Mary Cassatt, Impressionism, & *La Jeune Fille*:
Defining 19th-Century “Girlhood”

by

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................... 2

Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 5

I. Defining Adolescence: within American Psychology, Feminist Reform and Cassatt’s Circle .................................................................................................................................................................................. 30

II. Impressionism & Adolescence ..................................................................................... 76

III. A Dialectical Display of Adolescence & Femininity: Reading *La Loge* (1882) ............................................................................................................................................................................. 120

Epilogue .................................................................................................................................. 153

List of Figures ...................................................................................................................... 169

Bibliography ....................................................................................................................... 171
I initially came across questions of the depiction of the female adolescent in Professor Katherine Kuenzli’s “Modernism and Modernity” (ARHA240) course for a final research paper. It was there that I first began to grapple with Mary Cassatt’s 1882 painting, La Loge. When I met with Professor Kuenzli, she spent hours with me; going far beyond her allotted office hours time-slot and into the late evening, encouraging me to further probe the painting. Through Professor Kuenzli’s guidance, I learned to look at paintings in a distinctly new and meticulous way. This is not a rarity: throughout the entire thesis process, Professor Kuenzli was always readily-available, instantly answering any of my questions and working through my thoughts with me. She has been extremely dedicated and helpful. She has shown openness, warmth, care, and, of course, a vastness of intellect. Her comments have tremendously improved my writing. She demonstrates intelligence, insight and an unabridged extent of knowledge as a professor, art historian, advisor, mentor, and friend. I could not be more grateful to her for how helpful she was to me during this process.

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Furthermore, I would like to thank my friends and family for their interest, support, and devotion to making my thesis a reality. Thank you for supporting me and believing in my passion for art. I would particularly like to mention my second cousin, Ingrid Sischy (1952-2015), whose efforts to create a more inclusive art world served as an inspiration for this thesis. Sischy was my father’s first cousin, both of whom were born in Johannesburg, South Africa. Sischy had a wildly successful career: she was a writer and the art editor of *Artforum* (1979–1988), *The New Yorker* (1988–1996), *Interview* (1989–2008), and *Vanity Fair* (1997–2015). As a writer and feminist, Sischy worked to create a world in which women, as artists, writers, and art historians, were recognized and lauded for their efforts. Sischy was a force to be reckoned with: in a 1986 New Yorker issue Janet Malcolm profiled the thirty-three year old writer, declaring her “Girl of the Zeitgeist.”
Perhaps Cassatt shares some similarities with my second-cousin – both worked to define and advocate for the female in novel ways. To me, Cassatt may not be a woman of the “zeitgeist,” but rather she was a woman who was ahead of her time. While Sischy championed the woman through her critical writings, Cassatt’s form of advocacy was her painting. Cassatt was an unconventional woman. Yet, the unconventional nature of her paintings, especially those of the teenage girl, has not yet been fully understood.
INTRODUCTION

Mary Cassatt, Impressionism & La Jeune Fille: Defining 19th Century “Girlhood”

The teenage girl, no longer a child, but not yet a fully formed woman, emerges as a distinct subject matter in nineteenth-century French art.¹ This stage of adolescence, often marked by self-consciousness and nascent yearnings, converges with French Impressionism around 1870 through the 1920s. Adolescence unfolds as a relatively new subject for modernist, and particularly Impressionist, painting during this period. Depictions of adolescence can be seen as a dominant theme within the Impressionists’ oeuvre. Take, for example, Édouard Manet’s (1832-1883) painting of adolescent male Léon Leenhoff in Luncheon in the Studio (Figure 15, 1868), Pierre-Auguste Renoir’s (1841-1919) portrayal of a girl’s “première sortie” at the Parisian opera in The First Outing (Figure 16, 1878), Edgar Degas’s (1834-1917) The Little Fourteen-Year-Old Dancer (Figure 19, 1878-1881) and, finally, Berthe Morisot’s (1841-1895) image of a young girl at the opera in Young Girl in a Ball Gown, (Figure 17, 1879), as well as her paintings of her own teenage daughter, Julie Manet, such as Julie Daydreaming (Figure 18, 1894).

Modern printmaker and painter Mary Cassatt (1844-1926) exhibited at four of the eight Impressionist exhibitions (1879, 1880, 1881, 1886). Though stylistically, Cassatt produced avant-garde work like the Impressionists, her imagery is unique within the

¹ “Teenager” is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “a person who is in his or her teens; (more generally) an adolescent.” “Teenager” was first used in 1913, but “teenage” was used as early as 1706, and “teen” as early as 1596. It should also be noted that there is a distinction between “teenager” and “adolescent.” There are three definitions in the Oxford English Dictionary to define “adolescent.” As a noun, “adolescent” dates back to before the 1400’s, and is defined as “a person in the age of adolescence; a youth. Also: an animal at an analogous stage of development.” As an adjective, “adolescent” is defined as “designating an adolescent or adolescents; that is in the age of adolescence. Also: of or belonging to an adolescent or to adolescence” and “of an emotion, quality, etc.: characteristic of adolescence.” It appears that there is a greater emotional quality associated with adolescence, which this thesis will begin to explore. In addition, there is a slight difference between the age range of a “teenager” (thirteen – nineteen years old) and an adolescent (fourteen – twenty-four years old), which this thesis will also make note of. See: “teenager, n.”. OED Online. March 2019. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/198559?redirectedFrom=teenager. Also, see: “adolescent, n. and adj.”. OED Online. March 2019. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/2650?redirectedFrom=adolescent.
context of Impressionism. As the sole American and one of few female artists to participate in the Impressionist exhibits, Cassatt adopted a remarkably distinct approach to painting adolescence than did her Parisian contemporaries. Cassatt’s paintings of adolescents focus exclusively on girls, whereas many of her French counterparts painted both boys and girls. In her depictions of the female subject, Cassatt provided a new vision of the emotional complexity of female adolescence. The artist questions how and to what extent emerging ideas of physical and emotional development might apply to adolescent girls. Achille Ségard’s 1913 biography of Cassatt was one of the first to begin to identify the artist’s look into this new kind of subject matter. Ségard wrote that “one perceives that she [Cassatt] has a strong feeling that the place of the child in human life is of limitless importance.”2 Within this oeuvre, Cassatt marked adolescence as a pivotal life stage of the female. My thesis considers how Cassatt blends French and American notions of gender, modernity, adolescence, and modern painting. In this thesis, I position Cassatt and her artwork in relationship to emerging discourses on modernity and adolescence in the fields of modern art and modern psychology, both in France and the United States.

Exhibited at the Fourth Impressionist Exhibition in 1879, Cassatt’s Portrait of Miss Mary Ellison, or Woman with a Fan (Figure 2, c. 1878-1880) displays the artist working through ideas of female adolescence. The painting is one of two singular portraits the artist painted of Miss Mary Ellison. Mary Ellison Embroidering (Figure 1, 1877) was the first time Cassatt painted Ellison. Cassatt met Ellison through their mutual friend, Louise Waldron Elder, who was later Mrs. H.O. Havemeyer, a well-known American art collector and patron of Cassatt. Together, the two portraits trace a young girl’s

development throughout her transitional years from childhood to adulthood. There is little biographical detail on Ellison, and her precise age remains unknown. Ellison was the daughter of a Philadelphia businessman, Rodman Barker Ellison, who commissioned Cassatt, at the request of Mary, to paint the 1877 portrait. Perhaps this is indicative of Ellison’s age: she was too young to commission the portrait herself. One scholar has noted that Ellison was probably born in the mid-to-late 1850s when Cassatt painted these, thus, it seems that these paintings were completed during Ellison’s later teenage years.

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4 Jennings notes that there is very little biographical information available about Mary Ellison. According to Jennings, Ellison was probably born in the mid-late 1850s. Jennings, “Paintings and the Nuanced Gaze,” 247.

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Figure 1. Mary Cassatt, Mary Ellison Embroidering, 1877, oil on canvas, 29 1/4 x 23 1/2 inches (74.3 x 59.7 cm),

Figure 2. Mary Cassatt, Portrait of Miss Mary Ellison or Woman with a Fan, c. 1878-1880, oil on canvas, 85.5 x 65.1 cm (33 11/16 x 25 5/8)
Painted a mere three years apart, these two works are strikingly distinct in their individual portrayal of the young Ellison. The two paintings reveal not only the significant emotional development of the teenage girl throughout her transitional years, but also Cassatt’s alteration of her own artistic techniques as a result of her encounter with Impressionist painting in Paris. In *Mary Ellison Embroidering*, Ellison appears in three-quarter profile, sitting erect against the straight-back of a deep red upholstered sofa. Cassatt positions Ellison against a background of darkness in a pool of light, thus accenting her pale blue dress, lacy white shawl and cream-colored needlepoint canvas. The artist’s modulation of brights and darks in the reds on the sofa, the uneven lighting, and Ellison’s flushed skin that unites the light and dark tonalities of the canvas are all hallmarks of Cassatt’s earlier, more traditional artistic training. The portrait has traces of Realism. Painted in 1877, *Mary Ellison Embroidering* was created during a year of personal and artistic transition for Cassatt, when she renounced the Salon and embraced Impressionism. Peering out at the viewer with a slight smile emerging at the corner of her lips, Ellison emanates a quiet, warm glow as she tightly pulls at length of her embroidery thread. Engaged in an ornamental activity considered proper for refined young ladies, Ellison is a “picture of adolescent virtue.” This painting portrays a “young girl,” as described by Ellison’s daughter, who is “vital, enthusiastic.”

*Portrait of Miss Mary Ellison* (c. 1880), on the other hand, depicts the same subject as a slightly older young woman, yet with remarkable differences. Ellison wears a dress of yellows, green, blues, and mauves as she holds an open fan and sits in an upholstered

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5 Jennings, “Paintings and the Nuanced Gaze,” 248.
6 Jennings, 249.
7 Gretchen R Sinnett, 2006. “Envisioning Female Adolescence: Rites of Passage in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century American Painting,” Order No. 3211146, University of Pennsylvania, 64.
armchair in front of a mirror that reflects the back of her head. Ellison’s body position is ambiguous: whereas her shoulders seem to face the viewer, they are all at once slightly angled and yet nevertheless do not present a full three-quarter view. The direction of Ellisons’ legs are also indecipherable. Ellison’s body here conveys a sense of hesitation, whereas in *Mary Ellison Embroidering*, her pose displays a more conventional format and seating arrangement. Cassatt was wholly immersed with the Impressionists by the time *Portrait of Miss Mary Ellison* was executed. The painting exhibits Cassatt’s own transition to an attention modern life, individual observation, broken colors, gestural brushstrokes, the optical play of light and reflections, and the physicality of the painted surface. In *Portrait of Miss Mary Ellison*, Cassatt paints a flurry of yellow, red and beige strokes to the right of Ellison’s head, and also situates a similarly agitated portion of white and orange smears of paint. Yet, these strokes demonstrate more than simply Cassatt’s engagement with Impressionist techniques. The swirls and daubs of paint in the upper right corner of the canvas suggests that a state of mental interiority lurks within the thoughtfully somber female adolescent. As opposed to the earlier 1877 portrait, Ellison here appears more reserved. With her incredible gaze no longer tethered to the viewer before her, Ellison’s dark, shadowy eyes in the later portrait appear unfocused, melancholic, and reticent. As art historian Griselda Pollock has noted, Ellison appears “somber and almost mournful.” Rather than animatedly engaged with the viewer before her as in the earlier portrait, Ellison now looks off into the distance, seemingly absorbed in her own thoughts. Cassatt positions viewers in close physical proximity to the young woman. Yet,

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Ellison’s fan guards, conceals, and thus isolates her from the viewer, resulting in a female adolescent who is physically guarded and psychologically remote.\textsuperscript{11}

Together, these two paintings reveal Cassatt’s emerging ideas on female adolescence, in which she intertwines ideas from American psychology and feminism with a painterly language influenced by her Impressionist contemporaries. As this thesis explores, the concept of female adolescence was pervasive among American psychologists, as well as feminist educators and reformers. Connected to American philosopher and psychologist, William James, Cassatt was well aware of the discussions on adolescence. These widely-known debates occurring in a multitude of diverse academic and scientific fields were provoked by G. Stanley Hall, one of James’ students. In his ground-breaking two-volume book, \textit{Adolescence} (1904), psychologist Hall defined and thus popularized the concept of adolescence. Hall’s study on adolescence gave rise to a multitude of discourses among educators, scientists, and social reformers in the United States and Europe around 1900.

However, “adolescence,” as a term and a socially defined stage, was essentially a masculine experience. Psychologists, notably Hall, articulated that girls do not fully experience adolescence. Hall argued that when girls develop into women, the maturation of female reproductive causes an interference on their development, both intellectual and emotion. The psychology of the period thereby situates female adolescence in a problematic place. Femininity and adolescence were defined in ways seemingly contradictory to one another. To study Cassatt’s definition of girlhood, this thesis considers scholar Barbara Hudson’s characterization of the “subversive” nature of

\textsuperscript{11} Sinnott, “Envisioning Female Adolescence,” 63.
femininity and adolescence and applies it to Cassatt’s paintings of teenage girls.\textsuperscript{12} Cassatt’s paintings foreground the potentially antithetical, incompatible, and opposing nature of femininity and adolescence within the teenage girl at the same time that they propose some kind of provisional or partial co-existence. As we will come to understand, the adolescent girl, for Cassatt, was a studied portrait; she was the artist’s construed embodiment of a composite of influences that ranged from American reform movements to the studios of French Impressionist painters.

\textbf{From Philadelphia to Paris}

Cassatt first officially began her art studies at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, where the study of European, and particularly French Academic art, was encouraged. European art was shown in exhibitions, having a “profound effect on the Academy students.”\textsuperscript{13} The students were able to see special exhibitions at the Academy, such as the major annual exhibitions which combined Old Master art with contemporary work from Europe, entries from the elected members of the Academy, and selections from new artists.\textsuperscript{14} Christian Schussele and Joseph A. Bailey, teachers at the Pennsylvania Academy, were trained in France themselves and taught the students to admire the French masters.\textsuperscript{15} The students, including Cassatt, were aware of celebrated works such as Jean-Leon Gerome’s \textit{Egyptian Recruits Crossing the Desert} (1858), exhibited in 1860, 1861, and 1862, as well as Rosa Bonheur’s \textit{Horse Fair} (1852–1855), exhibited in 1864.\textsuperscript{16}


\textsuperscript{14} Cassatt, Mathews, \textit{Cassatt and Her Circle}, 17.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 17.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
Cassatt recognized Philadelphia as a cosmopolitan community of artists and patrons, yet, it lacked the history of art as well as excitement she saw as vital for her career. It was around the 1860s that the Pennsylvania Academy began instituting life classes designed specifically for female art students, however, classrooms were segregated and access to the fully nude model was denied. Cassatt also simply found the courses at the Pennsylvania Academy unstimulating. She was convinced, according to Adelyn Breeskin, that copying great paintings was the most fitting way to learn how to paint. The great paintings by the old masters were not, however, in Philadelphia, but were rather in Europe, at the Louvre and other museums. Her ambitions were supported by her family that belonged to a famously wealthy social class; one that encouraged intellectual inquiry, art, as well as travel and study far from home.

Cassatt’s early works reveal the large degree to which her techniques altered in the first decade of her studies and travels. At the Pennsylvania Academy, and later abroad, Cassatt augmented her artistic techniques by copying works by esteemed masters. At the Pennsylvania Academy, she first began drawing from casts and still-life groups but then later copied oil paintings hanging in the Academy. Cassatt’s earlier works dating to her first European travels reflect her studies of masters. In 1872, Cassatt traveled to Parma, Italy to study the works of the High Renaissance by Northern Italian painters Antonio da Correggio and Parmigianino. Her studies there can be observed in the works The Bacchante (Figure 3, 1872) and Early Portrait (1872). The Archdiocese of

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18 Breeskin, Mary Cassatt; a Catalogue Raisonné, 7.
19 Cassatt, Mathews, Cassatt and Her Circle, 9.
20 Breeskin, Mary Cassatt; a Catalogue Raisonné, 7. Breeskin does not include works from Cassatt’s time at the Pennsylvania Academy, but does note one in particular of which she copied a portion which was “The Deliverance of Leyden” by Withamp, a contemporary Dutch academician of no particular standing; Breeskin also notes and catalogues only one of Cassatt’s copies which seems to have survived, Copy after Frans Hals (c.1873).
Pittsburgh had commissioned Cassatt to copy works by Correggio, but she also created original paintings based on her travels.\textsuperscript{21} The painting of a young woman is rife of Italian references, and the ornamental, green vines and model’s pose echoes the fresco style of Correggio.\textsuperscript{22} From 1871-1874, Cassatt studied these masters and more, traveling to Rome, Madrid, Seville, Antwerp, and Parma.

Other works that reflect Cassatt’s academic artistic training are \textit{A Musical Party} (Figure 4, 1874) and \textit{The Young Bride} (Figure 5, 1875). These also demonstrate Cassatt’s gradual departure from Renaissance and Baroque painting to incorporating more modern techniques into her practice. Brightly illuminating women engaged in an array of activities (playing banjo, reading) at the foreground of the composition, \textit{A Musical Party} shows Cassatt’s attention to more evocative and expressive configurations of light, shade, and volume. The woman reading in the shadows contrasts with the centrally lit female figure, who is painted in brighter flesh tones and modelled in higher relief. Cassatt’s adherence to realism can be seen in this work, especially the influence of Courbet. Breeskin notes how in \textit{A Musical Party}, the even more shadowy and fragmented figure of a man in the background resembles “the handsome young Courbet,” whose early work is marked by a brooding subjectivity.\textsuperscript{23} Another painting by Cassatt, \textit{The Young Bride}, was executed while she was studying in Paris under a prominent French teacher, Charles Chaplin.\textsuperscript{24} \textit{The Young Bride} also reveals Cassatt’s departure from classical conventions, particularly in the her use of a brighter palette as evidenced in the orangey-pink hues of the woman’s dress. Absorbed in a deep-black background with her eyes cast

\textsuperscript{22} Breeskin, \textit{Mary Cassatt; a Catalogue Raisonné}, 8.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, 8.
\textsuperscript{24} Breeskin notes that female Impressionist artist, Eva Gonzales, Edouard Manet’s only pupil, worked under Chaplin and may have recommended him to Cassatt. Ibid, 9.
in shadow, the female sitter expresses a sense of brooding interiority. By considering Cassatt’s works as developing and changing over time, one can observe how she began to abandon the academic traditions seen in *The Bacchante* (1872).

Figure 3. Mary Cassatt, *The Bacchante*, 1872, oil on canvas, 24 x 19 15/16 in. (61.0 x 50.6 cm.), The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

Figure 4. Mary Cassatt, *A Musical Party*, 1874, oil on canvas, 98 x 68 cm.

Figure 5. Mary Cassatt, *The Young Bride*, 1875, oil on canvas, 69.85 x 87.63 cm, Private Collection.
In 1865, Cassatt began studying in Paris, a city that drew a collection of women artists from all over the world during the second half of the nineteenth-century. Paris was widely recognized as the world’s artistic capital, and the city experienced very significant changes throughout the second half of the nineteenth-century, including a variety of reforms that made the city a more comfortable place for Americans who were used to convenience, sport, and Anglo-American customs. Women in the art world advanced during this period: in 1865, Rosa Bonheur was awarded the Chevalier of the Legion d’Honneur, and in 1881, the Union des Femmes Peintres et Sculpteurs (Union of Female Painters and Sculptors) was created. As Nancy Mowll-Mathews notes, although they were initially denied the range of courses taught at the École, women “found that there was no dearth of instruction available to women.” Cassatt also spoke French fluently, and she struck up acquaintances with male and female artists from France, Italy, Spain, Belgium and elsewhere. Throughout her career, the artist continuously approached European masters who were academically-trained painters, soliciting advice on her work and even winning their lasting admiration. Paris was unique as it offered the opportunity for female artists to take private lessons from leading academicians. Though women could not enroll in the École des Beaux-Arts until in 1897, Cassatt was able to take private lessons from one of the principal masters of the École, Jean-Léon Gérôme.

26 Mathews, Cassatt and Her Circle 18.
28 Cassatt, Mathews, Cassatt and Her Circle, 18.
29 Ibid, 11.
After an initial period of academic study in Paris, Cassatt soon became aware of new, independent developments afoot that would become known by the mid-1870s, such as Impressionism. She was especially drawn to the Impressionists, not only for their artistic techniques, but also because of the opportunities they provided to female artists. It was not until 1874 that Cassatt finally settled in Paris and was frequently exhibiting at the Salons. The newly-formed Impressionists, then known as the Anonymous Society of Painters, Sculptors, Engravers, etc., exhibited their works together for the first time in 1874. In 1877, Edgar Degas invited Cassatt to join the group of Impressionists. Cassatt was one of four women, including Morisot, Eva Gonzalès, and Marie Bracquemond, to exhibit with the Impressionists. As opposed to other artistic movements that encompassed monumental canvases and heroic, historical, and religious themes, Impressionism was very fitting for women painters, in part due to the smaller canvas sizes and more daily subject matter that would have been accessible to these female painters. Impressionism was the first movement in nineteenth-century art that offered equal footing to women artists.

