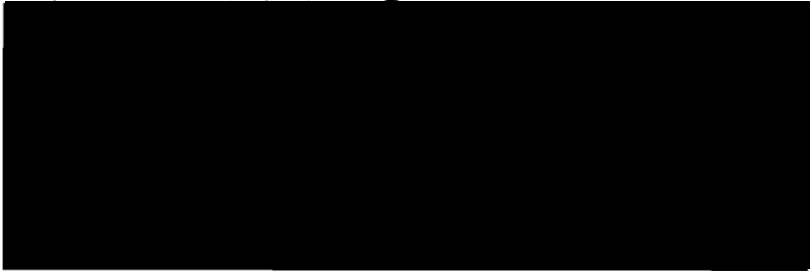
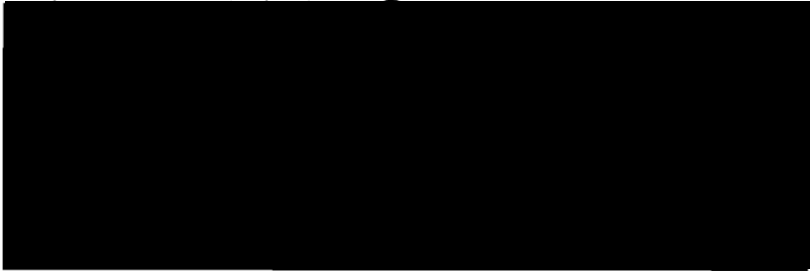
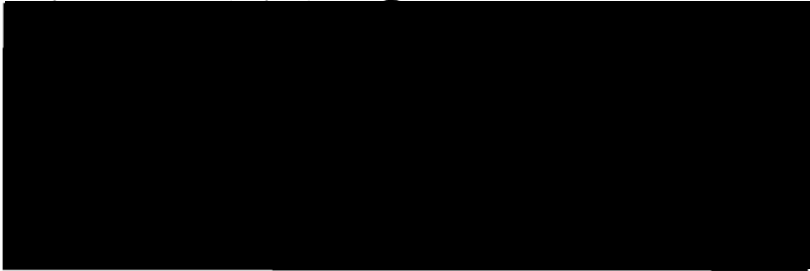
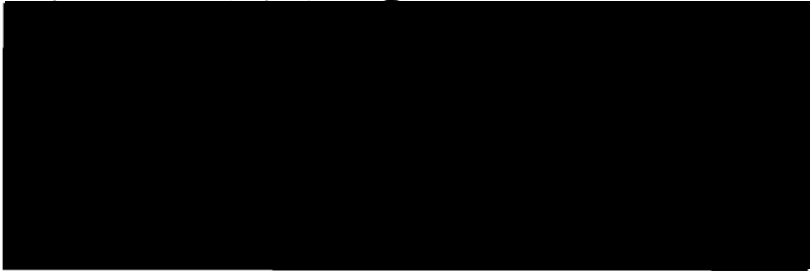
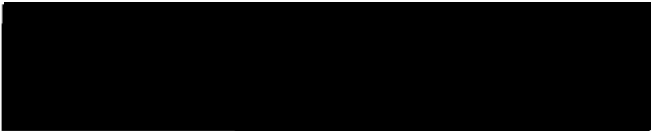
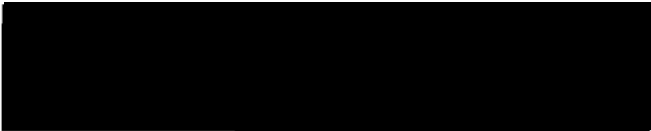


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Marie Antoinette was nothing short of an eighteenth-century fashion icon. Her style, behavior, and spending habits were considered unfit (even scandalous) for a queen. Nevertheless, her charm earned the attention—and criticism—of the French public. But how, exactly, did the fashion choices of the queen and the reception or perception of the public relate? The relationship between presentation, interpretation, and resulting public image applies to the discussion of reception within art history, as well as the understanding of everyday visual culture and the loaded power of imagery.

Austrian by birth and French by marriage, Marie Antoinette was a complex personality, to say the least. Although plenty has been written about Marie Antoinette's biography, little scholarship pursues the relationship between her portraiture and the evolution of her style. Portraits of Marie Antoinette provided the means in which various interpretations of her role as queen, wife, and mother could be presented to and assessed by the public. Three portraits in particular provide a window into significant intersections of dress, public expectations, and reception: Joseph Ducreux's *Archduchess Marie Antoinette*, Elisabeth Vigee-Lebrun's *Marie Antoinette en chemise*, and Adolf Ulrik von Wertmuller's *Marie Antoinette in the Gardens of Trianon with Her Two Children*. The following two questions guided the research and served as the backbone for the project: How did the depictions of Marie Antoinette form or reflect public interpretation? How did fashion and the presentation of Marie Antoinette influence the reception of the portrait? The interpretations and reception of the three portraits were analyzed in terms of the expectations and decorum of Marie Antoinette in late eighteenth century French society, through the iconography and trends of French fashion. Utilizing four art history

methodologies, I examined the artists' respective oeuvres, studied the symbols used in a particular piece (iconography), examined the portraits from the perspective of women (feminist art history), and examined the works commissioned by the patrons (patronage studies).

