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Mary Cassatt's Women at the Opera: Representations of Modern Femininity

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As the only American in the French Impressionist group, Mary Cassatt (1844–1926) stands out in the art historical canon, regarded frequently in scholarship as a dual-outsider: both a woman and foreigner.[1] Perhaps it is because of this twofold disadvantage that Cassatt was largely absent from scholarship until the 1980s when she received her scholarly due. However, this scholarship focused largely on domestic portraits, despite how Cassatt portrays both public and private scenes. I address these public scenes, taking place at the Paris Opera, to challenge the scholarship of the past that left these works unacknowledged as a group. Taken as a miniature *oeuvre* within Cassatt's overall works, what I refer to as her "opera-*oeuvre*," these images reveal anxieties surrounding female display in late nineteenth-century Paris. Through extensive engagement with etiquette guides from the time and thorough visual analysis, this paper showcases how complex images uncover underlying societal tensions regarding female bodies in places of public spectacle.

Prior to her debut with the Impressionists in 1879, Cassatt spent much of her early life traveling Europe and experimenting with various artistic styles. Born in Allegheny City – modern-day Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania – Cassatt reaped the cultural and educational benefits of having wealthy parents, including participating in frequent visits to the opera. During multiple trips abroad to Europe throughout her childhood, Cassatt viewed works of the "Great" artists of the age: Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), and Gustave Courbet (1819–1877).[2] After graduating from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, she moved to Paris in the mid-1860s. While the American academy admitted women to all classes but those with nude models, the École des Beaux-Arts – the official academy in France –

[1] Griselda Pollock, *Mary Cassatt* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1980), 5: "Cassatt suffers a double disability."
[2] Nancy Hale, *Mary Cassatt* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 10.

admitted only men. Cassatt found alternative ways of training and moved around Europe to expand her style and subject matter. With the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), she briefly traveled home to Pennsylvania, before returning to Europe in 1871, settling permanently in Paris in 1874.[3] After repeated rejections from the *Salon,* Cassatt made an acquaintance with Edgar Degas (1834-1917) and joined the Impressionists in their intention to paint the modern spectacle. Her early *oeuvre*, from 1878-1882, reflects this engagement with public space in its concentrated study of the Paris Opera.[4] This series of four oil paintings of bourgeois women at the opera constitutes, along with their accompanying pastels, drawings, and prints, a mini-*oeuvre.* The paintings, *In the Loge* (1878)(Figure 1), *Woman with a Pearl Necklace in a Loge* (1879)(Figure 2), *In the Box* (1879)(Figure 3), and *The Loge* (1882)(Figure 4), stand uniquely together within Cassatt's entire *oeuvre,* containing similar subject matter and revealing the complexities of being a "modern woman" in late nineteenth-century Paris.

So, why consider Cassatt's works at the opera as a unit? Past scholars have addressed her opera works individually; Griselda Pollock and Linda Nochlin in particular dedicate much of their time arguing for the consideration of Cassatt as a feminist artist, using her painting, *In the Loge* (1878) as evidence for what they consider as the empowering way in which she reclaims the female gaze.[5] However, while the scholars of the 1980s focus much of their attention on this painting alone, they neglect Cassatt's other depictions of the opera. I intend to fill this gap in Cassatt scholarship, analyzing and complicating the dynamics within her opera-*oeuvre* to reveal

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[3] Mary Cassatt, Judith A. Barter, and Erica E. Hirshler, *Mary Cassatt, Modern Woman* (New York: Art Institute of Chicago in association with H.N. Abrams, 1998), 45.
[4] Ibid.
[5] See Griselda Pollock, "The Gaze and the Look: Women with Binoculars – A Question of Difference," in *Dealing with Degas: Representations of Women and the Politics of Vision*, by Richard Kendall and Griselda Pollock (London: Pandora, 1992) and Linda Nochlin, "Chapter 6: Mary Cassatt's Modernity" in *Representing Women* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999).

the tensions surrounding the ideas of looking and being looked at, the "gaze," and public female display/objectification. In her varying portrayals of women at the opera, Cassatt scrutinizes and mediates between different types of female bodies engaging in modern spaces and subject matter.

In the following paper, I analyze these four works in a series of comparisons, beginning with an analysis of the widely analyzed *In the Loge* (1878), where I complicate the question of the "gaze" before shifting to the first painting she displayed with the Impressionists, *Woman with a Pearl Necklace in a Loge* (1879). Here, I analyze the tensions surrounding female display and build comparisons between the first two paintings, and then expand my analysis to her later *In the Box* (1879) and *The Loge* (1882). At this point, I use etiquette guides to reveal anxieties surrounding femininity and decorum. Addressing the complications and tensions implicit in each painting, comparisons between all four works reveal the complications and apprehensions associated with bourgeois female bodies in public spaces.

Before addressing these paintings specifically, I will first outline the greater context of Paris in the second half of the nineteenth-century. In doing so, I will then address the ways in which Cassatt's opera-*oeuvre* engages with ideas of femininity, display, etiquette, and spectacle. With advances in technology, entertainment, and commodity culture, nineteenth-century Paris established itself as the center of modernity and consequently, the center of leisure and modern urban spectacle. Under the Second Empire of Napoleon III (1852-1870), the Parisian population doubled and the industrial output of the country increased substantially, transforming Paris into what one English tour guide in 1884 referred to as the "finest city in the world."[6] Specifically citing the vast public works program led by Eugene Haussmann from 1853 to 1870, *Cassell's*

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[6] Cassell, *Cassell's Illustrated Guide to Paris* (Cassell, 1884), 58.

Illustrated Guide to Paris (1884) praises the wider boulevards, public parks, improved sewage system, and street lighting when comparing the new Paris to London: "[in London] he has an uncomfortable sense of being in the way. He is bustled and hustled on all sides. But in Paris everything is so large, and so broad, that the pedestrian can move with perfect freedom."[7] Haussmannization, as scholars refer to the public works program, made a concerted effort to organize the city into widened sections connected by vast boulevards, as Cassell depicts in his championing of pedestrian "freedom." The boulevards of the new Paris, in comparison to the cramped alleyways prior, pushed the working-class to the outskirts of the city in a mass-gentrification effort. These boulevards also created spaces wide enough to discourage the barricades of France's past political uprisings – most recently in the February Revolution of 1848.[8]

While some lamented the disappearance of the "old" Paris, others encouraged the developments and considered them to be improvements, especially the upper and middle-classeses who most benefited from the "new" city.[9] The upper-class and bourgeoisie flocked to the city when gentrification forced the working classes toward the suburbs. Edward King, an American author in Paris in 1868, notes how "the boulevards are now the social center of Paris. Here the aristocrat comes to lounge, and the stranger to gaze."[10] Bourgeois men roamed the streets freely and aimlessly, stepping into places of public spectacle like the *Moulin Rouge* or *Folies Bergère* – the latter regarded by one travel guide as, "the haunt and hunting-ground of the

[7] Ibid., 64.
[8] Robert L. Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, Conn. [u.a.]: Yale University Press, 1991), 1-12.
[9] Ibid., 4.
[10] Edward King, *My Paris, French Character Sketches* (Boston, 1868), 45-46, quoted in Herbert, *Impressionism,* 14.

demi-monde" –for a show. [11] A new commodity culture stemmed from these gendered commercial and entertainment spaces, which placed a special emphasis on spectacle and the "gaze," as King mentions above. Many visitors commented on the city as a place of pleasure and leisure. Cassell remarks that "the whole city of Paris has the appearance of being devoted to pleasure," while Thomas Forrester observes in his book *Paris and Its Environs* (1859) that "in other capitals, the stranger has to go in quest of amusement. In Paris, he cannot stir a step without coming in contact with the clashing cymbals of the votaries of pleasure."[12] The rise in consumer culture and the visual spectacle that came with it arose partly because of improvements in lighting and glass technology, which created increased visibility.[13] The pleasure culture and consumerism of the new Paris, encouraged by the rising bourgeois – intent on securing their status through increased spending and visibility in public spaces of amusement – stimulated the "gaze" and subsequently, the obsession with seeing and being seen. As Gustav Fraipont notes in his *Paris, á vol d'oiseau* (1889), "[i]t's the freedom of gazes that rules in Paris and rules here alone… and that turns the big city into a spectacle that is always lively, animated and joyous."[14] Some Parisians may have found joy in this manner of public display, but sources from the time also reveal underlying anxieties regarding female bodies in public space. This public spectacle, fraught with ideas surrounding gender and femininity, attracted the group of artists known as the

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[11] Alice M. Ivimy, *A Woman's Guide to Paris* (n.p.: J. Nisbit & Company, 1910), 79.
[12] Cassell, *Cassell's Illustrated*, 64; Thomas Forrester, *Paris and Its Environs* (1859), 37.
[13] Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-siècle Paris* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1999), 21.
[14] Gustav Fraipont, *Paris, á vol d'oiseau* (Paris: Librairie Illustrée, 1889), 5, quoted in Temma Balducci, *Gender, Space, and the Gaze in Post-Haussmann Visual Culture: Beyond the Flaneur* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2017), 63.

Impressionists, keen on portraying the scenes and spaces of modern life so described in Charles Baudelaire's essay *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863).[15]

Baudelaire, a French essayist and poet, championed the conception of the *flâneur,* or the modern, urban, and specifically male spectator. *Flâneurs* are now seen as a quintessential expression of the Impressionists' interests as they engage intimately with Baudelaire's ideas about modern life. The word *flâneur* comes from the French noun of the same spelling, meaning "stroller" or "lounger."[16] Baudelaire takes this one step further in his essay, presenting the *flâneur* as the artist-poet of modern Paris:

> For the perfect *flâneur*, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the center of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world—impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define. The spectator is a prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito... the lover of pictures who lives in a magical society of dreams painted on canvas…Or we might liken him to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life.[17]

The cosmopolitan that Baudelaire defines saunters throughout the city, content to wander and observe the life going on around him. Baudelaire popularized the *flâneur*, but others described the type prior to his publication, emphasizing the *flâneur*'s place in Parisian society as a well-known social type and literary trope. For example, in one Paris guidebook from 1856, Julie de Marguerittes interprets:

> The *flâneur* – a word which can be explained, but not translated. It means an easy sauntering without any definite object, though enjoying it all. It means a good-humored search after comfort and amusement, without previous design or preparation – skimming from life, as it passes by, the cream, and never going deep enough to get at the dregs, or

[15] Pollock, *Mary Cassatt*, 9.
[16] Herbert, *Impressionism,* 23.
[17] Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays (original 1863)*, ed. Jonathan Mayne (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1986), 9.

> to trouble and darken the steam… Now the Boulevards were created, arranged, and are kept up, for the *flâneurs*.[18]

To Marguerittes, the new, Haussamannized Paris created a space specifically for the *flâneurs,* his amusement and comfort devoured from the delicious "cream" of modern life. However, the *flâneurs* engages not in the spectacle, but rather watches the world go by. In the case of the Impressionists, the *flâneur* paints its contents using new techniques; seen in their visible brushstrokes, sketchy quality, and atmospheric effects. They also depicted "unheroic" subject matter – the modern spaces of urban life like the streets, railway stations, seaports or public parks.[19]

Underscoring the modernity found in these observations of everyday life, the Impressionists began as an *avant-garde* art movement to counter the institutional *Salon,* emerging in the 1870s and 80s in Paris. They depicted "ordinary" subject matter with free brushstrokes, and in some cases, used the technique of *en plein air* – painting outdoors.[20] Reviewers regarded both the style and subject matter of the Impressionists as "feminine," and as such, the *Salon* rejected them. Critics dismissed their plays of light, liberal use of the color white, and airy brushstrokes in much the same manner that they dismissed women – as weak, naïve, unfinished, superficial, capricious, whimsical, impulsive, and of no lasting value.[21] Thus, already regarded as a "feminine" undertaking, Impressionism somewhat allowed its few female artists, like Cassatt, to partly infiltrate the male-dominated art world.

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[18] Julie de Marguerittes, *The Ins and Outs of Paris; or, Paris by Day and Night* (Philadelphia, PA: W.W. Smith, 1855), 29, accessed May 3, 2018, https://archive.org/details/insandoutsparis00marggoog.
[19] Marie Bracquemond and Ingrid Pfeiffer, *Women Impressionists: [Berthe Morisot, Mary Cassatt, Eva Gonzalès, Marie Bracquemond ; [exhibition Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, February 22 to June 1, 2008]* (Ostfildern [u.a.]: Hatje Cantz [u.a.], 2008), 22.
[20] Nancy Mowll Mathews, *Cassatt: A Retrospective* (n.p.: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, Inc., 1996), 21.
[21] Bracquemond and Pfeiffer, *Women Impressionists*, 15.

The Impressionists sought to live and paint in the "candid" moments of city life: cafes, parks, concerts, operas, and anywhere else that exemplified urban spectacle.[22] Fleeting moments in time– or "impressions" – served as the basis for their compositions, highlighting the artists' eagerness to, as Baudelaire specifies, paint the "multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life."[23] Charles Garnier's Paris Opera (1861-75)(Figures 5 & 6) functioned as one such modern space, full of life and amusement and thus a perfect place for the Impressionist's desire for public voyeurism.[24] Lavishly ornamented, Garnier's building represents the "comfortable excess" of the late nineteenth-century Paris. Its gilded details, reflective surfaces and sumptuous use of chandeliers and sculpture combine to create a space of luxury and spectacle.[25] Figure 5 showcases the exterior of the building – here the classical columns, Greek mythological statues, and marble friezes combine with baroque accents in gold to epitomize the Beaux-Arts style. Figure 6 allows us to imagine ourselves seated in one of the loges (or the opera-boxes in which the bourgeoisie and upper-classeses sat, for a high price, secluded from the masses) – gazing out toward the stage and the audience, enraptured by the ornate detailing, gleaming chandelier, and opulent velvety reds.

According to Cassell, the new Paris Opera "was constructed regardless of expense, with the evident intention of endowing Paris with the finest theater in the world."[26] This intent evidently succeeded, as Cassell later praises the design of the theater, stating, "the plate glass mirrors, splendid chandeliers, and elaborately designed and gorgeously coloured paneling, form

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[22] Peter Brooks, *Realist Vision* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008), 151, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1njmhd.
[23] Baudelaire, *The Painter*, 9.
[24] Brooks, *Realist Vision*, 163.
[25] Christopher Mead, *Charles Garnier's Paris Opéra: Architectural Empathy and the Renaissance of French Classicism* (New York, N.Y.: Architectural History Foundation, 1991), 4.
[26] Cassell, *Cassell's Illustrated*, 275.

an *ensemble* unrivalled in any theatrical building."[27] The building emphasized the modernity of a "New France," while simultaneously harkening back to classical forms in its Beaux-Arts design. The mirrors, chandeliers, and colored paneling all feature frequently and prominently in the works of the Impressionists, to whom the complex compositional opportunities of the loges must have looked especially attractive. This gilded spectacle attracted some Impressionists to engage in series of opera works, focusing not only on the loges, but also different parts of the house. Degas, one of the group's founders, concentrates on the performers, looking backstage or toward the stage in his depictions. Others, like Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919) and Cassatt, depict the women of the loges. As guidebook author Gustave Fripont points out in 1889, "This place de l'Opéra, with its big ways that open onto everything, with these vast luxury stores, these gigantic cafés, the Grand Hôtel and the Opéra. This is modern Paris."[28] That the opera house represented "modern Paris" further emphasizes the reason for the Impressionists' engagement in the subject and underscores their desire to portray modernity.

The popularity of the opera house and the choice of performance highlight this modernity. With over half a million Parisians attending the theater once a week, and a million at least once a month, the opera served as one of the main sources of entertainment for the upper and middle-classeses.[29] With performances like Charles Gounod's *Faust* and Christoph Willibald Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice,* audience members attended the opera to see salacious subjects, lavish effects, and spectacular sets – passion, violence, and impropriety abounded in the operas performed. Those of a distinctly lower class than their bourgeois audience acted out these

[27] Ibid., 276.
[28] Gustave Fraipont, *Paris, á vol d'oiseau* (Paris: Librairie illustrée, 1889) 52, in Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities*, 23.
[29] Pamela Todd, "A Time to Enjoy: Racing, Theater, Opera, Music Halls and Ballet," in *The Impressionists at Leisure* (New York, N.Y.: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 49.

scandalous subjects.[30] The elaborate stage design resonates with the circular motifs along the architecture in the opera house itself, as seen in Jean-Baptiste Arnout's (1788-1865) lithograph of Act 3 scene 2 of Giacomo Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable* (Figure 7), which showcases the depth of the house and vast audience. Degas portrays the same opera in *The Ballet from 'Robert le Diable'* (1871)(Figure 8), but instead exemplifies the drama and high energy of the performances. Women fall along the stage, bodies contorted in intense positions to convey an especially passionate scene. Degas' gazing man, opera glasses pointed upward toward the loges, emphasizes again the idea of spectacle present at the opera. The desire to see and be seen operates at the opera as prominently as it does along Haussmann's boulevards.

