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We would like to conclude by extending enormous appreciation to the contributors to this year's journal and to all those who submitted their brilliant research for publication. We asked, and you responded—beyond our expectations. We hope that this volume demonstrates the diversity and talent that characterizes gender research at the University of Notre Dame.

Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

For the second year in a row, the Gender Studies Honors Society is proud to present *Through Gendered Lenses*, an Undergraduate Academic Journal of Scholarship and Research. From American Studies and Anthropology to Political Science and Peace Studies, the wide variety of submissions reviewed this year is truly a testament to the growing presence of gender-related scholarship at Notre Dame. As members of the Gender Studies Honors Society, we are pleased to afford our five authors due recognition and exposure for their distinctive work in the field of Gender Studies. Their exemplary papers on gender, as it pertains to Art History, English, History, Music, and Queer Studies, exemplify the interdisciplinary nature and pervasive relevance of Gender Studies. We believe there is something for everyone in this journal, so no matter where your interests lie, we hope you find this journal as engaging, stimulating, and entertaining as we do!

Sincerely,

Robyn Grant

Anna Katter



The Problem of the Woman Artist
How Eva Gonzales Was “Seen”
in Late Nineteenth-Century France
Brigid Mangano

Brigid Mangano (Class of 2011) is an Art History and French double major from Lebanon, New Jersey, with a minor in the Glynn Family Honors Program. She will return to Notre Dame in the fall in order to obtain a master's degree in Art History, with a concentration in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French painting. Eventually, she hopes to pursue a Ph.D. and work in the curatorial department of a museum. Brigid wrote this paper for her seminar "Gender and Sexuality in Modern Art," taught by Professor Kathleen Pyne. She is very grateful to Professor Pyne for her constant support and encouragement over the past three years. Her essay recently won the Philip L. Quinn Prize, awarded by the Gender Studies Program for outstanding research in the field.

The Problem of the Woman Artist

How Eva Gonzales was “Seen” in Late Nineteenth-Century France

Brigid Mangano

INTRODUCTION: THE UNFEMINITY OF FEMALE ARTISTS

“Many artists could imagine painting modern women; fewer could imagine a modern woman painting.”¹ In this witty yet piercing phrase, Anne Higonnet encapsulates an attitude that was very prevalent amongst French artistic circles in the second half of the nineteenth century. Women who served as models for male painters abounded, but women who honed their own painting skills beyond amateur ability and dared to enter the competitive world of salons and vendors were much fewer in number. Although bourgeois and upper-class French women were encouraged to pursue informal artistic training, and particularly to produce small-

scale pencil drawings and watercolor paintings, there was a clear demarcation between *arts d'agrément* and painting as a professional endeavor.² Women who crossed this line were often viewed as “acknowledged outsiders,” “mavericks,” and even trespassers in the art world, by both men and women and by both artistic producers and consumers.³

The outsider status of female painters was especially evident at the Salon, the most esteemed exhibition forum in France at that time. According to the calculations of the nineteenth-century journalist Jean Alesson, although 19 out of 100 contributors at the 1880 Salon were female, only 5 out of 100 awards were conferred upon female artists.⁴ So frustrating was the Salon jury's consistent depreciation of works by women artists that, in 1882, two all-female exhibitions were hosted for the first time, one by the Union des Femmes Peintres et Sculpteurs and the other at the Cercle de la rue Volney.⁵ It is clear that the need for a venue in which the interests of female artists would be protected and their oeuvres promoted was painfully felt.

What is less clear is the reason *why* professional women artists were seen as interlopers in a “male domain.” What can explain the popularity and longevity of the dismissive, incredulous, and sometimes fearful attitudes towards women artists with professional aspirations? One answer may be found by examining the ideas of the nineteenth-century French politician and social theorist Pierre Proudhon. He believed that “woman's proper position” could be summarized in three complementary roles – wife, housekeeper, and mother – and that the ideal woman did not engage in any inherently competitive or ambitious pursuit.⁶ The art world, with its Salon juries, critics, collectors, and auctions, certainly fell into this latter category of activities unsuitable for a respectable woman. It is important to note that

underlying Proudhon's desire to bar women from competitive milieus is the assumption that competition and ambition are incompatible with femininity.

Griselda Pollock's analysis of the predicament facing bourgeois women in late nineteenth-century France sheds some light on this assumption. She observes that "for bourgeois women...to maintain one's respectability, closely identified with femininity, meant *not* exposing oneself in public."⁷ Pollock then recounts an episode in a book by Jules Michelet in which an unaccompanied woman chooses not to enter a restaurant and alleviate her hunger, because she knows that to do so would be to render herself a spectacle.⁸ If so simple an act as eating in public could damage the respectability and femininity of a woman, it is not surprising that exhibiting art professionally, which constituted a much bolder foray into the masculine spaces of nineteenth-century France, could do likewise. Commercial exhibition of art entailed greater exposure to competition and to the public gaze than dining without a male guardian.

Tamar Garb offers a poignant example of how this characterization of women artists as unfeminine affected the women at whom it was directed. Her example draws from the prolific journals kept by aristocratic painter Marie Bashkirtseff. Garb is worth quoting at length for how incisively she captures the uncertainty of self that the socially-imposed antithesis between femininity and professional artistry could cause women artists:

Bashkirtseff's famous journals...were filled with agonizing reflections on her own appearance and an anxiety that her talent as an artist would unsex her as a woman. Painfully aware of the construction of the ambitious woman artist as one who had reneged on her role as a feminine woman, Bashkirtseff constantly compared herself to other women in terms of her physical attributes and social skills.⁹

What this journal entry emphasizes is the polarizing pull between, on the one hand, wanting one's art to be taken seriously and evaluated within a professional arena and, on the other hand, wanting to shield one's femininity from attack or ridicule. Some women artists, including Berthe Morisot's sister Edma, felt compelled to choose between painting and matrimony: Edma Morisot chose the latter, halting her artistic production after her wedding.¹⁰

SEEING AND BEING SEEN

Two important questions arise out of this taut relationship between femininity and the professional art world in late nineteenth-century France. How did this tension impact the way that female artists were "seen" by their fellow artists and critics and, equally, how did it influence the way they "saw" themselves? Several theories have been posited in response to the first query. Linda Nochlin argues that that many women artists were "seen" as self-indulgent creatures whose desire to vie with professional male artists was driven by an inner narcissism.¹¹ Anne Higonnet, referring specifically to the Impressionist circle, suggests that the female members of the group were "seen" as separate and distinct from their male colleagues at the forefront of the movement. This separation was manifested in the exclusion of the female Impressionists from the "anti-academic circuit that included the cafés, the Académie Suisse, and Gleyre's studio, where the Impressionist program was debated and formulated".¹²

One theory that is understated, perhaps simply because it is so very obvious, is that female artists were "seen" as *female artists* in late nineteenth-century France.

Women artists were often clumped together under one artistic subheading, as though possessing identical sex chromosomes enabled similar conclusions to be drawn about their artistic output.¹³ A prime example of a woman artist who was “seen” in this manner is Eva Gonzalès, as a brief examination of *The Women Impressionists: a Sourcebook* will amply demonstrate. Of the sixteen books listed in the bibliography for Eva Gonzalès, fourteen have titles such as *Six Femmes Peintres* and *Women Painters of the World*¹⁴ The only two books devoted entirely to Gonzalès were written by French authors, indicating that no book-length study of Gonzalès has been undertaken by a native English speaker.¹⁵ Even more staggering is the fact that the most recent solo exhibition of Gonzalès’ work occurred in 1959 at the Galerie Daber in Paris.¹⁶ Much more common are group exhibits like the one hosted by the Legion of Honor in San Francisco in 2008, which was predictably titled “Women Impressionists: Berthe Morisot, Mary Cassatt, Eva Gonzalès, and Marie Bracquemond.”¹⁷ Both during her lifespan and post mortem, Gonzalès has been repeatedly “seen” through the prism of her gender.

The purpose of this paper is twofold in nature. It seeks to explore both how Gonzalès was “seen” by her contemporaries and how she “saw” herself during her short artistic career. Some of the “seers” who will be examined knew Gonzalès intimately, including Charles Chaplin and Edouard Manet, with others are critics who knew Gonzalès at a distance, through her works. However, the degree of personal familiarity with Gonzalès seems to have had much less bearing on how these individuals “saw” Gonzalès and her artistic activity than did Gonzalès’ gender, which appears to have been the crucial variable. As for Eva Gonzalès herself, her self-viewing was conducted not through the prism of her gender, but rather through the

prism of her sister Jeanne. How Eva Gonzalès “saw” herself is inseparable from her interactions with and reliance upon Jeanne Gonzalès.

PERILOUS FEMININITY

Born in Paris in 1849, Eva Gonzalès’ earliest artistic tutelage took place in the studio of Charles Chaplin, which she entered in January 1866.¹⁸ Over a period of three years, Chaplin fostered her aptitude for pastel drawings, enabling her to develop “a delectably velvety use” of the medium.¹⁹ It is worth noting that the decision to enter Chaplin’s atelier was not Gonzalès’ own: her godfather Philippe Jourde handpicked Chaplin as her instructor in 1865.²⁰ Chaplin’s close friendship with Emmanuel Gonzalès, Eva’s father, and his reputation for regularly accepting female students both recommended him as a suitable teacher.

Two important historical facts offer clues as to how Chaplin “saw” his pupil Eva Gonzalès. The first clue comes from the subject matter that Chaplin most preferred as an artist. As Marie-Caroline Sainsaulieu shrewdly observes, “C’est toujours la femme qu’il représente.”²¹ This suggests that Chaplin was accustomed to thinking of women as models and as objects of the male gaze, and Eva Gonzalès was probably no exception. The second historical clue derives from a conversation that transpired between Chaplin and Emmanuel Gonzalès in October 1868. Chaplin advised Gonzalès against procuring a Parisian atelier for his daughter, arguing that “elle doit attendre le mariage.”²² In Chaplin’s mind, the purchase of an atelier by or for an unwed woman was tantamount to making her spectacle. This recalls Pollock’s discussion of the cautious measures that bourgeois women had to take in order to

safeguard their respectability. Eventually, Chaplin changed his mind and counseled Emmanuel Gonzalès to secure a studio for Eva, after she had moderate successes at the 1870 Salon.²³ However, both Chaplin's inconstant advice and his original reluctance to grant his student a workshop demonstrate his ambivalent attitude towards Eva Gonzalès. One can tentatively conclude that he "saw" her as a woman, as an object of the male look, and above all as a woman artist, whose femininity was in peril if she pushed her professional aspirations too far.

PAINTER OR MODEL?

In 1869, Gonzalès' artistic instruction took a new direction when she met Edouard Manet at the home of Alfred Stevens, a Belgian painter.²⁴ Following this chance encounter, Gonzalès asked her father's permission to receive painting lessons at Manet's atelier on rue de Saint-Pétersbourg.²⁵ It is worth emphasizing that this arrangement can be wholly credited to Eva Gonzalès. Unlike the artistic education she received from Chaplin, it was not initiated by a strong male presence in her life. However, it also must be noted that the relationship between Manet and Gonzalès was never so straightforward as artist-artist or artist-student. Gonzalès visited Manet's studio "for the dual purpose of posing and receiving criticism of her own work."²⁶ Thus we find Gonzalès receiving guidance of two sorts. On the one hand, she was told: "Est-ce que vous comptez les raisins? Non, n'est-ce pas? Ce qui est frappant c'est leur ton d'ambre clair."²⁷

On the other hand, we find Berthe Morisot commenting on Gonzalès' knack for maintaining the position in which Manet situated her, without fidgeting: "Elle a

de la tenue, de la persévérance.”²⁸ This complicated relationship with Manet has had enduring effects on how Gonzalès is “seen.” Some scholars, such as Tamar Garb, claim that Gonzalès is better known as Manet’s model than as a professional artist in her own right. Garb contends that “many accounts of her life dwell almost equally on her personal beauty and on her talent as an artist.”²⁹ For this reason, the most apposite place to begin an investigation of how Edouard Manet “saw” Gonzalès is his well-known 1870 portrait of her (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Edouard Manet, *Portrait of Eva Gonzalès*, 1870.

In this portrait, Gonzalès is seated in front of a framed, but unfinished, floral still life. Clad in a white muslin empire-line gown, she balances a palette and several brushes in her left hand, while simultaneously dabbing the canvas with a brush held in her right hand.³⁰ Gonzalès’ eyes do not concentrate on her work in progress, but rather appear glassy and unfocused.³¹ For the purposes of uncovering what this

painting reveals about how Manet “saw” Gonzalès, the two elements that demand the greatest consideration are the costume that Gonzalès wears and the subject that she paints.

Tamar Garb places much emphasis on the inappropriateness of Gonzalès’ attire for her task at hand. Gonzalès’ dress is elegant, costly, voluminous, and pale in color, all of which conspire to make it an ensemble that would be easily dirtied, perhaps even ruined, by the very act of painting.³² As a result, Garb describes her position at the easel as “problematic and unconvincing.”³³ Viewers cannot help but have the impression that Gonzalès is role-playing and that her acting skills need improving. If she were really an artist, wouldn’t her eyes be riveted to the canvas? Wouldn’t she be wearing a looser, less immaculate garment? Also incongruous is the amount of skin the gown exposes, which was quite unusual for a commissioned portrait of a respected bourgeois lady. As Garb remarks, “Any baring of flesh would normally have been associated with a hired model.”³⁴ While Gonzalès certainly served as Manet’s model for this portrait, she was neither paid for her services nor a member of the lower-class, as most hired models were. The gown’s transparent bodice, low-cut neckline, and short sleeves – all features to which Garb draws attention – eroticize Gonzalès in an unsubtle way.³⁵ While the dress may not strike the modern viewer as immodest, the late nineteenth-century viewer may have been startled to see a bourgeois woman thus clothed.

In sum then, two main problems arise out of Gonzalès’ apparel. The first is its inability to persuade the viewer that Gonzalès is a veritable working artist. One can tentatively infer from this that Manet was not himself persuaded that Gonzalès was a committed painter whose art could rival his own. If he had been, Gonzalès might

conceivably be attired in the nineteenth-century version of a smock, or else in day clothes more suited to painting. The second problem is the portrait's conspicuous sexualization of Gonzalès. Her dress was chosen at the sole discretion of Manet, according to his own testimony in a letter addressed to Gonzalès' mother.³⁶ As a result, it is clear that the sexualization of Gonzalès was knowing and intentional. Ingrid Pfeiffer suggests that "what Manet wanted...was not so much a life-like portrait of Gonzalès, as an attractive, whole-figure portrait."³⁷ In other words, Gonzalès' fleshy beauty made her an appealing subject and Manet was prepared to slightly overstep the established bounds of propriety for bourgeois portraiture in order to highlight that beauty. Manet "saw" Gonzalès first as a striking model and second as a painter.

The bouquet of flowers that Gonzalès paints also merits analysis. Floral still lifes were never a prominent part of Gonzalès' artistic repertoire.³⁸ Although Gonzalès did execute at least five oil paintings of flowers during her lifetime, all of these were undertaken well after Manet's portrait of her had already been completed.³⁹ Moreover, still lifes were considered the preserve of amateur artists and commanded little respect in late nineteenth-century France. If a professional painter undertook a still life it was usually for the purpose of fine-tuning a particular skill – in other words, an artistic exercise. Consequently, Manet's decision to depict Gonzalès as a still life painter is a gesture loaded with significations. Tamar Garb explores these significations by comparing Manet's portrait with an 1804 portrait by Francisco Goya, entitled *Maria Tomasa Palafox, Marquesa de Villafranca* (Figure 2). Like Eva Gonzalès, the marquesa is seated at an easel, but unlike Gonzalès she paints her husband in his military costume.⁴⁰ Whereas Goya presents his portrait

sitter as an accomplished portraitist herself, Manet leaves the viewer in doubt as to whether his portrait sitter is capable of such high art.



Figure 2. Francisco Goya, *Maria Tomasa Palafox, Marquesa de Villafranca*, 1804.

The obvious question is why Manet did not represent Eva Gonzalès as painting her younger sister Jeanne. In Sainsaulieu’s catalogue raisonné for Gonzalès, twenty-four works bear the description “Jeanne Gonzalès a posé pour ce pastel” or “Jeanne Gonzalès a posé pour ce tableau.”⁴¹ For approximately an equal number of oeuvres, the female model is uncertain, meaning that Jeanne may or may not have sat for it. What is indisputable is that Jeanne “consentit à lui servir quotidiennement de modèle” and was a constant source of inspiration.⁴² It would only be natural for Manet to depict Gonzalès working on a portrait of her sister. That he did not do so is

a possible indication that Manet did not “see” Gonzalès as a portraitist, or even as a serious artist. In Ingrid Pfeiffer’s estimation, “the fact that he was ‘generous’ enough to portray Gonzalès as an artist” can be “interpreted to mean that he regarded her as far enough removed from him in the artistic hierarchy as to be completely unthreatening.”⁴³ Rather than being honored by Manet’s portrayal of her, Gonzalès should perhaps have been insulted.

It is interesting to note that a large number of critics considered Manet’s 1870 portrait of Gonzalès to be offensive to his sitter, though not for the reason just outlined. Some critics remarked on the stiffness and gracelessness of Gonzalès’ arms, with one commentator calling them “bumpy protrusions.”⁴⁴ Others thought the darker paint near Gonzalès’ eyes and chin resembled unhealthy blotches.⁴⁵ Still other critics claimed that Gonzalès “evoked a sultry sexuality” reminiscent of gypsies and Jews.⁴⁶ The common thread between these critiques is that each pertains to Gonzalès’ physical appearance. Female portraits of bourgeois women were expected to strike a respectful balance between the specific and the generic. On the one hand, the sitter’s identity had to be apparent, but on the other hand, her femininity could in no way be compromised, which meant that she had to be portrayed as a beautiful woman.⁴⁷ In the eyes of the critics, Manet failed to achieve the necessary equilibrium. Although accounts of Manet’ life often mention his fascination with “Gonzalès’ great beauty”, his overly-individualized portrait rendered her unattractive in the eyes of nineteenth-century viewers.⁴⁸

To recapitulate, Manet’s 1870 portrait of Eva Gonzalès intimates that Manet “saw” Gonzalès in several lights. Firstly, he ‘saw’ her as a striking model, even if he failed to convey her as such to an audience habituated to Ingres’ reverent portraits of

beautiful sitters. Secondly, he “saw” her as a painter, but one whose abilities were inferior to his own. Thirdly – and this is something new – he saw her as his protégé, as someone whose success was an extension of his own. As Roger-Marx notes, “Manet se félicite de voir grandir...le nom de Gonzalès.”⁴⁹ Fourthly, by his own admission, he saw her as a friend. In a letter Manet wrote to Eva Gonzalès during her retreat to Dieppe with her mother and sister while the Franco-Prussian War was in progress, he said, “Une assiégée de nos amies me demandaient dernièrement comment je supportais votre absence, puisque l’admiration et l’amitié qui j’ai pour vous sont de notoriété publique.”⁵⁰

This excerpt from Manet’s correspondence with Gonzalès is intriguing, because it shows that Manet saw nothing contradictory between his stout friendship with Gonzalès and his reluctance to see her as a painter as talented as he.