Research in the art history field calls for an understanding of multiple aspects of a given culture. My thesis explored the role of presentation and public expectations in portraiture of Marie Antoinette, requiring a cross-section of many disciplines, including gender studies, eighteenth century French political culture, and the history of fashion. I began collecting materials in September of 2007, exhausting the Griffin catalog with searches of "Marie Antoinette" and "eighteenth century fashion." Dena Goodman's *Writings on the Body of a Queen* compiled multiple historians' works and served as the principle resource for locating scholarship on Marie Antoinette. Desmond Hosford's "The Queen's Hair: Marie-Antoinette, Politics, and DNA," from *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, and Vivian Gruder's "The Question of Marie-Antoinette: The Queen and Public Opinion before the Revolution," in *Oxford Journal of French History*, are both examples of articles that cite Dena Goodman's book. Last, but not least, Grove Art Online, which included the text from *The Dictionary of Art* and *The Oxford Companion to Western Art*, was the definitive encyclopedia and springboard for further investigation of late eighteenth century art styles and portraiture conventions.

Locating translated primary sources was, by far, the most difficult aspect of research. The majority of secondary sources cite various letters, memoirs, and Salon criticism in the original French language available in obscure Parisian collections. A few

scholars, including Mary Sheriff and Olivier Bernier, provide brief selections of translated primary sources in their reviews of literature. Searching the Griffin and Summit databases for primary sources and select references from the work of Mary Sheriff and Caroline Weber provided very few translated matches. The translated versions of Elisabeth Vigee-Lebrun's memoir (*Memoirs of Madame Vigee-Lebrun*, translated by Gerard Shelley), correspondence between Marie Antoinette and her mother, the Empress Maria Theresa (*Secrets of Marie Antoinette*, translated and edited by Olivier Bernier), and Jean-Louise-Henriette Campan's memoir (*Memoirs of the Private Life of Marie Antoinette*, revised by Frances Graves) were sources that proved invaluable in the analysis of the Ducreux, Vigee-Lebrun, and Wertmuller portraits. In the case of Campan's memoir, the most recent available translation was last published in 1917. As for Bernier's work, editorial comments (not to mention the title itself) fluctuate between romanticized history and objective scholarship, providing translations of letters interspersed with biographical information about Marie Antoinette. Though the availability of translated primary sources proved to be a challenge, the Summit catalog provided easy access to the necessary materials.

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Introduction

Imitation is the highest form of flattery—but at the height of Marie Antoinette’s influence on fashion, she also garnered severe criticism. How the Queen of France “dressed up,” and how she adhered to the royal rules for dress determined the reception of the public image of Marie Antoinette. Three portraits in particular demonstrate the correlation between the queen’s fashion, her popularity and the public’s perceptions throughout her life: *Archduchess Marie Antoinette* of 1769 by Jean-Baptiste Charpentier after Joseph Ducreux at the Musee National du Chateau de Versailles et de Trianon, *Marie Antoinette en chemise*, also known as *Marie Antoinette en gaule*, of 1783 by Elizabeth Louise Vigee-Lebrun, in a private collection in Kronberg, Germany, and *Marie Antoinette in the Gardens of Trianon with Her Two Children* of 1785 by Adolf Ulrik von Wertmuller in the Swedish National Museum of Stockholm. These three portraits also represent three major stages within Marie Antoinette’s life: becoming French, scandalous fashion icon, and conservative mother. Ducreux’s small portrait of Marie Antoinette in a blue gown as Austrian archduchess turned French *dauphine*, or wife of the heir to the throne, was commissioned for King Louis XV in 1769. Vigee-Lebrun’s painting, presumably commissioned for Marie Antoinette, portrayed the queen in a cutting edge fashion, a white cotton gown called the *chemise*, that was considered unbecoming and inappropriate to her title at the time of the painting’s exhibit in the Salon of 1783. Wertmuller’s work of 1785 featuring the queen in traditional French court dress with her two children, the *Madame Royale* (the title given

to the king's eldest daughter) and the *dauphin* Louis-Josephe (heir to the throne), was also criticized by the public as "indecorous."ⁱ

Portraits served as a powerful means of assessing or condemning the character and physical presentation of Marie Antoinette. She was judged according to the standards of appropriate queenly decorum and the conventions of monarchical portraiture, often being compared to the previous queen of France, Marie Leczynska. The Polish wife of King Louis XV, Marie Leczynska bore ten children over the course of eleven years and remained relatively unscathed from slander, ignored by the king and the public in favor of the king's mistress.ⁱⁱ Madame de Pompadour was the official mistress of Louis XV until her death in 1764, followed by Madame du Barry until the king's death in 1774. Marie Leczynska had little influence on French style, paling in comparison to the king's fashionable mistresses, Madame de Pompadour and Madame du Barry.ⁱⁱⁱ Marie Antoinette, on the other hand, was childless until her eighth year of marriage to Louis-Auguste, the target of salacious court gossip, and an influential trendsetter, or scandal maker, depending on interpretation. The last queen of France, as Marie Antoinette became known, proved no match for Marie Leczynska's seemingly spotless reputation as quiet, subservient wife.

Research Questions

How did the depictions of Marie Antoinette in Ducreux's *Archduchess Marie Antoinette*, Vigee-Lebrun's *Marie Antoinette en chemise*, and Wertmuller's *Marie Antoinette in the Gardens of Trianon with Her Two Children* form or reflect public interpretation? How did the role of fashion influence reception of the three portraits?

Methodology

Translated primary sources of Salon criticism, memoirs, and letters, along with analyses of the portraits themselves, form the foundation of the research. In addition, the scholarly work of Caroline Weber, Mary Sheriff, Pierre Saint-Amand, and Desmond Hosford will be reviewed. The interpretations and reception of the three portraits will be analyzed in terms of the expectations and decorum of Marie Antoinette in late eighteenth century French society, through the iconography and trends of French fashion. The following questions will be addressed: What was the setting of the portrait? Who saw the portrait (audience)? Who was the portrait commissioned for (or who was the patron)? What dress and hairstyle was worn? Was the depicted fashion imitated? Was the depicted fashion criticized? Was the portrait itself criticized?

