

Reading American Art

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2 Character and Class: The Portraits of John Singleton Copley

Paul Staiti

There are two ways of understanding portraiture—either as history or as fiction.
Charles Baudelaire, 1846

[Copley's portraits] illustrate the men and women of a day when pride, decorum, and an elegance, sometimes ungraceful but always impressive, marked the dress and air of the higher classes. . . . It appears to have been a favorite mode either with the artist or his sitters, to introduce writing materials, and to select attitudes denoting a kind of meditative leisure. The *otium cum dignitate* is the usual phrase. A rich brocade dressing-gown and velvet skullcap—a high-backed and daintily carved chair, or showy curtain in the background, are frequently introduced. "Sir and Madam" are the epithets which instinctively rise to our lips in apostrophizing these "counterfeit presentments." *Henry T. Tuckerman, 1867*

Henry T. Tuckerman understood the anthropology in portraiture. Throughout the lead biography in his landmark history of American artists, he saw registered in John Singleton Copley's 350 American portraits the social habits and desires—the "air," as he phrased it—of colonial elites.¹ In the passage above he mentioned some of the visual signs that made a Copley portrait socially effective: the display of clothing, furniture, manners, and leisure. He could have gone on to list more of the objects that draped, landscaped, and decorated the eighteenth-century portrait, for they too were specific sites where character and class were made manifest. The turn of a hand, the cut of a dress, the breed of an animal, the species of a flower, and the color of hosiery were all signs that allowed viewers to be persuaded of the social attainment of a Jeremiah Lee (Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford), the orientalizing sexuality of a Margaret Kemble Gage (see fig. 2.7), or the antimaterialist discipline of an Eleazer Tyng (see fig. 2.8).

In writing about Copley as a society painter, Tuckerman argued, in effect, that it is insufficient to consider this artist's stature in the history of American art merely as a matter of exquisite technique. Certainly, Copley's appeal had something to do with his unprecedented skill in transcribing material things onto

canvas: he could make paint look like polished mahogany or clear glass or reflective satin. But that descriptive ability, for which he was justly renowned, does not adequately account for why the merchant and professional classes so avidly sought his services in the two decades before the Revolution.

In addition to dazzling descriptions, Copley, before Charles Baudelaire put it in words, offered the elite persuasive fictions. With his deft hands and social perspicacity, he fashioned sitters into the personae they wanted to project. Copley adroitly choreographed bodies, settings, and objects into visual biographies—"counterfeit presentments," in Tuckerman's phrase—that had the power to calibrate social position in graphic ways that were legible to a community. As a result, patrons came to Copley for portraits that were venues where they might avouch a sense of themselves in the hierarchical and circumscribed social theater of colonial Boston. Typically displayed in the halls, parlors, and dining rooms of homes decorated with Chippendale-style furniture, rococo tea sets, and other objects selected for the purpose of self-articulation, Copley's portraits became centerpieces in the stagecraft of the eighteenth-century persona.²

Copley's pictures were authenticating narratives. That is, they not only derived from but also helped constitute class in Boston, and to a lesser extent in New York, during the late colonial period. With that expanded purview in mind, a number of questions will be raised in the pages ahead that all have to do with how a person was measured visually. How did the artist fashion a merchant, a wife, a dowager, a betrothed, a minister, an artisan, a girl? Through what visual codes were character and class read? Why and how were particular objects used in the interpretive program of a visual biography? What, in short, was portraiture's contribution to the production of social identity in the consumer society of late colonial America?³

Dined at Mr. Nick Boylstones, with the two Mr. Boylstones, two Mr. Smiths, Mr. Hallowel and the Ladies. An elegant Dinner indeed! Went over the House to view the Furniture, which alone cost a thousand Pounds sterling. A Seat it is for a noble Man, a Prince. The Turkey Carpets, the painted Hangings, the Marble Tables, the rich Beds with crimson Damask Curtains and Counterpins, the beautiful Chimny Clock, the Spacious Garden, are the most magnificent of any Thing I have ever seen. *John Adams, 1766*

To the discerning eye of John Adams, Nicholas Boylston's home was a dazzling visual domain composed of luxurious material possessions. Though Adams had gone to Boylston's on a late-winter evening in 1766 with the Stamp Act crisis on his mind, his diary entry for that visit only fleetingly refers to the dinner debate that took place over Parliament's right to tax the colonies. Most of the entry

instead catalogues Boylston's riches in detail and in animated and explicit language: Turkey carpets, chimney clocks, crimson dyes, marbletop tables, and damask curtains and counterpanes. After admitting to silently tabulating the breathtaking cost of the furniture as he walked from room to room, Adams revealed the linkage between objects and social identity in late colonial Boston in an astonishing sentence. He concluded that such a magnificent setting was not merely appropriate to a rich merchant but surely also was a sign that Boylston was the "noble Man" and the "Prince" whom he thought he had encountered that night.⁴

When Copley painted Boylston in 1767 (fig. 2.1), he, like Adams, represented the person on the basis of things, the quality and dimensions of personhood rising and expanding as the quality and abundance of the objects displayed proliferate. In the picture, Boylston's face is largely inscrutable as a bearer of meaning. But everything else is telling.⁵ The source of the merchant's livelihood is indicated by the large ship sailing on turbulent seas and by the book marked "LEDGER" that literally buttresses his arm and metaphorically sustains his extravagant habits of living, details that lay concrete claim to elite status. Boylston's refined tastes and extraordinary wealth are declared by his banyan made of expensive English silk damask and by his turban, both of which would be worn when the sitter was at leisure at home. Elegantly posed and lavishly dressed, looking more like a sultan than a businessman, he is not encumbered by the vicissitudes of work. Yet the material benefits of his business—regal leisure and costly fabrics—are abundantly displayed in this presentation of the achieved self. Boylston is meant to be judged on the basis of these elements. Viewers' eyes are to caress the silks and weigh the ledgers; they are to notice the right arm opening the banyan to show a magnificent vest that is unbuttoned for the gratuitous display of even more expensive fabric underneath. These things are the inanimate markers that are supposed to reflect well on the "essential person."

Copley and Adams were not alone among eighteenth-century Americans in equating luxury goods with character and social status.⁶ For everyone understood that the path to high enfranchisement in pre-Revolutionary Boston was studded with emblematic expressions of being.⁷ The merchants, and the artisans who served them, everywhere read the visual signs that announced exalted class: Georgian houses, export ceramics, silk fabrics, Chippendale furniture, chased silver, flower and fruit gardens, polite behavior, ample food, and even body fat. This was a face-to-face society that monitored things. It loved objects and facts and numbers and money. And with a quarter of a patrician's income spent on items handcrafted for one's home or one's back or on one's portrait, material goods and the display of those goods became the outward signs of the quest for prestige and power. This practice of equating things and people



Figure 2.1 John Singleton Copley, *Nicholas Boylston*, 1767. Oil on canvas, 49 × 40 inches. Courtesy of the Harvard University Portrait Collection, Cambridge, Mass., bequest of Ward Nicholas Boylston, 1828.

exemplifies what anthropologists and consumer historians call the power of goods to transform the self.

