze replica of the original clay acquired by Wellesley College is engraved

⁷⁵⁴ - Payne, 'Anne Whitney, Sculptor', p. 250.

with the following title, *Roma MDCCCLXIX* and the further information of 'Anne Whitney Sc. Rome 1869'. The repetition of the date of original manufacture in Arabic numerals confirms that for Whitney the title of the work is explicitly *Roma 1869* or, in Roman numerals, *Roma MDCCCLXIX*. Indeed, the temporal specification was now indispensable: on the fourth of September, 1870, Napoleon III had been deposed and the nation declared a republic. Without the French emperor's support, the Papacy could no longer stand against unification. As Paris came under siege by Prussian troops on September 20, Italian troops entered Rome at Porta Pia. On 27 January 1871, Rome was declared the capital of the Italian nation.

Full of optimism and regenerative projects for the city, the new government seemed to be addressing the very problems that Whitney's *Roma 1869* critiqued, so the sculpture demanded the date as part of its title in order to retain its original force as a criticism of Papal Rome. As late as 1893 when Whitney produced a monumental plaster version of the piece for the World's Columbian Exposition, the city described by *Roma 1869* seemed a phenomenon of the past, and thus the work was again titled with '1869' to mark the year before full Italian unification as a specific political moment and implicitly the historical low-point of the city prior to the advent of the new government.

Whitney's *Roma 1869* has now taken on the status of a historical political document, with a 'title' that has the status of a caption. Like the photographs that had recorded the wars of Italian unification, the breaching of the walls of Rome at Porta Pia by Garibaldi's troops, and the American Civil War from the same decade, *Roma 1869* is more of a documentary of contemporary political history than a melancholic portrait of 'the shadow of the thing itself'. 'A history that teaches people in this manner', proposes Buck-Morss, following Benjamin, 'does not make them melancholy, but provides

them with weapons.'⁷⁵⁵

The decline of neoclassical art with the dawn of the 'age of mechanical reproduction' is marked by an increase in works produced for mass-consumption, whose 'captions' allow the artist to direct audiences with no more than rudimentary knowledge of popular culture and history in the reading of the artwork. Anne Whitney's *Roma 1869* is one of the first American sculptures from the neoclassical tradition to draw upon neoclassicism's photographic qualities to produce a classicising sculpture with the force of contemporary political documentary. Thus, although *Roma 1869* bears a date now far in the past, it has not yet become a dated image.

755 - Buck-Morss, p. 287.

PART III: *Photography in Bronze*

Epilogue: *We, 'Other Victorians'*⁷⁵⁶

If our contemporary period is particularly attuned to the 'Romantic experience' as Stephen Bann, among others, has argued, then perhaps this explains the recent increased interest in the history of mechanical reproduction of art objects, largely debating the usefulness of Walter Benjamin's 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', concurrent with an unprecedented spate of critical publications on exhibition practices and museology. Both bearing as they do on the dissemination of aesthetic forms to mass audiences, and spurred on by the exigencies of public funding for the arts that increasingly measure the worth of the art event by the size of the public it reaches, the technologies of mechanical reproduction and curation go hand-in-hand, and never has this alliance been more visible than in the current day when the major new direction for museums and art galleries is the electronic curation of digital reproductions of their collections in on-line and CD-ROM-based exhibitions. Never, that is, since the advent of photography in the nineteenth century, and with it the rise of art periodicals dedicated largely to reviewing and reproducing images of the great international exhibitions of the century. Now, as then, the majority of the art-viewing publics experienced sculpture primarily through mass-audience exhibition sites and two-dimensional mechanical reproductions, either photographic or print-based, rather than in small private collections or their own homes. As Benjamin made clear by discussing mechanical

⁷⁵⁶ - This title is from Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*, trans. by Robert Hurley (NY: Pantheon Books, 1978; repr. 1990), part 1, pp. 1-13.

