Aura Satz

Tableaux Vivants: Inside the Statue

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Slowness

Gary Stevens, *Slow Life*, Matt's Gallery, London, 2002 (figure 7.1)

You are watching a video showing people engaged in the most inane of daily activities – walking up the stairs, browsing through the pages of a book, sipping a cup of tea. They are immersed in a slowness which seems almost impossible to sustain; one suspects it is the trickery of cinematic slow motion, and yet they are live, this is filmic documentation, not filmic frame-by-frame dissection. They are still lives, slow lives, performing real time, as we gather from the subtle yet excruciating sound of a rustling plastic bag or a creaky floor, or the natural rhythm at which the smoke billows. There is no extended space in-between the film frames, no hair flowing like algae or people falling to the ground with graceful weightlessness. Every impassive gesture is measured and controlled. Their blank expressions are sharpened by the look of concentration: they do not pretend to do something, they are engrossed in the miniscule action of slowly reaching for a book or bringing the rim of a cup to their mouths. These are live photographic stills which shift into micro-choreography. Focus on one actor, and during your distraction the others will have imperceptibly shifted. The performers refer to nothing outside themselves; they barely acknowledge each other, and are oblivious to their surroundings, except for the focused object of their action. Slowness requires facial paralysis, the absent look that tends to overcome dancers engrossed in their bodily choreographies, the deadpan expression which neutralises facial emotion or physical exertion. The performers here are not entranced, nor is the performance itself entrancing in its

rhythm. It is an almost unsustainable pace, and yet it is sustained by the concentrated isolation of each gesture. This does not document the everyday, but rather painfully extends it to exist in another isolated realm. There is no narrative, as each infinitesimal indication of change is a kind of event, a shift in gear without actual acceleration or deceleration. If you stand next to the performers' live or projected presence, your spectatorial standing-still might seem a contagious emulation of their slowness.[1] You are *both* a part of this slow life. Twitch a finger, however, scratch yourself, smile or frown at normal speed and you are suddenly fast-forwarded, catapulted into the future of a different speed of light. You have become choreographically and chronologically distinct from them.

Déjà vu

Gregor Schneider, *Die Familie Schneider*, Artangel Commission, London, 2004 (figure 7.2)

In a small East London street, you are invited to walk into one of two identical buildings, while your viewing partner is in the other house. You have exactly ten minutes each. As you timidly explore this stifling building, you encounter the members of this disturbingly dysfunctional family. They stand trapped in the timeless repetition of a minimal gesture: washing the dishes, masturbating in the shower, hiding inside a black bin-bag. They are all self-contained, self-absorbed, withdrawn. The mother caresses the plate with an absent gaze and, should you try and interfere, ask a question, look at her, touch her, she shrinks back, turns away, removes herself. You cannot exist but as voyeur. The format of so much contemporary live art is

1   Alongside the five-screen video-installation there were also two live enactments of *Slow Life*. See 'Working Blind', a transcript of email conversation between Gary Stevens and Paul Bonaventura, to accompany the exhibition *Slow Life* at Matt's Gallery, London, in 2002.

interaction with the audience, a unique feeling of the here-and-now of liveness, its irreproducibility, its distinct mode of accosting and inflicting itself upon the viewer: I am the present, look at me, I'll stare straight back. Here however, there is a strange play on the repeat performance, the déjà vu not only of the performer's daily routine, but also of the understudy, the next performer's re-interpretation or re-incarnation of the same role. For when you enter the second house you are presented with a second viewing, indistinguishable from the first. The performers are identical twins, and you are now in the knowledge that your unique event is in fact occurring simultaneously right next door. Their double-life suddenly sucks you into your possible double-life, colliding in an overwhelming sense of the uncanny, the familiar defamiliarised. Their performative withdrawal, autistic almost, excludes you, yet draws you in. You watch, waiting for something to happen. Nothing changes, so you move on at your own pace, probing the next performer with your inquisitive gaze, trying to enter the picture without becoming it, trying to see without being seen. Or maybe this time round try a different tactic, try to be seen, ask a question, move closer, only to be sharply withdrawn and shut out from their space – they stare away, or tighten the bin-bag grasp – an invisible wall wedges its way through between you and them.

Schneider states that 'For a long time now ... I have wanted to show a dead person in a museum ... in a natural way and just for a few hours'. While drawing up a legal document that might one day permit someone to donate their body to this artistic purpose Schneider has been substituting his own body by 'lying on the ground without moving – not sleeping – for hours on end. Very, very difficult.'[2] Is a cadaver the ultimate equivalent of the bare minimum of activity? This insignificant level of performativity does something to the space, to the performer, to the viewer. It magically transforms nothing, or very little, into something. The very act of looking and being looked at

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2   Gregor Schneider quoted in 'Profile' by Ossian Ward, in *Art Review* 64 (October 2004), p. 104. Schneider has himself featured in his 'non'-performances, hiding in a bin bag for seven hours at a time, in a piece evocatively entitled 'The Biggest Wank'. See also Gregor Schneider, *Die Familie Schneider* (London and Göttingen: Artangel and SteidlMack, 2004).

becomes the central event. This minimal performance sucks you in and spews you out, but theoretically you could also ignore it. You are the one who is alive, who moves, who acts, while 'it' takes place oblivious of you, ignoring you whilst desperately seeking your attention. It offers itself like some kind of dead object to be gawped at, the scene of an accident or a crime, invisibly taped off, a tableau in which every detail might be a clue to its past or future narrative, an untouchable realm which, if entered and tampered with, might irreversibly change the course of past and future events. No, your role is simply to watch, you are contracted to provide a gaze which justifies this scene, brings it to life, although, of course, it holds its breath, remaining still and silent, barely alive in this coffin of a house.

