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A GLIMPSE OF PRIVATE LIFE

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Anne Rosseter Norcross

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By

Anne Rosseter Norcross

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ABSTRACT

INSIDE IMPRESSIONISM:
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By

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This analytic survey of domestic interiors deals with paintings by Edouard Manet, Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Berthe Morisot, Marie Bracquemond, Mary Cassatt and Gustave Caillebotte. The uniqueness of their portrayals of dining rooms, *grands salons*, *petits salons*, balconies, gardens and bedrooms is emphasized throughout, although certain general conclusions can be made based on the artist's gender. Women artists primarily dealt with the ties that bind women to the home, reflecting their expected role in society. The male artist most often approached domestic subjects from the viewpoint of an outside observer. He distanced himself from his subject and as a result the interpersonal relations portrayed often suggest tensions and even estrangements. In the paintings by women tensions also occur yet they tend to be between interior and exterior spaces. This implies that the home was at times a stifling place of control, limiting the freedom of women.

For my husband, Marc Norcross

and our parents,

Al & Betty Rosseter and John & Jacqueline Norcross

Thank you for all the encouragement and support.

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CHAPTER 1

THE ARTISTS AND THEIR ERA

To make a study of the images of domestic interiors created by Manet and the Impressionists it is necessary to take into consideration the artist's gender, marital status and the nature of his or her family. The domestic world made public in paintings raises the question of to what degree these are personal revelations which would put the emphasis on the modern moment and on the other hand how much is of the eternal. The first step in this process of understanding these works is to know something about the private lives of the artists. This study will examine the works of Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Berthe Morisot, Marie Bracquemond, Mary Cassatt and Gustave Caillebotte, who were all associated with the Impressionist movement, as well as Manet, who was not himself an Impressionist and yet was very influential on this group.

THE ARTISTS

Edouard Manet (1832-83) was the son of a top civil servant in the Ministry of Justice. Together with Antonin Proust, he attended the studio of Thomas Couture, where he remained for six years. During this period he met and entered into a liaison with Suzanne Leenhoff, a Dutch-born piano teacher. In 1852 they had a son, Léon, but the child was not registered as Manet's, and the relationship was concealed from Manet's father and also from all his friends until they discreetly married in Holland in October 1863. The first works Manet exhibited at the Salon attracted the attention of many young painters, and at the Salon des Refusés of 1863 his *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* attracted more

attention than any other work. By 1866 Manet was regarded as the leader of a new school of artists, *the Batignolles*, who met at the Café Guerbois in Paris. Among those who came to the café were the painters Bazille, Degas, Stevens, and Whistler, along with the writer Zola. By the end of the 1860's Manet had met Claude Monet, Berthe Morisot and Eva Gonzalès and in the early 1870's painted alongside Monet and Renoir in Argenteuil. Although sympathetic with the aims of the young Impressionists, Manet declined the offer to participate in the first Impressionist exhibition of 1874, preferring to show his works at the official Salon.

In 1877 the first signs of the disease which was to kill Manet began to manifest itself; he had contracted syphilis in his youth, but it had laid dormant up to this point. He suffered ever increasing ill health for the rest of his life. In 1880, however, Manet held a highly successful exhibition at the gallery run by the periodical *La Vie Moderne,* and in 1881 he finally received a second-class medal at the Salon. In December 1881 he was appointed Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur, thanks to the intervention of his friend Antonin Proust, who had become Minister of Fine Arts. By April 1883 Manet was desperately ill, he developed gangrene in his left leg, which had to be amputated on April 19, and he died on April 30, 1883.[1]

Born into a wealthy banking family, Hilaire Germain Edgar Degas (1834-1917) started copying works in the Louvre soon after leaving school. Although he originally intended to study law, he decided to follow an artistic career and studied privately under one of Ingres's pupils, then entered the École des Beaux-Arts in 1855. Degas's early works are mainly historical paintings, portraits of family and friends and copies from the old masters. In 1865 he successfully submitted his *Battle Scene from the Middle Ages* at the Salon and continued to exhibit there until 1870. Around 1862 Degas met Manet, while copying works at the Louvre. Under his influence Degas began to take an interest in

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[1] For further information on Edouard Manet see: T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985; Anne Coffin Hanson, *Manet and the Modern Tradition*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977.

'modern life' subjects and dropped the traditional subject matter he had been doing. While Degas exhibited his work at the Salon, he increasingly came to despise everything for which the Salon stood. In 1874 he participated in the organization of and showed his work in the first Impressionist exhibition and from then on was to be one of the driving forces behind the movement's shows. Degas met Mary Cassatt during the mid-1870's and upon seeing her work at the Salon before they met remarked, "There is someone who feels as I do."[2] They developed a close relationship in the following years and Degas invited her to exhibit with the Impressionist group. He became an avid collector of works of art by such artists as Ingres, Delacroix, Daumier, Manet, Pissarro, Cassatt, Morisot, Gauguin, and Van Gogh. Monet, whom Degas never admired, was absent from his collection. He, like many of the other Impressionists claimed many literary figures as well as artists as close friends, although many of these relationships came and went due to his said difficult personality.

Degas remained a bachelor all his life and was looked after by a succession of devoted housekeepers. His life settled into a pattern of increasing withdrawal, mitigated by extensive travel during the summer months. During the later part of his career he battled constantly against increasingly poor eyesight which affected the development of his style. He nevertheless continued to work until five years before his death and when he felt he could no longer paint or draw, he turned to sculpture. At the end of the 1880's there was a period when he wrote a good deal of poetry and in 1895 he also experimented with photography.[3]

Claude Monet (1840-1926) was first encouraged in his artistic career by his aunt, who was an amateur painter, and later by Boudin, whom he met in about 1858 and with

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[2]Edward Lucie-Smith, *Impressionist Women,* London: George Wiedengeld & Nicolson Ltd., 1989, page 55.
[3]For further information on Edgar Degas see: Carol Armstrong, *Odd Man Out: Readings of the Work and Reputation of Edgar Degas*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991; Jean Sutherland Boggs, *Degas,* New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1988; Richard Kendall & Griselda Pollock (ed.), *Dealing with Degas: Representations of Women and the Politics of Vision*, New York: Universe, 1992; Eunice Lipton, *Looking into Degas: Uneasy Images of Women and Modern Life*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1986; Theodore Reff, *Degas: An Artist's Mind,* Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987.

whom he painted outdoors. He later studied painting under Gleyre, although his early work owes much to the example of the Barbizon School, Corot and Daubigny. His main associates at that time were Bazille and Renoir. In 1865 Monet first exhibited two seascapes at the Salon which were received well by the critics. The following year he exhibited *The Green Dress* which was again a success. Soon afterwards his works ceased to find approval with the Salon jury and life became very difficult for him. His liaison with Camille Doncieux, the model for *The Green Dress*, created further problems for him. She gave birth to their first son, Jean, in October 1867 and they married in June of 1870. During the 1860's and 1870's Monet worked closely with Renoir and then fled France to London with his family during the Franco-Prussian War. Upon his return to France he often painted on the Seine in a studio boat and it was at this time that he met Caillebotte. Manet, Renoir and Monet all painted together at Argenteuil during the mid-1870's and then near the end of the decade Monet moved to Vétheuil. After settling there, his second son, Michel, was born in March of 1878 and in September 1879 his wife Camille died. After this loss he cut himself off from the rest of the Impressionist group and became more distanced from their aims, although he remained on friendly terms with several. Except for the 1882 Impressionist show, he no longer exhibited with his former colleagues or at the Salon. In 1883 Monet settled at Giverny with Alice Hoschedé and her six children, who had been living with him since the illness of his wife. They married in 1891 after the death of her husband, Ernest Hoschedé. During the 1890's Monet became a public figure; he organized a public subscription for the purchase of Manet's *Olympia* for the Louvre and acquired many friends in the artistic and literary world. Mallarmé, after dining with Monet and Morisot at Giverny, said of the artist, "One thing that makes me happy is to be living in the same age as Monet."[4]

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[4]Denis Rouart, *The Correspondence of Berthe Morisot with Her Family and Her Friends: Manet, Puvis de Chavannes, Degas, Monet, Renoir, and Mallarmé*, London: Lund Humphries, 1959, page 175.

Monet's wife Alice died in 1911. Her daughter, who married Monet's eldest son, Jean, looked after him for the rest of his life. The summer after Alice's death, Monet suffered his first serious bout of eye trouble and was diagnosed with cataracts in both eyes. His eyesight was to trouble him for the rest of his life, often he was not able to distinguish colors accurately. Despite treatment and operations, plus specially designed glasses, his eyesight continued to deteriorate until his death.[5]

Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919) was born in Limoges, the son of a tailor. Unlike the other leading Impressionist painters who had middle-class backgrounds, his family was working class. The family moved to Paris in 1846 and at the age of fifteen Renoir was apprenticed to a porcelain painter, while at the same time attending drawing classes at art school. In 1860 Renoir began to work in the Louvre and two years later attended Gleyre's studio. He then enrolled at the École des Beaux-Arts and from 1864 exhibited at the Salon. During the late 1860's Renoir shared a studio with Bazille in Paris, where Monet joined them for a short while. The three frequented the Café Guerbois where they met Manet. In the 1870's Renoir visited Monet at Argenteuil, where Manet joined them, and showed several works at the first Impressionist exhibition of 1874. Of the eight Impressionist shows, Renoir was to show in only four, possibly due to the work he was doing for such patrons as Victor Choquet and later the Charpentier family. Gradually he became distanced from the Impressionist group although maintained a close circle of friends from the group that included Monet, Caillebotte, and Morisot. In 1878 he began to show at the Salon once more. In 1885 Renoir's eldest son Pierre was born, the real inspiration behind the mother-and-child theme which was to play so conspicuous a role in his later work. In 1890 he finally married Aline Charigot, whom he had kept a secret from his friends for many years. In 1888 Renoir suffered his first attack of

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[5]For further information on Claude Monet see: Joel Isaacson, *Claude Monet: Observation and Reflection*, Oxford: Phaidon, 1978; Richard Kendall (ed.), *Monet by Himself*, Great Britain: Macdonald & Co. Publishers, 1989, First United States Edition; Boston: A Bulfinch Press Book, Little, Brown & Company, 1990; C.M. Mount, *Monet: A Biography*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967; Charles F. Stuckey (ed.), *Monet: A Retrospective*, New York: Park Lane, 1985; Paul Hayes Tucker, *Monet in the 90's*, Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1989.

rheumatoid arthritis, which was gradually to cripple him completely. His final years were spent in the South of France where the warm climate was favorable to his health. He continued painting with brushes tied to his hands with rags until his death in 1919.[6]

Berthe Morisot (1841-1895) was born in Bourges, the daughter of a high-ranking civil servant. In 1852 the Morisot family settled in Passy, one of the western suburbs of Paris, and this was to be Morisot's base for the rest of her life. Berthe Morisot and her sister, Edma, were given drawing lessons at an early age as part of their general education. Both continued painting under the direction of Guichard. It was during this time that they met Corot who, although he did not have official pupils, was always happy to impart advice, and he became a regular visitor at the Morisot home. He later advised them to work with a landscape painter, Oudinot, and both sisters exhibited at the 1864 Salon. While copying at the Louvre, Berthe Morisot met many artists, including Fantin-Latour, who in 1867 introduced her to Manet. She was to pose for Manet's *The Balcony,* which was exhibited at the 1869 Salon, and was to be his model on many subsequent occasions. In that same year Edma married and decided to give up painting.

Berthe Morisot's place in the Impressionist group, while central, was to a certain extent circumscribed by her sex. She could not participate in the gatherings at the Café Guerbois but was closely associated with the members of the group. At the first Impressionist show Morisot exhibited nine works and that same year she married Manet's brother Eugène, but unlike her sister Edma, Berthe continued painting. The only Impressionist show she missed was in 1879 due to the birth of her daughter Julie. During the late 1870's, Morisot made the acquaintance of Mary Cassatt, and in the 1880's she established a close friendship with Renoir. Among her circle of friends one can find Monet, Degas and other artists of the time along with many eminent literary figures such as Mallarmé, all who frequented her soirées.

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[6]For further information on Pierre-Auguste Renoir: Barbara Ehrlich White, *Renoir: His Life, Art and Letters,* New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1984.

Eugène Manet's health began to fail in 1891 and he died in April 1892. In 1895 Berthe Morisot died of a pulmonary congestion of the lungs. At her death it was Degas, Monet, Renoir, and Mallarmé who helped organize a posthumous exhibition of her work at Durand-Ruel's Gallery. Mallarmé and Renoir also became the legal guardians of her daughter Julie and nieces.[7]

Marie Bracquemond (1841-1916) did not come from a prosperous, cultured family nor did she have any financial support, as many of the other Impressionist artists did. She was born Marie Quivoron at Argenton, near Quimper in Brittany. She was the child of an unhappy arranged marriage, her father, a sea captain, died shortly after her birth. Her mother quickly remarried and the family was to live an unsettled life, moving from city to city until finally settling in Etampes, south of Paris. She began painting under a M. Wassor, who restored canvases and gave lessons. In 1857 she submitted her first work to the Salon, a drawing of her mother, sister, and teacher, which was accepted. Shortly afterwards she was presented to Ingres and he arranged that she be advised by his pupils, Flandrin and Signol. The critic Philippe Burty considered Marie one of the most intelligent pupils of Ingres's studio.

In 1869 Marie married Félix Bracquemond, who was a leading printmaker in close contact with the Impressionist circle, and together they had one son, Pierre. As Marie gained interest in *plein air* painting and the impressionist techniques, showing her work in the 1879, 1880 and 1886 Impressionist exhibitions, her husband became increasingly opposed to it. She continued in her support of Impressionism, "Impressionism has produced...not only a new, but a very useful way of looking at things. It is as though all at once a window opens and the sun and air enter your house in torrents," she declared when

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[7] For further information on Berthe Morisot see: Charles F. Stuckey and William P. Scott, *Berthe Morisot, Impressionist*, New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1987; T.J. Edelstein (ed.), *Perspectives on Morisot*, New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1990; Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot*, New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1990; Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992; Tamar Garb, *Women Impressionists*, New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1986; Edward Lucie-Smith, *Impressionist Women*, London: George Weidengeld & Nicolson Ltd., 1989.

Félix attacked what he termed the *folly* of painting out-of-doors.[8] By 1890 Marie Bracquemond had all but abandoned painting for the sake of her marriage and domestic harmony, because of her husband's continuing disapproval and jealousy. After this time she only painted a few small canvases and today is the least well-known of the women Impressionists.[9]

Mary Cassatt (1844-1926) was the daughter of a Pittsburgh banker, and she traveled extensively in Europe with her family during the 1850's. In the early 1860's she attended classes at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia and in 1865-6 traveled to Paris, where she worked in the Louvre, studying with Gérôme and Chaplin. She exhibited her first work at the Salon in 1868, and in 1870 she went to Italy, but the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War caused her to return to the United States. In 1872 she returned to Italy to study the works of Correggio and to gain proficiency as a printmaker. She exhibited a portrait in the Salon of 1874, which immediately impressed Degas, and the following year she had her own first glimpse of Degas's work. Many years later she wrote to her friend, the American collector Louisine Havemeyer:

> How well I remember, nearly forty years ago, seeing for the first time Degas's pastels in the window of a picture-dealer on the Boulevard Haussmann. I used to go and flatten my nose against that window and absorb all I could of his art. It changed my life. I saw art then as I wanted to see it.[10]

In 1875 Cassatt settled in Paris and struck up a lasting friendship with Degas. She contributed to the Impressionist exhibition of 1879 and to all subsequent shows except that of 1882. Cassatt's early works, mainly of figures, were greatly influenced by 16th- and 17th-century art, but her association with the Impressionists soon resulted in her using a lighter palette and broken brushstrokes. Cassatt had always, from the beginning of her

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[8]Tamar Garb, *Women Impressionists,* New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1986, page 9.
[9]For further information on Marie Bracquemond see: Tamar Garb, *Women Impressionists,* New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1986; Edward Lucie-Smith, *Impressionist Women*, London: George Weidengeld & Nicolson Ltd., 1989; Jean-Paul Bouillon and Elizabeth Kane, "Marie Bracquemond," *Woman's Art Journal*, Volume 7, Number 2, Fall/Winter 1984-1985, pages 20-27.
[10]Edward Lucie-Smith, *Impressionist Women,* London: George Weidengeld & Nicolson Ltd., 1989, page 141.

career, specialized in domestic scenes, and from the end of the 1880's she began to concentrate on the mother-and-child motif for which she is so well known today, although she herself never married nor had any children.[11]

Gustave Caillebotte (1848-94) was the son of a wealthy businessman. Caillebotte initially trained to be a lawyer, but after military service he abandoned law and took up painting, entering the studio of the Salon painter Léon Bonnat. His first major work, *Raboteurs de Parquets,* was rejected by the Salon. By 1876 he was exhibiting with the Impressionists and continued to do so through 1882. Through his association with the Impressionist circle he formed a large collection of their art which he left to the French state at his death. Among his collection of sixty-seven paintings and pastels, by such artists as Manet, Monet, Renoir, Pissarro, Sisley, Degas and Cézanne (and also two drawings by Millet), one can see Manet's *The Balcony*, and Monet's *The Luncheon* of 1873 and *Apartment Interior* of 1875.[12]

Caillebotte was independently wealthy all his life and had no need to sell his work. Like his colleagues, he chose to paint scenes of contemporary life, but his style was more representational and finished than some of the other artists of the group. Originally he associated closely with Degas, but due to Degas's difficult personality Caillebotte shifted his allegiances to Renoir and Monet. Gustave Caillebotte never married nor had any children, although he shared at least the last twelve years of his life with a woman named Charlotte Berthier who appears in his garden scenes of the later 1880's and early 1890's.[13]

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[11]For further information on Mary Cassatt see: Nancy Mowll Mathews, *Mary Cassatt*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1987; Adelyn Dohme Breeskin, *Mary Cassatt: A Catalogue Raisonné*, Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1970; Tamar Garb, *Women Impressionists*, New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1986; Edward Lucie-Smith, *Impressionist Women*, London: George Weidengeld & Nicolson Ltd., 1989.

[12]Kirk Varnedoe, *Gustave Caillebotte*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987, pages 198-202.

[13]For further information on Gustave Caillebotte see: Kirk Varnedoe, *Gustave Caillebotte*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987; Marie Berhaut, *Gustave Caillebotte*, Paris: Galerie des Beaux-Arts, 1951; Kirk Varnedoe and Thomas P. Lee, *Gustave Caillebotte: A Retrospective Exhibition*, Houston: The Museum of Fine Arts, 1976.

The foregoing biographical summaries give an indication of the importance of the personal lives of each of the artists, and the relationships they had with other artists when discussing their approaches to domestic interiors. At the same time one must interpret the roles of men and women in society to be able to determine whether the artists portrayed life accurately or whether their aim was to make statements about French society.

THE PARAMETERS

Domestic interiors in the œuvre of Impressionist art are not what one would usually think of when speaking of Impressionism, although all the Impressionist artists painted domestic interiors at some point in their careers. The recording of domestic life should not be considered unusual because it was in keeping with Baudelairean views of portraying modern life.[14] Primarily one thinks of artists such as Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot as the Impressionist painters of domesticity, but this paper will consider all the artists, male and female, and their views of interior life.

The term *domestic interior,* for this paper's use, stands for any painting set in a domestic setting. This includes any event or subject matter that takes place within the home or extensions of the home (such as gardens and balconies). The portrait is for the most part not considered a domestic interior because its main purpose is to render likenesses of the sitters for a commission and does not necessarily portray domestic life at all. There are exceptions to this definition that will be discussed in conjunction with the occasional portraits that do represent domestic life. Also, some of the paintings discussed in this paper are today called "Mr. or Mrs. So-and-So doing some activity" and were not always painted strictly as a portrait, because many female artists used as their models family members and so the models are identifiable to us today. I do not consider these solely portraits, but they do often make affirmations concerning the artist's life and

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[14]For Baudelaire's views of modern life see: Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays,* edited and translated by J. Mayne, London: Phaidon Press, 1964; Charles Baudelaire "The Painter of Modern Life," *Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art and Artists,* translated by P.E. Charvet, Cambridge, 1972.

surroundings. The use of family members as models was partly due to the restrictions placed on women artists and therefore they naturally turned to the people closest to them to paint, but it is the case that family and family life was important to nearly all the artists associated with this movement and that the large number of paintings in this genre were painted by both men and women.

LITERARY CONNECTIONS

The School of Impressionism evolved during the Second Empire and the last decade after its fall, during the time when the major effects of Baron Haussmann's rebuilding program were to be felt.[15] For the Impressionists, Haussmann's new Paris was the center of their universe and the alterations to Paris created a new impression of light and space. He was the creator of the place de L'Opéra, the Etoile, the place de la Nation and the Bois de Boulogne, while eliminating the slums, the infamous center of disease and the haunts of robbers and murderers, such as the Buttes-Chaumont. Just as Haussmann was to transform the city of Paris, so the Impressionists were to change the face of painting. Manet, Monet, Renoir, Degas, Caillebotte, Morisot, Cassatt and others held a mirror up to French society and documented modern day subjects—the cafés and night life, prostitution, the theater, the countryside and domestic life.[16] By rejecting conservative academic traditions, the Impressionists followed the advice of critics such as Baudelaire and Champfleury and portrayed subjects of their own time, while breaking away from the state-sponsored Académie des Beaux-Arts and showing their works independently at eight exhibitions from 1874 to 1886.

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[15]Baron Eugène Haussmann's reorganization of Paris took place during the 1850's and 1860's.

[16]For further information on the impressionist movement and the times in which they worked see: Robert L. Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure and Parisian Society*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988; Bruce Bernard (ed.), *The Impressionist Revolution*, Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1986; Charles Moffett (et al.), *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874-1886*, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1986; John Rewald, *The History of Impressionism*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 4th revised edition, 1973; Martha Kapos (ed.), *The Impressionists: A Retrospective*, New York: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, Inc., Distributed by Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991.

The poet and critic Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) was a notable early influence on the Impressionist artists. In his essay "The Painter of Modern Life" published in the French newspaper *Le Figaro* in 1863, Baudelaire used the term *modernité* to articulate a sense of difference from the past and to describe a peculiarly modern identity. The modern, for Baudelaire, does not mean merely of the present but represents a particular attitude *to* the present, *an experience* of modernity. Baudelaire defined modern as it relates to art in this way: "By *modernity* I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable."[17] He also described modernity in terms that could describe fashion, as "the transient, the fleeting," and defined the aim of the artist of *la vie moderne*: "to extract from fashion the poetry that resides in its historical envelope, to distill the eternal from the transitory."[18] For the Impressionist painters, the representation of modern dress and manners was at once a rejection of the art of the past and an embracing of the newly rebuilt city of Paris, the fashion and entertainment capital of the world, and of *la vie moderne*, which could only be experienced there.[19] For Baudelaire, new subjects required a new technique and just as there were appropriate forms that the modern in art could take, so too there were inappropriate forms. Therefore, the terms *modern* and *modernity* are not a matter of fixed definition but are relative and subject to historical change.[20]

The Impressionists were not isolated individuals in the intellectual world of their generation. Indeed, they had strong links with emerging contemporary writers such as Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880), Emile Zola (1840-1902), Victor Hugo (1802-1885), Paul Verlaine (1844-1896) and Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898). Mallarmé became a key

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[17]Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, edited and translated by J. Mayne, London: Phaidon Press, 1964, page 13.
[18]Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," *Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, translated by P.E. Charvet, Cambridge, 1972, page 403.
[19]Anne Schirrmeister, "La Dernière Mode: Berthe Morisot and Costume" T.J. Edelstein (ed.), *Perspectives on Morisot*, New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1990, page 103.
[20]Briony Fer, "Introduction," *Modernity and Modernism: French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, in Association with the Open University, 1993, pages 9-10.

influence on the Impressionist artists and maintained close relationships with many artists such as Berthe Morisot, Degas, Monet, Manet and Whistler to name just a few. Mallarmé's work was a poetry of mystery, illusion and suggestion. He stated that:

> To *name* an object is to suppress three quarters of the pleasure in the poem which stems from the joy of divining little by little; to *suggest,* there is the dream. It is the perfect use of this mystery which constitutes the symbol: to evoke an object little by little in order to show a state of soul...[21]

Mallarmé worked at getting to the primitive aspect of poetry, the essence of things, much as the Impressionists worked at shedding off the academic tradition and aimed at getting to the essence of painting, an 'impression' of the object. In a letter of 1864, Mallarmé had announced his aim:

> To paint not the thing but the effect it produces. The verse must therefore not be composed of words but of intentions, and all the words must give way before sensations.[22]

Mallarmé felt that the aim of poetry was only important in terms of an experience of it. He believed that a successful poem should impart a sense of completeness and a mood of spontaneity.

Manet and Mallarmé became close friends in 1872. Baudelaire and Manet had been close friends before Baudelaire's premature death in 1867, which left Manet with a void in is life. Mallarmé, who was early on influenced by Baudelaire, had begun to replace Baudelaire's theories for his own ideas by this time. Manet and Mallarmé immediately became close friends and according to Mallarmé saw each other almost every day until Manet's death in 1883. Mallarmé took on the role of art critic beginning at the time of his friendship with Manet and in 1876 wrote "The Impressionists and Edouard Manet," which was published in the English publication *Art Monthly Review and Photographic Portfolio*, 30

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[21] *Les Mardis: Stéphane Mallarmé and the Artists of His Circle*, The University of Kansas Museum of Art, page 33.

