University of North Carolina Asheville
Journal of Undergraduate Research
Asheville, North Carolina
December 2020

Women Painting Women: Empowerment and Exploration in Artworks from the Renaissance Era to the Mid-Twentieth Century

Isabella Losskarn
Art History
The University of North Carolina Asheville
One University Heights
Asheville, North Carolina, 28804 USA

Faculty Advisor: Eva Bares, PhD.

Abstract

Through the course of history, women's portrayal of women in visual art has been influenced by societal norms and definitively progressive social movements. This has resulted in the creation and development of specific gender-and-class-and-race related stylistic conventions. Although there is documentation of women operating as professional artists as early as the Renaissance Era (such as Lavinia Fontana and Artemisia Gentileschi), later intellectual movements such as the Enlightenment positively influenced the development of social movements such as feminism and the Women's Rights Movement, resulting in greater recognition and mobility for professional women artists lasting into the present day. This is especially evident in paintings created by European and American women artists in the 19th and 20th centuries, as it was during these periods and in these areas that these particular intellectual and social movements occurred. Analyzing and juxtaposing paintings from artists in these periods— including Mary Cassatt, Berthe Morisot, Anna Bilinska-Bohdanowicz, and Suzanne Valadon, Edgar Degas and Édouard Manet— this thesis focuses on intersections between feminist history and visual art to document how women artists have used visual art to help empower the female gender. Through the discussion and comparison of artworks by the artists listed above, this thesis will examine how the female gender is constructed in visual art and demonstrate how this representation has developed alongside historical movements to both empower and explore female gender as a reality.

1. Introduction

Perceptions of gender and gender identity have shifted and developed significantly throughout the course of human history, and this has had an impact on how gender and gender identity are represented in visual artworks from various periods. This development is particularly apparent when comparing paintings from various time periods associated with historical movements related to gender empowerment, and for this reason much of this research will be concerned with artworks from the 19th and 20th centuries as these are key time periods in which feminism gained recognition as a definitive social movement. By maintaining a geographical focus on artworks created in Europe and North America, it is possible to draw on the widely available history regarding professional women artists and the practice of the particular kind of representational art which has its origins in Renaissance era Europe. Through the discussion and comparison of portrait and genre paintings created by artists in these periods— including Lavinia Fontana, Artemisia Gentileschi, Mary Cassatt, Berthe Morisot, Anna Bilinska-Bohdanowicz, Suzanne Valadon, Edgar Degas and Edouard Manet— this thesis focuses on intersections between feminist history and visual art to emphasize how women artists have used visual art to help empower and explore the female gender as a reality, and asserts that intellectual movements (such as the Renaissance and the Enlightenment) positively influenced the development of progressive social movements (such as feminism and Western Women's Rights Movements) resulting in greater recognition and mobility for professional women artists lasting into the future.

2. Historical Context for the Development of Professional Women Artists

Prior to the 16th century, women artists were largely unrecognized as professionals as a result of societal norms that bound them to creating artwork primarily within a religious context. Education for women prior to the Renaissance was typically only offered in the context of a convent, i.e. for those interested in becoming a nun. Consequently, many of the well documented women artists from this period practiced manuscript illuminations as their main form of art.[1] During the Renaissance, wealthy women experienced some social mobility as a result of their financial status and consequently education in the arts became more available to women, although artistic education for women at this time was largely still limited by social customs that dictated different methods of instruction and practice for men and women.[2] Specifically, women were prevented from creating artwork from the nude model, and they had a limited ability to create non-figurative artworks as a result of their lack of opportunity to study perspective or create artworks outdoors. As a result of these constraints, many Renaissance Era women artists practiced portraiture, as this was something that could be done without having to leave the household.[3] In addition, women artists of this period were limited to creating portraiture because it was assumed that they lacked the creativity of their male counterparts; portraiture was often considered a less respectable art form, as it involved *copying* the subject matter rather than *interpreting* it or constructing a narrative.[4]

Portrait paintings were widely regarded as a symbol of social status during the Renaissance, and consequently individuals represented in these artworks often adhere to a set of basic stylistic conventions that serve to inform the viewer of the individual's gender and class status.[5] Examples of this include fashionable, gendered garments and hairstyles, as well as gendered facial expressions and the representation of various objects or activities that would allude to one's level of education or profession (such as reading a book, sewing a garment, or painting a portrait). Additionally, Western perceptions of feminine beauty during the Renaissance era were largely associated with race, and pale European complexions typically acted as a signifier of an individual's femininity, beauty, and class status; for this reason, white individuals received the most representation out of any demographic in Renaissance era paintings.[6] As a result, representations of women from this period often attempt to signify feminine beauty by emphasizing the "whiteness" of individuals depicted— dark colored clothing, a figure's surrounding environment, and the stylized representation of black women in the composition are all elements which Renaissance era artists manipulated in an effort to indicate an individual's European traits or heritage.[7]

The existence of these gender-and-race-and-class-specific stylistic conventions alludes to the unique position of women artists of the Renaissance era, as they were tasked with depicting women in a way that empowers and elevates the status of the sitter while maintaining adherence to a set of specific societal norms that dictate various aspects of an individual's appearance. These conventions are particularly evident when reviewing self-portraits created by women artists during this time, as self-portraiture was often seen as a way of expressing the artist's level of skill (and by extension, as a means of empowerment)- and it was typical that public perceptions of a woman's artistic ability were in direct correlation with their social status and demeanor.[8]

The notion that this sense of empowerment exists alongside the need to conform to gendered social norms in artwork created by women in the Renaissance era is especially apparent when analyzing the self-portrait paintings of Lavinia Fontana and Artemisia Gentileschi. One of Fontana's most well-known artworks, *Self-Portrait at the Spinet (1577),* was created for Fontana's future father-in-law as an engagement gift.[9] It is clear that Fontana desired to highlight her class status in this painting, as the iconography of *Self-Portrait at the Spinet* (Fig. 1) features symbols of wealth, status, and education, namely by showing Fontana seated at a spinet and accompanied by a servant who displays musical notes.

