

DEPARTAMENT DE FILOLOGIA ANGLESA I ALEMANYA

CLASSICAL MYTHS ON THE VICTORIAN POPULAR  
STAGE: THE FIGURE OF CASSANDRA.

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CLASSICAL MYTHS ON THE VICTORIAN POPULAR  
STAGE: THE FIGURE OF CASSANDRA

**TESIS DOCTORAL**

*Presentada por:*

Laura Monrós Gaspar

*Dirigida por:*

Dra. Da. Carmen Morenilla Talens

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VALENCIA 2009



*To my parents and to Juan,  
for their loving support and understanding*



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## INTRODUCTION

### STRUCTURE AND OBJECTIVES

The idea for the present thesis originated with a Masters Degree dissertation on the reception of the figure of Echo in William Shakespeare, Samuel Beckett and Marlene Nourbese Philip. Parallelisms between the silenced voice of Echo and Cassandra directed my doctoral research towards the analysis of the reception of the tragic heroine in a period of British history crucial for the social development of women: the nineteenth century. Research on Victorian reworkings of Cassandra unveiled the reliance of popular entertainment on classical mythology and a theatrical genre which had been silenced by the critics well up to the middle years of the nineteenth century: classical burlesque.

Studies on Victorian burlesque have been published since the late years of the nineteenth century. Still, from Fitzgerald (1870) and Adams (1891), burlesque entered into a critical void in the first half of the twentieth century due to the passionate interest awakened by major playwrights such as George Bernard Shaw, for example. It was not until 1952 with Clinton-Baddeley's approach to burlesque that the interest of the critics in the genre was revived, with Victorian popular theatre becoming an emerging field of

research within English Studies during the 1990s. Numerous international conferences on nineteenth-century theatre have been recently organized in England and there is an increasing amount of published material on particular authors, theatres and the economics of nineteenth-century theatre.<sup>1</sup> None of the scholarly works consulted for this thesis, however, has focused on the semiotics of burlesque and its links with contemporary society.

At all times and in every genre, Greek and Roman mythology has been one of the most fruitful sources for the arts in the West. Recent studies from various disciplines have converged in the last decade in new trends in the study of the transmission, reception and impact of classical mythology in the literary tradition of the English-speaking world. As contended by Edith Hall, Schechner's 1968 production of *Dionysus in 69* inaugurated a profound reawakening of Greek tragedy which, still today, is an extremely fertile field in the literary production of modern authors.<sup>2</sup> Hand in hand with such a revival, the gradual collaboration between writers and academia has resulted in the foundation of numerous international research groups and archives for the compilation and study of such a broad corpus.<sup>3</sup> Some

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<sup>1</sup> For conferences, see for example, 'Victorian Performances' organized by the British Association for Victorian Studies in 2001 at the University of Lancaster; the 'Victorian Theatre and the Visual Arts' conference at the University of Lancaster in 2006 and the 'Victorian Dramas' conference held at the University of Worcester in 2007. For published material see Stedman (2000), Garlick (2003) and McCormick (2004).

<sup>2</sup> Hall (2004), 1.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. GRATUV, founded at the Universitat de València in 1987 by Dr. Carmen Morenilla; APGRD, founded at the University of Oxford by Prof. Oliver Taplin and Prof. Edith Hall in 1996; the Classical Reception in Drama and Poetry in English from c.1970 to the Present project directed by Prof. Lorna Hardwick at The Open University; the Classical Reception

thought-provoking recent works on modern receptions of Greek and Roman mythology in Britain are John Hollander's *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion from Milton and After* (1981), Yopi Prins' *Victorian Sappho* (1999), and the book edited by Fiona Macintosh, Pantelis Michelakis, Edith Hall and Oliver Taplin *Agamemnon in Performance: 458 BC to AD 2004* (2005).

From Lemprière to Sacks, the reference works and dictionaries on classical mythology and the ancient world consulted for this thesis coincide in spotlighting two episodes from the Cassandra myth: her prophetic visions and her rape by Ajax the Lesser at the temple of Athena.<sup>4</sup> Cassandra's powers of divination have traditionally overshadowed other topics associated with the myth, and scholarly works on the reception of Cassandra have focused, as a rule, on the predictions of the princess and on her prophetic voice. Rush Rehm's chapter 'Cassandra— The Prophet Unveiled' is an example of the critics' predisposition towards Cassandra's visionary discourse which, as Rhem argues, is the dramatic heart of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*.<sup>5</sup> Other seminal works on the reception of Cassandra which approach, to different degrees, the prophecies of the Trojan princess are *La légende de la prophétesse Cassandre d'après les texts et les monuments* by

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Studies Network; the *European Network of Research and Documentation of Performances of Ancient Greek Drama*, founded by Prof. Platon Mavromoustakos and Prof. Oliver Taplin in 1995.

<sup>4</sup> The dictionaries consulted were addressed both to the general and the niche audience. See Guerber ([1907] 2007), 324; Pérez Rioja (1988), 116; Bell (1993), 25; Sacks (1995), 53; Moormann and Uitterhove (1997), 76-8; Morford & Lenardon (1999), 171, 322-3, 355, 355, 357, 362, 383, 566; Grant & Hazle (2002), 118-119; Bonnefoy (1996-2002), ii 178.

<sup>5</sup> Rehm (2005), 344. Also see Prins (2005), 163-188.

Juliet Davreux (1942), *Der Aufstieg der Untergangsseherin Cassandra* by Thomas Epple (1993), *Die Gestalt der Cassandra in der antiken Literatur* by Dagmar Neblung (1997), and *Cassandra, la vergine e l'indovina: identità di un personaggio da Omero all'Ellenismo* by Sabina Mazzoldi (2001). Whilst Davreux, Neblung and Mazzoldi focus on the reception of the myth in antiquity, Epple's analysis is the only monograph which I have found so far in my research which concentrates on modern refigurations of the prophetess —Marie Goudot's edited book *Cassandre* (1999) combines chapters on Cassandra in Antiquity and in modern literatures. Still, Epple's scope only covers German receptions of Cassandra from the eighteenth century to the late years of the twentieth century. Therefore, apart from individual chapters and journal articles,<sup>6</sup> there exists a substantial gap in the analysis of the figure of Cassandra in English texts and contexts.

The scope of the present thesis is to unveil the cultural processes behind the reception of the Cassandra myth in Victorian burlesque theatre. The main focus is on the semiotic dialogue between art and reality which employs nineteenth-century popular theatre as an essential tool for reading the social history of Victorian England. My principal argument is that the analysis of the convergence of popular, iconic and literary refigurations of classical myths and their representation on the Victorian popular stage underscores the relevance of burlesque both as a reflecting and a refracting mirror of the contemporary mindset. The authors and texts under discussion evidence the marriage between spectacular effects and a strong reliance on contemporary affairs and topics to attract the audience. This will have an

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<sup>6</sup> See Peterson (1966), Fly (1975), Peyton (1975), Showalter (1991), Snyder (1996), Ross (1997) Webber (1999) and Sarsfield (2003).

influence on the adoption of aesthetic and social clichés to conform to or rebel against social codifications. The texts and cultural objects under analysis in this thesis are in many ways embodiments of the ambivalence surrounding constructs of women both as social subjects and artistic objects in Victorian Britain. As I shall propose, mixed attitudes towards women in burlesque reflected, as a witness and chronicler of its own time, the social turmoil which was involved in the remapping of the role of women in modern societies.

This thesis is structured into three chapters which cover at length the different aspects considered for my analysis. After an introductory section on methodology and critical antecedents, the chapter ‘Classical Mythology and the Evolution of Burlesque’ focuses, in the first place, on the terminological issues surrounding the comic theatre of the nineteenth century. Responses to the meaning and nature of Victorian burlesque are multifarious both in the nineteenth, twentieth and the present century. As I shall argue, only a holistic consideration of the genre allows for the recognition of the role of burlesque as a precedent of mass communication in the formation of modern cultures. The chapter proceeds with an analysis of the history of Victorian classical burlesque focused on particular works which evidence the topicality and ambivalence of the genre.

The second chapter, entitled ‘Women and Cassandra in the Nineteenth Century’, analyses Victorian refigurations of the Cassandra myth in a two-fold approach. First, I focus on nineteenth-century translations of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* and Homer’s *Iliad* to map out the linguistic choices which juxtapose Cassandra with contemporary popular stereotypes such as prophets, witches and fortune-tellers. Second, I consider the ideological

development underlying Victorian reworkings of the Cassandra myth both in highbrow and popular culture highlighting aspects such as the relationship between women and knowledge. A cross-class and cross-cultural analysis of Victorian revisitings of the Cassandra myth evidences the profoundly intertwined dialogue between the socio-cultural substrata of the receiving culture and the Greek prototypes. The classical models are appropriated in order to perpetuate prevailing attitudes towards women and education. Less canonical refigurations pave the ground for a responsive Cassandra who defies the ruling powers and foreshadows the collection of political female voices in the late years of the century.

The third chapter delineates the presence of Cassandra in Victorian burlesque from its eighteenth-century precedents in British street-theatre and on the French stage. Once the literary antecedents of the burlesque Cassandra are established, the chapter moves on to the analysis of the case study of Robert Reece's *Agamemnon and Cassandra; or, the Prophet and Loss of Troy* (1868). Reece's burlesque is contextualized within the dramatic production of the author and then examined under the lens of the ambivalence of burlesque. The evolution of the depiction of Cassandra on the comic stage from Settle to Reece manifests the mixed responses to the gradual integration of women into the cultural structures of modern societies. From a derided prophetess to an authorial and even political voice, the burlesque Cassandra mirrors the gender struggles which permeate an age rife with socio-cultural changes.

The conclusions of the present thesis elaborate upon the metaphors of Cassandra which explain and account for the ambivalent representations of women in Victorian burlesque. Burlesque refigurations of the Cassandra



myth epitomize the double standards which mould, measure and value the role of women in Victorian arts and culture. As I shall argue, dichotomies such as the petrification and emancipation of women are accommodated in metaphors which deal with the silencing and the revoicing of the Trojan princess in prevailing social structures. The recurring iteration of the motifs and images encompassed in the Cassandra metaphors of Victorian woman evidence the need to unveil the ongoing dialogue between present and past civilizations in order to apprehend the cultural processes which have shaped modern societies.

#### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

The economic and political implications of the rise of burlesque were a much contested issue by the 1830s, when debates on genre nomenclature in the Houses of Parliament concealed the fears the cultural elite felt of being overthrown by the middle and popular classes. Theories of genre have pervaded traditional approaches to Victorian burlesque and only recently has criticism, fostered by the tendency of contemporary Victorianists to understand the nineteenth century holistically, directed its attention towards the rediscovery of burlesque as one of the first socio-cultural mass phenomena of modern Britain. The present thesis follows Eltis (2004), Bratton (2004), Bratton and Featherstone (2006) in their sociological approaches to nineteenth-century popular theatre focusing on Macintosh and Hall's revitalization of burlesque through classical reception.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See Hall (1999a), Hall (2000), Macintosh (2000), Macintosh (2005).

The variety of academic fields approaching the reception of ancient theatre has stimulated an increasing prominence of classical reception research over the last decade. The immediate effect of such a multidisciplinary perspective has been to widen the intellectual, methodological and theoretical scope of studies on reception. Debates on the theoretical framework of the reception of Greek and Roman drama have been at the centre of contemporary approaches to classical receptions since the publication of Charles Martindale's seminal *Redeeming the Text* in 1993. Whereas yardsticks in critical theory such as Jauss' *Rezeptionsästhetik* are widely adopted, the range of methodologies which tackle classical receptions is as vast as it is controversial.

Martindale and Richard F. Thomas point to such controversy in their introductions to their co-edited book *Classics and the Uses of Reception* first published in 2006. The polemic surrounding the intellectual pluralism of research in reception is based, as argued by Martindale, on the 'weaknesses, or strengths, of particular methodologies'.<sup>8</sup> Evidence of the diverse approaches to classical receptions is provided by the articles in the second part of Martindale and Thomas' book, which exemplify the diversity of analysis of classical texts and ideas in the postclassical period.<sup>9</sup> More recently, issues related to the possibility of theorising classical receptions were raised at the round table chaired by Martindale at the *Theorising Performance Reception* conference organized by the Archive or Performances of Greek and Roman Drama at the University of Oxford in

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<sup>8</sup> Martindale (2006), 2.

<sup>9</sup> Also see Macintosh (2008) for a discussion on performance histories within the field of classical reception.

September 2007.<sup>10</sup> A compelling assumption which permeated the debate was recaptured one year later by Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray in *A Companion to Classical Receptions*: the theoretical framework of the reception of the classics is an ongoing debate which has resulted in the sophistication of its working methods. The relevance of the matter is openly discussed by Hardwick and Stray in their introduction to the volume which includes a section entitled ‘Contest and Debate in Classical Reception Research’.

In pursuit of a Victorian Cassandra, the present thesis starts from Jauss’ concept of *Erwartungshorizont* (‘horizon of expectation’) and considers various contexts in which the ‘meaning’ of Cassandra is constructed in the receiving audience of nineteenth-century England. First, I examine Cassandra in the classics in translation. Nineteenth-century translations of Homer and Aeschylus are scrutinized in order to yield an insight into the linguistic framework which constructed Cassandra not only as a literary figure but also as a social and aesthetic trope which echoed and moulded prevailing values. The three main translational procedures identified by Bassnett in Victorian England evidence the tendency, in the colonizing nineteenth century, to colour the source text in the spirit of the age.<sup>11</sup> Following Hardwick (2000*a*), I shall analyze the cultural implications of the linguistic choices which depict Cassandra in three key passages: *Ag.* 1194-1195, *Ag.* 1269-1274 and *Iliad* 24.699-708. Pivotal in my approach

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<sup>10</sup> The speakers included Helene Foley, Edith Hall, Fiona Macintosh, Pantelis Michelakis, Oliver Taplin and Scout Scullion. See conference programme <<http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/events/conftheory.htm>>, accessed 1 April 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Bassnett ([1980] 2007), 70-75.

is the use of amplification to ‘domesticate’ or ‘foreignize’ the source text.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the lexicon is examined not in terms of literary interference but as the echo of the particular Victorian mindset. No reference to the aspects of translation in drama is provided as none of the translations considered was first conceived to be staged.<sup>13</sup>

George Steiner’s ‘topological’ definition of culture links Cassandra in the classics in translation with Cassandra as a cultural and artistic product in Victorian England.<sup>14</sup> The fabric of culture is understood by Steiner as a whole entity formed by a ‘sequence of translations and transformations of constants’.<sup>15</sup> Within the Victorian fabric, receptions of Cassandra both perpetuate and transform semiotic systems which explain the role of women in society. Lotman’s theorization of the phenomenon of art as duplication of reality, and his semiotic triangle between painting, theatre and reality frame my approach to Victorian refigurations of Cassandra. In the semiotic activity stimulated within Lotman’s triangle, artistic and extra-artistic realities influence one another to produce new cultural sign systems:

A triangle is formed: real individual behaviour in a cultural system—theatre—visual arts; within it an intensive exchange of symbolism and means of expression takes place. Theatricality filters into everyday life and influences painting; everyday life influences both, waving the banner of

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<sup>12</sup> Venuti (1995), 18, 24.

<sup>13</sup> See Hardwick (2005) and Walton (2005) for issues on translating Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* for the stage.

<sup>14</sup> Steiner ([1975] 1992), 448.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 449.

‘naturalism’; and, finally, painting and sculpture actively influence theatre, determining the system of poses and movements, as well as the nonartistic reality, elevating it to the level of meaningfulness.

In this respect it is important that, while being transferred into another realm, a signifying structure maintains its links with the original context. Thus we have the ‘theatricality’ of gesture in painting and life, ‘pictorialism’ in theatre and life, ‘naturalism’ on stage and in painting. This dual connection with different semiotic systems produces the rhetorical situation containing a powerful source for new meanings.<sup>16</sup>

My thesis is that translations, paintings, ballets, operas, newspapers, almanacs, literature, and ultimately burlesque refigurations of Cassandra participate in the creation of a new cultural sign system which reflects and is reflected in the history and the representation of the roles of women in society. Considering Bobes’ concept of ‘transducción’,<sup>17</sup> my approach to Cassandra juxtaposes literary analysis with iconicity and kinesic semiotics. Following Eco’s interpretation of iconicity, texts are examined in relation with ritualized gestures in paintings and theatre which represent fixed cultural patterns. As Eco argues, iconism is based on *cultural convention*,

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<sup>16</sup> Lotman (1993), 54.

<sup>17</sup> Bobes (2006).

and similarity does not concern the relation between image and its object, but that between the image and a previously culturalized content.<sup>18</sup>

As I shall argue, the cultural conventions which revisit Cassandra both as a witch, a mendicant, a prattling fortune-teller and a responsive political voice are fixed in a 'palimpsest' of patterns of behaviour towards women and knowledge.

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<sup>18</sup> Eco (1979), 204.

## CHAPTER 1

### CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY AND THE EVOLUTION OF BURLESQUE

#### 1. 1. WHAT IS BURLESQUE?

Preplatonic poetics set the ground for literary theory as it is understood today, and Aristotle's definitions of catharsis and his description of the tragic hero were the point of departure for the revitalization of Genre Criticism as a reaction against New Criticism in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> By 1832, reasons more political than aesthetic underpinned the debates held in the Houses of Parliament on the question of *burletta*. The 1737 *Theatre Regulation Act* bestowed on Drury Lane and Covent Garden exclusive rights to perform 'serious drama'.<sup>2</sup> Burlettas were the only type of play allowed in minor theatres, which devised ingenious schemes to flout the law in their competition with the Theatres Royal. The term *burletta* was hard to define as it was used in all sorts of performances to satisfy the requirements for the licences.<sup>3</sup> In 1832, the Select Committee on Dramatic Literature reflected upon the scope of the laws of dramatic

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<sup>1</sup> See Campuzano (1978) for a comprehensive analysis of preplatonic theory.

<sup>2</sup> Stephens (1980), 6.

<sup>3</sup> Donohue (2004), 50.

copyright and licences for illegitimate theatres.<sup>4</sup> The debates sparked off a fierce controversy over the classification of burletta, which was parodied in some of the titles of the time such as Maurice Dowling's *Othello Travestie, an Operatic Burlesque Burletta* ([1834] 1877). The eagerness of the office of the Lord Chamberlain to define the genre was rooted in the political need to control the illegitimate theatres,<sup>5</sup> which were regarded as hotbeds of moral corruption for the lower classes. Planché's comments on the legal definition of the term are most illuminating:

The Adelphi and the Olympic had the Lord Chamberlain's licence for the performance of burlettas only, by which description, after much controversy in and out of Court, we were desired to understand dramas containing no less than five pieces of vocal music in each act, and which were also, with one or two exceptions, not to be found in the repertoire of the patent houses. But for this later restriction, not only any opera might have been played under the name of burletta, but 'Macbeth', or 'The School for Scandal', with the introduction of the prescribed number of vocal pieces.<sup>6</sup>

The burletta debates show how the definition of the Victorian comic genres was a decidedly contentious issue from the early years of the century. A number of moral, political, and intellectual reasons lay behind subsequent attempts to delimit the genres. In 1870 Percy Fitzgerald, who levelled fierce criticism against Victorian burlesque, claimed that the failure of the genre

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<sup>4</sup> See Stephens (1980), 8-10 for an account of the debate.

<sup>5</sup> Donohue (2004), 30.

<sup>6</sup> Planché (1879), II, 23; Also see Planché, op. cit, II, 66, qtd in Reynolds (1936), 26.



lay in the abuse of recurring elements, such as music, ballet and puns, which reduced their quality and associated burlesque with lesser entertainments.<sup>7</sup> In his arguments, Fitzgerald reproached the managers, writers, players and audience for their servility to mercantilism. For Fitzgerald, as for Clinton-Baddeley almost a hundred years later, the nineteenth century had forgotten what real burlesque was and only appealed to the senses, disregarding the ‘intellect and brain’:<sup>8</sup>

It may be doubted whether a single one of the managers who ‘command’ a burlesque, of the authors who write it, of the players who play it, —though no one would dream of asking anything from them,—or of the vapid groundlings who take stalls, and, with vacant mind, ‘guffaw’ over the poor antics they come to see, —could offer a definition of, much less describe, a burlesque. The swell of our day, according to his lights, will have before his eyes, —and before nothing more intellectual,— a mixture of low dresses, comic songs, and break-downs. ‘But why burlesque?’ he is asked. ‘Well, you know,’ he will answer, ‘a fellow dressed up as a woman, and Polly Melville doing Prince Arthur, —hang it! what more fun could you have? ...The greater public scarcely asks more.’<sup>9</sup>

Twenty years later, in 1891, William Davenport Adams presented, with a totally different aim, the first systematic in-depth analysis of theatrical

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<sup>7</sup> Fitzgerald (1870), 149-199.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 151.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 150.

burlesques in England. The corpus of his study reveals salient facts about theatrical life in Victorian England which are essential for modern considerations of the genre:

My business has been with the literary rather than the histrionic side of burlesque –with the witty and humorous, rather than the purely theatrical features of the subject with which I had to deal... I ought to say that, while I have endeavoured to mention all the most representative burlesques of which our stage history keeps record, I have intentionally left outside of my scheme all ‘extravaganzas,’ ‘bouffoneries musicales,’ and other such miscellaneous varieties of comic literature, —confining myself to definite and deliberate travesties of subjects previously existent.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the novelty of his analysis, Adams still takes too literary an approach, playing down the potential theatricality of the texts. His distinction between burlesques, extravaganzas and *buffooneries musicales* is rooted in the textual relation between the comic play and the object of parody. His dismissal of the staging implies neglecting the space where the Victorian comic genres were revealed to the audience. Nonetheless, Adams’ distinction between histrionic/theatrical and literary burlesque sheds light on the sociological dimension of the popular theatre of the nineteenth century which, as we will see, is at the forefront of recent approaches.

Two tendencies ran parallel during the second half of the twentieth century, coinciding with the zenith of Genre Criticism and the dawn of the

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<sup>10</sup> Adams (1891), iii-iv.

performance approach. Critics such as Terry Otten and Clinton-Baddeley extol eighteenth-century comic plays to the detriment of Victorian burlesques, burlettas and extravaganzas.<sup>11</sup> At the heart of their attacks lies a terminological issue whose main weakness is to be strictly focussed on the theories of Genre Criticism:

Extravaganza is not burlesque as Buckingham, Fielding, Sheridan and Canning understood the art. It is burlesque without an object, burlesque weakened into farce, a whimsical entertainment conducted in rhymed couplets or blank verse, garnished with puns, and normally concerned with classical heroes, gods and goddesses, kings and queens. The central idea might be a burlesque one: the interpolated songs might be parodies: but as a whole the extravaganza was pure travesty. It had no critical purpose. It was not aimed at any dramatic absurdity of the contemporary stage. The only burlesque element was the wide contrast between style and subject...The word [burlesque] had already lost cast, and was on its way towards that debased meaning which it now bears in the USA, where 'Burlesque' is a cheap variety show with a strip-tease artist as an essential and principal ingredient.<sup>12</sup>

In response to this approach, Meisel (1962) and Booth (1969-76) focus on the theatricality of texts and vindicate the importance of nineteenth-century comic theatre as a reflection of the society and mindset of the time.

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<sup>11</sup> See Booth (1974) for a full account of their theories and his refutation of them.

<sup>12</sup> Clinton-Baddeley (1952), 109-111.

Anticipating prevailing sociological and performance based approaches, Booth appeals to a more flexible theorization of the terms:

From the point of view of definition, it is not easy to distinguish between extravaganza and burlesque. However, problems of definition are so common in dealing with nineteenth-century drama that one should not worry about them; better to indicate characteristics, similarities, and differences rather than frame imprecise definitions of little value.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, even though Nicoll's differentiation of genres is less accommodating than Booth's, he acknowledges that the vagueness of terms such as *burletta* and *comediotta* results from the breakdown of the forms in the eighteenth century.<sup>14</sup> Booth's thesis is for considering nineteenth-century popular comic plays *en masse* and not as individual works.<sup>15</sup>

Modern critics, such as Richard W. Schoch, Sos Eltis and Jacky Bratton appeal to the analogies of the Victorian comic genres and provide a wider perspective of the entertainments of the age focusing on their complex interaction with society. In line with Booth and Meisel, for example, Schoch concentrates on theatrical practice where the terms are used interchangeably, and groups *Planché* and *Robert Reece's* burlesques in his catalogue of representative Victorian burlesques:

While such fine distinction between 'burlesque' and 'travesty' carry their own logic, they do not conform to

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<sup>13</sup> Booth (1969-76), v. 26.

<sup>14</sup> Nicoll (1952-59), iv. 133.

<sup>15</sup> Nicoll (1952-59), iv. 148.

nineteenth-century theatrical practice. As theatre historians know only too well, the terms ‘burlesque’, ‘travesty’, and even ‘extravaganza’ were used interchangeably by playwrights, managers, actors, critics, and spectators alike... the nineteenth-century stage did not insist upon precise differentiations among various theatrical forms and styles....Whether originally labelled burlesques, travesties, extravaganzas —or some combination thereof— the plays included in this edition all present themselves as comic misquotations of original ‘legitimate’ plays and performances.<sup>16</sup>

For the sake of convenience, I use burlesque here as a generic term to refer to the comic plays that, together with comedies, farces and pantomimes, were staged in England throughout the nineteenth century. The terms used by the playwrights are considered inasmuch as they illustrate the fluctuation of theatrical signs which characterized the Victorian comic theatre.

## 1.2. PRE NINETEENTH-CENTURY BURLESQUES. AN OVERVIEW

Satire in English literature dates from as early as Chaucer but the first theatrical burlesque appeared only in the seventeenth century.<sup>17</sup> *The Night of the Burning Pestle* ([1607] 1995) by Francis Beaumont inaugurated a tradition which was continued by Davenant and Buckingham after the Restoration of King Charles II.<sup>18</sup> The re-opening of theatres by the late

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<sup>16</sup> Schoch (2003), xiii.

<sup>17</sup> Kitchin (1931), 9.

<sup>18</sup> Kitchin (1931), 40-41.

seventeenth century gave rise to the emergence of a wide variety of genres which eventually became a potential source for burlesque.

The earliest noteworthy burlesque of the period is Sir William Davenant's *The Playhouse to be Let* (1663), where satire is not deployed politically but as mere entertainment.<sup>19</sup> Even though it is regarded as a *classical travesty*,<sup>20</sup> the last act of the play is based on *Pompey* (1663) by Katherine Philips, which is a version of Corneille's *Pompée*.<sup>21</sup> A distinctive feature of Restoration burlesque is that it either aims only to amuse the audience, or is a vehicle for profound political and aesthetic criticism. George Villiers, Second Duke of Buckingham, departed significantly from this tendency in *The Rehearsal* (1671),<sup>22</sup> where he bitterly criticized the rhymed heroic play, the tragicomedy and the dramatic operetta of the age.<sup>23</sup> In line with Buckingham, Thomas Duffet represented this kind of burlesque throughout the century. Duffet satirized Elkana Settle's *The Empress of Morocco*, in his version of the play in 1673; Shadwell's version of Dryden and Davenant's adaptation of *The Tempest* (1674) is also the object of his criticism in *The Mock-Tempest; or, the Enchanted Castle* (1674) and Shadwell's *Psyche* (1675) is derided in his *Psyche Debauch'd* (1675).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See Clinton-Baddeley (1952), 29: '[it is] the first stage burlesque to claim the name 'burlesque'... [with it Davenant] anticipated the shape of the English mock heroic couplet' at a time when travesty was usually written in heroic couplets.

<sup>20</sup> As acknowledged in Clinton-Baddeley (1952), 31 it is one of the first dramatizations of travesty.

<sup>21</sup> Lewis (1987), 2.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 1-10; Trussler (1995), ix.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis (1987), 13.

<sup>24</sup> Clinton-Baddeley (1952), 38-43 and Lewis (1987), 26.

Moreover, contrary to *The Rehearsal* and *The Critic*, Duffet's burlesque, as a precursor to late nineteenth-century burlesque, is based on high spirits and visual effects instead of on verbal wit.<sup>25</sup>

John Gay's *The What D'Ye Call It*, first performed in 1715, was a landmark in eighteenth-century comic theatre.<sup>26</sup> Gay deploys the metatheatrical structure of the play-within-a-play and attacks in parody important theatrical figures of the age such as Ambrose Philips, Nicholas Rowe, Thomas D'Urfey and Joseph Addison among others.<sup>27</sup> One year later, Richard Leveridge, singer, composer and a minor playwright,<sup>28</sup> made incursions into the burlesque of Italian opera with *The Comick Masque of Pyramus and Thisbe* ([1716] 1969), an afterpiece which satirizes Colley Cibber's *Venus and Adonis* (1715) and John Hughes' *Apollo and Daphne* (1715) in its prologue. Notwithstanding Leveridge's debt to Shakespeare, what is at stake here is the development of the audiences' taste for seeing classical myths on stage.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Clinton-Baddeley (1952). 42.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 43-47.

<sup>27</sup> David Nokes, 'Gay, John (1685–1732)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10473>> accessed 14 March 2008.

<sup>28</sup> Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson, 'Leveridge, Richard (1670–1758)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16536>, accessed 14 March 2008]

<sup>29</sup> See Burling (1993) for a full account of the theatrical shows put on stage throughout the eighteenth century. Burling's catalogue comprises the lists on *The London Stage, ESTC* — the online *Eighteenth Century Short-Title Catalogue*, and on Nicoll (1952-9), Hume (1976) and other major catalogues of the eighteenth century.

The growing interest in classical mythology which developed throughout is evidenced in the numerous reworkings of the fables of Apollo, Daphne, Perseus and Andromeda that were produced from 1716 till 1730.<sup>30</sup> The 1730s witnessed a rebirth of Greece and Rome in the arts, literature and leisure of wealthy, highbrow Britain. The Society of Dilettanti's sponsorship of classical archaeology encouraged a significant body of literature on Greek antiquities,<sup>31</sup> and numerous private collections of Greek sculpture and art were built up in England between 1732 and 1786 (e.g. Thomas Coke's and Sir Robert Walpole's). In addition, the development of travel literature, which idealized the landscape of Greece, and the rise of hellenized aestheticism exerted a powerful influence on the creation of grecian taste that was reflected on stage and reigned throughout. As far as burlesque is concerned, Lewis states that:

... since contemporary tragedies, operas and pantomimes often used classical subject matter, a classical travesty could easily be a satirical burlesque as well. An obvious example is Fielding's burlesque of pantomime, *Tumble-Down Dick*

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<sup>30</sup> John Hughes' *Apollo and Daphne* was first staged at Drury Lane as a *masque afterpiece* in 1716. In 1723, Theophilus Cibber wrote a version of *Apollo and Daphne* which was subtitled as a 'Dramatick Entertainment of Dancing' and was first put on in 1723 at Drury Lane. In 1725 the pantomime *Apollo and Daphne: or, Harlequin Metamorphoses* by John Thurmond, Richard Jones and Henry Carey was first seen at the same theatre. In 1726 another pantomime, *Apollo and Daphne; or, the Burgo-Master Trick'd*, by John Rich and Lewis Theobald and music by J.E. Galliard was staged at Lincoln's Inn Fields. In 1729, the anonymous pantomime *The Scene of Apollo and Daphne* was put on at Drury Lane. See Burling (1993).

<sup>31</sup> Stern (1969), 18.



(1736), in which the travesty of the Phaeton story is simultaneously a parodic satire of a popular pantomime, *The Fall of Phaeton*, incorporating a solemn dramatization of the myth. In other cases, such as John Gay's *Achilles* (1733), a comic version of the Greek warrior's stay on Scyros while disguised as a female, classical travesty is less fully integrated with satirical burlesque so that the criticism directed against a dramatic form, in this instance Italian opera, is intermittent rather than systematically sustained.<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, the reduction in the production of satire after the 1737 Licensing Act—which excluded political satire from the stage—might have turned the attention of the playwrights towards *mock classical burlesques*.<sup>33</sup>

Lewis Theobald, John Gay and Henry Fielding are the greatest exponents of eighteenth-century burlesque. Lewis Theobald, a man of letters whose approach to Shakespeare marked the history of Shakespearean scholarship, received education in classics from Revd. James Ellis, his tutor after his father's death, who 'instilled in him a lifelong love of the scholarship that made classical literature accessible to modern readers.'<sup>34</sup> His *Orestes*, which was first performed on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1731, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, is the only burlesque of a Greek tragedy that was put on stage in the eighteenth century. The importance of Theobald's text, according to Hall

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<sup>32</sup> Lewis (1987), 5.

<sup>33</sup> Rowell (1981), 67.

<sup>34</sup> Peter Seary, 'Theobald, Lewis (*hap.* 1688, *d.* 1744)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Oct 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27169>> accessed 27 Feb 2008.

and Macintosh, lies in the fact that it was ‘an elegant yet cheerful theatre which avoided coarseness and could offer an alternative to the Italian opera house on the one hand and to the uproarious satire on the other.’<sup>35</sup> Before *Orestes*, Theobald staged *Apollo and Daphne* ([1726] 1994), *The Rape of Proserpine* ([1726] 1727), *Perseus and Andromeda; or, The Spaniard Outwitted*—first performed in 1730 and revived in 1731 with the title *Perseus and Andromeda, or, The Cheats of Harlequin*—and *Pan and Syrinx* (1731) all in Lincoln’s Inn Fields, and all based on classical mythology.<sup>36</sup>

John Gay’s *Achilles*, the precedent of which was John Motley and Thomas Cooke’s ballad opera *Penelope* (1728) was put on for the first time in 1733.<sup>37</sup> Gay’s travesty narrates in prose how Achilles is disguised as Pyrrha in Scyros in order to avoid going to war.<sup>38</sup> The comic aspects of the play lie in the simplification of the characters and the passions they suffer. As a result, Gay satirizes the elevation of the classical figures in the tragedy and opera of the time.<sup>39</sup> In April of the same year John Durant Breval’s *The Rape of Helen* was put on at Covent Garden Theatre.<sup>40</sup> Breval’s burlesque is written in prose, as is Gay’s *Achilles*, but its satire is not of the same quality.

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<sup>35</sup> Hall and Macintosh (2005), 59.

<sup>36</sup> Besides the two versions written by Weaver in 1716 and 1728, the anonymous *The Shipwreck; or, Perseus and Andromeda* was put on at Drury Lane in 1717 and Lewis Theobald’s *Perseus and Andromeda, or, The Cheats of Harlequin* was first staged in 1731 at Lincoln’s Inn Fields.

<sup>37</sup> As argued in Lewis (1987), 75, *Penelope* is a burlesque of Alexander Pope’s translation of Homer’s *Odyssey*.

<sup>38</sup> See Noble (1988), 184-215, 210 for Gay’s sources and for his knowledge of the episode.

<sup>39</sup> Lewis (1987), 77.

<sup>40</sup> Burling (1993), 156.

Henry Fielding's burlesque *The Covent-Garden Tragedy* was performed in 1732 at Drury Lane as an afterpiece of *The Old Debauchees*.<sup>41</sup> The play satirizes Ambrose Philips' *The Distrest Mother* (1712), an adaptation of Racine's *Andromache* and one of the most popular tragedies of the time. Fielding also mocks the genre of pantomime and one of its representatives, John Rich. In 1730, *The Author's Farce* was first staged at the New Haymarket and was later revised and extended in *The Author's Farce; with a Puppet Show called The Pleasures of Town*, which was put on stage at Drury Lane in 1734.<sup>42</sup> The burlesque elements of the play are provided by a puppet show, which openly criticizes certain theatrical customs of the time and the figures of theatre managers. The puppets, played by human actors, allude to classical mythology through the myths of Orpheus, Charon, and the Styx.<sup>43</sup> The Orpheus myth was seen on stage again in Fielding's *Eurydice; or, The Devil Henpecked* at Drury Lane in 1737 as an afterpiece of *Cato*. Even though it did not enjoy much success, *Eurydice* is relevant here inasmuch as it follows the structure of a rehearsal, satirizes Italian opera and travesties classical themes.<sup>44</sup> Fielding wrote another classical burlesque, *Jupiter's Descent on Earth*, which, after the unsuccessful reception of *Eurydice*, was never put on. What remains from that play today is a long introduction entitled *An Interlude between Jupiter, Juno, Apollo and Mercury* published in *Miscellanies*.

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<sup>41</sup> Clinton-Baddeley (1952), 58.

<sup>42</sup> Clinton-Baddeley (1952), 51-52.

<sup>43</sup> The Orpheus myth is recurrent in other plays of the time such as *Orpheus and Eurydice* by John Weaver, a pantomime first performed at Drury Lane in 1718.

<sup>44</sup> Lewis (1987), 181.

The direct sources for the spectacle in Victorian burlesque are the eighteenth-century fairground entertainments, where the plots and characters of the puppet shows, for example, reveal how the popularity of classical mythology went beyond high art.<sup>45</sup> From the early years of the century, Martin Powell's adaptations of plays to the marionette theatre were based on legendary tales and ballads, and also came from other more sophisticated sources such as satire of topical issues and, more importantly, Italian opera:

there was a series of operatic burlesques in which classical stories like *Hero and Leander*, *The Destruction of Troy*, and *Venus and Adonis* were presented 'in imitation of the Italian Opera', with some spectacular scenery. In *The False Triumph*, for instance, the Greeks and Trojans were exactly dressed in the ancient manner, and 'at Paris' triumph the stage is to be beautified with trophies, the side scenes representing elephants with castles, in which are Syrians holding forth splendid banners, with Indians on horseback, bearing curious trophies'. And the Signior Punchanella appeared in the role of Jupiter, descending from the clouds in a chariot drawn by eagles, and sang an aria to Paris. The piece concluded with a prospect of Troy in flames. None of these plays had ever been acted in the human theatre, and only one of them was ever printed. The guying of the new

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<sup>45</sup> Hall (1999a), 341.

craze for Italian opera was to be Powell's best line, and brought him wonderful publicity.<sup>46</sup>

Powell's approach to puppetry appealed to popular tastes where classical mythology was common ground. Later in the century, whilst Charlotte Charke, Colley Cibber's daughter, programmed her first season in London according to the 'high dramas' that were put on at the time,<sup>47</sup> Charles Dibdin was reviving classical myths and themes such as Pandora and Ulysses.<sup>48</sup> The most important puppet show based on classical myths was Kane O'Hara's *Midas*, which opened at Covent Garden in 1766,<sup>49</sup> and became a reference

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<sup>46</sup> Speaight (1990), 94-95.

<sup>47</sup> In April the comedy, *Amphitryon*, by Dryden, was announced as in preparation, but it never seems to have been performed. Ibid. 113.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 117. As we will see in chapter 3, the recurrence of the motif of the Siege of Troy was illustrated by William Hogarth in *Southwark Fair* (1733). The exhibition *Pulling Faces: Caricature in Eighteenth-Century England* hosted by the National Portrait Gallery from June 24th till December 3rd 2006 evidences James Gillray's inspiration in classical mythology for his satires. *The Giant Factotum amusing himself* (1797), for example, depicts Pitt in the House of Commons as a modern Colossus, and his composition of Emma Hamilton as Queen Dido is evoked by Theodore Lane in his representation of the problems between King George IV and Queen Caroline in *Installation of a Knight Companion of the Bath and Dido in Despair* (1821).

<sup>49</sup> See Speaight (1990), 118-119: 'The play opens with the heathen deities seated amid the clouds in full council; Apollo has given offence, and Jupiter darts a thunderbolt at him and casts him from Olympus; the gods all ascend together to the rolling of thunder. Meanwhile the clouds part to reveal the earth, with a scene of 'a champaign country with a distant village'; shepherds sleeping in the field are roused by a violent thunderstorm, and run away frightened; 'Apollo is seen whirling in the air, as if cast from heaven; he falls to earth with a

for the definition of burletta in early nineteenth-century debates on the comic genres. The revival of *Midas* with Madame Vestris as Apollo also inspired Planché's first classical burlesque.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, according to Hall, the spirit of classical burlesque also entered the nineteenth century with the aid of Lord Byron's parodies of Euripides' *Medea*, *Maid of Athens* and *Don Juan*.<sup>51</sup>

From Duffet's late seventeenth-century *Psyche* to F.C. Burnand's late Victorian reworking of the myth, the concept and function of classical burlesque on the English stage bears out the truism of the correlation between the modern reworkings of Greek and Roman drama and the social history and politics of the target audience. The depiction of Queen Caroline as Dido by Theodore Lane in the etching *Installation of a Knight Companion of the Bath and Dido in Despair* (1821) and the representation of Queen Victoria as Hermione in *Punch*,<sup>52</sup> evidence how humour and classical mythology can well account for the archetypal construction of society whether through caricatures, puppet shows, tavern singing or burlesque.

As we shall see, nineteenth-century burlesque contains allusions to the industrial and social changes which underpinned Victorian imagination, and the relationship between topical references and classical mythology is the key to an aesthetic reinterpretation of prescribed roles. The analysis of

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rude shock, and lies for a while stunned; at length he begins to move, rises, advances, and looking upwards, speaks'. This play was given over seventy performances'.

<sup>50</sup> Adams (1891), 45.

<sup>51</sup> Hall (1999a), 341-342.

<sup>52</sup> *Punch*, 23 September 1865.

the works en masse, as claimed by Nicoll, allows us to unravel the interplay between the social codes, cultural commodities and Greek and Roman myths which are juxtaposed in the texts. Burnand's *Alcestis* and Blanchard's *Antigone*, then, far from being solitary cases, exemplify in conjunction with Reece's *Cassandra* the social correlation of collective imaginaries and articulate cultural and social realities.

### 1.3. NINETEENTH-CENTURY CLASSICAL BURLESQUE.

Nineteenth-century burlesque has been regarded for years as poor quality drama which added little interest to the history of English theatre. Notwithstanding the lack of verbal wit in many of the plays, Victorian burlesque is a valuable source for understanding the politics, culture, humour and aesthetic taste of the time, as well as the development of the art of stagecraft in England. Burlesque followed a predictable pattern:

rhymed couplets in a parody of the original text; the transposition of characters from high to low;... the contemporization of past events...; the ludicrous re-enactment of classic scenes;... a pronounced theatrical bias, with an emphasis on stage business, sight gags, and special effects...; relentless puns; ...and soliloquies and set pieces rewritten as lyrics to contemporary songs, whether popular, operatic, or even minstrel... . Above all, burlesques trafficked in topical allusions.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Schoch (2003), xx. See Hall (1999a) for a full account of the particulars of classical burlesques.

These features remained unchanged for more than fifty years of overwhelming success. In the heyday of burlesque, numerous plays were staged a year, which indicates the remarkable support given to the genre by the audience. The plots were recurrent: they parodied Shakespeare, melodrama, novels, historical figures and classical myths and legends. The innovations which attracted the audiences hinged not so much on *what* was staged as *how* it was arranged so, on some occasions, even the same stories were revived with minor changes in the plot and equal success.<sup>54</sup>

The 1737 *Theatre Regulation Act* which licensed Covent Garden and Drury Lane to perform *serious* drama was in force till 1843. The privileges of the patent theatres had been shared by the Haymarket from 1766, when it was licensed to perform plays with dialogue during the summer season. As explained above, the minor theatres were confined to burlettas by law, but these regulations were very often flouted and even Shakespeare could be disguised as burletta in order to get round the ban. The battle between patent and minor theatres carried implications for the evolution of the comic genres of the nineteenth century. As mentioned above, the camouflage of all sorts of performances as burlettas prompted a confusion of comic genres which allows us to consider them as equivalent theatrical events today. Furthermore, it implied deep political conflict about the control of the theatrical trade which shows the importance of access to culture and education in the social segregation of nineteenth-century England.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Such is the case of the children's tale *The Babes in the Wood*, which is still an acclaimed Christmas pantomime today.

<sup>55</sup> Moody (2000), 5.



Planché was the creator of mid-nineteenth-century classical burlesque with *Olympic Revels; or Prometheus and Pandora*, which was first performed at the Olympic Theatre under the management of Madame Vestris in 1830,<sup>56</sup> and the first burlesque of a Greek tragedy was Edward Lemman Blanchard's *Antigone Travestie*, which opened at the New Strand Theatre in 1845.<sup>57</sup> Blanchard's play drew on Mendelssohn's famous *Antigone*, which was performed at Covent Theatre only a month before its burlesque with Charlotte Vandehoff in the title role.<sup>58</sup> As Hall and Macintosh explain, other attempts had been made before Blanchard's *Antigone* to burlesque classical tragedy, but it was only he who 'discovered in the form and conventions of performed Greek tragedy itself an inspirational source for the popular stage.'<sup>59</sup> The staples of classical burlesque were Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, but Virgil's *Aeneid*, Apollonius' *Argonautica* and the Greek tragedies—Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Sophocles' *Antigone* and *Electra* and Euripides' *Alcestis* and *Medea*—were also burlesqued.<sup>60</sup> Even though burlesque shared much aristophanic laughter, it seems that only Planché's *The Birds of*

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<sup>56</sup> Nicoll (1952-59), iv. 379.

<sup>57</sup> See British Library Add. MS 42982, F 166-73. See Hall and Macintosh (2005), 238ff for an analysis of the play.

<sup>58</sup> See Hall and Macintosh (2005), 318-336 for an analysis of the impact of Mendelssohn's *Antigone*.

<sup>59</sup> Hall and Macintosh (2005), 339. Hall and Macintosh refer to Frederick Fox Cooper's *Ion Travestie*, which burlesqued Talfourd's *Ion* and opened at the Garrick Theatre in London in 1836. Unlike Blanchard's, Cooper's burlesque lacked many of the conventions of Greek tragedy.

<sup>60</sup> Hall (1999a), 341-350.

*Aristophanes* (1846) was founded on one of his comedies.<sup>61</sup> Burlesque audiences covered the entire social spectrum, but only on very few rare occasions was it necessary to relate the classical plot. The spectators' acquaintance with the mythological figures evidences the increasing access of the middle and lower classes to antiquity, which was gained either with education, or with new cultural commodities, or with the numerous entertainments with Greco-Roman themes available at the time.<sup>62</sup> A frequent referent was Lemprière's Dictionary, which was the standard work of this kind in mid-nineteenth-century England.<sup>63</sup> F. C. Burnand's *Paris or Vive Lemprière. A New Classical Extravaganza* licensed to be performed at the Royal Strand Theatre in 1866, for example, and Henry James Byron's *Weak Woman*, a comedy first performed in 1875 at the Strand, use Lemprière as an authoritative text:

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<sup>61</sup> See Walton (2006) 3-14 for an analysis of Planché's *The Birds of Aristophanes* (1846). See Hall and Wrigley (2007) for a performance history of *Aristophanes*. In the keynote talk 'The English-speaking Aristophanes from Frere to Gilbert Murray' given by Edith Hall in the *Literature in English and Classical Translation 1850-1950* conference, Hall argued that Aristophanic laughter filled the Victorian popular stage much earlier than Planché's reworking of *The Birds* in 1846.

<sup>62</sup> See *Penny Magazine*, 25 May 1839, 194-195 for an account of Aeschylus' tragedies; See Kendrew (1826), 13, 19 for the Penny fables 'The Waggoner and Hercules' and 'Mercury and the Tortoise'.

<sup>63</sup> See Clarke (1945), 172. The 35<sup>th</sup> English edition of Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary* appeared in 1824. The dictionary was compiled while Lemprière was still an undergraduate at Oxford (1788) and Lord Byron accused Keats of 'versifying Tooke's *Pantheon* and Lempriere's *Dictionary*'. Ibid. 172 n 4.

Chorus: In the play  
And Horray  
We'll be gay  
Ev'ry day  
Yes and every night  
Lempriere  
Doesn't care  
You're aware  
So we dare  
Just to quote  
The legend that he wrote  
And feel we are doing right.<sup>64</sup>

Captain Ginger: Icarus, sir, not Hickory; he was more of the shooting star than the walking-stick. He flew too high, got too near the sun, and came down *whack*, or rather *wax*---of which melting material you may be aware his wings were constructed.

Hem! Vide Lempriere.

Tootal: Vide *who*?

Captain Ginger: Lempriere! a classical dictionary,

Tootal.

Tootal: Bosh! Johnson's good enough for *me*.

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<sup>64</sup> See *Paris or Vive Lempriere*. British Library Add. MS 53049N, 42.

Captain Ginger: In whose voluminous columns you will *not* find the emphatic, uneuphonious and altogether arbitrary expletive--- bosh, Tootal.<sup>65</sup>

The ambivalence of the politics of burlesque favoured the recurrence of certain myths on stage; the debates on divorce, for example, prompted the emergence of a large number of Alcestis and Medeas burlesqued. Moreover, classical myths frequently served theatrical purposes, so figures which could be easily depicted through songs and music —such as Orpheus and Eurydice— were as regular on stage as those which served as showcases for new stage effects (e.g. Mercury, Calypso, Cupid...). Another aspect which had a considerable influence on the selection of the classical themes was their topicality. Venus had been a major figure in the arts and literature of Romanticism, and the nineteenth-century casts of the Venus de Milo, together with the various sculptures which were inspired by it and the Shakespearean legacy, turned them into one of the most recurring characters of burlesque.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Byron, Henry James ‘Weak Woman: A New Original Comedy, in three acts, by H.J. Byron’ [online text] *English Drama*, Chadwyck Healey, 1996 <[http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88)> accessed 14 January 2006.

<sup>66</sup> See Denvir (1984), 146 and Martindale (2006), 227-249. See Adams (1891), 48: ‘Venus and Adonis have always been great favourites with the producers of travestie. Among those who have made them the central figures of burlesque are Mr. Burnand, whose work was brought out in 1864, and Mr. Edward Rose, whose *Venus*, written in collaboration with Mr. Augustus Harris, and first performed at the Royalty in 1879 (with Miss Nelly Bromley as the heroine), was re-written for revival, and finally taken as the foundation of a third production in 1880.’ Other burlesques inspired by Venus are, for example, *The Paphian*

In general, nineteenth-century classical burlesque lacks a deep political discourse. Nonetheless, as I will argue in the conclusions on this section, the ambivalence of the politics of burlesque with regard to women gives voice to transgressive moulds which remained concealed in other cultural representations. Whilst recent approaches to the genre reflect upon it as a major vehicle for the ideas proffered by the so-called New Women,<sup>67</sup> previous studies emphasize the shallowness of the plays as opposed to the in-depth parodies of late eighteenth-century creations. This section maps out major features of the life of Victorian burlesque as the backdrop against which prominent figures of Greek tragedy deliver a deeply rebellious view of the roles of women in society. As I will demonstrate later in this thesis, the words of Medea, Electra, Alcestis and Cassandra render burlesque apt testimony to the social progress of women throughout the 1860s.

### *1.3.1. The Masters of Nineteenth-Century Classical Burlesque*

Few attempts have been made to categorize nineteenth-century burlesque; Booth (1974), Schoch (2003) and Hall (1999a) hint at periods of splendour and decay in their analyses, but only W. D. Adams' early study provides a comprehensive account of the chronological phases of the genre. Planché's *Olympic Revels; or, Prometheus and Pandora*, which was performed in 1831 at the Olympic under the management of Madame Vestris, laid the

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*Bower or Venus and Adonis* by J. R. Planché and C. Dance (1832) and *Venus versus Mars* by J.T Douglas (1870).

<sup>67</sup> See Macintosh (2000), 75-99.

foundations of the humour, costume and language of Victorian burlesque.<sup>68</sup> After Planché's wide success, burlesque had two distinct stages:<sup>69</sup> from 1831 to 1865, which was mostly characterized by his plays and by Blanchard's *Antigone* (1845), and from 1865 to 1885 when Edward Terry and Kate Vaughan retired from the Gaiety (only one year before John Hollingshead, who had opened the theatre in 1868,<sup>70</sup> dissolved their partnership with George Edwardes and gave him its sole control)<sup>71</sup>.

The two periods cover fifty years of the history of Britain which forged its modern identity. During the 1830s, the Great Reform Bill (1832)

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<sup>68</sup> See Adams (1891), 45: '[it] was remarkable, not only for the smooth flow of its versification and the general refinement of its tone, but also for the accuracy and consistency of the costumes, which were throughout 'classical', and therefore in strong contrast to the haphazard, incongruous attire in which 'classical' characters had hitherto been exhibited on the comic boards'. See Reinhardt (1968) for an account of Planché's costumes.

<sup>69</sup> Adams (1891), 33.

<sup>70</sup> John Hollingshead is an essential managerial figure of the late years of burlesque in England: 'On 21 December 1868 Hollingshead, as manager, opened the Gaiety Theatre in the Strand, which had been newly built by Charles John Phipps for Lionel Lawson. A theatre and restaurant were now combined for the first time in London in one building. At the Gaiety, Hollingshead made many innovations, including the system of 'no fees', and inaugurated continual Wednesday and Saturday matinées. In August 1878, outside the theatre, he first introduced the electric light into London, and later was the first to make use of it on the stage. He mainly devoted himself to burlesque, which he first produced in three acts. ....' A. F. Sieveking, 'Hollingshead, John (1827–1904)', rev. H. C. G. Matthew, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33946>>, accessed 23 November 2007.

<sup>71</sup> Hollingshead (1898), 434-435.

enlarged the franchise and restructured representation in Parliament, and huge advances in social issues were made with the Factory Act (1833), the abolition of slavery in the Empire (1834) and the fights of the Anti-Corn Law League and the Chartists. The 1840s saw the establishment of the Royal Commission on Health of Towns and the passing of the Public Health Act in 1848, which improved the sanitary conditions of the country. The first step for the liberalism of the following decades was the repeal of the Corn Law in 1846, while the beginning of the potato famine in Ireland, together with the outbreak of railway mania, prompted an exodus which, by the 1870s, would result in an extensive urbanization of the British population. In 1851, the Great Exhibition inaugurated a period of liberalism which invaded mid-Victorian politics; free-trade, the development of a popular press and the industrialization of society are but a few examples of the results of this politics, which span the latter years of the century. The fifties also witnessed a major boost for the rights of women. Individual champions like Caroline Norton, who had pressed for drastic reforms with the Infants Custody Act (1839),<sup>72</sup> began to receive the support of scores of followers.<sup>73</sup> The movement for women's rights epitomizes the state of turmoil which characterizes the last decades of the century.

The social and political changes described above were echoed in the arts and literature of the time. Charles Dickens' *Pickwick Papers* ([1837]

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<sup>72</sup> K. D. Reynolds, 'Norton, Caroline Elizabeth Sarah [*other married name* Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Stirling Maxwell, Lady Stirling Maxwell] (1808–1877)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20339>>, accessed 7 Nov 2007.

<sup>73</sup> Strachey ([1928] 1989), 64.

2004), for example, reflected the high levels of electoral corruption after the enlargement of the franchise and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* ([1847] 1970) developed a critique against mid-nineteenth century bourgeois patriarchal authority. Classical burlesque, in comparison with other expressions of Victorian humour, is rife with political ambivalence. Except for a few isolated cases, the topical references of the texts lack the denunciation of Dickens, Brontë, and even John Leech's caricatures. Nevertheless, as we will see, allusions to contemporary issues such as the Woman Question and the Health and Educational System, for example, showcase the mindset—and therefore the preoccupations and criticism—of the full gamut of society. Moreover, the aesthetic codes of burlesque entail an implicit criticism which is reflected in a subversion of Victorian morale.

The mainstays of the first decades of the glorious burlesque were Gilbert à Beckett, Francis Talfourd and the Brough brothers,<sup>74</sup> all men of education who exerted a powerful influence on the plays by Charles Selby, William Henry Oxberry, Albert Smith, Kenny and Shirley Brooks, Leicester Buckingham and Andrew Halliday. Minor authors of the period were Leman Rede, Stirling Coyne and Tom Taylor. À Beckett, Talfourd and the Brough brothers, 'set themselves really to travestite and to parody, and were careful to present, amid their wildest comicalities, a definite, intelligible story. They dropped naturally into the decasyllabic couplet, and made free use of the

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<sup>74</sup> Pearshall (1973), 64 points to Shirley Brooks, William and Robert Brough, George Augustus Sala, F.C. Burnand, E.L. Blanchard, Gilbert à Beckett and Henry James Byron. I adopt here Adams' distinction as I believe it accounts for classical burlesque more accurately.



pun; but in neither case did they become mechanical or strained.<sup>75</sup> The most representative authors between 1865 and 1885 were Francis C. Burnand, Henry James Byron, William Schwenck Gilbert and Robert Reece who all (to a lesser extent in the case of Gilbert) ‘favoured, in the main, the decasyllabic couplet and the pun, bringing both of them to all the comic perfection of which they were capable.’<sup>76</sup> Other minor burlesque playwrights of the late Victorian period were Mr. H. B. Farnie, Mr. Alfred Thomson, Mr. Conway Edwardes, Mr. G. A. Sala, and Herman Merivale. As we will see, both the educational background of these authors and their involvement in the satirical press of the time have a considerable bearing on their use of the classics.<sup>77</sup>

Even though James Robinson Planché (1796–1880) lacked the high education of Talfourd, Gilbert and Burnand, he built a successful career in theatre introducing innovations in various fields such as costume, scenery and humour. Planché was educated by his mother at home, attended the Revd Mr. Farren’s boarding-school in London from 1804 to 1808 and then studied geometry with M. De Court, a landscape painter.<sup>78</sup> He started his theatrical career in amateur circles, though his texts were soon staged in major theatres such as Drury Lane and the Lyceum. As a playwright, he covered the entire spectrum of dramatic genres, with more than one hundred

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<sup>75</sup> Adams (1891), 34.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 35.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 36.