[22] Mondor I, 145, Letter to Henri Cazalis, October 1864. "J'ai énfin commencé mon *Hérodiade.* Avec terreur, car j'invente une langue qui doit nécessairement jaillir d'une poétique très nouvelle, que je pourrais définir en ces deux mots: Peindre non la chose, mais l'effet qu'elle projuit. Le vers ne donc pas, là, se composer de mots, mais d'intentions, et toutes les paroles s'effacer devant les sensations...", page 41. For English translation see: Bruce Bernard, *The Impressionist Revolution*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1986, page 53.

September 1876. Today this essay exists only in its English translation and although it deals primarily with the art of Manet, Mallarmé does make reference to Degas, Morisot, Monet and Renoir, who he sees as being influenced by Manet.

By 1869, nearly all the Impressionists knew each other and would gather at the Café Guerbois on the rue des Batignolles (now the avenue de Clichy). Such figures as Duranty, Duret, Guillemet, Félix Bracquemond, Bazille, Fantin-Latour, Degas, Renoir, Zola, Sisley, Monet, Manet, and others could be found at the café. Manet and Degas met there in the early 1860's and seemed to have been closest in the years before 1865. Their interest in the pictorial possibilities of the life around them and a common influence by Baudelaire drew them together. Although Manet never officially showed with the Impressionist artists, the fact that he was close to them requires his inclusion herein.

SOCIETY

The cultural environment in which these artists worked, like the city of Paris, was also going through changes.[23] Women's roles were changing with the times. Traditionally women were responsible for seeing to it that the home was a refuge. She was referred to as "la femme au foyer" (woman by the hearth), a notion dating back to Roman times. P.J. Proudhon (1809-1865) stated that women had two choices: la femme au foyer, who was a *ménagère* (housewife), or a *courtisane* (harlot). The bourgeois woman's "exclusive devotion to the hearth" was a touchstone of respectability, an important symbol of the family's bourgeois status.[24] Women were raised to imagine themselves in terms of their appearance, their family, and their home, although women's femininity was being

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[23]For further information on culture and society in France see: Michelle Perrot (ed.), *A History of Private Life IV: from the Fires of Revolution to the Great War*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990; Alfred Cobban, *A History of Modern France: The Third Republic*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963.

[24]James F. McMillan, *Housewife or Harlot: The Place of Women in French Society, 1870-1940*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981, pages 2, 9, 13.

recast socially by bourgeois conceptions of women's roles as wife, mother, and homemaker.[25]

By the middle of the nineteenth century the 'woman question' had become a central issue in French intellectual and political discourse, so much so that during the Second Empire (according to a report issued in 1911) more books on women were published than at any other time in French history. During the late 1850's and early sixties Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Jules Michelet both argued for restricting the options and rights of women as a means of preserving and strengthening the family structure. In 1869 the liberal journalist Leon Richer founded the newspaper *Le Droit des femmes*, whose pages, over the next twenty-three years, recorded the French feminist movement.[26] Richer and Maria Deraismes (a political activist, a woman of independent means, and a brilliant and popular public speaker who could draw large crowds) founded in 1870 the 'Société pour l'Amérlioration du Sort de la Femme et la Revendication de ses Droits.' They worked to make feminism into a respectable political position in France, linking the emancipation of women to the stability and welfare of the family. They held the issue of women's rights (i.e., the vote) in abeyance, and concentrated their efforts on seeking legislative reforms particularly in the areas of equal education for women, the re-establishment of a divorce law, women's right to file paternity suits, the abolition of state-supervised prostitution, and the rights of married women to control their own property.

The First International Feminist Congress (Congres International du Droit des Femmes) opened in Paris on 25 July 1878. The sessions organized broadly around issues of pedagogy, economics, morality, and legislation, produced two series of resolutions calling for reform that had by now become a familiar part of the liberal feminist program: these included equal education for both sexes; 'equal pay for equal work' and open access

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[25]Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women*, Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1992, page 147.

[26]For a discussion on the French feminist movement see: Norma Broude, "Edgar Degas and French Feminism, ca. 1880: 'The Young Spartans,' the Brothel Monotypes, and the Bathers Revisited", *The Art Bulletin*, Volume 70, December 1988, pages 643-645.

to all professions; the abolition of state-regulated prostitution; and the establishment of a divorce law, based not on a double moral standard in regard to adultery, but on the principle of equality between the spouses.

The next year, 1879, was a major turning point for the feminist movement in France. The liberal Republicans gained control of the Senate and the Presidency, with the result that, for the first time in that decade, considerable legislative progress was made on feminist issues. In 1880 the Camille See Law was passed, authorizing the establishment of secondary schools for girls and the issue to reestablish a divorce law was much advanced and finally passed in 1884.

The interest in woman—often seen as an 'object' to be decorated—reached a culmination during the art nouveau period with the enshrinement of feminine taste in the pavilion dedicated to women at the Paris Fair in 1900. The numerous appearances of women in nineteenth-century imagery seldom reflected an increased personal development for women. Rather, the emergence of women as a force in society had much to do with manipulations in economics which made women both the new market and a marketable subject for the ever growing bourgeoisie—without changing the psychology about women which was still based upon tradition. Personal growth and emancipation for the French woman was to occur only within the twentieth century.[27]

In the early 1870's some artists saw women in a conservative light. Many echo the Dutch seventeenth-century theme of women and the home and recall the simple pleasures appropriate for women supportive of family life. It was left to the members of the Impressionist group to provide a more accurate picture of the way in which women were playing an active role in society. By the 1880's a new image of women was appearing which emphasized pleasure and personal enjoyment. One writer wrote that only "ten short

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[27]Gabriel P. Weisberg, *Images of Women: Printmakers in France from 1830 to 1930*, Salt Lake City: Utah Museum of Fine Arts, 1977, pages 7-8.

years had sufficed to restore Frenchwomen to all their former idleness..."[28] While not all the critics of the period were as harsh in their evaluations as this one, artists expanded the way in which they saw women of the Third Republic. They went beyond the formal portrait to picture different facets of a woman's life.

Private life in the nineteenth century centered around the family.[29] Great things were at stake in private spaces. Here ambitions of power were realized in material form, personal relations took shape, and people discovered themselves. Hence it is not surprising to discover that the house played an important role in art and literature. From Monet's sunny gardens to Caillebotte's partly open windows to the intimate portrayals of women by Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot, painting penetrated the home and hinted at its secrets. Literature, long silent about decor, suddenly began to describe interiors in minute detail, reflecting a change in the way people looked at places and things.[30] This is the era in which the Impressionist artists worked and lived.

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[28]Octave Uzanne, *Fashion in Paris, the Various Phases of Feminine Taste and Aesthetic from 1797 to 1897*, New York, 1898, quoted in Gabriel P. Weisberg, *Images of Women: Printmakers in France from 1830 to 1930*, Salt Lake City: Utah Museum of Fine Arts, 1977, pages 20-21.
[29]Michelle Perrot (ed.), *A History of Private Life IV: from the Fires of Revolution to the Great War*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990, page 167.
[30]Ibid., page 356.

CHAPTER 2

THE PUBLIC REALM IN DOMESTIC INTERIORS

Originally intended as a formal public area for dining and social events, the dining room was where the family put all its wealth on display. It was also a more private area where the members of the family would gather for daily meals and intimate conversation. One author best describes the family's use of the dining room: "When dinner was over and the tablecloth had been removed and the oil lamp had been set up, the wife took up her embroidery, the husband took up his book or newspaper, the children gathered their toys, and everyone talked freely."[31] Through the course of the nineteenth century the dining room would loose some of its intimate character. The dining room became more of a place solely for family meals and entertaining and the *petit salon*, when a family was prominent enough to have a *petit* and *grand salon*, became the family gathering room for reading and the like.

Marie Bracquemond's *Under the Lamp* (Figure 1) of 1887 portrays Alfred Sisley and his wife at the dinner table at the Bracquemond's home. Bracquemond places Madame Sisley with her back to the viewer in shadow while Monsieur Sisley sits across the table barely illuminated by the lamp above. The scene evokes a sense of a woman's domestic duties in that Madame Sisley is either just sitting down, or standing up, ready to serve the meal on the plates stacked to the left while M. Sisley waits for the meal to be served. Here the dining room serves as the room in which guests might gather for

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[31] Jacques Rancière, *La Nuit des Prolétaires,* Archives du rêve ouvrier, Paris: Fayard, 1981, as quoted from Michelle Perrot (ed.), *A History of Private Life: From the Fires of Revolution to the Great War*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990, page 367.

intimate conversation over the meal. The manner of execution and closeness of the figures portrays to the viewer the intimacy of this situation. The loosely painted figures and table setting gives us an 'impression' of the scene.

One of Mary Cassatt's few paintings dealing with the dining room is her *Mother Feeding Her Child* (Figure 2). She uses the theme of mother and child mixed with the idea of learning in this intimate work. The mother intently watches her child drink from a glass as she carefully helps to balance the cup. The table is set, although we only see a corner of it. The subject matter is the woman and child and the process of drinking. The figures have been monumentalized to focus the viewer's attention on the subject and not on the elaborate table settings.

Edmond Duranty, in an article entitled "The Middle Class Drawing Room," observed:

> When in the evening the curtains are drawn and the lamp has become the sun of this little world, when it concentrates light and life around the table, while distancing and throwing into shadow all the furniture, this little world expands and becomes mysterious, grave, and meditative.[32]

In the winter of 1868-1869, while at Etretat, Claude Monet painted three versions of the dining room. The first is *The Artist's Family at Dinner* (Figure 3) which shows a room lit solely by the lamp above the table which illuminates certain forms while casting others into deep shadow. A maid emerges out of the darkness from the kitchen area to serve the family dinner. The setting is quiet and somber, no conversation takes place between the family members. The harsh lighting and distance of the figures give this image a very cold feel in comparison to the works by Marie Bracquemond and Mary Cassatt. In the same year Monet painted *Le Déjeuner* (Figure 4), which portrays his wife Camille at the table with their son Jean. The scene is more intimate than the previous work, and the entire feel of the painting is more at ease. Jean is the most animated of all the figures, drawing our attention to him. The focus is on the child as he clasps his spoon ready to crack open an

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[32]Edmond Duranty, "Le Salon Bourgeois," *La Rue*, July 13, 1867, quoted in Theodore Reff, *Degas: An Artist's Mind*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987, page 222.

egg, a symbol of the appetite for life.[33] The light comes from the left bank of windows and floods the room with warmth. The table is set for the artist as well, in that the empty chair is pushed askew from the table inviting him and the viewer to become a fifth person in the room, although the table and chair at the left separates the viewer from the family. The open place setting seems to imply the empty seat is for a male participant in that the newspaper *Le Figaro* is placed at the side of the plate. This publication dealt primarily with politics, business and intellectual matters, and symbolized the 'outside world' open to men.

Although this seems to be an ordinary genre scene, Monet's inclusion of Camille twice in the painting requires one to question this duality. Once she appears seated at the table, acting as mother and domestic housewife, secondly, she stands at the window, dressed as if she were a society woman. These two images of Camille introduce to the viewer the changing roles of women in the later nineteenth century. Monet presents us with a dual perception of his wife, Camille, as mother of his child, seated at the table, and as a woman of society, referring to her social status, as she leans against the window that leads to the world outside the home.

The third dining room scene executed by Monet during his stay at Etretat was *Interior after Dinner* (Figure 5) which portrays a man leaning against the fireplace mantel while two women sew at the table. This scene is reminiscent of the uses of the dining room with the tablecloth removed and the wife embroidering while the man reads or talks. As in Monet's *The Artist's Family at Dinner*, the setting is lit only by the oil lamp above the table which casts objects into deep shadow or bright highlights.

A unique artist in terms of approach to domestic genres is Gustave Caillebotte. In his *Déjeuner (Luncheon)* of 1876 (Figure 6), the scene is of the formal dining room, with all the silver and crystal finery placed out for public view. The room is dark, lit only by the natural light coming through the two windows at the back of the room. The table is

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[33]Michael Levey, "The Luncheon," *ARTnews*, Volume 88, October 1989, page 92.

set for three, and as in the Luncheon scene by Monet, the seat closest to the viewer is empty, inviting him to join in the feast. Caillebotte has not given us the entire chair pushed open as Monet has, waiting for the viewer to be seated, but instead has already placed himself at the table with an empty plate directly in front of him with the result that we look at the scene with his eyes, the eyes of a participant. The knife at the artist's place setting leads the eye back into the painting through the figure at the right, who is Caillebotte's youngest brother René, to his mother at the opposite end of the table being served by the family valet.[34] The glimmers of light and highlights of the crystal and silver help to lead the eye back into the painting to the mother at the back, framed by the two windows. The isolated figures do not attempt to communicate with one another. The overall tone of the painting is dark and quiet, and the central focus of the work is on the table itself and the expanse of the room.

In these paintings of dining rooms it is interesting to notice the treatment of the figures. It seems in the works by Monet and Caillebotte there is a sense of isolation and distancing between the figures, although both artists have left a place at the table for themselves, which creates for the viewer an opportunity to partake in the event also. Both Monet and Caillebotte have focused on the details of the rooms and on the table settings. Everything is firmly and solidly in its place, including the figures who are almost immobile, so much that the entire scene appears more like a still life rather than a contemporary domestic interior. Therefore, the subject matter in these works by the male Impressionist artists is not about the people's lives or events in them, but rather a documenting of the daily rituals and surroundings in their lives.

On the other hand, Marie Bracquemond and Mary Cassatt paint their dining room interiors (Figures 1 & 2 respectively) in a much softer style, without emphasizing the specific details of every item. Although in each of their works there isn't a chair or place setting left open for the artist or the viewer, the closeness of the subjects to the picture

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[34]Kirk Varnedoe, *Gustave Caillebotte*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987, pages 66-67.

plane creates a more intimate setting and allows the viewer to feel more a part of the event. The subject in each of their works is the women and their roles, either as hostess and wife as in the case of Marie Bracquemond's painting, or as mother and teacher as in Mary Cassatt's painting. These are not still lifes as in the male artists' works, because the viewer is not shown the entire expanse of the table and room, but the focus is on the figures which are brought up close to the viewer giving a sense of intimacy with the subject.

While these works give one a feel for gender difference in the approaches to domestic interiors in nineteenth-century France, they are only a very small portion of the domestic interiors painted during this time. The dining room was not the most popular room in the œuvre of Impressionist artists, who tended, for the most part, to prefer the more intimate and private rooms of the home or rooms for entertaining such as the *grand salon*.[35] The *grand salon* was the symbol of the bourgeoisie and signified membership into this class.[36] Being the most public reception room in the French home, the *grand salon* was the room in which the lady of the house would receive guests on regularly scheduled days. The afternoon was devoted to social duties, and when a woman did not receive at home, she felt obliged to appear in other salons. From 1830 until 1914 women of good society set aside a certain day for receiving guests.[37] In the second half of the nineteenth century women normally received between two and six o'clock in the provinces and between three and seven o'clock in Paris.[38] The ritual of receiving guests was a very structured event.

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[35]There are scenes of entertaining in the *grand salon*, such as Manet's *The Artist's Wife at the Piano in Their Apartment on rue St. Pétersbourg*, 1867; Degas's *Manet Listening to His Wife Playing the Piano*, 1865; along with other paintings which depict music and entertaining. Both Morisot and Manet held regular salons and these weekly events were linked to their social status and public life. I am not including these as images of domesticity because their portrayal depicts a much more public image rather than one simply of domestic life.

[36]Michelle Perrot (ed.), *A History of Private Life IV: From the Fires of Revolution to the Great War*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990, page 368.

[37]For additional information about society and domestic life see: Anne Martin-Fugier, *La Bourgeoise*, Paris: Grasset, 1983; Michelle Perrot, *Le Mode de Vie des Familles Bourgeoises: 1873-1953*, Paris: Armand Colin, 1961; Bonnie Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class: Bourgeoises of Northern France in the Nineteenth Century*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981; Anne-Marie Sohn, "Les Rôles Féminins dans la Vie Privée: Approche Méthodologique et Bilan de Recherches," *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, October-December, 1981.

[38]Michelle Perrot (ed.), *A History of Private Life IV: From the Fires of Revolution to the Great War*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990, page 274.

Normally the hostess occupied a chair placed in the center of the salon. A table was set up with cakes, petits fours and sandwiches, and tea was brought to the guests by the daughters of the house. Female guests stayed only a short while, for they often had several receptions to attend in a single afternoon. It was deemed appropriate to stay for fifteen minutes to half an hour.[39]

One of the best examples of women receiving guests is the painting *Five O'Clock Tea* (Figure 7) by Mary Cassatt. The lady of the house, shown closest to the viewer, entertains a guest for tea. The guest wears a hat and gloves which distinguishes her from the woman of the house. The fine silver tea set and china attest to the formality of the visit. The mood of the moment is quiet, possibly an awkward break in the conversation. The two women do not look at one another, but glance to the right. This seems to be at the end of the visit, the woman of the house has finished her tea and her conversations. The guest is quickly finishing her cup of tea and will prepare to leave. This is a woman's domain and the subject of the painting is the women themselves and activities that were common to the leisure class of which they were a part. Orchestrating and maintaining social relations was a key aspect of bourgeois life and a responsibility of the mistress of the house. Women of the bourgeoisie were well aware of their responsibility and proclaimed their social standing by holding salons on specified days and by paying and receiving calls.[40]

Another example of the *grand salon* is Degas's portrait of his relatives in Italy. Entitled *The Bellelli Family* (Figure 8), this work utilizes many of the subtle symbols that others in his circle would use to portray the conflict between men and women and women's place in the domestic world. Degas himself considered this a painting and not a portrait. In a letter to Moreau he wrote: "This was to be not just another portrait, but a

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[39]Ibid., page 275.
[40]Ibid., page 278.

picture (*un tableau*)."[41] Degas displays his taste for domestic drama in this work and strays from the norm of portrait painting by picturing the Bellelli family in their home. He even goes as far as to secure the space and suggest a fourth wall through the interior reflection in the mirror.

This painting portrays an instant in the everyday life of this family, presented without any desire to please and without the slightest concession to the taste of the average viewer. The tension created between the family members illustrates the drama of their private life. Laura, Degas's aunt, appears unhappy with her life, stiff, rigid, obviously in mourning due to the recent death of her father, who appears in the painting behind her.[42] Giovanna mirrors her mother, standing straight and firm and looks directly at the viewer as if to defend and protect her mother and the unborn child that Laura is carrying. Baron Gennaro Bellelli sits reading by the fireplace, in shadow with his back to us, and turns as if just for a moment. Guilia, in the center of the paining, is the only link between the Baron and the Baroness, who are visibly estranged. She sits awkwardly on the chair, much more child-like than her sister and seems almost unaware of the tension around her.[43]

During the 1860's, Degas painted *Interior* and four other pictures, two of them set in modern Paris—*Sulking* and another *Interior Scene* that resembles *The Bellelli Family* in its separation of the sexes, both physically and emotionally. One writer observed about these works:

> In all these pictures the left is, so to speak, the female side of the canvas–it is separated from the right by a central element, across which Degas set a unifying diagonal..[and] the element of hostility between the sexes is apparent.[44]

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[41] Jean Sutherland Boggs, *Degas*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Ottawa: The National Gallery of Canada, 1988, page 80.
[42] Ibid., page 82.
[43] For a formal analysis of Degas's *The Bellelli Family* see: Jean Sutherland Boggs, *Degas*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1988; Theodore Reff, *Degas: An Artist's Mind*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987.
[44] Quentin Bell, "Degas," *Le Viol*, unpaged [pages 12-13], as quoted in Theodore Reff, *Degas: An Artist's Mind*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987, page 216.

Degas has thoughtfully created a home environment in *The Bellelli Family* to portray a quiet domestic life, with the bassinet and woolen bag placed on the feminine side of the painting and the dog, man's best friend, seen on the masculine side of the painting. The dog is half cut off by the picture frame possibly alluding to the loyalty of the marriage which at this point has deteriorated. The dog's presence could also represent his faithfulness to Baron Bellelli and by situating him only partially in the domestic space, Degas could be alluding to the Baron's uneasiness in a woman's domain and that he actually belongs to the world beyond the confines of the domestic space.

All the details of the home, the carpeted floors, papered walls, elaborate clock and chandelier reflecting in the mirror, tell us that this is a prosperous home, but one of great tension. The obvious division of male and female is not an uncommon theme in Impressionist domestic interiors, but rarely so obviously portrayed. A definite wall separates the Baron from the three women by means of the lines of the mirror on the mantle, the legs of the table and chair, even the calf of the youngest daughter. The Baron appears in dark lighting, with dark clothing and his back to us, whereas the women are illuminated and the direction of the Baron forces one's eye to the three women. Also, the male side of the room gives one a sense of an expanding area outside the domestic interior with the mirror, yet the Baron merges into the smaller, ambiguous forms of the mantel and mirror, emphasizing Mme Bellelli's dominance over her husband. The female side of the room is more restrictive and domestic, limiting the women into the space, although pictorially Laura stands out against the solid wall broken only by a sharply defined picture.[45] Only at the left edge of the canvas can one see the edge of a room beyond and a portion of a window alluding to the outside world, although this is so small and distant that it appears almost unattainable to the women.

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[45]Theodore Reff, *Degas: An Artist's Mind*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987, page 216.

Degas very carefully composed this work to give insight into the lives of the sitters and to give clues about their lives and their situation, following in the style of Manet and Baudelaire. Both were keenly interested in the pictorial possibilities of the life around them. Degas possibly considered this a painting and not a portrait because it is not just a recording of the Bellelli family, but an intimate portrayal of family life and of life in general. Within this single work we have a complete life cycle (the womb, the infant, the child, the adult, and finally death), along with many innuendoes and very subtle statements that tell the story of the Bellelli family. Each detail gives the viewer a clue as to either the status of the family or the personal drama of the Bellelli family. *The Bellelli Family* is therefore not merely a group portrait, but rather, as Degas himself stressed, a 'picture'—one in which he displays, to use Jamot's words, his taste for domestic drama, a tendency to discover hidden bitterness in the relationships between individuals...even when they seem to be presented merely as figures in a portrait.[46]

Berthe Morisot's *La Lecture* (now known as *The Mother and Sister of the Artist*) (Figure 9) was painted in the interior of Morisot's home and depicts her mother reading to her sister Edma, who is pregnant with her first child. The picture was painted in the downstairs living room or *grand salon*, which is unusual for Morisot because of its public setting.[47] All of her subject matter was domestic, and most of it is in locations that are more intimate and private to the home. This painting, while being a portrait of the two women who were the closest to Morisot, also deals with Morisot's personal life and decisions she has made as a woman. Like Degas, she is not presenting us with just a realistic rendering of the sitters, but is making statements about their lives, as well as hers.

The theme is a declaration of the path Berthe Morisot will take in her life. Edma, who had worked as a painter with Berthe, had chosen marriage and motherhood. She appears with her mother, about ready to become a mother herself. Edma seems distant,

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[46]Paul Jamot, *Degas* Paris: Editions de la Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 1924, quoted in Jean Sutherland Boggs, *Degas*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1988, page 81.
[47]Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, page 67.

detached, quiet, almost lonely. She has given up her past and her work as an artist, while her sister, Berthe, continues to paint. Berthe is not just portraying a domestic interior, but is indicating to the viewer the paths she and her sister have chosen in life. Berthe includes herself in the painting through the bouquet of violets seen at the left. Manet painted *Still Life with Violets and Fan* in 1872 (Figure 10) which he dedicated and gave to Berthe Morisot after painting *Portrait of Berthe Morisot in a Black Hat, with Violets* (Figure 11) in the same year. While the painting is that of mother and child, domesticity, and femininity, it is also about painting, and while she is portraying her sister as mother and wife, she is also making the statement about her choice, that of an artist. The actual process of painting has indicated the path she will follow in her life.

In these works portraying the public areas of the home, the dining room and *grand salon*, one gets a sense that both male and female artists are dealing with the divisions predetermined by society. While Degas deals with modern life from a dominant masculine viewpoint, although he is sympathetic to his Aunt Laura, he still maintains the strict division of masculine and feminine. Morisot, while limited in subject matter, represents a different viewpoint from that of Degas, that of femininity and women's choices in life, not only in her approach to the subject matter, but also in her style of execution. While Degas deals with drawing and line, Morisot works in a looser style utilizing color. This, in itself, is a division of the genders, as expressed in Charles Blanc's textbook, *Grammaire Historique des Arts du Dessin*, published in 1867. Blanc stated that:

> Drawing is the masculine sex in art, color is its feminine sex...The Union of drawing and colour is necessary for the engendering of painting, just as is the union between man and woman for engendering humanity, but it is necessary that drawing retains a dominance over colour. If it were otherwise, painting would court its own ruin; it would be lost by colour as humanity was lost by Eve.[48]

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[48]Charles Blanc, *Grammaire Historique des Arts du Dessin*, 1867, quoted in Tamar Garb, "Gender and Representation," *Modernity and Modernism: French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993, page 285 and in Tamar Garb, "Berthe Morisot and the Feminizing of Impressionism," T.J. Edelstein (ed.), *Perspectives on Morisot*, New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1990, page 61.

So Morisot and Degas worked in a style that best represented their gender as artists while allowing them to make statements about women's role in modern day society.

While this idea of male and female gender differences and line and color work well when applied to Morisot and Degas, the same is not true for Monet. In *Le Déjeuner* by Monet, while being more tightly painted than Morisot's work, deals more with the effects of light and color than with line. He seems to work more closely to the style of Morisot, observing the multiple roles of modern day women without portraying the women as the subject of the painting.

Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot both portray works with two seated females, in their *Five O'Clock Tea* and *La Lecture*, respectively, yet Morisot's painting seems to make a statement about women's roles and breaking out of the standard mold. Morisot also portrays the *grand salon*, the most public of all rooms but in a very personal nature. She paints her *La Lecture* in the *grand salon*, but uses this public room to make very personal statements about herself and the other women in her life. Cassatt, on the other hand, portrays the domestic world of the nineteenth-century woman in a dispassionate observation of the scene. There doesn't seem to be any underlying statements except that this is a woman's realm. When Cassatt's *Five O'Clock Tea* was shown in the fifth Impressionist exhibition of 1880, J.K. Huysmans published a review of the show in *L'Art Moderne* and stated that he preferred her work to that of her contemporaries who treated similar subject matter:

> Here is still the bourgeoisie, but it is no longer like that of M. Caillebotte; it is a world also at ease but more harmonious, more elegant. In spite of her personality, which is still not completely free, Miss Cassatt has nevertheless a curiosity, a special attraction, for a flutter of feminine nerves passes through her painting that is more poised, more peaceful, more capable than that of Mme Morisot, pupil of Manet.[49]

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[49] Edward Lucie-Smith, *Impressionist Women*, London: George Weidengeld & Nicolson Ltd., 1989, pages 60-61.

CHAPTER 3

THE *PETIT SALON*: A MORE INTIMATE ATMOSPHERE

The *petit salon* was a smaller, more intimate room for the gathering of family and close friends. This room took the place of the family dining room as the location in which the family would gather after dinner to relax, read, sew and converse. Many of the paintings of domestic interiors in the *petit salon* are painted by women. This is mainly because of the limitations placed on women as to the areas in which they could paint, and since they could not roam the streets like many of the male artists, they chose to paint domestic scenes within the home. Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot did paint pictures of women in public spaces, but all in a realm that was accessible to them and deemed proper. These included debutantes, young women of fashionable society at the theatre, and mothers, children, matrons and elegant families in parks. One will not find paintings of the backstage at the theater, cafes, or brothels in the œuvre of women artists, as are prominent in many of the male Impressionist's work.[50]

The *Interior* (Figure 12) by Berthe Morisot was painted in the *petit salon* or upstairs parlor of the home Morisot lived in during the late 1860's and early 1870's.[51] The woman seated in the black silk afternoon dress is probably the woman of the house, dressed to receive guests or make a social call. Her upright proper position and social dress are in sharp contrast to the simply dressed woman and child at the window. The woman with the child therefore is probably the child's nanny because of her simplicity, for if she

[50]Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art*, New York: Routledge, 1988, pages 77-78.
[51]Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot: Images of Women*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, page 67.

were the woman of the house and the seated woman was a visitor, the woman of the house would be dressed more formally when receiving guests.[52] This is, of course, unless the guest is a very intimate friend, then the seated woman could be the visitor and the standing woman the lady of the house. Morisot has not been specific as to the identity of the figures but allows the viewer to use this ambiguity to ask questions about women's roles.

Her scenes can be identified through their location, which in this case is the *petit salon* in her home where she executed most of her paintings, and also through the clothing worn. Upper-middle-class women changed their clothing with the changes of the time of day, or for special occasions which indicates to the viewer what time of day it is and what event might be taking place.[53]

Every aspect of interiority comes through in Morisot's images. The interior for her is not merely a place to be recorded but an idea to be expressed of confinement and feminine space. The subject of the painting seems to be about the different attitudes of the women of the household, with the lady of the house very proper and stiff, awaiting a caller in a darkened interior while on the opposite side the nanny and child are placed in a very casual manner, illuminated by the light from the window. The nanny and lady of the house are part of the domestic world, the lady of the house gazes blankly into the room stressing her isolation while the nanny looks at the child who gazes outside to the world beyond their boundaries, which is far in the distance and not within the viewer's sight. By placing the child with her back to the spectator, partially hidden behind the window draperies, Morisot has stressed the longing for the spaces outside the home, for the child has not yet been trained to accept the roles she must play in a confined world. This dreaminess and longing appears in both groupings of figures, and although they are physically and mentally separated, their yearning for the spaces beyond are common.

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[52]For a discussion as to the roles of the figures in Morisot's *Interior* see: Anne Schirrmeister, "La Dernière Mode: Berthe Morisot and Costume," T.J. Edelstein (ed.), *Perspectives on Morisot,* New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1990, pages 105-107.

[53]Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot*, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1990, pages 69-70.

Dutch artists, such as Jan Vermeer and Pieter de Hooch used this same pictorial device. Their domestic interiors portray a feminine space that is separate from that of a man's. In Dutch interiors similar themes dealing with feminine inner space are represented: the relationship of mother to child; the simplest objects of daily life used over and over in exactly the same way; and light, light as it streams in from the outside, caught by the interior, by the surfaces and textures of feminine life. Dutch artists portrayed these types and by doing so emphasized the non-changing realm of the feminine inner space.[54] Vermeer's *Woman with a Water Jug* (Figure 13), is a good example of the feminine space in the seventeenth century. The woman seems confined in the room, although a window to the left suggests the outside world, which is unattainable to her. The map on the back wall also alludes to the outside world and travel, which is a man's world. Although her hand is on the open window and the edge of the map just about touches her, she doesn't overlap or go beyond these boundaries. Her hand on the watering jug ties her back to the domestic world, in which she is solidly placed.

Pieter de Hooch's *Courtyard of a House in Delft* (Figure 14), again shows the domestic realm in Dutch painting. The mother and child are sheltered in an area between the indoor and outdoor areas of their home. Another woman is in the hallway leading out to the street, although she is certainly within the boundaries of the home. The area is all but enclosed except for the sky which can be seen at the upper right and our attention is directed there through the diagonal post at the right. Again, there is a sense of the outside world, through the doorway and halls out to the street, yet the women do not venture out. Theirs is a domestic world and although there are signs of the outside world, the world their husbands occupy, the women in these paintings go about their household chores, waiting for the return of their husbands.

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[54]Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, page 72.

The influence of Dutch art on the Impressionist artists can be seen in the genre scenes produced in the second half of the nineteenth century. It is interesting that the great Dutch master Vermeer was virtually unknown from the end of the seventeenth century until 1858, when the French critic and art historian Théophile Thoré, who wrote under the pseudonym Willem Bürger, began to bring Vermeer's paintings to public notice. In a book on Holland museums he mentioned three of Vermeer's works and then published three articles in 1866 in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* and in the same year published these in book form.[55] This initiated a revival of interest in genre scenes of the Dutch painters.

Madame Monet Embroidering (Figure 15) shows Monet's interest in the theme of women sewing, which was common in Dutch genre. It is possible that Monet was aware of Vermeer's *The Lacemaker* (Figure 16) which was acquired by the Musée du Louvre in 1870. The theme of sewing became a popular subject with the Impressionist artists who dealt with interiors and many women are portrayed sewing or doing needlework, which was a symbol of a truly domestic woman. Embroidery and needlework were widely regarded as a naturally feminine pastime in the nineteenth century and girls were taught to sew from an early age.[56] Embroidery was thought not only to signify femininity but to be instrumental in teaching suitably feminine behavior.[57]

Claude Monet's *Apartment Interior* (Figure 17) was one of the many Impressionist paintings in the collection of Gustave Caillebotte. It portrays Monet's son Jean in the center of an expansive interior gazing out at the artist and spectator. Camille sits quietly in the far back room at a table. The scene is reminiscent not only of Dutch interiors that portray deep perspectives but also of Caillebotte's *Déjeuner (Luncheon)* in its use of a dark, back-lit bourgeois interior, the steeply tilted floor, and the isolation of the figures and

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[55]Anne Coffin Hanson, *Manet and the Modern Tradition*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977, page 27.

[56]Sewing was an essential skill in the nineteenth century because clothes were expensive and in order to maintain them women needed to be able to sew. Millet painted numerous works of women sewing, weaving, and spinning wool which reinforces the necessity of these skills in domestic life.

[57]Tamar Garb, *Women Impressionists*, New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1986, page 28.

quietness of the scene.[58] Jean, who seems to be almost trapped within the boundaries of the space, moves away from his mother and the comfortable domestic space in the background toward the lighted foreground in which his father is placed–a man's world.

Mary Cassatt also dealt with the casual as found in domestic interiors. In *Young Girl in a Blue Armchair* (Figure 18), the setting is an informal room, most likely a family-type gathering room and is painted from a low perspective, that of a child and evokes the child's sense of space.[59] The mood of the painting is not very different from that of Monet's in that both paintings reveal a sensitivity to a child's impression of a world too big for the child. Monet's painting portrays a darkly lit interior which engulfs the figures within, while Cassatt's painting is of a child engulfed in a chair with other furniture looming in the background. Cassatt's child settles comfortably into her domestic space, bored yet content in her isolation. She is unaware that she is being painted, while Monet's son aggressively glares out at his father. He moves away from his mother which suggests that he is not confined in the domestic space like the young girl in Cassatt's painting.

Another work by Cassatt, *La Lecture (Mrs. Cassatt Reading to Her Grandchildren)* (Figure 19), gives the viewer a close up view of the situation. The surroundings are unidentifiable, although most likely this was again in a room for family gatherings. While Mary Cassatt herself never had children of her own, the subject of mother and child dominates much of her work. The intimacy and interaction of the figures in this work evoke a sense of warmth and family closeness in the viewer. The subject of reading can also be seen in Cassatt's *Reading 'Le Figaro'* and *Woman Reading.* In *Reading 'Le Figaro'* (Figure 20) Cassatt's mother dominates the entire foreground of the painting, filling the canvas as she reads the newspaper. She is portrayed as a well-educated woman who is fluent in French. Her intense intellectual absorption emphasizes her intelligence and seriousness. While images of women reading were very popular in the nineteenth century,

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[58]Kirk Varnedoe, *Gustave Caillebotte*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987, page 67.
[59]Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art*, New York: Routledge, 1988, page 65.

few painters showed women reading newspapers, those documents of 'outside affairs' usually associated with men.[60] What Cassatt has presented to the viewer is the domestic domain, a woman's sphere, as well as the 'outside world' symbolized by *Le Figaro,* a publication dealing with politics, business and intellect, a man's world.

Woman Reading (Figure 21) painted by Mary Cassatt, doesn't play on the differences of the outside world versus the domestic domain, but instead monumentalizes the woman reading, making this common activity the key subject of the painting. Engrossed in the paper she is reading, the woman is not aware of the viewer's presence. Renoir's *Portrait of Madame Monet* (Figure 22) portrays exactly the opposite of Cassatt's work. Camille Monet is decoratively placed on the couch, she is no longer reading, but meets the viewer's gaze, almost as if the viewer has interrupted. Yet her reading seems not to be as serious and in-depth as in Cassatt's *Woman Reading.* In Renoir's painting of Monet's wife, Camille, he approached the subject as if she were an object to be admired by the male viewer and her main purpose is to look beautiful, as she dreams about what she is reading, possibly a place or time far away. Her gaze is not a direct look at the viewer, but a mysterious glance to interest the viewer. Charles Baudelaire's essay "The Painter of Modern Life" established that women do not look, they are positioned as the object of the flâneur's gaze:

> Woman is for the artist in general...far more than just the female of man. Rather she is divinity, a star...a glittering conglomeration of all the graces of nature, condensed into a single being; an object of keenest admiration and curiosity that the picture of life can offer to its contemplator. She is an idol, stupid perhaps, but dazzling and bewitching... Everything that adorns women that serves to show off her beauty is part of herself...No doubt woman is sometimes a light, a glance, an invitation to happiness, sometimes she is just a word.[61]

Renoir and Cassatt show us distinct differences from the male and female perspective, that of woman as object and woman as intellect, respectively.

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[60]Tamar Garb, *Women Impressionists,* New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1986, page 60.
[61]Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art,* New York: Routledge, 1988, page 71.

Manet's *La Lecture (Reading)* (Figure 23) shows Madame Manet listening to a reading by her son, Léon Koëlla. Much like Renoir's *Portrait of Madame Monet*, Madame Manet becomes a decorative element within the painting. Her purpose is to look beautiful and to be the recipient of the male viewer's gaze. She looks out at the viewer, meeting his gaze in an almost dream-like manner, as though she is being inspired by the book her son is reading. Manet was very much influenced by Baudelaire during this time in his career as can be seen in this work and his portrayal of Madame Manet as "an idol, stupid perhaps" for she is not reading, yet adorns the setting with her presence.

Gustave Caillebotte, a contemporary of Cassatt and Morisot's, deals with the theme of interiors in many of his works. His *Interior, Woman Seated* (Figure 24), presents the same subject as Cassatt's *Reading 'Le Figaro'* and *Woman Reading*. In all three of these examples the artists have portrayed a woman seated, in profile or three-quarter view, and absorbed in the process of reading. In each, the surrounding interior is limiting and completely enclosed. Yet, Caillebotte focuses in on the figure of the woman, looming in the foreground, but has also included a male figure reclining on the couch in the background. Although he seems to get lost in the couch that is much larger than he, his presence gives the viewer the unsettling sense of physical and mental divorce in the figures even though they are engaged in a common activity in the same room.

Again in his *View across a Balcony* (Now known as *Interior, Woman at the Window*) (Figure 25), Caillebotte deals with the subject of reading, but now we see a man seated at the right reading, while a woman stands with her back to the viewer and gazes out the window. The details of the interior space are not a great concern to Caillebotte, but the picturing of a moment of contemporary life is. Caillebotte has made the subject of this work the opposition between the man and woman, emphasizing the boredom and unfulfillment in their relationship. In both of these works the theme of marital alienation is common and Caillebotte has used the physically comfortable bourgeois interior to reveal

the interpersonal tensions that exist there in and hold the potential for disaster, much as Degas did in his portrait of the Bellelli family.

A woman's place in nineteenth-century society was in the home, as felt by many and explained by Jules Simon in 1892:

> What is man's vocation? It is to be a good citizen. And woman's? To be a good wife and a good mother. One is in some way called to the outside world, the other is retained for the interior.[62]

Caillebotte portrays domestic life from a man's viewpoint, but seems to understand the longings of the contemporary woman.

Claude Monet portrayed his wife Camille in a mood of isolation while in self imposed exile in London, longing for the freedom to roam outside, in his painting *Meditation–Madame Monet on the Couch* (Figure 26). Like Caillebotte's woman before the window, Camille seems bored with her life and is deeply absorbed in her own thoughts. Her gaze is not to the outside world as the woman in Caillebotte's painting, but stares down at the floor possibly thinking of a far away place that she has just read about in the book she holds. Monet, like Caillebotte seems to understand some of the constraints placed on contemporary women and the loneliness of the domestic world.

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[62]Ibid., page 68.

CHAPTER 4

BALCONIES AND OPEN WINDOWS: A GLIMPSE BEYOND THE DOMESTIC WORLD

Balconies and open windows are common elements in domestic interiors. Besides becoming the primary light source in many paintings, they also represent the boundary between public and private spaces, that of a man's world as opposed to a female's world. An open window may represent the outside world, as seen from inside and symbolizes the spaces which are unattainable to women. Bourgeois women did go out in public to promenade, go shopping or visiting, although this became a risky adventure, for the upper-class women could be thought of as one of the working class women.[63] Jules Simon stated that a woman who worked ceased to be a woman. For the bourgeois women, going into town mingling with a crowd of mixed social composition was not only frightening because it became increasingly unfamiliar, but because it was morally dangerous. It was argued that to maintain one's respectability, closely identified with femininity, meant not appearing alone in public.[64] The public space was officially the realm of the man, the flâneur; for women who enter it entailed unforeseen risks. Marie Bashkirtseff, a contemporary artist who showed at the Salon and depicted urban life, expressed her frustrations at the restrictions placed on women artists:

> What I long for is the freedom of going about alone, of coming and going, of sitting in the seats of the Tuileries, and especially in the Luxembourg, of stopping looking at the artistic shops, of entering churches and museums, of walking about

[63]Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art*, New York: Routledge, 1988, page 68.
[64]Ibid., page 69.

> the old street at night; that's what I long for; and that's the freedom without which one cannot become a real artist. Do you imagine that I get much good from what I see, chaperoned as I am, and when, in order to go to the Louvre, I must wait for my carriage, my lady companion, my family?[65]

Balconies represent the boundary between the domestic and the outside world.[66] The balcony became an important feature of the new apartment buildings being constructed along the rebuilt boulevards of Paris by Louis-Napoleon and Baron Haussmann. They were usually a narrow platform that extended the private space of the home out over the public space of the street. For a woman the balcony represented a safe haven where she could observe the streets of Paris without actually leaving her home. It also was a constant reminder of the limitations placed on women and the restrictions on her freedom.

Edouard Manet's *The Balcony* (Figure 27) includes four people, three on the balcony and one in a shadowy interior. The work is totally without narrative and its meaning is opaque. This 'void' in location and story are common in works by Manet and the Impressionists. Mallarmé, a close friend of Manet's, dealt with the notion of 'void' in much of his work. His poetry deals with mystery and suggestion and it is its vagueness and lack of relationship in which Manet and many of the Impressionists showed an interest. In Mallarmé's poetry each phrase appears as a self-sufficient entity, not modifying the previous and following phrase. As a whole it comes together much as in Impressionist painting, where the individual brush strokes are independent of one another and up close have no unity, but upon stepping back from the composition one takes in the complete image. This approach changed Mallarmé's method of writing in his early

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[65]Tamar Garb, *Women Impressionists*, New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1986, page 9.
[66]For a discussion of balconies and the spaces they represent see: Kirk Varnedoe, *Gustave Caillebotte*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987.

formative years, for he stated that:

> Each poem, even each work, like each object it represents, must be a meeting place, a point of encounter. A crossroads in an essential liaison with the rest of the world, it can take on meaning only in its proper place and in its relationship to the All.[67]

"Afternoon of the Faun" is a good example to show Mallarmé's approach to poetry and how his technique is similar to how the Impressionists approached art.

> The Faun
>
> These nymphs, I would perpetuate them.
> So clear,
> Their incarnate buoyancy, that it tumbles on air
> Sleepy with drowsy tufts.
> I loved a dream?[68]

Mallarmé's poetry does not create things but centers on the relationships between them. He was attracted to the indefinite territory between the conscious, the preconscious, the unconscious, the willed and the self-deception which so eludes language.

Looking again at Manet's *The Balcony* we see that it is a perfect example of this lack of meaning and narrative. There is no conversation or eye contact among the four characters, and the only common bond between them is through their location. They appear isolated from one another and look in different directions. The seated figure of the woman gazes off into the distance in a dream-like state, as though she is longing for something that is unattainable to her. The balcony railing encloses the figures in the domestic space, although the viewer's gaze is from the outside world, a man's world. The seated woman, lost in her thoughts, was posed for by Berthe Morisot and is interesting because of Morisot's interest in the man's world of art. Manet has represented the

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[67]Guy Michaud, *Mallarmé,* translated by Marie Collins and Bertha Humez, New York: New York University Press, 1965, page 56.

[68]Translation from: Harry Rand, *Manet's Contemplation at the Gare Saint-Lazare,* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987, page 130.

> Le Faune
> Ces nymphes, je les veux perpéteur.
> Si clair,
> Leur incarnat léger, qu'il voltige dans l'air
> Assoupi de sommeils touffus
> Aimai-je un rêve?

semipublic, semiprivate space of the balcony by portraying the people in styles of dress appropriate for street wear and domestic wear. The violinist, Fanny Claus, posed for the standing woman at the right and appears in proper street attire, dressed in a walking dress supported by a crinoline, gloves, hat and walking boots. Whether she is putting her gloves on or taking them off, we do not know. Berthe Morisot is dressed in a Japanese-style peignoir with pagoda sleeves without a crinoline, her hair casually arranged around her shoulder, gloveless, and with a closed fan.[69] Therefore, in this area between the public and private worlds, Manet has portrayed for us two different types of women, the social woman who ventures into the world beyond domesticity, dressed in her street wear, and the domestic woman in her *robe d'intérieur* in a dream-like state, introspective, brooding, longing for the spaces beyond the balcony. The male figure between these two women could be seen as either a gallant waiter to be at service or a director who controls and limits their lives.

Morisot paints her *On the Balcony* (Figure 28) from the viewpoint within the family garden. The figures stand at a railing that marks the edge of her family's property and looks out into the city beyond.[70] The separation and sense of distance between the foreground figures and the view of the city are notable. It is a distance concerned not only with physical space but with social space.[71] Unlike the work by Manet, Morisot paints her scene from a feminine viewpoint, within the boundaries of the private garden.[72] The woman and child have their backs to the viewer and the woman looks down at the child who gazes out into the city. Both are clearly part of the domestic world, separated by the balustrade from the city which is far in the distance. It seems that in this work Morisot is clearly making a statement about the differences in masculine and feminine spaces.[73]

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[69]For a discussion on fashionwear see: Anne Schirrmeister, "La Dernière mode: Berthe Morisot and Costume," T.J. Edelstein (ed.), *Perspectives on Morisot*, New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1990, pages 103-115.
[70]Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, page 63.
[71]Kathleen Alder, "The Spaces of Everyday Life: Berthe Morisot and Passy," T.J. Edelstein (ed.), *Perspectives on Morisot*, New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1990, page 40.
[72]For a description of the private garden in relation to the domestic world refer to page 50 of this thesis.
[73] Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art*, New York: Routledge, 1988, page 62.

Another important difference about Manet and Morisot's works are in the artists' vantage points. Morisot paints from inside the family garden, looking out toward the women at the railing, so we too are part of the domestic world, unlike Manet's *The Balcony* where the painter and viewer are in the street looking up at the balcony.

Mary Cassatt's *Susan on a Balcony Holding a Dog* (Figure 29) shows a woman in white sitting at a window with a small dog resting on her lap. She does not acknowledge the viewer's presence but gazes out into the city in an almost dream-like state. The dog mirrors her intense gaze outside and ignores the interior in which they sit. The white straw hat adorned with white gauze and pink silk indicates that she is possibly awaiting to venture out, or may be a guest in the home. She is lost in her own thoughts, solitary except for the dog, who by his presence seems to compound her solitude. By monumentalizing the figure and deleting much of the interior environment, Cassatt seems to be emphasizing a longing to be a part of the world outside the home and by portraying the dog, a domestic pet, as gazing outside, she reinforces this idea.

In Caillebotte's *The Man on the Balcony* (Figure 30) the viewer's observation point is from out on the balcony with the man, who is depicted as the urban onlooker, intensely studying the street from a detached, elevated point of view. Caillebotte has emphasized the human content in the prominent, solitary spectator with the blur of the boulevard sweeping past far below. His gaze is not down the boulevard but across it, as the city rushes by. Similarly, Caillebotte's *Balcony* (Figure 31) pictures the same balcony but the view looks in the opposite direction along the boulevard.[74] The two men on the balcony gaze across the boulevard, yet the foliage rising from the street blocks their view.

In both these paintings by Caillebotte, the interior space is completely avoided. Only the outer edge of the building ties the balcony back into the interior space, yet the men are very solidly placed in the 'outside world' although distanced from it.

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[74]Kirk Varnedoe, *Gustave Caillebotte*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987, page 142.

In balcony painting, whether approached by a male or female, the balcony symbolizes the differences in the male dominated 'outside world' and the feminine domestic interior. This was an area of flux, part of the domestic world, yet a bridge to the outside world. For the man, the balcony allows him to make his mark on the city, assertively leaning out observing all the city has to offer, yet for the woman the balcony is a place still connected to the interior and she pulls back into her domestic space, safe from the city below. It seems that the male artists felt that the balcony was part of the streets of Paris in that they painted the balcony from a masculine perspective outside the home, whereas the feminine perspective was from inside the home, looking out onto the balcony with the city far in the distance, a place unattainable to the woman.

Windows, like balconies, can be thought of as an extension from the interior to the outside world, although the viewer and sitter remain within the interior and do not break through the barrier to the outside. The window creates a play of oppositions between the exterior and interior.

In the painting by Caillebotte *Young Man at His Window* (Figure 32) the window becomes the boundary between the interior and the outside world.[75] The viewer's observation is from a male perspective in that the outside world seems very close and reachable to the man, as opposed to a window scene portrayed by a woman where the outside world seems to be very far away and almost dream-like. Morisot's *Interior* is a good example of this approach, in that the woman and young girl at the window gaze out, but the viewer cannot see what they are looking at. The city is dream-like and distant. They are far from dominating the street, unlike Caillebotte's man who dominates both exterior and interior, the woman and child are very much a part of the domestic world.

Young Man at His Window was painted in the artist's family apartment, on the third floor of a building on the corner of the rue de Miromesnil and the rue de

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[75]Ibid., pages 60-62.

Lisbonne.[76] We are looking over the shoulder of Caillebotte's brother René whose gaze is as spectator of the city. His glance is at the woman on the street who appears isolated and visually confined in the space between the buildings. She is the object of the masculine gaze, exposed in the world outside, while René is sheltered by the reality of his interior. The woman's isolation allows the viewer and the man at the window to question her social position. Her possible availability casts the man at the window in the role of the possessor, or possible possessor of all that he surveys. He is the thoughtful observer, the characteristic urban person who appears in so much naturalist literature of the period, in the act of seeking the meaning of private interior versus public exterior. Caillebotte's view is similar to the ideas expressed by Edmond Duranty, one of the leading naturalist writers, in his essay *The New Painting: Concerning the Group of Artists Exhibiting at the Durand-Ruel Galleries* which was published in 1876, at about the time of the Impressionists' second group show in which *Young Man at His Window* appeared. Duranty makes a plea for painters to cast aside traditional subjects and turn to contemporary city life:

> And, as we are solidly embracing nature, we will no longer separate the figure from the background of an apartment or the street. In actuality, a person never appears against neutral or vague backgrounds. Instead, surrounding him and behind him are the furniture, fireplaces, curtains, and walls that indicate his financial position, class, and profession. The individual will be at a piano, examining a sample of cotton in an office, or waiting in the wings for the moment to go onstage, or ironing on a makeshift table. He will be having lunch with his family or sitting in his armchair near his worktable, absorbed in thought. He might be avoiding carriages as he crosses the street or glancing at his watch as he hurries across the square. When at rest, he will not be merely pausing or striking a meaningless pose before the photographer's lens. This moment will be a part of his life as are his actions.
>
> From indoors we communicate with the outside world through windows. A window is yet another frame that is continually with us during the time we spend at home, and that time is considerable. Depending on whether we are near

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[76]Robert L. Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991, page 19.