One additional dimension to Manet’s relationship with Eva Gonzalès that has yet to be explored is his simultaneous relationship with Berthe Morisot. Although Morisot had served as Manet’s model prior to him ever having met Gonzalès, she never entered his atelier as a student. In letters addressed to her sister, Madame Pontillon, Morisot confesses a resentment for Manet’s growing infatuation with Gonzalès.⁵¹ As Claude Roger-Marx observed, Gonzalès was “une artiste...dont Manet s’était à ce point entiché.”⁵² What is important, in terms of understanding how Manet “saw” Gonzalès, is that Manet did not attempt to lessen the growing rivalry between Morisot and Gonzalès. Instead, he encouraged and discouraged them “tour à tour,” wanting to preserve the high regard of both women.⁵³ While it is difficult to say anything definitive about Manet’s motivation for playing Morisot and Gonzalès

off of one another, it seems that he ‘saw’ both artists as women who could be emotionally manipulated.

THE EYE OF THE CRITIC

Gonzalès’ tenure as Manet’s pupil affected not only her approach to painting, but also the way in which art critics ‘saw’ her. Six years before Manet and Gonzalès were introduced, Manet had triggered public scandal by exhibiting paintings such as *Olympia* and *Le Déjeuner sur l’herbe* at the Salon. From the early 1860s onward, the relationship between Manet and Paris’ leading art critics was openly antagonistic. As a result, to self-enlist as Manet’s student was necessarily to be tainted by association and to set oneself up as a target for certain abuse. Fortunately for Eva Gonzalès however, her father was a much-esteemed figure in Paris and this induced many of the more biting critics to deflect or tone down their remarks. In Roger-Marx’s words: “Les journalistes de métier sont pris entre la haine...qu’il vouent au premier, et l’amitié qui les unit au bouillant Emmanuel Gonzalès.”⁵⁴ Although the critics were generally more “bienveillants” towards Gonzalès than towards her teacher, their commentaries frequently reminded Gonzalès of the dangers of working with so “provocateur” an artist.⁵⁵ The critics “saw” Gonzalès as someone who could be easily swayed by her more famous instructor. For this reason, they repeatedly cautioned her against following in his footsteps.

Not all of the art criticism that Gonzalès received centered on her connections to Manet. Following Gonzalès’ sudden death in 1883, a retrospective sale of her works was held in Paris, organized conjointly by Gonzalès’ husband Henri Guérard,

her father Emmanuel Gonzalès, and a family friend Léon Leenhoff.⁵⁶ In honor of the occasion, the French art critic Octave Mirabeau composed a tribute to Gonzalès' artistic career, in which he asserted that:

Ce qui frappe surtout, dans le talent d'Eva Gonzalès, c'est...la simplicité, la sincérité...Aucune mièvrerie de femme, aucun désir de faire *joli et sympathique*, et pourtant quel charme exquis!⁵⁷

This commentary is significant because of what it reveals about Mirabeau's presuppositions concerning women artists. Mirabeau anticipates that any art executed by a female hand will be insipid and overly emotional. He expects a woman artist to be more preoccupied with producing an image that is pleasing to the eye than one that appeals to the viewer on an intellectual level. Although Mirabeau intends to praise Gonzalès for surmounting the tendency to which, in his opinion, most female artists succumb, his pronounced surprise lessens the laudatory effect. Mirabeau "saw" Gonzalès through the prism of her gender and judged her against a female artistic standard.

Other excerpts from Mirabeau's post mortem tribute to Gonzalès reinforce this idea. For instance, Mirabeau refers to Gonzalès as "cette femme charmante, à laquelle la beauté et le talent faisaient une double auréole."⁵⁸ This recalls Tamar Garb's insights about the tension female artists experienced between participating in the professional art world and upholding their respectability. One has the impression that Mirabeau extols Gonzalès' beauty in order to obviate any slanderous comments concerning her femininity. When male artists were evaluated by art critics in late nineteenth century France, their physical appearance never factored into the appraisal: the very idea seems absurd. Yet for art criticism pertaining to works by female artists, this was not uncommon. Male art critics such as Octave Mirabeau

“saw” woman painters such as Eva Gonzalès as separate and distinct from their male colleagues.

However, despite the consensus that works by women artists were necessarily “distinct,” critics seemed unable to settle on a common vocabulary to describe this inherent difference. A brief comparison of how the artistic outputs of Berthe Morisot, Mary Cassatt, and Eva Gonzalès were commonly assessed makes this abundantly clear. Of the three artists, Morisot was most consistently lauded for painting in a “feminine style.” Critics frequently drew attention to the delicacy, grace, and featheriness of her brushstrokes. The French writer Raoul Sertat, for example, described Morisot’s art as “totally impregnated with the essential virtues of her sex.”⁵⁹ By contrast, Mary Cassatt was seen as embodying a more masculine style of art, with critics highlighting her tendency to present her subject in “a matter-of-fact, coolly observed way.”⁶⁰ The French novelist Joris-Karl Huysmans echoed Mirabeau’s comment about Cassatt when he observed that “Miss Cassatt has known the way to escape from sentimentality.”⁶¹ As for Eva Gonzalès, her art was thought to hover between femininity and masculinity. On the one hand, art critic Théodore de Banville characterized Gonzalès as having “une main ferme, agissante, et créatrice.”⁶² Firmness, activeness, and creativity were all considered masculine artistic traits during this time period. On the other hand, critics such as Mirabeau remarked upon Gonzalès’ “délicatesse instinctive de femme.”⁶³

What these conflicting evaluations suggest is that although Parisian critics recognized certain dissimilarities in the artistic production of Morisot, Cassatt, and Gonzalès, their gendered manner of “seeing” hindered them from being able to accurately articulate these differences. Instead of drawing upon the virtually limitless

language of technique, approach, style, and subject matter, critics distilled their critiques of women artists down to two much-abused adjectives: masculine and feminine. Like Gonzalès, Morisot and Cassatt were seen through the prism of their gender, but the angle of refraction was different for each artist.

IN DEFENSE OF A REALIST

One wonders, however, in what light *female* art critics “saw” Gonzalès and other women artists. Maria Deraismes, a full-time author and intermittent art critic, penned an in-depth analysis of Gonzalès’ 1874 painting *Une Loge au théâtre des italiens* (Figure 3). Published in a journal known as *Le Droit des femmes*, her article offers some



Figure 3. Eva Gonzalès, *Une Loge au théâtre des italiens*, 1874.

interesting insights into how Gonzalès was “seen” by a radical feminist audience. Deraismes was a woman of strong character and conviction. Heralded by Patrick Bidelmans as the “architect of the new feminism,” Maria Deraismes was an undaunted proponent of women’s rights.⁶⁴ She detested the dichotomous social mentality that inventoried French women as *femmes honnêtes* or *filles publiques* and publicly criticized the slowness of society to redress the disparities between the sexes.⁶⁵ In an 1873 essay entitled “France et progress,” Deraismes upbraids her fellow citizens for “cette inqualifiable injustice qui subit encore la moitié du genre humain, injustice que la révolution française a sanctionnée à nouveau.”⁶⁶ Throughout her busy career, Deraismes struggled to improve the life situation of French women and took pains to affirm the inherent value of women and their endeavors.

Deraismes’ defense of Gonzalès’ *Une Loge au théâtre des italiens* is an apt example of such an affirmation. Her critique can be thematically divided into two segments. In the first segment, Deraismes fabricates an imaginary dialogue between Gonzalès and the Salon jurors who denied her painting admission to the 1874 Salon. In the dialogue, the jurors justify their refusal by citing reasons such as Gonzalès’ apprenticeship with Manet and her pretentious realism reminiscent of Courbet. In the second half, Deraismes focuses on Gonzalès’ chosen subject matter and dissects the identities of the two opera-goers in the painting.

In the first segment, Deraismes devotes an entire column, which constitutes about two-fifths of the article, to vindicating Gonzalès’ status as a realist painter. Her fictional conversation is structured as a series of accusations and rebuttals between

the *sincères* (the realist painters) and the *non-sincères* (the classical painters). The crux of the latter's argument is as follows:

Vous vous permettez une foule de licences avec la nature, vous l'abîmez. Les contours, qui sont chez elle imperceptibles, ressemblent chez vous à un gros fil d'archal...Vous ne finissez rien; vos têtes ne sont ni modelées, ni dessinées.⁶⁷

In the eyes of the classical painters, the works of realist painters such as Gonzalès appear hasty and incomplete. Although the realists purport to more closely approximate nature, the classical painters believe that they distort it by inserting bold contours where none exist. Deraismes does not agree with this characterization of the realists, however. She rejoins by claiming that “la nature...dédaigne la convention, les trucs, les ficelles...Elle est sincère.”⁶⁸ In other words, no academic prescription for depicting nature can capture its true essence because nature is neither fixed nor formulaic, a fact that classical artists refuse to acknowledge.

The reason that Deraismes' highly-technical defense of realism is so important is that she is the first person to “see” Gonzalès as a realist. Even more remarkable, Deraismes emphasizes that Gonzalès' realism is not a mimetic homage to her teacher Manet. She distinguishes their two realisms by claiming that “Autant M. Manet aime le laid, autant son élève aime le beau.”⁶⁹ Roger-Marx, writing almost 70 years after Gonzalès' death, echoes the idea that Gonzalès was no copyist of her instructor. He pointed out that even when Gonzalès' subjects approximated Manet's, her style remained calmer and less provocative.⁷⁰ Although the observations of Deraismes and Roger-Marx may not seem revolutionary, their significance should not be understated. Deraismes was one of the few art critics whose capacity to “see” Gonzalès was not wholly circumscribed by Gonzalès' gender. Deraismes was able to

“see” Gonzalès with respect to her style and technique, criteria which other art critics were less prone to engage.

The second segment of Deraismes’ article necessitates a brief description of *Une Loge au Théâtre des italiens*. At the center of the painting sits an alert young woman modeled on Jeanne Gonzalès, dressed in a blue gown with a square décolleté neckline. Her left hand, which rests lightly on the balcony of the theater box, holds a pair of opera glasses. Two flowers add embellishment to her costume, one interwoven with her coiffure and the other atop her bosom. Next to the woman stands her male companion, partially enveloped in shadow and modeled on Henri Guérard.⁷¹

Deraismes describes the young woman at great length, focusing especially on her central positioning in the picture space, her intelligent expression, and her active engagement with the theatrical event.⁷² A large portion of Deraismes’ interpretation seeks to probe the young woman’s personality and self-understanding:

On devine que, pour cette jeune femme, les chants et les harmonies de l’orchestre ne font qu’accompagner la mélodie intérieure qui chante en elle. Elle suit son rêve à travers le poème et la partition.⁷³

This description is very cleverly constructed. It permits Deraismes to not only make conjectures about the character of the woman within the painting, but also to imply that Gonzalès, like her female protagonist, is a woman who follow her dreams.

This characterization is especially potent when compared to Deraismes’ analysis of the gentleman in the theater box, whom she deduces to be the woman’s husband. Unlike his wife, the man is “moins préoccupé de voir que d’être vu” or as Albert Boime describes him, “vain, superficial, and eager to be seen at his cosmetic best.”⁷⁴ Here, Deraismes deliberately undercuts the deeply-entrenched gender

stereotypes of late nineteenth century France. Instead of an alluring but shallow woman accompanied by an intellectually superior male figure who delights in her beauty, Gonzalès stages a scene in which a self-confident, independent woman takes pleasure in a theatrical performance, while her husband diverts his gaze from the show, concerned only with being seen. Or at least, such is Deraismes' reading of the painting.

Following these character sketches, Deraismes reiterates her opening contention that *Une Loge au Théâtre des italiens* deserved admission to the 1874 Salon and then offers her final appraisal of Eva Gonzalès. In Deraismes' estimation, Gonzalès "a en elle l'étoffe d'un grand peintre" because she is unafraid to dirty her fingers and because she recognizes that knowledge and talent are infinitely more valuable and long-lasting than youth and beauty.⁷⁵ Phrased another way, Deraismes "sees" Gonzalès as an artist with great potential because, unlike Marie Bashkirtseff, Eva Gonzalès does not vacillate between wanting to be acclaimed as a gifted painter and wanting to epitomize femininity.

Nonetheless, it must be remembered that "Deraismes' description is charged with her particular feminist agenda," which appreciably impacts Deraismes' manner of "seeing."⁷⁶ Although Deraismes' indignation that Gonzalès' painting was declined by the Salon was surely genuine, she was still writing with a particular readership and with specific political goals in mind. In her 1873 essay "France et progrès," Deraismes declares that "la femme...même aux époques où elle était la plus esclave" has shown "des preuves de génie, de talent, d'héroïsme."⁷⁷ Deraismes knew that she needed concrete examples to buttress this claim and Gonzalès may have appeared to her as a prime candidate. In sum, although Deraismes likely "saw" Gonzalès as a

promising realist painter who merited more Salon recognition, she may have also “seen” her as an artist whose name could be exploited to further her women’s rights campaign.



Figure 4. Edouard Manet, *Dans la loge*, 1874.

One aspect of *Une Loge au théâtre des italiens* that Deraismes does not engage, but that is important to bring out, is the way that the painting is in dialogue with works by Manet and Renoir. In 1874, exactly contemporaneous with Gonzalès’ painting, Manet executed a pastel entitled *Dans la loge* (Figure 4). Modeled on Eva Gonzalès and Léon Leenhoff, the composition of this work is very similar to that of *Une Loge au théâtre des italiens*.⁷⁸ The two most conspicuous differences are the inverse positioning of the two figures and the more outward-looking gaze of the man. Marie-Caroline Sainsaulieu believes Gonzalès’ painting to have been “inspiré du pastel de Manet.”⁷⁹ It is possible that Gonzalès chose this particular subject as a way

to both assert her identity as a serious painter and to demonstrate her ability to treat the same subject as her teacher with equal, if not superior, skill.

Another work to which *Une Loge au théâtre des italiens* makes explicit reference is Manet's 1863 painting, *Olympia* (Figure 5). Several critics harped on the visual resemblance between the flowers in the lower left hand corner of Gonzalès' painting with those offered to the courtesan by her maidservant in Manet's oeuvre.



Figure 5. Edouard Manet, *Olympia*, 1863.

Sainsaulieu has fittingly dubbed Gonzalès' bouquet "le jumeau de celui de l'*Olympia*."⁸⁰ The question is why Gonzalès was willing to risk reigniting the controversy surrounding *Olympia* when the bouquet does little to develop her painting's narrative. One tentative explanation is that Gonzalès sought to juxtapose her female opera-goer with Manet's prostitute. Instead of a sharp, angular woman engaged in the basest sort of capital transaction, Gonzalès presents a sinuous, attractive, and most importantly, intelligent woman who "is able to respond to the music with a depth of feeling and appreciation foreign to her male partner."⁸¹ Not only does Gonzalès present herself as a serious artist, she also presents the female

sex as endowed with powers of perception and reflection not usually attributed to them in art.

This is especially apparent when one compares *Une Loge au théâtre des italiens* to Renoir's 1874 painting *La Loge* (Figure 6). Although the setting for the



Figure 6. Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *La Loge*, 1874.

two paintings is almost identical, their female protagonists are quite unlike. Whereas Gonzalès depicts an alert woman who is in control of her own self-presentation, Renoir portrays an enchanting but obtuse woman whose boldly patterned gown threatens to overpower her. As Albert Boime observes, “The disarray of her hair...conveys an absence of poise...and the angle at which she is viewed reinforces her vulnerability.”⁸² By contrast, Gonzalès’ female opera-goer is situated at a greater distance from the picture plane and her hair is done up in a tidy coiffure, both of which undermine the notion that she in an object for display. Although it is

difficult to gauge the extent to which Gonzalès' painting was intended as a response to Renoir's *La Loge*, Gonzalès would certainly have been aware of the artwork that other Impressionists were producing and exhibiting, thanks in large measure to her relationship with Manet. Consequently, it is plausible that Gonzalès executed *Une Loge au théâtre des italiens* in order to stake a claim in the ongoing artistic conversation between Manet and Renoir.

At this point, it is worth briefly reviewing the different manners of "seeing" that have been discussed. Eva Gonzalès has been variously "seen" as a woman, as a passive object of the active male gaze, as a beautiful model, as a friend, as a trainee whose success is an offshoot of her teacher's, as an individual susceptible to dangerous artistic pressures, as a realist, as an artist with great potential, and finally (perhaps with the greatest frequency) as a woman artist. But how did Eva Gonzalès "see" herself? Did her self-perception align with how her artistic mentors and critics "saw" her or did she "see" herself in a different light? The answer seems to lie in her relationship with her sister, Jeanne Gonzalès.

THE ROLE OF SISTERHOOD

Jeanne and Eva Gonzalès were constant companions. United by their mutual interest in art, Jeanne Gonzalès often accompanied her older sister to Manet's atelier, "heureuse de profiter, elle aussi, des enseignements de Manet," though she never became his official student.⁸³ As is often the case with siblings, the two sisters were very different in temperament. Eva Gonzalès, remembered for her "maturité précoce, son caractère impétueux et son orgueil," dominated her sister quite

naturally.⁸⁴ Jeanne Gonzalès does not appear to have found Eva overbearing however, as she agreed to serve as her sister's model on an almost daily basis and readily accepted any artistic guidance that Eva had to offer.⁸⁵ Sainsaulieu even suggests that Eva Gonzalès acted as a "surrogate Manet" for her sister, counseling and steering Jeanne's artistic development in the same way that Manet did for her.⁸⁶

This intimate, but unbalanced, relationship between Eva and Jeanne Gonzalès is of the utmost importance when trying to understand how Eva Gonzalès "saw" herself, for several reasons. First, and most significantly, Eva Gonzalès did not produce a single self-portrait, with the exception of one dry point engraving, throughout her entire artistic career.⁸⁷ "Intimidée par sa propre image, jamais Eva n'osa se peindre face au miroir."⁸⁸ Even Marie Bashkirtseff, who so grappled with the incompatibilities between professional artistry and bourgeois femininity, generated a portrait of herself holding the painter's signature attribute, a palette.⁸⁹ It seems rather out of character for so headstrong a woman as Eva Gonzalès to flinch in front of her own image.

However, a disinclination for self-portraiture does not necessarily indicate a lack of confidence on the part of the painter. It is possible that Eva Gonzalès decided, whether consciously or unconsciously, to explore her own self-understanding through another figure, that of her sister. Indeed, Roger-Marx argues that Eva Gonzalès "s'est observée...à travers ce double d'elle-même qu'elle aimait, rudoyait, transformait à sa guise, de manière à en faire vingt sœurs différentes."⁹⁰ By dressing Jeanne Gonzalès in different garments, by arranging her in different attitudes, and by locating her in different spaces, Eva Gonzalès was able to prod her own self-knowledge and "see" herself from a multiplicity of angles.