reproduction in the context of the art object's exhibition and cult values, the photograph and the international exhibition were two sides of the same coin in the rise of the nineteenth century capitalist art market. No less salient today, the alliance between large, international exhibitions and the mechanical reproduction of artworks is now figured by the tourist viewing the national galleries of Europe and North America through a camcorder. And similarly, the possibility of electronic 'doctoring' of photographs today seems to have returned us to the nineteenth century debates around where the 'truth' in the image lies – in unadulterated, direct mechanical reproduction or in some 'profounder and serener depths'⁷⁵⁷ that are all but invisible.⁷⁵⁸

It is striking that when American art came into its own in the twentieth century as a self-confident and self-proclaimed 'American' vernacular, it found its 'unique' identity in the visual and critical rhetorics of Greenbergian flatness and white cube gallery spaces, which were later to develop into pop-art's photographic mediation of performative objects. There is perhaps little wonder, then, that modernist art should so despise the neoclassical source of its formal and ideological inspiration, which it plundered and then renamed 'original', 'new', 'modern', even 'radical' and 'avant-garde'. As Freud describes in his essay, 'The "Uncanny"', twentieth century American art meets, in nineteenth century neoclassical sculpture, its 'own image unbidden and unexpected', and has 'formed a very unfavourable opinion about the supposed stranger'.⁷⁵⁹ 'Failing to recognise itself in neoclassical sculpture', twentieth century American art history has expressed its dislike of its nineteenth century double primarily by relegating it to museum basements and deaccession, with the exception of those works which have been

⁷⁵⁷ - Carr, pp. 331-34.

⁷⁵⁸ - Martha Rosler, for example, has written, 'The question at hand is the danger posed to *truth* by computer-manipulated photographic imagery. How do we approach this question in a period in which the veracity of even the *straight*, unmanipulated photograph has been under attack for a couple of decades?' quoted in Sarah Kember, "'The shadow of the object": photography and realism' *Textual Practice*, 10.1 (Spring 1996), 145-163 (p. 145).

⁷⁵⁹ - Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 371.

patronisingly recuperated in order to make collections of 'American art' complete, or to demonstrate the collection's liberal dedication to exhibiting art by women and people of colour.

But just as Freud finds that in mental life, as in the ruins of the 'Eternal City' of Rome, 'nothing which has once been formed can perish', these nineteenth century imaginary formations are not relegated to an American past long dead and buried. Rather, they return with the uncanny insistence of the repressed in the work of twentieth century American sculptors. Audrey Flack, for example, was initially known for her hyper-real painting, which clearly sustains a heightened relationship to photography and issues of mechanical reproduction with their attendant temporal characteristics – all topics initially formulated and debated by Hosmer's generation. Today Flack describes her sculpture as 'New Millennium Neo-Classicism'⁷⁶⁰ and cites the American nineteenth century sculptural tradition as a major influence. As if to affirm the impact of photography on American sculpture since neoclassicism, however, Flack's 1992 *magnum opus*, the four monumental goddess sculptures made for the gateway to the city of Rock Hill, South Carolina, was designed with 'ideal viewing points' in mind. These optimum vantage points are now marked on the pavement in front of each figure, much as the 'vanishing points' of Michelangelo's portico around piazza San Pietro in Rome – the points from which the columns line up and present a 'flat' facade to the viewer – are demarcated by bronze disks on either side of the piazza's obelisk. Like Harriet Hosmer's and Hiram Powers's works in the Great Exhibitions of 1862 and 1851, respectively, Flack has 'framed' her statues and flattened their viewing space by specifying single, optimal viewing points. (*figs 127-130*)

The trajectory of Audrey Flack's *oeuvre* not only reveals that the concerns

⁷⁶⁰ - Audrey Flack, interview with David R. Bringham, 'The New Civic Art', *American Art*, 8.1 (Winter 1994), 2-21 (p. 5).