<sup>78</sup> Donald Roy, ‘Planché, James Robinson (1796–1880)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22351>>, accessed 23 Nov 2007.

and fifty works from comedy to high opera, but his most successful contributions were in the field of burlesque, where he became the forerunner of Gilbert and Sullivan's Savoy operas.

Planché's forays into classical mythology started with *A Burletta of Errors; or, Jupiter and Alcmena*, which opened at the Adelphi in 1820,<sup>79</sup> but it was not until 1831 with *Olympic Revels; or Prometheus and Pandora* that he founded the formula of classical burlesque. The play was staged for the opening of the Olympic under the management of Madame Vestris and it enjoyed such an unprecedented success that less than a year later *Olympic Devils; or Orpheus and Eurydice* was put on at the same theatre. Planché's treatment of the Gods in the two plays —'depicting their low-life behaviour'— is one of the great achievements which have been praised by critics.<sup>80</sup> A further aspect which demonstrates the quality of the playwright among his contemporaries is the use of puns based on witty associations and not on mere echoes.<sup>81</sup> Planché also wrote *The Paphian Bower; or, Venus and Adonis* (1832), *The Deep, Deep Sea; or, Perseus and Andromeda* (1833), *Telemachus; or the Island of Calypso* (1834), *The Golden Fleece; or Jason in Colchis and Medea in Corinth* (1845), *Ariadne; or, the Marriage of Bacchus* (1848) and *Orpheus in the Haymarket* (1865).<sup>82</sup> All of them, particularly Venus, Orpheus and Medea, became recurrent myths on the Victorian comic stage until the latter years of the century.

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<sup>79</sup> See Nicoll (1952-59), v. 376. The play was not printed.

<sup>80</sup> Booth (1969-76), v. 12-13.

<sup>81</sup> Adams (1891), 47.

<sup>82</sup> Nicoll (1952-59), iv. 376-383.

Two of his most acclaimed classical burlesques, *The Golden Fleece* (1845) and *Theseus and Ariadne* (1848), develop the theme of the abandoned wife and are strongly related to the historical context in which they were first performed: Macintosh, for example, demonstrates the connections between Planché's redemption of Medea and the marriage/divorce debates in mid-nineteenth century England. Divorce was a highly topical subject in the early 1840s after Caroline Norton's trials, and married women's inequality was at the centre of articles to the *Morning Chronicle* (1846-1850) written by John Stuart Mill and his wife, Harriet Taylor.<sup>83</sup> Planché's burlesques were groundbreaking and foreshadowed the spirit of the social criticism which lay behind the contemporary allusions of the genre in subsequent decades. The depiction of the heroines in *The Golden Fleece* and in *Theseus and Ariadne*, for example, rouse the audiences' sympathies towards wronged women. The 1857 Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act's legalization of divorce in England was much discussed on the comic stage of the fifties and sixties.<sup>84</sup> *Apollo and the Flying Pegasus or the Defeat of the Amazons* (1858) alludes to the new plea allowed by the law which permitted women to allege domestic brutality in Court.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Ann P. Robson, 'Mill, Harriet (1807–1858)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38051>>, accessed 7 Nov 2007.

<sup>84</sup> See Macintosh (2000) for an account of the relation between the Medea myth and the Divorce Acts of the nineteenth century.

<sup>85</sup> A mythological burlesque in one act. To be performed at the Astleys Royal Amphitheatre on Monday April 1858. British Library Add. MS 52973.

Venus: I love you dear Apollo, well you know it

Vulcan: Oh I never confound it, dash it, blow it

I'm your husband.

Venus: At present yes, of course

But very soon I shall have a divorce

Apollo: Under the new act, you've got a fine plea

I'm ready to swear to his cruelty.<sup>86</sup>

The domestic conflict in Henry James Byron's *Orpheus and Eurydice* (1863), conversely, extends the social denunciation to both sexes:<sup>87</sup>

Pros: That's rude the conduct of a wedded lady

Who flirts with married men is-

Orpheus: (Placing an arm around her) Rather shady

Pros: Shady, its shameful. Wonder how she can

Orpheus: It's more disgraceful in a married man

Madam, I thought I should be wretched here

But since Eurydice it's very clear

o forgotten me, believe me when I say

I've never loved.

Pros: Good gracious!

Orpheus: Till to day.<sup>88</sup>

Edward Litt Leman Blanchard (1820–1889) owed his theatrical bent to his father, who had a career as a comic actor at the Kembles' Covent Garden

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<sup>86</sup> British Library Add. MS 52973, 11.

<sup>87</sup> British Library Add. MS 53028 J.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* 27.

company.<sup>89</sup> In London, he edited various periodicals such as Chambers's London Journal (1841) and the New London Magazine, and pursued a career as a writer of illustrated books and novels. Blanchard's most important work, however, was for the stage. He was manager of The Royal Manor House Theatre (1838-1841)<sup>90</sup> and a regular contributor to *Fun*, the *Era Almanack* and *Annual*, *The Observer* and the *Daily Telegraph*.<sup>91</sup> Blanchard's descriptions of his work as a manager at The Royal Manor House Theatre provide an insight into the theatrical background where extraordinary enthusiasm for classical burlesque flourished. Moreover, they represent a valuable proof of the importance of burlesque in the whole spectrum of society a few years before the end of the Royal Theatre's monopoly in 1843.

In 1845 his *Antigone Travesty* was first performed at the New Strand Theatre with Harry Hall as Creon and George Wild as Antigone.<sup>92</sup> Blanchard's burlesque draws on Mendelssohn's *Antigone*, which was performed the same year at Covent Garden with Charlotte Vandenhoff in the title role and John Vandenhoff as Creon. Whilst Planché had found the perfect ingredients for classical burlesque with his extravaganzas almost fifteen years earlier, Blanchard's *Antigone* was groundbreaking in his

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<sup>89</sup> Jane W. Stedman, 'Blanchard, Edward Litt Leman (1820–1889)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004

<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2602>>, accessed 10 Aug 2007.

<sup>90</sup> Blanchard (1891), 20-27 and Nicoll (1952-59), iv. 23.

<sup>91</sup> Jane W. Stedman, 'Blanchard, Edward Litt Leman (1820–1889)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004

<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2602>>, accessed 10 Aug 2007

<sup>92</sup> Blanchard (1891), 202 and Coleman (1904), ii. 358.

approach to Greek tragedy. The humour of the play derives both from the topical allusions and the parody of the conventions of Greek tragedy.<sup>93</sup> Blanchard's depiction of Antigone and Ismene, as we will see, invokes contemporary issues on gender which contribute to present debates on the ambivalence of Victorian burlesque.

Gilbert à Beckett (1811–1856) made forays into satirical literature which went beyond the scope of burlesque and included parodies of topical plays (by James Sheridan Knowles, Douglas Jerrold, Thomas Noon Talfourd and Edward Bulwer-Lytton) and various volumes on burlesque prose.<sup>94</sup> Two classical burlesques were written by à Beckett, *The Son of the Sun, or the Fate of Phaeton* (1834) and *The Three Graces* (1843),<sup>95</sup> which were first staged at the Fitzroy Theatre and the Princess's respectively. The Three Graces were recurring characters in classical burlesque as they were usually presented on stage as classical statues in Greek attire simulating classical sculptures.<sup>96</sup> Less common was the story of Phaeton, which was

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<sup>93</sup> Hall and Macintosh (2005), 338-341.

<sup>94</sup> *The Comic Blackstone* (1844), illustrated by George Cruikshank, *The Comic History of England* (1847), and *The Comic History of Rome* (1851), both illustrated by John Leech. He also contributed to *The Comic Almanack* (1835–53). Paul Schlicke, 'À Beckett, Gilbert Abbott (1811–1856)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26>>, accessed 5 March 2008.

<sup>95</sup> Nicoll (1952-59), iv. 249-50.

<sup>96</sup> *Cupid* (1832) by N.T.H. Bayly by the English Opera Company at the Olympic Theatre. British Library Add. MS 42918, 3, 160-77b, which was subtitled by the author as 'Not a legitimate drama nor a Burlesque Burletta, but a Burletta Burlesqued. In one act' mocked the prevailing depiction of the Three Graces on stage with the characters of the Three Miss

staged, for example, in *Jupiter's Decree and the Fall of Phaeton or the Fiery Courses of the Sun* (1853) by W. E. Suter at Astley's Royal Amphitheatre and *The Loves of Cupid and Psyche* (1857) at the Royal Adelphi Theatre.<sup>97</sup> À Beckett's classical burlesques only made passing references to the theatrical life of Victorian England,<sup>98</sup> and his puns ran more smoothly than Talfourd's and the Broughs'.

À Beckett was more prolific, however, in non-classical burlesques, which he wrote for the St. James's Theatre, for the Haymarket and the Adelphi.<sup>99</sup> He was also responsible for the success of the burlesques about Aladdin and Ali Baba throughout the country. In 1844, *The Wonderful Lamp in a New Light* opened at the Princess' Theatre and *Open Sesame; or, A Night with the Forty Thieves*, written in collaboration with Mark Lemon, at the Lyceum<sup>100</sup>. Subsequent reworkings of the two stories are, for example

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Graces, described in the *Dramatis Personae* as 'old Maids'. See also *The Paphian Bower or Venus and Adonis* (1832) by J. R. Planché and C. Dance. *King Jupiter or the Freaks of the Graces* (1856) at the Effingham Salon, Whitechapel. British Library Add. MS. 52963 Q; *The Loves of Cupid and Psyche* (1857) at the Royal Adelphi Theatre. British Library Add. MS 52970 M.

<sup>97</sup>British Library Add. MS 52941 T and British Library Add. MS 52970 M.

<sup>98</sup> Adams (1891), 65-67.

<sup>99</sup> As noted in Nicoll (1952-59), v. 249-250, he wrote *King John* for the St. James's in 1837, *The Knight and the Sprite* (1844) for the Strand, *O Gemini; or, Brothers of Co(u)rse* (1848) and *The Castle of Otranto* (with Mark Lemon, 1848) for the Haymarket, and *St. George and the Dragon* (1845) and *Sardanapalus, the 'Fast' King of Assyria* (1853) for the Adelphi.

<sup>100</sup> See *ILN* 4, no.102 (13 April 1844), 237. Also see Nicoll (1952-59), iv. 250. The story of Ali Baba was so successful that the *ILN* promises an engraving of the premiere in the following number. Subsequent reworkings of the two stories are, for example H. J. Byron's

H. J. Byron's *Aladdin, or the Wonderful Scamp* for the Strand in 1861, E. L. Blanchard's *Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp* (1865), and Robert Reece's *The Forty Thieves* (1880) for the Gaiety, which was the first three-act burlesque staged in England at the suggestion of Mr. Hollingshead.

Francis Talfourd (1828–1862), son of Thomas Noon Talfourd, was educated first at Eton College (1841-1845) and then at Oxford where, after running up crippling debts, he failed to graduate.<sup>101</sup> Member of Christ Church, he founded, together with W. C. Bedford, an undergraduate from Brasenose College, *The Oxford Dramatic Amateurs*.<sup>102</sup> At Oxford, he put on *Macbeth Travestie* at the Henley Regatta of 1847, where he played the role of Lady Macbeth.<sup>103</sup> The travesty was staged again in 1848 at the Strand Theatre, revived in 1849 with a varied programme for an evening of the University Boat-race at the Royalty Theatre in London, and at the Olympic

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*Aladdin, or the Wonderful Scamp* for the Strand in 1861, E. L. Blanchard's *Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp* (1865), and Robert Reece's *The Forty Thieves* (1880) for the Gaiety, which was the first three-act burlesque under suggestion of Mr. Hollingshead. See *ILN* 46, no. 1350. (30 December 1865), 655 for a review and illustrations of the H.J Byron's pantomime. See Hollingshead (1898), 216: '[In Blanchard's play] Mr. Toole was, of course, the 'Ali Baba', Miss Farren 'Ganem', Miss Loseby 'Morgiana', and Miss Tremaine 'Hassarac'. 'Cassim' and 'Cogia' were represented by Mr. J. G. Taylor and Mrs. H. Leigh'. See *Ibid.* 399 for an account of Robert Reece's *The Forty Thieves*.

<sup>101</sup> Megan A. Stephan, 'Talfourd, Francis (1828-1862)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004. <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26950>>, accessed 27 Feb 2008.

<sup>102</sup> Mackinnon (1910), 21-27; Hall (1999a), 351.

<sup>103</sup> Samuel Brandam, from Trinity College acted *Macbeth*, and W.C. Bedford *Rose*. Brandham, Bedford and Talfourd were the only members of the company with theatrical experience. However, the performance was a great success. Mackinnon (1910), 21-22.



in 1853.<sup>104</sup> In 1848, T. N. Talfourd's *Ion* was performed in Henley, but a series of minor mishaps during the performance dashed any hopes of its achieving the overwhelming success of *Macbeth*.<sup>105</sup> Senior Talfourd's *Ion* opened in London on May 1836 at the Covent Garden Theatre,<sup>106</sup> and was, together with Talfourd's other Greek-inspired tragedy, *The Athenian Captive* (1838) 'the last significant use of Greek tragedy on the professional stage for a radical political purpose until the Edwardian era'.<sup>107</sup> Notwithstanding the indisputable influence of his father's theatrical career, Francis Talfourd's approaches to drama were not founded on firm political convictions but rather on the perpetuation of the rebelliousness which marked his Oxford years.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> In 1848, William Farren the Younger assumed the management of the Strand. Under the management of Miss Kelly, *Miss Kelly's Theatre and Dramatic School* opened in 1840. It was used for performances which lasted only a few days and after 1850 it became *The Soho* and *The Royalty*. In 1849, William Davidson's Olympic burned down and was rebuilt the following year. Nicoll (1952-59), iv. 227-8, 232.

<sup>105</sup> Mackinnon (1910), 25-26.

<sup>106</sup> *ILN* 3, no.199. (21 February 1846), 133.

<sup>107</sup> Hall and Macintosh (2005) 284.

<sup>108</sup> T. N. Talfourd won his first parliamentary election at Reading in 1835 and was on the radical wing of the liberals. He was re-elected in 1837 but stayed away from parliament for some period until 1847 when he stayed for another year. While in parliament he was an important voice for The Infant Custody Act (1839) and for the introduction of the Copyright Act in 1837 which was passed in 1842 and known as Talfourd's Act. See Edith Hall, 'Talfourd, Sir Thomas Noon (1795–1854)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26951>>, accessed 27 Feb 2008.

The last performance by Talfourd's *Oxford Dramatic Amateurs* was at Maidenhead, where they staged *Number 1A* (a farce by Talfourd) *Box and Cox*, and *Hamlet Travestie*. T.N. Talfourd's involvement in some of his son's performances is proof of his approval of his son's theatrical career as an undergraduate. It must also have fostered young Talfourd's relations in London's theatrical circles: for example, a prompter from Drury Lane was hired for the performance of *Ion* at Henley, and Charles Dickens and the Keelys were among the distinguished audience who attended their performances in T.N. Talfourd's house in Russell Square.<sup>109</sup>

Talfourd's most representative classical burlesques are *Alcestis, the Original Strong-Minded Woman* (1850a) and *Electra, in a New Electric Light* (1859); he also produced *Atalanta, or the Three Golden Apples* (1857) and *Pluto and Proserpine; or, The Belle and the Pomegranate* (1858) at the Haymarket, and collaborated in *Thetis and Peleus* (1851).<sup>110</sup> Talfourd's first-hand knowledge of the classical sources allowed him to introduce metatheatrical reflections on the staging of Greek theatre, and to present a

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<sup>109</sup> See Edith Hall, 'Talfourd, Sir Thomas Noon (1795–1854)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26951>, accessed 27 Feb 2008]: 'In the early 1830s he became famous for the dinner parties which he and his wife gave in their home at 56 Russell Square, London. His dinners were remembered for their informality, conviviality, swarming children, and numerous cats. Regular guests included Douglas William Jerrold, William Makepeace Thackeray, William Charles Macready, Daniel Maclise, John Forster, and Talfourd's old friend from Reading, Mary Russell Mitford. He was particularly loved by Charles Dickens and provided the archetype of the idealistic Tommy Traddles in *David Copperfield*; his children Frank and Kate gave their names to two youngsters in Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby*.'

<sup>110</sup> Adams (1891), 55-59 and Schoch (2003), 251.

smooth critique of topical debates which, on the other hand, lacked his father's explicit political radicalism.<sup>111</sup> In *Atalanta, or the Three Golden Apples* (1857), for example, Talfourd aligns himself with the intellectual undercurrent which demanded a reform of the British educational system and rejected the study of classics. Such burlesques became recurrent in the works of the rebellious young playwrights who, by the end of the century had become supreme in Victorian popular humour:

Hippom.:       Mama, my thirst for knowledge  
                  Is satisfied —a Bachelor's degree  
                  Is in a latitude so cold for me.  
                  No more I care now to attain the rank which is  
                  Assigned to the body snatchers of dead languages.  
                  I've read of Homer all that I could stuff of it-  
                  And —as for Ovid— I have had enough of it.  
                  All foreign languages I think a bore,  
                  Except Love's language —that I languish for!

Paid.: There is a line in Hesiod we read-

Hippom.: Then Hesiod said what he should not have said.  
                  No more quotations in my ears be dinning-.<sup>112</sup>

*Alcestis* brought to the fore other topical issues, which were already present in Planché's *The Golden Fleece*, regarding the condition of women and marital status in mid-Victorian Britain.<sup>113</sup> There are certain parallels between Blanchard's *Antigone* and Talfourd's *Electra* and *Alcestis* which, as

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<sup>111</sup> Hall (1999a)

<sup>112</sup> British Library Add. MS 52965 S, 11.

<sup>113</sup> Hall and Macintosh (2005), 433-38.

we will see, demonstrate the reliance of the political ambivalence of burlesque upon the representation of Greek tragic heroines. A more shallow allusion to life in London in Talfourd is *Electra*'s title, which referred to Paul Taglioni's use of the carbon-arc for the first time in England in the 'new ballet of Electra',<sup>114</sup> *The Lost Pleiade*, which opened with great success at Her Majesty's Theatre in 1849.<sup>115</sup> Also, *Pluto and Proserpine* display the proclivity of burlesque to refer to contemporary debates and compares the banks of the Styx with the murkiness and unhealthiness of the river Thames in the mid-Victorian years:<sup>116</sup>

Charon:

Another slack day! not a single obol  
Has crossed this palm in payment for my trouble  
In rowing parties from the Upper Earth!  
Of passengers there's been a frightful dearth  
Since what they call the 'Sanitary Committee'  
Has purified the drainage of the City;  
Oh for the good old times of Smoke and Sewer,  
Of Sundays spent in atmosphere impure,  
When public Parks were looked upon as fallacious

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<sup>114</sup> *ILN* 14, no. 369 (5 May 1849) 293.

<sup>115</sup> See Hall and Macintosh (2005), 360-1: 'embodied stars ... are seen to rise in the azure firmament as they are represented in the allegorical creations of the great masters of Italian pictorial art, and particularly in the designs of Giovanni da Udine, of Giulio Romano, and of the immortal Raphaël Sanzio, copies of whose enrichments, by the by, decorate the ceiling of her Majesty's Theatre'.

<sup>116</sup> See *Punch*, July-December 1842.

And no one dreamed of building Crystal Palaces!  
Then how they flocked upon the Stygian shore-  
I've known the time when I've run up a score  
And left as many waiting to compete  
In the return boat for the vacant seat!  
No ghostly likenesses are seen there flitting  
To be from life taken at one short sitting  
Death can't get hold of the sagacious elves,  
They live 'till age, and get old of themselves,  
Giving a stingy obol when I lands 'em-  
They used to come down young –and come down handsome!  
No gloomy shade for Hades shapes his course  
Leaving the fatal strand at Charon Cross!  
In short, Society's so called advance  
Don't leave a cove a shadow of a chance.<sup>117</sup>

William (1826–1870) and Robert Barnabas Brough (1828–1860) were born in London, sons of Barnabas Brough, a brewer and wine merchant, and the poet Frances Whiteside. They were both educated at a private school in Newport; Robert started his working career in Manchester as a clerk and William as a printer's apprentice in Brecon.<sup>118</sup> Robert's literary career included translations, prose and a complete dedication to journalism, where he displayed his talent for satire even more than on stage. He founded *The*

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<sup>117</sup> British Library Add. MS 52973 F, 40-1.

<sup>118</sup> Cynthia Dereli, 'Brough, Robert Barnabas (1828–1860)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3577>>, accessed 23 Nov 2007.

Liverpool Lion in 1847 and also wrote for *The Man in the Moon*, *Diogenes*, *Comic Times*, *The Train*, and *Household Words*.<sup>119</sup> In 1859 Robert Brough published *Songs of the Governing Classes*, a set of radical poems which illustrated the political implication of some of his burlesques. The Broughs' first burlesque was *The Enchanted Isle; or, Raising the Wind*, based on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, which was first performed at the Amphitheatre in Liverpool in 1848 and then at Benjamin Webster's Adelphi in London (See fig. 1).<sup>120</sup> They also worked together on other burlesques such as the *The Ninth Statue or the Jewels of the Sun*, which opened at the Theatre Royal Haymarket the following year.<sup>121</sup>

In 1849, the Brough brothers' *The Sphinx* was first put on at the Haymarket Theatre with Miss Reynolds in the role of Jocasta, Mrs. Keeley playing Mercury, Miss P. Horton Settler Oedipus and Mr. Keeley The Sphinx.<sup>122</sup> The play brings to the fore controversial questions which were at the centre of the social debates of the time. Jocasta's refusal of an arranged marriage, for example,<sup>123</sup> and her displeasure with the domestic duties which dominated the lives of the upper class Victorian woman foreshadow the open criticism against the 'abuse of women by home-abandoning

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<sup>119</sup> Blanchard (1891), i. 242.

<sup>120</sup> Nicoll (1952-59), iv. 271.

<sup>121</sup> British Library Add. MS 43023, 32. 926-942.

<sup>122</sup> See Nicoll (1952-59), iv. 271 and Brough, William and Brough, Robert 'The Sphinx: A 'Touch from the Ancients' *English Drama*, Chadwyck Healey, 1996 <[http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-003&xri:pqil:res\\_ver=0.2&res\\_id=xri:ilcs&rft\\_id=xri:ilcs:ft:drama:Z000060273:0](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:ilcs&rft_id=xri:ilcs:ft:drama:Z000060273:0)>, accessed 13 January 2006.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid: 'Less patriotically I'm inclin'd; /To marier pour la patrie I've no mind'

husbands'<sup>124</sup> which permeates the Broughs' *Medea* in 1856.<sup>125</sup> Besides the woman question, other issues raised in the burlesque concern the Public Health Act (1848) and the repeal of the Corn Laws (1846), but all of them, unlike the denunciations in *Medea*, took second place to the visual stunts performed in the show.

According to Adams, the beginning of the modern regime in burlesque acting is William Brough's *Perdita* (1856) performed at the Lyceum by Brough with J. L. Toole, Miss Woolgar and Marie Wilton, later Marie Bancroft.<sup>126</sup> In the 1850s the Strand was the home of burlesque and Marie Wilton's acting one of the main reasons underpinning its success. In 1865, she became co-manager of The Prince of Wales's theatre together with Henry James Byron. Burlesque was one of the mainstays of the theatre and it paved the way to T. W. Robertson's comedies, which transformed The Prince of Wales's into the most fashionable theatre of its time.

In 1867 Marie Wilton married Mr. S. B. Bancroft, with whom she shared the management of The Prince of Wales's, and marked an epoch in the history of British theatre.<sup>127</sup> The relation between the Broughs' and the Bancrofts lasted till the end of their management of the Prince of Wales's for which William Brough wrote *The Mudborough Election* (1865b) and *A*

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<sup>124</sup> Hall and Macintosh (2005), 408.

<sup>125</sup> As noted in Adams 1891: 55, Robert Brough's *Medea* opened at the Olympic in 1856, the same year, *Conrad and Medora or Harlequin Little Fairy at the Bottom of the Sea* by William Brough opened at the Lyceum.

<sup>126</sup> Adams (1891), 38-9.

<sup>127</sup> Pascoe (1879), 10, 21 and Hollingshead (1910), 75-76.

*Phenomenon in a Smockfrock* (1852).<sup>128</sup> Robert Brough's *The Siege of Troy*, which draw on Homer's *Iliad* and William Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, had its opening night at the Lyceum in 1859 with Mrs Keeley in the role of Hector.<sup>129</sup> The news and illustrations on the siege of Delhi in 1858 published at *ILN* ensured the immediate success of the play which bore witness to the Victorian taste for historically inspired settings.<sup>130</sup> Robert Brough died in Manchester only a year later, in 1860, but his brother continued writing burlesques while Lionel Brough, the other sibling, took up a career in acting.<sup>131</sup> William Brough wrote *Endymion, or the Naughty Boy who cried for the Moon* (1860)<sup>132</sup> and revived the myths of Perseus and Andromeda in 1861 for the St. James's Theatre. At the Strand he put on *Hercules and Omphale* (1864) and *Pygmalion, or the Statue Fair* (Strand, 1867).<sup>133</sup>

The four leading burlesque dramatists from 1865 to 1885, Byron (1835-1884), Gilbert (1836–1911), Burnand (1836–1917), and Reece (1838–1891) were all educated men who combined their theatrical careers

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<sup>128</sup> Hollinshead (1910), 74 and Tydeman (1996), 140-145.

<sup>129</sup> Blanchard (1891), 212.

<sup>130</sup> *ILN* 32, no 896 (2 January 1858)

<sup>131</sup> Nilanjana Banerji, 'Brough, Lionel (1836–1909)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32100>>, accessed 23 Nov 2007.

<sup>132</sup> Miss Herbert played the role of Diana. Miss Kate Terry was a Nymph, Charles Young, Acteaon and Belmore, Pan.

<sup>133</sup> *Pygmalion*'s cast included Miss Raynham as Pygmalion, Mr. David James as Cambyzes; Mr. Thomas Thorne as the Princess Mandane; Miss Ada Swanborough as Venus; Miss Elsie Holt as Cupid and Miss Eliza Johnstone as Mopsa. Adams (1891), 63.



with relevant positions in the satirical press of the time. Despite the open rivalry between Burnand and Gilbert,<sup>134</sup> the four playwrights worked in collaboration on *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* for a charity performance at the Gaiety in 1878,<sup>135</sup> and their careers were interwoven in managerial tasks and satirical journals.<sup>136</sup>

Henry James Byron was educated at a school in Essex and then at St. Peter's College until he was sent to the country to continue his education with a private tutor in the 1840s. He started his theatrical career in 1853 as an amateur actor touring around the provinces and London; he later became a bastion of Mid-Victorian comedy and burlesque. H.J. Byron succeeded in various cultural and theatrical fields: he was editor of *Fun*, a rival for *Punch* in the 1860s, *Comic News* (from 1863 to 1864) and *Mirth* (1877-1878); he was manager of *The Prince of Wales* together with Marie Wilton (later Mrs. Bancroft) from 1865 to 1867,<sup>137</sup> then manager of the Theatre Royal (1866-8) and the Royal Alexandra (1867-8) in Liverpool.<sup>138</sup> Byron was joint manager of the *Criterion* with E.P. Hingston (1874); he acted for the professional stage in London and wrote for all the theatres which eventually became the

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<sup>134</sup> Stedman (2000), 13.

<sup>135</sup> Davis (1984), 35.

<sup>136</sup> E.g.: Gilbert collaborated in *Fun* in the 1860s, when H.J. Byron was the editor of the journal. I will confine myself here to mentioning Reece's two classical burlesques—*Prometheus; or, The Man on the Rock. A New and Original Extravaganza*, first performed at the New Royalty Theatre in 1865 and *Agamemnon and Cassandra; or the Prophet and Loss of Troy*, first performed in Liverpool in 1868—as his approach is the central topic of chapter 3.

<sup>137</sup> *ILN* 46, no.1302 (18 February 1865), 167; *ILN* 46, no. 1311(22 April 1865).

<sup>138</sup> *Era Almanack*, 7 March 1868, 51.

home of comedy and burlesque (the Strand, the Gaiety, the Adelphi and the Prince of Wales's). In such a brilliant and prolific career he met all the distinguished figures of the period; for example, he worked with the Bancrofts and J.L. Toole,<sup>139</sup> and discovered Tom Robertson.<sup>140</sup> As an actor, his best interpretation was that of Sir Simon Simple for *Not Such a Fool as He Looks*, which opened at the Globe Theatre in 1869.<sup>141</sup> The *Athenaum* summarizes his work as a dramatist as follows:

Of our younger dramatists Mr. Byron is the one to whom we should most readily turn in expectation of receiving a contribution to genuine comedy. He is destitute of invention, a deficiency he shares in common with every English dramatist of the last fifty years. He has wit, however, dramatic perception, a certain power of character painting, and a talent, quite unrivalled in England, of turning to fresh account well-used materials. His defects are want of patience, and an irresistible tendency to wander from the course he has chalked out.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> In *Uncle Dick's Darling*, Hollingshead (1910), 104; *Dearer than Life* (107)

<sup>140</sup> Hollingshead (1910), 37.

<sup>141</sup> Pascoe (1879), 61.

<sup>142</sup> *Athenaum* no. 2362 (1 February 1873) 156, qtd in Pascoe (1879), 61. John Hollingshead's description of Byron's rehearsing habits provides a detailed account of his character and also from the theatrical life of London in the 1860s. As contended in Hollingshead (1910), 259-60: 'Mr. H. J. Byron had his own peculiar method of rehearsing. He wrote anything into the piece that was wanted, on the spur of the moment, and left the task of putting everything together to the actors, the stage manager, the musical director, and the manager. He would come late and make jokes on all subjects in stage corners...

H.J. Byron wrote more than one hundred and fifty plays, among which were comedies, pantomimes, burlesques and extravaganzas and, due to the general disdain with which highbrow circles treated burlesque, his comedies, which were for the most part written for The Prince of Wales, were better received than the former.<sup>143</sup> In 1984, Jim Davis published and edited some of Byron's most representative works as a result of the recent surge of interest in Victorian popular theatre in *English Theatre Studies*.<sup>144</sup> None of the plays, however, is a classical burlesque. Among H. J. Byron's classical burlesques,<sup>145</sup> *Pan, or the Loves of Echo and Narcissus* (Adelphi, 1865) enjoyed much success:

On Monday a new burlesque was produced at the New Adelphi. It is by Mr. Henry James Byron and is called an Arcadian pastoral extravaganza on the subject of 'Pan; or The Loves of Echo and Narcissus'. The theme is classical, but

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Byron, at rehearsal, used to stroke his long black moustache in a contemplative way, and seize the first opportunity of creeping out of the theatre unobserved. He knew all the exits and entrances. His chief amusement was to take houses in various parts of London, and sometimes in the country. He often had as many as three on his hands at one time. This made him difficult to find on an emergency. He was quite a genius in his way, very popular and successful. He was a quiet, gentlemanly companion. His jokes came to him without effort. He was much criticised, and the chief complaint against him was that his 'output' was too large and too rapid. The same might have been said of the elder Dumas and Lopez [sic]de Vega'.

<sup>143</sup> Archer (1882), 119-147.

<sup>144</sup> *The Babes in the Wood* (London, New Adelphi, 1859) *The Lancashire Lass* (Liverpool, Royal Amphitheatre, 1867; London, Queen's Theatre 1868), *Our Boys* (London, Vaudeville, 1875) and *The Gaiety Gulliver* (London, Gaiety, 1879).

<sup>145</sup> Davis (1984), 216-220.

scarcely the spirit of the piece, for Narcissus has none of the self-love ascribed to him in the old fable. He is, in fact, rather a general lover, and fights manfully both for Echo and Syrinx. However, he is spiritedly impersonated by Miss Woolgar. Mr. Byron has invented a suggestive plot, setting forth how that Pan, desirous of being loved, for himself alone, visits, with Jupiter's permission, earth as a man, for the time divesting himself of divine attributes....This Arcadian pastoral is illustrated with some beautiful scenery by Messrs. Gates and Thompson, and obtained the approbation of the house.<sup>146</sup>

The myth of Echo had long been a recurring device which supported the comicality of punning and the parody of operatic choruses in burlesque. However, *Pan* was the first burlesque that depicted Echo as a round character on the Victorian popular stage. Byron's depiction of Echo here challenges prescribed roles and is linked to the broader question of gender raised by burlesque which permeates the politics of the play. The audience's familiarity with the figures of Narcissus, Syrinx, Pan and even Echo allowed Byron to obviate the need for a summary of the sources and evidenced the audience's acquaintance with the classics.

W. S. Gilbert attended Western Grammar School in London and Great Ealing School, where he started his dramatic career writing for school performances and painting scenery. In 1853 he entered the department of science and general literature at King's College London where he completed

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<sup>146</sup> *ILN* 46, no.1310 (15 April 1865).

his BA and became secretary of a Shakespearean and Dramatic Society.<sup>147</sup> Gilbert's father's infatuation with travelling also allowed him to learn modern languages at an early age. Moreover, Dr. Gilbert's taste for theatre and writing exerted a strong influence on the future career of his son.<sup>148</sup> Notwithstanding Gilbert's famous theoretical dramatic criticism and regular articles in *Fun* and the *Era Almanack*,<sup>149</sup> his most successful and fruitful contribution to the history of English theatre are the celebrated Savoy operas, which he wrote in collaboration with Arthur Sullivan. As far as classical burlesque is concerned, Gilbert's *Pygmalion and Galatea* ([1871] 1875) and *Thespis, or the Gods Grown Old* (1871) are the last redoubt of the genre. *Pygmalion and Galatea* is immersed within the context of a wider aesthetic which marked the depiction of women throughout the century.<sup>150</sup> *Pygmalion, or the Statue Fair* by William Brough was first put on at the Strand in 1867 but the motif of the artist/nobleman enamoured of a statue which embodies prevailing ideals of beauty and femininity is recurrent in Victorian theatre.<sup>151</sup> *Thespis* was the first Gilbert and Sullivan product and

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<sup>147</sup> Jane W. Steadman, 'Gilbert, Sir William Schwenck (1836-1911)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33400>>, accessed 23Nov2007.

<sup>148</sup> Stedman (2000), 1-2.

<sup>149</sup> Stedman (2000).

<sup>150</sup> Marshall (1998).

<sup>151</sup> *Les Filles de Marbre* by MM. Théodore Barrière and Lambert Thiboust. French. Printed (1853) British Library Add. MS 52946 R; *The Elves or the Statue Bride* by C. Selby. A Ballet Extravaganza in Two Acts first staged at the Adelphi Theatre (1856) British Library Add. MS 52962 Y; *The Marble Bride or the Nymphs of the Forest* by C. H Hazlewood. A Magical Drama in two acts first performed at Britannia Saloon Hoxton (1857) British

included most of the features of classical burlesque: dance, music, topical references, etc. However, the sophisticated classical allusions and its reflections upon the genre transform it into a ‘self-conscious satire on the conventions of the genre’ and reveal the decay of classical burlesque.<sup>152</sup>

F.C. Burnand was educated first at Eton and then at Trinity College, Cambridge (1854 to 1858), where he wrote plays, started acting and founded the Cambridge Amateur Dramatic Club.<sup>153</sup> Like Byron, Gilbert and many others, Burnand combined his theatrical career with contributions to satirical journals of the time, where, for example, he openly revealed his rivalry with W.S. Gilbert, and became editor of *The Glow-Worm* and of *Punch*. Burnand was a leading parodist of his time, something which, in theatre, was demonstrated with versions of Shakespeare, Victor Hugo, and Goethe, for example.<sup>154</sup> Archer’s comments on Burnand’s approach to classical burlesque raise questions about the nature of the comic theatre which have already been discussed in this section:<sup>155</sup>

...the inventor of this ‘business’, the writer of these rhymes,  
this caricaturer of history, vulgarizer of mythology, and

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Library Add. MS 52964 V; *The Animated Statue*. A Modern Play in Five Acts staged at Theatre Royal Haymarket in 1868, British Library Add. MS 53070 F. As contended in Hollingshead (1910), 207, Gilbert’s burlesque prompted the staging of F. von Suppee’s operetta *The Beautiful Galatea* (1872) which works on the same topic.

<sup>152</sup> Hall (1999a), 363.

<sup>153</sup> Jane W. Stedman, ‘Burnand, Sir Francis Cowley (1836-1917)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004. <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32183>>, accessed 23 Nov 2007.

<sup>154</sup> Archer (1882), 113.

<sup>155</sup> Hollingshead (1910), 69.

desecrator of poetry, 'is a man of university education, of some pretensions to culture, and, upon occasion, possessed of genuine humour. It is a standing enigma to me how he can find in his heart thus to serve up so much that is worthy and beautiful, 'butchered to make a cockney holiday'.<sup>156</sup>

Indeed, Burnand's rhymes lacked the wit expected from a learned gentleman, and his allusions to Greek and Latin in burlesque fell within the context of the irate critique against an education based on the Classics which also permeated young Talfourd's plays. His involvement in the comic theatre of the 1860s follows the tendency of the group of 'angry young men' whose bohemian lives prompted a reaction against the establishment, but whose literary production lacked a strong political inclination.

Burnand wrote as many as four classical burlesques connected to the motif of Troy: first *The Siege of Troy* at the Lyceum in 1858;<sup>157</sup> then, *Dido* which opened at the St. James's Theatre in 1860;<sup>158</sup> *Paris, or Vive Lemprière* at the Strand in 1866;<sup>159</sup> and, finally *Helen, or Taken from the Greek* in 1866. Between 1863 and 1866 as many as eight of his classical burlesques were first put on in London and enjoyed much success despite

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<sup>156</sup> Archer (1882), 117.

<sup>157</sup> See Adams (1891), 67. So far I have not found a copy of Burnand's *Siege of Troy* in my research.

<sup>158</sup> The cast included Charles Young in the role of Dido.

<sup>159</sup> As outlined in Adams (1891), 67, the cast included Miss Raynham in the role of Paris, Mr Thomas Thorne as Oenone, Mr. David James as Castor, J.D. Stoye as Orion, Miss A. Swanborough as Venus, Maria Simpson as Juno and Miss Eliza Johnstone as Jupiter.

the constant criticism of the lack of originality of his humour.<sup>160</sup> He contributed to the three-act burlesque drama and wrote *Blue Beard* (1883) for The Gaiety.

## CONCLUSIONS

The notion of popular culture is synonymous with conventionalism and establishment. Therefore, bombastic effects and festive celebration of Victorian burlesque have traditionally been interpreted as creative void and political disengagement. Topical allusions both easy to recognize and to forget had condemned nineteenth-century popular theatre to oblivion. Still, at a time when the position of the individual in society was being questioned, the function of humour carried wider socio-political concerns which went beyond mere entertainment.

The lack of a deep political discourse in nineteenth-century burlesque cannot be denied. Nonetheless, as Hall points out, the fact of burlesquing —or subverting— a classical text embodies an act of transgression which, in this case, entails strong ideological concerns on the cultural division of the classes and a stagnant educational system which was

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<sup>160</sup> *Acis and Galatea* (1863a) British Library Add. MS 53021 O; *Patient Penelope or the Return of Ulysses* (1863c) British Library Add. MS 53027 M; *Venus and Adonis* (1864b) British Library Add. MS 53031 C; *Cupid and Psyche* (1864a) British Library Add. MS 53038 T; *Pirithous or the Son of Ixion* (1865a) British Library Add. MS 53041 C; *Ulysses; Dido, the Celebrated Widow* (1865c) British Library Add. MS 53046 J; *Helen or Taken from the Greek* (1866a) British Library Add. MS. 53051 P.



based on Classics as a status marker.<sup>161</sup> Recurrent allusions to the progress of science and the development of the railway and electricity coexisted in burlesque with comments on agreed marriages, divorce courts and erudite women, for which the popular stage became a forum for discussion. But the cultural codes transmitted were indeed ambivalent and whilst women are depicted as irrepressible chatterboxes in Byron's *Orpheus and Eurydice* (1864), for example, they rebel against a dictatorial government in Blanchard's *Antigone* (1845). The duality of the politics of burlesque which I examine in this thesis focuses on the representation of gender and sexuality.

The visual image of women on the Victorian popular stage is juxtaposed with a discourse which is elaborated between the poles of misogyny and emancipation. On the one hand, women are depicted as submissive and dependent subjects who need the words of the patriarchy to develop their own subjectivity. On the other, women are the responsive voice which appropriates patriarchal discourse and challenges the rigidity of the norms. Women, like Cassandra, experience the dichotomy of silence and speech, of prohibition and appropriation; of fulfilled knowledge and self-denial.

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<sup>161</sup> Stray (1998) and Hall (1999a), 350-54.



## CHAPTER 2

### WOMEN AND CASSANDRA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

#### 2.1. CASSANDRA AND THE CLASSICS IN TRANSLATION: AESCHYLUS' AGAMEMNON AND HOMER'S ILIAD

There are various classical sources that narrate passages of the history of Cassandra,<sup>1</sup> though the ones that have been most reworked by the arts of the western world are Homer's *Iliad*, both Aeschylus' and Seneca's *Agamemnon* and Euripides' *Trojan Women*. Although these last three plays were staged in Britain before the nineteenth century,<sup>2</sup> the most widely known episodes in the story of Cassandra in Victorian times were the ones recounted by Homer and Aeschylus. The two authors were pivotal in nineteenth-century burlesque, although a solid grounding in Classics was not a prerequisite for its success on the British stage.<sup>3</sup> Homer's *Iliad* was

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<sup>1</sup> See Cancik (2002-), 1157

<sup>2</sup> I refer here both to the original texts and adaptations. For the history of the performances of *Agamemnon* see Macintosh, Michelakis, Hall, Taplin, (2005).

<sup>3</sup> As argued in Adams (1891), 55, Planché relied on Lemprière's dictionary. As contended in Mackinnon (1910), 131-135, F. C. Burnand's review of the Oxford *Alcestis* in 1887 reveals the lack of scholarship of some burlesque playwrights. Smith's dictionary was also an essential source for burlesque playwrights. See Smith (1842).

refigured in a number of different artistic genres throughout the nineteenth century: in poetry, drama, engravings, in painting and comic opera. The first documented performance of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* was only in 1880. However, as we shall see, earlier translations of the age meant that it was widely available.<sup>4</sup>

The translation debates promoted by Tytler's early *Essay on the Principles of Translation* (1791) determined the ways in which early nineteenth-century authors approached ancient texts. The Arnold-Newman controversy perpetuated the dispute between literal, archaizing and 'Englished' translations, and resulted in the publication of a considerable number of both scholarly and non-scholarly works during the second half of the century.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, as the Victorian years wore on, a revolution in access to knowledge transformed the reading public, the educational system and the social stratification of the age. Circulating libraries and periodicals both for middle and for working-class readers expanded the market for classical texts in translation.<sup>6</sup> As a consequence, it was possible to find Homer among the readings of Robert Browning but also reviewed in *The Penny Magazine*.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Hall and Macintosh (2005), 139-162.

<sup>5</sup> Bassnett ([1980] 2007), 71-75.

<sup>6</sup> Stray (1998), 54-58.

<sup>7</sup> Clyde de L. Ryals, 'Browning, Robert (1812-1889)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3714>>, accessed 21 April 2008; *Penny Magazine* (15 March 1842), 114.

In a most illuminating essay, Hardwick states that ‘attitudes to and reworking of the literature and art of the ancient world not only represent a significant strand in nineteenth-century social and cultural history, they also provide an index for the analysis of change in scholarly, educational and artistic conventions’.<sup>8</sup> Following Hardwick’s ideas on the migration of ancient myths, this section seeks to analyse the ways in which nineteenth-century translations of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* and Homer’s *Iliad* foreshadow popular reworkings of Cassandra. Colin Burrow’s ideas on English translations of Virgil provide a useful insight into the study of the Victorian Cassandra:

When we interpret we usually think that it is simply we alone who are doing the interpretation. But our language contains buried fragments of the past, and to know the origins of at least some of these fragments can enable us to realize that some of what we think of as being our own views come from dark corners of history.<sup>9</sup>

Representative translations from *Agamemnon* and the *Iliad* shed light on some of these ‘dark corners’ which reveal cultural interventions in the description of Cassandra’s gestures, words and actions reflecting nineteenth-century representations of fortune-tellers, witches and mad women.

### *2.1.1. Knowledge, Witchcraft and Fortune-telling: Aeschylus’ Agamemnon*

The Promethean spirit which had invaded the Romantic psyche with Lord Byron’s ‘Prometheus’ (1816), Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein, or the Modern*

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<sup>8</sup> Hardwick (2000a), 24.

<sup>9</sup> Burrow (1997), 21.

*Prometheus* ([1818] 1996) and P.B. Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (1820) added to the appeal Aeschylus held for the Victorians.<sup>10</sup> Along with *Prometheus*, *Agamemnon* is at the forefront in the reception of Aeschylean tragedy in the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Macintosh considers various factors which contribute to the pre-eminence of *Agamemnon* in Victorian England. First, the influence of the German Romantics on British authors and James Thomson's successful reworking of the myth in 1738. Second, the impact which Ancient Greek history and art exerted on English writers and painters either through the formative experiences of the Grand Tour, or through the 1807 exhibition of the Elgin Marbles. And finally, and most importantly for this thesis, the Victorian fascination with visual culture.<sup>12</sup>

With regard to the latter, Macintosh's theories are based on Rush Rehm's reading of *Agamemnon* as a tragedy about 'seeing'.<sup>13</sup> The Cassandra scene is at the centre of Rehm's approach as he understands that 'the prophetic ... heart of *Agamemnon* resides in the captive Trojan princess Cassandra'.<sup>14</sup> As early as 1777, Potter had remarked upon how the scene stands out among the rest in the play calling attention to the prophetic character of Priam's daughter:

But the poet has nowhere exerted such efforts of his genius, as in the scene where Cassandra appears: as a prophetess, she gives every mark of the divine inspiration, from the dark and

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<sup>10</sup> France and Haynes (2006), iv. 179.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Macintosh (2005), 139-147.

<sup>13</sup> Macintosh (2005), 142 and Rehm (2005), 343-358.

<sup>14</sup> Rehm (2005), 344.

distant hint, through all the noble imagery of the prophetic enthusiasm; till, as the catastrophe advances, she more and more plainly declares it: as a suffering princess, her grief is plaintive, lively, and piercing; yet she goes to meet her death, which she clearly foretells, with a firmness worthy the daughter of Priam and the sister of Hector: nothing can be more animated or more interesting than this scene.<sup>15</sup>

Macintosh believes that ‘in terms of the nineteenth-century British reception of *Agamemnon*, we could say that it was the ‘discovery’ of this particular scene in the play that was to mark the ‘turn to modernity’.<sup>16</sup> Indeed it did and, as we shall see, from D.G. Rossetti to Evelyn de Morgan, Cassandra’s ravings captivated British artists much earlier than the Balliol production of *Agamemnon* in 1880. The complex network of meanings which developed from visual reworkings of the myth ran in parallel with the images which were evoked in nineteenth-century translations of the tragedy.

Robert Potter’s translation of *Agamemnon*, published in 1777, was a landmark in the reception of Aeschylean tragedy in England. It was revised and reprinted till the late years of the nineteenth century, when it was both praised and disputed.<sup>17</sup> Though John Symmons’s translation in 1824,<sup>18</sup> for example, differed in many ways from Potter’s, early nineteenth-century non-

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<sup>15</sup> Potter (1892), 121.

<sup>16</sup> Macintosh (2005), 142.

<sup>17</sup> France and Haynes (2006), iv. 158.

<sup>18</sup> The same year, *The Gentleman’s Magazine* reviews Hugh Stuart Boyd’s translation of *Agamemnon* with reference to Potter’s. See *The Eclectic Review* 32, (January-June 1825) 31-54 for a comparison of Symmons, Boyd and Potter.

scholarly translations were strongly influenced by him.<sup>19</sup> Yet Potter's *Agamemnon* was received by the Victorians with some reticence: 'What Bentley is reported to have said to Pope concerning the translation of Homer, might have been applied to Potter with still more propriety, — 'You have given us fine poetry, but it is not Aeschylus'''.<sup>20</sup>

As with Homer's *Iliad*, Victorian translators of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* were scholars, students, clergymen and men of letters whose attraction to the tragedian varied as did their knowledge of Ancient Greek.<sup>21</sup> Nineteenth-century notions of equivalence and faithfulness to the source text were diverse and,<sup>22</sup> despite the fact that the choice between prose and verse was not such a controversial issue as with Homer, prevailing debates also permeated the translations of *Agamemnon*. As an example, Boyd writes in his preface to his translation of the tragedy:

If it should be asked, why I have translated in prose, I answer —that I am sure I could not, and I believe the cleverest man could not, make a good translation of it in verse. To produce a *literal poetic* version of any Latin or Greek poet, and at the same time to preserve its elegance and spirit, would, I imagine, be impossible in any case; but especially in the case of a Choral Ode. I have examined several passages of Potter's translation of the *Agamemnon*. The dialogue, which is done in blank verse, appears to be tolerably literal; though not

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<sup>19</sup> Burian (1997), 272.

<sup>20</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 94 (July-December 1824), 49-51.

<sup>21</sup> France and Haynes (2006), iv. 178-180.

<sup>22</sup> Hardwick (2000a), 26.



quite as literal as it might have been. But in the Choral Odes, the case is widely different. I find several beautiful verses, but in them I do not recognise Aeschylus.<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, the 1829 edition of Black's *Agamemnon*, for example, begins with a quotation by Symmons which ponders late Regency and Victorian questions on the methodology and art of translation:

The times, customs, religion, and manners are changed; words which vibrated to the ear, and went straight to the heart, of an Athenian, causing a thrill through their crowded theatres, are known to us only by the dim light of the lexicons, context, and glossaries; and even when understood, we search in vain for corresponding expressions in our own language.

The six translations discussed in this chapter span the early 1820s to 1868, when Robert Reece's burlesque of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* was first performed in Liverpool. They evidence the common cultural backdrop where social models of Victorian England converge with the lexicon of the tragedy in translation. Except for Anna Swanwick, for obvious reasons of gender, the translators, Hugh Stuart Boyd, John Symmons, William Sewell, Henry Hart Milman and Edward Hayes Plumptre had been educated at Oxford and Cambridge: Sewell, Milman and Plumptre also pursued an academic career and became influential figures in the clergy. The network of meanings which arises from their interventions link popular and highbrow reworkings of Cassandra.

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<sup>23</sup> Boyd (1823), iv-v.

Two excerpts from the Aeschylean tragedy which emphasize the visual depiction of Cassandra as prophet and seer are relevant here:

ΚΑ.

ημαρτον η κυρω τι τοξότηζ τιζ ωζ;  
η ψευδόμαυίζ ειμι θυροκόποζ φλέδωυ; (I.1194-1195)

Cass:...Have I missed, or do I make a hit like an archer? Or am I a false prophet, a door-rapper, a babbler?<sup>24</sup>

ΚΑ.

ιδου δ Απόλλωυ αύτοζ εκδύωυ εμε  
χρηστρίαν εσθητ, εποπτεύσαζ δέ με  
και τοισδε κόσμοισ καταγελωμένη μέγα  
φίωυ υπ εχθρωυ ου διχορρόπωζ μάτην  
καλουμένη δέ, φοιταζ ωζ αγυρτρια,  
πτωχοζ τάκαινα λιμοθιηζ ηνερχόμην (I.1269-1274).

Cass:... And see, Apollo himself stripping me of my prophetic garb; and after he had watched me, even in this attire, mightily mocked by friends who were foes, and their delusion clear beyond doubt —and, like a wandering mendicant priestess, I bore being called ‘beggar, poor wretch, starveling’—<sup>25</sup>

In 1823, Hugh Stuart Boyd’s (1781–1848) translation of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* was published in London. Boyd had studied Greek with a tutor in Hampstead, and in 1800 he matriculated at Cambridge but went down

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<sup>24</sup> Fraenkel (1950), i. 164-171.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 169.

without getting a degree.<sup>26</sup> Boyd's translation was widely reviewed and advertised in mid and high-brow press of the time, particularly after Symmons' translation in 1824.<sup>27</sup> Boyd translates from Greek texts edited by Porson, Blomfield and Schutz, and even though he acknowledges Potter's contribution to the transmission of Aeschylus in England, he disagrees with his translation practice. Boyd compensates for the unavoidable linguistic and cultural losses in the English language version with a few timely, explanatory footnotes in the text, though none of them refers to Cassandra. Boyd's interventions in the two passages are symptomatic of nineteenth-century approaches to the myth. The cultural models prevail and ψευδόμαντις becomes a 'strolling fortune-teller' stressing the association between nomad gipsies, wanderers and the art of telling fortunes which existed in England from the late sixteenth century.<sup>28</sup> The link between 'poor' and 'wandering mendicant' responds to the same network of images which, as we shall see, connect Cassandra with the popular depiction of these icons:<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> William Hunt, 'Boyd, Hugh Stuart (1781–1848)', rev. John D. Haigh, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3106>>, accessed 12 Aug 2007.

<sup>27</sup> See fn 18 above.

<sup>28</sup> *OED* fortune-teller; fortune-telling, *vbl. n.*

<sup>29</sup> Note Addison's use of the term in *Spect.* No. 130 2 A Cassandra of the [Gypsy] Crew told me, That I loved a pretty Maid in a Corner. See *OED* Cassandra.

Cass. ... Have I erred? or, like a skilful archer, have I hit the mark? —Perhaps, ye deem me a lying prophetess; a mere strolling fortune-teller!<sup>30</sup>

Cass. ...Apollo himself divests me of mine oracular habiliments; Apollo, who beheld me, even in these insignia, derided by friends, by enemies; but ah, how vainly! When treated as a wandering mendicant; poor, woebegone, half-famished, I endured it all.<sup>31</sup>

Only a year after Boyd's *Agamemnon*, John Symmons (1780/81–1842) published his translation of the tragedy in blank verse. Symmons went to Christ Church, Oxford, where he graduated M.A. in 1806.<sup>32</sup> In the preface to his translation, he coincides with Boyd in his wish to amend Potter and to avoid explanatory notes.<sup>33</sup> Symmons' contribution to the depiction of Cassandra reinforces the connection of the myth with popular social types when the heroine is compared to a wandering minstrel:<sup>34</sup>

Cassandra

Ha! do the shafts fly upright at the mark?

Fly the shafts right, or has the yew-bow miss'd?

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<sup>30</sup> Boyd (1823), 43.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 46.

<sup>32</sup> Nigel Aston, 'Symmons, Charles (1749–1826)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26884>>, accessed 12 Aug 2007.

<sup>33</sup> Symmons (1824), xvii-xix.

<sup>34</sup> *OED* minstrel, *n* 2a. Note the quotation from W.S. Gilbert's *Mikado* (1885): 'A wand'ring minstrel I, a thing of shreds and patches'.

Methinks the wild beast in the covert's hit;  
Or rave I, dreaming of prophetic lies,  
Like some poor minstrel knocking at the doors?<sup>35</sup>

Significant changes in the history of England occurred between the publication of John Symmons' *Agamemnon* in 1823 and William Sewell's in 1846. In 1837, Queen Victoria ascended the throne, and only a year later the Chartist Movement started and the Anti-Corn league was established. Women who launched the women's rights movement in subsequent decades supported the demands both of the Leaguers and the Chartists: the first draft of the Charter of Rights and Liberties, for example, alluded to women's suffrage.<sup>36</sup> Despite the fact that the two movements allowed women certain social and political action, reality was far different. Not until the late forties was the first college for women in London, Queen's College, erected and the first legislation regulating the exploitation of women workers brought into force. A large number of conduct books which regulated the education of women had been published since the eighteenth century, but the social turmoil of the 1840s prompted a dramatic increase.<sup>37</sup> Sarah Ellis' *The Woman of England* (1839), *The English Maiden: Her Moral and Domestic Duties* (1841) by A.B. Muzzey and others all reflected upon the definition of nineteenth-century woman, and the evolution of the condition of women in society had a profound effect upon prevailing representations of Cassandra.

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<sup>35</sup> Symmons (1824), 111.

<sup>36</sup> Strachey ([1928] 1989), 31. The point was later removed to the advantage of the universal vote for men.