(fig. 1) *Self Portrait at the Spinet, Lavinia Fontana*, Oil on Canvas, 1577, 27 x 24 cm
Accademia di San Luca, Rome,
https://www.wga.hu/html_m/f/fontana/lavinia/selfspin.html

This illustrates Fontana's degree of education as it is clear that she is able to read and play a musical instrument. Additionally, the inclusion of a servant alludes to Fontana's wealth and class status, which is further highlighted by the difference in garment choice for each figure: the servant wears a simple neutrally colored dress that seems to fade into the background, while Fontana's dress is colorful and rife with beaded accessories. An easel in the background is indicative of Fontana's accomplishment as an artist, and her status as an educated woman is also reinforced by the Latin inscription in the upper left corner of the painting.[10] While these aspects of the painting serve to empower Fontana's status as a woman in the Renaissance era, it is apparent that she still had to adhere to certain gender norms in order for this to be a socially acceptable representation of a woman for the time. Examples of this include the styling of Fontana's hair—it is styled as an updo, which indicates her status as a proper woman by projecting modesty, drawing attention to features considered attractive during the Renaissance era, such as her rounded face and large forehead— as well as her slight smile, rose facial skin, pale complexion, and erect posture. Additionally, Fontana's elaborate yet modest choice of dress also is reflective of her desire to conform to the societal standards for women at the time, as the red coloration of her dress paired with the depiction of a red wedding knot on the spinet allude to Fontana's status as a soon-to-be married woman, as red was a common color for wedding dresses in Bologna at the time.[11]

Similar to Fontana's *Self Portrait at The Spinet*, the iconography in Artemisia Gentileschi's *Self Portrait as The Allegory of Painting (ca. 1639)* also navigates gendered societal constraints alongside the theme of empowerment. Gentileschi's *Self Portrait as The Allegory of Painting* (Fig. 2) is a response to Cesare Ripa's description of painting in *Iconologia*, where Ripa states that painting is "a beautiful woman, with full black hair, dishevelled, and twisted in various ways, with arched eyebrows that show imaginative thought, the mouth covered with a cloth tied behind her ears, with a chain of gold at her throat from which hangs a mask, and has written in front 'Imitation.'"[12]

(fig. 2) *Self Portrait as The Allegory of Painting*, Artemisia Gentileschi, Oil on Canva, c. 1638-39, 98.6 x 75.2 c, Royal Collection Trust, https://www.rct.uk/collection/405551/self-portrait-as-the-allegory-of-painting-la-pittura

Ripa's description of painting is a harsh criticism of the profession, and Gentileschi's painting, *Self Portrait as the Allegory of Painting* was intended to combat this criticism by providing an image of painting that embodies the positive aspects of Ripa's description and disregarding the negative ones (such as the covered mouth and the inscription, "imitation").[13] Although Gentileschi painted *Self Portrait as the Allegory of Painting* as a response to Ripa's *Iconologia*, the artwork is also intended to be a self-portrait, and it becomes apparent that these positive aspects of Ripa's description of painting have been adapted by Gentileschi in an effort to describe her status as an educated woman and artist.[14] This is evident in Gentilseschi's treatment of the hair; Ripa states that it is "full black hair, dishevelled", and Gentileschi renders her hair in a tied-up manner that can still be considered modest, although there are many stray hairs framing her face. In addition to this, Gentileschi also makes the viewer aware of her status by rendering herself with stylistic conventions that were typically used to depict wealthy or attractive women during the Renaissance era, such as soft rounded features, pale complexion, and blushing rose colored cheeks.

Where Renaissance era women artists sought to create depictions of women which stress the strength, independence, and intelligence of women, representations of women in paintings created by male artists often emphasize traits of feminine beauty (i.e. pale skin, well-groomed garments and hairstyle, erect posture, a fragile/weak/disengaged appearance or expression) in favor of the themes that are typically portrayed by their female counterparts.[15] Additionally, while there are depictions of "powerful" women which have been created by Renaissance era male artists, these depictions often feature specific iconography which correlates the idea of a "powerful" woman with evil religious themes or behavior.[16] This difference between male and female artists' representation of women during the Renaissance era is easily demonstrated in a comparison of Caravaggio's *Judith Beheading Holofernes* and Gentileschi's *Judith Slaying Holofernes.*

When viewing Gentileschi's *Judith Slaying Holofernes* (Fig. 3) simultaneously alongside Caravaggio's *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (Fig. 4), it becomes clear how vastly each composition differs from the other.

(fig. 3) *Judith Slaying Holofernes,* Artemisia Gentileschi, Oil on Canvas, c. 1620, 146.5 x 108 cm, Uffizi Gallery, https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/judith-beheading-holofernes

(fig. 4) *Judith Beheading Holofernes*, Caravaggio, Oil on Canvas, 1599, 145 x 195 cm, Palazzo Barberini, https://www.barberinicorsini.org/en/opera/judith-beheading-holofernes/

Each painting depicts the same religious scene— Judith's seduction and beheading of the Assyrian general Holofernes— however, Gentileschi's version offers the viewer an image of a powerful, rage-filled woman brutally engaged in the act of murder, whereas Caravaggio's rendition of the same scene presents a dainty, frail iteration of Judith's character.[17] Details of Caravaggio's *Judith Beheading Holofernes* emphasize Judith's beauty, and work to correlate the story of Judith's successful murder of Holofernes with the idea that feminine beauty, femininity, and powerful female behavior are tied to sinful behavior— examples of these details include: Judith's erect/unnatural posture while engaged in the act of murder, the rendering of Judith's maidservant as a lower-class elderly woman, the emphasized depiction of Holofernes' strength in his moment of death, and the use of gender-and-class-and-race describing stylistic conventions which dictate aspects of appearance such as hair, clothing, and makeup choices.[18] In contrast to this, Gentileschi's *Judith Slaying Holofernes* uses harsh, honest imagery to describe Judith as a strong, powerful woman. While certain elements of the composition— such as Judith's hair, dress, and complexion— function to convey Judith's feminine beauty to the viewer, other aspects of the painting allow the viewer to realize Judith's rageful strength as the true focal point of the image. For example, this is evident in Gentileschi's more honest approach to rendering light in *Judith Slaying Holofernes,* as though both paintings depict a light which originates from the same source, Gentileschi's painting features light which most strongly illuminates the action of the beheading of Holofernes

(thus leaving much of each of the female figures shrouded in shadow), while Caravaggio's rendering clearly illuminates Judith's figure in an almost unbelievable manner in an effort to stress the beauty of her character. Additional features of the painting which support the notion of Gentileschi's desire to depict Judith as powerful are as follows: Gentileschi's choice to depict Judith's maidservant as relatively youthful rather than elderly, the heavily engaged role of the two women in the murder of Holofernes, the contorted posture of Judith as she beheads Holofernes, and the depiction of Holofernes as weak in his moment of death.[19]

Analyzing representations of women in paintings created by Caravaggio, Gentileschi, and Fontana, allows for a theme of empowerment to be recognized in the women artists' artworks. While it is clear that both male and female artists used stylistic conventions affiliated with the societal gender norms of this period, it is apparent that women artists from this time intentionally employed these conventions in conjunction with "powerful" (i.e. symbols of intelligence, status, strength, or independence) iconography to represent themselves in a manner that was opposite of male artists' representation of women.[20] The careful navigation of these gender-related stylistic conventions in paintings created by women artists at this time allowed women to assert their existence as a priority in an artwork over the assertion of their beauty, acting as a subtle means of empowerment. This trend of women artists representing women in an empowering manner is also visible beyond the realm of the Renaissance Era, as changing societal norms throughout the course of history impacted women's artistic freedom and ability to operate as professional artists.[21]

5. Early Wave Feminism and Visual Representations of Feminine Gender Identity in Late-19th Century Paintings

Following the Renaissance Era (ca. 1350-1600), a period of intellectual prosperity ensued in Europe. This period, commonly referred to as The Enlightenment (ca. 1685-1815), was pivotal in the success of early wave feminism as it provided the philosophy, literature, and access to education that was necessary to create the groundwork for the ideology behind early feminist theory. As a result of the Enlightenment's focus on the furthering of philosophy and academia (and its inclusion of professional women in these areas, such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Olympe de Gouges), a growing public affinity for women's rights became recognizable— although it is also clear that during this era advocacy for women's rights was only beginning to spread throughout the Western world, and no true "feminist" movement existed at this point.[22]

Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, the terms "feminism" and "feminist" did not exist — instead, individuals who were in support of women's rights were often dubbed "female philosophers."[23] While an emerging public interest in women's rights issues became visible during the Enlightenment as a result of shifting intellectual values and the inclusion of more women in academia, feminism did not yet exist as a recognizable social or ideological movement.[24] In the late-19th century, increasing support for women's rights sparked the beginnings of a true, organized feminist movement- however, this first "early wave" of feminism is often criticized for being exclusionary in nature as it discriminated against women of color and was concerned primarily with Western locations, issues and ideologies.[25] Despite the exclusionary nature of early wave feminism, changing social attitudes in this era allowed for some development of the basic gender-describing stylistic conventions that had become prominent during the Renaissance era.

While The Enlightenment may have only provided a small amount of social and intellectual mobility for professional women of that time, as a result of this period's inclusion and recognition of women in professional and academic fields, public perceptions of the value and capabilities of women shifted to represent a slightly more progressive view of the female gender.[26] This altered, slightly more progressive attitude towards women and women's rights is visible in paintings created by women artists post-Enlightenment in the late 19th century. Specifically, paintings of women created by women artists during this time include an updated, 19th-century version of the previously described gender-and-class-and-race affiliated stylistic conventions which appear in Renaissance Era women artists' self-portraiture. These new stylistic conventions differ from those that are affiliated with the Renaissance Era in that the post-Enlightenment public attitudes towards female-specific gender norms were somewhat less restrictive, and allowed for more freedom of expression.[27] Examples of the stylistic conventions which have been carried over from the Renaissance Era include: pale European complexion, displays of modesty, the depiction of women executing a task or exercising independence, the depiction of fashionable garments, and the addressing of the viewer directly via the gaze of the figure.[28] In addition to the stylistic conventions which have been carried over from the Renaissance era, there are also new gender-and-class-and-race describing stylistic conventions which have emerged as a result of the slightly less restrictive gender expectations affiliated with the post-Enlightenment Western world— examples of these

new stylistic conventions include: displays of motherhood, displays of domestic skill, and the depiction of women with casual posture.[29]

The imagery in Anna Bilińska-Bohdanowicz's *Self Portrait with Apron and Brushes* supports the notion of women artists continued use and development of these pre-existing stylistic conventions, as it can be observed that Bilińska-Bohdanowicz has represented herself here in a way that is strikingly similar to the manner in which women artists of the Renaissance Era approached the composition of self-portraits. *Self Portrait with Apron and Brushes* (Fig. 5) depicts the artist, Bilińska-Bohdanowicz, seated casually in a leaning position, in a room that is presumably her studio space.

(fig. 5) *Self Portrait with Apron and Brushes*, Anna Bilinska-Bohdanowicz, Oil on Canvas, 1887, National Museum in Kraków https://culture.pl/en/artist/anna-bilinska-bohdanowicz

The dark coloration of the hair and clothing emphasize Bilińska-Bohdanowicz's pale complexion, and the figure's right arm, which is positioned in a comfortable leaning stance upon the right knee, holds an assortment of paint brushes, while the left arm dangles at Bilińska-Bohdanowicz's side loosely grasping a used painter's palette. These visual elements highlight the continuity of Renaissance era stylistic conventions, creating a link between Bilińska-Bohdanowicz's *Self Portrait with Apron and Brushes* and those of her female Renaissance colleagues. Although the figure's dress and general appearance are in accordance with societal gender norms for upper-class women during this period in Europe (i.e. the garments, accessories, and hair are styled in a fashionable, yet modest manner), Bilińska-Bohdanowicz's choice to render herself in a casual position and use of predominantly neutral tones in the rendering of this painting- such as the cascading charcoal-colored sea of fabric that serves as the figure's dress, and the relaxed stance of the shoulders and wrists- is suggestive of her intent to highlight her status as a professional artist by providing the viewer with imagery that is purposefully less feminine and distinctly informative of her individual status and character in what could be viewed as a subtle objection to societal gender norms.[30]

A first real, post-Renaissance breakthrough of women depicting women occurs in the painting by Mary Cassatt titled *Young Mother Sewing (1900),* which embodies the changing societal attitudes regarding gender and sexuality at the turn of the 20th century.[31] The composition of *Young Mother Sewing* (Fig. 6), which features a young woman and her child as the central focus of the painting, is set within a colorful and well-decorated interior.

(fig. 6) *Young Mother Sewing, Mary Cassatt*, 1900, Oil on Canvas, 92.4 x 73.7 cm, The Met Museum
https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/10425

Resting against her mother's knee, the young girl is depicted gazing outwards in the direction of the viewer as her mother stitches a piece of fabric, her gaze appearing to confidently question the viewer's presence. Both figures are adorned with fashionable attire, and a feeling of casual boredom emanates from both the posture and expression of each figure. These elements of the composition— the feeling of boredom, the depiction of a mother with her child, and the maternal figure's engagement in a domestic activity— can be considered as an extension of the gender-and-class-and-race describing stylistic conventions which originated by women artists in the Renaissance era, as these elements assert the independence, intelligence, and importance of women in a manner that is comparable to the way in which Renaissance era women artists chose to illustrate the same themes.

Perhaps influenced by other artists' exploration of familial themes in painting (such as Degas, for example), Cassatt's choice to depict a young mother with her child in *Young Mother Sewing* is reflective of a shift which occurred during this period regarding society's perception of women and femininity.[32] While appearance, behavior, and social status have reigned as the main factors which determine the public's perception of women until this point, at the turn of the 20th century, themes of motherhood and domesticity gained popularity among artists, writers, and philosophers, and consequently the public's perception of the female gender adapted to accommodate an increasing interest in aspects of motherhood and domestic life.[33] Cassatt's *Young Mother Sewing* embodies this concept by offering the viewer an intimate snapshot of a family moment: a bored daughter resting against her intently occupied mother in a domestic setting. Though painted scenes featuring a mother and child/children were quite popular during this time, women artists' approach to rendering these images varied distinctly from their male counterparts— women often depict the mother and child as the focus of the composition, whereas male artists' often use the mother-with-child imagery as, "either a small part of a larger composition…, or (to) convey an anecdotal message."[34] This idea is evident in the composition of *Young Mother Sewing*, as the casually positioned figures form a clear, central focal point, and there are no elements of the painting which work to create anecdotal meaning.