> or far, seated or standing, the window frames the scene outside in the most unexpected and changeable ways, providing us with constantly changing impromptu views that are the great delights of life.[77]

The huge stone balustrade against which the man at the window presses provides a massive line of division between the world inside and the world beyond, but by placing the figure off center and by slightly elevating our viewpoint, Caillebotte allows our movement over this hurdle into the deep space of the city beyond.[78] This painting plays on the differences between domestic confinement and the freedom of man.

The man at the window in Caillebotte's painting is a flâneur as Baudelaire, Manet, Degas and many other artists and writers cast themselves in their era. Exquisite manners and impeccable dress characterize the flâneur. He devoted himself to newspapers in order to be abreast of all current events and gossip. The flâneur or impassive stroller promenaded on the boulevards where he displayed himself and observed what went on about him. He was the key figure to embody the novel forms of public experience of modernity and is best described by Walter Benjamin:

> The street became a dwelling for the *flâneur*; he is as much at home among the facades of houses as a citizen is in his four walls...The walls are the desks against

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[77] Edmond Duranty, *La Nouvelle Peinture: À Propos du Groupe d'Artistes qui Expose dans les Galeries Durand-Ruel*, Caen: L'Échoppe, 1988 pages 38-39, "Et puisque nous accolons étroitement la nature, nous ne séparerons plus le personnage du fond d'appartement ni du fond de rue. Il ne nous apparaît jamais, dans l'existence, sur des fonds neutres, vides et vagues. Mais autour de lui et derrière lui sont des meubles, des cheminées, des tentures de murailles, une paroi qui exprime sa fortune, sa classe, son métier: il sera à piano, ou il examinera son échantillon de coton dans son bureau commercial, ou il attendra derrière le décor le moment d'entrer en scène, ou il appliquera le fer à repasser sur la table à tréteaux, ou bien il sera en train de dèjeuner dans sa famille, ou il s'assoira dans son fauteuil pour ruminer auprés de sa table de travail, ou il évitera des voitures en traversant la rue, ou regardera l'heure à sa montre en pressant le pas sur la place publique. Son repos ne sera pas une pause, ni une pose sans but, sans signification devant l'objectif du photographe, son repos sera dans la vie comme une action.

Du dedans, c'est par la fenêtre que nous communiquons avec le dehors; la fenêtre est encore un cadre qui nous accompagne sans cesse, durant le temps que nous passons au logis, et ce temps est considérable. Le cadre de la fenêtre, selon que nous en sommes loin ou près, que nous nous tenons assis ou debout, découpe le spectacle extérieur de la manière la plus inattendue, la plus changeante, nous procurant l'éternelle variété, l'impromptu qui est une des grandes saveurs de la réalité." English translation from Charles Moffett (et al.), *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874-1886*, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1986, pages 44-45.

[78] Kirk Varnedoe, *Gustave Caillebotte*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987, page 60.

> which he presses his note-books; news-stands are his libraries and the terraces of cafés are the balconies from which he looks down on his household after his work is done.[79]

The flâneur symbolizes the privilege or freedom to move about the public arenas of the city observing but never interacting, consuming the sights through a controlling but rarely acknowledged gaze, directed as much at other people as at the goods for sale.[80]

Caillebotte's *Interior, Woman at the Window* (Figure 25) more closely relates to Morisot's *Interior* (Figure 12) but the obvious distance between the man and woman becomes more the subject. While Morisot has distanced the seated woman from the woman and child at the window, the separation itself is not the subject of the painting, instead Morisot deals with spatial separations. Caillebotte's painting, on the other hand, stresses the separation of the couple, who we assume are married. The man's intense interest in his paper takes his attentions away from the woman, who dreamily gazes out the window longing for another space. The isolation of the two figures is apparent even though they are spatially close. Unlike Caillebotte's other paintings with windows or balconies, here we cannot see the city beyond, but concentrate on the woman's gaze toward the figure in the window across the street. This painting seems to closely relate to Degas's portrait of the Bellelli family in that it stresses the boredom and separation in the marriage.

Berthe Morisot dealt with the subject of windows in the painting *The Artist's Sister at a Window* (Figure 33). She approaches this subject from an intimate view of domestic life, alluding possibly to the long hours of enforced 'leisure' of the woman at home, who dreamingly gazes at the distant views outside the windows or in her imagination. The constraints of a sheltered bourgeois existence and privileged childhood may be seen in many of her paintings of women in front of windows or on balconies dreaming upon

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[79]Robert L. Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure and Parisian Society*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991, page 34, quoted from Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: a Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, translation by Harry Zohn, London, 1973.

[80]Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art*, New York: Routledge, 1988, page 67.

distant vistas, the world of the city, stomping ground of the flâneur.[81] Edma, who posed for this painting, sits in an overstuffed chair that has been placed in front of French doors opening onto a balcony. Despite the inviting open view of the outdoors, Edma ignores the window and gazes at the fan on her lap with her head tilted down. By portraying Edma as self-absorbed and alone, completely ignoring the outside world, Morisot may be stressing her own thoughts on the void in women's lives, the lack of freedom and ability to go out into the 'outside' world, while at the same time accepting her role in society instead of challenging women's roles and pushing beyond the limits.

Morisot, exemplary *haute bourgeoise*, a *"figure de race,"* as Mallarmé called her, came to represent for her admirers the acceptable female artist.[82] In her refined person and secluded life-style she was seen to embody the dignity, grace and charm regarded as the mark of a peculiarly French femininity. In comparison with the deviant women who threatened to disturb traditional social and moral values, the *femmes nouvelles*, focus of anxiety for numerous French commentators in 1896, the year of the large International Feminist Congress in Paris, Berthe Morisot, wife, mother, and elegant hostess, could be acclaimed as a suitable womanly woman.

Marie Bracquemond's *The Letter* (Figure 34) portrays a woman placed next to a vase of flowers in front of a window, who is deeply involved in reading her letter. The juxtaposition of the flowers and the woman seem to reinforce the femininity of the domestic interior and bring the outside indoors. The woman's dress reflects the green foliage outside the window and the pink flowers inside, possibly indicating that while she appears in a domestic space, she reads or dreams from the letter of a place far beyond the interior.

Claude Monet also deals with windows in the painting of Camille outside the window entitled *The Red Cape–Portrait of Madame Monet* (Figure 35). Monet distances

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[81]Anne Schirrmeister, "La Dernière Mode: Berthe Morisot and Costume," T.J. Edelstein (ed.), *Perspectives on Morisot*, New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1990, page 110.
[82]Tamar Garb, "Berthe Morisot and the Feminizing of Impressionism," T.J. Edelstein (ed.), *Perspectives on Morisot*, New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1990, page 60.

Camille from himself and the viewer by placing her outside in the snow, utilizing the idea of the 'void' in the distancing of the space. Camille appears framed in the window between two parting curtains as she gazes in at those who look out at her from the warm interior. Her almost painful expression suggests her desire not only to be in out of the cold but also to be in her rightful domain.

James Tissot, a realist painter, contemporary of Monet's and friend of Degas's, painted predominately scenes of leisured social life in a middle-class milieu which focused primarily on fashionably dressed women. His style avoided the extremes of academic studio finishes or the Impressionist *plein-air* freedom of handling. His etching *Woman at a Window* (Figure 36) is oddly similar to Monet's *The Red Cape–Portrait of Madame Monet*, in that the woman appears outside the window looking into the interior space that the artist and spectator occupy. Tissot has portrayed his interior room with a loving attention given to the rug on the floor and chairs. The placement of the female figure outside looking in is strikingly similar to Monet's. Both men perhaps are implying that the home is a refuge from the outside world and women outside the home are subject to the coldness of a man's world. They also seem to be suggesting that a woman who ventures beyond the safety of the home becomes cold and distant, no longer a domestic woman, and shut out by society. This common subject reinforces the idea that the Impressionists, like the Realist artist, painted subject matter that was naturalistic and part of the artist's world.

The same year as *The Red Cape–Portrait of Madame Monet* was painted, Monet again portrayed his wife in the window, yet this time he reversed their positions. *Camille at the Window* (Figure 37) portrays Camille inside the house, standing behind a colorful barrier of flowers and foliage and centered in the shuttered window opening as though on display. Set in her window, well behind the window plane of the canvas, Camille is even more remote than in *The Red Cape.* Once more her glance is opaque to us, her eyes obscured by the brim of her hat. Tissot again deals with a similar subject in his etching *At*

the Sea (Figure 38), where his model Kathleen Newton sits on the edge of the window sill gazing out into the world beyond.

Many of the paintings dealing with windows remind one of the German Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich. His *Woman at the Window* (Figure 39) is reminiscent of window scenes portrayed by the Impressionist artists in that the woman faces away from the viewer and gazes out the window in an almost dream-like state. The German painters of the early nineteenth century dealt with the open window in their works not simply as a picturesque scene, but as a symbolic motif, juxtaposing enclosure and escape.[83]

Following the Impressionist era, Matisse dealt with windows in his paintings from Collioure (1905) and Nice (after 1917). Rather than the taut, enigmatic expressionism of Friedrich, however, it is the relaxed, formal play of Matisse's window that Monet's painting evokes. *The French Window at Nice* (Figure 40) shows Matisse's interest in the window as subject of the painting. Dr. Albert Barnes noted that the figure occupies only a small proportion of the canvas, so that "the window as a whole may be regarded as the subject...It is this departure from conventional allocation of emphasis that establishes an effect of bizareness, of dramatic contrast, which is carried out in the detailed employment of space, color, light and line."[84] Matisse dealt with the contrast between indoors and outdoors in a number of earlier works and continued to explore this subject throughout much of his career.

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[83]Kirk Varnedoe, *Gustave Caillebotte,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987, page 60.
[84]Richard J. Wattenmaker, *Great French Paintings from The Barnes Foundation: Impressionist, Post-Impressionist and Early Modern*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1993, page 264.

CHAPTER 5

PRIVATE GARDENS

By the mid-nineteenth century the garden had become an important feature of middle-class life.[85] Tamed nature, enclosed by trees and hedges to ensure privacy, provided a perfect setting for family life. Men could tend trees and vines, while women were responsible for the flowers—a natural association between the sweet and gentle feminine nature and the delicacy and fragrance of blossoms. The private garden, while not being an internal part of the home, was an essential external addition. Many Impressionist artists painted in gardens and parks, and the private garden, while outdoors, was still considered to have been 'inside' the domestic world. For the female Impressionist the private garden allowed her to paint outdoors, while remaining safely 'inside.' These gardens, while open to the sky, were enclosed and separated from the spaces beyond, and therefore these works can be thought of as being of a type of domestic interior.

The subject of men and women in the garden was dealt with primarily by male artists, the most notable of them being Monet's *The Bench* and Manet's *In the Conservatory.* Both of these works deal with the tensions of a relationship and this is possibly why some of the female artists did not deal with this subject matter in the private garden. Monet's *The Bench* (Figure 41) was painted during his years in Argenteuil and like many of his garden scenes during this time deals with a 'void' in narrative, and has a sense of mystery. This possibly could have been due to an influence from Mallarmé and

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[85]Michele Perrot (ed.), *A History of Private Life: from the Fires of Revolution to the Great War,* Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990, pages 72-73.

his interest in these very qualities. There is no documentation as to whether Monet personally knew Mallarmé at this time, but Manet certainly did for they had become close friends in 1872. Manet and Monet's friendship started in 1869 when Manet invited Monet to the evening gatherings at the Café Guerbois. So it is possible to link Monet to Mallarmé indirectly through Manet, and it would seem probable that Manet would have discussed Mallarmé's ideas with Monet.

In Monet's *The Bench* not only is there a mystery as to the narrative, but the relationship of the figures is also in question. In the foreground appears Camille seated on a bench with a male figure standing behind leaning on the bench. She is oddly posed and seems agitated, while the man behind her seems somber and silent. The man is a 'dandy,' a flâneur, yet in these private gardens only intimate friends are allowed. Some scholars link this male figure with the recent death of Camille's father, which was in September 1873.[86] If one chooses not to relate the male figure to Camille's father, then one is faced with a number of questions about this scene. That they are both in this private enclosure suggests that they know each other but what their relationship is, is open to question. They do not appear to be having a conversation nor interacting with one another but look in different directions. The lines of the bench lead the viewer's eye back into the composition, to discover a woman in the background admiring the flowers. The center of the composition is empty, a spatial void between the two figures at the right and the woman in the distance emphasizes this void. The background in full sunlight is contrasted to the foreground in shadow, adding to the separation of the foreground and background figures both compositionally and psychologically. Monet has set up a situation based on innuendoes and evocation of mood, but not symbols. The combination of a seated woman and a standing man leaning upon the back of a bench was frequently found in

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[86]Joel Isaacson, *Claude Monet: Observation and Reflection*, Oxford: Phaidon, 1978, page 20.

popular illustrations and occasionally in painting, such as Manet's *In the Conservatory*, where it almost invariably signifies flirtation or amorous conversation.[87]

Manet has presented us with an equally intriguing work with his *In the Conservatory* (Figure 42). Again we are faced with a male and female in a garden-like setting, for a conservatory was a glassed in room filled with plants, a type of greenhouse. In Manet's work many clues are given to the viewer to help tell the story of the situation. The two hands almost exactly meet at the center of the picture, alluding to the complex nature of the relationship of the figures, since they both have on wedding bands. Manet seems to have purposely set up a situation that can be read in different ways, depending on how the observer chooses to approach it. The man and woman are married yet it is not clear whether they are husband and wife. Both viewpoints allow for different interpretations of this work. J.K. Huysmans, in a brief reference to the subject, said of the woman "she flirts, she lives." He may have referred to her as a flirt by the fact that a tête-à-tête at a park bench was a familiar subject in pictorial imagery at the time.[88]

As in Monet's painting, the figures once again do not look at one another nor seem to converse. Manet loved to portray stories much more than Monet. He confines his figures into close quarters as to suggest their relationship, while leaving out some of the mystery as seen in Monet's work. Today we know that the couple who posed for Manet's *In the Conservatory* were a married couple, Jules Guillemet and his American wife, who were long-time friends of Manet's.[89] Manet has not portrayed marital bliss for us, but instead shows us the complex nature of marriage, indicated by the woman's aloof, erect attitude toward her husband. Perhaps the purpose was to embody the sense of strain, of hurt, of misunderstanding that occurs in a union that has lasted over a period of time.

Both Monet and Manet have set-up tensions between male and female and both seem to portray the woman as pulling away from the man, no matter what the

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[87]Ibid., page 208.
[88]Ibid., page 103.
[89]Ibid., page 101.

relationships may be. Can one view this as a more personal statement about the lives of the artists and their own personal relationships? Joel Isaacson alludes to the idea that Manet, a man of the world, the confidant and presumed lover of numerous worldly and elegant women, here brings his public and private life together.[90] By portraying this married couple in the conservatory, which he used as his studio, and then painting a portrait of his wife in the same position as Mme Guillemet, he has allowed his private life to come together with his public life, and is possibly making statements about his own marriage.

Monet did eight paintings of figures in the garden in the summer of 1873; in four of them his six-year-old son Jean appears along with Camille and in each case he is seen in a decidedly detached relationship to her; in *Monet's House at Argenteuil* (Figure 43) Jean stands before the house alone and frail, while Camille or a maid peers out at him from the doorway; in *Camille in the Garden with Jean and His Nanny* (Figure 44), Camille poses in a grey and black dress and with a black parasol, while Jean awaits nearby next to his nanny; *Camille and Jean in the Garden at Argenteuil* (Figure 45), portrays a self-absorbed Camille and the self-abandoned Jean in the same setting but they are physically, psychologically and even stylistically remote from each other. All this evidence adds up to a commentary upon the estrangement within the fabric of the family, an estrangement that involves Monet himself, for his presence is nowhere indicated in these domestic garden settings.[91]

Portraying women and children in the private garden appears in the works primarily by Morisot and Monet. Both artists disliked pictorial stories, unlike Manet and Degas, and made a conscientious decision not to work on the same subject matter as Manet and Degas, but instead limited themselves to their private worlds. Although Monet does venture outside this world, during his years at Argenteuil he paints a number of works of Camille and Jean in garden settings, but he never goes as far as to paint Parisian night life or prostitutes as Manet and Degas did. In his *Camille in the Garden*

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[90]Ibid., page 107.
[91]Ibid., page 206.

with Jean and His Nanny, Monet isolates Camille away from Jean and his nanny, she is in the foreground in shadow and very dark, whereas Jean is in the middle ground, on the opposite side in light. The separation of Camille and Jean is emphasized by the contrast of light and dark and the physical separation of the two. Again Monet's use of the 'void' coincides with Mallarmé's use of 'void' in his work. The painter isolates his figures by creating around them either spatial or emotional voids, or sometimes both. Mallarmé's 'voids' were verbal, as opposed to Monet's, as the reader is forced to jump across one disjunction after another in an effort to make some sense out of the words. Mallarmé saw the universe around him as being pervaded by void and mystery. He also seems to have disliked the idea of action, instead he preferred to stop time in order to create a world of ideas embedded in the inexplicable.[92] This idea of stop time, the momentary, is precisely what Monet worked toward in his art and through this he, too, created mystery, by situating a scene in neither time nor place, and only alluding to a narrative that could never be confirmed. This is the mystery which continuously intrigues.

Berthe Morisot painted numerous paintings of women and children in the garden. In some of these she has replaced the woman, or mother of the child with the father, a combination that is rare in Impressionist art. Men are seldom present in these types of compositions because of the venerable association of women and children with nature. In each of Morisot's garden scenes she places her figures at the center of the image near a single prominent plant, a leafy tree or flowering bush and relates the people and plants compositionally.[93] Visual likenesses render femininity natural with the metaphors they articulate. Like many of Morisot's images of women, there is no horizon, no open sky. Although the gardens were indeed open to the sky and provided a place where women

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[92]Paul Abe Isaacs, *The Immobility of the Self in the Art of Edouard Manet; A Study with Special Emphasis on the Relationship of His Imagery to that of Gustave Flaubert and Stéphane Mallarmé*, Brown University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1976, pages 374-378.

[93]Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women*, Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1992, page 148.

artists could safely paint outdoors, they were still contained within garden walls and this separated them from the world beyond. This is evident in Morisot's work.

One of the most personal garden paintings by Morisot is her *Wet Nurse* (Figure 46). She portrays her own infant daughter, Julie, nursing, but not being nursed by Morisot herself, but by a 'wet nurse' or so-called 'seconde mère.'[94] This is not unusual for a woman of Morisot's social class, and was actually the most natural thing for her to do. Morisot has set up a painting which becomes a personal statement about herself, her social status and her choices in life. She portrays the wet nurse feeding her child, but not out of a natural nurturing instinct, but for wages. The fact that Morisot paints this scene indicates that she too is a working woman, an artist, so that through this child two working women meet at opposite ends of the working and social spectrum.[95] Morisot's painting is not about nursing a child, but is about choices and society, unlike Renoir's similar scene of his wife nursing their son Jean entitled *Maternity (Aline Charigot and Pierre Renoir)* (Figure 47). Renoir has portrayed his wife nursing, although she appears more as a sexual object for the viewer's gaze. She looks out at the viewer, not at the child she nurses, and the child is positioned such that the viewer can identify the sex. A cat grooms itself in the lower left corner of the canvas and seems to imply that a woman nursing a child is instinct due to animal nature. While Renoir's wife was not of the same social class as Morisot, coming from a working-class origin, it was not unnatural for her to nurse her own child, although the purpose and approach to the subject is very different between the two artists.

Another very unusual subject in the œuvre of Impressionist art is that of father and child engaged in an activity. Male Impressionists who turned to the domestic world around them for subject matter painted their wives and children as a matter of course. So

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[94]Tamar Garb, "Gender and Representation," *Modernity and Modernism: French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, in Association with the Open University, 1993, page 270; Linda Nochlin, "Morisot's Wet Nurse," *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays*, New York: Harper & Ross Publishers, 1988, pages 37-38.

[95]For a complete analysis of Morisot's *Wet Nurse* see: Linda Nochlin, "Morisot's Wet Nurse," *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays*, New York: Harper & Ross Publishers, 1988, pages 37-56; Linda Nochlin, "Morisot's Wet Nurse: The construction of Work and Leisure in Impressionist Painting," T.J. Edelstein (ed.), *Perspectives on Morisot*, New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1990, pages 91-102.

for Morisot to turn to her husband and child, was actually doing what came natural, turning to one's closest relative, although with the few number of women artists, this subject seemed rare. She depicts her husband and daughter doing some concrete activity in most works, playing with a boat or toy houses or sketching. In both *Eugène Manet and His Daughter at Bougival* (Figure 48) and *Eugène Manet and His Daughter in the Garden* (Figure 49) Morisot presents them engaged in an activity, although in a dispassionate manner. Their closeness is evident from their shared activity, but not from any overt display of emotion. This, in a sense, can relate back to the works by Monet of his wife and son in the garden, separated yet together. Even in her paintings of women and children, she separates the woman and child either physically or emotionally. In *Woman and Child in a Garden* (Figure 50) the vertical tree trunk in which the woman leans acts as a visual barrier between the woman and child avoiding the overt moralizing that contemporary *maternité* paintings portrayed. There is no attempt by Morisot to represent an idealized relationship, instead the effect created is of a moment observed.[96] The woman seems content in her activity in the garden, sewing or doing needlework while the child watches her sailing boat in the shallow pond. Even when the woman and child face one another, as in *The Fable* (Figure 51), they seem distanced in their emotions. The woman does not share the same excitement and interest in the activity as does the child. The two are further separated by the lighting, the woman sits in a shaded area while the child appears in a strong light which emphasizes her excited mood in contrast to the woman's more somber emotions.

Both Morisot and Monet, when portraying a woman or man with a child in the garden, separate the adult from the child in some manner whether by use of lighting or by physical or mental distancing. They both seem to juxtapose different moods and emotions in the same setting.

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[96]Tamar Garb, *Women Impressionists*, New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1986, page 28.

The subject of isolation in the garden, whether it is a single figure or multiple figures engaged in separate activities is common in Impressionist art. We have already discussed how Morisot and Monet play on the idea of isolation in their paintings of mother or father and child in the garden, but many Impressionist artists also painted individuals and other groupings of figures isolated in the garden.

Mary Cassatt painted few scenes in the garden, but when she did paint garden scenes they were very closely tied with the domestic world. *The Garden* (now known as *Lydia Crocheting in the Garden at Marly*) (Figure 52) shows Cassatt's sister Lydia at a point in her life when she was suffering from Bright's Disease, she ultimately died from it in 1882.[97] The once radiant woman seen in so many of Cassatt's paintings has here become frail and sickly. Although she appears at the forefront of the picture plane, the strong diagonal of the border of greens, shrubs and blossoms leads back to the conservatory windows and ties her directly into the domestic home, not only through the lines of the painting but through the act of sewing, which itself is a very domestic activity.

Gustave Caillebotte also portrayed women in the garden sewing, but instead of one isolated figure, he has grouped multiple figures in his *Portraits in the Country* (Figure 53), although they are each isolated from the other. The painting is of Caillebotte's family at Yerres and shows a cousin, aunt, family friend and the artist's mother.[98] All the women are in the act of sewing except Caillebotte's mother who is reading. The sitters seem unaware of the artist and are deeply absorbed in their own activity. They do not converse nor seem to be interested in what the other may be doing. The over all mood of this work is calm and serene. Like Morisot and Monet, Caillebotte's interest is in the personal isolation of the individual, and like Cassatt, he has brought the domestic world into the garden by portraying the women sewing.

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[97]Ibid., page 32.
[98]Kirk Varnedoe, *Gustave Caillebotte*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987, page 70.

Another domestic act portrayed in the garden is that of taking tea. Both Marie Bracquemond and Berthe Morisot portrayed women in the garden at tea time. In Marie Bracquemond's *Tea Time* (Figure 54), the woman is engrossed in reading the book she holds. She is deep in thought although she has momentarily diverted her eyes from the book, but does not attempt to engage the viewer's gaze. Berthe Morisot's *Tea* (Figure 55) again shows an isolated woman in the garden, although unlike Bracquemond's painting, she is not reading, but gazes dreamily into the garden. We do not know whether she is alone or seated with someone across the table, but if there is another person this does not affect her isolation within herself.

Berthe Morisot painted numerous other figures in the garden, many who are isolated either in their setting or in their thoughts. *The Garden* (Figure 56) is the largest work Morisot ever painted. She portrays a fashionably dressed model on a chair although the setting is informal. The atmosphere of melancholy and loneliness is emphasized in the models inanimate expressions and the air of distraction by the abandoned rank and the child wandering off behind her. Again there is no overt display of emotions between the woman and child and although the woman is not isolated in the setting, she is alone in her thoughts.