Thus, with this opportunity for display, the opera house became an "institution" for Parisian society. Henry James evidences this in the *New York Tribune* (1876): "The theater plays in Paris a larger part in people's lives than it does anywhere else… the theater is an essential part of French civilization… it is not a mere amusement, as it is in other countries; it is an interest, and institution, connected through a dozen open doors with literature, art, and society."[31] The opera house attracted the bourgeoisie, as it functioned as one of the modern places for self-display, important for their presentation of status. Self-fashioning functioned inherently within the opera house architecture, showcased on the grand staircase, in loges, and in the mirrors (Figures 9 & 10). The sometimes dimmed, but never completely extinguished auditorium lights

[30] Jean Sorabella, "The Opera" in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History.* New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000; Vlado Kotnik. "The Adaptability of Opera: When Different Social Agents Come to Common Ground." *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 44, no. 2 (2013): 303-42; and Todd, "A Time", 53.
[31] Henry James, *New York Tribune* (1876), quoted in Ruth E. Iskin, "Was There a New Woman in Impressionist Painting?," in *Women in Impressionism: From Mythical Feminine to Modern Woman*, by Sidsel Maria Søndergaard (Milano: Skira, 2006), 191.

allowed the audience to look around them and observe their neighbors across the space.[32] As Alice M. Ivimy observes in her guide to Paris from 1910, "the house is lighted by a glass chandelier, in itself a work of art."[33] These new technologies emerged to benefit this performative culture, but simultaneously induced criticisms and backlash.

Writings and satirical cartoons from the time signal the anxieties over this cultural institution and penchant for self-display. One writer in 1867, for example, questions the degradation of society in its enjoyment of the opera: "Must we admit that the center of this powerful city… is today the opera house? Must our glory in the future consist above all in perfecting our public entertainments? Are we no longer anything more than the capital of elegance and pleasure?"[34] This quote reveals the concerns surrounding social propriety in the opera house, substantiated as well in the various satirical cartoons of the day. Although of an English, rather than French opera house, George Cruikshank (1792–1878) nevertheless satirizes the loge in his *The Opera Boxes during the Time of the Great Exhibition* (1851)(Figure 11). He depicts various loges engaging in various activities – none of which include looking at the stage.[35] In fact, mini-dramas play out in the loges, showcasing the dramatics of an opera taking place in the audience, rather than on stage. Etiquette guides from the time reveal an anxiety over these activities – especially that of looking, addressed throughout Cassatt's images but most notably those with women using opera glasses. That the guides condemn this distracted looking for women, specifically, arises in considerations of respectability and "proper" etiquette in Cassatt's depictions. Gender and its implications within this construct of decorum necessitate a

[32] Cassatt, Barter, and Hirshler, *Mary Cassatt*, 46.
[33] Ivimy, *A Woman's*, 79.
[34] *Le Temps* (18 August 1867) quoted in Herbert, *Impressionism,* 93.
[35] Richard D. Leppert, *Aesthetic Technologies of Modernity, Subjectivity, and Nature: Opera Orchestra Phonograph Film* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016), 86.

brief background to past scholarship on the gender constraints of the time before diving into the works themselves.

Past scholarship, specifically the works of the pioneering feminist scholars of the 1980s – Griselda Pollock and Linda Nochlin – uses a private/public dichotomy to explain the ways in which society barred nineteenth-century female artists from the public spaces to which their male counterparts were privy. Recent scholarship, most notably that of Temma Balducci, however, pushes against the myth of the public/private binary, championing instead the idea of a new modern Paris with bourgeois women present in the public sphere and Baudelaire's *flâneurs* present not exclusively as a bourgeois masculine experience.[36]

Whereas Pollock observes a "historical asymmetry" between the spaces that nineteenth-century Parisian women and men inhabited, Balducci argues for the presence of bourgeois women in these fraught public spaces.[37] Pollock's argument finds firm ground in Baudelaire's exclusively masculine *flâneurs,* as Baudelaire speaks only of "him": "the crowd is *his* element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. *His* passion and *his* profession are to become flesh with the crowd."[38] Pollock argues that because society barred bourgeois women from the same public spaces that it allowed the male *flâneurs* to access (brothels, courtesan's rooms, backstage

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[36] More on this subject in Temma Balducci and Heather Belnap Jensen, *Women, Femininity and Public Space in European Visual Culture, 1789-1914* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017) and *Gender, Space, and the Gaze in Post: Haussmann Visual Culture: Beyond the Flâneur* (2017), Ruth Iskin, *Modern Women and Parisian Culture in Impressionist Painting* (2007) and John House, "Women Out of Doors" in *Women in Impressionism: From the Mythical Feminine to Modern Woman* (2006)

[37] Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 2003), 247.

[38] Baudelaire, *The Painter*, 9.

at the opera), female artists instead portrayed socially acceptable female spaces, and in doing so, portrayed their own social realities. [39]

That Berthe Morisot (1841–1895) and Cassatt, the leading female Impressionists, portrayed their own social realities by portraying largely domestic interior scenes of the "spaces of femininity:" mothers, children, sisters, and friends in the home, performing daily tasks, strengthens the argument of previous scholarship[40] Even when they ventured into public spaces, Nochlin argues, they remained confined; their portraits, while in a public setting, remained domestic in character. She uses Cassatt's *In the Omnibus* (1890-91)(Figure 12) to emphasize this point. Two women and a child sit in a confined space, the omnibus, within the city of Paris. Nochlin contends that the city functions more as a "backdrop for the domesticated interior" than a bustling center of modern and urban life.[41]

On the other hand, Balducci maintains that although the scholars of the 1980s exposed the systematic discrimination of women, their focus on the separate binary spheres overlooked the female presence in public, as well as the ways in which women had agency and power in public.[42] She counters Nochlin's reading of *In the Omnibus* (1890-91), asserting instead that the women pictured "irreducibly" participate in the public setting in Paris.[43] They engage with their surroundings, especially through the outward glance of the left woman, and ride in public transportation in the same way that everyone else does. Cassatt emphasized the presence of the women in the public sphere by including, in another iteration of the print, a man squeezed in next

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[39] Pollock, *Vision and Difference,* 253.
[40] Nochlin, *Representing Women,* 181.
[41] Ibid., 208.
[42] Balducci, *Gender, Space*, 4; the idea of women wielding power through consumerism, especially in department stores, is thoroughly addressed in Iskin, *Modern Women and Parisian Culture in Impressionist Painting* (2007).
[43] Balducci and Belnap Jensen, *Women, Femininity*, 159.

to them.[44] Primary sources from the time also evidence this presence and some scholars even identify a female *flâneur,* or *flâneuse*, who embodies the same facets of their male counterpart. Constant de Tours observes in 1890 these women on the streets:

> The Parisian woman! That pretty silhouette that one recognizes with a joyful heart on returning to Paris… Who is she? A great lady, a rich or not so rich bourgeoise, a factory worker, a shopkeeper… a department store employee, or a worker who, always gay and with open eyes, walks, walks, walks! In a word, she is all Parisian women.[45]

Cassell also notes the number of women out and about in Paris, stating: "One thing that will strike the stranger is the immense proportion of women in the streets as compared with men. Without bonnets, busy and active, they hurry here and there, presenting a striking contrast to the male population, who take things very easily."[46] Here, then, emerges the true imbalance between male and female power in the nineteenth century: not the presence of women in the public sphere, but rather, the varying degrees to which they could truly *engage* with it.

The dichotomy between the "busy and active" women and the men who "take things very easily" reveals the power of Baudelaire's *flâneur.*[47] Vanessa Schwartz argues in *Spectacular Realities* (1998) for *flanerie* (the action) as the position of power, rather than the *flâneur* himself as a real person. The *flâneur's* power thus comes from his ability to take part in the spectacle while simultaneously command it.[48] In the same vein, although primary sources reference female *flâneurs,* their actuality, according to some, seems impossible.[49] As scholar Janet Wolff

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[44] Ibid., 159.
[45] Constant Chmielenski (pseud. Constat de Tours), *Guide-album du tourist: Vingt Jours á Paris* (Paris: Maison Quantin, 1890), 56, quoted in Balducci, *Women, Femininity,* 154.
[46] Cassell, *Cassell's Illustrated*, 65.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities*, 10.
[49] For a female *flâneur:* "One also sees everywhere… the flâneur-femme: at the sermons of Pere Didion, at the conferences of Mr. Naquet on divorce, at the Sorbonne lectures of Mr. Caro, at the trials for serious crimes" in Malabar *L'Art de flaner,* 6, quoted in Balducci, *Gender, Space*, 7; for the non-existence of a female *flâneur* or *flaneuse,* see Aruna D'Souza and Tom McDonough, *The*

contends, a *flâneuse* could not exist because of the nature of *flanerie,* to stroll *aimlessly* and observe a *reflective* gaze.[50] Their ability to go unnoticed on the streets defined *flâneurs,* thus allowing them to engage with the reflective gaze without interruption. Women, on the other hand, could not pass unnoticed and wander without aim, without society branding them as "non-respectable." Only prostitutes or women of ill repute walked along the boulevards without purpose.[51] Furthermore, society associated the "gaze" itself with women of a lower class. One author comments on the ability of a man to distinguish the social standing of a woman based on her "gaze": "A man following a woman knows the only way to distinguish an honest woman from a well-dressed courtesan on the sidewalk is by the welcoming looks that [the courtesan] gives."[52] That society discouraged "proper" women from looking separates them from the women of ill repute and polices their ability to observe the world around them, as the male *flâneur* would.

What does this mean, then, for Cassatt's women at the opera? This paper operates within the idea that women in the public sphere were far more common than prior scholarship has acknowledged. Thus, Cassatt's opera-*oeuvre,* along with contemporary etiquette guides, exposes the social anxieties accompanying the emergence of bourgeois women in public.

***In the Loge* (1878)(Figure 1)**

The feminist art historians of the 80s heralded Cassatt's *In the Loge* (1878) as a representation of a thoroughly engaged modern woman, powerful and aggressive in her gaze. The scholars used the woman in black as a feminist icon, but while arguing for the empowered

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Invisible FlaÌ‚neuse?: Gender, Public Space, and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-century Paris (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008)

[50] D'Souza and McDonough, *The Invisible*, 21.

[51] Ibid., 19.

[52] Georges Montorgueil, *La Vie des boulevards* (Paris: Librairie-Imprimeries, 1896), 120, quoted in Balducci, *Gender, Space*, 68.

gaze of their "everywoman," they neglected the protagonist's individuality and exhibition of a specifically *female* gaze, rather than simply an inversion of the "male gaze." By first outlining the argument of past art historians, most notably Pollok and Nochlin, I will then build upon it with my own analysis, advocating this emergent idea of the specifically *female* gaze. Using contemporary etiquette guides, investigating the meanings embedded in items of femininity (gloves, fans, opera glasses), and scrutinizing Cassatt's mark-making techniques, I make a case for the uniquely *female* gaze that Cassatt portrays.[53]

A cursory sweep of *In the Loge* (1878) allows the theme of "the gaze" to emerge. Our heroine, clad in solemn and muted black, blends with the décor surrounding her: her red-brown hair matches the beams and balcony on which she leans, and her skin, with tinges of pink and yellow, almost merges into the pale pastels of the balcony ornamentation. The audience members wear similar muted tones: black, white, and pale yellow dominate the canvas. In comparison to her other theater paintings – like *Woman with a Pearl Necklace in a Loge* (1879), where pastel pinks, bright yellows, and blues rule – the dark and aggressive colors concentrated in the half of the canvas connote a stauncher and more traditionally "masculine" picture.[54]

Moreover, her black dress indicates a matinee performance, while showcasing a staunch color palette and "masculine" look. Bourgeois women present in the public spaces of Paris wore these day dresses, as seen in Gustave Caillebotte's (1848–1894), *Paris Street; Rainy Day* (1877)(Figure 13) and a portrait of Cassatt in Degas' *Mary Cassatt at the Louvre: The Paintings*

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[53] For the arguments of these 80s art historians, see Pollock, *Mary Cassatt* (1980), "The Gaze and the Look: Women with Binoculars – A Question of Difference," in *Dealing with Degas* (1992), *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and Histories of Art* (2003); Nochlin, *Representing Women* (1999); and Susan Fillin Yeh, "Mary Cassatt's Images of Women," *Art Journal* 35 no. 4 (1976): 359-63.
[54] Francis Frascina, *Modernity and Modernism: French Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 264.

Gallery (1885)(Figure 14).[55] The dress also signifies her older age, as a modest woman, conscious of her age and status, dressed "discreetly" in her clothes and accessories.[56] One beauty guide from 1863 suggests this consciousness, as the woman in black's complies with her "ideal" palette. The guide claims that a "pale brunette type" with pale skin should wear dark colors, especially near the face and head.[57] Fashion guides also insist on women blending into their surroundings when in public. The December 1876 issue of *Journal des Modes* states that women should "[be] dressed in unnoticeable colors like the stone of the walls and the dust on the pavement."[58] This emphasis on somber unobtrusiveness contrasts with the actual function of the dark color. Past feminist art historians used this "masculine" color palette, posture, and dominance of the focal woman to empower her gaze. The angle of her arm, combined with the upright post behind her support this position.

The audience members wear the similar "unnoticeable" colors of a day dress, yet Cassatt treats the background figures hastily and quickly, her brushstrokes aggressive and fast, making our woman in black the clear and intentional focus of the canvas. Even the other main player in the narrative, the man leaning eagerly over the edge of his box to catch a glimpse of our woman in black, consists of only a few hurried sweeps of Cassatt's brush.[59] Nevertheless, the gazes and similar poses of the man and woman showcase the empowered gaze that Pollock and Nochlin

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[55] For evidence of matinee performance see Herbert, *Impressionism,* 99; for an in-depth discussion of the role of the black dress in Caillebotte's painting, see Gloria Groom and Heidi Brevik-Zender, *Impressionism, Fashion, Modernity* (Chicago ; New Haven: Art Institute of Chicago ; Yale University Press, 2012), 186-195.

[56] Philippe Perrot, *Fashioning the Bourgeoisie: A History of Clothing in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 91.

[57] William Audsley and George Audsley, *Taste versus Fashionable Colors: A Manual for Ladies on Colour in Dress* (n.p.: Longman, Green, 1863), 17.

[58] *Journal des Modes,* December 1876 issue quoted in Groom and Brevik-Zender, *Impressionism, Fashion*, 194.

[59] Cassatt, Barter, and Hirshler, *Mary Cassatt*, 50.

identify. The bald man in the background leans far over the edge to gaze at the woman, contrasting with the passive poses of the other theatergoers. His pose almost matches that of the woman, his right arm bent over the balcony with binoculars in hand, yet he leans out to the extreme, arm dangling precariously over the edge. In contrast, the woman's arm lines up perfectly with the brown curve of the balcony, at a right angle to the man and viewer, visually asserting her power. Here, we encounter the main tenet of Cassatt's depictions: her self-contained women. The scholars of the 80s imply a male viewer of Cassatt's paintings as a means for comparison with her male counterparts. For Pollock, specifically, Renoir's *La Loge* (1874)(Figure 15) allows for an in-depth comparison between the gazes in each image. By assuming a male viewer, Pollock emphasizes the objectification Renoir's woman while upholding the power of the woman in black in her dismissal of the viewer.[60] The woman in black serves as the object of the male gaze (of the bald man) as well as the gaze of the male viewer but sits content in her own box and own gaze. Consumed in her own world, the woman in black angles her binoculars slightly upward and away from the stage, implying that she gazes at someone seated parallel and across from her. Her mouth sets in a firm line, making her appear concentrated; she has no regard for the partially rendered audience members around her.

The empowered gaze that past scholars argue for exists here, as a reversal of the canonical precedent, "men look, women are looked at."[61] Past "gaze" theory, most notably that of Laura Mulvey, posits that for women to engage in a "gaze," it must be inherently masculine, as gazing is inherently masculine.[62] Because of these theories, Pollock and Nochlin use the woman in black's "masculinity" to reclaim her gaze. They argue that because Cassatt's woman

[60] Pollock, *Mary Cassatt,* 10.
[61] Cassatt, Barter, and Hirshler, *Mary Cassatt*, 50.
[62] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16 (Autumn 1975): 6-18.

looks, while disregarding the man looking at her, she exhibits this traditional masculine quality. Through her dark color palette, the phallic and aggressive fan in her left hand, and the play between viewer and voyeur, Cassatt's woman in black revolutionizes the "gaze."[63] These past scholars, however, disregard the woman in black's capacity for a specifically "female gaze," one that complicates the "male gaze" rather than mimics it.