**Female Impressionism**

Impressionist critics of the time, as well as more recent scholars, have positioned Cassatt, as well as Gonzalès, Morisot and Bracquemond, as all belonging to the category of “female Impressionists.” Undoubtedly, their intervention into the painting of modern life was informed by their gendered experience. However, gender is not the only factor

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30 Although Cassatt first moved to Paris in 1865, the artist traveled between 1865-1874. Cassatt traveled abroad and studied in Paris and other parts of Europe, and often spent months at a time back at home in Philadelphia.

contributing to these female painters’ works. In “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity,” Pollock poses the question, “how do socially contrived orders of sexual difference structure the lives of Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot? How did that structure what they produced?” The art historian elucidates that, for artists like Cassatt and Morisot, there was a difference socially, economically, and subjectively between being a male and female artist in late nineteenth-century Paris. While male artists, such as Degas and Renoir, painted the spaces of modernity, they did so from a completely different perspective, given their male gender. By contrast, Cassatt’s and Morisot’s paintings of urban and suburban leisure have features of proximity, intimacy, and divided spaces that posit a different kind of viewing relation at the point of both production and consumption, Pollock argues. Yet, Pollock does not account for how Cassatt’s paintings are distinct from those of Morisot, as well from those of her other female Impressionist counterparts. This thesis explores differences among female Impressionists by examining how Cassatt’s paintings of the adolescent girl are unique in their underscoring fissures and even contradictions in the definition and representation of femininity and adolescence.

Other art historians such as Tamar Garb have pointed to the ways in which art critics in the late nineteenth-century defined the category of “l’impressionisme feminin” in relationship to the works of female Impressionist painters. Garb writes:

Contemporary viewers of the works of Morisot and Cassatt were acutely aware of their authors’ sexual identity and interpretations of their works were directly

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33 Ibid, 66.
influenced by this. At the same time Monet’s work was never assessed by his contemporaries in relation to how it expressed his ‘masculinity.’ To do so overtly would have seemed ludicrous. His ‘masculinity’ was assumed...But when a woman’s work was in question critics sought for the clue to the works’ meaning in their author’s femininity, which was understood as a fixed and constant identity, the product of irrefutable biological and concomitant social differences.\(^{34}\)

In the more recent as well as historical literature on Impressionism, women painters of the nineteenth-century have been considered first and foremost as “female.” Female artists are first coined by their gender identity, which is then used to define their mode of production and artistic practice.

This thesis aims to deconstruct these accounts and modes of viewing female artists. It is important to recognize the social experiences and spatial confinements of the nineteenth-century female artists and to consider how those constructions helped shape their artistic practice. However, now that leading feminist art historians, such as Pollock and Garb, have elevated and historicized the concept of the female artist, it is important not to get complacent, or rather, fixed, in that categorization. In *First Things: The Maternal Imaginary in Literature, Art, and Psychoanalysis*, scholar Mary Jacobus attempts to understand the mark of feminine difference in Morisot’s paintings as a “diacritical marking - a visual discourse of nonidentity, played out in the formal and compositional syntax of her canvases.”\(^{35}\) Jacobus looks at Morisot’s paintings as aligning with both nineteenth-

\(^{34}\) Frascina et al., *Modernity and Modernism*, 279.

century notions of femininity and Impressionist techniques while simultaneously creating a space within her canvases for what the author calls “feminine intersubjectivity,” in other words, a sort of deflection from these traditions, as we will come to see in her later works of her daughter, Julie Manet.\textsuperscript{36} Anne Higonnet is another scholar and art historian who has extensively studied Morisot’s paintings to define her as an artist with individual differences from her other, female counterparts, such as Cassatt.\textsuperscript{37} This thesis offers an equally probing account of Cassatt and her uniquely transatlantic intervention in the discourse of female adolescence.

**Cassatt: Painter of Mothers, Children and the “New Woman”**

Scholarship on Cassatt highlights her portrayal of mothers and children, as well as the modern woman. Among some of these remarkable representations that are centered on the mother-child bond include: *The Child’s Bath* (Figure 6, 1893), *Young Mother Sewing* (1900) and *Mother and Child*, or *The Oval Mirror* (1899). In these paintings, the mother and child are each distinctly foregrounded, not looking at one another in spite of their obvious physical contact. In *The Child’s Bath*, Cassatt’s bold patterns and contour lines create verticality in the baby’s legs and the mother’s stripped dress. While the mother and child are absorbed in one another as their tangled body parts grasp one another, each are their own entity. In doing so, Cassatt’s paintings focus on themes of psychological autonomy whilst delineating the mother-child bond. Scholars looked to the psychoanalytic position, but a very specifically psychoanalytic maternal position. In


addition to historians, contemporary critics of Impressionism, such as Camille Mauclair, Gustave Geffroy, and André Mellerio, all wrote about Cassatt and reiterated this stereotype of her as painter of maternity, clearly presuming that maternity was the most suitable subject for a woman artist.38

Beyond motherhood, scholarship on Cassatt has privileged her paintings of the “modern woman.” At the beginning of the twentieth-century, the “New Woman” emerged within the context of the feminist reform movement. Leading up to the “New Woman,” depictions of the so-called modern woman, as presented by Cassatt, explored the notion of the respectable woman out in public, delineated by bold contours which lend her a monumental presence. Reading Le Figaro (1878, Figure 7) shows a distinctly modern woman: Cassatt depicts a female figure not reading a newspaper geared toward women, but rather reading “Le Figaro,” a newspaper that reported on political events and economic developments in the public sphere dominated by men. The sitter’s large white dress covers the canvas, becoming a parallel to the newspaper itself. In doing so, Cassatt illustrates a sense of absorption; of physical and intellectual immersion in a task in ways that lend the woman both a sense of monumentality and importance.

The literature on Cassatt’s admittedly modern woman tends to reinforce conventional associations of women with the familial sphere, thus overlooking how the artist probed and defied gender expectations of her period. She certainly had to endure critics and writers who consistently pointed out her childless or unwedded state and who passed lightly over artistic technique to speculate on her motivation painting themes of maternity. Mowll-Mathews points out the irony in that Cassatt, a childless woman, became the “greater interpreter of maternity.” Perhaps it has been easier for the public – then as now – to grasp the idea of an unmarried, independent woman artist as a painter.

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39 The “New Woman” is a period-specific term, whereas “modern woman” is a more general descriptive term. The “New Woman” was a term used at the end of the nineteenth-century to define the generation of women who came of age between 1890 and 1920 and asserted a new public, female presence in society. The term “modern woman” was present in Cassatt’s period, as her mural is titled “Modern Woman.” That being the case, the two terms can be considered synonyms.

40 In 1890, one of the first articles ever written on Cassatt points out the artist’s childless state. After lauding Cassatt’s images of mother and children, the author writes that he hopes “she [Cassatt] will pardon us for mentioning this detail, which lets the reading glimpse a corner of her private life, Miss Cassatt has devoted herself to Art as other women have to religion. Miss Cassatt in not married.” See: Mowll Mathews, Mary Cassatt: A Life, 182-186.
of maternity. In doing so, however, scholars have marginalized her work within modern painting narratives, which equate modern life with the public streets, brothels, and entertainments locales of Paris.

Along with never marrying nor having any children of her own, Cassatt thwarted gender prescriptions and structures in other ways. Rejecting the Salon as a forum, Cassatt found sufficient outlet for her work in the Impressionist exhibitions and private initiatives.41 Resisting classification as a “woman artist,” Cassatt refused to join exhibitions organized for and by women to advance their cause.42 As a successful, highly trained woman artist who never married, Cassatt came to embody the concept of the modern woman. *A Woman and a Child Driving* (Figure 8, 1881), as well as *Reading “Le Figaro”* (1878), both reveal a modern woman engaged in the reporting of politics. Her depictions of modern women are circumscribed by familial relations, and therefore these two bodies of work are not truly distinct. For example, *Le Figaro* (1878) depicts a maternal figure, Cassatt’s own mother, reading the newspaper. In this painting, Cassatt renders her adult female figure both a maternal figure and a modern woman. This dichotomy can be similarly observed in Cassatt’s painting of a woman driving a carriage with her child, *A Woman and a Child Driving* (1881).

Cassatt is best known for these portraits as they reveal a psychological awareness of the female that was unconventional at the time. However, what has yet to be explored is the role of adolescence in the formation and definition of modern womanhood, as Cassatt understood it. Her maternity paintings both lend mother and infant a sense of subjectivity and interiority; her paintings of older women lend them intellectual and


physical independence. What is missing from this story is the middle, transitional period: How does a child grow up into an independent woman?

**Cassatt & the Female Adolescent**

The term, “adolescence,” did not emerge in popular parlance until the beginning of the twentieth-century, but well before that Americans and Europeans began to view the transition from childhood to adulthood as a distinct phase of life with its own particular qualities and problems. During this period, as well, young, teenage figures were an increasingly dominant theme in art, and particularly within Impressionism. Offering the Impressionists a new formal language of painting, adolescence arose as a subject matter during this period. Paintings by Manet, Renoir, Degas, Morisot and Cassatt together demonstrate the ever-growing visibility of adolescents in a city. Employing a modern, Parisian painterly vocabulary, Impressionist artists marked adolescence as noteworthy. These painters introduced a new understanding of this developmental stage as one of fluidity, growing independence and self-awareness. Adolescents similarly shared these qualities with Impressionist painters, and these traits were associated with, as well as exacerbated by, life in modern cities. Within this emerging definition, Cassatt took part by charting the development of girlhood. Immersed within American intellectual and feminist circles, as well as studying and practicing art in Paris, Cassatt defined girlhood by applying American ideas of adolescence to a modernist, Parisian painterly vocabulary.

Cassatt’s constructions of adolescence thus allow us to place her work at the center of modern art practice of the 1880s and the “Painting of Modern Life.”

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scholar Anna Green explains, Impressionist “painters seem to exemplify the multivalent intersections of childhood and adolescence with modernity and modernism.” Although the adolescent of either gender is object of gaze during this period, it is girl children who must learn to present themselves as an image, as Green elucidates. Girl children, especially, must learn “the special sort of exhibitionism and reproduce in themselves the charming qualities adults long to see.” The spectacle of the adolescent girl, according to Green, is thus emblematic of the spectacle of Parisian modernity.

In this way, the purview of femininity and modernity can be expanded beyond the Baudelairian flâneur and prostitute to include and even privilege the adolescent figure, and even more specifically, the female adolescent. In Charles Baudelaire’s “The Painter of Modern Life” (1863), the female spectacle is presented primarily in relation to the figure of the prostitute. Normally, visible mobile women in the city were those of ill-repute. This female was held in low esteem by the public, in contrast to the flâneur, who engaged in the act of seeing; in Baudelaire’s account, the flâneur is both observer and observed, detached yet passionate. When Baudelaire considers the “passionate spectator” for whom 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,” this spectator is a markedly male spectator. Due to the spectacular nature of femininity, as Baudelaire defined it, the female was not able to move amongst crowds and “to remain hidden from the world.” The spectator, for Baudelaire, is a male “prince,” one who freely moves around and everywhere rejoices in his privileged incognito.

45 Anna Green, French Paintings of Childhood and Adolescence, 1848-1886. (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 15.
46 Green, French Paintings of Childhood and Adolescence, 89.
47 Green, 105.
49 Harrison et al., Art in Theory, 493-506.
50 Ibid.
does not make a distinction between the “woman” and the “prostitute.” In doing so, the French poet categorically denied women faculties of mental interiority.

And nevertheless, decades after Baudelaire’s text, a new, more nuanced understanding of psychology emerged, particularly in the United States, that acknowledged the possibility of female interiority and self-consciousness, especially among educated, middle-class adolescents. It is true that this discourse emerged more prominently in the United States than in France. However, there are glimpses of it within France. The advancements for women artists in modern Paris are one indication of the new conceptions of the female during this period. Working with emerging American ideas of adolescence and women’s reform, Cassatt expressed this growing self-awareness through a modernist, French painterly language. The trans-Atlantic dimensions of this thesis are relevant to understanding Cassatt’s position within the materializing American psychology and feminist reforms.

Cassatt did not explicitly participate in the emerging American feminist and scientific discourse of adolescence at the turn of the century. She did not pen feminist tracts nor deliver speeches, but she consistently – almost single-mindedly – worked through these issues in her remarkable paintings. The resulting works shed new light on the central problematic of Cassatt scholarship – whether she merely reinforces or challenges conventions of femininity. More so than her paintings of mothers and children, her depictions of female adolescents show her subtly but surely undoing social and artistic conventions. Her paintings of female adolescents have bearing on the “Painting of Modern Life” in that they interrogate and unsettle conventions of bourgeois
leisure in the modern city, bringing viewers to acknowledge the artifice and illusoriness of images and social formations in the modern city.\textsuperscript{51}

This thesis contributes to a small but growing literature on paintings of nineteenth-century adolescents. Greg M. Thomas’ book, \textit{Impressionist Children} and Green’s \textit{French Paintings of Childhood and Adolescence} both highlight significant, representative works from these years. In her book, Green documents increasing numbers of paintings at the Impressionist exhibitions that present scenes of childhood and adolescence. Focusing solely on paintings of childhood and adolescence between 1848-1886, Green organizes her study initially by the class and gender of the depicted subjects, and then structures her chapters according to themes, including parent-child relations, modes of discipline, work, education, play, the spectacle, and sexuality. The scope of Green’s work differs from my study; focusing on images of childhood and adolescence over a broader period, Green does not definitely underline the connection between Impressionism and adolescence. Thomas, on the other hand, probes this intersection. In exploring the process of acculturation, Thomas writes that the Impressionists “understood childhood’s undeniable end.”\textsuperscript{52} Paintings of adolescence, as Thomas shows, illustrate a more profound, nuanced understanding of the very porous borders of childhood and adulthood.\textsuperscript{53} In considering paintings, prints, drawings, and sculptures by Impressionists, Thomas studies the influence of popular visual culture on the Impressionists’ conceptualization of childhood and family relations. However, by focusing on images of children and families, Thomas does not distinctly mark adolescence as a separate developmental phase within his analysis of these paintings.

\textsuperscript{51} Clark, \textit{The Painting of Modern Life}.
\textsuperscript{53} Thomas, \textit{Impressionist Children}, 193.
Art historian Gretchen Sinnett’s recent dissertation, “Envisioning Female Adolescence: Rites of Passage in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century American Painting,” examines ideas of gender, adolescence, modern painting and psychology in the United States. Sinnett focuses on an array of American artists between 1880 and 1910 to analyze how these artists represented female adolescence as a distinct life stage. Her work understands how art within this period displays a modern vision of female adolescence by looking at the influence of a multitude of social and artistic factors on the paintings at hand. Sinnett, as well as other art historians, however, do not foreground tensions related to femininity and adolescence in their close readings of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century art, thus overlooking the challenges that emerging definitions of adolescence posed for progressive, feminist artists.

“Mary Cassatt, Impressionism, & La Jeune Fille: Defining 19th-Century ‘Girlhood’” all at once augments the contributions of the aforementioned scholars while provoking new questions within these themes. This thesis points to the challenges that adolescence posed for artists, particularly women artists, and why the subject was of such pressing importance. Cassatt’s representations of female adolescence prompt more focused questions about the contribution of American ideas of adolescence to modernist, Parisian painting. This thesis places Cassatt’s paintings in relationship to American, feminist circles and the emergent psychology of the period. Her works shed new light on compositions by the French Impressionists whose artistic techniques not only influenced Cassatt, but who also worked with the same subject matter. Most importantly, by exploring the inherently “subversive,” or antithetical, opposing, characteristics of adolescence and femininity, this thesis positions Cassatt’s paintings of

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54 Sinnett, “Envisioning Female Adolescence.”
individual teenage girls, and particularly *The Loge* (1882), as central to the “Painting of Modern Life,” which it redefines to place more emphasis on female experience and subjectivity.

To understand Cassatt’s unique definition of the adolescent girl, this thesis situates Cassatt in a broader discourse of the emerging science of psychology, which was extremely male-dominated. Establishing a relationship between the fields of society, psychology and art, this study explores the psychological literature of the period that contributed to the definition of the adolescent, most importantly Edward H. Clarke’s *Sex in Education Or, A Fair Chance for Girls* (1873) and Hall’s *Adolescence* (1904). Employing scientific studies on adolescence in the United States, social history, and modern aesthetics, this thesis explores how Cassatt reconciled these emerging ideas with feminist principles regarding women’s subjectivity and independence. It should be noted that this study does not argue for a causal relationship between science and painting, or painting and feminism. Rather, it reconstructs how Cassatt’s paintings represent an original and complex intervention into emerging discourses on modern art, psychology, and adolescence – discourses that raised more questions than they answered and that often existed in tension with each other.

In addition to examining the scientific literature on psychology from the period, this thesis considers Cassatt’s broader intellectual circle and connections to American reformers, as revealed in her letters. Feminists, including psychologists and education reformers, worked toward reconciling adolescence with well-behaved femininity, and Cassatt was aligned with many of these, foremost among them Theodate Pope Riddle and Mary Robbins Hillard. Together, Pope and Hillard worked to advance adolescent girls’ education by creating the Westover School for Girls in Connecticut. Pope Riddle
designed the school, and Robbins Hillard founded it. Cassatt’s correspondence, combined with archives at the Hill-Stead Museum, the home Pope Riddle built in Farmington, Connecticut, reveal evidence of close and sustained ties among the three women and point to their engagement with feminist educational reform materials, such as Henry Thomas Buckle’s lecture “The Influence of Women on the Process of Knowledge” (1858). In investigating Cassatt’s circles and letters, this thesis presents Cassatt not only as an individual engaged in feminist reform movements, but one who was particularly tied to reform movements involving adolescent girls’ education.

Yet, Cassatt’s correspondence is remarkably guarded and only hints at ideas and processes developed much more fully in her paintings. It is quite challenging to write about Cassatt: she was an incredibly private person, who did not leave much for the written record and actively destroyed sensitive, personal correspondence.55 The majority of the literature on Cassatt stays within the measured and controlled boundaries of her correspondence and is mostly biographical. By contrast, by connecting her work to broader scientific and social developments, this thesis presents her work as engaged in public issues and debates beyond her family and beyond the home. It places Cassatt’s paintings in a context that goes beyond biography, to touch upon some of the most pressing social, artistic, and intellectual questions of her day. In so doing, it seeks to recover the independence of her work and ideas, which have broader meaning and relevance that go beyond the familial, private sphere. Cassatt was an unconventional woman, but the unconventional nature of her paintings has not yet been fully understood. This thesis proposes to do so by examining the intersection of modernity, modern aesthetics, and constructions of adolescence.

55 Before she died, Cassatt burned all of her letters with Edgar Degas.
CHAPTER ONE

Defining Adolescence
within American Psychology, Feminist Reform and Cassatt’s Circle

In the later half of the nineteenth-century, urbanization, industrialization and various social reforms of the period had the effect of making youth a more conspicuous presence. These developments had particular, enduring and crucial effects on individuals in their teenage years. As the new economy desired employees with degrees, enrollment in high schools and colleges drastically increased and rural labor traditions collapsed in the 1890s. Thus, the education system was radically re-constructed and re-shaped to accommodate the new jobs in the cities.

Yet, the popular press at the turn of the century did not dwell on the restructuring of education or how more teenagers were obtaining degrees. Rather, the majority of references to adolescents in the newspapers and popular literature articulated how more of them were committing crimes. Articles on “wayward youth,” “hoodlums,” “street girls,” and “gangs” pepper the many books about urban life that were published at the end of the nineteenth-century. There was a hysteria over juvenile delinquency, which gave rise to the first official juvenile court in Illinois in 1899. The new demographic created by the developments of urbanization and industrialization was viewed as a growing problem. Such developments and progress created concretely visible effects of a new space opening between childhood and adulthood. It is precisely these

58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
changes that made teenagers a more conspicuous presence in American society and a new subject of debate and research.