Endurance

Vanessa Beecroft, *VB47*, Peggy Guggenheim collection, Venice, Italy, 2001 (figure 7.3)[3]

A uniform army of naked high-heeled women stand in a gallery. Their faces are blank, masked by skin-coloured spheres the shape of a head: featureless, eyeless, their looking is barely discernable through the canvas-like headpiece. They look like the mannequins of a metaphysical de Chirico painting. Some stand facing us, others eventually melt onto the floor, or sink into the gallery's white sofa, the directionality of their 'facing' only vaguely decipherable. The orderly lines they initially formed gradually disintegrate, and in the reconfigurations of their bodies their faces sometimes appear to face a painting, as if looking, although they seem to be constantly slipping into some other activity. We see them as a living painting or statue, though never quite still enough, a statue engaged in the act of appearing to look without having a gaze. Beecroft claims the inspiration for this per-

3   The video and photos of the live performance were shown as part of the *Form Follows Fiction* exhibition at Castello Di Rivoli Museum in Turin, Italy, 2001.

formance, perhaps the most blatantly iconographic (although others
have been loosely based on a Canova, Botticelli or a Pre-Raphaelite
painting, using wigs and fashionable costume), came from De Chi-
rico's painting *Il Ritorno di Ulisse* (1968), where a young man rows a
boat inside a furnished room.[4] The models are there to be looked at,
whilst they themselves seem to be caught in a strange act of looking-
not-looking in relation to both the paintings of the Guggenheim col-
lection that surround them, and the supposed spectators of the per-
formance. In this living picture there is a faint original lurking some-
where, but it is constantly dissolved in a pose that is stretched out until
it wanes, the bodies too weak to bear its stillness. Hiring models to
pose in the costumes and arrangements she masterminds, Beecroft's
figures appear mostly naked or semi-naked, wearing their signature,
fetishistic high heels. Her dictums are usually along the lines of 1. do
not move; 2. do not talk; 3. do not interact with the audience, or, as
another writer paraphrases: 'Don't talk, don't fall down, don't move
too fast, don't move too slow ... Don't act'.[5] The duration of stillness
is protracted to its extreme limits, usually lasting for around three
hours. Beecroft draws attention to the structures of looking more than
to the looker or looked at, forcing her performers as much as her
spectators into shameful spectatorship and exhibitionism. This immo-
bile deadlock is constantly destabilised in awkward non-narrative (and
non-iconographic) pose-shifting, heightened by the difficult balan-
cing-act of prolonged standing in high heels. Movements become
more of a crumbling of a pose than an actual shift in position (or, to
use a Kleistian turn of phrase, the force pulling them down is stronger
than the force holding them up, and true standing seems to take place
in the midst of falling). In most of Beecroft's other performances, the
faces are highly visible: some stare vacantly, glazed; others shift their
eyes, nervously avoiding eye-contact. Naked and anonymous look-
alikes of one another, they appear trapped in the endurance test of a

4   Vanessa Beecroft interview with Massimiliano Tonelli in *Exibart*, published
     online at http://www.exibart.com/Notizia.asp/IDNotizia/2574/IDCategoria/75
     (accessed on 22 June 2006).
5   Collier Schorr, cited on the artist's website http://www.vanessabeecroft.com/
     (accessed on 22 June 2006); see also *Parkett* 56 (1999).

waiting room, an unending *tableau vivant* that never truly crystallises, never truly stiffens into its iconographic 'original', if it has one. They start by standing, bodies swaying in the effort of an uprightness rooted in such a small pedestal, a pointed heel. When they tire they crouch, sit, lay on the ground. The tableau eventually wears itself out, disintegrates.[6] We know little of the posers other than what their subtle choreography exposes: defiance, awkward discomfort, embarrassment, fidgety boredom, fatigue or even pain (which might find equivalents in the audience, in addition to fascination, embarrassment, outrage). It is hard to fixate what exactly immobilises; why it does so; whose desire it is gratifying (a male audience? Beecroft? the art world?). Above all, Beecroft's performances tend to highlight the body's *resistance* to *tableaux vivants* whilst using it as the framework. Her models constantly sway, stretch, re-adjust, as though there were no ideal shape, no possible stillness or image. The models are constantly 'out of focus', as it were (though clearly not so in the photographic documentation, which for this very reason betrays the tension inherent in the performances, stilling into image what in live performance refuses to become so). The body squirms, searching for a position it can't quite locate. The *pose* is constantly decom*posing*.

Appearance

Living pictures, better known as *tableaux vivants*, consist of people posing silently and motionlessly, in imitation of a painting or sculpture, existent or imaginary. It is not quite theatre – very little actually happens – nor is it easily categorised as visual art. Something else appears and occurs, something which questions object-hood, citation

6   In *VB48* and *VB54* Beecroft used black models, and painted them a dark uniform 'minstrel-style' black that eventually smudged and smeared itself over the walls or the floor on which they leaned, thus decomposing not only the pose but also the body's surface. See Marcella Beccaria, *Vanessa Beecroft: Performances 1993–2003* (Milan: Skira, 2003).

and authorship. It might be termed sculptural choreography and performative withdrawal. The three examples of contemporary live (or documented) performance described above, illustrate three main principles of the *tableau vivant*: firstly, that it represents a *slowing down* or crystallisation of a moment in time, a stillness never quite still enough; secondly, that this deceleration or hardening implies a repetition of sorts, it implicitly alludes to an event, a time, a space, a picture, an author, outside of itself, trapped in a déjà vu (from the French 'already seen', or a strange recollection of having-seen even at first sight); and thirdly, that the *tableau vivant* is an *endurance* test and a mode of enduring for the living body, hardening into the rigor mortis of the *tableau mort*, so to speak, without truly dying. The living picture lacks articulation (vocal, physical and narrative), it has ossified into rigor mortis, and if and when it slackens, this is only so as to shift into the next pose, the next statue, or to snap out of it and back to normal fluid life. The *tableau vivant* is in fact a temporary cadaver, a presence which has densified into object, like an outmoded, unusable, damaged utensil, to quote Maurice Blanchot, which, 'no longer disappearing in its use, appears'.[7] Something becomes visible in this interruption of the flowing choreography of life – the performance-as-object fixes, solidifies, frames into visibility, congeals into sculpture. This perceptible choreographic change of rhythm will be the guiding principle of this paper. The focus will be on the actual live performance of the *tableau vivant* (not its second stilling as photograph, painting or sculpture), and the peculiar moments in the relentless stream of history, notably the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in which it crystallises as an artistic practice. Let us embark on the task of trying to recover those disappeared moments of 'appearance'. We will attempt to flashback to the déjà vu of past *tableaux vivants*.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* presents many examples of bodies hardening and inanimate objects coming to life. These two morphological states are exemplified by the figures of Niobe (see figure 7.4), turned into stone as punishment for her maternal conceits, and the ivory