Where the "male gaze" rests on the physical objectification of women by a male artist, subject, and viewer, the "female gaze" does not desire the same in return. The male gazes voyeuristically at a woman – at the exposed breasts or red lips of Renoir's objectified woman.[64] The "female gaze" does not, reciprocally, objectify men. Rather, the "female gaze" intends to attain subjecthood. The "female gaze" refuses to be made "object" to a male viewer – both within the canvas and outside.[65] Recent theory invites the possibility for the "female gaze," one that claims subjecthood and agency.[66] How, then, does Cassatt's *In the Loge* (1878) exhibit this "female gaze"? Through distinctive brushstrokes, focus on the woman's face, and instruments of her sexual femininity: the fan, the opera glasses, and the gloves, the painting enacts the "female gaze."

Upholding proper etiquette at the opera required all three of these feminine-coded objects, as we see in a quote from the etiquette-guide author, Florence Hartley in 1872:

> Here you should wear full dress… Your gloves must be of kid, white, or some very light tint to suit your dress. Many dress for the opera, as they would for the theater; but the

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[63] See note 50 for sources that argue for *In the Loge*'s Second Wave feminist connotations
[64] Pollock, *Vision and Difference,* 257.
[65] Balducci, *Gender, Space*, 63.
[66] Balducci, "Gazing Women" in *Gender, Space & the Gaze*; Bell Hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators," in *Movies and Mass Culture*, by John Belton, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2000) and Suzanne Moore, "Here's Looking to You, Kid!," in *The Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture*, by Lorraine Gamman, 4th ed. (Seattle: Real Comet Press, 1992).

> beauty of the house is much enhanced by each lady contributing her full dress toilette to the general effect.[67]

Hartley stresses the role of women as almost akin to architectural decoration. She emphasizes performative femininity. The beauty of the female operagoers in their full toilette enhances the "beauty of the house" and their adherence to the rules of etiquette asserts their place as objects to be gazed upon. Mrs. ML Rayne's guidebook (1881) also underlines the importance of these objects:

> The wife of a wealthy gentlemen goes to the opera with a splendor of evening toilet, diamonds, elegantly *coiffured* hair, and a footman, who stands motionless behind her chair during the evening and hands her, as she requests them, her fan, the programme or her jeweled opera glasses.[68]

These two quotes demonstrate just how integral these instruments functioned in observing social expectations within the spectacle of the opera. However, these quotes do not showcase the incredible power that these objects held. Oftentimes, society and scholars regard fashion as distinctly feminine and non-threatening, seen only as a product of the desire to please men. Thus society devalues women and their fashions – it strips them of power and calls them "frivolous."[69] Cassatt's *In the Loge* (1878), however, validates the influence of these objects in creating a "female gaze," where the protagonist expresses her distinctive and complicated self through her accessories. These three objects produce a complex woman, their tensions combining to reveal her sexuality without objectifying her, or depicting a male object of desire.

As intentional iterations of a "gaze," the opera glasses, combined with their specific condemnation in etiquette guides, reveal this "female gaze." Invented at the end of the eighteenth

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[67] Florence Hartley, *Ladies' Book of Etiquette* (1872), 174.
[68] Martha Louise Rayne, *Gems of Deportment and Hints of Etiquette* (Chicago, Tyler & co., 1881), 348, accessed May 3, 2018, https://archive.org/details/gemsofdeportment00rayn.
[69] Jennifer M. Jones, "Repackaging Rousseau: Femininity and Fashion in Old Regime France," *French Historical Studies* 18, no. 4 (1994): 939-67.

century and becoming fashionable for women in the latter part of the nineteenth century, opera glasses are referred by one optical scholar as "little jewels."[70] Here, the scholar attempts to reduce the power of the glasses to an accessory, rather than active agents of the "gaze." Etiquette guides, however, reveal the true underlying tensions within society regarding women who look: "a woman should use her lorgnette only infrequently in the hall; her role is to be admired and, *I can assure her,* she will be the envy of the many women who are *reduced* to watching others!"[71] According to D'Alq in 1881, women should not prioritize looking at others, but rather only be looked at – much like the above quote reducing women to decoration in the opera house suggests. The guide's firm assertions against women gazing suggest the true power of the lorgnette or opera glasses – by looking around "the hall," women rebelled in a small but extremely powerful way. Just the tilt of their glasses changed the propriety associated with their gaze – with *In the Loge* (1878), and its preparatory drawings, Cassatt enacts the primacy of the glasses.

In her preparatory *Sketch for "A Woman in Black at the Opera" (No.2)*(1880)(Figure 16), Cassatt uses hazy shading and blending to outline the basic form of the woman in black and surrounding balconies. Contrasting with the muddle of soft pencil marks, Cassatt aggressively scores the paper with the pencil to create the cone-shaped opera glasses, directed outward just as in the final painting. The extremely dark and thick mark making on the paper stresses the authority of the glasses – while Cassatt only partially renders the woman, the glasses stand out, stark and firm among the obscured balconies. Her third sketch for the painting (Figure 17) extends this analysis further, as the soft pencil outlines the clear triangular shape of the glasses.

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[70] William J. Rosenthal, *Spectacles and Other Vision Aids: A History and Guide to Collecting* (San Francisco: Norman, 1996)*:* 149 and 153.
[71] D'Alq, *Le Nouveau Savoir-vivre* (1881), quoted in Balducci, *Gender, Space,* 62, emphasis added

Cassatt draws strict vertical lines to constitute the glasses, contrasting with the horizontal curve of the balconies and the diagonal lines of the woman's body. No other lines on the paper match up with those of the opera glasses, which once again emphasizes Cassatt's intention that they appear prominently. In its final iteration, the fully rendered opera glasses create parallels along the woman's face of the oil painting. Her stern expression, determined by the set line of her lips, implies purpose; the bright white of the earring constitutes a horizontal sightline with the bright dabs of paint along the black opera glasses which directs viewers' attention to this purpose. Overall, the opera glasses enact the physicality of the "gaze," the woman in black's eye almost converging with the device to direct her gaze toward an opposite loge.

Furthermore, her gloves showcase her complicated sexuality. Gloves – white, kid, or sheer – were essential to any well-fashioned woman at the opera, and this innocent white coloration clearly created a connotation of virginity, seen in writer's descriptions. The following quote from C. Cody Collins in *Glovers Review* (1909) showcases the extreme sexual implication of gloves in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries:

> Gloves were fitted so tightly, no matter how thin the hand might be, there was always a little pillow of pink flesh in the heart-shaped opening of the palm. It took a lady's time to get these tight gloves on and off, with much wetting of the finger tips to aid the progress. After removing these tight fitting gloves, there was a considerable graceful fluttering of hands in mid-air to restore circulation.[72]

Graphically descriptive, Collins establishes a sexual meaning when describing the "tight" "pink flesh" of the gloves and hands of a woman and inscribes them with their own kind of virginity. Once worn, a pair of gloves would not usually be worn again.[73] A duality emerges here that

[72] *Glovers Review* (1909), quoted in C. Cody Collins, *Love of a Glove*, Fairchild Publishing, New York, orig. pub. 1945, rev. edn 1947, 115, quoted in Susan J. Vincent, "Gloves in the Early Twentieth Century: An Accessory After the Fact." *Journal of Design History* 25, no. 2 (2012): 190-205.
[73] Vincent, "Gloves", 190-205.

coincides with the complexity of the "female gaze"; simultaneously virginal and carnal, the twofold implication of gloves corresponds with the desires of the woman in black. The desirable "tightness" in the sheerness of her gloves draws our eyes, and the flesh-color and distinctive delicate white seam that runs up her wrist emphasizes this sexuality. The white clashes against the vast blackness of her outfit and her hand erects at a right angle to the picture plane, which also attracts our gaze. As the gloves pull across her hands, she metaphorically breaks their perceived "virginity," leading us toward a sensual reading. This reading expands when we consider the gloves in relationship to the other two objects they touch – the opera glasses and the fan.

Similar in its dual connotations, the fan stands between concealing and beckoning, shielding from and encouraging flirtation, and sexuality and virginity. In other works from the opera-*oeuvre,* Cassatt depicts open fans shielding the bodies of younger operagoers.[74] Here, however, the woman in black clenches the fan tightly in her gloved left hand, causing its pronounced, thick brushstrokes to demand our attention. The fan stands parallel to the picture plane, jutting out toward the opera audience instead of toward the viewer. Past scholars argued for the fan as a phallic symbol of her "masculinity," reinforcing their "reversal of the male gaze" point of view. By enforcing evidence for her "masculine" qualities of empowerment, art historians downplay the importance of a uniquely feminine power.

I see, rather than a phallic projection of power, a yonic one. In line axially with the curvature of the balcony, the fan follows the direction of the opera glasses, pointing toward the object of her desire. While individually, the fan and opera glasses project outward in a stereotypically phallic way, together they combine to shape an ovular space. The lines of the

[74] See the open, shielding fan in *The Loge* (1882)(Figure 4), *In the Box* (1879)(Figure 3), and *At the Theater* (1879)(Figure 28)

balcony, from left to right, meet along the woman's loge, converging lines constructing a repetitive triangular- ovular motif that resembles female rather than male genitalia. The canvas, taken as a whole, structures a series of converging curvilinear lines, its deep folds and fleshy reds inspiring a vulvic pattern, mirrored in the thick brushstrokes to craft the folds of the fan and the rounded, triangular shape of the opera glasses. Overall, these three material objects – coded as specifically feminine – combine physically and thematically to construct a female space, wherein the central figure uses her sexuality to express her purpose, gazing outward without showing and reducing a visible male as a sexual "object."

Additionally, the brushstrokes underline the individuality of our protagonist, fighting against the "universally empowered" woman of Pollock and Nochlin. She fits in the space, her arm resting easily along the line of the balcony in contrast to the exaggeration of the man's pose, to the point where he hangs out of his loge, falling comically over the edge. Social satirists of the time poked fun at these men who, according to Gustav Doré's (1833–1883) caricature, got "carried away" by their gazes – seen in Doré's *Those Who Are Carried Away* and *Overcome* (1849)(Figure 18). These caricatures make fun of the same type of exaggeratedly excited man as Cassatt's painting, "overcome" by their lust. By contrast, Cassatt's woman in black's dark dress blends into the deep brown of her loge, and recurring hints of red throughout her person reflect in the deep red of the vertical loge-divider behind her back, fitting her within the space. By looking closer at the canvas, an interesting effect materializes. Certain areas indicate that Cassatt defined the woman's form in different and thicker brushstrokes than the space around her. Specifically, the triangular space from her bent arm and forward-leaning face cut into her dress, as if Cassatt went in to outline the woman after setting her on the canvas. The same effect occurs on the bonnet of our woman in black, the brown of the surrounding loges cutting into the pre-painted

head. The thickest paint surrounds and outlines her form. That Cassatt defined the woman against her surroundings with distinctive brushstrokes insinuates a world built specifically for her, one in which she sits, actively present.

This individualized world affirms a sense of empathy and understanding between viewer and subject. According to Balducci, in the same way that a male artist imagines a male viewer, a female artist posits a female gaze.[75] Using this framework to consider how women may have received Cassatt's image in the exhibitions during the nineteenth century, their familiarity with the objects of femininity and their experience with the idea of being seen materializes. The space, hastily rendered in comparison to the central figure, allows the female viewer to empathize with the emotions of her body, especially in the expression and careful rendering of her face. The delicate brushstrokes – blues, reds, and oranges blended attentively into her skin – function as subtle reiterations of her surroundings. With more time and consideration for her face, the small brushstrokes contrast with the large swathes of black and brown that make up the majority of the canvas. By spending so much time on her face, Cassatt asserts the importance of individuality. The blue and green veins crawl along her face, the meticulous shading along the nose combining to create a living, breathing woman embodied in the painting. The "female gaze" prioritizes the body, reclaiming the body, once objectified, to communicate active originality.[76] The positioning of the body along the picture plane cuts through the canvas parallel to the plane and constitutes over half of the canvas to enact her primacy. Her firm pose and size against the canvas create a space uniquely her own.

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[75] Charles Harrison, *Painting the Difference: Sex and Spectator in Modern Art*, paperback ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), Harrison disagrees with this, claiming that "to the extent that powers of patronage, purchase, and criticism remained in the hands of men, it was for men that women artists had to paint," 7.
[76] Balducci, "Gazing Women" in *Gender, Space & the Gaze;* hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze" and Moore, "Here's Looking at You, Kid!"

By engaging with the objects of femininity so described in the etiquette books of the era, the woman in black also interacts with and challenges set modes of decorum, revealing societal tensions and setting up the lens through which I examine the next three works. By wrenching the gaze away from the male – in this case, also poking fun at him for his over-enthusiasm – creating empathy among viewers, and subsequently, reclaiming the gaze as a distinctly feminine activity, Cassatt's *In the Loge* (1878) demonstrates more than the beloved "universally empowered woman" of the 80s.

***Woman with a Pearl Necklace in a Loge* (1879)(Figure 2)**

While scholars focus much of their attention on *In the Loge* (1878), they neglect Cassatt's other depictions within the opera-*oeuvre.* I will now expand upon and complicate the analysis of *In the Loge* (1878)*,* specifically with its revelations about female display and pleasure, by comparing it with *Woman with a Pearl Necklace in a Loge* (1879), a painting with the same motif, yet with an extremely distinct rendering. In comparing these two images, an interesting dynamic emerges. I argue for two different readings of the pieces to showcase the ways in which art historians confront the instability of images. First, I outline the surface-level dichotomies between the two paintings, constructing a gender binary in much the same way as the feminist art historians of the 80s. However, I then allow for a more nuanced relationship, wherein the similarities and parallels emerge, inextricably linking the two images together as conceptual pendants (Figure 19 – a side-by-side of the two paintings). By arguing for the distinctly female gazes present in both images, I challenge the binary of past scholarship to explore how a gendered gaze enacts female agency.

Initially, the differences between the two images materialize: the colors, the composition, and even the brushstrokes differ, creating both visual and narrative differences. The woman of *In*

the Loge (1878), darkly dressed, balances with the box surrounding her, serving to empower and support her. As the clear focus of the canvas, her individuality stands clearly against the hastily rendered figures in the audience. On the other hand, the surroundings of the woman of *Woman with a Pearl Necklace in a Loge* (1879) [from here on, referred to as *Pearl Necklace* (1879)] seemingly engulf her completely, swallowing her to showcase passivity. Where the woman in black's opera house primarily depicts deep browns of the interior of the loges, the pastels of the balconies and chandelier reign dominant in *Pearl Necklace* (1879). The pastel pink of her dress reflects in her skin; the blues and yellows of the balcony reflect in her hair and flesh. However, where the woman in black pairs with her surroundings to create a more imposing and aggressive figure, the woman in pink's colors fade her into the background, most notably where her reflected head and shoulders blend into the balcony's coloration, ostensibly showcasing her femininity and passivity (Figure 20). The dark and aggressive colors of *In the Loge* (1878) connote a stauncher and traditionally "masculine" picture, where the pastel colors of *Pearl Necklace* (1879) point to a more "feminine," softer disposition.

That many critics regarded Cassatt as a "masculine artist" – often describing her style as "virile" – is important here, and in the later consideration of *Pearl Necklace* (1879).[77] According to author Louisa May Alcott, "Mary Cassatt… [is] a woman of real genius, she will be a first-class light as soon as her pictures get a little circulated and well known, for they are handled in a masterly way, with a touch of strength one seldom finds coming from a woman's hand."[78] This contemporary consideration of Cassatt may well have shaped scholars' views of her work, explaining their desire to imbue *In the Loge* (1878) with the same masculine virility that many critics saw in the nineteenth century. They contrast her directly with the "feminine" colors and

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[77] Bracquemond and Pfeiffer, *Women Impressionists*, 17.
[78] Quoted in Ibid.

brushstrokes associated with one of the other prominent female Impressionists, Berthe Morisot. Critics considered Morisot's pastel colors and sweeping brushstrokes as the height of femininity and womanhood, exemplified in art critic George Moore's essay *Sex in Art* (1890): "Her art is no dull parody of ours: it is all womanhood – sweet and gracious, tender and wistful womanhood."[79] That society associated Impressionism with a lighter color, like that of Morisot, and masculinity with darker colors, like that of Édouard Manet (1832 – 1883) and Cassatt, underlines the inherent gendered tension between *In the Loge* (1878) and *Pearl Necklace* (1879).

This tension also reflects in the poses of the two women. The woman in pink leans languidly along the plush red cushion of the theater box, while the woman in black inclines forward, actively engaging in the spectacle before her. Indeed, the posture and dominance of the woman in black empower her gaze; the diagonal, curvilinear lines of the balcony and the rectilinear line of the post behind her simultaneously lead our eyes to her and isolate her from the audience around her. On the other hand, the curvilinear lines throughout *Pearl Necklace* (1879) create a "safe" space wherein the curves of the seat and balcony, and the shoulders and arms of the central figure outwardly serve to open her up to display. These observations allow us to consider how the two paintings fall in line with the previous gender binary argument of the 80s feminist scholars.