Scientists and intellectuals working in the fields of medicine, biology, psychology, and anthropology began to identify and assign larger meaning to both the social and biological factors in the adolescent. In this newly recognized transition from child to adulthood status, both the central role of biological factors and the determining influence of changing social role expectations materialized. Adolescence emerged as a culmination of efforts by those working in the surrounding fields to universalize and to democratize the concept of the teenager related to previous ideas and attitudes that appeared within the middle class in the 1880s and 1890s. The basis of the social definition of an entire age group was defined by a biological process of maturation.61

These different bodies of research formed the basis for G. Stanley Hall’s two volume work, Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relation to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education (1904). A leading American psychologist, Hall is often considered to be the “father of adolescence.” Adolescence contains research, commentary, and speculation on nearly every imaginable topic pertaining to adolescent development. In 1878, Hall earned a doctorate from Harvard University, the first to be awarded in psychology in the United States. After studying under William James at Harvard in the late 1870’s, Hall was a professor of psychology at Johns Hopkins University. From 1881-1888, Hall worked at a lab which was deemed the first of its kind in the country.62 The founder and president of Clark University, he also created the American Psychological

Association, the Pedagogical Seminary, and the *American Journal of Psychology* as well as published around 340 books, papers, and articles.\(^6\)

Although Hall’s publications post-date Cassatt’s paintings, they nonetheless summarize and add scientific rigor to an emerging discourse on adolescence that took place in many spheres of society and forms of cultural expression, including painting. Cassatt was painting during the period scientists and reformers extensively studied and engaged in debates to define the stage of adolescence. Popular conception of the adolescent was initiated by Hall, and his work can therefore be utilized to augment the discourse on adolescence and gender in late nineteenth-century America. Though Hall and Cassatt use different mediums to express their views (whereas one employs psychology, the other uses painting) and draw differing verdicts on the nature of female adolescence, the two worked in similar circles. There is not a causal relationship between Hall’s writing and Cassatt’s work. Yet, the studies and writings of Hall that surfaced at the moment in which Cassatt was working in are reflective of the dominant discourse of her period.

Trained as a psychologist, Hall also studied philosophy, theology, physiology and evolutionary biology and extensively explored the experimental psychology of the German physiologist and philosopher Wilhelm Wundt. Hall became an experimental psychologist during a time when scientific psychology was emerging as a popular focus in the late 1880s at Johns Hopkins. Throughout his career, Hall held acute interest in the problem of development and made an active effort to reconcile his training in natural science with deeply held philosophical and religious concerns. By the early 1890's, Hall decided to hone in on these interests and apply the theories of a scientific psychology

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toward the practice of child development and educational reform. Rather than utilizing laboratory psychology, Hall employed the work of thinkers such as Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, Herbert Spencer, Charles Darwin, and German zoologist Ernst Haeckel to fashion a genetic psychology, a type of psychology which studies the genetic influence on human behavior, from the postulates of evolutionary biology. This allowed Hall to formulate a theory of child development and scientific pedagogy. Hall’s work had widespread popular appeal and he was acclaimed as the pre-eminent spokesperson for the child-study movement in the 1890’s.

The child-study movement, which ran its course from 1883-1917, was considered the climax of a movement of thought that had been slowly garnering momentum in America throughout the previous centuries. Theoretical discussions of the nature of childhood and observational studies of individual children written chiefly by philosophers and educational theorists had preceded the child-study movement. The movement, therefore, can be regarded as the culmination of a trend of thought that had been gradually gaining strength throughout previous centuries. Hall’s 1883 publication, *The Contents of Children’s Minds on Entering School*, introduced the child-study movement into child psychology. His publication aroused an interest in a psychology of a more experimental, measurable type than the then current descriptive psychology. Working toward a documentation and inventory of the child’s mind, Hall created the basis of a questionnaire for children. Some of the topics of these questionnaires include:

64 DeLuzio, 94.
65 Ibid, 93.
66 Bradbury and Mcgoech, “The Contribution of the Child Study Movement to Child Psychology,” 21. Dorothy Bradbury notes that several minor magazine articles had appeared before Hall’s conception of the child study movement. Among these were the studies Holden, E. S., *On the Vocabularies of Children Under Two Years of Age*. Trans. Amer. Philol. Assoc, 1877, 9, 58-68. 23 and Humphreys, M. W., *A Contribution to Infanchile Linguistics*. Trans. Amer. Philol. Assoc, 1880, 12, 5-17. Both of these studied the vocabularies of children. These articles, however, excited very little attention.
67 Bradbury and Mcgoech, 22.
“Children’s appetites…The sense of self…Reactions to light and darkness…laughing…solitude, and restlessness, Fears, Punishment, Dreams, Memory, Anger, Envy and jealousy…rhythm, Motor ability, Toys…Moral and religious experiences of children.”

The results and analysis of Hall’s questionnaire were presented in a series of books which he published from 1904-1911.

The psychology of the child study movement relied upon a major premise Hall refers to as a “general psychonomic law.” An adaptation to psychology of the concepts of biological evolution and the doctrine of physical recapitulation, the law “assumes that the psychical life and its expression in the individual develops from birth onward through a series of stages more or less clearly corresponding to those through which early man and his ancestors are supposed to have passed.”

Hall believed that the normal growth of the mind requires and is grounds for the passing through of each subsequent stage. This is because, according to Hall, the development of any one level is the normal stimulus to the next. To Hall, child study was not solely indicative of the psychological aspect, but also of many other phases of the development of the child. Child psychology articulated by Hall is a kind of “nature study” of children’s minds rather than a “psychology” in the scientific meaning of the term.

Hall defined his system of psychology and the evolutionary benefits of development from womb to adolescence. The main periods or developmental stages can be categorized as infancy, childhood, youth, and adolescence. He considered the period

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68 Ibid, 22-23.
70 Bradbury and Megoech, 27.
71 Ibid.
of infancy and early childhood as bringing to light behavior that harkened back to that of remote animal ancestors. While Hall defined infancy as a period of physiological development and sensory experience, he considered childhood as marked by slow increase in height and weight. Childhood, according to Hall, is the period from two to eight years of age devoted to the pure activity of play. The ages eight to twelve mark the period of youth in which the individual’s health is at its prime, the brain is close to an adult’s brain in size and weight, and it possesses a distinct endurance and ability to fight off fatigue. It is at this point that a child begins to acquire a life of its own, that is considered distinct and outside of the family. Considered by Hall to be one of the most important problems of child development, play is not the mere excess of motor activity. At the center of the child’s existence and involving all of their interests, play (and the games the child repeats) define the history of the race.

Adolescence is the fourth stage in Hall’s definition of the child’s development and the focus of his two-volume publication, Adolescence. Largely constructed upon the results of the child-study movement, the book was to become a guide for historians, teachers, psychologists and social workers. In America, the book sold more than 25,000 copies. In 1906, a shorter version of Adolescence was published and popularized. Hall had an enormous influence in establishing the field of scientific psychology and child developmental studies. His influence as a founder of psychology as an academic discipline at American universities was second only to that of William James, who was

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72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid, 28.
76 DeLuzio, 95.
77 Ibid.
his doctoral advisor. In particular, Hall’s theoretical and practical efforts shaped the fields of parent education; child welfare; educational reform; and developmental, clinical, and educational psychology throughout the first decades of the twentieth century. In Adolescence, Hall attempted to reconcile a warning that the natural progression of development must not be artificially manipulated, on the one hand, with a radically optimistic vision for the improvability of the human race, on the other. Hall’s theory thus was both descriptive and prescriptive.

Adolescence was constructed on the basis of Hall’s review of vast bodies of literature and data from the fields of Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education. The book included many of the responses from questionnaires he had developed in the context of the child study movement, especially responses that pertained to adolescents’ feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. The questionnaires dealt with: (a) simple automatisms, instincts, and attitudes, (b) the small child’s activities and feelings, (c) control of emotions and will, (d) development of the higher faculties, (e) individual differences, (f) school processes and practices, and (g) church processes and practices. The questionnaires attempted to chart the child’s shift from the “spontaneous to the voluntary, from instinct to reason, and from simple sociality to the development of scientific and ethical reasoning.” In Adolescence, Hall organized responses into distinct categorizations and behavioral traits as they were relevant to the definition of the adolescent.

79 DeLuzio, 93.
80 Ibid, 95.
81 Ibid.
No longer a child, but not yet a fully formed adult, the adolescent was finally and completely recognized as unique, characterized by a particular set of biological imperatives, a corresponding psychological organization, and a consequent constellation of predictable social behaviors. Hall positioned the adolescent as between fourteen and twenty-four years of age. This was ideally a time of new birth of body and mind, when the individual crossed over from a barbarous state to a civilized one. Adolescence therefore marked the nascency period, or emergence phase, of the “later and more precious developmental acquisitions, including complex muscular organization, reasoning capability, social sensibility, consciousness of sexual feeling, high-level moral capacity, and religious sentiment.” According to Hall, any true study of psychology must focus on the physical aspects of the individual because, simply put, “character might be in a sense defined as a plexus of motor habits.” The two-volume work therefore is largely centered around charting the physical changes in the adolescent as they develop from an infant to an adult.

Hall recognized that from as early as the embryonic stage through the early years of adolescence, the past development of the species subsequently corresponds to and determines how the individual develops. Hall determined that the history of the species is actually a type of unconscious. He agreed on key points with Sigmund Freud, who was working and writing in Vienna at this very same moment. In fact, Hall is heralded as the person who “introduced Freud to America,” as he sponsored Freud’s trip to the States to lecture at a conference he organized at Clark University in 1909. Both Hall

84 DeLuzio, 91.
85 Ibid, 95.
87 Baxter, 48.
88 Ibid, 45.
and Freud agreed on the notion of the unconscious. However, Freud saw this unconscious as the product of repressed infantile desire, whereas Hall saw it as the inherited past of the progenitors which manifests during childhood and adolescence.\textsuperscript{89}

Although the impulsive, irrational nature of the unconscious and the conflict with authority inherent in the Oedipus complex are topoi often aligned with adolescence, the term adolescence is almost entirely absent from Freud's writings.\textsuperscript{90} Shifting the focus away from infancy to adolescence, \textit{Adolescence} defines adolescence as a stage in which the individual can acquire new character traits that can override those established during infancy. By contrast, Freud focused on infantile sexuality and how experiences during infancy shape adult behavior.

To an extent, Hall's theory of adolescence, thus, is informed by the “recapitulation approach,” which granted a scientific explanation of the savagery of childhood.\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Adolescence} takes a psychobiological approach: the development of the individual “recapitulates” the history of the species. In this situation, the child advances from a savage love of nature through adolescence to a humanistic learning of culture.\textsuperscript{92} Hall determines that “[t]he soul is thus still in the making” and the individual can still acquire new characteristics.\textsuperscript{93} Adolescence was conceived of as a time of abnormally rapid growth and therefore Hall viewed puberty as being a kind of “new birth” in the individual: “one develops so rapidly and changes so dramatically that one can move beyond the recapitulation of the species and develop new qualities.”\textsuperscript{94}

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid, 47.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid, 46.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid, 50.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid, 44.
\textsuperscript{93} Hall, \textit{Adolescence}, I: viii.
\textsuperscript{94} Baxter, 49-50.
Although the precise beginning and ending age of adolescence could vary between individuals, Hall associated the phase with a series of measurable physical and mental characteristics. The beginning of adolescence, according to Hall, is marked by puberty. Among some of the physical signposts that mark puberty include: the appearance of pubic hair, menstruation, rapid growth, and the development of sexual and reproductive capacity.95 This stage of pubescence occurred around the age of fourteen for boys and the age of thirteen for girls. Between eighteen to twenty years old, this rapid period of growth tapers off, as the individual has reached his or her full size.96 Other traits of adolescence were more interiorized. These qualities of adolescence, according to Hall, are not solely physical. Hall asserted that “new powers and faculties are developed during adolescence, such as the ability to love and pronounced interests in religion, nature, and art.”97

Hall discusses adolescent development as one that is discontinuous and rather abrupt. In the first volume of Adolescence, the psychologist refers to this developmental stage as one of “storm and stress.”98 Hall describes the new material and physical traits acquired in adolescence: “development is less gradual and more saltatory, suggestive of some ancient period of storm and stress when old moorings were broken and a higher level attained.”99 When he describes “saltatory” development, Hall describes a development that is discontinuous and abrupt, rather than a gradual one. During adolescence, the child began to repeat an epoch of racial history described by Hall as

95 Ibid, 52.
96 Ibid, 52.
97 Ibid, 50.
98 Hall, Adolescence, I: xiii.
99 Ibid.
“some ancient period of storm and stress when old moorings were broken and a higher level attained.”

Diverging from the category of “youth” from an earlier era, adolescence was a new type of identity marker. Scholar Kent Baxter associates this stage with the common narrative in which the adolescent searches for his or her place in the world. The concept of the emotional and behavioral distinctiveness of adolescence, Baxter observes, can be traced back to the writings of philosophers including Aristotle, Socrates and Rousseau. Aristotle remarked that youth are “heated by Nature as drunken men by wine,” and Socrates described youth as inclined to “contradict their parents” and “tyrannize their teachers.” Rousseau was writing around the same period as the “Sturm und Drang” genre of German literature was emerging. Both relied on a “stormy” metaphor in describing adolescence. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) is a short novel about the doomed love between a married woman and a young man, who ultimately commits suicide in despair over their cursed fate. A large number of stories that depicted youthful anguish and angst emerged during this proto-Romantic movement. Although he was writing in an entirely different age that was devoid of the industrialization and urbanization that Hall was contending with, Goethe’s “Sturm und Drang” stressed the importance of free expression to individual subjectivity and extremities of emotion. About a century later, Hall appropriated and redefined the term for the industrial age in *Adolescence*. Modernity is, in many respects, increasingly difficult on youth, Hall observes. He articulates how “never has youth been

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100 Baxter, 45-46.  
102 Arnett and Fowler, “Adolescent Storm and Stress, Reconsidered,” 317.  
103 Ibid.
exposed to such dangers of both perversion and arrest as in our own land and day. Increasing urban life with its temptations, prematurities, sedentary occupations, and passive stimuli."  

While adolescents have the ability to acquire new traits, the acquisition, or procurement, of these traits is not a straightforward process, Hall underlined. The “storm and stress” is thus tied to this developmental stage in adolescence, both in terms of the individual’s interior and exterior progression. In the adolescent’s developmentally changing, pubertal body, “storm and stress” mirrored and produced volatility in the adolescent mind and spirit, as well. “So, too, if the soul grows with every part of the body,” Hall explained, “its development is not continuous, uniform, or proportionate, but with successive nodes, the earlier stages ever a little more strange and alien to the newer, like dimly remembered past lives to a transmigrationist.”  

Hall believed that at adolescence, ancestral inheritance was received by the individual. Thus, there occurred, according to Hall, a “loosening of the bonds between the manifold factors of our ego,” as well as “a sudden and independent growth of single elements” in the personality that for a time were uncoordinated with and even engaged in a competitive struggle for survival against one another. The recent research in psychiatry allowed Hall to document and expose the manner in which for many young adolescent individuals there was a certain, as Hall described, “all-sided mobilization” of old and new “psychic elements” at adolescence which resulted in a wide range of psychoses and neuroses, including melancholia, mania, hysteria, anxiety, and moral perversities of various kinds.  

Scholar Crista DeLuzio explicates that ultimately, Hall’s larger ambition was to

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104 Hall, Adolescence, I: xv.
105 DeLuzio, 108.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
demonstrate that such morbid manifestations were “only exaggerated forms” of the psychological changes occurring during this period of life that was normally marked by “emotional strain” and even “repressed insanity.”\textsuperscript{108}

While Hall believed that a tendency toward “storm and stress” in adolescence was universal and biologically based, he still conferred that it was the culture which influenced adolescents’ expression and experience of it.\textsuperscript{109} Hall deemed that all adolescents were engaged in an inner “strife of opposite moods.”\textsuperscript{110} Adolescents, according to Hall, were simultaneously hyperactive and lazy, elated and depressed, confident and self-doubtful, egoistic and compassionate, as well as both introverted and gregarious, among many other antitheses. There was a specific instability, volatility, and unpredictability that was present in the marked age of adolescents. This emerged from their interior and exterior characteristics that Hall identifies.

DeLuzio identifies Hall as approaching this life stage as one compounded by a mixture of hereditary predispositions, both individual and racial, and by the pressures and demands of modern life. Around 1900, America was riddled with the “storm and stress” of modern life, which Hall believed affected adolescents more profoundly than in other countries, or “older lands with more conservative traditions.”\textsuperscript{111} As DeLuzio explains, “the more civilized the child, then, the more stressful the adolescence.”\textsuperscript{112} She elucidates that this is because civilized adolescents had more hereditary influences to integrate. In an urban, industrial society, there was an enormous amount of temptations, corruptions, and distractions for these adolescents to contend with.\textsuperscript{113} These emblems of

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109} Arnett and Fowler, 318.
\textsuperscript{110} DeLuzio, 108.
\textsuperscript{111} Hall, Adolescence, I: xvi.
\textsuperscript{112} DeLuzio, 108.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
modernity fashioned a society in which the adolescent was susceptible to temptations of vice, and by the clash between the sedentary quality of urban life and what he saw as adolescents’ inherent need for activity and exploration.\textsuperscript{114}

**The Gender of Adolescence**

*Adolescence* put forth the first methodical effort to describe this distinct stage of life. Yet, Hall’s systematic effort presented a definition of adolescence that was markedly gendered. Cassatt was painting within the period of the emerging psychological discourse on adolescence, including the child-study movement and Hall’s studies. Questions surrounding the gendered nature of the term “adolescence” were not only discussed in academic and scientific settings, but also within artistic and cultural ones, including Cassatt’s paintings. The artist’s paintings of teenage girls locate the formal tensions of this psychological discourse. This thesis studies the parallels of nineteenth- to twentieth-century American psychology and Cassatt’s paintings: the interior and exterior, the intimate and the universal, the self and the surface, among other mirrored counterparts. Marking adolescence, and particularly, *female* adolescence, as a distinct transitional stage in which one embarks upon from childhood to adulthood, Cassatt foregrounds the psychology of adolescence in her paintings.

At a historical moment of significant social, economic, and cultural change, many attempted to give reason for as well as manage the civilized boy’s social position and definition of masculinity.\textsuperscript{115} By writing *Adolescence*, Hall was in the vanguard of these discourses. At the turn of the century, white middle-class male authority was challenged.

\textsuperscript{114} Arnett and Fowler, 318.
\textsuperscript{115} DeLuzio, 97-98.
by some claims made by disempowered groups, including white middle-class women, African Americans, ethnic minorities, and the working classes who laid claim to various forms of political, social, and economic power.\textsuperscript{116} The broader shift from a small-scale, entrepreneurial style of capitalism to a corporate, consumer-oriented economy similarly threatened the power of white middle-class male.\textsuperscript{117} Increasingly, members of society dedicated themselves to considering the challenges faced by the civilized boy in negotiating these changes in society and to finding ways to enable him to meet them and to secure his position of superiority.\textsuperscript{118} Adolescence was therefore primarily focused on the development of the white middle-class American boy.

