

ACTING THE PART:

EMMA HAMILTON'S SELF-FASHIONING AND THE TRANSGRESSION OF CLASS BOUNDARIES

By

WHITNEY CAITLIN SHEETS

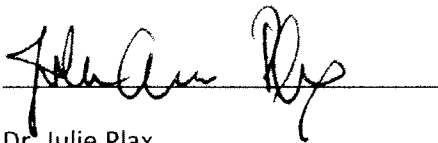
A Thesis Submitted to The Honors College

In Partial Fulfillment of the Bachelors degree
With Honors in
Art History

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

May 2010

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julie Plax", is written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Julie Plax
Department of Art History

**The University of Arizona Electronic Theses and Dissertations
Reproduction and Distribution Rights Form**

Name (Last, First, Middle) <u>Sheets, Whitney, Caitlin</u>	
Degree title (eg BA, BS, BSE, BSB, BFA): <u>B. A.</u>	
Honors area (eg Molecular and Cellular Biology, English, Studio Art): <u>Art History</u>	
Date thesis submitted to Honors College: <u>Wednesday, May 5th, 2010</u>	
Title of Honors thesis: <u>Acting the Part: Emma Hamilton's Self-Fashioning and the Transgression of Class Boundaries</u>	
:The University of Arizona Library Release	<p>I hereby grant to the University of Arizona Library the nonexclusive worldwide right to reproduce and distribute my dissertation or thesis and abstract (herein, the "licensed materials"), in whole or in part, in any and all media of distribution and in any format in existence now or developed in the future. I represent and warrant to the University of Arizona that the licensed materials are my original work, that I am the sole owner of all rights in and to the licensed materials, and that none of the licensed materials infringe or violate the rights of others. I further represent that I have obtained all necessary rights to permit the University of Arizona Library to reproduce and distribute any nonpublic third party software necessary to access, display, run or print my dissertation or thesis. I acknowledge that University of Arizona Library may elect not to distribute my dissertation or thesis in digital format if, in its reasonable judgment, it believes all such rights have not been secured.</p> <p>Signed: <u>Whitney Caitlin Sheets</u> Date: <u>5/5/2010</u></p>

Abstract

Emma Hamilton, an eighteenth-century British social icon, rose from classless obscurity and an unconventional past to fame and widespread popularity among Britain's elite. Like contemporary eighteenth-century British actresses who often struggled with associations with immorality, Emma too struggled to progress beyond the public's understanding of her as a prostitute or mistress. Emma can be viewed as similar to actresses, an association which serves to illuminate potential motives in portraits of Emma. Both Emma and actresses recognized the utility of portraiture in the reversal of their negative images and the construction of a public persona that more closely aligned them with the virtues assumed to be inherent in female members of the aristocratic class. Particularly in George Romney's portraits of Emma, her journey towards acceptance by the British social scene was in part the result of a conscious self-fashioning and construction a public persona for Emma by both Emma and Romney. Romney's portraits of Emma reveal an image of her that deliberately imitates portraits of the social elite in terms of virtue and respectability while also incorporating the celebrity and glamour found in contemporary portraits of actresses into Emma's own portraits.

Acting the Part: Emma Hamilton's Self-Fashioning and the Transgression of Class Boundaries

Emma Hamilton was a captivating and tantalizing figure in eighteenth-century British culture. She came from exceedingly low class and at some point or another in her life, she was a prostitute, mistress, wife and married lover. Hence, it was not surprising that Emma was largely well known for her questionable and unconventional character and transgression of class boundaries. Emma was a constant topic of conversation and attention, particularly by the upper echelons of polite and well-bred British society. Emma eventually became well-known as a social icon in the European social scene. The question remains: how was a woman with such an atypical past able to garner such rapture and attention by the very group of society that prized appropriateness and decorum the most? The answer lies in part in the portraits of her by late eighteenth-century British painter, George Romney. These portraits by Romney, I argue, can be understood to function similarly to portraits of contemporary eighteenth-century British actresses. Emma, having dabbled with acting both in her early and later years, often functioned socially as something similar to an actress, in terms of public perception and influence. Both contemporary portraits of actresses and the portraits of Emma by Romney involve a sense of theatricality, and both portrait groups were directly influenced by the sitters. One could even go so far as to say there were co-authored. This involvement in the portraits' productions was done specifically and intentionally by both the actresses and Emma to ensure that the proper image was fashioned. It was this image and creation of the self in the portrait that would shape the public's perception of them and her.

Emma Hamilton functioned similarly to an actress in the way that she fashioned herself for the public's eye, employing portraiture as a means by which to gain both visibility and popularity. Indeed, for any English woman in the eighteenth century, self-fashioning was a critical component of her public

image. As such, a knowledge and incorporation of contemporary trends and styles was critical to conveying an effortless style. This purposeful and self-conscious crafting of a woman's representation was all the more important the more socially visible a woman was, for the support or condemnation of her persona by those she knew, and also that of society at large, was at stake.¹

Born Amy (or Emy) Lyon in 1765, Emma Hart came from a poor family, with no pedigree whatsoever. In 1780, at age fifteen, she became mistress to Sir Harry Fetherstonehaugh which ended with her subsequent pregnancy. Soon after, she became mistress to Charles Greville from 1782 to 1786. In 1786, Emma was "given" to Sir William Hamilton, Greville's uncle and envoy to Naples, by Greville as he saw no further use for Emma. She eventually became the wife, of Sir William Hamilton. It was only after she became his wife that Emma gained wide acceptance from the aristocratic classes, but Emma had been the focus of public fascination and attention long before her marriage. These prominent men she was associated with certainly drew public attention to Emma and made her a visible woman within certain social scenes; her personal beauty and notorious loose past certainly garnered her much attention as well. When Emma was mistress to Greville, he underwent great efforts to chastise her for her past behavior and to teach her to become more demure, chaste and socially acceptable. In order to further this effort, Greville commissioned portraits of Emma from George Romney to create a more positive public image for Emma. The tension between Emma as a past prostitute and mistress, and the conscious efforts she and Greville made to portray her as an acceptable and legitimate woman certainly must have intrigued the public. However, regardless of her association with these powerful, socially popular men, and her efforts to refine and "better" herself, Emma was still merely a mistress. Although it was a prevalent "role" in society, mistresses were still condemned and not socially accepted by the powerful, influence-wielding upper classes, particularly when the mistresses were from a lower social level.

Elements of the theatrical abound in portraits of Emma, just as in portraits of contemporary actresses. Emma Hamilton lived a life that was connected to the theatrical. Emma worked as a model for Dr. James Graham, a quack doctor in England who gave lectures on health, beauty and sex, signifying her early relationship with posing and acting.² She was exposed to the world of the theatre at a very young age when she worked in the household of Thomas Linley, a prominent British musician and composer, beginning in 1778.³ Linley's daughter, Elizabeth, married Richard Brinsley Sheridan, a playwright, poet and owner of the Drury Lane Theatre in London. Emma's own personal interest and knowledge of the theatre, singers, actors and actresses, likely had its origins at this stage in her life. Emma's job as a maidservant to Mrs. Linley, the chief organizer and manager of Drury Lane theatre, was another crucial moment in the development of the theatrical spirit within Emma. While working at the Drury Lane theatre, Emma was probably an actress's maid, giving Emma the opportunity to witness firsthand the poses, expressions and gestures used by actresses.⁴ Additionally, while Emma was working for the Linleys, she was scolded repeatedly for reading plays and was caught acting various parts in private, leading to her eventual dismissal.⁵ Clearly, from a very young age, Emma was enamored with the world of the theatre, and it is likely that from these very formative years, Emma absorbed much of what she later exhibited in her portraits. Mistresses of a lower class were viewed in a similarly dubious light as actresses.

Like portraits of actresses which incorporated a certain element of theatricality, so too does the theatrical reveal itself in portraits of Emma. Emma likely looked to actresses for inspiration during the construction of her public self, as she likely would have recognized their common struggles. While all self-fashioning was painstaking and meticulous for women in eighteenth-century England, it was arguably the most complex for actresses. Prior to the eighteenth century, an actress's public presence in Europe was confined to the stage, granting her little to no influence outside the realm of the theatre.⁶ During the eighteenth century, however, actresses, through a newfound increased public popularity,

began to expand their roles and influence beyond the stage and theatrical realm, exerting influence over current fashion trends and social behaviors for upper-class women.⁷ This interest in actresses was not confined to the upper classes: "Curious onlookers followed their every move in the shops and streets of London, at private houses, and at pleasure gardens and resorts. Newspapers, pamphlets, and popular biographies chronicled the minutiae of their personal and professional lives."⁸ This public fascination led to the simultaneous scrutiny of, and interest in, the public and personal lives of eighteenth-century British actresses.

Undoubtedly, much of the fascination that actresses garnered from the general public was due to the vacillating perception of an actress's virtue. Actresses were frequently, and had been for centuries, associated with whores and prostitutes, criticized for displaying themselves in front of the audience so brazenly.⁹ Interestingly, the notion emerged in the eighteenth-century, however, that actresses were "fine ladies," cultivated, gifted and talented.¹⁰ Towards the end of the eighteenth-century, many of the most fashionable and well-known actresses were "the subjects of portraits that [too] represented them as fashionably dressed women of quality."¹¹ The tension between the conflicting roles, the scandalous and the virtuous, occupied by the eighteenth-century British actress was a problematic one. Actresses were just as socially unacceptable at points as mistresses in eighteenth-century England. Emma had also always suffered from the clash of the persistence of her wild past with what were perceived and thought of as her more positive attributes, such as her beauty and talent for acting. No doubt, many wondered if Emma could be written off as merely a classless and obscene social climber or if her beauty and talent for acting and drama in her portraits could imply cultivation and earn her station and class. Emma and actresses began to recognize that the solution to easing this tension required the delicate construction and handling of their public and private personas so as to influence their public reputation.¹²

The uniqueness of the actresses' profession served as one of their primary tools in working towards a deliberately crafted persona, which many actresses cleverly used to their advantage.¹³

Historian Robyn Asleson states that:

The exhibitionism that was fundamental to their profession enabled them to court publicity with relative impunity – a freedom denied women who ostensibly belonged to the private sphere. As a result, actresses were essentially the only group of women in Georgian Britain with both the power and the license to orchestrate public perceptions of themselves – chiefly through carefully contrived stage performances, but also through myriad forms of personal propaganda and self-fashioning.¹⁴

Certainly, actresses were aware that their personas existed in the public sphere beyond the constraints placed on typical British aristocratic women in the private sphere. Emma also benefited from this freedom; as a woman without social acceptance striving toward that very thing, Emma was still able to exist in the public sphere without retribution or further risk to her image. Emma's collaboration with Romney in the construction of an acceptable public persona benefited Emma greatly for Romney was so well-known for painting portraits of fashionable aristocratic women that Emma was instantly compared and likened to them.¹⁵ For these reasons, both Emma and actresses were able to become active participants in their "formation of selfhood."¹⁶

The British artist George Romney's studio was located at No. 32, Cavendish Square, and it was here that Romney enjoyed a successful career as an artist and wildly popular portraitist, painting portraits particularly of the elite and aristocratic classes. Throughout Romney's life, both personally and professionally, he was always intimately connected to the theatre, much like Emma. First and foremost, Romney was well-versed in theatre; he loved the theatre and attended it regularly.¹⁷ Some of Romney's closest friends were playwright Richard Cumberland and the tragic actors Henderson and Thomas Sheridan, intimately connecting him firsthand to the realm of the theatre.¹⁸ Additionally, many of Romney's portraits, and some of his most successful ones at that, were of prominent actresses, such as Mary Ann Yates, Dorothy Jones and Sarah Siddons.

His portrait of the actress Mary Ann Yates in *Mrs. Yates as the Tragic Muse, Melpomene*, was a great success when it was shown at the Society of Artists exhibition in 1771 (Illustration 1). This event occurred early in Romney's career, and is important because it was his first largely successful portrait of an actress. By this point in 1771, there was a large and well-established tradition of portraiture of actors and actresses, and artists such as Johan Zoffany, Thomas Gainsborough and Sir Joshua Reynolds executed these. Romney's portraits of performers, when compared to Zoffany's, Gainsborough's and Reynolds's, for example, are unique, according to historian Alex Kidson, for they "begin to reveal a deeper engagement with some of the interests of contemporary actors in the expression of the passions and the sculptural use of gesture."¹⁹ Romney was more keenly aware of contemporary theatrical issues and trends, and was more adept at translating these into portraiture than his main rivals, Sir Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Gainsborough, giving Romney a unique edge over them.

On April 12th, 1782, Emma and Romney met for the first time when Charles Greville, Romney's friend and patron, brought Emma to sit for a portrait.²⁰ Romney was overwhelmingly drawn to and engaged by Emma as a model, despite the fact that Romney's usual sitters made up the most elite of eighteenth-century British society.²¹ However, Romney immediately saw within Emma a drama that he wished to capture. Romney painted many portraits of Emma, for she sat for Romney from 1782-86 and again during 1791. Romney represented her in myriad roles throughout their artistic relationship, ranging from classical mythological characters, to historical figures, to religious personas.²² One of the many things about Emma that arrested Romney's attention was her theatrical personality and the ease with which she assumed roles and personas when sitting for him for a portrait. Emma's face was extremely expressive and Romney was, therefore, able to cast her in a broad range of guises and personas. Similarly, Sichel wrote that "Emma was by nature an ideal model . . . To Romney she was the model of all the possibilities of feeling, and every beauty in action."²³ Emma certainly flourished as Romney's most important sitter. Historian Flora Fraser maintains that "Emma was a natural pupil."²⁴

This was largely due to Emma's experience, however limited, with acting and the theatre earlier in her life, making her already familiar with accurately, insightfully and dramatically portraying emotions.²⁵

It was not just Romney who seemed to be captivated by Emma's expressiveness, drama and beauty. Many wrote about her acting abilities and her skill at depicting emotion. William Hayley, a contemporary English poet, wrote that "her features, like the language of Shakespeare, could exhibit all the feelings of nature and all the gradation of every passion with a most fascinating truth and felicity of expression."²⁶ Greville, too, wrote about Emma's extraordinary natural talent for acting, as he wrote "whether she was Lucretia or Sappho, or Scaerola or Regulus; anything grand, masculine or feminine, she could take up."²⁷ Clearly, Emma impressed many with her ability to perform great and dramatic emotions and the ease with which she could take up any mythological or classical character's guise. Emma had no formal training whatsoever when it came to acting, and her lowly background caused her viewers to wonder where she learned these skills.

Romney immediately noticed the similarities between Emma and contemporary actresses. In Romney's portraits of Emma, he includes the same conventions that he used in his portraits of contemporary stage actresses.²⁸ As Romney was very interested in contemporary British, particularly, London theatre, certainly ideas and notions of theatricality that he often saw in the theatre would have been at the forefront of his mind when painting Emma. Romney thought of Emma as "*naturally* theatrical"; when sitting for a portrait, she did not merely pose, but rather assumed the character or guise fully until she completely embodied the character.²⁹ Sichel writes that "as an actress of impressions, she stands supreme," emphasizing, once again, that Emma's sitting for Romney did not consist of mere posing and bland poses; rather, when she sat for Romney, she acted.³⁰

In Romney's rather theatrical portraits of Emma, she portrayed mythological, literary and religious figures; perhaps not coincidentally, this notion of disguise or portrayal was also a trend in contemporary aristocratic portraits.³¹ Additionally, during the period from 1776 to 1812, a great many

actresses were represented in theatrical roles and allegorical guises in a manner extremely similar to those of aristocratic women. Another aspect of Romney's theatricality embodied in portraits of Emma is "the combination of the performative and the sculptural that dominated the contemporary stage as well as the life and profile of Hamilton herself."³² In contemporary eighteenth-century British theater, actors imitated the poses of sculptures, utilized makeup to give their skin a smoothed marble look like sculpture and often dressed in ways that emulated garb from classical sculptures. Romney aimed to incorporate these same references to ancient sculpture in his art. Through Emma's close relationship with Romney, she would have certainly been aware both of Romney's ideas regarding the fusion of classically-inspired theatre and art and of contemporary trends in portraiture, leading her to aptly incorporate these theatrical ideas and easily express them through her acting of different characters for her portraits.³³

Both the inclusion of a theatrically-depicted literary guise and the inclusion of sculptural elements can be found in Romney's *Emma Hart as Circe*, 1782 (Illustration 2). Emma is shown as the mythological literary character Circe, the bewitching female sorceress in Homer's *Odyssey* who seduces Odysseus and turns his men into swine. As well as Romney's familiarity with the conventions of the mythological portrait, he may have been drawn specifically to the character of Circe for other reasons. Romney may have seen Circe as an apt and fitting character to represent Emma in this portrait. Romney perhaps alludes to the power and effect that Emma seemed to have over Greville in their relationship, as he renders Emma as the beguiling and powerfully enchanting Circe and implies a similarity between Greville and the easily-persuaded Odysseus.³⁴ Romney also may have been exposed to the idea of using Circe in a painting at the 1781 Royal Academy Exhibition, where Sir Joshua Reynolds exhibited *Mrs. Nisbett as Circe*, 1781 (Illustration 3). Mrs. Nisbett was rumored to have had a very scandalous past, which accounted for the fascination that surrounded her.³⁵ Though Mrs. Nisbett was not an actress, her identity and her subsequent portrait by Reynolds illuminate issues that are strikingly similar to the ones

brought to light by *Emma Hart as Circe*, as both women were struggling to reconcile a cloudy past with their eventual entrance into polite society.

Romney's portrait of Emma as Circe was done in the so-called "grand manner" that was prevalent in Britain in the late eighteenth century. Emma stands parallel to the picture plane, fully facing the viewer, while she is illuminated so as to make her actions, gestures and expressions visible and readable to the viewer. This mode of representation was used in portraits of aristocrats, royalty, and famous or popular individuals. Contemporary actresses were frequently painted with the conventions of grand-manner portraits. For example, Romney depicted the actress Mary Ann Yates in the classical allegorical portrait *Mrs. Yates as the Tragic Muse*, 1771, exhibited at the Society of Artists in 1771 in the grand manner style, and it was met with great general acclaim.³⁶ Actresses, painters and, indeed, Emma too, understood that portraiture was deeply saturated with notions of prestige, aggrandizement, success, fame, flattery and, above all, it ensured public visibility. Grand manner portraits were "inflected by tradition and fashion" and were intended to "represent position and impress the viewer."³⁷ Such is the way in which actresses utilized and approached portraiture, as well. Actresses' popularity thrived with visibility and "it is arguable that they exerted a more profound and pervasive impact on the visual arts than any other group of women in Britain."³⁸ Thus, achieving visibility through successful mediums, such as portraiture, was critically important to an actress working to maintain a growing career and ensure the construction of a positive public persona.

Romney and Emma's choice to paint her portrait in a grand manner guaranteed Emma the same implications from her portrait as a portrait of an actress, particularly with regards to public visibility. Historian Robyn Asleson states "actresses may have found that association with the noble themes and prestigious imagery of 'high art' helped to reinforce their claims to creative artistry and cultural authority."³⁹ Actresses used portraiture to create the image of respectability, something that the aristocratic women that they aimed to emulate already possessed. Actresses' portraits found

comparison with images of the female aristocracy in terms of their placement and their display, particularly when they were displayed side by side from one another in exhibitions, such as the annual Royal Academy exhibition, where portraits of both actresses and the aristocracy were displayed.⁴⁰ The fact that the images of actresses were regarded with the same esteem by artists and academicians as those of socialites and the aristocracy makes clear both the comparisons that must have taken place between the two groups of sitters and also the give-and-take relationship between the two groups of sitters. In effect, both portraits of actresses and aristocratic women affected and influenced a public audience. Romney was certainly aware of these associations, and would have kept these issues of aggrandizement and visibility in mind when constructing the portrait of Emma as Circe, as would have Emma. Grand manner portraits of actresses were very often the result of collaboration between the artist and the actress herself.⁴¹ Emma very likely would have exerted a considerable amount of control or influence over the way she was rendered and presented by Romney in this portrait.⁴² With Romney's help, Emma would have been able to incorporate elements of the theatrical into the portrait's aesthetics, much like contemporary actresses did. By doing so Emma would have been able to emulate the popular actresses, but she could also have a hand in controlling her own public perception, thereby making herself appear as more than a mistress.

A prime example of such collaboration can be found in the writings of the famous late eighteenth-century British actress Sarah Siddons. In her memoir, Siddons claimed that she herself was the one who chose her pose and color scheme for her portrait *Sarah Siddons as the Tragic Muse*, 1784 (Illustration 4) by Sir Joshua Reynolds.⁴³ Siddons desired the opportunity to not only give input, but the ability to make certain key decisions in the construction of her representation in this portrait.⁴⁴ Both the artist and actress played a crucial role in the construction of the actress's public persona. The artist understood how to render the sitter in a flattering way that guaranteed not only visibility but an association with the significance and prestige inherent in grand manner portraits. The actress, and I

argue Emma, through collaboration with the artist, “gained a measure of control over the construction of their public images.”⁴⁵ There were multiple significant occasions where Emma was likened to Sarah Siddons and both were described by contemporary writers in similar ways.⁴⁶ For example, English writer William Hayley’s “description of Emma appropriates the contemporary language of praising the theatrical attributes of Siddons.”⁴⁷ Some of Romney’s sketches of Emma exhibit similarities to those he had done of Siddons, furthering the likeness between the great actress and Emma that Romney and many others saw. Siddons was a “model of respectability,” and when Emma was likened to Siddons she, by extension, inherited similar qualities and virtues.

Romney drew upon classical sculptures as references and inspirations for his art. Though Romney was never formally taught Latin and Greek, he always felt a strong interest in classical antiquity, which manifested itself in his art through his choices to include classically inspired elements.⁴⁸ At the time, an interest in classicism was something of a standard interest amongst those who viewed themselves as cultured and having good taste. The discoveries at Pompeii and Herculaneum in the 1780s led to a general interest in classical antiquity, and the attention and reverence for beauty and power found in ancient art, which certainly must have influenced Romney.⁴⁹ Romney constructed an “aesthetic that had affinities with a more recent theatrical style that drew on the expression of the passions and antique sculpture for its articulation.”⁵⁰ Romney was drawn to what he perceived to be a tendency in contemporary theatre to incorporate sculptural conventions from classical antiquity into the theatre. During the late eighteenth century, both theatrical performances and paintings were heralded by critics if they incorporated sculptural elements into their final execution through, for example, lighting, costume or actor’s gestures or postures. Romney’s son discussed Romney’s interest in both classical sculpture and theatre; he wrote that Romney aimed to merge the two and often experimented with lighting in his studio so as to light the sitters in such a way that they took on the appearance of sculpture. Romney’s portrait, *Rose (Gardiner) Milles*, 1780-1783 (Illustration 5) embodies his sculptural

elements. Deliberately rendered to invoke classical ideals, Rose Milles stands in a version of a pose that is typically found in classical vase paintings and relief sculptures.⁵¹ The smoothness of her skin, particularly her cheeks, and the way her relaxed hands are positioned are also direct quotations to common classical sculptural styles. Rose Milles' gown adds to the classical feel, as it gathers at her waist and the drapery of the gown falls to the ground, and she seems to bear a resemblance to a classical sculpture. Romney, however, does not merely replicate classical sculptural elements from existing sculptures; rather, he uses them to create a distinctly sculpturally-inspired style that combines contemporary fashions with ancient statuary.

This blend of ancient statuary with contemporary fashion trends as a basis for the sculpturally-inspired poses for his sitters could not have been far from Romney's mind during the creation of *Emma Hart as Circe*. In this portrait, Emma's body is constructed as an evocation of classical sculpture. Romney, infatuated with classicism, saw Emma as the classical ideal embodied.⁵² Just as other actresses, such as Sarah Siddons, were likened to a piece of classical sculpture, so too was Emma, and in many contemporary writings and documents, Emma was often described in terms of classical sculpture.⁵³ Emma's mouth often garnered comparisons with those in Greek sculpture and was heralded as being the most beautiful part of her body.⁵⁴ Additionally, Emma's skin was likened to marble, while her forehead and chin also elicited comparisons with those in classical sculpture. Portraits of Emma by Romney often drew upon elements of classical sculptures rather than directly off of an existing sculpture.⁵⁵ In fact, Romney often created classically inspired poses, gestures and stances for Emma in portraits he made of her.⁵⁶ This inclusion of a theatrical classical style of Romney's own creation can certainly be seen in *Emma Hart as Circe*.

Romney's portrait of Emma in *Emma Hart as a Bacchante*, 1784 (Illustration 6), also called *Emma Hart with a Dog* and *Emma Hart as a Bacchante Leading a Goat*, from 1784, further reveals Romney's infatuation with classical antiquity. Emma is shown in a Grecian-inspired gown, with her hair

and gown rippling in the breeze, while an energetic dog leaps alongside her. The grape leaf in her hair adds to the Bacchic connotations of the image. Romney was a very fashionable painter during his time largely because he was the forerunner in terms of incorporating “Grecian” gowns into his portraiture in the 1770s and 1780s, which were, simultaneously, becoming a contemporary fashion for eighteenth-century British women.⁵⁷

For many sitters, certainly including actresses, a keen awareness of fashion trends was a key way in which women could express their high social position.⁵⁸ These “Grecian” gowns were flowing diaphanous dresses frequently used by Romney in his female portraiture, as he insisted that the loose drapery brought out the shape of the sitter’s body, while incorporating the classical theme that he so enjoyed.⁵⁹ Romney’s biographer, William Hayley, wrote that “Romney’s handling of drapery surpassed that of any of his contemporaries.”⁶⁰ Romney’s aristocratic female sitters recognized that he was a talented painter of “glamorous society portraits,” and Romney was able to respond to what aristocratic and upper-class women needed and desired when it came to portraiture, often through utilizing the latest and most chic fashions, such as these loose Grecian gowns.⁶¹ One such aristocratic lady, Lady Mary Beauchamp-Proctor, was painted in a portrait by Romney in classicizing garb that exemplifies Romney’s talent for depicting “Grecian” gowns. In *Mary (Palmer), Lady Beauchamp-Proctor, 1782* (Illustration 7), Romney portrayed Lady Beauchamp-Proctor in a classicizing gown that hangs loosely around her figure, while being cinched at the waist with an accenting blue ribbon. The falling fabric of the gown creates folds and pleats, adding visual interest, as well as conveying the fine quality of the linen. The gown Lady Beauchamp-Proctor wears is not a literal recreation of a classical gown; rather, it is a blend of classical antiquity influences and contemporary fashions.⁶² In conjunction with the “Grecian”-inspired gown, Lady Beauchamp-Proctor wears a blue silk scarf and white satin shoes.⁶³

Actresses often aimed to emulate representations of high-class British women and socialites in their own portraits. Many actresses were depicted in classical garb after upper-class women began

taking up the classical style in full force. Actresses therefore desired to be painted in this manner so as to reveal that, similar to aristocratic women, they possessed elegance, beauty and sophistication. Sir Joshua Reynolds, for example, included a Grecian-inspired gown in his portrait of the prostitute and courtesan turned celebrated comic actress, Frances Abington, in *Mrs. Abington as The Comic Muse*, in 1764-5 (Illustration 8). One can assume that Emma's reasons and desires for being rendered in classical garb were motivated by a similar concern to create an affinity with upper-class women who were embracing the classical style in their own portraits. This would have implied much about Emma's character and helped to construct a positive public persona. Perceived similarities between the representations between actresses and aristocratic women were, of course, exactly what actresses strived for.

Portraits of actresses became wildly popular during the late eighteenth century in Britain; indeed, images of actors and actresses could be found in paintings, prints, sculptures, caricatures, even decorated mugs and fans. There was a very strong public desire to see and have images of actresses. Moreover, actresses were economically minded, fully aware of the public's desire for images of themselves. This certainly emphasized the success in the deliberately fashioned public personas of actresses. Thus, in the spirit of commercialism, actresses "appeared in familiar fictional roles or in mythological guise, allowing the painter to explore literary themes within the context of more commercially viable portrait commissions."⁶⁴ Surely, actresses were becoming steadily more and more visible, particularly through their depictions in portraits.

Actresses pushed for and received co-authorship of their portraits, not only so that they could have some control over their representations, but also because "actresses wanted it acknowledged that they had the intelligence and taste to direct the painting of their own portraits, just as their aristocratic counterparts did."⁶⁵ An important element of the fashionable portraiture of aristocratic women in the eighteenth century in England was reference to the sitter's great propriety and virtue through the

settings of the portraits, the sitters' accoutrements, their clothing and their decorum. Actresses were perceived to be lacking virtue due to the constant accusations of their involvement in prostitution. Art historian Desmond Shawe-Taylor maintains that:

One might think that portraiture, having so much to do with externals, would concentrate on beauty and leave virtue to the poets and writers of dedications, but this is not the case. The whole thrust of serious portraiture, especially in the second half of the [eighteenth] century, is to suggest both these qualities, even to the extent that a purely beautiful portrait, if at all ostentatious or flashy, is sometimes regarded as compromising its own and its sitter's virtue.⁶⁶

While there was a certain glamour and celebrity in the portraits of actresses, the beauty and virtue with which aristocratic women were portrayed was greatly desired by actresses, and they strove to have these elements carefully, but not showily, included in their portraits. There was a reciprocal relationship between actresses and aristocratic women, for just as actresses tried to emulate the grand manner styles of aristocratic portraits, aristocratic women looked to actresses for models of innovation in portraiture styles. Beginning in the late eighteenth-century in Britain, aristocratic women began to be represented in theatrical and classical themes and manners of representation that could be found in so many contemporary portraits of actresses.⁶⁷ These theatrical-based themes for portraits were essentially spear-headed by the late eighteenth-century British actresses. Emma's portraits by Romney were also intended to emulate aristocratic female portraiture, imbued with beauty, virtue and fashion, so as to imply a likeness between Emma and ladies of propriety and station.

It was prudent for actresses to be wary of depicting themselves as beautiful, for the line between lovely and seductive was certainly prevalent in their minds and it was carefully treaded. This would have certainly been a concern for Emma who was trying to legitimate her image. Oftentimes, Emma was viewed as so beautiful and tantalizing that she was viewed as a temptress. Therefore, it was crucial that she represent herself as beautiful, so as to liken herself to the aristocratic women. Kidson writes about this portrait that it is "fit for the generic male connoisseur of the antique, its allusions unambiguous and sanctioned by classical taste," implying that while Emma is portrayed with great

beauty and allure, this portrait stays within the realm of the appropriate rather than crossing over to the enticing because its virtue is drawn from its classically-inspired nature.⁶⁸ Additionally, this incorporation of classically inspired garb added an element of the theatrical to Romney's portraits. Hence, in this portrait of Emma as a Bacchante, Emma has been rendered in a Grecian gown, which, in effect, gives Emma the appearance of being likened to the fashionable social elite.⁶⁹ This, in effect, serves to imply that there are more similarities between Emma and the aristocratic class than mere clothing, which, in turn, directly responds to the deliberate self-fashioning and construction of a public persona for Emma.

Additionally, historian David A. Cross supports the notion that the portrait served to link Emma with the respectable social elite. Cross asserts that this painting was sometimes referred to as *Diana*, in reference to the classical Roman goddess Diana, a virginal goddess associated with nature.⁷⁰ Cross argues that this was a reference to "the Petrarchan duality evident in Leonardo [da Vinci]'s *Woman with an Ermine*, [1489-1490] (Illustration 9), where a courtesan is depicted as a goddess of chastity."⁷¹ The idea embodied here - a mistress asserting that she is, in fact, more than just a mistress (going so far as to suggest that she is even pure and morally chaste) - clearly found resonance in the minds of Emma and Romney. Emma's soiled past can be, in essence, avoided by fashioning her image in such a way as other well-known and well-respected women's portraits. This portrait of Emma can be viewed as an instance where Emma's public persona is being deliberately crafted to imitate both the social elite in terms of virtue and moral respectability and the actresses in terms of celebrity and glamour.

While the two previous works show Emma in characters and guises that convey virtue and utilize classical garb as an argument for respectability through links with aristocratic portraiture, these messages of Emma's association with virtue and chastity become even more overt in Romney's *The Spinstress* (Illustration 10). As such, it seems very likely that Romney's *The Spinstress*, 1784-5, was painted to directly and unwaveringly depict her in a clearly morally upright and respectable manner. In this portrait, commissioned by Greville, Emma is shown in her own house, where Greville essentially

kept Emma from 1782 to 1786 as his mistress. Emma was largely secluded in this house. Greville believed this was a way to impose a “frugal existence of exemplary domestic virtue” upon Emma and to correct her “misguided” ways, despite the fact that he kept her as his mistress.⁷² This house was located on the outskirts of London, which, at the time, was a semi-rural and isolated area. Emma is shown seated at a spinning wheel in a rustic setting with a chicken below, adding to the rural nostalgia and simplicity of the scene.⁷³ Though *Emma Hart as a Bacchante* and *The Spinstress* both reveal notions of purity and chastity, Greville viewed *The Spinstress* as the “counterpart” to *Emma Hart as a Bacchante* in the sense that Emma is seen in *The Spinstress* to be acting as the embodiment of a modest, simple domestic maiden, rather than acting as an enchanting, carefree and blissful Bacchante.⁷⁴

Historian Kimberly Crouch stated that for “any women with public reputations, a private life was impossible to maintain. Any personal detail of lovers, children, or any social association . . . was of interest to the public.”⁷⁵ Without a doubt, it is clear that Emma’s contemporaries, both upper and lower classes, knew of her indiscretions and of her activities and relationships. Her public persona was based on her private life. Certainly, Emma’s private relationships with men were a constant source of public interest. Emma likely felt, since this was the case, that she would need to consciously fashion herself an acceptable and impressive public persona to not only redeem herself in the eyes of Greville, her lover, but also in the eyes of the public, who determined the vitality of one’s social life in eighteenth-century Britain. Interestingly though, *The Spinstress* places Emma within the domestic sphere, as Emma attempted to affirm Greville’s thoughts regarding the successes of his efforts to purify and tame her into a docile and humble lady. Emma wanted to be seen by others as the embodiment of goodness and wholesomeness, which she accomplishes via this portrait by being portrayed in a clean and simple white dress.

However, Kidson maintains that there are implicit references to Emma’s wild past within the portrait itself.⁷⁶ For example, Emma could be seen as being an eighteenth-century representation of

Penelope, who waits patiently for her husband, Odysseus, to return home to her from the bewitching ways of Circe, the subject of a previous portrait of Emma and reference to the influence she seemed to have over men. Kidson draws attention to the grape vines as a possible reference to the Bacchic theme from Emma's previous portrait as a Bacchante, symbolizing the wild ways of her past.⁷⁷ The empty birdcage above her head could be read, additionally, as a symbol of lost virginity and purity and it could serve as a reminder that, although Emma may change her ways, she will always have lost something that is irretrievable. All of these references to her rowdy and unrestrained past could be interpreted as elements that she has overcome in her quest to be wholesome and disciplined. Additionally, these references function as a kind of tongue-in-cheek joke for both Emma and Romney to appreciate. Greville was largely convinced that his efforts to tame Emma were wholly transforming her into a modest and respectable woman. However, it seems far more likely that Emma played along with Greville, acting the part of the fully changed woman while utilizing what she learned from Greville to consciously constructing an acceptable public persona with Romney's help. Emma and Romney likely found a pleasurable irony in the fact that she is rendered as the embodiment of domesticity, when, in fact, she is not. These references to her wild past that Emma and Romney included in *The Spinstress* would have served as lighthearted jab to the gullible Greville.

During the physical act of sitting for a painter for a portrait, the studio becomes a sort of stage, with the sitter ready to perform and the artist ready to record.⁷⁸ It is here that an interchange occurs between the sitter, here being Emma, and the artist, Romney. Emma acts, in this instance as a chaste and innocent lady, and portrays herself according to an emotion, idea or persona of her and Romney's choice. Emma, in effect, becomes an actress. This acting and portrayal on her part allows Emma to control the nuances of the emotions. In this case, it seems very likely that this depiction of Emma as an innocent rural seamstress is a direct response to Emma's shady past. Romney's role concerns the final depiction of Emma, which is, in essence, the manifestation of her acting. As an artist, Romney was

concerned with how the lighting highlighted her features, how she was rendered on the canvas, how she would exist within the constructed space. Certainly, there would have been verbal exchanges and discussions between the two regarding the details of the construction of the portrait, but, as is clear, not only did Romney and Emma both have a part to play in the construction of the final portrait, they were each allowed a degree of freedom within their specific and previously designated roles. This would have allowed for a certain amount of individual choice and leeway with regard to how the final portrait would appear and what elements would and would not be included. Thus, it was during the physical act of sitting for a portrait when Emma literally acted out her roles, just as a contemporary actress would have during their own sitting for her own aggrandizing portrait. Often in Britain, during the late eighteenth century, when a sitter would sit for an artist, particularly a well-known one, the session would be attended by friends of either the artist's or the sitter's, in addition to visitors or prospective patrons who would happen to be in the studio, which, again, mimicked the events of an actual theatre.⁷⁹

Emma wanted herself portrayed in *The Spinstress* specifically as a faithful simple maiden surrounded by the simplicities of a wholesome rural life to further convince Greville of her newfound goodness and changed ways. In fact, "the characters chosen for Emma often represented specifically feminine virtues" as a way of directly attempting to erase her soiled reputation by consciously constructing a positive, virtuous identity.⁸⁰ The subject of a spinstress was particularly appropriate as spinning was recognized as a wholly female task, while additionally the distaff was known as a symbol for femaleness. For example, Emma and Romney specifically picked characters and personas such as Saint Cecilia in *Emma Hart as Saint Cecilia*, 1785 (Illustration 11) and Mary Magdalene in *Emma Hart as the Magdalene*, 1791 (Illustration 12). Emma was also depicted as praying in another portrait, *Emma Hart Praying*, 1782 (Illustration 13), her eyes upturned towards the heavens while her every thought is directed there as well, as a way in which to draw attention to her positive virtues and attributes. Emma, during her time in confinement with Greville, read *The Triumphs of Temper: a Poem in Six Cantos* by

William Hayley.⁸¹ The main character Serena learns to control her emotional outbursts and conduct herself in an honorable, respectable and virtuous manner, something which Emma herself claimed to have emulated.⁸² This restraint that Emma had supposedly acquired pleased Greville immensely, and it is likely this success that Emma wished to be portrayed by Romney in *Emma Hart as Serena*. It is important to keep in mind that not only would portraits of Emma with her virtuous attributes as central to the paintings be impressive and meaningful to Greville, others would certainly have been privy to view them. Thus, the images functioned as visible ways in which Emma consciously constructed an appropriate, pleasing and acceptable persona for others to view. Additionally, these portraits too would have served as a tongue-in-cheek joke between Emma and Romney as Emma's ability to play a particular role did not accurately reflect her true nature. Despite Emma's seclusion, Greville still took her to Romney for her portraits, thus, Emma was still able to construct and fashion a persona even though she was socially excluded from those whose opinions and acceptance she cared about most.

Romney's portrait of Emma in *Emma Hart in a Straw Hat*, 1785 (Illustration 14) is a notable change from the portraits of Emma previously discussed in this examination. Emma is not represented as a literary character, as in *Emma Hart as Circe*, or a mythologically-inspired individual as in *Emma Hart as a Bacchante*, nor does she seem to represent a theoretical ideal as she did in *The Spinstress*. In *Emma Hart in a Straw Hat*, Emma is truly and completely just Emma. Emma's hat is certainly one of the most striking elements included in this painting. Hats were emerging in the late eighteenth-century, particularly the 1770s and 1780s as the most up-to-date and progressive fashions that a socially elevated woman could wear; as it conveyed that the wearer had a keen awareness of fashion, in addition to wealth and station.

Romney exhibited a great ability to consistently adapt his portraiture style to the ever-changing conventions of fashionable portraiture which contributed to his popularity and subsequent financial success.⁸³ Hats, during the 1780s, particularly those that were dramatic and intricate, grew rapidly in

popularity, and were extremely stylish and fashionable, quickly separating the classy and aristocratic from the rest of society.⁸⁴ Romney often incorporated dramatic, extremely large and elaborately decorated hats into his portraits, satisfying his female sitters' desires to be fashionable, seen in his paintings such as *Penelope (Rycroft) Lee Acton*, 1791 (Illustration 15), *Mrs. Alexander Blair*, 1787 (Illustration 16) and *Mrs. Harriet Greer*, 1781 (Illustration 17).⁸⁵ Romney even repeated this motif in other portraits he had done of Emma, such as his *Emma Hart in Morning Dress* (Illustration 18), 1782-1785, due to its popularity and its subsequent implications that Emma was indeed stylish and in vogue with contemporary fashion trends.

Romney had long been interested in incorporating hats into his portraiture, as he was interested in and fascinated by the way in which hats complemented "his own ideas of beauty and composition," part of his theories of theatrical realism, in addition to the drama and sense of theatricality they added to the portrait.⁸⁶ Romney wrote in a diary that a hat "is a part of dress which gives much softness to the face by throwing it into a half-shadow of any color that the wearer chooses."⁸⁷ Just as Romney was interested in light and shadow across a sitter's body that would render them similar to a classical sculpture, here Romney again directs his attention and interest to the dramatic play of shadow and light that hats create on the sitter's face, echoing the dramatic lighting of a theatre on an actress's face. While, for the sitters of Romney's portraits, the purpose for the inclusion of classically-inspired Grecian gowns in the 1770s and strikingly beautiful hats in the 1780s may have solely been to show them in the fashion of the moment, for Romney Grecian gowns and hats represented ways in which he could experiment with and include elements of the theatrical in his portraits while still maintaining his marketability towards his customers. Thus, Romney's theatricality functions as a means by which to appeal to his sitters and as a way in which he was able to merge his interest in theatre with his love for the dramatic.

This incorporation of theatrical lighting into portraiture particularly suited actresses, for along with the inclusion of up-to-date fashion trends, their portraits appeared to be the epitome of elegance and style. A wildly popular portrait of Sarah Siddons by Thomas Gainsborough, *Sarah Siddons*, 1785 (Illustration 19) reveals this combination of a dramatic hat with theatrical lighting. Actresses were keen to include the most up-to-date fashion trends, for one of the ways in which actresses deliberately constructed their images was through their choice in dress. By dressing fashionably and trendily, “actresses could exert additional control over the way they were perceived by their public.”⁸⁸ Additionally, actresses were looked to by high-class and fine ladies for fashion inspiration, adding to the allure and popularity surrounding actresses, for in many ways, actresses could push the boundaries of proper attire and fashion without terrible repercussions, and after this had been done, aristocratic women were free to follow in their footsteps.⁸⁹ As “nuances in conduct and demeanor, as well as dress, were significant elements in the self-fashioning of the eighteenth-century woman,” both fashionable aristocratic women and actresses alike were careful to include particular elements in their portraits so as to portray themselves in the best possible light.⁹⁰

Since the construction of identity was such a critical part of eighteenth-century female portraiture, one can only wonder why *Emma Hart in a Straw Hat* is so unclear in its messages. Emma is shown seated, leaning back into a chair, with a withdrawn and solitary look on her face as she stares straight out at the audience. Her arms, one crossed across her waist, the other drawn up to her neck, signal a timidity and reserve about her, while the shadow across her face and eyes act to shield her from view, adding to the distance one feels between Emma and themselves. She seems to peer out from beneath her bonnet with an innocent gaze.⁹¹ With the added element of the white dress and plain and simple color hues, Emma seems, at first, to be the epitome of demureness. However, this feeling of reticence surrounding Emma clashes with other elements that appear to signal a lack of inhibition on Emma’s part. Emma’s hair appears wild, sprawling atop her shoulders, while her white sash over her

black straw hat seems spontaneous and done swiftly, which seems to indicate a lack of concern for the propriety signaled by the expensive and fine straw hat.⁹² The lowering of her chin could be read as a coquettish and fetching invitation, while her body language could seem teasing and enticing; Kidson writes that “even by the mid-1780s, and notwithstanding her quiet and secluded life under Greville’s protection, she had a reputation among male connoisseurs of women.”⁹³ Even the brushstrokes that comprise her hair, bonnet and dress appear to have energy about them.⁹⁴

There is an enticing reserve about this painting as there exists a play between exuberance and reticence.⁹⁵ Tensions are abundant in this portrait. Emma’s demeanor and slouched posture seems casual, yet her dress is formal. Though Emma has elements of womanly beauty, she still possesses the childlike whimsy and coquettishness of the teenage girl she is.⁹⁶ The shadow on Emma’s face seems to “both to mystify and to mitigate” her gaze, a technique that Romney similarly used in *Catherine (Brouncker) Adye, 1784-1785* (Illustration 20).⁹⁷ Additionally, her body language at one moment seems timid and modest, while at another, her crossed arm draws attention to her breasts and thin waist as she seems to highlight what she knows to be desirable.⁹⁸ What could Emma hope to signal with this ambiguous and tantalizingly interesting portrait? The portrait certainly seems to reveal the “greater complexity in her character”; one is both intrigued and surprised by Emma consistently.⁹⁹ It would certainly seem as though the training and teaching of virtue that Greville had imposed on Emma had not managed to change her fully into a modest, proper woman. Emma seems aware here of her desirability as she seems content to pose languidly. Emma seems to be capitalizing on the tension between her identity as a woman of pleasure and a woman of fashion.¹⁰⁰

Women of pleasure, who lacked social acceptance at large, imitated the social elite, by adopting their poses and fashions, creating an ambiguity where “women of pleasure were no longer distinguishable from women of fashion.”¹⁰¹ However, in portraiture, it was at times highly probable that the social elite may have wanted to imitate those portraits of women of questionable propriety.¹⁰²

Women of questionable virtue were able, like actresses, to stretch the boundaries of portraiture in a way that aristocratic women were not able to. *Emma Hart in a Straw Hat* was a portrait that aristocratic women may have hoped for theirs to emulate.¹⁰³ Though Emma's personal indiscretions rendered her a social pariah, the general public knew all about these indiscretions, which was the exposure Emma needed to become and remain an object of social fascination. Her beauty was well-known, as it had been captured and permeated throughout eighteenth-century England by Romney's copious portraits of her, and additionally, she was well-known as Greville's mistress. Her sexuality and seductiveness were part of her intrigue and popularity, regardless of her surrounding impropriety.

Romney's portrait of Emma in *The Ambassador* from 1791 (Illustration 21) seems to represent Emma's journey in self-fashioning and the construction of a socially acceptable persona come full circle. Painted in celebration and commemoration of her wedding to Sir William Hamilton on the sixth of September, 1791, the painting includes Vesuvius as a quotation to Sir William and his deep interest in vulcanology in Naples.¹⁰⁴ This portrait marks the moment of Emma's full entrance into polite society.¹⁰⁵ Emma is shown demure and sophisticated, wearing the height of late eighteenth-century English fashions. It seems as though Emma no longer had to act a certain part to gain notoriety, nor did she have to struggle to achieve affirmation of societal worth or escape her past. Portrayed as the epitome of fashionable class, Emma seemed to have constructed a successful self. It is important to keep in mind that Emma, after her marriage to Sir William, resided in Naples, where the rules of social etiquette and the company in which Emma found herself were different. This portrait was noted contemporarily in *Gentlemen's Magazine* and the *European Magazine*. The *Gentlemen's Magazine* even described Emma as "a lady much celebrated for her elegant accomplishments and great musical abilities," affirming Emma as talented and stylish.¹⁰⁶

Emma Hamilton not only constructed a self, largely based on the tactics of actresses, that garnered her public adulation and acceptance, but she influenced many other portraits as well.

Romney's day book for 1795-1796, well after the last time he ever saw or painted Emma again, reveals the incredible frequency with which other artists borrowed and then made copies of Romney's portraits of Emma.¹⁰⁷ This is a testament to how far Emma had come. For a young woman of no class and a loose past, Emma had moved from transgressing social boundaries to establishing an acceptable public persona. Emma followed many actresses' leads, as many of the actresses themselves struggled to reach similar levels of social acceptance among the aristocratic classes. Emma managed to deliberately fashion and construct a persona for herself that gave her the social acceptance she so desired. Emma accomplished this with Romney's help by creating a public persona in portraits that was deliberately crafted to imitate the social elite in terms of moral respectability and virtue while also imitating actresses in terms of celebrity and glamour.

¹ Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus, eds., *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: roles, representations and responsibilities* (London; New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1997), 59.

² "Emma Hart, later Lady Hamilton, in a Straw Hat." *The Huntington: Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens*. Web. 2 March 2010.

³ Flora Fraser, *Emma, Lady Hamilton* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1986), 7. Much of my general bibliographic information came from this source.

⁴ Alex Kidson, *George Romney: 1734-1802* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 167.

⁵ Gita May, *Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun: The Odyssey of an Artist in an Age of Revolution* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2005), 92.

⁶ Robyn Asleson, ed., *Notorious Muse: The Actress in British Art and Culture 1776-1812*, (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2003), 1.

⁷ Asleson, *Notorious Muse*, 1.

⁸ Asleson, *Notorious Muse*, 1.

⁹ Barker, eds., *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England*, 65.

¹⁰ Barker, eds., *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England*, 65.

¹¹ Barker, eds., *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England*, 73.

¹² Barker, eds., *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England*, 59.

¹³ Asleson, *Notorious Muse*, 1.

¹⁴ Asleson, *Notorious Muse*, 1.

¹⁵ David A. Cross, *A Striking Likeness: The Life of George Romney* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2000), 107.

Historian David Cross states, that these women "sought an artist who could suspend them for posterity in that elusive state known as 'grace,' such that they might be taken for an 'ancient divinity who has strayed into society.'"

¹⁶ Patricia Smyth, "Calculated Uncertainty: Georgian Theater and the Construction of Feminine Identities," *Oxford Art Journal* 31(2008): 439.

¹⁷ Alex Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination: Essays on George Romney*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 135. Kidson's book was a good source of information on the late eighteenth-century tradition of the portraiture of theatrical figures. Kidson's book also provided a very useful discussion of Romney's involvement in the contemporary British theatrical milieu. Kidson states that Romney was particularly a fan of Shakespeare.