Continuing this consideration of display frames the woman in black as reclaiming her body from the "male gaze," empowered in looking through her opera glasses, gazing directly and pointedly outward. Meanwhile, the woman in pink, through her posture and color palette, seemingly opens herself up physically for the viewer. In *In the Loge* (1878*)*, the yonic representation, the triangular-ovular repeating motif, and the objects of femininity combine to

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[79] George Moore, *Sex in Art* (London 1890), quoted in Bracquemond and Pfeiffer, *Woman Impressionists*, 17.

construct a female space, wherein the central figure communicates her unique and comfortable sexuality. Closing herself off physically from the viewer, yet showcasing her desires emotionally, the strong and staunch nature of her gaze remains. Conversely, the curvilinear lines of the woman in *Pearl Necklace* (1879)'s shoulders and seat seemingly emphasize her "softness" and non-aggressive countenance. The pastel colors and hazy brushstrokes accentuate this same "feminine softness."

Furthermore, the ornate quality of her dress and accessories underscore this "feminine softness." The woman in black remains covered, with only hints of skin visibly allowed to the viewer, whereas the woman in pink flaunts her chest with her dress. The cut of her dress combines with her delicate jewelry and flowers to showcase her beauty and elegance. Baudelaire comments on these fashions of the bourgeoisie:

> Bathed in the diffused brightness of an auditorium, it is young women of the most fashionable society, receiving and reflecting the light with their eyes, their jewelry and their snowy, white shoulders, as glorious portraits framed in their boxes… they tap their teeth with their fans.[80]

Certainly, Lydia's shoulders protrude, on display, the gaslight dancing across her exposed skin (Figure 21). The wide décolleté gown, flowers at the neckline, and kid gloves coupled with a mother of pearl-handled fan all fall in line with the fashion trends of the time, as is seen in contemporary fashion plates (Figure 22).[81]

Moreover, the positioning of the female body attracts the viewer. She gears her body toward us, flaunting her form. Her bosom projects invitingly, her head turned to the right to expose her neck. In addition, just as the fan *In the Loge* (1878) created an outward connotation of sexuality, combining with the curves of the balconies to create a yonic shape, *Pearl Necklace*

[80] Baudelaire, *The Painter,* 35
[81] Groom and Brevik-Zender, *Impressionism, Fashion*, 182; Valerie Steele, *Paris Fashion: A Cultural History* (Oxford: Berg, 1998)

(1879)'s fan acts as a symbol of simultaneously flaunted and withheld sexuality (Figure 23). The deep V triangular shape of the fan draws the eye while at the same time covering the woman's private parts.[82] The fan, like her body, splays slightly open, sitting directly above her lap, drawing attention to the space, yet concealing it as well. Upon first glance, the open nature of the fan reflects the similar open and unguarded disposition of its holder. Superficially, the splay of the fan, combined with her exposed chest further open up the woman in pink to the viewer's pleasure.

We gaze directly upon her, her shoulders and chest facing us head-on, squared for our pleasure. The mirror behind her showcases her bare back, allowing us to see twice as much of her exposed flesh. The sensuous brushstrokes and lines point to a preoccupation with the sensuality and pleasure found when looking at the woman. The pleasure of gazing upon her consumes us fully – the appealing color palette, the beautiful woman, and the use of the mirror draw us in and our gaze remains on the woman, intrigued. Our eyes scan from the top left corner, where the chandelier catches the eye, down past her body and to the fan hanging delicately from her fashionably gloved hand in the lower right corner, all the while comforted by the curved lines guiding us. We fully appreciate her body, effectively gawking at her. The easy access to her body and the colors of her skin combine perfectly to encompass the colors of the rest of the canvas. These compositional choices make the painting visually alluring. It appeals to the eye, and thus, we find pleasure in our gazing and subsequent objectification of the central figure.

Similarly, her open mouth, a rare and therefore symbolic occurrence in Victorian art, showcases her vulnerability and sensuality. Proper etiquette considered teeth semi-private parts, not fit to be seen in public, and one "never [kept] their mouth open or ajar," as that would have

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[82] Susan Sidlauskas, "Painting the Skin: John Singer Sargent's 'Madame X'," *American* Art 15, no. 3 (Autumn 2001): 28.

gone against societal norms, states a late nineteenth-century etiquette book.[83] In addition, according to David Sonstroem, the display of teeth in Victorian art has great significance, associated with varying character "types."[84] Sonstroem associates the "types" of the Child and Naïf with teeth. If considering the woman in pink to be Cassatt's younger sister, Lydia, as many scholars do, the Child type makes sense.[85] When painting a younger sibling, artists would often paint their teeth to display their immaturity. Equally apt is the association with the Naïf. This type, according to Sonstroem, signifies "unguardedness, vulnerability, as well as incipient sensuality."[86] Her sensually bared skin allows the viewer to gaze upon her, allowing for objectification. However, these connotations also fall in line with Baudelaire's characterization of the *flâneur* as childlike and newly fascinated by the world around him:

> The child sees everything as novelty… Nothing is more like what we call inspiration than the joy the child feels in drinking in shape and color… To this deep and joyful curiosity must be attributed that stare, animal-like in its ecstasy, which all children have when confronted with something new, whatever it may be, face or landscape, light, gilding, colors, watered silk, enchantment of beauty, enhanced by the arts of dress.[87]

That Baudelaire describes the male spectator's privileged view of society as child-like resonates with Cassatt's depiction of Lydia. This allows us to form a deeper reading of the piece, as the woman in pink engages, much like the *flâneur,* in her surroundings and the spectacle around her, as more than a woman on display.

Looking closer at the two paintings and attempting to parse out the structured *relationship* between them, I now establish a more complex analysis. Here, Cassatt successfully

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[83] Rayne, *Gems of Deportment*, 147.
[84] David Sonstroem, "Teeth in Victorian Art," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 29, no. 2 (2001): 370, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25058558.
[85] Breeskin titles the piece, "Lydia in a Loge, Wearing a Pearl Necklace" in Adelyn D. Breeskin, *Mary Cassatt: A Catalogue Raisonné of the Oils, Pastels, Watercolors, and Drawings* (Washington: Smithsonian Inst. Press, 1970), 51.
[86] Sonstroem, "Teeth in Victorian," 356.
[87] Baudelaire, *The Painter,* 8.

displays two different women connected visually and conceptually through their active and radical looking. From here, I examine Cassatt's paintings using the lens of a specifically female gaze, arguing against past scholars. By maintaining more than a simple binary between "masculine" and "feminine" countenances, as past scholars have done, I showcase how the paintings function jointly as conceptual pendants, their connection becoming clear when we see their physical, compositional parallels.

To begin with, the balconies fall in line with each other, curving from the left of *Pearl Necklace* (1879) all the way to connect with the balcony in *In the Loge* (1878) (See Figure 19 for this comparison). As well, the curve of the woman in pink's seat lines up with the curve underneath the first balcony in the woman in black's image. Red converges with brown, and they create a semi-circle that unifies the paintings together, fostering a sense of "wholeness" when we place the two next to each other. This positioning creates a deep V between the two images, with the woman in pink's left arm slanting downward at the same angle of the balcony beneath the woman in black, the diagonal elements of both images inclining toward each other. The yonic reading of the woman in black extends here to the woman with the pearl necklace. The bright reds and fleshy pinks of *Pearl Necklace* (1879) spread the vulva-like curvature of the woman in black's balconies to a feminine epicenter of sexuality and create a sense of belonging within the space of spectacle. As well, the pink dress resonates visually with skin, as creamy pink with hints of blue veins spread throughout and further emphasize female genitalia.

Likewise, the two figures interact on a narrative level. The woman in black points her opera glasses slightly upward, creating the illusion that she gazes up at the woman in pink. If not for the varying balcony patterns, we would almost imagine that they sit in the same theater, with the possibility of one looking at the other. This idea of looking and similarity in location

converge when we notice the presence of the "gazing man" in both images (Figure 24). Though he plays a larger role in *In the Loge* (1878), as we see in his frequent references by past scholars for the comical way in which he eagerly leans to see the focal woman, the bald man with his opera glasses features in both images. His presence in both images underscores the importance of the "gaze" to Cassatt, and her desire to subvert the male gaze by portraying women active in their own, specifically female, gazes.

Pearl Necklace (1879) actively displays female agency through the "female gaze" previously represented *In the Loge* (1878). To start, the central figure looks away from the viewer and out toward the audience displayed in the mirror behind her. Her squared and outright shoulders "look back at the viewer[s]," returning and even challenging their gaze.[88] Her skin, rippling along with the bright gaslight, gazes back at the viewer. The smile on her face indicates her pleasure, and art historian Ruth Iskin argues that this represents the modern woman's power in performative display, claiming that she "actively and pleasurably display[s] herself."[89] The focal woman's pleasure in her own act of display points to a kind of active engagement differing from that of the woman in black, showcasing the varying techniques women employed to perform their agency in the public space of the opera.

Furthermore, the colors of the canvas combine subtly within the woman in pink's skin to emphasize her complete engagement with the scene before her. While at first, they seem to engulf her, I argue that her skin reflects how securely she feels at home, relaxed, actively involved in the spectacle of the loges. Rather than swallowing her into the background, the colors of the opera house echo in her skin, the pinks, blues, and yellows morphing the house into her body. This in-depth visual analysis demonstrates, much like Iskin argues, that she *enjoys* "the

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[88] Sidlauskas, "Painting the Skin," 27.
[89] Iskin, *Modern Women*, 32.

art of self-display."[90] This relaxation and enjoyment are evident in her posture. She leans back against the seat with ease, one arm stretched out on her lap, the other lazily holding onto the fan. The smile on her face showcases her contentment, the small upturned lip signifying the effortless satisfaction with which she takes in the public exhibition. We see this additionally in Cassatt's pastel rendering of a similar subject, *Lydia Leaning on Her Arm, Seated in a Loge* (1880)(Figure 25). Her similarly open mouth and easy pose point to the same open disposition as her counterpart in pink. However, Lydia in yellow engages so much in the spectacle before her that the mirror reflection shows no other balconies or audience members. Only the chandelier and her form reflect in the mirror – both shining brightly as the luminaries and centers of unselfconscious display.

In conclusion, when comparing all three images, we at first see stark differences in countenance and narration. One points to an active and engaged gaze, an aggressive and individualistic posture and dark palette underscoring this intention. The other two, upon cursory inspection, point to women on display, their flaunted skin and rosy disposition there for the viewer to engage in and objectify. However, upon closer inspection, my analysis showcases their visual and conceptual harmony through purposefully developed contrast. Cassatt paints two distinct female experiences. Her women enjoying the "art of self-display" unselfconsciously in the depictions of Lydia thus resonate with the modern woman in black, functioning jointly within Cassatt's body of the opera-*oeuvre*. Overall, the images reveal a uniquely modern, feminine way of seeing – not as a mimicry of the male gaze, as previous scholars have argued for, but instead a female gaze wherein modern women engage in the public spectacle of the opera.

[90] Ibid

In the Box (1879)(Figure 3)

Concentrating on the display of femininity and the theme of looking, *In the Box* (1879)(Figure 3) combines and contrasts with the motifs seen in her other works to create a unique depiction within Cassatt's opera-*oeuvre* – here, the women engage actively with the performance on the stage before them, not with the audience surrounding them. *In the Box* (1879) engages with the prevailing notions of modesty and manners, revealed in stipulations from contemporary etiquette guides, and thus exposes concerns regarding female looking. Here, a dichotomy between the women on stage and the women in the audience materializes, complicating the relationship between the "gaze" and its place between the different classes in Parisian society. By first showcasing the ways in which this painting displays engrossed stage looking, I will then complicate the analysis, pointing to a different opera experience depending on class.

Two young women sit in an opera box, facing away from us and toward the stage. One holds up opera glasses to her eyes, angled slightly downward to the stage, a slight curve to her mouth implying a sense of enjoyment with the scene before her. The other woman gazes similarly downward. She holds an open fan between her and her companion and opens her back and shoulder toward the viewer. Dressed in the typical evening toilette, the girls employ fashionable gloves, flowers, and low-necked gowns (also called décolletés).[91] Bathed in the bright white light from the stage, a pink glow to their skin implies a healthy vitality and flush of satisfaction.

Where the woman in *Pearl Necklace* (1879) – I will refer from here on to the main figure in this image as Lydia, Cassatt's sister – sits in a box illuminated by the descended chandelier

[91] Cassatt, Barter, and Hirshler, *Mary Cassatt*, 47.

representative of Intermission, the light from the stage below splays onto the bodies of the two young women of *In the Box*'s (1879), implying instead the presence of the performance on stage (Figure 26 shows *Pearl Necklace* (1879) and *In the Box* (1879) together). The same distinction can be seen between *In the Box* (1879) and *In the Loge* (1878)(Figure 27 shows them together), as consistent light along the opera house allows the woman in black to gaze across the auditorium to a person in another loge, implying the same intermissive state as in *Pearl Necklace* (1879). Contrary to the woman in black's strong outward gaze, angled toward another audience member, the two young women instead direct their gazes downward toward the stage, implied through this differing use of light.

Indeed, their upright posture and concentrated disposition suggest interest in the production on stage at the very most, and upkeep of polite manners, at the very least. According to an etiquette manual from 1881:

> Those who have no music in their souls, but who go to the opera to see the styles and be seen themselves, should remember that etiquette demands of them an entire submission to the rules of time and place… listen in decorous silence, if not with pleased attention, and suppress all criticisms… Nothing is more ill-bred than whisperings and tittering.[92]

Here, the etiquette guide clearly acknowledges the social aspects of the opera, yet stipulates that while the performance takes place, women's attention must not sway from the stage. Clear silence, in accordance with polite manners, looms between the two women, the fan separating them acting as a physical manifestation of this auditory separation. In addition, unlike the somewhat distinguishable members of the audience in *In the Loge* (1878) and *Pearl Necklace* (1879), we cannot make out any individual figures in the audience of *In the Box* (1879). This emphasizes the concentration of the central figures on the performance that takes place on stage, rather than in the surrounding opera boxes. The curving lines of the balcony follow the sightline

[92] Rayne, *Gems of Deportment*, 346.

of the women, stemming directly out of the opera glasses and continuing to angle downward toward the stage to further stress this attentiveness.

The similar treatment of the female form between *In the Box* (1879) and *Pearl Necklace* (1879) enforces the propriety and awareness of the body in both images. All three women wear décolletés, and with them, delicate white gloves and the additional ornate accessories of flora and fans. Their bright, pink, fluffy dresses couple with their delicate jewelry and flowers to showcase their beauty and elegance. According to the guidebook, *The Ins and Outs of Paris; or, Paris by Day and Night* (1855), young, unmarried women could only wear white, pink, or blue; "white, the color of innocence; pink, the insignia of youth; and never worn by any woman over thirty; and blue, the color consecrated to the patroness of young girls, the Virgin Mary."[93] Our three women follow these fashion guidelines, the light pink of their dresses corresponding to their youthful glow and pointing to their adherence to the social rules. Additionally, the contrast with the woman in black of *In the Loge* (1878), completely covered in a black day dress, modestly dressed according to her age and status, stands starkly against these young women, in line with the fashions according to their youth.

Both images include a fan, further emphasizing their compliance with contemporary fashion stipulations. The open fan that sits between the two women finds commonality with the slightly open fan sitting in Lydia's lap. The fans signal, on the one hand, open dispositions. On the other hand, the fan of *In the Box* cuts across the canvas, parallel to the picture plane, separating the girls' bodies from our view, much like the composition and function of the fan in a pastel of Cassatt, *Young Woman in a Loge Holding a Wide-Open Fan* (1879)(Figure 28). This pastel demonstrates a similar barrier-like fan, cutting into the subject's face to effectively hide

[93] de Marguerittes, *The Ins and Outs*, 10-11.

her from the viewer's gaze. At the same time, however, the open fan projects outward into the theater, reflecting her own gaze out toward the loges across the way. Where the curve of the pastel's fan ends on the left in line with a balcony, however, the fan of *In the Box* curves downward toward the stage. Here, we follow the gazes of each subject to their destination: in the pastel, the illuminated operagoers in the other loges, and in the oil, the spectacle taking place on stage.

The ways in which Cassatt uses color in each painting also differentiates *In the Box* (1879) from its counterparts. In *Pearl Necklace* (1879), light dances across Lydia's exposed chest, the musculature drawing in the eyes of the viewer to her skin. Similarly, the exposed flesh of the two women's shoulders *In the Box* (1879) draw in our gaze. When our eyes scan across Lydia's chest and flushed face, we see the pastel pinks, blues, and yellows blend in the brushstrokes along her face and chest. This coloration reflects how securely relaxed she feels in this setting that emphasizes public display, as she leans back against the seat with ease and smiles with satisfaction.[94]

With the same intention, but with differing execution, Cassatt's two young women of *In the Box* gaze toward the stage, the contours of their faces implying upturned lips that indicate this same engaged satisfaction. Cassatt partially obscures their faces, however, from our prying eyes. Where Lydia's face, on full display with her teeth showing, brightens the painting, the two girls look down and away from us, rather than placing themselves on display. They instead engage with the display occurring on stage. Peaches, subtle reds, and dark browns intermingle along the skin of the two young women to reflect in the darker iterations within the opera house around them. The deep red balcony replicates in the shell of the closer woman's ear, the browns

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[94] Iskin, "Was There," 195.

and subtle greens of the obscured audience echoing in the shadows along the women's faces and backs. The reverberations of the red in the balconies and the woman's ear imply an auditory experience with the performance before her. The symphony of colors echo along the forms of the women, their dispositions and skin creating a complete sensory engagement with their surroundings, as is evident as well in the image of Lydia.