<sup>37</sup> Strachey ([1928] 1989), 46 and Eden and Vickers (2006)

William Sewell's rhymed translation in 1846 introduced a second network of meanings which was linked to mid-Victorian representations of women and knowledge. Sewell got a doctorate from Oxford in 1857 where he preached and taught till the early 1860s. As a classical scholar he wrote *Hora philologica, or Conjectures on the Structure of the Greek Language* (1830), and translated *Agamemnon* (1846a), *The Georgics* (1846b), and *The Odes and Epodes of Horace* (1850), which were disparaged by his contemporaries.<sup>38</sup> At Oxford, he developed compelling arguments for university reform and became acquainted with the Oxford or Tractarian Movement, which 'attacked what the high churchmen regarded as the prevailing weaknesses of the church...[:] the doctrinal laxity and inattention to many aspects of the church's rich heritage, and political trends which threatened the church's status as a national institution'.<sup>39</sup> Although Sewell steered an independent course, he introduced his sister, the novelist Elizabeth Missing Sewell, to members of the Movement and encouraged her career as a writer and as a religious educator. Both in her novels and in the various schools she opened,<sup>40</sup> Elizabeth Sewell focused on the education of middle and upper-class girls through the principles of the Church of

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<sup>38</sup> S. A. Skinner, 'Sewell, William (1804–1874)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25148>>, accessed 12 Aug 2007.

<sup>39</sup>Part Seven of Schlossberg, Herbert 'Religious Revival and the Transformation of English Sensibilities in the Early Nineteenth Century', *The Victorian Web* <<http://www.victorianweb.org/religion/herb7.html>>, accessed 11 November 2007.

<sup>40</sup> See Jeaffreson (1858), ii. 388-389 for an account of the relationship between her work as a teacher and as a novelist.

England,<sup>41</sup> which were diametrically opposed to the concept of the ‘New Woman’. According to Everett and Landow, direct links between Tractarianism and the Ecclesiological movement influenced the Pre-Raphaelite’s fascination with Raphael’s medieval precursors.<sup>42</sup> The connections between Sewell’s translation and Pre-Raphaelite painting are too tenuous to read his text as a direct precursor to their Cassandra.<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless, Sewell’s translation of ψευδόμαντις as ‘witch’ points to the same images which link the Cassandra myth with Medea and Circe in Mid-Victorian art.<sup>44</sup> It also evidences the appropriation of the Victorian imagination of a threat which by the 1840s began to invade the lives of the Victorians: women and the possession of knowledge,

*Cass.* ... Err’d I, or hunt I ought; e’en as an archer?  
Or am I lying witch, knocker at doors,  
Babbler?...<sup>45</sup>

Moreover, Sewell picked up the thread of the syncretism between Cassandra and popular types of British culture by introducing ‘gipsy’ for θυροκόποις. As we will see, the Victorian fascination with gypsies is tantamount in nineteenth-century reworkings of the myth. Here, an added connotation

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<sup>41</sup> Valerie Sanders, ‘Sewell, Elizabeth Missing (1815–1906)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36027>>, accessed 2 May 2008.

<sup>42</sup> Everett, G. and Landow G.P., ‘High Church: Tractarianism’, *The Victorian Web*, <<http://www.victorianweb.org/religion/tractarian1.html>>, accessed 17 December 2007.

<sup>43</sup> See Monrós-Gaspar (2006) for an outline of the Pre-Raphaelite Cassandra.

<sup>44</sup> See Dijkstra (1986).

<sup>45</sup> Sewell (1846a), 47.

related with Cassandra's prophetic gift and her possession of knowledge stresses the depiction of the heroine as an outsider:

Cass. ...With his own hands stripping me bare of all  
My garb prophetic! Ay, having oft looked on,  
And seen me with these gew-gaws, laughed to scorn  
With friends, by foes, without one wavering scale,  
All idly. And called after, vagabond,  
Like wand'ring gipsy, —beggar, poor wretch, half-starved,  
I bore it all. ...<sup>46</sup>

In 1865 two very different translations of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* were published in England: Henry Hart Milman's and Anna Swanwick's. The two decades which separated them from Sewall's saw major advances in the history of the women's rights movement. Isolated actions intensified: in 1848 the Seneca Falls Convention (the first women's rights convention) took place in the United States and a large number of groups were formed in England in the 1850s to fight for the rights of women. Barbara Leigh Smith (later Boudichon), for example, who was a major activist, founded the Langham Place Group which 'led four great campaigns: for married women to be granted legal recognition, and for women's right to work, to vote, and to have access to education.'<sup>47</sup> Moreover, in 1869, John Stuart Mill published his famous essay 'On the Subjection of Women', which reflected upon the situation of married women and attacked the economical system

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 51.

<sup>47</sup> Pam Hirsch, 'Boudichon, Barbara Leigh Smith (1827–1891)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2007 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2755>>, accessed 7 Nov 2007.



which allowed their enslavement. The social debate was intense and John Leech's cartoons in *Punch* from 1841 to 1864 reflected its effect in his caricatures of women's social achievements.

Milman was a 'prolific historian and reforming clergyman': he studied at Eton and then at Brasenose College, Oxford, where he won various literary prizes and was elected Professor of Poetry. He also became Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in 1849.<sup>48</sup> In his preface to the tragedy, Milman states that he followed the editions of Porson, Schütz, Blomfield and Peile and abstained from looking into English translations except for Symmons', whose 'finer ear for lyric harmony' he praised.<sup>49</sup> With regard to his translational practice, Milman declares:

I have, in the many passages which are still left in great part to conjecture, adopted that sense or reading which appeared to me the best and most poetical. Possibly I may have chosen some, as most poetical and Æschylean, which the severer scholar may question or reject. The peculiar manner and wonderful power of Æschylus in suggesting, rather than developing or distinctly expressing, many thoughts and many images by a few pregnant and close-set words, or by an

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<sup>48</sup> H. C. G. Matthew, 'Milman, Henry Hart (1791–1868)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Oct 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18778>>, accessed 5 May 2008.

<sup>49</sup> Milman, Henry, 'The Agamemnon of Aeschylus', *Chadwyk Healey*, 1994 <[http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res\\_ver=0.2&res\\_id=xri:ilcs&rft\\_id=xri:ilcs:ft:drama:Z000103075:0](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:ilcs&rft_id=xri:ilcs:ft:drama:Z000103075:0)>, accessed 15 January 2006.

overteeming compound epithet, sometimes compel the translator, if he would not lose the full force of the poetry, to indulge in paraphrase beyond what his judgment would allow in other cases.<sup>50</sup>

Indeed, Milman was poetic but his depiction of Cassandra bears more resemblances to Sewell's than to Symmons'. Like Sewell, Milman adopts 'witch' for ψευδόμαντις, and then again for θυροκόποις which reinforces the syncretism with mid-nineteenth-century representations of Cassandra and sage women:

Cassandra:

Err I? or strike the white, an archeress true?  
Or am I a false wandering witch, that knocks  
At any door? Bear witness ye, make oath  
How well I know that house's ancient sins.<sup>51</sup>

...

Cassandra:

Lo! lo! Apollo's self hath stripp'd from me  
My robes prophetic! made a show of me  
In these once-hallowed trappings; laughed to scorn  
By friends, by foes---dissentient none. How vain!  
No doubt, in baser and more bitter scorn,  
A strolling witch, a juggler, I had been call'd---  
Beggar, wretch, starveling! and for thee I bore it.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

As social changes were sweeping through the century, a large number of women translators began to see their work published: Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Mary Howitt, Ellen Marriage, Clara Bell,<sup>53</sup> and Anna Swanwick, whose translation of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* became standard.<sup>54</sup> With her translations from the Greek, Swanwick earned respect for women's scholarship and brought Greek culture closer to the nineteenth-century English reader.<sup>55</sup> Her literary life can be traced back as early as the beginnings of her education, first at home, then at a girls school in Liverpool and in the home of Professor Karl Gottlob Zumpt in Germany.<sup>56</sup> Her translations from Goethe, Schiller and Aeschylus won her a wide intellectual circle of friends, among whom were counted Thomas Carlyle, Helen Faucit, Alfred Lord Tennyson and the Brownings.<sup>57</sup> Influenced by her family's Unitarianism, Swanwick had, from her early years, been interested in receiving a first-class education.<sup>58</sup> She once claimed: 'I often longed to assume the costume of a boy in order to learn Latin, Greek, and

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<sup>53</sup> France and Haynes (2006), iv.125.

<sup>54</sup> See 'SWANWICK'S ÆSCHYLUS'. *The Pall Mall Gazette* no.2668 (3 September 1873), 10 for a review of the 1873 edition.

<sup>55</sup> Hardwick (2000a), 33.

<sup>56</sup> Barbara Dennis, 'Swanwick, Anna (1813–1899)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26822>>, accessed 28 April 2008.

<sup>57</sup> See Carlyle (2000), 239, 246, 262 for an account of the relationship between Swanwick, Faucit and the Brownings. Also Hardwick (2000b), 185ff for reactions to her translation of Aeschylus.

<sup>58</sup> Hardwick (2000a), 32.

mathematics'.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, as a social reformer, she pressed for drastic reforms in the British educational system: she backed the establishment of colleges for working-class men and women,<sup>60</sup> and Boudichon and Mill's petition for women's suffrage.<sup>61</sup>

In the introduction to her translation of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Swanwick focuses on the didactic transmission of the religious and moral ethos of the Greeks to the English reader. For example, Swanwick comments upon various representations of Greek art available in Victorian Britain, such as the Elgin marbles, in relation to Greek aesthetics and, most importantly, to Aeschylean tragedy. With regard to religion, she declares:

In order to appreciate the poetry of antiquity, it is necessary to take into consideration the religious ideas which lie at its root ... Accordingly, in offering the public a new version of the *Oresteia*, the only complete trilogy which has escaped the wreck of time, it may not be altogether irrelevant if I endeavour to determine the position of Aeschylus among those kindlers of the beacon-fire, through whose agency the

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<sup>59</sup> M. L. Bruce (1903, ed.), *Anna Swanwick: a memoir and recollections*, 19–20 *qtd* in Barbara Dennis, 'Swanwick, Anna (1813–1899)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26822>>, accessed 28 April 2008.

<sup>60</sup> Anna Swanwick *Daily News*, 16727. (3 November 1899), 6-7.

<sup>61</sup> Barbara Dennis, 'Swanwick, Anna (1813–1899)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26822>>, accessed 28 April 2008. Also Hardwick (2000*b*), 191-192.

light of ancient wisdom was transmitted from age to age before the advent of Christianity.<sup>62</sup>

Swanwick believed that the principle which should rule every translation is accuracy to reflect the original, 'both in spirit and in form': this accuracy accounts for her adoption of blank verse for the iambics and rhyme for the lyric meters. On the whole, Swanwick 'rejected the domesticating method of translation which emphasised fluency and easily assimilated dominant English cultural values into the translation'.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, being herself a Cassandra-like voice within the patriarchal world of classical scholarship, her Cassandra lacks the cultural and gender bias of Boyd's, Sewell's and Symmons'. Swanwick's use of 'yclept'<sup>64</sup>, 'mountebank',<sup>65</sup> and 'juggler',<sup>66</sup> responds to the archaizing method which evidences her support for Newman's translation of the *Iliad*.<sup>67</sup> Still, nineteenth-century uses of 'juggler' also implied a deployment of magic, which aligns her depiction of Cassandra with Milman's and even Sewell's without the pejorative connotations of their translations:<sup>68</sup>

### Cassandra

...Have I miss'd?

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<sup>62</sup> Swanwick (1865), ix.

<sup>63</sup> Hardwick (2000a), 35 and Hardwick (2000b), 180-193.

<sup>64</sup> *OED* yclept, ycleped, *pa pple*.

<sup>65</sup> *OED* mountebank.

<sup>66</sup> *OED* juggler 1.

<sup>67</sup> Hardwick (2000b), 188-190.

<sup>68</sup> *OED* juggler 2, 3.

Or, like true archer, have I hit the mark?  
Or juggler am I, knocking at the door,  
Seeress of falsehood; witness bear on oath  
That of these halls the hoary crimes I know.<sup>69</sup>

Cassandra

Behold, Apollo's self doth strip me bare  
Of the prophetic robe; coldly he gazed  
The while, in consecrated garb array'd,  
To friends and foes a laughter I became:  
Vagrant yclept, poor hunger-stricken wretch,  
Like strolling mountebank, I bare it all;<sup>70</sup>

In 1868, coinciding with the opening night of Robert Reece's burlesque *Agamemnon and Cassandra, or The Prophet and Loss of Troy* in Liverpool, Edward Hayes Plumptre published his translation of *Agamemnon*. Plumptre had read Classics and Mathematics at University College, Oxford, and graduated M.A. in 1847.<sup>71</sup> At King's College, London, he combined his teaching with his religious interests after having been ordained by Bishop Wilberforce in 1846. As Principal of Queen's College, London, he also played an important part in the development of higher education for women. Even though his writings were mostly focused on religious topics, he also wrote *Master and Scholar* (1866), and *Things New and Old* (1884).

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<sup>69</sup> Swanwick (1865), 49.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 53.

<sup>71</sup> R. C. Browne, 'Plumptre, Edward Hayes (1821–1891)', rev. H. C. G. Matthew, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22402>>, accessed 5 May 2008.

Moreover, Plumptre translated Sophocles (1865), Aeschylus (1868) and Dante (1886-7).

Plumptre followed Paley's edition of 1861 in his translation of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and set the popularizing aim of his version in his preface:<sup>72</sup>

I have felt, however, that it was desirable for the large mass of readers to whom the culture which comes through the study of Greek literature in the inimitable completeness of the originals is more or less inaccessible, that there should be a translation within their reach, embracing all that has been left to us by one who takes all but the highest place among the tragic poets of Athens, and making it, as far as was possible, intelligible and interesting in its connexion with the history of Greek thought, political and theological.<sup>73</sup>

Plumptre's didactic purpose was in line with Swanwick's, whom he believed to be one of the best translators of Aeschylus in the nineteenth century together with Milman.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, Plumptre fulfilled his ambitions and, even though his translations of Sophocles and Dante were more widely reviewed,<sup>75</sup> his version of *Agamemnon* was reprinted in 1873, and again in 1891 in a 'new and cheap edition' by Isbiter and Co.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Plumptre ([1868] 1994) *Agamemnon* [online text], Chadwyck-Healey <[http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res\\_ver=0.2&res\\_id=xri:ilcs&rft\\_id=xri:ilcs:ft:drama:Z000111264:0](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:ilcs&rft_id=xri:ilcs:ft:drama:Z000111264:0)>.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> 'Dean Plumptre's Dante'. *The Leeds Mercury* no. 15211 (8 January 1887), 10 and *The Pall Mall Gazette* no. 239 (13 November 1865), 10.

Plumptre's translation of 1.1194-5 and 1.1269-1274 is far more neutral than, for example, Sewell and Symmons:

Cassandra:

To that defiler. Miss I now, or hit  
Like archer skilled? or am I seeress false,  
A babbler vain that knocks at every door?<sup>77</sup>

Cassandra:

Reviled as vagrant, wandering prophetess,  
Poor, wretched, famished, I endured to live.<sup>78</sup>

Nonetheless, his theatrical interlocutions evince an important transmutation of the myth. Plumptre's descriptions point to formulaic late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century acting gestures and attitudes which, as we will see, link Cassandra with the depiction of melodramatic heroines, hysterical, mad and sage women:

shudders as in horror<sup>79</sup>

...

Bursts into a cry of wailing<sup>80</sup>

...

Looking wildly and pointing upward<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> See Plumptre (1873) and (1891).

<sup>77</sup> Plumptre ([1868] 1994) *Agamemnon* [online text], Chadwyck-Healey  
<[http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res\\_ver=0.2&res\\_id=xri:iles&rft\\_id=xri:iles:ft:drama:Z000111264:0](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:iles&rft_id=xri:iles:ft:drama:Z000111264:0)>

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* 72.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* 60.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* 60.



...

Speaking wildly as in ecstasy<sup>82</sup>

...

In another access of frenzy<sup>83</sup>

...

Shrinking back<sup>84</sup>

...

Shuddering in another access of frenzy<sup>85</sup>

The six translations discussed here foreshadow the linguistic background which supports nineteenth-century visual representations of Cassandra. From Boyd to Plumptre, all the translators outlined in this section received higher education: some became scholars and others were committed supporters of the women's movement. Despite their ideological and academic background they shared a cultural competence which developed from a patriarchal organization of the economy. Accordingly, prevailing cultural attitudes towards women, which stressed their educational subjection and lampooned their possession of knowledge, predominated in the semantic fields which translated the myth. Aeschylus' prophetess becomes a 'poor' and 'wandering mendicant', a 'gipsy' and even a 'witch' in an attempt to depict sage women with images related to peripheral segments of society. Connections between Cassandra and these social icons

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid. 62.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. 69.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. 71.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. 74.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. 74.

go beyond the printed page and illustrations in magazines, paintings and popular entertainments depict Cassandra-like gypsies, witches and fortune-tellers which create the cultural substrata where a burlesque Cassandra can be accommodated. Within this context, Homer's *Iliad* provides further linguistic clues which complement and link visual representations of Cassandra as a witch, as a gypsy and as a mendicant fortune-teller with issues regarding voice and hysteria.

### 2.1.2. *Images of the Voice: Cassandra in Homer's Iliad*

In October 1861, the Times published 'On translating Homer', an article which discussed Dr. Matthew Arnold's lectures delivered at Oxford in 1861.<sup>86</sup> Arnold's lectures 'On translating Homer' questioned Newman's approaches to the *Iliad*, and sparked off a debate on the translation of Homer which lasted till the late years of the century.<sup>87</sup> The wide spectrum of translations which emerged from the Homeric controversy was acknowledged by Herschel in 1866, who declared in the prologue of his translation of the *Iliad* that 'The version of the Iliad here presented to the reader was commenced in October 1861, on the occasion of reading an article in the *Times* of the 28<sup>th</sup> of that month on Translations.'<sup>88</sup> Herschel was a prominent mathematician of the early years of the century whose

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<sup>86</sup> *The Times* no.24075 (28 October 1861), 8.

<sup>87</sup> The lectures were published in London in 1861.

<sup>88</sup> Herschel (1866), ix.

noble origins secured him the best education at Eton and Cambridge.<sup>89</sup> His prologue evidences a phenomenon common by the early decades of Victorian England: a large number of new translators who endeavoured to translate the Homeric epics belonged to the nobility and the clergy.<sup>90</sup> No great poets such as Pope or Cowper devoted themselves to the task of a complete translation either of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* and even though Conington translated Homer in 1868, Germany was in the forefront of classical scholarship in the nineteenth century. As a result, among the vast number of translations from the *Iliad* which were published, none of them remains today as standard.

George Chapman's *Iliad* (1598) was the first complete translation of Homer written in verse in a modern language.<sup>91</sup> The wide impact of Chapman's Homer extended as late as the nineteenth century when John Keats, Samuel T. Coleridge and Charles Lamb's fascination with his translations stimulated their revival.<sup>92</sup> In the eighteenth century, Alexander Pope's (1715-1720) and William Cowper's (1784-) approaches to Homer captured the attention of the critics. Whilst Chapman had chosen to write the *Iliad* in rhymed 'fourteeners', Pope opted for the heroic couplet. Pope's translations were so hugely admired during the eighteenth century that they

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<sup>89</sup> Michael J. Crowe, 'Herschel, Sir John Frederick William, first baronet (1792–1871)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13101>>, accessed 10 April 2008.

<sup>90</sup> Hardwick (2000a), 25 and France and Haynes (2006), iv. 98-105.

<sup>91</sup> Fay (1952) and Highet (1996), i. 185.

<sup>92</sup> Fay (1952), 104-111. As argued in Chislett (1918), 11, Lamb's source for his *Adventures of Ulysses* was Chapman's *Odyssey*.

even superseded Chapman's.<sup>93</sup> Such was his success that he became 'the first man of letters to live in comfortable independence on the earnings of his pen'.<sup>94</sup> Later attitudes towards Pope, however, were ambivalent: his elegance was praised but his accuracy was censured.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, the decline of the heroic couplet by the late eighteenth century favoured Cowper's translation and his choice of Miltonic blank verse for the *Iliad*. Even though Cowper's *Iliad* did not enjoy as much success as Pope's, it still had an influence, as we will see, on the considerable number of blank verse translations that were published throughout the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, as free as Pope's translation was, even Arnold found it more Homeric than Cowper's.<sup>96</sup>

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Homer was not read at Oxford, and Cambridge only began to prescribe it for all its Classics students during the 1880s,<sup>97</sup> Nonetheless, the reading of Latin and Greek authors was a gentlemanly accomplishment and the examples of women such as Anna Swanwick and Florence Nightingale show that on very few occasions education based on Classics overcame gender barriers and allowed women to read in and even translate the poets from their originals. Despite the easy access of the high classes to the classical prototypes, the truth is that the conventional ways to become acquainted with the idealized

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<sup>93</sup> Fay (1952), 1. Also see Hopkins (2008).

<sup>94</sup> Clarke (1945), 124.

<sup>95</sup> See Griffin (1995) for an account of the controversial reception of Pope in the Romanticism.

<sup>96</sup> Arnold (1861), 14.

<sup>97</sup> Ogilvie (1964), 138, 141.

Hellenic past in Victorian England were exhibitions in art galleries and museums, and allusions in poetry and translations.

The Homeric question raised by Robert Wood and developed in Germany by Wolf and his followers,<sup>98</sup> influenced nineteenth-century approaches to Homer in England.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, translations from selected books of the *Iliad* proliferated, as did a popularisation of Homer, which explains allusions to his epics made by burlesque, by Penny books and at street fairs. Within this context, Chapman, Pope and Cowper marked the style and the aesthetic taste of Romantic and Victorian poets. John Keat's sonnet 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer' (1815), for example, left a stamp on the style of the young poet and revealed his admiration towards Chapman's text.<sup>100</sup> On account of the significant influence of Chapman, Pope and Cowper on the transmission of Homer in English, their depictions of Cassandra had a major effect upon nineteenth-century translations of the *Iliad*.

There is a direct reference to Cassandra in *Iliad* 24.699-708 that is relevant here:<sup>101</sup>

ἀλλ' ἄρα Κασσάνδρῃ, ἰκέλη χρυσέῃ Ἀφροδίτῃ,  
Πέργαμον εἰσαναβᾶσα φίλον πατέρ' εἰσεινόησεν 700  
ἔσταότ' ἐν δίφρῳ, κήρυκά τε ἀστυβοώτην·

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<sup>98</sup> See Wolf ([1795] 1859).

<sup>99</sup> Hardwick (2000), 25. The question is echoed, for example in Browne (1852), 62.

<sup>100</sup> Kelvin Everest, 'Keats, John (1795–1821)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15229>>, accessed 18 April 2008.

<sup>101</sup> See Davreux (1942), 3-9 and Iriarte (1999), 51 for an account of the interpretations of the Homeric Cassandra as a prophetess. For further references see Neblung (1997).

τὸν δ' ἄρ' ἐφ' ἡμιόνων ἶδε κείμενον ἐν λεχέεσσι·  
κώκυσέν τ' ἄρ' ἔπειτα γέγωνέ τε πᾶν κατὰ ἄστυ·  
ὄψεσθε, Τρῶες καὶ Τρωάδες, Ἔκτορ' ἰόντες,  
εἴ ποτε καὶ ζῶντι μάχης ἐκ νοστήσαντι 705  
χαίρετ', ἐπεὶ μέγα χάσμα πόλει τ' ἦν παντί τε δήμῳ.  
Ὡς ἔφατ', οὐδέ τις αὐτόθ' ἐνὶ πτόλει λίπετ' ἀνὴρ  
οὐδὲ γυνή· πάντας γὰρ ἀάσχετον ἵκετο πένθος.

Cassandra, beautiful as Golden Aphrodite, was the first among the men and girdled womenfolk of Troy to recognize them as they came. She had climbed to the top of Pergamus and from that point she saw her father standing in the chariot with the herald, his town-crier. She saw Hector too, lying on a bier in the mule-cart. She gave a scream and cried for all the town to hear: 'Trojans and women of Troy, you used to welcome Hector when he came home safe from battle. He was the darling of every soul in town. Come out and see him now.'

Cassandra's cries plunged the whole town in grief, and soon there was not a man or woman left in Troy. They met the King with Hector's body at no great distance from the gates.<sup>102</sup>

Cassandra's recognition of the body of Hector and the announcement of his death to the Trojans foreshadow the semantic field by which images associated with her visionary gift and her frenzied possession of knowledge are depicted in the nineteenth century.

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<sup>102</sup> Lattimore (1961), 456.

The nine translations considered in this section span from 1850 to the late 1860s, where the first burlesqued Cassandra was put on stage in England. Whereas translations from *Agamemnon* show a clear interconnection between images belonging to Victorian cultural codes, to high-brow literature, and to popular entertainment, nineteenth-century translations from the *Iliad* draw an interesting parallel between the Cassandra myth and icons of Victorian madwomen and female weakness.

Cowper follows Chapman in his choice of ‘discern’ for εἰσεινόησεν in Cassandra’s first encounter with the body of Hector. Pope, on the other hand, without a metrical imperative, prefers ‘behold’ which, as we shall see, is the standard for nineteenth-century translations:

Industrious Mercurie. And now the saffron morning rose,  
Spreading her white robe over all the world –when (full of  
woes)  
They scourg’d on with the Corse to Troy, from whence no  
eye  
had seene  
(Before Cassandra) their returne. She (like love’s golden  
Queene,  
Ascending Pergamus) discern’d her father’s person nie,  
His Herald, and her brother’s Corse; and then she cast this  
crie  
Round about Troy: ‘O Troyans, if ever ye did greet  
Hector return’d from fight alive, now looke ye out and meet  
His ransom’d person. Then his worth was all your citie’s joy;

Now do it honour.' Out all rusht;

(Chapman, 1.617-625)

Nor warrior yet, nor cinctured matron knew  
Of all in Ilium aught of their approach,  
Cassandra sole except. She, beautiful  
As golden Venus, mounted on the height  
Of Pergamus, her father first discern'd,  
Borne on his chariot-seat erect, and knew  
The herald heard so oft in echoing Troy;  
Him also on his bier outstretch'd she mark'd,  
Whom the mules drew. Then, shrieking, through the streets  
She ran of Troy, and loud proclaim'd the sight.

(Cowper, 1.871-880)

Cassandra first beholds, from Ilion 's Spire,  
The sad Procession of her hoary Sire,  
Then, as the pensive Pomp advanc'd more near,  
Her breathless Brother stretch'd upon the Bier:  
A Show'r of Tears o'erflows her beauteous Eyes,  
Alarming thus all Ilion with her Cries.

(Pope, 1.870-875)

Despite obvious differences in methodology, Buckley (1851), Newman (1856), Barter (1857), Wright (1858-65), Derby (1864), and Merivale (1869) coincide with Pope in their translation of εἰσενόησεν with a term which belongs to the semantic field of 'see' and 'behold'. Dart (1862-65) follows Chapman and Cowper and chooses 'discern'd', whereas Norgate (1864) and Conington stress the phonic association with εἰσενόησεν and



translate ‘kenned’ and ‘know’ respectively. None of these forms, however, brings to the fore the prophetic Cassandra which is evident in *Agamemnon*.<sup>103</sup>

Whereas translations of εἰσεινόησεν do not carry significant implications for the depiction of Cassandra as a seer and a fortune-teller, the translations of κώκυσέν and γέγωνε connect the myth with dramatic gestures and attitudes which, as we will see, depict melodramatic heroines, burlesque characters and conventional Victorian conduct. It is noteworthy how scholarly and non-scholarly translations which follow Heyne’s edition differ here. Except for Newman, Dart, Wright and Derby, all the translators studied in this section coincide with Cowper in their choice of ‘shriek’ for κώκυσέν. Newman prefers a verb paraphrase ‘cried aloud with grief’ which is complemented by ‘wailed’ so as to emphasize the laments of the heroine. Whereas Wright maintains the connotation of mourn in ‘burst her wailing cry’, Dart and Derby avoid it and translate ‘utter a scream’ and ‘lifted up her voice’ respectively. The term κώκυσέν has nuances which are difficult to translate,<sup>104</sup> and the prevalence of ‘shriek’ over ‘wail’, ‘grief’ or ‘lament’ responds, as we will see, to cultural more than to linguistic issues.

In the nineteenth century, ‘shriek’ as referred to humans was used in order to express ‘a loud shrill cry of a human being in pain or terror’,<sup>105</sup> and the action of uttering ‘words with a shriek or shrieks’.<sup>106</sup> As a noun, the general definition of ‘shriek’ which prevails till the late years of the century

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<sup>103</sup> See Heyne and Graefenhan (1802), 738-739 for the non-prophetic Cassandra in Homer.

<sup>104</sup> See Spatafora (1997).

<sup>105</sup> *OED* shriek, v. 1a.

<sup>106</sup> *OED* shriek, v. 2.

is ‘an act of shrieking a shrill, piercing, or wild cry expressive of terror or pain. Also, an utterance of loud high-pitched laughter’.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, by 1853 a new popular and figurative sense of the word which is relevant here emerges and ‘shriek’ becomes ‘a hysterical exclamation; an outcry of alarm, surprise, or reproof’.<sup>108</sup>

Whilst nineteenth-century translations of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* evoke peripheral Cassandra-like social types such as gipsies and fortune-tellers, the translations of the *Iliad* connect the Trojan princess with literary women in accesses of frenzy. The image of women ‘shrieking’ is commonplace in Victorian literature to describe the association between hysterics and madwomen. As we shall see, the action is related to particular images —dishevelled hair, rolling eyes— which not only depict the Victorian Cassandra but also a number of ‘madwomen in the attic’, like Bertha Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, who shriek in either pain, or in fits of frenzy, or as a sign of the impotence caused by their concealment.

### 2.1.3. Other sources

Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* and Homer’s *Iliad* provide the key for Victorian reworkings of Cassandra. Her gestures and words are reproduced in translations and, as we will see, in paintings, ballets, and other forms of entertainment which include puppet shows, juvenile plays, street fairs and almanacs. Lycophron’s *Alexandra*, Euripides’ *Trojan Women* and Seneca’s *Agamemnon* are influential sources for reworkings of the myth in Europe. In nineteenth-century England, however, the amount of translations of these

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<sup>107</sup> OED shriek, n. a.

<sup>108</sup> OED shriek, n. a.

texts never surpassed Homer's *Iliad* nor Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and there is no substantial evidence for their influence on the comic Cassandra of the time.

The only nineteenth-century translation of Lycophron's *Alexandra* dates as early as 1806. Viscount Royston, son of the Earl of Hardwicke translated the poem while an undergraduate at Cambridge; a total of a hundred copies were privately printed and distributed to family and friends.<sup>109</sup> A review of 1812 states that even though the text never 'transpired beyond the circle of his academical acquaintance, his erudition was regarded, even by Porson, with wonder'.<sup>110</sup> The truth is that twenty years later, and also in 1859, Royston's *Alexandra* was reprinted in Abraham John Valpy's *Family Classical Library*.<sup>111</sup> Valpy's collection was addressed to the general non-learned reader, to young people and to women.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> See Urban, Sylvanus. *The Gentleman's Magazine* 10 (December 1838), 572.

<sup>110</sup> *Select Reviews* 1, (1812), 367.

<sup>111</sup> See *The Examiner* 1460, (24 January 1836).

<sup>112</sup> Only a year after the publication of Lycophron's *Alexandra*, *The Examiner*, 1319 (12 May 1833) advertised the *Family Classical Library* as follows:

Publishing monthly with biographies, portraits, maps, notes, &c. price 4s. 6d. small 8vo in cloth. Edited, Printed, and Published by A. J. Valpy, M. A. Red Lion Court, Fleet Street; and sold by all Booksellers. 'If you desire your son, though no great scholar, to read and reflect, it is your duty to place into his hands the best translations of the best classical authors' –Dr. Parr. As the learned languages do not form part of the education of females, the only access which they have to the stores of antiquity is through the medium of correct translation; and the present selection is intended to include those authors only, whose works may be read by the youth of both sexes.

The collection was sold at a reasonable price and newspapers such as the *Literary Gazette*, *Sun*, *Court Journal*, *The Spectator*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Observer* insisted on its suitability for a wide scope of readers.<sup>113</sup> A. J. Valpy had inherited his passion for Classics, and probably for pedagogical matters, from Dr. Richard Valpy, his father, and the headmaster of Reading School.<sup>114</sup> Even though Royston's *Alexandra* reached Porson and Parr, who were also friends of the Valpy family,<sup>115</sup> there is no evidence of its influence on the Victorian popular stage in the sources consulted. Still, the argument of the poem and particular passages of Royston's translation point to the same set of common cultural knowledge which was evoked in nineteenth-century visual representations of the myth and the translations of Homer and Aeschylus:

Some wretch shall groan, 'From her no falsehood  
flow'd;  
True were the shrieks of that ill-omen'd bird.'  
Such was her strain; she hurried to her cell  
With troubled steps, and took th' astonish'd soul

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<sup>113</sup> See for example the following reviews as quoted in *Sketches* (1833), 214: 'Gentleman's *Classical Magazine* Dec. 1820; 'Mr. Valpy has projected a *Family Classical Library*. The idea is excellent, and the work cannot fail to be acceptable to youth of both sexes, as well as to a large portion of the reading community, who have not had the benefit of a learned education.' *Weekly Free Press*: 'We see no reason why this work should not find its way into the boudoir of a lady, as well as into the library of the learned. It is cheap, portable and altogether a work which may safely be placed in the hands of persons of both sexes'.

<sup>114</sup> Hall and Macintosh (2005), 246-250.

<sup>115</sup> See *The Gentleman's Magazine* 43, (January-June 1855), 205-5 for an account of the life of A. J. Valpy.

With siren songs and mournful melodies,  
Or frenzied as a moon-struck bacchanal,  
Or furious sibyl, or Phicean sphinx,  
Show'd her dark speech, and mutter'd oracles.<sup>116</sup>

The first translation of Euripides' *Trojan Women* was only in 1780, two years earlier than the publication of the first complete translation of Euripides by Michael Wodhull in 1780, and then by Potter in 1783. Both Wodhull's and Potter's translation of the tragedy were widely received and reprinted till the late years of the nineteenth century.<sup>117</sup> The success of Euripides on the eighteenth-century stage was due to his depiction of women, which offered a wide range of maternal and suffering heroines to the She-tragedy plays.<sup>118</sup> Still, there is no relevant reworking of the Euripidean Cassandra in British Restoration drama: and the myth was never granted the emblematic position of Alcestis and Medea throughout the nineteenth century.

The Schlegel lectures given in Vienna in 1808 enthroned Aeschylus in England whereas his rejection of Euripides pushed the playwright into the background.<sup>119</sup> The *Penny Magazine*, for example, recalls in 1839:

'If' says Schlegel, 'we look at Euripides by himself uncompar'd with his predecessors, if we select several of his better pieces, and single passages in others, we must allow

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<sup>116</sup> *Hesiod* (1832), 288 l.1696-1704.

<sup>117</sup> Foster (1966), 47.

<sup>118</sup> Hall and Macintosh (2005), 67. For the development of the 'She-tragedies' see Howe (1992), 108-128.

<sup>119</sup> See Schlegel (1815).

him extraordinary praise. On the contrary, if we place him in his connection with the history of the art, if, in his pieces, we always look to the whole, and again to his general aims, as they appear in the works which have come down to us, we cannot avoid subjecting him to much and severe reproof. Of few authors is it possible to say, with truth, so much good and so much evil. He was a genius of boundless talents, well practised in the most varied arts of mind: but in him a superabundance of splendid and amiable qualities was not regulated by that lofty earnestness of thought, and that severe wisdom of the artist, which we venerate in Aeschylus and Sophocles.<sup>120</sup>

This and other allusions to Euripides are proof that he remained present in the Victorian popular print culture and Talfourd's burlesque of *Alcestis* is an example of his influence on the comic popular stage.<sup>121</sup> None of these references, however, prove a great familiarity of mid-brow and popular culture with his Cassandra. Besides Wodhull and Potter, the only translation of the nineteen extant plays of Euripides before the 1860s is Buckley's, which was reissued for the Bohn's Classical library in 1850.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, even though Robert Browning championed Euripides among his contemporaries, few translators devoted themselves to the task of rendering *Troades* to the English language in the first half of the century.

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<sup>120</sup> *Penny Magazine* (8 June 1839), 224.

<sup>121</sup> Hall and Macintosh (2005), 431-454.

<sup>122</sup> France and Haynes (2006), iv.182.

The first translation of Seneca's tragedies into English dates as early as 1581 when Thomas Newton collected and edited the complete dramatic works of Seneca in English. The compilation includes works by several translators, some of whom had already published translations of the individual plays before:<sup>123</sup> Jesuit Jasper Heywood translated *Troades* and John Studley, *Agamemnon*. Seneca had a profound influence on Elizabethan tragedy but during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the number of translations declined: even though Newton's collection was reprinted till the late years of the Victorian period, Edward Sherburne's (1648-1679) and Charles Wheelwright's (1810) were the only full translations of a play by Seneca in English till the early years of the twentieth century.<sup>124</sup> Seneca's influence on the English stage began to wane in the eighteenth century, so his influence on the Victorians stage, as demonstrated by Hall in her analysis of the Clytemnestra myth, must be studied not so much in translation as with regard to works, such as James Thomson's *Agamemnon* which draw on his tragedies.

## 2.2. NINETEENTH CENTURY CASSANDRA

The most widely known episodes of the story of Cassandra in Victorian times were the ones recounted by Homer and Aeschylus.<sup>125</sup> The classical figures of the Trojan cycle were evoked in essays, novels and even in the illustrated papers of the time. With regard to the figure of Cassandra, the

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<sup>123</sup> France and Haynes (2006), iv.531.

<sup>124</sup> Share (1998), 145.

<sup>125</sup> For a list of translations of Homer's *Iliad* in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Clarke (1945).

aspects of the myth that were generally highlighted throughout the nineteenth century are her lack of the gift of persuasion and her prophetic visions in Troy and Argos. The Homeric and Aeschylean Cassandra is frequently represented in the Victorian arts rending her hair, tearing her clothes, mocked, despised and uttering a constant stream of barely intelligible words. A historiographic research on the reception of the Cassandra myth in the 1800s must go back to the late years of the eighteenth century which foreshadow the network of aesthetic codes that converge in its reception in the subsequent decades.

In 1788, John Lemprière published his *Classical Dictionary of Proper Names Mentioned in Ancient Authors*, which became the main reference book for classical knowledge in high and middlebrow nineteenth-century England. Lemprière focuses his description of Cassandra on her prophecies in Troy and Argos, though he also makes occasional references to other episodes of the myth such as her confinement in Troy and Ajax's acts of violence against her body. In the early nineteenth century connections were made between the aesthetic and non-aesthetic codes in relation to women, prophets, gipsies and fortune-tellers, which profoundly shaped the reception of the Cassandra myth throughout the century. As we will see, the resulting points of reciprocity between the cultural and figurative objects, which allude to marginal access to knowledge in a political milieu which witnessed the first organized movements for the liberation of women, raise questions about the gendered construction of both Western thought in general and the myth of Cassandra in particular.



*2.2.1. Gestures, movements and attitudes*

According to Bernard H. Stern, in order to account for the attitude towards Greece in the eighteenth century,

...it is necessary to study three influential forces which developed from 1732 to 1786 and directed the idealization of antiquity to Greece. These forces are, first, the growth of scientific Greek archaeology; secondly, the growth of sentimental accounts of Greece written by travellers; and, finally, the rise of a Hellenized body of aesthetics produced by artists, painters, and poets.<sup>126</sup>

The promotion of the study of antiquities by the Society of Dilettanti (1732) and the Society of Antiquaries (1751) in England,<sup>127</sup> the publications by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Johann Gottfried Herder and, most importantly, Johann Joachim Winckelmann,<sup>128</sup> the controversy between Le Chevalier, Bryant, Wakefield and Morrit about the location of Troy,<sup>129</sup> are but a few examples of the wide and heterogenic presence of Greece in high and middlebrow cultural circles of the second half of the eighteenth century. Within such a rich context of classical references, the painters John Flaxman and George Romney, and the society hostesses Lady Hamilton and Henriette Hendel-Schütz are fundamental for the study of the reception of Cassandra both in the Regency and in Victorian England.

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<sup>126</sup> Stern (1969), 11.

<sup>127</sup> See Clarke (1945) and Stern (1969).

<sup>128</sup> Clarke (1945), 188; Stern (1969), 81-117.

<sup>129</sup> Clarke (1945), 183-185. See for example Chevalier (1791), Bryant (1795) and (1799), Franclin (1800) and Morrit (1800).

Cassandra was a recurrent figure in the eighteenth-century European scene. Operas, ballets, cantatas and comical pieces were composed after Aeschylus, Seneca, and Homer, or as free versions of the Troy epic.<sup>130</sup> James Thomson's political *Agamemnon* (1738), for example, was restaged in France in 1780 in a translation by Henri Panckoucke, and Hall traces the play's potential influence as far as Wagner.<sup>131</sup> Due to the impact of Thomson's tragedy and to the popularity of the actress who played his Cassandra, Mrs. Cibber,<sup>132</sup> I consider this to be an excellent starting point for my arguments on the reception of the myth.

Susannah Maria Cibber (1714-1766) was trained as a singer by Handel and as an actress by Colley Cibber and Aaron Hill.<sup>133</sup> Even though the natural manner of her gestures was a salient feature in her acting,<sup>134</sup> she practised Hill's style, which was to become enshrined in the sets of encoded gestures and postures for each of the ten passions outlined in his treaty *The*

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<sup>130</sup> See Reid 1993 *s.v.* Cassandra for a comprehensive list.

<sup>131</sup> Hall (2005), 72.

<sup>132</sup> See Van Lennep *et al* (1961), 710:

Thursday 6 DL. Agamemnon. Parts by Quin, Milward, Cibber, Wright, Hill, Mrs. Potter, Mrs. Cibber, Miss Brett; but edition of 1738 lists: Agamemnon-Quin; Egistus-Milward; Melisander-Cibber; Arcas-Wright; Orestes-Green; Talhybius Herald –Havard; Clytemnestra –Mrs. Furnival. Prologue written by the Author of Eurydice and spoken by Quin. Epilogue spoken by Mrs. Cibber. Comment: Never Acted Before. [By James Thomson].

<sup>133</sup> Lesley Wade Soule, 'Cibber, Susannah Maria (1714-1766)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5417>>, accessed 15 Oct 2007.

<sup>134</sup> Highfill *et al.* (1973-1993), iii. 270, 279-80.

*Art of Acting; An Essay* (1746).<sup>135</sup> With her first entrance on stage in IV. ii, as well as in her subsequent speeches, pity was the fundamental passion which characterised her Cassandra in Thomson's play. Thomson followed the structure of Seneca's *Agamemnon* whilst retaining an Aeschylean hallmark in his verse and in the laments and visions of Priam's daughter.<sup>136</sup>

Hill described the application of pity in acting as follows:

let him, first, strain his muscle into the tension, above required for expression of joy, and if, then, he adds the look that is proper to grief, the result of this mixed co-operation of contraries (of a visage peculiar to sorrow, with a spring on the muscles adapted to joy) will immediately produce the gesture, the voice and the feeling expression of Pity.- And the more strongly he braces his nerves, in opposition to the distress that relaxes his look, the more beautifully will he touch the concern, till his utterance paints it, as one may say, to the ear.-For, by effect of a struggle, that will be formed in his mind, between the grief, that has softened his eye, and the force, that invigorates his muscles, there will arise a pathetic and trembling interruptedness of sensible sound, that must affect a whole audience, with a participated concern in the passion.<sup>137</sup>

The pathos of the Aeschylean verse which interfaces mantic sounds with words of distress is adapted to accommodate the myth to the tragic heroine

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<sup>135</sup> See Lowe, Arnott and Robinson (1970), 74-75 for further editions.

<sup>136</sup> Hall (2005), 69-72.

<sup>137</sup> Hill ([1746] 1821), 17.

of the eighteenth-century stage. Therefore, Thomson's Cassandra and the Senecan prototype meet in the 'pathetic and trembling interruptedness of sensible sound' which characterises her expression of grief. Another lesser passion which marks the character of Cassandra in Thomson's play is fear. Hill outlines the expression of fear as follows:

Here, an actor, who would impress his imagination with a natural idea of fear, will most effectually represent it, by assuming the same languor, in look and in muscles, that was just now described, as peculiar to *grief*. For then, if he would strike out, in an instant, the distinction by which fear is diversified from sorrow, let him only, in place of that resigned, plaintive, passive distress, that is proper to *grief*, add (without altering the relax'd state of his nerves) a starting, apprehensive and listening alarm to his look, keeping his eyes widely stretched, but unfixed; his mouth still, and open; his steps light and shifting-yet, his joints unbraced, faint, nerveless. And, then will his whole air express the true picture of Fear, and his voice too, *sound* it significantly.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid. 12. Hill's description of grief involves the following gestures: 'his look, ... must, now, in a moment, take a mournful and declined impression. His muscles must fall loose, and be unbraced into the habit of languor. And, then, no sooner shall his nerves have formed themselves to this lax disposition, for complying with the melancholy demand of the sentiments, than his voice also will associate its sound to the plaintive resignation of his gesture, and the result, both in air and accent, will be the most moving resemblance of a heart-felt and passionate sorrow. Ibid. 11.

The portrayal of Cassandra with open eyes and mouth is not new: the gesture is associated with the Ajax episode at the temple of Athena,<sup>139</sup> and Seneca's chorus of Argive women in *Agamemnon* depict Apollo's possession of Cassandra with sudden and convulsive movements of her body, eyes and mouth.<sup>140</sup> Early eighteenth-century visual depictions of Priam's daughter, however, retain the languor of the heroines of the she-tragedies and her gesture evinces grief and fear instead of derangement. Clear predecessors which portray Cassandra as a pitiful victim are La Doué and Bouvard's opera *Cassandre* first performed on 22 June 1706 at the Académie Royale de Musique, Paris,<sup>141</sup> and Stuck and La Doué's opera ballet *Ajax*, first performed at L' Opéra Paris in 1716.<sup>142</sup> Both operas focus on Cassandra's wails and on her fear being a war trophy both for Agamemnon and for Ajax. Furthermore, as exemplified by the dying scene at the end of *Cassandre*, her requited love for Oreste and for Chorebe prevails over the scenes of prophetic frenzy:

Egiste ou plutôt votre Mère, m'a porté ces funestes coups;  
mais je chéris leur violence. Puisqu'avant de prendre le jour,  
je puis déclarer un amour, que je condamnois au silence...<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Davreux (1942), 139-209.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. 62-66.

<sup>141</sup> *Cassandre* was composed by Thomas Bertin de La Doué and François Bouvard with libretto by François-Joseph de Lagrange-Chancel based on Claude Boyer's *Agamemnon* (1666). See Lavalliere (1760), 138 and Girdlestone (1972), 160-163.

<sup>142</sup> The opera ballet *Ajax* (1716) was composed by Jean-Baptiste Stuck and Thomas Bertin de La Doué with the libretto by A. Mennesson. See Girdlestone (1972), 182. *Ajax* was restaged in Paris in 16 Jun 1726, 2 Aug 1742 and 13 May 1755. See Lavalliere (1760), 153.

<sup>143</sup> La Doué (1706), 224-5.

The gestures described by Hill (e.g.: the expression of the eyes, hands and mouth) are still associated with the paradigm of Cassandra in modern reworkings of the myth.<sup>144</sup> However, new economic and political orders foster different cultural texts which motivate and are motivated by these signs. Whilst early eighteenth-century Cassandra is characterized by the hallmark of the emotions of the Restoration theatre —sorrow, agitation—, late Victorian interpretations of the bombastic gestures of her eyes and mouth allude to a demon-esque sage woman for which Frederick Sandy's *Cassandra* (c.1895) is shorthand (see fig. 7).<sup>145</sup> Flaxman, Romney, Hamilton and Schütz's refigurations of the myth bridge those two poles by highlighting, in different degrees, the frenzy of her movements.

*Agamnenon vengé* with music by Josef Starzer and choreography by Jean Georges Noverre was first performed in Viena in 1771; the Milan revival in 1774 enjoyed such an overwhelming success that it might even have inspired the title of the tragedy by Vicente García de la Huerta

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<sup>144</sup> See, for example Pauline Koner's solo *Cassandra* (1953) based on the music by Aaron Copeland. *Oxford Dictionary of Dance*. s.v Koner, Paulina (276). Also see Anna Kisselgoff 'The Dance: Modern Pioneers', *The New York Times*, 27 May 1985, <<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F02E4D71639F934A15756C0A963948260&n=Top/Reference/Times%20Topics/Subjects/D/Dancing>> accessed 3 Nov 2007.

<sup>145</sup> See Picart, Bernard. *Cassandra Warns the Trojans Their Fate and is Not Believed* (1731) (See fig.2). Notwithstanding the neutral depiction of Cassandra's hair in Sandys' *Helen and Cassandra* (1866), woodcut on paper, Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, USA, Sandys retains the fury of Priam's daughter with her gesture against Helen.

*Agamenón vengado*.<sup>146</sup> There is no evidence of Noverre's *Agamemnon vengé* being staged in England during the century. However, the indisputable influence both of his writings and of his work as a dancer, as a choreographer and as a ballet master for the renovation of classical ballet allow us to include his reworking of the Cassandra myth in this thesis. The *ballet d'action* initiated by Noverre broke with the restriction of the body of dancers encumbered by tonnelets and wigs which hindered their movements. Noverre claimed that ballet, like music and painting 'ne doivent être qu'une copie fidèle de la belle nature'<sup>147</sup> and that it was an independent aesthetic unit liberated from the restrictions of opera:

Un ballet est un tableau, ou plutôt une suite de tableaux liés entre eux par l'action qui fait le sujet du Ballet; la scène est pour ainsi dire, la toile sur laquelle le Compositeur rend ses idées; le choix de la musique, la décoration, le costume, en sont les coloris; le compositeur est le Peintre. Si la nature lui a donné ce feu et cet enthousiasme —tous les arts imitateurs, l'immortalité ne peut-elle pas lui être assurée?<sup>148</sup>

Plot was another key element in Noverre, who departed from the Aristotelian units and developed specific rules applied to dance which were largely based on the transplantation of the verbal to the mimic discourse:

La peinture a des règles de proportion, de contraste, de position, d'opposition, de distribution, d'harmonie; la Danse

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<sup>146</sup> See Bañuls, Crespo and Morenilla (2006) for an account of García de la Huerta's adaptation of Sophocles' *Electra*.

<sup>147</sup> Noverre (1760)1.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.* 2.

a les mêmes principes. Ce qui fait Tableau en Peinture, fait Tableau en Danse: l'effet de ces deux Arts est égal, tout deux ont le même but à remplir, ils doivent parler au coeur par les yeux: l'un et l'autre sont privés de la parole: l'expression des Têtes, l'Action des Bras, les Positions, mâles et hardies, voilà qui parlent en Danse comme en peinture.<sup>149</sup>

With regard to *Agamemnon vengé*, Noverre draws the plot both from Aeschylus' and Seneca's *Agamemnon*, Sophocles' *Electra* and Aeschylus' *Eumenides* 'pour former un ensemble que pût fournir à l'Action et au mouvement rapide et précis qu'exigent les Scènes pantomimes'.<sup>150</sup> Cassandra is presented in the 'personnages du Ballet' as 'Fille de Priam, Captive d'Agamemnon' and the pantomimic actions chosen by Noverre from the prototypes cue the suffering caused by her captivity and by her prophetic visions in Argos.<sup>151</sup> Unfortunately, I have not yet come across an engraving from Noverre's *Agamemnon vengé* so far in my research. Nonetheless, the furore-dolore dichotomy portrayed in the juxtaposition of Clytemnestra and Cassandra in his ballet parallels that of Médée and Creuse in *Médée et Jason* played by Adélaïde Simonet and Giovanna Baccelli respectively.

Giovanna Baccelli had become, together with Auguste Vestris, one of the ballet icons of the eighteenth century. She had been model to Thomas Gainsborough, Sir Joshua Reynolds and John Boydell and had also worked for Francesco Clerico.<sup>152</sup> In England, whilst her performance as Creuse in

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<sup>149</sup> Noverre (1776), 10.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. 12.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. 34-39.

<sup>152</sup> Eliot (2007), 7-8.



*Médée et Jason* was widely reviewed, her life as mistress to the third Duke of Dorset put her at the centre of the theatrical gossip. At Covent Garden she danced with Vestris, Bournville and other famous contemporary dancers when Noverre was *maître de danse*. Together with Vestris, she

...broke established boundaries in achieving extraordinarily demanding technical feats, while they also explored the dramatic demands of the ballets d'action created by Jean-Georges Noverre and other like-minded maîtres, who required dancers to communicate through mimed gesture and movement.<sup>153</sup>

As a result, despite the fact that Noverre's *Agamemnon vengé* was never staged in Britain, the movements and gestures of pity, fear and love, which were portrayed in Noverre's choreographies and assimilated by Baccelli and others, were easily recognizable to a British audience.

John Flaxman (1755-1826) illustrated Homer (1793) and Dante (ca.1793) during his stay in Italy (1787-1794),<sup>154</sup> where he gained wide recognition amongst the European nobility after his works for Mrs. Hare Naylor and the Dowager Countess Spencer. Only a year after his return to England, he published his illustrations to Aeschylus' tragedies and the first

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid. 15.

<sup>154</sup> In 'Flaxman, John (1755–1826)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9679>>, accessed 17 Sept 2007, Sarah Symmons highlights how Flaxman's knowledge of the Classical world exceeded that of many of his contemporary artists, pointing to *The Antiquities of Athens* by Stuart and Revet, for example, among his reading.

English edition of the *Iliad*.<sup>155</sup> As the greatest exponent of Neoclassicism, Flaxman's works have been reprinted and studied up to the present time.<sup>156</sup> During the nineteenth century, his plates decorated a large number of editions and translations of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and Homer's *Iliad* in England, and his illustrations of Dante had a profound influence on the arts of the time.<sup>157</sup> From 1810, he delivered various lectures on English, Egyptian and Greek Sculpture, Science, Beauty, Composition, Style, Drapery, and Modern and Antique Art as the first Professor of Sculpture at the Royal Academy, and in 1851 the Flaxman Gallery opened at University College London.

Cassandra is portrayed twice in the two sets of Flaxman's illustrations to Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (1795): standing by Agamemnon's side during his triumphal entry to Argos,<sup>158</sup> and lying dead on the floor after Clytemnestra's murder.<sup>159</sup> However, none is evoked with any significance

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> See Symmons (1984).

<sup>157</sup> Symmons (1984), 277-9.

<sup>158</sup> As described in Sparkes Plate 21. (1879), 17:

'My royal lord, by whose victorious hand/  
The tow'rs of Troy are fall'n.'  
Agamemnon, after the ruin of Troy, is returning to Argos with Cassandra, in a chariot drawn by four horses, and followed by armed soldiers. He is met by the old men of Argos, who welcome his return with eager reverence.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. Plate 22:

'My king, my royal lord, what words can show/My grief.'  
Clytemnestra is standing by the dead body of Agamemnon, whom she has slain with a battle axe as he came from his bath. The body of the unfortunate

elsewhere. Despite the lack of an explicit reference to Cassandra in Flaxman's illustrations to the *Iliad*, the iconic gestures of a Trojan woman who witnesses Hector's death from the walls of the city in *Andromache Fainting on the Wall* clearly point to Priam's daughter.<sup>160</sup> Isolated from the rest of the group, she rends her hair while she witnesses Achilles' vengeance over the body of Hector (see fig.3). As we will see, this hitherto highly analysed ancient gesture is also frequently adopted in the nineteenth century reworkings of the myth, particularly, by the Pre-Raphaelites.<sup>161</sup>

Bentley signals two features of Flaxman's technique here to explain the extent to which his Cassandra influences subsequent refigurations of the myth.<sup>162</sup> First, Bentley emphasizes that

the 'story may be represented', rather than illustrated, by the designs, except for a few words to indicate the scene represented..., and the entire story had to be pieced together

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Cassandra, who has shared his fate, lies in the background. At the head and feet of the king are citizens of Argos, bent in attitudes of grief and horror at hearing from the lips of Clytemnestra what she has done.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. 13. Plate 34:

'Around, a train of weeping sisters stands,/To raise her, sinking, with assistant hands' –*B 22, l. 605* Andromache, hearing from the chamber the sound of lamentation, rushes to the tower, followed by her attendants. From there she sees the chariot of Achilles rushing toward the Greek ships with the body of her husband Hector lashed to it by his heels. She sinks into a swoon, supported by her sisters and attendants. The nurse in the background is holding in her arms the infant son of Hector.

<sup>161</sup> See Taplin ([1978] 2003) for Cassandra's gestures in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. Also see De Martino (2004).

<sup>162</sup> Bentley (1964), 8.

from the engraved designs themselves. The aim was not to illustrate the original work, but to imitate it in a different medium....<sup>163</sup>

Therefore, Flaxman represented rather than accompanied the text; his outlines were complete in themselves and not dependent on or secondary to it. Secondly, Bentley highlights how Flaxman's account 'was told in the simplest outlines, imitating in their chastity and directness the best of classical vase painting, which Flaxman was consciously echoing'.<sup>164</sup> The iconography of Flaxman's drawings was, accordingly, a highly referential sign for the receivers. In this case, it is the rending of Cassandra's hair as a sign of mourning and frenzy of rage.