7   Maurice Blanchot, 'Two Versions of the Imaginary', in *The Gaze of Orpheus and Other Literary Essays*, ed. A. Sitney, trans. G. Hartman (New York: Station Hill Press, 1981), pp. 79–89, p. 84.

statue brought to life in response to the yearning of its maker, Pygmalion. The one is a death penalty, a fearful petrification; the other a reward, a birth of sorts, a freeing from the constraints of the pedestal. Both remain silent, 'speaking' through the body's composition, as is expected of inanimate matter. Niobe's anguish itself immobilises her, before she is physically turned into stone, so that her metamorphosis is quite seamless. Frozen in grief, her eyes 'stare in an expression of fixed sorrow', and her pride is acoustically stifled, 'even inside her, her tongue clove to her palate and froze into silence'. Yet still she weeps, even as a mountainous rock. An interiority is evoked, one which is trapped in the hardened shell of stone. Likewise, we are told of the ivory statue's symptoms of animation surfacing from within: she feels a kiss and blushing, 'timidly raises her eyes' to see her lover.[8] Both metamorphoses provide ample material for the silent performance of statuary, offering the empathetic actor not only the preceding narrative for the moment of animation or de-animation, but also countless art historical iconographies to emulate. One might re-phrase Psalm 135:18 into 'Like them be those who look at them'. Idolatry resurfaces as theatrical technique. But there is a complication in the performer's proprioceptive act of looking, this contagious vision which transforms one into the subject/object of sight. In imitation of the object, one must surrender subjecthood, and to do so must withdraw sight, glaze over like the punctured yet blind eyes of marble statues. This self-made statuary offers its stilled body to the gaze of the spectator, facilitating a more brazen unreciprocated view. The immobile body does not look back, nor does it see itself. To re-contextualise Walter Benjamin, this would entail a willing abdication of the uniqueness of aura, a human original shedding itself in order to become blind copy:

8   Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. M.M. Innes (London: Penguin books, 1955), book VI: 267–312, p. 142, and book X: 243–97, pp. 231–2. Interestingly, the narrative that precedes the Pygmalion story is one of Niobe-like petrification, in which the first prostitutes, shameless unblushing women, are turned to stone as punishment. Pygmalion's sculpture appears as an undoing of this lascivious womanhood.

looking at someone carries the implicit expectation that our look will be returned by the object of our gaze. Where this expectation is met ... there is an experience of aura to the fullest extent ... Experience of the aura thus rests on the transposition of a response common in human relationships to the relationship between inanimate or natural object and man. The person we look at, or who feels he is being looked at, looks at us in turn. To perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return.[9]

In becoming inanimate object, the seeing person folds inwards into another realm which excludes the viewer, denying their gaze whilst allowing them to look. Becoming statue thus implies a voluntary blindness. The frozen poser could be said to physically incarnate both the camera and the photograph, recording 'likeness without returning ... [the] gaze'.[10] Absorbed in emulating the object of sight, one ceases to see, and presence is withdrawn to enable object-hood to appear. The sculptor Pygmalion's yearning is precisely for presence to appear within the ivory statue, a longing for her look to acknowledge him in a reciprocation both tactile and visual (though not verbal). In this sense the term pygmalionism, used to define the erotomania of falling in love with statues, is something of a misnomer.[11] Pygmalionism is in fact the love of the statue as statue, not as object brought to life, and stimulation is derived from the simultaneously empowering and debilitating fact of being coldly ignored.[12] What then must one make of those who willingly offer themselves as a statue? Who is doing the stilling? Does this inarticulate withdrawal into the silence of the statue reflect an actual lack of voice, of authorship? Is there always a sculp-

9   Walter Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', in *Illuminations*, trans. H. Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 152–98, p. 184; 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, pp. 211–44, p. 217.
10   Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', p. 184.
11   Coined by Havelock Ellis in *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (1936). Cf. A Scobie, and A.J.W. Taylor, 'Perversions Ancient and Modern: I. Agalmatophilia, the statue syndrome', *Journal of the History of the Behavioural Sciences* 11 (January 1975), pp. 49–54.
12   This sexual pathology is sometimes associated with necrophilia, and might also be seen to be related to masochism, as in Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs* (1870), where the coldness of a statuesque marble body becomes the tortuous cruelty of the master who on occasions does not deign to even look at her adulating slave.

tor and a sculpture? Do artist, artwork and audience conflate, com-
pressed in one single body? We are told that women, more than men,
are historically the privileged species to oscillate between the mor-
phological states of hardness and softness, stillness and mobility,
pose/ place/pause and continuity. The predominant scholarship on the
Pygmalion myth situates it within the context of the misogyny and
desire of the sculpture's (male) maker, leading to a reiteration of the
outsider view of Pygmalion, not of the statue.[13] We are led to believe
that these living statues are forced into silent immobility by their
lookers, just as they are brought to life by their coveters. But why not
consider the possibility of their withdrawal into stillness as a volun-
tary act that restructures looking, that questions and extricates author-
ship and that can be thought of in alternative terms to those of the
petrifier and the petrified?

The willing desire to de-animate one's own body into self-made
statuary permeates eighteenth-century theatrical practice. Indeed, the
Pygmalion trope was becoming a popular feature in theatre, opera and
ballet, culminating in Rousseau's 1770 monodrama *Pygmalion*.[14] Eng-
lish and French writers would suggest that the actor look to pictorial
or sculptural artworks for inspiration.[15] Thus, in 1775 William Cooke