Hall’s concept was constructed through research conducted primarily on, as well as subsequently attributed to, boys and not girls.\textsuperscript{119} Henry William Gibson, one of Hall’s followers writing in the 1920’s, referred to all of adolescent psychology as “boyology” and “boy analysis.”\textsuperscript{120} Scholars argue that the invention of adolescence in the United States was firmly embedded in cultural meanings and social expectations for masculinity and functioned specifically to describe and prescribe the transition from childhood to adulthood for male youth.\textsuperscript{121} Hall’s tables in his chapter on Adolescence do mark the charts for boys as well as girls.\textsuperscript{122} Yet, his developmental theory identified adolescence with the development of the civilized boy.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Ibid. Crista DeLuizio notes a variety of transformations in the lives of male youth that had begun in the late eighteenth century, and increased during the second half of the nineteenth century. She notes: “Most notable was an ongoing differentiation in the opportunities available to middle-class and working-class boys. Under the conditions of advancing industrial capitalism, many jobs were opening up in the white-collar sector of the economy, including a demand for clerks, bookkeepers, accountants, engineers, lawyers, and business managers. Yet only those parents of sufficient means could afford to.”
\item \textsuperscript{119} Pamela J. Bettis and Adams, Natalie G., eds., \textit{Geographies of Girlhood: Identities In-Between}, (Mahwah: Routledge, 2005), 9.
\item \textsuperscript{120} DeLuizio, 100-101.
\item \textsuperscript{121} For further reading see works by contemporary scholars Carol Gilligan and Barbara Hudson.
\item \textsuperscript{122} See, for example, the charts on the “Height and Weight for Boys and Girls” in Hall, \textit{Adolescence}, 1: 7-8.
\end{itemize}
The final developmental outcome in *Adolescence* represented the male adolescent boy, who preserved traits and evolutionary gains of the white race, such as self-control, self-direction, as well as strength, and carried these forth into higher states of civilization. Hall articulated that “primitive” males finished recapitulating the more limited traits of their ancestors when they reached puberty whereas “civilized” boys had a longer racial history to repeat. According to Hall, at the age marked by adolescence these civilized boys were to experience and integrate their protracted and increasingly complex racial heritages, control the “primitive” passions and master the self, as well as pursue the higher learning that would promote the innovation of new racial traits.\(^{123}\) Social definitions of “primitive” for the male included physical prowess, aggressiveness, boldness, and spontaneity.\(^{124}\) To persist developing mentally and morally throughout their prolonged adolescent period, these civilized boys, Hall argued, utilized the newfound powers from puberty, ones that emerged with the onset of the sex instinct.\(^{125}\) Hall articulated this in his assertion that “the higher the species the larger the proportion of its average life...spent in attaining maturity.”\(^{126}\) As DeLuzio aptly spells out, “with a racial history marked by a violent struggle for survival in which males were the primary aggressors, the biology and psychology of the individual male body and mind, and the future of the white middle-class boy as its primary points of focus, Hall’s developmental theory hereby conflated adolescence with the development of the civilized boy.”\(^{127}\)

Hall’s *Adolescence* challenged these late nineteenth-century cultural expectations by underlining the role that “savagery” played in a middle-class boy’s emotional and

\(^{123}\) DeLuzio, 100-101.
\(^{124}\) Ibid, 99.
\(^{125}\) Ibid, 100-101.
\(^{126}\) Ibid.
\(^{127}\) Ibid. This can be particularly observed in Hall’s discussion of play in *Adolescence*, Hall delineates the maturation of this civilized boy, which DeLuzio explains in *Female Adolescence in American Thought*, 100-101.
physical maturation. In the late nineteenth-century, middle-class family values stressed the many virtues of rationality, self-control, persistence, and diligence that had been upheld in the antebellum period.\textsuperscript{128} Earlier in the century, there had been less emphasis placed on the quelling of the adolescent and the so-called rebellious tendencies that Hall outlines. However, when Hall published \textit{Adolescence}, there existed a prevailing attitude and stress on “the importance of youthful obedience, compliance, and conformity, essential virtues if the boy was to stay in school and the young man was to bide his requisite time on the bottom rungs of the corporate ladder.”\textsuperscript{129} During this phase, the boy was expected to gain an understanding of how to suppress his rebellious urges by deferring to the authority figures in his life.\textsuperscript{130} Among the most outspoken in sanctioning savage sensibility and behavior in the individual boy’s development, Hall provided the most systematic explanation for how “primitive” boyhood was to be reconciled with the human species’ ontogenetic and phylogenetic progress.\textsuperscript{131}

Adolescence was defined as the process whereby white, middle-class boys “recovered from” the inherent biological dictates of childhood and early adolescence. These included savage impulses and behavioral tendencies that were highly identified with the boy. Throughout the process of adolescence, qualities such as reason, judgment, and inhibition were to gradually dominate the psychic life of the boy. As Hall describes, the adolescent’s mind was to become capable of “knitting together . . . all the new and old factors of personality so as to maintain the proper tension between savage impulse and civilized self-control.”\textsuperscript{132} Hall’s concept of adolescence is therefore defined as the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid, 98.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid, 100.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid, 104.
\end{flushleft}
civilized boy’s procurement of this identity instituted on a natural and gradual abandonment of his rebellious, impulsive nature to an inception of his masculine virility and manly self-control.

Per the requirements of the doctrine of recapitulation, however, the route from “savage boyhood to civilized manhood also necessarily entailed a movement through a life stage marked by a set of attributes of which the civilized female, who occupied the evolutionary rung just below that of the civilized male, was the chief exemplar.” Hall held the boy up to the girl; he did so, however, while declaring the requisite of dichotomous sexual difference for evolutionary progress and the primacy of the civilized male in facilitating racial advancement. Adolescence broadened and then foreclosed certain possibilities in the boy’s development. The boy’s development was deemed as normative and superior to the girl’s, who was simply a template from which to draw qualities of the adolescent boy. In other words, the girl, for Hall, served as the model for particular adolescent attributes of behavior the psychologist desired to elucidate for the boy.

The concept of adolescence that Hall articulated posited stages of normative development for boys that inevitably placed girls outside the acceptable normal behavior. The girl, and her feminine attributes, were valorized and then marginalized within the context of developmental thought and the society in which she came of age. One way in which the girl typified adolescent development was the dynamics of a girl’s physical growth. Hall drew on a range of growth studies conducted from the 1870s to the 1890s. Through these studies, physical growth in adolescence normatively proceeded

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133 Ibid, 105.
134 Ibid.
135 Bettis, Geographies of Girlhood, 9.
136 DeLuzio, 105-106.
in irregular, disproportionate, and discordant fashion. Hall referred to this as the “awkward age” in development. The awkwardness in the physical development of adolescent boys explained their ungainliness, clumsiness, roughness, and even their poor manners.\textsuperscript{137} For adolescent girls, Hall determined that the growth spurt was not only more pronounced and more consequential, but also occurred earlier.\textsuperscript{138} Hall described that for adolescent girls, “hips, chest, and the reproductive system, and the instincts that go with them, constitute a far larger proportion of the girl’s whole system in weight and function than is the case with boys.”\textsuperscript{139} Girls experienced a greater measure of developmental disharmony because of their growth spurt and were also understood to be normatively pathological in their inability to overcome it.\textsuperscript{140} Hall discerned disharmony and even difficulty in the growth of both boys and girls.\textsuperscript{141} Yet, with girls, these disharmonies were more pronounced in ways that thwarted their overall development.

Hall drew on analogies of the adolescent girl to understand the adolescent boy, since he considered studies on the boy to be inconclusive. He believed that “the pubertal changes which take place in the male organs...have received far less attention than has been bestowed by morphologists, physiologists, and gynecologists upon those of the female.”\textsuperscript{142} This suggests that there was an earlier or parallel scientific literature on adolescent girls, which we will come to understand throughout this chapter. Hall thus insinuated through his two volumes of \textit{Adolescence} that he was defining a corrective to past ignorance about the dynamics and influences of puberty in male development.

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid, 107.  
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid, 107.  
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid, 107.  
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid, 107.  
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid, 106.  
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid, 107-108.
Although Hall drew on studies of both the male and female adolescent, when he defined adolescence, it was gendered male. The female adolescent, thus, was both acknowledged and subsequently marginalized.\(^{143}\)

Hudson asserts how femininity and adolescence are “subversive” of one another.\(^{144}\) The femininity that adolescence subverts is one that refers to both female biological and reproductive functions as well as social roles. The girl experiences the “Sturm and Drang” of adolescence more intensely than boys do. Thus, the female adolescent never fully succeeds in mastering her body or emotions as she becomes dominated by her reproductive organs. The sequential progression of adolescence from barbarism to mastery of one’s mind and body is disrupted in girlhood and eventually is thus stalled. The societal norms of the period similarly defined femininity in ways that precluded the important phases of rebellion, sexual experimentation, and independence that were central to the trajectory of adolescence. In other words, the concept of adolescence for the girl stood at variance with the cultivation of supposedly feminine attributes, including social compliance, enduring relationships, and sexual restraint.\(^{145}\) The savagery that Hall associated with adolescence did not accord with the social upbringing of girls.

Hall associated the adolescent period of girls and boys with specific interior states of mind, but he assigned a deeper range and intensity of emotions to the adolescent girl in ways that rendered her incapable of mastering them. While both

\(^{143}\) Scholars of today argue the primary focus of Hall’s developmental theory was on boys, boyhood, and masculinity and girls were left out of many of Hall’s descriptions of and prescriptions for adolescent development. However, they do not pursue the reasons or the ways in which Hall also attempted to reconcile ideas about girls, femininity, and adolescence. DeLuzio’s *Female Adolescence in American Scientific Thought, 1830-1930* considers the reciprocity among these surfacing concepts. DeLuzio explores these ideas, within the context of Hall’s pioneering contributions to the emerging field of developmental psychology, shaped conceptions of female development and modern category of adolescence.

\(^{144}\) See Hudson’s Chapter Two in *Gender and Generation: McRobbie, Gender and Generation*, 31-33.

\(^{145}\) DeLuzio, 2.
genders were ascribed traits such as enthusiasm, self-affirmation, and bashfulness, the broader emotional intensity and moodiness of adolescence were associated with a feminine sensibility. Hall defined the adolescent girl's moods as “more tumultuous and also more subterranean” than that of the boy. “In the transition from the grub to the butterfly state,” he further declared, “the female is most liable to become psychologically upset, because her reproductive organs and functions are not only larger, but the changes are more rapid.”

Rather than a “phase” of development through which girls passed, adolescence marked their permanent state of existence and the terminus of their development. Unable to master their bodies or their minds, women both epitomized adolescence and ended by being developmentally inferior to men.

The notion that adolescence has long been conceptualized as a patriarchal construct is present in the leading historical studies. American clinical psychologist Mary Pipher asserts that girls have not been well served by this branch of psychology, which adopts the white middle-class male as the model for human development. Hall observes that savagery of adolescence does not accord with the social upbringing of adolescents, both boys and girls. Yet, he was more willing to overturn societal conventions regarding boys’ behavior than he was for those of girls. Although Hall devoted one chapter of Adolescence to the adolescent girl and acknowledged the existence of the new pattern of behavior for the female sex, he gathered together much evidence to support his view that traditional roles of girls or women were natural and correct. Hall argued that childless women were unnatural, and further, that a “woman’s body and

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147 Ibid, 2.
soul are made for maternity and she can never find a true repose without it.\textsuperscript{149} A woman’s maternal destiny thus precluded the full range of adolescent development.

The conception of female adolescence undeniably posed challenges for independent, educated women, such as Cassatt. Adolescence was viewed in masculine terms, as well as in terms that were deemed not typical of the societal conventions that upheld femininity. Cassatt was among many individuals who recognized adolescence as a pivotal phase of development. The period’s emerging psychological literature thus denied adult women and growing adolescent girls a sense of independence. Hall’s study, then, posed more questions than answers for Cassatt and her contemporaries.

**Feminism and the Education of the Adolescent Girl**

Around 1900, a wide array of innovative feminist studies surfaced and women’s organizations proliferated. Reformers, and particularly feminists, became acutely conscious of the multitude of issues that the female encountered in the ever-modernizing United States.\textsuperscript{150} Throughout the last decades of the nineteenth-century, forces of industrialization, immigration, and urbanization accelerated, effectively establishing the United States as a modern nation.\textsuperscript{151} Middle-class white adult women who possessed secondary or some college education began to speak up during this ever-changing modern period. Challenging the limits on their autonomy, feminists pursued professional careers, participated in fledgling campaigns for women’s suffrage, and organized and joined clubs devoted to self-improvement and social reform.\textsuperscript{152}

\textsuperscript{149} Hawes, 56.
\textsuperscript{151} DeLuzio, 56.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
Feminism took on a variety of forms, and the movement began to actively flourish between 1890 and 1920. During this period, women stepped forward as organizers and innovators, tackling different problems of society they sought to rectify for women. By 1914, however, all of the different segments of the women’s movement united around suffrage. The women’s suffrage movement gained steam at the beginning of the mid-nineteenth-century in Seneca Falls and at the turn of the century when Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton lobbied Congress to pass the suffrage amendment. Anti-suffragists looked to the emerging science of psychology and biological determinants as a defense against female suffrage. According to the more hysterical anti-suffragists, woman’s right to vote was a revolt against “nature.” They believed pregnant women might “lose their babies, nursing mothers their milk, and women in general might grow beards or else be raped at the [public] pools,” upon receiving the right to vote, thus damaging human evolution and society.

Feminists also took on social causes. The progressive women of the period emerged: viewing themselves as a disadvantaged minority, they wanted to help other minorities of disadvantaged individuals in society. Founded in 1873, the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union also came into view as an organization devoted to social reform based on applied Christian teachings. Women’s Clubs, established in the late 1870s, began to flourish as well in the late nineteenth-and early twentieth-centuries. The clubs began as lecture and discussion clubs with an emphasis on art, literature and travel, but eventually became more involved in social reform. Other progressive women became involved in issues such as reforming settlement houses and child labor laws.

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154 Banner, 90.
155 DeLuzio.
156 Ibid, 95.
More radical women, such as Margaret Sanger and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, advocated for relieving housewives’ burdens and promoted labor laws, equalization of wages, and unrestricted divorce.\textsuperscript{157}

Literature of the period put forth feminist ideas. Plays and novels often implemented feminist concepts by exploring the relationship of the female to the male in marriage. Novels and plays by authors such as Susan Glaspell, Neith Boyce, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman were openly feminist.\textsuperscript{158} Emily James Smith Putnam, American classical scholar, author, and educator, is another example of a prominent female author of the periods whose ideas echoed feminist views. Putnam was also dean of Barnard College and President of the League for Political Education which was co-founded by her sister-in-law Mary Putnam Jacobi. Jacobi was one of the key participants in the late-nineteenth-century debate over coeducation.\textsuperscript{159} The Lady (1910), written by Putnam, is a historical analysis of the female role over the ages. She was one feminist reformer who employed history as a way of re-considering and re-assessing the role of the female.

Adolescent girlhood emerged as a distinct cultural category in literary and print culture. Early magazine publications provided girl readers with a list of heroines. In W. H. Davenport Adams’ The Child-Life and Girlhood of Remarkable Women (1883), which stresses the importance of correctly classifying and characterizing the “between” stages of their readers’ lives, thus creating euphemisms for the girl’s transition through puberty and acquisition of sexual maturity.\textsuperscript{160} There were also “halfpenny weeklies” that existed early on such as Girl’s Best Friend (1898–1931) and Forget-Me-Not (1891–1918).\textsuperscript{161} These

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid, 104.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid, 50.
\textsuperscript{160} Beth Rodgers, Adolescent Girlhood and Literary Culture at the Fin De Siècle Daughters of Today. (Cham: Springer International Publishing: Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 27.
\textsuperscript{161} Rodgers, Adolescent Girlhood and Literary Culture at the Fin De Siècle Daughters of Today, 20.
magazines targeted middle-class girls, featuring serials and horoscopes. In the *Girl's Own Paper* of 1887, Lily Watson observed that “there is scarcely a more favourite subject for delineation by poet and artist than the period when childhood is just melting into womanhood.” The correspondence surrounding Blanche Alethea Crackanthorpe and Pearsall Smith reveals early feminists taking issue with contemporary society’s prescriptive gendered, social roles. By publishing “The Revolt of the Daughters;” (1894), Crackanthorpe highlighted the growing separation between mothers and their “daughters of today.” In her essay, she called for reconciliation while simultaneously acknowledging girls’ desires for greater freedom. Many correspondents rejected Crackanthorpe’s characterization of the generational divide. However, many demonstrated continued dissatisfaction felt by many young women. One of these included Alys Pearsall Smith’s response, “A Reply from the Daughters,” in which she voiced the limited roles available to girls and daughters. The idea of girlhood was therefore developing even before Hall’s studies through his book.

The literature and mass culture of the surrounding period demonstrate that adolescence was being theorized and discussed by a wide range of commentators in the years before the publication of Hall’s study in 1904, even if these writers simply did not possess Hall’s groundbreaking and popular terminology of the “adolescent.” In attempts to describe and name the girl of this period, a variety of terminology was employed. Earlier there were a number of references to the adolescent female, such as “daughters of today” and “revolting daughters.” Later, in the 1880s and 1890s, in addition to the “new girl,” discussions, especially those that occurred in the periodical

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162 Rodgers, 1.
163 Ibid, 2.
164 Ibid, 9.
press, referred to “the modern girl” and “the juvenile spinster.” Hall’s *Adolescence* was novel, and foundational, in that he truly defined this transitional period.

Other feminists looked beyond the disciplines of history and literature, drawing upon psychological sources. In his writings on girlhood, Hall declared there to be “in all the wide domain of psychology perhaps no such terra incognita as the heart of the adolescent girl.” Hall frequently appealed to “common sense” and “common honesty” in describing and prescribing the development of the adolescent girl’s body, mind, and soul. Hall conceived of the adolescent girl as an enigma. In doing so, the psychologist issued a call to his fellow scientists to take her up as a topic of particular concern.

In the late nineteenth-and early twentieth-centuries, operating within the emerging framework of the child development studies, scientists eventually came to render their own version of the new girl as the “adolescent girl.” Sally Mitchell suggests the “new girl” as the definition to the transitional space between childhood and womanhood. “The new girl—no longer a child, not yet a (sexual) adult—occupied a provisional space,” Mitchell writes, “girls’ culture suggested new ways of being, new modes of behaviour, and new attitudes that were not yet acceptable for adult women (except in the case of the advanced few).” Mitchell writes that, with the emerging category of adolescence, girlhood began to operate as a separate culture with its own values, customs, and social standards within the era’s scientific psychological studies.

Some psychologists occupied similar positions to Hall, who earned the enthusiasm of numerous parents, educators, and reform groups as the preeminent

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165 DeLuzio, 121.
166 Ibid, 131.
167 Ibid.
168 Ibid, 2.
169 Rodgers, 13.
spokesperson for the child-study movement during the 1890s. Working during the same time as Hall, Havelock Ellis published *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* in 1897. DeLuzio points out that Ellis and Hall were “avid devotees of one another.” Other early twentieth-century feminist psychologists opposed with Hall’s theories. DeLuzio explicates that many psychologists rejected the assumption that girls were inherently dissatisfied with their femininity. These early twentieth-century psychologists rejected Hall’s belief that the goal of the psychologist was to get the adolescent girl to expose and then accept truths about the girl’s feminine nature, which remain deep in the recesses of her unconscious. A branch of other feminist psychologists, on the other hand, held that the issue did not originate from within the female body or psyche. Rather, these psychologists maintained that it was simply an outdated set of social expectations for women that could as well as should be changed.

Authorities in the field of science began to equalize the male and female psychological and scientific prescriptions given by psychologists working at the time. They argued that men were subjected to periodic emotional disturbances based on bodily changes comparable to those that occur during the menstrual cycle. The contemporary medical and biological evidence substantiated these claims. Some feminists theorized that the female was superior to the male. The new scientific evidence confirmed their claims, as it was shown that women were better able to resist pain and disease than men, lived longer, and had greater powers of endurance. These feminists argued that it was simply the man’s superior physical strength allowed them to become the world’s leaders and

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171 DeLuzio, 93.  
172 Ibid, 127.  
173 Ibid, 119.  
174 Ibid, 119.  
175 Ibid.  
176 Banner, 107.  
177 Ibid.
Notable among them were Phyllis Blanchard, Leta Hollingworth, and Lorine Pruette, whose descriptions of and prescriptions for adolescent girlhood were discussed and published in the early 1920s. These psychologists also constituted the “girl problem” as a particular venue along which the meanings and merits of feminism were to be discerned and debated.

Education was a large part of the feminist movement, encompassing elementary schools, high schools and colleges for the education, or co-education of, females. A cultural fervor developed over the advantages and disadvantages of “identical coeducation” beginning in the 1870s. Referring to either educating boys and girls together or, if they were educated separately, using the same methods and purposes, co-education emerged as a topic of debate during the period surrounding the emergence of the concept of adolescence. An array of anxieties about gender roles and identities and their relationship to social change and “racial” progress made these questions over co-education surface. The issue of female education had been debated for many years before this time, but the influence of the then current climate of developmental thinking that was based on the authority of biological science was new in this debate over co-education.

Among the leading voices in the late nineteenth-century debate over co-education included Jacobi and Edward H. Clarke. Former Harvard University medical professor Clarke, who published Sex in Education (1873), was at the center of this debate. Clarke’s work has been situated by historians in the context of the history of women’s
education; his work has been considered as determining how educational policies, programs, and practices, as well as young women’s attitudes, were shaped (or not). Following a limited case study of Vassar students, Clarke contended that women who studied damaged their health in the process and stored up future health problems for themselves and risked masculinization, endangering their reproductive capacity. Therefore, female education should be reassessed for the betterment of society. The opponents of co-education employed biology to argue against the equalization for education of the adolescent girl. They argued that in contrast to boys, girls’ bodies grew “too fast, too soon, and with great demands placed on them.” This rapid growth of girls inhibited their advanced intellectual and moral development. Puberty, then, was transformed into an experience of pronounced somatic vulnerability and emotional volatility.

Women’s rights advocates, educators, and some doctors protested these accounts and advanced their own alternative explanations of female development. Among the earlier pioneering founders of female seminaries were Catharine Beecher, Mary Lyon, and Emma Willard. These women advocated for female education by arguing that it would not undermine the identity and purpose of the true woman, but it would instead strengthen girls’ ability to perform their future roles as wives and mothers. In her writings, Jacobi strove to elucidate the effects of evolutionary thought on contemporary conceptions of womanhood. Her observations ultimately condemn the dominant scientific interpretation of evolutionary theory that rendered woman biologically inferior

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183 Ibid. 52.
184 Christine Bolt, *The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s.* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 158.
185 DeLuzio, 52.
186 Ibid.
187 Ibid.
to man. Jacobi was a scientist deeply embedded in the conversations around developmental thought. Weighing in on the co-education debate, Jacobi challenged the prevailing trend in the biological as well as the emerging psychological sciences of the time. Jacobi refused to conceive of the female mind as overdetermined and therefore restricted by the female body, and her reasonings were based in alternative conceptions of female physiology, as well as of the changes that occurred in it over the course of the life cycle. Jacobi’s arguments are therefore all grounded within the authority of biological science.

