Université de Montréal

Emma Hamilton, a Model of Agency in Late Eighteenth-Century Europe

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Résumé français et mots clés français

Emma Hamilton (1765-1815) eut un impact considérable à un moment charnière de l'histoire et de l'art européens. Faisant preuve d'une énorme résilience, elle trouva un moyen efficace d'affirmer son agentivité et fut une source d'inspiration puissante pour des générations de femmes et d'artistes dans leur propre quête d'expression et de réalisation de soi. Cette thèse démontre qu'Emma tira sa puissance particulière de sa capacité à négocier des identités différentes et parfois même contradictoires – objet et sujet ; modèle et portraiturée ; artiste, muse et œuvre d'art ; épouse, maîtresse et prostituée ; roturière et aristocrate ; mondaine et ambassadrice : et interprète d'une myriade de caractères historiques, bibliques, littéraires et mythologiques, tant masculins que féminins. Épouse de l'ambassadeur anglais à Naples, favorite de la reine de Naples et amante de l'amiral Horatio Nelson, elle fut un agent sur la scène politique pendant l'époque révolutionnaire et napoléonienne. Dans son ascension sociale vertigineuse qui la mena de la plus abjecte misère aux plus hauts échelons de l'aristocratie anglaise, elle sut s'adapter, s'ajuster et se réinventer. Elle reçut et divertit d'innombrables écrivains, artistes, scientifiques, nobles, diplomates et membres de la royauté. Elle participa au développement et à la dissémination du néoclassicisme au moment même de son efflorescence. Elle créa ses *Attitudes*, une performance répondant au goût de son époque pour le classicisme, qui fut admirée et imitée à travers l'Europe et qui inspira des générations d'interprètes féminines. Elle apprit à danser la tarentelle et l'introduisit dans les salons aristocratiques. Elle influença un réseau de femmes s'étendant de Paris à Saint-

Pétersbourg et incluant Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, Germaine de Staël et Juliette Récamier. Modèle hors pair, elle inspira plusieurs artistes pour la production d'œuvres qu'ils reconnurent comme parmi leurs meilleures. Elle fut représentée par les plus grands artistes de son temps, dont Angelica Kauffman, Benjamin West, Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, George Romney, James Gillray, Joseph Nollekens, Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Lawrence et Thomas Rowlandson. Elle bouscula, de façon répétée, les limites et mœurs sociales. Néanmoins, Emma ne tentait pas de présenter une identité cohérente, unifiée, polie. Au contraire, elle était un kaléidoscope de multiples « sois » qu'elle gardait actifs et en dialogue les uns avec les autres, réarrangeant continuellement ses facettes afin de pouvoir simultanément s'exprimer pleinement et présenter aux autres ce qu'ils voulaient voir.

Mots clefs :

Emma Hamilton, agentivité, Attitudes, classicisme, modèle, muse, néoclassicisme, portrait, George Romney, Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun

Résumé anglais et mots clés anglais

Emma Hamilton (1765-1815) had a marked impact at a pivotal moment in European history and art. This dissertation shows that Emma drew her particular potency from her ability to negotiate these different and at times contradictory identities—object and subject; model and sitter; artist, muse, and work of art; wife, mistress, and prostitute; commoner and aristocrat; socialite and ambassadress; and performer of myriad historical, biblical, literary, and mythological male and female characters. Emma displayed astonishing resilience, found an effective way to assert her agency, and was a powerful inspiration for generations of artists and of women in their own search for expression and self-actualization. The wife of England's ambassador to Naples, the favourite of the queen of Naples, and the lover of Admiral Horatio Nelson, she was an agent on the political stage during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic era. She adapted, adjusted, and reinvented herself in her dizzying rise from rags to riches. She entertained and beguiled countless writers, artists, scientists, aristocrats, politicians, and royalty. She participated in the dissemination of Neoclassicism in Europe at the very moment of its efflorescence. She created her Attitudes, a performance that tapped into her epoch's taste for classicism, was admired and imitated throughout Europe, and inspired generations of female performers. She learnt to dance the tarantella and introduced it into aristocratic drawing rooms. She influenced an early nineteenth-century network of women that spanned Paris to St Petersburg and included Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, Germaine de Staël, and Juliette Récamier. An unmatched model and sitter, she inspired artists to produce what they

acknowledged to be some of their best work. She appeared in works produced by the major artists of her time, among whom Angelica Kauffman, Benjamin West, Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, George Romney, James Gillray, Joseph Nollekens, Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Lawrence, and Thomas Rowlandson. And she repeatedly pushed against the limits of social mores. Nevertheless, Emma did not attempt to present a coherent, unified, polished identity. Instead, she was a kaleidoscope of different selves that she kept active and in dialogue with each other, constantly reconfiguring the pieces so that she could simultaneously express herself fully and present to others what they wanted to see.

Keywords:

Emma Hamilton, agency, Attitudes, classicism, model, muse, Neoclassicism, portrait, George Romney, Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun

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To Sam and Ben

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Introduction

Emma Hamilton, “the most extraordinary compound ever beheld”

Emma Hamilton was no “silly little thing.”[1] She had a marked impact at a pivotal moment in European history and art. The wife of England’s ambassador to Naples, the favourite of the queen of Naples, and the lover of Admiral Horatio Nelson, she was an agent on the political stage during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic era. She adapted, adjusted, and reinvented herself in her dizzying rise from rags to riches. She participated in the dissemination of Neoclassicism in Europe at the very moment of its efflorescence. She entertained and beguiled countless writers, artists, scientists, aristocrats, politicians, and royalty, key figures of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century that included Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and the Prince of Wales. She created her *Attitudes*, a performance that tapped into her epoch’s taste for classicism, was admired and imitated throughout Europe, and inspired generations of female performers. She learnt to dance the tarantella and introduced it into aristocratic drawing rooms. She influenced an early nineteenth-century network of women that spanned Paris to St Petersburg and included Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, Germaine de Staël, and Juliette Récamier. An unmatched model and sitter, she inspired artists to produce what they acknowledged to be some of their best work. She appeared in works produced by the major artists of her time, among

[1] Critic cited by Frances Newman, “Noctes Neapolitanae: Sir William Hamilton and Emma, Lady Hamilton at the Court of Ferdinand IV,” *Illinois Classical Studies* 27-28 (2002-03): 213-232, p. 213. Newman specifies that this critic was a man.

whom Angelica Kauffman, Benjamin West, Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, George Romney, James Gillray, Joseph Nollekens, Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Lawrence, and Thomas Rowlandson. And she repeatedly pushed against the limits of social mores. My aim is to show that in skilfully negotiating these different identities, Emma provided a strong model of agency, creativity, and self-actualization.

Although I find the practice of designating female historical figures by their first names demeaning and marginalizing, I have decided to refer to my subject as Emma. Part of the difficulty here is that Emma was known successively as Amy Lyon, Emma Lyon, Emma Hart, and finally Emma, Lady Hamilton. In the period that this dissertation covers, she was both Hart and Hamilton, so I felt that the use of either one of those surnames, or both, would have been confusing. Amy Lyon was her name at birth. Her protector Charles Greville imposed the name Hart on her in 1782. And Hamilton was her husband's surname, which she adopted when she got married in 1791. Emma seems to be the only name she gave herself. I feel "Emma" has the advantage of reflecting both society's expectations of a woman in her position and her own aspirations. It takes into account at once her status as an object, without a last name, but also as a subject, with agency, working the system to carve out a place for herself in society.

Literature review and historiography

Emma has never completely disappeared from the public imagination. The year of her death, 1815, saw the publication of the anonymous *Memoirs of Lady Hamilton*, a scandal-mongering text with the obvious aim of launching her posthumous reputation on an opprobrious course.[2] Highly successful, it was reprinted numerous times and was translated into French as early as 1816.[3] Emma featured regularly in the writings of her contemporaries, from William Hayley's biography of George Romney (1809) to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Italienische Reise* (1816-17), Henry Angelo's *Reminiscences* (1828-30), and Vigée-Le Brun's *Souvenirs* (1835-37). In the mid-1860s, Alexandre Dumas published two novels based on Emma's life.[4] In the 1880s and 1890s, historians began to take a keen interest in Emma's story, and in the first decade of the twentieth century, a flurry of writings on Emma coincided with the centenary of Nelson's death. Thereafter, Emma appeared uninterruptedly in publications that ranged from historical accounts, biographies, and correspondence to plays, operas, and romance novels. Some of these publications continued in the vein of the anonymous 1815 book and presented her as a manipulative woman who had tricked her way up the social ladder. Others were

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[2] Anonymous, *Memoirs of Lady Hamilton; with illustrative anecdotes of many of her most particular friends and distinguished contemporaries*. It was published in 1815 in London by Henry Colburn, in New York by David Huntington, and in Philadelphia by Moses Thomas.

[3] Aonymous, M*émoires de Lady Hamilton ... ou, Choix d'anecdotes curieuses sur cette femme célèbre, tirées des relations anglaises les plus authentiques*, Paris: Dentu, 1816.

[4] Alexandre Dumas (1802-1870) was in Naples from 1861 to 1864, where he became director of museums and excavations. He published *La San Felice* in 1864, the second part of which is called *Emma Lyonna*, and *Souvenirs d'une favorite*, sometimes also known as *Confessions d'une favorite*, the following year.

more sympathetic and focused on her treatment at the hands of men and on the limited options that were available to her in the society in which she progressed.[5]

In the late twentieth century, art historians began to take an interest in Emma.[6] Their studies have provided a greater understanding of Emma's place and significance in the development of late-eighteenth and early nineteenth-century art. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, a spate of studies on the history of the Grand Tour generated a great deal of interest in Emma, as did the bicentenaries of the deaths of George Romney

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[5] The titles are often evocative of the writer's feelings toward their subject. See for instance Walter Sichel, *Emma, lady Hamilton*, London: Archibald Constable and Co., Ltd., 1905; Joseph Turquan, Jules d'Auriac, and Lillian Wiggins, *A Great Adventuress: Lady Hamilton and the Revolution in Naples*, London: H. Jenkins, 1914; Alfred Richard Meyer, *Lady Hamilton oder die Posen-Emma oder von Dienstmädchen zum Beefsteak à la Nelson*, ill. George Grosz, Berlin: Fritz Gurlitt, 1923; E. Barrington, *The Divine Lady: A Romance of Nelson and Emma Hamilton*, New York: Dodd, Mead, 1924; Albert Flament, *Une ennemie de Napoléon, Lady Hamilton*, Paris: Flammarion, 1927; Marjorie Bowen, *Patriotic Lady: Emma, Lady Hamilton, the Neapolitan Revolution of 1799, and Horatio, Lord Nelson*, New York and London: D. Appleton-Century, 1936; Paul Reboux, *Lady Hamilton, ambassadrice de l'amour*, Paris: Sfelt, 1946; Terence Rattigan, *A Bequest to the Nation: A Play*, London: Evans, 1971; and Susan Sontag, *The Volcano Lover, a Romance*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1992.

[6] Betsy Bolton, "Sensibility and Speculation: Emma Hamilton," in *Lewd and Notorious: Female Transgression in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Katharine Kitteredge, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003, p. 133-161; Elise Bruhl and Michael Gamer, "Emma and Fatima Hamilton: Two Forms of Attitude," in *Race, Romanticism, and the Atlantic*, ed. Paul Youngquist, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013, p. 183-212; Kate Davies, "Pantomime, Connoisseurship, Consumption: Emma Hamilton and the Politics of Embodiment," *CW3 Journal* 2 (Winter 2004) http://www2.shu.ac.uk/corvey/CW3journal/issue%20two/davies.html, accessed 21 March 2007; Andrew D. Hottle, "More than 'a preposterous neo-classic rehash': Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun's *Sibyl* and its Virgilian Connotations," *Aurora, The Journal of the History of Art* 11 (2010): 120-146; Amber Ludwig, "Becoming Emma Hamilton: Portraiture and Self-Fashioning in Late Enlightenment Europe," PhD dissertation, Boston University, 2012; Marcia Pointon, *Strategies for Showing: Women, Possession, and Representation in English Visual Culture, 1665-1800*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997; and Lori-Ann Touchette, "Sir William Hamilton's 'Pantomime Mistress': Emma Hamilton and Her Attitudes," in *The Impact of Italy: The Grand Tour and Beyond*, ed. Clare Hornsby, London: The British School at Rome, 2000, p. 123-146.

in 2002 and of Nelson in 2005. For the most part, these are articles and book chapters and focus on a single issue, often as part of a larger discussion. My dissertation, which is greatly indebted to these writings, aims to present a more comprehensive study of Emma, one that looks closely at some of the key representations of her and that relates them to her performances and to her environment, in particular late eighteenth-century Naples.

Methodological framework

In her study of late eighteenth-century female amateur performers, Ann Bermingham describes Emma as a "blank screen on which masculine desire could project itself."[7] While I agree with Bermingham that many have viewed Emma as an object that could be gazed at, exchanged, and consumed, I believe that she was also able to affirm her subjectivity. But I disagree with the argument at the other extreme, expounded by Amber Ludwig, for instance, that Emma straightforwardly asserted her subjectivity and "became Emma Hamilton," as if she had fashioned for herself a fixed identity.[8] As numerous scholars have argued, identity is multi-layered and in constant flux.[9] My argument is that

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[7] Ann Bermingham, "The Aesthetics of Ignorance: The Accomplished Woman in the Culture of Connoisseurship," *Oxford Art Journal* 16.2 (1993): 3-20, p. 16.

[8] Ludwig, "Becoming Emma Hamilton," p. vii.

[9] For arguments about the way the limited notion of identity is contested in the eighteenth century, and particularly in allegorical portraiture, see Kathleen Nicholson, "The Ideology of Feminine 'Virtue': The Vestal Virgin in French Eighteenth-Century Allegorical Portraiture," in *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*, ed. Joanna Woodall, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997: 52-72, and Gillian Perry, "Women in

Emma was simultaneously object and subject, that she constantly negotiated these and other seemingly contradictory identities, and that in doing so, she was able to arrogate an agency for herself that proved inspiring to others.

The question of subjecthood and objecthood has been addressed through different theoretical lenses, including Marxism, psychoanalysis, and feminism.[10] Although understandings of the question have varied, they have traditionally shared some notions regarding relationships to power. The object is powerless, while the subject has power over its self and the object. The subject acts upon the world. The object is part of the world that is acted upon by the subject. More recently, thinkers have rejected this simple, dichotomous separation between object and subject. Rather than starting from the position that some individuals are subjects and others objects, these studies contend that each individual is at once both subject and object.

Michel Foucault's writings focus on the power relationships between social forces and the individual. He calls the process whereby the individual becomes a subject

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disguise: likeness, the Grand Style and the conventions of 'feminine' portraiture in the work of Sir Joshua Reynolds," in *Femininity and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Art and Culture*, ed. Gillian Perry and Michael Rossington, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994: 18-40.

[10] Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* [1844], trans. Martin Milligan, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1959 (in particular the third manuscript). Also available at http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Economic-Philosophic-Manuscripts-1844.pdf, accessed 3 September 2013. In the early twentieth century, Georg Lukács was to expand further on this question. See Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* [1912-13], trans. Rodney Livingstone, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971. Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* [1905], trans. James Strachey [1962], New York: Basic Books, 1975. Jacques Lacan, *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse* [1973], Paris: Seuil, 1990. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16.3 (Autumn 1975): 6-18. Thomas B. Hess and Linda Nochlin, *Woman as Sex Object: Studies in Erotic Art, 1730-1970*. London: Allen Lane, 1973. A fuller discussion of the subject / object dialectic lies outside the scope of this dissertation. My aim here is to outline the main body of work that has informed my thinking and that I use in my examination of Emma Hamilton's performances and representations.

subjectivation, and names one of its modalities *assujettissement*.[11] In this modality, the individual becomes a subject at the moment when s/he becomes subjected to society's structures. Hence the double meaning of *assujettissement*: the individual becomes at once a "subject" and "subjected to." Because of this process, Foucault argues, the possibility of resisting the societal structures to which we adhere in our *subjectivation* is inscribed in the very process of subject formation. He states, "Every power relationship implies, at least *in potentia*, a strategy of struggle."[12] This opens up the possibility of different forms of resistance.

Some feminist scholars, including this one, seize upon these concepts and reflect on the spaces available for women to resist their subordinate status in society. While acknowledging that women have historically had fewer opportunities than men, they reject the idea that women have been passive victims of their condition and show that the very structures that have kept them silenced and oppressed have also provided openings for expression and creativity. Judith Butler in particular further analyzes the potential for agency and resistance that arises precisely through subject formation. "Subjection," she writes, "consists precisely in this fundamental dependency on a discourse we never chose but that, paradoxically, initiates and sustains our agency."[13] She calls for performative acts that expose and challenge the process whereby we become gendered subjects.[14] In Emma's case, adherence to norms of gender and class behaviour was indispensable to her

[11] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8.4 (Summer 1982): 777-795.

[12] Foucault, "The Subject and Power," p. 794.

[13] Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997, p. 2.

[14] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York and London: Routledge, 1990.

rise in society. But in acquiring her aristocratic status, Emma did not entirely jettison her past self. She retained her working-class accent and left her origins exposed despite the upper-class veneer she had acquired. Such fissures revealed the fact that being a gendered and class subject was the result of a construction and not a natural manifestation of being. This realization disquieted Emma's contemporaries, particularly those who had been affected by the French Revolution and who saw in Emma's social persona a reminder of the instability of gender and class. Emma's power and singularity lay in her troubling of the categories to which she had to subscribe in order to succeed.

Feminist approaches to subjecthood have proven very fertile in the field of art history. Angela Rosenthal has argued that Angelica Kauffman's paintings can possess various meanings, some of which accord with dominant eighteenth-century notions of gender, and some of which undermine them.[15] Rosenthal thus shows how seemingly contradictory meanings can coexist as layers rather than polarities. Other scholars have changed the focus of the study of art history, moving away from the examination of individual artists (who have tended to be male) and looking instead at the role of sitters and patrons in the fashioning of a work of art. Marcia Pointon has considered wills written by women in the late eighteenth century as an instance where women had control of the fate of their collections, and specifically, of objects they valued.[16] Gillian Perry's work on the performance and representation of femininity in the eighteenth century has shown the multi-layered and sometimes contradictory nature of feminine identity and the

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[15] Angela Rosenthal, "Angelica Kauffman Ma(s)king Claims," *Art History* 15.1 (March 1992): 38-59.

[16] Marcia Pointon, *Strategies for Showing: Women, Possession and Representation in English Visual Culture 1650-1800*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

necessity to admit a certain fluidity of concepts.[17] In *Reclaiming Female Agency*, a compilation of essays edited by Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, feminist art historians examine art from the sixteenth century to the present and uncover numerous instances in which women were able to express themselves and enact their subjectivity.[18] The contributors to *Women, Art and the Politics of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, edited by Melissa Hyde and Jennifer Milam, examine the roles of women as artists, sitters, and patrons, and the various ways in which their relationships with art contributed in shaping their sense of self.[19] In these studies, scholars focus not on the limits imposed upon women, nor on their lack of power, but on women's agency and capacity for self-expression. My reading of Emma's performances and of the portraits and caricatures in which she is depicted means to contribute to this movement.

Dissertation structure

A few months before becoming Lady Hamilton, Emma expressed the wish "to be an example of good conduct, and to show the world that a pretty woman is not allways a

[17] Gillian Perry, "Women in Disguise."

[18] Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, eds., *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History after Postmodernism*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

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

fool."[20] My contention is that Emma Hamilton was a model of self-expression and self-actualization, and for that reason she was far from a paragon of proper conduct for an aristocratic lady. The body of my dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first two examine Emma's life and milieu, while the last three focus on her performances and her modelling.

The first chapter, "La vie de Lady Hamilton est un roman," traces the major events of Emma's life. It follows a chronological arc, from her very poor origins in Cheshire, through her rise into the glamorous echelons of the upper aristocracy, to her spectacular fall back into poverty. In her letters, Emma repeatedly stated her awareness of the distance she had travelled and her feelings of gratitude toward her protectors. This recognition is one expression of her showing her origins in spite of the veneer of proper behaviour she had acquired. A comparison of two portraits of Emma by George Romney, painted about three years apart (1782 and c. 1785), shows the transformation that the young Emma underwent under Greville's custodianship.

The rest of the dissertation focuses on Emma's years in Naples, 1786 to 1799, when she was at the height of her success. Chapter two, "Desire and Display in Sir William Hamilton's Naples," hones in on the environment in which Emma flourished. Sir William had been in Naples since 1764, serving as England's ambassador, when Emma was sent there by Greville, who was Sir William's nephew. In the second half of the eighteenth century, Naples was the third largest city in Europe and was becoming increasingly popular as a Grand Tour destination, due, in large part, to the excavations at

[20] Emma Hamilton, letter to Charles Greville, Naples, January 1791, in *The Hamilton and Nelson Papers*, ed. Alfred Morrison, 2 vols., [s.l.]: Printed for Private Circulation, 1893, Morrison letter 189, vol. 1, p. 151. I have kept the original spelling in the letters quoted.

Pompeii and Herculaneum. Sir William's home was a hub of activity during the thirty-five years he spent in Naples, welcoming European aristocrats, diplomats, Grand Tourists, artists, French exiles from the Revolution, and all those interested in the archaeological explorations that were feeding the development of Neoclassicism. And Emma was at the centre of that activity. Sir William, a renowned volcanologist and collector, suffused his relationship to Vesuvius and to his collections with desire. It is in this context, where desire for objects and people blurred together, that he acquired Emma, the "acme" of his delights.[21] The discovery of large numbers of homoerotic and pederastic scenes on walls and vases at Pompeii and Herculaneum confirmed that same-sex desire had been at the core of classical culture, just as it was in the writings of Johann Joachim Winckelmann and in the nascent field of art history. Sir William recognized these varied interests and staged a variety of spectacles for his guests. At his seaside villa of Posillipo, he hired young boys to splash in the shallow waters, and in the evenings, inside his home, Emma performed her celebrated *Attitudes*.

The *Attitudes* are the focus of the third chapter. In these performances that she created, Emma donned classical garb and adopted poses that brought to mind mythological, religious, and literary figures form classical statuary, grand master works, and paintings found on ancient vases and on the recently excavated walls of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Emma's *Attitudes* capitalized on Sir William's guests' desire for classical experiences and contributed to the development and spread of Neoclassicism. A widely circulated set of engravings of the *Attitudes* by Friedrich Rehberg (1794) presents the performance as a paragon of the Neoclassical values of timelessness, universality, and

[21] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Italian Journey* [1816-17], trans. W. H. Auden and Elizabeth Mayer, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982 (1996), p. 208.

permanence. Yet contemporary accounts of Emma's *Attitudes* insist not only on the beauty of the individual poses, but on the "movements and surprising transformations"[22] between them. Emma's *Attitudes* should not simply be inscribed within a monolithic and erroneous view of Neoclassicism: I argue that with her *Attitudes*, Emma imprinted her own signature on Neoclassicism and participated in the late eighteenth century's rethinking of the relationship between past and present. Moreover, this chapter shows that Emma's *Attitudes* were not just presentations of a series of female stereotypes but that they challenged eighteenth-century constructions of class and gender identity. It is for this reason that twentieth- and twenty-first century scholars have understood the *Attitudes* as belonging to an archaeology of performance art and, more generally, as an inspiration for women's self-expression in our own time.

The fourth chapter analyzes Emma's performance of the tarantella, a traditional dance from the environs of Naples. To the eighteenth-century traveller, the tarantella was an exotic and colourful Neapolitan tradition inherited from antiquity. To the performer of the tarantella, it was an opportunity to dance without inhibition and to express his or her sexuality with relative freedom. Taking Vigée-Le Brun's portrait of Emma dancing the tarantella as its point of departure, this chapter looks at the way in which Emma's dancing was appropriated by a group of illustrious and accomplished women whose network spread throughout Europe and included Vigée-Le Brun, Germaine de Staël, and Juliette Récamier. Although they were inspired by Emma's potency as a model and performer, they excluded her from their network and glossed over her contribution to their success. My study of Emma's tarantella reveals an instance where women's

[22] Goethe, *Italian Journey*, p. 208.

networks and women's rivalry are both at work, in a process that strengthened their bonds to each other and excluded a woman who troubled class and gender construction at a critical moment of European history.

The fifth and last chapter, "Model, Muse, and Artist," examines Emma's extraordinary talent for modelling to shed new light on the relationship between artist and muse and on the role of the muse in the creation of a work of art. I delve into Emma's particularly intense relationship with Vigée-Le Brun and Romney. These two prominent portraitists who worked during a time when portraiture was becoming increasingly important were inspired by Emma's posing to create what they acknowledged to be their greatest work. Yet their reactions to their sitter were diametrically opposed. Vigée-Le Brun made repeated efforts to distance herself from her model, whereas Romney, on the contrary appeared to want to immerse himself entirely into her. Romney's last portrait of Emma, on the day of her wedding in 1791, is an eloquent testament to his feelings of attachment for the woman whom he viewed as his muse. The way Emma drew out extreme reactions from these two major figures confirms her place in the history of portraiture and the potency of her presence as a model.

It is perhaps surprising that Romney does not feature more prominently in this dissertation given the undeniable impact that he and Emma each had on other. I felt that it was important to define Emma's significance outside of that one relationship[23] and to offer a much broader picture, one that includes her social performance of self, her widely influential *Attitudes* and tarantella, and her contacts with other artists such as Vigée-Le Brun, whose portraits of Emma have been little studied. This broader view, which places

[23] Emma posed for Romney from 1782 to 1786, when she left for Naples, and then a few times in 1791, when she returned to London to get married.

the focus more squarely on Emma during the years of her apogee, has allowed me to gain a better understanding of the multivalent identity that Emma exhibited and of the agency that she arrogated for herself and modelled for others.

Chapter 1
La vie de Lady Hamilton est un roman

Emma Hamilton's vertiginous rise into, and spectacular eventual collapse from, high society prompted the famed eighteenth century portraitist Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun to reflect, "La vie de Lady Hamilton est un roman."[24] Emma was raised in dire poverty. Through her contacts with wealthy patrons, she climbed the social hierarchy to become the wife of Sir William Hamilton, England's ambassador to the court of Naples and the Two Sicilies. The third largest city in Europe in the late eighteenth century, Naples was becoming an ever more popular travelling destination as the excavations progressed at Herculaneum and Pompeii, and Sir William's house was the hub of social and cultural activity, where he welcomed foreign diplomats, exiles fleeing revolutionary France, and young aristocrats on their Grand Tour. And Emma was at the centre of this activity. In her early twenties she learnt to play the part of the ambassador's mistress and then wife, a social performance that involved learning aristocratic manners, entertaining distinguished guests, and displaying herself in amateur artistic accomplishments. She became the favourite of Queen Maria Carolina of Naples and the mistress of Lord Horatio Nelson, history's most famous naval commander, and performed diplomatic functions at a time of great instability in Europe. Emma readily fulfilled the demands of her new roles, yet, as Sir William remarked, she did so without pretence and in fact continued to display signs of her origins despite the manners and polish she had acquired.

[24] Élisabeth-Louise Vigée-Le Brun (1755-1842), *"Les femmes régnaient alors, la Révolution les a détrônées." Souvenirs, 1755-1842* [1835-37], ed. Didier Masseau, Paris: Tallandier, 2009, p. 173.

"My virtue was vanquished"[25]

Emma Hamilton was born Amy Lyon, probably on 26 April 1765, at Ness, a small village on the Wirral Peninsula in Cheshire.[26] Her father, a blacksmith at the local coal mine, died when she was a few weeks old. Her mother was forced to return to her family's home in the Welsh village of Hawarden, where it is doubtful Emma received much education. Little is known of Emma's early years. She went into service for a local family around the age of twelve. Finding herself unemployed after a few months, she followed the course of so many other country girls and moved to London. She entered service first for the Budd family, where one of her fellow maids was Jane Powell, later a famous actress. Emma often stayed out late, and ignoring her employers' rebukes, she was fired. She then went to work for the Linleys, owners of the Drury Lane Theatre. There, she met actresses such as Frances Abington, Mary Robinson, and Elizabeth Farren, women who rose through society despite their sometimes-disreputable backgrounds. But by December 1778, Emma had lost that position too and had begun working as a barmaid and prostitute.

[25] Emma Hamilton, letter to George Romney, Caserta, 20 December 1791, Morrison 199, vol. 1, p. 158.

[26] The records are unclear. Most biographers agree she was born in 1765, while others have advanced the years of 1763 and 1761, suggesting that her parents, who only married in 1764, might have wanted to cover an earlier birth by having her baptized in 1765. The following outline of the main events of Emma's life is taken from Flora Fraser, *Beloved Emma: The Life of Emma, Lady Hamilton*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986; Kate Williams, *England's Mistress: The Infamous Life of Emma Hamilton*, New York: Ballantine Books, 2006; Julie Peakman, *Emma Hamilton*, London: Haus Publishing, 2005; and Tom Pocock, "Hamilton, Emma, Lady Hamilton (*bap.* 1765, *d.* 1815)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2007, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12063, accessed 8 June 2011.

In 1780, Emma is rumoured to have started posing at the Temple of Health and Hymen in Westminster, where the quack doctor James Graham delivered lectures and provided consultations on a variety of ills, dispensing all kinds of cures and advice, mostly for problems related to sex and fertility.[27] His clients were presented with a multimedia extravaganza involving lights, music, smells, smoke shows, and alluring young women. The main attraction was the Celestial Bed, where for £50 infertile couples could spend the night on a bed through which passed a static electric current, with the promise that the babies thus conceived would be healthy and beautiful. A drawing by the miniaturist and portrait draughtsman Richard Cosway depicts Emma performing at the Temple of Health, personifying a character that has traditionally been interpreted as Hygeia, the goddess of health (fig. 1). Usually dated around 1775 to 1780, the drawing initially belonged to Charles Greville, Emma's protector between 1782 and 1786, and then to Sir William Hamilton. It depicts Emma wearing a loose thin gauze that exposes her right shoulder and the top of her right breast and that reveals the contours of her right buttock and thigh. She smiles very slightly, her gently rounded cheeks signifying youth

[27] While there are no records to confirm this rumour, it is significant that this was the perception during Emma's lifetime and that she never disclaimed it. This point is made by Andrei Pop in "Sympathetic Spectators: Henry Fuseli's *Nightmare* and Emma Hamilton," *Art History* 34.5 (November 2011): 942. If indeed she did work at the Temple of Health, her specific role there is unclear. She is said to have either danced as one of the goddesses of health inside the room that housed the Celestial Bed, posed on stage on a pedestal where she fed snakes out of a goblet while Graham lectured, or delivered the concluding part of Graham's lecture in the character of Hebe Vestina. For more on James Graham, see Roy Porter, "Graham, James (1745-1794)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edition, Jan 2006, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11199, accessed 13 Sept 2011; Porter, *Health for Sale: Quackery in England 1660-1850*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989; and Peter Otto, "The Regeneration of the Body: Sex, Religion and the Sublime in James Graham's Temple of Health and Hymen," *Romanticism on the Net* 23 (2001), http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/005991ar, accessed 8 July 2012.

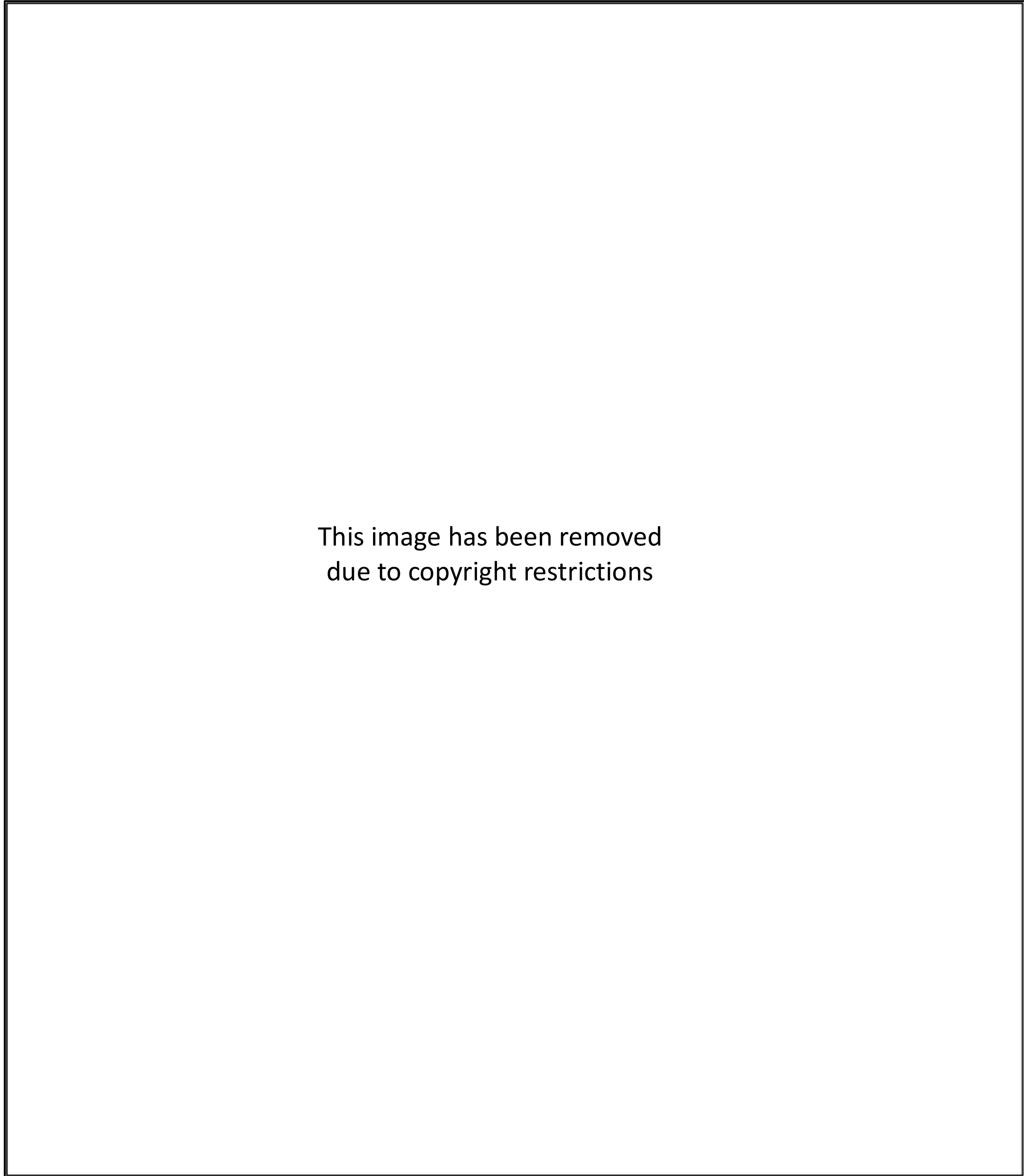

Figure 1. Richard Cosway, *Emma as Hygeia*, c. 1799. Pen and wash, 31.6. x 27.2 cm. London, National Maritime Museum (PAF4385).

and health. She steps airily on lightly drawn clouds, her feet bare yet adorned with laces, as if she were wearing sandals. The drawing exudes a sense of movement and lightness, slightly held in check by the heavy vertical lines of the drapery over her left forearm but enhanced by the movement in Emma's hair. This type of long flowing hair was associated with a natural acting style in representations of the eighteenth-century actress Dorothy Jordan.[28] Here, Emma's hair is partly let loose and partly held with a ribbon and tied in a knot, and it illustrates the combination of naturalness and artifice that characterized Emma. In the words of the earl of Minto, who met her in Naples in 1796, "she is all Nature, and yet all Art."[29] What is striking about this comment is that it describes Emma not as combining these two elements in some perfect proportion, but as embodying both of them whole and undiminished. Emma's ability to display contradictory and seemingly mutually exclusive extremes was no doubt part of the fascination she held for her admirers.

The vase that Emma holds in Cosway's drawing is unusual. Carefully rendered and the object of her gaze, it is clearly meant to be significant to the meaning of the image. But Hygeia is not usually represented holding a vase. Her attribute is a snake, which she is occasionally shown feeding out of a shallow bowl. The vase seems to have a lid, making it a type of pyxis,[30] a container in which we might have found the ointments

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[28] Gill Perry, "Staging Gender and 'Hairy Signs:' Representing Dorothy Jordan's Curls," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38.1, Special issue: Hair (Fall 2004): 145-163.

[29] Sir Gilbert Elliot, First Earl of Minto, *Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot, First Earl of Minto from 1751 to 1806*, edited by his great-niece the countess of Minto, 3 vols., London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1874, vol. 2, p. 364.

[30] My thanks to Marie-Ève Marchand for this remark. It seems to be a Nikosthenic type pyxis; see Toby Schreiber, *Athenian Vase Construction: A Potter's Analysis*, Malibu, CA: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1999,

and salves that Graham promised would provide youth, renewed sexual vigour, and cures for all manner of ills. This suggests that Emma is represented not as Hygeia but as Hebe Vestina, "the rosy goddess of youth and health," a divinity that Graham had invented for his Temple.[31] Her name is a combination of Hebe, the Greek goddess of youth,[32] cupbearer to the gods, and Vestina, a name derived from Vesta, the Roman goddess of the hearth. Graham introduced Hebe Vestina in 1782, by which time Emma is known to have left his establishment, which leads me to believe that the drawing postdates 1782 and that its design is an invention of Cosway's. In 1784, Cosway and his wife Maria moved into the building that had housed the Temple of Health,[33] and it was perhaps the

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p. 261. Pyxides were often decorated with marriage scenes, an iconography that would have fitted with Graham's purposes.

[31] A transcription of Hebe Vestina's lecture at the Temple of Health was published anonymously though almost certainly authored by Graham himself. *Il Convito Amoroso! Or, a Serio-comico-philosophical Lecture on the Causes, Nature, and Effects of Love and Beauty…As Delivered by Hebe Vestina! The Rosy Goddess of Youth and Health!…*, London: [s.n.], 1782. Graham hired other women to give lectures at his Temple of Health, among them, Ann Julia Hatton (1764-1838), who was Sarah Siddons's younger sister. Philip Highfill, Kalman Burnim, and Edward Langhans, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers, and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800*, 16 vols., 1973-93, vol. 14, Siddons to Thynne, Carbonale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991, p. 34, entry on Sarah Siddons. Also in Moira Dearnley, "Hatton, Ann Julia (1764-1838)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/45853, accessed 22 March 2012.

[32] A closer look reveals that Cosway had initially drawn a much more slender vase. While a slenderer vase might conceivably have been used for pouring, thus identifying the figure as Hebe, the final reworked version has neither a handle nor a spout, so it cannot be identified as the amphora from which she pours the nectar to the gods.

[33] Schomberg House, 81 Pall Mall, is the second building that housed Graham's Temple of Health and Hymen. The Cosways took over the building from Graham when he declared bankruptcy in 1784. Daphne Foskett, Arts Council of Great Britain Scottish Committe, *British Portrait Miniatures: An exhibition arranged for the period of the Edinburgh International Festival*, Edinburgh: Published by the Committee, 1965, p. 106.

fact of living in that building, coupled with Emma's growing fame, that prompted Cosway to execute this drawing.

The uncertainty of the drawing's subject matter and date reveals a quandary at the centre of the study of representations of Emma. Over the last two centuries, artists and art dealers have sought to utilize Emma's fame to further their own ends, which has led to the reattribution and misnaming of many drawings, prints, and paintings.[34] Unidentified portraits and studies in expression have been renamed as portraits of Emma. The resulting confusion is only beginning to be redressed.

In late 1780, at the age of fifteen, Emma is believed to have joined one of London's most glamorous brothels. Nicknamed Santa Carlotta's Nunnery, it was run by the procuress Mrs. Kelly, whom her regulars called the Abbess.[35] It was very exclusive, frequented by the wealthiest of patrons. In order to provide suitable companions for her aristocratic clients, the Abbess had her girls tutored in music, languages, and the less lofty performance of erotic postures and dancing.[36]

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[34] A number of paintings have been mistakenly identified as portraits of Emma, most notably, the figure of comedy in Joshua Reynolds's *Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy* (oil on canvas, 148 x 183 cm, Waddesdon, Buckinghamshire, The Rothschild Collection), even though it was painted in 1760-61, four years before Emma was born.

[35] In his *Reminiscences* the fencing master Henry Angelo (1756-1835), Sir William Hamilton's godson, writes that Emma had worked for Mrs. Kelly. While no account—Angelo's included—can be fully trusted regarding the specific places Emma worked and when, all biographers agree that she did turn to prostitution. Henry Angelo, *Reminiscences*, 2 vols., London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830, vol. 2, p. 238. See Williams, *England's Mistress*, p. 62, citing *The Town and Country Magazine* for the nickname Santa Carlotta's Nunnery.

[36] Williams, *England's Mistress*, p. 60.

It is probably around then that Emma began to model for artists. It is widely believed she sat at that time for Joshua Reynolds, who was known to scour the brothels for models, and that he used her for *The Death of Dido* and *A Nymph and Cupid: "A Snake in the Grass."*[37] Some biographers believe she also sat for George Romney during those early years, and that she was the model for Henry Fuseli's *Nightmare*.[38] Andrei Pop has argued convincingly for an affinity between Emma and the subject of Fuseli's emblematic painting, but while a drawing of Emma by Fuseli from that time does survive, Pop does not believe this is enough to conclusively identify Emma as the model for the *Nightmare*.[39] We can conclude, however, that artists had begun to appreciate Emma's talent for modelling.

It was either at the Temple of Health or at Mrs. Kelly's that Emma was spotted by the roguish minor aristocrat Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh. He took her as his mistress and moved her into his mansion in Uppark, Sussex. There, at uproarious parties whose guests included the Prince of Wales, Emma was served as entertainment, reportedly dancing naked on tables. It is at this time that she renamed herself Emma. In December 1781, Fetherstonhaugh discovered Emma was pregnant and cast her out.

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[37] Joshua Reynolds (1723-92), *The Death of Dido*, 1781, oil on canvas, 147.3 x 239.4 cm. The Royal Collection, London. Reynolds, *A Nymph and Cupid: "A Snake in the Grass*,*"* also known as *Cupid Untying the Belt of Venus*, exhibited in 1784. Oil on canvas, 124.5 x 99.1 cm. Tate Gallery, London. A number of copies of this painting exist, among others a 1788 autograph copy, oil on canvas, 127.5 x101 cm, at the State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg.

[38] Williams, *England's Mistress*, p. 52-53.

[39] Pop, "Sympathetic Spectators."

“You have made me good”

Sixteen years old and penniless, Emma turned to Charles Greville, a friend of Fetherstonhaugh’s who had professed his admiration for her while she was at Uppark. In January 1782 she wrote him a letter that suggests they were already well acquainted:

> believe me, I am allmost distracktid … What shall I dow? Good God what shall I dow? … I cant come to toun for want of mony. I have not a farthing to bless my self with… O G., what shall I dow? what shall I dow? For God’s sake, G. write the minet you get this, and only tell me what I am to dow.[40]

In his answer, Greville berated Emma for her earlier indiscretions in a way that suggests that they had had secret assignations while Emma was at Uppark.[41] In any event, he did help her out of her crisis. He moved her into his house on Edgware Row in Paddington—a backwater at the time—away from society gossip, and made her promise to sever links with her old acquaintances. He even took in her mother as housekeeper.

Emma’s daughter, “little Emma,” was sent away to be raised by family in Hawarden. Emma could not object, for she was under Greville’s protection. Greville then began the process of taming Emma’s wilder side and shaping her into his ideal woman. He changed her name to Mrs. Emma Hart, made her dress and act more demurely, worked with her to improve her deportment and pronunciation, and encouraged her to practice her reading and her singing. He made her read William Hayley’s didactic poem *The Triumphs of Temper*, which told the tale of Serena, a young girl who retains a sweet

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[40] Emma, letter to Greville, endorsed 10 January 1782, Morrison 113, vol. 1, p. 78.

[41] This mention of secret meetings raises the possibility that Greville was in fact the father of Emma’s unborn child. Greville, letter to Emma, 10 January 1782, Morrison 114, vol. 1, p. 78.

disposition despite the obstacles she faced. Serena's demeanour and her "wish to please" were assuredly meant to teach Emma how to behave towards her protector.[42] Emma was a fast learner and adapted herself to her protector's wishes. Soon she had acquired the polish he desired to see and could be presented to his circle of friends. In March or April of 1782, Greville introduced her to the painter George Romney. Emma became Romney's favourite model. It was not only her beautiful features that Romney appreciated but the intensity and range of expressions she could adopt. In his biography of the painter, William Hayley explained that

> She had exquisite taste, and such expressive powers, as could furnish to an historical painter, an inspiring model for the various characters, either delicate, or sublime, that he might have occasion to represent. Her features, like the language of Shakespeare, could exhibit all the feelings of nature, and all the gradations of every passion, with a most fascinating truth and felicity of expression.[43]

Over the next decade, Emma would sit for Romney hundreds of times and become known as his muse.[44] The process of sitting for a portrait was part of the performance of higher-class status,[45] and two portraits by Romney painted three or so years apart show the transformation that Emma underwent in her refashioning of herself to please her

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[42] This phrase is repeated many times in Hayley's poem. William Hayley (1745-1820), "The Triumphs of Temper," 1781. Serena was rewarded for her good behaviour with an advantageous marriage. Emma seems to have assimilated the lessons so well that some believe that the illustrations of Serena in early editions of Hayley's poem are modelled on her. See Arthur Dunkelman, ed., *The Enchantress: Emma, Lady Hamilton. The Jean Kislak Collection*, exh. cat., New York: The Grolier Club, 2011, p. 26.

[43] William Hayley, *The Life of George Romney, Esq.*, London: T. Payne, 1809, p. 119.

[44] See chapter five, "Model, Muse, and Artist," for a discussion of the relationship between Romney and Emma and an re-examination of the concept of muse.

[45] See Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993.

protector (figs. 2 and 3). With pink cheeks, seductively parted red lips, loose hair, and a revealing décolleté in the 1782 portrait, she bursts with dangerous sensuality. In the

Figure 2. George Romney, *Lady Hamilton as Circe*, 1782. Oil on canvas, 53.3 x 49.5 cm. London, Tate Gallery (N05591).

Figure 3. George Romney, *Lady Hamilton*, c. 1785. Oil on canvas, 73.7 x 59.7 cm. London, National Portrait Gallery (NPG294).

second portrait, she appears much more restrained and her sexuality is held in check. These were important formative years for Emma: through her contact with Romney, she assimilated a blend of classicism and expressivity that was to serve her in later years.

Sometimes, Emma's spirited personality broke through the polish Greville had tried to give her, much to his chagrin, but she would eagerly make amends. Greville once took Emma to the fashionable Ranelagh Gardens. She had dressed elegantly and attracted enough attention to cause Greville discomfort. Romney's son tells the story in his biography of his father: "Greville…took her to Ranelagh, where she attracted so much notice, that she perceived it gave him pain; she, therefore, of her own accord, put off her

gay attire…and never again went to any public place."[46] At once intelligent and malleable, Emma fashioned herself to please her custodian.

In 1783 Greville introduced Emma to his uncle Sir William Hamilton, who had come to England from Naples to bury his first wife and settle her estate. Sir William's stay lasted about a year, during which he often visited Greville, with whom he shared a passion for collecting and for observing natural phenomena. Emma's presence at Greville's was a boon for Sir William. Enchanted by her and transfixed by her classical features, he commissioned Reynolds to paint a portrait of her as a bacchante. Dissatisfied with the result, he ordered one from Romney.[47]

In the summer of 1784, Greville accompanied Sir William to Wales. In the letters Emma wrote Greville during those weeks, she expressed her sadness at being separated from him and vowed to keep improving her behaviour in order to become "every thing you can wish." She promised Greville that the "wild unthinking Emma" had now become a "thoughtful phylosopher," and she begged him to forget her "past follies," which were now, she asserted, "all gone & berried never to come again."[48] Paradoxically, Emma's entreaties to Greville to forget her past only served to keep it alive, as did her repeated

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[46] John Romney, *Memoirs of the Life and Works of John Romney*, London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1830, p. 183. John Romney specifies that it is Emma who had related the incident to his father. The scurrilous *Memoirs of Lady Hamilton* published anonymously in 1815 reports she was so excited by the attention she received that she broke into song. *Memoirs of Lady Hamilton*, London: Henry Colburn, 1815, p. 63-64.

[47] Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Emma as a Bacchante*, 1784. Oil on mahogany panel, 79.4 x 61.5 cm. The original is now in a private collection. This work is known mostly through the many printed reproductions. George Romney, *Emma as a Bacchante*, 1784. Like the Reynolds, this is now in a private collection and known mostly through prints.

[48] Emma, letter to Greville, 22 June 1784, Morrison 125, vol. 1, p. 86.

expressions of gratitude for the change she had undergone under his tutelage. In effect, she was not leaving her origins behind but finding a way to balance past and present.

A second son, Greville was forced to live on a limited income that was too modest to meet his tastes, lifestyle, and passion for collecting, and he came to the realization that he needed to marry money. Feeling that the presence in his home of his increasingly famous mistress might compromise his chances of securing a good prospect, and perhaps having simply grown tired of her, he hatched a plan to be rid of Emma. He suggested to Sir William that she be sent to Naples to live with him. Greville probably also banked on this move as one that would secure his inheritance: Sir William did not have any children from his first wife and had pledged his estate to his favourite nephew. If he took Emma as a mistress, he would be kept occupied and satisfied and would not seek to remarry.[49] But Sir William would not be easily persuaded. For months, Greville wrote to convince him, insisting on Emma's qualities and detailing her improvements under his protection. Yet, Greville assured Sir William, she was smart and malleable enough to adapt herself to Sir William's needs and desires. Nephew and uncle exchanged letters for months. Sir William appeared tempted but was sensible to the dangers of taking so young a mistress. "I am not a match for so much youth and beauty," he wrote.[50] He knew that Grand Tourists, who were notorious bedpost notchers, would attempt to seduce her: "It would be fine fun for the young English travelers to endeavour to cuckold the old Gentleman their Ambassador, and whether they succeeded or not would surely give me

[49] Sir William was aware that Greville was counting on this inheritance. After a mild flirtation with Lady Clarges he wrote to his nephew, "had I married Lady C, which might have happened, it must have been a cruel disappointment to you, after having declared you my heir." Sir William, letter to Greville, 4 June 1785, Add MSS 42071 f 4, quoted in Peakman, *Emma Hamilton*, p. 25.

[50] Sir William, letter to Greville, 5 May 1785, Add. MSS 137, quoted in Peakman, *Emma Hamilton*, p. 30.

uneasiness."[51] Greville pressed on, despite Sir William's hesitation. He warned his uncle that he should fear venereal disease: "At your age a clean & comfortable woman is not superfluous, but I should rather purchase it than acquire it, unless in every respect a proper party offer'd."[52]

Greville's letters are telling of the crude exchange that was being proposed: "As I consider you as my heir-aparent I must add that she is the only woman I ever slept with without having ever had any of my senses offended, & a cleanlier, sweeter bedfellow does not exist."[53] Greville's reference to his uncle as his "heir-aparent" reverses the direction of the inheritance—the transference of money, goods, and property from the uncle to the nephew that Sir William had promised would occur upon his death—thus making clear Emma's status as an object in this relationship. In the end, Greville offered his uncle what every good salesman promises, a satisfaction guarantee: "You will be able to have an experiment without any risque."[54] After over a year of indecision, Sir William finally relented and accepted the deal.

[51] Sir William, letter to Greville, 1 June 1785, Add. MSS 42071 f 5-6, quoted in Peakman, *Emma Hamilton*, p. 113.

[52] Greville, letter to Sir William, 5 May 1785, Morrison 137, vol. 1, p. 101.

[53] Greville, letter to Sir William, 3 December 1785, Morrison 142, vol. 1, p. 109.

[54] Greville, letter to Sir William, 3 December 1785, Morrison 142, vol. 1, p. 109.

“I am the happiest woman in the world”

Emma set off for Naples in the spring of 1786, accompanied by her mother and the painter Gavin Hamilton.[55] Greville had not revealed the truth of the exchange to Emma. He had told her she would simply be staying with Sir William for a few months while he attended to business in Scotland. This sojourn, he said, would help round out her education. The party arrived in Naples on 26 April, Emma’s twenty-first birthday. Emma had been sent to Naples along with some portraits of her for which Greville had been unable to pay. Greville had thus transferred his debt along with his mistress. The *World* newspaper stated that it would have been preferable for Sir William to acquire portraits instead of the actual woman: “[Romney’s] dozen portraits…might have gone abroad with Sir W. Hamilton and answered his purposes full as well as the piece he has taken with him, a piece more cumbrous and changeable than any of the foregoing.”[56] The suggestion that a few portraits were better suited for Sir William’s purposes than a flesh-and-blood woman not only confirmed Emma’s status as an art object, it also put into question Sir William’s virility. At the same time, Emma’s ability to adjust to her environment, her changeability, was seen as threatening.

Sir William was not unaware of the difficulty of Emma’s position, and although he empathized with her to a certain extent, he also believed she should accept her situation. Five months after her arrival in Naples, he wrote to his friend the botanist Joseph Banks, “It is a bad job to come from the nephew to the uncle but she must make

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[55] Gavin Hamilton (1723-98) was not related to Sir William.