Between Portraits: 1769 to 1783

In 1770, the archduchess of Austria married the *dauphin* Louis-Auguste and became the *dauphine* Marie Antoinette. Her arrival at Versailles was a mixture of celebration and skepticism: while the young couple symbolized the hope of deliverance from the moral decay of Louis XV's court, suspicion of Marie Antoinette's possible influence grew. Her opportunistic mother, the Empress Maria Theresa, was a source of concern for many in the French court, including King Louis XV's daughter, Madame Adelaide. Marie Antoinette's lady-in-waiting, Madame Campan, wrote, "if [Madame Adelaide] had the direction of the matter, she would not send for an Austrian."^{iv} To add to the charges against Marie Antoinette, the *dauphine* had a voracious appetite for fashion that secured the disdain of the ever-watchful French public and, ultimately,

sealed her fate as the frivolous *Autrichienne*. This term, meaning “Austrian,” represented the public’s distaste for Marie Antoinette, who was viewed suspiciously as an outsider. Her marriage also became the source of court gossip as rumors of the young *dauphine*’s frigidity and barrenness spread.^v In reality, the union between Louis-Auguste and Marie Antoinette remained unconsummated for seven years, due in part to a medical condition suffered by Louis-Auguste.^{vi} As a result, Marie Antoinette’s primary role as future queen—to bear a son and heir—proved an impossible task.

Following the death of Louis XV in May of 1774, the *dauphin* Louis-Auguste was crowned Louis XVI. After his coronation, Louis offered the Petit Trianon, an enclosed park with a small chateau built under Louis XV’s reign, as a present to Marie Antoinette.^{vii} The queen immediately began improving the gardens surrounding the Petit Trianon and closed the area to the court, spurring rumors that she was creating a “Little Vienna” for herself.^{viii} The hasty re-shaping of Versailles land garnered further distrust and fear of the *Autrichienne*’s influence on the king and the royal purse strings.

Upon her accession as queen, Marie Antoinette began her career as fashion icon of the French court and public. Imitation of the queen’s elaborate hairstyles and dresses led to increased spending, and consequently, her lady-in-waiting Madame Campan declared, “the general report was—that the Queen would be the ruin of all the French ladies.”^{ix} If the extravagance of Marie Antoinette’s wardrobe and projects, including the renovations at the Petit Trianon, warranted the concern of the French public, the queen’s gambling habits led to incessant scolding from her advisor, the comte de Mercy-Argenteau, and her mother, Empress Maria Theresa.^x Not only did her long

hours of card playing keep the queen from her husband (who slept in a separate bedroom to avoid disturbance when the queen retired), the accumulation of gambling-related debts left little money for charity, an activity traditionally favored by previous French queens like Marie Leczynska.^{xi}

In 1778, Marie Antoinette gave birth to a daughter, Marie Therese. While the birth of the *Madame Royale*, the official title of the king's eldest daughter, redeemed lingering doubts of the (king and) queen's fertility, the question of the queen's ability to produce an heir remained.^{xii} In addition to securing the title of mother, Marie Antoinette earned the reputation of a political meddler during the succession of Bavaria to Austria.^{xiii} The Empress Maria Theresa had pressured her daughter to influence the king in regards to the King of Prussia and the French alliance—the *Autrichienne* obliged her mother and, consequently, irritated the French foreign ministers Maurepas and Vergennes.^{xiv} Two years after the political squabble, Marie Theresa died. Had she lived another year, she would have seen the birth of the *dauphin*, Louis-Josephe, in 1781. The king and queen momentarily enjoyed the favor of the French public as the promise of an heir caused celebration throughout Versailles and Paris.^{xv}

Results and Discussion

Archduchess Marie Antoinette

By the time she was thirteen, Marie Antoinette was creating a sensation among Viennese ladies with the hairstyle known as "*a la Dauphine*."^{xvi} Loosely based on the *pompadour* hairstyle, which originated in the court of Louis XV—and made popular by the king's mistress, Madame de Pompadour—the style *a la Dauphine* featured a lightly

powdered upsweep with a slight pouf near the forehead.^{xvii} The style *a la Dauphine* was a result of the transformation of Marie Antoinette (daughter of the Holy Roman Emperor Francis I and Queen of Hungary and Bohemia Maria Theresa) from archduchess of Austria into eligible wife for Louis XV's grandson, the *dauphin* Louis-Auguste.^{xviii} Young Marie Antoinette was groomed in appearance, speech, and poise for the purpose of securing a political alliance between Austria and France—Gallicized, or made French, in the hopes of becoming the future queen of France.^{xix} The task of recording Marie Antoinette's makeover fell on the shoulders of the French pastellist, Joseph Ducreux (1735-1802).^{xx} Sent to Vienna by Louis XV, Ducreux spent two months in early 1769 sketching and painting multiple portraits of the archduchess Marie Antoinette.^{xxi} The Empress Maria Theresa was known to have reservations about an artist's ability to capture the true beauty of her daughter and Ducreux was not unique in this matter.^{xxii} As Mary Sheriff explains, the power of the portrait to "capture beauty, taken as a signifier of future fertility" pervaded contemporary thought.^{xxiii} Ducreux's *Archduchess Marie Antoinette* (figure 1) featured the sitter in the proper French court attire: the *robe a la francais*, or 'dress in the French [style].'^{xxiv} During the reign of Louis XV, the dress code at Versailles included the *robe a la francais* with wide *panier*, or side panels extending beyond the hips, and elaborate powdered wigs. Besides being the typical court fashion, the *robe a la francaise* (figure 7) was also the prominent style of women's dress throughout France from the 1740s until the 1770s, featuring a triangular silhouette with deep-cut décolletage, or neckline.^{xxv} The sheer abundance of bows, lace, and ribbons decorating the silken gowns, particularly on the bodice, displayed Rococo