While Cassatt's work is "devoid of any anecdotal interest," her consistent repetition of feminine subject matter (i.e. the representation of women, mothers, and children) in conjunction with gender-and-class-and-race describing stylistic conventions across her body of work makes it apparent that her paintings could have functioned to assert the existence and importance of women during her lifetime.[35] An example of this is her use of informal posture in *Young Mother Sewing*—while the informal/casual posture of the subjects in *Young Mother Sewing* can be partially attributed to the impressionist preference for capturing a singular unique moment in life, it is worth noting that because Impressionism set the precedent of artists' painting figures in casual/leisurely stances, until this point in history women artists have been largely unable to create casual or informal representations of women as a result of historical societal gender

norms.[36] This notion allows the figures' casual posture in *Young Mother Sewing* (and in Cassatt's other works, for that matter) to also be recognizable as an exploration of the representation of femininity in painting which functions to assert women's ability and right to engage in casual behavior or leisurely activity.

Women engaged in leisurely activity is a subject that is also explored in many of Berthe Morisot's artworks. While women in this time period were generally not supposed to be outdoors without male company, Berthe Morisot was able to create a number of paintings which featured outdoor leisure scenes of women (and oftentimes children, as well) by frequently painting on privately-owned property.[37] Many of the gender-and-class-and-race describing conventions which appear in the works of Mary Cassatt and Anna Bilinska-Bohdanowicz also appear in the works of Berthe Morisot, which supports the notion that these Renaissance era originating stylistic conventions continued to be developed in a progressive manner in accordance with societal gender norms and the progression of time. This is exemplified well in Morisot's painting, *In The Garden at Maurecourt* (Fig. 7), an artwork which depicts two well-dressed female figures seated among the grass in a private garden.

(fig. 7) *In The Garden at Maurecourt*, Berthe Morisot, 1884, Oil on Canvas, 54 x 65.1 cm, Toledo Museum of Art http://emuseum.toledomuseum.org/objects/54778

The figures in *In The Garden at Maurecourt*— a woman accompanied by a young girl, located in the center of the composition— are the clear focal point of the painting. Surrounding the two figures, a violent sea of color and brush strokes presents itself as a garden environment in which the women rest casually. The figures' clothing, also an array of saturated hues, works with the colorful background to highlight the pale complexion (and by effect, the feminine beauty) of the two women. Similar to paintings by Mary Cassatt and Anna Bilinska-Bohdanowicz, and their Renaissance era counterparts (such as Artemisia Gentileschi and Lavinia Fontana), iconography suggesting modesty—such as the subtle rose pigmentation visible on the cheeks of the leftmost figure, the modest yet fashionable garment choice, the styled-up hair, and the closed posture of the more mature female figure— also functions here to reiterate the gender-and-class status of the individuals represented.[38] However, while many of the compositional details in *In The Garden at Maurecourt* allowed Morisot to present the viewer with an image of two women that was socially acceptable in terms of contemporary beauty standards for this period, other elements of the artwork appear to suggest the independence and significance of the female figures depicted, such as the placement and positioning of the figures within the picture plane. When viewed against societal gender norms for this period, it is possible to interpret this depiction of casually-resting unaccompanied women in an outdoor setting in *In The Garden at Maurecourt* as imagery which is intended to support and assert the independence of women, as this painting offers a representation of two independent female figures during a period in which women were required to have male accompaniment to be able move through public/outdoor spaces.[39] Behind the casually-resting female figures, two vacant garden chairs are visible to the right of what appears to be a woven basket. While the vacant garden chairs and woven basket may appear to be somewhat commonplace compositional elements, when compared to compositional elements and themes used by Morisot's female peers (such as depictions of women executing a task, or depictions of motherhood), it becomes apparent that the iconography of the vacant garden chairs and woven basket may also be

intended to suggest a narrative which describes the female figures' ability to engage in independent decision-making (as they are sitting on the grass, rather than in the chairs) and outdoor leisure activities (such as flower-gathering, for example, as this was a popular women's activity at the time).[40]

6. Exploitation vs. Empowerment

A comparison of male and female artists' representation of women in paintings from this period is helpful in clarifying the existence and use (as well as purpose) of the gender-and-class describing stylistic conventions commonly used by 19th and early 20th century women artists to represent women in paintings. Male artists' representation of women in artwork from this period often shares the common theme of focusing on a woman's figure, or utilizing a woman's presence as a compositional element, rather than asserting the woman's identity or livelihood. This notion is made evident through the juxtaposition of paintings created by male and female artists from this period that represent women, as it is often the case that artwork created by male artists offers a voyeuristic perspective of women which does not allow for them to engage with the viewer.[41] Oftentimes male artists' representation of women features them turning away from the viewer, or engaged (oftentimes passively) with another subject within the artwork that obscures the woman's specific identity and purpose. While there are examples of male artists from this period who have created artworks that feature a female figure engaged with the viewer, these works differ from similar works created by women artists in that they do not seek to empower the female gender or explore gender identity but rather seem to be more focused on examining aspects or realities of familial life.

The differences in male and female artists' representation of women in this period are underscored when comparing Degas' painting, *The Dance Lesson* (1879), to Berthe Morisot's *In the Garden at Maurecourt* (1884). During his career, Degas made many paintings which featured ballet as the main subject matter— these paintings are widely known for Degas' unique approach to representing an aspect of society that was heavily fantasized about, as his paintings "both do and do not adhere to prevailing prejudices; they both support and subvert the commonly held stereotypes of the ballet dancer and her life."[42] A key feature of Degas' series of ballet paintings is his caricature-like depiction of the ballet dancers. While he often depicts the ballerinas in an independent setting (although the dancers would have had a male ballet master present during rehearsals and performances, there are only a few instances in which the ballerinas are shown alongside the male ballet master), his representations typically are bereft of any unique detail which would suggest the individuality of the persons represented.[43] *The Dance Lesson* (Fig. 8) depicts a group of female dancers in various positions, in what is presumably a dance studio.

(fig. 8) *The Dance Lesson*, Edgar Degas, 1879, Oil on Canvas, 38 x 88 cm, National gallery of Art
https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.93045.html

Each figure is situated so that their gaze falls in the opposite direction of the viewer, obscuring their face and specific identity. While the dancers are each executing a different specific action, none of the figures are particularly engaged

in the act of dancing as the painting's title may suggest. Though this image of a disengaged figural presence within genre scenery is characteristic of much of Degas' body of work, it is arguably a significant aspect of his ballet series as ballet dancing is a coordinated and labor-intensive practice and Degas chose to largely ignore these specific defining aspects of ballet practice in favor portraying a voyeuristic narrative.[44] The dancers' passive actions and lack of individual identity in *The Dance Lesson* is indicative of the caricaturization on which Degas' relied to depict the dancers, and supports the notion that the figures in *The Dance Lesson* act mainly as a compositional element, as their precise placement along a diagonal axis in the picture plane functions to provide visual interest and lead the viewer's eye across the painting. Additionally, Degas' choice to create a painting which represents skilled women dancers which are idle and not directly engaged with the viewer alludes to the meaning of the artwork, as oftentimes Degas sought to examine various aspects of "strange human relatedness" with his paintings of women in favor portraying specific identities.[45]