The anti-coeducational movement emerged in the early 1900s. The popularity of Adolescence and its use of scientific theories, particularly its stress on recapitulation theory, deemed Hall the spokesperson for this movement. In 1904, around the time he published Adolescence, Hall addressed the issue of co-education at the annual meetings of the National Education Association, receiving both favorable and unfavorable responses to his remarks. Hall argued against coeducation on the basis of three concerns for recapitulation: (a) that adolescence was a critical period in the development of the reproductive organs in women, (b) that the adolescent male needed freedom to engage in cathartic expression of his savage impulses, and (c) that natural sexual differentiation during adolescence was the basis for later attraction between the sexes. Feminists considered Hall’s popular theories an enormous hindrance to social change for women.

By the end of the nineteenth-century, feminist concerns over women’s rights had pervaded the study and theory of psychology. Beecher and Elizabeth Peabody were

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188 Ibid.
189 Ibid.
among the earlier pioneers of female education. These women, along with a number of others, chose to, or were forced to, work outside of the traditional white male-dominated institutions, due to the fact that their beliefs conflicted with conventional ones at the time, or since they wanted to expand education to those not reached by traditional schooling.192 The first woman to graduate a regular medical school in the United States in 1849, Elizabeth Blackwell, presented lectures on health and hygiene for girls and women. Blackwell established a woman’s hospital and medical training schools for women.193 Ellen Swallow Richards was another pioneering feminist in the sciences, encouraging women to undertake science careers. Social reformer Jane Addams fought for child labor laws, compulsory education, and improved sanitation in cities.194 Hull-House, a settlement house she established, provided aid and education to immigrant adults and children living in the slums. A later educator and advocate, Maria Montessori created the “Montessori Method,” which taught children to be independent, responsible, and cooperative.195 Montessori established a teacher-training institution in Italy that supplied teachers for her worldwide schools and came to America in the early 1900s to promote them.196 All advocates of education reform and pioneers in their fields during their respective periods, each of these women wrote articles and books that promoted their beliefs and methods.

194 Ibid.
195 Ibid.
196 Ibid.
**Cassatt’s Circle**

Surrounded by the feminist reforms and debates of the period in which she was working, Cassatt was undoubtedly a feminist throughout the entirety of her life. Women, Cassatt believed, should be “someone, not something.” Art, for Cassatt, was partly a discipline in which her paintings truly look at what it is to be female. This determination pervaded Cassatt’s lifestyle. Cassatt never married nor did she have children; she devoted to her life to her artistic career – an alternative lifestyle for a woman of her period. Cassatt considered her art, as Mowll-Mathews writes, an expression of respect for women. The artist was working during a period of exciting reform, progressive change and lively debate among modern women. Yet, Cassatt did not engage directly in this dialogue until much later in her life. Cassatt’s paintings were her foremost medium through which she engaged with the psychology and feminism of the period.

The artist worked primarily between the 1860s through the 1910s. This period gave birth to a feminist movement. The early years of the twentieth-century were the era of the educated “New Woman.” The “New Woman” is defined as a crucial “transitional” figure who helped expand women’s roles, and took advantage of new educational and professional opportunities, yet never achieved social, economic, or political equality with men. These years were marked by campaigning for suffrage, contraception and other forms of equality and emancipation, including education reform.

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198 Fillin-Yeh, “Mary Cassatt's Images of Women,” 363.
200 Laurie Lisle, *Westover: Giving Girls a Place of Their Own.* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2009), 21.
Cassatt’s paintings can be situated in this debate about the modern woman, and especially the “New Woman.” Aligned with a circle of reformers in the United States, Cassatt drew upon the ideas of these thinkers and individuals. In doing so, she developed new ideas on gender, adolescence, and education. As aforementioned, Cassatt must have known of Hall’s study on adolescence through her connection to his doctoral advisor, William James. Evidently, then, she was aware of the psychological debates of the period, including feminist discourses and dialogue over the nature of female adolescence.

Aligning herself with those who desired to free themselves from prescribed roles and conventional traditions, Cassatt immersed herself within circles of American feminists. Educators and reformers in particular informed Cassatt’s views on female adolescence, and, even more so, the education of teenage girls. Feminist reform movements in the sector of female education included two individuals committed to advancing the education of adolescent girls: Mary Robbins Hillard and Theodate Pope. The Popes met Cassatt while she was on a visit to America and continued their friendship with her on their visits to France. Throughout her life, Pope made several visits to Cassatt’s home. In addition being an avid collector of Cassatt’s work, Pope herself was one of the first female American architects. Pope designed her home, now the Hill-Stead Museum, which presents a significant collection of Cassatt’s work. Pope also designed the Westover School for Girls, which Hillard founded for adolescent girls.

202 See Page 7 of the Introduction of this thesis for a consideration of the synonymy of the terms “New Woman” and “modern woman.”
Yet, the idea of an all-girls school was associated with anti-coeducationalists and more limited roles for women. Co-education occupied a more progressive position, whereas single-sex education aligned with more traditional views. An all-girls education presented contradictions and limitations for young girls. Adolescent girls would not be able to achieve equality with adolescent boys if they were not even given the opportunity to attempt to do so. Though Hillard and Pope were progressive women, Westover School for Girls certainly was somewhat contradictory in nature. The school should not be seen as “solving” the problem of female adolescence, nor should the views of Hillard and Pope be seen as wholly embodying Cassatt’s views on the education of the adolescent girl. Nevertheless, both the artistic connection and the letters between these women are significant for understanding Cassatt’s conception of the female adolescent.
The fields of aesthetics and social reform were very much connected for both Pope and Cassatt. Cassatt was first and foremost a painter, and she was clearly one who was thinking about adolescence, gender, feminism and education. The artist left behind a very sparse written record. Therefore, it is imperative to investigate the connections that remain known.

The task of educating girls already had a long debated history in the United States and in Europe by the time the Westover School for Girls opened.203 During the Enlightenment, Mary Wollstonecraft, eighteenth-century British feminist, advocated for equal education for girls and boys. In addition to establishing several schools for girls herself, Wollstonecraft called upon mothers to teach their daughters so they would learn to think in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787).204 The “mothers of the republic” emerged as a distinct subject matter after the American Revolution. Girls were to be educated so that they, in turn, would be able to educate the male citizens of the young democracy. It was nurture, rather than nature, declared Wollstonecraft, that was responsible for women’s supposed mental inferiority.205 Of all states, Connecticut espoused enlightened attitudes regarding female education, many of the top schools for girls were established there as early as in the mid eighteenth-century.206 Among these schools was one designed to educate the daughters of merchants, landowners, and ministers, including educator Beecher and her sister, author Harriet Beecher Stowe, opened in 1790 by Sarah Pierce in Litchfield.207 During this time period, there was a need

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203 Lisle, *Westover: Giving Girls a Place of Their Own*, 3.  
204 Ibid.  
205 Ibid, 221.  
206 Ibid, 3.  
207 Ibid.
for the inception of boarding schools due to the difficulty and expense of travel at the time.

A new generation of female educators emerged in the nineteenth-century, calling upon women to take responsibility for educating other women. In the midst of the exciting feminist movement, Hillard and Pope together established the Westover School for Girls. According to Laurie Lisle, the school called Westover was Mary Hillard’s idea long before it was anyone else’s.208 Hillard strongly desired to become the headmaster of a school and establish an educational program of her own. Hillard had first been hired in 1885 by Sarah Porter to teach at her long-established girls’ school in Farmington, Miss Porter’s School.209 Hillard would later model many aspects of Westover School for Girls on Porter’s methods. Hillard admired Porter for her attempt to instill old-fashioned, traditional values in her students. This was to prepare her pupils for family, rather than for teaching, missionary, and other kinds of women’s work.210 However, unlike traditionalists who believed that the female body did not have enough blood to sustain both the brain and the womb, Porter also “rejected the idea that mental activity undermines a woman’s family responsibilities,” preparing girls for lifelong intellectual and spiritual growth.211 Hillard was inspired by Porter’s dualistic approach to female education and later sought to emulate these values in her own school.

An ardent suffragette and socialist as well as Unitarian, Pope worked closely with Hillard so her educational designs could be enacted. The two met at Miss Porter’s School, where Pope studied and Hillard was her mentor. Believing in Hillard’s ideas about the education of young girls, Pope and her parents wanted to aid Hillard.

208 Ibid.
209 Ibid, 8.
210 Ibid, 8-9.
211 Ibid.
Westover also granted Pope with an opportunity to further her career in architecture.\textsuperscript{212} Pope first designed the Hill-Stead home for her parents in Farmington, Connecticut. Pope’s family was extremely well-connected. The Popes knew people who were part of the country’s intellectual and established elite, as well as prominent artists and writers in Europe, including Cassatt. Writer Henry James, brother of the psychologist and philosopher William James, was so impressed with Hill-Stead that he compared it to George Washington’s Mount Vernon in his book \textit{The American Scene} (1905).\textsuperscript{213}

Hillard and Pope worked closely to ensure that their mutual vision for innovative women’s education would be correctly translated into built environments. To design Westover School for Girls, Pope and Hillard toured England and France with an eye toward what they most admired in architecture. Colleges in England and Europe, where students both studied and lived, influenced Hillard and Pope’s school.\textsuperscript{214} While traveling in Europe, the two women stopped in Paris and visited Cassatt.\textsuperscript{215} Together, Hillard and Pope created a plan for a girl’s school for one hundred and forty boarders and their teachers. Hillard envisioned Westover as a “wholesome setting for study and sports, as well as a school in which to instill in young women useful knowledge and idealistic values.”\textsuperscript{216} Pope’s design contained a notably quadrangular structure. This design was uncommon for the time.\textsuperscript{217} The courtyard was planned to create a sense of community; students could gather together to socialize while carefully monitored by their teachers.\textsuperscript{218}

\textsuperscript{212} Melissa English and Rondinone, Troy, “History Defined by the Spiritualist Passion of Theodate Pope Riddle,” 2014, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses: 59.
\textsuperscript{213} Lisle, 13.
\textsuperscript{214} Ibid, 14.
\textsuperscript{215} Ibid, 14.
\textsuperscript{216} Ibid, 3.
\textsuperscript{217} English and Rondinone, “History Defined by the Spiritualist Passion of Theodate Pope Riddle,” 60.
\textsuperscript{218} Ibid.
Pope and Hillard desired that the young girls were protected, as well as in a position to attend a school where feminist beliefs of female adolescents could be molded.

Hillard structured a way of life for the adolescent girls as one she envisioned as a truly balanced existence. Hillard and Pope believed that education for adolescent girls was comprised of both intellectual and traditional domestic components. Therefore, Westover was much more than simply getting an education from books, Lisle writes.\(^{219}\)

The year the school opened, one female student perceived that she was learning the “art of living,” and others throughout the years would echo her words.\(^{220}\) The importance of feminine values was articulated in a 1909 issue of *The Lantern*, Westover’s literary magazine, which linked each letter in the name of the school with a virtue:

“Womanliness, Earnestness, Sweetness, Truthfulness, Orderliness, Vigor, Enthusiasm, and Righteousness.”\(^{221}\) The editors of the publication elucidated that by adhering to these ideals, girls would learn “the very great art of living.”\(^{222}\) Hillard hoped the girls would adopt the aims of the school as their own after graduation. Many of the activities and traditions of Westover echoed those in other girls’ schools, such as Miss Porter’s. However, there were many that reflected Hillard and Pope’s educational philosophy and were unique to Westover. The schedule encompassed classes, exercise, studying, dancing, attending events, or listening to the headmistress read aloud.\(^{223}\) Westover, as dreamed of by Hillard and Pope, was to be a place for young girls not only to study, but to engage with their peers, as well as do sports. The school for girls was also to inculcate

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\(^{219}\) Lisle, 60.  
\(^{220}\) Ibid.  
\(^{221}\) Ibid, 29.  
\(^{222}\) Ibid.  
\(^{223}\) Ibid, 41.
knowledge and idealistic values that would aid their transition from being girls to becoming women.

Hillard described the need for these girls to develop what she called spontaneity: the ability to shed self-consciousness and to become “herself.”\(^{224}\) It was the way French diplomat Alexis de Tocqueville had described the surprisingly frank voice of the American girl in the 1830s: she “has scarcely ceased to be a child when she already thinks for herself, speaks with freedom, and acts on her own impulse,” he wrote in *Democracy in America.*\(^{225}\) Therefore, Westover’s program was simply conceived as a matter of reawakening an earlier naturalness before inhibition had set in. Carol Gilligan, Harvard psychologist, would identify this phenomenon in adolescent girls and articulate it many years later in her book, *In a Different Voice.* Pope and Hillard both believed that adults should create a condition for youth to heal from the changes brought about by adolescent physical and emotional changes, as well as the external forces of modernity. In other words, the girls at Westover, according to Hillard, were “to be trained by us to be free.”\(^{226}\)

It is likely that Hillard and Pope were considering the psychological literature on the adolescent girl of the period. They wanted to create a place that was unique for girls, one that was apart from the “Storm and Stress” of modern life, as coined by Hall in *Adolescence.* Hillard desired her school to become a place for a “traditional way of life apart from all the rapid changes going on in America.”\(^{227}\) Pope became fascinated with what was called “psychical science,” the investigation into the unknown and the

\(^{224}\) Ibid, 48.
\(^{225}\) Ibid.
\(^{226}\) Ibid.
\(^{227}\) Ibid, 3.
unconscious.\textsuperscript{228} Though they were in communication with William James, who had started the American branch of the Society for Psychical Research, it seems very possible that the women were aware of his other, more psychological writings. Since William James was Hall’s doctoral advisor, it is imaginable that Hillard and Pope were aware of Hall.

Hillard’s educational philosophy was largely constructed upon her theory of female development. Hillard believed that the maturity of girls depended on “shattering their self-consciousness” by using their minds.\textsuperscript{229} Hillard was not entirely distinct from Hall, who associated the broader emotional intensity and moodiness of adolescence with a feminine sensibility.\textsuperscript{230} However, Hillard did not attribute this trait specifically to the female adolescent. Hillard believed it was natural for all teenagers to be moody and melancholy.\textsuperscript{231} It was the task of adults to create conditions for adolescents that would nourish adolescents and allow them to grow in ways that would liberate them from the pressures of modern life. The two women therefore created Westover with the intention that it would both celebrate familiar traditions and provide new experiences. Hillard wrote that living in an idealistic community “creates mental responsiveness, stimulates liveliness of mind, and makes possible that interchange of humor, wit, and sentiment that makes the best fertilizer for the garden soil of civilized life.”\textsuperscript{232} This process of personality development could only happen in a small caring community such as Westover.

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\textsuperscript{228} Ibid, 15. \\
\textsuperscript{229} Ibid, 48. \\
\textsuperscript{230} DeLuzio, 109. \\
\textsuperscript{231} Lisle, 48-49. \\
\textsuperscript{232} Ibid, 29.
\end{flushright}
The ideological goals of the Westover School for Girls is somewhat at odds with the tensions and contradictions of femininity and adolescence. As noted above, the two women did not solve the “problem” of the adolescent girl. Hillard and Pope’s ambitions to create Westover as a place for teenage girls to grow intellectually, physically, and emotionally are to be lauded. In addition, the fact that Westover introduced sport as well as courses in science and math alongside home, economics, literature, and music was novel for the time. Yet, certain limitations and contradictions in their statements must be considered. Hall defines “storm and stress” as an essential phase of adolescence. Westover’s search for a community that insulated girls from modern life opposes Hall’s notion. Exposing and introducing adolescents to modernity, for Hall, was integral to adolescent development. In shielding girls from this phase, Hillard and Pope, to a certain extent, encouraged a more traditional and limited scope for women. Girls could not become modern, independent women if they were isolated. During this period, adolescence was defined as a modern, urban phenomenon. Pope and Hillard’s desire to isolate girls in Connecticut, far from modern cities and from contact with men was not necessarily a solution to modern adolescence. While Hillard and Pope were progressive individuals, facets of the Westover School for Girls contradicted the psychological definitions of adolescence and ambitions behind the pioneering co-educational reforms.

Yet, in the absence of a written historical record, the views of these two women, and their connection to Cassatt, shed important, new light on the artist’s own beliefs. Pope was a close friend of Cassatt’s and there is much surviving correspondence and evidence of visits between the two women and Hillard. Hillard and Pope were both advocates of female education, and thus keenly interested in the psychology and education surrounding the development on the adolescent girl. Given the limited written
historical record, Hillard and Pope can be situated as prominent figures in Cassatt’s life, and in the reconstruction of Cassatt as a painter of female adolescence. Of course, the views of Hillard and Pope are not representative of those of Cassatt. Nevertheless, Cassatt did discuss ideas of female adolescence with the Pope and Hillard. The three women were in close dialogue and their letters reveal their discussions of Westover. Both pioneers of the education of adolescent girls, Pope and Hillard provided Cassatt with an understanding of girls’ subjectivities as individual, active, and independent.

Cassatt’s exploration of the concept of educating the adolescent female is published in her writings. Cassatt mentioned Westover to Pope in her letters, telling her, in 1910, that “we have talked of you & Mary Hillard & your joint effort for the school.”\(^{233}\) In this letter, Cassatt discusses a young girl with Pope. She writes that this child “is wild about school, one can see what Miss Hillard can do with girls from her report - isn’t it splendid to be able to influence whole generations?”\(^{234}\) Evidently, Cassatt thought about girls, education, and the ability to influence young girls. Cassatt also tells Pope of her two nieces in the letter, asking if Hillard has a spot for one of the nieces at Westover. In the letter, Cassatt writes:

> The youngest wants to go to boarding school, wants friends & companionship, her age is 13 she will be fourteen next August in her fifteenth year when the school year begins. Is she too young? And if not has Miss Hillard a place for her?...\(^{235}\)

\(^{233}\) Cassatt, Mathews, *Cassatt and Her Circle*, 303-305.
\(^{234}\) Ibid., 303-305.
\(^{235}\) Ibid.
Though she does not identify a young girl, here Cassatt nonetheless identifies an age set that is congruent with the period’s definitions of adolescence. Furthermore, in this quote Cassatt notes what girls would like to do at this age. In writing that her niece wants “friendship & companionship,” Cassatt articulates that her niece desires a certain independence from her parents and to go be with her peers. This reflects what Hall observed: that young children need the companionship of those who understand them.

Letters written by Cassatt to Pope reveal her feminist attitude. Yet, Cassatt was unquestionably distinct from Pope and Hillard in that the artist saw her primary arena of activity in art, not social or education reform. Cassatt wrote to Pope, “Just think how much better if women know all about the men’s work - at present men lead double lives - what we ought to fight for is equality it would lead to more happiness for both.” Her letters also indicate that she believed education was fundamental to the betterment of society. Cassatt wrote to Pope in 1910, “We can do so little for others, except in the way of education.” It is the education of adolescent girls that Cassatt discusses, as she wrote to Pope who was in the midst of constructing and defining the Westover School.

Cassatt’s letters also reveal her interest in the education of young girls through her desire to impart early feminist philosophy into the curriculum of adolescent girls. In a letter to Pope in 1910, Cassatt wrote about women’s suffrage, an issue in which Louisa Havemeyer and Cassatt had become interested in. Cassatt wrote to Pope, “I hope you got Bucle’s lecture on Women’s contribution to knowledge and that Miss Hillard will read it to her girls.” Her writing refers to Henry Thomas Buckle’s lecture before the Royal Institution London, “The Influence of Women on the Process of Knowledge,”

\[\text{236 Ibid.}\]
\[\text{237 Ibid, 300-301.}\]
\[\text{238 Ibid.}\]
March 19, 1858, which was re-published 1910.²³⁹ Buckle argued that women are capable of exercising and have actually exercised an enormous influence on the process of developing knowledge. In his lecture, Buckle stated the “incalculable service women have rendered to the progress of knowledge,” discussing their

...turn of thought, their habits of mind, their conversation, their influence, insensibly extending over the whole surface of society, and frequently penetrating its intimate structure, have, more than all other things put together, tended to raise us into an ideal world, lift us from the dust in which we are too prone to grovel, and develop in us those germs of imagination which even the most sluggish and apathetic understandings in some degree possess. The striking fact that most men of genius have had remarkable mothers, and that they have gained from their mothers far more than from their fathers; this singular and unquestionable fact can, I think, be best explained by the principles which I have laid down.²⁴⁰

Buckle was advocating for the importance women have in newfound knowledge that is typically attributed solely to men. By stressing the influence that the mother has on the boy, he makes a case for the education of the female. Buckle condemns the current conditions of female education, claiming that “the remarkable rapidity with which women think is obscured by that miserable, that contemptible, that preposterous system, called their education, in which valuable things are carefully kept from them, and trifling

²³⁹ Ibid.
things carefully taught to them, until their fine and nimble minds are too often irretrievably injured.”

