THE REPRODUCIBLE MUSEUM:
COLLECTING, DESCRIBING, AND
REPRESENTING ANTIQUITY, 1753-
1837

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The work presented in this thesis is the candidate’s own
Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between reproductive media and antiquarian museum culture between 1753-1837. It demonstrates how the emergence of a ‘constellation of reproductions’ was central to the conceptual, institutional, and practical development of public museums. It also argues that accounts of museum writing can be enriched by an appreciation of its participation in a wider ‘constellation of reproductions’. The thesis is divided into five chapters investigating the relationship between particular museums, texts and reproductive media. The first chapter concentrates on the manner in which three texts attempted to elaborate different modes of description in accounting for the experience of the British Museum in the first decade after its opening in 1759. The second chapter examines the attempt by the artist Jan van Rymsdyk to develop a positive visual epistemology of museum objects in his published account of the British Museum. If the first two chapters describe a centrifugal dissemination of reproductions from the museum, the next two chapters chart the countervailing centripetal concentration of reproductions within museums. The third chapter therefore describes the production and display of antiquarian models for popular and professional audiences in London and Paris at the end of the eighteenth century. The fourth chapter reinterprets the Soane Museum as the site of an ‘archaeology of the future’ predicated on the transformative potential of the plaster cast for the architectural profession, challenging the prevalent critical image of the Museum as the site of nostalgia or melancholy. The fifth chapter offers a reading of three Newdigate Prize-winning poems on antiquarian themes. It proposes that the literary interpretation of ekphrastic poetry can be enriched by its incorporation into the ‘constellation of reproductions’ that circulated around museums in this period, demonstrating how the very fabric of the text negotiates a relationship with multiple reproductions.
In Memory of Cameron Bain and Felicity Anne Arnott
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Abbreviations

AN – Archives nationales, Paris
BM – British Museum, London
BL – British Library
CRO – Warwickshire County Records Office, Warwick
DNAP – Department of Natural and Artificial Productions, British Museum
EP – École polytechnique, Paris
HRO – Hampshire Records Office, Winchester
MB – Jan and Andrew van Rymsdyk, Museum Britannicum (London: the authors, 1778)
MLN – Modern Language Notes
OED – Oxford English Dictionary
PH – Pennsylvania Hospital, Philadelphia
SM – Sir John Soane’s House and Museum, London
Introduction

All other arts of perpetuating our ideas continue but a short time; statues can last but a few thousand of years, edifices fewer, and colours still fewer than edifices. Michael Angelo, Fontana, and Raphael, will hereafter be what Phidias, Vitruvius, and Appelles are at present; the names of great statuaries, architects, and painters, whose works are lost. The several arts are expressed in mouldering materials; Nature sinks under them, and is not able to support the ideas which are impressed upon it.

The circumstance which gives authors an advantage above all these great masters, is this, that they can multiply their originals; or rather can make copies of their works, to what number they please, which shall be as valuable as the originals themselves.¹

For Joseph Addison, it appeared a matter of fact that art was divided into two distinct categories. On one hand stood sculpture, architecture, and painting, while on the other print media; on one hand forms ‘expressed in mouldering materials’ and doomed to oblivion, on the other works that could reasonably aspire to eternity through the ‘multipl[ication of] their originals’. Rather than the product of any a priori distinction, this conceptual division was a concrete abstraction, a product of the technological divergence between the modes of (re)production of different media. Whereas text could be copied ad infinitum without loss of information or value, other art forms incapable of reproduction could at best expect to ‘last but a few thousand of years’. At the centre of Addison’s conceptual framework was the problem of the reproduction and its capacity to produce representations that could deliver permanent, fixed values. While Addison was aware of copies from the more mutable art forms, remarking upon the frequency with which ‘the best Models’ of sculpture were copied for ‘those that are Curious’, he felt that these copies were in no way ‘as valuable as the originals’, were more susceptible to decay or diminution.² Yet, over the course of the subsequent century, copies would become increasingly acceptable as proxies for objects otherwise inaccessible to the spectator. Models, prints, and casts from architecture and sculpture would all be increasingly accepted in various contexts.

¹ Joseph Addison, ‘On Authors and Writing’, The Spectator, 10 September 1711.
² Joseph Addison, Remarks on several Parts of Italy, &c. In the Years 1701, 1702, 1703 (London: Jacob Tonson, 1705), p.341.
as substitutes for Addison’s mouldering originals. In this study I will investigate the
development and reconfiguration of these reproductive media around the remains of
antiquity, and the implications of this historical process for eighteenth- and early-
nineteenth-century museums. Focusing on the changes in the concept and use of
reproducions, I will identify how they informed and were informed by the emergence
of the museum in the second half of the eighteenth century. My fundamental
argument is that to understand the museum in this period one must come to terms
not only with the establishment and organisation of particular institutions, but also
with how originals are reproduced and disseminated through a multitude of
reproductions.

The story of the emergence of the public culture of museums has already been
well rehearsed, both in general accounts of the period, and specific studies of
individual institutions.³ The story of how objects were arranged and rearranged,
distributed and redistributed, selected and deselected, identified and lost, placed and
replaced, accessed and deaccessed, displayed and concealed, highlighted and
obscured, all in the name of the museum, is a familiar one.⁴ It has long been

³ In the case of the British Museum (and the Sloane collection preceding it) there are
numerous studies, including: James Delbourgo, Collecting the World: The Life and
Curiosity of Hans Sloane (London: Penguin, 2017); From Books to Bezoars: Sir Hans
Sloane and his Collections, ed. by Michael Hunter and others (London: British Library,
2012); Sir Hans Sloane: Collector, Scientist, Antiquary, Founding Father of the British
Museum, ed. by Arthur MacGregor (London: British Museum, 1994); J. Mordaunt
Crook, The British Museum (London: Allen Lane, 1972); the establishment of the
Louvre is also addressed frequently: Sébastien Allard, Le Louvre à l’Époque
romantique: Les décors du palais (1815-1835) (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2006); Yveline
Cantarel-Besson, La naissance du musée du Louvre: La politique muséologique sous la
Révolution d’après les archives des musées nationaux, 2 vols (Paris: Éditions de la
Réunion des musées nationaux, 1981); Andrew McClellan, Inventing the Louvre: Art,
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Bette W. Oliver, From Royal to
National: The Louvre Museum and the Bibliothèque Nationale (Plymouth: Lexington
Books, 2007); Les musées en Europe à la veille de l’ouverture du Louvre, ed. by Édouard
ed. by Sharon MacDonald (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 115-33; Tony
Bennett, The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics (London: Routledge, 1995);
Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge (London: Routledge,
recognised across a number of disciplines that museums are ‘mediating institutions’: mediating subjects, objects, knowledge practices, and disciplines; producing the ‘fiction’ of ‘a coherent representational universe’ from their heterogeneous collections. This understanding of museums as media has led to greater critical attention to how museums concretely mediate objects, ideas, and subjects. Donald Preziosi has explained some of the ‘mechanisms of [...] success’ for museum representational practices, unpacking the ‘stage machinery and epistemological technologies’ that form the ‘practice of enframing vision and knowledge’ in the museum. In relation to antiquarian and art collections, Didier Maleuvre has sought to recognise the museum as a site not only of historical study, but also of the manufacture of ‘an image of history’ in which collection ‘gives shape and presence to history, inventing it, in effect, by defining the space of a ritual encounter with the past’. Another significant part of this ‘practice of enframing vision and knowledge’ has been the building and setting of the museum itself. The ‘architecture and furniture which determine the nature of these premises’ not only protect objects ‘against theft and damage from the environment’ but also ‘bestow unity on a multiplicity of objects.


a unity which allows them all to be perceived as constituent elements of the same whole’. Museums are constituted by a panoply of mediating technologies that inform how collections are rendered visible and meaningful.

Less acknowledged has been the fact that while museums are ‘mediating institutions’, they are also, importantly, themselves subject to complex mediations. For every spectator who experienced first-hand the material remains of antiquity, there were countless others whose experience was limited to reproductions of one sort of another. For every visitor who stepped inside the British Museum or the Louvre, there were many more whose knowledge and understanding of what constituted a museum was determined first and foremost by a host of descriptions and illustrations. The eighteenth century witnessed an intense clarification of the concept of the ‘museum’, and in this study I will investigate the role of the reproduction in that process. Far from the passive receptacle of particular visual or institutional information, the reproduction was intimately involved in the representation, organisation, and transmission of the museum and its objects across substantial distances and chronologies. Paul Magnuson has argued that the ‘public significance of a literary work rests, not in itself, not within its own generic boundaries, but in its locations’, because ‘without precise location, there is no cultural significance’. One might equally argue that the significance of the eighteenth-century museum was brought into focus precisely by its dislocations, by how its reproductions and its objects circulated to audiences much larger than it could ever expect to welcome through its doors.

These brief initial remarks on the historiography of museums bring me to the second part of this Introduction, where I want to define, as succinctly as possible, some of the terms that I use in this study, to explain its basic methodological premises, and to describe the arrangement of my materials.

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Underpinning my argument above all is the concept of ‘reproduction’. To ears better attuned to the use of this term in its Benjaminian sense – as the ‘technological reproduction’ that ‘substitutes a mass existence for a unique existence’ – my employment of it may at first jar. Undoubtedly, the manual and pseudo-technological reproductions of the eighteenth century are not of the same order as the photomechanical processes that superseded them over the course of the nineteenth. Whereas technological reproductions initiate a potentially limitless series predicated on the fungibility of its members, the reproductions I examine in this study are often more limited, incomplete, and peculiar. Yet, in identifying the historical specificity of the technological reproduction, Benjamin indicates that this term might embrace a wider array of phenomena than those he himself pursues. As he explains early in the ‘Work of Art’ essay:

In principle the work of art has always been reproducible. Objects made by humans could always be copied by humans. Replicas were made by pupils in practicing for their craft, by masters in disseminating their works, and, finally, by third parties in pursuit of profit.

The reproductions I marshal in this study are closer to these ‘replicas’ than their technological relatives. Their claim to the title of reproduction rests less in their exact mechanical reproducibility, than in their capacity to act as proxies for objects, institutions, and experiences. They are reproductions in the sense that they afford access to an original object in locations that are temporally and geographically distant from that original. Specifically, these reproductions operate as proxies for the objects and experiences of the eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century museum. They are phenomena invested with the power of mediating the museum or the original object for those without immediate access to it, serving to initiate their readers, viewers, and spectators into museum culture without the prerequisite of any more literal initiation.

For this reason, I include writing about museums within the concept of ‘reproduction’. While far from technological reproductions of museum objects, museum writing was nonetheless understood to reproduce an experience of the object and the institution, and to participate in the larger field of mediations through which the public sought to engage in and vicariously access museums. Writing about museums – whether descriptions, letters, coterie dramas, catalogues, histories, guides, articles, advertisements, speculative fictions, or poems – all participated in a shared culture of museum reproduction alongside copies in print, plaster, and other media. In this period writing was yet to be conceptualised as literature as an autonomous cultural discipline, and its problems were still frequently theorised alongside those of arts ‘expressed in mouldering materials’. It is my contention that considering these reproductions collectively will yield valuable insights into eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century museum culture. A consideration of these cousins’ secret affinities will be enriching to our understanding of both. Such an approach also helps to rearticulate the ways of making and knowing that contributed to the formation of these different art forms and knowledge practices, throwing renewed light on the development of the disciplines and their institutions in this period. The inclusion of poetry, belles lettres, and other textual representations of the museum in the category of ‘reproduction’, while acknowledging their specificity as genres of writing, therefore allows for a reading of museum writing as actively participating in a wider project of the cultural (re)production of the museum.

Methodologically, this study is predicated on the idea of the ‘constellation’, and in particular the constellation of reproductions. The figure of the ‘constellation’ was first theorised by Benjamin as ‘an arrangement of concrete elements in the concept’

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out of which a representation of the ‘idea’ was produced.\textsuperscript{16} In this configuration of phenomenal elements there can be no “‘fundamental’ features, no centres, no “ultimately determining instances” or bottom lines, except for the relationship of all these contents to each other’.\textsuperscript{17} The formation of the idea in the constellation takes place in the negative space between phenomena. However, this is all done without simultaneously sacrificing the phenomena in the name of an abstract concept.\textsuperscript{18} ‘The images’ represented in the constellation ‘illuminated contradictions rather than negating or sublating them; the procedure was one of mimetic representation rather than synthesis.’\textsuperscript{19} I therefore intend to make visible the panoply of reproductions constellated around the museum, without sacrificing them on the altar of a single conceptual identification. The representation of the constellation of reproductions allows for an understanding of the museum as a far more troublesome and non-identical concept than my use of the definite article would suggest. The many reproductions that build up in and around the museum make any straightforward appeal to identity implausible. In the \textit{Passagenwerk} Benjamin intended to build his idea of nineteenth-century Paris out of ‘Corsets, feather dusters, red and green-coloured combs, old photographs, souvenir replicas of the \textit{Venus di Milo}, collar buttons to shirts long since discarded’. Discarding the other ‘battered historical survivors from the dawn of industrial culture’, I will take up the replicas of the \textit{Venus de Milo}, along with a number of other casts from ancient sculpture, engravings of museum objects, descriptions of museums, poetic ekphrases of museum objects, models of Greek and Roman monuments, and casts from classical architecture in order to configure an idea of the museum.\textsuperscript{20} This constellation of ‘phenomenal elements’ will be arranged in order to make their relationship visible, constituting an idea of the

\textsuperscript{17} Fredric Jameson, \textit{Late Marxism: Adorno, or, the Persistence of the Dialectic} (London: Verso, 2007), p.244.  
museum through reproductions that were constantly circulated, taken up, discarded, centred, marginalised, recovered, and rearranged in new and unexpected configurations. This methodology of reading the museum through its constellation of reproductions therefore also has the value of being remarkably amenable to the actual circulation, operation, and distribution of museum mediations: to the way in which the redistribution of these elements constantly threw new light on the museum and museums.

Geographically and chronologically, this study concentrates on antiquarian collections in London during the period spanning the establishment of the British Museum in 1753 to the death of Sir John Soane in 1837, with a brief detour to Paris at the turn of the nineteenth century. This period could loosely be defined as the first Age of the ‘public museum’, during which the earliest predicates for modern museum culture were identified, and the first significant institutions for ‘the advancement of knowledge and the artistic education of the people’ were established. In the first two chapters I investigate the reproduction of the museum and museum objects, with a particular focus on the British Museum. In Chapter 1 I consider descriptions of the British Museum and its Egyptological collections in the first decade of its establishment. In describing the Museum’s dialectic of visibility and obscurity, I investigate how these early texts sought to reproduce an integrally visual experience in a non-visual medium. In Chapter 2 I look at the earliest attempt to visually reproduce objects in the museum: Jan and Andrew Van Rymsdyk’s *Museum Britannicum* (1778). Reconstructing the Rymsdyks’ attempt to represent a hundred or so of the Museum’s objects, I analyse the hybrid method of visual representation that they pursued, examining how they sought to assert the image’s claim to positive epistemological content independent of that supplied by the word. In the next two chapters I focus on the reproduction as itself a museum object. If the first two chapters describe a centrifugal dissemination of reproductions from the museum, the next two chapters chart the countervailing centripetal concentration of reproductions within museums.

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Thus, in Chapter 3 I turn from the British Museum to the world of antiquarian models and their exhibition. Examining the careers of two modellers, one Parisian and one a Londoner, I explore the relationship between modelling and other more conventional methods of antiquarian representation. I then identify the different ways in which media, material, and mode of presentation all modified how models were understood to reproduce ancient monuments, and the different – sometimes competing – purposes to which they were put in an exhibition setting. In Chapter 4 I continue to focus on architectural reproductions, this time exploring the role of the reproduction in Sir John Soane’s House and Museum in London. My contention in this chapter is that to understand the arrangement and concept of Soane’s Museum, one must attend to the archaeological reproduction as not only a representation of the history of the discipline of architecture, but also of its future. Reading against the grain of the dominant critical image of the Soane Museum, I contend that the Museum was configured as an archaeological depiction of the architectural future. Finally, in Chapter 5 I return to the relationship between the museum object and its textual reproduction. Proceeding with a series of readings of winning entries to the Newdigate Prize for Poetry between 1806 and 1827, I offer an account of the ekphrastic poem’s relationship to the constellation of reproductions in the Romantic period, and its participation within that constellation. Above all, I show just how complex and just how diffuse the representation of museums and museum objects could become through their distribution across reproductions.
CHAPTER 1

Thresholds of visibility at the British Museum: Displaying and describing the Lethieullier mummy

In 1753 Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753) died, leaving his collection of curiosities to the nation in the expectation that it would be used to form a public museum. Sloane’s collection was substantial: Horace Walpole, one of the executors of his will, characterised it as a vast and expensive collection of ‘hippopotamuses, sharks with one ear, and spiders as big as geese!’ Parliament was tasked with establishing a museum from this collection and rearranging it in a suitable fashion. The questions of how the British Museum should be constituted, and what it comprised, were difficult ones: as well as the unwieldly diversity of Sloane’s collection, Parliament also had to deal with a miscellany of gifts and bequests. In a single fortnight the trustees might be presented with ‘a starved Cat & Rat; Mr. Francis Perry the first number of His Series of English Medals; and [...] a large petrified Oyster from the Chalk Cliffs near Folkestone in Kent’. To the eighteenth-century eye the British Museum presented itself as an immense accumulation of heterogeneous objects. Yet this heterogeneous accumulation required some sort of order. Parliament passed three acts for this purpose: one in 1753 that regulated the establishment of the institution; another in 1754 determining the number and nature of the trustees; and another in 1755 purchasing Montagu House in Bloomsbury to accommodate it. The difficulty with which the authors of the

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1 Horace Walpole to Sir Horace Mann, 14 February 1753, in The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole’s Correspondence, ed. by W.S. Lewis and others, 48 vols (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1937-83), XX, 358-59, hereafter abbreviated HWC.
2 London, British Museum (hereafter abbreviated to BM), CE3/3, 9 July 1762, p.779. These are the bequests listed for the previous fortnight.
3 Great Britain, An Act for the Purchase of the Museum, or Collection of Sir Hans Sloane: 26 George II, c. 22 (1753); An Act [...] to empower a certain number of the Trustees of the British Museum to do certain Acts: 27 George II, c. 16 (1754); Great Britain, An Act for Vesting Montagu-House in Trustees and their Heirs, [...] to convey the same to the
1753 Act came to terms with Sloane’s collection is testament to this problem of establishing order among overwhelming heterogeneity. The Act describes the collection as:

Library of books, drawings, manuscripts, prints, medals and coins, ancient and modern, seals, cameas [sic], and intaglios, precious stones, agates, jaspers, vessels of agate and jasper, crystals, mathematical instruments, drawings, and pictures, and all other things in the said Collection or Museum.  

The proviso ‘all other things in the said Collection or Museum’ was necessarily open-ended, since even Sloane had struggled to account for everything he had collected, and there was still no clear indication of where the limits of this new ‘General Repository’ lay. Yet the 1753 Act also stipulated that ‘the said collection be preserved entire without the least diminution or separation’. Each object had to find a place; the heterogeneous had to be consolidated into a more or less coherent totality. A new practice of disciplining and categorisation was required that would allow the museum to be seen with coherence: decisions had to be made about what objects were to be visible; how they were to be made visible; and what their visibility meant for the totality of the Museum.

For visitors, the collections of the British Museum were therefore extraordinary not only in themselves, but also in the novelty of their concentration and arrangement as a single public exhibition. The German tourist G.F.A. Wendeborn (1742-1811) diagnosed his ‘satisfaction’ in experiencing ‘these large and lofty rooms, dedicated to the Muses’ in just these terms:

Trustees of the British Museum, for a General Repository; and upon Such other Trusts as therein are mentioned: 28 George II, Private Acts, c. 3 (1755).

4 Great Britain, 1753.

5 The term ‘General Repository’ had been used elsewhere to describe, among other things, the function of the Chapter House at Westminster, where a large number of legal documents were housed; while Ephraim Chambers in his Cyclopædia had defined ‘Repository’ as a ‘Store-house or Place where things are laid up and kept,’ confirming its connotative association with ‘MUSEUM’ by cross-reference; Ephraim Chambers, Cyclopædia, or a Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences, 2 vols (London: J. and J. Knapton, 1728), II, 995.
the whole is costly, worth seeing, and honourable to the nation; that, when taken all together, it has not its equal; but when considered in its separate branches, almost each of them singly, may be surpassed by some other collections, even in England itself.⁶

The comprehension of the Museum as a totality was a necessary part of its experience. What was unique to the British Museum was not its individual objects, but the sight of them ‘when taken all together’.

The British Museum was the subject of profound curiosity: a place that many members of the public wanted to visit and explore as much for what it represented, as for what was represented within it. But while there were many people like Wendeborn who made this pilgrimage to the new Museum, there were many more who could not: either because of geographical distance; lack of time; lack of room; or lack of social standing. This context soon gave rise to a descriptive literature that sought for ways to reproduce an experience of the halls, collections, and objects of Montagu House for a readership to whom they were otherwise inaccessible, and that participated in the wider constellation of reproductions. This literature was not only concerned with representing the individual objects in its collections, but also with representing the institution in toto for an audience without first-hand experience of it, or anything like it. This mediation was made more complicated by the fact that the British Museum was conventionally understood to be an institution primarily encountered through the sense of sight; its collections were organised according to a visual regime, and visual interest was the principal standard against which the value of its objects was measured. Objects were ‘put on display’, there ‘to be looked at’ or exposed to the sight of the curious.⁷ Publications concerned with the Museum therefore had to deal with this visual regime. This required finding a way to represent objects – and, significantly, an institution – through a medium that could not literally reproduce

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visual experience: the written word. Authors had to find ways to respond to the dialectic of illumination and obscurity that animated the British Museum through a medium that was non-visual. In representing the visual impact and organisation of the collection, publications on the British Museum therefore had to develop a vocabulary and a grammar for the unseen visible.

In this chapter, I will examine how authors participated in this museal dialectic of illumination and obscurity. I will do so by examining three very different accounts produced in the first ten years after the opening of the Museum: Edmund Powlett’s (b. 1730) *The General Contents of the British Museum* (1761), Alexander Thomson’s (fl. 1767-1798) *Letters on the British Museum* (1767), and the Reverend Weeden Butler’s (1742-1823) ‘Pleasing Recollection or a Walk through the British Museum: An Interlude of two acts’ (1767). Focusing on what Mieke Bal has termed the various ‘gestures of exposing’ that constitute the grammar and vocabulary of the museal encounter, I will examine how deictic textual gestures are framed as much according to what is not seen, as what is. In demanding that the reader ‘Look!’, such gestures intrinsically demonstrate what is rejected by or resists sight, and how these moments of obscurity or resistance are involved in the act of textual representation and institutional production. The reproduction of the British Museum for an absent readership involved the text as much in the representation of what was not visible, or what could not be seen, as what was accessible to the sight of the visitor.

In order to explore this dialectic of illumination and obscurity in accounts of the British Museum, I will pay particular attention to its early collection of ancient Egyptian artefacts. At first sight, the decision to focus on the Egyptian holdings at the British Museum in the 1760s may appear odd. Sloane’s Egyptian collection has been characterised as largely comprising ‘small objects of unremarkable character’, the result of ‘chance’ rather than any ‘special attempt to build up an Egyptian section in his private museum’, and they were few in number (only 160 out of 1,125 antiquities or

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'Things relating to the Customs of ancient Times, or Antiquities, Urns, Instruments, &c.')\(^9\). When these objects were placed in the British Museum, they were distributed across several rooms, rather than in a single, unified collection. Indeed, some of the earliest plans for the Museum preferred to keep them in the base storey, largely out of sight of most visitors. However, Egyptian artefacts – and mummies especially – were nonetheless especially subject to the attention of visitors from the very first. Stephanie Moser has shown how Egyptian items often featured as ‘iconic curiosities’ in eighteenth-century collections, their appearance and historical associations drawing in the sight of visitors:

> While mummies and mummy cases provided a fascinating glimpse into death, the votive figurines featuring animal gods were seen as testament to the existence of a bizarre religion long gone. Furthermore, the colour and design of the mummy cases and the miniature size of many of the figurines made them appealing as display items.\(^10\)

This was especially true of the British Museum, where *Egyptiana* were a ‘highlight’ that featured ‘prominently’ in visitors’ ‘first impressions’.\(^11\) But however visually rich these antiquities may have appeared, they were nonetheless received with greater ambivalence than those of either Greece or Rome. Ancient Egypt was subject to a ‘lesser degree of reverence’ than either of these cultures, and engagement with its antiquities was therefore more ‘complex and contradictory’, encompassing ‘both fascination and admiration, distaste and derision’.\(^12\) Visitors were as likely to turn away or stare in disgust at a mummy or its coffin, as they were to gaze in awe. Furthermore, whereas both Greek and Roman script remained legible into the modern era, Egyptian hieroglyphs were resolutely illegible. This meant that visual resistance and

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incomprehension inevitably became a central figure in visitors’ experience of Egyptian antiquities. Jean-François Champollion (1790-1832), the decipherer of the Rosetta Stone, described exactly this resistance to visual comprehension in recounting the eighteenth-century experience of hieroglyphs:

The learned world, unfavourably forewarned, not without some reason, had somewhat pronounced itself in advance against all the attempts which had been made to arrive at the understanding of the Egyptian inscriptions; And in this respect only one opinion appeared to be well established, that of the impossibility of arriving at this knowledge so vainly and laboriously sought until now.13

That hieroglyphs were defined by their obscurity is demonstrated by the word’s entrance into the general vocabulary to signify something mysterious or unreadable. This popular connotation is evident in Horace Walpole’s casual remark about the indecipherable writing of his correspondent Henry Seymour Conway (1718-1794): ‘in general his compositions might as well remain in hieroglyphic’.14 Hieroglyphs appeared resolutely illegible, impossible to decode or explain. And yet, in representing knowledge through ‘visible Shapes and Forms’ – through the mimetic depiction of animals, utensils, gods and vegetation – hieroglyphs appeared at the same time immediately legible to anybody with eyes to see. They drew the eye in even as they resisted its attempts to decode: embodying the contradiction of mimetic immediacy and textual illegibility, visibility and obscurity.

Like early textual representations of the British Museum, Egyptian artefacts were therefore impregnated with questions of how best to represent an encounter with the unfamiliar, and how to respond to the inevitable breakdowns in visibility and legibility when an object imbued with institutional meaning could not be straightforwardly represented or delivered to comprehension by sight. The figure of

14 Horace Walpole to Sir David Dalrymple, 21 December 1761, HWC, XV, 76-77, Walpole also authored a collection of stories titled Hieroglyphic Tales.
Egypt in the British Museum is therefore particularly susceptible to the analysis I propose in this chapter.

I. Museum in light, Museum in shadow

In this section I will explore how visibility was distributed in the Department of Natural and Artificial Productions (DNAP) through the lens of an early proposal for its layout by James Empson (d. 1765), the Under-Librarian for the DNAP. I will explain the institutional framework through which objects were rendered more or less visible, and contextualise the need of visitors for a written guide to inform their experiences of the Museum.

The limit of what was seen, what could be seen, and how it could be seen, was a general concern among early visitors to the British Museum. French traveller Pierre-Jean Grosley (1718-85) complained that ‘the cursory view that visiters [sic] are obliged to be satisfied with, through fear of encroaching upon [the attendants’] complaisance, makes them overlook a number of objects which deserve to be attentively considered’.\(^{(15)}\) Attention was distributed according to a visual economy, one that encompassed technologies of display, the role and activities of staff, and the arrangement of objects. This distribution of attention was a major preoccupation for the first officers responsible for the Museum.

Empson had assisted Sloane with his private collection in Chelsea for many years, and after his appointment at the Museum, he put forward his ‘Proposal of a Plan for the removing and placing of the Sloanian Curiosities’ on 27 May 1756.\(^{(16)}\) Though the ‘Proposal’ did not conclusively dictate the arrangement of the DNAP, it nonetheless had an impact not only on subsequent proposals, but also on how the Department was arranged for the next decade or more. In the ‘Proposal’ Empson

\(^{(16)}\) BM, CE4/1, 16-17, fols 39-45.
proved himself a close reader of the 1753 Act. Its terms informed his understanding of the place of the visitor in the organisation of the British Museum:

How much soever a private Person may be at Liberty, arbitrarily to dispose & place his curiosities; we are sensible that the British Museum, being a public Institution subject to the Visits of the Judicious & Intelligent, as well as Curious; Notice will be taken, whether or no the Collection has been arranged in a methodical Manner. (fol. 40)

The British Museum is defined by Empson according to its public duties, not the arbitrariness of private exigencies; it will inevitably come under the scrutiny of the public; consequently, it must be arranged in a ‘methodical Manner’ reflective of their ‘Judicious & Intelligent’ demands. Empson’s ‘Proposal’ for the reorganisation of the collection is determined by his awareness of the 1753 Act’s designation of a state-endorsed spectator whose demands had become sovereign. For Empson, the DNAP was to be arranged through a visual hierarchy predicated on the subject-position of the visitor:

We intend, according to the Nature and Characteristick of each of these Matters, to subdivide them & in disposing of each Subdivision, to take particular Care, that those Matters may be brought nearest the Sight, as are most pleasing to the Eye and of most Consideration; placing the Rest, in Proportion as they are less so, higher & higher on the Shelves above them and those that are still inferiour, in the Drawers under each Subdivision. We conceive, that such a Disposition will afford great Ease to the Spectator and be no less convenient to the Officer in shewing them. (fol. 40)

Rooms were more or less interesting according to their ‘great Variety of pleasing Objects’ and their ‘beautiful Appearance’, with the measure of value being their capacity to ‘attract the Eye of the Spectator’ (fol. 42). Unlike in the Cabinet of Curiosities where the collector was king, in the British Museum the ‘Eye of the Spectator’ was the single point from which the entire collection should be comprehended. Yet this visual organisation of the collection would not lead, in Empson’s opinion, to a scattered and eclectic arrangement of the most beautiful objects in one place, whatever their nature. The disposal ‘of each Subdivision’ according to the ‘different and methodical Manner’ or systematic typology was not in
conflict with the need to provide ‘Ease to the Spectator’ but a direct result of it: beauty was not only a product of individual objects, but of their successful display and arrangement (fol. 42).

Who was this sovereign ‘Spectator’? According to the 1753 Act, the collection was to be kept ‘for the use and benefit of the public’, with ‘free access to view and peruse’. Yet the question of who constituted this public was inevitably a fraught one. Much was made of the guarantee of public provision; however, the constitution of this public was far from straightforward. The first Principal Librarian of the Museum (equivalent to today’s Director), had indicated that the ‘Monsters & Anatomical preparations’ were best kept ‘in the Base Story’ because ‘these are not proper Objects for all person[s] particularly Women with Child’.\footnote{BM, CE4/1, 21, fol. 52.} As well as gender, class was also significant in determining the identity of the British Museum’s ‘Spectator’. As early as 1755, one of the trustees, John Ward (1678/9-1758) had circulated a memorandum arguing that visiting hours and days should be gerrymandered specifically to restrict the admission of ‘ordinary people of all Ranks & denominations’. According to Ward, if ‘the common people once tasted of this liberty’ it would be ‘very difficult afterwards to deprive them of it’, meaning it would be better ‘never to let them have any admittance at all’. Parsing the wording of the 1753 Act, Ward further argued that its reference to ‘studious and curious persons’ should not be made to include ‘the lower class of the people’. Ward therefore argued that only the ‘trustees themselves’ should have the power to admit visitors in order to guarantee their status, and that ‘publick days’, when anyone might attend, should not be put into effect.\footnote{BL, Add. MS. 6179, fol. 61.} By the end of 1755 Ward had proposed these rules to the General Meeting of trustees, recommending that:

\begin{quote}
all Learned & Curious persons with leave of Trustees [...] have free Access to View the Collections every day in the Week Saturday and Sunday excepted between the Hours of 9 & 3 from the 25th of March to the 29th of September & between the Hours of 10 & 3 from the 29th of September to the 25th of March.\footnote{BL, Add. MS. 6179, fol. 63.}
\end{quote}
When this rule was incorporated into the first *Statutes and Rules*, the thinking behind the decision was not explained; however, it was declared that ‘studious and curious persons’ – a term Ward had been careful to distinguish from ‘the lower class’ – could apply for tickets from trustees, entitling them to attend at exactly those days and hours specified by Ward.\(^{20}\) Ward’s public was therefore tacitly restricted to exclude a significant portion of society.

Once these visitors entered the Museum, what could they expect of their tour through its collections? According to the original *Statutes and Rules*, the visit as a whole was expected to last three hours, with each hour given over to a department (DNAP, Printed Books, Manuscripts).\(^{21}\) However, it quickly became clear that visitors felt cheated having to spend two hours with manuscripts and printed books. As a consequence, the *hortus siccus*, kept in the Department of Manuscripts – as well as other more visually appealing items – began to sustain serious wear-and-tear. This problem was registered by the Standing Committee, who within a year agreed that a rule change was necessary to resolve the divorce between the legislative framework set in the *Statutes and Rules*, and the preferences of visitors. The trustees announced in March 1761 that:

having, by experience, found that some inconveniences have attended the method, first resolved on and published, for exhibiting to the same to view, as [...] the Spectators have it not in their power to employ such proportion of the time allotted, in the examination of the particular objects of their curiosity [...] that each of the Companies be allowed two hours to go through the Museum, which two hours may be divided and employed, in the respective departments, in such proportion as shall be agreed on, by the majority of the said Companies, and that if any smaller part of the same shall chuse to tarry in any of the departments, beyond the time that the rest are desirous to stay, they be left there, under the care of a proper Officer, to spend what proportion of the two hours they please.\(^{22}\)


\(^{22}\) BM, CE3/3, 13 March 1761, fols 671-73.
The consequence was that the collection of books and manuscripts became progressively divorced from the operation of the Museum as an attraction for visitors. With greater flexibility in how visitors spent their time, the form of the Museum visit also progressively changed. Originally a choreographed procession through three discrete collections, the visit soon became more free-ranging, with its shape decided as much by the group or individual visitor as the Statutes and Rules. The ‘Eye of the Spectator’ became increasingly sovereign in fact as well as intention, dictating which objects or cabinets were more worthy of attention, deciding what should be more or less visible, and fortifying the distinction between the DNAP as the realm of vision, and the books and manuscripts as objects to be left in studious obscurity.

Nor was the figure of light and dark that characterised this museal encounter entirely metaphorical. The distribution of visibility and obscurity within the Museum was also literally determined by the limitations of lighting. The original Montagu House had burnt down in 1686 as a result of an unchecked fire, and the minutes of both the Standing Committee and the General Meeting of the British Museum are witness to a concern with averting a similar occurrence. Candles and lamps were banned from the halls of the Museum, with artificial lighting afforded only to officers in the commission of their administrative duties.\textsuperscript{23} Fires were also discouraged, the 1753 ‘Proposal for the Establishment of the British Museum’ announcing that ‘Sir Hans Sloane having never suffered any Fire to be made in his own Repository in all his time, it is Judged none can be necessary in the Repository of the Museum’.\textsuperscript{24} The hours of the Museum therefore had to map onto the hours of daylight in summer and winter for the health and ease of the ‘Eye of the Spectator’. Comprising two stories facing North, East, and West, the distribution of natural light was not equal throughout Montagu House: where an object was placed in relation to lighting therefore had a significant impact on how it was seen, whether it was worth seeing, and even whether it could be seen.

\textsuperscript{23} BM (1757), p.4.
\textsuperscript{24} BL, Add. MS. 4449, fol. 83r.
Empson was well aware of this reality, arguing that the ‘Animals in Spirits’ should be ‘placed in Rooms above Stairs’ instead of the ‘Base Story’:

For, as the Inspection of these Animals will require much more Light than the Base Story can afford, it follows, that they will not be placed there to much Advantage. We apprehend, that in Winter Time and upon dark Days, the Numbers engraved on the Bottles will scarce be distinguishable, and what deserves, in our Opinion, still more to be consider’d is, that these preserved Animals make up a principle Part of the Collection. (fol. 41)

Prizing Sloane’s *naturalia* and realising the limitations of lighting in Montagu House, Empson prioritises its visibility over that of other objects. However, this came at a cost. When deciding where to place the ‘Antiquities, such as Etruscan Vases, Bassorelievos, Urns, Lachrymatories, Pateras, Sepulchral Lamps, Egyptian & Roman Idols, Mosaic Works, Ancient Inscriptions &c.’ Empson argues that since ‘a great many of these Articles are of a heavy Weight, we propose to place the Antiquities below Stairs in the first Room on the right Hand at the Entrance of the House from the Court’ (fols 43-44).

Part of Empson’s concern must have been for the structural integrity of Montagu House. At the new Royal Academy at Somerset House (1776-80) sculpture suffered a similar fate, banished to a ‘dungeon’ due to the difficulties of ‘physical limitations and internal geography’. As late as 1827 Harriet Lady Coutts (1777-1837) had to employ carpenters to reinforce the staircase of her house at Piccadilly, so that a marble statue of her deceased husband could be placed in the dining room safely. To cater for this kind of substantial architectural work on a larger scale and in a more regular fashion would have been impractical. The weight and size of several of the classical inscriptions militated against their display in any more illustrious or visually accessible location, while the physical limitations of Montagu House and British architecture further compounded this problem. However, if there were any doubt about the qualitative implications of his decision, Empson also proposes to place ‘the Indian, Chinese and some other modern Curiosities’ in ‘the Base Story’, ‘being of an inferior

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Consideration’ (fol. 45), and argued that the ‘Collection of Books’ deserved to be in the base story because it would ‘be view’d and resorted to by the Curious’ much less than ‘the Collection belonging to Natural History’ (fol. 41). Placement in the Base Story was not only a practical requirement, but also, unavoidably, a decision about what should or should not be seen: in this case the antiquities were deprioritised and made marginal to the Museum visit.

Where light was sufficient, there was also the problem of how technologies of display impacted upon the visual experience of the collection. The German traveller Karl Philipp Moritz (1756-93) complained that ‘I am sorry to say, it was the rooms, the glass cases, the shelves, or the repository for the books in the British Museum which I saw, and not the Museum itself’. Moritz’s statement also underlines the importance of ‘the glass cases, the shelves, or the repository’ in mediating what visitors saw and how they saw it. Sloane’s collection had originally been moved because the trustees felt that ‘the publick visiting and inspecting of it’ required ‘new presses with Glasses or Wires for the Security of many things of Value and Curiosity’ which were not available at his ‘Mannor [sic] House at Chelsea’. Empson was adamant that the Museum should provide suitable cabinets for the display of Sloane’s naturalia, and that they should be arranged correctly. Arguing again from the principle that the Museum should ‘dispose of Things in such a Manner as will be most advantageous to View’, Empson asserts that the Museum officers should not ‘crowd [objects] on the Shelves, or place Thin [things] to the very Depth of the Shelves, where no distinct View can be had’ (fol. 42). Likewise, Empson argued that the shelves designated to hold the ‘stones with Inscriptions’ should be ‘painted with a whitish or any other light Colour’ in order to ‘set them off the better’ (fol. 44). These technologies of display were not only the setting in which objects were viewed, but were also seen to participate in how those objects were viewed, and were made with the understanding that their structure and

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26 Charles P. Moritz, ‘Travels, chiefly on foot, through several parts of England, in 1782, described in letters to a friend’, in A General Collection of the best and most interesting Voyages and Travels in all parts of the world: many of which are now first translated into English, ed. by John Pinkerton, 2 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Reese and Orme, 1808), II, 512.
27 BM, CE1/1, 2 February 1754, fol. 23.
arrangement impacted on the visitors’ experience of the Museum, again distinguishing it from the typically more open technologies of display prevalent in private cabinets of curiosity.

When visitors did have a chance to look more closely at the objects on display, they found little to help them identify or understand what they were looking at. The trustees had intended that ‘written numbers, answering to those in the Catalogues, be affixed both to the Books, and other parts of the Collection, as far as can conveniently be done’, and while this requirement was fulfilled for the library of books, it was largely left unheeded in the DNAP, meaning that few if any articles were readily identifiable by a catalogue or collection number.28 Even if they had been properly numbered, there was no official catalogue produced for visitors until the start of the nineteenth century. This meant that unprepared or inexpert visitors were entirely reliant on Museum officers for explanations of the collection.

Such a vacuum produced a demand for publications offering guidance on how to view the collection, and what was worth particular attention. Moritz describes the reality of this problem in his own visit, where:

I had Mr. Wendeborn’s book in my pocket, and it, at least, enabled me to take a somewhat more particular notice of some of the principle things; such as the Egyptian mummy, an head of Homer, &c. The rest of the company, observing that I had some assistance which they had not, soon gathered round me; I pointed out to them as we went along [...] what there was most worth seeing here.29

In the absence of any official account, unofficial guides began to be produced whose purpose was to offer assistance to the visitor: in Moritz’s words to ‘point out’ whatever ‘was most worth seeing’. Guidebooks began to structure the visual experience of the Museum, to contribute to its insights, and its blindesses. On his visit, Moritz became the embodiment of the original German version of Wendeborn’s

29 Moritz, II, 512.
travel guide, performing the deictic configuration of the visual offered by his text for a live audience. Moritz even annexes to himself and his guidebook the capacity to shape the visual experience of the visitor, declaring ‘I taught these English [...] what they might see in their own museum!’ The lack of guidebooks or adequate information accompanying displays meant, practically, that the shape of the visit – and of the public consciousness of the Museum – was progressively determined by such publications.

II. Thresholds, indexes, and The General Contents of the British Museum

In this section I will examine how one of the earliest guidebooks, Edmund Powlett’s *The General Contents of the British Museum*, sought to produce an account of the Museum visit for a reading public without any real experience of its institutional framework. I will also demonstrate how this account actively helped to constitute this framework, providing the predicates for how visitors were meant to understand and engage with the Museum and its objects; and how this was done through the representation of the threshold to the Museum, and in particular the ‘iconic curiosity’ of the mummy.

Though the trustees promised to compile a catalogue of the Museum soon after it was opened to the public, this promise would not be fulfilled for another fifty years. This left a gap in the market that was satisfied by unofficial publications. Magazines, travel guides, and volumes of travels all offered accounts of the Museum, and explained to potential visitors how it was to be accessed. As well as these incidental accounts, a number of guidebooks were produced that were specifically dedicated to the Museum. The first and most popular of these guides was Powlett’s *General Contents*, originally published in 1761 and quickly republished in a new edition

30 Moritz, II, 512.
31 The *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* was published in 1808.
in 1762.\textsuperscript{32} In the \textit{General Contents} Powlett makes use of his social standing, justifying his account of the institution and its objects with reference to his participation in a network of genteel learning centred on the Museum: ‘several Gentlemen’ gave him ‘Notes they had taken on viewing it’, enabling him to ‘pursue a more regular Plan’, while ‘a Lady […] gave me some curious Remarks on the recent Shells’ (indicating that this network was not exclusively male, though his female correspondent is notably identified with the feminine interest of conchology).\textsuperscript{33} In the second edition Powlett also thanked the Museum’s officers for not only refraining from criticising his guidebook, but even allowing it ‘some Degree of Merit’, claiming for his publication the quasi-official approval of the institution.\textsuperscript{34}

The \textit{General Contents} was intended to supply a lack while the ‘Officers of the House’ prepared ‘a particular Account of all the Contents of this noble Cabinet’; Powlett therefore defined the limits of his publication in opposition to this promised work. Powlett expected the officers’ publication when it arrived to ‘consist of many Volumes in Folio’: consequently, the first edition of the \textit{General Contents} was a single volume in octavo, small enough to be carried along by visitors; while the second edition was even smaller, ‘printed in Duodecimo’ to make it still ‘more conveniently portable in the Pocket’ (p. xxi).\textsuperscript{35} Whereas the ‘particular Account’ was expected to be

\textsuperscript{32} It was also translated into a German edition later in the decade: Edmund Powlett, \textit{Britisches Museum, nebst der Beschreibung des berühmten Naturalien u. Antiquitäten-Cabinets des Hon. Ritters Hans Sloane} (Berlin: Friedrich Wilhelm Birnstiel, 1764).


\textsuperscript{34} Edmund Powlett, \textit{The General Contents of the British Museum: With Remarks, Serving as a Directory In viewing that Noble Cabinet}, 2nd edn (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1762), p.xx, all subsequent quotations in the body of this section will be taken from this edition. Certainly at least one trustee – William Musgrave (1735-1800) – owned a copy of this edition, whose signature can be found on the inside cover of the British Library copy 1044.b.4.(1.).

\textsuperscript{35} Powlett, (1761), p.ix.
exhaustive, the *General Contents* was concise and pragmatic. Powlett’s ‘Method’ for this work was regulated according to the arrangement of the Museum visit, with the reader ‘accompanied through all the Rooms in the same Order as they are shewn’ (p. ix). In the second edition Powlett makes his intentions for the publication even more explicit: responding to ‘Some of the Purchasers of the first Edition’ who had complained ‘it was too long to be read in the Time allowed to view the whole Museum’, Powlett explained that ‘it was not intended to be read there’ from start to finish. The ‘most eligible Method’ was instead to read ‘these Sheets with some Attention at Home’ to form ‘a tolerable idea’ of the contents of the Museum, so that on visiting the spectator is able to gratify his curiosity by applying ‘particular Attention to that Part [...] that suits his Taste’, while returning to pages describing objects of interest as they passed through the collection. The guide is a domestic double of the Museum visit, initiating readers into its novelty and enabling them to engage with it once they become visitors. The *General Contents* were to frame and form the limits of visitors’ attention, ensuring they do not wander ‘from Object to Object, without suffering any Thing to claim his immediate Notice’ (pp. xxi-xxii). It was not intended so much as a description of the visit, as the building blocks through which a visitor might imagine their own trajectory through the Museum, framing the outer limit of what was to be seen. This desire to frame the limits of the visit and the visible for the reader was characterised by Powlett as a response to failures in his own experience of the Museum. Curious to ‘get a Sight of this Collection’, he describes having visited the Museum after it first opened, unfortunately finding ‘the Time allowed to view it’ too short and the rooms too ‘numerous’ (pp. ix-x). The resulting confusion made it impossible ‘without some kind of Directory’ to form ‘a proper Idea of the Particulars’. Though acquainted with ‘most of the Contents before they became the Property of the Public,’ Powlett found that the sheer diversity of the DNAP made it impossible to effectively engage with the collection. According to Powlett this ‘Complaint was general’: the public required ‘something concise and cheap’ that might facilitate their ‘Sight of this Collection’, instituting order in the chaos of Montagu House (p. x). Powlett understood his publication to fill this gap in the market.
The framing of the *General Contents* around obscurity and illumination was a product of how Powlett understood the operation of the Museum. In the preface to the first edition Powlett employs the familiar terms of enlightenment to describe how ‘Learning was for many Ages [...] buried in Oblivion’ with people subject to ‘a blind Infatuation’ with their own ‘dark Ignorance’ (pp. vi-vii). Progressively the human mind ‘rose superior to all Difficulties’: literature ‘now shines in its pristine Lustre’, while ‘many Things’ are now ‘generally known, of which the Ancients had not the least Notion’ (p. vii). However, in order to guard against the return of obscurity, Powlett identifies the need for ‘Repositories in every Nation to contain its Antiquities’. The Museum was not only a place to be illuminated, but a source of illumination: to enter the British Museum accompanied by the *General Contents* was both to pour light upon its obscurer parts, and to have light poured upon oneself as a member of the newly constituted museum public.

Yet the ‘sight’ that Powlett offered did not include any illustrations, it relied for fulfilment upon the actual objects. Nor was this unusual; until the publication of Jan and Andrew Van Rymsdyk’s *Museum Britannicum*, accounts of the British Museum could at best be expected to include a small illustration of the façade of Montagu House or a portrait of Hans Sloane, with engravings of artefacts and specimens entirely absent.36 The interface between text and vision in the *General Contents* was therefore not reliant upon the integration of words with images within the publication, but on the integration of the reader with the visitor. Pursuing this integration in revisions to the second edition, Powlett changed the opening sentences of a number of paragraphs to include the visitor in his deictic descriptions of the visit: whereas in the first edition he remarks ‘There are a great Number and Variety of small earthen Figures’ (p. 21), or ‘There are many Specimens of the various Kinds of the Apocynum’ (p. 76), in the second edition this has been changed to ‘We find here’ (p. 39), and ‘Here we find’ (p. 150). Powlett also added an index, allowing his reader to ‘find out in the Book any Title he pleases, and many curious Specimens’, further integrating the guidebook into the

visual experience of the visit (p. xxi). The General Contents were intended to both form and inform the visitors’ experience of the Museum, offering them the tools to construct a coherent visit, and providing them with accounts of anything that might interest them once that visit was in motion. Rather than an undifferentiated guide to every object, it was intended as the foundation both for readers to comprehend the connections and arrangements that formed the Museum as a whole, and for visitors to construct their visit out of this framework. Acknowledging the impossibility of a complete experience of the Museum, Powlett’s guidebook sought to frame the visit around the interest of the spectator, and the economy of attention that emerged from their choices.

How, then, did Powlett introduce his readers to the visual regime of the British Museum? Through a focus on thresholds and mummies. Following the course of the regulated visit, the General Contents enters Montagu House through the Hall, noticing a number of remarkable stones and intriguing frescoes before taking the staircase up to the first floor, and the DNAP. However, before entering the DNAP proper, Powlett asks his readers to pause in the ‘vestibule’ set apart ‘for the immediate Reception of Presents’. The eighteenth-century vestibule was a suspended threshold, a chamber between the entrance to a building and its interior: it was in this location that the visitor was introduced to the operation of the Museum while still awaiting admittance. Describing the vestibule, Powlett makes a point of giving ‘first mention’ to ‘an Egyptian Mummy, which is deposited in a Glass Case in one Corner of the Room, as its Coffin in the other’ (p. 12). This mummy was not a Sloanian antiquity, but the gift of Colonel William Lethieullier (1701-56), presented to the Museum alongside a similar specimen in 1756. In fact several Lethieulliers – a successful merchant family operating in the East – contributed to the Museum’s Egyptian collection: when they collected William’s mummy, his nephew Pitt (d. 1776/7) presented another along with a number of

37 M.L. Bierbrier, ‘The Lethieullier Family and the British Museum’, in Pyramid Studies and Other Essays presented to I.E.S. Edwards, ed. by John Baines and others (London: The Egypt Exploration Society, 1988), pp. 220-28 (p.222); William’s collection was the result of a voyage to Egypt in 1721: the mummies were found in Saqqara and shipped back to England on the Dove Galley in 1722.
artefacts; and in 1758 Smart Lethieullier (1701-60), William’s cousin, also presented a few small Egyptian antiquities (Plate IV).\textsuperscript{38} Noting the arrival of the first Lethieullier mummy, the Standing Committee described it as ‘A Mummy in its original Sycamore Coffin with the Hieroglyphical Paintings placed over its Breast and Legs, and the Masque (or Covering of the Face) brought to England from Egypt by himself’.\textsuperscript{39} The next time this bequest was discussed by the Standing Committee was to instruct the surveyor, Henry Keene (1726-1776), to place the mummy and associated objects in the vestibule, rather than with the Egyptian antiquities in the DNAP, or the ‘Mummies, Calculi’ and other ‘Monsters & Anatomical Preparations’ that had been banished to the base story.\textsuperscript{40} Despite the temporary purpose of the vestibule as a reception room for gifts, the Lethieullier bequest remained there for more than a decade, becoming in the process an emblematic object for the Museum, even as it failed to find a place in the DNAP proper. The mummy thus became a liminal object, initiating visitors into the visual regime of the Museum, while both eliciting their attention and resisting institutional discipline. Sitting alongside ‘a Hornet’s Nest’, ‘Large Corals’ and assorted bronzes, as well as several natural specimens in jars, the mummy and its coffin were by far the largest objects in the vestibule, and the ones that consistently drew most comment and questioning from visitors.\textsuperscript{41} They were iconic curiosities: icons both of ancient Egypt and the Museum itself. This centrality was also the case in publications concerned with the Museum: in \textit{London and Its Environs Described} (1761) the only object specifically referred to is the mummy, while the \textit{Imperial Magazine} reproduced Powlett’s description of the mummy for its readers while keeping all other description to a bare minimum.\textsuperscript{42}

As an emblematic museum object, the mummy was a test case for Powlett in the development of his ‘Method’ for reproducing the visual experience of an object.

\textsuperscript{39} BM, CE3/1, 27 February 1756, fols 66-67.
\textsuperscript{40} BM, CE3/2, 14 July 1758, fol. 452.
\textsuperscript{41} \textit{A View of the British Museum: or, a Regular Account relating What is most remarkable and curious to be seen there} (London: [n.pub.], [1765(?)]), p.14.
\textsuperscript{42} Moser, \textit{Wondrous Curiosities}, p.56.
through text. Marked for the attention of visitors and readers alike, it was an object for which Powlett’s description, and suggestions for how to approach it, would be decisive in determining the interface between text and visit. It is therefore unsurprising that of the nearly ten pages Powlett dedicates to describing the vestibule, around nine are given up to an account of the mummy and its attendant objects (in fact, the mummy receives more attention than any other object in the General Contents). After naming the mummy, Powlett immediately launches into a description of Egyptian funerary practices, distinguishing between three modes of mummification, each of which was employed by a different social class: the ‘common People’, those of a ‘higher Rank’, and ‘those of a very eminent Station’ (pp. 13-15). According to Powlett the Lethieullier mummy conforms to the second method, in which the body was embalmed ‘with a kind of resinous or bituminous Substance, properly mixed with cheap and ordinary Drugs’; the prepared body was then ‘put in a […] Sycamore Coffin, painted with various Colours’ (p. 14). Powlett appears to have discreetly adapted his account of Egyptian embalming practices from Thomas Greenhill’s (1669?-1740) Νεκροκηδεία. Whereas most popular sources (including Chambers’ Cyclopædia) only refer to two types of embalming, Greenhill is distinct in carefully delineating a third. Greenhill is also unusual in identifying all three with social classes.⁴³ Both of these unusual facets of Greenhill’s work are echoed in Powlett’s account. However, whereas Greenhill is profuse in his references to ancient authorities to justify his explanation, Powlett is not, instead stating only that he has taken his account from other ‘Writers who have treated of the Subject’; whereas in the Νεκροκηδεία a large number of sources are identified (Diodorus Siculus, Herodotus, and Bellonius most prominent among them), in Powlett all sources are flattened out to a single mass of authority used to justify his statements on the Egyptian antiquities (p. 15).⁴⁴ The reader is thus principally expected to engage uncritically with the Museum as part of a larger scholarly context and to understand its objects as invested with this context. The General Contents is written

⁴⁴ Greenhill was also a reader of more contemporary authors, such as the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher (see below): a number of the illustrations of mummies in his Νεκροκηδεία were taken from Kircher’s Oedipus Ægyptiacus (1652-54).
with the intention of ensuring that the visual encounter is never only visual, that what is seen can be seen for what has been deemed by authorities worth noting about it, as well as what it is.

The General Contents is not, however, wholly a reiteration of authorities: it is also careful to describe the arrangement of the objects in the vestibule. Following his reconstruction of Egyptian funerary practices, Powlett begins to describe the Lethieullier mummy. Its face is ‘covered with a gilded Mask’, while:

near its Feet is a Skull, and several Bones, viz. Feet and Hands, taken from a broken Mummy, which shews the State in which these embalmed Bodies are preserved from Decay. Over its Head are some of those small earthen Idols, which are already mentioned to be put by the Embalmers into the Cavities of the Body. (pp. 16-17)

Later, Powlett mentions a ‘square Case’ above the coffin containing ‘some Utensils belonging to the Deceased’ deposited near the body, as well as ‘two Models of a Mummy, one of which they put near the Coffin at the Head, the other at the Feet’ (p. 18). The effect of this visual encounter with the mummy and its associated objects was of mise-en-abyme, with each artefact reflecting and amplifying the impact of the mummy. The vestibule included a number of comparative objects, used to clarify and sharpen focus, and the General Contents attempts to guide the visitor into realising this visual syntax in their approach to and interpretation of the Lethieullier mummy.

The use of ‘Glass Case[s]’ to contain mummy and coffin is also significant in this respect: they served to mark the mummy and coffin out from those objects in the collection that could be more closely handled and examined, recommending them to the visitor as primarily visual. Denied the opportunity to touch the mummy and its associated antiquities, the visitor was encouraged to engage with the mummy as part of an assemblage that was to be seen.\(^{45}\) Powlett’s description of this assemblage

\(^{45}\) Gavin Lucas, Understanding the Archaeological Record (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), pp.93-94. I use the term ‘assemblage’ here in its archaeological sense to mean ‘a collection of objects associated on the basis of their depositional or spatial find-context’. That is, a collection of objects given in an arrangement within the bounds of a particular place, that has been determined by human activity.
establishes dense relations of mutual interpretation between artefacts and their wider networks within the vestibule. Rather than reducing the object to a single mode of access, Powlett’s representation of the mummy assemblage embeds the visual register in the textual account, turning the optical data of the visit into prompts that engage the discursive forms of knowledge previously acquired by the reader-visitor in reading the General Contents. Sight implies the insight of text, and text implies the interpretation of sight.

The embedding of meanings in the guidebook’s construction of the visit was nowhere more apparent than in Powlett’s explanation of the hieroglyphs on the Lethieullier coffin. These hieroglyphs had a rich publication history that informed how Powlett desired his reader-visitor to encounter them. One object in the vestibule not mentioned in the General Contents was a ‘draught of the Coffin’ placed on the wall above the display case; this was a hand-coloured engraving produced by George Vertue, made for the Society of Antiquaries in 1724 immediately after Lethieullier acquired the mummy (Plate II).46 A decade after Vertue, Alexander Gordon (c. 1692-1754), then Secretary to the Society of Antiquaries, published an Essay Towards Explaining the Hieroglyphical Figures, on the Coffin of the Ancient Mummy Belonging to Capt. William Lethieullier. This was anticipated in 1737 by a volume of twenty-five prints depicting the mummies, coffins and urns in the collections of Lethieullier and Dr Richard Mead (1673-1754), as well as Egyptian antiquities from several other English collectors (Plate I). The claim of the Essay, that it might explain the ‘hieroglyphical figures’, amounted in reality to a description of the ornaments found on the coffin with reference to classical authors’ claims for hieroglyphs and Egyptian religion. Gordon did not differentiate between decorative details and what we now consider to be hieroglyphs, and his explanations were really a recapitulation of popular ideas about ‘Egyptian Theology’ from such authors as Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680) and Hermann Witsius (1636-1708) as well as classical authors familiar from Greenhill.47

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46 A View of the British Museum, pp.11-12.
However, whereas Kircher was keen to advance a modified version of the Neoplatonist theory of hieroglyphs, Gordon is happier to pursue the more mundane task of suggesting a connection between the images on the coffin and ‘Conjectures’ about Egyptian cultic practices.\(^{48}\)

In the *General Contents* Powlett borrows from Gordon’s *Essay* in his description of the coffin and its ‘hieroglyphical figures’. Powlett’s description of the figures ‘On the Breast of the Coffin’ appears a synopsis of Gordon’s own (p. 17). Likewise, when he describes Egyptian coffins in general Powlett explains that they were ‘ornamented with a Number of Curious Hieroglyphics, on which their Superstition prompted them to have great Reliance, imagining that they helped to preserve the Body from Corruption’ (p. 14). This statement is a close approximation of Gordon’s opinion that the ‘symbolical Figure now described’ was evidence that the Egyptians embalmed their dead because of their belief in ‘the Immortality of the Soul’.\(^{49}\) This idea of a *being-towards-posterity* was a common one in contemporary accounts of Egypt. In the *Recueil d’antiquités* Anne Claude de Caylus (1692-1765) identified hieroglyphs specifically with such a desire to be remembered. However this desire was not without its contradictions. According to Caylus, the great irony of Egyptian culture was that ‘this People who seemed to wish nothing but to work for posterity, could not foresee that in employing a symbolic script’ they put ‘an obstacle in the way of their design’. The hieroglyph, a ‘mystery’ in which Egyptian religion was enveloped, was evidence of that civilisation’s ‘limited and very imperfect sight’. It was also what constituted the reader-visitor’s own imperfect sight:

The Egyptian antiquities are therefore of a nature that cannot be perfectly illuminated. It is necessary most often to content oneself with glimpsing a few thoughts; & the explanation, such as we are able to give today, would not throw much light on any historical detail. The knowledge that it is possible for us to possess of this People, is confined in a small number of figures & characters. Unfortunately, however, the little that we know of it is covered

\(^{48}\) Gordon, p.10.  
\(^{49}\) Gordon, p.12.
Hieroglyphs are associated with the Egyptian cult of the dead and with what Caylus described as the Egyptian desire ‘to work for posterity’, and yet at the same time Egypt was resolutely a domain of ‘mystery’ whose ‘figures & characters’ served to cover it finally with ‘obscurity’ and ignorance. Yet this forgetting is also part of how they are meant to be understood in their museal present. Referring to the coffin once more, Powlett explains that:

over the whole Foreside is a very great Variety of Hieroglyphics, Figures rudely designed, and Egyptian Characters, only understood by their Priests and learned Men, but which the Antiquaries of these later Times can no ways explain. On the Back of the Coffin, (which may be turned at Pleasure) is another Figure of Isis, having an Ibis on her head. (p. 18)

Powlett’s reader-visitor thus experienced hieroglyphs with the contradictory knowledge that they could only be understood as immediate images and not as a legible text, even as meaning must certainly adhere in them. The image might be described (‘an Ibis on her head’), but its meaning was inaccessible, could be deictically indicated but never comprehended. Thus, where Egyptian antiquities reappear across the rest of the DNAP, Powlett does no more than point them out, and is even reduced to a deixis that fails to escape the text itself, directing his readers not to the objects but to other passages in the General Contents. Faced with a ‘Cylinder, and some Pebbles curiously marked with Hieroglyphics and Figures’, Powlett explains that ‘their Use is not easily determined at this Distance of Time’ (pp. 42-43); with a collection of ‘several Bronze Figures of Egyptian Idols, Priests, &c.’ donated by Thomas Hollis (1720-74), he explains that ‘as I have already sufficiently enlarged on the Subject’ it is ‘not necessary to be more particular’ (p. 52); and confronted with more Egyptian idols donated by Lethieullier, he remarks only that ‘the others it is unnecessary to particularize, as I have said so much on the Subject, Page 19’ (p. 64). There is finally no vocabulary to

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engage with the objects themselves as anything other than types or examples of knowledge. Even those objects attended to in greater detail are never really described in themselves, only gestured towards. There is no sense in the General Contents that what is being described is what the visitor will see: instead, the description is at best a textual supplement to the visual assemblage, and generally only an indication of where to look. One Egyptian idol is interchangeable with another, and the knowledge embedded in a particular object by the guide might as easily be invested in another. To look at an Egyptian hieroglyph or artefact in the context of the British Museum was at once to look at an object of illumination and one of obscurity, to engage with an object defined by its failed communication and its interchangeability, to encounter an object that asked to be seen and that refused to be read.