Morisot and Monet painted subject matter and emotions that were very similar although they approach their work from different gender viewpoints. In Morisot's *The Garden Chair* (Figure 57) and Monet's *The Artist's Garden at Vétheuil* (Figure 58) one can see similarities in their work. Both artists portray an abandoned child in the foreground looking directly out at the viewer, although there is a sense of separation, either by a gate or a distancing of space. They seem to be longing for the world outside the garden, evoking a need to venture beyond the restricting walls, while at the same time they are protected in their environment and enclosed in the safety of the domestic world. Morisot presents this by separating the child from the viewer by a fence and enclosing the child's space entirely. There is no sky, no area beyond, only a bench in the background. Monet

places his child in the domestic realm by portraying him on a path which leads directly to the home in the background. Also, the child is visually placed in the middle ground of the composition and has not ventured too far from home. He can easily be related back to the domestic world through the two children behind him who are even closer to the safety of the home. In both of these works, the garden itself is wild, overgrown and a bit threatening to the small child, although the feeling of enclosure reminds one of the world 'inside.' In fact, Monet's *The Artist's Garden at Vétheuil* is very similar in composition to his *Apartment Interior* (Figure 17). Both works depict a deep perspective with Jean in the middle ground, two large planters on each side in the foreground and the surrounding space confining the figures within.

The juxtaposition of women and flowers was a favorite topic of Monet's during the early 1870's. His *Gladioli* (Figure 59) shows a woman admiring flowers in a garden setting. Like Morisot's garden scenes, Monet has completely enclosed her in the garden, not even a touch of the sky shows above. Gustave Caillebotte also portrayed women in the garden admiring flowers. In both *Dahlias, the Garden at Petit-Gennevilliers* (Figure 60) and *Roses, the Garden at Petit-Gennevilliers* (Figure 61) Caillebotte portrays a single female figure in the garden admiring the flowers. For Caillebotte these scenes were part of the flow of daily life in the large garden, and how closely tied the garden was to the house is a constant reminder, especially in *Dahlias, Garden at Petit-Gennevilliers* with the house looming in the background.

These private gardens have been the standard type of suburban gardens common to the bourgeoisie, but Caillebotte's family's property at Yerres shows another type of garden, that which is more 'public' in its design and execution. The intimate character we observed in Morisot's paintings is missing in Caillebotte's, for instead of small suburban gardens, we face the grounds of a large country estate. *The Orange Trees* (Figure 62), with its boxed trees and landscaped area is more like the formal grounds of a great château. Although the setting is much more formal than we have seen in the work of other

Impressionists, the mood is the same. Caillebotte has again dealt with the idea of isolation and voids in space. The mixture of public and private finds expression in the contrast of the setting with the isolation of the figures. The man in the foreground has his back to the viewer and totally absorbs himself in his reading. He doesn't seem to be aware of the woman at the orange tree, nor is she of any interest to him. The setting is quiet and calm, so much so that the dog in the background lies sleepily in the sun.

In all these private gardens, we have observed the presence of figures intermingled with nature, whether it be a man and woman, parent and child or people engaged in some activity. In all these works, the human presence reinforces the idea of the garden as a place of social harmony.[99] And yet isolation and aloneness in nature is a common thread which runs through many of the works. Monet's *The Luncheon* (Figure 63) ties both these ideas into one work. The setting is of a social gathering, yet the separation of the figures and lack of narrative add to the isolation of the setting. Jean is dressed like a proper middle-class child and sits playing in the shade by the abandoned luncheon table. The meal is finished and two women stroll in the garden to the rear. The parasol and bag on the bench suggest that at least one women is a visitor, yet we do not know exactly what the relationship between the figures is, and the straw hat hanging on the tree limb adds to the mystery. Jean's separation from the women is emphasized not only through distance, but through lighting. He sits in the shade while the women are in sunlight, much like Morisot's *The Fable.* The empty bench reinforces the isolation and void in this work and Monet invites the viewer to wonder about the narrative and relationship of the figures.

Manet, too, presents the viewer with a setting that asks the viewer to question the narrative and plays on the theme of isolation and void in a setting. Painted at the rented house at Versailles, *The Bench* (Figure 64) gives the viewer the sense of abandonment in the garden, with the woman's yellow hat tossed over a bush behind the bench and by the untenanted bench itself. These are the same elements which cause one to question

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[99]Judith Bumpus, *Impressionist Gardens*, Oxford: Phaidon Press Limited, 1990, page 48.

relationships and narrative in Monet's *The Luncheon.* Both artists have used these cues to emphasize the mood of loneliness and isolation, a feeling which pervaded much of Impressionist art in the private garden.

CHAPTER 6

BEDROOMS AND INTIMACY IN THE HOME

The most intimate room in the home was the bedroom. The master bedroom was a sacred place, a temple consecrated not to voluptuousness but to procreation.[100] Once it had been permissible to receive guests in a room with a bed in it, but that time was past. A woman's bedroom, now the temple of her private life, was appropriately adorned with symbols to identify with its occupant. The private bedroom gave proof of individual independence.[101]

The Impressionist artists dealt with the bedroom in a variety of ways; relationships between men and women, women alone, and scenes of motherhood. The subject of men and women in the bedroom was very rare but appears in the work of Degas and Manet. Both artists portrayed people or situations, so that a characteristic or drama would reveal itself for that moment. The artist was sometimes present and sometimes seemed to be viewing through a keyhole. Their common interest in the wordless expression of a narrative is portrayed in Degas's *Interior* and Manet's *Nana*. Both works raise many questions and to this day scholars are continuing to research new narrative possibilities, especially where Degas's *Interior* is concerned.

The *Interior* (Figure 65) is one of Degas's most baffling works. Degas did many preliminary sketches for this work as with all of his works. It is theorized that Degas even considered different story lines, this results from a sketch he did of the man that includes

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[100] Michelle Perrot (ed.), *A History of Private Life IV: from the Fires of the Revolution to the Great War*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990, page 368.
[101] Charlotte Gere, *Nineteenth Century Interiors: An Album of Watercolours*, London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1992, page 20.

a woman behind him in the doorway. Every item, every gesture Degas thought out, he even seems to have taken advice from someone visiting his studio (probably James Tissot), who made reference to:

> The room too light in the background, not enough mystery. The sewing box too conspicuous, or instead not vivid enough. The fireplace not enough in shadow...Too red the floor. Not proprietary enough the man's legs...Beside the lamp on the table, something white to thrust the fireplace back, a ball of thread. Darker under the bed. A chair there or behind the table would perhaps be good...[102]

Degas seems to have followed some of the advice, accentuating the shadow, darkening the floor, adding a touch of white on the table, and lightening the ceiling in the mirror. He was an artist who loved a drama, and along with Manet and Baudelaire, was as much concerned with artifice as with nature.[103] Degas's pride lay in inventing, not in imitating a situation.

This work is one of the most disturbing and intriguing bedroom scenes in the Impressionist œuvre. Degas has portrayed a scene that starts somewhere in the middle of the narrative, the action has already taken place. Exactly what story may have influenced Degas, if any, or the exact story which takes place in this scene is unknown. Some scholars have related this to Zola's novel *Madeleine Férat*, first published serially in *L'Evénement* in the fall of 1868, then released in book form at the end of the year. A possible episode

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[102] Theodore Reff, "Degas's 'Tableau de Genre'," *The Art Bulletin*, Volume 54, September 1972, page 332. Written on both sides of a used envelope inscribed "Monsieur deGas, rue Laval 13," this text was evidently written in Degas's studio during his absence. It begins on the back and inside flap of the envelope, "Jenny mise à la porte, Pierre tout embêté, voiture difficile à trouver, retard à cause d'Angèle, arrivé trop tard au café, mille excuses. Je ne vous ferai de complements du tableau que de vive voix. Prendre garde à la descente de lit, chocquant. La chambre trop claire dans les fonds, pas assez de mystère. La boîte à ouvrage trop voyante ou alors pas assez vivante. La cheminée pas assez dans l'ombre (pensez à l'indécision du fond de la femme verte de Millais sans vous commander). Trop roux le parquet. Pas assez propriétaire les jambes de l'homme. Seulement dépêchez-vous, il n'est que temps. J'irai ce soir chez Stevens. Pour la glace voici l'effet, je crois [a sketch of the mirror above the fireplace]. Le plafond doit être plus clair dans une glace. Très [ton?] clair, en mettant la chambre dans l'ombre. Dépêchez-vous, dépêchez-vous." The manuscript then continues in a more disconnected manner on the front and outside flap on the envelope, "A côté de la lampe sur la table quelque chose de blanc pour enfoncer la cheminée, petote et fil (nécessaire) [a sketch of the table, sewing-box, lamp, and ball of thread]. Plus noir sous le lit. Une chaise là ou derrière la table ferait peut-être bien. Ça ferait pardonner la descente de lit [a sketch of the table, with a chair in front of it]." Translation in Theodore Reff, *Degas: The Artist's Mind*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987, page 225.

[103] Robert L. Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991, page 41.

considered was that of Madeleine and her former lover Jacques:

> who is by strange coincidence spending the night in the very hotel, steals in during her husband's temporary absence and, remaining near the door ready to depart, while she cringes before him helpless and ashamed, unconsciously torments her with memories of their former loves, which had by even stranger coincidence taken place in this very room.[104]

In the climatic scene, set in a dreary hotel room where Madeleine and her husband Guillaume are spending the night to escape the fate they feel closing around them, both the mood and certain physical details correspond to those in Degas's picture and actually mentioned are the round table and the narrow virginal bed.[105]

Theodore Reff in 1972 suggested another Zola novel, *Thérèse Raquin*, as the principal literary source for Degas's *Interior*.[106] Described by Reff as the "depiction of a married yet utterly estranged couple, doomed to live together closely yet without intimacy," this is a story in which it is said that Degas "would have seen projected powerfully his deepest, most disturbing feelings about marriage and the relations of the sexes."[107] The scene in the novel is the one in which the two lovers, now married after having murdered Thérèse's first husband, meet a year later for their wedding night. The chapter begins:

> Laurent carefully shut the door behind him, then stood leaning against it for a moment looking into the room, ill at ease and embarrassed. A good fire was blazing in the hearth, setting great patches of golden light dancing on the ceiling and walls, illuminating the whole room with a bright and flickering radiance, against which the lamp on the table seemed but a feeble glimmer. Mme Raquin (Thérèse's aunt) had wanted to make the room nice and dainty and everything was gleaming white and scented, like a nest for young and virginal love. She had taken a delight in decorating the bed with some extra pieces of lace and filling the vases on the mantelpiece with big bunches of roses...Thérèse was sitting on a low chair to the right of the fireplace, her chin cupped in her hand, staring at the flames. She

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[104] Theodore Reff, "Degas and the Literature of His Time–I," *The Burlington Magazine*, Volume 112, Number 810, September 1970, page 585.
[105] Theodore Reff, *Degas: An Artist's Mind*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987, page 203.
[106] Theodore Reff, "Degas's 'Tableau de Genre'," *The Art Bulletin*, Volume 54, September, 1972, pages 316-37.
[107] Norma Broude, "Degas's 'Misogyny'," *The Art Bulletin*, Volume 59, March 1977, page 96.

> did not look round when Laurent came in. Her lacy petticoat and bodice showed up dead white in the light of the blazing fire. The bodice was slipping down and part of her shoulder emerged pink, half hidden by a tress of her black hair.[108]

If perhaps this novel influenced Degas, his intention was plainly not to illustrate this precise episode. There are many differences between the painting and the scene in the book. There are no roses in the vase, no lace on the bed, nothing to suggest a room lovingly prepared for a wedding night. Instead, Degas depicts a working girl's room with her cloak and scarf on the bed, a sewing box and thread on the table, and a narrow single bed.

Applied to Degas's *Interior* in 1912 wholly without his sanction, the title *The Rape* added another twist to the already confused narrative of the painting. Edmond Duranty wrote of this work in his article *The New Painting: Concerning the Group of Artists Exhibiting at the Durand-Ruel Galleries*, published in 1876. Duranty never states that the work is this image by Degas, yet writes that it is a scene where "A man opens a door, he enters, and that is enough: we see that he has lost his daughter!"[109] In this interpretation the scene does become a scene of rape, although the act of violence has already taken place. The male figure is not the man who raped her, but instead is her father, there to deal with the emotions and scars left behind. This interpretation sets up an entirely different

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[108] Emile Zola, "Thérèse Raquin," 1867 *Oeuvres complètes, I*, page 605 "Laurent ferma soigneusement la porte derrière lui, et demeura un instant appuyé contre cette porte, regardant dans la chambred'an air inquiet et embarrassé. Un feu clair flambait dans la cheminée, jetant de larges clartés jaunes qui dansaient au plafond et sur les murs. La pièce était ainsi éclairée d'une lueur vive et vacillante; la lampe, posée sur une talbe, pâlissait au milieu de cette lueur. Mme Raquin [Thérèse's former mother-in-law] avait voulu arranger coquettement la chambre, qui se trouvait toute blanche et toute parfumée, comme pour servir de nid à de jeunes et fraîches amours; elle s'était plu à ajouter au lit quelques bouts de dentelle, et à garnir de gros bouquets de roses les vases de la cheminée...Thérèse était assise sur une chaise basse, à droite de la cheminée. Le menton dans la main, elle regardait les flammes vives, fixement. Elle ne tourna pas la tête quand Laurent entra. Vêtue d'un jupon et d'une camisole bordés de dentelle, elle était d'une blancheur crue sous l'ardente clarté du foyer. Sa camisole glissait, et un bout d'épaule passait, rose, à demi caché par une mèche noire de cheveux." Translation in Richard Kendall & Griselda Pollock (ed.), *Dealing with Degas: Representations of Women and the Politics of Vision*, New York: Universe, 1992, page 83-84, and Theodore Reff, *Degas: An Artist's Mind*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987, page 205.

[109] Edmond Duranty, *La Nouvelle Peinture: À Propos du Groupe d'Artistes qui Expose dans les Galeries Durand-Ruel*, Caen: L'Échoppe, 1988, page 35 "Un homme ouvre une porte, il entre, cela suffit: on voit qu'il a perdu sa fille!" In the published version of the essay, Duranty did not provide the names of any of the artists cited. However, in 1878 he sent an annotated copy of *The New Painting* to the Italian critic Diego Martelli; in the margins he inscribed the names of the artists intended, and at the end of the text he wrote: "Les noms en marge sont écrits de ma main. Duranty. Le 9 Septembre 1878." The entire article with artists names indicated is published in Charles Moffett (et al.), *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874-1886*, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1986, pages 37-49.

psychological state, the presence of the male figure does not enrage us, but gives one a sense of safety and a sympathy with the girl. Without the information from Duranty, one isn't quite sure of the relationship of the characters and what exactly is going on.

Degas has deliberately set up a dramatic situation, one that demands a story. The viewer is forced to question what happened before and what will happen next. By portraying an event somewhere in the middle of the story, he has left much of the narrative up to the individual's interpretation. Mallarmé stated of his own literary techniques that "One must always cut the beginnings and the end of what one writes. No introduction, no conclusion."[110] Degas's work does exactly this. The viewer certainly does not know what happened before this scene, or what will happen next. One is faced with many possible narratives, and can apply their own depending on individual experiences and perceptions. This possibly is the key to Degas's *Interior*, that it is a narrative painting, but also very personal and filled with mystery. Degas told Jeanniot: "A painting demands a certain mystery, vagueness, fantasy. When one dots all the i's, one ends by being boring."[111] We may never know exactly what he saw in this painting, but he kept it in his possession until June 15, 1905, when he sold it to Durand-Ruel gallery in Paris.[112] Degas himself said of the painting while showing it to a guest around 1897, "You know my genre picture, don't you?"[113]

Much has been written and speculated about this ambiguous canvas, which is so loaded with meaning. Degas told Daniel Halévy: "Beauty is a mystery, but no one knows

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[110] Guy Michaud, *Mallarmé*, translated by Marie Collins and Bertha Humez, New York: New York University Press, 1965, page 24.

[111] Theodore Reff, "Degas's 'Tableau de Genre'," *The Art Bulletin*, Volume 54, September 1972, page 332, "Une peinture demande un certain mystère, du vague, de la fantaisie. Quand on met tout le temps les points sur les i, on finit par ennuyer." Translation in Theodore Reff, *Degas: An Artist's Mind*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987, page 225.

[112] Theodore Reff, *Degas: An Artist's Mind*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987, page 326 (footnote 4), according to Durand-Ruel gallery, Paris, and the Alfred A. Pope Collection, now the Hill-Stead Museum, Farmington, Conn., it was bought from the artist by Durand-Ruel, June 15, 1905.

[113] Lettres Degas 1945, page 255; Degas Letters 1947, page 235 as quoted in Jean Sutherland Boggs, *Degas*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1988, page 145.

it any more. The recipes, the secrets are forgotten."[114] The well thought out composition evokes physical and psychological distance between the two figures enclosed in a private space, while the main emphasis is on the relationship between the man and woman. This was one of the early works by Degas that dealt with contemporary life and in this respect is similar to many of the works by Manet whose focus was on social situations, often placed in settings with ambiguous or equivocal associations, or on the margins between private and public spheres.

Manet's *Nana* (Figure 66) is one such example of portrayal of contemporary life, balancing between private and public realms, while dealing with relationships between men and women. Unlike Degas's *Interior*, Manet has made his figures and narrative more identifiable. *Nana* was probably inspired by a character from Emile Zola's novel of the same name from 1880. Although the novel had not been begun in 1877, its protagonist, the daughter of the two main characters, Coupeau and the alcoholic laundress Gervaise, appeared the previous year in the serial publication of *L'Assommoir.*[115] At the end of the book she has 'caught her count' who marries her in the novel *Nana.*[116] Manet's painting shows her dressing in her elegant boudoir while a fully clothed man (her count?) waits seated on the plush sofa. She is a 'kept woman' preparing for an evening while her middle-aged male companion anxiously looks on. She does not seem intimidated by the man's presence and directs her gaze to the viewer to acknowledge his presence and admiration. She is a *cocotte* always ready to consider another relationship. She stands before a mirror, but being impure, she cannot she her reflection.[117] The top-hatted male keeps his composure as he waits, but his outstretched leg and cane reach out to embrace his prize.

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[114] Theodore Reff, "Degas's 'Tableau de Genre'," *The Art Bulletin*, Volume 54, September 1972, page 332, "Le beau est un mystère, mais on ne sait plus. On oublie les recettes, les secrets." Translation in Theodore Reff, *Degas: An Artist's Mind*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987, page 225.

[115] Robert, L Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991, page 113.

[116] Emile Zola, *L'Assommoir*, translated by Altwood H. Townsend, New York, 1962, page 431, quoted in Anne Coffin Hanson, *Manet and the Modern Tradition*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977, page 129.

[117] Robert, L. Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991, pages 112-113.

As in Degas's *Interior* the female figure has been placed to the left of the composition and the man to the right, yet Manet paints Nana as a woman solely for the enjoyment of men. This intimate scene of contemporary life is simply that and the Japanese design on the wall is quite appropriate and expected in this modern day environment.[118]

Degas deals more openly with sex in works not for public viewing, but as small monotypes, many reworked in pastel, that were known only to a few of the artist's intimate friends. His bathers are not innocent women at their toilette, but are most likely prostitutes, for no proper woman would ever had deigned to be represented in such a way. *Nude Woman Combing Her Hair* (Figure 67) offers many similarities to Manet's *Nana* in that we are presented with a woman preparing herself as a male figure sits on the opposite side of the room observing. She wears brightly colored stockings which identify her as a brothel worker. Degas approaches his brothel scenes from a voyeuristic angle, the figures do not look out at us nor do they take us into their confidence with a wink or a bold glance as Manet's *Nana*. Degas seems to have presented to the viewer what he hopes will be accepted as matter-of-fact pieces of contemporary life. They are all the more convincing because they appear to be chance encounters with the subject rather than dramatic narrative scenes.

The depiction of bedroom scenes by Manet and Degas portrayed a world that had all the trappings of an intimate domestic setting, but are surprisingly public for they are places for the illicit and even commerce. Sexual favors were brought and sold in these bedrooms and shockingly made public what was known to exist, but was always kept quiet. The portrayal of 'fallen' women was treated by both artists yet kept within the commercial realm, for to expose a similar drama between a married couple would have been to destroy the sacred notion of the family bedroom and neither artist was willing to go that far.

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[118] Anne Coffin Hanson, *Manet and the Modern Tradition*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977, page 130.

Morisot's paintings of women in their bedrooms offer a picture of women who are not portrayed solely as an object to men. These women are innocent in comparison to the scandalous women depicted by Degas. Morisot's works are more contemplative and thoughtful, the women appear in a private moment engrossed in their personal activity. The viewer is not forced to apply a narrative to these intimate scenes, as in the work of Degas and Manet, nor are they sexual in their subject matter. Morisot brings the intimacy of the bedroom to the public eye without exploiting the women she paints as a gender type. In her painting *The Cheval Glass* (Figure 68) she shows a woman before a mirror. She does not look out at the viewer as Nana, but instead gazes into the mirror, reflecting upon herself. Manet's *Before the Mirror* (Figure 69) places the woman back into an object for the viewer's gaze. Although the two subjects are very similar, Manet's painting portrays the woman as a sexual object, she is seen from behind and the setting is generalized, forcing the viewer to focus in on the woman. She is half-dressed and looks into the mirror in such a way that her ample back is offered to the spectator as merely a body in a working room.[119] Manet approaches these bedroom scenes from a male perspective with voyeuristic potential. He is not invited into the room as a welcomed visitor but seems to be peering through a keyhole observing the woman in a private moment.

Morisot offers a similar composition to Manet's in her *Woman at Her Toilette* (Figure 70). Both women are viewed from behind although Manet's woman sends a clear message to the viewer by the loosened laces on her corset. She is the object of the man's desire. Morisot simply portrays a woman at her dressing table, fully dressed, while fixing her hair. Morisot's *At the Psyché* (Figure 71) shows a partially nude model with her back to the viewer and her reflection, along with Manet's painting *Berthe Morisot Reclining*, in the mirror. According to Anne Higonnet, Morisot expresses her identification with, and yet distance from, the image she is representing by including herself in her painting

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[119] Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art*, New York: Routledge, 1988, page 81.

through Manet's portrait. The female nude is juxtaposed with Morisot herself, both visions of a female seen with masculine eyes.[120] Degas's *Before the Mirror* (Figure 72) is of the same compositional type, yet again shows the male voyeuristic viewpoint. The woman is much more sensual and definitely the subject of the painting. We view her while she prepares to go out, as she puts on her hat and fixes her hair. There is no sense of the surrounding room which forces the viewer to direct his attention on the woman.

Another interesting comparison is Degas's *After the Bath* (Figure 73) and Cassatt's *Morning Toilette* (Figure 74). Both works were shown at the eighth and last Impressionist exhibition in 1886 and Degas acquired Cassatt's painting for his private collection. Cassatt's *Morning Toilette* departs from the standard of male appreciation and contradicts the voyeuristic male fantasy that women are always nude in the privacy of their bedrooms. The slow moving, stretching model is voluminously clothed, yet exudes a warm and drowsy sensuality.[121] In Degas's *After the Bath* the woman is undressed in a private setting while seemingly engaged in a natural activity. The subject of the combing of the hair has a varied iconography and contemporary significance, traditionally associated with vanity, the action of dressing the hair also has a long association with eroticism. In Edmond de Goncourt's *La Fille Elisa*, a novel that Degas is known to have read in the 1870's, several pages are devoted to a graphic account of the heroine's relationship with another prostitute, which largely consists of Elisa brushing the other woman's hair in highly suggestive circumstances.[122] Both paintings by Degas and Cassatt have a sexual feel about them with the model's head thrown back in a lustful manner, yet do not seem to suggest a relationship as described in the novel *La Fille Elisa*. One late work by Renoir comes the closest to this type of portrayal. His *Bather and Maid* (Figure 75) portrays two women in a pastoral setting far beyond the realm of contemporary society. The only thing that

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[120] Anne Higonnet, "The Other Side of the Mirror," T.J. Edelstein (ed.), *Perspectives on Morisot*, New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1990, page 75.
[121] Susan Fillin Yeh, "Mary Cassatt's Images of Women," *Art Journal*, Volume 35, Number 4, Summer 1976, page 362.
[122] *Degas: Images of Women*, Liverpool: Tate Gallery Liverpool, 1989, page 68.

indicates that this setting is somewhat modern is the jumble of clothing, including the straw hat, in the lower left corner. Berthe Morisot's *The Bath (Girl Arranging Her Hair)* (Figure 76) again deals with the subject of combing of the hair, yet in each of these works the suggestive erotic connotations are downplayed and the attention of the viewer is more on the simple rituals of daily life.

Manet approaches bathing scenes much in the same manner as Degas, except that his models seem to be aware of the viewer's presence. It isn't as though one were peering through a keyhole during a private moment. *The Bath* (Figure 77) portrays a model in the act of bathing although this is no longer an intimate ritual but has become a situation in which the woman is a sexual object on display for the male viewer's pleasure. She acknowledges his gaze and continues bathing, unaffected by the viewer's presence.