The minds of women, and girls, are “injured” by the education, or lack thereof, provided to them. In her letter to Pope, Cassatt specifically writes that “Miss Hillard should read it to her girls,” connoting that Cassatt was thinking about young girls and teaching them about feminist attitudes.

Yet, Cassatt’s feminist stance was in actuality more radical than this letter makes her appear. In the lecture that Cassatt references, Buckle positions women in conventional roles. He primarily saw women as having agency not through their themselves, nor through their daughters. Instead, he saw them as exercising their influence as mothers through their male children. In another letter, Cassatt asks Pope if she ever read The Benefactress, a novel by Countess Elizabeth Mary Russell published in 1901, about young woman who resists marriage. This suggests that Cassatt held a starkly more radical view than expressed in Buckle’s lecture. As aforementioned, Cassatt never got married nor had children of her own. It was seen as difficult for a woman to pursue both a successful career as well as marriage. Many of the emerging female psychologists at time were grappling with these questions. The women who were successful at obtaining professorships were unmarried women who were largely employed at undergraduate institutions for women.

Cassatt’s letters to Pope also reflect a keen interest in the psychology of the period. In 1910, Cassatt wrote to Pope that she greatly admired “Prof. James philosophy & love his books.” As aforementioned, James taught physiology, psychology and

242 Cassatt and Mathews, Cassatt and Her Circle, 303-305.
244 Cassatt and Mathews, Cassatt and Her Circle, 300-301.
philosophy at Harvard and was Hall’s mentor. Furthermore, William James was in communication with Hillard and Pope in their psychical research, something Cassatt was also heavily involved in. It is imaginable that the women read James’ and his students other writings about women, particularly their popular writings about the female adolescent. It is likely that reading James, Cassatt was also acutely aware of the surrounding psychology, including Hall and the developments being made in the definition of the adolescent girl.

Cassatt’s paintings are one remarkable interpretation of the ever-changing, continuously re-interpreted concept of the adolescent girl. In this thesis, I understand Cassatt’s adolescent girl as a reflection of her coalescence of the array of influences in the fields of psychology, feminism, history, and aesthetics she was working through. My thesis does not depend on speculation of possible connections. Rather, I situate Cassatt’s work in relationship to broader debates about women, their psychology, and social roles. Hall provides a touch point; I am reading his text for the insight it affords into the definition of and debates surrounding adolescence as a gendered concept. The adolescent girl was, in some sense, born in Cassatt’s period; from the emerging psychological discussions and literature (most notably, Hall’s, and James’ among others), to education reform for young girls (and most relevantly to the artist, Pope and Hillard) as well as feminist novels, plays, and wider consumer culture centered on girlhood, all situated within the excitement of the all-encompassing first wave of the feminist movement. As the next two chapters will demonstrate, Cassatt’s paintings of the adolescent girl have traces of these influences.
CHAPTER TWO

Impressionism & Adolescence

Art, for Cassatt, was the principal manner of defining, and therefore advocating for, the female, and especially the adolescent girl. Within the burgeoning feminist movement in America in the early 1900’s, Cassatt proudly took part in and joined the period’s advancement of women’s professional, economic, and political influence and growth. The main issue during this early twentieth-century period was the call for women’s suffrage in the United States. However, it was not until the latter half of Cassatt’s life that she became involved with the feminist political issues of her period. Still, Mowll-Mathews makes it clear that Cassatt was undoubtedly a feminist throughout her life.245 Cassatt, as Mathews writes, believed in “a woman’s right to education and advancement in the world outside of home. She was fully aware of and did not hesitate to raise her voice against the vast injustices suffered by women in modern life.”246 However, Cassatt had no interest nor temptation to join in the activist groups emerging in France. She instead demonstrated her desire to support the growing movement in America financially and, most distinguishably, through her art.247 Cassatt financially and materially supported the women’s movement, yet she primarily championed the female through her own artistic production. And, through her representations of the female, the

246 Ibid.
247 McGuirk, “Mary Cassatt and Cecilia Beaux,” 53
artist proudly did “raise her voice,” or rather her brush, against the injustices suffered by the modern woman.²⁴⁸

As we observed in her correspondence, and as we will also see in her paintings, Cassatt viewed adolescent girls as more than simply prettied surfaces. Cassatt’s letter to Pope in 1910 on the subject of her two nieces makes it clear that she supported girls developing their free will away from their families at a boarding school for teenage girls.²⁴⁹ Similar to how Hall’s Adolescence states that young adolescents need the companionship of those who understand them, Cassatt, in her letters and art, articulates that adolescent girls, like her niece, desire a certain independence from their parents and fellowship among their peers. Yet, to a large extent, Cassatt’s correspondence is somewhat limited. While the artist discusses ideas about girls’ education and feminist reform, it is in her paintings that one truly grasps the complexity and tensions of female adolescence. As her artwork reveals and foregrounds, even more than her correspondence, adolescent girlhood represented, for Cassatt, a transitional state in which a girl was to reconcile the sometimes antithetical tendencies within herself: adolescence and femininity. This reconciliation of femininity and adolescence could not be straightforward, given the tensions between femininity and adolescence that were widely recognized in society, literature, and psychology around 1900. However, while psychologists at the time and more recently have been quick to point out contradictions and limitations in the concept of female adolescence, the discourse in art history has been less forthcoming. The following chapter considers how Cassatt’s views of female

²⁴⁸ Of course, Cassatt came from a wealthy family, whose fortune derived from the Pennsylvania Railroad, which was not wholly without its injustices. Moreover, I would like to point out that Cassatt, as noted by Mowll Mathews, was said to have made offensive comments. Her brother, Alexander Cassatt, made anti-Semitic remarks. While Mary was more cosmopolitan than Alexander and decried many forms of intolerance, her own “cleverness with words and keen perception of people made her acid comments biting and at times offensive.” She too, as Mathews writes, “could make anti-Semitic remarks, such as those against Gertrude Stein and Leo Stein.” (Mowll Mathews, Mary Cassatt: A Life, 70)
²⁴⁹ Cassatt, Mathews, Cassatt and Her Circle, 303-305.
adolescence, which were formed in relationship to American feminism and developmental psychology, informed her paintings of modern women in the 1870s and 1880s in France, in the context of Impressionism.

**Cassatt & Impressionism**

Within three years of settling in Paris, Cassatt was invited by Degas to join the Impressionists. The Impressionists considered different elements of the modern Parisian world as subjects for their new style of painting. They painted naturalistic tableaus of modern life, offering an entirely new interpretation of modern Paris by depicting the unidealized inhabitants of the newly reconstructed metropolis as they saw it. As art historian Robert Herbert aptly puts it, “humans mediate the view, which becomes more than a view: it is a way of experiencing the modern city.”

Oftentimes placing modern figures within their paintings, the Impressionists centered their works on scenes of public life, including scenes of cafés and cabarets, as well as of the newly visible youth. Paintings by Impressionists such as Manet and Claude Monet (1840-1926) demonstrate the manifold techniques in which the Impressionists interpreted the modern city. Even though he did not participate in their exhibits, Manet supported Impressionist artists, including his sister-in-law, Berthe Morisot.

One of the most controversial painters of his period, Manet depicted scenes of modern life, such as in *The Railway* (Figure 10, 1873). In this painting, Manet renders female youth in the urban Parisian landscape. Manet depicts a woman with a young child presumably in front of the Gare Saint–Lazare. *The Railway* presents the centrality of the subject matter of young people, and especially young women, as becoming increasingly more visible in the modern city. Manet was interested in conveying a two-dimensional

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surface and painted with broad, free brushstrokes that appear to have been swiftly applied to his canvas. His brushstrokes in the background of his compositions often interject into the foreground, thus creating a lack of depth. These techniques, as well as the artist’s employment of his subject’s direct confrontation with the viewer, are hallmarks of Manet’s painting.

Like Manet, Monet incorporated white and bright colors into his palette. These techniques can be observed in Monet’s *Springtime* (Figure 11, 1872), which similarly depicts a young woman. By isolating dabs of color, Monet attempts to capture the effect of sunlight filtered through the green leaves. Exhibited at the Second Impressionist Exhibition in 1876, *Springtime* is an illuminated canvas, composed of brushstrokes of an array of sizes with inflections of light and contours. Monet’s canvases were all

![Figure 10. Édouard Manet, *The Railway*, 1873, oil on canvas, 93.3 x 111.5 cm (36 3/4 x 43 7/8 in.), The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.](image)
harmonious and illustrated the more fleeting, optical visual effects of Impressionism. Whereas in *The Railway* Manet paints a female figure in the center of Paris, here, Monet paints a young woman in the outskirts of Paris, in Argenteuil. Nevertheless, both artists’ choice of subject matter illustrates its dominance within Impressionism: the female youth.

![Figure 11. Claude Monet, *Springtime*, 1872, oil on canvas, 50 x 65.5 cm (19 11/16 x W: 25 13/16 in.), Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland.](image)

Immersing themselves within the subject of contemporary life, the Impressionists abandoned the biblical and mythological subjects that had been the mainstay of nineteenth-century academic paintings in favor of subjects from Paris and its suburbs, including images of leisure and entertainment associated with the café-concert, the theater, the racetrack, riverside bathing, and pleasure boating. Still, there were members of the Impressionist movement who engaged with subjects outside the urban

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Parisian world. Notable among them was Camille Pissarro (1830-1903), who painted villagers, peasants and animals in landscapes undergoing modernization. In his paintings, peasant cottages co-exist with newly-built mansions and the new railways lines, which were laid parallel to old, split rail fences. Pissarro employs Impressionist techniques to depict a young peasant girl in *The Shepherdess*, or *Young Girl With a Stick* (Figure 12, 1881). Constructing his canvas through congregations of rigorous pixels of color, Pissarro foregrounds his female figure.

![The Shepherdess](image)

*Figure 12. Camille Pissarro, The Shepherdess, also known as Young Peasant Girl with Stick, 1881, oil on canvas, 64.5 x 81 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.*

Foregoing history, sentimentality or the merely picturesque, Impressionist painters were diverse and yet interrelated by threads of common interest. All of these Impressionists embraced change, impermanence, and fleeting temporality, whether in nature, the city, or the villages surrounding Paris that were nearby and accessible to urban dwellers by means of the railway. What was new in Impressionism, as Herbert notes, “was the sense of graphic immediacy that arose from the painters’ turn towards

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252 Herbert, 28.
the settings of contemporary life.”253 Within these paintings, there evolved a unique intermingling of both a sense of artistic control and an apparent spontaneity. The play of natural light and reflection of colors attracted artists’ attention. Impressionist painters embraced the earlier *plein-air* methods in their attempt to directly record scenes of modern life in urban and suburban settings.

*Plein-air* painting, along with an array of other characteristics of both subject and style, distinguish the Impressionist group. Poet and critic Stéphane Mallarmé helped characterize these methods in his influential essay, “Édouard Manet and the Impressionists in 1876,” in which he defined the new school of painting. Mallarmé argued that “there is indeed no painter of consequence who has not adopted or pondered over some theories advanced by the Impressionists, and notably that of open air, which influences all of modern artistic thought.”254 Mallarmé accentuates the mastery of the group’s new treatment of light, space, and air. The spectator beholds the represented subject, which, being “composed of a harmony of reflected and ever-changing lights, cannot be supposed always to look the same, but palpitates with movement, light, and life.”255 In his discussion of Manet, Mallarmé writes that the artist creates visible effects that enliven his canvas, never appearing stationary. To define these new methods of painting, Mallarmé cites other artists: Monet portrays “mobility and transparency,” or Sisley “seizes the passing moments of the day, watches the fugitive cloud and seems to paint it in its flight.”256

However, *plein-air* painting, as Mallarmé discusses it, exceeds mere reporting: the painterly techniques of the Impressionists encompassed the application of spontaneous

253 Ibid, 43.
256 Ibid.
brushstrokes, the foregrounding of the materiality of paint, and the physicality of expressive gesture. Rather than reproduce a realistic depiction of what they saw, the Impressionists desired instead to capture an individual’s optical sensations. In doing so, the Impressionists did not model from dark to light but instead used color to create form. This engagement of color was juxtaposed with rapid brushwork that captured the fleeting, temporal effect of nature. Since Mallarmé, scholars have noted the Impressionists’ devotion to contemporary urban settings and have brought out the paradoxical qualities of an art that was “natural,” and yet thrived on artifice. These Parisians treated their city as a theater, because they exalted “the transitory, the sensual, and the artificial.” The Impressionists engaged with an artifice of representation; elements of pictorial artifice were both the subject and form of modern life.

Though not as prominent nor as preferred, indoor subjects and lighting are also noted by Mallarmé. The effects of outdoor and natural lighting give way to the unknown, the uncertain, and that which is out of the artist’s direct manipulation. As Mallarmé puts it, this “infinite complexity of execution induces [the artist] to seek more hazardous success in things widely opposed to nature.” He cites “a box at the theatre” as one example of these types of complex, interior subjects. The critic elevates natural over artificial light by stressing the ability of natural light to uphold “truth.” Not only does artificial light take an artist farther from the truth, but it also positions a painter in the more obsolete, conventional manner of painting. When one paints in the interior lighting or artificial half-light in use in the schools, Mallarmé observes, “the light strikes

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257 Herbert, 33.
258 Ibid, 37.
259 Ibid, 38.
260 Mallarmé, “The Impressionists and Edouard Manet.”.
261 Ibid.
262 Ibid.
and forces into undue relief, affording an easy means for a painter to dispose a face to suit his own fancy and return to by-gone styles.”

For these reasons, Mallarmé privileges natural light over artificial light as one of modernity.

Mallarmé highlights the contribution of female Impressionists in his essay, citing Morisot and Gonzalés as examples of artists who were attuned to the subtle and delicate changes of nature. In his discussion of Manet’s pupils, Mallarmé commends Gonzalés, who notably unites qualities of “youthfulness and grace all on her own.”

Mallarmé gives special attention to Morisot in his essay and the qualities of her works drawn from contemporary life. Mallarmé describes, yet he does not name, a few of Morisot’s canvases, noting her “pure atmosphere, “airy foreground,” “well-painted poses,” and “charming water-colour.”

Mallarmé concludes his essay by highlighting a certain “child-like charm” within Impressionism. The critic pronounces Morisot’s canvases as having the “perfection of an actual vision.” Using Impressionist techniques, Mallarmé writes, Morisot captures the presence of the female in the modern world.

As we will observe in the third chapter of this thesis, Cassatt broke with Mallarmé’s insistence in the superiority of plein-air painting. As opposed to some of her Impressionist contemporaries, Cassatt created her works in her studio. Furthermore, Cassatt presents a blend of artifice and nature in her canvases, imbuing her works with more psychological and spatial complexity that exceeds the “child-like charm” that Mallarmé praises and which many Impressionists sought to capture. Her paintings truly go against what Mallarmé refers to as Morisot’s “unconscious grace.”

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263 Ibid.
264 Ibid.
265 Ibid.
266 Ibid.
267 Ibid.
268 Ibid.
independently, Cassatt charted her own sensibilities in her depiction of light, color, and space in her works.

Cassatt is not mentioned in Mallarmé’s essay on the Impressionists in 1876, as it was not until 1879 that she began exhibiting with the group. After years of studying and traveling in Europe and Philadelphia, Cassatt only finally settled in Paris in 1874, where she was frequently exhibited at the Salon (the annual exhibition sponsored by the French government) before Degas invited her to join the Impressionists in 1877. Cassatt soon formed relationships with many of the Impressionist artists as well as critics in Paris. Most prominent amongst her relationships with these critics was with Mallarmé, who took a unique interest in female artists. The two were introduced in 1888 through their mutual friend, Morisot.269 Upon joining the Impressionists, Cassatt’s career blossomed; as she later recalled, “I began to live…”270

Under the influence of the Impressionists, Cassatt revised her technique, composition, and use of color and light, demonstrating her esteem for the works of French modern painters, primarily Degas and Manet.271 Cassatt quickly established close friendships with artists, including Degas, Pissarro, Manet, and others. Manet and Cassatt enjoyed a close friendship, and, like Manet, Cassatt was an Impressionist “only in the high key and luminosity of her color and in her insistence on the importance of light as it plays on objects.”272 She did not employ the broken brushwork more typical of Monet

270 Cassatt, Mathews, Cassatt and Her Circle, 132.
272 Breeskin, Mary Cassatt, a Catalogue Raisonné, 9
and Morisot. Both of the artists also heeded special attention to capturing the effects of light and rendering the three-dimensionality of forms.

Two major figures of the Impressionist movement, Degas and Cassatt had a complex and dynamic relationship, moving in the same social and intellectual circles, in spite of their differences in gender and nationality. Art historians, critics, and scholars have traced the nuanced visual conversation between Cassatt and Degas, as seen in their paintings, pastels, and prints. The two were allies within the Impressionist group; when internal controversies within the group caused fissures to develop, the two artists remained in support of one another. Art historians have time and again noted Degas’s enormous influence on Cassatt. Degas was among several male colleagues who enthusiastically supported the involvement of Cassatt, Morisot and Bracquemond. It is clear that within the two years between Degas’s invitation and the 1879 exhibition, Cassatt brightened her palette and altered her subject matter to focus more on modern, everyday Parisian themes. Less commonly considered is Cassatt’s influences on Degas.

Paintings shown at the Impressionist exhibitions, such as Little Girl in a Blue Armchair (1878), The Nurse (Figure 13, 1878), Five o’Clock Tea (1880), and Susan on the Balcony Holding a Dog (1883) demonstrate Cassatt’s reworked technique. Cassatt quickly developed painting techniques associated with Impressionism, including rapid brushwork, bright color, and a fascination with light, including natural and artificial light and its reflections. Her subject matter also aligned with those typical of the

274 Jones, et al., Degas/Cassatt, 3.
275 Not until 2014 did an exhibition at the National Gallery of Art titled Degas/Cassatt finally explore Cassatt’s influence on Degas’s artistic production.
Impressionists, as she portrayed the Parisian middle-and upper-class world: the interior of apartments, gardens, balconies, theaters, beaches, and carriage rides, among other subjects.

In *The Nurse*, Cassatt depicts a sleeping baby in a stroller and a young child accompanied by a nurse in a flowering garden. Exhibited at the Eighth Impressionist Exhibition of 1886, this was the first major canvas of the outdoors that Cassatt painted. Her commitment to open-air painting can be directly observed in her correspondence with her biographer, Achille Ségard. In the letter to the art critic announcing her desire to have her photo taken outdoors, Cassatt reminded him that she herself had “done a lot of [painting] out of doors.”276 The photograph of Cassatt at the Villa Angeletto in Grasse (Figure 14, 1913) in Ségard’s 1913 biography of the artist was meant “not only to show

276 Viraben, “Constructing a Reputation: Achille Ségard’s 1913 Biography of Mary Cassatt,” 106.
the reader the artist’s face, but also to indicate her role in the history of open-air painting,” writes scholar Hadrien Viraben. In *The Nurse*, the artist’s loose handling of paint can be observed through the green foliage that softly blends together. Just as Monet painted isolated spots of color to capture the sunlight’s effect on the foliage in *Springtime* (1872), Cassatt uses similar techniques in *The Nurse*. By markedly dabbing the pink and white, Cassatt also accentuates and distinguishes the brightly colored flowers planted neatly along the path’s reading diagonal. This painting not only displays a domesticated outdoors, but it also reflects the bright palette and spontaneous application of paint many Impressionists employed. *The Nurse* starkly departs from the artist’s earlier, more traditional works, which made use of a darker palette and more cleanly legible draughtsmanship. The natural environment and sense of spontaneity that is associated with Impressionism, and more particularly, *plein-air* painting, can be observed in this work by Cassatt.

![Figure 14. Mary Cassatt, 1913. Photograph of the Artist.](image)

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277 Viraben, 106.
The Modern Child: Adolescence as a Subject Matter within Impressionism

Cassatt not only shared techniques with the Impressionists, but also subject matter. The artist could have hardly failed to notice the growing prominence of adolescent figures, and particularly female adolescent figures, in Impressionist works. The adolescent was a subject of keen interest in nineteenth-century Paris during the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist period. The Impressionist painterly techniques have been most readily associated with *plein-air* painting, yet many artists working at this time applied this technique to new subjects, including adolescence and especially the female adolescent. A considerable amount of paintings of youth became a part of Impressionist painters oeuvre. Representations of childhood in Impressionism is widely recognized. Thomas’ *Impressionist Children* brings together remarkable Impressionist images of childhood to elucidate how these paintings reflect the dominant social, cultural and political aspects of this period. Anne Higonnet’s *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* focuses on the construction of childhood in art and popular culture. Richard Kendall’s *Degas’s Dancers* and Higonnet’s *Berthe Morisot’s Images of Women* are also among the scholarship that been done specifically on Impressionist paintings of childhood and youth.