The British Museum therefore appears in the General Contents as a huge repository of objects whose purpose and arrangement is focused on the triggering of discursive interventions. Overtly constructed around a series of deictic gestures that weld the text to the contents of the visit, the General Contents in fact converts the Museum’s objects into deictic gestures that point back to discursive knowledge. The capacity of objects to become visible is therefore closely tied to their eloquence, with obscurity finally thrown not on those objects that are most unremarkable, but those that are most unreadable. Where Egyptian artefacts resisted such a verbal register, this resistance was in turn made part of their construction as museal objects, their illegibility became something to remark, but also something that framed the limits of Powlett’s concept of the guidebook and the museum.

III. Time, travel and the Letters on the British Museum

In this section I will explore how Alexander Thomson’s decisions about what or what not to present in the Letters on the British Museum were influenced by his understanding of both epistolary travel writing as a genre and its connection to the museum as an institution. I will show how Thomson’s account of the visual experience of the British Museum is oriented to the formal expectations of travel writing,
constructing a museum of letters that renders distances of time and space proximate and proximities distant in a way that was consonant with the Museum’s own programme. In the Letters Egypt was figured not only as an exotic and unfamiliar land, but at the very extreme edge of antiquity. Imagined at the limit of temporal and geographic difference, Egypt became the centrepiece of Thomson’s understanding of the shared programmes of travel writing and the museum.

Alexander Thomson was a London physician and an author best known for his translation of Suetonius’ *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* (1796), *An Enquiry into the Nature, Causes, and Method of Cure, of Nervous Disorders* (1781) which ran into five editions before the end of the century, and a collection of *Letters of a Traveller, on the Various Countries of Europe, Asia, and Africa* (1798). In 1767 Thomson anonymously published the *Letters on the British Museum*, his first work. His choice of the epistolary genre is far from incidental in how he depicts the British Museum: his *Letters* derive meaning from the ‘structures and potential specific to the letter form’. In particular, they frame the visit to the Museum according to the generic expectations associated with travel letters. Thomson’s visit of two hours becomes an arduous voyage through time and space retold across nineteen letters, while the reader is introduced to that which is foreign or unfamiliar as if encountered in the course of travel. The letter, typically defined by its ‘function as a connector between two distant points’, becomes a bridge between the compacted world of the Museum and the mundane world of the addressee.

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52 Thomson’s *Letters* were published by James Dodsley (1724-97), brother to Robert Dodsley (1704-64) who together had previously published Powlett’s *General Contents* from their shop in Pall Mall.


Thomson addresses himself to an unnamed gentleman ‘whose goodness and taste merits so much the love and esteem of all his acquaintance’, and who had expressed regret at having been ‘obliged to leave town without seeing the British Museum’. Thomson hopes that he might consequently provide ‘some account of it’ in a ‘short series of letters’ transmitted ‘from time to time’ in order to ‘afford you the smallest amusement’. They are intended as a means of experiencing the Museum for readers unable to directly access it. The interests of the author and the reader are identified, so that Thomson is able to earnestly exclaim in his first letter that ‘I cannot remain satisfied till I have ranged thro’ the vast collection’ in order to find ‘something not unworthy of your attention’ (p. 5). In order to guarantee the veracity of his account, Thomson therefore establishes a contract with his readers in which he promises to both inform and entertain them.

The metaphor of travel developed in the first letter becomes dominant over the course of the Letters. The novelty of the British Museum is incorporated into the trope of unfamiliarity and distance, with the presumption of ‘geographical separation between writer and addressee’ employed by Thomson to emphasise the Museum as a place of alien encounters, his visit animated by a ‘rambling curiosity’ and unfamiliarity (p. 38). This metaphor was in part facilitated by the epistolary culture of the period. Between 1720-60 Ralph Allen (1693-1764) created a national network of post roads and offices, ‘transforming a structure that had centred mainly upon London’ and cementing it as the centre of national communication. The exponential growth in postal infrastructure was reflected in the development of the epistolary genre, with over twenty-one thousand items titled ‘Letter’ or ‘Letters’ published over the course of the eighteenth century. The published letter became a recognisable mode of

57 Brant, p.213.
59 Brant, p.1.
engaging the provinces with metropolitan matters (and vice versa). Yet, however familiar the city may have been in print, it was still rare for most of the nation’s readers to visit it. London became a site of imaginary investment for the provincial public, with the letter its herald: the capital city was made by the new epistolary culture into a place ‘endlessly fascinating to the English’, an abroad at its heart. The British Museum became a site of particular fascination, a public institution of which little was known and much was heard, its collections gathered from the four corners of the globe.

Thomson’s description plays up this fascination, with the speaker exploring the Museum as if it were a foreign land. Donna Landry has observed that ‘the letter writer is always travelling, explicitly through time, and either explicitly or implicitly across space’, and this is certainly the case in Thomson’s *Letters*. Describing the ‘whole oeconomy of the Museum’ as if it were tantamount to the political order of an unfamiliar nation, Thomson reassures his readers that it is ‘conducted by the best regulations’, a utopia of social order (p. 4). Another travel trope is Thomson’s identification of the Museum as the site of an enchanting disenchantment for the visitor. Just as the travel writer so often sought to ‘disparage predecessors for inaccuracy’, so Thomson disabuses the reader of their fabulous notions about the natural world. Explaining in his eleventh letter that ‘natural history’ has been ‘long involved’ in the encouragement of fictions, Thomson laments that ‘fable has been mixed with the accounts of venomous creatures’, producing ‘many fictitious animals [...] which never existed but in the imaginations of mankind’. Thomson corrects this error through an honest retelling of his own encounters with ‘the most remarkable of the serpent-kind, that are really to be met with [...] in the Museum’ (pp. 44-45).

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62 Brant, p.213.
Thomson even describes his physical passage through the Museum in terms more familiar from travel writing. In the penultimate letter, Thomson has made his way to the library; however, ‘quite weary with pursuing my journey through uncultivated regions of fancy’ he rests, before spying ‘two lovers sitting beneath a green shade’, and being charmed by their dialogue. Finally unveiling his metaphor, Thomson explains that ‘I have found among the manuscripts a pastoral poem’, before transcribing a manuscript copy of Thomas Carew’s ‘As Celia rested in the shade’ (p. 84). The metaphor of travel is shown to contain within itself the act of reading, so that visitor, author, traveller, and reader are held together in a compact centred upon the idea of the recounted journey through the Museum and a shared interest in its unfamiliarity.

The generic expectations of the epistolary journey are most clearly employed by Thomson in his account of his experiences as a visitor. The Letters are remarkable for being the first published account to describe not only the collection of objects, but also the subjective experience of the visitor. Thomson’s account is oriented around the speaker ‘situated at the centre of the epistolary world’, with space deictically configured around his spectatorial position, the objects ordered according to his gaze, Empson’s ‘Eye of the Spectator’.

The deployment of the genre of travel letters is most apparent in Thomson’s account of the Egyptian antiquities. They are identified with the exoticised and mysterious eighteenth-century image of ancient Egypt as an unfamiliar land needing the elucidation of an educated foreigner. While increasingly the location of European voyages, contemporary accounts of Egypt were still rare in the mid-eighteenth century, particularly in comparison with the hundreds of journeys to Rome and even Greece appearing in the same period. From 1600 to 1799 there were thirty-one English travel accounts of Egypt, while fifty-five appeared in French, eleven in German, and six in Italian. Frederic Louis Norden (1708-42) and Richard Pococke (1704-1765)

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published two of the better known of these accounts of travel in Egypt, providing detailed drawings of its monuments that had been formerly unavailable. However, such accounts maintained an image of Egyptian civilisation as an obscure and unfamiliar domain that was alien to European civilisation. They also continued to rely on the same ancient authorities as Greenhill had for their explanations of Egyptian civilisation, depriving it of any historical development that might postdate antiquity. Where travel writers spoke of Egypt, they therefore maintained a sense of its temporal and geographical distance, emphasising it as a land shrouded in the mystery of distance and time. It is these mysteries that Thomson develops in his account of the Egyptian antiquities in the British Museum.

Thomson first enters Montagu House to find ‘two pieces of greenish marble, which belonged to the mausoleum of Cleopatra’ displayed in the hall. He then climbs the stairs and arrives – as did Powlett – in the vestibule. However, whereas Powlett’s description is disembodied – largely focused on the objective arrangement of the Museum at the cost of the spectator’s experience – Thomson frames this transitional space according to his own experience and the assumed response of the reader. Drawing the reader’s attention to the Lethieullier mummy, he remarks that:

It is somewhat extraordinary, that after giving you an account, in my last, of two marbles which are valuable for their antiquity, I should now write you of human bodies more antient by upwards of a thousand years. Would not the greatest part of mankind be apt to question my veracity, were I to affirm, that I have really seen several persons, who, if they did not precede the age of Solomon, have at least been his contemporaries? They probably might think that I myself deserved the first rank among the antiquities. (p. 11)

Thomson describes himself transported in the vestibule into a geographically and temporally foreign space. His resituation at the centre of a concentration of objects both ancient and alien offers the opportunity for public visual verification of an

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antiquity that borders on the pre-historical. This opportunity inspires a mixture of vertigo and incredulity. The ‘greatest part of mankind’, without access to or initiation into the Museum and its operations, are imputed with disbelief at the possibility opened up by the contiguity between one of their contemporaries and an Egyptian mummy. It is entirely insupportable to the Letters’ addressee that ‘antient’ bodies should be accessible by anybody other than a viewer of equal antiquity. Thomson the time-traveller faces a potentially radical divestment of his contemporaneity by virtue of this new relationship to ‘the antiquities’ hosted by the Museum:

And indeed, if the doctrine of the antient Egyptians concerning the transmigration of the soul, was not now exploded, I cannot see why I might not claim as good a title to even the oldest of these relics, as Euphorbus pretended to have had to the body of Homer. (pp. 11-12)

Thomson at this point differentiates between a non-museal conception of visual verification, and that developed by the new museum. By way of irony, he refutes the Egyptian doctrine of the ‘transmigration of the soul’ and confirms that what is there before him is real. Without the Museum, such visual experience would be impossible: it is therefore his role to provide an account of this experience for a readership excluded from it because of their exclusion from the Museum. The Letters are the means by which the subjective experience of the Museum is translatable to a readership unacquainted with it. The Museum, like the letter, becomes the site of mediated travel in time and space, with the mummies its focal point. Thomson identifies the reader’s experience with the non-visual and his own with the visual. The relationship between speaker and addressee becomes one of dependency predicated on Thomson as the site of authentic and immediate experience and the reader as experientially bereft. The reader is not meant to engage with the mummy, but with Thomson’s experience of it.

It is at this point – with the spatial and temporal expectations of the Museum set out, and the centrality of his experience established – that Thomson announces ‘I shall begin my description of the mummies’ (p. 12). After an explanation of the assemblage of objects around the Lethieullier mummy, Thomson offers a description
of the mummy itself. Whereas previous accounts limited their explanation of the mummy to recapitulations of established authorities and tropes, Thomson’s account extends beyond this expectation into the realm of subjective experience. Given that the ‘art of embalming among the antient Egyptians has been very imperfectly transmitted by historians’, Thomson decides to look elsewhere for an explanation (p. 16):

I was extremely desirous of knowing in what state human bodies could exist for so many ages; and being informed that a mummy had been lately dissected, I inquired into the particulars, and received the following account from a gentleman who attended at the dissection. (p. 14)

Rather than taking him to the library, Thomson’s ‘desir[e] of knowing’ apparently leads him to consult the dissection room, that site of visual penetration, in which authority is constructed in terms of the vision of the ‘gentleman’. The appeal of this gentleman witness lay in the possibility of a shared and verifiable form of knowledge, an experience simultaneously derived from ‘direct perception of the phenomenon under review’ and ‘highly structured’ by the implied cognitive structure of a shared social situation. This gentlemanly witnessing parallels the speaker’s relationship with his addressee: both imply a contract based on shared interest and social standing.

Thomson thus continues to ensure the reader’s expectation of visual immediacy in the Letters by way of the guaranteed mediation of a gentlemanly account. Yet Thomson’s gentleman was not all that he appeared. A few years before the Letters in 1763 John Hadley had dissected a mummy held by the Royal Society in front of several doctors, including William and John Hunter, and the Rev. Mr Egerton Leigh. Hadley’s dissection was also the subject of a published report in the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society the following year, and the similarities between this account and Thomson’s own indicate that his consultation with a gentleman was in fact a reading of

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68 Wortham, p.45.
Hadley’s report (Plate III). While the retelling of a report in the *Philosophical Transactions* would have no doubt appeared reliable to Thomson’s readers, what is important to his *Letters* is the pretence to a mediated immediacy embodied in the figure of the gentleman (whether Thomson or his friend). The internal composition of the mummy – a subject of incredulity and curiosity for a readership unfamiliar with objects of this sort – is guaranteed by the witnessing eye of the gentleman. The account of the mummy functions through uniting two contradictory demands made upon the object for its verification. In offering an account of the object that is at once immediate (in the assumed truth of the eye) and mediated (by a regime of social plausibility) Thomson’s visual account opens a new path to the object while reinforcing the experiential framework of the Museum.

The temporal and spatial mode of the eighteenth-century museum was to make visibly present that which is figured as distant. Recognising this museal mode, Thomson exploited its similarity with the established framework of travel writing to construct his style of museum writing. In both travel and the museum visit, a journey through space took the traveller-visitor into contact with objects that were alien or ancient; in both cases the reader was expected to access these objects through a vicarious engagement with the experience of the traveller-visitor. Objects became associated with epochs and cultures, leading to meditations fixed on the voice of the speaker. Yet along with associations came contrasts. What was visible to the traveller-visitor was dependent on the extent to which it could be compared with its other. In the case of travel writing this was the persistent comparison between ‘home’ and ‘abroad’, while in the Museum it was predicated on the distinction between different epochs and cultures:

I have now got among the antiquities of those parts of Greece and Italy, where all the polite arts were carried to the highest perfection. But the stop I made in Hetruria [sic], has greatly weakened the contrast, which I expected would have been stronger, had I passed immediately from the Nile to the Tyber. From a

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land where a deity was represented with the head of a dog; where a lion was
the most respectable inhabitant in one city, and an ox of another; from a
people immersed in mystery, to Rome and Athens, where wit and elegance
resided; the cities of heroes and demi-gods. (p. 28)

The limits of what could be seen in Thomson’s time-travelling museum were defined
by the success of contrasts between diverging cultural forms and their material
remains. This was a framework typical of travel letters from the period. As John Lettice
(1737-1832) explained, the ‘miscellaneous nature of a traveller’s letter is continually
making violent transitions necessary from one subject to another, of a species totally
different’.\(^{70}\) Far from a failing, the ‘violent transition’ from subject to subject or place
to place was an identifying characteristic of travel writing. Thomson’s apology is really
an attempt to reassert this affinity between the museum and the journey, and to
emphasise just how alien his experience of Egypt was. Ancient Egypt was to be seen in
its contrast with Greece or Rome, and the intervention of Etruscan artefacts, while
making the contrast less clear, is ultimately mitigated by his reassertion of the
difference of ‘a land where a deity was represented with the head of a dog’, its people
‘immersed in mystery’.

It is therefore unsurprising that in his *Letters of a Traveller* some thirty years
later Thomson recapitulates extended sections of the *Letters*, this time reframing them
as the reports of an English traveller. Five of the *Letters of a Traveller* were accounts of
‘Africa’, and of those four were on Egypt. A large part of these Egyptian letters were
direct transcriptions from the *Letters on the British Museum*. Self-plagiarised passages
included Thomson’s account of the mummification process, as well as the ‘mummies,
which I have seen taken from the catacombs of Egypt’ and which bear an incredible
resemblance to those found in the vestibule of the British Museum. Thomson also
repeats his fear that the ‘greater part of mankind’ might be ‘apt to question my
veracity’ in affirming ‘that I have really seen several persons, who, if they did not

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\(^{70}\) John Lettice, *Letters on a Tour through various parts of Scotland, in the year 1792*
precede the age of Solomon, may have been at least his contemporaries?"71 Perhaps most significantly, the arrangement of ‘several of the birds Ibis, embalmed in earthen pots’ near the mummies in the vestibule is translated directly to ‘the catacombs’ in the later work, with the Museum and the site of antiquarian discovery becoming synonymous.72 Though no doubt a product of Thomson’s wish to produce a new book for publication at minimum cost and in the least amount of time, this self-plagiarism nonetheless indicates the extent to which the experience of the museum visitor and the traveller were not only reconcilable, but figuratively connected. In Thomson’s guide Egypt operates as a conveniently alien location from which the exoticism and novelty of the Museum can be conveniently extrapolated, and it is this characteristic that makes the Egyptian passages of the Letters particularly amenable to recapitulation in travel writing.

In the ease with which he translated materials between genres Thomson indicates what made his description of the Museum distinct from that of Powlett. Whereas in the General Contents the intention was to create a virtual proximity between reader and collection through deixis, with objects invested with a discursive eloquence, in Thomson’s Letters deixis is employed to produce a distance between author and addressee. While Powlett’s reader is virtually invited into the Museum to imagine that they themselves might experience it, Thomson’s reader is encouraged to experience the collection at a distance. What is deictically pointed to in the Letters is not the object itself, but Thomson’s experience of it. The ‘voice and personality of a single subjectivity’ colours the contents of both the Letters and the Museum according to Thomson’s perspective, making of it a place of geographical alterity and temporal disjunction.73 In offering an account of the British Museum’s Egyptian collection, Thomson does not describe its integration into Montagu House, but his transportation to a distant place and time as a Spectator.

72 Thomson, Letters of a Traveller, p.481.
73 Wright, p.552.
IV. Conversation, attention and the ‘Pleasing Recollection or a Walk through the British Museum’

Unlike Powlett and Thomson, the Reverend Weeden Butler never intended to publish his description of the British Museum. His ‘Pleasing Recollection or a Walk through the British Museum: An Interlude of two acts’ (1767) was instead privately addressed to ‘Mr. W. R.’. This was probably William Rosewell (1744-c. 1782) to whose father, Benjamin Rosewell (1714-82), Butler had briefly been articled for training as a lawyer in the early 1760s. The ‘Pleasing Recollection’ claimed to recount a visit to the Museum but, unusually, was written as a play, emphasising the conversational framework that typically animated the visitor’s ‘Walk through the British Museum’. The tour is conducted by way of dialogue with few stage directions, with objects existing only insofar as they are objects of conversation. In this section I will examine how Butler mirrored the sociability of the visit through the genre of the closet drama in order to produce composite depictions of museum objects, with artefacts deictically overdetermined by the competing viewpoints of dramatis personae. The Museum itself was also subject to this composite mode of depiction, becoming the site of competing interests and demands for attention. Drawing on the idea of the dialectic of visibility and obscurity in the Museum, I will show how this composite deixis was as much the product of the inattention as the attention of visitors, demonstrating the conflict between fascination and indifference that animated visitor experiences of the Egyptian antiquities.

While depicting a public, sociable experience, the ‘Pleasing Recollection’ is inherently an intimate and private performance: a piece of familiar correspondence designed to mitigate Rosewell’s unfortunate absence from the party of visitors, and to

74 BL, Add. MS. 27276, fol. 7r. All subsequent quotations in the body of this section will be taken from this text.
75 Butler soon changed tack and took orders as a Church of England clergyman.
be read by a coterie of friends with privileged access to the manuscript. Specifying
the date and time of the play’s occurrence as 16 July 1767 at ‘4 o’Clock’, Butler intends
for his play to read as the record of an actual visit taken by himself and Rosewell’s
family (listed in the *dramatis personae* as ‘Mrs. Rosewell, her own family’),
accompanied by the Assistant Librarian for Manuscripts and Baptist Minister Doctor
Andrew Gifford (1700-84) (fol. 6r-7r).

Describing the purpose of his letter, Butler explains to Rosewell’s wife that:

> desirous of making up to Him to the best of my ability, the Loss of an
> Entertainment so rational and improving; on his Behalf, I beg the Favour of You
to accept of the Inclosed; It is an humble attempt to delineate to him Objects,
in which you was pleased to Express so much satisfaction. (fol. 5r)

The letter is meant as a substitute for the experience of the Museum, a reproduction
of its ‘rational and improving’ entertainment. However, far from the ‘semi-public,
formal epistle’ that one might expect of such a worthy intention, Butler’s letter is
jocular, full of word-play and gentle humour. The entertainment is as much
associated with the social presence of ‘Mrs. Rosewell’ and her family as the institution
and its objects. Thus Butler asks that it:

> first undergo the candid and indulgent Inspection of the Ladies; and should it
not be found worthy of a second perusal, it may at least be rendered of some
service to light Mr. R—’s pipe in the evening. (fol. 5v)

The letter is not simply the scholarly correspondence of two men, but communicated
to a ‘respectable Circle’ comprising polite men and women concerned as much with
entertainment as learning (fol. 5v). In his lectures on rhetoric Hugh Blair (1718-1800)
explained that epistolary writing became ‘a distinct species of Composition’ when it

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76 Betty A. Schellenberg, “‘The Society of Agreeable and Worthy Companions’:
Bookishness and Manuscript Culture after 1750, in *Bookish Histories: Books, Literature,
and Commercial Modernity, 1700-1900*, ed. by Ian Ferris and Paul Keen (Basingstoke:
77 Unfortunately there is no register of visitors for this period to confirm this time and
date.
78 Wright, p.556. For instance, Gifford, the omnipresent and all-knowing guide to their
visit, has his name anonymised to the playful, if mildly sacrilegious, ‘G-d’.
was ‘conversation carried out upon paper’, and in the ‘Pleasing Recollection’ the representation of such conversation becomes the formal underpinning of the whole work. The letter is ‘a performance – an “act” in the theatrical sense’ that ‘through a variety of techniques, such as masking and impersonation’ devises ‘substitutes for gesture, vocal inflection, and physical context’. The world of the Museum visit is both reported and recreated in this text, its validity verified by a circle of women who had participated in the original event and who can witness it once more through Butler’s text.

Notions of polite conversation were thus central in framing Butler’s depiction of the British Museum. According to Herbert Davies, conversation was ‘the chief art of human life’ in the early eighteenth century. In ‘Of Essay Writing’ David Hume (1711-76) divided thought into two worlds: the ‘learned’ and the ‘conversible’. Whereas the ‘learned’ require ‘Leisure and Solitude’ to pursue the ‘more difficult Operations of the Mind’, the ‘conversible World’ joins ‘to a sociable Disposition, and a Taste of Pleasure, an Inclination to the easier and more gentle Exercises of the Understanding’. Such exercises could not be pursued alone, but required ‘the Company and Conversation of our Fellow-Creatures, to render them a proper Exercise for the Mind’, bringing ‘Mankind together in Society’. However, while the two worlds were distinct, they should not be opposed. For Hume conversation is defined as ‘a form of vernacular discourse, closely associated with the literary, that can save ordinary life from vacuity,

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but also properly socialise the scholarly world’. Hume is therefore happy to find that in the eighteenth century ‘Men of Letters’ are no longer ‘at a Distance from Mankind’, and ‘Men of the World’ borrow from books ‘their most agreeable Topics of Conversation’. This ideal alliance between the twin ‘learned’ and ‘conversible’ worlds became embodied in the establishment of the British Museum. When deciding on how to appoint the Under Librarian for the DNAP the trustees expressed a preference for ‘a person sufficiently skilled in the knowledge of the Natural and Artificial Curiosities, to shew and Explain them’. The implications of this were made even more explicit in the requirements for the Principal Librarian, who was expected to not only be ‘Studious and Learned’ but also to have made ‘the several divisions and parts of the Repository familiar to him’ so that he could ‘Converse with any persons of Learning & Curiosity on the matter of them’. The Principal Librarian was also expected to speak French and Latin so that ‘he will be able to correspond with almost all persons of Learning or distinction in any foreign Country, as well as converse with them at home’. Andrew Gifford, Butler’s guide during his visit, was particularly known for his conversational ability. One obituary described him as having a ‘talent to receive and communicate knowledge with all the ease of an unaffected politeness,’ making his ‘acquaintance among the nobility and gentry’ remarkably extensive.

Butler’s choice of drama as the genre for his ‘Pleasing Recollection’ is unsurprising: it is a medium particularly well suited to the representation of conversation. And yet in the generic claims he makes for the play, Butler appears to resist too close an identification with the established theatre, describing his work as ‘Nobly devoid of all scholastick Rules and freed from the Shackles of dramatick

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85 BL, Add. MS. 4449, fol. 83r.
86 BL, Add. MS. 4449, fol. 108. In recognition of this expectation, at one point in Butler’s play a ‘Gentilhomme Francois’ is heard to exclaim ‘Forte surprennante [sic] par ma Foi!’ (fol. 29’).
87 The Gentleman’s Magazine and Historical Chronicle, August 1784, p.595. Indeed, in the ‘Pleasing Recollection’ one visitor praises Gifford for exactly this attribute, exclaiming ‘Bless my soul how communicative the Gentleman is’ (fol. 12’).
Punctilio’ (fol. 4’). The ‘Pleasing Recollection’ was not to be read as if it were meant to be performed, instead it was closer to ‘closet drama’. Generally defined as a play ‘crafted for reading rather than for performing’, the eighteenth-century closet drama was typically associated with a mixture of leisure and learning: fostering an interest in both ‘advancing intellectual knowledge’ and ‘creating social ease’. In this regard its generic expectations were a neat fit with the expectations surrounding the institution of the British Museum. Both sought to bridge the ‘conversible’ and ‘learned’ worlds, affording entertainment and education in equal measure. Furthermore, in resisting the ‘Shackles of dramatick Punctilio’ the closet drama was freer to depict conversation without a narrative teleology, and was therefore able to adhere more closely to the ranging and leisurely exchange characteristic of a museum visit. Catherine Burroughs has argued that the generic identity of the Georgian closet drama was less determined by the fact of its performance than a desire to use ‘dramaturgical elements for a purpose that lies outside of the traditional stage’. In this sense Butler’s renunciation of stagecraft in favour of a formal emphasis on dialogue and the representation of polite conversation is typical of the genre. Furthermore, in titling the play ‘An Interlude of two acts’ Butler indicates that it is not meant in itself to be dramatic. Chambers defined ‘interlude’ in his *Cyclopædia* as ‘an Entertainment’ exhibited ‘between the Acts of a Play’, describing its function as:

> to amuse the Spectators while the Actors take breath, and shift their Dress; or to give time for changing the Scenes and Decorations. These *Interludes* usually consist of Songs, Dances, Feats of Activity, Consorts of Music, &c.

Butler’s interlude is not so much a drama as a diversion from drama, an entertainment that distracts through a variety of disconnected amusements. This appears particularly appropriate for the Museum visit, in which one visitor promises another ‘scenes,

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90 Chambers, ii, 399.
where “gazing Wonderment may have her Fill”, and the highest expectations must linger in Lassitude behind admiration, amazement, and surprize’ (fol. 9r). The promise of the Museum is novelty, curiosity, and incredulity; an interlude from the everyday world outside.

The interlude begins with Butler listing his *dramatis personae* by gender. The ‘Ladies’ include the loquacious ‘Matrona, Dorotheæa, Eliza, Annabella, Elizala’ as well as the unspeaking parts ‘Mrs. Rosewell, her family, Strangers’; while the men alongside ‘Dr. G-d’ are the eminently knowledgeable ‘Index’ (identified in a different hand as Butler) and ‘Strangers’. In the first scene the party gather in the courtyard to the Museum before climbing the stairs and arriving in the ‘anti Rooms’ in the second scene (fols 7r-9r). Once more we are confronted with a description of the vestibule. Index, our de facto guide, is quick to draw attention to the Lethieullier mummy, asking Matrona ‘Did you ever see an Egyptian Mummy, Madam?’ Matrona is dismayed, answering ‘Oh dear! No’, unexpectedly demonstrating a reluctance to address this shortcoming (fol. 11r). As Dr G-d enters the vestibule, Index explains the mummy assemblage, beginning with the coffin:

**INDEX** Nor I neither, Madam. But, There is the Case to put one in, if you chose it. Those hieroglyphical scrawls, that awkward stiffness, those vile Daubings, and a variety of uncouth *et ceteras*, may convince you of it being a genuine Egyptian Effort of art: – Pray Dr. G-d turn it round.

**ELIZALA** Turn? – How’s that, Index?

**INDEX** Nothing easier. Do you observe that small Spring-handle there? It is the easiest thing in the world, believe me, to turn round a dead – ay, or a living Mummy, if you may but find out, and touch and twirl the proper Spring – the ruling Passion, - or the ruling Foible – or whatever else you please to call it.‡

(I. 2. fols 11r-12r)

In the footnote to this passage Butler quotes Francis Bacon’s *Advancement of Learning* (1605) and Alexander Pope’s *Essay of Man* on ‘the strength of the Ruling passion, and the Necessity of attending to it, in our Commerce with Mankind’ (fol. 10r). The

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91 *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. by James Spedding and others, 14 vols (London: Longman and co., 1857-74) III (1859), 238, Butler probably had Pope’s ‘Epistle to
implication is that Matrona has attended to her own ‘Ruling passion’ in turning away from the mummy and its coffin: just as the technology of the mechanical display case turns the mummy to improve the visitor’s view of it, so the mummy itself becomes a mechanism of disgust that forces Matrona – the mother – to turn away, to obscure her view. Later when one of Matrona’s daughters wishes that ‘Mama could but look at’ the mummies interesting her, her sister explains ‘But you see, she seems much better employ’d, yonder, and there’s no seeing everything’ (fol. 13’). Later in the play, Index attempts to encourage the ladies to ‘take a view of the Books’, including such illustrious items as ‘a most beautiful scroll of the Thorah’ and an edition of Pindar’s odes ‘finely copied by the pen only’ (fols 16'-17’). However, on breaking from his reverie Index discovers that ‘Not a soul stays to hear’ his discourse, instead Anabella is at the window amazed at the ‘very clever’ gardens of the Museum and gazing out towards Highgate and Hampstead to the north. As with so many visitors before them, Index’s companions are far less interested in manuscripts than the more visually appealing garden and landscape. The interests of visitors frame their visits. The economy of attention of the two-hour visit was a central contributing factor to the dialectic of the visible and the obscure, and in the ‘Pleasing Recollection’ it is readily apparent how this distribution of attention affected the construction of the Museum for visitors.

In the vestibule the disgust that prompted Matrona to refuse her sight prompts in Index and her daughters a fixed fascination, thematically underpinning Index’s description of the coffin. This ‘mixture of distaste and astonishment’ was a regular feature of eighteenth-century antiquarian responses to Egypt as a land of ‘sacred crocodiles’.92 James Kennedy – the cataloguer of Henry Herbert’s (1734-1794) country seat of Wilton House in Salisbury – plainly asserted distaste in his description of antiquities inscribed with hieroglyphs in the stately home: ‘the Hieroglyphics


wherewith they are loaded, at present are unintelligible, or if they were known, could communicate nothing worthy attention’. And yet these hieroglyphics were, precisely, worthy of attention while on display in Herbert’s collection. The antiquarian Bernard de Montfaucon (1655-1741) in his *L’antiquité expliquée* was similarly preoccupied with denigrating Egypt even as he drew the reader’s attention to it. Though acknowledging the ‘common sentiment in antiquity’ that the Greeks ‘had taken their gods from the Egyptians’, and that on this basis ‘some believed that we should begin that part which concerned religion with the divinities of Egypt’, he declined to do so. Montfaucon decided it was preferable ‘to begin with that which is most well-known and interesting’, finding the Egyptian gods ‘too bizarre a form to be placed at the head of the Antiquities’ and preferring to place them in the second part of the work alongside ‘the other barbarous nations’. Yet this feeling of ambivalence and revulsion towards the traces of Egypt was in no small part responsible for the increase in interest over the course of the eighteenth century. Despite Montfaucon’s dismissiveness, *L’antiquité expliquée* was responsible for making the traces of Egyptian civilisation increasingly visible ‘not only intellectually but also in the literal sense of the word’. Its wide dissemination and important place in antiquarian culture established Egyptian antiquities as part of the established visual record as it was shared across Europe, prompting an increase in interest and documentation by other antiquarians. Index is led to describe the decoration on the coffin in terms resonant with the ‘bizarre forms’ in Montfaucon’s denigration of the Egyptian deities. The ‘genuine effort’ of Egyptian art is paradoxically characterised by its artificiality, its ‘awkward stiffness’ and ‘vile Daubings’. The reader is led to regard something disregarded, to attend to objects characterised by their unworthiness. The description of the visual material of the Museum is characterised by the visitor’s subjective response: what is seen is always intimately connected to who is seeing.

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95 Assman, p.432.
These aesthetic associations extend in the ‘Pleasing Recollection’ to other Egyptian objects elsewhere in the collection. Thomas Ford Hill (1753–95), an antiquary who spent much time studying hieroglyphs, apparently unhappy with his understanding of the distinction between the cobra and viper signs in the script, chose to examine ‘the specimen conserved in spirit in a jar at the British Museum’ in order to supplement ‘classical descriptions’.96 Index makes a point of connecting Egyptian animalia with art, leading the party into a room full of ‘Gorgons and Hydars, & chimeras dire’, grotesque figures not unlike those on the coffin (fol. 42r). When the ladies finally confront these monsters they start back in horror while Dr G-d reassuringly explains ‘O don’t be frighted: Tis a crocodile, Ladies, from the River Indus Nile in Egypt, formidable only in appearance I assure you’ (fol. 43r). The misidentification of the crocodile as Egyptian in origin associates it with the ‘sacred crocodiles’ that so unsettled eighteenth-century perceptions of Egyptian theology. The technology of the Museum, designed to increase the visibility of objects, serves to confirm them as things that in turn resist and entice sight, repulsing attempts at observation while drawing increasing attention through a proliferation of associations. It is in this way that the hieroglyphs on the coffin are both dismissed as nothing more than ‘scrawls’ – illegible or primitive text whose identification prompts a refusal to interpret – while also proving themselves indisputably alluring to visitors. Thus alien objects do not always provoke alienation. While Matrona flees the coffin with discomfort, across the room her daughters observe two other mummies with something approaching familiarity:

ANNABELLA  Good luck! Betsey, Here are two more of those Mummy-Things: I fancy.
ELIZA  Yes, and observe how smug and funny they look at each other! I protest they move to the very Tune of ‘Old Darby, & Joan by his side’.

(I. 2. fols 12r-13r)

In this case fascination with Egyptian artefacts facilitates their interpretation through popular culture. ‘Old Darby, with Joan by his side’ was a line describing a married couple in ‘The Joys of Love never forgot: A Song’, a poem published in 1735 and incredibly popular throughout the period. Projected onto the mummies is the image of comfortable eighteenth-century married life: far from the objects of Matrona’s disgust, they are given life and transformed into an image of Matroa and her husband. Museum and object are represented as encouraging interpretation that figures them as at once alien and familiar: they draw from the visitor divergent, even contradictory, attempts at illumination by way of association.

In another corner of the vestibule a stranger discovers some coral, crying out ‘A Brain-stone, Doctor!’ to Gifford, who then explains that ‘If you pull off your dura Mater, and your pia-Mater, and then draw gently aside your Pericranion; you will find the superficies of your Skull, for all the World, like this Brain-stone’ (fol. 12r). The ‘brainstone’, a piece of coral said to resemble the brain, is described in such a way that its anatomical associations resonate with the mummy across the room. This association again returns at the end of the scene when Dr G-d asks them to leave the vestibule and enter the DNAP proper. The ladies are disappointed by this ‘hurrying’, complaining that ‘I have hardly indulged both eyes yet’, but Index explains that it is for the best ‘since the Dwelling long upon such monstrously wonderful objects, might otherwise too strongly affect the tender pia-mater, or the pericranion, or the Eyes, or the Imagination’ (fol. 14r). From mummy to coral, to visitor, echoes resonate through the vestibule and associations transfer from one object to another.

The mummy and attendant artefacts, along with the other objects in the vestibule, are, finally, in danger of overwhelming the vision (both inward and outward) of the party with their monstrous wonder. Sight – the principal sense with which visitors were meant to engage with the Museum – is threatened with too much material, the imagination is in danger of being overwhelmed. The ‘young Ladies’ reach the limit of their tour through such an over-exhaustion of vision, with Index

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discovering them towards the end ‘tired of seeing-sights, and seated, and silent!’ (fol. 56’). While Index carries on into the base story, the ladies retire to the ‘Prospect House’ for tea, a public house in Islington ironically best known for its impressive views of the city, popular spectacles and sociable setting (fol. 69’). They have seen and said enough, and still are ready to see and say more.

The limit of the Museum in the ‘Pleasing Recollection’ is, finally, defined by the limits of the visitors’ conversation and attention. As fascination gives way to inattention, vocalisation to silence, the Museum disappears from the reader’s eyes and the *dramatis personae* bid ‘adieu! adieu! adieu!’ (fol. 69’). What is visible or what is obscure in Butler’s description is thus identical to what is observed and what is ignored, what is the topic of conversation and what is left unsaid. In the vestibule objects constantly allude to, contradict, or interpret one another, becoming subjects or citizens of Hume’s ‘conversible world’ insofar as they are spoken about. In the case of the mummy assemblage, this leads to a competition between different modes of attention – and inattention – that seek to make sense of the role of Egypt and its antiquities in the organisation of the Museum and in the experience of the visitor: disgust, as a mode of engagement, becomes as important in giving prominence to an object as beauty.

**V. Conclusion: Verbal indications of the visible**

In focusing on the place of Egypt in early descriptions of the DNAP I have made explicit the extent to which the dialectic of illumination and obscurity animated early experiences of the British Museum. The British Museum was understood as a necessarily visual institution in the period, and visitors were expected to experience its collections visually. Visits were framed by an economy of attention in which what constituted the Museum was informed by what was seen, what could be seen, and how it could be seen. Early publications and texts describing the Museum had to respond to this economy of attention, providing accounts that were predicated on the

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98 *Public Advertiser*, 24 April 1767.
primacy of sight while limited to the reproduction of the unseen visible. These accounts were equally subject to the limits set by the Museum’s economy of attention, framing what they described around such limitations. In so doing, they themselves participated in the selection and deselection, the placement and replacement, display and concealment, highlighting and obscuring of objects within the British Museum. As well as, in Eric Gidal’s words, guiding, supplementing, and revising ‘in memory the raw experience of the collections’, guides constituted those collections both for visitors with immediate access to the Museum, and readers accessing the Museum through its descriptions. In each of the cases I have examined, the description of objects in the collection was also implicitly a description of what constituted the Museum in toto. Guidebooks were therefore not so much exhaustive accounts of items in the collection, as apparatuses that aimed at framing the limits of the visible, ‘inculcating general ideas, creating general sensations – all within a short time period’, and propagating ‘a generalised idea of the new and unknown world’ of the Museum. Yet in attempting to represent an avowedly visual experience in a non-visual medium, each author inevitably confronted a contradiction between their modes and objects of representation. How was the experience of the ‘vile Daubings’ of the mummy assemblage – objects read most frequently as revolting or illegible – to be represented in text? Each guidebook sought different answers to this question, mobilising genre, readerly expectations, and deictic gestures to manage this resistance of the visible. Egypt was finally visible in the text through a mediation of precisely the alien, exotic, and illegible nature of both object and institution: through a representation of this resistance of the visible and its powerful allure in the British Museum.

Chapter 2

‘Drawings, Prints, and Demonstrations’: Representing knowledge in Jan and Andrew van Rymsdyk’s *Museum Britannicum*

To diffuse the eighteenth-century museum and its artefacts in print illustrations – William M. Ivins’s ‘exactly repeatable pictorial statements’ – required the development of new representational methodologies; protocols by which institutions and objects that were in one sense novel could be rendered both visible and knowable.¹ Such new protocols, however, could not be cut from whole cloth. Just as the first public museums were often housed in former palaces, stately homes, and government buildings; and just as the first museum objects were bequests, appropriations, or purchases; so these visual rhetorics and methodologies did not emerge *ex nihilo*, but rather came from historically situated practices of representation and more established print cultures. That is, the earliest images of museums and their objects were epistemological and aesthetic hybrids, born of a variety of discourses and methods. In the previous chapter I began to develop an account of the role of *textual* representations of the British Museum’s early collection in the development of its dialectic of illumination and obscurity, and to chart the relationship between this dialectic and the different strategies of display employed in the Department of Natural and Artificial Productions (DNAP). In this chapter I will further develop this account in relation to the British Museum’s visual representation in print. To do this, I will investigate the production of images for Jan and Andreas van Rymsdyk’s illustrated description of a selection of objects from the British Museum, titled *Museum Britannicum* (1778).

¹ William M. Ivins, Jr., *Prints and Visual Communication* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), p.2. For Ivins ‘the importance of being able exactly to repeat pictorial statements is undoubtedly greater for science, technology, and general information than it is for art’; in this chapter I will attempt to draw out some of the implications of this epistemological claim for prints and printmaking.
Though not the first publication to offer a description of the British Museum, the *MB* stands out as the first illustrated work to do so. This chapter will unpack the concrete practices that contributed to the Rymsdyks’ ordering of images around the ‘natural and artificial productions’ housed in the British Museum. Far from being an externally imposed optic, this relationship between image, object and institution was an avowed concern of the *MB*. Originally subtitled – with a nod to both its visual focus and its primary subject – an ‘Exhibition of a great variety of Antiquities and Natural Curiosities’, the *MB* catalogued a miscellany of objects from the ever-expanding collection of the early British Museum, and was produced with an explicit focus on exploring the epistemological and aesthetic potential of visual representations of the collection. In doing this, Rymsdyk involved himself in both the theoretical and practical problems of representation, marshalling his knowledge of the art world and medical illustration, as well as his experience as a collector of art and a visitor to the British Museum, in order to produce a publication that might adequately represent and produce such an ‘Exhibition’.

To do so, Rymsdyk had to establish a relationship between text and image. Setting out in the preface to describe his programme, Jan Van Rymsdyk unequivocally delineates an object that is hyper-visual, marginalising the capacities of text to convey information to the reader, in favour of the *MB*’s ‘Engraved Figures’:

Now as this Work is to Consist chiefly of Figures, there is no need I think of a great deal of Writing. Engraved Figures accompanied with a few Words, are preferable to those bulky Works of Authors, where there are but a few bad Figures, or perhaps none, for a Description of a Figure, in writing, will never depict so strong an Idea to the Mind, as a true Representation of an Object in Drawing, let the Work be ever so well explained, disposed, link’d, or hung together; either by the golden Tongue of Homer or Cicero.²

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² John and Andrew van Rymsdyk, *Museum Britannicum, being an Exhibition of a great variety of Antiquities and Natural Curiosities, Belonging to that Noble and Magnificent Cabinet, the British Museum* (London: the authors, 1778), p.xi. All subsequent quotations in the body of this chapter will be taken from this edition.
The central operation unfolding across the work, according to this account, was the capacity of the image to ‘depict [...] an Idea to the Mind, as a true Representation of an Object’. According to Rymsdyk, no matter how elaborate, a text – whether ‘explained, disposed, link’d, or hung together’ – was generally inadequate to ‘an Object in drawing’. The image was a superior arbiter, mediating between the ideas of the mind and the objects of the collection with clarity and without need for the relatively imperfect support of description. At the high-water mark of this argument, Rymsdyk even denigrates the descriptive capacities of ‘the golden Tongue of Homer’ in relation to the image. For eighteenth-century rhetorical treatises the figure of Homer embodied a ‘privileged and prestigious’ place as the chief model for descriptive writing; his denigration therefore indicated a flagrant and combative attempt to subjugate the entire apparatus of verbal description to that of the engraved image: the blind poet could not compare to the perspicacious artist. Images acquired a positive epistemological content that was quite autonomous from any relationship with a textual apparatus: that is, images might claim to know something, to carry ideas, not only through the mediation of a written description, but in and of themselves. In this chapter I will offer an account of this positive epistemological content of the museum illustration.

For the production of ‘Engraved Figures’ illustrating the objects of a museum to be a plausible endeavour, an institution (the museum) was required through which these representations could be validated. The MB was necessarily predicated on the British Museum. However, alongside such institutional validation, the illustrations that composed Rymsdyk’s work also required a print culture to make sense of them both in terms of genre and market. The first section of this chapter will therefore examine the institutional and cultural frameworks that made a work such as the MB conceivable, and that lent themselves to the production of images that could hold a claim to positive epistemological content, to being ‘true Representations’.

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The next section will examine the claim in the MB that images might constitute ‘true Representations’, making sense of the theoretical genealogies and practical considerations that went into the production of Rymsdýk’s illustrations. The absolute partisanship for the image expressed above by Rymsdýk will therefore undergo closer examination. In *Eye Witness*, Sam Smiles describes this passage as ‘the nub of the empiricism that motivates [Rymsdýk’s] new doctrine: seeing is a primary activity, engendering a comprehensive view of the object which no text can supply’. While it may be true, as Smiles persuasively asserts, that ‘Rymsdýk declares this position without a flicker of doubt’, it is important to disentangle the initial declarative confidence of the author from the molecular organisation and operation of the publication’s images: seeing is not identical to viewing, object is not identical to illustration. Though Rymsdýk is assuredly a partisan of the visual both in presentation and *representation*, these two terms are never equivalent: an illustration is not simply a reiteration of an object. If images had a positive epistemological content in the MB – if they could be ‘true’ – it was not simply due to the fact of their existence as visual objects, but had to be a product of the artist’s skill, guaranteed by protocols whose sovereignty both pre-dated and extended beyond its pages. ‘True representation’ is no pleonasm; instead, it hints at the precarious epistemological status of the engraved image, and the difficulty with which Rymsdýk envisaged its passage from the object towards truth or knowledge. For Rymsdýk, the positive epistemological content of images was not in their very nature, but the result of the refinement of a practice, of the skill and care taken in the (re)production of the figurative object.

In the final section I will reconsider the relationship between image and text in the MB. Though Rymsdýk clearly gives primacy to the image, it is worth considering its limits, and the ways in which it is framed by recourse to the word. Smiles explains that in the MB ‘seeing’ offers a ‘comprehensive view of the object’ that ‘no text can supply’; I will therefore reverse this question and ask in turn what the image might not be able to supply, and where the marginalised text reasserts or reinserts itself. Rymsdýk’s

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claim for the positive epistemological content of the image against the imperfection of the text is rendered insecure by the structure and shape of the publication itself. If care in practice is the guarantee of his visual epistemology, then we must ask how this operated in practice. Though his ‘new doctrine’ of visual supremacy is expressed ‘without a flicker of a doubt’, the necessity of the text still haunts Rymsdyk’s visual epistemology. The ‘Engraved Figures’ still required some supplement, still eventually needed to be ‘accompanied with a few Words’. It is from the point of view of these ‘few Words’ that I will begin to pose the question of the limits of Rymsdyk’s visual epistemology of the museum.

I. British Museum and Museum Britannicum: Framing the visual institution in publication

In order to understand the relationship between the MB and the British Museum it is important to pay attention to the genesis of the work and the process that led to its publication. The manner in which the MB represented the British Museum had a significant impact not only on the form taken by the Museum within its pages, but also on the form of the publication itself. A proper account of the mediation of the institution by the publication will therefore pay attention to all three terms: to Museum, Museum, and form.

Jan Van Rymsdyk reported that he first conceived of the MB six years prior to its publication, in 1772. Many years before that, the Museum was already a personal and professional obsession for Rymsdyk:

When first the Museum opened for the good of the Public, it elevated my Mind with great Conceptions; nothing would have made me more happy than Drawing and Studying these Curiosities, having always had a great Veneration and Taste from my Youth, for all manner of Learning, being like a Luxurious Banquet, to me indeed the most voluptuous Entertainment. I had long before made a Sketch, and List of curious Objects, which, when I should be admitted, I intended to draw. (pp. ii-iii)
According to this account, from the earliest Rymsdyk was attuned to the British Museum as an institution that encouraged a visual response from its visitors. Just as the ‘true Representation of an Object’ was said to transmit a ‘strong [...] Idea to the Mind, so the ‘Public’ space of the museum elevates the ‘Mind with great Conceptions’ that were by implication visual, provoking in the artist a desire to make ‘a Sketch, and List of curious Objects’ that he intended to draw. Rymsdyk conceptualised publication and institution as analogous in the manner in which they circulated objects and ideas by way of the – mental or printed – image. When over a decade later he came to choose objects to represent in the MB itself, Rymsdyk was therefore guided by a desire to visually reproduce the ‘Luxurious Banquet’ of ‘Curiosities’, of ‘Learning’ and of ‘Entertainment’ that the Museum had been for him: illustrated Museum was to reproduce visual Museum. Thus, the objects that ended up in the MB are largely the most popular items in the collection, items that featured frequently in other publications and the private accounts of visitors from the period.

Rymsdyk was given access to the Reading Room on 16 July 1772, with permission to draw birds and other exhibits. This initial visit was apparently insufficient, since he is again recorded as being admitted to the Reading Room on 17 February 1774. Rather than single dates of entrance, these are records of bi-annual periods of admission, and given the detail and care in his drafts, it is likely that he spent considerable time in the Reading Room over this period. On these visits he was often accompanied by his son Andrew, who wholly drew or assisted in drawing around a third of the MB’s plates. Andrew also drew the ‘Title Plate from Nature’: a ‘North East View of the British Museum’, which presented a small picturesque image of Montagu House, its perimeter wall, and gardens (Plate V).

By September 1775 this initial stage of drawing illustrations was apparently complete, with Rymsdyk advertising for ‘Engravers who understand to imitate chalk drawings’:

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5 BL, Add. MS 45869, ‘Persons admitted to Reading Room Jan 12th 1762 to March 2d 1781’.
however, it would be another three or more years before publication. The title page to the first edition of the MB is dated 1778, but a series of adverts placed in the London press by Rymsdyk across that year indicate that the conclusion to this project did not come as soon as desired. The work was ‘In the Press, and with as great dispatch as the nature of the work can admit of’ as early as 21 April, with a price of three and a half guineas and a request for subscriptions, but it was not until the following January that it became available for collection. When it eventually did come out in print on 26 January 1779 it did so under the following terms:

MUSEUM BRITANNICUM, being Part of the General Contents of the Antiquities and natural Curiosities of the noble and magnificent Cabinet, the BRITISH MUSEUM: Illustrated by Thirty curious Prints, besides Vignettes; being a Composition of the most beautiful and most interesting Subjects, some of which have never been published; engraved after the original Design from Nature, other Objects, and with distinct Explanations of each Figure.

The title here bears consideration. Whereas previous publications had always been named ‘guides to’, ‘views of’, ‘tours of’ or ‘letters on’ to mark their generic relation to the British Museum, the MB was the first to adopt the name of that institution directly. One apparent source for this decision would be the stamp used to mark items admitted to the Department of Printed Books, which read either ‘MUSEUM BRITANNICUM’ or ‘MVSEVM BRITANNICVM’. These stamps were in use between 1753 and 1836 and, given Rymsdyk’s claims to have regularly consulted the Reading Room, he would have been very familiar with them. Adopting such a title involved claiming both the authority of the Museum and a place in its library. However, quite apart from this institutional gesture, titling a publication ‘museum’ in this period had its own distinct print genealogies, which impacted on the cultural significance of the publication and its images.

7 Morning Post and Daily Advertiser, 21 April 1778; 14 May 1778.
8 Public Advertiser, 26 January 1779.
Throughout the mid- and late-eighteenth century a variety of publications staked a claim to the title of ‘museum’ according to relatively discrete generic criteria. It is in these various contexts that the MB’s claim to being a ‘museum’ in print sits. The earliest of these were instructional miscellanies, such as A Museum for Young Gentlemen and Ladies: or, A Private Tutor for Little Masters and Misses (1751) and The Polite Instructor; or, Youth’s Museum (1761). A ‘catch-all work’, the Museum for Young Gentlemen and Ladies saw itself as an aid for ‘governesses and tutors in the home setting’, constituted from a range of articles on themes from ‘Directions for reading with eloquence and propriety’ to the dying words of great men. By 1778 and the publication of the MB, the Museum for Young Gentlemen and Ladies had run to nine editions, and by the end of the century it had reached sixteen. In this context the MB would have been expected to have some instructional force, its images capable of edification and illumination.

Alongside these instructional museums, magazines also began to appear in the 1760s with the title ‘museum’. An early example was The Museum in whose second edition Horace Walpole had proposed his idea of ‘a Museum’ as ‘an Hospital for every Thing that is singular’, either as a result of having ‘escaped the Rage of Time; from any natural Oddness in itself’, or from being ‘so insignificant’ that nobody thought ‘to produce any more of the same Sort’ (an apposite description of the MB itself). Metropolitan periodicals included specialist titles such as the Museum Rusticum et Commerciale: or, Select Papers on Agriculture, Commerce, Arts, and Manufactures (1766) and The Medical Museum (1763-64), as well as broader titles such as The Gentleman’s Museum (1763). While John Wilkes in London was printing the London Museum of Politics, Miscellanies, and Literature (1770), provincial towns were remarkable for the number of miscellaneous periodical ‘museums’ they also had on offer: there was The Coventry Museum, or Universal Entertainer (1764-65), the Oxford

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10 ‘Descartes’, “A Scheme for raising a large Sum of Money for the Use of the Government, by laying a Tax on Message-Cards and Notes’, The Museum: Or, the Literary and Historical Register, 12 April 1746, pp.46-47.
Magazine: or University Museum (1770); Birmingham offered The British Museum: or Universal Register of Literature, Politics, and Poetry (1771); Manchester in turn provided The Manchester and Liverpool Museum (1779); Berwick-Upon-Tweed The Berwick Museum, or, Monthly Literary Intelligencer (1785-87); and Aberdeen had The Christian’s Theological Museum (1790). These periodicals included anything from republications of articles that had already appeared elsewhere, to poetry, translations, discussions of local history, and reflections on local medical cases. All appeared within the period of roughly two decades, indicating a thickening of the concept of the ‘museum’ as an entertaining or instructive miscellany of items, synonymous with a magazine or repository in both the literary and literal senses of these words. The conceptual thickening in popular literary culture during the 1760s is most likely closely related to the opening of the British Museum in 1759, and the place held by the Museum in the cultural imaginary as the principal metropolitan centre of public learning and curiosity, as well as the site of an unprecedented diversity of objects, books, and manuscripts (see Chapter 1). Such novelty and importance in the capital demanded a mirroring, if only in print, across the new and expanding urban centres of the industrialising Midlands and North. The great and resolutely eclectic selection of objects both described and depicted in the MB thus in turn engaged the generic conventions of the periodical ‘museum’.

As we saw in the last chapter and continue to see in this one, ‘museum’ as a concept did not by any means necessarily imply systematicity or coherence of either purpose or object; in fact, this diversity of objects is what first led to its use as a moniker for the various sorts of publication described above. The general reader’s familiarity both with such miscellanies – and, indeed, museums – with their variety of subjects, might feasibly have found reflection in that diversity of objects selected by Rymsdyk. Rymsdyk himself articulated just this refusal of generic or disciplinary limitation, claiming to have resisted the urging of ‘Ladies and Gentlemen’ who wished ‘my work had consisted of Botany, others of Birds, Butterflies, or Quadrupeds, some again of Fish Shells and Fossils, a few wanted them all Artificial, &c.’ Instead, Rymsdyk ‘came to a Resolution to chuse an Intermixture’. This assertion of ‘intermixture’, while echoing the diversity of objects in the DNAP, also made sense according to
contemporary generic criteria applied to periodical and instructional museums, ensuring there is something that might ‘please every body’ (pp. iii-iv).

In England ‘museum’ might also be applied to auction catalogues of private collections. This category of ‘museum’ includes the *Museum Bakerianum* (1775) which catalogued the ‘elegant cabinet of natural and artificial rarities’ of the English naturalist Henry Baker (1698-1774), and the *Museum Falconarianum* (1778), a catalogue of ‘the Entire and Capital Museum of Anatomical Preparations, And other subjects of Natural History’ owned by Magnus Falconar (1721-1778). A reader coming to the *MB* would have been unsurprised to find within its pages a list of objects. However, while partially engaging the notion of the catalogue ‘museum’, this list is intensely truncated, focusing only on a small assortment of objects. Though sharing certain characteristics with catalogue ‘museums’ such as the *Museum Bakerianum*, the *MB* is selective rather than comprehensive in its procedure. While certainly concerned with offering an account of the British Museum, Rymsdyk does so not by the exhaustion of the catalogue ‘museums’ (or, indeed, museum catalogues), but instead through the principle of exemplification, choosing a few notable objects to indicate the breadth and diversity of its collection.

Finally, alongside these more popular publications appeared scholarly – frequently antiquarian – works titled ‘museum’, which more often supplied an educated European market. They were generally more coherent in topic, offering an exhaustive account of either a particular collection, or a particular subject matter and – of special note with regards to the *MB* – tended to be both titled and written in Latin. Works such as the *Museum Meadianum* (London, 1755), the *Museum Mullianum* (Amsterdam, 1755), and the *Museum Mazzuchellianum* (Venice, 1761-63) all offered catalogues of private numismatic collections (though only the last of these was illustrated). Whereas the eclectic dynamic of the *MB*’s subject matter indicated a certain relation to the more popular periodical ‘museum’ literature of the day, the

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11 None of these genres of publication particularly prioritised the inclusion of printed images, and those few that did were generally limited to recycled woodcuts and decorative vignettes.
Latinisation of the name of ‘the noble and magnificent Cabinet’ also served to identify it with both the continental and local traditions of scholarly ‘museum’. The Latin title set it in an identifiable cosmopolitan publishing context that traded in the virtues of antiquarian scholarship and erudition. These virtues were emphasised by Rymsdyk in his profuse references drawn from the ‘Library of the British Museum’ and in the way in which he emphasised this erudition to his readers.

In titling the work in Latin, Rymsdyk also rendered an explicit distinction between the actual Museum and his publication. While invoking the claim of relationship to the British Museum as the overarching organising principle running through its pages, the MB also becomes identified through the copula ‘being’ with a ‘Part of the General Contents of the Antiquities and natural Curiosities’: Museum and Museum are not identical, with the latter employing its own selection criteria. Firstly, two of the three Departments of the Museum are excluded entirely: Printed Books and Manuscripts are absent from the illustrations and accompanying text, each readmitted only by way of reference.12 Secondly, the MB also excluded from its selection the residual ‘Part’ of the DNAP that is not depicted or described. The thirty plates of the MB offer only a fraction of the objects available to the visitor, and therefore require that the reader draw some distinction between publication and institution. Indeed, the MB even depicted objects not to be found in Montagu House at all: the third figure on Plate II depicts an oriental pearl resembling a bunch of grapes set in vine-leaves. The pearl was not part of the collection but rather the property of Arthur Chichester, 5th Earl of Donegall (1739-1799), and it was through his assistance that Rymsdyk was able to draw it (p. 5). The act of naming after is also an act of renaming and an act of naming differently: the title of the MB not only referred to an object that it claimed to represent, but also suggested that the publication might too hold some independent claim to the title of ‘museum’.

12 As we saw in the previous chapter, this exclusion mirrors the preference of the large part of visitors to the Museum, whose lack of interest in printed books and manuscripts led to changes to the rules of admission.
The history of the thirty illustrative plates also engaged a claim to the title of ‘museum’. We have already seen that the process by which institution was represented in publication was by no means transparent or free of the traces and transformations inherent in the application of a particular medium of representation. Nor was this any less the case in the relationship between object and illustration. Such a relationship can never be identical: illustration represents object, with all the complications that arise from the act of representing. While Rymsdyk made a claim for the ‘truth’ of his representations, he was aware that images had an independence that could challenge the representational cohesiveness of his publication. The MB therefore required a coherent programme for its images that could institute their collective claim to a positive epistemological content: readers had to be initiated into an understanding of the images and their relationship to the Museum. The 1779 advert thus continues by informing the reader that the publication will comprise ‘Thirty curious Prints besides Vignettes, being a composition of the most beautiful and Interesting subjects, some of which have never been published’ and 104 folio pages. The MB’s hand-coloured plates printed on ‘fine French colombia [sic]’ were bound into the volume alongside accompanying descriptions of its figures on ‘the best English paper’. At this time a technical and commercial shift was happening in the European paper market. French laid paper had long been viewed as the best in quality; however, new developments in wove paper in England were beginning to shift this pre-eminence. Rymsdyk’s glorying in the quality of his French paper (‘Grand Colombier’ being one of the official sizes of French paper regulated since 1741 by an Arrêt de Roi), before assuring his readers that his English paper was ‘the best’ thus constitutes a double affirmation as to the quality of the publication. Price and paper quality worked together to frame the MB as a particularly refined object: not only the account of a collection, but also an appropriate object for a collector.

Though clearly marshalled to justify the expense and importance of the MB, the thirty prints had a publication history that was inconsistently bound up with that of

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the text; in fact, book and prints were subject to relative disentanglement at particular points in the production process. The plates and prints were completed well before the body text had been finalised. Nearly a year before the publication became available, Rymsdyk had advertised the opportunity to view ‘the original drawings, and all the prints, &c.’ at ‘Mr Irwin’s, Jeweller, No. 4, Porter-street, Newport-market’, a street in Covent Garden heavily associated with Goldsmiths and Jewellers.\(^\text{14}\) The prints and drawings were to form an exhibition for curious customers as yet unsure whether they were willing to pay the two-guinea subscription. Part advertising opportunity, part assurance of quality, this exhibition indicated that the images themselves were a valuable object of contemplation and possession. Images were again here afforded a certain autonomy from text: they were to be seen, valued, and understood both on their own terms and as part of a coherent display. The appeal to the autonomous aesthetic and epistemological value of the images was further reinforced by the statement that some of the ‘most beautiful and Interesting subjects’ of the prints and vignettes ‘have never before been published’. In the circulation of objects, prints, and publications around the British Museum, the MB claimed for its images a unique place.

The question of distinction between object and representation was also here rendered more uncertain and diffuse in its transmission of the ‘Idea to the Mind’. These objects were initiated into the circulation of knowledge around the Museum for the first time not by way of but as the ‘true Representation’; objects that had until then rested more or less obscured in the Museum's quiet galleries were for the first time brought into a virtual relation with their companions in print insofar as they were, precisely, \textit{virtual} reproductions. Thus, these companions were not only those sat beside them on the shelves of Montagu House, but also by implication the entire field of objects held in the private collections and public museums of Europe, and reproduced in print.