Flaxman had met George Romney (1734-1802) during the seventies as a member of the circle of the Gothic enthusiasts, when he started to synthesize Classicism with Medievalism.<sup>165</sup> Romney encouraged Flaxman's talent while he was at a tender age,<sup>166</sup> and Flaxman was among the handful of friends who had seen Romney's Liverpool cartoons before his son

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Maclean-Eltham (1996), 7; Bell (2000), 10.

<sup>166</sup> Gamlin (1894), 124. Flaxman also sat for Romney twice in 1795 for *John Flaxman modelling the bust of William Hayley* (Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut, USA (B1981.25.538) and *John Flaxman modelling the bust of William Hayley with Thomas Alphonso Hayley in the foreground* (National Portrait Gallery, London, England, 101). See Barry Maclean-Eltham (1996), 28.

presented them to the Liverpool Royal Institution in 1823.<sup>167</sup> Besides their friendship, the two artists also worked together, for example, enlarging the house of William Hayley at Eartham in 1780.<sup>168</sup> From 1782 till the early years of the 1790s Emma Hart, later Lady Hamilton, sat for George Romney as Circe, Calypso, Euphrosyne, a Sybil, a Bacchante, Saint Cecilia, Lady Macbeth and Cassandra.<sup>169</sup> Romney portrayed the heroine in *Lady Hamilton as Cassandra* (c.1786) with ‘Rich and tawny hair, mouth open, looking upwards expressing tragedy’ (see fig. 4).<sup>170</sup> In 1791, Romney painted Lady Hamilton in *Cassandra Raving* illustrating *Troilus and Cressida* II. ii. for *Boydell’s Shakespeare’s Illustrations*.<sup>171</sup> The same year, she was depicted in

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<sup>167</sup> See Kidson (2002), 4. As annotated in Kidson (2002), 118, 138n.2, there is a total of eighteen cartoons drawn in the late 1770s which, as John Flaxman noted in William Hayley’s biography of Romney, were ‘entirely new in British art’.

<sup>168</sup> As outlined in Gamlin (1894), 123:

In 1780, Hayley, finding that his books suffered from damp, enlarged his house by the addition of a capacious library, 30 feet by 24 feet, built over a arcade. He engaged Flaxman to decorate the interior, and Romney to paint it, -a happy combination of talent; for artist and sculptor were friends.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. 137-182.

<sup>170</sup> Maclean-Eltham (1996), 32. See Kidson (2002), 169-171 for a discussion on the identification of Romney’s *Studies of a Female Figure Holding a Wand* (c.1776-1777 and c.1777-1782) as either Cassandra, Juno or Circe.

<sup>171</sup> As quoted in Tours (1963), 99, Romney writes to Lady Hamilton in 1792:

You may be assured that I have the same anxiety that Sir William and yourself should continue to think well of me, and the same desire to do everything in my power that may merit your esteem. I have waited till I could give you some account of the picter [sic.] of Cassandra and some

Richard Westall's *Cassandra in the Temple of Minerva Prophesying the Death of Hector and the Fall of Troy* although the impact of this work was not as decisive as Flaxman's or Romney's. According to Sillars,<sup>172</sup> Romney's source for the Boydell Cassandra was not so much Shakespeare as classical tragedy, particularly, I may add, Seneca's *Agamemnon*: with vaporous drapery, an axe in her right hand and snatching away the crown of laurel that pins her hair, she foretells the misfortunes of Troy.

The works of the Boydell Gallery were still commented upon throughout the nineteenth century, following their 1803 publication.<sup>173</sup> As Sillars points out, there is a significant difference between the responses of the beholders of a painting in a gallery and the consumers of printed material, especially in the years between the eighteenth and the nineteenth century, when viewing as a social act was replaced by a forum for discussion.<sup>174</sup> The exhibition of the paintings of Boydell's Gallery was widely received, but the number of purchasers of the prints, either as subscribers to the various series or as occasional owners of individual engravings, was colossal.<sup>175</sup> On the whole, the turn of the nineteenth century

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other of the pictures you were so kind as to let me see. The Cassandra is at last gone to the Shakespeare Gallery. It suits.

The King and Royal Family saw it. I have never heard from the Prince of Wales till a few days ago Mr. West called and said the Prince desired him to look at the picture for His Royal Hiness [sic.]. They are near finished. The lively one I have made to suit Calipso.

<sup>172</sup> Sillars (2006), 138.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid. 261.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. 262.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. 254-9.

witnessed a host of highbrow receivers commenting on Romney's furious Cassandra. Meanwhile, the popularity of Lady Hamilton as a model for Romney increased with the performances of her 'Attitudes'.<sup>176</sup>

From Lady Hamilton's very first appearance in 1787 at Sir William Hamilton's Villa at Posillipo, Naples,<sup>177</sup> she captivated artists, writers and both the men and women of the European aristocracy.<sup>178</sup> In her 'Attitudes', Lady Hamilton impersonated famous female figures of paintings, plays, the

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<sup>176</sup> Also related to the Boydell project, to Flaxman, Romney, and later to Richard Westall, Henry Fuseli (Johann Heinrich Füssli, 1741–1825) mirrors in *Cassandra Raving* the image of the deranged prophetess that is at the centre of the aesthetics of the turn of the century (see fig. 5). The drawing wasn't as popular as expected from the work of such a highly influential figure in the intellectual and artistic circles of his time. For example, as outlined in Clarke (1945) 188, he was the first to translate Wincklemann's works into English. Nevertheless, Fuseli's Cassandra synthesizes the gestures, movements and the deployment of the draperies that Hamilton and later Schütz read in the heroine. See D. H. Weinglass, 'Fuseli, Henry (1741–1825)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2007 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10254>>, accessed 28 Oct 2007; Powell (1951), 21.

<sup>177</sup> Williams (2006), 138. Emma Hart married Sir William Hamilton in 1791. Cf. Geoffrey V. Morson, 'Hamilton, Sir William (1731–1803)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12142>>, accessed 3 Nov 2007.

<sup>178</sup> Lady Hamilton had both admirers and detractors. Elisabeth Vigée le Brun and Goethe, for example, both praised and criticised her art. Despite the controversy of her attitudes they never went unnoticed. For Lady Hamilton's relation with Goethe see Peakman (2005), 47-8 and Williams (2006), 139. For her relationship with Elisabeth Vigée le Brun see Peakman (2005), 49 and Williams (2006), 140. See Peakman (2005), 68, 77-81, 85, 107 and Williams (2006), 167-171 for a relation with the European aristocracy and Queen Maria Carolina.

Bible and classical mythology. The audiences found themselves enthralled by the rapid movements of her body, hair and shawls, which she designed and chose with care for the occasion.<sup>179</sup> The light also played an important role in her performances, having a dramatic effect on the pathos of her poses. In 1794, Friedrich Rehberg published in Rome a set of twelve drawings of Lady Hamilton's Attitudes entitled *Drawings Faithfully Copied from Nature at Naples* which included: Sybil, Mary Magdalene, verliebte einsame Träumerin, Sophonisbe im Begriff, Amymone, Muse der Tanzkunst, Iphigenia, Nympe, Priesterin, Cleopatra, Heiligen Rose and Niobe.<sup>180</sup> For her performances, Hamilton was inspired by her impersonations for Romney and also by the collection of Sir William Hamilton's vases.<sup>181</sup> There is no Cassandra in Rehberg's drawings and no evidence of a performance of Cassandra by Lady Hamilton has been found in my research so far, except for the comments that Lady Elizabeth Foster wrote in her diary around 1791. The Duchess of Devonshire had invited Mrs. Hart to perform her 'attitudes' after their acquaintance in Bath.<sup>182</sup> As a member of the audience, Lady Elizabeth Foster noted in her diary that:

This morning she was to show her attitudes. She came, and her appearance was more striking than I can describe, or could have imagined. She was draped exactly like a Grecian statue, her chemise of white muslin was exactly in that form,

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<sup>179</sup> Peakman (2005), 47-9 and Williams (2006), 138-45, 243, 256,296, 331.

<sup>180</sup> See Rehberg (1794)

<sup>181</sup> Williams (2006), 141. Warner argues that it was Sir William Hamilton who designed the attitudes (1960), 99.

<sup>182</sup> Tours (1963), 89.



her sash in the antique manner, her fine black hair flowing over her shoulders. It was a Helena, Cassandra or Andromache, no Grecian or Trojan Princess could have had a more perfect or commanding form. Her attitudes, which she performed with the help alone of two shawls, were varied – every one was perfect –everything she did was just and beautiful. She then sung and acted the mad scene in *Nina* – this was good, but I think chiefly owing to her beautiful action and attitudes –her singing except in the *Buffo* is always in my mind a secondary talent and performance.<sup>183</sup>

Lady Elizabeth Foster's reference to the performance is vague, and full reliance on this source could be misleading. Nevertheless, there is evidence that Lady Hamilton's attitudes inspired Henriette Hendel-Schütz, and among Schütz's repertoire there was a Cassandra. Moreover, in 1789, *Il Ritorno di Agamennone*, a tragic ballet in five acts choreographed by Francesco Clerico, opened at San Benedetto Theatre, Venice, with Rosa Clerico Panzieri dancing with great success as Cassandra.<sup>184</sup> It would not be surprising, then, if an enthusiastic aristocrat audience who could have enjoyed Clerico's art had required from Hamilton an *attitude* of Priam's daughter.

Henriette Hendel-Schütz (1772-1849) had become acquainted with Lady Hamilton's Attitudes thanks to F. Pforr, who possessed a copy of

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<sup>183</sup> *Qtd* in Warner (1960), 108-9 and Tours (1963), 90.

<sup>184</sup> In 1801 the ballet was revived in La Scala, Milan with the name of *Agamennone*. See 'Agamennone' *APGRD Database*, University of Oxford, ed. Amanda Wrigley, <<http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/database>>, accessed 05Feb2009.

Rehberg's drawings which he had received from Wilhelm Tischbein.<sup>185</sup> Schütz began her performances in 1808 in Frankfurt-am-Main and also toured various countries in Europe: Sweden, Finland, Denmark.<sup>186</sup> Two particular features which distinguished Schütz's performances from Lady Hamilton's were relevant for the reception of Cassandra in the aristocratic and intellectual circles of early nineteenth-century Europe. Schütz had a fixed repertoire of *attitudes* and, contrary to Hamilton, she used to comment on her work during the intervals of her performances.<sup>187</sup> These discussions resulted in deeper understanding of the performance codes for the mythological figures impersonated by Schütz. In 1809, J.N. Peroux published a collection of twenty-six illustrations based on Schütz's performances,<sup>188</sup> which are valuable records for her reworking of Cassandra.<sup>189</sup> According to Holmström's analysis of the illustrations:

As a rule the performances consisted of two main parts, the first with motifs from classical mythology in the style of antique sculpture, the second with Christian motifs in painterly style. Each part was divided into two cycles; the antique part into an Egyptian and a Grecian cycle, the

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<sup>185</sup> In 1791-5, Tischbein published Sir William Hamilton's *Collection of Engravings from Antique Vases*, a book of drawings of Sir William Hamilton's vases. Tischbein had also been a profound admirer of Lady Hamilton's performances which he attended on various occasions in Europe.

<sup>186</sup> Wurst (2002), 172

<sup>187</sup> Holmström (1967), 206.

<sup>188</sup> Peroux (1809).

<sup>189</sup> As argued in Holmström (1967), 191, they cover a whole performance, unlike Sergel's two Sketches 'drawn during Mme. Hendel-Schütz's visit to Stockholm'.

Christian part into an Italian and an ancient German cycle. In Peroux's cycle we see the Egyptian style represented by Isis and a caryatid... . The Grecian style is seen in two Ariadnes... and a Cassandra, ... and there is an odalisque.... The second part of the performance begins with a connected cycle in the style of the Italian school of the life of the Virgin from the Annunciation to the Ascension ...and continues with a smaller cycle with the same motif in the style of Dürer and Cranach.<sup>190</sup>

Peroux's illustration of Cassandra portrays Schütz overwhelmed by her visions, half bent on a pedestal, with one knee on the floor and dishevelled hair slightly covered with a shawl. Fearfully foreseeing tragedy, the gestures of Cassandra in Romney and Hendel-Schütz have much in common with Mrs Cibber's performance of passions and the descriptions of the acting manuals of her time.<sup>191</sup> However, Schütz's conveys a more energetic figure which anticipates nineteenth-century definitions of women in terms of hysteria, madness and, most importantly, the possession of knowledge.

Mid and late nineteenth-century refigurations of Cassandra began to exploit, by and large, models of the 'evil' women that have been much studied by Victorian scholarship over the last decades.<sup>192</sup> With the social and intellectual advances of women in the second half of the century, especially with the passing of the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act in 1857, the concept of sage women began to be related to other more

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid. 191-192.

<sup>191</sup> Barnett (1987),38-48, 52-55.

<sup>192</sup> See Auerbach (1982), Dijkstra (1986), Casteras (1990), and Stott (1992).

pejorative labels such as witches, sorceresses, fallen women and ultimately *femme fatales*, which, as we will see, testify to the fear and trepidation with which the patriarchal structures of the age approached the freedom of women and their access to knowledge. This resulted in the syncretism of the representational forms of this demon-esque woman sage with the figure of Cassandra by the turn of the century.

D. G. Rossetti's drawing *Cassandra*, which appeared in *Sonnets for Pictures* (1870) beside the Cassandra sonnets, aligns the Trojan princes with the sages and fallen women of the Pre-Raphaelite movement and depicts her body in a moment of frenzied possession. In Sonnet I, Rossetti's Cassandra is to make the same gestures as described above. Pivotal is the rending of her hair, but this is accompanied by the wringing of hands and rending of garments. Rossetti's Cassandra combines the gestures of Greco-Roman antiquity with those of the Pre-Raphaelite tradition:<sup>193</sup>

Rend, rend thy hair, Cassandra: he will go-  
Yea, rend thy garments, wring thine hands, and cry  
From Troy still towered to the unreddened sky.<sup>194</sup>

The focus on Cassandra's hair in the drawing foreshadows the broader association between a woman's virtue and the colour and style of her hair.<sup>195</sup> The high symbolism and the pivotal effect of her hair also connect Cassandra with other representations of mythological sages, namely Circe or Medea, who anthropomorphize the evils that lie behind the association of

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<sup>193</sup> For the configuration of Cassandra in D.G. Rossetti see Monrós-Gaspar (2006).

<sup>194</sup> Rossetti ([1870]1968), 143.

<sup>195</sup> E.g.: George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* ([1876] 2003); Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* ([1862] 1913).

women with knowledge.<sup>196</sup> Further examples of the depiction of Cassandra's rage through her hair are the paintings *Cassandra* (ca.1895) by Frederick Sandys and *Cassandra* (1898) by Evelyn De Morgan (see figs. 7 and 8).

In De Morgan's *Cassandra*, her subject rends her long, red hair against the burning wall of Troy and is depicted with ferocious eyes. The richness of the symbolism here even exceeds her gestures, the colour of her hair, the coldness of her robes, the roses at her feet and the flames of Troy all stressing the sense of tragedy of the scene. It is worth noting that *Cassandra* is the twin and counterpoint of *Helen* (1898), which De Morgan painted for William Imrie, her patron at that time.<sup>197</sup> As for Frederick

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<sup>196</sup> For an account of the creation of the woman reader in the first decades of the nineteenth century see Pearson (1999). As explained in Cherry (2000), 162,

Paintings of witches and sorceresses were among the many images in high art and popular culture to negotiate the representation of the learned woman and thus to participate in ferocious and at times violent contestations over middle-class women's education and professional training.

<sup>197</sup> As argued in Yates (1996), 70,

In the painting, Evelyn De Morgan makes her a figure of beauty and doom, the counterpart of Helen. She is tearing her hair, not admiring it; she wears not the pink robe of innocence but a shade near the deep blue which denotes death rather than life around her especially in the burning city.

Besides *Helen* and *Cassandra*, De Morgan also painted the following classical figures: *Cadmus and Harmonia* (1877), *Ariadne in Naxos* (1877), *Venus and Cupid* (1878), *Deianira* (1878), *The Sea Maidens* (1886/1887), *Aurora Triumphant* (1886), *Medea*

Sandys' *Cassandra*, Priam's daughter is depicted open-mouthed with inflamed eyes and hair flowing dishevelled in the wind.<sup>198</sup> The expression is that of Jelgerhun's drawings for the dramatic gestures of the eighteenth century.<sup>199</sup> Likewise, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's 'Wine of Cyprus' in 1844 refers to the 'wild eyes' (18.139) of Cassandra in her prophesies.<sup>200</sup> The examples above show how new elements were highlighted now that the participation of women in society had increased. As Dijkstra comments on Sandys' *Cassandra*: 'She was usually shown ... stalking about wide-eyed and desperate, presumably because no one would listen to her —itself a by no means unusual experience for a woman in the nineteenth century'.<sup>201</sup> It should also be pointed out that the red-haired *Cassandra* in these two late nineteenth representations of the myth highlighted an explicit malevolence

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(1889), *Flora* (1894), *Boreas and Oreithyia* (1896) and *Eos* (1907). Also see Stirling (1922), 192.

<sup>198</sup> In Casteras (1982), 169, Sandy's painting is analysed under the perspective of the representation of sage women in Victorian art:

Madness or possession by supernatural forces is another common denominator shared by many of the women in these paintings. The sorceresses have great mental powers and cunning, but they are seized either by uncontrollable rage or a force greater than themselves that propels their evil magic. Often the female body seems possessed, from twisting torso and clothes, to electric hair, riveting gaze, telekinetic powers, and open mouth.

For nineteenth-century pictorial representations of madness see *Freeing the Insane Women of Salpêtrière* by Théodore Géricault (1878).

<sup>199</sup> Barnett (1987), 38.

<sup>200</sup> Browning (1853), 277.

<sup>201</sup> Dijkstra (1986), 48.

which became increasingly more evident as the concept of the New Woman developed.<sup>202</sup>

The interaction between the intellectual frame and the cultural texts which depicted Cassandra throughout the nineteenth century was revealed by the parallelisms between translations of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and pictorial representations of the myth. In Milman and Plumptre's translations of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, their interventions made a link between Cassandra, evil and witchcraft explicit as the century unfolded. Behind these aesthetics of the myth lay a profound sociological discourse which arose from the need for social reforms to raise the status of the underprivileged, both in gender and economic terms. With the publication of penny books and magazines came a cultural democratization which began to undermine the most powerful tool in the Victorian upper class armoury: the possession of knowledge. One of the claims of John Stuart Mill in *The Subjection of Women* is that the emancipation of women must involve economic independence and equal access to education. With mainstream society, women's access to and practice of knowledge was the object of satire and caricature as the various sketches by John Leech published in *Punch* regarding women and intellectual professions show.<sup>203</sup> Hence, the parallel between the stage directions in Plumptre's translation of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* ([1868] 1994) and Pinero's *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* ([1895] 2008) respectively describing Cassandra and Agnes, is not

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<sup>202</sup> See Bornay (1994) and also *Mrs. Warren's Profession* for the association of hair colour with moralities.

<sup>203</sup> See 'Ladies of Creation' 11 (1851) <<http://john-leech-archive.org.uk>>, accessed 18 July 2007.

fortuitous at all. Cassandra's ravings in Plumtre, looking wildly, crying out, and showing accesses of frenzy are very much in line with Agnes' 'changed manner, flashing eyes, harsh voice, and violent gesture' when she speaks about politics.<sup>204</sup> Furthermore, the relation between Cassandra and knowledge throughout the nineteenth century was determined by the interaction between aesthetic and non-aesthetic codes which represented social figures that exercised a powerful influence on the lives and thoughts of the Victorians. As will be analyzed below, prophets, gipsies and fortune-tellers were frequent referents in the socio-cultural texture of nineteenth century Britain. The symbiosis of these icons with the stage movement and the iconographical codes analysed so far built a substratum of signifieds that determined the reception of the Cassandra myth in nineteenth century popular theatre.

### 2.2.2. *Prophets, Gipsies and Fortune-tellers*

The intellectual configuration of the prophet throughout the first half of the nineteenth century is clearly marked by the works of the sage writers; in particular by Thomas Carlyle, whose reflections on the hero in lectures delivered in 1840 and printed in a collection one year later as *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* represent a landmark in the thought of the age.<sup>205</sup> Together with Carlyle, John Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, J. H. Newman and Walter Pater were the greatest exponents of Victorian

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<sup>204</sup> Pinero ([1895] 2008), 90.

<sup>205</sup> Besides *On Heroes*, Carlyle's sage writing is mainly put forward for example in *Sartor Resartus* ([1833-34] 1987).



sage writing,<sup>206</sup> which was, according to Landow, an essayistic narrative which signalled some contemporary phenomenon, interpreted it showing the evils of straying from the path of virtue, and predicted the disasters to come if no measures were taken to improve the situation.<sup>207</sup> John Holloway's *The Victorian Sage* (1953), the first extended study on Victorian sage writing, puts together the works of Carlyle, Disraeli, Newman, Matthew Arnold, George Eliot and Thomas Hardy, acknowledging in his introduction that even though they succeeded in different genres, what united them in his book was an 'interest of a general or speculative kind in what the world is like, where man stands in it, and how he should live'.<sup>208</sup>

Culture, religion and politics were intertwined in Victorian times. The influence of clergymen and their sermons on social life and public opinion was consequently profound. This is important to factor in to the influence of the works of sage writers if we are to understand Victorian receptiveness towards prophets. John Cumming, for example, was an influential preacher in London in the middle of the nineteenth century, and one of the most popular topics for his sermons was apocalyptic

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<sup>206</sup> Bellringer and Jones (1975) also include J. Sterling, T.B. Macaulay, B. Disraeli, C. Kingsley, J.S. Mill, G.H. Lewes, F. Harrison, T. Arnold, L. Stephen, H. Spencer, C. Darwin, S. Butler, T. H. Huxley, and W. Morris in their anthology of Victorian Sages.

<sup>207</sup> Landow ([1986] 2001).

<sup>208</sup> Holloway (1953), 1. Similarly, the more recent *Victorian Sages and Cultural Discourse* (1990) approaches the concept of the Victorian Sage in a broader sense conceiving sages' texts from a postmodernist perspective and focusing on gender analysis in its understanding of nineteenth-century aesthetics. See Morgan (1990), 2.

prophecies.<sup>209</sup> His ideas were published in over thirty books and pamphlets between the 1840s and 1870s, which illustrates how the popularity of the prophetic sermon extended beyond the church. Pamphlets and magazines like the *Penny Pulpit* were also at the service of the ideas disseminated in these public lectures, and are, as we will see, the key to considering the reception of Cassandra in popular culture.

From the early 1800s, prophetesses, sages, gipsies and fortune-tellers were common referents within society, the arts and leisure of the time. In October 1859, for example, *Punch* published an article which, under the title ‘A Smash for a Star-Teller’ questioned the divinations of Mr. Zadkiel Tao Sze in his Almanack for the ensuing year.<sup>210</sup> In 1843 *The Toilet* by W. Fisher, which portrayed an Arabian gipsy woman dressing her hair, was exhibited at the British Institution,<sup>211</sup> and on 12<sup>th</sup> August 1859, the painting *The Fortuneteller* by Von Holt was exhibited in The Northwich Collection at the Modern Gallery London.<sup>212</sup> The presence of these stereotypes in the collective consciousness of the age can be clearly mapped with reference to the press and to numerous forms of entertainment. In line with the tradition of historical drama which developed in England in the 1820s from the war between the Greeks and the Turks,<sup>213</sup> for example, the story of Schamyl the

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<sup>209</sup> See Rosemary Mitchell, ‘Cumming, John (1807–1881)’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6897>>, accessed 31 Oct 2007.

<sup>210</sup> *Punch* (1 October 1859) and *Punch* (10 December 1859)

<sup>211</sup> *ILN* 2, no.45 (11 March 1843),167-8.

<sup>212</sup> *The Times* 23384 (13 August 1859), 9.

<sup>213</sup> Hall and Macintosh (2005), 270-272.

prophet, whose legendary deeds spread all over Europe till his surrender to Russia in 1859, was a favourite of nineteenth-century audiences.<sup>214</sup> The progress of the insurrection led by Schamyl was regularly chronicled in *The Times* and *The Illustrated London News*.<sup>215</sup> In 1854, *Schamyl the Circassian Chief and the Prophet's Son* by J.R. Anderson was first performed at the Standard Theatre in London and then at the Princess's Theatre under a version by J.P. Simpson entitled *Schamyl the Warrior-Prophet*.<sup>216</sup>

French theatre was the mainstay of the nineteenth-century British stage. The influence of plots, settings, actors and actresses is documented in reviews, essays and biographies well into the late years of the Victorian era. The comic Cassandra was predominantly French: François-Georges Fougès Desfontaines' *Cassandre-Agamemnon et Colombine-Cassandre* (1803), and Florimond Ronger Hervé's *Agamemnon; ou, Le chameau à deux bosses* (1856). The French stage also played a crucial role in introducing gipsies and prophets to the London stage. A number of nineteenth-century French plays focus their plots on the stories of these characters, and can be seen as second cousins to the comic Cassandras.

The recurrence of the story of John of Leyden and the Revolt of Munster in early Victorian theatre evidences the fascination that surrounded

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<sup>214</sup> In the 1850s the references were to the Crimea War (1853-1857). E.g.: *Our Victories in the Crimea* (1855), see British Library Add. MS 52953, J; *Shelah from Cork or a Spy in the Crimea* by W. Scaman (1856), see British Library Add. MS 52959, M; and *Crimean Relics* (1857), see British Library Add. MS 52965, P.

<sup>215</sup> E.g.: *The Times*, 21765. (12 June 1854), 10; *The Times*, 21795. (17 July 1854), 10; and *The Times* 21849 (18 September 1854), 8. Also see *ILN* 9, no.226 (29 August 1846), 131-132.

<sup>216</sup> See British Library Add. MS 52949 P and Add. MS 52950 D.

the figure of the prophet in a genre distinct from that of the social criticism of Carlyle and his fellow sage writers. This is all the more noteworthy if we consider the theatrical backdrop against which these plays were staged, which included *The Knights of the Cross or the Hermit's Prophecy* by S. Beazley and *The Gypsy's Warning* by G. Linley and R. B. Peake, for example, both performed in the Drury Lane in 1826 and 1838 respectively. In those plays, the upper and middle-class audiences were confronted with other prophets, gipsies and fortune-tellers.<sup>217</sup> The Munster episode was staged in *Le Prophète*, a lyrical drama in five acts, which was first performed in England at Covent Garden in an Italian translation from E. Scribe's French text by Manfredo Maggioni with music by G. Meyerbeer in 1849.<sup>218</sup> The playscripts of the Lord Chamberlain's Play Collection at the British Library also record a burlesque version of Meyerbeer's opera written by Edward Fitzball with the title *The Prophet*,<sup>219</sup> which was performed throughout the late months of that same year in Astley's Royal Amphitheatre,<sup>220</sup> and also *The Prophet or the Revolt of Munster*, which was licensed to be performed at the Theatre Royal in Manchester in 1851.

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<sup>217</sup> See also *The Gypsy Prince* (Haymarket, 24 July 1800) and *Wheel of Fortune* (Drury Lane 24 Sept. 1801) as quoted in Genest (1832), vii. 522, 530.

<sup>218</sup> For a review of the first night in Paris see *ILN* 15, no.367 (21 April 1849), 258; for the advertisement of the play in London see *ILN* 15, no. 380 (14 July 1849), 22; for a review of its opening night at the Royal Italian Opera see *ILN* 15, no. 382 (28 July 1849), 55.

<sup>219</sup> British Library Add. MS 43020, 20, 865-918.

<sup>220</sup> For a review of the first night see *ILN* 15, no. 393 (6 October 1849), 234.

The well-received performances of the ballets *La Gitana* and *The Gypsy* in London in 1838 and 1839,<sup>221</sup> with the corresponding rivalry

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<sup>221</sup> As explained in Craine and Mackrell (2000), 205, 220, *La Gitana* was choreographed by Filippo Taglioni with music by Schimdt and Auber and first performed in St. Petersburg at the Bolshoi Theatre on November 23, 1832, and *The Gypsy* was choreographed by Joseph Mazilier with music by F. Bénéoist, A. Thomas and T. Marliani and first performed at the Opéra de Paris on January 28, 1839. See the review on the performance of *La Gitana* at Her Majesty's Theatre in London in *ILN* 9, no. 220 (18 July 1846), 43:

The reappearance of Taglioni in *La Gitana* has been the great event at this theatre during the past week, and one of the most momentous of the season, especially to those who appreciate this great and gifted *danseuse* – not only by her marvellous powers, but by the change she has effected in her art. Other *ballerine*, such as Lucile Grahn, Carlotta Grisi, or Cerito, may follow in her steps, and may even rival the performances of Taglioni; but to the latter the votaries of Terpsichore have a debt of gratitude, as the originator of all that delights us in an art now poetical and intellectual, and before her time quite the reverse. All that Taglioni does bears the stamp of genius. It is not merely the astonishing degree of physical power by which she disguises all effort, and almost makes the beholder imagine that that floating, flying movement she maintains is her only natural method of locomotion; it is not merely this which constitutes the peculiar charm of Taglioni's dancing – It is that she transports the spectator into an ideal world; and, by every look, tone, and gesture, maintains the illusion.

*La Gitana* was the *ballet* in which the fair Sylphide re-appeared before the English public.

The groundwork of this *ballet* is identical with the plot of the *Bohemian Girl*; a child stolen from her parents by the Gypsies, and finally recognised and restored to them & c. *La Gitana* is presented to us during her vagabond existence; and it is then that the 'Cracovienne' and other characteristic dances are introduced. With Taglioni, even in these, there is

between the ballerinas Maria Taglioni and Fanny Elssler in the title roles,<sup>222</sup> were another key factor in the development of the figure of the gipsy in the social fabric of early Victorian England. Based on different plots, both ballets follow a similar narrative pattern by which a young noble girl is kidnapped by gipsies and then restored to her origins with either a happy or a tragic ending.<sup>223</sup> Stories about children being kidnapped by gipsies spread throughout the nineteenth century. In 1826, for example, *The Times* reports how a group of gipsies ‘had wreaked vengeance on a Somerset farmer by kidnapping his son and gluing the poor lad’s lips together with bird lime’.<sup>224</sup> An illustration of the topic published in *The Boys* in 1891 established intimate connections between the portrayal of gipsies and the depiction of Cassandra as stereotypical figures of magic and menace (see fig. 9).<sup>225</sup>

The reviews of *The Times* and the *ILN* testified to the favourable reception of the ballets in London, and to the success of *The Bohemian Girl* throughout the following decade.<sup>226</sup> William Balfe’s opera *The Bohemian*

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a refinement, a poetry, and intellectuality, which never abandon her. But more of the great *danseuse*, when we have had further opportunities of judging whether she still fully maintains her wondrous powers.

<sup>222</sup> Levinson (1929), 80.

<sup>223</sup> See Pasi (1981) 102-103. *The Gypsy*, whose source is Miguel de Cervantes’ *Novelas Ejemplares* was created in answer to *La Gitana*, which relates the story of the kidnap of the daughter of the Duke of Medinaceli.

<sup>224</sup> Behlmer (1985), 234.

<sup>225</sup> Note the parallelisms between the gestures of this illustration and Anthony Frederick Augustus Sandys’ *Cassandra* (c. 1895)

<sup>226</sup> As reviewed in *ILN* 4, no.90. (20 January 1844), 45:

*Girl* opened at the Drury Lane on 27<sup>th</sup> November 1843. The libretto was written by Alfred Bunn and was based on Mazillier and Saint-Georges' ballet *The Gipsy*.<sup>227</sup> The second act of *The Bohemian Girl* opens with Arline, the daughter of Count Arnheim, as a fortune teller in the gipsy camp of Devilshoof, who took her from her family when she was only a young girl. Mrs. Rainforth's successful performance of the role of Arline reinforced the widespread fascination for fortune tellers and gipsies in other popular fields of entertainment.<sup>228</sup> Titillating stories about gipsies invaded the Victorian imagination in novels, plays and songs: Matthew Arnold wrote

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Drury Lane. The second act of Balfe's opera ('The Bohemian Girl') opens with an interesting incident –that of *Arline*, the stolen child, aided by the influence of a dream, imagining herself in the 'marble halls', to which, by right, she had inheritance, but of which she as yet has no knowledge. The situation, interesting in itself, is rendered doubly so by the simple and natural acting and singing of Miss Rainfort, as *Arline*, who is all that could be desired in the part. The manner in which she vocally recounts her dream is most exquisite; there is an enthusiastic ecstasy expressed at the probability of its reality, and

A hope indulg'd in, that like summer clouds  
In autumn evenings, promises good morrow.

We have already chronicled the great merit of Mr. Harrison, in Thaddeus.'

The news is illustrated with Miss Rainforth and Mr. Harrison, in Balfe's Opera of *The Bohemian Girl: The Gipsy's Dream*.

<sup>227</sup> Tyldesley (2003), 88.

<sup>228</sup> Tyldesley (2003), 112 ascribes this fascination to the success of Balfe's opera alone. However, as I demonstrate in this chapter, it was part of a more generalized phenomenon which covered wider aspects of Victorian society.

*The Scholar Gipsy* in 1853,<sup>229</sup> and as many as four songs about gipsies and superstitions were published in *The Prince of Wales Songster*.<sup>230</sup> Moreover, numerous illustrations accompanying news on the life and customs of gipsies in the *Illustrated London News* evidence the appeal the roving life held for Victorians (see fig. 10).<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Nicoll (1955), iv. 344. Also see *Liverpool Mercury* (2 February 1865) for an advertisement of the staging of *The White Gipsy. A Story of gipsy life*, dramatised by Nelson Lee the younger at the Royal Colosseum Theatre, Liverpool on February 1865.

<sup>230</sup> E.g.: *Gipsy's Tent*.

Our fire on the turf, and our tent 'neath a tree,  
Carousing by moonlight, so merry are we!  
Let the lord boast his castle-the baron his hall-  
But the house of the gipsy is widest of all.

We may shout o'er our cups, and laugh loud as we will,  
'Till echo rings back, from wood, welkin, and hill;  
No joys seem to us like the joys that are sent  
To the wand'rer's life, and the gipsy's tent.

Pant ye for beauty? Oh, where would ye seek  
Such bloom as is found on the tawny one's cheek?  
Out limbs that go bounding in freedom and health,  
Are worth all your pale faces and coffers of wealth.

There's nought to control us; we rest or we roam;  
Our will is our law –and the world is our home;  
Even Jove would repine at his lot, if he spent  
A night of wild glee in the gipsy's tent.

*Songster* (1860-1885), 259.

<sup>231</sup> See Behlmer (1985)



News in the press of the time gave prominence to fortune-telling as part of the entertainment of Victorian middle and upper classes. In the late years of the 1770s, the Belgian John Joseph Merlin, who had been James Cox's assistant when he first moved to London, set up 'Merlin's Mechanical Museum'.<sup>232</sup> One of Merlin's most ambitious projects, which he never undertook for economic reasons, was to be the creation of Merlin's Necromantic Cave, with fortune-telling as one of the main attractions.<sup>233</sup> Altick quotes Merlin's description of the project, which I reproduce here, as a close example of the eighteenth-century entertainments inherited by the Victorians:

On the entrance [said the prospectus], the Company will be accommodated in a CIRCULAR SALOON, most judiciously adapted to its Uses, and ornamented with uncommon Taste. In the Centre of the SALOON will be the NECROMANCIC CAVE, on which the Automaton Figure of AMBROSIUS MERLIN will be seated; holding in his Right-hand a Leaden Sceptre, or conjuring Rod, a Symbol of his absolute Power, by which he will apparently animate all inanimate Things, such as Chairs, Paintings, and Magical Looking-Glasses; all which obey his Commands; he will likewise tell the Fortunes of the Ladies. Two AUTOMATON FIGURES will then walk in a Gallery to the Saloon, and play on ancient Instruments of

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<sup>232</sup> Charles Mould, 'Merlin, John Joseph (1735–1803)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/46472>>, accessed 25 Oct 2007.

<sup>233</sup> Altick (1978), 75.

Music, by Means of a wonderful Exertion of Mechanism,  
presenting Refreshments to the Ladies only.<sup>234</sup>

The exhibition of exotic automatons which predicted the future was deeply rooted in the nineteenth century as is shown by the *Illustrated London News* accounts of Professor Faber's *The Euphonia, or Speaking Automaton*.<sup>235</sup> Equally important was their presence in fairs and street entertainments. The chronicle of the Greenwich Fair in 1843 published in the *Illustrated London News*, for example, highlights fortune-tellers and gipsies as some of the greatest attractions of the day. Both the text and the illustration draw attention to a particular anecdote that relates with amusement how a young couple was exposed to their future.<sup>236</sup> Prophecies and those who predicted them also appear in almanacs. In November 1842, for example, the *Illustrated London News* advertises 'the best almanack for 1843, entitled VOX STELLARUM; or OLD MOORE'S ALMANACK',<sup>237</sup> which includes in its wonders 'a Prophetic Hieroglyphic adapted to the times'.<sup>238</sup> In this sense, most important here is *The Prophetic Momus or Laughing Cassandra* (1834), which combines the clichés associated with magical truths with a humorous description of the social events expected for the following season.

In the early years of the nineteenth century, not only was the spiritual guidance of prophets and preachers required but also the more exotic counsel of gipsies and fortune-tellers, who could make predictions about

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> *ILN* 9, no.221 (25 July 1846), 59.

<sup>236</sup> *ILN* 2, no. 51 (22 April 1843), 269-271.

<sup>237</sup> *ILN* 1, no. 33 (24 December 1842), 527.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

everyday affairs which were at the centre of public gossip. Victorian reliance upon fortune-telling is evidenced in various domestic incidents recorded in *The Times* involving people from all walks of life. Also the *Illustrated London News* features gipsies and fortune-tellers documenting, for example, how the famous actress Mrs. Mary Ann Keeley's appealed to the fates through the aid of a gipsy woman.<sup>239</sup> The episode, as reported in the news, was included in the burlesque *Wax and Wonders* which was performed at the Strand Theatre during the summer season of the same year.<sup>240</sup>

By the late decades of the century, the presence of fortune-tellers in society news reported in *The Times* had dwindled. The few occasions on which they were mentioned reveal the pejorative connotations that surrounded these characters. Two notorious murder cases drew the attention of the reading public to these newly instated objects of contempt of the 1860s. The case known as 'the murder and suicide at Carlisle', which involved the reliance on the predictions of a fortune-teller for perpetrating the two crimes, covered the pages of *The Times* in 1861.<sup>241</sup> Moreover, by 1868, the British middle classes were shaken by the case of the three widows from Marseilles who killed their respective husbands after visiting a fortune-teller.<sup>242</sup> As the claims for equal rights for the poorer classes, and

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<sup>239</sup> *ILN* 1, no.14 (13 August 1842), 221. The image shares the icons that John Leech will use in 1853 in his sketch for *Punch* 'An Easy Forecast' <<http://john-leech-archive.org.uk>>, accessed 18 July 2007.

<sup>240</sup> See *The Times* 18501, (2 August 1842), 4; *The Times* 18053, (4 August 1842), 4.

<sup>241</sup> See *The Times* 23907, (15 April 1861), 9 and *The Times* 23924 (4 May 1861), 12.

<sup>242</sup> *The Times* 26305, (11 December 1868), 5.

particularly women, were sweeping through the second half of the century,<sup>243</sup> knowledge and independence of mind became a menace for the foundations of the patriarchal order. As we will see, what had amused the Victorian mid and upper classes at the 1843 Greenwich Fair, for example, about gipsies and fortune-tellers, needed either to be engulfed by the forces of the establishment or excluded. Therefore, the Royal Polytechnic was allowed to exhibit the entertainment 'The Modern Delphic Oracle' in 1858,<sup>244</sup> but in 1866, Ann Williams was sentenced to one year of hard labour for victimising 'so large a number of domestic servants of London by the exercises of her black art'.<sup>245</sup>

On the whole, the reception of prophets, gipsies and fortune-tellers throughout the nineteenth century touches on major issues which equally determine prevailing reworkings of the Cassandra myth. Like Cassandra, these are peripheral figures who stray from the paths of conventional and mainstream access to and possession of knowledge. The otherness of these peripheral figures is heightened by touches of ethnicity which are revealed either by their genealogy or by their costumes.<sup>246</sup> In this sense, they also assimilate the dichotomy of desire for and contempt of the colonial subject

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<sup>243</sup> E.g.: The first Bill to enable Married Women to dispose of Reversionary and other Interest in Personal Estate, (177) III.533, which meant a crucial step for the economic independence of women was passed in 1854.

<sup>244</sup> *ILN* 33, no. 942 (23 October 1858), 381.

<sup>245</sup> *ILN* 48, no. 1352 (13 January 1866), 35.

<sup>246</sup> See Pasi (1981), 102 for pictures of Taglioni and Elssler dancing *La Gitana* and *The Gipsy*. Ibid. 118 for Fanny Cerrito dancing in *La Fille du Marbre*.

which is reflected in the theatre, paintings and novels of the age.<sup>247</sup> In the case of women, the bonds between intellectual and physical otherness reveal the crisis that the social changes exert on the thought patterns of the nineteenth century. Accordingly, the alluring heroism that surrounds male prophets such as Schamyl and John of Leyden becomes peripheral wisdom and forbidden sorcery when it is related to deal with women gipsies and fortune-tellers.

With regard to Cassandra the prophetess, nineteenth-century translations of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* evince the syncretism between popular social stereotypes and the tragic heroine. Furthermore, allusions to the myth in poems and philosophical and political essays which highlight her visionary power are frequent from the early years of the century. In 1811, Mary Russell Mitford (1787-1855) wrote 'Joanna's Prophecy', a poem which depicts the social life of the Bath of her time. Mitford's portrayals of scenes of Victorian village life in dramatic sketches, essays and vignettes became very successful in high and middlebrow circles.<sup>248</sup> Amongst her most influential readers were Charles Lamb and John Ruskin, and she was a close friend of Thomas Noon Talfourd and Elizabeth Barrett

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<sup>247</sup> Note for example, the various exhibitions of the 'Hottentot Venus' in Britain during the nineteenth century.

<sup>248</sup> Sara Lodge, 'Mitford, Mary Russell (1787-1855)', *Literature Online Biography*. Chadwyck Healey, 2000 <[http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res\\_ver=0.2&res\\_id=xri:lion&rft\\_id=xri:lion:rec:ref:1480](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:rec:ref:1480)>, accessed 9 Nov 2007.

Browning.<sup>249</sup> The reference to Priam's daughter in 'Joanna's Prophecy' is in passing, and only evidences Mitford's intentional display of classical knowledge. Nevertheless, her poem is shorthand for prevailing aesthetic codes which linked a particular reworking of the myth with the non-aesthetic codes analysed above. 'Joanna's Prophecy', the almanack *The Prophetic Momus or Laughing Cassandra* (1834), and the various allusions to the myth in *The Penny Magazine* reveal how Cassandra as prophetess was a touchstone in Victorian daily life just as were gipsies and fortune-tellers.<sup>250</sup> Furthermore, the miscellaneous nature of these texts demonstrates that not only did the intellectual elite participate in the syncretism between these codes and the myth but that this was a widely spread phenomenon. As such, it stimulated, and was equally stimulated by, the cultural context of nineteenth century England.

Winthrop Macworth Praed's (1802-1839) 'Cassandra' was posthumously published in the United States in 1844 in *Poems*, one year after Margaret Fuller had referred to the heroine as the 'silenced voice of women' in her article for *The Dial* (see below).<sup>251</sup> From his early years at Cambridge, where he read Classics at Trinity College, Praed became a

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<sup>249</sup> Martin Garrett, 'Mitford, Mary Russell (1787–1855)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18859>> , accessed 9 Nov 2007.

<sup>250</sup> See *Penny Magazine* (25 May 1839), 194-6 for an account of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*; *Penny Magazine* (21 March 1841), 110ff for an account of the occult sciences both in Ancient and Victorian times and *Penny Magazine* (1846), 183-7 for a comparison between modern prophets and Cassandra.

<sup>251</sup> Praed's poems were first published in New York. There is a London edition which dates as late as 1902. See Godley (1902).

highly political figure who wrote a considerable amount of satires illustrating his anti-Reform ideas.<sup>252</sup> However, his ‘Cassandra’ is not as explicitly political as some of his contemporaries’, nor was it as widely available. It directs attention, nonetheless, to a discourse in which Priam’s daughter was a frequent symbol. Praed’s focus on the predictions of Cassandra and his portrayal of the heroine as a derided prophetess bear strong resemblances to the religious sermons and the works of the sage writers referred to above. He heads the poem with a quotation from Lycophron’s *Cassandra*, which emphasizes the importance of her prophetic gift, and then relates her visions in Troy and Argos. In the last stanza, the first person lyric of the poem, Cassandra, denounces: ‘I tell of others’ lot/ They hear me, heed me not!’ (13.4-5).<sup>253</sup>

The dismissal of Cassandra’s words is at the heart of sage writing and also of the political essays and pamphlets for which William Rathbone Greg’s *Rocks Ahead or The Warnings of Cassandra* is shorthand. The first use of the disregarded Cassandra-like voice in the English lexicon is documented in the *OED* as early as 1668.<sup>254</sup> Even though there are precedents in the late eighteenth century, it is within the political texts of the nineteenth century—including Carlyle’s— where we find the largest

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<sup>252</sup> Philip Harling, ‘Praed, Winthrop Mackworth (1802–1839)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22696>>, accessed 9 Nov 2007.

<sup>253</sup> Praed (1865), i. 396.

<sup>254</sup> ‘Cassandra’ *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 2007 <[http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50034117?single=1&query\\_type=ord&queryword=Cassandra&first=1&max\\_to\\_show=10](http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50034117?single=1&query_type=ord&queryword=Cassandra&first=1&max_to_show=10)>, accessed 7 Nov 2007.

number of examples of this particular usage. Greg published *Rocks Ahead* in 1874, when Rossetti and Meredith had already developed the myth, and after Nolan's and Reece's burlesques of *Agamemnon* had been put on in Oxford and Liverpool in 1867 and 1868 respectively. His is probably the most prominent of the political writings which allude to Cassandra as a scorned prophetess in the political milieu of Victorian England. The following excerpt from the prologue is representative of this tendency:

The part of Cassandra can never be a pleasant one for any man to play. It makes others uncomfortable and himself unpopular. It is always annoying both to individuals and nations to be warned, with irritating pertinacity and lucidity still more exasperating, of dangers imminent or future which may be unavoidable, and which will be probably fatal if not averted. The more unanswerable the prophet, the more hated he is sure to be, and the more neglected he is likely to be.<sup>255</sup>

The pejorative features outlined in Greg's allusion to the myth parallel the pictorial reworkings of Cassandra, where her frantic movements were underscored in the late decades of the century as a sign of sinful and rejected wisdom.

William John Courthope's reworking of the myth in 'Experience', which was published in *Poems* in 1865, follows the same line of thought. Courthope (1842–1917) graduated in Classics from Corpus Christi College, Oxford, in 1866, where he became a close friend of John Conington, who

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<sup>255</sup> Greg (1874), 1.



was Professor of Latin at that time.<sup>256</sup> Courthope's conservatism towards the emancipation of women is reflected in *Ludibria Lunae, or The Wars of The Women and the Gods* (1869), an allegorical burlesque poem where he confronts the wisdom of men and women. From the very first lines of the poem, Courthope depicts Cassandra repeating the commonplaces that describe the perniciousness of women's access to knowledge:

I am the mad Cassandra: I have bought  
The truth by mighty suffering and great sin;  
I roam a wretched woman and a seer,  
Crazy, forlorn, and waiting for my doom.<sup>257</sup>

[.....]

Out on her frenzy! neighbours, let us go:  
We have no leisure to stand idle here,  
And listen to the clack of crazy tongues.<sup>258</sup>

The marked epithets of *crazy*, *mad*, and *frenzied* are all taken up again by Plumptre in his translation of 1868, in D. G. Rossetti's sonnets *Cassandra* ([1870]1968), and in William Morris' *Scenes from the Fall of Troy* (1859-1865).

As we saw above, Dante Gabriel Rossetti published the two 'Cassandra' sonnets and a drawing in 1870 as part of the collection *Sonnets*

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<sup>256</sup> A. O. Prickard, 'Courthope, William John (1842–1917)', rev. Katherine Mullin, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32588>>, accessed 9 Nov 2007.

<sup>257</sup> Courthope (1865), 46.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.* 48.

for Pictures. Rossetti's notes to the drawing, which inspired the two poems, testify to a merging of the Aeschylean and Homeric Cassandras in the nineteenth century which emphasize the prophecies of the heroine.<sup>259</sup> The scorn of her words accompanied by the gestures analyzed above becomes the leitmotif of the two sonnets:

See, all but she that bore thee mock thy woe:—

[.....]

He goes. Cassandra's words beat heavily

Like crows above his crest, and at his ear

Ring hollow in the shield that shall not save.

Between 1859 and 1865 William Morris wrote the six poems which finally made up his Trojan cycle. Under the title of *Scenes from the Fall of Troy*, Morris had devised a total of twelve series which were never completed. In his poems, Morris not only focuses on Cassandra's prophecies on the death of Hector but also on the words of those who spurn them. Morris' Cassandra is 'mad',<sup>260</sup> she's 'used like a jester',<sup>261</sup> and she's mocked for her predictions:

Teucer:

Then as their screams rung all about the roof

Came Agamemnon, and he saw a hand

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<sup>259</sup> The subject shows Cassandra prophesying among her kindred, as Hector leaves them for his last battle. They are on the platform of a fortress, from which the Trojan troops are marching out. Helen is arming Paris; Priam soothes Hecuba; and Andromache holds the child to her bosom.

<sup>260</sup> Morris (2005), 5.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

Clutching Apollo's foot from underneath  
Some heap of women's raiment; down he stopped  
And drew henceforth Cassandra by the wrists  
Who called upon the God in bitter strain.  
As pale as privet was she to my eyes,  
Dark-haired and ox-eyed, tall and strong of limb.  
Right many a bitter curse she called on him  
And struggled in a mad way without hope.  
So Agamemnon bore her oft a last  
And looking at her I saw not the rest.<sup>262</sup>

In the 1880s William Morris began to develop a deep concern for politics and his socialist ideas inspired many of his later works.<sup>263</sup> Notwithstanding his own prophetic and reformist discourse, Morris' Cassandra lacks the profound social criticism of other of his contemporaries, such as Florence Nightingale. Accordingly, it is only mentioned here because it perpetuates mainstream connections between women and knowledge, as well as the syncretism between popular and highbrow reworkings of the myth.

In 1862, George Meredith also highlights Cassandra's prophetic powers as central to his poem of the same name, printed in *Modern Love and Other Poems of the English Roadside*. George Meredith wrote *Modern Love and Poems of the English Roadside* as a reflection on his first marriage to Mary Ellen Nicholls, Thomas Love Peacock's daughter, after she

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Fiona MacCarthy, 'Morris, William (1834–1896)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Oct 2007 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19322>>, accessed 9 July 2008.

abandoned him for her lover.<sup>264</sup> Meredith's Cassandra focuses on her prophetic gift in Troy and Argos. For Meredith, she's 'Ilion's prophetic flower' (3.3, 9.3) though he also refers to her prophesies in Argos where 'Still the Future strikes her face' (10.5) and Cassandra 'views her Fate' (11.5). Despite Meredith's firm beliefs in equal education for men and women, he does not exploit the Cassandra-like voice deployed by Greg, Fuller and Nightingale in order to ponder the wrongs of their age. On the contrary, his is a rather neutral reworking of the myth as compared to other fellow Pre-Raphaelites, such as D.G. Rossetti and Frederick Sandys, with whom he shared long discussions on aesthetics.<sup>265</sup> Meredith's Cassandra does, nonetheless, show the facet of the myth which predominates in Victorian England

Against these mainstream reworkings of the myth, isolated voices such as Florence Nightingale in England and Margaret Fuller in the United States addressed Cassandra as shorthand for the disregard of women in the social spheres of the nineteenth century. The American journalist, Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), chose Priam's daughter in order to demand higher education for women, far removed from the idleness that the social obligations of the time imposed on them. Fuller became the first editor of *The Dial* in 1840, and by 1845 she had accepted a position in the literary department of the *New York Tribune*.<sup>266</sup> In 1843 she wrote the essay 'The

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<sup>264</sup> Margaret Harris, 'Meredith, George (1828–1909)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34991>>, accessed 9 July 2008.

<sup>265</sup>Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Urbanski (1980), 9, 101.

Great Lawsuit: Man *versus* Men; Woman *versus* Women' for *The Dial*, which was transformed in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century and Kindred Papers Relating to the Sphere, Condition and Duties of Woman*, published in 1845. In her essay, Fuller refers to Cassandra thus:

Women are, indeed, the easy victims both of priest-craft and self-delusion; but this would not be, if the intellect was developed in proportion to the other powers. They would then have a regulator, and be more in equipoise, yet must retain the same nervous susceptibility while their physical structure is such as it is.

It is with just that hope that we welcome everything that tends to strengthen the fibre and develop the nature on more sides. When the intellect and affections are in harmony; when intellectual consciousness is calm and deep; inspiration will not be confounded with fancy. Then 'she who advances | With rapturous, lyrical glances, | Singing the song of the earth, singing | Its hymn to the Gods,' will not be pitied as a mad-woman, nor shrunk from as unnatural.

The Greeks who saw everything in forms, which we are trying to ascertain as law, and classify as cause, embodied all this in the form of Cassandra.<sup>267</sup>

Although less influential than Fuller's, Nightingale's *Cassandra* illustrates the potential of the myth to serve as the epitome of the silenced voice of women in nineteenth century England. In 1852 Florence Nightingale wrote

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<sup>267</sup> Fuller ([1845]1971), 105.

*Cassandra*, an essay which employs the techniques of sage writing to provoke an outcry against the lack of occupations for women in middle and upper-class Victorian homes. Florence Nightingale's appropriation of sage writing leads to a gendered reappraisal of the figure of the sage woman, who abandons the negative signs associated with her possession of truth/knowledge and places her voice at the centre of the discourse as a speaker.<sup>268</sup> *Cassandra* was only privately printed during the nineteenth century as part of Nightingale's essay *Suggestions for the Thought to Searchers after Religious Truth* (1852). Six copies of the essay were sent to her father, her uncle Samuel Smith, Richard Monckton Milnes, Sir John McNeill, Benjamin Jowett and John Stuart Mill.<sup>269</sup> The next edition of the essay is dated 1928, when it was reprinted as an appendix to Ray Strachey's *The Cause: a Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain* and became widely available.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The syncretism between the Homeric and the Aeschylean Cassandra results in a system of signs which accounts for Victorian relations of power in terms of class and gender. The linguistic choices in nineteenth-century translations of the *Iliad* and *Agamemnon* reveal aspects such as the methods

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<sup>268</sup> Landow (1990), 41. For an account of Nightingale's revision of the myth of Cassandra as a feminine reappraisal of Carlyle's theories on the prophet see Jenkins (1994), 16-26. Also see Monrós-Gaspar (2008).

<sup>269</sup> Snyder (1993), 254. For the correspondence between Nightingale and Jowett in relation to her work see Quinn and Prest (1987), 4, 8-9, 206, 264; for the relation between Nightingale and John Stuart Mill see McDonnald (2003), 369-410.

of translation and the politics of the texts which, notwithstanding their importance in the Victorian intellectual milieu, are intrinsic to every act of translation. However, considered en masse, the translations expose a cultural construct which deploys the same aesthetic mechanisms both to conceal and to mock unorthodox manifestations of knowledge. In marked contrast to the Promethean spirit which filled the Romantic imagination, the transmission of the *Iliad* and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* in translation, therefore, contributes to the creation of Cassandra as a cultural object which epitomizes the uglification and the silencing of the Victorian woman who defies prescribed roles in society. As we will see, the same signs which depict Cassandra as a witch, as a fortune-teller, and as a hysterical sage are displayed in burlesque refigurations of the myth. The point at issue which I raise in this thesis is whether they perpetuate prevailing reworkings of Cassandra or they use the filter of humour to call them into question.

The consuming passion of the Victorians for possessing, controlling and categorizing knowledge reveals the fears of an affluent society which is threatened by the various *others* —colonial, gendered...— that emerge from a strongly patriarchal and imperialistic environment. Accordingly, there is a clear relation between the physiological description of Cassandra, in terms of the frenzied possession, that characterises her visions of the future, and the issues regarding women's appropriation of knowledge and discourse. This connection is not confined to the Pre-Raphaelite movement alone, nor to the poetry and political essays of the fifties, sixties and seventies. Notwithstanding the obvious differences in time and genre between the works mentioned here, there are close ties between the representations of Cassandra within them; and the myth becomes the epitome of a very

specific female *other* in the late Victorian arts. Cassandra is grotesqued and uglified by a mainstream culture that rejects truth outside the canon. Her voice, unheard, disregarded and mocked has no authority over a discourse built on a traditionally patriarchal set of values. As a consequence, alongside the transmission of the classical sources that foster a consideration of the myth in terms of a frenzied prophetess, there are other factors that link Cassandra with the situation of women in the nineteenth century and have an influence on their history.