Yet, not many scholars have interrogated the meaning of adolescence for Impressionist painting and the challenges it posed, particularly for female artists. Art historians Green and Thomas have begun to explore childhood and adolescence within French painting. Yet, these scholars do not present the particular problems of adolescence as a distinct phase within the life cycle of the female, and why the subject was of such critical significance. There certainly was an increasing amount of adolescent figures in Impressionist painting. Children and teenagers were portrayed in the
Impressionist paintings in markedly different ways. Impressionists such as Manet, Renoir, Morisot, Degas, among many others, inscribed this unique transitional stage between childhood and adulthood into their works. The works highlighted above, Manet’s *The Railway*, Monet’s *Springtime*, Pissarro’s *The Shepherdess*, Cassatt’s *Little Girl in a Blue Armchair*, all are Impressionist paintings of young women, at a variety of ages.

**Defining “Adolescence” in Nineteenth-Century France**

The term “adolescence” dates back in the *Littré Dictionnaire de la langue française* to its first usage in the fourteenth-century. However, John Neubauer explains that despite its Latin descent, “adolescence” was quite seldomly used in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and then only in reference to the traditional “ages of man.”\footnote{John Neubauer, *Fin-de-Siècle Culture of Adolescence.* (New Haven ; London : Yale University Press, 1992), 5.} It was not until the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-centuries that “adolescence” was widely used in the French language. Although the terminology of the “adolescent” had not been scientifically used at this time, the 1873 *Littré* defined it as “the age which succeeds childhood and which begins with the first signs of puberty.”\footnote{*Littré, E. *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1873), 53. Also in Kathleen Alaimo, “Adolescence in the Popular Milieu in France during the Early Third Republic: Efforts to Define and Shape a Stage of Life.” Order No. 8903003, (The University of Wisconsin - Madison, 1988), 25-26.} Prominent French scholar of pedagogy and politician Gabriel Compayré also notes that the *Littré* considered “l’adolescence” and “la jeunesse” as synonyms.\footnote{Alaimo, “Adolescence in the Popular Milieu in France during the Early Third Republic,” 25-26.}

Green discusses the application of the term “adolescent” in relationship to Impressionist representations of male and female youth. The term “adolescent,” Green notes, is found much more readily pertaining to males.\footnote{Green, 147.} Perhaps this is because the term is revealing of the transition from childhood to adulthood. This passage to
adulthood was something only guaranteed for girls in France through the process of marriage and coincided with a girl’s physical, rather than intellectual, maturation. The entry for “girl” (“fille”), Thomas makes clear, stated that girls generally begin puberty around twelve, “losing that playful, carefree gaiety of childhood and becoming more moody and introspective.” Thomas, 193. Thus, infantilizing the term “grande” or “jeune” fille, for the depictions of the young girl in this state, was deemed more appropriate than adolescent. Green, 147. In other words, “adolescence” was used less frequently to refer to girls than the term “fille,” along with its variations, “grande” and “jeune” fille.

In France, a distinction existed between “grande fille” and “jeune fille,” yet the categorization of the two terms was not entirely straightforward. The “grande fille,” not yet a “jeune fille,” in its more precise sense, can be described as a female in her later stages of adolescence emerging into early womanhood. Green elucidates that a “jeune fille” is a young woman physically ready for marriage, while a “grande fille” still retains that certain, particular awkwardness of early adolescence in which sexuality exists more as an embarrassment than as a pleasure.

As in America, scientific discourse on adolescence in France only emerged in the last decades of the nineteenth-century and the early decades of the twentieth-century. Hall’s Adolescence (1904) was controversial and popular in France as well as in the United States. As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, there are ambiguities in Hall’s account. In her dissertation, Kathleen Alaimo writes about how France, during this period, redefined the experience of youth. Léon Biérent’s La Puberté (1896) and Antoine Marro’s “Le Rôle social de la puberté” (1899) are examples of published works on the

282 Thomas, 193.
283 Green, 147.
284 Ibid, 132.
subject of puberty before Hall. Nevertheless, it was Hall’s massive two-volume publication which truly marked the beginning of adolescent study and established the framework for future research and writing. The extent of his influence on French thinkers can be seen in the work of Compayré. In 1906, Compayré published a series of articles summarizing and analyzing Hall’s key ideas, including physical growth during adolescence, the evolution of adolescent sentiments and the theory of recapitulation, the education of adolescent girls, and the issue of co-education of the sexes. In 1909, Compayré published L’Adolescence, étude de psychologie et de pédagogie, which was a shorter version of Hall’s Adolescence (1904). The first major original French publication in the area of adolescent study, Alaimo concedes, was not until 1909: Pierre Mendousse’s L’Ame de l’adolescent.

In general, French scholars and scientists, like their American counterparts, conceived of adolescence primarily as a male construct. The Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales, a French organization that publishes linguistic data, cites dictionaries from the nineteenth-century. As understood from the site, early nineteenth-century dictionaries either define the term “adolescence” as markedly masculine, or they do not specify a gender at all. Across class and gender lines, “adolescence” began during this period yet only reached its height in the twentieth-century. In an article in Courrier de Vaugelas from 1869, contributor Éman Martin investigates the question as to whether adolescence only applies to boys: “‘Adolescence’ ne se dit-il que des garçons?”

285 Alaimo.
286 Alaimo, 24.
287 Ibid, 24-25.
288 Ibid.
289 The Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales, a French organization that publishes linguistic data, states: “sur ce point les dictionnaires du 19ème siècle hésitaient : pour LAV 1820 et LAND 1834 le mot s’appliquait aux garçons; BOISTE 1834, NOEL-CHAPUIS 1826, LITTRÉ ne font pas allusion à cette restriction de sens.” http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/adolescence
290 Alaimo, 18.
Courrier de Vaugelas was a bi-monthly journal devoted to the spread of French language that ran from 1868-1887. Martin shows how in the Dictionnaire de l’Académie (1835) adolescence only applies to the male sex. Martin cites later, less restrictive definitions of the term. He considers the Encyclopédie des gens du monde (no date specified), which allows for both male and female adolescence, providing slightly different age ranges for each. 292 Martin’s article also reflects how the debate over adolescence, as a markedly masculine, or not masculine, term, was unique to the nineteenth-century. 293 Furthermore, the fact that this question is even being posed is indicative of how the term “adolescence” was, and perhaps was not, used in popular parlance in the mid nineteenth-century. Martin’s article points to a debate, and therefore emerging dialogue, over whether and how “adolescence” might apply to girls. The equivocation seems to be highly specific to the nineteenth-century.

“La Jeune Fille”: Female Adolescence within Impressionism

In keeping with gendered understandings of the term, portrayals of male adolescence within Impressionist paintings were strikingly at variance with those of female adolescence. Whereas paintings of male adolescents convey independence, images of female adolescents often depict a lack of subjectivity and self-awareness. This thesis works with the period’s definitions of adolescence, which were readily accepted at the time, even if they were not always consistent. A new visibility of adolescent youth in modern Paris can be seen in Manet’s Luncheon in the Studio (Figure 15, 1868). In this painting, Léon Leenhoff leans casually against the dinner table with his gaze directed out

292 Martin, “Adolescence ne se dit-il que des garçons?” 43.
293 Martin notes how in the thirteen-century and also among the ancient Romans, there existed a concept of female adolescence. Martin, 43.
of his domestic, interior family space and toward the exterior. Léon Leenhoff was the son of Suzanne Leenhoff, who had given Manet piano lessons as a boy and whom he later married. Manet was therefore somewhat of a father-figure to Léon, and the artist employed him time and again as a model in his paintings. Manet’s interest in the theme of the boy growing up and donning a man’s costume is present in this work. Léon is dressed not as a child, but clearly as a young man, in his tie, collared shirt, suit jacket and hat. Léon occupies the foreground of the painting, forming the tip of a triangle with two seemingly anonymous figures behind him whom scholars have debated. The woman could be his mother, yet she could also be a maid waiting to serve. On the right of the canvas, a man smoking a cigar and drinking a coffee is seated at a table topped with a lemon, silverware, bottles and breads. The man has been often referred to by scholars as Auguste Rousselin, an artist and Manet’s neighbor. While it remains unclear exactly who these background figures are, what is significant is Léon’s indifference to them. He holds a formal composure that presents a combination of formality (of dress) and casualness (his pose). The young boy is all at once self-assured and unperturbed without any sign of strain or tension. Manet poses the young Léon in a three-quarter length view, turned a bit and looking outward as well as beyond the frame. In doing so, Manet conveys a very specific maturity and self-composure in the male adolescent. Manet depicts this young boy gazing outward, dressed to go out and face the public gaze, which is represented by the sunlight. The young Léon is poised to explore the freedoms of the city. Adolescence, Manet suggests here, was accompanied by a growing sense of adventure and independence.
In doing so, Manet creates a painting that is primarily concerned with the undoing of social and artistic conventions. Manet achieves a sense of fluidity in his construction of space, unusual positioning of the central figure, and handling of paint. The composition seems to be a peculiar hybrid of the space between a studio and a bourgeois apartment, though the title of the work seems to indicate its placement in a studio. The painting is complete with a potted plant and a linen tablecloth, atop which a sit objects reminiscent of the naturalist tradition of seventeenth-century Dutch still-life. Yet, it is unclear whether these objects serve as the trappings of domesticity or studio props. Manet also shapes a certain ambiguity of space in *Luncheon in the Studio*. The items on the table are somewhat distorted; it appears that the viewer is looking at the

table both directly head-on as well as from above. The viewer’s placement is therefore also unstable. These also all are incongruous to the second still-life of armor, which is quite oddly placed in a luncheon scene. The central youthful boy has his back to the table and to the other figures, appearing as if he is about to emerge out of the canvas, yet is simultaneously confined in the tight half-studio, half-apartment setting. The feeling that Léon youth is about to come forth out of the canvas, and, yet, at the same time is interrupted in a moment of pause, gives way to a sense of suspense within Manet’s narrative scene. There is the sense, as Nancy Locke notes, that the three persons here appear to be “between moments of sociability: they are unconnected and preoccupied.”

Manet paints Léon with a leaning posture and closed hand within the tightly confined apartment. The represented space of the apartment is stuffed with windows, plants, paintings, a table, armor, appearing confined and less accessible to the viewer. The other sense of distortion comes from the strange size of the figures. The placement of the figures in their respective positions within the composition does not anatomically make sense: the young man is monumental in comparison to the plant, woman, and armor behind him. Manet’s use of light in his handling of paint also appears artificial. Cool greys, blues, browns, and whites, with smaller dabs of blue and yellow, suffuse the canvas. Yet Léon, as well as parts of the male and female figures in the background, and even the white tablecloth, are lit in stark contrast to the darkness of the interior. These techniques revoke conventions in ways that align very well with an understanding of male adolescence, as fitful, uninhibited, and full of contradictions.

296 Locke, _Manet and the Family Romance_, 130.
Paintings of female adolescence, on the other hand, convey a sense of interiority. And, yet, these Impressionist works at the same time present a contradiction between interiority and surface. Among the significant Impressionist depictions of female adolescence are Renoir’s *The First Outing* (Figure 16, 1876-77), Degas’s *Young Dancer Aged Fourteen* (Figure 19, 1878-1881) and Morisot’s *Young Girl in a Ball Gown* (Figure 17, 1879). Representations of female adolescents exceed in number those of male adolescents. Within these Impressionist paintings, there is the underlying association of teenage girls with public spectacle. There existed a prevailing, inherent assumption of the young girl as an object of display and consumption.

![Figure 16. Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *The First Outing*, or *At the Theatre (La Première Sortie)*, 1876-77, oil on canvas, 65 x 49.5 cm, The National Gallery of Art, London.](image)
Renoir’s *The First Outing* (1876-77) positions the viewer in that typical nineteenth-century quandary that Green spells out – “is she ‘fille’ or ‘femme,’ a girl or a woman?”297 Renoir portrays the public spectacle of the female adolescent at the theater. In *The First Outing*, Renoir illustrates a round-cheeked, young-faced girl buoyed by an eager attitude for life and the glamor of the Parisian game of being seen. Dressed in a dark navy, almost black outfit, the adolescent girl appears excited as she holds a bouquet of flowers in her lap. Renoir emphasizes the adolescent’s youthful, joyous snub-nosed profile and open lips to show her excitement of her first outing to the theater. Her very well-developed figure is intensified by Renoir’s composition in such a way that the curve of the partition perfectly echoes her bust and contrasts her naïve, youthful face. Within this contradiction lies Green’s question: the teenage girl has a young face, yet at the same a curiously post-pubertal body.

Thus, Renoir instills a deliberate ambiguity in *The First Outing* by presenting the face of a young girl and the body of a fully-developed woman. The age of Renoir’s figure remains an incongruous, curious unknown for the viewer. By imbuing the figure with a girlish, naive air, Renoir imbues her with emotional simplicity. Yet, the artist at the same time showcases her grown figure, attesting to her physical maturation. In doing so, the viewer is left vacillating between the figure being a girl-child and a woman. Renoir thus does not seem to be working with the concept of adolescence at all in *The First Outing*, and the uncertainty for the viewer remains wittingly obscure.

The innocence of the young girl, in spite of the ambivalence of her age, is made evident by Renoir, particularly in her lack of awareness that she is a spectacle to be consumed by surrounding theatergoers, including the viewer. The teenage girl’s

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297 Green, 106.
innocence is pronounced by Renoir’s inclusion of an additional, older female presence to the right of the composition. Similar to the teenage girl, the viewer simply observes the side of the older woman’s face. However, the older woman is not the object of the viewer’s attention. The older woman, dressed demurely in dark colors vouchsafes the younger girls’ propriety, which in turn enhances her charm for viewers. Naively unaware of her surroundings, the young girl is fully immersed in the performance before her. Moreover, the young girl also has a certain degree of privacy that allows her feelings of excitement to become visible. The viewer simply looks upon the young girl’s profile. She is partly secluded, for the division in the theater box protects her from the gaze of spectators to her right. However, this construction of privacy is merely rhetorical, for Renoir gives viewers full access to her figure, which shows no signs of recognition or resistance, thus reinforcing conventional ideas of the female as comprised only of matter and surface. Renoir’s teenage girl is, as Herbert notes, “more natural in the plainer theater she sits in, because she is innocent of any feeling of being on view as the representative of family and class.”

In *The First Outing*, Renoir thus invites the viewer’s visual possession through his presentation of an outwardly commodified prettiness. The romance of, what Green calls, Renoir’s “love-making brush stroke,” is particularly evident on the girl’s skin and dress. Renoir’s canvas is entirely composed of broken, long brushstrokes. These strokes can be observed in the distant, indistinct faces composed of browns, dark blues, and tinted with white in the background audience, as well as in the orchestra and the surrounding tiers. Renoir’s young girl holds a gentle bouquet shaped by plushy-painted white strokes that

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298 Sinnett, 146-147.
299 Herbert, 100.
300 Green, 107.
coalesce with the soft surfaces of audience members. Renoir’s young girl displays a sense of transformation, “suspended between an infant’s limited self-awareness and a girl’s fully conscious contemplation of herself and her social existence as seen by others.”

Enthralled in her first outing, Renoir’s model is a figure who displays a combination of physical maturity and child-like emotions.

**The Woman Painting the Girl: Female Impressionists**

Both highly attuned to the popular and increasingly dominant themes and subjects in the Impressionists oeuvre, Cassatt and Morisot explored the subject of female adolescence within their respective works. Certainly, Cassatt and Morisot were in the same circles. *Cassatt and Her Circle* highlights letters exchanged between the two artists. However, the correspondence is limited and therefore no letter directly touches upon the subject of female adolescence. Cassatt’s other letters to women in her American circles, like Pope and Hillard, reflect her interest in the adolescent girl, particularly in the United States. Morisot’s published letters illustrate the emerging dialogue of the female adolescent in France. Many of Morisot’s letters validate a young woman’s sense of spontaneity and impulsiveness. Berthe Morisot’s sister, Edma, sent to Berthe the diary of her eldest daughter in the summer of 1884. In one letter, Berthe urges Edma to “let Jeannot develop freely.” The letter in answer reveals the artist’s commitment to spontaneity and the value she placed on the personal expression of feeling, rather than “correctness”: qualities which she strove to bring to her own painting. In this concise yet significant

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301 Thomas, 62.
303 Harrison et al, *Art in Theory*. 
letter, the artist associates adolescence, and all the awkwardness attendant with it, with positive qualities of sincerity, spontaneity, and the free expression of personality.

These are also qualities associated with Impressionist painting. What has been neglected in accounts of modernism and modernity centered on Baudelaire’s texts is the increasing visibility of the adolescent in the modern city. It was this visibility that the Impressionists picked up on, taking note of and then depicting in their paintings. These burgeoning ideas of female psychology—which were admittedly nascent and not fully articulated in the 1870s—are as modern as are the figures of the flâneur and the anonymous prostitute and helped shape modern painting in ways that have yet to be appreciated.

Morisot depicts a young girl at the theater in *Young Girl in a Ball Gown* (1879). Morisot’s painting first entered into the collection of the art critic Théodore Duret, who also served as collecting advisor and buying agent for American art collector, feminist, and close friend of Cassatt’s, Louise Havemeyer. In 1894, however, it was the poet Stéphane Mallarmé who convinced Duret to sell the painting to the State. Mallarmé had a very close relationship with Morisot and therefore his actions with Duret make sense. Mallarmé’s involvement in the sale of Morisot’s painting also may demonstrate the poet’s interest in female adolescence.

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The girl in Morisot’s *Young Girl in a Ball Gown* reveals the artist’s own values of adolescence, independence and spontaneity, as evidenced by her letters. Morisot’s loose, unbounded handling of paint reflects Impressionist tendencies. The Impressionists also considered the interactions between figures and *plein-air* environments to be at once sources of controlled natural light and also more manageable. Morisot employed this technique even in her works of interiors. Morisot creates an ambiguous, indeterminate space in *Young Girl in a Ball Gown*. It is impossible to situate the model in a location. Morisot combines Impressionist techniques with her own distinct style in this painting.

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305 Frascina et al., *Modernity and Modernism*, 42-43.
which set her apart from other Impressionists. Vaguely defined floral greenery appears to move behind the young woman. These florals are echoed on the dress, diagonally across the bust of the young model. Morisot’s strokes are lengthy: the long white brushstroke is markedly protracted across upper half of the canvas. The foliage on the flowers is constructed by drawn out, leafy strokes. Rapidly painted strokes shape brisk, sudden lines of green foliage, swept brown hair, and pearly white flowers. The model’s dress appears to be a similar pearly white to the flowers situated behind her. The white paint of her dress is quite close to the young woman’s skin tone, immersing her further into the canvas. This rough, sketch-like aesthetic creates the feeling of an unfinished canvas. The young girl’s bottom half appears to coalesce with the grey, purple-hazy seat upon which she is positioned. The impulsive, quick brushwork and the model’s glance over her right shoulder lend the painting a certain liveliness. In doing so, the unconstrained, swift, and free brushwork that Morisot employs to render the female adolescent exhibits the same spontaneity and freedom that she announces in her writing about the same subject. Her paintings reveal a connection to the thoughts expressed in her letter.

Though Morisot’s figure evidently departs from Renoir’s model, her teenage girl nonetheless exists as a series of fleeting surface effects that evokes The First Outing. The young girl blends into the canvas, albeit harmoniously. She does not exist as her own individual human but rather as a part of the flowery, optical background into which she merges. Morisot’s model becomes a prettied surface, similar to Renoir’s young girl in The First Outing. Critics of the Fifth Impressionist Exhibition in 1880, where this work was exhibited, described the painting as light, harmonious and evanescent. Charles Ephrussi also described Morisot’s painting process as one in which she “grinds flower petals onto her palette, in order to spread them later on her canvas with airy, witty touches, thrown
down a little haphazardly. These harmonize, blend, and finish by producing something vital, fine, and charming.” Morisot’s artistic techniques, in particular her fluid handling of brushwork, denies her sitter an independent presence as a subject. Rather, Morisot’s model merges with the canvas, becoming a part of the very composition that brings her in.

Yet, unlike Renoir, Morisot’s girl has a sense of interiority. Morisot alludes to the difficult transitional stage of female adolescence coming into womanhood through the young model’s serious and slightly hesitant expression. While Morisot’s figure blends harmoniously with the soft details that surround her within the theater, she still holds a sense of presence. Though her hair merges with the background of the canvas, the young girl’s arms, shoulders, and chin convey permanence through Morisot’s stable drawing lines. Morisot’s female adolescent, then, does possess a degree of liveliness as well as self-assertion. Morisot’s work is complex and it has a subtle psychology that sets it apart from Renoir’s *The First Outing*, among other works. As we will come to observe, this is still far less than the stability and monumentality with which Cassatt imparts her female adolescents. Unlike Morisot, Cassatt presents a greater contrast between structure and surface, as well as lends her subjects greater psychological and physical specificity.