Circulating through the various mediations of the eighteenth-century publishing industry, these objects entered into and enacted a community founded on the principle that their virtual appearance inaugurated both a new epistemology and a new relationship between representation and institution.

\(^{14}\) \textit{Morning Post and Daily Advertiser}, 21 April 1778; 14 May 1778.
The terms of Rymsdyk’s largely typical offer of thanks to the Trustees of the British Museum hinted at such a relationship. Rymsdyk stated that ‘if the Trustees of the British Museum shall think my Figures, or Demonstrations, any way Subservient to their Designs, it may stimulate my Industry’ (p. xii). Publication is actively integrated into the purposes and activities of the Museum, its ‘Designs’; the ‘Industry’ of the artist upon the museum’s objects produces both ‘Figures’ and ‘Demonstrations’, images and text that had the capacity to institute knowledge. As well as a prized object for the discerning collector, the MB was therefore also a necessary addition to the library of those committed to the production and circulation of knowledge within, through, or outside of the eighteenth-century museum. As the body of a separate exhibition of objects ‘never before [...] published’ at ‘Mr Irwin’s, Jeweller’ these prints, ironically, decentred the Museum from itself as the location of knowledge, and re-centred themselves as the place in which the knowledge of the museum was to be figured or demonstrated.

Exhibited with a specific focus on the epistemological and aesthetic qualities of its illustrations, the MB was thus also a museum in the sense of a museum of fine images, ‘engraved after the original designs from nature, [and] other objects’. That Rymsdyk might have thought of this collection of images as a museum is plausible considering his history as a collector of Old Master drawings. Though far from wealthy, and often relatively impoverished, Rymsdyk appears to have spent much of his life forming an art collection of more than thirty drawings that included Italian, Flemish and Dutch artists, with a particular interest in Rembrandt. Though a more modest collection than that formed by many other artist-collectors in the period, the drawings collected by Rymsdyk are still identified with the grandiose autograph inscription ‘Rymsdyk’s Museum’ found variously on the mount, the verso, and even the recto of drawings.15 While it is difficult to confirm exactly what Rymsdyk intended by such a title, it is notable that he began forming his collection around the late 1750s and early 1760s, just as the British Museum first opened its doors (and just as his self-attested

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15 Pellegrino Tibaldi, *Four Grotesque Masques (Mascarons)*, 1547-1549, pen and brown ink on blue paper, 211 x 173 mm, Morgan Library, New York.
fascination with the Museum began). He was also familiar with other collectors – such as his employer William Hunter (1718-83) – whose collections would go on to form museums themselves. Though probably a private collection stored in his library or study, ‘Rymsdyk’s Museum’ was carefully mounted, and drawings often had a framing border of gold applied around their perimeter, with information about the artist or school inscribed on their versos or mounts.\(^\text{16}\) It is also not implausible that, as a practising portraitist and artist, Rymsdyk may have at certain points in his career put his collection on display, either as a lure for clients, or a demonstration of his artistic expertise. In any case, the collection of drawings was thought of as a museum by Rymdsyk, and Rymsdyk worked to produce an apparatus around it that emphasised exactly this virtual institution.

That the identification of the \textit{MB} as a ‘museum’ might also depend to some extent on its prints as \textit{prints} therefore gains plausibility in such a context. It was not only the items found in the DNAP that were curiosities, but also the images drawn from them, the ‘curious Prints’ identified in Rymsdyk’s advertisement. The \textit{MB} addressed a readership who paid attention to the engravings not only as the unremarked transmitters of information about objects in the British Museum, but as valuable ‘artificial productions’ themselves. The \textit{MB} was also a museum insofar as it furnished its purchaser with a valuable collection of images that bore repeated study and display, forming a coherent ‘Exhibition’ in its own right.

The \textit{MB}’s use of the constellation of concepts constituting the eighteenth-century museum is more complicated than a simple parasitical or reflective relationship to an ontological ground. While certainly deeply bound to the British Museum as its impetus and guiding logic, the \textit{MB} was also concerned with the publishing culture of the ‘museum’, with the procedures and claims of a relatively new and underdetermined institution, and with a culture of collection and display that predated and extended beyond the British Museum. Importantly, it also concerned

itself with the organisation and display of prints, the question of what knowledge might be produced through such a reproductive medium, and how such knowledge might be limited, amplified or transformed in its diffusion.

II. ‘Theorical and Practical Treasures’: protocols of image production

The question of the relationship between knowledge and image was a persistent one in the eighteenth century. Far from an eccentric concern, it formed a topic of serious discussion not only for engravers concerned with the possibilities and the limits of their craft, but for artists and illustrators debating the inherence of ‘truth’ in representations, and for natural philosophers and medical professionals preoccupied with the distinct potential for engraved images to convey information. Rymsdyk’s discussion of the epistemology of the image clearly reflects this practical emphasis in contemporary theoretical debates. Though the ‘true Representation of an Object in Drawing’ in order to depict ‘an Idea to the Mind’ was the central theoretical claim underpinning the epistemology of the image in the MB, the truth of the representation was not a given, but a result of the labour of individual authors, artists and engravers. In positive terms this was an affirmation that images could rise to a greater value than text, but it also allowed for the very real danger of failure in the process of representation. It is worth reflecting again on the fact that Rymsdyk chose to exhibit ‘the original drawings, and all the prints’ side by side. He felt the pressure to offer some guarantee that the prints found in the MB were not compromised by their technical support, that engraving did not do too much damage to the original drawings ‘from Nature’. The decision to exhibit drawing and print side by side offered cautious customers the opportunity to compare one against the other in order to assess the reliability of the transmission of information, the ‘truth’ of the representation (cf. the transmission from preparatory watercolour, to hand coloured and uncoloured engravings on Plate X). Without access to the objects in the collection for comparison, the drawings in turn became ‘original’, became the site upon which the ‘truth’ of the representation was to be grounded.
This interpretation is borne out in the preface to *MB*, where Rymsdyk chose to describe the process of illustration specifically through an account of the necessity of the relationship between nature, image and print. Claiming that for his engravers ‘my Drawings were as intricate to them as Nature was to me’, according to Rymsdyk the processes of illustrative drawing and reproductive engraving mirrored one another, the work of printmaking required a double-analogy both in object and event (p. viii). The act and product of drawing were the ‘true representation’ of nature, just as those of engraving were to be the ‘true representation’ of drawing.

The double-analogy was nonetheless hierarchical. The engravers had to treat the drawing with the same reverence as the artist treated nature: ‘the Drawing is the Quintessence, and Engraving with Hatches only the Mechanical Part of the Art’ (p. viii). Explicitly making a case for the superiority of his own practice in the preface to the *MB*, Rymsdyk explained his choice of engravers:

I have employed those who I thought were Men of Merit, and able to execute the Prints in the Manner and Taste of the Original Drawings; they are not graved with Strokes, or Hatches, as I thought them not Natural, that mechanical Manner of Engraving, or cutting the Copper with large broad Hatches, Grate-like Work, I detest. (p. viii)

The conventional representation of volume and tone through ‘Grate-like Work’, hatching and cross-hatching, was anathema to Rymsdyk’s representational strategy. While praising his engravers as ‘Men of Merit’ who largely avoided such significant technical failures, Rymsdyk was also clear in stating that it was his own guidance that led to the work’s success. It was through his care and nurture that the prints were executed ‘in the Manner and Taste of the Original Drawings’:

The drawings were engraved by Messrs, *Elias Martin, Frederick Martin*, and *Charles White*, and Others. The two last were those who best comprehended the general Maxims I made use of in my Drawings: And it would have made me still happier if they had been intirely done according to my Doctrine. (p. viii-ix)

This was not simply a boast, but acted as a statement of intent for the publication as a whole: there was a single, coherent ‘Doctrine’ guiding its representational strategy and
guaranteeing its capacity to convey information, and that doctrine was framed by the tyrannical judgement of the author, at the cost of the intellectual abdication of the engraver. The engraving was secondary and dependent upon the work of the artist. With unrepentant pragmatism Rymsdyk emphasises that the success of the artist is the guarantee of his visual epistemology; in turn, the role of the engraver is to reproduce this success faithfully. The imitation of an object in such a way that might present an ‘Idea to the Mind’ – that might constitute knowledge – was the result of artistic fluency: it was through the artifice or skill of the artist that Rymsdyk imagined ‘truth’ entering into the representation. His doctrine was that ‘the Art of Painting is nothing else, but a true Representation of Nature’; and if such a doctrine meant that truth in drawing came from the successful representation of the object by the artist, so too did truth in the engraving come from the ‘Mechanical’ reproduction of the drawing by the engraver (p. v).

Such claims by authors to authority over the success of their engravers’ work were not uncommon in eighteenth-century illustrated works. In Objectivity Daston and Galison describe how the transfer of the ‘reasoned image to the page’ required that the artist or engraver ‘become something like a medium, not merely a subordinate’, thus ‘when Enlightenment savants dreamed of knowledge without mediation, they usually meant dispensing with their illustrators, or at least their engravers, not with their own senses and discernment’. Alexander Wragge-Morley has argued that this domination of artisanal craft by authorial judgement was particularly felt in illustrated medical books. In William Cheselden’s Osteographia – an epochal work of eighteenth-century human anatomy – the author uses his ‘Epistle to the Reader’ to marshal his professional expertise as a guarantee of the accuracy of the plates, stating that ‘where particular parts needed to be more distinctly expressed on account of the anatomy, there I always directed’. According to Wragge-Morley claims such as these were conventional, and were intended to ensure readers understood anatomical and

17 Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, Objectivity (New York: Zone Books, 2010), pp.82-84, p.96.
18 William Cheselden, Osteographia, or the Anatomy of the Bones (London: 1733), ‘To the reader’.
philosophical illustrations as ‘epistemologically useful’ representations, ‘in spite of the role played by non-anatomists and non-philosophers in their production’.¹⁹ Such a judgement, alongside the argument offered by Daston and Galison, might help to explain Rymsdyk’s purpose in the MB when guaranteeing the representational legitimacy of his images as objects of knowledge by way of his own involvement in their production and reproduction. This is not only because of the similarity of rhetorical structure and purpose between these two authors’ narratives of professional intervention, but also because, significantly, Rymsdyk was the leading medical illustrator in England for three decades before the publication of the MB, and it is in this field that he both first participated in the publication of illustrated books, and learnt his trade as an illustrator.

Little is known about Jan Van Rymsdyk’s early life; however, he probably first came to England from Holland in the 1740s. By 1750 he had started work for William Hunter, preparing the earliest anatomical drawings for The Anatomy of the Human Gravid Uterus.²⁰ Between these first drawings, and the final publication of the Gravid Uterus, Rymsdyk produced illustrations for a number of other notable eighteenth-century anatomies, including William Smellie’s (1697-1763) A Sett of Anatomical Tables, Charles Nicholas Jenty’s An Essay on the Demonstration of the Human Structure and Demonstrations of a Pregnant Uterus, as well as William Hunter’s brother, John’s (1728-93) The Natural History of the Human Teeth (1771). All of these publications were large (folio or larger), carefully illustrated and engraved, and included – as with Cheselden’s earlier Osteographia – sophisticated introductory remarks specifically addressing the methodology and theory behind the production and use of their images. Harry Mount has argued that this period of work under England’s foremost anatomists allowed Rymsdyk to become ‘familiar with a way of thinking about the representation of nature’ dominated by a methodology that placed primary

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²⁰ Thornton, p.4.
importance ‘on the close empirical observation of particular nature’, demanding from
illustrators a ‘meticulous level of accuracy’. While this goes some way to explaining
the visual ‘Doctrine’ in the MB, it is worth thinking through the distinctions in the
practices pursued by men such as Jenty, Smellie and the Hunters. This allows us to
account for how Rymsdyk adapted or diverged from these sources in developing his
theoretical account of museum illustration. A closer attention to the theoretical and
practical choices that echo through these works and into Rymsdyk’s own will allow us
to better understand the place of the printed image in the MB. In this way we can
better reconstruct his establishment of a visual epistemology for representing the
British Museum, not only through a reiteration of the primacy of the image, but
through an analysis of the production and presentation of those images themselves
around particular objects in the Museum.

II.i. Hunter, Smellie, and ‘Nature-Menders’

In the preface to the MB Rymsdyk would repeatedly go on the offensive against those
who sought to ‘mend’ nature, claiming that:

Concerning Mine and my Son’s Drawings, all the Objects we have truly imitated
without adding or diminishing, an established solemn Law, I had formed from
my Cradle, for my future Conduct as a Painter, Professing it to be the Principal
and favourite Article of my Pictorial Creed. (p. iv)

At the end of this passage, Rymsdyk declares himself an enemy to ‘Nature-Menders’,
his term for those who ‘imitated’ their objects by ‘adding or diminishing’, against the
‘sacred Law’ of painting (p. iv). While we will soon see how this polemic was most
explicitly directed against the Royal Academy and its artists, Rymsdyk’s first experience
of such Nature-Mending would come from an altogether different place: the world of
anatomical preparation and illustration.

William Smellie’s *A Sett of Anatomical Tables* (1754) was the first published work to present drawings by Rymsdyk. Alistair L. Gunn praises its illustrations as transformative for the science of midwifery, and Smellie appears to have felt similarly, claiming to have ‘done something towards reducing that Art, into a more simple and mechanical method than has hitherto been done’. Even at this early stage in his career, Rymsdyk is recognised by Smellie as central to this success. He is identified as the artist for the first twenty-two illustrations, after which Smellie decided that more tables were necessary; the next eleven were produced by the Leiden physician Petrus Camper (1722-1789); before Rymsdyk produced all but two of the remaining illustrations.

Given Rymsdyk’s ‘Pictorial Creed’ in the *MB*, it is interesting to note the particular manner in which the illustrations for Smellie’s *Anatomical Tables* were produced. In the diary of his visit to London in 1752, Camper recorded witnessing Smellie’s preparation of anatomical specimens and seeing Rymsdyk’s drawings. Camper took rooms in Meard’s Building:

near Dr Smellie, who was the first person I saw, as also his figures, drawn by Rymsdijk, but not all from real life. The children are placed in pelves of women, the children themselves looked natural, but the other parts were copied from other preparations.23

A portion of Rymsdyk’s final drawings were not representations of objects ‘truly imitated’, but of a combination of anatomical preparations, whether combined in the dissection room or on the page. Just as the painter might trespass against the ‘solemn Law’ of art in ‘adding [to] or diminishing’ the object before them, so it was common for anatomical illustrations to be the product of a combination of cadavers: in this case it

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appears that Rynsdyk himself was involved in the procedure, becoming just the sort of ‘Nature-Mender’ he would later vehemently rail against.

The procedure of *nature-mending* in anatomical illustration was well-attested in Smellie’s day; however, it was ‘susceptible to the charge’ of ‘empirical falsehood’.24 One anatomist who laid such a charge at Smellie’s door, though without explicitly naming him, was William Hunter. A student of Smellie, Hunter had begun employing Rynsdyk to illustrate his anatomical preparations at his house in Covent Garden at around the same time as his master. These drawings would eventually form the bulk of illustrations in Hunter’s *Gravid Uterus*. In the preface to the *Gravid Uterus* Hunter directly addressed these two opposing methods of representation, describing ‘two very different ways’ in which ‘anatomical figures’ were made:

one is the simple portrait, in which the object is represented exactly as it was seen; the other is a representation of the object under such circumstances as were not actually seen, but conceived in the imagination.25

According to Hunter both methods had their advantages and drawbacks: the ‘close representation of nature’ finished ‘from a view of one subject’ while possessing the ‘elegance and harmony of the natural object’ is prone to being ‘indistinct or defective’, divergent from the type; the ‘figure of fancy’ though it exhibits ‘in one view, what could only be seen in several objects’, unfortunately ‘has commonly the hardness of a geometrical diagram’, is far from life.

The second type was that pursued by Smellie. Describing in the preface the choice to be made between different styles of engraving, Smellie explains the impact of a choice:

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24 Smiles, p.37.

Arguing from a position of economy (and therefore wider diffusion and public utility), Smellie explains that ‘delicacy and elegance’ in the plates were forfeited in favour of a ‘strong and distinct manner’, what Hunter would call ‘the hardness of a geometrical diagram’. What this practically meant was that the expense of ensuring greater detail and a closer approximation of the drawings was done away with, in favour of heavier and less intricate lines that could present basic information more clearly. As ‘working-objects’ these illustrations are less attempts at the accurate representations of objects’ visual appearance than what John Bender and Michael Marrinan have termed the process-oriented ‘proliferation of manifestly selective packets of dissimilar data’ characteristic of the diagram. They are the attempted representation of specific and useful knowledge about the object, not of the object itself. A brief study of the first three plates of the *Sett of Anatomical Tables* is enough to confirm the consequences of this tendency to disregard visual ‘accuracy’ in favour of the diagrammatic: they are ‘graved with Strokes, or Hatches’, appearing the ‘Grate-like Work’ that Rymsdyk would complain of twenty years later (Plate VI). Whereas some of the ‘delicacy and elegance’ of Rymsdyk’s preparatory drawings still comes through in Charles Grignion the Elder’s (1721-1810) engravings, the consequence of this method of representation is even more apparent in the illustrations taken from drawings by Camper. These illustrations are effectively diagrams of anatomical and gynaecological information freed from any interest in representing volume or tone, and appear to eschew ‘accidental’ detail in favour of what Smellie and Camper determine to be the essential components of the anatomical specimen.

In contrast, Hunter was a partisan of the first method. Distinguishing between the two according to their relation to the visual experience of the object, Hunter explains that ‘the one shews [sic] the object, or gives perception; the other only

26 Smellie, preface.
describes’. Though not as aggressive as Rymsdyk in his denunciation of ‘description’ as against the ‘true Representation […] in Drawing’, Hunter similarly gives preference to the ‘simple portrait’; for him its essential advantage consisted in the fact that ‘it represents what was actually seen, it carries the mark of truth, and becomes almost as infallible as the object itself’. According to Hunter, while the diagrammatic average of a set of particular objects is vulnerable to untruth because it is not grounded in any material thing, the first type of image comes to contain knowledge by representing actually existing nature and becoming a proxy for the object.

Rymsdyk was similarly committed to representing the object as ‘actually seen’, even at the expense of the object itself. The eighth Table of the MB shows a ‘Brick from the Tower of Babel’ (p. 32; Plate VII). Describing the process by which the image was produced, he recalls that:

> It is diminished very much, for it would not bear being handled, it crumbled into Dust. The original Measure of the Brick was fourteen Inches square, and five Inches and a half thick. What concerns the Reeds that were placed in layers between every fourth and fifth Row of Bricks, I have taken no notice of in the Print because we were not able to find them anywhere in the Museum. The Engraver has handled the bits of Straw with long Lines or Hatches. (p. 33)

Rymsdyk represents the object by autopsy, verifying the representation through its mirroring of his own act of seeing. This act of seeing is guaranteed as much by an appeal to what is not seen (‘we were not able to find them anywhere in the Museum’), or what can no longer be seen (‘it crumbled into Dust’); by the limits of the visible as well as its positive content. Furthermore, the engraver’s work is not obscured, but marshalled in Rymsdyk’s account to secure the relation between object, drawing, and engraving. The ‘marks of truth’ here are therefore quite literal: rather than rendering invisible the work of representation, the depiction of the ‘Idea to the Mind’ is ensured through an explicit account of the artist’s handling of the object, and the engraver’s handling of the image.

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28 Hunter, preface.
Rymsdyk’s partisanship against Smellie’s ‘typical’ composite and in favour of the particular object (even going so far as to inadvertently produce new particulars of his own) thus also entailed an argument about style. In the preface to the MB Rymsdyk argued against accusations that ‘my Drawings are too Minute, a great many little Parts, &c.’, explicitly claiming that such minuteness was required if the artist were to adequately represent their object (p. vii):

On such a Plan as this, if a Painter, &c. chuses to be bound, to sail for the Harbour of Nature, he will find his Pictorial Vessel loaded with new Theorical and Practical Treasures, which on comparison, he will only find among a few Men of Merit; but in a low Degree, like the Shade of a Figure, or a bad Echo. (p. iv)

For Rymsdyk it is through attention to the minute that the artist represents an object truthfully. In the Anatomical Tables Smellie had decided to eschew ‘the extreme Minutiae’ and ‘what else seemed foreign to the present design’, effectively favouring extreme linearity and a visual epistemology that was diagrammatic. In contrast, Rymsdyk here made adherence to minutiae the guiding principle of his representational strategy, rejecting the notion that the particular was inessential and exhorting his fellow artists to sail for the ‘Harbour of Nature’ through the careful articulation of the minute appearances of an object. As his attention to detail in the Babylonian brick demonstrates, these minutiae are not only important in establishing the quality of the representation, but are also a guarantee of the veracity of the object: its ‘marks of truth’.

II.ii. Joshua Reynolds and ‘every minute Part’

If it is clear that Rymsdyk engages with natural philosophical – specifically anatomical – debates about propriety in visual representation, this polemic against ‘Nature-Menders’ and in favour of the minute particular also clearly engages the ‘Theorical’ and ‘Practical’ in fine art. Perhaps engaging in a latent act of Netherlandish patriotism,

29 Smellie, preface.
Rymsdyk rejected the Royal Academy’s denigration of what was seen as the visual empiricism of the ‘Dutch School’ of painting. This denigration was articulated particularly forcefully by the president of the Royal Academy, Joshua Reynolds. As far back as 1759 in a letter to Samuel Johnson’s *Idler*, Reynolds dismissed the ‘Dutch School’ as limited to representation of the particular and the superficial, as against the eternal and universal beauties to be found in the ‘Italian School’:

> The grand style of Painting requires this minute attention to be carefully avoided, and must be kept as separate from it as the style of Poetry from that of History […] to mingle the Dutch with the Italian School, is to join contrarieties which cannot subsist together, and which destroy the efficacy of each other. The Italian attends only to the invariable, the great, and general ideas which are fixed and inherent in universal nature; the Dutch, on the contrary, to literal truth and a minute exactness in the detail, as I may say, of Nature modified by accident. The attention to these petty peculiarities is the very cause of this naturalness so much admired in the Dutch pictures, which, if we suppose it to be a beauty, is certainly of a lower order.30

Attention to ‘the great, and general ideas which are fixed and inherent in universal nature’ appeared to Rymsdyk the apologia of ‘Nature-Menders’, the followers of Reynolds who ‘Learn I know not what from the Modern Italians, a certain Mode of Drawing and Painting’ entirely inadequate to the task of visual representation (p. v). In seeking ‘nature’ as something apart from its modifications ‘by accident’, the artists of the ‘Italian School’ appeared to Rymsdyk to be falsifying the truth, separating it from its appearance and therefore from its representation. For Rymsdyk, such artists were charlatans operating in an echo chamber, pursuing ‘the Shade of a Figure, or a bad Echo’, their artwork redolent of the Dutch proverb: ‘the Dog is turned to his own vomit again’ (p. v). Rymsdyk marshals the mythological figures of both Echo and Narcissus in his critique of this form of artistic production, alluding to the punishment that befell

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each of them for taking a false image for the true in order to impugn Reynolds' own illusions.

However, the influence of Reynolds’ ‘Italian School’ was powerfully felt by 1778, in an artistic climate where he held pre-eminent institutional, cultural, and political power as the President of the Royal Academy. Rymsdyk’s dissent from the ‘Italian School’ was thus equally articulated as an institutional critique, attacking the establishment of the Royal Academy, which he believed did ‘more Harm than Good’ in enforcing a style that failed in the imperative to represent Nature truthfully (p. vi). Such militant anti-academicism extended beyond the publication of the MB: though unremarked until now, it appears that in 1785 he advertised to ‘Artists, Virtuosi, &c.’ for an independent course of twice-weekly lectures ‘on Drawing, Composing, Painting, &c. from the Examples of Nature and Classic Artists’ at Castle Street by Leicester Square. At the same time he offered for sale ‘his Volume in Folio, of The Curiosities of the British Museum’, its price now reduced by just under one guinea to 2l. 12s. 6d.31 Though limited in content, a few details of this advert are worth noting. Firstly, while the use of space to further advertise for the sale of the MB indicates that the publication had not sold in as great numbers as Rymsdyk had hoped, it also tells us that its theoretical strictures likely still underpinned his practice, and formed the basis for these further excursions into the English art debate.

The choice of Castle Street as a location, while probably a pragmatic result of Rymsdyk’s social and domestic situation at the time, also marshals geography to align the lectures with a particularly well-noted historical precedent. One street along from Castle Street was St Martin’s Lane in Covent Garden, and it is likely Rymsdyk would have had the example of William Hogarth’s St. Martin’s Lane Academy in mind as he polemicized against the Royal Academy (then recently established at New Somerset House on the other side of Covent Garden). Hogarth had been the original source for Rymsdyk’s notion of ‘Nature-Menders’, and was more generally felt to offer an

31 Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser, 24 October 1785.
alternative tradition in English art to the one centred around Reynolds.\textsuperscript{32} Rymsdyk had even praised Hogarth in the \textit{MB} as the epitome of this alternative, more truthful, tradition, describing him as ‘that excellent Painter, and the first in this Country [...] not to be ranked among this Class of Nature-Menders’ (p. v). Hogarth was, for Rymsdyk, a master of the minute, able to represent truth through the careful and close observation of nature according to a ‘Doctrine’ that Rymsdyk himself hoped to re-establish against Reynolds.\textsuperscript{33}

After exhorting his artist colleagues to ‘sail for the Harbour of Nature’ – avoiding the siren song of Reynolds’ ‘Italian School’ – Rymsdyk further elaborates his alternate proposal with an account of the ‘three different ways of imitating an Object’ according to their distance from the artist (p. iv, vii). The first distance consists of disposing ‘Nature at a tolerable Distance [of around fifteen feet] where all the Minutia is lost, and only the Form, and grand Masses are to be seen’; such a distance is found in the frescos on the ceilings ‘at White-hall, British Museum, &c’ (p. vii). The second, ‘medium Distance’, is ‘where the small Parts are more visible: according to Rymsdyk, ‘Painters never, or seldom, exceed this’ (p. vii). Both these distances are also, implicitly, the tools of ‘Nature-Menders’ such as Reynolds, adequate only for the representation of the ‘Effect of Nature’, for ‘an Artist to get a good deal of Money, and use much Art, but shew little of nature’ (p. vii). In contrast was the third distance:

> where the Different Substances, and every minute Part is discovered by being brought so near the Eye. This Distance I was obliged to make use of, for to represent Nature in its greatest Beauty; [...] if I was to do otherwise it would be


\textsuperscript{33} It would be an irony of this doctrine that Rymsdyk’s son and co-author, Andrew, ultimately found his career limited to the minor genre of miniature portraiture, ending his life advertising in Bath for ‘Portraits in small, accurately drawn’ at two guineas each, alongside the distinctly un-grand offer of ‘Bracelets, &c. painted, and a speaking Likeness executed in the size of a Silver Penny, if required’ at six guineas. From the valorisation of the minute and particular in the representation of objects, the Rymsdyks finally arrived at the production of objects that were themselves minute and particular, and generically marginal to the art discourse that was current in late-eighteenth-century England; \textit{Bath Chronicle}, 18 November 1784.
Affectation, Manner, and of no Service to Naturalists, &c. How far Nature exceeds all Arts and Human Skill, is well known; let it be sufficient to say, that through a Microscope she appears more and more wonderful; all artificial things, though ever so high finished, more and more rude, and disadvantageous: Therefore the Imitation of Nature I would recommend to all Professions, none excluded, and to every Person as an Encourager to judge thereby. (p. vii-viii)

Here Rymsdyk most clearly articulates his own ‘Practical’ position through the typical frame of opposition to an adversary or adversaries. Reiterating the exhortation to ‘Follow Nature!’ that appeared in alarming red letters on the title page of most copies of the MB, he sets this appeal to nature apart from those made by contemporaries such as Reynolds through an extreme literalism, demanding that ‘every minute Part is discovered by being brought so near the Eye’. According to Rymsdyk, it is the high ‘finish’ of nature, her appearance in detail as if ‘through a Microscope’ that ensures the visual epistemology of the MB. Thus, his appeal to the close study of objects also entailed their close representation, so that ‘many of the Drawings, or Prints, are as big as Nature, or the Objects they represent; and if they are less, or larger, it is mentioned with each Explanation’ (p. iv). Just as Hunter had determined that ‘Anatomical figures’, needing to show ‘the peculiar habit and composition of parts’ should be ‘made of the natural size’ as far as possible, and just as Jenty’s illustrations had been ‘as large as nature’, so the representation of Nature without ‘Affectation, Manner’ in the MB necessitated that the image be as far as possible a replication of the object in a ratio of 1:1.34

In employing such a method, Rymsdyk sets certain limitations on what is included in the MB. The frame of the visible is reduced down to the size of the printed page, significantly altering what is or is not representable as part of the British Museum. We can understand the impact of this frame of the visible when we consider it alongside the narrative of a visit to the Museum in the same decade. The twelve-year-old John Coltman visited in 1780:

34 Hunter, preface.
First we saw Egyptians that had been dead three thousand years ago. Next we saw the skull of an elephant, and the Queen of Otaheite’s hat, the crown of it big enough to hold you, and the brim of it not much unlike the mat that lies at the bottom of our stairs. There was a piece of the wall of Babylon, and the head-dress of a lady five thousand years ago. In another room there was all sorts of birds; birds of Paradise, and humming birds, the most beautiful colours that I could imagine. The next room was filled with all kinds of serpents and lizards once alive, and some of them with wings. There was a pair of gloves made of the beards of mussels; also some snakes and rattlesnakes, sword fishes, etc., and a crocodile, which was such a monstrous great thing, he could have eaten three or four men for a breakfast. We next saw the jaw-bone and head of a whale; the jaw-bone was such a monstrous thing, I could have stood upright in it.35

The size of objects forms a significant part of the visitor’s experience of the Museum; headdresses, the skull of an elephant, a crocodile and other reptiles, and the head of a whale impress the young Coltman because of their size (‘big enough to hold you’; ‘a monstrous great thing’; ‘such a monstrous thing’). However, despite this prevalence in visitor narratives, these objects are of a size that renders them unrepresentable in the MB according to Rymsdyk’s ‘Practical’ requirements. Conversely, the smaller objects that occur in this narrative are not only representable according to these requirements, but actually represented. These are objects whose size renders them suitable for life-sized engraving: a brick from the wall of Babylon; birds of paradise and hummingbirds (Table XXX); gloves made from the beards of mussels (Table XII). Where those larger objects do re-enter the MB, they do so through the lens of smaller objects: the ‘monstrous’ crocodile is represented by an egg in Table V, and in the text we are informed that it ‘lays Eggs no bigger than those of a Goose; yet no living creature extends to so exceeding a magnitude, from so small an Origine’ (p. 17). What we saw as its monstrous size in Coltman is here summoned through contrast with the minuteness of the object visibly present. Selection according to size informs the entire composition of the MB; in illustrating the Museum, Rymsdyk’s theoretical framework limits and determines what kind of objects are to be admitted to print; the representational practices elaborated through the work of drawing and engraving not only modify the appearance of objects but also the conditions of possibility through

35 Catherine Hutton and Her Friends, ed. by Catherine Hutton Beale (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, 1895), pp.82-83.
which they – and consequently their institution – might appear. In striking out against ‘Nature-Menders’ Rymsdyk limits the visible to the minute; the Museum becomes a museum of small things. Rymsdyk’s polemic against those who deface their object by ‘adding or diminishing’ ultimately leads to a diminution of the Museum, to its reduction to the height and width of a folio page of ‘fine French Columbia’.

II.iii. ‘Inspecting Nature artificially’ with Charles Nicholas Jenty

Charles Jenty was similarly concerned with how the ‘Harbour of Nature’ might be reached through printmaking. According to the preface to An Essay on the Demonstration of the Human Structure, his chief motivation for the publication was to afford ‘Gentlemen [...] after completing their anatomical Studies’ the ‘Opportunity, occasionally, of inspecting Nature artificially in some anatomical Tables, disposed in a more natural Manner’ than previously achieved. In careful wordplay Jenty proposes what, to the eighteenth-century reader, would appear the paradoxical experience of inspecting ‘Nature artificially’ through a print. The natural object was to be reproduced through the artificiality of human representational art, resulting in an equally natural and artificial production. In such a way illustrations would become (as with Rymsdyk’s MB) the ‘true mechanical Representation of the human Machine, as well as a Description of it’, and ‘as useful as a Lexicon, or geographical Map, to the learned World’ (my italics). In this section I will examine Jenty’s experimentation with colour and tone as part of this attempt to produce a ‘true mechanical Representation of the human Machine’, and the way in which this affected Rymsdyk’s own ‘Theorical and

36 Charles Nicholas Jenty, An Essay on the Demonstration of the Human Structure, Half as large as Nature, In Four Tables: From the Pictures painted after Dissections for that Purpose: Disposed in such a Manner, as to represent gradually all the Capital Parts of the Human Body in their natural Situation, as they appear in Dissection when the Sanguiferous Vessels are injected: calculated To convey a clearer artificial Idea of the Animal Oeconomy than has hitherto appeared in any other Anatomical Figures (London: the author, 1757), p.5.
Practical’ deployment of colour and tone to represent objects from the British Museum.

Charles Jenty employed Jan van Rymsdyk from 1755 to prepare drawings for his *Demonstrations of a Pregnant Uterus* and *An Essay on the Demonstration of the Human Structure*. Highly complimentary of Rymsdyk, Jenty praised his ‘anatomical Performances’ for the *Essay* as ‘the best that have ever been done’, and in the *Demonstrations* was even more effusive, claiming that ‘several eminent Persons of the Profession’ had witnessed ‘the Subject, whence these Tables are done’ and confirmed ‘the Pictures to be the greatest Masterpieces of his Performances that have ever yet been produced’.38 The large crayon drawings done by Rymsdyk for this purpose, now housed at the Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia, exhibit an incredible command of colour, deploying reds and blues in luxurious detail.39 Sent by Doctor James Fothergill to the Hospital in 1762, these drawings were themselves used as teaching objects throughout the eighteenth century, forming the centrepiece of Doctor William Shippen Junior’s ‘Course of Lectures on Anatomy’, the first to be read in colonial America.40 In the *Essay*, the success of Rymsdyk’s drawings was said to come from their capacity to ‘give a more natural compendious View of the human Structure than any which has hitherto been produced’.41 The claim made here was further emphasised by the unusually verbose formulation of attribution found on the plates of both volumes: though inconsistent, in a majority of their plates the usual terse ‘pinx.’ or ‘ping.’ is extended to read ‘â Naturâ Pinxit Londini 1757’, or elsewhere ‘ad Dissectionem Pinxit Londini Anno 1756’ (‘painted after Nature London 1757’; ‘painted after a dissection London in the year 1756’).42 As well as echoing Cheselden’s guarantee in *Osteographia* that his publication was epistemologically useful, Jenty’s assessment of Rymsdyk’s

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38 Charles Nicholas Jenty, *The Demonstrations of a Pregnant Uterus of a Woman at her Full Time: in Six Tables, As large as Nature: Done from the Pictures painted, after Dissections, by Mr. Van Riemsdyk: and Disposed in such a Manner, as to represent, completely, this State of Pregnancy* (London: the author, 1758), p.8.
40 PH, Minutes vol. 2, 8 November 1762, fol. 326.
42 The first of these inscriptions is also repeated on PH, Male Anatomy, 1.1.
work also bridged the gap between the natural object and the artificial image. The professional status of the ‘several eminent Persons’, as much as the claims made on the prints themselves for Rymsdyk’s work, ensured that the ‘Performance’ of the artist did not diminish or estrange Nature from the ‘full View’ that was being produced, but guaranteed them as ‘real Delineations after Nature’.

However, the drawings still needed to be reproduced on copper plates: the ‘true Representation’ had to pass through a ‘mechanical’ process. Thus, the relationship between object and printmaking technique could not be incidental. For Jenty, this meant a reproductive process that centred its attention on the tone and colour of the object. In both Essay and Demonstrations Jenty made the exceptional choice of mezzotint over the more conventional engraving or etching because of what he saw as its greater fidelity to tone and colour. Barely any illustrated publications from the period employed mezzotint as it was only able to produce a few hundred impressions before the burr wore away; however, for Jenty it was still preferable because:43

Engraving itself, how well soever performed, would not have answered my Intention for Colouring so well as Mezzotinto, as this Method is softer, and capable of exhibiting a nearer Imitation of Nature than Engraving, as Artists themselves acknowledge that Nature may admit of Light and Shades, well blended and softened, but never did of a harsh Outline: So it must be confessed, that these Prints may want the Smartness which Engraving might have contributed; but the Softness which they possess, may approach nearer to the Imitation of Nature, when coloured, than any Engraving possibly could, merely thro’ the unavoidable Delineation of the Outline.44

For Jenty, his choice of printmaking process amounted to a statement concerning not only the practical issue of technique, but also the visual ontology of nature itself. Nature in its visual component is constituted by ‘Light and Shades’, never ‘a harsh Outline’: in contradiction to Smellie, Jenty felt nature to be painterly. While engraving might afford ‘Smartness’ or distinction in lines, for which reason it was commonly

43 Stijnman, p.246.
44 Jenty, The Demonstrations of a Pregnant Uterus of a Woman at her Full Time, p.9.
employed in anatomical illustration, in so doing it transgressed nature’s *ontological sfumato*. Nature for Jenty appeared not as a composition of lines that neatly held one part from another, but as a series of hardly perceptible gradations through different shades of light and colour. His publications employed mezzotint because it could represent tonality without the need for hatching (as was the case for engraving and etching) (Plate VIII).

Jenty was so committed to reproducing the effects of light and colour in his specimens that his earliest programme was for entirely mechanical colour mezzotints, believing that ‘if this Work were represented in Colours as nearly as possible imitative of Nature, it would make a stronger Impression on the Memory’. Jenty first attempted this coloured imitation of nature through a four-colour intaglio printing method where:

> by scraping four different Plates for one single Print, in such a Manner, one for a black, one for a blue, one for a yellow, and one for a red; as, by a due Combination of these Colours, and the same Sheet of Paper going over one another, it would represent any Picture whatever, as is well known by the Laws of Optics, to be the Case.

The process was probably much like Jacob Christoph Le Blon’s RYBK system developed in Amsterdam at the start of the eighteenth century, and trialled by the printmaker for a short time in England between 1717 and 1735 (Le Blon even used this method to produce anatomical prints in 1740). Unfortunately, the engraver employed for this process ‘not being Master of this Art, and deficient in Drawing’ cost Jenty over a hundred pounds before producing ‘one of the Tables in a very bad Manner’. As a result of his incompetence ‘an Artery, Vein, or sometimes a Tendon, &c. is confounded by these Colours, one with another’. The danger of foregoing the ‘harsh Outline’ in favour of a ‘nearer Imitation of Nature’ through colour was that the object became

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47 RYBK stands for the colours used in polychrome printing Red, Yellow, Blue, Key (black). This system was a precursor to the modern CMYK model.
dissolved in a confusion of parts where no distinction could any longer be made. Jenty therefore finally settled on black and white mezzotints, with the option of having them hand-coloured afterwards, ‘either from the original paintings, or Nature’. 49

Though in the MB Rymsdyk was to stick to the more conventional technique of engraving for the reproduction of his illustrations, he appears to have taken much from the experience of producing ‘natural and artificial’ illustrations for Jenty’s Essay and Demonstrations, a fact that has until now been left unremarked. Though not in mezzotint, Rymsdyk’s prints in the MB attempted to pursue a similar style of detail through the use of stippling and irregular, intricate and minute lines to form shape and contour, with a particular emphasis placed on light and shade. Rare instances where hatching or heavy lines were employed by the engravers, the ‘Grate-like Work’, met with heavy criticism from the author himself. Just as the emphasis on colour and tone in Jenty’s illustrations had come from a practical commitment to the theoretical premise of nature’s ontological sfumato (and therefore the necessary relation between particular technical processes and the objects depicted), so Rymsdyk’s resistance to conventional engraving techniques came from his own understanding of the relationship between object and drawing, and drawing and print. Believing traditional engraving techniques to be prone to falsification, Rymsdyk’s engravings employed distinctly conceived protocols to achieve their ends. A particularly remarkable instance of this is the vignette of a small disc with a ram’s head found on page 44 of the MB (Plate IX). Entirely free from hatching or cross-hatching, there appears barely a single engraved line in this image; instead, volume is built up through the distribution of light and shade in a series of dots of lesser or greater density, with the effect that the ram’s head appears to rise up off of the page as if in three dimensions.

Like Jenty, Rymsdyk’s interest in technique also extended into a serious concern with the role of colour in the ‘Imitation of Nature’. While addressing the relationship between the production of images of natural and artificial objects,

Rymsdyk makes the point that in his ‘Choice and Method’ of representation the accurate depiction of ‘peculiar Colours’ is of utmost importance, along with ‘their true Character, different Substances’ and ‘a clear large Mass of Light and Shade’ (p. iv). Though not emphasised in Rymsdyk’s account of his artistic method, colour therefore had an important role in its images. Having witnessed Jenty’s failure to adequately reproduce colour mechanically, Rymsdyk did not attempt a similar experiment with overlaid mezzotint plates; however, a number of the 1778 editions of the MB come with hand-coloured prints. Of the preparatory drawings by Rymsdyk held at the British Museum, all but three of the hundred or so objects represented are done in watercolour with the full range of colours to be found in the hand-coloured prints. The three exceptions are drawn in red chalk, and represent objects whose range of colouring in the final prints is more restricted to browns and blacks. It appears then that these watercolours were employed as guides by those responsible for hand-colouring the prints – possibly Rymsdyk and his son themselves – in order to ensure a consistency in appearance, and the accurate manual reproduction of the artists’ preparatory drawings. Though far from consistently applied, the use of colour in the MB was therefore not simply an expensive supplement to the work, but a necessary part of its completion for Rymsdyk, an essential component in its representational strategy.

Colouring, however, posed the question of the limitations of Rymsdyk’s visual epistemology. If the role of the ‘true Representation’ in the MB was to ‘depict [...] an Idea to the Mind’, then it is worth thinking through the use of the singular indefinite article (‘an Idea’). In a footnote to the final illustration of the MB, Table XXX, Rymsdyk describes the difficulty in representing the Bird of Paradise:

Thus have I given a Description of the real Colours of this Bird, from Nature, but its impossible for any Person or myself so to do, for all these different Colours are as glossy, will change like the Peacocks Tail, from one Colour into another if any Person changes his Point of view. (p. 81)

50 I have consulted the coloured copy held in the British Library at 42.i.4; in contrast the edition held in Oxford at the Bodleian Library, Gough Lond. 131 is in black and white, while G.A. Lond. b.27 is without even the red lettering on the title page.
Employing a dozen or so adjectival words for colour in the accompanying description, Rymsdyk’s verbal profligacy is finally defeated by the multiplicity of the bird’s colourful appearance. Though directed at description, this insertion of the concept of ‘Point of view’ rebounds on the illustration as well. If ‘like the Peacocks Tail’ the ‘different Colours’ of the Bird of Paradise will change from one ‘into another if any Person changes his Point of view’, then the illustration, even with its hand colouring, proves unsatisfactory to its object: as a representation it is at best partial, and at worst entirely unreliable. Whereas the British Museum is a collection of objects extended in three-dimensional space, in their insertion into the pages of the MB these objects must retreat to two dimensions, and must become singular representations indifferent to changes in point of view. There may be any number of ways of viewing the bird in situ at the DNAP, but all of those points of view are reduced to a single representation once engraved and coloured. Rymsdyk as author-artist has to reduce objects to a planar appearance, always paying for the rendering visible of one face of the object with the obfuscation of all other potential faces. The illustrated museum reduces a polysemic, reiterative – at times confused or confusing – experience of objects into a single visual representation in which the authorial point of view predominates. Resistant to reducing the particular detail of nature to an artificial universality, Rymsdyk nonetheless inevitably reduces the many sides of his objects to one representative face.51

III. The limits of the image, the uses of the word

The singular point-of-view of the engraving brings us back to the problem of the relationship between image and text in the MB. Sol Worth argues that images ‘cannot represent, portray, symbolise, say, mean, or indicate things equivalent to what verbal utterances of the type “This is not ...” or “It is not the case that ...” can do’. That is,

51 It is interesting to note that the exception to this in the MB are the numismatic illustrations that follow the well-established antiquarian practice of representing both sides of the coin in publication.
pictures cannot exist in a negative relation to their object: ‘a picture cannot comment on itself. A picture cannot depict “This picture is not the case,” or “This picture is not true”’; according to Worth, to do so would require an external sign system. With the appearance of the bird of paradise in the MB, it becomes clear that this limitation framed Rymsdyk’s own visual epistemology. Though critical of the use of description to convey a polychrome object, explaining that even with twelve approximations such description results in partiality, restriction to a singular point-of-view is also present in the image. Significantly, however, this visual restriction is only articulated to the reader via a textual mode of address: though the ‘Description of a Figure’ might not ‘depict so strong an Idea to the Mind’ as an illustration, it still has capacities quite distinct from the engraved image. Text is where the limits of the image become articulable for Rymsdyk. In this section I will probe this facet of Rymsdyk’s visual epistemology, exploring the ways in which these distinct qualities of ‘description’, so marginalised in his doctrine, guarantee its return from the margins of the MB.

The use of images is an obvious point of distinction between the MB and previous textual accounts of the British Museum. Where images were incorporated in earlier guides they were limited to depictions of Montagu House, and generally did not attempt to represent the collection or its objects, focusing instead on the institution in toto. The Royal Magazine’s ‘Tour’ of the Museum was aware of the consequences of this neglect of the visual representation of the collection, concluding:

Such is the British Museum; but the reader can expect only a faint sketch from any description, however exact; he must view the whole with attention, before he can form an adequate idea of this noble and numerous collection.

Over a decade before the MB, this coda presages Rymsdyk’s own anti-textual visual epistemology.

53 Royal Magazine, February 1764, p.90.
As we saw in the previous chapter, before the publication of the MB accounts of the British Museum in print were principally synoptic in their content, less interested in describing individual objects than the collection as a whole. Most often, these descriptions formed a small part of a larger periodical publication dedicated to guiding visitors through a ‘Tour of London’. One example of this is the Royal Magazine’s own ‘Tour through the Cities of London and Westminster, and Places adjacent to these populous Cities’, whose February 1764 edition includes ‘an Elegant View of the British Museum’. The word ‘view’ is, however, misleading: the tour is free from illustrations or vignettes, and is constituted by a short history of the Museum’s establishment, instructions on the method of admission, a brief description of a visit through the collection, and an account of the size and constitution of its holdings. Even in publications wholly given over to the Museum, such as Powlett’s The General Contents of the British Museum or the anonymous A View of the British Museum, the same patterning of description and information is largely followed. Proposing to satisfy in some way the curiosity provoked by the opening of the Museum, Powlett begins with a paean to its establishment, before admitting that his work, ‘not being meant to give a particular Account of all the Contents of this noble Cabinet’ will only offer ‘a few Remarks on the general Contents, without enlarging too much on any Thing’. Likewise, in Thomson’s Letters or Butler’s ‘Pleasing Recollection’, what is represented is not so much the individual objects in the collection, as the experience of the visit. In each of these cases, description is concerned less with individual artefacts than with the Museum in toto. The account focuses on the institution, its legal apparatus, history, buildings, and collections. Where objects are mentioned, it is with only cursory attention; they are named, but usually not described in any detail, forming the anecdotal material for a text that is principally an account of the collection and its scholarly context. Listing the ‘Natural Productions’ of the first room in the DNAP, the View gives an indication of the consequences of this decision for the content and shape of the text:

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Several Serpents, Lizards, Quadrupeds, Birds, and Spiders, preserved in spirits.
A Hornet’s Nest.
Large Corals, Sea productions, which, after several observations, are now pretended to belong to the animal kind.
Keratophyta, Sertularia. A Sea Fan, and a Sea Feather.
Madrepora, Branchy Corals, marked with small holes like stars.
Millepora, another kind of the same, with round holes.
The Vertebrae, or Backbone of an Elephant, petrified.

In contrast, the MB as a publication is organised entirely around the individual artefacts represented in its illustrations. The institution is decentred in favour of a focus on its objects; where the Museum did appear in the publication, it did so through a kind of refraction or reflection by those objects. The ‘Round Christal [sic] Ball’ in Table XVIII in its ‘exceedingly Brilliant’ surface offered a portrait of the museum in a convex-mirror (Plate X). This engraving shows the Reading Room, its tables, entrance, and walls in remarkable detail, while its window offers a glimpse of the redbrick of Montagu House’s courtyard, and a dark figure in the centre potentially shows the artist himself, with his hand curved around a pencil. The object becomes a clever device by which Rymsdyk is able to depict the Museum interior without marginalising its objects: the object becomes a lens or mirror for the institution, becomes the frame of the visible within the MB. This visual strategy for representing the Museum has its counterpart in the way in which information about the Museum is filtered through the text of the MB. However, whereas Rymsdyk’s images are limited to asserting themselves alone, the text is able to provide both information and commentary on the Museum, incorporating it into larger networks of scholarly knowledge. Each section of the MB is dedicated to a single plate depicting an object or set of objects, and it is through the description of these objects that an account of the more general complexion of the Museum is developed. In a footnote to the description of Table IV (‘Ensigns, &c.’) Rymsdyk offers a brief summary of antiquarian knowledge of brass arrow-heads, detailing the various regional and historical variations that can be found across Europe and referring to respected authors such as Montfaucon to justify his account. He then concludes by explaining that ‘Great number of these curious Cases, Bows, and Arrows are to be seen in the British Museum’ (p. 14). In the next footnote

Rymsdyk explains the use of poison arrows in the Americas with reference to a volume of voyages by a Jesuit priest. The antiquarian excursus eventually resolves into an explanation of the diversity of the Museum collection itself. Whereas the reflection in the ‘Christal Ball’ is restricted to an assertion of the visible in the Museum, the reflections on the Museum in text work precisely to supersede such an assertion, demonstrating its attachment to larger networks of learning and multiple forms of knowledge production.

We have already seen, in Rymsdyk’s denigration of Homer, how the privileging of the image came at the cost of a general suspicion towards description. The premise of this suspicion ultimately returns to the doctrine that animated the critique of ‘Nature-Menders’: arguing against any excessive proliferation of text, Rymsdyk assures the reader that it ‘is not my Intention to Surfeit the Reader with tiresome Narrations, heightened beyond reality, rather wishing something more to be Desired, than saying too Much’ (p. xi). Just as the decision to avoid ‘adding [to] or diminishing’ the object in the process of illustration raised questions of artistic technique, so this reluctance to ‘Surfeit the Reader’ with ‘Narrations, heightened beyond reality’ raises the question of prose style. Explaining his choice of style, Rymsdyk states that:

The Chief and Principal Parts of my Subjects I have only treated of, rejecting all that was Foreign, and other Trifles, not as Some I know, who talk at Random, and by the heat of their Fancy, roving from one thing to another, till the chief Argument is lost, and the Reader is left in a Labyrinth of Confusion; from hence it comes to pass that some Writers, and Lecturers, by forgetting the Subject are not easily understood; therefore the Reader or Teacher is obliged to turn the Page, or Begin Again, and Again. (p. xi)

The text accompanying illustrations should be to the point, and treat only the ‘Chief and Principal Parts of my Subjects’ with brevity and concision, in deference to the image. The overuse of text, its swamping of image, would produce a ‘Labyrinth of Confusion’, endangering the possibility of depicting ‘an Idea to the Mind’, depriving the work of a ‘chief Argument’. Yet the formal movement of this sentence undercuts

such a claim to brevity, while instantiating just that danger Rymsdyk warns against: it is cumulative (it ‘Begin[s] Again, and Again’), working by the rhetorical technique of *adjectio* (or addition of superfluities) across fifteen clauses in order to designate its single object: the unnecessary elaboration or confusion of an argument by way of addition.

This contradiction is far from an exceptional moment in the text (though it is especially stark). *Adiectio* is the overarching rhetorical procedure used by Rymsdyk across the *MB*: sentences expand beyond expectation; footnotes overwhelm the body text; asides abound on subjects as diverse as the state of academic art in modern Europe, Spaniards’ suspicion of their wives, and the author’s recollections of a rainstorm in Jamaica. At one point Rymsdyk even steals the opportunity to launch an attack on his former employer, William Hunter. Rymsdyk’s privileging of the image for its potential to stand as an unmediated bearer of knowledge is therefore not nearly as straightforward as his prefatory claims encourage one to believe: the text is constantly in danger of forming not only an accompaniment, but also a carapace to the image.

We see *adjectio* play out in the accompanying description for Table III, ‘Incrusted Scull and Sword’. The body text itself is relatively terse, occupying perhaps a quarter of a folio page, and briefly describing the figures:

> *Fig. 1.* An Incrustated* Scull and Sword, they were both found in the Tiber at Rome, on the right side of the Scull (A.) is the bone or head of the humerus, and (B.) the first rib adhering to it.

> *Fig. 2.* — The Sword half as big, the blade of which was iron, rusted into a hard kind of ochre, (C.) the scabbard was wood, but I could not perceive any covering either in or out-side; some part of the sword was solid and no ways injured. (p. 10)

Despite this brevity, the asterisk on the second word signals a turn to the footnote, and another three pages of text in small font and tightly-packed double columns. Over these three pages Rymsdyk gives an account of the nature and history of incrustations; speculates on the cause of the incrustations on these items; apologises for the absence of a drawing of an incrusted wig unfortunately missing from the British Museum;
justifies ‘the Antiquity of Perukes’ with reference to the antiquarian Journal des Sçavans; explains the ancient and modern use of head-dresses by women with reference to Ovid, Capitolius Verus, and Varro; and finally quotes an epigram taken from the Hampshire Chronicle in 1777, lamenting ‘False rumps - false teeth - false hair - false faces; - / Alas! poor man! how hard thy case is’ (pp. 10-12). The footnote performs much of the function that Anthony Grafton has assigned to it as a genre: it persuades, convincing the reader that the author ‘has done an acceptable amount of work’, and it indicates its ‘chief sources’, giving the reader an idea of the kind of textual and historical practice engaged by Rymsdyk. However, that is not all that it does. The images on which the original descriptions are founded are slowly decentred by a footnoted text that is profligate. We can access a sense of this profligacy, and its capacity to disorient the illustration, when we consider the distance travelled across three pages between the image of an incrusted Roman sword, and a lament for the vanity of eighteenth-century womanhood.

Much of the text of this footnote, whether cited or uncited, comes from other publications. As I have remarked above, while the objects depicted in the illustrations to the MB are all from the DNAP, it is precisely here in the descriptions that the other Departments – Printed Books and Manuscripts – re-enter the publication:

But here I must not forget to remark the Liberty I had of Consulting with the Library of the BRITISH MUSEUM; now those Authors, which I found by the scale of Common Sense, and Comparison to agree best with my Antiquities and Natural Curiosities, I have Cited with Honour, when I made use of their Authority. (pp. x-xi)

The relation between text and image in the MB mirrors the departmental relation: Authors, by ‘Common Sense, and Comparison’ are held to more or less agree with ‘Antiquities and Natural Curiosities’. Comparison brings them into relation both for Rymsdyk and his readers. But this relation is unequal: references harvested from

consultation ‘with the Library’ are tested against the objects, in a process
determinative of whether they should be ‘Cited with Honour’.

Just as references are tested against objects, so text is also to be tested against
image. In the preface, Rymsdyk uses a number of words to describe his descriptions:
‘Demonstrations, References, or Paragraphs, and Notes of the Figures’, but the most
frequent of these is ‘Demonstrations’. We have already seen this word used
elsewhere: both publications by Jenty that Rymsdyk illustrated were titled
‘demonstrations’, with the word used to signal the textual accompaniment to the ‘Four
Tables’ of the Essay and the ‘Six Tables, As large as Nature’ of the Demonstrations. The
term itself came from philosophy and mathematics, where it was used to mean:

a Syllogism in Form, containing a clear and invincible Proof of a Proposition: Or,
a convincing Argument, the two first Propositions whereof are certain, clear,
and evident; whence of Necessity arises an infallible Conclusion. ⁵⁸

In the field of geometry, illustrations had long been accompanied by ‘demonstrations’
that explained what was being represented, and confirmed – or demonstrated – the
initial proposition. By the 1750s demonstration had, as we have seen, been co-opted
by medical literature to indicate that its claims to truth might be comparable to those
of mathematics:

Demonstration, (Med.) This term is also in use among doctors, who affirm that
the principles of their science are capable of demonstration, that is, one may
establish the truth of them by certain proof, clear and irrefutable, just like
those of the physico-mathematical sciences. ⁵⁹

When used to describe anatomical lectures, this generally came closer to the meaning
of ‘a practical exhibition and explanation of how something works or is done’, but
when specific to the demonstrations in a publication, it still held closer to the more

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⁵⁸ Ephraim Chambers, Cyclopædia, or a Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences, 2 vols
⁵⁹ Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers, ed. by
Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert, 28 vols (Paris: Briasson, David, Le Breton
and Durand et al., 1751-1772), IV (1754), 823-24.
established philosophical and mathematical sense. In the example of the MB, the term ‘demonstration’ might also plausibly relate to its grammatical cousin ‘demonstrative’ which ‘is applied to Pronouns that serve to shew, point out, or indicate a Thing; As, This here, That there, Those yonder, &c.’ Demonstrations would be text that deictically ‘point[ed] out, or indicate[d]’ the ‘Thing’ of the image across the page.

In each of these examples (geometrical, medical, rhetorical), ‘demonstration’ is intended to refer to a body of text that exists in correspondence with an image or object. The use of ‘demonstration’ therefore points to a relation of dependency between text and image, where the former exists insofar as it is meant to relate to the latter. However, in the preface Rymsdyk finally resolves to think of demonstrations as having some independent epistemological value; accounting for his ‘Notes’, he explains that quotation is the central underpinning of his textual practice:

we have taken the Liberty in collecting whatever Auxiliary Forces of Authors we could raise upon various Subjects to lend a hand, not forgetting that old Saying, Many hands make light Work. (p. x)

Accounting for the demonstrations, he employs terminology close to the truth claims previously asserted for his illustrations: the truthful demonstration is opposed to those guilty of ‘adding or diminishing’ from it until it has become ‘bare-faced Fallacies’. The demonstration must correspond properly to the image if it is to be true. Yet the ‘certain Truth’ is achieved not by way of the immediacy of a carefully constructed image, but rather through proof, through reference to other texts. It is through ‘the Multitude of Books, published since the Invention of Printing’ that knowledge is gained and demonstrations are rendered perfect. These ‘Roses, Lillies, Honeysuckles’ of the printing press accumulate within the pages of the MB like so many pressed flowers, establishing its ‘sweet Knowledge’ (p. ix). Inscribed within and bound to the literary practices of citation and quotation that dominated antiquarian and historical

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61 Chambers, I, 184.
authorship in the eighteenth century, Rymsdyk’s ‘demonstrations’ are reconfigured as a space of knowledge indifferent to or autonomous from the image. There is, after all, some knowledge to be found in the text.

Indeed, in possession of these epistemological capacities, text might even come to produce images of its own. In a footnote to Table XXVI (‘A Roman Patera, & a large Gold One ditto’) on ‘Ovid’, Rymsdyk explains how this mutual confirmation and pollination of image and text might operate in his work, referring the reader to the Metamorphoses:

> which I commonly call the Painters Bible; an easy and excellent Poet, a wonderful great Reader, and who has disposed into very agreeable Compositions, Times, Persons, and Things, very artfully, and infinitely different; so that I know no Author, whose Works make better entertainment, and picturesque Pictures than his. (p. 65)

Text is here no longer subservient and secondary to the primacy of the image, but has a generative potential of its own, producing ‘Compositions’ of ‘Times, Persons, and Things’. The ‘Large Gold Patera’ depicting ‘Oxen circling round’ and ‘dedicated to Bacchus’ prompts a turn to the poet Ovid, who in turn provokes the possibility of new figurative representations in the ‘picturesque Pictures’ that proliferate around his descriptions (p. 65).

If the demonstration was, at its finest, capable of generating images in this way, it was also prone to distorting or destroying them. In the description of Table XXIX, ‘Antiquitates Aëgypticæ, Sistrum, &c.’ Rymsdyk again diverts the reader down the route of an extended footnote, explaining the image of a lotus flower found on the side of a sistrum. Lamenting the difficulty of illustrating the lotus, Rymsdyk remarks that:

> I should have liked to have met with a Real Lotus, a dried one, or one painted from Nature in Native Soil, or a transplanted one; in order to compare them with the various Pictures on Mummies or Monuments, &c. for in drawings of different Figures, I soon found the variety of Characters there is among the Egyptian Flowers and Fruits, and in Comparing even various Lotusses [sic], &c. I
Antiquarians have failed to deal successfully with the lotus, either because they have transcribed ‘bad Authors’ or confounded ‘different fruits, &c. together’. The inference in stating a wish for ‘a Real Lotus, a dried one, or one painted from Nature in Native Soil, or a transplanted one’ is clear: it is the lack of ‘a true Representation of Nature’ that leaves the demonstrations of antiquarians lacking ‘a right idea’. Antiquarian knowledge of the hieroglyphic script is undercut by an inability to grasp its mimetic reference to really existing objects. Text is again subject to the truth of the image. However, this is not simply a return to the dependence of text on image: much has changed. Rymsdyk’s difficulty in representing the lotus is as much a difficulty with finding correct textual sources as it is due to a lack of visual confirmation. The indecipherability of the hieroglyphs is as much the cause of this illegibility as any lack of access to appropriate objects of comparison. Both ‘bad Authors’ and visual confusion are marshalled by Rymsdyk to explain his failure to distinguish between the ‘various Pictures on Mummies and Monuments’ of the lotus: neither text nor image can represent its object without recourse to the confirmation of the other.

Knowledge is no longer only affirmed in the image, but also rendered a problem. In attempting to represent something that resists representation, Rymsdyk inevitably arrives at the limit of his anti-textual visual epistemology. As an enigma, the image’s status as difficult object of knowledge can only be articulated through the accompanying text. Thus, in Table IV the demonstrations explain that the figure represents an ‘unknown Subject’ that:

I drew chiefly to set the Antiquarians to work, for I must own it is like many other pieces whose use is not easily understood, unless perhaps it is that ornament which we find on the bottom of their Quivers, or part of the Decorations we see on the Roman Signals, &c. (p. 11)
The image is chosen not because of the knowledge it presents, but precisely because it is a challenge to knowledge, because it is a place of ignorance where the immediacy of visual experience is epistemologically insufficient. This *aporia* then becomes the breeding-ground for a scientific practice that is precisely textual, an opening for the ‘work’ of ‘Antiquarians’ to clarify and explain an object that the author is unable to describe, that the author is only able to depict. The image no longer depicts ‘so strong an Idea to the Mind’; instead, it is the place where the idea falters, weakens, must be taken up again by the text.