extravagance.^{xxvi} The women's wigs of the 1770s were also ornate, towering over the wearer's head in a pile of powdered hair and often anchoring various accouterments.^{xxvii} The pyramidal shape of the woman's form, from the top of tall wigs to the exaggerated oval of the dress base, also embodied the excessiveness of the Rococo styles. Rococo, an artistic movement with origins in Italy, dominated French fashion, painting, and interior decoration from the early to mid-eighteenth century with an emphasis on ornamentation, lighthearted subject matter, and S-shaped curves.^{xxviii}

In the Charpentier copy of the Ducreux portrait, *Archduchess Marie Antoinette*, Marie Antoinette's identity as the 'Hapsburg other' was concealed under a blue and yellow palette reminiscent of the French Bourbon royal family's crest.^{xxix} Limiting references to the Hapsburg line, the Austrian royal family, even to the point of minimizing the archduchess' disagreeable "Hapsburg forehead" was deemed necessary for the greater purpose of securing the Franco-Austrian alliance.^{xxx} Ducreux painted the thirteen-year-old Marie Antoinette with her body at a slight angle and her pale blue eyes meeting the gaze of the viewer. The soft gray hair is arranged neatly on top of the archduchess' head, the pale blonde color hidden beneath powder, and the high Hapsburg forehead softened by the heightened *pompadour* style—all evidence of the Parisian coiffeur Larsenseur's labor.^{xxxi} The composition, though rather sparse, emphasized the face and dress of the young woman. Gestures, references to the setting, and attributes (or, simply, symbolic props) are absent. Desmond Hosford suggests the lack of narrative cues to be a deliberate choice of the artist to focus on the archduchess' hairstyle and dress.^{xxxii} The folds and creases of the blue silk neckpiece and the sleeves

on the dress repeat the rounded pleat-like texture of Marie Antoinette's hairdo.

Likewise, the wide cut of the dress' neckline and the exaggerated slope of the shoulders draws the viewer's eyes toward the upper half of the portrait. The overall air is one of demure regality.

Unlike portraits of Marie Antoinette before 1769, Charpentier-Ducreux's *Archduchess Marie Antoinette* presents the subject of the painting as a French woman, rather than a young Austrian girl. When Ducreux's work is compared to the pastel *Archduchess Marie-Antoinette of Austria* (figure 2) by Jean-Etienne Liotard, the contrast in physical depiction and style of Marie Antoinette is apparent. Jean-Etienne Liotard (1702-1789) pictured the seven-year-old Marie Antoinette in a pink gown with her sewing. Though surrounded by an air of precociousness, the archduchess appears physically young: her face is soft and round, her cheeks look untouched by rouge. Liotard featured young Marie Antoinette with a noticeably higher forehead than the Ducreux portrait. Though "[minimizing] the effect of a Hapsburg forehead that was too high for French taste" may have been in Ducreux's best interest, Liotard was not compelled to portray Marie Antoinette to suit French preferences. Empress Maria Theresa, after all, was the patron, and presumably the primary audience, of Liotard's pastel piece.^{xxxiii} The individual portrait of Marie Antoinette by Liotard was part of an eleven-image series of the empress's children. Rendering the young archduchess in a French manner (as Ducreux had done) was unnecessary, as the intention of the portrait was to record a likeness of the children for their mother's personal enjoyment. The Ducreux portrait, on the other hand, served as a marketing tool for the Austrian

empire—the success of the alliance depended on the artist’s ability to communicate the physical transformation of the archduchess into a proper French woman.

Little is known about the reception of Joseph Ducreux’s portrait of Marie Antoinette, *Archduchess Marie Antoinette*. The original painting by Ducreux, given to Louis XV, has been lost, though the French painter and printmaker, Jean-Baptiste Charpentier (1728-1806), made copies of the portrait. It can only be assumed that Louis XV approved of the representation of Marie Antoinette, based on the offer of marriage extended on behalf of the king’s grandson in June of 1769.^{xxxiv} Likewise the Empress Maria Theresa’s approval of the painting, based on its arrival in Versailles with the comte de Mercy-Argenteau, an agent working on behalf of Maria Theresa, points to further evidence of the positive reception of Ducreux’s work.^{xxxv} The acceptance and popularity of Marie Antoinette’s French fashions and hairstyles, featured in *Archduchess Marie Antoinette*, by the Austrian aristocracy were widespread.^{xxxvi}

Marie Antoinette en chemise

Fourteen years later, Marie Antoinette was captured again at the height of her trendsetting career. This time, however, the queen’s image invited criticism as well as imitation. Exhibited at the Salon, an art show open to the public, in 1783, *Marie Antoinette en chemise* (figure 4) by Elisabeth Vigee-Lebrun (1755-1842) was removed amidst scandal: “the public, it was felt, should imagine a queen dressed only in sumptuous Lyons silks.”^{xxxvii} Indignantly, Vigee-Lebrun wrote in her memoir: “the evil-minded did not fail to say that the Queen had had herself painted *en chemise*; for ... slander had already begun to make her its butt.”^{xxxviii}