This seems to be especially true for two pastels executed in 1879, for which Jeanne Gonzalès obligingly posed in Eva's white satin wedding gown. In keeping with French custom, Eva Gonzalès and Henri Guérard were married first at the town hall of



Figure 7. Eva Gonzalès, *La Mariée*, 1879.



Figure 8. Eva Gonzalès, *La Mariée*, 1879.

their Parisian arrondissement, and then at a church two days later, in February of 1879.⁹¹ Eva Gonzalès was thus a new bride when she undertook these two pastels, which are identically entitled *La Mariée* (Figures 7, 8).⁹² In his post mortem salute to Gonzalès, Octave Mirabeau singles out the twin pastels for special praise. He observes, “Je retrouve-là, dans la douceur des tons, dans le jeu de la lumière sur l'étoffe blanche et le nuage transparent des voiles, une caresse particulière.”⁹³ The tenderness and special attention that Mirabeau discerns in the execution of the pastels probably reflects the fact that the subject resonated with Eva Gonzalès in a

very personal way. Gonzalès' new status as wife was a major part of her changing identity and it surely affected the way she "saw" herself. Therefore, in order to investigate the new opportunities for self-seeing offered by her recent marriage, Eva Gonzalès chose to complete two works featuring a young bride, modeled on her sister Jeanne.

It is also worth noting that, in an ironic twist of fate, these pastels proved to be prophetic. Five years after Eva's death in 1883, Jeanne Gonzalès became Henri Guérard's second wife and took over care of Eva's son, by then a toddler.⁹⁴ By fulfilling the nuptial and maternal vacancies created by Eva Gonzalès's death, Jeanne poses one last time for her sister. This time, however, the role Jeanne plays will not be undone. More than any other event or artistic work, Jeanne Gonzalès' marriage to Eva's widower demonstrates just how blurred the identities of the two sisters were. As Sainsaulieu so aptly phrases it, "Eva et Jeanne auront leurs vies étroitement mêlées, et dans l'art, et dans l'amour."⁹⁵

This is not to say, however, that Eva Gonzalès "saw" herself exclusively through the prism of her sister, though her relationship with Jeanne was certainly pivotal to her self-viewing. There is also evidence to suggest that Eva Gonzalès "saw" herself as someone capable of taking initiative and directing the course of her own artistic career. For example, Gonzalès "realized that the teaching she was being given was frustrating her avant-garde instincts," and so she quit Chaplin's studio in 1869.⁹⁶ This decision was made before Gonzalès had met Manet, so she did not yet have an alternative instructor in mind. Gonzalès simply had enough self-awareness to recognize that her artistic bent differed from that of Chaplin, the so-called "François

Boucher moderne.”⁹⁷ This indicates that Gonzalès “saw” herself as a serious artist, preferring an artistic hiatus over education ill-suited to her artistic needs.

The life and artistic activity of Eva Gonzalès offer modern art historians a fascinating opportunity to examine the problem of the woman artist in late nineteenth-century France. As Griselda Pollock observes, female artists “worked from different position and experiences from those of their colleagues who were men,” and this impacted both how they “saw” and how they were “seen” by art consumers and producers alike.⁹⁸ There was also a tendency to create common identities for female artists based on no criterion other than their sex, which was misleading and unrepresentative.⁹⁹ This has certainly been the case for Eva Gonzalès, who is frequently bracketed together with Berthe Morisot, Mary Cassatt, and Marie Bracquemond under the taxonomic category of “female Impressionists.” The purpose of this paper was to depart from this approach and analyze Gonzalès in terms of both how her contemporaries “saw” her and how she “saw” herself. While Chaplin, Manet, Mirabeau, and Deraismes “saw” Eva Gonzalès through the prism of her gender, Gonzalès “saw” herself through the prism of her younger sister Jeanne.

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1.** Edouard Manet, *Portrait of Eva Gonzalès*, 1870.
- Figure 2.** Francisco Goya, *Maria Tomasa Palafox, Marquesa de Villafranca*, 1804.
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- Figure 7.** Eva Gonzalès, *La Mariée*, 1879.
- Figure 8.** Eva Gonzalès, *La Mariée*, 1879.

NOTES

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1. Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women*, (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1992), 124.
 2. *Arts d'agrément* literally translates as "pleasure art" but it is perhaps better understood in light how *école d'arts d'agrément pour les jeunes filles* is typically translated – as "finishing school for young girls".
 3. Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" *ARTnews*, Jan 1971, 23.
 4. Tamar Garb, *Sisters of the Brush: Women's Artistic Culture in late Nineteenth-Century Paris*, (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1994), 26.
 5. *Ibid.*, 21.
 6. Hope B. Werness, "The Modest Maiden in 19th-Century Art: Evolution of a Theme," *JSTOR, Woman's Art Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Autumn 1984 – Winter 1985, 7.
 7. Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in *The Expanding Discourse*, ed. by N. Broude and M.D. Garrard, (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 253.
 8. *Ibid.*, 254.
 9. Tamar Garb, *The Body in Time: Figures of Femininity in late Nineteenth-Century France*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 66.
 10. Higonnet, 22.
 11. Nochlin, 36-37.
 12. Higonnet, 23.
 13. Vestiges of this tendency persist even today in the art world.

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14. Russell T. Clement et al., *The Women Impressionists: A Sourcebook*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), 171-173.
 15. *Ibid.*, 171-173.
 16. *Ibid.*, 176.
 17. Jordan Robbins, "On view at the Legion of Honor, exclusive U.S. venue," 2008, <www.famsf.org>.
 18. Marie-Caroline Sainsaulieu and Jacques de Mons, *Eva Gonzalès: Étude Critique et Catalogue Raisonné*, (Paris: La Bibliothèque des Arts, 1990), 5.
 19. Marie-Caroline Sainsaulieu, "Expressive Red: Eva Gonzalès and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec," in Hatje Cantz, *Women Impressionists*, (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco), 211.
 20. Sainsaulieu, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 11.
 21. *Ibid.*, 25. Translation: "He always represents women."
 22. *Ibid.*, 11. Translation: "She must wait until marriage."
 23. *Ibid.*
 24. Frederick A. Sweet, "'Girl with Cherries' by Eva Gonzalès," *JSTOR, Bulletin of the Art Institute of Chicago (1907-1951)*, Vol. 34, No. 5, Sept – Oct 1940, 74.
 25. Sainsaulieu, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 11.
 26. Sweet, 74.
 27. Claude Roger-Marx, *Eva Gonzalès*, (Saint-Germain-en-Laye: Les Éditions de Neuilly, 1950), 16. Translation: "Do you count the raisins? No, right? What is striking is their clear amber shade." Manet's advice is to focus more on color than on meticulous details.
 28. *Ibid.*, 11. Translation: "She has good posture and perseverance."
 29. Garb, *Women Impressionists*, (Oxford: Phaidon Press Limited, 1986), 12.
 30. Tamar Garb, *The Painted Face: Portraits of Women in France, 1814-1914*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 78.
 31. Critics such as Gaston Klein were quick to compare Eva Gonzalès to a wax doll due to her glazed eyes; see *Ibid.*, 74.
 32. *Ibid.*, 79.
 33. *Ibid.*, 78.
 34. *Ibid.*, 86.
 35. *Ibid.*, 78.
 36. *Ibid.*, 78.

37. Ingrid Pfeiffer, "Impressionism is Feminine: On the Reception of Morisot, Cassatt, Gonzalès, and Bracquemond," in Hatje Cantz, *Women Impressionists*, (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco), 24.

38. Garb, *The Painted Face*, 91.

39. The five oil paintings mentioned are as follows: *Anémones au vase bleu* (Anemones in a Blue Vase) of 1871-1872, *Les Pivoines et le hanneton* (The Peonies and the June Bug) of 1871-1872, *Bouquet* of 1871-1872, *Pivoines* (Peonies) of 1875-1876, and *Roses dans un verre* (Roses in a Glass) of 1880-1882; see Sainsaulieu, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 98, 102, 106, 162, and 244.

40. Garb, *The Painted Face*, 84.

41. Translations: "Jeanne Gonzalès posed for this pastel" and "Jeanne Gonzalès posed for this painting."

42. Sainsaulieu, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 33. Translation: "Jeanne agreed to serve as her model on a daily basis."

43. Pfeiffer, 24.

44. Garb, *The Painted Face*, 86.

45. *Ibid.*, 76.

46. *Ibid.*, 79.

47. *Ibid.*, 60.

48. Sweet, 74.

49. Roger-Marx, 12. Literal translation: "Manet congratulates himself on seeing Gonzalès' name grow (in renown)." Looser translation: "Manet congratulates himself as Gonzalès' fame escalates."

50. Sainsaulieu, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 14. Translation: "A large number of our female friends have recently asked me how I have endured your absence, since the admiration and friendship I have for you are common knowledge."

51. Roger-Marx, 11.

52. *Ibid.*, 10. Translation: "Gonzalès was an artist...with whom Manet was at this point infatuated."

53. *Ibid.*, 12. Translation: "He alternately encouraged and discouraged them."

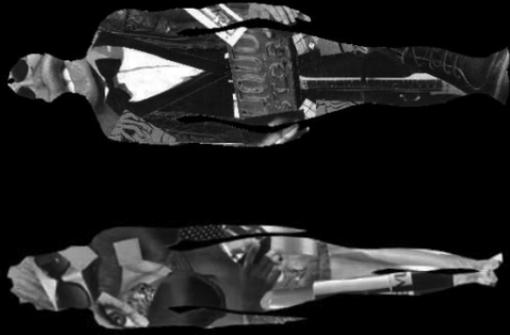
54. *Ibid.*, 4. Translation: "The professional journalists are torn between the hatred that they devote to the former, and the friendship that links them to the fiery Emmanuel Gonzalès."

55. *Ibid.*, 21. "Bienveillants" translates as "benevolent," while "provocateur" translates as "provocative."

56. Eva Gonzalès died of an embolism a few days after giving birth to a son; see Sainsaulieu, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 20).

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57. Ibid., 270. Translation: "What is most striking about Eva Gonzalès' talent is...her simplicity, her sincerity...No feminine sentimentality / vapidness, no desire to render (the work) pretty and agreeable, and yet what exquisite charm!"
58. Ibid., 268. Translation: "This charming woman, around which beauty and talent formed a double halo."
59. Garb, *Sisters of the Brush*, 126.
60. Tamar Garb, *Women Impressionists*, 68.
61. Ibid., 68.
62. Roger-Marx, 44-45. Translation: "A firm, effective / active, and creative hand."
63. Sainsaulieu, 270. Translation: "Instinctive feminine delicacy."
64. Garb, *Sisters of the Brush*, 50.
65. Ibid., 51.
66. Jean Bernard, *Œuvres Complètes de Maria Deraismes*, (Paris: Felix Aican, 1895), 189. Translation: "This unspeakable injustice that half of mankind still suffers, an injustice which the French revolution sanctioned anew."
67. Maria Deraismes, "Une Exposition Particulière de l'École Réaliste," *L'Avenir des Femmes*, July 1874, non-paginated. Translation: "You permit yourselves loads of liberties with [your representations of] nature, [and in so doing] you spoil her. The outlines, which in nature are imperceptible, resemble big brass wires in your work...You finish nothing; your heads are neither modeled nor drawn."
68. Ibid. Translation: "Nature disdains convention, tricks, devices...She is sincere." `
69. Ibid. Translation: "As much as Mr. Manet loves the ugly, his student loves the beautiful."
70. Roger-Marx, 28.
71. Sainsaulieu, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 16.
72. Albert Boime, "Maria Deraismes and Eva Gonzalès: A Feminist Critique of 'Une Loge aux Théâtres des Italiens,'" *JSTOR, Women's Art Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 2, Fall 1994 – Winter 1995, 35.
73. Deraismes, non-paginated. Translation: "One senses that, for this young woman, the songs and harmonies of the orchestra only serve to accompany the interior melody that sings within her. She follows her dream through the lyrics and the score."
74. Ibid. and Boime, 34. Translation: "Less preoccupied with seeing than with being seen."
75. Deraismes, non-paginated. Translation: "Gonzalès has in her the makings of a great painter."
76. Boime, 34.
77. Bernard, 190. Translation: "Woman...even during the periods when she was the most enslaved, has shown evidence of genius, of talent, and of heroism."

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78. Sainsaulieu, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 16.
79. *Ibid.*, 16. Translation: "Inspired by Manet's pastel."
80. *Ibid.*, 8. Translation: "The twin of the one in *Olympia*."
81. Boime, 34.
82. *Ibid.*
83. Sainsaulieu, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 33. Translation: "Happy to profit, she too, from Manet's teachings."
84. *Ibid.*, 5. Translation: "Her early maturity, her impetuous character, and her pride".
85. Roger-Marx, 27.
86. Sainsaulieu, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 45.
87. Roger-Marx, 27. Unfortunately, no photograph of this dry point seems to be available. It does not appear in Sainsaulieu's catalogue raisonné.
88. *Ibid.*, 33. Translation: "Intimidated by her own image, Eva never dared to paint herself facing the mirror."
89. Garb, *Body in Time*, 76.
90. Roger-Marx, 27. Translation: "She observed herself...through this duplicate of herself that she loved, mistreated, and transformed as she pleased, so as to create twenty different sisters."
91. Sainsaulieu, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 17.
92. Translation: "The Bride."
93. Sainsaulieu, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 270. "I recognize, in the softness of the shades, in the play of the light on the white fabric and the transparent cloud of veils, a particular caress."
94. *Ibid.*, 8.
95. *Ibid.*, 5. Translation: "The lives of Eva and Jeanne were tightly entwined, both in art and in love."
96. *Ibid.*, "Expressive Red", 207.
97. Roger-Marx, 2. Translation: "The modern François Boucher."
98. Pollock, 248.
99. Garb, *Women Impressionists*, 5. Admittedly, the female Impressionists also betray similarities in style and subject matter, which is arguably another criterion for so grouping them. However, such a grouping often emphasizes communal identity at the expense of individual identity and downplays differences in technique. For this reason, it is just as misleading as a grouping based on gender alone.



*A Written But Unpracticed Intolerance
Same-Sex Sexuality and Public Order
in Colonial America*
Joseph VanderZee

Joseph VanderZee (Class of 2012) is a History and Spanish major who wrote the first version of this paper for Professor Gail Bederman's wonderful course "US Sex and Sexuality to 1865." His other research projects include colonial Peruvian religious history and modern Mexican student protest movements, and he is spending this spring semester at the Colegio de Mexico in Mexico City thanks to a special exchange through the Kellogg Institute for International Studies. Joseph thanks Professor Bederman for her invaluable feedback and suggestions for this paper even after the course was completed, and his advisor in the International Scholars Program, Professor Jaime Pensado, for developing his research and writing skills both in and out of the classroom. He also would like to recognize the influence of his family, Professor Karen Graubart for getting him interested in gendered history in the first place, and the men of Keough 2A for their frequent late-night conversations about religion, sexuality, and other politically incorrect topics.

A Written but Unpracticed Intolerance

Same-Sex Sexuality and Public Order in Colonial America

Joseph VanderZee

From America's first settlements to the revolutionary period, colonizers, Puritans, and revolutionary citizens all faced severe social pressures. Limited time and resources forced them to choose their battles carefully in their efforts to establish and maintain a functional society. Sexuality certainly played a role in this process; church and state laws illustrate a fear of sodomy in particular as a serious threat to order. Anna Clark proposes "twilight" as a metaphor for those sexual practices and desires that societies prohibit by law or custom, but that people pursue

anyhow.”¹ Her reflections within this framework shed light on how deviant sexuality might have been understood (or not understood) in this environment. She also supposes a societal “pattern” that “when the boundaries of a society seemed to be eroding,” authorities’ worries about deviant sex increased and “often erupted in ‘moral panics.’”² The following study of three cases across early America calls this generalization into question. Accounts of prosecution for sodomy in early America show that imposed religious and, consequently, legal opinions of same-sex sexuality stood in tension with the reality that early Americans either could not or did not want to enforce them. Despite the harsh prohibitions of sodomy they inherited for their projects and the alleged propensity for moral panic inherent in their situations, these early Americans found their ability to ignore or even circumvent such prescriptions as a necessary means to maintain their tenuous hold on social order. The documents they left behind demonstrate tolerance over dogma because their situation necessitated pragmatism more than idealism.

Clark’s twilight model can help explain how early Americans understood (and did not understand) same-sex sex. In a period before a developed rhetoric of sexual orientation, “These people’s desires did not create a fixed [or public or stigmatized] identity; they indulged in these forbidden moments and then returned to their ordinary lives.”³ The metaphor “helps us get beyond the assumption that sexual desires that did not follow prescriptive ideals inevitably destabilized the conventional order” because they were hidden and silent.⁴ However in times of crisis or pressure on established hierarchies, “stigmatized identities such as the sodomite or prostitute were created to serve as scapegoats,” and “fear of the ‘other’ [reinforced] social boundaries.”⁵ The colonial and revolutionary projects in America represent an

excellent example of a society under pressure—full of the uncertainty of new and changing social and political hierarchies. Following Clark’s analysis, it offered a perfect breeding ground for moral panic over disordered sexuality. It certainly seems that if sodomy escaped the twilight and fell into the authorities’ gaze that harsh punishment, increased fear and regulation, and even “panic” would probably result. In colonial New Mexico, New England, and revolutionary Philadelphia, this exact situation took place: public accusations or discussion of sodomy came forth. These societies and their authorities failed to panic, stigmatize and scapegoat, or even deliver harsh punishment. In fact, they showed a surprising amount of toleration and responded with pragmatic solutions instead of panic—precisely because they needed to maintain the social order.

According to Tracy Brown, governance in colonial New Mexico represented a frustrating juxtaposition of limited power with the grand desire to “police [native] Pueblo peoples in numerous arenas of their lives” ranging from sexuality to organization, meetings, and religious practice.⁶ She attempts to reconcile the strident religious rhetoric surrounding the “pecado nefando” (or “abominable sin,” the Spanish term for sodomy) in Spanish culture on both sides of the Atlantic with the New Mexican government’s apparent failure to regularly police such sexual offenses. While “civil authority kept closer tabs on those activities it deemed an immediate security threat to the Spanish populace . . . overall, it is clear that sexual practices were not as vigorously policed.”⁷ This does not mean they had no interest in policing such matters—the 1731 sodomy trial Brown presents demonstrates a great deal of attention and weight. This should come as no surprise because this crime against God’s natural order was punishable by death in both Spain and in the New

World.⁸ However, the court record illustrates that a reassertion of social hierarchy drove the proceedings at least as much as the church doctrine that underlined the law and the accuser's righteous response to the "abominable sin." The court subjected the accused and their accuser to repetitive and uncomfortably detailed questioning. The Spaniard's testimony carried more weight than the indigenous defendants', and the defense attorney's convoluted arguments explicitly took indigenous moral ignorance into account. At the top of the legal hierarchy, the governor personally requested further investigation twice as he reviewed the case. In the end, the governor questioned the defendants' guilt but nonetheless sentenced them to lashings and exile thanks to a system that erred on the side of conviction and punishment. The exile kept the two accused sodomites away from the town and from each other, while the lashings may have looked to appease the indignant accusers. The entire process was an attempt to reestablish the preferred order of society: whites over indigenous, authority's power to meet accusation with appropriate procedure and justice, and to keep the same thing from happening again.