From here, we look more closely at the poses of the two young women, seeing specific connections to *In the Loge* (1878)(Figure 27 shows them side by side). The farther woman in *In the Box* (1879) holds the opera glasses up to her eyes in a manner similar to the woman in black but seems to use both hands rather than the woman in black's singular one, pointing to an attentiveness to the scene on stage. Both look outward, and the curvilinear lines of the balconies converge with the women, who each take up at least half of the space on their canvases. Their opera glasses correlate directly to the curve of the balconies, the red line acting as extensions of their gazes. Much as the fan curves downward toward the stage, the balcony line of *In the Box* (1879) curves downward, where it points upward toward another loge in *In the Loge* (1878). Dark brownish-red vertical posts cut through each composition, in the case of the woman in black grounding her against the audience around her. Her mouth sets in a firm line, asserting her sexuality and dominance through what I have characterized as a "female gaze" toward another opera-goer. In a similar fashion, the deep red rectilinear post supports the gloved hands of the spectacled woman of *In the Box* (1879), backing physically and compositionally the intention of an empowered gaze.

When thinking of the gloves in this image specifically, we see the same connotations of propriety mixed with eroticism but rendered in a different way from those applied to the woman in black. The open palm of the woman in black – projecting toward the viewer, opened up for

sensual connotations – contrasts with the backhand of the young woman in *In the Box* (1879). The gloves cover the delicate fingers that clasp the opera glasses, illuminated partially by the stage light. The upright arms of the young woman cross in front of her bosom and shield both the skin of her hands and the skin of her chest from the viewer. With the fan also acting as a barrier, the young women maintain propriety.

Having established that the young women of *In the Box* (1879) look toward the stage, rather than the audience, we must now address what they would have been looking at. Consequently, we must then address the classed and gendered tensions inherent here, most notably the complex relationship between middle-class female looking and lower class female display. Where Cassatt's other images display women who look out to other operagoers, asserting either their sexual desires or desire to be on display, the women of *In the Box* (1879) look toward the stage. As Marguerrites asserts, "Only, the ladies are those who occupy the boxes at the Opera, and look through their opera glasses at the others dancing on the stage." [95] Thus, the bourgeois women would look to the actresses dancing or singing on stage.

Society viewed female performers as public figures, and as such, as unrespectable in nineteenth-century France. In the contemporary literature of the age, like *Nana* (1880), Emile Zola likened actresses to prostitutes and the theater to a brothel.[96] As H. Despaigne stipulates in her *Le Code de la Mode* (1866), "the theater… whose principal attraction is the splendour of costumes – the two worlds mix, those of honest women and courtesans."[97] The implied bodies of the female performers in Cassatt's painting create a dichotomy between "honest women" and the actresses/"courtesans." The implicit presence of the performers comes from the woman's down-

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[95] de Marguerittes, *The Ins and Outs*, 38.
[96] Steele, *Paris Fashion*, 158.
[97] H. Despaigne, *Le Code de la Mode* (Paris: Chez l'auteur, 1866), 290, quoted in Steele, *Paris Fashion,* 161

turned opera glasses and the reflected lighting from the stage. Despaigne, directing her comments at the male operagoers, speaks of the "strange but real brilliance [of the performers]…[which] fascinates your eyes and your imagination."[98] As proper women looking at the stage before them, rather than "round the house with [their] glass," the women of *In the Box* would have experienced this "strange but real brilliance," revealing a tension between women's policed looking and men's encouraged gazes.[99]

Here, a comparison with Degas' *Singer with a Glove* (1878)(Figure 29) highlights the clash between the proper, upright women of the middle-class and the perceived "looseness" of the female performers. Degas portrays a female singer onstage, mouth agape in song. Her mouth and bared chest open her up to the ogling of the audience and viewer. She stands parallel to the picture plane, her gloved hand jutting upward and outward toward the viewer. Her black glove implies her lower status in society, as higher class women would only wear kid, white, or another very light hue.[100] In addition, the black outlining of her chest draws the eye of the viewer and audience, accentuating her bosom. The pastel medium also implies the touch of the artist, scrawling white and pink across her chest to attract the eye.[101] Cassatt, on the other hand, respectfully suppresses her touch. By having the girls shield their bodies away from the viewer, and thus, the artist, Cassatt does not engage in the same intimate touch as Degas, whose marks scrawl directly across the chest of his figure.

Where Baudelaire condemns higher class women in their loges as "solemn," "grave," "brainless," and "complacent," he praises the "proud," full of "joy," and "delightful" lower class

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[98] Steele, *Paris Fashion,* 293-4
[99] Ibid
[100] Hartley, *Ladies' Book*, 174.
[101] More on Degas' touch in Anthea Callen, *The Spectacular Body: Science, Method, and Meaning in the Work of Degas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 136.

counterparts.[102] Propriety kept higher class women confined to their loges, their glasses fixed on the stage, their bodies shielded from view by their fans. On the other hand, the highly sexualized women on stage carry their own power. The staunch horizontal lines behind Degas' performer connote strength in character and sexuality that Cassatt avoids in her rounded, circular, appropriate women. In contrast with the outright and sexual woman Degas portrays, Cassatt's young women sit politely, mouths closed and abiding by proper etiquette that their class required; her brush does not interact visibly with the sensually-coded parts of their bodies.

We see a further gendered tension of propriety in the differences between the access that men and women had to the backstage area. While the opera permitted men like Degas access to the backstage area, and thus, relationships with the female performers, bourgeois women stayed firmly on one side of the curtain. Eugéne Chapus observes in *Le Sport á Paris* (1854) the eager backstagers, also called "lions": "if only you are something like the uncle of a dancer or her *protector,* the tutor of a *panther* or her mahour, then the portals become open to you… many men…are there, in the evening, finding fantastic shelter amidst the hubbub behind the scenes of the Ópera."[103] Male subscribers could entertain themselves with the dancers in the "green room" backstage, as well as their dressing rooms; Degas produced quite a few representations of these relationships (Figures 30 & 31).[104] Here, the treatment of the female figure contrasts directly with Cassatt's portraits. The man behind the stage in Figure 30 looks directly to the performer's sex, her hands outlining her lower half, rather than having a fan cover the area as in Cassatt's images. Pointing to an open sexuality, rather than a hidden one, Degas demonstrates the differences between male and female spectatorship. By engaging in these relationships with the

[102] Baudelaire, *The Painter,* 35.
[103] Eugéne Chapus, *Le Sport á Paris* (1854), 242-3, quoted in Herbert, *Impressionism,* 107.
[104] Herbert, *Impressionism,* 107.

performers, the male spectator has a much different gaze than that of the bourgeois woman, knowing the actresses only by their stage presence. When Marguerrites references the affairs between the "lions" and the performers, and their subsequent access to backstage, she pronounces, "To see the actresses in private life, though at the same distance, is so much more amusing than to see them on stage!"[105] That higher class women could only imagine what happened behind the scenes, where men of the same status had privileged access and sexual dealings with the performers, emphasizes the notion of the "proper" woman in Cassatt's *In the Box* (1879).

In the Box (1879) speaks to a different moment at the opera, one of contented concentration and visible enjoyment with the actual performance, rather than the performative self-presentation so common in nineteenth-century Parisian society. Furthermore, through the implied presence of the female performer, it displays the non-reciprocal gaze of the middle-class women down to the lower class performer. This play of gazes complicates the position of a bourgeois woman at the opera. If not looking around the theater toward other operagoers of a similar class, then she would be looking to the stage, where actresses, considered by many as courtesans, acted and sung out various narratives of love, tragedy, and scandal. This aspect of the opera – women looking at other women – emphasizes a different "female gaze" from the one discussed when looking at the woman in black in *In the Loge* (1878). Dealing with class difference rather than bourgeois women looking to other members of the bourgeoisie, *In the Box* (1879) engages differently with the "female gaze." However, it aligns with *In the Loge* (1878) as it looks to the performance on stage and upholds the propriety of the middle-class rather than objectify men, in turn, as an imitation of the "male gaze." In the same way that *In the Box* (1879)

[105] de Marguerittes, *The Ins and Outs*, 116.

connects the "female gaze" and the "proper" acts of looking, the final painting, *The Loge* (1882)(Figure 4), engages with the idea of female propriety and restraint, specifically through the lens of etiquette guides.

***The Loge* (1882)(Figure 4)**

The latest dated painting in Cassatt's opera-*oeuvre, The Loge* (1882) complicates the previously developed ideas from the prior three paintings. When compared with the first two paintings, *In the Loge* (1878) and *Pearl Necklace* (1879), the young women of *The Loge*'s innocence and respectability stand starkly in the face of Cassatt's two prior rule-flouting opera-attendees. As well, they give no indication of participating in the same engaged stage looking as the women of *In the Box* (1879). However, upon closer inspection, through the examination of symbols, brushstroke, and composition, an awkward tension emerges within the image, complicating the idealized "rigid correctness of upper-class adolescents" that past scholars like Robert Herbert asserted.[106] Focusing specifically on the idea of proper etiquette when attending a performance at the opera house, we see the specific stipulations in etiquette guides that emerge in the painting:

> During the [theater] performance complete quiet should be preserved, that the audience may not be prevented seeing or hearing. Between acts it is perfectly proper to converse, but it should be in a low tone, so as not to attract attention. Neither should one whisper. There should be no loud talking, boisterous laughter, violent gestures, lover-like demonstrations or anything in manners or speech to attract the attention of others.[107]

In the above quote, Richard Wells instructs young women on the rules to follow when attending a performance, expecting the audience members to keep quiet, watch the performance respectfully, and refrain from engaging in what we by now know to be the primary social

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[106] Herbert, *Impressionism,* 100.

[107] Richard A. Wells, *Manners, Culture, and Dress of the Best American Society* (King, Richardson, 1894), 162, accessed May 4, 2018, https://archive.org/details/mannersculturea01wellgoog.

function of the opera house: to see and be seen. Various etiquette books from the nineteenth century reinforce this same point, directing their guidelines especially to female operagoers. One states that a woman "should go about her business quietly and for her own sake, attracting as little publicity as possible." [108] Another emphasizes this same idea of quiet female propriety, directing women to "not look round the house with your glass."[109] This quote addresses the tendency to watch one's fellow operagoers and the issues society had with women not looking properly to the performance at hand. We see this tension in *In the Box* (1879)(Figure 32 shows it with *The Loge* (1882)) and especially with the woman in black in *In the Loge* (1878)(Figure 33 shows it side by side with *The Loge* (1882)).

At first glance, Cassatt's two young women of *The Loge* (1882) conform perfectly to this societal expectation of feminine restraint. Two young women sit next to each other, gazing out of their opera box toward the audience, two sets of balconies and hazy, partially rendered figures reflected in the mirror behind them. Broad strokes of white, light pink and yellow sweep across the canvas, the pale skin of the women reiterated in their surroundings and accessories. The same coloration reflects on the chandelier and along the sweeps of the balconies, as well as in the pinks of the bouquet and along the fan. Green and blue accents along the balconies and their accessories give the composition a sense of depth, complimentary colors melding to create an aesthetically pleasing palette. Their subdued expressions match those of popular fashion plates of the time (Figure 34), their clothes and accessories emphasized at the expense of outright

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[108] De B. Randolph Keim, *Handbook of Official and Social Etiquette and Public Ceremonials at Washington* (Washington, DC, 1889), 240; see also *Gems of Deportment and Hints of Etiquette* by Mrs. ML Rayne (1881), and Richard Well's *Manners, Culture, and Dress of the Best American Society* (1894)
[109] Ibid

personality or emotion.[110] In comparison to Lydia of *Pearl Necklace* (1879)(Figure 35 shows a side by side) whose smile and teeth brighten the loge in which she sits, the two young women's lips remain tightly closed, and in one case completely covered, in accordance with the proper restraint of the setting. Florence Hartley stipulates in her etiquette book to:

> Avoid carefully every motion or gesture that will attract attention… to flirt a fan, converse in whispers, indulge in extravagant gestures of merriment or admiration, laugh loudly or clap your hands together, all are excessively vulgar and unlady-like.[111]

Their appropriately rigid expressions and postures seem to fall in line with the perceived ideals of female engagement with society.

Both young women hold a classic example of female adornment: the woman on the left covers herself with a large fan (decorated with a flower motif), while the right holds a bouquet of white and red flowers. The large fan sweeps across her body, parallel to the picture plane and concealing completely her upper body and the lower half of her face. The flowers, on the other hand, rest lightly in the right woman's lap, almost spilling from their casing. Each coded with their own set of cultural and historical symbols, we look specifically to the bouquet, as no other painting in Cassatt's opera-*oeuvre* displays the same amount and prominence of this feminine accessory. The woman in black makes no reference to flora and Lydia and the women of *In the Box* (1879) wear sparse blossoms in their hair and on their dresses.

However, in *The Loge* (1882), the floral motif of the splayed fan and the large bouquet emphasize the Victorian language of flowers and its association with propriety and etiquette.[112] Artists use flowers to connote fertility and beauty, and in the nineteenth century, this practice gained further popularity in "floral female painting," the subject type where artists solidified the

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[110] Illustration in Cassatt, Barter, and Hirshler, *Mary Cassatt*, 48.
[111] Hartley, *Ladies' Book*, 174.
[112] Stott, "Floral Femininity."

relationship between women and flowers to imply the decorative, passive function of both.[113] Etiquette books, as well, encouraged women to look, smell, and act like flowers, using floral terminology to define femininity. *Everybody's Book of Correct Conduct*s (1893) states the importance of proper calling-manners: "If you go, calling at the right day and hour, you will be welcome as flowers in May."[114] Richard Wells claims that "women… are like moss-roses, and are most beautiful in spirit and in intellect, when they are but half-unfolded."[115] We see these associations in *The Loge* (1882), where the bouquet effectively blocks the private parts of the young woman on the right and even extends to the woman on the left. The white roses imply her innocence, the flowers in her lap seemingly shielding her sexuality and symbolizing purity, covering that which must be kept pure.

Furthermore, if we return to the lips of the women, we see further connotations of floral femininity, where *The Bazar Book of Decorum* (1870) stipulates:

> We consider a certain fullness of the lips essential to female loveliness… All the poets– and they are supposed to have the nicest sensibility to female as to other beauty – agree in bestowing a certain fullness and redness upon the lips of their ideal loves. The expanding rose-bud is, as is well known, the traditional comparison: 'Roses are her cheeks/ and a rose her mouth.'[116]

The rosy, flushed cheeks of the woman on the right, coupled with her full red lips, foster additional associations with flowers, as the color repeats in the deep pink shadows along some of the white roses. The floral overtones of the piece reinforce the conception of women as ideal

[113] Ibid., 61.
[114] Lady M. Colin and M. French-Sheldon, *Everybody's Book of Correct Conduct* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1893), 32.
[115] Wells, *Manners, Culture*, 77.
[116] Robert Tomes, *The Bazar Book of Decorum: The Care of the Person, Manners, Etiquette and Ceremonials* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1870), 50.

examples of female propriety and as decoration to adorn the opera house, much like their own accessories.[117]

Where the woman in black of *In the Loge* (1878) looks about the theater using her accessories to empower her, the young women of *The Loge* (1882) display a different "gaze." With her opera glasses, directly engaging with the other audience members and displaying a "female gaze," the woman in black actively flouts the rules of etiquette that stipulate that a woman should "use her lorgnette only infrequently in the hall."[118] Conversely, the young women of *The Loge* (1882) look down, appropriately "modest and guarded in their glances," as Mrs. ML Rayne instructs.[119] Furthermore, their twin expressions reflect their conformity to the social codes of the time. In *Pearl Necklace* (1879), Lydia's open countenance reflects in her open and relaxed posture. In comparison to Lydia, whose chest emboldens the viewer to gaze and observe, the skin of the young women in *The Loge* (1882) blends into their dresses, with no strokes to emphasize light or flesh, discouraging any further examination. As well, the two young women shield and barricade themselves from the viewer with their accessories. The large fan covers all but the arms and the upper face of the left woman and the bouquet shields her sex. In contrast to Lydia's shoulders squared toward the viewer, the two young women turn slightly inward from the picture plane, closing themselves off further. Where Lydia revels in being observed, the two young women purportedly, as previous scholars have asserted, represent polite society, demonstrating themselves to be well schooled in manners and polite demeanor, shielding themselves from view.[120]

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[117] Hartley, *Ladies' Book*, 174.
[118] D'Alq, *Le Nouveau Savoir-vivre* (1881), quoted in Balducci, *Gender, Space,* 62.
[119] Rayne, *Gems of Deportment*, 141.
[120] Herbert, *Impressionism,* 100.