At the age of twenty-eight, Marie Antoinette posed for Vigee-Lebrun dressed in the height of fashion: a *chemise*. Set against a dark background, the queen's figure is lit on her right side. The top half of her body vertically bisects the picture plane, while the curve of Marie Antoinette's arms and the tilt of her straw hat create an oval-shaped focus of forms. Centered in the picture plane, the queen is the focus of the viewer's attention. Though the informal dress and the wide-brimmed hat evoke a pleasant outdoor scene, the small decorative table and vase in the bottom right of the composition suggest an interior setting. The large vase provides a variety of pink and red flowers, suitable for nosegays. The soft tilt of the head and the position of the hands suggest that the viewer's gaze has interrupted the queen's activity. Wrapping a blue ribbon around a small bouquet of roses, Marie Antoinette looks into the viewer's face with a calm familiarity. Her loosely curled hair hides beneath a straw hat, slightly powdered and away from her rosy cheeks. The muted blue feathers are consistent with the blues of the hat and nosegay ribbons, as well as the cool grayish blue of the queen's eyes. In a similar manner, the golden tones of the straw hat echo the richly colored sash tied around the waist of the *chemise* and the embellishments of gold on the table's edge. The ruffles along the *chemise* neckline are repeated in the cuffs of the three-quarter length sleeves and the frilly petals of the pink Hapsburg roses. These particular roses, seen in various portraits of the queen and throughout her private living spaces, were traditional Hapsburg symbols and Marie Antoinette's favorite flower.^{xxxix} Roses, associated with Venus (the goddess of love and beauty) as well as the Virgin Mary, often served as icons of love and charity.^{xi} But is the nosegay a symbolic gesture of

loyalty and affection for the king, or perhaps a lover, or simply a reference to the queen's Hapsburg ties? The ambiguous nature of the flowers would certainly have complicated the interpretation of Vigee-Lebrun's painting.

In the traditional French wardrobe, the *chemise* was a long white gown worn as the first layer of a woman's outfit.^{xli} The undergarment was made of simple cotton muslin, distinguishing the class and wealth of the wearer by the particular quality of the cotton. Characterized by a sash at the waist, loose sleeves, and a frilly double collar, the *chemise a la reine* (the name given after the exhibition of Vigee-Lebrun's 1783 painting) was considered informal dress, appropriate in informal company only.^{xlii} The transition of the *chemise* from strictly underwear to fashionable gown in France was influenced by informal English sportswear, and the introduction of the *robes a la creole*, as well as the "return to nature" championed by the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau.^{xliii} Similar to the plain *chemise*, the *robes a la creole* worn by French women of the West Indies were brought to the French mainland in the 1770s.^{xliiv} The *chemise a la reine*, also known as the *gaulle*, became popular during the 1780s. Madame Campan, lady-in-waiting to Marie Antoinette, described the white cotton gown and large straw hat as the "costume universally adopted by females at that time."^{xliv} As fascination with England's relatively simple dress grew during the 1780s in Paris and Versailles, the popularity of the strictly formal *robe a la francais* waned.^{xlvi} This movement was due in part to the introduction of fashion plates featuring English styles by the French engraver Hubert Gravelot.^{xlvii}

Marie Antoinette embraced an idyllic version of the countryside and nature when she donned the *chemise*. Reserved for informal wear at her private retreat in the

Petit Trianon, the relaxed muslin *chemise* physically represented the queen's escape from the realities of court life. Without the burden of *paniers* or heavy wigs, Marie Antoinette and her friends, the Duchesse de Polignac and the Princesse de Lamballe, played at 'farm life' in the hamlet of Petit Trianon: a sort of shepherdess's dream based on Rousseau's romanticized view of the country. This marked contrast from her role in the Versailles pomp caused traditionalists to become all the more wary of the *Autrichienne* and her deviation from queenly decorum.^{xlviii}

Mary Sheriff focuses much of her research on the work of Elisabeth Vigee-Lebrun, most notably her portraiture of Marie Antoinette. Regarding the 1783 piece *Marie Antoinette en chemise*, Sheriff connects the queen's informal (and "scandalous") costume to the desecration of the king's image. Without any mention to her role and status as wife of Louis XVI in the portrait, Marie Antoinette appeared to usurp the boundaries and protocol of queenly behavior according to Salic Law, the French law that prevented women from inheriting the throne.^{xlix} Furthermore, Sheriff's suggestion of the queen's desire to be depicted in her favorite fashions and settings, although not necessarily for the explicit purpose of public exhibition, is supported by Elisabeth Vigee-Lebrun's preference "to paint [the queen] without grand attire."^l Why Vigee-Lebrun chose to submit *Marie Antoinette en chemise* to the Salon of 1783 and whether Marie Antoinette knew such a portrait would be shown publicly remains a mystery.