## CHAPTER 3

### COMIC CASSANDRA AND VICTORIAN BURLESQUE

The socio-cultural and economical explosion of the nineteenth century paved the way to the present democratization of ideas in Western cultures. Significant progress in science, technology, education and the business of books meant that culture and literature were more available to the middle and popular classes than ever. The transmission of Cassandra in such a socio-cultural milieu reflected a complex interaction between the Greek and Roman prototypes and the contemporary cultural goods, social stereotypes and artistic referents. The syncretism between classical mythology and popular images covered the full gamut of society. Consequently, whilst the Greek Cassandra coexisted with particular images of frenzied women in D.G. Rossetti's painting, she became an unheeded Victorian sage woman in John Robert O'Neil's *The Siege of Troy, or, the Misjudgement of Paris* (1854).

The relationship between Cassandra and neglected women had been brewing since the early years of the eighteenth century, when the streets of London first witnessed a popular refiguration of the Trojan princess with Elkanah Settle's *The Siege of Troy* in 1707. Subsequent reworkings of the myth both in French and British popular theatre manifest the gradual

stylization of the Victorian Cassandra through the syncretism between popular stereotypes and Greek tragedy. As outlined in chapter 2, eighteenth-century tragedy, ballet and painting portray Cassandra as a suffering princess with gestures of pain and discomfort caused by her wretchedness and her prophetic vision. Popular refigurations perpetuate the prevailing melodramatic Cassandra and it is only the nineteenth century that witnesses the juxtaposition of the words and gestures of the Trojan princess with witches, gipsies and mountebanks.

### 3.1. POPULAR COMIC PRECEDENTS: STREET FAIRS AND FRENCH THEATRE

#### 3.1.1. *Street Fairs*

The huge surge of interest in Greece and Rome during the eighteenth-century provided a wide range of sentimental Cassandras in highbrow entertainment reflecting the aesthetic taste of the age. The evolution from these melodramatic reworkings of the myth to the Victorian Cassandra answered to religious, cultural and sociological changes which influenced the nineteenth-century conception of knowledge, prophets and women. As demonstrated in chapter 2, the symbiosis between popular stereotypes and antiquity colored the reception of the Cassandra myth in the nineteenth century. Not only did Cassandra appear in the private rooms of wealthy European families and in prestigious theatres, but also in the ordinary lives of common English men and women. In this sense, an important source for the comic Cassandra is the street theatre of the eighteenth century.

The first documented Cassandra on the English popular comic stage dates from the early eighteenth century. In 1707 Elkanah Settle (1648-1724)

wrote *The Siege of Troy*, a tragicomic droll of his opera *The Virgin Prophetess; or, the Fate of Troy*, which was first performed at Drury Lane in 1701 with music by G. Finger and featuring Jane Rogers as Cassandra.<sup>1</sup> Settle left Oxford without a degree and moved to London to study poetry.<sup>2</sup> The success of *The Empress of Morocco* in 1671 won Settle an enviable reputation but his acrimonious dispute with John Dryden and Thomas Shadwell, and his involvement in the political turmoil of the age—first with the Whigs and then with the Tories—tarnished his literary fame.<sup>3</sup> Settle became famous for his tragedies and operas, but in the latter part of his life a dramatic change in fortune forced him to write for and to act in Mrs. Mynn and her daughter's booth at Bartholomew and Southwark Fairs, where he enjoyed immediate success and where his comic *Cassandra* was first staged.<sup>4</sup>

Mrs Mynn's first production of *The Siege of Troy* in 1707 proved a sensation, so it was published and sold the following year with a sixpenny history of Troy at the Black Raven in Paternoster Row and at the booth at the time of the fair.<sup>5</sup> Settle had adapted his opera to the taste of the fair's buffoonery and, not only the production but also its performers were widely acclaimed: Thomas Walker's interpretation of Paris, for example, won him a

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<sup>1</sup> Rowe (1992), 189. See Genest (1832), 232 for the complete cast list. According to White (1983), 17, the opera was later known as *Cassandra, or, the Virgin Prophetess* (1702).

<sup>2</sup> Brown (1910), 11.

<sup>3</sup> Brown (1910), 14-16, 18, 21-7 and see *The Pocket Magazine* 1, (Jan 1827), 137.

<sup>4</sup> Disraeli (1849), 198, *Bentley's Miscellany* 32 (1852), 497 and Rosenfeld (1960), 19.

<sup>5</sup> Morley (1859), 358, 368. *Ibid.* 358-378 for a full account of the staging of the play at the Fair.

place in the Drury Lane company.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the display of sophisticated stage machinery was particularly successful in the transformation scene with which the play concluded.<sup>7</sup>

In 1715 and 1716, Mrs. Mynn brought *The Siege of Troy* to the Queen's Arms Tavern in Southwark.<sup>8</sup> Between 1724 and 1725, her daughter tried to revive it at Bartholomew Fair but 'the clothes and scenes were not ready in time and the performance was postponed until Southwark Fair'.<sup>9</sup> Settle's droll had such an overwhelming success that it was immortalized by William Hogarth in his caricature *Southwark Fair* (1733), where a booth is portrayed with a large cloth announcing *The Siege of Troy*.<sup>10</sup> In 1747, probably due to the success of Thomson at Drury Lane and Hogarth's promotion of the spectacle, Warner, Lee and Yeates revived Settle's droll

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<sup>6</sup> *Thespian* (1802) s.v. Walker.

<sup>7</sup> As contended in Morley (1859), 373, the city of Troy in flames became a model for nineteenth-century spectacles. *Schamyl the Circassian Chief and the Prophet's Son* (1854) British Library Add. MS 52949, P. *The Loves of Cupid and Psyche* (1857), British Library Add. MS 52970, M; and *Remember the Grotto or Harlequin's Rehearsal*, British Library Add. MS 53047, C exemplify how transformation scenes with ruins, cities and castles in flames were commonplace among nautical and historical dramas and burlesques in the nineteenth century. Moreover, both dioramas and panoramas showing battles, the siege of exotic places and views of ports, bays and ancient ruins were a popular entertainment among the Victorians. See for example *ILN* 32, no. 900. (30 January 1858).

<sup>8</sup> Rosenfeld (1960), 76.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* (1960), 28.

<sup>10</sup> Clerk (1812), i. 114 and *Bentley's Miscellany* 9 (1841), 129.

for Bartholomew Fair again with new clothes, machinery and props ‘according to the Taste of Ancient Greeks’.<sup>11</sup>

Jane Rogers, who acted Cassandra in the opera *The Virgin Prophetess*, was an exception to the seventeenth-century rule which connected the actress’ persona with her roles on the stage:<sup>12</sup> the mistress of her fellow actor Robert Wilks,<sup>13</sup> she often played ‘the suffering, noble, virginal young heroine’ in tragedy.<sup>14</sup> In *The Virgin Prophetess*, Cassandra is a bastion of virtue: she is depicted in juxtaposition to the adulteress Helen and as a martyr for Troy.<sup>15</sup> Settle’s operatic Cassandra is analogous to La Doué’s in 1706, Thomson’s in 1738 and Noverre’s in 1774. The melodramatic ethos of her discourse parallels the gestures systematized by

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<sup>11</sup> Rosenfeld (1960), 54.

<sup>12</sup> Rowe (1992), 103-4, 161, 188-9.

<sup>13</sup> *Thespian* (1802) s.v. Wilks.

<sup>7</sup> Rowe (1992), 104. As outlined in Morley (1859), 367, Wilks himself played the role of Menelaus.

<sup>15</sup> In Settle (1703), 13, Diana urges Cassandra to sacrifice herself for the sake of Troy:

Diana:

Hear then what's fixt in Fate, and ask no more.

If a fair Virgin born of Royal Race

Shall like a second Iphigenia yield

Her pious Breast up to the Grecian swords,

And falls their Bleeding Victim, then that single

Atonement shall appease the Wrath of Heav'n,

Reverse the Doom of Troy. But if refused

Troy's Doom is seal'd for ever.

Note how the term ‘sorceress’, which is associated with Cassandra in the nineteenth century, is used here by the prophetess to refer to Helen. *Ibid.* 7.

Hill years later where pity and fear were expressed, for example, by languor in look and muscles. Settle's parody, *The Siege of Troy*, kept the juxtaposition between the two women and the character list of the 1703 publication describes Cassandra as a doleful victim:

A Virgin Daughter of King Priam, and exalted Character of Piety and Virtue, inspired by the Gods with the true Spirit of Prophecy yet never believed; a vehement prosecutor of Paris and Helen for their lewd and wicked lives, and foretelling the destruction of Troy as a Vengeance hanging over their heads, for their impious and hardened adultery.<sup>16</sup>

Paris' scorn for his sister is intensified and Cassandra is also depicted as a 'mad, foolish, wretched, thoughtless thing',<sup>17</sup> and a 'roving lunatick' in a 'mad fantastic frenzy'.<sup>18</sup> Parallelisms between Cassandra, gipsies and mountebanks are still distant and the princess' derangement is only exploited inasmuch as it contributes to the humour of the satire.

Notwithstanding the different cultural connotations in Settle and Reece, Settle's refiguration anticipates connections between the Cassandra myth and the play within the play developed by Robert Reece. Settle incorporates two *tableaux changeants*, which were a series of painted cloths under the direction of a master of ceremonies who explained the scenes

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 2. Note that the first documented publication of the play dates from four years earlier than its first documented performance.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

displayed to the audience.<sup>19</sup> In Settle's tableaux, golden statues at the Temple of Diana are transformed into dark sculptures which represent Cassandra's prophecies on the dreadful fate of Troy. Cassandra directs the spectacle with the touch of her wand, which connects Settle with the metatheatrical potential of the Trojan princess exploited by Reece.

Settle's refiguration of Cassandra fostered the transmission of the myth in British popular culture well up to the mid- eighteenth century, when Thomson's *Agamemnon* took hold of mainstream theatres. Between the first performance of *The Siege of Troy* and the 1747 revival, Alexander Pope published his controversial translation of Homer where the melodramatic Cassandra still held sway. Thomas Burnett and George Duckett's campaign against Pope's *Iliad* in *Homerides, a Letter to Mr. Pope* (1715)

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<sup>19</sup> Note that the device is expanded in the opera. As explained in Heulard (1971), 130, *La Foire Saint-Laurent* by Le Grand included some of the most popular entertainments of the fair in 1709 among which there was *l'Homme aux tableaux changeants*:

L'auteur a voulu introduire dans sa pièce les principaux jeux qui étoient à la Foire. Celui des Tableaux changeants, montré par un nommé Le Rat, étoit le plus fréquenté, non par le mérite de ce spectacle, mais pour celui que le faisoit voir: c'étoit un grand homme de bonne mine, habillé de noir coiffé d'une perruque de la même couleur, et d'une si énorme étendue, qu'elle le couvroit jusqu'à la ceinture, par devant et par derrière. A cet ajustement il joignoit un fort beau son de voix, pour débiter gravement le détail des changements de ses tableaux, et terminait toujours son annonce en disant: Oui, Messieurs vous serez contents, etc.

foregrounded an important figure for eighteenth-century puppet theatre, Martin Powell.<sup>20</sup>

From 1711, and for three intense seasons, Powell boosted puppet theatre in such an unprecedented way in England that it soon became a major attraction both for popular and highbrow audiences. Powell won the favour of the audience at the Little Piazza at Covent Garden and at the London fairs. Plays on legendary tales coexisted with others based on classical mythology and Italian Opera, among which *The False Triumph; or, the Destruction of Troy* is worthy of note. *The False Triumph* was never published and so far in my research I have not come up with any evidence of Cassandra in the play. The success of the performance, however, demonstrates anew that Troy was a favourite dish for the tastes of the eighteenth-century theatregoing public.

In 1726, whilst Settle's *The Siege of Troy* was being performed at the London fairs, Louis Fuzelier staged *L'amant brutal* at the French Foire Saint

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<sup>20</sup> Burnett and Duckett (1715) allude to Powell when requesting a production of *The Siege of Troy* to publicize Pope's translation. Even though theirs is a disparaging request, it manifests the widespread acquaintanceship of the eighteenth-century audience with the popular spectacles which recreated the siege of Troy. Burnett and Duckett allude in *Homerides* to Robin Powell, to whom they also devoted another book, *A Second Tale of a Tub; or The History of Robin Powell the Puppet Show-Man* (1715). See Burnett and Duckett (1715), 20 and Kitchin (1931), 286 n14. As contended in Cutler Shershow (1995), 117, Robert Powell, was actually a fictitious name which evoked Robert Harley, first duke of Oxford and a Tory minister, and Martin Powell, another popular entertainer of the eighteenth century.



Germaine with the *Opéra Comique Le Saint de Leucade*.<sup>21</sup> Second cousins to the Bartholomew and Southwark fairs, the Foire Saint Germaine and Foire Saint Laurent were primarily concerned with trading produce, and began to host puppet shows and theatre only from 1678.<sup>22</sup> In *L'amant brutal*, Fuzelier parodied Bertin de La Doué's 'tragédie en musique' *Ajax* with words by A. Mennesson, which was first performed at the Paris Opéra on April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1716.<sup>23</sup> Fuzelier's output, which consisted mainly of comic plays written for the two fairs, developed the theme of Troy, for example in *Le ravissement d'Hélène, ou Le siège et embrasement de Troie* (1705) and *Arlequin Enée ou la Prise de Troye* (1711).

*L'amant brutal* was probably never published,<sup>24</sup> but its hypotext provides indirect hints as to what Fuzelier's satire might have been. Cassandra's access of frenzy in La Doué perpetuates the figure of lamenting

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<sup>21</sup> Charles Dibdin revived the topic of Troy in the puppet theatre of the 1780s. La Foire Saint Germaine and la Foire Saint Laurent were the two most famous fairs in Paris in the eighteenth century. The Foire Saint Germaine was established in the twelfth century but the origins of the Foire Saint Laurent are uncertain. See Le Sage, Autreau, Orneval, Fuzelier (1810), xiii. i-iii. Also note that *Attagamenone* premiered in Italy in 1731. So far, I have not come across a copy of the text but it is included in Reid (1993), i. 70 as a comic reworking of Cassandra. As contended in Davreux (1942), 48-49, the rape of Cassandra was already parodied in the fourth century BC.

<sup>22</sup> See LeSage et al (1810), iii. See Heulhard (1971) for a comparison between the two fairs and a full account of the history of the *foire Saint-Laurent*.

<sup>23</sup> La Doué (1716), fl. La Doué also put on stage the opera *Cassandre* in 1706, where Priam's daughter is a lamenting prophetess in love with Orestes. See *Cassandre* (1706). La Doué's *Ajax* opera enjoyed much success in Lyons, Nantes and Bordeaux, and was revived in Paris in 1726, 1742 and 1770. *New Grove s.v.* La Doué.

<sup>24</sup> Parfaict, Parfaict and d'Abguerde (1767), 64.

heroine which correlates with Susannah Cibber's performance in James Thomson's *Agamemnon* (1738), and the longstanding tradition of suffering heroines of English eighteenth-century She-Tragedy.<sup>25</sup> Cassandra's love for Corebe and her laments for Troy structure the words of the princess, which might have been the object of Fuzelier following the tradition of the British parodists of Restoration tragedy. Fuzelier's Cassandra would equate with Settle's both in the space of performance and the model parodied: the emotional frailty of a disregarded sister, daughter and lover distressed by her clairvoyance and her unrequited love.

Altogether, comic street theatre in England and France participated in the melodramatic spirit of La Doué, Thomson and Noverre and the semiotic construct embedded in Settle's Cassandra is still distant from Victorian refigurations of the myth. Nonetheless, no other Cassandra as metatheatrical as Settle's had been staged in England before. Therefore, the introduction of Cassandra into the comic circles of the eighteenth-century street theatre can be said to prepare the ground for nineteenth-century metatheatrical revisitings to the Trojan Princess.

### 3.1.2. *Cassandra-Columbine in a French Argos*

Browsing through the Lord Chamberlain's collection of plays at the British Library, one can easily shape an idea of the pre-eminence of French theatre on the London stage throughout the nineteenth century. In the late Georgian and early Victorian eras, the French craze impregnated England at all levels: the *ILN*, for example, advertised in 1843 the services of Le Page's French

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<sup>25</sup> Rowe (1992), 108.

School in London,<sup>26</sup> and the costume fashions imported from Paris for the ladies were persistently parodied in the comic press of the time. Reactions to the Frenchification of English theatre and manners were multifarious. On the one hand, playwrights such as Tom Robertson pitied the British submission to the impoverishment of the quality of national drama. On the other, managers such as John Hollingshead promoted the reliance of show business on their continental neighbours. A comprehensive analysis of the influence of French theatre on Victorian England is complex to tackle as it involves an in-depth holistic approach to both nineteenth-century French and British aesthetics.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, my purpose here is to outline how eighteenth and early nineteenth-century French precursors introduced Cassandra onto the popular comic stage which later received the works of Hervé and Scribe.

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<sup>26</sup> As advertised in *ILN* 2, 50 (15 April 1843), 264:

MONS. LE PAGE'S FRENCH SCHOOL. PART I.- L'ECHO de PARIS; being a Selection of Phrases a person would hear daily if living in France. With a Vocabulary of the Words, and Idioms. Fifth Edition, with numerous Woodcuts. Price 4s., neatly bound. By M. LE PAGE, Professor of French in London.- Part II: GIFT OF FLUENCY in FRENCH CONVERSATION. A set of Exercises for the learner of French language, calculated to enable him, by means of practice, to express himself fluently on the ordinary topics of life. Second edition, with notes, 3s 6d. -Part III: THE LAST STEP TO FRENCH; or the Principles of French Grammar displayed in a series of Short Lessons, each of which is followed by Questions and Exercises, with the Versification 3s 6d.

<sup>27</sup> See Ramos-Gay (2007) for an analysis of the influence of French theatre in Oscar Wilde. See Leal (1998) for an analysis of the relationships between the Théâtre de la Foire and Offenbach's operettas.

François-Georges Fougès' (Desfontaines) *Cassandre-Agamemnon et Colombine Cassandre* was first staged at Théâtre du Vaudeville, Paris, in 1803. Desfontaines parodies Citizen Louis Jean Népoumucène Lemercier's *Agamemnon*, which was first performed at the Théâtre de la République in 1797.<sup>28</sup> Before Desfontaines, the broad eighteenth-century tendency to stage a comic *Agamemnon* reached Italy and Portugal. In 1731, Bartolomeo Cordans' opera buffa *Attanaganamenone* was first put on in Venice and in 1772, *Agamenon e Clitemnestra* by Juan Crisóstomo Faría Cordero was staged in Portugal.<sup>29</sup> Neither of these countries, however, enjoyed a long established tradition of comic Cassandras nor did they influence the Victorian classical burlesque as the French stage did. There is no evidence of a revival of Desfontaines in England, nor of a direct influence of the play on subsequent English refigurations of the myth. Nonetheless, its histrionic laughter is analogous to the burlesque spirit of the Victorian Harlequinades which coexisted with popular refigurations of the Cassandra myth in nineteenth-century England.

François-Georges Fougès' (Desfontaines) sets his parody within the theatrical backdrop of the *commedia dell' arte*,<sup>30</sup> yet none of the pantomimic

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<sup>28</sup> Bonnéric (1986), 267. Lemercier's prototype is Seneca's *Agamemnon* but, as argued in Hall and Macintosh (2005), 125, he was also influenced by Thomson's treatment of the sacrifice of Iphigenia.

<sup>29</sup> Reid (1993), i. 70. I have not found a copy of these publications so far in my research.

<sup>30</sup> Note how the author plays with the cacophony between the figure of Cassandro d'Aretusi—a third character which interacted with the pair Pantalone and Graziano—and Cassandra as a hidden reference to the character transformations of the *commedia*. See Nicoll (1963), 60-61 on the character of Cassandro:

gestures which characterizes Cassandra's frenzy are explicitly emphasized in *Cassandre-Agamemnon*. The lavishness of Lemerrier's tragic heroes is transformed into a domestic conflict between lesser characters. Desfontaines downplays the violence of the visions of Lemerrier's Cassandra and the political implications of her discourse. *Cassandre-Colombine* is the 'fille du directeur du petit théâtre de Troye',<sup>31</sup> and debates on the homicide of a corrupt monarch which are present in Lemerrier's are replaced by questions on the present state of theatre in France.<sup>32</sup> Cassandra's visions are confined

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Concerning his costume we know nothing, and there is even uncertainty regarding his place of origin; he has been described as a Florentine, but elsewhere there are suggestions that he comes from Bologna, Rome or Siena. If such doubt exists, however, concerning his appearance and origin, we may be reasonably sure of his nature. Like Pantalone, he is a merchant and of honourable family, but from the part he takes in the plots it seems that he is even more 'serious' than his fellow businessman, more kindly and a less active participant in the movement of the comedies. Sometimes, his mission, like that of Vincentio in *The Taming of the Shrew*, is merely to bring a tangled plot to rights. Nevertheless, his personality was forceful enough to keep him firmly on the boards for more than two hundred years; he is a character in several French plays of the eighteenth century, and when Jan Potocki wrote his *Parody* for performance in far-off Poland in 1792 he included the Dottore among his commedia dell'arte characters but in place of Pantalone he chose Kassander.

<sup>31</sup> Desfontaines (1804), 11.

<sup>32</sup> See Hall (2005), 73 and Michelakis (2005), 10, 17 for an account of Lemerrier's *Agamemnon*. As explained in Geoffroy (1825), xvi, 5, Madame Dorsan imitated Mademoiselle Talma, who performed Cassandra in Lemerrier's *Agamemnon*:

to the dénouement of Desfontaines' play and to the fate of French drama,<sup>33</sup> attacking the national theatre and the new patriotic censorship which had put Desfontaines into jail a few years earlier.<sup>34</sup> Cassandra's discourse becomes an apologia for the popular genres in opposition to the drama supported by the late years of the Revolution. Yet Desfontaines' refiguration lacks political engagement and cannot be said to foreshadow late nineteenth-century British political Cassandras.

Altogether, neither the voice nor the gestures of Desfontaines' Cassandra anticipate Victorian refigurations of the myth. The different socio-cultural determinants in England and France foster the development of contrasting sign systems. Moreover, *Cassandre-Agamemnon et Colombine Cassandra* is the only example that I have come across which refigures Cassandra in the *commedia* style, so it would be misleading to consider *commedia dell'arte* a direct precedent of the Victorian burlesque Cassandra. Nonetheless, and despite obvious differences in time and place between the French *commedia* and Victorian burlesque, the association of certain cultural images with the codified types which is common to the two kinds of comedy provides the backdrop against which the interaction between

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Colombine-Cassandre prédit les mauvaises tragédies dont le théâtre doit être inondé, les cabales des acteurs et des auteurs, les banqueroutes des directeurs. Madame Dorsan, chargée de ce rôle, a fait beaucoup rire en imitant la démarche, l'attitude, les mouvements, les accents lugubres de madame Talma

For an account of Madame Talma's preparation of the character of Cassandra see Legouvé (1885).

<sup>33</sup> Desfontaines (1804), 27.

<sup>34</sup> Boureau and Cochrane (2001), 271.

classical mythology and popular culture may be studied in this thesis.<sup>35</sup> The influence of the pantomimic style on nineteenth-century French vaudeville and the English importation of the genre through Hervé, Scribe and others also allow us to see intimations of an underlying semiotic continuity between the two traditions.<sup>36</sup> Desfontaines' *Cassandre-Agamemnon et Colombine Cassandra* illustrates the extensive input of French comic plays which enriched the semiotic substratum which is conveyed to the Victorian comic Cassandra.

### 3.2. EQUESTRIAN BURLESQUE AND THE SIEGE OF TROY

The Victorian attraction towards a spectacular display of properties and stage machinery, together with the widespread popularity of Elkanah Settle's droll, fostered the recreation of the episode of the siege of Troy in the popular theatre well up to the late years of the nineteenth century. The prototypes were Homer and Virgil, although widely known Shakespearean words, scenes and characters were also amply evoked. Equestrian spectacles were the staple of Astley's Amphitheatre, the Coburg and the Surrey theatre

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<sup>35</sup> See Jolibert (1999). Note that the presence of type figures in comic theatre dates as early as Menander's New Comedy, which was transmitted in subsequent periods of European theatre by Roman authors, particularly by Terence. See Morenilla (2003b) and (2006a).

<sup>36</sup>Evidence of such dialogue is documented for example in the perpetuation of the Galatea aesthetic with the performance of *Les Filles de Marbre* by the French T. Barrière and Thiboust first performed at the Vaudeville in 1853, and the various English versions of the same topic E.g.: *The Elves or the Statue Bride* by C.Selby (1856) British Library Add. MS 52962,Y; *The Marble Bride or the Nymphs of the Forrest* by C.H Hazlewood (1857) British Library Add. MS 52964, U; *The Marble Maiden* by W. Suter (1866) British Library Add. MS 53054, G.

on the south bank of the river Thames, between Westminster and Blackfriars. In 1768, Philip Astley had been the first to introduce ‘acrobats, rope-dancers, and short mimed or dialogued scenes’ into equestrian burlesques in Paris.<sup>37</sup> In 1775, Astley’s Amphitheatre began its formulaic equestrian burlesques in London where, together with the performances at the Surrey and the Coburg, almost every great battle was put on stage.<sup>38</sup> The popularity of equestrian spectacles was widespread in nineteenth-century England: theatres were erected in London and the provinces to exhibit horses in burlesque spectacles,<sup>39</sup> and productions were supported by a whole managerial system which almost created an industry on its own.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Metzner (1998), 226.

<sup>38</sup> Roy and Emeljanow (2003), 99.

<sup>39</sup> As outlined in Stonehouse (1844), 180, the Olympic Circus, later called the Victorian Theatre, for example, was built in Liverpool in 1803 to house equestrian performances until 1825, when it was abandoned after the rupture of a sewer. The proprietor then built the Royal Amphitheatre. Also see *The Era* (8 Feb 1852):

Mr. William Cooke’s Colossal equestrian establishment will open in Bath on Monday, February the 9th with an enormous stud of seventy trained horses, and ponies, zebras, ostriches, and reindeer, purchased from the renowned aviary of the Earl of Derby, together with the most talented ladies and gentlemen of the equestrian company in Europe. Mr. Cooke most respectfully informs the public that he purposes opening in the town of Bath on a scale of splendour unequalled, with a Galaxy of talent and attraction such as were never before presented to the inhabitants of Bath.

<sup>40</sup> It is frequent to find advertisements directed at ‘equestrian managers’ in the press of the time as exemplified in *Era* (20 Jan 1856):

Notice to Equestrian Managers and others in the profession. To be sold, James Cooke’s Equestrian Establishment, consisting of a splendid stud of



Over a hundred years after Settle's first performance of *The Siege of Troy*, Thomas John Dibdin staged *Melodrame Mad!* at London's Surrey Theatre in 1819.<sup>41</sup> Dibdin's burlesque is the first documented reworking of the Cassandra myth on the popular stage after Settle. Cassandra had been widely available in 'serious' refigurations: James Thomson's *Agamemnon* and Lady Hamilton's impersonations, for example, were celebrated in highbrow circles until the early 1800s. From Settle to Dibdin, audience sensibilities had changed: between 1707 and 1819, the comic theatre of John Gay, Lewis Theobald and Henry Fielding had transformed the English comic scene, and the 1737 Theatre Regulation Act had limited the activity of the theatres.

A steep decline in theatre marked the dawn of the new century and paved the way for the resurgence of burlesque. Allardyce Nicoll provides four main reasons which explain the new panorama: first, the distance between theatre and the great poets of the age; second, the failure of the talented writers to produce quality drama; third, the indulgence of playwrights in burlesque and melodrama; and, finally, the want of other non-poetic writers in stage careers.<sup>42</sup> Notwithstanding the innovations introduced by Planché and Blanchard, and the success of Burnand, Byron and the Brough brothers, the truth is that many a burlesque was written by minor poets, musicians and composers who did not possess the formal expertise of the great masters of the genre. Despite Thomas John Dibdin's

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horses and ponies, carriages, harness, wardrobe &c., &c., For particulars apply to Mr. James Cooke, Music Hall, Dublin.

<sup>41</sup> Nicoll (1952-59), iv. 301-2 and 296-305 for the rest of his production.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 59.

massive hits *The Cabinet* (1802),<sup>43</sup> his *Melodrame Mad!* fell into the category of the minor burlesques which impaired the quality of the English stage.

Thomas John Dibdin (1771–1841) was the illegitimate son of Charles Dibdin and the actress Harriet Pitt.<sup>44</sup> He started his career on stage at an early age, when he was led before the audience by Sarah Siddons at the Drury Lane and played the role of Cupid in the revival of Garrick's *The Jubilee* (1775).<sup>45</sup> At the age of eight he was in the choir at St. Paul's Cathedral and after attending several schools in London, he learnt Greek and Latin with Mr. Gallant.<sup>46</sup> Dibdin flirted with upholstery in his youth but soon became a famous song-writer and devoted his career to the stage.<sup>47</sup> He was appointed prompter of Drury Lane in 1812,<sup>48</sup> of which he was to become manager only three years later.<sup>49</sup> In 1816 Dibdin became lessee of the Surrey Theatre, where he first staged *Melodrame Mad!* in 1819. In the wake of the opening of the Waterloo Bridge in 1817, the Surrey had to compete with the Coburg Theatre (later Royal Victoria), which was built in the same

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<sup>43</sup> Dibdin (1827), 316-7 and Nicoll (1952-59), iv. 297.

<sup>44</sup> Jon A. Gillaspie, 'Dibdin, Charles (*bap.* 1745, *d.* 1814)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7585>>, accessed 23 Nov 2007.

<sup>45</sup> Dibdin (1827), i. 10

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 16, 20.

<sup>47</sup> Matthew Kilburn, 'Dibdin, Charles Isaac Mungo (1768–1833)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7586>>, accessed 23 Nov 2007.

<sup>48</sup> Dibdin (1827), i. 8.

<sup>49</sup> Dibdin (1827), ii. 52.

year on the south side of the river.<sup>50</sup> The Coburg overtly challenged the repertoire of the Surrey, which needed to attract its audience with visiting celebrities and sound effects. Under such circumstances Thomas Dibdin wrote *Melodrame Mad!*:

After performing a posthumous piece (written by the late Dr. V. and presented me by his daughter) called ‘The Unknown,’ I dramatised Lady Morgan’s romance of ‘Florence Macarthy,’ the then proprietors of the Cobourg Theatre producing a piece with a similar title on the same evening: during the run of this I wrote a comic spectacle, and brought it out at great expense, with the imposing name of ‘Melodrame Mad, or the Siege of Troy:’ —in this piece, I converted the air of ‘The Soldier Tired’ into a grand burlesque chorus, which being extremely well executed, by at least two dozen good voices, —had a wonderfully comic, yet impressive effect: I had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Braham applauding and encoring it from the boxes more than once.<sup>51</sup>

Indeed, both the subtitle and the paratextual elements of *Melodrame Mad!*, as they are described in the 1819 publication, demonstrate that it answered more to the commercial needs of the theatre than to Dibdin’s literary interest in a thorough reworking of the classics:

*Melodrame Mad! or The Siege of Troy. A New Comic, Pathetic, Historic, Anachronasmatic, Ethic, Epic Melange,*

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<sup>50</sup> Davis and Emeljanow (2001), 6.

<sup>51</sup> Dibdin (1827), ii. 176.

*'full of dolefull mirth and right merrie conceit'*. The situations and sentiments from Mr. Homer, a blind old Ballad-singer –one Shakespeare, a Warwickshire Deer-stealer– the language of the Gods from A Pope –and many of the Songs are Gay. The ancient Music from some of the greatest Lyres of the earliest ages –the modern Compositions by Arne, Arnold, Attwood, Bishop Dibdin, Reeve, Shield, Sanderson, &c. –the new Music by Mr. Erskine. The Scenery taken from several Spots of Greece (and Troy); the Artists being prevented, by our present Neutrality, from attending the Siege, have left the task of Invention and Execution to the talents of Mr. Wilson, assisted by his Pupils H. Wilson, C.R. Dibdin, &c. The Dresses, a la Grec, from the classic Scissors and Needles of Mr. Brett and Miss Freelove. The Machinery by Ben Johnson the Carpenter. The Decorations by Artists described hereafter. The Dances by Mr. Giroux– The Heroic Action and Processions under the direction of Mr. Ridgway.

The prototypes were very freely adapted to include women attired in classical costumes, popular songs and an impressive scenery. Allusions to famous Shakespearean scenes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Richard III* and *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, coexisted with velocipedes,<sup>52</sup> artillery,<sup>53</sup> and firemen<sup>54</sup> on the walls of Troy.

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<sup>52</sup> Dibdin (1819), 8.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 5.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 5, 41.



In their true colours: then disgust and hate  
Strike daggers, well deserv'd, to either heart,  
And prove that e'en repentance comes too late.

(Helen *bursts into tears*)<sup>57</sup>

Similarly, Cassandra's portrayal of Paris as an idle philandering dandy lambast a social stereotype which emerged in the late years of the eighteenth century with the figure of George (Beau) Brummell. Brummell epitomized the dandy's stance in the early nineteenth century which was attacked by Carlyle in *Sartor Resartus* ([1833] 1987) and celebrated by Baudelaire in *Le Peintre de la vie moderne* (1863).<sup>58</sup> References to Paris as a satire of such a stereotype are frequent in Dibdin's burlesque, but Cassandra's attacks impinge upon her moralizing attitude which recalls earlier refigurations:

Cass: Away! I know thee too —thou—what shall I call thee?  
Thou art lower than what my mind prophetic tells me, a  
nation yet unborn will call a *Dandy*,. Your ancestors were  
strong, could carry arms, but—( *sings*)

'You're a frog in an opera hat,

'Heigho! says Rowley'

Paris: Rowley be d—d!

Cas: Go, get thee to a madhouse —go, for all thy tribe are  
lunatics. Ye strut and stare, and would alarm the modest,  
were ye less insignificant. Away! I know ye—to a madhouse  
go; for, as a future Bard will truly say, ye amble, ye lisp, ye

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<sup>57</sup> Dibdin (1819), 31.

<sup>58</sup> See *Bentley's Miscellany* 37 (1845), 514-521 for an account of Brummel's life as a dandy.

nickname heaven's creatures, and are no more like men than I to Hercules. Go! I've heard of your patchings, your paintings, your copper heels and stays. For shame! to a madhouse —go,go,go!<sup>59</sup>

Moreover, allusions to topical clichés like the 'wife's first duty', 'the husband's peace' and the 'innocent virgin' to refer to Helen, to Menelaus and to herself later in the play embrace the moralistic stance which is depicted in contemporary 'serious' drama. Dibdin's Cassandra, like Settle's, perpetuates the traditional values which pictured the nuclear family in England until the mid nineteenth century, when divorce and marriage laws encouraged greater flexibility. Nonetheless, references to Cassandra's madness and links with popular imagery foreshadow the semiotic construct epitomized in Reece's *Agamemnon and Cassandra* (1868). The absence of any textual indication to Cassandra's 'shrieks' and gestures of frenzy distances Dibdin's text from early and mid-nineteenth century translations from Homer and Aeschylus (see chapter 2). Yet Mrs. Quotem's models for the performance of Cassandra establish intimate connections between *Melodrame Mad!* and the cultural fabric which suffuses Cassandra with contemporary representations of gipsies and fortune-tellers:

Ap T: Mrs. Quotem, you must do your part, and play the mad Cassandra, and hang yourself.

Mrs Q: I'll be Ophelia, Meg Merrilies, Mad Bess, and Crazy Jane, in one —multum in parvo, as Bickerstaff says.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Dibdin (1819), 32. She appeals to the audience's cultural competence by deploying nursery rhymes and Shakespearean lines in her speech.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 3.

Besides the obvious Shakespearean reference, Meg Merrilies, Mad Bess and Crazy Jane were powerful embodiments of madness in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.

From Walter Scott's novel *Guy Mannering, or the Astrologer* ([1815] 2003), the character of Meg Merrilies became a model for thieves, witches and gypsies in nineteenth-century literature. Scott's old gypsy was refigured by John Keats in his poem 'Meg Merrilies' ([1818] 1994),<sup>61</sup> by Charles Lamb in 'The Gipsy's Malison' ([1829] 1864),<sup>62</sup> and in various paintings between 1816 and 1822.<sup>63</sup> A single description of Meg Merrilies in Scott's novel evidences connections with late-nineteenth-century reworkings of the Trojan princess:

On this occasion, she had a large piece of red cotton cloth rolled about her head in the form of a turban, from beneath which her dark eyes flashed with uncommon lustre. Her long and tangled black hair fell in elf-locks from the folds of this singular head-gear. Her attitude was that of a sibyl in frenzy, and she stretched out in her right hand a sapling bough, which seemed just pulled.<sup>64</sup>

Cassandra's dishevelled hair and access of frenzy, like Meg Merrilies' here, were two key elements in the semiotic construction of the relation between women and knowledge in the nineteenth century.

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<sup>61</sup> Keats ([1818]1994), 302.

<sup>62</sup> Lamb ([1829] 1864), 70.

<sup>63</sup> Nord (2006), 26.

<sup>64</sup> Scout ([1815] 2003), 217.



Mad Bess was a well-known musical piece written by Henry Purcell (c.1682) which enjoyed much success in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England.<sup>65</sup> Inspired by King Lear's allusion to the story of Bessy in III, 6, 27, Mad Bess soon became part of the popular coteries which not only saw Purcell's song performed on stage but also produced versions as illustrative as the one published at *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1812:

Day after day the maniac would appear;  
Wild were her locks; upon her bosom bare,  
Matted like Furies tresses hung her hair,  
Her glaring eyes the wand'ring stars would dart.<sup>66</sup>

*The Gentleman's Magazine* version of Mad Bess perpetuated the symbolic gestures which depicted the Cassandra myth throughout the nineteenth century. Such commonplaces were also juxtaposed with Purcell's 'Crazy Jane', the third character alluded by Mrs. Quotem. With music set by Harriet Abrams and lyrics by Monk Lewis,<sup>67</sup> the piece became a hit in London after Maria Bland sang it at Drury Lane in 1799.<sup>68</sup> Lewis' lyrics were published as a poem in 1812 which was 'republished in broadsides and song chapbooks for about seventy-five years...inspired two sequels..., a ballet, a melodrama by Charles A. Sommerset, and a fashion in hats'.<sup>69</sup> Jane's 'wretchedness' and 'frantic looks' were analogous, like Mad Bess and Meg

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<sup>65</sup> See for example *Supplement to the Musical Library* (March-December 1834), 18.

<sup>66</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* (October 1812), 368.

<sup>67</sup> Levin (1995), 243.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 245.

<sup>69</sup> Macdonald (2000), 224.

Merrilies, with contemporary refigurations of the Trojan princess.<sup>70</sup> The last character mentioned in Dibdin's play is Isaac Bickerstaff. Whether Mrs. Quotem referred in her speech either to Isaac Bickerstaff the playwright, or to the fictitious astrologer invented by Jonathan Swift, Richard Steele and William Congreve for *The Tatler* is unclear.<sup>71</sup> Dibdin's allusions to either evidence the reliance of popular entertainment on topical events and characters, but analogies between Cassandra and Bickerstaff the astrologer open a new sign system which relates Cassandra with contemporary popular astrologers and culminates in Reece's *Agamemnon and Cassandra* (1868).

Altogether, Dibdin's *Melodrame Mad!* bridges eighteenth-century melodramatic refigurations of Cassandra with an emerging imagery which juxtaposes the Trojan princess with popular stereotypes. Subsequent reworkings replace, by and large, Cassandra's dramatic passions by images which connect the myth with witches, prophetesses and madwomen. The transition from the parody of the moralistic Cassandra to Cassandra the shrew-like mastermind of the revenge against Clytemnestra culminates in the comic stage in Robert Reece's *Agamemnon and Cassandra*, which was first performed in Liverpool at the dawn of the organized movements for the rights of women.

Between 1833 and 1867 as many as six burlesques on the siege of Troy were first staged in London and in the provinces. Clytemnestra and Helen were usually at the centre of these parodies and only one text, Hugo Vamp's *The Siege of Troy, or, the Misjudgement of Paris* (1854) satirized the figure of Cassandra. The daughters of Leda were recurrent characters in

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<sup>70</sup> Lewis (1839), v. 188-9.

<sup>71</sup> Tasch (1971), 19.

the English burlesque of the nineteenth century due to the social debates which sparked from the discussions on the Divorce and Marriage bills of the 1850s. The two women epitomized the stereotypes of vengeful, adulterous wives and young, fair concubines who filled the society news of the age.<sup>72</sup>

As demonstrated by Macintosh,<sup>73</sup> the comic potential of Clytemnestra was exploited in theatre, novels and engravings: in William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847-8) Becky Sharp performs Clytemnestra's Machiavellian plans against Agamemnon and in Owen Meredith's (pseudonym for Edward Robert Bulwer Lytton) *Clytemnestra* (1855) she claims equal rights with her husband.<sup>74</sup> *Agamemnon at Home, or The Latest Particulars of that Little Affair at Mycenae* by Edward Nolan, which was staged at Oxford in 1867 by St. John's College Dramatic Society, portrays Clytemnestra as a capricious young lady who deploys divorce at the expense of her husband's and her suitor's welfare.<sup>75</sup>

With regard to Helen, many a burlesque which alluded to her beauty and her affair in Troy was written until the last decades of the century. In 1866, for example, Francis C. Burnand put on *Helen; or Taken from the Greek* at the Adelphi and *Paris; or Vive Lemprière* at the Royal Strand Theatre, and as late as 1884 Robert Reece's *Our Helen* was staged at the

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<sup>72</sup> See for example *The North British Review* 27, no.53 (Aug-Nov), 162-194 for the engagement of the press with the debates. See *Punch*, 5 September 1857, 103 for a parody of the discussions. See Humphreys (1999), 42-59 for a full account of the representation of women and divorce in the Victorian novel.

<sup>73</sup> See Macintosh (2005), 139-162.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* 147-150; 153.

<sup>75</sup> See Nolan (1867).

Gaiety. Moreover, the success of Jacques Offenbach's operetta *La Belle Hélène* at the Théâtre des Variétés in Paris in 1864 fostered a number of English versions which contributed to the vogue for the genre in England.<sup>76</sup> In such burlesques, Helen was a bastion of beauty and epitomized the paradigm of idle,<sup>77</sup> shallow, vain young girls who put the institution of marriage at risk.<sup>78</sup>

The popularity of the siege of Troy on English comic theatre has been amply demonstrated in Elkanah Settle's production at Bartholomew and Southwark Fairs and in Dibdin's *Melodrame Mad!* at the Surrey. The surge of interest in the classical episode increased in the nineteenth century: Victorian stagecraft allowed for more bombastic stage effects and favoured the display of sophisticated animal exhibitions. The procession of the giant horse through the walls of Troy was an added attraction to the staging of the sieges that were so popular in nineteenth-century entertainment.<sup>79</sup> As advertised in a 1833 playbill, the anonymous *The Siege of Troy or the Giant*

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<sup>76</sup> Eg: Kenney (1866). See Hollingshead (1898), 201-202, 209, 243 for performances of *La Belle Hélène* at the Gaiety both in French and in English. See Mackinlay (1927), 215-225 for an analysis of the development of French operetta in England.

<sup>77</sup> Neff (2006), 186-243 for an analysis of the stereotype of idle women in Victorian England.

<sup>78</sup> Note the success of *Masks and Faces* by Charles Reade and Tom Taylor, which was first produced at the Haymarket Theatre in 1852. Reade and Taylor based their comedy on the misunderstandings caused by Mr. Ernest Vane's infatuation with Peg Woffington and the unexpected visit from his wife.

<sup>79</sup> As outlined in Nicoll (1952-59), iv. 639, burlesques based on the siege of Troy coexisted for example with *The Siege of Liverpool; or, The Days of Prince Rupert* (unknown author, 1830).

*Horse of Sinon*, was first put on at Astley's Amphitheatre as an Equestrian burlesque where 'chariot dancing', 'wild zebras' and 'gladiators' became the centre of attraction.<sup>80</sup> Astley's Amphitheatre stood out among other popular theatres for its equestrian performances as described in a 1838 pocket guide of London:

Astley's Amphitheatre is on the Surrey side of Westminster-bridge, and has long been famed for the exhibition of spectacles and equestrian feats. This is decidedly the most fashionable of the minor theatres on the south side of the Thames, receiving a steadier share of the public patronage than any other dramatic establishment in London, maintaining its prices, and being generally full. It is open from Easter Monday till the end of autumn.<sup>81</sup>

Such was the success of the *The Siege of Troy or the Giant of Sinon* that a toy theatre based on this anonymous burlesque was printed and sold by Hodgson in London the same year,<sup>82</sup> and a 1840 revival of the equestrian show with the title *The Siege of Troy; or, The Great Horse of Greece* is documented in Nicoll's *History of English Drama*.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> 'The Siege of Troy or the Giant Horse of Sinon', 29 April 1833, printed by T. Romney, London. Museum no. S.2-1983.

<sup>81</sup> Brady (1838), 116.

<sup>82</sup> As explained in Speaight (1999), 28-29, a sketching of the backdrops for II.4 for the toy theatre performances shows how the pomposity of the stagecraft also influenced juvenile drama. See Speaight (1946), 58ff for an account of the history of Hodgson & Co.

<sup>83</sup> Nicoll (1952-59), iv. 639.

The episode of the judgement of Paris as triggering the Trojan war was also evoked in Victorian classical burlesques. In 1846, Charles Selby put on *The Judgement of Paris, or the Pas de Pippins* at the Adelphi Theatre. Selby's burlesque was a parody of the famous 'Pas de Déesses' from the ballet *Le jugement de Paris* by Jules Perrot with music by Cesare Pugni, which was performed at Her Majesty's Theatre the same season.<sup>84</sup> *Le jugement de Paris* was first conceived as part of Perrot's ballet *Les tribulations d'un maitre de ballet*, but the autonomy of the piece led Perrot to isolate it as an independent ballet which was widely welcomed in London (particularly the performance of Fanny Cerito, Marie Taglioni, and Carlotta Grisi).<sup>85</sup> Selby's burlesque was extremely successful, and his *pas de trois*

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<sup>84</sup> See *New Grove Online* s.v. Pugni, Cesare. In *Le jugement de Paris* the three main ballerinas of the time, Fanny Cerito, Marie Taglioni, and Carlotta Grisi, danced together at the 'Pas des Déesses'. The moment was immortalized by Jacques Bouvier in a wood engraving held at the Allison Delaure Collection at Princeton University.

<sup>85</sup> *ILN* 9, 221 (25 July 1846), 59:

...on Thursday, a feat of managerial tact, equalling that of the 'Pas de Quatre' last year, was accomplished. Perrot's new ballet, 'Les Tribulations d'un Maitre de Ballet', was to have been produced on this occasion, and during the course of its performance a 'Pas' was to have been introduced, combining the three matchless *danseuses*, Taglioni, Grahm, and Cerito...this portion of the composition was found to be of so striking a character, and of such paramount importance, as to be quite out of place introduced merely as an accessory. The 'Jugement de Paris' has, therefore, been isolated, and now forms a charming *divertissement* of itself. As may be anticipated, the 'Pas de Déesses' represents the three rival goddesses, *Juno*, *Minerva* and *Venus*, impersonated by our three great *ballerina*, contending for the apple thrown by the *Goddess of*

with Mr. Wright, Paul Bedford, and Mr. Ryan was hilarious for the Adelphi audience.<sup>86</sup> In line with the most conservative responses to the genre, however, an *ILN* critic condemned the ‘light humour’ displayed at the burlesque:

in a *pièce de circonstance* of this kind, which must of necessity be planned, written, and brought out with high-pressure haste, whilst the prototype is before the public, or fresh in their minds, acute criticism on its merits ought not to be looked for. It is, however, filled with jokes upon passing topics and follies, and plays on words generally, some of which were received with the courtesy due to strangers, and others warmly welcomed as very old acquaintances indeed.

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*Discord*, and which *Paris* is to bestow on ‘the most beautiful.’ The idea of this *pas* is an excellent one; for it is an important qualification in choreographic compositions, that the dancing should appear to be a necessary result of the action—that an intelligible idea should be conveyed by it, and a story kept up throughout... Here there is a purpose in the varied attitudes and graceful evolutions of each *danseuse*, as she is supposed to be endeavouring to outstrip her rivals, and vindicate her right to the disputed apple; and the effect is a charming one, independently of the interest and excitement that must inevitably attach to the combined performance of such unequalled artists as these. The *Graces*, enacted by Louise Taglioni, Demessisse, and Cassan; *Cupid* by that graceful child. Mlle Lamoureux; *Mercure*, by Perrot, &c., &c, are all numbered amongst the *dramatis personae* of the *ballet*, and a more charming combination could hardly be met with.

Also see Lumley (1864), 195.

<sup>86</sup> *ILN* 9, 225 (22 August 1846), 122.

Taking the ‘sense of the house’ as the criterion of its success, we are bound to say that the extravaganza answered all the purposes intended. ... But we must honestly express our distaste for such exhibitions; and the more so in the present case, because both author and actors are so fully competent to make people laugh heartily by legitimate means. ...It is, therefore, to be regretted that they should stoop to a display which, to use a mild term, is offensive, even to those who love to scream until their sides ache at the Adelphi; and we are amongst their number.<sup>87</sup>

Burlesque reworkings of the Troy episode reveal the historical value of popular theatre as a chronicle and a witness to nineteenth-century society. Whereas the display of stunning stage effects in the performances of the siege of Ilium manifested the allure sophisticated mechanical inventions held for Victorians, the refigurations of Helen and Clytemnestra reflected topical debates on divorce and the emancipation of women. The issue of the position of women within the institution of marriage accompanied more profound questions on gender regarding the nature of women and their economic position in society. The 1850s witnessed not only Caroline Norton’s efforts to improve the condition of wives and divorcees but also a significant upsurge of interest in the education of women. Before John Stuart Mill’s famous apologia for equal rights in 1861, individual actions had started to threaten the patriarchal organization of British society. In 1850, the North Collegiate School for girls was founded in London by

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.



Frances Mary Buss; in 1851 Harriet Taylor published 'The Enfranchisement of Women' in *The Westminster Review*, in 1853 Cheltenham Ladies' College, the first college for women, was set up and in 1856 Elizabeth Barrett Browning published *Aurora Leigh*. Claims of the inferior intellectual capability of women were being challenged and, as noted in Florence Nightingale's *Cassandra* ([1852] 1979) the full socialization of women needed the institutionalization of their access to knowledge. In such a climate of social turmoil, the playwright and composer Robert O'Neil, known as Hugo Vamp, first staged *The Siege of Troy, or, the Misjudgement of Paris*.

O'Neil's burlesque was put on at Astley's Amphitheatre on Monday August 28<sup>th</sup> 1854,<sup>88</sup> and it was the first burlesque reworking of the Cassandra myth after Dibdin's. John Robert O'Neil (1823-1860) was the nephew of the once celebrated actress Miss O'Neil, later Lady Beecher.<sup>89</sup> When Lady Beecher's brother died, she took care of her nephew's education: he went up to Oxford to study for the Church but instead opted for a career in theatre.<sup>90</sup> O'Neil first devoted himself to acting but his lack of talent forced him to become a public reader and a lecturer.<sup>91</sup> A second failure in his career brought him to London, where he wrote a large number of songs and a few comic pieces under the pseudonym of Hugo Vamp.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> British Library Add. MS 52,949 C.

<sup>89</sup> <<http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/photolondon/pages/details.asp?pid=5732>>, accessed September, 26, 2008.

<sup>90</sup> Donaldson (1865), 309-10.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. 312.

<sup>92</sup> *The Times* (5 December 1856), 4.

Unluckily, O'Neil's early death at the age of thirty-five left the burlesque stage without one of its most promising playwrights.<sup>93</sup>

Hugo Vamp became a celebrated songwriter who published a number of scores for the theatre and for home entertainment.<sup>94</sup> His compositions were based on popular plays and legends; most famous were the comic scenas *Othello*, *the Black-Amour of Venice Comic* and *Mazzepa, the Cream of Tartars*, but he also wrote pantomimes, burlesques, extravaganzas and dramas. O'Neil's work for the theatre developed between 1852 and 1854 at the Royal Marionette Theatre,<sup>95</sup> the Marylebone, the St. James's,<sup>96</sup> and at Astley's Amphitheatre.<sup>97</sup> His puppet shows at the Marionette were particularly successful as they contributed to the puppet fever of the first half of the century:

Having ventured into that field of politics whence no Chamberlain can exclude them, the puppets are beginning to strike out with wondrous audacity, and sing sage counsels to Lord John (by name) to the top of their voices. A little piece,

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<sup>93</sup> Donaldson (1865), 315.

<sup>94</sup> *The Times* (1 November 1856), 1

<sup>95</sup> Nicoll (1952-59), v. 221. Also see McCormick (2004), 50:

In the nineteenth century halls proliferated for philanthropic, scientific and educational purposes. These were respectable places and tended to attract more middle-class patrons. In 1852 the Brigaldi 'Royal Marionettes' had occupied the long galleried room of the Adelaide Gallery in the Strand. Their repertoire, with its heavy emphasis on parody and satire, was aimed at a middle-class adult audience.

<sup>96</sup> *The Times* (7 December 1852), 8.

<sup>97</sup> Nicoll (1952-59), v. 507.

called *Poll-practice*, played last night for the first time, represents a corrupt system of suffrage, followed by grave hints on the expediency of Parliamentary reform....At the same time the little squib, being more complicated in action than those which have preceded it, shows new capabilities in the puppets, the characters engaged in by-play at the back, while the rest are engaged in front, being most cleverly managed. The mechanical perfection at which the exhibition has arrived is great indeed.<sup>98</sup>

O'Neil's taste for shows with elaborate stagecraft is also revealed in *The Siege of Troy, or, the Misjudgement of Paris*, where tableaux with opening mountains and sea serpents appear.<sup>99</sup> *The Siege of Troy, or, the Misjudgement of Paris* was announced in the title page of the 1854 manuscript at the Lord Chamberlain's Plays collection as a 'Grand Classical Equestrian Burlesque in Two Acts'<sup>100</sup> continuing with the tradition initiated by Selby. *The Siege of Troy* follows the pattern of the comic theatre of the age: topical allusions, spectacular stage effects, women in Greek attire...Reference to famous Shakespearean scenes from *Hamlet* also abound: the cockcrow, the sentinels, the fencing scene 'à la Hamlet &

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<sup>98</sup> *The Times*, 2 March 1852, 8.

<sup>99</sup> British Library Add. MS 52,949 C, 1,20.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.* 1.

*Laertes* were all familiar to an audience which had already been exposed to a large number of travesties of the tragedy.<sup>101</sup>

O’Neil’s Cassandra is subdued by the spectacular nature of the show and only in passing allusions to her madness connect the myth with the sign system developed in contemporary refigurations. The playwright provides clues about Cassandra’s gestures through stage directions, which often appear with the heroine’s agitated discourse on her visions about Troy. O’Neil’s Cassandra comes on stage ‘wildly’<sup>102</sup> and ‘running like winking’<sup>103</sup> which recalls Plumptre’s translation and anticipates Reece’s burlesque. Nonetheless, Cassandra is a flat character in *The Siege of Troy* and her prophetic voice and gestures are mere secondary ingredients which reinforce the humour of the play.

*The Siege of Troy* is a burlesque about men watching women, flirting with them, and speaking about war. Women’s sexual and physical attributes, then, prevail over other matters. The socio-cultural context in which the play was first put on favoured the caricature of intellectual women and the eulogy of ‘female statues’ which complied with the demands of the voyeuristic male audiences. Accordingly, while the beauty of Juno’s, Venus’ and Minerva’s nudity is applauded by both Paris and the audience, Cassandra’s ‘knowledge’ is pitied and deprecated:

Paris: Display your beauty of a la poses plastiques

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<sup>101</sup> See Young (2002), 346-371 for a detailed account of *Hamlet* and burlesque. See Moody (2000), 118-147 and Schoch (2002) for Shakespeare and Victorian burlesque. For an anthology of the burlesques based on Shakespeare see Wells (1978).

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.21b

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. 4.

Be Greekly pure, be classically chaste  
Dismiss your Bustle and I'll make more haste  
(*They flung* of Helmet cloaks –Form a tableau)<sup>104</sup>  
[.....]  
Paris:  
Poor thing she's mad, she prates about one Homer  
And says she's living in a state of Coma  
Apollo mesmeriz'd her *entre nous*  
Since which she has been mad...<sup>105</sup>

Furthermore, even though the nineteenth-century fascination with necromancy and divination is perpetuated in O'Neil's burlesque in Sinon's mesmeric powers,<sup>106</sup> Cassandra's clairvoyance is confined to shallow allusions to the future of Troy and the Crimean conflict, which had begun only a year earlier. In 1854 Britain signed a treaty of alliance with France and declared war on Russia.<sup>107</sup> O'Neil plays with the hackneyed polysemy of 'Paris' to raise the nationalistic spirit of the audience and win their favour:

Cassandra:  
Firebrand of Troy not this the only age  
When myriad tongues shall Paris judgement wait  
Leave Russian Nicholas to tell the tale

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<sup>104</sup> British Library Add. MS 52,949C, 3.