Degas's *Woman in the Tub* (Figure 78) shows his effort to represent the female body with greater truth. He installed tubs and basins in his studio and watched the models engaged in ablutions and personal care. This enabled him to observe the models in a more natural way and his women engaged in the intimate rituals of both the bath and the brothel became regular themes. "The nude has always been portrayed in postures that presuppose an audience, but my women are simple, straightforward women, concerned with nothing beyond their physical existence..." Degas reportedly explained to the English writer George Moore in 1886. "It's as though one were peeping through a keyhole."[123] The women in Degas's paintings, unlike Manet's, are unaware of the viewer's presence which tends to make the scenes seem more realistic. *The Tub* (Figure 79) is one of the most extreme of Degas's pastels. The viewpoint excludes the background entirely and we are provided with no indication of the woman's location, status, or identity. A common remark of Degas's toilette scenes produced in the mid 1880's was of the courageous

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[123] Colta Ives, "French Prints in the Era of Impressionism and Symbolism," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, Volume XLVI, Number 1, Summer 1988, page 19.

realism of the nudes and the way in which Degas showed plausible contemporary women rather than idealized goddesses or milk-white nymphs, as Renoir did.[124]

Renoir's sequence of bathers continues the eighteenth-century dream of Arcadia. His nudes, whom he saw as "splendid fruit," often glow in a gold and rose outdoors, waiting to be picked.[125] The idyllic settings are far removed from the cramped quarters of a typical Parisian apartment as can be seen in many of Degas's bathers. The theme itself goes back to antiquity. Water—a female element, like earth—is associated with powers of generation and transformation, with rites of initiation and purification. The act of bathing provided for the Impressionist artists a plausible pretext for revealing the naked female body and continued the long popularity from the Renaissance onward of the Birth of Venus and other bathing scenes. *After the Bath* (Figure 80) is just one example of Renoir's approach to bathers. Common with the other male artists, he portrayed his women nude and from a voyeuristic viewpoint, yet his women are not the same modern-day women as Degas portrayed. Renoir approached his scenes from a romantic viewpoint, portraying robustly sensual, tenderly soft women, who seem pure and innocent.

Gustave Caillebotte portrayed one very unusual bath scene in the œuvre of Impressionist art. While bedroom and bathing scenes were not unusual, they mainly portrayed women in situations, whereas Caillebotte painted a man toweling off after his bath. *Man After His Bath* (Figure 81) is the most intimate among his numerous views of private, interior life. We view the man from the back, keeping his identity anonymous to the viewer. Like Degas's bath scenes, we seem to be observing him without his knowledge, as he goes about his private business. His pose is similar to Degas's *Woman at Her Toilette* (Figure 82), with the towel drawn across the back, drying off after the bath. Yet Degas's image seems more at ease, a slow, unhurried pace, while Caillebotte's man stretches the

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[124] *Degas: Images of Women*, Liverpool: Tate Gallery Liverpool, 1989, page 63.
[125] Marina Warner, "Art: Beauty of the Bath," *Architectural Digest*, Volume 43, February 1986, page 98.

towel across his back vigorously drying himself off. There are no sexual overtones as in many of Degas's and Manet's works; instead, Caillebotte has presented to the viewer a bathing scene that appears very natural and ordinary, not a leisurely, intimate moment to be savored.

It was primarily the male artists who painted bath and bedroom scenes with nude models. Eva Gonzalès did not exhibit with the Impressionists, but she was closely involved in the movement toward naturalism and realism. She shared with the Impressionists an interest in the depiction of modern life themes. She was a member of an aristocratic family and the daughter of a popular novelist of the day. She began painting in 1867 and in 1869 asked Manet to give her lessons. He agreed and she became his only real pupil. Her painting *Morning Awakening* (Figure 83) portrays her sister Jeanne just opening her eyes. Gonzalès places herself as the invisible observer of this intimate scene but the image lacks the erotic quality that a male painter would almost certainly have brought to it.[126] The model lies in a position that obscures much of her body rather than revealing it. Her arm hides her breast and the garment that she wears produces an effect seemingly more realistic. The effect created is one of a naturalistic recording of a seen moment.

Berthe Morisot painted a similar scene in which appears a woman just rising in the morning. In her *Getting Up* (Figure 84) the model has already risen and while putting on her slippers, rests for a moment at the edge of the bed before beginning her morning routine. She wears a white nightgown that slips off her left shoulder, not in a sexual, alluring way, but in a very naturalistic manner. Morisot, like Gonzalès, seems to be a silent observer but does not exploit the situation into a sexual moment as a male artist might.

Both Morisot and Gonzalès painted women at their toilette. Morisot produced seven toilette scenes (*At the Psyché, Young Woman with a Mirror, The Toilette, Young Woman Seen from Behind at Her Toilette, Young Woman Powdering Her Face, Woman at Her Toilette, and Young Woman Putting On Her Stocking)* and in five she juxtaposes the

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[126]Tamar Garb, *Women Impressionists*, New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1986, page 50.

woman with a mirror, contemplating her own self-image. In all of these toilette scenes, the viewer's gaze is not acknowledged and virtually all of the women turn away from the spectator. All seven women look at themselves or at their mirrors. In *Young Woman Powdering Her Face* (Figure 85), the woman sits at her mirror, but we do not see her reflection. She is completely clothed in white except for her bare arm. The loose fitting clothing does not accentuate her form nor does it reveal anything. Morisot hired models for all these paintings.[127]

Caillebotte's *Woman at a Dressing Table* (Figure 86) portrays an unexpected moment (fastening or unfastening the crinolines) in this casual, insistently undramatic, yet spacious scene. The artist views the woman from a distance and focuses in on the incidental details. His sensitivity to the young woman's combination of concentration and daydreaming self-absorption, and especially the inclusion of her mirrored image make this scene all the more intimate without being overtly sexual as in many of the other male artists' versions of toilette scenes.

Pink Morning (Figure 87) by Eva Gonzalès portrays a young woman (probably modeled by the artist's sister, Jeanne Gonzalès) gazing contemplatively at the puppies in the basket, is typical of the many interiors with women that Gonzalès executed. The mood of self-absorption and quiet resignation often characterizes her paintings.[128]

Contemporary texts and pictures both make the toilette scene's erotic implications explicit. They emphasize that it is the sight of a woman at her toilette which is erotic, and explain that a woman's exposure to a male gaze at that moment designates her as his actual or potential sexual possession.

> This moment when the worldly woman is still enveloped in waves of brilliant white batiste, in a peignoir of the finest cotton, fringed with lace...It's a dangerous thing for a man...to see this lovely morning *negligée*, this disorder of dress more apparent than real, that opens the scope of the imagination, if ever he had any, which tickles all the senses and awakens them if ever they had energy...A young woman who respects herself must never receive [*recevoir*] anyone but her husband at her

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[127] Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, page 167.
[128] Ibid., page 46.

> toilette...She who receives any other man at that moment, obviously has nothing left to refuse him.[129]

In the toilette scenes produced by women, the viewer may be teased with shoulders and ankles, as in Morisot's work, but the sexual overtones and naked bodies are withheld. Though the erotic potential of the toilette scene resides in the transparency of the peignoir or chemise, Morisot and Gonzalès reveal almost nothing of the women's bodies.[130] These paintings offer the spectator a view into the bedroom of a bourgeois woman and as such is not without voyeuristic potential but at the same time, the pictured woman is not offered for sight so much as caught contemplating herself.[131]

The portrayal of motherhood, with the mother's gaze often directed at the child, was one of the most popular subjects during the Third Republic. Motherhood was almost universally promoted as the only legitimate option for women, and paintings of mothers and children proliferated at the Salons of this time.[132] The theme of mother and child has an extensive history in art, going back beyond the great Italian Masters, although it was they who brought the subject to its climax. Anna Jameson, England's first professional art historian, was a leader in reviving the importance of Catholic images of the Madonna and Child.[133] She wrote that images of the Madonna and Child depicted "the glorified type of what is purest, loftiest, holiest in womanhood."[134] Middle-class families then reinterpreted these images according to their own ideals and beliefs and artists such as Millet painted scenes of peasant women with children. In these scenes he secularized them from the past tradition of Madonna and Child. He generalized the people and made

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[129] Vicomte de Bournon-Ginestoux, *Les Jeunes Femmes, ou, les Séductions de la Nature et de l'Art,* Paris: Blanchard, 1856, pages 109-110, quoted in Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, page 161.

[130] Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, page 168.

[131] Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art*, New York: Routledge, 1988, page 81.

[132] Tamar Garb, *Women Impressionists*, New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1986, page 72.

[133] Adèle M. Holcomb, "Anna Jameson: The First Professional English Art Historian," *Art History*, Volume 6, Number 2, June 1983, pages 171-187, quoted in Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, page 216.

[134] Anna Jameson, *Legends of the Madonna, As Represented in the Fine Arts: Forming the Third Series of Sacred and Legendary Art*, 2d ed., London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1857, page 58, quoted in Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, page 216.

them very solid and monumental to stress the traditional subject of Madonna and Child. Mary Cassatt also monumentalizes her subjects but they do not seem to come across in the same manner as Millet's. She downplays the subject and stresses technique much more while focusing in on the intimate relationship between mother and child.

Edgar Degas purportedly suggested to Cassatt the relatively unexplored theme of mother and child sometime between 1877, when they first met, and 1880, when she first painted the subject. Another possible source of inspiration was Berthe Morisot, whose work Cassatt knew as early as 1878 when she bought Morisot's *The Toilette.*[135] Mary Cassatt's images of motherhood were some of the most admired of her paintings. They inspired the critic Huysmans to enthuse:

> ...Woman alone is capable of painting childhood. There is a particular feeling which a man does not know how to render; unless he is singularly sensitive and delicate, his fingers are too big not to leave clumsy and brutal marks; only the woman can pose the child, dress it, pin it without pricking it.[136]

Mother About to Wash Her Sleepy Child (Figure 88) is her first *maternité* image. The focus is on the mother and child who are monumentalized in the picture frame. The mother's gaze is toward the child, who sprawls in a typically childish fashion. Painted at the height of Cassatt's involvement with 'realism' there is no doubt that this is a specific woman and her child pictured in the daily routine of washing.[137] The intimacy and physical closeness which Cassatt applied to her scenes of mother and child give these works an emotion that might otherwise not have been seen in a masculine viewpoint. Even though Mary Cassatt never had children of her own, she closely observed maternal encounters for it expressed very clearly her own view of the highest achievement a woman could attain. A nineteenth-century unmarried woman artist, such as Cassatt, suffered deep doubts on the subject of marriage and motherhood. Cassatt said in later years that

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[135] Stewart Buettner, "Images of Modern Motherhood in the Art of Morisot, Cassatt, Modersohn-Becker, Kollwitz," *Woman's Art Journal,* Volume 7, Number 2, Fall/Winter 1986-1987, pages 15-16.
[136] Nancy Mowll Mathews, *Mary Cassatt and the Modern Madonna,* page 65, quoted in Tamar Garb, "Gender and Representation," *Modernity and Modernism: French Painting in the Nineteenth Century,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, in Association with the Open University, 1993, page 267.
[137] Tamar Garb, *Women Impressionists,* New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc. 1986, page 74.

her greatest mistake was to have chosen painting instead of maternity, yet out of that conflict came the greatest body of work on the mother-and-child theme since Raphael.[138]

In her *Mother and Baby* (Figure 89) the two figures have been melded together in a tight embrace. By emphasizing the figures themselves and almost ignoring the surroundings, Cassatt forces the viewer to focus in on the mother and child and feel the emotion of the moment. Typically, her images centered on an embrace, cheek to cheek, lips to hands, hands caressing feet. Interestingly, no family members served as models for the 1880 or later mother-and-child studies. For her mothers, Cassatt posed rural women as the models because of the ease and intimacy in which they held and related to their children, which was unknown to upper-class mothers most of whom still employed nursemaids to help with the rearing of their children.[139] Cassatt's images shield the woman's body from our gaze, for she is fully dressed in clothing of the bourgeoisie. The children are the objects of desire, and it is women who enjoy them.[140] Her images of mother and child are entirely devoted to pleasure.

The act of nursing is the most intimate connection between mother and child. Cassatt's *Mother Nursing Her Baby* (Figure 90) is one of the few such scenes in Cassatt's work which dealt with the subject. It is surprising that she did not paint nursing scenes more often due to the fact that she employed country women as models and they usually always nursed their own children, unlike upper-class mothers, such as Morisot, who hired 'wet nurses.' Cassatt's scene reinforces the intimate bonding between mother and child, the suckling child gazes at the mother and touches her chin while the mother adoringly looks at her infant and caresses its foot. The bonding takes place not only through the physical interaction of the mother and child but also psychologically in that both mother and child are completely emersed in the affection of the other.

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[138] Frank Getlein, *Mary Cassatt: Paintings and Prints*, New York: Abbeville Press, 1980, page 36.
[139] Stewart Buettner, "Images of Modern Motherhood in the Art of Morisot, Cassatt, Modersohn-Becker, Kollwitz," *Woman's Art Journal*, Volume 7, Number 2, Fall/Winter 1986-1987, page 16.
[140] Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, page 219.

Renoir's *Maternity (Aline Charigot and Pierre Renoir)* (Figure 47) shows his wife nursing his son, yet the gaze of the woman is at the viewer. The bonding between mother and child is less emphasized in Renoir's painting and a more lustful emotion seems to come across. Renoir has been very careful as to position the child so as the viewer can identify the sex, and Renoir can show off his newborn child. In Berthe Morisot's *Wet Nurse* (Figure 46) the woman gazes out at the viewer, but does not exploit the child. The bonding during nursing here is not maternal, but as a business transaction. This was perfectly natural for Morisot to hire a 'wet nurse' and in doing so she has portrayed an accurate scene of contemporary life in her social class.

It was left to the artists who followed the Impressionists to continue exploring the intimate bond between mother and child. Jacob Meyer de Haan's *Motherhood, Marie Henry Feeding Her Child* (Figure 91), and *Mother and Child* (Figure 92) by Maurice Denis continue in the manner of Cassatt, monumentalizing figures in a nondescript environment, in order to emphasize the relationship and intimacy between mother and child.

Berthe Morisot, like Mary Cassatt, dedicated much of her late career primarily to the representation of maternity. She painted many scenes of her daughter Julie growing up, although she, being the mother, was not included. So while she dealt extensively with the theme of mother and child, the actual number of paintings which include both mother and child are few. Her mother-and-child paintings were usually of her sister Edma with her children, *The Cradle* (Figure 93), being the most well known. Edma sits at the edge of the cradle watching her infant as she falls asleep, just visible through the muslin. The pose of the mother is the same as the child for both their arms are bent back, elbows almost touching so that their hands rest against their faces. Mother and child are alike, but in different stages of development and consciousness.[141] Shown at the first Impressionist exhibition, it received mildly favorable reviews perhaps because of its appealing subject matter. Jean Pouvaire of *La Rappel* wrote on 20 April 1874:

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[141] Ibid., page 120.

> ...nothing is both more true and tender than the young mother—admittedly rather badly dressed—who leans over the cradle where a rosy child falls asleep, just visible through the pale cloud of muslin.[142]

Claude Monet portrayed his newborn son much as Berthe Morisot portrayed Edma with her daughter in *The Cradle. The Cradle–Camille with the Artist's Son Jean* (Figure 94), is a very intimate view of mother and child. The focus of the painting is the child in the cradle, while Camille has been placed at the far right edge with her back to the viewer, whereas in Morisot's painting Edma has the only clear view of the child and she shields her infant from the viewer by pulling the muslin drape across the cradle. Monet, while being unique in portraying subject matter that was primarily dealt with by women artists, does not quite match the intimacy between mother and child as portrayed by Cassatt and Morisot. His painting seems to be more a portrait of his son, for he is the proud father, rather than a work that expresses the traditional relationship between mother and child. He has distanced Camille from the child and the viewer by pushing her to the edge of the canvas and placing Jean directly in the center looking out at his father, emphasizing their relationship.

Of all the artists considered who dealt with mother-and-child themes, Cassatt came closest to the conventional Christian iconographic arrangement of a seated mother with a child place on her lap for her images. Cassatt's works were solidly designed and constructed, even monumental, which displayed an impulse to return to more traditional values. These same urges seem to have overtaken Renoir a few years earlier with the birth of his son, and were also visible in the work of Berthe Morisot, although she did not paint a traditional mother and child until 1894, the year before her death.[143]

Bedroom scenes, in general, were handled in different ways according to the artist. Manet and Degas both dealt with modern life, that of the city, prostitutes, and

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[142] Charles Moffett (et al.), *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874-1886*, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1986, page 131.

[143] Stewart Buettner, "Images of Modern Motherhood in the Art of Morisot, Cassatt, Modersohn-Becker, Kollwitz," *Woman's Art Journal*, Volume 7, Number 2, Fall/Winter 1986-1987, pages 15-16.

male/female relationships. Their joint interest in the pictorial drama is evident from the need to apply a literary source to such works as *Nana* and *The Interior.* The viewer is faced with a narrative, yet exactly what the story is may be unknown.

Degas's bathing scenes openly rejected the knowing smile and speaking glance, the glamorous seductive displays or invitingly averted eyes of the salon nymph or odalisque. His specialty was to pretend that the model did not know anyone was there watching. "It's the human animal taking care of its body," said Degas. "A female cat licking herself."[144] Renoir followed in this voyeuristic manner, yet his bathers are much more idealized, expressing feminine beauty with softly brushed curves painted in warm tones.

Mary Cassatt, Berthe Morisot, Claude Monet and Gustave Caillebotte dealt with interior life, away from the city and its night life. Their women were not nude in the bath or at the toilette, yet like Renoir strove to express the beauty and intimacy of a woman in the most personal of settings. Cassatt and Morisot portrayed the intimate life of a woman's bedroom, but do not portray family members or close friends in these scenes. Both women hired models to pose for their works. Therefore, this is not to say that theirs is more realistic than the others, for Caillebotte's image of a man toweling off after the bath is very realistic and a bold departure from the female nude at her bath. Claude Monet consciously chose not to deal with city life, but instead painted intimate scenes of his child and wife, as Cassatt and Morisot did. His views of mother and child deal more with rendering the child, as Renoir's, than with expressing the intimate bond between mother and child.

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[144] Marina Warner, "Art: Beauty of the Bath," *Architectural Digest,* Volume 43, February 1986, page 100.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Edmond Duranty's essay *The New Painting: Concerning the Group of Artists Exhibiting at the Durand-Ruel Galleries* said of the Impressionist artist's style that:

> The very first idea was to eliminate the partition separating the artist's studio from everyday life...Our lives take place in rooms and in streets, and rooms and streets have their own special laws of light and visual language.[145]

The "New Painting" differed from the realist art style in that instead of carefully modeled figures convincingly situated in a landscape or interior, by such artists as Tissot and Stevens, we find the figures treated with the same broken brushwork as their settings. The figures portrayed by the Impressionist artists all seem at least partially to obliterate the face as a possible focus of the painting. The almost blurred, imprecise treatment of Morisot's *Wet Nurse* and the shadow cast by the parasol in Monet's *Camille in the Garden with Jean and His Nanny* are only a few examples of how they diverted the viewer's focus. In all, we can identify this erasing of the details of a figure's face as a device to redirect our attention elsewhere, away from what is often regarded as the psychological center of a painting—the human face—onto other parts and characteristics of the painting.[146]

Whatever the artists hoped to portray to the viewer through a particular painting differed depending on a multitude of variables. In each case one could ask the question as

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[145] Edmond Duranty, *La Nouvelle Peinture: À Propos du Groupe d'Artistes qui Expose dans les Galeries Durand-Ruel*, Caen: L'Échoppe, 1988: "L'idée, la première idée a été d'enlever la cloison qui sépare l'atelier de la vie commune...(que) notre existence se passe dans des chambres ou dans la rue, et que les chambres, la rue, ont leurs lois spéciales de lumière et d'expression." Translation in Charles S. Moffett (et al.), *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874-1886*, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1986, page 44.

[146] Briony Fer, "Introduction," *Modernity and Modernism: French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, in Association with the Open University, 1993, pages 8-9.

to why this painting was done and did it have anything to do with a particular event in the artist's life? Also, did culture or society play any role in the portraying of the domestic interior, or did these artists go beyond what they actually experienced in everyday life to make statements about the roles of men and women in domestic life? In order to answer these questions, one must understand what was the perception of women in French society, and then review the artists individually, since they were first and foremost "people of independent temperaments."[147]

During the nineteenth century the old order of family and home life gradually changed due to industrialization.[148] Italy and Flanders in the fifteenth century, Holland in the seventeenth century, and the nineteenth century in France were all three moments of dramatic expansion in capitalism. These three eras were also a time of intense artistic concentration on the theme of the feminine interior. It was with the Impressionist artists that the subject of domesticity and femininity pushed farther in portraying women in domestic situations than ever before.

Both male and female artists dealt with the subject of private life, although the restraints on becoming a professional woman artist in the late nineteenth century were numerous. There was no free state education for women in fine art, and the official state art school, the École des Beaux-Arts, was only opened to women in 1897. Women were hampered by their general education since the curriculum for girls differed markedly from that of boys. A classical education, considered essential for success in the fine arts, was not available to most women. It was their lack of general education and academic training, their domestic situation and their social and psychic conditioning that led many women to concentrate on small scale genre painting and still life throughout the nineteenth century. The critic Paul Mantz in 1865 praised Berthe Morisot's submission to the Salon while

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[147] Edmond Duranty, *La Nouvelle Peinture: À Propos du Groupe d'Aritstes qui Expose dans les Galeries Durand-Ruel*, Caen: L'Échoppe, 1988: "...que des tempéraments avant tout indépendants." Translation in Charles S. Moffett (et al.), *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874-1886*, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1986, page 46.

[148] Gabriel P. Weisberg, *Images of Women: Printmakers in France from 1830 to 1930*, Salt Lake City: Utah Museum of Fine Arts, 1977, page 7.

satirizing the genre in which she worked: "Since it is not necessary to have had a long training in draughtsmanship in the Academy in order to paint a copper pot, a candlestick, and a bunch of radishes, women succeed quite well in this type of domestic painting."[149] The belief that women were incapable of handling complex subjects led teachers to restrict the range they offered them. In 1860, Marie Bracquemond wrote of Ingres: "The severity of M. Ingres frightened me...because he doubted the courage and perseverance of a woman in the field of painting...He would assign to them only the painting of flowers, of fruits of still lifes, portraits and genre scenes."[150]

By the 1890's the independent spirit of women became increasingly apparent. Women who had once been confined to the home, were seen in public everywhere—from the tennis courts to advertisements in magazines and on posters. During this period some women tried to change the stereotyped domestic image that men had come to accept as the role of women in society. Concerned about their roles in society, women moved into professions striving for a competitive basis with men. Often, women who engaged seriously in artistic or intellectual pursuits were considered 'masculine' and it was widely believed that these tasks were unsuited to them by nature. Official change in France came slowly; women did not receive the vote until 1944; equal pay for equivalent work was officially recognized only in 1946.

The modern feminist movement's first international congress on women's rights took place in 1878, at the height of the Impressionist movement, but Impressionist painting records no traces of this aspect of contemporary life. Nor does it acknowledge the increasing numbers of middle-class women who were seeking legitimate training and employment outside the home, for Impressionism presents us with few images of women at work outside the domestic environment, with the exception of prostitutes. The fact that Bracquemond, Cassatt and Morisot broke away from the official Salon to join the

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[149] Tamar Garb, *Women Impressionists*, New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1986, page 6.
[150] Ibid., page 6.

Impressionist group was a statement in itself that they would not compromise to the dictates of society and the Salon, but chose to search for their own version of truth and reality.

For the woman artist, social position in terms of both class and gender in many ways determined the limits of the work produced.[151] For Morisot and Cassatt to turn to domestic interiors was very natural for their position in society. Both women portrayed people and relationships as the subjects of many of their works, at times pushing the limits of women's roles, yet never too far. Both women challenged the prescribed roles for women by becoming artists themselves, yet Morisot maintained her femininity, much more than Cassatt, by marrying and becoming a mother.

The portrayal of confinement, a longing for freedom to roam and the intellectual side of women were common in both artist's work, although neither went as far as to portray women of the feminist movement. Toward the end of her life, Mary Cassatt often remarked that a woman's principal purpose in life was to bear and raise children and she, of course, had done neither. Many of Cassatt's mother-and-child scenes are at odds with her long and dedicated involvement with the cause of women's suffrage, or what was more generally called Female Emancipation.

Morisot's œuvre expressed the convention "like house, like woman."[152] "The more ingenious projects devoted to embellishing the interior you notice, the more esteem you have for the mistress of the house."[153] Her art exclusively portrayed bourgeois femininity. She shows no scenes of illness or exertion, but focuses in on the everyday rituals of the women of her social class. Her paintings express the lack of freedom women had, yet in a way which did not overtly threaten the men closest to her. The statement she makes with

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[151] Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art*, New York: Routledge, 1988, page 82.
[152] Mme Emeline Raymond, *Le Secret des Parisiennes*, 3rd edition, Paris: firmin-didot, 1885, page 82 , quoted in Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women*, Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1992, page 65.
[153] Ibid, page 82.

much of her work is that a woman can be both a mother and professional, and she can retain her femininity no matter what her choices in life may be.

She, like Cassatt, portrayed women differently than the current gender stereotypes of Stevens and Tissot. Both women stressed the restrictions placed on women by restricting the figures in their surroundings. In many works the viewer can barely see farther than the enclosures and the women themselves almost never look out to a view beyond. The women's gaze is almost always back homeward to the spaces that both shelter and restrict her. Every woman has her barriers; railings, fences, balconies, bench slats, trellises, window sashes, mirror frames, picture edges, sofa corners, or hearth moldings: These are the limits within which women are contained.[154] Although the physical restrictions placed on women by society are stressed in many of Morisot and Cassatt's works, they both seem to push their women intellectually beyond what society would expect. They themselves were not willing to accept what society viewed as the traditional pursuits of women. The female figures in their paintings are bored with the constraints which have been imposed upon them. They are not willing to be satisfied being perfect bourgeois women, but instead stress their dissatisfaction with the limitations placed on them. The women portrayed by Cassatt and Morisot are not the idyll, mindless women seen in the paintings by Manet and Renoir, but are more realistic in both their actions and their setting. This is not to say that Cassatt and Morisot offer us the complete truth about the spaces of femininity. Griselda Pollock argued that their intimacy with the domestic space did not necessarily enable them to escape their historical formation as sexed and classed subjects, or that they could observe domesticity objectively and transcribe it with some kind of personal authenticity.[155] Instead we are given a view of private life through a woman's eyes, and each work is in some way a personal statement about her life and society around her as she perceives it.