The case shows that the courts and at least one concerned citizen who caught and accused the two men saw sodomy as a threat to the rigid and hierarchical colonial order. However same-sex relations were apparently not enough of a threat for the legal system or government to expend enough time and effort to extirpate them fully or prosecute them consistently. This one court case is the only surviving example of a sodomy trial in a region where same-sex sex apparently persisted "into the eighteenth century."⁹ Barring a tremendous bias in the surviving documents from the period and region, formal criminal proceedings against sodomites were few and far between. Brown's point that "Spanish civil authority had to pick its battles,"

explains why they rarely prosecuted the crime despite the clear religious passion and interest it aroused in 1731. This paradigm of a government at the unstable frontier that fails to enforce its idealized regulations reflects the treatment of homosexual activity in the British colonies as well.

Scholarship reveals a similar laxity in New England with regards to proceedings against sodomy. Richard Godbeer argues that “Villagers and townspeople were . . . seldom willing to invoke official sanctions against sodomy, despite theological and legal denunciation. Whatever their leaders’ expectations, they viewed and treated sodomy on their own terms.”¹⁰ Godbeer demonstrates the fervor of religious prohibitions against sodomy, citing ministers who claimed it was “more against the light of nature’ than other sexual offenses,” and merited “death, without mercy.”¹¹ Legal codes matched this firm religious predisposition, but ran into the same problem as those of New Mexico—convicting someone of sodomy required a much more time and effort than the authorities could afford, as “most courts had only circumstantial evidence on which to base their deliberations . . . The two-witness rule made conviction even less likely.”¹² The trial of Nicholas Sension in 1677 Connecticut, a state which had lifted its harsh anti-sodomy law straight from the Bible, illustrates how tolerant New Englanders could be relative to the religious and legal superstructure.¹³ The defendant’s “predilections were apparently well known,” and one witness testified that “he had ‘long’ practiced ‘this trade’” of homosexual behavior with various servants for over thirty years.¹⁴ Godbeer finds in the laxity of the town’s elders a “live and let live” attitude until “the ‘hazard’ of Sension ‘infecting the rising generation’ [drove] the first informal inquiry.”¹⁵ He theorizes, “The status accorded him as one of the wealthiest householders in town

probably shielded him to some degree. Reluctance to tear the fabric of community life by taking formal action against an established citizen and employer may also have counterbalanced disapproval of his sexual proclivities.”¹⁶ In other words, these New Englanders applied a cost/benefit analysis to their situation. At first, bringing Sension to court would have disrupted the social order more than benefited it, so neighbors were unwilling to do so. Once his behavior crossed a certain threshold, it threatened the social order more than the specter of a sodomy trial did, and his community appealed to the polemical legal codes.

In a nineteenth-century Connecticut case, a popular minister named Stephen Gorton came under fire for his sexual overtures to men, also over a thirty-year span. His parish voted overwhelmingly to keep him as their pastor after his confession.¹⁷ Godbeer reasonably concludes from this that, for a period of years, elders “were hoping that he would mend his ways without their having to initiate formal proceedings . . . [and] although most of the surviving information about sodomitical activity comes from court records, townspeople and villagers did not see such behavior primarily as a legal problem.”¹⁸ In fact, it appears that the church members worried more about their reputations should their pastor’s activity come to light than the fact that such activity was taking place.¹⁹

The two New England cases suggest that colonial citizens were poor-enforcers of the heavy-handed legal and religious condemnation of sodomy. They certainly displayed no predilection toward a moral panic or even active attempts to uncover other offenders. The records of the few trials which did occur indicate that this was largely because individuals valued social order too much to disrupt it for a messy and embarrassing trial. Instead of using fear over disordered sex to reinforce authority,

these people saw legal persecution of otherwise “twilight” activity as disruptive and disintegrating. Even when they did take matters to legal or religious authority, the verdicts seem designed to revive the status quo. These authorities ignored codes recommending harsh condemnation and followed a more moderate path—just like the governor in New Mexico, they looked to move on and minimize the disruption. The court offered recompense to one of Sension’s indentured servants but did not punish Sension, and the church restored the pastor after his display of repentance.

During the second half of the 18th century, the bustling port-city of Philadelphia also illustrates a pragmatic preference for social order over religious or legal preoccupations with homosexual practice. Claire Lyons paints the city as a diverse and vibrant center that was ripe for new ideas about same-sex sexual practices that had developed in Western Europe. Print materials as well as human bodies and minds carried these ideas across the Atlantic Ocean. They introduced new tropes of the libertine rake, effeminate fop, and the sodomite, and “popular works of fiction presented an imagined homoerotic world that often denigrated people practicing same-sex intimacy and also presented the opportunity for a voyeuristic erotic gaze by the reader,” as did “sensational true-crime literature” about European sodomy trials.²⁰ During the second half of the 18th century, these texts arrived in Philadelphia, where their extensive propagation and marketing, as well as the extant library record imply their voracious appetite for such works.²¹ However Philadelphian’s growing awareness of the homosexual subcultures of Europe failed to persuade them to respond to sodomy with violent force and sanctions as did England, France, and Amsterdam. Instead, Lyons finds no evidence for any sodomy trials whatsoever except one case in which the grand jury tossed out

an accusation as “ignoramus.”²² She also points out that the legal code of Pennsylvania seems to have consistently offered the weakest possible language and sentencing for sodomy that they could get away with.²³ Unlike in 17th century New England where citizens, however reluctantly, did bring their sodomite neighbors to court when they crossed the line, “Philadelphians were not charging each other with attempted sodomy, nor were they, apparently, blackmailing each other with exposure as sodomites” as they knew occurred in Europe.²⁴ In fact, the fop earned a legitimate place in literature about the characters of the post-revolutionary city.²⁵ While he was not without ridicule, he was hardly feared, persecuted, or turned into a scapegoat by unstable authorities who faced a messy urban government and a climate of political revolution.

Why the difference with Europe? First, Quakers (the dominant religious group in Philadelphia) never felt the strong need to police those outside their membership like New England puritans. However, Lyons brings up an additional reason for such extreme tolerance that was driven by a demand for social order and cohesion in the revolutionary city. She sees the persecution of the sodomite in Europe “as a tool to create and maintain divisions among men” in social and class battles.²⁶ These persecutions follow Clark’s theory or trend that authorities used moral panic to reassert hierarchy or order when questioned or under stress. Rather than establish new divisions between men, Philadelphians living in the decades of this homoerotic literary boom needed to create the “white male republican citizen.”²⁷ Lyons argues this figure was bound to his fellow white male republican citizens by “male sexual prerogatives.”²⁸ She writes that “white men of all classes experienced increased opportunities to engage in nonmarital sexual behaviors with diminishing

social repercussions and decreased personal responsibility. [They] became more manly, not by circumscribing sexual behavior, but by expanding access to sexual privilege to white men of all classes.”²⁹ The perception of social unity marked by white men’s shared “sexual privilege” served an important role in the democratic revolutionary project by bridging class division. Prosecuting sodomy would create a contradictory division among white men; questioning their sexual prerogatives would undermine this project. Authorities could not afford and were not interested in sexual policing or moral panic because they needed unity to achieve their goals. Religious and legal concerns were ignored completely.

From the earlier years of the colonial project in New Mexico to the revolutionary city of Philadelphia, citizens’ tempered reactions to same-sex sexuality illustrate the high priority that they placed on social order. While the overarching powers in society like the Catholic Church, British crown, scripture, or Puritan theology, would have them respond to sodomy one way, in these cases they used their agency as citizens in turbulent and changing societies to choose unity and stability over imposed, polemical law and doctrine. Clark offers many examples for her pattern of unstable societies driven to sexual moral panic, but in early America authorities in tight situations confronted sodomy with an opposite strategy despite mandates or examples from the church, European countries, and their own laws. They protected their authority and social order by tolerating same-sex sexuality, or at least refusing to accuse their neighbors of sodomy until pushed to the breaking point. They were content to allow such moments remain in the silent and private “twilight” that Clark compellingly describes for as long as possible. Historians can learn from these examples that overarching historical patterns quickly bump into

exceptions, and that people did not always believe or practice what their governments or churches recorded that they should.

NOTES

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1. Anna Clark, "Twilight Moments," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14 (2005): 140.
 2. *Ibid.*, 144.
 3. *Ibid.*, 140.
 4. *Ibid.*, 146.
 5. *Ibid.*, 143, 144.
 6. Tracy Brown, "'Abominable Sin' in Colonial New Mexico: Spanish and Pueblo Perceptions of Same-Sex Sexuality," *Long Before Stonewall: Histories of Same-Sex Sexuality in Early America*, ed. Thomas A. Foster (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 52.
 7. *Ibid.*, 53.
 8. *Ibid.*, 57.
 9. *Ibid.*, 71.
 10. Richard Godbeer, "The Cry of Sodom: Discourse, Intercourse, and Desire in Colonial New England," *Long Before Stonewall*, 83.
 11. *Ibid.*, 85.
 12. *Ibid.*, 90.
 13. "If any man lyeth with mankind, as he leyth with a woman, both of them have committed abomination; they both shall surely be put to death," *Ibid.*, 86.
 14. *Ibid.*, 93-94.
 15. *Ibid.*, 95.
 16. *Ibid.*, 95.
 17. *Ibid.*, 96.
 18. *Ibid.*, 97.
 19. *Ibid.*, 99.
 20. Claire Lyons, "Mapping an Atlantic Sexual Culture: Homoeroticism in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia," *Long Before Stonewall*, 170.
 21. *Ibid.*, 171.
 22. *Ibid.*, 176.
 23. *Ibid.*, 176.
 24. *Ibid.*, 177.

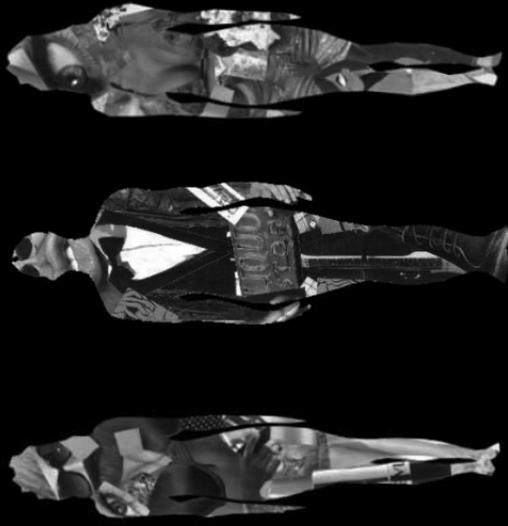
25. Ibid., 179-180.

26. Ibid., 188.

27. Ibid., 189-190.

28. Ibid., 189-190.

29. Ibid., 189-190.



Fairy Tale Fascinations with Victorian Governesses
The Seduction of Sympathizing with the Governess
Figure in Nineteenth-Century Novels
Kelly McGauley

Kelly McGauley (Class of 2011) is an English and Gender Studies major from Trenton, Michigan. This thesis stemmed from her two favorite novels, *Jane Eyre* and *The Turn of the Screw*, and a lot of long conversations with Professor Abby Palko, whom she would like to thank along with Professor Sara Maurer for all of their advice and feedback. She would also like to thank her roommates for not killing her off when she herself became a near madwoman at times in the writing process. Following graduation, Kelly will be attending Denver Publishing Institute to pursue a career in book publishing.

Fairy Tale Fascinations with Victorian Governesses

**The Seduction of Sympathizing with the Governess Figure in
Nineteenth-Century Novels**

Kelly McGauley

ABSTRACT

In many ways, Victorian governess novels mirror popular fairy tales, borrowing elements from a swift rise in social status by marrying a man of higher rank to the evil stepmother figure. While some fictional governesses took on the position to support themselves or their families, still more solicited a position seeking the means to heighten their social status. In reality, women's position in society was not quite this fluid, but within the constructs of the novel, governesses could often be seen quickly climbing the social hierarchy. Both because of the possibility for this exaggerated rise through society and the complicated, often ambiguous positioning of the

governess figure within Victorian gender and class structure, many novelists used the governess as a prominent character in their fairy-tale like plots. In nineteenth-century literature, however, women were forced into one of two categories—"angel" or "madwoman," presenting a binary within governess tales that dictated the outcomes of each plot depending on whether or not a woman fit perfectly into the Victorian "domestic ideal." Because a governess' position within this binary was not always easily determinable by her character alone, many novels employ doubles to further imply qualities about these characters that they may or may not actually possess, simply to push them further toward a categorization as either "angel" or "madwoman."

The constructs of Victorian literature forced any "madwoman" to be punished at the end of the novel, so while in the popular fairy tale the heroine earns a "happily ever after" finale, in the governess novel many of the women at work within these fairy-tale constructs are denied any sort of happy ending. A liberal feminist reading on the Victorian governess tale shows that perhaps these endings are in some ways unfair, since these women were actually ahead of their time in their defiance against their patriarchal societies and amply motivated to achieve their goals and ambitions. Nevertheless, in every governess tale, a plot twist of some sort impedes the "madwoman" from receiving her in many ways well-deserved happy ending. Thus, nineteenth-century governess novels necessitate a lens through which to better analyze the ideas facilitating the twisted endings of these fairy tale plots shown throughout Victorian literature.

INTRODUCTION

One of the many fascinations with the novel stems from the genre's generosity in its allowance of imaginative takes on otherwise regular situations. Though certainly some novels tend toward the realistic, still many show the possibilities for fairy tale situations, those that in reality we might dismiss as impossible but continue to maintain in our imaginations as that which could be. As in many classic fairy tales, often the novel demonstrates a swift rise within the class structure, a heroic rescue of a heroine, or an evil stepmother figure attempting to ruin the plans of the tale's more reputable characters. But what, then, do we make of novels that contain many or all of those elements and rather than leading to the much-anticipated "happy ending" lead instead to the fall of the female protagonist? The tale of the governess, like many popular fairy tales, focuses on the life of a lower to middle-class workingwoman, and in one way or another fictionalizes and romanticizes her tale for entertainment in the novel. Some early nineteenth-century British fiction about governesses portrays them in very a positive light, while later novels often depict more defiant versions, even going so far as to call the women mad. However, while fictional representations of governesses degenerate over time, sympathy for the governess protagonist maintains by viewing the novel through a feminist lens. Many governess tales highlight some of the narrative techniques used to elicit sympathy for certain characters and often strive to make the governess relatable to the reader; furthermore, many fictional governess tales have much in common with popular fairy tales. However, often the endings of governess novels force a much more complicated reading of the novel.

In late eighteenth-century Great Britain, the position of the governess was prevalent in society but strangely absent from popular print culture. In Jane Austen's novels, for instance, which focused primarily on both family and societal dynamics in Europe at the turn of the century, the role of the governess was very small and rarely discussed at any length. When a governess is mentioned in Austen's early works, it is typically in a manner that either criticizes the woman for not performing her duties well enough or simply groups her with the rest of the household's hired help. In one of Austen's pieces written around the turn of the century, *Lady Susan*, her protagonist describes leaving her daughter "to the care of servants, or a governess very little better," lightly touching on the governess' position but only showing it as very similar to a servant's.¹ Many of Austen's other novels similarly discount the position, concentrating much more heavily on characters of higher class. In her one of her last novels *Emma*, published in 1815, however, Austen focuses more strongly on the possibilities for a central female character as governess; the debate about whether or not Jane Fairfax should become a governess becomes a prominent plot point in the novel. Furthermore, the concept of the "governess-trade," is referenced in the novel and discussed among two of the major characters, illustrating the rising prevalence of the position during the early nineteenth century.² Austen, who in her earlier works scarcely touches the subject of governesses, later allows one of *Emma*'s most respectable female characters the possibility of being employed in a situation as governess. Even in *Emma*, however, Austen forecloses the possibility of Jane becoming a governess by marrying her to Frank Churchill, thus still not exploring the governess' role or story in any depth. Austen's works mirror the literary development

of the time period, displaying the rise of the governess figure as a strong female role in the novel.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the governess had become a prominent figure in both Victorian and Gothic novels. Perhaps the social status of the governess was one that many readers could relate to, or perhaps the possibilities for her upward mobility began to fascinate the imaginations of those authors who had yet to see anything similar happen in reality. In any case, using a governess as a protagonist, nineteenth-century novelists had ample opportunities to push the boundaries of class formation, family structures, and gender roles in British society. Many novels featuring a governess provided insight on class structure and demonstrated the fascination with the idea of climbing the social hierarchy, highlighting as well the significance of gender in relationship to social position. Furthermore, the governess tale inevitably explored family structure in many ways, forcing readers to consider how the governess' position in the family compared to motherhood or other familial stances. As the nineteenth century progressed, the possibilities for the governess figure in the novel widened and the governess characters became indisputably more defiant. Over the nineteenth century, the governess figure in the novel became more rebellious both in terms of the character's actions within her surroundings as well as in terms of the way the novels themselves progress. Despite the fact that as time progressed the governess as a character became more openly defiant, however, the interest in her character was maintained and even piqued among readers and authors of the time. Moreover, from a feminist standpoint, the sympathy for these defiant women did not diminish. The fascination with the role of the governess emerged in a variety of novels throughout the nineteenth century in different ways,

each telling a different enchanting, romanticized tale of a woman's life in her Victorian society.

CLASS STRUCTURE

In many popular fairy tales like "Cinderella" or "Snow White," a large part of the happy ending is due to a young girl's rise in social standing, inevitable because of her newfound love for a prince. Similarly, one of the most prominent features of many governess novels of the nineteenth century is the rise in social status for the governess, whether or not such a rise was the protagonist's ultimate goal. Though the governess tale is often heavily romanticized to create more opportunity for social rise than might have been realistically plausible, the governess' position within the class structure of British society was no doubt significant; a rise in a woman's position within the Victorian class structure often serves as the driving force in governess novels. For example, William Makepeace Thackeray's 1848 *Vanity Fair* and Mary Braddon's 1862 *Lady Audley's Secret* both feature women using the position of governess as a mere stepping-stone to a higher position in society. Regardless of whether a rise in social standing is the woman's end goal, however, money is still an important aspect of the governess' life. Other governess protagonists such as Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* exemplify women using the position to support both themselves and their families. While some of these characters solicit their position to make a living at a very base level and others have high hopes of eventually entering the upper class, in each situation financial standing is one of the fundamental reasons for women seeking paid employment. Each

governess tale, in no matter how small a way, demonstrates the inextricable link between financial status and the governess' position.