13   The most complete studies of the Pygmalion myth are Ana Rueda's *Pigmalion
      y Galatea: Refracciones Modernas de un Mito* (Madrid: Fundamentos, 1998)
      and Essaka Joshua, *Pygmalion and Galatea: The History of a Narrative in Eng-
      lish Literature* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2001). In relation to theatre,
      see Gail Marshall, *Actresses on the Victorian Stage: Feminine Performance
      and the Galatea Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). In these
      studies the direction of desire appears to be one way, from man to statuesque
      woman. Interestingly, Frances Borzello points to the strangely overemphasised
      fascination with the formula of male artists/female models, when historical evi-
      dence points to a more predominant use of male models, or indeed examples
      the reverse (female artist/male model). See *The Artist's Model* (London: Junc-
      tion Books, 1982), p. 15.
14   For a chronology of Pygmalion and Galatea performances throughout the ages,
      see Joshua. See also Leonard Barkan, '"Living Sculptures": Ovid, Michelangelo,
      and *The Winter's Tale*', *English Literary History* 48 (April 1981), pp. 639–67.
15   On the interaction between theatre and the visual arts, see Shearer West, *The
      Image of the Actor: Verbal and Visual Representation in the Age of Garrick
      and Kemble* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1991); Martin Meisel, *Realizations:*

suggested that male actors study the two Antinouses, the Hercules Farnese, the Apollo Belvedere, the Apollo de Medicis, the Caracalla, the Fighting and Dying Gladiators, whilst women should look to the Venus de Medicis, the Venus de Calipaedia, Diana, Flora and the Graces.[16] These iconographic examples of classical art are themselves charged with mythological narrative, recalling Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's account of the 'pregnant moment' in *Laocoön* (1766), in which past, present and future narratives are overlaid. Following a tradition epitomised by the famous actor David Garrick, who at climactic moments would freeze in 'statuesque attitude, as if waiting for the applause to die down', theatrical tableaux became a popular technique of expressing the pathos of the scene with heightened intensity.[17] In 1757, Diderot wrote of the perfect play in terms of a succession of crystallised tableaux, like a gallery or exhibition, and contrasted the stasis of the tableau to the *coup de théâtre*, the sudden movement or change in the situation of the characters.[18] Although not a *tableau vivant* in the strictest sense, the theatrical tableau drew greatly from the visual arts, and would have served as a memorable pause, a coagulation of attention, a visual hiatus in the constant flow of perception. As Roland Barthes writes: 'The tableau (pictorial, theatrical, literary) is a pure cut-out segment with clearly defined edges,

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Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

16 William Cooke, *The Elements of Dramatic Criticism* (London: Kearsly, Robinson, 1775), pp. 200–1.

17 Joseph Roach, *The Players Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1985), p. 69.

18 Denis Diderot, 'Entretiens sur le fils naturel', in *Œuvres: Esthétique-Théâtre*, vol. 4 (Paris: Robert Lafonte, 1996), pp. 1132–90; see Jay Caplan, *Framed Narratives: Diderot's Genealogy of the Beholder* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986). Theatricality, in Michael Fried's reading of Diderot, can be systematically negated through the representation of profound self-absorption, which would therefore make the *tableau vivant* a perfectly non-theatrical event. Like the subject of the painting who ignores his or her beholder, the performer of the *tableau vivant* is completely absorbed in his or her own thoughts, actions and emotions. Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and the Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

irreversible and incorruptible; everything that surrounds it is banished into nothingness, remains unnamed, while everything that it admits within its field is promoted into essence, into light, into view'.[19] The hieroglyphic tableau must be perceptible in one effortless glance, absorbable in one bite, from one position of spectatorship, in a short amount of time, just enough to etch itself in one's memory and mould the stream of narrative into image. For, unlike the static temporality of the statue or painting, the living human body is a weak carrier of such condensed narrative, it cannot sustain the intensity of the past/present/future (nor, perhaps, of the copy) for too long.

The briefly climactic duration of the theatrical tableau is stretched out in the immobile *tableau vivant*, which remains autonomous, unframed within a greater narrative.[20] However, it too cannot last longer than several minutes at the most, unless it is returned to a state of *tableau mort*, as it were, painted, sculpted or photographed back into durable stillness.[21] An alternation of the choreographies of stillness and movement unfolds. Think of the street theatre of living statues, waiting for an unknowing passer-by to startle whilst easing the body into the next tableau, or grateful for the coins which bail it out of one restricted position into the next. A curious negotiation of the gaze is acted out: if you walk past me without acknowledging my stillness, I will move my stillness to stop you in your steps, immobilise you in a jerk of fright; if you recognise my stillness, pay me and I will change positions, move so as to reiterate my stillness for your gaze only. When looking at sculpture on the pedestal, the spectator is free to move around it, getting closer to afford a more detailed view,

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19   Roland Barthes, 'Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein', in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. S. Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 69–78, p. 70.

20   The term 'tableau vivant' was coined in 1838, before that it was referred to as 'tableaux mis en action' or 'tableaux fugitifs'. Bernard Vouilloux, 'Le Tableau Vivant, un Genre Ambigu', *48/14 La Revue du Musée d'Orsay* (2000), pp. 44–55, p. 45.

21   Exhibitions on the theme tend to focus on this photographic stilling. Cf. Quentin Bajac, *Tableaux Vivants: Fantaises Photographiques Victoriennes (1840–1880)*, exhibition catalogue, Musée d'Orsay, 1999; Sabine Folie and Michael Glasmeier, *Tableaux Vivants: Lebende Bilder und Attitüden in Fotografie, Film und Video*, exhibition catalogue (Vienna: Kunsthalle, 2002).

or further away to consider the overall impression. If, on the other hand, it is the audience who are immobilised in their viewing seats, the stage must offer some form of commotion before the viewers turn upon themselves in patterns of disquiet. This is the theatrical weakness of the *tableau vivant*, it *must* shift and change, however slowly, or else the gaze wanders astray. Not only does the spectator look away, but the performer enacting the sculpture or painting also suffers from this painful inactivity and confinement – it tingles, twitches, itches, blinks, aches. The body cannot tolerate such prolonged immobility.

Yet, the body in painful stillness can also be the body that stills itself in pain. 'Pain suspends the desire to move', wrote the philosopher Etienne Bonnot, the Abbé de Condillac in 1754, describing his hypothetical statue which is gradually thawed out to activity by sensations triggered by the external world.[22] Pleasure and pain are the deciding principles in the sculpture's acquisition of sensation. Curiosity would motivate it to mobility: '[The statue] totters, it walks, leaning against everything that can help it to stay up; it falls, it hurts itself, and feels pain anew. It does not dare get up, it scarcely dares move: the fear of pain offsets the hope of pleasure ...' Pain would delay the process of animation. Had the initial positioning of the statue been paralysing enough, 'movement would have ceased to be a pleasure for it and it would have remained immobile'.[23] Like a toddling child, the sculpture discovers verticality and the possibility of locomotion, but interestingly, the stillness characteristic of inanimate sculpture becomes associated with fear, not unlike those petrified by Medusa's gaze. Garrick had described the same effect in theatrical terms, stating that Macbeth's fear caused a kind of spasmodic paralysis of the limbs, making the actor 'a moving statue, or indeed a petrified man'.[24] The stationary inanimate is suddenly analogous to a pained