Who a person was—or seemed to be—was a matter of reading what that person possessed. Objects in Copley's portraits thus were not emblems in the traditional iconographic sense of the word, for their interpretation was not strictly codified or explicitly determined in written texts, such as books of em-

blemata.⁸ Instead, they were props fashioned by the artist into images that fulfilled the desire of elite clients who wanted to assert their position and social identity in materially potent ways that were visible to eighteenth-century viewers. Gentlemen and gentlewomen needed signs that collectively were the index of the social self: social graces, eating skills, proper carriage, body control, knowledge of the arts, informed taste in fashion, carved furniture, and powdered wigs. As agents in an interpretive system, the signs Copley presented were not merely bystanders in a picture, for these things had the cultural power to personify, to endow a sitter with the social, civic, or personal attributes he or she sought. And all forms of visual display in eighteenth-century British North America, from pictures to teapots, were bearers of identity and class definition.⁹

With a few notable exceptions that are discussed below, it is not known whether Copley's sitters owned the clothing, dogs, fruits, jewels, fountains, flowers, vases, and columns with which they are shown in their portraits. Knowledge of such facts of ownership might be revealing insofar as it would indicate the degree of a painting's deviation from reality and thus the degree of its fictionality. But this knowledge or the lack thereof has no bearing on an essential assumption about Copley's portraiture: that his pictures are not and ought not to be construed as visual probate records. Instead, the objects in the portraits, owned by the sitters or not, should be understood as metonymic, in the sense that they are sites into which character and class have been displaced. They are the rhetoric—not the record—of self-representation in eighteenth-century America.

To be effective in a materialist culture—to acquire a social voice—those objects had to be taxonomic as well as metonymic. That is, they had to be classifiable and legible, both individually and collectively, for interpretive reckoning by eighteenth-century viewers. A study of a few classes of objects should indicate how they operated in an interpretive system that was the result of collaboration among Copley, his sitters, and contemporary viewers.

The object most visible in Copley's emblematic language is the body itself, for its condition and control reflected the status of gentlemen and gentlewomen. Copley frequently focused on distinctive markings as attributes that served to individualize a person. He did nothing, for example, to hide physical anomalies, such as the smallpox scars on Miles Sherbrook's face (Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia), the hairy wen on Nathaniel Allen's cheek (Honolulu Academy of the Arts), the bend in Henry Pelham's earlobe (see fig. 2.6), the scar on Thomas Mifflin's forehead (Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia), the moles on the faces of Elizabeth Lewis Goldthwait (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) and James Allen (Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston), the fleshiness behind Myles Cooper's ear (Columbia University, New York), or the swollen tissue of

Epes Sargent's old right hand (National Gallery of Art, Washington). On the contrary, he made a spectacle of these features by centralizing them in compositions and placing them in a bright, descriptive light. "Warts and Moles," as John Dryden wrote in his introduction to Copley's edition of Charles-Alphonse Dufresnoy's *De Arte Graphica*, were capable of "adding a Likeness to the Face" and were "not therefore to be omitted."¹⁰ Marks on the body had the power to endow pictures with the stamp of authenticity. William Carson of Newport pointed this out to Copley in 1772 upon seeing the artist's portrait of his wife: "I discover new beautys every day, and what was considered as blemishes, now, raises the most exalted Ideas of the perfection of the Painter 'and painting to the life'. . . . Strange objects strongly strike the senses, and violent passions affect the mind."¹¹

In a similar way, fat was a marker of individuality and struck the senses strongly in many of Copley's portraits of wealthy men, but it was also a class marker. The vast stomach of Jeremiah Lee, to name just one of Copley's overweight subjects, proudly strains against his waistcoat and overloads narrow shoulders and diminutive legs. Copley often opened overcoats and latched hands, like Moses Gill's (Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence), onto broad hips in order to amplify the appearance of corpulence. Fat, on these pictorial occasions, is the leitmotif of a composition that expands outward from the volume of a stomach, its curvature articulated and exaggerated by ripples of shining satin fabric cinched together by waistcoat buttons. On some of these occasions, in the portrait of Nathaniel Sparhawk (fig. 2.2), for example, pentimenti indicate that Copley may have inflated a belly artificially in what amounts to a pictorial equivalent of the prosthetic stomach pads and calf pads that were sometimes used to reshape the anatomies of English and American gentlemen.

Fat in these portraits would have been read in the eighteenth century as salutary. It was perceived as protecting the body from injury, preserving the muscles, and filling interstices of the torso in such a way as to give shape, symmetry, and beauty.¹² Moreover, it was a sign of wealth, for only the well-to-do had sufficient and rich enough food to produce fat. A laborer's meals centered on bread, but the diet of prosperous merchants and landowners was more varied, including meats and sugar, and more abundant. Indeed, in the decades before the Revolution, as American elites became less provincial and more anglicized, they indulged in great dinners in the English style and constituted the largest market in the world for imported English foods.

Because the conduct, as well as the condition, of the pictured body was the site for the inscription and enactment of values of status, in painting the elite Copley's job was to present men and women comporting themselves in a visually



Figure 2.2 John Singleton Copley, *Nathaniel Sparhawk*, 1764. Oil on canvas, 90 × 57½ inches. Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Charles H. Bayley Picture and Painting Fund.



Figure 2.3 John Singleton Copley, *Mary and Elizabeth Royall*, c. 1758. Oil on canvas, 57½ × 48 inches. Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Julia Knight Fox Fund.

elegant manner that spoke like an official biography of their refinement and high moral character.¹³ Increasingly in the middle decades of the eighteenth century, appropriate comportment for colonial elites meant behaving as they thought English aristocrats behaved. And so Copley's figures for the most part reflect idealized contemporary codes of conduct, despite the notoriously angular legs and awkward hips that are the products of an artist who was an autodidact. Guided by polite society's almost theatrical art of bodily demeanor, Copley chose to depict his sitters as moderate and pleasing by presenting their bodies in a controlled, graceful, and composed way, radiating ease and serenity, and avoiding what one etiquette master called "odd motions, strange postures, and ungenteel carriage":¹⁴ hence the easy walk of Theodore Atkinson Jr. (Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design), the Royall sisters' relaxed arms and hands (fig. 2.3), Epes Sargent's graceful leaning posture, Nathaniel Hurd's self-contained outline (Cleveland Museum of Art), and Mary Charnock Devereux's serene, contemplative repose (Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington). Few of Copley's figures sit or stand "bolt upright," at one extreme, or "too negligent and easy," at the other, for the true eighteenth-century man of fashion "makes himself easy, and appears so, by leaning gracefully, instead of lolling supinely."¹⁵

Copley knew firsthand the codes of polite behavior because he was himself trained by his English-born stepfather, Peter Pelham (1695–1751), who taught classes in manners in Boston. Pelham, in turn, would have been familiar with, and sensitive to, the contemporary English behavioral theory that reached its culmination in Lord Chesterfield's *Letters to His Son*.¹⁶ Pelham, Chesterfield, and other etiquette masters in this period viewed manners as social theater acted out for peers and inferiors. Unconcerned with the moral imperatives that motivated traditional courtesy literature, contemporary writers used manners as a form of self-fashioning that was a conventionalized fiction of the self, calculated to profit the individual more than society. In Copley's visual culture, the body was another agent of social persuasion, another piece of capital equipment to be exploited.