Though many governesses both in reality and in fiction took their position to make a living, the salary for the profession was generally very low. Governesses were housed and fed by their employers, but the rest of their expenses were left to them. Pay ranged from £15 to £100 a year, depending on both the standing of the family by whom the governess was employed and the skills of the governess herself. As compared to other household employees (i.e. housekeepers, cooks, nursemaids), the governess' salary was only slightly higher.³ Frequently, women working as governesses sought to send a portion of their income back to their families as well. Anne Brontë reflects this historical reality in her 1847 novel *Agnes Grey* when Agnes becomes a governess in the hopes of sending money home to her ailing father and the rest of her family. After being sent home from her first situation as governess, she convinces her mother to let her try again, professing, "My money is but little, and cannot last long; if I could increase it, it would lessen papa's anxiety on one subject at least. I cannot draw like Mary, and so the best thing I could do would be to look out for another situation."⁴ The position that Agnes secures, however, only pays her a salary of £50 a year. While this appears to her to be "no ordinary sum," the amount falls in the middle of the range of pay for governesses at the time. Furthermore, she describes, "I must have decent clothing becoming my station, I must, it seemed, put out my washing, and also pay for my four annual journeys between Horton Lodge and home." After paying for everything else, Agnes will only be left with £30 a year, but even so, she is so excited to be able to help her family in any way possible with their financial situation that she exclaims, "What a valuable addition to our stock!

Oh! I *must* struggle to keep this situation, whatever it might be!”⁵ Similarly, Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre is also paid £30 a year as a governess at Thornfield Hall. She, like Agnes Grey, is excited by the amount since her previous position as a teacher at Lowood had only paid her £15 a year.⁶

Though the pay for governesses was very low, occasionally the position—at least within the novel—provided a larger non-monetary payoff and was in that regard worth the effort for some fictional women. For example, from almost the beginning of *Vanity Fair*, Becky Sharp seeks financial gain and a rise in social status. As a young student at Miss Pinkerton’s academy, she taunts the schoolmistress: “Give me a sum of money,” she says, “and get rid of me—or, if you like better, get me a good place as governess in a nobleman’s family—you can do so if you please.”⁷ By the middle of the novel, however, it becomes clear that securing a position as governess in Sir Pitt Crawley’s household will prove perhaps more beneficial than any sum of money Miss Pinkerton could have given her. Not only is Becky able to “come ‘round everybody” in the house, she also eventually gains the affections of Rawdon Crawley, Sir Pitt’s second son, and marries him, despite her much lower class. Using her position as governess as her initial entrance into upper class relations, Becky is able to cleverly and ruthlessly maneuver herself higher and higher in society.

In *Lady Audley’s Secret*, Lady Audley also uses the position of governess in combination with her charming personality to gain a large rise in social status. Very early in the novel, the reader is told the truth about how Lucy Graham, through her marriage to Sir Michael, became Lady Audley in “one of those apparently advantageous matches which are apt to draw upon a woman the envy and hatred of her sex.” Immediately, Braddon insinuates that Lucy’s gain was through her own

planning and worked out for quite some time just as advantageously as she had planned. Lucy “had come into the neighborhood as a governess in the family of a surgeon in the village near Audley court,” and like Becky Sharp, her accomplishments were “brilliant and numerous.”⁸ Though she proclaims, “it would be a great deal too much good fortune for me to become Lady Audley,” sure enough, Lucy is soon married to Sir Michael and rises from a penniless governess to an upper-class woman.⁹

Even those fictional governesses who solely sought a salary or home from her position are usually eventually rewarded with a corresponding heightened social status, or at least a more comfortable position. Agnes Grey, for example, on top of earning some money to send back to help support her family, eventually marries the curate she had met during her time at Horton Lodge, which gives her at least the financial stability her family had lacked during her childhood. Although Agnes’ rise in social status is not nearly as high as Becky Sharp’s or Lady Audley’s, her life with Edward Weston as a pastor’s wife is much more comfortable than her youth spent in the house of her poor mother and father or even than her time spent working as a governess. She and Edward live together in a “happily ever after” of sorts: “Our modest income is amply sufficient for our requirements,” she describes, “and by practising the economy we learnt in harder times, and never attempting to imitate our richer neighbours, we manage not only to enjoy comfort and contentment ourselves, but to have every year something to lay by for our children, and something to give to those who need it.”¹⁰ In her acknowledgment of the ways she and Edward had learned to maintain economic stability and in her declaration that she does not want to mimic those richer than her family, Agnes admits that seeking heightened

social status is not always beneficial. Her realization is mirrored throughout governess novels as those who seek social rise are often punished, whereas those like she and Jane Eyre who stumble into monetary gain are rewarded both in wealth and in a greater happy ending.

Charlotte Brontë's 1847 novel *Jane Eyre* also shows the possibilities for a governess heightening her social status without specifically plotting to do so. After securing a position at Thornfield Hall where she will be able to make her living, Jane Eyre also falls in love with the master of the household, Edward Fairfax Rochester. Rochester finds Jane his intellectual equal and falls in love with her as well; eventually he marries her, and Jane, who had been orphaned and incredibly poor, finds herself in the position to eventually have her own household servants after working as a governess for so many years. While at the end of the novel Brontë does not describe this future for Jane, presumably because it might have seemed too unrealistic to readers of the time and because it might have been more enjoyable for readers of the time to imagine their own further ending to the story, the ending she does allow for Jane doubtless gives way to thoughts of an even happier one.

The idea of fictional governesses inevitably achieving a rise in social status only adds to the fairy tale aspect of the novel, since in reality many governesses had often experienced a fall in social class. As Martha Vicinus notes in *Suffer and Be Still*, "employment as a governess was only of very limited use even in maintaining gentle status." While fiction on the subject implies that even without aiming for a rise in status, a governess was bound to achieve at least a slight rise in standing, the reality was that "however educated a girl from the 'lower ranks' might be, she was still 'ill-bred' in the eyes of those who made themselves judges of governesses." Certainly

British citizens might have felt that the governess was inescapably restrained to lower rank; however, without exaggeration of such facts within the novel, romantic endings of novels like *Jane Eyre* would have been impossible. Vicinus argues that “the governesses who were figures of evil or immortality were women of humble origins” and points to Becky Sharp as one who used her position as governess for a rise in social status, implying that mainly those women depicted as more corrupt in fiction were those seeking social rise.¹¹ She neglects, however, to note that even those governesses presented as pious, like Agnes Grey, are given opportunity for rise, in a way similar to the Cinderella tale. Novels about the governess, in favor of a very romanticized version of where the occupation can lead, always somehow ignore the truth about the more realistic fates of governesses in the nineteenth century.

GENDER STRUCTURE

While the fairy tale nature of some governess novels ignores the difficult gender expectations placed on women in the nineteenth century, in reality, women’s positions were not nearly as fluid as some novelists would have them appear. The governess position was unique in that while her position required her to resemble the upper class in values and education, a governess must also be of a rank low enough to still require employment. The image of a governess as compared to that of a lady in the nineteenth century was contradictory partially because of the issue of the governess working for a salary. Middle class women at the time were “creature[s] of leisure, enclosed within a private circle of family and friends and completely supported by father or husband,” negating any need for paid

employment. Though the position was paid and thus looked down upon, it was still better than other paid positions for a woman at the time, since often those who took on the position of governess were of respectable families who had somehow fallen in standing due to death or financial ruin.¹² Demonstrating this, fictional governesses like Jane Eyre or Agnes Grey were previously in better class standing but had been orphaned or their families had lost money. Vicinus explains, “Victorian parents sought a woman who could teach their daughters the genteel accomplishments which were the aims of female education. More important, they sought a gentlewoman.”¹³ While the position of governess was paid employment, the job was different in that she was “doing something she might have done as a wife in better circumstances.”¹⁴ Within novels about the governess, these qualities helped to facilitate a rise in the governess’ social status because she would already be prepared for many of the ideals that might be required of her should she become an upper-class wife.

Although governesses certainly occupied a different position in society than the higher-class women in the houses in which they worked, governesses within the novel were nonetheless women and must be looked at in a similar way within the gender structure of the novels. Mary Poovey’s *Uneven Developments* explains that across Victorian culture, women were viewed in terms of a “domestic ideal,” implying that women were not only the weaker sex, but also that they were “dominated by the involuntary periodicity of the reproductive system” and governed by “maternal instinct.”¹⁵ Governesses, though held to different standards in terms of class distinction, were nonetheless held to the same domestic ideal as other women in society. “As superintendents of the domestic sphere,” she argues, “women were

represented as protecting, and increasingly, incarnating virtue.”¹⁶ Governesses, as Vicinus indicated, took on many of the responsibilities involved in maintaining the domestic sphere, and therefore acted as a very concrete representation of women as domestic beings. Yet since in reality governesses were frequently reminded that they were not of the same rank as women of the upper class, their adherence to the domestic ideal was slightly contradictory.

Because these ideals were relentlessly reiterated over time, women both in reality and in the novel were continuously forced to behave according to this “domestic ideal,” regardless of their social standing or specific circumstances. The ideal created a binary of sorts between those women who fit the ideal and those who challenged the type of character society deemed appropriate. By establishing proper, often submissive, and domestic women as the ideal, Victorian culture created a harsh dichotomy, placing all women who did not fit this description in a position opposing the ideal. Poovey explains, “the contradiction between a sexless, moralized angel and an aggressive, carnal magdalen was therefore written into the domestic ideals as one of its constitutive characteristics,” an issue present throughout nineteenth century representations of women. In fact, Poovey cites the governess as a prominent example of the “redundant woman,” or those women who inflicted evil on society:

She constituted the border between the normative (working) man and the normative (nonworking) woman. Not a mother, the governess nevertheless performed the mother’s tasks; not a prostitute, she was nevertheless suspiciously close to other sexualized women; not a lunatic, she was nevertheless deviant simply because she was a middle-class woman who had to work and because she was always in danger of losing her middle-class status and her “natural” morality.¹⁷

Poovey illustrates the difficult position governesses occupied in Victorian society because of the often contradictory nature of their situation. By discussing the

incongruity of the governess position, Poovey accounts for many of the contradictory expectations for governesses as women and as citizens within a strict class structure. She demonstrates the problem of having one specific ideal of what a woman should be by indicating the problem in categorizing any woman—including the governess. Because Victorian literature dictated that well-behaved women needed to fit the domestic ideal, those who did not fit were viewed as “other,” and categorizing them became problematic for novelists. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar take this idea even further, presenting this paradox between women encompassing societal ideals of domesticity and those contradicting them in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, describing the “angel in the house” in opposition to the contrasting “madwoman.”

“MADWOMAN” V. “ANGEL IN THE HOUSE”

Gilbert and Gubar present a dichotomy between groups of women in Victorian fiction through the conflicting images of the “angel in the house” as compared to the “madwoman in the attic,” describing two opposing categories in Victorian literature that accounted, in some way, for all female characters. They explain the way that many nineteenth-century authors have chosen to write about an “angel of the house,” or a woman who possesses all those qualities that Poovey describes as fulfilling the “domestic ideal.” The opposing madwoman then encompasses anything outside of that angelic image, even if the evil qualities are not so extreme as Madame de la Rougierre’s. Gilbert and Gubar assert that the original image of purity, the Virgin Mary, manifests itself in nineteenth century novels “not by a madonna in heaven, but by an angel in the house.”¹⁸ However, while they

acknowledge the existence of this angel woman in Victorian novels, they also argue that she often “manipulates her domestic/mystical sphere in order to ensure the well-being of those entrusted to her care,” revealing “that she *can* manipulate; she can scheme; she can plot.”¹⁹ This conniving aspect of some of these angelic women in novels is what Gilbert and Gubar argue separates the madwomen from those who might otherwise be angels. By their logic, behind many of the angelic faces of governess protagonists within the novel lies a truly monstrous character inside. While this theory blurs the lines between the categories of angel and madwoman, their opposing distinctions are worth exploring to better understand the classifications of fictional governesses.

Although characters in many nineteenth-century novels are quick to call uncooperative or defiant female figures mad, for most of these female characters this term is not appropriate. While attempting to drastically shift one’s social standing often called for cunning actions quite deviant from the expectations of domesticity set in place by Victorian society, attempting to go against these traditional ideals was much more an expression of courage and astuteness than a representation of insanity for the governess figure. Many fictional governesses secured the position in the hopes of rising to a higher-class standing, but as Vicinus notes, “the possibility of a real upward mobility was a chimera,” and therefore fictional governesses aiming for social rise necessarily had to take extreme measures.²⁰ In Sheridan Le Fanu’s 1865 novel *Uncle Silas*, Maud’s governess Madame de la Rougierre, like Lady Audley, takes very extreme actions in her attempts to ensure financial gain. By taking part in Silas’ plan to lock Maud in a mysterious room and steal her inheritance, Madame de la Rougierre not only uses her position as governess to her advantage,

but also breaks through the constructs of the typical power structure present for the situation. Though her actions are exceedingly vindictive in similar fashion to Lady Audley's, once again, even as evil as she is, it is difficult to call Madame de la Rougierre mad. Her plans are very well thought out, and although like Lady Audley's she cannot fully follow them to fruition, the text presents no evidence to say that she was in any way crazy or foolish. Rather, it seems that the governesses whom surrounding characters in the novel are most likely to condemn as mad are perhaps instead some of the most intelligent, calculating women in the novel.

Many governess novels lead to the question of whether or not "madwoman" is the most appropriate term for describing even the most devious of women, since many women seem instead to be devious and cunning, but completely sane. While some governesses such as the moral Agnes Grey and the evil Madame de la Rougierre fit neatly into either category, many others are more difficult to categorize. Instead, some choose to wear an angelic mask over their more truly monstrous nature. Both Becky Sharp and Lucy Audley act angelically for a time despite their underhanded plans to get ahead in society, initially through governessing, but eventually through whatever means necessary. Both women use their good looks and charming nature to continually get ahead in society, paying no mind to how this might negatively affect others around them or the consequences their actions might afford them later in life. Certainly such women's actions often cause problems for those around them, shown for example when Lady Audley goes so far as to attempt murder to solve her problems. However, while the lengths to which she and others are willing to go to get ahead in society are sometimes outlandish, their initial desire

for success is perhaps simply a part of human nature and in that way understandable at least to some extent.

Lady Audley's Secret also plays heavily upon the fear of women not fitting the domestic ideal, showing one example of a woman who is extensively characterized as the angel of the house before her mask is figuratively torn off, revealing yet another monstrous female figure striving to rise in society. After Lady Audley's endearing nature is established, it is almost too easy for her to behave in extremely defiant ways behind her angelic façade. In one instance exemplifying her truly monstrous nature, Lady Audley is so determined to keep the secrets of her pasts that she sets fire to the nearby Mount Stanning, attempting to kill her nephew Robert Audley. However, when she comes down to breakfast the next morning, Lady Audley remains the picture of an upper-class woman: "exquisitely dressed in a morning costume of delicate muslin, elaborate laces, and embroideries...she accounted for this pale face and these hollowed eyes by declaring that she had sat up reading until a very late hour the previous night."²¹ While her charming personality protects her for quite some time, however, Lady Audley's secrets are eventually revealed, and her husband and other characters begin to think her mad because her actions have been so vindictive. By the conclusion of the novel, she is thought so strongly to be a madwoman that Sir Michael orders her to a madhouse.

Perhaps Lady Audley's actions are even more difficult for society to accept because she is not only a woman but also a wife and mother by the time her actions are uncovered. Unlike Madame de la Rougierre, domesticity is even more expected of Lady Audley because of her position in her family. When her actions are uncovered at the end of the novel, then, it is all the more shocking to the characters around her

because she had been putting on such a good façade of upholding the domestic ideal. Though the reader is given ample foreshadowing to suggest that Lady Audley might not be as pure as she seems to others around her, her secretive nature about her schemes shows her to be just as devious as more openly rebellious women like Madame de la Rougierre, if not more so for her intelligence in keeping it hidden. Lady Audley's scheming is her main trait that forces society to place her in the madwoman category; since she had acted angelically before, straying from the angel model so deeply tremendously heightens the cultural compulsion to categorize her as mad. However, because of the cunningness she exhibits in her situation, she also proves she is most certainly not "mad" by clinical definition,²² since she was skilled enough to keep her secret for so long before being caught.

In their defiance against their situations, these types of governess protagonists actually made large strides toward independence: Madame de la Rougierre to a heightened power over her pupil Maud and Becky Sharp to a heightened societal rank. In this way, certain governess tales actually change the expectations for what might define a madwoman, at least from a feminist standpoint. Gilbert and Gubar quote Leo Bersani in saying that "written 'language doesn't merely describe identity but actually produces moral and perhaps even physical identity,'" a crisis that arises in many governess novels.²³ They explain that while the terms "angel" and "madwoman" initially function simply as techniques to characterize women within Victorian writing, eventually the meanings behind these categories becomes so deeply a part of literature that it is difficult for any female characters to escape them. However, because the role of the governess character is so ambiguous both in terms of her class and gender, the reader is forced to consider whether a

space outside of madwoman or angel might be necessary in which to situate the governess.

Many fictional governesses are forced into the category of madwoman in the paradox of angel versus madwoman, despite their not necessarily fitting wholly into either category. However, the only reason they are forced into this category is because they do not fit Poovey's "domestic ideal." Gilbert and Gubar also explain that "from the eighteenth century on, conduct books for ladies had proliferated, enjoining young girls to submissiveness, modesty, selflessness, reminding all women that they should be angelic," and more importantly that to be considered an angel required obedience and compliance to men.²⁴ Since women like Madame de la Rougierre or Becky Sharp were certainly not submissive to men or anyone, it is impossible to consider them angels by any Victorian standards.

Gilbert and Gubar defend a feminist reading of these novels, stating, "Assertiveness, aggressiveness—all characteristics of a male life of 'significant action'—are 'monstrous' in women precisely because 'unfeminine' and therefore unsuited to a gentle life of 'contemplative purity,'" implying that though the actions of female characters in the novel may be no different than the actions of male characters, the women's are inevitably considered morally wrong or the women are thought to be mad simply because they are going against contemporary expectations.²⁵ *Uncle Silas* exemplifies this point by pairing Madame de la Rougierre with Uncle Silas in a collaborative plan against Maud. This parallel demonstrates Gilbert and Gubar's idea that any defiance like Madame de la Rougierre's was seen as unfeminine and inherently "monstrous." While she is no more a monster than Uncle Silas, Madame de la Rougierre is constantly shown as such because while Uncle

Silas' aggressive nature is expected and to a degree acceptable, hers situates her against the more typical angelic expectation for women at the time. By the end of the novel, however, since the Victorian narrative cannot allow for a woman in this assertive position, Madame de la Rougierre is not only pegged as monstrous over and over by Maud but is also killed. On the surface, it may appear that Madame de la Rougierre is killed at the end of the narrative simply in punishment for her actions against Maud; however, if that is the case one must wonder why Uncle Silas is not also killed. While surely in part Madame de la Rougierre's death is a result of her actions against Maud, within the text her death results more from her open defiance against the domestic ideal, a concept that the surrounding society expected of all women in the Victorian time. By punishing Madame de la Rougierre within the narrative, *Le Fanu* not only punishes her for her actions throughout the novel but also demonstrates the need society imagined for punishing real women like her who similarly fell short or were defiant of the domestic ideal.