Though denigrated by Rymsdyk, text surreptitiously comes to play a central role in the organisation of knowledge in the *MB*. It stabilises images, defines the terms of readerly engagement, and integrates them within wider networks of scholarly knowledge production and social significance. While images are emphasised as the site at which this knowledge is invested, the reader is constantly thrown upon a complicated web of text, footnotes, asides and corrections in order to make sense of the illustrations before them.

**IV. Conclusion: Museum of prints, museum of words**

The *MB* was undoubtedly novel in its approach to the British Museum, not only identifying – as had previous accounts – the institution as a particularly visual regime, but connecting that insight to the need to represent it through a visual medium. Rymsdyk had claimed that the ‘principal and chief Aim’ in his choice of objects was ‘to make them instructive, entertaining, and useful’; this claim went hand in glove with the Museum’s own sense of purpose as we saw it develop in Chapter 1 (p. iii). While Rymsdyk’s choice of objects was far from unusual – one might even go as far as calling it unoriginal – his attempt to establish a representational methodology that ascribed positive epistemological content to the image was an important and sensitive response to the new, highly visual, framework of knowledge production developing around the public museum. Yet objects were represented not in place on display in the Museum, but surrounded by the white space of the page. Insofar as the *MB* represented the
Museum, it therefore did so through identifying objects of particular interest and focusing the reader’s attention upon them. It was only through this concentration of readerly attention that the ‘true Representation’ might convey any ‘Idea to the Mind’, rather than the vague and unsatisfactory ‘Effect of Nature’ beloved of ‘Nature-Menders’. The MB therefore reproduced the Museum not as a grand and distant hoard of objects, but as a mode of engagement with the material world, a visual epistemology predicated on the relationship between object, image and institution. Yet, just as visitors frequently complained of being thrown upon their sense of sight without the support of any guiding text, so Rymsdyk ultimately had recourse to ‘Demonstrations, References, or Paragraphs, and Notes of the Figures’ in order to give coherence to his representations. The ‘true Representation’ was not enough without the ‘few Words’ that might assist the reader in organising their visual engagement with Rymsdyk’s engravings. Though in the ascendancy, the image was not quite free from the confirmation of words.
Chapter 3

London Cork and Paris Plaster: Du Bourg, Fouquet, and the representation of remains in antiquarian modelling

On 11 October 1808 the Minister of the Interior for the French Empire, Emmanuel Crétet (1747-1809) wrote to the curator of the collection at the École d’architecture, Léon Dufourny (1754-1818), informing him that Louis-François Cassas (1756-1827) had offered his ‘abundant collection of models’ for sale to the École des Beaux Arts.¹ Crétet asked Dufourny to prepare a report on the collection, addressing the value of the models and the use served by their amalgamation with the collection already established at the gallery of architecture under his supervision. This was a substantial task: the models numbered at around eighty; were made in a variety of materials, including wood, cork, terra cotta, bronze, and plaster; and represented ancient monuments from across Greece and the Italian peninsula, as well as the Near and Middle East (and even two examples of ‘Celtic’ Neolithic remains from England).

Dufourny immediately set to work on his task along with two colleagues, the Secretary of the École d’architecture Antoine-Laurent-Thomas Vaudoyer (1756-1846) and the architect Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand (1760-1834). The ‘Rapport fait à son Excellence le ministre de l’Intérieur sur la collection de modèles d’Architecture de M. Cassas’ was quickly drafted, and delivered on 19 December, with an extensive analysis of the collection’s aesthetic and educational merits, a breakdown of its monetary value, and a catalogue of its models. To determine the value and utility of the Cassas collection, Dufourny resorted to defining it against the chief comparable resource of the period, the antiquarian publication:

¹ AN, AJ/52/446, all translations my own unless stated otherwise (for a full translation of this report see Appendix 1). Despite the urgency with which Dufourny worked, it would take another five years for the Ministry of the Interior to authorise the funds that would secure the collection for the gallery of architecture.
The best done drawings, the most meticulous engravings cannot in this regard replace, except in an imperfect manner, the inappreciable advantage of models which, exhibiting at once all the forms [of the edifice], develops them on all the sides and engraves them in the memory in indelible lines without requiring the effort of attention demanded by the comparison of plans, sections, and general elevations, [an effort] difficult to achieve even for the consummate artist; difficulties that are never entirely assuaged by even the most correct and the best presented drawing in perspective.²

Dufourny and his colleagues explained that the model wholly surpassed the various techniques of paper reproduction that had dominated antiquarian and architectural study. The difference is one of medium: whereas models, with their capacity to represent space in three dimensions, can claim to offer an immediate reproduction of the edifice or ruin, it is only with a demanding attentiveness that readers are provided a comparable experience in their study of two dimensional plans, sections and elevations. The Cassas models are praised for their fundamental break with previous representations, freeing the spectator from the need for the sustained labour of abstraction, substantiating themselves as reproductions by their empirical existence. Yet this innovative development was not all that it claimed to be. The metaphor of the model engraving ‘all the forms’ of the edifice with ‘indelible lines’ into the memory of the spectator is reliant for its meaning on the epistemological apparatus of the antiquarian publication; though lauded for its superiority, the model is still conceptually grounded in the work of the ‘drawing in perspective’².³ More often than not, these models in miniature were constructed out of the very antiquarian descriptions, measurements, and drawings that were targeted for denigration.⁴

² AJ/52/446.
³ The term ‘epistemological apparatus’ will be elaborated throughout this chapter, however a basic definition at this stage would be the framework by which knowledge can be constructed and maintained in a disciplinary field, including the technological and practical operations that give rise to knowledge, the material and objects that emerge from or give rise to such knowledge, alongside the edifice of conceptual and theoretical statements.
Though Dufourny is adamant that these media have been surpassed, they are in fact the practical underpinning that guides and frames the hand of the modeller.

In this chapter I will examine the development of this conflicted, complicit relationship between antiquarian modelling and the wider field of antiquarian representational practices according to their methods, materials, and modes. These practices were principally concerned with the problem of figuring architecture not only as a visual form, but as something that was spatially embodied: with the difficult and contradictory task of the bidimensional translation onto paper of an object fundamentally conceptualised through its extension in three dimensions. This is what Immanuel Kant, in his *Prolegomena*, called analogy: ‘which surely does not signify, as the word is usually taken, an imperfect similarity between two things, but rather a perfect similarity between two relations in wholly dissimilar things’. The analogical translation of the ‘relations’ between parts of an object allowed for its reproduction in a different form not usually amenable to the reliable representation of certain of its properties. In antiquarian literature, this typically meant the ability of the image to mediate alien materialities and spatial configurations. For instance, the process by which the lines of a perspective drawing could represent volume, or the antiquarian model made of plaster or cork, spanning a few feet, sitting in a museum, could become a truthful representation of a sepulchral monument.

To achieve this difficult task, a new epistemological apparatus took shape, with novel truth procedures that began to inflect and define the emergent disciplinary field of antiquarianism. The antiquarian epistemological apparatus was predicated on, and spawned, a complicated constellation of visual reproductions that – as we have already seen in Dufourny’s account of the work of the antiquarian draughtsman – modified and redefined one another in the minds of readers. The validity of this epistemological apparatus was tied to contemporary developments in analysis, description, and publication. Its claims to innovation and truthfulness emerged from a

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point of departure that was technical and experimental in nature, drawing attention to procedures that could successfully claim that what was described or depicted on the page was a direct translation of what was to be found in situ. The central method at work was the reduction of one form of art (or artifice) to another form, entirely inimical to it: the architectural edifice transposed onto the page, whether via the visual passage between the edifice and the engraving, or the metaphorical labour that transposed image into text. However, these extensive claims to a newly absolute consolidation of the act of seeing with that of reproduction raised the problem of representation. Representations, as the end-product of ‘technologies for simplifying, discriminating, and interrelating objects’ were ‘political’ points of disciplinary conflict as well as clarification for eighteenth-century antiquarianism. Developments in visual representation were the site of constant criticism and resistance. As the practice of antiquarian modelling began to develop and take its place in this constellation of reproductions from the 1760s onwards, it inevitably took part in this conflict over the purposes and capacities of antiquarian representation, offering both a site of rupture and confirmation for the antiquarian epistemological apparatus and its methodology.

I will address this development of the conditions of possibility for modelling through a study of two modellers: the Londoner Richard Du Bourg (1738-1826) and the Parisian Jean-Pierre Fouquet (1752-1829). The former practiced as a modeller in cork, the latter a modeller in plaster, and both were geographically divorced from the monuments they depicted. I will be focusing on Du Bourg’s two exhibitions which took place in London between 1774 and 1819, and the extensive selection of models by Fouquet included in Louis-François Cassas’s Parisian ‘Collection des chefs-d’oeuvre de l’architecture des différens peuples’ (galerie Cassas) between 1806 and 1813.

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I. Methods: Antiquarian reductions

The new epistemological apparatus that would give shape to eighteenth-century antiquarianism was the labour of many hands and eyes; however, the figure that came to exemplify this shift in methodology was Antoine Babuty Desgodetz (1653–1728). Between 1676-1677, over a period of sixteen months, Desgodetz examined the architectural remains of Rome on behalf of the French Académie royale d’architecture. The measurements, plans, elevations and details that he produced would eventually constitute Les édifices antiques de Rome. As Desgodetz himself admitted, he was not the first to measure these remains, nor was he the first to draw or describe them: before him had come such illustrious names as Sebastiano Serlio (1475-1554); Antonio Labacco (1495-1570); and Andrea Palladio (1508-1580). His innovation came from his approach to the monuments in relation to their publication history:

My first intention, when I undertook to measure with precision the antiquities of Rome, was therefore to know which of these highly reputed Authors should be followed, as having given true measurements. But when coming to these places and employing all the care necessary to have resolved this doubt, I was surprised to find another revelation that I had not sought, which was to see that those who had measured these antique edifices up until the present time did not do so with precision, and that there are none among all the drawings that we have to date, free from very considerable faults.7

Desgodetz’s ‘revelation’ – a clarification that marked him out as the architect of a new antiquarian methodology – was not the discovery of the ruins themselves, which had a long history of documentation, nor was it his impulse to take measurements (Palladio had done the same), but the initial gesture towards the disintegration of the prevailing model of authority that had held over the previous era. Desgodetz questioned previous accounts not as and when he found them suspect, but in toto, registering doubt as a fundamental premise of his investigation. The object of representation had become alienated from its textual history: the security of relation between text, image, and edifice was no longer to be assumed, but had to be grounded. This required a constant attentiveness to the space between media and object of representation, and

the development of technical strategies that might bridge it. In place of the previous model of authority came a new imperative over the following century, an antiquarian anti-authorialism that impelled the student just as much as the master to rediscover the edifice for themselves, to take new measurements and carefully re-examine the foundations of each authoritative account. Durand, a hundred years later in his introduction to the *Recueil et parallèle des édifices de tout genre* indicates the longevity of this principle, echoing Desgodetz: ‘the most celebrated works [...] must be put to the test of a new verification, before an assumption of any significance can be made on their authority’. Likewise the author was impelled to justify every statement and every representation. Desgodetz’s preface stylistically fixes the embodiment of truth in the attitude of the enquiring first person: ‘my first intention’; ‘I undertook’; ‘drawn myself’; ‘the measurements that I have taken’; ‘I have verified everything’. This rhetoric of experimentalism and the imperative to independent verification continued to have a powerful impact on antiquarianism, even redounding on Desgodetz himself.

A century later Jacques-Guillaume Legrand (1753-1807) – author of a detailed catalogue of Cassas’s collection of models – recounted journeying to Rome with a copy of the *Edifices*, quickly subjecting it to the analysis by reinspection that Desgodetz had performed on Palladio:

I made an attentive and scrupulous examination of this Author, comparing each plate of his work at the foot of the antique monuments, during my voyage to Rome in 1785, with citizen Molinos, my colleague and friend. This curious study made us recognise a multitude of faults in the configuration of the monuments. Consequently, we rectified these errors with notes and drawings traced in the very place, in the margin of the book; and we have additionally taken casts from many ornamental details, to demonstrate the differences that exist in the form and character of those which he has represented, and to prove to the most incredulous the absolute necessity of these verifications.\(^8\)


Underpinning Desgodetz’s development of this sceptical, experimental attitude was an incomparably modern technical arsenal that framed his method of approach to the edifice. Narrating his time at Rome, he complains of the difficulty of surveying an edifice buried below ground level and towering above the eye, explaining the vast effort he went to in order to surpass these limitations:

I saw that to disinter that which was buried, and to get as close as I desired to that which was elevated, would require expenditure and exertion far beyond my capacities. Nevertheless [...] I found the means of myself surveying all these ancient edifices, drawing the plans, and taking the elevations and profiles, with all the measures taken exactly, having observed the outlines of the ornaments in the different manners in which they were to be found. I checked the whole many times to confirm for myself with a certainty that I can answer for, having searched those parts that were buried, and erected ladders and other contraptions to approach those [parts] that were the most elevated, in order to see up close and to measure their heights with a compass the heights of all the components, from the general to the specific down to the smallest parts.  

Armed with ‘ladders and other contraptions’ as well as a compass and a rule, Desgodetz was able to take the most precise measurements not only of the base and foundations but also the entablature and uppermost ornaments of these edifices. Such careful measurements, undertaken in the Parisian foot, served an elaborative function, enabling a representation of the edifice ‘from the general to the specific down to the smallest parts’. It also played a powerful rhetorical role, securing the verifiability of the representation by the assertion of a direct relation between image and object. Accompanying these innovations in field work were developments in architectural and antiquarian draughtsmanship and engraving. Desgodetz explains that once back in Paris his institutional attachments and support gave him access to ‘the most skilled of those who do architectural engravings for the King’, who ensured that no expense was spared in ‘the perfection of this work’.  

At every stage of transposition – from edifice, to measurement, to drawing, to engraving, to print – there is a careful recapitulation of the procedures and techniques that guarantee the viability of the representation.

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10 Desgodetz, preface.
11 Desgodetz, preface.
The documentation of the monument was equally a documentation of the transition between media.

For Desgodetz the purpose of this exacting process of artistic recapitulation was to reduce the voluminous edifice into an equivalent form on paper. This process of reduction required a reconfiguration of the tridimensional object in such a way that the information of its extension in space might be preserved in a bidimensional representation. Through a mixture of technical ability and individual care the edifice was to be transfigured from one form into another by way of the competent hand, the careful eye, and the standardised measure. Marshalling the information he had painstakingly gathered from the site, Desgodetz and his engravers had to develop truth procedures that might support this reduction, enabling the evidence of the edifice to be meaningfully reproduced in a new form. Measurement, scale, and orthogonal projection, along with verbal description and corroboration were all deployed in an effort to retain the efficacy of the reduction. This effort, through the bidimensional reduction, to pursue the possibility of transmitting technical data without either falsification or loss of information, framed the possibility of knowledge within the field of antiquarianism.

In 1762 James Stuart (1712-1788) and Nicholas Revett (1720-1804) published the *Antiquities of Athens*. Their programme, as set out in their preface, was an explicit recapitulation of Desgodetz’s eighty years before, providing ‘accurate Representations’ of Grecian ‘Originals’:

> We have carefully examined as low as to the Foundation of every Building that we have copied [...] It may here be proper to observe, that we were provided with Instruments made in London, by the best Artists, one of which was a Rod of Brass, three feet long, most accurately divided by Mr Bird.\(^{12}\)

Like Desgodetz, Stuart and Revett drew attention to the herculean labour and cost required to expose buildings’ foundations to the competent hand and the deliberate

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eye of the antiquarian, and carefully identified themselves with the work of 
examination, measurement, and draughting: the end product the result of an 
enquiring first person (this time plural) whose investigative work shared with 
philosophical scepticism a focus on experimental discovery. In explaining their 
methodology, Stuart and Revett were equally preoccupied with the reduction of 
architectural forms onto the page. The act of reduction was attended by an explicit 
claim to a process of measurement and re-measurement that could ensure an 
analogical relation that would persist across media. Stuart and Revett were therefore 
also similarly exacting in their explanation of the technical apparatus that assured the 
accuracy of their measurements and drawings, their use of a rod of brass ‘most 
accurately divided’. These echoes between Desgodetz and Stuart and Revett attest to 
a novelty in the *Edifices* that was disciplinarily transformative, offering to the architect 
and antiquarian ‘juster Ideas’ and ‘Examples’ than ever before possible.

Stuart and Revett were not, however, the first antiquarians of their era to 
publish the ‘antiquities of Athens’. Four years earlier Julien-David Le Roy (1724-1803) 
had beaten them to the blow. Having apparently read Stuart and Revett’s ‘Prospectus’ 
for the *Antiquities*, Le Roy rushed to Athens and completed his work in under three 
months before publishing *Les Ruines des plus beaux monuments de la Grece* in 1758.13 
This work incorporated a number of scenic views, as well as more precise plans and 
sections.14 However, the actual precision of Le Roy’s work was the subject of much 
dispute, with Stuart spending a significant portion of the four years between Le Roy’s 
publication and his own revising the accompanying text into a critique of Le Roy’s 
failings and errors in attribution, description and, in particular, measurement. In the 
preface to the first volume of the *Antiquities* Stuart directly addresses Le Roy and his 
*Ruines*, arguing for a qualitative difference between the two works in just those terms 
that had guaranteed their own endeavour against error or failure:

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If nevertheless any one should doubt of the accuracy of the Measures, because they differ so greatly from those which Mons. Le Roy has given, I can only assure him, that in a considerable number of them, at the taking of which I assisted with Mr Revett, and in many others, which occasionally I have measured after him, I have always found reason to praise his exactness.\footnote{Stuart and Revett, \textit{The Antiquities of Athens}, I, vii-viii.}

Stuart accounts for the difference between Revett’s measurements and those of Le Roy by impugning Le Roy’s own exactitude and praising Revett’s, implying that Le Roy had failed to live up to the requirements laid down by Desgodetz. Drawing on the burgeoning expectation that an experiment should afford repeatability, Stuart assures the reader that he has confirmed Revett’s work. For Stuart, this inaccuracy in measurement damaged the viability, indeed the possibility, of Le Roy’s entire reductive practice, making his \textit{Ruines} a work of fantasy, unable to justify the relationship between edifice and page.

\section*{II. Methods: Fouquet’s explosions}

Jean-Pierre Fouquet would have been aware of this heated dispute between the two chief Greek antiquarians of the eighteenth century. Never having visited Greece or Italy, Fouquet made use of antiquarian publications to furnish himself with subjects for his models, owing a textual debt to numerous authors during his career. Indeed, Fouquet and his son are known to have possessed and worked from publications by Charles-Louis Clérisseau (1721-1820), Cassas (who would become a major patron of the elder Fouquet), and Durand (himself the first professor of architecture at the École centrale des travaux publics, and therefore likely to have worked with Fouquet on his models for the collection).\footnote{AN Minutier central, Etude 46, 836, 14.} In the case of Fouquet’s model(s) of the Corinthian Maison Carrée at Nîmes, we have confirmation that this design was taken from a textual source. In the auction catalogue to Clérisseau’s collection after his death in 1820, the model of the Maison Carrée is noted as having been executed by Fouquet
‘after designs by Mr. Clérisseau’. These designs were those found in Clérisseau’s *Antiquités de la France* (1778) (though there is also the tantalising possibility that for this commission Clérisseau allowed Fouquet to work directly from his own drafts). Fouquet was thus involved in the practice of explosion (the counterpart to reduction), transforming bidimensional images into tridimensional models in miniature of Greek and Roman edifices. Using the data made available in these publications, Fouquet approximated edifices’ extension in space. After its reduction for publication, the edifice was to be re-embodied through a reliance on the measurements that had originally secured the verifiability of the published illustrations. His models therefore held a complicated place in the constellation of antiquarian reproductions; while the rhetoric around modelling supposed them to be reproducing a truer, more immediate image of the edifice, they nonetheless depended on – and disclosed the necessity of – bidimensional representations: they were another step along the chain.

To illustrate this use of antiquarian prints in the production of models, it is worth considering how Fouquet came to construct his model of the Temple of Augustus at Pola in Istria. By the middle of the 1780s Fouquet had become a sought-after artist, and his antiquarian models were purchased by many significant private collectors and public institutions, both before and after the Revolution. In 1794 the École centrale des travaux publics (later the École polytechnique) was established. Between 1 November 1794 and 19 June 1797 Fouquet was appointed its ‘artist Modeller in plaster’ alongside two other modellers in wood. In that time he executed four models at the school: the Acropolis at Athens; the Ionic Temple on the banks of the Ilissus; arches planned for rooms at the newly established school; and the Temple of Augustus at Pola. The final model executed at the school, the Temple at Pola in

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19 EP, VII, 2c, 1, carton 1, 1796; the school also purchased another eleven models from Fouquet’s studio, alongside a number of casts for illustrating lectures on masonry.
Istria, Corinthian order’ is registered as having been ‘taken from the work of Citizen Le Roy’. This was a composite of the plate titled ‘Vue d’un Temple de Pola en Istrie’ and the plans, sections and elevations on plates 20 and 21 in Les Ruines.

Examining the other models made for or sold to the École, one finds examples of temples from Paestum, Baalbek, Palmyra and Rome. Without the opportunity to draw – let alone model – on site from the originals, Fouquet must have also worked these up from the two dimensional plans, elevations, profiles, and views to be found in such celebrated works as Desgodetz’ Edifices, Robert Wood’s (1717-71) Les ruines de Palmyre (1753) and Les ruines de Balbec (1757), and one of the many publications of the ruins of Paestum made during the 1760s and 1770s, probably the extraordinarily inaccurate views found in Jean-Claude Richard de Saint-Non’s (1727-1791) Voyage pittoresque ou description des royaumes de Naples et de Sicile (1781-1786) or perhaps even Giambattista Piranesi’s (1720-1778) more accomplished Avanzi degli Edifici di Pesto (1777-1778).

An inventory drawn up by the inspector of the École Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées for the Comité de Salut Public on 28 Brumaire year 3 (18 November 1794) lists the ‘models in Plaster executed by the Citizen Fouquet, belonging to the nation and originating from the Cabinet of [the Count of] Choiseul’. These models were made for the Count of Choiseul-Gouffier (1752-1817) some time before the revolutionary period, probably early in the 1780s after his return from Greece, before or immediately after he travelled back to Constantinople as French ambassador in 1784. It is likely that the Count used them to corroborate his account in the Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce (1782), as well as offering a material demonstration of his taste and knowledge to visitors. The Ponts et Chaussées list of Choiseul-Gouffier’s models shows a similar group to that Fouquet would make a decade later for the École Centrale des Travaux Publics: included among the models were the Temple of Neptune at Palmyra; the Tower of the Winds (alongside many other Athenian monuments); a temple from Baalbek; and another from Paestum. The working up from published

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20 EP, VII, 2c, 1, carton 1, 1796.
sources of the models at the École Centrale was not a novelty or an exception, but demonstrated a considered and established practice that had persisted over time, from Kingdom to Republic.

Beside the listing for each model is carefully inscribed its scale (the first fourteen are four ‘lignes’ – or twelfths of an inch – per foot, or 1:36; the final eight two ‘lignes’ per foot, or 1:72), and below that the committee is informed that all the models from Choiseul-Gouffier’s collection ‘are executed to the greatest perfection’. This phrase reappears nearly four months later on 17 Pluviôse Year 3 (5 February 1795) in the ‘Inventaire des modèles de Monuments antiques tant de la Grèce que d’Italie qui étoient dans une Maison de Choiseul Gouffier’. This report again includes an extensive list of monuments both Greek and Roman, Athenian and Levantine, including the familiar Temple of Pola in Istria, valued elsewhere at 400 livres. Its author is approving of these models, echoing the previous report in remarking on the first page that ‘they are executed in Talc to the greatest perfection’. The author was David Le Roy himself, accompanied by the architect François-Jacques De Lannoy (1755–1835). Did Le Roy recognise his own hand in Fouquet’s models? In any case, as a witness to the Greek originals and the most trusted French philhellene of his epoch Le Roy appears happy to have endorsed Fouquet’s models not only as reasonable approximations, but as meriting the highest approbation. In this report more information is also given on Fouquet’s process: describing how the Choiseul-Gouffier models ‘had been executed from the designs of Fouquet by Citizen Fouquet residing in the house holding these models’. This enigmatic passage seems to describe a second, mediating stage in Fouquet’s modelling process, where measurements and drawings taken from antiquarian books could be worked into an adequate schematic on paper for the production of the plaster model in the workshop. Rather than working from antiquarian prints or publications lying open on the table beside models in the middle of construction, it is more likely that Fouquet sought out and studied these

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21 AN, AF/II/80/592.
22 AN, F/17/1265, dossier 3; the Fouquet report is found at AJ/52/446.
publications elsewhere, before taking his purpose-made schematics back to his workshop.

In Guillaume Legrand’s catalogue of Cassas’s exhibition, the Collection des chefs-d’œuvre de l’architecture des différens peuples, Fouquet’s Temple of Augustus at Pola appears once more, made of talc. In his description of the monument Legrand is unusually preoccupied with its bibliography. He gives several sources, including Vitruvius, for his account of the edifice and its modelled double, before correcting their errors by referring to Cassas’s own drawings of the Temple:

We notice here, on the portico frieze, at the beginning and at the end of the inscription, two small Victories wearing crowns, ingenious details which escaped Palladio and Mr David Leroy, who first published this antiquity, and which since then Mr Clérisseau made known in the work on Dalmatia, published in London in 1764; and finally Mr Cassas, in the voyage pittoresque de l’Istrie et de la Dalmatie, printed in Paris, in 1802, in folio embellished with 60 plates, to which one can turn in order to become familiar with the history and antiquities of this country.

Palladio and Le Roy are censured for failing to notice the crowned victories accompanying the inscription on the portico frieze, while Clérisseau and Cassas are praised for their perceptiveness in noting the figures. Legrand is also exceptionally careful in this description to give the dimensions of the temple, both its external extent and the diameter of its columns:

This little monument, which is only 20 feet internally, and whose columns are only 2 feet 6 inches 4 lines in diameter, is one of the most elegant productions of architecture; it employs the Corinthian order with a richness which is suited to it, but without being overwhelmed with ornaments.

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25 Werner Szambien has incorrectly stated that Clérisseau too was attacked by Legrand for this oversight, however his view of the Temple clearly includes the crowned victories.
26 Legrand, Collection, p.169.
An explanation for this bibliographical preoccupation and rare reference to measurements is Legrand’s concern with privileging Cassas’s depiction of the edifice. Both the figure for the internal dimensions of the temple and the diameter of its columns come from Cassas’s *Voyage pittoresque de l’Istrie et de la Dalmatie*. Likewise, the direction of the spectator toward an ornamental feature that did not figure in Palladio’s or Le Roy’s engravings of the edifice appears to emphasise Cassas’s version of the Temple over those of other antiquarians. Legrand is here working to establish a citational hierarchy with Cassas at its head, and with Fouquet’s model offering immediate proof of his superiority. Given these features would not have appeared on earlier versions of the model made after Le Roy’s depiction, this indicates the likelihood that Fouquet may have revised his Temple of Augustus at Pola for the galerie Cassas. For the purposes of this new commission Fouquet may have either redesigned his plans in order to feature these newly published details, or else quickly reconfigured a pre-existing model that had already been cast. Indeed, since Fouquet appears to have worked ‘under the direction’ of Cassas, the (re)production of this subject might even have been the result of a collaborative process between collector and artist. Fouquet’s practice was thus not fixed, but changed in parallel with developments in French and European antiquarian culture, adapting to new information, apparently careful to maintain claims to immediacy in representation through a paradoxical attentiveness to new publications.

Despite these many complicities between models and their various supports, Legrand, like Dufourny, was careful in his introduction to the catalogue to rhetorically distance the antiquarian model from such troubling relations of derivation, disagreement, or modification. It is ‘correct scales, alone’ that ‘offer a powerful means of instruction of its kind’, it is through the explosive articulation of the subject in tridimensional form through the medium of a plaster model that the edifice gains a conceptual content in the museum.²⁷ In this claim we see the source for Dufourny’s assertion two years later, in his report, that the model offered an entirely new medium

²⁷ Legrand, *Collection*, p.x.
of antiquarian access. The terms Dufourny employed are more or less identical to
those found in Legrand’s guide (Dufourny had in fact plagiarised much of his report
from Legrand):

The variety of forms adopted by each of these peoples cannot be felt except
through relief models [...] The best done drawings, the most meticulous
engravings, could not have replaced for this object the incomparable advantage
of models which thus make all the forms contrast with one another, and
engrave them in the memory in indelible lines without requiring the effort of
attention demanded by the comparison of plans, sections, and elevations
difficult to properly conceive even for the artist, difficulties that are never
entirely resolved by even the most correct and the best presented perspective
drawing.28

Legrand emphasised the model’s revolutionary separation from previous modes of
representation, even as they were placed side by side both in catalogues and
museums. In its exceptional capacity to displace and replace volume in new
institutional environments – its explosive character in relation to antiquarian
reductions – the model allows for a representation of architectural form and
distribution far in excess of anything provided by the abstracting operations of the plan
and section. Legrand, like Dufourny later, explained that the tridimensional model
wholly surpassed the technical arsenal of drawings that informed it. Again, even ‘the
best done’ drawings and ‘the most meticulous’ engravings, are identified as the site of
difficulty for the reader trying to come to terms with the incongruence between a
bidimensional reduction and a tridimensional form. Nor is this only a problem for the
uneducated spectator or the amateur: it reaches to the very heart of artistic and
architectural practice, requiring attention and effort ‘even for the artist’, a figure
stalked by this same disparity as he leafs through volumes of antiquities. The model,
though constructed out of measurements and drawings from the publications of
antiquaries, is supposed to fundamentally break with these media. Though reliant on
the truth procedures of ‘plans, sections, and elevations’ the model rendered them
invisible, substantiating its truth by the empirical fact of its extension in space. The
rhetoric of immediacy that circulates around the antiquarian model served to establish

28 Legrand, Collection, pp.xi-xii.
a new spectatorial position. Likewise, the contrasting of forms was no longer the result of comparative work reduced with labour onto the page (before in turn being subjected to a painful decoding by the reader), but now an engraving directly onto the memory of the spectator by way of the model: careful and prolonged ‘attention’ was no longer needed to gain comprehension of the edifice, instead one had only to refer directly to the ‘indelible lines’ of the model. It was as if the edifice had appeared for the first time to an amazed Parisian public, newly initiated into the physical presence of classical architectural form by the dimensions and movement of that form itself.

The difficulty of translating information from page to plaster was inevitably never as settled as Legrand encouraged readers to believe. Fouquet’s models were ultimately contingent on the limitations of their sources. In drawing the proportions of his models from publications, Fouquet had to make do with only partial dimensions, with many crucial measurements entirely absent from plans and sections, and those given often unreliable or even contradictory. In the case of the Temple of Augustus at Pola the question of ratio was particularly fraught. From a later report on the Cassas collection, we know that this model measured 59 centimetres high by 95 centimetres long.29 Given the disparity in units of measurement it is difficult to give a ratio with total precision, however this would indicate that the model was close to 1:14 after the measurements given by Cassas.30 More difficult still is the relationship between these measurements and the actual size of the temple, which stands at 8.05 metres in breadth and 17.65 in length.31 This would mean that the ratio of the model in relation to the actual temple would be just over 1:17 if measured from the length of the building. The ‘correct scale’, so valued by Legrand and Cassas as a ‘powerful means of instruction’ is no longer as clear cut, with the model offering a significantly warped representation of the temple’s dimensions. The revolutionary shift in antiquarian representation was neither as absolute, or unadulterated, as Legrand grandiosely

29 AN, AJ/52/454.
30 In his account of the galerie Cassas Werner Szambien describes the ratio of the model as ‘around 1:20’ but it is not clear how he arrived at this figure, cf. Le Musée d’architecture, p.169.
claimed, relying instead on a textual support that it wished to do away with, but upon which its relation to the original edifice was entirely contingent. This emphasises quite how important rhetorical strategies of verisimilitude – both drawn from and in opposition to antiquarian publications – could be in establishing the validity of modelling as a method of representation, in consolidating the act of seeing with that of reproducing, and securing the passage between such heterogeneous media. With models far from conforming to an exact ratio with their sources, it becomes even more apparent how integral the external emphasis on their verification and immediacy was to their efficacy as antiquarian representations.

III. Methods: Du Bourg’s explosions

Recourse to an apparatus of antiquarian procedures and reproductions is also central to the practice of explosion adopted by Du Bourg. However, while Fouquet was entirely dependent on secondary sources, justifying his practice with reference to them, Du Bourg traded on his first-hand experience of Rome as justification for his models. Accounts of his exhibition were replete with claims of verisimilitude founded on this experience: an advert from 1802, often reprinted, describes the models ‘all from scale [...] as the originals, with the greatest nicety, taken during actual residence of nine years’. In this section I will explore the significance of this claim for Du Bourg’s exhibitions, paying particular attention to how it shaped perceptions of his modelling practice. I will also try to understand the extent to which this claim really described his method, and that to which it was a rhetorical trope that hid a practice based on a more complicated incorporation of secondary sources.

Baptised on the 4th of February 1738 in Saint Pancras Parish, Du Bourg was the son of ‘Henry & Sarah De Bour’, a French immigrant from Le Catelet in Normandy and

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32 Cuisset, pp.236-37.
33 The Morning Post and Gazetteer, 13 March 1802.
his English wife. Du Bourg’s early professional training came in drawing. In the mid-1750s he studied at the second St. Martin’s Lane Academy founded by Hogarth in 1735, learning alongside ‘Messrs Griggs, Rowe, [...] J. Taylor, J.S. Dance, J. Seton, and T. Radcliffe’ under the supervision of the painter and engraver Francis Hayman. Decades later one of Du Bourg’s fellow students, John Taylor, would nostalgically remember them as ‘seven British worthies as good, if not so wise, as the seven of Greece’. In 1755 Du Bourg won fourth place and an award of two guineas for his submission of ‘a head of St. Paul’ to a competition for drawings by artists between the age of fourteen and seventeen being administered by the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. Sometime after this Du Bourg travelled to Italy: in his published travels, Benjamin Silliman (1779-1864) reported that ‘this very ingenious man, Du Bourg, a Frenchman, from an actual residence of nine years in Italy, gained the information necessary for the execution of his wonderful work’, and ‘has contrived by the aid of cork alone, with a little cement and paint, to give perfect copies of some of the most admired ruins of antiquity’. Though Du Bourg is not listed in Richard

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34 London, London Metropolitan Archives, Parish of Saint Pancras register of Baptisms, P90/PAN1/2; St James, Spanish Place, Westminster: Baptisms 1732-1848 and Marriages 1732-1845, in Miscellaneous London District Transcriptions, 2 vols (London: Catholic Family History Society), II [on CD], his parents had been married a year earlier on the 23rd of May 1737 at the Spanish Chapel in London. His father is listed in the marriage records as a Henricus Dubourg ‘of Catelet in Normandy’, his mother ‘Sarah Lunn of London non-Catholic.’ This Catholic heritage goes some way to explaining his baptism in Saint Pancras parish, as at the time it was known for accepting Roman Catholic parishioners, its church-yard ‘a general burying place for persons of the Romish religion’, The Ambulator: Or the Stranger’s Companion in a Tour Round London (London: J. Bew, 1774), p.135.


36 Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce, A Register of the Premiums and Bounties given by the Society instituted at London for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce, From the original institution in the year MDCCCLIV, to the year MDCCCLXXVI inclusive (London: the author, 1778); this competition was also reported in the Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure, January 1755, p.45; Robert Dossie, Memoirs of Agriculture, and other Oeconomical Arts, 3 vols (London: C. Nourse, 1768-1782), III (1782), 395.

37 Benjamin Silliman, A Journal of Travels in England, Holland and Scotland, and of two passages over the Atlantic, in the years 1805 and 1806; with considerable additions, principally from the original manuscripts of the author, 3 vols (New Haven: S. Converse, 1820), I, 246-47.
Hayward’s (1728-1800) list of British travellers to Rome, this may be because, as demonstrated by Silliman, he was often identified as a Frenchman. The residence would have concluded by 1771 when he first exhibited a model of the Temple of Fortuna Virilis in Rome at the annual exhibition of the Royal Society of Artists of Great Britain in Spring Gardens, giving his address as ‘Mr Rogers’s, ironmonger, in Bread-street, Cheapside’. The residence in Italy therefore probably spanned most of the 1760s. It was during this extended period in Italy that Du Bourg first learnt the craft of cork modelling, almost certainly from one of the artists working in Rome at the time.

A lot of weight is placed by advertisements on these nine years in Rome, and this may well have furnished Du Bourg with his own drawings and measurements, as well as the usual picturesque vedute acquired by English tourists. He could have then produced his models back in London from these documents. Such is the contemporary account given by Robert Dossie (1717-77) in his *Memoirs of Agriculture*:

> After some more exercise in designing, he made it his study particularly to delineate Buildings of remarkable Architecture; and during a residence of some years at Rome, he took such minutely accurate Plans, Elevations, and Sections of many venerable remains of Antiquity, as served for constructing, with a material so happily adapted to the purpose, as Cork, several Edifices and Ruins expressively resembling their originals.

Du Bourg’s modelling practice was thus seen to emerge directly from a skill in architectural drawing that reduced the ‘venerable remains of Antiquity’ to two dimensions on the page. His ‘minutely accurate Plans, Elevations, and Sections’ provided – just as antiquarian publications had done so for Fouquet – the framework from which the model was to be constructed. Though there is no record of Du Bourg

40 *The Morning Chronicle*, 12 April 1802.
41 Dossie, III, 395.
having learnt architectural drawing and measurement, such lessons might have comprised the ‘exercise in designing’ that Dossie notes, and Richard Gillespie has suggested that the gap in our record of Du Bourg’s life between 1755 and his trip to Rome could be explained by his having undertaken ‘training in an architectural practice, or picked up other work as a journeyman artist and engraver, designing advertising handbills, painting theatre scenery, carriages or signs, or finding work as a portrait painter for the urban middle class’.  It is also possible that he could have learnt these more technical architectural skills while in Rome, either before or at the same time as training in cork modelling. James Stuart had travelled to Rome as a lowly fan-painter before acquiring his skill in draughtsmanship. One of Du Bourg’s classmates at the St. Martin’s Lane Academy, Nathaniel Dance (1735-1811), was in Rome at the same time with his brother, the architect George Dance the Younger (1741-1825), and it is possible that he could have studied the ruins of Rome alongside either of them. Such a method may explain why his modelling career, which stretched well into the era of the Greek Revival, was largely restricted to Roman subjects, alongside French monuments typically found on the route of the Grand Tour.

Du Bourg’s Neapolitan and Roman contemporaries (and potentially masters) in cork modelling deployed a variety of different practices in relation to their sources. While Italian modellers typically worked from the designs of others, either in print or draft, it was not unheard of for them to work from their own drawings. Augusto Rosa (1738-1784) accompanied Piranesi on his trip to Paestum in 1777 to take measurements and views. In a letter to Sir Roger Newdigate, Charles Parker indicated that this was in order to produce antiquarian models for the international market:

Poor Piranesi before he died took drawings of the Temples at Pestum & Rosa went with him to take measures in order to form models in Cork. I wish to know whether you would like a Model of the Great Temple, he has sent 2 or 3 to England.

Given the notorious unreliability of publications on Paestum in this period (in part the reason for Piranesi’s trip south), it could be that this marked an exception and necessity for Rosa if he were to produce satisfactory models of the Paestum temples. Rosa was thus at the very least capable of drawing plans, and could supplement the limitations of textual sources where required. Such conjectures are reinforced by Thomas Jones (1742-1803), another pupil at St. Martin’s Lane, who notes that while lodging in his house with William Pars, Rosa ‘called himself an Architect’, possibly a reference to his capacity for architectural draughtsmanship.45

The Neapolitan Giovanni Altieri (fl.1767-1790) was probably the first modeller to work in Rome, arriving in 1767. Altieri seems to have largely worked from publications and prints, but also took a number of individual commissions requiring him to work directly from the drawings of tourists or their draughtsmen. In a letter to the Society of Antiquaries, painter and art dealer Thomas Jenkins explained the process behind the production of his model of the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli:

a Man of very singular Talents having lately appeared at Rome, whose Merit consists in making Models of the Antiquities, it raised in Mr Jenkins a Desire to have one of the most respectable ones executed by him; & chose that usually called the Sibys Temple at Tivoli; being one of the most elegant & pittoresque Objects in that Country, as well as the most singular in point of Architecture.

The Roman architect Giovanni Stern (1734-1794) was commissioned by Jenkins to take plans and measurements of the building. Once completed these plans were given to Altieri to work up a model. This, however, was not the end of the process:

to compleat the Imitation, Mr James Forrester, a Countryman, & an ingenious Landscape Painter, has been so obliging as to colour the various Parts of it in its proper Tints; which has so good an Effect, as to become the Admiration of all who have seen it.46

45 ‘Memoir of Thomas Jones’, Walpole Society, 32 (1946-1948), 1-142 (p.87).
Finally, the Irish painter James Forrester (1724-1779) was given the task of colouring the model. This offers an indication of the extent of collaboration between artists and antiquarians in the production of models. Such a collaborative method appears not to have been an exception. Over a decade later another British visitor to Rome, the young architect Thomas Hardwick (1752-1829), employed Altieri to produce a model adapted from his own plans and elevations. In a letter to the Society of Antiquaries in 1785 Hardwick explains the process behind the model while offering it as a gift:

I have the honour of sending you for the inspection of the Society a model of the remains of the amphitheatre of Flavius Vespasian at Rome, which from the minuteness and accuracy with which it is executed, I flatter myself will deserve their attention. [...] As the Coloseum [sic] is one of the noblest remains of Roman grandeur, and as authors had differed in opinion on some essential points, I determined during my residence in Rome to get an exact and perfect model of it constructed from my own actual measurements and inspection. For this purpose I employed one Giovanni Altieri, an ingenious Neapolitan (the same who I was afterwards informed had executed a model of the Sibyls temple at Tivoli, now in the possession of the Society); and in order to have it more accurate than any I had seen, I obtained permission to remove so much of the ground which in a long series of years had accumulated from various causes against the building, as might furnish me with the means of discovering those parts of the edifice which had for centuries lain concealed.47

Unhappy with Desgodetz’s account of the Colosseum, Hardwick took his own measurements, excavating the site and finding that while the Edifices ‘tells us that where he happened to dig the building was in so ruinous a state that he could only venture at conjectures as to its original form’, his own ‘description’ proved such ‘conjectures’ to be ‘erroneous’.48 Consequently Hardwick began to take his own measurements and drawings. One of those still extant, from 1778, is of the consecutive orders on the Colosseum’s façade, and includes instructions for ‘the Model to be made 1/10 of an Inch to a Foot’ (1/120).49 From a very early stage in its

47 Thomas Hardwick, ‘Observations on the Remains of the Amphitheatre of Flavius Vespasian at Rome, as it was in the year 1777’, Archaeologia, 7 (1785), 369-73 (pp.369-70).
48 Hardwick, p.370.
production, Hardwick’s Colosseum participated in the antiquarian epistemological apparatus inaugurated by Desgodetz, deploying a similar emphasis on individual confirmation and excavation to validate the model, even as it sought to undercut Desgodetz’s own work. Aware of the representational capacity of the model, Hardwick deployed it as evidence for his critique of Desgodetz. At the same time, Hardwick also sought to justify the novelty of the model in relation to previous representations of the Colosseum through a methodology indebted to Desgodetz.

Like Altieri, despite practicing in close proximity to his subjects it appears that the Roman modeller Antonio Chichi (1743-1816) used the designs of others to compose his models: principally Palladio’s *Quattro libri* for most of his depictions of the temples of Rome and Tivoli; and Desgodetz’s *Édifices* (republished in Rome in 1771) for the Portico of Octavia (missing in Palladio). For his models of the aqueducts and the Pyramid of Cestius, Chichi employed the engravings and plans of Piranesi, even reproducing his errors despite the proximity of his studio to the monument.  

While apparently largely relying on his own store of drawings and designs, Du Bourg could, like his Italian counterparts, also employ the work of others. The earliest examples of Greek architecture in Du Bourg’s exhibition were two Doric temples from Paestum. Though isolated from Rome, Paestum would not have been an impossible voyage for the young artist to make: John Soane would make the same journey with Frederick Hervey, Bishop of Derry in March 1779. However, the first record of Du Bourg’s Paestum models comes in 1784, at least thirteen years after his return to England, with a series of adverts published in the *Morning Herald* and the *Morning Post*. Such a chronology increases the likelihood of his having used antiquarian publications to either design or supplement his work. Though it is possible he had been


*Lecocq*, p.232.


saving drawings of these ruins for later modelling, it is equally likely that Du Bourg, with an entrepreneurial ear to the ground, saw the growing Greek Revival as a potential market, both shoring up his antiquarian credentials, and drawing in a new and curious clientele. Interest in the ruins at Paestum had been steadily growing since their discovery in the 1740s, and by the 1770s they had begun to be incorporated into the larger circuit of the Grand Tour. By this point the format and layout of Du Bourg’s exhibition had already been established, and it seems likely that these models, rather than the long-deferred adaptation of drawings from his time in Italy, were in fact new works, drawn from the increasing number of publications of the ruins at Paestum.  

More definite evidence of Du Bourg’s use of secondary sources appears in the 1785 catalogue to his exhibition at Spring Gardens. Responding to the growing force of the Greek Revival, this catalogue lists five Attic models: the ‘Remains of the Portico of the Temple of Augustus’; ‘the Tower of the Winds’; ‘a Monument erected by Thrasyllus on a Victory he gained in the Athletic Games’; ‘the Remains of the Aqueduct of Adrian at Athens’; and ‘a Monument erected in Honour of Caius Julius Philopappus’. While all of these monuments appear in one of the first three volumes of Stuart and Revett’s Antiquities of Athens, only the first had appeared in print by 1785, so it is unlike to be the source of Du Bourg’s models. More likely is that Du Bourg came to possess either an edition of Le Roy’s Ruines des plus beaux Monuments de la Grece (1758), or Robert Sayer’s pirated Ruins of Athens with remains and other valuable antiquities in Greece (1759) and drew on it for the plans of his five Athenian models. This would explain the misidentification of the Choragic Monument of Thrasyllus as commemorating a victory in athletics. A few years after this model appeared in the exhibition, Stuart in the second volume of the Antiquities in 1788 would explain that the identification proposed by Du Bourg was incorrect: ‘on the front of the building are three inscriptions, recording victories obtained either in the Odeum or in the theatre, which

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54 Mr. Du Bourg’s Exhibition of Large Models cut in Cork, of the Remains of Capital Buildings, in and near Rome and in England, to be seen At the Great Room, Spring Gardens, Late Cox’s Museum (London: the author, [1785]).
prove it to have been a Choragic monument’.\textsuperscript{55} While it would seem more plausible that the Englishman Sayer would be Du Bourg’s source for this model, he identifies this building only as ‘the Monument of Thrasyllus’ and is more circumspect, suggesting the monument might commemorate a ‘Game, or Play’.\textsuperscript{56} In contrast, Le Roy’s identification closely mirrors the name given to the model in the catalogue, unambiguously supporting the theory of the building as an athletic monument: ‘a Monument erected by Thrasyllus, in memory of a Victory he won in the Athletic Games’.\textsuperscript{57} Du Bourg, the son of a Frenchman and a seasoned tourist, would have translated this with ease. It thus appears certain that Le Roy, by then a celebrated author, was the source for Du Bourg’s Greek monuments, just as he would be for Fouquet. This experiment in the Greek Revival appears not to have justified the outlay, and in his second exhibition Du Bourg reduced the Greek contingent of models to only two: a Doric Temple from Paestum, and the Portico of the Temple of Augustus.\textsuperscript{58} The first of these is struck through in all extant catalogues, indicating that it was probably removed from the exhibition, or sold, while the latter, though located in Athens, was erected in honour of the goddess Rome and Octavian Augustus, and is therefore more in keeping with the Roman style that dominated the rest of the exhibition.

As in the case of Fouquet in Paris, Du Bourg’s claims to immediacy are more complicated than at first sight. Though his models were praised, as with Fouquet’s, for their transformative impact on eighteenth-century practices of antiquarian reproduction – one reviewer described them as ‘the only invention that has ever been yet discovered, to convey a striking and just image to the spectator of the ruins of antiquity’ – they were equally reliant on the epistemological apparatus that they

\textsuperscript{57} Le Roy, \textit{Les Ruines des plus beaux Monuments de la Grece}, I, 14, ‘un Monument élevé par Trasyllus, en mémoire d’une Victoire qu’il remporta dans des Jeux Athlétiques’.
supposedly transcended. Principally recognised as a modeller after his own ‘minutely accurate Plans, Elevations, and Sections’ taken during his nine year residence in Rome, Du Bourg could also draw directly on antiquarian reductions to bolster or develop his exhibition when necessary. This is particularly clear in the case of his relationship to the Greek Revival, where his lack of first-hand drawings is satisfied, as with Fouquet, by a turn to Le Roy’s *Ruines*. Even where Du Bourg could rely on his own drawings, they were inevitably contingent on the same epistemological apparatus as other antiquarian representations. Du Bourg’s artistic labour was explicitly inscribed within the constellation of reproductions in reduction that characterised the development of eighteenth-century antiquarianism.

IV. Materialities: Du Bourg’s ruination

Tied to the epistemological apparatus of eighteenth-century antiquarianism and its constellation of reproductions, modellers also had to contend with the methodological problem of what was to be represented. The eighteenth-century antiquarian had to work from remains that were at best defaced and at worst all but non-existent; as a result they frequently had to decide what object or aspect was to be represented, and consequently when and how to intervene in the record. At one extreme was the premise that the representation should reproduce remains as they were to be found, as ruins or fragments; at the other extreme was the complete reconstruction of the edifice.

Desgodetz’s *Edifices* offered an early delineation of this contradiction between object and representation, presenting these conflicting imperatives in documentation as a motor in his own practice:

The drawings that I have given represent the edifices in the state in which they are to be found, and I have refrained from imitating the Authors who were not

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59 *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligence*, 10 May 1779.
contented with restoring them, but who rebuilt them as if new, constructing a grand temple on three columns which remain.\textsuperscript{60}

The representation would be free from the fantastical speculation that led the architect or artist to ‘rebuil[d]’ the edifice. Alluding to Palladio’s \textit{I Quattro Libri dell’Architettura} (1570), Desgodetz criticises his highly fantastical elevation of the Temple of Castor and Pollux, which took the three ruined columns found at the Roman Forum and extrapolated a complete temple. Palladio himself asserted this speculative bent in his work, announcing that in the \textit{Quattro libri} his intention was to ‘deduce from [ruins] what they must have been like when they were complete’.\textsuperscript{61} Yet, despite censuring Palladio for his fantasies, Desgodetz’s process was not entirely free from speculation. The second, conflicting procedure announced by Desgodetz was the restoration of elements within a monument through the extrapolation of reliable or irrefutable data. The process is tentative, and much more limited in scope than that pursued by Palladio, however it is an acknowledgement of the pressure in antiquarian research not only to present, but also to interpret.

As the question of the limits of restorative work – and that of antiquarian reproductions – continued to be posed, these two conflicting representational tendencies, the temple ‘in the state in which [it is] to be found’, and ‘rebuilt’ would come into sharp relief over the course of the eighteenth century. The antagonism between the ruin and its reconstruction, as Desgodetz himself attests, demanded from authors constant attention to the interplays of actual and ideal, of representation and purpose. Was the antiquarian expected to depict the clear-cut line of architectonic form, or the confusion of what remained? \textit{How} and \textit{why} should the antiquarian representation intervene in its object? The problem of the relationship between concept and concretion was not limited to the realm of antiquarian publication, but also took hold in modelling, requiring modellers to methodically contend with a series of choices. Depending on the decisions of the modeller, the finished product could be

\textsuperscript{60} Desgodetz, preface.
reproductive of either – at one extreme – an approximation of the ruinscape as if discovered in situ, or – at the other – the ideal form of the ‘original’ edifice, free from disfigurement. Responses to this choice were often guided by the materials being modelled, and the cultural expectations that surrounded them.

In the case of Du Bourg’s exhibition, the priority lay in documenting ruins ‘in the state in which they are to be found’. From the earliest, numerous advertisements emphasise that his models ‘are executed in such a manner as to convey the most perfect idea to the beholders’. Such a ‘perfect idea’ was not of a representation of the edifice as if newly built, but models as documents of ‘the present state of the originals’. On the renewal of his exhibition at the end of the century, Du Bourg is even more insistent on this fact, describing the collection in advertisements as composed of the ‘Ruins in and near Rome and Naples’. The title to his 1810 catalogue explicitly incorporates a reference to his ‘nine years’ in Rome as evidence for the models’ truthful reproduction of ‘every decay of Time and tint of Colour, as the Originals, with the greatest nicety’. Visitors, for their part, were quick to absorb and respond to this tendency in the models, often drawing on touristic or antiquarian credentials in their encomiums. ‘M.N.’, writing to the Gazetteer in 1778, recounted his agreeable surprise ‘on seeing these models so perfectly well executed (the originals of which I had the pleasure of seeing but a few months past)’, and pronounced them ‘done with the greatest accuracy’. A reviewer in the Morning Herald was even more forceful:

To this true representation of the beautiful outline, Mr Du Bourg has contrived to give every natural tint incident to the materials of the building, and also those venerable embossments, as it were, which all-devouring time has imposed upon these great remains of ancient Roman splendor [sic].

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62 General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer, 1 March 1779.
63 Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser, 23 March 1785.
64 Morning Chronicle, 6 June 1799.
66 Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser, 2 June 1778.
67 Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser, 23 March 1785.
The disfigurement of the ruin is not presented in opposition to the true and the beautiful, but is understood as their signature and proof. The validity of Du Bourg’s models is thus identified with their replication of the ‘natural tint’ of the ‘remains’. The reference to the ‘venerable embossments’ of time further emphasises the chiastic interaction between material remains and the artifice of the modeller in pursuit of the ‘true representation’. Embossments, as ‘figures carved or moulded in relief’ might equally be the work of ‘all-devouring time’ on weatherworn marble and porous stone, as that of the modeller on cork. The capacity of the model to become a ‘true representation of the beautiful outline’ is ensured by the identification of the work of the modeller with the historical process of ruination.

Such a notion of procedural validation in the method of representation was tied to a concern with the actual material of modelling, and its relation to the ruin. The American tourist John Griscom (1774-1852), as many before him, was eager to remark upon the ‘fidelity’ of the models ‘executed in cork’. Praising the detail and accuracy to be found in the exhibition, a correspondent naming himself ‘ROMULUS’ puts it down to Du Bourg’s technical mastery of his materials:

They are all executed in cork, stained and done in such an exact manner, as conveys to the beholder the most lively idea of the originals; the mouldering of the stones, the crevices in the walls, &c. are executed with the greatest nicety; the very moss on the buildings and on the ruins which are scattered about them, are finished to the greatest minutiae of exactness.

It is the just application of technique and material that allows the beholder to experience ‘the most lively idea of the originals’. Richard Rush (1780-1859), at the time American Minister to Britain, was called upon by Griscom on the morning of his visit to

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70 Morning Post and Daily Advertiser, 5 May 1779.
the exhibition, and was himself an enthusiastic visitor. In his memoir he recounts how in conversation with his Neapolitan counterpart he had been told that cork was a material singularly suited to modelling ruins:

The Neapolitan Minister had drawn my attention to it by remarking that representations of the ancient buildings of Italy, were thought to be better in cork than perhaps any other material – particularly of the colour of some of them; a sort of duskiness, or brown this side of it.\textsuperscript{71}

It is unsurprising that the Neapolitan Minister would be keen to make this point. As a distinct technique, cork antiquarian modelling originated between the 1750s and 1760s in Naples, and then spread along the tourist route to Rome.

Technical antecedents to antiquarian modelling in cork included both architectural modelling in hardwoods, and the well-established practice of city modelling in cork.\textsuperscript{72} However, given the Neapolitan origins of two of its earliest practitioners (Altieri and Rosa) the most likely source of the technique lies in the nativity scenes that were common in Naples and its environs in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{73} These models were usually constructed from cork or wax, and often appropriated a local Roman architectural idiom for their depiction of the manger.\textsuperscript{74} The transition from this secondary inclusion of antiquarian elements to their development as the primary subject of the model would thus coincide with the

\textsuperscript{71} Richard Rush, \textit{The Court of London from 1819 to 1825}, (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1873), p.59.
\textsuperscript{72} Jannic Durand, ‘Une collection oubliée: les maquettes anciennes du Musée des Antiquités Nationales’, \textit{Antiquités Nationales}, no. 14-15 (1982-1983), 118-35 (pp.118-22). Such city models went back to at least the sixteenth century, when the Pope commissioned the Florentine architect Niccolò Tribolo (1500-1550) to produce a relief model of the city to better facilitate his siege. This practice continued to be popular into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with numerous landscapes and cities modelled in cork, including Paris, Jerusalem, London and Westminster, and the Swiss Alps. Particularly notable was Gasparo Grimani’s (c.1729-1801) plan-relief of Rome, which travelled across Europe, exhibiting in Bath and London, before eventually finding a home at L’abbaye Saint-Geneviève in Paris in 1785.
\textsuperscript{73} Lecocq, pp.230-31.
\textsuperscript{74} Rudolf Berliner, \textit{Die Weihnachtskrippen} (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1955), p.117.
development of antiquarian tourism in the south of Italy around the sites at Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Paestum.

It is appropriate that cork would become the material of choice for such modelling in Naples and Rome. Cork (specifically the bark of the cork oak tree, Quercus suber) is indigenous to the western Mediterranean, with substantial forests in southern Italy. The method by which it was extracted and processed is not significantly different from the process used today, and was described by Chambers in his *Cyclopaedia*:

To take off the Bark they make an Incision from top to the bottom of the Tree, and at each Extremity another round the Tree, perpendicular to the first. When stripp’d from the Tree, which does not therefore die, ‘tis pil’d up in a Pond or Ditch, and loaden with heavy Stones to flatten it, and reduce it into Tables: Hence it is taken, to be dry’d; and when sufficiently dry put in Bales for Carriage.75

The bark then underwent a process of adaptation for the purposes of the modeller. Pieces were carved out and re-shaped, and paint and cement were used to colour and fix the model. Ornamental details (such as capitals, friezes, sculptures and reliefs) on a minute scale were impossible to render in cork alone, and were usually constructed out of plaster and metal, or terra cotta, before being applied to the model.76 In order to further accentuate what the Neapolitan Minister described as cork’s already superior capacity to embody ‘representations of the ancient buildings of Italy’, moss was often wrapped around a finished piece to give it a weather-worn and aged appearance, and paint was often also applied (see above).77

The emergence of cork modelling as an antiquarian technique at this historical moment (the 1760s) and in these locations (Rome and Naples, then London) has not been treated in much detail; however, as we have seen, there were a number of interlocking causes that might help to explain it. First, techniques of cork modelling, tied to the availability of local resources, had an established Italian lineage, extending back at least two centuries. Such knowledge and expertise transferred to antiquarian modellers, making the use of cork bark more self-evident that it would appear in other artisanal cultures. It is perhaps significant that the first commercial cultivation and export of cork for a northern European market also began around 1760 in Spain, potentially providing Du Bourg with the necessary raw materials to continue his craft when back in London. Secondly, by this time the Grand Tour had become well-established as a practice for young aristocrats, artists, architects and dilettanti. This mass of tourists provided an eager market for art-objects and souvenirs that might embody or demonstrate refinement, taste and knowledge. Antiquarian modelling, adapted from an already established craft practice, served this purpose very effectively. Made from cork, models would also be lighter and more portable than equivalents made from hardwood or plaster, and could be assembled and disassembled with relative ease, making their import home significantly easier. Tourists, already familiar with the cork model as a bearer of the antique, would recognise the material’s affinity with archaeological sites, and serve to authorise and witness its validity as a representational form, allowing for its exhibition in London to achieve a meaningful character.

Finally, as visitors to Du Bourg’s exhibition frequently remarked, the formal appearance of cork – its ‘aesthetic’ – was regarded ‘as a congenial material to reproduce the porous stone’ of a temple of Paestum or Tivoli. The weathered appearance of the cork, its rough, granular texture, and its uneven colouring all gestured to the present ruined state of its classical subjects, in sharp distinction to the ideal, clean lines of hardwood, terra cotta, or plaster. Cork’s ability to absorb

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79 Cooke, pp.6-7. An alternate source may have been the client state of Portugal who maintained a substantial trade deficit with Great Britain in the period.
(dis)colouring from moss and paint also added to its representational capacity with regards to ruins, responding to the growing ruinenlust of tourists. Thus, cork became typically identified as the material best suited for the depiction of monuments in their ‘current ruined condition [...] mostly without the additions and changes made since antiquity’. Indeed, this genre of modelling directly emerged out of the Italian trade in artefacts and mementos for foreign visitors, and was from the beginning directed at returning travellers who could be expected to prize the model’s closeness to the visited ruin still fresh in their memory.

V. Materialities: Fouquet’s reconstruction

If cork was thought of as a material singularly suited to representing the appearance and texture of degraded marble or porous stone, then the same could not be said for the plaster employed in Fouquet’s studio. Whereas cork’s uneven appearance was congenial to the ‘embossments’ of time, plaster was highly malleable and more convenient in the reproduction of clear-cut lines. In the realm of statuary and sculpture, plaster’s representational capacity contributed to the development of a dominant formalist aesthetic in the late-eighteenth century, with the reduction of figures to their outlines corresponding to Johann Joachim Winckelmann’s (1717-68) belief ‘that these constituted the essence of the statues themselves’. The widespread use of plaster casts helped to reconfigure expectations around sources, leading to ‘the eye being educated according to an aesthetic vision that identified the white of the cast with that of the original statue’, and the positing of the essence of the statue in its depiction of corporeal form. Though the hegemony of plaster reproductions in the reception of classical statuary was not repeated to the same extent in architecture, the prevalent associations attached to the material – as well as its practical limitations –
would shape the representational strategies of plaster modellers. Models in plaster thus generally represented the ruin ‘rebuilt’. Legrand noted this tendency in his catalogue for the galerie Cassas, while pointing out that a significant proportion of the collection of seventy-four models came from Fouquet’s workshop at 11 Rue de Lille, in an area that had become since the revolution Paris’s ‘arts quarter’.83

Since we call attention here to the beautiful execution of these models, we cannot fail to observe that the largest part of these architectural models, and those the best executed, are due to the very distinguished talents, in this genre, of Mr Fouquet, architectural modeller, and that in his work he has perfected the accuracy of proportions and precision in profiles.84

Legrand particularly singles out Fouquet’s models as deserving distinction: Fouquet is the only modeller appearing in the gallery to be identified by name. His models’ excellence is identified as a product of their ‘accuracy of proportions and precision in profiles’; they are esteemed for reproducing edifices in a manner that was true to their architectonic form, rather than their present-day dilapidation, in an aesthetic appraisal that is distinctly Winckelmannian, and implicitly born of the conventions and expectations associated with their material.