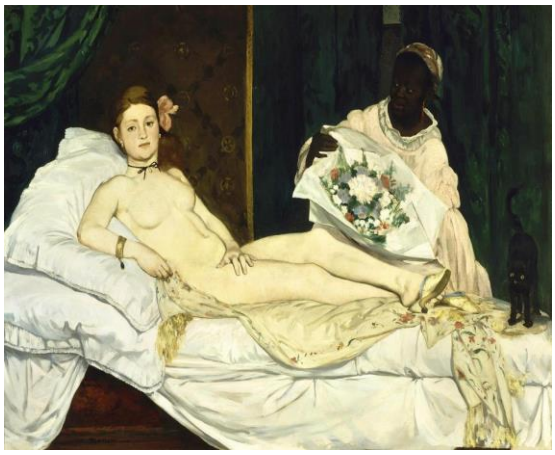
In comparison to Degas' desire to use depictions of women as compositional elements that investigate voyeuristic themes and themes of human relatedness, Berthe Morisot's paintings of women seem to act as empowering testaments to the individuality or personal identity of the model(s). This is evident in the iconography and composition of *In the Garden at Maurecourt* (Fig. 7), as one of the two figures (a woman and a young girl seated) looks over her shoulder so that her gaze directly engages with the viewer, almost as if to assert her presence in the garden.

The central orientation of the figures in this composition makes it apparent that Morisot intended to create a painting that maintains a focus on the existence of the female figures, whereas male artists from this period often sought to use the presence of female figures in paintings to create artwork that is visually pleasing.[46] In addition to this, the position of the figures also alludes to a theme of empowerment in this artwork, as the finely-dressed figures are seated in the grass, unaccompanied, during a period in which women were rarely permitted to be outdoors without male supervising company.[47]

7. Redefining the Reclining Nude

The formation and eventual success of the various women's suffrage movement across the Western world in the late 19th and early 20th century directly impacted the representation of women in visual art, and this impact is apparent when comparing Manet's 1865 painting, *Olympia*, to Suzanne Valadon's *Reclining Nude* from 1928.[48] Both artists approach the same subject matter with a vastly differing understanding of iconography, composition, and meaning, which highlights the progressive evolution of women's rights and perceptions of femininity in the late 19th and early 20th century.

While the women's suffrage movement did not formally begin until 1869, it is evident that societal gender norms were called into question and began to fluctuate in the years prior to the creation of the National Woman Suffrage Association.[49] This notion is identifiable in the subject matter of *Olympia* (Fig. 9), where Manet offers the viewer a reimagined version of the idealized female nude, as details of the painting allude to the nude figure's professional occupation as a prostitute.[50]



(fig. 9**)** *Olympia*, Édouard Manet, 1863, Oil on Canvas, 130 x 190 cm, Musée d'Orsay
https://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/works-in-focus/painting/commentaire_id/olympia-7087.html?cHash=d2a816b40c&tx_kleemobileredirection=1

In his depiction of a prostitute as an idealized reclining nude figure, Manet defies many of the long-held traditions regarding the rendering of the female nude, and offers the viewer an image of a woman who, by the standards of the time, appears cold and unfeminine. In this way, it is recognized that Manet's *Olympia* goes beyond the tradition of representing reclining nude women for their beauty alone and begins to question aspects of societal gender norms at the time.[51] This defiant artistic behavior, Manet's creation of *Olympia*, was not received well during his time— art critics decried its existence, citing her unrelaxed stance and flexed hand posturing as two of many reasons which underpinned their disdain for the artwork.[52] These elements of the painting, among other aspects of the composition (such as Manet's line-heavy approach to rendering, Olympia's unfeminine nature) disobeyed this period's conventions of the female nude, causing "some disturbance in the normal relations between prostitution and femininity" which resulted in the largely negative critic reaction to *Olympia*.[53]

Although Manet's *Olympia* represents the female figure in a manner that can be considered somewhat progressive when compared to other classical depictions of reclining nude women, it is apparent that Manet was still overwhelmingly concerned with asserting the beauty, status, and femininity of the reclining female nude.[54] This is evident in the appearance of the central figure, as despite her nudity she is adorned with makeup, jewelry, high heels, and a floral hair ornament. In addition to this, while the nude figure recognizes the viewer's presence with a direct outward gaze, she exhibits a degree of modesty as a result of Manet's decision to obscure the genital area with the placement of her hand— although critics were offended by the implications that arise as a result of Olympia's flexed hand which obscures her genitals, it is apparent that if Manet had instead left the genital region completely exposed (i.e. with no attempt by the figure to remain modest) critics would have also reacted poorly as modesty and specifically the use of the hand to gently cover genitalia were non-negotiable conventions of the female nude until this point.[55] The presence of the black female maid figure in the background of *Olympia* is also a significant aspect of the painting. Though Manet's rendering of the maid figure can be considered a flattering representation of a black woman during this period, the maid figure's presence in the composition ultimately follows the Renaissance era-originating tradition of manipulating black figures within an image to function as an indicator of class status and feminine beauty for Caucasian individuals which are also represented within the composition.[56] This iconography of modesty, excessive jewelry, feminine beauty and a "well-groomed" appearance in *Olympia* is synchronous with the gender- and class-affiliated stylistic conventions of this period, and the appearance of these stylistic conventions in *Olympia* indicates Manet's desire to still adhere to societal gender norms while creating a version of the female nude that deliberately defies tradition.

Where *Olympia* accepts and embraces aspects of the voyeuristic male gaze, Suzanne Valadon's *Reclining Nude* seems to exist as a rejection of these concepts.[57] *Reclining Nude* (Fig. 10), a self-portrait of Valadon, depicts Valadon resting on a loveseat in a contorted position, gazing coldly outwards in the direction of the viewer.

(fig. 10) *Reclining Nude*, Suzanne Valadon, 1928, Oil on Canvas, 23 5/8 x 31 11/16 inches, The Met Museum https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/461643

Various aspects of the painting allude to a sense of discomfort within the figure, such as: the figure's close proximity to the borders of the picture plane, the clenched fist and closed positioning of the figure, the stylized facial features, and the extension of the figure and the loveseat beyond the edges of the picture plane. In addition to these features of the composition, the color choices in *Reclining Nude* also evoke a tensity-laden sense of unease. Elements of a complementary color scheme present themselves as bold pairings of dissimilar hues (such as yellow and blue, and green and red) which function to reinforce a sense of discomfort within the composition as "[color] pairs with similar hues are, on average, both more preferred and more harmonious."[58] The existence of this intentional sense of discomfort in the context of a traditional reclining nude composition is evidence of Valadon's rejection of the idea that depictions of female reclining nudes must exist primarily as a stereotypical representation of feminine beauty.