<sup>105</sup> British Library Add. MS 52,949 C, 4.

<sup>106</sup> The presence of hypnosis in Victorian entertainment is well documented by Winter (1998) and Willis and Wynne (2006).

<sup>107</sup> See Sweetman (2001).

I'm that pale brow, the red Republic face is  
And soon my spark you'll send us all –to blaze!<sup>108</sup>

Cassandra's allusion to the war is only in passing and therefore distant from contemporary refigurations of the myth, such as William Rathbone Greg's, which exploit the political potential of Priam's daughter.

From Elkanah Settle to John Robert O'Neil, each refiguration of Cassandra analysed so far provides a different layer of meaning of the semiotic substratum inherited by Robert Reece's classical burlesque. The main contribution of the equestrian spectacles is the inclusion of Cassandra in the circuit of light-hearted entertainments of the closed theatres of the nineteenth century. As outlined above, Helen and Clytemnestra captured the interest of the burlesque playwrights fascinated by the Trojan episode to the detriment of Cassandra, who was usually pushed into the background. The lure of the spectacle introduced by the siege of Troy reawakened the interest in the comic possibilities of the myth paving the ground for Robert Reece's *Agamemnon and Cassandra; or, the Prophet and Loss of Troy* in 1868.

### 3.3. CASSANDRA AND THE HEYDAY OF BURLESQUE: ROBERT REECE'S *AGAMEMNON AND CASSANDRA OR THE PROPHET AND LOSS OF TROY* (1868)

The second period of Victorian classical burlesque begins in the late years of Palmerston's Liberal government, when England was emerging as an increasingly urban nation. The Victorian imagination incorporated sociological stereotypes into its visual and verbal culture which arose from changes in the economy and the mindset of the time. Suicidal virgins, jovial

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<sup>108</sup> British Library Add. MS 52,949 C f. 4.

dustmen, and New Women dressed in bloomers, for example, filled the pages of the novels, caricatures and illustrated press of the age.<sup>109</sup> The sixties were also a decade when the social activism of women became decisive and, as a result, the Married Women's Property Act, for example, was passed in 1870.

Robert Reece's *Agamemnon and Cassandra* is the first English play where the burlesque Cassandra is depicted as a round character. Despite the avid interest which Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* aroused among Victorian middle and highbrow circles, and the French theatrical precedents of the comic Cassandra, deeper semiotic and sociological reasons, as I demonstrate in this thesis, explain the Victorian necessity for parodying the myth. The syncretism between the images of prophets, fortune-tellers and Cassandra favours a patriarchal discourse where women are both scorned and feared for their desire for knowledge. Nonetheless, the ambivalence of burlesque favours a comic Cassandra which both perpetuates and departs from the Greek prototypes reimagining the signs within an ideological context in which her predictions are believed.

### *3.3.1. Robert Reece and Burlesque*

Robert Reece (1838-1891) was born in Barbados in the bosom of a wealthy English family.<sup>110</sup> His life in Barbados was often the subject of hilarious anecdotes during his Oxford years at Balliol, where he matriculated in 1857

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<sup>109</sup> Maidment (1996), 53-176.

<sup>110</sup> C. Boase, 'Reece, Robert (1838-1891)', rev. Megan A. Stephan, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23267>>, accessed 18 July 2008.

and graduated BA in 1860 and MA in 1864.<sup>111</sup> Alan Mackinnon relates with amusement how he was regarded as an expert on the sugar market and how he was one night ‘awakened at six o’clock in the morning to receive a deputation coming to protest against the local grocer’s charge of a half-penny more the pound for that article, an imposition which was alleged to have been instigated by Reece’.<sup>112</sup> Reece worked as an extra clerk in the office of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and also for the Emigration Commissioners for a short period of time between 1861 and 1868. However, his activity in the Oxford Amateurs theatrical society soon led him to pursue a successful career as an occasional actor and a playwright. In 1867, Reece married Mary Arnold Chipperfield and little else is known about Reece’s life except that he lost many of his property investments in the West Indies and that he passed away in 1891 suffering from an apoplexy. With regard to his work as a playwright, however, the chronicles and papers of the time provide a more detailed account of the casts, premières and impact of his burlesques.

At Oxford, Reece rubbed shoulders with Edmond Warre, a Balliol scholar and fellow of All Souls,<sup>113</sup> and Herman Merivale, also a member of

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Mackinnon (1910), 29.

<sup>113</sup> Tim Card, ‘Warre, Edmond (1837–1920)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36751>>, accessed 18 July 2008.



Balliol who eventually went on to become a famous writer.<sup>114</sup> It was after reading one of Reece's plays at a meeting with the two friends that Merivale persuaded Reece to abandon sentimental theatre in favour of burlesque which had earned him an unrivalled reputation among his fellow collegians.<sup>115</sup> Reece's work for the Oxford Amateurs included playing the piano and acting: his most famous performances were in cross-dressed roles, particularly as Miss Tight and as Nancy Bitters.<sup>116</sup> While at Oxford, Reece also joined a provincial company, together with Alan Mackinnon, Herman Charles Merivale and A. Ponsonby, which toured at Coventry and Leamington. Amusing anecdotes from the performance at Coventry show that the work of this group of Oxonians was still desultory.<sup>117</sup> Nonetheless, both Reece's performances within the Oxford amateurs and with the provincial troupe provide the substratum for Reece's passion for burlesque.

After leaving Oxford, Reece continued with his work for the theatre in the provinces and opened in Edinburgh, Porstmouth, Liverpool, Brighton, Manchester and Bournemouth. From the mid 1860s his plays were staged at The New Royalty Theatre, The Royal Gallery of Illustration, The Alhambra, The Vaudeville and The Olympic among others.<sup>118</sup> In 1872, he began to write for the Gaiety where, under the management of John Hollingshead, he

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<sup>114</sup> Leslie Stephen, 'Merivale, Herman (1806–1874)', rev. Donovan Williams, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18593>>, accessed 18 July 2008.

<sup>115</sup> Mackinnon (1910), 28.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.* 29.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.* 32-34.

<sup>118</sup> Nicoll (1952-59), v. 536-538.

introduced the three-act burlesque for the first time in England.<sup>119</sup> Reece became the Gaiety's stock dramatic author and, as Hollingshead recalls in his memories, his success in the theatre paralleled his warm-hearted character:

Mr. Reece had now become the chief purveyor of burlesque and *apropos* sketches to the theatre. He was a quick worker, very modest, very amiable, and very clever. He worked with me and for me for several years... . Like Reece, Burnand was a most pleasant author in a theatre, ready and willing, and successful or unsuccessful (he was generally the former), he was always cheerful.<sup>120</sup>

Reece adapted plays from the French and also collaborated with other playwrights of his time such as John Hollingshead,<sup>121</sup> Henry James Byron,<sup>122</sup> E. Righton,<sup>123</sup> J. F. McArdle,<sup>124</sup> H.S. Leigh,<sup>125</sup> K. Summers,<sup>126</sup> W. Yardley,<sup>127</sup> T. Thorpe,<sup>128</sup> A. Thompson and, above all, Henry Brougham

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<sup>119</sup> Adams (1891), 90 and Hollingshead (1898), 399.

<sup>120</sup> Hollingshead (1898), 250.

<sup>121</sup> Nicoll (1952-59), v. 537.

<sup>122</sup> Hollingshead (1898), 377.

<sup>123</sup> Nicoll (1959), v. 538.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.* 539.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

Farnie, with whom he wrote over fifteen plays.<sup>129</sup> Reece wrote more than a hundred plays, the majority of which were operettas, opera bouffe, farces, comic sketches and burlesques,<sup>130</sup> and only five dramas. Among these *May, or Dolly's Delusion*, which was first produced at the Royal Strand Theatre on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1874, stands out, but it never had the impact of his most acclaimed comic plays.<sup>131</sup> Reece was also an avid adapter of Hervé, from whom he probably found his inspiration for his *Agamemnon and Cassandra*.<sup>132</sup> Reece's most successful adaptation from the French author is *Chilperic*, which was first staged at the Lyceum in 1870.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> C. Boase, 'Reece, Robert (1838–1891)', rev. Megan A. Stephan, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23267>>, accessed 18 July 2008. See Nicoll (1959), v. 537-9.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. 537. According to Nicoll, Reece's only serious opera is *Castle Grim*, which premiered at The Royalty Theatre in 1865. The rest of the documented sources register *Castle Grim* as an operetta. See *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 September 1865; *The Era*, 3 September 1865. The piece was moderately successful and it was staged at the Victoria Hall Theatre later in the year. See *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post or Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser*, 6 September 1865.

<sup>131</sup> The play toured in the provinces and it was regarded in *The Era*, 31 May 1874, as 'a pretty pastoral drama'. Also see *The Era* 11 October 1874, and *The Era*, 23 August 1884, for the revival of the play in Exeter and Halifax.

<sup>132</sup> Florimond Ronger Hervé's *Agamemnon; ou, Le chameau à deux bosses* (1856) was probably never published and I have not come across a reference of the play so far in my research.

<sup>133</sup> Nicoll (1952-59), v. 537. An ongoing debate on the adaptation of foreign plays to the English stage was held among mid and late Victorian authors and theatre managers. Whereas for the latter, and also for minor authors and adaptors, the French plays meant a

With regard to burlesque, Reece's name is intimately related with John Lawrence Toole and Nelly Farren, two of the most famous comic actors of late Victorian popular theatre. Even though Nelly Farren laid the foundations of her popularity as a comic actress at the Olympic,<sup>134</sup> it was at Hollingshead's Gaiety that she was catapulted to fame. Three of her most important roles performed at the Gaiety were in two burlesques written by Reece: Leporello in *Don Giovanni*, Ganem in *The Forty Thieves* and Aladdin in the burlesque with the same title.<sup>135</sup> Toole's career as an actor, like Reece's, started in the provinces and after his first debut in London, in 1852, he played on the most important stages of his time.<sup>136</sup> Like Farren, Toole collaborated with Reece at the Gaiety, where he interpreted, for example, Reece's *Ali Baba à la Mode* (1872a) and *Don Giovanni* (1873),<sup>137</sup> and inspired the title of two of Reece's burlesques, *Seeing Toole* (1873) and *Toole at Sea* (1875).<sup>138</sup> The relation between the playwright and the two actors, and his intense activity at the Gaiety, prove that he was one of the bastions of late Victorian burlesque. It comes as no surprise, then, that Adams included him, together with F.C. Burnand and H.J. Byron, among

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considerable increase on their profits, for some authors, such as Burnand, it meant an obstacle to the development of national drama. See Jackson (1989), 318-320.

<sup>134</sup> J. Parker, 'Farren, Ellen (1848–1904)', rev. Patty S. Derrick, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33089>>, accessed 21 July 2008.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> Pascoe (1879), 321-327.

<sup>137</sup> Hollingshead (1898), 216, 229 and Nicoll (1952-59), v. 537.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.* 537-8. *Seeing Toole* was written in collaboration with John Hollingshead. *Ibid.* 442.

the ‘premier burlesque writers’ of his time ‘whose productions have been as notable for their multiplicity and variety as for their technical excellence.’<sup>139</sup>

Indeed, Reece’s style was acclaimed among his contemporaries, so whilst John Hollingshead acknowledged that his burlesques, like Byron’s and Burnand’s, might have occasionally been ‘machine-made’, he also emphasizes the fact that they were ‘founded on stories with a backbone, and therefore presenting something a little more coherent on the stage than a music-hall entertainment without drink, or a smoking concert without tobacco.’<sup>140</sup> Moreover, Archer’s utter disdain for burlesque doesn’t prevent him from considering Reece ‘the most satisfactory, or more correctly the least objectionable writer of the day’.<sup>141</sup> Archer also underscores his *Prometheus, or the Man on the Rock* and *Agamemnon and Cassandra* amongst other contemporary classical burlesques.<sup>142</sup>

Reece’s burlesques draw from English myths and legends, from classical antiquity and, mainly, from the comic and dramatic hits which filled both the English and the French stage of his time.<sup>143</sup> Some of them, like *The Forty Thieves* and *Aladdin* were framed within a tradition of comic plays which, pondering the same topics, forged the imagination of the popular culture of modern Britain.<sup>144</sup> Others, like *Agamemnon* and

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<sup>139</sup> Adams (1891), 36.

<sup>140</sup> Hollingshead (1898), 330.

<sup>141</sup> Archer (1882), 290.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.* 291-2.

<sup>143</sup> See Nicoll (1952-59), v. 537-539 for a comprehensive list of Reece’s burlesques.

<sup>144</sup> See Adams (1891), 86-90 for a comprehensive list of the most prominent theatrical reworkings of these tales in Victorian England.

*Prometheus*, were unique in their species. On the whole, Reece's burlesques were, inevitably, a product of his age: bombastic effects, ballets and familiar topics were the backbone of his theatre. Still, the witticism of his puns, and the freshness of some of his plots allow us to put him on a par with Henry James Byron, Francis Burnand and the Brough brothers.

Coinciding with the heyday and the decline of burlesque, Robert Reece wrote more than forty burlesques and extravaganzas. The golden years of Planché were over and, after the Theatre Regulation Act in 1843, burlesque was performed both in the formerly called patent and minor theatres. Furthermore, new theatre venues had been erected from the 1840s in numbers and some, such as the Gaiety, had become the new home for burlesque.<sup>145</sup> Robertson reformed the comedy of Boucicault in the late 1860s and Gilbert continued the work of the comic theatre of Planché and Byron the following decade.<sup>146</sup> The eighties witnessed the shift between the Old and the New burlesque, which meant a dramatic change in the conception of the genre. Managers encouraged a market where stage effects, visual stunts and dancing increased the number of potential audiences and, consequently, of profits.<sup>147</sup> The results were texts with little quality which favoured pompous effects and the exhibition of women in breeches as a prelude to what burlesque is nowadays:

The pieces, having now become the staple of the night's amusement, were to be placed upon the boards with all possible splendour. Money was to be spent lavishly on

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<sup>145</sup> See Davis and Emeljanow (2001).

<sup>146</sup> See Stedman (2000).

<sup>147</sup> Bratton (2004), 165.

scenery, properties and costumes. Dancing was to be a prominent feature —not the good old-fashioned ‘breakdowns’ and the like, but choreographic interludes of real grace and ingenuity. The music was to be written specially for the productions, and pains were to be taken to secure artists who could really ding.<sup>148</sup>

Music-hall entertainment took over, and the paucity of plot and the weakness in character delineation which were at the core of the attack of the critics against the burlesques of Talfourd, for example, were frequent.

Within this context, Reece’s burlesques show the evolution of the genre from Byron and Burnand in the sixties to the music hall of the eighties.<sup>149</sup> As stated above, Reece lampooned French theatre, English theatrical hits and folktales. Among his most widely known burlesques of fairytales are: *Whittington Junior, and his Sensation Cat*, written for The New Royalty in 1870; *Ali Baba à la Mode*, first staged at the Gaiety in 1872; *The Forty Thieves* in 1880; *Aladdin* in 1881 and *Valentine and Orson*, in 1882. Robert Reece based six of his plays on classical myths and legends: *Prometheus; or, the Man on the Rock* ([1865] 1994), *Agamemnon and Cassandra; or the Prophet and Loss of Troy* (1868), *Perfect Love, or the Triumph of Oberon* (1871a), *The Very Last Days of Pompeii* ([1872] 1994), *Romulus and Remus, or The Two Rum’uns* (1872b) and *Our Helen* (1884).

Despite the fact that most of these plays recaptured contemporary theatrical and literary hits for the popular stage, none enjoyed long-term

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<sup>148</sup> Adams (1891), 208.

<sup>149</sup> Bratton (2004), 164-182.

success. Moreover, the audiences' responses were heterogeneous and whereas *Prometheus*, for example, was widely acclaimed in London and in the provinces,<sup>150</sup> *Our Helen* failed to get favourable reviews. Shakespeare and Greek tragedy were the main sources for Reece's classical burlesques but contemporary authors and composers, such as Bulwer Lytton and Offenbach, were also parodied.<sup>151</sup> *Prometheus; or the Man on the Rock*, which is subtitled by Reece a 'new and original extravaganza',<sup>152</sup> inaugurates his first forays into the genre and it is Reece's only parody, besides *Agamemnon*, which is partially based on Greek tragedy.

Notwithstanding the social debates which are promoted in *Prometheus*, this play still lacks the complexity of *Agamemnon and Cassandra*. It illustrates Reece's approach to the genre in the 1860s, where entertainment still coexisted with literary quality. Even though the burlesques of the seventies still received the acknowledgement of critics and audience, they began to yield to the economic powers of commercial theatre. In general, the essential ingredients of burlesque—dancing, spectacle, transvestism and exotic settings—concurred with intelligent puns and

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<sup>150</sup> *Manchester Times*, 6 January 1866.

<sup>151</sup> E.g: Shakespeare is recalled in the characters and actions of *Prometheus* ([1865] 1994) and in *Agamemnon and Cassandra* (1868); *The Very Last Days of Pompeii* ([1872] 1994) is based on the theatrical adaptation of Edward Bulwer Lytton's novel with the same title which was performed at the Queen's theatre also in 1872. *Our Helen* draws from Jacques Offenbach's famous operetta *La Belle Hélène* ([1864] 1865).

<sup>152</sup> Robert Reece 'Prometheus; Or The Man On The Rock.' *English Drama*, Chadwyck-Healey, 1994 <[http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res\\_ver=0.2&res\\_id=xri:ilcs&rft\\_id=xri:ilcs:ft:drama:Z000114635:0](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:ilcs&rft_id=xri:ilcs:ft:drama:Z000114635:0)>, accessed 10 March 2009.



delineated characters,<sup>153</sup> but the topical issues raised in the plays never rivalled the social debates which could spring from Blanchard's *Antigone* or Reece's *Agamemnon*, for example.

The exception is *Richelieu Redressed*, which took a more open political stance than its contemporaries.<sup>154</sup> Reece's burlesque opened at the Olympic on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1873 and was based on Edward Bulwer Lytton's *Richelieu*, which was first staged at Covent Garden on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1839 and revived at the Lyceum in 1873<sup>155</sup>. Despite the political potential of Lytton's *Richelieu*, the conventions of theatrical performance at the beginning of the century and Macready's interpretation of the French cardinal turned it into a

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<sup>153</sup> As reviewed in *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* 15 January 1871 and in *The Era* 15 January 1871, *Dora's Device* was first staged at the New Royalty on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1871. A review in *The Graphic*, 14 January 1871 explains how the accurate delineation of the characters in *Dora's Device* (1871) was emphasized by the critics despite the little success of the performance:

The dialogue of the comedietta has a few good points, but, on the whole, is diffuse. The author's chief aim, however, appears to have been to delineate character, and in this he has been partially successful. A plain-speaking old baronet, performed with much artistic power by Mr. A. Wood, was at least successful in amusing the audience, while the lodging-house servant, performed by Miss Fanny Leng, is decidedly life-like. Miss Hodson is lively and pleasing in the part of Dora.

<sup>154</sup> Stephens (1980), 119-120. According to Stephens (1980), 119, W.S. Gilbert's and Gilbert à Beckett's *The Happy Land: A Burlesque Version of 'The Wicked World'* is the only example besides *Richelieu* of open political satire in burlesque.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.* 123.

‘hybrid ‘Historical Romance’’ closer to melodrama.<sup>156</sup> In Reece’s parody, allusions to Gladstone and Disraeli were so clear that William Donne, the Examiner of Plays, needed to attend the performance to report to the Lord Chamberlain on the liberties taken in the performance.<sup>157</sup> As stated above,

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<sup>156</sup> Taylor (1989), 52. Ibid. 51-61 for an account of the performance and the political implications of the play.

<sup>157</sup> Stephens (1980), 123. Reviews on the press on the political allusions of the play were frequent. See for example, *The Examiner* 1 November 1873:

It may be taken for granted that such political burlesques as ‘Richelieu Redressed,’ produced on Monday at the Olympic deserve no high position among dramatic works. There exists a demand for such trifles, however, and it is well that they should be supplied in as inoffensive a form as possible. Mr. Reece, the author of the piece under consideration, although scarcely yet free from the pernicious effects of the peculiar development which this form of dramatic composition has undergone among us, has always given signs of a healthy, intellectual constitution which will carry him through. In so far as ‘Richelieu Redressed’ bears the stamp of Mr. Reece’s own handiwork it is witty and amusing, but frequent lapses are permitted into the popular style, which are the more painful by contrast. There is a considerable ingenuity in the working out of the parallel between the state of things in Lord Lytton’s play and our own political situations, and many of the parodies of the original speeches are well written and conceived in a truly humorous spirit.... An imitation of Mr. Gladstone (good taste apart), with an implied parallel to the great French statesman, or a representation of Richelieu suggesting the similarity of his position and that of our own Premier, would either of them afford an opportunity for humorous acting of a subtle kind if consistently worked out and carried through.

Also see *Daily News*, 29 October 1873, as qtd. in Stephens (1980), 23.

the case of *Richelieu* is the exception to the rule which was for plays to contain indirect references that trivialized contemporary issues. *Dick Whittington and His Cat*, for example, reflects in a very superficial manner, upon the educational system and the working like in London: <sup>158</sup>

Dick:

So this is all my dream, my speculation,  
Houseless and turned out of my situation;  
Fool that I was to heed that story old  
Which says that London streets are paved with gold---  
Weak offspring of some mad poetic head---  
For I have found them paved with guilt instead.

(bells)

What are those wild bells ringing all day long,  
Singing some senseless see-saw civic song?  
'Turn again, Whittington!' clangs through the air,  
'Whittington, thrice of London town Lord Mayor.'  
Perish the thought---to live that life were low  
Where money only makes the Mayor to go.  
My faithful Thomas! look into these eyes!  
This very day your merry playmate flies.  
You weep, the sort of thing I might expect,  
A flood of tears, Tom, from this cat erect.  
I'm going, Thomas.

(knock)

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<sup>158</sup> Nicoll (1952-59), v. 537 notes that *Whittington Junior and His Sensation Cat* was first put on stage at the New Royalty on November 23th, 1870.

Hark! I heard some knocks.

Come in, whoe'er you are!---So open, locks!

As most of its contemporaries, *Dick Whittington* was widely welcome in spite of its want of social and political involvement.<sup>159</sup>The opposite case is *Paquita*,<sup>160</sup> which, according to the Daily News,

[it was] badly written throughout and more than one of the jokes is painfully suggestive of an advertisement...*Paquita* is not destined for a very long life; but the music will find its way into many a drawing room.<sup>161</sup>

*Perfect Love, or the Triumph of Oberon* was first performed at the Olympic on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1871. As *Pompeii*, *Romulus* and *Our Helen*, *Perfect Love* was based on a contemporary hit, in this case Carl Maria von Weber's opera *Oberon*, which was put on at the Covent Garden on April 12<sup>th</sup>, 1826 with

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<sup>159</sup>See *The Era* 27 November 1870:

To the pleasant fancy of Mr. Robert Reece, often exercised to advantage on these boards, Miss Henrietta Hodson has been indebted for the first decidedly successful piece brought forward under her Management. The new civic burlesque entitled *Whittington Junior and his Sensation Cat*,...is a very bright and bustling extravaganza, entirely free from all vulgarity...Mr. Reece has managed to present the history of Whittington in quite a new form, but the five scenes, occupied in a panoramic presentation of his adventures, are so managed that a dramatic interest pervades them amidst all the songs, puns, and parodies by which they are so liberally embellished.

<sup>160</sup> *Paquita; or, Love in a Frame* premiered at the New Royalty in 1871. See Nicoll (1952-59), v. 537.

<sup>161</sup> *Daily News*, 23 October 1871. Note the criticism of the music of Mr. Malladine in *Liverpool Mercury* 23 October 1871.

libretto by Planché.<sup>162</sup> Reece's burlesque was advertised together with Andrew Halliday's *Nell; or, the Old Curiosity Shop*, an adaptation of Dickens' novel,<sup>163</sup> and a revival of Charles Marsham Rae's *Poppleton's Predicaments*.<sup>164</sup> The Olympic was erected by Philip Astley as the Olympic Pavilion in 1806,<sup>165</sup> and had become the driving force of nineteenth-century burlesque with Planché and the Vestris management. From 1869 to 1872, when William Henry Liston was manager of the theatre, his wife Maria Liston performed most of the female title roles. Liston collaborated with Reece in the direction of *Perfect Love*, which enjoyed much success due not only to Reece's verse but also to the scenery and the performance of Maria Liston as Oberon:

Miss Reinhart enacts the part of Reiza with much fervour, and in thoroughly legitimate manner, here and there being a dash of the humorous element needful for an extravaganza, but nothing more. Mrs. Liston is a superb Oberon, and sings with spirit; whilst Mr. Warner looks magnificent as Sir Huon; and the love-making of Mr. Bakeley and Miss Saunders

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<sup>162</sup> Planché's *Oberon, or, the Elf King's Oath* was written after the poem *Oberon* by Christoph Martin Wieland. See White (1983), 69.

<sup>163</sup> Nicoll (1952-59), v. 401.

<sup>164</sup> Rae's farce premiered at the Royalty in 1870. See Nicoll (1952-59), v. 533. See UKC/POS/LDN OLY : 0595538 Playbill advertising NELL and PERFECT LOVE and POPPLETON'S PREDICAMENTS at the Olympic Theatre, 25 February [1871?] <<http://library.kent.ac.uk/library/special/icons/playbills/londonolympic.htm>>, accessed 21 August 2008.

<sup>165</sup> Howard (1970), 165-6.

creates much laughter. The scenery is pretty and picturesque, and the dresses handsome and becoming.<sup>166</sup>

*The Very Last Days of Pompeii* and *Romulus and Remus, or the Two Rum'uns* were both first staged at the Vaudeville in 1872. *Pompeii* derided the theatrical adaptation of Edward Bulwer Lytton's novel which was being performed at the Queen's theatre the same season.<sup>167</sup> The plot recalled the most famous scenes of the performance at the Queen's, drawing particular attention to the character of the Egyptian priest Arbaces, who was performed by David James.<sup>168</sup> *Pompeii* adopted the fundamental tenets of what was going to become the New Burlesque, where, as amply illustrated below with *Valentine and Orson*, the spectacular nature of the performance predominates over the quality of the text. The stage directions in *Pompeii* pinpoint complicated stage designs and specify the ostentation of the House in Pompeii in scene one and the view of Mount Vesuvius from the Amphitheatre in scene five. Furthermore, Bulwer Lytton's political conscience about the empire was erased in favour of the acrobatic display of James' acting and the exhibition of the Quadrillion Troupe at the Amphitheatre:<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 5 March 1871.

<sup>167</sup> *The Era*, 18 February 1872.

<sup>168</sup> Rober Reece 'The Very Last Days of Pompeii! A New Classical Burlesque.' English Drama, Chadwyck-Healey, 1994 <[http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res\\_ver=0.2&res\\_id=xri:ilcs&rft\\_id=xri:ilcs:ft:drama:Z000114652:0](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:ilcs&rft_id=xri:ilcs:ft:drama:Z000114652:0)>, accessed 10 March 2009.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

Mr. James's breadth of humour in this scene well entitled him to the applause he won from all parts of the house. It is fair to say that at the Queen's the gymnastic interludes here parodied —the tight-rope dancing and tumbling in the circus— have been judiciously retrenched since the first representation of the play; but the fact that such strange entertainments were ever submitted to the public as the becoming illustrations of a serious work amply justifies the bantering treatment of them adopted by the caricaturist.<sup>170</sup>

*Pompeii* departs significantly from deeper burlesques such as *Prometheus*, *Richelieu* and *Agamemnon* and prepares the ground for Reece's classical burlesques which squarely rest on superficial elements that provide light entertainment.

*Romulus and Remus*, was first staged at the Vaudeville on 23<sup>th</sup> December 1872 by the same Vaudeville company which had performed *Pompeii*. The play reintroduced the topic of twins which had brought unprecedented success to *Box and Cox*.<sup>171</sup> Reviews claim that Reece both drew from Roman history and his own invention for the creation of the play.<sup>172</sup> Indeed, many a history of Rome was published in England in the nineteenth-century which described the story of the two brothers.<sup>173</sup> Mass

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<sup>170</sup> *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 16 February 1872.

<sup>171</sup> As contended in See Nicoll (1952-59), iv. 363, *Box and Cox* is a one-act farce by John Madison Morton based on *Une chambre à deux lits* which was first staged at the Lyceum theatre. in 1847.

<sup>172</sup> *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 January 1873.

<sup>173</sup> E.g: Adam and Major (1835); Smith (1860); Arnold (1871).

elementary education from the 1860s included history in the curricula of the most entrepreneurial schools and in 1867 it became a grant-earning subject.<sup>174</sup> The *Catalogue of the Educational Division of South Kensington Museum*, for example, which was published in 1867 to provide a comprehensive bibliography of books for primary and secondary education, numbers as many as nineteen histories of Rome for schools.<sup>175</sup> Even though the acting of the leading members of the company is featured in the press of the time,<sup>176</sup> only a single aspect of *Romulus and Remus* is worth mentioning here. *Romulus* substitutes the conflict between the two brothers for a mockery of Grecian statues and *tableaux vivants*. Whereas the statuesque representation of women is an essential element of the aesthetics of *Prometheus* ([1865] 1994), Reece parodies the cliché here and presents Romulus and Remus singing a new version of the famous ballad ‘He stood just so’ in amusing poses on top of a revolving platform. The display of this scenic resource with the corresponding departures from the original story manifests the theatre-for-theatre’s-sake spirit of the newborn burlesque of the seventies, which prepared the ground for the New Burlesque of the following decade. Even though stage effects had always been the hallmark of burlesque, plot began now to be at their mercy.

In *The Forty Thieves*, and the three-act burlesques of the eighties, such as *Aladdin*, sophisticated ballets and lavish costume prevail over textual matters. The temporal imperative devalues from the literary quality of the plays and favours superficial jokes and puns. Some of the criticism

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<sup>174</sup> Sanderson (1995), 17.

<sup>175</sup> Eyre and Spottiswoode (1867), 27.

<sup>176</sup> *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 29 December 1872.



received by *Valentine and Orson* is shared in this sense by *The Forty Thieves*, which was generally reviewed as an exhibition of spectacular novelties rather than quality theatre:<sup>177</sup>

The claim of this thousand and first adaptation of a familiar portion of the Thousand and One Nights' Entertainment to rank as a Christmas production seems to rest upon elaboration of scenic detail rather than any special feature of literary execution. Many years have elapsed since an extravaganza at the Gaiety has been produced upon a scale of equal or approximate splendour. Successive scenes in Ispahan and the adjoining forest, in the robbers' cave, and in the palace of Ali Baba are glowing in colour and effective in arrangement. The costumes meanwhile are brilliant and picturesque, and the dances and concerted pieces are animated. Very considerable reductions may with advantage be made in the burlesque itself, since an hour and a half of spectacle, however highly seasoned with song, joke, or breakdown, is enough for ordinary appetites. When this

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<sup>177</sup> For *The Daily News* 23 December 1880, though, it acted as reminder of Planché's extravaganzas:

At the Gaiety, moreover, we are to have a new burlesque extravaganza, written by Mr. Robert Reece, on the old Arabian Night's story of 'The Forty Thieves' in rhymed verse, accompanied by all the splendours appropriate to pieces of that sort. This will be to old playgoers a pleasant reminder of the days when Mr. Planché ruled supreme in this domain; and not less suggestive of old associations will be the appearance of *The Green Bushes* in the Adelphi playbill.

concession to public demand is made, the whole will probably answer perfectly the purpose with which it is mounted.<sup>178</sup>

Critics were harsher with *Our Helen*, which was first staged at the Gaiety on 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1884 with Ellen Farren as Helen, Edward Terry as Paris and Arthur Williams as Menelaus.<sup>179</sup> The play, a burlesque in three acts, was based on Offenbach's *La Belle Hélène* which was satirized on a number of occasions throughout the century. Little novelties were put on stage in Reece's version and reviews recall how 'the gallery exhibited a tendency to mischief by throwing things from their lofty elevation' on the opening night.<sup>180</sup>

Reece's contemporary success never outlived him. Nonetheless, his introduction of the three-act burlesque was crucial to the evolution and the decline of the genre in the last decades of the century. The main differences in Reece's burlesques respond to the transformation of the theatrical scene, where opulence reigns over excellence. Still, there is a further aspect which must be considered here. As stated above, the simple plots of the fairy tales and classical burlesques inspired by anecdotic episodes from Greek and Roman mythology cannot compete with the intricacies of ancient tragedy. The potential of the characters in classical burlesques based on Greek and Roman tragedies is limitless, and favours intellectual criticism beyond topical allusions and recurrent puns. This 'sub-type' of burlesque characters, among which there is Reece's Cassandra, enhances the debates on the

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<sup>178</sup> *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 27 December 1880.

<sup>179</sup> *The Era*, 12 April 1884.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

ambivalence of the nineteenth-century comic genres and opens a new field of research on the reception of Greek tragedy in Victorian England.

3.3.2. *Agamemnon and Cassandra or the Prophet and Loss of Troy* (1868)

*The Liverpool Scene*

*Agamemnon and Cassandra or the Prophet and Loss of Troy* was first staged at the Prince of Wales's Theatre in Liverpool on Easter Monday, 1868.<sup>181</sup> Liverpool was one of the main theatrical centres of the provinces in the second half of the nineteenth century with more than ten theatres, concert and music halls.<sup>182</sup> The theatrical activity of the city had begun at least three hundred years earlier, the earliest record of a performance being in 1574.<sup>183</sup> Like the rest of England, Liverpool theatres did not survive the Puritan interlude, but venues were erected again after the Restoration and in 1772 the Theatre Royal opened on the east side of Drury Lane.<sup>184</sup> Evidence of the connection between Liverpool theatres and London is provided in a 1805 history of the city which documents, for example, how the Theatre Royal was first 'open only in the summer months, when the London theatres

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<sup>181</sup> Reece (1868), 5. The play also toured to Portsmouth and Dublin.

<sup>182</sup> As noted in Nicoll (1952-59), v. 225, 'The Adelphi, The Bijou, The Colosseum, The Court, The Empire, The Grand, The Lyric, The Prince of Wales's, The Rotunda, The Sefton, The Shakespeare and The Star.' See Stonehouse (1844), 179 ff, for the history of the Theatre Royal.

<sup>183</sup> Stonehouse (1844), 178.

<sup>184</sup> See *General and Descriptive History* (1797), 172 and *The Picture of Liverpool* (1805), 125.

were shut, and the best of the performers were selected for the season'.<sup>185</sup> During the nineteenth century such a connection strengthened. Liverpool had become a leading business centre, second only to London, and large communication networks fostered by trade favoured contact with the capital.

Between 1831 and 1861, Liverpool experienced, as a port town, a rapid growth in population.<sup>186</sup> Male employment was dominated by dock and warehouse labour, transport-related and ocean-going employment, commerce and urban services. The activities reserved for women were shop-keeping and school teaching.<sup>187</sup> By 1851, almost half of the population of Liverpool were migrants mainly born in Ireland (22%), Wales (5.4%) and Scotland (3.7%); a small percentage also came from Asia and Africa.<sup>188</sup> The industrial expansion in Liverpool and the multicultural profile of the population stimulated the development of a wide variety of entertainment.<sup>189</sup> The Prince of Wales's theatre, for example, still as Clayton Hall, hosted numerous different attractions in the 1857 season, from Gordon Gunning the lion hunter to Carter's American Panorama, the Indian giant and the little Texas lady.<sup>190</sup>

London and the provinces shared a closely-linked theatrical life through the work of well-known actors and managers. Numerous

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<sup>185</sup> Sarah Siddons and John Kemble were among such performers. See *The Picture of Liverpool* (1805), 124.

<sup>186</sup> In 1861 it reached 151.2%.Ibid. 98

<sup>187</sup> Ibid. 104-105.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid. 115

<sup>189</sup> Rowell and Jackson (1984), 7.

<sup>190</sup> Broadbent (1908), 269.

advertisements and reminiscences from eminent figures of the time provide evidence of such a link.<sup>191</sup> As we shall see, the activity of the Prince of Wales's theatre —with the Brough brothers, H.J. Byron, Madame Celeste and the Bancrofts among others—, epitomizes the increasing dynamism of the provincial theatres which was analogous, to a lesser extent, to that of the metropolis. As a microcosm of the minor burlesque theatres in London, Liverpool's Prince of Wales's put on farces, burlesques, vaudevilles and extravaganzas. The prologue to the performance of H.J. Byron's *Miss Eily O'Connor* for the opening of the theatre in 1861 manifests the comic bent of its first manager, Alexander Henderson.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Donaldson (1865), 131-133; 135-6; *Era*, 1543 (18 April 1868); *Liverpool Mercury*, 6306 (13 April 1868); Adams (1904) 52.

<sup>192</sup> The prologue is reproduced in Broadbent 1908, 271:

A heavy weight of light fun on his breast,  
Requests that I should ease him of his care,  
Presents his carte I mean his bill-of-fare.  
No five-act tragedies, we bring to tease you,  
We'd rather live than die, kind friends, to please you.  
Hard feat to gasp through ten poetic feet, or  
Meet our fate in dull lines of long metre.  
We'll catch the 'humours of the age,' and show  
How far the charms of harmless mirth can go:  
Give every novelty we can afford  
Upon these boards you never shall be bored.  
Cram but our little house from floor to rafter,  
We'll cram the stage with fun, and crack your sides with  
Laughter.

Alexander Henderson began the project of transforming Clayton Hall into The Prince of Wales's theatre after attending a performance in 1859;<sup>193</sup> his love for theatre and the cosiness of the place itself provided the two other ingredients for the success of the theatre. Between 1861 and 1905, more than ten managers, who pursued similar policies, were in charge of Henderson's theatre. The years prior to the first performance of *Agamemnon and Cassandra* are crucial to understanding the interaction between the London stage and that of Liverpool. Patterns from the metropolis were adapted to the new context but the main ingredients of the genre were perpetuated and fostered by the same names who had succeeded in London. William Brough, who became manager of the Prince of Wales's in 1866, renamed it 'The Vaudeville' favouring the performances of the precursors of the musical venues of the late years of the century.<sup>194</sup> Brough's successor from 1867 and Charles Benjamin, manager of the theatre in the months prior to the return of Henderson in September, included *tableaux vivants* of German ladies in classical poses in its repertoire.<sup>195</sup>

Debates on the morality of popular spectacles and audiences were the order of the day in London. Music hall entertainment and the *tableaux vivants* were not immune and many an invective was delivered against proprietors and managers who fostered the shows.<sup>196</sup> Still, Brough's and Benjamin's plans for the Prince of Wales's reflected the tendency of the

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid. 269.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid. (1908), 282.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> The great days of the music hall in London were the 1880s and 1890s but the first purpose built halls date as early as 1832. See Bratton (2004), 166, 170.

small theatres, singing saloons and dance halls which were licensed for music in London and the provinces to expand their horizons towards music hall entertainment.<sup>197</sup> The imported atmosphere of London's local theatres to the Prince of Wales's favoured the coexistence of local productions with actors and actresses known to the audience with performances from London and by foreign troupes. The common practice of testing the reception of a show in the provinces before its staging in the metropolis also brought to Liverpool major Victorian actors and playwrights. *Society* and *Ours*, for example, by Tom Robertson, were first put on at the Prince of Wales's before being staged in London,<sup>198</sup> and Henry Irving and Lionel Brough interpreted the roles of Oenone and Castor respectively in Burnand's *Paris, or Vive Lemprière* in 1866.<sup>199</sup> Other popular figures of the London scene who influenced the history of the Prince of Wales's were John Toole, who in 1862 joined Henderson's company to perform the title role in certain productions,<sup>200</sup> and the Bancrofts, who helped Robertson with the final touches of *Ours* in Liverpool.<sup>201</sup>

With regard to classical burlesque, Burnand's *Paris, or Vive Lemprière* and Reece's *Agamemnon and Cassandra* were both performed with success at the Prince of Wales's theatre, but the Liverpool audience

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid. 169.

<sup>198</sup> Broadbent (1908), 278-279.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid. 278.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid. 272. See Pascoe (1879), 321-326 for an account of Toole's performances in London.

<sup>201</sup> Broadbent (1908), 280. See Tydeman (1996) 56-91 for the connection between the Bancrofts and Robertson.

was also acquainted with other Greek tragedies and burlesques which had been ‘hits’ on the London stage. In 1864, Burnand’s *Ixion; or, The Man at the Wheel* was performed at the opening night of the Theatre Royal at Birkenhead under Alexander Henderson’s management.<sup>202</sup> This was not the only successful burlesque by Burnand in Liverpool as, in 1866, *Sappho; or, Look before You Leap* by F.C. Burnand was staged at St. James’s Hall. Separated from Liverpool by the river Mersey, Birkenhead’s Theatre Royal was the first step for an entertainment culture in Birkenhead independent of Liverpool. The impact of the opening of Birkenhead’s Theatre Royal was significant as it also meant the return to the stage of the famous burlesque actress Lydia Thompson before she went on to make a name for herself in the States as Mrs. Henderson.<sup>203</sup> Henderson, his wife and the burlesque troupe they brought from England —formed by Ada Harland, Lisa Weber, Pauline Markham and Harry Beckett— revolutionized American burlesque.<sup>204</sup> Lydia Thompson and her ‘British Blondes’, as they were called, conquered the American stage with a revival of Burnand’s *Ixion*, and the night of the first performance at Wood’s theatre in New York, Beckett played the farce *To Oblige Benson* before Burnand’s burlesque.<sup>205</sup> Harry Beckett had worked with Lydia Thompson in the revival of *Agamemnon and Cassandra* in Edinburgh<sup>206</sup>. Harland, Weber and Markham were famous burlesque actresses in London who, together with Thompson, shifted the

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<sup>202</sup> Broadbent (1908), 379.

<sup>203</sup> Pascoe (1879), 318-9.

<sup>204</sup> Allen (1991), 5.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.* 10.

<sup>206</sup> Gänzl (2002), 83.



focus of satirical nineteenth-century burlesque in America to the display of female bodies. Modern critics argue how the ‘British Blondes’ challenged domestic ideologies and prescribed roles of women in America,<sup>207</sup> and the performance of *Ixion* in Liverpool became the driving force for the creation of this group of revolutionary ‘stage creatures’.<sup>208</sup> The presence of other rebellious characters such as Legouvé’s Medea or Blanchard’s Antigone on Liverpool’s popular stage paved the way for the reception of Reece’s insurgent and transvestite Cassandra.

In 1854, the fêted Convent Garden production of Mendelssohn’s *Antigone* was put on at Liverpool’s Theatre Royal.<sup>209</sup> In the Liverpool performance, John and Charlotte Vandenhoff still played the title roles of Creon and Antigone,<sup>210</sup> although it was Helen Faucit’s later interpretation of the heroine which conquered the hearts—both male and female—of British audiences.<sup>211</sup> The impact of Mendelssohn’s *Antigone* on the British stage has been widely studied by Hall and Macintosh (2005).<sup>212</sup> First, it revitalized the appeal Greek tragedy held for Victorians but it also had two other major consequences significant in the development of classical burlesque. On the one hand, Faucit’s embodiment of the statuesque ideal of female beauty had

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<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.* 1.

<sup>208</sup> It should also be noted that many other popular figures from the London scene such as William Brough, who wrote the opening words, were involved in the production. See Broadbent (1908), 381-2.

<sup>209</sup> *The Musical World* 32, no 47 (25 November 1854), 773.

<sup>210</sup> Broadbent (1908), 165.

<sup>211</sup> Carlyle (2000), 143 *ff.*

<sup>212</sup> Hall and Macintosh (2005), 316*ff.*

a powerful influence on the theatrical aesthetics of subsequent decades.<sup>213</sup> On the other, it stimulated the creation of Blanchard's *Antigone Travestie* in 1845, the undisputed first example of burlesqued Greek tragedy in England.<sup>214</sup> Together with Mendelssohn's *Antigone*, another ubiquitous tragedy on the European scene which was performed in Liverpool was Legouvé's reworking of Euripides' *Medea*.

Legouvé's *Medea* was first performed at the Théâtre Italien in Paris in April 1856 with the famous Italian diva, Adelaide Ristori, in the title role;<sup>215</sup> in June the same year, it was performed at the Lyceum Theatre in London. The production was so widely acclaimed that after touring around various continents it returned to England a full eight years after its first London performance.<sup>216</sup> Ristori's first tour in Britain brought her to Liverpool,<sup>217</sup> and in July 1856 she performed *Medea* at the New Theatre Royal with great success.<sup>218</sup> In 1863, Ristori returned to Liverpool with a bill that included *Medea*, *Lady Macbeth* and *Maria Sturda*.<sup>219</sup> Like Faucit's *Antigone*, Ristori's performance of *Medea* was revolutionary for the representation of women on the nineteenth-century European stage. In Legouvé's version, *Medea* was not the outrageous savage who killed her children but a suffering mother overwhelmed by the unjust behaviour of her

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<sup>213</sup> Carlyle (2000), 143 ff

<sup>214</sup> Hall and Macintosh (2005), 336ff.

<sup>215</sup> *Bentley's Magazine* (1856), xl. 484; Hall and Macintosh (2005), 577.

<sup>216</sup> Booth, Stokes and Bassnett (1996), 161. George Eliot recalls the performance of Ristori in *Daniel Deronda*. See Eliot ([1876] 2003), 358.

<sup>217</sup> Booth, Stokes and Bassnett (1996), 161.

<sup>218</sup> Broadbent (1908), 166.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.* 171.

once beloved husband.<sup>220</sup> The empathy engendered in the audience by this French/Italian Medea cannot be understood without considering the socio-political context in which it was first staged, when the first organized movements for the rights of women emerged.<sup>221</sup> Moreover, Legouv e himself was an ardent campaigner for equal rights for women; in his *Histoire morale des femmes*, he re-read, for example, the Christian axiom of equality and argued: ‘si un mari peut r epudier sa femme pour cause d’adult ere, une femme peut quitter son mari pour le m eme crime: *Dans des conditions  egales, l’obligation est  egale*’<sup>222</sup> Ristori’s Medea represented the Victorian passionate wife abandoned and rejected by her husband. Like Mendelssohn’s *Antigone*, Legouv e’s *Medea* was the object of one of the most important nineteenth-century classical burlesques, Robert Brough’s *Medea; or, the best of Mothers, with a Brute of a Husband* (1856).

By the time *Agamemnon and Cassandra* was first performed in Liverpool, Reece’s plays had already been staged at the Royalty with enormous success. The performance of *Agamemnon and Cassandra* was widely acclaimed and reviewed both in the local and the national press of the time.<sup>223</sup> With music composed and arranged by Mr. Connelly, Reece’s burlesque soon won the favour of the public, particularly with Harry Beckett’s performance as Cassandra, which was strongly applauded.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> See Booth, Stokes, Bassnett (1996), 149 and Macintosh (2000), 17.

<sup>221</sup> Macintosh (2000), 14-17.

<sup>222</sup> Legouv e (1854), 200.

<sup>223</sup> E.g. *The Era* (19 April 1868) and *Liverpool Mercury* (6 May 1868).

<sup>224</sup> See *The Era* (19 April 1868) for reviews at the *Mercury Post*, the *Daily Post* and *The Daily Courier*.

Every ingredient of classical burlesque was present in *Agamemnon and Cassandra*: breeches roles interpreted by popular beauties, word puns, grand transformation scenes, stage effects and famous burlesque performers. Complex transformation scenes and stage effects brought the setting of *Agamemnon and Cassandra* from the exterior of King Agamemnon's palace by sunrise to interior rooms, gardens, terraces and the heights of Parnassus. Reece's metatheatrical reflection in *Agamemnon and Cassandra* parodied the flamboyant display of modern stagecraft in the play-within-the-play scene where in *A-Midsummer-Night's-Dream* manner, the amateurish handling of the stage machinery gave rise to all sorts of comic situations.

Breeches roles were interpreted by Bessie Harding as Eros, R. Mayne as Choragus and, most importantly, Miss Caroline Parkes, who played Agamemnon. Caroline Parkes had become a favourite actress and dancer in pantomime although she was also praised for her serious parts at Sadler's Wells.<sup>225</sup> Parkes was married to Charles Fenton, a famous harlequin who worked for Sadler's Wells between 1855 and 1861 and for the Strand Theatre between 1861 and 1869, which explains her comical bent.<sup>226</sup> Other famous figures of mid-Victorian burlesque who met in *Agamemnon and Cassandra* were G.P. Grainger and Chater—in the roles of the Furies Alecto and Tisiphone—who had successfully worked together in the first performance of Tom Robertson's *Society* in Liverpool in 1865. A troupe of famous Australian actors who later toured Europe and the States also took

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<sup>225</sup> Blanchard (1891), 603.

<sup>226</sup> Adams (1904), i. 510.

part in the Liverpool performance of Reece's burlesque. Julia Matthews, who had been born in London in 1842,<sup>227</sup> excelled among them.<sup>228</sup>

*Agamemnon and Cassandra, or the Prophet and Loss of Troy* was subsequently staged in Plymouth and Dublin but never reached London. The topical references in Reece's burlesque were primarily addressed to an Irish audience, both London and Liverpool being destinations for Irish emigrants after the potato famine. Moreover, the appeal to Victorians of classical burlesque and the numerous nineteenth-century translations of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* could well accommodate a satire on the Greek tragedy despite the absence of the tragedy itself from the stage. However, the short life of Reece's burlesque was probably due to the incidental nature of the

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<sup>227</sup> Jean Gittins, 'Mathews, Julia (1842 - 1876)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, Online Edition, Australian National University, 2006 <<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A050258b.htm>>, accessed 02 January 2009.

<sup>228</sup> Julia Matthews became a favourite among the Melbourne audiences soon after her family moved to Australia. Matthews's interpretations were highly praised in Sidney and New Zealand during the 1850s and 1860s and she became the first 'Australian-trained singer to appear at Covent Garden Opera House'. See Jean Gittins, 'Mathews, Julia (1842 - 1876)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, Online Edition, Australian National University, 2006 <<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A050258b.htm>>, accessed 02 January 2009. As outlined in See Hollingshead (1898), 151, 199, in England she became a member of the Gaiety company where she was widely acclaimed for her performances of Offenbach's pieces which included *Barbe Bleue* 1870, and *La Belle Hélène* in 1871. Lee (2005), 512 explains how in 1874, Julia Matthews set sail for the United States accompanied by Gilbert Hastings Macdermott, a music-hall singer with whom she was very successful at the Eagle theatre in New York. Two years later she was touring the country as the star of Julia Matthews English Opera Bouffe and Burlesque Company. See *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society* (1962), 273.

company. Unlike major theatres in London, Liverpool's Prince of Wales's had no permanent specialized company. In *Agamemnon and Cassandra*, local actors and actresses coexisted with famous London stars, with some Australian performers who were trying their luck in English provinces and with others, among them the manager Alexander Henderson, who cherished higher dreams across the Atlantic.<sup>229</sup> The unfamiliarity of the general public with Cassandra as compared to Orpheus or Galatea, for example, and the lack of a major theatrical figure to promote the play condemned it to its oblivion on stage.<sup>230</sup>

Reece's burlesque was neither the first nor the last classical burlesque seen in Liverpool. It was groundbreaking, nonetheless, in showcasing Cassandra as an ungovernable slave princess whose words were heeded by the court in Argos. Recent studies on Victorian arts and literature show how nineteenth-century aesthetics navigated between literary and popular referents; how satires, diaries and chronicles had their visual corollaries in caricatures, scrap books, and the illustrated papers of the time.<sup>231</sup> Such interaction attracted mass culture and fostered, for example, the development of the advertising industry and part-issue novels. Reflecting the spirit of the age, the idiosyncrasies of the Victorian Cassandra were owed equally, as outlined in chapter 2, to literary as well as to pictorial

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<sup>229</sup> See Gänzl (2002) 45-76 for the relevance of the relationship between Lydia Thomson and Alexander Henderson and the development of burlesque in Liverpool. Ibid 77-100 for their American tour with the British Blondes and Harry Beckett, the actor who performed Cassandra in Reece's burlesque.

<sup>230</sup> Note, however, that it was published in 1868.

<sup>231</sup> Roston (1996), Flint (2000) and Thomas (2004).

and popular refigurations. As I shall demonstrate, the intertextuality of *Agamemnon and Cassandra* accounts for the rich semiotic substratum in Reece's refiguration of Cassandra. The interconnections of Reece's burlesque with other texts stress the importance of a multidisciplinary and cross-class approach to the reception of classical tragedy in Victorian England.

*Textual Sources: An 'Intertextual Extravaganza'*

Robert Reece's perpetuation of the burlesque kaleidoscope contributed to the refiguration of an ambivalent Cassandra. The literary sources of Reece's *Agamemnon and Cassandra or the Prophet and Loss of Troy* were numerous and varied, and ranged from Aeschylus, Seneca and Shakespeare to English folk songs, Celtic mythology and French theatre. Reece's burlesque concludes with a *tableau* featuring a 'grand transformation scene' with the 'Apotheosis of Aeschylus on the Heights of the Parnassus'.<sup>232</sup> The *tableau* is introduced by Agamemnon with an address to the audience which stresses Reece's free use of the classical sources:

Agam. (*To audience*) I know tho' what she means, and wants  
to say,  
That with success you'll crown us all to day;  
'Tis true, the poet's mind is here o'erthrown,  
And puns inserted that were not his own.  
If that old Greek —half warrior half poet—  
Could see his play now, he would hardly know it.

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<sup>232</sup> Reece (1868), 6.

‘Tis but a jest! And so we ask you *thus* (*indicating applause.*)  
Propitiate the shade of Aeschylus.  
That genius appeased —our wrong made right,  
We’ll play the King again for many a night.<sup>233</sup>

Indeed, Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* is concealed under an amalgam of influences which results in a hybrid form which was labelled by Fiona Macintosh as an ‘intertextual extravaganza’.<sup>234</sup> Untying certain threads of such intertextuality allows us to map the cultural and literary phenomena which reflect the semiotic system embedded in Victorian refigurations of Cassandra.

Reece found inspiration in Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* for the portrayal of his characters: Clytemnestra is depicted as a remorseless murderess, Aegisthus is a coward and downtrodden lover and the Guardian, the Messenger and the Herald Talthybius are reflected in Phylax, Talthybius, and Keryx all faithful to the King of Argos. There is no chorus of Elders but the three Furies —the Virgilian Alecto, Megaera and Tisiphone— who swirl around Clytemnestra under the guise, as we will see, of the Shakespearean witches of *Macbeth*. As I shall outline below, no trace of the Aeschylean revengeful mother nor of the Senecan lustful lover is retained in Reece’s Clytemnestra. Therefore, only Clytemnestra’s independence of mind and resolution recall the Greek heroine in *Agamemnon and Cassandra*. Despite Aegisthus’ halfhearted attempts to murder Agamemnon during the play-within-the-play scene, Agamemnon’s pseudo(-)death in Reece is also eminently Aeschylean. Clytemnestra is the mastermind and the chief executioner of the act of regicide and Aegisthus only a pawn of her will.

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid. 36.

<sup>234</sup> Macintosh (2005), 151.



Allusions to Aegisthus' weakness of character abound: even his longest soliloquy is devoted to his 'effeminate' nature. Equally important is Phylax, who opens the play in a false Aeschylean start burlesquing the Guardian's monologue in the prologue of *Agamemnon*. Phylax links the tragic setting with the conventions of burlesque as he also leads the traditional subplot of the love scenes between menservants and chambermaids and introduces some of the minor characters of the play. With regard to the three Furies, they actively participate in the unmasking of the regicide by foretelling Clytemnestra's crime against Cassandra. The Furies do not pursue Orestes in revenge for his matricide; instead, they chase Clytemnestra for her murderous intentions. They contribute to the humour of the play with their appearance and acts of intimidation against Aeschylus.

The essential Senecan legacy to Reece's burlesque is the banquet scene, which, as we shall see, is expanded with a refiguration of Shakespeare's *The Murder of Gonzago*. Shakespeare is the second major source for *Agamemnon and Cassandra or the Prophet and Loss of Troy*. Besides the play-within-the-play episode, a scene or a speech from Shakespeare known to the burlesque audiences is occasionally parodied. From the very first performance of *Hamlet Travestie* in 1810, parodies of Shakespeare's plays, particularly Shakespeare's tragedies, were commonplace in British nineteenth-century comic theatre.<sup>235</sup> Major burlesque authors such as Francis Talfourd, the Brough brothers, F.C. Burnand, H.J. Byron and W.S. Gilbert succumbed to the temptation of

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<sup>235</sup> See p. 193 n.101.

parodying the Bard.<sup>236</sup> Liverpool audiences were well acquainted with both the tragedies and their burlesques: in 1864, for example, celebrations for Shakespeare's tercentenary put on special performances of Shakespeare's plays in most of Liverpool's theatres.<sup>237</sup> Moreover, John and his son George Vandenhoff's joint appearances in *Romeo and Juliet* and *As You Like It* at the New Theatre Royal in 1841 were widely acclaimed,<sup>238</sup> and the first performance of Maurice G. Dowling's *Othello Travestie*, after some years of lethargy of the genre, was also staged in Liverpool in 1834.<sup>239</sup>

Two major Shakespearean tragedies which were popular among the burlesques of the time are refigured in *Agamemnon and Cassandra: Hamlet and Macbeth*.<sup>240</sup> References to *Hamlet* and *The Murder of Gonzago* scene shall be further analysed with regard to the depiction of Cassandra and the concept of New Woman. As far as *Macbeth* is concerned, Clytemnestra and

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<sup>236</sup> E.g: Talfourd's *Macbeth Travestie* (1850b), Burnand's *The Rise and Fall of Richard III, or, A New Front to an Old Dicky* (1868), and Gilbert's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* ([1891] 1982).