Comparing *The Loge* (1882) to a domestic portrait of the young woman on the left, Mary Ellison, allows us to see how etiquette from the home extended to the loges. The opera boxes could function as private domestic spaces, seen in this comparison to *Miss Mary Ellison* (1880)(Figure 36). Ellison sits in a rounded settee, a mirror behind her reflecting only the back of her head and neck, a fan held up and shielding her partially from view. However, the fan here differs from *The Loge* (1882), where the fan completely engulfs her body, shielding her entire upper half from view. A similar downturned expression, Mary Ellison's solemn face and upright posture parallel her positioning at the opera, upholding proper female etiquette in both places.

When we look closely at the canvas of *The Loge* (1882), however, a certain awkward discomfort surfaces, stemming from compositional irregularities in color, line, and the duplicity of the floral symbol. We begin with the partially explored floral motif, established above incompletely as only a symbol of innocence and passivity. Flowers also have the connotation with overt, rather than hidden sexuality – seen here in their placement above the woman's sex.[121] By shielding, but simultaneously drawing in the viewer's eyes toward her lap, the bouquet can be seen in two ways. The folds and flaps of the wrapping around the flowers open up in a very inviting way, attracting the viewer's attention and prying eyes. The arch of the fan as well acts as the blooming petals of a flower, corresponding with the curved balconies, rounded chandelier, and the shoulders of the women reflected in the mirror. The curves of the girls' shoulders, heads, and even eyes and lips, along with the black choker necklace emphasize the circle motif further.

The circles, however, differ from Cassatt's other depictions of the theater, especially when considering the choker and the balconies. Where the balconies of the three other opera-works follow the sightlines of their main figures, *The Loge* (1882)'s balcony rests just above the

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[121] Stott, "Floral Femininity," 66.

left woman's gaze, curving up and away from her sightline rather than moving seamlessly along it. The downward curve of the fan pulls the girls' gazes downward as well, the balconies curving upward where their gazes point down along the line of the fan. When looking at a preliminary drawing of the painting (Figure 37), Cassatt's original plans show her intention to line up the balcony with their sightlines, like the other three paintings. As well, Cassatt removes the left woman's mouth, now covered completely by the fan. Mounting the discomfort further, the balcony, not following their sightlines, instead cuts through the heads of the women, the aggressive black of the choker following this same pattern to effectively decapitate the woman on the right. In contrast to the woman in black, whose bright white neck creates balance within her body, or *Pearl Necklace* (1879), where the delicate white jewelry rests on her neck, the young woman in *The Loge* (1882)'s stark black choker slices across her neck violently, one of the few dark spaces on the pastel-ridden canvas.

Furthermore, when looking at the preliminary drawing, we see the difficulty that Cassatt had when trying to place the left woman's arms – resulting in the final painting's uncomfortably long and extended formation. The drawing shows three arms of the left girl, stacked on top of each other as if Cassatt did not know where to put the arms. This extends to the final painting, which finds the girl's left arm clasping her elbow in a maneuver that would be impossible in reality. In the drawing, Cassatt includes a chair or settee behind the right girl, grounding her within the opera more so than in the oil painting. In addition, markings on the original drawing, specifically the arrows pushing in the borders around the edges, indicate that she moved the composition inward significantly, closing in on her subjects like a scientist with a magnifying glass. As the girls now take up considerably more space on the composition, the viewer focuses on them, rather than the surrounding space. The discomfort of the image increases with this

magnification and their physical displacement with the removal of the chair. Faint traces of blue curves on the canvas possibly imply the original presence of the chair, yet no such seat exists in the final painting. They float in their opera box, detached and untethered from the space around them, yet increasingly scrutinized by the amplification of the viewer's gaze on their forms. The girls become trapped, the haziness in the reflection of the mirror also reflects heightened disorder.

Finally, certain color choices and brushstrokes point to an abstraction of form and dissociation from reality that is not present in the other three paintings. The dark green of the reflected figure finds parallels in the green along the gloves and dresses of the young women, as well as the physical and motif flowers. Dark blues imply shadows, the open brushwork and occasional scratch-like strokes point to a separation from reality. The audience-member splotches implied in the mirror further emphasize this unreality. One cannot help but feel slightly unnerved by the image, particularly by the almost twin figures' blank stares and upright postures which are confusing and disturbing to the viewer.

This disturbance thus implicitly serves as a critique of gendered expectations. The painting resonates with the anxiety expressed by the writers of etiquette books, which advocated "upholding proper society." It also resonates with those disquieted by the tendency of the opera to be more focused on the display of bodies and status rather than the performance at hand. Caricatures of the time exhibit this same tension (Figure 11, 18 & 38). Nineteenth-century viewers who abided by the rules of propriety would at first find comfort in the seemingly good manners and rigid propriety of the piece, but then become slowly discomforted the more they gazed upon the two young women. Much like the projected image of Paris that followed Haussmannization – a clean, gilded playground for the rich, with wider and beautiful boulevards

– the opera, also seen as a hallmark of French nationalism, did not completely follow its portrayal. On the surface, it appears beautiful, proper, upright, and rigid; but upon closer inspection, dark corners, impropriety, and tensions between the surface-level and underlying society emerge.

Conclusion

Was the opera, then, an intermediary space between public and private, wherein women could exhibit their specifically “female gazes”? The opera house served as one of the only public places that bourgeois women could actively *look,* as society constantly policed their behavior and bodies. Cassatt’s opera-*oeuvre* engages actively with these social issues, their visual comparisons and resonances complicating perceived notions of femininity. Overall, her opera-*oeuvre,* taken together as a series of comparative, complicated images, expose societal tensions regarding women in public. Etiquette guides, unsettled by the bourgeois female presence in the “public sphere,” showcase, throughout this essay, the societal desire for control over women’s bodies. Cassatt’s opera works, through their instability and openness to interpretation, juxtapose against these etiquette guides. For example, their condemnation of the use of opera glasses resonates in the paintings by the other Impressionists, showcasing Cassatt’s challenge to the prevailing notions of society. Cassatt painted the only examples of women actually *using* opera glasses in the Impressionist group; all of the others depicted the glasses hanging limply in the hands of their women as mere fashion accessories (Figure 15, for example).[122]

In fact, some scholars regard her most famous portrayal of a woman using this “accessory,” *In the Loge* (1878), as a self-portrait. Herbert suggests this perspective when he describes the painting: “Her firm gesture and concentrated profile give her an air of self-

[122] Herbert, *Impressionism,* 100.

containment, a no-nonsense maturity (she looks strikingly like the artist herself) which is confirmed by her plain costume."[123] When comparing *In the Loge* (1878) to the two confirmed self-portraits, we see this resemblance (Figures 39 & 40). The sparse jewelry, covered body, red-brown hair, and firm set of her mouth align the three portraits. What are the implications of this alignment? What does it mean for a woman artist to portray herself, actively gazing outward, steadfast and empowered against the social codes that discouraged this very act? I would argue that Cassatt presents a female *flâneur* – who, much as the "female gaze" does not mimic the "male gaze," displays her own act of *flanerie,* without mimicking her male counterparts. The *flaneuse,* like the "female gaze," seeks subjecthood through portrayal. Cassatt attains this subjecthood through her empowered *In the Loge* (1878), and what one critic considered her "penetrating *powers of observation* [emphasis added]." [124] Perhaps it is because of her unique position as an outsider in Paris – American, unmarried, an avant-garde female artist – that Cassatt was able to rebel against the existing modes of etiquette through her works, *observing* and exploring a gendered, exclusively feminine gaze.

Scholars stress this very positionality, claiming that, "[Cassatt's] American self-confidence, her origins and education, and long life enabled her to produce a large body of work and to reap the rewards of her success even during her lifetime."[125] This self-confidence likewise allowed Cassatt to express her beliefs, boldly asserting her desire for "Women [to] be *someone* and not *something*."[126] We see this same assertion in a statement made about one of her later works, *The Mural of Modern Woman* (1892-93)(no longer exists) for the Chicago World Fair's

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[123] Ibid

[124] Exhibition review by Albert Wolff, no further details, quoted in Bracquemond and Pfeiffer, *Women Impressionists*, 21.

[125] Bracquemond and Pfeiffer, *Women Impressionists*, 22.

[126] Sarah Hallowell, letter to Mrs. Palmer, citing Mary Cassatt, 6 February 1894, in Nancy Mowll Mathews, ed., *Cassatt and Her Circle, Selected Letters,* New York 1984, 254.

"Woman's Building" designed by Sophia Hayden (1863-1953). Cassatt commented on her choice to include only women on the mural:

> Men I have no doubt, are painted in all their vigor on the walls of the other buildings; to us the sweetness of childhood, the charm of womanhood, if I have not conveyed some sense of that charm, in one word, if I have not been absolutely feminine, then I have failed.[127]

She does not deny the so-called "femininity" of her work but rather embraces it to portray an exclusively female life experience. Cassatt reclaims the bodies of women, most notably in her opera-*oeuvre,* to be "someone" and not "something," from object to subject.

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[127] Mary Cassatt, letter of 11 October 1892 to Mrs. Palmer, in Nancy Mowll Mathews, *Cassatt and Her Circle: Selected Letters* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984): 238.

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Mary Cassatt's Women at the Opera: Representations of Modern Femininity

Illustrations

Figure 1 Mary Cassatt (1844-1926), *In the Loge,* 1878, oil on canvas, 32 x 26 in. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Figure 2 Cassatt, *Woman with a Pearl Necklace in a Loge,* 1879, oil on canvas, 32 x 23 ½ in. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia

Figure 3 Cassatt, *In the Box,* 1879, oil on canvas, 17 x 24 in. Private collection

Figure 4 Cassatt, *The Loge,* 1882, oil on canvas, 31 6/16 x 25 1/8 in. The National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

Figure 5 Garnier, Paris Opera Exterior, 1861-75, Paris, France

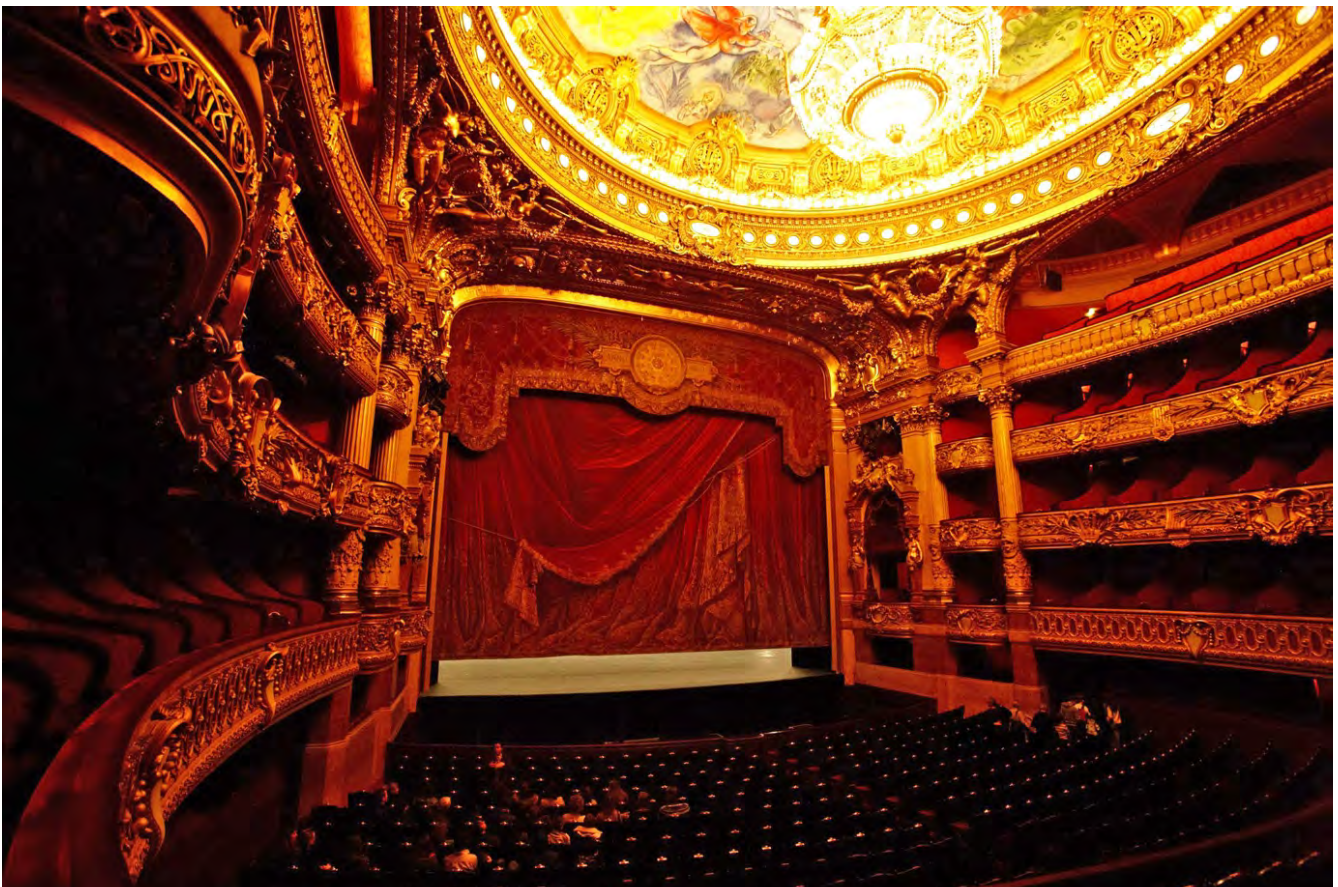


Figure 6 Charles Garnier, Paris Opera Interior, 1861- 75, Paris, France

Figure 7 Edgar Degas (1834-1917), *The Ballet from "Robert le Diable"*, 1871, oil on canvas, 26 x 21 3/8 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

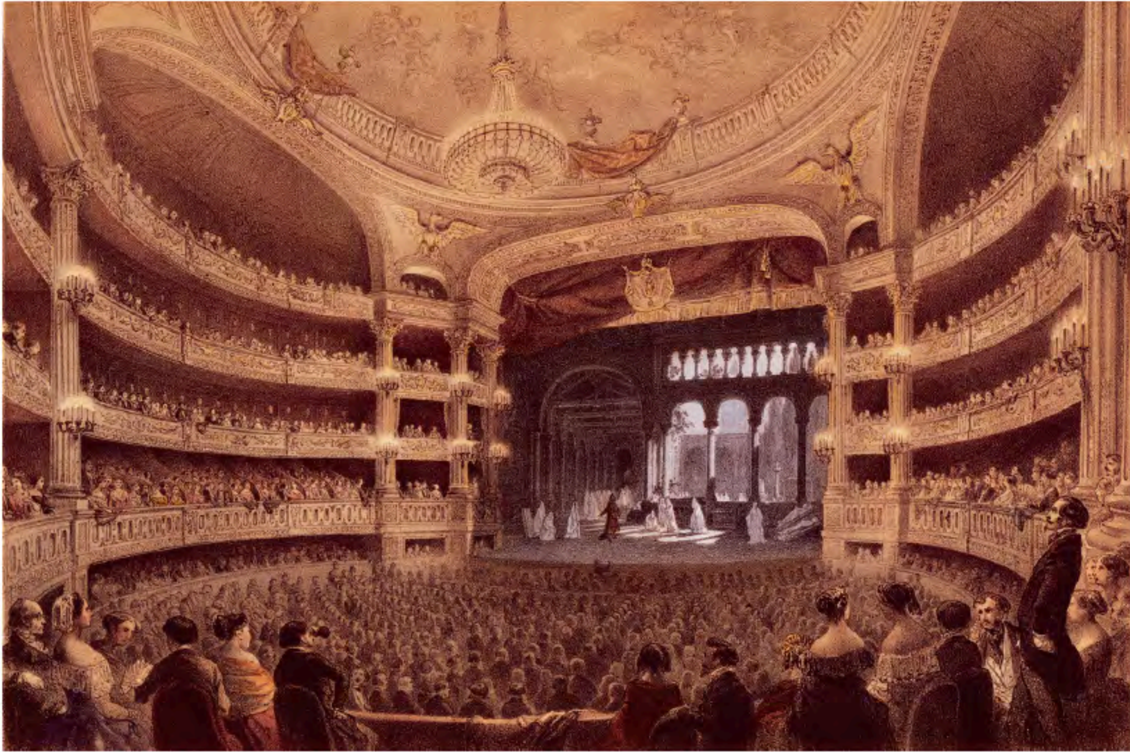


Figure 8 Jean-Baptiste Arnout (1788-1865), *Imperial Academy of Music, Theater of the Opéra Garnier,* color lithograph, Paris, Musée de la Ville de Paris, Musée Carnavalet