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[154] Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, page 149.
[155] Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art,* New York: Routledge, 1988, page 81.

Feminine imagery, though the overwhelmingly predominant aspect of Morisot and Cassatt's work, constitutes only one aspect of mainstream Impressionism. Manet and the male Impressionists extended the range of their imagery with private, domestic images, while Morisot and Cassatt made virtually nothing but private, domestic images. In painting, as in other domains, femininity has a more limiting effect on production than masculinity does. The male Impressionists could try images of women or femininity and then turn to other subjects, but culture for women artists offered no such recourse.[156]

The four painters (Cassatt, Morisot, Gonzalès, Bracquemond) did not consciously identify themselves with each other. The strongest intellectual and aesthetic collaborations that they developed were with their male colleagues rather than among themselves; important were Gonzalès and Morisot's relationships with Manet, Cassatt's with Degas, and Bracquemond's respect for Monet's contribution to art. Friendship and professional consideration existed between Cassatt and Morisot, and Gonzalès and Morisot knew one another. Bracquemond seems to have had less contact with the others. Cassatt, of all the women Impressionists, was the most politicized about her femininity and consequently established strong ties with women artists, primarily though, outside the Impressionist circle.[157]

While Morisot, like Monet and Bracquemond, can be seen to have explored the transitory quality of light and its effects on color and atmosphere, Cassatt, like Degas and Gonzalès, was more concerned with drawing and compositional structure, and with achieving a quality of monumentality and permanence.[158] Of the male artists involved in the Impressionist movement, Monet comes the closest to the subjects of Morisot and Cassatt with his interest in the isolation of women and the mother-and-child theme. He never portrayed shocking subject matter like Degas's bathers or Manet's *Olympia*, instead

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[156] Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, page 79.
[157] Tamar Garb, *Women Impressionists*, New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1986, page 5.
[158] Ibid., page 9.

he consciously chose to paint subjects which were intimate to him and not scenes of the Parisian night life.

Monet's work evolved in many ways around his personal life. He began his interest in domestic interiors with the birth of his son, Jean, and then painted multiple scenes of him in his early childhood. Monet's interest in void and mystery came into play primarily in 1873 when he portrayed Camille and Jean in the garden in a number of works. His use of presence and absence relates to Mallarmé's void. Being present physically but absent mentally, symbolizing one's death by one's absence, or playing a game with the viewer's participation in an image can be compared to Mallarmé's imagery. The void is simultaneous with a lack of relationships and normal communication between things and therefore void can be related to vagueness and mystery.[159] Monet separated Jean and Camille in such works as *Camille in the Garden with Jean and His Nanny*, creating a void between them. Is it possible that Monet was actually expressing a void that had entered his life, for his son, Jean, had robbed him of his lover. Camille's attentions were no longer solely focused on Monet and a sense of emptiness and loneliness enters Monet's work. Even in his painting *Le Déjeuner* one gets a sense that Monet has realized the changing role Camille has taken on, for she appears twice, once as mother and again as a woman of society and Monet's wife.

Gustave Caillebotte's paintings of interior spaces are similar in many ways to that of Monet's, although his technique was much closer to that of Degas's with an emphasis on drawing. Caillebotte's images of domesticity stress loneliness and longings for another space outside the confines of the feminine world. Both Monet and Caillebotte portrayed many of their women sewing, a truly feminine act, or juxtaposed interior and exterior spaces. Although Caillebotte never painted mother-and-child themes, he did portray women in the garden with flowers, a theme which was of great interest to Monet. His

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[159] Paul Abe Issacs, *The Immobility of the Self in the Art of Edouard Manet: A Study with Special Emphasis on the Relationship of His Imagery to that of Gustave Flaubert and Stéphane Mallarmé*, Brown University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1976, pages 497-98.

works come across as very natural and realistic and seem to portray some of the drawbacks of bourgeois society. The people that he portrayed were of the upper-class, doing activities which came natural to them. There doesn't seem to be any dramatizing of a situation, as Degas was known for, or idealizing of people or locations. Everything here is of the proper bourgeoisie, a world Caillebotte knew well.

Renoir was not always so interested in portraying family life or the modern woman. It was not until the birth of his son Pierre that he began to paint mother-and-child themes, yet not with the same intimacy as Cassatt and Morisot. Renoir, although close with Berthe Morisot did not support women in their new endeavors. He is quoted as saying:

> I consider women writers, lawyers, and politicians (such as George Sand, Mme Adam and other bores) as monsters and nothing but five-legged calves. The woman artist is merely ridiculous, but I am in favor of the female singer and dancer.[160]

Renoir's comment divides women by class and occupation. Working-class women are admired for entertaining men; professional women with public roles are seen as challenging male authority and destroying domestic harmony.

Renoir viewed women as Manet and Baudelaire did, as objects to be admired. His bathers were not intelligent women, able to think and compete in a man's world, instead they were goddesses, decorative elements, there only for man's enjoyment. Even in his mother-and-child themes, *Maternity (Aline Charigot and Pierre Renoir)*, Renoir portrays Aline gazing out at the artist in a seductive, sexual manner, emphasizing the sex of their newborn son, yet paying no attention to the intimate bond between mother and child. Although he was unique in portraying Aline breast feeding Pierre, a subject which Morisot and Cassatt only briefly touched upon, his rendition of this subject was no where near the intimacy which other contemporary artists achieved. Alfred Stevens, a naturalist painter

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[160] Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society*, London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1991 (reprinted), pages 215-216.

and contemporary of Renoir's, dealt with the subject of nursing in his painting *Complete Happiness* (Figure 95). Steven's commented on the greatness of maternity:

> Painters are to be pitied who have not deigned or have not known how to sing of woman and child [and] all the masters have painted the Virgin and the Infant Jesus. It is always a mother and her son, and this will be an admirable subject to all eternity.[161]

Perhaps Renoir, by emphasizing the child as a boy, felt that the viewer would relate this work to the Madonna and Child, yet the timelessness of maternal devotion nowhere appears in Renoir's painting. Instead he again portrays Aline as an object, to be admired by both artist and son.

More than three-quarters of the total number of works of art produced by Edgar Degas are representations of women. Degas was not, of course, alone in his preoccupation. In a society where the 'Woman Issue' formed an increasingly conspicuous element in political, ethical and economic debate, many of Degas's contemporaries (both male and female) devoted at least part of their energies to the depiction of women at all levels of the social system. Prominent amongst these were the novelists, several of who were known personally to Degas, whose explorations of female behaviors and psychology were often based on subjects close to Degas's art. Flaubert's studies of middle-class heroines in *Madame Bovary* and *Sentimental Education* dealt with precisely the kind of women (the wives of a doctor and a business-man) that Degas is known to have painted, while the writings of Zola and others offer even closer parallels. The Goncourt brothers produced an account of a brothel in *La Fille Elisa*, while other writers from Degas's immediate circle, such as Halévy and de Maupassant, published studies of dancers, prostitutes and female sexuality.[162]

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[161] William A. Coles, *Alfred Stevens*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Museum of Art; Baltimore: The Walters Art Gallery; Montréal: Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1977, page 11.

[162] For a detailed discussion of some of Degas's connections with these texts see: Theodore Reff, "The Artist and the Writer," *Degas: An Artist's Mind*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987, pages 147-199.

Manet and Renoir shared to some extent in Degas's interest in female imagery. Amongst more traditional or established painters, again largely known to Degas himself, the subject was identified with Tissot, Stevens and others. For all these artists, however the subject was only one amongst a number of themes of the preoccupation of a limited historical period. The only individuals to approach Degas's obsessional, lifelong relationship with the female image were the women artists associated with the Impressionist group.[163]

It is a paradox that Degas—of all the male Impressionist painters—was probably the one who did most to encourage his female colleagues. Friendly with Morisot as well as with Cassatt, he acquired their work for his collection. He also helped to arrange Morisot's memorial exhibition and did a number of portraits of Cassatt, whom he remarked about: "There is someone who feels as I do."[164]

In portraiture, Degas did not paint women as stereotyped feminine objects but as realistic human beings, emphasizing neither charm, grace nor prettiness, but rather, individual character. This fact often put off his contemporaries and helps to explain the less than enthusiastic response that his portraits sometimes elicited.[165] His portrait of the Bellelli family was not just an ordinary portrait but revealed the inner most problems of the family and the divisions predetermined by society. The division of male and female appear in a number of paintings by Degas, including *The Bellelli Family* and *Interior.* Degas's friend and realist painter, James Tissot also dealt with the physical distance between figures which implied a psychological tension in his *A Passing Storm* (Figure 96). Degas's acknowledgment of Tissot's authority in the field of realistic genre is apparent from the extent to which he incorporated the latter's criticism into the final version of *Interior.*[166]

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[163] *Degas: Images of Women,* Liverpool: Tate Gallery Liverpool, 1989, page 7.
[164] Edward Lucie-Smith, *Impressionist Women,* London: George Weidengeld & Nicolson Ltd., 1989 page 8.
[165] Norma Broude, "Degas's 'Misogyny'," *The Art Bulletin,* Volume 59, March 1977, pages 104-105.
[166] Theodore Reff, *Degas: An Artist's Mind,* Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987, page 227.

On a number of occasions, Degas drew attention to the importance of the act of vision in his art, claiming that "One sees as one wishes to see. It's false; and it is that falsity that constitutes art." He also remarked that "Drawing isn't a matter of what you see, it's a question of what you can make other people see."[167] Degas himself said: "A picture is first of all a product of the artist's imagination."[168]

In Degas's bather scenes he emphasizes the lack of socially specific or pictorially informative detail. Many of his pictures include elevated views, a departure from "the official way of seeing." In opting for a raised vantage-point, Degas created pictures of extraordinary originality and immediacy, but he also placed himself outside the conventional routines of human contact. Situated above, but often quite close to his subjects, he could observe without participating, viewing his subjects like a concealed observer or a "fly on the wall." By looking down on a woman in her tub he was taking liberties with both artistic and social propriety. Degas himself implicitly accepted this view by only using such angles of vision when representing working-class subjects. With few exceptions, his studies of women of his own class are based on an equal level of confrontation, while plunging perspectives, bird's-eye views and intrusive lines of vision were reserved by the artist for those subjects which were beneath him.[169]

Degas's bathers are not like the idealized women depicted by Renoir, although both artists view women in a voyeuristic manner. Manet's bathers relate more closely to Renoir's in the manner in which they were portrayed although the settings are different. Degas's bathers seem more realistic in that they seem to be a chance encounter, rather than a posed situation. All three men view women as being nude at their toilette or after the bath, a departure from the feminine viewpoint of the same subject. Alfred Stevens

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[167] The first quotation comes from Daniel Halévy, *My Friend Degas*, London, 1966, page 66; the second from Jean Adhémar and Francoise Cachin, *Degas: The Complete Etchings, Lithographs and Monotypes*, London, 1974, page 89.
[168] *Degas: Images of Women*, Liverpool: Tate Gallery Liverpool, 1989, page 56.
[169] Ibid., page 9.

portrayed his bather in *The Bath* (Figure 97) as dressed in her underclothes as she soaks in the tub. Stevens never depicted women in the nude, whether the situation called for it or not. This painting, while on the surface seems very innocent and pure, has an erotic focus with the dripping water tap in the form of a goose head, which symbolizes the masculine form as opposed to the adjacent soap dish symbolizing the feminine form.[170] Many of Degas's images also appear erotic although his models are not posed, but go about their private rituals as if no one was looking. It is important to consider that although Degas's scenes were of women bathing or in the privacy of their bedroom, most of these women were prostitutes and not women of society as depicted in the work of Morisot, Cassatt and Gonzalès.

The portrayals of private life were as varied as were the artists. Not one can be said to have portrayed reality in the strictest sense of the word. Rather, their painted subjects related to their personal experiences, whether real or imagined. The boundaries between femininity and masculinity blur when one takes into consideration the entire œuvre of domestic interiors in Impressionist art, for these artists were first and foremost individuals, from different backgrounds and lifestyles.

The Impressionists are, perhaps, best understood not as a movement with a coherent aesthetic program but rather as a group of painters united in their opposition to the conservative tastes of the École des Beaux-Arts and the official Salon. Gradually, the tide turned in their favor, aided by a slow change in middle-class taste and the slow, but sure, recognition of their natural talents and abilities.

Duranty summarized the Impressionist movement in his essay *The New Painting: Concerning the Group of Artists Exhibiting at the Durand-Ruel Galleries*:

> Rather than acting as a group who share the same goal and who arrive successively at this crossroads where many paths diverge, these artists above all are

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[170] William A. Coles, *Alfred Stevens*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Museum of Art; Baltimore: The Walters Art Gallery; Montréal: Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1977, page 37.

> people of independent temperaments. They come in search of freedom, not dogma.
>
> Originality in this movement coexists with eccentricity and ingenuousness, visionaries exist with strict observers, and ignorant naïfs with scholars who want to rediscover the naïveté of the ignorant. There are voluptuous delights in painting for those who know and love it, and there are unfortunate attempts that grate on the nerves. An idea ferments in one's brain while almost unconscious audacity spills from another's brush. All of this is interrelated.[171]

The younger generation of European avant-garde painters that followed the Impressionists rejected realism and retreated into an introspective interest in abstract form and color. Édouard Vuillard and Pierre Bonnard depicted daily life throughout much of their careers. Their work continued the Impressionists exploration of intimate interiors. In such paintings as Vuillard's *Interior with Woman Sewing* (Figure 98) and *The Breakfast Table* (Figure 99), one can see the influence of Caillebotte and Monet in both the subject matter and treatment of the space. The interest in expressing the intellectual side of women in domestic spaces is evident in his *The Newspaper* (Figure 100) which portrays a woman reading a newspaper in a domestic interior, while at the back of the room a large window brings the outside world into the home.

Windows appear throughout many of the paintings by Vuillard and Bonnard, as they did in the work of Morisot and Caillebotte. Vuillard and Bonnard juxtapose interior and exterior spaces as did many of the Impressionists. Bonnard's *The Breakfast Room* (Figure 101) depicts both interior and exterior with the window occupying the central space in the composition. The expansive exterior through the window is in sharp contrast to the shallow space of the interior, with a woman barely perceptible in the corner. In *At the Window* (Figure 102) Vuillard minimizes the interior space and monumentalizes the

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[171] Edmond Duranty, *La Nouvelle Peinture: À Propos du Groupe d'Aritstes qui Expose dans les Galeries Durand-Ruel*, Caen: L'Échoppe, 1988: "Ce sont moins gens voulant tous nettement et fermement la même chose qui viennent sucessivement à ce carrefour d'où rayonnent plusieurs sentiers, que des tempéraments avant tout indépendants. Il n'y viennent pas non plus chercher des dogmes, mais des exemples de liberté.

Des originalités avec des excentricités et des ingénuités, des visionnaires à côté de savants qui veulent retrouver la naïveté des ignorants; de vraies voluptés de peinture, pour ceux qui la connaissent et qui l'aiment, à côté d'essais malheureux qui froissent les nerfs; l'idée fermentant dans tel cerveau, l'audace presque inconsciente jaillissant sous tel pinceau. voilà la réunion." Translation in Charles S. Moffett (et al.), *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874-1886*, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1986, page 46.

window further exploring this theme. He even goes as far as to ignore the interior space completely as in *Child at a Window* (Figure 103). Vuillard's subject matter changed significantly around 1900, when he no longer painted primarily intimate interiors of family life, but turned to painting society portraits and decorations.

Pierre Bonnard continued his portrayals of domestic interiors well into the twentieth century. Such works as *Woman Washing Herself* (Figure 104) continued in the style of Degas and his voyeuristic manner of observing women at their toilettes, while *Man and Woman* (Figure 105) further explores the division between men and women in an intimate setting. By depicting both the man and woman as nude in a bedroom setting this painting was indicative of the changing times and takes the portrayal of an intimate setting further than any of the Impressionists ever would have dared. Bonnard's penetration into psychology and silence is related to the sets designed by Bonnard and other young painters such as Édouard Vuillard, Paul Sérusier, Paul Ranson and Maurice Denis for Lugné-Poë's Théâtre de l'Oeuvre which performed symbolist plays by Ibsen and Strindberg.[172] These plays, like Bonnard's painting, were suggestive of the tensions working beneath the surface of our daily existence and are reminiscent of the domestic tensions portrayed by the male Impressionists.

The Impressionists took an active interest in portraying the domestic life of the milieu of which they were a part. Each artist expressed his own thoughts and feelings of private life through the depictions of domestic interiors. Their unique approaches to private life set the stage for future artists to continue exploring the intimacies of domesticity. Today one can only admire the works of the Impressionists as personal expressions of the artist's most private life and reflections of how society played a part in their world.

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[172] Sasha M. Newman (ed.), *Bonnard: The Late Paintings*, New York and London: Thames and Hudson, 1984, page 108.

APPENDIX: FIGURES

Figure 1

Marie Bracquemond
Under the Lamp
1887

Figure 2

Mary Cassatt
Mother Feeding Her Child
1898

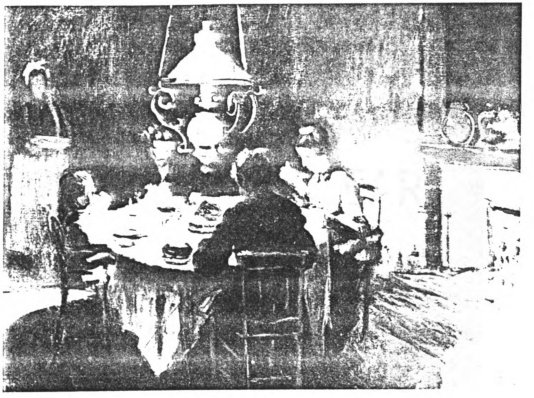

Figure 3

Claude Monet
The Artist's Family at Dinner
1868

Figure 4

Claude Monet
Le Déjeuner
1868

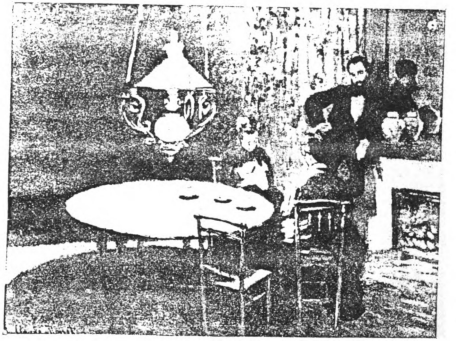

Figure 5

Claude Monet
Interior after Diner
1872

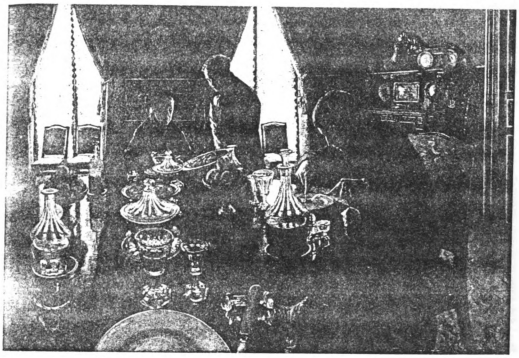

Figure 6

Gustave Caillebotte
Déjeuner (Luncheon)
1876

Figure 7

Mary Cassatt
Five O'Clock Tea
1880

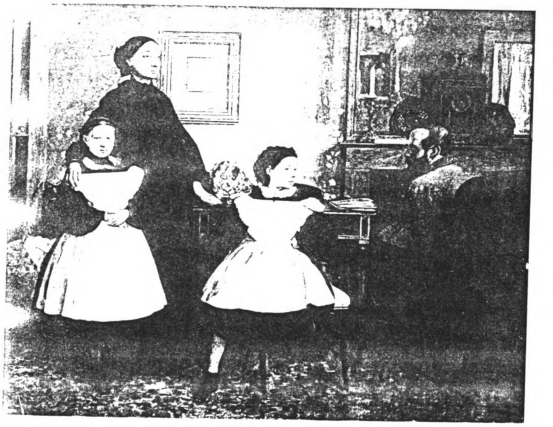

Figure 8

Edgar Degas
The Bellelli Family
1858-67

Figure 9

Berthe Morisot
La Lecture (now known as *The Mother and Sister of the Artist)*
1869-70

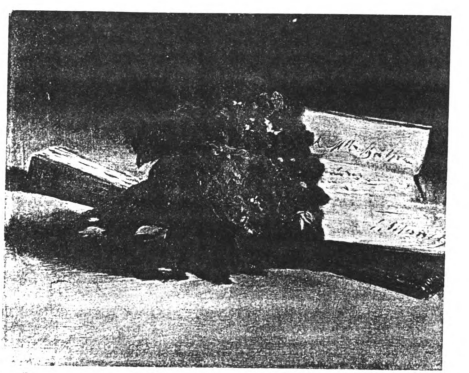

Figure 10

Edouard Manet
Still Life with Violets and Fan
1872

Figure 11

Edouard Manet
Berthe Morisot in a Black Hat, with Violets
1872

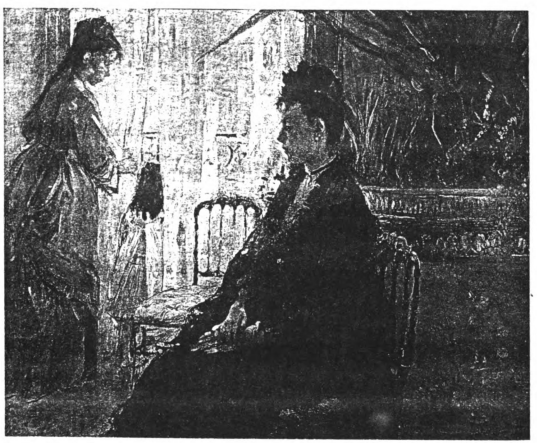

Figure 12

Berthe Morisot
Interior
1872

Figure 13

Jan Vermeer
Woman with a Water Jug
1664-65

Figure 14

Pieter de Hooch
Courtyard of a House in Delft
1658

Figure 15

Claude Monet
Madame Monet Embroidering
1875

Figure 16

Jan Vermeer
The Lacemaker
1669-70

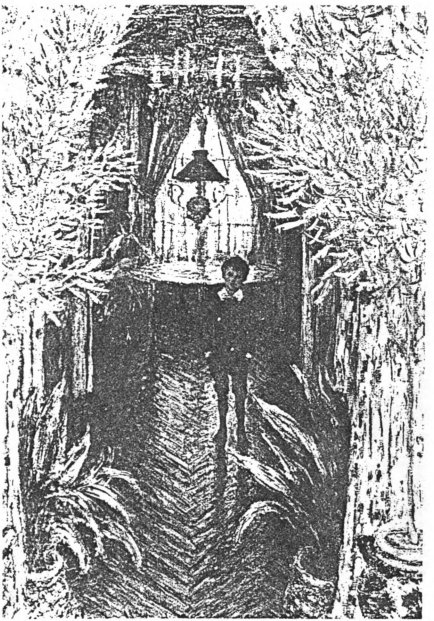

Figure 17

Claude Monet
Apartment Interior
1875

Figure 18

Mary Cassatt
Young Girl in a Blue Armchair
1878

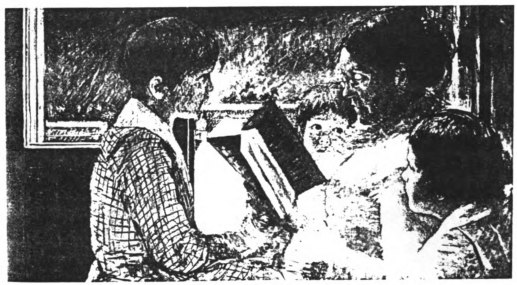

Figure 19

Mary Cassatt
La Lecture (Mrs. Cassatt Reading to Her Grandchildren)
1880

Figure 20

Mary Cassatt
Reading 'Le Figaro'
1878

Figure 21

Mary Cassatt
Woman Reading (now known as *Portrait of Lydia Cassatt, the Artist's Sister)*
1878

Figure 22

Pierre-Auguste Renoir
Portrait of Madame Monet
1872

Figure 23

Edouard Manet
La Lecture
1868-69

Figure 24

Gustave Caillebotte
Interior, Woman Seated
1880

Figure 25

Gustave Caillebotte
View across a Balcony (now known as *Interior, Woman at the Window*)
1880