<sup>237</sup> As examined in Broadbent (1908), 171-2, 199, 239-9 and 273, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice* were staged at the Royal; *A Winter's Tale* at the Adelphi Theatre; *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *As You Like It*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Much Ado About Nothing* at the Amphitheatre; and *Hamlet* at the Prince of Wales's.

<sup>238</sup> Broadbent (1908), 150.

<sup>239</sup> Adams (1891), 128-9; Broadbent (1908), 325; Nicoll (1952-59), 307. As an anecdote, Liverpool was also the first city besides Stratford to host a playhouse in the provinces named after the bard in 1888.

<sup>240</sup> *Agamemnon*'s allusion to a husband's jealousy and the handkerchief episode in scene III, as well as Cassandra's mishandling of the stagecraft in the play-within-the-play scene allude in passing to *Othello* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* respectively.

the Furies are the clearest allusions to the Elizabethan tragedy. The relation between Clytemnestra and Lady Macbeth has been amply analysed both by Shakespearean and classical scholars,<sup>241</sup> and the analogy between the antithetical nature of Clytemnestra's determination, Aegisthus' feebleness and the Macbeth pair is widely acknowledged. Altogether, the dagger scene in *Macbeth* became a favourite of Shakespearean burlesques as it easily accommodated satires on typified roles of men and women within the institution of marriage.<sup>242</sup> In Talfourd's *Macbeth Travestie*, for example, the most successful nineteenth-century burlesque of the tragedy, Lady Macbeth's strong-mindedness is counterpoint to her husband's cowardice as a clear mark of gender transgression:<sup>243</sup>

Macb. Who would believe you were a female woman?

We shall be sorry for it!

Lady M. For a warrior

I may say that I never saw a *sorrier*!

Say, who hast sought in battle undismayed

The hot *affray*, of what thou art *afraid*!<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Jameson (1833), ii. 304-245; Muir ([1977] 2005). See Poole (2004), 98-102 for the relationship between Clytemnestra and Lady Macbeth in Victorian England. See Morenilla (2003a) for an analysis of Clytemnestra's strong-mindedness in antiquity.

<sup>242</sup> Schoch (2002), 7, 11.

<sup>243</sup> It is uncertain whether Reece was in any way acquainted with Talfourd's *Macbeth*, but it is very likely that Talfourd's play was at least commented on within the Oxford Amateur group.

<sup>244</sup> Talfourd (1850b), 11.

Clytemnestra's reactions in the murder scene of *Agamemnon and Cassandra* are analogous to Lady Macbeth's anti-angel-of-the-house response in Talfourd's burlesque as they both counteract the passivity of their couples:

Lady M. Why did your bring those daggers from their  
[places?

Go, take them back, and smear the sleepers' faces  
With blood.

Macb. (doggedly) No: come you know, I've done one  
[murder;

That's quite enough, and I sha'nt go no furder.

Lady M. Don't leave the job unfinished, come now, don't;  
[Go;

Mab: If I do I'm —, never mind, I wont!

Lady M. Be mine the task, since you the courage lack;  
Give me the daggers, I shall soon be back.

[Exit (R)]<sup>245</sup>

Agam. What do you do here?

Aegis. *Do!* Why I'm *done!* I'm boiled.

'Twas she who put me here.

Clyt. (*drawing dagger*) Nay, if you blab,

'Tis Clytemnestra's hand must give the stab.

(*rushes at* AGAMEMNON, *is seized by* PHYLAX,  
CHORAGUS *and* TALHYBIUS— AEGISTHUS *is held by*

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid. 13.

*the FURIES —TROPHE tips over into the bath and is brought out by EROS —CASSANDRA delighted.)*<sup>246</sup>

Links between Clytemnestra and Lady Macbeth reinforce Macintosh's theories on the burlesqued strong-minded woman as precursor of the presence of New Women in late nineteenth-century theatre.

The multiplicity of influences which coexist in Reece is also revealed in the depiction of the three Furies. Shakespeare's witches, Aeschylus' Eumenides and Virgil's Furies provide the prophetic and vengeful essence of the characters. The burlesque spirit prevails, so the horrifying features of the three women are fostered inasmuch as they favour the humour of the play. Reece is therefore closer to the Talfourndian referent than to any of the classic prototypes:

*Macb.* You'll just allow me to observe, my pippin,  
You get its shelter, and give me the dripping.  
But who [*seeing witches*] are these abominable hags?  
Why, Banquo did you ever see such scraggs?—  
What ugly brutes! how rough and wild in dress!  
Who and what are ye? Answer.

*Witches.* Can't you guess?

*Macb.* You *should* be women, but I never heard  
Of women wearing whiskers, and a beard!  
Speak, if you can, and, if you can't, why don't;  
Come, speak out plainly —won't you — oh, you

[won't?<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Reece (1868), 35.

*Enter Three Furies*

Phyl. Fair Ladies—

Alecto (*to sisters*) Ha! ha! ha! he says we're fair,

Well, for three powers of darkness.

Megaera.

Which we *air*

Alec. The compliment's not bad.

Phyl. (*aside*)

What awful creatures!

I think I never seed sich idjus features.

Tis. I think he's struck with our appearance, dear.

Alec. It's possible, but in *which* way's not clear;

Phyl. What rummy hair they've got —Oh! Lord, it's

[snakes.<sup>248</sup>

The comic uglification of the Furies is stated from the outset as the character list refers to them as 'not unaptly in Female form'.<sup>249</sup> And, indeed, Alecto, Megaera, and Tisiphone interpreted by three actors are the least feminine they can be.<sup>250</sup> Cassandra's interaction with such gruesome ladies accentuates the pejorative connotations of her visionary powers and, in general, of women's wisdom.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Talfourd (1850*b*), 2.

<sup>248</sup> Reece (1868), 7-8.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid* 5.

<sup>250</sup> 'Mr. G. P. Grainger as Alecto; Mr. Butler as Megaera and Tisiphone by Mr. Chater'.  
*Ibid*. 5.

<sup>251</sup> Note that Reece precludes Shakespeare's portrayal of Cassandra in *Troilus and Cressida*, probably due to the lack of a burlesque tradition of the tragedy.

Altogether, Reece's manifold literary sources account for the rich referentiality which pervades Victorian burlesque. However, none of Reece's refigurations of Shakespeare, Seneca or even Aeschylus provides in isolation a whole and satisfactory response to the quest for the socio-cultural factors which endorse his Cassandra. As I shall demonstrate below, it is only when considered in conjunction with the popular forms that the appellatives derived from Reece's literary sources reveal the particular mindset which accommodates his Cassandra. Macintosh compellingly argues that Reece's Cassandra is eminently Aeschylean insofar as she perpetuates the spirit in which the tragedy was received in the nineteenth century. Macintosh's verdict is fully understood when Aeschylus is read within the tradition of popular culture.

Topical references in *Agamemnon and Cassandra* allude to cultural goods of the popular culture of the time such as famous folk songs, spectacles, publications, tunes and dances. Popular songs such as *Oxford Joe*,<sup>252</sup> *Captain Jinks, of the Horse Marines*<sup>253</sup> and *Cruel Mary Holder*,<sup>254</sup> for example, are substituted for the lyrical parts of the tragedy for the pleasure of the burlesque audience. Most important here is to analyse how such cultural goods contribute to Reece's mapping of the multiple expressions of visionary knowledge in Victorian Britain. Famous melodies —such as the

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<sup>252</sup> See <<http://jhir.library.jhu.edu/handle/1774.2/2856>>, accessed 7 March 2009 for an 1869 version of *Oxford Joe* arranged by Char. J. Miers. Johns Hopkins University, Levy Sheet Music Collection.

<sup>253</sup> Ballad written by T. MacLagan and brought into vogue by William Lingard. See Newman (1995), 211.

<sup>254</sup> Written and composed by Arthur Lloyd. See Lloyd (1866).

Shan Van Voght—, shows and almanacs by well-known prophetic characters and contemporary fortune-tellers —such as Zadkiel and Old Moore— are mirrored in the lines of *Agamemnon and Cassandra*. The coexistence of such stereotypes with the signs transmitted in the translations from Homer and Aeschylus portray the burlesque Cassandra who embodies Victorian ambivalent attitudes towards women and knowledge. To illustrate my thesis I shall focus here on two major passages: Cassandra's first entrance and her second long speech.

*Cassandra: a Witch, a Fortune-Teller and a New Woman*

Cassandra comes on stage for the first time in Reece's burlesque 'wildly, all alarmed'<sup>255</sup> as a contemporary refiguration of the Shan Van Voght, an Irish mythological figure and an emblem for the United Irishmen rising in 1798. Shan van Voght is the English spelling for Sean-bhean Bhocht (poor old woman), a prophetic character much evoked both in Irish and English folk songs well until the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>256</sup> Originally, *The Shan Van Voght* only narrated the love story between a young man and an old woman but the 1798 version transformed the myth into the Irish equivalent of the British Britannia after Thomson.<sup>257</sup> The Shan Van Voght was both

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<sup>255</sup> Reece (1868), 11.

<sup>256</sup> The earliest reference for the song is 1797 although the first printed copies date as late as 1840. See <<http://www.csufresno.edu/folklore/ballads/PGa027.html>>, accessed 10 September 2008. By the nineteenth century, Liverpool was an established Irish colony. The success of the play among the Irish immigrants might have prompted the Dublin performance.

<sup>257</sup> Thuende (1989), 53. The 1798 version is collected in Windsor (1911), 42-43:



Oh! the French are on the sea,  
Says the Shan Van Vocht;  
The French are on the sea,  
Says the Shan Van Vocht;  
Oh! the French are in the Bay,  
They'll be here without delay,  
And the Orange will decay,  
Says the Shan Van Vocht  
*Oh! the French are in the Bay,*  
*They'll be here by break of day,*  
*And the Orange will decay,*  
*Says the Shan Van Vocht.*

And where will they have their camp?  
Says the Shan Van Vocht  
Where will they have their camp?  
Says the Shan Van Vocht  
On the Curragh of Kildare,  
The boys they will be there,  
With their pikes in good repair,  
Says the Shan Van Vocht  
*To the Curragh of Kildare*  
*The boys they will repair,*  
*And Lord Edward will be there,*  
*Says the Shan Van Vocht.*

Then what will the yeomen do?  
Says the Shan Van Vocht  
What will the yeomen do?  
Says the Shan Van Vocht;  
What should the yeomen do,

represented as a young woman and as an old wrinkled lady suggestive of the Celtic Cailleach, the generic for hag or wise woman.<sup>258</sup> Reece rewrites the

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But throw off the red and blue,  
And swear that they'll be true  
To the Shan Van Vocht?  
*What should the yeomen, &c.*

And what colour will they wear?  
Says the Shan Van Vocht;  
What colour will they wear?  
Says the Shan Van Vocht;  
What colour should be seen  
Where our Fathers' homes have been,  
But their own immortal Green?  
Says the Shan Van Vocht;  
*What colour should, &c.*

And will Ireland then be free?  
Says the Shan Van Vocht;  
Will Ireland then be free?  
Says the Shan Van Vocht;  
Yes! Ireland shall be free,  
From the centre to the sea;  
Then hurrah for Liberty!  
Says the Shan Van Vocht;  
Yes! Ireland shall &c.

<sup>258</sup> As argued in Beiner (2007), 92-3,

This carrier of a prophetic message [the Shan Van Voght] was taken from the Jacobite *aisling* (vision/dream) poetic genre, which centered on a legendary female character —the *spéirbhean* (sky woman), who originally assumed a royal persona (associated with the names Éire or

lyrics of the melody emphasizing the attributes which connect the depiction of the old Celtic wise woman with Cassandra:

AIR— ‘*Shan van vought*’

CASS. Oh! The classic type you see,  
Of the Shan van vought,  
Whatever that may be,  
For I hardly know.  
But a frantic prophetess,  
With a poet’s phiz and dress,  
I very shrewdly guess,  
Is a Shan van vought. *Chorus*  
Like the party in her sleep,  
In that play the ‘Frozen Deep,’  
I the rapt appearance keep  
Of a Shan van vought.<sup>259</sup>

The recurrence of certain clichés like ‘frantic prophetess’ and ‘rapt appearance’ to portray the two sage women is symptomatic of the syncretism between the aesthetics of high and popular culture in nineteenth-century refigurations of Cassandra. Such syncretism is perpetuated by the

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Eriú, Banba, and Fodla) but was oftentimes known by names of fictional commoners (Síle Ní Ghadhra, Siobhán Ní Mheadhra, Meidhbhín Ní Shúilleabháin, Síle Bhán Ní Shléibhín, Móirin Ní Chuileannáin, or Caitlín Ní Uallacháin).

For a full account of the Cailleach myth see Frazer (1983), 403-9 and Crualaoich (2003).

<sup>259</sup> Reece (1868), 11-12.

association of Cassandra with the witches from Macbeth and when Aegisthus and Choragus play on references of Cassandra as a sorceress:

Clyt. You're mad you know, just mark your hair and dress,

You've got the queerest *phiz* as *effe-vesce*!

By every act the lunatic's convicted.

Chorag. Besides you *twitch*!

Aegis. To *which* she's much addicted!<sup>260</sup>

Moreover, the homophonic game with the colour of her hair —raven/raving black— also parallels the numerous Circes of John William Waterhouse, for example, where the occult knowledge of women was symbolically displayed through black-haired femmes fatales:

Cass: He! he! I'd like to find, but for a lark,  
A party who would challenge that remark;  
I never was as mad before I vow,  
Or felt such inclination for a row.  
Look at my mad appearance! Oh, good lack,  
Observe my hair, you see it's *raven* black;  
My cheek, which once was pale's a trifle sadder,  
And more insane too, for its colour's *madder*.  
My garb is mad too, look! And you'll confess,  
Mine is a most *unreasonable* dress;  
My foes with smiles too well I understand,  
Declare I come from famed *Illyria*'s land,

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid. 12.

And all this time, this one impression's had'em,  
Tho' I'm unmarried, they *will* call me *mad am*;<sup>261</sup>

As early as 1823, the Trojan princess was referred to by Boyd as a 'wandering mendicant' and subsequent translations allude to Cassandra as a 'vagabond' and 'wandering gipsy' (Sewell 1846*a*), a 'wandering witch' (Milman [1865] 1994), and a 'vagrant, wandering prophetess' (Plumptre [1868] 1994).<sup>262</sup> Such disparaging epithets manifest the Victorian need to control knowledge, which is patent in section four of the 1824 Vagrancy Act, which regulated the activities of fortune-tellers and wandering vagabonds levelling them with street thieves and prostitutes.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Reece (1868), 29. Also see Bornay (1994).

<sup>262</sup> See chapter 2.

<sup>263</sup> See

<<http://www.statutelaw.gov.uk/content.aspx?LegType=All+Primary&PageNumber=94&NavFrom=2&parentActiveTextDocId=1029462&ActiveTextDocId=1029467&filesize=16028>>, accessed 16 November, 2008:

Every person committing any of the offences herein-before mentioned, after having been convicted as an idle and disorderly person; every person pretending or professing to tell fortunes, or using any subtle craft, means, or device, by palmistry or otherwise, to deceive and impose on any of his Majesty's subjects; every person wandering abroad and lodging in any barn or outhouse, or in any deserted or unoccupied building, or in the open air, or under a tent, or in any cart or waggon, not having any visible means of subsistence and not giving a good account of himself or herself; every person wilfully exposing to view, in any street, road, highway, or public place, any obscene print, picture, or other indecent exhibition; every person wilfully openly, lewdly, and obscenely exposing his person in any street, road, or public highway, or in the view thereof, or in any

Cassandra's second long speech alludes to two popular figures among the entertainment of the time, Zadkiel and old Moore:

Cass. Yes! I'm aware that nobody believes me;  
The future, though, will owe a lot to *me*,  
All modern *seers* in my type you'll see  
Though you may burke Cassandra now and bury her,

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place of public resort, with intent to insult any female; every person wandering abroad, and endeavouring by the exposure of wounds or deformities to obtain or gather alms; every person going about as a gatherer or collector of alms, or endeavouring to procure charitable contributions of any nature or kind, under any false or fraudulent pretence . . . . . every person being found in or upon any dwelling house, warehouse, coach-house, stable, or outhouse, or in any inclosed yard, garden, or area, for any unlawful purpose; every suspected person or reputed thief, frequenting any river, canal, or navigable stream, dock, or basin, or any quay, wharf, or warehouse near or adjoining thereto, or any street, highway, or avenue leading thereto, or any place of public resort, or any avenue leading thereto, or any street, or any highway or any place adjacent to a street or highway; with intent to commit an arrestable offence; and every person apprehended as an idle and disorderly person, and violently resisting any constable, or other peace officer so apprehending him or her, and being subsequently convicted of the offence for which he or she shall have been so apprehended; shall be deemed a rogue and vagabond, within the true intent and meaning of this Act; it shall be lawful for any justice of the peace to commit such offender (being thereof convicted before him by the confession of such offender, or by the evidence on oath of one or more credible witness or witnesses,) to the house of correction, . . . for any time not exceeding three calendar months.

In times to come she'll make *old Moore the merrier*,  
Out of my stock, though *you* think nothing of it  
One *Zadkiel* will make a mighty *profit*,  
I'll start a host of *Astrologic* sages,  
Tho' some won't care two *buttons* for their *pages*,  
Whose Almanacs will pay and help to feed' em,  
Till *all men* ax —*Where* fools are found to read  
[‘em.<sup>264</sup>

Almanacs were best selling literature in nineteenth-century England. Debates on the progress of science and on religious beliefs explain the lure such publications held for Victorians.<sup>265</sup> With the 1855 abolition of Stamp Duty, sales rocketed in the 1860s, increasing the circulation of the cheap press.<sup>266</sup> Consequently, if almanacs —as fortune-telling— reached the full spectrum of society from the very first years of the century,<sup>267</sup> their impact was even greater in mid-Victorian England. Two of the most controversial figures in the field were Old Moore and Zadkiel. The polemic surrounding the two characters hinged on contemporary concerns about the origins and the possession of knowledge. Henson argues how the Victorian almanac was a ‘Janus-faced [type] equally evoking its reputation for ‘useful information’ and ‘imposture’.<sup>268</sup> Indeed, almanacs fell into a socio-cultural no-man’s-land-like arena, like gipsies and fortune-tellers, where they were rejected as

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<sup>264</sup> Reece (1868), 12.

<sup>265</sup> Anderson (2004), 98.

<sup>266</sup> King and Plunkett (2005), 348.

<sup>267</sup> Anderson (2004), 97

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.* 98

well as demanded. The analogies established between the popularity of Zadkiel, Old Moore and Cassandra in Reece's text evidence prevailing ideologies about the social recognition of peripheral knowledge.

*Old Moore's Almanack* was first published in 1697 by Francis Moore under the patronage of the Stationers' Company as *Vox Stellarum*.<sup>269</sup> The unprecedented success of the publication has encouraged the continuation of the almanac until the present day. After Francis Moore, subsequent issues still adopted his name as sign of respectability; in the nineteenth century, Herbert Ingram's edition, who became one of its most successful printers, included the following contents:

Just published, price 1d. only the best Almanack for 1843, entitled VOX STELLARUM; or OLD MOORE'S ALMANACK, for the Year of Human Redemption 1843, being the third after the Leap Year, and the seventh of the Reign of her present Majesty Queen Victoria; with Twelve Original Engravings, and containing amongst a great variety of other matter, all the Fairs in England, directions for the Farmer and Gardener, the Weather, calculated from a never-failing date, a Prophetic Hieroglyphic adapted to the times, summary of the Population Returns, Stamp Tables, the Wisest Sayings of the Wisest Men. In fact, it contains all that can be desired or expected in an almanack.

Published by Ingram and Cooke, Crane-court, Fleet-Street, London.

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<sup>269</sup> Rickards, Twyman, De Beaumont and Tanner (2000), 15.



The above original and crowded book of information is published at 1d. only. Be sure and ask for the Almanack published by Ingram and Cooke, London.- Sold by most book-sellers throughout the kingdom.<sup>270</sup>

Ingram's appeal to the reading public only to buy his almanac responds to the great demand of *Zadkiel's Almanac* and *Raphael's Prophetic Messenger*. The three publications dwelt on the same topics, usually hieroglyphics on social affairs and weather prediction:

Raphael's Prophetic Messenger for 1866, with Coloured Hieroglyphic. Price 2s. 6d., or post free for 2s. 8d. *The best Weather Guide* and Almanack. T.T. Lemare, 1, Ivy-lane, Paternoster-row, E.C.<sup>271</sup>

Astrology was another favourite among the most popular almanacs in the early Victorian period. Lieutenant Richard James Morrison, a famous astrologer at the time, founded *Zadkiel's Almanac* in 1829, which reached its sales peak after predicting Prince Albert's death in 1861.<sup>272</sup> The dichotomy surrounding *Zadkiel's Almanac* springs from Morrison's efforts to build up the reputation of astrology as a science. Morrison founded the British Association for the Advancement of Astral Science (BAAAS) and linked his meteorological predictions with astrological theory. Such an attempt to standardize peripheral forms of knowledge had its champions and

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<sup>270</sup> *ILN* 1, no.33 (24 December 1842), 527.

<sup>271</sup> *ILN* 48, no. 1361 (17 March 1866), 258; my emphasis.

<sup>272</sup> See Anderson (2004), 102-112 for a full account of the impact of *Zadkiel's Almanac*.

detractors,<sup>273</sup> and Zadkiel's Cassandra-like voice was publicly persecuted by some conservative sectors after the demise of Prince Albert. The most famous case is Rear Admiral Sir Edward Belcher's attempt to urge the masses to prosecute Zadkiel as 'rogue and vagabond',<sup>274</sup> which ended in the Morrison vs. Belcher trials where Zadkiel won his case against Belcher's libel and cleared his name.

Links between pejorative allusions to Zadkiel, the Shan Van Voght and Cassandra are analogous to the spirit in which the myth was received in the nineteenth century. The triple refraction of Lotman's semiotic triangle is evidenced in the interconnections of the three personages, which perpetuated the double moral standards behind the widespread standpoint which both reflected and worshipped marginal accesses to knowledge. The evolution of the reciprocal relation between Cassandra's gestures of frenzy and women, prophets, witches and hysteria reconstructs the socio-historical context which nurtured the reception of the Cassandra myth in Robert Reece's burlesque. In contrast to mainstream refigurations of Cassandra

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<sup>273</sup> E.g. Moody (1838). See *The Anthropological Review* 3, (June 1866), 191 for remarks on Zadkiel's doctrines as an 'intermediate position between science and dogmatism'.

<sup>274</sup> Anderson (2004), 77. See Belcher's letter to the *Daily Telegraph* as reproduced in *The New York Times* (18 July 1875), 5:

In your impression of this day you say Who is this Zadkiel, and are there no means of ferreting him out and handing him up to Bow street, as a rogue and vagabond? I will aid you on the scent by first informing you that he stands as Lieutenant on the Navy list; next that he has his admirers in Greenwich Hospital who fancy him a prophet [...] and that his mischievous propensities are not solely involved in that foolish publication, *Zadkiel's Almanac*.

such as Rossetti's or Meredith's, and the sage's appropriation of the classical figure, Reece combines hackneyed allusions to Cassandra with humour. The comic variable introduces an alternative equation in which laughter might serve as a catalyst for questioning social realities, in this case the relation between women and knowledge.

Isobel Hurst's accounts of the relation between Victorian women writers and classical texts offers a wide range of examples of the dichotomy of the representation of women and knowledge. In general, women's acquisition of knowledge was underestimated due to Victorian gender boundaries in education. Notwithstanding the increase of educational opportunities throughout the century, by the 1820s and 1830s the traditional schooling received by Elizabeth Barrett or George Eliot was still inferior to that received by their male colleagues, just as highly regarded secondary schools for ladies still had not reached the standards of boys' schools by the end of the century. The struggle of upper-class young ladies to cultivate intellect in opposition to their domestic duties was a recurring theme in the literature of the time: Elizabeth Barrett's *Aurora Leigh* ([1856] 1995); Mary Elizabeth Coleridge's 'A Clever Woman' and Charlotte Yonge's *The Clever Woman of the Family* (1865), for example, all reflected upon the constriction of women's intellect.

Victorian sharply polarized attitudes towards women and knowledge were ubiquitous in the 1890s, when attacks on the emerging New Women coexisted with debates on the Women's Suffrage Bill. Macintosh's conclusive argument that such polarity was foreshadowed in the burlesque drama of earlier decades is supported here by Reece's portrayal of Cassandra. Both Florence Nightingale and Margaret Fuller used the Trojan

princess as the epitome of the silenced voice of women and, as analysed above, Reece's intertextual networks exemplify the analogous disparagement of sage women and marginal social stereotypes in the nineteenth century. The counterpoint of Reece's alienation of Cassandra is her active participation in the play-within-the-play scene, where the stigmatization of strong-minded women is downplayed to acknowledge their wisdom.

The term 'New Woman' was first used by Sarah Grand in an essay published in the *North American Review* in 1894 to refer to the reawakening of women in society.<sup>275</sup> As Nelson argues,

A stereotyped image of the New Woman quickly took hold on the public imagination. She was educated at Girton College, Cambridge, rode a bicycle, insisted on rational dress, and smoked in public: in short, she rejected the traditional role for women and demanded emancipation...The New Woman, arguing that the separate spheres ideology was a

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<sup>275</sup> As argued in 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question,' *North American Review*, 158 (March 1894), 448 as edited in Nelson (2000), 142, New Women were women who perceived:

the sudden and violent upheaval of the suffering sex in all parts of the world. Women were awakening from their long apathy, and, as they awoke, like healthy hungry children unable to articulate, they began to whimper for they knew not what. They might have been easily satisfied at that time had not society, like an ill-conditioned and ignorant nurse, instead of finding out what they lacked, shaken them and beaten them and stormed at them until what was once a little wail became convulsive shrieks and roused up the whole human household.

construct of society and culture rather than biological mandate, demanded that women be given the same opportunities and choices as men.<sup>276</sup>

The phrase, used both by the champions and detractors of such a model of women, soon became omnipresent in the American and British press, art and literature of the time. The image portrayed by Nelson recalled Barbara Bodichon, an ardent campaigner for the rights of women in Victorian England. Bodichon, who was founder and benefactor of Girton College and numerous other educational institutions, was herself omitted from the executive committee for the establishment of the College for being publicly associated with ‘strong-minded’ campaigners for the rights of women.<sup>277</sup> Together with Bodichon, it would not have been difficult to imagine Harriet Taylor or Emily Davies, as ‘strong-minded women’, surrounded by the books and attired in the clothes by means of which the April 28, 1894 number of *Punch* ridiculed the figure of the emerging New Woman.

Indeed, the clichés associated with the two stereotyped women were analogous and strong-minded women became immediate forerunners of Grand’s New Woman. ‘Strong-minded women’ were at the centre of topical debates during the 1850s and the 1860s<sup>278</sup>; the polemical Irish dancer Lola Montez, for example, who was famous both for her art and her scandalous

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<sup>276</sup> Nelson (2000), ix.

<sup>277</sup> See Pam Hirsch, ‘Bodichon, Barbara Leigh Smith (1827–1891)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2007 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2755>>, accessed 7 Nov 2007.

<sup>278</sup> See Taylor and Mill (1851).

life, reflected upon such a stereotype in a series of lectures published in 1858 and presented worldwide.<sup>279</sup>

In attempting to give a definition of strong-minded women, I find it necessary to distinguish between just ideas of strength and what is so considered by the modern woman's rights movement.

A very estimable woman, by the name of Mrs. Bloomer, obtained the reputation of strong-minded by curtailing her skirts six inches, a compliment which certainly excites no envious feeling in my heart; for I am philosophically puzzled to know how cutting six inches off a woman's dress can possibly add anything to the height of her head....<sup>280</sup>

Montez' lectures reflected the prevailing frame of mind with respect to the deployment of such an epithet. On the one hand, the phrase 'strong-minded woman' was used by radical campaigners to vindicate women's social equality. On the other, being a 'strong-minded woman' was considered by some women, Montez among them, a pejorative mark of gender which manifested current social inequalities.<sup>281</sup> Despite all criticism, the 'strong-

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<sup>279</sup> *The New York Times* (16 February 1858), 5.

<sup>280</sup> Montez (1858), 173. Montez refers here to Amelia Jenks Bloomer, the famous American campaigner for the rights of women who introduced the 'bloomers', a piece of clothing designed for the comfort of women as a substitute for petticoats.

<sup>281</sup> See Montez (1858), 176-7:

...history is full of examples, which indicate the courage and intellect of woman, and her right to claim equality with the harder sex whenever

mindful woman' referent was easily recognisable and, as Ellen Jordan argues, it was related to a wide range of emerging professional women such as governesses, artists and nurses as well as bluestockings, philanthropic women and intellectuals.<sup>282</sup> Being a highly topical issue, strong-minded women could not escape the burlesque pen and soon became an easy target for satirical press and drama.

During the nineteenth century, a subgroup of classical burlesques led by Greek and Roman heroines openly questioned prescribed roles of women in society. Still displaying the ambivalence of burlesque, Blanchard's *Antigone* and Francis Talfourd's *Alcestis, or a Strong-Minded Woman*, for example, heralded the advent of the Noras, Marguerite Gautiers and the New Woman playwrights of the following decades. Fiona Macintosh's deep analysis on nineteenth-century burlesques of Medea provides a detailed account of the representation of wives and mothers in nineteenth-century

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Heaven has imparted to her the gift of genius. I can hardly see how it is possible that any woman of true genius should ever feel the necessity of calling together conventions for the purpose of resolving that she is abused. One woman going forth in the independence and power of self-reliant strength to assert her own individuality, and to defend, with whatever means God has given her, her right to a just position of the earth's privileges, will do more than a million of convention-women to make herself known and felt in the world. There is such a great difference between strength of mind and strength of tongue!

See also Taylor (1866), 350-364; 'The Ladies of the Creation: or How I was Cured of Being a Strong-Minded Woman' *Punch* 24 (1852) x-xii, xiv, xvi, xviii; 'The Strong-minded Women' *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, 68 (November 1863), 667-678.

<sup>282</sup> Jordan (1999), 87-144.

comic theatre. As Macintosh argues, ‘with her ‘unwomanly’ fluent articulation and repudiation of the inequalities of the marital state, and her actions serving as a reminder that motherhood is not something fixed but of necessity redefinable in each context, Medea becomes the prototype for the 1890s New Woman.’<sup>283</sup> In like manner, Reece’s Cassandra’s defiance of the discourse of hegemony and her constant attempts to break her forced silence epitomize, as I shall contend, the intellectual struggle of New Women by the late years of the century.

Reece’s *Agamemnon and Cassandra* provides two complementary approaches to the burlesque representation of New Women: Cassandra and Clytemnestra. The identification of Clytemnestra with the social stereotype is straightforward from the outset. Recalling the title of one of the most successful classical burlesques of earlier decades, Talfourd’s *Alcestis, the Original Strong-Minded Woman* (1850a), the character list depicts Clytemnestra as follows:

The original strong-minded woman, with only one weakness, viz. for Aegisthus —the founder of the Queen in ‘Hamlet,’ ‘Lady Macbeth,’ Mrs. Caudle, &c., a woman who *sticks* at nothing (save her enemy!) and altogether a type not to be followed by British matrons.<sup>284</sup>

Reece’s portrayal of the heroine parallels the burlesque representations of the stigmatized strong-minded women of the age. In contrast to Aegisthus and Agamemnon, Clytemnestra is overtly courageous and intellectual and mirrors the general tendency which marks the traditional refiguration of the

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<sup>283</sup> Macintosh (2000), 77.

<sup>284</sup> Reece (1868), 5.



myth perpetuating the transgressive Clytemnestras exploited, for example, by William Thackeray and Edward Nolan.<sup>285</sup>

Eighteenth and early nineteenth-century refigurations of Cassandra generally focus on the princess' visionary gift and madness, pushing her efforts to find a space for her discourse into the background (see chapter 2). In the midst of the nineteenth-century first feminist turmoil, Reece takes a step forward and reinserts the Cassandra myth into contemporary perceptions of women and knowledge. The ubiquitous ambivalence of burlesque allows multifarious interpretations of Reece's refiguration of Cassandra. The comic performance of Harry Beckett together with the semiotic system related to Cassandra's derangement support the idea of a pejorative satire of the Trojan princess. Following the aesthetics of Victorian reworkings of the myth, for example, Reece highlights the agitated movement of Cassandra's hair, her frenzied possession and her costume. Moreover, the image of Cassandra's repudiation of her garments as a priestess of Apollo in *Agamemnon* syncretize with contemporary representations of wandering prophets and beggars clothed in rags.<sup>286</sup> Considering other aspects which evidence the ambiguity of burlesque such as Cassandra's active participation in the unmasking of the regicide and the subsequent consideration of her voice, Cassandra becomes a model for the intellectual strong-minded women of the nineteenth century.

Reece's reenactment of Shakespeare's play-within-the-play scene in *Hamlet* is the key to the arguments in favour of the interpretation of Cassandra as a strong-minded woman. In a Hamlet-like manner, Cassandra

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<sup>285</sup> Macintosh (2005), 139-162.

<sup>286</sup> See chapter 2 for a cross-analysis with translations.

devises the plot of the performance and reveals the stratagems of the adulterous Clytemnestra. Such an actively masculine attitude is only endorsed by Cassandra's predictions, which are believed by the rest of the characters. As I shall argue, the evolution of Cassandra from a derided mad prophetess to a dramatist anticipates the gradual integration of 'strong-minded' women into the social structures of nineteenth-century England.

The play-within-the-play scene opens with a speech by Agamemnon about his wholehearted confidence in the virtuous character of the Queen. Agamemnon's accounts of his deeds in Troy in I.ii inspire Cassandra to put on stage a performance during the Senecan banquet in honour of the monarch to uncover Clytemnestra's plot:

Clyt: Come my Lord,  
The banquet waits you —let me take your sword:  
With this how many you've to Hades packed.  
Agam: A little Drama, dear, by *Steele*, one *hacked*.  
Aegist.: These *heavy dents*, presumptive proofs of force,  
We must accept as *heavy dence* of course.  
Cass.: (*To Eros.*) Sublime idea! Love! I'm yours for ever.  
Eros. Trust love to make *wise, fools, or foolish, clever*.  
Cass. *Eureka!*  
Eros. Yes, *you wreak* a vengeance, too!  
And these two deep ones you will surely do.

The idea, Cassandra claims, is her own though borrowed from the Elizabethan tragedy.<sup>287</sup> Recalling the metatheatrical potential of the myth

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<sup>287</sup> Reece (1868), 24.

previously exploited by Settle, Reece's Cassandra acts as a playwright, a stage director, a stage manager and a stagehand.<sup>288</sup> Cassandra's plan is followed by Eros, Alecto, Choragus, Phylax and Trophe, who lay on the entertainment. Eros performs Agamemnon. Alecto is Clytemnestra and Cassandra plays the moon while she surveys the reactions of the guilty lovers. The credibility of the prophetess is enhanced as compared to her burlesque predecessors who only raved in madness. The court in Mycenae welcomes and accepts Cassandra's clairvoyance and only Agamemnon is initially sceptical.

The play-within-the-play scene in *Agamemnon and Cassandra* not only recalled the well-known Shakespearean episode but also reproduced a common referent of Victorian life: private theatricals. Private theatricals had been a well-established tradition since the late years of the eighteenth century. Lady Hamilton's 'Attitudes', for example, achieved popularity in Italy in the late eighteenth century and George Henry Lewes dedicated a whole chapter of his *Life of Goethe* to the impact of the performances of such amusements on the works of the German writer.<sup>289</sup> The Victorians' fascination for theatre led to a vogue for the genre which had even reached America by the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>290</sup> Winthrop Macworth Praed, for

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<sup>288</sup> Reece (1868), 24-27.

<sup>289</sup> Lewes (1864), 260-268.

<sup>290</sup> See *The Living Age*, 21 (April-May-June 1863), 39. Belew (1866) provides a full guide with illustrations for the performance of private theatricals in America.

example, wrote a poem on private theatricals,<sup>291</sup> and numerous novels of the time revealed the emotions of their characters in home performances.<sup>292</sup>

Joanna Baillie's comedy *The Tryal* (1798) exemplifies eighteenth-century attitudes which were adopted towards women and home theatricals in the early Victorian period. In *The Tryal* Agnes Withrington is able to write and stage various home amusements while she is accused by her uncle Withrington of not leading a 'gentlewomanlike' life.<sup>293</sup> Caught between her domestic duties and her love for theatre, Agnes' involvement in private theatricals manifests how the domestic space both silenced and gave voice to women's creativity. As Burroughs contends, the experience of the elite Elizabeth Berkeley Craven and Elizabeth Yorke, Countess of Hardwicke, were two oft-quoted living examples of such duplicity, though middle-class women such as Mariana Starke also wrote and staged their own plays in home theatricals.<sup>294</sup> Closer in time, comic after-texts of Elizabeth Lytton's essay 'The Girl of the Period' (*The Saturday Review*, 1868) portrayed modern, dangerous girls engaged in private theatricals.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Praed (1865), 207.

<sup>292</sup> E.g. Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* ([1814] 2003); Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* ([1847] 1970) and George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* ([1876] 2003).

<sup>293</sup> For a full development of the argument see Burroughs (2004).

<sup>294</sup> Russell (2007), 199. See the whole chapter for a full account of private theatricals during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

<sup>295</sup> See *Girl of the Period Miscellany*, 1 (1869) as qtd. in Fraser, Green & Johnston (2003), 22-23. The fashion was followed by contemporary novels of the time where both male and female characters were engaged in home performances (see n. 294 above). See Eliot ([1876] 2003), 46-49 for Gwendolyn Harleth's artful impersonation of Hermione in *Daniel Deronda* which exemplifies the stratagems of noble young ladies to display themselves and

The public participation of women in the theatrical life of Victorian England, not only as actresses but also as managers and producers, is epitomized by widely known figures such as Madam Vestris and Marie Wilton. Women assuming executive roles in theatres were exposed to moral judgments and found difficulty in combining their professional ambitions with social respectability.<sup>296</sup> Consequently, even though Vestris and Wilton

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raise the passion of their suitors during the performances. Note that Gwendolen is also the mastermind and stage director of the charades in *Ibid.* 47:

The cousins were continually together at the one house or the other — chiefly at Offendene, where there was more freedom, or rather where there was a more complex sway for Gwendolen; and whatever she wished became a ruling purpose for Rex. The charades came off according to her plans; and also some other little scenes not contemplated by her in which her acting was more impromptu. *Ibid.* 45. And Hermione was chosen; all agreeing that age was of no consequence; but Gwendolen urged that instead of the mere tableau there should be just enough acting of the scene to introduce the striking up of the music as a signal for her to step down and advance; when Leontes, instead of embracing her, was to kneel and kiss the hem of her garment, and so the curtain was to fall.

<sup>296</sup> See Mary Keely's speech as a manager of the Lyceum in *ILN* 4, no. 102 (13 April 1844), 237:

This house [Lyceum] of variable baptism was opened on last Monday night under the management of Mrs. Keeley, as the bill says. Female sovereigns have often proved successful in dramatic sway, and we trust that the present queen regnant of the Lyceum will have a long reign. Certainly her address was better concocted and delivered than certain other Queen's speeches, and was most heartily welcomed. It was written by Mr. G. à Beckett, and was as follows:-

When a new minister assumes the reins,

His policy 'tis right that he explains;  
I, having taken office, don't refuse  
To make the house acquainted with my views.  
Some may conceive I owe an explanation  
For having headed the administration:  
Upon that point a motion I will  
The opinion of the house at once to take,  
That ladies can't food managers be reckoned.  
Is that a motion any one will second [cheers]?  
I thank the house for its polite decision,  
The motion is thrown out without division.  
To look on idle ne'er could be my choice,  
A woman always likes to have a voice;  
Silent indifference could never suit her,  
The grammar tells us woman can't be neuter.  
'Tis true, I might have filled a humble station  
In our theatrical administration;  
But female influence soon gains the ascendant-  
When it begins, no one can see the end on't.  
Instead of coming to it by degrees,  
I thought at once the Premiership I'd seize.  
To keep the place I very much incline,  
Unless this house calls on me to resign.  
Now for the measures I shall introduce:-  
I mean to do away with one abuse.  
The scheme on innovation somewhat borders,  
But I propose to drop the standing orders.  
My policy may probably be hinted  
In a short bill I've order'd to be printed;  
That bill I see already in your hands-

were not isolated cases, managing and producing plays in nineteenth-century England were two eminently male-dominated activities. Equally, Victorian women playwrights had to face an endogamic sector where male

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I trust that you will pass it as it stands.  
'Tis not the least remarkable of facts,  
That if you pass that bill, you pass five acts;  
If Parliament as fast could use its powers,  
It wouldn't be complaining of late hours.  
My views with brevity I now will state,  
Upon the principle legitimate;  
The drama call'd legitimate may thrive  
As well in two or three acts as in five.  
Were length legitimacy's standard –then  
What would become of all the little men?  
Heirs to a throne, if short, would lose a crown,  
Which too must be given up –not handed down.  
Man, by his mind, not by the height, we rate;  
Talent, not length, makes plays legitimate.  
But here I am, don't practise what I teach,  
Making a long, and perhaps an empty, speech;  
So, I'll be brief in coming to a close-  
We've several measures ready to propose;  
But if you deem them wrong, they shall be stopp'd-  
Amendments we are anxious to adopt.  
The confidence I feel there's one thing clenches-  
As yet I see no opposition benches.  
Before I bring my statement to an end  
One thing must earnestly I recommend:  
Throw out your bills, objects, or criticise-  
But never think of stopping the supplies.

critics and managers either self-promoted their own plays and productions, or the plays and productions of their fellow male authors. Notable exceptions such as the women playwrights of the East End show the eager attempts of the 'weaker sex' to enter the public theatrical coteries, although they were too few to rival their male counterparts.<sup>297</sup>

The stigmatization of women who devoted themselves to theatre in public as well as the gender restrictions of the time obliged many potential women playwrights to remain within the domestic sphere.<sup>298</sup> Private theatricals, charades and entertainment were dominated by the pen and artistic creativity of women forced to confine their wisdom in their closets. By the late years of the century, however, the intense activity of private theatricals raised the aspirations of women to make the jump from amateurish productions to professional theatre which, according to Friedl, anticipated the vindications of the suffrage propaganda plays in the United States.<sup>299</sup> Should we consider burlesque the comic mirror of Victorian England, Cassandra's involvement in private theatricals bears witness to the gradual recognition of the cultural engagement of women in the nineteenth century. The semiotic system developed in nineteenth-century reworkings of the Cassandra myth rests on pejorative representations of women and knowledge. Through their dishevelled hair, rags, rolling eyes, agitated movements and silenced voices Victorian Cassandras are depicted as women who are both deranged and intellectual. The juxtaposition of Cassandra's frenzy with witches, false prophets and madwomen coexists for

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<sup>297</sup> Holder (1999).

<sup>298</sup> Powell (1997), 77-94.

<sup>299</sup> Friedl (1987), 5.



the first time in Reece with the wise and heeded Cassandra vindicated by Nightingale and Fuller. Mapping such sign systems in burlesque reveals the culturalized content of the representation of women in the arts and society of Victorian England.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Eighteenth and early nineteenth-century comic refigurations of Cassandra focused on otherizing representations of the Trojan princess. Even though particular features of Settle and Desfontaines were perpetuated in Reece, there is a substantial gap which separates the 1868 burlesque from earlier comic reworkings. *Agamemnon and Cassandra* coincided in time with the feminist upheaval of the middle years of the nineteenth century. Burlesque offered Victorian audiences a cathartic mirror where social stereotypes were decoded for laughter. In a century of parody and humour, the departure from prevailing refigurations of Cassandra was nowhere more significant than in a genre which caricatured the contradictions of the social order. Whether Reece intentionally portrayed a vindictive Cassandra or not is a debate that cannot be resolved. In any event, the refiguration of the Cassandra myth in the late Georgian and early Victorian England was concomitant with the recent history of women and intellect, and burlesque could not and did not obviate the topicality of the matter.

Cross-class analysis of the refiguration of classical mythology reveals the cultural assumptions which suffuse the reception of Greek and Roman art and literature within the spirit of a particular mindset. Burlesque refigurations of Cassandra in Victorian England manifested the social structures which both undermined and perpetuated contemporary gender

struggles. The ambivalence of burlesque accommodated a revisiting of the myth which embodied a set of opposite binaries (e.g. canonical discourse vs. counter-discourse) which explained the representation of women on the Victorian popular stage. Such a polarized experience, as I shall contend in the next final chapter of this thesis, correlates with the general representation of burlesque female characters which reflect the conflicting state of overwhelming deprivation and social recognition that affected the lives of Victorian women. Transplanting the dichotomy of the Cassandra metaphors to other literary contexts reveals overlapping territories where intertwined semiotic constructs evince the cultural discourse behind the reception of the Cassandra myth in the nineteenth century.

## CONCLUSIONS

### PERFORMING METAPHORS OF CASSANDRA

Nineteenth-century burlesque was a source and mirror of the cultural images which shaped Victorian Britain and countless examples of recurring props, costumes and settings accounted for the fertile imagery which moulded contemporary representations of women.

As demonstrated in this thesis, the semiotic dialogue between the depiction of Cassandra in Victorian arts and literature and social stereotypes is in many ways linked to the history of women in England. Recurring sign systems reveal patterns which juxtapose Cassandra with wandering mendicants, witches, and fortune-tellers, but also with political voices against prevailing constraints on women. Surrounded by ambivalence, Cassandra becomes, therefore, a model for petrified experiences, for silenced voices, but also for the emerging echoes which defied the existing social order.

A holistic approach to the study of the Cassandra myth unmask the cultural processes behind codified scholars' platitudes about Victorian associations between women and knowledge. The cultural conventions which depict the Victorian Cassandra are perpetuated in burlesque, where humour provides the perfect backdrop for the coexistence of old

codifications with new sign systems. The ambivalence of burlesque allows for the development of metaphors which epitomize the dichotomy surrounding Victorian refigurations of the Trojan princess. The Cassandra metaphors which complete the present thesis encompass two concepts which are pivotal in gender studies: the voice and the body of women. The focus here is on women and burlesque, but a semiotic understanding of the Cassandra metaphors enables the scope to be broadened to other artistic fields which contribute to what is, in Steiner's terms, a 'topological' definition of culture.

#### STAGING FEMALE ECHOES

The constant concern for pictorial effect in Victorian aesthetics was perpetuated in the press, ballet, opera, novels and even scrap books of the time. The subjugation of theatre to the visual arts was nowhere more evident than in the display of *tableaux vivants* and in an affected style of acting where mimicry and gesture prevailed over the actor's voice modulation. Playbills and illustrations from famous performances testified to the pre-eminence of the body as a vehicle for comic expression. However, the evolution from the conventional to the unhistrionic natural style of acting promulgated by William Hazlitt and George Henry Lewes contributed to a gradual recognition of the voice on stage. The acting guides in circulation manifested a clear evolution from Hill ([1746] 1821) —with gesture in supreme command — to Hammerton (1897), who provided a comprehensive account of the articulation of the voice for the different passions. Despite the prominence of the body as a vehicle of expression,

earlier theorists showed a concern towards the mastering by the performers of certain aspects of the voice. Henry Siddons' *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action* ([1807] 1822),<sup>1</sup> for example, refers every now and then to the tone and expression of the actor's voice:

The modifications of the body [of the actress], which depend upon the cooperation of the soul, and which manifest themselves in a manner more or less imposing, often have a signification extremely vague and general: they answer to the inflexions of the voice, which should be managed with so much nicety as to fix the attention of the auditor to the *same point* which employs that of the speaker. But this method of exciting the attention must be aided by another, more marking, more rapid, and more determinable—that is to say, by a method which may strike with greater force upon the *senses*; as, for example, by the raising or sinking of the voice— by a pronunciation more slow and more imposing—or by a particular tone, marked and emphatical, on the *word* indicating the *idea* peculiarly worthy of this distinction.<sup>2</sup>

Siddons' remarks on voice are only isolated examples compared to the comprehensive collection of gestures described in his textbook. Reminiscences from famous figures of Victorian burlesque manifest that

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<sup>1</sup> As explained in Lowe, Arnott and Robinson (1970), 76, Henry Siddons, son of the great Sarah Siddons, translated and adapted to the English stage Engels' treaty *Ideen zu einer Mimik* (1785-86) in 1807.

<sup>2</sup> Siddons (1822), 18.

despite the gestural acting style being the rule, the actor's voice modulation was the object both of praise and contempt.<sup>3</sup> Ballad-singing was one of the mainstays of burlesque performances and many a review was devoted to the singing abilities of their performers.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, certain stereotyped stage characters were associated with particular tones of the voice from the earlier decades of the century. The 1820 edition of *The Thespian Preceptor*, for example, described hoydens and chambermaids as follows:

*Hoydens*—A hoyden exhibits herself by an impatient readiness to romp, eagerness to contradict, fretfulness if contradicted, vehement wishes to enjoy, dress that is ridiculous by exceeding the fashion, and, while absurd in manner, loud of voice, and a total stranger to good breeding, by an air of excessive self-satisfaction.

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<sup>3</sup> Blanchard (1891), i. 264.

<sup>4</sup> *ILN* 8, no. 207 (18 April 1846), 253. See *ILN* 1, no. 33 (24 December 1846), 525:

After a long interregnum of poverty, the English stage may be said to be in a fair way of once more becoming affluent in song. Since the days of Mara and Billington, 'few and far between' were the 'visits' of those whose merits rose beyond mediocrity: fine voices there were enow, but true singing was, in general, most shamefully neglected, or, it would seem, despised. The vocalist who could sweetly or loudly carol or bawl a ballad was held to be perfect in the vocal art. None of the higher emotions capable of being excited by the dramatism of song were ever dreamt of — none of the conflictions of passion which music can so faithfully depict were attempted. The ballad or ballad rondeau were the height of a would-be popular singer... Happily, times are changed for the better...

*Chambermaids*—Volubility, pertness, a prevailing sense of self-importance, irksome curiosity, uncommon acuteness in all that relates to family secrets, extreme ignorance of everything beyond her sphere, impatience to prattle, timidity when over-awed, and a pleasure in being rude when she dare, are most of them what the chambermaid supposes to be her peculiar airs and graces.<sup>5</sup>

The hoydens' 'loud voice' and the chambermaid's 'prattle' referred to two stereotyped conceptions of women which were criticised and regulated in conduct books and feminist treatises of the time.<sup>6</sup> The descriptions in *The Thespian Preceptor* provide evidence of parodic representations of the voice of women on the Victorian popular stage.

Numerous nineteenth-century popular plays featured histrionic models of women who attacked the accepted prototype of the common Victorian wife. In 1833, for example, *The Prescription; or, a Cure for Hysterics*, a comic interlude in one act by George Colman, staged the pretended hysterical episodes of Lady Steadfast to control her husband.<sup>7</sup> Later in the century, *Gossip*, an anonymous comedy performed in the Princess Theatre in 1859, portrayed Mrs. Chatterton, one of the guests to the Forleseucues' table, as a ridiculous prattler:

the woman's a torrent of talk, a whirlwind of words, and when the steam gun of her conversation has fairly exhausted its ammunition, Hawaii she goes leaving behind her a

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<sup>5</sup> *Thespian Preceptor* (1820), 29.

<sup>6</sup> Ellis (1839), 96 ff.

<sup>7</sup> British Library Add. MS 42922 (1), 45.

hecatomb of reputations ruined and fair names mortally wounded.<sup>8</sup>

Again in 1859, *The Chatterbox*, a comedietta in two acts by M.W. B. Jerrold was performed at St. James's Theatre on the same topic.<sup>9</sup> *Gossip*, *The Chatterbox* and the public denunciations in Bernard's *The Dumb Belle* as early as 1831 attest to the recurrent contempt for the voice of women in nineteenth-century popular theatre.

*The Dumb Belle*, a burletta by William Bayle Bernard, reflected upon the relation between discourse and women. Bernard's burletta, which was first staged at the Olympic theatre in London,<sup>10</sup> recounted the story of an unrequited love and the differences between men and women. Captain Vivian, the *gentleman* character of the comedy, writes a letter to Mr. Manvers —uncle of Eliza, the *lady*— relating his trips around Europe and his relations with women. The Captain's misogynist concept of women makes Eliza resolve to hide her secret love for him. The voice of women becomes an object of derision in the Captain's letter and manifests hegemonic patriarchal attitudes towards women's discourse:

I am eager to see how time has improved my little playmate [Eliza] —but between ourselves I regret to hear that one of her faculties has been developed with extraordinary power —that of speech... I am told she is the most immoderate talker in the Country ... Now the thing of all others that I

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<sup>8</sup> British Library Add. MS 52987 G,16-17.

<sup>9</sup> British Library Add. MS 52987 F.

<sup>10</sup> British Library Add. MS 42913 (14), 569-627. *The Dumb Belle* is an adaptation of *The Woman's Tongue* by the same author. Ibid. 569.



abominate most is a loquacious young lady ... My head was never a strong one ... and the sufferings I have undergone in Paris lately, make me almost wish that it was natural for the fair species to be born dumb...I think her eyes would be a sufficient medium —it's a fact that I have hunted half Germany to meet with that interesting object a dumb woman— and I have not been gratified.<sup>11</sup>

Insulted and determined to modify Captain Vivian's narrow concept of woman's intellect, Eliza feigns dumbness. After the restitution of the order and the reunion of the lovers, Eliza's final address to the audience acts as a manifesto for the rights of women:

*Eliza:* Perhaps I shall have further need of it [a trumpet]— there may be further need of it—there may be many here who may require its use when I ask them if they have come to the same conclusions as ourselves —the Ladies of course are all upon my side —but oh what a majority of male faces do I see what a terrible array of fathers husbands and brothers if I shall ask *them* to tolerate a woman's Tongue — I'm sure they'll all require this medium to hear me and even those that assent, will express no doubt their approbation so faintly that I shall be under the necessity of putting up my Trumpet to hear them.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 557-557b.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 694.

*The Dumb Belle* condemned the subjugation of the discourse of women in nineteenth-century England and foreshadowed the demands of the movements for the rights of women in the latter years of the Victorian era.

As stated above, the reification of female bodies in breeches roles and *tableaux vivants* favoured a visual aesthetic where male *voyeurism* prevailed. Classical burlesques which featured the love affairs of Olympian Gods and heroes displayed nymphs and young maidens in erotic attitudes as shown, for example, in the first scene in J.R. Planché's *Telemachus or the Island of Calypso*.<sup>13</sup> The Victorian statuesque ideal perpetuated by burlesque put on stage, as we shall see, numerous petrified female voices concealed within worshipped female statues. Countless examples like *The Elves or the Statue Bride* (1856) by C. Selby,<sup>14</sup> *The Marble Bride or the Nymphs of the Forrest* by C.H. Hazlewood (1857)<sup>15</sup> and *The Marble*

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<sup>13</sup> See British Library Add. MS 42928 (24), 708:

Scene 1<sup>st</sup>. *The Grotto of Calypso in the island of Agygia. Leucothone. Eucharis and other Nymphs discovered in melancholy attitudes. A lamp and Magic Book.*

*Recit. Eucharis*

Calypso is inconsolable for the departure of Ulysses  
Her grief she cannot master for the man she much misses.  
Where her lover went to Sea every day she goes to stare  
And instead of following her hounds she has taken to tearing her hair  
E'en night to her brings no repose for in this Grotto mystical  
She brewes 'thick coming fancies' very black and Manfredistical  
Her Nymphs dare not approach her in her solitary rambles  
And here is Christmas come and we forbid our Christmas gambles.

<sup>14</sup> British Library Add. MS 52962 Y.

<sup>15</sup> British Library Add. MS 52964 U.

*Maiden* (1866) by W. Suter account for the Victorian Galatea aesthetic systematized by Marshall.<sup>16</sup> Such Cassandra-like voices, mocked and silenced, reinforced a patriarchal viewpoint and support the thesis that Victorian burlesque was eminently conservative.