22   Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, 'A Treatise on the Sensations' (1754), in *Philosophical Writings of Etienne Bonnot, Abbé de Condillac*, trans. F. Philip (London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1982), pp. 154–339, p. 155. Cf. J.L. Carr, 'Pygmalion and the *Philosophes*: The Animated Statue in Eighteenth-Century France', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 23 (1960), pp. 235–55.
23   Condillac, pp. 240–1.
24   David Garrick, *Essay on acting* (1744), cited in Roach, p. 90.

body, deeply paralysed in fear. *It dare not move*. Like the tearful standstill of Niobe, the geological genealogy of the statue is a silenced suffering, a fearful petrification, a painful paralysis. Such an assumption throws new light on the symptoms of animation that characterise miraculous images which bleed, sweat, weep, etc. These exoskeletal outer shells imply a living, fluid interiority which seeps out. It is as though, to paraphrase Kenneth Gross, the signs of life take on the form of a wound.[25]

One might view the tableau vivant as a defensive cocoon, a protective armouring of the body which safeguards its amorphous interior and gives fixed shape to liquid shapelessness. Just as Diderot's tableau is a coagulation of the articulation of narrative, the *tableau vivant* as living picture is in fact an inarticulate pause in life. To enact a *tableau vivant* is to sustain stiff and silent immobility until the body melts back into flexibility, imparting the brief impression of animation, which, in truth, is only the after-effect of intense de-animation (without dying). Perhaps, to follow Steven Connor, 'petrifaction is sovereign against putrefaction',[26] the *pose* becomes a *pause* in the general process of ageing, dying, disintegrating. The *tableau vivant* might be read as a self-imposed incorruption – 'hardening suggests not just fatality but survival'.[27] Becoming-object is a mode of slowing down, of enduring, of surviving, of halting the ravages of time.

But it is also a mode of remembering, of déjà vu. The supposed originator of the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century mania for *tableaux vivants* was Emma Hart, companion to Sir William Hamilton, the English Ambassador in Naples, whom she eventually married in 1791. In March 1787, Goethe describes Emma enacting the stillness of a statue or painting for her admiring future spouse, sustaining each pose or 'attitude' long enough for the viewer to absorb her, unravel the *mise-en-abîme*, the multiplied view of the living, breathing Emma,

25   Kenneth Gross, *The Dream of the Moving Statue* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 86.

26   Steven Connor, 'Fascination, Skin and the Screen', *Critical Quarterly* 40 (January 1998), pp. 9–24, p. 13.

27   Gross, p. 19.

the painting or sculpture she was posing as, and the mythological, biblical or historical scene the image represented. Once these various discernments were grasped, she could shift to the next tableau. This condensed view of original, prototype, and copy had to be pried apart, stratified by the observer. The duration of the tableau was thus pre-scribed by the process of recognition and recollection, not only by physical stamina. The past tense of the already-seen image would intrude into the present in this erudite game of charades. Or maybe, to recall Benjamin, the fleeting rhythm of the *tableau vivant* is due to a newfound propensity toward replication, by nature impermanent: 'Uniqueness and permanence are as closely linked [to the original image] as are transitoriness and reproducibility [to the reproduction or copy]'.[28] One of the main novelties of Lady Hamilton's act was this process of iconographic identification. The moment the copy is recog-nised, the next copy can appear, silently asking the question 'who am I?' all over again. The original Emma retracts into the copy, enabling the image to surface, whilst she herself withdraws. There is no climac-tic spellbinding instant in which she comes to life, but rather the strange moments in which she switches off, glazes over, becomes the image. Defying Pygmalion's yearning, here *the sculpture never ac-tually comes to life*, it merely becomes another statue. The spell is fi-nally undone when the performance ends. Goethe's account of Emma's performance reads her attitude-posing as a response to Sir William's enthusiasm,[29] but there are more interesting readings to be found than her victimisation by the male gaze.[30] Emma's main in-

28   Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', p. 217.
29   Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, entry from Caserta, 16 March 1787, *Italian Journey*, trans. Robert R. Heitner (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 170–1. Goethe writes that Emma is 'an art object' in whom Sir William 'sees all the antiquities, all the beautiful profiles on Sicilian coins, even the Apollo Belvedere himself!'
30   This is the prevailing reading of the practice of *tableaux vivants*, which, al-though partly true, seems somewhat reductive and does not account for the more varied performances of living statues enacted by men, such as those of Andrew Ducrow. On male performers see A.H. Saxon, *The Life and Art of An-drew Ducrow and the Romantic Age of the English Circus* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1978), p. 152 and Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 342–9.

spiration was classical statuary (often drawn from her husband's collection), vase painting, the ancient paintings of Pompeii and even modern neoclassical works. Unaccountably, alongside the (male?) profiles on coins, Goethe evokes (through the eyes of William Hamilton, who in turn spotlights Emma) the masculine and semi-naked sculpture of the Apollo Belvedere. Disparate images project onto her like a slide-show, she crystallises each image only briefly, and can adopt any persona or gender, remaining herself intact. And just as she emulates works of art, in a complex permutation of copies and originals, she is then captured in paintings reproducing her attitudes. Lady Hamilton was a popular artists' model already in her youth, posing for George Romney as Circe, Sybil, Saint Cecilia, Lady Macbeth and so forth, and became even more in demand as a result of her statue-posing, later portrayed by women artists such as Angelica Kauffman and Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun.

The Comtesse de Boigne, who was far from being an admirer of Emma, could not help but praise her attitudes. Her description of a performance is illuminating in that it details the method of framing with the shawl, the audience reaction, as well as the experience of being within a tableau, something Lady Hamilton did not impart:

Most of these Pygmalion readings follow from Laura Mulvey's 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', and John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, in which women are constructed as passive objects to be seen by a male gaze. See Mary Chapman, 'Living Pictures, Women and *Tableaux Vivants* in Nineteenth Century American Fiction and Culture', *Wide Angle* 18 (March 1996), pp. 22–52; Robert M. Lewis, '*Tableaux Vivants*: Parlor Theatricals in Victorian America', *Revue Française d'Études Américaines* 36 (1988), pp. 280–91; David Nolta 'The Body of the Collector and the Collected Body in William Hamilton's Naples', *Eighteenth Century Studies* 31 (January 1997), pp. 108–14, p. 112; Jennie A. Kassanoff, 'Extinction, Taxidermy, Tableaux Vivants: Staging Race and Class in *The House of Mirth*', *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 115 (January 2000), pp. 60–74; and Robin Veder, 'Tableaux Vivants: Performing Art, Purchasing Status', *Theatre Annual: A Journal of Performance Studies* 48 (1995), pp. 14–29. Marshall in particular discusses the Galatea aesthetic of the Victorian actress in her negotiation with statuesque metaphors, as a visual/sexual commodity.