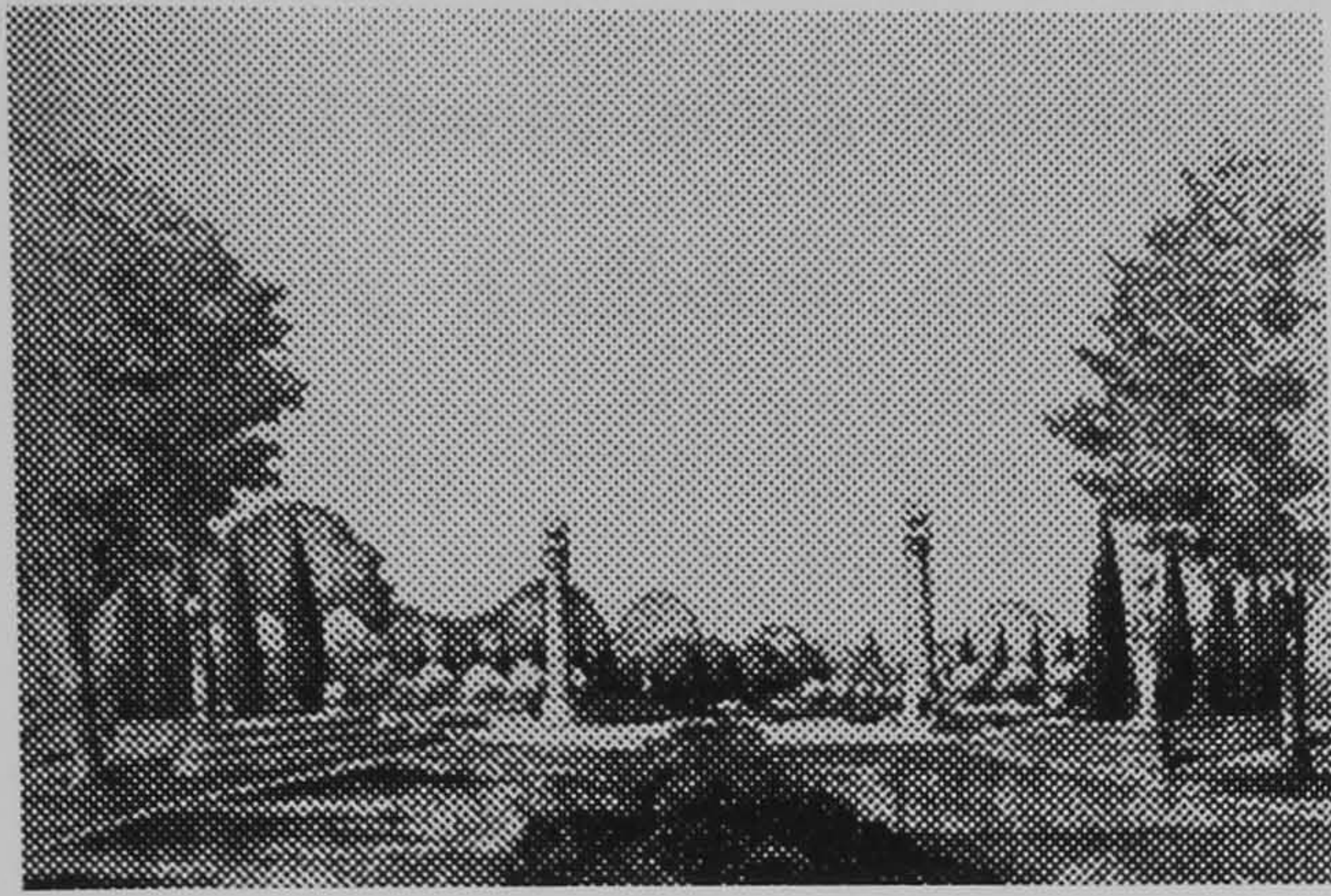


fig. 127 Audrey Flack, early artist's sketch of *Civitas: Four Visions (Gateway to the City of Rock Hill)*, 1990-91