[56] Quoted in Williams, *England’s Mistress*, p. 113.

the best of it."[57] But Emma, still ignorant of the nature of the exchange of which she had been the key piece, was anxious about her status with Greville. She wrote him fourteen desperate letters in as many weeks, to which she only received one response. From these it appears that Sir William was making advances but not pressing her excessively and that she refused to even consider him: "No, I respect him, but no never."[58] At the end of July, Greville wrote to her to inform her that he would not be sending for her and that she should place herself entirely in Sir William's hands. Emma's response on 1 August 1786 makes clear her distress at being told by her lover that she should become another man's mistress.

> As to what you write me, to oblidge Sir William, I will not answer you. For oh! if you knew what pain I feel in reading those lines where you advise me to W—.... Nothing can express my rage! I am all madness! Greville to advise me!—you, that used to envy my smiles! How, with cool indifference to advise me to go to bed to [*sic.*] him, Sir W^{m}! Oh! that is the worst of all.[59]

In her letters from this period, Emma's tone changes drastically and with little or no transition, from angry to sentimental, desperate, pleading, pleasant, jovial, and threatening. Shortly after the passage quoted above, she tells Greville that if she were with him she would "murder you and myself both," then a few lines later turns the threat towards herself: "I will go to London, their go into every excess of vice tell I dye, a miserable, broken-hearted wretch." In the next few lines she expresses her sadness upon learning of the death of Lord Brooke, talks about the weather, brags about the attentions

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[57] Sir William to Joseph Banks, 26 September 1786, Add. MS 34048 f 33, quoted in Peakman, *Emma Hamilton*, p. 46.

[58] Emma, letter to Greville, 22 July 1786, Morrison 152, vol. 1, p. 117.

[59] Emma, letter to Greville, 1 August 1786, Morrison 153, vol. 1, p. 118. Emma has shortened the word Whore to its first letter.

she receives from the Neapolitan king and from a visiting dignitary, complains about having a cold, begs Greville to write to her, thanks him for a hat and glove he sent her, and concludes with the following postscript: "Pray write, for nothing will make me so angry, and it is not to your interest to disoblidge me, for you don't know the power I have hear. Onely I never will be his mistress, If you affront me, I will make him marry me.—God bless you for ever."[60] Emma's threat to become Sir William's wife should be considered as more than a mere "amusing" menace.[61] What it shows is her keen understanding of Greville's pecuniary position in relation to Sir William and of her status as an object of exchange in their transactions. Emma quickly realized that Greville's decision was irreversible and that she was now stranded in Naples under Sir William's protection. She understood that there was only one option available to her if she were to avoid being abandoned a third time: she had to marry.

In spite of all this, Emma became an instant celebrity in Naples. King Ferdinand IV courted her openly, but she resisted his advances, which earned her Queen Maria Carolina's trust. Artists and Grand Tourists travelling through Naples helped spread her reputation as an exceptional beauty. Sir William hired tutors for her, thus continuing the process of refinement that Greville had begun.

A letter from Emma to Sir William dated 26 December 1786 indicates that she had finally become his mistress. In it, she expressed the same intensity of feeling as she had in her letters to Greville mere months earlier: "yesterday when you went a whey from

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[60] Emma, letter to Greville, 1 August 1786, Morrison 153, vol. 1, p. 119.

[61] John Cordy Jeaffreson, *Lady Hamilton and Lord Nelson*, 2 vols., London: Hurst and Blackett, 1888, vol. 1, p. 168.

me, I thought all my heart and soul was torn from me, and my greif was excessive."[62] More importantly, the letter shows she was aware of Sir William's desires and expectations. Pursuing on her earlier path, she vowed to learn to control her temper further and to make herself agreeable to her protector: "I am a pretty whoman, and one can't be everything at once; but now I have my wisdom teeth I will try and be ansome and reasonable."[63] Sir William's needs were different to Greville's, and Emma had to learn to read them and adapt to them. Sir William offered her lessons in languages, singing, and dancing, brought her to Vesuvius and to excavation sites, and took her to Rome to experience classical art, moulding her into his ideal woman. Emma developed her dancing, singing, and attitudinizing, and presented herself in displays of female accomplishment that were expected of someone in her rank and that were essential to her entry into the aristocracy.[64] And she learnt to perform the duties of the ambassador's consort.

By 1789, Sir William was conscious of Emma's designs to become his wife, but he entertained no such plans. The main obstacle was that however much Emma was able to transform herself, she could not erase her past. Sir William feared that when Emma finally understood that he would not be marrying her, this would sour their arrangement, thus making "herself & me unhappy."[65] Emma was willing to jeopardize the status she had acquired, and she continued to pressure Sir William. Rumours began circulating that

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[62] Emma, letter to Sir William, 26 December 1786, Morrison 157, vol. 1, p. 123.

[63] Emma, letter to Sir William, 26 December 1786, Morrison 157, vol. 1, p. 124.

[64] Ann Bermingham, "The Aesthetics of Ignorance: The Accomplished Woman in the Culture of Connoisseurship," *Oxford Art Journal* 16.2 (1993): 3-20. Emma's *Attitudes* are examined in chapter three and her dancing of the tarantella, in chapter four.

[65] Sir William, letter to Greville, 26 May 1789, Morrison 177, vol. 1, p. 140. The italics are in the original.

Emma and Sir William had married secretly. To many, it seemed inconceivable that a man of Sir William's social standing would marry her, and they were alarmed that this should even be considered a possibility. Heneage Legge, a mutual friend of Sir William's and Greville's, wrote to the latter in 1791,

> The language of both parties, who always spoke in the plural number—we, us, & ours—stagger'd me at first but soon made me determine to speak openly to him on the subject, when he assur'd me, what I confess I was most happy to hear, that he was not married; but flung out some hints of doing justice to her good behaviour, if his public situation did not forbid him to consider himself an independent man. Her influence over him exceeds all belief; his attachment exceeds admiration, it is perfect dotage. She gives everybody to understand that he is now going to England to sollicit the K.'S consent to marry her, & that on her return she shall appear as L^{y} H. She says it is impossible to continue in her present dubious state, which exposes her to frequent slight & mortification…. *They* say they shall be in London by the latter end of May…. I have all along told her she could never change her situation for the better, & that she was a happier woman as Mrs. H. than she would ever be as L^{y} H., when more reserved behaviour being necessary, she would be depriv'd of half her amusements, & must no longer sing those comic parts which tend so much of the entertainment of herself & her friends. She does not accede to that doctrine, & unless great care is taken to prevent it I am clear she will in some unguarded hour work upon his empassion'd mind, & effect her design of becoming your aunt.[66]

Despite the perceived incongruity of the situation, Emma and Sir William did travel to England a few weeks after this letter was written in order to seek King George III's permission to marry, a protocol dictated by Sir William's ambassadorship.[67] The king gave his permission reluctantly and made it clear that Emma would not be welcomed at

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[66] Heneage Legge, letter to Greville, Naples, 8 March 1791, Morrison 190, p. 152. The italics are in the original.

[67] Sir William called George III his cousin and foster brother and is reported to have said, "my Mother reared us and the same Nurse suckled us." Sir William's mother had been Lady of the Bedchamber and Mistress of the Robes to the Princess of Wales, and rumours abounded that Sir William was in fact the illegitimate son of Frederick, Prince of Wales. Sir William cited by Charles Greville, "Memorandum," BL Add MSS 42071, f. 40, quoted in Williams, *England's Mistress*, p. 10.

court.[68] The wedding took place in London on 6 September 1791, at St Marylebone Church, to the dismay of some of the witnesses, not least of whom Charles Greville, who feared his plans had gone horribly awry.

Reactions to the wedding were mixed. Queen Charlotte's refusal to receive the new Lady Hamilton was a clear snub that sent out a signal that Emma's past was to be neither forgiven nor forgotten. Lord Bristol nevertheless wrote to congratulate Sir William, not only on his wedding, but on his defiance of society's disapproval, which he appreciated as a sign of virility: "I congratulate you, my old friend, from the bottom of my heart, upon the fortitude you have shown, & the manly part you have taken in braving the world & securing your own happiness & elegant enjoyment in defiance of them."[69]

Whether accepted or not by high society, Emma attracted countless admirers in London and could not step outside without being swarmed. As Romney wrote to Hayley, "all the world following her, and talking of her, so that if she had not more good sense than vanity, her brain must be turned."[70] Emma had absorbed Serena's lessons on proper behaviour.

The newlyweds arrived back in Naples in the late fall of 1791. "I am the happiest woman in the world," Emma exclaimed in a letter to Romney.[71] After years of poverty, rejection, uncertainty, and humiliation, Emma was now Lady Hamilton. Still, her position was not an easy one. She had to negotiate many different identities, for she existed between countries, classes, and personas.

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[68] Other members of the royal household, such as the Prince of Wales, Prince Augustus, and the Duke of Gloucester, had no similar qualms at being in Emma's presence. In fact, they sought her out.

[69] Lord Bristol, letter to Sir William. 21 December 1791, Morrison 200, vol. 1, p. 159.

[70] Romney, letter to Hayley, 7 July 1791, reprinted in Hayley, *The Life of George Romney*, p. 159.

[71] Emma, letter to Romney, Caserta, 20 December 1791, Morrison 199, vol. 1, p. 158.

Sir William believed his new wife had managed this well. “Lady H…has had also a difficult part to act & has succeeded wonderfully,” he wrote to Horace Walpole in April 1792, “having gained, by having no pretensions, the thorough approbation of all the English ladies.”[72] But in fact not all the English ladies approved of Emma. Lady Holland opined, “it is impossible to go beyond her in vulgarity and coarseness,”[73] thus seeing her lack of pretensions not as a virtue but as a fault that confirmed Queen Charlotte’s judgment of her. In the eyes of many, Emma might have joined the ranks of the aristocracy nominally, but they did not consider her one of their own.

If Emma could not erase her past, it was not only because of the Lady Hollands of the world. Sir William appreciated her less polished side. Lady Palmerston’s description of their relationship is revealing in this sense:

> Lady H is to me very surprising, for considering the situation she was in she behaves wonderfully well. Now and then to be sure a little vulgarness pops out, but I think it’s more Sir William’s fault, who loves a good joke and leads her to enter into his stories, which are not of the best kind.[74]

But Emma could not reveal too much of herself to her husband. She constantly re-read *The Triumphs of Temper* in an effort to reinforce the lessons learnt. She confessed to Romney,

> Tell Hayly I am allways reading his Triumphs of Temper; it was that that made me Lady H., for, God knows, I had for 5 years enough to try my temper, and I am affraid if it had not been for the good example Serena taught

[72] Sir William, letter to Earl of Orford, 17 April 1792, Morrison 208, vol. 1, p. 167.

[73] Elizabeth, Lady Holland, journal entry for 21 April 1799, in *The Journal of Elizabeth Lady Holland (1791-1811)*, ed. the Earl of Ilchester, 2 vols., New York, Bombay, and Calcutta: Longmans, Green, and Col., 1908, vol. 1, p. 242.

[74] Lady Palmerston, letter to her brother Benjamin Mee, 20 March 1793, in *Portrait of a Golden Age: Intimate Papers of the Second Viscount Palmerston*, ed. Brian Connell, Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1957, p. 280-281.

> me, my girdle wou'd have burst, and if it had I had been undone, for Sir W. minds more temper than beauty.[75]

Emma knew that even as Lady Hamilton, her position was not guaranteed and that she had to remain sweet tempered for her husband. She had to tread a very fine line indeed.

Some, like Lady Palmerston, did not seem to be exceedingly shocked by the signs of Emma's past that appeared in the fissures in her polish. The Earl of Minto, for instance, revealed he had been "wonderfully struck with these inveterate remains of her origin."[76] If the discrepancies in Emma's social performance bothered such people as Lady Holland, who reported she had been "disgusted" by one of Emma's lapses, it was a mark of the late eighteenth-century anxiety about upward social mobility and lower class infiltration into the higher echelons of society, a perceived danger amplified by the French Revolution.[77] The flaws in Emma's social performance of class served as a reminder that social class was but a construction that could be exposed and toppled.

Emma's social origins did not worry the Neapolitans as much. Perhaps it was because as the wife of the English ambassador, she was already an outsider and thus did not represent much danger to the Neapolitan social hierarchy. As Lady Hamilton, Emma could be introduced into Queen Maria Carolina's intimate circle, where she was

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[75] Emma, letter to Romney, Caserta, 20 December 1791, Morrison 199, vol. 1, p. 159.

[76] Earl of Minto, *Life and Letters*, vol. 2, p. 365.

[77] This phenomenon has been studied in depth. See for instance Marcia Pointon, *Strategies for Showing: Women, Possession, and Representation in English Visual Culture, 1665-1800*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 33. Regarding Lady Holland's disgust, see chapter three, "Emma's *Attitudes*: Movement and Surprising Transformations," and *The Journal of Elizabeth Lady Holland (1791-1811)*, ed. The Earl of Ilchester, 2 vols., London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1908, vol. 1, p. 243.

welcomed “with open arms.”[78] In her letters home, Emma bragged about how close she had become to the queen. “In the evenings I go to her, and we are *tête-à-tête* 2 or 3 hours. Sometimes we sing,” she wrote to Greville.[79] It is conceivable she overstated the attachment in her letters, not only to raise her own status, but also to gently needle her former lover and show him who she had become since his rejection. “My ever dear Queen as been like a mother to me, since Sir William has been ill. She writes to me four and five times a day and offer’d to come and assist me. This is friendship.”[80] Rumours began to circulate of a sexual relationship between Emma and Maria Carolina.[81] Emma was aware of them and strove to dispel them: “If ever you hear any lyes about her,” she warned Greville, “contradict them, and if you should see a cursed book writen by a vile french dog with her character in it, don’t believe one word.”[82]

[78] Emma, letter to Romney, Caserta, 20 December 1791, Morrison 199, vol. 1, p. 158. Although Emma was welcomed at court, Queen Charlotte’s snub had repercussions and her official status was not as high as if Charlotte had accepted her.

[79] Emma, letter to Greville, Caserta, 2 June 1793, Morrison 221, vol. 1, p. 176.

[80] Emma, letter to Greville, Caserta, 19 April 1795, Morrison 263, vol. 1, p. 208.

[81] It was during those same years that Maria Carolina’s sister Marie Antoinette was accused of having sexual relationships with her favourites, in particular with the Duchesse de Polignac.

[82] Emma, letter to Greville, Caserta, 18 December 1794, Morrison 250, vol. 1, p. 197. I was not able to identify this cursed book. While it is known that the Queen had a number of male lovers, rumours of a sexual relationship with Emma have never been confirmed nor dispelled. There is unfortunately a dearth of material owing to the fact King Ferdinand ordered his and Maria Carolina’s papers be burnt upon their deaths. My research in the archives of the royal palace of Caserta did not reveal anything that could ascertain whether there had been a sexual relationship between Emma and Maria Carolina. There is a caricature, sometimes wrongly attributed to James Gillray, that is often said to represent Emma and Maria Carolina. Entitled *Love-a-la-mode, or two dear friends*, it shows two women sitting on a bench in an intimate embrace, while behind them, two men appear hidden in the bushes. The print however was published in 1820 and represents Lady Strachan and Lady Warwick (BM 1868,0808.8501).

It is not only personal affinity that linked Emma to Maria Carolina, but also political expediency. Since king Ferdinand, *il re lazzarone*, was more interested in hunting than in state matters, it was effectively Maria Carolina who governed the kingdom of Naples and the Two Sicilies.[83] Emma's role as a political figure has been largely downplayed both by her contemporaries—with the exception of Sir William and Nelson—and by most of her biographers, owing not only to their dismissal of her as "a rather silly woman,"[84] but also to the general tendency to occlude the role that women have played in politics. More recently, however, scholars have begun to revise this assessment and to show the range and extent of women's contribution to politics and this has helped to clarify Emma's role in Naples.[85] With political unrest increasing in Europe in the wake of the French Revolution, Emma became particularly useful to Maria

[83] It was an arrangement that suited them both. The king was happiest when he was out hunting wild boar (and young women). The queen was educated and ambitious, growing up under the tutelage of her mother, Maria Theresia, who was the ruler of the Habsburg Empire from 1740 to 1780 and the only woman to ever hold that title. When Maria Carolina gave birth to her first son in 1777, she gained the right to sit on the Council and thus acquired the authority to rule, albeit unofficially. As Sir William wrote, "it is the Queen of Naples that actually governs this country." Sir William, letter to Lord Weymouth, 10 March 1787, Egerton MS 2639 f 12, quoted in Peakman, *Emma Hamilton*, p. 66.

[84] Brian Fothergill, *Sir William Hamilton: Envoy Extraordinary*, London: Faber and Faber, 1969, p. 219.

[85] See, among many other titles, Christine Fauré, ed., *Political and Historical Encyclopedia of Women*, London: Routledge, 2003. On the eighteenth century, see Elaine Chalus, "Elite Women, Social Politics, and the Political World of Late Eighteenth-Century England," *The Historical Journal* 44 (2000): 669-697, and the studies of the life of Georgina, the Duchess of Devonshire: Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire*, New York: Random House, 2010, and Amelia Rauser, "The Butcher-Kissing Duchess of Devonshire: Between Caricature and Allegory in 1784," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 36.1 (2002): 23-46. On Emma's role in Naples, see in particular Julie Peakman, "'The best freind [*sic*] in the world': The Relationship between Emma Hamilton and Queen Maria Carolina of Naples," in *Woman to Woman: Female Negotiations During the Long Eighteenth Century*, ed. Carolyn D. Williams, Angela Escott, and Louise Duckling, Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2010, p. 173-189.

Carolina. In 1795, Ferdinand's brother, Charles IV of Spain, was planning to ally his country with France and, in a series of clandestine letters, was urging Ferdinand to do the same. But Maria Carolina wanted no such alliance, as the French revolutionaries had dethroned and decapitated her sister, Marie Antoinette.[86] Through Emma, who as a woman and the queen's favourite was not suspected of ferrying diplomatic secrets, Maria Carolina enlisted the help of Sir William, whose main obligation on behalf of George III was to keep Naples on the side of England. Maria Carolina made copies of the letters between Charles and Ferdinand and gave them to Emma to deliver to Sir William. Sir William was then able to courier them to England, thus ensuring his government remained abreast of the dialogue between Naples and Madrid.

Ferdinand nevertheless signed a treaty with the French in October 1796, hoping it would spare his kingdom from invasion. Less than two years later, Nelson, in pursuit of Napoleon Bonaparte's ships in the Mediterranean, stopped in Sicily to restock his own fleet, but because of the treaty with France, the governor of Sicily refused Nelson entry. Nelson wrote to Sir William, asking him for help. Emma interceded with Maria Carolina, who was able to convince Ferdinand to order the governor to admit Nelson's ships and give them the supplies they needed. Thus replenished, Nelson and his fleet went on to fight Bonaparte in the Battle of the Nile where he won a commanding victory over the French.

Nelson planned to stop in Naples on his way back from Egypt. Tired, suffering from a head wound, and having lost an arm and an eye—Oscar Wilde might have

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[86] Emma had met Marie Antoinette in 1791, on her way back to Naples from London. Marie Antoinette gave Emma a letter to deliver to Maria Carolina, which was to be the last letter Marie Antoinette would write to her sister.

accused him of carelessness—he planned a stop in Naples to recover and make the necessary repairs to his ship. In a letter displaying warmth and a wry sense of humour, Sir William informed Nelson that they were making preparations for his arrival: "Come here, for God's sake, my dear friend, as soon as the service will permit you. A pleasant apartment is ready for you in my house and Emma is looking out for the softest pillows to repose the few wearied limbs you have left."[87] Emma, in fact, had fitted not only the apartment, but her own body. She wrote to Nelson, "My dress is head to foot alla Nelson… Even my shawl is Blue with gold anchors all over. My earrings are Nelson's anchors; in short, we are be-Nelsoned all over."[88] Nelson arrived in Naples in September 1798. Nelson wrote to his wife that as soon as Emma saw him, she "fell into my arms more dead than alive."[89]

As a present to Emma, Nelson had brought a black servant girl from Egypt. A sign of sophistication and exoticism, the black servant was a fashionable marker of elevated social class and confirmed Emma's new status as an aristocratic lady.[90] The servant's dark skin was seen to enhance the pallor of the aristocratic lady, as is confirmed

[87] Sir William, letter to Nelson, quoted in Robert Southey, *The Life of Nelson*, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1901, p. 167.

[88] Emma letter to Nelson, 8 September 1798, BL Add MSS 34989, ff. 4-7. Quoted in Williams, *England's Mistress*, p. 206.

[89] After reporting that Emma suffered "severe bruises" from this fall, Nelson went on to praise Emma to his wife: "She is one of the very best women in this world. How few could have made the turn she has. She is an honour to her sex and a proof that even reputation may be regained, but I own it requires a great soul." Nelson, letter to his Frances Nelson, 25 September 1798, quoted in Thomas Joseph Pettigrew, *Memoirs of the Life of Vice-Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson*, 2nd ed., 2 vols., London: T. & W. Bone, 1849, vol. 1, p. 150.

[90] See Elise Bruhl and Michael Gamer for a more in-depth look at the relationship between Emma and Fatima. Bruhl and Gamer, "Emma and Fatima Hamilton: Two Forms of Attitude," in *Race, Romanticism, and the Atlantic*, ed. Paul Youngquist, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012, p. 183-212.

by the remark of a journalist who in 1800 described the girl as a "counterpart in black beauty of Lady Hamilton's charms."[91] Flexing her aristocratic muscle, Emma completely disregarded the young girl's identity and renamed her Fatima.

Over the following weeks, Emma nursed Nelson back to health. This period of calm was not to last. Bonaparte's armies were fast approaching Naples and the Neapolitan Jacobins were gaining in strength. Fearing a fate similar to that of the French royal family, Ferdinand and Maria Carolina decided to flee to Palermo.[92] Sir William was responsible for the evacuation of the British citizens from Naples. Emma took it upon herself to organize the royal escape. Amid the preparations, Emma wrote that she wished to prove to Maria Carolina "that an humble born Englishwoman can serve a Queen with zeal and true love even at the risk of her life."[93] Emma continued to be aware of her past. It was as if she were defining herself not by her new status but by the distance she had travelled and using it as motivation.

The voyage to Palermo was marred by a violent storm. All the passengers were gravely seasick, with the exception of Emma and her mother. Sir William lay in bed with two loaded pistols, saying he would rather shoot himself than drown.[94] The sickest of all was Maria Carolina's six-year old son, prince Carlo Alberto. Emma was constantly by his

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[91] Journalist in a Grasz newspaper in July-August 1800, quoted by Fraser, *Beloved Emma*, p. 265.

[92] Emma claimed she had been the one to convince the queen she had to leave. Emma letter to Nelson, 20 October 1798, Add MS 34989 f 15, quoted in Peakman, *Emma Hamilton*, p. 91-92.

[93] Emma wrote this note on the envelope containing a letter from Maria Carolina. Egerton MS, 1616, f. 38, quoted in Walter Sichel, *Emma, Lady Hamilton*, London: Archibald Constable and Co., Ltd., 1905, p. 9.

[94] Reported in "Nelson's First Visit to Naples," *Colburn's United Service Magazine and Naval and Military Journal*, part 2, London: Henry Colburn, 1945, p. 26.

side but his situation deteriorated and he died in her arms on 25 December, the day before they arrived in Palermo.

Life in Palermo for the two thousand refugees from Naples was full of social occasions. Ferdinand was kept occupied with plentiful hunting. Emma began to drink and gamble excessively. Nelson regularly stayed up with her late into the night, lending her money so she could gamble. And it is there that she and Nelson began their affair. Nelson's second-in-command Sir Thomas Troubridge wrote to warn him, "Lady Hamilton's character will suffer; nothing can prevent people talking."[95] He was right. The affair became the subject of endless gossip both in Palermo and back in England. In order to quell the talk about late night comings and goings, Sir William invited Nelson to move into his and Emma's home. The ménage à trois began to refer to themselves as the *Tria juncta in uno*, which was the motto of the Order of the Bath of which both Nelson and Sir William were members.

Meanwhile Bonaparte's troops took over Naples and on 23 January 1799 the Parthenopean Republic was founded. The population was split and a civil war ensued. In June 1799, news reached Palermo that Cardinal Ruffo's troops had retaken Naples from the French. Hoping to avoid further bloodshed, Ruffo had granted armistice to the French sympathisers. But Ferdinand and Maria Carolina were angered by his leniency and asked Nelson to return to Naples and nullify Ruffo's agreement. Nelson's own superiors had given him orders to go defend Minorca, but he disregarded them and instead returned to Naples with Emma and Sir William.[96]

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[95] Quoted in Mollie Hardwick, *Emma Hamilton*, New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1970, p. 62.

[96] They arrived in Naples on 24 June 1799. Officially Sir William was there to translate and advise.

Maria Carolina wanted Nelson to be nothing short of ruthless. She used Emma as a conduit to communicate her wish that rebel leaders be executed as a deterrent to further insurgencies. Admiral Francesco Caracciolo was to become one such example. Caracciolo had served in the Neapolitan navy for many years and had fled with the Royal Family to Palermo. Returning to Naples to look after family affairs, he switched sides and joined the republicans. He was charged with high treason and brought on board the *Foudroyant* in June to be tried. The trial, conducted by Nelson, was a sham that grossly contravened British war code. Two days before it began, Sir William informed Nelson of Maria Carolina's wish that Caracciolo be hanged, thus effectively sealing his fate. The *Foudroyant* was considered British territory, and as such was an inadmissible location to try someone accused of high treason against the king of Naples, yet the trial was conducted there. Caracciolo was not allowed to summon witnesses. The jury that would deliver the verdict was composed of his own former officers. After he received his death sentence he was denied the customary twenty-four hours to prepare himself. And Nelson refused to grant him his wish to be shot instead of hanged. Caracciolo was hanged at the yard-arm of his own ship, the *Minerva*. In a treatment unbefitting to an officer of Caracciolo's rank, his body was left hanging there for all to contemplate as a warning and then thrown into the sea. When word of Nelson's actions reached England, he was condemned for the excessive cruelty and inhumanity with which he had conducted this affair as well as for the inordinate influence that Emma seemed to wield over him. To add to his superiors' discontent over his handling of the Caracciolo case, Nelson continued to disobey direct orders to leave the region.

In April 1800, Sir William was recalled to London, thus ending his thirty-six year ambassadorship. Nelson was also summoned home, with his superior, Lord Keith reportedly remarking bitterly to Queen Charlotte that "Lady Hamilton has had command of the fleet for long enough."[97] Emma, Nelson, and Sir William set off in the summer of 1800, together with Maria Carolina and five of her children. Pregnant with Nelson's child, Emma feared sea-sickness, so they took the long route home and travelled by land, stopping off in various European courts. In Vienna, Haydn composed a cantata for Emma, which celebrated Nelson's victory at the Battle of the Nile.[98] Maria Carolina remained in Vienna with her family. Emma wrote, "I am miserable to leave my dearest friend, the Q—. She cannot be consoled."[99] Emma may have overestimated the extent of Maria Carolina's sadness over the separation. The queen gave her a diamond necklace, but while in Vienna, she largely ignored her supposedly bosom friend. As the wife of the now former ambassador, Emma was no longer of much use to her.

In Dresden the court painter Johann Heinrich Schmidt produced a pair of pastel portraits of Emma and Nelson (figs. 4 and 5) that are now kept at the National Maritime Museum in London. It seems astonishing that these pendants should be of Emma and her lover and not of Emma and her husband. Nelson kept this portrait of Emma hanging in

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[97] Lady Minto in a letter to her sister, reporting Wyndham's words of what Lord Keith said to Queen Charlotte. Quoted in Christopher Hibbert, *Nelson: A Personal History*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995, p. 211.

[98] Haydn was reportedly entranced by Emma's voice and by the intensity of the emotion with which she performed.

[99] Emma, letter to Greville, 25 February 1800, in Lord Horatio Nelson, *The Letters of Lord Nelson to Lady Hamilton; with a supplement of interesting letters by dinstinguished characters*, 2 vols., London: Thomas Lovewell & Co, 1814, vol. 1, p. 272.

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Figure 4. Johann Heinrich Schmidt, *Emma, Lady Hamilton*, 1800. Pastel on paper, 44 x 33 cm framed. Greenwich, London, National Maritime Museum (PAJ3940).

Figure 5. Johann Heinrich Schmidt, *Horatio Nelson, Vice Admiral of the White*, 1800. Pastel on paper, 44 x 33 cm framed, 29 x 23.7 cm unframed. Greenwich, London, National Maritime Museum (PAJ3939).

his cabin aboard the *Victory*.[100] Referring to it as his "Guardian Angel," he removed it from the wall when going into battle lest it should get damaged.[101] Emma wears a respectable white dress with a high waist and a high collar that entirely covers her neck. Her shoulders are wrapped in a pale pink shawl. Her hair is cut short in the French Directoire fashion *à la Titus*. The Maltese Cross, which she had received in December 1799 for her role in helping to dispatch provisions to the starving Maltese, is pinned to

[100] Its size, roughly 28 x 24 cm, made it easily movable.

[101] Pettigrew, *Memoirs of the Life of Vice-Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson*, vol. 2, p. 518, and Royal Museums Greenwich, "Emma, Lady Hamilton, 1761-1815," http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/202515.html, accessed 15 October 2012.

her breast.[102] Nelson, whose features, including the reinstatement of his lost eye, have been markedly idealized, wears his many decorations, with the empty sleeve of his missing right arm pinned to his overcoat like another badge of honour.[103] The warmth and informality of the pastel medium conveys a sensuality that is at odds with the military decorations.

There is no mention about how Nelson's portrait was kept or displayed. Placed side by side, with Emma on the left and Nelson on the right, the two figures seem to be looking towards a single point outside the images. Arranged in this way, the two images seem to form a diptych, like a protective force for Nelson. Yet the arrangement also signals an absence. Schmidt has drawn shadows on Emma's arms and on the wall behind her. There are no corresponding shadows in Nelson's portrait. The shadow to the left of Emma seems to be cast by Nelson, while the shadow on her right is unexplained. We could conceive that it is cast by the third member of the *Tria juncta in uno*, Sir William, with the lighting coming from in front of Emma, as if the two men were placed slightly in front of her. There is no documentation regarding a third portrait of Sir William, nor are there any records of the commission to Schmidt. Whether such a third portrait exists or

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[102] It was the first time this honour had been bestowed upon an English woman. It was Tsar Paul of Russia who, as grand master of the knights of Malta, granted her the cross of the order, probably upon Nelson's request. Queen Maria Carolina had the cross set in diamonds.

[103] These are the star of the Order of the Bath, the star of the Order of St Ferdinand and Merit, the star of the Turkish Order of the Crescent, the medals awarded for the battles of Cape St Vincent and the Nile around his neck, and Davison's Nile medal fastened to his lapel. Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of Pastellists before 1800*, "Schmidt, Johan Heinrich," Online edition, updated 12 May 2014, http://www.pastellists.com/Articles/SCHMIDTjh.pdf, accessed 31 May 2014, p. 3, and Royal Museums Greenwich, "Orders and Decorations," http://www.rmg.co.uk/explore/sea-and-ships/in-depth/nelson-a-z/orders-and-decorations, accessed 16 October 2012.

not, the images themselves suggest Sir William's presence, thus placing Emma between her lover and her husband in her dual position as mistress and wife.

"A Legacy to my King and country"

Emma, Sir William, and Nelson landed at Yarmouth on 6 November 1800. Nelson was welcomed as a hero by all except his wife Fanny, whose absence was due not to the torment she must have felt with the press's constant broadcast of her husband's affair, but to a misunderstanding that kept her waiting at the wrong place. Back in London, Nelson moved in with Emma and Sir William and made it clear to Fanny that he wanted nothing more to do with her. Nelson, Emma, and Sir William set up house together in an open arrangement that gave caricaturists and gossip-mongerers ample fodder.

Nelson was recalled to naval duty in January 1801. Emma gave birth to his daughter a few days later and named her Horatia. In order to maintain some semblance of propriety—and this, in spite of the baby's name which broadcast her paternity—the birth was registered to a Mr. and Mrs. Thompson. The fiction that was presented was that Mr. Thompson was a sailor under Nelson's command who had asked Nelson and Emma to serve as his daughter's godparents and had entrusted her care to them.

Plagued by constant headaches from his head wound and driven to near insanity by his jealousy at the Prince of Wales's attentions to Emma,[104] Nelson began to dream of retirement and asked Emma to find them a place to live, for which he would supply the funds. She purchased "Paradise Merton" in August 1801.[105] The plan was for the Hamilton-Nelson ménage to live there, with Nelson meeting all the expenses.[106] Emma was responsible for furnishing the house and improving the grounds. She bought livestock and put fish in the stream, the Wandle, which she incongruously renamed the Nile. She turned the house into a shrine to Nelson, plastering it with portraits and memorabilia to Nelson's glory. In mid-October 1801, Sir William wrote to Nelson to inform him that they had moved into Merton and were awaiting his return.

Sir William's placid acceptance of the affair between his wife and Nelson is astonishing. The trio seemed unaffected by the rampant gossip their arrangement provoked. Sir William declared he did not give "a fig for the world. I have lived too long to mind what the world either thinks or says on such matters."[107] Nor did Nelson seem to mind much that they were the subject of ridicule. He even imagined new designs for caricaturists. "How I should laugh to see you, my dear friend, rowing in a boat," he wrote to Emma, "the beautiful Emma rowing a one-armed Admiral in a boat! it will certainly be caricatured!" He continued, "Well done, farmer's wife! I'll bet your turkey against Mrs.

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[104] "I am so agitated that I can write nothing," he begins. "I am gone almost mad." Nelson, letter to Emma, 17 February 1801, Morrison 518, vol. 2, p. 116-117.

[105] Emma, letter to Nelson, 8 October 1805, Morrison 845, vol. 2, p. 268. Near what is now Wimbledon, nothing remains of it.

[106] Hardin Craig, Jr., "Admiral Nelson's Farm," *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 11.4 (August 1948), p. 435.

[107] Sir William, quoted by W. H. Long, *Memoirs of Emma, Lady Hamilton*, London: Gibbings & Co., 1891, p. 227-228.

Nelson's [his sister-in-law]; but, Sir William and I will decide."[108] Not only did there seem to be no jealousy between the two men, but their letters express a sense of camaraderie: they will decide together who makes the best turkey and, perhaps, who is the greater cuckold.

Nelson was granted leave in October 1801, and the Peace of Amiens provided him with the opportunity to stay in England until May 1803, albeit with a few interruptions. Emma was adopting the trappings of her new class, spending exorbitant amounts on furnishing Merton and entertaining guests. Like many upper-class women, she was also gambling heavily.[109] Unlike some of these other women, however, Emma could not afford to play with such immoderate sums of money. Neither of her men had the liquidity to sustain her losses.

Emma's performance of class extended beyond gambling. She threw extravagant parties daily, on a scale she felt would reflect and honour Nelson's stature. But Sir William was getting older and wished to live a calmer life. He contemplated an official separation from Emma but finally decided against it, fearing it might embarrass Nelson.[110] He asked the lovers to be patient "considering the probability of my not troubling any party long in this world."[111] On 6 April 1803, Sir William died in Emma's

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[108] Nelson, letter to Emma, 20 October 1801, quoted in Pettigrew, *Life of Vice-Admiral Nelson*, vol. 2, p. 230.

[109] In this period, moral reformers were particularly concerned with aristocratic women's gambling, which became, as Gill Perry argues, a "potent and easily recognisable [signifier] of the moral degeneration of their class." Perry, *Spectacular Flirtations: Viewing the Actress in British Art and Theatre, 1768-1820*, New Haven & London: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 2007, p. 175.

[110] Sir William, letter to Emma, 1802, Morrison 684, vol. 2, p. 197.

[111] Sir William, letter to Emma, 1802, Morrison 684, vol. 2, p. 197.

arms with Nelson at his side. Nelson described Emma as "desolate" at the loss of her husband, and feared "I hope she will be left properly, but I doubt."[112] In his will, Sir William had arranged to pay off Emma's debts, given her a pension on which she could live comfortably if she controlled her spending, and left the bulk of his estate to Greville. The Earl of Minto described Emma as "worse off than I imagined" and Maria Carolina sent Emma her condolences and expressed herself shocked that Emma had been "so indifferently provided for."[113] Perhaps Emma would have been left in a better financial position had she provided Sir William with an heir. As per his request, Sir William was buried in Pembrokeshire next to his first wife. Neither Emma nor Nelson were present at the funeral.

With the breakdown of the Peace of Amiens in May 1803, Nelson had to leave for battle. While he was away, Emma gave birth to his second daughter, whom she named Emma, but the infant died six weeks later. Nelson returned to Emma one last time, for twenty-four days in August-September 1805. The Earl of Minto reported that their "passion is at hot as ever."[114]

As he prepared to enter battle at Trafalgar on 21 October 1805, Nelson composed a codicil to his will. After describing the crucial role Emma had played in Naples in the affair of the letters between Charles and Ferdinand and in the supplying of British ships before the Battle of the Nile, Nelson stated,

> Could I have rewarded these services, I would not now call upon my country; but as that has not been in my power, I leave Emma

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[112] Nelson, letter to Davison, 6 April 1803, quoted in Sichel, *Emma, Lady Hamilton*, p. 398.

[113] Earl of Minto, *Life and Letters*, vol. 3, p. 283. Maria Carolina, letter to Emma, 26 July 1803, quoted in Pettigrew, *Memoirs of the Life of Vice-Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson*, vol. 2, p. 322.

[114] Earl of Minto, *Life and Letters*, vol. 2, p. 363.

> Lady Hamilton therefore a legacy to my King and country, that they will give her an ample provision to maintain her rank in life. I also leave to the beneficence of my country my adopted daughter, Horatia Nelson Thompson; and I desire she will use in future the name of Nelson only. These are the only favours I ask of my King and country, at this moment, when I am going to fight their battle.[115]

He died a few hours later.

Emma was not invited to the funeral. Nelson's wife and brother received ample financial compensation for their loss, but Nelson's wishes regarding Emma were not respected. In heavy debt and unable to control her spending, Emma was left in a dire financial situation. She applied to George III and to the Prince of Wales for a pension, wrote to Maria Carolina for help, tried to reconnect with Fetherstonhaugh and to find another protector, all to no avail. Nelson and Sir William had both been rewarded with government pensions for their roles in the events in Naples but Emma was not. Even her entitlement to a pension simply as the widow of the British ambassador was denied to her. The aristocracy closed ranks and ensured she was kept excluded.

Nelson, himself not an aristocrat, had counted too heavily on the beneficence of the crown. His lack of understanding of the workings of English society had left Emma and Horatia vulnerable. A later commentator wrote, "Nelson in his innocence did not know English society; otherwise he would not have commended Lady Hamilton to the gratitude of the English. It was like commending her to a pack of wolves."[116] Emma and Horatia were forced to leave Merton and move to London, in progressively worse lodgings. The sale of Merton did not raise enough money to cover Emma's debts. Her

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[115] Codicil to Nelson's will, 21 October 1805, Morrison 848, vol. 2, p. 270.

[116] Elbert Hubbart in *Little Journey to Homes of Great Lovers Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton*, East Aurora, NY: The Roycrofters, vol. XIX, Nov 1906, quoted in Dunkelman, *The Enchantress*, p. 118.

mother died in January 1810. Sinking further and further into debt and finding herself in and out of debtors' prison, Emma escaped with Horatia to Calais in June 1814. Emma died there on 15 January 1815, without Horatia ever knowing that Emma was her mother.

Emma's story has served as a cautionary tale against all types of vices ranging from drinking and gambling to adultery, naked ambition, and uncontrolled spending. Even those most sympathetic to her have taken a dim view of the excessive behaviour she displayed during her last years. What these judgments overlook is that Emma's greatest impact has not been as a negative example, but as a positive one. The next four chapters explore the ways in which Emma's openly multi-layered identity, her assertion of agency, and her particular talent at posing served as a powerful source of inspiration for artists and as a model for generations of women to follow in their own search for self-expression. It was during her years in Naples that Emma was at her most commanding, and it is to that environment that this investigation now turns.

Chapter 2

Desire and Display in Sir William Hamilton's Naples

Sir William Hamilton is often remembered as Emma's cuckolded husband. In his time, however, he was a respected diplomat, collector, and volcanologist.[117] In 1763, after a failed attempt at a military career, he was named Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Bourbon Court of Naples and the Two Sicilies. Lady Catherine, his first wife, suffered from severe asthma, and Sir William hoped that the milder and drier Neapolitan climate would be beneficial to her health. She did fare better there but was never healthy and died in 1782.

Sir William's ambassadorial duties were light, and he was able to devote much of his time and resources to the pursuit of his various other interests.[118] He did not discriminate between art and what we would now call science. He closely followed the excavations in the Phlegraean Fields and at Pompeii and Herculaneum (whence he pilfered all manner of antiquities), climbed and studied Mounts Vesuvius and Etna, gathered various geological specimens, commissioned artworks from contemporary artists, amassed a vast collection of *virtu*—paintings, sculptures, vases, prints, casts,

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[117] For more details about Sir William's life, see Ian Jenkins and Kim Sloan, eds., *Vases and Volcanoes: Sir William Hamilton and His Collection*, London: British Museum Press, 1996, and Geoffrey V. Morson, "Hamilton, Sir William (1731-1803)." In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. Oxford: OUP, 2004. Online edition, edited by Lawrence Goldman, May 2006. http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12142, accessed 1 November 2006.

[118] Ferdinand IV had very little interest in state matters and did not demand much of Sir William. His main passion was for hunting, and Sir William often accompanied him on shooting trips.

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Figure 6. David Allan, *Sir William Hamilton*, 1775. Oil on canvas, 226 x 180.3 cm. London, National Portrait Gallery (NPG 589).

drawings, cameos, coins, gems, medals, decorative arts objects, and assorted bric-a-brac—and commissioned three multi-volume, lavishly illustrated, folio-sized publications that marked the history of book publishing: two that catalogued his vase collections and one that detailed his findings about Vesuvius. He was rewarded for all these activities with membership to several learned societies. Elected Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1772 and of the Royal Society in 1776,[119] he was named Knight of the Order of the Bath in 1772, inducted into the Society of Dilettanti in 1777, and served as Trustee of the British Museum from 1783 until his death.

Sir William leased four residences in and around Naples during his ambassadorship. His official home was the Palazzo Sessa, located in the fashionable area of Naples and it is there that that he housed his collections. The Villa Angelica, his "sweet house at Portici," was at the foot of Vesuvius and served as headquarters for his volcanological explorations. His small *casino* by the seaside in Posillipo, which he named Villa Emma after Catherine's death, both allowed him to go bathing during the hot summer months and afforded him an unparalleled view of Vesuvius from a safe distance. And he had another small house in Caserta, near the royal palace.

David Allan's full-length portrait of 1775 shows Sir William in full ambassadorial splendour (fig. 6). The magnificent robes of the Order of the Bath, the sword suspended from his belt, and the opulent furnishings attest to his status. The red ribbon around the documents he holds is evidence that these are diplomatic papers. Other elements in the portrait speak to Sir William's extra-ambassadorial activities. The smoking Vesuvius in the background both locates the scene in Naples and testifies to Sir Williams's scientific

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[119] The Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge, founded in 1660, acted as England's academy of sciences.

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Figure 7. Joshua Reynolds, *Sir William Hamilton*, 1777. Oil on canvas, 255.3 x 175.2 cm. London, National Portrait Gallery (NPG 680).

interests, while some of the details reveal his taste for what was then generally called Etruscan-style furnishings, inspired by the objects excavated at Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Paestum. The pedimented cabinet behind Sir William, decorated with a Medusa head and topped with a statue of Jupiter, is in the form of a lararium, a central feature of ancient Roman private houses.[120] Inside it sits the "Hamilton Vase," one of the showpieces of Sir William's vase collection.[121]

Joshua Reynolds, two years later, depicted another side of the man: the connoisseur (1777; fig. 7). Sitting rather than standing, wearing casually elegant clothing, and looking away from the viewer with an air of distant contemplation, Sir William seems far less imposing here than in Allan's portrait. His only decoration is the star of the Order of the Bath. The setting is much sparser than in the earlier portrait. Sir William sits at a table in a sober antique style on what appears to be a veranda, with Vesuvius visible through the large opening between the pillars. He holds open the first volume of the publication that catalogued his first collection of vases[122] and is surrounded by a few vases, books, and other objects from his collection, among them the large "Meidias Hydria," which Johann Joachim Winckelmann described as "the most beautiful vase in the Hamilton collection."[123]

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[120] Lararia served as shrines to the guardian spirits of the home. Many had been unearthed in Pompeii.

[121] "Hamilton Vase," c. 330-310 BCE. Pottery, red-figured wine bowl, attributed to the Baltimore Painter, height: 88.9 cm. Made in Apulia, southern Italy. London, British Museum (GR 1772,0320.14.+).

[122] Sir William Hamilton and Pierre Hughes François d'Hancarville (1719-1805), *Antiquités étrusques, grecques, et romaines tirées du cabinet de M. William Hamilton*, 4 vols., Naples: Moralle, 1767-76. The plate shown here is a dedication to Sir William featuring a design that d'Hancarville invented.

[123] "Meidias Hydria," c. 420-400 BCE. Pottery: red-figured hydria (water-jar), height: 52.1 cm. British Museum (1772,0320.30.+). Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of Ancient Art* [1764], trans. G. Henry Lodge, 4 vols., Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1873, vol. 1, p. 397.

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Figure 8. James Gillray, *A Cognocenti, contemplating ye Beauties of ye Antique*, 1801. Hand-coloured etching, 34.9 x 25.5 cm. London, The British Museum (1851,0901.1045).

It is the connoisseur that James Gillray also depicts in his 1801 caricature, *A Cognocenti, Contemplating ye Beauties of ye Antique* (fig. 8). In an interior bursting with art objects, Sir William looks intently through inverted glasses at a bust of Emma represented as the ancient Greek courtesan Lais,[124] which seems to be looking back at him. He is so captivated that he does not see the portraits on the wall that represent Emma as Cleopatra, her breasts bared, holding a bottle of gin, and Nelson as Mark Antony, with whom she flirts across the frames. The fool's bauble at Sir William's feet attests to it: he looks yet sees nothing. The trope of the cuckold who looks through an optical device but does not see what is happening around him is a common one in the history of caricature, a visual pun on the difference between looking and seeing, and making us reflect on what we, as viewers, are also doing. To the right of the image a portrait of Claudius, whose profile echoes Sir William's, looks away from a picture of a volcano that is erupting with sexual bravura.[125] The interplay Gillray articulates among gazing, display, and desire in Sir William's Neapolitan environment is precisely the subject of this chapter. It manifests itself in the relationship of Sir William and his visitors to the touristic sites of Vesuvius, Pompeii, and Herculaneum; in Sir William's acquisition and display of his collections; in a form of pederastic spectacle that Sir William organized for his guests; and in Emma's status as the prized object of his collection.

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[124] There were two courtesans named Lais in Ancient Greece: Lais of Corinth (fl. 425 BCE) and Lais of Hyccara (died 340 BCE). The two often get confused in accounts. Both were known for their beauty and high price.

[125] Whereas in Allan's and Reynolds's portraits, Vesuvius stood as an emblem of Sir William's scientific pursuits, here it explodes in a virile eruption that belongs not to Sir William but to the younger heroic Nelson.

Vesuvius, Herculaneum, and Pompeii

Vesuvius, more active during the three and a half decades that Sir William spent in Naples than at any other time since the famous eruption of 79 CE, dominated the Neapolitan landscape and provided a dazzling visual spectacle of fire and smoke. Witnesses were simultaneously excited and reminded of the tragic fate of Herculaneum and Pompeii. Hot, fiery, and dangerous, Vesuvius also carried heavy sexual overtones, functioning in the imagination of travellers "as a metaphor for desire, for romantic and sexual adventures liberated from the entanglements of social restriction."[126]

Sir William was, as he confessed, "mad upon the subject of Volcanoes."[127] His consuming interest and desire to know the volcano was akin to a form of passion and it earned him the nickname of "the volcano lover" among his colleagues at the Royal Society.[128] He climbed Vesuvius over sixty-five times, jotting down his observations,

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[126] Noam Andrews, "Volcanic Rhythms: Sir William Hamilton's Love Affair with Vesuvius," *AA Files* 60 (2010): 9-15, p. 14. See also Chloe Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour: Travel Writing and Imaginative Geography, 1600-1830*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999, p. 192, and Germaine de Staël, *Corinne, ou l'Italie* [1807], ed. Simone Balayé, Paris: Gallimard, 1985, p. 294.

[127] Sir William, letter to Greville, 3 March 1778, in *The Hamilton and Nelson Papers*, ed. Alfred Morrison, 2 vols., [s.l.]: Printed for Private Circulation, 1893, letter 78, vol. 1, p. 52. During the particularly violent eruption that lasted from June to August 1794 and that destroyed the nearby town of Torre del Greco, Sir William went out to sea in a rowboat to investigate the water. Unsurprisingly, he found it scalding hot. The boat started falling apart, and he only just made it back to shore on time. Then he climbed the still-active crater. Sir William's other nickname among his contemporaries was Pliny the Elder in recognition of the risks he took. Greville was known as Pliny the Younger.

[128] Gita May, *Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun: The Odyssey of an Artist in an Age of Revolution*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005, p. 90. Susan Sontag chose this phrase as the title of her novelization

making sketches, and gathering samples, and often disregarding his own safety in doing so. His constant investigations of and reports on Vesuvius prompted Sir Horace Walpole to quip, "He I believe is *putting up* volcanoes in his own country."[129] Sir William was highly respected for the pioneering contribution he made to the science of volcanology, Walpole's caustic irony notwithstanding. He wrote long letters to the Royal Society in London in which he detailed his observations, including lava flows, temperatures, noises, soil formations, and changes in the shapes of the cone and crater. These were presented to Royal Society members in readings enhanced by the drawings and geological specimens that Sir William also sent.[130] The letters were published in *Philosophical Transactions*, the journal of the Royal Society, and later appeared separately as compendia. They were then plagiarized by rogue publishers and appeared, often bastardized, in cheap formats and in Naples guidebooks.

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of Sir William's life. *The Volcano Lover, a Romance* [1992], New York: Picador, 2004. It is unclear whether the subtitle, *a Romance*, refers to Sir William's relationships to Emma, Nelson, or Vesuvius.

[129] Emphasis in the original. Horace Walpole, letter to the Earl of Strafford, 6 August 1784, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W. S. Lewis and A. Dayle Wallace, 48 vols., New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937-83, vol. 35, 1973, p. 383. Walpole did not care much for volcanoes erupting and even wrote disapprovingly of Sir William's fascination with them on the occasion of the eruption of 1779: "Are there not calamities enough in store for us, but must destruction be our amusement and pursuit?" Walpole, letter to Henry Seymour Conway, 13 September 1779, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 39, 1974, p. 339.

[130] These were meant to provoke awe, though not in the sense of the Burkean sublime that leaves the beholder dumbfounded, for it was important that the audience retain their rational and analytical capabilities.

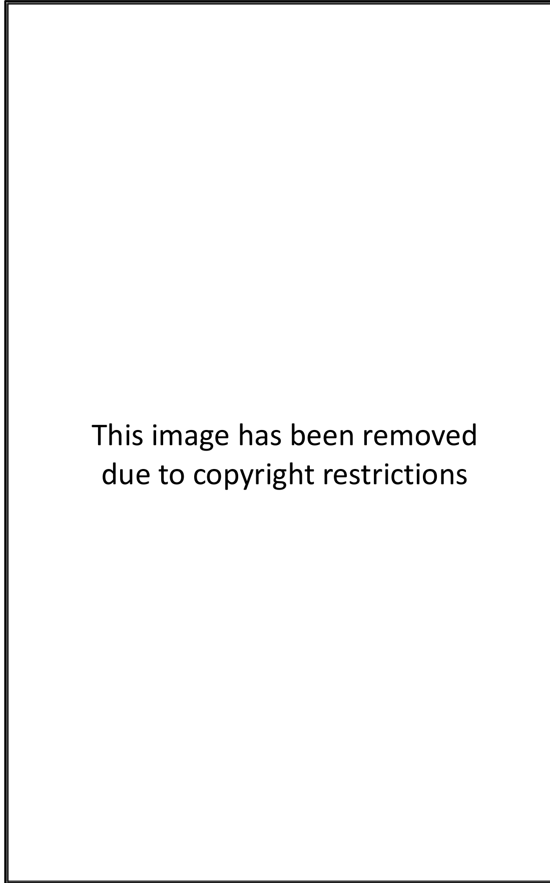
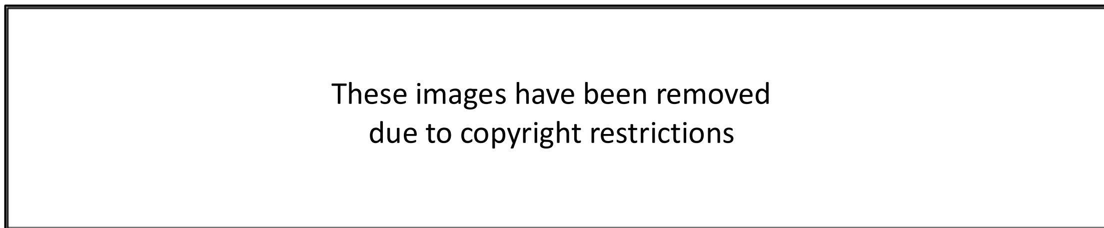


Figure 9. Pietro Fabris and Sir William Hamilton, *Supplement to Campi Phlegraei*, 1779, plate 2. Hand-coloured etching and engraving. Book: 47 cm. Claremont, CA, Seeley G. Mudd Library.