DOUBLES

A governess' position as angel or madwoman, good or bad, within the novel, is not always determinable through her individual character or actions alone and requires a double to really emphasize the nature the author attempts to display in her. While the actions of the governess herself usually fit one of the two categories to some degree, at times authors seek other narrative devices to fully convince the reader with complete authority that the woman can and should only be placed in only one of the two categories. For many of the governesses in Victorian fiction, whether

considered to be angel or madwoman, there exists a foil character within the novel to further define her. For example, Gilbert and Gubar explain that in *Vanity Fair*, Amelia helps facilitate a definition of Becky as mad. "Behind Thackeray's angelically submissive Amelia Sedley, for instance," Gilbert and Gubar argue, "lurks Vanity Fair's stubbornly autonomous Becky Sharp, an independent "charmer" whom the novelist at one point actually describes as a monstrous and snaky sorceress."²⁶ Thackeray, like many Victorian authors, clearly positions the two women in opposition to one another to display the contradictory nature of the two and in doing so heightens the reader's sense of one as angel and one as madwoman. Furthermore, Thackeray displays through Amelia and Becky the idea that forcing women into these opposing categories completely eliminates the possibility of a middle ground in the spectrum of womanhood. Showing a woman's double within the novel as someone with opposite qualities to hers promotes the idea that women may only exist in one of two ways, not only limits the possibilities for what a woman can be, but also at times forces a woman to be considered as something she is not.

By using doubles within the novel to accentuate another character's qualities, authors are able to subtly highlight specific the character flaws or virtues they find most important. Thackeray focuses on Amelia's extremely angelic nature so as to call attention to Becky's equally identifiable monstrous nature. As previously mentioned, many instances within the text call attention to Becky's schemes for personal gain and her constant departure from the domestic ideals of submissive wife or fitting mother. Certainly it is not entirely Amelia that makes the reader see Becky as immoral or malevolent within the novel. However, the reader's sense of Becky as madwoman is heightened each time Thackeray reiterates Amelia's position

as the novel's angel. From the very first description of Amelia, who "had such a kindly, smiling, tender, gentle, generous heart of her own, as won the love of everybody who came near her," she is presented as "a dear little creature," though "not a heroine" of the novel.²⁷ When Becky is presented a few pages later as "not, then, in the least kind or placable," she is immediately set in contrast to Amelia who possesses all the virtuous qualities she does not.²⁸ Throughout the novel, Becky's own actions continually inform the reader's views of her as despicable; those views, however, are also skewed by Thackeray's consistent presentation of Amelia occupying the other end of the spectrum as the novel's angel. As the novel continues, for instance, Becky is at one point pointed to by her servants as "lost and ruined."²⁹ While the servants' word might have been enough to convince the reader of Becky's position within the novel, Thackeray highlights how appallingly her life is progressing as she ages by showing her in contrast to Amelia who in contrast is constantly called "the poor widow."³⁰ He encourages the reader to think Becky's lifestyle appalling by contrasting it with Amelia's heartbreaking existence.

Other novelists take the doubling technique one step further by using it to imply qualities in characters that they may not even possess. Charlotte Brontë employs a similar technique of doubling in *Jane Eyre* by showcasing Bertha's madness throughout the novel to heighten the reader's sympathy for her opposite, the seemingly angelic Jane. Brontë sets up a dichotomy between angel and madwoman, forcing the reader to place the non-governess character on either side of the spectrum. Consequently, we are left with no other place for the governess who seems this character's opposite in almost every way than to locate her on the other end of the spectrum. In terms of textual evidence, Jane actually possesses

surprisingly few significantly angelic qualities. As a child, she occasionally defies her Aunt Reed and Mr. Brocklehurst, and as she goes older her defiance to some extent disappears. However, the reader is rarely given any indication that she is behaving in a particularly admirable way, at least so far as in the opinions of those around her. In fact, the novel is surprisingly lacking in examples of Jane as a particularly domestic woman or as a high-quality governess to Adele. What is noticeable about Jane's character throughout the text is her lack of any outward misconduct in her adult life. Perhaps it is for this very lack of wrongdoings while a governess at Thornfield that Jane would unquestionably belong to the angel category if the reader were forced to assign her to one group or the other. However, a reading of Jane as an angel figure within the novel with this limited view seems unconvincing. Furthermore, for Jane to be truly angelic by Victorian standards, she would have to be submissive, which she proves she is not in her conversational defiance of Rochester at times and in her leaving Thornfield suddenly after learning about his wife. It is only by including Bertha Mason, a literal madwoman in the attic, in the story's plot, that Brontë clearly depicts Jane as belonging to the category of angel within the dichotomy. Because Bertha is so clearly characterized as mad, Jane can logically be characterized as nothing other than an angel.

Characters acting as doubles in opposition to some of the protagonists in governess tales emphasize the governess' positions within the novel as either "good" or "bad" women, as "angels of the house" or as "madwomen." Just as in popular fairy tales often the heroine is shown in direct contrast to another figure such as Cinderella against her evil stepsisters, novelists of the governess tales often take the same approach, pitting some double against the governess protagonist. By

deconstructing the doubling model, however, it is clear that one must look at each individual character in isolation to get a true picture of his or her personality. Another double often used in fairy tales is the evil stepmother figure, often contrasted with the memory of a much more virtuous biological mother. While in fairy tales an evil stepmother figure somehow plays into the heroine's upbringing or success in achieving her goals, often in the governess tale the governess has had no mother figure whatsoever to guide her throughout her life, adding to her confusion on how to act as a woman. Furthermore, in the governess tale the protagonist herself is often put into a position similar to that of a stepmother through her role as the governess, complicating the definitions and expectations of motherhood.

MOTHER FIGURES

Although the role of the governess within the family either in reality or in fiction has never been entirely consistent, many of her duties often had common characteristics as those of a mother during the nineteenth century. A governess was responsible for supervising the children, sometimes accompanying them into town or chaperoning them elsewhere, and also for educating them in various subjects. In many cases, children spent more time with their governess than with either of their parents, and for this reason a governess would no doubt have acted as a role model for some children in many ways. However, the struggle for authority over the children and the necessity of a parent present to provide any real discipline often set the governess and the children's actual mother figures apart. The relationship between fictional governesses and her role in relationship to the mother's role is

never completely clarified. While some of the responsibilities were certainly shared, because of the different levels of power various fictional governesses felt entitled to, their influences on the children were quite varied. Within the governess novel, representations of mothers are also quite varied, and the relationship of governess to mother figure is proven to be both inextricable in some ways and in others very separate. Victorian governess tales not only compare and contrast the governess and mother figures, but also used similarities to draw conclusions about whether or not motherhood was natural in a way that was impossible to consider at the time period when the idea involved actual biological mothers.

Often in the novel, governesses were expected to somehow be inherently maternal, despite the fact that biologically, they were usually not mothers at all. However, since they are only given the opportunity to practice maternity if other mothers were absent or not maternal, it is also shown to be immensely difficult for a governess to learn maternal behavior. The governess tale seems to deconstruct the idea of “maternal instinct,” instead implying that maternity must be learned. Often, the governess figure is portrayed—at least when she begins her employment—as too young to become a mother herself. Though becoming a governess always gave young women at least some experience in a sort of pseudo-motherhood, for many fictional governesses their solicitation of their position did not at all stem from a desire to experience motherhood. Poovey argues, “The very existence of so many governesses was proof that, whatever middle-class women might want, not all of them could be (legitimate) mothers because they could not all be wives,” but her line of reasoning assumes that all governesses had, in one way or another, failed at becoming mothers.³¹ Yet many fictional governesses were not even thinking about getting

married at the time they entered their position, let alone about becoming a mother. Agnes Grey, for instance, is eighteen when she solicits her first position; though certainly of marriageable and childbearing age, the concept has not entered her thoughts or her family's. So far are the concepts of marriage or children from their minds that her mother explains, "My love, you have not learnt to take care of *yourself* yet; and young children require more judgment and experience to manage than elder ones."³² Part of the reason Agnes is initially thought to be unfit for raising children, of course, comes from the obvious detail that she does not yet have any of her own. However, rather than following Poovey's contention that she must have been unable to be a wife, she has chosen to wait to marry and have children until she is older.

Other fictional governesses solicit a position so as to escape a life of drudgery or spent in the lower ranks, rather than to experience pseudo-motherhood. Lady Audley stands as another and perhaps even clearer example of a woman who has not chosen to become a governess because she cannot be a wife or mother herself. In fact, not only was Lady Audley both a wife and mother before she even began to work as a governess, she also willingly left her position in her family and sought a position as a governess instead. One of the main reasons Lady Audley became a governess was, rather than desiring to have a family, to get away from the one she had. She was very unhappy in her marriage with George Talboys and also describes her son in an extremely negative light. "I did not love the child," she says, "for he had been left a burden upon my hands."³³ Though it would have been logical for a woman to become a governess as a way of acting as the mother figure without actually bearing children,

the theme was surprisingly uncommon among governess novels of the nineteenth century.

While Poovey's assertion that women took on the governess position mainly because they could not have children of their own did not necessarily hold throughout novels on the subject, the more implicit argument behind it that these women could not find husbands is nonetheless often true. In reality, the governess often had trouble finding someone to marry because of the ambiguity of her situation in the class structure. Vicinus notes, "since one of the functions of marriage was to extend the connections of family and to add, through the marriage settlement, additional income to the young family, the attractions of an orphaned, poverty-stricken girl," like many of the governesses in Victorian novels, "would be very limited.³⁴ Poovey agrees, and her own argument suggests that many women had difficulty finding husbands within their own social class and therefore could not have children without sliding further down the social ladder, so some took on the position of governess instead to care for children in a different way.

Some novels on the subject acknowledge governessing arising as a result of not being able to find a proper husband, as Poovey proposes. However, in such cases the idea of finding a higher-ranked husband through the position is much more likely. In that case, the situation as a pseudo-stepmother to one's charges was a secondary acquisition rather than the reason for taking the job. Many fictional women who governessed for personal gain reiterate the secondary nature of the stepmother role they are forced to assume. For instance, while Becky Sharp and Lady Audley were thrilled to take on the position for the possibilities it opened for them in terms of gaining a husband, neither was quite so excited to take on the job of actually

caring for their charges. Even Jane Eyre, often pointed to as one of the more angelic fictional governesses, rarely seems concerned about the actual duties required of her position. Whether a governess acted as a literal stepmother, like Jane Eyre eventually did, or more figuratively filled the position, the positions unquestionably had common traits in Victorian fiction.

No matter the reason for taking on the governess position, women both in reality and in fiction certainly did become governesses and inevitably took on roles similar to that of a mother that sometimes helped them to learn to be matronly. Some of the more conventional governess figures actually learned to become mothers from their position, for better or for worse, eventually influenced the way they mother their own children. Agnes Grey, for instance, though in no way prepared for motherhood at the beginning of the novel, closes her narrative with a confident statement about her mothering abilities. With her husband Edward, she has three children, "Edward, Agnes, and little Mary," who she says, "promise well; their education, for the time being, is chiefly committed to me; and they shall want no good thing that a mother's care can give."³⁵ Doubtless both Agnes' frustrating experience as a governess for the Bloomfields and her more enjoyable employment by the Murrays contributed to her growing maternal instinct. With the Bloomfields, Agnes is often forced, though often to no avail, to practice disciplining her pupils. In one description of her anger at Mary Ann, she describes how she "would shake her violently by the shoulders, or pull her long hair, or put her in the corner."³⁶ Mary Ann remains disobedient nonetheless because she knows her mother will not force her to behave, and sure enough Mrs. Bloomfield reprimands Agnes for attempting discipline rather than her daughter for her misbehavior. From this experience and

other similar experiences, Agnes is able to both experiment with different methods of discipline and to see an example of the type of mother she hopes not to become.

In another much different lesson in maternity from her experience as a governess for the Murrays, Agnes also learns how to care for one of her charges as a mother cares for her child. When Rosalie Murray gets engaged, Agnes is as cautionary about the match as many mothers are when marrying off their own children. When Rosalie asks Agnes why she is not immediately congratulating her on her marriage, Agnes replies, "I cannot congratulate you...till I know whether this change is really for the better; but I sincerely hope it is; and I wish you true happiness and the best of blessings."³⁷ Though her position as governess is obviously only somewhat paralleled with the position of mother, Agnes still picks up a maternal instinct that later allows her to confidently enter into motherhood herself.

While most fictional governesses, like Agnes, apply what they learn through their position to their parenting tactics later in life, not all are made better mothers from their experiences; while governessing could benefit some characters in teaching them how to be mothers, other novels proved that learning to be matronly in the wrong ways could cause one to develop a negative maternal instinct. Since Agnes had put generous effort into being the best governess she was capable of, it is not surprising that she would later put forth the same effort in striving to be a good mother to her children. Unfortunately, this logic also held true for those women who took the position of governess lightly and showed little care for their children. Since, in the only experience even close to parenting that these governesses would have had when preparing for to be mothers, they were able to get by with apathy and selfishness, they predictably applied these same standards to their parenting

techniques. Becky Sharp exemplifies this type of reverse learning; rather than picking up parenting techniques, the former governess is perhaps a worse mother after the experience than she might have been without it. Part of what comes from Becky's experience as a governess is the uncaring model for motherhood that she witnesses in Lady Crawley. When Becky temporarily leaves the children, she receives many letters from the Baronet containing "urgent prayers...for her return" that convey "the neglected state of his daughters' education."³⁸ For the Crawleys, a governess is clearly an important figure within the family, since their mother pays them very little attention. Little to the Crawleys' realization, however, Becky herself is also far more concerned with an "advance with her employers" and in befriending Miss Crawley in the hopes of a share in her wealth, than with the well being of the children.³⁹ Because the only models of motherhood Becky has seen or experienced by the time she becomes a mother herself have been somewhat removed from the children, it comes as no surprise when she is not a high-quality mother to her own child.

Despite Becky's training for motherhood through her years as a governess, she actually becomes a terrible mother rather than an accomplished one. Though Thackeray implies that Becky had at least for a time appreciated being a mother, more likely this was only because it acted as concrete proof of her securing a marriage to Rawdon Crawley and thus a heightened social status. Shortly after the birth of her son, however, "the beautiful mother-vision had faded away," and Becky began to ignore her child.⁴⁰ Throughout her life, Becky, both as a governess and a wife, has consistently proven to only truly care for herself. Thackeray continues to demonstrate this characteristic as applied to her maternal instinct. Rather than

growing closer to her son, her “dislike increased to hatred,” and “the consciousness that the child was in the house was a reproach and a pain to her.”⁴¹ While perhaps Becky did learn something from her time as a governess to the Crawley children, she seems to have learned only to like children when they are beneficial to her in some way. Just as her charges were useful only in that they helped to facilitate her social rise, her son is only valuable to exemplify that higher social status.

In an element shared by some fairy tales, a governess can also take on an “evil stepmother” role in a child’s life. For example, the mother figure is absent for Maud in *Uncle Silas* from the beginning of the novel. Early on, Maud explains that her father’s “beautiful young wife died, leaving me, their only child, to his care.”⁴² From then on there is only a short chapter detailing the time when Maud’s father explained her mother’s death, and the rest of the narrative details how various governesses, most importantly Madame de la Rougierre, took over as a stepmother-like figure in Maud’s life. Throughout the novel, Maud is depicted as a young, innocent, and impressionable girl. However, unlike the way Mary Ann has Agnes to guide her and help her to grow up respectably, Madame de la Rougierre is almost constantly a manipulative, altogether negative influence in Maud’s development. In one example, Maud admits to feeling, “quite alone...detected and overtaken with an awful instinct by my enemy, what might not be about to happen to me at that moment?”⁴³ Rather than helping Maud to grow in any constructive way, Madame de la Rougierre instead frightens Maud into constantly behaving the way Madame de la Rougierre thinks she should behave. In order to claim this power over Maud, however, Madame de la Rougierre asserts much more control over her charge than usually awarded to a woman of her position. Generally, somewhat strict boundaries were enforced

between the governess and the children. Such boundaries are exemplified in *Agnes Grey* when the children are not happy with her disciplinary techniques and run to their mother to have her removed from the household. However, in the novel, if a governess was able to somehow evade any higher authority overseeing her position, she could take on a position of very high power within her pupil's life.

In *Uncle Silas*, Madame de la Rougierre sets a precedent for her role of evil stepmother to Maud in the beginning of the novel, bringing it to fruition at the end of the tale. At the commencement of her time with Maud, Madame de la Rougierre almost immediately begins to scare Maud and to taunt her with the power she holds. At one point, she teases her, saying, "Wat leetle fool! I suppose you think I want to keel a you and bury you in the churchyard."⁴⁴ Maud admits that she is terrified of her governess, and her fear allows Madame de la Rougierre an immense power to control her almost however she pleases. Though Maud is able to convince her father to discharge Madame de la Rougierre, after his death Maud is powerless when her Uncle Silas hires her former governess to a position at Bartram-Haugh. Though Maud is not fooled by her governess' newfound kindness, Madame de la Rougierre's power over her continues to grow. Madame de la Rougierre schemes with Uncle Silas, who assigns her to accompany Maud on her "journey." He tells Maud: "remember that this lady is not your attendant only, but that she has authority to direct every detail respecting your journey, and will make all necessary payments on the way. You will, please, then, implicitly to comply with her directions."⁴⁵ Maud's guardian Uncle Silas very directly gives full control of his niece over to her scheming governess. Though as a governess she should not have nearly this explicit amount of

power, Silas' plot allows Madame de la Rougierre the same power a stepmother would have over Maud.

Many governess novels of the nineteenth century used the governess figure to reveal that idealized motherhood was not natural, but by using governesses authors were able to explicitly illustrate some of the negative implications of this point without placing blame as clearly on biological mothers. They drew instead upon examples of governesses as pseudo-stepmothers or as mothers-in-training, only focusing on actual mothers when the governess herself later becomes a mother, and then showing that sometimes even a life of training cannot prepare one for motherhood. After all, sometimes even the worst fictional mothers or those least fulfilling of the domestic ideal like Becky Sharp came from a young adulthood spent "in training" for motherhood through their position as a governess.