She threw a shawl over her head which reached the ground and covered her entirely, and thus hidden, draped herself with the other shawls. Then she suddenly raised the covering, either throwing it off entirely or half raising it, and making it form part of the drapery of the model which she represented. But she always appeared as a statue of most admirable design ...

I have sometimes acted with her as a subordinate figure to form a group. She used to place me in the proper position, and arrange my draperies before raising the shawl, which served as a curtain enveloping us both. My fair hair contrasted with her magnificent black hair, to which many of her effects were due.

One day she placed me on my knees before an urn, with my hands together in an attitude of prayer. Leaning over me, she seemed lost in grief, and both of us had our hair dishevelled. Suddenly rising and moving backward a little, she grasped me by the hair with a movement so sudden that I turned round in surprise and almost in fright, which brought me precisely into the spirit of my part, for she was brandishing a dagger. The passionate applause of the artists who were looking on resounded with exclamations of 'Brava, Medea!' Then drawing me to her and clasping me to her breast as though she were fighting to preserve me from the anger of Heaven, she evoked loud cries of 'Viva, la Niobe!'

She took her inspiration from the antique statues, and without making any servile copy of them, recalled them to the poetical imagination of the Italians by improvised gesture. Others have tried to imitate Lady Hamilton's talent, but I doubt if anyone has succeeded. It is a business in which there is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous. Moreover, to equal her success, the actor must be first of faultless beauty from head to foot, and such perfection is rare.[31]

Note the surprise of the Comtesse, who from within her static pose is caught unaware by a sudden movement of liveness that causes immobilised fright. Her fear is appropriate to her role, as she learns from the audience's cry of recognition. From the pose of a furious Medea about to murder her child – vocally identified by the audience and therefore perishable – Emma transforms into a protective Niobe, battling to save her children. The Comtesse as vulnerable child remains within the tableau, unknowing, blind, invisible to herself as both statue and iconography. She is positioned by Lady Hamilton, but must decipher her stage manager's gestures as much as her own. Indeed, in the following century the practice of *tableaux vivants* evolved into the game

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31   Hugh Tours, *The Life and Letters of Emma Hamilton* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963), p. 91.

of charades, as though the essence of the performance of stillness were guesswork.

Emma's use of the veil as sculptural element which both hides and renders visible each attitude functions parallel to the pedestal, in that it frames the image, allows it to set as the ethereal billowing solidifies into a sculpture-like composition.[32] One can imagine its final draping as the moment the poser solidifies as 'image', when all movement has been deflated, a skin-like stole that settles over the ossified body. In the account of the Comtesse, hair functions almost as an additional veil or membrane that settles into pose, a malleable prop which is styled into fixity. The *tableau vivant* is incomplete without a framing device of some sort or another. In May 1787, Goethe describes the set-up used by the Hamiltons when Emma enacted paintings, rather than sculptures. He tells of how Sir William took them down to a secret vault where he saw an open-fronted box painted black inside and surrounded by a gold frame big enough to take a person standing upright.[33] The silent picture is a zooming-in of sorts, a focussing which segregates from the flow of everyday life, which frames stillness, traps movement. Like Diderot's fourth wall, the veil, pedestal, or frame isolates and encloses the living statue from the rest of its surroundings. It enables the poser to ignore the spectator and fold inwards, engulfed in her or his oblivious gaze.

This suction effect excludes linear narrative. In the tableau vivant one crystallised instant morphs into the next in serial discontinuity, with no necessary narrative connection between them other than that

32   Kirsten Gram Holström speculates that Emma was inspired by the practice in sculptor's studios of covering clay models so as to keep them damp or perhaps to conceal the unfinished work from inquisitive eyes. She also relates it to Rousseau's *Pygmalion*, where the removal of the veil which conceals the statue of Galatea is an effective dramatic gesture. See *Monodrama, Attitudes, Tableaux Vivants: Studies on some Trends of Theatrical Fashion, 1770–1815* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1967), p. 115.

33   Goethe, entry from Naples, May 27 1787, in *Italian Journey*, pp. 261–2. This second entry concludes with his disenchantment with Lady Hamilton's insipid performances, particularly in light of the fact that she lacks vocal qualities in her singing. Her beauty does not compensate for her lack of talent, and Goethe finds her silent posing vulgarly common compared to the rarity of a 'pleasant speaking voice'.

of a body changing pose, which could eventually become dance. In her novel *The Volcano Lover*, Susan Sontag fictionalises Emma's attitudes as a non-dance in which the body is loose to float up, drift down, settle in a 'flurry of grimaces, tightening of tendons, stiffening of hands, head rocketing back or to the side, sharp intake of breath. [...] But don't move. Don't ... move. This is not dance. You are not a proto-Isadora Duncan in freeze frame, for all your bare feet and Greek Costume and loose limbs and unbound hair. Illustrate the passion. But as a statue'.[34] Neither dance nor theatre, but *micro-choreographic sculpture*. This short-lived pregnant moment of narrative has no need to develop further, rewind nor fast-forward, for it contains the entire story itself.