While *Reclining Nude* rejects ideas associated with traditional portrayals of the female reclining nude, it does feature some of the gender and class affiliated stylistic conventions typically associated with artworks that depict women from this period. For example, although Valadon's facial expression appears to be rather stoic, a rose coloration on the cheeks indicates a blush- a detail that has often functioned to describe beauty and gender identity in painted representations of women.[59] The figure's position is also significant in this regard: although the figure is nude, Valadon presents herself modestly in a closed position, with crossed legs obscuring the pubic area and an arm attempting to cover her breasts. Historically, modesty has been closely affiliated with societal perceptions of feminine beauty and attractiveness until the mid to late 20th century, and as a result the indication of a woman's modesty in an artwork has often functioned as a convention which describes the beauty and class status of an individual.[60]

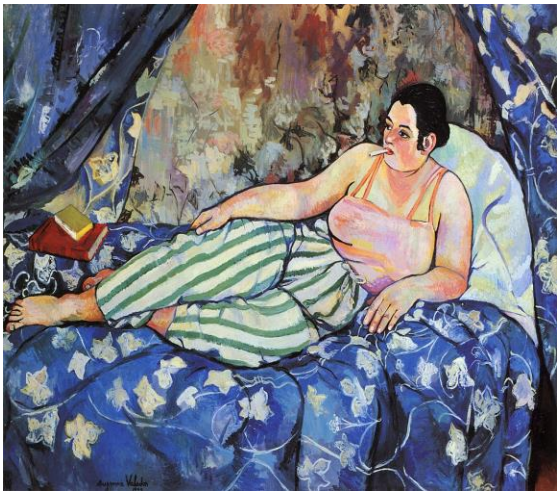
The combination of gender and status describing stylistic conventions with the rejection of traditional renditions in Suzanne Valadon's *Reclining Nude* (1928) of the female nude to create a version of the reclining nude that can be considered beautiful and feminine without existing solely for the viewer's pleasure.[61] This idea of representing women in a manner that opposes aspects of traditional representations of feminine beauty began to gain popularity among women artists in the early-to-mid 20th century, as the continued advancement of the Women's Rights Movement and the Suffrage Movement stimulated the progressive development of societal attitudes towards gender and sexuality.[62]

Representations of Feminism & Women in Early & Mid-20th Century Paintings

Much like the end of the 19th century, the 20th century was heavily characterized by instances of progressive social change and a growing public interest in feminism and gender equality. Specifically, the span of time occurring between the early-and-mid 20th century brought about many progressive political changes throughout the Western world, including the furthering of Feminist movements and the legalization of women's rights to political participation and independence (i.e. the legalization of women's financial independence, and the bodily independence which accompanied the emergence of the use of birth control medicines in some areas).[63] During this era, it is also visible that social movements and historical events across the Western world began to ignite the embers of what would

eventually be recognized in the mid-20th century as the American Civil Rights Movement— as this movement had an enormous impact on the painted representation of women (extending to representations of women created outside of the United States, as well), this thesis will refrain from examining works created beyond the date of 1950 and instead conclude by surveying how women's painted representations of women from this period are reflective of this current and impending social change regarding women's rights and racial equality.

The iconography in Suzanne Valadon's paintings, *Reclining Nude* (1928) and *The Blue Room* (1923), is evocative of the progressive social change regarding women's rights which occurred in the early 20th century. Like Valadon's *Reclining Nude*, many of the details in *The Blue Room* (fig. 11) follow the traditionally established means of depicting the female figure and feminine beauty, while also simultaneously defying and rejecting these traditionally established means in a purposeful manner.



(fig. 11) *The Blue Room*, Suzanne Valadon, 1923, Oil on Canvas, 90 cm × 116 cm, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris https://womenandartblog.wordpress.com/2017/04/25/suzanne-valadon-the-blue-room-1923-chapter-10/

Examples of this are predominantly apparent in the figure's appearance, as though aspects such as the figure's modestly tied-up hair, the makeup on the figure's face, and the general positioning of the figure within the composition and scene work to convey the figure's female gender in a way that is traditionally and socially acceptable, other details— such as the imagery of a cigarette in the figure's hand, the sunburned V-shaped passage on the figure's chest, the figure's stoic expression, and the subtle rendering of the nipples beneath the shirt fabric— suggest this image should also be viewed as a distinctly immodest and unfeminine representation of a female figure.[64] Valadon juxtaposes this simultaneously modest and immodest, feminine and unfeminine imagery, with traditional indicators of class (such as the lavish fabric that decorates the bed on which the figure rests, or the rendering of two books on the corner of the bed) in what can be viewed as an effort to reject the at the time widely accepted idea that feminine beauty is mutually exclusive with the intellectual and class status of women.[65] Also significant to this end, the representation of a clothed female figure which defies societal gender norms, purposefully positioned in a manner that is related to the classical depiction of the reclining female nude figure creates a sense of discomfort within the scene, and arguably exists in this image as a critical rejection of traditional conventions and ideas associated with the representation of the classical reclining nude.[66]

Similar to Valadon's *Reclining Nude* and *The Blue Room*, much of Frida Kahlo's work can be connected to the growing social freedom which women experienced in the early-and-mid 20th century. Kahlo had extensive access to both an artistic and a traditional education which later influenced the content of many of her paintings, a luxury which can be contributed to her father's wealth and class status as well as the increasingly progressive social and political perceptions of women during the 20th century.[67] This notion is demonstrated when examining the imagery in Frida Kahlo's painting, *My Birth* (1932). The iconography in *My Birth* (Fig. 12)— an image of Frida, engaged in labor, centrally located in the composition, her torso covered in a linen sheet as she births herself out of her graphically rendered pubic region— can be considered a stark departure from the rigid gender-and-class-and-race describing stylistic conventions which have existed in the painted representation of women from the Renaissance era until this point, and like the whole of Kahlo's body of work, it marks the art world's acceptance of images which take the

priority of representing the experience of women truthfully, in spaces and roles outside of strict feminine gender norms.[68]

(fig. 12) *My Birth*, Frida Kahlo, 1932, Oil on Canvas, Private Collection.
https://www.fridakahlo.org/my-birth.jsp

While the public desire for racial equality began to become visible in the early-20th century with movements such as the Harlem Renaissance (1918-1937), the beginnings of a true American Civil Rights Movement (c. 1940-1968) were not visible until the mid-20th century. Most famous for her portraiture, the works and career of Harlem Renaissance icon Laura Wheeler Waring illustrate the early-mid 20th century's changing public attitudes toward racial equality and representations of women and feminine beauty.[69] Like Kahlo, Waring's success and ability to operate as a professional artist was largely a product of her parents' wealth and class status and the period's growing social outcry for gender and racial equality.[70] This notion is evident in Waring's education history, as she received an extensive and diverse artistic education— something which would have been almost certainly impossible for a black woman to obtain in previous eras and especially difficult to achieve without the aid of family wealth and/or class status.[71]

Laura Wheeler Waring's *After Sunday Services* (1940) (Fig. 13) offers viewers a full-length portrait of a fashionably dressed black woman standing in what appears to be a corridor in a church.