Under Pelham's tutelage, Copley would have learned recent theories not only of bodily carriage but also of facial etiquette. According to the new courtesy literature, the ideal facial expression should be "moderately cheerful" and should affect the whole face, especially the mouth, which should be trained to have a "gentle and silent smile."¹⁷ True to that theory, Copley's sitters as a rule veer neither into melancholy nor into gaiety. Instead, their slight smiles, full eyes, and generally placid faces that are devoid of incident project a genteel sense of inner peace, confidence, grace, and moderation.

The cloth that draped and enfolded the bodies of Copley's sitters, like the bodies themselves, was a potent sign of personhood. When, for example, Copley painted Mary and Elizabeth, the daughters of Isaac Royall (see fig. 2.3), the extraordinarily successful rum merchant from Medford, he enveloped them in luxurious materials. The picture, the largest and most ambitious of the artist's early canvases, is about fabrics as much as faces. Dozens of yards of imported English satins cascade upon them, wrapping their bodies, furniture, and space in what Royall undoubtedly hoped would be read as a pageant of his family's wealth.

Fruits and flowers, as well as fabrics, were active agents in Copley's staged presentations of character and class. Copley sometimes used flowers as simple adornments to the hair or the décolletage of a dress. But he more frequently and more prominently featured flowers by representing women holding blossoms and bouquets or presenting them proudly to the viewer.

Copley also called attention to the horticultural craftsmanship of the women he depicted with fruits. In his portrait of Hannah Fayerweather Winthrop, for example, the painter arranged a nectarine branch so as to display the fruit and leaves but also and more pointedly to show that the stem is cut precisely, suggesting that she has been grafting or experimenting with hybrids (fig. 2.4). The fruit and cut branch that she offers the viewer is associated with scientifically



Figure 2.4 John Singleton Copley, *Mrs. John Winthrop (Hannah Fayerweather)*, 1773. Oil on canvas, 35½ × 28¾ inches. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Morris K. Jesup Fund, 1931.

managed cultivation: it is from a nectarine, which in the eighteenth century was typically grafted onto peach stock.¹⁸

It is not known whether all of the women Copley portrayed with flowers and fruits gardened. But certainly Copley himself must have been an accomplished gardener. He had Newton Pippin apples and New York watermelons on his Beacon Hill property and was advised to consult John Hancock next door about acquiring trees for his estate.¹⁹ And certainly some of his sitters had renowned gardens. Thomas and Lydia Hancock, for example, planted their acreage on Beacon Hill with plum, peach, apricot, nectarine, pear, mulberry, and cherry trees imported from England and available in Boston shops that boasted of "hundreds of grafted and inoculated English fruit trees."²⁰

Whenever cultivated flowers and fruits were shown in a portrait, they were meant to be understood as the product of a woman's discipline, science, handiwork, and thus character. Women did not merely grow flowers, they reared them, much as they did children, or as they themselves had been raised.²¹ Such a linkage between gardening and moral education grew out of the writings of John Locke, who claimed that fine character is nurtured, not innate.²² A child, in his sensationalist theory, comes into the world a tabula rasa that, like a plant, is

cultivated into an adult. “Moral Seeds,” wrote Richard Steele, a follower of Locke’s, “produce the novel Fruits which must be expected from them, by . . . an artful management of our tender Inclinations and first Spring of Life.”²³ In his pictures Copley portrayed women in terms of a Lockean analogy, defined with and by plants, namable by genus and species, and cultivated or grafted according to horticultural science. The plants, like their gardeners, were elite species, and, as gems of the colonial garden, they were metaphors for their owners, who understood the ties between the social order and natural law. Gardens, and the cultivated flowers they produced, were analogous to civilization and the superior character it nurtured.

Copley used flowers and fruits as gendered objects that express feminine accomplishment, virtue, and class distinction. He displayed masculine prowess with a different set of gendered objects: business ledgers, transatlantic ships, and quill pens. Animals, however, were the province of both men and women, though a particular species of animal was often assigned to one sex or the other. For example, birds usually accompany woman sitters. They are exotic, typically parrots and hummingbirds, which trumpeted class privilege because they were imported from the Caribbean and Latin America. Almost invariably Copley showed birds in transaction with women, the objective being the display of the sitter’s, not the bird’s, skill.²⁴ Most audacious among the demonstrations of female skill of this sort are the portraits in which birds have alighted on their mistresses’ hands: for example, Elizabeth Ross (fig. 2.5) has a white dove that balances itself on her finger by raising its wings.

The trained bird, like the cultivated flowers and fruits in Copley’s pictures, reflected, by means of a Lockean analogy, on the semblance of the essential woman. Though Locke was not widely read in midcentury America, his theory penetrated the behavioral pedagogy of the colonies. For instance, polite girls and young ladies in America were encouraged as part of their education to train birds. Writing in 1777 in *The Young Ladies School of Arts*, Hannah Robertson recommended a number of activities that would improve character. She offered detailed instructions on how to make gum flowers that imitate “roses, tulips, anemonies, ranu[n]culas, plainthos, daisies, auriculas” and on how to clean shells from India and the Red Sea and arrange them in decorative grottoes. She also gave instructions on the keeping and care of tamed birds, detailing how young Americans could breed, cage, nest, and feed canaries and even how they might wean chicks away from a mother hen.²⁵ Copley’s Mary MacIntosh Royall (see fig. 2.3) clearly was one of the young girls of the era who was trained according to a Lockean method like Robertson’s. The viewer observing Miss Royall calmly balance a quivering ruby-throated hummingbird on a fingertip is



Figure 2.5 John Singleton Copley, *Elizabeth Ross (Mrs. William Tyng)*, c. 1767. Oil on canvas, 50 × 40 inches. Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, M. and M. Karolik Collection of Eighteenth-Century American Arts.

