



O'Mahony, M. J. (2024). In Search of Olympia: Imaging the Ancient Games in Late Eighteenth-Century Art. *Journal of Olympic Studies*, 5(2), 30-52. <https://doi.org/10.5406/26396025.5.2.02>

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# In Search of Olympia: Imaging the Ancient Games in Late Eighteenth-Century Art

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# In Search of Olympia: Imaging the Ancient Games in Late Eighteenth-Century Art

## *Abstract*

Richard Chandler's rediscovery of Olympia in 1766 was a turning point in Olympic history. Yet when Chandler reported this on his return to England it was clear that the material evidence he had uncovered was negligible. Nonetheless, this very absence of evidence provided a golden opportunity for two artists on either side of the English Channel to produce grand scale paintings visualising this absence. This article examines in detail, two major artworks by James Barry and Jean-Pierre Saint-Ours, produced in the wake of Chandler's rediscovery. Through the deployment of art historical methods in the detailed reading of the works themselves, and contextualisation of them within a broader socio-political and cultural history, this article foregrounds the importance of visual culture as evidence for Olympic historians whilst also exposing how such engagements with that history could raise vital questions not only about the past, but simultaneously about contemporary society and culture.

## *Keywords*

Olympia, art, painting,

## TEXT

Early in the morning we crossed a shallow brook, and commenced our survey of the spot before us with a degree of expectation from which our disappointment on finding it almost naked received a considerable addition.<sup>1</sup>

It was with these words that the British antiquary Richard Chandler described his first, and clearly less than overwhelming, encounter with Olympia, site of the ancient Games. The year was 1766 and Chandler was near the end of a two-year expedition, sponsored by the London-based Society of Dilettanti, visiting ruins from classical antiquity in Turkey and Greece. His travel companions, the artist William Pars and architect Nicholas Revett, had sketched much of what they had witnessed, but at Olympia there was clearly little to see. This would remain the case for more than another century until, in 1875, the German archaeologist Ernst Curtius began excavations to uncover the site, buried for more than a millennium under several metres of mud and silt. On his return to England, Chandler published several accounts of his journey, including *Ionian Antiquities* (1769) and *Travels in Greece* (1776). The first of these, written as an academic account, included multiple and detailed illustrations of the many locations visited, but made no reference to Olympia.<sup>2</sup> The second, which incorporated sections more in the spirit of a personal travelogue, offered an overall history of Olympia but only dedicated a few paragraphs to the actual encounter.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the paucity of evidence uncovered here, no illustrations were included. Thus, for many in late eighteenth-century Europe, Olympia, though now appearing as a name on a map, would remain very much a blank canvas. And yet, this did not mean that the imagination of the broader public was not captured by Chandler's rediscovery of

Olympia. Indeed, its very invisibility fired the enthusiasm of one specific group; namely artists.

In the decade or so following the publication of Chandler's *Travels to Greece* two painters, in particular, would attempt to visualise this gap by basing major works on the theme of the ancient Olympic Games. The first of these was produced in Britain between 1777 and 1783 by the Irish-born artist and member of the Royal Academy of Arts in London, James Barry. *Crowning the Victors at Olympia* formed the centrepiece of Barry's decorative cycle for the Royal Society of Arts in London, where it can still be seen today (fig 1). On its completion it attracted widespread press and critical attention and gained further publicity through the sale of prints produced by Barry himself.<sup>4</sup> Within a few years of the completion of *Crowning the Victors*, the French-trained, Swiss artist Jean-Pierre Saint-Ours produced a similarly ambitious painting entitled *Les Jeux olympiques* (1787-90) (fig 2). This monumental canvas, measuring near 4 x 2 metres, would subsequently be exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1791 and is today on display at the *Musée d'art et d'histoire* in Geneva.<sup>5</sup> Whilst both these works have been given coverage within the fields, respectively, of British and French art history, they have not previously been considered side by side, or as part of a shared transnational agenda addressing Olympic history. Yet, they reveal the extent to which interest in, and knowledge of, the ancient Games informed Enlightenment thinking and cultural production across western Europe. It might additionally be claimed that these artists followed directly in Chandler's footsteps, at least metaphorically, by themselves going in search of Olympia, attempting to articulate in visual form an image of what the ancient Olympic festivals and Games might have looked like. But beyond subjective historical interpretation, visualising the Olympic Games could also address bigger questions. What, for example, might visual representations of an imagined, even mythic, landscape reveal about 18th century conceptions of Olympia? Or, in a wider context, to what extent did referencing Olympia's golden age simultaneously provide an opportunity to explore a complex range of then contemporary social, political and cultural issues. Close visual analysis of these works within their socio-historical context can thus demonstrate not only how Olympic history was conceived at this time, but also what wider significances such a conceptualisation offered. In Barry's work, for example, an engagement with Ancient Olympic festivals provided an opportunity to offer a critique of contemporary history painting as practiced in eighteenth-century Britain in the wake of the formation of the Royal Academy of Arts. At the same time, his focus on a moment of victory celebration, rather than sporting participation, foregrounded his perception of a need for suitable reward for artists even as his own rewards ended up being scant. Further, as Barry scholar William L. Pressly has posited, this work might also be interpreted as having made subtle claims about the religious status of Catholicism, Barry's own religion, in a staunchly Protestant Britain. For Saint-Ours, a supporter of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Republican ideals, a different set of questions may be considered. What, for example, does Saint-Ours' explicit focus on a single, violent moment say about attitudes to changing class relationships in the wake of the French Revolution. Further how did changes in the evolution of this work from early oil sketch to finished canvas reflect political developments over the course of the production of the work? And finally, what might the response of the spectators within the scene represented, say about both Olympic and contemporary history? In what follows, the intention is to demonstrate how both these works, though in different ways, produced visual representations of Olympia that amalgamate both past and then contemporary themes.

It should also be added that, from an Olympic and sports history perspective, considerably less attention has been focused on visual sources such as these significant interventions into debates concerning Olympic history. In recent years, however, scholars have increasingly expanded the research resources typically deployed within sports history specifically to include visual and material culture.<sup>6</sup> Within Olympic studies these have broadly focused on the modern Games, though there is, of course, a significant body of literature looking at the visual and material culture of the Ancient Games.<sup>7</sup> An area that has received less attention is what might be referred to as the period of revival of interest in the Games, particularly as part of European Neoclassicism during the Enlightenment. It is therefore the intention of this article to address this absence by exploring and analysing these two key case studies of late-eighteenth century works of art, produced in the wake of Chandler's rediscovery of the site of Olympia, within the context of their own socio-political and cultural contexts.