Figure 26

Claude Monet
Meditation–Madame Monet on the Couch
1887

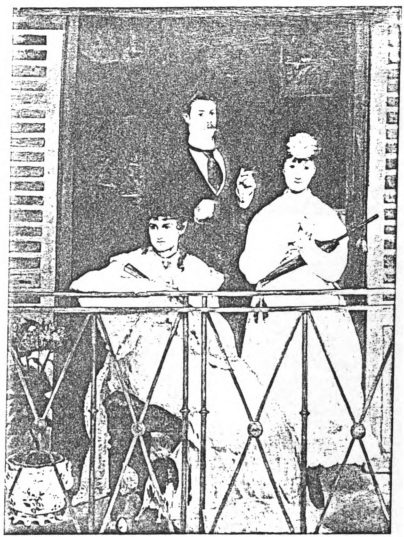

Figure 27

Edouard Manet
The Balcony
1868-69

Figure 28

Berthe Morisot
On the Balcony
1874

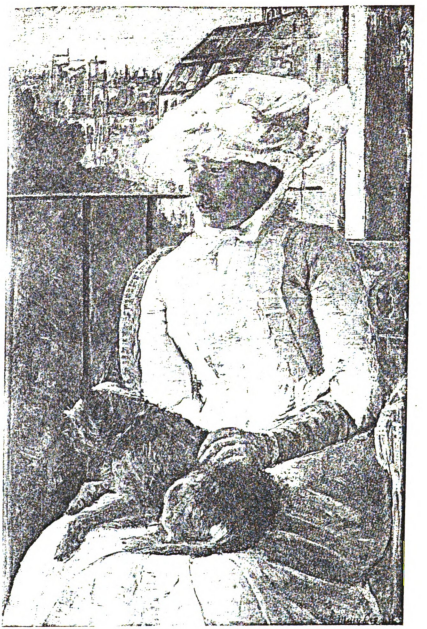

Figure 29

Mary Cassatt
Young Girl at the Window (now known as *Susan on a Balcony Holding a Dog*)
1883

Figure 30

Gustave Caillebotte
The Man on the Balcony
1880

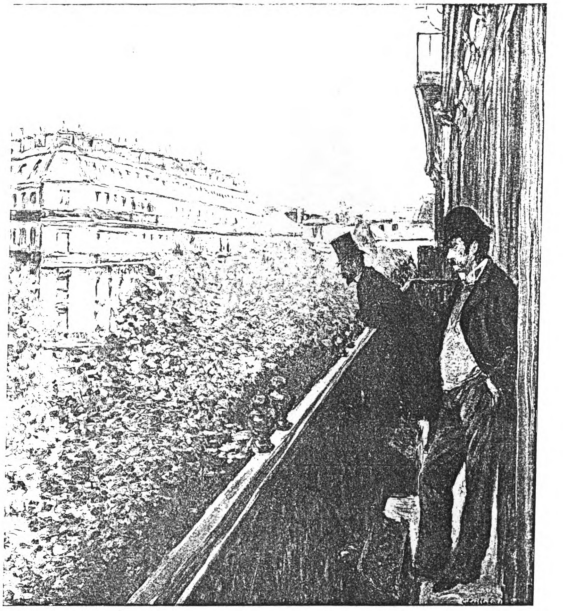

Figure 31

Gustave Caillebotte
Balcony (now known as *Un Balcon, Boulevard Haussmann*)
1880

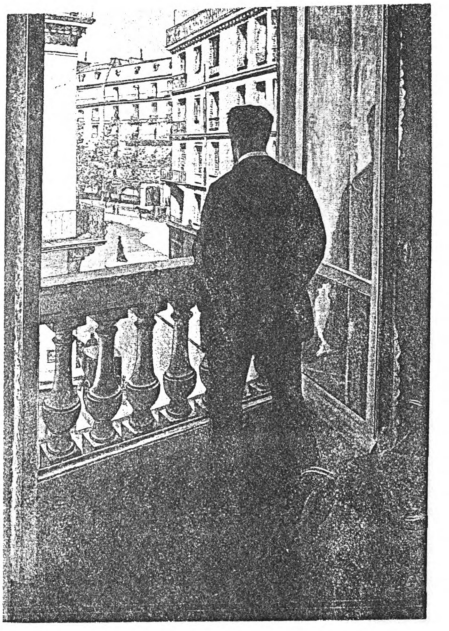

Figure 32

Gustave Caillebotte
Young Man at His Window
1876

Figure 33

Berthe Morisot
The Artist's Sister at a Window
1869

Figure 34

Marie Bracquemond
The Letter
1886

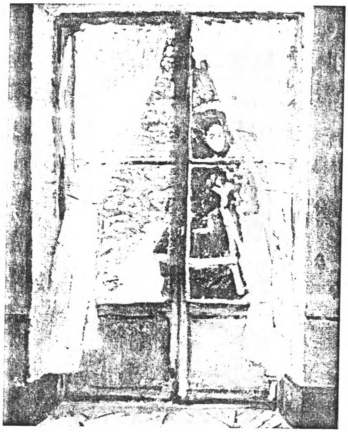

Figure 35

Claude Monet
The Red Cape–Portrait of Madame Monet
1873

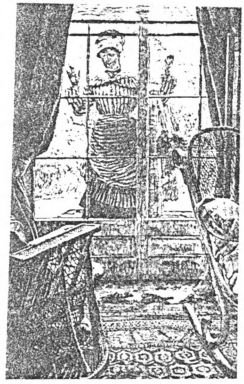

Figure 36

James Tissot
Woman at a Window
1875

Figure 37

Claude Monet
Camille at the Window
1873

Figure 38

James Tissot
At the Seaside
1880

Figure 39

Caspar David Friedrich
Woman at the Window
1822

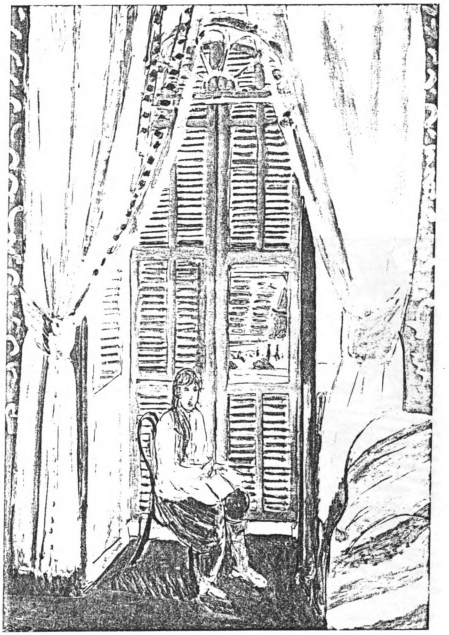

Figure 40

Henri Matisse
The French Window at Nice
1919

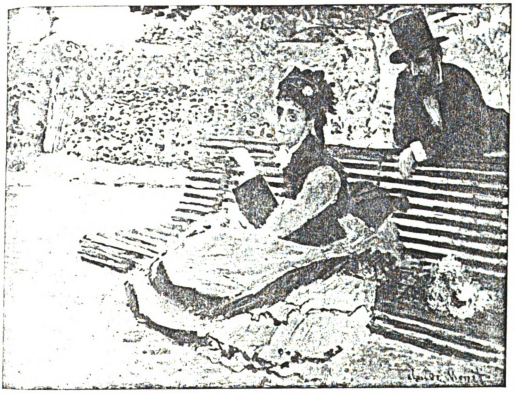

Figure 41

Claude Monet
The Bench (Camille Monet on a Garden Bench)
1873

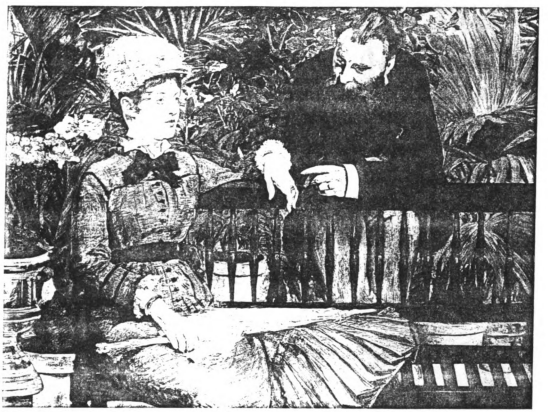

Figure 42

Edouard Manet
In the Conservatory
1879

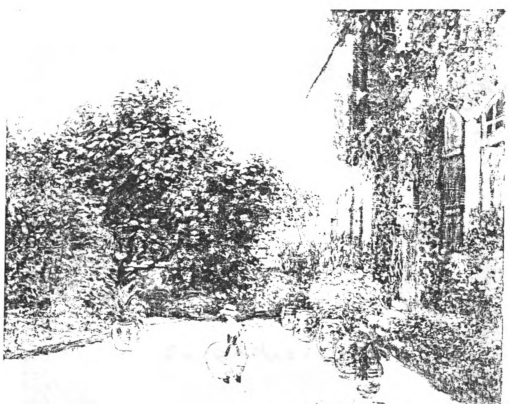

Figure 43

Claude Monet
Monet's House at Argenteuil
1873

Figure 44

Claude Monet
Camille in the Garden with Jean and His Nanny
1873

Figure 45

Claude Monet
Camille and Jean in the Garden at Argenteuil
1873

Figure 46

Berthe Morisot
Wet Nurse
1879

Figure 47

Pierre-Auguste Renoir
Maternity (Aline Charigot and Pierre Renoir)
1886

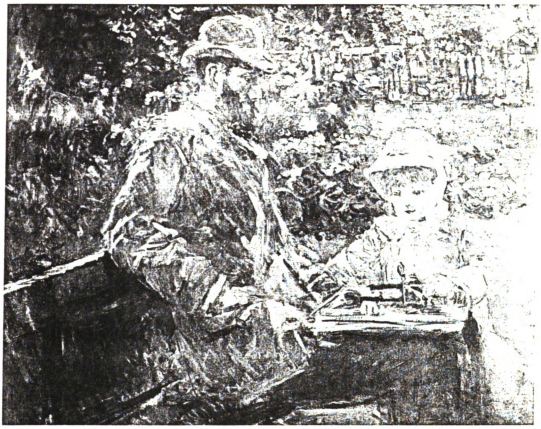

Figure 48

Berthe Morisot
Eugène Manet and His Daughter at Bougival
1881

Figure 49

Berthe Morisot
Eugène Manet and His Daughter in the Garden
1883

Figure 50

Berthe Morisot
Woman and Child in a Garden
1884

Figure 51

Berthe Morisot
The Fable
1883

Figure 52

Mary Cassatt
The Garden (now known as *Lydia Crocheting in the Garden at Marly*)
1880

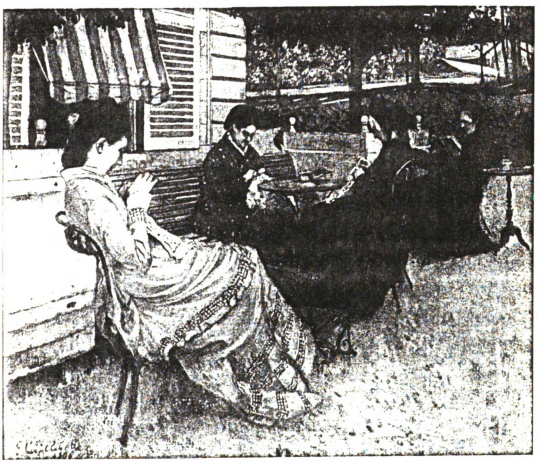

Figure 53

Gustave Caillebotte
Portraits in the Country
1876

Figure 54

Marie Bracquemond
Tea Time
1880

Figure 55

Berthe Morisot
Tea
1882

Figure 56

Berthe Morisot
The Garden
1882 or 1883

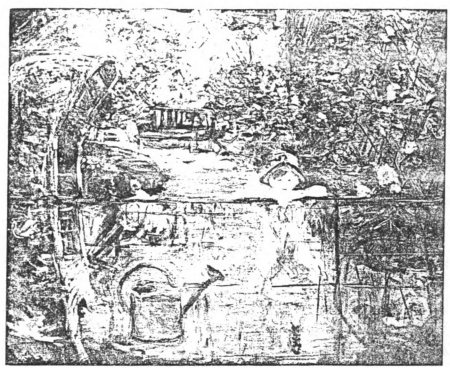

Figure 57

Berthe Morisot
The Garden Chair
1885

Figure 58

Claude Monet
The Artist's Garden at Vétheuil
1881

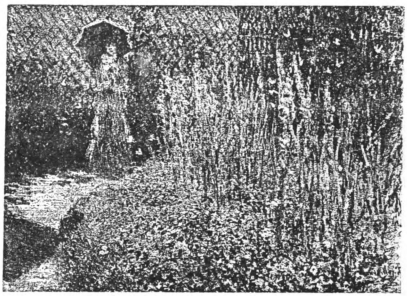

Figure 59

Claude Monet
Gladioli
1876

Figure 60

Gustave Caillebotte
Dahlias, the Garden at Petit-Gennevilliers
1893

Figure 61

Gustave Caillebotte
Roses, the Garden at Petit-Gennevilliers
1886

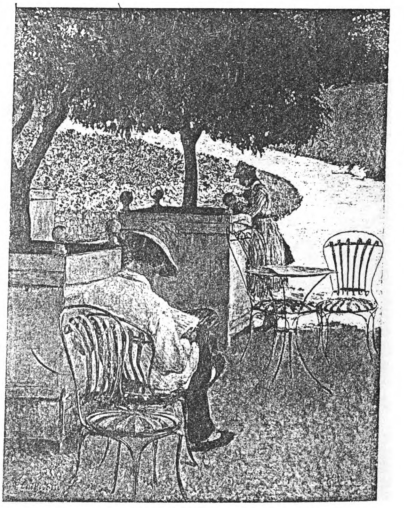

Figure 62

Gustave Caillebotte
The Orange Trees
1878

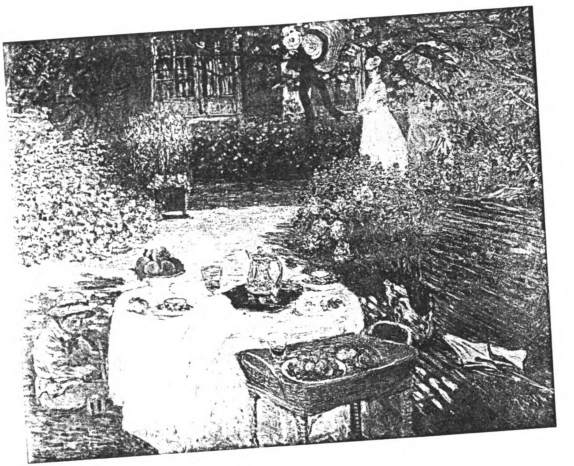

Figure 63

Claude Monet
The Luncheon
1874

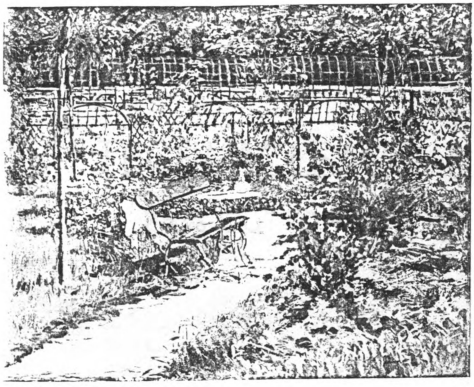

Figure 64

Edouard Manet
The Bench
1881

Figure 65

Edgar Degas
Interior
1868-69

Figure 66

Edouard Manet
Nana
1877

Figure 67

Edgar Degas
Nude Woman Combing Her Hair
1877-79

Figure 68

Berthe Morisot
The Cheval Glass
1876

Figure 69

Edouard Manet
Before the Mirror
1876

Figure 70

Berthe Morisot
Woman at Her Toilette
1880

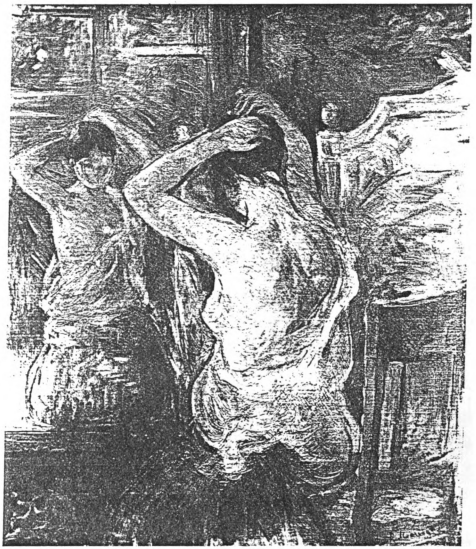

Figure 71

Berthe Morisot
At the Psyché
1891

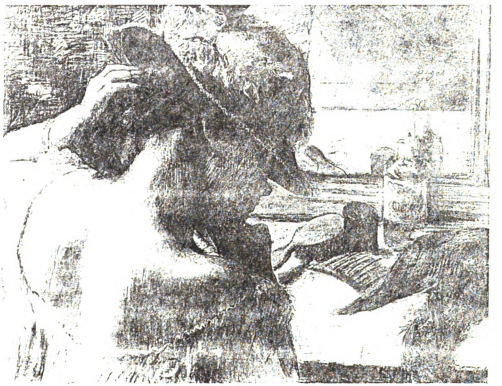

Figure 72

Edgar Degas
Before the Mirror
1889

Figure 73

Edgar Degas
After the Bath
1885

Figure 74

Mary Cassatt
Morning Toilette (now known as *Girl arranging her Hair*)
1886

Figure 75

Pierre-Auguste Renoir
Bather and Maid
1900

Figure 76

Berthe Morisot
The Bath (Girl Arranging Her Hair)
1885-86

Figure 77

Edouard Manet
The Bath
1879

Figure 78

Edgar Degas
Woman in the Tub
1886

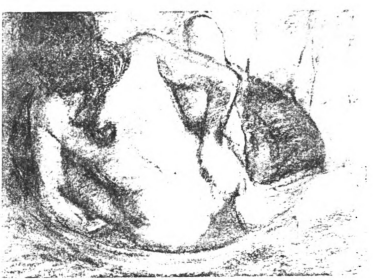

Figure 79

Edgar Degas
The Tub
1884

Figure 80

Pierre-Auguste Renoir
After the Bath
1888

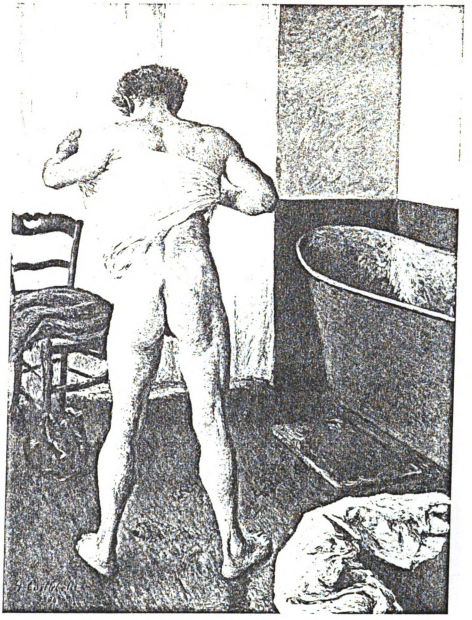

Figure 81

Gustave Caillebotte
Man After His Bath
1884

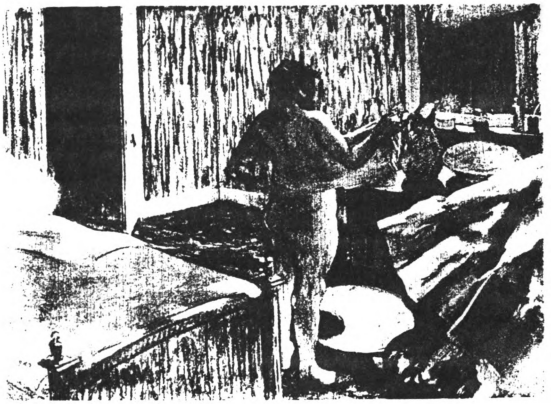

Figure 82

Edgar Degas
Woman at Her Toilette
1886-90

Figure 83

Eva Gonzalès
Morning Awakening
1876

Figure 84

Berthe Morisot
Getting Up
1886

Figure 85

Berthe Morisot
Young Woman Powdering Her Face
1877

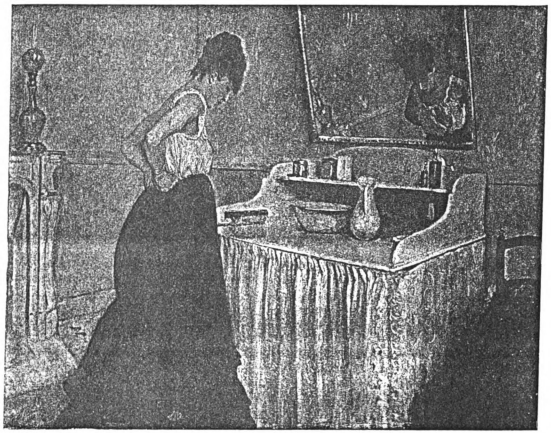

Figure 86

Gustave Caillebotte
Woman at a Dressing Table
1873

Figure 87

Eva Gonzalès
Pink Morning
1874

Figure 88

Mary Cassatt
Mother About to Wash Her Sleepy Child
1880

Figure 89

Mary Cassatt
Mother and Baby
1880

Figure 90

Mary Cassatt
Mother Nursing Her Baby
1908

Figure 91

Jacob Meyer de Haan
Motherhood, Marie Henry Feeding Her Child
1891

Figure 92

Maurice Denis
Mother and Child
1895

Figure 93

Berthe Morisot
The Cradle
1872

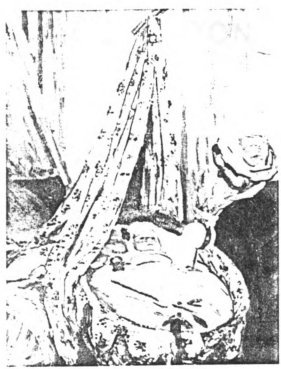

Figure 94

Claude Monet
The Cradle–Camille with the Artist's Son Jean
1867

Figure 95

Alfred Stevens
Complete Happiness
1861

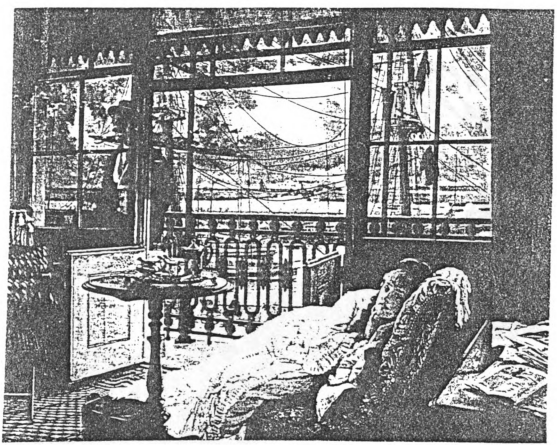

Figure 96

James Tissot
A Passing Storm
1875

Figure 97

Alfred Stevens
The Bath
1867

Figure 98

Édouard Vuillard
Interior with Woman Sewing
1899

Figure 99

Édouard Vuillard
The Breakfast Table
1900

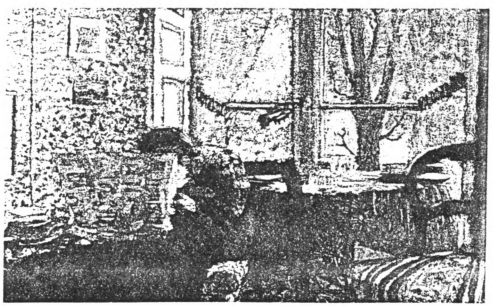

Figure 100

Édouard Vuillard
The Newspaper
1895

Figure 101

Pierre Bonnard
The Breakfast Room
1931-32

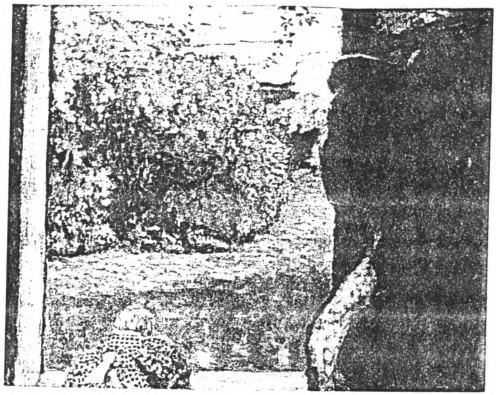

Figure 102

Édouard Vuillard
At the Window
1900

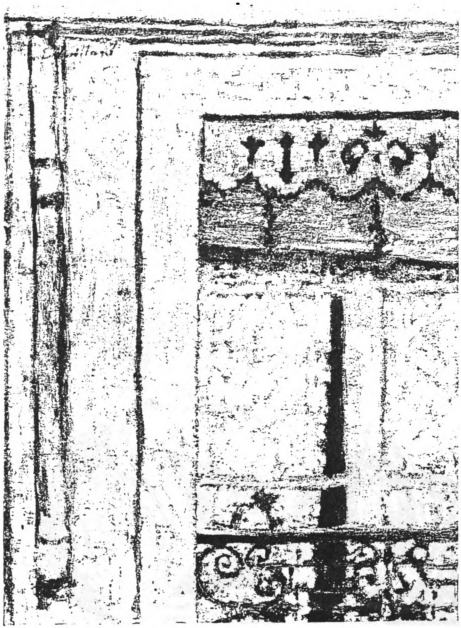

Figure 103

Édouard Vuillard
Child at a Window
1901

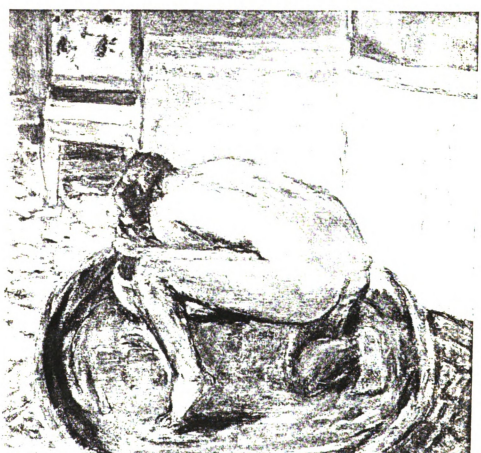

Figure 104

Pierre Bonnard
Woman Washing Herself
1916

Figure 105

Pierre Bonnard
Man and Woman
1900

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