Figure 9 Garnier, Paris Opera Grand Staircase, 1861-75, Paris, France

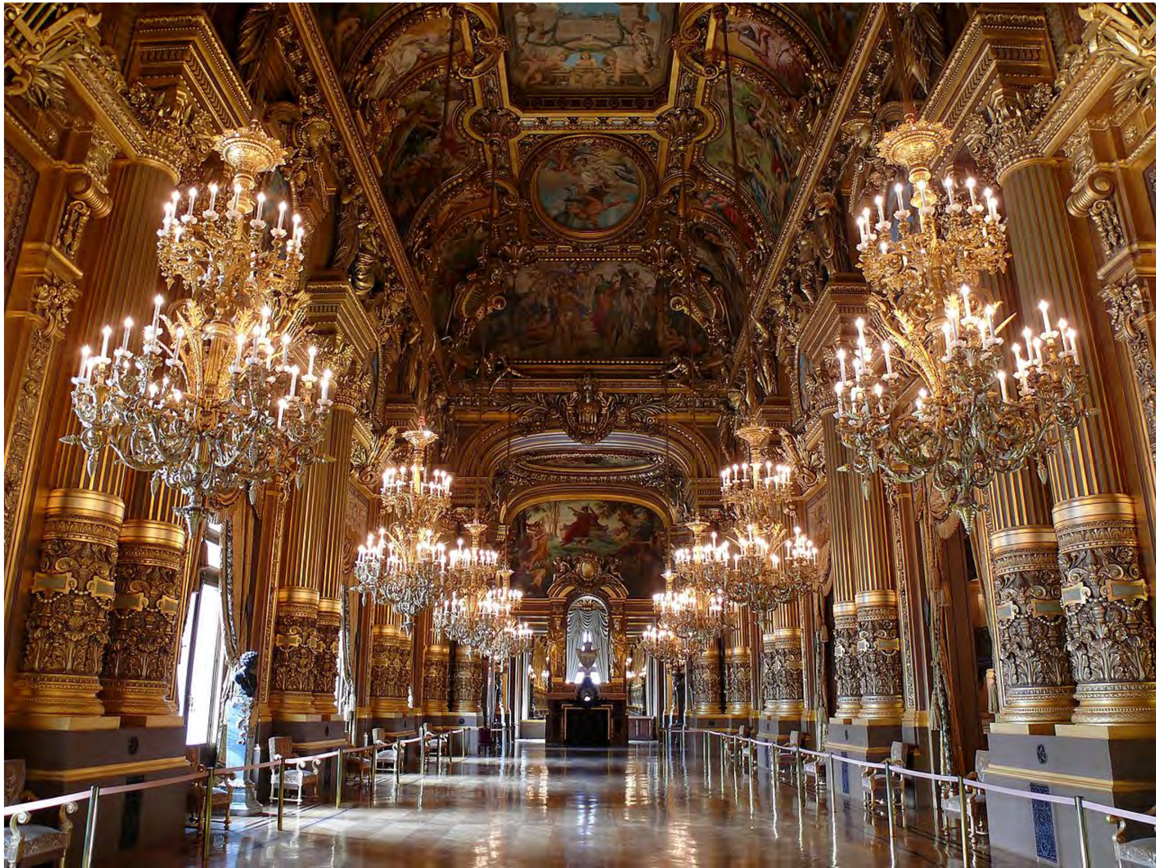


Figure 10 Garnier, Paris Opera Interior Hallway, 1861-75, Paris, France

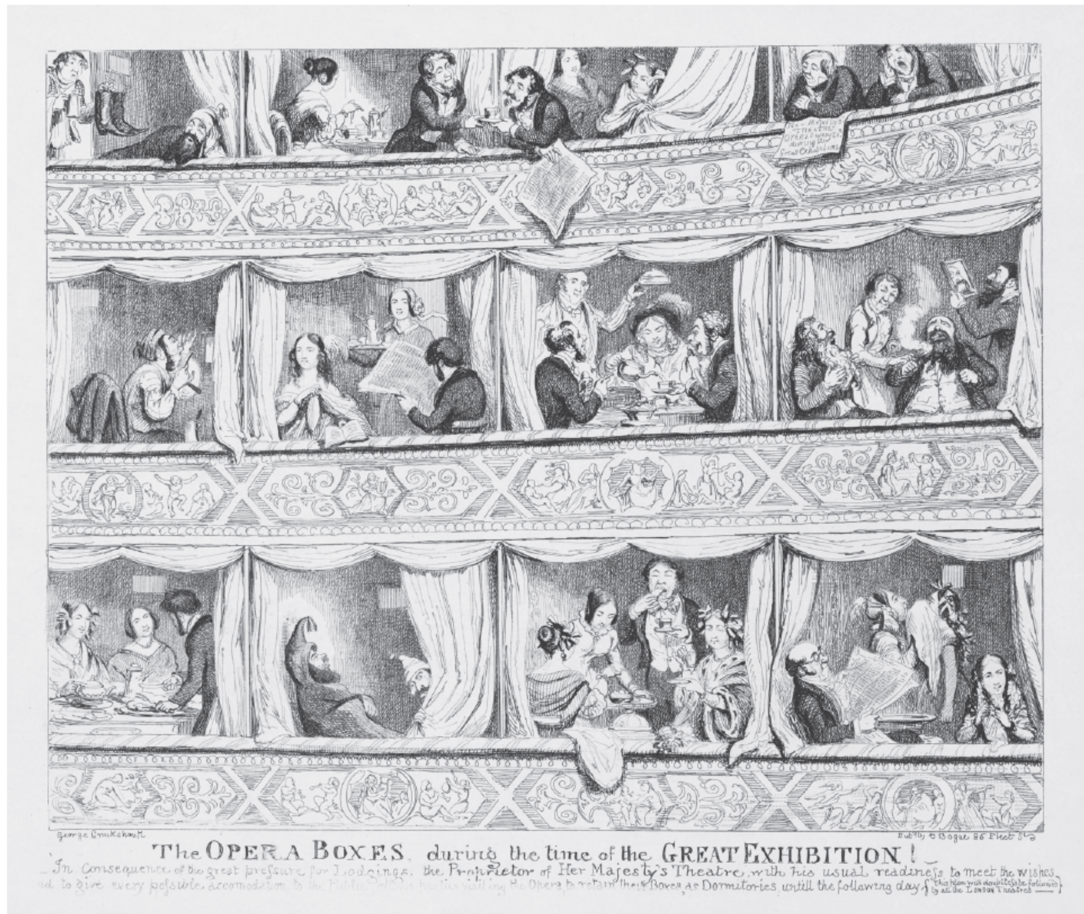


Figure 11 George Cruikshank (1792-1878), *The Opera Boxes during the Time of the Great Exhibition,* 1851, etching, London, Science Museum

Figure 12 Cassatt, *In the Omnibus,* 1890-1891, drypoint and aquatint, plate: 14 5/16 x 10 ½ in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Figure 13 Gustave Caillebotte (1848-1894), *Paris Street; Rainy Day,* 1877, oil on canvas, 83 ½ x 108 ¾ in. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago

Figure 14 Degas, *Mary Cassatt at the Louvre: The Paintings Gallery*, 1885, pastel, over etching, aquatint, drypoint, and crayon electrique on tan wove paper, 305 x 127 mm, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago

Figure 15 Pierre Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), *La Loge (Theatre Box),* 1874, oil on canvas, 31 x 25 in. The Courtauld Gallery, London

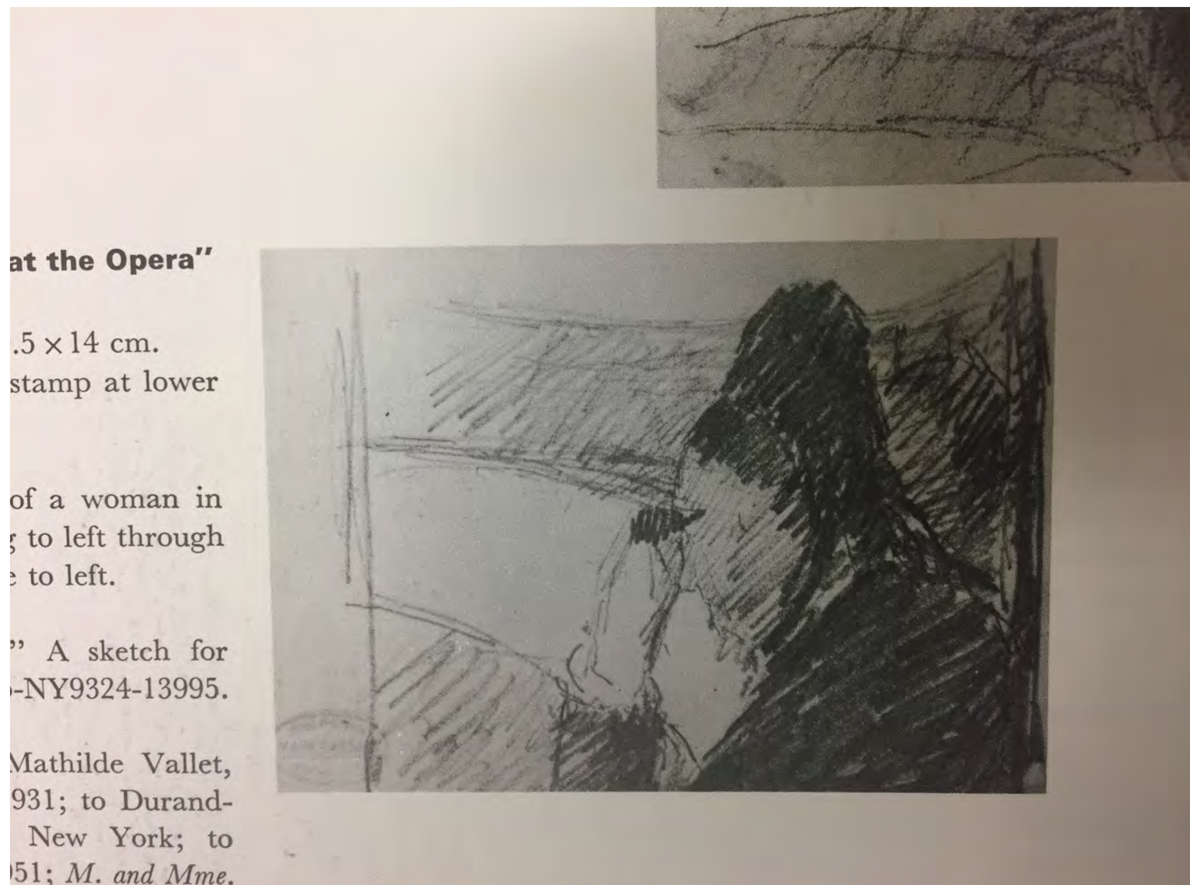
te." A sketch for BrCR 73.

of Fine Arts, Boston, gift of
, 1955.

Note: A sketch for BrCR 73.

Collections: From the artist to Mathilde Vallet, 1927; Vincent Price, Los Angeles, California; to *Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston.

Figure 16 Cassatt, *Sketch for "A Woman in Black at the Opera" No. 2*, 1880, soft pencil on paper, 4 x 7 in. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



at the Opera"

.5 × 14 cm.
stamp at lower

of a woman in
to left through
to left.

" A sketch for
-NY9324-13995.

Mathilde Vallet,
931; to Durand-
New York; to
51; *M. and Mme.*

Figure 17 Cassatt, *Sketch for "A Woman in Black at the Opera" No. 3,* 1880, soft pencil on paper, 3 ¾ x 5 ½ in. Private collection

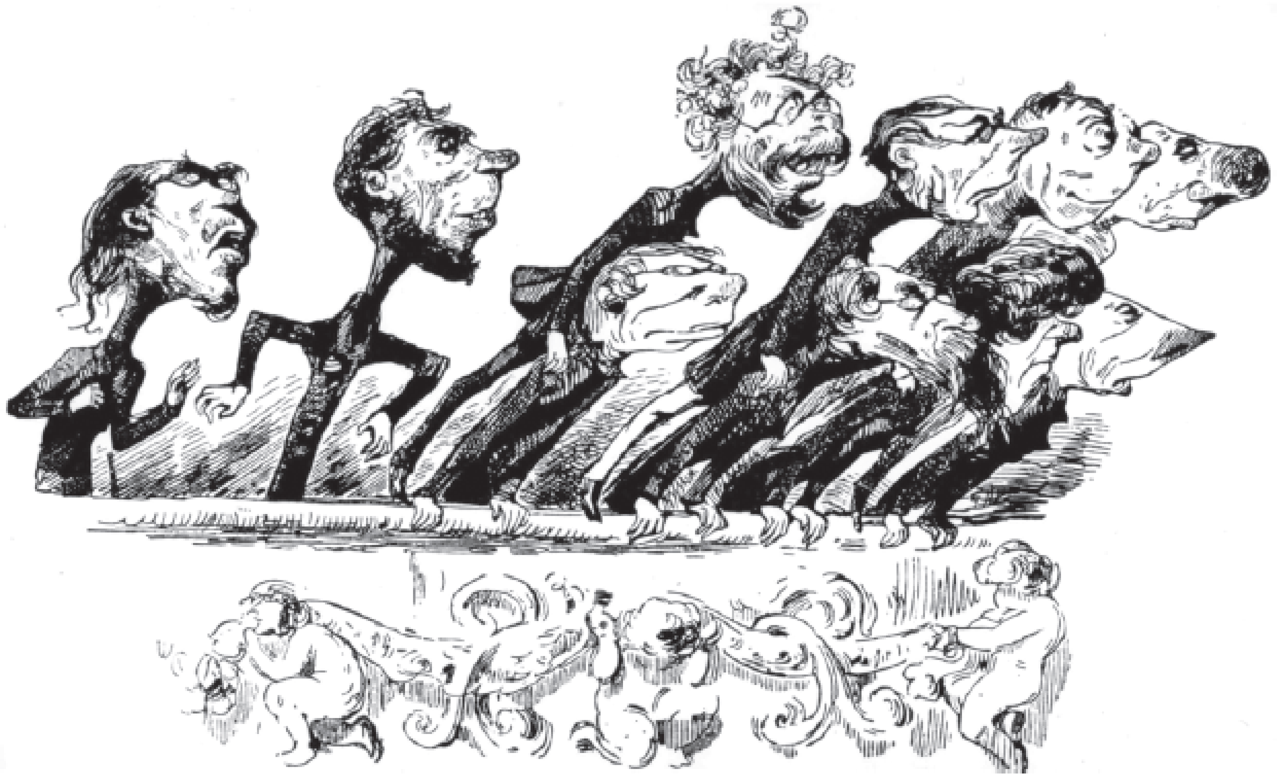


Figure 18 Gustave Doré (1832-1883), *Those Who Are Carried Away* and *Overcome,* from *Grotesques*, 1849, Private Collection

Figure 19 – Cassatt, *In the Loge* (1878) and *Pearl Necklace* (1879), side by side