meant to understand that exceptional stunt as a sign of the young lady’s exceptional character. Even though Mary may never have conducted such an impressive trick, in the fictional spaces of Copley’s picture the bird serves to lay claim to the sitter’s moral accomplishment.²⁶

Dogs also figured in Copley’s vocabulary of Lockean tropes on the character of women. All the dogs he depicted are house pets that are objects of affection, rather than laboring or sporting animals: for instance, the dog that nestles in Mary Sherburne Bower’s lap (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), the one that wears a floral necklace and admires Elizabeth Royall, and the inquisitive creature that watches an anonymous young lady (*Young Lady with a Bird and Dog*, 1767, The Toledo Museum of Art). The dogs in these three portraits are all King Charles spaniels, which were exported to America and considered symbols of high status.²⁷ In England, spaniels and also hounds and greyhounds were breeds whose ownership was restricted by law to the aristocracy. Though that law did not apply to America, in the colonies the King Charles spaniel was nonetheless associated with the English court and the seventeenth-century Cavalier rulers, Charles I and Charles II. Ironically, these kings had epitomized



Figure 2.6 John Singleton Copley, *Boy with Squirrel* (Henry Pelham), 1765. Oil on canvas, 30¼ × 25 inches. Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, gift of the artist's great-granddaughter.

profligacy and unseemly luxury for the original American Puritans, but in the 1760s the nonutilitarian dog named for the second Charles was a potent emblem for elite American women who sought ways to declare their privileged and leisured status through images that spoke of pampering and training animals.

As spaniels were the province of upper-class girls and women, squirrels were the sport of privileged children, usually boys (fig. 2.6). “Boys frequently nurse this beautiful and active animal,” stated an eighteenth-century encyclopedia.²⁸ Unlike dogs, they were not born and bred as fully domesticated house pets but instead were wild animals brought into a civilized state through training, which again, following Lockean pedagogy, in turn improved the trainer. In Copley’s portraits all the squirrels, like their masters, have been civilized. Yet the rodents are nevertheless held in check with training collars and chains. Henry Pelham, for example, loosely holds a chain to an “easily trained”²⁹ flying squirrel that nibbles on the meat of nuts, the shells of which litter a polished table.

The chains attached to pet squirrels were themselves tropes applied to childhood. In 1784 Benjamin Franklin wrote a parodic epitaph on the squirrel Mungo, who led a luxurious life and was fed daily “the choicest viands by the fair hands of an indulgent mistress.” But in his quest for more freedom, the squirrel wandered away, only to be met by “the merciless fangs of wanton cruel Ranger,”

a dog. Franklin ended his tongue-in-cheek story with a parable that sheds some light on the broad meaning of Copley’s chained squirrels. “Who blindly seek more liberty,” Franklin wrote, “whether subjects, sons, squirrels or daughters, that apparent restraint is real liberty, yielding peace and plenty with security.”³⁰ Both Franklin and Copley, writing and painting in the tradition of Locke, understood the powerful linkage in America between the methods of training animals and the moral development of children. Restrained yet free, like his squirrel, Henry Pelham’s face radiates the peace that is the reward of the new Enlightenment belief in the nurturing and protection of youth.

The squirrels, dogs, fruits, flowers, and fabrics in Copley’s portraits could all have been owned by his sitters. Though specific documentation about the majority of his sitters is not available, it is known that squirrels and flowers were found in the homes of the elite in Boston, New York, and other cities and towns before the Revolution. But sometimes in picturing a person Copley created a situation that was overtly fictional by using props that could not have been owned by his subject. In these works fictional objects set a theatrical stage for a sitter’s role playing. In his eight-foot portrait of Nathaniel Sparhawk (see fig. 2.2), for example, Copley configured the justice of the Inferior Court of Common Pleas in a superior pose set against uncommon architecture.³¹ A merchant from Kittery, Maine, Sparhawk had experienced mixed fortunes despite his marriage into the wealthy Pepperrell family in 1742. At one point, in 1758, he had to put up his property for auction, the colonial equivalent of bankruptcy. However, the following year he was rescued by the death of his father-in-law, William Pepperrell, an English peer, who left his fortune not to Sparhawk but to Sparhawk’s wife and their son.

Nonetheless, Copley’s grand portrait commemorates Sparhawk’s ascendancy to the apex of class structure, social position, and wealth. Its extraordinary scale and size must reflect a conscious effort on the part of Copley and Sparhawk to challenge—and surpass—John Smibert’s monumental painting of Sir William Pepperrell (Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts), one of five portraits of the heroes of the siege of Louisburg, which took place during King George’s War of 1740–1748. In fact, a total of three of the great Louisburg portraits, originally commissioned from John Smibert and Robert Feke to be placed in civic spaces, were hanging in Sir William’s house in Kittery when he died and therefore would have been familiar to Sparhawk.

Compared to these pictures, which glorify civic disinterestedness and military acumen, Copley’s *Nathaniel Sparhawk* is purely self-congratulatory. It exalts only the class ambitions of the sitter, to the degree that some passages veer into the preposterous. Dressed in expensive silk velvet and arranged in a pose based on an English mezzotint by James McArdell, Sparhawk leans against the



Figure 2.7 John Singleton Copley, *Mrs. Thomas Gage* (Margaret Kemble), 1771. Oil on canvas, 50 × 40 inches. The Putnam Foundation, Timken Museum of Art, San Diego.

plinth of a colossal fluted column unknown in America. Pentimenti show that the buttons of his waistcoat were moved to the right in order to inflate the curve of his stomach, converting a skinny man into the preferred image of a fat squire who has the taste—as well as the means and the appetite—to eat like a king, in mimicry of the English. In his left hand he holds an architectural drawing for some grand building that cannot be identified. And, most audaciously, he stands before a stunning classical arcade far more reminiscent of sixteenth-century Italy than eighteenth-century Maine. It is the implausibility of Sparhawk's pictorial circumstances that speaks to his real desire to be perceived as a gentleman in the manner of his aristocratic father-in-law, Sir William.

In his stunning portrait of Margaret Kemble Gage (fig. 2.7), wife of Thomas Gage, who was commander in chief of the British army in North America, Copley presents the sitter uncorseted and wrapped in a brilliant red taffeta caftan, confecting her as an exotic Turkish woman.³² Copley embellished the oriental metaphor by adding to the costume a silk hair scarf that looks like a turban and a blue belt that is cinched high and embroidered in a floral design. Moreover, along the same orientaling line, he constructed a languid sexuality for his sitter, manifested in her dreamy eyes and in her glossy brown hair that escapes the

loosely fitted scarf and cascades sensually over her shoulder and chest. It is a sexuality situated in the gesture of the left hand that holds the dress and presses up against her thigh; in the sinuous curves of the camelback sofa, itself a furniture form from west Asia; and in a lolling pose so relaxed and expressive of idleness and self-indulgence as to challenge contemporary codes of polite bodily conduct.