### *The Games in Early Modern Culture*

Before turning directly to these two works of art it is important to outline briefly some of the ways in which knowledge of the ancient Olympic Games had been circulating long before Chandler first set foot on the sun-baked earth of the Peloponesian peninsula. Documents concerning the history of the Games had been preserved throughout the Middle Ages, particularly in the copious writings of the ancients; these included texts as diverse as the medical treatises of Galen, the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides, the travel accounts of Pausanias, the biographies of Plutarch and the odes of Pindar.<sup>8</sup> Whilst these texts were known to many Byzantine scholars, it was not until the emergence and expansion of Renaissance humanism around the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries that ideas about the ancient Olympic Games began to be disseminated amongst a wider intellectual elite, many of whom aspired to discover and revive the values and practices of their revered forebears. As early as the 1430s, for example, the Florentine poet and statesman Mateo Palmieri included a reference to the ancient Olympics in his *Libro della vita civile, dialoghi* (*Book of Civil Life, Dialogues*).<sup>9</sup> By 1491, Virgilius Polydorus had extolled in print the virtues not only the Olympic, but also the Isthmian, Pythian and Nemean Games in *De Inventoribus Rerum* (*On the Invention of Things*). The early sixteenth century saw the first publication of classical texts by both Pindar and Pausanias (1513 and 1516 respectively), thus contributing to the further spread of knowledge regarding the Olympic past, if only initially to readers of ancient Greek.

Throughout the rest of the century, references to the Olympic Games began to appear more and more frequently in print across Europe.<sup>10</sup> In Germany, for example, the work of both Johannes Aquila and Hans Sachs drew attention to the Olympic heritage, whilst further references to the glories of Ancient Olympia were noted in the publication of *Agonisticon* (*On Athletic Matters*) by Pierre du Faur (Petrus Faber) in Lyon in 1592.<sup>11</sup> By the later sixteenth century references to the Olympic Games began to appear within the wider European literary tradition. For example, the French playwright Robert Garnier made reference to the Games in *Cornélie*, first performed in 1573 and published the following year.<sup>12</sup> When Garnier's play was translated into English by Thomas Kyd in 1595, knowledge of the Olympic Games was already reasonably well-established in England, as made evident in the works of William Shakespeare. For example, in *Henry VI, part 3*, George Plantagenet, later Duke of Clarence, looking for a suitable means to inspire his men to battle, specifically invokes the sport of the ancients when he declares,

And, if we thrive, promise them such rewards  
As victors wear at the Olympian Games:  
This may plant courage in their quivering breasts;  
For yet is hope of life and victory.<sup>13</sup>

Shakespeare's literary reference to the glories of an Olympic past no doubt reflected wider interests in the classical heritage that were leaving their mark on late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century culture. And it was also in England that this celebration of classical sport led to what has frequently been argued to be the first significant Olympic revival of the modern era; namely the sports and games held annually in a field near Chipping Campden in the Cotswolds, known as Robert Dover's 'Olimpick Games'.

Dover's Games are believed to have their origin in 1612 and were being widely referred to as 'Olimpick Games' at least as early as 1631.<sup>14</sup> In reality, these Games had little in common with competitions at ancient Olympia, consisting mostly of traditional English sporting activities, such as hunting, coursing and horse racing, though various running and throwing competitions were also included in the programme. Nonetheless, one key source, a publication known as the *Annalia Dubrensia* (The Annals of Dover), reveals the cultural desire to link these very early modern practices with a classical past, however incongruously. Amongst the celebratory poems published in this small pamphlet were numerous idyllic visions of sun-drenched arcadias and 'Heleconian Springs' inhabited by 'neighbouring Nymphes ... so glorious and attractive, as would make Most of the gods turn shepherds for their sake', or references to the 'Golden Age's Glories' of 'those brave Grecians in their happy dayes'.<sup>15</sup> Notably, this literary vision jars with the more down-to-earth cover illustration of the pamphlet representing contemporary seventeenth-century figures participating in the various events, dressed uniformly and rather prosaically, in doublet and hose (fig 3).

### *Enlightened Olympians*

By the eighteenth century, throughout Enlightenment Europe, references to an Olympic past expanded further, becoming increasingly incorporated into the performative arts of theatre, music and dance.<sup>16</sup> In 1733, for example, the poet Pietro Metastasio collaborated with Antonio Caldara to produce an opera entitled *L'Olympiade*, thus bringing visions of ancient Greek sport to the stage.<sup>17</sup> Loosely based on a tale from Herodotus' *Histories*, *L'Olympiade* tells the story of two young Greeks, Megacles and Lycidas, who compete for the hand of Aristaea, the daughter of King Cleisthenes. Whilst Metastasio's plot is conventional in terms of eighteenth-century dramaturgy, the narrative notably unfolds against a backdrop of the Olympic Games, which becomes the terrain upon which this battle for love is fought. Significantly, Metastasio's opera proved a huge success. Over the next half-century the libretto would be adopted by no fewer than fifty composers – including Antonio Vivaldi (1734) and Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1735) – and became one of the most widely performed and popularly attended operas of the mid-eighteenth century, with productions staged as far afield as London, Milan, Moscow, Paris, Prague, Rome and Vienna.

Metastasio's *L'Olympiade* was far from an isolated example of a cultural fascination with the Olympic heritage. By the second half of the century, the influence of the German writer Johann Joachim Winckelmann also cast a considerable shadow over countless artists and intellectuals. Winckelmann's *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and*

*Sculpture*, first published in 1755, extolled the virtues of what the author described as the 'noble simplicity and quiet grandeur' of the art of the Hellenistic period. His thesis proved highly influential and within a decade the text had been translated into both French and English.<sup>18</sup> More importantly, Winckelmann's ideas both developed from and contributed further towards growing interests in both the history of art and the emergence of archaeology as a discipline. Indeed, the mid-eighteenth century witnessed some of the first major archaeological discoveries that both brought visual and material culture into the light of day and would dramatically change western knowledge of the ancient world. Between 1738 and 1748, for example, news of the 'discovery' and systematic unearthing of artefacts at Herculaneum and Pompeii was widely circulated throughout Europe and an increasing number of archaeological expeditions were organized, some by official government bodies, others by private institutions such as the Society of Dilettanti in England. During this period, projects to uncover the site of the ancient Olympic Games were never far from the agendas of these august bodies. As early as 1723, for example, the French Benedictine monk and classical scholar Abbé Bernard de Montfaucon had written to the recently appointed Archbishop of Corfu proposing that an archaeological expedition be sponsored to search for the site of ancient Olympia.<sup>19</sup> Sadly this was not adopted. Winckelmann too, was much inspired by the notion of what discoveries might be made at the site of the Games. He had even claimed that, in his youth, he had dreamed of being transported to Ancient Olympia and there encountering the splendours of classical antiquity in their original setting. Following Chandler's re-discovery of Olympia in 1766, and prior to his own untimely death in 1768, Winckelmann notably began to put together plans to lead an expedition to the site of the ancient Games. In the end, however, he was never to make the journey of his youthful dreams.

### *Crowning the Victors at Olympia*

It was thus in the wake of both Chandler's 'rediscovery' of Olympia and Winckelmann's exposition on Greek art, that James Barry began work in July 1777 on a project that was to become both his magnum opus and a significant drain on his financial resources. At over 12.5 m wide and 3.6 m high, *Crowning the Victors at Olympia* is certainly a monumental work (fig 1). Further, this vast panel forms the central focus of a more extensive ensemble consisting of six mural-scale paintings installed in the Great Room of the Royal Society of Arts in London under the title *The Progress of Human Knowledge and Culture*. The context in which Barry came to produce this series of works is here of some significance to the Olympic subject-matter and therefore needs to be outlined.