Following the reception of the queen's informal portrait, Vigee-Lebrun produced *Marie Antoinette with a Rose* in 1783 (figure 5), borrowing the pose of *Marie Antoinette en chemise*.^{li} Contrasting with the nondescript setting of the *en chemise* piece, this new

portrait was set in a garden with the queen in full regalia.^{lii} Donning the *robe de la francais* in blue-gray silk with a pearl necklace and bracelet, this ensemble did not stray from the realm of royal decorum. The pearls, known as symbols of purity and virtue, visually referenced her proper place in Versailles as the wife of the king and mother of the *dauphin*.^{liii} This depiction of Marie Antoinette's proper role as queen and wife was more in keeping with the tradition of royal portraits, like Carle Van Loo's depiction of Marie Leczynska in 1741 (figure 3).^{liv} Placing the wife of Louis XV among various symbols and attributes of her virtue and loyalty to the king underlined Marie Leczynska's adherence to decorum.^{lv}

Marie Antoinette in the Gardens of Trianon with Her Two Children

By the age of thirty, Marie Antoinette had two children with a third child on the way. Increasingly consumed by her duties as mother, and self-conscious of her public image, the queen adopted conservative dress.^{lvi} In 1785, Adolf Ulrik von Wertmuller (1751-1811) was commissioned to paint *Marie Antoinette in the Gardens of Trianon with Her Two Children* (figure 6) for Gustavus III, the King of Sweden. Measuring nine by six feet, the original painting is currently housed in the National Museum of Sweden in Stockholm.

Two years after the Vigee-Lebrun Salon scandal, Adolf Ulrik Wertmuller submitted *Marie Antoinette in the Gardens of Trianon with Her Two Children* for exhibition in the Salon of 1785. Set in the lush park surrounding the Temple of Love (pictured in the top right corner of the composition), Marie Antoinette walks with her seven-year-old daughter and four-year-old son. The gardens were characterized by "uncultivated

and wild” beauty, based on the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a philosopher who championed the “return to naturalness.”^{lvii} During Marie Antoinette’s extensive building and gardening project with the architect Richard Mique, the English-style gardens replaced the symmetrical and well-groomed landscape from the Louis XV era.^{lviii} The Temple of Love was a neoclassical columned rotunda, often the site of evening garden parties and small theater performances.^{lix} The gardens lend an informal atmosphere to the painting, enhancing the sense of movement and immediacy of the family’s movement. Their stroll through the park is momentarily halted, with each figure caught mid step. A pink rosebud has fallen from the hands of Marie Therese, breaking the monotony of the ground. Marie Antoinette’s right hand gently touches the *dauphin*’s arm, as he clutches at his mother’s cream and brown colored gown. The queen gazes out to the viewer, while her children’s eyes remain within the composition. A hat of soft white feathers and blue ribbon crowns the queen’s heavily powdered hair. Marie Antoinette’s arms stretch to the sides of the *panier* and point toward her children. The gesture of her hands visually incorporates the *dauphin* and his sister into a pyramidal formation—a formal device used by artists in the French Academy to organize and establish a hierarchy of subjects within a composition. The lace collar on Marie Antoinette is similar to the one worn by her son. Louis-Josephe, the *dauphin*, wears a two-piece outfit of light blue silk trousers and overcoat in the popular sailor style.^{lx} The blue sash worn by Louis-Josephe was given to him at the time of his birth, as a symbol of his status as heir to the throne and a sign of the French monarchy’s allegiance to the Order of the Holy Spirit.^{lxi} Marie Therese’s collar and bodice, on the other hand, are

reminiscent of the *chemise* featured in Vigee-Lebrun's 1783 portrait of the queen, *Marie Antoinette en chemise*. Tied with a mint green sash, the dress worn by Marie Therese blends with the soft greens of the background. Marie Therese grasps her dress with her left hand, carrying a bunch of pink roses in the fold of the skirt, and holding a single stem with her right hand. Marie Antoinette's physical connection to her daughter is prevented by the young girl's armful of roses.

Dressed in a corseted *robe a la francais*, the queen's gown departs from her usual fashion-forward style. Her children, on the other hand, wear contemporary styles: her daughter in a *chemise*-like gown, and her son in a two-piece sailor suit. Though the queen was dressed within the lines of propriety, her daughter's costume resembled all too closely the outfit her mother had made famous a few years before in Vigee Lebrun's *Marie Antoinette en chemise*.

This portrait of the queen and her children was exhibited in the Salon of 1785. One Salon critic commented, in response to Wertmuller's portrait of the queen with her children, that the painting was "so weak that nothing could excuse it."^{lxii} A commission by Marie Antoinette for a new portrait of herself and the children came shortly after the Wertmuller piece was exhibited in the Salon of 1785, and, as Mary Sheriff suggests, such a request could signify the queen's displeasure with Wertmuller's "appalling" portrayal.^{lxiii} Even if Marie Antoinette did, in fact, find *Marie Antoinette in the Gardens of Trianon with Her Two Children* horrendous or inappropriate, she apparently was willing to give Wertmuller another chance when she commissioned him in 1788 to paint a portrait of herself in hunting dress. Contrary to other comments and criticism of

Wertmuller's 1785 work, the queen's lady-in-waiting, Madame Campan believed there to be "no good portrait of the Queen, save that by Wertmuller, chief painter to the King of Sweden, which was sent to Stockholm" and a portrait of Marie Antoinette with her children completed by Vigee-Lebrun for the Salon of 1787.^{lxiv}

Conclusions

Long before her role as *la reine de France* ended under the guillotine in 1793, Marie Antoinette's extravagant life had garnered equal parts criticism and fascination. The three portraits by Ducreux, Vigee-Lebrun, and Wertmuller are distinct representations of the three specific roles of Marie Antoinette: queen, fashion icon, and mother. However, little scholarship has attended to the relationship between the "charge" of fashion, the presentation of the painting, and the audience, particularly in the cases of Ducreux and Wertmuller.