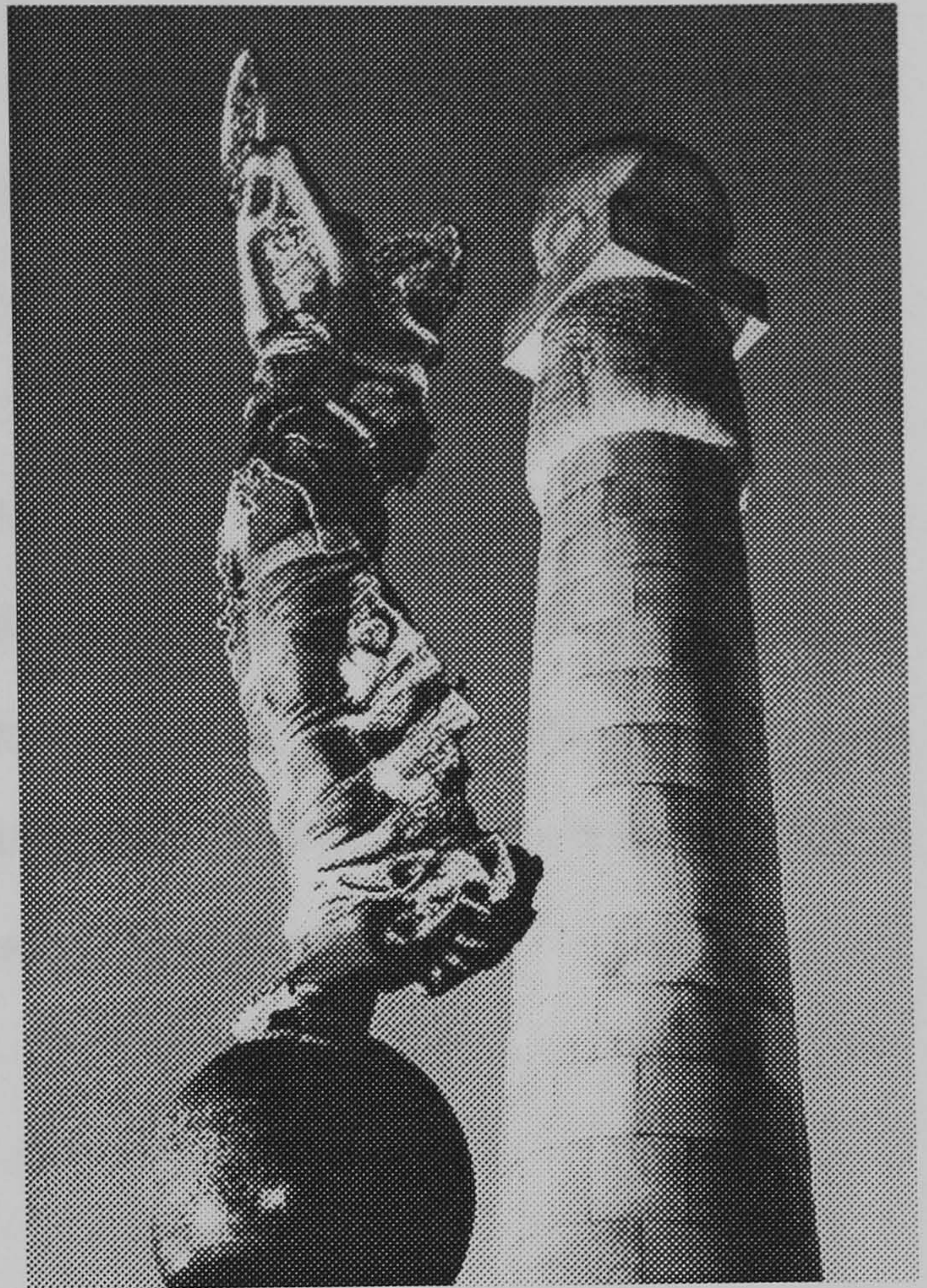


fig. 128 Audrey Flack, *Civitas: Four Visions (Gateway to the City of Rock Hill)*, 1990-91, patinated and gilded bronze with black granite base, approx. 7m high with base; beside the statue is a 20m Egyptian Revival column; see also fig. 94