When viewing Romney's drawings and sketches of Shakespearean subjects, they "often exhibit the shallow space and frieze-like arrangement of characters that characterized the contemporary convention of actors performing." (Kidson 131)

¹⁸ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 131. This book also provided a useful discussion of Romney's appreciation of Emma's theatrical and malleable character.

¹⁹ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 137.

²⁰ Kidson, *George Romney: 1734-1802*, 167.

²¹ Cross, *A Striking Likeness*, 121. This book also provided a useful discussion of Romney's appreciation of Emma's theatrical and malleable character.

²² Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 146.

²³ Walter Sichel, *Emma, Lady Hamilton*, (London: Archibald Constable and Company, Ltd.), 1907, 22.

²⁴ Fraser, *Emma, Lady Hamilton*, 27.

²⁵ Colin Simpson, *Emma, the life of Lady Hamilton* (London; Sydney; Toronto: Bodley Head, 1983), 24.

²⁶ Kidson, *George Romney: 1734-1802*, 202.

²⁷ Simpson, *Emma, the life of Lady Hamilton*, 53.

²⁸ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 146-147. Kidson further states "Romney's tendency to sketch scenes from Shakespeare's plays in between his portrait drawings of Lady Hamilton reveals the way in which his imagination was stimulated to associate her with the wider sphere of the drama. His inclusion of Hamilton's face in representations of Cassandra, Miranda and Titania for the Shakespeare Gallery finally realize the theatricalization of Hamilton in Romney's imagination. Although these could equally register Romney's fascination with the drama, the insertion of the real (and by then well-known) Emma into dramatic scenes of the Shakespeare Gallery transformed the dramatic poetry of the scene into the specificity and occasionality of a performed event."

²⁹ Sichel, *Emma, Lady Hamilton*, 11.

³⁰ Sichel, *Emma, Lady Hamilton*, 17.

³¹ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 145.

³² Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 147.

³³ Fraser, *Emma, Lady Hamilton*, 27.

³⁴ Kidson, *George Romney: 1734-1802*, 178.

³⁵ John Davis and Jaroslaw Leshko, *Smith College Museum of Art: European and American Painting and Sculpture, 1760-1960* (Hudson Hills Press, 2000), 108.

³⁶ Heather McPherson, "Review: Reconsidering Romney," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 36(2003): 419.

³⁷ McPherson, "Review: Reconsidering Romney," 419.

³⁸ Asleson, *Notorious Muse*, 2.

³⁹ Asleson, *Notorious Muse*, 2.

⁴⁰ Smyth, "Calculated Uncertainties," 440.

⁴¹ Smyth, "Calculated Uncertainties," 440.

⁴² Barker, eds., *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England*, 74. Crouch states that "although it could be argued that the images of actresses were merely the means through which artists and patrons displayed their own ideas about such women, evidence can be offered which suggests that the subjects had some control over the way they were presented."

⁴³ Michael Corder and Peter Holland, eds., *Players, Playwrights, Playhouses: Investigating Performance, 1660-1800* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 275. Siddons wrote: "I was, as I have confess'd, an ambitious candidate for fame . . . As much of my time as could now be stol'n from imperious affairs, was employ'd in sitting for various Pictures." Historian Shearer West states that "the implication of Siddons's reference to 'fame' is that she felt artists could provide longevity to an actor whose stage performances were by definition ephemeral. A portrait could thus supply a monument for posterity and a means of elevating the actor's normally fleeting reputation," effectively rendering Siddons not simply visible, but permanent.

⁴⁴ Smyth, "Calculated Uncertainties," 440.

⁴⁵ Asleson, *Notorious Muse*, 2.

⁴⁶ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 146-147.

⁴⁷ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 146-147.

-
- ⁴⁸ Fraser, *Emma, Lady Hamilton*, 25.
- ⁴⁹ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 147.
- ⁵⁰ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 131-132.
- ⁵¹ "Rose (Gardiner) Milles." *The Huntington: Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens*. Web. 2 March 2010.
- ⁵² Marjorie Bowen, *Patriotic Lady: Emma, Lady Hamilton, the Neapolitan Revolution of 1799, and Horatio, Lord Nelson*, (New York; London: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1936), 24.
- ⁵³ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 146.
- ⁵⁴ Fraser, *Emma, Lady Hamilton*, 25.
- ⁵⁵ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 146.
- ⁵⁶ Simpson, *Emma, the life of Lady Hamilton*, 24.
- ⁵⁷ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 24.
- ⁵⁸ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 49.
- ⁵⁹ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 24.
- ⁶⁰ "Rose (Gardiner) Milles." Web.
- ⁶¹ Cross, *A Striking Likeness*, 107.
- ⁶² "Mary (Palmer), Lady Beauchamp-Proctor." *The Huntington: Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens*. Web. 2 March 2010.
- ⁶³ "Mary (Palmer), Lady Beauchamp-Proctor." Web.
- ⁶⁴ Smyth, "Calculated Uncertainties," 440.
- ⁶⁵ Barker, eds., *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England*, 74.
- ⁶⁶ Desmond Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians: Eighteenth-Century Portraiture and Society* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1990), 100.
- ⁶⁷ Barker, eds., *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England*, 73.
- ⁶⁸ Kidson, *George Romney: 1734-1802*, 185.
- ⁶⁹ Barker, eds., *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England*, 58.
- ⁷⁰ Cross, *A Striking Likeness*, 122.
- ⁷¹ Cross, *A Striking Likeness*, 122.
- ⁷² Kidson, *George Romney: 1734-1802*, 184.
- ⁷³ Cross, *A Striking Likeness*, 121.
- ⁷⁴ Kidson, *George Romney: 1734-1802*, 185.
- ⁷⁵ Barker, eds., *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England*, 64.
- ⁷⁶ Kidson, *George Romney: 1734-1802*, 185.
- ⁷⁷ Kidson, *George Romney: 1734-1802*, 185.
- ⁷⁸ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 145.
- ⁷⁹ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 146.
- ⁸⁰ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 146-147.
- ⁸¹ Cross, *A Striking Likeness*, 122.
- ⁸² Cross, *A Striking Likeness*, 122.
- ⁸³ Kidson, *George Romney: 1734-1802*, 12.
- ⁸⁴ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 49.
- ⁸⁵ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 49.
- ⁸⁶ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 49.
- ⁸⁷ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 49.
- ⁸⁸ Barker, eds., *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England*, 71.
- ⁸⁹ Barker, eds., *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England*, 73. Interestingly, it has been suggested that many eighteenth-century English actresses' predilections for fashion were attempts by the actresses to associate themselves with aristocratic fine ladies.
- ⁹⁰ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 53.
- ⁹¹ "Emma Hart, later Lady Hamilton, in a Straw Hat." Web.
- ⁹² "Emma Hart, later Lady Hamilton, in a Straw Hat." Web.
- ⁹³ Kidson, *George Romney: 1734-1802*, 187.

⁹⁴ Kidson, *George Romney: 1734-1802*, 186.

⁹⁵ Kidson, *George Romney: 1734-1802*, 186.

⁹⁶ "Emma Hart, later Lady Hamilton, in a Straw Hat." Web.

⁹⁷ "Emma Hart, later Lady Hamilton, in a Straw Hat." Web.

⁹⁸ "Emma Hart, later Lady Hamilton, in a Straw Hat." Web. "Romney, an inveterate theater-goer, would have been familiar with the stage convention that 'the holding of your Arms close is a sign of Bashfulness, Modesty, and Diffidence.' Yet by caressing the spotlit chin, encircling the waist, and hugging the breasts, the sitter's body language also calls attention to her physical desirability."

⁹⁹ "Emma Hart, later Lady Hamilton, in a Straw Hat." Web.

¹⁰⁰ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 52.

¹⁰¹ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 52.

¹⁰² Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 52.

¹⁰³ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 52.

¹⁰⁴ Cross, *A Striking Likeness*, 125.

¹⁰⁵ Kidson, *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination*, 52.

¹⁰⁶ Fraser, *Emma, Lady Hamilton*, 146.

¹⁰⁷ "Emma Hart, later Lady Hamilton, in a White Turban." *The Huntington: Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens*. Web. 2 March 2010.