Caroline Weber argues that fashion was the primary way that Marie Antoinette could assert her individuality amidst the rigorous court etiquette, "turning her clothes and other accoutrements into defiant expressions of autonomy and prestige."^{lxv} While such a statement assumes and, perhaps, exaggerates the queen's calculated intentions, Weber's suggestion of the demonstration of power through clothing nevertheless holds merit. Similarly, Pierre Saint-Amand places Marie Antoinette in "the center of rivalry and imitation," a conduit for trends in the court at Versailles.^{lxvi} Both Weber and Saint-Amand point to a relationship between the queen's power to influence, whether in matters of style or politics, and criticism from French society. However, the correlation

of influence and criticism is not directly addressed in terms of portraiture, interpretation, and reception in either scholar's work.

When a painting of Marie Antoinette was shown publicly at a Salon, in the cases of Vigee-Lebrun's *Marie Antoinette en chemise* and Wertmuller's *Marie Antoinette in the Gardens of Trianon with Her Two Children*, the queen's fashion choice was open to the projection of fears as well as the expectations of society. The portrait by Ducreux escaped the public's scrutiny. Decorum was relatively inflexible for each respective audience. Traditionalists read *Marie Antoinette en chemise* as a blatant disregard of the king's majesty, since the queen had the indignity to present herself in her underwear. The Revolutionaries responsible for the final—and fatal—condemnation of the queen used the Vigee-Lebrun painting as evidence of the monarchy's indecency and frivolity. Wertmuller's *Marie Antoinette in the Gardens of Trianon with Her Two Children* was similarly judged: supporters of court ceremony noted the definite informality of the queen strolling with the *Madame Royale* and the *dauphin* as unbecoming to the wife of the king and the mother of the heir to the throne. The critics of the monarchy cited young Marie Theresa's gown as suspiciously akin to a certain scandal-causing *chemise*, proof of the mother's negative influence and contaminating behavior.

Furthermore, the three portraits represented the change in Marie Antoinette's physical surroundings from Vienna to Versailles (Ducreux's *Archduchess Marie Antoinette*), Versailles to the Petit Trianon (Vigee-Lebrun's *Marie Antoinette en chemise*), and, finally, the shift back from the Petit Trianon to Versailles (*Marie Antoinette in the Gardens of Trianon with Her Two Children*). The evolution of Marie Antoinette's style

came full circle: the political pawn in *panier* put on the gauzy *chemise* for her escapade into “country” life, only to slip back into a corset and *robe a la francais* to play the part of a modest mother.

The portraits, and the fashions therein, acted as litmus tests when placed in the various “waters” of audience. Ducreux, in his obedience to propriety, presented the archduchess in a neutral fashion: a blue *robe a la francais* pledged Marie Antoinette’s allegiance and appearance to France. Vigee-Lebrun, in a departure from typical monarchical portraiture, incited a strange mixture of acidic remarks and curiosity. Lastly, Wertmuller was charged with poor taste, painting a base example of the queen’s matronly look and questionable maternal influence. Though it is doubtful that these paintings were the cause of the queen’s fall from grace, they did mark the progressive stages of public disfavor and visually represented and confirmed the rumors of Marie Antoinette’s pretense, her lifelong masquerade.

Attacked by both royalists and revolutionaries, Marie Antoinette’s public and private life was a medium upon which the French citizenry could project various fears, allegations, and suppositions. Marie Antoinette’s circle of (fashion) influence corresponded to her station as *dauphine*, Queen of France, and mother to the *dauphin*.

ⁱ Paula Rea Radisich, "Que peut définir les femmes?: Vigee-Lebrun's Portraits of an Artist," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 25:4 (Summer 1992), 449.

ⁱⁱ Jean-Louise-Henriette Campan, *Memoirs of the Private Life of Marie Antoinette: Volume II*, rev. Frances M. Graves (New York: Bretano's, 1917), 288-306.

ⁱⁱⁱ Olivier Bernier, *The Eighteenth-Century Woman* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981), published in association with The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 36-48, 81-92.

^{iv} Campan, I:31.

^v *Dauphine* was the title reserved for the wife of the *dauphin*.

^{vi} Olivier Bernier, *Secrets of Marie Antoinette* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1985), 223-224.

^{vii} Bernier, 129. Also, Maria Theresa's letter to Marie Antoinette on 16 June 1774; Bernier, 142-143.

^{viii} Campan, (volume I) 101.

^{ix} Campan, (volume I), 88.

^x See Maria Theresa's letters to Marie Antoinette, 30 August 1777 and 5 December 1777, Mercy's letter to Maria Theresa, 12 September 1777; Bernier, 224, 231, 226, (respectively).

^{xi} See Marie Antoinette's letter to Maria Theresa, 10 September 1777; Mercy's letter to Maria Theresa, 18 March 1777. Bernier 213-214, 225.

^{xii} Campan, 185.

^{xiii} Bernier, 240.

^{xiv} See Maria Theresa's letter to Marie Antoinette, 1 February 1778, Marie Antoinette's letter to Maria Theresa, 19 April 1778; Bernier, 237-238, 245-246.

^{xv} Campan, 189-194.

^{xvi} Antonia Fraser, *Marie Antoinette: The Journey* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 37.

^{xvii} Desmond Hosford, "The Queen's Hair: Marie-Antoinette, Politics, and DNA," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 38: 1 (Fall 2004), 185. Caroline Weber, *Queen of Fashion: What Marie Antoinette Wore to the Revolution* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006), 16.

^{xviii} Weber, 16-17.

^{xix} Weber, 15-22.

^{xx} Mary Sheriff, "The Portrait of the Queen," *Writings on the Body of a Queen*, ed. Dena Goodman (New York: Routledge, 2003), 53.

^{xxi} Philippe Huisman and Marguerite Jallut, *Marie Antoinette*, trans. Edita Lausanne (New York: The Viking Press, 1971), 33.