The portrait calls up the notion of the courtesan. Yet it is clear that the pictured persona of the harem woman has nothing to do with Mrs. Gage's normal conduct or dress: her turban is lightly attached, as if a studio accessory; a proper eighteenth-century chemise peeks through the openings of the caftan; and a fine, brass-tacked American sofa of about 1770 frames her performance. Mrs. Gage plays her role lightly.³³ Like the character Charlotte in George Colman's play of 1776 *Man and Wife*, she might, in anticipation of her performance in a costume party, be prepared to slip "on [her] dress, which is a blue Turkish habit, directly after dinner, and in that . . . shall expect you about seven o'clock."³⁴

It was understandable that Mrs. Gage might wish to be portrayed in *turquerie*, for that was the thing to do in England. In English elite culture going Turkish had been and was a custom best exemplified by the portraits of and writings by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who occasionally played the role of an oriental woman in public.³⁵ It was also popular to act out Turkishness in the context of another English elite custom, the masquerade, at which the harem woman was a popular disguise because, of all the identities a woman could assume, it offered the most exotic and erotically liberating possibilities.

But in America actually assuming Turkish dress and taking part in masquerades would have been daring if not impossible.³⁶ Margaret Kemble Gage could not walk the streets of New York with such bodily or sartorial abandon, nor could she entertain at home that way. Nor could she attend the sexually liberating masquerades that were available to her contemporaries in England. Nonetheless, she was an elite Englishwoman by marriage and continued to think of herself as such. And that is where Copley entered. His project was to construct for her an imagined self, a desired role, a public face that American social practice could not condone but that representational practice could. In the fictive spaces of Copley's portrait, a faux sultana could participate, if only two-dimensionally, in the intoxicating English vogue for masquerading, dressing up, and role playing.

At stake in the portrait was one of Mrs. Gage's social identities. Here Copley fashioned for her an image meant to gain purchase not only with the guest in her home but also, however tacitly, with the sitter herself and, undoubtedly, with the society in which she was situated. This image was the tool Margaret Kemble

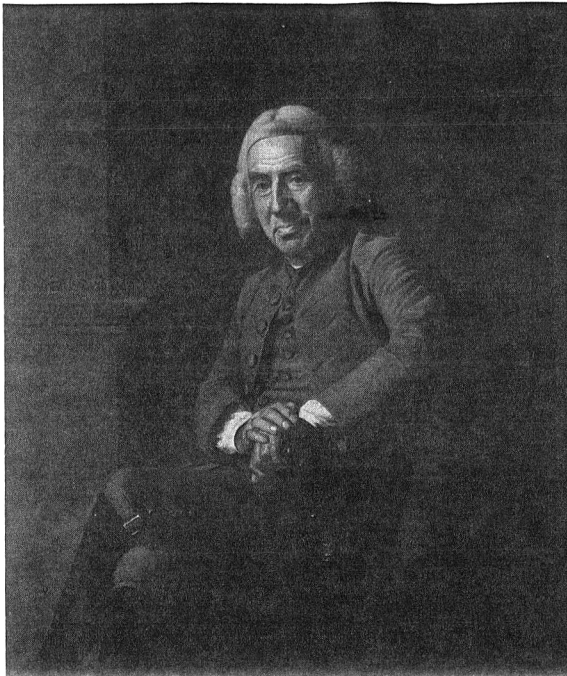


Figure 2.8 John Singleton Copley, *Eleazer Tyng*, 1772. Oil on canvas, $49\frac{3}{4} \times 40\frac{1}{8}$ inches. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., gift of the Avalon Foundation.

Gage used to connect with a social group from which she was distanced. It made the portrait a material artifact that could generate a social discourse that otherwise did not exist for her. It was one of the masks she wore in the dramaturgy of social life.

As much as luxury objects defined class and character in the portraits of Sparhawk, Gage, and Boylston, the denial of ostentation could be just as telling. Copley's portrait of Eleazer Tyng (fig. 2.8), for instance, is brutally unadorned. Yet the sitter was a wealthy landowner who had inherited his family's seventeenth-century estate on the Merrimac River. Why would he not engage in the lavish anthropological display that was the pictorial convention of his class? Probably because Tyng, who was Puritan and eighty-two years old at the time the portrait was painted, came from an older, more modest, less flamboyant, less anglicized culture than Copley's younger elites.

Moreover, Copley and Tyng seem to have declared plainness a virtue, for the astringency of the sitter and his accoutrements contradicts the values that inform, say, Copley's portrait of Nathaniel Sparhawk (see fig. 2.2). This astringency is evident in the green Windsor chair on which Tyng is posed, a simple country piece far removed from the rococo furniture in high English style in

Copley's more lavish pictures. Tyng's suit, too, is simple, made of homely wool broadcloth, not silk or velvet. His stockings are black, instead of the more fashionable white. His full white shirtsleeves are those of a loose-fitting worker's smock, similar to the one worn by Paul Revere in his portrait (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). And, to complete the image of a workingman from a simpler time, there is dirt under his fingernails.

Copley's project in his portrait of John Hancock (fig. 2.9) carried the act of simplification into the realm of politics. The written accounts of Hancock's life tell a consistent story: he was among the most fashionable, socially flamboyant, and politically ambitious figures in pre-Revolutionary Boston. In the year Copley painted his portrait, Hancock inherited his uncle Thomas's fortune, his mansion on Beacon Hill, and the House of Hancock, the largest trading firm in the port city. In Boston Hancock was conspicuous for wearing lavender suits, driving a bright yellow carriage, and exercising an extravagantly expensive taste for English goods.

Yet Copley's Hancock is an ascetic man. He wears a stylish but simple dark blue wool frock coat, the plainness and practicality of which sharply contrast with the opulence and frivolity of the brightly colored velvet garments that he favored. He sits on an outdated Queen Anne chair of about 1740. His environment is devoid of any markers that might reveal him as a leisured person—he is not at home, nor surrounded by the luxurious things that he admired and owned. Most startling, given Hancock's reputation for ignoring the financial details of his uncle's sprawling business, he is portrayed tending account books, holding a quill pen, with an inkstand nearby, ready to make entries in his ledger or just finished with the task.

In the context of a culture that viewed luxury objects as signs of elite class, Hancock's portrait would seem to deny his true status in the community. The open ledger that is filled with entries represents a numerical itemization of his mercantile activity. But otherwise the picture says little about his status, almost every material index of his social position having been omitted. Compared to his ultrarich merchant peers, such as Nicholas Boylston (see fig. 2.1), who are presented as princes in their sumptuous portraits by Copley, Hancock looks like a minor trader, a small-businessman who tends his own books and is proud to be shown as such.