(fig. 13) *After Sunday Services*, Laura Wheeler Waring, 1940, Oil on Canvas, 14 1/2 x 30 in., Petrucci Family Collection.
https://pffcollection.com/artworks/laura-wheeler-waring-after-sunday-service/

Certain details of this work can be connected to the gender-and-class describing stylistic conventions which have been examined across this thesis, such as the following iconography which suggests feminine beauty: the figure's modest yet fashionable hair styling and clothing choice, the depiction of makeup, the depiction of a female figure with erect posture, and the rendering of a church pamphlet in the figures hand- intended to reiterate the figure's intellect and religious association. The presence of these details in a work from this period which represents a black woman is indicative of the furthered use and development of these gender-and-class describing stylistic conventions, as previous to the 20th century painted representations of black women clearly do not employ these conventions but rather rely on a series of "stock" characteristics or "types" to depict black individuals.[72]

9. Conclusion

After reviewing the history of progressive social movements and the development of feminism in conjunction with a number of paintings created by men and women during these time periods, it becomes clear that the representation of women in art was heavily influenced by the gender-related norms affiliated with the period during which the artwork was created. It is apparent that as time has progressed, perceptions of women, gender identity, race, and femininity have also progressed and developed, and this is reflected particularly well in representations of women in Renaissance era portraiture, Impressionist genre and portrait paintings, and paintings created by women in the years before second wave feminism in the early-20th century. The emergence of the use of a particular set of gender-and-class-and-race describing stylistic conventions in the painted representation of women is visible beginning in the Renaissance era, in artworks created by both men and women, and a chronological examination of artworks has revealed that these stylistic conventions have undergone a gradual process of progressive growth and revision as a result of social and historical movements such as the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, Feminism, and Women's Rights Movements. Specifically, these gender-and-class-and-race describing stylistic conventions have been modified over time to defy, reject, and add to the traditionally established means of depicting women and femininity in artworks, in a clear effort to offer an artistic representations of women which takes the priority of representing the experience of women truthfully in spaces and roles outside of strict feminine gender norms.

9. Acknowledgements

The author would like to extend thanks to Dr. Eva Hericks-Bares and Dr. Leisa Rundquist for their mentorship and invaluable guidance throughout this research process.

10. References

1 Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists, 1550-1950,* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1977), 13-25.

2 Harris and Nochlin, *Women Artists, 1550-1950,* 20-31.

3 Shearer West, *Portraiture*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2004), p. 145.

4 See West, Portraiture, 145-150.

5 Ibid, 145-150.

6 Jaelynn Walls, *The Overlooked Role of Black Women in European Renaissance Paintings,* Artsy. May 27, 2020. Although the representation of black men and women did occur in Renaissance era paintings, these representations often served to emphasize whiteness as a beauty trait in other individuals represented in the composition. This resulted in a set of stylistic conventions specific to the depiction of black individuals in the Renaissance era— light clothing intended to contrast with dark skin tones, a dull approach to the rendering of skin, generic facial expressions (and the lack of strong identifying features outside of skin color), and themes of servitude are examples of these conventions. Additionally, there are no representations of black men and women in Renaissance era paintings which are created by women artists- this is a result of women's lack of access to models of color during this period.

7 Walls, *The Overlooked Role of Black Women in European Renaissance Paintings.* Using *Titian's Diana and Actaeon* (1556-1559), Jaelynn Walls provides an analysis of the role of black women in Renaissance era artwork which explains, "These works serve to perpetuate the inaptness of the Black female body for nudity, vouch for its ugliness, and dismiss it in aesthetic conversations, then and now…Titian's Diana and Actaeon served to perpetuate a European Renaissance fantasy of what was visually interesting and societally accepted as beautiful at the time. Titian's work acts to confine Black womanhood to a space of functional and visual servitude to white beauty."

8 Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda, Nochlin. *Women Artists, 1550-1950,* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1977), 13-25.

9 Liana Cheney, Alicia Craig Faxon, and Kathleen Lucey Russo, *Self-portraits by Women Painters*, (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2000), p. 60.

10 Monica Bowen, "Lavinia Fontana and the Female Self-Portrait*", Alberti's Window*, October 6th, 2014, Accessed August 17th, 2020. The inscription reads: "Lavinia virgin/maiden of Prospero Fontana has represented the likeness of her face from the mirror in the year 1577."

11 Liana Cheney, Alicia Craig Faxon, and Kathleen Lucey Russo, *Self-portraits by Women Painters*, (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgat, 2000), p. 60.

12 Claire E. Pingel, *Emblem Books in Bryn Mawr College Library Special Collections*. 2001. Pingel writes, "Cesare Ripa's (ca.1555-1622) Iconologia was intended for and widely used by painters, for whom it provided an index of allegorical figures, attributes and gestures. The Iconologia was originally published in 1593."

13 *Self Portrait as the Allegory of Painting*, Royal Collection Trust.

14 Ibid.

15 Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin. *Women Artists, 1550-1950, (*Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1977), 13-25.

16Jerry C Nash, "Renaissance Misogyny, Biblical Feminism, and Hélisenne De Crenne's Epistres Familieres Et Invectives", *Renaissance Quarterly* 50, no. 2, (1997): 379-410, Accessed October 12, 2020.

17 Art Institute of Chicago, *Violence and Virtue: Artemisia Gentileschi's "Judith Slaying Holofernes",* Art Institute of Chicago. Oct 17, 2013–Jan 9, 2014. Accessed October 20t, 2020. This painting is often interpreted as Gentileschi's "painted revenge" in response to her rape by one of her father's long-time colleagues, which scholas cite as a possible reason for the sheer rage depicted in this artwork.

18 Jerry C. Nash, "Renaissance Misogyny, Biblical Feminism, and Hélisenne De Crenne's Epistres Familieres Et Invectives", *Renaissance Quarterly* 50, no. 2, (1997): 379-410, Accessed October 12, 2020.

19 Art Institute of Chicago, *Violence and Virtue: Artemisia Gentileschi's "Judith Slaying Holofernes",* Art Institute of Chicago. Oct 17, 2013–Jan 9, 2014. Accessed October 20, 2020.

20 Shearer West, *Portraiture.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2004), p. 145.

21 Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society.* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1990), p. 127, 165-191.

22 Barbara Taylor, *"*Feminism and the Enlightenment, 1650-1850*", History Workshop Journal*, no. 47 (1999): 261-72, Accessed August 8, 2020.

23 Taylor, Feminism *and the Enlightenment, 1650-1850,* no. 47 (1999): 261-72.

24 Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor, *Women, Gender, and Enlightenment*: *Section 9: American Women's Rights Before Seneca Falls,* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 667-686.

25 Michelle Wright, "Feminism*", Keywords for African American Studies*, New York: NYU Press, (2018): 86-89, Accessed August 23, 2020.

26 Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor, *Women, Gender, and Enlightenment*: *Section:10: Women and Enlightenment: A Historiographical Conclusion,* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 667-686.

27Knott and Taylor, *Women, Gender, and Enlightenment*: *Part 1: Women, Men, Enlightenment,* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 3-75; 259-326,

28Tess Thackara, *Rediscovering the Black Muses Erased from Art History,* Artsy. October 9th, 2018.

While during this period modesty is still a significant aspect of a woman's public reputation, it is not as widely revered of a trait as it was during the Renaissance Era, and as a result there is a greater freedom of choice regarding the artists' ability to make compositional decisions while still emphasizing the modesty of the individual represented.