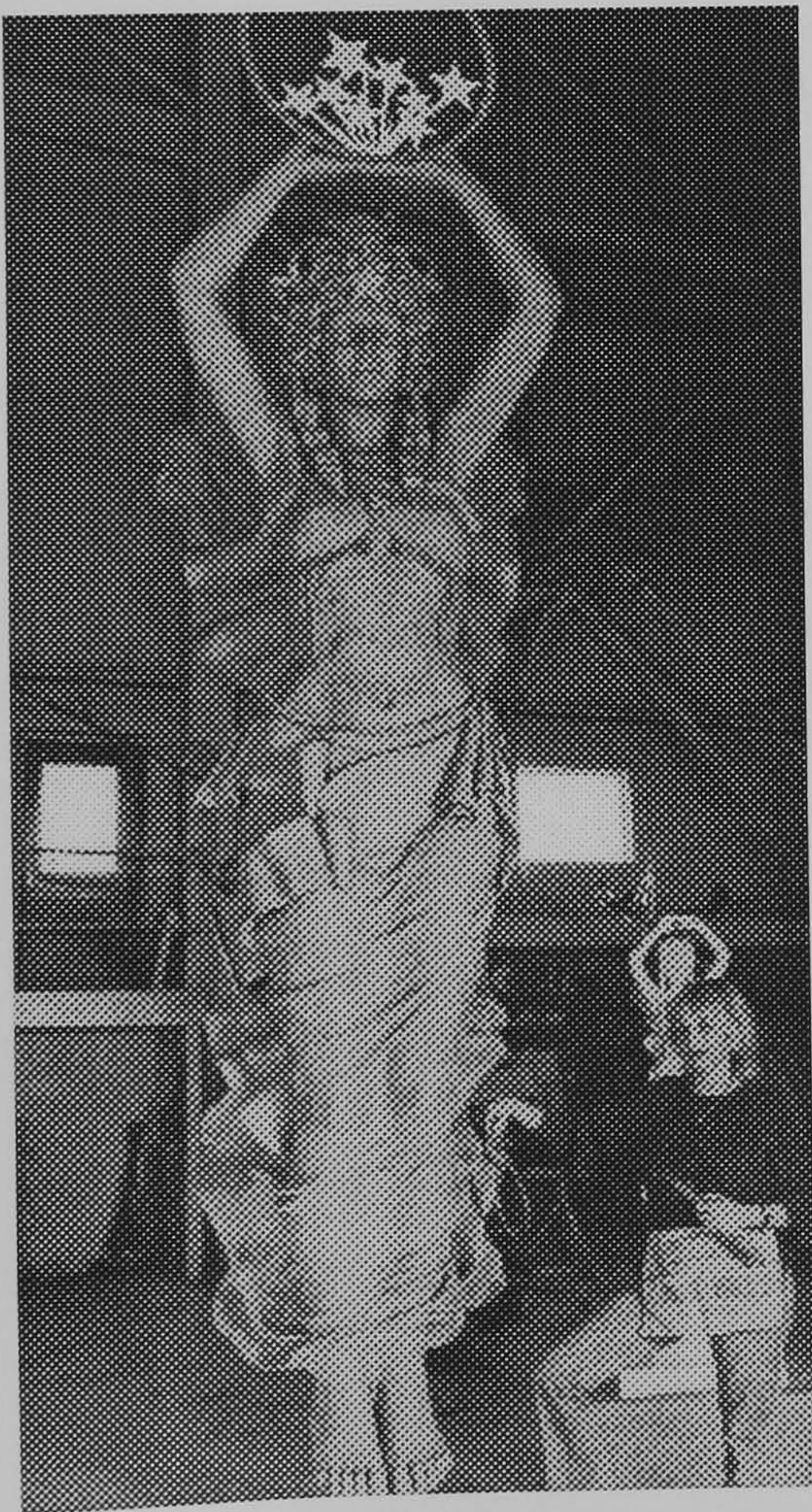


fig. 129 Audrey Flack standing beside the full-scale clay enlargement of *Civitas*, Tallix foundry; cp. fig. 105