The refiguration of Greek tragedy in classical burlesque introduced a group of heroines who questioned authoritarian values under the guise of humour.<sup>17</sup> Medea, Alcestis and Antigone, for example, were refigured as round characters with more complex dramatic histories which surpassed the frivolous loveplay of the nymphs and the pomposity of battle-scenes. Anticipating subsequent depictions of New Women, they represented the subversive Cassandra who is refigured in Florence Nightingale, William R. Greg and Margaret Fuller. The topicality of Victorian popular theatre offered these petrified voices the ground on which to debate contemporary gender issues. Fiona Macintosh amply analyses burlesque refigurations of the Medea myth and their relation to caged women, maternity and marriage. As maintained by Macintosh, Medea was in the ‘vanguard of the campaign for women’s emancipation’ since Brough and Lemon’s revisiting of the myth in 1856.<sup>18</sup> Medea foregrounded issues like divorce and filicide and is in parallel with the refiguration of other tragic heroines who endorsed the independence of the social discourse of women earlier in the century.

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<sup>16</sup> British Library Add. MS 53054 G. See Marshall (1998).

<sup>17</sup> See p.216.

<sup>18</sup> Macintosh (2000), 75-99 analyses Jack Wooler’s *Jason and Medea* (1851), Robert Brough’s *Medea; or, the Best of Mothers, with a Brute of a Husband* (1856), and Mark Lemon’s *Medea; or, a Libel on the Lady of Colchis* (1856).

The lack of significant English models during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the impeccable performance of *Antigone* by Charlotte Vandenhoff and later Helen Faucit were crucial for the success of Mendelssohn's *Antigone* in Victorian England.<sup>19</sup> Hall and Macintosh's analysis of the repercussions both of the Covent Garden and the Dublin performances of the tragedy in 1845 identifies how Sophocles' *Antigone* suffused the intellectual, aesthetic and theatrical production of the subsequent decades.<sup>20</sup> Responses to Mendelssohn's *Antigone* ranged from Thomas De Quincey to John Gibson and George Eliot. The questions raised by the tragedy pertained to the idealized statuesque beauty, the conflict between man-made laws and divine universals as well as Antigone's impersonation of Victorian virtue. Margaret Sandbach's poem 'Antigone' published in 1850, for example, exemplified the nineteenth-century construction of the heroine's uprightness which was also evoked by De Quincey:<sup>21</sup>

Defiest the mandate. Vainly dost thou prove  
The affection, fortitude, and faith divine,  
That live in woman's heart, how rich in thine!<sup>22</sup>

Nineteenth-century American refigurations of the myth also gave prominence to the sacrificial Antigone and perpetuated the role of the

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<sup>19</sup> Hall and Macintosh (2005), 316ff.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> See De Quincey (1863), 204-5. Sandbach's poem in (1850), 13 was based on *Antigone discovered over the dead body of her brother* by John Gibson (1866), which perpetuated the images of melodramatic heroines of the eighteenth century.

<sup>22</sup> Sandbach (1850), 13.

‘dutiful sister who defied the state to attend to her family and religious conscience’<sup>23</sup> The pre-eminence of the virtuous Antigone, however, did not completely upstage the political potential of the myth, as George Eliot contended in her essay ‘The Antigone and Its Moral’ published in *The Leader* in 1856.<sup>24</sup> Eliot’s reading of the tragedy was in tune with her personal defiance of the institution of marriage as she underscored the struggles between the individual and society embodied in Antigone:

Wherever the strength of a man’s intellect, or moral sense, or affection brings him into opposition with the rules which society has sanctioned, *there* is renewed the conflict between Antigone and Creon; such a man must not only dare to be right, he must also dare to be wrong –to shake faith, to wound friendship, perhaps, to hem in his own powers.<sup>25</sup>

Forty years later, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps’ short story ‘The Sacrifice of Antigone’ (1891) deployed realism to denounce how inadequate education and moral obligations to family determined the development of women.<sup>26</sup> Phelps appropriated contemporary aesthetics to present the miserable condition of the heroine, Dorothy Dreed. Dorothy was only visible to society when she exposed herself in public as a statuesque, virtuous and dramatic Antigone. The moment when her body and voice were reified to

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<sup>23</sup> Winterer (2001), 70.

<sup>24</sup> See Eliot (1856). Eliot had begun writing her essay in 1855. See Eliot ([1884] 2004), 197.

<sup>25</sup> Eliot (1856).

<sup>26</sup> Winterer (2001), 81-84.

call attention to her knowledge and to denounce the oppression to which she was forcefully submitted:

There glided to the front of the platform a lovely creature, slim and swaying, all in white, clinging white, and Greek from the twist of her dark hair to the sandal of her pretty foot and the pattern on her *chiton*'s edge.

The costume was cheese-cloth, and cost five cents a yard—but who knew? who cared? It was studious, it was graceful, it was becoming, it was perfect, it was Greek—it was Antigone.

Professor Kosmos gave a start which shook the programme from his hand when the Greek goddess emerged from her black chrysalis; and when she opened her trembling lips and began to speak with the rhythmic Greek undulation dear to the heart and head of the classic scholar, and delivered an excellent phillippic against Creon and a piteous, womanly wail for Polynices, and a pathetic appeal to the attentive audience for Antigone's own doomed young life, he covered his eyes with that programme and felt shaken to his soul. In *this* Antigone, buoyed in terrible struggles by love of art that no privation could quench, bearing woes that no Sophocles had sung, he recognized the face of his waitress and the voice of his washerwoman.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Phelps (1892), 243.

The coexistence of the sacrificial with the rebellious Antigone in relation to the woman question is stressed by Julia Ward Howe's lecture at The Congress of Women held in Chicago in 1893 and published in 1895:

In some of the comedies of Aristophanes the women's cause is presented in a light intended to provoke ridicule ... For ideal types we must go to those dramatists who deal with the historic and mythic traditions of the past ... In the female characters put upon the stage by Sophocles we can trace within the influence of his friend Socrates, or the sympathy of view which may have formed the bond between them. My present limits will only allow me to speak of two of these characters, Electra and Antigone. Both of these women are rebels against authority. In both of them high courage is combined with womanly sweetness and purity...And in these gracious and more purely feminine types presented by Sophocles, we admire the union of a womanly tenderness with womanly courage.<sup>28</sup>

Prior to Phelps' reinvention of the Faucit-like Antigone who was seen in America and England from the 1840s, and to Howe's restoration of the subversive voice of the heroine, E.L. Blanchard staged *Antigone Travestie* in 1847. Unlike Talfourd's *Alcestis* (1850) and Reece's *Agamemnon and Cassandra* (1868), Blanchard's *Antigone* depended on the staging of a

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<sup>28</sup> Eagle (1895), 102-103.

Greek tragedy, whose spirit was recaptured by the playwright and transposed to the aesthetics of Victorian popular entertainment.<sup>29</sup>

*Antigone Travestie* preserved the laudatory virtues of the heroine and stressed the entombment of her truth. Blanchard's Antigone embodied both the sacrificial and dutiful sister who chimed in with the Victorian family values and the strong-minded woman involved in 'male'-made politics. The syncretism with the tragic plot and images surrounding the petrification of women's discourse abounded. Creon's condemnation of Antigone, for example, syncretized with the systematic reification and concealment of women in caves in Victorian popular entertainment:

Creon:

My herald now proclaims the morn

When you so guilty found

Shall in a Cave –a maid forlorn

Be taken under ground

There in this cavern deep confined

With horrors none can tell

Too late, alas, you, then will find

My Cave is not a cell<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, the heroine's perseverance in relating her truth paralleled the nineteenth-century political Cassandra-like voice of the Victorian sage who scrutinized the legitimacy of ethical and political institutions. The activist impetus of George Eliot, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps and Julia Ward Howe was

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<sup>29</sup> See Hall and Macintosh (2005), 332-336 for further theatrical consequences. See Ibid 336-41 for an account of Blanchard's *Antigone Travestie*.

<sup>30</sup> British Library Add. MS 42982, 169.



downplayed by the burlesque spirit of the comic *Antigone* and, inevitably, by Blanchard's male pen:

*Solo*

Antigone:

Though you put me in a Cave  
You shall find me in earth descending  
Even there I can behave  
As a heroine should rave  
You may yet repent this hour  
Though no poll curtailed your power  
Thus to grind so fair a flower  
Yes, though lingering in a Cave  
You shall find when life is ending  
That my ghost shall leave my grave  
And sing a spectral Polka Stone!<sup>31</sup>

Nonetheless, the denunciations of the play, which, for example, deal with hierarchical structures of society, are diametrically opposed to the open frivolousness of other contemporary classical burlesques:

Hermon:

To be entombed alive is not the thing  
And there's my father calls himself a king  
I wonder who first made such kings as he?  
If I was one I'm sure it shouldn't be.

Antigone:

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 170.

Nay, but a king may punish folks we know

Hermon:

A King's no King who spoils a subject so.

Antigone:

But lines like that are taught in all our schools

Hermon:

It's but hard lines, when only one man rules.<sup>32</sup>

The struggle between the 'natural' order of things and law was at the centre of the intellectual coteries of the 1840s. Charles Dickens' portrait of social inequalities in *A Christmas Carol* (1843), for example, was followed in time by Disraeli's *Sybil* (1845) and Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) while Europe witnessed how a young Friedrich Engels was shaking the old order to pieces with *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England*, published in Leipzig in 1845. The clash between free-thinking and reliance on authority was an acute dilemma in Victorian England:<sup>33</sup> James Martineau, for example, maintained in 1840 that there was 'a simultaneous increase, in the very same class of minds, of theological doubt and of devotional affection'.<sup>34</sup> The dialogue between Hermon and Antigone on the relation between kings and subjects draws attention to issues of the sources of power and authority and reflects the socio-ideological crisis of the contemporary individual. Therefore, Blanchard's Antigone can be said to reflect the entombed voice of the political, wise Cassandra revisited by Nightingale, Greg and Fuller. Even though it might be argued that George

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Houghton (1957), 99-109.

<sup>34</sup> As qtd. in Houghton (1957), 108.

Wild's cross-dressed interpretation might dissipate any possible gender criticism, it should be noted that Brough's subversive Medea and Reece's Cassandra were also impersonated by male actors. Transvestism was one of the staples of Victorian burlesque and on some occasions the characters less in tune with the Victorian ideals of femininity were precisely the ones performed by mature, well-known actresses and men. An added point to this issue is the function of humour as catalyst for debating social issues.

Between 1845 and 1850, flat burlesque characters such as those in Selby's *The Judgement of Paris or the Pas de Pippins* (1846), and the anonymous *Cupid and Psyche* (1848)<sup>35</sup> coexisted, for example, with Ariadne and Medea in Planché's *The Golden Fleece* (1845) and *Theseus and Ariadne* (1848). Notwithstanding the general perfunctory tone of burlesque, the topicality of the themes displayed questioned social issues which inevitably dealt with the woman question. Talfourd's *Alcestis, the Original Strong-Minded Woman* was first performed at the Strand Theatre in 1850 with Mrs. L. Murray in the title role. The title of the burlesque manifests how Talfourd's *Alcestis* departs significantly from the Euripidean prototype, which is reinforced by the subtitle of the 1850 Lacy publication which referred to the burlesque as 'a most shameless misinterpretation of the Greek Drama of Euripides'<sup>36</sup> and Talfourd's allusion to Euripides as the 'injured poet' in the summary of his plot.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, Talfourd's referent was the Victorian caged woman rather than the devoted and self-sacrificing Greek *Alcestis*. As contended by Hall and Macintosh, Talfourd's

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<sup>35</sup> See British Library, Add. MS. 42995 (31) and 43011 (32).

<sup>36</sup> Talfourd (1850a), 2.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 4

domestication of the tragedy called attention to the marital status of women in the middle of the nineteenth century, when the legalization of divorce was still at embryo stage.<sup>38</sup> Unlike his father, Frank Talfourd was not an active campaigner for the rights of women. However, Alcestis' 'classical soliloquy' must have unequivocally raised the female audience's empathy with the heroine.<sup>39</sup> Alcestis evokes the disillusionment of arranged marriages, the legal vulnerability of children and the uneven opportunities for women to overcome their deadening existences. Alcestis' appeal to the audience is more vicarious than that of Brough's Medea and even of Bernard's Eliza. Still, the words of Admetus' wretched wife could have been easily articulated by Caroline Norton, for example, or any her fellow campaigners a few years earlier:

(Alcestis *advances with the two children*)

Alcestis:

Oh! sun, and moon, and stars! oh, day and night!

Oh every thing above an inch in height!

Oh Day! as black as black of Day and Martin,

To what infernal realms must I be starting!

Oh bed! —beg pardon— nuptial couch, I mean,

'Twere green, though, to regret now Gretna Green.

Else might I ask, were not the question idle,

Why was I ever saddled with this bridal?

Or why —but these, alas, are *whys* too late.

Did I with such milksop link my fate!

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<sup>38</sup> Hall and Macintosh (2005), 433-8.

<sup>39</sup> Talfourd (1850a), 16 ff.

Why at the altar did we join our hands?  
Why Hymen e'er unite us in his bands?  
Those *bands* which ne'er have paled thee, *heavy waits*,  
*A-merry-key* in our *united states*?  
Why was my heart to be with such a spoony un,  
A wretched picture of a poor *heart* union?  
For life with him was nothing but a curse,  
And though I took him 'for better or for worse.'  
The world can't surely wonder I forsook him, for  
I found him such a deal worse than I took him for.  
Oh, parent hearth! oh, earth, air, fire, and water!  
Oh, son in petticoats and unmarried daughter!  
[.....]  
When I am gone? or who supply the stitches  
That may be wanting in his infant -trousers?  
And when in youth his jacket he outwears,  
And sows his wild oats, whe's to *sow* his *tares*?  
[.....]  
I might, if I had space, expatiate—  
Alas! though, I've no room to ruminate,  
Still less, as I die early, to di-late!  
So I have done —another observation  
Would be entire supererogation.  
My life, 'tis clear, no words of mine can save.  
And I must pass at once from 'gay to *grave*!  
That bourne from which each traveller born soon learns

T'expect 'small profits and no quick returns.'  
I must descend; egad! I can't help thinking  
E'en now I'gin to feel a sort of sinking;  
I'll show them though how well real good stuff *dies*-  
No woman tears shall dim my closing eyes,  
I'll not e'en *hit off* 'one of my own *sighs*.'<sup>40</sup>

Unlike Brough's *Medea*, *Alcestis*' 'voice' is timid, even melodramatic. Talfourd's title, however, raises an important question regarding the reception of the play by the Victorian audience. The identification of *Alcestis* with 'strong-minded women' evoked a whole semiotic construct which pointed to a highly marked socio-political referent.<sup>41</sup> Women questioned the institution of marriage in contemporary novels and short stories throughout the nineteenth century. The immediacy of theatre, however, and the wide scope of Victorian burlesque audiences attached considerable significance to the denunciations made by Talfourd's heroines, particularly by *Alcestis* as a 'strong-minded' woman.

The relation between marriage, women and the Victorian prophetic Cassandra increased as the century unfolded. Cassandra-like voices who debated on marriage legislation and women's suffrage were evoked in numerous newspapers and magazines devoted to the Woman Question.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, uneasy questions about marriage were at the centre of the politicised works of suffragette drama by the early twentieth century. The

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* 16-17.

<sup>41</sup> See chapters 2 and 3.

<sup>42</sup> See *Women's Penny Paper* (23 March 1889), 6; *The Woman's Herald* (7 Jan 1893), 6-7; *The Woman's Signal* (17 January 1895), 7-8; *The Woman's Signal* (4 June 1896), 360-1.

performance of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* at the Novelty Theatre in June 1889 had opened a Pandora's box and, by the turn of the century, wifedom and motherhood were being overtly questioned. Cicely Hamilton's prose work *Marriage as Trade* (1909) is a classic example of the feminists' attempts to debunk the institution.<sup>43</sup> As Hamilton contends:

The only excuse for this book is the lack of books on the subject with which it deals —the trade aspect of marriage. That is to say, wifedom and motherhood considered as a means of livelihood for women... . The love of man and woman, is no doubt, a thing of infinite importance; but also of infinite importance is the manner in which woman earns her bread and the economic conditions under which she enters the family and propagates the race. Thus an inquiry into the circumstances under which the wife and mother plies her trade seems to me quite as necessary and justifiable as an inquiry into the conditions of other less important industries —such as mining or cotton-spinning. It will not be disputed that the manner in which a human being earns his livelihood tends to mould and influence his character—to wrap or to improve it....Particular trades tend to develop particular types; the boy who becomes a soldier will not turn out in all respects the man he would have been had he decided to enter a stockbroker's office. In the same way the trade of marriage tends to produce its own particular type,

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<sup>43</sup> See Showalter ([1977] 1991), 174, 207-209 and Stowell (1992), 71-99.

and my contention is that woman, as we know her, is largely the product of the conditions imposed upon her by her staple industry.<sup>44</sup>

Marriage was being debated in the popular press and theatre of the time, resulting in a sub-genre of ‘condition of marriage plays’, as coined by Stowell, which exposed one of the most inflammatory issues of the Edwardian era.<sup>45</sup> The outcry of Talfourd’s *Alcestis* and Nightingale’s *Cassandra*, as weak and private as they might have been, anticipated Hamilton’s agitprop and illustrated the subversive voice of the Victorian *Cassandra*.

The female characters who represent the *Cassandra* metaphors on the Victorian popular stage echo the binarism embedded in nineteenth-century refigurations of the Trojan Princess. Silenced and subversive, derided and regarded, the voice of *Cassandra* covers the multiple frames of mind which attempt to fathom out the new roles of women in Victorian England. The semiotic substratum which constructs the identity of women in British nineteenth-century popular coteries sets the ground for an analysis of the changing perceptions of women in consumer culture. Unveiling the images behind such perceptions suggests the shifting social mores which allow for modern refigurations of the myth such as Christa Wolf’s *Cassandra* (1983).

Feminist approaches to the representation of women in popular culture have focused on the (de)construction of women through the Cartesian mind/body duality. As outlined in chapter 2, the range of

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<sup>44</sup> Hamilton (1909), 1-2.

<sup>45</sup> Stowell (1992), 105.



vocabulary which portrayed the voice of Cassandra in the nineteenth century was as important as the pictorial refigurations of the myth for understanding its relation to contemporary attitudes to women. Therefore, the next step in this thesis is to explore how Victorian reworkings of Cassandra's body explain the aesthetics involving contemporary representation of women.

### BODIES IN MARBLE AND ENTOMBED EXPERIENCES

Writing in 1866, a literary critic from the *ILN* manifested the concern of some renown figures from the theatrical and the political sector who attacked the commercial imperatives of contemporary theatre:

The most cursory observer of theatrical business cannot have failed to remark the profuse manner in which productions are now placed on the stage. Managers appear to have made up their minds that no drama will succeed without spectacular accessories.<sup>46</sup>

Indeed, as contended by Richard Altick in the seminal work *The Shows of London* (1978), one of the mainstays of nineteenth-century entertainment was the spectacular display of stage effects in theatre, in magic shows and in the exhibition of dioramas, for example.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *ILN* 48, no. 1366-1367 (14 April 1866), 395.

<sup>47</sup> Britain was not alone in this practice. In Spain, nineteenth-century *comedias de magia y de santos* also gave prominence to spectacular effects. Commonplaces in the genre were huts, hell, palaces, gothic landscapes and grottos. See Oliva, César and Maestre (1992), 425.

Spectacular transformation scenes which introduced ballets, *tableaux vivants* and bombastic scenery changes invaded the burlesque stage of the nineteenth century. The origin of transformation scenes must be traced in pantomimes, which interspersed Victorian burlesque with the personages and the structure of the harlequinade.<sup>48</sup> The labelling of all illegitimate performances as burletta before 1843 to get round the 1766 ban for non-patent theatres fostered the combination of the popular comic genres and the introduction of transformation scenes in all sorts of spectacles. By the middle of the nineteenth century, transformation scenes became part of the lure of the playbills which even advertised them with display types,<sup>49</sup> and an important and recurring element of transformation scenes was that of caves and grottos. John Gray's pantomime *Egypt! 3000 Years Ago!* for the Britannia Theatre in 1855, for example, is advertised, as illustrated by Pearsall, promising a 'Grand Metempsychosian Transformation' with an 'Illuminated Point Lace Grotto'.<sup>50</sup>

In the nineteenth-century, the display of caves and grottos within transformation scenes went beyond the pantomimic origin of the scenic device which depicted the space where Harlequin lost his power in favour of Pantaloon.<sup>51</sup> The apparition of extraordinary beings, the recognition and encounter of main characters, the resolution of the plot and, most important, the confinement of women, all took place within transformation caves and

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<sup>48</sup> Booth (1969), v. 3.

<sup>49</sup> For the role of playbills in nineteenth-century theatre see Moody (2000), 154- 159.

<sup>50</sup> Pearsall (1973), 28-29.

<sup>51</sup> Booth (1969), 3.

grottos in Victorian burlesque.<sup>52</sup> The semiotically charged environment of caves and grottos revealed them as an essential ingredient of the Victorian imaginary, which meant that not only burlesque but also farces, melodrama, ballet and opera were permeated with such pseudo-mystical places.<sup>53</sup> As a chronicler of contemporary nineteenth-century society, Victorian popular theatre also displayed caves and grottos reflecting of the customs and the cultural commodities of the age.

The British spirit of adventure which had taken James Stuart and Nicholas Revett to Greece in the eighteenth century increased after Queen Victoria ascended the throne in 1837 and nurtured the idea of a splendid empire. The cultural and territorial colonizing temperament of the age aroused a generalized curiosity about virgin landscapes which was manifested, for example, by constant allusions to remote spots where

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<sup>52</sup> See for example in 1845 B.F. Rayner's *Harlequin Prince of Thebes or the Star Talisman of the Elements and the Compact of the Enchanted Castle of the Silver Lake*, British Library Add. MS 42989 25, 117:

The Crystal Palace in Grotto of the Guardian. Spirit of Goof. The arched roof, supported by pillars of crystal, emeralds ... through which is seen the beautiful garden and Lake of the Grotto –A throne of Coral in the back Centre –Before this figures of crystal supporting on their heads a Golden Cauldron with a fire burning.

Also see *Jupiter's Decree and the Fall of Phaeton or the Fiery Courses of the Sun* (1853) by W.E. Suter.

<sup>53</sup> E.g: W. Dimond's opera *The Nymph of the Grotto* (1828), Dion Boucicault's famous domestic drama *The Colleen Bawn* (1860) and E. Fitzball's ballet spectacle *Ondine the Naiad* (1843).

grottos and caves were frequently discovered.<sup>54</sup> Caves were also part of the Victorian's daily entertainment as exemplified by the popular *Cave of Harmony*, where first common citizens and then refined ladies and gentlemen of the age dined and enjoyed the night shows:

In old times, before the obscenity of the place was done away with, towards early morning it seemed a perfect Babel ... You looked around, but not a blush did you see in that crowded room; not one single head was held down in shame; not one high-spirited gentleman rushed indignantly from the place ... But this exhibition is of the past, –the room is reformed; it is now a gentlemanly place, where even the most refined of ladies might take her supper and listen to good music.<sup>55</sup>

Furthermore, illustrations from *Punch* and *ILN* highlighted caves in caricatures on contemporary politics and Christmas carols.<sup>56</sup>

Nineteenth-century literature provided numerous refigurations of the symbol of the cave which, from Propertius and Hesiod, was related with inspired knowledge.<sup>57</sup> William Wordsworth, for example, recalled 'poets who attuned their harps/ In wood or echoing cave' in *The Prelude* 11. 456-

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<sup>54</sup> See *The Penny Magazine* 2, no. 98 (12 October 1833), 293-4 on Fingal's Cave. Note that Mendelssohn's symphony *Die Hebriden*, which was first performed in 1830, was based on his own trip to Fingal's Grotto in Scotland. See *The Penny Magazine* 6, 307 (14 January 1837), 11-14 on the Grotto of Adelsberg; *The Penny Magazine* 10, no.594 ( 3 July 1841), 362 for the Derbyshire Caves.

<sup>55</sup> Ritchie (1857), 134-136.

<sup>56</sup> See *Punch's Victorian Era* (1887), 329 and *ILN* 49, no.1404 (22 December 1866), 608.

<sup>57</sup> Luck (1957).

57, and devoted three sonnets to the ‘Cave of Staffa’.<sup>58</sup> Most important for this thesis is Mary Shelley’s introduction to her novel *The Last Man* (1816), where the novelist referred to her attempts to decipher the legacy of wisdom bequeathed by the Cumaean Sibyl in her cave. As outlined in chapter 2, the entombment of peripheral knowledge was common practice in Victorian England. The relation between caves, women and knowledge found space in nineteenth-century burlesque, which displayed wondrous beings and magical and mysterious women concealed in caves.

Edward Fitzball’s ballet spectacle *Ondine or the Naiad*, which was first staged in 1843 in an adaptation from Friedrich de la Motte Fouque’s *Undine* (1811), put on stage the fallen myth of Ondine inside a cave.<sup>59</sup> A cave was also the place from which Venus prophesied, disguised as a sibyl, ‘waving her wand and speaking as an oracle’ in the burletta *The Loves of Cupid and Psyche*, first staged at the Royal Adelphi Theatre in 1857.<sup>60</sup> The ‘witches’ cave’ was the first setting of J. B. Johnstone’s *Harlequin Guy Fawkes or the Fairies of the Golden Grotto*, first performed at the Queen Theatre in Manchester in 1867,<sup>61</sup> and an enchanted cavern was the retreat of Planche’s witch Mordicanta in *Young and Handsome* (1856).<sup>62</sup> Following the popular and pictorial representation of false prophets, fortune-tellers and gipsies, necromantic arts and occultism were concealed in burlesque in remote spots which served both to conceal unwanted truths and to incite the

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<sup>58</sup> Wordsworth (1865), iv. 209-211.

<sup>59</sup> British Library Add MS 42969 (28), 731.

<sup>60</sup> British Library Add MS 52970 M, 18, 26.

<sup>61</sup> British Library Add. MS 53063 X, 1.

<sup>62</sup> Planché (1879), 182.

attraction towards the unknown. The relation between wise and magic beings and caves, however, was not exclusive to the popular genres. An illustrated review of *The Island Nymph* ballet published in the *ILN* in 1846 manifested the perpetuation of the stage device in the ballets performed at Royal theatres,<sup>63</sup> and the continuation of the image in contemporary serious genres is exemplified by George Dibdin Pitt's Irish melodrama *Ellen Ma Vourneen or the Sybil of the Giant's Causeway* (1844), which presented a sibyl prophesying from a cave at the Britannia.<sup>64</sup>

The metaphorical petrification of the peripheral knowledge of women went hand in hand with the equally metaphorical petrification of their bodies. Statuesque women coexisted with grotesque representations in a systematic reification of either sexualized or intellectual female bodies. Marshall's analysis of the Victorian Galatea aesthetic manifests the widespread portrayal of women following the nineteenth-century statuesque ideal of beauty. As Marshall contends, the Galatea aesthetic was based on a sculptural representation of women moulded by a voyeuristic male gaze which silenced female bodies and voices.<sup>65</sup>

The origin of the Victorian attraction for sculptures dates back to the eighteenth-century Society of Dilettanti, travel literature and archaeological discoveries which paved the way for example, for the impact of the exhibition of Lord Elgin's Marbles in 1807.<sup>66</sup> The proliferation of private

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<sup>63</sup> *ILN* 8, no.199 (21 February 1846), 132.

<sup>64</sup> British Library Add MS 42983, 503-1026.

<sup>65</sup> Marshall (1998).

<sup>66</sup> Note the chain of reactions provoked by the exhibition on intellectuals. See Larrabee (1943), 151-8 and Hight (1996), ii. 184 for Lord Byron's protests against Elgin's

collections in Britain, and the exhibition of statues by torchlight in Italian galleries during the 1780s also influenced, according to Holmström, the perception of art throughout the following century.<sup>67</sup>

Examples of the Victorian statuesque aesthetic abound in the press of the time. John Leech's caricature *Specimens from Mr. Punch's Industrial Exhibition of 1850*, for example, was published in *Punch* foreshadowing Prince Albert's visit to the 1851 Exhibition. The 1851 Great Exhibition, which was sponsored by the Prince consort and housed at the Crystal Palace, was widely covered by the papers of the time.<sup>68</sup> Leech substituted the original sculptures with social stereotypes which denounced the poverty of the lower classes, contrasting this with the sumptuousness of the Exhibition. Leech's sculptures were *An Industrious Needle Woman*, *A Labourer Aged 75*, *A Distressed Shoemaker* and *A Sweater*,<sup>69</sup> and were displayed inside urns simulating scientific experiments. Later in the century, the 1865 Dublin exhibition was echoed in the press primarily focusing on the display and impact of the sculptures shown to the public. The *ILN*, for example, devoted several of its pages to the unpacking of the sculptures and the description of some of the most prominent marble groups such as Harriet Hosmer's *Sleeping Faun Satyr*.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, following a

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plundering. See Larrabee (1943) 210 ff and Highet (1996) 189-191 for the impact of the marbles in John Keats.

<sup>67</sup> Holmström (1967), 117.

<sup>68</sup> E.g: *The Eclectic Review* 1 (July 1851) 126; *The Gentleman's Magazine* 36 (July 1851), 55 For a description of the specimens exhibited see *Guide-book* (1851).

<sup>69</sup> *Punch*, 18 (1850), 145.

<sup>70</sup> See *ILN* 46, no.1315 (13 May 1865), 448; *ILN* 47, no.1329-1330 (19 August 1865), 165.

common Victorian practice, the same newspaper reproduced sketches of the sculptures exhibited at leading art galleries and museums of the time. In 1865, for example, the *ILN* echoed the exhibition of antiquities held at Kensington Museum in an article which, under the epigraph ‘The Art Loan Collection in the South’, included illustrations of the most sophisticated pieces.<sup>71</sup>

The daily life of the Victorians also abounded in references to the statuesque ideal of beauty, in particular, to women entombed in marble bodies. With the development of the printed press, advertising became an important channel for creating attitudes towards women and beauty. Lori Ann Loeb, for example, analyses the portrayal of actresses in Victorian advertising with regard to the 1887 Pear’s Soap campaign and concludes:

The actress was an altogether different commercial heroine whose celebrity crossed barriers of class and morality. Her stature was clearly not a product of womanly virtue. Risqué portraits in the late Victorian and Edwardian press highlighted her distance from the maternal ideal. Instead, she was a feminine version of the adventurer —an extreme expression of some qualities of her sex, which were democratized and idealized in the commercial forum ... The actress in the advertisement becomes a siren, praised in the advertisement not only for her beauty but also for the

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<sup>71</sup> The pieces were *Gilt salt cellar, lent by the Queen, Bronze group of Apollo and Daphne* and *Bronze Vase, lent by the Queen*. See *ILN* 46, no.1312-1313 (29 April 1865), 399.



promise of sexuality she represents, a promise frequently ennobled with Grecian motifs.<sup>72</sup>

The five actresses represented in the advertisement referred by Loeb were Miss Fortescue, Adelina Patti, Mary Anderson, Marie Roze and Mrs. Langtry. Curiously two of them —Langtry and Fortescue— had performed Galatea in two different productions of Gilbert's *Pygmalion and Galatea*.<sup>73</sup> As a form of mass communication, newspapers perpetuated a statuesque aesthetic which even reached Queen Victoria, who was portrayed for example in *Punch* as the petrified figure of Shakespeare's Hermione. The caption of the caricature appealed to the reawakening of the Queen after her reclusive widowhood by Britannia, another sculptural embodiment of femininity.<sup>74</sup> Echoes of the beauty of marble sculpture in art can be traced well into the late years of the Victorian era, when portraits of languid waxed women by Alma-Tadema were described by Tennie Claflin in 1871 as perpetuating the 'marble contour' of the sculptures from previous decades.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, as we shall see, most important for this thesis are the exhibitions of *tableaux vivants* which reproduced the style of Greek art with regard to postures and costumes.

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<sup>72</sup> Loeb (1994), 95-96.

<sup>73</sup> Loeb (1994), 96; Marshall (1998) 11-12 and 56-7.

<sup>74</sup> *Punch* (23 September 1865). For the depiction of Britannia as Great Britain see also *Britannia and the Admiralty*, *Punch* (14 December 1849), R. B. Peake's *Europe, Asia, Africa and America or Harlequin Mercury (Harlequin Traveller or the World inside out)* British Library Add MS 42919, 730-737b and the anonymous *A Masque*, British Library Add MS 42954.

<sup>75</sup> Dijkstra (1986), 123.

Burlesque mirrored the lives of the Victorians, so whilst John Gibson's infatuation with his sculpture *The Tinted Venus* developed,<sup>76</sup> female statues moulded by the gaze of male voyeurs invaded the nineteenth-century popular stage. *Pygmalionism*, as defined by Havelock Ellis, was a generalized malady in European drama.<sup>77</sup> The French stage, which nurtured its Anglophone neighbour, was rife with Galateas madly worshipped by pathological Pygmalions. In 1847, Cesare Pugni's ballet *Pygmalion* (choreographed by Arthur de Saint-Léon, which was a pseudonym for Charles-Victor-Arthur Michel) was first staged at the Théâtre de l'Opéra de Paris.<sup>78</sup> In November the same year, Félix Anvers parodied the piece in *La femme de marbre* and four years later, in March 1851, Levassor staged a satire of Pugni's ballet in the ballet-pantomime *La fille de marbre* at the Palais Royal.<sup>79</sup> The Paris Vaudeville witnessed in 1853 the first performance of Théodore Barrière and Lambert Thiboust's *Les filles de marbre*, which was subsequently parodied in Marceline's vaudeville *Les filles...de marbre* (1853) and in *Les filles d'argile* (1855) by

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<sup>76</sup> Smith (1996), 200.

<sup>77</sup> As outlined in Ellis ([1906] 2001), 188.

Pygmalionism, or falling in love with statues, is a rare form of erotomania founded on the sense of vision and closely related to the allurements of beauty. (I here use 'pygmalionism' as a general term for the sexual love of statues; it is sometimes restricted to cases in which a man requires of a prostitute that she shall assume the part of a statue which gradually comes to life, and finds sexual gratification in this performance alone).

<sup>78</sup> Travers (1941), 85.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

Hyacinthe Dubaq and Édouard Jaloux.<sup>80</sup> In 1854, Barrière and Thiboust's play was first put on in London.<sup>81</sup> Numerous adaptations of *Les filles de marbre* were staged in London between 1854 and 1883. The topic was widely reworked by all genres: ballet, extravaganza, burlesque, and magic drama.<sup>82</sup> The general plot reproduced Ovid's original story with variations founded on the petrification of the heroines and their responsive voices after reawakening to life.<sup>83</sup>

The symbiosis between women, caves and sculptures reveals the semiotic construct which explains the cultural codes that perpetuated the social and individual subjection of women in Victorian England. Idealizing beauty and concealing wisdom were two regularized tools which enabled the gendered slavery of women denounced by Mill to continue. As demonstrated in chapter 2, a third mechanism of control was the uglification of the unknown, which also contributed to the reification of the female body. Patriarchal gazes, hands and institutions moulded ventriloquized bodies which remained concealed—and controlled—inside statues, caves and grotesque gestures. The Victorian representations of the

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid. 17.

<sup>81</sup> British Library Add. MS 52946 R.

<sup>82</sup> E.g: *The Marble Heart* by Charles Selby (1850); *The Elves or the Statue Bride* by Charles Selby (1856) (BL Add Ms 52962 Y); *The Marble Bride or the Nymphs of the Forest* (1857) by C. H. Hazlewood (BL Add MS 52964 V); *The Marble Maiden* by Suter (1866) (BL Add MS 53054 G); *The Animated Statue. A Modern Play in Five Acts* (1868) (BL Add MS 5370 F); *Pygmalion or the Statue Fair* by W. Brough (1867) (BL Add. Ms 53058 M). For the impact of the refiguration of the Galatea myth on the British stage see for example *Times* (24 May 1854) and *ILN* 8, no.201 (7 March 1846), 163.

<sup>83</sup> See Frenzel (1994), 152-4.

body of Cassandra epitomized the man-made corseted bodies which reigned throughout. The maddened gestures which characterized the frenzied possession of the Trojan princess in Rossetti, Meredith and Hugo Vamp were the result of a reification of the female body as an object of both contempt and desire. The Cassandra metaphor, then, serves to explain, for example, the analogies between burlesque depictions of Electra in Talfourd's *Electra in a New Electric Light* (1859) and Burnand's *Dido* (1860) in the play of the same name.

Burnand's free adaptation of Virgil's *Aeneid* portrays Dido's desperation at the romance between Aeneas and her sister, Anne, following the representational patterns of women, hysteria and Cassandra. Dido's madness, as presented in the prototype, follows the images of tragic maenadic frenzy.<sup>84</sup> The syncretism between the classical text and Victorian depictions of women's derangement converge in the semiotic construct which portrayed the derided Cassandra. Petrified in derogatory gestures, Dido is presented in 'a possession of rage'<sup>85</sup>, 'hysterically',<sup>86</sup> and 'in a fiendlike manner.'<sup>87</sup> The semantic links between the three attributes perpetuate nineteenth-century cultural associations between madness, rage, necromancy and non-conventional women. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the description of Dido's derangement coincides with her rejection of prescribed roles in society:

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<sup>84</sup> See Hershkowitz (1998) for a thorough analysis of Dido's madness in Virgil.

<sup>85</sup> British Library Add MS. 53989 N, 27.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* 37.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* 28.

D (ironically):            Shall I dear indeed  
Perhaps you think I'll sit me down and sew  
If as my sister, me you little know  
Bah! Dam your needles! Catch me ever sitting  
Down with my housewife pins and things for knitting  
You'll never see me Ann in that condition  
I'll Buckle too fulfilling Woman mission  
Leave me.<sup>88</sup>

Burnand's Dido can be juxtaposed with Talfourd's parody of the Sophoclean Electra in *Electra in a New Electric Light*, first performed at the Theatre Royal Haymarket on Easter Monday 1859.<sup>89</sup> Electra is scorned by her enemies, Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, for her involvement in their political affairs. The political thirst of the heroine is manifested in an unfeminine-like appearance which parallels prevailing characterizations of intellectual women and Cassandra.<sup>90</sup>

Aegist. She may be broken but will never mend herself  
Besides her dress is –where got I can't tell,  
Apparel quite without a parallel:  
Wherein she wanders forth at early morn,  
Unkempt, uncinctured, with her stockings torn,  
In her hand offerings, in her eye a fear  
To *imbrue* her fathers lamen-*table* beer.

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid. 30.

<sup>89</sup> Talfourd (1859), 2. See Hall and Macintosh (2005), 360-3 for an account of the play. See Morenilla (2006*b*) for an analysis of Electra in antiquity.

<sup>90</sup> E.g.: *Donna Quixote*, *Punch* 28 April 1894.

Chrysothemis is of another sort,  
On politics she never wastes a thought.  
Clytem. I doubt if she's a thought to waste, unless  
It be upon the fashion of her dress  
Thus different ways, each in her duty flags  
One's *over dressed*, the other *done to rags*.<sup>91</sup>

Moreover, the parallelism between Electra, Cassandra, and mainstream links between maverick women and madness is reinforced by Talfourd's depiction of Electra's hair, uncombed, dishevelled and unruly:

*Enter ELECTRA, L., her hair dishevelled, her dressed torn and disarranged, shoes unsandaled and down at heel.*

Electra. Another day has passed, and yet another  
Brings with its light no tidings of my brother.  
While poor Electra, wearied of expecting  
By all neglected, and herself neglecting,  
Resembles much as classic heroine can  
The well know slip shod, Good-for-nothing Nan  
These locks of gold<sup>92</sup> when servants on me waited  
Used to be carefully *electra-plaited*.  
Now all dis- *Sheffield* down my shoulders flow—  
No friendly comb'll make them *comb il faut*;  
Where a 'deserted auburn' they remain,  
I fear not 'loveliest even of *the plain*.'<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Talfourd (1859), 8.

<sup>92</sup> Note that the manuscript reads 'black'. See British Library Add MS 52982 C, 3.

<sup>93</sup> Talfourd (1859), 12.

Burnand's *Dido* and Talfourd's *Electra* evidence the common semiotic background which constructed the images of the unknown in Victorian England.<sup>94</sup> The Cassandra metaphors explain the burlesque voyeuristic depiction of women which petrified sexualized beauty and concealed and grotesqued women's wisdom. However, burlesque was, like Victorian society, ambivalent in many ways and conflicting social attitudes towards the bodies of women were echoed on its stage.

Nineteenth-century comic theatre was highly transvestite: girls in breeches roles interpreted heroes,<sup>95</sup> gods,<sup>96</sup> and princes, whilst men attired in women's robes and gowns represented elderly heroines and goddesses.<sup>97</sup> Besides the growing interest in Hellenism which was rooted in the late eighteenth century,<sup>98</sup> particular events such as Planché's attention to historical costuming<sup>99</sup> and Helen Faucit's most acclaimed performance of *Antigone* in 1845 encouraged the deployment of tunics and shawls in classical tragedies and burlesques.<sup>100</sup> Both the breeches roles and the

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<sup>94</sup> See Hall (1999b), 288- 298 for late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century revisitings of *Electra*.

<sup>95</sup> E.g.: Miss Talbot in the role of Achilles in *The Siege of Troy* by William Brough, first performed in 1858.

<sup>96</sup> E.g: Miss Lydia Maitland in the role of Apollo in *Prometheus, or the Man on the Rock* by Robert Reece, first performed in 1865.

<sup>97</sup> See for example the famous performance of *Medea* by Frederick Robson in Robert Brough's *Medea; or, the Best of Mothers with a Brute of a Husband*.

<sup>98</sup> Stern (1969)

<sup>99</sup> See Reinhart (1968), 541-542 for Planché's concessions to historical costume in his extravaganzas, particularly regarding the opening scene of *Olympic Revels* (1831), where the gods are attired in Greek costume while playing card games.

<sup>100</sup> Carlyle (2000), 143-160.

costumes which were inspired by Greek sculptures violated the dress codes of the time and displayed the shape of the women's bodies. The sexualized world of popular burlesque —with cross-dressing and *tableaux vivants*— prompted an erotic voyeurism of the female body which was reinforced by the presence of actresses in Victorian erotic books, periodicals and photographs.<sup>101</sup> As a result, the intrinsic reification of women in these contexts perpetuated mainstream conceptions of gender.

Yet breeches roles also allowed women to defy social conventions and act and dress with the same liberties as men. The absence of petticoats, crinolines and corsets in cross-dressing and classical costumes transgressed the ideal of domestic womanhood and gave women's bodies freedom of movement. Accordingly, the sexual self-awareness of burlesque actresses prompted them to capitalize on bourgeois voyeurism and to use eroticism as self-propaganda. Madame Vestris, for example, began the series of *The Exquisite* in 1842 with an illustration of herself dressed in a light gown as Venus, and Madame Celeste was featured in breeches in various numbers.<sup>102</sup> As the century unfolded, male impersonation in breeches roles gave way to a stronger assertion of women's sexuality in the stardom of the Gaiety girls of the late 1890s.<sup>103</sup> Imbued with the erotic spirit which also invaded Aubrey Beardsley's drawings, for example, the Gaiety girls both perpetuated the pygmalionist spirit of statuesque women and represented the emancipated and economically independent women of the turn of the

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<sup>101</sup> Davis (1989).

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.* 304.

<sup>103</sup> Allen (1991), 30.



century.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, cross-dressed roles in burlesque anticipated the premise of freedom of movement with regard to costume championed by the Bloomer's campaigners. Contemporary attacks on Bloomerism focused on costume as the objective correlative of women's usurpation of male roles in society which was, indeed, common practice as exemplified by George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans).<sup>105</sup> The metaphors of Cassandra, therefore, provide a wide range of female bodies which correspond to the various lenses which moulded women in the making of modern Britain. Emancipated women and bodies coexisted with reified subjectivities which struggled to abandon periphery. Reflecting the unavoidable dichotomies which permeate an exceptionally fast-changing society, Cassandra linked arts with life, Greek tragedy with penny literature and the past with the present of women's life in Britain.

The present thesis contributes to shedding light on the semiotic possibilities of Victorian burlesque as well as uncovering hidden substrata of the reception of the Cassandra myth in England. As contended in chapter 2, nineteenth-century refigurations of Cassandra manifest ambivalent contemporary attitudes towards women and knowledge. Conservative approaches like those of Rossetti and Milman foreground Cassandra as the epitome of the dangers of the unknown. Thus Cassandra paralleled

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<sup>104</sup> See for example *The Shop Girl* (1894) by Ivan Caryll, as argued in Hollingshead (1903), 176-85 and the sequel plays produced at the Gaiety which featured women both in respectable jobs and openly sexualized as chorus girls.

<sup>105</sup> See *Bentley's Miscellany* 30 (1851) 640-645; *Punch* 20 (1851) 200, 202, 217. For an analysis of the gradual use of bloomers in England and Europe in the nineteenth century see Cunningham (2002), 65-74.

prevailing conceptions of social stereotypes on the periphery and was equated with false prophets, fortune-tellers, mendicants and witches. Unorthodox responses to the myth centred on the political potential of the Trojan princess and deployed her warnings to draw attention to the wrongs of an era rife with socio-political changes. Gendered reworkings of the Cassandra myth shed light on the vindications of the rights of women and challenged the silences traditionally imposed on the princess.

An intertextual analysis of Robert Reece's *Agamemnon and Cassandra* shows that nurtured by the arts, culture and daily lives of the Victorians, burlesque echoed the full spectrum of Victorian political, prophetic and feminist Cassandra. The ambivalence of the genre favoured the coexistence of opposing refigurations of the myth and staged both a scorned and strong-minded heroine. The syncretism between highbrow and popular refigurations of the Cassandra myth allow us to recreate the socio-cultural mindset which suffused the Victorian contribution to the reception history of the Trojan princess. As demonstrated in this thesis, the Cassandra metaphors resulting from such syncretism account for the representation of women in the arts and culture of the nineteenth century. Victorian burlesque is the case study which exemplifies my theories here but research on the sign system reflected by the Victorian Cassandra is an ongoing process which can be transposed to other literary genres in vogue, like the novel, which bridge the past and the present of the history of women.

## EPILOGUE

Contemporary narratives have traditionally linked the relation between women and knowledge with culturally constructed ideas on madness, caves and isolated attics. From Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, to Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and Christa Wolf's *Cassandra*, western literature is teeming with narrative voices which either conceal or demand socio-cultural recognition.

From the publication of Gilbert and Gubar's seminal work *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) and Elaine Showalter's *The Female Malady* (1985), theories on women, madness and hysteria have suffused contemporary approaches to the Victorian novel. Claire Kahane's *Passions of the Voice* and Evelyne Ender's *Sexing the Mind: Nineteenth-Century Fictions of Hysteria* were both published in 1995, Peter Melville Logan wrote *Nerves and Narratives* in 1997 and in 1994 books such as Janet Beizer's *Ventriloquized Bodies. Narratives of Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century France* (1994) and Jann Matlock's *Scenes of Seduction. Prostitution, Hysteria, and Reading Difference in Nineteenth-Century France* (1994), steered the topic towards the continental tradition.

Considering these and other works on nineteenth-century depictions of hysteria, the transversal axis linking culturally hysterical female bodies and voices with Cassandra is the premise for a semiotic analysis of the representation of women in the Victorian novel. Cassandra becomes a cultural locus for social criticism, and the impact of the genre and the critical responses elicited in contemporary scholarly work open the

possibility of wide and complex research into the intricate network of novelistic Cassandras.

## APPENDIX

### LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Fig.1: ‘Scene from the New Burlesque of “The Enchanted Isle,” at the Adelphi Theatre *ILN* (2 December, 1848), 352.
- Fig.2: Bernard Picart (1731). *Cassandra warns the Trojans Their Fate and is Not Believed*. Private collection.
- Fig. 3: John Flaxman. *Andromache Fainting on the Wall*. (1792-3) © Royal Academy of Arts.
- Fig. 4: George Romney *Lady Hamilton as Cassandra* (c.1785-6). © Tate collection. Bequest by Maj.-Gen John Julius Johnstone.
- Fig.5: Henry Fuseli *Cassandra Raving*. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.
- Fig.6: Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s *Cassandra* (1861,1867). © British Museum. Bequest by Colonel William Gillum.
- Fig.7: Anthony Frederick Sandys’ *Cassandra* (ca. 1895). Private collection.
- Fig.8: Evely de Morgan’s *Cassandra* (1898). ©The De Morgan Foundation.
- Fig.9: *The Boys* (1891).

Fig.10: ‘Sketches of Gipsy Life: Inside a Tent on Mitcham-Common’ *ILN* (6 December 1879), 528.

Fig. 11: *Skelt’s Grotto & Drapery Wings* (ca.1890s). Scenery sketch for juvenile drama.

Fig.12: ‘Interior of the Aquarium’ *ILN* (4 July 1868), 21.

Fig.13: “‘Statue of Caractacus’ By Foley, To be placed in the Egyptian Hall’. *ILN* (13 August 1859), 1.



Fig.1: 'Scene from the New Burlesque of "The Enchanted Isle," at the Adelphi Theatre *ILN* (2 December, 1848), 352.



Fig.2: *Cassandra warns the Trojans Their Fate and is Not Believed.*  
Bernard Picart (1731).



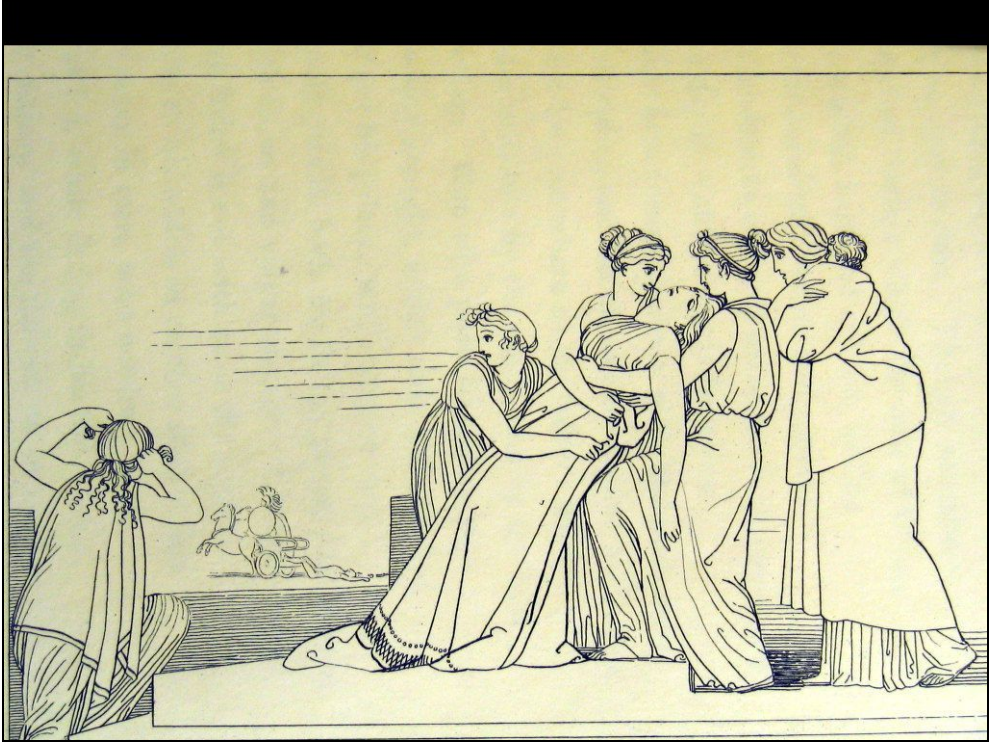


Fig. 3: *Andromache Fainting on a Wall*. John Flaxman (1792-3).



Fig. 4: *Lady Hamilton as Cassandra*. George Romney (1785-6)



Fig.5: *Cassandra Raving*. Henry Fuseli.



Fig.6: *Cassandra*. Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1861, 67).



Fig.7: *Cassandra*. Frederick Sandys (ca. 1895).



Fig.8: *Cassandra*. Evely de Morgan. (1898).



Fig.9: *The Boys* (1891).

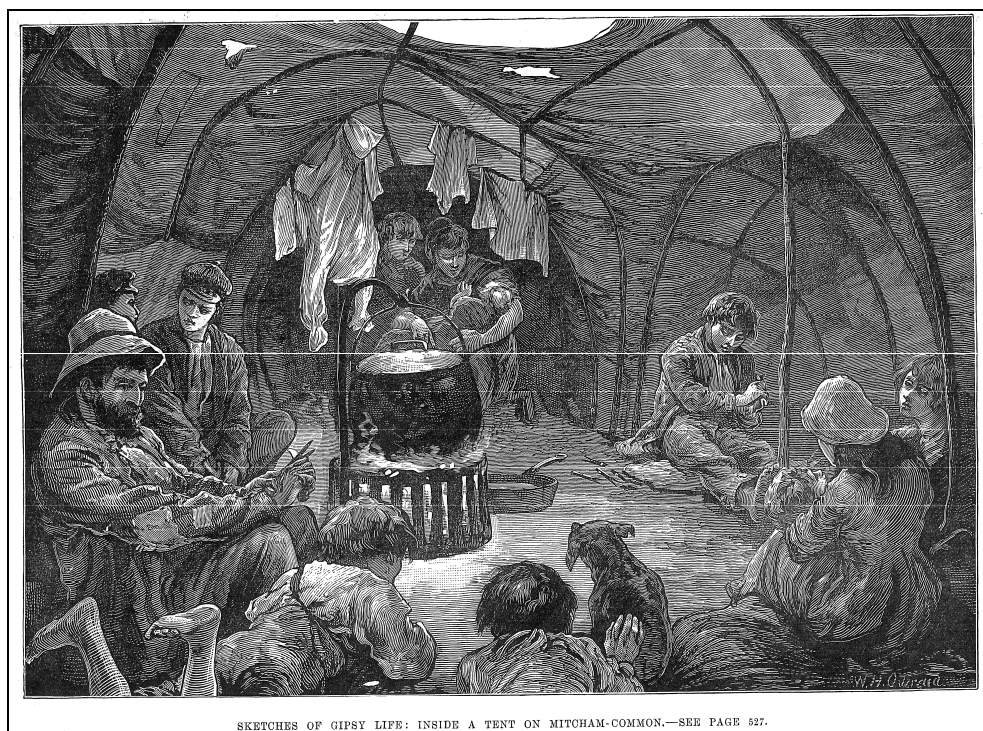


Fig.10: 'Sketches of Gipsy Life: Inside a Tent on Mitcham-Common' *ILN* (6 December 1879), 528.



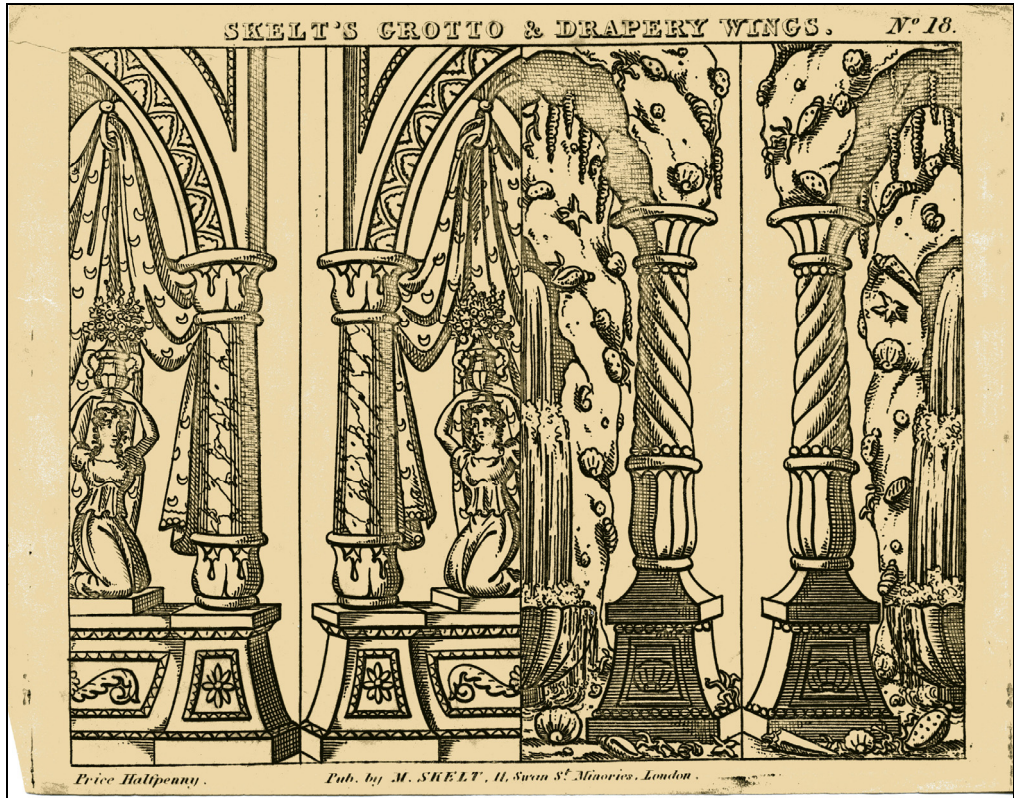


Fig. 11: *Skelts Grotto & Drapery Wings* (ca.1890s). Scenery sketch for juvenile drama.



Fig.12: 'Interior of the Aquarium' *ILN* (4 July 1868), 21.



Fig.13: “Statue of Caractacus” By Foley, To be placed in the Egyptian Hall’ . *ILN* (13 August 1859), 1



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