29 Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor, *Women, Gender, and Enlightenment*: *Part 1: Women, Men, Enlightenment,* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 3-75; 259-326. See Knott and Taylor's text for an in-depth analysis of The Enlightenment's effect on women in personal, public, and professional spheres.

30 Ewa Micke-Broniarek, *Anna Bilińska-Bohdanowicz: 19th Century Painter, Born in 1857 in Złotopole in The Ukraine, Resided in Paris for Much of Her Career, Died 1893 in Warsaw*, National Museum in Warsaw, March, 2005, Translated by Marek Kępa in March 2012, Edited by Agnieszka Le Nart in May 2012. Micke-Broniarek's text provides a biography of Bilińska-Bohdanowicz, which stresses her desire to be perceived as a professional. For information regarding upper class societal gender norms for women during this period, see Sarah, Knott and Barbara Taylor, *Women, Gender, and Enlightenment*: *Part 1: Women, Men, Enlightenment,* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 3-75; 259-326,

31 Linda Nochlin, *Representing women,* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999): 152-215.

32 Linda Nochlin, *Representing women*, 152-215.

33 Griselda Pollock, "Modernity And The Spaces of Femininity", in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, London: Routledge, (1988): 50-90.For additional research, author Linda Nochlin also draws on a number of resources to discuss and define the public's increased interest with familial themes and notions of motherhood during the years preceding the turn of the 20th century in her text, "*Representing women*, p. 152-215, New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999". For a more substantial description of family structure during this time, see Mark Poster's *Critical Theory of the Family*, which is often cited in Nochlin's text.

34 Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists, 1550-1950,* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1977), p. 241.

35 Haris and Nochlin, *Women artists, 1550-1950,* p. 241.

36 Robert L. Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian society*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988): 195-254.

37 Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and The Spaces of Femininity", in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, London: Routledge, (1988): 50-90.

38 Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor, *Women, Gender, and Enlightenment*: *Part 1: Women, Men, Enlightenment,* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 3-75; 259-326.

39 Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and The Spaces of Femininity", In *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, London: Routledge, (1988): 50-90.

40 Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor, *Women, Gender, and Enlightenment*: *Part 1: Women, Men, Enlightenment,* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 3-75; 259-326.

41 Linda Nochlin, *Representing women,* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999): 152-215. Nochlin's text provides an in-depth analysis of a multitude of works created by Cassat and Degas, and draws overarching comparisons based on the visual content that is present in each artists' respective body of work.

42Eunice Lipton and Edgar Degas, *Looking into Degas: Uneasy Images of Women and Modern Life*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986): p. 91. Although ballet at this point in time was not as highly revered as it was in previous eras— the dancers during this period were often lower-middle class and not as skilled— during this period, the ballet was a subject of heightened interest among Parisians and behind-the-scenes imagery of ballerinas and the ballet was particularly stimulating to the public.

43Lipton and Degas, *Looking into Degas: Uneasy Images of Women and Modern Life*, 90-115.

44 Ibid. See Lipton's text for additional information regarding the whole of Degas' ballet series, including comparisons to other artist representations of ballerinas from the time.

45 Linda Nochlin, *Representing women*, (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999): 152-179.

46 Nochlin, *Representing women*, 152-179.

47 Karen Chernick, *"*A Rare Look at a Little-Known, Intrepid Woman Painter of Open-Air Landscapes", *Hyperallergic Media Inc*, Brooklyn, New York, 2020.

48 Karen Offen, "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach," *Signs* 14, no. 1 (1988): 119-57, Accessed April 10, 2020.

49 National Archives, *Women's Rights Timeline*, The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, Accessed April 12th, 2020.

50 Charles Benheimer, "Manet's Olympia: The Figuration of Scandal*",* in *Poetics Today,* Durham: Duke University Press, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1989): 255-277.

51 Benheimer, "Manet's Olympia: The Figuration of Scandal*",* 255-277.

52 Timothy J. Clark, "Preliminaries to A Possible Treatment of 'Olympia' in 1865*", The MIT Press Journals*, Vol. 21 (1980): 18-42.

53 Clark, "Preliminaries to A Possible Treatment of 'Olympia' in 1865*",* p. 24.

54 Ibid, 18-42.

55 Charles Benheimer, "Manet's Olympia: The Figuration of Scandal*",* in *Poetics Today,* Durham: Duke University Press, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1989): 255-277.

56 Jaelynn Walls, *The Overlooked Role of Black Women in European Renaissance Paintings,* Artsy. May 27, 2020. Walls describes the Renaissance era originating tradition of artists manipulating the presence of black figures within a composition to portray a narrative of Caucasian beauty, however, for more information regarding how Manet's representation of a black maid figure in *Olympia* can also be perceived as a defiant and flattering representation of a black woman, see Denise M. Murrell's text: *Seeing Laure: Race and Modernity from Manet's Olympia to Matisse, Bearden and Beyond* , pages 35-112.

57 Rosemary Betterton, "How Do Women Look? The Female Nude in the Work of Suzanne Valadon" , *Feminist Review*, no. 19 (1985), Accessed May 5, 2020. This source offers an additional in-depth analysis of Valadon's rejection of the "classic tradition of the female nude" across the entirety of her body of work.

58 K. B. Schloss, & S. E. Palmer. *"*Aesthetic Response to Color Combinations: Preference, Harmony, and Similarity", *Attention, Perception & Psychophysics*, *73*(2), (2011): 551–571.

59 Shearer West, Portraiture. (Oxford: Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2004), 14.

60 Whitney Chadwick. *Women, Art, and Society.* (New York: Thames and Hudson. 1990), 165-236.

61 Rosemary Betterton, "How Do Women Look? The Female Nude in the Work of Suzanne Valadon", in *Feminist Review,* no. 19 (1985): 3-24.

62 Karen Offen. "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach." in *Signs* 14, no. 1 (1988): 119-57. Accessed April 10, 2020.

63 Ruby Maloni, "Dissonance Between Norms and Behaviour: Early 20th Century America's 'New Woman'" *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress,* vol. 70 (2009): 880-86. Accessed November 1, 2020.

64 Patricia Mathews, "Returning the Gaze: Diverse Representations of the Nude in the Art of Suzanne Valadon", *The Art Bulletin,* vol. 73, no. 3 (1991): 415-30, Accessed October 5, 2020.

65 Mathews, "Returning the Gaze: Diverse Representations of the Nude in the Art of Suzanne Valadon", *The Art Bulletin*, 415-30.

66 Ibid.

67 Phyllis Tuchman, "Frida Kahlo", *Smithsonian Magazine*, Smithsonian Institution, 2002.

68 Tuchman, "Frida Kahlo", *Smithsonian Magazine*, Smithsonian Institution.

69 Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame, *Laura Wheeler Waring,* Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame, 2019. Accessed October 30, 2020.

70 Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame, *Laura Wheeler Waring,* Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame, 2019.

71 Ibid.

72 Denise M. Murrell, "Seeing *Laure:* Race and Modernity from Manet's Olympia to Matisse, Bearden and Beyond*",* (PhD diss., University of Columbia, 2014), 35-112.