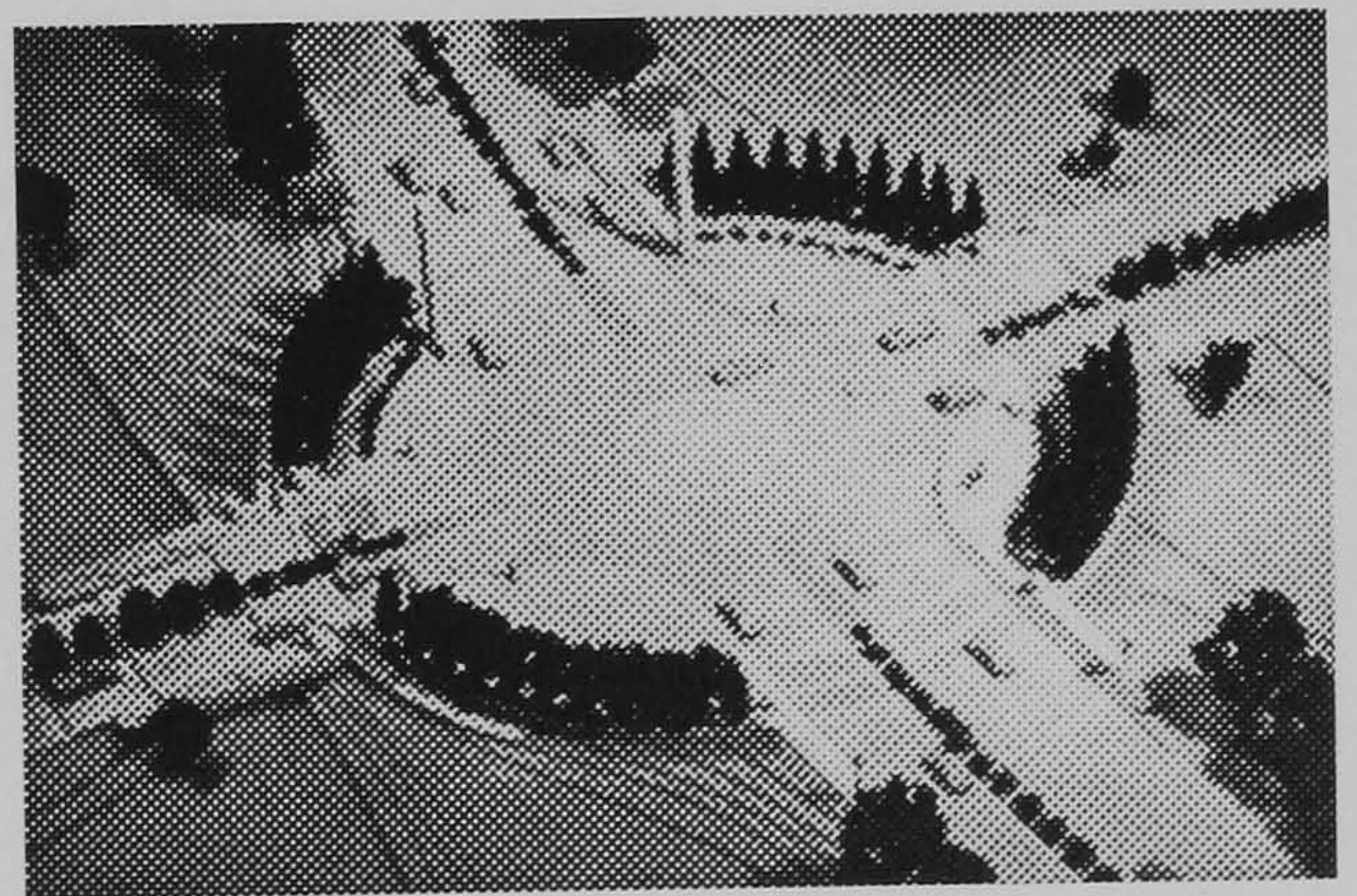


fig. 130 Michael Gallis, architect, scale model for Flack's *Rock Hill Gateway*

about history and identity posited by nineteenth century American sculptors as well as their neoclassical style and its relationship to photography are still powerful forces in the American cultural agenda, but might also suggest that Hosmer's prediction over 100 years ago was as visionary as it was reactionary. The contemporary resurgence of figuration and classicising styles in American sculpture can only be adequately understood in the light of Hosmer's assurance that, 'after all these schools have completed their little cycles, lovers of all that is beautiful and true in nature will seek inspiration from the profounder and serener depths of classic art.'⁷⁶¹

⁷⁶¹ - Carr, p. 334.

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