What would have motivated Copley to fashion Hancock into a modest, unadorned, disciplined man who has denied himself the trappings of wealth and class that were available to him and were deemed essential elements of portraiture by current representational practice? Why, in the year of his promotion to the summit of wealth and class structure in Boston, would Hancock

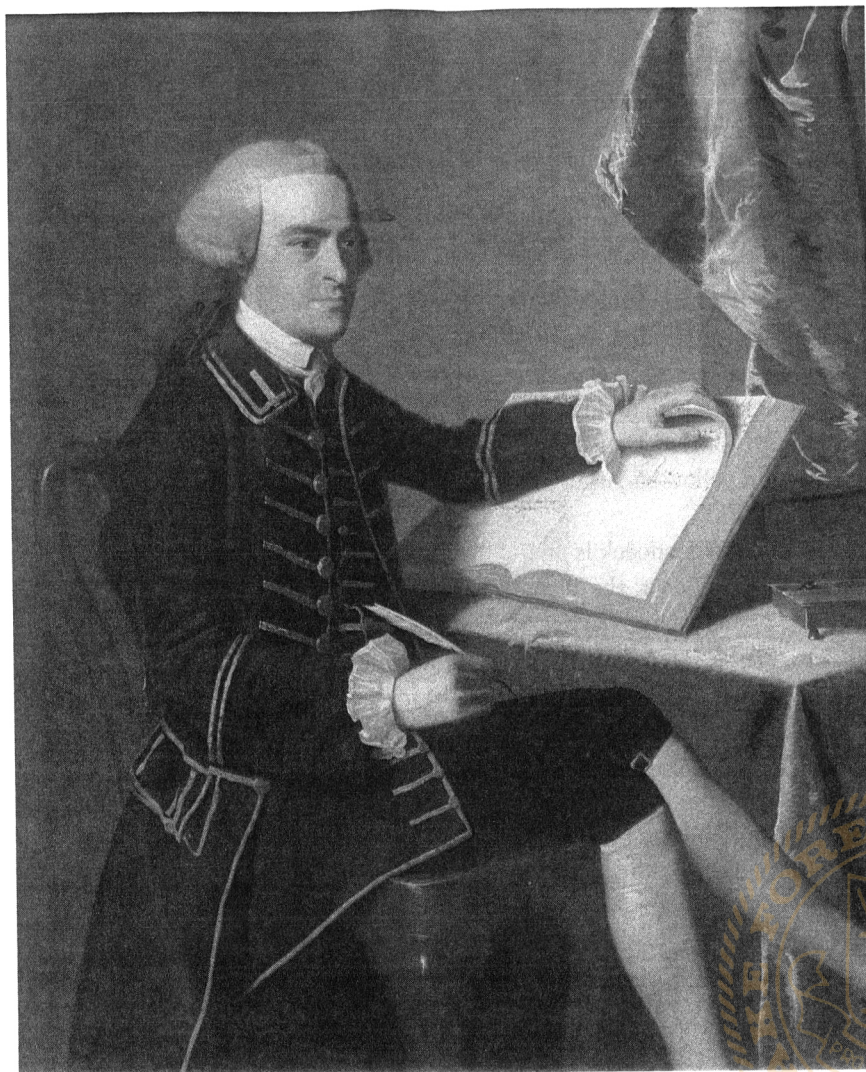


Figure 2.9 John Singleton Copley, *John Hancock*, 1765. Oil on canvas, $49\frac{1}{2} \times 40\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, deposited by the City of Boston.

approach Copley for a portrait that fraudulently presents him as the house accountant?

One can only speculate. It is possible that his choice of this guise was politically motivated. Hancock was beginning to seek public office in the mid-1760s. At a time when demagogues such as Samuel Adams were launching blistering

attacks on privilege and when populist mobs were demolishing the houses of Thomas Hutchinson, Andrew Oliver, and other elites in power, the politically ambitious and materially flamboyant Hancock was particularly vulnerable to shifting public opinion. Adams, for example, called for the disempowerment of the elites at the precise moment they were extravagantly flaunting their wealth by indulging their taste for great urban mansions, ornate furniture, elaborate weddings, grandiose portraits, and a ceaseless and, to radicals, seemingly grotesque mimicry of the English, financed by the exploitation of workers and the poor.³⁷

The situation was perilous for Hancock, but he was a brilliant tactician. In the disintegrating Boston of 1765 he presented himself as a self-sacrificing man of the people. He participated in the boycott of English goods, at the risk of ruining his own trading firm. And he spouted radical rhetoric, calling for the beheading of all holders of royal office. Unlike many of his ever more isolated elite peers who became increasingly wrapped up in the social rituals of an earlier, safer era, Hancock anticipated how he might be a leader in a new political era by publicly identifying with the laboring classes. Through both verbal and visual rhetoric this patrician was able to project an image of republican virtue, frugality, and simplicity.

Privately he believed in class structure, distrusted those he thought beneath himself, rebuked the mobs for sacking Hutchinson's house, retained all the perquisites of his class, and was more concerned with his commercial interests than with individual rights.³⁸ Nonetheless, his crafty political gambits worked, winning him immense popularity and election to the General Court in the midst of the Stamp Act crisis of 1766 and later to the positions of governor of Massachusetts and president of the Continental Congress.

The gulf between the private and public Hancock, between the elegant patrician and the man of the people, is bridged by the critical agency of Copley's portrait. Why did Copley portray Hancock as a worker, unadorned and almost old-fashioned? Because of Hancock's self-protective yet self-promotional need in 1765 to be seen as a new representative man. Hanging in Hancock's politically resonant home, the site of countless political events, the portrait surely identified him as a wealthy man, even though no luxurious objects are included in it. The very large size of the picture (roughly 50 by 40 inches) and the thick ledger filled with numbers that is displayed in it indicate this status. However, set in his house amid an extraordinarily rich ensemble of the finest American and English decorative arts, the picture must have seemed out of place. With its disciplined forms, astringent composition, simple props, and working-man's ethos, it speaks in the ethical and aesthetic language of the antimaterialist,

neo-Puritan, nascently republican culture that sprang up and began to find a voice in 1765 and propelled a revolution a decade later.

Until 1765 Hancock had been a politician manqué who coveted high office. But that year, when he contemplated running for one of four seats on the General Court, Hancock commissioned a portrait from Copley that expresses a new kind of virtue, crafted from republican wool. The picture can be considered an agent in his populist gambit, which took many forms. He made the decision—honored only temporarily, in 1765—to cease acquiring foreign goods. He had his ship carry the order that overturned the Stamp Act to Boston, where he personally announced the news of the repeal to the public. He mounted fireworks in celebration of the repeal on the lawn of his mansion and provided glasses of Madeira for the crowds there. And he chose the visual motif of a working elite for himself in Copley's portrait, which, in the demonology of John Hancock, is the equivalent of a log-cabin myth. These acts of antimaterialist purification, these self-congratulatory rituals of self-conscious denial, were the manifest signs of what the new public man in America would become.