HAPPILY EVER AFTER

Some governess tales in Victorian fiction were written in a manner so closely following the typical formula of a fairy tale that inevitably the protagonist was awarded a romantic happy ending at the end of her story. For example, *Jane Eyre* and *Agnes Grey* both closely follow the pattern of a formulaic fairy tale, at least in the most stripped versions of their plots. In both stories, the protagonist becomes a governess to support herself, and for *Agnes*, her family as well. Throughout their time as governesses, both women encounter trials related to their position in the household and fall in love with someone of slightly higher class, eventually leaving their employers' house for a period of time in dramatic fashion with apparently all

hope for a happy ending lost. Just before the books' conclusions, however, the women are reunited with their love interests and married in a swift "happily ever after" finale. While for *Jane Eyre* and *Agnes Grey*, happy endings are possible and allowable by the narrative structure, however, for most other fictional governesses at the time featuring more deviant governesses, happy endings were neither plausible nor expected within the novel.

The idea that a happy ending is only possible for those governesses that fit the domestic ideal supports the view of Victorian society and therefore fits the conventions of fiction at the time. However, a liberal feminist reading of these nineteenth century governess novels allows for a different and important view of the novels' endings since one is called to explore the texts with a specific importance placed upon individuality and self-worth. One of the main tenets of feminist philosophy emphasizes: "Independence and self-determination for women can be achieved only by 'speaking in one's own voice'—i.e., only by thinking and acting in ways that genuinely reflect ones perspectives, experiences, feeling, and concerns as an individual.⁴⁶ In Henry James' 1898 *The Turn of the Screw*, while it is perhaps delusional of the Governess is looking for a happy ending despite the fact that many similar fictional governesses before her have also attempted and failed, it is also admirable from a feminist standpoint that she maintains an attitude of self-determination. Looking at the fictional governesses throughout the nineteenth century through a liberal feminist lens allows for sympathy toward many of the "madwoman" governesses by offering one possible justification for even some of the most ridiculous actions taken by these women. Unfortunately, while a liberal feminist reading on these novels open us a possibility for sympathizing with the

"madwomen" in these novels over the "angels," this forward thinking was not available to nineteenth-century British novelists. Instead, the strict constructs of Victorian literature force the possibly more deserving women into a role that emphasizes their need to be punished within their conservative societies.

Though obviously not from a moral standpoint, in a feminist reading of Victorian governess tales that focuses on the importance of individuality and self-determination, many of the governesses' unhappy endings can also be deemed unjustified. At the end of *Vanity Fair*, for instance, Becky Sharp lives with a group who "consider her to be a most injured woman," with her name on "all the Charity lists."⁴⁷ Though Thackeray seems to mock the group's feeling sympathy for Becky, in fact it is quite upsetting that despite her efforts and attempts throughout her life to gain personal happiness, she ended up where she least wanted to be; for a woman so concerned with material stability, a life spent in others' charity would certainly not be satisfying. Unfortunately, since Becky has strayed so far from the domestic ideal, all that Thackeray has to offer her through the narrative is this charity, not condemning her to death but also refusing to allow redemption for her character.

Lady Audley's Secret offers an even less sympathetic ending for its protagonist, despite the fact that achievements such as hers to make her way in society would not only have required a sound mind but would also, wicked as they were, have required great cunning and intelligence. Her society does not recognize that she has created her own nature, and rather deems her mad, forcing her into a mad house, a fitting punishment for a woman so constantly focused on societal standing but a very upsetting ending for anyone wishing to offer Lady Audley sympathy. Through a liberal feminist lens, some sympathy for the governess figure

holds within even those novels like *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Uncle Silas* where the governess is shown as extremely evil because she is constantly held down by a male figure in the novel. Though Madame de la Rougierre is by the conclusion of *Uncle Silas* so openly defiant that she might be considered completely unsympathetic as a character, a feminist understanding of her still holds. Because her schemes with Silas demonstrate an attempt to break from the ideals of domesticity and exert herself more fully as an individual, her ending is upsetting in the fact that her hard work does not pay off.

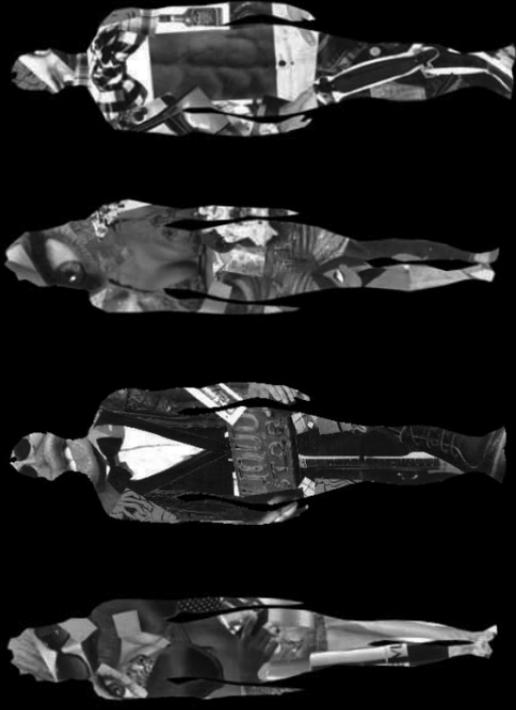
Because a feminist reading of the novel encourages independence and an exertion of individuality, the ending of Ellen Wood's 1861 *East Lynne* is particularly disappointing. Lady Isabel gives up her self-determined personality completely in an ending of virtual defeat. Throughout most of the novel, Lady Isabel focuses on self-importance; leaving her marriage when she does not feel respected and learning to be a governess to support herself, she functions as an ideal example of a woman speaking in her own voice about her needs and desires. However, when Lady Isabel, so changed in appearance from age and her train accident, goes back to East Lynne disguised as a governess for her own children, she literally stops speaking in her own voice, giving over her previous self-determination to a life of submissiveness not only to her former husband but also to his new wife, Barbara. While Barbara was also portrayed as self-determined through parts of the novel especially in her resolve to marry Archibald, in order for her to succeed Lady Isabel inevitably had to fail. While from a feminist standpoint it is good to see at least one determined woman succeed, unfortunately Lady Isabel fails despite the defiance and individuality she displays throughout her tale.

Fictional governesses throughout the nineteenth century, much like the Governess from *The Turn of the Screw*, imagined fairy tale lives for themselves that were so enticing they were willing to go to extremes to accomplish them. Yet in the novel, just as it seems they are actually getting their much desired fairy tale ending, well deserved at least from a feminist standpoint for their prevailing self-determination, a plot twist unravels their plans and instead punishes their actions. Without such twists of fate within the plot, these defiant governesses would likely have gotten away with their schemes, ultimately proving their individuality through their self-determination. The societal impulse to punish women who do not fit the domestic ideal creates a reverse fairy tale for women in defiance, forcing the woman into an unhappy ending rather than the conventional happily ever after employed in typical fairy tales. Instead, the happy ending for the “madwoman” governess tale seems to lie in the woman’s defeat and society continuing to repress her. While fictional governesses such as these were actually ahead of their time in their realization that they deserved more for their lives and in their demonstrations of the lengths to which they were willing to go to get what they knew they deserved, still the constructs of Victorian novels punished them for stepping outside the “domestic ideal.” However, in reading these novels with a liberal feminist lens, one can begin to imagine the different outcomes that might have been possible if these clearly powerful female characters were allowed to exert themselves to the full extent of their determination.

NOTES

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 11. Vicinus, *Suffer and Be Still*, 7.
 12. *Ibid.*, 6.
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 14. *Ibid.*, 6.
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 16. *Ibid.*, 10.
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29. *Ibid.*, 519.
30. *Ibid.*, 540.
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33. Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret*, 353.
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40. *Ibid.*, 157.
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“A Life in Words”
Domestic Objects and Gertrude Stein
Rachel Roseberry

Rachel Roseberry (Class of 2011) is a senior English major with a minor in Education, Schooling, and Society. In addition to her academic pursuits at Notre Dame, she has chaired the Social Concerns committee of Student Government, served as the President of Literacy Awareness Notre Dame, and tutored at the Robinson Community Learning Center. She wrote this essay for Professor Stephen Fredman's course, "American Culture as Collage," and she is currently completing a senior thesis on Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* and will be joining Teach for America after graduation.

“A Life in Words”

Domestic Objects and Gertrude Stein

Rachel Roseberry

They're tactile. Material. Mundane. The objects that comprise the environment of our daily lives live their own lives in the looming shadow of the people who use them. In literature, they typically flesh out a scene, help to construct a specific setting in and around which the characters maneuver. Sometimes there are objects in literature that stand out, Othello's contested handkerchief comes to mind, but most times only an overall atmosphere remains, such as the Jazz Age opulence of Fitzgerald. Objects remain in the background because they are the background. They are lowly, homely, and worst of all, functional. Yet it is in this very functionality of objects that Gertrude Stein begins her inquiry, through literature, into the forces that

shape our society and her own philosophical beliefs. A closer reading of Stein's prose-poetry, *Tender Buttons*, as well her poem, "Lifting Belly," set among more prevailing theories of objects in literature, will reveal how Stein utilized domestic objects in her work for a unique purpose: to both construct a specifically lesbian, intellectual, communal space and to reaffirm her theory of the "continuous present."

As mentioned previously, objects in literature traditionally exist in the background. Yet conversely, or perhaps as a result of, they form the subject for an ever-burgeoning field of study. Objects in literature, and the way objects are used in daily life, have increasingly become imbued with significance. Several theorists have thus begun to use them as signifiers for larger cultural shifts and philosophical developments. One such contemporary theorist, Bill Brown, identifies the industrial revolution in America as the catalyst for moving objects to the forefront of our life and introducing an "age of things" that exists to this day.¹ Yet Brown wants to move beyond this capitalistic vision of objects to include a vision of objects with not only an "interiority" but an "interiority" that reflects the human user of those objects in a capacity beyond mere ownership.² Brown himself notes that his work rests on many prior theorists including perhaps most prominently the philosopher Walter Benjamin who identified, "a relationship to objects which does not emphasize their functional, utilitarian value—that is their usefulness—but studies and loves them as the scene, the stage of their fate."³ Brown would then argue that objects are not just the stage of humanity's fate, but that the stage's fate itself is reflective of humanity. It is then in this line of argument about objects that Gertrude Stein's work can be placed. In the prose-poetry of *Tender Buttons* and the poem "Lifting Belly," Stein constructs an understanding of objects that is incredibly consequential to the person.

To do this she initially decreases the distance between object and person by only featuring those objects from the most intimate of spaces; the domestic realm. *Tender Buttons*, her prose-poem in three acts, includes ‘chapters’ on “Objects,” “Food,” and “Rooms.” It is the ‘Objects’ section that will be featured subsequently, and in this section she writes of cushions, plates, seltzer bottles, hats, pianos, chairs, handkerchiefs and more. Critic Margeritte Murphy asks of Stein’s work in *Tender Buttons*, “Where have we heard such words before?” and then answers her own question, “In the home, in the kitchen and in the parlor, where women sew and where women dress.”⁴ In “Lifting Belly” Stein places the erotic poetry and the phrase “Lifting Belly” repeatedly among domestic objects such as furniture, tables, doors, cups, dresses, and the like. Her friend, Virgil Thomson, described the poem as a “hymn to domestic affections” and the critic Rebecca Mark in an introduction to the poem notes that Stein is “associating ‘Lifting Belly’ with the details of her everyday life.”⁵ Yet Stein’s notion of the domestic was not conventional and a better understanding of her definition of domestic space will further elucidate her use of traditional domestic objects. Gertrude Stein’s conception of domestic life in the literature of *Tender Buttons* and “Lifting Belly” can itself only begin through knowledge of Gertrude Stein’s historical domestic life specifically at the time of the writing of the previously mentioned works.

For most of her life, Stein lived at 27 Rue de Fleurus in Paris as an American expatriate. She acquired the home in 1904 and began living there with her brother Leo.⁶ It is during this time that she established her renowned artistic salon, visited by dozens of well-known and as-yet-unknown writers, painters, and intellectuals. Yet in 1913 Leo vacated the apartment, leaving it to Stein and her partner Alice Toklas.

Stein wrote *Tender Buttons* and “Lifting Belly” in the following two years, marking this period of her historical life as important to her definition of domesticity. The transition of Stein’s familial home into a lesbian, artistic household with Alice served as a strange conflation of the public and the private, the artistic and the personal. Mabel Dodge, the art patron, noted of Stein in 1913, “In a large studio in Paris, hung with paintings by Renoir, Matisse, and Picasso, Gertrude Stein is doing with words what Picasso is doing with paint.”⁷ What she does not note is that Stein also called that studio her home. Critic Sara Blair defines this unique dual purpose, “Stein’s key insight is an understanding of the changing space of home--the private world of love and ritual, the sphere of bourgeois women’s self-assertion and of working women’s labor--as intimately linked with other metropolitan sites of production, marketing, and display.”⁸

Photographs of her home at this time reveal regimented rows of paintings on the walls, contained to the upper half of the room and the photograph. Below them are the slightly more untidy collections of traditional domestic objects including a long table in the center of the room. The wall behind the art (done by Picasso, et al.) is painted a stark white. The bottom half is painted in what appears to be a darker gray with the bottom line of the frames of the paintings serving as a strict horizontal demarcation between the two halves of the interior. The architecture of the building then roughly followed this same pattern of artistic and domestic coexistence, “Infamous and public--indeed, notorious--the atelier of 27 was adjacent to Stein and Toklas’s carefully guarded living space in the *pavillon*; while the studio itself was hidden from the street in a private courtyard.”⁹ While each theme was individually visible, they were both housed under one roof. The intersection of domestic life with

an artistic, public one was already marked within the walls of 27 Rue de Fleurus before it entered her literary creations. Again Sara Blair notes of Stein's historical space, "avant-garde production can be seen to take shape within a domestic space that nurtures particular networks of sociality, contact, and exchange."¹⁰ By privileging domestic objects within a domestic space in her writing and in her life, and choosing to align it with her most public, artistic endeavors, Stein has begun to create a new vision for domestic life, one which the objects in her literature would take even further.

Critic Lisa Ruddick noted that, "For this is one realm (the domestic) according to Stein, that his hierarchies have trivialized or placed in shadow." "His hierarchies" to which she is referring are the patriarchal, heterosexual hierarchies of a society that has deemed the domestic space wholly private and intellectually inferior.¹¹ It has been demonstrated that Stein contradicted this definition in the construction of her personal space at 27 Rue de Fleurus, yet she takes this idea one step further by also freeing domestic objects themselves from the traditional significations of the time. She narrows her focus once more, moving from the space itself to the objects within the space so that she can come closer to Brown's vision of objects as avatars for humanity, "humans and things...and the metamorphosis of the one into the other."¹² They are the most appropriate vessels of human identity as both pots and people are objects within a larger space. Transferring animate emotions and human signifiers to an inanimate object encounters the least possible resistance while also commenting on the "made" or "constructed" quality of both items. A pot has been shaped by human hands, but so has the person been shaped or made by human hands, a quality

that then allows Gertrude Stein, as an artist, to simultaneously re-mold both object and human; in this case the female.

One of the objects described in *Tender Buttons* is “A New Cup and Saucer.” Under this heading Stein writes, “Enthusiastically hurting a clouded yellow bud and saucer, enthusiastically so is the bite in the ribbon.” The traditional connotation of these objects as physically fragile and intended for a specific purpose, to drink, is noticeably absent. Instead, Stein introduces an element of the natural, “a clouded yellow bud” in her description of the man-made object as well as a conscious avoidance of the object’s traditional purpose. As her friend Sherwood Anderson noted of this work, “it makes familiar words seem like strangers.” Another critic describes it similarly: “Here words create their own *raison d’être*, triumphantly emerging as verbal usurpers that subvert the voice and the underlying linguistic structure of the composition by jamming the syntactical circuits with unfamiliar choices.”¹³ Stein exploits the technique of defamiliarization, used previously by other female writers, to subvert traditional interpretations of objects and their function. Yet as critic Thomas Foster notes, Stein does not do so to emotionally distance the reader from the domestic object, the traditional objective of “defamiliarization.” Rather she opens up a space of “pleasurable possibility” in her “affection” for the domestic object. Contradictorily she brings the domestic objects closer to the female by freeing them from their previous patriarchal context, “functioning within the intellectual paradigm of men.”¹⁴ Margeritte Murphy goes even farther by arguing that the prose-poetry of *Tender Buttons* simultaneously defamiliarizes the objects and utilizes them in an “authoritative discourse” by virtue of excluding subjectivity through the non-use of personal pronouns.¹⁵

Importantly, Stein does not wholly rely on defamiliarization to create a different function for her domestic objects. In *Tender Buttons* and in “Lifting Belly,” even more potently, she subverts the traditional notion of domestic objects by using them as elements and symbols of lesbian love. The household at 27 Rue de Fleurus in 1913 was shifting, through the absence of Stein’s brother, to become an exclusively lesbian household and Stein’s work at the time reflects this. As she eroticizes objects and codes lesbian sexuality throughout her poems, Stein reveals a “fear of a direct expression of eroticism”¹⁶ thus putting in place another argument for the importance of objects, as things able to hold parts of her life she was not yet willing to explicitly address in literature. In the poem “Lifting Belly” she writes of “A splendid table little table / A splendid little table” among repeated insertions of the “Lifting Belly” phrase in various phrases of endearment, “‘Lifting Belly’ cherished and flattened” and “‘Lifting Belly’ is full of love.” The household object, the table, has been used to represent a specific object of lesbian eroticism. The explicitness of this coding in both “Lifting Belly” and *Tender Buttons* challenges conventional uses of the objects while revealing Stein’s sense of humor. She has subverted the patriarchy through defamiliarization but in an apparent concession, she has kept domesticity and domestic objects in the realm of the female. This itself then is an inversion. She places the objects in the realm of liberated love between two females; a distinctly different feminine realm than what would be acceptable to the patriarchy of the time and, in effect, a literary representation through objects of the home she created with Toklas. Additionally, Sara Blair spoke of Stein’s “rhythms of bourgeois domesticity.”¹⁷ By inserting a lesbian discourse into the daily rhythms of domestic objects, objects that have achieved a “comfortable intimacy...dwelling together in a

space,”¹⁸ Stein has “naturalized” the experience of lesbianism. Margeritte Murphy identifies this also, “Stein exploits the...ordinary discourse of domesticity to create her own new ‘language.’ This language is not only, according to her own terms, a ‘poetic’ one, but one which is highly unconventional.”¹⁹

In her attempt to create a new discourse of domesticity, Stein’s objects are defamiliarized from the patriarchy, encoded with lesbian symbolism, and, finally they are dirtied. In *Tender Buttons* Stein describes domestic objects that are stained, broken or dirty. In her description of “A Petticoat” Stein states that it is a “disgrace” ostensibly due to the “ink spot” that is present on the material. Yet she concludes the section on the petticoat by stating that this very spot is actually “a rosy charm.”²⁰ As Ruddick states, “the stain that seemed bad at first is actually appealing.”²¹ In her section on “A Piano,” Stein writes of the consequences “if there is no dirt in a pin.” She views the absence of dirt as a greater crime than the existence of the dirt itself. In the section “Dirt and Not Copper” she argues for the presence of dirt as an enhancer to the richness and depth of daily life, “Dirt and not copper makes a color darker” and this theme continues throughout the whole of her prose-poetry. Due to the previously discussed lesbian codes, the dirt or stains are also often explicitly sexual in nature. Stein uses this type of sexual ‘dirt’ as another form of defamiliarization and “is doing more than challenging the reader’s delicacy. By focusing on an unconventional or even a suppressed subjects...she brings into view a region of common experience that is conventionally over-looked.”²² Her use of dirt and stain, many times with sexual connotations, represents her continued attempts to free objects, and subsequently the body of the female they represent, from a traditional, patriarchal and heterosexual definition of appropriate cleanliness.