^{xxii} Hosford, 184.

^{xxiii} Sheriff, 53.

^{xxiv} Madeleine Delpierre, *Dress in France in the Eighteenth Century*, trans. Caroline Beamish (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 14-15, 165.

^{xxv} Delpierre, 15-16.

^{xxvi} Akiko Fukai, "Rococo and Neoclassical Clothing," *Revolution in Fashion: European Fashion 1715-1815*, ed. Amy Handy (New York: Abbeville Press, 1989), 109-117.

^{xxvii} Fukai, 112.

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- ^{xxviii} *Grove Art Online*, s.v. "Rococo, §I: Introduction," Richard John; "Dress, §VII, 1: Regence and Rococo Styles, c 1715-65," Aileen Ribeiro.
- ^{xxix} Hosford, 185.
- ^{xxx} Hosford, 184.
- ^{xxxi} Hosford, 185. Weber, 16.
- ^{xxxii} Hosford, 185.
- ^{xxxiii} N.F. Karlins, "Royal Realism," review of *Jean-Étienne Liotard (1702-1789): Swiss Master* exhibition at the Frick Collection, *Artnet Magazine*, July 3, 2006.
- ^{xxxiv} Huisman and Jallut, 34.
- ^{xxxv} See Sheriff, 69 n21.
- ^{xxxvi} Fraser, 37.
- ^{xxxvii} Huisman and Jallut, 125.
- ^{xxxviii} Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *The Memoirs of Madame Elisabeth Louise Vigée-Lebrun, 1755-1789*, trans. Gerard Shelley (London: John Hamilton Limited, 1926), 54.
- ^{xxxix} Weber, 133.
- ^{xl} Mirella Levi D'Ancona, *The Garden of the Renaissance: Botanical Symbolism in Italian Painting* (Firenze: L.S. Olschki, 1977), 330-355; James Smith Pierce, *From Abacus to Zeus: A Handbook of Art History* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1998), 125, 167.
- ^{xli} Delpierre, 32.
- ^{xlii} Sheriff, 45-46.
- ^{xliii} Fukai, 109-117.
- ^{xliv} Aileen Ribeiro, *The Art of Dress: Fashion in England and France 1750 to 1820* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 71-72.
- ^{xlv} Jean-Louise-Henriette Campan, *Memoirs of the Private Life of Marie Antoinette: Volume I*, rev. Frances M. Graves (New York: Bretano's, 1917), 175.
- ^{xlvi} Delpierre, 58-59.
- ^{xlvii} Delpierre, 16-18.
- ^{xlviii} Sheriff, "Portrait of the Queen," 58.
- ^{xliv} Sheriff, 45-71.
- ^l Sheriff, 57; Vigée-Lebrun, 53.
- ^{li} Mary Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 166-167.
- ^{lii} The original portrait from 1783 was lost, however, a copy of *Marie Antoinette with a Rose* was made in 1784. Sheriff, 166.
- ^{liii} E. de Jongh, "Pearls of Virtue and Pearls of Vice," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 8: 2 (1975 - 1976), 69-97.
- ^{liv} Sheriff, "Portrait of the Queen," 48-49, 55.
- ^{lv} Sheriff, 48-50.
- ^{lvi} Weber, 173.
- ^{lvii} Weber, 133; see also Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *La Nouvelle Héloïse: Julie, or the New Héloïse*, trans. Judith H. McDowell (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968), 304-305.
- ^{lviii} *Grove Art Online*, s.v. "Versailles, §4: Petit Trianon," Simone Hoog.

^{lix} Huisman and Jallut, 128.

^{lx} Delpierre, 30.

^{lxi} Huisman and Jallut, 123.

^{lxii} Mary Sheriff's translation of *Mercure de France* 40 (1 October 1785), 34; "The Cradle is Empty: Elisabeth Vigee-Lebrun, Marie Antoinette, and the Problem of Intention," *Women, Art and the Politics of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Melissa Hyde (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), 166.

^{lxiii} Sheriff, 166. See also Radisich, 441-467.

^{lxiv} Campan, I: 142.

^{lxv} Weber, 3.

^{lxvi} Pierre Saint-Amand, "Terrorizing Marie Antoinette," trans. Jennifer Curtiss Gage, *Marie Antoinette: Writings on the Body of a Queen*, ed. Dena Goodman (New York: Routledge, 2003), 262.



Figure 1. Jean-Baptiste Charpentier after Joseph Ducreux, *Archduchess Marie Antoinette*, oil on canvas, 1769, Musee National du Chateau de Versailles et de Trianon.



Figure 2. Jean-Etienne Liotard, *Archduchess Marie-Antoinette of Austria*, pastel, 1762, Musee d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva, Switzerland.

Figure 3. Carle van Loos, *Portrait of Marie Leczynska*, oil on canvas, 1741, Musee du Chateau, Versailles, France.



Figure 4. Elisabeth Vigee-Lebrun, *Marie Antoinette en chemise*, oil on canvas, 1783, Private collection of Hessische Hausstiftung, Kronberg, Germany.

Figure 5.
Elisabeth Vigee-
Lebrun, *Marie
Antoinette with a
Rose*, oil on
canvas, 1784
copy of 1783
original, Musee
du chateau,
Versailles,
France.





Figure 6. Adolf Ulrik von Wertmüller, *Marie Antoinette in the Gardens of Trianon with Her Two Children*, oil on canvas, 1785, National Museum, Stockholm, Sweden.



Figure 7. Dress, *robe à la française*, French, floral silk brocade, c. 1770, The Kyoto Costume Institute, Japan.

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