Copley's portrait of Hancock and his pictures of other colonial men and women epitomize Tuckerman's notion of the "counterfeit presentment." Whether fashioning the image of a simple man such as Hancock or a grandee such as Nathaniel Sparhawk, arranging Mrs. Gage's masquerade, or constructing a Lockean analogy between the cultivation of flowers and of women, Copley was engaged in the audacious tooling of identity for those elite American men and women who felt compelled to be perceived as more than they were. As Jonathan Richardson claimed in his *Theory of Painting* in 1715, this ability to "raise the character; to divest an unbred person of his rusticity, and give him something at least of a gentleman," to, in other words, fashion, embellish, and even distort while retaining his likeness, "is absolutely necessary to a good face-painter; but it is the most difficult part of his art, and the least attained."³⁹

Visual certification of character and class was especially important in a colonial society in which position could not be secured by inherited title. "In Europe," wrote Benjamin Franklin, one's birth "has indeed a Value; but it is a Commodity that cannot to be carried to a worse market than that of America."⁴⁰ In Boston elites somehow had, literally, to earn status and authority by accumulating wealth and other forms of accomplishment and had to prove their power on a daily basis by displaying the kinds of things and images that emblemized class. With traditional sources of status "surrounded and squeezed," as historian Gordon Wood puts it, colonial Americans were measured "by cultivated, man-made criteria having to do with manners, taste, and character."⁴¹

These material attributes, which allowed for the deduction of character and

class, were exactly the meritocratic criteria that led themselves to manipulation in the hands of Copley, who was the master imagist of eighteenth-century America. His artistic genius lies not merely in an inexplicable ability to teach himself how to paint as well as he did or to make his art look modern but also in his peerless understanding of the codes of patrician representation that were current in Boston and, by extension, in London. He, as no one before and few afterward, could provide clients with what they wanted, and sometimes provide them with even more than they could imagine they wanted.

Copley understood implicitly an early modern condition according to which the material appearance of character becomes the demonstrable proof of character. He postulated, de facto, that personality could be made available from the details of personal affectations, that character was immanent in material appearances, and that the reading of things assembled in a portrait was tantamount to knowing the essential person who was pictured. His project in portraiture was not the creation of accurate likenesses but the production of authenticating narratives about people. As such, he was part of a perceptual conspiracy, also enacted by other craftsmen of his period, which presented the artifices of body form and luxury objects as natural representations of character.⁴²

Since it claimed identity through an assemblage of discrete elements, Copley's representation of a person's character could be disassembled by a viewer into an inventory of an individual's appearances and possessions. Copley's interpretive method assumed that personal identity is visible and additive, instead of concealed and ineffable, that status was a projection, not just a possession. It assumed, moreover, that viewers had the ability to scrutinize, to make distinctions between objects and thus between individuals. Copley must have realized that in his culture this was the analytical means by which people evaluated one another, by which, to invoke the mercantile language of the era, individuals audited individuals. This was Copley's method. And surely it was the method that John Adams used to assess Nicholas Boylston's character the evening he visited him in the winter of 1766.

This emphasis on the field of semantic display was Copley's radical contribution to the anthropology of personhood in pre-Revolutionary America. When he was at his best in assembling the signs of a person, in his portraits of Nicholas Boylston, Nathaniel Sparhawk, and Margaret Kemble Gage, for example, he pushed the codes for the representation of character into realms previously unknown in America. It is not his descriptive technique alone but Copley's unsurpassed ability to reify the bourgeoisie's mythic perception of itself that is the critical basis for the claim that he is the supreme portraitist of the colonial era.

Notes

This article is an abbreviated version of an essay that first appeared in *John Singleton Copley in America*, exh. cat., Metropolitan Museum of Art, ed. Carrie Rebora and Paul Staiti (New York, 1996), 53–77. Locations are provided for paintings that were illustrated in the original publication but are not reproduced here.

The first epigraph is from Charles Baudelaire, "Salon of 1846," in *Art in Paris, 1845–1862: Salons and Other Exhibitions Reviewed by Charles Baudelaire*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (1965; rpt. New York, 1981), 88. The second is from Henry T. Tuckerman, *Book of the Artists: American Artist Life* (New York, 1867), 75–76.

1. Gordon Wood defines the elite as the class of gentlemen and gentlewomen, "the better sort," as they were called then. People who were mechanics, artisans, laborers, and those without property were "the lower sort" (Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* [New York, 1992], pp. 24–42).

2. Probate inventories in Suffolk County, Mass., for instance, overwhelmingly place family portraits in the semipublic spaces of the first floor of a house.

3. I admire the critical language and interpretive methods of Marcia Pointon's *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, 1993). I am using the words *character* and *social identity* interchangeably. By those words I mean to follow Colin Campbell's definition of "character as the name for that entity which individuals constantly strive to create out of the raw material of their personhood. It is thus not equatable with personality, as that term usually covers the sum total of an individual's psychic and behavioural characteristics, nor is it something which can simply be understood as the unproblematic outcome of dominant culture patterns or processes of socialization. On the contrary, character covers only that portion of the conduct of individuals which they can be expected to take responsibility for, and is the entity imputed to underlie and explain this willed aspect of their behaviour. As such it has an essentially ethical quality not possessed by the concept of personality" (Colin Campbell, "Understanding Traditional and Modern Patterns of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century England: A Character-Action Approach," in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter [London, 1993], 45).

4. *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, ed. Lyman H. Butterfield (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), 1: 294.

5. Pointon discusses this briefly in *Hanging the Head*, 6–7.

6. In discussing the relationship between luxury goods and social differences, I am following the theoretical and historical writings of a number of scholars, particularly Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass., 1984); see esp. his chapter "The Dynamics of the Field," 226–56. I have also been influenced by the sociological theory of Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford, 1987); as well as by Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976); and Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, N.Y., 1959). Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rocheberg-Halton concisely state the premise at work in this essay: "All people can, and presumably most people do, use symbolic objects to express dimly perceived possibilities of their selves to serve as models for possible goals"

(Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rocheberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* [Cambridge, 1981], 28). Anthropologists Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood equate the symbolic value and the use value of objects in *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption* (New York, 1979). Grant McCracken calls goods "tokens in the status game" in his *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (Bloomington, Ind., 1990), 17. The most intelligent overviews of the theory of objects and status are Jean-Christophe Agnew, "Coming up for Air: Consumer Culture in Historical Perspective," in Brewer and Porter, *Consumption and the World of Goods*, 19–39; and Ann Smart Martin, "Makers, Buyers, and Users: Consumerism as a Material Culture Framework," *Winterthur Portfolio* 28 (Summer–Autumn 1993): 141–57. T. H. Breen writes specifically about the relationship between goods and identity in eighteenth-century America; see his excellent essays "'Baubles of Britain': The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 119 (May 1988): 73–104; "An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690–1776," *Journal of British Studies* 25 (October 1986): 467–99; and "The Meaning of 'Likeness': American Portrait Painting in an Eighteenth-Century Consumer Society," *Word and Image* 6 (October–December 1990): 325–50.