Barry first came to the attention of the English art establishment following the exhibition of his painting *The Temptation of Adam* at the Royal Academy of Arts in 1771. At this point Barry had recently returned from a five-year sojourn in Europe where, like so many of his contemporaries, he immersed himself in studying the works of classical antiquity and the Renaissance Masters to be found in Italy. The timing of Barry's return to England proved propitious to his career, not least following the foundation in 1768 of the Royal Academy under its first President Sir Joshua Reynolds. Between 1771 and 1776 Barry exhibited a further fourteen works at the Royal Academy and gained official status as an Academician in August 1773.<sup>20</sup> Despite this early success, Barry had ambitions to produce paintings on a more monumental scale. Also in 1773, he joined forces with five other painters, Reynolds, Benjamin West, Angelica Kauffmann, Giovanni Battista Cipriani and Nathaniel Dance, to propose a major decorative scheme for St Paul's Cathedral. Although

the plan came to nought, Barry continued to seek to participate in the production of a major cycle of history paintings. The following year he was one of ten artists invited to decorate the Great Room, designed by Robert and James Adam, for the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturing and Commerce at its newly established headquarters at the Adelphi.<sup>21</sup> Again Barry was disappointed when the artists voted to reject the invitation, which was deemed to offer limited reward both financially and in terms of prestige. It would be another three years before Barry would contact the Society again, but by now he was determined to seize the opportunity to work on a grand cycle of history paintings. Thus he offered to execute the entire scheme single-handedly and at his own expense, asking only that the Society provide materials and funds to hire models. Barry thus commenced work on *The Progress of Human Knowledge and Culture*, a project that he initially estimated would occupy him for two years.<sup>22</sup> In the end, Barry spent much of the next six years working on the project and would continue to make minor amendments to the cycle right up until his death in 1806.

Barry's series consists of six separate panels representing, in cyclical order: *Orpheus; A Grecian Harvest-Home; Crowning the Victors at Olympia; Commerce, or The Triumph of the Thames; The Distribution of Premiums in the Society of Arts; and Elysium, or the State of Final Retribution*. The cycle is divided into two sections of three panels each. The first of these charts the rise of ancient Greek society from its earliest pre-cultural days to a golden age signified by the colourful procession that marked the climax of the ancient Olympic Games. The second half of the cycle focuses on the glories of modern Britain, here illustrated by allegorical representations of trade, technology, philanthropy and education. The cycle culminates in a representation of 'those great and good men of all ages and nations, who were cultivators and benefactors of mankind' - architects, artists, intellectuals, military leaders, philosophers, poets, playwrights and scientists – all gathered together in a space simultaneously signifying the Elysian fields of classical antiquity and historical posterity for the Age of Enlightenment.<sup>23</sup> In *The Progress of Human Knowledge and Culture*, Barry conceptualized the rise of civilization, notably placing *Crowning the Victors* at the very heart of his historical cycle. In terms of the configuration of the Great Room, *Crowning the Victors* was the first work to greet the spectator on entering the space and, positioned directly above the President's chair, constituted the primary focal point of the whole ensemble (fig 4). It might also be added that Barry's original conception for the cycle included two other works based on Olympic subject matter. In a letter written to Sir George Savile in April 1777, Barry claimed that, in addition to the *Crowning the Victors* main panel, he would add two more representing 'the contest and matching the competitors' and 'Prodicus reading to that assembly his performance of the choice of Hercules, Aetion the

painter, and a number of other ingenious men producing their several performances'.<sup>24</sup> In the final ensemble these panels would make way for *Orpheus* and *A Grecian Harvest-Home*, although the presence of a discus thrower and two wrestlers in the middle-distance of the latter panel act as reminders of this earlier plan. In the final composition, Barry focused attention on the festival celebrated at the culmination of the Olympic Games. For the artist, this marked the very apex of cultural attainment in antiquity and was thus proposed as an aspirational model for modern British society.

Notably, Barry's work made no claim to represent a single moment in history. Rather knowledge of many episodes relating to the Games are here brought together into one



synthesized evocation of Olympic glory. *Crowning the Victors* is composed as a frieze, a form instantly reminiscent of the Parthenon friezes at the Acropolis in Athens. Although not brought to London and installed in the British Museum until the 1810s, knowledge of the Parthenon friezes was already widespread in the latter half of the eighteenth century, largely due to the archaeological and publishing activities of James 'Athenian' Stuart, and his colleague, the architect, and later travel companion of Chandler, Nicholas Revett. Stuart and Revett had undertaken a major expedition to Greece in the early 1750s and returned with hundreds of drawings. Between 1762 and the end of the century these were incorporated into the five-volume publication, *The Antiquities of Athens*, probably the single-most influential book for artists, architects and designers of the neoclassical era.<sup>25</sup> Certainly Barry would have been fully aware of these illustrations, not least as he had worked for Stuart in 1764.<sup>26</sup> To reinforce the sculptural allusion made in *Crowning the Victors*, Barry also framed the image to left and right with *trompe l'oeil* representations of statues dedicated to Hercules and Minerva. Here, by including both the founder of the Olympic Games, celebrated for his physical strength, and the patroness of Athens, renowned for her wisdom and support for the arts, Barry collapsed these 'comprehensive exemplars of that strength of body, and strength of mind, which were the two great objects of Grecian education'.<sup>27</sup> He also reinforced a link between the home of the Games and the fifth-century Greek city state widely held, at the time, to be the cradle of modern civilization.

Given the complexity of the overall composition, Barry also produced a text entitled *An Account of a Series of Pictures, in the Great Room of the Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, at the Adelphi*, to accompany the first public exhibition of the works in 1783. This included a written description of all the works in the cycle, thus enabling the spectator to decipher the various characters and events represented. Drawing upon this resource it is thus possible to read the image from left to right. *Crowning the Victors* commences with a representation of musicians and singers, all accompanying the poet Pindar, here represented playing his lyre. Pindar's Olympic Odes, it might be noted, were very much in vogue in eighteenth-century Britain, not least as a consequence of translations of his work published by the British classical scholar Gilbert West in 1749. West's addendum to his translation, a *Dissertation on the Olympick Games* can also be considered as the first significant monograph on the Olympic Games of the modern era and was to be a major influence on both intellectuals and artists of the time.<sup>28</sup> Behind these figures Barry has included two charioteers. The foremost of these represents Hiero of Syracuse, a famous victor at the Olympic Games of 468 BC notably celebrated in an Ode penned by Pindar. The second charioteer is anonymous, consigned to both background and shadow. Barry's knowledge of Pausanias would have meant that he was likely aware of the presence of two statues dedicated to Hiero originally installed at Olympia.<sup>29</sup> In front of the charioteers comes a horse rider struggling manfully to restrain his rearing steed. This representation once more draws attention to Barry's evident awareness of the Parthenon friezes as illustrated by Stuart and Revett. Immediately behind the rearing horse, Barry included numerous spectators, each of whom represents a character from Greek history. These include: Pericles (raising his left arm and here, notably, represented with the features of the recently deceased Earl of Chatham, better known as William Pitt, the Elder); Cimon and Euripides (to the left of Pericles); Aristophanes (behind Pericles); and Socrates with a young student (to the right of Pericles).<sup>30</sup> To the right of this group of spectators, and in a prominent centre-foreground position, Barry focuses on one of the classic tales from Olympic history. Here a now elderly, former Olympic boxing champion, Diagoras of Rhodes,

is borne aloft on the shoulders of his two sons, Damagetos and Akousilaos. Reportedly, this incident took place in 448 BC, when both Damagetos and Akousilaos were also victorious in the pankration and boxing events. According to several classical authors, they celebrated their success by carrying their father around on their shoulders whilst the crowd festooned the triumvirate with flowers. At this moment a Spartan spectator called out to Diagoras, extolling him to die now as he could attain no greater joy in life (in some versions of the tale Diagoras promptly reciprocated, dropping dead on the spot).<sup>31</sup> Finally, to the right of the Diagoras group other athletes, including victors in both the running and hoplite (running in armour) events approach the enthroned Hellenodikai (judges) to receive their prizes. Situated between these competitors and the judges is a second group of spectators, this time including the historian Herodotus (with a scroll in his left hand), the physician Hippocrates, the philosopher Democritus and the mathematician Philolaus.

Barry's *Crowning the Victors* certainly constitutes a complex work that relies heavily on the artist's textual *Account* to enable the spectator to access the finer points of the composition. It is also worth noting that whilst Barry explicitly cited West's *Dissertation* as a source for his work, he nonetheless adopted considerable artistic licence in his historical presentation. For example, the charioteers on the left notably process around a column upon which the Greek word 'Aristeve', or 'strive', is carved. This reference is lifted directly from West where, however, it refers not to the appearance of a column in the hippodrome at Olympia - West openly acknowledged that no evidence existed to describe the appearance of these columns and even bemoaned Pausanias' failure to describe these structures.<sup>32</sup> Rather, West was forced to rely upon knowledge of a hippodrome pillar from Constantinople which, he points out, bore this inscription. Further, Barry openly acknowledges that there is no evidence to suggest that the panoply of characters represented in Barry's canvas all attended a single Olympic Festival. After all, if this is a representation of the Games of 448 BC, Aristophanes was probably not yet born, whilst Cimon was already deceased. Barry casually explains this anomaly by suggesting that the characters represented 'lived nearly about that time, and might have been present on the occasion'.<sup>33</sup> For the artist clearly the goal was far more to offer an evocation of the ancient Olympic Games rather than an archaeologically accurate rendition.

Yet perhaps the most striking feature of this representation of an Olympic festival, especially to a modern eye, is the relative absence of reference to actual sporting activity. Amongst the dozens of characters represented in *Crowning the Victors*, only seven can be definitively described as athletic competitors and these can be divided into two clear groups. On the left Barry focuses on equestrian sports, including the two charioteers and the horse rider; on the right, the two sons of Diagoras, the hoplite-runner and the foot-runner. This relative absence of athletes might be explained by Barry's desire to highlight the intellectual, as well as physical, activities that were known to have been a vital component of Olympic festivals. After all Barry was fully aware from West's *Dissertation* that both Pindar and Herodotus were known to have performed their works at Olympic festivals, even if they did not compete for victory. Artists too displayed, and sold, their works at Olympic festivals and Barry notably included a representation of an artist in the lower left-hand corner of *Crowning the Victors*. This seated figure, holding an oval shaped canvas bearing a representation of a cyclops and satyrs is actually a self-portrait of Barry in the guise of the classical painter Timanthes.<sup>34</sup>

With regard to the athletes included by Barry, it is notable that the equestrian figures are represented retaining a poise and dignity despite the need physically to control

their horses which rear excitedly and unpredictably amidst the gathered crowds. Here, in keeping with the wider message of the first three panels of Barry's cycle, man's control over the beasts stands as an example of the progress of civilization and reflects his superiority and command of his own destiny. The prominence given to horses in this panel is also of interest in the context of West's description of equestrianism at the ancient Olympics. Notably, West dedicated three chapters of his *Dissertation* to equestrian sport at the ancient Olympics. He also used this activity to make one of his few explicit comparisons between ancient and modern sporting practices. In one passage West states,

It may seem impertinent to use many arguments with an English reader, to convince him of the wisdom and justice of a proceeding which is everyday practised amongst us; who have also our horse races and prizes for the victor.<sup>35</sup>

He continues to point out that 'with us, as with the Grecians', these prizes are bestowed upon the owner of the horse, rather than the rider. West clearly approved of this practice and derided the latter for whom, he claimed, 'a piece of plate of a hundred guineas is preferable to the glory of a thousand Olympic crowns'.<sup>36</sup> West takes this disapproval of modern horse racing further and condemns a lack of 'true' sporting spirit amongst these hired performers. Thus he adds that he will not,

make any farther comparison between the customs observed at the horse races at Olympia and those in fashion at Newmarket: I shall only take notice that no kind of fraud or violence was allowed of in the former; the competitors in which contended for glory only: an object seldom heartily pursued by those who are sordid enough either to use or connive at the use of fraud.<sup>37</sup>

Barry's engagement with equestrian sports in *Crowning the Victors* can also be read in light of West's concerns. For example, the principal charioteer is specifically identified as the noble King Hiero of Syracuse. This certainly concurs with West's view that competitors in this sport were 'generally speaking, men of higher rank', when compared with horse racing.<sup>38</sup> The rider in the left foreground is not identified in Barry's *Account* and thus would appear to be a hired hand, the classical equivalent of the modern jockey. Nonetheless, this rider is given a prominent position within the composition as a whole. As previously stated, this form of representation clearly signals Barry's knowledge of the Parthenon friezes, as seen through the illustrations of Stuart and Revett. At the same time, however, Barry seems to be revealing his knowledge of the work of his contemporary and friend, the painter George Stubbs.<sup>39</sup> Throughout the 1760s, Stubbs had built a career based on his paintings of the thoroughbreds of such eminent stalwarts of eighteenth-century horse racing as the Duke of Richmond and the Marquess of Rockingham. Yet these works, often represented with accompanying jockeys or stable-hands could, in many respects, be read as being little more than portraits of the property and staff of the wealthy. For Barry, the inclusion of horses in *Crowning the Victors* signals the importance of equestrian subject matter, and not least his own skill in the representation of horses, at a time when this was much in vogue as a consequence of the expansion of horse racing as a major social activity. This was, after all, the golden age of British horse racing, a period which witnessed the foundation of the Jockey Club (1752), and the establishment of the three major classic races, the St Leger (1776), the Oaks (1779) and the Derby (1780).<sup>40</sup> More importantly, however, Barry's

evocation of a classical precedent also provided a grand historical context in which such subject matter might be presented, thus conferring what the artist doubtless regarded as a greater dignity and classical resonance on equestrian painting.

Much as Barry's horse rider echoes classical precedent, his representation of the four athletes in the right foreground also alludes to classical representations of Greek heroes. Certainly the near-nude corporeal forms of these athletes invoke harmony, balance and passivity, suggesting Barry's awareness of Winckelmann's admiration for the 'noble simplicity and quiet grandeur' of Greek art. Whilst relatively few of the classical antiquities known today were available to Barry and his contemporaries, famous sculptural examples such as the *Apollo Belvedere*, the *Belvedere Antinous*, the *Borghese Gladiator* and the *Laocoön*, were widely known and had been both described and illustrated by Winckelmann and Stuart and Revett, amongst others. Further, Barry would likely have seen these works whilst in Rome during the later 1760s, and may also have had access to the numerous small bronzes and plaster cast copies after classical works that were being produced throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>41</sup> Whilst Barry's athletes do not directly invoke a single exemplar, a general conception of Greek sculpture is evident within these representations.<sup>42</sup> Further, the statuesque quality of Barry's foreground athletes is notably echoed in the artist's inclusion of victor monuments lining the Altis in the background of *Crowning the Victors*. These monuments, erected to triumphant athletes either at the expense of the athletes themselves, their families or their home states, are described in the writings of Pausanias and are also mentioned by West, though here, notably, West acknowledged that such monuments were frequently represented either with the attributes of their sport or even in poses denoting their activities, a notable contrast to Barry's athletes whether of flesh or bronze.<sup>43</sup>

Ultimately, however, it is Barry's focus on festival and pageantry that characterizes not only *Crowning the Victors*, but the whole of the *Progress of Human Knowledge and Culture* series. Barry scholar William Pressly has argued that *Crowning the Victors* incorporates a hidden socio-political message supporting Barry's own Catholicism at a time when the Roman Catholic Church was under considerable attack. For example, he argues that Barry picked up on the fact that West, in his *Dissertation*, claimed that '... many of the customs and ordinances of the Roman Church allude most evidently to many practised in the Olympic stadium', thus making an explicit link between Catholicism and Olympic Festivals.<sup>44</sup> Pressly has subsequently taken this claim further to suggest that the Diogenes figure borne aloft by his sons might also be read as a subliminal reference to the papal processions that Barry had witnessed in Rome and that the presentation of palm branches to the victorious athletes references Christ's entry into Jerusalem.<sup>45</sup> Whether or not Barry sought covertly to promote Catholicism 'in the chambers of a prestigious English institution whose membership was overwhelmingly Protestant' at the time of the anti-Catholic Gordon Riots remains open to conjecture, though it is certainly an appealing notion.<sup>46</sup>

However, consideration should also be given to the emphasis on reward that constitutes an integral aspect of Barry's pageantry. For here, it seems, the artist is far more interested in the winning, than the taking part. Barry's decision to focus all his attention on 'that point of time, when the Victors in the several games, pass in procession before the hellanodicks (sic) or judges, where they are crowned with olive, in the presence of all the Grecians', was likely chosen by Barry to make a broader statement concerning the role of art and artists in British society at this moment.<sup>47</sup> Certainly Barry equated his own unpaid labour on the Adelpi series with a commitment to 'cultivating the human faculties' for the

general good of humankind.<sup>48</sup> Further, his focus on Olympic heroes being both judged and appropriately rewarded (a theme also expounded upon in *The Distribution of the Premiums in the Society of Art*, and *Elysium, or the State of Final Retribution*, panels five and six in the series), suggests his own desire for approval, and perhaps a little anxiety that this was not being sufficiently pursued on his behalf. Barry had suffered at the hands of the critics following his last submission to the Royal Academy annual exhibition in 1776, whilst his well-documented irascible personality and 'single-minded devotion to a type of painting that so spectacularly failed to command the support of his contemporaries' seems to have made him at the very least, as art historian David Solkin has claimed, an 'odd man out' in eighteenth-century artistic circles.<sup>49</sup> All this serves to reinforce the notion that references to the Olympic Games in visual culture frequently tell us as much, if not far more, about broader contemporary political and cultural concerns than they do, simply about the history of the Games themselves. Barry's *Crowning the Victors at Olympia*, as one component in the broader cycle *The Progress of Human Knowledge and Culture*, offers a useful insight into the ways that visual representations of Olympic history could be deployed to express a critique of contemporary society and culture.

In 1805, the critic Francis Burroughs praised Barry's Adelphi murals, describing them as 'the only publick monument of art in this country'.<sup>50</sup> However, after Barry's death the following year, the artist's reputation fell into rapid decline. Although knowledge of his work had been widely disseminated, not least through a series of prints Barry produced in 1791-92, *The Progress of Human Knowledge and Culture* never quite became the benchmark for history painting that the artist doubtless hoped it might. Further, its elevation of Olympic subject matter failed to capture the imagination of a subsequent generation of British artists. Over the next century, representations of the Olympic Games remained relatively peripheral in contemporary British art circles, despite a wider engagement with classical subject matter.

### *Les Jeux olympiques*

Britain, however, was far from being the only European nation at this time with an interest in the Olympic Games as a subject for grand-scale history painting. In the mid-1780s, shortly after Barry completed his Adelphi project, a Swiss artist by the name of Jean-Pierre Saint-Ours was busy working on a painting that would subsequently become his best known work, a large-scale canvas entitled *Les Jeux olympiques* (fig 2).

The son of a Genevois artist, Saint-Ours was sent to Paris in 1769 at the age of sixteen to study painting at the *École de l'Académie Royale* under the Classicist Joseph-Marie Vien.<sup>51</sup> Amongst his fellow students was the young Jacques-Louis David. Saint-Ours, like David, was a keen scholar of both antique art and literature and in 1780 achieved his ambition to study in Rome: by this time Vien had become Director of the *Ecole de France* in Rome, and David had already been in the Eternal City for five years. As a Protestant, Saint-Ours was ineligible for the State support usually available to young artists and so financed himself, not least by gaining the support of important patrons including the Cardinal François-Joachim de Pierre de Bernis (the French Ambassador in Rome), and the Marquis de Créqui. Saint-Ours would remain in Rome for the next twelve years where he befriended the Venetian sculptor Antonio Canova.

In 1785, he produced his first sketch for *Les Jeux olympiques*, a work which so inspired the Marquis de Créqui that he immediately commissioned the artist to produce a large-scale canvas of the subject which he intended to offer as a gift to the French Royal

Family.<sup>52</sup> Saint-Ours continued working on this project for the next six years.<sup>53</sup> Notably, it was during this period that Jean-Jacques Barthélemy's hugely successful *Le Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce vers le milieu du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle avant l'ère vulgaire* (*Travels of Anacharsis the Younger in Greece during the Middle of the Fourth Century Before the Christian Era*) was first published.<sup>54</sup> In this fictional work, a Scythian of the fourth century BC travels around ancient Greece and, in one section, offers detailed descriptions of a visit to the Olympic Games. This contemporary focus on Olympic subject matter by both artist and writer offers further evidence of the extent to which the Olympic legacy remained in vogue amongst both intellectuals and a wider public at this time. For Saint-Ours, however, the Olympic Games would also provide a subject that could act as a potential signifier for broader notions of liberty, equality and civic virtue.

Saint-Ours continued his work on the Créqui commission throughout the late 1780s, completing a small-scale oil study in 1787 (fig 5). In this work he focused on a specific moment during a competition in combat sports at the ancient Olympic Games. While it is unclear which of the three major combat sports is here depicted, it is most likely to be pankration, a combination of the other two contests, boxing and wrestling, and the contest with a reputation for being the most violent of the three. In the centre-foreground of the composition a powerful athlete stands before the Hellenodikae, or judges, his defeated opponent at his feet. Behind the victor, two more of his defeated opponents are either treated by medics or carried, seriously injured, from the arena. In response to this athlete's gesture, the main judge clasps an olive wreath in his right hand, a visual acknowledgement of victory for the competitor who has defeated all-comers. A large crowd has gathered to witness this event; their dramatic gestures and expressions leave the spectator in no doubt that this victory is regarded as exceptional, a super-human feat.<sup>55</sup> Gathered in the left foreground is the priestess of Demeter Chamyne with her virgin attendants, believed to be the only women allowed to attend Olympic competitions. The various temples and the Altis of Olympia can be seen in the background, although notably only one sculpture is included. In the right foreground, mounted on a pedestal, is a sculptural representation of a rearing horse being controlled by a nude male figure. Intriguingly, the source for this statue was not any reference in antique literature, or modern descriptions of Olympia by either West or Barthélemy. Rather, Saint-Ours has copied one half of the group sculpture found in the Piazza del Quirinale in Rome and believed to represent the twin gods, Castor and Pollux.<sup>56</sup> At this time, Castor and Pollux were widely regarded as patrons of athletes and athletic competitions, not least as a consequence of Pollux's status as boxer, as described in Homer's *Iliad*. Certainly Saint-Ours would have known of this monument, not least as it was much admired and sketched by his friend Canova and, in 1786, whilst Saint-Ours was in Rome working on his preparatory drawings for *Les Jeux olympiques*, Pope Pius VI had notably adorned the twin statues with an obelisk. Thus, the inclusion of this familiar, if geographically and historically dislocated, monument certainly had a contemporary significance for the artist.

It is unclear what progress Saint-Ours made on *Les Jeux olympiques* between 1787 and the overthrow of the French monarchy in 1789. What is clear, however, is that these political events inevitably reshaped his relationship both with his patron, Créqui, and with the work as a whole. When the Revolutionary storm broke, Saint-Ours was clear regarding where, on the political spectrum, his sympathies lay. Despite his aristocratic origins, he had been much influenced in his youth by the writings of his fellow-Genevois, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and avidly supported the Revolution. Later, in 1793, he would even be elected a

deputy of the *Assemblée Nationale* in Geneva, after which he broadly abandoned painting and dedicated much of the rest of his life to Republican politics.<sup>57</sup> Despite these political sympathies, Saint-Ours' previous reliance on aristocratic patronage placed him in an awkward position. Créqui, financially ruined by the revolution, was now forced to abandon his commission. Thus in 1791, for the first and only time in his career, Saint-Ours submitted his work to the French Salon exhibition, that year notably un-juried and dubbed the *Salon de la Liberté*. Here Saint-Ours exhibited three canvases, including a large-scale finished version of *Les Jeux olympiques*, dated 1790. At over 2¼ x 4 metres, Saint-Ours' work certainly attracted attention, even amongst other large-scale canvases by such luminaries of French revolutionary painting as David and was well received in the critical press. Seeking to capitalize on this success and doubtless fearful of the declining economic circumstances following the declaration of war with Austria, Saint-Ours directly approached Francois Tronchin, an important Genevois politician, writer and art patron, with an offer to sell the work. Tronchin was happy to oblige, offering Saint-Ours more than the price requested by the artist. Both the sketch and the finished version of *Les Jeux olympiques* have subsequently remained in Saint-Ours' native Geneva where they are held at the *Musée d'art et d'histoire*.

Whilst the two versions of *Les Jeux olympiques* are virtually identical in overall composition there are a number of notable differences, particularly in the representation of the key figures at the centre of the narrative. For example, in the sketch, the defeated athlete, whilst clearly overpowered by his opponent, still plays an active role. His gesticulating arm and fully erect head carry an expression that simultaneously acknowledges defeat and pleads for mercy. In the finished work, however, the twisted wrist and limp head of the now reconfigured opponent render him utterly lifeless. The clear implication here is that the victor has not only defeated his opponent, but actually killed him. In this new context, the grievous injuries inflicted upon the other defeated opponents in the background serve to highlight the extreme violence of this sporting encounter and to confirm this likelihood of mortality.

In a letter written shortly after the display of *Les Jeux olympiques* at the Salon, Saint-Ours acknowledged his debt to a number of sources. These included the classical texts of Strabo, Plutarch and Pausanias and, indeed, the work of James Stuart, whose illustrations after classical antiquities had earlier influenced Barry. Yet, as this shift in emphases suggests, Saint-Ours was only too happy to depart from the historical evidence in his visualization of the ancient Games. Whilst serious injuries were indeed commonplace in combat sports at Olympia, the killing of an opponent was rare in practice and, when it did occur, was roundly condemned. Further, in the few recorded cases of an Olympic competitor actually killing his opponent, the judges usually awarded victory to the victim and banished the athlete who had caused the incident. Yet here, the probable death of the defeated athlete seems to be the catalyst for the principal judge to confirm victory by reaching for the olive wreath. Other minor changes from the sketch version are also evident. For example, the victor, too, has adopted an altered posture, the body far less tensed and sculptural, suggesting a greater individuality and humanity. As if further to emphasize this shift from the sculptural to the corporeal, the frieze representing wrestlers adorning the rostrum upon which the Hellenodikai sit has also been removed. More importantly, however, the principal judge now seems perhaps less comfortable, more threatened by the victor and less willing to look him squarely in the eye.

All of this inevitably begs the question; how might these changes in Saint-Ours' work operate within the context of the late 1780s and early 1790s? Certainly, it was widely understood at this time that combat sports at Olympia were mostly associated with the lower classes of Greek society, a fact that Saint-Ours makes literal by positioning his fighters below the level of both judges and spectators. Further, the extreme violence that has brought about this victory seems to cause considerable consternation amongst the crowd, whose gestures might be read as expressing a greater sense of shock and horror, than admiration of sporting excellence. Saint-Ours' representation of combat sports at ancient Olympia thus seems simultaneously to reference a sense of potential class threat and an underlying violence at a time when such concepts were doubtless prominent in the minds of both those, like Saint-Ours himself, who supported revolutionary action, and those in positions of authority who feared it. Completed around the time of the storming of the Bastille, or shortly thereafter, this paean to victory achieved through a willingness to engage in extreme, though carefully directed, violence doubtless also spoke volumes to its spectators in 1791.

In some respects, the pre-revolutionary sketch version of *Les Jeux olympiques* seems more in keeping with conventional Olympic histories. Here, whilst the strength and power of the victor remains in no doubt, his adherence to the rules and conventions of the Games, along with his compassion, seems much more in evidence than in the later, post-revolutionary version. Further, the gesticulated dialogue between the Hellenodikai and the victorious athlete now appears less mutual, with the latter not so much seeking official confirmation of his victory, as demonstrating his physical prowess as a challenge to officialdom. Here the violent, even murderous, athlete of the finished work implies a more confident, more radical revolutionary perhaps less willing to perform to entertain authority and more inclined to deploy his physical skills to challenge it. Here, it is also striking that the posture of the victorious athlete bears more than a passing resemblance to David's heroes in his famous *Oath of the Horatii*, a work originally exhibited at the Salon of 1785 but re-exhibited at the same Salon exhibition in which *Les Jeux olympiques* appeared (fig 6). It might also be noted that the inclusion, yet separation, of the group of women in the left foreground similarly conforms to the gendered separation that contemporary critics noted as an integral element within David's visual rhetoric.<sup>58</sup> Whilst it is certainly the case that Saint-Ours' *Jeux olympiques* lacks some of the clarity and eloquence of David's *Horatii*, the focus on the dramatic moment, articulated with a seemingly austere and didactic precision, strongly suggests that Saint-Ours both recognized and valued the way that David's work, as art historian Albert Boime has claimed, 'historically manifested the progressive outlook of those who sought social promotion based on talent and a more equitable social order'.<sup>59</sup>

Finally, it may be useful to return to the inclusion of the Castor and Pollux monument in Saint-Ours' work. It is notable that Saint-Ours has included only one of the twins in his composition, though it might here be implied that the second sculpture would occupy a symmetrically echoing position behind the priestesses and beyond the picture frame. Given this explicit reference to twins, it is tempting to speculate that Saint-Ours may well have been alluding to a number of dualities, or twinings, that inform the wider context of the work. For example, Saint-Ours' focus on ancient Greece can be twinned with David's emphasis on ancient Rome, whilst both these emphases reflect the ways in which these historical epochs were being deployed as historical ciphers for contemporary politics. Similarly, by quoting David's work, Saint-Ours was potentially positioning himself alongside the more famous artist with whom he had earlier studied and spent time in Rome. The fact



that David's work, by the early 1790s, was already being strongly associated with the kind of revolutionary politics that Saint-Ours himself supported lends some credence to this association. Yet such thoughts must necessarily remain little more than speculation. What is clear, however, is the fact that once more references to the Olympic Games in the visual arts could be deployed to negotiate complex contemporary debates and political issues that made the theme a highly valuable weapon in the armoury of the artist.

### *Conclusion*

The late eighteenth century was certainly a golden age for revived interests in the ancient Olympic Games. Chandler's re-discovery of the original site of the Games and Winckelmann's promotion of Olympia as a potentially rich archaeological resource (although this later proved ill-founded) were popularly bolstered by the publication of key texts such as West's *Dissertation on the Olympick Games* in England and Barthélemy's *Travels of Anacharsis the Younger* in France, whilst wider allusions to the Games in the performing arts of theatre, opera and dance ensured that Olympic history remained very much in focus amongst cultural circles. The two case studies examined in this article reveal the importance of the Olympic Games as a subject for artists at a specific moment during the early pre-history of the modern Olympic Games. But more than this, they also demonstrate the considerable extent to which visual culture could exploit Olympic history to challenge wider socio-historical issues, ranging from contemporary conceptions about art itself, religious identities and class issues grounded in Republicanism. In the end, perhaps neither artist impacted upon the development of history painting in the ways that they would doubtless have wished. For Barry, no English history painter took up his challenge whilst for Saint-Ours, even amongst his contemporaries only his close friend, the sculptor Antonio Canova, seems to have turned to the theme of ancient sports. For example, his twinned sculptures of the boxers *Damoxenos* and *Kreugas* (1795-1806), though notably referring to an event at the Nemean, rather than the Olympic, Games, can be read as paralleling Saint-Ours' emphasis on the potential violence of ancient sport (fig 7). But the works of Barry and Saint-Ours still serve to remind us of how an engagement with Olympic history can address wider universal themes with as much relevance for us today as in the past.

This also raises a much bigger question in relation to Olympic scholarship and the value of visual sources to further research. As this article has hopefully demonstrated, close engagement with specific case studies can expand our knowledge of historical narratives engaging with an Olympic past, adding another dimension to the panoply of narratives that frame Olympic history. Whilst the focus here is very much on that understudied period about a century before the revival of the Games, the same opportunities are very much there for other periods both preceding and following this moment, including up to the present. A disciplinary divide between sport historians and art historians has resulted in too few of the former engaging on a deeper level with visual resources, while the latter have tended to diminish the importance of sporting practices, both ancient and modern, as a vital socio-historical cultural category. But rather than conclude that this as a failure, it may be more valuable to highlight the ample opportunities that this provides for scholars of the future, not least those who value sport and Olympic history, and its manifestation in visual and material form, as a vital component within our cultural experiences and cultural lives.

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#### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Richard Chandler, *Travels in Greece: Or an Account of a Tour Made at the Expense of the Society of Dilettanti* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1776), 294.
- <sup>2</sup> Richard Chandler, Nicholas Revett, William Pars, *Ionian Antiquities* (London: Society of Antiquities, 1769).
- <sup>3</sup> Chandler, *Travels in Greece*, 294-5.
- <sup>4</sup> William L. Pressly, *The Life and Art of James Barry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 119-127.
- <sup>5</sup> See the exhibition catalogue, Anne de Herdt, *Jean-Pierre Saint-Ours: Un peintre genevoise dans l'Europe des Lumières* (Geneva: Musée d'art et d'histoire de la ville de Genève, 2015).
- <sup>6</sup> Mike Huggins and Mike O'Mahony (eds), *The Visual in Sport* (Oxford: Routledge, 2011); Bernard Vere, *Sport and Modernism in the Visual Arts in Europe, c.1909-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018); Daniel Haxall (ed.), *Picturing the Beautiful the Game: A History of Soccer in Visual Culture and Art* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).
- <sup>7</sup> Margaret Timmers, *A Century of Olympic Posters* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2008); Mike O'Mahony, *Olympic Visions: Images of the Games Through History* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2012).
- <sup>8</sup> For a compendium of classical writers on Greek sport and the Olympics in particular, see Stephen G. Miller, *Arete: Greek Sports from Ancient Sources* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).
- <sup>9</sup> Karl Lennartz, "Olympia and History", *Olympic Review*, 126 (1978), 272.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 273.
- <sup>11</sup> Nigel Spivey, *The Ancient Olympics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 240.
- <sup>12</sup> Lennartz, "Olympia and History", 273.
- <sup>13</sup> William Shakespeare, *Henry VI, part 3*, Act 2, scene 3.
- <sup>14</sup> Francis Burns, "Robert Dover's Cotswold Olimpick Games", *Olympic Review*, 210 (1985), 231.
- <sup>15</sup> Christopher Whitfield, *Robert Dover and the Cotswold Games* (London: Henry Sotheran, 1962), 102.
- <sup>16</sup> Jeffrey O. Segrave, "The Olympic Games 393 AD-1896 AD: The Genealogy of an Idea in Literature, Music and Dance", *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies*, 13, 53-74, 2004.
- <sup>17</sup> Jeffrey O. Segrave, "Pietro Metastasio's *L'Olympiade* and the Survival of the Olympic Idea in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Europe", *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies*, 14, 1-28, 2008. *L'Olympiade* dramatizes the Trial of the Suitors from Herodotus 6.126-130
- <sup>18</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks*. Trans. of *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* by Henry Fuseli (London: A. Millar, 1765).
- <sup>19</sup> Lennartz, "Olympia and History", 273.
- <sup>20</sup> Pressly, *Life and Art*, 42.
- <sup>21</sup> For this proposal, the six artists who had been part of the original proposal to decorate St Paul's cathedral were joined by John Hamilton Mortimer, Joseph Wright of Derby, George Romney and Edward Penny. Pressly, *Life and Art*, 86.
- <sup>22</sup> Pressly, *Life and Art*, 87.
- <sup>23</sup> James Barry, *An Account of a Series of Pictures, in the Great Room of the Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, at the Adelphi* (London: William Adlard, 1783), 116.
- <sup>24</sup> See letter in Edward Fryer (ed), *The Works of James Barry*, vol. 1 (London: Cadell and Davies, 1809), 255.
- <sup>25</sup> James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens* vol. 1 (London: John Haberkorn, 1762).
- <sup>26</sup> David G.C. Allen, 'A Biographical Outline' in Susan Bennett (ed), *Cultivating the Human Faculties: James Barry (1741-1806) and the Society of Arts* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2008), 23.
- <sup>27</sup> Barry, *An Account*, 55-56.
- <sup>28</sup> William Pressly, "Crowning the Victors at Olympia: The Great Room's Primary Focus" in Tom Dunne and William Pressly, *James Barry, 1741-1806: History Painter* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 193.
- <sup>29</sup> Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 6.12.1-4, c.110-180 (English translation: W.H.S. Jones, 1918).
- <sup>30</sup> Barry, *An Account*, 52-3.
- <sup>31</sup> Donald G. Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2007), 201-2.
- <sup>32</sup> Gilbert West, *The Odes of Pindar in English Prose with Explanatory Notes to Which is Added West's Dissertation on the Olympic Games in Two Volumes* (London: R. Dodsley, 1749), vol. II, 129.
- <sup>33</sup> Barry, *An Account*, 52.
- <sup>34</sup> Pressley, "Crowning the Victors", 196.
- <sup>35</sup> West, *A Dissertation* 123-4.
- <sup>36</sup> West, *A Dissertation* 123-4. Although so-called 'gentlemen jockeys' did participate in horse racing in the eighteenth century, jockeys were more usually servants or from the poorer classes. See Robin Blake,

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- “Fieldwork: Stubbs and the Humbler Sort” in Robin Blake and Malcolm Warner, *Stubbs and the Horse*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 88.
- <sup>37</sup> West, *A Dissertation* 124.
- <sup>38</sup> West, *A Dissertation* 112.
- <sup>39</sup> Pressly, *Life and Art*, 7.
- <sup>40</sup> Malcolm Warner, “Stubbs and the Origin of the Thoroughbred” in Blake and Warner, *Stubbs and the Horse*, 102.
- <sup>41</sup> Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).
- <sup>42</sup> Martin Kemp, (ed), *Dr William Hunter at the Royal Academy of Arts* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 1975), 25. Cited in Pressly, “Crowning the Victors”, 193.
- <sup>43</sup> West, *Dissertation*, 187.
- <sup>44</sup> Pressly, *Life and Art*, 100. Quotation in West, *Dissertation*, 61.
- <sup>45</sup> Pressly, “Crowning the Victors”, 189-210.
- <sup>46</sup> William L. Pressly,, *James Barry: The Artist as Hero*, (London, Tate Publishing, 1983), 27.
- <sup>47</sup> Barry, *An Account*, 50.
- <sup>48</sup> Barry, *An Account*, 40.
- <sup>49</sup> David Solkin, “From Oddity to Odd Man Out: Contesting James Barry’s Critical Legacy” in Dunne and Pressly, *James Barry*, 20.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* 14.
- <sup>51</sup> de Herdt, *Saint-Ours*, 4.
- <sup>52</sup> Alain Arvin-Bérod, *Les Enfants D’Olympie 1796-1896*, (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1996), 43.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.
- <sup>54</sup> Jean Jacques Barthélemy, *Le Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce vers le milieu du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle avant l’ère vulgaire* (Paris: De Bure L’Ainé, 1788).
- <sup>55</sup> ‘des hommes de différentes nations et de différentes qualités’. From a letter sent by Saint-Ours to Tronchin, cited in Arvin-Bérod, *Enfants D’Olympie*, 46.
- <sup>56</sup> *A Letter from the Chevalier Antonio Canova and Two Memoirs Read to the Royal Institute of France on the Sculptures in the Collection of the Earl of Elgin* (London: John Murray, 1816), 90.
- <sup>57</sup> Arvin-Bérod, *Enfants D’Olympie*, 40-51.
- <sup>58</sup> Albert Boime, *Art in an Age of Revolution, 1750-1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 399.
- <sup>59</sup> Boime, *Art in an Age of Revolution*, 401.

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#### **List of (possible) Illustrations:**

- Fig 1. James Barry, *Crowning the Victors at Olympia* (from *The Progress of Human Knowledge and Culture* series), 1777-1783, oil on canvas, 360 x 1308 cm, Meeting Room, Royal Society of Arts.
- Fig 2. Jean-Pierre Saint-Ours, *Le Jeux olympiques*, 1787-1791, oil on canvas, 209.5 x 386cm, Musée d'art et d'histoire, Geneva.
- Fig 3, Anon., Cover of *Annalia Dubrensia, or Celebration of Captain Robert Dover's Cotswold Games*, 1636 (reprint 1878), ink on paper.

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Fig 4. Thomas Rowlandson and Augustus Welby Northcote Pugin, *The Society for the Encouragement of the Arts at the Adelphi*, c.1809, coloured aquatint.

Fig 5. Jean-Pierre Saint-Ours, *Le Jeux olympiques* (sketch), 1787, oil on canvas, 73 x 135 cm, Musée d'art et d'histoire, Geneva.

Fig 6. Jacques-Louis David, *Oath of the Horatii*, 1784, oil on canvas, 303 x 425 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Fig 7 Antonio Canova, *Kreugas and Damoxenos*, c.1800, marble, Vatican Museum, Rome.