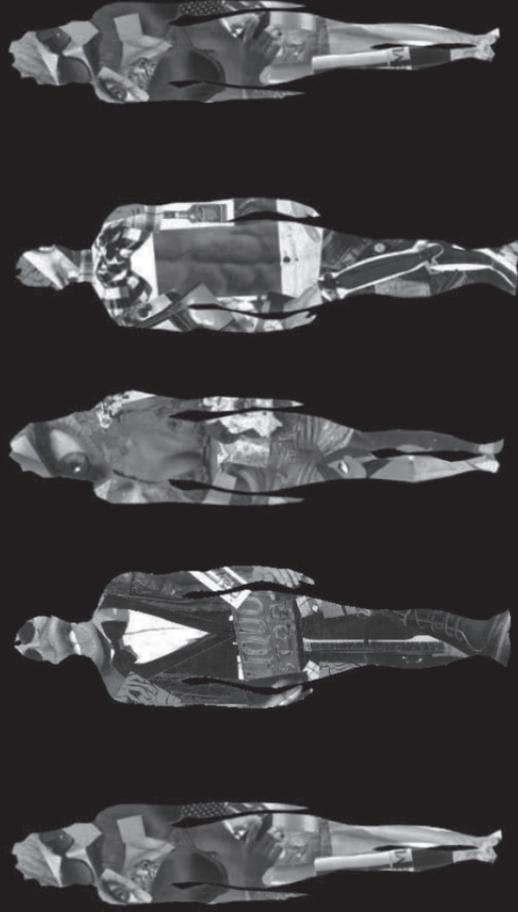
Stein also utilizes the presence of dirt as an evocation of her theory of the “continuous present.” She wrote extensively of this “present” and her attempts to construct a language that would honor the moment-by-moment subjective experience of life in opposition to the traditional structure of past, present, and future. Critic Neil Schmitz believes Stein captures this in *Tender Buttons*’s domestic objects, “Narrative thus becomes what it is in *Tender Buttons*, the telling of what happens in each successive moment of its happening.”²³ As a direct representation of this statement, the dirt remains and the idea of cleaning becomes an unnatural intervention in Stein’s idea of the present. Additionally, the use of domestic objects themselves represents an initial commitment to the present, to the materials and objects at hand in the moment. Stein goes further by re-conceptualizing the space in which these objects exist and by questioning their traditional functions. She reaffirms her theory of the “continuous present” while acknowledging that the present is not perfect, allowing the objects in her literature to form a better and more inclusive one. These lesbian, unclean objects exist in Stein’s communal, intellectual domestic space without tension indicating the possibility for humanity to exist in such a unique, loving, present space as well.

NOTES

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 4. Margeritte Murphy, "'Familiar Strangers': The Household Words of Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons*," *Contemporary Literature* 32.3 (1991), 383.
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 13. Elyse Blankley, "Beyond the 'Talent of Knowing': Gertrude Stein and the New Woman" in *Critical Essays on Gertrude Stein*, ed. Michael J. Hoffman (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1986), 205.
 14. Blankley, "Beyond the 'Talent of Knowing'", 198.
 15. Murphy, "'Familiar Strangers'", 389.
 16. Margaret Dickie, "Gertrude Stein: Living is All Loving" in *Stein, Bishop, and Rich: Lyrics of Love, War, and Place* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 27.
 17. Blair, "Home Truths", 421.
 18. *Ibid.*, 425.
 19. Murphy, "'Familiar Strangers'", 384.
 20. Ruddick, "A Rosy Charm", 125.
 21. *Ibid.*, 127.

22. Ibid., 126.

23. Neil Schmitz, "Gertrude Stein as Post-Modernist: The Rhetoric of Tender Buttons" in *Critical Essays on Gertrude Stein*, ed. Michael J. Hoffman (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co. 1986), 28.



Singing in the Dead of Night,
Seeking an Inclusive Community

Mary Herber

Mary Herber (Class of 2013) is a sophomore studying English, Arabic, and Spanish. Born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, she spent much of her early life developing a passion for literature which led her to explore the literature of other cultures at Notre Dame. She particularly enjoys studying the literature of marginalized groups, and she is grateful for the opportunity to explore social minorities through the medium of literature, as she did in Professor Susan Harris' class, "Narrative and Sexuality," where this paper was conceived. In the future, she intends to pursue her enthusiasm for writing and reading by studying comparative literature at the graduate level.

Singing in the Dead of Night, Seeking an Inclusive Community

Mary Herber

Music is a potent presence in communities worldwide, functioning as a way for people to express themselves and share that expression with others. In Larry Duplechan's novel *Blackbird*, music functions as an essential element to the development of the protagonist Johnnie Ray's relationships, both homosexual and heterosexual, as well as his self-awareness. Music provides a socially acceptable medium for Johnnie Ray to express both his sympathy for and attraction to his classmate, Todd. It also serves as both the catalyst and narrative of his first sexual relationship, constituting his long-awaited introduction to homosexual relationships. Finally, Johnnie Ray uses music to access his emotions and to achieve a more complete self-awareness. Outside of *Blackbird*, music has operated as a tool for developing a cohesive gay community, especially in the 1970's and 1980's, as a group

of musicians recorded an album with the express purpose of celebrating their sexuality. Characters in other novels depicting homosexual relationships have also discovered music as a way to establish personal relationships, as in Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues*, and sustain a community, as in Andrew Holleran's *Dancer from the Dance*. Because music is such a pervasive device for achieving group and self-awareness, its use in *Blackbird* provides a common language for both homosexual and heterosexual readers to understand Johnnie Ray's experiences.

Johnnie Ray uses music in one way to create a deeper relationship with a straight classmate that societal norms, condemning any suggestion of homosexual behavior, would not otherwise allow. He grapples with how to go about comforting his classmate Todd after his pregnant girlfriend is hastily exiled, thinking, "I had the strongest desire to touch him. And I don't mean the sort of crotch-level desire I usually had where Todd was concerned. I just wanted to touch his hand...tell him I was sorry, that I cared...But this was not quite the time and place for that."¹ In this moment, Johnnie Ray yearns not for physical intimacy, but rather a socially acceptable way to express his sympathy to a friend. Unfortunately, the exposure of the school's choir room prevents him from freely communicating his concern. Instead of abandoning Todd to his misery, Johnnie Ray evades the societal restriction by turning to music. He asks Todd to accompany him to "Blackbird," his girlfriend's favorite song, and receives a wholeheartedly affirmative response: "the look on Todd's face...well it could nearly make you cry. It was as close to a real smile as he'd probably had on his lips for days, but if I wasn't mistaken, there were tears gathering at the corners of his eyes."² Johnnie Ray's invitation to play music breaks through Todd's attempt to isolate himself. By sharing the song, Johnnie Ray finally

achieves a kind of intimacy with Todd, even if it is not the physical intimacy he desires. This closeness lets Johnnie Ray express his admiration more demonstratively, as he does when he “dared touch Todd, softly, on the knee.”³ His new courage to break the touch barrier reflects the emotional barrier broken during the song. Through music, Johnnie Ray demonstrates the depth of his caring for Todd in a way that accesses both of their emotions, the new connection revealing music’s power as a tool for building relationships.

While music gives Johnnie Ray deeper emotional intimacy with Todd, it is not the kind of intimacy that satisfies his need for romantic love. He finds this romantic satisfaction in Marshall MacNeill, with music functioning as the relationship’s catalyst. Marshall offers Johnnie Ray a ride home after they meet, during which he asks Johnnie Ray to sing. When Marshall inquires about his song choice, Johnnie Ray hesitates before answering, thinking:

I still wasn’t too sure just how much I could trust him, how much I could really tell him about myself. How I felt about things. I went ahead, anyway. ‘Well, I guess it’s because to me, music isn’t just something to listen to. It’s like...it’s like an escape. It’s like no matter how bad it gets sometimes, the music’s always there’...And I could tell...[h]e knew exactly what I was trying to say, despite my not saying it all that well. And he felt the same.⁴

It is only after Johnnie Ray senses that Marshall shares his feelings about music that he fully yields to his attraction to Marshall. Music erases Johnnie Ray’s doubts, thus becoming a point of connection that surpasses emotional barriers. Music is also a constant presence during Johnnie Ray’s first sexual encounter with Marshall. Johnnie Ray recounts, “My head filled with music, seemed to fill the room with a wall of sound...hundreds of orchestras and thousands of choirs, tuning up and up and up, louder and higher... and the music the music the music, and my whole body

spasmed.”⁵ Translating his experience to music, the scale of the “thousands of choirs” reflects the magnitude of its significance to him. Even though he seems to lose the capacity to form an articulate sentence, music remains as a language for his ecstasy. By narrating his most intimate moment with Marshall through music, Johnnie Ray shows that music is inextricably linked to their relationship. Music’s constant presence shows its driving power for the relationship and, for Johnnie Ray, readily substitutes for language when words fail him.

Duplechan’s use of music in *Blackbird* to establish a relationship also appears in Leslie Feinberg’s *Stone Butch Blues*. Without music as an ambassador, the relationship between the protagonist Jess and her neighbor Ruth may never have taken shape. Initially, Ruth wants nothing to do with Jess. However, when Ruth tersely takes an interest in Jess’s music, Jess senses a fracture in Ruth’s coldness. She thinks, “Now I knew that she listened to my music just as I listened to hers. So I began to play tapes for both of us...I imagined our lives connected in spite of the thin walls and closed doors physically separating us.”⁶ By showing her interest in Jess’s music, Ruth signals her willingness to accept a relationship. Jess’s vision of music penetrating the apartment’s physical barriers reflects her hope that music will transcend the lingering obstacles to their still-cautious relationship. Jess’s belief in music’s power to bond reflects the way Johnnie Ray allows himself to trust Marshall when he recognizes Marshall’s appreciation of music. As Jess and Ruth’s relationship progresses, music functions as a metaphor to discuss difficult, emotionally intimate questions. During one conversation, Jess asks Ruth what kind of musical instrument she would be. Ruth answers, “‘A soprano saxophone.’ I [Jess] smiled. ‘Because it’s so sad?’...‘No, because it’s so evocative. What kind of instrument would play your

music, Jess?’ I sighed. ‘I think a cello.’ Ruth held me tight. ‘Because it’s so sad?’ I shook my head and looked out over the city. ‘No, because it’s so complicated.’”⁷ Both characters refuse to characterize their lives as “sad,” opting instead for strong like “evocative” and “complicated.” Rather than attempt to convey emotional experiences through abstract concepts, Ruth and Jess translate their emotions to music to let the other person understand how they feel. Their method of connection mirrors the way Johnnie Ray uses music as a clandestine channel to deepen his relationship with Todd; the music expresses what he otherwise could not.

While the characters in *Blackbird* and *Stone Butch Blues* use music as a critical mode of establishing relationships, musicians outside of fiction have also used music to create a group identity and express previously overlooked experiences. The 1978 album “Walls to Roses” was recorded by a collective of gay and straight men with the goal of discussing issues concerning sexuality as well as promoting equality and dialogue between the sexes. Chris Tanner, one of the album’s featured musicians, shares his experience of the unity the project created: “I learned that gay men are universal, that no matter where you come from... we all have this certain something about being gay that’s just undescribable(sic)...and I found friends there.”⁸ While compiling the album, Tanner experienced music’s capacity to unify a group and found new personal relationships. In an article analyzing the album, Cindy Boucher observes its effect on listeners, writing that “Walls to Roses is the album that best reflects the realization of a community of gay men and strives for a level of musical inclusiveness to reflect a growing sense of gay community and the changing image of ‘man.’”⁹ The idea that music can establish a community reflects Johnnie Ray’s personal use of music to establish a small community for himself. It

allows him to include Todd in his community in spite of societal restrictions and gives him the opportunity to strengthen his bond with Marshall. Given that *Blackbird* was published several years after the release of “Walls to Roses,” Duplechan’s use of music as a source of connection in *Blackbird* reveals at least an awareness of music’s power created by “Walls to Roses,” even if the album itself did not directly influence him.

While music plays an essential role in establishing Johnnie Ray’s relationships with other people, it also gives him the opportunity to clarify his emotions to himself and outwardly express them. After receiving bad news, Johnnie Ray automatically turns to music. He reflects:

Hearing about somebody else’s troubles—Todd’s...or the starving children in Africa... I’ll begin to feel like life just makes no sense at all...I’ll just go to my room and listen to my stereo...[I] let Joni’s voice pour over me like cool honey. I figure, if you’re going to be depressed anyway, you might as well listen to Joni Mitchell.¹⁰

Johnnie Ray instinctively resorts to music in the face of problems beyond his control, showing his dependence on music to manage his distress. He also uses music as a metaphor for his isolation, as when he discusses one of his short stories: “I started out the story with a gray, cloudy morning and a single bird, all by itself, on a telephone wire, singing all alone. Which was to symbolize loneliness.”¹¹ Johnnie Ray’s emphasis on the bird’s solitude ensures that the reader knows exactly the significance of the bird’s lonely singing. His choice of music as the metaphor for the bird’s loneliness shows that, even in a different creative medium, he still relies on music as the best expression of his feelings. Besides sorting out his emotions, Johnnie Ray uses music to come to fuller self-awareness. At the end of the novel, he

performs “Blackbird” after Todd’s suicide, announcing to the audience, “I’d like to dedicate this song...to absent friends’...I signaled Johnnie to begin, closed my eyes, and sang...I knew right then that this—singing, performing—was something I wanted to do for the rest of my life.”¹² Johnnie Ray’s performance leads him to the concrete realization that his love for music expresses his identity and his dreams for the future. This self-discovery also encompasses his homage to Todd, linking Johnnie Ray’s self-realization with coping with his grief. By having Johnnie Ray first explore his own sorrow with music and then invert the process by sharing his grief with the audience, Duplechan shows music’s ability to access the emotions of others in a ripple effect which can lead one or many individuals to fuller self-realization.

This use of music to discover personal emotions and create a community also appears in Andrew Holleran’s *Dancer from the Dance*. The community of homosexuals in the novel dances together in discotheques every night, and while dancing fundamentally unites the community, without music the unity would be impossible. The narrator expresses this dependence on music when he observes, “We lived on certain chords in a song, and the proximity of another individual dancing beside you, taking communion from the same hand, soaked with sweat, stroked by the same tambourines.”¹³ The narrator describes music in religious terms like “communion,” the very word evoking community and giving music the magnitude of a sacrament. Given that this community has “no existence at all outside” of the discotheque, Holleran equates their passion for music with their very existence.¹⁴ Music appears even more strongly as the binding element of the discotheque community when the narrator observes, “I once asked a friend seriously when it occurred to me...how ephemeral the bond was that joined us; he responded, ‘We all

have lips.’ Perhaps that is what we all had in common: No one was allowed to be serious, except about the importance of music, the glory of faces seen in the crowd.”¹⁵ In a community as “ephemeral” as the narrator’s, music emerges as the uniting element, echoing Johnnie Ray’s extension of community to a larger audience as he performs “Blackbird.” In response to Johnnie Ray’s performance, “there was a long moment of silence. You could have heard a Q-tip drop. I did hear my heart-beat. Then the applause, like a storm...Somebody called ‘More!’”¹⁶ The crowd’s reaction shows their participation in the song, the demand for “more” signaling their desire to continue experiencing the sense of community. Johnnie Ray, as the source of the music, frees himself from his story of the lonely bird and becomes instead both a member and source of a community.

Johnnie Ray’s love for music initiates his self-exploration and strengthens his relationships, finally ending with his finding a place in a community of his own making. He uses music to establish an intimacy with Todd that conventional circumstances prohibited. In his relationship with Marshall, music serves as the gateway to their deeper intimacy by establishing trust between them. In addition to encouraging relationships with others, music allows Johnnie Ray to express his own feelings and realize deeper self-awareness. Outside of *Blackbird*, music like the “Walls to Roses” album has been used by members of the gay community to establish a common identity and publicly articulate previously unshared experiences. Further, in other works of literature, like *Stone Butch Blues* and *Dancer from the Dance*, music also becomes both the channel of personal relationships and the background for establishing a community. By making music Johnnie Ray’s method of seeking relationships and self-expression, Duplechan selects a medium familiar to his

readers that creates greater empathy with his protagonist. In addition to its universality, music's power harnessed and shared in the "Walls to Roses" album and Johnnie Ray's performance of "Blackbird" serves as a means of communication between the performer and the audience. It is only through this channel that Johnnie Ray finally participates in the community on his own terms, allowing him to recognize that he can freely express his identity and that the audience will respond to it for its simple honesty and its humanity.

NOTES

1. Larry Duplechan, *Blackbird* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2006), 76.
2. *Ibid.*, 105.
3. *Ibid.*, 106.
4. *Ibid.*, 101.
5. *Ibid.*, 154-155.
6. Feinberg, Leslie. *Stone Butch Blues* (Los Angeles: Alyson Press, 2003), 250.
7. *Ibid.*, 256.
8. Chris Tanner, interview, September 2008, Queer Music Heritage, <http://www.queermusicheritage.us/sep2008s.html>.
9. Boucher, Cindy. "Newly Imagined Audiences: Folkways' Gay and Lesbian Records." *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 20, no. 2 (2008): 129-149.
10. Duplechan, *Blackbird*, 61.
11. *Ibid.*, 45.
12. *Ibid.*, 203.
13. Andrew Holleran, *Dancer from the Dance* (New York: First Perennial, 2001), 112.
14. *Ibid.*, 38.
15. *Ibid.*, 114.
16. Duplechan, *Blackbird*, 203.

Iota Iota Iota

Undergraduate Gender Studies Honors Society

Iota Iota Iota, or Triota, is an Undergraduate Honors Society composed of sophomore, junior, and senior class Gender Studies majors and minors. Formed in 2006, Triota represents the Gender Studies Program's top students as demonstrated by their overall academic performance. All members have earned at least a 3.5 GPA in Gender Studies and a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0. Members of Triota act as liaisons between the Gender Studies Program faculty and administrators and the Program's students and continually identify ways to improve the academic quality of the Gender Studies experience for Notre Dame undergraduate students. *Through Gendered Lenses* is their main project throughout the year, but members of Triota also represent and promote the Gender Studies major and minor at various campus events and host a study break each semester during finals week for all undergraduate majors and minors.

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