7. Richard L. Bushman believes that viewers in the eighteenth century were able to read a person's character cumulatively, through one visual opportunity after another (Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* [New York, 1992], 61–99).

8. Roland E. Fleischer has attempted to read the portraits in the traditional, iconic way in "Emblems and Colonial American Painting," *American Art Journal* 20, no. 3 (1988): 2–35.

9. Wood, *Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 32.

10. Quoted in Kenneth Silverman, *A Cultural History of the American Revolution: Painting, Music, Literature, and the Theatre in the Colonies and the United States from the Treaty of Paris to the Inauguration of George Washington, 1763–1789* (New York, 1976), 23.

11. William Carson, letter to Copley, Aug. 16, 1772, in Guernsey Jones, ed., *Letters and Papers of John Singleton Copley and Henry Pelham, 1739–1776* (Boston, 1914), 187–88.

12. See Thaddeus Harris, "Fat," in Thaddeus Harris, *The Minor Encyclopedia; or Cabinet of General Knowledge* (Boston, 1799), 2: 250.

13. The best recent study of manners is Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 30–60, 63–69. Bushman points out that the self-conscious control of the body was the most visible way in which a gentleperson expressed himself or herself.

14. Lord Chesterfield [Philip Dormer Stanhope], *Letters to His Son*, 3d ed. (New York, 1775), 1: 39, quoted in Christina Dallett Hemphill, "Manners for Americans: Interaction Rituals and the Social Order, 1620–1860," (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1988), 191.

15. Chesterfield, *Letters to His Son*, 1: 86, quoted in Hemphill, "Manners for Americans," 192.

16. Chesterfield was first published in America in 1775, but his influence had permeated Anglo-American society before then; see Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 36.

17. Chesterfield, *Letters to His Son*, 1: 86, quoted in Hemphill, "Manners for Americans," 193.

18. Mrs. Winthrop's son, James, chronicled the dates his nectarines bloomed and fruited in Cambridge; see Ann Leighton, *American Gardens in the Eighteenth Century: "For Use and for Delight"* (Boston, 1986), 235.

19. Henry Pelham advised his half-brother that Hancock "can supply you with every Fruit Tree, flowering Tree except the Tul[ip] shrub or Bush, that you want" (Henry Pelham, letter to Copley, Sept. 10, 1771, in Jones, *Letters and Papers*, 158).

20. For the Hancocks, see W[illiam] T. Baxter, *The House of Hancock: Business in Boston, 1724–1775* (Cambridge, Mass., 1945), 67. The advertisement comes from the *Boston News-Letter*, Oct. 22, 1772.

21. For the idea of rearing, see Mrs. Anne Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady, with Sketches of Manners and Scenery in America As They Existed Previous to the Revolution*, 2 vols. (London, 1808).

22. Both Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau repeatedly used the metaphor of cultivating plants to describe the proper pedagogical approach for the raising of gentlemen and gentlewomen. See Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution against Patriarchal Authority, 1750–1800* (Cambridge, 1982), 31–35.

23. Richard Steele, *The Spectator* 3 (London, 1750): 406. Americans had been introduced to the metaphorical association of gardening and moral education directly by Locke's writings, particularly his *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (London, 1693), and indirectly through popular English literature in eighteenth-century America, including Daniel Defoe's epic on the subject of education, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

24. The only portrait of a male by Copley that includes birds is *Thomas Aston Coffin*, ca. 1758 (Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Museum of Art, Utica, N.Y.). Though this picture seems to negate a thesis of gendered emblems, when he was painted Coffin was only about five years old, unbreeched, and thus not yet a subject for full masculine imagery.

25. Mrs. Hannah Robertson, *The Young Ladies School of Arts* (New York, 1777), 125. In addition, Robertson wrote "On the Nature and Signification of Colours," advising on the appropriate use of color in drapery (for example, "azure, signifies constancy," p. 25); and "On Emblems" (for example, "The Dove is mild and meek, clean of kind, plenteous in increase, forgetful of wrongs, for when their young ones are taken from them they mourn not," p. 27).

26. For birds symbolizing civility, see Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady*, 1: 166–68.

27. King Charles spaniels are now known as English toy spaniels. See Mary Forwood, *The Cavalier King Charles Spaniel* (London, 1967).

28. *Encyclopedia; or a Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Miscellaneous Literature* (Philadelphia, 1798), 10: 712–13.

29. *Ibid.*, 713.

30. Benjamin Franklin, "Epitaph on Miss Shipley's Squirrel, Killed by Her Dog," *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 10, 1784.

31. For a thorough discussion of the picture, see Carol Troyen, "John Singleton Copley and the Grand Manner: Colonel Nathaniel Sparhawk," *Journal of the Museum of Fine Arts* (Boston) 1 (1989): 96–103.

32. See Aileen Ribeiro, "Turquerie: Turkish Dress and English Fashion in the Eighteenth Century," *Connoisseur* 201 (May 1979): 17–23; and Pointon, *Hanging the Head*, 141–57.

33. Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford, Calif., 1986), 4–5.

34. George Colman, *Man and Wife*, in *The Plays of George Colman* (London, 1777), act 2, p. 31.

35. On Lady Montagu, see Pointon, *Hanging the Head*, 141–57.

36. See Bruce C. Daniels, "Sober Mirth and Pleasant Poisons: Puritan Ambivalence Towards Recreation and Leisure in Colonial New England," *American Studies* 34 (Spring 1993): 17–28; and Bruce C. Daniels, "Frolics for Fun: Dances, Weddings, and Dinner Parties in Colonial New England," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 21 (Summer 1993): 1–22.

37. On the subject of wealth and poverty in Boston, see Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970); and Jackson Turner Main, *The Social Structure of Revolutionary America* (Princeton, N.J., 1965).

38. As Nash puts it, in 1765 Hancock was not "risking his life and fortune for a return to arcadian simplicity" (*Urban Crucible*, 224).

39. Jonathan Richardson, *An Essay on the Theory of Painting* (London, 1715), 172.

40. *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Albert Henry Smyth (New York, 1907), 8: 605.

41. Wood, *Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 32.

42. Pointon eloquently claims that objects were "components in a language, in a vast repertoire of signifiers. . . . The subject of the portrait participates in the production of meanings that are not defined by reference to standards of likeness" (*Hanging the Head*, 112).