Figures 10-12. Pietro Fabris and Sir William Hamilton, *View of Naples from Pausilipo*, in *Campi Phlegraei*, 1776, left to right: vol. 2, plate 3; vol. 2, plate 50, and vol. 2, plate 48. Hand-coloured etching and engraving. Book: 47 cm. Claremont, CA, Seeley G. Mudd Library.

Seeking to regain control over his volcanological work, Sir William produced *Campi Phlegraei*, a lavish two-volume folio publication, in 1776.[131] The volume of text reproduces the six letters that Sir William had sent to the Royal Society between 1766 and 1770, to which he added a prefatory letter.[132] The volume of illustrations is composed of fifty-four hand-coloured prints by the Anglo-Neapolitan artist Pietro Fabris that depict the volcano variously at rest, smoking, and spouting lava; representations of artfully arranged geological specimens; views of the Bay of Naples; and a large foldout map of the region (figs. 9-12). Following the 1779 eruption of Vesuvius, Sir William complemented this publication with his *Supplement to the Campi Phlegraei*, a single volume including one letter and five more prints, again by Fabris.

The illustrations were integral to the project, for Sir William was sensitive to "the great difficulty of conveying a true idea of the curious country I have described, by words alone, particularly to those, who have not an opportunity of visiting this part of Italy."[133] He closely supervised Fabris's work, insisting on both the aesthetic and scientific

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[131] Campi Phlegraei translates as Flaming Fields. Sir William Hamilton and Pietro Fabris (active 1768-1778), *Campi Phlegraei: Observations on the Volcanos of the Two Sicilies, as they Have Been Communicated to the Royal Society of London*, Naples: [s.n.], 1776, and *Supplement to the Campi Phlegraei: Being an Account of the Great Eruption of Mount Vesuvius in the Month of August 1779: Communicated to the Royal Society of London*, Naples: [s.n.], 1779. For the publication history of Campi Phlegraei, see Jenkins and Sloan, eds., *Vases and Volcanoes*; Thora Brylowe, "Two Kinds of Collections: Sir William Hamilton's Vases, Real and Represented," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 32.1 (Winter 2008): 23-56; and Karen Wood, "Making and Circulating Knowledge through Sir William Hamilton's Campi Phlegraei," *British Society for the History of Science* 39.1 (March 2006): 67-96.

[132] The text was in both English and French, as French was at the time the main language used in scholarly writings.

[133] Sir William, *Campi Phlegraei*, p. 5.

qualities of the drawings, ensuring they would convey "as much taste as exactness."[134] The resulting publication is a curious hybrid. It is an intervention in a scientific debate in which Sir William positions himself explicitly against the philosopher Buffon, who also wrote about volcanoes.[135] Yet there is a discrepancy between the rather dry and technical letters and the breathtaking full-page, full-colour illustrations that accompany them. Like Vesuvius, *Campi Phlegraei* is an object of both scientific interest and spectacular display, of "superior knowledge and exquisite beauty."[136] Printed in a small run, prohibitively expensive, and destined only for a very select few, it became a coveted luxury publication. However, it has rarely survived as the unit that Sir William had desired and conceived. Most of the volumes were dismantled, the plates sold individually, and the text discarded, more value being placed on the spectacular images that could be displayed than on the text or on the publication as a whole.

Of course, travellers to Naples were attracted to Vesuvius not only because of its visual and scientific appeal, but also because it stood as a monument from a classical past that was being unearthed daily at Pompeii and Herculaneum. Longing to bridge antiquity and the present, Sir William and his visitors hoped these sites would act as "portals" through which they would achieve "a closer communion with the ancient past."[137] They

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[134] Sir William, *Campi Phlegraei*, p. 5.

[135] Sir William goes as far as explaining the source of what he sees as Buffon's misrecognition of the nature of volcanoes: "Had this great Philosopher (whose superior merit is universally allowed) been informed [of the size of Vesuvius and Etna]…, I say, he wou'd certainly have treated the subject of Volcanos very differently." Sir William, *Campi Phlegraei*, p. 7.

[136] Wood, "Making and Circulating Knowledge," p. 92.

[137] Shelley Hales and Joanna Paul, "Introduction: Ruins and Reconstructions," in *Pompeii in the Public Imagination from its Rediscovery to Today*, ed. Shelley Hales and Joanna Paul, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 1.

wanted to step back into a time that had remained frozen and had not fallen victim to slow degradation and erosion, as if they could move through the centuries in a way similar to James Cook's travels to distant geographical lands. In a letter to Lord Palmerston, Sir William wrote of his excitement when he visited the newly unearthed temple of Isis whose ancient frescoes looked "as fresh as if they had been just executed."[138]

Touristic desires to experience a "transhistorical 'connection'"[139] were quickly thwarted, however. Visitors to Pompeii and Herculaneum acknowledged feeling a deep sense of melancholy that the towns not only did not offer unmediated access to the past, but in fact did just the opposite. As soon as the sites were unearthed, they became subject to transformation, as the objects found there were being moved to safer places or stolen by private collectors. Moreover, Pompeii and Herculaneum immediately began to fall victim to what has been called a second death, the same slow process of erosion as all other antiquities. William Beckford, who visited Pompeii in 1780, described his disappointment:

> I could not…help feeling some regret, in not having had the good fortune to be present at the first discovery. It must have been highly interesting to see all its antient [*sic*] relics (the greatest part of which are now removed) each in its proper place; or, at least, in the place they had possessed for so long a course of years.[140]

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[138] Sir William, letter to Henry Temple, Lord Palmerston, 19 August 1766, Krafft MS, quoted in Ian Jenkins, "'Contemporary minds': Sir William's Affair with Antiquity," in *Vases and Volcanoes*, ed. Jenkins and Sloan, p. 42.

[139] Hales and Paul, "Introduction," p. 5.

[140] William Beckford, *The Travel-Diaries of William Beckford of Fonthill*, ed. Guy Chapman, 2 vols., Cambridge, UK: Printed at the University Press for Constable and Co. & Houghton Mifflin, 1928, vol. 1, p. 229.

This statement reflects Beckford's awareness that he could not have access to an authentic experience of the ancient past and points to a modernist anxiety of impermanence and changeability. A monument that had remained intact for seventeen hundred years was now suddenly subject to change. The "leap through time"[141] was just an illusion, and the gulf that separated visitors from the classical past was unbridgeable. The very experience of walking through empty streets made the gap more deeply felt. Germaine de Staël knew this when she wrote in *Corinne*, "l'apparence même de vie qu'offre ce séjour fait sentir plus tristement son éternel silence."[142] There was an impracticable disconnect in the confrontation between a present swarming with life and a past that was very much dead. Beckford confessed he "experienced a strange mixture of sensations" at the contrast between the devastating scars left by the eruption "and, all around them, the most luxuriant and delightful scenery of nature."[143] He recognized that the only way to travel through time was via his imagination, "[falling] into one of those reveries, and transporting myself seventeen hundred years back"[144]—a highly mediated means if there ever was one.

The experience of visiting these sites was nevertheless a powerful and formative one, and Sir William was an obliging host who gladly shared his knowledge and interests with his many guests. He never seemed to tire of accompanying them on their excursions. And of course, such trips to excavation sites also gave Sir William the opportunity to add to his collection of antiquities.

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[141] Hales and Paul, "Introduction," p. 14.

[142] De Staël, *Corinne*, p. 300.

[143] Beckford, *Travel-Diaries*, vol. 1, p. 221.

[144] Beckford, *Travel-Diaries*, vol. 1, p. 224.

The Collector

By the time Sir William arrived in Naples in 1764, he had already acquired a reputation as an avid collector. Horace Walpole feared that "He is picture mad and will ruin himself in virtu-land."[145] Walpole's worry was not misplaced. Sir William often spent well beyond his means and regularly had to sell pieces from his collection, but the funds obtained immediately went back into the acquisition of some newly coveted object. Despite the considerable income he received from Lady Catherine's estate before and after her death, Sir William came close to bankruptcy more than once.

Collecting was an important way for eighteenth-century aristocrats to perform their class identity.[146] The practice demonstrated taste, refinement, leisure time, and money, and for many, the passion for collecting exceeded rational boundaries. Sir William's nephew Charles Greville spoke—approvingly—of his uncle's "rage" for collecting, which he described as "natural" and "improved" by years of application.[147] But the practice also had its detractors. Some, such as Denis Diderot, refused to acknowledge that collecting held much interest, going as far as to denounce it as a mental illness. Diderot admitted that connoisseurs might display prodigious knowledge and memory but felt that collecting itself fell short, for it did not involve reason. Jean Baptiste

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[145] Walpole, letter to Sir Horace Mann, 8 June 1764, in *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 22, 1960, p. 243.

[146] On collecting, see Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500-1900*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981; the special issue of *Art History*, "Collecting Queerly," edited by Michael Camille and Adrian Rifkin, 24.2 (April 2001); and Jenkins and Sloan, eds., *Vases and Volcanoes*.

[147] Greville, letter to Sir William, 31 August 1781, Morrison 105, vo. 1, p. 72.

Siméon Chardin must have shared Diderot's opinion, as he represented a monkey numismatist studying his coin collection through a magnifying glass, surrounded by reference books (c. 1726; fig. 13). In a quirky act of self-parody, Sir William owned a pet

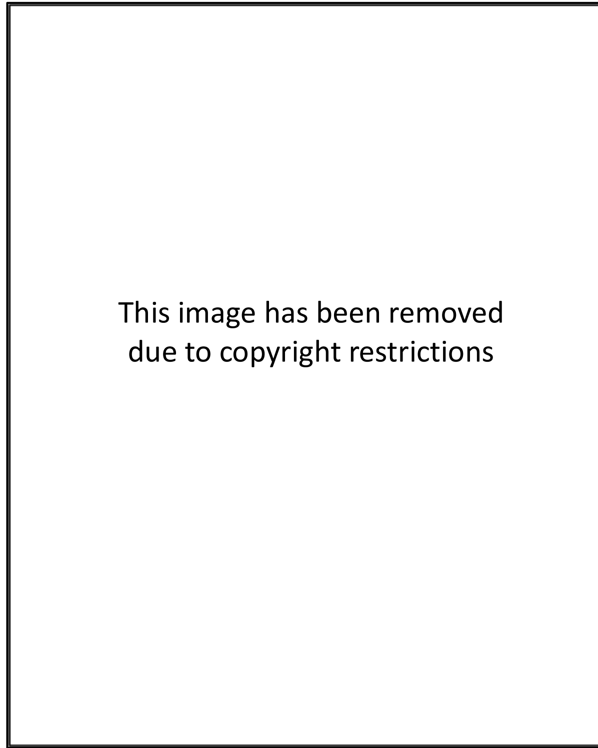

Figure 13. Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, *Le singe antiquaire*, c. 1726. Oil on canvas, 81 x 64 cm. Paris, musée du Louvre (INV3206).

monkey, Jack, whom he had trained to hop from one artwork to another, at times pausing to examine one with a magnifying glass. Sir William wrote to Greville that he had done so "by way of laughing at antiquarians" and reported that "it is really true that he diverts himself with my magnifying glass to look at objects."[148] The monkey had apparently acquired the habits and sensibilities of collectors.

[148] Sir William, letter to Charles Greville, 12 September 1780, Morrison 95, vol. 1, p. 63. See also Harry Mount, "The Monkey with the Magnifying Glass: Constructions of the Connoisseur in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Oxford Art Journal* 29.2 (2006): 167-183 for a discussion of the trope.

Diderot warned that collectors could lose themselves in their passion, which he termed "*anticomanie*," a form of mania or madness.[149] Given that some collectors' extreme overspending resulted in their ruin, Diderot was perhaps not entirely wrong. Collecting is addictive, and collectors describe themselves subsumed by passion, pursuing a coveted object like they would an object of sexual desire, tracking it down, hunting it, then finally putting their hands on it and possessing it. Collectors have often relinquished more than time and money in the process, acquiring objects by means that are not entirely lawful. This was particularly true in the eighteenth century, when the purchase and trade of art objects was less regulated than it generally is today. During his visit to Naples, Goethe described a secret room in Sir William's villa, which he was fortunate to visit with the German landscape painter Jacob Philipp Hackert:

> Sir William showed us his secret treasure vault, which was crammed with works of art and junk, all in the greatest confusion. Oddments from every period, busts, torsos, vases, bronzes, decorative implements of all kinds made of Sicilian agate, carvings, paintings and chance bargains of every sort, lay about all higgledy-piggledy; there was even a small chapel. Out of curiosity I lifted the lid of a long case which lay on the floor and in it were two magnificent candelabra. I nudged Hackert and asked him in a whisper if they were not very like the candelabra in the Portici museum. He silenced me with a look. No doubt they somehow strayed here from the cellars of Pompeii. Perhaps these and other such lucky acquisitions are the reason why Sir William shows his hidden treasures only to his most intimate friends.[150]

This passage shows two slightly contradictory aspects of Sir William's collecting. On the one hand, it does not seem that it was of paramount importance for Sir William to display

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[149] Annie-France Laurens, "Présentation," in *L'Anticomanie: la collection d'antiquités aux 18e et 19e siècles*, ed. Annie-France Laurens and Krzysztof Pomian, Paris: École des Hautes études en sciences sociales, 1992, p. 16.

[150] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Italian Journey*, [1816-17] trans. W. H. Auden and Elizabeth Mayer, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982 (1996), p. 315. Jacob Philipp Hackert (1737-1807).

all his pieces. Perhaps the greatest thrill had been in their acquisition, or he had enjoyed seeing them exhibited and could now lay them aside, or perhaps he had deliberately hidden them because of their illicit origins. On the other hand, however, the collector receives some essential validation from showing his illegally obtained objects to his peers, making the risk of being caught worthwhile. As Susan Sontag writes in *The Volcano Lover*, her fictionalized biography of Sir William,

> For the collector to show off his collection is not bad manners. Indeed, the collector, like the impostor, has no existence unless he goes public, unless he shows what he is or has decided to be. Unless he puts his passions on display.[151]

Undeterred by concerns such as money and ethics, connoisseurs developed collections that they displayed to each other in social encounters essential to the legitimation not only of their own collections, but also of the practice in general. Collectors thus encouraged and flattered each other and competed with each other. Collections became famous and some even developed into sites to be visited in their own right. Before travelling to Naples in 1794, William Beckford wrote to Sir William, “Nothing would afford me more satisfaction than the opportunity of paying you a visit & examining the glorious treasure you have collected.”[152]

The aspect of sociability surrounding the practice of collecting translated into the formation of collectors’ groups and clubs, one of the best known of which was the Society of the Dilettanti. It was formed in London in 1734 by a group of British aristocrats after they had returned from their Grand Tours. They met regularly to talk

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[151] Susan Sontag, *The Volcano Lover, a Romance* [1992], New York: Picador, 2004, p. 144.

[152] Beckford, letter to Sir William, 18 February 1794, Morrison 235, vol. 1, p. 187.

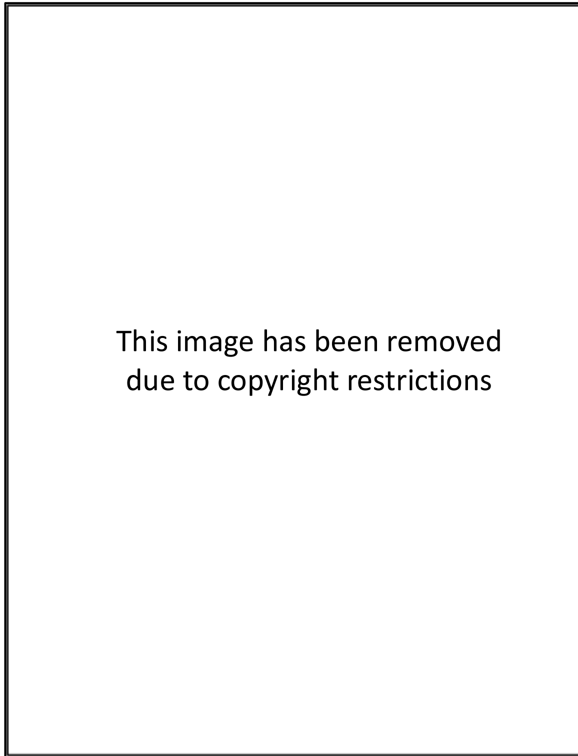

Figure 14. Joshua Reynolds, *The Dilettanti Society*, 1777-79.
Oil on canvas, 196.8 x 142.2 cm. London, The Society of Dilettanti.

about their collections, exchange information about new discoveries, and, as the wine flowed over the course of the evening, remember their sexual exploits while on voyage. Sex and collecting were intimately linked. Walpole was dismissive of the Dilettanti and described them as "a club, for which the nominal qualification is having been in Italy, and the real one, being drunk."[153] In his group portrait of the Dilettanti (1777-78; fig. 14), Joshua Reynolds, who was a member of the society, shows members involved in discussions about both drinking and art. Painted on the occasion of Sir William's induction into the society, it depicts him at the centre of the composition. On the table in front of him, among the wine glasses, are one of his vases and a volume from the

[153] Walpole, letter to Horace Mann, 14 April 1742, in *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 18, 1954, p. 211.

publication of his collection, open at the page where this vase is illustrated. Two members of the group converse with him, while three others seem more interested in their wine—one of them looks through the bottom of his empty glass as if through a magnifying glass—and another holds a garter and looks out at the viewer with a complicit smile.

The Dilettanti did not just meet to revel and talk about their treasures. Their meetings were meant to be both playful and serious, as their motto, *seria ludo*, indicates.[154] They gave themselves the mandate to develop and promote the study and understanding of ancient Greek and Roman art and culture. One of their most famous ventures was the sponsoring of Nicholas Revett and James Stuart's voyage to Greece. The aim was to devote the same scholarly attention to Greek monuments as had previously only been applied to Roman ones. Stuart and Revett measured, drew, and recorded their findings, which resulted in a publication, also sponsored by the Dilettanti, entitled *The Antiquities of Athens*, the first volume of which appeared in 1762. This and the subsequent volumes had a significant impact on the development of the Grecian style in British decorative arts at the end of the eighteenth century.

For Sir William, this sense of responsibility to promote understanding translated into the publication of his catalogue of his significant collection of antique vases. Aside from the self-promotion such a venture represented, he believed it would help build good taste in England by providing a model for artists on which to base paintings, sculptures,

[154] Redford translates the motto as "serious matters in a playful vein." Bruce Redford, *Dilettanti: The Antic and the Antique in Eighteenth-Century England*, Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008, p. 3.

and decorative arts. He chose the self-styled "baron," Pierre d'Hancarville,[155] to coordinate the production. The final result was published in four volumes that appeared between 1767 and 1776.[156] With explanatory text in both French and English, it was very richly illustrated, the first non-scientific publication to contain colour prints.[157] Behind this project lay a desire to propagate Neoclassical ideals through the study and reproduction of vases, a mission in which d'Hancarville compared himself to Winckelmann. In fact, Sir William had asked Winckelmann to collaborate on the publication, but the latter had politely declined, seemingly aware that d'Hancarville was something of a charlatan.[158] The publication nevertheless succeeded in its aim to promote the Neoclassical aesthetic. The newly opened Wedgwood manufacture, for instance, used the prints in Sir William's publication as matrices for its porcelain and jasperware objects (figs. 15-17).[159] But this success had come at great financial cost to Sir William, and in 1772, facing bankruptcy and before the fourth volume of the d'Hancarville

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[155] Pierre-Hughes-François d'Hancarville (1719-1805) was not a nobleman but gave himself the title. By 1763, when he arrived in Naples, he already had acquired "a reputation as, at best, an adventurer, and at worst a swindler." Jenkins, "Contemporary Minds," p. 45.

[156] Sir William Hamilton and Pierre d'Hancarville, *Antiquités étrusques, grecques, et romaines tirées du cabinet de M. William Hamilton*, 4 vols., Naples: Moralle, 1767-76, large 2° (466 x 367mm).

[157] François Lissarrague and Marcia Reed, "The Collector's Books," *Journal of the History of Collections* 9.2 (1997): 275-294, p. 275.

[158] See Jenkins, "Contemporary Minds," and Brylowe, "Two Types of Collections."

[159] Wedgwood began manufacturing its iconic pottery in 1759. The designs were sometimes copied from Sir William's publication wholesale, as in the case of *The Apotheosis of Homer*. At other times, the designers would mix and match: a Wedgewood vase now held at the Victoria and Albert Museum (object number 2413-1901) draws its shape from plate 5 of the first volume and its decoration from plate 59, http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O118226/vase-josiah-wedgwood-and/ (accessed 26 December 2013).

publication had appeared, he sold his first vase collection to the British Museum for the "considerable sum" of £8,400.[160]

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Left to right:

Figure 15. The Peleus Painter (attributed to the manner of), Red-figured calyx crater depicting *The Apotheosis of Homer* vase from Sir William's collection, c. 450-440 BC. Height: 45,72 cm. Diameter: 46.99 cm. London, The British Museum (1772.0320.26.+).

Figure 16. Pierre-François-Hughes d'Hancarville, *The Apotheosis of Homer*, 1767-76. From *Antiquités étrusques, grecques et romaines…*, vol. III, pl. 31, p. 201. Etching. Book: 49 cm. London, The British Museum.

Figure 17. Modelled after John Flaxman, *The Apotheosis of Homer*, c. 1778-79. Plaque produced by the Wedgwood manufacture. Jasperware, height: 18.5 x 37.85 inches. London, The British Museum (1909,1201.186).

Addicted to the thrill of collecting, Sir William immediately began to amass a second collection of vases. This time, he chose the German painter Wilhelm Tischbein, who had been appointed director of the Neapolitan art academy, to coordinate the publication of the four volumes that appeared between 1791 and 1795.[161] This second publication was produced more economically than the d'Hancarville, with the illustrations in simple outlines instead of sumptuous coloured engravings, which was also more in keeping with the taste of the time. Just as with the earlier publication, decorative

[160] R. G. W. Anderson, in his preface to Jenkins and Sloan, eds., *Vases and Volcanoes*, p. 7.

[161] Sir William Hamilton and Wilhelm Tischbein (1751-1829), *Collection of Engravings from Ancient Vases Mostly of Pure Greek Workmanship Discovered in Sepulchres in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies but Chiefly in the Neighbourhood of Naples During the Course of the Years MDCCLXXXIX and MDCCLXXXX*, Naples: Wm. Tischbein, 1791-95.

arts manufacturers and contemporary artists used the illustrations as models for their creations.[162] Through the circulation of these two publications and of the artworks and manufactured objects that they inspired, Sir William was able to spread the fame of his vases much more extensively and to ensure the permanence of his collections long after they had been dismantled. And he could continue to possess and enjoy his vases, albeit in a different form.

The most prized object in Sir William's collection was Emma. "Sir William has actually married his gallery of statues," scoffed Horace Walpole.[163] This points on the one hand to the erotic charge in the process leading from the acquisition to the enjoyment of the collected object, and, on the other, to a blurring that occurs between human being and object. This blurring is the subject of two works by Gillray: one in which the antiquarian is so enthralled by his collected object that he begins to merge with it, and the second, in which the collector begins to see people around him as objects to be collected.

The fusion between collector and collected object is depicted in Gillray's *The Charm of Virtù — or a cognocenti, discovering the Beauties of an antique terminus* (1794; fig. 18).[164] The central figure is Richard Payne Knight, friend of Sir William's, member of the Dilettanti, and one of Britain's leading connoisseurs. In 1786, Payne Knight and Sir William had together published a pamphlet in which they set out to

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[162] The Neoclassical sculptor Antonio Canova (1757-1822), for instance, based his *Hercules and Lichas* (1795-1815; marble, h: 335 cm. Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'arte Moderna e Contemporanea) on one of the plates in Tischbein's publication. See Régis Michel, *La peinture comme crime, ou, la part maudite de la modernité*, Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2001, p. 38.

[163] Walpole, letter to the Miss Berrys, 11 September 1791, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 11, 1944, p. 456. Emma status as an object in Sir William's home is examined more closely in the latter part of this chapter.

[164] It is a very developed preparatory drawing for a caricature that was never made into a print.

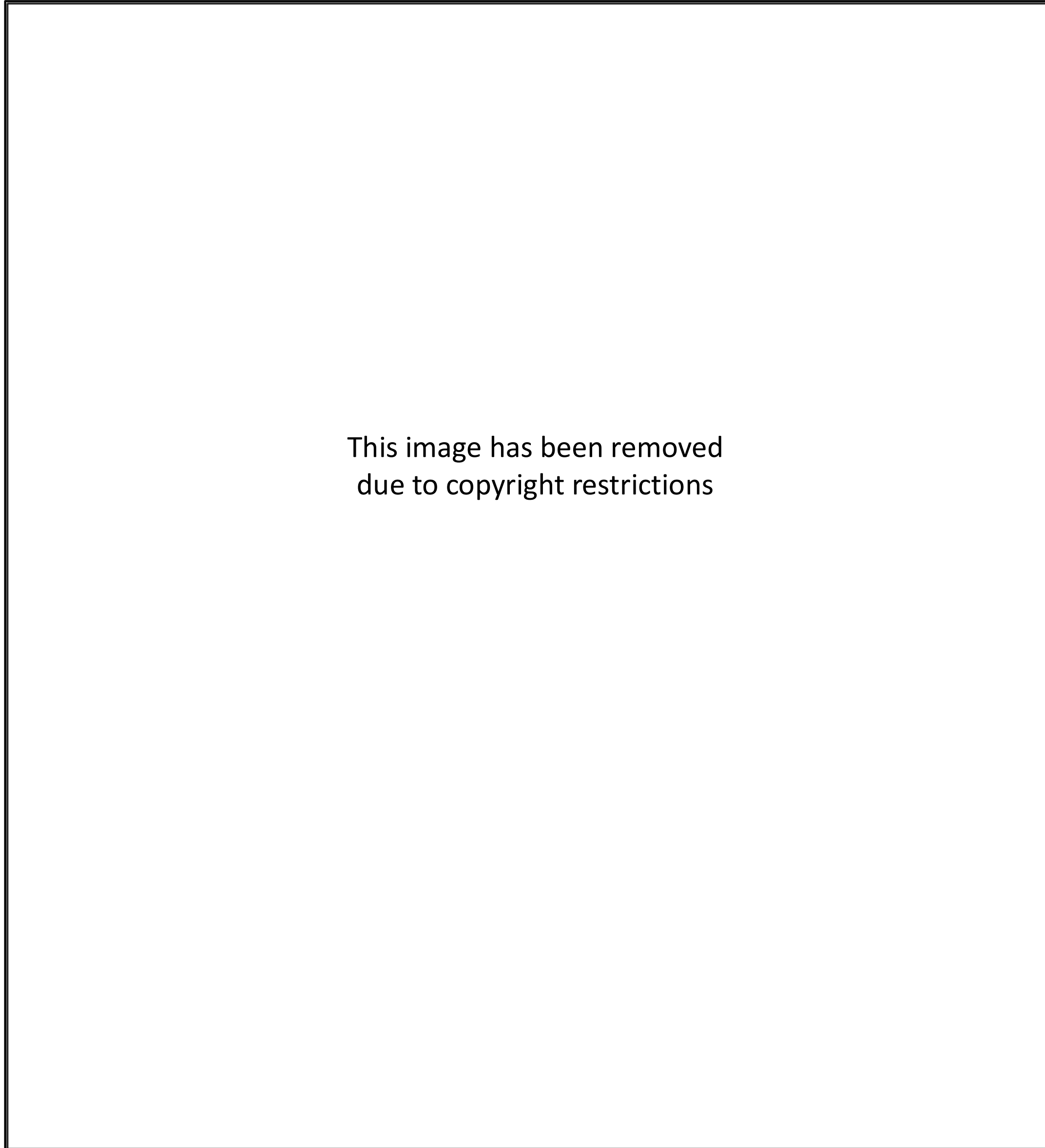

Figure 18. James Gillray, *The Charm of Virtù, or A Cognocenti, Discovering the Beauties of an Antique Terminus*, 1794. Graphite and ink on paper. New York, New York Public Library (MEZYRK).

demonstrate the prevalence of the priapic cult in antiquity and its survival in contemporary times despite the efforts of the Christian church to suppress it.[165] Much of

[165] Sir William Hamilton and Richard Payne Knight (1751-1824), *An Account of the remains of the worship of Priapus, lately existing at Isernia, in the kingdom of Naples; in two letters, one from Sir William Hamilton ... to Sir Joseph Banks ... and the other from a person residing at Isernia; to which is added, A*

the pamphlet was based on Sir William's findings earlier that decade of what were euphemistically called Cosmo's big toes. These were wax moulds of penises that women sold once a year in the streets of nearby Isernia and offered as *ex-voti* to celebrate the festival of Saint Cosmo—proof, according to Payne Knight and Sir William, of the pagan traditions that survived in the Christian period.[166] Sir William deposited some examples of "big toes" at the British Museum with the tongue-in-cheek enjoinder to "Keep Hands Off."[167] The museum's display of *ex-voti* was engraved and served as the frontispiece to Sir William and Payne Knight's pamphlet (figs. 19 and 20). The authors argued that the wax penises were the successors of the phallica that had been unearthed in Pompeii and

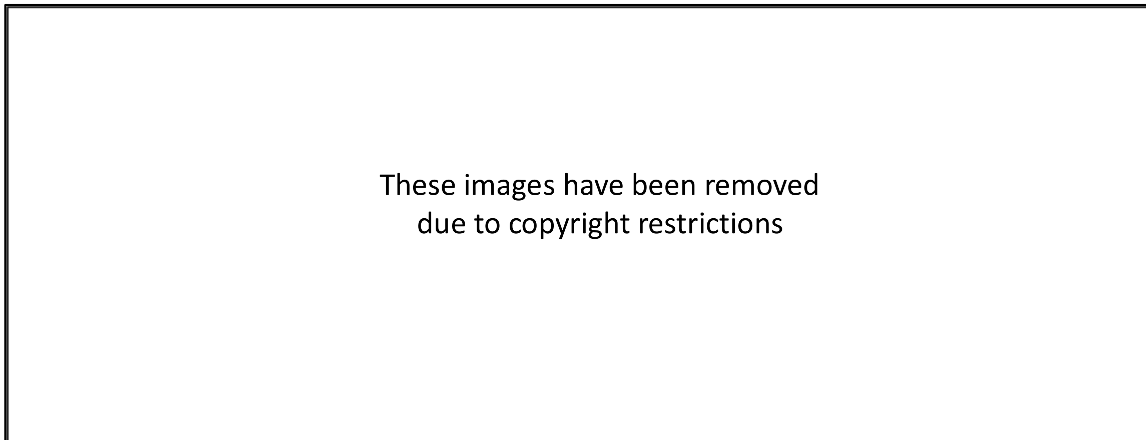

Figure 19. Unknown maker, *Ex: Voti of Wax Presented in the Church at Isernia, 1780*, 1786. Frontispiece of Richard Payne Knight's *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*, London: Printed by T. Spilsbury, 1786. Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute.

Figure 20. "Reconstruction" (1996) of the engraved plate forming the frontispiece of Richard Payne Knight's *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*, 1787. London, The British Museum.

discourse on the worship of Priapus, and its connexion with the mystic theology of the ancients, London: Printed by T. Spilsbury, 1786.

[166] Between Sir William's discovery of the cult and the publication of the pamphlet, the local bishop realized the practice was ongoing and that it would soon be publicized, and so he outlawed it. Jenkins and Sloan, *Vases and Volcanoes*, p. 238.

[167] Quoted in Ann Bermingham, "The Aesthetics of Ignorance: The Accomplished Woman in the Culture of Connoisseurship," *Oxford Art Journal* 16.2 (1993): 3-20, p. 15. The gift was made in 1784.

Herculaneum (figs. 21 and 22). It was an ideological as well as an anthropological argument: Payne Knight and Sir William explicitly positioned themselves against what they saw as the Christian Church's "bigotry" and its refusal to recognize that the phallus was the most "just and natural image…by which to express the beneficent power of the great creator."[168]

Figure 21. Exterior decoration of a Pompeiian house.

Figure 22. Bronze phallic wind chime (*tintinabulum*). Roman, 1st century CE. Length: 13.5 cm. London, The British Museum (GR 1856.12-26.1086)

Is it little wonder, then, that connoisseurs were suspected of dissimulating deeply lubricious interests behind their ostensibly research-driven archaeological and aesthetic debates?[169] Gillray's *The Charm of Virtù* plays on what had by this time become a

[168] Payne Knight, "On the Worship of Priapus," in *An Account of the Remains* [1786], new ed., London: [n.p.], 1865, p. 17.

[169] Rowlandson indulged in the depiction of a number of scenes where connoisseurs pore over erotically charged artworks or inspect the nether regions of naked women. See *Connoisseurs* (1799, hand-coloured etching, 25.9 x 19.5 cm, London, The British Museum [1935,0522.9.17]) and the more pornographic *Cunnyseurs* (c. 1812-27, hand-coloured etching, 14.6 x 15 cm, London, The British Museum [1977,U.521]).

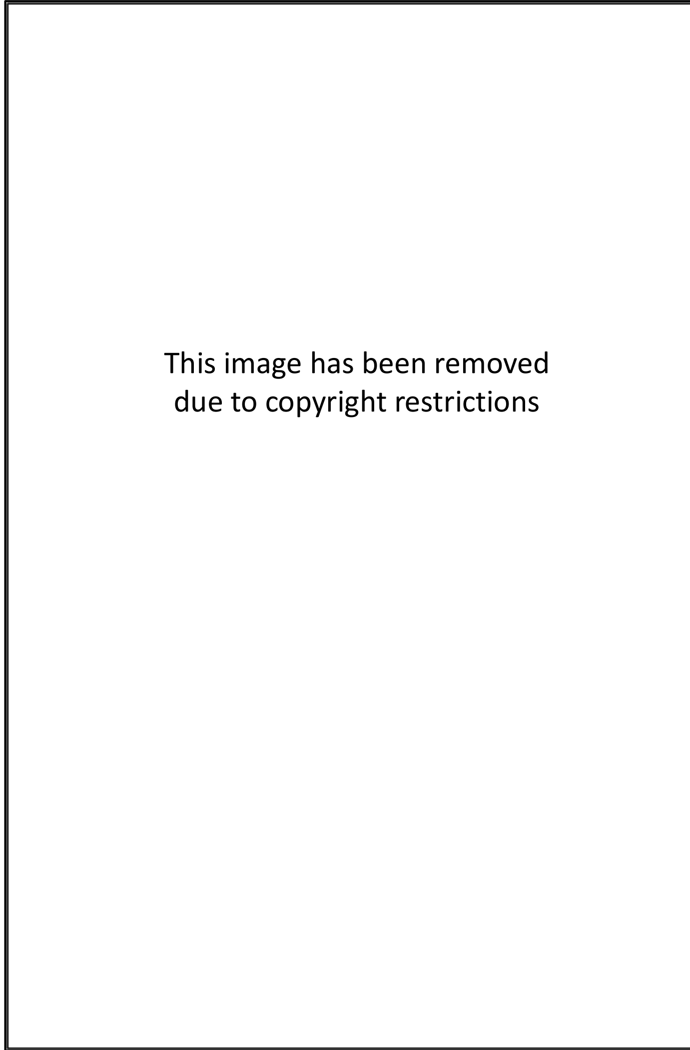

Figure 23. James Gillray, *The Charm of Virtú, or A Cognocenti, Discovering the Beauties of an Antique Terminus*, 1794. Graphite and ink. New York, New York Public Library (MEZYRK).

stereotype,[170] with Payne Knight's overtly sexual pose, his use of a magnifying glass to examine the statue's phallus in more detail, his placing of his thumb on the erect phallus of the statue, as if to fondle it, and his facial expression communicating the pleasure he feels at this touch. Gillray expands the idea of the lascivious antiquarian further: a closer look at the print reveals that it is in fact very difficult to distinguish the thumb from the

[170] See Mike Goode, "Dryasdust Antiquarianism and Soppy Masculinity: The Waverly Novels and the Gender of History," *Representations* 82 (Spring 2003): 52-86.

statue's phallus, as if they had melted into each other: the collector and the object of his collection have merged in this very spot. An earlier preparatory drawing shows the importance of this motif in Gillray's mind (fig. 23). The upper and lower third of the page are covered in writing in both pencil and ink and show Gillray trying to find a title and subtitle for the caricature. In the centre of the page, a very light pencil sketch outlines the main idea for the drawing. The clearest part of the sketch is at the top right, where darker lines indicate Payne Knight's hand, the statuette, and its phallus, confirming that this was the central feature of Gillray's design.

Gillray derides collectors again in his 1801 caricature *From Sir Willm Hamilton's Collection* (fig. 24). Here, he presents a connoisseur whose mania has reached such a degree that he no longer differentiates between people and objects. This caricature has traditionally been read as representing Sir William, so absorbed by his collection that he has become absorbed *into* his collection. More recently, however, it has been suggested that this is actually Nelson, as the very little time that Sir William had spent in the army would not justify him being portrayed wearing military uniform and epaulettes.[171] The print is one of a trio of caricatures representing the *tria juncta in uno* that Gillray produced between February and May 1801. *A Cognocenti, Contemplating ye Beauties of ye Antique*, *From Sir Willm Hamilton's Collection*, and *Dido, in Despair!* (fig. 37) form a set whose very threesomeness mocks the situation it satirizes. These caricatures focus respectively on Sir William, Nelson, and Emma, and in each one, the other two members of the triangle also have a presence. In *From Sir Willm Hamilton's Collection*, Sir

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[171] Jenkins and Sloan, eds., *Vases and Volcanoes*, catalogue entry 191, p. 302, citing Dyfri Williams, *Greek Vases*, London: British Museum Publications, 1985, p. 54-55.

William is present in the title, and Emma through her voice, the “Willm” mimicking the way she pronounced her husband’s name.

From Sir Willm Hamilton’s Collection shows the transformation that has taken place in the eyes of the collector who has become so enamoured with his vases that he sees people around him, even the great victor of the Nile, as objects to be acquired. The lettering at the base of the vase—a bizarre mix of Greek and Latin script—has never been interpreted, but I would like to suggest that it supports the more recent reading of this print as depicting Nelson. It could be seen as a parody of the *kalos*

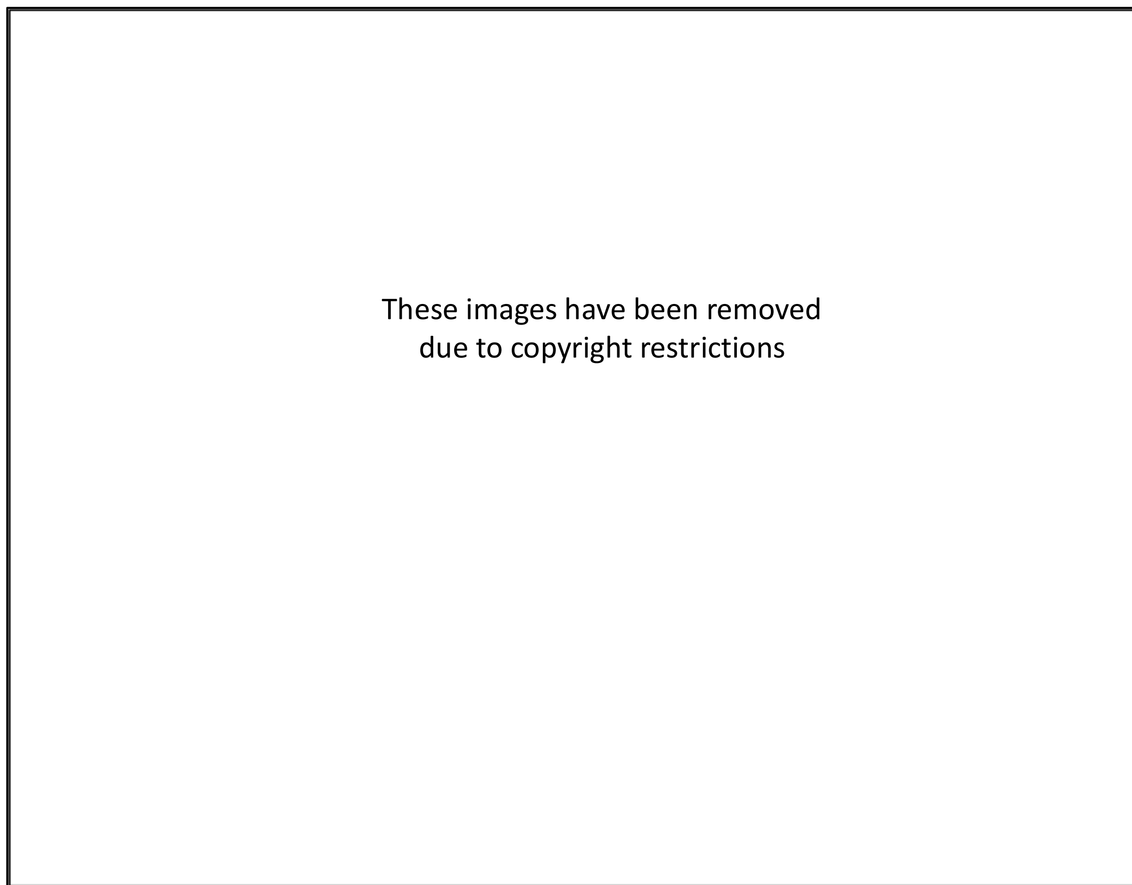

Figure 24. James Gillray, *From Sir Willm Hamilton’s Collection*, 8 May 1801. Hand-coloured etching, 28.8 x 23 cm. London, National Portrait Gallery (NPG D12761).

Figure 25. Meidias, The Meidias Hydria, c. 420-400 BCE. Pottery, red-figured, height: 52.1 cm. London, The British Museum.

inscription on hundreds of Greek artefacts, in particular on vases. Meaning “beautiful,” *kalos* was accompanied by the name of a youth or sometimes, by the more generic formulation “the boy is beautiful.”[172] It was already understood in Gillray’s time that the artefacts thus inscribed were destined as “gifts made in the social context of pederastic courtship.”[173] The last three letters of the inscription, “ΣΩΝ,”refer to the last three letters of Nelson’s name and, I suggest, to the fact that Sir William often said he viewed Nelson as a son.[174] In this interpretation Nelson becomes an object that Sir William has acquired at least in part via erotically charged relations, just as Emma had been. Sir William’s acquisitiveness, fuelled in part by eroticism, confuses objects and people to the extent that the nation’s hero becomes, in his eyes, a decorative vase.

Neapolitan fisherboys

As impresario of the British court of the south, Sir William presented spectacles that continually stimulated his guests’ erotic gaze. In the evenings, Emma performed her *Attitudes*, in which she brought to life the very dancers that decorated the walls of Pompeii and Herculaneum, and in the afternoons, Sir William paid young boys to splash

[172] Female names accompanied by the feminine form *kale* were much rarer: a late-nineteenth-century study revealed 528 addressed to males and 30 to females. Whitney Davis, “Homoerotic Art Collection,” in Camille and Rifkin, eds., “Other Objects of Desire,” p. 274, n30.

[173] Davis, “Homoerotic Art Collection,” p. 253. Davis specifies that Winckelmann and the Comte de Caylus were aware of the erotic significance of the *kalos* inscriptions.

[174] Sir William’s affection for Nelson may explain, at least in part, his tacit consent to the affair.

in the water at his seaside villa of Posillipo in a sort of re-enactment of ancient gymnopaedias. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe describes these latter displays in his account of his travels through Italy:

> The day before yesterday I visited Sir William Hamilton in his Posillipo villa. There is really no more glorious place in the whole world. After lunch a dozen boys went swimming in the sea. It was beautiful to watch the groups they made and the postures they took during their games. Sir William pays them to give him this pleasure every afternoon.[175]

Naples had a reputation as a place where boys were available to tourists for hire. The economic hardship of so many Neapolitan families likely made many young boys vulnerable to prostitution.[176] The excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum had brought to light a particularly large number of homoerotic and pederastic scenes on walls and vases, as well as phallica and other erotica. Whitney Davis has shown that "the modern *sensus communis*, same-sex or not, [had] long agreed that pederastically determined objects were indeed and had remained beautiful images of (beautiful) masculinity."[177] Davis argues that with Winckelmann, the foundational judgement of artistic beauty was homoerotic and in fact specifically pederastic. At the core of western art history—and as an optimal offering in Sir William's house of delectation—pederastic desire was similarly sublimated into judgements of universal beauty and "non-sensuous (rational and moral) approbation and admiration."[178] Published reproductions of ancient, explicitly homoerotic and pederastic artworks, such as scenes on vases in Sir William's collections, turned Winckelmann's sublimation in on itself. They located homoerotic and pederastic

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[175] Goethe, *Italian Journey*, p. 353.

[176] My thanks to Jonathan Katz for this suggestion.

[177] Davis, "Homoerotic Art Collection," p. 251.

[178] Davis, "Homoerotic Art Collection," p. 252.

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Top left: Figure 26. François Rude, *Jeune pêcheur napolitain jouant avec une tortue*, 1833. Marble, 82 x 88 x 48 cm. Paris, musée du Louvre (LP63).

Top right: Figure 27. Francisque-Joseph Duret, *Jeune pêcheur dansant la tarantelle. Souvenir de Naples*, 1833. Bronze, 158 x 67 x 58 cm. Paris, musée du Louvre (LP62).

Bottom left: Figure 28. Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, *Jeune pêcheur à la coquille*, also known as *Le Pêcheur napolitain*, 1856-58. Plaster, 91 x 47.4 x 54.9 cm. Paris, musée du Louvre (RF1317).

Bottom right: Figure 29. Unknown artist, Lamp Ornament, Dancer, 1st century BCE. Bronze, height: 18 cm. Found in Herculaneum. Now in Paris, musée du Louvre (BR4245).

"practices…at the heart—as the very bodily canon—of classical culture itself."[179] The young boys splashing about for the benefit of Sir William's guests could therefore be appreciated both erotically and aesthetically.

The aesthetic veneer was so convincing that it rendered the spectacle permissible even for women to witness. In her *Souvenirs*, Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun recounts seeing these boys on display. Her reaction is primarily emotional.

> Le chevalier Hamilton avait sur le rivage un petit casin où j'allais quelquefois dîner. Il faisait venir de jeunes garçons qui, pour un sou, plongeaient dans la mer pendant plusieurs minutes; et, au moment où je tremblais pour eux, je les voyais remonter triomphants, leur sou à la bouche.[180]

The vein of pederastic eroticism found in Pompeiian art and in Hamilton's displaying of boys survived into the following century, when the Neapolitan fisherboy became a trope of nineteenth-century sculpture (figs. 26-28). In these works, what Fred Licht has called "the equivocation between high ideal and raw sexuality" that was to become "a hallmark of modern speculations on the theme of nakedness"[181] reflects an assimilation and continuation of the aesthetics / erotics of Sir William's circle. Thus the Neapolitan fisherboys of François Rude, Francisque-Joseph Duret, and Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux harkened back to works such as the Herculaneum lamp ornament representing a dancer (fig. 29).

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[179] Davis, "Homoerotic Art Collection," p. 262.

[180] Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, *"Les femmes régnaient alors, la Révolution les a détrônées." Souvenirs, 1755-1842* [1835-37], ed. Didier Masseau, Paris: Tallandier, 2009, p. 177. This runs contrary to Waltraud Maierhofer's view that women were excluded from witnessing these spectacles. Maierhofer, "Goethe on Emma Hamilton's 'Attitudes': Can Classicist Art Be Fun?," *Goethe Yearbook* 9 (1999): 222-252, p. 240.

[181] Fred Licht, in David Finn and Fred Licht, *Canova*, New York: Abbeville Press, 1983, p. 186. According to Licht, these sculptors took their cue from Canova's *Perseus*.

The boys are naked, except for Duret's, who wears short pants. They all wear the traditional Neapolitan fishermen's bonnet on their heads. Resembling the Phrygian cap that Ganymede wears (see figs. 30 and 31), it associates the fisherboys with Zeus's young paramour and thus sanctions pederastic desire.[182] Identified with the French Revolution, the Phrygian bonnet might also have signalled a form of liberation from restrictive social and cultural mores.

Figure 30 (left). Anonymous, *Ganymede and the Eagle*, 2nd century CE Roman copy of a 4th century BCE Greek original. Marble. Naples: National Archaeological Museum (6355).

Figure 31 (right). Bertel Thorvaldsen, *Ganymede with Jupiter's Eagle*, 1817. Marble, height: 93.3 x 118.3 cm. Copenhagen, Thorvaldsens Museum (A44).

The sculpting of a fisherboy was almost a necessary rite of passage, so that Rude, Duret, and Carpeaux all produced their versions at foundational moments in their careers, when they were beginning to establish their reputations. Even the Realist painter Gustave Courbet attempted a rendition in the only sculpture he ever sent to a Salon. Antoinette Le Normand Romain explains that Naples was a formative stop for young sculptors visiting

[182] Ganymede was from Phrygia, hence the Phrygian bonnet. John Goodman, "Paris with Ganymede: A Critical Supplement to Damisch's *Judgement*," *Oxford Art Journal* 28.2 (2005): 227-244; Neil Hertz, "Medusa's Head: Male Hysteria under Political Pressure," *Representations* 4 (Autumn 1983): 27-54.

Italy because of the archaeological museum in that city, and that, although they might have been repelled at first by the city's noise and dirt, they eventually found inspiration in it.[183]

Rude showed a preliminary version of his *Jeune pêcheur napolitain avec une tortue* at the 1831 Salon (fig. 26). Two years later, he exhibited the final version and was awarded the Cross of the Legion of Honour. His fisherboy was to become one of the most successful sculptures of the nineteenth century. Duret exhibited his fisherboy, *Jeune pêcheur dansant la tarentelle*, also at the Salon of 1833 (fig. 27). He had just returned to Paris from Italy where he had sojourned after being awarded the Prix de Rome. Thanks to this work, he received the Medal of Honour and became a member of the Legion of Honour.[184] As a strategic homage to the work of these two sculptors, Carpeaux sent his *Pêcheur napolitain* (1856-58; fig. 28) to Paris as his first *envoi de Rome*, the second-year project at the Academy. The recognition and celebration of the vein of pederastic desire at the core of western art history's foundational moment thus became a foundational moment in the careers of these sculptors.

Gustave Courbet produced his own Realist version of the trope in his 1862 *Le pêcheur de chavots* (fig. 32). Instead of Naples, Courbet chose a local setting: the title informs us that the boy is fishing "*chavots*," the local name for sculpin, a fish found in

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[183] Antoinette Le Normand Romain, in *La sculpture française au XIXe siècle*, ed. Christian Germanaz, Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1986, p. 55. In the same volume, Philippe Durey explains away the trend for fisherboys as a simple bucolic reverie: "Cette vision souriante du corps d'adolescents se veut l'apologie d'une vie simple au contact d'une nature supposée sereine et accueillante." *La sculpture française au XIXe siècle*, p. 354.

[184] June E. Hargrove, "Francisque-Joseph Duret, 1804 Paris 1865," in *The Romantics to Rodin: French Nineteenth-Century Sculpture from North American Collections*, ed. Peter Fusco and H. W. Janson, exh. cat., Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1980, p. 247.

Figure 32. Gustave Courbet, *Le pêcheur de chavots*, 1862.
Bronze, height: 120 cm. Ornans, place Courbet.

the Loue river near Courbet's home town of Ornans.[185] John Hunisak has argued that Courbet's fisherboy is as exotic as the earlier sculptures of Rude, Duret, and Carpeaux, despite the title that identifies him with the Franche-Comté, and that it exhibits the same "ideal nudity and 'fisherboy charm.'"[186] Courbet's fisherboy may be naked, but his nudity is not ideal. His flesh is dull and his musculature is slack. He displays neither the exoticism nor the eroticism of his Neapolitan counterparts. Rather, *Le pêcheur de chavots* shares more with the toiling boy in Courbet's *Stonebreakers* than with Rude's, Duret's, and Carpeaux's smiling figures,[187] and his fisherboy might be read as his attempt to

[185] The usual term is "*chabots*."

[186] John Hunisak, "Images of Workers: From Genre Treatments and Heroic Nudity to the Monument to Labor," in *The Romantics to Rodin*, ed. Fusco and Jansen, p. 52.

[187] Gustave Courbet, *The Stonebreakers*, 1849. Oil on canvas, 165 x 257 cm. Destroyed (Dresden, 1945). It is not clear whether Courbet's boy is fishing for enjoyment or to earn wages, as the water in the Loue river is much colder than the Mediterranean.

produce the first Realist sculpture. In spite of the important differences between *Le pêcheur de chavots* and the Neapolitan fisherboys, what is significant is that Courbet undertook the trope of the naked adolescent fisherboy at an academic moment in his career. In December 1861, Courbet had finally relented to pressure from his admirers and supporters and had established a studio.[188] The first work that Courbet produced there was the *Pêcheur de chavots*. He wrote to his parents in March 1862, "Je viens de faire pour mon début dans l'atelier de mes élèves, la statue que je voulais faire pour la fontaine qui est devant chez nous à Ornans. C'est un pêcheur aux chavots, un enfant de 12 ans."[189] Courbet turned to the fisherboy trope at a strategic moment in his career, when he founded a studio, an act that confirmed his position as the head of a school. It was a foundational moment as well for the history of Realist sculpture. And Courbet conceived the *Pêcheur* as a public art project, donating it to the city of Ornans, where it was placed in the central square in confirmation of his own status as the town's most famous citizen. At the same time, by undertaking a work in a medium with which he was unfamiliar, Courbet demonstrated to his students that he was learning with them.

Courbet's rendering of the trope of the fisherboy was not as successful as he had hoped. The *Pêcheur de chavots* did not receive much critical praise when it was

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[188] He had been reluctant to do so, for he did not believe that art could be taught. As he explained in his "Letter to Young Artists" dated 25 December of that year, he agreed to open a studio but did not wish to enter into a formal teacher-student relationship with its younger members. This letter has come to be viewed as a sort of manifesto of Realism even though Courbet shies from using the term. Courbet, "Lettre aux jeunes artistes," in *Courbet raconté par lui-même et par ses amis*, ed. Pierre Courthion, 2 vols., Geneva: Cailler, 1950, p. 204-207.

[189] Courbet, letter to his parents, 10 March 1862. Quoted in Conseil général du Doubs, "Les sentiers de Courbet. Parcours de vie," http://web.utbm.fr/amicale/files/2012/05/Courbet-parcours_de_vie.pdf, accessed 14 May 2014.

exhibited. It was taken down by Bonapartist sympathisers in 1871 in retaliation for Courbet's role in the destruction of the Vendôme column, then reinstated in 1888. Nevertheless, Courbet's strategic appropriation of the trope of the naked adolescent fisherboy shows he understood its significance in the history of Western art.

The exploration of the aesthetics and erotics of antiquity through the depiction of adolescent Neapolitan boys continued into the twentieth century, in the works of the German photographer Wilhelm von Gloeden, for instance, in a furtherance of the desire that had been on display for Sir William Hamilton's guests and that had been at the centre both of classical culture and of the dilettanti's collecting practices.

Emma, the "acme of Sir William's delights"

"The prospect of possessing so delightfull an object under my roof soon certainly causes in me some pleasing sensations."[190] The object in question is Emma, and the note is from a letter that Sir William wrote to Greville in 1786 in anticipation of her arrival. Although Sir William did view her as an object to be owned, he perceived her as surpassing all other items in his collection, for in her he had found the realization of ideal beauty. "She is better than anything in nature," he wrote. "In her particular way she is finer than

[190] Sir William, letter to Greville, 25 April 1786, Morrison 149, vol. 1, p. 114.

anything that is to be found in antique art."[191] But Emma did more than simply incarnate beauty. She embodied a fusion of Sir William's scientific and artistic interests, a quality that made her a unique treasure in his eyes. Goethe summarized it best: "Sir William Hamilton…has now, after many years of devotion to the arts and the study of nature, found the acme of these delights in the person of an English girl of twenty with a beautiful face and a perfect figure."[192]

It is not surprising that Sir William would seek to display the prize object of his collection to his peers, and he did exhibit the live Emma as well as representations of her. Emma entertained Sir William's assembled guests both by fulfilling her duties as a hostess and by performing for them—singing, dancing, and attitudinizing. She made herself the object of their gazes to such an extent that Walpole wondered how Sir William did not guard his prized possession more jealously: "I shall not be so generous as Sir William and exhibit my wives in pantomime to the public."[193] Like any collector with his collection, however, it is through such display that Sir William received validation.

Emma was further put on show in the paintings and representations of her that adorned Sir William's Neapolitan villas. She had arrived in Italy with portraits of herself, and her reputation as an exceptional model preceded her. As soon as she landed in Naples, artists began to vie with each other to gain a sitting. Sir William had rooms in his apartments refurbished specifically for the purpose of housing the artists who came to

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[191] Sir William, quoted in John Knox Laughton, "Hamilton, Emma," *Dictionary of National Biography*, 1885-1900, vol. 24, p. 149, available online, http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Hamilton,_Emma_(DNB00), accessed 4 February 2014.

[192] Goethe, *Italian Journey*, p. 208.

[193] Walpole, letter to the Mary and Agnes Berry, 11 September 1791, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 11, 1944, p. 350.

paint, draw, and sculpt her. Less than three months after she arrived, Emma proudly catalogued the activity around her in a letter to Greville:

> Sir William wants a picture of me, the size of the Bacante, for his new apartment… There is two painters now in the house, painting me…. But as soon as these is finished, ther is two more to paint me—and Angelaca, if she comes. And Marchmont is to cut a head of me, for a ring.[194]

A year after Emma's arrival in Naples, there were nine finished portraits of her on the walls of Sir William's various villas and two more on the way. Emma and the images of her became conflated, reinforcing her identity as an object.

James Gillray clearly objectifies Emma in *A Cognocenti, Contemplating ye Beauties of ye Antique* (fig. 8). However, a closer examination reveals that he also does something else: although she is an object at which to be gazed, she reverses the direction of the gaze and has the power to take control of her environment through her own gaze.[195]

Emma is on display twice in *A Cognocenti*: once in sculptural form as Lais and a second time, painted, as Cleopatra. In both representations she is dressed and coiffed in late-eighteenth, early-nineteenth-century fashion, as if in an illustration of Greville's description of her as "a modern piece of virtu."[196] Lais's nose and mouth have eroded away in the manner of antique statues, a degradation that can also be understood as a *vanitas*, a reminder that Emma's beauty will soon fade. By 1801, the date of this print, many commentators had already noted that her looks were waning. The missing nose, also one of the effects of advanced syphilis, was often used in eighteenth-century

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[194] Emma, letter to Greville, 22 July 1786, Morrison 152, vol. 1, p. 117.

[195] Earlier readings of this caricature have not gone beyond the Sir William – Emma – Nelson love triangle that Gillray satirizes.

[196] Greville, letter to Sir William, 10 March 1785, Morrison 136, vol. 1, p. 100.

caricature to indicate promiscuity. The cracked chamber pot in front of her—a throwback to Gillray's earlier *The Crack'd Jordan* and to works such as Jean–Baptiste Greuze's *La Cruche cassée*—is an indictment of both her history as a prostitute and of her adultery.[197] On the table behind Emma stands a statue of the bull Apis, the Egyptian god of fertility and virility. Its horns link the groins of the two lovers portrayed behind him right at the level of their crotches, while its head sits atop a long stone pillar in the manner of an antique herm, another ancient symbol of virility (fig. 33). If, as with most herms, Apis's pillar is enhanced by a phallus, we can imagine that the bull is preparing to mount the courtesan. Emma is caught between her lover and her husband, between the potent and erect Apis and the old and hunched Sir William. Sir William's left hand might gesture a

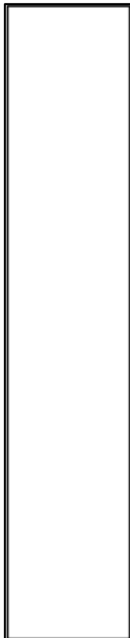

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Figure 33. Herm portrait of the kosmetes (magistrate) Sosistratos, from Athens, c. 141-142 CE. Marble, Athens, National Archaeological Museum.

[197] James Gillray, *Lubber's Hole, alias the Crack'd Jordan*, published 1 November 1791. Hand-coloured etching, 276 x 213 mm. London, The British Museum (1851,0901.552). Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725-1805), *La Cruche cassée*, oil on canvas, 108 x 86 cm, Paris, musée du Louvre (INV5036).

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Figure 34. James Gillray, *A Cognocenti, contemplating ye Beauties of ye Antique*, 1801. Pen and brown ink with some pink and brown wash over graphite sketch, 19.5 x 16.4 cm. London, The British Museum (1851,0901.1045).

sexual invitation in the style of 1801[198] that is in turn bizarrely echoed by the glove that emerges from his pocket, but the flaccid arrow held by the putto between him and his young wife makes it clear that his desire cannot be fulfilled. If he is to get any sexual gratification, it will be with his right hand, which is ungloved and thus free to fondle the statuettes.

Sir William scrutinizes Emma closely. The intensity of his gaze is heightened by a line that connects him to Emma and that runs from the tip of his hair through the rim of his hat, his eye, his hand, and the arm of his glasses, to Emma's eyes. Yet he seems to be losing his power over her, as the more we look at the print, the more it looks not like an exchange of glances but like a reversal of the gaze, and it begins to seem that Emma has the ascendency. The glasses that Sir William holds backward could be interpreted as a sign that it is Emma who is looking through them. Sir William's gaze stops at his glasses, whereas Emma's drives all the way through. Jacques Lacan argued that the gazer always opens himself up to the risk that the gazed object might look back at him,[199] and in her book *On Longing*, Susan Stewart warns, "There is always the possibility … that the object itself will take charge, awakening some dormant capacity for destruction."[200] The power and potency of Emma's gaze is confirmed by a preliminary drawing for this print, now held at the British Museum (fig. 34). In the passage from the drawing to the print, there is a change of scale: Sir William takes up a larger proportion of the picture plane in

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[198] See Lord Sandwich's hand-gesture in Gillray's *Sandwich-Carrots! Dainty Sandwich-Carrots!*, published 3 December 1796. Hand-coloured etching, 354 x 251 mm. London, The British Museum (1851,0901.835).

[199] Jacques Lacan, *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse* [1973], Paris: Seuil, 1990.

[200] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984, p. 148.

the drawing than in the final print. Perhaps Gillray only meant to focus on the central motif in this drawing. Nevertheless, the effect of zooming out is that Sir William looks smaller in comparison to his surroundings, more insignificant. By contrast, Emma is now in a more central position. The subject of the final print has become less Sir William in the act of looking, and more Emma gazing back at him.

The bust in the preparatory drawing is revelatory of this reversal of power relations. The inscription at the base of the bust, which might at first be mistaken for an insignificant scribble, identifies it as a representation of Medusa, which is confirmed by the fact that she has snakes instead of hair. Medusa has the ability to turn the one gazing at her into stone, rendering him, in all senses of the word, impotent.[201] In an exchange of gazes between Sir William and Emma / Medusa, Sir William would be sure to lose. One other point suggests that Gillray intended to confer a certain amount of agency to Emma. In the final print, her features are not distorted for the purpose of ridicule, contrary to the usual process in caricature. If anything, they are idealized. Sir William's features are exaggeratedly geriatric. This gives Emma a certain degree of dignity. Emma might have be a mere courtesan in the final print, lacking a mouth and unable to speak, but she has retained Medusa's capacity to weaken the one who looks at her.

Medusa was a popular figure at the close of the eighteenth century, for her ability to disempower men functioned as a strong symbol of aristocrats' fear of losing political, social, and economic power.[202] Gillray was happy to reveal and mock this aristocratic

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[201] Medusa retained this power even after she was beheaded. The mere sight of her severed head turned the tyrant Polydectes to stone.

[202] See Neil Hertz, "Medusa's Head: Male Hysteria under Political Pressure," and Barbara Judson, "The Politics of Medusa: Shelley's Physiognomy of Revolution," *ELH* 68.1 (Spring 2001): 135-154. Margaret

castration anxiety. In an earlier print, he had depicted Mrs. Fitzherbert, the mistress and morganatic wife of the Prince of Wales, as Dido, sitting on a pyre of penises (fig. 35).[203] At the moment she is about to die, Dido becomes the castrating Medusa. Mrs.

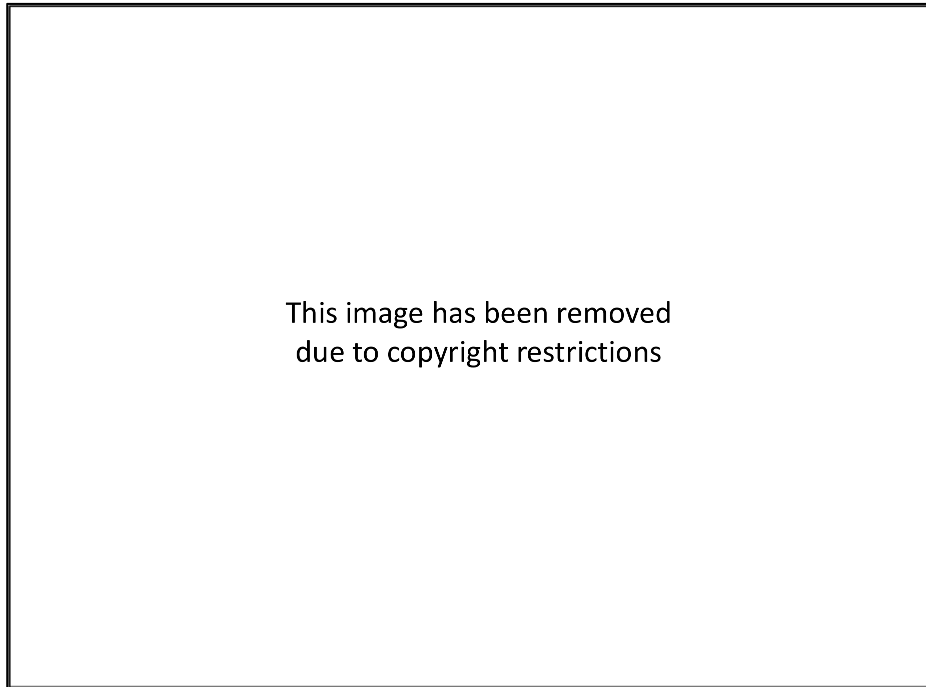

Figure 35. James Gillray, *Dido Forsaken*, 1787. Hand-coloured etching. 27.3 x 365 cm. London, The British Museum (1851,0901.356).

Fitzherbert might have been seen as such because of her many husbands and lovers and, more significantly, because she was alleged to be exerting excessive influence over the Prince. She was older and more experienced than him, and because she was a Catholic,

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Waller has instead described the *mal* of the time as impotence. As Sir William had been unable to father children with either Catherine or Emma, some of his contemporaries rumoured that he was impotent. Waller, *The Male Malady: Fictions of Impotence in the French Romantic Novel*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993.

[203] The British Museum entry describes them as money-bags. See The British Museum, *Dido Forsaken* (1851,0901.356). http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1476961&partId=1&searchText=gillray+dido&page=1, accessed 7 June 2014.

he risked losing his claim to the throne if he married her.[204] And although in this caricature, the Prince has abandoned her and is denying the marriage took place, he will not be able to travel very far, the holes in his sail a sign of his lack of power.

Around the same time, Antonio Canova sculpted a Perseus holding the head of Medusa (1804-06; fig. 36). It is a highly unusual representation of the subject in that it

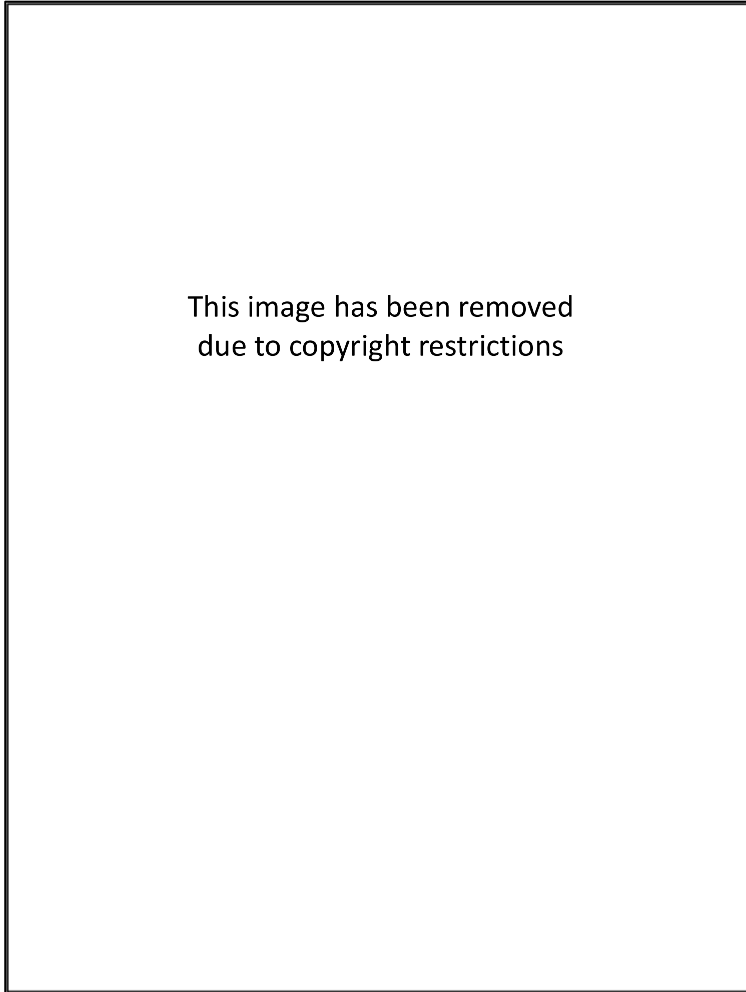

Figure 36. Antonio Canova, *Perseus with the Head of Medusa*, 1804-1806. Marble, 242 x 191.8 x 102.9 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum (67.110.1).

[204] According to the Act of Settlement of 1701, any heir to the throne that married a Roman Catholic became ineligible to reign. The Royal Marriages Act of 1772 mandated members of the royal family to obtain the permission of the king to marry.

shows Perseus looking at the severed head of Medusa. Fred Licht has argued it should be read as "a curious allegory on the art of sculpture," suggesting that the marble is less a representation of Perseus' victory over Medusa than of Perseus himself, now stone after gazing at Medusa.[205] Again, and just as Emma had done in Gillray's *A Cognocenti*, Medusa arrogates power for herself by taking control of the gaze.

In *A Cognocenti*, Sir William's powerlessness is confirmed by another set of details. He has entered the dealer's shop wearing a hunter's costume,[206] for, like any collector out for a find, he is a hunter. The tables are turned, however. The stag's antlers crowning the framed portrait of Sir William as Claudius have traditionally been linked to his cuckoldry. I want to suggest that the antlers also make the portrait resemble a trophy mounted on a wall so that Sir William, the hunter, has become the hunted. Supporting the opinion of some of their contemporaries that Emma had somehow trapped Sir William into marrying her, Gillray shows him sitting powerlessly, a spectacle himself, on display for all to see.

A similar reversal of roles takes place in Gillray's *Dido, in Despair!*, also from 1801 (fig. 37). Emma is portrayed here as rollickingly obese,[207] crying out in an attitude of despair as Nelson sails away with his fleet. She is left behind with Sir William, who sleeps nestled in the back of the bed, oblivious, as he had been in the *Cognocenti*. And just as in

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[205] Licht, in Finn and Licht, *Canova*, p. 186-187.

[206] I believe he is at a dealer's establishment and not at home. This is confirmed by the fact he is wearing a hat, overcoat, and spurred boots and, in the preparatory drawing, by the catalogue he holds in his left hand.

[207] Contemporaries often remarked gleefully on Emma's girth. She had given birth in secret to Nelson's daughter Horatia on 29 January 1801, eight days before the publication of this print. Gillray must have been unaware of the pregnancy or he would have capitalized on such sensational gossip.

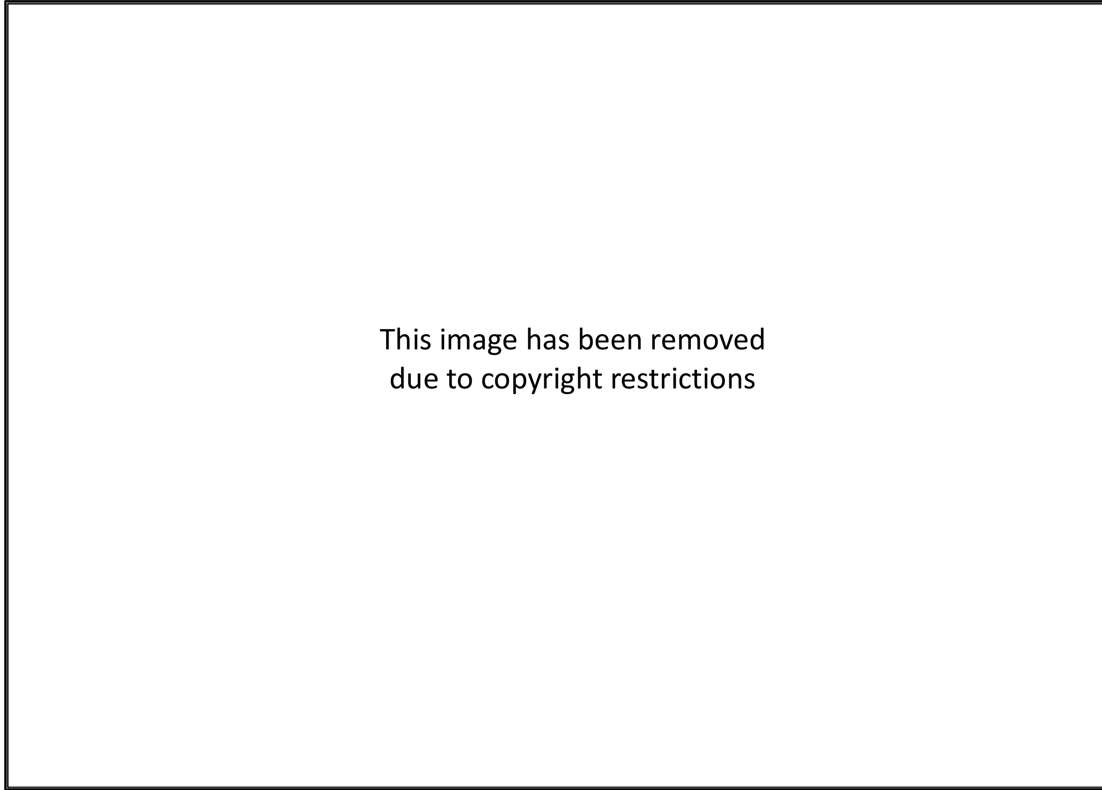

Figure 37. James Gillray, *Dido, in Despair!*, 1801. Hand-coloured etching. 27.3 x 365 cm. London, The British Museum (1851,0901.356).

the *Cognocenti*, the room is filled with objects that speak simultaneously of Emma's history, of Sir William's collecting, and of the sexual goings-on. At the very right of the caricature, a figurine of a satyr looks lewdly toward a statuette of a naked Venus beside him. Next to her is a bust of Messalina, head thrown back, laughing.[208] Venus looks over her head toward a phallic-shaped grotesquerie, the base of which is inscribed PRI[apus]. Coins are scattered on the floor of the room, along with Emma's slippers, a garter inscribed THE HERO OF THE NILE, and a volume entitled *Antiquities of Herculaneum, Naples & Caprea* that parodies the publications Sir William had commissioned. The

[208] Messalina was the third wife of Claudius, linking this print to the *Cognocenti*. She is remembered for being ruthlessly ambitious and sexually predatory and insatiable. She was executed in 48 CE, accused of bigamy and of plotting against Claudius.

image that is represented on the cover of the book is of a satyr chasing a nymph and looks nothing like a vase painting. It evokes the lascivious nature of many of the illustrations in those volumes and the exaggerated libido associated with all things Neapolitan. On the window seat lies open a volume, *Studies of Academic Attitudes taken from life*, a parody of Friedrich Rehberg's album of Emma's *Attitudes*.[209] Emma's pose is not in that album, however, but rather is reminiscent of Fuseli's famous *The Nightmare*, for which some say Emma may have been the model.[210]

Gillray's verses to the left and right of the title invest Emma with definite power over Sir William. It is she who speaks:

> Ah, where, & ah where, is my gallant Sailor gone? —
> He's gone to Fight the Frenchmen, for George upon the Throne.
> He's gone to fight ye Frenchmen, t'loose t'other Arm & Eye,
> And left me with the old Antiques, to lay me down & Cry.

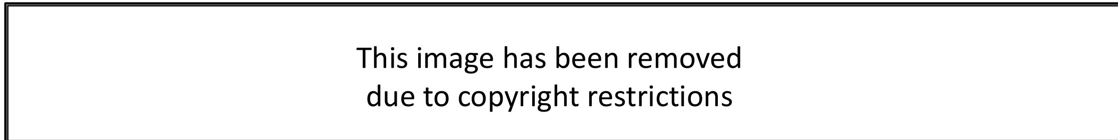

Figure 38. James Gillray, *Dido, in Despair!*, 1801. Hand-coloured etching and aquatint, 25.3 x 35.8 cm. London, The British Museum (1868,0808.6927). Detail.

In the last line of the caption, the "s" of *Antique(s)* is not as dark as the other letters (fig. 38). I do not believe this to be an oversight. Gillray had trained first in the art of lettering,

[209] See the following chapter of this dissertation, "Emma's *Attitudes*: Movements and Surprising Transformations."

[210] Andrei Pop, "Sympathetic Spectators: Henry Fuseli's *Nightmare* and Emma Hamilton's Attitudes," *Art History* 34.5 (November 2011): 934-957.

and was always scrupulous with the writing in his caricatures, as it formed an important element of the design of his works.[211] *The old Antique* refers to Sir William and *Antiques*, to his collected objects. Just as the word *Antique* is encapsulated in *Antiques*, Sir William has become an antiquity, now a part of Emma's collection.

The portrait of Emma that emerges from these caricatures is of a woman who, while often regarded as an object in Sir William's collection, was nevertheless able to take charge of the gaze and to use its potency to transcend her status. Through the agency this afforded her, she had the power to transform her environment and to perform her own desire—her desire for her lover and, more generally, her desire for a higher status. What Gillray suggests, even while deriding Emma, is that she was able to overcome the objectifying consequences of her self-exhibition. Emma clearly revealed this ability in her legendary *Attitudes*.

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[211] For Gillray's early education and apprenticeship in lettering, see for instance Richard Godfrey, *James Gillray: The Art of Caricature*, exh. cat., London: Tate Gallery, 2001, p. 12. For more on lettering in Gillray's prints, see David Bindman, "Text as Design in Gillray's Caricature," in *Icons, Texts, Iconotexts: Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality*, ed. Peter Wagner. Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996: 309-323.

Chapter 3
Emma's *Attitudes*: "Movements and surprising transformations"

> In the attitudes of Lady Hamilton are mirrored the entire palette of female icons, from the furies to the saints, which continue on into the work of such contemporary artists as in the secretaries, house wives and femme fatal [*sic*] of Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills*.
>
> — Lindy Annis[212]

With these words written to accompany her 2004 performance entitled *Lady Hamilton's Attitudes*, the artist Lindy Annis explains why she believes Emma Hamilton was an important precursor to twentieth- and twenty-first-century performance art.[213] Emma's

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[212] Lindy Annis, "Lady Hamilton's Attitudes," http://www.lindyannis.net/lindy_annis_hamilton.html, accessed 31 October 2013. Also quoted, though with slightly different wording, in Arthur Dunkelman, ed., *The Enchantress: Emma, Lady Hamilton. The Jean Kislak Collection*, exh. cat., New York: The Grolier Club, 2011, p. 48.

[213] Some scholars have similarly identified Emma's *Attitudes* as part of an archaeology of performance art. See for instance Toril Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, Oxford and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 120, and Jennifer Fisher, "Interperformance: The Live Tableaux of Suzanne Lacy, Janien Antoni, and Marina Abramovic," *Art Journal* 56.4 (Winter 1997): 28-33. Fisher writes: "Although the genealogy of *tableaux vivants* has multiple trajectories, its populist form can be traced to performances in Italy at the end of the eighteenth century by Emma Hamilton, whose 'attitudes' mimetically enacted the poses of classical statuary that were being excavated at the time." Fisher, "Interperformance," p. 28.

Performance art as we understand it today developed in the 1950s and 1960s in the midst of a particularly politicized environment. Adding its voice to the social and ideological battles of the time, it defied social mores and artistic practices. For a history of performance art, see for instance RosaLee Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art Since the 60s*, New York: Thames & Hudson, 1998 and Amelia Jones, *Body Art / Performing the Subject*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

Attitudes, Annis argues, should be understood as commentaries on the construction of femininity: Emma enacted female stereotypes and used an aspect of the culture of her time, classicism, in much the same way that almost two centuries later, Cindy Sherman drew on popular culture—mimicking in order to subvert.[214] Annis places Emma in the lineage of feminist performance artists who displayed their bodies in ways that purposefully thwarted the conventional perception of women as passive objects for heterosexual male viewers' scopic and sexual enjoyment and that brought to the fore the cultural construction of women's lived experiences.[215]

I would like to join Annis in deepening my generation's rereading of Emma's *Attitudes* as having continued relevance and a progressive character. Traditional interpretations of the *Attitudes* portray Emma as uncritically embodying feminine stereotypes in a self-display that enabled her to climb through the social ranks.[216] Through her personifications of different female figures, it was said, Emma could temporarily disguise her lower class origins in a blinding display of her beauty and talents, her poses so perfect that she was able to exhibit what artists had attempted to represent for centuries. Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun wrote that "on aurait pu copier ses

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[214] See Peter Galassi, "The Complete *Untitled Film Stills*. Cindy Sherman," MOMA, http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/1997/sherman/, accessed 26 November 2013: "For [Sherman] the pop-culture image was not a subject (as it had been for Walker Evans) or raw material (as it had been for Andy Warhol) but a whole artistic vocabulary."

[215] See for instance Carolee Schneemann, *Interior Scroll*, 1975.

[216] See for instance Kate Davies, "Pantomime, Connoisseurship, Consumption: Emma Hamilton and the Politics of Embodiment," *CW3 Journal* 2 (Winter 2004) http://www2.shu.ac.uk/corvey/CW3journal/issue%20two/davies.html, accessed 21 March 2007. Davies contrasts Emma's *Attitudes* to Germaine de Staël's *Corinne*, which "offers a deeply critical account of the notions of gender" (section 1). Davis's view values text over art and betrays a definite class bias, casting de Staël as rational (and, in a sense, male) in opposition to Emma's perceived empty-headedness.

différentes poses et ses différentes expressions pour faire toute une galerie de tableaux," while Johann Wolfgang von Goethe exalted that he saw in Emma's *Attitudes* "what thousands of artists would have liked to express."[217] This recurring trope, which construes Emma as the ideal model for artists who needed only copy what she presented, confirms the antiquarian view of the *Attitudes* as an uncritical procession of various classical and other female types.[218]

The identification of Emma as a foremother of feminist performance artists, however, and the extensive genealogy of women performers who self-consciously stand in her lineage confirm that Emma's *Attitudes* were more than simple mindless incarnations of female stereotypes. From Henriette Hendel-Schütz and Ida Brun in the years immediately following Emma's time,[219] through Colette and Isadora Duncan,[220] to

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[217] Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, *"Les femmes régnaient alors, la Révolution les a détrônées." Souvenirs, 1755-1842* [1835-37], ed. Didier Masseau, Paris: Tallandier, 2009, p. 174. Vigée-Le Brun was in Naples in 1790-91, but wrote her memoirs much later, in the 1830s. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Italian Journey* [1816-17], trans. W. H. Auden and Elizabeth Mayer, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982 (1996), p. 208. Waltraud Maierhofer casts doubt as to whether Goethe ever actually witnessed Emma's *Attitudes* and argues instead that his "reminiscences" must be based on accounts he had heard and read. See Maierhofer, "Goethe on Emma Hamilton's 'Attitudes': Can Classicist Art Be Fun?," *Goethe Yearbook* 9 (1999): 222-252. As Maierhofer points out, however, whether or not Goethe was indeed present at any of these performances does not detract from the interest and importance of his description.

[218] This trope will be examined more critically in chapter five, "Model, Muse, and Artist."

[219] For an analysis of the attitudes of Henriette Hendel-Schütz (1772-1848) and Ida Brun (1792-1857), see Kirsten Gram Holmström's seminal study, *Monodrama, Attitudes, Tableaux Vivants: Studies on some Trends of Theatrical Fashion, 1770-1815*, Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri Ab, 1967.
Ida Brun added music to her performances. Her mother, Federikke Brun, who was on friendly terms with Germaine de Staël, was in Naples in 1796, where she possibly saw Emma perform her *Attitudes*. While in Italy, she bought a copy of Rehberg's series of engravings of the *Attitudes*.

[220] Colette (1873-1954) practiced pantomime between 1907 and 1913. Photographs by Jean Reutlinger (1891-1914) show her in poses similar to Emma's attitudes. They can be accessed on Gallica, vol. 53,

twentieth- and twenty-first-century performance artists such as Lindy Annis and Cindy Sherman, women have borrowed from Emma's *Attitudes* in their own search for self-expression. They have drawn their inspiration not just from Emma's costumes and poses, but from the way she asserted her agency and performed her subjectivity through her specific positioning vis-à-vis the dominant culture.[221] This chapter aims to uncover the mechanisms of this positioning. Although Emma's *Attitudes* were greatly admired, they posed a compelling challenge to gender, social, and artistic conventions. Emma became an icon of Neoclassicism, yet defied many of its principles. Against Neoclassicism's values of stasis, atemporality, universality, and permanence, Emma asserted her own subjectivity in performances that were alive with fleeting movements and quick transformations. The first part of this chapter will argue against the customary understanding of the *Attitudes* as "essentially static"[222] and for the importance of movement rather than stasis in her performances. The second part will further explore the protean quality of Emma's *Attitudes* to uncover the way in which she asserted her agency, artistry, and subjectivity in her performances.

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screens 5-7 http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8596952g/f5.item and volume 55, screens 55-57, http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b85969549/f49.planchecontact.r=Album%20Reutlinger%20de%20portraits%20divers%2055.langFR, accessed 5 November 2013.

Isadora Duncan (1877-1927) famously danced in a Grecian tunic and flowing shawls.

[221] Emma also inspired the creation of fictional characters, most notably Germaine de Staël's Corinne, who resists social conventions. See chapter five, "Model, Muse, and Artist."

[222] Volker Schachenmayr, "Emma Lyon, the Attitude, and Goethean Performance Theory," *New Theatre Quarterly* 13 (1997): 3-17, p. 3.

Movement and Stasis

Grand Tourists and other visitors to Naples assembled in Sir William's drawing room to witness Emma perform her *Attitudes*. Dressed in a white Greek-style tunic, barefoot, flourishing one or two shawls, she adopted poses and expressions—or attitudes—that evoked in turn classical, biblical, and literary heroines.[223] Poses lasted barely an instant and were linked to each other by fluid movements. Sometimes Emma would cover herself entirely with her shawls, assume the pose and expression of the character she was personifying, and then drop the shawls and reveal herself to her spectators like a statue that had been unveiled. The Comtesse de Boigne described this in her memoirs:

> Elle jetait sur sa tête un shall qui, traînant jusqu'à terre, la couvrait entièrement et, ainsi cachée, se drapait des autres. Puis elle le relevait subitement, quelquefois elle s'en débarrassait tout à fait, d'autre fois, à moitié enlevé, il entrait comme draperie dans le modèle qu'elle représentait. Mais toujours elle montrait la statue la plus admirablement composée.[224]

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[223] There is no agreed-upon universal way of referring to Emma's *Attitudes*. The word is sometimes capitalized, sometimes not, italicized or not, and put in quotation marks or not. I have chosen to italicize and capitalize the performance (*Attitudes*) and differentiate it from the individual poses (attitudes). While the overwhelming majority of the figures Emma portrayed were female, Goethe does mention an Apollo in his description of the *Attitudes*: "In her he has found all the antiquities…even the Apollo Belvedere." Goethe, *Italian Journey*, p. 208. More significantly, Greville wrote of Emma's ability to take on male roles: "Anything grand, masculine or feminine, she could take up, & if she took up the part of Scævola, she would be as much offended if she was told she was a woman as she would be, if she assumed Lucretia, she was told she was masculine." Charles Greville, letter to Sir William, November 1786, in *The Hamilton and Nelson Papers*, ed. Alfred Morrison, 2 vols., [s.l.]: Printed for Private Circulation, 1893, letter 156, vol. 1, p. 123. The list of female characters includes Agrippina, Andromache, bacchantes, Cassandra, Cleopatra, Diana, a Fury, Gabriella de Vergy, Hera, Iphigenia, a Jewish woman, the Magdalen, Maria (from Lawrence Sterne), Medea, muses, Niobe, a sibyl, and Sophonisba.

[224] Éléonore-Adèle d'Osmond, Comtesse de Boigne (1781-1866), *Récits d'une tante: Mémoires de la Comtesse de Boigne, née d'Osmond*, 5 vols., Paris: Émile-Paul Frères, 1921-23, vol. 1, p. 107.

At other times, Emma metamorphosed from one pose to the next in full view of her spectators, surprising them with her ability to shift quickly from one character to another. Emma based her attitudes on a number of prototypes—antique statues, classical paintings, and the figures painted on Sir William's vases and on the walls of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Spectators' accounts reveal that at times, she imitated her sources precisely, while at others she only loosely based her poses and expressions on them.

In the context of late-eighteenth-century Naples, where the pull of the classical was particularly powerful,[225] Emma's guests and spectators compared her to a classical statue. Upon meeting Emma, Lady Palmerston wrote her brother approvingly, "Sir William perfectly idolises her and I do not wonder he is proud of so magnificent a *marble*, belonging so entirely to himself."[226] Emma's classical features and statuesque figure made the comparison especially germane, as did the costume she wore, the way she presented, as the Comtesse de Boigne described it, the most admirably composed statue, and the lighting in which she performed. Lady Elizabeth Foster, who saw Emma attitudinize in London in 1791, described her as "draped exactly like a Grecian statue, her chemise of white muslin was exactly in that form, her sash in the antique manner."[227] Emma performed her *Attitudes* in controlled lighting that followed the late-eighteenth-

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[225] Naples became an increasingly popular destination in the late eighteenth century, due, in great part, to the ongoing excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum, as mentioned earlier. These provided tourists and other visitors with a new perspective on the classical era. See chapter two, "Desire and Display in Sir William Hamilton's Naples."

[226] Lady Palmerston, letter to her brother Benjamin Mee, dated 17 January 1792, quoted in Henry Temple Palmerston, *Portrait of a Golden Age: Intimate Papers of the Second Viscount Palmerston Courtier under George III*, ed. Brian Alan Connell. Boston: Houghton Mifflin; 1958, p. 276. My emphasis.

[227] Lady Elizabeth Foster, August 1791 journal entry, quoted in Hugh Tours, *The Life and Letters of Emma Hamilton*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1963, p. 90.

century fashion for displaying statuary—in the dark and by torchlight.[228] As Melesina St George recalls, "She stands at one end of the room with a strong light to her left, and every other window closed."[229] One of the reasons for this way of displaying is that the flickering light on the marble gave the impression that the surface of the sculpture was animated, giving life to the statue. The effect of performing the *Attitudes* by torchlight was therefore a further way of encouraging the confusion between Emma and a statue and between marble and flesh.

The effect of the *Attitudes* on Emma's spectators was mesmerizing. The traveller and writer John Morritt of Rokeby, who visited Naples in 1796, left one of the most detailed descriptions of the *Attitudes* in a letter to his mother.

> Since I wrote to you we have not seen many new sights, but one of those we have seen is fairly worth all Naples and Rome put together. Not to puzzle you too much, I mean Lady Hamilton's attitudes; and do not laugh or think me a fool, for I assure you it is beyond what you can have an idea of. As I have heard them described and talked about fifty times, and had, after all, no idea of their excellence, I cannot hope for much better success; however, I will tell you as well as I can what they were like. Her toilet is merely a white chemise gown, some shawls, and the finest hair in the world, flowing loose over her shoulders. These set off a tall, beautiful figure, and a face that varies for ever, and is always lovely. Thus accoutred, with the assistance of one or two Etruscan vases and an urn, she takes almost every attitude of the finest antique figures successively and varying in a moment the folds of her shawls, the flow of her hair; and her wonderful countenance is at one instant a Sibyl, then a Fury, a Niobe, a Sophonisba drinking poison, a Bacchante drinking wine, dancing, and playing the tambourine, an Agrippina at the tomb of Germanicus and every different attitude of almost every different

[228] For a detailed account of this fashion, see John Whiteley, "Light and Shade in French Neoclassicism," *Burlington Magazine* 117 (1975): 768-773. I will return to this later in this chapter.

[229] Melesina Trench, previously St George (1768-1827), *The Remains of the Late Mrs. Richard Trench*, ed. Richard Chenevix Trench, London: Parker, Son, and Bourn, 1862, p. 107. The Earl of Minto remembers the *Attitudes* being lit by candlelight. Gilbert Elliot, First Earl of Minto (1751-1814), *Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot, First Earl of Minto*, 3 vols., London: Longmans, Green, & Co, 1874, vol. 2, p. 365.

> passion. You will be more astonished when I tell you that the change of attitude and countenance, from one to another, sometimes totally opposite, is the work of a moment, and that this wonderful variety is always delicately elegant, and entirely studied from the antique designs of vases and the figures of Herculaneum, or the first pictures of Guido, etc., etc.
>
> She sometimes does above two hundred, one after the other, and, acting from the impulse of the moment, scarce ever does them twice the same. In short, suppose Raphael's figures, and the ancient statues, all flesh and blood, she would, if she pleased, rival them all.[230]

The spectacle was original and unique. It surpassed the expectations of those who had heard or read about it and had the power to silence those who had previously been doubtful or outright dismissive of it. As Goethe wrote, "it's like nothing you ever saw before in your life."[231]

It is hard to reconstruct Emma's *Attitudes* today. Any examination of them runs into the problem of ultimately being about something that can no longer be witnessed. The visual and written traces are scattered, and none come from Emma herself. Although she drew from extensive knowledge, she improvised her performances and thus left no record of a choreography. She performed her *Attitudes* in Sir William's private residence, hence there were no press reviews. The records that remain are visual representations—drawings, prints, and paintings—and descriptions in travellers' journals and letters, all of which obviously speak to the writers' and artists' own biases. The written accounts reveal the writers' perceptions of the very controversial figure that was Emma Hamilton, while the visual representations of the *Attitudes* produced during her time manifest the artists'

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[230] John B. S. Morritt (c. 1772-1843), letter to his mother, 14 February 1796, in *The Letters of John B. S. Morritt of Rokeby: Descriptive of Journeys in Europe and Asia Minor in the Years 1794-1796*, ed. G. E. Marindin, London: John Murray, 1914, p. 281-282.

[231] Goethe, *Italian Journey*, p. 208.

own aesthetic concerns.[232] And this problem is not specific to Emma's *Attitudes*. Scholars of performance art—indeed, of performance in general—have warned that by basing our studies exclusively on secondary sources, the voice of the performer is silenced.[233] If we are to write about performance, however, we have no choice but to examine these accounts and representations—and to create our own—all the while remaining conscious, as Amelia Jones has stated, of the limitations and advantages of our position.[234] The following attempt at a reconstruction will draw on a wide variety of written and visual traces of Emma's *Attitudes*. Although there have been a number of excellent studies of the *Attitudes*, these have tended to be partial, discussing single works and relying only on a small number of written sources. I aim to provide a fuller account of them and will analyze in detail not only the better known representations of the *Attitudes* by Friedrich Rehberg, but also drawings by Antonio Novelli, William Artaud, and Rehberg himself, a print by Dominique-Vivant Denon, and a painting by Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun.

For Sir William's guests, who had come to Italy to engage with classical culture, the *Attitudes* became one of the requisite Neapolitan experiences. The portraitist and

[232] There is no evolution in the written and visual representations of the *Attitudes* over Emma's lifetime. They are scattered, individual impressions that when taken together, allow us to form an idea of the performances.

[233] See for instance Catherine Elwes, "On Performance and Performativity: Women Artists and Their Critics," *Third Text* 18.2 (2004): 193-197. If we follow this point to its logical conclusion, we would argue that all writing on art suppresses the artist's voice in favour of the art historian's, which might preclude us from writing altogether.

[234] As Jones has argued, even being present at these events would not give us a stronger or more neutral position from which to comment. Any recollection is also always necessarily mediated. Jones does not believe this is inevitably a limitation, as the writer may better understand the significance of an art object or performance with some historical distance. See Amelia Jones, "'Presence' in absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation," *Art Journal* 56.4 (Winter 1997): 11-18.

history painter William Artaud, while in Italy in 1796 as a Royal Academy visiting scholar, noted in a letter to his father, "The environs of Naples are truly Classic Ground…. I have been at Herculaneum & Pompeii & the Museum at Portici, & saw Lady Hamilton's attitudes."[235] It was as if the dancers of Pompeii and Herculaneum had peeled off the walls and taken bodily form. Spectators familiar with classical theatre, moreover, could trace the roots of the *Attitudes* specifically to ancient pantomime.[236] As Emma's fame grew and spread throughout Europe, visitors flocked to Sir William's villa to watch her perform.

The *Attitudes* became instrumental in the spread of the Neoclassical aesthetic, not only thanks to Emma's own fame—the Grecian dress that she wore during her performances became very fashionable across Europe at the end of the eighteenth century—but also through the series of twelve prints published in 1794 after the drawings of the German portraitist and historical painter Friedrich Rehberg (figs. 39-41).[237]

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[235] William Artaud (1763-1823), letter to his father, May 1796, quoted in *Vases and Volcanoes: Sir William Hamilton and His Collection*, ed. Ian Jenkins and Kim Sloan, London, British Museum Press, 1996, p. 261.

[236] See Lori-Ann Touchette, "Sir William Hamilton's 'Pantomime Mistress': Emma Hamilton and Her Attitudes," in *The Impact of Italy: The Grand Tour and Beyond*, ed. Clare Hornsby, London: The British School at Rome, 2000: 123-146; and Ismene Lada-Richards, "'Mobile Statuary': Refractions of Pantomime Dancing from Callistratus to Emma Hamilton and Andrew Ducrow," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 10.1 (Summer 2003): 3-37. Horace Walpole (1717-97) referred to Emma as Sir William's "pantomime mistress." Walpole, letter to Marry Berry, 17 August 1791, in *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W. S. Lewis and D. Wallace, 48 vols., New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937-83, vol. 11, 1944, p. 337.

[237] Friedrich Rehberg (1758-1835), *Drawings faithfully copied from nature at Naples; and with permission dedicated to the Right Honourable Sir William Hamilton, his Britannic Majesty's envoy extraordinary and plenipotentiary at the Court of Naples, by his most humble servant, Frederick Rehberg, historical painter in his Prussian Majesty's service at Rome. Engrav'd by Thomas Piroli*, [Rome]: Niccola de Antonj, 1794.

Rehberg's Neoclassical pedigree is impressive. He went to Rome in 1777 and trained with the Neoclassical painter Anton Raphael Mengs.[238] There he also made plaster casts in the Académie de France, where he befriended Jacques-Louis David. [239] Tommaso Piroli, who etched the plates, had executed the previous year the prints for John Flaxman's two Homeric series, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* (fig. 42).[240] These share with the etchings after Rehberg the aesthetic of absolute linear purity and simplicity characteristic of Neoclassicism.

Rehberg's images are the best known and most reproduced visual representations of Emma's *Attitudes*, and what we retain of the performances today has been largely shaped by this series. Despite this they have never been studied as artworks in their own right. Instead scholars have studied them summarily or used them as simple illustrations in their writings on Emma's performances. The following analysis will attempt to redress this oversight. I will place the prints in relation to other works of art and to a variety of

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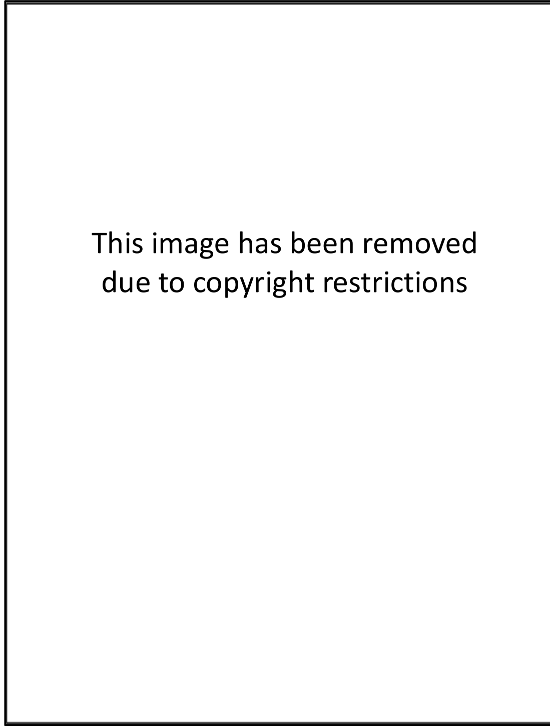
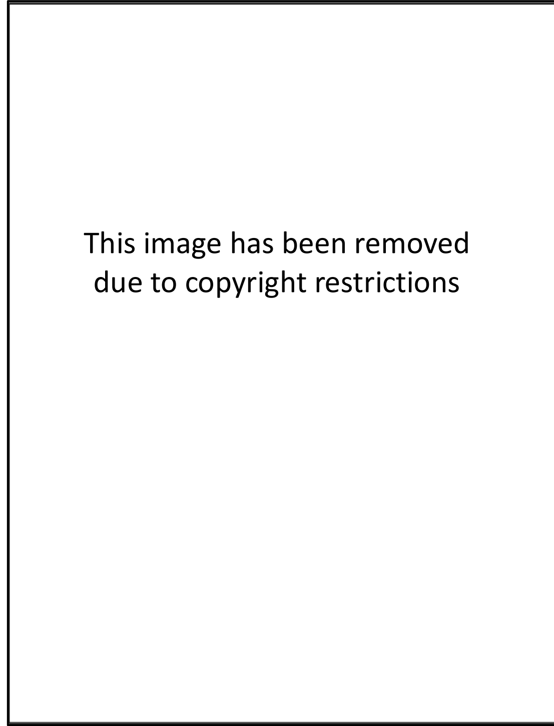
A facsimile of the first edition was published by Harvard University's Houghton Library in 1990 with a preface by Richard Wendorf. The images reproduced here are scanned from this edition. Editions of the full set of Rehberg's representations of Emma's *Attitudes* are available in many rare book libraries and are widely accessible online.

[238] Anton Raphael Mengs (1728-79).

[239] Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825). See Ingrid Sattel Bernardini, "Rehberg, Friedrich," *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*. Oxford University Press, http://oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T071188, accessed 30 November 2013, and Michael Bryan and George Williamson, *Bryan's Dictionary of Painters and Engravers*, 5 vols., new ed., New York: The Macmillan Company and London: George Bell and Sons, 1903-05, vol. 4, p. 206.

[240] Tommaso Piroli (1750-1842). John Flaxman (1755-1826) was a friend of the Hamiltons and had stayed with them in Naples in 1792-93. He also made several drawings after vases in Sir William's collection, which he sent to Wedgwood to use as models. See David Irwin, "Flaxman: Italian Journals and Correspondence," *Burlington Magazine* 101 (1959): 212-217 and G. E. Bentley, Jr., "Flaxman in Italy: A Letter Reflecting the Anni Mirabiles, 1792-93," *The Art Bulletin* 63.4 (December 1981): 658-664.





Figures 39-41. Tommaso Piroli, after Friedrich Rehberg, *Drawings Faithfully Copied at Naples…,* 1794. Plates 3 (above left), 4 (above right), and 5 (below). Etching, 26.9 x 20.8 cm. Cambridge, MA, Houghton Library (XCage XFA6275.30 Folio).

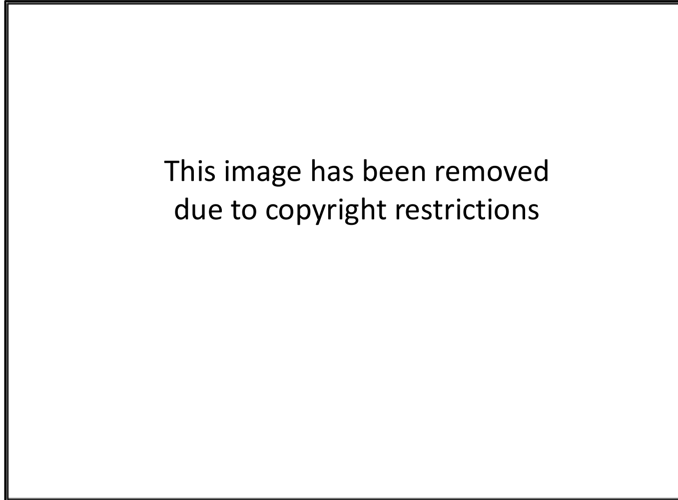


Figure 42. Tommaso Piroli, after John Flaxman, *Euryclea Discovers Ulysses*, from *The Odyssey of Homer*, 1793. Part 2, plate 23. Etching, 23.5 x 35 cm. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale (TA-6-PET FOL).

written sources to show that Rehberg manufactured a version of the *Attitudes* that would comply with and promote Neoclassical values of permanence and universality. For this he had to retain only some characteristics of Emma's performances, while evacuating others, most notably her movements.

Rehberg's album appeared in many editions. It was published originally in 1794, probably in Rome, and then appeared in British editions in 1794, 1797, 1800, 1807, c. 1840, c. 1850, and c. 1880, and in a German edition in 1802.[241] The many editions of Rehberg's drawings, combined with the widespread fascination for Emma and her performances, ensured that these images were broadcast throughout Europe, thus disseminating the Neoclassical aesthetic while helping to shape and enhance Emma's reputation.[242] Several printmakers sought to capitalize on this phenomenon. Hannah

[241] The series can now be found in libraries across Europe, North America, and as far from Naples as Australia.

[242] While Rehberg's volume does not state explicitly that his drawings represent Emma, there was never any doubt as to who the subject was.

Figures 43 to 45. Unknown artist, *A new edition considerably enlarged, of Attitudes faithfully copied from nature: and humbly dedicated to all admirers of the grand and sublime*, 1807. Plates 3 (above left), 4 (above right), and 5 (below). Etching, h: 31 cm. Lewis Walpole (Quarto 75 G41 807).

Humphrey published a spoof in 1807 of Rehberg's twelve images, each attitude now performed by a grotesquely obese Emma, wittily entitled *A new edition considerably enlarged, of Attitudes faithfully copied from nature* (figs. 43-45).[243] In 1801, Samuel

[243] Unknown artist, *A new edition considerably enlarged, of Attitudes faithfully copied from nature: and humbly dedicated to all admirers of the grand and sublime*, London: H. Humphrey, 1807. The images have often been attributed to James Gillray on the basis of an unsigned dedication that is said to be in his hand

Fores published another series of twelve prints showing classical figures and rendered in the same style as Rehberg's. The cover title reads, *A second part to Lady Hamilton's attitudes, containing outlines of figures and drapery…published by S. W. Fores,…who also publishes Lady Hamilton's attitudes*,[244] and the volume was most often sold bound together with Fores's own edition of Rehberg's drawings. The title page shows a female figure, often assumed to be Emma, copying a drawing from a book held up by two putti (fig. 46).[245] On the floor in front of her are three other books of drawings, one of which is entitled *Lady Hamilton's Attitudes*, directly linking this volume to Rehberg's.[246] Yet the prints do not represent Emma attitudinizing. They are simply drawings of characters in Racine plays to be used as models for amateur draughtsmen. Emma and her *Attitudes* had become such an icon of Neoclassicism that they are used here as a selling point for a commercial enterprise.

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on the title page of a copy held at the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University. This attribution can be debated, however, as such close replications would have been unprecedented in Gillray's oeuvre, and by 1807, Gillray signed all his prints. Scans of the full series can be viewed on the Walpole website.

[244] Oxford Bodleian Library catalogue and Yale University catalogue. The full title on the illustrated title page is *Outlines of figures and drapery: collected with great care from antient statues, monuments, basreleivos &c representing the principle characters in the plays of Racine, in their proper costume forming an useful study for amateurs in drawing, from the most correct & chaste models of Grecian & Roman sculpture…*

[245] The image she copies is Agrippina, the first figure in the *Outlines*. The title page of this book reads "Fores' Correct Costume," an alternate title of the *Outlines*.

[246] *Outlines* is often assumed to represent Emma, but there is no reason to believe this to be the case. In the prints that depict male characters, the men are obviously men. Some, like Achilles or Agamemnon, are bearded and muscular. The women (Hermione, Cleone, and Thamar, respectively plates VI, VII, and XII) have very different colouring and physiognomic traits. Yet the success of Rehberg's series and the power of Emma's name have been such that to this day, these prints have been unquestioningly assumed to represent Emma.

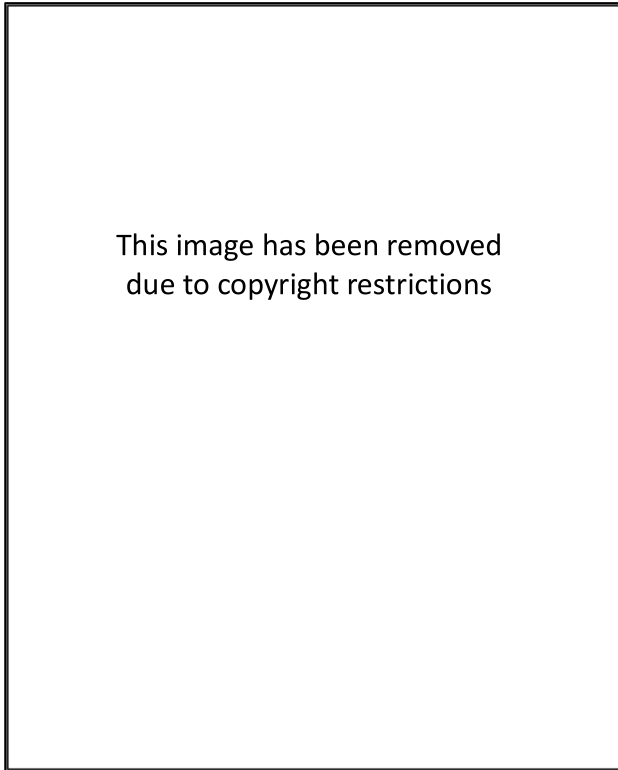

Figure 46. Unknown artist, title page of *Outlines of Figures and Drapery…*, [s.l.]: [s.n.], [s.d.]. Etching, h: 33 cm. Oxford, Bodleian library.

Rehberg's drawings are unusual in that they show that the female body could be used to disseminate the Neoclassical aesthetic, contrary to an orthodoxy that identifies the masculine nude as depository and signifier of the classical ideal. The important homoerotic element that comprised this aesthetic, discernible already in the foundational writings of Johann Joachim Winckelmann on classical sculpture, is widely recognized today.[247] What is less often acknowledged, however, is that the desiring Neoclassical gaze could also rest on the female body. This was understood in the eighteenth century.

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[247] See for example Whitney Davis, "Winckelmann Divided: Mourning the Death of Art History," *Gay and Lesbian Studies in Art History* 27.1/2 (1994): 141-159; Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994; and Satish Padiyar, *Chains: David, Canova, and the Fall of the Public Hero in Postrevolutionary France*, University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007.

The traveller Henry Matthews, for instance, admitted he could not “admire the Apollo” at the Vatican as much as he did the Venus.

> If it were the perfection of the male figure, one ought to admire it more: for sculptors agree that the male figure is the most beautiful subject for their art. But perhaps it is impossible to divest oneself entirely of all sexual associations;—and this may be the secret charm of the Venus.

With a refreshing awareness of the female spectators’ gaze, he added, “The ladies, I believe, prefer the Apollo.”[248] The erotic and the aesthetic went hand in hand in the appreciation of classical statuary. And because Emma, it was felt, so resembled an antique statue, spectators could displace the erotic desire they felt at the sight of her body on display and express it as “a detached aesthetic judgement.”[249] What Emma brought to the *Attitudes*, however, was not solely the highbrow and sublimated eroticism of classical statuary praised by Mengs and Winckelmann. She fused this eroticism with the lewd posing she had learnt while working as a prostitute at Miss Kelly’s and which she had refined in her numerous modelling sessions for George Romney.[250] The classical veneer, though barely disguising the licentious roots of the *Attitudes*, rendered the performances respectable enough to be presented to the mixed company assembled in Sir William’s villa.

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[248] Henry Matthews (1789-1828), *The Diary of an Invalid, Being the Journal of a Tour in Pursuit of Health in Portugal, Italy, Switzerland and France in the Years 1817, 1818 and 1819*, Paris: A. and W. Galignani, 1825, p. 108.

[249] Ann Bermingham, “The Aesthetics of Ignorance: The Accomplished Woman in the Culture of Connoisseurship,” *The Oxford Art Journal* 16.2 (1993): 3-20, p. 5.

[250] According to Vigée-Le Brun, Emma learned from George Romney what she needed in order to invent the *Attitudes*. See *Souvenirs*, p. 174.

Emma did not hide or abandon her past in her rise through society. Other women who experienced similar climbs—the actress Elizabeth Farren, for instance, who married the earl of Derby—were accepted into the aristocracy because they donned its trappings unreservedly, adapting like chameleons to their new class and jettisoning all trace of their dubious beginnings. Emma, by contrast, openly showed her roots. She brought them squarely to the fore and articulated them to her raised status. She knew that she was the subject of gossip, and that her past was never far from people's minds, and rather than hide from this, she turned it to her advantage. To her spectators' delight, she brought the bordello into the drawing room, asserting her own origins boldly and simultaneously underscoring the lascivious side of Neoclassicism.

These contradictory impulses within the *Attitudes* point to a notable instability in Neoclassicism at the very moment of its development. Rehberg's publication, however, sought to promote the perception that Neoclassicism was stable and ideologically fixed and to disseminate the aesthetic principles of the movement. Its aim—to serve as the basis for other forms of artistic production—and its mode of presentation—precisely drawn images laid out in succession—were the same as Sir William's two vase publications.[251]

But Emma was no vase. To employ the same format for the *Attitudes* as for vases meant reducing her from living to inanimate. Rehberg's drawings broke her performances down into a series of detached and static moments, suppressing Emma's fleeting and ever-changing movements in accordance with Neoclassicism's values of timelessness, permanence, and universality.

[251] See chapter two, "Desire and Display in Sir William Hamilton's Naples."

The lasting impact of Rehberg's representation of the *Attitudes* can be ascertained by the often-made comparison of Emma's performances to *tableaux vivants*, a society amusement that consisted in a group of amateurs posing in imitation of a painting.[252] It is true that there are some similarities between the two types of entertainment. Both were performed by upper-class amateurs in a domestic setting, played on the identification between performers and works of art, blurred the line "between pictorial art and theater,"[253] and could be an entry point into society for women from lower social classes. The main difference between *Attitudes* and *tableaux vivants*, however, lies in the role of movement within the performance. While *tableaux vivants* were by definition utterly immobile, Emma's *Attitudes* merged motion and stasis. Movement became so integral to the *Attitudes* that Emma abandoned an element of her early performances, a body-sized black chest in which she had stood and posed as if in a three-dimensional frame.[254] Emma might have appeared like a statue to the assembled guests, and the name of the performance might be taken from the individual poses, but spectators' accounts reveal that Emma's movements captivated her audience at least as much as her poses did. The

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[252] The *Attitudes* have even been described as a "tableau for one person." Karin Klitgaard Povlsen, "Standsningens attitude i krop og tekst: Lady Hamilton, Ida Brun & Friedrike Brun," in *Tableau: Det sublime øjeblik*, ed. Elin Andersen and Karen Klitgaard Povlsen (Århus: Klim, 2001): 93-116, p. 356, n47, quoted by Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, p. 93. The fad for *tableaux vivants* began around the same time as the *Attitudes* and became wildly popular in the nineteenth century. See, among others, Holmström, *Monodrama, Attitudes, Tableaux Vivants* and Bernard Vouilloux, *Le tableau vivant: Phryné, l'orateur et le peintre*, Paris: Flammarion, 2002. Toril Moi has argued that both *Attitudes* and *tableaux vivants* should be understood in parallel with the development of panoramas and dioramas. Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, p. 120.

[253] On the latter point, see Holmström, *Monodrama, Attitudes, Tableaux Vivants*, p. 139.

[254] Goethe describes having seen discarded, in Sir William's villa, "a chest which was standing upright. Its front had been taken off, the interior painted black and the whole set inside a splendid gilt frame. It was large enough to hold a standing human figure." See Goethe, *Italian Journey*, p. 315.

Italian poet Carlo Gastone della Torre, count Rezzonico, noted, “I have never seen anything more fluid and graceful.”[255] Goethe described the *Attitudes* as “movements and surprising transformations” in which “one pose follows another without a break.”[256]

Rehberg’s etchings render neither the grace nor the fluidity of Emma’s movements. This becomes all the more evident if we compare these prints to Pietro Antonio Novelli’s lesser-known drawings of 1791 (figs. 47 and 48)—a comparison that

Figure 47. Pietro Antonio Novelli, *The Attitudes of Lady Hamilton*. 1791. Pen and brown ink on laid paper, 19.5 x 32.2 cm. Washington, DC, National Gallery of Art (Alisa Mellon Bruce Fund. 1988.14.1).

has been made by a number of scholars but never in much depth.[257] Despite the inherent difficulties involved in rendering a live performance with a series of drawings, Novelli’s works succeed in communicating an impression of Emma’s movements. He has chosen

[255] Carlo Gastone, Count Rezzonico (1742-96), *Opere del Cavaliere Carlo Gastone, Conte della Torre Rezzonico, VII: Giornale del Viaggio di Napoli negli Anni 1789 e 1790*, ed. and trans. F. Mochetti, Como: [s.n.], 1819, p. 247-248.

[256] Goethe, *Italian Journey*, p. 208.

[257] Previous comparisons have tended to be more content oriented in order to argue that Novelli’s drawings allow the viewer to imagine the passage from one attitude to the next. I aim to provide a more in-depth analysis.

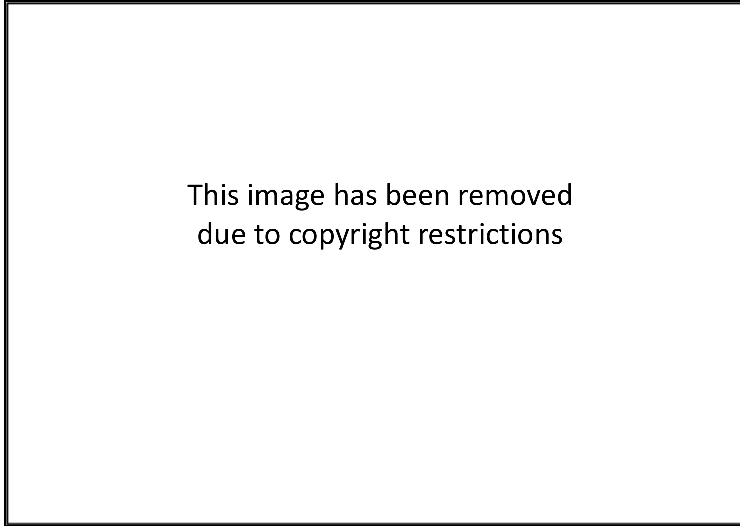

Figure 48. Francesco Novelli, after Pietro Antonio Novelli, *The Attitudes of Lady Hamilton*, 1791. Etching, 20.4 x 32.5 cm. London, Victoria and Albert Museum (E.253-2000).

to represent multiple poses on a single sheet and in a sequence that allows the viewer to imagine a smooth transition from one attitude to the other. This differs from Rehberg's mode of presentation in which there is no continuity between the poses: plates III, IV, and V (figs. 39-41) show Emma sitting, standing, and then lying down. Rehberg's Emma is dressed and coiffed differently from one pose to the next. Moreover, the format of Rehberg's series, a bound volume, forces the spectator to turn the pages between the attitudes, enhancing the discontinuity, whereas Novelli's drawings represent what we imagine as successive attitudes on the same page. Rehberg's hermetic enclosure of each print within a frame emphasizes the stasis, in a curious reversion to the black chest that had initially contained the attitudes. While Novelli renders Emma's facial expressions, Rehberg has opted for a much less expressive representation. Lastly, Novelli's Emma is drawn with a rich and sensuous line and a degree of modelling and shading that communicates her physicality, in contrast to Rehberg's very dry line, which robs Emma of her vitality, physicality, and sensuality.

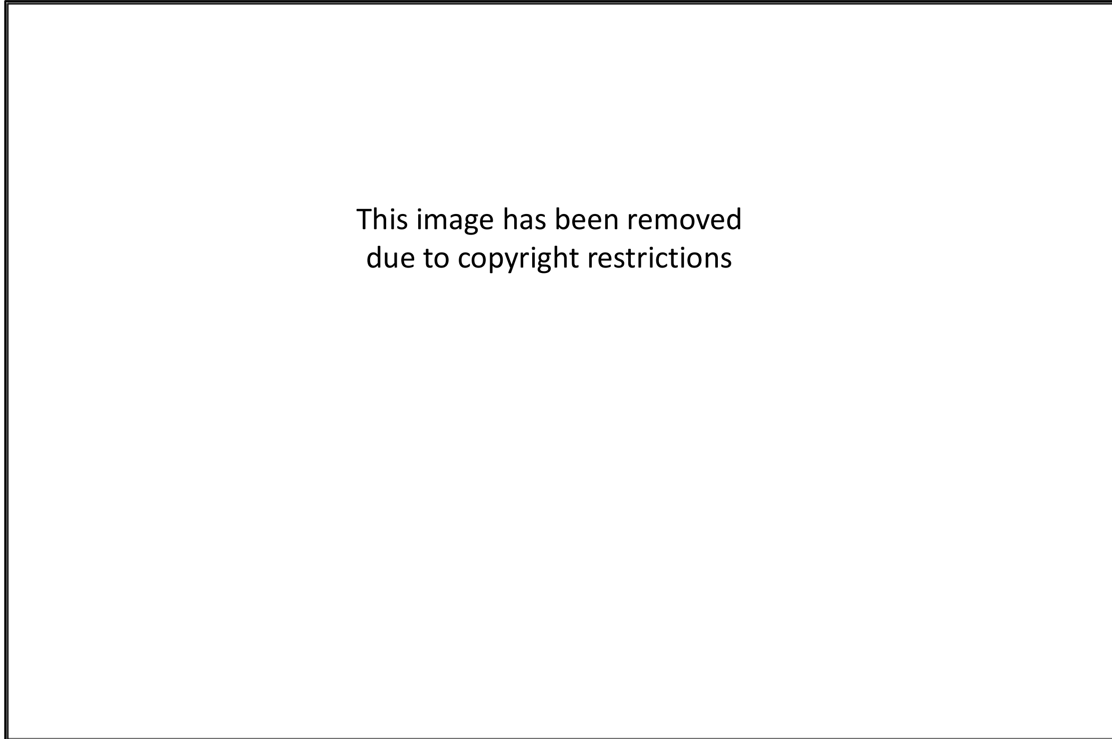

Figure 49. Dominique Vivant Denon, *Les Attitudes d'Emma Hamilton*, c. 1803. Etching, 13.7 x 10.7 cm. London, The British Museum (1871,0812.2129).

Dominique Vivant Denon's little known and unexamined etching of c. 1803 conveys an effect that is similar to Novelli's drawings (fig. 49). Denon depicts two continuous poses on the same sheet of paper. He renders the physicality of Emma's body through numerous shadows and folds in her dress. The two attitudes can easily be imagined as flowing into each other. The sense of continuity and unfolding succession—far from the atomization of Rehberg's depiction—is reinforced by the apparent contact between the two figures, whose feet seem to touch, and by the single shadow they cast on the wall behind them.

A drawing executed by Rehberg in preparation for the series of etchings shows what his prints suppress (fig. 50). On the same sheet, Rehberg has depicted three attitudes. The poses, especially the first two, follow smoothly from one other. Emma's

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Figure 50. Friedrich Rehberg, *Three Attitudes of Emma Hamilton*, 1793-94. Pen and ink over graphite, 15.2 x 25.4 cm. Cambridge, MA, Houghton Library (f Typ 725.94.736).

hair and drapery flow in a way that suggests she is in motion. Her traits are expressive and a greater degree of modelling than in the prints renders the three-dimensionality of her body. But in moving from the preparatory drawing to the final etchings, Rehberg's severe line freezes Emma's performance into a series of discrete poses and empties her physicality. Reproduced by the thousands, Rehberg's prints result in a loss of the uniqueness and integrity of Emma's performance.

The quietly still version of the *Attitudes* propagated by Rehberg's album not only suppresses her movement and sensuality, but muzzles the subjectivity that Emma injected into her performances. Sir William's guests expressed both their admiration for the "very refined taste" with which Emma performed her *Attitudes* and their surprise at how this

contrasted with her everyday behaviour, in which she displayed signs of her original class—coarse manners, distasteful dress, lower class accent, and general vulgarity.[258] The Comtesse de Boigne, for instance, concludes her glowing description of the *Attitudes* by stating, “Hors cet instinct pour les arts, rien n’était plus vulgaire et plus commun que Lady Hamilton.”[259] Even in the *Attitudes*, however, there were moments, although rare, in which Emma’s roughness became apparent. Lady Holland recalled one such instance in 1799: “Just as she was lying down, with her head reclining upon an Etruscan vase to represent a water-nymph, she exclaimed in her provincial dialect ‘Don’t be afeared Sir Willum I’ll not crack your joug.’ I turned away disgusted.”[260] One small lapse, and the spell was broken. The shock that Lady Holland describes evinces a desire to repress Emma’s persona, to control her, empty her, in order to make her comply with the image that Rehberg’s album circulated.

This pressure to conform is at the centre of the Neoclassical project, which Régis Michel identifies as criminal: “il s’agit d’une véritable stratégie de *modélisation* du corps, où le geste, la pose, la physionomie, sont l’objet d’un contrôle minutieux de conformité.”[261] Michel argues that this control amounts to a type of violence, and I would say this is what is reflected in Rehberg’s emptying Emma of her vitality and freezing her

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[258] The Earl of Minto writes, “We had the attitudes a night or two ago…. They set Lady Hamilton in a very different light from any I had seen her in before; nothing about her, neither her conversation, her manners, nor figure announce the very refined taste which she discovers in this performance, besides the extraordinary talent that is necessary for the execution.” Earl of Minto, *Life and Letters*, vol. 2, p. 365.

[259] Comtesse de Boigne, *Récits d’une tante*, vol. 1, p. 108.

[260] Elizabeth, Lady Holland, *The Journal of Elizabeth Lady Holland (1791-1811)*, ed. the Earl of Ilchester, 2 vols., London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1908, vol. 1, p. 243.

[261] Régis Michel, *La Peinture comme crime, ou, la part maudite de la modernité*, Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2000, p. 6. Emphasis in the original.

into a series of marmoreal poses. There was no room for error in Neoclassicism's ideal of flawlessness. The flaws in Emma's performances showed not only her origins, but an interiority that went against the two-dimensionality of her image.

Emma's display of her subjectivity and physicality in her *Attitudes* not only challenged Neoclassical values, it exposed the fabrication of gender and class identity. As Catherine Elwes has argued, the woman performer's physical presence before her audience "serves to unsettle and resist sexist readings" (and I would extend her analysis to take into account class as well as gender in Emma's case). Elwes continues,

> The lights, the gestures, the inevitable flaws in her act all serve to emphasise the artificiality of the masquerade of femininity the artiste depicts…. When a woman dispenses with…scenarios, drops or swaps the mask and confronts her audience live with her skills, her endurance, and her uncompromising corporeal presence, she constantly unhinges the stereotypical readings that a static image of her body would draw.[262]

Emma similarly confronted her spectators with her physicality in her improvised *Attitudes*, blending movement and stasis, flawlessness and error. She did not turn away from Neoclassicism, but put her own valence on it. She successfully introduced instantaneity, movement, flow, and contingency into classical permanence, universality, and atemporality, a combination that Charles Baudelaire would define as modernity seventy years later: "By 'modernity' I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable."[263] Emma understood the culture of her time, absorbed it, and helped shape it. She realized that Neoclassicism was not simply a movement looking back toward the classical past, but that it was also

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[262] Elwes, "On Performance and Performativity," p. 197.

[263] Charles Baudelaire (1821-67), "The Painter of Modern Life" [1863], in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne, New York: Da Capo Press, 1964, p. 13.

firmly rooted in the present. She incorporated that knowledge and displayed it in her *Attitudes* in a way that allowed her to perform her own subjectivity.

Surprising Transformations

Emma seemed to exist in a liminal space: between contemporary and antique, between woman and work of art, between living and inanimate, between flesh and marble. It is little wonder, then, that she captivated her spectators, for the corollary of the Enlightenment project of classification, definition, and organization was a fascination with hybrid and liminal phenomena that escaped clear categories. Transformations, mutations, metamorphoses all captured the late eighteenth-century imagination. Emma understood her contemporaries' taste for these phenomena and incorporated them into her performances. She did so through the sheer variety of poses she adopted—almost two hundred per performance, as Rokeby stated—and through the alternating of movement and stasis, as she herself metamorphosed from flesh into marble and back again, in a constant re-enactment of the myth of Galatea.[264]

Variety was indeed one of the qualities that astonished Emma's spectators, contrary to the conformity that characterizes Rehberg's representations of the *Attitudes*—all the same format, in the same frame, all full-length figures taking up a similar proportion of the picture surface. William Artaud's sketches drawn from Emma's

[264] In fact, Emma's very metamorphosis while she performed from vulgar to graceful was in itself a surprising transformation.

Attitudes communicate some of the variety, and the agitated line of his drawings conveys the sense of Emma's body in motion (fig. 51)[265]. The top sketch, very faint, shows a rare frontal view of Emma, advancing toward the viewer, her hair and shawl, undifferentiated, billowing behind her. On the lower page, two views of Emma are superimposed. In one, Emma stands, her arms stretched out, her shawl floating behind her, while in the other one, more finished, she kneels, with her hands joined in front of her. The darker line reinforces the stillness of this drawing. The juxtaposition of the two drawings on this sheet, one showing Emma in movement, the other, still, communicates the sense of variety of Emma's performances.[266]

The sheer number of transformations in each performance was one of the keys to the success of the *Attitudes*. Kate Davies states that Emma's spectators were captivated by the way she could "be Greek, Egyptian, Catholic, pagan, tragic, epic, sentimental, pastoral, all in a matter of minutes."[267] Such variety was one of the major principles of beauty for eighteenth-century art theorists such as William Hogarth.[268] Variety, though, might have been seen as opposite to the timeless and universal qualities that were

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[265] Artaud's sketchbook from his time in Naples contains about five pages of sketches of Emma performing. Jenkins and Sloan, in *Vases and Volcanoes*, cat. 161, p. 261.

[266] According to Jenkins and Sloan, these quick sketches are "quite different" from the "sketches for historical compositions or the more careful pencil and wash studies [Artaud] made three years later of the daughters of British families in Dresden, acting out their own parlour versions of the 'attitudes.'" Jenkins and Sloan, eds., *Vases and Volcanoes*, cat. 161, p. 261.

[267] Davies, "Pantomime, Connoisseurship, Consumption," section 7.

[268] The title page of William Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty* includes a vignette drawn by the author of a pyramid within which is inscribed his line of beauty, and which rests on a base marked "variety." Regarding the need for variety, Hogarth explained, "The ear is as much offended with one even continued note, as the eye is with being fixed to a point, or to the view of a dead wall." William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, London: J. Reeves, 1753.

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Figure 51. William Artaud, *Sketch of Lady Hamilton's Attitudes*, 1796.
Pencil, in sketchbook measuring 11.3 x 18 cm. London, The British Museum (1973-12-8-85 (6)).

supposed to characterize classicism. Davies believes that Richard Payne Knight, in his writings, resolved this apparent contradiction. Knight argued that variety and classicism needed to be conjugated, for "change and variety are…necessary to the enjoyment of all pleasure, whether sensual or intellectual."[269] The classical acted as a "solid ground" upon which variety could be displayed. Emma's living statue would have appeared to him "to position itself upon the ground of classic universality even as it, through its movement and gesture, [produced] the variety necessary to all pleasure."[270]

Emma's transformations occurred not only in her poses but also in her facial expressions. Rehberg's drawing of three attitudes shows a dramatic change of countenance between the first two figures (fig. 50). Another drawing by Novelli depicting two attitudes and focusing on Emma's face similarly renders the force and diversity of her expressions (fig. 52). The proximity within these drawings of very different expressions communicates Emma's ability to vary her countenance suddenly, "the work of a moment," as Rokeby described it. Yet this expressiveness is absent from Rehberg's finished etchings, which are more in keeping with the ideal of "quiet grandeur" that Winckelmann argued classical works should display. Some skeptics such as Horace Walpole felt that Emma should not exhibit such powerful expressions. Walpole wrote, "I have not seen her yet, so am no judge; but people are mad about her wonderful expression, which I do not conceive; so few antique statues having any expression at all,

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[269] Richard Payne Knight, *An Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste*, 3rd ed., London: T. Payne, 1806, p. 429.

[270] Davies, "Pantomime, Connoisseurship, Consumption," section 21. In a sense, a similar merging of differences happened with the fashion for classical dress, "both a-historical and relentlessly contemporary." See Davies, "Pantomime, Connoisseurship, Consumption," sections 26 to 29.

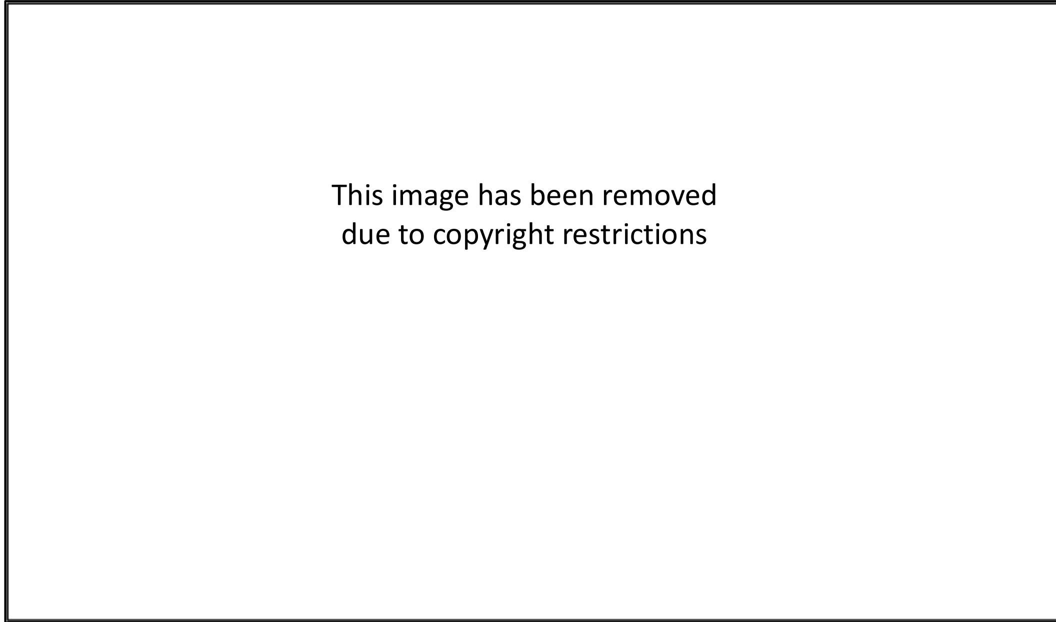

Figure 52. Pietro Antonio Novelli, *Attitudes of Lady Hamilton*, 1791. Pen and ink on paper. Private collection.

nor being designed to have it."[271] Walpole did however defer to his friend "Lady Di.," whose judgement he trusted, and recorded that she preferred the *Attitudes* "to any thing she ever saw,"[272] thus conceding that Emma's expressiveness might not have been as misplaced as he had feared.

Lady Di was not alone in admiring the power and variety of Emma's expressions and the seeming ease with which she transformed from one to the other. Goethe, in a breathless description of the *Attitudes*, catalogues poses and expressions without differentiating between them, so intrinsic are they both to the spectacle: Emma was "standing, kneeling, sitting, reclining, serious, sad, playful, ecstatic, contrite, alluring,

[271] Walpole, letter to Mary Berry, 17 August 1791 in *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 11, 1944, p. 338.

[272] Walpole, letter to the Miss Berrys, 11 September 1791, in *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 11, 1944, p. 518.

threatening, anxious."[273] As Waltraud Maierhofer has argued, Emma's expressiveness should be read as aligned with the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century fashion for sentimentality, which can be confirmed by the emotional response that Emma drew from her audience.[274] Most connoisseurs did not balk at the seeming discrepancy between the classicism that they appreciated in Emma's *Attitudes* and the extreme emotions she displayed. On the contrary, the overwhelming popularity of her *Attitudes* shows she was able to successfully combine the conflicting tendencies of classicism and sentimentality.

Rehberg and Novelli depicted the transformations Emma enacted by showing different poses on a single sheet. In her 1790 portrait of *Lady Hamilton as Ariadne*, also known as *Lady Hamilton as a Bacchante*, Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun took a different and original path and showed Emma as she transformed from one character to another (fig. 53).[275] To depict this atypical subject for a painting—transformation—Vigée-Le Brun chose to portray Emma in an unusual horizontal format and half-reclining pose.[276] The

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[273] Goethe, *Italian Journey*, p. 208.

[274] Maierhofer, "Goethe on Emma Hamilton's 'Attitudes'." The Comtesse de Boigne, for instance, describes the spectators' "applaudissements passionnés." *Mémoires d'une tante*, p. 107. Emma had posed as *Sensibility* for George Romney around 1787 and would have been familiar with the cult of sensibility. George Romney, *Emma Hart as Sensibility*, c. 1787. Oil on canvas, 150 x 121.5 cm, Miami, The Jean Kislak Collection. See Betsy Bolton, "Sensibility and Speculation: Emma Hamilton," in *Lewd and Notorious*, ed. Katharine Kitteredge, Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2009, p. 133-161.

[275] There also exists a miniature after this painting by Henry Bone, *Lady Hamilton as a Bacchante*, also known as *Lady Hamilton as Ariadne*, 1803. Enamel on copper, 22 x 28 cm, London, Wallace Collection. A pencil preparatory drawing by Bone squared in ink for transfer can be found at the National Portrait Gallery (23.9 x 30.6 cm; NPG D17508). For a detailed discussion of this painting, see Stephanie Hauschild, "Schatten. Farbe. Licht. Die Porträts von Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun," PhD dissertation, Albert-Ludwig University, 1998.

[276] Two precedents are Joseph Wright of Derby's portrait of Sir Brooke Boothby (1781) and Wilhelm Tischbein's of Goethe in the Roman Camagna (1787). Later ones include Jacques-Louis David's

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Figure 53. Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, *Lady Hamilton as Ariadne*, also known as *Lady Hamilton as a Reclining Bacchante*, 1790. Oil on canvas, 135 x 158 cm. Private collection.

portrait was commissioned by Sir William, but it is not known whether he had any say regarding how Vigée-Le Brun would portray his mistress. The uncertainty as to whether Emma is impersonating Ariadne or a bacchante begins with Vigée-Le Brun, who in different instances described Emma as portraying both.[277] The discrepancy might be

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unsuccessful portrait of Juliette Récamier (1800) and Antonio Canova's marble statue of Pauline Bonaparte as Venus (1805-08).

[277] In a letter penned while she was at work on the portrait, she wrote, "Je peins aussi une très belle femme, Madame Hart, qui est amie du ministre d'Angleterre; j'en fais un grand tableau d'Ariane gaie, sa figure prêtant à ce choix." Quoted in Pierre de Nolhac, *Madame Vigée Le Brun, peintre de la reine Marie-Antoinette, 1755-1842*. Paris: Goupil; Manzi, Joyant, 1912, p. 168. In her *Souvenirs*, however, Vigée-Le Brun described Emma as adopting the character of a bacchante: "Je peignis madame Hart en bacchante couchée au bord de la mer, tenant une coupe à la main. Sa belle figure était fort animée…; elle avait une quantité énorme de beaux cheveux châtains qui pouvaient la couvrir entièrement, et en bacchante, ses cheveux épars, elle était admirable." Vigée-Le Brun, *Souvenirs*, p. 172. In the list of her paintings at the

explained away by saying Vigée-Le Brun was simply misremembering the painting when she wrote her *Souvenirs* over thirty years later or, as Pierre de Nolhac states, that the portraitist at some point just decided to transform the personification into one of a bacchante by the seaside.[278] If Vigée-Le Brun had simply decided on an iconographic change, however, she would not have carelessly left behind attributes of the earlier personification. The double identification is borne out in the painting itself. The cave in which Emma reclines and the ship sailing away in the distance identify this as a painting of Ariadne on the island of Naxos, as she wakes up to discover that Theseus has deserted her. The reclining pose is a possible derivation of various Ariadne sculptures, in particular the Museo Pio Clementino's *Sleeping Ariadne* (fig. 54).[279] Emma, however, does not have the appearance of a woman who has just been abandoned by her lover, contrary to the forlorn and desperate expression of Angelica Kauffman's Ariadne (fig. 55). Instead, with rosy cheeks and bright red lips, Emma smiles alluringly at the viewer,

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end of her *Souvenirs*, Vigée-Le Brun describes Emma as "en bacchante couchée." Vigée-Le Brun, *Souvenirs*, 2009, p. 522.

[278] De Nolhac, *Madame Vigée Le Brun*, p. 165.

[279] Long thought to be a representation of Cleopatra, this sculpture was the object of much discussion in the late eighteenth century. Winckelmann had argued in his 1764 *History of Ancient Art* that what had been read as a snake around the figure's wrist was simply a bracelet, and that the identification as Cleopatra was therefore mistaken. He believed it simply depicted a nymph or a Venus. Twenty years later, Ennio Quirino Visconti re-identified the sculpture as an Ariadne on the basis of a comparison with a relief. Sir William's circle would undoubtedly have been aware of these debates. Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Histoire de l'art dans l'antiquitié*, trad. Dominique Tassel. Paris: Librairie générale française, 2005, p. 544. Ennio Quirino Visconti, *Il Museo Pio-Clementino*, Rome: [s.n.], 1784. For a quick history of the re-identification of this statue, see Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500-1900*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981, p. 81-87. The reclining pose also resembles representations of the repentant Magdalen.

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Figure 54. Unknown artist, *Sleeping Ariadne*, Roman Hadrianic copy of a Hellenistic sculpture of the Pergamene school of the 2nd century BCE. Marble, 1.62 x 1.95 m. Rome, The Vatican Museums.

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Figure 55. Angelica Kauffman, *Ariadne Abandoned by Theseus*, 1774. Oil on canvas, 63.8 x 91 cm. Houston, The Museum of Fine Arts.

and the leopard skin on which she rests, the wine cup she holds, and the vine leaves in her hair and around her body identify her as a bacchante.

Vigée-Le Brun portrays Emma in a light diaphanous white dress that clings revealingly to her body and exposes her thighs more than it hides them. Her neck, left shoulder, and left breast are completely exposed, while her left arm conceals her bared breast from the viewer. Strands of her famously long hair lie suggestively between her thighs, in a throwback to the *Venus of Urbino*'s hand that covers and points to her pubic region.[280] Unlike Rehberg, Vigée-Le Brun does not repress Emma's sensuality. On the contrary, Emma openly displays her powerful sexual allure. She has used it to conquer the leopard that lies eviscerated beneath her like a trophy, its sharp teeth and claws now harmless.

The thick red curtain on the upper portion of the painting suggests the setting is a stage. Looking at the portrait more closely, we realize the cave looks artificial, as the light that shines on Emma comes from within it. The moss that covers both the cave floor and the rock upon which leans Emma looks like perfectly manicured grass. Emma's dress, moreover, is similar to what she must have worn while performing her *Attitudes*. All these elements, together with the presence in the paintings of attributes of both Ariadne and a bacchante, suggest Emma is in the middle of a performance, enacting a transformation from Ariadne to a bacchante. This would explain Vigée-Le Brun's description of the painting as an "Ariane gaie."

We can imagine the powerful effect on the audience of the emotional contrast from the expression of despair of the abandoned Ariadne to that of the life-affirming pleasure of the bacchante. This explanation is supported narratively, by the next episode in the myth of Ariadne. After Theseus abandoned her, Ariadne met Bacchus, whom she

[280] Titian, *Venus of Urbino*, 1538. Oil on canvas, 119.2 x 165.5 cm. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi. See Ulrike Ittershagen's unpublished paper on Vigée-Le Brun's portrait in the files of the Wallace Collection.

married, becoming, in a way, a bacchante. The wine goblet Emma holds, which looks almost like a chalice, should be read as a symbol of the moment the wedding is concluded. In Nicolas Bertin's depiction of the marriage of Bacchus and Ariadne, the protagonists seal their union by drinking wine (fig. 56).[281] Such narrative continuity was not the norm in Emma's *Attitudes*, when her changes from one character to the other often took her spectators by surprise, but it did sometimes happen.

Figure 56. Nicolas Bertin, *Le Mariage de Bacchus et Ariane*, c. 1710-15.
Oil on canvas, 75 x 50 cm. Saint-Etienne, musée d'Art et d'Industrie.

What all the representations of Emma attitudinizing have in common is that they show her ability to embody different characters and to transform from one to the other. Underlying these successive transformations was a continuous cyclical re-enactment of the myth of Galatea: as she alternated between stasis and movement, Emma seemed to metamorphose into marble, then flesh, then back to marble. Through this alternation, the *Attitudes* set in motion a certain flux between spectators and performer, one that allowed

[281] Hauschild, "Schatten. Farbe. Licht," p. 33-34.

Emma to assert her authorship of her performances and achieve a level of control over her audience. A closer examination of the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea in relation to the *Attitudes* will reveal how Emma achieved this agency. With its strong erotic component and play on hybridity and transformation, the story of Galatea, an inanimate object being brought to life through desire, was particularly popular in the eighteenth century.[282] The association of Emma with Galatea seems almost overdetermined and has been perpetuated by scholars to this day.[283] What I will argue here, however, is that in her performances of *Attitudes*, Emma was not simply a passive slab of marble. She was able to assert her agency by being her own Pygmalion and to turn the tables on her spectators by transforming, in a sense, into an anti-Pygmalion and turning her audience to stone.

Emma was likened to Galatea on a number of levels: her body and facial traits recalled those of a classical statue, the costume she wore to perform her *Attitudes*, the lighting, and the way she unveiled herself were all designed to bring to mind classical statuary. There was also her Galatea-like transformation on a social level, at the hands of Sir William, into a being who could fulfill his desires and stand beside him in his duties. In achieving this she ignited a new passion in him, just as Galatea had done for Pygmalion. Ovid relates that the sculptor had sworn off women, but that at the sight of

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[282] This can be evidenced by the large number of plays, operas, sculptures, and paintings on this theme. See for instance Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Pygmalion*, 1762; Étienne-Maurice Falconet, *Pygmalion et Galatée* (marble, 1761, Paris, musée du Louvre); and Wilhelm Tischbein, *Venus und Pygmalion* (oil on canvas, c. 1786-1800, Staatliche Zeichenakademie).

[283] In the catalogue to the 1996 British Museum exhibition dedicated to Sir William, for instance, Kim Sloan writes that Emma "was Hamilton's living embodiment of ideal Greek beauty, the Galatea to his Pygmalion." Kim Sloan, "'Picture-Mad in Virtu-Land': Sir William Hamilton's Collection of Paintings," in *Vases and Volcanoes*, ed. Jenkins and Sloan, p. 84.

his creation, he had again begun to experience love, desire, even adoration.[284] While Pygmalion's desire awakened the woman he created, she in turn rekindled in him a seemingly extinguished sexuality. In a curious reflection of the myth, ribald gossip intimated that Emma had sexually revived the aging Sir William who had never been overly interested in the pleasures of the flesh.

Just as Pygmalion, through his desire, transformed Galatea into a flesh and blood woman, so the audience, through their desire, willed Emma's transformation from one attitude to the other.[285] The audience acted as a collective Pygmalion that willed each mutation. The performance was an enactment of the desire of each spectator to be the sculptor, free to imagine himself in the role of Pygmalion, laying his hands on Emma's body, moulding it with his touch. This was facilitated by the fact that Emma's poses were free interpretations of different prototypes, to the extent that the spectators sometimes disagreed on the character that Emma was portraying. Emma, then, became not one but many Galateas, a different Galatea for each spectator, and each spectator was free to project himself and his desire onto her.[286]

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[284] Ovid writes: "*Pygmalion* loathing their lascivious Life, / Abhorr'd all Womankind, but most a Wife: / So single chose to live, and shunn'd to wed, / Well pleas'd to want a Consort of his Bed." Ovid, *Ovid's Metamorphoses in Fifteen Books*, trans. John Dryden, Joseph Addison, and Laurence Eusden, London: J. Tonson, 1717, "The Story of Pygmalion, and the Statue," translated by John Dryden, Book X, p. 343.

[285] In a way this analysis presupposes a male heterosexual viewer. Emma of course did have female spectators. Judging by the journals and letters that survive, women seem to have been much less spellbound by Emma's *Attitudes* than men were. If they did admire the *Attitudes*, women were then quick, in general, to remind their readers of Emma's vulgarity. At the same time, viewers could also experience a desire that was not sexual, to wit, the desire to see the next pose, expression, and movement.

[286] For a study of a similar, though slightly later, phenomenon, see Gail Marshall, *Actresses on the Victorian Stage: Feminine Performance and the Galatea Myth*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

But Emma was able to go beyond the character of Galatea. She made herself her own Pygmalion, transforming her body from one attitude to the next. Her authorship is evinced by the creative role she played in developing the *Attitudes*. We do not know exactly how the *Attitudes* originated. An incident that Emma recounted in a letter in 1787 suggests that she developed them in concert with Sir William.

> The[y] have all got it in their heads I am like the Virgin, and do come to beg favours of me. Last night their was two priests came to our house, and Sir William made me put the shawl over my head, and look up, and the priest burst into tears and kist my feet and said, "God has sent me a purpose."[287]

This anecdote reveals a definite complicity between Emma and Sir William barely a year after she had arrived in Naples.[288]

Spectators recognized Emma's authorship of her *Attitudes*. Emma did not follow a strict and rehearsed choreography but improvised movements and attitudes as she performed. The Comtesse de Boigne's description of the *Attitudes* as "une espèce d'improvisation en action"[289] conveys the sense that Emma was the creator of her performing self. In the incident recounted by Lady Holland and cited above, Sir William's seeming look of alarm when Emma reached for his "joug" indicates that he was not aware she was going to use it in her performance. The Comtesse de Boigne, who stayed with the Hamiltons in Naples when she was a child, recounted in her *Memoirs* that she had acted as a prop—"un accessoire"—in Emma's performances, though without

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[287] Emma Hamilton, letter to Charles Greville, 4 August 1787, in *The Hamilton and Nelson Papers*, Morrison 168, vol. 1, p. 133.

[288] It also illustrates Sir William's mischievous and irreverent side, and we can surmise that given Emma's past employment in a brothel known as the little nunnery and where the procuress was nicknamed the abbess, it is conceivable that this incident appeared particularly amusing to both of them.

[289] Comtesse de Boigne, *Récits d'une tante*, vol. 1, p. 108.

being prepared for her part: "Tout à coup, se redressant et s'éloignant un peu, elle me saisit par les cheveux d'un mouvement si brusque que je me retournai avec surprise et même un peu d'effroi."[290] The degree of improvisation Emma brought into the *Attitudes* was compelling proof of her creativity and self-assurance.[291] Basing her attitudes on art she had seen, Emma created new performances for her audience, often spontaneously. Although she improvised, she did so on the basis of a deep knowledge and understanding of artistic tradition. She composed each attitude in the same way that artists composed their works. Emma was not a puppet on a string. She was the sculptor and her own raw material. She was both Pygmalion and Galatea. Actors and theatre scholars have reflected on the way performers always assume both these roles. The nineteenth-century French actor Constant Coquelin, for instance, stated,

> La matière de l'acteur, c'est lui-même. Pour réaliser une pensée, une image, un portrait de l'homme, c'est sur lui qu'il opère! Il est son propre clavier, il joue de ses propres cordes, il se pétrit comme une pâte, *il se sculpte*, il se peint![292]

In her study of the revivals of ancient pantomime in the eighteenth century, Ismene Lada-Richards points out that the analogy is even more convincing when the actor is silent, as Emma was during her *Attitudes*, and cites the twentieth-century mime Etienne Decroux,

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290 Comtesse de Boigne, *Récits d'une tante*, vol. 1, p. 108.

291 This points to an important difference between *Attitudes* and *tableaux vivants*, as the latter imitated existing works to the greatest detail. It also points to a similarity between Emma and Germaine de Staël's Corinne, who was also an improviser. See chapter five, "Model, Muse, and Artist."

292 Constant Coquelin (1841-1909), *L'Art et le comédien*. Paris: Paul Ollendorf, 1880, p. 2, quoted in Lada-Richards, "Mobile Statuary," p. 5. My emphasis.

who described himself as "both sculptor and statue."[293] Emma created something new with the raw material of her own body, blurring the lines separating artist, muse, and work of art.[294]

But more than that, there is a sense in which Emma reversed the Galatea myth, acting on her mesmerized spectators as an anti-Pygmalion and turning them from flesh to stone. As early as classical Greece, a powerful sight was said to immobilize the onlooker. Lucian of Samosata described himself "being turned to stone" upon seeing a remarkably beautiful woman.[295] Closer to Emma's time, Diderot made a similar comparison between a powerful sight and becoming petrified in his commentary on Étienne-Maurice Falconet's highly successful 1761 *Pygmalion and Galatea*, which depicts the moment

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[293] Etienne Decroux (1898-1991), *Words on Mime*, trans. M. Piper, ser. *Mime Journal*, 1985, Claremont, CA: Pomona College Theatre Department, p. 12 (orig. *Paroles sur le mime*, 2nd ed., Paris: Libraire Théâtrale, 1977), quoted in Lada-Richards, "Mobile Statuary," p. 6.

[294] Though many admired Emma's artistry and creativity, the fact that she rivalled artists and arrogated for herself the role of artist and not merely muse, could have been, as Mary Sheriff has argued, a point where Emma, "rather than inspiring the painter steals her thunder." More on Emma as muse and her relationship with painters in chapter five, "Model, Muse, and Artist." Mary Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 245.

[295] "*Ly*. Polystratus, I know now what men must have felt like when they saw the Gorgon's head. I have just experienced the same sensation, at the sight of a most lovely woman. A little more, and I should have realized the legend, by being turned to stone; I am benumbed with admiration.
Poly. Wonderful indeed must have been the beauty, and terrible the power of the woman who could produce such an impression on Lycinus. Tell me of this petrifying Medusa. Who is she, and whence? I would see her myself. You will not grudge me that privilege? Your jealousy will not take alarm at the prospect of a rival petrifaction at your side?
Ly. Well, I give you fair warning: one distant glimpse of her, and you are speechless, motionless as any statue." *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*, trans. by H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1905.

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Figure 57. Étienne-Maurice Falconet, *Pygmalion au pied d'une statue qui s'anime*, also known as *Pygmalion et Galatée*, 1761. Marble, 83.5 x 48.2 x 26.1 cm. Paris, musée du Louvre (OA10000).

when Galatea's transformation from statue to flesh has begun but is not yet complete (fig. 57). Diderot imagined the sculptor's reaction at the metamorphosis of his statue: his movements become frozen by "la crainte ou de se tromper, ou de mille accidents qui

pourraient faire manquer le miracle."[296] Pygmalion's paralysis is communicated in the 1778 print illustrating Rousseau's *Pygmalion* (fig. 58). Galatea has just awoken and has

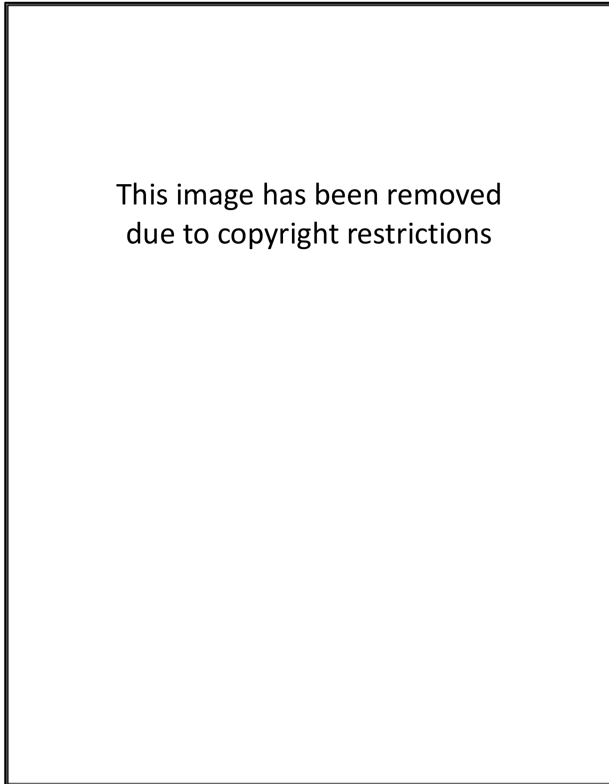

Figure 58. Noël Le Mire, after Jean Michel Moreau le jeune, *Pygmalion*, 1778. Etching and engraving, 27.7 x 20 cm. Illustration to Pygamlion, vol. 7, p. 75, of Rousseau's *Œuvres complètes* (Brussels: Boubers, 1774). London, The British Museum (1875,0710.2904).

stepped off her base. Her shawl flutters around her as she walks towards another statue in the sculptor's studio. This contrasts with Pygmalion's own very still posture. His hands raised in astonishment mirror those of the statue toward which walks Galatea, as if to underscore Pygmalion's physical and psychological reaction. Hope, astonishment, fear, all have the effect to freeze the spectator, who remains immobile before the statue in

[296] Denis Diderot, *Salon de 1763*, in *Œuvres complètes*, 10 vols., Paris: Garnier Frères, 1876, vol. 10, p. 223. For more on eighteenth-century perceptions of the Pygmalion and Galatea myth, see Sheriff, *Moved by Love*, 2004.

movement.[297] As Galatea transforms from stone to flesh, Pygmalion turns from flesh to stone. In the same way, Emma, through her movements, mesmerized her audience and turned them to stone, rendering them into statues, if only for a moment. No longer a passive inanimate object at which to be gazed, she controlled her audience through the very expression of her subjectivity as well as through her artistry.

Conclusion

The *Attitudes* were unstable as an art form. They became famous via what Bernard Vouilloux has called "une élite voyageuse," an international micro-society that travelled throughout Europe on the Grand Tour and during the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars.[298] What survived was a legacy that showed a way for women performers to take charge of their own bodies, direct their spectators' gazes, and use their times' cultural

[297] René Descartes, in his essay on the passions, described the effect of astonishment on the onlooker's brain and muscles. It had such a powerful impact, he argued, that the whole body becomes as still as a statue. In his article 73 entitled "Ce que c'est que l'étonnement," he wrote: "Et cette surprise a tant de pouvoir pour faire que les esprits qui sont dans les cavités du cerveau y prennent leur cours vers le lieu où est l'impression de l'objet qu'on admire, qu'elle les y pousse quelquefois tous, et fait qu'ils sont tellement occupés à conserver cette impression, qu'il n'y en a aucuns qui passent de là dans les muscles, ni même qui se détournent en aucune façon des premières traces qu'ils ont suivies dans le cerveau: ce qui fait que tout le corps demeure immobile comme une statue, et qu'on ne peut apercevoir de l'objet que la première face qui s'est présentée, ni par conséquent en acquérir une plus particulière connaissance. C'est cela qu'on appelle communément être étonné; et l'étonnement est un excès d'admiration qui ne peut jamais être que mauvais." René Descartes, *Les passions de l'âme* [1649], in *Œuvres de Descartes*, ed. Victor Cousin, 11 vols., Paris: F. G. Levrault, 1824-26, vol. 4, p. 97–98.

[298] Vouilloux, *Le tableau vivant*, p. 23.

vocabulary and gender stereotypes freely and potentially subversively. In this sense, there is no doubt Emma's *Attitudes* stand as precursors of performance art.

There is another way in which the *Attitudes* can be called performative. The notion of performativity originates with the philosopher of language J. L. Austin, whose *How To Do Things With Words* investigated utterances that are not simply descriptive or constative but enact a change.[299] For instance, when a person with the requisite authority breaks a bottle of champagne against the prow of a ship and declares, "I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth," s/he has performed an action with the words. Change is made: the ship is now called the Queen Elizabeth. In her *Attitudes*, Emma lived and performed within a number of dualities—subject and object, marble and flesh, artist and artwork, modern and ancient, classicism and sentimentality—and exploited the possibilities opened up in the space between these poles to achieve a degree of self-expression and self-actualization that enabled her to transcend her status as object, to stun her audience, and to turn them into mesmerized statues.

There is one last sense in which Emma's *Attitudes* can be called performative. The feminist philosopher Judith Butler adopted Austin's concept of performativity to expose the constructed nature of gender formation, arguing that our gendered identity is not fixed at birth but is constructed daily through our actions.[300] In order to expose the artificial nature of gendered identity, Butler calls for dissonant gestures, performative acts that would come and trouble this identity and expose it as constructed and incoherent.

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[299] J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962. The book was based on a series of lectures Austin delivered in 1955.

[300] See in particular Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* [1990], New York and London: Routledge, 1999. For an excellent synthesis of the theory of performativity, see James Loxley, *Performativity*, London and New York: Routledge, 2007.

> Performativity describes this relation of being implicated in that which one opposes, this turning of power against itself to produce alternative modalities of power, to establish a kind of political contestation that is not a "pure" opposition, a "transcendence" of contemporary relations of power, but a difficult labor of forging a future from resources inevitably impure.[301]

The performance of the classed and gendered late-eighteenth-century female upper-class subject was constituted in part by a set of accomplishments presented semi-publicly.[302] But Emma's citation of cultural and gender stereotypes was imperfect. The mis-performing in her *Attitudes* troubled the apparent coherence of both her social identity and the ostensible fixity of classicism, and exposed to view the process of their construction. Emma thus asserted her "right or entitlement to a livable life when no such prior authorization [existed], when no clearly enabling convention [was] in place."[303] To insist on the totality of the spectacle that Emma performed, to end much of art history's acquiescence to Rehberg's fracturing and atomizing, and to maintain that what she presented was more than the sum of its parts, is to affirm the totality and three-dimensionality of the performance of Emma's subjectivity and the subversive nature of her *Attitudes*.

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[301] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, New York and London: Routledge, 1993, p. 241.

[302] See Bermingham, "The Accomplished Woman."

[303] Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, New York and London: Routledge, 2004, p. 224.

Chapter 4
Emma's Tarantella

Emma Hamilton began to dance the tarantella for Sir William's assembled guests in the late 1780s. Within two decades, aristocratic women were performing this local Neapolitan dance in drawing rooms across Europe. This chapter charts the tarantella's adoption and use by a network of women that included the writer Germaine de Staël, the painter Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, and the socialite Juliette Récamier. Women such as these relied on their female networks to advance their careers and reputations, having much less access than did men to mainstream means of education and promotion. Their relationships were friendly or professional, sometimes both, and amounted to what some scholars have since called a sisterhood.[304] The women suggested readings to each other, they encouraged, cited, commended, and even eulogized each other in a process that was mutually beneficial. As the women under consideration here were forced into exile by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, their network reached across Europe and as far as Russia, where Vigée-Le Brun spent six years. I will trace the history and significance of the tarantella to argue that the unique freedom enjoyed by those who danced it was a source of empowerment and a potent means of expression.

[304] Catherine Sama, "At the Intersection of Print and Correspondence: 18th-Century Italian Women Forging Social and Professional Networks," Interacting With Print conference, Montreal, 22 March 2013.

The painting

My starting point for this discussion is Vigée-Le Brun's little-studied portrait of Emma dancing the tarantella, known as Lady Hamilton as a Bacchante (fig. 59).[305] We do not know who commissioned the portrait. It now hangs in the Lady Lever Art Gallery in Port Sunlight, a small model village on the Wirral Peninsula located approximately ten kilometres from Ness, where Emma was born.[306] Emma had escaped her humble village, travelled to London then Naples, she had married into the aristocracy, become ambassadress, frequented royalty, and been the lover of England's greatest hero, only to have her portrait end up right back where she had started.[307]

The portrait is displayed in a large room adjacent to the main hall and dedicated to eighteenth-century furniture and paintings. It is surrounded by three landscapes by Richard Wilson and by seven paintings by Joshua Reynolds. Five of the Reynolds

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[305] The only earlier studies of the painting are Amber Ludwig's, in "Becoming Emma Hamilton: Portraiture and Self-Fashioning in Late Enlightenment Europe," PhD dissertation, Boston University, 2012, and Amrei I. Gold's, in "Der Modellkult um Sarah Siddons, Emma Hamilton, Vittoria Caldoni und Jane Morris: Ikonographische Analyse und Werkkatalog," PhD dissertation, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, 2009. Ludwig makes some debatable statements, for instance that this is a work in the tradition of Grand Tour portraiture in which, she writes, Emma is "running wildly" and is a "violently possessed woman, ready to tear animals and men limb to limb" (p. 58). Emma may be dancing but she is not wild, and there are no Grand Tour portraits in which the sitters are either dancing or running. Gold's mention of this painting is only a paragraph long.

[306] Port Sunlight was created in 1888 by William Hesketh Lever (1851-1925), the soap magnate best known for his Sunlight washing powder, to accommodate the workers in his factory. Lever, who became Lord Leverhulme, was an avid art collector and opened the Lady Lever Art Gallery in 1922 in his wife's memory.

[307] Lever, who collected mostly English artists, presumably acquired this portrait because of its sitter's association with the area.

paintings are portraits of women that constitute a female pantheon representing everything Emma was not.[308] These are:

Mrs. Peter Beckford, sacrificing to Hygeia, the goddess of health (1782; fig. 60). She is depicted full length, standing in an open temple, and wearing a yellow dress complemented with a pale blue belt. Her marriage was not a happy one, and at the time this portrait was painted, she was conducting an affair with her husband's cousin, William Beckford, who was, incidentally, also a relative of Sir William's. She suffered from ill health and was to die of tuberculosis in 1791, less than a decade after this portrait was painted.

Elizabeth Gunning, Duchess of Hamilton and Argyll, a stunning full-length portrait in Reynolds's Grand Manner (1760; fig. 61). Elizabeth Gunning stands in a garden, with one foot and one arm resting on a low wall decorated with a bas-relief depicting the Judgment of Paris in reference to her reputation as a great beauty. Her statuesque form is tempered by a soft contrapposto, and Reynolds shows her dreamily contemplating a rose, an allusion perhaps to the recent death of her husband, the sixth duke of Hamilton.

Mrs. Mary Henrietta Fortescue, a young woman with her head resting on one hand, a curtain barely visible behind her, dressed and coiffed in the fashion of the day, and gazing absent-mindedly at something in the distance (c. 1759; fig. 62).

Mrs. Seaforth and Child, a mother with her toddler in an exterior setting (1787; fig. 63). Sitting on her mother's lap, the rosy-cheeked girl laughingly brings her hand to

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[308] Of the two non-portraits, one depicts a *Child with Grapes* (1770s) and the other represents *Venus Chiding Cupid for Learning to Cast Accounts* (1770s), which represents the goddess of love admonishing Cupid for developing his math skills instead of spreading love.

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Figure 59. Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, *Lady Hamilton as a Bacchante*, 1790-91. Oil on canvas, 159 x 135 cm, Port Sunlight, UK, Lady Lever Art Gallery (LL3527).

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Top row, left to right: Figure 60. Joshua Reynolds, *Mrs. Peter Beckford*, 1782. Oil on canvas, 239 x 147 cm. Port Sunlight, Lady Lever Art Gallery (LL3125)

Figure 61. Joshua Reynolds, *Elizabeth Gunning, Duchess of Hamilton and Argyll*, 1760. Oil on canvas, 238.5 x 147.5 cm. Port Sunlight, Lady Lever Art Gallery (LL3126).

Bottom row, left to right: Figure 62. Joshua Reynolds, *Mrs. Mary Henrietta Fortescue*, c. 1759. Oil on canvas, 76 x 63.5 cm. Port Sunlight, Lady Lever Art Gallery.

Figure 63. Joshua Reynolds, *Mrs. Seaforth and Child*, 1787. Oil on canvas, x cm. Port Sunlight, Lady Lever Art Gallery.

Figure 64. Joshua Reynolds, *Mrs. Paine and her Daughters*, 1766. Oil on canvas, 126.5 x 103 cm. Port Sunlight, Lady Lever Art Gallery.

her mother's chin. The scene is reminiscent of Reynolds's famous portrait of the duchess of Devonshire with her daughter.[309] Mrs. Seaforth looks lovingly at her daughter but holds her spontaneous gesture in check. This is more than a warm picture of motherhood: it is through interactions like this one that the little girl will learn to behave in a manner suitable to her social standing.

And finally, *Mrs. Paine and her Daughters*, a mother with her two young daughters (1766; fig. 64). This is a pendant to a double portrait by Reynolds of the male members of the family that depicts the father, James Paine, an architect, poring over architectural drawings with his son, also James, who was to become a sculptor.[310] In the female pendant in Port Sunlight, the girls demonstrate female accomplishments. The oldest daughter sits at a harpsichord and the younger one, with one hand around her sister's shoulders, turns the pages of the sheet music. The mother looks approvingly at her daughters' impeccable behaviour. This triple portrait hangs to the right of the door leading to the next room; to the left is Vigée-Le Brun's portrait of Emma.

The contrast is striking between these five portraits of women and Vigée-Le Brun's depiction of Emma dancing the tarantella. Whereas Emma is portrayed in full movement, the other women's poses are static or still. Emma looks confidently outward at the viewer, the other women's gazes are introspective if not vacuous. Emma's dress is more revealing than the clothes worn by Reynolds's sitters. The behaviours of these women appear "natural" since they had been steeped in them since birth, whereas Emma

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[309] Joshua Reynolds (1723-92), *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, with her Daughter, Lady Georgiana Cavendish*, 1784. Oil on canvas, 112.4 x 140.3 cm. Chatsworth, Derbyshire, The Devonshire Collection.

[310] Joshua Reynolds (1723-92), *James Paine, Architect, and his Son, James*, 1764. Oil on canvas, 127 x 101 cm. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum.

had had to acquire her manners as an adult. We have seen that the lapses in her social performance acted as reminders of her low class origins and threatened to disrupt her contemporaries' perceptions of their own social standing. In the same way, this portrait of Emma dancing the tarantella upsets the uniformity of the portraits in the room in which it is displayed and exposes the phoniness of class.

In *Lady Hamilton as a Bacchante,* Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun represents Emma at three-quarter length, dancing in the Neapolitan landscape. Emma wears a dark blue dress, cinched at the waist with a gold-coloured belt, with short sleeves rolled up above her shoulders. She is in near profile, with her body turned ever so slightly away from the picture plane and her head turned back to look toward us. Her cheeks are flushed from the dance. She raises her arms, which are strikingly bare against the dark colours of the painting, and gently taps with her right hand a tambourine held in her left. Her long hair flows freely down her back. In the distance, Vesuvius, letting out a dark cloud of smoke that rises to fill the top of the painting, anchors the scene in Naples. This location and the tambourine in Emma's hand indicate that she is performing the tarantella. The reddish tones in the clouds around Vesuvius and in the light that falls on Emma's dress suggest that the scene is taking place at sundown.[311] The natural colours of the sunset are heightened by the emanations from the smoking volcano, as if there were a residue of fire in the clouds.

The composition of the portrait is remarkably simple: Emma at the very front of the picture plane and the volcano in the distance. The painting is organized along a strong

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[311] I believe there is too much blue in the sky to suggest sunrise, when the sky would be darker.

diagonal, beginning at the top left with Emma's tambourine and following her arms and body to the lower right-hand corner. The feeling of dynamism and movement created by this strong diagonal is emphasized by Emma's long flowing hair and by the folds of her dress, and finds an echo in smaller details such as the floating ends of her belt. The ribbon, unnaturally animated given its size, reinforces the sense of movement and gives the composition a lift. The clouds of smoke that rise from Vesuvius add to the feeling of lightness and instantaneity thus created. The emphasis in this portrait is on movement. The challenge is great for Vigée-Le Brun: to represent a fleeting instant in a dance in a way that will communicate to the viewer that it is part of a continuous performance—not, as in Friedrich Rehberg's representations of Emma's *Attitudes*, abstracting the pose from the movement and thus divorcing the instant from the whole (figs. 39-41).

Emma's beguiling sensuality is fully on display in this portrait. Her bare arms and warm smile entice the viewer. There is a somewhat erotic quality to the V created by the space between the index and middle finger of her right hand, which mirrors the V formed by the space between the thumb and index of her left hand as it holds the tambourine. Her breast is almost at the exact centre of the composition and is further emphasized by the red light that falls upon it. Her loose hair and the simple landscape in which she dances combine to convey an impression of naturalness—of lack of artifice—that mirrors the directness of her gaze. Other senses are brought to bear: hearing, through the sound of the tambourine; smell, through the volcano smoke; and touch, through the display of flesh of her naked arm and her tapping the tambourine.

There is a strong relationship between Emma and Vesuvius in this painting. The volcano and Emma's dress are of similar colours, they are similarly lit, and their

pyramidal shapes echo each other. A straight diagonal line runs from the left side of the volcano to the top of Emma's breast. The clouds of smoke that rise in volutes mirror the waves of Emma's hair. At the bottom of the painting, Emma and Vesuvius seem to touch, and the space delineated by the right side of the volcano and Emma's thigh is in the shape of a V, or an inverted volcano, a shape that reiterates the Vs created by her fingers. The contrast between the roughness of the volcano and the delicacy of Emma's skin and the placement of Vesuvius at the level of Emma's groin suggest that Vesuvius can be understood as a stand-in for the male, and particularly for Sir William, whose interest in volcanoes was well known. The red tones in the clouds around the volcano and the red light that draws attention to Emma's breast are suggestive of passion and heat, intimating the existence of an intense sexual relationship that belies the common portrayal of Sir William as impotent.

Just as male and female are brought together in this painting, it might be tempting to also see in it a meeting of the sublime and the beautiful.[312] There are certainly ways in which Edmund Burke's description of these categories in his 1757 *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* fits with Vigée-Le Brun's depiction of Vesuvius and Emma. Burke writes that "beauty should be smooth and polished," while the sublime should be "rugged." Beauty is "light" compared to the "dark" sublime.[313] However, this comparison fails in some important respects. Although the volcano is spewing clouds of smoke, it is far from imposing: it does not appear threatening enough to cause in the viewer the sensations that the sublime should provoke,

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[312] Ludwig makes this parallel in "Becoming Emma Hamilton," p. 62.

[313] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* [1757], ed. J. T. Boulton, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958, p. 124.

namely astonishment, horror, terror, and fear.[314] The Vesuvius depicted here runs in fact contrary to Vigée-Le Brun's own experience of the volcano, of which she made a number of drawings, and which she described verbally in powerful terms: "Je croyais toucher aux avenues de l'enfer."[315] Moreover, the relative scale of Emma and Vesuvius contradicts Burke, who explains, "Sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small."[316] In *Lady Hamilton as a Bacchante*, Vesuvius is so far in the distance that it does not look "massive," nor does Emma appear particularly "delicate," fragile, or weak.[317] On the contrary, she has a weighty physicality, her smile is confident, and she towers over the volcano. She moves unafraid toward it, as if she were embracing its smoke with her arms.

Emma sometimes accompanied Sir William on his treks up Vesuvius, even while it was erupting. The day after one particularly dangerous expedition, she wrote to Greville,

> We was last night up Vesuvus at twelve a clock, and in my life I never saw so fine a sight…. [T]here was the finest fountain of liquid fire falling down a great precipice, and as it run down it sett fire to the trees and brushwood, so that the mountain looked like one entire mountain of fire…. I was enraptured. I could have staid all night there.[318]

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[314] Burke, *A Phiosophical Enquiry*.

[315] Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, letter to the architect Alexandre Brongniart, transcribed in her memoirs. Vigée-Le Brun, *"Les femmes régnaient alors, la Révolution les a détrônées." Souvenirs, 1755-1842* [1835-37], ed. Didier Masseau, Paris: Tallandier, 2009, p. 180-182.

[316] Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 124.

[317] Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 124 and passim.

[318] Emma, letter to Greville, 4 August 1787, in *The Hamilton and Nelson Papers*, ed. Alfred Morrison, 2 vols., [s.l.]: Printed for Private Circulation, 1893, letter 168, vol. 1, p. 131. The subsequent quotations of Emma's climb up Vesuvius are from this letter.

Emma was not afraid of the erupting volcano. On the contrary, she found visitors who were "frightened out of their sences"—such as the Prince Royal and his tutors—entirely ridiculous: "O, I shall kill my selfe with laughing!" It would be too facile here to say that Vigée-Le Brun has represented beauty triumphing over the sublime, for this is not a sublime depiction of a volcano in eruption, but a portrayal of a force that has been expended. And just like the dying day and the spent volcano, Sir William is in decline, his days and nights of passion behind him, whereas Emma is still full of vitality.

The woman depicted by Vigée-Le Brun is a new incarnation of Emma. She is no longer the wild young seductress that George Romney represented in 1782 in *Emma as Circe* (fig. 2), nor is she the tame, almost lifeless woman fashioned to please Greville and portrayed by Romney around three years later (fig. 3). Vigée-Le Brun's *Lady Hamilton as a Bacchante* shows a confident woman full of vitality, colour, and movement. Emma has forged a new identity for herself, one that simultaneously satisfies Sir William's needs and allows her to transgress social norms and assert her agency. It is not accidental that she would arrive at this self-actualization through her dancing of the tarantella.

The tarantella

The origins of the tarantella are basically twofold and are rooted in both the sacred and the secular. The first manifestation of the dance is as an exorcism ritual that was

performed in Ancient Greece as early as 2,000 BCE.[319] Related to Dionysian rites, it involved frenzied dancing that was believed to help rid the body of that which was afflicting it. Centuries later, at the time of Christianity, this healing ritual became closely identified with a cure for the delirium caused by the bites of a particular type of tarantula spider, which might explain the origin of the dance's name. Symptoms generally included "nausea, paralysis, lethargy, spasms, headaches, irregular pulse and breathing, and fainting."[320] Musicians were asked to perform at the afflicted person's home, where they experimented with different rhythms and melodies until they found the one that awakened the victim, who started dancing. There was also a public ritual performed on a particular day of the year for the victims whose symptoms recurred. This public display usually took place on the night of 28 to 29 July around the festival of Saint Paul, who had become associated with the phenomenon because he had survived unscathed his encounter with a snake (Acts 28:3-6). The victims, most of whom were women, became known as *spose di San Paolo*. Renditions of the tarantella, both public and private, could last a few days.

In its second manifestation the tarantella was a courtship dance specific to Naples and its surrounding areas, notably the city of Taranto, another possible explanation for its

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[319] The information on the tarantella is drawn from Jerri Daboo, *Ritual, Rapture and Remorse: A Study of Tarantism and* Pizzicata *in Salento*, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010; Luisa Del Giudice and Nancy van Deusen, eds., *Performing Ecstasies: Music, Dance, and Ritual in the Mediterranean*, Claremont Cultural Studies, Ottawa: The Institute of Mediaveal Music, 2005; Ernesto De Martino, *The Land of Remorse: A Study of Southern Italian Tarantism* [1961], trans. Dorothy Louise Zinn, London: Free Association Books, 2005; Ellen Ettlinger, review of *La Tarantella Napoletana* by Renato Penna, *Man* 65 (September-October 1965), 176; and Ya-Feng Wu, "Corinne's Tarantella: Germaine de Staël's Performance of Cultural Authority," *Sun Yat-sen Journal of Humanities* 33 (July 2012): 21-50.

[320] Daboo, Ritual, *Rapture and Remorse*, p. 2.

etymology. It was most often danced by heterosexual couples but could also be performed by a lone man or woman, or by two or even three women.[321]

By the end of the eighteenth-century, these two manifestations—healing ritual and courtship dance—had merged into a single dance called the tarantella, and become identified with the Neapolitan region. Grand Tourists visiting southern Italy thus expected to witness performances of the tarantella as part of their experience of local customs and traditions. It is difficult to ascertain the extent to which the tourists were familiar with the origins of the tarantella, but some did make a link between the dance they were witnessing and ancient practices. Henry Swinburne, for instance, who travelled to southern Italy in the late 1770s, explicitly linked the tarantella with the art that was being unearthed in Herculaneum. He described the dancers performing "the Tarantella to the beating of a kind of tambourine, which was in use among their ancestors, as appears by the pictures of Herculaneum."[322] The tarantella therefore represented to them an instance, similar to the priapic cult of Saint Cosmo's "big toes," of an ancient pagan ritual that had survived among the peasants of the area around Naples despite Christianity's attempts at repressing it.[323] Many eighteenth-century writers in fact believed that the Greek and Italian peasantry observed traditions that were vestiges from antiquity and therefore maintained a link to the classical past that the upper classes had lost.

The tarantella did not involve a specific sequence of steps. Instead, the performer could improvise uninhibited and dance alone or with others, thus keeping alive the

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[321] Lilly Grove, *Dancing*, London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907, p. 339.

[322] Henry Swinburne (1743-1803), *Travels in the Two Sicilies in the Years 1777, 1778, 1779, and 1780*, 2 vols., London: P. Elmsly, 1783, vol. 1, p. 94.

[323] Frances Newman, "Noctes Neapolitanae: Sir William Hamilton and Emma, Lady Hamilton at the Court of Ferdinand IV," *Illinois Classical Studies* 27-28 (2002-03): 213-232, p. 223.

dance's twin sources. Vigée-Le Brun's portrait of Emma dancing encompasses this dual origin: the solo dance and, if we read the volcano as a proxy for Sir William, the courtship dance.

Emma, whose *Attitudes* were also an exercise in improvisation, successfully exploited the expressive potential of the tarantella. The Comte d'Espinchal witnessed Emma dancing during his visit to Naples in 1790 and recalled in his journal,

> Mme Hart, anglaise, grande et superbe, femme d'une figure célèste, vivant depuis quelques années avec le chevalier Hamilton, ministre d'Angleterre, avec lequel on la croit secrètement mariée, chante aussi à ce concert avec infiniment de goût…. J'y vois exécuter avec le plus grand plaisir une danse très libre et très voluptueuse…appelée la tarant[elle]. Les demoiselles de Amici, bourgeoises napolitaines, extrêmement jolies, la dansent à merveille, mais Mme Harte y met une volupté, une grâcce qui échaufferaient l'homme le plus froid et le plus insensible.[324]

According to d'Espinchal, the personal touch that Emma brought to the tarantella made her rendition of it particularly enthralling.

In spite of Emma's success with the tarantella, there are not many representations of her performing this dance. Perhaps this is because in the eighteenth century the representation of the female body in movement was viewed as morally dubious and associated with bawdiness and threatening sexual behaviour.[325] Given Emma's past as a

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[324] Joseph Thomas Anne, Comte d'Espinchal (1748-1823), *Journal d'émigration du Comte d'Espinchal*, ed. Ernest d'Hauterive, Paris: Perrin, 1912, entry for 28 January 1790, p. 88-89.

[325] Gill Perry, *Spectacular Flirtations: Viewing the Actress in British Art and Theatre 1768-1820*, New Haven and London: Published for the Paul Mellon Center for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 2007, and "The Spectacle of the Muse: Exhibiting the Actress at the Royal Academy," in *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780-1836*, ed. David Solkin, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001: 111-125. Perry notes, for instance, that critics had been troubled by Dorothy Jordan's twisted pose in John Hoppner's *Mrs. Jordan in the Character of the Comic Muse,*

prostitute, these connotations would have been all the more conspicuous. One representation other than Vigée-Le Brun's does exist, however, and it confirms the tarantella's character as a dance of free expression and of transgression of social mores. In the early 1790s, William Locke II made a drawing of Emma dancing the tarantella with another woman (fig. 65), which was later published as a colour stipple (1796; fig. 66). The British Museum, where the drawing is kept, identifies the woman on the right as Emma,[326] but the longer hair and fuller figure of the woman on the left suggest she is Emma, and it is this identification that we will adopt.[327] Emma is seen from the front, her partner from the back. They hold hands and both step forward. With their arms, they form an arch underneath which Emma prepares to pass.[328] The simple yet effective repetition of the movement and the similarity of the women's physiques and dresses contribute to the impression that we are looking at an indissociable whole. In the print, the colours of Emma's dress complement those of her partner: Emma wears a blue dress with a white belt, her partner a white dress with a blue belt. They look intently at each other as if nothing could break their gazes and as if unaware of the spectators watching them. Their hands join at the centre of the picture in the shape of a heart. With flushed cheeks, they

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Supported by Euphrosyne who Represses the Advances of a Satyr (c. 1785-86, oil on canvas, 238.8 x 146.1 cm. Royal Collection, UK [404611]). Perry, "The Spectacle of the Muse," p. 123.

[326] The British Museum, "Print," (1906,0719.5) http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1546826&partId=1&searchText=1906,0719.5&page=1, accessed 13 June 2014.

[327] This is also how Elise Bruhl and Michael Gamer identify the figures in "Emma and Fatima Hamilton: Two Forms of Attitude," in *Race, Romanticism, and the Atlantic*, ed. Paul Youngquist, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012: 183-212.

[328] Emma's partner's left hand is awkwardly rendered, particularly in the print where she seems to have two right hands.

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Figure 65. William Lock II, *Emma, Lady Hamilton, Dancing the Tarantella*. Graphite with pen and grey and brown ink. 369 x 286 mm. London, The British Museum (1906,0719.4).

Figure 66. Mariano Bovi, after William Lock II, *Emma, Lady Hamilton, Dancing the Tarantella*, 1796. Stipple printed in colours, 385 x 297 mm. London, The British Museum (1906,0719.5).

smile ever so slightly at each other. Emma's partner's lips are sensuously parted and she lowers her head slightly to look up at Emma seductively. This drawing and print suggest that the tarantella was an opportunity for the dancers to express sexualities alternative to the heteronormative one.

This is confirmed by Francique-Joseph Duret's *Jeune pêcheur dansant la tarentelle. Souvenir de Naples* (1833; fig. 67), a sculpture in the lineage of the Neapolitan fisherboys sub-genre.[329] The boy wears nothing but a necklace, the typical Neapolitan bonnet, and short pants that are rolled up to the top of his thighs and that cling to his

[329] See chapter two, "Desire and Display in Sir William Hamilton's Naples." Duret sculpted a number of representations of naked adolescent boys, among which his famous copy of Donatello's *David*.

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Figure 67. Francisque-Joseph Duret, *Jeune pêcheur dansant la tarantelle. Souvenir de* Naples, cast after 1838. Bronze, 44 x 19.5 x 15.5 cm. Reduced bronze of the statue now at the Louvre. Montpellier, Musée Fabre (895.7.68).

Figure 68. Francisque-Joseph Duret, *Danseur napolitain*, cast after 1838. Bronze, 44 x 15 x 12 cm. Montpellier, musée Fabre (895.7.69).

body. Having won the Prix de Rome in 1823, Duret often journeyed to Naples during his four-year stay in Italy. The work's subtitle invites viewers to share a fond memory from one of their own Neapolitan sojourns. Following the success of this statue, Duret sculpted another Neapolitan fisherboy five years later, wearing similar clothing and dancing with a tambourine (fig. 68). The fisherboys were a huge commercial success for Duret. They were reproduced many times in different materials and varying sizes, and sold individually or in sets. In some versions of his boy with the tambourine, such as the one

reproduced here, there is an opening in the boy's pants just under his very low-slung belt, close to his genitals, an unmistakable invitation for the viewer's erotic gaze to linger.

Men performing the tarantella were the exception, however, for this specific type of tarantula seemed to bite mostly the female sex. As early as 1695, the Neapolitan doctor Giovanni Baglivi referred to the day on which the tarantella was performed as "Il carnevaletto delle donne."[330] Swinburne observed, not without a certain skepticism, that it was mostly single women who appeared to be afflicted.[331] Supporting this view, Ernesto De Martino, in his 1961 seminal study of the tarantella, noted that while those afflicted with tarantism seem to have been overwhelmingly from the lower classes, most often they were "young women in situations of forbidden or unrequited love, unhappily married women, spinsters, or widows."[332] What these writers observed was that under the guise of being a cure, the performance of the tarantella had become a moment during which women could temporarily liberate themselves from society's edicts. This was actually understood as early as the fifteenth century by the Neapolitan humanist Giovanni Pontano:

> Women are wont very often to be bitten by this spider; and then, since the poison cannot be extinguished in any other way, it is licit for them to unite with men, freely and with impunity. In this way

[330] Giovanni Baglivi, *Dissertatio de Anatome, morsu et effectibus Tarantula*, opero Omnia Romae, 1695, Dissert. VI, quoted by Daboo, *Ritual, Rapture and Remorse*, p. 139.

[331] Swinburne, *Travels in the Two Sicilies*, vol. 1, p. 394.

[332] Luisa Del Giudice, summarizing De Martino's findings in *The Land of Remorse*, in "The Folk Music Revival and the Culture of Tarantismo in the Salento," in Del Giudice and van Deusen, eds., *Performing Ecstasies*, p. 218. For more on the gendering of the tarantella, see Daboo, *Ritual, Rapture and Remorse*, particularly chapter two.

> what for others would be a shamefull act [*flagitium*], for Apulian women is a remedy.[333]

Through their performance of the tarantella, whether the solo dance, the courtship dance, or a hybrid of the two, women could transgress repressive social codes regarding proper and shameful behaviour. Swinburne concluded that since Christianity had driven the ancient ritual underground, women in the modern era simply used the excuse of the tarantula bite in order to be allowed to dance freely for that one day of the year:

> The introduction of Christianity abolished all public exhibitions of these heathenish rites, and the women durst no longer act a frantic part in the character of Bacchantes. Unwilling to give up so darling an amusement, they devised other pretences…. Accident may also have led them to a discovery of the Tarantula; and, upon the strength of its poison, the Pugulian dames still enjoy their old dance.[334]

Emma adopted the tarantella as an opportunity to express herself freely yet within socially acceptable parameters. Her version of the dance did not manifest the frantic character of the ancient bacchic ritual. On the contrary, she exhibited what the Comte d'Espinchal described as an exquisite "grace and voluptuousness," which we also see represented in Vigée-Le Brun's portrait. Emma's tarantella was not a direct appropriation of the dances she watched Neapolitan peasant women perform. Instead, it was a personal creation that she developed from a variety of sources, bringing together traditional renditions of the dance with representations of dancers on the walls of Pompeii and

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[333] Giovanni Pontano, *Antonius*, in *I Dialoghi*, ed. C. Previtera, Florence, 1943, p. 41, quoted in Daboo, *Ritual, Rapture and Remorse*, p. 113. Apulia, near the Gulf of Taranto, is a region near Naples.

[334] Swinburne, *Travels in the Two Sicilies*, vol. 1, p. 393.

The tarantella is not the only instance when a spider became associated with transgressive female behaviour. The female black widow spiders, in a notorious instance of sexual cannibalism, often eat their male partners after mating. Today powerful women are frequently branded by anti-feminists as black widows who emasculate their men and kill traditional nuclear family values.

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Figures 69 and 70. Pompeii dancers, 1st century CE.

Herculaneum (figs. 69 and 70).[335] Thus Emma fashioned for herself a novel performance that showcased her talents and enthralled her audience, simultaneously fulfilling Grand Tourists' expectations with regards to local dances and their wish to be connected to the classical past. Just as she had done with her attitudes, Emma displayed not only great creativity and confidence, but an understanding of the mood of the period, as well as a singular ability to tap into it and to reinvent herself through it. This expressivity, agency, and self-actualization inspired other women of her time.

[335] Newman, "Noctes Neapolitanae."

Transfers

In Germaine de Staël's novel *Corinne, ou l'Italie* published in 1807, the eponymous heroine, while in Naples, dances the tarantella for Lord Nelvil, her English admirer. This is how de Staël describes Corinne's dance:

> Elle se mit à danser, en frappant l'air de ce tambour de basque, et tous ses mouvements avaient une souplesse, une grâce, un mélange de pudeur et de volupté…. Corinne connaissait si bien toutes les attitudes que représentent les peintres et les sculpteurs antiques, que, par un léger mouvement de ses bras, en plaçant son tambour de basque tantôt au-dessus de sa tête, tantôt en avant avec une de ses mains, tandis que l'autre parcourait les grelots avec une incroyable dextérité, elle rappelait les danseuses d'Herculanum…. Ce n'était point la danse française, si remarquable par l'élégance et la difficulté des pas; c'était un talent qui tenait de beaucoup plus près à l'imagination et au sentiment…. Corinne, en dansant, faisait passer dans l'âme des spectateurs ce qu'elle éprouvait.[336]

One would think de Staël is basing her narration on Vigée-Le Brun's portrait of Emma dancing the tarantella. Yet in a footnote, a rare occurrence in the novel, de Staël credits her friend Juliette Récamier for the dance: "C'est la danse de madame Recamier [*sic*] qui m'a donné l'idée de celle que j'ai essayé de peindre,"[337] referring to Récamier's *danse du châle*, for which she had became famous at the turn of the nineteenth century. Amélie Lenormant, Récamier's niece and adopted daughter, describes this dance in some detail:

> C'était une pantomime et des attitudes plutôt que de la danse… [U]ne longue écharpe à la main, elle exécuta[it] en effet toutes les attitudes dans lesquelles ce tissu léger devenait tour à tour une ceinture, un voile, une draperie. Rien n'était plus gracieux, plus

[336] Germaine de Staël, *Corinne ou l'Italie* [1807], ed. Simone Balayé, Paris, Gallimard, 1985, p. 148.

[337] De Staël, *Corinne*, p. 590, n14.

> décent et plus pittoresque que cette succession de mouvements cadencés.[338]

With her use of shawls and her combination of movement and static poses, Récamier seems to be performing something much closer to Emma's *Attitudes* than to any rendition of the tarantella. I believe this consideration of a dancing / attitudinizing hybrid performance sheds new light back onto Emma and suggests we should consider Emma's *Attitudes* and tarantella as connected rather than discrete performances. There is a continuity, a porosity, between the *Attitudes* and the tarantella. We could even envisage that, rather than seeing the *Attitudes* as a set of poses linked together with movement, they could also be considered as a continuous movement punctuated by poses or pauses. Rehberg's album of Emma's *Attitudes* attests to this continuum between the two types of performances: in two out of the twelve plates, Emma is dancing, once with a tambourine (fig. 71) and once with a shawl (fig. 72). The idea of Emma's *Attitudes* as a series of static poses has become so deeply ingrained—at once subsumed under and contributing to the Neoclassical ideal of stasis—that scholars have tended to disregard the traces of movement that can be found even in Rehberg's volume.

De Staël's assertion that it was Récamier who provided the inspiration for Corinne's tarantella is curious in that as described, Corinne's and Récamier's dances have little in common. Récamier dances with a shawl, Corinne with a tambourine, which she holds either above her head or in front of her, just as Emma does in Vigée-Le Brun's

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[338] Amélie Lenormant, *Souvenirs et correspondance tirés des papiers de Madame Récamier*, 5th ed., Paris: Libraire nouvelle, 1876, vol. 1, p. 18-19. Emphasis in the original.

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Figures 71 and 72. Tommaso Piroli, after Friedrich Rehberg, *Drawings Faithfully Copied at Naples…*, 1794. Plates 6 (left) and 8 (right). Etching, 26.9 x 20.8 cm. Cambridge, MA, Houghton Library (XCage XFA6275.30 Folio).

portrait.[339] In fact, de Staël's description of Corinne's tarantella and Lenormant's description of Récamier *danse du châle* signal an affiliation with Emma's performances, yet neither author acknowledges any connection there. Instead, both go out of their way to divert our thoughts from Emma as a possible inspiration. De Staël's footnote, attributing a French origin to this performance of an Italian dance is curious, particularly since the scene takes place in a chapter entitled "Les moeurs et le caractère des Italiens," yet de Staël's authority and Récamier's reputation are such that the reader should accept this incongruity unquestioningly. Lenormant, for her part, states, "Je ne sais de qui elle

[339] De Staël also specifies that Corinne's performance of the tarantella attests to her knowledge of classical painting and ancient art and recalls the dancers on the walls of Herculaneum. Again, this description is much closer to Emma's performances than to Récamier's.

avait appris *cette danse du châle*."[340] Her erasure of Emma as a possible influence is effective: if someone as close to Récamier as her own daughter ignores the source of the dance, then it must be unknowable. Lenormant then completes the circle by asserting that it was Récamier's rendition of the dance "qui fournit à Mme de Staël le modèle de la danse qu'elle prête à *Corinne*,"[341] thus reinforcing the lineage between Récamier and Corinne.

Yet there were some contemporaries of Lenormant's who recognized Emma as a source for Récamier's *danse du châle*. Mary Mohl—a friend of Récamier's for eighteen years and her neighbour at Abbaye-au-Bois for seven of those—wrote that Récamier's shawl dance "was invented by Lady Hamilton on seeing the drawings of Pompeii and Herculaneum."[342] Mohl does not specify how the dance might have made its way from Emma to Récamier. It is possible that the fourteen-year-old Récamier saw Emma when the Hamiltons were in Paris at the end of 1791,[343] or she could have learnt of Emma's performances through spectators' accounts and through representations such as Rehberg's, as did the many women who imitated Emma's attitudes throughout Europe.

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[340] Lenormant, *Souvenirs…de Madame Récamier*, vol. 1, p. 18.

[341] Lenormant, *Souvenirs…de Madame Récamier*, vol. 1, p. 18.

[342] Mary Mohl, *Madame Récamier: with A Sketch of the History of Society in France*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1862, p. 37. Mohl states in her preface (p. v) that she seeks to put to right many of the "many mistaken judgments and false conclusions" that have arisen following the publication of Lenormant's volume.

[343] De Staël was in Paris in 1791, and it is not impossible that she saw Emma's attitudes then. Récamier may also have seen Emma perform when she travelled to London in 1802, but this date seems too late: Récamier only performed the *danse du châle* when she was very young, "à son début dans le monde," (Lenormant, *Souvenirs…de Madame Récamier*, vol. 1, p. 18), and she would have been twenty-five in 1802, hardly a debutante.

What is clear from Mohl's account, however, is that Lenormant could have credited Emma's tarantella as a model for Récamier's *danse du châle* but did not.

De Staël's and Lenormant's vocabulary is also telling: de Staël describes Corinne as dancing with a "mélange de pudeur et de volupté," and Lenormant asserts that "rien…n'était plus décent" than Récamier's *danse du châle*. Emma has been accused of many things, but modesty and decency have never been among them. There seems to be in the accounts of Lenormant and de Staël a conscious distancing from Emma in a dual process—a silencing of Emma's contribution and a tightening of the bonds to each other—the effect of which is to squeeze Emma out of the Récamier / Corinne narrative and out of their network.

But it does not end there. In 1808 Vigée-Le Brun painted a portrait of de Staël in the character of Corinne. As Mary Sheriff has noted, there was a great deal of affinity between artist and writer, whom their contemporaries described as two women of genius who stood alone well above their gender.[344] Of this portrait, the woman of letters Anne-Marie de Beaufort d'Hautpoul wrote,

> Je ne sais qui des deux remporte la victoire:
> L'une guide la main, l'autre fixe la gloire,
> Et la même couronne enlace en ce tableau
> Le front inspirateur et l'immortel pinceau.
> Staël offrait à Le Brun un talent digne d'elle;
> Le Brun méritait seul [*sic*] un si parfait modèle;
> L'univers étonné de cet ensemble heureux
> Sans choix tombe en silence au pied de toutes deux.[345]

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[344] Mary Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 253.

[345] Anne-Marie Beaufort d'Hautpoul, quoted in Vigée-Le Brun, *Souvenirs*, editor's note, p. 598, n15.

Vigée-Le Brun based her portrait of de Staël as Corinne on her earlier depiction of Emma as a sibyl (figs. 73 and 74). The portrait of Emma as a sibyl had been Vigée-Le Brun's

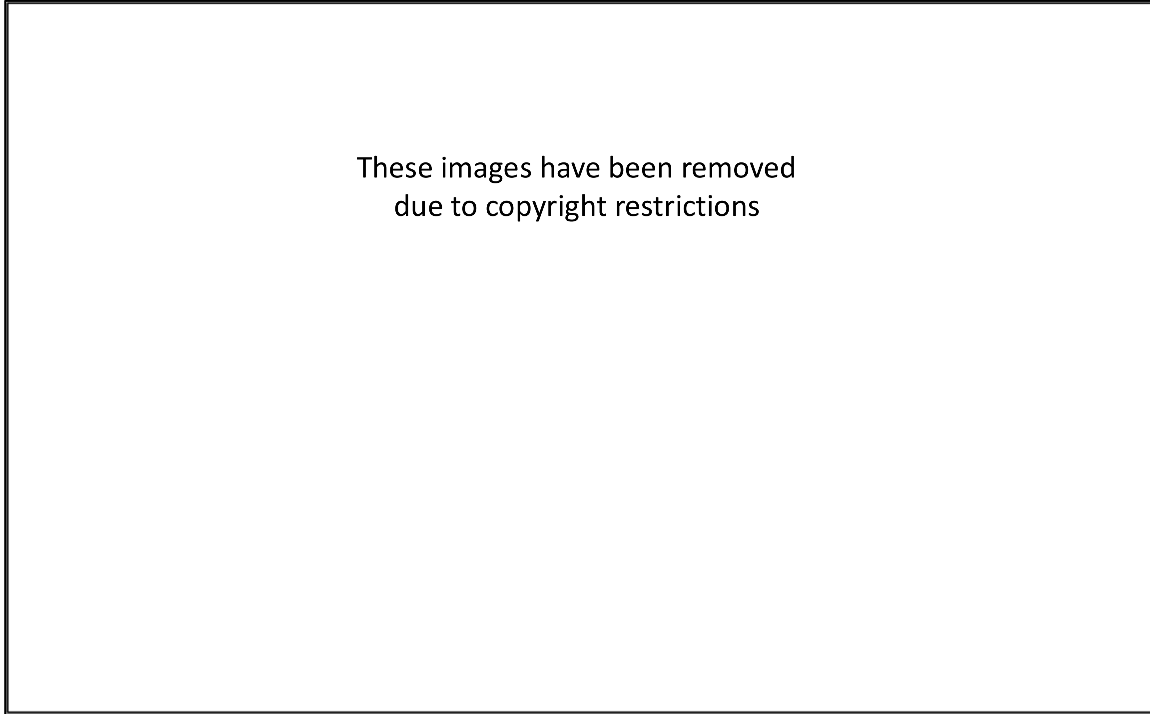

Figure 73. Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, *Lady Hamilton as a Sibyl*, 1790-92. Oil on canvas, 173.2 x 98.4 cm. Private collection.

Figure 74. Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, *Portrait de Madame de Staël en Corinne*, c. 1807-08. Oil on canvas, 140 x 118 cm. Geneva, Musée d'art et d'histoire (1841-0003).

favourite painting, and she had kept a copy that she took with her in her travels through Europe, showing it in every court she visited to advertise her skill as a portraitist. As we will see in the next chapter, Vigée-Le Brun sought to minimize Emma's contribution to the creation of this painting through a series of measures such as generalizing Emma's features, hiding her sensuality in an enormous dress, containing her hair in the turban, and neutralizing her vitality through a solid pyramidal composition.[346] And in her

[346] See chapter five, "Model, Muse, and Artist," and my article "Inspiration divine: *Lady Hamilton en sibylle* par Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun," *RACAR (Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*) 35.2 (Spring 2010): 35-46.

memoirs, Vigée-Le Brun repeatedly referred to this painting as “ma sibylle.” Vigée-Le Brun used the portrait of de Staël as Corinne to shore up her reputation, as well as de Staël’s, but in a very similar process to de Staël’s and Lenormant’s, she occluded her debt to Emma.

The network of women described in this chapter was no benevolent sisterhood. Although Emma was at the centre of the relationships delineated here and contributed to these women’s success, she was kept out of their circle. Emma bothered. It was not so much her rise through the social hierarchy—after all, other women had achieved similar climbs and had been accepted, their humble and disreputable origins forgotten—it was more that traces of her original social class were still discernible in her accent and behaviour. What these fissures in Emma’s veneer could not fail to indicate was that there was nothing natural or permanent about social standing. This message must have been particularly resonant with women such as Récamier, Vigée-LeBrun, and de Staël in the wake of the French Revolution. Juliette Bernard, born into a bourgeois family, had married Jacques Récamier, a rich banker, and become part of the political and cultural élite of the Directoire, one of the “three graces,” along with Mme Tallien and Joséphine de Beauharnais (the future Mme. Bonaparte). Her richly decorated *hôtel particulier* on the rue du Mont-Blanc became a model in the antique style that others sought to imitate. But after 1805 the Récamier bank went through a series of severe financial difficulties that forced the couple to scale down drastically. Germaine Necker, born into an already rich banking family, achieved an even greater fortune and social standing through her marriage to the Swedish ambassador Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein. As for Vigée-Le Brun, she was all too aware of the vagaries of class. Having climbed the artistic and

social hierarchy to become Marie Antoinette's first painter, she had lost everything and been forced to flee France in 1789. All three women were exiled from France during the revolutionary and post-revolutionary period in concrete manifestations of the changeability and uncertainty of social position. The fissures in Emma's performance of her acquired social class served as reminders of their own climb through society's hierarchy and, because what goes up can also come down, of the very precariousness of one's position within this hierarchy. Such a reminder would have been unsettling for anyone but was perhaps felt particularly acutely by these three women.

Conclusion

While the tarantella's adoption by aristocratic women may signal that the dance had lost some of its transgressiveness by the nineteenth century,[347] it nevertheless continued to be associated with women's uninhibited self-expression. In Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879), often designated the first feminist play, the heroine Nora dances the tarantella in front of her husband and his male friend. She dons the costume of a Neapolitan fishergirl and lets her hair down—literally and figuratively. A. S. Byatt believes that at the moment

[347] Not only did it become acceptable for aristocratic young women to dance the tarantella without using the pretense of suffering from a poisonous spider bite, it even became a mandatory part of a proper upper-class upbringing. Frances Power Cobbe, born to a prominent Irish family, recalls that her early education included learning "almost every national dance in Europe, the Minuet, the Gavotte, the Cachucha, the Bolero, the Mazurka, and the Tarantella." Frances Power Cobbe, *Life of Frances Power Cobbe as Told by Herself*, London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1904, p. 165.

Nora unties her hair, she becomes an object in the eyes of the men who watch her.[348] In fact, the opposite seems to be the case. When Nora lets her hair free she begins to dance the tarantella in a way that is also free. She dances wildly, as if in a trance. Her husband berates her for her apparent loss of control, although what he is really condemning is her escape from his control. Nora's tarantella, like Emma's, is a vehicle for free expression and self-actualization.

Emma attempted to transmit to her daughter what she had learnt about the path to creativity and accomplishment. The accomplishments that Emma tried to impart to her daughter were not in society's image but in her own. Horatia is depicted dancing the tarantella in a portrait by an unknown artist dating from around 1813 to 1815 (fig. 75).[349] Looking straight out at the viewer with a smile and holding a tambourine over her head, she dances outdoors against a background of a smoking volcano and orange-tinged sky. Her billowing shawl, necklace suspended in motion, and the folds of her dress convey the impression of movement. But in spite of echoes of Vigée-Le Brun's portrait of Emma dancing the tarantella, this portrait of Horatia does not communicate confidence and control in the way that Emma's does. Vigée-Le Brun had depicted a confident woman, in control of her surroundings and of her self, who has learnt how to navigate through society's edicts, playing the part that is expected of her while retaining her own identity,

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[348] A. S. Byatt, citing Toril Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism: Art, Theater, Philosophy*, Oxford and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2006. Byatt, "Blaming Nora," *The Guardian*, 2 May 2009, http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2009/may/02/ibsen-a-dolls-house, accessed 20 April 2013.

[349] The National Maritime Museum dates the portrait around 1815 and states that it was probably Emma who commissioned it. A slightly earlier date of around 1813 is probable, as Emma was living in very poor conditions in 1815, the year she died. National Maritime Museum, "Horatia Nelson, 1801-81," http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/14359.html, accessed 12 June 2014.

and it is perhaps this form of self-actualization that she attempts to teach to her daughter—a statement of identity that she developed through her appropriation of the tarantella.

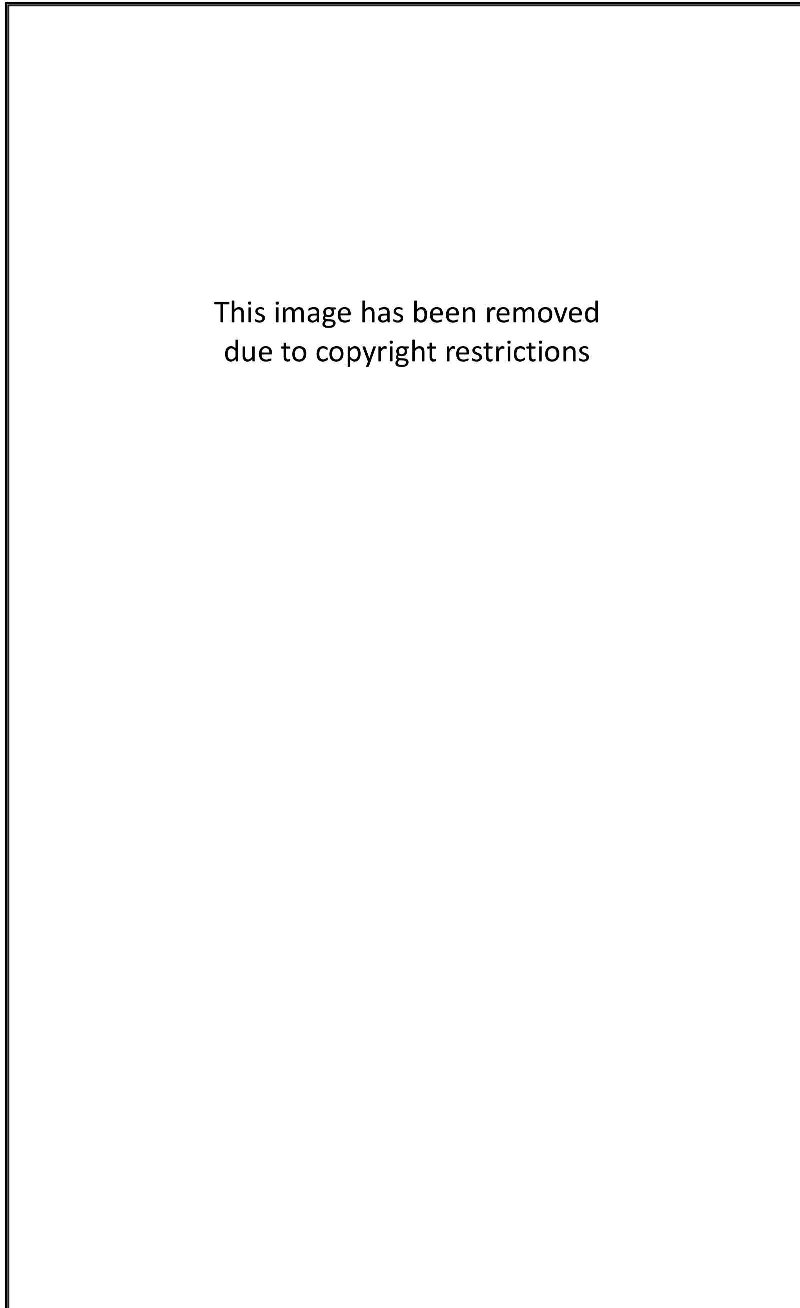
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Figure 75. Unknown artist, *Horatia Nelson*, c. 1812-13. Oil on canvas, 195.5 x 127 cm. Greenwich, London, National Maritime Museum (BHC2886).

Chapter 5

Model, Muse, and Artist

On aurait pu copier ses différentes poses et ses différentes expressions pour faire toute une galerie de tableaux.

— Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun

She really presents the very thing which the artists had aimed at representing.

— Lord Palmerston

The spectator can hardly believe his eyes. He sees what thousands of artists would have liked to express realized before him.

— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

J'ai entendu dire à des artistes que, si on avait pu l'imiter, l'art n'aurait rien trouvé à y changer.

— Comtesse de Boigne[350]

These four quotations are examples of the recurring trope, which they helped to create and broadcast, that Emma Hamilton was an unparalleled model who presented artists with perfectly composed expressions and poses that they needed only copy. She herself

[350] Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun (1755-1842), *"Les femmes régnaient alors, la Révolution les a détrônées." Souvenirs, 1755-1842* [1835-37], ed. Didier Masseau, Paris: Tallandier, 2009, p. 174. Lord Palmerston (1739-1802), letter to Lady Palmerston, 18 September 1791, in Henry Temple Palmerston, *Portrait of a Golden Age: Intimate Papers of the Second Viscount Palmerston Courtier under George III*, ed. Brian Alan Connell, Boston: Houghton Mifflin; 1958, p. 276. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), *Italian Journey* [1816-17], trans. W. H. Auden and Elizabeth Mayer, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982 (1996), p. 208. Éléonore-Adèle d'Osmond, Comtesse de Boigne (1781-1866), *Récits d'une tante: Mémoires de la Comtesse de Boigne, née d'Osmond*, 5 vols., Paris: Émile-Paul Frères, 1921-23, vol. 1, p. 107.

Figure 76. Thomas Rowlandson, *Lady Hxxxxxxx Attitudes*, c. 1791-1800. Etching, 23.7 x 17 cm. London, The British Museum (1981,U.258).

was a work of art, it was said, “the masterpiece of the great artist.”[351] By simply reproducing what Emma brought forth, artists could create their own masterpieces. The

[351] Goethe, *Italianische Reise* [1816-17], 2 vols., Munich: C. H. Beck, 2010, vol. 2, p. 217. My translation, from a passage that was not translated in the Penguin edition of *Italian Journey*, 22 March 1787: “Hamilton ist ein Mann von allgemeinem Geschmack und, nachdem er alle Reiche der Schöpfung durchwandert, an ein schönes Weib, das Meisterstück des großen Künstlers, gelangt.” The “great artist” has been understood as referring to God or, less frequently, Nature.

greatest artists of the day vied with each other for the opportunity to paint, draw, or sculpt her likeness, and she became the most frequently depicted woman in Europe.[352]

The British caricaturist Thomas Rowlandson satirized the enthusiasm for Emma's modelling in *Lady Hxxxxxxx Attitudes* (fig. 76).[353] Emma stands on a platform, naked and in an awkwardly twisted pose, in front of a young artist who draws her. Her left arm is bent over her head, and her long hair flows freely down her back. In her left hand she holds a mask and in her right, a piece of drapery.[354] Her right foot rests on an antique vase. Sir William stands beside her and pushes a curtain back as if to reveal his young wife's body. He points toward her pubic region while smiling at and conversing with the seated artist. The latter looks through a quizzing glass, but his eyes are heavily shaded, which casts some doubt as to what and how much he can really see. In front of his seat is a portfolio of prints inscribed *Lady Hxxxxxxx Attitudes*. The artist's right foot knocks over another portfolio, which in turn topples a sculpted head that falls into another bust, the two locked in an amorous, if rock hard, gaze. These busts and the statue of a satyr and nude woman embracing in the background characterize Emma's modelling as lascivious.

Like the young draughtsman in Rowlandson's caricature, the artists who gained a sitting with Emma benefitted greatly from their encounters with her, and from these

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[352] Stephanie Niemeyer, "George Romney, *Lady Hamilton*," The Blanton Museum of Art, http://collection.blantonmuseum.org/VieS6917?obj=14588&sid=145589&x=3324270, accessed 10 April 2014.

[353] This caricature is traditionally dated around 1800, when there was a spate of prints satirizing Emma, Sir William, and Nelson. However, Ian Jenkins and Kim Sloan have suggested it might date from 1791 when Emma and Sir William were in London to marry. Jenkins and Sloan, *Vases and Volcanoes: Sir William Hamilton and His Collection*, London: British Museum Press, 1996, p. 302-303.

[354] The drapery could not flow in the manner depicted here since it is caught between her head and left arm. The bottom part of the drapery ends in an odd tail-like shape between her legs.

sprung some of their most successful work. Emma seems to have had the unique talent of being all things to all artists. This chapter aims to move beyond the simple declaration of Emma's talent and to delineate with more precision what qualities and abilities she brought to the task of modelling. To that end, I will examine the intense reactions of two artists to Emma, a distancing one in Vigée-Le Brun's case and an immersive one in Romney's, and will propose a different way of understanding the dynamic between model and artist.

Vigée-Le Brun: An artist at odds with her model

Emma's malleability as a model is evident in the history and variety of Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun's portraits of her. While in Naples in 1790-91, Vigée-Le Brun painted three portraits of Emma: in full movement dancing the tarantella (fig. 59), in transformation from Ariadne to a bacchante (fig. 53), and completely still in *Lady Hamilton as a Sibyl* (fig. 77).[355] As is evident in the quotation that is cited in epigraph to this chapter, Vigée-Le Brun recognized Emma's talent for modelling. Yet to assert, as she does, that by simply copying Emma, an artist could create an entire oeuvre is tantamount to surrendering the authorship of the paintings to the model, the artist being reduced to the level of a mere copyist whose labour was technical and not intellectual. As Mary Sheriff states in her study of Vigée-Le Brun, Emma "becomes a most dangerous model—the

[355] Vigée-Le Brun also drew two portraits of Emma in charcoal on doors at Sir William's Palazzo Sessa.

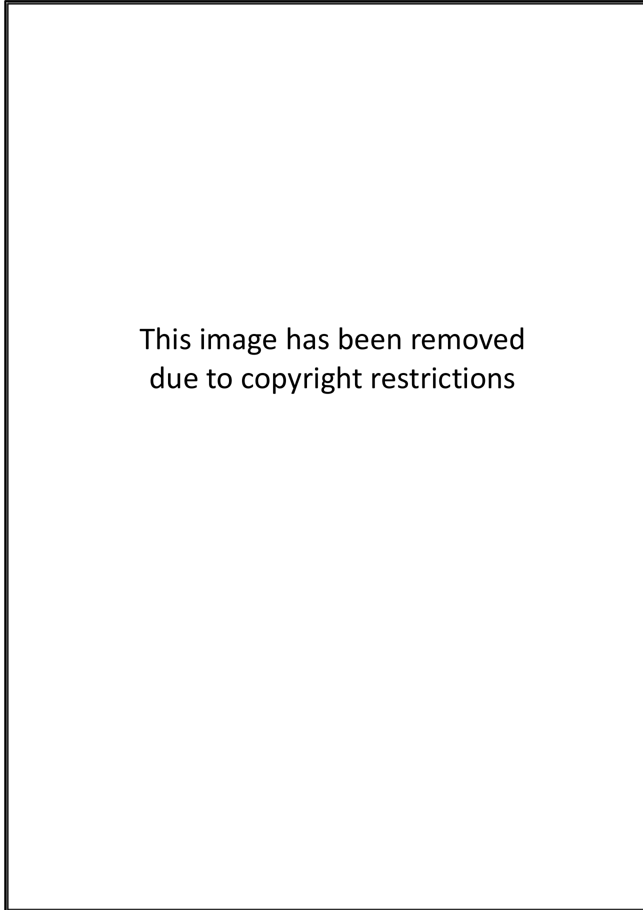

Figure 77. Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, *Lady Hamilton as a Sibyl*, 1790-92.
Oil on canvas, 173.2 x 98.4 cm. Private collection.

muse who rather than inspiring the painter steals her thunder."[356] My contention is that despite the fact that Vigée-Le Brun recognized Emma's talent, she was not prepared to accept such a secondary role. Her conflicted opinion of Emma is discernible in her memoirs and in her acclaimed portrait of *Lady Hamilton as a Sibyl*.

Vigée-Le Brun's memoirs betray her desire to secure the authorship not only of her portraits, but of Emma herself. At first, the artist seems to have been quite taken with Emma's beauty. She recalls painting Emma's "belle figure" and "beaux cheveux

[356] Mary Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 245.

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Figure 78. Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, *Lady Hamilton as a Sibyl*, 1790-92. Oil on canvas, 73 x 56 cm. Private collection.

châtains" and describes her as a "superbe femme…que sa beauté a rendue célèbre," though she disliked Emma's behaviour.[357] A few paragraphs later, however, in the narration of a sitting for *Lady Hamilton as a Sibyl* at which two society ladies were also present, Vigée-Le Brun reverses her appreciation and intimates that Emma's beauty was neither natural nor innate but due only to the way in which the artist had dressed and coiffed her for the portrait.

> J'avais coiffé Mme Harte, car elle n'était pas encore mariée, avec un châle tourné autour de sa tête en forme de turban, dont un bout tombait et faisait draperie. Cette coiffure l'embellissait au point que ces dames la trouvèrent ravissante. Le chevalier nous ayant toutes invitées à dîner, Mme Harte passa dans ses appartements pour faire sa toilette, et, lorsqu'elle vint nous retrouver au salon, cette toilette, qui était des plus communes, l'avait tellement changée à son désavantage, que ces deux dames eurent presque toutes les peines du monde à la reconnaître.[358]

If we are to believe Vigée-Le Brun, it is to her that Emma owed her looks. The incident is described in a way that makes the artist seem objective, as if she were simply transmitting a judgment proffered by the two other women present. In another passage, Vigée-Le Brun states that she had been the one to suggest Emma use shawls in her *Attitudes*.[359] In fact, Emma had been flourishing them for years in her performances: in a letter dated 1787, years before Vigée-Le Brun was in Italy, Emma had asked Charles Greville to send

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[357] Vigée-Le Brun, *Souvenirs*, p. 172. Her appreciation of Emma as "superbe" relates undoubtedly to the latter's talent for posing and attitudinizing, for Vigée-Le Brun was otherwise quite scathing toward Emma, describing her as "n'ayant point d'esprit, quoiqu'elle fût excessivement moqueuse et dénigrante, au point que ces deux défauts étaient les seuls mobiles de sa conversation; mais elle avait aussi de l'astuce, et elle s'en servit pour se faire épouser. Elle manquait de tournure et s'habillait très mal." Vigée-Le Brun, *Souvenirs*, p. 174-175.

[358] Vigée-Le Brun, *Souvenirs*, p. 175

[359] Vigée-Le Brun, *Souvenirs*, p. 174.

her a shawl to replace the one that had become worn from use during the *Attitudes*.[360] I believe that Vigée-Le Brun's statements reveal her desire to exploit Emma's reputation for her own ends by claiming she was responsible for the efflorescence of Emma's best-known attribute, her beauty, while at the same time minimizing Emma's impact on her painting.

This sort of manoeuvring occurs frequently in the *Souvenirs*, which Vigée-Le Brun dictated with a specific purpose in mind: to counter detractors who might seek to damage her renown.[361] It is therefore with her eye fixed firmly on her posthumous reputation that she published her memoirs in 1835, at the age of eighty, over forty years after she had painted Emma. In them, she fashioned the image she wanted to leave to posterity, hence her obvious posturing and marked instrumentalization of people and events. Emma had been dead for twenty years and was thus in no position to object, but her fame did survive. Vigée-Le Brun thus sought to use her sitter's celebrity and to channel it for her own reputation.

Of Vigée-Le Brun's hundreds of portraits of kings, queens, emperors, princes, princesses, and other aristocrats, *Lady Hamilton as a Sibyl* is the work that she mentions most often in her memoirs. She believed the portrait to be her masterpiece, "celui de mes ouvrages auquel je tenais le plus,"[362] and referred to it simply and affectionately as "ma

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[360] Emma, letter to Charles Greville, 4 August 1787, in *The Hamilton and Nelson Papers*, ed. Alfred Morrison, 2 vols., [s.l.]: Printed for Private Circulation, 1893, letter 168, vol. 1, p. 133.

[361] Vigée-Le Brun records that she wrote her memoirs upon her friends' insistence. She began them in epistolary form: "Ma bien bonne amie, vous me demandez avec tant d'instances de vous écrire mes souvenirs que je me décide à vous satisfaire." *Souvenirs*, p. 36. In her memoirs, Vigée-Le Brun often notes that she was frequently the target of jealousy and malicious gossip.

[362] Vigée-Le Brun, *Souvenirs*, p. 149.

sibylle."[363] She recounts that she kept a version of the *Sibyl* with her during her exile from France, displaying it in the different cities she visited in order to showcase her talent as a portraitist and attract new commissions,[364] and that she was praised abundantly for this work. While she lived in Saint Petersburg, she sent it to the 1798 Paris Salon, where it was compared favourably to a pair of portraits painted by Jacques-Louis David. She relates an incident in Parma in which students, having at first assumed that one of their masters had the been the author of this work, threw themselves, teary eyed, at Vigée-Le Brun's feet when they learned that she was in fact its creator.[365] In one passage of her *Souvenirs*, she even apologized for displaying what might appear as too much pride or vanity towards one of her own creations, but then asked her reader to forgive her, saying it was rare for a painter to feel such a sense of accomplishment.[366] There are, however, some elements that trouble this harmonious narration of a seemingly perfect concordance between the portraitist and her painting. These elements, which I call disjunctions, point to Vigée-Le Brun's uneasy relationship with Emma and to an attempt on her part to evacuate Emma from *Lady Hamilton as a Sibyl*.[367]

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[363] Vigée-Le Brun, *Souvenirs*, p. 204, 285.

[364] It served as a model, for instance, for Vigée-Le Brun's portrait of the Princess Dolgorouky, c. 1797. Oil on canvas, 138.5 x 100.3 cm. Private Collection. See Vigée-Le Brun, *Souvenirs*, p. 285.

[365] Vigée-Le Brun, *Souvenirs*, p. 204. As Mary Sheriff has pointed out, this story is apocryphal and resembles a number of other stories of misrecognition, for instance the one of Chardin's acceptance to the Academy. Sheriff, *The Exceptional* Woman, p. 227. Even if the story is a complete fabrication, it shows the importance that the painting held in Vigée-Le Brun's view.

[366] Vigée-Le Brun, *Souvenirs*, p. 204.

[367] It was the Duc de Brissac, the Comtesse du Barry's lover, who commissioned the portrait of Emma as a sibyl. Vigée-Le Brun started the painting in 1791 and took it with her to Rome to finish it. There, she produced a bust after it, which she gave to Sir William (fig. 78). In her memoirs, Vigée-Le Brun accused Sir William of selling the bust of the *Sibyl* at the first opportunity. This is an unjust aspersion, since the

Vigée-Le Brun depicts Emma sitting in front of a cave. She wears a dark orange orientalizing dress cinched at the waist with a beige ribbon. Her head is covered in an enormous scarf of the same beige, which she wears as a turban. In her right hand, Emma holds a pen and parchment on which she transcribes the prophecy she is receiving: her eyes are turned heavenward in a conventional expression indicating divine inspiration. The words on the parchment imply that she is in the middle of her vision: she has written a few words and continues to receive the prophecy, which she will continue to transcribe.

Lady Hamilton as a Sibyl seems at first to fit into the category of allegorical portraiture, in which the sitter is depicted in the guise of a mythological, religious, or literary figure, with the aim of highlighting a particular quality or talent.[368] The genre was immensely popular in France in the first half of the eighteenth century in the work of Nicolas de Largillière and Jean-Marc Nattier, for instance. In the 1760s, allegorical

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painting remained in Sir William's possession until 1801, when he sold his entire collection to avoid bankruptcy. See Jenkins and Sloan, *Vases and Volcanoes*, p. 271. Vigée-Le Brun delayed sending the portrait to Brissac, most probably sensing that as the situation in France was deteriorating quickly for the nobility, it might be wiser to hold on to the painting, at least for a while, not only to keep it from being damaged or destroyed, but to avoid exposing herself as too closely associated with the old nobility. Her calculation appears to have been correct, for Brissac was guillotined in 1793, with the *Sibyl* still in Vigée-Le Brun's possession.

[368] On allegorical portraiture, see Kathleen Nicholson, "The Ideology of Feminine 'Virtue': The Vestal Virgin in French Eighteenth-Century Allegorical Portraiture, in *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*, ed. Joanna Woodall, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997: 52-72; Gill Perry, "Women in Disguise: Likeness, the Grand Style and the Conventions of 'Feminine' Portraiture in the Work of Sir Joshua Reynolds," in *Femininity and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Art and Culture*, ed. Gill Perry and Michael Rossington, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994: 18-40; Marcia Pointon, *Strategies for Showing: Women, Possession and Representation in English Visual Culture 1650-1800*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997; and Guillaume Scherf and Sébastien Allard, "The Allegorical Portrait," in *Citizens and Kings: Portraits in the Age of Revolution 1760-1830*, exh. cat., London: Royal Academy of Arts: 226-243.

portraiture became very fashionable in England, as Sir Joshua Reynolds, president of the Royal Academy, encouraged painters to practice it in order to help raise the status of portraiture, arguing that the classical reference brought it closer to history painting.[369] Reynolds produced much work in this Grand Style, such as his 1783-84 portrait of *Sarah Siddons as the Tragic Muse*, which was so successful in its aim that his contemporaries celebrated it not as a portrait but as a history painting.[370] Allegorical portraits are relatively rare in Vigée-Le Brun's oeuvre, particularly in the early 1790s.[371] Her adoption of the genre marks both the recovery of imagery from the *ancien régime*, from which she had been separated, and the borrowing of a trend fashionable in England at the very moment she was called upon to depict an Englishwoman. The sibyl, however, is a problematic allegorical choice for depicting Emma, for she was no sibylline prophetess. When she posed for this portrait, Emma was living openly with Sir William as his mistress, and her disreputable past was widely known. The incongruity between the sitter and the allegorical figure transgresses the conventions of allegorical portraiture and frustrates the viewers' expectations.

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[369] On the Grand Style, see Joshua Reynolds's third discourse on art, 1770.

[370] Joshua Reynolds, *Sarah Siddons as the Tragic Muse*, 1783-84. Oil on canvas, 239.4 x 147.6 cm. San Marino, CA, The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens (21.2). While this is the portrait of an actress, it is not an actress portrait. It is an allegorical portrait, for Siddons is not represented acting a role, but as Melpomene, the Muse of Tragedy. Siddons did portray Melpomene in a play, but not before 1785. She is therefore depicted as the embodiment of the Muse, not playing the role of the Muse. See Heather McPherson, "Picturing Tragedy: *Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse* Revisited," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33.3 (Spring 2000): 401-430 and Gill Perry, "'The British Sappho': Borrowed Identities and the Representation of Women Artists in Late Eighteenth-Century British Art," *Oxford Art Journal* 18.1 (1995): 44-57.

[371] Before that she had painted *Portrait of Prince Henry Lubomirski as the Genius of France*, 1789; *Bacchante*, 1785, which may not be a portrait; her *Mme Dugazon as Nina* is a portrait of an actress in a role.

The choice of the sibyl is further surprising in that sibyls appear only rarely in allegorical portraiture.[372] The figure that is closest to the sibyl, its conceptual cousin, is the muse. But contrary to the muse, a quintessentially feminine figure that allowed the spectator a degree of erotic contemplation, the sibyl was not clearly gendered. The sibyls on Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling, for instance, display a very masculine musculature. By depicting Emma as a sibyl, Vigée-Le Brun troubles the usual highly gendered and eroticized representations of Emma, a woman whose powerful sexual allure was widely recognized.

There is another disjunction in the way that Emma is depicted. Vigée-Le Brun has removed from the *Sibyl* much of her sitter's specificity. Emma's features are generalized, idealized. Her hair, one of her most vaunted physical attributes, is confined in the turban. She is stripped of her vitality: the pyramidal composition negates the grace of her

[372] In *Vases and Volcanoes* (p. 271), Jenkins and Sloan state that, "there had been a series of works by a succession of British and artists of compositions and allegorical portraits based on, and copies of, [Guercino's *Persian Sibyl*] and Domenichino's *Cumaean Sibyl*." I was not able to find more than a handful of portraits as sibyls dating from those years, a very small number compared to the portraits as a Muse, Grace, Diana, and Hebe. There was, however, a fashion for sibyl painting in late eighteenth-century English art, probably under the influence of Anton Rafael Mengs, whose *Sibyl* is an adaptation of Guercino's *Syrian Sibyl*. The chosen iconography could be another nod to Emma's Englishness (Mengs, *Sibyl*, 1761. London, private collection). Benjamin West copied Mengs's *Sybil* (c. 1761. Oil on canvas, 118.4 x 95 cm. Hull, Ferens Art Galaery, Hull Museums). Angelica Kauffman copied Domenchino's *Cumean Sibyl* (c. 1763. Oil on canvas. There are many version of Kauffman's painting, among them one at Washington's National Gallery of Women in the Arts, 98 x 75 cm). Gavin Hamilton also painted a sibyl, for which it is often assumed that Emma was the model, despite the convincing argument against this theory expounded by Françoise Foster-Hahn in "After Guercino or After the Greeks? Gavin Hamilton's *Hebe*: Tradition and Change in the 1760s," *The Burlington Magazine* 117.867 (June 1975): 365-371. Lastly, among Benjamin West's drawings at the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York is a study for a sibyl for which Emma possibly modelled (see Ruth S. Kraemer, *Drawings by Benjamin West and his Son, Raphael Lamar West*, New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library, 1975, p. 38-39).

movements and the fluidity of her performances. Thus I do not believe that this may be read as a representation of Emma in the attitude of a sibyl.[373] In Vigée-Le Brun's portraits of Emma dancing the tarantella and as Ariadne / a Bacchante, Emma's charms, her long hair, naked arms, and beguiling smile are alluringly on display. While she looks out at the spectator in these two works—as convention prescribes in portraiture—in the *Sibyl*, Emma turns her eyes away. Emma is displaced from this painting. Vigée-Le Brun seems to be attempting to redefine her not as a sitter but as an anonymous model, a depersonalization that is reinforced by the fact Vigée-Le Brun referred to this painting as "ma sibylle" and sent it to the 1798 Salon with the simple title of *Une Sibylle*.[374]

These disjunctions have the effect of allowing Vigée-Le Brun not only to project herself into the painting, but of transforming the *Sibyl* into what I believe is an affirmation of her own worth as a painter and, more generally, into a statement about female genius.[375] At the time Vigée-Le Brun was painting the *Sibyl*, the notion of genius was acquiring its modern definition and was hotly debated by a number of thinkers.

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[373] See for instance Gita May, *Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun: The Odyssey of an Artist in an Age of Revolution*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005, p. 95. Mary Sheriff points out that the effect of the pyramidal composition is that "The person Lady Hamilton…has been effaced." Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman*, p. 245-247. My analysis differs from Sheriff's in that I believe that Emma has been displaced, not effaced.

[374] *Explication des ouvrages de peinture et dessins, sculpture, architecture et gravure, Exposés au Musée central des Arts, d'après l'Arrêté du Ministre de l'Intérieur, le 1er Thermidor, an VI de la République Française*, Paris: Imprimerie des Sciences et des Arts, 1798, p. 41.

[375] For a more detailed analysis of this portrait in relation to the concept of genius, see my article, "Inspiration divine: *Lady Hamilton en sibylle* par Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun," *RACAR (Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*) 35.2 (Spring 2010): 35-46. In the same year, Andrew D. Hottle published a study of this painting in which he analyzed its Virgilian references. Hottle, "More than 'a preposterous neo-classic rehash': Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun's *Sibyl* and its Virgilian Connotations," *Aurora, The Journal of the History of Art* 11 (2010): 120-146.

Immanuel Kant believed that genius was a natural faculty: "*Genius* is the innate mental disposition (*ingenium*) *through which* Nature gives the rule to Art."[376] Nature being most often associated with women,[377] this opened the door to the possibility that women could be geniuses, contrary to the thinking of other writers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau.[378] With *Lady Hamilton as a Sibyl*, Vigée-Le Brun positions herself in this argument and claims a place for female genius at the very moment the concept of genius is being redefined for the modern era.

The prophecy that the sibyl has begun to transcribe supports this reading of the painting. The frame of the painting has truncated the words, rendering their meaning ambiguous, as is typical of sibylline prophecies. They refer to Virgil's fourth Eclogue, in which the poet quotes the Cumaean Sibyl's prophecy announcing that "A new generation is being sent down from the high heavens,"[379] which is traditionally understood as a harbinger of the coming of Christ. These words could also indicate that which is

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[376] Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), *Critique of Judgement* [1790], trans. J. H. Bernard, Digireads, 2010, p. 113, § 46.

[377] Gillian Perry argues that the antique style dress that female sitters wore in portraits by Reynolds was a way of reinforcing the link between woman and nature. Perry, "Women in Disguise," p. 29.
The concept of nature was in flux at the end of the century, when it began to gain a more positive valance. In the nature-culture polarity, nature was considered inferior and feminine, whereas in the nature-artifice polarity, nature was considered superior and masculine. See Sylvana Tomaselli, "The Enlightenment Debate on Women," *History Workshop* 20 (Fall 1985): 101-124, for a nuanced history of the gendered concept of nature. The notion of femininity was also unstable, an instability that was visible in, and nourished by, the allegorical portrait.

[378] Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) was among the most outspoken against the possibility of a female genius. See for instance his *Lettre à M. d'Alembert sur son article Genève* [1758], introduction de Michel Launey, Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1967, p. 201.

[379] James Morwood, *Virgil: A Poet in Augustan Rome*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 10.

engendered and created through celestial inspiration, a reference either to the sibyl's prophecy or to the artist's creativity. The words *create* and *engender* are doubly relevant for Vigée-Le Brun, who is an artist *and* a mother, a twin creative role that she exhibits in her self-portraits with her daughter Julie.[380] In these portraits, Paula Rea Radisich states, Vigée-Le Brun "indexes beauty, power, and talent" to motherhood and "proudly asserts the value of her maternity to her self-definition as an artist."[381] I believe that with the *Sibyl*, Vigée-Le Brun proudly asserts the link between these two aspects of her creativity and proclaims her own access to genius through her gender, not in spite of it. She thus evaginates the dominant belief that inscribes woman's "natural" inferiority in her reproductive system. Motherhood being exactly what brings women closer to nature, and nature being the source of the artist's creativity, the female artist—and, more specifically, she, Vigée-Le Brun—benefits from a strong relationship to genius.

By bringing the *Sibyl* with her and showing it in every country she visited, Vigée-Le Brun broadcast throughout Europe her position on female genius and her affirmation of her own genius. There is another way in which Vigée-Le Brun proclaims her worth as an artist in this painting, which becomes a manifesto of sorts. Although she refers to Virgil through the words on the scroll, Vigée-Le Brun does not represent her sibyl in the trance that Virgil describes as she receives the divine prophecy. Virgil writes,

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[380] The relationship in Vigée-Le Brun's work between her career as a painter and her motherhood has already been studied. See Paula Rea Radisich: "Que [*sic.*] peut définir les femmes? Vigée-Le Brun's Portraits of an Artist," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 25.4, special issue: Art History: New Voices / New Visions (Summer 1992): 441-467, and Angela Rosenthal, "Infant Academies and the Childhood of Art: Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun's *Julie with a Mirror*," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37.4 (Summer 2004): 605-628.

[381] Radisich, "Que peut définir les femmes?," p. 452 and 467.

> Her hair stood up, convulsive rage possessed
> Her trembling limbs and heaved her laboring breast.
> …
> Her staring eyes with sparkling fury roll.[382]

Vigée-Le Brun's sibyl is in no such frenzy. There is loss neither of control nor of reason.[383] She has started writing the words she has heard and pauses as she continues to receive the prophecy before returning to her transcription. The process takes time and application. Vigée-Le Brun believed that, similarly, the work of the artist demanded not only inspiration but also sustained effort. In her *Souvenirs*, she attributed a large part of her success to the fact that she had been able to work in such a fashion, "avec une constance, une assiduité assez rares dans une femme."[384] Without patient and careful work, inspiration and genius would be wasted.[385] Hence her gentle admonition to her friend the painter Hubert Robert whom she described as having "cette extrême facilité qu'on peut appeler heureuse, mais qu'on peut appeler fatale: il peignait un tableau aussi vite qu'il écrivait une lettre; mais quand il voulait captiver cette facilité, ses ouvrages étaient souvent parfaits."[386] Vigée-Le Brun thus proclaims that her diligence—which she affirms both in her memoirs and in her *Sibyl*—was rare not only in women but in artists

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[382] Quoted in Gayle A. Levy, "A Genius for the Modern Era: Madame de Staël's *Corinne*," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 30.3-4 (Spring-Summer 2002), p. 243-254, p. 246.

[383] In this sense, Vigée-Le Brun aligns her working method with essential Enlightenment qualities. Her *Sibyl* closely relates to the tradition in art that shows sibyls in a calmer state than the one that Virgil describes.

[384] Vigée-Le Brun, *Souvenirs*, p. 198.

[385] This goes against the Romantic conception whereby artistic genius was related to an irrepressible creative impulse, invention and imagination taking precedence over applied work.

[386] Vigée-Le Brun, *Souvenirs*, p. 498. Radisich believes Vigée-Le Brun's portrait of Robert is a friendly criticism of his sometimes too rushed brushwork (1787, oil on canvas, 105 x 84 cm. Paris, musée du Louvre). Radisich: "Que peut définir les femmes?"

in general and made her into an exceptional woman and artist, to borrow and expand on Sheriff's expression.

By displacing Emma from the painting and reducing her role from sitter to model, not only could Vigée-Le Brun freely project herself into it, she avoided the risk that it would be Emma whom viewers would associate with genius, for it could have been argued that the talent Emma displayed in her *Attitudes* and tarantella was a gift from nature that she honed to perfection. Joshua Reynolds's *Sarah Siddons as the Tragic Muse* provides a telling counter-example. This portrait became Reynolds's signature work, not only because it was considered by many to be his best, but because it demonstrated the truth of his theory of grand portraiture. The name of Reynolds became associated with that of Siddons, so that the glory was shared between portraitist and sitter. Reynolds used Siddons's fame, while also bowing before her, signing his name on the edge of her dress, and declaring gallantly: "I have resolved to go down to posterity upon the hem of your garment."[387] This painting could only be so successful because of the affinities among the portrayed, the allegory, and the portraitist: Sarah Siddons, the greatest tragic actress of the Georgian era; the allegory, the muse of tragedy; and Sir Joshua Reynolds, academician and portraitist of august status. This is an association, not a dislocation. But Vigée-Le Brun wanted no similar relation with her sitter, hence the multiple disjunctions

[387] It is Siddons who recounts this *bon mot*, cited in Heather McPherson, "Picturing Tragedy: *Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse* Revisited," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33.3 (Spring 2000): 401-430, p. 427, n63. The signature, however, is no longer visible. Reynolds concluded his last discourse to the Royal Academy, delivered on 10 December 1790, by speaking longingly about his wish to meet Michelangelo: "Were I now to begin the world again, I would tread in the steps of that great master: to kiss the hem of his garment, to catch the slightest of his perfections, would be glory enough for an ambitious man." Reynolds, *Discourses*, ed. Robert R. Wark, New Haven and London: Published by Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 1997, p. 282.

in an attempt to empty the canvas of Emma's presence and fill it with her own. Vigée-Le Brun manifests a presence in this painting in a variation on the familiar trope that all portraits are self-portraits. In this case, however, the characteristics depicted are psychological—female genius, assiduity, constancy—instead of physical.[388]

Some scholars have read Emma's displacement from the canvas as an indication that the *Sibyl* should be considered a history painting.[389] Andrew Hottle has argued that identifying it as a portrait of "the notorious Emma Hamilton" precludes us from recognizing its erudite Virgilian references and understanding its "deeper" meaning,[390] although he does not explain why the two are mutually exclusive. Vigée-Le Brun referred to the painting under the general terms of "ma sibylle" but also described it as a portrait of Emma in her *Souvenirs*, evincing her own recognition of the painting's multiple layers of signification. Hottle gives more weight to the former statement than the latter in order to support his own assertion that this painting should be read as a history painting to raise Vigée-Le Brun's status. In the process, he collaborates in the attempted evacuation of Emma from her own portrait. What I propose, instead, is that Vigée-Le Brun was conflicted about her opinion of Emma, that Emma would not be so easily displaced, and that artist and sitter jostled for presence on the canvas.

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[388] See for instance Jean-Luc Nancy, *Le regard du portrait*, Paris: Galilée, 2000, p. 33, and Jean-Marie Pontévia, *"Tout peintre se peint soi même" ("Ogni dipintore dipinge sé")*, vol. 3 of *Écrits sur l'art et pensées détachées*, Bordeaux: William Blake & Co., 1986, p. 38.

[389] Following Félibien's nomenclature, a history painting should present more than one figure. The *Sibyl* could nevertheless be considered an example of the growing vogue for single-figure history painting, an offshoot of late eighteenth-century sentimentality, where narrative is compressed in favour of the depiction of the character's emotional state. But Emma retains a presence in the painting that qualifies her as a sitter rather than a model, and the *Sibyl* as a portrait rather than a history painting. See below.

[390] Hottle, "More than 'a preposterous neo-classic rehash'," p. 120.

Indeed, Emma does not disappear completely from the painting. Her sensuality remains in the lock of hair that has escapes the turban, her sensuous lower lip, the pink cheeks, the heavy breasts, and the nipple whose shape is delineated through the cloth. Notwithstanding Vigée-Le Brun's attempts to claim authorship for her work and for her model, Emma reaffirms her own agency by asserting an indelible physicality in the painting. With its shaky allegory, *Lady Hamilton as a Sibyl* does not fit comfortably within the genre of allegorical portraiture and presents itself as what could I would call an uncomfortable portrait.

In spite of Vigée-Le Brun's instrumentalization, she had no control over Emma's celebrity, not in 1790-92 when she painted the *Sibyl* nor in the 1830s when she dictated her memoirs, nor today. In fact, Emma's celebrity has had the opposite effect, and the painting has gone down in history with the title *Lady Hamilton as a Sibyl*.[391] Emma's posthumous fame has lain beyond Vigée-Le Brun's grasp. The title guarantees that Emma retains a presence in the painting, and the "as" in the title signals that Emma is portrayed here embodying a sibyl. And embodying is what Emma did best.

As an artist, Vigée-Le Brun appreciated Emma's talent: she depended on her sitter's particular way of incarnating a character in order to ensure her *Sibyl*'s success. On a personal level, however, she seems to have disliked Emma intensely. Vigée-Le Brun's portrayal of Emma in her memoirs does not hold back on the enumeration of Emma's

[391] Already in the inventory of Sir William's art collection conducted by James Clark in 1799, this portrait was titled *Portrait of Lady Hamilton: A Bust with Turbant [sic.] and Scroll* <u>*in the character of a Sybil*</u>. Emphasis in the original. Clark's inventory, now at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, is reproduced in Brian Fothergill, *Sir William Hamilton, Envoy Extraordinary*, London: Faber and Faber, 1969, p. 431. In 1854, on the occasion of a sale at the Hôtel Drouot in Paris, an article in *Le Figaro* referred to the painting as *Portrait de Lady Hamilton, en sibylle*. http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k292157s/texteBrut, acccessed 11 May 2014.

flaws. Vigée-Le Brun recounts Emma's humble origins and her recourse to prostitution, and describes her as coarse, dimwitted, supercilious, disdainful, manipulative, and vulgar.[392] Having been Marie-Antoinette's official portraitist, Vigée-Le Brun quite possibly considered it beneath her to paint a lowborn courtesan, which would have been like adding insult to the injury of the French Revolution. It is not surprising that she would seek to evacuate Emma from a painting that would become a declaration of her own worth and an intervention into the debate about female genius. Said another way, it is surprising that Vigée-Le Brun would choose Emma as the model for such an important painting given how she felt about her. This choice is the strongest testament of Emma's genius for modelling.

Romney: The artist and his muse, revisited

Romney, on the other hand, had no conflicted feelings toward Emma. He did not seek to distance himself from her. On the contrary, he clearly recognized Emma's impact on his work. She sat for him hundreds of times over nearly a decade, and George Romney and Emma Hamilton are now remembered as one of the great pairings of artist and muse. In 1782 when Emma began to model for him, Romney was a mature, established portraitist, and his encounter with the seventeen-year-old Emma breathed a forceful new life into his

[392] Vigée-Le Brun, *Souvenirs*, p. 172-176.

work, marking what the preeminent Romney scholar Alex Kidson has called a "watershed in his career."[393]

Emma modelled for many other painters, but it was Romney who most fully exploited her talent, a process that helped him reach his own potential as a portraitist. Emma's impact on Romney can be witnessed from the very beginning of their collaboration. Kidson argues that Romney's sketch from around 1782 of Emma as Circe (fig. 2) proved to be a "decisive, intoxicating moment" in which "the difference between creative and routine portraiture crystallised in his mind, and where the full expressive potential of the rapid sketch, immediate and poetic, became manifest to him."[394] Romney's appointment books reveal that he began to scale down his engagements for society portraiture and to focus increasingly on painting Emma, who could "assume, hold, and remember difficult poses and strong, legible expressions—unlike his day-to-day clients."[395] He painted Emma almost obsessively, availing himself of his unique access to her and fully exploring the extraordinary range of emotions she could display. For Emma, this offered a chance to explore her own depth of passion and talent for characterization, an opportunity for self-expression, sometimes extreme, that contrasted with and freed her from the demureness and self-effacement that Greville demanded of her.

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[393] Alex Kidson, *George Romney, 1734-1802*, exh. cat., London: National Portrait Gallery, 2002, p. 12. The first finished portrait Romney painted of Emma is *Lady Hamilton as 'Nature*,*'* 1782. Oil on canvas, 75.9 x 62.9 cm. New York, The Frick Collection.

[394] Kidson, *George Romney*, p. 169.

[395] Alex Kidson, "Romney & Emma: Reciprocal Muses," in *The Enchantress: Emma, Lady Hamilton. The Jean Kislak Collection*, ed. Arthur Dunkelman, exh. cat., New York: The Grolier Club, 2011: 15-36, p. 16-17.

Romney and Emma's collaboration was of mutual and long-term benefit. Romney favoured a natural manner of painting, less formal than Reynolds's Grand Style. Through his contact with Emma, Romney developed a style of portraiture that was more immediate, almost momentary, and that displayed heightened emotional intensity. His representations of Emma were highly praised and contributed to increasing his reputation. Emma too became more famous through these paintings, both for her intense expressiveness and for her powerful sensuality. Through her experience of posing for both Reynolds and Romney and her prolonged contact with Romney and with the writers and actors that populated his studio, Emma developed a significant understanding of the different ways of embodying myth in the modern era. She carried these lessons and Romney's "personal aesthetic, part austerely classical, part proto-Romantic" into the art form that she later developed, the *Attitudes*.[396] Emma would always remain aware and grateful of the decisive and formative role Romney had played in her life. And conversely, Romney always recognized Emma's momentous impact on his career. A few months after Romney's death, his close friend the poet and biographer William Hayley wrote Emma a letter in which he said Romney had thought of her as

> not only *his model* but *his inspirer*, and he truly and gratefully said, that he owed a great part of his felicity, as a painter, to the angelic kindness and intelligence with which you used to animate his diffident and tremulous spirits to the grandest efforts of art.[397]

For Romney, Emma was more than a model: she was his inspirer, his muse.

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[396] Kidson, "Romney & Emma: Reciprocal Muses," p. 17.

[397] William Hayley, letter to Emma, 17 May 1804, quoted in Thomas Joseph Pettigrew, *Memoirs of the Life of Vice-Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson*, 2nd ed., 2 vols., London: T. & W. Boone, 1849, vol. 2, p. 596-597. Emphasis in the original.

The relationship between the artist and his muse is a common art historical trope, one littered with misconceptions. The clichéd image is of a male artist who experiences a period of renewed creativity stimulated by his infatuation and obsession with his female muse.[398] While she ensures that the artist's creativity can burst forth, the muse is presented as voiceless, passive, and stripped of agency and creative power. Feminist scholars have attempted to redress this image by looking into the changing history of our understanding of the muse and by underscoring the many instances of female inspiration and creativity. Even these studies, however, refuse to offer the muse any creative agency. Germaine Greer, for instance, describes the muse as castrated when she goes from abstract concept to flesh-and-blood woman posing before an artist.[399] It is this chronic disempowerment that I seek to redress in this part of the chapter.

In her study of the poetess Sappho and of the role of the Muse in Ancient literature, Penny Murray returns to the Greek myths in order to show the Muses' power and creativity.[400] The Muses, daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne (Memory), presided over human cultural and intellectual achievements and were revered as goddesses. Far

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[398] This perception of the muse's role finds paradigmatic expression in Robert Graves's *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth*, first published in 1948. See the recent publication by Nathalie Kaufmann, *Les couleurs du désir: ces femmes sans qui les chefs d'œuvre n'existeraient pas*, Paris: Éditions du Toucan, 2011, for a list of these "muses" through the centuries.

[399] Germaine Greer, *Slip-shod Sibyls: Recognition, Reflection and the Woman Poet*, London: Viking, 1995, p. 4-5.

[400] Penny Murray, "Reclaiming the Muse," in *Laughing with Medusa: Classical Myth and Feminist Thought*, ed. Vanda Zajko and Miriam Leonard, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 327-354. I have capitalized the Muses of Greek mythology in order to differentiate them from the more general concept and earthly incarnation of the muse. The nine Muses were Calliope (epic poetry), Clio (history), Erato (lyric poetry), Euterpe (song and elegiac poetry), Melpomene (tragedy), Polyhymina (hymns), Terpsichore (dance), Thalia (comedy), and Urania (astronomy).

from simply lounging idly on Parnassus with their leader Apollo, they were creators and performers in their own right. They were essential actors in the creative accomplishments of humans and, as a consequence, showed no pity toward ungrateful mortals. Thamyris, for instance, the Thracian bard, having dared to boast that his singing was superior to the Muses', was punished for his pride by losing his sight and his ability to sing and to play the lyre. It was the Muses who had granted him his talent and creativity, and they could just as easily take their gifts away.[401] More appreciative humans, on the other hand, conceived of themselves merely as conduits for the Muses' creativity: Homer famously begins *The Odyssey* with the words, "Speak through me, O Muse."[402]

By the eighteenth century, the Muses' creativity was a topic of debate. According to the French essayist Ponce Denis Écouchard-Lebrun, for instance, the Muses' role was to inspire but not to create. He instructed women who wished to become poets,

> Rassurez les Grâces confuses!
> Ne trahissez point vos appas.
> Voulez-vous ressembler aux Muses?
> Inspirez mais n'écrivez pas![403]

There were others, however, who saw no contradiction between being a muse and creating. In 1779, Richard Samuel painted a group portrait celebrating nine accomplished contemporary women as living embodiments of the nine Muses presiding over Parnassus (fig. 79). Giving the lie to the assumption that women could not match the best male

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[401] The Muses were similarly challenged by the Sirens and by the nine daughters of King Pierus, all of whom they punished mercilessly. The Muses also took an active role in the flaying alive of the satyr Marsyas who had foolishly dared challenge Apollo.

[402] Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Charles Stein, Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2008, p. 10.

[403] Ponce Denis Écouchard-Le Brun (1729-1807), "Aux belles qui veulent devenir poètes," 1796, in *Œuvres de Le Brun*, Paris: C. Berriat Saint-Prix, 1827, Book 6, Ode 2, p. 172-174.

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Figure 79. Richard Samuel, *Portraits in the Characters of the Muses in the Temple of Apollo*, 1779. Oil on canvas, 132.1 x 154.9 cm. London, National Portrait Gallery (NPG 4905).

artists and writers, *The Nine Living Muses of Great Britain* pays homage to the accomplishments of Elizabeth Carter, Anna Barbauld, Elizabeth Montagu, Angelica Kauffman, Catherine Macaulay, Hannah More, Charlotte Lennox, Elizabeth Griffith, and Elizabeth Linley. In Samuel's painting, each of these paragons of intellectual and artistic achievement has merged perfectly with her respective Muse. Each woman has been elevated to a level above mere humanity, and each allegorical figure has been "brought…down to earth."[404] As incarnations of the Muses, the nine selected women

[404] Elizabeth Eger, "Representing Culture: 'The Nine Living Muses of Great Britain' (1779)," in *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere, 1700-1830*, ed. Elizabeth Eger, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006: 104-132, p. 111.

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Figure 80. Angelica Kauffman, *Lady Hamilton as Thalia, the Muse of Comedy*, 1791. Oil on canvas, 127 x 103 cm. Private collection.

both exemplify the best of their art and act as role models, thus providing inspiration—acting as muses—to other women artists and writers.

The representation of women as allegorical figures, and in particular as Muses, was frequent in eighteenth-century British portraiture.[405] Angelica Kauffman, for instance, depicted a number of actresses and writers as Muses, among them Emma as the Muse of Comedy in her portrait *Emma Hart, Lady Hamilton, as Thalia* (fig. 80).[406] In a letter to Sir William, Kauffman had expressed the desire to gain a sitting with Emma, who also longed to be painted by Kauffman.[407] Their reciprocal wish was fulfilled in 1791, when, on her way back to Naples from London, the newly married Emma sat for Kauffman. In the resulting painting, Emma wears a white low-cut dress and pale yellow scarf, her dark hair falling in tight curls over her shoulders. She looks straight out at the viewer with a slight smile, holding a mask of comedy in her right hand, thus revealing her face, while with her left, she pushes aside a heavy curtain to uncover herself in a gesture

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[405] The Muse was a favoured personification for allegorical portraits of women. It could be used to celebrate female amateur accomplishments and could help give an aura of respectability to portraits of actresses. See Scherf and Allard, "The Allegorical Portrait." Allegorical portraits as Muses can be found in this epoch by Romney, Reynolds, Hoppner, Kauffman, Nattier, Van Loo, Canova, and Ceracchini, among others.

[406] For an analysis of this painting in relation to other female portraits by Kauffman and in particular to that of the poet and dancer Teresa Bandettini (1794), see Angela Rosenthal, *Angelica Kauffman, Art and Sensibility*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press for The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2006, p. 182-187.

[407] "How often I have wished to see and be acquainted with Mrs. Hart…and I confess to envy especially all the artists who were so fortunate at least to attempt an Imitation of so graceful an object." Angelica Kauffman, 17 May 1790 letter to Sir William Hamilton, quoted in Rosenthal, *Angelica Kauffman*, p. 186. Emma expressed, "I wish Angelaca [*sic*] would come." Emma, letter to Charles Greville, 22 July 1786, Morrison 152, vol. 1, p. 116.

that is curiously similar to Rowlandson's caricature. Emma's dress is held at the waist with a wide belt decorated with a cameo, perhaps a miniature portrait of Sir William.[408]

It is not clear whose decision it was to represent Emma as the Muse of Comedy. A popular allegorical figure in British late eighteenth-century portraiture, Thalia was both a particularly fitting choice to represent Emma, who was known for her performances, and a highly respectable role for the new wife of the English ambassador.[409] As the Muse of Comedy, Emma inspires other comedic performers. As both a Muse and performer in her own right, she also inspires herself. The chosen allegory functions in the same way as the ones in Samuel's group portrait of the nine Muses and in Kauffman's self-portrait, four years earlier, as the Muse of painting (fig. 81).

There are a number of formal echoes in Kauffman's self-portrait and in her portrait of Emma as Thalia that justify bringing these two works together: the similar sizes of the canvases, the poses, with the body turned slightly to the left and the head facing right, the position of the left arm, and similar antique-style clothing with wide ornamented belt. Kauffman represents herself painting, just as she shows Emma performing. The women are not passively inspiring others: they are active and creative.[410]

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[408] In her dissertation, Ulrike Ittershagen identified the cameo as being a profile portrait of Sir William on the basis of a print after Kauffman's portrait by Raphael Morghen (1758-1833) from the same year. See Ittershagen, *Lady Hamiltons Attitüden*, Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1999, p. 80. Etching and engraving, 432 x 315 mm. London, British Museum (1870,0514.1335). The timing of the portrait and this identification could indicate this to be a wedding portrait.

[409] As one of the Muses living on Parnassus, Thalia was a much more respectable allegory than would have been a bacchante.

[410] Kauffman holds charcoal and drawing board. Rosenthal describes her as "with a diverted gaze in a pose of melancholy preoccupation," displaying, I think, the intellectual side essential to the artistic process. Rosenthal, *Angelica Kauffman*, p. 265.

Figure 81. Angelica Kauffman, *Self-Portrait as the Muse of Painting*, 1787. Oil on canvas, 128 x 93.5 cm. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi.

They simultaneously "are" and "do." In a bold and pre-emptive gesture, Kauffman wrote to her friend Goethe that she wished this work be considered not only as a portrait but as a painting: "My portrait, or, better put the painting that I made for the Gallery in Florence has been positively received."[411] The purposeful correction in the letter reinforces the

[411] Kauffman, letter to Goethe, 5 August 1788, quoted in Rosenthal, *Angelica Kauffman*, p. 269.

dual nature of Kauffman's self-representation as the Muse of painting and the resulting dual function of the self-portrait. She wished for the painting, which was destined for the Uffizi's Galleria degli Autoritratti, to act as the depiction of the Muse that had inspired all the illustrious artists whose self-portraits lined the walls of the gallery, and at the same time to identify her as one of those artists.

In Kauffman's portrait of Emma as Thalia a further *dédoublement* is discernable that is not present in these other works: Emma's renown as a muse for painters, which adds an additional layer of meaning to the painting and exposes the underlying tension in allegorical portraiture between the represented figure and the allegory. Emma seems to occupy two contradictory positions: the active Muse—the creative deity—who inspires herself and other comedic performers, and the passive, voiceless muse who inspires artists. This active creator / passive model polarity has inadvertently been perpetuated by feminist scholars who, while recognizing the creative power of both Muse and artist / writer when the two figures are fused into a single woman, deny the "inspirer" any creativity when they are distinct. Murray states that the Muse lost her agency "when the grand and distant divinity enthroned on Parnassus dwindled into the poet's love object—as soon as the Muse is identified with an embodied woman she loses her power."[412] To argue against this muzzling of the muse,[413] I will retain the important conclusion advanced by feminist scholarship whereby Muse and artist are both active when fused into the same woman, and I will apply it to the more conventional pairing of artist and

[412] Murray, "Reclaiming the Muse," p. 130.

[413] The verb "to muse" derives from the same origin as "muzzle" and it would be tempting in this context to find a shared etymology between the noun "muse" and "muzzle." However, they do not have a common root.

muse as two separate figures—and in Romney and Emma's case, a pairing of a female muse and a male artist who is infatuated and obsessed with her.

By 1786 when Emma left for Naples, she had sat to Romney for hundreds of hours. It is not known whether Romney was aware that Greville planned to be rid of Emma for good and that she would not be returning to live in London in the near future, but the two men were close friends, and Romney was therefore most probably cognizant of it, even more so as he sent Sir William portraits of Emma that Greville had commissioned. The year Emma left, Romney painted *Emma Hart in a Cavern* (fig. 82).[414] The portrait has also been read as a representation of Ariadne mourning the departure of Theseus, an interpretation that Alex Kidson has dismissed as no more than a later "invention."[415] The title of *Absence* given to the painting by one of Romney's assistants in 1787 points to a more likely interpretation. Emma sits in what Romney imagines as "the caverns of the Neapolitan coastline,"[416] in a pose of contemplation or devotion, her hands together as if in prayer. Romney has projected his own mournful feelings about Emma's departure onto her, imagining her in turn longing for her life in London, and, Romney might hope, for him. Emma's profile pose, the sense of melancholy that suffuses the work, and the theme of painting a loved one in her absence bring to mind the subject of the Origin of Painting, which was very popular at the end of

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[414] The painting has also come to be known as *Kate*, from William Cowper's *The Task*, a poem in which Kate is a "serving-maid," who "fell in love / with one who left her, went to sea, and died." The title *Kate* only dates from an 1827 engraving after the portrait, and there is no indication that Romney was thinking of Cowper's poem when he painted this picture.

[415] Kidson, *George Romney*, p. 200.

[416] Kidson, *George Romney*, p. 200.

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Figure 82. George Romney, *Emma Hart in a Cavern*, 1786. Oil on canvas, 127 x 101.6 cm. Greenwich, London, National Maritime Museum (BHC2736).

the eighteenth century.[417] This affinity is particularly apt, as Emma had been at the origin of an important transformation in Romney's work. This portrait was still in Romney's possession at his death, indicating that it was a private study and that it held great importance for him.

Romney continued to paint after Emma left, but he suffered increasingly from a mental breakdown. He described his state in early May 1791 in a letter to Hayley: "My mind is labouring under some anxiety, and depression of spirits, which has indeed been the case with me for some time past."[418] Later that month, Emma and Sir William arrived in London to marry, and Romney's mood changed radically as a result. He entered a highly creative period: Emma modelled for him thirty-five times during the three and a half months she was in London, posing for, among other works, three portraits that had been commissioned by the Prince of Wales. On 11 September 1791, the day of her wedding, Emma went directly from the church to Romney's studio, where she sat in her wedding dress for the portrait now known simply as *Lady Hamilton*, a name that reflects her new official title (fig. 83).[419] Kidson notes that Romney reversed Emma's pose from

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[417] The Origin of Painting was considered the foundational myth of painting. It illustrated the Greek story of the Corinthian maid who had traced the outline of her lover's shadow on a wall while he slept just before his departure from the city. See for instance David Allan (1775, oil on panel, 44.10 x 5.70 cm, Edinburgh, Scottish National Gallery), Joseph Wright of Derby (1782-84, oil on canvas, 106.3 x 130.8 cm, Washington, DC, National Gallery of Art, Paul Mellon Collection), and Romney's own drawing from around 1775 to 1780 (pen and brown ink and brush and gray wash on tan laid paper, 51.7 x 32.2 cm. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Art Museum).

[418] Romney, letter to Hayley, 3 May 1791, quoted by Patricia Jaffé in *Lady Hamilton in Relation to the Art of Her Time*, exh. cat., London: The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1972, p. 45.

[419] The portrait is often referred to as *Lady Hamilton as the Ambassadress* and more rarely as *Emma Hamilton on Her Wedding Day*. See Jaffé, L*ady Hamilton in Relation to the Art of her Time*, cat. 53 for the former and Meryle Secrest, *Duveen: A Life in Art*, New York: Knopf, 2004, p. 205 for the latter. My thanks

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Figure 83. George Romney, *Lady Hamilton*, 1791. Oil on canvas, 159.1 x 133.1 cm. Austin, Texas, Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, Bequest of Jack G. Taylor (1991.108).

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to Francesca Consagra and Sydney Gulbronson for providing me with scans of the Blanton Museum's files relating to this portrait.

the one she had adopted for *Emma Hart in a Cavern* to "celebrate her return to London."[420] Yet the mood of the portrait is far from celebratory. Rather, it is suffused with melancholy. This was the last time Emma ever sat for Romney, and the portrait was completed after Emma had left for Naples. Romney was aware, while he was painting it, that he would never see Emma again and most probably sensed looming once more the depression into which he had fallen during her previous absence.

Lady Hamilton appears to be a formal portrait that highlights Emma's position as the wife of the ambassador to Naples, the smoking Vesuvius in the background associating her with that city. Amber Ludwig states, "It was important for the Hamiltons to have visual confirmation of Emma's new position in Sir William's life."[421] Yet *Lady Hamilton* did not emanate from a commission, was not destined for Emma and Sir William, and does not seem to have been meant for the public eye.[422] Hayley reports that Romney had intended to give it to Mrs. Cadogan, Emma's mother,[423] but it was not sent to her until 1800, after she, Emma, Sir William, and Nelson had moved back to London: it remained in Romney's possession until then. Contrary to what Ludwig has asserted, *Lady Hamilton* does not stand in the tradition of Grand Tour portraiture.[424] Emma's pose

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[420] Kidson, *George Romney*, p. 200.

[421] Amber Ludwig, "Virtue in a Vicious Age: Fashioning Feminine Identity in Eighteenth-Century London," in *Thomas Gainsborough and the Modern Woman*, ed. Benedict Leca, exh. cat., London: Giles, 2010, p. 164. Ludwig also states that Emma "assumes no character or personification…since her role as Sir William's wife has been made official." I disagree. She assumes the character of the ambassador's wife.

[422] The image was not disseminated through reproductive prints. The only known print after it is a mezzotint by T. G. Appleton published in October 1904 (58.9 x 35.6 cm). Cited by Arthur B. Chamberlain, *George Romney*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910, p. 391.

[423] William Hayley, *The Life of George Romney, Esq.*, London: T. Payne, 1809, p. 297.

[424] Ludwig, "Virtue in a Vicious Age," p. 164, and "Becoming Emma Hamilton," p. 57.

is closed and her look is wistful. She does not present the casually confident relationship to her surroundings that sitters adopt in the characteristic Grand Tour portraits by painters such as Pompeo Batoni (fig. 84).[425] There is nothing at all to indicate that this is anything other than Romney's private farewell to his muse.

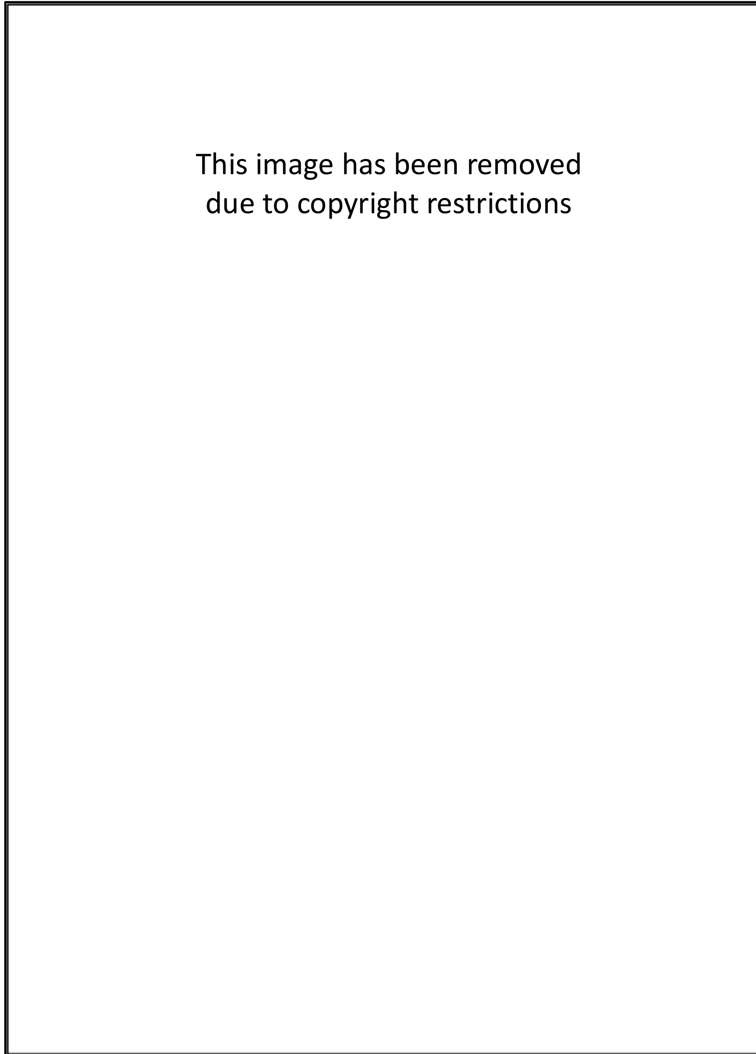

Figure 84. Pompeo Batoni, *Colonel the Honourable William Gordon*, 1766. Oil on canvas, 289.5 x 217 cm. Turriff, Aberdeenshire, Fyvie Castle. Collection of The National Trust for Scotland.

[425] Ludwig fails to acknowledge the Grand Tour's primary function as a fundamental constituent in the education of the *male* aristocrat. Moreover, a Grand Tour portrait would have been commissioned and would have been executed while on Tour, not in England.

Romney depicts Emma on the threshold of the position toward which she has been aspiring, in a portrait that is replete with signs of her hybrid status. She is between countries: Vesuvius indicates the setting to be Naples, yet the type of sofa on which she sits is more typically English.[426] As an ambassadress, Emma represented Britain in the kingdom of Naples and the Two Sicilies, a position that can be described as existing between the two countries. The portrait's pyramidal composition conveys stability, while at the same time a definite curvy S shape—a line of beauty—from the top of the feather on Emma's hat through her head, body, buttocks, and thighs renders the design more fluid. A similar contrast exists between the stiffness of her head and hands and the suppleness of her body. The brushwork is careful and detailed for the skin but loose and flowing for the dress. Emma's body is directed toward Naples and her future, but her head turns back to look at her past one last time. Her expression is bittersweet, a sense of contentment for the status she has achieved, optimism towards the future, mixed with affection and sadness for everything and everyone she leaves behind. It is the moment she is assimilating a new layer of self: she is no longer Sir William's mistress, she is now his wife.

More importantly for our purposes here, this is the moment when Romney has to separate from Emma. *Lady Hamilton* is a portrait that expresses much of what Romney must have felt toward his muse's departure. It conveys an unmistakable sense of proximity, even intimacy between the artist and his model. For Romney, in whose studio the painting was hung, it was toward him that Emma looked back. A close examination of the surface of the canvas reveals important pentimenti around Emma's face (fig. 85).

[426] My thanks to Marie-Ève Marchand for this remark. It is made of red velvet and would have been placed indoors, but it is outside on the veranda as if in a hybrid space.

Figure 85. George Romney, *Lady Hamilton*, 1791. Oil on canvas, 159.1 x 133.1 cm. Austin, Texas, Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, Bequest of Jack G. Taylor (1991.108). Detail.

Romney seems to have slimmed her cheeks and chin, as if to give her the more youthful appearance of earlier times. This painting conveys a sense of the way in which Romney viewed Emma, his desire to keep her in his studio, and the way he wished to remember her.

After Emma left for Naples, Romney did indeed fall into a deep depression. He sought inspiration in the sketchbooks he had filled with drawings of Emma, but these

failed to provide him with the spark that Emma's presence in his studio had ignited. Whether or not there is something slightly histrionic about the way Romney hitched his wagon to Emma's star, it is undeniable that both her presence and absence had a tremendous impact on his work. Through his collaboration with Emma, Romney had experienced prodigious periods of creativity and developed the manner in which he wanted to express himself. During her absence, he was voiceless. Such was the power of his muse.

Conclusion: Regendering the muse

Emma's talent as a model, her particular ability to convincingly embody characters, lay in her capacity to blur the boundaries separating muse, artist, and work of art. Her creative input as inspirer is undeniable in both Vigée-Le Brun's and Romney's cases, disproving the accepted notion that the muse is voiceless when she is a flesh-and-blood woman. For Vigée-Le Brun, an ambitious artist building her career and acutely aware of her status and reputation, this meant attempting to evacuate Emma from a painting that was as meaningful to her as the *Sibyl* became—a displacement that occurred both in the portrait itself and in her memoirs. Yet Emma's power as a model was such that she continues to occupy a presence in this portrait. Romney felt no similar antagonism toward Emma: working with her intensely over close to a decade allowed him to explore, experiment, and find his own style of portraiture, his own voice. He recognized Emma's

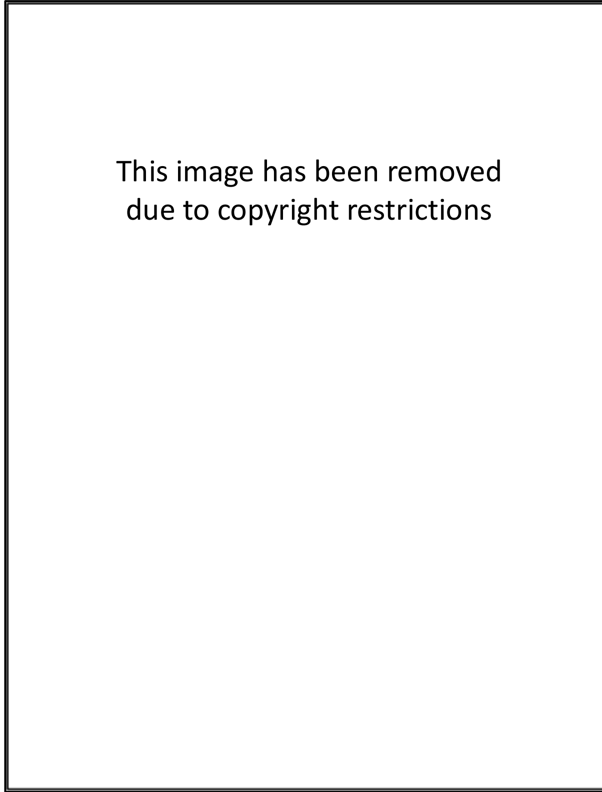

Figure 86. Pierre Subleyras, *Le bât*, c. 1732. Oil on canvas, 31 x 24 cm. Private collection.

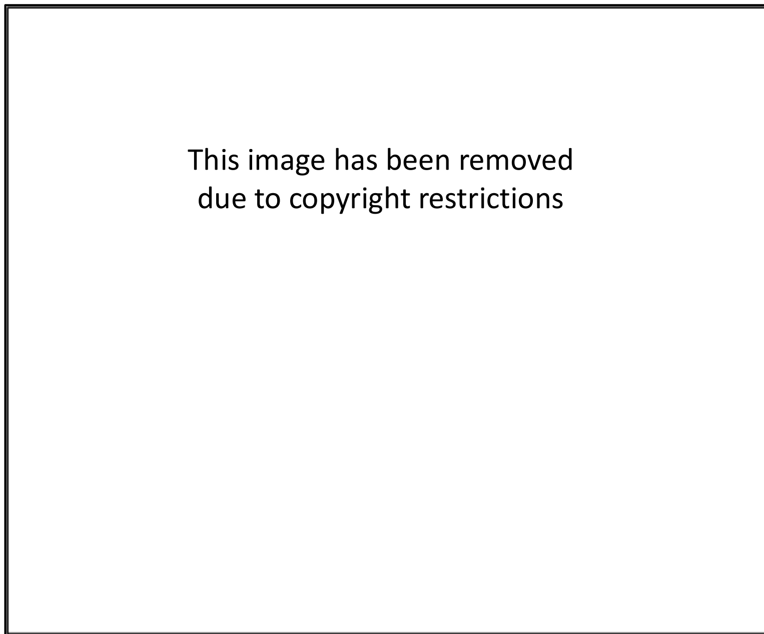

Figure 87. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *Les débuts du modèle*, c. 1770.
Oil on canvas, 50 x 63 cm. Paris, musée Jacquemart-André.

impact on his career, closely associating his own trajectory with hers. He became so dependent on Emma that when she left London, he lost his ability to create.

If we transfer to Romney the parallel between motherhood and creating art that is commonly made with Vigée-Le Brun, we could say that when Emma left, Romney was left barren. The metaphor of the pregnant brain that gives birth to a work is encountered in literature as early as Antiquity and was popular in the eighteenth century, regardless of the gender of the writer.[427] This metaphor is not found in the visual arts, however, where there seems to be a bias in favour of associating painting with a masculine creative and generative act. There is a particular virility that is identified with painters, which is epitomized by Renoir's famously combative declaration that he painted with his prick.[428] We encounter it in the eighteenth century, in paintings such as Pierre Subleyras's *Le Bât* (fig. 86) and Jean-Honoré Fragonard's *Les débuts du modèle* (fig. 87), where the artist uses his painter's tools—the paintbrush in Subleyras's case, the maulstick in Fragonard's—to assert his possession of the woman before him.[429]

But there is no reason to accept the art historical bias that favours masculinity. If the creative process is likened to motherhood in the case of female painters, then it can

[427] See for instance Murray, "Reclaiming the Muse," and Raymond Stephanson, "The Symbolic Structure of Eighteenth-Century Male Creativity: Pregnant Men, Brain-Wombs, and Female Muses (with some comments on Pope's *Dunciad*)," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 27 (1998): 103-130.

[428] Cited for instance by Nicholas Chare in "Sexing the Canvas: Calling on the Medium," *Art History* 32.4 (September 2009): 664-689, p. 679. The story is apocryphal, and there is some uncertainty as to whether Renoir was addressing his son or a critic and whether he used "queue" or "bite" to refer to his penis, but the sentiment remains the same.

[429] It lies outside the scope of this dissertation to attempt to explain why painting differs from literature in this respect. Perhaps it is connected with the physical proximity of the model and artist, the model's nudity, the artist's scopic desire, the process of close observation and replication in visual art, and the physicality of painting. The paintbrush's phallic shape is no different than the pen's.

also be done for male painters, for it is not specifically because Vigée-Le Brun is a mother that the identification can be made. It is because the process of creation can be described in similar terms: the painting gestates in the pregnant artist's mind until s/he is ready to give birth to it. And the seed, the inspiration, has come from the model. As Germaine de Staël wrote of Corinne dancing the tarantella, "[elle] faisait naître successivement une foule d'idées nouvelles pour le dessin et la peinture."[430] And so the muse impregnates the artist.

I do not wish to suggest that this reversal of genders implies that the muse is more powerful than the artist.[431] In instances such as *The Nine Living Muses of Great Britain* where the Muse has fused with the female artist into a single harmonious creative being, creativity of inspiration merges with creativity of execution. There is not one that is dominant over the other. Both need to exist for the creative act to happen and they must collaborate. The creative agency of the muse can be asserted without diminishing that of the artist. Emma's singularity, the reason artists sought her out and produced successful works through their collaboration with her, lay both in her particular powerful way of embodying various characters and in the intelligence and malleability with which she was able to adapt to the needs of the different artists for whom she posed.

[430] Germaine de Staël, *Corinne*, p. 148.

[431] Emma leaves Romney barren when she moves to Naples. She does not castrate him.

Conclusion

The portrait of Emma Hamilton that has emerged in these pages is far from Adam Komisaruk's dismissive description of her as "the quintessential woman of no character at all."[432] Emma displayed astonishing resilience, found an effective way to assert her agency, and powerfully impacted on generations of artists and of women in their own search for expression and self-actualization. She drew her particular potency from her ability to negotiate different and at times contradictory identities—object and subject; artist, muse, and work of art; model and sitter; wife, mistress, and prostitute; commoner and aristocrat; socialite and ambassadress; and performer of myriad historical, biblical, literary, and mythological male and female characters. Emma did not attempt to present a coherent, unified, polished identity. Instead, she was a kaleidoscope of different selves that she kept active and in dialogue with each other, constantly reconfiguring the pieces so that she could simultaneously express herself fully and present to others what they wanted to see.

This dissertation has combined close readings of paintings, prints, and drawings and of writings by Emma and her contemporaries to show that she successfully took charge of her life, constantly pushing against the boundaries of what was deemed acceptable behaviour in her time. She asserted her subjectivity and her ascendency over Sir William from the confines of her status as the most prized object in his collection. She

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[432] Adam Komisaruk, "Pygmalion's 'Wanton Kind of Chace': Hogarth, Rowlandson and the 'Line of Beauty'," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 33 (2004): 369-397, p. 389.

understood the culture of her milieu, the particular blend of eroticism and the longing for a connection with the ancient past that characterized the Neapolitan experience, and she fashioned for herself performances that kept her spectators mesmerized. In her *Attitudes*, she stunned audiences as she successively assumed the roles of Pygmalion and Galatea, artist and work of art, troubling conventional perceptions of femininity in a way that has been inspirational for generations of women. She aided in the development and dissemination of Neoclassicism throughout Europe, all the while exposing its more lascivious side and imprinting it with her own valence. Her dancing of the tarantella influenced the lives, performances, and writings of her contemporaries by giving them a new avenue for creative expression. As a model, Emma inspired some of the most celebrated artists of her time to produce works that they came to value as their greatest pieces. The impact she had on George Romney and Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun has led us to look anew at the relationship between artist and muse and to recognize the muse's creative agency in the generation of a work of art. The permeability of the boundaries between male and female become evident once we see how the muse adopts the masculine role, inseminating the artist—whether male or female—who gives birth to the work of art.

But Emma also disturbed. While her particular display of polyvalence ensured her rise in society and the success of her attitudinizing, dancing, and modelling, it also caused deep anxiety in some of her contemporaries. Through the fissures in her presentation of self, she exposed from within the ranks of the aristocracy the workings of gender and the constructedness and impermanence of social class—a reality with which the ruling class

never wants to be confronted, and most especially not after the social upheaval of the French Revolution.

For an individual such as Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, whose life and career had been torn asunder by the Revolution, Emma's blurred self was deeply troubling. Rather than recognize the multiple layers that formed Emma's identity, Vigée-Le Brun sought to present her as wholly fake, to remove the boundaries between "reality" and "performance," as if all of Emma's existence were an act.[433] One passage in Vigée-Le Brun's *Souvenirs* makes this explicit. Having travelled to London during the Peace of Amiens, Vigée-Le Brun received a visit from Emma, who was in mourning following Sir William's death. Vigée-Le Brun recalls doubting the sincerity of Emma's grief and speculating instead that Emma was merely playing the part of the grieving widow:

> Lorsque j'allai à Londres, en 1802, lady Hamilton venait de perdre son mari. Je me fis inscrire chez elle, et elle vint aussitôt me voir dans le plus grand deuil. Un immense voile noir l'entourait, et elle avait fait couper ses beaux cheveux pour se coiffer à la Titus, ce qui était alors à la mode. Je trouvai cette Andromaque énorme; car elle avait horriblement engraissé. Elle me dit en pleurant qu'elle était bien à plaindre, qu'elle avait perdu dans le chevalier un ami, un père et qu'elle ne s'en consolerait jamais. J'avoue que sa douleur me fit peu d'impression; car je crus m'apercevoir qu'elle jouait la comédie. Je me trompais d'autant moins que peu de minutes après, ayant aperçu de la musique sur mon piano, elle se mit à chanter un des airs qui s'y trouvait.[434]

[433] Beyond the way in which all social behaviour is a performance. See for instance Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Social Sciences Research Centre, 1959.

[434] Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun (1755-1842), *"Les femmes régnaient alors, la Révolution les a détrônées." Souvenirs, 1755-1842* [1835-37], ed. Didier Masseau, Paris: Tallandier, 2009, p. 175. Vigée-Le Brun seems to have misremembered the year the incident took place, as Sir William died on 6 April 1803. According to her biographer Joseph Baillio, it is in 1803 that she travelled to London. See Baillio *Elisabeth-Louise Vigée-Le Brun. 1755-1842*, exh. cat., Fort Worth, TX: Kimbell Art Museum, 1982, p. 15.

Vigée-Le Brun was not the only one to accuse Emma of faking her displays of emotion. Gillray did the same in his caricature *The Death of Admiral Lord Nelson* (fig. 88). It portrays Nelson expiring in the arms of Britannia. The scene takes place on the deck of the Victory as the battle still rages around the dying man. Nelson is pale, his eyes are

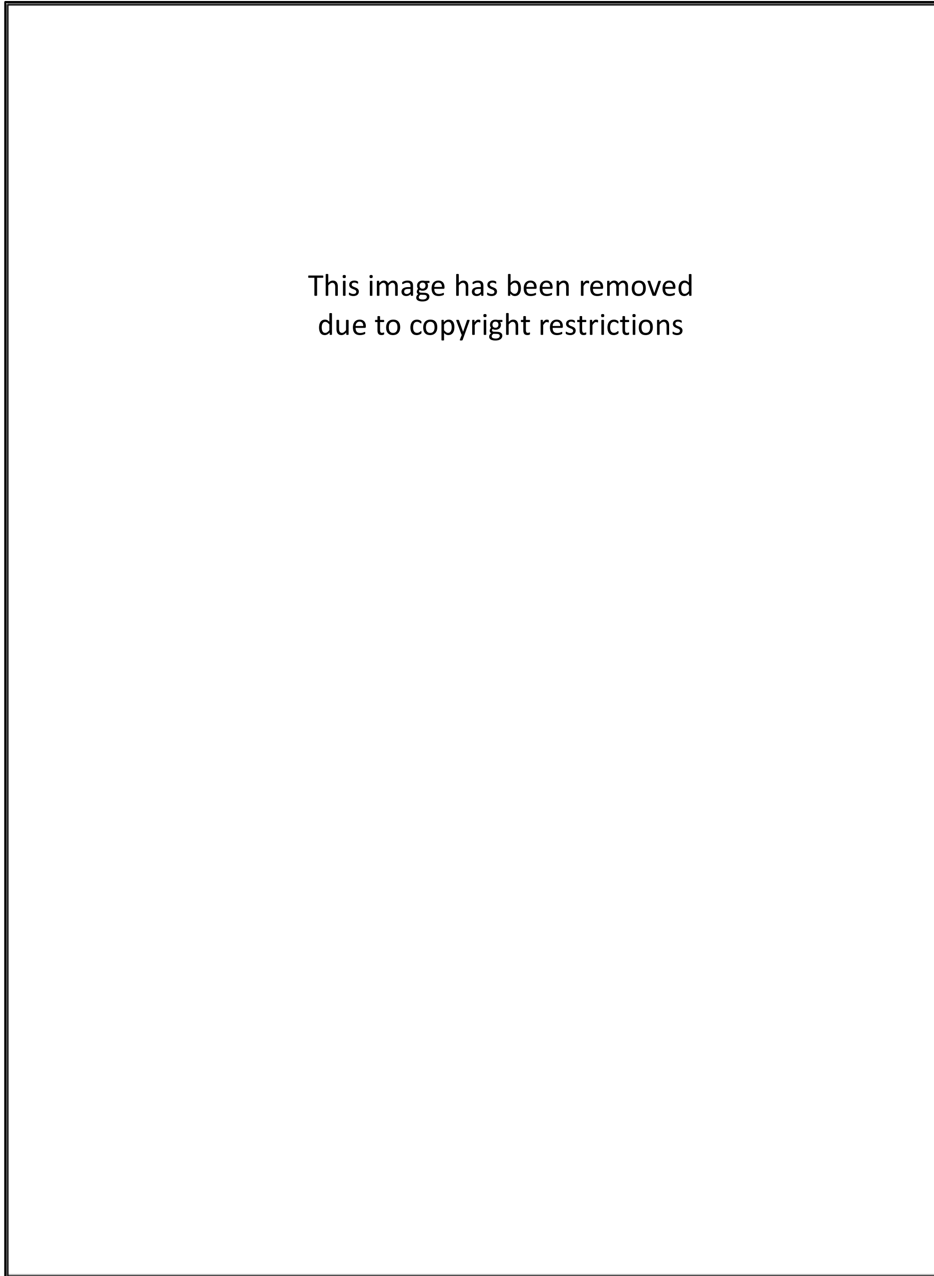

Figure 88. James Gillray, *The Death of Admiral Lord Nelson in the Moment of Victory*, 23 December 1805. Hand-coloured etching and aquatint, 40.3 x 29.6 cm. London, National Portrait Gallery (NPG D12856).

vacant, and his sword drops from his limp left hand. Captain Hardy helps support the admiral and attempts to stanch his wound.[435] Another sailor rushes in to tell Nelson that his tactics have ensured a decisive victory over the French. In the sky, a winged Fame blows a trumpet and writes the word *Immortality* in the billowing clouds. *The Death of Admiral Lord Nelson* satirizes the hysteria that seized the British nation following Trafalgar. The theme of the hero's tragic demise at the moment of his greatest victory was prone to generate extreme emotion. It carried echoes of General Wolfe's death in Quebec in 1759, an episode whose memory was highly mediated by Benjamin West's famous representation of 1770, and it is no accident that Gillray's caricature is so strongly reminiscent of that painting.[436] As soon as news of the events at Trafalgar reached British shores, a deluge of prints, paintings, bas-reliefs, medals, sculptures, plaques, books, poems, plays, songs, coins, medals, cups, plates, ribbons, and teapots was produced and sold, and artists vied with each other to create a winning proposal for a monument to commemorate the nation's fallen hero (figs. 89-92). Gillray caricatures the overblown pathos and bombastic heroism of these productions and puts Emma at the

[435] Dorothy George believes Hardy's traits are made to resemble the future George IV's, thus implicating the British crown in the tragedy. While this is possible, Hardy's features here do resemble some official portraits. See Dorothy George's description of this print transcribed onto the British Museum website, http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1639540&partId=1&searchText=gillray+nelson&page=1, accessed 2 May 2014.

[436] Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770. Oil on canvas, 152.6 x 214.5 cm. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada. In 1795, Gillray had produced a parody of West's painting entitled *The Death of the Great Wolf*, in which he faithfully reproduced the composition but substituted the characters for British politicians. William Pitt is the dying man. Published 17 December 1795. Hand-coloured etching, 34 x 44.7 cm. London, The British Museum (1851,0901.767).

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Figure 89. Thomas Baxter and Albin R. Burt, *Britannia Crowning the Bust of our Late Hero Nelson*, 5 December 1805. Hand-coloured aquatint, 59.5 x 42.5 cm. Greenwich, London, National Maritime Museum (PAH7312).

Figure 90. Peter Wyon, Medal commemorating the death of Nelson, 1805. Recto and verso. Silver, diameter 5.2 cm. London, National Maritime Museum (MEC2919).

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Figure 91. William Barnard, after Samuel Drummond, *The Death of Lord Nelson*, 1805. Coloured mezzotint, 53 x 36.3 cm. London, The British Museum (2010,7081.2255).

Figure 92. Unknown maker, *The Death & Victory of Ad. Ld. Nelson*, 1805. Hand-coloured mezzotint and etching, 17.6 x 23.1 cm. London, The British Museum (2010, 7081.1717).

centre of this bombast, for Britannia's features are unmistakably Emma's.[437] The tears running down Britannia's cheeks in *The Death of Admiral Lord Nelson* recall the ones Emma shed in Gillray's *Dido, in Despair!* (fig. 37). The nose, mouth, and chin are similar

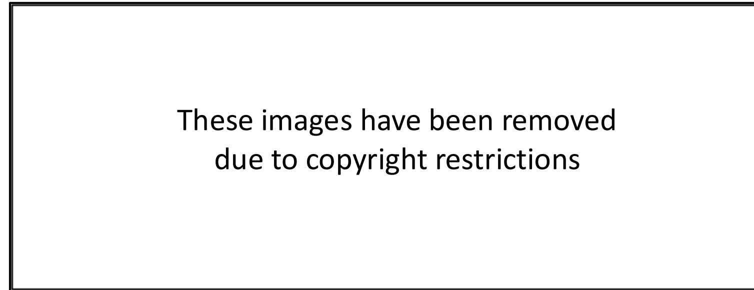

Figure 93. James Gillray, *The Death of Admiral Lord Nelson*, 23 December 1805. Etching and aquatint, hand-coloured, 40.3 x 29.6 cm. London, National Portrait Gallery (NPG D12856). Detail.

Figure 94. James Gillray, *Dido, in Despair!*, 6 February 1801. Hand-coloured etching, 25.3 x 36 cm. London, The British Museum (1868,0808.6927). Detail.

as well. In the earlier caricature, Gillray had suggested that Emma's show of emotion was nothing more than a performance akin to one she might have given during her *Attitudes*. This time, her insincerity stands for that of the nation, which seeks to assuage its supposed grief with the production and purchase of trinkets. While disparaging both Emma and the British, what better recognition, albeit cynical, of the status Emma had achieved than for Gillray to give her features to the allegory of the nation. Gillray thus

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[437] *The Death of Admiral Lord Nelson* draws from both the more realistic, albeit pieta-like, iconography of the depictions of the admiral's last moments and the allegorical images of Britannia weeping over the dying Nelson or at his monument. It parodies prints such as Thomas Baxter and Albin R. Burt's *Britannia Crowning the Bust of our Late Hero Nelson* (fig. 89) that had lent Britannia Emma's features. At the same time it attacks the greed of the artists and merchants who sought to capitalize on the wave of high emotion in the months that followed Trafalgar. Artists' and printmakers' commercialism had previously been a target of Gillray's, most notably in his 1789 *Shakespeare Sacrificed; or the Offering to Avarice*, in which he imputed John Boydell for devising his Shakespeare Gallery simply as a money-making venture. James Gillray, *Shakespeare Sacrificed; or the Offering to Avarice*, 20 June 1789. Etching and aquatint, hand-coloured, 50 x 38.2 cm. London, British Museum (1868,0808.5869).

reinforces Emma's significance by representing her not as "England's mistress,"[438] but as the personification of the country and its people at a crucial moment in British and European history.

The impulse has not gone away. In 1981, to fulfill a commission for a commemorative medal of Nelson for the Club français de la médaille, the British artist and cartoonist Robert Searle reproduced the central motif of Gillray's caricature (fig. 95).

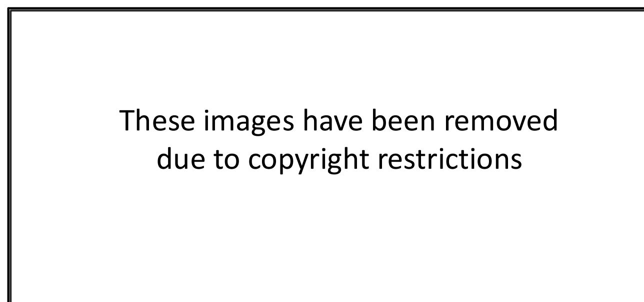

Figure 95. Ronald Searle, Medal Commemorating Vice-Admiral Horatio Nelson and Trafalgar, 1981. Unknown materials, 1.7 x 7.4 cm. Greenwich, London, National Maritime Museum (MEC2763).

Searle's choice reminds us of Emma's impact not only on Nelson, but also on Gillray, in whose oeuvre Emma appears at least half a dozen times, and in this way confirms, from the remove of nearly two centuries, Emma's imprint on British history and culture. Searle's medal attests to how productive Emma has continued to be for artists. For instance, in 1923, Alfred Richard Meyer and George Grosz mounted a veiled attack of Weimer Germany through their telling of a particularly tawdry version of Emma's life.[439]

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[438] Kate Williams, *England's Mistress: The Infamous Life of Emma Hamilton*, New York: Ballantine Books, 2006.

[439] Alfred Richard Meyer, *Lady Hamilton oder die Posen-Emma oder von Dienstmädchen zum Beefsteak à la Nelson*, ill. George Grosz, Berlin: Fritz Gurlitt, 1923. My thanks to Catherine Girard, who first alerted me to this publication, and to Ginette Jubinville, who photographed its pages for me at the Getty Research Institute. The Getty copy is the one that is reproduced here. The title loosely translates as *Lady Hamilton, or the Emma Poses, or from Service Maid to Steak à la Nelson*.

Lady Hamilton, oder die Posen-Emma, oder von Dienstmädchen zum Beefsteak à la Nelson is a satirical booklet that consists of fifty-four pages of text by Meyer and eight lithographs by Grosz (figs. 96-103). It appeared the same year as *Ecce Homo*, Grosz's vitriolic series of one hundred images that indicted 1920s Berlin as a corrupt, violent, and lecherous society inhabited by a collection of portly businessmen, war invalids, beggars, pimps, and prostitutes. Grosz and the publisher of *Ecce Homo* had been prosecuted and found guilty of obscenity and offending public morality, an accusation not far from some of the ones that had been levelled at Emma both in her lifetime and since.

Grosz and Meyer were no admirers of Emma Hamilton. In many ways, they portrayed her with more virulence than did her contemporary detractors. Yet, Emma's multivalence and her status as an icon of her period allowed them to denounce decadence, to criticize classicism, to present classicism as decadence, and to indict both late eighteenth-century Britain and 1920s Berlin. Although the text is humorous—a battle-weary Nelson commits suicide at the moment of his victory at Trafalgar, for instance, in order to avoid spending his retirement years with the boisterous Emma—the picture that emerges is bleak. It is of a society in which all individuals consistently and unrepentantly surrender to the basest urges of greed and lust. Greville is depicted as a pimp. Romney is only interested in producing paintings that he can sell at "outrageous" prices.[440] Emma's affair with Nelson stems from nothing more than her desire to "capture

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[440] Meyer, *Lady Hamilton*, p. 26. My translation. Curiously, although Meyer and Grosz are unforgiving toward their society and attack Romney for producing art only to make money and not having any interest in art as such, they participate in commercial schemes to improve the sales of their booklet: only three hundred copies are printed, they are numbered individually by hand, Meyer autographs the first fifty copies, only the first 150 are illustrated, and only some of these are hand-coloured. The Getty Research Institute's copy is number eight and it has coloured illustrations.

the most famous man in the world for all time."[441] Sir William looks at the adulterant pair with detachment, wondering only how he will manage to turn his cuckoldry to his financial benefit. Emma is certainly a gold-digger, but then, so is everyone else.

In the eight accompanying lithographs, which, to my knowledge, have gone unexamined and have never been reproduced together, Grosz simultaneously attacks and borrows from English eighteenth-century culture as a whole (figs. 96-103). He uncompromisingly refuses to idealize his subject, but his usually crude graphic style seems somewhat softened here, the forms slightly less angular, as if he were deliberately mitigating his caustic line with a touch of Rowlandsonesque lightness and roundness. Earlier in his career, Grosz had expressed the desire to become the German Hogarth.[442] Hogarth had used his art to inspire at once better morals and the development of a national British school of painting that would not look to classical Italy but to its own country's strengths. In the *Lady Hamilton* drawings, Grosz exploits Emma's life story and mocks her reputation as an icon of Neoclassicism to denounce immorality and the reliance of his nation's art and literature on classicism. For Grosz, countering the decadence of Weimar Germany did not mean breathing the so-called rarefied purity of classical air, it meant going back to Hogarth.

Lady Hamilton oder die Posen-Emma presents a talentless Emma. Her beauty, although mentioned repeatedly in the text, is nowhere seen in the images. Instead, Grosz presents Emma as unattractive, cheap, and vulgar. Her crotch and her pubic and underarm

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[441] Meyer, *Lady Hamilton*, p. 37. My translation.

[442] The diplomat Harry Kessler, Grosz's patron, relates this wish after visiting the artist in his studio in February 1919. Quoted by Dennis Crockett, *German Post-Expressionism: The Art of the Great Disorder, 1918-1924*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999, p. 37.

hair are always visible, whether she is clothed or naked. Emma is portrayed as an exhibitionist: she loves to display herself and needs the gaze of others.[443] In Romney's studio, she seems to be not so much posing as exposing herself (plate 2, fig. 97).[444] Crass and vulgar, her attributes transfer to the men whom she beguiles. The man who watches her dance claps enthusiastically, his smile and open mouth frozen in a foolish expression (plate 4, fig. 99). The conflated picture planes, a formal borrowing from Hogarth, have the effect of bringing the two figures closer to each other, as if the man's hands were between Emma's legs, reaching for her crotch. The man's gaze and the composition's diagonal lines focus our attention on Emma's breasts and crotch, and so we become complicit in the lecherous—not aesthetic—appreciation of the spectacle. This recognition is confirmed in the following plate, in which the male spectator's left hand disappears into the folds of his clothing, doubtlessly to assuage his desire made apparent by the definite bulge in his overcoat (fig. 100). The bottle sitting on the table and the pipe he is smoking stand as unmistakable phallic symbols.[445] Grosz's vision indicts Emma's *Attitudes* and the classicism they represent and disseminate as nothing more than semi-pornographic spectacles, and her admirers, as sleazy and lecherous voyeurs.[446]

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[443] In the same way that the collector needs the gaze of others for his validation.

[444] Her pose here is reminiscent of Rowlandson's *Lady Hxxxxxxx Attitudes*, c. 1791-1800. See figure 76.

[445] The pipe in this case is more than a pipe, recalling Isaac Cruikshank's *A Mansion House Treat. or Smoking Attitudes!*, in which Emma favourably compares Nelson's long and vigorous pipe (the end of which is shaped like a penis in Cruikshank's drawing) to Sir William's short and extinguished one. 18 November 1800. Hand-coloured etching, 25 x 35 cm. London, British Museum (1868,0808.6913).

[446] In the text, Meyer similarly berates German culture's reverence for classicism by ridiculing Goethe and Rehberg—two of its greatest proponents—and their admiration for Emma's performances. Goethe's response to the inspiration that Emma's *Attitudes* provides is to disappear into his room to write furiously, then to leave Sir William's villa so he can spend the night with a prostitute.

Fig. 96 (plate 1)

Fig. 97 (plate 2)

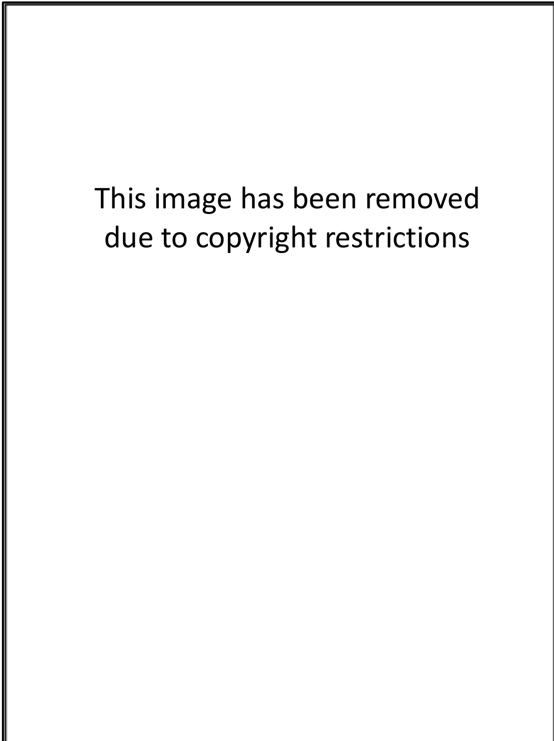

Fig. 98 (plate 3)

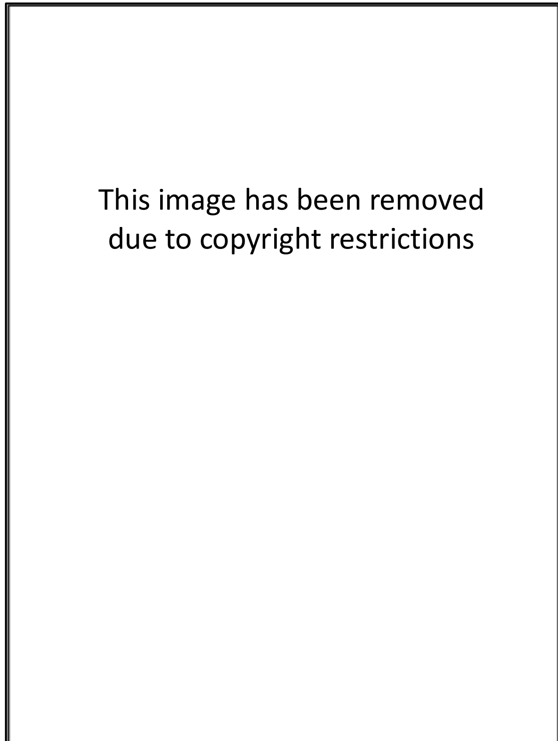

Fig. 99 (plate 4)

Figures 96 to 99. George Grosz, *Lady Hamilton*, 1923, plates 1-4. Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute.

Fig. 100 (plate 5)

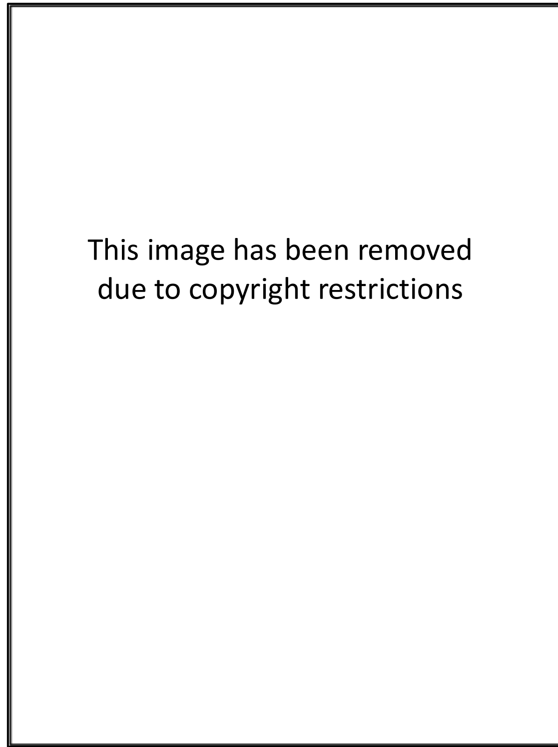

Fig. 101 (plate 6)

Fig. 102 (plate 7)

Fig. 103 (plate 8)

Figures 100 to 103. George Grosz, *Lady Hamilton*, 1923, plates 5-8. Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute.

In the last image in the series Emma wears a frilly dress and holds a large fan above her head (plate 8, fig. 103). As in the only other image in the series in which Emma is clothed (plate 3, fig. 98), her dress seems to be a hybrid of late eighteenth-century and early twentieth-century fashions. The fan belongs more to the 1920s, the powdered wig, to the 1790s. It is Marie Antoinette at the cabaret, and so Grosz's vitriol is directed not only at late eighteenth-century society but also at his own. On the wall behind Emma, an image of a swan recalls the myth of Leda. The swan cranes its neck toward Emma, ready for coupling. Emma's labia are visible over her pubic hair: they are red and swollen. She is aroused. Her dress forms a V that accentuates her pubic region, while on the table, at the level of her crotch, a bottle stands erect.

Close to a century later, in 2002, the American artist Karen Kilimnik reprised George Romney's early portrait of Emma as Circe (figs. 104, 105). This painting is part of a series in which, like Grosz and Meyer, Kilimnik interrogates eighteenth-century art and explores the resonances between that time and hers as a way to shed new light on both epochs. In these works, she begins with paintings that are somewhat recognizable without being very well known. She does not copy them in detail. Instead, she reissues her own version of these works, changing the cropping, the style, some details, the colours, and the title, dissembling the works, and bringing them into our time. In a booklet published to accompany a solo exhibition of Kilimnik's work at the Serpentine Gallery, Scott Rothkopf explains, "Through the cropping and the addition of the title…Kilimnik intervenes in history, borrowing from it but creating a new narrative—one that implicates

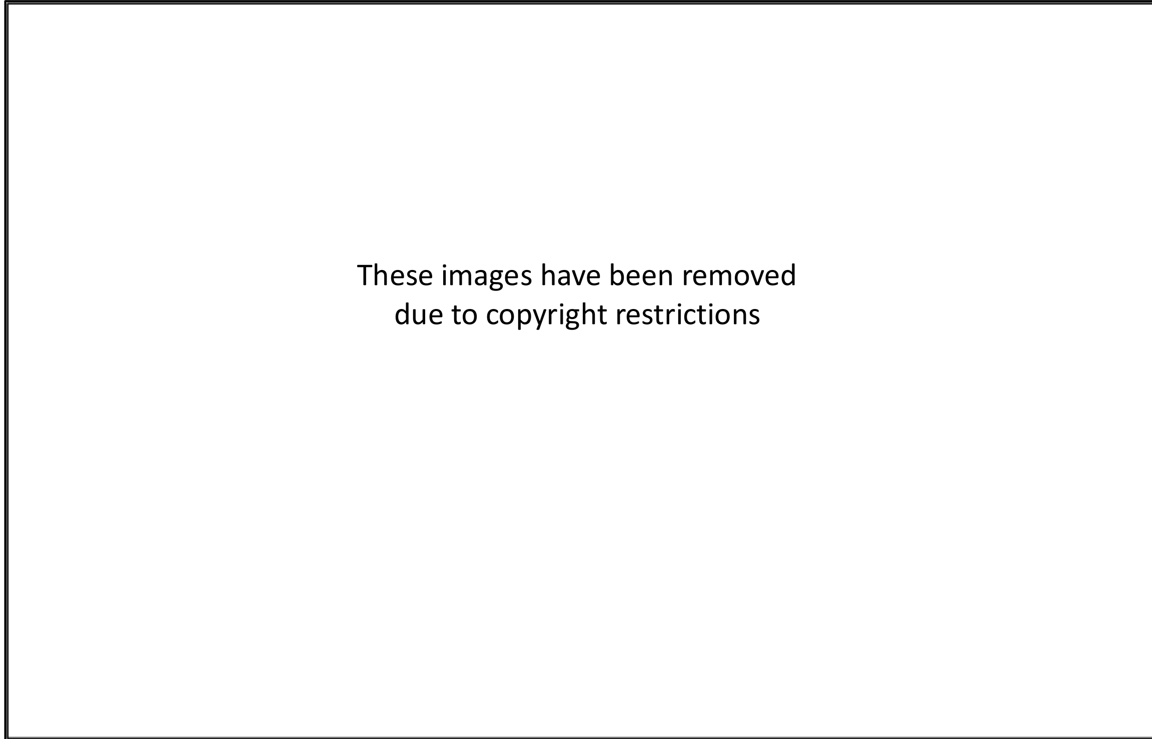

Figure 104. Karen Kilimnik, *Circe, at the Volcano*, 2002. Water soluble oil colour on canvas and cassette, 61.5 x 45.7 cm.

Figure 105. George Romney, *Lady Hamilton as Circe*, 1782. Oil on canvas, 53.3 x 49.5 cm. London, Tate Gallery.

the viewer, or the artist, in an almost violent relationship to the past."[447] In *Circe, at the Volcano* Kilimnik has not changed the width of the painting significantly but she has extended the image upward to make it more rectangular, slightly more elongated than would be usual for a bust portrait. The effect, when we look back at Romney's original, is to realize how close to square that portrait is and how Emma, who is surrounded by a swirling vortex of which she is the centre, confidently occupies the picture's space.

[447] Scott Rothkopf and Meredith Martin, *Period Eye: Karen Kilimnik's Fancy Pictures*, London: Serpentine Gallery, 2007, p. 16. Kilimnik is a reclusive artist, and it is difficult to find information about her life and work.

The change of title is significant. Kilimnik often uses titles to add layers of meanings to her works. In 2005, she represented Paris Hilton wearing contemporary dress standing in front of Le Hameau.[448] The title, *Marie Antoinette Out for a Walk at her Petite Hermitage, France, 1750*, is purposefully misleading in that Marie Antoinette was only born in 1755. Similarly, we may not question the location named in the title until we realize that the Petit Ermitage is a luxury hotel in Hollywood, thus referring to Paris Hilton's lineage (even though it is not a Hilton hotel) and to her celebrity status in the nexus of twenty-first century popular culture. In changing the title of Romney's painting from *Emma Hart as Circe* to *Circe, at the Volcano*, Kilimnik has reversed the allegory. It is no longer a painting of Emma incarnating Circe. Here, it is Circe who is posing. The volcano in the title links the painting back to Emma because of Emma's association with Vesuvius.[449] Emma's celebrity ensures that the viewer makes this link. *Circe, at the Volcano* becomes a portrait not of Emma, but of Circe posing, in front of a volcano, as Emma. Kilimnik thus brings to the fore the existence of the different layers of identity—sometimes in tension—that make up the allegorical portrait. Her Emma seems younger than Romney's: she has a rounder face, brighter cheeks, and her dress, which now covers her cleavage, has been changed from white to pink. Kilimnik portrays her as a teenage girl on the cusp between innocence and awakening sexuality, far from the powerful

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[448] Karen Kilimnik, *Marie Antoinette Out for a Walk at her Petite Hermitage, France, 1750*, 2005. Water soluble oil on canvas, 50.8 x 40.6 cm. Private collection. Kilimnik is known for her exploration of the issue of celebrity. See also her portrait of Leonardo DiCaprio as the character he portrayed in the film *The Man in the Iron Mask*, in which he plays the dual roles of Louis XIV and his fictional evil twin Philippe: *Prince Charmin*g, 1998. Water soluble oil on canvas, 50.8 x 60.7 cm. Private collection.

[449] Aeaea, on which Circe lived, was not a volcanic island.

seductress that Romney depicts, while the title simultaneously reminds us that this is Circe, the dangerous and canny sorceress who turned men into animals.

The year 2002 in which Kilimnik painted *Circe, at the Volcano* is not incidental. It was the bicentenary of George Romney's death. Publications and retrospective exhibitions were organized to commemorate this painter who had fallen out of favour and to revive his critical fame.[450] With *Circe, at the Volcano*, Kilimnik pays homage to Romney in a very significant way: she does so through his muse.

For over two centuries, artists have represented Emma in ways that have allowed them to explore and express a number of different aesthetic, political, historical, personal, and cultural concerns. Emma's powerful inspiration comes through in the severe Neoclassicism of Friedrich Rehberg's renderings, the sensuality and emotion of Romney's images, the variety and richness of Vigée-Le Brun's portraits, the multiple layers of meaning in Gillray's caricatures paralleling Emma's kaleidoscopic identity, Grosz's lambasting of Weimar Germany, the works of feminist performance artists, and Kilimnik's rethinking of allegorical portraiture and of the nature of celebrity. By staying attuned to Emma's presence in art and to the extent of her reach, we can continue to appreciate her versatility, her polyvalence, her agency, and the power of the images she has left behind.

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[450] The Walker Art Gallery's exhibition website, entitled *George Romney, British Art's Forgotten Genius*, asserts that "The association of Romney's name with Lady Hamilton's in the Victorian era contributed to the subsequent eclipse of his reputation as a serious artist." http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/walker/exhibitions/romney/, accessed 10 May 2014.

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