The three principles of the *tableau vivant* identified earlier – slowness, déjà vu and endurance – intermittently punctuate the eighteenth century, but seem to finally combine in a perfect constellation during the nineteenth century. The slowness of *tableaux vivants* was perhaps a soothing contrast to the increasing mobility and speed of nineteenth-century life in the cities, the unruly swarms of crowds, the curious patterns of movement between the distracted, detached and alienated gaze of the peripatetic *flâneur* and the immobile or glittering refractions of the displays of the arcade and the department store that characterise modernity. The *tableau vivant* represents the opposite of the *flâneur*, who, as Baudelaire wrote, finds 'an immense joy ... in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite'.[35] The *flâneur* wanders aimlessly, viscously, moving through the crowd like a '*kaleidoscope* equip-

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34   Susan Sontag, *The Volcano Lover: A Romance* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992), pp. 145–6. Interestingly, on the one hand Sontag emphasises Emma Hart's objecthood in the Cavaliere's (Sir William's) collection, but on the other she states that she is not a victim, that she is not only a work of art or a model but also an artist (p. 149). Cf. Brigitte Peucker, 'Looking and Touching: Spectacle and Collection in Sontag's *Volcano Lover*', *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 11 (January 1998), pp. 159–65; Stacy Olster, 'Remakes, Outtakes, and Updates in Susan Sontag's *The Volcano Lover*', *Modern Fiction Studies* 41 (January 1995), pp. 117–39.

35   Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life', in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1995), p. 9.

ped with consciousness', dodging its blows and collisions, allowing its nervous impulses to flow through him like the energy of a battery. He is a mirror to its thousand faces. The involuted poser of the *tableau vivant*, on the other hand, autistically withdraws from the flow, looks fixedly without seeing.

The already-seen, déjà vu effect can be read in light of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' progressive proliferation of copies and reproductions, from plaster casts of antique and renaissance statuary,[36] to wax death-masks immortalised in tableaux,[37] to the imminent birth of photography. The cast and the photograph, like the death-mask, represent an ossified second skin of sorts, a shedding of the surfaces of wax, plaster or light. Correspondingly, the performance of *tableaux vivants* adopted a cutaneous surface realism, as part of the more general developments in stage illusionism of the nineteenth century. Costume and skin began to merge to the point of disorientation, suggesting at once a tight second skin which could transform the body's tint or shape, or a stillness which made the skin appear so foreign, waxen, and sculptural that it almost resembled armour. Speculations in 1894 suggest a titillating confusion: 'what looks like flesh is in reality wax; the human figures being encased in a species of framework, excepting the head'. The same commentator remarked that the women wore 'little more than fleshings, with, in some cases, plaster moulds over the breast;' or 'a light sash, a filmy fluttering ribbon of white gauze, that only serve to emphasise the absence of clothing' and continued 'a woman clad only in a garment representing the bare skin … [is] a woman who is impersonating a naked woman …'.[38] In such

36   Casts had gradually proliferated throughout Europe since the Renaissance, but reached an apogee in 1794 with the establishment in Paris of the *atelier de moulage*, which produced copies of antique sculptures for museums and academies all over the world. See Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500–1900* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981).

37   Madame Tussaud's Museum was established in London in 1835. On waxwork displays see Altick, *The Shows of London*, pp. 50–63, 332–49.

38   The Reverand H.C. Shuttleworth, Charles Morton, Frederick A. Atkins and A.W. Pinero, from the symposium 'The Living Pictures', *The New Review* 2.11 (1894), pp. 461–70, p. 467, p. 469, p. 462. Here the question of living pictures

motionlessness, nudity attempted to circumvent pornography by making skin feign costume, and costume appear like draped skin. The second skin is by nature a negative/ positive imprint, a derivative copy which, in the *tableau vivant*, merges with its original.

The increasing realism of the live imitation of sculpture runs parallel with the developments of photography. The pre-photographic bodies of eighteenth-century *tableaux vivants* seem almost to prepare for the prolonged posing necessary to produce a portrait, and in this sense can be seen to both anticipate and then reiterate the invention of the daguerreotype in 1839. Like Niobe, the models of early photographic portraits were immobilised as an image before their photographic reproduction was complete. During the considerable period of exposure, the subject 'grew into the image'.[39] Daguerre's rival, William Henry Fox Talbot (who would accelerate the photographic process), noted in 1852: 'Lord Brougham assured me once that he sat for his Daguerreotype portrait half an hour in the sun and never suffered so much in his life'.[40] In order to avoid appearing out-of-focus, headrests and kneebraces, often caricatured as tortuous devices, were used to aid the body in its unbearably still photographic posing. Likewise a poser in a painting of John Singer Sargent writes in 1895:

> Being but an amateur model, I was easily entrapped into a trying pose, turning as if to walk away, with a general twist of the whole body and all the weight on one foot. Professional models will always try to poise the weight equally on both feet ... I managed pretty well on the whole, but the sittings cleared up a point which had long puzzled me: why did models occasionally faint during a

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is discussed in ways ranging from offensive impropriety to plain entertainment. For the controversial censorship of indecent *tableaux vivants* see Jack W. McCullough, *Living Pictures on the New York Stage* (Essex: Bowker Publishing Company, 1981). However, second skin was not merely a technique for the revelation of female flesh. Male performers such as Andrew Ducrow were also employing highly illusionistic techniques to render the body marble-like.

39   Walter Benjamin, 'A Small History of Photography', in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. E. Jephcott and K. Shorter (London: Verso, 1997), pp. 240–57, p. 245.

40   William Henry Fox Talbot in a letter to John Dillwyn Llewelyn, dated 21 May, 1852, online archive, http://www.foxtalbot.arts.gla.ac.uk/corresp/06616.asp?target=2#dag06616 (accessed on 22 June 2006).

long pose without mentioning that they were tired and wanted a rest? One day the answer came to me quite suddenly. I had been standing for over an hour and saw no reason why I should not go on for another hour, when I became aware of a cold wind blowing in my face accompanied by a curious 'going' at the knees. I tried to ask for a rest, but found that my lips were frozen stiff and refused to move. Hundreds of years passed – I suppose about twenty seconds.[41]

The poser proves incapable of sustaining the image he is about to become. He finds it strenuous to enact 'entrapped' movement whilst immobilised in an imbalance, lacking the support of a pedestal. He becomes the durational survival of the image, projected forward several centuries, time expanding through him to the point of vertiginous fainting. Speechless, he freezes into the portrait, so that the original becomes its copy. But then, overwhelmed by the potential loss of presence, he returns. The pose is unendurable. It falls upon the image to endure instead. The poser can only pause.

Which brings me to the principle of endurance. One can only imagine the excitement when the year 79 AD was discovered, 'imprinted' in bodily poses among the ruins of Pompeii. Bodies were gradually uncovered, or, more correctly, filled in, according to an innovative technique invented by Giuseppe Fiorelli around the 1860s. The ashes covering the dead after the volcanic eruption had hardened, and the bodies had rotted, leaving a hollow mould. Fiorelli poured plaster of Paris into these cavities, rendering plaster replicas of the final moments of the dead, copies not of other images but of actual moments of death, of genuine fossilisation into statue, or rather, the statue's negative. These hollow cadavers were solidified, re-skinned, fleshed out, sculpturally 'printed' into a positive image, to adopt photographic terminology. The *tableau vivant* of human suffering so poignantly represented in the mythical figure of Niobe suddenly spilled into the tableaux of historical truth. Although perhaps the posers of *tableaux vivants* were unaware of their re-enactment, their hardened bodies of which one must guess the original can be read as an act of homage to the citizens of Pompeii, an archeological, almost paleontological conundrum, it too requiring reconstruction.

41   W. Graham Robertson, himself a painter and illustrator, cited in Borzello, p. 38.

The *tableau vivant* concurrently presents a loss of the original prototype, and a proliferation of prototypes. Photography's inflation of images had made copyright legislation a matter of urgency by the late 1800s, and it comes as little surprise that owners of copyrighted images attempted to sue theatres staging *tableaux vivants*. This is, after all, plagiarism in the flesh. The performer camouflages his or her identity, assumes a variety of guises, and disappears, although remaining present. Imitation becomes embodiment, the poser becomes his portrait, the original becomes the copy, identity refracts into a game of charades. Who (or what) am I this time? asks the *tableau vivant*, voicelessly. As Arthur Symons wrote in 1894, during the final blaze of nineteenth-century statue-posing: 'A picture, for the most part, is an imitation of life, and a living picture is life imitating an imitation of itself, which seems a little roundabout'.[42] Where exactly *is* the original in this self-replicating production of copies? Like the miraculous *acheiropoietai* icons, the body of the *tableau vivant* itself produces an image 'not-made-by-human-hands', both questioning and extricating authorship. Not only 'who am I?', but 'who made me?', 'what stills me, and why?' it asks. The imitated original seems ever farther away, harder to grasp, whilst the authentic person living the statue stands there in a seizure, seizing an image other than themselves, literally 'caught in the act', as it were. The prototypical original of these *tableaux vivants* is a mummified, museumified, replica of *inanimation*, all the dead Niobes of the neoclassical world, the volcanised citizens of Pompeii, passing through the body of the living like a catatonic fit (see figure 7.5).[43]

Performance, according to Peggy Phelan, 'becomes itself through disappearance'. Once it enters the economy of reproduction, 'it be-

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42   Arthur Symons, 'The Living Pictures', *The New Review* 2 (November 1894), p. 464.
43   Coined by German psychologist Karl Kahlbaum in 1874, the term 'catatonia' (later subsumed into general schizophrenia) referred to a tensing of the muscles in a statuesque manner, accompanied by stupor, mutism and absence of movements.

trays and lessens the promise of its own ontology'.[44] Live perform-
ance has no copy, each repetition marks it as different, and its
documentation is in itself an alteration. The irreproducibility of per-
formance is subverted in the *tableau vivant*, where one might say the
performer *is* the copy, rendered startlingly original. The ephemeral
'tracelessness' of performance is brought to a standstill. Its relentless
present is paused in a timeless statue. In the midst of our inevitable
disappearance, the slipping away of both the live performance and the
life of the performer, the *tableau vivant* 'appears'.

After-Image

Like an accelerated cinematic animation, the technique of successive
tableaux vivants eventually occasioned a method of movement which
greatly informed the birth of American modern dance. François Del-
sarte (1811–1871) devised a system of dramatic expression which
used the 'becoming-statue' as a scientific technique. The edifying and
ennobled purpose of *tableaux vivants* was systematised in the Delsar-
tian method of movement, which took first France, then America by
storm.[45] In the 1870s, American Delsartianism became almost exclu-
sively a women's movement, enabling them to liberate their bodies
from the constrictions of Victorian society. Genevieve Stebbins'
major treatise, *The Delsarte System of Expression*, went through six
editions between 1885 and 1902, and the sixth and revised edition
included thirty-two full-page reproductions of photographs of classical
Greek sculpture. In her 'decomposing' exercises, aimed at attaining
physical flexibility, she describes the letting fall of the limbs 'as if
dead'. This leads eventually to the imitation of photographed statues

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44 Peggy Phelan, 'The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Repro-
    duction', in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London and New York:
    Routledge, 1993), p. 146.
45 According to Kassanoff, tableaux vivants duplicated original artworks based in
    Europe, and thus 'high art was democratised to yet another American commod-
    ity' (p. 66). Cf. Veder.

(yet another *mise-en-abîme* of copy and original), ranging from the frieze of the Parthenon, to Pallas Athene, Ariadne, the Fighting Gladiator, and so forth (without the aid of makeup, women posed unproblematically in male roles whilst gowned in female drapery). Between each pose the transitional movement was to be fluid, magnetic, rhythmic, micro-choreographic; never spasmodic, sudden or surprising. Stebbins concludes: 'What is it, child? You would look at the others? Seek some gallery where you will find casts of the antique, and spend a profitable hour in discovering the attitude in which each statue stands. Then go home and essay them before the glass'.[46] From photos to casts to living statues, the proliferation of copies is infinite. But most fascinating is the mirror image of these mirror-images. Sculpture-posing is implied here as a more private activity, no longer necessarily subject to the gaze of an audience, but becoming a curious narcissism, an act of ennobled self-portraiture. *The statue looks back.* Looking at oneself become-statue gives rise to a strange configuration of reverse photography, whereby the gazer is at once camera and photograph, both blind and seeing, temporarily immortalised through temporary immobilisation. This still enactment of endurance is caught in a mirror chamber of déjà vu.

46   Genevieve Stebbins, *Delsarte System of Dramatic Expression* (New York: Werner, 1886), p. 72. See also Nancy Lee Chalfa Ruyter, 'The Genteel Transition: American Delsartism', in *Reformers and Visionaries: The Americanization of the Art of Dance* (New York: Dance Horizons, 1979), pp. 17–30, and Ruyter, 'Antique Longings: Genevieve Stebbins and American Delsartian Performance', in *Corporealities*, ed. S.L. Foster (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 70–89.