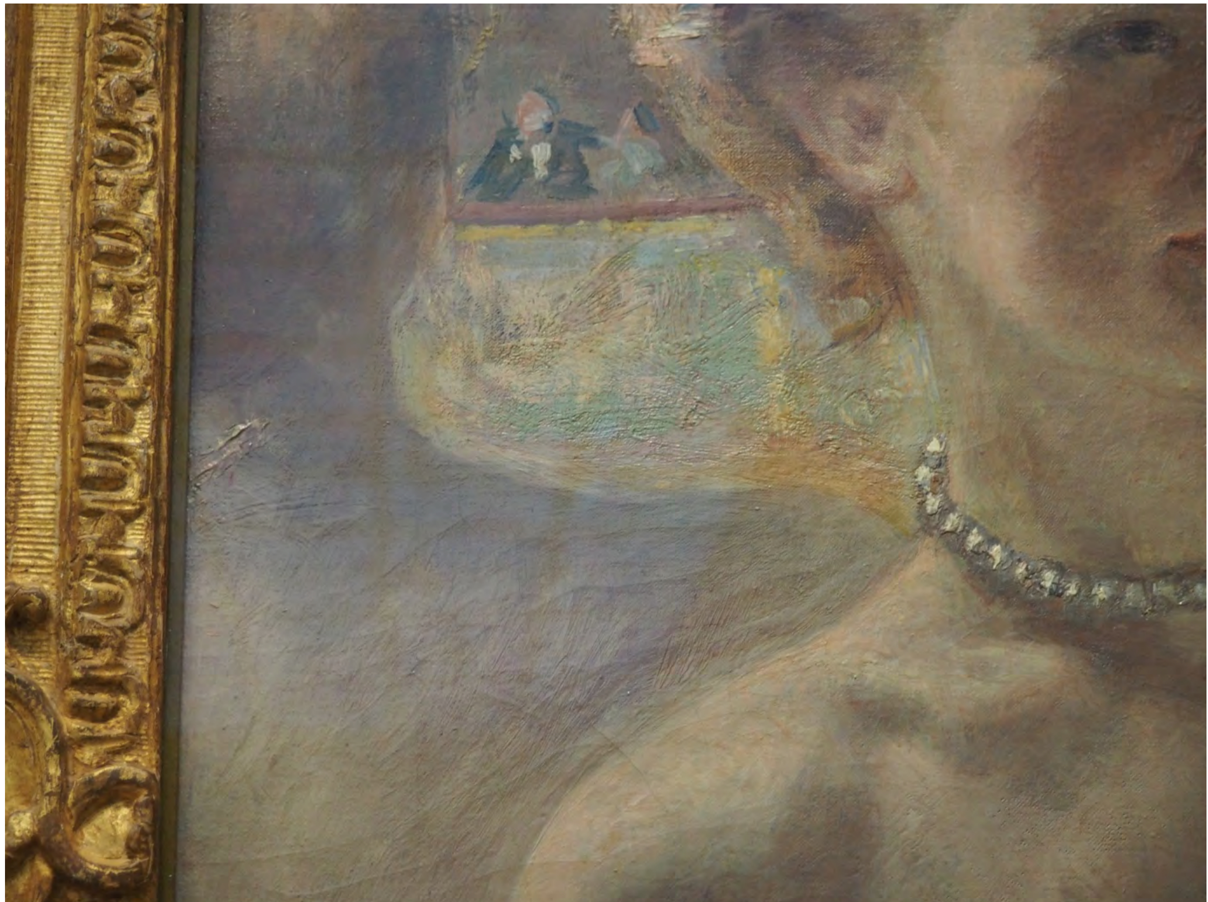


Figure 20 Cassatt, *Pearl Necklace* (1879) detail of shoulder and reflection

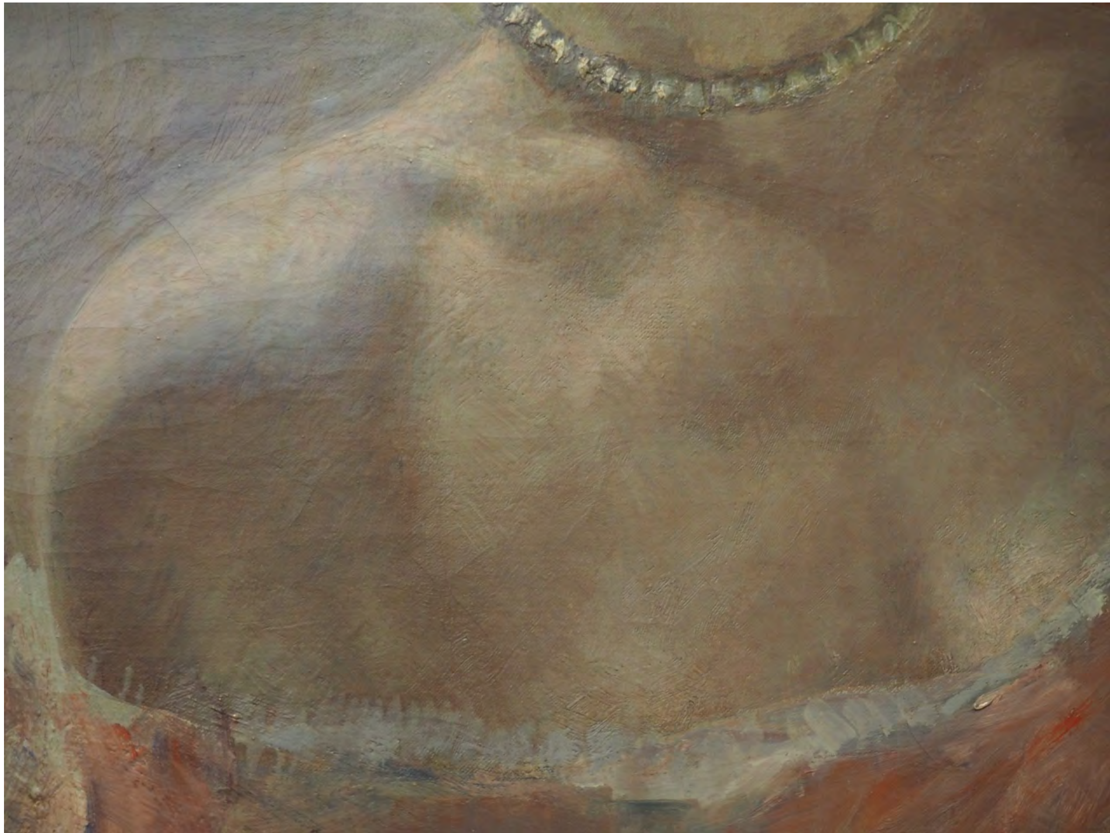


Figure 21 Cassatt, *Pearl Necklace* (1879) detail of chest/ gaslight on skin

Figure 22 Journal des Demoiselles*, Two Women in Evening Dresses*, 1880, steel engraving with hand coloring, sheet: 9 ¾ x 7 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Figure 23 Cassatt, *Pearl Necklace* (1879) detail of fan and lap

Figure 24 Cassatt, *Pearl Necklace* (1879) detail of "gazing man"

Figure 25 Cassatt, *At the Theatre (Lydia Cassatt Leaning on Her Arms, Seated in a Loge),* 1880, pastel on paper, 21 5/8 x 17 ¾ in. Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City

Figure 26 Cassatt, *Pearl Necklace* (1879)(top) and *In the Box* (1879)(bottom)

Figure 27 Cassatt, *In the Loge* (1878)(top) and *In the Box* (1879)(bottom)

Figure 28 Cassatt, *Young Woman in a Loge Holding a Wide-open Fan,* 1879, pastel on paper, 26 ¼ x 32 ½ in. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia

Figure 29 Degas*, Singer with a Glove,* 1878, pastel on canvas, 20 15/16 x 16 1/8 in. Harvard Art Museum, Boston

Figure 30 Degas, *Dancer's Dressing Room,* 1878, pastel, dimensions unknown, Private collection

Figure 31 Degas, *Pauline and Virginie Conversing with Admirers,* 1880-83, monotype print, 8 7/16 x 65/16 in. Harvard Art Museum, Boston

Figure 32 *The Loge* (1882)(top) and *In the Box* (1879)(bottom)

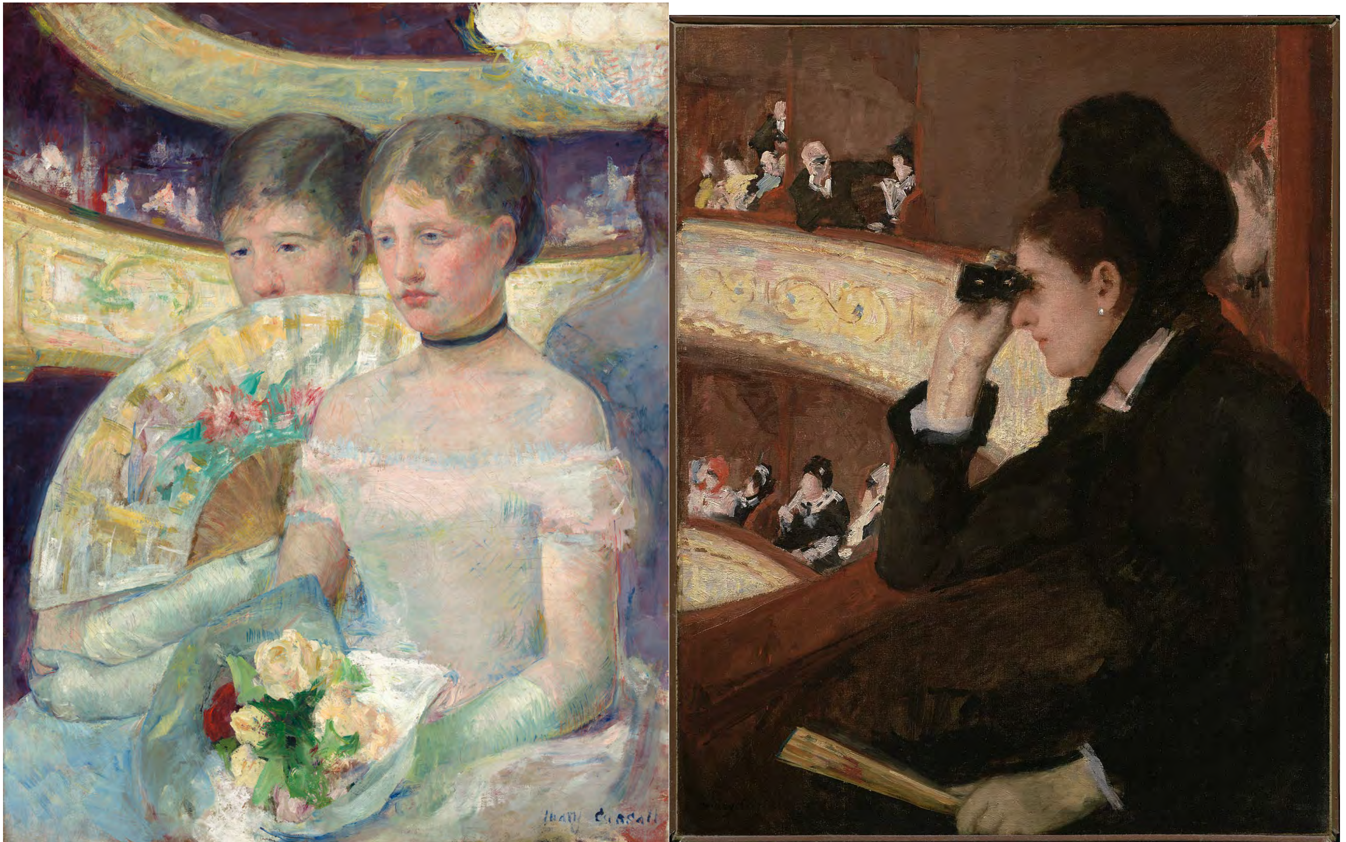


Figure 33 *The Loge* (1882) and *In the Loge* (1878) side by side

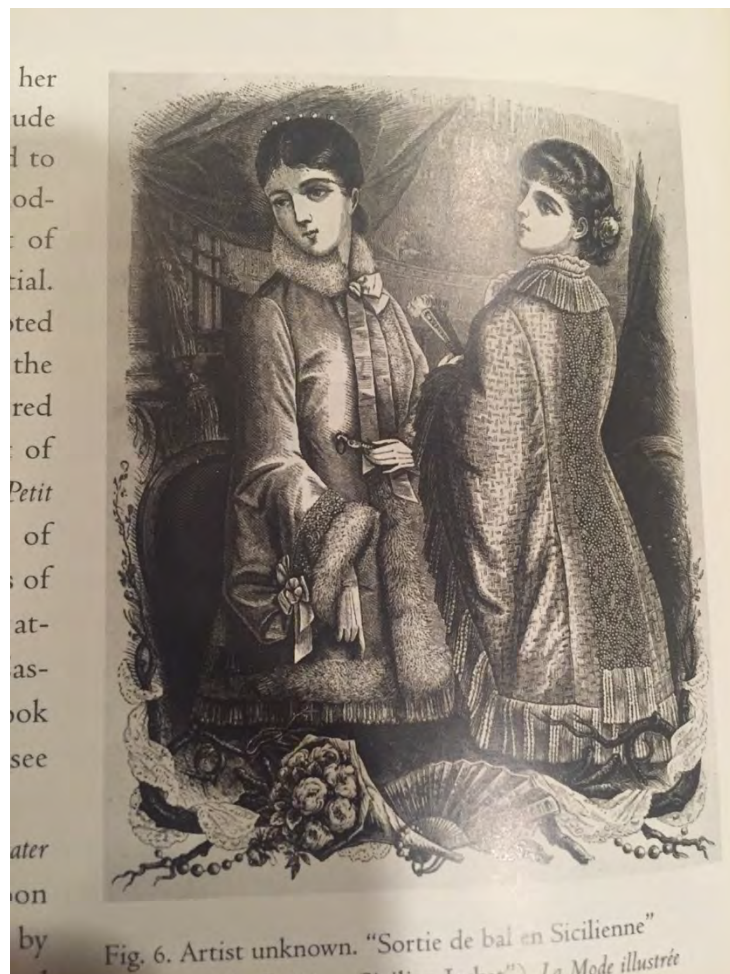


Figure 34 Artist unknown, "Sortie de bal en Sicilienne" in *La Mode illustrée* (Dec. 24, 1882), p.1. Photo: courtesy Boston Public Library

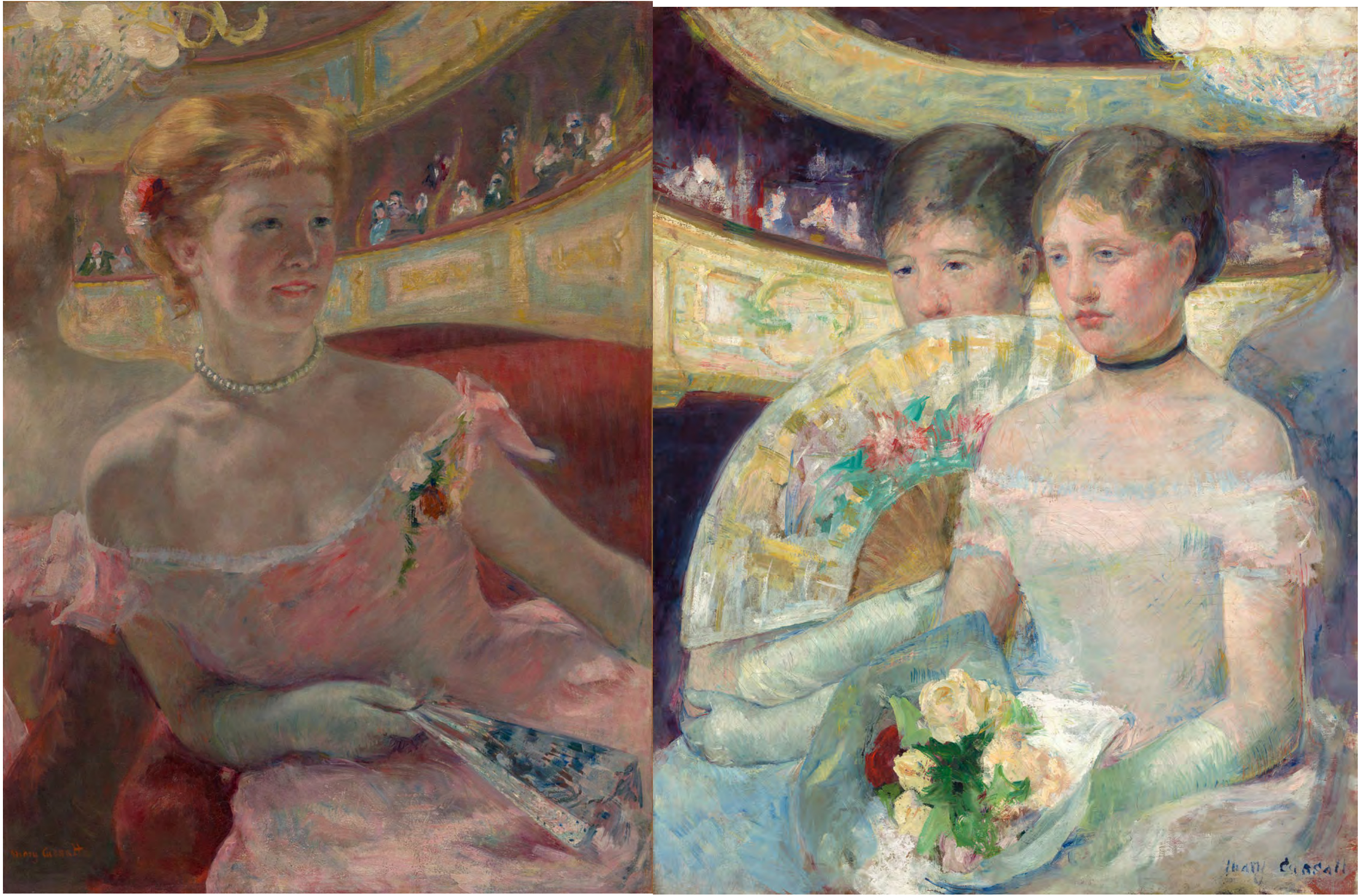


Figure 35 *Pearl Necklace* (1879) and *The Loge* (1882) side by side

Figure 36 Cassatt, *Miss Mary Ellison,* 1880, oil on canvas, 33 ¾ x 25 ¾ in, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

Figure 37 Cassatt, *The Loge [Recto],* 1882, pencil with trace of color on paper, 11 1/8 x 8 5/8 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

Figure 38 French School, 19th century, *The Claque in Action*, 1830-40, lithograph, Paris, Bibliothéque des Arts Decoratifs

Figure 39 Cassatt, *Portrait of the Artist,* 1878, watercolor, gouache on wove paper laid down to buff colored wood-pulp paper, 23 5/8 x 16 3/16 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and *In the Loge* (1878) side by side

Figure 40 Cassatt, *Self-Portrait,* 1880, gouache and watercolor over graphite on paper, 13 1/16 x 9 11/16 in, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC