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Forgotten Encounters: The Legacy of Sculptresses and Female Muses

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Forgotten Encounters: The Legacy of Sculptresses and Female Muses

Abstract
Sculpture as a medium is inherently connected to legacy making. In producing three-dimensional monuments designed to withstand the test of time, women artists provided evidence of the lasting quality and permanence of their creative acts. This article examines the actress, sculptress and novelist Anne Damer's sculpture of the famous actress turned Countess Eliza Farren (c. 1788), paying particular attention to the relationship between sculpture as a static art form that captures tactile embodied presence and the ephemerality of performance. Farren's involvement in Damer's staging of the private theatricals at Richmond House (Farren directed and Damer starred) suggests that their collaborative relationship engendered aesthetic acts across media – performances that are now lost but remain in traces across a variety of material.

Similarly, in the mid nineteenth century the American artist Harriet Hosmer’s spectacular sculptures of female figures were inspired in part by her intimate relationship with the famous actress Charlotte Cushman. Cushman’s dynamic performances of Lady Macbeth parallel Hosmer’s powerful controversial sculpture of Zenobia as a warrior Queen (1859). Looking ahead to the early twentieth century, I propose that Malvina Hoffman's uncanny portrait busts of the ballet dancer Anna Pavlova (particularly her “Head of Pavlova” made of wax, 1924), similarly recreate a unique dynamic between the female artist and the intangible performances of her female muse. Drawing connections between Damer, Hosmer, and Hoffman, across time and media, allows us to re-imagine the relationship between artistic forms, materials, and aesthetic practices. Women's artistic and theatrical legacies, I suggest, are not found only in tangible sources, but also by recuperating networks, connections, and collaborations through interdisciplinary practices. In doing so we create new legacies that chart the extraordinary accomplishments of women of the past.

Keywords
sculpture, women artists, eighteenth century, actresses

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What is or can ever be the record of an actress, however famous?
—Charlotte Cushman (1816-1876)¹

Sculpture as a medium is inherently connected to legacy making. In producing three-dimensional monuments designed to withstand the test of time, women artists provided evidence of the lasting quality and permanence of their creative acts. The actress, sculptress, and novelist Anne Seymour Damer became well known for her portrait busts of women including her close friend and confidant Mary Berry, Her Royal Highness the Princess Caroline, and the famous comedic actress-turned-countess, Eliza Farren. Farren’s involvement in Damer’s staging of the private theatricals at Richmond House (Farren directed and Damer starred) suggests that their collaborative relationship engendered aesthetic acts across media—performances that are now lost but remain in traces across a variety of material.

Similarly, in the mid-nineteenth century the American artist Harriet Hosmer’s spectacular sculptures of female figures were inspired in part by her close friendships with the famous actress Charlotte Cushman and the cultural critic Anna Jameson. Her majestic sculpture of Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, may have been influenced by Cushman’s performances of Lady Macbeth. Jameson’s writings about Lady Macbeth as well as her history of Zenobia could also have been possible influences for Hosmer’s powerful and controversial sculpture. Looking ahead to the early twentieth century, I propose that Malvina Hoffman’s uncanny portrait busts of the ballet dancer Anna Pavlova (particularly her “Head of Pavlova” made of wax, 1924), continue to signify a unique dynamic between the female artist and the intangible performances of her female muse.

Thinking of the encounters between the artist and her subject as forgotten material in the archives, reformulates traditional gendered trajectories of the gaze, suggesting instead a more fluid and reciprocal creative process that recurs between the spectator and the artwork across time periods. Sculpture as an art form is about permanence, memory, commemoration, and timelessness. Theater and dance, on the other hand, are ephemeral art forms. Drawing connections between Damer, Hosmer, and Hoffman, across time and media, allows us to re-imagine the relationship between artistic forms, materials, and aesthetic practices. Women’s artistic and theatrical legacies, I suggest, are not found only in tangible sources, but also by recuperating networks, connections, and collaborations.

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through interdisciplinary practices. In doing so we create new legacies that chart the extraordinary accomplishments of women of the past.

I consider Damer, Hosmer, and Hoffman as active participants in the creation of their own artistic legacies, as translators of lost performances, and as agents involved in crafting and extending legacies of female inspiration and making, commemoration, and memorializing. In using sculpture as their chosen art form these artists also explore the complexities of female touch and female embodiment. A female artist crafting a female subject, who is also a performer, shifts the model of the traditionally gendered masculine gaze, and instead stages an artistic scene of mutual exchange. The subject performs for the artist, and the artist performs for the subject. The particular collaborative moment between the female artist and her actress subject reinforces a legacy of active, powerful female creativity and ingenuity. The traces of these material and performative legacies are represented in the artworks themselves. Together these sculptures tell a specific story about forgotten/invisible relationships, connections, and negotiations in the archives.

As women, Damer, Hosmer, and Hoffman were not formally permitted to study anatomy. Instead, they studied privately with well-known male sculptors. They traveled extensively (Damer and Hosmer to Rome, and Hoffman to Rome and Paris) visiting museums and galleries filled with neoclassical sculpture. They exhibited their work at prestigious venues alongside accomplished male professional artists, were admired by royalty and literati, and created opportunities for themselves and their work that had not previously existed for female sculptresses. Despite their successes, their lives were mired in controversy, attack, and suspicion.

While it might seem that Damer, Hosmer, and Hoffman are an anachronistic group, they worked at bookends of what one could consider the very “long” nineteenth century, and they had many things in common. All three women came from relatively privileged backgrounds and were trained by well-known male artists: Damer by Giuseppe Carracci and John Bacon, Hosmer by John Gibson, and Hoffman by Auguste Rodin. All were ambitious and displayed their work for the public in well-respected venues, and in the case of Hosmer and Hoffman, they received international recognition and critique. Damer and Hoffman were unhappily married (Damer’s husband committed suicide and Hoffman’s marriage ended in divorce), which left them on their own for the majority of their careers; all were drawn to other creative women who also served as their muses.
There are also important differences among the artists and our access to information about their individual histories and the artistic practices which shape their legacies. Hosmer and Hoffman typically worked on a much larger scale than Damer, which necessitated larger studio spaces and a considerable number of assistants. Hosmer and Hoffman’s artistic practice is connected to a collective group of artisans, which Damer lacked. In terms of documentation, Hoffman meticulously and self-consciously recorded her artistic practice in diaries, letters, memoirs, and photographs. Her correspondence is available in archives, and there are several well-known photographs of her with her artworks. Damer, who was also a novelist and an actress, burned most of her personal correspondence. Although the Walpole Library has four of Damer’s notebooks with copies of the passionate letters that she sent to her dear friend Mary Berry, we have very little information about her aesthetic process. Nevertheless, even in the light of these variations of context and process, the tangible existence of these artworks provides us with a way to think about how these artists’ highlighted legacies of female performance and collaborative agency.

Figure 1. Elizabeth (née Farren), Countess of Derby, by Anne Seymour Damer (née Conway), c. 1788, National Portrait Gallery 4469.
Eliza Farren and Anne Damer

Anne Damer completed her bust of Eliza Farren in 1788, the same year that they both took part in a private theatrical at Richmond House. In addition to starring in the production, Damer decorated the set with her artworks, including her sculpture of Farren as Thalia the comic muse. The practice of private theatricals (or performing plays at the homes of the rich and fashionable using professional actors and “real” people) reimagines the relationship between interior and exterior places and spaces. As Jane Austen famously underscores in the episode of the failed private theatricals in *Mansfield Park*, performing requires shape-shifting, morphing, and a potential transgression of the boundaries of proper codes of behaviour. Neo-classical sculpture, on the other hand, emphasizes serenity, opacity, and idealized normative forms of beauty. The legacy of Damer’s sculpture of Farren combines these varied histories both ephemeral and tangible. Although Anne Damer had been linked to other women, particularly her dear friend Mary Berry (Elfenbein, 2), her connection to Farren seemed particularly threatening to both of their reputations. The Richmond House theatricals, that Farren directed and Damer performed in, were reviewed by all the London papers and attended by aristocrats and royalty. According to the *Gazetteer*, “The Theatre at Richmond House had everything to recommend it on Friday evening that elegance, beauty, and expense could confer” (quoted in Gross, 111). For their first performance of Arthur Murphy’s *The Way to Keep Him*, Damer played the virtuous heroine Lady Lovemore who desperately tries to keep her libertine husband from betraying her. The first scene in Lady Lovemore’s drawing room featured prominently displayed portraits of “Mrs. Damer’s friends”: the Duchess of Richmond, the Duchess of Devonshire, Lady Duncannon, Lady Elizabeth Foster, and Sarah Siddons by contemporary artists John Downman, Francesco Bartolozzi, and others (Rosenfeld, 40; Tuite, 586). Damer’s most recent biographer Jonathan Gross elaborates:

In the plays in which Anne Damer performed, John Downman provided portraits including his half length pastel of Elizabeth Farren, now at the National Portrait Gallery…Anne displayed her own art work as well, with a bust of Elizabeth Farren as Thalia placed prominently on the Richmond House set (107).

Farren’s conspicuous presence on stage in the theatricals as an art object or set piece highlights the relationship between actresses, celebrity, and material culture in innovative ways, reinforcing the idea that Farren’s after-image exists not only in the moment of performance but can be seen, possessed, owned, exchanged and displayed long after the play has ended. Damer’s bust of Farren as Thalia, the
muse of comedy (Fig. 1), operated as a focal point for audience members, as well as acting as a reminder of the play’s celebrity director, the importance of their artistic collaborations, and of the presence of beauty and grandeur surrounding the performance itself.

In addition to including her sculptures as set pieces on the stage, Damer also adorned herself as a kind of lavishly ornamented object. Her sumptuous costumes and dazzling jewels reaffirmed her status as an aristocratic woman as well as her creative agency as a designer and maker of gorgeous things (Gross, 112). As Clara Tuite has argued, Damer’s rococo theatricalized display of things reflected her own heightened awareness of the nuances of the theatre as a medium that reveals as much as it conceals (586). The circulation of things, bodies, and images blurs the already tenuous line between the players and the audience as well as the theatricality of the scene and the heightened illusion of everyday life. Damer’s artwork on stage operated in part as a corrective to the objectified gaze aimed particularly at women in the public sphere, by providing an alternative trajectory of female artists and admiration that potentially highlighted objects in performance as subversive and disruptive forms of presence.

It seems important to consider the effect of Damer in performance as an actress/fashion icon/sculpture come to life moving in the space with her own artwork, itself a re-creation of the dazzling presence of Farren, who was watching from the audience. Damer and Farren perform interchangeably here as both Pygmalion and Galatea, creators and subjects of the spectator’s gaze. Interestingly, Eliza Farren left behind no letters, diaries, or memoirs. The information that we have about her comes from other people’s writings and from a variety of visual materials, where she appears in very different roles. It is up to the contemporary reader/spectator then to glean from these materials traces of the impact and significance of Farren’s performances on and off stage and across media. Comparing her image in the marble bust to Johann Zoffany’s extraordinary painting of Farren as Hermione coming to life in The Winter’s Tale, we could say that the shimmering and glorious after-effects of the portrait, are captured and embalmed in the portrait sculpture. Although Damer’s bust appears static and serene, the figure that inspired it was a living dynamic presence. In making these connections we create an alternative legacy of the dynamic connections between sculptresses and actresses.

**Harriet Hosmer, Charlotte Cushman, Anna Jameson, and Zenobia**

The American sculptress Harriet Hosmer surrounded herself with groups of extraordinary women both in Lenox, Massachusetts, where she attended a school
for girls run by the pioneering author and educator, Catherine Sedgwick, and in Rome, where she was invited by the actress Charlotte Cushman to join a group of women artists including Emma Stebbins, Edmonia Lewis, and Louisa Lander. While in Rome, Hosmer spent a good deal of time with Anna Jameson, who shared insights with her about her writings on women in art, theatre, and history.

Hosmer’s *Zenobia* (Fig. 2) is an imagined conflation of several models of extraordinary female presence based on narrative, artistic, and theatrical sources. Zenobia, the brilliant queen of third-century Palmyra (now Syria), mounted an invasion of Egypt and ruled over much of eastern Rome until she was captured and defeated by the Roman Emperor Aurelian. Hosmer’s sculpture depicts a regal Zenobia in chains at the moment of her captivity; her design echoes Anna Jameson’s description of Zenobia’s demise: “But every eye was fixed on the beautiful and majestic figure of the Syrian Queen, who walked in the procession before her own sumptuous chariot, attired in her diadem and royal robes, blazing with jewels, her eyes fixed on the ground, and her delicate form drooping under the weight of her golden fetters” (Jameson, 64).
Zenobia is Hosmer’s most famous work partially because of the controversy surrounding its production. After the sculpture debuted at the Great London Exhibition (1862), some male critics accused Hosmer of not being the artist. A heated debate followed with Hosmer coming to her own defense in a pamphlet. Scholars have written about Zenobia in relation to Victorian sculpture, queenship, race, slavery, and models of nineteenth-century female form. What has not been explored is the relationship between the sculpture and the visual legacy of female theatrical performance and representation that may have inspired it, particularly depictions of famous eighteenth- and nineteenth-century actresses Sarah Siddons and Charlotte Cushman as Lady Macbeth. In memorializing Zenobia, Hosmer created a monument of the intangible theatrical, artistic, and intellectual accomplishments of these celebrated female performers, who represented theatrical royalty.

Hosmer’s artistic practice involved immersing herself in research about her subjects. Jameson’s essay on Zenobia in her Memoirs of Celebrated Female Sovereigns (1831) as well as her piece on Lady Macbeth in her Shakespeare’s Heroines or Characteristics of Women (1832), provide some important context for Hosmer’s depiction of the Queen in chains. At the beginning of her chapter on Lady Macbeth, Jameson writes about understanding Shakespeare’s character through the art of sculpture: “Characters in history move before us like a procession of figures in basso relievo; we see one side only, that which the artist chose to exhibit to us; the rest is sunk in a block: the same characters in Shakespeare are like the statues out of the block, fashioned, finished, tangible in every part” (358). Jameson’s suggestion that Shakespeare’s characters in performance are like sculptures coming to life, offers a potential invitation for artists like Hosmer to consider how they might embody the intangible, majestic qualities of past performances (both real and imagined) in sculptural form. While some scholars have seen Hosmer’s Zenobia as a statue devoid of desire, covered, blank, and cold, positioning Hosmer’s work in relation to her connection to Cushman and Jameson in particular, poses alternative ways of thinking about how intangible acts may be embodied in static materials as well as the collaborative and generative nature of female artistic communities.

Jameson’s framing of Zenobia and Lady Macbeth as brilliant women whose ambition is misdirected or misguided may have also promoted an association between these figures that translated into Hosmer’s depiction of Zenobia. In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Lady Macbeth became the signature role for actresses. Like Sarah Siddons before her, Cushman marked important stages of her career with performances of this dynamic and difficult role. In doing so successfully, she extended Siddons’ legacy of legitimate female celebrity,
translating elements from Siddons’ visual repertoire into her Lady Macbeth costume.

Hosmer’s portrayal of Zenobia, particularly her attention to the details of her royal dress and accessories, invokes a performative genealogy of images that looks back to portraits of Cushman as Lady Macbeth, Siddons as Euphrasia, and Siddons as *The Tragic Muse*. While the garments in these images are costumes designed for portrait purposes (and are a fantasy amalgam of real and imagined dress) the signifiers of royalty, particularly the crown as a distinct accessory, would have signalled to spectators the idea of “Queenness” – or the celebrated qualities associated with being a Queen – presence, power, wealth, prominence. Considering Hosmer’s Zenobia as an extension of this legacy, connects Hosmer, Cushman, Siddons, and Jameson’s mutual interest in representing a history of heroic and tragic female figures, created in part through performance.

A print of Cushman as Lady Macbeth (Fig. 3) depicts her in an agitated pose holding the daggers meant for Duncan.
She wears a regal gown trimmed with jewels and a headdress or crown on her head. The pattern of the crown is echoed in the border of her stage costume. Decades before Cushman, Siddons’ image became associated with royal iconography inspired by her performances. In William Hamilton’s widely reproduced portrait of Siddons as Euphrasia (Fig. 4), Siddons wears a dazzling crown that echoes the jewelled broach in the middle of her gown and the gold trim of the border of her dress.

![Figure 4](image.jpg)

**Figure 4.** Sarah Siddons (née Kemble) (‘Mrs Siddons in the Tragedy of the Grecian Daughter’), by James Caldwell, after William Hamilton, 1798. [National Portrait Gallery D10715](https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/S06951).
In Sir Joshua Reynolds’ iconic portrait of Siddons as *The Tragic Muse* (Fig. 5), the crown reappears, this time to metaphorically commemorate Siddons’ presence and theatrical accomplishments. Much like sculpture, this portrait chronicles the effects of Siddons’ legendary celebrity.

Figure 5. *Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse* by Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1784. [Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joshua_Reynolds_Mrs_Siddons_(as_the_Tragic_Muse).jpg).
In addition to these portraits, a memorial sculpture of Siddons (Fig. 6) in Westminster Abbey by Thomas Campbell (1845) anticipates the majestic presence of Hosmer’s *Zenobia*. Siddons’ headdress/crown, her serene expression, the draping of her dress, the placement of her feet, and the solidity of her figure are reminiscent of Hosmer’s rendering of *Zenobia*.14

Figure 6. *Sarah Siddons* by Thomas Campbell, 1845. Westminster Abbey Library.
In memorializing Zenobia, Hosmer may also have been imagining Cushman and her theatrical ancestor, Sarah Siddons, whose performances moved Anna Jameson to write about Shakespeare’s character as she appeared when Siddons brought her to life. This conflation of Queens, both real and imagined, invokes the overlapping material, narrative, and performative legacies that I have been outlining. The sheer size of the Zenobia statue (82 inches high) promotes a legacy theatrical power and presence that still impacts spectators today.

**Malvina Hoffman and Anna Pavlova**

The ballet dancer Anna Pavlova’s extraordinary talent and beauty dazzled the early twentieth century sculptress Malvina Hoffman. The daughter of a society belle who eloped with a concert pianist, Hoffman lived between the glittering world of the one percent and the artistic landscape of the most influential modernists, including Gertrude Stein, Auguste Rodin, and Marianne Moore. According to Hoffman’s first biographer, Janis Conner, the artist had a “lifelong attraction to powerful, charismatic subjects, people whose lives were woven through with drama or tragedy, who stood bravely for a cause, or whose special talents made them objects of public admiration or erotic longing” (130). Anna Pavlova had transformed the world of ballet with her innovative theatrical style, bringing the art form from Russia to the United States and became an international superstar. After being “electrified” by Pavlova’s performances, Hoffman became her biggest fan. Hoffman’s fascination with Pavlova inspired many years of artistic collaboration, from intimate portrait busts to an elaborate twelve-panel frieze sculpture. Her theatrical and intricate collaborations with Hoffman suggest that they worked symbiotically, developing a close personal and professional relationship and collaborating on a series of dance sculptures.

The process involved much discussion, debate, and posing for photographs in Hoffman’s New York studio. Hoffman’s duet sculptures capture two moving bodies together in one scene—but also echo her own process or dance with Pavlova as the artist imagining her subject. Hoffman’s pieces of Pavlova reflect her presence on and off stage linking her image to classical dancers, mythological heroines, and legacies of western art and performance. In particular, Hoffman’s “Head of Pavlova” in wax, made from a “life mask” and inspired by Pavlova’s staged performance at an elaborate party, provides a significant example of the translation between live and static art forms. Hoffman’s process of translating Pavlova’s performance from live action to wax embodiment provides a way of thinking about sculpture’s relationship to performance as well as the particular dynamics of wax as a medium that captures an uncanny sense of presence across time. These images provide a sense of the theatricality and the dynamics of
performativity that went into the creation of the sculptures, particularly a series called the Bacchanal Frieze.

As a celebration of the completion of this project, Hoffman threw an elaborate party in her studio, very much like a private theatrical, except here there was no designated stage; the guests were all an integral part of the show. Janis Conner writes: the space “transformed into oriental splendor by red and gold hangings and brocades all loaned by the fabulous Mr. Miller of Louis the XIV Antique shop fame… forty thousand dollars’ worth of hangings covered the walls and balcony railings. Dancers appeared in masks and rare costumes covered with semi precious jewels.” In a dramatic moment at the party Pavlova appeared lavishly dressed as the Byzantine Madonna framed by a large doorway created for the event. Hoffman designed a series of sculptures based on Pavlova’s live performance as the Byzantine Madonna, including a plaster of the arching frame and the head in relief, a life size bronze and the head in wax. Here Hoffman reverses Damer’s use of Farren’s image as an object in performance instead creating an object from the performance itself. In using wax Hoffman reverses the usual process of sculpture, which typically begins with a wax cast that is then converted to stone.
Figure 7. *Head of Pavlova* by Malvina Hoffman, 1924. Rhode Island School Of Design.
Hoffman’s head of Pavlova in wax (Fig. 7) is startlingly real because of the medium, which mimics the look and feel of actual skin. The uncanny resemblance to a “real” living, and severed head, creates an almost macabre feeling, as if the inanimate object might suddenly come to life. Yet Pavlova’s serene expression and closed eyes echo the classic iconography of Damer’s head of Farren and Hosmer’s representation of Zenobia. The placid quality of these art objects belies the dynamic shimmering live presence of each performer. The images of Farren and Pavlova across materials reflects a translation of embodiment and memory—almost like a series of touches and reciprocal gazes—the intimacy between the artist and her muse is embedded in the afterlife of the artwork itself.15

Actresses’ visual presence across genres and formats can potentially provide traces of their lost performances. I am not arguing that there is a one-to-one correspondence between what actresses did on stage and how they were portrayed in works of art, but I do want to suggest that there are potentially important links between the embodied actions of actresses and subsequent representations of them. In some with more famous actresses, we can glean a sense of their absent-presence through reading multiple images of them across materials. Actresses’ association with objects also echoes late eighteenth-century Enlightenment speculations about permeable boundaries between bodies and between the animate and inanimate, the organic and artificial, the real and the constructed.

When we turn our attention to Anne Damer, an artist and actress who made things, a unique paradigm emerges, one in which the female artisan/performer is self-consciously curating a stage full of “things” that represent the power of actresses and their lasting legacy. Decorating her stage with two- and three-dimensional portraits of well-known actresses and juxtaposing these images with the dynamics of live performances, Damer creates a performance piece that merges the immediacy of the theatre with the experience of going to an art gallery. Over a century later, the artist Malvina Hoffman similarly used the medium of sculpture to capture and embody the dazzling performances of the dancer, Anna Pavlova. Hoffman described her feelings about being able to sculpt Pavlova as “(the) sudden chance of a lifetime, to catch a living, fluttering piece of antique beauty and have it willing, keen, sympathetic, responsive.” Imagining herself as a female Pygmalion, Pavlova’s spirit is somehow kept alive in Hoffman’s dazzling object.

Hosmer’s portrayal of Zenobia captures the ephemeral performances of an historical figure through the performances of famous actresses. Damer’s portrait of Farren, an expression of the actress as an ideal antique beauty, also captures a lost set of creative collaborative acts. Drawing connections between Damer, Hosmer, and Hoffman, across time and media, allows us to re-imagine the
relationship between artistic forms, materials, and aesthetic practices. The work of these artists contains traces of a creative collaborative process that is often difficult to archive, and almost always forgotten. Considered together these artists, subjects, and artworks chart a new type of material and performative legacy that emphasizes the generative power of female collaboration and exchange. It is up to us as scholars, collaborators, and creators, to find and highlight the tangible and intangible threads that connect women’s labor, accomplishments, and genius.

Notes

This essay is part of a special issue: “Shaping the Legacy of 18th-Century Women,” guest edited by Marilyn Francus, Aphra Behn Online 13, no. 1 (Summer 2023). To read the essays in the cluster, follow this link: https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/abo/vol13/iss1/.

1 Quoted in Wojczuk, Lady Romeo, 126.

2 For more about the history of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century female sculptresses and their practices, see Marjan Sterckx. For more on the history of eighteenth-century women artists, networks, and collaboration see seminal works by Mary D. Sheriff, Melissa Hyde and Jennifer Milam, Heidi Strobel, and Paris A. Spies-Ganz.

3 Damer was the subject of scathing satiric prints as well as accusations of sapphism and impropriety. See Tuite’s discussion of Damer’s ability to transcend these attacks. Hosmer was mocked in the press for her penchant for dressing in men’s clothing. She was also involved in a very public dispute about the originality of her artworks. The discussion in the press brought attention to the practices involved in making large-scale sculptures. Hosmer posed for a photograph of herself with her studio workers in an attempt to foreground the collaborative process that was necessary for making large works out of stone. Hoffman’s career became enmeshed in negative criticism after her exhibit “The Races of Man” at the Field Museum in Chicago. She was accused of using racist templates and stereotypes to depict African subjects.

4 For more biographical information on Damer, see Gross and Webb. For Hosmer see Melissa Dabakis’s excellent study, A Sisterhood of Sculptors, and Kate Culkin’s cultural biography of Hosmer. For Hoffman, see Janis Conner.

5 According to a recent interview with leading Damer scholar Caroline Gonda, “many of Damer’s private papers were destroyed by her or at her request.” Damer’s desire to erase evidence of her own legacy is another significant form of legacy making.

6 In 1790 Henry Siddons, the feckless husband of the famous actress, Sarah Siddons, wrote an unpleasant verse about Eliza Farren and Anne Damer: “Her little stock of private fame/Will fall a wreck to public Clamour/ If Farren leagues with one whose Name/ Comes near—Aye very near—to Damn Her.” (Highfill, 5:172) These rumours apparently led to a separation between Damer and Farren.
According to Melissa Dabakis, it was the actress Fanny Kemble who first suggested that Hosmer become a sculptress.

For Susan Waller, the sculpture of Zenobia “reflects Harriet Hosmer’s friendship with Anna Jameson, whose advice and encouragement were central to the work’s gestation and development, and in this Zenobia becomes the embodiment of a shared ideal, a shared confidence that women’s underlying strength of character ultimately transcended the circumstances of defeat” (262).

For a brilliant discussion of Hosmer’s Zenobia and depictions of race, see Deborah Cherry, pp. 101-141. See also Charmaine A. Nelson, pp. 39-40.

Hosmer’s contemporary, Lydia Marie Child, wrote about Hosmer’s fascination with Zenobia: “Cleopatra and Zenobia were descended from the same line of Macedonian kings, and both received a wonderful inheritance of beauty; but neither in the character nor person of Zenobia was there any trace of the voluptuousness or coquetry which distinguished her royal relative of Egypt. It was her womanly modesty, her manly courage, and her intellectual tastes, which first attracted Miss Hosmer toward her; and the result of her loving study of the character is her marble embodiment of the Queen of the East, by a Queen of the West. (Quoted in Pulham, 72).

Jameson writes: “She is Lady Macbeth; as such she lives, she reigns and is immortal in the world to imagination” (358).

Jameson on Zenobia: “Zenobia not only excelled in her countrywoman in the qualities for which they were all remarkable—in courage, prudence, and fortitude, in patience of fatigue, and activity of mind and body, --- she also possessed a more enlarged understanding; her views were more enlightened, her habits more intellectual” (58).

For more on Siddons and visual celebrity see Asleson, Engel, and McPherson. For more on Cushman’s celebrity, see Lisa Merrill.

Although I am not able to prove that Hosmer saw Campbell’s statue, it is very possible that she did, either in person or through a print of the work in a newspaper. The statue was reproduced in The Illustrated London News, October 6, 1849.

See Katharine Fein’s discussion of Hosmer’s sculpture of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning’s hands. Fein presents a fascinating argument about the ways in which the artwork contains traces of both the artists’ artistic practice and the subjects’ actual bodies.

Pulham writes that at the end of her life Hosmer gave up being a sculptor and instead devoted her time to working on a “perpetual motion machine—which could not have been in greater contrast to her definitively inert marble oeuvre. Over the years she received several patents for this chimeric appliance, which, if it had worked as described, would certainly have defied all laws of physics.” Pulham notes that, “While her sculptures were doomed to the catatonic rigidity of the sublime, Hosmer herself seems to have aspired to perpetual motion in more ways than one. Her machine seems to have been designed as a conduit to an impossibly indeterminate space, a tireless vehicle that would provide her with a way to elude categories for perpetuity” (81).
Works Cited