Bibliography

- Asleson, Robyn, ed. *Notorious Muse: The Actress in British Art and Culture 1776-1812*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2003.
- Asleson, Robyn, ed. *A Passion For Performance: Sarah Siddons and her Portraitists*. Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1999.
- Baillio, Joseph. *Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun: 1755-1842*. Fort Worth: Kimbell Art Museum, 1982. Print.
- Barker, Hannah and Elaine Chalus, eds. *Gender in eighteenth-century England: roles, representations, and responsibilities*. London; New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1997.
- Bermingham, Ann. "The Aesthetics of Ignorance: the Accomplished Woman in the Culture of Connoisseurship." *Oxford Art Journal* 16.2 (1993): 3-20.
- Bowen, Marjorie. *Patriotic Lady: Emma, Lady Hamilton, the Neapolitan Revolution of 1799, and Horatio, Lord Nelson*. New York; London: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1936.
- "Catherine (Brouncker) Adye, later Catherine Willett." *The Huntington: Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens*. Web. 2 March 2010.
- "Charlotte (Pilford) Grove." *The Huntington: Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens*. Web. 2 March 2010.
- Cordner, Michael and Peter Holland, eds. *Players, Playwrights, Playhouses: Investigating Performance, 1660-1800*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007.
- Cross, David A. *A Striking Likeness: The Life of George Romney*. Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2000.
- Danby, Frank. *Nelson's Legacy: Lady Hamilton, Her Story and Tragedy*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915.
- Davis, John and Jaroslaw Leshko. *Smith College Museum of Art: European and American Painting and Sculpture, 1760-1960*. Hudson Hills Press, 2000.
- Deutsch, O.E. "Sir William Hamilton's Picture Gallery." *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 82.479 (1943): 36-41.
- Dowler, Lorraine, Josephine Carubia and Bonj Szczygiel, eds. *Gender and Landscape: Renegotiating morality and space*. London; New York: Routledge, 2005.
- "Emma Hart, later Lady Hamilton, in a Straw Hat." *The Huntington: Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens*. Web. 2 March 2010.

"Emma Hart, later Lady Hamilton, in a White Turban." *The Huntington: Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens*. Web. 2 March 2010.

Ewart, Andrew. *The Great Lovers*. New York City: Hart Publishing Company, Inc., 1967.

Faxon, Alicia Craig. "Preserving the Classical Past: Sir William and Lady Emma Hamilton." *Visual Resources*. 20.4 (2004): 259-73.

Foster, Barbara, Michael Foster and Letha Hadady. *Three in Love: ménages à trois from ancient to modern times*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997.

Fowler, R. "'On Not Knowing Greek:' The Classics and the Woman of Letters." *The Classical Journal* 78.4 (1983): 337-349.

Fraser, Flora. *Emma, Lady Hamilton*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1986.

Goodman, Elise. *Art and Culture in the Eighteenth Century: New Dimensions and Multiple Perspectives*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001.

Goring, Paul. *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Hardwick, Mollie. *Emma, Lady Hamilton*. New York; Chicago; San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970.

Hyde, Melissa and Jennifer Milam, eds. *Women, Art and the Politics of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Europe*. Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2003.

Ittershagen, Ulrike. *Lady Hamiltons Attitüden*. Mainz: von Zabern, 1999.

Jones, Robert W. *Gender and the Formation of Taste in Eighteenth-Century Britain: The Analysis of Beauty*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Kidson, Alex. *George Romney: 1734-1802*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Kidson, Alex. *Those Delightful Regions of Imagination: Essays on George Romney*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.

Kittredge, Katharine, ed. *Lewd & Notorious: Female Transgressions in the Eighteenth Century*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003.

Luckhurst, Mary and Jane Moody, eds. *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Malafarina, Gianfranco. "George Romney (1734-1802)." *FMR (Black Edition)* 116 (2002): 8-9.

"Mary (Palmer), Lady Beauchamp-Proctor." *The Huntington: Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens*. Web. 2 March 2010.

- May, Gita. *Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun: The Odyssey of an Artist in an Age of Revolution*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2005.
- McPherson, Heather. "Review: Reconsidering Romney." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 36:3 (2003): 411-422.
- Moorhouse, E. Hallam. *Nelson's Lady Hamilton*. London: Methuen & Co., 1911.
- Nolta, David D. "The Body of the Collector and the Collected Body in William Hamilton's Naples." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 31.1 (1997): 108-114.
- Pearson, Andrea, ed. *Women and Portraits in Early Modern Europe: Gender, Agency, Identity*. Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008.
- "Penelope (Rycroft) Lee Acton." *The Huntington: Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens*. Web. 2 March 2010.
- Perry, Gillian and Michael Rossington, eds. *Femininity and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Art and Culture*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994.
- Postle, Martin, ed. *Joshua Reynolds: The Creation of Celebrity*. London: Tate, 2005.
- Postle, Martin. *Sir Joshua Reynolds: A Complete Catalogue of His Paintings v.1 & v.2*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2000.
- Pullan, Kirsten. *Actresses and Whores: On Stage and in Society*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- "Rose (Gardiner) Milles." *The Huntington: Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens*. Web. 2 March 2010.
- Rosenthal, Angela. *Angelica Kauffman: art and sensibility*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2006.
- Russell, Gillian. *Women, Sociability and Theatre in Georgian London*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Schofield, Mary Anne and Cecilia Macheski, eds. *Curtain Calls: British and American Women and the Theater*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1991.
- Shawe-Taylor, Desmond. *The Georgians: Eighteenth-Century Portraiture and Society*. London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1990.
- Sherrard, Owen A. *A Life of Emma Hamilton*. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd., 1927.
- Sichel, Walter. *Emma, Lady Hamilton*. London: Archibald Constable and Company, Ltd., 1907.
- Simpson, Colin. *Emma, the life of Lady Hamilton*. London; Sydney; Toronto: Bodley Head, 1983.

Smyth, Patricia. "Calculated Uncertainty: Georgian Theater and the Construction of Feminine Identities." *Oxford Art Journal* 31.3 (2008): 439-442.

Touchette, Lori-Ann. "Sir William Hamilton's 'pantomime mistress: Emma Hamilton and Her Attitudes.'" *The Impact of Italy: The Grand Tour and Beyond*, ed. Clare Hornsby. London: The British School at Rome, 2000.

Tufts, Eleanor. "Vigée Le Brun." *Art Journal* 42.4 (1982): 335-338.

Vincent, Edgar. *Nelson: Love and Fame*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2003.

Watson, J.C. "The Paintings of Emma Hart (Lady Hamilton) by George Romney: A Study of Their Significance in Relation to Historical Works." *Allen Memorial Art Museum Bulletin* 33.1 (1975-76): 51-53.

Watson, Jennifer C. "Romney's Portrait of Lady Elizabeth Foster." *The Burlington Magazine* 131.1040 (Nov., 1989): 770-772.

West, Shearer. *The Image of the Actor: Verbal and visual representation in the age of Garrick and Kemble*. London: Pinter Publishers Limited, 1991.

Williams, Kate. *England's mistress: the infamous life of Emma Hamilton*. London: Hutchinson, 2006.



Illustration 1: George Romney, Mrs Yates as the Tragic Muse, 1771.



Illustration 2: George Romney, Emma Hart as Circe, 1782.



Illustration 3: Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Mrs Nisbett as Circe*, 1781.



Illustration 4: Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Sarah Siddons as the Tragic Muse*, 1784.



Illustration 5: George Romney, Rose (Gardiner) Milles, 1780-1783.



Illustration 6: George Romney, *Emma Hart as a Bacchante*, 1784.



Illustration 7: Mary (Palmer), Lady Beauchamp-Proctor, 1782-1788.



Illustration 8: Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Mrs. Abington as The Comic Muse*, 1764-5.



Illustration 9: Leonardo da Vinci, *Woman with an Ermine*, 1489-1490.



Illustration 10: George Romney, *The Spinstress*, 1784-5.



Illustration 11: George Romney, *Emma Hart as Saint Cecilia*, 1785.



Illustration 12: George Romney, *Emma Hart as the Magdalene*, 1791.



Illustration 13: George Romney, *Emma Hart Praying*, 1782.



Illustration 14: George Romney, *Emma Hart in a Straw Hat*, 1785.



Illustration 15: George Romney, *Penelope (Rycroft) Lee Acton*, 1791.



Illustration 16: George Romney, *Mrs. Alexander Blair*, 1787.



Illustration 17: George Romney, *Mrs. Harriet Greer*, 1781.



Illustration 18: George Romney, *Emma Hart in Morning Dress*, 1782-1785.



Illustration 19: Thomas Gainsborough, *Sarah Siddons*, 1785.



Illustration 20: George Romney, *Catherine Brouncker) Adye, later Catherine Willett*, 1784-1785.



Illustration 21: George Romney, *The Ambassador*, 1791.