

The rise and demise of Octavia Hamilton: a study of colonial celebrity and scandal

Author:

Kennedy, Patricia

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**The rise and demise of Octavia Hamilton:
a study of colonial celebrity and scandal**

Patricia Kennedy

**A thesis in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of a
Master of Arts by Research UNSW**



**School of Humanities and Languages
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences**

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Thesis/ Dissertation Sheet

Surname or Family Name: Kennedy

First name: Patricia

Other names/s: Anne

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Abstract

This thesis recovers the history of Octavia Hamilton, a singer-celebrity who occupied colonial Victoria's lyric stage between 1854 and 1865 before scandal destroyed her career, and provides insights into the cultural values of the era. The English born subject arrived in Melbourne in 1854 as Mrs Moon, a theatrical unknown, yet she secured her first singing engagement within a month under the pseudonym "Miss Octavia Hamilton". Her celebrity was founded on a level of musical expertise that was valued, in part, because it supported colonists' own projects of social mobility: attendance at high calibre musical productions showcased residents' material and cultural capital.

Hamilton's history complicates the notion of colonial female respectability, supporting the argument that pragmatism was a stronger ideological force than evangelicalism in the construction of respectable female lyric stage identity in mid-nineteenth-century Victoria. This study of Hamilton's life adds depth to our understanding of colonial female experience by revealing new connections between lyric stages performance and audience ambition, female philanthropists and celebrity music-makers, Melbourne's 'ladies' and female artistes, and women in financial crisis from both the working and middle class. Hamilton's history provides additional knowledge about enabling female networks and collaborative relationships between male and female professionals. While there is evidence of strong and diverse class support for Hamilton, analysis of her failure to connect with some audiences, such as Melbourne's Trade Unionists, adds strength to the thesis' argument that spectator involvement in lyric stage culture was influenced by self-conscious projects of identity formation.

An analysis of the two-phase nature of the Hamilton scandal provides new insights into social perceptions of female misdemeanour in mid-nineteenth-century Victoria. In a colony striving to build an image of civility, some residents were prepared to dim the lights on the publicised adultery of a singer with cultural utility. However, Hamilton's perceived abandonment of her children in the second phase of the scandal saw her shunned by audiences, a response conveying the limits of colonial pragmatism. In this cultural history, the study of Hamilton's rise and demise reveals as much about Victorian colonists as it does about a long-forgotten celebrity.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the children of Octavia Hamilton who became state wards and to Augustus Graham Moon's secret daughter.

Emile Augustus Moon	(1856-1913)
Alice Florence Moon	(1857-1925)
Edith Rose Millicent Moon	(1861- 1927)
Edith Florence Moon	(1864-1939)

I also dedicate this thesis to my son, Sebastian Alexander Pugliese, who has faced extraordinary challenges with enormous courage.

Sebastian Alexander Pugliese (1985-)

Points to note regarding sources and referencing

1. I have accessed genealogical records from ancestry.com and supplemented data through purchased copies of original documents in some cases.
2. While this thesis generally adopts the Oxford system of referencing, there are exceptions. Genealogical material is organised under the last name of the identity and the information category is noted immediately after the subject's name, for instance: Moon, Edith Rose, Birth, 1861 May 29, reg. 11214, East Melbourne, *Australia Birth Index, 1788-1922*. When reciting information, I provide the name and the information category, for instance: Moon, Edith Rose, Birth.
3. In order to make the many newspaper articles provided through the Australian National Library database *trove* readily accessible in the Reference list, I adopt the Australian Harvard system of referencing, a format that commences with the year of publication and lends itself to chronological tracking. For the sake of consistency, I have also followed this system as far as possible in the citation of non-*trove* press articles, including those obtained from the nineteenth-century *London Gazette*.
4. I have not included access or online publication dates for stable archives that include:
<http://trove.nla.gov.au>; www.london-gazette.co.uk; <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org>;
<http://sydney.edu.au/paradisec/australharmony/>; <http://adb.anu.edu.au/>.
5. I have not included access dates for theses accessed through online university repositories.
6. In my referencing of colonial diaries, I have distinguished between edited primary sources, in which the original text is substantially intact, and heavily interpolated diaries, in which the editor's commentary breaks up the original text. In the former case I have privileged the diarist as author and in the latter case I have either privileged the editor or attributed joint authorship, depending on the degree of interpolation.

Introduction – Octavia Hamilton, Australian colonial singer

The purpose of this thesis is to recover the history of Octavia Hamilton, a singer-celebrity who occupied the lyric stage of Victoria between March 1854 and August 1865. Hamilton's life provides a valuable yet neglected lens through which to examine a number of issues central to colonial society, most significantly respectability and the nature of scandal. This study suggests that in colonial Victoria the widespread demand for music frequently overrode evangelical notions of female virtue. The lyric stage required its female artistes and Hamilton's colonial career indicates the imbrication of secular values in Melbourne's church culture. Her pronounced public profile, her extended periods of touring, her skilled participation in professional networks and her interactions with Melbourne's ladies highlight her exceptionality, yet the strategies she adopted to address her financial problems at the end of her career were shared with ordinary women. Indeed, her recourse to the state as a childcare provider, a strategy more typically associated with working-class women, was a central aspect of her disgrace. While an investigation of Hamilton's respectable celebrity complicates the notion of female virtue, her struggles as a disgraced celebrity reveal deep anxieties about the presence of transgressive women in colonial society. This thesis argues that Hamilton's life highlights the elastic nature of respectability in colonial Victoria and the limits of tolerance for errant women of cultural utility.

Mrs Eliza Moon, an English migrant who arrived in Victoria in February 1854 as a theatrical unknown, secured her first theatrical engagement within a month under the pseudonym Octavia Hamilton. Frequent press references to Hamilton throughout her career indicate her status as a household name in the newspaper-reading cultures of colonial Victoria and New South Wales, yet today she is all but forgotten.¹ Like the

¹ For commentary on the strong press culture in the east coast colonies see K. McKenry, 'The ballads of Eureka', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, vol.10, no.1, 2008, p. 51. S. Macintyre, *A concise history of Australia*, Cambridge, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 118. See D. Dunstan, 'The Argus: The life, death and remembering of a great Australian newspaper', in M. Porter (ed.), *Argus: The Life and Death of a Great Melbourne Newspaper (1846-1957)*, Melbourne, Vic, RMIT Publishing, 2003, p. 17.

internationally renowned burlesque dancer Lola Montez, Hamilton was involved in scandal, but unlike Montez her mode of colonial celebrity could not accommodate a scandalous identity. The focus on Hamilton's career in this thesis is grounded in larger contexts of social mobility, cultural capital and colonial identity and as such highlights opportunities for socially valued achievement in colonial Victoria.

Hamilton's performance skills were valued by her public because they enabled audiences to engage in their own performances of social civility. Her production of a musical repertoire constructed as 'civilised' by the dominant culture helped to distance colonial identity from the supposed 'savagery' of the Indigenous inhabitants and the convict origins of the white settler state. However from August 1865, her depiction as a cold mother in the course of two court hearings evoked the spectre of female convictism and she lost the cultural capital necessary for genteel celebrity. Just as her musical expertise influenced her rise to celebrity status, scandal eroded her cultural capital and drove her demise.

To date Octavia Hamilton has been omitted from colonial social and cultural histories and appears as little more than a footnote in lyric stage histories.² One probable reason for the neglect of Hamilton is the relegation of colonial music-makers to musicology, or narrowly conceived lyric stage history. Such typology has obscured the role of music as a technology of empire, yet racialised conceptions of Anglo superiority and non-western barbarism pervaded nineteenth-century constructions of music. In refracting the light on colonial cultural history through the prism of lyric stage biography our vision of colonial Victoria gains clarity and scope. The popularity of a woman who toured in the absence of her husband, and sang opera as well as sacred oratorio, suggests that evangelical extremism was

² Burlesque dancer Lola Montez appears in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* of 2016, despite her relatively short stay in the colonies. See M. Cannon, 'Montez, Lola (1818–1861)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 1974, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/montez-lola-4226>. Frenchman Nicholas Boscha, who toured Australia very briefly with prima donna Anna Bishop before dying in January 1856 in Sydney, also appears in the *Dictionary*. See E. Lea-Scarlett, 'Bochsa, Robert Nicholas Charles (1789–1856)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Australian National University, 1969, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bochsa-robert-nicholas-charles-3019>. However, two women who were principal vocalists of Melbourne, Mrs Elizabeth Testar and Octavia Hamilton, are absent as of December 2016.

not a dominant force for many residents. Similarly, Hamilton's acclaimed performances, in both Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, indicate the unevenness of religious sectarianism in mid-century metropolitan Melbourne. A focus on Hamilton's professional demise not only illuminates the woman but also reveals some of the values and motivations of key players in the celebrity network. As Kirsten McKenzie has argued, a study of scandal provides insights into the larger culture producing it.³

In his iconic history of the city – *The rise and fall of marvellous Melbourne* (1978) – Graeme Davison associated (and interrogated) the notion of the “marvellous” in relation to Victoria's 1880s metropolis.⁴ However this thesis puts a somewhat neglected spotlight on the so-called “magnificent intentions” of the mid-century residents whose aspirations propelled the reshaping of Melbourne's cultural and physical environment.⁵ As Hamilton's history underscores, the will to produce cultural experiences valued by the middle-class British world was essential to the narrative of a civil white settlement in Victoria. Yet from the perspective of Australian Indigenous people, the cultural, commercial and political ‘remapping’ of Melbourne and its environment was near catastrophic.

Two major histories of Melbourne – James Boyce's *1835: The founding of Melbourne* and Davison's previously mentioned *Marvellous Melbourne* – provide the prequel and sequel to Melbourne's rapid growth during mid-century, but there is much remaining scope for investigation of the 1850s and 1860s.⁶ Social and cultural histories of the mid-century are frequently filtered through the lens of the gold rushes. Andrew Reeves, Iain McCalman and Alexander Cook examine both cultural anxieties about gold

³ K. McKenzie, *Scandal in the colonies: Sydney and Cape Town, 1820-1850*, Carlton, Vic., 2004, p. 62.

⁴ For reference to the visit of English journalist George Sala who coined the phrase “Marvellous Melbourne” see G. Davison, *The rise and fall of marvellous Melbourne*, Melbourne University Press, 2004. p. 12. Davison's entire work is a well-synthesised analysis of the notion of the “marvellous” in relation to Melbourne.

⁵ David Goodman has noted that Melbourne was being described as a city of “magnificent intentions” as early as 1856. See D. Goodman, ‘Gold’, in A. Brown-May and S. Swain (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Melbourne*, Melbourne and Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 309.

⁶ J. Boyce, *1835: The founding of Melbourne & the conquest of Australia*, Melbourne, Black Inc, 2012.

rush society and the quest for self-improvement in the east coast colonies.⁷ Goodman links gold rush urbanisation to the increased repression of Indigenous people and Davison highlights the rise of “new consumer markets”.⁸ This thesis provides new insights into the relationship between European cultural practices and the consolidation of the white settler state in colonial Victoria. Octavia Hamilton’s career aspirations, supported by the demands of an expanding celebrity marketplace, reinforced a narrative of white cultural superiority.

To date histories of Melbournian culture in the 1850s and 1860s have primarily concentrated on male activities. While the scholarship of Ann Galbally, Stuart Lurline and Paul de Serville details the cultural milieu of Melbourne’s clubmen, there is considerable scope for the investigation of the middle-class women who interacted with those men.⁹ A focus on the colonial lyric stage, which involved close collaboration between women and men in a relatively egalitarian subculture, highlights the complexity of women’s experiences in mid-century Melbourne.

On the surface, Hamilton’s experience of celebrity and public disgrace distinguishes her life from less prominent women. Yet her experiences as a workingwoman and reluctant wife are best located within a wider history of shared female experience. Hamilton’s story reveals connections between female philanthropists and celebrity music-makers, working-class mothers and female professionals, and lyric stage performers and ambitious spectators – thereby elevating a lyric stage history into a cultural and feminist history. Recent histories by Clare Wright and Catherine Bishop, who have examined opportunities for female entrepreneurial activity in the colonial era, provide models for the location

⁷A. Reeves, I. McCalman and A. Cook, ‘Introduction’, Reeves, A., McCalman, I., and Cook, A. (eds.), *Gold: forgotten histories and lost objects of Australia*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 12, p. 17.

⁸D. Goodman, ‘Making an edgier history of gold’, in A. Reeves, I. McCalman and A. Cook (eds.), op. cit., p. 32. D. Goodman, *Gold seeking Victoria and California in the 1850s*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, Australia, 1994, p. 14. G. Davison, ‘Gold-rush Melbourne’, in Reeves, McCalman and Cook (eds.), op. cit., p. 55.

⁹ I will be making reference to the work of de Serville and Galbally in the course of this thesis. See P. de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees: the upper class in Victoria, 1850-1880*, South Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1991. A. Galbally, *Redmond Barry: an Anglo-Irish Australia*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1995.

of life stories in histories with a wider focus.¹⁰ This study of Hamilton in the context of her networks assists in the recovery of larger female experience.¹¹

This thesis builds on Penny Russell's landmark studies of gentility through elaborating on the elastic nature of respectable identity. Russell has commented on the tension between a genteel blindness shrouding unrespectable behaviours in "decent obscurity" and a response of "outrage" to those same behaviours.¹² As I argue, colonial press reports of Hamilton's marital conflict ultimately made such blindness impossible. This thesis extends Anne O'Brien's investigations of voluntaristic culture through the argument that cooperative relationships between musical and philanthropic women authorised autonomy for female music makers.¹³ This thesis also builds on McKenzie's argument that scandal was a device for asserting the 'moral' values of colonists.¹⁴ A study of Hamilton's life suggests that scandal associated with the once-reputable figures might humiliate the dominant culture, imputing their gullibility and ambiguous morality.

The origins of this cultural and feminist history lie in my investigation of family history, specifically the history of my great grandmother, Sydney housewife Mrs Edith Lloyd who died in 1939 at age 75. Was she Jewish as rumoured in the family? Or was it her Protestant faith that prevented her from engaging with my Catholic mother, who never spent time with Edith, despite the fact that they both lived in Petersham? A photograph of Edith as an older woman, striding along Canterbury Road in her two-toned shoes, engaged my attention as a teenager: she was a woman of mystery and style. Decades later, an investigation of Mrs Lloyd's origins

¹⁰ Clare Wright documents numerous examples of women seizing opportunities and negotiating constraints. See for example the micro-history of English Eliza Perrin who was able to rid herself of her feckless husband in Ballarat in the mid 1850s and to establish a public house. C. Wright, *The forgotten rebels of Eureka*, Melbourne, Victoria, Text Publishing, 2013, pp. 182-183. Catherine Bishop has devoted an entire book to the discussion of colonial of female entrepreneurial spirit. See C. Bishop, *Minding Her Own Business*, Sydney, NewSouth Publishing, 2015.

¹¹ This study uncovers aspects of the lives of singers such as Louisa Swannell and Geraldine Warden, who performed with Hamilton at various points in time. I also touch on Lucy Escott's relationship with Henry Squires, almost certainly adulterous. My discussion of these women is necessarily restricted in this thesis but does uncover new information.

¹² P. Russell, *Savage or Civilised? Manners in Colonial Australia*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2010, pp. 132-133.

¹³ For relevant discussion see A. O'Brien, *Philanthropy and settler colonialism*, Hampshire, England, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 5, p. 19, p. 61, p. 67, p. 73.

¹⁴ McKenzie, *Scandal in the colonies*, p. 35, p. 50, p. 70, p. 87.

through digitised genealogical records and newspapers led me to Octavia Hamilton, the woman I initially believed to be her mother. How easily I slipped into nineteenth-century templates of assumption and blame, concluding that Edith was one of Hamilton's 'abandoned' daughters – and how wrong I was in my deduction. As I will explain in Chapter Three of this thesis, Edith was in fact the secret daughter of Augustus Graham Moon, Hamilton's estranged husband. Tanya Evans has underscored the power of genealogical investigations to uncover the "manifold secrets and lies" that not only rewrite the narratives of family but also contribute to larger histories.¹⁵ As Evans notes, one way that the "radical potential of family history" may be achieved is through collaboration between family historians and historians from the academy.¹⁶ Another is for the family historian to *become* the feminist and cultural historian, which is what I have attempted to do in the writing of this thesis.

Who was Octavia Hamilton?

Octavia Hamilton was born Eliza Octavia Scrivenor, the sixth of eight children to John and Frances Scrivenor in 1835, London.¹⁷ The Scrivenor family moved house at least fifteen times in England because of debt and insolvency and John Scrivenor spent time in debtors' prison.¹⁸ The desire

¹⁵ T. Evans, 'Secrets and Lies, the radical potential of family history', *History Workshop Journal*, issue 71, Spring 2011, p. 51.

¹⁶ Evans notes that Babette Smith has used her skills as a genealogist in her history writing and that the work of Lucy Frost, Portia Robinson and Grace Karskens has been enriched through the use of genealogical resources. The phrase "radical potential of family history" is drawn from the title of Evan's article. Evans concludes her article by acknowledging the value of the skilled family historian to larger historical writing: *ibid*, p. 68.

¹⁷ For Hamilton's birth details see Scrivenor, Eliza Octavia, Birth, 6 June 1835, *London Metropolitan Archives, St Marylebone, Register of Baptism*.

¹⁸ Scrivenor started out his working life as solicitor, but after 1823, his name did not appear on the roll of attorneys. For Scrivenor's name on the roll see T. Cockell, *Clarke's New Law List*, J. & W. T. Clarke, Law Booksellers, Portugal-street, Lincoln's Inn; and R. Pheney, Temple Gate, 1821, p. 70; T. Cockell, *Clarke's New Law List*, 1822, p. 105. T. Cockell, *Clarke's New Law List*, 1823, p. 70. For John Scrivenor's various phases of insolvency see 1834 *London Gazette*, 'Insolvent Debtor – Dividend,' Issue 19148, 22 April, p. 22, www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/19148/pages/740. 1836 *London Gazette*, 'Insolvent Debtor–Dividend,' Issue 19350, 26 January, p. 22, www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/19350/pages/166. 1837 *London Gazette*, 'Insolvent Debtor – Dividend,' Issue 19484, 14 April, p. 14, www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/19484/pages/1000. 1838 *London Gazette*, 'The Court for Relief of Insolvent Debtors,' Issue 19594, 2 March, p. 24, www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/19594/pages/902. 1850 *London Gazette*, 'The Court for Relief of Insolvent Debtors,' Issue 21079, 22 March, p. 40, www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/21079/pages/902. *London Gazette*, The Court for Relief of Insolvent Debtors, Issue 21079, 2 March, p. 41, www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/21079/pages/903. According to Richard

for greater economic security was one clear motive for the family's migration to the Australian colonies; the other was family reunion. In 1850 Eliza's brother Walter was sentenced to a ten-year term in Western Australia for stealing from a post office, while sisters Isabella and Fanny were married in 1851 in a double wedding in South Australia.¹⁹ Eliza herself married in 1851, exchanging vows with the family boarder Augustus Graham Moon, the day after her sixteenth birthday.²⁰ By the standards of the time she was a very young bride but her parents probably considered her match with an affable clerk a stroke of good fortune, given their history of financial struggle.²¹ After giving birth to daughter Frances and son Walter in 1852 and 1853 respectively, Hamilton migrated with her husband and at least four other members of the extended Scrivenor-Moon family, arriving in colonial Victoria in February 1854.²²

As a lyric stage aspirant who lacked a performance history or teachers of renown, Mrs Moon aka "Miss Octavia Hamilton", seized

Abel, it would have been virtually impossible for Scrivenor to regain his 1821-23 status of solicitor, as insolvents were struck off the roll. See R. Abel, Email, 12 April, 2014. At the time of Hamilton's birth, Scrivenor identified as a clerk. See Scrivenor, Eliza Octavia, Birth. At the time of the 1851 census record he identified as a "solicitor's managing clerk". See Scrivenor, John W, 1851 England Census, Middlesex, Islington, Islington West, *Census Returns of England and Wales, 1851*. However, at the time of Hamilton's 1851 marriage he identified as a solicitor, as if rehearsing for his colonial reinvention of identity. See Scrivenor, Eliza Octavia, Marriage, 7 June 1851, London, *Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-1921*.

¹⁹ For details of Walter Scrivenor's conviction see Scrivenor, Walter, 'Walter Scrivenor, mail theft, 6th January 1851,' *The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, London's Central Criminal Court, 1674 to 1913*, <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?divt18510106-346>. Fanny self-represented as 26 on her marriage documentation but was actually 30 while Isabella raised her age from 18 to 22, presumably strategic choices. See Scrivenor, Fanny, Marriage, 1851 October 27, Adelaide, *Australia Marriage Index, 1788-1950*. Scrivenor, Isabella, Marriage, 1851 October 27, Adelaide, *Australia Marriage Index, 1788-1950*. Hamilton's sister Ellen also married in South Australia. See Scrivenor, Ellen Augusta, Marriage, 25 April 1854, Adelaide, *Australia Marriage Index, 1788-1950*.

²⁰ Scrivenor, Eliza Octavia, Marriage.

²¹ In 1851, the average age of marriage for women was approximately 24.6 years. See R. Outhwaite, 'Age at Marriage in England from the Late Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Fifth Series*, vol. 23, 1973, p. 58.

²² For the birth details of Hamilton's children see Moon, Octavia Frances, Birth, 15 April, 1852, London, *England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813-1906*. Moon, Walter Graham, Birth, May 4, 1853, London, *Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813-1906*. For the shipping records relevant to Moon migration see Moon Family Name, Feb 1854, *Index to Unassisted Inward Passenger Lists to Victoria 1852-1923*, Victoria, <https://goo.gl/ELZ6A7>. For the shipping records relating to the 1854 Scrivenor migration, specifically Mr and Mrs Scrivenor and their two sons Frederick and Frances, and an unidentified child named Scrivenor, see Scrivenor Family Name, Feb 1854, *Index to Unassisted Inward Passenger Lists to Victoria 1852-1923*, Victoria, <https://goo.gl/cHHhGQ>.

available opportunities for public performance and soon secured regular engagements, appearing with a wide range of music-makers, and her press reviews were generally warm. Hamilton's expertise in British balladry and sacred music, her participation in a strong voluntaristic culture, and her forays into opera allowed her to exert her appeal on wide ranging sectors of society. Her colleagues included prima donnas, tenors and baritones of international reputation, colonial born singers, European instrumentalists, and a number of composers who used her celebrity to market their music. In the first phase of her Australian colonial career, which spanned March 1854 to August 1865, Hamilton performed for the most part in metropolitan and regional Victoria but also toured Sydney and Tasmania.²³ Aside from her first two English-born children, Hamilton had seven additional children during her years of celebrity, and seven post-celebrity children: sixteen in total.²⁴ There were no media references to pregnancies or the deaths of three children between 1855 and 1864 – and no press allusion to her formalised separation from Augustus Graham Moon in 1862.

Then came 1865 when Hamilton's claim for child maintenance against her husband resulted in two damaging court hearings. In the first court hearing, Moon attempted to evade his contracted payments by arguing that he should not be responsible for the maintenance of illegitimate children. After damning press reports and a five-month hiatus in her career, Hamilton returned to the metropolitan stage on August 16 but her favourable reception lasted all of a day. On August 18 a second hearing involved a three-way contest between Hamilton, Moon and the Crown. Hamilton attempted to compel Moon to take on the role of custodial parent to two of his legal daughters, Moon denied paternity and the Crown endeavoured to resolve the dispute without carrying the financial burden. Ultimately eight-year old Alice Florence and four-year old Edith Rose were

²³ Although Hamilton's career was substantially suspended from February 24 to mid-August 1865, she did perform at Ballarat in April, in a Good Friday event, and on July 7 & 8. See 1865 'NEWS AND NOTES', *The Ballarat Star* (Vic.: 1865-1924), 12 April, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article112885997>. 1865 'Advertising', *The Ballarat Star* (Vic.: 1865-1924), 6 July, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article112877031>. 1865 'Advertising', *The Ballarat Star* (Vic.: 1865-1924), 8 July, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article112877085>.

²⁴ For a summary of the birth details of Hamilton's sixteen children see Appendix 2.

committed to the state industrial school of Victoria as wards of the state.²⁵ In subsequent press reports, Hamilton was not only depicted as a serial adulteress but as an abandoning mother, with the latter image in particular inciting press condemnation.²⁶

Octavia Hamilton's efforts to resurrect her career in 1867 failed as audiences shunned her. Press announcements of her involvement in the English Glee and Burlesque Opera Company were interspersed with reports of her daughter Alice Florence being recommitted to state care after abuse by a custodial adult outside the institution.²⁷ Hamilton left the colonies at some point between the 1874 birth of Eliza Dora Davis Moon, in Williamstown Victoria, and the 1875 birth of Mabel Frances in England.²⁸ In England she lived out an anonymous life as Mrs Eliza Davis, the "wife" of an "Australian wine merchant".²⁹ She died in 1907, at age 72 of a stroke, in the Yorkshire home of her youngest daughter Mabel Frances.³⁰

²⁵ For representative reporting on the second court hearing see 1865 'SINGULAR CASE OF CHILD DESERTION', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 19 Aug., p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5785638>. 1865 'THE NEWS OF THE DAY', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854-1954), 19 August, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article155040415>. For the birth details of the girls who became state wards see respectively Moon, Alice Florence, Birth, 1857 November 7, reg. 14287, Richmond, *Australia Birth Index, 1788-1922*. Moon, Rose Edith Millicent, Birth, 1861 May 29, reg. 11214, East Melbourne, *Australia Birth Index, 1788-1922*.

²⁶ 1865 'How Industrial Schools Are Stocked', *Mount Alexander Mail* (Vic.: 1854 - 1917), 23 August, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article197090437>. 1865 'No title', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 22 August, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article155039893>.

²⁷ For reports on the experiences of [Alice] Florence Moon see 1867 'NEWS AND NOTES', *The Ballarat Star* (Vic.: 1865 - 1924), 11 October, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article112871091>. 1867 'VICTORIA', *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser (NSW: 1843 - 1893)*, 17 October, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article18730391>. 1867 'Victoria', *The Cornwall Chronicle (Launceston, Tas.: 1835 - 1880)*, 23 October, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article72185383>.

²⁸ Thomas Davis posted an advertisement for clearing of stock in his store in Collins-street on January 15, 1874. See 1874 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 15 January, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article587947>. For the birth of daughter Eliza see Moon, Eliza Dora Davis, Birth, May 2, 1874, reg. 13008, Williamstown, *Victoria, Australia, Birth Index, 1788-1922*. For the birth of Mabel in November 10 1875 and her belated christening in 1900, March 11 see Davis, Mabel, Christening, March 11, 1900, West Yorkshire, Reg. 1679, *Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813-1910*.

²⁹ See Davis, Eliza, 1881 England Census, Lewisham, London, *Census Returns of England and Wales 1881*. Note: she consistently shaved two years off her age post-Australia context.

³⁰ See Davis, Eliza, Death, 1907, Yorkshire, West Riding, *England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915*.

Literature Review

Unless otherwise specified, the scholars I refer to in this review are Australian historians and the scholarship I draw on is predominantly historical. In recovering the silenced history of a colonial woman whose experiences provide insights into various categories of women – middle-class, working-class, transgressors, celebrities, ‘civilisers’, philanthropists – I am adopting a feminist frame. Where possible, I have included comparative elements in this cultural history and life study so as to zoom out from a narrow celebrity focus to the broader sweep of interconnected female experience.³¹ Barbara Caine has rightly argued that feminist histories should link individual lives with the female collective, and this thesis aims to take up that challenge.³²

I will begin by evaluating historical references to Hamilton and her peers, before moving on to works analysing the cultural construction of music in the British world. Next I will discuss scholarship focusing on notions of public and private space as it related to women and in the final section I will discuss relevant investigations of celebrity and scandal.

In his landmark *Golden Age of Opera in Australia* (1981), Love tracks the contribution of the Lyster Opera Company to colonial music culture, with a particular focus on the American prima donna Lucy Escott.³³ Similarly, Luke Agati, Deborah Crisp, Davis Ross and Ann Wentzel emphasise the role of visiting prima donnas such as Catherine Hayes and Anna Bishop in engaging colonists in concert and operatic culture.³⁴ Perhaps the traditional privileging of the prima donna over principal

³¹ In my use of the term ‘life study’ I am distinguishing between relatively fragmented life stories and full-blown biographies – although no biography is complete. See B. Caine, ‘Feminist biography and feminist history’, *Women's History Review*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1994, pp. 247-247, pp. 251-252.

³² *ibid.* pp. 251-252.

³³ Love, H., *The Golden Age of Australian Opera: W. S. Lyster and his Companies*, Sydney, Currency Press, 1981, p. 15.

³⁴ See L. Agati, ‘Sweetly sings the Swan of Erin: Catherine Hayes in Tasmania in 1856’, *Papers and Proceedings, Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 57, no. 2, August 2010, pp. 119-125. L. Agati, ‘A far-famed cantatrice tours Tasmania: Anna Bishop in concert in 1857’, *Papers and Proceedings: Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 56, no. 3, Dec 2009, p. 198. D. Crisp, ‘“Acted and sung in Italian”: Catherine Hayes and Anna Bishop in Sydney, 1855-1856’, *Australasian Music Research*, no. 4, 1999, p. 34, p. 37, p. 43. D. Ross, *Singing And Society: Melbourne, 1836-1861*, MA diss., University of Melbourne, 1982, p. 152. A. Wentzel, The rapid development of music in Australia, 1851–1861, *Musicology Australia*, 3:1, 1968, p. 70.

vocalists has influenced the preoccupation with international stars in Australian lyric stage histories. While Alison Gyger, Nicole Anae and Wentzel have acknowledged Hamilton as a significant contributor to the colonial lyric stage, their investigation has been slight and she remains a relative unknown.³⁵ In contrast to histories replicating metropolitan hierarchies, with prima donna Nellie Melba at the pinnacle, Anne Doggett's treatment of colonial rural music making in Ballarat emphasises the importance of quasi-professional local singers, such as Mrs Little.³⁶ Wright, too, highlights the relationship between regional demands and theatrical opportunity.³⁷ Bishop's discussion of Marie Carandini's lyric stage successes and Anae's examination of the achievements of the Tasmanian Howson sisters invites a broader investigation of celebrated vocalists trained in the local environment.³⁸

Anae's description of Octavia Hamilton as a "non-domestic act" fails to recognise that in a context of demographic fluidity, she was perceived as a domestic staple: she was a stayer.³⁹ In fact it was the domestic nature of Hamilton's celebrity that reduced her status in the presence of visiting troupes with internationally renowned prima donnas.⁴⁰ Graeme Skinner's history of Australian musical composition alludes to Hamilton's celebrity status by identifying the original music compositions that she helped to promote.⁴¹ Both Love and Doggett have suggested that Hamilton lived a flagrantly promiscuous lifestyle, conflating the press

³⁵ A. Gyger, *Civilising the colonies: pioneering opera in Australia*, Sydney, Pellinor, 1999, p. 105. N. Anae, 'Operatic performances two hundred miles in the Australian bush': staging rural identity, the case of Madame Fannie Simonsen in Wagga Wagga, 1866', *Rural Society*, vol. 20, supplement 1, 2010, pp. 73-74. Wentzel, op. cit., p. 72.

³⁶ T. Radic, Melba, *The Voice of Australia*, South Melbourne, Macmillan, 1986, p. ix. A. Doggett, 'Beyond gentility: women and music in early Ballarat', *History Australia*, vol. 6, no. 2, Aug 2009, p. 37.7.

³⁷ Wright, *The forgotten rebels of Eureka*, pp. 241-5.

³⁸ Bishop, op. cit. pp. 193-194. Anae, 'The new prima donnas': 'Homegrown' Tasmanian 'stars' of the 1860s Emma and Clelia Howson', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 28, no. 84, 2005, p. 177.

³⁹ For reference to Hamilton's "non-domestic" status see Anae, *Journal of Australian Studies*, p. 177. Hamilton was described as a "celebrated cantatrice" one year after her arrival, a sign of her esteem as a domestic singer. See 1855 'Local News, *The Hobart Mercury (Tas.: 1854 - 1857)*, 9 February, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article3334878>.

⁴⁰ Anae rightly notes that the status of the Howson sisters was reduced in the presence of visiting celebrities but fails to include Hamilton, also a domestic act, within this frame. See Anae, *Journal of Australian Studies*, p. 180.

⁴¹ See G. Skinner, *Towards a general history of Australian musical composition: First national music 1788-c.1860*, PhD diss., University of Sydney, 2011, p. 319, p. 464, p. 539.

scandal of 1865 with her career as a whole, when there is evidence that she was reasonably circumspect for much of her career.⁴²

Between the 1870s and 1930s, nostalgic newspaper retrospectives on the mid-century colonial lyric stage recognised the contributions of earlier music-makers that included Octavia Hamilton. In 1909 one press commentator's observation that the arrival of the Lyster Theatre had the effect of deflecting attention away from "old favourites" implied the need for a substantive revisionist history.⁴³ This thesis aims to contribute to that history.

Cultural capital: music as colonial currency

As scholars such as Russell have observed, colonies founded on indigenous dispossession and convict labour faced challenges when self-representing as legitimate. Savagery was most often associated with Indigenous Australians but some whites could be categorised as savage, such as convicts and "uncouth" miners.⁴⁴ British historian Catherine Hall has argued that the upkeep of empire involved continuous efforts to "craft" a "grammar of difference" between empire builders and the colonised. Notions of difference between Europeans and Indigenous peoples were based on fictional claims of European superiority, a fiction that required effort to maintain.⁴⁵

Colonial concert life offered considerable opportunity for audience performances of civility. Russell, Love, Gyger and Anae have commented that opera attendance tutored the socially mobile in the kinds of behaviours appropriate to the refined middle class: for instance, nineteenth-century audience behaviour involving quiet and engaged response as opposed to

⁴²Doggett, *History Australia*, p. 37.7. Love, *The Golden Age of Australian Opera*, p. 90.

⁴³1908 'MUMMER MEMOIRS', *Sydney Sportsman* (Surry Hills, NSW: 1900 - 1954), 1 January, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article166735874>.

⁴⁴ See Russell, *Savage or Civilised*, p. 2, p. 5. Bain Attwood and John Arnold have argued that the myth of Aboriginal barbarity was used to justify white occupation. See B. Attwood and J. Arnold, 'Power, Knowledge and Aborigines', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 35, 1992, p. 1, cited in Hogg, R., 'Performing manliness: "unmanly" men on British frontiers in the mid-nineteenth century', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 35, no. 3, pp. 358-359.

⁴⁵ See C. Hall, 'Men and their Histories: Civilising Subjects', *History Workshop Journal*, October 2001, issue 53, p. 52. Pal Ahluwalia also argues that in a settler colonial state distinctions between settler and natives "buttress the conquerors". See P. Ahluwalia, 'When does a settler become a native? Citizenship and identity in a settler society', *Pretexts: Literary and Cultural Studies*, vol., 10, no. 1, 2001, p. 63.

unruly socialising was culturally coded as genteel.⁴⁶ Like Love, Richard Waterhouse has noted that a ‘respectable’ majority overruled puritanical objections to the theatre by the mid-century.⁴⁷ In his history of operatic culture and nation building in nineteenth-century Central Europe, German music historian Philip Ther observes that societies that saw themselves as “peripheral” or “backward” often built the largest theatres.⁴⁸ However what is largely missing from the historical analysis is a focus on the relationships between female vocalists and self-perceived ‘ladies’ in contexts such as philanthropic fundraising, an omission that negates the contribution of singers such as Hamilton.

Alan Maddox, Dolly MacKinnon and Helen Penridge have each examined nineteenth-century perceptions that certain musical repertoires exerted moralising influences. Maddox recounts how prison superintendent Alexander Maconochie introduced music into the Norfolk Island penal settlement in 1840 so as to encourage the prisoners’ transformation from supposed brutes to socialised beings. Nostalgic and patriotic British ballads were deployed to foster feelings of social connection.⁴⁹ MacKinnon has investigated the therapeutic use of music – along with divine service and dance – in nineteenth-century asylums.⁵⁰ Austro-Germanic music, with Handel and Beethoven at the pinnacle, was associated with the white middle class culture of self-improvement, and musical productions in parks

⁴⁶ See Love, *The golden age of Australian Opera*, p. 139. Anae, *Journal of Australian Studies*, p. 178. Russell has observed that a colonial image of gentility was constructed through public performances in spaces that included the theatre. See P. Russell, *A wish of distinction: colonial gentility and femininity*, Carlton, Victoria, Melbourne University Press, 1994, pp. 58-62, 69. Linda Young also observes that the ‘performance’ of “correct taste” coded the image of a middle class family as genteel or refined. See L. Young, *Middle-class culture in the nineteenth century: America, Australia and Britain*, Hampshire and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p. 5, p. 15, p. 20.

⁴⁷ Love, *The Golden Age of Australian Opera*, p. 126. Waterhouse, *Private Pleasures, Public Leisure: A History of Australian Popular Culture Since 1788*, South Melbourne, Longman Australia, 1995, p. 43.

⁴⁸ P. Ther, *Center Stage, Operatic Culture and Nation Building in Nineteenth-Century Central Europe*, Purdue University Press, 2014.

⁴⁹ See A. Maddox, ‘On the Machinery of Moral Improvement: Music and Prison Reform in the Penal Colony on Norfolk Island’, *Musicology Australia*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2012, p. 185, p. 190. English musicologist Derek Scott argues that sentimentality was viewed as bonding. See D. Scott, ‘Music, morals and social order’, in *Sounds of the Metropolis: The 19th Century Popular Music Revolution in London, New York, Paris and Vienna*, Oxford Scholarship Online, 2008, pp. 65-67.

⁵⁰ D. MacKinnon, ‘Divine Service, Music, Sport, and Recreation as Medicinal in Australian Asylums 1860s-1945’, *Health and History Australian Asylums and Their Histories*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2009, p. 128.

connected Melbourne with the great European cities, according to Penridge. German historian Stefan Manz has rightly argued that the widespread perception of the musical superiority of Austro-Germanic music in Britain influenced the high status of composers such as Handel.⁵¹ However there remains much scope for examining the role of particular categories of music in framing colonial singers like Hamilton as virtuous women.

Celebrity and scandal

Aside from royalty and reformers, the middle-class women who occupied public space most conspicuously in the nineteenth-century British world were undoubtedly literary and stage celebrities. Simon Morgan, Mary Luckhurst, Chris Rojek and Jane Moody locate the origins of celebrity – the commodification of personalities for popular consumption – in the print culture of the mid-eighteenth century. Scholars generally agree that celebrity status was (and remains) socially constructed.⁵² Lorraine York’s definition of celebrity as a “negotiation” between different parties captures scholars’ general conception of celebrity-creation as a collaborative process in which the aspiring subject, relevant media, agents and audiences play crucial roles.⁵³ An investigation of the role of scandal in disrupting Hamilton’s respectable image assists in identifying the breaking points of

⁵¹ H. Penridge, ‘Echoes of home: Park music culture in colonial Brisbane’, *Queensland History Journal*, vol. 22, no. 6, August 2014, p. 468, pp. 470-471. S. Manz, ‘Joseph Mainzer (1801–1851) and the Popularisation of Choral Singing in Britain’, *Immigrants & Minorities*, vol. 30, no. 2-3, 2012, pp. 152-153. S. Manz, ‘Intercultural transfer and artistic innovation: German Musicians in Victorian Britain’, *German Life and Letters*, vol. 65, no. 2, 2012, p. 161. R. Covell, ‘European musical nationalism in a colonial context’, *History of European Ideas*, vol. 16, no. 4-6, 1993, p. 693.

⁵² P. Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame in contemporary culture*, Minnesota and London, Minnesota Press, 1997, p. 19. G. Turner, F. Bonner, and P. Marshall, *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 11. G. Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, London, Sage Publications, 2004, p. 7. C. Rojek, *Celebrity*, London, Reaktion Books, 2001, p. 10.

⁵³ For York’s discussion see L. York, ‘Star Turn: The Challenges of Theorizing Celebrity Agency’, *The Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 46, no. 6, 2013, p. 1340. See S. Morgan, ‘Celebrity: Academic ‘Pseudo-Event’ Or A Useful Concept for Historians?’, *Celebrity, Cultural and Social History*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2011, p. 98, p. 101, p. 103. Rojek, op. cit., p. 104. M. Luckhurst and J. Moody, ‘Introduction: The singularity of theatrical celebrity’, in Luckhurst, M., and Moody, J. (eds.), *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000*, Hampshire and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p. 3. P. Marshall, ‘The Genealogy of Celebrity: Introduction’, in Marshall, P., and Redmond, S. (eds.), *A companion to celebrity*, Wiley Blackwell, 2016, pp. 32-34. Loren Glass begins her discussion of literary celebrity with Lord Byron in the early-nineteenth century. See L. Glass, ‘Brand names: A brief history of literary celebrity,’ in Marshall and Redmond, op. cit., p. 55.

such negotiation, thereby contributing to an under-developed field – the study of Australian colonial celebrity as consumer commodity.⁵⁴

Kirsten McKenzie, Australia's leading scholar of scandal, has depicted the colonial locations of Sydney and Cape Town in the first half of the nineteenth century as sites of "opportunity" where those lacking respectability might refashion their identities. However, with social mobility came the risk of exposure and the consequence of scandal.⁵⁵ According to Russell, the adultery of prominent men often escaped overt social criticism, unlike that of women – the living arrangements of Melbourne judge Sir Redmond Barry, a case in point.⁵⁶ If female sexual impropriety was "shrouded by decent obscurity" then social "outrage" might be sidestepped, Russell observes.⁵⁷

In the nineteenth-century British world scandal generally involved a struggle between those attempting to preserve reputation and those wishing to define their respectability against another's scandalous identity.⁵⁸ Both McKenzie and Kristine Garrigan (American literary studies scholar), have emphasised the role of the press in disseminating scandal.⁵⁹ Conversely, American musicologist Roberta Marvin has examined the way that the London press might sanitise scandalous biography in the interests of attracting a middle-class readership.⁶⁰ This study of Hamilton and her lyric

⁵⁴ No Australian work comes close to Harold Love's insightful cultural history of the mid-nineteenth-century lyric stage although a number of articles provide into the broader culture, such as Doggett's study of the colonial reception of Chinese music and Anae's discussion of the Howson sisters' celebrity. See Love, *The Golden Age of Australian Opera*. A. Doggett, 'Harmony on the Goldfields: Music and identity in multicultural Ballarat', *Royal Historical Society of Victoria*, vol. 75, no. 1, 2004. Anae, *Journal of Australian Studies*.

⁵⁵ McKenzie, *Scandal in the colonies*, p. 1, p. 4, p. 10.

⁵⁶ P. Russell, 'For better and for worse': Love, power and sexuality in upper-class marriages in Melbourne, 1860–1880, *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 3, no 7-8, 1988, p. 23

⁵⁷ Russell, *Savage or civilised*, p. 132-33.

⁵⁸ The struggle for scandal management is a well-developed theme in McKenzie's work but see in particular McKenzie, *Scandal in the colonies*, pp. 62-64.

⁵⁹ See McKenzie, *Scandal in the colonies*, p. 7, p. 10. K. Garrigan, 'Foreward: Decorum, Scandal, and the Press', in K. Garrigan (ed.), *Victorian Scandals: Representations of Gender and Class*, Athens, Ohio University press, 1992, p. 5.

⁶⁰ See R. Marvin, 'Idealising the Prima Donna in Mid-Victorian London', in Cowgill, R., and Poriss, H. (eds.), *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century*, Oxford Scholarship online, 2012, pp. 2, 5, 7, 17-18. In contrast, Seymour details the lack of press tolerance accorded to Lola Montez. See Seymour, op. cit., p. 332. Crisp stops short of interpreting a terse colonial review of Anna Bishop as shunning but does read it as a sign of disapproval. See Crisp, op. cit., p. 43.

stage network provides the opportunity to explore comparable acts of scandalmongering and censorship in the Australian colonial context.

The nineteenth-century scandalous identity was constructed through attack and exclusion. Richard Davis discusses the role of the press in representing English prima donna Anna Bishop as an adulterous wife in the late 1830s.⁶¹ Bruce Seymour also observes that shunning (the refusal of one group or individual to engage with the scandalous other) was a tactic that could result in “economic ruin” of the person being shunned.⁶² Scholars have also demonstrated the importance of effective refutation in quelling a scandal, with McKenzie tracing the complex strategies of defence used by a Cape Town Chief Justice accused of incest in the early 1830s, and Wright noting one actress’s use of the Ballarat press to assert her respectability.⁶³ Seymour recounts that burlesque dancer Lola Montez made frequent recourse to public letters when defending her reputation.⁶⁴ While Montez’s scandalous identity has monopolised the field of Australian colonial celebrity studies to date, the investigation of the demise of respectable celebrity has been neglected.⁶⁵ If – as McKenzie argues – scandal has the capacity to “throw the organisation of society into sharper relief”, then Hamilton’s history has much to reveal about Victorian colonial society.⁶⁶

Private and Public Women

The literature examining the relationship between private and public identity includes scholarship depicting the blurred boundaries between private and public gendered space as well as scholarship suggesting the somewhat binary relationship between the private self and the public

⁶¹ R. Davis, *Anna Bishop: the adventures of an intrepid prima donna*, Sydney, Currency Press, 1997, p. 45.

⁶² B. Seymour, *Lola Montez a life*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1996, p. 55.

⁶³ McKenzie, *Scandal in the Colonies*, pp. 26-28. Wright, *The forgotten rebels of Eureka*, pp. 245-6

⁶⁴ Seymour, op. cit., p. 38, p. 331.

⁶⁵ Wright argues that the focus on Montez as a scandalous celebrity deflects attention from her political activities. However this thesis demonstrates that celebrity is produced through representations that are frequently divorced from reality. For Wright’s discussion see C. Wright, ‘Lola Montez: a lover and a fighter’, *Overland*, Issue 195, 2009, p. 24.

⁶⁶ McKenzie, *Scandal in the Colonies*, p. 32.

persona.⁶⁷ American feminist historian Joan Scott argued in 1983 that the “recovery” of “female subjects” involved the investigation of the political nature of women’s lives, including a focus on the “hidden operations of gender” often associated with female agency.⁶⁸ British historians Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland and Jane Rendall have noted the influence of Scott’s scholarship on the current tendency to complicate the boundaries between public and private space.⁶⁹ Brendan Gleeson distinguishes between the ideological gendering of space in the nineteenth century and historical reality, arguing that many nineteenth-century middle-class Australian colonial women were able to escape the “sentence of domesticity” through charitable and other socially oriented activities.⁷⁰ Similarly Dogget and American musicologist Michelle Boyd contend that musical skill generally allowed women to take a prominent place in public life without conflicting with feminine norms.⁷¹ An examination of the life of Octavia Hamilton develops the idea of philanthropic activity and vocal performance as escape routes from domesticity through highlighting the nexus between amusement and philanthropic fundraising.

American historian Joan Landes concludes that the categories of ‘private’ and ‘public’ provide a useful frame for analysis but advises that the “endless variations” in the meaning of such terms be considered in analysis.⁷² Similarly British historian Leonore Davidoff rejects simplistic

⁶⁷ Scholars such as Anna Peak argue that there was a disjunction between nineteenth-century separate spheres doctrine and the historical reality and today most scholars agree. See A. Peak, *Music of the spheres: music and the gendered mind in nineteenth-century Britain*, PhD diss., Temple University, Philadelphia, 2010, p. xvi. pp. xv-xvi. See also K. Peiss, ‘Going Public: Women in Nineteenth-Century Cultural History’, *American Literary History*, vol. 3, no. 4, Winter 1991, p. 818.

⁶⁸ J. Scott, ‘Women in History: The Modern Period’, *Past and Present*, no. 101, November 1983, p. 149, p. 156.

⁶⁹ J. Scott, ‘Gender a useful category of historical analysis’ in *Gender and the Politics of History*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1988, cited in C. Hall, K. McClelland and J. Rendall, ‘Introduction’, in C. Hall, K. McClelland and J. Rendall (eds.), *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the British Reform Act of 1867*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, pp. 33-34.

⁷⁰ B. Gleeson, ‘A Public Space for Women: The Case of Charity in Colonial Melbourne’, *Area*, Vol. 27, No. 3, September, 1995, p. 193-194.

⁷¹ M. Boyd, *Music and the Making of a Civilised Society: Musical life in Pre-Confederation Nova Scotia 1815-1867*, University of Toronto, PhD diss., 2011, p. iii, p. 267, p. 284-285. Doggett, 2009, op., cit., 37.2, p. 37.11.

⁷² J. Landes, ‘Further thoughts on the public/private distinction’, *Journal of Women’s History*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 28-30, pp. 32-34. Historian Simon Morgan recognises female involvement in nineteenth-century public culture but argues that public space was

binarisation while observing that the restriction of women's access to certain opportunities in public life was a historical reality.⁷³ This study of Hamilton draws attention to the zones of private space available in public sites (such as Bendigo hotel rooms) that in all likelihood supported her sexual autonomy, as well as reinforcing the need for the respectable celebrity to preserve adequate barriers between private conduct and public image in order to preserve a marketable image.

Archive and methodology

In comparison to the archive available for the investigation of the Australian Federation prima donnas Dame Nellie Melba, whose life has been traced through divorce papers, memoirs, photographs, maps and interviews, as well as press articles, the archive for Hamilton is limited.⁷⁴ The major portion of my material has come from nineteenth century Australian newspapers, specifically advertisements, reviews and editorials relating to the lyric stage, new reports and editorials on the 1865 Hamilton-Moon court hearings and their aftermath, as well as articles relating to the larger colonial context. Primary material from the colonial press – most particularly the Victorian press – supports the investigation of Hamilton's rise and demise between 1854 and 1868 and is essential in tracking the shifts in her public representation between the early 1870s and 1925. Colonial press reports on musical productions from the 1840s are also useful in illuminating the meanings most frequently ascribed to Indigenous, Chinese and European music in the white settler states of the colonial east coast, most particularly Victoria. A wide range of press sources have been used drawn on, including the most popular Melbourne metropolitan daily newspapers (*The Argus* and *The Age*), the influential weekly *Examiner*, and widely read regional newspapers such as the *Ballarat Star*.

While the commercialised nature of newspapers renders some press items, such as performance reviews, more persuasive and sensationalised

frequently “divided along gender lines”. See also S. Morgan, ‘A sort of land debatable’: female influence, civic virtue and middle-class identity, 1830-c 1860’, *Women's History Review*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2004, p. 185.

⁷³ See D. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes*, London, Hutchinson, 1987, cited in Hall, C., McClelland, K., and Rendall, J. (eds.), *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the British Reform Act of 1867*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 32.

⁷⁴ A. Blainey, *I am Melba: a Biography*, Melbourne, Black Inc, 2008, pp. 340-366.

than factual, such articles nevertheless yield rich insights into the cultural values and aspirations of audiences. Given the fact that court records relating to the Hamilton-Moon hearings of 1865 are no longer extant, press articles providing verbatim or closely paraphrased recounts of solicitor and witness exchanges provide vital detail. The paucity of sources capturing Hamilton's perspective on events restricts the scope of this study as biography, yet when viewed through the frame of cultural history, the press archive sheds valuable light on the cultural meanings of celebrity and performance.⁷⁵

As a feminist history, this thesis heeds Judith Allen's call to re-examine available evidence and to be "more perceptive of the silences" and "specific strategies" of past women. To date the 1865 press narratives characterising her as a negligent mother have been accepted at "face value", yet a closer scrutiny of economic influences sheds light on Hamilton's actions.⁷⁶ American literary studies scholar Laura Handft Korobkin has discussed the way that courtroom narratives provide insights into the culture producing them when they are read against the grain, a strategy relevant to analysis of the Hamilton scandal.⁷⁷ This thesis argues that the genre of melodrama, immensely popular in the nineteenth century, influenced 1865 press interpretations of the Hamilton and Moon court hearings, and that

⁷⁵ For a relevant discussion of representation see Kali Israel, 'Writing inside the kaleidoscope: Re-Representing Victorian Women Public Figures', *Gender & History*, vol. 2, no. 1, Spring 1990, p. 41. Similarly Barbara Tuchman argues that biography may refract new light on a larger historical landscape. See B. W. Tuchman, 'Biography as a prism of history', in M. Pachter (ed.), *Telling lives: the biographer's art*, University of Philadelphia Press, 1981 cited in S. Smith and J. Watson (eds.), *Getting a life: everyday uses of biography*, University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 28.

⁷⁶ For Allen's discussion see J. Allen, 'Evidence and silence: feminism and the limits of history', in Pateman, C., and Gross, E., *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory*, Sydney, London and Boston, Allen and Unwin, 1986, pp. 184-187. Here I am also mindful of Russell's argument that "context... illuminates the life" (and visa versa). See P. Russell, 'Life's Illusions: The "Art" of Critical Biography', *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 21, no. 4, Winter 2009, p. 154.

⁷⁷ L. Handft Korobkin, *Conversations: Sentimentality and Nineteenth-century legal stories of Adultery*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1998, p. 11. The work of Australian social historian Nicola Goc demonstrates the way historically situated discourse analysis can extract more information out of archival forms. See N. Goc, *Women, infanticide and the Press, 1822-1922: News narratives in England and Australia*, Surrey, England, Ashgate, 2013, p. 1, p. 6, p. 15. For the importance of context and intertextuality see also E. Vaara and J. Tienari, 'Critical Discourse Analysis', in Mills, A., Durepos, G., and Weibe, E. (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*, Sage Publications, 2010, p. 245.

there were connections between the cultural values of melodrama and the larger tensions of the Victorian colonial context.⁷⁸

In addition to the newspaper archive, a range of Australian and British genealogical records documenting births and deaths, insolvency, criminal convictions, migration and residential addresses of subjects have helped to track the social and geographical mobility of the Scrivenor-Moon and Davis families.⁷⁹ While such official documentation helps to locate subjects in time and place, as well as locating them within familial and legal frameworks, it may also evoke more personal and elusive aspects of experience. For instance, British insolvency records provide clues about the motivations for Moon-Scrivenor migration, while the birth documentation for one of Hamilton's colonial-born daughters provides a glimpse of the mother's post-1865 humiliation.⁸⁰ In the absence of Hamilton's own diaries and letters, a number of colonial diaries reinforce the narrative of her celebrity status conveyed in the colonial press and/ or corroborate the cultural value of her repertoire. Most particularly the diaries of colonists Annie Dawbin Baxter (a squatter's wife who resided in Melbourne and its outskirts intermittently from 1861 to 1865), John Buckley Castieau, (Melbourne gaoler 1854-55 and Beechworth gaoler from 1856-1868), and William Thompson (a timber cutter who resided in Melbourne between 1858-1867) provide glimpses of Hamilton beyond press representations.⁸¹

⁷⁸ For the influence of melodrama on nineteenth-century representation see W. Sypher, 'Aesthetic of Revolution: The Marxist Melodrama,' *Kenyon Review*, vol., 10, no. 3, 1948, cited in M. Vicinus, "'Helpless and Unfriended': Nineteenth-Century Domestic Melodrama', *New Literary History*, vol. 13, No. 1, 1981, p. 128. Damousi's identification of the motif of the "abandoning" mother" is of great relevance to the outrage incited by Hamilton's 1865 courtroom hearings. See J. Damousi, *Depraved and disorderly: female convicts, sexuality and gender in colonial Australia*, Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 3-5, p. 111.

⁷⁹ Note: my reference to "migration" encompasses both enforced and voluntary. Hamilton reinvented herself as "Mrs Davis" in the English context, as will be later discussed.

⁸⁰ For relevant discussion of Hamilton's post-1865 humiliations see the Epilogue.

⁸¹ Anne Dawbin spent extended period of time in Melbourne between 1861 and 1864. See L. Frost, (ed.), *A Face in the Glass: The journal and life of Annie Baxter Dawbin*, Melbourne, William Heinemann Australia, 1992, pp. 232-293. For Castieau's years of service see M. Finnane, 'Introduction', in Castieau, J., and Finnane, M., *The difficulties of my position: diaries of Prison Governor John Buckley Castieau, 1855-1884*, Canberra, National Library of Australia, 2004, p. xi. William Thompson appears to have attended three performances of the *Messiah* in which Hamilton performed, as will be discussed in the course of the thesis, but he makes no direct reference to her. See for instance W. Thompson, *William Thompson Diary 1857-1871*, Victoria, Entries August 11, December 24, 1859.

Desley Deacon, Penny Russell and Angela Woollacott have noted that a transnational frame helps track lives across political borders as well as recovering lives omitted from national histories.⁸² However such a frame may be more relevant to the history of a touring prima donna than a singer whose career was confined to the Australian colonies.⁸³ A consideration of more geographically and politically bounded frames is helpful in analysing the meaning of Hamilton's celebrity for Victoria's residents, directing attention to the ways the Englishwoman 'belonged' to colonial Victoria and 'Australia'.⁸⁴ Anae has argued that native-born singers Emma and Clelia Howson supported narratives of local pride in the 1860s and 1870s. While Tasmania embraced the Howson sisters as their own, a wider colonial audience also identified with the sisters as "Australian".⁸⁵ This concept of colonial-grown talent as a source of local patriotism in pre-Federation Australia may be further investigated through a focus on the career of Hamilton, whose 1864 acclamation as the "most tasteful oratorio singer in Australia" highlights what Veronica Kelly has described as a "serviceable" or culturally useful identity.⁸⁶

⁸² For relevant discussion of the transnational frame see D. Deacon, P. Russell and A. Woollacott, 'Introduction', in Deacon, D., Russell, P., and Woollacott, A., (eds.), *Transnational Ties: Australian Lives in the World*, ANU Press, 2008, p. xiv. D. Deacon, P. Russell and A. Woollacott (eds.), 'Introduction', *Transnational Lives: Biographies of Global Modernity, 1700-present*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 2. S. Beckert, 'Sven Beckert', in C. Bayly et al, 'AHR Conversation: On Transnational History,' *The American Historical Review*, vol. 111, no. 5, 2006, p. 1446.

⁸³ In qualification, as the core musical repertoire (for instance Handelian sacred music and Verdean opera) was transnational, a musical career was transnational by its very nature. Hamilton was mentioned in the London weekly newspaper *The Era* on eight occasions, hence achieved a fleeting transnational profile. See for instance 1859 'Theatricals in Australia', *The Era* (London, England), Sunday, January 9, 1859, Issue 1059. 1863 'Theatricals in Australia', *The Era* (London, England), Sunday, April 23, Issue 1283.

⁸⁴ For relevant discussion of historiography and the recent tendency to downplay the influence of nationalism in pre-Federation Australia see S. Ward, 'The 'New Nationalism' in Australia, Canada and New Zealand: Civic Culture in the Wake of the British World', in Darian-Smith, K., Grimshaw, P., and Macintyre, S. (eds.), *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Culture*, Melbourne University Publishing, 2007, pp. 233-235. However, Winston McGinn argues that a nationalist frame is not anachronistic in the study of that era. See W. McGinn, *Nationalism and Federalism in Australia*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 24. Aside from her appeal to localism, Hamilton as Englishwoman was well placed to appeal to English migrants. For the predominantly British background of migrants during the era see W. Bate, *Victorian gold rushes*, Victoria, McPhee Gribble, 1988, cited in Fahey, op. cit., p. 149.

⁸⁵ Anae, *Journal of Australian Studies*, p. 178, p. 181.

⁸⁶ For this description of Hamilton see 1864 'NEWS AND NOTES', *The Star (Ballarat, Vic.: 1855 - 1864)*, 14 November, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article66349716>. For Kelly's discussion see V. Kelly, 'Hybridity and Performance in Colonial Australian

Terminology

In this study my use of the term “celebrity” refers to those identities whose conspicuous occupation of public space was commercialised. Celebrities were created and commodified by impresarios, the press, the paying public and the celebrity-subject themselves. Respectable lyric stage celebrities such as Octavia Hamilton were commoditised as sources of cultural capital for genteel and aspirational audiences. In my use of the term “cultural capital” I am referring to the scarce cultural competencies that were valued and rewarded in the colonial context.⁸⁷ My references to “private” and “public” space recognise the fluid and overlapping nature of such categories. As do most contemporary historians, I distinguish between the ‘private sphere’ theory influencing nineteenth-century discourse and the historical reality of female lives that blurred private and public space. However, in my discussion of celebrity image-shaping and scandal trajectory I also recognise the important conceptual distinction between relatively obscured, or private, and more widely exposed, or public, facets of lifestyle. While my focus on celebrity often turns the spotlight onto the public spaces subject to the gaze of the press, newspaper readers and paying audiences, my examination of collegial and professional-philanthropic networks involves space that was far more veiled and ambiguous in terms of categorisation.

My use of the term “colonial” encompasses both a time and a place. While I make reference to a number of events in the larger time frame of

Theatre: The Currency Lass’ in Helen Gilbert (ed.), *(Post)Colonial Stages; Critical and Creative Views on Drama, Theatre & Performance*, West Yorkshire: Dangaroo Press, 1999, p 40, cited in Anae, *Journal of Australian Studies*, p. 173.

⁸⁷ The term ‘cultural capital’ was coined by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in 1970 in reference to scarce cultural competencies. See D. Robbins *Bourdieu and Culture*, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, 2000, p. 33. P. Bourdieu, ‘Cultural capital The Embodied state, in The Forms of Capital’, In J. Richardson (Ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, New York, Greenwood, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/bourdieu-forms-capital.htm>. (Note: pagination is not available in the online version so I have supplied the section). Cultural historians now routinely refer to ‘cultural capital’. For instance, P. Russell, The Brash Colonial: Class and comportment in nineteenth-century Australia, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, no. 12, p. 438. L. Young, ‘Extensive, economical and elegant’: The habitus of gentility in early nineteenth century Sydney, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 36, no. 124, 2004, p. 202 [pp. 201-220]. H. English, Musical Entertainment in Newcastle, New South Wales, in the 1870s: Audience, Identity, Power and Cultural Ownership, in *Crosswords, Special Issue 2011 Perspectives on Power Conference*, vol. 6, issue 2, pp. 73-83, 2013, p 75, p. 77. P. Ther, *Center Stage, Operatic Culture and Nation Building in Nineteenth-Century Central Europe*, Purdue University Press, JSTOR ebook, 2014, p. 19.

pre-Federation Australia (1788 – 1901), I concentrate most of my discussion on mid-nineteenth-century Victoria. The main period under focus begins with the colony's achievement of responsible government at the height of the gold rushes (1854-1855) and concludes in the mid-1860s.⁸⁸ The category of colonial lyric stage identity is a broad one, including native-born music-makers such as Emma Howson, long-term resident-migrants who ultimately left the colonies such as Octavia Hamilton, long-term resident-migrants who died in the colonies such as Sarah Flower, and touring celebrities who lived in the colonies for extended periods of time such as Anna Bishop, Giovanna Bianchi and Lucy Escott.⁸⁹

While the term “prima donna” refers to the opera singer of international repute who toured extensively and experienced acclaim in Italy, the term “principal vocalist” is associated with lesser but high profile vocalists such as Octavia Hamilton. Any professional theatrical performer might be referred to as an “artiste”. Singers of all ranks contributed to “benefit performance” which involved the voluntary services of performers for the financial gain of a charity, a respectable institution, or a deserving individual. With regards to the English Glee and Burlesque Opera Company which Hamilton and Davis helped form in 1867, the term “burlesque” refers both to comic versions of operatic productions and to the satirical performances of members whose speciality was minstrelsy. “Minstrelsy” involved the appropriation of African-American melodies (‘negro’ as referred to at the time), often through a sentimental frame, as well as satirical routines based on stock ‘negro’ characters.⁹⁰

In my discussion of Melbourne's church culture my reference to evangelicalism acknowledges a spectrum of doctrinal values and practices. The strictest evangelical Protestants objected to attendance at opera and

⁸⁸ For discussion of the rapid social and political development of the mid-1850s see J. Steffan, ‘The Mining Frontiers of California and Australia: A Study in Comparative Political Change and Continuity’, *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 52, no. 4, Nov., 1983, p. 428, p. 431. For discussion of the 1860s economy see H. McQueen. *A New Britannia*, 2nd edn., University of Queensland Press, 2004, p. 143.

⁸⁹ I will cite relevant sources for these identities as they arise in the course of this thesis.

⁹⁰ For definitions see P. Gammond, ‘Burlesque’, *The Oxford Companion to Music*, Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, accessed 21 May, 2016. C. Henderson, ‘Minstrelsy, American’, *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, accessed 21 May, 2016.

balls, any consumption of alcohol, social interaction with members of Christian denominations outside their own, church practices associated with Catholicism and the pursuit of leisure in public places on a Sunday. They also supported evangelisation – or missionary work – and charity work. More accommodating Protestants crossed sectarian lines in the interests of engagement in civil society or attended churches where liturgical practices were influenced by Catholicism. However a consistent engagement in charitable works still located such Protestant Christians in the Evangelical tradition.⁹¹

Chapter Overview

In the first chapter I argue that Hamilton's facility for professional networking helped her build her celebrity status with remarkable speed. Her network involved her colleagues, the press, Melbournians of influence and the many Victorian residents who attended her concerts and operatic productions. This chapter includes discussion of the main participants in Hamilton's celebrity network, with a particular focus on professional interactions. In the second chapter I investigate Hamilton's status as a respectable celebrity. On the most fundamental level, singers of highly regarded western music were of crucial importance in supporting the colonial narrative of Aboriginal Australia as a land without culture.⁹² The cultural utility of singers such as Octavia Hamilton meant that audiences aiming to mark or acquire genteel status had a vested interest in loosening definitions of respectability in the context of lyric stage culture.

In the third chapter I discuss the factors contributing to the destruction of Octavia Hamilton's career. Hamilton's fall from grace reveals the plight of a middle-class celebrity who traded on civility, yet conspicuously transgressed the codes of behaviour associated with civil

⁹¹ For discussion of charitable works or benevolence see B. Gleeson, 'A Public Space for Women: The Case of Charity in Colonial Melbourne', *Area*, Vol. 27, No. 3 Sep., 1995, p. 196. For Bishop Perry's sectarianism see A. de Q. Robin/ Quetteville, *Charles Perry Bishop of Melbourne: the challenges of a colonial episcopate, 1847-76*, Nedlands, W. A. University of Western Australia Press, 1967, p. 48, p. 135-36.

⁹² Here I am extrapolating from the argument of Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson that in a settler colonial state, the doctrine of terra nullius was reinforced by "stories and histories": "words" supported "herds". See A. Johnston and A. Lawson, 'Settler Colonies', in Schwarz, H. and Ray, S. (eds.), *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, Blackwell Publishing, 2000, pp. 364-365.

society, specifically maternal and sexual codes. I also investigate the probable motives behind Hamilton's court actions and compare her attempts at scandal management with the strategies deployed by other women in the nineteenth-century British world. The Hamilton scandal sheds light on the power and limitations of colonial networks, the complexity of gendered relationships and larger political tensions.

Conclusion

Hamilton may have been a celebrity but her story gains importance as a feminist history because of the experiences she shared with ordinary women. She worked hard. She had many children – sixteen in total – and some of them died. She was unhappily married and separated from her husband. She had at least two affairs. She experienced conflict with her larger family. She worked when she was heavily pregnant. She struggled financially and took on different modes of employment. She took court action to gain child maintenance. She was accused of bad mothering. She was subject to double standards: the press could have pointed the finger at the probable father of at least one of her children – but did not.

Hamilton's personal story is not only linked to the stories of women seeking greater expressive and economic autonomy. Her cultural work provided opportunities for both men and women to engage in the 'civilised' rituals of class performance, respectability and legitimacy. Her professional life also reveals evidence of collaborative and loyal working relationships between women and men, some of which persisted in the face of scandal. The trajectories of her career – her rise and her demise – ultimately connects her with a multitude of colonial identities whose fluctuating fortunes saw them experience both upward and downward social mobility in the course of their lives.

Chapter 1 – Octavia Hamilton as adaptable networker

Introduction

In colonial Victoria Octavia Hamilton's transformation from anonymous wife-mother to colonial celebrity soon after her arrival in February 1854 appears to have been founded as much on resilience and charm as musicality. Her ability to engage with professional networks and to adapt to the challenges of theatrical production in colonial Victoria saw her widely embraced by reputable lyric stage artistes and influential Melbournians in the course of her career. Like her criminally tainted father and brother, migration provided her with the opportunity to refashion her identity. Seven of John Scrivenor's children migrated to the colonies and their collective experiences included respectability, notoriety, anonymity, celebrity, and poverty. While the public record captures traces of all seven children, only Hamilton was remembered as late as 1925, eighteen years after her death.⁹³

In the Australian colonies, social mobility might be assisted by one of the challenges of migration: dislocation from familiar networks. Individuals tethered to shameful or restrictive histories might reinvent themselves once they left Britain. Facts regarding personal identity could be – and were – manipulated for life-enhancing purposes.⁹⁴ In Victoria and New South Wales, John Scrivenor reinvented himself as a solicitor.⁹⁵ Similarly, his son Walter used intercolonial migration from Western Australia to New South Wales as a means of obscuring his criminal history:

⁹³ For the last extant reference to Hamilton in the Australian press see 1925 'SEVENTY YEARS OF MUSIC', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 10 October, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article2150469>. See Appendix 2 for a list of John Walter Scrivenor's children (Hamilton and her siblings).

⁹⁴ Processes of state data gathering and moral surveillance were more easily subverted in the nineteenth-century, with convincing performances supporting creative documentation. See J. Caplan and J. Torpey, 'Introduction' in Caplan, J., and Torpey, J. (eds.), *Documenting Individual Identity: The development of state practices in the modern world*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2001, p. 1, p. 3; p. 6.

⁹⁵ John Scrivenor advertised his services as a solicitor based in Collins Street in 1854. See 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 1 November, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4799682>. In 1861 the Queanbeyan press announced his "[re]admission to the Supreme Court of Victoria", inflating his actual role of solicitor's clerk in 1830s and 1840s England to that of solicitor/attorney. He claimed that relevant documents had been lost in a house fire in Melbourne. See 1861 'Local Intelligence', *The Golden Age* (Queanbeyan, NSW: 1860 - 1864), 7 November, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article306318>.

the convicted thief became a Queanbeyan banker.⁹⁶ Both men both used the tyranny of distance to their advantage, making capital out of the “imperfect...coordination” of imperial bureaucracy.⁹⁷ They severed old networks and forged new ones. Just as her father and brother shed their restrictive social identities, Hamilton too used migration to Victoria to loosen her ties to fulltime wifedom. As Kirsten McKenzie has argued, in the colonies “the line between the self made man or woman and the imposter could be a faint one.”⁹⁸

Octavia Hamilton was one of that vast number of “imperial career[ists]” identified by David Lambert and Alan Lester who both “made” and were produced by the British empire. Imperial careerists not only influenced changes in their social and cultural environments but also helped to shape the emerging “differences” between the colonies and the British metropolis.⁹⁹ By migrating from London to colonial Victoria, Hamilton was exposed to opportunities unavailable at home, most importantly a potential audience drawn from some of the 150,000 British migrants who descended on Victoria between 1852 and 1854.¹⁰⁰ Characteristic of population sites built through gold rushes was an appetite for musical productions that variously entertained, soothed, and helped audiences to mark or obscure their class origins.¹⁰¹ Hamilton’s musicality was just one factor in professional success. In tracing Hamilton’s rise to celebrity status, this

⁹⁶ 1861 'Advertising', *The Golden Age (Queanbeyan, NSW: 1860 - 1864)*, 23 May, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article30631408>

⁹⁷ See C. Dardy, *Identites de papiers*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1998, cited in Caplan and Torpey, op. cit., p. 7.

⁹⁸ K. McKenzie, 'Performing the Peer: Status, empire and impersonation', *History Australia*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2004, p. 211.

⁹⁹ D. Lambert and A. Lester, 'Introduction: Imperial spaces, imperial subjects', in D. Lambert and A. Lester, (eds.), *Colonial lives across the British Empire: Imperial Careerings in the Long Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 1, p. 16.

¹⁰⁰ G. Blainey, *A history of Victoria*, 2nd edn., Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 35.

¹⁰¹ According to Ann Wentzel, population increases resulting from the 1850s gold rushes accelerated the growth of musical entertainment in Victoria and influenced developments in other colonies. See A. Wentzel, 'The rapid development of music in Australia, 1851–1861', *Musicology Australia*, 3:1, 1968pp. 69-70. George Fethering observes that “music was to be heard everywhere in mining camps”. See G. Fethering, *The Gold Crusades: A Social History of Gold Rushes, 1849-1929*, Toronto, Buffalo and London, University of Toronto Press, 1997, p. 57, p. 58. For a discussion of migrant longing for familiar cultural experiences see J. Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*, 3rd edn., Toronto, Buffalo and London, University of Toronto Press, 2007, p. 15. For British historian Daniel Snowman’s discussion of opera-going and class status see D. Snowman, *The Gilded Stage: a social history of opera*. London: Atlantic Books, 2009, pp. 140-143.

chapter argues that the singer's ability to participate in the ever-changing formation of professional networks was as crucial as vocal skill. In a colonial context of limited cultural resources, a talented soprano did not require recognised European training to gain recognition but an ability to network was imperative.

The role of professional networks in supporting individual careers is a theme that recurs in the literature. In *Civilising the Colonies* Alison Gyger details the professional and familial connections that added cohesion to lyric stage companies.¹⁰² Similarly Nicole Anae notes the contribution of the Howson and Carandini families to professional music making and Jane Hunt argues that Tasmanian born organist Lilian Frost was enabled by her father's support.¹⁰³ The work of musicologist Rosemary Hallo on harp tutelage in colonial New South Wales suggests that one's place in the professional network was extended through historical connections: students who earned their living through music advertised the identities of high status teachers – or the teachers of those teachers in some cases.¹⁰⁴ Therefore it was particularly important for Hamilton to forge a supportive professional network as she lacked a family of musical pedigree, a prior history of performance in Britain and teachers of recognised status. Her capacity to form warm working relationships with her colonial peers helped her access informal mentorship and secure engagements.

¹⁰² See A. Gyger, *Civilising the colonies: pioneering opera in Australia*, Sydney, Pellinor, 1999, pp. 33-38. Similarly, in Donna Parson's description of the career of nineteenth-century English composer Ethel Smyth, the power of the network is evident. See D. Parsons, *Their voices sing true and clear: British women musicians and their literary counterparts 1860-1920*, University of Iowa, PhD diss., 2001, p. 129. In her examination of Elizabeth Masson's career, Deborah Rohr discusses the founding of the first English benefit society for female musicians. See D. Rohr, 'Women and the music profession in Victorian England: The Royal Society of Female Musicians, 1839-1866', *Journal of Musicological Research*, vol. 18, no. 4, 1999, p. 308.

¹⁰³ N. Anae, 'The new prima donnas': 'Homegrown' Tasmanian 'stars' of the 1860s Emma and Clelia Howson,' *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 28, no. 84, 2005, p. 175-178. J. Hunt, 'Trafficking Modernities-Gender and Cultural Authority in the Case of the Woman Organist', Lilian Frost, *Hecate*, 2011, vol. 37, no. 1, p. 100.

¹⁰⁴ See R. Hallo, *Erard, Bochs and their impact on harp music-making in Australia (1830-1866): an early history from documents*, University of Adelaide, PhD diss., 2014, pp. 72-77. According to Hannu Salmi, "interventions of technology", including the press improved transportation, shaped the "viral" nature of early celebrity. See H. Salmi, 'Viral Virtuosity and the Itineraries of Celebrity Culture', in H. Salmi, A. Nivala, J. Sarjala (eds.), *Travelling Notions of Culture in Early Nineteenth-Century Europe*, New York and London, Routledge, 2016, p. 140.

This chapter begins by examining the way Hamilton's celebrity profile was built through her involvement in a dynamic lyric stage network. It then discusses the need for adaptable and resilient professionalism in a context of limited colonial resources. While some critics recognised the need for improvisation in a colonial environment lacking the extensive resources of the English metropolis, other critics sought to impose purist standards. The role of the critic in supporting or undermining lyric stage performance is examined through a focus on the staging and reception of three ventures involving Octavia Hamilton: the experiences of the short-lived English Opera Company of 1858, the Coulon production of *La Traviata* in 1859 and the Bianchi Italian Opera Company's productions of 1860. Investigation of these endeavours suggests not only the performative nature of the music-maker and the critic but also draws attention to the performative attributes of audiences. In the final section of the chapter, I illustrate the power of the audience to determine the success of a musical venture through a focus on Hamilton's entrepreneurial activities at the Melbourne Trades Hall. This chapter explores Hamilton's establishment of professional networks as well as the function of those networks, with discussion of the larger celebrity network involving stage performer, critic and audience threaded throughout the entire thesis.

From nonentity to celebrity: the emergence of Octavia Hamilton

In January 1854 Mrs Eliza Moon accompanied her two children in a voyage across the Southern Ocean but twelve months later "Miss Octavia Hamilton" travelled to Tasmania in the company of lyric stage professionals.¹⁰⁵ It is likely that the childcare service of Mrs Frances Scrivenor was crucial in helping Hamilton to establish her career, particularly as Augustus Moon and John Scrivenor were employed as a solicitor and public servant, respectively.¹⁰⁶ Hamilton's involvement in a

¹⁰⁵ For the shipping records relevant to the Moon-Scrivenor migration on the Phillips von Martnitz, specifically the listing of Mr and Mrs Moon and their children Frances and Walter see Moon Family Name Feb 1854, Public Records Office Victoria, *Index to Unassisted Inward Passenger Lists to Victoria 1852-1923*, Victoria, <https://googl/ELZ6A7>. Hamilton's tour to Tasmania will be discussed in the course of this chapter.

¹⁰⁶ Pat Grimshaw and Graham Willett have observed that colonial migrants tended to settle near family members whenever possible, kinship networks were radically diminished in the colonies. See P. Grimshaw and G. Willett, 'Women's history and family history: an

performance network that included, in the first instance, impresarios, musicians, conductors, singers and the press, soon extended to members of the Melbourne establishment. While she seized every opportunity to become a “bright, particular star,” given the culture of theatrical interdependence, her celebrity status also served the interests of her peers.¹⁰⁷ In order to produce commercially successful lyric stage events, competitive instincts appear to have been tempered by cooperation and informal mentorship.¹⁰⁸

Journalist James Smith, who arrived in Melbourne soon after Hamilton, described Melbourne of the mid-1850s as a “heterogenous collection of buildings” in which very ordinary structures lurked behind “palatial facades,” and long stretches of housing were constructed out of “corrugated zinc, weatherboarding, canvass, calico, sheet-tin and old packing cases”.¹⁰⁹ Melbourne’s “Canvas City” – the thicket of tents sprouting south of the Yarra River in the early 1850s – was emblematic of the adaptive environment that Hamilton entered in February 1854. Canvas City troubled the government because of its semi-civilised appearance and its removal was ordered in 1853.¹¹⁰ However for most of 1854, Melbourne’s major locations of regular music production were still adapted tent and circus structures and there was no government decree to dismantle them.¹¹¹

exploration of colonial family structure’, in Grieve, N., and Grimshaw, P. (eds.), *Australian Women: Feminist perspectives*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1981, p. 145. My belief that Hamilton lived with her parents up until 1858 is based on the fact that both parties incurred losses in a house fire at that time. See 1861 ‘Local Intelligence’, *The Golden Age* (Queanbeyan, NSW: 1860-1864), 7 November, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article30631858>. 1858 ‘MELBOURNE NEWS’, *Bendigo Advertiser* (Vic.: 1855-1918), 17 August, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article87982694>.

¹⁰⁷ Hamilton was described as Melbourne’s “bright, particular star” in 1865, in ironic acknowledgement of her erstwhile celebrity. See 1865 ‘No title’, *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 22 August, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article155039893>.

¹⁰⁸ In mid-1855 the press commented on the rapid progression of Hamilton’s career. See 1855 ‘DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 8 June, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4809257>.

¹⁰⁹ Smith arrived at the end of 1854. See L. Stuart, *James Smith: The making of a colonial culture*, Sydney, London Boston and Wellington, Allen & Unwin, 1989, p. 1. For relevant discussion of Smith’s impressions of mid-1850s Melbourne: *ibid.*, p. 3.

¹¹⁰ In 1853 the inhabitants of Tent City received notice that their dwellings would be pulled down. See 1853 ‘THE CITY OF THE TENTS’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 5 January, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4788717>.

¹¹¹ Rowe’s Circus was a “semi-circus” entertainment in Lonsdale Street. See 1930 ‘Theatre Bygones’, *The Australasian* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1864 - 1946), 16 August, p. 4. (Metropolitan Edition), <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article141803240>. Astley’s was opened in a series of concerts in September 1854 and reportedly accommodated 2000. See 1911 ‘THEATRES OF OLD MELBOURNE’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 2 December, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article11636507>. The Queen’s Theatre was well

The Salle Valentino, Rowe's Circus and Astley's amphitheatre – the predominant performance sites of Hamilton's early career – were all associated with circuses through their architectural structure or histories of use.¹¹² By March 1854 Hamilton was living in Spring Street, the location of Astley's, the Salle Valentino,¹¹³ and a café frequented by refugees from the 1848 revolutions.¹¹⁴ In the same street there was a dance school run by Italian refugee Count Carandini, the husband of the first Australian colonial 'prima donna', Marie Carandini, one of Hamilton's early colleagues.¹¹⁵ In 1854 Mrs Testar, another eminent colleague, almost certainly lived in Spring Street.¹¹⁶ Spring Street provided the kind of bohemian environment where talent and charm yielded cache in the absence of performance pedigree – and a bold and ambitious newcomer might contrive introductions with relative ease.

In 1853 one ex-resident of Canvas City argued that only those who were able to adapt and commit to hard work were fit colonists.¹¹⁷ This observation captures something of the initiative of Octavia Hamilton who

established by 1853 as a drama theatre. See 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 29 December, p. 7, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4802436>.

¹¹² These transitional spaces featured mixed routines. For reference to tightrope walking at Astley's see 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 29 November, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4801003>. Love frames 1854 as the temporal border between makeshift and "true theatres". See H. Love, *James Edward Neild, Victorian Virtuoso*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1989, p. 23. However this thesis argues that a 'true' entertainment experience was always the product of a fluid contract between audience and performers.

¹¹³ The Salle was located close to the corner of Spring and Bourke Streets. See 1939 'MELODIOUS MEMORIES', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 15 July, p. 10, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article204925367>. Hamilton's home, "Verandah Cottage" at 71 Spring Street, where she took music students, appears to have been located on the grounds of a school. See 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 29 March, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4805051>. On March 29 she advertised under the name of Mrs Moon but by March 31 she was Octavia Hamilton. See 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 31 March, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4805149>.

¹¹⁴ Some patrons of the café had fled Europe during the 1848 revolution. See 1907, *Leader* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1862 - 1918), 20 July, p. 43, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page21516106>.

¹¹⁵ For Carandini's role as dance teacher see 1934 'THE SALLE DE VALENTINO', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 16 October, p. 52, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article10963033>. Although Marie Carandini's career was largely domestic, she was sometimes described as a "prima donna" during her career, and frequently so in nostalgic retrospectives. See for instance 1857 'SACRED AND SECULAR CONCERT', *Bendigo Advertiser* (Vic.: 1855 - 1918), 2 October, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article87975967>.

¹¹⁶ Mrs Testar posted an advertisement to alert her students that she was moving from Spring Street to St Kilda in October 1855. See 1855 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 30 October, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4822045>.

¹¹⁷ THE STRANGER, 1853, March 5, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), p. 3. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4790372>.

launched her career from the Salle Valentino on March 6, 1854, less than one month after her arrival in Victoria. The “Salle” as it was known, a “ramshackle, circular building, half barn, half tent”, was an old circus structure adapted for the purpose of concerts and dancing.¹¹⁸ Hamilton must have met James Ellis, the impresario of the Salle, at one of his promenade concerts and offered her services. Promenade concerts, which provided minimal seating and allowed for the audience to freely socialise, would have made it easy for Hamilton to forge new acquaintances, although in the early days she was probably accompanied by her husband.¹¹⁹

The March 6 event, a benefit performance for Ellis, involved the highly respected Madame Carandini, the lesser-known Mrs George Cox, and Mr Barlow, a tenor who forged his immense popularity through black-face minstrelsy and comic songs.¹²⁰ Mrs Cox was marketed through the epithet “from the Philharmonic concerts” in advertisements for this production, but by March 28 Ellis had transferred the epithet to Hamilton, as if it were a tinny coronet that could be donned, then transferred to a shinier applicant.¹²¹ As was the custom with benefit performances, none of the performers were paid, aside from the beneficiary, with such altruistic gestures doubling as politic investments in future earnings. Despite the

¹¹⁸ 1934 'THE SALLE DE VALENTINO', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 16 October, p. 52, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article10963033>.

¹¹⁹ It would have been foolish of Hamilton to flout social proprieties by arriving alone in an unfamiliar context, particularly one frequented by prostitutes. For the Salle's association with prostitutes see 1879 'MELBOURNE FIVE AND TWENTY YEARS AGO', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 2 August, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5952047>.

¹²⁰ For Ellis's benefit see: 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 3 March, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4803856>. English born Marie Carandini was often reported to be Tasmanian but migrated to Tasmania at age seven. 1857 'Local Intelligence', *Colonial Times* (Hobart, Tas.: 1828 - 1857), 14 July, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article8787618>. 1931 'Notes & Queries', *The Australasian*, Melbourne, Vic.: 1864-1946, 28 March, p. 4. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article141420317>. She would be remembered as the “star attraction” at the Salle. See 1934 *The Argus* (Melbourne), The Salle Valentino, 16 October, 1934, p. 52, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article10963033>. There are few press references to Mrs Cox's performances. For discussion of Barlow see G. Skinner, BARLOW, Robert ("Billy", William), *Austral Harmony*, Sydney University, <http://sydney.edu.au/paradisec/australharmony/register-B.php>.

¹²¹ Mrs Cox may have been in the chorus of the Melbourne Philharmonic Society concerts. For the use of the epithet in relation to Hamilton, see 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 28 March, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4805031>.

ambiguous respectability of the Salle, it was a place where performers might hone their skills in a relaxed environment.¹²²

One month after Ellis's benefit Hamilton was granted a benefit concert of her own at the highly respectable Melbourne Mechanics Institute.¹²³ The violinist Monsieur Fleury, who was to have joined her in a violin-piano duet, failed to appear but Hamilton gained cultural capital and probable emotional support from the presence of Mrs Testar.¹²⁴ Mrs Testar's experiences as a London concert singer in the late 1840s distinguished her from singers such as Hamilton whose careers were rooted solely in the colonies. Mrs Testar, who was deeply committed to philanthropic activities, performed at the May fundraiser for Melbourne Hospital and the Orphan asylum, as did Hamilton, Madame Carandini and Herr Strebinger.¹²⁵ This event drew Hamilton into a philanthropic network that flagged the respectability and usefulness of performers in a colony where charity was the main form of support.¹²⁶

One Melbourne resident's complaint about a concert held in mid-1854 provides a glimpse of the friendship experienced by lyric stage professionals, while highlighting its uneven nature. In a letter to the *Argus*, the resident recounted that Herr Strebinger had been forced to compete with backstage frivolity during his violin solo. His "boisterous" colleagues, whose champagne cork-popping could be heard by the audience, included

¹²² The venue was described as "notorious" in a 1910 retrospective. See 1910 'CREMORNE', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 30 April, p. 7, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article10852833>.

¹²³ 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 27 April, p. 8, 2014, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4806488>.

¹²⁴ For Fleury's absence from Hamilton's concert see 1854 'DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 29 April, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4806598>.

¹²⁵ For Melbourne's high estimation of Mrs Testar, see Australian musicologist T. Radic, *Aspects of organised amateur music in Melbourne: 1836-1890*, Masters diss., University of Melbourne, 1968, p. 163. For her epithet as a "Melbourne prima donna" see 1891 'Mrs Testar', *Table Talk* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1885 - 1939), 23 January, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article147283927>. For the details of the May fundraiser see 1854 'Advertising', *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer* (Vic.: 1851 - 1856), 25 May, p. 3 Edition: DAILY, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article91932704>.

¹²⁶ Gleeson, one of many scholars, has argued that charitable institutions were vital in the absence of colonial Poor Laws. See B. Gleeson, 'A Public Space for Women: The Case of Charity in Colonial Melbourne', *Area*, Vol. 27, No. 3 Sep., 1995, pp. 194-196.

Hamilton, Mrs Testar and pianist Emily Smith.¹²⁷ Later that year, another letter-writer to the *Melbourne Age* complained that a review had neglected to mention Strebinger, whereas “one or two lady vocalists” were “always” depicted as “perfection”.¹²⁸ Although the aggrieved violinist possessed skills that were in short supply, it appears that on occasions he struggled to engage the esteem of colleagues and critics.¹²⁹

A few months later Hamilton and Mrs Testar’s encounter with the pianist Herr Collin suggests the camaraderie between the women as well as the vulnerability of musicians who offended their peers. Despite Collin’s previous professional assistance to Hamilton,¹³⁰ both she and Mrs Testar “withdrew their services” from a concert he organised, disregarding the convention of reciprocity and inflicting humiliation and financial loss on the pianist: “[Herr Collin] was unfortunate as some of the lady vocalists whom he had retained refused, for reasons best known to themselves, to make their appearance.”¹³¹ In a market of stretched supply, singers could not easily be replaced at short notice. Hamilton and Mrs Testar were astute enough to cancel their appearance without an explanation that might be disseminated by the press to their detriment.

In the course of her career, Hamilton’s celebrity status was enhanced by her working relationship with composers who recognised the capacity of

¹²⁷ For the list of performers at Emily Smith’s concert see 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 3 June, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4808757>. For the review see 1854 'UNRULINESS OF THE "STARS"', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 10 June, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4809277>.

¹²⁸ The reviewed concert was probably the MPS concert held on December 7. See 1854 'DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 9 December, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154850645>. For the letter of complaint about Strebinger’s neglect see 1854 'Original Correspondence', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 12 December, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154851450>. The “lady vocalists” referred to were probably Mrs Testar and Mrs Hancock, the soprano mainstays of Melbourne at that time.

¹²⁹ I will discuss Melbourne’s response to a later sex scandal involving Strebinger in Chapter Three.

¹³⁰ For the contributors to Hamilton’s concert see 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 4 September, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4797227>.

¹³¹ For Hamilton and Mrs Testar’s advertised appearances at Herr Collin’s concert see 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 21 September, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4797930>. For their non-attendance see 1854 'Domestic Intelligence', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 28 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4798223>. The fact that Collin had lost a previous booking suggests that he offended multiple parties. See 1857 'Music And The Drama', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 2 February, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154823966>.

her celebrity to make their music more memorable. Her voluntary services at a benefit for the Prahran Mechanics Society, held by Englishman John Winterbottom on June 8, marked the beginning of her professional association with this popular composer, conductor, bassoonist, and apparent admirer.¹³² Winterbottom was of “striking” appearance. His impressive height and his dark, shoulder length hair, swept back from his forehead without parting, was reminiscent of the Hungarian composer and pianist Franz Liszt.¹³³ If Winterbottom had a particular ‘look’, the public record suggests that Hamilton, too, possessed physical appeal, in an era where there were few hints about the appearance of respectable celebrities. The press coldly acknowledged her beauty at the end of her career, and occasional references to the “fair” Miss Hamilton in the course of her career may have played on the notion of blonde good looks.¹³⁴ At her mid-1854 benefit concert, seven male performers of high reputation, including

¹³² For Hamilton’s support of the Prahran event see 1854 ‘Advertising’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 7 June, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4809034>. Winterbottom also performed at a benefit for Hamilton in late June. See 1854 ‘Advertising’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 17 June, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4793941>. Winterbottom’s Promenade Concerts attracted audiences into the thousands. See A. Wentzel, op. cit., pp. 69-73.

¹³³ For a description of Winterbottom see 1909 ‘EARLY MELBOURNE’, *The Argus*, Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 15 September, p. 9, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article10733758>. For an illustration suggesting his panache see W. Mason, ‘Mr Winterbottom, the eminent musician’, illustration, *The Australian picture pleasure book: illustrating the scenery, architecture, historical events, natural history, public characters &c., of Australia*, J. R. Clark, Sydney, 1857. For a relevant discussion of Liszt see H. Salmi, ‘Viral Virtuosity and the Itineraries of Celebrity Culture’, in H. Salmi, A. Nivala, J. Sarjala (eds.), *Travelling Notions of Culture in Early Nineteenth-Century Europe*, New York and London, Routledge, 2016, p. 135. For the cultural impact of Liszt’s hair (widely fetishised in the 1830s and 1840s) see A. Levin, *Seducing Paris: Piano virtuosos and artistic identity, 1820-48*, PhD diss., Musicology, University of North Carolina, 2009, p. 290, fn.106.

¹³⁴ There is no extant photo of Octavia Hamilton so her appearance is a matter of speculation. According to his police records, Hamilton’s son, Ernest Frederick, born in 1859, was six-foot tall and fair-haired. See Moon, Ernest Frederick, Prisoner nos. 23319–23815, *Central Register of Male Prisoners*, vol. 42, Melbourne. Hamilton’s brother Walter Scrivenor had “light” hair, a “fresh” complexion and blue eyes. See Scrivenor, Walter, Prisoner 1054, *Western Australia, Australia, Convict Records, 1846-1930*. For reference to the “fair” Miss Hamilton see 1855 ‘DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 8 June, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4809257>. 1861 ‘CURRENT TOPICS’, *Geelong Advertiser* (Vic.: 1859 - 1926), 7 February, p. 2, 2016, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article148696047>. 1863 ‘MELBOURNE PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY’, *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 4 March, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154968978>. For reference to her “pleasing appearance” see 1865 ‘The Australasian’, *The Australasian* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1864 - 1946), 26 August, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article138041671>.

Winterbottom, were contributors.¹³⁵ Hamilton's appearance as a woman flanked by males established one of the prominent features of her career: she was at home in a stage full of men.

While professional productions required risk-taking entrepreneurs, the casting of popular singers lessened the risk.¹³⁶ Like Hamilton, John Winterbottom's wife performed at the June benefit for the Prahran Mechanics Institute, but unlike Hamilton she was never granted a stage role of importance: presumably her talents were limited.¹³⁷ Winterbottom's engagement of Hamilton as the female lead in his promenade concerts at Rowe's Circus in July and August of 1854 indicates his belief in her capacity to draw audiences.¹³⁸ His colonial adaptation of the Jullien-style event appears to have been largely successful, with up to fifteen hundred people in attendance.¹³⁹ Such a mobile throng of spectators maximised audience opportunities for close scrutiny of Hamilton, as the 'front row' shifted formation.¹⁴⁰

After a slump in attendance at Rowe's Circus, Winterbottom announced the "Irish Music Festival", an inflated description for two promenade concerts with Irish music content. Hamilton continued as the female attraction. As Irish colonists in Victoria ranged from working class Catholics to the Irish Protestants dominating the Melbourne judiciary, the concerts would have drawn a 'mixed' crowd, as reflected in ticket price

¹³⁵ 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 20 June, p. 8. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4794060>.

¹³⁶ George Lewis was insolvent by October 1855 due to the burden of taking on the role of lessee of Astley's Theatre from Thomas Mooney. See 1855 'NEW INSOLVENTS', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 16 October, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4821013>.

¹³⁷ For Mrs Winterbottom's attendance see 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 7 June, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4809034>.

¹³⁸ For concert details see 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 15 August, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4796383>. Winterbottom modelled his promenade concerts on the London Jullien concerts of the 1840s where he played the bassoon. Louis Jullien, said to have introduced the polka to England in 1844, may also have inspired Winterbottom's own polka compositions. See A. Carse, *The Life of Jullien*, Cambridge, W. Heffer & Sons Ltd, 1951, p. 3, p. 51. Love, *The Golden Age of Australian Opera*, p. 29.

¹³⁹ One review describes the 15 July event as "crowded" and Hamilton as "distinguished". See 1854 'DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 18 July, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4795299>. These concerts appealed to a wide class spectrum. See 1859 'COMMENCEMENT OF THE JULLIEN ERA', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 7 January, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7307568>.

¹⁴⁰ 1854 'DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 18 July, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4795299>.

variations.¹⁴¹ In all probability, the kind of upper class bachelors and erring husbands who were members of the Melbourne Club helped swell the numbers. Paul de Serville and Ann Galbally have observed that such men used the Club as a base for their forays into diverse forms of entertainment.¹⁴² In the final concert of the Irish Music Festival, Winterbottom's use of Hamilton's name to promote his composition the "Octavia Polka" conveys the utility of a celebrity that was both respectable and glamorous.¹⁴³

In Melbourne the emergence of promenade concerts not only captures colonial efforts to adapt British entertainments to the local setting but echoes another facet of the larger culture: the exhibitionist parade. From the 1850s the fashionable leisured class of Melbourne walked the Collins Street block between Elizabeth and Swanston streets, with self-conscious insouciance.¹⁴⁴ It is hard to imagine that Hamilton, with her penchant for eye-catching dress and her white dog named 'Beauty' equipped with red collar, refrained from a saunter down Collins Street.¹⁴⁵ Although there are few sources capturing the tenor of social exchange on Melbourne's better

¹⁴¹ For the August 19 concert see 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 18 August, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4796537>. For the September 2 concert see 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 1 September, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4797098>. Both De Serville and Galbally have commented on the prominence of Protestant Irish in Melbourne's elite. See P. De Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees: the upper class in Victoria, 1850-1880*, South Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1991, pp.4-5. A. Galbally, *Redmond Barry: an Anglo-Irish Australia*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1995, p. 135. The Irish also featured prominently in ex-convict and assisted migrants sectors of the east coast colonies. See M. Campbell, 'Ireland's Furthest Shores: Irish Immigrant Settlement in Nineteenth-Century California and Eastern Australia', *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 71, no. 1, 2002, p. 67.

¹⁴² For relevant commentary on the Melbourne Club see de Serville, op. cit., p. 54. Galbally, op. cit., p. 45.

¹⁴³ For the reference to the "Octavia Polka" see 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 1 September, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4797098>.

¹⁴⁴ Paul de Serville dates "doing the block" – or parading the stretch of Collins Street between Swanston and Elizabeth Street – from the mid-1850s. See de Serville, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

¹⁴⁵ In 1860 a Sydney press' observation that Hamilton's "dress was not always in the best taste" may suggest her penchant for low necklines. See 1860 'THEATRICALS', *Bell's Life in Sydney and Sporting Reviewer* (NSW: 1845 - 1860), 9 June, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article59872851>. For Hamilton's advertisement for her lost dog see 1861 'Advertising', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 3 September, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5703733>.

streets, it appears that informal encounters did provide opportunities to consolidate one's place in Melbourne's elite social networks.¹⁴⁶

By October 1854 Hamilton had worked with the two most important singers of sacred music in Victoria, Mrs Testar and Mrs Hancock, both paid soloists for the Melbourne Philharmonic Society (MPS), the centre of sacred oratorio in Melbourne.¹⁴⁷ Hamilton's friendly relationship with these women may well have influenced the MPS to employ her at the time of Mrs Testar's protracted farewell from the stage a few years later.¹⁴⁸ In late 1854 Hamilton and Mrs Hancock developed their working relationship in a series of concerts at Astley's amphitheatre.¹⁴⁹ While Mrs Testar generally avoided quasi-circus venues, she did deign to perform at Astley's between September 18 and 28, at the time when the lessee George Lewis declared his intention of engaging the Irish prima donna Catherine Hayes.¹⁵⁰ However, Lewis, the equestrienne gymnast turned entrepreneur, simply lacked the cultural capital to retain Mrs Testar – or to secure Catherine Hayes, who rejected Astley's on spurious grounds.¹⁵¹

Hamilton's collaboration with the popular Frenchman Emile Coulon,

¹⁴⁶ Russell's discussion of Annie Carre Riddell's Melbourne shopping trip suggests that Collins Street functioned as an extension of middle-class social space. See Annie and Bessie Carre, Diary, 13 May 1872, *Carre Riddell family papers*, cited in P. Russell, 'The Brash Colonial: Class And Comportment In Nineteenth-Century Australia,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 12, 2002, p. 452.

¹⁴⁷ Mrs Hancock and Mrs Testar had been performing as soloists with the Melbourne Philharmonic Society since its inaugural 1853 concert. See W. Carne, *The Official Centenary History of the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society*, Melbourne, Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society, 1954, p. 7.

¹⁴⁸ For Mrs Testar's farewells see 1891 'Mrs Testar', *Table Talk (Melbourne, Vic.: 1885 - 1939)*, 23 January, pp. 4-5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article147283927>. 1872 'Opening Of The International Exhibition', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 6 November, p. 1. (The Argus Supplement), <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5841902>.

¹⁴⁹ Hamilton and Mrs Hancock performed in October, November and December. See for example 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 9 October, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4798674>. 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 6 November, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4799877>. 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 1 December, p. 8. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4801122>.

¹⁵⁰ For an example of Mrs Testar's presence at Astley's when Lewis was 'courting' Hayes see 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 18 September, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4797768>. George Lewis started his career as an equestrian acrobat. See 1922 'New Princess Theatre', *Table Talk (Melbourne, Vic.: 1885 - 1939)*, 28 December, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article146457811>.

¹⁵¹ Hayes' stated reason for rejecting Astley's was poor acoustics. See M. Colligan, 'Circus in theatre: Astley's amphitheatre', Melbourne 1854-1857, *Australasian Drama Studies*, no. 35, October 1999, pp. 35-36. For Lewis's defence of his venue see 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 30 October, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4799617>.

who arrived in Victoria in September 1854, would prove immensely profitable for her career. Colonial enthusiasm for Coulon was reinforced by his prestigious tutelage, his mystique as a Frenchman and his short but well-publicised touring history with the prima donna Catherine Hayes.¹⁵² On one level, Coulon was yet another a moderately successful careerist mining the colonies for elevated status: he certainly never achieved the success of his brother who was employed in the Paris opera.¹⁵³ Yet, as American historian George Martin has observed, it was supposedly “secondary” artistes like Emile Coulon who had been crucial in introducing Verdi to California prior to his arrival in Australia, not prima donnas such as Bishop or Hayes.¹⁵⁴

In colonial Victoria and New South Wales, Coulon was embraced as a major celebrity. Hamilton, Hancock and Coulon performed at the “grand opening” of the “Lower Saloons and Superb Entrance Hall to the New Theatre Royal Bourke Street east” from the end of December in what was essentially a promenade concert held in the theatre’s vestibule.¹⁵⁵ However, in the context of Melbourne’s rough and ready musical venues, even the entrance to an unfinished building of substance provided prestige and novelty.¹⁵⁶ By late January Coulon’s name was prominently associated with that of Hamilton’s.¹⁵⁷ As a barrel-chested baritone, he may have served as a physical foil to Hamilton’s more diminutive beauty, and they were clearly

¹⁵² Coulon was described as the “admirable coadjutor of Catherine Hayes” in post-Hayes promotion. See 1854 ‘Advertising’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 23 December, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4802211>. For a favourable review of the pair see 1854 ‘CATHERINE HAYES’, *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer* (Vic.: 1851 - 1856), 22 November, p. 4. (DAILY), <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article91858410>.

¹⁵³ Like many others who visited the colonies, Coulon left a more successful sibling behind; his was a Paris opera singer. See Love, *The Golden Age of Australian Opera*, p. 29.

¹⁵⁴ See G. Martin, *Verdi at the Golden Gate: Opera and San Francisco in the Gold Rush Years*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford, University of California Press, 1991, p. 56. Martin observes that Coulon and his peers left a cultural gap that was hard to fill when they left California for the Australian colonies in 1854. See G. Martin, op. cit., p. 105.

¹⁵⁵ 1854 ‘Advertising’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 23 December, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4802211>.

¹⁵⁶ The review focused on the grandeur of the entrance. See 1854 ‘DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 26 December, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4802254>.

¹⁵⁷ For Hamilton’s first appearances with Coulon see 1854 ‘Advertising’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 28 November, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4800948>. By January 2, Coulon and Hamilton were being promoted as the prominent duet. See 1855 ‘Advertising’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 3 January, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4802603>.

perceived as an effective duo.¹⁵⁸ In Coulon's so called "Farewell to Victoria" concert, held at Melbourne's Queen's Theatre, the site of Catherine Hayes' recent concert appearances, his duets were conducted exclusively with Hamilton.¹⁵⁹ Such operatic duets introduced a dynamic of dramatic tension to Hamilton's repertoire, allowing the audience to engage with extended lyrical dialogue. The Coulon-Hamilton coupling freshened memories of Coulon-Hayes renditions of Donizetti's opera, and encouraged favourable – and hyperbolic – press comparisons between Hamilton and Hayes.¹⁶⁰

In the course of the pair's touring of Launceston and Hobart in February 1855, the Victorian press described Hamilton as a "celebrated cantatrice".¹⁶¹ While this descriptor, generally reserved for prima donnas, echoed the recent marketing of Catherine Hayes and inflated Hamilton's actual status, it also suggests the way her touring provided Victoria with an opportunity to assert pride in its cultural assets.¹⁶² Estimations of singers' voices in press reviews were influenced by a variety of factors including available singer resources and projects of self-presentation engaged in by colonists and critics alike. Vocal skill was not always the primary influence.

Coulon and Hamilton performed a range of Italian operatic music in Tasmania, with a duet from the Donizetti opera *L'Elisir d'Amore* (the elixir of love), the most emblematic of a relationship that may have been thriving

¹⁵⁸ For the image of Coulon which suggests his stocky build (published in the *Illustrated Sydney News* of 12 October 1854) see N. Anae, 'Operatic performances two hundred miles in the Australian bush': Staging Rural Identity, the Case of Madame Fannie Simonsen in Wagga Wagga,' 1866, *Rural Society*, vol. 20, October 2010, p. 75.

¹⁵⁹ 1855 'Advertising', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 26 January, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4803569>.

¹⁶⁰ In Sydney Hayes was well received in Donizetti's *Daughters of the Regiment* which Hamilton also performed with Coulon. See 1854 'MISS CATHERINE HAYES' FIRST APPEARANCE IN OPERA', *The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954)*, 4 October, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12951885>. In Melbourne Hayes sang duets with Coulon at a miscellaneous concert. See 1854 'Advertising', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 26 October, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4799436>. For Hamilton's comparison with Hayes, a comparison that would not be sustained in later reviews see 1855 'DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 8 January, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4802779>.

¹⁶¹ 1855 'TASMANIA', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 17 February, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4804512>.

¹⁶² Catherine Hayes was described as a "celebrated cantatrice" in 1854 and beyond. See for instance 1854 'CATHERINE HAYES', *Empire (Sydney, NSW: 1850 - 1875)*, 23 September, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article60195020>. 1856 'Local Intelligence', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 5 May, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154866354>.

at the expense of her marriage by 1856, as I suggest in Chapter Two.¹⁶³ In Tasmania Coulon not only supported Hamilton's expansion into operatic duets; he demonstrated the power of a patriotic repertoire to rouse audience fervour. His rousing rendition of *The Marsellaise*, the French national song, created a furore on the tour, as in the context of the Crimean War it served as a defacto British anthem.¹⁶⁴ Some four months later, Hamilton's long remembered Melbourne premier of the song *The Queen's Letter* paid more explicit homage to British sacrifice in the Crimea.¹⁶⁵ Octavia Hamilton learned quickly, thriving in an environment of informal mentorship. Her capacity to meet the challenges posed by her own training deficits, as well as those of the lightly resourced colonial stage, assisted her successful penetration and development of professional networks.

Adaptable lyric stage artistes and their critics

In Melbourne between 1853 and 1855 Noble's Circus grew into the Salle Valentino, the Princess Theatre rose from Astley's amphitheatre, and Rowe's Circus was recast as the Olympic Theatre.¹⁶⁶ As previously discussed, early structures melding circus ring with concert space and dance hall created histories of theatrical production that were foundational to the development of the Melbourne lyric stage. Similarly the long-term residents and lingering visitors who took up successful lyric stage careers did so with

¹⁶³ For the pair's performance of *The Elixir of Love* in Tasmania see 1855 'Classified Advertising', *The Courier* (Hobart, Tas.: 1840 - 1859), 12 February, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article2479220>.

¹⁶⁴ *The Marsellaise* was repeated to enthusiastic reception throughout Coulon's career in the Australian colonies. See for example 1854 'DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE', *Empire* (Sydney, NSW: 1850 - 1875), 2 October, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article60198241>. For the song's British patriotic resonance and Coulon's enduring association with the song see 1917 'National Anthems—And Others', *Gippsland Mercury* (Sale, Vic.: 1914 - 1918), 1 May, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article88445151>. For the use of the song in 1858 Melbourne protest marches aimed at 'unlocking' the land see M. Cannon, *Melbourne after the gold rush*, Main Ridge, Victoria, Loch Haven Books, 1993, p. 99.

¹⁶⁵ For the Melbourne premier of *The Queen's Letter*, see 1855 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 6 June, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4809161>. Hamilton's association with the song was still remembered in 1906. See 1906 'OLD MEMORIES', *Ovens and Murray Advertiser* (Beechworth, Vic.: 1855 - 1918), 10 November, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article200559204>.

¹⁶⁶ For the prior histories of the three quasi circus venues see 1909 'Early Melbourne', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 15 September, p. 9, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article10733758>. Note that the name of Noble's circus was the Olympic Circus. See 1852 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 1 March, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4783489>.

a degree of invention and resourcefulness that pre-dated the arrival of the Lyster Theatre troupe in 1861.

Octavia Hamilton took her place in the company of music-makers who helped to produce cultural experiences available to middle-class audiences in Britain and larger Europe. Concomitant with this drive was a make do-attitude: a willingness to disregard purist notions of musical arrangement, accompaniment, form, staging and casting, as necessary. Mid-century colonial music makers presented versions of operas that were incomplete by rigid standards. Singers were accompanied by borrowed pianos, defective pianos and wailing babies.¹⁶⁷ When vocalists were in short supply, event organisers might have to resort to a performer whose singing evoked a barking dog, while other singers were compelled to compete with literal dogs.¹⁶⁸ A pianist might face the challenge of transposing each note on a defective piano or if a pianist failed to arrive, a singer might accompany themselves, as Hamilton did in 1859 at the Melbourne Trades Hall.¹⁶⁹ Women such as Hamilton performed with bad colds, or persevered in the face of injury.¹⁷⁰ They took to the stage when heavily pregnant, sang out of their natural range and took male roles, all signs of their resilience

¹⁶⁷ Mrs Horsley's 1864 Saturday Afternoon Concerts were made possible by the loan of a piano. See 1864 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 11 August, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5751488>. The piano used for Hamilton's post fire benefit was out of tune. See 1858 'Miss Octavia Hamilton's Benefit Concert', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 1 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154877144>. For references to wailing babies in theatres see A. Doggett, 'The 'resistless fascination of the unknown': fifteen years of opera in Ballarat's other golden age', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, vol. 5, 2004, p. 85. The Garrick Club deterred "babes in arms" by charging for their attendance. See 1857 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 22 December, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154831879>.

¹⁶⁸ For reference to Gregg's staccato style of singing see 1861 'THEATRICALS AND MUSIC', *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1857 - 1868), 13 July, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article201372005>. 1863 'GRAND SACRED CONCERT', *The Star* (Ballarat, Vic.: 1855 - 1864), 24 October, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article72518196>. For reference to the literal barking of dogs see Doggett, *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, p. 86.

¹⁶⁹ The pianist was forced to perform such a feat at a concert involving Hamilton. See 1855 'Domestic Intelligence', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 8 January, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4802779>. For Hamilton's "double duty" see 1859 'THE NEWS OF THE DAY', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 17 October, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154826712>.

¹⁷⁰ Hamilton sang with a sore throat at the Athanaeum opening. See 1860 'OPENING THE Kew Athenaeum', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 9 May, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5682058>. Madame Carandini was wounded in a production of *Fra Diavola* but took no time off work. See 1858 'VICTORIA', *Launceston Examiner* (Tas.: 1842 - 1899), 2 October, p. 2. (AFTERNOON), <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article38993415>.

and skill.¹⁷¹ On one legendary occasion, Sara Flower, a gifted contralto, remained hidden in the wings of a theatre, singing the part of her baritone peer while he mimed his way through the performance.¹⁷² Similarly Hamilton played the male role of Maffio Orsini in Donizette's *Lucrezia Borgia* at a benefit performance for Emile Coulon.¹⁷³ Singers performed in chilly venues and in weather so hot that the audience reeked.¹⁷⁴ Such feats of artistic adaptability were paralleled in San Francisco, another site of cultural growth enriched by quest for gold. When the Bianchi touring company staged Italian opera in California, including the state's premier of *Il Trovatore*, the standard chorus of female voices was replaced with a chorus of eight German males.¹⁷⁵

In a colonial context of make-do, lyric stage reviewers might encourage, celebrate, denigrate or patronise imperfect lyric stage events. The idea that high calibre musical production was a benchmark of civil society was a predominant theme but critics had to decide how much 'make do' could be tolerated in local productions. The conflict between the short-lived English Opera Company of 1858 – of which Hamilton was a member – and James Neild, chief critic of Melbourne's most influential newspaper at that time, the daily *Argus*, and its offshoot the weekly *Examiner*, sheds light on the cultural authority of a critic with a strong institutional base, as well as

¹⁷¹ Hamilton was close to giving birth to Edith Rose in May 1861 when she sang at Mrs Hancock's last benefit concert in the Australian colonies. See 1861 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 21 May, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154888509>. Genteel women appeared in public when pregnant. See M. Hancock, *Colonial consorts: the wives of Victoria's governors 1839-1900*, Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2001, p. 52. In a Bianchi production Hamilton sang contralto part. See 1860 'THEATRE ROYAL', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 17 January, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5695548>.

¹⁷² For Sara Flower's contribution see 1878 'The Opera In Australia', *Launceston Examiner* (Tas.: 1842 - 1899), 13 May, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article47786099>. Julia Harland took on the male role of Elvino in *La Sonnambula* see 1863 'News And Notes', *The Star* (Ballarat, Vic.: 1855 - 1864), 4 July, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article72515495>.

¹⁷³ 1860 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 6 September, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5689298>.

¹⁷⁴ For reference to a chilly Theatre Royal see 1861 'THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1861', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 19 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5704235>. In 1855 Mrs Hancock and Coulon reportedly sang in an "offensive" environment. See 1855 'MELBOURNE', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842 - 1954), 2 November, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12976132>. The odour of a Ballarat audience was also alluded to in 1865. See 1865 'THE HARMONIC SOCIETY'S CONCERT', *The Ballarat Star* (Vic.: 1865 - 1924), 27 December, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article112866053>.

¹⁷⁵ G. Martin, op. cit., pp. 125-126, p. 129.

the capacity of united professionals to stage counter attacks in obliging rival newspapers.¹⁷⁶ Neild, an English critic who like Smith, had migrated to the Australian colonies shortly before Hamilton, generally framed the performances of the English Opera Company as falling short of standards of operatic excellence and would be publically blamed for their demise.¹⁷⁷ Most significantly, in light of the clashes of opinion played out in the press about the worth of the company, Neild was also the adversary of James Smith, critic for the *Age*, at that point in time. According to Love the “fracas” over Neild’s treatment of a touring magician created hostility between the two journalists some months before Hamilton and her peers made their foray into full-length opera.¹⁷⁸

The story of the conflict between the English Opera Company and James Neild, Victoria’s most “norty kritick”, unfolded in a larger context of cultural shift and public performance.¹⁷⁹ By the mid-nineteenth century, dominant British notions of high calibre theatrical performance included the idea that artistic works should be presented in their entirety, and as close to the original vision as possible, with the audience restrained and courteous spectators. This cultural emphasis on the primacy of the theatrical ‘work’ evolved out of – and coexisted with – a more ‘event’ based tradition of theatre. In the event tradition, dominant in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, audience presence was highly conspicuous and the drive to entertain took precedence over purist notions of artistic perfection or

¹⁷⁶ From October 1858 Neild was the main critic for the *Argus* and the *Examiner* (the *Argus*’s weekly magazine). Melbourne’s leading intellectuals contributed to the *Argus*, “an exceptionally well written newspaper”. See Love, *James Edward Neild*, p. 23, pp. 48-49. Elizabeth Morrison has noted the paper’s influence. See E. Morrison, *Engines of Influence: Newspapers of Country Victoria 1840-1890*, Victoria, Melbourne University Press, p. 132.

¹⁷⁷ Neild arrived in Melbourne in September 1853. See Love, *James Edward Neild*, p. 20.

¹⁷⁸ While Lurline Stuart comments that it is uncertain whether Smith accepted the invitation of Ebenezer Syme to take up editorship of the *Age* in 1858, Love notes his occupation of that role in his far more rigorous investigation of Neild’s life. The conflict between an editor hostile to colonial opera (Neild) and the editor of *Age* coincides with the fracture in the volatile friendship between Smith and Neild in 1858. This thesis assumes Smith’s editorship of the *Age* during the life of the 1858 English Opera Company. For relevant discussion see L Stuart, *James Smith: The making of a colonial culture*, Sydney, London Boston and Wellington, Allen & Unwin, 1989, p. 29. Love, *James Edward Neild*, pp. 25-26, pp. 62-63, p. 66. It is probable that the many years Smith spent working for the *Argus* obscured public recollection of his 1858 association with the *Age* at the time of his death. See 1910 ‘DEATH OF MR. JAMES SMITH’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 21 March, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article10843438>.

¹⁷⁹ This phrase was used to characterise Neild as a provocative journalist by his contemporaries. See Love, *James Edward Neild*, p. 65

composer intention.¹⁸⁰ In short, Neild judged opera from a work-oriented, rather than event-oriented perspective, privileging unrealistic standards of excellence over resident determination to experience the event, however adapted. On the one hand he might be viewed as an idealist whose goal was the perfection of taste. On the other he might be viewed as prioritising his use of the press to highlight his erudition and supposed sensibility.¹⁸¹

Like the proverbial phoenix, the English Opera Company (or the “Grand Opera Company”) rose out of a fire at 17 Napier Street Collingwood, the residence of Octavia Hamilton, in August 1858.¹⁸² While the effects of the fire were reported as “severe” and “calamitous”, the advertisements that Hamilton promptly posted for singing and piano tuition provided the old address, so the premises must have been habitable.¹⁸³ Whatever the extent of the damage, Hamilton’s colleagues rallied around her, organising a benefit concert for August 31 to help lessen her losses.¹⁸⁴ The announcement of the benefit took the unusual form of a press-published letter that directly addressed her, a public yet personal declaration of friendship that underscored her value to her colleagues: “To Miss Octavia Hamilton, Hearing with great regret of the great loss recently sustained by you... we beg to OFFER you our PROFESSIONAL SERVICES.” In this letter, the eminent singers who declared their intention to contribute to Hamilton’s benefit included Maria Carandini, Emile Coulon, Julia Harland, and Ellen Hancock. Norman Linley and Louis Lavenue, well-respected conductor and accompanist respectively, also came to Hamilton’s assistance.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁰ J. Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts: Opera and Elite Culture in London, 1780-1880*, Durham, New Hampshire, University of New Hampshire Press, 2007, pp. 5-9.

¹⁸¹ For William Weber’s discussion of “taste” see W. Weber, *The great transformation of musical taste: programming from Haydn to Brahms*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 97.

¹⁸² For the press report of the fire, see 1858 'MELBOURNE NEWS', *Bendigo Advertiser* (Vic.: 1855 - 1918), 17 August, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article87982694>.

¹⁸³ 1858 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 19 August, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7299527>. 1858 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 24 August, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7299818>.

¹⁸⁴ 1858 'MELBOURNE NEWS', *Bendigo Advertiser* (Vic.: 1855 - 1918), 17 August, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article87982694>.

¹⁸⁵ For the first open letter see 1858 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 30 August, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7300162>. Singer Walter Sherwin also provided support. See 1858 'MISS OCTAVIA HAMILTON'S BENEFIT

An “immense” audience gathered at Hamilton’s benefit, with one reviewer noting that “almost all that Melbourne and its vicinity boasts of wealth and fashion were present.”¹⁸⁶ The singer’s immense popularity is clearly apparent at this event. Colonial esteem for Hamilton extended to the elite, with the vice regal circle, Governor Barkly, his sister, father-in-law, and private secretary Captain Bancroft attending, as well as Judge Redmond Barry who would have been well acquainted with Hamilton through their joint association with the Melbourne Philharmonic Society.¹⁸⁷

On the basis of reciprocity alone it would have been relatively easy to garner support for Hamilton. In an 1855 letter to the press, Englishman Richard Horne, a published writer and an important member of the Melbourne literary network, praised Hamilton and a few of her peers for their contributions to benefit concerts. As a member of the Mary Mitford literary circle in England, the influential Horne, described by Love as “the most distinguished man of letters” in Victoria at the time of his 1852 arrival, was well used to respectful interactions with women of talent.¹⁸⁸

CONCERT', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 1 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154877144>.

¹⁸⁶ For the review quoted see 1858 'THEATRICALS AND MUSIC', *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1857 - 1868), 4 September, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article201372140>. *The Age* also commented on the crowded venue. See 1858 'PRINCESS'S THEATRE', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 1 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7300300>. For eminent audience members see 1858 'THEATRICALS AND MUSIC', *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1857 - 1868), 4 September, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article201372140>. 1858 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 30 August, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7300162>. Here I am assuming that attendance was consistent with advertising.

¹⁸⁷ Captain Timmins was Barkly’s father-in-law. Barkly’s first wife Elizabeth died in 1857. See Hancock, op. cit., p. 50, pp. 54-55. For Bancroft’s role in the vice regal circle see 1857 'HIS EXCELLENCY'S LEVEE', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 2 January, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154825363>. For Barry’s role as President of the MPS see Galbally, op. cit., 85.

¹⁸⁸ For Horne’s letter to the editor see 1855 'BENEVOLENCE AND JUSTICE', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848-957), 21 July, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4812873>. For reference to Horne’s literary network in Melbourne see G. Nadel, *Australia’s colonial culture: Ideas, men and institutions in mid-nineteenth century eastern Australia*, Cambridge and Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1957, p. 106. For Love’s commentary see Love, *James Edward Neild*, pp. 31-32. For the prominence of women in the Mitford circle see K. Halsey, “‘Tell me of some booklings’: Mary Russell Mitford’s Literary Networks”, *Women’s Writing*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2001, p. 130. Horne had been friendly with poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning, in the Mitford Circle. See 1877 ‘Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’, *Portland Guardian* (Vic.: 1876-1953), 1 June, p. 1, Evening Supplement, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article63338498>.

The repertoire for Hamilton's 1858 concert involved the first act of *Norma*, the second act of *Lucrezia Borgia*, the second act of *Maritani* and a theatrical farce. This concert was described as "Grand Opera" to distinguish it from miscellaneous concerts that included single arias or operatic duets. While the provision of entire acts provided some sense of extended operatic scope, the variety of the operas performed also catered to the public's desire for novelty.¹⁸⁹ However, when judged on the criterion of operatic completion and technical perfection, the production was viewed as problematic. According to the *Melbourne Age* the chorus was weak and Lavenu's piano "hideously out of tune".¹⁹⁰ The *Argus* was unsparing in its focus on the production's deficiencies.¹⁹¹ After performing their grasp of purist standards of production, the critics of both papers conceded that Hamilton's concert had strengths but there was implied criticism of her acting that would recur over the years.¹⁹² Male singers were not immune from attack. Neild judged the casting of Edward Hancock at Madame Carandini's benefit, held shortly after Hamilton's benefit, as an act of last resort, while *Bell's Life in Victoria* recommended that Walter Sherwin invest in 'cough lozenges' and acting lessons.¹⁹³ However, the *Age* responded to Madame Carandini's concert with more optimism observing that there was enough lyric stage talent to sustain an operatic season at the Princess Theatre.¹⁹⁴ Clashes in critical judgements, both within and between colonial presses, suggest that celebrity status was a matter of ongoing,

¹⁸⁹ 1858 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 30 August, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154876808>

¹⁹⁰ 1858 'MISS OCTAVIA HAMILTON'S BENEFIT CONCERT', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 1 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154877144>

¹⁹¹ For the *Argus* review see 1858 'PRINCESS'S THEATRE', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 1 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7300300>. *Bell's Life in Victoria* agreed that the chorus and orchestra were lacking but the review was generally favourable. See 1858 'THEATRICALS AND MUSIC', *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1857 - 1868), 4 September, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article201372140>.

¹⁹² 1858 'MISS OCTAVIA HAMILTON'S BENEFIT CONCERT', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 1 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154877144>.

¹⁹³ For commentary on Hancock and Sherwin see respectively 1858 'PRINCESS'S THEATRE', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 6 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7300543>. 1858 'THEATRICALS AND MUSIC', *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1857 - 1868), 11 September, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article201379639>.

¹⁹⁴ 1858 'THE NEWS OF THE DAY', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 6 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154875605>.

informal and frequently implicit “negotiation” between various parties, with critics possessing a particular ‘licence’ to compromise, accept or reject artistic performance.¹⁹⁵

Whatever its limitations, the benefits held for Hamilton and Madame Carandini attested to the popularity of both singers, and a strong if uneven level of collective musical skill. Certainly there was sufficiently warm reception to inspire the creation of Melbourne’s first opera company.¹⁹⁶ The description of the company as “extempore” acknowledged its lack of customary resources, yet the English Opera Company staked its claim in the territory of “grand opera.”¹⁹⁷ Indeed it soon took on the title of the “*Grand Opera Company*” in Melbourne advertising (italics mine).¹⁹⁸ Hamilton’s appearance as a principal artist was delayed until the premier of *La Favorita* in early November of 1858, perhaps because she lacked the extensive knowledge of repertoire possessed by Carandini, Harland, Coulon, and Farquharson – or perhaps because of domestic pressures. As I will discuss in Chapter Two, in the November of the previous year, Hamilton had given birth to a child conceived while touring and her husband was probably wary about her involvement in a company that may have included her lover.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ For York’s discussion of celebrity “negotiation” see L. York, ‘Star Turn: The Challenges of Theorizing Celebrity Agency’, *The Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 46, no. 6, 2013, p. 1340.

¹⁹⁶ The company involved much the same list of professionals, with the addition of Frank Farquharson. See 1858 ‘The Argus’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 15 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7301062>

¹⁹⁷ For the reference to the “extempore” nature of the company see 1858 ‘The Argus’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 15 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7301062>. They were not the only company to use the rather generic name of English Opera Company. See for example the company performing in Ballarat in June: 1858 ‘Advertising’, *The Star* (Ballarat, Vic.: 1855-1864), 12 June, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article66048618>. All the opera that the company staged at the Princess Theatre was advertised as “grand opera”, even before the establishment of the English Opera Company. See for instance 1858 ‘Advertising’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848-1957), 4 September, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7300487>.

¹⁹⁸ See for example 1858 ‘Advertising’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 17 September, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7301233>. 1858 ‘Advertising’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848-1957), 29 September, p. 8., <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7301930>.

¹⁹⁹ For Hamilton’s inclusion in the company see 1858 ‘The Argus’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848-1957), 15 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7301062>. For Hamilton’s involvement in *La Favorita* see 1858 ‘AMUSEMENTS’, *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 15 September, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154877374>. 1858 ‘Advertising’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 10 November, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7304293>.

The Melbourne *Age* urged the public to accept that the staging of grand opera had to be compromised in line with available resources, whereas *Argus* reviews generally displayed intolerance for a make-do approach to theatrical production.²⁰⁰ Neild's passion for naturalistic theatre and his sense of gendered entitlement were probable influences on his 1857 observation that Sara Flower had been too fat to play the role of the virgin Adalgis in *Norma* at the Princess Theatre. On that occasion Flower's network rallied in support and he was taken off the theatre's free ticket list.²⁰¹ But was Neild himself above punitive gestures? His journalistic assaults on the English Opera Company, which staged all its events at the Princess Theatre during its three months of existence, would suggest he was not. Debates about the value of the company indicate the power of the colonial critic to support or damage vulnerable theatrical projects. While conceding that opera had "difficulties to contend with in a young colony" and should be reviewed "generously" Neild held little in reserve when criticising performers.²⁰²

The English Opera Company received mixed reviews between October and November. The first opera, *Il Trovatore*, was enthusiastically reviewed in the *Age* and Governor Barkley requested a repeat performance.²⁰³ Even Neild conceded that the production had succeeded in "absolute terms", regardless of a "paucity of resources".²⁰⁴ However, he received the company's other productions coldly. In late September, in a probable attempt to deflect criticism from Neild, the *Age* advertisement for

²⁰⁰ For the perspective of the *Age* see 1858 'THE OPERA SEASON', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 15 September, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154877381>. Neild was alienated by opera at the best of times, viewing the convention of sung dialogue as too contrived. See Love, *The Golden Age of Australian Opera*, p. 39.

²⁰¹ *ibid.*, pp. 47-48. There were precedents for the criticism of the casting of fat women in the role of youthful heroines. Reportedly the fiasco of Verdi's first staging of *La Traviata* in 1853 in Venice was influenced by the fact that the singer playing the lead female role was twenty-stone. See M. Steen, *Verdi's La Traviata: a short guide to a great opera*, U.K., Icon Books, 2013, p. 16.

²⁰² *The Examiner and Melbourne Weekly News*, Saturday 1858, December 4, No 75, p. 10.

²⁰³ For relevant *Age* advertisements and reviews see 1858 'Advertising', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 21 October, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154875961>. 1858 'PRINCESS'S THEATRE', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 22 October, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154874800>. For the command performance see 1858 'THE NEWS OF THE DAY', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 17 November, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154878265>.

²⁰⁴ 1858 'PRINCESS'S THEATRE', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 22 October, p. 7, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7303189>.

Fra Diavolo explained that Carandini's adoption of a male role had been essential for production.²⁰⁵ While outwardly sympathetic, *Bell's Life in Victoria* implied that "diverse anomalies" had a role to play in poor ticket sales, alluding to audience reaction against female cross-dressing.²⁰⁶

The *Age* remained the company's most consistent supporter and the *Examiner* and *Argus* their most frequent detractors.²⁰⁷ Neild responded to Hamilton's first foray into large-scale opera in November with a comment about her "excessive timidity", implying a lack of stage presence.²⁰⁸ Soon after, she and her colleagues published a statement in the *Age* claiming that the critic's unjustified assaults were depriving them of their livelihoods.²⁰⁹ *Bell's Life in Victoria* came to their defence, accusing an "impractical" Neild of "pitch[ing] into performers" whose productions were superior to those staged at London's Theatre Royal.²¹⁰ Here hyperbolic comparisons between London and Melbourne theatre, coupled with a demand for the "amusements of England", conveyed the sense of cultural entitlement to theatrical experiences that underpinned event-oriented criticism in the colonies.²¹¹

Not all conflicting opinions about the worth of this company's productions can be attributed to the clash between work and event-oriented criticism but it is impossible to recover the full range of influences. Smith's

²⁰⁵ 1858 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 24 September, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154873810>.

²⁰⁶ 1858 'THEATRICALS AND MUSIC', *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1857-1868), 2 October, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article201379357>.

²⁰⁷ For an illustration of the *Age*'s support see 1858 'THE NEWS OF THE DAY', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854-1954), 8 November, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154874837>.

²⁰⁸ For the announcement of her premier in grand opera see 1858 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 8 November, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7304183>. For Neild's commentary see 1858 'THE THEATRES', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848-1957), 9 November, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7304246>.

²⁰⁹ Hamilton and thirty-five other signatories argued that their "new operas" had broken cultural ground in Victoria and that relative to available resources their production standards were high. See 1858 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 16 November, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154873525>.

²¹⁰ See 1858 'THEATRICALS AND MUSIC', *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1857 - 1868), 20 November, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article201375158>. Note London's Theatre Royal was alluded to in the article's reference to "Drury Lane".

²¹¹ A week later *Bell's Life* declared that operatic productions had been "nipped in the bud" by "unfair" criticism. See 1858 'THEATRICALS AND MUSIC', *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1857-1868), 27 November, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article201374123>.

professional networks may have helped shape a kinder response to the English Opera Company than that of Neild. It is likely that Smith met with Hamilton in the company of the gregarious Richard Horne on more than one occasion. Both men helped to found the Garrick Club in 1855, the same year that Horne publically praised Hamilton for her generous contributions to benefit concerts.²¹² As Lurline Stuart has noted, Smith had both a facility for “foreign languages” and an affinity with French and Italian residents, hence he almost certainly socialised with members of Hamilton’s network, such as the Coulon and Count Carandini.²¹³ Regardless of Smith’s cultural or social inclinations, the *Age* was a less influential paper than the *Argus* on the basis of circulation alone.²¹⁴

As both the *Argus* and the *Age* praised the company’s efforts in mid-November, there may have been talk of pending crisis, and it closed before the end of the month.²¹⁵ In a letter to the *Examiner*, a resident with the pen name “Paul Pry” (a play on Neild’s pseudonym “Christopher Sly”) challenged Neild to deny the reality of Hamilton’s “rich soprano” voice. With proto-nationalist defensiveness, Pry described her as an “Australian debutante”, a performer who had been fostered locally, as opposed to having her skills honed in Britain or Europe, and he insisted that Sly had been unjust in “hunt[ing]” her “down”.²¹⁶

²¹² For Horne’s association with the Garrick Club see 1917 ‘EARLY MELBOURNE’, *Truth* (Melbourne ed.) (Vic.: 1914-1918), 3 November, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article130169704>. For Smith’s role as a founding member see A. Jordens, ‘Smith, James (1820–1910)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 1976, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/smith-james-4604/text7571>.

²¹³ For Smith’s foreign language skills see L. Stuart, *The making of a colonial culture*, Sydney, London Boston and Wellington, Allen & Unwin, 1989, p. 8. Smith’s camaraderie with many stage artistes is suggested by the large number of letters from such celebrities identified in one of his obituaries in 1910. See 1910 ‘MR. JAMES SMITH’, *The Ballarat Star* (Vic.: 1865-1924), 21 March, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article216051203>.

²¹⁴ Elizabeth Morrison notes that the circulation of the *Age* was less than 2000 in 1859 and that the *Argus* sold up to 13000 papers daily throughout the 1850s. See E. Morrison, *Engines of Influence: Newspapers of Country Victoria*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 2005, p. 73.

²¹⁵ For Neild’s probable review see ‘The Argus’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 15 November, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7304567>. For the *Age*’s unqualified praise see 1858 ‘PUBLIC AMUSEMENTS’, *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 15 November, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154877638>. John Black’s announcement of closure made euphemistic reference to the company’s “withdrawal.” See 1858 ‘Advertising’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 24 November, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7305140>.

²¹⁶ 1858 *The Examiner and Melbourne Weekly News*, Saturday December 4, no 75, p. 12.

Hamilton's professional network proved resilient but changed formation. The company fragmented into two smaller companies both touring regional Victoria under the title "Grand Opera Company." These productions failed to draw large audiences and by February of 1859 Monsieur Laglaise had left the colony for England and Frank Farquharson was touring India.²¹⁷ Hamilton was less active in regional Victoria than her peers in the months following the original company's collapse but in late January she united with Coulon, Harland and Sherwin in Ballarat.²¹⁸ Family networks involving professional performers supported the touring capacity of females, with Mr and Mrs Hancock, Madame Carandini, Julia Harland (Mrs Hoskins) and Mr Hoskins highly active in the regional circuit.²¹⁹ Married couples in the industry would often gravitate towards one another in their professional lives, or tolerate periods of separation.

In the wake of "grand" opera, however flawed, the mundane offerings of the Melbourne lyric stage in the first few months of 1859 could only have encouraged audience craving for novelty.²²⁰ Residents were ready to experience an opera that had set the London stage abuzz with controversy in 1856 – namely Giuseppe Verdi's *La Traviata*.

A colonial sense of entitlement: the staging of *La Traviata*

According to 'event' school criteria, the Melbourne premier of Verdi's *La Traviata*, which featured Octavia Hamilton as female lead and Emma

²¹⁷ 1859 'PUBLIC AMUSEMENTS', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 4 February, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154838606>.

²¹⁸ See 1859 'Local and General News', *The Star* (Ballarat, Vic.: 1855 - 1864), 25 January, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article66333574>.

²¹⁹ For the touring of Mr and Mrs Hancock see 1859 'Advertising', *The Star* (Ballarat, Vic.: 1855-1864), 1 February, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article66333705>. For commentary on the Carandinis see Anae, *Journal of Australian Studies*, p. 175. Julia Harland performed with her husband Mr Hoskins. See 1859 'Advertising', *The Star* (Ballarat, Vic.: 1855-1864), 29 November, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article72463457>.

²²⁰ The more common miscellaneous concerts did not draw large crowds. See 1859 'SHIPPING INTELLIGENCE', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 31 January, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7308928>. Jullien style concerts offered no novelty by the late 50s. See 1859 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 4 February, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7309249>. One event of interest included Boulanger's instrumental concert, which involved eminent musicians. See 1859 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848-1957), 15 January, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7308064>. Mr Fawcett's burlesque also entertained. See 1859 'THE THEATRES', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848-1957), 1 February, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7309039>.

Younge as ‘male’ lead, took place on April 13, 1859 at the Theatre Royal.²²¹ Australian musicologists generally dismiss this production as insufficiently complete to qualify as a premier.²²² However, this thesis argues that the Coulon production of *La Traviata* was an authentic premier from the perspective of the Victorian colonists who attended. The fact that the Melbourne Theatre Royal was filled to capacity on April 13 suggests that the event was charged with social significance. Indeed an opera featuring a prostitute as protagonist arrived in the wake of a cultural preoccupation with sex. Michel Foucault has demonstrated that the “tightening” of sexual prohibitions in the nineteenth-century was accompanied by a widespread intensification of interest in sexuality.²²³ According to Bongiorno colonial concern about the containment of female sexuality led to a great deal of “chatter... about sex” in the colonies.²²⁴

In the Coulon production of *La Traviata* Octavia Hamilton was cast in the lead role of Violetta Valery, an alluring courtesan who would eventually die of consumption. On one level a resolution involving death imposed a punitive consequence for illicit desire; on another level it had the potential to fan audience sexual fantasies, as consumption (tuberculosis) was widely linked to the notion of its victims’ heightened sexual desires.²²⁵ Emma Younge took on the role of Alfredo Germont, Violetta’s love interest, presumably in the absence of a suitable tenor. In this production, Hamilton and Coulon were cast as adversaries, with Coulon playing the part

²²¹ See 1859 ‘Advertising’, *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 11 April, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154840095>

²²² Musicological purists such as Gyger attribute the premier performance to the Bianchis, adopting the ‘work-oriented’ perspective that truncated adaptations are not authentic opera. See Gyger, *Civilising the Colonies*, p. 105, p. 106. In the nineteenth century there was a “transformation of musical taste”, according to William Weber, in the direction of work-oriented productions. See W. Weber, *The great transformation of musical taste: Concert programming from Haydn to Brahms*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2008, 2. 26, p. 35, p. 88.

²²³ See M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1: An Introduction*, Ringwood, Victoria, Penguin Books, 1990, pp. 17-18, pp. 32-33. For Foucault’s ongoing relevance see also T. Evans, ‘Knowledge and Experience’, in Toulanan, S., and Fisher, K. (eds.), *The Routledge History of Sex and the Body 1500 to the Present*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2013, p. 256.

²²⁴ F. Bongiorno, *The sex lives of Australians: A history*, Collingwood, Victoria, Black Inc, 2012, p. 23.

²²⁵ Susan Sontag has observed that consumption was widely believed to create “exacerbated sexual desire”. See S. Sontag, ‘Illness as Metaphor’, New York, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1978, cited in Hutcheon, M and L, ‘Famous last breaths: The tubercular heroine in Opera’, *Parallax*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1996, p. 6.

of George Germont, the stern and protective father who successfully persuaded Violetta to leave his son for the good of his family's reputation.²²⁶

In 1859 *La Traviata* was seven years old but advertisements described it as "new".²²⁷ The opera was certainly new to the colonies in that it had only been previously experienced through excerpts at concerts, or reviews copied from the English press.²²⁸ *La Traviata* failed to receive instant popularity in either Europe or England. Its Italian premiere had been criticised because a twenty-stone prima donna played the role of Violetta, and some performers were vocally unsuited to their roles. However a restaging of the opera in 1854 drew accolades.²²⁹ *La Traviata*'s 1856 premier in England generated criticism of a different sort, as the sympathetic portrayal of a Parisian courtesan troubled middle-class morality.²³⁰ Yet by 1857 the commentary of the *London Times*, copied in the colonial press, signalled the widespread embrace of the opera: "Written against, preached against, talked against as it was by all the world, all the world went to see it."²³¹ In 1858 *La Traviata* proved so popular that it was staged simultaneously at three of the most important London theatres, with

²²⁶ The advertising listed the principal performers without specifying all roles, shrewdly omitting mention of Mrs Young's casting as a tenor. See 1859 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 12 April, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5679392>. For the vocal register of the roles see Oliver Ditson and Co., *Verdi's Opera La Traviata, containing the Italian text with an English translation and all the music of the principal airs*, Boston, Author, 1859, p. 3.

²²⁷ The Italian premier was in 1853. See M. Steen, *Verdi's La Traviata*, London, Icon Books, 2013, p. 16. The London premier was in May 1856. See H. Wiebe, Spectacles of sin and suffering: *La Traviata* in Victorian London, *Repercussions*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2001, p. 33.

²²⁸ For an example of a British review copied in the colonial press see 1856 'ART, MUSIC, AND THE DRAMA', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848-1957), 20 November, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7140290>. For an example of Coulon's involvement in a concert with excerpts from *La Traviata* see 1857 'MELBOURNE NEWS', *Bendigo Advertiser* (Vic.: 1855-1918), 28 November, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article87983791>.

²²⁹ Steen, op. cit., p. 16.

²³⁰ E. Sala, *The Sounds of Paris in Verdi's La Traviata*, Cambridge, New York and Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 151. Steen, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

²³¹ For the extract from the *London Times* see 1857, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 7 July, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page194510>. For the popularity of *La Traviata* in London see R. Marvin, 'Verdian Opera Burlesqued: A Glimpse into Mid-Victorian Theatrical Culture', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, vol. 15, no. 1, Mar., 2003, p. 34.

Queen Victoria's disapproval proving no obstacle to middle-class theatre goers.²³²

The colonial staging of an opera that had come to generate more thrill than outrage was well overdue in 1859, although there was some disapproval. *Bell's Life in Victoria* argued that Verdi's "exquisite music" accounted for the appeal of what was "rather a *dirty* work" [italics mine], whereas the *Williamstown Chronicle* dispensed with moralism, admitting that the prospect of experiencing the opera was "unusually attractive".²³³ There was enough interest generated in Williamstown to motivate the organisation of a "special train" to convey opera enthusiasts to Melbourne.²³⁴ Arguably the suburb's demonstrated keenness for opera would help it regain its reputation as a civil society. Two years previously the Inspector General of Penal establishments in Victoria had been crushed to death by a stampede of prisoners in that location, a tragedy that the *Argus* had linked to the "ferocious brutishness" of convictism, and a clear slur on the image of the town.²³⁵ Just as Williamstown's participation in Verdean opera provided a probable opportunity to fashion a more cultivated image, *La Traviata* provided the larger Victorian metropolis with opportunities to self-represent as cultured and affluent.²³⁶

The Misses McCarthy's "Grand Concert", which was also held on April 13 and attended by various members of the Melbourne elite, featured

²³² The chief London theatres were Drury Lane, Majesty's Theatre and Covent Garden. See Steen, op. cit., pp. 17-19. For Queen Victoria's refusal to attend the opera see 1857 'MORALITY OF THE ITALIAN OPERA' *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 2 January, p. 7, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7142600>.

²³³ For the respective press commentaries see 1859 'THEATRICALS AND MUSIC', *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1857 - 1868), 16 April, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article201379396>. 1859 'THEATRE ROYAL', *Williamstown Chronicle* (Vic.: 1856-1954), 9 April, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article68569368>.

²³⁴ 1859 'THEATRE ROYAL', *Williamstown Chronicle* (Vic.: 1856 - 1954), 9 April, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article68569368>.

²³⁵ Williamstown, a gold rush port settlement, experienced enough crime to warrant the appropriation of hulks for a prison. See 1929 'Williamstown', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 19 January, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article204239796>. For the report of the 1857 murder see 1857 'The Murder at Williamstown', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 30 March, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7147095>.

²³⁶ For advertisements for consumer items such as opera glasses and white boots see respectively 1859 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 1 January, p. 7, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7307274>. 1859 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 1 January, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7307281>.

just one song from *La Traviata*.²³⁷ Despite James Neild's enthusiastic promotion of the McCarthy sisters, they could not compete with Coulon's event.²³⁸ The *Age*, in a gesture of diplomacy, attributed the poor turnout to "inclement" weather, as if storm clouds had threatened the route to the Exhibition Centre but not to the venue staging *La Traviata*.²³⁹

The Theatre Royal was filled to capacity on April 13, according to both the *Age* and the *Argus*.²⁴⁰ However, the question of artistic merit proved contentious, with predictable conflict between the two papers. The *Age* argued that *La Traviata* had been staged with "reasonable completeness and success," its reviews resonating with the values of event-oriented theatre: there was no fixation on the purist replication of Verdi's original. Emma Younge was praised for singing her "unsuitable" male part "adroitly". Granted, Octavia Hamilton was an inexperienced lead in grand opera but she was nonetheless "eminently successful" according to the *Age*, which in the context meant successful *enough*.²⁴¹

According to the tenets of event-oriented criticism, Coulon's production of *La Traviata* at the Princess Theatre was greater than the sum of its abbreviated parts. It was an assertion of middle-class entitlement to a lyric stage experience available in Italy since March 1853, and in England since May 1856. It was a *happening* providing the excuse for kaleidoscopic finery that outshone the stage in visual appeal. The pinnacle of praise in the

²³⁷ For the advertisement featuring the program and the names of elite supporters see 1859 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 12 April, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5679392>.

²³⁸ For Christopher Sly/ Neild's praise of the McCarthy sisters see *The Examiner and Melbourne Weekly News*, Saturday 1859, April 2, No 92 p. 13. *The Examiner and Melbourne Weekly News*, Saturday 1859, April 9, No 93 p. 13.

²³⁹ 1859 'THE NEWS OF THE DAY', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 14 April, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154837658>

²⁴⁰ 1859 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 11 April, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154840095>. 1859 'THEATRE ROYAL', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 14 April, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5679501>.

²⁴¹ Early 1858, Emma Younge (originally from Dublin) and her husband Frederick Young, both actors and singers, arrived in Melbourne. See G. Skinner, YOUNGE, Mrs Frederick (Emma Jane CORRI) and YOUNGE, Frederick, A biographical register of Australian colonial musical personnel-XYZ, *Australharmony*, Sydney University, 2016. At the time of Coulon's Farewell concert, [Carandini, Sherwin and Lavenu were performing at the Theatre Royal in Hobart](#). See 1859 'THEATRICALS AND MUSIC', *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1857-1868), 9 April, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article201372351>.

Age's review involved a reference to dress circle "brilliancy": a metaphorical toast to the ladies of Melbourne.²⁴²

However Neild heaped contempt on audience and singers alike in his *Argus* and *Examiner* reviews. He declared that the audience had used an "abortive" production to mimic a decayed aristocracy and that the production was butchered by scene-cuts, an objection typifying work-oriented criticism. He melded personal insult with critical assault, mocking Hamilton's adoption of a role that had been played by the illustrious prima donna Piccolomini and declaring that Emma Younge looked so pale, short and unattractive in her role of 'male' paramour that she had rendered the production "burlesque".²⁴³ His argument that the event was only well attended because it had been "condemned and denounced" by the London press not only implied colonial fascination with sex but evoked the critic's own sexual-social awareness.²⁴⁴ The debates around *La Traviata* in the colonies and abroad indicate diverse responses to sexuality.²⁴⁵

²⁴² For the *Age* review 1859 'THE NEWS OF THE DAY', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 14 April, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154837658>. Despite his negative 1859 reviews, nine months after the Coulon production Neild conceded the importance of colonial participation in a the Verdi "phenomena" [sic]. See *The Examiner and Melbourne Weekly News*, Saturday January 21, 1860, no. 134, p. 13. For the social significance of the dress circle see P. Russell, *A wish of distinction: colonial gentility and femininity*, Carlton, Victoria, Melbourne University Press, 1994, p. 70.

²⁴³ For Neild's review see *The Examiner and Melbourne Weekly News*, Saturday 1859, April 16, no. 94, p. 13. Sos Eltis has rightly argued that many nineteenth-century critics used deployed theatrical analysis to construct narratives contrasting the morality of the English with French decadence. See S. Eltis, *Acts of Desire: Women and Sex on Stage 1800-1930*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 82. The idea of the English construction of the English-French divide is supported by the fact that the original Dumas play, *La Dame aux Camellias*, was banned from the English stage until 1889. See M. Marvin, 'Verdian Opera Burlesqued: A Glimpse into Mid-Victorian Theatrical Culture', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, vol. 15, no. 1, March, 2003, p. 35. At the time of production, Hamilton was six-months pregnant, although there were special corsets for concealing a pregnancy. In any case, Neild made none of the cutting observations that saw him disbarred from the free ticket list in 1857. For Hamilton's pregnancy see Moon, Ernest Frederick, Birth, 15 July, 1859, Collingwood, reg. 10822, *Australia Birth Index, 1788-1922*. For a relevant discussion of corsetry see L. Summers, *Bound to please: a history of the Victorian corset*, Oxford and New York, Borg, 2001, p. 6, p. 38, p. 42.

²⁴⁴ For Neild's negative *Argus* reviews see 1859 'THEATRE ROYAL', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 14 April, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5679501>. 1859 'THE THEATRES', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 18 April, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5679730>. Like Neild, *Bell's Life* also conceded large attendance in a sardonic tone. See 1859 'THEATRICALS AND MUSIC', *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle (Melbourne, Vic.: 1857-1868)*, 16 April, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article201379396>. The concept of "prurient curiosity" in relation to the story of *La Traviata* was explicitly raised by *Bell's Life in Victoria* in their review of Coulon's production. See 1859 'THEATRICALS AND MUSIC', *Bell's Life in Victoria and*

Attendance numbers and audience fervour in response to Coulon's production suggest that it was self-display at a well-known opera that comprised the central performance for colonial residents – the event, not the work, was of paramount importance. Just as many Melbournians of 1854 had once enjoyed musical productions in the improvised spaces of Tent City, spectators at Coulon's *La Traviata* accepted its shortcomings in the absence of more polished alternatives. In the celebrity network of performer, spectator and press, Neild's refusal to accommodate a 'make-do' production of *La Traviata* was effectively ignored by numerous respectable Melbournians.

Twelve months after the Coulon production, Hamilton and Coulon's involvement in the Bianchi's so-called "premier" of *La Traviata* illustrates the shifting demands of the network. Giovanna and Eugenio Bianchi, Italian opera singers who had performed "credit[ably]" in Italy and Mexico, had been received with fervour in gold rush San Francisco of 1858.²⁴⁶ After touring California to acclaim, the Bianchis were squeezed out of the limelight by rival troupes; then headed to colonial Victoria.²⁴⁷ Just as the Bianchis introduced *La Traviata* to San Francisco in 1859, they staked their claim to the 1860 Melbourne premier.²⁴⁸ It was certainly not in the interests of Octavia Hamilton to dispute that claim, particularly when she needed work and her colleague Coulon, who had produced the *La Traviata* of 1859, was touring Mauritius.²⁴⁹ However, the Bianchis did present *La Traviata* "in its entirety", which would have made it a better candidate for a premier performance according to work-oriented criteria.²⁵⁰

Sporting Chronicle (Melbourne, Vic.: 1857-1868), 16 April, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article201379396>.

²⁴⁵ Evans, *The Routledge History of Sex and the Body*, 2000, p. 256.

²⁴⁶ Martin, op. cit., p. 118, p. 121.

²⁴⁷ For relevant discussion see Doggett, *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, p. 81.

²⁴⁸ For the Bianchis acclaim in California see Martin, op. cit., pp. 140-143, p. 152. For the advertisement associating the Bianchis with the colonial premier of *La Traviata* see 1860 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 23 January, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5695708>.

²⁴⁹ For Coulon's tour of Mauritius see 1860 'MONDAY, MARCH 12', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 12 March, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5678666>.

²⁵⁰ For the reference to the complete nature of the opera see 1860 'THEATRE ROYAL', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 24 January, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5695766>.

The Bianchi production of *La Traviata* took place on January 23, 1860 at the Theatre Royal, supported by Farquharson, Herr Schuter, Hamilton and Mrs Hancock, and was sung “entirely in Italian”, an attribute valued by operatic purists.²⁵¹ Hamilton, the Violetta of 1859, was ignored in reviews and it is uncertain what role she played, although she was cast as Flora, Violetta’s friend, when she touring Sydney with the Bianchis later that year.²⁵² In his review of the Bianchi production, Neild persisted in disparaging *La Traviata* for its immorality, although he praised Madame Bianchi’s acting.²⁵³ The reviewer for the *Age* identified some weaknesses in the performance but judged Madame Bianchi’s sedate death scene to be superior to that of the iconic prima donna Piccolomini, an assertion of colonial pride that challenged both conventional lyric stage hierarchies and the imperial marginalisation of the colonies.²⁵⁴

Around May 22, the sacking of Signor Cutolo as conductor for the Bianchi troupe would lead to yet another instalment in the intermittent drama involving the colonial lyric stage versus Neild. According to Eugenio Bianchi, whose letter to the editor of the Sydney *Empire* was published in June 1860, Signor Cutolo had slandered the Bianchi troupe through false statements published in the *Examiner* after being dismissed for incompetence. In his public letter of protest, Signor Bianchi depicted Cutolo as a vindictive villain, while Neild was cast as the “talented” victim of Cutolo’s wile, a narrative probably designed to appeal to the critic’s ego and avert retaliation. Bianchi also released a copy of a letter to theatre manager Samuel Colville in which thirty-seven signatories, including Hamilton and

²⁵¹ For the use of an Italian libretto on January 23 see 1860 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 23 January, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5695708>.

²⁵² Hamilton’s Melbourne performances in *Il Trovatore* were reported on enthusiastically in Sydney, perhaps in anticipation of her later Sydney tour. See 1860 'MELBOURNE', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842 - 1954), 23 January, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13035895>. 1860 'ITALIAN OPERA', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842 - 1954), 30 May, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13041196>. 1860 'MELBOURNE', *Empire* (Sydney, NSW: 1850-1875), 30 May, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article60410980>. For Hamilton’s casting as Flora in Sydney see 1860 'Advertising', *Empire* (Sydney, NSW: 1850-1875), 5 June, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article60411229>.

²⁵³ Neild’s identity as the reviewer is suggested by his performance of dramaturgical erudition. See 1860 'THEATRE ROYAL', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 24 January, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5695766>.

²⁵⁴ 1860 'THEATRE ROYAL', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 28 January, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154879152>.

Coulon, praised Cutolo as a musician but petitioned for his dismissal as conductor. The positioning of Hamilton and Coulon's names at the top of the list of signatories, next to the names of the Bianchis, suggests their influential presence within the company.²⁵⁵

This episode highlights the role of professional networks in countering threats to performer livelihood. In the first instance, the lyric stage network rallied to expel a member whose lack of skill threatened collective wellbeing. In the second instance, the Bianchi troupe publically defended their honour, endeavouring to do so without further alienating a powerful member of the press. When coupled with positive critical reception, the traits of skill, loyalty and diplomacy helped to secure the place of music-makers within the lyric stage network. However, strong professional alliances in isolation from audience support could do little to influence success, as Hamilton's interactions with Melbourne trade unionists would show.

A tale of singers and tradesmen

According to British cultural historian Dave Russell the perception of music as a "balm for society's many evils" was widely shared in the second half of the nineteenth century. While many English reformers sought to use musical activity to create a "respectable, self reliant, collaborationist working class" in a top down approach to social change, the cultural initiatives of Melbourne trade unionists in the late 1850s asserted their capacity to drive their own projects of self-help and social mobility.²⁵⁶ The unionists who won the eight-hour day in 1856 were described by one observer as "well-dressed, intelligent gentlemen who knew how to conduct themselves".²⁵⁷ Indeed the body of Melbourne unionists (drawing strongly from the building

²⁵⁵ For the *Examiner* article in which Neild sides with Cutolo see *The Examiner and Melbourne Weekly News*, Saturday June 2, 1860, no. 153, p. 13. For the petition see 1860 'Copy of Protest', *Empire (Sydney, NSW: 1850 - 1875)*, 12 June, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article60411624>. Wright observes that while British women organised petitions in the first half of the nineteenth century, male signature was the norm. Hamilton's signature on this petition provides yet another indication of the extension of uncouth freedoms to high calibre female singers. See Wright, *The forgotten rebels of Eureka*, p. 234.

²⁵⁶ D. Russell, *Popular Music in England, 1840-1914*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, pp. 17-18.

²⁵⁷ M. Shaw, *Builders of Melbourne: the Cockrams and their contemporaries 1853-1972*, Melbourne, Cyprus Books, 1972, p. 9.

trades) included Chartists who had been articulate advocates for more democratic processes in Britain.²⁵⁸ Such were the men who built the Melbourne Trades Hall of 1858, a basic wooden building intended as gathering place, a “memorial to the dignity of labour” and a place for “cultural uplift”.²⁵⁹

In late May 1858 Hamilton and other members of the MPS volunteered their services at the opening of the Melbourne Trades Hall.²⁶⁰ In order to remain financially viable in a colony with limited resources, lyric stage artistes needed to diversify both repertoire and audiences, and the inauguration of the Trades Hall provided an opportunity for relationship building with Melbourne’s artisan class. Twelve months after the event Hamilton organised her own concert at the Trades Hall, supported by Messrs Coulon, Pierce, Williams and Mitchell (the latter David Mitchell, the father of Nellie Melba the Federation prima donna).²⁶¹ The event failed abjectly, boycotted by tradesman who objected to three-tiered ticket-pricing corraling them to different parts of the hall.²⁶² Men who had achieved an

²⁵⁸Some colonial unionists had been Chartists in Britain. That is, they advocated for a more democratic society. See H. Hughes, ‘The eight hour day and the development of the Labour movement in Victoria in the eighteen-fifties,’ *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, vol. 9, no. 36, p. 396. M. Shaw, *Builders of Melbourne: the Cockrams and their contemporaries 1853-1972*, Melbourne, Cyprus Books, 1972, p. 8.

²⁵⁹ For the purpose and inauguration of the Trades Hall see C. Brigden, ‘Creating Labour’s Space: The case of the Melbourne’s Trade Hall’, *Labour History*, no. 89, November 2005, pp. 126-127. 1858 ‘The Argus’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 8 March, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7147677>. 1859 ‘The Trades Hall’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 25 May, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5681703>. For a description of the Trades Hall see W. Newnham, B. Carroll, J. Bechervaise, A. McKay, *Historic Melbourne Sketchbook, Australia*, Rigby, 1977, p. 98.

²⁶⁰ 1859 ‘THE TRADES HALL’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848-1957), 25 May, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5681703>.

²⁶¹ For details of the concert see 1859 ‘Advertising’, *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 6 June, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154826552>. David Mitchell, an early member of the MPS, was in the company of Mr W. H. Williams, another inaugural member, at this event. For the importance of Williams see 1858 ‘FIRST PERFORMANCE OF THE BALLARAT PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY’, *The Star* (Ballarat, Vic.: 1855 - 1864), 24 June, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article66048825>. Mitchell’s role as a leading builder influenced his regular engagement with tradesmen, helping to account for his interest in the Trades Hall. For a relevant discussion of Mitchell see J. Campbell, ‘Mitchell, David (1829–1916)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 1974, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mitchell-david-4209>. A. Blainey, *Marvellous Melba: the extraordinary life of a great diva*, Chicago, Ivan. R. Dee, 2009, p. 4. 1946 ‘AUSTRALIANA: Early Melbourne Liked Music’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 17 August, p. 17, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article22326044>

²⁶² 1859 ‘THE NEWS OF THE DAY’, *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 7 June, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154826795>.

eight hour day would not brook seating hierarchies in a venue built through their voluntary labour.²⁶³

Undeterred, Octavia Hamilton held the first of a series of “People’s Concerts” at the Trades Hall on September 10, 1859, changing the system of ticket pricing in a clear effort to placate her prospective audience.²⁶⁴ However the *Argus* reviewer complained that a “meagre” and “hackneyed” programme had patronised its audience.²⁶⁵ Such specific and unusual criticism suggests that the review had been informed, at least in part, by dialogue between dissatisfied tradesmen and a critic. The relationship between artistes and Melbourne’s tradesmen may have been strained but Hamilton experienced a warmer working relationship with Thomas Holme Davis, a vocal supporter of the People’s Concerts, and in all likelihood one of the unnamed “gentlemen” who volunteered their contributions to her September 10 concert.²⁶⁶ A wine merchant, amateur singer and long time member of the MPS, Davis was the man with whom she would spend the last forty-five years of her life. By the second September concert, the *Argus* had changed its tune, praising the production, while the *Age* levelled criticism at the absence of “those whose pride it ought to be to sustain [the concerts]”, that is, the tradesmen who rendered the event unprofitable by staying at home.²⁶⁷

In response to small audiences, a letter to the editor of the *Age* in late September, ostensibly from a working man, urged his peers to attend the People’s Concerts: “We want some decent, cheap place of amusement

²⁶³ For worker pride in the eight hour day see C. Brigden, Creating Labour’s Space: the Case of the Melbourne Trades Hall, *Labour History*, no. 89, November 2005, pp. 126-127.

²⁶⁴ Tickets bought on the night cost allowed spectators to sit anywhere they wanted in the available seating. 1859 'Advertising', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 6 September, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154827653>

²⁶⁵ 1859 'MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1859', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 12 September, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5687928>

²⁶⁶ Davis was appointed to the MPS committee in September 1855, so presumably had been a member for some time before that date. See Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society Minutes 1853-1856, 11 September 1855, Melbourne. Davis was appointed secretary of the MPS by 1860 and was presumably a member well before that date. 1879 'THE MELBOURNE PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 13 January, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5928151>.

²⁶⁷ For the *Argus* and *Age* commentary see respectively 1859 'MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1859', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 19 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5688330>. 1859 'THE PEOPLE'S CONCERT', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 19 September, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154828712>.

where we can take our wives.”²⁶⁸ In another letter published in the *Argus* two days later, Davis attempted to woo Melbourne’s unionists through an announcement that Governor Barkly had been enlisted as a patron and had made a donation.²⁶⁹ The artistes attempted to draw larger audiences through the introduction of a night of Scottish music in early October but without success.²⁷⁰ In mid-October Hamilton staged her final performance at the Trades Hall and was compelled to provide her own accompaniment on an out of tune piano when the pianist failed to turn up.²⁷¹ In a reversal of its previous empathy for the performers, the *Age* adopted the persona of an aggrieved spectator who wanted a better purchase for their shilling: “The people have taste, and they’ll attend concerts in large numbers provided the performances are as good as those given at the Exhibition Building and elsewhere.”²⁷² Again the tone and specificity of the criticism suggests that the reviewer had conversed with annoyed and articulate trade unionists.

Conversely, the *Argus* review captured the perspective of the vocalists, observing that tickets were cheap and that improvements to the event would have been too expensive for “persevering” entrepreneurs already burdened with debt. It argued that the location of the Trades Hall in a “remote, almost unknown, and all but inaccessible” place – *the corner of Lygon and Russell Streets* – had deterred patrons. Here the implication that Melbourne artistes had struggled to bring musical culture to an outpost of Melbourne – *the Trades Hall* – would have done nothing to earn the regard of the city’s tradesmen for the People’s Concerts.²⁷³

²⁶⁸ 1859 'SATURDAY NIGHT CONCERTS', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 22 September, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154829919>.

²⁶⁹ 1859 'THE PEOPLE'S CONCERTS', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 24 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5688685>. The events were advertised as weekly. See 1859 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 15 September, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154827381>. Attendance appears to have increased at the third concert. See For a reference to improved audience numbers see 1859 'THE NEWS OF THE DAY', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 26 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154829027>.

²⁷⁰ 1859 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 8 October, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5689564>

²⁷¹ 1859 'THE NEWS OF THE DAY', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 17 October, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154826712>.

²⁷² 1859 'THE NEWS OF THE DAY', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 17 October, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154826712>

²⁷³ For the *Argus* review see 1859 'MONDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1859', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 17 October, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article>

Ever resilient, Hamilton, in the company of three male colleagues, held a People's Concert in the Melbourne Mechanics institute, but only a tiny audience of seventy attended.²⁷⁴ For the rest of 1859 her performance in People's Concerts was confined to those organised by the Geelong Recreative Society.²⁷⁵ Yet as the diary of William Thompson reveals, there was one Melbourne worker (skilled enough in his handling of wood to fashion a fiddle), who described the 1859 MPS Christmas concert in which Hamilton performed as "splendid".²⁷⁶ Colonial sensitivities and the vagaries of circumstance meant that despite a performer's best efforts, it was not possible for a lyric stage artist to draw every musical resident into the orbit of their celebrity.

Conclusion

Octavia Hamilton's status as a principal colonial vocalist was achieved in the company of colleagues who were often friends and mentors. While she experienced unusual freedoms, her touring up until her 1862 separation from Augustus Moon was more curtailed than that of women whose husbands were also professional music-makers; yet she was able to maintain valuable collegial relationships for extended periods of time. Her status as a Melbourne celebrity is captured by the support of the Melbourne elite at the 1858 benefit following her house fire but not every event was successful and she showed resilience in the face of failure.

Hamilton's relationship with lyric stage critics, the cultural mediators who influenced public reception, was substantially warm but

[5690118](#). For the location of the Trades Hall see 1859 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 1 October, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154828654>.

²⁷⁴ For the event see 1859 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 20 October, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154828345>. Her inclusion in a series of cheap concerts "for the people" organised by the Geelong Recreative Society saw her perform before much larger audiences. See 1859 'CURRENT TOPICS', *Geelong Advertiser* (Vic.: 1859 - 1929), 18 October, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article146567488>. 1859 'CURRENT TOPICS', *Geelong Advertiser* (Vic.: 1859 - 1929), 13 September, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article146565916>.

²⁷⁵ 1859 'TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 1859', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 1 November, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5690963>. See 1859 'Advertising', *Geelong Advertiser* (Vic.: 1859 - 1929), 14 November, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article146566331>.

²⁷⁶ For Thompson's reference to the concert see W. Thompson, *William Thompson Diary 1857-1871*, Victoria, Entry August 11 1859, Entry December 24 1859. For references to William's fiddle playing and fiddle making: *ibid* Entries 1859 December 24, 1863 July 12, 1867 February 8.

always precarious. She and her peers pitted their wills against hostile critics and attempted to win over audiences, with varying degrees of success. Just as Octavia Hamilton's failure to engage Melbourne tradesmen in 1859 resulted in the demise of her People's Concerts, middle-class determination to share the experience of *La Traviata* in the same year saw the audience cheerfully accommodate the production's imperfections. From Williamstown to metropolitan Melbourne, attendance at opera, however adapted, was an assertion of spectator membership in a larger British or European world. Ultimately, the event offered more than musical entertainment for to attend a production of *La Traviata* in colonial Australia was to make a statement of sorts: of the recognition of moral complexity, of membership in a cultural community and of one's place in the splendour of the dress circle. As the next chapter will show, the drive to experience theatrical culture in Melbourne and its peripheries was paralleled in regional Victoria, further legitimising Hamilton's absence from her home.

Chapter Two – Octavia Hamilton, a respectable celebrity

Introduction

In January 1855 the *Argus* noted that crowds gathered at the Theatre Royal Concert Hall each evening to hear vocalists such as Octavia Hamilton, Mrs Hancock and Emile Coulon. Here there was no reference to the routine drinking and sexual soliciting at the site; rather the nightly productions were framed as evidence of progress in Melbourne's musical entertainments.¹ The so-called "Concert Hall" was actually the foyer to the main body of the theatre and connected to the hotel next door, where the bar, a gathering point for prostitutes, was known as the "saddling paddock".² John Castieau, Melbourne gaoler, 'man about town' and keen diarist, who became acquainted with Hamilton and female vocalist Louisa Swannell, frequently attended the Concert Hall.³ While depicting the venue as a morally suspect site, Castieau's diary entries also imply the respectability of the women who sang there.⁴

Castieau's entries often create the impression that music-makers were peripheral to the central, off stage action – mere providers of background noise in the context of spending, drinking, soliciting and

¹ 1855, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 27 January, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page185933>

²For relevant discussion of the "Concert Hall" see M. Cannon, *Melbourne after the gold rush*, Main Ridge Victoria, Loch Haven Books, 1993, p. 314. The Concert Hall's dependence on the hotel for alcohol is suggested by its brief closure after conflict between the respective managers in April 1855. See 1855 'DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 18 April, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4806889>.

³By June 1855 Castieau was describing Black's Concert Halls as "the favourite lounge for most men about town". See J. Castieau, *Castieau, John Buckley Diary 1855-1861*, Victoria, Entry June 16, 1855. In 1855 Hamilton and Swannell performed there repeatedly. See for instance 1855 'DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 20 January, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154849868>. 1855 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 12 May, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154895741>. 1855 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 6 June, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4809161>.

⁴On April 3 Castieau met a prostitute at Black's concert room, then spent the night with her. See Castieau, op. cit., April 3, 1855. The venue is identifiable as Black's through the recount of the presence of Mr Coleman. For the entertainer's advertised presence see 1855 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 2 April, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4806160>.

mustering companions for the next destination.⁵ He veered from berating himself as a wastrel to maligning the prostitutes working the venue – but he never questioned the morality of any of the singers he named.⁶ His sketch of the Concert Hall complicates the nature of colonial space through the suggestion that the singers inhabited their own arena of innocent activity in the midst of a morally troublesome location. Castieau's perseverance during a Carandini performance that he found tedious suggests a motivation for attendance beyond entertainment – the desire for cultural capital. Castieau's confession that he *should* have been able to enjoy the singing captures the widespread perception of music as a marker of refinement.⁷

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the respectable nature of Hamilton's identity and to analyse its meaning for colonial society. Up until her 1865 demise, she was a public figure who reflected a substantially idealised image of English-colonial womanhood: she was depicted as generous, civic-minded and 'motherly' in a broadly philanthropic sense. There were alternative portrayals for women who were absent from home for extended periods of time, who made spectacles of themselves, who made money from self-display and who performed in operas involving transgressive sex – yet Hamilton was viewed as respectable. Her mode of celebrity was founded on her capacity for middle-class social performance and was supported by network collusion in narratives about civic-minded, chaste identity.

Aside from establishing Hamilton's public image as a woman of propriety, this chapter also explores the colony's vested interest in the creation of respectable celebrity in both Melbourne and the gold towns of regional Victoria. As sites of local pride – and sites of anxiety about evolving identity – these locations comprised complex amalgamations of

⁵For Castieau's castigation of himself for excessive drinking and spending see Castieau, op. cit., Entries Feb 12, Feb 19, March 27, 1855. Castieau observed that the music at Black's Concert Hall was "little attended to by the audience": *ibid.*, Entry June 16, 1855.

⁶For Castieau's bland reference to Hamilton: *ibid.*, Entry Feb 8, 1856. Despite regular contact with Louisa Swannell, Castieau did not sexualise her. He escorted her to the theatre and drank "villainous brandy" at her home but all home visits were circumscribed by the presence of her family: *ibid.*, Entries 22 Feb, May 5, May 14, May 19, May 21, 1855. Castieau also identifies other female performers with a sense of respect: *ibid.*, March 3, March 15, March 23, March 27, July 7, 1855; Jan 9, Dec 29, 1856.

⁷For Castieau's regret at his "fidgety" response to the singing: *ibid.*, Entry 1855, 15 March.

imperial and regional identification.⁸ I argue that the music produced by Hamilton and her colleagues in public spaces supported narratives favourable to the colony's self image.⁹ In analysing Hamilton's celebrity, the frame of imperial worker helps to explain the latitude granted to women of her ilk in the colonies: Victoria needed them.

This chapter investigates the social significance of Hamilton's celebrity, with a focus on her value for particular sectors of Victorian society, such as gold town Victoria, Melbourne churchgoers, and Melbourne's genteel and philanthropic 'ladies'. Where possible, given the limitations of a newspaper-dominated archive, I will be distinguishing between the facts about Hamilton's personal life and the press narratives that shaped her public image. I begin by contrasting the reception of singers such as Hamilton with Aboriginal and Chinese musicians, taking up Catherine Hall's argument that the nation – in this case the colony – can only be understood “by defining what is not part of it”.¹⁰ On one level Hamilton was an imperial worker helping to legitimise British colonisation of an already occupied land and this influenced her reception. In the second part of the Chapter, I focus on the exceptional freedoms available to female singers, as illustrated by Hamilton's touring of regional Victoria between the years of 1856-1858. While she experienced extramarital sex in Beechworth, the diary of John Castieau, the Beechworth gaoler at the time of her 1857 arrival, suggests that she was able to do so without any obvious breaches in social propriety; indeed, Castieau portrayed her as a worthy “professional”.

In the third section I argue that Hamilton's facility with sacred oratorio strengthened her identity as a cultivated white woman because of

⁸ British scholars Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody have argued that the lens of nation is useful for investigating celebrity's function as “symbols of... culture and identity” for their larger society and I have adapted that lens in this thesis. See M. Luckhurst and J. Moody, ‘Introduction: The singularity of theatrical celebrity’, in Luckhurst, M., and Moody, J. (eds.), *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000*, Hampshire and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p. 9.

⁹ Sarah Maddison makes reference to violent “settler colonial technologies” – but arguably non-violent technologies, such as music, furthered settler colonial objectives. See S. Maddison, ‘Indigenous identity, ‘authenticity’ and the structural violence of settler colonialism,’ *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2013, p. 290.

¹⁰ C. Hall, ‘Introduction’, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2002, p. 9.

its place in a heavily racialised and widely accepted hierarchy of musical works. As an Anglican, Hamilton was able to make prominent vocal contributions to significance Catholic events without generating a sense of religious anomaly because her identity as an eminent singer overrode sectarian concerns. I conclude by locating Hamilton in a middle-class network of women who consolidated their genteel status through acts of imperial loyalty and outreach to the destitute of Melbourne. In addition, her professional support of a number of French musicians esteemed by Melbourne's female elite highlights her value in producing prestigious events.

Singing the colony into 'legitimacy'

In early 1855 the Tasmanian press introduced Hamilton as a "celebrated [Victorian] cantatrice" and the *Argus* described her duets with Coulon as "brilliant", praising her voice for its "purity and capacity".¹¹ While such press superlatives provide no objective indication of Hamilton's vocal excellence, the consistency of such praise certainly suggests her status as an esteemed singer. By the time she performed at the Theatre Royal Concert Hall for the likes of John Castieau, her celebrity network was constructing her as an important entertainer. Hamilton's facility with sentimental British ballads such as *Bessie Gray*, *Marie O'Argyle*, *Truth in Absence* and *Oh Yet Thou Art Remembered* helped to build her celebrity before she was acclaimed as a singer of sacred music or made substantive forays into opera.¹² Derek Scott observes that balladry was perceived as assisting the goals of a moral society because of its stress on the value of emotional attachment to friends, family and country.¹³ Aside from supporting the

¹¹For the reference in the Tasmanian press see 1855 'TASMANIA', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 17 February, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article48045121855>. For *Argus* commentary see 1855 'TASMANIA', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 17 February, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4804512/>

¹²For relevant repertoire see 1855 'MISKA HAUSER', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 1 June, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4808961>. 1855 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 27 January, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4803610>.

¹³For significance of sentimental ballads see A. Maddox, 'On the Machinery of Moral Improvement: Music and Prison Reform in the Penal Colony on Norfolk Island', *Musicology Australia*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2012, p. 185, p. 190. D. Scott, 'Music, morals and social order', in *Sounds of the Metropolis: The 19th Century Popular Music Revolution in*

middle-class domestic ideal through sentimental song, the work of singers such as Hamilton also helped to produce the British and European cultural forms that implied Indigenous cultural “absence”.¹⁴ Tracey Banivanua-Mar contends that the “practices” and “things” imposed by colonisers helped to “unremember” Aboriginal experiences while Richard White argues that colonial buildings helped to redefine the cultural landscape.¹⁵ Similarly Penny Russell observes that the claim to civilised status was supported through the cultivation of talents, technologies and institutions valued in the British world.¹⁶

Hamilton’s story has as much to say about those colonial residents who helped to construct her celebrity-identity as it does about her life. To draw on Ann Stoler’s terminology, her performances contributed to the “organising grammar” of racial difference that provided the “psychological scaffolding” for the exploitation of Australian Indigenous people. Race was but one factor in the context of the Hamilton story, with class and gender additional categories of influence. Her celebrity supported a middle-class narrative of female “sexual virtue” that was evident in the values of colonists across the empire, according to Stoler.¹⁷ In his study of nineteenth-century Swedish prima donna Jenny Lind, Michael Coleman argues that the investigation of a celebrity might be better approached as the study of a socially constructed “figure” than biography as such. According to Coleman, media construction of Lind’s public image played a role in developing narratives around the concept of “Swedishness” at a time when Sweden was a nation “peripheral” to larger Europe.¹⁸ Similarly, Hamilton’s

London, New York, Paris and Vienna, Oxford Scholarship Online, 2008, pp. 7-8. Other song forms are covered elsewhere.

¹⁴ For a discussion of the role of such cultural practices see A. Moran, ‘As Australia decolonizes: indigenizing settler nationalism and the challenges of settler/Indigenous relations’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 25, no. 6, 2002, p. 1021.

¹⁵ T. Banivanua Mar, Settler-colonial landscapes and narratives of possession, *Arena Journal*, 2012, issue 37, no. 38, p. 176, pp. 180-182. R. White, *Inventing Australia: Image and Identity 1688-1980*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, Sydney, 1991, p. 60.

¹⁶ P. Russell, *Savage or Civilised? Manners in Colonial Australia*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2010, pp. 6-7.

¹⁷ A. Stoler, *Race and the education of desire: Foucault’s history of sexuality and the colonial order of things*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1995, p. 10. See also C. Hall, Introduction *Civilising Subjects: Colony and metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2002, p. 16.

¹⁸ For the discussion of Sweden as a peripheral nation see Coleman, op. cit., pp. p. v, p. vii-viii, 1-2, p. 29. Like Coleman, this study relies largely on press articles and performance

celebrity helped to shape an acceptable identity for a self-governing British colony seeking to legitimise its assault on indigenous society.

However the dubious legality of settlement was not the only obstacle to a confident colonial identity. James Boyce notes that in Victoria the anti-transportation arguments of the 1840s and 1850s often represented convicts as “more savage than the Aborigines” and Frank Bongiorno goes so far as to depict the fear of white criminality experienced by some members of the middle class as “moral panic”.¹⁹ According to David Goodman, the president of the Melbourne Philharmonic Society, Redmond Barry, believed that the tendency for immorality in cities built on gold rush materialism might be counteracted by activities associated with self-improvement.²⁰

Leigh Boucher and Lynette Russell have traced the devastating impact of “land settler hunger” and gold rush migration on the Aboriginal population of the mid-nineteenth-century. Settlers developed a number of narratives to explain away colonial violence, most significantly the myths of the “dying race” and indigenous inferiority²¹ – and this thesis argues that music played a role in such myth-making. Richard White’s observation that in the eyes of “most” white settlers, Australian Indigenous people were uncivilised “pests” of a “comic” or “vicious variety” is borne out by early performance reviews.²² In a satirical poem of 1840 the *Australasian Chronicle* compared the music accompanying an indigenous performer derided as “Chief Frying Pan” to kitchen din. Not only was the man unmusical, he was cruelly indifferent to his people’s starvation.²³ An 1843

reviews, sources that are particularly suited to shedding light on the values of colonial consumers of celebrity: *ibid.*, p. ix.

¹⁹ Boyce and Bongiorno’s discussion provides the background to Victoria’s harsh legislation of 1852. See J. Boyce, *1835 The founding of Melbourne and the conquest of Australia*, Collingwood, Victoria, Black Inc., 2011, p. 197. F. Bongiorno, *The Sex Lives of Australians*, Collingwood Victoria, Black Inc., 2012, p. 24.

²⁰ For relevant discussion of Redmond Barry see D. Goodman, *Gold seeking Victoria and California in the 1850s*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, Australia, 1994, p. 56..

²¹ For a relevant discussion of such myth-making see L. Boucher and L. Russell, *Introduction: Colonial history, postcolonial theory and the ‘Aboriginal problem’ in colonial Victoria*, in *Settler colonial governance in nineteenth-century Victoria*, Boucher, L., and Russell, L., (eds.), ACT, ANU Press, 2015, p. 2. See also R. Hogg, Performing manliness: “unmanly” men on British frontiers in the mid-nineteenth century, *Journal of Australian Studies*, 35:3, 2011, p. 359.

²² R. White, *Inventing Australia: Image and Identity 1688-1980*, Sydney, George Allen & Unwin, 1981, p. 15.

²³ 1840 ‘Original Poetry’, *Australasian Chronicle* (Sydney, NSW: 1839 - 1843), 22 August, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article31729029>.

edition of the *Australasian Chronicle* developed a slightly different theme: that of the “simple” or childlike Aboriginal tune, which could only be improved through the addition of English “rhythm” and euphony. The writer assured their audience that one such composition, enhanced by English migrant Isaac Nathan, might serve as a “memorial” for a rapidly disappearing people.²⁴ By the 1860s, press discussion of Aboriginal music was rare in the context of this supposedly ‘dying race’. Melbourne *Punch* used the concept of the musical Aboriginal person as a metaphor for the heights of absurdity in 1862, negating the concept that Aboriginal people had the capacity to produce music.²⁵

Both local and transnational histories have highlighted the importance of music for residents in the towns and cities that grew out of gold rushes²⁶ – but not all migrant contributions to the lyric stage were welcomed. In Victoria discriminatory taxation against the Chinese, who were viewed as a labour threat, was justified through denigration of their civilisation,²⁷ including press attacks on their musical culture as this thesis argues. Like Australian Indigenous music, Chinese music was generally depicted as an uncivilised foil to western aesthetic standards. The notion of

²⁴ See 1842 'NEW MUSIC', *Australasian Chronicle* (Sydney, NSW: 1839 - 1843), 2 July, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article31736395>. Catherine Mackerras has observed that Nathan was the “first to attempt a serious study of Aboriginal music”. See C. Mackerras, 'Nathan, Isaac (1790–1864)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Australian National University, 1967, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/nathan-isaac-2502>. In 1861 the *Argus* stated that Aboriginal music would die along with the people. See 1861 'SATURDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1861', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848-1957)*, 28 December, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5707423>.

²⁵ For an 1860s reference to high Aboriginal mortality rates see 1862 'The Star', *The Star (Ballarat, Vic.: 1855-1864)*, 30 December, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article66329853>. For an anglophilic narrative involving the ‘ignorant’ Verdi’s embrace of Aboriginal music see 1862 'OUR EXHIBITION COMMISSIONERS', *Melbourne Punch (Vic.: 1855-1900)*, 2 October, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article174527919>.

²⁶ For British cultural historian Daniel Snowman’s discussion of the transnational impact of gold see D. Snowman, *The Gilded Stage: a social history of opera*. London: Atlantic Books, 2009, pp. 140-143. For discussion of gold rush acceleration of developing musical culture see A. Wentzel, ‘The rapid development of music in Australia, 1851–1861’, *Musicology Australia*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1968, pp. 69-70. G. Fethering, *The Gold Crusades: A Social History of Gold Rushes, 1849-1929*, Toronto, Buffalo and London, University of Toronto Press, 1997, p. 57, p. 58. For a discussion of migrant longing for familiar cultural experiences see also J. Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*, 3rd edn., Toronto, Buffalo and London, University of Toronto Press, 2007, p. 15.

²⁷ For a discussion of hostility toward the Chinese see G. Blainey, Geoffrey, *A history of Victoria*, 2nd edn., Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 53, pp. 55-56. D. Goodman, *Gold seeking Victoria and California in the 1850s*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, Australia, 1994, p. 21.

the cultural deficiency of the Chinese was evident in an 1853 edition of the *Hobart Courier*, which carried an article (reproduced from the *New York Herald*) positioning its audience to view the Chinese lyric stage with utter contempt. Chinese performers were depicted as comic, hybridised creatures with “little porcine eyes” and “tails”, whose vocal efforts were akin to a “moonlight concert of cats”: “moyaaow”. Like Chief Frying Pan, their performance was compared the “din” of kitchen clatter.²⁸ Press disparagement of the Chinese lyric stage, which began in the context of the 1850s gold rushes, continued well into the 1860s.²⁹ Arguably, the organised nature of the Chinese and their greater legal protection, relative to Aboriginal people, implied a more threatening cultural resilience, hence required more persistent satirical attack.³⁰ However the racial hierarchy that influenced colonial conceptions of music saw the Chinese consistently depicted as unmusical outsiders, while many musical migrants of British and European origin were warmly welcomed and remembered for decades.³¹

There were many residents of regional Australia who were keen consumers of lyric stage productions in the early 1850s and beyond, mimicking and adapting the British metropolitan rituals being replayed from London to Melbourne. At one end of the spectrum the musical women who toured gold town Victoria brought pleasure to diggers in sites of heavy drinking and revelry; at the other they produced ‘high calibre’ music in venues associated with ‘rational entertainment’. As Russell notes, the gold fields were simultaneously “outside colonial society” and symbolic of “upward mobility”.³² The capacity of Hamilton and her peers to provide the

²⁸ 1853 'Public Amusements', *The Courier (Hobart, Tas.: 1840 - 1859)*, 22 September, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article2247539>.

²⁹ For instance an 1863 article represented a British imperial-colonial vision of the Chinese as performing animals. 1863 'THE CHINESE MISSION', *The Star* (Ballarat, Vic.: 1855 - 1864), 9 April, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article72556157>

²⁹ Doggett, A., *Harmony on the Goldfields: Music and identity in multicultural Ballarat, Royal Historical Society of Victoria*, vol. 75, no. 1, 2004, p. 66.

³⁰ Kathryn Cronin notes that the Chinese were perceived as less open to control than Indigenous people. See Cronin, K., *Colonial Casualties: Chinese in Early Victoria*, Melbourne University Press, 1982, p. 72.

³¹ I shall be discussing nostalgic reminiscences of the gold rush performers in the thesis Epilogue.

³² Russell, *Savage or Civilised*, p. 198.

rituals associated with cultural ‘insiders’ reinforced their status as respectable professionals in gold rush Victoria.

Female singers with a licence to travel

In the mid-1850s, Octavia Hamilton’s touring schedule saw her spending extensive periods of time in regional Victoria and she was not alone: there were a number of women trading on their musical talents in the gold towns of Ballarat, Bendigo and Castlemaine.³³ Certainly Hamilton’s involvement in regional touring, while less intense than that of women accompanied by their husbands, helped to build her reputation as a cultural emissary from the metropolis. Among other opportunities, touring offered Hamilton the possibility for intimacy in locations beyond the purview of her husband.

Hamilton’s 1855 debut in Ballarat was in the company of violinist Miska Hauser in the Star Hotel Concert Room, which stood on an unsealed road that turned from dust bowl to mud slick in the rain.³⁴ Despite the make-do nature of the road, the years 1855-1857 would be remembered as Main Street’s era of theatrical greatness. The “music-mania” generated around Hauser’s seventeen Ballarat concerts helped raise Hamilton’s profile in regional Victoria where audiences were drawn from a migrant population that was primarily young, male, literate and British.³⁵ By mid-August 1855

³³ For two examples of the many references to Carandini’s touring in regional Victoria see 1855 ‘BALLARAT’, *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer* (Vic.: 1851-1856), 21 June, p. 2. (DAILY), <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article91863499>. 1857 ‘THE MUNICIPAL LAMPS’, *Bendigo Advertiser* (Vic.: 1855-1918), 19 October, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article87976331>. For examples of Mrs Hancock’s touring see 1855 ‘MINING INTELLIGENCE’, *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854-1954), 25 August, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154890624>. 1856 ‘BENDIGO’, *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854-1954), 15 February, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154864393>. For examples of Louisa Swannell’s touring see 1856 ‘BALLARAT’, *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854-1954), 2 February, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154860811>.

³⁴ For Hauser and Hamilton’s touring see 1855 ‘Advertising’, *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854-1954), 6 July, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154894327>.

³⁵ For a discussion of Ballarat’s Main Street, unsealed until 1859, see W. Bate, *Lucky City: The first generation at Ballarat 1851-1901*, South Carlton, Victoria, Melbourne University Press, 1978, p. 97, p. 102, p. 103, p. 110. For reference “music mania” in relation to Hauser and Hamilton see 1855 ‘BALLARAT’, *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer* (Vic.: 1851-1856), 18 July, p. 4. (DAILY), <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article91868253>. For the number of Hauser concerts held see 1855 ‘LOCAL INTELLIGENCE’, *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 18 August, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154894033>. For discussion of the goldfield migrant demographic see C. Fahey, ‘Peopling the Australian goldfield from boom to bust, 1851-1901’, *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2010, p. 156. G. Serle, *The Golden Age, A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851-1861*, 1963, Carlton, Victoria, Melbourne University Press, cited in Fahey, op. cit., p. 149. W. Bate, *Victorian gold rushes*, Victoria, McPhee Gribble, 1988, cited in Fahey, op. cit., p. 149.

Hamilton and Hauser were appearing before rapt audiences in Bendigo: “it seemed as if a spell held [the audience]... a deathlike stillness prevailed.”³⁶ Such performative silence in response to works perceived to be solemn or sophisticated was a way of displaying acute appreciation of highbrow cultural experience and critics were mindful of this in their depictions of the audience.

Hamilton performed intermittently at Bendigo’s Shamrock Hotel between 1855 and 1856 where she was praised by the press as a “superior artiste” and was almost certainly very well paid.³⁷ Entertainment was supposedly free but the Shamrock’s hoteliers profited through the sale of high-priced drinks to the nightly throng.³⁸ The fact that recount of the heavy-drinking culture of the Shamrock Hotel was largely confined to memoirs suggests the tactful editing choices made by journalists in their depictions of local communities.³⁹

The proprietorial attitude of the regional press towards metropolitan singers who brought expertise to the local stage is captured by the *Bendigo Advertiser*’s description of Hamilton’s return to Melbourne at the end of 1855 as a “visit” – as if her residence was located in Bendigo, and Melbourne was on her periphery.⁴⁰ Hamilton’s absence from Bendigo was almost certainly driven by the need to nurse her son Herbert Parry, who died

³⁶ A local correspondent for the *Age* wrote the review. See 1855 'Bendigo', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854-1954), 23 August, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154895230>.

1855 'DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 8 November, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4822784>

³⁷ Comic writer Stephen Massett, who visited the Shamrock Concert Hall in the mid-1850s, noted the “immense” salary of performers. See S. Massett, “*Drifting About*” or what “*Jeems Pipes of Pipesville*” saw-and-did: an autobiography, New York, Carleton, 1868, pp. 282-283. For Hamilton’s popularity in Bendigo see 1855 'DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 8 November, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4822784>. 1855 'BENDIGO', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 29 November, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4824498>. 1856 'MISCELLANEOUS NEWS', *Bendigo Advertiser* (Vic.: 1855 - 1918), 14 February, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article88048847>.

³⁸ For the reference to the expensive drinks at the Shamrock see 1890 'BENDIGO SINCE '51', *Bendigo Advertiser* (Vic.: 1855 - 1918), 19 April, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article88983309>. For reference to ‘free’ entry see Massett, op. cit., p. 282.

³⁹ Migrant Joseph Jewkes, active in Ballarat from 1854, also characterised the digger as heavy-drinking. See J. Jewkes, *Reminiscences of Ballarat, Victoria, its goldfields and the Eureka Stockade, 1854-1900*, State Library NSW, 2007.

⁴⁰ 1856 'MISCELLANEOUS NEWS', *Bendigo Advertiser* (Vic.: 1855 - 1918), 14 February, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article88048847>.

on December 17 after a five-week illness.⁴¹ However it was not the custom of the colonial press to intrude on the personal lives of resident singers, with press reticence insulating female entertainers from public commentary on pregnancies, household arrangements and family illnesses.

It is impossible to recover all of the influences on the breakdown of the Moon marriage but there is no doubt that Hamilton's adultery was a contributing factor.⁴² While her touring in regional Australia provided opportunities for extramarital sex, it also provided proof of adultery when she became pregnant in her husband's absence. If Hamilton's third born son Emile were a full term baby he would have been conceived sometime between November 26 and December 5. As press reports indicate that Hamilton was still performing in Ballarat in late November, Moon's paternity would be premised on prompt homecoming sex with his wife in early December, at the time that eight-month old Herbert Parry was critically ill.⁴³

The forenames of Emile Augustus Moon link him to both to Emile Coulon, Hamilton's touring partner, as well his legal father, Augustus Moon. There were precedents for Hamilton naming sons after unrelated men, with the nominal link between Emile Coulon and Emile Moon by no means evidence of paternity.⁴⁴ Emile Coulon spent early November of 1855 in Sydney and arrived in Geelong in late November, a schedule that casts doubt on the notion that he fathered Emile Augustus, without entirely excluding it.⁴⁵ In the absence of conclusive evidence, perceptions based on

⁴¹ After a four-weeks of diarrhoea, eight-month old Herbert died on December 17. See Moon, Herbert Parry d. 17 December 1855, reg. 5464, *Australia Death Index, 1787-1985*.

⁴² The evidence of marital breakdown is drawn from the detailed press reports of 1865 concerning Hamilton's claim for child maintenance and the state v. Moon on a charge of child desertion. See Chapter Three.

⁴³ For a report of Hamilton's performances see 1855 'BENDIGO', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 29 November, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4824498>. For Emile's Augustus's birth details see Moon, Emile Augustus, Birth, 23 August 1856, Collingwood, Victoria, reg. 6986, Australia, Birth Index, 1788-1922.

⁴⁴ Herbert Parry, for example, appears to have been named after D. H. Parry, an occupant of Hamilton's George Street, Collinwood home, who served as informant at the birth registration. Parry was probably the 40 year-old male who left for London early 1857, as the name is rare. 1857 'SHIPPING INTELLIGENCE', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 2 February, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7143963>. D. H. Parry, Victoria, Australia, Outward Passenger Index, 1852-1915, Feb 1857, Ancestry.com.au.

⁴⁵ For arrival in Sydney see 1855 'ARRIVALS', *The Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List (NSW: 1844-1860)*, 5 November, p. 246, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article161107975>. For arrival in Geelong see 1855 'SHIPPING INTELLIGENCE', *Geelong*

the synchronicity of names and touring dates appear to have ruled the boy's fate. Eleven years after his birth Emile appeared before the Richmond bench "request[ing]" admission to Victoria's state industrial school system on the naïve premise that this step would help him to become a "great man".⁴⁶ The boy's stated belief that the state industrial school, an institution housing illegitimate children, would elevate him socially was almost certainly scripted by an adult, particularly in light of his admission to the school on the grounds of neglect.⁴⁷ Ultimately Moon came to believe that he had not fathered Emile and took steps to expel him from his household.

In November 1856, two months after Emile's birth, Hamilton resumed her career. She performed duets with Coulon in North Williamstown on the outskirts of Melbourne, then visited the gold town of Heathcote, reported as "barren of amusement" until the arrival of Coulon's small troupe.⁴⁸ From January through to the end of March of 1857 the company appeared at Beechworth at the Star and Eldorado Hotels, venues that doubled as sleeping accommodation.⁴⁹ Pianist Herr Collin and satirical songster John Pierce also performed with Hamilton and Coulon.⁵⁰ Assuming Alice Florence, Hamilton's daughter, was a full term baby, then she must have been conceived between February 12 and February 20 in Beechworth and may have been the product of Hamilton's affair with one of her touring

Advertiser and Intelligencer (Vic.: 1851-1856), 27 November, p. 2. (DAILY), <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article91870450>.

⁴⁶ 1868 'POLICE', *Leader* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1862 - 1918), 30 May, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article197426131>.

⁴⁷ For discussion of the stigma associated with some mothers of institutionalised children see C. Twomey, *Deserted and Destitute: Motherhood, Wife Desertion and Colonial Welfare*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2002, pp. 81-86.

⁴⁸ 1856 'Advertising', *Williamstown Chronicle* (Vic.: 1856 - 1954), 15 November, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article68568871>. 1856 'Mining Intelligence', *Bendigo Advertiser* (Vic.: 1855-1918), 19 December, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article87996215>.

⁴⁹ For references to the hotels she performed at in Beechworth see 1857 'Advertising', *Ovens and Murray Advertiser* (Beechworth, Vic.: 1855-1918), 15 January, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article113013670>. 1857 'Advertising', *Ovens and Murray Advertiser* (Beechworth, Vic.: 1855-1918), 12 February, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article113014013>. 1857 'Theatricals And Music', *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1857-1868), 14 March, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article201375031>. 1857 'Music And The Drama', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854-1954), 30 March, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154823722>. Castieau's journal records his social visits to Hamilton's hotel, with the implication that she was accommodated there. See Castieau, op. cit., Entry Feb 12, 1857.

⁵⁰ For Pearce and Collins' involvement see 1857 'Music and The Drama', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854-1954), 2 February, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154823966>.

partners.⁵¹ The journal of John Castieau, the erstwhile Melbourne gaoler who had shifted his employment to Beechworth gaol at the time of Hamilton and Coulon's 1857 arrival, suggests a particular friendliness between Coulon and Hamilton, as on occasions he appears to have interacted with them as a pair, in isolation from their other touring partners.⁵² In any case, Hamilton played leading lady to Coulon's leading man in their stage performances.

The fact that John Castieau viewed Hamilton as a respectable performer indicates the discreet nature of her public persona at that point in time. As his diary characterises him as a man alert to the sexual availability of women his perceptions of Hamilton are significant.⁵³ Castieau's association with Richard Horne, the inaugural president of the Melbourne Garrick Club member and an enthusiastic advocate of Hamilton in 1855, may also have encouraged his respect for the Melbourne celebrity. In 1857 Castieau appears to have been oblivious to Hamilton's sexual activities in Beechworth, simply framing her as congenial companion and "professional".⁵⁴ His observation that the company struggled to draw audiences to the inconveniently located El Dorado suggests the sympathetic engagement of friendship, and contact between Castieau and Hamilton was sustained throughout February and March.⁵⁵ The gaoler attended the benefits of both Hamilton and Coulon and dined with the pair at the homes of the Beechworth police inspector and 'Mr Murphy' (probably the

⁵¹ If Hamilton's pregnancy with daughter Alice Florence, born on November 8, 1857 in Richmond, was full term, then she was conceived between February 12 and February 20.

⁵² For evidence of Castieau's interactions with Coulon and Hamilton as a couple see J. Castieau, op. cit., Entries Feb 12, Feb 13, March 14, 1857.

⁵³ Castieau's journal has abundant sexual references. In February he makes an ironic reference to an "interesting female" who loses her allure when she appears to be focused on marriage: *ibid.*, 1855 Feb 9, Feb 11. One month later he also makes references to an "interesting damsel" that might or might not be interested in "spy[ing] out the nakedness of the land", a comment replete with sexual innuendo. It is unclear whether this woman is different to the earlier woman: *ibid.*, March 18, 1855.

⁵⁴ For Horne's public praise of Hamilton see 1855 'BENEVOLENCE AND JUSTICE', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848-1957)*, 21 July, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4812873>. For Castieau's framing of Hamilton as a professional see for instance Castieau, op. cit., Entry 11 Feb, 1857.

⁵⁵ For Castieau's assessment of the El Dorado: *ibid.*, Entries Feb 6-Feb 7, 1857. Attendance eventually improved. See 1857 'THEATRICALS AND MUSIC', *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle (Melbourne, Vic.: 1857 - 1868)*, 14 March, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article201375031>. 1857 'Advertising', *Ovens and Murray Advertiser (Beechworth, Vic.: 1855-1918)*, 27 February, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article113014240>.

Beechworth Councillor and mason, respectively) on separate occasions. He called upon Hamilton with his friend Mr Martin (probably the Beechworth surveyor) for a chat over claret and accompanied Hamilton and Coulon to their hotel one evening.⁵⁶

Despite Hamilton's reputed beauty, Castieau framed the twenty-one year old as companionable rather than alluring – as an amiable woman of the mould of Mrs Poole, the Melbourne actress he had once described as “nice” and “sensible” and “not young enough to be dangerous”.⁵⁷ Glimpsed through Castieau's eyes, Hamilton was no bold “siren”, despite the use of that term in her earlier advertisements.⁵⁸ The £200 contribution of Coulon's troupe to Beechworth Hospital may have been motivated by generosity but was more likely to have functioned as a tactical stroke of marketing, particularly in light of poor houses at the outset of their Beechworth tour.⁵⁹ In any case, it characterised the troupe as respectable and benevolent. Indeed, as late as 1906 Hamilton was being fondly recalled in the Beechworth press.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ For Castieau's reference to Inspector Bourke see Castieau, op. cit., Feb 13 1857. For his claret drinking with Mr Martin and Hamilton: *ibid.*, March 3, 1857. For the dinner at Murphy's: *ibid.*, March 31 1857. For Inspector Bourke's profession see 1856 'LAW NOTICES—(This Day)', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848-1957), 11 December, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7141460>. For Mr Martin's probable profession see 1856 'BEECHWORTH', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848-1957), 23 August, p. 7, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7135347>. For press references to Murphy, mason and councillor, see 1856 'Advertising', *Bendigo Advertiser* (Vic.: 1855-1918), 7 May, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article88049882>. For the reference to Hamilton and Coulon's hotel: *ibid.*, Entry Feb 12, 1857.

⁵⁷ Castieau makes a number of references to Coulon and Hamilton's company as “professionals”: *ibid.*, Feb 11, Feb 14, March 14, 1857. For Castieau's references to Mrs Poole: *ibid.*, 24 Feb, March 6, March 8, March 12, March 23, June 16, August 17, September 24, 1855; 19 Jan, 1856.

⁵⁸ Hamilton was marketed as a “siren” at the same time that Louisa Swannell was marketed as a nightingale, albeit briefly. See for instance 1855 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 12 May, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154895741>. In her transatlantic history of opera, British musicologist Susan Rutherford has rightly observed that images of the “siren” – evoking virtuosity and sexual allure – and the “songbird” – evoking sweetness and innocence – co-existed in nineteenth-century representations of professional singers. While Rutherford argues that it is difficult to find a singer “who was not awarded the epithetic of siren” in the nineteenth century, in the Australian colonies, it is difficult to find a singer described as a “siren” at the mid-century. See S. Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera, 1815-1930*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 40, p. 42, pp. 47-48, p. 57.

⁵⁹ 1857 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 28 November, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7142677>

⁶⁰ 1906 'OLD MEMORIES', *Ovens and Murray Advertiser* (Beechworth, Vic.: 1855 - 1918), 10 November, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article200559204>.

Hamilton remained in Beechworth into March 1857 but returned to Melbourne for in time for a late April MPS concert, two months into her pregnancy.⁶¹ She was then was absent from the stage for seven months, an uncharacteristically long gap that was quietly remarked on in the press when she made her return.⁶² While it is impossible to determine exactly how and when Hamilton's pregnancy was revealed, her husband's later court testimony suggests that initial conflict was followed by a reconciliation of sorts.⁶³ Perhaps Moon's forgiveness was contingent on Hamilton's withdrawal from the stage for a substantial period of time.

The need to recoup losses imposed by the fire at her house on August 16 may have encouraged Moon's acceptance of Hamilton's next foray into regional Victoria at the end of 1858 – or perhaps she crossed that boundary regardless.⁶⁴ When the Ballarat press reported that she would be singing at the Charlie Napier there was something of the tone of a good friend aggrieved by neglect: "Tomorrow night, Miss Octavia Hamilton, of whom Ballarat has seen nothing for three and a half years, will make her reappearance."⁶⁵ A subsequent peeved review, which complained that the metropolitan singer possessed insufficient "energy and fire" for her role in *Il Trovatore*, implied that metropolitan stars did not necessarily shine by Ballarat standards.⁶⁶ The self-aggrandising notion that Ballarat's benchmarks of quality performance were more metropolitan than

⁶¹ For the last Beechworth advertisement for Hamilton see 1857 'MUSIC AND THE DRAMA', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 30 March, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154823722>. For her next Melbourne performance see 1857 'NEWS OF THE DAY', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 25 April, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154825783>

⁶² For the comment on her absence see 1857 'Literature of Wales', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854-1954)*, 5 December, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154834996>.

⁶³ In the August 1865 court hearing Moon said that he had forgiven his wife the first infidelity. See 1865 'SINGULAR CASE OF CHILD DESERTION', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 19 August, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5785638>. Moon's name appeared on a list of patrons in a press advertisement for Farquharson's 1858 benefit, which would suggest that Moon was not entirely alienated from Hamilton's circle. See 1858 'Advertising', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 30 October, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7303672>.

⁶⁴ Hamilton posted daily advertisements for her services in music after the fire, suggesting her need for extra money. See 1858 'Advertising', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 13 October, p. 7, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7302677>

⁶⁵ 1858 'THE THEATRES', *The Star (Ballarat, Vic.: 1855 - 1864)*, 27 December, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article66332995>

⁶⁶ 1859 'THE THEATRES', *The Star (Ballarat, Vic.: 1855 - 1864)*, 3 January, p. 2014, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article66333134>

Melbourne's would be repeated on future occasions. However, a few weeks after her 1858 performance in *Il Trovatore* Hamilton earned praise for her "judgement and skill, a sign of the inherently unstable nature of celebrity reception."⁶⁷

Cowgill and Poriss have argued that as the touring of professional female vocalists left them open to the charge of unwomanly behaviour, their images required careful management by all parties in the celebrity network.⁶⁸ The point of significance about Hamilton's 1858 Ballarat reviews – indeed many of her Melbourne performance reviews – is that the focus on her professional expertise often deflected attention away from her gender. Terms such as "judgement", "skill", "power" and "energy" used to describe to Hamilton's performances in Ballarat would have been just as appropriate to a description of male performances.⁶⁹ However, as following sections argue, the larger social frames around some of Hamilton's vocal performances – such as church attendance, philanthropic fundraising and solidarity with Melbourne's eminent women – were consistent with female virtue and middle class domestic ideals. On the one hand, the representation of female singers expanded social perceptions of respectability; on the other it showcased normative middle-class femininity in highly conspicuous ways.

Singing for colony and Christ

Arguably it was Hamilton's expertise with sacred music that did most to reinforce the respectable nature of her celebrity from 1857, the first year of her employment by the most significant producer of religious oratorio in the colony, the Melbourne Philharmonic Society (MPS). As the discourse legitimising colonial occupation drew heavily on the concept of the Christian-savage divide, sacred music productions in churches, mechanics institutes and schoolrooms helped to assert residents' Christian identity.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ 1859 'Local and General News', *The Star* (Ballarat, Vic. : 1855 - 1864), 25 January, p. 2, 2014, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article66333574>

⁶⁸ R. Cowgill and H. Poriss, 'The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century', in Marvin, R., (ed.), *Idealising the Prima Donna in Mid-Victorian London*, Oxford Scholarship online, 2012, pp. 4-5.

⁶⁹ 1859 'Local and General News', *The Star* (Ballarat, Vic.: 1855 - 1864), 25 January, p. 2, 2014, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article66333574>.

⁷⁰ For relevant discussion of 'savagery' see Russell, *Savage or Civilised?*, p. 6.

Hamilton's reviews of April 1857 were tepid in tone but by December she was warmly reviewed. The Beethoven oratorio in which she performed before an audience including Melbourne's "elite" was described as "difficult" and "advanc[ing] the taste of the higher range of classical music".⁷¹ In early 1858, Hamilton's Melbourne audience was so delighted by her performance in Mendelssohn's *Elijah* that they broke into applause, disregarding protocols for the silent reception of sacred music.⁷² Two months later, an audience appeal for an encore from Hamilton in an MPS production of Beethoven – which she genteelly declined – suggests the impact of the singer's celebrity on audience conduct.⁷³

In the British world, performances featuring the music of Austro-Germanic composers such as Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Haydn and Handel were a source of cultural capital for both performers and audiences. While Beethoven and Mendelssohn were generally regarded as "difficult", the works of George Handel (1685-1759), who was embraced as England's defacto national composer at that time, exerted broad appeal.⁷⁴ Graeme Skinner has identified a number of Austro-Germanic composers who were popular in the east coast Australian colonies in the mid-century, but it was admiration for the music of Handel that united the working and middle classes most closely.⁷⁵ Hamilton's 1859 press description as "the leading

⁷¹ For reviews of Hamilton's debut with the MPS see 1857 'MELBOURNE PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 29 April, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7148762>. For her December review see 1857 'Melbourne News', *Bendigo Advertiser (Vic.: 1855-1918)*, 28 December, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article87977751>.

⁷² 1858 'THE PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 7 January, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154859584>.

⁷³ 1858 'MELBOURNE PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 31 March, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7292067>.

⁷⁴ For relevant references to difficulty of Beethoven and Mendelssohn see 1858 'UNITED METHODIST FREE CHURCH, COLLINGWOOD', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 29 April, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154855188>. 1858 'THE PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 31 March, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154856636>. 1862 'The Forthcoming Philharmonic Festival', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 6 October, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article155009223>. For discussion of Handel's popularity see D. Burrows, *Handel: Messiah*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 1991, vii. M. Parker, Reception of Handel operas, then and now, *University of Toronto Quarterly*, vol. 72, no. 4, Fall 2003, pp. 850-857, p. 854-855. T. Gilman, 'Arne, Handel, the Beautiful, and the Sublime', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 42, no. 4, Summer 2009, p. 532.

⁷⁵ Skinner makes reference to an 1857 colonial lecture in which Handel's music was described as 'unrivalled'. See G. Skinner, *Towards a general history of Australian musical composition: First national music 1788-c.1860*, PhD diss., University of Sydney,

Handelian soprano in the colony” was a declaration of her celebrity status.⁷⁶ As Teresa Radic has observed “anyone with any social pretensions”, including Melbourne’s ladies, attended MPS concerts.⁷⁷ It is no coincidence that Hamilton’s importance as principal vocalist for the MPS coincided with the use of her name to promote song premiers between 1858 and 1860: her image as eminent sacred music singer enhanced her value on the secular stage.⁷⁸

The diary of William Thompson, a timber cutter who migrated from England to colonial Victoria in 1857, and who praised three performances involving Octavia Hamilton, captures the class diversity of sacred music devotees.⁷⁹ During a trip to Ballarat, six weeks after his arrival in Victoria, Thompson noted that “Handle’s” [Handel’s] song *His Yoke is Easy* from the *Messiah* was performed both at the Wesleyan Chapel he visited, as well as the local Anglican Church.⁸⁰ Given the infrequent and pared back nature of Thompson’s entries, these references functioned as acts of favourable self-representation: *musical William is well acquainted with Handel’s compositions.*

2011, pp. 32-33. My previous discussion of William Thompson suggests a sector of working class-support for religious oratorio, in particular Handel (Chapter One). A strong middle-class basis of support for the MPS is suggested by strict nomination rules, audience subscription and vice regal patronage. See *Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society Minutes 1853-1856*, Melbourne, Entry Saturday 15 October 1853.

⁷⁶ 1859 'HANDEL CENTENARY CELEBRATION', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 12 August, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154826171>

⁷⁷ T. Radic, *Aspects of organised amateur music in Melbourne: 1836-1890*, MA diss., University of Melbourne, 1968, p. 177.

⁷⁸ Hamilton sang George Weinritter’s song *Rose of England Fare Thee Well* in 1858. See Skinner, op. cit., p. 539. For the use of Hamilton’s identity in promoting Sidney Nelson’s composition see 1859 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848-1957), 19 October, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5690216>. For her association with Charles Compton’s composition see 1859 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 19 April, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5679805>. Similarly for her association with a Lewis Lavenue’s composition see 1860 'Advertising', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842 - 1954), 21 July, p. 13, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13043335>.

⁷⁹ For Thompson’s references to *Messiah* concerts he describes as “magnificent” and “splendid” respectively see Thompson, *William Thompson Diary*, Entries 11 August, 24 December, 1859; 24 December, 1860. For event details see 1859 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854-1954), 6 August, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154828222>. 1859 'Christmas Musical Festival', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854-1954), 27 December, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154879949>. 1860 'THE NEWS OF THE DAY', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854-1954), 26 December, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154884137>.

⁸⁰ For Thompson’s references to Handel: Thompson, *William Thompson Diary*, Entry October 11, 1857.

Just as Hamilton's history indicates the cross-class appeal of sacred music in Victoria, it also sheds light on its broad denominational appeal. In 1850s Victoria sectarianism was most prominent in the "battleground" of education but was expressed unevenly, with the Irish Catholic John O'Shannassy receiving enough support from Protestants to be twice elected as Premier in the 1850s and 1860s.⁸¹ However the exclusively Protestant committees overseeing the Melbourne Orphan Asylum replicated "ancient hostilities between Protestants and Catholics".⁸² Similarly the refusal of Bishop Perry (who presided over the Melbourne Diocese between 1848 and 1873) to meet with the Catholic Bishop Geoghegan demonstrates the persistence of sectarian tensions that had been evident from the beginnings of white settlement.⁸³

The substantial irrelevance of sectarian prejudices to sacred music societies in Victoria was made explicit in an 1855 announcement by the Geelong Sacred Harmonic Society that their institution was "composed of ladies and gentlemen of all denominations" and that the chapel used for an up and coming concert was selected because of convenience, not religious affiliation.⁸⁴ In a resource-strapped environment, a non-sectarian approach to the production of sacred music enabled the production of cultural events that might not otherwise take place, or at the very least be heavily compromised. In this respect, a focus on the cooperation of otherwise competing Christian dominations, linked by what Michael Hogan describes

⁸¹ A long history of English-Anglican persecution of Irish Catholics in Britain influenced the discriminatory religious laws experienced by convicts in the early settlement, with Protestants monopolising power and privilege. See R. Thompson, *Religion in Australia: a history*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 12. For discussion of conflict relevant to education: *ibid.*, p. 18. See also J. Kildea, *Tearing the fabric: sectarianism in Australia 1910-1925*, Sydney, Citadel Books, 2002, pp. 12-13.

⁸² For relevant discussion see D. Jaggs, *Asylum to Action: Family Action 1851 – 1991*, Oakley East, Victoria, 1991, p. 18, p. 30. Thompson, *Religion in Australia*, p. 12.

⁸³ For a discussion of Perry's anti-sectarianism see A. de Q. Robin/Quetteville, *Charles Perry, Bishop of Melbourne: the challenges of a colonial episcopate, 1847-76*, Nedlands, W. A. University of Western Australia Press, 1967, p. 48. Philip Hughes notes the discussion of "the deep cleavage" between Catholics and the Protestants in Benjamin Edwards' 2008 publication *WASPS, Tykes and Ecumaniacs*. See P. Hughes, 'Sectarianism in Australia Historical Perspectives, Review', *Christian Research Association Bulletin*, vol. 20, no. 1, March 2010, p. 6. Indeed Edwards points to "an intensification of anti-Catholic feeling" in the nineteenth-century". See B. Edwards, *Wasps, Tykes and Ecumaniacs: Aspects of Australian Sectarianism 1945-1981*, Victoria, Acorn Press, 2008, p. 54.

⁸⁴ 1855 'SACRED CONCERT', *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer* (Vic.: 1851 - 1856), 20 June, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article91871316>.

as an “ideology of order”, provides a window into broadly shared social goals, such as participation in the rituals of a civil society.⁸⁵

The cross-denominational composition of the MPS is demonstrated by the cooperation of Catholic and Anglican singers. Mrs Testar for instance was a devout Roman Catholic while Octavia Hamilton and Mrs Hancock were Anglicans. In addition, the overlap between principal MPS vocalists and church choir soloists helped to brand paid female vocal performance as a worthy activity. Both the MPS and Melbourne’s churches required regular attendees in order to remain financially viable, with music playing an important role in drawing congregations to churches such as St Francis’s Catholic Church and St Peter’s Anglican Church.⁸⁶ In this context, sacred space functioned as an extension of the explicitly commercial lyric stage. Churches such as St Peter’s of Eastern Hill brimmed with spectators keen to experience vocal celebrities on the Sabbath⁸⁷ and arguably the respectability of the secular stage was enhanced through the presence of women associated with religious oratorio.⁸⁸ John Castieau, who appears to have

⁸⁵ M. Hogan, *The sectarian strand: religion in Australian History*, Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria, 1987, pp. 74-76.

⁸⁶ Annie Baxter Dawbin, a squatter’s wife who was active in Melbourne in 1863, was an Anglican who happily accompanied her friend to St Francis’s Church in 1863, describing the music as “beautiful but rather noisy”. More often, she appears to have attended St Peter’s Anglican Church regularly while in Melbourne. See A. Baxter Dawbin, *The Journal of Annie Baxter Dawbin 1858-1868*, Frost, L. (ed.), University of Qld Press, St Lucia, Qld, 1998, Entries 7 June, 21 June, 31 May 1863, p. 326, p. 334. Note that Nellie Melba, a Presbyterian, was employed in the choir of St Francis’s church in 1885. See J. Hetherington, *Melba*, Sydney, F. W. Cheshire, p. 44.

⁸⁷ The association of Testar, Hancock and Hamilton with the MPS was discussed in Chapter One. For Elizabeth Testar’s affiliation with the choir of St Francis’s Church see 1891 ‘Mrs Testar’, *Table Talk (Melbourne, Vic.: 1885 - 1939)*, 23 January, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article1472839> 27. For Mrs Hancock’s affiliation with the choir of St Peter’s Church see 1861 ‘WEDNESDAY, MAY 15, 1861’, *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 15 May, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5700224>. An 1860 review of a concert involving Hamilton, Mrs Hancock and St Peter’s Choir as St Peter’s School Room implies that she had been a member of the church for some time. See 1860 ‘TUESDAY, MARCH 27, 1860’, *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 27 March, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5679558>.

⁸⁸ Like Hamilton, some of the women who were soloists for the MPS (the institution associated with the most extensive sacred music productions), such as Octavia Hamilton, also became involved in operatic productions. For the example of Madame Stuttaford see 1861 ‘THEATRICALS AND MUSIC’, *Bell’s Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle (Melbourne, Vic.: 1857 - 1868)*, 31 August, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article201378593>. Members of St Peter’s Choir also supported Madame Stuttaford’s Saturday Night Popular Concerts. See 1862 ‘Advertising’, *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 30 May, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5715621>.

attended church primarily for social reasons, commented enthusiastically on the augmentation of St Paul's Church choir by Mr and Mrs Hancock.⁸⁹

On May 15, 1858, Hamilton, an Anglican, performed to a full house at a "grand concert" held at St Francis's Catholic Church (variously referred to as the Catholic "Cathedral") for the purpose of showcasing a repaired organ. Described by the *Age* as a singer of "eminence", Hamilton carried the vocal burden of Haydn's No 12 Mass, supported by Mr Ewart, also from the MPS. She was welcomed, indeed invited, into a Catholic church for a prominent role in the proceedings and she was not the only non-Catholic in the building, with the audience including many Protestants. The *Age*'s proud declaration that St Francis's Church was "unsurpassed on this side of the equator" blurred denominational difference in the interests of shared colonial "credit" for a beautiful building.⁹⁰ It also appears that in the concert at St Francis's Church in May 1858 Catholics were willing to exploit Hamilton's 'credit' in the interests of promoting their church.

In advertisements for the St Francis's Church "Grand Concert" both Octavia Hamilton and Mrs Wilkinson (the wife of the church organist and undoubtedly Catholic) were listed as principal vocalists.⁹¹ Mrs Wilkinson's solos went unidentified in the review from the *Age*, although the "deficien[cy]" of her contralto register was noted. The *Argus* ignored her altogether. Of the pair it was the Hamilton, the Anglican, who sang Schubert's *Ave Maria*, the rapturous Catholic prayer honouring Christ's mother, a performance described as "one of the gems of the evening". Indeed, the *Age* journalist went so far as to confess his urge to "break down the restriction" of an encore in response to the *Ave Maria*, a comment blurring the church gallery with the stage and the church singer with the

⁸⁹ Castieau, *op. cit.*, *Entry Feb 11, 1855*. For the indication that he attends St Paul's Church: *ibid.*, *Entry March 18, 1855*.

⁹⁰ For the *Age*'s praise of Hamilton in the lead up to the event see 1858 'THE NEWS OF THE DAY', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854-1954)*, 14 July, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154875228>. For enthusiastic 'reviews' of the well attended event see 1858 'CASTLEMAINE', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 15 July, p. 7, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7297577>. 1858 'MELBOURNE NEWS', *Bendigo Advertiser (Vic.: 1855 - 1918)*, 16 July, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article87981886>. For the *Age*'s expression of pride in St Francis's Church leading up to the event see 1858 'MISCELLANEOUS TOPICS', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 15 June, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154856414>.

⁹¹ 1858 'Advertising', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 14 July, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7297571>.

secular celebrity.⁹² The fact that the Catholic community at St Francis Church invited an Anglican woman into a sacred space that honoured their revered Virgin Mary with her very own Chapel indicates Hamilton's place, however peripheral, in a network of Catholic women. It also suggests that the illegitimacy of Hamilton's daughter Alice Florence (born in 1857) was a well-kept secret at that time.

In 1859 Hamilton made an even more significant incursion into Catholic space when she sang at the ordination of Melbourne priest Patrick Geoghegan as the new bishop of Adelaide. At this ordination Hamilton took her place by her Catholic colleague Mrs Testar (who stepped out of retirement for the occasion), without generating a sense of religious anomaly. She was also listed before Mrs Testar in the press reviews of the event, adding credence to the *Age*'s 1859 judgement that she had become Victoria's premier singer of sacred music.⁹³ The spectacle of two Englishwomen in the midst of "great splendour" exerted an appeal not only to Catholic pride, but also to local and imperial patriotism.⁹⁴ Aside from her vocal skills, Mrs Testar was a talented artist, a keen philanthropist, and the wife of a respected citizen.⁹⁵ Hamilton's celebrity had drawn the support of Melbourne's most eminent citizens after her house fire and she had battled

⁹² For the *Age* review see 1858 'GRAND CONCERT AT ST. FRANCIS'S', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 15 July, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154875278>. For the *Argus*'s elision of Mrs Wilkinson see 1858 'CASTLEMAINE', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 15 July, p. 7, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7297577>.

⁹³ For ordination requirements see O. Thorpe, 'Geoghegan, Patrick Bonaventure (1805–1864)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Australian Centre for Biography, Australian National University, 1972, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/geoghegan-patrick-bonaventure-36021859>. For event details see 1859 'CONSECRATION OF THE BISHOP OF ADELAIDE', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 9 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154829248>. 1859 'CONSECRATION OF THE RIGHT REV. DR. GEOGHEGAN', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 9 September, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5687783>. For the *Age*'s assertion of Hamilton's Handelian expertise see 1859 'HANDEL CENTENARY CELEBRATION', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 12 August, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154826171>.

⁹⁴ 1859 'THE CITY AND SUBURBS', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 16 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154829768>.

⁹⁵ For reference to Mrs Testar's artwork see 1891 'Mrs. Testar', *Table Talk* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1885 - 1939), 23 January, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article147283927>. Caroline Jordan argues that an education involving art and music flagged the middle-class woman. See C. Jordan, *Picturesque pursuits: colonial women artists & the amateur tradition*, Carlton, Vic., Melbourne University Press, 2005, pp. 13-14. Thomas Testar, accountant for the Board of Education from 1862, was remembered. See 1862 'THE GOVERNMENT GAZETTE', *The Star* (Ballarat, Vic.: 1855 - 1864), 14 October, p. 3. 1899 'Mainly About People', *Table Talk* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1885 - 1939), 23 June, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article145917524>.

the city's most churlish critic over operatic projects. Her premier performance of the colonial composition *English Rose Fare Thee Well*, written to celebrate the marriage of an English princess the previous year, suggests that her celebrity image was readily associated with notions of iconic English beauty.⁹⁶ Collectively the sopranos evoked the good, the brave and the beautiful at a highly newsworthy event.

The *Age* reported that the ordination aroused so much excitement amongst the Catholic community that tickets were issued as a means of crowd control: "Even previous to ten o'clock in the morning the doors were besieged by crowds of well dressed persons anxious to obtain good seats".⁹⁷ In this recount the notion of church space as an extension of the secular stage was implied without any adverse judgement – in fact, the major point of the description was the enthusiastic nature of Melbourne Catholicism, while the description of "well dressed persons" served as a broadly understood metonym for middle-class respectability. As McKenzie has argued, the "material" aspects of colonial culture were imbricated in the "maintenance of status".⁹⁸

At Geoghegan's ordination the elements of music, liturgy, ritual objects, architectural space, ornamentation and homily worked in tandem to legitimise Britain's expropriation of land and imposition of cultural practices. According to the press, the "excellence of the execution" of Haydn's "celebrated" Mass mitigated against the four-length of the event.⁹⁹ This selected Mass, known in England as the "Imperial", "Coronation Mass" or "Nelson Mass" was associated with Nelson's ascendancy over Napoleon in a 1798 battle, hence it roused as much patriotic as religious

⁹⁶ The sheet music for the song was advertised for sale at the end of June 1858. See 1858 'Advertising', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848-1957)*, 30 June, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7296846>. Hamilton is the only singer reported to have sung the song in public. See 1858 'Signor Cutolo's Concert', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 1 July, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154876761>. The symbolic dimensions of the rose for English pride is captured by press description of English roses in Paris as "ever passing fair and beautiful amongst the loveliest of God's creation". See 1855 'CAUSERIE PARISIENNE', *The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954)*, 28 August, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12973468>.

⁹⁷ 1859 'CONSECRATION OF THE BISHOP OF ADELAIDE', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 9 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154829248>.

⁹⁸ McKenzie, *Scandal in the colonies*, p. 65.

⁹⁹ 1859 'VICTORIA', *Empire (Sydney, NSW: 1850 - 1875)*, 15 September, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article60404624>.

enthusiasm. Indeed, the patriotic associations of Haydn's Imperial Mass contributed to its popularity across the British world.¹⁰⁰ At the ordination, the Reverend Barry's sermon, which depicted Geoghegan as a "humble missionary" bringing "civilisation" to "tribes and nations that were previously unknown", legitimised Anglo-Christian imperialism.¹⁰¹ The respectable nature of Hamilton's celebrity was strengthened by her capacity to contribute to such rituals of imperial significance, adding a new dimension to Michael Hogan's observation that "at the middle levels of society", denominations were united in their belief in the value of "respectable womanhood".¹⁰² The following section of the chapter suggests that Hamilton's performances of feminine virtue were persuasive enough to make her acceptable to some of Melbourne's most eminent ladies.

Hamilton and the ladies of Melbourne

Octavia Hamilton frequently crossed paths with Melbourne's ladies in the course of the philanthropic fundraisers that framed all participants as socially committed Christian women. Mary Poovey, Linda Colley and Dorice Elliot have argued that it was the very notion of female duty that provided women with their escape clause from the confines of their home in the nineteenth century British world, justifying their exit as agents of virtue as they ministered to the needs of a larger society.¹⁰³ As Tanya Evans notes,

¹⁰⁰ For the socio political significance of this Mass see K. Geiringer, *Haydn: A Creative Life in Music*, 3rd edn., Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press, 1982, p. 347. C. Alwes, *A History of Western Choral Music from the Medieval Foundations to the Modern Age Volume 1*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 340-341. D. Janower, 'Franz Joseph Haydn, *Missa in Angustiis* (1798) ("Lord Nelson Mass")', *Journal of the Conductor's Guide*, vol. 10, nos. 1 & 2, Winter/Spring 1989, p. 27. For the various titles of the Mass see K. Geiringer, *Haydn, A creative life in music*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press, p. 347.

¹⁰¹ 1859 'Consecration of The Bishop Of Adelaide', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 9 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154829248>.

¹⁰² M. Hogan, *The sectarian strand: religion in Australian History*, Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria, 1987, pp. 74-76.

¹⁰³ Mary Poovey, Linda Colley and Dorice Elliot have argued that women's duties legitimised their entry into the larger world. Amanda Vickery argues that the nineteenth-century conception of gendered spheres of activity developed with the middle class's efforts to define itself favourably against other classes. See M. Poovey, *Uneven Developments*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988, pp. 8-10. L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, (3rd edn.), London, Pimlico, 2003, pp. 239-240, pp. 272-274. D. Elliot, *The Angel out of the House: Philanthropy and Gender in Nineteenth Century England*, Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 2002, p. 9. A. Vickery, 'Golden age to separate spheres? A review of the categories and chronology of English women's history', *The Historical Journal*, 36, 1993, p. 383.

philanthropy was a device often used by the middle-class to assist their social and political advancement.¹⁰⁴ Anne O'Brien argues that the "discursive power" of philanthropy was particularly "strong" in the Australian colonies due to the absence of system of taxation addressing the needs of the poor. In addition the economic inequities exacerbated through Victoria's gold rushes increased the importance of philanthropic interventions.¹⁰⁵

Aside from her professional involvement in benefit performances for her peers, Hamilton's engagement in Melbourne's larger voluntaristic culture helped to secure her status as a popular and deserving resident and aligned her activities with those of Victoria's most respectable citizens. She lent her support to the aid of the poor, along with other endeavours associated with imperial and cultural citizenship, such as fundraising for Britons affected by the 1857 Indian mutiny, the celebration of Shakespeare, (England's iconic playwright), and fundraising for the local military.¹⁰⁶ In the course of a career that was lengthy given Melbourne's demographic flux, her civic-mindedness helps to account for popularity that endured for a decade. Even James Neild acknowledged her status as a "highly respected member of the musical community" when Melbournians flocked to her benefit after her 1858 house fire.¹⁰⁷

Hamilton's association with the Melbourne Temperance movement of 1858 demonstrates that her performances were never confined to mere singing. Her probable champagne drinking at the Melbourne Mechanic's

¹⁰⁴ T. Evans, *Fractured families: Life on the margins in colonial New South Wales*, UNSW Press, 2015, p. 191.

¹⁰⁵ A. O'Brien, *Philanthropy and settler colonialism*, Hampshire, England, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 5, p. 61.

¹⁰⁶ Hamilton performed gratuitously for the Lying-in Hospital, where Melbourne's poor women had their babies, and the Melbourne Benevolent Society, which supported poor families in various ways. See respectively 1859 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 24 December, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154881446>. 1860 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 25 April, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5681220>

For Hamilton's support of the Britons affected by the Indian Mutiny see 1858 'Indian Relief Fund', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic. 1854-1954), 3 February, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154857608>. For Hamilton's involvement in a plan to raise money for the purchase of a statue of Shakespeare see of 1864 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 25 August, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5751831>. For her support of fundraising for the military band see 1862 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 2 August, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5719472>.

¹⁰⁷ 1858 *The Examiner and Melbourne Weekly News*, 4 September, no 62, p. 13.

Institute in 1854, her chat with Castieau over claret in 1857 and her enduring relationship with Thomas Davis a wine merchant, suggests that she was far from teetotal.¹⁰⁸ Yet Hamilton and Coulon performed temperance hymns at the 1858 “monster” tea meeting held by the Victorian Temperance League, an organisation that sought to promote abstinence from alcohol. The “large number of ladies in evening dress” amongst the 2000 who assembled indicates the movement’s substantial middle-class support at that time. Hamilton’s repertoire coupled didactic lyrics with appropriated tunes; for example the song *Coming from the Inn* was sung to the tune of *Coming through the Rye*.¹⁰⁹ The core values of the movement were both respectable and pragmatic as they focused on preserving working class families from the destitution inflicted by the wastage of wages on alcohol.¹¹⁰ Grimshaw notes that employers, in their quest for sober workers, had a vested interest in temperance, and that such a “civilising mission held some power for women”.¹¹¹

As in the case of Melbourne’s other philanthropic women, Hamilton’s frequent absences from home were justified in the light of the broader engagement of middle-class women in “social mothering”, to use a term coined by Eileen Yeo.¹¹² Social mothering involved philanthropic

¹⁰⁸ Alcohol consumption at Herr Strebing’s concert was documented in Chapter 1 but for the reader’s convenience see 1854 ‘UNRULINESS OF THE “STARS”’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 10 June, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article 4809277>. Female consumption of alcohol does not appear to have been unrespectable when constrained, with the *Examiner* advising the middle-class picnickers of 1858 that the best mixture for ladies lemonade and claret. See *The Examiner and Melbourne Weekly News*, Saturday January 2 1858, no. 27, p. 2. Habitual drinking and drunkenness was certainly frowned upon. See Cannon, op. cit., p. 331. Hamilton’s relationship with Davis will be discussed in Chapter Three.

¹⁰⁹ 1858 ‘THE TEMPERANCE FESTIVAL’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 2 July, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7296946>

¹¹⁰ At first the movement focused on abstinence from the categories of alcohol favoured by members of the working class, such as spirits, but a more extreme policy developed from the 1830s. See J. Perkin, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth Century England*, London, Routledge, 1989, p. 121. P. Grimshaw et al, *Creating a Nation*, Ringwood, Vic., McPhee Gribbe, 1994, p. 89. The observations of John Tankard, a member of the Melbourne Benevolent Society Committee, commented on connection between excess alcohol consumption and family destitution. See Cannon, op. cit., p. 334.

¹¹¹ Grimshaw et al, op. cit., 1994, p. 89. See also Simon Morgan, ‘A sort of land debatable’: female influence, civic virtue and middle-class identity, c 1830-c 1860 [1], *Women’s History Review*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2004, p. 189.

¹¹² For the concept of “social mothering” see E. Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science: relations and representations of gender and class*, London, River Oram Press, 1996, in S. Swain, ‘Negotiating poverty: women and charity in Nineteenth Century Melbourne,’ *Women’s History Review*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2007, p. 101.

activities extending the ‘feminine’ hearth into the public domain through ministry to lesser classes and races.¹¹³ While Hamilton’s apparent advocacy of temperance clearly asserted the importance of sobriety, it also made a more subtle statement about the importance of containing sexual activity within conservative norms. Just as excessive gustatory appetite was associated with sexual promiscuity, temperance values implied sexual propriety. As British cultural geographer James Kneale has noted: “Themes of seduction, excess, appetite and control suffused temperance concerns.”¹¹⁴ While Hamilton’s 1857 pregnancy in Beechworth captures her private transgression of sexual norms, her appearance at the 1858 Temperance Festival helped to shape her public image as a woman committed to chastity and the preservation of family.

However in a society without Poor Laws temperance values alone would not meet the needs of destitute families, hence philanthropic activities played a crucial role in alleviating poverty.¹¹⁵ As discussed in Chapter One, Hamilton’s engagement with the lyric stage network drew her into fundraising events for Melbourne’s Hospital and its Orphan Asylum (an institution housing illegitimate and destitute children) as early as May 1854.¹¹⁶ Aside from voluntary services for the city’s main hospital and poor

¹¹³ For the review see 1858 'THE TEMPERANCE FESTIVAL', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 2 July, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7296946>. In the first song listed, Hamilton adopted the perspective of a male contrasting the disappointments of the public bar with the joys of the home. For relevant discussion of the temperance repertoire see E. P. Hood, *The Book of Temperance Melody*, 2nd edn., London, Charles Gilpin – Bishop Gate Street, 1850, pp. 2-3.

¹¹⁴ J. Kneale, ‘The place of drink: Temperance and the public, 1856–1914’, *Social & Cultural Geography*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2001, p. 52.

¹¹⁵ For relevant discussion of destitution and philanthropy see M. Kehoe, *The Melbourne Benevolent Asylum: Hotham’s Premier Building*, Melbourne, Hotham History Project North Melbourne Library, 1998, p. 5. D. Jaggs, *Asylum to Action: Family Action 1851 – 1991*, Oakley East, Victoria, 1991, pp. 7. Melbourne Ladies Benevolent Society, *Women’s Work During Fifty Years in connection with the Melbourne Ladies Benevolent Society: 1845-1895*, Melbourne, 1895, pp. 8-9. Gleeson and Swain have both observed that the work of societies such as the MLBS went some way to addressing poverty in a society without Poor Laws. See Swain, op. cit., 2007, p. 100. B. Gleeson, ‘A Public Space for Women: The Case of Charity in Colonial Melbourne’, *Area*, Vol. 27, No. 3 Sep., 1995, pp. 195-198.

¹¹⁶ For her May concert see 1854 'Advertising', *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer* (Vic.: 1851 - 1856), 25 May, p. 3 Edition: DAILY, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article91932704>. For her support of orphans see 1863 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 10 December, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article155024855>. Her 1855 appearances with Miska Hauser had begun with a benefit concert for Melbourne Hospital. See 1855 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 16 June, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154891317>. For subsequent support to Melbourne Hospital see 1865

children, she performed in aid of Melbourne's Benevolent Asylum,¹¹⁷ Melbourne Lying in Hospital,¹¹⁸ The Patriotic and India Relief Funds,¹¹⁹ church building funds,¹²⁰ Victorian flood victims,¹²¹ and Beechworth Hospital.¹²²

Each foray into philanthropic fundraising brought Hamilton into contact with Melbourne's esteemed women, most particularly the ladies who helped to define female respectability. Her contribution to causes supported by the Melbourne Ladies' Benevolent Society (MLBS) drew her into the orbit of the highest ranked Protestant women in the city, including Mrs Perry (Bishop Perry's wife), Mrs Nicholson (the wife of an eminent Melbourne businessman), Mrs Timins (Governor's Barkly's first mother-in-law) and Mrs McCulloch (the wife of a leading politician).¹²³ In their philanthropic endeavours, these middle-class women adapted domestic

'THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 1865', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 19 January, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5745234>.

¹¹⁷ For her support to the Benevolent Asylum see 1862 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 11 March, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5711466>. 1862 'THE PHILHARMONIC TRIENNIAL FESTIVAL', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 8 October, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article155011033>. 1863 'THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1868', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 3 September, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article6488702>. 1864 'THURSDAY, AUGUST 11, 1864', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 11 August, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5751483>. 1864 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 29 October, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5748177>.

¹¹⁸ 1859 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 24 December, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154881446>.

¹¹⁹ 1855 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 26 June, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154895380>. 1858 'INDIAN RELIEF FUND', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 3 February, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154857608>.

¹²⁰ 1863 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 20 November, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5739418>. 1863 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 26 November, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article155019792>.

¹²¹ 1864 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 9 January, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5742158>.

¹²² 1857 'MUSIC AND THE DRAMA', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 16 February, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154822343>.

¹²³ Russell has commented on the role of Melbourne's ladies as "custodians of morality". See P. Russell, 'The Brash Colonial: Class And Comportment In Nineteenth-Century Australia', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, no. 12, 2002, p. 449, p. 452. For relevant discussion of Mrs Perry's philanthropic work see P. Sherlock, 'Perry, Frances (Fanny) (1814-1892)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Australian National University, 2005, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/perry-frances-fanny-13150>. For reference to Mrs Nicholson see P. Russell, *A Wish of Distinction: Colonial Gentility and Femininity*, 1994, p. 194. For relevant discussion of philanthropic women see D. Jaggs, *Asylum to Action: Family Action 1851 - 1991*, Oakley East, Victoria, 1991, pp. 10-13, p. 23, p. 30. Gleeson, op. cit., p. 198. For reference to Lady McCulloch's association with the Ladies Benevolent Society see 1870 'SATURDAY, AUGUST 27, 1870', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 27 August, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5830117>.

ideals through their focus on bettering lives potentially lived on the streets, as opposed to the home.¹²⁴ While the interactions of the MBLS with specific applicants for financial relief were noted in minute books, rather than the press, Hamilton's occupation of the lyric stage at philanthropic benefits was highly conspicuous. Nevertheless, the philanthropic motivation of women who sang for the benefit of the vulnerable transformed public space into a symbolic extension of the home, linked female artistes with privileged wives, and imbued Hamilton's image, at least in part, with a sense of middle-class normality. Non-government fundraising worked in tandem with government contributions to alleviate destitution in various institutions and critical shortfalls in funding made the charitable engagement of Melbourne's artistes all the more vital.¹²⁵ Melbourne charities actively sought support from the reputable lyric stage as illustrated by the MBLS's request for assistance from the Melbourne Philharmonic Society (MPS) in early 1855.¹²⁶

Hamilton's association with the MPS from 1857 established a strong platform for contact with the vice regal family as Governor Barkly was patron for the highly respectable society.¹²⁷ His patronage had added prestige to a number of concerts organised by Hamilton and her peers, including the benefit following her 1858 house fire.¹²⁸ In July 1860 *The Age* reported that Mr Pringle's recently formed Musical Union, which included Hamilton,

¹²⁴ Coventry Patmore captured the British Victorian middle-class domestic ideal in characterising the wife as an "angel" who displayed selfless love. See C. Patmore, Preludes – The Wife's Tragedy, Canto IX, Book I, *Angel of the House*, The Victorian Web, August 2004, <http://www.Victorianweb.org/authors/patmore/angel/9.html> For discussion relevant to colonial Victoria see D. Jaggs, *Asylum to Action: Family Action 1851 – 1991*, Oakley East, Victoria, 1991, p. 23. For a discussion of MBLS activities see Gleeson, op. cit., pp. 195-198, p. 204. Swain, op. cit., pp. 99-112.

¹²⁵ For the importance of charity see Kehoe, op. cit., p. 5. Gleeson, op. cit., p. 198.

¹²⁶ The request by Dr Curtis on behalf of the Benevolent Society was declined. See Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society, *Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society Minutes 1853-1856*, Entry 1855 Tuesday 6 Feb. Dr Curtis was a Melbourne practitioner who offered free treatment to inmate of the Melbourne Benevolent Asylum in 1855. See 1855 'THE BENEVOLENT ASYLUM', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 23 January, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4803425>.

¹²⁷ 1857 'Advertising', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 23 December, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7143880>

¹²⁸ For Barkly's patronage of events involving Hamilton see 1858 'Advertising', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 9 February, p. 1. 1858 'Advertising', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 27 July, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7298270>. 1858 'THEATRICALS AND MUSIC', *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle (Melbourne, Vic.: 1857 - 1868)*, 4 September, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article201372140>.

Mrs Hancock and Mr Farquharson, had responded “with praiseworthy alacrity” to a plea for fundraising assistance from the Ladies Committee of the Fitzroy Industrial Home for [financially] distressed females, a society under the auspices of the MBLs.¹²⁹ At this fundraiser, which took place in early October, Hamilton’s public donation of eight guineas may have been an action aimed at impressing the vice regal family.¹³⁰

Arguably one of the networks that helped gain the approval of the vice regal circle on Octavia Hamilton between 1860 and 1862 was that of an influential group of French nationals including the baritone Emile Coulon, violinist Horace Poussard, cellist Rene Douay and pianist Edward Boulanger. While the small number of French who migrated to the colonies did not generally form homogenous communities, evidence points to warm collegial relationships between French musicians, in keeping with its intricately networked culture of the lyric stage.¹³¹ The friendship between Coulon, the colony’s only French baritone, and Boulanger, the most eminent classical pianist, is captured in an 1855 illustration in the Sydney press, published two months after the pianist’s arrival.¹³² Coulon almost certainly introduced his compatriot to Hamilton, one of his most popular leading ladies, when the opportunity arose.

In November 1860 Hamilton and Coulon provided the entertainment at the Prince of Wales birthday celebrations on the grounds of Toorak House, the vice regal residence. Presumably music-loving Annie, only three

¹²⁹ 1860 'THE NEWS OF THE DAY', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 3 October, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154886126>.

¹³⁰ For Barkly’s patronage of the event see 1860 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 1 October, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154884234>. For his attendance at the event see 1860 'THE NEWS OF THE DAY', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 3 October, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154886126>. For the reference to Hamilton’s donation see 1860 'THE NEWS OF THE BAY', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 1 November, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154885467>.

¹³¹ For a discussion of the place of the French in Australian colonial demography see R. Aldrich, *The French Presence in the South Pacific, 1842-1940*, Houndmills, Basingstone, Hampshire and London, Macmillan Press, 1990, p. 199. A. Stuer, *The French in Australia*, Canberra, The Australian National University, 1982, p. 40.

¹³² Boulanger, who arrived Australia on January 12, 1855, appeared in a sketch with Coulon that was published in the *Illustrated Sydney News* on March 17, 1855. See D. Ross, *Singing and Society: Melbourne, 1836-1861*, MA diss., University of Melbourne, December 1982, p. 159. For Boulanger’s date of arrival see G. Skinner, Edward and Kate Boulanger, ‘A biographical register of Australian colonial musical personnel-B’, <http://sydney.edu.au/paradisec/australharmony/register-B.php>.

years younger than Hamilton, exerted some influence in the choice of entertainers for the vice regal family and their many guests. It can also be assumed that Mrs Pratt, Annie's mother, who also resided at Toorak House, judged the pair to be respectable vocalists.¹³³ On this occasion the image of a beautiful English soprano on a manicured lawn could only have enriched a spectacle that was resonant with imperial pride. Governor and Lady Barkly stood at the entrance to their drawing room as their guests flowed into expansive grounds featuring a "sumptuous" spread of food, grand marquees and archery fields. For many English-bred, middle-class spectators the image of archery would have evoked both the legendary Robin Hood and the English victory against the French at Agincourt.¹³⁴ Emile Coulon left Melbourne for Europe a month later with the goal of gaining international involvement in a colonial opera company but never returned.¹³⁵ However Hamilton's association with Melbourne's French connection continued.

The status of French instrumentalists Boulanger, Poussard and Douay is captured by their role as entertainers at a private concert at Toorak House for "ladies and gentlemen" on September 21, 1861. At this event the Barklys functioned as impresarios of sorts, shaping the most impressive production they could from the best of available musical resources.¹³⁶ It is in this context that Hamilton's relationship with the French musicians gains significance. One influence on the status of the French instrumentalists was an expertise in Austro-Germanic classical music. While this category of

¹³³ For the event at Toorak House see 1860 'VICTORIA' *South Australian Register* (Adelaide, SA: 1839 - 1900), 13 November, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article50026935>. For relevant details of the Barklys and Pratts, including Mrs Pratt's evangelical bent, see M. Hancock, *Colonial consorts: the wives of Victoria's governors 1839-1900*, Carlton, Vic, Melbourne University Press, 2001, pp. 57-58.

¹³⁴ M. Johnes, Archery, Romance and Elite Culture in England and Wales, circa 1780-1840, *History*, vol. 89, no. 294, 2004, p. 200.

¹³⁵ The press provides two dates for Coulon's departure – December 26 and January 1 – but presumably he was delayed and the latter date is correct. See respectively 1861 'WEEKLY REGISTER', *Empire* (Sydney, NSW: 1850 - 1875), 5 January, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article60504641>. 1861 'VICTORIA', *The Mercury* (Hobart, Tas.: 1860 - 1954), 1 January, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article8795374>. Coulon was unable to raise £15000 from colonial investors. See 1860 'MELBOURNE', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842 - 1954), 12 November, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13048530>. After, Coulon and Poussard had both left they colonies they appear to have kept in contact. See 1869 'THE INDO-AUSTRALIAN TELEGRAPH', *South Australian Register* (Adelaide, SA: 1839 - 1900), 8 July, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article41406978>.

¹³⁶ 1861 'VICTORIA', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842 - 1954), 27 September, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13065508>. 1861 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 5 September, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5703779>.

music featured in, rather than dominating their programmes, it nevertheless provided opportunities for audiences to engage with a prestigious repertoire. Historical musicologist Tia DeNora argues that within the larger Anglo-European setting, Beethoven was the key figure in what proved to be a “reorientation of musical taste”. Austro-Germanic instrumental music usurped Italian opera in cultural capital and the status of Beethoven, positioned at the apex of the classical musical hierarchy, grew steadily in the course of the nineteenth century.¹³⁷

Hamilton first performed with Boulanger in April 1859 and contributed vocal solos to his concert at St Kilda Town Hall in October 1860, three months before Coulon left the colony.¹³⁸ The press noted the “prominent” contributions of Boulanger and Hamilton to the closing of the 1861 Victorian Exhibition, where their performances enhanced the colony’s most conspicuous showcase of material and cultural production.¹³⁹ Hamilton supported Poussard and Douay at their benefit performance on September 7, an event attended by Judge Barry, the French Consul, the American Consul and other members of Melbourne’s “elite”.¹⁴⁰ While the limited numbers drawn to the dress circle on this occasion suggests weak middle class interest in their offerings (at least initially), unimpressive

¹³⁷ For the status of classical music see J. Burkholder, D. Grout, and C. Palisca (eds.), *A history of western music*, 9th edn., New York and London, W. W. Norton and Company, 2014, p. 585. M. Bonds, *Music as thought: listening to the symphony in the age of Beethoven*, New Jersey and Woodstock, Princeton University Press, 2006, p. 8. J. Irving, ‘The Invention of Tradition’, pp. 178-212, in J. Samson, *The Cambridge history of nineteenth-century music*, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 183.

¹³⁸ For Hamilton’s early performances with Boulanger see 1859 ‘Advertising’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 12 April, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5679392>. 1860 ‘Advertising’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 1 October, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5690686>. For Coulon’s exit from the colony see 1860, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 2 October, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page200888>

¹³⁹ On the last day of the Exhibition 3,959 persons attended the Exhibition Building where Hamilton and Boulanger performed. See 1861 ‘Intercolonial News’, *The South Australian Advertiser* (Adelaide, SA: 1858 - 1889), 14 December, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article880940>. 1861 ‘VICTORIA’, *The Mercury* (Hobart, Tas.: 1860 - 1954), 14 December, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article8802937>.

¹⁴⁰ An advertisement noting that Governor Barkly would be attending their concert on August 31 (he failed to show) appears to have increased numbers but attendance was still modest. See 1861 ‘THE NEWS OF THE BAY’, *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 2 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154902215>. For references to prominent identities at their concerts see 1861 ‘Advertising’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848-1957), 5 September, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5703779>. 1861 ‘Advertising’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 7 September, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5703861>

middle-class attendance also provided opportunities for some members of Melbourne's so-called elite to perform superior discernment.¹⁴¹ In mid-September 1861 Hamilton joined the pair in a benefit for a Melbourne widows and her children, strengthening her public association with the Frenchmen and reinforcing her image of 'social mother'.¹⁴² More importantly in terms of prestige, she also provided professional support at their October 9 benefit at the Melbourne Mechanics Institute, held by the "ladies of Melbourne", most particularly Lady Pratt, the Governor's mother-in-law.¹⁴³ The *Argus* review of the concert highlighted the cultural capital associated with the musicians' repertoire, declaring that the "classical selections", specifically two Mozart and Beethoven quartettes, allowed the instrumentalists to demonstrate mastery "of the highest branches of their arts".¹⁴⁴

Hamilton's association with Lady Pratt at this event is a striking indicator of the singer's respectability: the governor's mother-in-law, with her evangelical streak, was hardly likely to collaborate with an artiste of dubious sexual integrity.¹⁴⁵ The "Ladies of Melbourne" would have had no inkling of Hamilton's impending separation from Mr Moon, or the fact that four months previously she had given birth to Edith Rose, an illegitimate

¹⁴¹ For a reference to the lightly filled dress circle see 1861 'THEATRICALS AND MUSIC', *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1857 - 1868), 7 September, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article201374615>. 1861 'NEWS AND NOTES', *The Star* (Ballarat, Vic.: 1855-1864), 26 September, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article66342335>.

¹⁴² 1861 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854-1954), 12 September, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154901452>.

¹⁴³ For relevant advertising see 1861 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 1 October, p. 1. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154901813>. 1861 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 7 October, p. 1. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154900511>. Messrs Boulanger, Poussard and Douay had performed Beethoven at a private concert at Toorak House in September. See 1861 'MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1861', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5704332>.

¹⁴⁴ For the review see 1861 'THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 10 October, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5704879>. In late September the *Ballarat Star* complained that Poussard and Douay had failed to recognise the "mental calibre and musical tastes" of his audience by omitting classical music from the program. See 1861 'NEWS AND NOTES', *The Star* (Ballarat, Vic.: 1855-1864), 30 September, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article66342401>. See *Argus* commentary: *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848-1957), 10 October, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page202410>. 1861 'Summary For Europe', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848-1957), 26 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5704424>.

¹⁴⁵ Hancock, op. cit., p. 57.

child.¹⁴⁶ Hamilton's involvement in the benefit located her in a network of upper class women, women united in their endeavour to assist two high-ranked musicians. Her purposeful interaction with Melbourne's most eminent ladies, however fleeting, was in distinct contrast to Lola Montez's social reception. English visitor Ramsay-Laye noted in her 1861 memoir of her time in gold rush Victoria: "I heard that [Montez] had been acting in Melbourne but no ladies went to see her."¹⁴⁷

Hamilton's ability to maintain an image of respectable celebrity is suggested through her interactions with a range of individuals and institutions from the time of her separation to the end of her career. On August 13 1862 St Kilda Municipal Council discussed Octavia Hamilton's request for use of the local Town Hall for a concert to be held the following week, an event considered newsworthy enough to be recounted in the Melbourne *Leader*. Despite the fact that repairs to the hall had been scheduled on the nominated day, the Council decided that they were prepared to tolerate the inconvenience because Hamilton's "exertions" were "worthy of encouragement".¹⁴⁸ One month later she sang at a fundraiser for Sandridge Trinity Church that was under the auspices of the Bishop.¹⁴⁹ In 1862 Hamilton also performed for the first time with civic-minded tenor Edwin Exon at an MPS concert. Not only was Exon heavily invested in the welfare of children through his role of Superintendent of the Emerald Hill Orphan Asylum, he served as the secretary of the Prahran Visiting Society, a similar body to the MLBS, and he was a poet who penned sentimental verse about mother love, orphans and the tragic loss of children.¹⁵⁰ In her

¹⁴⁶ Octavia Hamilton formally separated from her husband Augustus Moon in May 1862 and appears to have taken up residence in St Kilda, as will be discussed in Chapter Three.

¹⁴⁷ E. Ramsay-Laye, *Social life and manners in Australia: being the notes of eight years experience*, London, Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1861, p. 152.

¹⁴⁸ 1862 'NEWS OF THE WEEK', *Leader* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1862 - 1918), 16 August, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article196392997>.

¹⁴⁹ 1862 'THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1862', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 4 September, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5721526>.

¹⁵⁰ Hamilton and Exon's first recorded co-appearance was in 1862 and their last in 1864. See 1862 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 18 December, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article6481929>. 1864 'THE PHILHARMONIC CONCERT', *Leader* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1862 - 1918), 31 December, p. 9, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article197291282>. For his association with the Orphan Asylum see 1861 'ORPHAN ASYLUM, EMERALD HILL', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 26 January, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5697017>. For his role with the Prahran Visiting Society see 1859 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 29 June, p. 8,

numerous professional engagements with Exon, Hamilton would have had every incentive to maintain the curtain between her professional image of propriety and her unconventional private life.

In 1863, a year of transition in Victoria's governorship, the vice regal circle performed its usual rituals of lyric stage attendance. Governor and Lady Barkly surveyed Hamilton with their "suite" in July 1863, when she performed the "gem of the evening" in an Orpheus Union production at St George's Hall.¹⁵¹ Four months later she sang for Governor Darling and his family at a fundraiser for repairs to an Anglican School House.¹⁵² The colony's political transition created no discernible ripples on the lyric stage. It was business as usual: music-makers united with spectators in performances of cultural refinement and philanthropic values.

Conclusion

Between 1854 and 1864, Hamilton's ability to hide 'unrespectable' facets of her personal life from public scrutiny – most particularly her extramarital affairs – was foundational to her career. The nature of her off-stage interactions with 'respectable' citizens in a range of sites including hotels and private residences in regional Victoria, rehearsal spaces, school rooms, church space and prestigious streets such as Collins Street was vital in supporting her image of respectable celebrity. Individuals as diverse as the Beechworth gaoler John Castieau, Bishop Geoghegan and the reputedly evangelical Lady Pratt appear to have viewed Octavia Hamilton as a woman of substantial propriety before scandal led to her demise. As some lyric stage productions brought prestige to Victorian audiences, both the audience and the press had a vested interest in the construction of respectable female celebrity. Press narratives concerning Victoria's principal vocalists involved notions of the metaphorically 'chaste' singer, the 'social mother' and the imperial stalwart. It was certainly not in the interests of the press or persons

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5683565>. For relevant poems see E. Exon, *The Lost Flower Found and Other Poems*, Bourke Street East, Melbourne, Evans and Foster, 1862, pp. 5-6, p. 14, pp. 23-24, p. 39.

¹⁵¹ 1863 '[No heading]', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic. : 1848 - 1957), 9 July, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page207976>

¹⁵² 1863 'THE NEWS OF THE DAY', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 27 November, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article155024433>

desiring cultural experiences beyond the drawing room to readily interrogate her respectability.

Hamilton engaged with a cross-section of Melbourne society that included trade unionists, philanthropists, clubmen and Governors' wives. Vocal professionals provided cultural capital for white Victorian residents wishing to assert or enhance their class image. As respectability was forged through social esteem, it was inherently unstable; therefore lyric stage productions provided opportunities for colonial residents to reinforce or better their status. The value and scarcity of Victoria's principal vocalists was implicit in the *Argus's* 1862 declaration that in producing a music festival, the Philharmonic Society had "retained the whole of the available talent in the colony". Here the critic's characterisation of Melbournians as a music-loving people served as an affirmation of their civility and moral character. On the list of female vocalists, Hamilton was ranked third, after prima donnas Lucy Escott and Sara Flower. In essence, this review asserted the respectability of musical Melbourne and the artists who enabled the city to express its musicality.¹⁵³

¹⁵³ 1862 *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 25 October, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page206185>.

Chapter 3 – Octavia Hamilton, a ‘scandalous’ woman

Introduction

Between 1854 and 1864, Octavia Hamilton’s performances as a respectable middle-class woman were as much social as theatrical, yet the archive provides only fleeting glimpses of her everyday, off-stage performances. One such glimpse is filtered through Hamilton’s 1861 advertisement for the return of a lost white dog named “Beauty” who sported a “red-leather collar”. This advertisement not only served as a practical response to loss, it asserted her middle-class status: here was woman of feeling who was keen to retrieve a loved dog and rich enough to accessorise her pet.¹ The advertisement aligned her with the many middle-class women of London whose devotion to their dogs amounted to what one scholar has described as “dog bourgeoisification” – that is, the inclusion of dogs in the domestic ideal of maternal devotion.²

However, devotion to pet dogs was located on the periphery of the middle-class domestic ideal. Far more central was devotion to children, however shallowly and unevenly expressed, and it was Hamilton’s ultimate construction as ‘bad mother’ that would destroy her career. In February 1865, in a child maintenance hearing in Melbourne, Octavia Hamilton was exposed as an unfaithful wife and shamed in subsequent press reports. She

¹ 1861 ‘Advertising’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 3 September, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5703733>

² For discussion of “dog bourgeoisification” see P. Howell, ‘Flush and the banditti Dog stealing in Victorian London’, in C. Philo and C. Wilbert (eds.), *Animal spaces, beastly places: new geographies of animal-human relations*, London and New York, Routledge, 2000, p. 47. A long tradition of (transnational) prima donna-pet-coddling provides further insight into the cultural significance of Hamilton’s advertisement. For a reference to Giuseppini Verdi’s “entourage” of pets, her favourite of which was a white dog see F. Walker, *The Man Verdi*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1982, p. 235. Love also comments on the tradition of prima donna devotion to pet dogs in his discussion of Georgia Hodson. See H. Love, *The Golden Age of Australian Opera: W. S. Lyster and his Companies*, Sydney, Currency Press, 1981, 276. Scholars of transnational history such as Simon Potter and Alan Lester argue that the globalised dimensions of the press in the British world helped to construct a sense of cultural interconnection. See S. Potter, ‘Webs, Networks, and Systems: Globalization and the Mass Media in the Nineteenth-and Twentieth-Century British Empire’, *The Journal of British Studies*, vol. 46, no. 3, 2007, July 20, 2007, pp. 627-630. A. Lester, ‘Imperial Circuits and Networks: Geographies of the British Empire,’ *History Compass* 4, no. 1, January 2006, p. 124.

then withdrew from the metropolitan stage for five months, pre-empting rejection by Melbourne audiences. Her extended absence allowed her to test her reception on the regional stage while her remaining Melbourne supporters regrouped.³ Finally on August 16 she attracted a full audience to Melbourne's St George's Hall where she was favourably received. Then came a second court hearing on August 18. Hamilton's appearance at the East Collingwood courtroom in the context of her husband's summons on charges of child desertion revived the scandal around her identity as she was constructed as a negligent mother who had abandoned her children to the care of the state. The intense level of public condemnation that followed made the revival of her career impossible.

The Hamilton scandal developed in phases. In the initial stage she lost press approval and withdrew from the public gaze. In the interim stage her reputation somewhat recovered – or was at least reabsorbed into a form of unrespectable celebrity that fell short of the fully blown scandalous celebrity associated with Lola Montez.⁴ In the final stage, the scandal around her identity was revived and increased to such a degree that the damage appears to have been irreversible. This chapter investigates what the scandal reveals about Hamilton's level of agency, as well as analysing its use in exploring the aspirations and anxieties of larger colonial society. In particular Hamilton's professional demise draws attention to the role of the press in managing public information and adjudicating on reputation.

I will begin this chapter by discussing the most significant aspects of the context for the Hamilton scandal, including the widespread east coast agitation against the plan to reintroduce convict transportation to Western Australia, the colonial investment in the respectability of its eminent citizens, the status of poor woman, and the tensions concerning the

³ 1865 'THE HARMONIC SOCIETY'S CONCERT', *The Ballarat Star* (Vic. : 1865 - 1924), 17 April, p. 1, SUPPLEMENT TO THE BALLARAT STAR, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article112886070>

⁴ For the association of Montez with scandalous celebrity see G. Turner, F. Bonner, and P. Marshall, *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 46. Claire Knowles discusses the role of Lady Caroline Lamb's affair with Lord Byron in increasing her book sales. In contrast literary celebrities with images of "non threatening femininity" might lose their place in the literary marketplace. See C. Knowles, 'Celebrity, Femininity and Masquerade: Reading Letitia Landon's Romance and Reality', *European Romantic Review*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2012, pp. 254-255. See also C. Tuite, 'Tainted Love and Romantic "Literary Celebrity"', *ELH*, vol. 74, no. 1, Spring, 2007, p. 72.

Victorian government's financial support of destitute children. This discussion provides essential background for the interpretation of press and audience reaction to Hamilton at the various stages of her scandal. In the second section I trace the key events in Hamilton's personal life in the lead up to the first court hearing of February 1865. Here a focus on Hamilton's marriage break down and economic difficulties establishes her likely motivations in taking risky legal action. Next I trace the various stages of the scandal with a focus on the two court hearings and their aftermaths. I argue that Hamilton's construction as an unmaternal woman after the second hearing provoked deep-seated colonial anxieties about unconstrained female sexuality and effectively stripped her of her middle-class status. I analyse Hamilton's management of the scandal, comparing the actions she took to restore her identity of with those of other prominent women in the British world. Finally I examine her efforts to achieve a second comeback, noting the damaging effects of her notoriety. Bereft of respectability, the singer who was once able to crowd an auditorium repelled audiences in 1867: her image as bad mother prevailed.

'Melbourne is not Botany Bay'

The demise of Octavia Hamilton's celebrity highlights both the participatory nature of scandal and the limits of tolerance for women who strayed too far from the domestic ideal of mother love and wifely devotion. While the press denounced Hamilton, her own entry into the courtroom allowed damaging information about her family arrangements to be leaked into the public domain.⁵ The scandal around her identity began in the Melbourne County Court, set down roots in press representations that borrowed and built on the language of the courtroom, then spread along the colonial east coast and reached across to New Zealand.⁶

In the second half of the nineteenth-century there was an increasing tendency in the British world to advocate for the needy child. In England the

⁵ Media scholars Lull and Hinerman note the role of the media/press in disseminating scandal. See J. Lull and S. Hinerman, 'The search for scandal', in J. Lull and S. Hinerman (eds.), *Media Scandals: Morality and Desire in the Popular Culture Marketplace*, Oxford, Polity, 1997, p. 16.

⁶ For a New Zealand reference to the Octavia Hamilton scandal see 1865 'Melbourne', *Otago Daily Times*, Issue 1157, 5 September, p. 5.

novelist Charles Dickens positioned his readers to feel for neglected children while in colonial Melbourne the motifs of mother love and child loss recurred throughout sentimental verse of Edward Exon, Hamilton's MPA colleague between 1862 and 1864.⁷

Hamilton's construction as a neglectful mother in 1865 was influenced by larger colonial concerns about the welfare of vulnerable children. In 1864 the passing of Victoria's Neglected and Criminal Children Act suggests that there was enough concern about the plight of destitute and unsupervised children for the state to take steps to house them. As Jan Kociumbus has noted, the mid-century perception that unaddressed poverty had the capacity to propel convictism into the future influenced the state to increase their "paternalistic" role in New South Wales and Victoria.⁸ The 1864 legislation was intended to reduce the growth of a criminal class by limiting child contact with sexually suspect mothers.⁹ By 1865 transportation to the east coast had long ceased but the fear of the convict contaminant persisted.¹⁰

In the minds of many mid-century middle-class Victorians, sexual transgression and criminality were linked. The anti-transportation campaigns of the 1830s that had halted transportation to New South Wales

⁷ Literary studies scholars have concurred on the influence of Dickens' portraits of the vulnerable child. See M. Burgan, 'Bringing Up By Hand: Dickens and the Feeding of Children', *Mosaic*, Summer 1991, vol. 24, no. 3, p. 74. M. Bernardi, 'Children and the dark side of Charles Dickens', *History of Education & Children's Literature*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2013, pp. 448-449. Regenia Gagnier notes his wide readership. See R. Gagnier, 'The Global Circulation of Charles Dickens's Novels', *Literature Compass*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2013, p. 84. Bereavement appears to have influenced Exon's preoccupation with children in his previously mentioned poetry. (See Chapter Two). For the deaths of his daughters see 1860 'Family Notices', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 28 November, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5694016>. 1860 'Family Notices', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 8 December, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5694657>.

⁸ J. Kociumbas, *Australian childhood: a history*, St Leonards, N.S.W., Allen & Unwin, 1997, pp. 79-80.

⁹ As Christina Twomey and Nell Musgrave note, destitute children were perceived as more susceptible to criminal influence. See C. Twomey, 'Gender, Welfare and the Colonial State: Victoria's 1864 Neglected and Criminal Children's Act,' *Legal History*, no. 73, November 1997, p. 181. N. Musgrave, *The scars remain: a long history of forgotten Australians and Children's Institutions*, North Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2013, pp. 17-18, p. 83. Neglected children were effectively quarantined from the 'unrespectable' by visiting rules. See 1864 'REGULATIONS FOR INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS', *The Farmer's Journal and Gardener's Chronicle (Melbourne, Vic.: 1862 - 1864)*, 2 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article179480709>

¹⁰ Transportation to New South Wales and Tasmania ceased in 1840 and 1853 respectively. See S. Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, 3rd edn., Port Melbourne, Victoria, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 76-77.

by 1840 linked convicts to sexual vice.¹¹ While Victoria had identified as a convict-free colony since its 1851 separation from New South Wales, this self-image was precarious, as Port Phillip (the name for pre-separation Victoria) had received convicts. The Victorian Convicts Prevention Act of 1853, which was aimed at reducing the flow of convicts into the colony, suggests the importance of a convict-free identity for Victoria's dominant culture.¹² In 1863 a British report into the English prison system recommended that all healthy male prisoners be sent to Western Australia during the final stages of their imprisonment, "for social training", a proposal that was met with widespread colonial protest.¹³ Then in 1864 one Sydney newspaper captured Victorian hostility to the British proposal to revive transportation through the trope of a protective dragon guarding its threatened treasure.¹⁴ When Britain withdrew its proposal in early 1865, the *Argus* reasserted its widely shared rejection of convictism: "Melbourne is not Botany Bay".¹⁵ As will be elaborated in subsequent sections, the refusal of Hamilton, a middle-class woman, to take custody of her children in August 1865 was highly concerning for Victorians, as it destabilised the divide between the women viewed as social detritus and the supposedly genteel.

Octavia Hamilton was not the only prominent middle-class identity whose behaviour unsettled colonists in the mid-1860s. Revelations

¹¹ The colonial anti-transportation movement that had led to the termination of transportation on the east coast was premised on the argument that the moral and social integrity of the colonies was undermined through the convict presence. For relevant discussion see S. Macintyre, *A concise history of Australia*, 3rd edn., Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 71, p. 76. S. Petrow, Claims of the colony: Tasmania's dispute with Britain over the Port Arthur penal establishment 1856/ 1877, *Papers and Proceedings (Tasmanian Historical Research Association)*, vol.44, no.4, Dec 1997, pp. 222-224. P. Grimshaw, *Creating a Nation*, Ringwood, Vic., McPhee Gribbe, 1994, p. 77.

¹² B. Gleeson, 'A Public Space for Women: The Case of Charity in Colonial Melbourne', *Area*, vol. 27, no. 3, September 1995, p. 187.

¹³ 1863 'Transportation', *The Inquirer and Commercial News* (Perth, WA: 1855 - 1901), 4 November, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article66013266>. 1864 'SUMMARY FOR EUROPE BY THE MADRAS', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 25 November, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article155014518>

¹⁴ 1864 'TRANSPORTATION', *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney, NSW: 1850 - 1932), 30 January, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article128803756>

¹⁵ Portia Robinson notes that the association between New South Wales and a preponderant criminal class was prevalent in the nineteenth century and extended well into the twentieth century. See P. Robinson, *The women of Botany Bay: a reinterpretation of the role of women in the origins of Australian society*, Sydney, Macquarie Library, 1988, p. 3. 1865 'THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 1865', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 19 January, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5745234>

regarding the domestic lives of Judge Molesworth and his wife in 1864 troubled respectable Victoria by suggesting that the morality of the colonial elite might be as suspect as that of the poor.¹⁶ Mrs Henrietta Molesworth had petitioned the court for a judicial separation on the grounds of cruelty, while her husband counter-sued for divorce on the grounds of her alleged adultery with Richard Ireland, the Victorian attorney general of 1860-61. Press reports on the couple included representations of the judge as a foolish cuckold and his wife as shamelessly promiscuous.¹⁷ While the public were tantalised with images of elite impropriety, the capacity of such revelations to injure colonial reputation was a recurring theme in reports on the Molesworth divorce case. The sector of society likely to find such behaviour objectionable had expanded by the mid-nineteenth century. According to Australian historian Frank Bongiorno, many working class Australians of the era were just as strongly invested in the “ideal of respectability” as members of the middle class.¹⁸ Duncan MacCallum has observed that the colonial reaction to the Molesworth case was intensified by anxieties about the continuation of transportation to Western Australia.¹⁹ As a well-publicised scandal, the case also inflamed colonial sensitivities about its convict origins. If the political right to reject convictism in colonial Australia was won through arguments involving moral contamination, then the colonial rejection of convictism was yoked to the image of a morally upright establishment.²⁰

¹⁶ F. Bongiorno, *The Sex Lives of Australians*, Collingwood Victoria, Black Inc., 2012, p. 47.

¹⁷ Molesworth changed his initial plea for divorce to judicial separation. See 1863 'MELBOURNE', *The Cornwall Chronicle (Launceston, Tas.: 1835 - 1880)*, 3 October, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article72192687>. Ultimately, the court granted a judicial separation in his favour but not before repeated narratives regarding his folly and his wife's infidelity were related to the public. See 1864 'SUMMARY FOR EUROPE BY THE MADRAS', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 25 November, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article155014518>. See also R. Sholl, 'Molesworth, Sir Robert (1806–1890)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Australian National University, 1974, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/holes-worth-sir-robert-4217>.

¹⁸ F. Bongiorno, op. cit., p. 47.

¹⁹ D. MacCallum, 'The Alleged Russian Plans for the Invasion of Australia, 1864', *The Journal of the Sydney University Arts Association*, vol. 7, 1972, p. 45.

²⁰ As Russell has argued, colonisation was rationalised on a moral dichotomy that associated the Aboriginal “savage” with qualities such as sensuality and licentiousness, and the white coloniser with ‘propriety of conduct. See Russell, *Savage or Civilised?*, p. 6.

A number of press reports criticised Judge Molesworth for revealing facets of his personal life that could have been kept private. The Melbourne *Argus* declared that the colony's "credit" had been blasted by a "filthy tale" that should have been suppressed: "[this episode] will furnish no small occasion for triumph to those whose habit it is to speak sneeringly of colonial manners and morals." Similarly the Melbourne *Leader* argued that Molesworth had brought "social catastrophe" to the colony through failing to placate his wife.²¹ For the commentators of the *Argus* and the *Leader* the *act* of disclosing the details of a failed marriage was just as reprehensible as the *substance* of the disclosure because respectability, both individual and collective, was founded in part on secrecy. In such press commentary, the connection drawn between the discredited individual and the discredited state evoked the fragility of respectable communal identity in a colony distancing itself from convictism. McKenzie rightly argues that reputation on a local and imperial level had repercussions for colonial ambitions.²² For genteel and aspirational colonists, any frisson from sexual scandal was overlaid with genuine concern about damage to collective identity. Colonial cultural sensitivities emerged very clearly in press responses to the 1864 Molesworth revelations and would be echoed in August 1865 in relation to Hamilton.

Ann Stoler notes that the instability of claims to respectable middle-class status in the colonies was evidenced by English "disparage[ment]" of colonial residents as culturally "incompetent" and "morally suspect".²³ When respected identities such as Hamilton fell from grace, the cultural crisis that followed might be accompanied by explicit admissions of the

²¹ Bongiorno has commented on social perception that Molesworth had "done too little to keep the matter from public view". See Bongiorno, op. cit., p. 49. For the press perspectives discussed see 1864 'THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1864', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 24 November, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5742103>. 1864 'The Molesworth Scandal', *Leader* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1862 - 1918), 26 November, p. 12, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article197294233>.

²² K. McKenzie, 'Discourses of Scandal: Bourgeois Respectability and the End of Slavery and Transportation at the Cape and New South Wales', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2003, p. 1, p. 9.

²³ A. Stoler, *Race and the Education of desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*, Durham, US, Duke University Press Books, 2012, p. 102.

colony's precarious status in the larger empire.²⁴ The register of outrage adopted in the press also enabled a form of defensive "policing", with journalists articulating the perspectives of the morally 'righteous'.²⁵ What the press failed to consider in relation to Hamilton was the possibility that her court conduct was motivated by financial struggles. The reality was that in the lead up to her court hearings of 1865 Hamilton's dependence on Thomas Davis increased as her own earning capacity diminished.

A woman in need of male protection

Octavia Hamilton separated from her husband, Graham Augustus Moon, on May 8, 1862, under a deed of settlement witnessed by her trustee, and one-time landlord, William Grave.²⁶ On May 8 Hamilton was three months pregnant with Harry Hamilton Moon, who was almost certainly the son of Thomas Davis, a wine merchant.²⁷ Hamilton was theoretically free of her husband, yet her son's name captures her predicament. In order to render Harry legitimate, he had to carry Moon's name, and she was unable to divorce the man she detested in order to reinvent herself as Mrs Davis. Divorce, available in Victoria from 1861, was difficult, protracted and rarely granted in the colonial period. In any case, as a woman might only be granted divorce if her husband perpetrated incest, bestiality, sodomy; or adultery coupled with cruelty, bigamy or long-term desertion, it was not an option for Hamilton.²⁸

²⁴ Ann Stoler has made reference to the 'precarious vulnerability' of colonial identity. See A. Stoler, *Race and the Education of desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*, Durham, US, Duke University Press Books, 2012, p. 97.

²⁵ Ann Stoler's reference to "the insistent policing of those Europeans who fell from middle-class grace" is consistent with the conduct of the press. See A. Stoler, *Race and the Education of desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*, Durham, US, Duke University Press Books, 2012, p. 97, p. 102.

²⁶ 1865 'Extraordinary Action for Maintenance', *The Australian News for Home Readers* (Vic.: 1864- 867), 18 March, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article63170037>.

²⁷ Hamilton was three months pregnant with Harry Hamilton at the time of her 1862 separation from Moon. Given the undisputed claims made by Moon in the 1865 courtroom that he and Hamilton had lived separately from the time of Edith Rose's 1861 birth, it is highly unlikely that he fathered Harry. See 1865 'Singular Case of Child Desertion', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 19 August, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5785638>. For Harry Moon's birth see Moon, Harry Hamilton, Birth, 10 November 1862, St Kilda, Victoria, reg. no. 4913, *Australia, Birth Index, 1788-1922*.

²⁸ For the arrival of divorce in Victoria see H. Finlay, 'Law making in the shadow of the empire: divorce in colonial Australia', *Journal of Family History*, vol. 24, no. 74, 1999, pp. 77-78, p. 83, p. 88. For women's limited access see H. Finlay, *To have but not to hold: A*

Between 1862 and 1864 Hamilton's income was drawn from four main sources: public performances in secular spaces, church performances, private tuition and Moon's maintenance payments of £4 per week. It is doubtful whether she received any childcare assistance from her larger family after May 1862 as Moon's later court testimony suggests that he and the children he claimed as his own had lived with the Scrivenors for an extended period of time.²⁹ In June 1863 Thomas Davis, on the brink of insolvency, signed over his estate for the "benefit of creditors", his company worth slightly more than his £5000 debt.³⁰ By August he had set up a new business in Elizabeth Street, presumably with little capital.³¹ Davis, a pragmatic thirty-five year old man faced with the task of rebuilding his livelihood, must have viewed Hamilton's daughters as expendable burdens.³²

Alice Florence and Edith Rose were enrolled in Mrs Thompson's school at St Kilda from 1864, if not earlier.³³ Tuition at Mrs Thompson's school ranged from 35 to 50 guineas a year, with the fee structure suggesting the accommodation of boarders and non-boarders.³⁴ While it is impossible to recover the precise details of Hamilton's arrangement with the school, its location in St Kilda, the suburb where she lived, meant that it was

history of attitudes to marriage and divorce in Australia 1859-1975, Sydney, The Federation press, 2005, pp. 52-53.

²⁹ For Moon's court testimony see 1865 'SINGULAR CASE OF CHILD DESERTION', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 19 August, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5785638>. In the press obituaries following John Scrivenor's death in 1864, reference was made to a "reversal" of fortune that caused Mrs Scrivenor and her son to return to Melbourne. This may have been a euphemistic reference to Moon's additional need for support after his reduced income and the loss of Hamilton's assistance in May 1862. See 1864 'Local Intelligence', *Queanbeyan Age and General Advertiser* (NSW: 1860 - 1867), 5 May, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article30634703>.

³⁰ 1863 'MONETARY AND COMMERCIAL', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 25 June, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154965780>. Davis also pressed for his debtors to settle the debts they owed. See 1863 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 19 June, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article6486674>.

³¹ 1863 'Advertising', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 15 August, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154961950>.

³² For Thomas Davis's age see Davis, Thomas Holme b. November 1, 1827, St Mary Magdalene, Bermondsey Poor Union, London, England, *Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813-1906*.

³³ For Mrs Thompson's role see 1865 'SINGULAR CASE OF CHILD DESERTION', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 19 August, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5785638>.

³⁴ Mrs Thompson's fees ranged from 35 to 50 guineas a year. See 1864 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 19 March, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5745919>.

possible for her daughters to return home of an evening, while being accommodated at the school in her absence.³⁵ In the second court hearing, Jessie Hunt's testimony certainly indicates that she had seen the girls in Hamilton's home often enough to recognise them on the steps of St George's Hall.³⁶

Octavia Hamilton experienced two serious financial blows in 1864. Early in the year the Reverend Handfield at St Peter's Anglican church made the decision to manage church debt through significant cuts in expenditure, including Hamilton's £40 salary. The choir's resistance to these cost-cutting measures resulted in their mass resignation.³⁷ Thomas Davis, also a member of the choir, would have left with Hamilton.³⁸ Aside from church finances, there may have been other influences on Hamilton's retrenchment, such as evangelical objections to a choir that eclipsed the importance of the general congregation.³⁹ Hamilton's retrenchment from St Peter's Church also saw the loss of a useful marketing opportunity as it

³⁵ Mr Moon's testimony on the August 18 court hearing suggested that Hamilton had long paid the school fees for the girls and he had only been recently applied to for the payments. See 1865 'SINGULAR CASE OF CHILD DESERTION', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 19 August, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5785638>.

³⁶ Davis and Hamilton lived in Octavia Street, St Kilda, in 1864. For Davis's workplace and household address see Davis, Thomas H., St Kilda 1864, *Australia City Directories, 1845-1948*. Davis had been living in St Kilda as early as 1859. See Davis, Thomas, City of St Kilda 1859, *Victoria Australia Rate Books, 1855-1963*. He also lived there in 1864. See Davis, Thomas H., St Kilda 1863, *Australia City Directories, 1845-1948*. The recounts of the August 1865 court hearing, cited numerous times in this thesis, suggest that the girls were enrolled as full-time boarders at Mrs Thompson's school by 1864. The fact that Alice Florence's birthday was reported as November 7 at the time of her baptism as a ten-year old ward of the state in 1867 (as opposed to the November 8) suggests the paucity of birthday celebrations in her life: she had forgotten the date. However this could have been a mistake of a State Industrial School informant. For Alice Florence's christening details see Moon, Florence Irving, Christening, 1867 December 22, Melbourne, Bourke, *St. Peter's Eastern Hill, Baptisms, 1848-1915*.

³⁷ 1864 'THE CHOIR AT ST. PETER'S CHURCH', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 8 February, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5743786>

³⁸ For the reference to Davis as a member of the choir see 1862 'FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1862', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 12 September, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5721984>

³⁹ For tensions between evangelical and high church Anglicanism see C. Cox, Church music in the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, 1847-1997 pp. 67-88, in C. Holden (ed.), *People of the past?: The culture of Melbourne Anglicanism and Anglicanism in Melbourne's culture*, Parkville, Victoria, University of Melbourne Press, 2000, p. 71. C. Holden, *From Tories at Prayer to Socialists at mass: St Peter's, Eastern Hill, Melbourne 1846-1990*, Carlton, Victoria, Melbourne University Press, 1996, p. 33. A. de Q. Robin, Perry, Charles (1807-1891), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 1974, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/perry-charles-4391>. C. Holden, *From Tories at Prayer to Socialists at mass: St Peter's, Eastern Hill, Melbourne 1846-1990*, Carlton, Victoria, Melbourne University Press, 1996, p. 31, p. 35.

severed her weekly appearance before a “lucrative” and “influential” church community.⁴⁰

On October 8, 1864 Hamilton was forced to cut her performance short in a Melbourne Saturday concert because “sudden faintness prevent[ed] her from proceeding”.⁴¹ Although she was only thirty and a stoic performer, she was more than seven months into her ninth pregnancy and may have been feeling the strain, particularly in a year of increased financial pressure. On December 2, she gave birth to Lizzie ‘Moon’, an event inciting Augustus Moon’s decision to terminate his weekly £4 child maintenance payments, according to later court testimony – although the truth, far more involved, would never be disclosed in Hamilton’s lifetime.⁴² Augustus Moon had a lover of his own at some point between 1863 and early 1864: a woman who gave birth to a child named Edith Florence. Moon was a witness at Edith’s 1887 marriage to Benjamin Lloyd in Carlton and a “M. G. Lloyd” stood in as her mother, an unusual arrangement which suggests that third parties raised Edith. As the space for “mother” is left blank on Edith’s death documentation it appears that the identity of her mother was never disclosed.⁴³ What is certain is that the clandestine responsibility that Moon took for Edith would have placed him under

⁴⁰ C. Perry to Wardens, 5/1/1854, unpublished parish history, cited in C. Holden, *From Tories at Prayer to Socialists at mass: St Peter’s, Eastern Hill, Melbourne 1846-1990*, Carlton, Victoria, Melbourne University Press, 1996, p. 32. I am unable to access the records at St Peter’s Church at this point in time so as to determine the duration of Hamilton’s appointment at St Peter’s but it may have coincided with her friend Pringle’s engagement as organist in 1860. For the reference to Pringle’s appointment see Holden, 1996, p. 33-34. An 1860 letter to the editor makes reference to a number of paid soloists at the time of Pringle’s appointment. See also 1860 ‘ST PETERS CHOIR’, *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 29 March, p. 1. (Supplement to The Argus), <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5679673>.

Hamilton was most certainly a member of the St Peter’s Choir in 1862. See 1862 ‘SATURDAY, MARCH 22, 1862’, *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 22 March, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5712064>.

⁴¹ 1864 ‘MONDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1864’, *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 10 October, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5742633>

⁴² Moon actually said he stopped the payments in September, rather than December, in the court hearing. He either confused September with December or stopped payments when he learned of Hamilton’s pregnancy. See 1865 ‘SINGULAR CASE OF CHILD DESERTION’, *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 19 August, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5785638>

⁴³ Edith’s father-in-law is named George Lloyd. See Moon, Edith Florence Lloyd, Marriage, 1887, September 21, 1887, Victoria, reg. 3975, *Australia Marriage Index, 1788-1950*. For her death documentation see Lloyd, Edith Florence, Death, August 1, 1939, Petersham, Sydney, reg. 14265, *Australia, Death Index, 1787-1985*.

increased financial pressure in 1864 and probably harshened his reaction to additional Hamilton-Davis offspring.

Just as the identity of Edith Florence Moon's mother cannot be recovered, the extent of Hamilton's agency with regards to the management of her fertility remains elusive. If a fertile woman was unwilling or unable to use abstinence or effective contraception (condoms) as a means of fertility control, then children were a logical outcome. By 1864 Hamilton had given birth to three illegitimate daughters (Alice Florence, Edith Rose and Lizzie) and all three births incited a punitive response from Moon. These children were born before 1870s, the decade that saw the beginnings of a significant birth decline in both the colonies and England.⁴⁴ Frank Bongiorno has noted that information about relatively effective means of birth control (condom use) was only readily available from the late 1870s.

On December 16 Lizzie Moon died from diarrhoea and exhaustion and Hamilton cancelled her paid role in the annual Melbourne Philharmonic Society Christmas Eve production of 'The Messiah'.⁴⁵ At this difficult time she appears to have been estranged from her relatives living with Moon.⁴⁶ It was "house keeper" Helen Lynch who served as informant in the registration of Lizzie's death. Lynch identified Hamilton as "unmarried" and Lizzie's father as "unknown", bureaucratic choices privileging the

⁴⁴ For reference to available birth control literature see F. Bongiorno, *The Sex Lives of Australian: A history*, Collingwood, Victoria, Black Inc, 2012, p. 66. For discussion of the 1870s as the beginning of the phrase of gradual decline in reproduction see P. McDonald and H. Moyle, 'Women as agents in fertility decision-making: Australia, 1870-2015', Conference Paper, *Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America*, San Diego, 2 May 2015. H. Woolcock, M. Searle and K. Saunders, 'My beloved chloroform: Attitudes to childbearing in colonial Queensland: a case study', *The Society for the Social History of Medicine*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1997, p. 444. For a discussion of the drop in the English birth rate see H. Cook, *The Long Sexual Revolution: English Women, Sex, And Contraception, 1800-1975*, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 15.

⁴⁵ Moon, Lizzie, Death, December 16, 1864, reg. 8785, *Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages*. For Hamilton's performance cancellation see 1864 'THE PHILHARMONIC CONCERT', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 27 December, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article155018433>.

⁴⁶ Moon's testimony in the second court hearing suggests that one of her brothers played a tattle-tale role in communicating Hamilton's activities to Moon. However, Moon's testimony also suggests that Frances Scrivenor, Hamilton's mother, may have had some affection for Alice Florence and Edith Millicent, as he conceded the possibility that she showed people their photographs. Mrs Scrivenor, who had been widowed since April 28, 1864, was in a vulnerable position without her husband, and her new level of dependency on her sons and son in law may have influenced her compliance. See 1865 'SINGULAR CASE OF CHILD DESERTION', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 19 August, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5785638>.

protection of Davis's reputation over that of his celebrity partner.⁴⁷ While the colonial middle class did not recognise 'de facto cohabitation', Davis would never be called to account for his relationship with a married woman.⁴⁸ The widespread notion that "chastity was the exception with men", which was even voiced in the Victorian parliament, ensured that women would always be far more vulnerable in scandals involving sex.⁴⁹

The employment difficulties heightening Hamilton's dependency on Davis in the lead up to February 1865 were hard to address in the context of an erratic local economy. Economic histories of Victoria generally locate the 'long boom' in the 1860s-80s, blurring the reality of economic troughs through reliance on statistical averages.⁵⁰ However the myth of the mid-century colonial workers' paradise that Richard White has debunked so convincingly was also contested at the time under focus.⁵¹ In 1864 the *Geelong Advertiser* commented on the use of statistics to represent the notion of plenty, despite evidence of poverty.⁵² According to Henry Pook and Andrew Wells, unemployment was a significant social issue in the 1860s and was accompanied by a decline in wages.⁵³ Certainly there is evidence of lyric stage artists suffering financially in the 1860s, with both

⁴⁷ Moon, Lizzie, Death, December 16 1864, reg. 8785, *Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages*.

⁴⁸ H. Finlay, Lawmaking in the Shadow of the Empire: Divorce in Colonial Australia, *Journal of Family History*, vol. 24, no. 74, 1999, p. 97.

⁴⁹ H. Finlay, *To have but not to hold: A history of attitudes to marriage and divorce in Australia 1859-1975*, Sydney, The Federation press, 2005, p. 76.

⁵⁰ For an instance of the "long boom" narrative see L. Frost, Economy pp. 223-226, in A. Brown-May and S. Swain (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Melbourne*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York and Melbourne, 2005, p. 223-224. (However Frost does concede the 'mask[ed]... weaknesses' of Melbourne's 1880s economy). E. P. Thompson has pointed out the treacherous nature of economic averages. See E. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 2nd edn., Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1968, cited in M. Bellanta, 'Leary Kin: Australian Larikins and the Blackface Minstrel Dandy', *Journal of Social History*, vol. 42, no. 3, Spring, 2009, p. 678.

⁵¹ R. White, *Inventing Australia: images and identity 1688-1980*, Sydney, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1981, pp. 32-36.

⁵² 1864 'A MUFF CONCERT', *Geelong Advertiser (Vic.: 1859 - 1926)*, 15 August, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article150464492>. An 1863 review of Mr Horsley's 1863 Monday evening concerts which alluded to larger economic influences on depressed attendance. See 1863 'THE ROYAL MARRIAGE', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 20 May, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article6485864>

⁵³ H. Pook, *A worker's paradise?*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1981, p. 23. W. Well, *Constructing Capitalism: An economic history of Eastern Australia: 1788-1901*. Australia: Allan and Unwin, 1989, p. 52.

Edward Boulanger and Thomas Ewart, Hamilton's colleagues, reduced to insolvency and Sarah Flower dying destitute in 1865.⁵⁴

Hamilton's decision to sue her husband for unpaid child maintenance in February 1865 was almost certainly influenced by Thomas Davis's unwillingness to house Alice Florence and Edith Rose, children that were not his own. The fact that Edith Rose was enrolled as a boarder at age four suggests that the presence of the girls in the Hamilton-Davis household was contentious from the start.⁵⁵ Just as Mrs Molesworth's action for increased alimony was linked to her economic dependency,⁵⁶ Hamilton's bid for maintenance was driven by her need for financial assistance. As Australian law historian Henry Finlay has observed, women with young children who lacked family support faced a "grim" situation in colonial Australia.⁵⁷ Given the double standard regarding female sexuality, Hamilton may not have told Davis that a previous lover fathered Edith Rose and Alice Florence, and he may have only learned about through the court hearing. It is unlikely that Davis would have knowingly exposed his family to revelations that were not only deeply humiliating but had the power to detract from his partner's earning capacity.

⁵⁴ In March 1856 Boulanger was certified as an insolvent and permitted to keep no possessions other than his clothing. He was on the list of local insolvents once more in early 1861. See 1856 'INSOLVENT COURT', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842 - 1954), 21 April, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12978189>. 1856 'INSOLVENCY PROCEEDINGS', *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* (NSW: 1843 - 1893), 21 August, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article18648869>. 1856 'INSOLVENT COURT', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842 - 1954), 25 April, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12983776>. 1861 'NEW INSOLVENTS', *Geelong Advertiser* (Vic.: 1859 - 1926), 18 January, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article148695558>. Hamilton's colleague Mr Thomas Ewart, described as the "principle tenor" of the MPS in 1865, also struggled financially. For information relating to his status and insolvency respectively see 1865 'PHILHARMONIC CONCERT', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 6 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5784591>. 1861 'LAW REPORT', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 13 November, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5705873>. 1862 'LAW REPORT', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 25 February, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5710625>. Sara Flower died destitute in 1865. See 1865 'DEATH OF MADAME SARA FLOWER', *Bendigo Advertiser* (Vic.: 1855 - 1918), 5 September, p. 2, Supplement to The Bendigo Advertiser, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article87926110>. 1902 'Sara Elizabeth Flower', *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney, NSW: 1850 - 1932), 1 February, p. 26, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article111073173>.

⁵⁵ The boarding arrangement also provided care for the girls when Hamilton was rehearsing and performing and appears to have eventually become full time.

⁵⁶ Bongiorno, op. cit., p. 53.

⁵⁷ H. Finlay, Lawmaking in the Shadow of the Empire: Divorce in Colonial Australia *Journal of Family History*, vol. 24, no. 74, 1999, p. 98.

Colonial middle-class women rarely sued for child maintenance. It was a legal procedure far more likely to be pursued by working class women, and by deserted wives in particular, so it was, in effect, *déclassé*.⁵⁸ While this form of legal action, alone, would have been unlikely to inflict lasting damage to a woman of Hamilton's established reputation, she must have known that the hearing was likely to be accompanied by risky revelations. As the courtroom was a staple resource of the colonial press, and the press the main transmitter of colonial scandal, the dangers of a court hearing were obvious.⁵⁹

Press reports following the first court hearing suggest that Hamilton's adultery was a revelation to most Victorians – yet there is evidence that Annie Baxter Dawbin, a 'respectable' Melbourne woman, was aware of the Hamilton-Davis relationship as early as March 1864 and was far from perturbed, noting in her diary after Hamilton sang at St Peter's Church: "I... was glad to hear Miss Octavia Hamilton (alias Mrs Moon) voice again in the choir. The previous Sunday she and her lover... (a wine merchant in Melbourne) did not sing...The lost sheep have returned for a time." While it is impossible to gauge when or how far gossip had spread before 1865, it is apparent that Hamilton had struck John Castieau as respectable when she dined with him on several occasions in 1857 in Beechworth. Perhaps Hamilton's talent, in combination with her public image of generosity and civic-mindedness, influenced a level of acceptance from Annie Dawbin that was never afforded to Mrs Molesworth. As McKenzie has observed, gossip was not always "censorious" and it appears that the lustre of Hamilton's celebrity softened Mrs Dawbin's reaction to her adultery.⁶⁰ Similarly, there is evidence suggesting that Lucy Escott's

⁵⁸ For Twomey's observation about the inflections of class and gender in the colonial courtroom see C. Twomey, *Gender, Welfare and the Colonial State: Victoria's 1864 Neglected and Criminal Children's Act*, *Legal History*, no. 73, November 1997, pp. 172-173. McKenzie observes that women were rarely plaintiffs. See McKenzie, *Scandal in the colonies*, p. 70.

⁵⁹ For the primacy of the press in disseminating see K. McKenzie, *Scandal in the colonies*, p. 10.

⁶⁰ For Dawbin's reference to Hamilton's adultery see A. Baxter Dawbin, *The Journal of Annie Baxter Dawbin 1858-1868*, Frost, L. (ed.), University of Qld Press, St Lucia, Qld, 1998, Entry 6 March 1864, p. 389. For her praise of Hamilton's voice see Dawbin, *op. cit.*, Entries 1863 June 21, p. 334; 1864 June, p. 389. For condemnation of Mrs Molesworth see: *ibid.* Entries 1864 July, p. 421, pp. 426-9, p. 431. For Castieau's intimation of Hamilton's

respectable image persisted in the face of gossip about her sexual relationship with American tenor Henry Squires.⁶¹ Within limits, colonial celebrity might generate a level of protective admiration.

From 1858 to early 1865, Hamilton's role as the premier singer of sacred music in Victoria associated her with a persona of chastity and gravitas.⁶² She made charitable donations that she could ill afford and donated her time to philanthropic causes because she understood the political nature of public performance.⁶³ Yet this astute woman entered a courtroom in 1865, exposing herself to obvious risks. What this suggests is Hamilton's reduced agency in a context of increased financial burden.⁶⁴ Her first appearance in court was aimed at securing money for the maintenance of the girls, not relinquishing custody. However the hearing brought her into contact with a hostile husband experiencing financial pressures of his own. Augustus Moon would not comply without attacking his wife's reputation.

“Startling” disclosures

Articles published in the *Melbourne Leader* and the *Age* suggest that salacious pre-trial gossip filled the Melbourne county court to capacity on

respectability see J. Castieau, *Castieau, John Buckley Diary 1855-1861*, Victoria, Entries February 7-8, Feb 10-13, Feb 14, March 3, March 14, March 31, 1857

⁶¹ An 1868 Texas press report on Escott's supposed “jealous” stabbing of Squires in Melbourne suggests the passionate nature of the relationship. See 1868 ‘Lucy Escott’, *Flake's Bulletin* (Galveston, Texas), 8 January, vol. 3, p. 4. In the early 1860s, middle-class Sydney diarist Jessie Francis, an ardent Escott fan, complained that gossip about a “scandal” involving Escott and Squires disrupted her enjoyment of an opera. See Francis, J., *The Journal of a colonial lady*, Sydney, Lansdowne Press, 1985, Entry 18 August, 1863, pp. 13-14. Lucy Escott married Squires ten years before her first husband died. For her first marriage see Grant, Lucy E, Marriage, 24 March 1846, reg. 4032, *Free BMD Birth Index 1837-1915, Birth, England & Wales*. For her first husband's death see Escott, Richard, Death, 19 August 1880, *Springfield Massachusetts Death Records, 1841-1915*. For her marriage to Squires see Grant, Lucy Evans, Marriage, 21 June 1870, reg. 4032, *New York Marriage Index 1866-1937*. There is no available record for Lucy's divorce from Richard.

⁶² Hamilton consistently took top billing as soprano in MPS concerts from 1858 to 1865. For her domination of sacred music performances see 1858 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 15 May, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7294589>. 1858 'Advertising', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 20 May, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7294842>. In 1864 she was singled out as the “most tasteful oratorio soloist in Australia”. See 1864 'NEWS AND NOTES', *The Star* (Ballarat, Vic.: 1855 - 1864), 14 November, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article66349716>.

⁶³ The *Melbourne Age* reports Hamilton's £8 donation to the Ladies Benevolent Society. 1860 'THE NEWS OF THE BAY', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 1 November, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154885467>

⁶⁴ As Nell Musgrave notes, “it is unreasonable to immediately assume that families' bonds are non-existent simply because they part from one another”. See N. Musgrave, *The scars remain: a long history of forgotten Australians and Children's Institutions*, North Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2013, p. 73.

February 24. Just as Annie Dawbin's diary suggests strong public awareness of the Molesworth divorce some weeks before its first hearing, the Victorian press revealed that the Hamilton case had been eagerly anticipated as "likely [to produce] disclosures of a startling and not very creditable nature."⁶⁵ In the context of a failed marriage the implication of illicit sex was clear. The theme of Hamilton's adultery was elaborated through the recount of trial questions and answers in the press. The cross-examination of Grave by Moon's solicitor, Mr O'Donnell, included questions as to whether Hamilton had had yet another child since her separation from Moon, and Grave's failure to provide an emphatic denial, suggested that she had. O'Donnell also questioned Moon about whether all the children living with him at the time of the separation were his own, providing Moon with the opportunity to imply that they were not. Moon argued that Hamilton was not entitled to child maintenance because she had contravened the 1862 deed of settlement through continuing to live with him for two days after it was signed. She had also run up debts in his name, another contravention of the deed. Mr O'Donnell represented himself as too chivalrous to ruin Hamilton through providing details of what he declared was a "common scandal" – implying that he and his client held damaging information in reserve. If this was a ploy to induce Hamilton's team to withdraw their maintenance claim, it failed. However, the judge ruled against Moon who was instructed to pay 15 shillings a week – not the £4 requested – a dubious win for Hamilton.⁶⁶

The case was reported in the Melbourne and regional Victorian press, as well as the Sydney *Empire*.⁶⁷ Despite the damage to Hamilton's

⁶⁵ For Dawbin's entry about the Molesworth hearing see Dawbin, op. cit, Entry October 1863, p. 354. For the reference to local anticipation of Moon v. Grave see 1865 'EXTRAORDINARY ACTION FOR MAINTENANCE', *Leader* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1862 - 1918), 25 February, p. 11, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article197035022>. 1865 'THE NEWS OF THE DAY', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 25 February, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article155026723>. 1865 'SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 1865', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 25 February, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5736070>

⁶⁶ 1865 'EXTRAORDINARY ACTION FOR MAINTENANCE', *The Australian News for Home Readers* (Vic.: 1864 - 1867), 18 March, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article63170037>.

⁶⁷ For Victorian reports see 1865 'MELBOURNE NEWS', *Mount Alexander Mail* (Vic.: 1854 - 1917), 27 February, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article207000546>. 1865 'EXTRAORDINARY ACTION FOR MAINTENANCE', *The Australian News for Home Readers* (Vic.: 1864 - 1867), 18 March, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article63170037>. 1865 'NEWS AND NOTES', *The Ballarat Star* (Vic.: 1865 - 1924), 27 February, p. 2,

reputation, there was scope for at least partial recovery. Lengthy press reports between February and August 16, 1865 depicted Moon in a more favourable light than Hamilton, but there was no blatant editorialising as such, and no explicit directives for audiences to shun her. One of Hamilton's strategies on February 24 was silence: Grave, her trustee spoke for her. This helped her to evade Mrs Molesworth's experience of having her own words deployed in attacks on her character.⁶⁸ Yet the danger of silence in such cases was that it was generally interpreted as confirmation of guilt.⁶⁹ Moon, however, seized an opportunity to self-characterise as a victim when he pleaded for insolvency a few weeks later on the grounds that he had: "impoverished himself by making his said wife too large an allowance for her support".⁷⁰

Given the limited theatrical resources of regional Victoria – and the strength of regional aspirations – it is unsurprising that the first phase of Hamilton's attempted comeback was staged in Ballarat. In the April 12 advertisement for the Good Friday performance of sacred music by the Ballarat Harmonic Society, Hamilton topped the list of "several musicians of eminence from the metropolis" who would be performing Handel's *Creation*.⁷¹ However in the local (and sole) review of the event, she was the only soloist whose performance escaped mention, raising the possibility that

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article112885017>. 1865 'THE COLIBAN WATER SCHEME', *Geelong Advertiser* (Vic.: 1859 - 1924), 27 February, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article148768046>. 1865 'CURIOUS DISCLOSURES', *Gippsland Times* (Vic.: 1861 - 1954), 4 March, p. 3 Edition: Morning, http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article653_64795. 1865 'MELBOURNE AUTUMN', *Bendigo Advertiser* (Vic.: 1855 - 1918), 4 March, p. 1 Supplement: Supplement to The Bendigo Advertiser, http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article_87930471 For Sydney reports see 1865 'VICTORIA', *Empire* (Sydney, NSW: 1850 - 1875), 1 March, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article60566842>

⁶⁸ While Englishwoman Caroline Norton was urged to keep silent by her legal team and relatives in her struggles with her husband in 1830s-1850s, her decision to speak out – through her pen – was more beneficial than not. Norton's case will be discussed in the course of this chapter. See K. Dolan, A woman's pleading: Caroline Norton's pamphlets on laws for women in nineteenth-century England, *Australian Feminist Law Journal*, vol. 10, Mar 1998, p. 56.

⁶⁹ See for instance 1865 '[No heading]', *Leader* (Melbourne, Vic. : 1862 - 1918), 26 August, p. 13, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page21239092>

⁷⁰ 1865 'NEW INSOLVENTS', *Leader* (Melbourne, Vic. : 1862 - 1918), 15 April, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article197037082>

⁷¹ 1865 'NEWS AND NOTES', *The Ballarat Star* (Vic.: 1865 - 1924), 12 April, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article112885997>

this erasure was a form of shunning.⁷² What is more probable is that the reviewer was deflecting attention from the real reason that the Ballarat Mechanics Institute was so “closely packed” on April 12: the opportunity to gawk at a shamed celebrity. In her initial fall from grace, Hamilton exerted unique drawing power in Ballarat, with two hundred would-be spectators turned away and one tardy resident attempting to make a forced entry “knocked down” by a doorkeeper.⁷³ However it was far more politic for the *Ballarat Star* to characterise the audience as appreciative of high calibre music and stoic in the face of cramped conditions.

Some sense of Hamilton’s remaining network is suggested through the June 13 fundraiser for the St Mark’s School building directed by Herr Schott, an event that involved Thomas Davis and Charles Horsley, as well as Frank and John Howson.⁷⁴ Schott was the first event organiser to include a member of the Hamilton-Davis partnership in a metropolitan concert, and his inclusion of Hamilton in his “grand concerts” at Ballarat on July 7 and 8, suggests that he was intent on assisting her theatrical rehabilitation.⁷⁵ In response to this event, the *Ballarat Star* reviewer declared Hamilton’s importance for regional Victoria, describing her as the “best soprano in the colony” and describing her colleagues as “musicians of mark.”⁷⁶ This praise, stamped with Herr Schott’s “mark”, asserted the value of Hamilton’s cultural capital and reassured artistes that musicians who performed with Octavia Hamilton would retain their reputations.

Hamilton’s metropolitan comeback at St George’s Hall Melbourne on August 16 involved the professional support of Miss Geraldine Warden,

⁷² Respectable society disassociated itself from dishonorable and unrespectable people though ignoring them in varied contexts. Seymour’s observation that “shunning could mean economic ruin” would be demonstrated in the case of Hamilton. See B. Seymour, *Lola Montez a life*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1996, p. 55.

⁷³ 1865 'The Harmonic Society's Concert', *The Ballarat Star* (Vic.: 1865 - 1924), 17 April, p. 1, Supplement To The Ballarat Star, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article112886070>

⁷⁴ 1865 'Advertising', *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1857 - 1868), 10 June, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article199061347>

⁷⁵ For Herr Schott’s concerts see 1865 'Advertising', *The Ballarat Star* (Vic.: 1865 - 1924), 6 July, p. 3, 2015, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article112877031>. 1865 'Advertising', *The Ballarat Star* (Vic.: 1865 - 1924), 8 July, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article112877085>. There were no other female performers in Schott’s Ballarat concerts but this did not necessarily signal Hamilton’s unrespectability as she had frequently performed as the sole female amongst male colleagues over the years.

⁷⁶ 1865 'NEWS AND NOTES', *The Ballarat Star* (Vic.: 1865 - 1924), 8 July, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article112877084>

brothers John and Frank Howson, pianist Coleman Jacobs and conductor Charles Horsley.⁷⁷ The appearance of Fanny Reeves, a singer who had recently made her theatrical debut, was advertised but she was absent ostensibly because of “bereavement” – but perhaps she was also concerned about the effects of co-performing with a scandalous woman.⁷⁸ However, the Warden family’s own struggles with reputation may have positioned Geraldine to feel sympathy for Hamilton. Geraldine’s sister Isabella had given birth to an illegitimate child some twelve months previously, at age thirteen, a reality difficult to hide from the Bendigo locals.⁷⁹

Hamilton’s comeback concert was favourably reviewed by the *Age* and the *Leader*, an indication that some sectors of the press were prepared to support her. In the *Age* review, the description of a “crowd” which was “fervent” in its “gratitude” suggests that she had maintained popularity with a considerable number of Melbournians.⁸⁰ The Melbourne *Leader* praised

⁷⁷ Geraldine Warden’s contributions to the stage have only been lightly touched on, perhaps because of her humble beginnings, her success in *burlesque*, and the transnational nature of her career. For cursory references to Warden see K. Ganzi, *W. B. Gill: From the Goldfields to Broadway*, New York and London, Routledge, 2003, p. 33. L. Moore, *Never on a Sunday: a study of Sunday observance and Sunday public musical entertainment in theatres in Melbourne, 1890-1895*, PhD diss., Australian Catholic University, 2009, p. 52. See also G. Skinner, ‘Warden, Geraldine’, *Australharmony*, Sydney University, <http://sydney.edu.au/paradisec/australharmony/register-W.php>. For mention of Warden’s international touring see for instance 1869 ‘FROM THE MORMON CITY’, *Portland Guardian and Normanby General Advertiser* (Vic.: 1842 - 1843; 1854 - 1876), 25 November, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article64694083>. 1870, ‘Opera Comique’, *The Era*, (London, England), Sunday, 4 December, Issue 1680.

⁷⁸ For Reeve’s debut see 1864 ‘MONDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1864’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 19 December, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5743370>. For her advertised presence at Hamilton’s comeback see 1865 ‘Advertising’, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 14 August, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5785293>. For her absence see 1865 ‘NEWS OF THE WEEK’, *Leader* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1862 - 1918), 19 August, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article197036001>.

⁷⁹ The Bendigo locals must have known about the birth of Isabella’s child but family troubles never intruded in press reports on Geraldine. The family connections between Geraldine, her musician father James, and Isabella, who died of alcoholism at age 28 are evidenced collectively in documents relevant to James Warden and Isabella Warden’s deaths and Elsie Burrell’s birth. Isabella’s age was manipulated on Elsie’s birth registration, probably to deflect attention from the fact she was a thirteen-year old mother. See Warden, Elsie Gordon Burrell, Birth, 16 December 1863, Sandhurst, reg. 4968, *Australia, Birth Index, 1788-1922*. Warden, James, Death, 16 August 1870, Sandhurst, reg. 7924, *Australia, Death Index, 1787-1985*. Warden, Isabella, Death, 28 March 1879, Sandhurst, reg. 6169, *Australia, Death Index, 1787-1985*. Sadly, Isabelle’s attempts to embark on a career after the birth of her child appears to have failed: the promotion drew on Geraldine’s celebrity, but the event was not reviewed and there were no repeat performances. See 1868 ‘CURRENT TOPICS’, *Geelong Advertiser* (Vic.: 1859 - 1924), 9 April, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article150466345>.

⁸⁰ All concerts produced by the Orpheus Union were under the patronage of the governor but he did not attend on this occasion. See 1865 ‘THE NEWS OF THE DAY’, *The*

her “excellent voice” and its reference to her “unwonted animation” hints at her defiant assertion of skill in the face of public scrutiny.⁸¹ As in the case of the earlier Ballarat concert, some spectators may have attended out of curiosity or sexual thrill, hence the size of gathering was not necessarily a gauge of revived celebrity or future reception. Deborah Crisp argues that colonial audiences may have been “titillated” by Anna Bishop and Nicolas Bochsa’s appearance a decade earlier, given their reputed adultery, and it is possible that Hamilton’s reception on August 16 was influenced by the same dynamic.⁸²

While Melbourne’s eminent ladies were most certainly absent from Hamilton’s concert, she had succeeded in drawing together a celebrity network that was substantially functional. However her celebrity was not robust enough to survive another courtroom appearance, particularly one involving the presence of her own distraught children.

“A woman... must be a woman”

Newspaper reports of the second court hearing highlighted the themes of unwanted children, a duped husband and a cold mother. Damning judgements of Hamilton were implied through courtroom dialogue that characterised her as emotionally disconnected from her distraught daughters. The press recounted that on August 16 Mrs Thompson’s messenger attempted to deliver Alice Florence and Edith Rose to their father because of unpaid school fees (a circumstance influenced by the fact that Moon, like other public servants in Victoria, had been unpaid in July and August due to political crisis).⁸³ When Moon refused to accept the children, the messenger searched for Hamilton before leaving the girls on the steps of St George’s Hall, presumably between 8.00 and 10.00 pm

Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 17 August, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article155042189>

⁸¹ 1865 'NEWS OF THE WEEK', *Leader* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1862 - 1918), 19 August, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article197036001>.

⁸² D. Crisp, 'Acted and sung in Italian': Catherine Hayes and Anna Bishop in Sydney, 1855-1856, *Australasian Music Research*, no. 4, 1999, pp. 42-43.

⁸³ 1865 'SINGULAR CASE OF CHILD DESERTION', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 19 Aug., p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5785638>. 1865 'THE POLITICAL CRISIS', *Leader* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1862 - 1918), 26 August, p. 12, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article197035960>. MELBOURNE (FROM THE DAILY TIMES CORRESPONDENT), *Otago Witness*, Issue 719, 9 September 1865

during the scheduled performance. In press reports, much would be made of Jessie Hunt's description of the girls' dirty, distressed state, as well as the lightness of their dress in the winter chill. George Hunt appears to have located Moon's residence after the concert but was duped into heading to a false address, before sheltering the children for the night. The next day when he located Moon, and declared his intention of delivering the girls to the authorities, Moon did not protest.⁸⁴

In the reports of the second court hearing Moon was portrayed as a powerless figure, unable to control or discipline his wife. He had permitted Hamilton "to travel about" and he had condoned her adultery through failing to evict her from his home. Here there were clear parallels to earlier press representations of Robert Molesworth as a pitiful cuckold. Moon was a victim of Hamilton's deceit; there was ambiguous merit in his folly: like Molesworth, he had been "too kind".⁸⁵

However unlike the case of Judge Molesworth, colonial identity had scant investment in lowly clerks. According to historians of masculinity, Christopher Forth and John Tosh, by the mid-nineteenth century sedentary occupations were at odds with the growing perception of manly men as active.⁸⁶ Clerks fitted uneasily into the middle-class because of their perceived servility, while the working class viewed their undeveloped physiques with suspicion.⁸⁷ In the second court hearing, Moon framed his withdrawal of maintenance in terms of a punitive response to Hamilton's adultery: she had given birth to yet another illegitimate child. While this response drew on masculine codes, its effectiveness was cancelled by delay. After all, in the eyes of world, he had carried the burden of other men's children since 1857. Given Moon's publicised financial struggles, his withdrawal of support appeared more like inability to pay, reinforcing his

⁸⁴ 1865 'SINGULAR CASE OF CHILD DESERTION', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 19 August, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5785638>

⁸⁵ 1865 'SINGULAR CASE OF CHILD DESERTION', *The Australasian* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1864 - 1946), 19 August, p. 12, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article138041520>.

⁸⁶ C. Forth, *Masculinity in the modern west: Gender, civilisation and the body*, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp. 84-87. J. Tosh, What Should Historians Do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain, *History Workshop*, no. 38, 1994, pp. 179-202.

⁸⁷ J. Tosh, What Should Historians Do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain, *History Workshop*, no. 38, 1994, p. 186.

emasculated status. John Tosh has observed that a man's capacity to provide for his household was a crucial component of masculine identity in the era, yet in the press's depiction of Moon, there was the suggestion that the Scrivenors had absorbed him into *their* household, an image of quasi-dependence.⁸⁸ The decrease of his £4 maintenance to 15s was a dubious win for Moon, as his borderline poverty was announced to the world through the court's concession.⁸⁹ While Moon's masculinity was generally demeaned in the press, some editorials invited male readers to identify with him, at least in part, arguing that it was "unreasonable" to expect a man to support the children of his rival.⁹⁰

Mr Wrixon, Moon's representative in the August hearing, argued that it was actually Hamilton who was guilty of child desertion, and the press repeatedly characterised her as a cold mother, who had rejected the advances of her sobbing children in the courtroom.⁹¹ Her portrayal as a child deserter gains meaning from a consideration of the colonial context, in which women, often working class – were generally the victims – not perpetrators – of desertion. It was one of the many ways in which Hamilton was both 'unsexed' and 'declassed'.

From the outset, the discovery of gold on the colonial east coast in the 1850s was viewed as a mixed blessing, with some social commentators

⁸⁸ For discussion of the male provider: *ibid.*, p. 185. Press accounts of the August court hearing recounted Moon's testimony: 'He had been living with his wife's family who had been very kind to him, since the separation.' See 1865 'MISS OCTAVIA HAMILTON AND HER CHILDREN', *The Ballarat Star* (Vic.: 1865 - 1924), 21 August, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article112878187>

⁸⁹ In the first hearing, Moon was ordered to pay 15s to Hamilton; in the second hearing, he was ordered to pay 15s to the state. See previously cited articles.

⁹⁰ The concept of condonement was linked to the fact that he had continued to support her financially after her adultery. This action weakened his legal position. 1865 'HOW INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS ARE STOCKED', *Mount Alexander Mail* (Vic.: 1854 - 1917), 23 August, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article197090437>.

⁹¹ 1865 'SINGULAR CASE OF CHILD DESERTION', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 19 August, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5785638>. There were many similar recounts, for instance: "She would have nothing to do with them, though the poor little creatures cried out to her in the court, and the police had to take care of them": 1865 'EPITOME OF NEWS', *The Armidale Express and New England General Advertiser* (NSW: 1856 - 1861; 1863 - 1889; 1891 - 1954), 16 September, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article188135734>. Both Hamilton and Moon were explicitly identified as deserting parents in *The Age* on August 22. See 1865 'No title', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 22 August, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article155039893>

disturbed by the problem of wife desertion.⁹² There were numerous instances of men heading off to the goldfields and abandoning their wives and children. Contemporaries viewed wife desertion as a major issue not merely because of associated poverty but because abandoned women might resort to prostitution.⁹³ Some Victorians argued that colonial women should be granted more liberal divorce laws than those available in England because deserted wives who set up small businesses were periodically fleeced by their “rapacious” husbands.⁹⁴ Here the colonial groundswell of sympathy was directed at wives who were seen to be victims, not women who impoverished their husbands and neglected their children.

According to Finlay, a mother’s loss of her children “was the most powerful hold that an unscrupulous husband had over his wife” in the nineteenth-century British world.⁹⁵ Yet Hamilton’s apparent disregard for her children challenged this ideal of middle-class, feminine normalcy, unsettling colonial Victoria. Joy Damousi has commented on the “central[ity]” of mothering to respectable middle-class society. In the east coast colonies, the negligent mother generated intense cultural anxiety because of her historical proximity to the colony’s convict foundations.⁹⁶

But was Hamilton a total aberration of gender and class? Instances of middle-class women relinquishing custody of their children are difficult to locate, yet still the same time middle class mothers were under increasing scrutiny. As Jill Matus observes, increasing numbers of middle-class women in the 1850s and 1860s British world were being condemned as “delinquent” for offloading the breastfeeding of their babies onto working-class wet-nurses.⁹⁷ An 1865 opinion piece in the *Melbourne Age* commented that the “ladies” of Melbourne “escaped much trouble and

⁹² 1852 'THE GOLD DISCOVERIES IN AUSTRALIA', *South Australian Register* (Adelaide, SA: 1839 - 1900), 27 December, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article38454522>. 1864 'DESTITUTION IN MELBOURNE', *South Australian Register* (Adelaide, SA: 1839 - 1900), 31 October, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article39119039>.

⁹³ For relevant discussion see C. Twomey, *Deserted and Destitute: Motherhood, Wife Desertion and Colonial Welfare*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2002, p. xii-xiii, xvi.

⁹⁴ Finlay, *Journal of Family History*, p. 93.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 92.

⁹⁶ J. Damousi, *Depraved and disorderly: female convicts, sexuality and gender in colonial Australia*, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 157.

⁹⁷ J. Matus, *Unstable bodies: Victorian representations of sexuality and maternity*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1995, pp. 158-159.

annoyance” by employing wet-nurses, with the implication that they were shirking their duty.⁹⁸ For some colonial Victorians, these larger concerns about middle-class mothers would have made Hamilton’s behaviour all the more troubling.

However, in the context of other well-known histories, Hamilton’s renunciation of her children was culturally anomalous. The history of Caroline Norton, an upper-class woman who battled the English child custody laws when her estranged husband, George Norton, separated her from her children in 1836, was well known in the British world. Despite her alleged affair with Lord Melbourne, Norton’s high profile campaign for the rights of mothers gained considerable press sympathy in England and Australia because it reflected the cultural assumption that it was natural for women to crave contact with their children.⁹⁹ When measured against this model of passionate mother-love Hamilton appeared ‘unnatural’.¹⁰⁰

The ironic subtitle of the widely copied article “Maternal love extraordinary” from August 1865 captures a core element of her perceived transgression: maternal deficiency.¹⁰¹ As the *Melbourne Age* put it: “A woman... must be a woman... and she who coolly, discards her own children is not entitled to forbearance.”¹⁰² Yet arguably Hamilton did *not* renounce her maternal obligations in August 1865. What she did do was renounce a response that would have jeopardised her relationship with Davis and rendered her destitute. Her employment opportunities were

⁹⁸ For the opinion piece see 1864 'No title', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 30 November, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article155015226>. A letter to the editor of the *South Bourke Standard* argued that wet-nurses who had given birth to illegitimate children deliberately endangered the lives of their own babies in order to destroy the “evidence of their shame”; hence the women who hired them were complicit in infanticide. The demands on a wet-nurse’s milk sometimes meant that her own children had insufficient nourishment. See 1863 "'DIED FROM THE WANT OF PROPER NOURISHMENT'", *South Bourke Standard (Vic.: 1861 - 1873)*, 27 March, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article66904515>

⁹⁹ V. Blain, Rosina Bulwer Lytton and the Rage of the Unheard, *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, vol. 53, no. 3, Summer 1990, [pp. 220-236] p. 220. K. Chase and M. Levenson, *The spectacle of intimacy: A public life for the Victorian family*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2000, pp. 40-45. 1855 'MRS. NORTON'S CASE', *The Tasmanian Daily News (Hobart Town, Tas. 1855 - 1858)*, 23 November, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article203388885>.

¹⁰⁰ 1865 'No title', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 22 August, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article155039893>

¹⁰¹ 1865 'MISS OCTAVIA HAMILTON AND HER CHILDREN', *The Ballarat Star (Vic.: 1865 - 1924)*, 21 August, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article112878187>

¹⁰² 1865 'No title', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 22 August, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article155039893>

already reduced at the beginning of 1865 – and after the revelations concerning her adultery, she was dropped by the Melbourne Philharmonic Society. While Octavia Hamilton failed to conform to a template of passionate mother-love on August 18, she did demonstrate pragmatic mothering. As a disgraced public figure, alienated from her extended family, she would have struggled to keep herself without a male protector, let alone two additional children. Hamilton evaded the very likely prospect of destitution by maintaining her relationship with Thomas Davis and relying on the state to care for her daughters. Yet women who relied on the state for their childcare were perceived as following in the convict tradition.

In August 1865, the *Melbourne Age*'s description of the state industrial school as a “semi-convict” institution linked Hamilton's daughters, with their new state ward identities, to the children of convicts committed to earlier institutions such as New South Wales Female Orphan School (established 1801) and the Female School of Industry (established 1821).¹⁰³ In a similar vein the *Melbourne Leader*'s description of the new location for Hamilton's children as the “abode of outcasts” evoked convictism and destitution.¹⁰⁴ Such references to the convict origins of Australia's east coast reinforced Hamilton's demise by stripping her of cultural capital and placing her on a genealogy of shame winding back to the late eighteenth century. Institutions such as Victoria's state industrial school reflected in part the evangelical notion that it was parental “deviance” from moral norms that necessitated state guardianship.¹⁰⁵ In general the Victorian police and judiciary believed that the community had a vested interest in the provision of asylums for poor children because poverty fuelled a “potentially criminal” class.¹⁰⁶ According to Damousi, the image of the female convict was central in the defining of colonial and

¹⁰³ B. Bubacz, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801-1850, PhD diss.*, University of Sydney, 2007, pp. 16-18, p. 69.

¹⁰⁴ 1865 '[No heading]', *Leader* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1862 - 1918), 26 August, p. 13, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page21239092>

¹⁰⁵ R. Van Krieken, *Children and the state: social control and the formation of Australian child welfare*, North Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1992, R. Van Krieken, 1992, pp. 49-57.

¹⁰⁶ Twomey, *Deserted and Destitute*, p. 84. The idea of criminal parents bred criminal children was widely supported at the time of the first fleet. See D. Oxley, *Convict maids: the forced migration of women to Australia*, Cambridge and Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1996. p. 40.

national identity: women whose acts of self-presentation evoked the sexually unruly were demoted or excluded.¹⁰⁷ What Hamilton's history reveals is the threatening nature of the convict visage at a time when convict transportation was still being hotly contested.

Yet the colonies resented the expense of state care.¹⁰⁸ In the article "A scandalous disclosure" of August 1865 the *Melbourne Leader* argued that Octavia Hamilton's renunciation of her children vindicated earlier concerns that the state industrial schools would become "convenient receptacles" for the offspring of "vicious" and "idle" parents.¹⁰⁹ In the course of an attack on Hamilton, the *Mount Alexander Mail* called for the punishment of deserting parents whose children were cared for by the state.¹¹⁰ While Moon, rather than Hamilton, had been summoned to court as a deserting parent, on the level of the influential press narrative, Hamilton was the most culpable parent. The demands of the *Mount Alexander Mail* for the criminalisation of her lovers – and *her* criminal conviction if she failed to name them – positioned her squarely in the convict continuum.¹¹¹ A mid-August article in *The Australasian* was quite explicit in linking the wellbeing of colonial reputation to the boycott of Hamilton's public performances, warning that if she continued her career, the "low" reputation of the colonies would become "lower still".¹¹² Here the reference to poor reputation alluded to the convict beginnings of colonial settlement while the call for the destruction of Hamilton's career was conceptually linked to the moral transformation of colonial identity.

Kay Daniels has observed that the 'respectable' woman of the colonial period was defined against others, her supposed asexuality a foil to

¹⁰⁷ Damousi, op. cit., p. 54.

¹⁰⁸ As Australian historian Nell Musgrave notes, the industrial schools were 'overcrowded from the time they opened their doors.' N. Musgrave, *The scars remain: a long history of forgotten Australians and Children's Institutions*, North Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2013, p. 25.

¹⁰⁹ 1865 'A SCANDALOUS DISCLOSURE', *Leader (Melbourne, Vic.: 1862 - 1918)*, 26 August, p. 12, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article197035964>

¹¹⁰ 1865 'HOW INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS ARE STOCKED', *Mount Alexander Mail (Vic.: 1854 - 1917)*, 23 August, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article197090437>

¹¹¹ In the absence of male providers, if there was evidence of financial capacity, some women were expected to pay maintenance for their children in the state industrial school. See 1865 'ITEMS OF NEWS', *Mount Alexander Mail (Vic.: 1854 - 1917)*, 19 August, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article197090911>

¹¹² 1865 'The Australasian', *The Australasian (Melbourne, Vic.: 1864 - 1946)*, 26 August, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article138041671>

the “sexual appetite” of the “rough” labouring and convict class. Sexual desire was perceived as alien to middle-class respectability.¹¹³ In 1865, the link between Hamilton and deviant desire was developed in Melbourne’s *Australasian* press through a comparison between the singer and the quasi-historical character of Messalina, the wife of the Roman Emperor Claudius. Messalina, a reputed beauty with uncontainable lust, not only took part in a bigamous remarriage, but engaged in covert prostitution, according to the popular version of her history. When her crimes were discovered, her punishment was death. This allusion to Messalina was far from obscure to regular consumers of the press.¹¹⁴ In the context of the Hamilton scandal, the image of the prostitute-empress was an apt metaphor for the sexual transgressor who had duped colonial Victoria with her impressive facade for many years.

Carolyn Taylors’s observation that “Dirt and nomadism were pivotal symbols in the construction of...‘otherness’” in the era is reflected in press representations of Hamilton and her daughters.¹¹⁵ While the concept of nomadism in the nineteenth century British world evoked the gypsy traveller who was always “morally... unacceptable” and “separate from settled society”, it was doubly suspect in a colonial context involving the systematic denigration of nomadic indigenous people.¹¹⁶ In the period of Hamilton’s cultural utility, her absence from the home was readily accommodated into the practices of a respectable settler colonial society. She performed in architectural structures associated with fixed settlement and her facility with sentimental balladry evoked home and hearth. But viewed through the lens of stigma, she became a white savage, with her

¹¹³ K. Daniels, *Convict Women*, St Leonards N.S.W, Allen & Unwin, 1998, pp. 161-163.

¹¹⁴ For the Australian article see 1865 'The Australasian', *The Australasian* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1864 - 1946), 26 August, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article138041671>. For discussion of the significance of Messalina see K. Hosack, Can one believe the ancient sources that describe Messalina?, *Constructing the past*, vol. 12, issue 1, article 7, pp. 1-4. For other articles using allusion to Messalina see 1864 'THE SOCIAL EVIL IN MELBOURNE', *Ovens and Murray Advertiser* (Beechworth, Vic.: 1855 - 1918), 8 December, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article112910245>. 1864 'Don't make any Mistake', *Melbourne Punch* (Vic.: 1855 - 1900), 8 December, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article176533504>

¹¹⁵ C. Taylor, 'Humanitarian Narrative: Bodies and Detail in Late-Victorian Social Work', *British Journal of Social Work*, vol. 38, p. 678.

¹¹⁶ D. Mayall, *Gypsy travellers in nineteenth-century society*, Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 1, p. 3, p. 88.

“peripatetic” profession aligning her with the woman of the streets.¹¹⁷ The press rebuked Moon for failing to contain her wandering ways. He allowed her to “rove around the country” and reaped “the consequences”, according to the *Melbourne Leader*.¹¹⁸

In colonial society, women who earned their living on the streets – “common prostitutes” as opposed to brothel workers – could be imprisoned under vagrancy laws.¹¹⁹ The distinction between the woman of the streets and the wandering woman was readily blurred, as was the distinction between the prostitute and the adulterer. For some colonial Victorians, the exposure of Mrs Molesworth’s extramarital sexual activities aligned her identity with that of the whore. According to Annie Baxter Dawbin, who strove to preserve her own image of propriety while in Melbourne, Mrs Molesworth’s extramarital activities rendered her “much more of a prostitute than many who gain their bread by the sale of their poor bodies and souls”.¹²⁰ In 1865 the revelations regarding Hamilton’s adultery aligned her strongly with Mrs Molesworth, the virtual prostitute of 1864.

In the recurring depictions of Hamilton’s abandoned children, the steps of St George’s Hall became a symbolically charged site. These stairs were an extension of the street and exposed to the winter cold. The girls’ nomadic mother scattered them “like the dead leaves in Vallambrosa” according to the *Australasian*.¹²¹ This image of decayed leaf litter, appropriated from Milton’s poem *Paradise Lost*, reflected the contemporary notion that illegitimacy corrupted a child’s moral status.¹²²

Repeated references to the filthy and infested appearance of Alice Florence and Edith Millicent generated pathos but also stigmatised the girls

¹¹⁷ For the reference to her “peripatetic” lifestyle see 1865 ‘HOW INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS ARE STOCKED’, *Mount Alexander Mail* (Vic.: 1854 - 1917), 23 August, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article197090437>. For discussion of the street see Damousi, op. cit., p. 158.

¹¹⁸ 1865 ‘[No heading]’, *Leader* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1862 - 1918), 26 August, p. 13, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page21239092>

¹¹⁹ Prostitution had not been a crime, as such, from the outset of convict society. See Oxley, op. cit., p. 41

¹²⁰ Bongiorno, op. cit., p. 48.

¹²¹ 1865 ‘The Australasian’, *The Australasian* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1864 - 1946), 26 August, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article138041671>.

¹²² J. Evans, ‘The leaves of Vallombrosa: Milton’s great-rooted simile’, *English Studies*, vol. 71, no. 5, 1991, p. 401.

as destitute and potentially criminal.¹²³ According to British historian Carolyn Taylor, physical appearance was crucial to the way that commentators in the British world made sense of their social environment.¹²⁴ Hamilton's daughters were orphaned in the colonial sense of the word – they lacked adult protection – and they were also “metaphorically stained and diseased” by parental transgressions.¹²⁵ Physical grime evoked moral filth, as the destitute – those living in miserably filthy conditions – were likely prostitutes.¹²⁶ Damousi argues that this imagery of pollution was integral to the depiction of the female convict's sexuality.¹²⁷

While the Victorian press used a number of literary tools to villainise Octavia Hamilton – allusion to immoral historical characters, ironic attacks on her institutional patrons, and rationalist objections to her financial impositions – one of their most effective techniques was subverted melodramatic narration. Melodrama was a conservative medium supporting the social and religious values of the Victorian era “in the strictest possible manner” according to literary studies scholars Michael Hays and Anastasia Nikolopoulou.¹²⁸ Michael Booth observes that the heroine's “suffer[ing]” was the “cardinal rule” of melodrama, a genre invariably casting the female as the victim of a male perpetrator.¹²⁹ If the heroine had children, they were also victims, with their “feeble cries” distressing their “destitute mother”.¹³⁰ In contrast, Hamilton was characterised as an imperious ice queen who reduced her children to the status of outcasts: “a woman... in gorgeous

¹²³ 1865 'SINGULAR CASE OF CHILD DESERTION', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic. : 1848 - 1957), 19 Aug. p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5785638>. 1865 '[No heading]', *Leader* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1862 - 1918), 26 August, p. 13, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page21239092>.

¹²⁴ Carolyn Taylor, 'Humanitarian Narrative: Bodies and Detail in Late-Victorian Social Work', *British Journal of Social Work*, vol. 38, p. 686.

¹²⁵ Damousi, op.cit., pp. 143-146.

¹²⁶ An 1861 meeting of the Sydney Ragged and Industrial School reported that a third of Sydney's prostitutes were under seventeen and the product of filthy, impoverished homes. 1861 'SUSSEX-STREET RAGGED AND INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL', *Empire* (Sydney, NSW: 1850 - 1875), 14 May, p. 8. , <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article60491775>.

¹²⁷ Damousi, op. cit., p. 43.

¹²⁸ Michael Hays and Anastasia Nikolopoulou, *Melodrama: the cultural emergence of a genre*, New York, St Martin's Press, 1996, p. 237.

¹²⁹ Michael Booth, *English Melodrama*, London, Herbert Jenkins, 1965, p. 24.

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 3.

array, is singing sacred music inside a building, while her forsaken illegitimate children are howling in rags on the flags outside”.¹³¹

In nineteenth-century melodrama the villain often tricks the hero out of his property.¹³² However, in the press reports of 1865 it was Hamilton who exploited the feminised Mr Moon by draining off two thirds of his salary, stripping him of furniture, and running up debts in his name – including maintenance payments for an interloper’s children.¹³³ The *Mount Alexander Mail* commiserated: “the unfortunate man can fix no limits to the degradation and expense which his wife’s wickedness may entail upon him.”¹³⁴ Cast in the masculine role of the villain, Hamilton was a woman unsexed.

The longevity of Hamilton’s celebrity heightened the cultural anxiety that followed her fall. How stable were notions of civil colonial society when an unmotherly adulterer could masquerade as a respectable woman? The popular singer who had once engaged in the ‘social mothering’ of orphans had failed to protect her own daughters.¹³⁵ After Hamilton’s second court appearance, fiery editorials debated the virtue of her one-time supporters. The *Australasian* asserted that the finely “lacquered” folk of east Collins Street had been undisturbed by her sexual improprieties because they, themselves, were as immoral as Little Bourke-street’s brothels.¹³⁶ The *Melbourne Age* attacked St Peter’s Anglican Church

¹³¹ 1865 'The Australasian', *The Australasian* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1864 - 1946), 16 September, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article138042096>

¹³² Booth, op. cit., p. 17.

¹³³ Aside from maintenance payments, there were press references to Moon paying Hamilton’s butcher and grocer, and to him giving all of his furniture. See 1865 'EXTRAORDINARY ACTION FOR MAINTENANCE', *Leader* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1862 - 1918), 25 February, p. 11, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article197035022>. 1865 'MISS OCTAVIA HAMILTON AND HER CHILDREN', *The Ballarat Star* (Vic.: 1865 - 1924), 21 August, p. 4, 2015, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article112878187>

¹³⁴ 1865 'HOW INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS ARE STOCKED', *Mount Alexander Mail* (Vic.: 1854 - 1917), 23 August, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article197090437>

¹³⁵ See Jill Matus, colonial studies scholar, for a contemporary definition of ‘orphan’: Matus, op. cit., p. 159. As Lull and Hinerman have observed, stars developed a particular “image system” and the image of social mothering which had been part of Hamilton’s ‘system’ was destroyed by her apparent mistreatment of her children. See J. Lull and S. Hinerman, *The search for scandal* pp. 1-33, in J. Lull and S. Hinerman, *Media Scandals: Morality and Desire in the Popular Culture Marketplace*, Oxford, Polity, 1997, p. 22.

¹³⁶ 1865 'The Australasian', *The Australasian* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1864 - 1946), 26 August, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article138041671> 1865 'PROFLIGACY IN UPPER COLLINS STREET', *Melbourne Punch* (Vic.: 1855 - 1900), 31 August, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article176535138>. There were numerous Bourke Street hotels heavily frequented

for paying singers such as Hamilton to perform liturgy. The *Age* developed the satirical theme of payment for entry into heaven through allusion to the practices of Roman Catholics and pagan Chinese. In addition, it insisted that the church must have known about Hamilton's domestic situation.¹³⁷ This depiction of larger colonial society's complicity in Hamilton's conduct provoked an outraged response. *Melbourne Punch* attacked *The Australasian* for questioning the integrity of the citizens of Upper Collins-street. *Punch* rejected the assumption that Hamilton's audience were familiar with her private life, insisting on their status as respectable people. All classes of society attended the theatre, according to *Punch*, not just the Collins Street east-enders.¹³⁸

Here the connections drawn – and disputed – between Hamilton's personal identity and larger colonial identity echoed the anxieties of 1864 in relation to the Molesworth court hearings. In the heat of the earlier scandal, the *Argus* had expressed the "hope" such a tale would never recur in Victorian "history".¹³⁹ However the Hamilton scandal revealed that the improprieties of the Judge's "ill marriage" were not unique. Once again, the shaming of an eminent figure jolted colonial security about the depth of its social transformation.

Taken together, the Hamilton and Molesworth scandals suggested the complex nature of scandal management in the colonies. In 1864 Mrs Molesworth's jocular responses to legal questioning were a source of entertainment but did nothing to enhance her reputation.¹⁴⁰ Conversely, Hamilton's silence in the wake of the second court hearing was read as proof of her guilt.¹⁴¹ Mrs Molesworth was widely shunned after the press

by prostitutes. See M. Cannon, *Melbourne after the gold rush*, Main Ridge, Vic., Loch Haven Gooks, 1993, pp. 337.

¹³⁷ Although St Peter's Anglican Church is not named as such, there is no other church to which the article could have been referring. See 1865 'No title', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 22 August, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article155039893>

¹³⁸ 1865 'PROFLIGACY IN UPPER COLLINS STREET', *Melbourne Punch* (Vic.: 1855 - 1900), 31 August, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article176535138>

¹³⁹ 1864 'THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1864', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 24 November, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5742103>

¹⁴⁰ Bongiorno, op. cit., p. 47.

¹⁴¹ I am defining the second phase of the scandal as beginning with Hamilton's August 1865 court appearance and ending in October 1867, at the point when Hamilton faded from view as a performer. In the Epilogue, I shall also make reference to brief flare up of the

coverage of her adultery, whereas Hamilton's adultery was accommodated – however briefly – by a substantial number of influential Melbournians. It was Hamilton's construction as a bad mother that imposed a seemingly insurmountable obstacle to at least a partial revival of her career. In the following section, a consideration of the strategies used by a number of prominent women to scandal management suggests the need to perform behaviours associated with gendered norms, in particular maternal devotion.¹⁴²

Scandal management in the British world

The effects of scandal were not uniform or stable. While gender, wealth and social connections might influence a scandal's duration and intensity, scandal management involved commonly used strategies. In most instances, it was important for the person at the centre of the scandal to engage in a public denial of wrongdoing, even if this was done through a third party, and they might also level counter-allegations against scandalmongers.¹⁴³ However performance of the domestic ideal of parental love was of far greater significance to women than men in the management of scandal.

The successful strategies adopted by English reformist Caroline Norton, and English prima donna Anna Bishop in response to allegations of impropriety earlier in the nineteenth century serve as counterpoints to the Hamilton scandal. These female histories suggest the value of performing conventional femininity in discrediting the testimony of hostile husbands as well as the importance of disseminating a convincing counter narrative. In 1836 George Norton appealed for a divorce from his wife, Caroline Norton,

scandal when her son Emile Augustus Moon was committed to the state industrial school system.

¹⁴² For discussion of Norton's manipulation of gendered norms see K. Caras, "Public complaint and private sorrow": *The feminism of Caroline Norton*, PhD diss., Indiana University, 1984, p. 17. Nicole Fluhr, The letter and the law, or how Caroline Norton (Re)wrote female subjectivity, *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, Volume 28, Number 1, Spring 2009, p. 37.

¹⁴³ For relevant discussion see McKenzie, *Scandal in the colonies*, p. 64. J. Thompson, Scandal and Social Theory, in J. Lull and S. Hinerman, *Media Scandals: Morality and Desire in the Popular Culture Marketplace*, Oxford, Polity, 1997, p. 46. Also for the utility of traditionally gendered behaviours, see K. Chase and M. Levenson, *The spectacle of intimacy: A public life for the Victorian family*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2000, 44-45.

on the grounds of her alleged affair with the politician Lord Melbourne.¹⁴⁴ Mrs Norton was refused a voice in the courtroom, lost custody of her children and was tainted by residual scandal despite Lord Melbourne's exoneration.¹⁴⁵ Norton's exploitation of his wife's inheritance was well known to the public – the saga of Norton v. Norton played out for years. Yet, despite social and financial losses, Caroline Norton garnered public support through skilful attacks on her husband's reputation, as suggested by the colonial press response to her 1855 pamphlet, *A letter to the Queen*.¹⁴⁶ Both Mary Poovey and Keiran Dolin have commented on Caroline Norton's use of melodramatic depictions to represent herself as the victim of Norton's cruelty.¹⁴⁷ According to Poovey, Mrs Norton characterised George as a "gnomelike villain" while self-presenting as a "lady-in-distress" and her own valiant "defender".¹⁴⁸ One of Caroline Norton's major lines of attack against her husband was to depict him as depriving her children of a mother's care: "Mr Norton allowed his child to lie ill a week before he sent to tell me he was dying; and, when I arrived, I found the poor little creature already in his coffin."¹⁴⁹

The *Melbourne Age* was one of the many newspapers to embrace Norton's cause after the publication of her *Letter to the Queen*: "She states her case in the manner of one who has nothing to fear... She writes strongly because she feels deeply."¹⁵⁰ Despite her reformist agenda, Mrs Norton self characterised as acceptant of the gendered hierarchy, but this facet of her self-representation was a strategic ploy according to feminist scholars

¹⁴⁴ Caras, op. cit., p. 14. The Edinburgh Review, *Pamphlets by Caroline Norton: Separation of Mother and Child-the Law*, April 1910, vol. 211, no. 432, pp. 331.

¹⁴⁵ Caras, op. cit., p. 14. K. Dolin, Woman's Pleading: Caroline Norton's Pamphlets on Laws for Women in Nineteenth-Century England, *Australian Feminist Law Journal*, 1998, vol. 10, p. 54-55.

¹⁴⁶ 1855 'MRS. NORTON'S APPEAL FOR DIVORCE', *Launceston Examiner (Tas.: 1842 - 1899)*, 6 November, p. 3. (AFTERNOON), <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article36294963>

¹⁴⁷ M. Poovey, 'Covered but Not Bound: Caroline Norton and the 1857 Matrimonial Causes', *Feminist Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3, Autumn, 1988, p. 468-470. Dolin, op. cit., p. 56.

¹⁴⁸ One means by which Caroline Norton suggested her husband's brutality was to expose letters he had written in which he playfully compared himself to a well-known murderer. M. Poovey, *Feminist Studies*, pp. 471-472

¹⁴⁹ C. Norton, *A Letter to the Queen on Lord Chancellor Cranford's Marriage and Divorce Bill*, London, Longman, Brown, Green and Longman, 1855, p. 69.

¹⁵⁰ 1855 'METROPOLITAN GOSSIP', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 15 October, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154892133>.

Kathryn Caras and Nicole Fleur.¹⁵¹ Certainly the warm response of the *Age* to Norton's supposed belief in the "inferiority" of women suggests that her persona of humility exerted appeal.¹⁵² The parallels between Mrs Norton and Hamilton are accompanied by significant differences. Hamilton was a proven adulterer, whereas Mrs Norton was not. Caroline Norton had a celebrated family lineage but Hamilton did not.¹⁵³ Nevertheless, the contrast between the public's reception of two distinctly different expressions of maternal care – passionate and pragmatic – highlights the penalty for conspicuously aberrant mothering in the British world. Norton's literary gifts enabled her to express her grievances as a wounded mother in an extended and eloquent way.¹⁵⁴

The history of Englishwoman Anna Bishop, born in 1810 and christened Ann Riviere, has closer parallels with Hamilton's than Norton's, as both women were celebrated singers whose adultery fuelled scandal. However Bishop's status as a touring prima donna elevated her to a higher rank of celebrity than Hamilton's, providing her celebrity with greater resilience.¹⁵⁵ Bishop, mother of three children, toured with her lover Nicholas Bochsa from 1839, despite the protests of her husband, Henry Bishop.¹⁵⁶ After her relationship with Bochsa was reported in the *London Times*, she acted in tandem with her brother Robert Riviere to defend her reputation. Riviere provided the press with Bishop's letter to her husband, a

¹⁵¹ Caras, op. cit., p. 17. Fluhr, op. cit., p. 37.

¹⁵² 1855 'MRS. NORTON'S " LETTER TO THE QUEEN"', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 1 November, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article154860548>

¹⁵³ The celebrated playwright Richard Sheridan was Caroline Norton's grandfather. See Dolin, op. cit., p. 54.

¹⁵⁴ For the importance of performances of moral self-righteousness in countering scandal, see Thompson, *Media Scandals*, p.47.

¹⁵⁵ Arguably the fact that the renowned harpist Nicholas Bochsa, came with his own store of cultural capital, mitigated against the damage of the scandal, as did his gender. There was 'public lament' in response to his 1856 death. See L. Agati, A far-famed cantatrice tours Tasmania: Anna Bishop in Concert 1857, *Papers and Proceedings: Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 56, no. 3, December 2009, p. 195.

¹⁵⁶ Luke Agati is conservative in dating her affair with Bochsa from 1840. See L. Agati, A far-famed cantatrice tours Tasmania: Anna Bishop in Concert 1857, *Papers and Proceedings: Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 56, no. 3, December 2009, pp. 192-193. Revelations that Bochsa had committed forgeries in France tarnished his image with notoriety, even before his elopement with Anna in 1839. See R. Davis, *Anna Bishop: the adventures of an intrepid prima donna*, Sydney: Currency Press, 1997, p. 2. See E. Lea-Scarlett, Bochsa, 'Robert Nicholas Charles (1789–1856)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 1969, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bochsa-robert-nicholas-charles-3019>

letter crafted for public consumption. In this document Bishop represented her career as essential for her children's survival and characterised her husband as a feckless provider who had compelled her to step into the masculine breach. Bishop's persona of providential mother allowed her to maintain a 'womanly' image in a way that Hamilton's actions did not. Like Norton, Bishop provided compelling refutations of her husband's allegations, and she also possessed male allies, at the level of family, which Hamilton lacked.¹⁵⁷ While Bishop's brother liaised with the press on his sister's behalf, Hamilton's brother relayed damaging information to Moon, fuelling destructive antagonism and further tainting her image in the press.¹⁵⁸

As an English prima donna, a rare position in the nineteenth-century British world, Bishop was equipped with enough cultural capital and material to reverse the effects of her scandal.¹⁵⁹ Unlike the financially pressed Hamilton, Bishop's earnings not only allowed her to finance the needs of her children, but also helped to silence her husband.¹⁶⁰ By 1843 the English press had re-embraced her, with the influential journal *The Musical World* making reference to the "exquisite purity" of her voice.¹⁶¹ In contrast to Bishop, Hamilton's precarious finances restricted her agency and influenced her dangerous entry into the courtroom. Paradoxically, it was her long-time status as a respectable celebrity that fuelled the scandal. The fact that she had interacted extensively with the Melbourne elite, engaged in acts of 'social mothering' and influenced church attendance destabilised her audience's sense of their own discernment. If an unrespectable woman could support Victorians in their projects of respectability, then the concept

¹⁵⁷ Davis, *Anna Bishop*, pp. 44-46.

¹⁵⁸ 1865 'SINGULAR CASE OF CHILD DESERTION', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 19 August, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5785638>

¹⁵⁹ R. Marvin, 'Idealizing the Prima Donna in Mid-Victorian London', Cowgill, R., and Poriss, H., *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century*, Oxford Scholarship Online, 2012, p. 5.

¹⁶⁰ Davis, *Anna Bishop*, p. 116.

¹⁶¹ American music historian Roberta Montemorra Marvin has documented the 'discretion[ary]' choices made by the Illustrated London News when reporting on the lives of Italian prima donnas and these discretionary choices were even more evident in the reporting of the lives of English prima donnas. See Marvin, *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century*, pp. 2-5. While an English report on Anna Bishop in 1839 was full of innuendo, an 1846 report framed Bochsa as her musical mentor. See respectively 'Bochsa and Bishop', *Figaro in London*, issue 339, July 27, 1839, p. 229. Mr Bochsa and Mrs Bishop, *The Musical World*, June 6, 1846, pp. 267-268.

of respectability, itself, was inherently unstable.¹⁶²

Hamilton's final attempt at a comeback

After the press offensive of 1865, there were faint gestures of acknowledgement that Hamilton's vocal skills once were – and still were – impressive. When the Ballarat Harmonic Society published their report for 1865 in January 1866, they conceded the value of Hamilton's contribution by naming her first in the list of female soloists being thanked.¹⁶³ In early July 1866, the South Australian and Victorian press advertised Hamilton's presence at an event in the Adelaide Town Hall, which aimed to raise funds for the purchase of a church organ. In the context of Adelaide, a small town relative to Sydney and Melbourne, she still had enough cultural utility to be involved in James Shakespeare's sacred music concert.¹⁶⁴ However, she cancelled this engagement, ostensibly because the ship that was to have conveyed her was laid up for repairs.¹⁶⁵ While there may have been some controversy over her involvement in the concert, it is likely that Mr Shakespeare genuinely wanted to provide a sacred concert of high quality for Adelaide, a city that lacked the lyric stage resources of Sydney and Melbourne, and that he believed Hamilton's inclusion would enhance the event.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Goffman's argument that individuals who adopt false personae are unsettling because they threaten the notion of legitimacy provides insight into the social response to Hamilton. See E. Goffman, *The presentation of self in everyday life*, Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh Social Sciences Research Centre, 1956, p. 38.

¹⁶³ For the Ballarat Society's report see 1866 'BALLARAT HARMONIC SOCIETY', *The Ballarat Star* (Vic.: 1865 - 1924), 20 January, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article112866657>. For the conventional listing of female leads before male leads see the reference to Mrs Testar in 1855: 1855 'PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 29 August, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4816751>.

¹⁶⁴ 1866 'Advertising', *South Australian Register* (Adelaide, SA: 1839 - 1900), 3 July, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article41018826>. 1866 'PUBLIC WORKS AND PUBLIC FUNDS', *South Australian Register* (Adelaide, SA: 1839 - 1900), 4 July, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article41027169>. 1866 'MEMORANDUM ON THE DEFENCES OF ADELAIDE', *Adelaide Observer* (SA: 1843 - 1904), 7 July, p. 4. (Supplement to the Adelaide Observer), <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article159503754>

¹⁶⁵ 1866 'TOPICS OF THE DAY', *The South Australian Advertiser* (Adelaide, SA: 1858 - 1889), 5 July, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article28788847>. 1866 'IMMIGRATION AND LABOUR', *South Australian Register* (Adelaide, SA: 1839 - 1900), 5 July, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article41023417>

¹⁶⁶ Mr Shakespeare's concert was reportedly a success: "a sacred concert like it was never before held in Adelaide," according to the *South Australian Weekly Chronicle*. See the 1866 'TOPICS OF THE WEEK', *South Australian Weekly Chronicle* (Adelaide, SA: 1858 - 1867), 14 July, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article94746814>

Twelve months after her cancelled appearance, the Victorian press announced that a party of singers had established the “English Glee and Burlesque Opera Company”, which included Octavia Hamilton, the contralto Maggie Liddell, Mr Thomas Holme Davis, and burlesque performers Mr Melvyn, Mr Rainsford and Mr Bent, whose reputations had been forged in popular minstrel shows.¹⁶⁷ While the repertoire involved sacred music, the inclusion of opera parody, and routines made familiar through blackface minstrelsy had the potential to attract audiences uninterested in opera and sacred oratorio.¹⁶⁸ According to Richard Waterhouse, the combination of minstrelsy and operatic pieces in concert productions was not unusual before 1870.¹⁶⁹ Initial advertisements stated that the company would first visit Sydney, but Queensland was toured first, *without* Hamilton and Davis, from July 15 to September 12.¹⁷⁰ Perhaps the company sought to establish a respectable image before introducing a controversial personality. The death of four-year old Harry Hamilton on May 30, 1867, the only Hamilton and Davis offspring at that time, may have delayed the couple’s appearance with the company.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ For reference to and Rainsford see 1863 'PUBLIC AMUSEMENTS', *Empire* (Sydney, NSW: 1850 - 1875), 21 April, p. 3, http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article6313_0678. For reference to Mr Bent see 1861 'Advertising', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842 - 1954), 23 March, p. 1, http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article_13054605.

¹⁶⁸ Richard Waterhouse has commented on the enormous popularity of minstrelsy, which had anti-authoritarian, sentimental and cross-class appeal. See R. Waterhouse, 'The Minstrel Show and Australian Culture', *The Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 24, no. 3, Winter 1990, p. 147, p. 151. R. Waterhouse, *Private pleasures, public leisure: a history of Australian popular culture since 1788*, South Melbourne, Longman Australia, 1995, p. 72. R. Waterhouse, Culture and Customs, *Sydney Journal*, 1 March 2008, p. 3.

¹⁶⁹ R. Waterhouse, *From minstrel show to vaudeville: the Australian popular stage 1788-1914*, Kensington, UNSW University Press, 1990, p. xi.

¹⁷⁰ For the members of the company see 1867 'Advertising', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842 - 1954), 16 September, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article28607574>. Initial press reports had suggested that Horsley would join the Company in Sydney – but he did not. See 1867 'CURRENT TOPICS', *Geelong Advertiser* (Vic.: 1859 - 1926), 8 July, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article150646217>. It is likely that conflict between Horsley and Davis influenced Horsley’s absence. See 1867 'POLICE', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 13 July, p. 7, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5772175>. For the company’s first Queensland performance see 1867 'Classified Advertising', *The Brisbane Courier* (Qld.: 1864 - 1933), 13 July, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article1285821>. For their last Queensland performance see 1867 'Classified Advertising', *The Brisbane Courier* (Qld.: 1864 - 1933), 11 September, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article1287216>.

¹⁷¹ Harry died of scarlatina followed by dropsy from nephritis, with his illness involving the end of April and all of May. Octavia was living in Williamstown, Victoria, at the time, and she, not Davis, informed the authorities of the child’s death. It can be assumed that Davis accepted the child as his own. Moon, Harry Hamilton, Death, 30 May 1867, reg. 7344, *Australia Death Index, 1787-1985*.

In mid-September of 1867, the first Sydney advertisements for the English Glee and Burlesque Opera Company appeared, with Hamilton's name taking top billing. The company's Sydney performances commenced September 30 and were poorly attended during their first week, with no extant reviews that suggest a later increase in numbers, aside from a benefit for the popular burlesque singers Rainford and Melvyn who drew a "very fair house".¹⁷² An advertisement in the *Sydney Freeman* journal in early October that misnamed Hamilton as "Victoria Hamilton" may have been an attempt to obscure her identity and entice a larger audience.¹⁷³ In response to the company's struggle to engage Sydney audiences, the *Sydney Empire* published an article that was effusive in tone, and was possibly a paid piece.¹⁷⁴ Hamilton's colleagues appear to have recognised her influence on poor audience attendance and responded accordingly.¹⁷⁵ In better days, as the soprano of the company, she would have received a benefit but that acknowledgement of valued service was accorded to everyone else but her.¹⁷⁶

Audiences were probably further alienated from Hamilton by October press reports that her daughter Alice Florence had experienced

¹⁷²For references to concert attendance see 1867 'The Sydney Morning Herald', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842 - 1954), 1 October, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13163179>. 1867 'The Empire', *Empire* (Sydney, NSW: 1850 - 1875), 7 October, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article60845629>. 1867 'The Sydney Morning Herald', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842 - 1954), 25 October, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13160550>. 1867 'The Sydney Morning Herald', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842 - 1954), 19 October, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13158230>.

¹⁷³ 1867 'Advertising', *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney, NSW: 1850 - 1932), 5 October, p. 15, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article119439466>.

¹⁷⁴ See 1867 'The Empire', *Empire* (Sydney, NSW: 1850 - 1875), 7 October, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article60845629>. While the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on October 5 that the company had been warmly received at the Sydney School of Arts, that did not equate to a full house. 1867 'NOTES OF THE WEEK', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842 - 1954), 5 October, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13154622>. See also 1867 'The Sydney Morning Herald', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842 - 1954), 25 October, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13160550>.

¹⁷⁵ The Sydney competition for audiences may also have flattened attendance. See 1867 'The Sydney Morning Herald', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842 - 1954), 7 October, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13152669>.

¹⁷⁶ For the contralto Maggie Liddell's benefit see 1867 'Advertising', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842 - 1954), 16 October, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13162426>. For the benefit of Messrs Melvyn, Rainsford see 1867 'The Sydney Morning Herald', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842 - 1954), 19 October, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13158230>. For Bent's benefit see 1867 'Advertising', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842 - 1954), 19 October, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13158184>. For Norman Linley's benefit see 1867 'Advertising', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842 - 1954), 12 October, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article28607747>.

physical assault at the hands of a custodial adult in Melbourne. As the Mechanics Institutes featured a wide range of colonial newspapers, many concertgoers would have had little trouble linking Hamilton to the battered Melbourne girl. Press reports on Alice Florence recounted that she had been twice removed from the state industrial school system by adults offering paid care. In the second instance, the violence of a Mrs Montgomery incited the girl's escape.¹⁷⁷ Hamilton's troupe engaged in a promotional blitz, posting advertisements in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Sydney Empire*, *Freeman's Journal*, and *Bell's Life in Sydney* but promotion competed with scandal.¹⁷⁸ According to the *Melbourne Leader*, Hamilton's daughter had appeared in court "miserably clad and wretched looking", an image evoking earlier descriptions of the Moon sisters on the steps of St George's Hall.¹⁷⁹ Regional New South Wales press picked up the story on October 17 and on October 23 the German Adelaide press branded Hamilton a "rabenmutter" – or bad mother.¹⁸⁰

By mid-November, the press reported that the English Glee and Burlesque Opera Company had "dissolved", with all members but Hamilton

¹⁷⁷ For Victorian and Tasmanian reports of Alice Florence's experiences see 1867 'THE NEWS OF THE DAY', *The Age (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954)*, 10 October, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article185505959>. 1867 'NEWS AND NOTES', *The Ballarat Star (Vic.: 1865 - 1924)*, 11 October, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article112871091>. 1867 'Victoria', *The Cornwall Chronicle (Launceston, Tas.: 1835 - 1880)*, 23 October, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article72185383>.

¹⁷⁸ For the company's promotion attempts see 1867 'Advertising', *Empire (Sydney, NSW: 1850 - 1875)*, 7 October, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article60845646>. 1867 'Advertising', *The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954)*, 9 October, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13162454>. 1867 'Advertising', *Empire (Sydney, NSW: 1850 - 1875)*, 11 October, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article60845823>.

¹⁷⁹ See 1867 'NOTES AND NEWS', *Leader (Melbourne, Vic.: 1862 - 1918)*, 12 October, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article196635704>. 1867 'NEWS AND NOTES', *The Ballarat Star (Vic.: 1865 - 1924)*, 9 October, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article112871042>.

¹⁸⁰ For a New South Wales' report on Hamilton see 1867 'VICTORIA', *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser (NSW: 1843 - 1893)*, 17 October, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article18730391>. For Victorian reporting see The literal translation of 'Rabenmutter' was 'raven mother'. See 1867 *Süd Australische Zeitung (Tanunda and Adelaide, SA: 1860 - 1874)*, 23 October, p. 7, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page7567298>. See also 1867 'MELBOURNE', *Bendigo Advertiser (Vic.: 1855 - 1918)*, 8 October, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article87955380>. 1867 'NEWS AND NOTES', *The Ballarat Star (Vic.: 1865 - 1924)*, 11 October, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article112871091>. 1867 'THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1867', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 10 October, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5780236>. 1867 'Victoria', *The Cornwall Chronicle (Launceston, Tas.: 1835 - 1880)*, 23 October, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article72185383>.

and Davis continuing their tour in New South Wales.¹⁸¹ In fact, the company had not dissolved at all – it simply continued without the contaminating presence of Hamilton for another year.¹⁸² The fact that Maggie Liddell an emerging performer drew audiences whereas the once-acclaimed Hamilton now repelled them reveals the corrosive effects of scandal.¹⁸³

Hamilton had attempted to recover her identity as a respectable celebrity and failed – but were there other modes of celebrity that she might have pursued? When Montez performed her “spider dance” at the Melbourne Theatre Royal in 1855 before an audience that included ‘ladies’, the *Argus* judged the dance to be so obscene that a repeat performance would require police “intervention”.¹⁸⁴ Subsequent attendance at the theatre dropped so sharply that John Black the impresario experienced devastating financial loss.¹⁸⁵ The brief period of acceptance that the Melbourne public extended to Montez suggests the precarious nature of disreputable celebrity: attendance motivated by sexual thrill might be followed by audience retreat. There was little market for scandalous celebrity in Melbourne. Just as the Melbourne press had ruled against Montez in 1855, it condemned Hamilton

¹⁸¹ 1867 'Provincial', *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1857 - 1868), 16 November, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article199057719>

¹⁸² See 1868 'Advertising', *Bendigo Advertiser* (Vic.: 1855 - 1918), 26 March, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article87894828>. The press accounted for Hamilton's absence from the domestic performance circuit with references to her touring of India, a narrative influenced by the initial report of the English Glee and Burlesque Opera's company's intention to tour beyond the colonies. See 1868 'THE BENDIGO ADVERTISER', *Bendigo Advertiser* (Vic.: 1855 - 1918), 27 May, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article87896197>

¹⁸³ Maggie Liddell's Queensland reviews were generally positive. See 1867 'TELEGRAPHIC', *The Brisbane Courier* (Qld.: 1864 - 1933), 17 July, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article1285920>. 1867 'OUR CHANGED POLITICS AND POLITICIANS', *The Toowoomba Chronicle and Queensland Advertiser* (Qld.: 1861 - 1875), 4 September, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article212784089>

¹⁸⁴ For the *Argus*'s damning review Montez's performance of the spider dance on September 19 see 1855 'DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 20 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4818801>. She appears to have toned down the sexually evocative nature of the spider dance in subsequent performances. See 1855 'DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 22 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4819020>

¹⁸⁵ See Cannon, op. cit., 1993, pp. 313-314. Her audience attendance fluctuated as she was not supported in Geelong but she reportedly drew large houses in Bendigo. See respectively 1855 'GEELONG SUMMARY FOR ENGLAND', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 29 September, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4819529>. 1856 'COLEMAN'S CRITERION THEATRE', *Bendigo Advertiser* (Vic.: 1855 - 1918), 25 June, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article88050918>

in 1865. It was impossible for a woman cast as Messalina to adopt the personae of the social mother or the chaste singer of religious oratorio.

In joining the English Glee and Burlesque Opera Company, a touring company that by-passed the colony of Victoria in 1867, Hamilton tried to use geographical distance to renew her celebrity.¹⁸⁶ However Victoria and New South Wales were both colonies where the dominant culture was substantially focused on public performances of ‘decency’ – at least in the domains that were monitored by the press. Hamilton also lacked the anonymity that had enabled her father and brother to rehabilitate their reputations after their various experiences of criminalisation. Melbourne’s 1865 declaration that it was no “Botany Bay” resounded for Hamilton’s Sydney audiences of 1867.

The category of gender was uneven in its influence on colonial reception to scandal. While Melbourne failed to point the finger at possible candidates for the paternity of Hamilton’s illegitimate daughters, the experiences of male musicians whose sexual transgressions led them to the courtroom varied considerably. In 1862 the celebrity of classical pianist Edward Boulanger flourished despite reports on his adultery and wife battery, and his exit from the colonies to evade child maintenance payments was followed by press expressions of regret at his absence.¹⁸⁷ Conversely Herr Strebing, the violinist whose performance was disrupted by his champagne-drinking colleagues of 1855, became an object of ridicule after

¹⁸⁶ The company toured Victoria in 1868, after Hamilton had left. See 1868 'Town Talk and Table Chat', *The Cornwall Chronicle (Launceston, Tas.: 1835 - 1880)*, 15 July, p. 8., <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article66464777>.

¹⁸⁷ Here I am not conflating public esteem with financial viability as Boulanger experienced ongoing financial problems. For a press recount of the court hearing alleging his assault (and that of his wife’s) see 1862 'M. BOULANGER AND HIS FAMILY', *The Star (Ballarat, Vic.: 1855 - 1864)*, 29 August, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article66326762>. Governor Young was not deterred from attending his Sydney Philharmonic concert in November and one critic urged Boulanger to remain in the colonies. See 1862 'LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY', *Freeman's Journal (Sydney, NSW: 1850 - 1932)*, 29 November, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article115427267>. For the child maintenance ruling see 1862 'CENTRAL POLICE COURT', *Sydney Mail (NSW: 1860 - 1871)*, 13 September, p. 7, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article166690207>. Boulanger had died of cholera by 1863. See 1863 'ADELAIDE', *The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954)*, 24 September, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13092757>. For the Sydney press’s continued eulogising of Boulanger see the review of an 1866 newcomer: 1866 'The Empire', *Empire (Sydney, NSW: 1850 - 1875)*, 2 July, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article60592859>.

his affair with a Melbourne woman became known to the community: too terrified to face the husband, he had abandoned his violin and hat.¹⁸⁸

Unlike Boulanger and Strebinger, Hamilton's restricted mobility, compounded by her lack of prima donna status, meant that she could not escape recrimination by relocation in Europe. Her colleagues in the English Glee and Burlesque Opera Company were the last to reject her but it was not in their interests to continue their association with a commercial liability. Celebrities were marketplace commodities. The colonial lyric stage needed Hamilton in 1854. Her talent, energy and adaptability were attributes essential to a lyric stage with limited resources. However by 1867 her determination to succeed was unable to bridge the divide between respectability and notoriety.

¹⁸⁸ For the incident involving backstage festivities discussed in Chapter One see 1854 'UNRULINESS OF THE "STARS"', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 10 June, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4809277>. For Annie Dawbin's derisive and exaggerated recount of the number of objects Strebinger abandoned after being surprised by Mr Constable see Dawbin, op. cit., October 1863, p. 354. For the report of the subsequent divorce hearing see 'Appellate Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, And Divorce Jurisdiction', *The Australasian (Melbourne, Vic.: 1864 - 1946)*, 24 December, p. 7, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article138037029>. Strebinger was reported to have died in London nine months later. 1865 'MELBOURNE NEWS', *Bendigo Advertiser (Vic: 1855 - 1918)*, 18 September, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article87926467>.

Conclusion

Octavia Hamilton's history involves the recovery of one of Victoria's foundational lyric stage celebrities. It also revives the story of an English migrant whose colonial ambitions carried her beyond the borders of the domestic ideal. For a talented singer without teachers of repute, a city borne out of the gold rushes provided career opportunities that would have been far more elusive in London. In a colony of limited resources, Melbourne's most eminent music-makers accepted her into their networks, providing her with informal mentorship and benefiting from her contributions to a culture that thrived on generosity and reciprocity. Touring without her husband made the experience of transgressive sex a distinct possibility, yet reviews focused on her purity of voice. Acts of 'social mothering' at fundraisers for orphans required her absence from her own home, a reality repeatedly ignored by the press.

Hamilton was a popular woman whose 1858 benefit concert following a house fire was attended by members of the Melbourne elite, including Governor Barkly, Judge Redmond Barry and members of the Victorian parliament. Hamilton collaborated in innovative projects, performing in the first colonial performance of *La Traviata* (however imperfect), promoting new musical compositions through her celebrity and contributing to the production of full-scale opera in 1859. In company with her colleagues, she defended the right of colonial music-makers to produce lyric theatre falling short of European standards of excellence. She helped showcase available talent with pleasure and defiance. She strengthened evolving narratives of local pride and colonial independence.

As the member of a middle-class family shadowed by debt and criminality, Hamilton used musical talent to achieve respectable celebrity and redefine the limits of her previous life. She was an Anglican woman who collaborated with Catholics at the ordination of a bishop. She expanded the circle of her genteel acquaintance, joining with a governor's mother-in-law to raise money for a pair of French musicians. Yet her connections with her public did not always bring accolades. She attracted members of the

working class to Christmas Eve productions of Handel's *Messiah* but alienated influential trade unionists. For a time she was acclaimed as Victoria's best singer of sacred oratorio but her acting ability often drew criticism.

Hamilton served the colony of Victoria by helping to legitimise white occupation. Her contributions to cultural projects in a land 'without culture' reinforced narratives about Indigenous inferiority that were integral to the white settler state. Her facility with a diverse and broadly valued repertoire – sacred oratorio, British balladry and Italian opera – influenced her cross-class appeal. Her professional activities doubled as social performances. She sang sacred music with gravitas, made public donations to the needy and made conspicuous contributions to Melbourne's strong voluntaristic culture. As a respectable middle-class woman she performed charitable acts, raising money for orphans and destitute women, British victims of Indian massacres and injured colleagues. The philanthropic dimensions of her work were highly esteemed in a colony that lacked taxation to cater to the needs of the poor. As the economic benefits of the gold rush proved uneven, charitable men and women united with government to ameliorate poverty.

Hamilton was an unhappily married woman who experienced extramarital sex and separated from her husband in 1862. Three years later the complications of her family life – one hostile husband, one defacto partner, two illegitimate daughters and financial difficulties – influenced her entry into a Melbourne courtroom. In 1865 the Victorian press failed to consider the possibility that Octavia Hamilton was a woman in financial crisis. A number of 1865 editorials argued that Moon condoned his wife's adultery up until 1862 because he benefited from her earnings – and the image of Hamilton as financially stable persisted, despite evidence to the contrary. There was certainly no acknowledgement of her reduced financial circumstances from 1864; rather, there was the implication that her involvement in the secular and sacred stage had proved so profitable that Moon had been enticed to condone her adultery. Editorials criticising Hamilton elided mention of her retrenchment from St Peter's Church Choir and failed to note the unprofitable nature of many lyric stage events.

Middle-class colonists who were heavily invested in narratives of progress could not readily contemplate the possibility that long-time female celebrities might have to resort to the same sources of support as working-class and destitute women. The image of a cultured society was supported by the concept of a viable lyric stage. If colonial audiences were unable to muster adequate support for their principal vocalists, were they so cultured after all? In contemporary accounts of Hamilton's demise, it was more comfortable for social commentators to invoke the moral extremes of melodrama.

Epilogue

The call for Octavia Hamilton's expulsion from the lyric stage, widely voiced in the press and actively supported, was driven by a number of factors: the desire to exorcise the spectre of convictism, the belief that respectability was grounded in conventional patriarchal family structure, and the fear that colonial resources would be overwhelmed by demands for state guardianship. After her last public performance in 1867 Hamilton reverted to the role of wife – although her intimate relationship with Thomas Holme Davis was never sanctioned by the colonial state and was invisibilised in the documentation of her colonial born children.

Octavia Hamilton remained in Victoria for seven years after her exit from the English Glee and Burlesque Opera Company. Of her six colonial born children to Thomas Davis, four would survive, with their birth registration hinting at the humiliations she endured as a demoted celebrity. In 1866 Ernest Edward was born in Williamstown, a place where opera enthusiasts had once organised a special train to convey residents to the Coulon production of *La Traviata*. As Verdi acknowledged in his opera's resolution, some women paid a high price for their sexual transgressions. In the manner of a single mother, without male protection, Hamilton served as the informant for her son's birth, eliding the names of her previously born children and leaving blank the space allocated for details of the father.¹

Hamilton gave birth to her next baby in Ballarat East in June 1868, just one month after the Melbourne *Age* reported the committal of Emile Augustus Moon, her son, to the state industrial school system and berated her for her "brutal and systematic neglect of her children".² Indeed, she may have chosen to give birth to her daughter Alice Mary in Ballarat to protect herself from harassment in Melbourne, particularly as Emile's committal had been reported quite neutrally in the Ballarat *Star*.³ Perhaps Hamilton

¹ Moon, Ernest Edward, Birth, 26 January 1866, Williamstown, reg. 12015, *Australia, Birth Index, 1788-1922*.

² 1868 'SUBURBAN POLICE', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1854 - 1954), 25 May, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article176996980>.

³ For report see 1868 'NEWS AND NOTES', *The Ballarat Star* (Vic.: 1865 - 1924), 26 May, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article113603629>.

hoped to trade on the warm reception she had received in Ballarat for so many years; after all Ballarat had received her with enthusiasm (and probable voyeurism) when she performed in their town after her first 1865 court hearing. Alice Mary's birth documentation hints at Hamilton's contemptuous treatment in the registration office. On the relevant form mother and daughter were categorised as "unmarried" and "illegitimate" respectively, with both terms vigorously underlined. Perhaps provoked by an unnecessary emphasis on her status as sexual miscreant, Hamilton provided the fictive response "Maid Hill" for her place of birth, a gesture of defiance playing on the notion of virginity.⁴ She was again the informant at the 1871 registration of Rosie Elsie, who lived just seventeen months, and that of her last colonial born daughter Eliza Dora in 1874. Although knowledge of his paternity of post-1862 children must have been widespread, Davis was not officially acknowledged on registration documents, for reasons that may have included an 1865 demand for the criminalisation of Hamilton's lovers.⁵

In England Hamilton had two more daughters, with her last child Beatrice Connaught Davis born in 1879, when Hamilton was aged around 44. When measured against the statistics for the colonial mothers of the era Hamilton's fertility was exceptional, as the average number of colonial offspring was seven – as opposed to her total of sixteen (inclusive of early death children).⁶ Mrs Moon aka Miss Hamilton adopted a new pseudonym in the English environment – that of Mrs Davis. While she identified as the "wife" of an "Australian wine merchant" on census night of 1881, Thomas Davis, who spent that night in Hampshire identified as single, perhaps

⁴ This gesture may have been inspired by the phrase "maiden name" at the top of the relevant column. Two letters were blotted out after the word 'Maid' on the registration page, as if Eliza had originally uttered "Maiden" before dictating the correction: "Maid". See Scrivenor, Alice Mary, Birth, 20 June 1868 Ballarat East, reg. 14011, *Australia, Birth Index, 1788-1922*.

⁵ See Scrivenor, Unnamed, Birth, 29 March, 1873 Kew, Victoria, reg. 3240, *Australia Birth Index, 1788-1922*. Here I am assuming that the date of March 39 was intended as March 29. ⁵ In 1873 Thomas Holme Davis was named on the birth documentation of an unnamed Scrivenor as the "friend" in whose home Hamilton gave birth – not as the father of the child. See Chapter Two for the discussion of the press's demand.

⁶ See Davis, Beatrice C., 1891 England Census, Hertfordshire, England, *Census Returns of England and Wales, 1891*. Patricia Grimshaw et al identify the late 1830s as a time when colonial women birthed an average of seven children. See Grimshaw, P., *Creating a Nation*, Ringwood, Vic., McPhee Gribbe, 1994, p. 119. As Hamilton was born in 1835 and bore most of her children in colonial Victoria, these statistics are still broadly relevant.

constrained by his brother-in-law's knowledge that Hamilton was not his legal wife.⁷ (In 1901 when he was absent from home, he reported his status as married).⁸ The 1881 census return hints at the refusal of Davis's disapproving relatives to collude in face-saving narratives. Octavia Hamilton aka Eliza Davis died in the home of her penultimate daughter Mabel Frances in 1907, in West Yorkshire, and Davis laid claim to her as his wife at the time of her death.⁹

After the last disparaging press report of 1868, the memory of Hamilton, leached of detail but bathed in nostalgic patina, was revived in recounts of the Victorian lyric stage of the 1850s and 1860s. In the context of obituaries for Coulon in 1878 she featured in a list of his significant peers that included Madame Carandini, Mrs Hancock and Louisa Swannell.¹⁰ In the 1870s she was acknowledged in a retrospective on the Lyster Theatre Company and memories of her association with the MPS were revived at the time of the suicide of her longtime colleague, Thomas Ewart.¹¹ In the 1880s she was linked to the Salle Valentino in a wistful homage to old Melbourne, she was recalled when Melbourne's Princess Theatre was condemned, and she was remembered in relation to Bendigo's Shamrock Hotel.¹² The grounding of the Hamilton memory in architectural space

⁷ Davis, Eliza, 1881 English Census, Lewisham, London, *England Census and Voter Lists*. Regarding Thomas Davis's census material, he was staying in the home of brother-in-law See Davis, Thomas Holme, 1881 Census, Hampshire, Ryde, *England Census and Voter Lists*.

⁸ See Davis, Thomas Holme, 1901 English Census, Bardsey, Yorkshire, *Census Returns of England and Wales 1901*.

⁹ Davis, Eliza, Death, 1907, Yorkshire, West Riding, *England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915*.

¹⁰ 1875 'The Argus', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 23 January, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article11511064>.

¹¹ The press implied Ewart's suicide was a result of financial misfortune. See 1878 'TOWN TALK', *Geelong Advertiser (Vic.: 1859 - 1929)*, 21 November, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article147321698>.

¹² For her grounding in the history of the Salle see for instance 1882 'HERE, THERE, & EVERYWHERE', *Williamstown Chronicle (Vic.: 1856 - 1954)*, 2 December, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article70006948>. 1909 'EARLY MELBOURNE', *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 15 September, p. 9, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article10733758>. 1910 'MUMMER MEMOIRS', *Truth (Perth, WA: 1903 - 1931)*, 8 January, p. 4. (CITY EDITION), <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article207404539>. For her recollection in the context of the Princess Theatre see 1884 'OUR MELBOURNE LETTER', *Ovens and Murray Advertiser (Beechworth, Vic.: 1855 - 1918)*, 17 May, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article198972369>. For her association with the Shamrock Theatre see 1885 'THE OLD DAYS OF BENDIGO', *Bendigo Advertiser (Vic.: 1855 - 1918)*, 2 September, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article88653534>. 1908 'OLD-TIME

across metropolitan and regional Victoria underscored the role of the lyric stage artist in the cultural remapping of the colonial landscape.

A press obituary following Moon's 1891 death described Hamilton as a "once celebrated singer", without allusion to her adultery, although two years later press mockery of her as "fair minion of the Moon" revealed that her extra-marital affairs had not been forgotten.¹³ However, this resurrection of the 1865 scandal was both oblique and fleeting. In the early twentieth century her contributions to the lyric stage at Beechworth were still being recalled and in 1925 one old-timer described her as a "great favourite of the public", the final reference to Hamilton in the colonial press.¹⁴ This frame of sentimental remembrance reflects what Macintyre has described as nostalgia for the "heroic era" of the 1850s gold-digger, as opposed to the wage earners who retrieved gold through industrial machinery in the post-rush phase of mining.¹⁵ In addition Goodman argues that "optimistic celebrations" of gold rush society were much easier when anxieties about the corrupting effects of gold were long-gone.¹⁶

The most wilful erasure of the Hamilton scandal from public reminiscences was evident in one resident's reflections on St George's Hall, the place where Alice Florence and Edith Millicent had sobbed for their absent mother in August 1865. Fred Hales' 1910 memories of the site were detailed in many respects, but were also amnesic with regards to the Hamilton scandal: "The Philharmonic and Orpheus Union Societies held

MEMORIES', *Narandera Argus and Riverina Advertiser* (NSW: 1893 - 1953), 18 September, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article99753330>.

¹³ For Moon's obituary see 1891 'DEATH OF THE SHIRE SECRETARY', *Alexandra and Yea Standard, Gobur, Thornton and Acheron Express* (Vic.: 1877 - 1908), 20 November, p. 2, (MORNING), <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article57490333>. For the pun on "Moon" see 1894 'REMINISCENCES OF OLD BENDIGO', *The Bendigo Independent* (Vic.: 1891 - 1918), 16 June, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article178729220>.

¹⁴ In 1906 the Beechworth press recalled her contribution to a benefit concert for their hospital. See 1906 'OLD MEMORIES', *Ovens and Murray Advertiser* (Beechworth, Vic.: 1855 - 1918), 10 November, p. 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article200559204>. In 1917 another contributor to the regional press praised Coulon's rousing performance of the Marsellaise in the company of Hamilton in Beechworth. See 1917 'NATIONAL ANTHEMS—AND OTHERS', *Gippsland Mercury* (Sale, Vic.: 1914 - 1918), 1 May, p. 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article88445151>. For the final press reference to Hamilton see 1925 'SEVENTY YEARS OF MUSIC', *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957), 10 October, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article2150469>.

¹⁵ S. Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, 3rd edn., Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 91.

¹⁶ D. Goodman, *Gold seeking Victoria and California in the 1850s*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, Australia, 1994, p. xii, p. xviii.

concerts [at St George's Hall], and I am sure the name of that very gifted singer, Miss Octavia Hamilton, will take you back a few years. How she could sing!"¹⁷ Hamilton had come full circle – at least on the level of rhetoric. A career that was “celebrated” in 1854, then destroyed in 1865, was revived in nostalgic retrospectives. For cultural commentators she had regained a utility of sorts, helping to consolidate a communal identity founded on shared memories of places, personalities and events. Post-scandal references to Hamilton included her in lists of the mid-century vocalists who had provided In her physical absence from the colonies, Hamilton regained some value for the generations invested in proto-nationalist and patriotic mythmaking in the lead up to 1901 Federation Australia. The image of the once-disgraced singer was revived and re-deployed in nationalistic narratives about the glory days of the gold rush.

When Armes Beaumont retired in 1903 his reference to Octavia Hamilton in his press-published speech made a number of points very clear: he recalled his friend fondly; he assumed that she was known to his audience, and she was far from universally maligned. Of the four female singers he identified in his speech, Hamilton was named first, taking precedence over three prima donnas.¹⁸ Beaumont's story demonstrates the capacity of narratives to “store network relationships”. His recount that it was Hamilton who accompanied him to the theatre on the night he was summoned from the dress circle to take the place of a sick tenor paid tacit homage to the soprano as his friend and mentor.¹⁹ His anecdote not only implied her respectability – eliding her place in the annals of scandal – but also revealed traces of the younger man who relished the attention of a female celebrity.

The internationally acclaimed Nellie Melba sang at Beaumont's farewell and it can be safely assumed that she was unshaken by Hamilton's transgressions. By 1903 Melba was divorced from her long estranged

¹⁷ 1910 'MUMMER MEMOIRS', *Truth* (Perth, WA: 1903 - 1931), 6 August, p. 12. (CITY EDITION), <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article207408415>

¹⁸ 1903 'MR. ARMES BEAUMONT', *The Advertiser* (Adelaide, SA: 1889 - 1931), 26 March, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4932912>.

¹⁹ For Hayden White's notion of the story as symbolic artefact, see Eiko Ikegami, 'A Sociological Theory of Publics: Identity and Culture as Emergent Properties in Networks', *Social Research*, vol. 67, no. 4, Winter 2000, p. 996.

husband and her celebrity had survived her publicised adultery. Fortunately for Melba, international renown had equipped her with a level of cultural utility that helped to extinguish the scandal – but she had still been pressured to terminate contact with her lover.²⁰ In 1865 Hamilton was constructed as emblematic of Collins Street hypocrisy but in 1931 Melba was “buried like a hero” in a Collins Street church that was built by her father.²¹

In 1913 Mr Peake, the first historian for the Melbourne Philharmonic Society, posed the question as to why Dame Nellie Melba “had never sung for the Society of which her father [David Mitchell] was one of the founders”.²² In terms of the issue of respectability the more pressing question is why Mitchell was so adamant that his daughter not sing professionally at all. One eminent Australian musicologist has contended that Melba’s father viewed touring women as unrespectable per se, supporting this viewpoint through anachronistic evidence from an 1827 newspaper.²³ However Ann Beedell has persuasively depicted the 1820s struggle for a Sydney theatre culture as a “battleground” riven by

²⁰ Therese Radic argues that Melba’s career survived the scandal of adultery because she terminated her relationship with her lover. After a custody battle for her son George, she did not see him for a decade, and according to Radic, failed to pursue contact when she was in the USA for quite some time. See T. Radic, *Melba: the voice of Australia*, South Melbourne and Crows Nest, Macmillan, 1986, pp. 69-70, p. 72. For treatment in the colonial press see 1891 ‘GREAT DIVORCE SCANDAL’, *Launceston Examiner (Tas.: 1842 - 1899)*, 3 November, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article39581234>.

²¹ T. Radic, *Melba, The Voice of Australia*, South Melbourne, Macmillan, 1986, p. vii-viii, pp. 3-4.

²² William Carne cites peak in his 1954 history of the Melbourne Philharmonic Society. See W. Carne, *A Century of Harmony: The Official Centenary History of the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society*, p. 6.

²³ For Therese Radic’s argument see T. Radic, *Melba, The Voice of Australia*, South Melbourne, Macmillan, 1986, p. 18. For the article cited see 1827 ‘ADVANCE AUSTRALIA SYDNEY GAZETTE, AND New South Wales Advertiser’, *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser (NSW: 1803 - 1842)*, 30 January, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article2187533>. Governor Ralph Darling’s obstruction of the efforts of Barnet Levey to obtain a theatre licence was emblematic of the response of diehard evangelicals and Exclusives to the development of a theatre culture. See R. B. Walker, *The Newspaper Press in New South Wales 1803-1920*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1976, p. 7. Under Governor Bourke’s patronage, the ‘Philharmonic Concerts’, held at the Pulteney Hotel in 1834, proved a turning point for public music culture in New South Wales. See 1834 ‘PHILHARMONIC CONCERTS’, *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser (NSW: 1803 - 1842)*, 29 July, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article2216725>. 1834 ‘Philharmonic Concert’, *The Australian* (Sydney, NSW: 1824 - 1848), 29 July, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article42009106>. Ann Blainey errs in stating that in the 1870s opera singers “stood not a chance of retaining respectability”. See A. Blainey, *I am Melba*, Melbourne, Black Inc, 2008, pp. 15-16.

“prejudice” and competing viewpoints. The concern that theatre would foster moral disorder, frequently alluded to in the press before the mid-1830s, stood in contrast to the dominant embrace of theatre as a mechanism for social order in the 1850s and 1860s, as this thesis has established – which is not to deny the fact that many nineteenth-century fathers would have preferred their daughters to follow a more orthodox path than the stage.²⁴

One intriguing possibility as to why David Mitchell resisted the notion of a stage career for his daughter lies in the enormity of his disillusionment with Hamilton in the wake of the 1865 scandal. As Hamilton had sung with the Melbourne Philharmonic from 1857 to 1864, the pair would have met on a number of occasions – although it is uncertain how often Mitchell, a founding member of the society, performed. The esteem Mitchell felt for Hamilton before 1865 is reflected in the fact that his rare public performances outside official Philharmonic concerts included his involvement in her 1859 Trades Hall People’s Concerts²⁵ – although his role as a prominent builder would also have influenced his attendance. In this context it must be remembered that James Neild, who was generally underwhelmed by Hamilton, praised her respectability in 1858.²⁶ Given Mitchell’s involvement with the MPS, ostensibly a model of institutional decorum, it is highly likely that he and his family attended MPS functions on a number of occasions and interacted warmly with Hamilton.²⁷ After February 1865 Mitchell may have been shaken by his own lack of judgement and questioned the suitability of the lyric stage for women of unimpeached respectability.

The assumption that Hamilton was a heartless mother who felt nothing for her daughters went unchallenged in the press but requires

²⁴ Here ‘theatre’ refers to musical and dramatic productions. See A. V. Beedell, *The decline of the English musician, 1788-1888: a family of English musicians in Ireland, England, Mauritius, and Australia*, Oxford and New York, Clarendon Press and Oxford University press, 1992, 244.

²⁵ This has been previously cited but I will replicate here for the reader’s convenience. See 1859 ‘THE TRADES HALL’, *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957)*, 25 May, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5681703>

²⁶ *The Examiner and Melbourne Weekly News*, Saturday 1858, September 4, no 62, p. 13.

²⁷ T. Radic, *Aspects of organised amateur music in Melbourne: 1836-1890*, Masters Music diss., University of Melbourne, 1968, p. 177.

interrogation. Robert Van Krieken argues that a historical study of family relationships debunks the notion of innate parent-child love, but as Nell Musgrave observes, it is also a mistake to assume that all mothers who relinquished their children did so without grief.²⁸ Gaps in the archive – the absence of memoirs, journals and interviews capturing Hamilton’s perspective – have made it difficult to assess her emotional connection with her daughters. Neither Augustus Graham Moon nor Thomas Davis wished to take on the financial burden of children that they had not fathered and Hamilton’s modest income restricted her autonomous decision-making. Arguably Davis miscalculated: the exposure of Hamilton’s secrets in an open court imposed severe costs on his family both in terms of wellbeing and his partner’s future earning capacity.

Augustus Graham Moon was a consummate keeper of secrets. Only in 2016 did his great-great granddaughter, the writer of this thesis, learn that there were two illegitimate lines stemming from the Moon-Scrivenor marriage.²⁹ While the names of two of Hamilton’s illegitimate children were exposed in courtrooms of 1865, the identity of Moon’s own illegitimate daughter was obscured for more than a hundred and fifty years.³⁰ The additional financial burden imposed by the birth of Edith Florence Moon in 1864 – a child hidden from the gaze of Moon’s family – was almost certainly a important motivation in Moon’s withdrawal of child maintenance payments. Unlike Alice Florence and Edith Rose, Moon’s daughter appears to have died in 1939 without knowledge of her mother’s name, and the available archive fails to provide clues about her identity.

²⁸ Van Krieken argues that “abandonment” was the “primary means” by which English parents limited family size for many centuries. See R. Van Krieken, *Children and the state: social control and the formation of Australian child welfare*, North Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1991, p. 27. See also N. Musgrave, *The scars remain: a long history of forgotten Australians and Children’s Institutions*, North Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2013, p. 73. It is not impossible that Hamilton made contact with Alice Florence on occasions. Pringle, the conductor with whom she worked so often, took custody of the child on 20 November 1867 but the child returned to the school on May 7, 1869, after ‘uncontrollable’ conduct. See Moon, Florence, *Victoria, Australia, Index to the Children’s Registers of State Wards, 1850 -1893*.

²⁹ The democratisation of knowledge in the present era of digitised colonial newspapers and genealogical records made some vital historical investigation possible before my university enrolment.

³⁰ Lloyd, Edith Florence, Death, 1 August 1939, Petersham New South Wales, reg. 14625, *Australia, Death Index, 1787-1985*. There is no birth documentation for Edith.

Some aspects of history are irrecoverable.³¹

³¹ As Evans has noted, “There are dead ends and gaps that can never be filled”. See T. Evans, ‘Secrets and Lies, the radical potential of family history’, *History Workshop Journal*, issue 71, Spring 2011, p. 20.

Appendix 1 – Octavia Hamilton and her English-born siblings

1. Fanny Scrivenor	November 1821
2. Marian Scrivenor	May 1823
3. Kenrick John Scrivenor	May 1825
4. George Henry Scrivenor	circa 1827
5. Isabella Caroline Scrivenor	March 1833
6. Eliza Octavia Scrivenor	June 1835
7. Francis Edward Scrivenor	September 1838
8. Frederick William Scrivenor	February 1842

Appendix 2 – Octavia Hamilton’s children listed in order of birth

1. Frances Octavia Moon	Birth: 15 April 1852
2. Walter Graham Moon	Birth: 4 May 1853
3. Herbert Parry Moon	Birth: 21 April 1855
4. Emile Augustus Moon	Birth: 23 August 1856
5. Alice Florence Moon	Birth: 8 November 1857
6. Ernest Frederick Moon	Birth: 15 July 1859
7. Edith Rose Millicent	Birth: 29 May 1861
8. Harry Hamilton Moon	Birth: November 1862 <i>Childhood death</i>
9. Lizzie Moon	Birth: 3 December 1864 <i>Infancy death</i>
10. Ernest Edward Moon	Birth: 26 January 1866
11. Alice Mary Scrivenor	Birth: 20 June 1868
12. Rosie Elsie Scrivenor	Birth: 27 November 1871 <i>Infancy death</i>
13. Unnamed male Scrivenor	Birth: 1873 <i>Lived for a day</i>
14. Eliza Dora Davis Moon	Birth: 2 May 1873
15. Mabel Frances Davis	Birth: 10 November 1875 <i>English Born</i>
16. Beatrice Connaught Davis	Birth: 1879 <i>English Born</i>

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