The conjunction of plaster and Paris in Fouquet’s practice was far from coincidental. As Chambers’ Cyclopædia demonstrated, plaster, while not exclusive to Paris, was by that time heavily identified with the city. This was particularly the case because the reserves found to the north of Paris in Montmartre and Ménilmontant were known for their exceptional quality:

PLASTER of Paris, is a Fossil-Stone, of the Nature of a Lime-stone; serving many Purposes in building; and used likewise in Sculpture, to mould and make Statues, Basso Relievo’s, and other Decorations in Architecture. See STONE,

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83 Cuisset, p.231. Nearby were the École des Beaux Arts, the Musée des Monuments Français, and numerous galleries, as well as the residential area home to the Empire’s (and later the Restoration’s) elite.
84 Legrand, Collection, p.183.
STATUE, &c. It is dug out of Quarries, in several Parts of the Neighbourhood of Paris; whence its Name.  

It is hard to be certain of the precise techniques used by Fouquet in the construction of his models, however a general account of the process of architectural modelling in plaster is offered by Jean-Claude Pingeron’s (1730?-1795) preface to his translation of Francesco Milizia’s (1725-1798) *Le Vite de’ più celebri architetti* (1768). Pingeron argues that young architects ‘should exercise themselves in constructing small models of the edifices that they have planned’. He then explains the process by which they can produce these models: first, one cuts the raw gypsum up into very small pieces in order to be cooked in an oven ‘a little hotter than needed for baking bread’; then the carbonised gypsum is ground and passed twice through a sieve, before finally being ground into a fine powder in a dry, enclosed space. After this has been done, the product should be mixed with ‘the clearest water’ in order to avoid altering ‘the whiteness of its material’. Once this paste had been prepared, it was poured onto an oiled marble table, and formed into shape with a series of rules, at which point the bays for the windows and doors of the façade are introduced. The separate façades are then finished by attaching them to one another before they have completely set, still retaining their ‘amour’, a term designating their ability to hold together, or to reform into a single body after being separated. The model then usually takes around fifteen days to set; columns are made through the application of plaster onto an iron frame wrapped in paper which, once set, is tapped gently until it releases the column. The ornamentation of the different architectural orders, including the capitals:

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85 Chambers, II, 832-33. As well as the uses of plaster more familiar to historians of art it was also an important and longstanding component in the building trade, and was even apparently used in North America as a substitute for manure, cf. *On the Effects of Gypsum, or Plaster of Paris, as a Manure; chiefly extracted from papers and letters on Agriculture, by the Agricultural Society in Canada* (London: James Phillips, 1791).


87 Milizia, I, lxv.

88 Milizia, I, lxvi.
are made separately; you mould each of their parts individually, such as the volutes and the acanthus leaves, the caulicoles, in moulds made with good plaster, tempered with linseed oil at a very high temperature, which renders these details very hard; being moulded, the acanthus leaves or caulicoles are placed around the core of the capital, and the whole is fixed with great care; the modillons and rosettes for the cornices are manufactured in the same manner.\textsuperscript{89}

Unlike cork models, once this intricate process had been completed, those in plaster could not be disassembled and reassembled and were therefore prone to damage during transport.\textsuperscript{90}

Plaster was heavily identified with the ‘ideal’, structural form of the edifice, as implied by the heavy correlation of plaster models with architectural projection. Models of planned buildings in plaster were characterised by clean lines – or ‘precision in profile’ as Legrand put it – precise demarcations, and exact reproductions. Pingeron hints at this when explaining that plaster offers the architect models that are ‘the most agreeable to the sight, and those that approach closest to nature’: visually, the plaster model was expected to embody the concept of the projected building, its ideal state.\textsuperscript{91}

In the case of his architectural maquettes, Fouquet was to depict the project in its unblemished and ‘complete’ state. Such is the case with his maquette of the Virginia Capitol made for Clérisseau and Thomas Jefferson (designed after the Maison Carrée at Nîmes) and the maquette of a planned bridge made after designs by Jean-Randolphe Perronet (1708-94) in 1787.\textsuperscript{92}

The transparency of correspondence between the architectural concept and its reproduction was carried over by Fouquet into his antiquarian work. Fouquet’s antiquarian models partook of the same representational strategy, depicting the

\textsuperscript{89} Milizia, I, lxxv-lxxi.
\textsuperscript{90} Milizia, I, lxix.
\textsuperscript{91} Milizia, I, lxi.
\textsuperscript{92} The Capitol of Virginia: A Landmark of American Architecture, ed. by John Kukla (Richmond: Library of Virginia, 2002); Cuisset, p.228. The model was sent to Virginia in 1786 and is still preserved at the State Library in Richmond, the bridge was completed in 1791 and is today known as the Pont de la Concorde.
monument not in its present condition, but as a projection of its idealised original state, the clean lines of the plaster imitating newly cut stone, its surface a clean, unmarked white. The justification given for this restorative elaboration of ruins ultimately returned to the procedures first established by Desgodetz. Legrand, in his introductory notice to the galerie Cassas, with Fouquet’s models in mind, concluded with ‘a word about the authorities which have served to restore, in complete models, edifices that today no longer exist, or are so mutilated that it appears difficult to know how to come to what they were at their first foundation’.\(^\text{93}\) The ‘addition of parts’ in modelling is a ‘licence’ for the artist to work by analogy both with the archaeological record and the data provided in comparison with other sources. In order to achieve an adequate restoration the model is to be extrapolated by way of just those truth procedures established by Desgodetz as part of the antiquarian epistemological apparatus:

> with a plan measured from the locations and fragments still in existence, even if small in number, one can easily recover the whole mass of a temple, a theatre or a circus, of which the ancient and constant forms are known from ancient authorities, from medals, from bas-reliefs, or are found entire and without mutilation in certain ancient monuments.\(^\text{94}\)

Thus Legrand explains how the models within the galerie Cassas appropriated antiquarian practices for new ends. The model in plaster represents a materialisation of the ideal architectural edifice – its ‘first foundation’ – according to the ‘ancient and constant forms’ said to substantiate themselves in the faint traces found in medals, bas-reliefs, the theoretical strictures of Vitruvius’ *De Architectura*, and the ruins of antiquity. Smooth plaster models reflected an architectural idea that could be reconstructed through scholarly study, becoming exemplary of the essential logic of classical architecture.

\(^{93}\) Legrand, *Collection*, pp.xix-xx.

\(^{94}\) Legrand, *Collection*, p.xx.
VI. Modes: The picturesque and the rational in the galerie Cassas

The ‘architectural idea’ of the edifice would also help to frame the mode of presentation used in the exhibition of Fouquet’s models at the galerie Cassas. Werner Szambien has described the gallery as, in certain aspects, a limited recapitulation in three dimensions of Durand’s *Recueil et parallèle des édifices*, a system ‘aimed at presenting the entire history of architecture across all periods’.\(^95\) In this work, Durand presented the plans and elevations of a vast array of buildings, ancient and modern, according to a shared scale, for the sake of comparison and clarification. In his introduction Durand explained the purpose of such a work as necessarily tied to the problem of architectural knowledge:

> Continuous observation is the first duty of the Architect; a judicious application of the models offered up to his eyes, and their combination in new forms, an extensive knowledge of all the Monuments of ancient and modern peoples, impose on him a labour that is constant and sustained.\(^96\)

Application, combination and knowledge of models are the key components in Durand’s programme of education, all founded on the premise that the architect should be an observer. This programme is echoed a few years later in Legrand’s account of the galerie Cassas:

> The Collection of masterpieces of Architecture, executed in models in their true proportions, and brought together in appropriate scales, offers alone a powerful means of instruction in this genre; and the comparison to be made, from these models, of the particular architectural character of different nations is a spectacle worth of all cultivated minds.\(^97\)

Expanding his audience to include ‘cultivated minds’ as well as the professional architect, Legrand supposes with Durand that the observation of models alongside one

\(^{95}\) Werner Szambien, ‘La collection de Cassas et le musée d’architecture à l’école des beaux-arts’, *Sites et Monuments*, supplement to n.117 (1987), 8-9 (p.8).

\(^{96}\) J.N.L. Durand, p.6. This work significantly also included an historical introduction written by the future cataloguer of the galerie Cassas, Legrand.

\(^{97}\) Legrand, *Collection*, p.x.
another has a necessarily beneficial impact on the spectator. Models, at ‘appropriate scales’ – though, unlike Durand’s *Recueil*, not at a uniform scale – were a means of instruction pursued in a singularly scientific mode: by way of precise comparison. Cassas, in placing ‘these models before the eyes of amateurs, through a public exhibition, renders an essential service to the art’ and facilitates ‘its study through the reasoned selection that he has made of the most beautiful, the most celebrated, and the most characteristic monuments’ of different nations. The gallery was intended as an educational space, in which the rational kernel of the edifice was to be recapitulated by the model, and brought out in the process of comparison with the architecture of other nations and periods (Plate XIII).

A few years later Dufourny’s report, co-signed by Durand, identified just this educational capacity of the model as central to the ‘power’ of the galerie Cassas and its value to the École des Beaux Arts:

> At the same time that it will facilitate the students’ study, this collection will provide the professors with precious means of instruction, they will obtain by it: examples to suggest; well-grounded applications to clarify the principles set down in their lessons; enlightening demonstrations which will finish by bearing in their spirit the torch of evidence. The students will profit as much from this rapid and agreeable method, which speaks to the spirit by way of the eyes, as by commentaries, which must not be esteemed nor neglected, but which, alone, do not enough aid their weak intelligence.

Again, the power of the model as a mode of presentation was framed according to its intervention within the larger methodology of architectural education. The model served Durand’s ideal of architectural education in providing objects of observation, evidence, and offering ‘applications’ of the principles that guided and framed the professors’ lessons. Further, they were a supplement to and even an eclipsing of the commentary as a mode of access to classical architectural knowledge, providing a more immediate form of architectural education to the student that relied on immediate vision alone for comprehension.

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98 Legrand, *Collection*, p.x.
99 AN, AJ/52/446.
Despite this definite rational and comparative impulse, the galerie Cassas was far from univocal in its mode of display. From one point of view the use of effects of lighting in the display of the models was eminently educational. Legrand explained that the ‘variety of forms’ adopted by the different ancient architectures ‘cannot be properly experienced except with relief models, capable of being illuminated with all the effects of the day, or of receiving night through means of skilfully arranged lights’. Light here was an epistemological tool, expanding the range of observations available to the student. Yet, it was not only knowledge that stood to be produced by light; the model, placed under the correct lighting, could produce:

a picturesque and often magical chiaroscuro, from which history and decorative painters might take the most advantageous part, to place in their paintings the appropriate style for the subject of which they treat, and a more perfect truthfulness.  

As well as representing architectural information, the model could also initiate a ‘picturesque’ experience for the spectator. The ‘picturesque’ as a term principally meant to ‘look at the world as if it were a picture’, and had been appropriated to eighteenth-century architecture and landscape gardening from the language of painting by British critics such as William Gilpin (1724-1804), Uvedale Price (1747-1829), and Humphrey Repton (1752-1818).  

Thus the representational capacity of the model in the galerie Cassas could itself become an object of contemplation in the correct circumstances, leading to an enjoyment of the representation as representation. Moreover, the picturesque use of model and lighting could generate further representations of the monument in historical and decorative painting. For instance, rehoused in the École des Beaux Arts, Fouquet’s Athenian models became a source for the background architecture in Jean-Hippolyte Flandrin’s Thésée reconnu  

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100 Legrand, Collection, p.xi.
par son père (winner of the 1832 prix de Rome).\textsuperscript{102} Correctly configured, the models might just as easily demonstrate architectural effect as architectonics.

Cassas himself was no stranger to the picturesque effects of antiquarian representations. During his tour across Italy in the late 1770s and 1780s he made many drawings, and these were subsequently collected into the *Voyage pittoresque de l’Istrie et de la Dalmatie* (1800). As early as 1782 Cassas had also contributed views to the Abbé de Saint-Non’s *Voyage pittoresque de Naples et de Sicile*. When Choiseul-Gouffier returned to Constantinople in the 1780s, he employed Cassas as artist on the projected second volume of his *Voyage pittoresque en Grèce* (1782-1809). While in the eastern Mediterranean, and with the support of his patron, Cassas produced a vast number of drawings that would ultimately provide the basis for his *Voyage pittoresque de la Syrie, de la Phénicie, de la Palestine et de la Basse-Égypte* (1799). Cassas would later synthesise many of these works in the *Grandes Vues pittoresques des principaux sites et monuments de la Grèce, de la Sicile et des sept collines de Rome* (1813). In this period Cassas was perhaps more than any single figure the artist most associated with the French cult of the picturesque. He was either the author of, or a contributor to, half a dozen significant volumes of ‘picturesque’ travel. His gallery therefore paired its more scientific, comparativist tendencies with the knowing deployment of a picturesque mode of display. Constructed through the drawings and paintings in perspective characteristic of his picturesque voyages, the exhibition’s field of vision resituated the rational, architectonic models of Fouquet within the landscape and scenery of Italy, Greece, and the Near East:

The paintings from his hand that decorate this gallery, all bear a relation with the monuments whose models are exhibited, and present the surrounding sites, or the picturesque effects of their remains.\textsuperscript{103}

A view of the exhibition published in 1806 shows Fouquet’s restored models ranged at waist height along the gallery accompanied by painted ruins and landscapes.\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{102} Cuisset, pp.230-31.
\textsuperscript{103} Legrand, *Collection*, pp.xix.
Furthermore, while the catalogue gestures towards a rationalisation of the material organised by nation and period, the actual layout of the gallery appeared more haphazard, with models entering into an essentially picturesque relation to one another. This visual evidence suggests that Cassas was concerned much more with the comparison and combination of effects of light and shadow and distinct architectural styles, than with the production of systematic historical knowledge. Through its multimedia display the space of the gallery becomes a bridge between the ‘interval of many thousands of years, of what each edifice formerly was, and what it is now’, mediating vast geographical, temporal, and cultural distances. The gallery thus became a site of multiple modes of representation each drawing on current and at times conflicting aspects of antiquarian culture to make sense of its models for spectators. The mode of display in the galerie Cassas appeared to move along two vectors: one picturesque, the other architectural. However, these two modes inevitably interacted with one another, often appearing in a single field of vision, each intervening in the other, reinforcing a complicated, layered understanding of the architectural and the antique, design and effect.

VII. Modes: Plurality of effects in Du Bourg’s ‘Classical Exhibition’

Du Bourg was, like Cassas, an exhibitor who worked hard to frame his audience’s experience through an exhibition complex that owed much to contemporary antiquarian culture. He was well-attuned to the implications of various strands of thought about classical architecture for his ‘Classical Exhibition’: his mode of display therefore exploited lighting and other media to produce defined effects for his visitors. As with Cassas, one of the most important of Du Bourg’s modes of display was the picturesque. For Du Bourg, exhibiting during the ‘apotheosis of the picturesque’ between the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, emphasis was consistently placed on producing and reproducing the picturesque in the model.

106 Legrand, Collection, p.xvii.
107 MacArthur, p.2.
William Gilpin, in his essay ‘On Picturesque Travel’ characterised the ‘general intention of picturesque travel’ as ‘searching after effects’.\textsuperscript{108} This meant searching for and experiencing the variety of scenery in the process of travel: the picturing forth of the landscape as it appeared to the tourist. Gilpin argued that ‘among all the objects of art, the picturesque eye is perhaps most inquisitive after the elegant relics of ancient architecture’.\textsuperscript{109} A frequent refrain among visitors to Du Bourg’s exhibition was that it reproduced the picturesque experience of tourism. A visitor to Saint Alban’s Street in 1776 wrote to the editor of the \textit{Morning Post} to inform him that:

Those who have seen the originals will review them with delight, those who have not and from various causes may not travel, can enjoy this at a trifling expense, and without the fatigue of a voyage.\textsuperscript{110}

‘M.N.’ attending at Savile Row in 1778, confessed to being ‘agreeably surprized on seeing these models so perfectly well executed (the originals of which I had the pleasure of seeing but a few months past)’.\textsuperscript{111} ‘ROMULUS’, visiting the exhibition at Duke Street in 1779, remarked that there was ‘a very genteel company there; among whom was a Gentleman just come from Rome, who declared he thought it impossible for human art to copy so closely the originals’.\textsuperscript{112} Even critiques of Du Bourg’s exhibition incorporated an assumption that it reproduce the picturesque experience of the tourist. An ‘admirer of Mr Du Bourg’s ingenious Cork Models’ in the \textit{Morning Post}, while generally fulsome in his praise, advised the modeller on how he could improve his models by joining ‘figures to his Temples’:

\begin{quote}
but particularly to the model of the Colosseum; the grandeur and simplicity of that immense building would be better understood; [...] The beautiful Grotto of Egeria might have the vestal Virgins with their elegant turned bases, fetching water; and Stonhenge \textit{sic}, a Shepherd, with his flock, &c.\textsuperscript{113}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{108} William Gilpin, \textit{Three Essays: on Picturesque Beauty, On Picturesque Travel, and On Sketching Landscape: To which is added a Poem, on Landscape Painting} (London: R. Blamire, 1782), p.41.  \\
\textsuperscript{109} Gilpin, p.46.  \\
\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Morning Post and Daily Advertiser}, 8 May 1776.  \\
\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser}, 2 June 1778.  \\
\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Morning Post and Daily Advertiser}, 5 May 1779.  \\
\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Morning Post and Daily Advertiser}, 14 March 1785.
\end{flushright}
The suggestion is that Du Bourg’s models should more completely replicate the formal conventions of the picturesque view. The view as a mode of representation had become an increasingly popular, even dominant, form of antiquarian representation, deploying staffage (human and animal figures) in composing the image of the ruin. Such staffage was typically composed of rustic locals and cosmopolitan visitors, and had an explicitly picturesque purpose: giving a sense of architectural scale in relation to the human form, integrating the monument within a scene reflective of the local culture, and inscribing within the picture the expected mode of spectatorial apprehension. Piranesi’s *Vedute di Roma* were instrumental in defining the genre of the view, and were immensely popular with tourists throughout the second half of the eighteenth century. In the plates dedicated to the Colosseum, scale is indicated by groups of tourists and locals dwarfed by the edifice. Likewise, in Piranesi’s representations of the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli staffage included tourists alongside shepherds and their flocks. The suggestion that figures might augment the effect of Du Bourg’s models therefore indicates the extent to which the exhibition was expected to reflect contemporary picturesque culture.

Despite the lack of staffage, Du Bourg’s model of the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli was the object of other, more spectacular picturesque effects. ‘ROMULUS’ recounts how in a niche of the gallery appeared a:

> view of the town of Tivoli, pleasingly situated about eighteen miles from Rome, where there is a very curious cascade; this is likewise done by machinery, and upon the whole surpasses every thing I ever saw exhibited either at the theatres, or elsewhere; the view of Tivoli is most romantic, and the Sybils Temple built on the tops of the rocks, which overhang the cascade, create in the minds of the spectators the most pleasing ideas.¹¹⁴

As Thomas Jenkins had remarked ten years before, the Temple of Vesta was considered ‘one of the most elegant & pittoresque Objects’ on the Grand Tour. Now situated at the centre of ‘a Perspective View of the Town of Tivoli, and adjacent

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¹¹⁴ *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 5 May 1779.
country’, placed high on a model of the city’s acropolis, overlooking a mechanical
representation of the cascade of the River Aniene as if in movement, the picturesque
effect of the model had become even more explicit. ‘ROMULUS’, finding the view
‘romantic’ (a term heavily identified with the picturesque in landscape), indicated that
the whole created ‘pleasing ideas’ in the minds of spectators.\footnote{Cf. Gilpin: ‘the general idea of the scene makes an impression, before any appeal is
made to the judgment [...] we rather feel, than survey it’, p.50.}

The cascade of Tivoli was not the only mechanical effect to be found in the
exhibition. In the same niche was also:

A Night View of a Current of Lava that ran from Mount Vesuvius, towards
Resina, the 11th of May, 1771. It ran into the Valley between Semma and
Vesuvius, disgorged itself into a hollow Way in its fluid State, and formed a
most beautiful Cascade of Fire.\footnote{Mr. Du Bourg’s Exhibition of Large Models cut in Cork, of the Remains of Capital
Buildings, in and near Rome and in England, to be seen At the Great Room, Spring
Gardens, Late Cox’s Museum (London: J. Rozea, [1785]), p.8.}

Whereas the former picturesque mechanical display had been experienced as a
beautiful object encouraging relaxed contemplation of its ‘pleasing ideas’, the latter
appeared decidedly sublime:

The chief pieces that attracted his notice were a View of Mount Vesuvius in the
time of an eruption, and the overflowing of the lava; this is done by machinery
in a nick [sic] made on purpose in the wall, and afforded great satisfaction to all
the company present; particularly to the Gentleman who had just come from
abroad, who said he was at Naples at the last great eruption, and this recalled
every circumstance so fresh in his memory, as made him shudder at the very
thoughts of it.\footnote{Morning Post and Daily Advertiser, 5 May 1779.}

The fearful sublimity of the Vesuvian model only increased when, on 2 April 1785, it
apparently caused a fire that destroyed the exhibition in its entirety. While Du Bourg
denied that the model was the source of the fire, the idea of its responsibility took
hold. One report, seemingly written by a spectator well aware of the analogical
relationship that the performance encouraged between model and volcano, noted an almost magical translation of power between object and representation:

It is remarkable that the model of Vesuvius, should have occasioned the late devastation at Spring Gardens; from the circumstance that the Volcano in question, has before now been the cause of the destruction of immense cities.\textsuperscript{118}

When Du Bourg returned with his second exhibition in 1799 so did the Vesuvian model, this time with numerous additions. Silliman dedicates a great deal of space to describing the revitalised performance:

We were conducted behind a curtain where all was dark, and through a door or window, opened for the purpose, we perceived Mount Vesuvius throwing out fire, red hot stones, smoke and flame, attended with a roaring noise like thunder; the crater glowed with heat, and, near it, the lava had burst through the side of the mountain, and poured down a torrent of liquid fire, which was tending toward the town of Portici, at the foot of the mountain, and toward the sea, on the margin of which this town stands. The waves of the sea are in motion – the lava is a real flood of glowing and burning matter, which the ingenious artist contrives to manage in such a manner as not to set fire to his cork mountain. [...] He has not forgotten to appeal to the sense of smell as well as those of sight and hearing, for, the spectator is assailed by the odour of burning sulphur, and such other effluvia as volcanoes usually emit: I suppose they are set on fire by some one behind the scene, for the double purpose of producing the smell and fiery eruptions.\textsuperscript{119}

The experience of the model was now multi-sensory as well as multimedial, incorporating smell, heat, and sound in order to produce ‘the awful view’ of the eruption. Though matter of fact about his description of the spectacle, Silliman’s frames of reference appear in keeping with the mechanics of the Burkean sublime, founded on ‘whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger’, inspiring ‘terror’ in the spectator.\textsuperscript{120}

\textsuperscript{118} Morning Herald, 5 April 1785.
\textsuperscript{119} Silliman, I, 248-49.
The specificity of date and location attached to this model is worth noting: 11 May 1771; a valley between Somma and Vesuvius. By 1771 Du Bourg had returned to London, and could not have himself drawn this view when it occurred, its source instead must have been Pietro Fabris’s (1740-92) ‘A night view of a current of lava, that ran from Mount Vesuvius towards Resina, the 11th of May 1771’ from William Hamilton’s *Campi Phlegraei*. The *Campi Phlegraei* was a prestigious work, published in English and French and elaborately illustrated with prints hand coloured with gouache. Du Bourg’s access to it, as well as indicating an interest in the picturesque potential of mechanical displays, demonstrates a seriousness in his commitment to the value of the model as a mode of immediate access. Indeed, in the later catalogues, the view is accompanied by Hamilton’s descriptions of the site, its topography, and its culture. Again, in Du Bourg’s exhibition the model became a proxy for the experience of the traveller, its illusion purposefully tied to the verifying mediation of the eye-witness scholar.

Du Bourg was also known for using other lighting ‘effects’. In the Spring of 1801 he began to advertise late-night spectacles, declaring that his ‘ROOM, erected in a rural stile, will be brilliantly Illuminated TO-MORROW, April the 24th, from Eight in the Evening till Eleven’ at a price of three shillings (two shillings more than the regular price for visitors). Apparently successful, a week later Du Bourg announced that the room would ‘be Illuminated Mondays and Fridays [evening] till further notice’. The architect John Soane, himself a collector of cork models, visited Du Bourg’s exhibition at least once in 1785, and may well have attended one of these spectacles. He

121 While identifying Sir William Hamilton’s *Campi Phlegraei* as ‘a great influence in promoting the contemporary fashion for model volcanoes’ such as Du Bourg’s, Jenkins and Sloan appear not to have picked up on this direct link between Fabris’s prints and Du Bourg’s model; Ian Jenkins and Kim Sloane, *Vases & Volcanoes: Sir William Hamilton and his Collection* (London: British Museum Press, 1996), p.145.
123 *Morning Post and Gazetteer*, 23 April 1801.
124 *Morning Post and Gazetteer*, 30 April 1801.
arranged a similar one during three days in March 1825, where over the course of an evening selected visitors were treated to a view of his ‘Egyptian crypt’ illuminated with candles and lanterns.\textsuperscript{126} This crypt, as well as containing the newly purchased sarcophagus of Seti I, also held a number of cork models of ancient sepulchres.\textsuperscript{127} It is possible that the idea for this illuminated spectacle might have originated in an experience of Du Bourg’s own modest affair.

As the catalogue was expanded, Du Bourg’s antiquarian models were also increasingly subject to extensive descriptions. His exhibition was notable for its reliance on antiquarian (and sometimes antique) sources to ground the experience of the visitor. While most of the twenty-two models listed in the 1779 catalogue were without description, an exception to this were those of Stonehenge and the Colosseum, the former accompanied by an explanation taken from Inigo Jones, and the latter from the Roman historian Aurelius Victor.\textsuperscript{128} By 1808, with the exhibition in Lower Grosvenor Street, the terse catalogue of 1779 had expanded to over fifty pages with extended descriptions given for most of its twenty-eight models (fifteen pages are dedicated to the Amphitheatre of Verona alone). Unlike the 1779 catalogue, these descriptions came without an attributed source, and were intended to act as a disembodied guide to visitors as they travelled on their tour of the room. Some of Du Bourg’s comments on Roman history originated in Charles Rollin’s (1661-1741) \textit{The Roman History from the Foundation of Rome to the Battle of Actium} (1768), and his account of the construction and development of the amphitheatre was taken from \textit{A Compleat History of the Ancient Amphitheatres}, by Francisco Scipione, Marquis of Maffei (1675-1755). However, by far the most substantial plagiarisms came from Andrew Lumisden’s (1720-1801) \textit{Remarks on the Antiquities of Rome and Its Environs} (1797). Lumisden had been a Jacobite exile in Rome for much of his life and was there at the same time as Du Bourg. The \textit{Remarks} contained copious descriptions and engravings and were well received, going into a second edition by 1812. Du Bourg was

\textsuperscript{126} Darley, pp.274-76.
\textsuperscript{128} \textit{London Courant and Westminster Chronicle}, 7 April 1780.
to use a long list of Lumisden’s descriptions for his own catalogue: the Aruntia sepulchre; the Temple of Janus Quadrifrons; the Sepulchre of Scipio; Cestius’s Pyramid; the Colosseum (accompanying Du Bourg’s model of the Amphitheatre at Verona); the Sepulchre of Horatii and Curiatii; the Sepulchre of Caecillia Metella; the Ponte Lucano, and the Sepulchre of Plautius; the Fountain of Egeria; Tivoli; the Temple of Vesta; and the Catacombs. Far from remaining solely in print, the Remarks in fact formed the basis of Du Bourg’s own description of his models as he guided his visitors through the exhibition, much as Moritz had used Wendeborn’s guide to direct and inform his co-visitors to the British Museum (Chapter 1). John Griscom, an American tourist visiting in 1818, remarked that ‘whoever visits the collection without being conducted through it by the owner himself, will lose no inconsiderable part of the gratification’. In an engraving by Du Bourg, the modeller is shown at the centre of a party of gentleman, ladies, and children, explaining the model of the Amphitheatre at Verona with a pointer (Plate XI). The amphitheatre was the model with the longest description dedicated to it in the catalogue, and Du Bourg appears to be pointing out to his visitors ‘the part broken down in the model, purposely done, to show the inside Galleries, which communicate with the stair-cases and Vomitories’. On the right hand wall, above the model of the Pyramid of Cestius, appears a plan marked ‘ROMA’ which though roughly drawn is almost certainly the ‘pianta di Roma’ in the second plate of the first volume of Piranesi’s Antichità Romane (1756), including the same larger capitalised title (Plate XII). This etching was used to orient visitors to the exhibition as they moved from model to model, indicating where each was likely to be found if visited in Rome itself, and further emphasising the role of the exhibition as a virtual Grand Tour for those able only to vicariously experience its delights. In 1776 Samuel Johnson remarked that ‘a man who has not been in Italy, is always conscious of an inferiority, from his not having seen what it is expected a man should see’, and in providing a reproduction of the monumental visual record of ancient Rome, Du

129 John Griscom, I, 127.
Bourg’s exhibition offered a novel mode of access that was identified as in some way mitigating such inferiority.\textsuperscript{132}

As well as being the scene of Du Bourg’s performance as antiquarian and virtual cicerone, the exhibition also prompted in visitors independent performances of erudition and cultivation. A visitor in 1779 recounted how a ‘well known hop-factor in the City’, accompanied by his fourteen-year-old son, on viewing the Colosseum exclaimed ‘where the devil was the stage?’ The citizen’s ignorance prompted the room to laughter, however:

the son soon made up for the deficiency of the father, by not only setting him right, but in entertaining the whole company present with a very clear and distinct account of that stupendous edifice, and the various feats performed there.\textsuperscript{133}

The father, shamed by his lack of a classical education as a bourgeois citizen-merchant, is ultimately saved by his son’s learning. Samuel Galton, a manufacturer from Birmingham was another bourgeois citizen to visit the exhibition. He did so in 1807 with his twenty-three-year-old daughter Adele and his seventeen-year-old son Hubert. In a letter back to thirteen-year-old John Howard Galton, his maidservant L.A. Patterson remarked that he would have been much interested by the ‘collection of Cork Models Collected and cut by a Mr Du Bourg’.\textsuperscript{134} While on tour in Switzerland, the novelist Anna Eliza Bray (1790-1883) recollected her childhood, remarking that she first encountered aqueducts through ‘Mr Du Bourg’s cork model of one that I had drawn when a girl, when I used to visit at that excellent man’s house’. Like the party gathered around the model of the Amphitheatre at Verona, Bray was enraptured, describing it as ‘the only thing that gave me any adequate idea of the beauty of such a

\textsuperscript{133} General Advertiser, 15 May 1779.
\textsuperscript{134} Birmingham, Library of Birmingham, MS3101/C/D/10/61/29.
structure’. The exhibition was a site of initiation for those previously excluded from the polite culture of the Grand Tour (many of whom were women, or younger and less genteel than the average traveller), providing verified access to its monuments in a way that lent itself to public demonstration.

Visiting at the same time as a ‘party of Ladies of the first distinction’, another correspondent ‘had the gratification to hear one of the beautiful group quote to a gentleman near her, some passages from Dyer’s poem, on the ruins of Rome, with graceful emphasis, and just application’. The section recited by the lady narrated the decay of Rome:

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behold the pride of pomp,
The throne of nations fall’n; obscur’d in dust;
E’en yet majestical: the solemn scene
Elates the soul, while now the rising Sun
Flames on the ruins in the purer air
Towering aloft, upon the glittering plain,
Like broken rocks, a vast circumference:
Rent palaces, crush’d columns, rifled moles,
Fanes roll’d on fanes, and tombs on buried tombs.
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The erotics of observation are activated in this scene, indicating a sociability that, while refined in taste, subtly elides the picturesque experience of the ruins of the eternal city with the approving contemplation of ‘the beautiful group’. The women, as much objects to be observed as the models themselves, initiate a kind of fantastic reverie in their male auditor, where the generative potential of sexual intercourse is contrasted with the present decay of ‘the throne of nations fall’n’. The extreme visibility of the ‘party of Ladies’ is contrasted with the monuments ‘obscur’d in dust’, the refinement of the ladies contrasted with the ‘rent palaces, crush’d columns, rifled moles’ of Rome. And yet, Rome is nonetheless newly visible in the exhibition: the poetic reverie of the

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136 *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser*, 23 March 1785.
'party of Ladies’ serves to emphasise the picturesque as the principle mode of experience for visitors, its series of images echoing the series of views available in the exhibition itself.

Whether these recollected performances were real or not, they indicate that the modes of presentation employed by Du Bourg in his exhibition were understood and expected to elicit a reaction from spectators, to both draw and impose educational and picturesque responses. Much of the subtlety and flexibility of this practice has been lost in the subsequent critical denigration to which Du Bourg’s exhibition has been subjected. Edward Walford in his *Old and New London* of 1878 described the location of Du Bourg’s second exhibition in Lower Grosvenor Street as an ‘invasion’ of ‘plebeian’ culture.\(^{138}\) While it is true that Grosvenor Square was at this time one of the best addresses in London, and Du Bourg’s exhibition could attract a broad cross-section of visitors, the exhibition was far from straightforwardly popular.\(^{139}\) It drew multiple royal visits, and partook in a complex sociability that was informed by and structured around modes of representation and display spanning the antiquarian, the artistic, and the spectacular.\(^{140}\) The exhibition’s different modes of display were explained most clearly by a visitor to Spring Gardens in 1785, who described how Du Bourg:

> blended instruction and amusement, adapted to all ranks and every capacity. Such a transcript of nature and art has seldom, he apprehends, if ever, before met the public eye. The virtuoso, the antiquarian, the gentleman, the mechanic, here meet with objects to engage their attention, and gratify their minds. The admirer of architecture sees here preserved to the most critical nicety, all those beautiful proportions that distinguish the masters of the art who flourished in the Augustan age.\(^{141}\)

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140 *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 8 May 1775; *Morning Chronicle*, 2 June 1800; *Morning Chronicle*, 17 May 1802. Prince William Henry, Duke of Gloucester visited twice (1775 and 1800), and in 1802 the Queen accompanied by five of her daughters ‘expressed themselves highly gratified with the Models’.
141 *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser*, 13 March 1785.
Whereas the galerie Cassas apprehensively spanned the divide between rational and picturesque modes of antiquarian representation, Du Bourg’s exhibition seemed more strategically plural. Whether virtuoso or antiquarian, gentleman or mechanic, its models could plausibly engage the attention with their aesthetic effect, or gratify the mind with their educational value.

VIII. Conclusion: Architectural initiations

Inevitably Du Bourg and Fouquet’s models diverged from one another in significant ways. Du Bourg’s exhibition was a commercial venture that had to respond to changes in fashion in order to survive, and there is little indication that his models were particularly vendable on the British market. In contrast, there is no indication that Fouquet ever exhibited himself, whereas his models were principally produced for a clientele of learned aristocrats and public institutions. Furthermore, both men employed different materials and representational strategies to achieve their ends. Superficially, then, there appears little to unite the two modellers beyond a coincidence in their subjects. Nonetheless, both Du Bourg and Fouquet were united by their proximity to a continental antiquarian culture and integration into its constellation of reproductions. Both men were not only students of antiquarian authors such as Le Roy, Stuart and Revett, and Desgodets, but sought to actively supersede them in the production of representations of ‘the most celebrated works’ of antiquity that could vicariously initiate visitors into classical architectural idioms. Their models were not only curios designed to draw in those in search of entertainment, but also serious interventions in the project of recording and disseminating representations of classical ruins and architectural knowledge. In this context, both the galerie Cassas at the rue de Lille and Du Bourg’s migrating exhibition sought to augment, and even surpass previously hegemonic modes of access to ancient

142 Indeed, when he did attempt to retire and auction his models off, he was remarkably unsuccessful; Gillespie, p.16.
monuments based on travel and bidimensional illustrations. An experience of antiquity that had previously been monopolised by the erudite and the well-travelled was newly integrated into a public culture of display; and this was achieved through the legitimisation of the reproduction as a viable form of knowledge production and intellectual engagement.
Chapter 4

Archaeologies of the future: Casts, fragments, and the ruins of Sir John Soane’s Museum

Dominant critical opinion of Sir John Soane’s (1753-1837) Museum in Lincoln’s Inn Fields has tended to focus on it as a site of historical and biographical reflection. Its accumulation and arrangement is commonly figured as a response to the personal and social transformations occurring in Soane’s life and his period. Its critical image has typically been that of a regressive carapace, looking back to the past with regret, either the product of a subjective melancholia or an objective nostalgia.

In the first of these critical images, Soane is figured as a paranoid melancholic, withdrawing into the protection of his museum after suffering the failure of his sons John and George to become architects, the collapse of his hopes for an architectural dynasty, and the death of his wife, Elizabeth. His museum is imagined as a sepulchre or a cell, guarding the solitary hermit who awaits oblivion. David Watkin presents this position succinctly when he describes the architect’s *ruinenlust* in biographical terms:

> Melancholy and introspective, Soane suffered from a persecution complex from which he escaped into a solitary world of his own which is well expressed in the labyrinthine planning of his house in Lincoln’s Inn Fields.¹

According to this attitude, Soane originally planned to establish an architectural academy at his residence in Ealing, Pitzhanger Manor, in the early 1800s. This residence was to serve as a school for his sons and include a gallery of architectural models, remains, and casts. In an initial iteration of the Pitzhanger project from 14 July 1800 Soane had ideas for a model room overlooked by a chamber, designated ‘John’s

Study’ (for his elder son); however, ‘disappointed by his son’s forsaking the architectural profession, Soane sold Pitzhanger in December 1810’, removing his architectural and art collection to Lincoln’s Inn Fields. In this reading, the pedagogical value of the museum has to be moderated by an acknowledgement that as it was being established Soane was suffering from a deep melancholy and self-pity borne of rejection from both his profession and his sons.

In the second critical image – the nostalgic – Soane reflects on a historical cultural formation that is marked by absence. He is depicted as fundamentally nostalgic for the past glories of Greece and Rome, an archaeologist avant la lettre, sifting through the fragments of architectural history to arrest the steady decomposition of classical forms and meanings. His Museum becomes a refuge for obsolete and unreadable architectural objects, a shoring of fragments against their own ruin. Representative of this second position is John Elsner’s Freudian account, in which the Museum embodies a desire for a plenitude of objects and the imaginary world in which they were once all together:

Just as the museum looks back to the ‘real’ life, the activity, of the desire that brought it into being, so that desire, that very process of collecting, itself looks back to an origin. Collecting is inherently a cult of fragments, a sticking together of material bits that stand as metonyms and metaphors for the world they may refer to but are not.

This reading of Sir John Soane’s House and Museum is more typical of museum studies in general, in which the museum, existing in a state of temporal or geographical exception, becomes a site of stasis and reclamation, its very activity attesting to the absence of activity. Appealing to the past and to the other, the house becomes a

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3 Feinberg Millenson, p.45.
museum at the point at which it renounces the world. Historical remembrance becomes identified with a lament for the disappointed present.

Though each of these interpretations is built on the valid reading of certain aspects of the Soane Museum, both overemphasise the reactionary and passive nature of the Museum, occluding its very real role in the development of early nineteenth-century architecture and architectural education. Against this, I want to assert its historically transitional role. Focusing on the Museum as the site of practices of production and reproduction, I will open the sepulchre, so to speak, to discover the traces of life entombed within. I will show that what is effaced in an over-identification of the Museum as the repository of objects eclipsed by history is a sense of its powerful role as mediator between past and future, and the concrete uses to which it was put for this purpose.

In order to remedy the critical overemphasis of professional nostalgia and private melancholy in the Soane Museum, in this chapter I will investigate the futures that are embedded in the arrangements of its objects, that cannot be read in the present state of past things, but only in the traces of unfulfilled futures with which they were fleetingly invested. Such a critical practice might be termed an archaeology of the future. Given the Soane Museum’s present claim to uninterrupted continuity of display since its foundation, it would be all too easy to ignore the ways in which the Museum and its self-image have been subject to change and interruption in the intervening centuries. The paradoxical conjunction between the never-to-be-present future and archaeology’s emphasis on the material traces of past artefacts and their assemblage is intended as an interruption of the overt continuity in the relationship between present and past emphasised in the self-conception of the Museum as untouched crime-scene. In its place sits an examination of objects rescued from their own historical futures, from their enshrinement and nullification as historical artefacts by a victorious present.

The casts, models, and other objects of the Museum are doubly significant, both as artefacts of classical Antiquity and early nineteenth-century architecture.
Drawing on Walter Benjamin’s critique of history and the theory of progress, this analysis thus attempts to return to Soane’s collection the play of forces that consumed and challenged it in its previous configurations. Benjamin’s *Passagenwerk* theorises how phenomena can be rescued through the constellation of past and present phenomena into a ‘dialectical image’:

What are phenomena rescued from? Not only, and not in the main, from the discredit and neglect into which they have fallen, but from the catastrophe represented very often by a certain strain in their dissemination, their ‘enshrinement as heritage.’ – They are saved through the exhibition of the fissure within them.\(^5\)

The dialectical image is a figure of ‘the ruined hopes of the past’ looming ‘into greater visibility’, unearthing desires and impulses otherwise forgotten in the enshrinement of objects as heritage.\(^6\) It is the ‘constellation’ of ‘what is past’ and ‘what is present’. For Benjamin ‘it is at this moment that the historian takes up, with regard to that image, the task of dream interpretation’. Such an archaeology, tasked with exhibiting the ‘fissure’ within objects, renders legible the ‘movement at their interior’, recognising meaning behind fragments and past promises in their ruins.\(^7\)

In the case of the Soane Museum, what is needed for such an archaeology of the future is an investigation of the production and arrangement of its objects, and an analysis of the claims on the future implicit in their incorporation into the collection. Such claims upon the future are often more or less present in museums in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, but they are particularly apparent in the case of museums of architecture. Architecture in the period of Neo-Classicism was prone the ‘scholarly reproductions’ or ‘quotation’ of ‘Antique buildings and elements’.\(^8\) By quotation is meant the purposeful reuse of ‘another building’s detail, material, or


\(^7\) Benjamin, pp.462-64.

form’ in such a way that ‘the properties that are referred to are not only denoted, but also exemplified’. Quotation therefore ‘inherently addresses the past’, particularly in the case of architecture, where architects ‘tend to position their work in relation to previous practices’. However, as much as it addresses the past, architectural quotation ‘does not seek to revive distant pasts but to establish instead a great leap forward, an ideal liberation’. The architect’s ‘recourse to the past’ confirms a path to the future:

The different repetition of the models of an ideal past is much more than an imitation; it is a distancing and a radical renewal. [...] This is the reason why we encounter the same ideological use of the quotation at the beginning and the end of the nineteenth century: those were times of invention, consolidation, negation, and the recovery of history.

Quotation is integral to architecture’s image of its own history and progress. The museum thus became central to the development of neoclassical architecture, affording access to the many elements and subtle variations of design in antiquity in such a way that they might be more easily reimagined and reused in new configurations. Neo-Classicism, the architectural constellation of reproductions, and the need for new buildings and architectures in an expanding city all contributed to a situation in which the architectural museum, with its vast array of objects and fertile capacity to bridge new relationships and juxtapositions, operated as a site of utopian thought. As a collection predicated on the evocative power of the fragment and the reproduction, the Soane Museum was the place in which the struggle for and between new forms of architecture could be most intensely articulated. In assembling diverse, competing objects whose fabric, arrangement, and arrangeability bore testimony to their contingency and capacity for reconfiguration, the Soane Museum not only

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12 Tournikiotis, p.166.
produced new architectural associations, but ensured that these associations were constellated around a poetics of practical reproducibility.

It is for this reason that the copy or reproduction – whether plaster cast, wooden replica, architectural model, student drawing or antiquarian engraving – must be a central component in the story of the Soane Museum. It is not necessarily in any ‘original’ object that the archaeological interrogation of past futures is situated, but rather in the object’s multiple and contradictory reiterations. The ‘original’ object – with its claim to a fully adequate truth only requiring a moment of historical retrieval – gives way in the reproduction to a dissenting insistence on the impure and non-identical in its future. The overtly static ‘original’ object is transformed into a fluid and diverse assemblage of uses and meanings when it is subjected to quotation, reconfiguration, new object relations, or new media and materials of representation. ‘Original’ gives way to a conflict of uses, in which its future is not the result of a simple teleological progression or historical authority, but the play of forces unleashed by its reproduction and rearrangement inside the Museum. The poetics of reproducibility inside the Soane Museum was the concretion of new possibilities for both the museum and architecture. Art historians have rightly noted that the reproduction of objects in plaster and other media served as a novel and transformative mode of access to the material culture of classical antiquity.13 As Florence Rionnet argues, in ‘substituting itself for the original work, the cast permitted the imaginary possession of a renowned work, a sign of power and knowledge’. Objects that had previously only been visible at the end of an arduous and expensive journey became available for the first time for private and public consumption across Europe: ‘casts of the finest antiques would have allowed for the collection in one place of masterpieces that had been dispersed’ previously across the Mediterranean.14 This was certainly the case for Soane, who

‘regarded his casts as teaching tools’ exemplifying the history of architecture. However, the Museum and its use by students is a demonstration of the fact that reproduced objects not only facilitated access to past cultures or worlds, but also to future ones. A cast taken from Rome or Athens, Naples or Nîmes, might re-emerge in a country house, a churchyard, a public office, or a private residence via the Museum. The Museum that Soane built not only enabled ‘his students to study an important Antique building in detail’ but also enabled him ‘to recreate its elements in his own work’. The reproduced objects of the Soane Museum were representative not only of an eclipsed past but also of a possible future.

The use of casts to suggest possible futures is an indication of why the composition and arrangement of objects inside the Museum was so important to Soane. The ‘picturesque’ nature of the visitor’s experience was remarked upon as early as 1827 in John Britton’s (1771-1857) guide, and has continued to be emphasised by, among others, Robin Middleton and Helen Dorey. The framing of vistas in the Museum through a mixture of technical innovations (such as mirrors, tinted glass, moveable planes) and the careful placement of objects betrayed a concern with the potential for objects and views to do architectural work. It demonstrated Soane’s belief that the deployment and reproduction of fragments of an old world in new orders might lead to the development of new architectural forms, that the correct invocation of the spectres of the past – of its life, its architecture, its arrangement of objects and space – might lead architecture into the future. In this chapter I will explore the different ways in which reproductions were used to mediate between the

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past and the future in the Museum, examining a number of different representations of the Museum and uses to which it was put over the course of Soane’s career in order to salvage an understanding of the Museum as an institution as much concerned with the architectural future as the archaeological past.

I. Triumphal bridges and the language of architecture

The earliest public explanation of the origin of his Museum was offered by Soane in a brief aside at the end of his sixth professorial lecture to the Royal Academy, first read on 16 January 1812:

On my appointment to the Professorship I began to arrange the books, casts, and models, in order that the students might have the benefit of easy access to them. The drawings now offered to your inspection are part only of what is already done for that purpose and which makes only a portion of the entire plan, will give some idea of the means by which I proposed to discharge the duties of my situation to the advantage of the students, for whose improvement the Professor must always in a very considerable degree be held responsible.\(^{18}\)

The Museum is another form in which the Professor discharges his duties ‘to the advantage of the students’. Whether by allowing Royal Academy students access to the Museum itself, or by providing them with images drawn from its collection at his lectures, Soane deploys the objects in his care as illustration and inspiration. In overtly claiming for his Museum an origin that is coterminous with his Professorship, Soane presents a theory of architectural history that does not relegate artefacts to the role of ambassadors of an inaccessible past, but declares them active participants in modern architectural practice. These artefacts come from the most recognised sites of antiquity, but appear through their reproduction in mediums that were better suited to ensure clarification and communicability. The extensive constellation of reproduced

objects – ‘books, casts and models’ – gained significance from an increasing concern within archaeological, architectural, and antiquarian circles with achieving the just measurement and the true representation (see Chapter 3). In such a context, the reproduction began to develop its own truth claims that rested uneasily between the notional autonomy of the original and the supposed mechanical dependence of the copy. Though proxies or stand-ins for the original, the cast or model represented a conceptual shift in modes of access to the Antique, both establishing a greater immediacy to the original at the same time as representing an acceleration in processes of mediation.

Reproductions certainly held something of the past within them, yet they also established claims upon the future. These multiple objects were therefore assembled by Soane not only or even principally as an attempt at the reconstruction of an inert antiquity, but as active participants in an architectural practice that was intimately related to a process of self-reflection. Architecture's rediscovery of antiquity through the copy, as well as being a mythic recollection ‘imbued with nostalgic ideologies’ was also the experience of that myth as fragmented and decayed by ‘revolutionary expectations’. In the accumulation of reproductions, architecture waged a battle against itself and its history. Such an experience threatened the dissolution of architecture itself in the undoing of its own foundations. But, conversely it was through this new, already mediated, experience of the architectural fragment that new foundations were built. In their establishment within the rooms, galleries and corridors of Lincoln’s Inn Fields, these reproductions of an excavated antiquity presented not only an historical ordering, a grammar or archaeology of deceased forms, but were themselves an attempt to produce archaeological and architectural grammars of the future.

The diffusion through the museum of a diversity of objects, purposefully placed by Soane to contrast with or complement one another, was a material indication of

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Soane’s interest in the linguistic analogy with architecture. Objects were meant to physically articulate new shapes of thought and forms of construction as if they were themselves a language. This linguistic analogy had a century-long lineage in French architectural theory stretching from Germain Boffrand (1667-1754) through the works of Jean-Nicholas-Louis Durand, and reaching English readers in the writings of William Chambers (1723-1796). Particularly prominent in espousing this theory was Antoine-Crysostôme Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849) who argued that ‘every architecture constituted a language’, and whose relationship to Soane was ‘one of the most important determining factors in his interpretation of the character and meaning of architecture’. Quatremère was also remarkable for his contention that decoration ‘is a language of which the signs and expressions must be endowed with a precise signification capable of conveying ideas’. Soane took detailed notes and translations from the works of Quatremère throughout his residence at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, and eventually owned copies of six separate works by him. In a Commonplace Book of 1807 Soane translated Quatremère’s remark on the Egyptians that ‘their buildings being intended to receive on all their surfaces inscriptions in symbolical characters, we must consider them as large books always open to the public instruction’. The announcement in his sixth lecture that his museum would serve as a project for public instruction therefore rearticulated these fragments and plaster casts, models and illustrations. The student was offered not only a reconstructed account of the fragmented ‘local grammars of architecture’, but also a revitalisation of those dead languages according to novel and contentious grammars in which a careful re-reading of ancient and modern, Greek and Roman, European and Asian might suggest novel contrasts and syntheses.

24 Lavin, p.181.
The sixth Royal Academy lecture, in which Soane first offered a public explanation of his Museum, was eclectic in content. The first topic that he addressed was the question of the ornamental and structural demands of arches and bridges. Soane argued that bridges were the most magnificent of all classical constructions for their exceptional capacity to defy given conditions, to embody solidity in opposition to the flux of the river. In forging a link between two places that were naturally isolated from one another, bridges demonstrate for Soane both the original necessity of all architectural practice and conversely its capacity to supersede the limitations that gave rise to its origin. It is perhaps surprising that Soane should conclude such a lecture with an account of his Museum, when he had previously restricted himself to a discussion of more pragmatic architectural concerns. However, the bridge had biographical significance for Soane. It was thanks to his design for a Triumphal Bridge in 1776 that he had won the Gold Medal at the Royal Academy, and was subsequently able to afford his tour of Italy in 1778. An anecdote from his *Memoirs of The Professional Life of an Architect* further spells out the importance of the bridge drawing in preserving his life and ensuring his future architectural career. While he was working on the drawing one Sunday during one of the few moments he was not required to attend the offices of his employer Henry Holland (1745-1806):

> one of my schoolfellows having attained the age of twenty-one years, myself and another agreed to celebrate that event with him at Greenwich. When the day arrived I found myself so pressed for time to finish my drawings, that I requested to be excused. The two friends proceeded on their excursion, and after dinner went on the water in a small boat, which was unfortunately upset, and one of the party was drowned. Thus as, like my regretted friend, I could not swim, the circumstances of my being employed on the drawings of the bridge preserved me from a watery grave.25

In saving him from ‘a watery grave’, this bridge is in a sense the one that took him to Rome, Paestum and Sicily, first brought him into contact with continental antiquarian culture, and first allowed him to experience ‘the remains of the great works of Greece

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and Italy’ (p. 176). It also remained a focal point for his career, subject to frequent reinterpretations and revisions by Soane, his colleagues, and his students. The most explicit of these was that carried out after his visit to the three temples at Paestum in 1779. This visit offered Soane his first authentic experience of the ruder Doric order of architecture, commonly identified with Grecian purity and simplicity, which he would later describe in his lectures as embodying the ‘correct ideas of masculine strength’ and grandeur (p. 55). Thirty years later Soane still felt the impact of this encounter. In his second Royal Academy lecture, delivered on 15 January 1810, he would illustrate the description above of the Doric order with, among others, illustrations of the Temple of Hera II at Paestum (then known as the Temple of Neptune). Thus, during his return to England from Italy, Soane presented himself at the Parma Academy and, while declining to enter the Diploma contest (as his former teacher George Dance the Younger had done), ‘settled for a submission for honorary membership’. To accomplish this, Soane offered ‘a reworking of the old Royal Academy Gold Medal drawing, his Triumphal Bridge, this time using the Greek Doric Order’. The bridge had been stylistically transformed from the ‘delicate, gay, and impressive’ Corinthian order, to the grander and more simplistic Doric (p. 55). This was also a shift backwards in time, with the Doric order predating the Corinthian as an original moment in the dominant historical theory of orders. Later, in 1799, Soane would employ his student Joseph Gandy (1771-1843) to produce a watercolour incorporating the Doric within ‘a revised version of his prize-winning Triumphal Bridge project, represented by a striking worm’s-eye view’. Another of Soane’s students, George Basevi (1794-1845), when first training at Lincoln’s Inn Fields in May 1811, was instructed to ‘undertake a perspective view of the famous Triumphal Bridge design of 1776’, a task taken serious enough that he was ‘nearly three weeks being thus occupied’. This was during the same period in which Soane was employing at times his entire staff of seven in making ‘diagrams for the Royal Academy Lectures’, including diagrams of the Triumphal

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26 SM, Drawer 23.3.8; vol. 2, 7.
Bridge. This early example of Soane’s preoccupation with quotation and reconfiguration indicates his complicated relationship with situated ruins in his architectural practice. Never to be built, the bridge required repeated rearticulation along the new vectors opened up by the first-hand experience of classical antiquity. It also represented the potential for architectural pasts to erupt into the present as potential new forms. What was taken for ruin is suddenly projected into the architectural future; its fixed abstraction as an academic project dissolves into the capacity of reproduced forms to move between substances, locations and types of building. On its journey from the new Somerset House through Italy to Lincoln’s Inn Fields, the bridge reveals itself capable of translation to new sites, according to new methods and through new media. By the end of his life Soane had at least six images of the Triumphal Bridge placed around his Museum. Two were in the picture room, a selection of the original drawings were suspended on the staircase leading to the Chamber Floor, another version was in the North Drawing-Room, and finally another drawing – of the Doric version – was hung in the Model Room, opposite cork models of the temples at Paestum that Soane had originally visited back in 1779 and that had inspired the conversion of its orders in the first place.

The inclusion of the announcement of the Museum at Lincoln’s Inn Fields in a lecture that began with the subject of bridges thus conforms to a certain logic within Soane’s practice. The Museum was to be a bridge for the architects who succeeded him. During the first years of the Museum’s establishment in Lincoln’s Inn Fields, young architects, unable to reach Rome because of poverty or the Napoleonic Wars, might use it as a means of bringing the remains of Greece and Rome within their field of vision. Even after the effective cessation of hostilities in 1815, a mixture of expense and distance still put the Grand Tour out of the reach of a majority of students, necessitating the study of fragments, casts and other copies at home.Britton

was to describe the situation for architecture students in 1825 as still dire, with the exception of Soane’s collection:

England, even at the present enlightened epoch, is still without a public school of architecture. The Royal Academy, although it professes to include this branch in the tripartite union of the Fine Arts, affords its students very little patronage and less instruction. Its collections of architectural casts and books are comparatively meagre. The enthusiastic pupil, as well as the amateur, will therefore be gratified to learn, that the Professor of Architecture to this national school has formed at his own house, and by his own means, a collection of great value, extent, and variety.\footnote{J. Britton and A. Pugin, \textit{Illustrations of the Public Buildings of London: With Historical and Descriptive Accounts of each Edifice}, 2 vols (London: J. Taylor, J. Britton, A. Pugin, 1825-1828), I (1825), 315.}

The Museum, as the terminal of an alternative, less literal, professional journey in counterpoint to the Grand Tour, was emphasised again by Britton in his private letter addressed to Soane on Christmas Day 1829, ‘The Sinners offering at the Shrine of St. John of Soania’. In a mood at turns comical and reflective, Britton determines to:

make a pilgrimage to the revered and sacred shrine of \textit{St. John of Soania}. There I would not only make a full confession of all my negligences and ignorances – but of all the great and little sins whereof I had been guilty: fully confiding in the miraculous powers and potencies of that revered Saint, which I had chosen for my patron and mediator.

Dressed up in the vestments of a Saint, his Museum a shrine, Soane is here both ‘patron and mediator’, the shrine is associated with ‘Antiquities, Topography - the Fine Arts [...] Architecture pictures and books’\footnote{SM, 7.10.8, fols 2-3.} For Britton, the antiquarian author and publisher, the Museum both replicates the archaeological and is identified with its replicative function.

With the Royal Academy collection generally considered insufficient, Soane’s Museum offered the best means of access to classical architectural remains. The Museum played a mediating role between current architectural practice and the
developing contemporary knowledge of Antique remains. According to Soane’s educational model, the Museum, in holding within itself the contradictory capacity to represent the past and form the future, was itself a bridge. Soane’s Museum was a space of mediation that offered the student the opportunity to look into the foundations of architecture and reconfigure them for the modern city. Envisaging the establishment of his Museum as an important event in the history of British architecture, Soane saw himself by a herculean effort again turning ‘our eyes towards Italy, that classical ground abounding with so many rich treasures of the ancient architecture, the powers of which may be obscured by ignorance and prejudice, by fashion and caprice, by improper models and tasteless patrons, but cannot be annihilated’ (p. 124). The Museum was not only to provide the material of vision, but to actively reform it, removing ‘ignorance and prejudice’ as scales from the eyes of students.

II. New orders, new ruins, and the limits of propriety

To understand what form this mediation of past and future was intended to take, it is necessary to examine what Soane thought to be the role of ‘the remains of the great works of Greece and Italy’ in modern architecture. To do this I will examine Soane’s criticism of other architects’ engagement with antiquity, paying attention to the ways in which he accounted theoretically for the limits of propriety in contemporary appropriations of antique forms. I will offer an account of the attack in his third Royal Academy lecture on the eighteenth-century fashion for new architectural orders, and the criticism in his tenth Royal Academy lecture of the overuse of artificial ruins in landscape gardening. After attending to this negative aspect of Soane’s critical engagement with contemporary appropriations of antique forms, in the next section I will consider the way in which Soane could also affirm such appropriations, exploring his own use of artificial ruins at Pitzhanger.

In the eighteenth century classical architecture was generally understood to be composed of either three (Doric, Ionic, Corinthian) or five (with the addition of
Etruscan and Composite) orders. Though often reduced to a column and an entablature, in their fullest expression orders dictated the relationship between the many forms and components that constituted a building, determining everything from the use of ornament, to the measurement of the intercolumniation and even the purpose of buildings. They offered a total architectural order upon which any framework for construction should be founded. It is in this context that, in his second lecture, Soane described orders as an ‘alphabet’ for the student of architecture, emphasising the necessity that students ‘acquire the fullest knowledge and most clear and correct ideas of their constituent principles’ (pp. 44-45). They were the most basic components out of which the complicated language of architecture was built. Yet this universality was grounded in the particular: each of these orders, with the exclusion of the Composite (which sometimes took the names Latin, Italian, or Roman), derived its name from a nation, like languages themselves. This nominal residue scarred the orders with a national specificity defining the limits of their position as universal ‘models of beauty, harmony, and perfection’ (p. 48). It was from this scar of particularity that scholarly, professional, and amateur speculation regarding the potential for a new order of architecture emerged. The project for a new order, in its development across Europe, was coterminous with projects to develop national architectural styles. Though there are precedents in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the European fashion for new architectural orders was properly inaugurated in 1671 when Jean Baptiste Colbert (1619-1683), Louis XIV’s Minister of Finances, announced a prize of 3,000 livres for whichever architect succeeded in producing a new, French, order of architecture that was to adorn the Square Courtyard of the Louvre Palace.34 Over the following century dozens of projects – mostly French, but also Spanish, German, Hungarian and British – were announced, published, drawn up, and some even built.35

Soane, while generally critical of ‘some of the architects of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries’ and ‘the feeble efforts of the French architects’, largely reserved his most substantial criticism for the proposals for a new British order, put forward by Henry Emlyn (1728/9–1815) in *A Proposition for a New Order in Architecture* and by Peter de la Roche in *An Essay on the Orders of Architecture* (p. 65). Soane owned copies of both these proposals, and even had large-scale drawings of their respective orders made for display – and ridicule – during his lectures.\(^{36}\) Emlyn claimed that his proposal was drawn equally from observations of nature and society: from his examination of ‘Twin Trees’ growing in the Forrest of Windsor, and the symbols associated with the Order of the Garter (or St. George), an English and then British chivalric order. This lexical slippage between three orders – the architectural, the natural, and the national – gives an indication of the complexity associated with such projects for a new order, and the thematic resonances that they desired to impose on their materials. Emlyn’s new order was to comprise two columns sharing a single base, with a shield painted with St George’s cross marking the point at which the two columns met. The capital was to be composed of ‘a Lion’s Snout rising out of a Rose’ and a plume of three ostrich feathers, symbol of the Prince of Wales.\(^{37}\) In the introductory note to the reader, Emlyn states his awareness of the projects that had preceded his, and the danger his was likely to encounter, remarking that ‘after the many unsuccessful Endeavours of others, it may be judged too presumptuous in me to think of striking out any Thing in this way worthy to be adopted into Practice’.

Emphasising his contempt for Emlyn, in his copy of the *Proposal*, besides the words ‘striking out’ Soane has written ‘with a Mallet & Chisel’, indicating he thought him little better than a workman or vandal.\(^{38}\) Later, in a section where Emlyn describes the entablature in detail, Soane wrote in pencil that he has done all this without ‘a single profit copied from Greece or Rome’.\(^{39}\) In these notes Emlyn is figured as a mere

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\(^{36}\) SM, Drawer 23.8-9.


\(^{38}\) Emlyn, p.iv, SM, 2198.

\(^{39}\) Emlyn, p.5, SM, 2198.
builder, not an architect, his attachment to his tools – the ‘Mallet & Chisel’ – marking him as a labourer without artistry. Likewise, his inability to integrate his project within the history of his profession (classical architecture) reveals Emlyn to be an abstract fantasist, incapable of constructing a meaningful, *profitable*, work.

De la Roche similarly constructs his ‘Britannic Order’ from the three ostrich feathers of the Prince of Wales’ heraldic badge, this time aligning it with the popular account of its origins in the Black Prince’s victory over John I of Bohemia at the Battle of Crécy in 1346. De la Roche’s greatest anxiety about his ‘Britannic Order’ is that, in its radical departure from the canonical orders, it will not be recognised as a valid addition to the architectural ‘alphabet’:

> There is a general opinion, which is, that it is next to an impossibility, for an Architect to acquire any degree of reputation, if his taste has not been modelled by a survey of the *Antique Remains*; and of course, a journey to *Italy* is reckoned as necessary to finish the artist [...] This seems to me, an unhappy prejudice under which the art of Architecture is tamely limited in its growth. And though it may be thought a too bold assertion; yet I will venture to say, that the Architect who is not capable of any thing great of himself, and without going to *Italy*; will never perform any thing really so, were he to spend three quarters of his life in the contemplation of the *Antique Remains*.40

De la Roche here makes a virtue of his lack of architectural education: it is not the modelling of the student’s ‘taste’ by the oppressive experience of ‘Antique Remains’ that makes an architect, but the architect’s independent capacities within himself, apart from any technical study of ruins. At the conclusion to the *Essay* de la Roche makes this point even more directly:

> If the present age does not approve of the invention, perhaps posterity will judge otherwise; I believe it only wants antiquity, and when found among ruins, it may perhaps please many, whose genius would have condemned it at its birth.41

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40 Peter de la Roche, *An Essay on the Orders of Architecture: In which are contained Some considerable Alterations in their Proportions, several Observations on the propriety of their Use, And the Introduction of a New Great Order. Called the Britannic Order* (London: 1769), p.iii.

41 de la Roche, p.59.
De la Roche’s startling claim is that it is not necessarily its universal aesthetic value that determines the worth of classical architecture, but only its context as the ruins of antiquity. De la Roche is defiant in implying that his order ‘only wants antiquity’ and, were it to be ‘found among ruins’, would please those who condemn it for its novelty alone.

Astonishingly, despite the relative obscurity of de la Roche’s order, Soane felt compelled in his third lecture to offer an extensive refutation of his argument:

If Monsr de la Roche had recollected the conduct of Michael Angelo he need not have waited for the praise of posterity. It is related of that great artist that, having made a statue of Bacchus, he broke off one of the arms which he retained in his studio, burying the other part of his work in a place that he expected soon to be the scene of exploration, which accordingly happened, and the mutilated statue being then found, it was supposed to be an antique, and was sold to an eminent connoisseur of that day for a very large sum of money. Michael Angelo then produced the arm and triumphantly claimed the whole work for his own. Had this contrivance occurred to Monsr de la Roche he might most easily have made a small model of his great work, and having buried a part of it in excavations near Cheltenham or in the environs of Bath, it might then have been there found with tessellated pavements and other valuable fragments, to the inexpressible delight of the antiquarian. And when ushered into the world by the man of superior skill, with elaborate descriptions of its beauties and splendid engravings, Monsr de la Roche might have produced his fragment, proclaimed himself the author of the work and have given full scope to his vanity. But Mons de la Roche was no Michael Angelo, and his great work, instead of obtaining for its author immortal fame, agreeably to his expectations, has long since been consigned to oblivion. (p. 66)

Soane figures Michelangelo (1475-1564) as an artist both faithful to the essence of classicism while successfully transforming it into something new, opening up new possibilities for sculpture. The tactical manoeuvres of an art dealer aimed at raising the price and prestige of a work are retold to become an allegory for the relationship between artist and history, drawing attention to the vertiginous play of temporalities in the moderns’ relationship with the ancients. The completion of the statue coincides with its realisation as a product of the modern artist, and the recognition that the unbridgeable gulf between the classical and the modern has been bridged through a
sleight of hand that produces a moment of mutual recognition. De la Roche is ridiculed for his misrecognition of the history of art as an abstract process of apotheosis: for Soane it is not in the intractable and untouchable past of the work that its success is posited – as if the more absolutely the work is distanced from its present the more valuable it becomes – but rather in its living contest with the present. Legibility becomes the category by which the work is to be judged: de la Roche fails not because his order is too new, but because it is inadequate to the modernity it attempts to realise.

This theoretical claim is again articulated in Soane’s tenth lecture. Turning to the eighteenth-century craze for artificial ruins, Soane cautions against the detachment of ruined buildings from their context and purpose:

if correct representations of the temples at Segesta and Paestum were placed on a fine dressed lawn, surrounded by beautiful shrubberies, from the want of appropriate scenery, they would appear clumsy and misapplied. Nor will objects, however beautiful in themselves, satisfy the classical mind unless they are likewise judiciously placed. (p. 222)

For Soane, the concept of architectural beauty is explicitly not autonomous. Architecture as an art form must have a necessary relation to the natural and the social world. Ruins ‘evidently constructed for decoration only, in situation and character such as not to pretend to represent anything more than a heap of materials, broken into a great variety of agreeable forms’ are a failure in architectural terms, producing ‘no satisfactory sensations’ (p. 224). Beauty does not reside solely in the internal organisation of the building, but also in its end. The appearance and organisation of the building must appear necessary in relation to its environment and its purpose. It is through construction according to principles of ‘situation and character’ that the beauty of each part coheres into ‘more than a heap of materials’, becoming architecture proper. These two terms, situation and character, indicate the relationship of the building to its natural and social contexts. In such a way Soane poses the question of architectural purpose at the modular level: from overall arrangement or taxis right down to ornamentation, situation and character must be at
the forefront of the architect’s considerations. In the case of ruins, their purpose is to produce ‘satisfactory sensations’ relating to time and mutability. The success of the broken-down temples, mausoleums and theatres of Italy is attributed to their ability to ‘fill the mind with the most serious and awful reflections’. It is in this moment of embodying their purpose that ruins become adequate to their concept and their beauty becomes manifest: ‘when such sensations are raised [...] we are only anxious for time to spare such monuments, that the same effect may be produced to the latest ages’ (p. 223). The ruin becomes eloquent as the knot of a temporal contradiction: it is the decay of the ruin that allows it to represent a permanent meaning, and its permanence that allows it to represent decay.

At this point in his lecture, Soane binds this concept of the ruin to a theory of reproduction. The culmination of the artificial ruin is its indistinguishability from the authentic:

And if artificial ruins of rocks and buildings are so cunningly contrived, so well conceived, as to excite such reflections and convey such useful, though melancholy, lessons, too much cannot be said in favour of their introduction on every occasion. Like the buildings of the Egyptians, covered with their hieroglyphics, they may be considered as histories open to all the world. (p. 223)

The successful artificial ruin is a site of architectural education no different from the authentic. But this indistinguishability cannot be achieved through the simple work of copying, instead it is the product of ‘cunning’ conception, of a reproduction that pretends to autonomy. Incorporating Quatremère’s account of Egyptian architecture, Soane conceives of the artificial ruin as a double whose success is defined according to its capacity to paraphrase the authentic artificial ruin without exposing the suture between reproduction and original. This paraphrase entails a play of appearance, shifting meaning from the real to the image:

But in order that these artificial ruins, these mimic representations, these portraits of objects, should produce pleasing sensations there must be an appearance of truth. A picture of any kind to please must be correct as to what it proposes to represent. In like manner ruins should not be so strikingly out of
character, as respect form and situation (I mean the representation and the original must have the same scenery), as to show at once that it is but a representation and not a reality. In a word, ruins must recall to the mind the idea of real objects and not be considered as mere pictures. (p. 224)

Artificial ruins are images, ‘portraits of objects’, and yet they must ‘not be considered mere pictures’ if they are to ‘produce pleasing sensations’. Though image and object are opposed, it is through the craft of the artist that this representational suture is hidden. However, rather than offering an escape from the play of images, the ‘cunning’ validation of the reproduction in its self-effacement ultimately participates in it. Soane decides that the artificial ruin succeeds when it produces an ‘appearance of truth’. Working to hide ‘that it is but a representation and not a reality’, the artificial ruin expresses its truth as appearance. This contradiction between representation and object is unresolvable, an absolute reality of architectural practice. The truth of the artificial ruin is at the same time the truth of its representative function and of the effacement of this function. It must at once represent a past architecture, that architecture’s movement through history, and its persistence into the future. Equally, it must at once represent and eschew ‘mere’ representation. And it must do so in such a way that does not betray its environment. Thus, a satisfaction of the requirements of ‘form and situation’ is necessary if architectural language is to be more than a play of surfaces, is to irrupt and charge the – social and natural – world in which it is grounded. If – as Soane seems keenly aware – ruination is the limit of the architectural work, the problem of the future of architecture must be asked in terms of ruins, architecture must speak of its future in the language of ruins, of its persistence in ruins. It is through the reconfiguration and reimagining of these ruins that architecture articulates itself and its future.
III. Imagining the future and the artificial ruins at Pitzhanger Manor

Biographically, these thoughts occurred to Soane in the aftermath of his unsuccessful experiment in legacy building at Pitzhanger Manor. In his *Memoirs of The Professional Life of an Architect*, he describes the Manor as originally being purchased and rebuilt for the training of his son as an architect:

> in all that was done at Pitzhanger Mansion-house, I had in view the comfort and convenience, as well as its influence upon the pursuits of my elder son, for whose residence the Villa was intended if he followed the profession of an Architect.\(^{42}\)

This ultimately ended in catastrophe when his son, John Soane Jr, turned against architecture, refusing to follow his father into the profession, and marrying against his wishes – leading to an estrangement. Soon afterwards in 1810 Soane sold Pitzhanger to a General Cameron for £10,000.

In the grounds of Pitzhanger, abutting the north wall of the Manor House, Soane had built an artificial Roman ruin. The ruin principally employed the Corinthian order, incorporating a tight network of columns and pilasters to present the residue of a construction whose fragmentary remains were careful to allow for multiple interpretations. At its centre was a submerged archway that resisted any definite confirmation of its purpose or extent, while alluding to a number of classical antecedents as well as later works and proposals by Soane himself. The ruin appeared a confusion of elements superimposed upon one another, producing a sense of oxymoron in observers. Such oxymoron was intensified by the inclusion of gothic features both in the architecture of the house, and in the narrative accompanying the ruins. The ruins therefore appeared an archaeological site whose confusion could only be clarified through the exposure of its phantom foundations.

Any attempt to relate these artificial ruins to Soane’s account of the genre in his lectures immediately comes up against a contradiction. For Soane, the exigencies of architectural propriety made the importation of classical ruins into the English landscape inappropriate:

ruins representing the remains of Grecian or Roman buildings, however beautiful and picturesque, can never be introduced into the decorative gardening of this country: nor perhaps can any other style of composition so effectively as the Gothic, of which we have so many striking examples in the mouldering ruins of castles, the religious houses, magnificent priories, and extensive cathedrals, still existing in so many parts of England. (p. 224)

The Pitzhanger ruins, constructed by Soane as an educative and exploratory tool, made no sense according to his own theory of propriety. The Graeco-Roman ruin, ‘however beautiful and picturesque’ is not appropriate to British decorative gardening and is divorced from any semblance of architectural ‘truth’. Soane’s introduction of a ruin into his model country home therefore appears contradictory. Indeed, any attempt to read Soane’s writing and architecture together is bound to produce such contradictions; his passion for prescription and proscription was matched only by his frequent willingness to contradict himself. For instance, the use of classical orders in the domestic interior is at once condemned and enacted in his architectural practice; Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778) is critiqued in the Royal Academy lectures yet the subject of lifelong fascination; Soanian propriety restricts country residences to a single story, yet Pitzhanger Manor was built on multiple levels. Further difficulty comes in attempting to understand these contradictions without reducing them to a relationship of norm and aberration. To do so would be to privilege either the material confirmation of architectural work, or to establish the primacy of textual explanation over practice. Either of these choices would submit the contradiction between text and practice to a vanishing point of minimal recognition. Rather than attempt such a synthesis, I will intentionally emphasise the persistence of this conflict in the question of the artificial ruin in Soane’s work.

One plausible explanation for the contradiction between text and practice would be to point out that Soane built the ruins at Pitzhanger at the start of the
decade, and did not write his critique of artificial ruins until its end. This would be to suggest that after a process of learning and correction his work at Ealing was first incorporated into and then surpassed by his theoretical claims for architecture. Yet this is not how he frames the ruins in his one direct statement on them, the *Plans, Elevations and Perspective Views, of Pitzhanger Manor-House, and of the Ruins of an edifice of Roman Architecture*, written as a ‘letter to a friend’ describing the estate and dated 1802. In reality the description was written sometime in 1832 or 1833 and appears to have been prompted by the resale of Pitzhanger by the Cameron estate in 1832. Bound in a volume of drawings by Charles James Richardson (1808-71), made in the summer of 1832, is the notice of sale of the estate and its buildings by the auctioneer Shuttleworth. The extensive description of the house in the notice of sale focuses on Soane’s hand in its construction, emphasising the architectural and aesthetic value of the building through the deployment of technical terminology and antiquarian points of reference:

Erected when Sir John Soane made it his Private Residence; the Front is decorated with four fluted Grecian Ionic Columns, raised on pedestals with corresponding Antae Pilasters, supporting an Entablature, and surmounted by Figures from the Chariotidae of the Pandrosium. – Under each window is a panel, containing the Wreath and Eagle; above the columns are Pilasters dividing the Attic, and in each compartment is a Medallion, or Pannel [sic], containing Figures in basso relievo, or raised ornaments – the whole surmounted by a ballustrade, &c. 43

The drawings by Richardson appear to have been made largely in August 1832, two months after the auction, and they would become the *Plans* illustrating Soane’s description. It appears plausible, then, that one chronology for the description of Pitzhanger in 1833 would be that, after reading the notice of sale, Soane decided to instruct his former pupil Richardson to take drawings from the grounds, and then produced his own description to accompany them.

43 SM, Volume 87, ‘Manor House, Great Ealing, Middlesex. Particulars of a valuable Copyhold Estate [...] Which will be Sold by Auction, by Mr. Shuttleworth, at the mart, Bartholomew-Lane, Opposite the Bank of England, On Wednesday, June 13, 1832, at Twelve o’Clock’.
The description itself is dated by Soane to ‘Ealing, June 30th, 1802’ however, almost precisely thirty years before the sale of the property at auction. It is intended as a letter to a friend written as Soane first took possession of the property, first rebuilt it according to the exigencies of contemporary style, first ‘discovers’ the adjacent ruins. Yet this reinsertion of the authorial voice into the past as a lived event is immediately rendered grammatically implausible by Soane’s choice of tense and tone. Soane’s ‘anticipation’ of the future of his family is described as having been ‘enjoyed’ resolutely in the past: he describes how his son ‘seemed’ at the time to have a future in the profession of architecture, hinting at his later apostasy. This is the tone of the later Soane, disappointed by the failure and betrayal of his son, entombing his familial aspirations in the past tense. In a section of the description later reused by Soane in his Memoirs of The Professional Life of an Architect, the implications of this use of the past tense are made explicit. Soane follows his description of the house with the story of his estrangement from his son, concluding with his departure from Pitzhanger:

This was to me a severe mortification, for it entirely defeated my hopes and plans with respect to him; and in consequence I disposed of the Manor-house at Ealing. Many of the architectural and antiquarian fragments there accumulated were removed to my house in Lincoln’s Inn Fields, and of those which were left there but little now remains.\[44\]

The disjunction between the structuring of the text as a description of a time passed and the larger gesture of setting it in a time in which the future of the house is still open is another of the temporal contradictions that Soane frequently generated in his articulation of architectural history. It is analogous to the contradiction of the artificial ruin at Pitzhanger itself: the ruin poses itself as a problem resolvable only in the archaeological unpacking of its future from its past. Both ruin and description are forged in order to appear more ancient than they really are, both engage any attempt to read them in a dangerous play of truth and falsehood, designed to at once foreclose and release the energies of architectural speculation. In both cases the ruin is the site of a future potential that has not been realised. Soane begins his account of the ruin in the Plans with a fantastic story of its discovery:

44 Soane, Memoirs of The Professional Life of an Architect, p.66.
Proceeding with these works, to the east of the offices we perceived among the trees mutilated shafts of columns covered with ivy, wild roses, and briers. On removing some of the brambles and other obstacles, the ruins appeared to be of greater importance and extent than had at first been anticipated. Geometrical elevations and plan were made from which the whole assumed the character of a regular composition. The ruins were afterwards represented in perspective, and an attempt made to restore the exterior to its original state.\textsuperscript{45}

Yet, in the \textit{Memoirs of The Professional Life of an Architect} this speculative fancy was resisted, with Soane providing a more prosaic account of the ruins’ construction. The artificial ruins were in fact designed as a ridiculous trick upon ‘fanciful architects and antiquaries’ who extrapolated the grandest buildings from the minutest data:

finding a few pieces of columns, and sometimes only a few single stones, proceeded from these slender data to imagine magnificent buildings; and by whom small fragments of tessellated pavements were magnified into splendid remains of Roman grandeur, which were given to the world in the most pompous and expensive style.\textsuperscript{46}

While certainly one valid interpretation of the ruins, this trickster origin story obscures as much as it reveals: written by Soane toward the end of his life, his plans for a legacy defeated, the value of the ruins as architectural practice is intentionally obscured. In fact, when first designing the Manor at Pitzhanger Soane suggests, in a plan dated 1801, that the gallery for plaster casts and models should include a large window on the north wall overlooking ‘sham classical ruins referred to on the plan as “Ruins of a Temple.”’\textsuperscript{47} The room was also to be lit above by three lanterns. This gallery for architectural specimens – for casts, fragments, and models – was to serve as the site of education for a young architect. Its complex system of windows and space, light and vision, juxtaposed the ruin with the gallery, creating a single vista that allowed a

\textsuperscript{46} Soane, \textit{Memoirs of The Professional Life of an Architect}, p.66.
\textsuperscript{47} Feinberg Millenson, p.7.
mutual enrichment of objects through the proliferation of shared meanings and effects. The Pitzhanger ruin here no longer limited itself to nostalgic or cynical object of reflection, but began to have an impact on the education of the student and the practice of the architect. In being studied, speculated about, represented and reproduced, the ruin became the articulation of an architectural future.

The evocative capacity of the ruins was still felt in Richardson’s later watercolours, where they are subtly modified and augmented, registering new allusions and potentials in the process. The images that were supposed to present the ruins as they were, without the speculative mediation of the architect, were not quite as unmodified as they first seemed. Soane ‘embellished the reality of what he had actually built’ by adding ‘urns and statues’, while copies of Thomas Banks’ ‘roundels of “Morning” and “Evening”’ were applied to the triumphal arch. Soane also included hypothetical reconstructions of the ruin on a grand scale in his description. Even thirty years after the ruin’s construction, twenty years after its sale, Soane still played the old game. Nor was it only Soane’s game to play:

The drawings of the ruins in their present state, and the attempts made to represent the edifice in its ancient grandeur, were sources of amusement to the numerous persons visiting this place, particularly on the three days of Ealing fair, held on the green in front of the Manor-house. On those days it was the custom for our friends to visit us by a general invitation […] many of whom, after contemplating the ruins and drawings, communicated their sentiments on the subject, which created a constant source of intellectual enjoyment.

Most significant is what Soane reveals about the relationship between his son and the ruins. When John was a student at Cambridge:

I recommended to him to restore the ruins of Pitzhanger, an idea with which he expressed great satisfaction, and I flattered myself, that on his return from college I should have seen his sketches and ideas on the subject. In this I was disappointed.

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48 Visions of Ruin, p.31.
49 Soane, Plans, p.8.
The study of the ruins, and their restoration, was not only a trick upon the presumptions of the antiquarian, nor was it only an imaginative game between friends, it was also the centrepiece of the programme of architectural education in Soane’s Pitzhanger project. The ruins, in their arrangement alongside the gallery, and in their unfulfilled restoration by the younger John Soane, represented a contention in archaeological and architectural terms. They asked to be completed by the objects of contemplation in the gallery, to return to life through a reincorporation of its fragments and casts (in fact, the urns, statues, and roundels that Soane had applied in Richardson’s illustrations had been taken from the façade of the Manor house itself). They were a prompt to new architectures.

IV. The reproducible museum at Lincoln’s Inn Fields

Soane’s programme for architectural education through generative juxtapositions was carried forward at his Museum at Lincoln’s Inn Fields. A volume still in the Museum archives contains ‘Miscellaneous Drawings of Ornaments, Sections & Views of the Museum by the Pupils of Sir John Soane’. During his career Soane trained at least 55 students, a little under half of them at Lincoln’s Inn Fields. On admission to Soane’s office, students were expected to demonstrate their talent by drawing objects in the Museum before having their articles signed. For some this was a formality quickly accomplished, while others ended up leaving after a matter of months if they did not progress sufficiently. These drawings were generally of two sorts: either depictions of individual objects in the collection isolated from their context; or illustrations of the Museum’s eclectic objects juxtaposed in situ. Both types of drawing formed an integral part of the programme of education pursued within the Museum. In his account of Soane’s teaching, Arthur T. Bolton describes George Basevi’s fairly typical experience of this programme:

Basevi Junior first appears in the Office Day Book quite suddenly, on 19 December 1810, and the seven preliminary weeks before the signature of his
articles (11 February 1811) are occupied in drawing the Orders, beginning with
a day spent on ‘the mouldings,’ Tuscan one day, Doric two, Ionic four, and so
on, the series apparently finishing with an elaborate pencil drawing (21 by 18)
of a Corinthian cap, the diameter of the columns being 12 1/2 inches. [...] He
then goes out with two others to take the plan of a house in Montague Place,
works on Dulwich College, then in hand, and spends a day squaring dimensions.
Temples are next drawn and perspective is begun. He is sent to Chelsea
Infirmary to take notes of work in hand and then spends five days drawing a
view of a room in that building. [...] By May 1811 Basevi is able to undertake a
perspective view of the famous Triumphal Bridge design of 1776, of which
composition there are so many versions in the Soane, nearly three weeks being
thus occupied. 51

One of the objects that appears to have been the focus of attention for a
significant number of students was the plaster copy of the Corinthian capital of the
Temple of Castor and Pollux (then known as the Temple of Jupiter Stator; cf. Plate XIV).
There are at least five drawn versions of this cast by students in Soane’s library,
including drawings by Basevi dated 21 January 1811 (a month before he received his
articles, and probably the elaborate ‘Corinthian cap’ to which Bolton refers); Arthur
Mee (1802-1868) dated 28 August 1818 (a few months after he received his articles); a
disappointing example by Thomas Lee (1794-1834) from 25 July 1810 (the month he
entered the office, two months before he left for that of David Laing (1774-1856), an
earlier pupil of Soane’s); and two by Robert Smirke (1780-1867) from 13 and 15 April
1796 (a month before he entered Soane’s office). 52 There are also at least another two
drawings of the entablature of the Temple of Castor and Pollux, one of which by
Thomas Chawner (1774-1851) is dated 30 January 1789. 53 This last drawing by
Chawner is evidence that this was one of the very earliest and most persistently drawn
monuments in Soane’s practice, drawn three years before his earliest recorded
acquisition of casts. 54 Basevi’s drawing of the cast of the capital from Castor and Pollux
is peculiar for its annotation in a Roman monumental script, reading ‘JANVARY XXI -
MDCCCXI’ and then ‘II DAYS DRAWING IT’, indicating his pride in the sketch, as well as
the amount of work invested in its careful lines. Equally common in student drawings

51 Bolton, p.3.
52 SM, Volume 83, nos. 18, 49, 50, 51, 52.
53 SM, Volume 83, nos. 48, 59.
54 Feinberg Millenson, p.28.
are details of the capital and frieze of the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli, with four individual images. In total there are another ten drawings in the volume that take casts from capitals (largely Corinthian) as their principle or sole subject, while a significant number of the other drawings are of plaster casts from ornaments.

The number of images among the student drawings depicting plaster casts is an indication of how central these copies were to the educative schema of the Museum. The casts were objects that initiated students into the world of architectural history, and therefore equipped them for practice. Soane’s casts were not only a private collection, but operated as a public intervention in British architectural pedagogy:

This knowledge will be most effectually attained by attentively studying the taste, character, and expressions of the original works, but as some of the young architects cannot have this advantage, casts in plaster carefully made from them must in such cases supply that deficiency. [...] I have, therefore, never lost any opportunity of collecting casts from the ruins of ancient structures, marble fragments, vases and cinerary urns. (p. 155)

Casts in the Soane Museum were not only a reminder of the classical past: they were the retrieval of that past and its reintroduction into the architectural present. While willing to admit in his third lecture that two-dimensional representations had a use, Soane was adamant that they were insufficient for the advancement of architectural learning:

Drawings and prints, however correct they may be, can give but very imperfect ideas of real and relative quality; nor will they show the great varieties in the effects produced by the same objects when seen with different lights and shadows upon them, and even if correct representations were sufficient for every useful purpose of study where are they to be found – how are they to be obtained? Will the works of antiquity as shown by Palladio, Scamozzi, and Vignola give artists correct ideas of the original building? Can he depend on the delineations of Desgodetz? (p. 87)

Drawings and prints are insufficient in their representation of both the ‘real’ and the ‘relative’ qualities of their objects; that is, they neither represent the object sufficiently

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55 SM, Volume 83, nos. 53, 54, 55, 57. The artists are unfortunately unidentified.
in itself, nor can they provide a representation of its juxtaposition alongside other comparable objects. The student must be able to compare objects alongside one another to be able to reasonably select which is most appropriate for any particular situation or use. Furthermore, drawings and prints are inevitably unable to represent the effect that different arrangements of space and light will have on their subjects. Architecture is an art form that goes beyond the stationary vista or single view: its objects must be seen and seen again, must be inhabited and explored; there are ‘great varieties in the effects produced by the same objects when seen with different lights and shadows upon them’. The cast, in offering this capacity to reconfigure according to ‘variety’ – to the differences in space, light, and association required by architectural practice – is a revolutionary object in relation to ‘drawings and prints’, offering a potentially limitless opportunity for the exploration of the qualities of the object in space and in juxtaposition. The thickening of focus in the student drawings at the Museum around casts is thus evidence of Soane’s educational programme in effect. Plaster casts, with their spatial extension, impose a three-dimensional architectural imaginary on the student, requiring that they consider an object in many lights and among many different objects depending on their point-of-view.

Given the years, even decades, that divided the individual student drawings of the capital of the Temple of Castor and Pollux, it was inevitably drawn in numerous different locations, with different forms of lighting, proximate objects, and strategies of display. Each image thus captured a different aspect of the cast, as well as the different priorities and circumstances of its author. By 1824 with the construction of the Picture Room, the capital of Castor and Pollux was in its final location in the Corridor between the Corinthian colonnade and the Picture Room. It was around this time that it was drawn for Britton’s *Union of Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting* (1827) (Plate XV). By this point the majority of the extant student drawings of the capital had already been made, however its continued importance as a keystone of Soane’s educational programme is confirmed by the layout of the Corridor. The

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location of the cast at this particular juncture within the Museum is an impressive statement. As you walk down the staircase from the Students’ Room, it is the first thing you see on the south wall, drawing in your attention at the centre of a field of vision carefully focused through a lens constructed out of the long walls of the narrow Corridor. The cast was a focal point for any visitor or student passing along this route through the Museum, an item that signalled entry to the world of architectural learning.

As well as figuring centrally in Soane’s theory of architectural pedagogy, casts were therefore also important focal points in the physical arrangement of the Museum. Concentrated in those areas of the Museum most identified with instruction, they predisposed visitors and students to certain forms of visual and spatial experience that emphasised their pedagogical force. Not only the general existence of the Museum, but also its specific arrangement and rhythm was shaped by a preoccupation with reproductions. The reproduction vicariously administered a relationship to the Antique that proposed its investment in the architectural future. Before describing the Corridor in his guide, Britton is therefore careful to explain the importance of casts. Reiterating many of the claims in the Royal Academy lectures, Britton announces:

Of the superiority of fac-similes, in relief, to any other mode of representation, there can be little doubt; for they show at once, in a tangible form, what cannot otherwise be at all satisfactorily understood without a great number of diagrams; and even then the actual effect is left in a great degree to the imagination.  

In a footnote, the facsimiles are envisaged as a step towards the ‘more efficient provision [...] for the study of architecture’. Such a provision required an institution ‘furnished with models of the finest structures of antient [sic] and modern times, and affording specimens of every style and every country’, an institution not unlike Soane’s. As we saw with antiquarian models in Chapter 3, the immediacy with which the cast could represent an architectural idea enabled it to embody knowledge otherwise only available through the comparison of ‘a great number of diagrams’. Nor

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57 Britton, The Union of Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting, p.38.
was the superiority of casts only quantitative: their ‘actual effect’ surpasses diagrams which, however numerous, are always marked by a lack only made up for by ‘the imagination’. Likewise, as Soane had determined in his third lecture, the juxtaposition of a large array of different casts from within a single order was an incomparably powerful spur to architectural thought. Turning to the linguistic analogy, Britton notes that the many different Corinthian capitals in the Corridor ‘may be regarded as synonyms [sic] in [the student’s] vocabulary’. Comparing not only their ornamental differences, but also those relating to light and space, allowed for a monumental advance in architectural poetics, giving the student the power to ‘express those delicate and almost evanescent shades of meaning which cannot otherwise be conveyed, and to point out with precision the sentiment he intends to convey’.58 Britton understood the revolutionary importance of the Corridor as consisting in the capacity of its multiple ‘fac-similes, in relief’ to provide an experience of architectural forms and idioms alongside one another simultaneously.

The elaboration of the visual regime of the Museum around the transformative aspect of the cast was compounded by the manner in which they were arranged within the Museum. Students looking to draw the casts from the Temple of Castor and Pollux would have found them arranged in a particularly evocative manner:

At the south end of this corridor is a Cast from the Cornice of the Temple of Jupiter Stator, in the Campo Vaccino; and under it is the Capital. Between the capital and cornice is an antique Frieze, of very fine execution.59

The casts were arranged to give the appearance of a partially submerged ruin, the floor of the Corridor interrupting the downward movement of the capital’s column. The Castor and Pollux casts were presented – in an arrangement evocative of the artificial ruins at Pitzhanger – as an archaeological site requiring the intervention and investigation of the student. Top lit by a half-round skylight supplied with yellow glass, the Corridor was bathed in a warm light that suggested the imaginative location of its

fragments and casts among the ruins of Italy or Greece. This combination of the virtual reconstruction of the archaeological with the actual construction of the architectural is articulated in Britton’s description of the Museum’s activity:

Archaeology is certainly most indispensably connected with [architecture], in order to familiarize the student with the models of antiquity, and to enable him to catch their spirit, and to emulate their principles of composition, whether generally, or with respect to details; and we may venture to affirm, that the more thoroughly the artist understands these, the less liable will he be to copy their beauties servilely, and to apply them indiscriminately; as he will at once be able to judge how far they ought to be modified, according to the peculiar circumstances of his own design.60

The development of the Corridor as a site of intersection between the archaeological and architectural, the classical ruin and its irruption into modern architectural practice, was also emphasised in Soane’s Description of 1835. In the Description he is careful to point out the ‘two Mahogany Pedestal Bookcases’ placed ‘between the columns and the wall of the corridor’. On these bookcases were influential works that had done much to influence recent developments in neoclassical architectural theory and practice, such as the Description de l’Égypte and Le Loggie di Rafaele nel Vaticano.61 If the student turned for a moment from the casts they were drawing, they would therefore have discovered important works of antiquarian scholarship that had contributed significantly to their discipline. Barbara Hofland (1770-1844) was also keen to emphasise this intersection of archaeology and architecture in her account of the Corridor accompanying Soane’s Description:

On every side are objects of deep interest alike to the antiquary, who loves to explore and retrace them through ages past; the student, who, in cultivating a classic taste, becomes enamoured of their forms; and the imaginative man, whose excursive fancy gives to each “a local habitation and a name” in

60 Britton, The Union of Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting, p.7.
association with the most interesting events and the most noble personages the page of history has transmitted for our contemplation.\textsuperscript{62}

For Hofland, the Museum’s objects played a double role of evoking the history of architecture and inspiring its future. These objects were overdetermined by a series of different perspectives, all of which served to define the taste of the present, whether through antiquarian inquiry, architectural practice, or imaginative fancy.

Soane’s description of the Corridor then concludes by turning back to the north wall opposite the casts of Castor and Pollux, on which was placed ‘a Cast of the Cornice of the Temple of Jupiter Tonans’ before rising up the staircase to the Students’ Room. The room was originally designated as Soane’s Upper Drawing Office and was constructed in 1821, before receiving alterations in 1824. The room was built as a mezzanine held in suspension inside the Museum; it is independent of the main walls, so that ‘the two long skylights which light the drawing-tables also illuminate the exhibits on the walls down to ground-floor level and even give a ray of light (on the north side) to the Crypt’.\textsuperscript{63} In 1825 six men were expected to work or study in this office. Work started at 9 a.m., and employees recorded all of their activity in the office day books. The work generally consisted of elaborating Soane’s designs, but could also include drawing objects in the Museum collection, or visiting building-sites to take drawings or surveys.\textsuperscript{64} The room itself was state-of-the-art, designed specifically as a modern, professional setting for Soane’s practice: ‘well lighted, and peculiarly adapted for study’. Given over entirely to their work:

\begin{quote}
The attention of the Artist is not disturbed by extraneous or external objects; the place is surrounded with marble Fragments and Casts, from the remains of antiquity, from the works of the Artists of the cinque cento; and the drawers are filled with Architectural drawings and prints, for the instruction of the pupils.\textsuperscript{65}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{62} Soane, \textit{Description}, p.13.
\textsuperscript{63} \textit{A New Description of Sir John Soane’s Museum}, pp.18-19.
\textsuperscript{64} Peter Thornton and Helen Dorey, \textit{A Miscellany of Objects from Sir John Soane’s Museum} (London: Laurence King, 1992), p.34-35.
Among these ‘marble Fragments and Casts, from the remains of antiquity’ were ‘casts from antique Consoles’, friezes, pilasters, capitals and ornament ‘from Greek and Roman works’. The west wall of the room is interrupted by ‘an aperture, affording a bird’s-eye view of part of the Museum’. Finally, on the east wall of the Students’ Room ‘are Models, [...] in wood, of the Five Orders of Architecture’.\(^{66}\) As Britton describes it, this room is the ideal setting for architectural practice, ‘no place can be conceived better fitted for an architect’s study, or more richly furnished with objects adapted either to inspire his mind, or refine his taste’. The architect or student is surrounded by objects of interest and refinement ‘for turn which side we will, – above, below, around, – models, casts, ornaments, and details meet the eye in every direction’.\(^{67}\) Far from diversions, these reproductions were intentionally placed to inspire and direct the work of the architect, offering models and examples fit for quotation.

Hofland recognised this encouragement to quotation as an explicit architectural programme within the Museum, describing it as an attempt to manipulate and capture the attention of the student by way of the classical copy, to infiltrate the future of architectural practice with select casts and fragments. In her account of the Corridor she declares:

Not one ancient moulding – not one architrave, column, or broken cornice, is before us, that is not calculated to excite admiration by its own inherent merits, to call up recollections of importance from knowledge and memory, or inspire the cultivated mind with useful projects and elegant designs.\(^{68}\)

The plaster cast is the return of the classical in a concrete form. The cast revives the ruin as a living form capable of intervening in processes of construction at the molecular level, to operate not only on the edifice but also on individual components. The ruin is no longer itself, but is transformed into a series of parts susceptible to novel rearrangement, new associations, and creative quotation in the present. This liberal use of quotation opens the archaeological record to a potential infinity of

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\(^{67}\) Britton, *The Union of Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting*, p.29.

\(^{68}\) Soane, *Description*, p.14.
reconfigurations. For Soane, Britton, and Hofland, the student was the central figure underpinning this concept of the Museum of reproductions. The relationship between archaeology and architecture, between the retrieval of the past and the pursuit of the future, is thus repeatedly articulated through the relationship between student and cast. Returning to the Corridor, Soane describes in its recess ‘a magnificent Fragment of Grecian Sculpture’ and behind it ‘a view into the Monk’s room, which displays some powerful effects of light and shade, and a rich assemblage of interesting objects’: another view is always open to the student, another potential relationship to be drawn between disparate remains.\(^69\) The cast is not only a technique for reimagining classical architecture, it makes anything other than its reimagining impossible. Every capital, architrave, and rosette is confronted by another and reinterpreted according to the initial gesture of a new language. Every quotation in the Museum is an adoption or an adaptation that hints at its own repurposing. These quotations are not only returned from the classical past, but also offered up as the potential material of a future architecture. The fragile dialectic between past and future fantasies that is emphasised by Hofland is in fact immanent to the relationship between cast and student. In proposing an endless series of quotations, the cast gestures towards the pliability of ‘original’ form, towards the possibility of a future architecture built from fragments of its own history.

The theoretical gesture towards quotation from reproduction as the building block for a future architecture is, indeed, practically enacted by Soane in a number of his completed works. Most familiar is the Tivoli corner at the Bank of England, whose design, though certainly owing much to Soane’s visit to the Temple of Vesta in 1778, must have owed as much, if not more, to the prints, models, and casts in his collection (one of which was to be found in the Corridor). Less familiar though equally important is his quotation from the Corinthian order of the Temple of Castor and Pollux in the façade of the Board of Trade and Privy Council Offices, built in Whitehall between 1824 and 1827 (Plate XVI).\(^70\) Just as the cast of the capital had reached its resting place at

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\(^69\) Soane, *Description*, p.12.

the end of the Corridor, it was given new life and impetus at the newly consecrated
centre of British imperial and commercial order. A negative impression taken from a
ruin in Rome had produced a plaster cast that, copied by hand by Soane or one of his
students, had been remade again for a monumental administrative building at the
heart of a growing city at the heart of a growing Empire.

V. ‘Crude Hints’ towards the future of architecture at Lincoln’s Inn Fields

To conclude I want to attend to a final reproduction, this time textual: Soane’s ‘Crude
Hints towards an History of my House in L[incoln’s] I[nn] Fields’ (1812). The ‘Crude
Hints’ have conventionally been read as evidence of the critical images of the Soane
Museum as a place of nostalgia or melancholia; however, in this section I would like to
offer another reading of them through the lens of the future-oriented poetics of
reproducibility that I have elaborated in this chapter. Written between 30 August and
22 September 1812 while 13 Lincoln’s Inn Fields was being rebuilt and the Museum
was yet to take a determinate shape, the ‘Crude Hints’ are voiced by ‘An Antiquary’
from fifty years in the future. Soane’s House and Museum lie in ruins and the antiquary
is trying to extract the plan, design, and use of the remains before him through a
mixture of archaeology, antiquarianism, and speculation: to reclaim the concept of the
house from its remains.

The ‘Crude Hints’ in this sense are a textual reimagining of the ‘architectural
capriccio’ popular in early nineteenth-century painting, in which a building heavily
identified with modern culture was represented in ruins. Helene Furján has suggested
that in the midst of constructing his new home Soane wrote ‘Crude Hints’ as a way of
‘exploring the ambiguity of a construction site, where it was impossible to tell not only
what the edifice might be for, but whether it was under construction or demolition’.71
It is certainly true that Soane frequently sought to represent this ambiguity in his work.

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He often employed his colleague Joseph Gandy to paint his projects in the process of construction or in ruins. One familiar example of this is Gandy's *Aerial cutaway view of the Bank of England* from 1830. Often misidentified as ‘The Bank in Ruins’, this painting in fact represents, in a combination of plan, section, and elevation, Soane’s achievement at the high temple of British mercantilism. Though hinting at the capriccio and the ruin, on closer inspection the Bank appears intact, ‘there is no menacing vegetation, and the site is as pristine as a desert excavation swept clear of sand that very morning’. The painting asserts the ‘survival, not oblivion’ of his work.72 More overtly in the ruinous tradition of the architectural capriccio is Gandy’s *View of the Rotunda imagined as a ruin* first exhibited in 1832, but painted in 1798 as a pair with a *View of the interior of the Rotunda*. The choice of the term ‘view’ to describe these two images likely owes something to Piranesi, whose *Vedute di Roma* were a definitive intervention in the eighteenth-century representation of ruins (see Chapter 3). Yet more intriguing is the unsigned note, possibly in Gandy’s hand in the Soane Museum archive, in which the author writes to Soane that ‘Perinisi [sic] has made a View of the Temple of Minerva Medica perhaps it may be of some assistance to me in giving the Drawing more the appearance of a Ruin’.73 Though undated, it seems plausible that the unspecified ‘Drawing’ in this note, that Soane desired might have the ‘appearance of a Ruin’, was the view of the Rotunda in ruins. There is a particularly striking similarity between this drawing and the *Veduta del Tempio ottangolare di Minerva Medica* in Piranesi’s work. Piranesi’s engravings of Antique ruins thus played a definite role in how Soane imagined his works through ruination to ‘take their place besides those of antiquity’, with the ruins of Rome offering a historical counterpoint to his own labours for posterity.74

It may at first appear unlikely that the appeal to posterity exhibited by the architectural *capriccio* was Soane’s intention when writing the ‘Crude Hints’. The Antiquary makes a point of the architect’s disappearance from the annals of history:

72 *Visions of Ruin*, p.49.
73 SM, 111 B1, unnumbered note at the back of Soane’s correspondence with John Britton and Mrs Britton.
74 *Visions of Ruin*, p.28.
no trace remains of the Artists who were to have inhabited the place from one
generation to another – & the building itself only presents a miserable picture
of horrible dilapidation – Oh could the dead but for a moment leave their quiet
mansions – could they but even look out of their Graves and see how posterity
treated them and their Works what Hell could equal their Torments.\textsuperscript{75}

The Antiquary imagines Soane as a defeated legacy builder and his work dissolving into
archaeological illegibility, his resurrected corpse staring horrified at the illegible ruins
time has made of his work. However, the ‘Crude Hints’ do not fit as neatly into either
the melancholic or the nostalgic image of the Museum as this passage might indicate.
As Helen Dorey rightly suggests, this textual ruination is not the negation of futurity in
the Museum, but the persistence of its spectre; although ‘Crude Hints’ certainly
‘represents a melancholy vision’ of the house as a ruin, it also ‘encapsulates his vision
for the future of his museum as an ‘Academy of Architecture’.\textsuperscript{76} The ‘Crude Hints’
appeared at a point of difficulty in Soane’s life (he was in dispute at once with the
district surveyor, the Royal Academy, and his sons), but also at a point at which his
project for a museum of architecture were first bearing fruit. In his attempt to read a
new coherence into the confused remains of the house at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, the
Antiquary demonstrates the continued validity of the play of juxtapositions that
underpinned the future-oriented methodology of the Museum.

The ‘Crude Hints’ therefore owe much to the games of restoration played at
Pitzhanger. They pose the problem of an eclectic architectural site whose plan and
remains gave contradictory indications about its history and its use, enticing
impossible ‘hypotheses’ from the unwary amateur. According to the Antiquary, various
provisional conjectures and speculations have attempted unsuccessfully to ‘rescue this
plan from its present unmarked uncertainty’: a ‘Votive foot & hand’ indicates that it
must have been a Temple ‘dedicated to Jupiter’; a recovered ‘Colonnade’ is ‘peculiar to
Convents’; certain ornaments ‘carry us very far back into Antiquity’; while the ‘flat

\textsuperscript{75} John Soane, ‘Crude Hints towards an History of my House in L[inclo\’n’s] I\[nn] Fields’,
in\textit{Visions of Ruin}, pp.61-78 (p.72-73).
\textsuperscript{76} Helen Dorey, ‘Crude Hints’, in\textit{Visions of Ruin}, pp.53-59 (p.59).
vaulted Ceiling of the great Crypt is [...] truly Egyptian’. At one point the Antiquary
admits himself ‘at a loss to reconcile this idea to the real fact of the case’, at another
that ‘we are so completely in the dark on the subject of this structure, that to ascertain
with any hope of precision either the periods in which it was founded – its extent, or
on what occasions or for what purposes it was originally destined will be found to be
no moderate task’.77

Describing the front of the building, the Antiquary argues that it ‘must have
been raised by some fanciful mind smitten with the love of novelty in direct defiance
of all the established rules of the Architectural Schools, anxious to “Sketch a grace
beyond the reach of art”’.78 This line is borrowed from Alexander Pope’s (1688-1744)
Essay on Criticism (1711) in which he identifies an artistic power that proceeds by way
of fault, disorder, and contradiction:

Great Wits sometimes may gloriously offend,
And rise to Faults true Criticks dare not mend;
From vulgar Bounds with brave Disorder part,
And snatch a Grace beyond the Reach of Art.79

Contradiction and paradox thus adhere to the very fabric of the ruin, troubling each
univocal interpretation. However, rather than leading to a dissolution of the possibility
of coherent thought, this contradiction eventually becomes the all-encompassing
concept of the ruin at Lincoln’s Inn Fields. The building must have been the work of an
architect, its purpose to surpass the limitations of the architectural present by way of
contradiction. The ruin appears to seep through the text of the ‘Crude Hints’ as the
confirmation of this methodological contradiction’s persistent validity. The assemblage
of competing forms, styles and objects is not an absence of legible data, but the data
itself. Reflecting on the artefacts found within the ruin, the Antiquary announces his
discovery, declaring that the building must have been an architectural museum:

p.149, ll.152-55.
It is difficult to determine for what purposes such a strange and mixed assemblage of ancient works or rather copies of them, for many are not of stone or marble, have been brought together – some have supposed it might have been for the advancement of Architectural knowledge by making the young Students in that noble & useful Art who had no means of visiting Greece and Italy some better ideas of ancient Works than would be conveyed thro: the medium of drawings or prints. This proposition is by far too visionary and absurd to be admitted for a moment, & yet it does appear in some degree to remove the obscurity & veil of darkness which at present envelopes the subject; at all events it is worthwhile to pursue the idea, circumstances may arise to justify the suggestion & to prove it less Utopian than at first view it may appear.80

The ‘strange and mixed assemblages’ of reproductions of ‘ancient works’ could only plausibly be for the ‘advancement of Architectural knowledge’. The ruin, as the limit of the building’s legibility, as the end of architectural history, also confirms the establishment of the Museum, of its poetics of reproducibility and thus intervention into the future. In Soane’s Museum and his work, it is through the tense constellation of reproduced ruins that architecture speaks of its future. The Museum is therefore the privileged site of architectural production. Home to the ‘fac-simile, in relief’, the Museum allows for a productive, explorative, utopian, investigation of antiquity, for a reinvestment of history in its future through the ruined, reproduced, reimagined objects proper to it. Likewise, the copy – becoming in the process of ruination an object emblematic of the whole ‘Utopian’ project of the Museum – suggests against ruination the future of the productive contradiction of Soane’s Museum. It argues that the concept of the Museum will survive even its ruination in the potentially infinite architectures unleashed by the constellation of reproductions.

80 Soane, ‘Crude Hints’, p.69.
Chapter 5

‘Judgements through the eyes of others’: Vicarious access, ekphrasis, and the reproduction of classical sculpture in the Newdigate Prize Poems

In previous chapters I examined the representation and reproduction of classical artefacts in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century museums. In so doing I extended the concept of ‘reproduction’ to include models, descriptions, catalogues and guidebooks, as well as the more usual fare of prints and casts. This conceptual extension is grounded in an understanding of textual accounts of museums and museum objects as organically participating in a larger constellation of mediating practices, of ‘reproductions’. It is also grounded in an appreciation of how print text – as a medium capable of reproduction in volume – assumed the role of proxy for both artefact and institution for many consumers of museum culture. Texts concerned with museum objects – whether descriptions, letters, dramas, catalogues, histories, guides, articles, advertisements, speculative fictions, or poems – in representing the same things, shared with visual media an investment in the development of museum culture. Both visual and textual representations served to establish a constellation of reproductions that at once generated the museum culture of the period, and circulated it to a wider audience than the institution alone could expect to reach. In this context, to be initiated into the culture of the museum did not necessarily mean literal entry through its doors, but could also be the result of a kind of vicarious access through its numerous mediations.

By vicarious access I mean access not predicated on the immediate presence of an ‘original’ object within a particular situation (whether geographical or institutional), but instead deferred through the constellation of its reproductions (across geographies, institutions, publications and media). Vicarious access entails knowing and experiencing an object as part of a collection or context, while at the same time detached from that same collection or context: it is the paradoxical attribution of both
distance and proximity to the object produced by its mediation, allowing it to appear both in your line of sight and in a location that you have not visited and perhaps never will. It is also plural, the product not of a single unproblematic view or experience but a constantly proliferating series of materials and deferrals. It is a mosaic, an assemblage of materials constituting a singular object that is never simple.

Such vicarious access was a point of serious contention in the appreciation of antiquity in the eighteenth century. Undoubtedly transformative for the study and appreciation of the ‘antique’, reproductions could be a target of criticism as well celebration. In his foundational Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums Johann Joachim Winckelmann had used his preface to denounce vicarious access as a fruitless method of art historical study, criticising Bernard de Montfaucon in his L’antiquité expliquée for having ‘compiled his work on the treasures of ancient art from afar, and because he made judgements through the eyes of others, and from drawings and engravings, he was led into great error’.\(^1\) Criticising previous works of art history, Winckelmann complains that their authors ‘were insufficiently conversant with art and could communicate only what they had gleaned from books or hearsay’ (p. 71). The drawings, engravings and descriptions of other authors were not the ground upon which an understanding of classical sculpture could be built. For Winckelmann, the immediate presence of the sculpture in the round was the absolute precondition for appreciation: judgement was autoptic and covetous. It was ‘difficult, if not impossible, for someone not resident in Rome to write anything substantial about ancient art or obscure antiquities; even a few years in Rome is insufficient’ (p. 75).

In contrast to Winckelmann’s demand for sustained autopsis, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing appears to have understood vicarious access as an entirely acceptable mode of critical engagement. Lessing’s Laocoön appeared in 1766, two years after the publication of Winckelmann’s Geschichte. In Laocöon, Lessing argued that painting and

sculpture were distinguished from poetry (and by extension other literary modes) because whereas the former was best suited to representing the spatial configuration of bodies, the latter better represented their movement in time.² Lessing’s argument was deeply influenced by his reading of Winckelmann; however, he appears to have rejected the argument for autopsis. In making his argument Lessing gave a detailed description of the Laocoön group in the Cortile del Belvedere without having seen the original sculpture in the round, nor a life-sized cast, and relying principally on printed engravings of variable quality and iconography. Lessing’s interpretation of the Laocoön group became a ‘(non-)event and [...] misreading’ according to Wolfgang Ernst.³ Another partisan of vicarious access was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, whose thoughts on the Laocoön group in ‘Über Laokoön’ were heavily influenced by Lessing’s, and specifically inspired by a visit to the ‘forest of statues’ in the cast gallery at Mannheim, well before he ever stepped foot in the Cortile del Belvedere. For Goethe the relationship between reproduction and original was inverted, with the Mannheim cast serving as a standard from which his thoughts on the work could be drawn, and against which the original marble in Rome was eventually assessed. With pedestals that ‘could be turned about at pleasure’ and lighting that could be adjusted ‘by opening and closing the curtains’, Goethe found the Mannheim gallery served as a better place to study the ‘great, ideal’ works of art than the Cortile del Belvedere itself. According to Goethe vicarious access might even exceed the insights offered by the original sculpture or museum.⁴

In this chapter I will explore the role of vicarious access in ekphrastic poetry about classical sculpture from the early nineteenth century. I will define ekphrasis with James A.W. Heffernan as the ‘literary mode’ concerned with ‘the verbal representation

of visual representation’, in this case poems describing sculptures.\(^5\) While
acknowledging its specificity as a particular form of poetic writing, the flexibility of this
definition allows me to place these ekphrases within a wider array of descriptive
literatures and media focused on museum objects, and consequently maintain its
place within the constellation of reproductions I have enumerated in the rest of this
study. Poetic ekphrasis will be considered as both emerging from and contributing to a
culture of vicarious access predicated on the constellation of reproductions of
eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century museums.

In my study of ekphrasis I will focus on poems that won the prize for English
verse at the University of Oxford between 1806 and 1826, a prize that has come to be
known by the name of its principal benefactor: Sir Roger Newdigate (1719-1806). The
Newdigate Prize poems offer an explicit opportunity to consider the importance of
vicarious access for early nineteenth-century museum culture. The poems were
written by students at the University of Oxford who were unable to access the canon
of classical sculpture due to the Napoleonic Wars. The canon had developed over the
course of the previous three centuries from the thousands of statues excavated across
Europe into what Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny have determined to be the
‘relatively small number’ which ‘acquired a special standing’. Importantly, the nature
and composition of the canon was often shaped by the way in which they were
displayed and reproduced, whether:

in the Belvedere courtyard in Rome, in the Tribuna in Florence or in the Musée
Napoléon in Paris, between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries; in the
copies of them that were commissioned for Versailles and St. Petersburg,
English country houses and American art academies; [or] in the illustrated
volumes devoted to them and in the repetitious and enthusiastic attention paid
to them by generations of travellers and writers of guidebooks.\(^6\)

\(^5\) James A.W. Heffernan, *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to
\(^6\) Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical
With their opportunity to take the Grand Tour curtailed by current events, access to the canon for Newdigate Prize entrants could not come as the result of visits to Florence, Rome, Naples, or even Paris: instead, they drew their accounts of statues from prints and drawings, descriptions, museum catalogues, and to a lesser extent casts and copies.

From the time of Winckelmann onwards, the privileging of autoptic experience in literary accounts of classical sculpture has unfortunately effaced the precise significance of reproductive media for ekphrastic poets. By exploring the use of reproductions and descriptions in the production and circulation of the Newdigate Prize poems, I hope to argue for a renewed critical attention to the role of vicarious access in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century ekphrastic poetry. Reading Winckelmann against himself, I intend to uncover the ‘judgements through the eyes of others’ that constituted literary accounts of classical statuary and their exhibition, to discover the insight that can be drawn from such ‘great error’.

I. The Newdigate Museum of Classical Sculpture

Before the establishment of the Newdigate Prize, awards for English verse at the University of Oxford had been occasional, and included a miscellany of themes including ‘The Conquest of Quebec’ (1768), ‘Beneficial Effects of Inoculation’ (1772), and ‘The Aboriginal Britons’ (1791). However, in 1805 Sir Roger Newdigate gifted the sum of one thousand pounds to the University to fund ‘a premium of 20 Guineas in every year for making & repeating in the Theatre at the annual Enconia [sic] one copy of English Verse of fifty lines & no more’. The encaenia were annual events held at the Sheldonian Theatre at which honorary degrees were conferred on distinguished individuals, and benefactors commemorated. Occasional poems were also read out, and in 1806 the Newdigate Prize poems were incorporated into the ceremony. As a frequent attendee of the encaenia, Newdigate was very strict about the number of lines to be read; when asked whether he would allow more than fifty lines he replied
in the negative: ‘I won’t tire them in the theatre’. The terms of Newdigate’s gift required that the poems be written on a subject ‘in recommendation of the Study of the ancient Greek & Roman remains of Architecture Sculpture & Poetry’; however most subsequent accounts of the gift replace ‘poetry’ with ‘painting’. It is unclear where this modification came from, but it must have been changed very early on, as the subject of John Wilson’s winning poem of 1806 was ‘A Recommendation of the Study of the Remains of ancient Grecian and Roman Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting’. Given that barely any Greek or Roman painting had survived antiquity (with the notable exception of the Pompeii wall paintings), the decision to replace poetry with painting was unusual. John Wilson appears to have agreed, failing to mention painting once in his inaugural poem. In the intervening twenty years between 1806 and 1826 only one subsequent prize theme required students to address a work of classical painting: the ‘Iphigenia of Timanthes’ (1819), itself a work long lost and known to posterity only through ancient descriptions such as Pliny’s *Natural History*, and most famous at the time thanks to Lessing’s account of it in *Laocoön*. The first competition attracted a mass of entrants, with John Wilson numbering his competitors at as many as three thousand.

Wilson’s poem was formally a pattern for subsequent entries, combining a heroic couplet with the odd hexameter. This formal ‘unwritten covenant’ was absolute, and persisted without interruption into the 1870s, with Oscar Wilde’s winning ‘Ravenna’ (1878) written in much the same metre. The principal verse form of John Dryden and Alexander Pope (used by the former in his translation of the *Aeneid*, and the latter in his *Iliad* and *Odyssey*), by 1806 the heroic couplet had become well-established as the most popular form for English authors. The expectation of its use in

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9 A version of the sacrifice of Iphigenia was found in the House of the Tragic Poet at Pompeii, and is now believed to be a copy of Timanthes’s work, however this was only discovered later in 1824.
Newdigate Prize poems was therefore a conservative constraint on entrants; although it was typically used ‘with much more laxity and variety in the pauses and cadences than Pope’s couplet was wont of old to tolerate’, it still exerted upon the Prize poems a pressure towards conventionality unsurprising in the University at that time, and contrary to any attempts at more fundamental formal experimentation.\(^{11}\)

For the next three years after the Prize of 1806 winning poems were markedly longer than fifty lines, and the set themes failed to adhere to the conditions of Newdigate’s gift, focusing instead on religious subjects such as ‘Moses’, ‘Mahomet’, and ‘John the Baptist’. However, in 1810 this changed, the terms of the gift were more strictly enforced, and George Robert Chinnery (1792-1825) won the prize for his response to the *Dying Gladiator* (now known as the *Dying Gaul* or *Galatian*). For the next sixteen years the Prize committee continued to select themes in praise of Greek and Roman art, including: ‘Parthenon’ (1811); ‘The Farnese Hercules’ (1817); ‘The Coliseum (1818); and ‘Pompeii’ (1827). In 1827 this changed once more:

After the very inconvenient restrictions imposed by the founder had been endured for seventeen years, 1810-1826, they were removed with the consent of his heir and representative; and from that time there has been no precise limitation either of the length of the poems or of the range of subjects.\(^{12}\)

It appears the change was actually less to do with any ‘inconvenient restrictions’, than the fact that there had recently been proposals for the creation of another prize for poetry at the University. Rather than accept this proposal and found an additional prize, it was decided that the terms of Newdigate’s Prize would be altered, ‘making it the University prize for poetry’, and freeing it up for a greater number of themes.\(^{13}\)

\(^{12}\) *The Historical Register of the University of Oxford: Being a Supplement to the Oxford University Calendar* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900), p.165.
Newdigate’s interest in the promotion of the ‘study of the ancient Greek & Roman remains of Architecture Sculpture & Poetry’ at the University of Oxford was longstanding. He took two Grand Tours to Italy during his life: the first in 1738 immediately after taking his degree, and the second between 1774 and 1775 after the death of his wife. On both occasions he bought plaster casts of antique sculpture, some of which were donated to Oxford and others displayed at his seat at Arbury Hall.\(^\text{14}\) He also bought prints, books, paintings, marbles and medals, as well as an architectural model of the Colosseum in cork by Augusto Rosa.\(^\text{15}\) Of particular note were the ten volumes of Antonio Francesco Gori’s *Museum Florentinum* (1731-1766) that Newdigate donated to University College, as well as the twelve volumes of Piranesi’s prints he donated to the Bodleian Library.\(^\text{16}\) On his second visit to Italy, Newdigate also purchased two candelabra found at Tivoli by Gavin Hamilton in 1769 and restored by Piranesi. In 1777 these were presented to the University and erected in the Radcliffe Camera.\(^\text{17}\) Their presence in the library was of great interest: George Horne, in a letter to Newdigate dated 26 February 1777, declared that they ‘excite the admiration of all who see them, being indeed a perfect school in themselves, of Sculpture and Architecture’.\(^\text{18}\) Such praise ‘has the air of being an echo of something Newdigate might have expressed as a desirable function of his gift to the University’, and proleptically echoed the future terms of the poetry prize.\(^\text{19}\)

While travelling, Newdigate drew plans of the major galleries and palaces of Rome and Florence. In one notebook he mapped out the precise placement of the statues and other antiquities in the Cortile del Belvedere, the Palazzo Farnese, and the Musei Capitolini, while in another he drew a detailed plan of the layout of the ‘Group

\(^\text{14}\) Kurtz, p.77.
\(^\text{16}\) Kurtz, p.117.
\(^\text{19}\) McCarthy, ‘Sir Roger Newdigate and Piranesi’, p.470.
of Niobe found in the Garden’ of the Villa Medici in Rome.\textsuperscript{20} Studying developments in the collection and display of antique marbles was one of the major impetuses behind his trip to Rome, a preoccupation he brought back to Oxford.

As the Member of Parliament for the University of Oxford, in 1755 Newdigate wrote to the jurist William Blackstone, by then a member of Convocation at the University, to inform him that Lady Pomfret wished to donate her collection of marbles (the counterpart to the Arundel Marbles donated in 1667) and hoped that they ‘would [be] accepted with due honor & regard, & dispos’d [as an] ornament, with proper inscriptions’.\textsuperscript{21} The principal agent for this transaction, Newdigate ensured their transfer to Oxford was a success. Over the following fifty years, Newdigate demonstrated a deep and abiding concern for the fate of the Pomfret statues and remained unhappy about the University’s failure to find a suitable location for their display.\textsuperscript{22} By 1805, nearing death, Newdigate launched a fresh attempt to change this situation; arguing that, left to languish in the Old Schools, they had been ‘placed and still continued in a situation unworthy of so invaluable a treasure’, he suggested that they might ‘become a distinguished ornament to the University and particularly to the Radcliffe Library’. He offered two thousand pounds in financial support to turn the Radcliffe Camera into a museum of classical sculpture and marbles, and even had the sculptor John Flaxman produce a plan ‘to undertake the selection of those of the choicest workmanship, to restore them where practicable, and to place them upon such of the \textit{basso relievos} as will serve for pedestals’.\textsuperscript{23} Unfortunately for Newdigate his plan, though favoured by much of the University, met with opposition from the trustees of the Radcliffe Library, and ultimately his gift was returned after it was decided that the University could not afford a costly application to the Court of

\textsuperscript{20} CRO, CR136/A/574; CR136/A/579.
\textsuperscript{21} The Correspondence of Sir Roger Newdigate of Arbury Warwickshire, ed. by A.W.A. White (Hertford: The Dugdale Society, 1995), p.76.
\textsuperscript{22} Kurtz, p.121.
\textsuperscript{23} White, p.315, 310.
Chancery to resolve the issue. With his attempt to establish a physical museum of the ‘Remains of ancient Grecian and Roman Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting’ a failure, the poetry prize at least offered Newdigate an alternative means of establishing something comparable in verse.

The institution of the Newdigate Prize as a poetry competition concerned specifically with compositions on Greek and Roman art therefore reflected its benefactor’s ‘lasting commitment to an appreciation of classical art and its promotion in the University’. The choice of theme for the prize was strategic on Newdigate’s part: an attempt to encourage students to pay greater attention to the ‘Study of the Remains of ancient Grecian and Roman’ art. The poems were to be appreciated not only as poetic works, but also as ‘recommendations’, eulogies to the sculpture, architecture and painting they described. The intention was to reconfigure classical education at the University around greater attention to the visual record, and closer aesthetic evaluation of art objects. They were, in sum, an encouragement to students to engage in the ways of reading art and its history that had been proposed by Winckelmann half a century earlier. The irony was that this study was to be the product of engagement not with artworks themselves as situated in continental museums, but with the publications and reproductions that circulated around them and gave them a virtual presence at the University.

II. Ekphrasis, reproduction, vicarious access

As works in ‘Recommendation of the Study of the Remains of ancient Grecian and Roman Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting’, the Newdigate Prize poems therefore offer a valuable opportunity to understand the role of vicarious access in contemporary ekphrastic literature. A study of their use of sources in the

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25 Kurtz, p.121.
representation of works of classical sculpture will help to make sense of the relationship between reproductions and the ekphrastic poetry that made use of them.

Though the accepted terminology to describe such ‘verbal representations of visual representations’, ‘ekphrasis’, is in fact a mid-twentieth-century critical invention and would not have been used by the poets themselves to describe their works (these would have been simply ‘poems’ or ‘verses’), the term itself has a classical lineage. As an ancient rhetorical device ekphrasis was defined as ‘speech which brings the subject matter vividly before the eyes’: in Greek Progymnasmata the list of acceptable subjects for ekphrases included ‘persons, places, times, and events’ with works of art given no special prominence or particular status.26 What was key in ancient rhetoricians’ accounts of ekphrasis was not the object (as in the modern usage focused on the work of art), but the effect it had on its audience, its quality of enargeia or ‘vividness’. Though not necessarily subordinated to the concept of ekphrasis in the early nineteenth century, enargeia was nonetheless considered independently a virtue of descriptive literature, and in particular ‘verbal representations of visual representations’. Hugh Blair recommended that ‘where a sublime, or a pathetic impression is intended to be made, energy is above all things required’; and advised the poet that ‘in describing inanimate natural objects’ ‘life and action’ should be introduced ‘into his description’.27 Lord Kames was even more resolute in declaring:

The power of language to raise emanations, depends entirely on the raising such lively and distinct images as are here described: the reader’s passions are never sensibly moved, till he be thrown into a kind of reverie; in which state, forgetting that he is reading, he conceives every incident as passing in his presence, precisely as if he were an eye-witness.28

The classical rhetorical tradition of *enargeia* was reenergised by ‘an epistemology that repeatedly described perception and imagination in terms of fictions, images, pictures, and paintings’. Even philosophical opponents of this equation of words with images, such as Lessing, surreptitiously reincorporated *enargeia* within their own poetics, postulating it as the basis for the successful description of figurative art in poetry.

Ekphrasis, though conceptually anachronistic, can therefore be made to describe a real preoccupation within early nineteenth-century poetics: the question of what to describe in the artwork, and how to describe it. As a ‘literary mode’, ekphrasis served to re-present a form of representation distinct from itself, registering the ‘difference between the medium of visual representation and its referent’, making form explicit, and making this visibility of form integral to its own mode of representation. In the ‘verbal representation of an encounter with a work of art represented in the form and conventions of another medium’, the ekphrastic poem becomes ‘contentious’. Representing ‘the technique as well as the content of a work of graphic art’, the poet must ‘reckon with representational friction’, with a conflict between ‘the signifier or material medium of representation and the signified – the objects or figures represented’. We must therefore consider the way in which poets attend to the craftsmanship of the artwork, to the practice of representation rather than the object represented. In a period in which ekphrastic poets were principally reliant on a constellation of reproductions for access to works of classical art, the imperative to reckon with the contentious encounter between ‘the medium and the subject matter of a work of art’ must include a formal appreciation of mediation. Ekphrasis, far from indifferent to the formal content and context of its referent, might be shown to be especially sensitive to its status as reproduction or original, registering in its own representational procedures the transformation of its material through the support of new media.

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30 Heffernan, p.19.
If early nineteenth-century ekphrasis was invested in the question of form as it related to the reproduction, it was equally concerned with the situation and circulation of the work of art. In *The Sister Arts* Jean H. Hagstrum asserts that to understand the relationship between literature and art ‘shared by Dryden, Pope, Thomson, their contemporaries, and their immediate followers’ one has to appreciate the importance of travel (particularly to France and Italy), private collections, and ‘widely diffused treatises on the fine arts’; that is, a culture of connoisseurship predicated on the increasingly intense consumption, circulation and appreciation of artworks.  

Heffernan adapts this thought in his concept of the ‘museum of words’, asserting that the museum institutes a new, ‘romantic’ relationship between verbal and visual modes of representation in the nineteenth century, with the work of visual art preserved in the museum as an emblem of its historical epoch. Both transcendent and historically marked, the museum object is equally praised and mourned in ekphrastic poetry.  

Carolyn Springer has termed this ‘the elegiac mode of archaeological representation’ and identified Lord Byron as one of its chief practitioners. Divorced from their larger contexts (whether biographical, historical, institutional or stylistic), works of art on display in museums became ‘self-sufficient icons’, as Heffernan argues, individuated ‘for contemplation or veneration in [their] own framed and labelled space’. According to Heffernan’s genealogy, the ‘individuated work of art’ begat ‘the individual ekphrastic poem’, whose entire subject is the work of art. Finally, the museum as ‘the place where the poet must go to see the individuated work of art’, became ‘the shrine where all poets worship in a secular age’. For Heffernan the museum became the all-encompassing figure of Romantic ekphrasis: it subsumed within itself those other institutions that ‘select, circulate, reproduce, display, and explain works of visual art [...] that inform and regulate our experience of it’.  

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33 Heffernan, p.134.
35 Heffernan, pp.138-39.
reproductive media, he does so only to dismiss them as secondary to the museum, effacing the question of how they might actually ‘inform and regulate’ our experience of the artwork.

Yet the museum depended on a constellation of reproductions. The assumption of a subordinate vicarious access regulated by a primary autopsis should be reversed. In *The Voices of Silence*, André Malraux marks out the unacknowledged rift that separated writing about art in his own time from the criticism of the past. According to Malraux a major failing of art historians was to assume that ‘those writers whose views on art still impress us’ were ‘speaking of the same works as those we know, and referring to the same data as those available to us’. Far from such an equivalence, they had in fact most likely visited only:

> two or three galleries, and seen reproductions (photographs, prints or copies) of a handful of the masterpieces of European art; most of their readers had seen even less. In the art knowledge of those days there was a pale of ambiguity, a sort of no man’s land — due to the fact that the comparison of a picture in the Louvre with another in Madrid was that of a present picture with a memory.

As a consequence, ‘from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century’ works of art ‘interpreted by engravings, had become engravings’, losing their colour and their dimensions, and acquiring margins.36 When critics, travellers, collectors, antiquarians, historians, and poets discussed or described works of antique sculpture, what they were really describing might more often than not be a print, drawing, cast, or copy, sometimes only a memory of one of these. Simply put, the object of a description was as likely to be diffused over an extended series of reproductions, as it was to be concentrated in a single work of art located in a museum or collection. Indeed, the very notion of the ‘authentic’ or original work of art could be said to be a product of the burgeoning eighteenth-century constellation of reproductions. Walter Benjamin argues at one point that the reproduction might even be said to produce the work of

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art and not vice versa: ‘Precisely because authenticity is not reproducible, the intensive penetration of certain (mechanical) processes of reproduction was instrumental in differentiating and grading authenticity.’ Thus, the work of art ‘became “authentic” only’ in the centuries succeeding the ‘invention of the woodcut’ and other modes of manual reproduction (even as they ‘struck at the root of the quality of authenticity’). 37

Alongside the physical, located institution was therefore a ‘mostly imaginary’ museum, ‘an extended Louvre based on mnemonic traces, workshop imitations, graphic reproductions, and so on’. 38 An assumption of simple correspondence between eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century descriptions of works of art and their location in museums misunderstands both the process by which those museums were constituted, and the form in which their objects were experienced. When we speak of a museum we are already speaking of a reproduction.

The techniques, technologies, and tools for the selection, circulation, reproduction, display, and explanation of visual art must therefore be thoroughly accounted for in early nineteenth-century ekphrasis. While it is undoubtedly true that the institution of the museum was a central and dominating presence in ekphrastic literature from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, an acknowledgement of this hegemony need not blind us to the role played by reproductive media. Instead, we must understand the museum object – and consequently the ekphrastic poem – as itself constructed through the assemblage and distribution of reproductive media: through vicarious access. One attempt to do so within the discipline of art history is that of Michael Baxandall. Though concerned with ‘art-critical description’, the stress Baxandall places on the transformative force of the reproduction is useful for thinking the relation between visual representation and verbal representation in ekphrastic poetry. For Baxandall, in art criticism the ‘words and concepts’ used in producing a ‘mediating “description” of the picture’ are determined by the question of whether ‘the object is present or available – really, or in reproduction, or in memory, or (more remotely) as a rough visualization derived from knowledge of other objects of the

same class’. How this question is answered constitutively modifies the nature of the description, just as it does the ekphrasis. Furthermore, Baxandall emphasizes the historicity of the shift from ‘discourse designed to work with the object unavailable, to discourse assuming [...] a reproduced presence of the object’. Whereas Giorgio Vasari (1511-74) produced descriptions ‘calculated to evoke the character of works not known to the reader’, by the eighteenth century an ‘almost disabling ambivalence had developed on this point’. As we have seen, Lessing’s *Laocoön* was an object ‘that most of his readers would have known, as he only did himself, from engravings or replicas [sic]’, and by 1800 ‘the great Fiorillo was adding footnotes to his books specifying the makers of the best engravings after the pictures he is discussing’. According to Baxandall, as books were ‘increasingly illustrated with engravings’ descriptions tended to concentrate ‘more on what can be seen in them’. The assumed absence or presence of an original or reproduction therefore ‘has great consequences for the working of our language’, in poetry no less than in art criticism.39

Attention to the significance of the reproduction in affording vicarious access to museum objects allows us to rearticulate a number of the central conceptualisations of ekphrastic literary criticism along new axes. Firstly, we can ask how the distinction between visual and verbal representation, and their encounter in ekphrastic poetry, operates when the poem is representing not the work of art itself, but a reproduction of it. How does our understanding of the *paragone* between the poem and the artwork need to take account of its mediation within a constellation of reproductions? Secondly, how does the unspoken pre-eminence of *vicarious access* inflect the Winckelmannian imperative to *autopsis*? What kinds of encounter, or rather ‘non-encounter’ appear in such ekphrastic poetry? Finally, if the ekphrastic poem represents not the record of an immediate encounter, but one step along a series of mediations, what is the relationship between the poem and those mediations? How does the ekphrastic poem predicated on vicarious access operate within, and relate to, the wider constellation of reproductions?

III. Lessing, Niobe, and the contradictions of ekphrastic labour

In *Laocoön*, though Lessing does not use the term ‘ekphrasis’, he devotes significant attention to writing where ‘the poet [imitates] the artist’. For Lessing, such imitation could mean one of two things: either ‘the one takes the other’s work as his model’, or the poet ‘borrows his manner of presentation’ from the artist. These different modes of ekphrasis carried with them judgements: whereas the former is ‘original’ and a part of ‘that general imitation which is the very essence of [the poet’s] art’, the latter robs the poet ‘of any kind of dignity’ and, in ‘imitat[ing] an imitation’ he ‘gives us lifeless reflections of the style of another man’s genius’. The ekphrastic poet had therefore to confront the artwork as if it were ‘a work of nature’, representing ‘the thing itself’, describing *how* it represents as well as *what* it represents.\(^\text{40}\) Within this prescription for ekphrastic poetry rests a denial of the validity of the Horatian claim, ‘ut pictura poesis’, that had formed the basis for understandings of the relation between the arts for much of the eighteenth century. According to this tradition, poetry and painting were ‘sister arts’. A poem was characterised by its capacity to be translated into ‘painting or some other visual art’; while it need not resemble any painting or artwork in particular, ‘its leading details and their manner and order of presentation must be imaginable as a painting or sculpture’.\(^\text{41}\) In contrast, Lessing believed that poetry was not an art-form well-suited to producing images of the spatial organisation of objects and was instead best used to represent the actions of objects in time. Yet in making this claim, Lessing still believed that the artwork could have a place in literary description, and retained the eighteenth-century ‘belief’ in ‘*enargeia* and visual language’.\(^\text{42}\)

\(^{40}\) Lessing, p.45.  
\(^{41}\) Hagstrum, pp.xxi-xxii.  
To successfully describe the artwork, ekphrasis must represent the temporal organization of its materials, showing ‘that which the artist must leave to the imagination’ and thereby rendering the poem ‘equally vivid’ with the work of visual art, albeit according to a different premise of vividness. The problem, then, is how to represent the movement of time in a work of visual art when that artwork is formally defined by its spatiality, its refusal of time. How might the poet temporally describe the artwork without simply recapitulating its narrative and producing that ‘imitation of an imitation’ that effaces its formal qualities as a material thing? Lessing’s answer to this problem is well trodden: the poet must ‘disperse the image of his object over a kind of history of it’ (p. 83); he must, like Homer, represent the artwork over the course of its production and use:

By means of countless artistic devices he places this single object in a series of stages, in each of which it has a different appearance. In the last stage the artist must wait for the poet in order to show us complete what we have seen the poet making. (p. 80)

Drawing on the figure of Achilles’ shield in the Iliad, Lessing explains that:

Homer does not paint the shield as finished and complete, but as a shield that is being made. Thus, here too he has made use of that admirable artistic device: transforming what is coexistent in his subject into what is consecutive, and thereby making the living picture of an action out of the tedious painting of an object. We do not see the shield, but the divine master as he is making it. [...] Now the shield is complete, and we marvel at the work. But it is the believing wonder of the eyewitness who has seen it forged. (p. 95)

The ekphrastic poem should be processive, advancing as the development of the artwork itself advances. The poet should not be overly reliant on adjectives, but like Homer have ‘an economy in description’ and ‘use only one single property of a body’ which ‘awakens the most vivid image’, allowing a ‘detailed picture’ to emerge through its movement in time (p. 79). The artwork should be shown in the course of its production. The worst thing the poet can do is resort to an immobile deixis, whereby

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43 Lessing, p.99.
through ‘its eternal “here is” and “there is,” “close by stands” and “not far off we see,” the description becomes [...] cold and tedious’ (p. 96).

Lessing’s requirement that the ekphrastic poet describe the artwork as it ‘is being made’ and not ‘finished and complete’ proved influential in Romantic poetics. Yet, despite Lessing’s own use of reproductions in his account of the Laocoön, what it means to engage with the work of art vicariously or in absentia according to his framework is never clarified. A contradiction begins to emerge between the actual object accessed by the poet and the artwork described, between the work of art and the work of reproduction. Does one describe the sculpture, or the reproduced ‘thing itself’? Does one describe the artist at work on the original, or the artisan at work on its print or cast? And if one assumes that the Romantic answer to each of these questions is inevitably the former, what traces of the reproduction, or of its effacement, might mark or unmark the ekphrastic poem as it describes the ‘finer blows’ of the master’s ‘hammer’ (p. 95)?

John Leycester Adolphus’s ‘Niobe’ (1814) is marked and unmarked by precisely these contradictory hammer blows, saturated by the question of how reproductions should be engaged by the ekphrastic poet.⁴⁴ Beginning with a framing of the myth of Niobe and her children, as the poem proceeds the figures of the scene appear increasingly sculptural, frozen in their movement:

Still o’er yon rock-built towers the heavenly foe
Hovers in gloom, and bends the fatal bow
Still, as the arrows urge their vengeful speed,
Thy princes, Thebes, thy sons, Amphion, bleed.
Low lie the honours of that boasted race,
Youth’s manly bloom and beauty’s virgin grace,
And the last victim now, in wild despair,
Flies to her mother’s breast – to perish there.
Closely she clings, her throbbing heart beats high,

⁴⁴ Oxford Prize Poems: Being a Collection of such English Poems as have at various times obtained Prizes in the University of Oxford, 7th edn (Oxford: J. Parker, J. Vincent, and H. Slatter, 1826), pp.175-78. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
And fear looks eager from her youthful eye.

(ll. 1-10)

As the poem progresses, its movement is simultaneously checked by the repeated adjective ‘still’ initiating each of the first two couplets: the characters’ movement in time is rendered increasingly spatial, stilled into a moment of permanent crisis. The title of the poem does not specify any particular depiction of Niobe from Greek or Roman art (whether poetic or sculptural), but as the story forms around the focal point of stilled mother and child, the Niobids in the Uffizi – mapped out by Newdigate in the gardens of the Villa Medici on his first Grand Tour – come unmistakably into view.\(^4\)

However, even as this identification develops, it is undercut by an iconographical divergence: whereas the Medici Niobids include no representations of ‘heavenly foe’, in Adolphus’s telling they initiate the poem. Though unnamed, these gods are Apollo and Diana, seeking revenge on behalf of their slighted mother Leto.

While the Niobe with her daughter was unquestionably taken to be the centrepiece of the Niobids and represented as such in engravings, the composition of much of the rest of the group was relatively flexible, and this flexibility was reflected in how they were displayed and reproduced. Arguments over whether they should be arranged as a planar group or across three-dimensions persisted through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as did arguments about which figures comprised the group, and which were interlopers.\(^6\) Sets of copies might be anything from exhaustive (as with the complete set of casts presented to the Prince Regent after the Napoleonic Wars and passed on to the Royal Academy), to selective and piecemeal (as with the casts and statuettes of Niobe on sale in London later in the nineteenth century). Most common were busts, usually of Niobe, but frequently also of her daughters.\(^7\) The group was also frequently engraved. In Joseph Spence’s _Polymetis_...

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\(^4\) The Niobids had been removed from Rome in 1769, arrived in Florence by June 1770, and were on display in a specially designed room in the Uffizi by 1781, accompanied by ‘modern reliefs illustrating the same legend’ (Haskell and Penny, p.274).


\(^7\) Haskell and Penny, pp.277-78.
there is a single engraving of the sculpture of *Niobe* and her daughter, whereas the whole group of fifteen statues is depicted in Charles-Paul Landon’s (1760-1826) popular *Annales*. It was uncommon in all these cases to find a representation of the ‘heavenly foe’ hovering over the despairing mother. An exception to this was the engraving of the group found in François Perrier’s *Segmenta nobilium signorum et statuarum quae temporis dentem invidium evasere*. This depiction was reproduced in Montfaucon’s *L’antiquité expliquée* as well as many other commercial etchings and engravings through the eighteenth century. Montfaucon was the author whose work Winckelmann had condemned as such a damaging model in having made ‘judgements through the eyes of others’: and it was Perrier’s ‘drawings and engravings’ of sculptures such as the *Niobids* that Winckelmann was criticising when he attacked Montfaucon. In his engraving Perrier presents what appears to be almost a tableau vivant, with the finely measured sculptural lines of the *Niobids* dissolved into voluptuous baroque flesh, its figures embedded in a natural scene with the vengeful gods poised above them loosing arrows from their bows (Plate XVII). Niobe is stood at the centre of the composition with her child, slightly raised above the other figures arranged in foreground and background, who variously flee, lament and fall prey to the arrows of Apollo and Artemis. Perrier’s *Niobids* appear less a sculptural group ranged in a garden, and more like history painting (for which he was known as an artist). Spence approved of Perrier’s innovation, remarking that while such a setting with the figures of the gods would have been ‘impracticable’ in the gardens of the Villa Medici, ‘in a relievo or picture’ it would have been ‘an unaccountable omission to leave out the two principal persons of the piece’ and accordingly Perrier ‘takes the liberty of adding the deities over them in the air’. Though unsatisfied with ‘the

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51 Spence, p.96.
manner of ranging the figures’, Spence eventually refers his readers to Perrier’s engraving as the best place to see the group because ‘I have no copies, or drawing of them, in my collection’. It is unsurprising that Adolphus the poet would adhere to this mode of presentation. According to Spence – writing in a vein that would later find an echo in Lessing – the difference between Ovid’s ‘manner of telling the story’ and the ‘representation of it in the Medicean figures’ could be explained ‘from the different natures of statuary and poetry: the latter of which can represent persons in the air as easily, as on the earth; whereas the former is more confined, in general; and, in particular, tied down to one point of time’. According to Spence, the Perrier engraving therefore acted as the point of articulation between the myth of Niobe and the Niobids at the Uffizi. In particular it is the figure of Niobe who unites the two representations: in both cases she ‘is represented as engaged in the same action, and with the very same attitude’.52

Niobe is also the point of articulation between the stilled myth of the opening lines of Adolphus’s poem, and its transition into a description of the work of the artist:

Undaunted Art! and could thy magic power
Recall the terrors of that dreadful hour,
Bid the cold stone with life and passion glow,
Pant with affright, and heave with silent woe?
Yes, at thy touch the rugged mass grew warm,
And softening shrunk and melted into form,
O’er ev’ry feature spread the mimic pain,
And the pale parent liv’d and mourn’d again.

(ll. 11-18)

The danger of falling into Lessing’s ‘imitation of an imitation’ that persisted in the first part of the poem – as it oscillated between the myth of Niobe and its petrification – is ultimately evaded as Adolphus finally renders explicit the sculptural stillness of his figures. As in Ovid’s Metamorphoses, Niobe has become fixed ‘in stony grief’:

Her hair stirs not in the breeze; her face is pale and bloodless, and her eyes are fixed and staring in her sad face. There is nothing alive in the picture. Her very

52 Spence, pp.97-98.
tongue is silent, frozen to her mouth’s roof, and her veins can move no longer; her neck cannot bend nor her arms move nor her feet go. Within also her vitals are stone.53

Her final punishment is to be turned to stone by the gods who annihilated her family, her flesh and blood.

Yet the identification of Niobe as a statue in Adolphus is paradoxically inverted: the ‘Undaunted Art’ of the sculptor is to render her flesh once more. The artist’s skill is not to turn Niobe to stone, but to turn stone to Niobe. This paradoxical inversion, far from the invention of Adolphus, was a poetic commonplace that circulated intensely around the Niobids and Niobe in the eighteenth century. The commonplace came from an anonymous epigram from the Planudean Anthology titled ‘On a Statue of Niobe’: ‘From a living being the gods made me a stone, but Praxiteles from a stone made me alive again’.54 Bernard de la Monnoye translated it in his Poésies (1716), while Voltaire transformed the epigram from a prosopopoeic ekphrasis in the voice of Niobe, to a third-person description of the sculptor’s skill:

Le fatal courroux des Dieux
Changea cette Femme en pierre;
Le sculpteur a fait bien mieux;
Il a fait tout le contraire.

(The fatal wrath of the gods
Turned this woman to stone;
The sculptor did much better;
He did the total reverse.)55

Voltaire’s translation reappeared in a French guidebook to Florence in the section dedicated to the Niobids, while a translation into English ‘from the French of Voltaire’

appeared in an anthology of epigrams in 1797 and in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* in 1804, again identified with the sculptures in the Uffizi.\textsuperscript{56} In both of the English translations from Voltaire, the epigram concludes its final line with Niobe being made to ‘breathe again’ like Hermione in the final act of *The Winter’s Tale*. This is in contrast to the ambiguity of Voltaire’s ‘tout le contraire’, and finds an unmistakeable echo in Adolphus’s own account of the work of the sculptor some ten years later – where Niobe ‘liv’d and mourn’d again’ – giving credence to the idea that Adolphus had one of these translations in mind when he wrote his poem.

Another detail in the translations that Adolphus appears to have followed is the excision of the name of Praxiteles as the statue’s author. In fact, in all but a handful of translations of the epigram this deletion occurs. The relationship between the Medici *Niobe* and Praxiteles had long been contentious. While the epigram itself had been used to justify an attribution of the *Niobe* to Praxiteles, Pliny the Elder had only partially corroborated this claim, identifying a group of *Niobids* in Rome as the work of either Praxiteles or Scopas.\textsuperscript{57} For Winckelmann this ambiguity was decided against Praxiteles: if the Medici *Niobids* were the same group ‘of which Pliny speaks’, then the ‘high beauty conveyed by their heads’ made it more likely they were in reality the work of Scopas, given he was the artist most associated with the ‘high style’ of Greek sculpture. Even this attribution was uncertain. According to Winckelmann, ‘some people with insufficient knowledge’ had doubts about whether the *Niobe* was ‘an original or copy’. Winckelmann maintained that ‘such doubts’ had no impact on ‘any judgment’ made from the work, because such a work by Scopas ‘always will have stood as the prime example for those who selected this theme’, and consequently ‘it will have been imitated by others in the most exact way, and thus we may always judge the style of the original master from the copy’.\textsuperscript{58} One of these doubters was Anton Raphael Mengs (1728-1779), who argued that most ‘Greek statuary’ in Italy was

\textsuperscript{56} *La Galerie de Florence* (Basle: 1803); *Select Epigrams*, 2 vols (London: W.H. Lunn, 1797), II, 143; *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, November 1804, p.1050.


\textsuperscript{58} Winckelmann, *History*, p.233, pp.308-09.
in fact a later marble copy, stating that the *Niobe* group was ‘too poor and uneven in execution to be by a great early Greek master’.59 Richard Payne Knight concurred with this opinion, explaining that ‘the statues of Niobe and her children lately in the gallery at Florence appear to be copies’ when compared with fragments of a head found elsewhere ‘being of the same personage, and of much superior sculpture’.60 Depending on one’s opinion about the authorship and originality of the *Niobids*, the Planudean epigram might as easily be used as a guarantee or a refutation of their authenticity. The removal of Praxiteles’ name from the epigram therefore preserved it as an optic through which to perceive the craft and vividness of the sculpture at the Uffizi, maintaining its pedigree as well as its prestige. The trope of ‘breathing stone’ that is the focus of the epigram operates within Adolphus’s ‘Niobe’ as an engagement with the specific literary and exhibition history of the Medici *Niobe*. Indeed, this trope organises ‘Niobe’ as an explicitly ekphrastic poem, with Adolphus returning again and again to it to emphasise the mother’s ‘melt[ing] into’ sculptural ‘form’: Niobe is ‘Fix’d and unchanging with her latest breath’ (l. 39); ‘the pulse of life seems pausing in her breath’ (l. 44); ‘Her soul, her being, seem suspended there’ (l. 46); and finally:

No sound, no sign shall mark her dying pains,  
No deadening chill creep sluggish through her veins,  
Her mightier fate shall bear no faint delay,  
But, lightning-like, at once be seen and slay.

(ll. 47-50)

Adolphus’s ‘Niobe’ is therefore the site of a series of material and formal transformations. These transformations are the consequence of its status as an ekphrastic poem attempting to represent in verse a work of sculpture that is only accessible to its author and audience through a larger constellation of reproductions. Firstly, the *Niobids* are described through an iconographic framework that closely


mirrors that found in Perrier’s well-known engraving. In following Perrier’s manner of presentation of the *Niobids*, Adolphus departs from the *Niobids* themselves in representing a more painterly group of figures, reincorporating the gods at the cost of a closer ekphrastic engagement with the group itself as found in the Uffizi. Adolphus then attempts to resolve this contradiction through an appeal to the sculptor’s ‘Undaunted Art’. However, in attempting once more to reassert Niobe’s status as marble (indeed, as the marble of the Medici *Niobe* in particular), Adolphus narrates the making of an artwork in which the typical roles of god and artist are reversed, with the former rendering Niobe ‘cold stone’, and the latter rendering her ‘life and passion’. This image of the *Niobe*’s marble originated in the Planudean epigram. But in incorporating the epigram, the material of *Niobe* is transformed once more: Adolphus’s ‘Niobe’ is now to be found in the words and on the paper of a Greek manuscript and its translations, it has become an ekphrasis of an ekphrasis. In attempting to reassert the sculptural form of Niobe in the poem, Adolphus must construct his description through the cannibalisation of another ekphrasis, deploying a classical commonplace that was a frequent proxy for the *Niobe* in cases where it could not be seen itself. Yet even here the poem cannot rest, its object again transformed through the intrusion of another reproduction: in the covert mediation of the sculptural figure in the poem through another text, it has inevitably inserted itself into scholarly and art historical debates about authorship and attribution. The choice, in translating the epigram, of whether or not to identify Praxiteles (or Scopas) as the author of the *Niobe* touched upon current art historical debates over the status of the statue as original or copy. Adolphus’s omission of any reference to a named sculptor therefore committed ‘Niobe’ to a certain agnosticism towards a debate that might otherwise destabilise or marginalise the meaning of a sculptural figure whose description was the central underpinning of the poem. As the poem develops an image of the statue through the constellation of its reproductions, flesh becomes stone, stone becomes flesh, flesh becomes word, and word becomes marble: material and form repeatedly transform as the poet tries to vicariously describe the work of art.
IV. Winckelmann, Milman, and immediate encounters with the Apollo Belvedere

Alongside descriptions of the ‘finer blows’ of the artist’s ‘hammer’, ekphrastic writing in the Newdigate Prize poems was also co-ordinated around the autoptic encounter with the work of art. However, such autoptic ekphrases were almost always the product of an access that was vicariously mediated by print or engraving. In 1823, an exception to this deprivation occurred when the theme of ‘Stonehenge’ was selected by the Prize jury. The prehistoric ring of standing stones was only around a hundred kilometres from the University, easily within travelling distance for even the least intrepid of students, and it appears a significant number of them exploited this opportunity. This inspired Gerard Edward Smith, writing under the pseudonym ‘Sir Oracle’ from ‘Ox. Coll.’, to publish a parody of the enthusiasm for autopsis among Prize entrants. Sir Oracle recounts how he went to the ‘Spread Eagle, where the coaches stay’: ‘And paid down sixteen shillings for a place, | To see Stonehenge, that manuscript of days’. Sir Oracle concludes his poem with the hope that this financial outlay might reward him with the chance that ‘the Theatre’s rostrum I may tread’, and more importantly that ‘My sixteen shillings turn to twenty pounds!’. Smith ends the poem with a footnote harshly critical of Sir Oracle, and other ‘such scribblers’ for whom ‘it were better to stay at home and learn their grammar, than to break their heads against unknown stones’ (p. 6). The ekphrasis might be too autoptic, might forego the necessary mediation through scholarly study in favour of immediately reading the object itself as a ‘manuscript’. This practice was in danger of rendering its object indecipherable: an insistence on immediate presence might lead only to a crisis of incomprehension. In the contrast between the two modes of viewing Stonehenge – both as the ‘manuscript of days’ and as ‘unknown stones’ – is played out the contradiction of autopsis in the period. The visual evaluation and analysis of the antiquarian object might at once be legible and illegible to different eyes, might have the capacity to elicit one mode of writing while paralysing another. Autopsis was a

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dominant mode of engagement, but it could also raise the dangerous spectre of the viewer having seen nothing after all.

As far as the *autoptic* encounter was concerned, there was one figure above all who embodied the correct attitude towards the work of art. While Lessing stood as a model for descriptions of the work of the sculptor, Winckelmann — and his *Geschichte* in particular — was the principle model for these *autoptic* descriptions of the encounter with sculpture. Though the significance of Winckelmann’s *Geschichte* for classical education in England was somewhat mitigated by critiques from Royal Academy figures such as James Barry, and the lack of even a partial English translation before 1850, his mode of engagement with sculpture remained highly influential, an influence that can be felt in the Prize Poems themselves. Winckelmann is referenced either directly or indirectly in a number of the poems, including Henry Hart Milman’s ‘Belvidere Apollo’ and George Robert Chinnery’s ‘Dying Gladiator’. Winckelmann is also the most frequently cited writer in the *Illustrations, Historical and Descriptive of the Oxford Newdigate Prize Poems* that were produced as an accompaniment to the poems from 1824, offered as an authority for the *Niobids*, the *Dying Gladiator*, the *Apollo Belvedere*, the *Horses of Lysippos*, *Trajan’s Pillar*, and the *Pantheon*. 

Winckelmann’s method of appreciation was therefore well disseminated in popular critical discourse, and had become more or less pre- eminent in the study of classical art by the 1800s. It is therefore worthwhile considering exactly how he proposed the student or critic should encounter a work of classical sculpture.

Towards the end of the first part of the *Geschichte* Winckelmann introduced ‘a memorandum’ whose purpose was to teach ‘youthful beginners and travellers’ how to ‘recognise and find beauty’ when ‘viewing Greek figures’. The memorandum was based on his ‘daily experience of observing that beauty goes unrecognised by the majority of people’ because ‘they wish to play the critic before they have begun to be students’. Winckelmann sets out two reasons for this: a tendency towards negative critique; and the general and abstract appreciation of beauty. According to Winckelmann most observers are ‘like schoolboys who are all clever enough to discover the weaknesses of the schoolmaster’. They critique the limitations and failings
of the object before them because ‘it is easier to make a negative statement than a positive one’. This is because they are limited to the ‘uncertain and fluttering look’ and the production of encomiums ‘in general terms’. With such a mode of engagement the student will not find ‘the good in its parts, along with reasons for it’; instead, ‘the eye fixes on the faults’, and ‘[seeks] to impress’ with incidental historical details. In contrast, Winckelmann proposes that it is only with careful, detailed, and repeated study that beauty is to be found in ‘a beautiful statue’. Only by engaging sufficiently with the work before them will students discover that ‘much beauty is to be found’, after which ‘some of it will reveal itself to them’. Thus, ‘one must return again and again until it is found: for it is present.’

But what if it were not ‘present’? What if the objects to which one returned ‘again and again’ were not the sculptures in the Cortile del Belvedere, but reproductions in galleries, libraries, and print shops? How did this deeply felt injunction to autopsis play out through Newdigate Prize poems reliant on a wider constellation of reproductions? And how did the problem of interpretive misrecognition – of poets breaking ‘their heads against unknown stones’ – continue to menace the autoptic encounter, when those stones were formed of plaster, pen, and ink? In Stonehenge, Smith had registered the ambivalences that infiltrated the ekphrastic poet’s encounter with his object; but this registering of ambivalence was predicated on the larger generic context of the Newdigate Prize, in which authors were generally confined to ‘recommending’ the ‘study’ of artworks to which they had no direct access. These ‘recommendations’ retained a general commitment to representing immediate aesthetic experience even as they engaged with their objects through modes that were heavily mediated. When talking about the resistance to the employment of reproductive media in ekphrastic poetry following in the Winckelmannian critical tradition, it is important to understand that ekphrastic poets reliant on reproductive media could themselves be, and often were, active participants in such resistance, conspiring to efface from their poems marks of engagement with the larger constellation of reproductions. While autopsis was as much the prevailing

mode of encounter in vicarious as immediate ekphrases, the procedures of encounter and their risks in such poems were modified by the engagement with or disengagement from reproductions.

There was perhaps no work of ancient art more frequently and intensely reproduced in the eighteenth century than the Apollo Belvedere. First recorded in Rome in 1509, it had made its way to the Cortile del Belvedere by 1511. From that time it remained more or less unmoved until ceded in February 1797 to the French as part of the Treaty of Tolentino, and it arrived in Paris ‘in the triumphal procession of July 1798, in a garlanded case’. It was on display at the Louvre until Napoleon’s defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. After the Congress of Vienna it was returned to the Cortile del Belvedere by the end of February 1816. During this period of almost three centuries of uninterrupted stasis and two decades of abrupt peregrination there were a whole host of Apollos Belvedere produced, collected, displayed, and described in different media, and circulated across Europe. For instance, one might have encountered the five plates of the Apollo with precise measurements in Gérard Audran’s Les proportions du corps humain mesurées sur les plus belles figures de l’antiquité (1683); or the plaster copies of the statue, either life-sized or reduced, part or whole, that were cast in Rome for collectors and tourists alike; or the bronze copies made for François I for his palace at Fontainebleau.

In England, these encounters were particularly well disseminated. Reproductions of classical statuary were a common sight in country gardens and estates, and could even inform the cultural logic of the house itself. In 1730 Edward Wright had remarked that the ‘Statues in the Court of the Belvedere’ were ‘as to their Attitudes’ so well known ‘not only by the Prints, but Casts from them, or Models after them’ in England that ‘I need only name them’. In Richard Cumberland’s The

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63 Haskell and Penny, p.148.
64 Audran’s work was reprinted from 1785 in English as Bowles’s Proportions of the human body.
Observer, the narrator describes the lady of the house giving orders to servants ‘to prepare the Apollo [room], declaring herself ashamed to receive a gentleman of talents in any other apartment’. The narrator is led into a smoke-filled room, where ‘when the smoke cleared up, I discovered a cast of the Belvidere Apollo on a pedestal in a nitch at the upper end of the room’. Such reproductions typically came in a wide variety of forms and media: the copy in eighteenth-century England had a ‘cachet’ in elite cultural circles, with an educated clientele that did not ‘simply collect copies of [the] antiques and busts’ they had seen while abroad, but also had them ‘translated into a variety of aesthetic media’, as easily enlarged as reduced ‘to fit existing architectural and domestic spaces’. These reproductions might also just as easily be produced at home as abroad. John Cheere (1709-87) was a supplier of lead garden statuary, as well as ‘plaster casts, bronzed plaster statuettes and plaster library busts’. Near to his yard at Hyde Park Corner were those of his colleagues William Collins and Thomas Carters, with the trio forming ‘an important clique of sculpture production in London’. In William Hogarth’s Analysis of Beauty Cheere’s yard appears as the centrepiece of the illustrative plate. The scene is busy with winches at work placing statues, a gentleman reviewing copies, and an artist comparing the statues in the round with a book of designs. In the centre of the frame stands a copy of the Venus de’ Medici on a podium; below her, with his back to us, is the Belvedere Torso; in the background stands a complete copy of the Laocoön group; to their left is the Belvedere Antinous (now known as the Hermes); looming above him stands the Farnese Hercules with his back to us, while another copy of the same faces us in the foreground; finally, on the far right is a copy of the Apollo Belvedere with his arm outstretched. Cheere’s yard was also a cultural attraction. Its appearance was described in ‘The Cit’s Country Box, 1757’:

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68 Haskell and Penny, p.80.
And now from Hyde-Park Corner come
The Gods of Athens, and of Rome.
Here squab Cupids take their places,
With Venus, and the clumsy Graces:
Apollo there, with aim so clever,
Stretches his leaden bow for ever.71

Cheere purposefully exhibited his statues ‘to the amusement of stage-coaches and country waggons [sic], upon their entrance into town at Hyde-Park Corner’, both to gain attention and to attract custom.72 Travellers – including Oxford students – would marvel at Cheere’s reproductions, the ‘Gods of Athens, and of Rome’ newly transplanted to Westminster. Away from Hyde Park Corner, Cheere’s casts might also be seen in gardens, houses, parks and collections across the country. Eleanor Coade (1733-1821) was another domestic manufacturer of classical copies, offering popular Coade-stone miniatures of the Apollo Belvedere and the Farnese Hercules for a guinea, as well as a two-foot-high Laocoön for four guineas later in the century.73 By 1799 Coade had opened a gallery on London’s Southbank to display works for sale, making Coade-stone copies an attraction in their own right for visitors desirous of vicariously accessing a pseudo-museum of classical sculpture.74 Whether foreign or domestic manufacture, print, bronze, stone or plaster, reproductions such as Cheere’s and Coade’s were therefore the grounding for an experience of the Apollo Belvedere in England. In each case, the spectator was being asked to engage in an encounter with the cast or copy as if it were the Apollo, to take the reproduction for the original.

73 A Descriptive Catalogue of Coade’s Artificial Stone Manufactory, at King’s Arms Stairs, Narrow-Wall, Lambeth: Opposite White-hall Stairs (London: Coade’s Artificial Stone Manufactory, and J. Strahan, 1784), p.4.
74 Coade’s Gallery, or, Exhibition in Artificial Stone, Westminster-Bridge-Road, by appointments, from the King, Prince of Wales, Duke of York, &c. of Statues, Vases, Bustos, Pedestals, and Stoves, Medallions and Pannels in Bass-Relief, Models from the Antique, Chimney-Pieces, Monuments, Fonts, Coats of Arms, &c. being Specimens from the Manufactory, at King’s Arms Stairs, Narrow-wall, Lambeth, opposite Whitehall and Hungerford-stairs; Established in the Year 1769, Where it is requested that Orders and Letters may be directed (Lambeth: S. Tibson, 1799), p.vii.
In his ‘Apollo Belvidere’ Henry Hart Milman explored how this double moment of engagement and effacement in the ekphrastic encounter might function (pp. 167-70). Milman matriculated at Brasenose College in May 1810 at the age of nineteen, and while a student at the University was remarkable for being the first to win all four of the prizes: English Verse (1812); Latin Verse (1813); English Essay (1816); and Latin Essay (1816). In 1810 Milman attended the installation of Lord Grenville as Chancellor of the University and complained that ‘the complimentary verses, as one might expect, were too full of Muses and Apollos and classic shades to be very interesting, though there were occasionally some extremely beautiful lines’. Milman was unimpressed by the unreflective classicism of the occasional poems, their ‘academical’ tendency to circle endlessly ‘on the same round of Homer and Horace’, in particular the repeated invocations of the Muses and Apollo, god of poetry, which he felt to be empty and unoriginal tropes.\textsuperscript{75}

Yet as a student at Oxford Milman had had access to a rather less commonplace Apollo. In 1759 the Bodleian Picture Gallery included ‘A Statue of Venus de Medicis, taken from the Original at Florence’ and ‘A Statue of Apollo Belvidere, taken from the Original at Rome’, both ‘in Plaister of Paris’.\textsuperscript{76} Housed in what is today the Upper Reading Room of the Library, it was accessible to visitors for a small fee and included over two hundred portraits as well as other pictures ‘arranged in a large, well-lit, panelled gallery’.\textsuperscript{77} It is unclear where these statues had come from (some have speculated that they were gifts of Newdigate), but they proved perennial favourites with visitors to the Gallery.\textsuperscript{78} As the University’s collection of casts increased, they were removed for a period to the Radcliffe Camera and placed alongside reproductions of the \textit{Laocoön, Diana of Versailles, Borghese Warrior,} and a \textit{Discobolus.}

\textsuperscript{77} Whiteley, p.611.
\textsuperscript{78} Kurtz, p.52.
By 1855 these statues were back in the Bodleian Picture Gallery, accompanied by a number of other casts including the *Townley Venus*, an *Alexander*, an *Antoninus*, a *Diana and Fawn*, assorted busts and the *Medici Niobe*. It is very likely that the young Milman and the many other entrants for the Prize, tasked with writing a poem on the theme of the ‘Belvidere Apollo’, would have turned to this cast for inspiration or assistance.

Milman’s ekphrasis hinged on an *autoptic* encounter that was negotiated through a mobilisation of text, image, and cast. Whether Milman’s engagement with Winckelmann occurred directly through a French translation or indirectly through an English imitation or plagiary is unclear. However, it is irrefutable that the *Geschichte* formed the basis for his ekphrasis. Winckelmann’s account was a touchstone for authors seeking to describe the *Apollo* late into the nineteenth century. The *Apollo* was one of two or three works of sculpture that received particular attention in the *Geschichte*, where it was ranked ‘the highest ideal of art among all the works of antiquity that have escaped its destruction’, with Winckelmann arguing that ‘this Apollo surpasses all other images of him as much as the Apollo of Homer surpasses those portrayed by later poets’. Describing the *Apollo*, Winckelmann praised its ‘heavenly nature’, filling his ‘spirit’ with ‘beauties that rise above nature – for here is nothing mortal, nothing that betokens miserable humanity’.

For Winckelmann, entering into the presence of the *Apollo* amounted to contact with the divine: the artist had annihilated everything human or mundane in his subject. In Milman’s ‘Belvidere Apollo’ this sculptural apotheosis is initially transformed into a moment of direct communion with the god. The reader is deprived of the security that comes with the aesthetic detachment of contemplating subject from...
contemplated object, so that they are at first brought into immediate contact with what Winckelmann had identified as the statue’s ‘sublime’ presence:

The heav’nly Archer stands – no human birth,
No perishable denizen of earth;
Youth blooms immortal in the beardless face,
A God in strength, with more than godlike grace.
(ll. 5-8)

The figure has not yet become sculpture, remaining potent as a ‘heav’nly Archer’ whose strength and grace are present to the spectator. Not only does Milman efface the mediatedness of the *autoptic* encounter with the ideal form of the artwork, but even its distinction as a moment of aesthetic contemplation: what the reader is asked to see is not a description of a sculpture nor a sculpture of a god, but the god himself. The bloom of youth stands ‘immortal’, and while the ‘beardless face’ is a detail provided by Milman, the sentiment of this line appears a rewording of Winckelmann’s own suggestion that ‘an eternal springtime [...] clothes the alluring virility’ of the Apollo ‘with a pleasing youth’ (p. 333). Milman takes seriously Winckelmann’s claims to amazement at the artwork, deferring any recognition that it is, in fact, a work of art at all. This divine occlusion of the sculptural form is maintained for the next four lines, with the figure described as:

All, all divine – no struggling muscle glows,
Through heaving vein no mantling life-blood flows,
But animate with deity alone,
In deathless glory lives the breathing stone.
(ll. 9-12)

It is only with the introduction of the ‘breathing stone’ trope (that we saw directed at the *Niobe* in the previous section) that the poem explicitly announces what the title has made clear from the start: the object of its description is sculptural and not divine. Yet readers of Winckelmann or his many exegetes, copycats, and imitators would already have been familiar with the sculptural implications of the preceding lines on Apollo the god. While they seemingly direct the reader towards a misreading of the figure as divine, they are a precise echo of Winckelmann’s description of the
musculature of the *Apollo Belvedere*: ‘no veins or sinews heat and move this body, but rather a heavenly spirit that, flowing like a gentle stream, has saturated, as it were, every contour of this figure’ (p. 333). The reduction of the god to pure form without ‘struggling muscle’ or ‘heaving vein’ is on one hand a claim to its divinity, while on the other already an ekphrastic gesture directing the reader towards the *Apollo Belvedere*.

Compounding the superimposition of sculpture over god through the reiteration of Winckelmann, Milman continues by describing the ‘keen eye’ of Apollo ‘bright kindling with a conqueror’s stern delight’, his ‘indignant cheek’ burning ‘with vengeful fire’, and ‘his lip’ quivering ‘with insulting ire’ (ll. 13-16). For his part, Winckelmann had described the *Apollo* with ‘scorn’ sitting ‘upon his lips’, displeasure swelling ‘the nostrils of his nose’ and spread upward to his proud brow’, while his ‘blissful stillness remains undisturbed, and his eyes are full of sweetness’ (p. 333). Each detail points the reader towards two, contradictory readings of the image: on one level it is an account of an immediate and reverential *autoptic* encounter; on the other it is the recapitulation of a series of commonplaces that monopolised descriptions of the *Apollo*. The employment of Winckelmann at once secures the immediateness of the encounter (Winckelmann as corroborating witness) while also emphasising its mediation (Winckelmann as predictable commonplace).

Finally, Milman’s account of the physical appearance of the *Apollo* (or rather reiteration of Winckelmann’s description) concludes with a description of the illusion of movement in the statue’s hair:

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The rich luxuriance of his hair, confin’d
In graceful ringlets, wantons on the wind,
That lifts in sport his mantle’s drooping fold,
Proud to display that form of faultless mould.
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(ll. 19-22)

Again, Milman’s description heavily echoes Winckelmann, with the former describing the statue’s ‘soft hair’ playing about ‘this divine head like the tender, waving tendrils of the noble grapevine stirred, as it were, by a gentle breeze’ (p. 334). However, there
is no source in Winckelmann or his French translators for the image of the ‘mantle’s dropping fold’ playing in the breeze. While it is possible that this is Milman’s own observation, it is also possible that he took it from Charles Paul Landon’s *Annales*, a work that included an engraving of the *Apollo Belvedere* alongside a description heavily plagiarised from the *Geschichte* (this same engraving would later turn up in the *Illustrations* that accompanied Milman’s ‘Belvidere Apollo’ from 1824). Indeed, so heavily plagiarised was Landon’s description, that one of the few divergences from Winckelmann was where he described ‘a small mantle’ covering the *Apollo’s* shoulders, while ‘a breeze seems to animate his hair’. If this was Milman’s source, then it is likely that not only was he paraphrasing Winckelmann while describing a plaster cast on display in the Bodleian Library, but he was also drawing on a French plagiary printed opposite a primitive line engraving of the *Apollo* (Plate XIX).

Having finished his description of the statue itself, Milman proceeds to describe its manufacture. While one might expect this to resolve the dilemma between god and sculpture that had animated the first part of the poem, in fact this indecision continues to haunt the image. Apostrophising the artist, Milman depicts him taking the form of his sculpture from heaven itself:

Mighty Ephesian! with an eagle’s flight,  
Thy proud soul mounted through the fields of light,  
View’d the bright conclave of Heav’n’s blest abode,  
And the cold marble leapt to life a God.

(ll. 23-26)

In a footnote, Milman explains that the ‘Mighty Ephesian’ whose touch transformed the ‘cold marble’ into ‘a God’ was ‘Agasias of Ephesus’. Agasias was widely recognised as the author of the *Borghese Gladiator*, but there was no scholarly tradition that associated him with the *Apollo*. Nonetheless, even here, in the confusing misattribution of the *Apollo*, the mark of Winckelmann is felt. In the *Geschichte* both the *Gladiator* and *Apollo* are mentioned together in the paragraph immediately following:

82 Landon, I (1800), 143. ‘un manteau léger couvre ses épaules, et se relève sur son bras gauche; le zéphir [sic] semble agiter sa chevelure’.
preceding the latter’s description. In Hendrik Jansen’s revised and updated French translation of the *Geschichte* this passage explained that ‘it is likely that the *Apollo Belvedere* and the so-called *Borghese Gladiator*, made by Agasias of Ephesus, were to be found among the number of statues brought from Greece’.\(^{83}\) The original meaning of the paragraph was that both statues had been imported from Greece in the time of Nero, and that one of them was the work of Agasias; however, to a young student with imperfect French, it may have appeared that both were being attributed to the same artist. Just as formerly the *Apollo* had become ‘all divine’, so it becomes the work of Agasias by way of Milman’s reading of the *Geschichte*. The ekphrastic object appears not as the *Apollo* in the Cortile del Belvedere or Musée Napoléon, but a Wincklemannian composite, a monstrous object of art historical misreading.

The mode of presentation finally seems to shift in the last section of the poem, moving from an account of the *Apollo* as a god or a published object to a piece of sculpture situated in a museum. However, this happens not by way of the description of an *autoptic* encounter between the speaker and artwork, but through the deferral of such immediate experience onto a proxy whose status secures their proximity to the statue: a figure named the ‘Maid of France’. In 1812 the *Apollo* had been in the Musée Napoléon for nearly fifteen years, housed alongside other prominent works in the canon including the *Laocoön*, the *Dying Gladiator*, and the *Venus de’ Medici*. When Milman describes a ‘Maid of France’ gazing ‘with more than rev’rence’ on the *Apollo Belvedere*, the sculpture is immediately transported to its contemporary location in the halls of the Louvre, and seemingly rendered definitively a work of art (l. 38).

The immersiveness of this encounter is immediately emphasised, with the Maid said to gaze on the *Apollo*’s form ‘in wild delirious trance’ (l. 37). In contact with the artwork, context falls away and the encounter cleansed of all but subject and object. The opportunity for proximity to the object afforded by the Musée in turn negates the Musée, suspending the presence of the institution in the experience of its patron.

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More than this, the identification of the artwork as artwork – seemingly affirmed with the poem’s entrance into the museum – is once more threatened. The Maid’s trance intensifies, becoming pathological; she compulsively returns to the Musée and the Apollo:

Day after day the love-sick dreamer stood
With him alone, nor thought it solitude;
To cherish grief, her last her dearest care,
Her one fond hope – to perish of despair.

(ll. 39-42)

Just as at the start of the poem god and sculpture are superimposed one on top of the other, so again the Maid has come upon sculpture become flesh. The trope of ‘breathing stone’ that first identified the Apollo as an artwork is turned on its head: the sculpture is increasingly rendered human, a subject whose presence is socialised as the negation of ‘solitude’. The maid falls prey to what was felt, in the eighteenth century, to be the weakness of her sex when faced with classical beauty: she takes the imitation for reality. This anxiety of sexual-aesthetic misrecognition was particularly felt with regards to the Belvedere Apollo, and Milman was the latest in a long line of authors to exploit it for effect. John Armstrong had referred to this dynamic in his description of the Cortile del Belvedere, explaining that while the Antinous was ‘well-shaped’, ‘If I was a Woman, I should be more in love with the Apollo than as a Man I am with Venus.’\(^\text{84}\) John Courtenoy’s depiction of this scene even more closely approximates the reverie of Milman’s ‘Maid of France’. Courtenoy describes how ‘Apollo, here raptures the keen glancing fair, | Who worship his Godship y’clip’d Belvidere!’\(^\text{85}\) Yet this sociability is still, in fact, a product of aesthetic accomplishment, of the illusion of enargeia. It is an asocial sociability. The Maid’s only hope remains ‘to perish of despair’. Rather than the life-affirming sexual society that it mimics, the society produced in the autoptic encounter is a trick of the light:

\(^{84}\) Launcelot Temple [John Armstrong], *A short ramble through some parts of France and Italy* (London: T. Cadell, 1771), pp.34-35.

Oft as the shifting light her sight beguil’d,
Blushing she shrunk, and thought the marble smil’d:
Oft breathless list’ning heard, or seem’d to hear,
A voice of music melt upon her ear.

(ll. 43-46)

The intimacy between artwork and spectator is a counterfeit, the museum is not the site of a concrete sexual relationship, but of its dangerous forgery, of a presence that is always shifting or melting, of a ‘voice of music’ that on second thoughts was only seemingly there. The subtle expressions and gestures in the Apollo that Milman commended in the first part of the poem are here shown to falsify the human encounter, to ‘beguile’ the senses and draw physiological responses as if they were real and not represented. As the statue comes to life, the Maid becomes increasingly statuesque, ‘breathless’ like the stone that she regards. The cost of belief in the illusion is to become illusion.

Finally the metamorphosis is completed, the Maid of France has taken the place of the marble she so fixated upon:

Slowly she wan’d, and cold and senseless grown,
Clos’d her dim eyes, herself benumb’d to stone.
Yet love in death a sickly strength supplied,
Once more she gaz’d, then feebly smil’d, and died.

(ll. 47-50)

In death, the Apollo’s ‘keen eye’ and smile has been exchanged for the gaze and feeble smile of the dead Maid. Her engagement with the Apollo was not the site for the sociable encounter with another, but for a dangerous undoing of the self in illusion. Milman’s proxy, rather than confirming the primacy of autopsis, ultimately figures a point of crisis for the immediate encounter with the work of art in the museum. Too close for comfort, she bashes her head against the Apollo’s stones. Yet even here, in the dangerous undoing of the self in service of the autoptic encounter, Milman is reading and misreading Winckelmann.
In his ‘memorandum’ for ‘youthful beginners and travellers’ Winckelmann had recommended that ‘one must return again and again’ until ‘beauty’ is found in the sculpture, ‘for it is present’. The exhortation to careful, detailed, and repeated study made by Winckelmann was intended to enable students to better ‘recognise and find beauty’; however, in describing the Maid returning ‘again and again’ to the Apollo, Milman challenges this approach, indicating that such returns might just as easily facilitate misrecognition, that such an obsession with beauty might just as easily lead to the loss of self. At the end of Winckelmann’s account of the Apollo, the tendency to reverence that Milman exploited at the start of the ‘Belvidere Apollo’ is given free reign. Like the Maid, he recounts how ‘in gazing upon this masterpiece of art, I forget all else’; and, as with the Maid, this reverential gaze becomes increasingly physiological in its effects:

My chest seems to expand with veneration and to heave like those I have seen swollen as if by the spirit of prophecy, and I feel myself transported to Delos and to the Lycian groves, places Apollo honoured with his presence — for my figure seems to take on life and movement, like Pygmalion’s beauty. How is it possible to paint and describe it! (p. 334)

Winckelmann’s senses are confounded; in ‘veneration’ he feels himself ‘transported’ to holy sites dedicated to Apollo while the Cortile del Belvedere melts away; the very possibility of describing the statue is put in doubt as it becomes a form of mediation to another world (in this case the utopia of classical Greece). In a footnote to the ‘Maid of France’ section of the ‘Apollo Belvidere’, Milman explained that ‘the foregoing fact is related in the work of Mons. Pinel sur l’Insanité’ (p. 170). Philippe Pinel (1745-1826), a French physician instrumental in the development of modern psychiatry, made no reference in the Traité Médico-Philosophique sur l’Aliénation Mentale to any case of ‘aliénation mentale’ particularly comparable with the Maid’s. However, he had referred to Winckelmann’s description while using the Apollo as a phrenological model in a section entitled ‘The Advantages of assuming for a standard of comparison, the beautiful proportions of the head of the Apollo’; and in a footnote to the English translation of the Traité Pinel quotes extensively from the Apollo passage in the
In this translation Winckelmann explains that the *Apollo* is ‘beyond dispute the most astonishing’ artwork which has ‘escaped the ravages of time’, going on to say that ‘at the sight of this prodigy, I am disposed to forget the world’ and ‘sink into extacy’. Pinel then explains that the statue had lately ‘become by conquest the property of France’, placed ‘in the museum at Paris’ and had elicited a similar response from himself. The ‘Maid of France’ with her ‘wild delirious trance’ is Winckelmann and Pinel. The Maid’s desire is a displacement of that homoerotic desire that charges Winckelmann’s own encounter with the *Apollo*. Through a ‘complex series of equivocations and elisions’ the desire of the male spectator is projected onto an acceptable female proxy, while the failure of such a fervent misrecognition is displaced from the art historian onto a more acceptable figure of inadequacy.

While developing an ekphrastic description that is heavily indebted to Winckelmann’s *autoptic* mode, Milman writes against this mode. The immediate encounter with the *Apollo Belvedere*, while crucial to the representation of the sculpture in the poem, repeatedly endangers any engagement with it as a work of art. Finally, the spectator’s reverence is transformed into an erotic experience of the work of art, Winckelmann becomes a doting lover misapprehending what stands before her, a Maid whose erotic desire for the beloved object is doomed to failure. The excesses of Winckelmann’s encounter become entirely identified with effeminate sexual experience, even as Winckelmann is effaced as the source for such misrecognition. In his winning entry of 1816 for the English Prize Essay, Milman had written on the theme of ‘A Comparative Estimate of Sculpture and Painting’. His explanation of the aesthetic experience of ‘the fine arts’ relied on an idealist account of the mimetic transformation of the living subject into an artwork, and the spectator’s apprehension

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87 Philippe Pinel, *A Treatise on Insanity, in which are Contained the Principles of a New and More Practical Nosology of Maniacal Disorders than has yet been offered to the Public*, trans. by D.D. Davis (Sheffield: Cadell and Davies, 1806), p.116.
of both these aspects of the artwork ‘through the sense of sight’. The sculpture was an imitation of ‘forms really existing’ that became ‘purely ideal’ through ‘awakening and keeping alive that active faculty [of imagination]’. The mental process was essentially reproductive: the imagination was said to waver ‘from the representation to the thing represented, and moulds up for itself a sort of indistinct existence from the qualities of both’. The mind mediates the artwork, like a plaster cast moulding it into a form that comprehends both its materiality as marble, and vitality as an imitation of life, rendering its idea accessible to contemplation. However, Milman’s account was haunted by the danger of madness, that one might mistake the ‘representation’ for the ‘thing represented’. In his normative presentation of aesthetic experience, Milman described the artwork as provoking spectators into experiencing feelings ‘of elevation, of terror, or of mild and placid delight’, while retaining a sense of its artificiality, in part through ‘their habit and familiarity with addresses of this nature’. But in cases of imaginative or emotional excess, or unfamiliarity with the cultural expectations that surrounded works of art, the encounter could go wrong:

The images are before us in stone or on canvas; but our creative mind breathes life and motion and feeling upon them. Not that any positive actual illusion takes place; no one, except in a state of the most violent enthusiasm, is worked to a belief, that a statue is breathing flesh, or a painting real life.89

While guaranteeing for his readers an autoptic encounter with the artwork that is equally framed by belief and disbelief, the danger that the encounter might be all too immediate cannot be eradicated. Art is meant to fool, but its capacity to fool is a danger to its identity as art. Taking illusion for reality, the Maid is endangered precisely by the immediacy of her encounter. Winckelmann is marshalled against himself, with the hegemony of the autoptic encounter serving to decontextualize the artwork, its divine force producing the ‘trance’, ‘extacy’ or ‘violent enthusiasm’ that abolishes knowledge of the object and subjects the spectator to its illusion. Autopsis is both the necessary precondition of aesthetic experience, and a cause of its destabilisation.

Ironically it is Milman, in his mediated engagement with the Apollo, who is placed at a sufficient distance to satisfactorily comprehend both viewed object and the act of viewing. Encountering the Apollo through a plaster cast, a French print, a physician’s exegesis, and above all Winckelmann’s description, Milman’s poem was the product of active participation in the larger constellation of reproductions. Autopsis is framed as precarious, never circumscribed by an experience of the statue alone: consequently, his judgement is as easily trained on the modes of perceiving the artwork, as it is on the artwork itself. At every stage of this ekphrasis Winckelmann is the direct or indirect source for Milman’s description, a fact that indicates the extent to which Winckelmann’s reading of the Apollo had come to dominate contemporary art criticism. But Milman turns against his source. As much as it is an account of the Apollo, the poem is equally an account of Winckelmann’s engagement with the Apollo. Milman’s imagining of the Apollo therefore proceeds not only by a reading of Winckelmann, but also by a misreading. The ‘Belvidere Apollo’ that Milman’s readers encounter is something quite different to the Apollo Belvedere. Its making is a non-event, its encounter persistently deferred and posited elsewhere. Milman ultimately challenges the primacy of autopsis: its mode of description is shown to be inconclusive, failing to recognise an object that is refracted through a wider constellation of reproductions. In putting their faith in an object that could be the ‘manuscript of days’, Winckelmann and Sir Oracle had broken ‘their heads against unknown stones’. The poet must see the sculpture, but he must also know how other people saw the sculpture.

V. Gibbon, Chinnery, and the poetics of the footnote in the Dying Gladiator

While Milman’s ‘Belvidere Apollo’ is pressed into an autoptic encounter with the Apollo, this encounter was also the product of engagement with a profusion of mediations. However, the problem of how, precisely, to engage with these mediations was an open one. How much scholarship and learning was expected of the poet? Would a passing knowledge of Greek or Roman history be sufficient, or was something deeper needed? What kinds of authorities were poets expected to cite, and which
should be avoided? How should they make those citations? Should the poet, as in Adolphus’s ‘Niobe’, simply allude to well-known prints, authorities, and commonplaces over the course of the poem? Or should they make strategic reference exterior to the body of the poem, as with Milman’s reference to Pinel at the end of the ‘Belvidere Apollo’? Do different genre or media require different modes of reference, and how might they be so distributed? How should the poet organise the relationship between verse and reference to ensure that one does not negate or dominate the other? Were they expected primarily to produce a scholarly poem, or poetic scholarship?

One way in which Newdigate Prize poets dealt with this need to incorporate or identify the mediations through which they had constructed their ekphrastic objects was through footnotes. From the earliest, footnotes were felt to be an integral part of the Prize poem apparatus. Reviewing the fair copies of the poems held at the Bodleian Library, one finds that rather than a supplement added over the course of preparation for publication, footnotes were frequently incorporated into the original entry. Of the eighteen Prize-winning poems between 1810 and 1827, fourteen had footnotes: the ‘Dying Gladiator’; ‘Belvidere Apollo’; ‘Pantheon’; ‘Horses of Lysippus’; ‘Farnese Hercules’; ‘Coliseum’; ‘Temple of Diana at Ephesus’; ‘Paestum’; ‘Palmyra’; ‘Stonehenge’; ‘Arch of Titus’; ‘Temple of Vesta’; ‘Trajan’s Pillar’; and ‘Pompeii’.90

An insight into the importance attached to footnotes in the Newdigate Prize, and the expectations that surrounded them, is found in the correspondence between Henry George Herbert, Earl of Carnarvon (1772-1833) and his son Henry John George Herbert, Lord Porchester (1800-1849) while the latter was a student at Oxford. In 1818 Porchester, yet to visit Rome on his Grand Tour, wrote an entry on the theme of ‘The Coliseum’. Unfortunately, Porchester’s letters from this correspondence were probably destroyed; however, a clear picture can be painted from Carnarvon’s responses.

90 Bodleian Library, MS.Don.d.66-68.
Carnarvon is initially optimistic about his son’s chances, declaring on the announcement of the Prize theme in late 1817 ‘what a thing it would be for you to gain all the prizes like Mr Boone, with equal industry you may as well as he’. Carnarvon was still sanguine about his son’s chances of success in his letter of 14 April 1818, announcing ‘I should rejoice indeed to hear you have won the prize’, while expressing concern that he should not ‘strike out facts & incidents for mere verses & mouth words’. Carnarvon implores his son to retain an account of the battle of Actium re-enacted in the Coliseum and the ‘sign for life & the sign for death’, over a merely poetic reflection on the glory of gladiatorial combat. He explains his reasons for this preference for ‘facts & incidents’ over mere ‘mouth words’ by relaying an account of the expectations that surrounded the Prize by 1818, telling his son that ‘the judges […] look very much to classical facts & descriptions’. At least to Carnarvon, it appears clear at this stage that the scholarship exhibited in entries to the Newdigate Prize was as significant as the poetry itself.

On 29 April, as the deadline drew near, Carnarvon was still offering advice, warning his son that his notes are ‘so very vague & loose’ that he fears ‘instead of doing you good this will do you great harm’. Carnarvon advises that to correct this, Porchester would do well to remember that ‘the Margin of Gibbon as I told you will help you & many quotations’. The choice of Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) as a source of footnotes is unsurprising. The author of The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (1776-1789), Gibbon was near-synonymous with his footnotes; and their use and appearance had become a standard in English historical writing. Authors after Gibbon ‘inside the historical tradition’ were expected not only to ‘tell stories, but cite evidence’; historical writing was to be increasingly regulated by ‘a new set of standards’ for handling a ‘profusion of evidence’. Originating in the antiquarian tradition, this new imperative to footnote had been long resisted by philosophical historians. The antagonism between ‘the philosophers and the antiquarians’ resided in

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91 HRO, 75M91/E4/1.
92 HRO, 75M91/E4/11.
differences in their ‘method of study’, which Voltaire had characterised as the difference between the ‘vague and sterile science of facts and dates’ of antiquarianism and the ‘history of the human spirit’ of the philosophers. While the ‘lengthy footnote’ was an ‘indispensable part of the antiquary’s scholarship’, to the classically trained historian it had represented ‘an unwanted interruption to the narrative flow’, an ‘excess of erudition over taste’. Gibbon’s innovation as a historian was to blend ‘in himself the philosopher and the antiquarian’, offering the ‘treasures of [antiquarian] erudition’ to the ‘contemplation of the philosophic historian’. Such new epistemological standards came to be epitomised by Gibbon’s footnotes. It is therefore unsurprising that Carnarvon’s advice to his son appears to have been the product of a conversation with his brother Algernon Herbert (1792-1855), an antiquary and Fellow of Merton College, Oxford. According to Algernon, entries for the Newdigate Prize were expected to be articulated within the post-Gibbonian European historical-antiquarian tradition: to borrow from its critical apparatus, and to engage in the debates that animated it. Study at Oxford in the 1810s was still regimented by the conservative Literae Humaniores course developed after the examination statutes of 1800. This was the course that Porchester took. Students were expected to complete a common examination syllabus comprised of a ‘limited group of texts’ in Latin and Greek, ‘largely similar or identical to what they would have already studied at school’, and featuring such names as Homer, Virgil, Aristotle and Euclid. However, students and tutors alike commonly read outside of this simple course. John Henry Newman (1801-90), a gifted contemporary of Porchester, spent the summer of 1818 reading

98 Heather Ellis, Generational Conflict and University Reform: Oxford in the Age of Revolution (Brill: Leiden, 2012), pp.75-76.
John Locke and Gibbon.\textsuperscript{99} In 1819, as Newman read the historians Herodotus and Thucydides, he returned once more to Gibbon, rejoicing in his ‘happy choice of expressions, his vigorous compression of ideas, and the life and significance of his every word’.\textsuperscript{100} While not on the examination syllabus at the University, Gibbon therefore remained the embodiment of historical rectitude, and an example to be followed in his enormous erudition and diligent scholarship. Any description of a work of classical art for the purposes of the Prize demanded some familiarity with modern historical and antiquarian study, and an accordance with the epistemological apparatuses that lay claim to them, whether historical, antiquarian, or classical. Significantly, this meant the appropriate employment of footnotes. Algernon – quoted by Carnarvon – advises that:

\begin{quote}
   every note should quote the \textit{Author & the purpose of the author}, & that at Oxford they built upon this a great deal, but you have not cited one single book except an \textit{Encyclopædia} which is no authority, you should have traced it to the fountain head.\textsuperscript{101}
\end{quote}

In advising that notes should be ‘traced […] to the \textit{fountain head}’ (my italics), Algernon/Carnarvon is directly alluding to Gibbon’s own methodological prescriptions, and to the expectations that accompanied antiquarian writing. According to Rosemary Sweet, antiquaries ‘always preached the importance of returning to the original text’, even if this recommendation was ‘observed in the breach as much as the observance’.\textsuperscript{102} Gibbon echoed this recommendation, explaining in the fourth volume of the \textit{Decline and Fall} that: ‘I have always endeavoured to draw from the fountain-head; that my curiosity, as well as a sense of duty, has always urged me to study the originals’.\textsuperscript{103} The image of the ‘fountain-head’ is used to posit a culture of ‘originals’ against an over-reliance on the proliferation of secondary sources typical of

\textsuperscript{101} HRO, 75M91/E4/13.
\textsuperscript{102} Sweet, p.178.
\textsuperscript{103} Edward Gibbon, \textit{The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire}, 12 vols (London: Joseph Ogle Robinson, 1830), IV, ‘Preface to the Fourth Volume’. 
eighteenth-century literary culture, such as encyclopaedias, dictionaries, and – in the University context – crib sheets.\textsuperscript{104} Such works were felt to be ‘no authority’ by Carnarvon, who urged that ‘at Oxford there can be no real difficulty in tracing’ any reference back to its author ‘with labour & perseverance’. Detached from the object described, the poem falls back upon the expectations for other forms of description, such as the institutions and publications that circulated those works of art and antiquity and that reproduced them for geographically diffuse audiences. The emphasis on footnotes indicates an acceptance of the need for the ekphrastic Prize poem to engage with the epistemological expectations that formed around scholarly modes of vicarious access to classical antiquities. Footnotes were not only a guarantee of information, but also of the unseen object, of a description that could be trusted, and that truly reproduced the monument, sculpture or antiquity. Footnotes in Prize entries were more than helpful supplements or an alien apparatus; they were an initiation of the poem into the constellation of reproductions surrounding antiquarian museum culture. They offered the potential to transform a poem into a viable mode of vicarious access.

After this explanation of the institutional and disciplinary importance of footnotes, Carnarvon begins to explain their stylistic significance, with an uncompromising criticism of Porchester’s weaknesses in this regard:

I see the style has been so much neglected as the matter. [...] The language of the notes requires as great sweetness as the poetry and as much minute attention, & your style is far from being a studied & corrected language it appears as if written as quick as you could write.\textsuperscript{105}

Rather than a prosaic supplement, footnotes were an intrinsic part of the literary style of the poem. They are said to have their own ‘sweetness’ and require equally ‘minute attention’ as verses. When, as Carnarvon notes, ‘the taste of all Poets is to shew all the learning they can collect in the notes’, learning itself becomes a matter of taste, and its

\begin{footnotes}
\item[105] HRO, 75M91/E4/13.
\end{footnotes}
proper presentation as much a part of the Newdigate Prize poem as any ‘mere verses & mouth words’. In vicariously accessing the ‘Remains of ancient Grecian and Roman’ art through their publication history, the Newdigate Prize poem becomes itself a mode of vicarious access. This inevitably generates the problem of how such a mode is to be constituted stylistically. In their ‘studied & corrected language’ footnotes are intended to introduce into the poem the stylistic expectations of the works of scholarship whose representations and descriptions formed the basis for the poem itself. The poem is not only a reflection of the work of art, but also of its mediations.

George Robert Chinnery (1791-1825) was the author of the first of the Newdigate poems to address a single work of classical art, ‘The Statue of the Dying Gladiator’. The ‘Dying Gladiator’ was also the first attempt to render explicit the scholarly expectations that surrounded the Prize, and their consequences for poetic form. Replete with footnotes and references, the poem is as much an engagement with the publication and exhibition history of the Dying Gladiator as it is with the statue itself. Indeed, the poem concludes with the following footnote, explaining just this preoccupation:

N.B. In pointing out the principal beauties and leading features of this statue, Montfaucon, Winkelmann, and the author of the article ‘Gladiateur Expirant’ in the French Encyclopedia, have been followed. (p. 161)

By stating that in writing his entry he had ‘followed’ his principle authors, Chinnery not only identifies the sources for the reproductions and descriptions out of which his ekphrasis was constructed, but also the stylistic expectations with which he grappled.106

The ‘Dying Gladiator’ is a composite of mediations, which are presented as the authenticating principle behind the poem. The names Winckelmann, Montfaucon, Giovanni Gaetano Bottari (1689-1775), and Domenico Augusto Bracci (1717-95) are

106 He also indicates that while Carnarvon’s opposition to citing the Encyclopédie proposed itself as normative, it was far from hegemonic.
integral to the construction of the poem. In contrast to the disembodied blindness of ‘mere verses & mouth words’, Chinnery’s footnotes ‘shew all the learning’ he has collected, constituting the poem as a visual spectacle while paradoxically securing its procedures through their textual apparatus. Chinnery guarantees his poem through reference to accounts recognised at once for their textual authority and their well-known visual foundation. Montfaucon, Bottari, and Landon all included engravings of the *Dying Gladiator* in their publications, and organised their descriptions around these images (Plate XX). The words of the footnote implied a grounding in images, and grounded the ekphrastic images of the poem.

The first of Chinnery’s footnotes establishes this relationship between the ekphrastic poem and its textual sources. The lines footnoted describe a central theme in the poem, the wavering between life and death legible in the eyes of the *Gladiator*: ‘Still glares his closing eye with angry light, | Now glares, now darkens with approaching night’ (ll. 7-8). Focusing on the ‘angry light’ constituting the sight of the gladiator, Chinnery constructs his description of the statue through an emphasis on the act of looking. The reader looks at the poem, the poet looks at the reproduction, the reproduction looks at the *Dying Gladiator*, and finally the meaning of the *Dying Gladiator* is articulated in his look, into which all these previous individual acts of seeing are collapsed. Chinnery’s footnote then proceeds to justify this chain of visual communication with reference to Winckelmann and Pliny:


(In which (*Dying Gladiator*) one could see all that still remained of life: *in quo possit intelligi quantum restet animæ.*) (p. 161)

The use of vision as the means of access to the statue is an interpolation or reinterpretation of both Pliny and Winckelmann: the Latin *intelligere* (‘to come to know’) becomes *empfinden* (‘to feel’) in German, and then *voir* (‘to see’) in French. The

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107 Where Chinnery’s footnotes are in French, I retain the original text alongside my own translation.
rendering visible of the description of the *Dying Gladiator* is absorbed by Chinnery in the following lines: the heaving of the gladiator’s ‘sinewy breast’ become ‘vengeance visible’ (ll. 9-10), as his ‘every nerve [seems] for one last effort set’ (l. 14). While maintaining the idea that what is to be seen in the sculpture is its subject’s oscillation between life and death, in the ‘Dying Gladiator’ this becomes explicitly a matter of looking. Chinnery’s access to the visual image of his subject is vicariously legitimised through textual sources, and yet he does not forego visual description, instead organising the poem around the logic of sight. Vision is not only implicitly, but explicitly registered as the mode of aesthetic access for the speaker, and by proxy the reader.

The visuality of this indeterminacy between life and death in the poetic representation of the body of the gladiator – the open-endedness of ‘the Gladiator’s mortal throes’ (l. 2) – is also a focal point in Chinnery’s footnotes. The compulsion to watch the statue in expectation of his death was an aspect of the *Dying Gladiator* that was particularly remarked upon in the eighteenth century. Although two plates of the figure were included in Gerard Audran’s *Les Proportions du corps humain mesurés sur les plus belles figures de l’antiquité*, and although ‘budding artists were encouraged to draw it from every angle’, there was little doubt that ‘it was primarily the poignancy of the expression that attracted the attention of most visitors’ (p. 161). Joseph Spence described the face of the *Dying Gladiator* as ‘among all the statues of the antients [...] the most expressive of a human passion’ (p. 161); while Peter Beckford, an English visitor to Rome, described it as:

> The most perfect representation of a wounded person at the last extremity: the hair stands erect; the legs have already lost all their power; pain is strongly expressed in the countenance; and the very lips seem to quiver in the agony of death.\(^{108}\)

It was this indeterminacy that drew spectators in the Ludovisi collection, the Musei Capitolini, and finally the Musée Napoléon. And it was this indeterminacy that Chinnery unsurprisingly sought to replicate through his footnotes. In the second

footnote Chinnery refers to the *Encyclopédie française*’s description of the gladiator: ‘il ne craint point la mort, il craindroit de faire une grimace ou de pousser un lâche soupir’ (‘he is not afraid of death, he fears to grimace or utter a cowardly sigh’). The *Encyclopédie* is again cited in the fifth footnote where we are told:

On sent dans celui-ci que, malgré la force qui lui reste après le coup dont il est attaïnt, il n’a plus qu’un moment à vivre, et l’on regarde long tems dans l’attente de le voir tomber en expirant.

(We feel in this [sculpture] that, despite the strength that remains within him after the blow he has suffered, he has no more than a moment left to live, and we watch for a long time in the expectation of seeing him fall in death.) (p. 161)

Eyes are fixed upon the final ‘moment’ of life of the *Dying Gladiator*. When Chinnery and the encyclopaedists explain that ‘we watch for a long time in the expectation of seeing him fall in death’, they are not only describing the phenomenon of the statue, but also the normative experience of it: readers would expect not only to see the ‘Gladiator’s mortal throes’, but to be encouraged into that expectation. With the accounts of spectators, travellers, and historians all collectively fixed on the *Gladiator’s* attitude towards death, it is not only the representation of that attitude that marks a description out as legitimate, but also the recognition that such a representation is expected. The footnotes therefore operate not only as an authentication of Chinnery’s description, but more importantly as an enmeshing of the expectations of the museum visitor into its fabric, so that the reader’s expectations as spectator, and expectations of the spectator, coincide. The status of the footnote as mode of *vicarious access* is not to be effaced, but to be emphasised in order to combine the reader in a compact with those who lay claim to an immediate experience of the sculpture.

The compact established in the footnotes also has implications for the fabric of the poem. When, at its crux, the statue is made to speak, it is to announce precisely the mortal threshold that animates the relationship between the artwork and its mediations in the poem:
His fix’d eye dwells upon the faithless blade,
As if in silent agony he pray’d,
‘Oh might I yet, by one avenging blow,
Not shun my fate, but share it with my foe!’

(ll. 25-28)

In announcing his own death, the statue is made suddenly and unexpectedly to come to life, speaking in the first person. Yet this speech is an unvoiced prayer, and before it has even been said it has been unsaid. Furthermore, in being unsaid, it shifts into the register of the seen: no longer the vocalised words of the Gladiator, but the silent communication of his ‘fix’d eye’. Vision is returned to the sculpture in this moment to entangle its speech within the chain of visual communication established in the opening lines of the poem. And even this vision is finally disentangled from the statue and returned to the spectator. The ‘as if’ transfers the words away once more from the eyes of the Gladiator, to a spectator’s interpretation: it establishes an absolute gap between the content of the prayer and its actual enunciation by the Gladiator, making it clear that the prayer is only seen by the spectator, not spoken by the statue. The prayer is an interpretative leap. These words are in fact images, and these images a product of the correct interpretation of the object on display in a museum, circulating across a series of reproductions. What appears at first to be the prosopopoeic animation of the statue is subsumed under the work of visual interpretation performed by the spectator, a work that is then repeated and reproduced by the reader. Chinnery’s ekphrasis of the Gladiator situates its object within the realm of the footnote, making its reproduction in print the location at which its experience is posited. The ekphrasis in the ‘Dying Gladiator’ is recognised via the footnote as the latest in a chain of mediations, and as a product of them: as the source of Chinnery’s vicarious access to the statue, the footnote becomes a force for the interpretative regulation of the poetic image.

Significantly, this act of regulation through footnotes is accomplished via untranslated quotations from French sources. As well as the inevitable product of the lack of adequate English translation of Winckelmann’s Geschichte in this period, and a demonstration of Chinnery’s learning and linguistic abilities, the original French hints
at the contemporary situation of the *Dying Gladiator*. First recorded in the Ludovisi collection in Rome in 1623, the *Dying Gladiator* changed hands several times before its acquisition by Pope Clement XII for the Capitoline Museum at some point before 1737. In 1797 it was ceded to the French, reaching Paris in 1798 before being placed on display in the Muséum Central des Arts (subsequently the Musée Napoléon) in November 1800. The *Dying Gladiator* was therefore (begrudgingly) understood to be a French possession in 1810, one of the ‘glories of the antique world’ that greeted William Hazlitt in 1802 on his visit to Paris, alongside the *Apollo Belvedere*, *Antinous*, *Laocoön*, and *Venus de’ Medici*.

The use of French therefore indicated a kind of authenticity or proximity of access: a confirmation that Chinnery’s *vicarious access* to the sculpture was in the language of immediacy, of its situation and appreciation in Paris.

If a distinction can be made between Chinnery’s footnotes in French, and those in English, it is that the former are employed when citing texts that directly describe the ‘beauties and leading features of the statue’, while the latter generally return the figure of the *Dying Gladiator* to its concrete existence as a piece of classical art. The first of the two footnotes in English justifies the archaic identification of the sculpture with a dying gladiator. By 1811 it was generally established that the *Dying Gladiator* could not, in fact, have been a gladiator at all. Chinnery would have been well aware of this, as the edition of Winckelmann’s *Geschichte* he cites includes an argument for identifying the sculpture with a Greek herald. However, in his *Histoire de l’art chez les anciens*, while translating Winckelmann, Jansen also offers his own refutation of Winckelmann’s position, reasserting the identification of the figure as a representation of a gladiator. This forms the basis for Chinnery’s own refutation in his sixth footnote, where he states:

> For a proof that the figure represented by this statue was meant to be that of a Laquearius [gladiator], see note to Winkelmann, vol. ii, p.243. See also l’abbé Bracci, in his Dissertation ‘sopra un clipeo votivo,’ præf. p.7. (p. 161)

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109 Haskell and Penny, p.224.
As well as emulating Jansen’s argument and referring his reader to it, Chinnery also recycles Jansen’s reference to Bracci’s attack on Winckelmann’s identification in his *Dissertazione* (1771). Similarly, the second footnote in English is used to marshal Winckelmann and Pliny as justifications for identifying the *Dying Gladiator* as the ‘sculptur’d form’ that ‘gave deathless fame | To Ctesilas’ (ll. 39-40).

On the other hand, the footnotes in French cling closely to the description of the statue itself, eschewing larger historiographical and attributional debates. In particular, these notes repeatedly describe details through prosopopoeia, through the figuration of the sculpture as a living, responsive human being. The ‘sculptur’d form’ of the *Dying Gladiator* falls away in these descriptions as he comes to life (and death). In the final footnote in French this is particularly striking. When Chinnery justifies his description of ‘the streams of life-blood fast descend[ing]’ (l. 29) he refers in the footnote to Bernard de Montfaucon’s account of the *Gladiator*’s injury: ‘le sang coule de sa plaie’ (‘the blood flows from his wound’). At this moment the sculpture is pulled into movement, the present indicative transforming the blood into a flowing liquid whose temporality works against the previous fixity of the gladiator’s eye and the silence of his voice. The poem momentarily asks us to trace an image of life over the ‘sculptur’d form’, to imagine death emerging from its ‘deathless frame’. The indeterminacy of the statue as representation of life and death is played out again in the movement between languages in the footnotes, which is also a movement between a recognition of the statue as a historically situated work of art, and as a representation of life. As the reader moves from poem to footnote, footnote to source, source to engraving, and engraving to poem, they must constantly readjust the ekphrastic image to account for competing modes of access, to engage in the sculpture as a composite.

The footnotes in the ‘Dying Gladiator’, then, produce over the course of the poem a series of readings that oscillate between the centripetal and centrifugal. They

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111 Montfaucon, III (1719), 267.
are centripetal in constructing a viable image from an integration of sources, a coherent ekphrasis out of a series of descriptions and reproductions. A body of scholarship, study, and images appear to be brought together and synthesised into a poem with a single subject. On the other hand, they are centrifugal in sending readers away to just these sources in search of those descriptions and images out of which the poem is made. The reader is asked to confirm the poem’s representation of the *Dying Gladiator* with their own reading, to validate its claim to precision and rectitude by unravelling the threads it has woven together. Chinnery’s ‘Dying Gladiator’ and its sources become symbiotic: the Newdigate Prize poems begin to appear not as simple works of literature, but as individual components within a larger complex. The poem is another element in the cultural recommendation of ‘the Study of the Remains of ancient Grecian and Roman Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting’.

**VI. The Newdigate Prize in print**

Any reading of the Newdigate Prize poems must be informed by a careful reconstruction of the sources through which poets developed an understanding of their subjects, as well as a consideration of how these sources were manipulated and consolidated. It must be grounded in an analysis of the ways in which authors vicariously accessed the canon of classical sculpture through an increasingly complex constellation of reproductions. However, it must also be grounded in a recognition of the Newdigate poems as themselves participating in such a constellation, as themselves becoming an additional mediation through which Winckelmann’s ‘art of antiquity’ might be accessed by an audience entirely divorced from any *autoptic* encounter with originals. Printed and reprinted, read and shared, Newdigate Prize poems became the material of further vicarious encounters, and were increasingly identified as such.

Besides reading their poems at the annual encaenia, prize-winners were expected to provide the Chancellor of the University with a fair copy in manuscript of their poem, an ‘established usage’ for all University competitions. The Chancellor
might also reciprocate with his own gift (Lord Grenville sent Milman ‘a present of books, accompanied by a letter congratulating him [...] and auguring a brilliant, useful future’).\textsuperscript{112} Newdigate Prize poets could expect to see their works published. These were exclusively in octavo and generally appeared either as small pamphlets of individual poems, released the same year as the prize was awarded and priced at two shillings; or collections, released in increasingly large editions and priced at five shillings and six pence. There was also at least one collection dedicated solely to Prize-winners from a single college, \textit{The Christ Church Newdigate Prize Poems} (1823). This edition comprised poems by George Robert Chinnery, Alexander MacDonnell (‘The Horses of Lysippus’, 1816), James Shergold Boone (‘The Farnese Hercules’, 1817), and George William Frederick Howard (‘Paestum’, 1821).\textsuperscript{113} Generally, however, collected editions of the poems were not college specific and included poems that had won prizes for English verse at the University before 1806, as well as poems that were produced for the Newdigate Prize. The collected poems ran through seven updated editions between 1807 and 1826, and continued to be regularly republished into the 1830s. Between the publication of editions, the practice appears to have been to bind in the separate pamphlet editions of individual poems to keep the latest edition up to date.\textsuperscript{114} These volumes were generally published with a print depicting the encaenia in the Sheldonian Theatre, but had no visual matter or descriptions illustrative of the subject of the poem.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{112} Arthur Milman, p.22. Failure to honour the convention could lead to censure: in 1814 Richard Burdon (a previous Newdigate Prize-winner with ‘Parthenon’) was reprimanded for not providing a hand-written copy of his English Essay ‘A Comparative Estimate of the English Literature of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries’, offering only a ‘printed copy’ that was ‘not according to form’, see Bodleian Library, MS. Don. d. 67, fols 167-68.

\textsuperscript{113} Despite having matriculated at Christ Church William Ewart’s ‘The Temple of Diana at Ephesus’ (1820) was omitted without any clear reason.

\textsuperscript{114} Cf. the 1810 edition of \textit{Oxford Prize Poems} held at the Bodleian Library 28041/f.13 which has the poems for 1811 to 1813 bound in the back; or the 1826 edition held at the University of Toronto Library PN6110.C7/O75/1826 which has ‘Trajan’s Pillar’ (1826) and ‘Pompeii’ (1827) bound in the back.

\textsuperscript{115} Almost all editions were published in Oxford by J. Parker, and in London by F. and C. Rivington, and Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme. One exception to this was the 1828 edition of \textit{Oxford English Prize Poems} published by D.A. Talboys, a publisher usually associated with the publication of the University Prize Essays. The reason for this
The relationship between the poems and the constellation of reproductions became more explicit in a supplement to the *Oxford Prize Poems* published in 1824 under the title *Illustrations, Historical and Descriptive, of the Oxford Newdigate Prize Poems, with Engravings*. The *Illustrations* included both descriptions and engraved images of works of art chosen as themes for the Prize, but only reproduced subjects concerning the art of antiquity. In the ‘Advertisement’ to the *Illustrations* the purpose of the publication and its audience is loosely demarcated:

This humble offering to the Public attempts to illustrate by plates, and by a few notes, (which may probably afford aid at least to readers not of the University,) the elegant compositions which have in successive years obtained the Prizes awarded according to the will of Sir R. Newdigate.\(^{116}\)

The publication was meant to ‘illustrate’ – principally visually, but also textually – the Prize poems. Though aimed no doubt in part at the body of the University itself, the *Illustrations* was intended to have a wider audience, and ‘afford aid’ to those who might not otherwise be able to access visual reproductions of the works of art described in the poems. Few copies of the *Illustrations* now survive, and it is therefore difficult to say much about its public; however, an inscription on the inside cover of a copy of the 1824 *Illustrations* in the Bodleian Library reads ‘Frances Macbride from Mary Macbride 1824’, recording this copy as a gift from a mother to her sixteen-year-old daughter.\(^{117}\) Frances Macbride was the daughter of John David Macbride, at the time Principal of Magdalen Hall (later Hertford College). This copy, at least, records a


\(^{117}\) Bodleian Library, 28041 f.11.
readership that was young, associated with the University (if not a member of it), and initiated into a wider climate of classical education and culture, but – significantly, and not unlike the authors of the poems themselves – unable at the time to access the sites and museums of classical art first hand. The Illustrations provided a supplementary publication to the Oxford Prize Poems that could be used as a form of initiation into classical art, offering a way of reading its ekphrases alongside the historical and visual record.

The desire expressed in the 1824 Illustrations, that it might be used to ‘illustrate by plates, and by a few notes […] the elegant compositions’ of the Newdigate Prize is substantiated by its subsequent publication history. In 1828 a new edition of the Prize Poems was published, this time under the title: Oxford Prize Poems with Illustrations, Historical and Descriptive, of the Newdigate Poems, From the best Authorities, and Eighteen Engravings by Fisher.\(^{118}\) Alongside each poem in this edition now sat the engravings and descriptions from the previous Illustrations. In subsequent editions of the collected prize poems, though the descriptions were left out, the habit of including illustrations continued.\(^{119}\) Readers were encouraged more and more to approach the poems not as a substitute for, but alongside images of the objects they sought to describe. The illustration of the poems with engravings of classical artworks was an important innovation for the audience. It is also indicative of the preoccupation of the Newdigate Prize poems with the relationship between vicarious access to classical sculpture and its poetic description that has been traced in this chapter.

\(^{118}\) Oxford Prize Poems with Illustrations, Historical and Descriptive, of the Newdigate Poems, from the best Authorities, and Eighteen Engravings by Fisher (Oxford: J. Parker, 1828). Interestingly, at least one of these eighteen engravings was not in fact by Fisher, but by his daughter Eliza: that of ‘The statues composing the Fall of NIIOBE arranged according to Mr. Cockerell’s Plan in Description’.

\(^{119}\) Oxford Prize Poems: Being a Collection of such English Poems as have at various times obtained prizes in the University of Oxford: With Illustrations (Oxford: J. Parker, J. Vincent, and H. Slatter, 1831); Oxford Prize Poems: Being a Collection of such English Poems as have at various times obtained prizes in the University of Oxford (Oxford: J.H. Parker, J. Vincent, and H. Slatter, 1839).
We have already seen how the Newdigate Prize poets were preoccupied with constructing a poetics of ekphrasis through an engagement with the constellation of reproductions that surrounded the classical sculptural canon. But this constellation in turn became part of the edifice of those poems. The *Illustrations* offer us an opportunity to examine how this edifice was constructed. The descriptions that accompanied the Prize poems were in a large part a collage of other texts: an editing together of disparate passages (both cited and uncited) into a coherent account of a specific object. While the notes and allusions offered by authors were no doubt of some assistance, they were clearly thought insufficient for the general reader. The entry for the *Apollo Belvedere* begins with a paragraph from Joseph Spence’s *Polymetis*, before turning for its next paragraph to a passage from *Bell’s New Pantheon* (heavily quoted in subsequent editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*), followed by five paragraphs from Edward Burton’s *Description of the Antiquities and other Curiosities of Rome*. Within these borrowed passages Winckelmann’s thoughts on the iconography of the statue are also cited, along with Ovid, Antonio Canova (1757-1822), Edward Dodwell’s (1767-1832) *A Classical and Topographical Tour through Greece* (1819), Maximilien Misson’s (1650-1722) *Nouveau Voyage d’Italie* (1691), Gerardus Vossius (1577-1649), Cicero, and Pausanias. Of further note is the thanks given to Peter Edmund Laurent, author of the *Recollections of a Classical Tour through various parts of Greece, Turkey, and Italy* (1821), for ‘occasional aid and encouragement’. The publications stitched together for the text of the *Illustrations* were therefore generally English works well-known for providing a successful synthesis of classical sources, European antiquarian and art historical scholarship, and books of travels. These were of a type with the ‘anthologies and reference books in English’ that had been the ‘principal sources of classical knowledge’ for John Keats while a young man (Keats had been particularly interested in Spence’s *Polymetis* while a pupil at John

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121 *Illustrations*. 
Clarke’s school in Enfield).\footnote{Nicholas Roe, \textit{John Keats and the Culture of Dissent} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p.67.} Scholarship that had been translated into an accessible vernacular for a popular audience was recycled by the \textit{Illustrations}. But they were also works that allowed their readers to vicariously experience Grand Tourism and the art of antiquity (see Chapter 3). The descriptions in the \textit{Illustrations} were not intended as a critical intervention into ongoing literary and art historical debates; instead, they provided an introduction to objects whose names may have been familiar to their audience, but whose histories were less so. The audience was not expected to be fluent in Latin or Greek, but interested in developing a greater knowledge of the objects described in the poems, and engaging with them as objects of sustained aesthetic and cultural contemplation.

When we turn to the engravings in the \textit{Illustrations}, we find that they are similarly sourced from other well-known publications. Those which openly admit to this repurposing include the engravings of the Pantheon, the Colosseum, and the Arch of Titus, all attributed to Piranesi, a drawing of the Temple of Theseus ‘from a drawing by Stewart’, and an engraving of the \textit{Niobids} as a pedimental group ‘arranged according to Mr. Cockerell’s Plan’.\footnote{Illustrations.} In each of these cases, the author of the illustration was the name most associated in contemporary culture with the object depicted. Piranesi’s engravings had been the embodiment of Roman architecture for most of the previous century, while James Stewart’s work with Nicholas Revett on the \textit{Antiquities of Athens} had formed much of the basis for the Greek Revival in Britain, and Charles Robert Cockerell’s (1788-1863) \textit{Le Statue della favola di Niobe} had only a few years previously prompted a re-evaluation of the arrangement of the \textit{Niobids} both in England and on the Continent.

The sources for the engravings of classical sculpture are generally undisclosed; however, a comparison with the large number of prints and illustrations in circulation at that time indicates that those of the \textit{Apollo Belvedere, Niobe, and Dying Gladiator} are all redrawn from Charles Paul Landon’s \textit{Annales du Musée et de l’école moderne}
des beaux-artes, while the engraving of the Farnese Hercules is heavily indebted to Landon’s style of presentation. This is significant not only because it indicates what images readers would have associated with the Prize poems, but also because it was precisely these engravings by Landon that had been consulted by Milman while writing the ‘Belvidere Apollo’, and Chinnery while writing ‘The Statue of the Dying Gladiator’. The images that had first prompted the Prize poets had now been recirculated besides the Prize poems. The constellation of reproductions out of which the poets had drawn their ekphrases was now providing the illustrations against which their readership would compare their descriptions. Far from autonomous, these ekphrastic poems were demonstrably read as part of a larger complex of mediations: besides, against, and through the engravings and descriptions found in the Illustrations and other publications. The poet’s encounter with the work of art had become guaranteed via a closed circuit in which meaning was deferred not onto some authorising original, but another reproduction. Poem, description, and illustration are no longer framed within a hierarchy of originality, but as part of an interdependent complex through which ‘the art of antiquity’ was to be vicariously accessed and composed.

The Illustrations are a concrete example of how the Prize poems were integrated into the constellation of reproductions that helped give them shape. The incorporation of these mediations into the Prize poem apparatus allows us to think through the constellation of reproductions as an historically determined arrangement: as a configuration that modifies and is modified by the descriptions, casts, engravings and ekphrases that participate in it. In building their ‘Recommendations’ of the ‘Remains of ancient Grecian and Roman Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting’ from reproductions, the Prize poets in turn contributed additional reproductions. For their audience, the poems became proxies for those ‘Remains’ of classical sculpture they had recommended. This was nowhere more the case than with Milman’s ‘Belvidere Apollo’. By far the most widely read of the poems, it was reprinted in a number of journals, including The Classical Journal (1812), The Literary Panorama (1813), The New Monthly Magazine and Universal Register (1819), The Atheneum (1820), and

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124 Landon, I (1800), 143; IV (1802), 61.
most significantly James Elmes’ *Annals of the Fine Arts* (1820). Milman’s ‘Belvidere Apollo’ also provoked others to write in response, becoming the basis for further poetic Apollos. Milman claimed that Lord Byron had borrowed from his poem in his account of the *Apollo* in Canto 4 of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (1818), while he also recounted having found ‘a billet-doux full of verses from a lady (postmark Bristol) — and the verses were very good verses too, of course — all about my having Apollo’s shell, etc., etc. N.B.’¹²⁵ Such was the popularity of the ‘Belvidere Apollo’ that it was even said to usurp the original sculpture in the imagination of British tourists at Rome: ‘the English traveller who sees the Apollo Belvedere in the Vatican gallery will long recall the most perfect of all Oxford prize poems, every line of which catches some characteristic of the matchless statue’.¹²⁶ The ekphrastic poem, born of vicarious access, became a lens through which the canon of classical sculpture was studied, consumed, and became in the process part of the experience of the artwork itself.

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Conclusion

Towards the end of the period that I have marked out James Watt (1736-1819), recently retired, began to tentatively dream of a new, absolute, mode of reproduction less dependent on the assurance of the human hand or eye:

The principle of the machine was to make a cutting tool or drill travel over the work to be executed, in like ratio with the motion of a guide-point placed upon the bust to be copied. It worked, as it were, with two hands; the one feeling the pattern, the other cutting the material into the required form.\(^5\)

Watt’s fantasy was of a machine that ‘was to do for solid masses and in hard materials, what the copying machine of 1782 had already done for drawings and writings impressed upon flat surfaces of paper’, that is, provide ‘copies of works of sculpture which should be perfectly true to their originals’.\(^6\) Watt imagined a reproduction guaranteed not only by resemblance, but ‘authenticated by the object itself’; guaranteed not by the honesty of the artist but the inevitability of the mechanism. The hands of the copyist were to be replaced by those of a machine, their eyes replaced by the ‘bodily real’, the spatial extension of sculpted marble.\(^7\) Watt’s machine never reached completion, producing a few painful reproductions before his death. Samuel Smiles recounts visiting his garret workshop long after his death and finding it abandoned:

Many objects lay about or in the drawers, indicating the pursuits which had been interrupted by death, – busts, medallions, and figures, waiting to be copied by the sculpture-machine, – many medallion moulds, a store of plaster of Paris, and a box of plaster casts from London, the contents of which do not seem to have been disturbed.\(^8\)

\(^8\) Smiles, p.513.
While Watt’s plans came to nothing, his idea was the seed of a new world. Technological reproductions would become the new given in the distribution of museum culture. However, this should not blind us to the historical significance of other forms of reproduction. As we have seen over the course of this study, the idea of copies ‘perfectly true to their originals’ did not begin with the sculpture-machine. It was in the mouth of Rymsdyk as he explained his visual epistemology; it was the first thought of the spectators at Du Bourg’s exhibition and the commissioners who evaluated the Galerie Cassas; it was even in the minds of readers of the Newdigate Prize poems. Museum culture was – and continues to be – determined as much by the idea of its immediate accessibility via mediations, as it is by its concretion in particular reproductions.

The initial aim of my study was to develop a framework for understanding the shared histories of reproductive media and public museums, and to rethink the prevalent critical exceptionalism of writing in relation to this history. I have pragmatically included ekphrasis within the broader constellation of reproductions to dethrone it from its place of distinction in literary accounts of museum culture, rendering it one citizen among many. Accordingly, my focus has not been on a description of ‘the poet and (institution, object, image)’, but on the broad network of reproductive media that constituted museum culture. The object of description is redistributed across an expanded chain of mediations. Poems, guidebooks, and other texts all made sense of their vicarious identification with museum objects through an engagement with what I have called the constellation of reproductions. It therefore makes sense to supply the reading of these museum writings with a proper account of this engagement. To write the museum, the author also had to write with and in competition with the reproduction.

Nor was the relationship between museums and their reproductions a one-way street: it was powerfully reciprocal, with museum culture shaped by its configuration through reproductions. The distribution of museum culture was marked by this integration into a field of reproductions. The museum was written by museum writing,
as much as it was a source for it; the museum was seen through reproductive media, as much as it was the origin of their objects. Whether it was the visitor stepping over the threshold of the British Museum with a guidebook, or the reader diligently studying the Museum Britannicum’s useful and entertaining illustrations, the spectator wondering at the various casts and models of the architectural museum, or the Oxford poet engaging the canon of classical sculpture through prints, casts, and descriptions (in fact anything but the original object), the distribution of the museum was synonymous with the distribution of its reproductions.

For this reason, my elaboration of the constellation of reproductions has produced an image that is undeniably mosaic, combining a variety of institutions, objects, and practices. This mosaic image does not provide us with a single, non-contradictory identification of the term ‘reproduction’. Indeed, the readings in this study have served to expose some of the contradictions between the various copies constituting museum culture. Whether it be the impulse towards the representation of the unseen visible in the museum guide, or the positive epistemological content of the image (and negative capacities of text) in the Museum Britannicum, the architect’s fantasy of an unmediated archaeological reproduction, or the redistribution of the ekphrastic image in the Newdigate Prize Poem, an elaboration of the relationship between different museum reproductions has allowed us to trace the lines of force of a real conceptual antagonism. There were many differing and competing claims for the power of the reproduction to represent (whether aesthetically or epistemologically), and it was through just these contradictions that an historical sense of the capacities of the museum reproduction emerged.
Plates

Plate I
Plate III

1. The Bulbous root
2. The part of the filleting which enclosed the root with the shining skin adhering to it.
3. The Spiral lines of the skin
4. The Tendons of the Peronous Branches
5. Some of the Ligaments of the Ankle
Plate V

Follow Nature!

"No more you learned Fops, your Knowledge boast,
"Pretending all to know, by reading most,
"True Wit, by Inspiration, we obtain,
"Nature, not Art, Apollo’s Wreath must gain.

Mrs. A. in Æsop’s Lib
Plate IX
Plate XII
Plate XIV
Plate XVI
Plate XVII
Appendix 1

Paris, Archives Nationales, AJ/52/446

‘Report given to his Excellence the Minister of the Interior on the architectural model collection of Mr Cassas’

Sir,

According to your invitation the undersigned commissioners, that you have nominated to give their opinion on the architectural model collection formed by Mr Cassas, met many times to examine it; after having communicated with Mr Cassas and received from him all the necessary information, they have drafted the following opinion which they have the honour of submitting to your Excellence in response to the questions that were addressed to them.

FIRST QUESTION

Will it be of great interest to the arts to incorporate the collection of Mr Cassas into the architecture gallery?

It is sufficient to throw a glance over the nature of this collection to perceive the great interest of which, alone and even independently of its merger with the architecture gallery, it could have for the arts; and in examining it more carefully we were soon convinced that the incorporation of the masterpieces of antique architecture executed in relief model, in their correct proportions, and on a scale suitably developed, offers, of its kind, a powerful means of instruction for the students, for the masters themselves and for the public.

1. Utility of the collection for students

The antique monuments, so represented as models, will be of great assistance to young architects in their studies; we know with what rapidity sight seizes that which a yet weak intelligence does not conceive of but slowly.

The best done drawings, the most meticulous engravings cannot in this regard replace, except in an imperfect manner, the inappreciable advantage of models which, exhibiting at once all the forms [of the edifice], develops them on all the sides and engraves them in the memory in indelible lines without requiring the effort of attention demanded by the comparison of plans, sections, and general elevations, [an effort] difficult to achieve even for the consummate artist; difficulties that are never entirely assuaged by even the most correct and the best presented drawing in perspective.

At the same time as it will facilitate the study of the students, this collection will provide to the professors precious means of instruction. They will obtain by it: examples to suggest; well-grounded applications to clarify the principles set down in
their lessons; enlightening demonstrations which will finish by transmitting in their spirit the torch of evidence. The students will profit as much from this rapid and agreeable method, which speaks to the spirit by way of the eyes, as by commentaries, which must not be contemned nor neglected, but which, alone, do not enough aid their feeble intelligence.

Finally, the habitual view of these masterpieces will be above all eminently suited to purifying their taste, enflaming their imagination, and awakening their genius.

2. Utility for the masters

The artists already trained, the architects compelled to execute public or private works will find here precious resources.

It is for them an indispensable necessity – especially when it concerns monuments and edifices which affect the glory of the arts – to check what effect might be produced in executing their compositions (not trusting only in the study of drawings), by studying relief models of which the expense of construction often proves beyond their means.

They will find here in this assembly of monuments of all the orders and all the forms, models already executed, so to speak, which will allow them to consider, by approximation, the project they have will have already devised and the effect of its masses and details according to different points-of-view, and by this way they will avoid the serious errors which too often experience has made clear to them too late.

The extreme variety of forms presented by these models may be illuminated by all the effects of day, or receive, at night, through cleverly arranged lights a picturesque and often magical chiaroscuro, offering again to history and decorative painters the means of putting in the background of their paintings and in theatrical scenes, not only the appropriate style but also a verisimilitude of effect which is of the highest merit.

3. Utility for the public

But in vain would we have instructed students and skilled architects, if their talents, unknown to the public, were not employed; if, as happens all too often, they were obliged to sacrifice to the oddity of the public’s caprices the purity of principles that they have obtained in the schools.

It is therefore no less important to establish public taste, whose influence on the progressive or retrograde progress of the arts, has been, during every epoch, so manifest.

We cannot hide it, architecture so justly honoured among the ancient peoples is not appreciated in France according to its true value: it is not rare to encounter
distinguished men of rank, spirit, and vast knowledge who, having next to no idea of the nature of this art, confuse it without cease with vulgar construction and confine it within the narrow limits of that trade, without the slightest suspicion that its noblest employment consists in the erection of monuments responsible for attesting to posterity the character and the genius of peoples and indicating the epochs of their glory and fortune.

This indifference of people of station and the ignorance of the public, in general, of beautiful architecture, and their small knowledge of antique monuments, must be attributed, in large part, to the state of uncertainty and fluctuation that one notes in the practice of this beautiful art.

If eyes were accustomed to pure and elegant forms, if spirits were familiarised with the just and delicate point-of-view, we would not have dared either to construct edifices without proportion, without regularity, nor employ decorative ornaments which have no relation with the uses to which they are destined. Finally, if the taste of the public was generally enlightened, artists would be forced to put more perfection or at least more rigour in their works; and this salutary constraint, far from being detrimental to their progress would redouble their emulation and enflame their genius, because the progress of art is a result of the purity of the public taste.

Sufficient proof of this can be found if you throw a glance at the rapid progress that has overtaken all the factories and workshops which have some relation with the art of design. Since the opening of the museums of painting and sculpture, that which the arts have produced of the most exquisite order has been put without rest under the eyes of the public, and has accustomed them to true beauty, making them reject with scorn that which was nothing but bizarre fashion.

It is not surprising that the public taste floats uncertain when deprived of these resources to train their architectural judgement. For instruction in these arts there are only two means; the journeys in distant countries which are impracticable for most, or reading works which treat of architecture and monuments of antiquity, works whose nature and price are also often beyond the reach of most.

Many of these treatises are, in truth, accompanied by engravings, but since they are rarely consulted other than by scholars and artists, monuments are not for the most part represented in them in their state of current degradation; from which results efforts more or less painful and often useless, of comparing their plans, their sections and elevations, in order to give oneself a clear and precise idea of monuments, judge their extent, their usage, their genre and decoration, and to appreciate all that the ancients knew in them to develop utility, refinement and magnificence.

Yet the enjoyment of a collection such as this would be, for the public, a means of instruction more direct, easy and within reach, where with one glance and without having to move, the observer could follow the state of architecture in each people, even different epochs, and there study its progress, from its origin among the
Egyptians, up to its decadence, during the time of the late Empire. An interesting show for many and worthy of holding the attention of all cultivated minds.

At this exhibition meetings between artists and amateurs will occur, and the discussions that they will have could not but operate to the profit of art. The masterpieces of genius are not exempt from deviations, and the narrow minded will perceive them, without appreciating the sublime beauties which efface or excuse them; it is up to the masters of art to enlighten in this regard the public and make them learn to recognise those delicate laws which are the true secret of the arts.

4. The utility of this collection will be augmented by its merger with the architecture gallery

If, considered in isolation, Cassas’s collection of models already presents so many benefits, what will it be when it is united with that formed by Mr Dufourny which composes the gallery of architecture established close to the École des beaux-arts?

This gallery (where one also finds some architectural models which will serve to complete the collection of Mr Cassas) consists principally in a numerous set of moulded ornaments, of a natural grandeur, from antique monuments themselves, of Greece or Italy, and of which the models in miniature, are mostly to be found in Mr Cassas’s collection, such that these two collections mutually complete one another. The advantages of such a merger are evident, its results immeasurable.

In effect, this will present to the artist and the amateur an abundant source of instruction, and to all classes of observer an interesting scene. In one view will be seen the whole and the parts of a monument; in a single glance will be encompassed its general proportions, the details of its ornaments, and even the grandeur of its execution!

So France will be able to glory in possessing a Musée complet d’architecture, an establishment currently lacking in the teaching of this portion of the beaux-arts, which is equally desired by those who engage in its study and those who direct or execute the monuments that the munificence of the government erects everywhere. And it will be unique in its kind, because for a while now one finds everywhere museums of painting and sculpture, but nowhere does there exist a Museum of Architecture.

Since, by way of undertakings as useful as they are splendid, France rivals in magnificence both Greece and Italy, the monuments of antiquity are no more, for us, a vain spectacle proper only for exciting curiosity; their view presents quite another interest. In giving the measure of what is beautiful and imposing, the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans must excite our emulation (because that which they could do we can still do), and convince us, at the same time, that we have not produced anything truly great, until such time as we have equalled or even surpassed them.

SECOND QUESTION
What price can we offer to the Artist for it?

To determine its response to this question the commission has neglected nothing. It has first decided that, in order to be perfectly fair, this estimate should focus on two distinct parts: the one material relative to the collection; the other personal relative to its author.

The preparation of the models, their packaging, their transport, their placement in Paris, and in general all the expenses that they have occasioned, form the material part.

The personal part is composed of journeys, works and pains without number, over time; as well as the talent of the author employed in assembling the material and directing the work demanded by the creation of this collection. In consequence of this division:

1. The Commission, after having produced with the greatest care a detailed inventory of the whole collection (attached to this report), proceeded to an estimation of the value of the models in themselves, and for this operation it did not limit itself to its own knowledge.

As these models, relative to the material in which they have been executed, can be divided into three classes, those in talc, those in cork, and those in terra cotta, the committee addressed itself to the persons the best able to help it in its knowledge of each of these genres.

Thus, to understand the precise value of models in talc, which are for the most part those of Mr Fouquet, the committee had recourse to him. This artist, of whom the capacity, and the probity are well known by his Excellence, was requested to put a price on each of the models which were executed in talc, material of which he is familiar.

The price of models in cork executed at Rome was established according to an inventory or price list previously provided by Antonio Chichi, the most skilled Roman artist in this genre; but as this price list was already old and the prices of them appeared excessive, the commission decided, in agreement with Mr Cassas, to considerably reduce them.

Finally, for the models and bas reliefs in terra cotta, and notably for the beautiful trophies of Marius (one of the most capital fragments in the collection), the commission invoked the knowledge of Mr Chaudet, statuary and Member of the Institute.

It is by way of these precautions that the commission assured itself that each of the articles composing the collection, and detailed in the inventory attached, was brought to its just price, and that the totality of the intrinsic value of these models was raised to the sum of 45,910 Francs.
2. To this sum, which represents solely the costs that Mr Cassas had to pay for the making of these models, it is necessary to add the amount which he paid for the packaging and encasing of the part of these models which were executed in Rome: such as the duty, insurance, and the cost of their transportation to Paris. This part reduced to the strictest evaluation cannot be judged at less than 6,000 Francs.

3. On its arrival in Paris, it was necessary for Mr Cassas to obtain the studios, and the other locations needed for the establishment and the display of his collection; it is irrefutable that it was necessary to pay, for fourteen years, for this object, an excessive rent. The commission estimates the surfeit of rent that Mr Cassas was obliged to pay for his collection at 1,000 Francs per year 14,000 Francs.

4. Mr Cassas could not gather the materials necessary for the formation of his collection without carrying out costly works and journeys, and without buying a great number of prized books, from which he gathered the knowledge which he had need of for the restoration of these monuments. For all these costs, as well as for many others which it is easy to imagine, the commission thinks that it is just to allocate him a sum of 10,000 Francs.

5. The sums allocated for the four preceding articles do not represent the amount of diverse expenses that this collection occasioned for Mr Cassas. If the government refuses to reimburse him for these, it seems to the commission that it would not be entirely just from his view. There remains to take into consideration the rare merit of the artist who to his audacity of conception, joined courage, constancy and the talents necessary to execute such an undertaking.

The choice of monuments to execute as models, the knowledge of authors and sources from which it was necessary to draw to reunite with art and verisimilitude their scattered remains, and form them into a whole conforming to the architectural character of the period and of each people, demanded from the author of this collection a fine touch, an expert taste, infinite researches and explorations.

The execution of these models in the correct proportions of the originals and according to sufficiently developed scales, whether in talc, cork, or terra cotta, demanded on his part persistent application and labour to direct the modellers and provide them, in time, all the designs of the whole and its details; in a word, all the suggestions of which they had need.

It is publicly known that for more than twenty years Mr Cassas occupied himself with these labours, which it is just that the government takes into account. The commission would like to pay outright and not simply report a bill so difficult to settle; it is so difficult to put a price on talents! However, without intending to prescribe limits to the munificence of the government with regards to a distinguished artist, of little wealth and loaded with family, and in the intention only of indicating an average and base for evaluation, the commission ventures its opinion. It thinks: that subtracting from twenty years the time that he has effectively devoted to forming of his collection,
we can with confidence determine the time in which Mr Cassas could have employed himself with other works at ten entire years; that the government must allocate to him an honorarium for these ten years; and that this honorarium cannot be projected as a sum less than fifty thousand francs 50,000 Francs.

Total: 125,910 Francs.

CONCLUSION

Thus, summarising in a few words what was developed in the course of this report, the commissioners undersigned are of the opinion:

1. That the acquisition by the government of the collection of architectural models formed by Mr Cassas and its merger with the architecture gallery will provide a powerful means of instruction; that these two collections merged will serve at once to train students, assist masters, enlighten the public; and that, in this way, they will effectively contribute not only to the progress of architecture, but also to the improvement of all kinds of industry which have a relation to design and over which this art exercises its influence.

2. That the price to offer to the artist for the intrinsic value of the models which compose the collection, for the transportation fees, installation, and rent, and for the honorarium due to him, should not come to less than 125,910 Francs.

Paris, 19 December 1808

Durand, Professor of Architecture at l’École polytechnique
Vaudoyer, Secretary of l’École d’architecture
Dufourny, Member of the Institute, Professor of l’École spéciale d’architecture, Rapporteur
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- Pregnant Womb 1.1-7

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*The Antijacobin Review, and True Churchman’s Magazine: or, Monthly, Political, and Literary Censor*
*Athanæum, ou galerie Française des productions des tous les arts*
*The Atheneum*
*Bath Chronicle*
*The Berwick museum, or, Monthly Literary Intelligencer: Forming an Universal Repository of Amusement and Instruction*
*The British Museum: or Universal Register of Literature, Politics, and Poetry*
*The Christian’s Theological Museum*
*The Classical Journal*
*The Coventry Museum, or Universal Entertainer*
*The Court Jester: or, Museum of Entertainment*
*Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*
*Gazette nationale ou le Moniteur Universel*
*General Advertiser*
*General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer*
*The Gentleman’s Magazine*
*The Gentleman’s Magazine and Historical Chronicle*
*The Gentleman’s Magazine: Or, Monthly Intelligencer*
*The Gentleman’s Museum*
*The Hampshire Chronicle*
*The Lady’s Museum*
*The Lilliputian Library: or Gulliver’s Museum*
*The Literary Panorama*
*Lloyd’s Evening Post and British Chronicle*
*London Courant and Westminster Chronicle*
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The Manchester and Liverpool Museum: or the beauties of all magazines selected
The Matrimonial Museum: or, Meritorious Monitor
The Medical Museum: or, A repository of cases, experiments, researches, and discoveries, collected at home and abroad
The Monthly Magazine
The Monthly Magazine, or British Register
Morning Chronicle
Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser
Morning Herald
Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser
Morning Post
Morning Post and Daily Advertiser
Morning Post and Gazetteer
The Museum: or, the Literary and Historical Register
Museum Rusticum et Commercial: or, Select papers on agriculture, commerce, arts, and manufactures
The New Monthly Magazine and Universal Register
The Oxford Magazine: or University Museum
Parker’s General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer
Public Advertiser
The Royal Magazine
Somerset House Gazette and Literary Museum
The Spectator
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A Catalogue of all the chiefest Rarities in the Publick Anatomie-Hall, of the University of Leyden, by John Eysendrach, Which are so set in order that every thing may be easily found in their places (Leyden: Gregorius Bouwman, 1753)

A Catalogue of the celebrated Cork Models of Mr. R. Du Bourg, forming The Exhibition at No. 68, Lower Grosvenor Street, and comprising correct representations of some of the most distinguished Remains of Antiquity, in and near Rome, Naples, and the South of France, All done to a Scale with every Decay of Time and Tint of Colour as in the Originals, taken by the above Artist during an actual Residence of Nine Years, Forming a Classical Collection, unique in this or any other Country: together with an interesting Model of the Old Somerset House: which (by virtue of a bill of sale) Will be Sold by Auction, by Messrs. Squibb & Son, on the premises, No. 68, on the South Side of Lower Grosvenor Street, on Saturday the 12th of June, 1819, at One o’clock (London: 1819)

A Catalogue of the Genuine and Valuable Collection of Drawings, Designs in Architecture: Comprising a select SET OF VIEWS, of the most admired Remains of Antiquity, in the Environs of Rome, Naples, &c. by the late Ingenious Mr. Playfair, Dec. Likewise some Drawings by Barrett, Wheatley, Socchi, &c. framed and glazed, Many Curious Models and Casts in Plaster, from the antique, At the Capitolium Pantheon and Museum at Rome, never before brought to England, In fine Preservation, together with a few valuable books of architecture, and Two Sets of Elegant Six-Panned Folding Doors, Of beautiful solid Mahogany, Eight Feet Five Inches High, by Four Feet Two Inches Wide, Which will be sold by auction (By Order of the Executors) By Mr Christie, At his Great Room in Pall Mall, On Saturday, January the 10th, 1795, at twelve o’clock (London: 1795)

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— *An Act for exempting certain specifick Legacies which shall be given to Bodies Corporate, or other Publick Bodies, from the Payment of Duty; and also the Legacy of Books and other Articles given by the Will of the late Reverand Clayton Mordaunt Cracherode to the Trustees of the British Museum: 38 George III, c. 73* (1799)

— *An Act for making perpetual several laws for punishment of persons destroying turnpikes, locks or other works erected by authority of Parliament; and that all*
Acts made for erecting Courts of Conscience shall be deemed public Acts; and to empower a certain number of the Trustees of the British Museum to do certain Acts; and for confirming the Table of Fees to be taken by the clerks to the Justices of the Peace for the county of Middlesex; and for giving further time for the payment of duties omitted to be paid for the indentures or contracts of clerks to attornies and solicitors; and for preventing persons driving certain carriages from riding upon such characters: 27 George II, c. 16 (1754)

— An Act for the Purchase of the Museum, or Collection of Sir Hans Sloane, and of the Harleian Collection of Manuscripts; and for providing one General Repository for the better reception and more convenient use of the said Collections; and of the Cottonian Library, and of the Additions thereto: 26 George II, c. 22 (1753)

— An Act for Vesting Montagu-House in Trustees and their Heirs, freed and discharged from all the Estates, Uses, and Agreements, to which at present it stands limited and appointed, upon Trust, to convey the same to the Trustees of the British Museum, for a General Repository; and upon Such other Trusts as therein are mentioned: 28 George II, Private Acts, c. 3 (1755)


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Bronzes, in Figures and Busts, of Henry IV, Moliere, Antonius, Jupiter, Farnese
Hercules, Piping Fawn, Bacchanalian, Rapes of Europa and Dejanira, and many
others, a Noble Bronze of the Crucifixion, by M. De L’Algardi, of Bologna, The
Figure is Six Feet in Height, and was considered by Canova, as a Chef-d’Oeuvre
of the Art, it was formerly placed in the Chapel of the Marquis Bologneti, at Rome, and was purchased by Cardinal Fetsch for Napoleon Buonaparte, and adorned his Chapel at Paris, Bronze Boys and Or-moulu Candelabras and Chandelier for Nine Lights. The Celebrated Hungarian Topaz Vase, From Fonthill, The undoubted Execution of Benevenuto Cellini, set with Diamonds and Precious Stones. Rare Specimens of Dresden, Seve, Saxon, & Oriental Porcelaine, Including a superb Dresden Dejeune, the Paintings from the Gallery at Dresden, by Pietro Libori, Gurezno, Albano, and Raphael – This is absolutely unique, Also, beautiful Groups, Figures, Chimneys Ornaments, Clocks, Vases, Jars, and Candlesticks, mounted in Or-moulu, Fine Enamels, Ivory Cabinets, two magnificent large ebony cabinets, very richly carved, Marqueterie Cabinets, Secretaire, Work Tables, Two Barometers, Parisian Commodes, with Marble Tops, a beautiful and very large Cork Model of the Amphitheatre, at Rome, several Suites of Steel Armour, a costly set of Fire Arms, mounted in chased Steel and Silver, with many other Items, worthy the attention of the connoisseur and collector, Which will be Sold by Auction, by Messrs. Robins, At their Great Rooms, Piazza, Covent Garden, On Friday, the 24th Day of February, 1826, And following Day, at Twelve o’clock (London: the author, 1826)

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