As indicated in the title of the work, the figure is a “jeune femme,” or a “young woman.” It is quite difficult to discern how much emphasis to place on painting titles. Yet, one must consider: why is this painting titled “jeune femme” and not “jeune fille”? Is this simply a coincidence, or was Morisot attempting to position her sitter in a marked age category? And, further, what is the effect of this distinction? Why is it so significant? The unknown figure seems to wear a strapless, or low-necked dress. The girl’s sleeves are

anchored on the tips of her shoulders and her bare chest is exposed, as she wears an elaborate, jeweled choker around her neck. Perhaps the more embellished necklace is indicative of a more elite social class, or, perhaps it is a sign of a girl who is of a slightly older age.

The subject of female adolescence would persist in Morisot’s work, and most especially in her most innovative and extensive pictorial project: paintings of her daughter, Julie. After giving birth to Juliet Manet in 1878, Morisot created a great number of portraits of her over the next sixteen years. Pollock has noted Morisot’s use of her daughter’s life to produce works remarkable for their concern with female subjectivity, and, most especially, at these very “critical turning-points of the feminine.”

The “turning-points of the feminine” can be understood as the moments of transition throughout the life cycle of the female, and, most particularly, the stage of adolescent transitions. This devotion to a singular female subject over her lifespan implies not only Morisot’s fascination with the mother-daughter relationship, but also her interest in the development of the girl. Morisot’s images, as Higonnet writes, have “more to maternal bonding than the physical love between mother and baby…in [Morisot’s] pictures the baby grows up…almost immediately, Julie acquires a separate identity…she develops an intellectual and artistic life which echoes her mother’s and yet is her own.”

In the artist’s later works, such as *Juliet Manet and her Greyhound Lartes* (1893), *Julie Playing the Violin* (1893), *Julie Daydreaming* (Figure 18, 1894), all belonging to 1893-94, Julie is rendered as an adolescent girl. Morisot’s images of Julie, as well as her some of her other images of adolescent girls, demonstrate a particular sense of independence.

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309 Higonnet, *Morisot, Berthe Morisot’s Images of Women*, 213.
Morisot’s later paintings of the adolescent are intertwined with the turn of the century’s emerging literary, cultural, and psychological definitions and perceptions of adolescence. As Mary Jacobus notes, these advents in France gave rise to new literary and artistic concerns, and can be seen as inseparable from the rise of early modernism.\textsuperscript{310} The paintings of Julie as an adolescent girl can, therefore, also be observed as Morisot inserting herself into this emerging culture in fin-de-siècle literary and artistic France.

\textsuperscript{310} Jacobus, \textit{First Things: The Maternal Imaginary in Literature, Art, and Psychoanalysis}, 274.
Psychologists, such as Freud and Hall, as articulated in the first chapter of this thesis, began to define adolescence during this period. For Freud, the experiences of infantile sexuality are the important ones and he therefore had relatively little to contribute to the discourse on adolescence. It was left to psychologists, such as Hall, to truly define adolescence. Jacobus identifies how these psychologists viewed the adolescent as undergoing an intensification of imagination, creativity and sexuality. Considering female adolescents as particularly vulnerable to biologically-based dangers, Hall, as well as others, held that the beginning of menstruation was what typically limited girls and denied them any attempt at serious intellectual efforts. Hall also deemed absorption as a key factor within adolescent development. In *Adolescence* (1904), Hall’s chapter on “Diseases of the Body and Mind” begins with “inner absorption and reverie” in his listing of the pathological traits of adolescence. Reverie was, as Jacobus highlights, the “foremost feature of adolescence signaled out in Hall’s monumental work.” Within this advent of adolescence, psychologists associated adolescence as a time of absorption, reverie, and introspection.

*Julie Daydreaming* (1894) is emblematic of the adolescent girlhood absorbed in a state of reverie and introspection. Entirely immersed in and isolated against an abstract, fluid field, Julie is depicted as a young woman – not quite a little girl, but not yet a fully-formed woman. The composition is a pyramidal one, with Julie’s head at the tip and her body adorning a white flowing dress at the bottom. She sits in three-fourth profile and her dreamy green, brownish eyes stare directly at the viewer. While one soft, pale arm

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311 Ibid, 286.
312 Ibid.
313 Ibid.
314 Ibid.
315 The idea of adolescence as associated with reverie and absorption is also discussed more extensively in the epilogue of this thesis.
rests on her leg, the other supports her velvety cheek. The image is unified by aquatic, sinuously mingled blues and greens, as well as deepened in some areas by opaque browns.\textsuperscript{316} Julie stares directly at the viewer and simultaneously appears to be staring off into space in a pensive pose. This outward, unfocused glance is quite reminiscent of Manet’s young Léon in \textit{A Luncheon in the Studio} (1868). Yet, of course, Manet’s male adolescent is imparted with a certain confidence that Julie does not seem to hold. Morisot’s work portrays Julie’s absorption in her own thoughts rather than the modern, self-conscious awareness of the city displayed by Léon in Manet’s canvas. Morisot’s paintings of Julie, as observed in \textit{Julie Daydreaming} (1894), illustrate both female adolescence as the age of reverie and interiority as well as one of modernity.

Morisot and Cassatt, therefore, both held interest in the psychology, theory, and the literary and print culture surrounding the surfacing definition of the adolescent girl. Yet, as we will see, their representations of female subjectivity remain markedly distinct. As aforementioned, it is important to understand and view these two female artists, who are so often grouped together because of their gender, as having individual differences. Morisot’s portrayals of adolescent girls do show adolescence as encompassing independence, absorption, and spontaneity. However, this achievement is distinct from Cassatt. As we will come to see in the third chapter, Cassatt imparts ideas of adolescence similar to the ones Morisot holds, but takes these visualizations even further by instilling greater, more complex psychological tensions in her portrayals of the adolescent girl. Rendered by Morisot’s swift, energetic brushstrokes that blend into each other, the girls in \textit{Young Girl in a Ball Gown} (1878) and \textit{Julie Daydreaming} (1894) all at once reveal a spontaneity as well as a definitive introspective in their facial expressions. Yet, Morisot’s

\textsuperscript{316} Higonnet, \textit{Berthe Morisot’s Images of Women}, 222.
adolescent girls do not have the same concrete, physical and monumental presence that determine Cassatt’s adolescents as individual, self-aware beings.

Furthermore, Morisot’s depictions of the young Julie reveal a degree of sexuality that, as we will come to observe, is not present in Cassatt’s works. In Julie Daydreaming (1894), Morisot takes care to outline the developing figure of the female body. A yellow belt clenches Julie’s waist, allowing Morisot to draw the silhouette of the young girl’s body. With her lips slightly parted and hair tussled, Julie conveys an aura of sexuality that renders her far beyond a girl-child. This sensuality surprises us, as Higonnet writes, “we are not accustomed to see it so openly acknowledged in images of children well past babyhood and into adolescence.” The sinuosity with which Julie’s body curves on the canvas also reveals a certain sensuality. Lost in her thoughts, Julie is illustrated as a female adolescent, no longer a child but not yet a woman, poised on the brink of adult sexuality.

Whereas the two artists were evidently both attuned to the emerging psychology of the adolescent girl, it appears that Morisot was far more than a decade behind Cassatt in her modern representation of the female adolescent. In 1890, Morisot read and discussed the adolescent journals of Marie Bashkirtseff, a Russian diarist, painter, sculptor as well as a respected member of the Union des Femmes Peintres et Sculpteurs. Bashkirtseff’s adolescent journal entries, Journal de Marie Bashkirtseff, avec un portrait, were published in 1887 and sparked contemporary debate about the nature of the “jeune fille” during this period. Jacobus notes that Morisot is known to have read these journals, which in turn informed her paintings. However, her paintings of modern

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317 Higonnet, 222.
319 Ibid.
adolescent girlhood portrayed as individual, subjective, and independent occurred over ten years later than Cassatt’s renditions, which began in the late 1870s.

**The Female Adolescent: Class and Physicality**

The adolescent female as an urban spectacle on display is a trope within Impressionism, yet this representation was primarily limited to the upper middle-class Caucasian girl. In nineteenth-century France, adolescence was limited along class lines, primarily a phenomenon associated with the middle-and often upper-classes.³²⁰ Alaimo cites Maurice Crubellier’s *L’Enfance et la jeunesse dans la société francaise, 1800-1950*, which described adolescence as a “category of age reserved for the bourgeoisie, as if there were by some trick of nature, two youths.”³²¹ The class-specific nature of adolescence can be grasped above all by considering Degas’s many works of young working-class ballet dancers, which present the physical attributes of adolescents but without the corresponding psychological complexity. His sculpture *The Little Fourteen-Year-Old Dancer* (1878-81) presents a compelling example. The sculpture was originally by Degas in wax and dressed by him in a fabric tutu, hair wig, and silk ribbon.³²² *The Little Dancer* was shown at the Sixth Impressionist Exhibition at 1881. Researchers have established that the model for the sculpture was in fact a working-class girl. A ballet dancer at the Palais Garnier, Marie van Goethem came from a Belgian family who lived in Montmartre.³²³ Her mother was a laundress and father a tailor.³²⁴ The dancer is posed with her hands clasped together behind her back, leaning back onto her left foot as she looks upward,

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³²⁰ Alaimo, 18.
³²¹ Ibid.
³²² Kendall, Degas, Druick, Beale, Degas, Edgar, Druick, Douglas W, Beale, Arthur, and Joslyn Art Museum. *Degas and The Little Dancer*. (New Haven : Omaha, Neb.: Yale University Press ; Joslyn Art Museum, 1998), 1. It should be noted that the figure was replicated after the artist’s death in some twenty-eight bronze casts.
³²³ Kendall, et. al., *Degas and The Little Dancer*, 14.
³²⁴ Ibid.
pressing her chest forward and outward. Art historians, including Kendall and Eunice Lipton, among others, have extensively studied how Degas captured young dancers in unrehearsed poses, in corners of rehearsal rooms, and off-stage. Focusing on the bodies, rather than the thoughts, of working-class girls, the female figure that the artist captures is one who consciously does not perform.
Figure 19. Edgar Degas, *The Little Fourteen-Year-Old Dancer*, 1878-81, pigmented beeswax, clay, metal armature, rope, paintbrushes, human hair, silk and linen ribbon, cotton faille bodice, cotton and silk tutu, linen slippers, on wooden base overall without base: 98.9 x 34.7 x 35.2 cm (38 15/16 x 13 11/16 x 13 7/8 in) weight: 49 lb. (22.226 kg), National Gallery of Art, D.C.

Figure 20. Edgar Degas, *Three Studies of a Nude Dancer*, c. 1878, charcoal heightened with white chalk on gray wove paper. Private collection. Photo: Bridgeman Images

The Little Fourteen-Year-Old Dancer makes the parallel to childhood explicit as Degas identifies the girl’s age and highlights her pubertal body type. Degas’s figure is not a self-possessed subject, since he objectifies his fourteen-year old girl. The model appears all body as she does not even have her eyes open. As a sculptural figure, she is isolated from any background environment. She is not performing, but rather caught in a moment of rest. According to Kendall, the body type of the young dancer was one evidently in the pubescent, transitional state.

The young girl’s proportions, distinctive physiognomy, and Degas’s specification of the model’s age in the title all mark the dancer’s youthfulness and particular age. Kendall elucidates Degas’s unique interest in the subject of the working-class girl:

Fourteen was specified as the age when the “Rat was no longer a rat” by Nestor Roqueplan, a mid-century director at the Opera, and Martine Kahane has referred to the “transitory state” - both sexual and technical - of this phase in a dancer’s career. It is unlikely to have been a coincidence Degas chose such a moment as the subject of his sculpture, rejecting the pre-pubescent innocence of the ballet pupil in Ballet Girl in Repose, on the one hand, and the ready-formed elegance of the etoile - which attracted so many of his successors to the theme - on the other. 325

Suspended between childhood and maturity, The Little Dancer as a subject is evidence of Degas’s fascination with this transitional state, which held specific meaning in the life of a dancer. Degas seemingly was drawn to this awkwardness of the physical body of the

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325 Ballet Girl in Repose (1878-80) is a drawing using charcoal on cream colored paper. See: Kendall et al., Degas and The Little Dancer, 19.
teenage girl. The multitude of drawings and studies of the model exemplify the artist working through the physical changes in the development of the girl. Degas’s initial depiction of a long-limbed, flat-chested girl in *Three Studies of a Nude Dancer* (Figure 20, c. 1878) and later response to the figure’s slightly fuller forms in *Study of a Nude Dancer* seen together are indicative of his negotiating her uncertain status. Between these two studies of Marie van Goethem, Degas marks the pubertal transformations in her developing body: she is no longer narrow, but is rendered with rounded assertive hips. Generally speaking, Degas never painted ballerinas in their polished performances. The artist was intrigued by the gestures done in the wings of the stage or in the rehearsal rooms that were not choreographed, which did not fit within the scripted movements of the ballet. His interest in the fourteen-year-old belongs to this same set of interests in the natural, unscripted, and also entirely physical movements that are not rhetorical, communicative, or performative. The oeuvre of Degas’s works, including *The Little Dancer*, allows the viewer to follow the “maturing of the dancer’s physique, beginning with the angular child and advancing to the ampler forms of executants long past their prime.”

Criticism of *The Little Dancer* from the Sixth Impressionist Exhibition in 1881 reveals the disparate ways in which the work was received, particularly regarding the age of the young dancer. In his review for *Le Pays, Les Indépendants*, Paul de Charry surmised that the young “filette” was thirteen or fourteen years old. The criticism from the exhibition shows that other writers were in disagreement regarding Degas attribution of

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326 Ibid.
327 Ibid, 18.
the model’s age. Jules Claretie suggested that she had “scarcely reached puberty.” Elie de Mont, on the other hand, wrote that the young girl “has nothing of youth about her; her thinness is dryness, it is the thinness, the stiffness of age, not of childhood.” Many critics also commented on the ungainliness of the model, not finding the work attractive. The Little Dancer’s nineteenth-century viewers did not perceive, nor did Degas intend them to, the sweet beauty that many viewers today find in his work.

Degas and Cassatt, as aforementioned, had a close relationship. Degas initially invited the young Cassatt to officially exhibit with the Impressionists and the two artists exchanged letters and worked closely together in Paris. Evidently, Degas was particularly interested in the physicality of the teenage girl. As Kendall notes, it must not have been a coincidence that Degas chose a female at such a stage in her development in The Little Dancer. Given their close relationship, it is likely that Degas and Cassatt discussed their shared interest in subject matter, even if we will never know for sure, since their relationship remains largely shrouded in mystery. The fact that Cassatt burned all of Degas’ letters to her before she died is significant, they evidently contained deeply private information.

After the Impressionist Exhibition of 1886, Degas and Cassatt acquired one another’s works. It seems significant that both chose works which portray the awkward physicality of the female body. For her part, Cassatt selected Woman in a Shallow Tub (Figure 22, 1885). In this pastel, a woman in a small blue tub crouches over, resting her elbows on her sturdy knees. Degas uses charcoal and pastel on light green wove paper to reveal a woman’s graceless body as she bends over. It was during this exhibition that

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329 Kendall, Degas and The Little Dancer, 19.
330 Ibid.
331 Thomas, 198.
critics attacked the poses of Degas’s bathers - they were seen as awkward and grotesque. Though the woman in *Woman in a Shallow Tub* is not an adolescent girl, perhaps, as Amanda T. Zehnder explains, Cassatt deliberately chose to acquire the pastel because it was considered one of the most awkward compositions in his pastel series of nude bathers shown at the exhibition.333

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 22.** Edgar Degas, *Woman Bathing in a Shallow Tub, or Woman in a Shallow Tub*, 1881, Charcoal & pastel on light green wove paper, now discolored to warm gray, laid down on silk bolting, 32 x 22 1/8in. (81.3 x 56.2cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

For his part, Degas selected Cassatt’s painting, *Girl Arranging Her Hair* (Figure 24, 1886). Degas acquired *Girl Arranging Her Hair* and prominently presented it in his private salon. A photograph taken in 1895 shows just how proudly the painting is on display in Degas’s living room (Figure 23, c. 1895).334 The work presents a markedly working-class girl at her toilette. Cassatt deliberately appropriated aspects of Degas’s style, and her

effort was so successful that upon Degas’s death, *Girl Arranging Her Hair* was briefly misattributed by the executors of his estate as being one of Degas’s own.\(^{335}\) Exhibited at the Eighth Impressionist Exhibition in 1886, *Girl Arranging Her Hair* shows an adolescent girl in profile, pulling her hair back in a thick, heavy braid. The working-class girl is at her toilette, rendered in a white night dress. Cassatt reveals a more interior, private moment of the girl within a domestic setting. The nightdress, the background, as well as the model’s skin all are fashioned by pinks and blues. Painted in a brightened, Impressionistic palette, the colors work together in a harmonized contrast.

*Figure 23.* Edgar Degas(?), *Elie and Louise Halevy in Edgar Degas’s Living Room*, c. 1895, copy print, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.\(^{336}\)

*Girl Arranging Her Hair*, however, only presents one side of the problem of female adolescence. Cassatt does not display any of the societal expectations required of the middle and upper-class bourgeois teenage girl. Instead, it is simply the pubertal body

\(^{335}\) Jones et al., 13.

\(^{336}\) This image was found in Jones et al., 15.
portrayed here. The painting is divorced of self-consciousness and awareness of “proper” feminine behavior. Degas similarly does not convey the femininity that Cassatt, along with other Impressionists, portrayed in their representations of middle-and upper-class female adolescence. Degas’s *The Little Fourteen-Year-Old Dancer* is not proper nor is she prettified. Rather, the dancer is an isolated sculptural object full of physicality. Degas makes the young girl into a site to display the result of the rigor of arduous ballet training and its effect on the teenager’s pubertal, developing body. Degas’s sculpture and bather pastels, along with Cassatt’s *Young Girl Arranging Her Hair*, do not belong to the category of adolescence, which was reserved for middle and upper-class teenage girls. The girls’ bodies in these works are “pubertal,” “developing,” and certainly awkward, yet they are not self-conscious nor do they present any signs of conflict.

Figure 24. Mary Cassatt, *Girl Arranging Her Hair*, 1886, oil on canvas, 75.1 x 62.5 cm (29 9/16 x 24 5/8 in.), National Gallery of Art, D.C.
Young Girl Arranging Her Hair shows the sort of “ungracious profile” of a teenage girl engaging in the private act of cleaning herself. Cassatt’s inclusion of the girl’s dull gaze, thick lips, and contorted elbows all present an awkwardness within the teenage girl. Unaware of her surroundings with her mouth agape and her eyes averted elsewhere, the girl does not seem fully present in the activity of arranging her hair. Cassatt also flattens the composition: the red wallpaper and sink in the background appear to foreground the canvas with the girl. The chair, sink and mirror all parallel the upwardly right diagonal motion of the girl’s arm position. The girl’s collarbone protrudes forward and she sits erect. Her elbows are opposite one another, as she grips her own hair. Both Young Girl Arranging Her Hair and The Loge (1882), as we will see in the next chapter, exemplify the awkward physicality of the girl. Portraying a working-class girl, Cassatt did not believe Young Girl Arranging Her Hair to be the site to present the societal expectations and emerging psychological definitions of female adolescence, which was solely applicable to middle-and upper-class teenage girls.

Cassatt’s one foray into representing a lower-class girl, Girl Arranging Her Hair, confirms her primary interest in adolescence as a particular problem affecting the upper classes. For, as the psychology, literature and feminist movements revealed, it was within these middle-and upper-class adolescent girls that the conflict between femininity and adolescence was most acute. After her early experiments with plein-air painting, Cassatt ultimately came into her own as a painter of Parisian interiors, where artificial light and gilded woodwork formed a stage for the young girl’s passage from childhood into the alluring and complex world of adolescence.

CHAPTER THREE

A Dialectical Display of Adolescence & Femininity: Reading *La Loge* (1882)

A frequent trope within many of the Impressionists’, and certainly Cassatt’s, works, theater-going provided the perfect vehicle to display the adolescent girl as a public spectacle of modernity. In nineteenth-century Paris, the act of attending the theater or the opera comprised part of the upper-middle class social sport of seeing and being seen. The subject of the female at the opera was popular among French Impressionist painters, including Degas, Renoir, Morisot, and Cassatt. The Impressionists typically depicted the female spectator as part of the audience. However, Degas painted both ballet dancers at the opera and audience in the orchestra seats. Cassatt’s paintings of women in theater boxes display a remarkably unique image in comparison to her counterparts.

In the late 1870s, Cassatt painted a range of theater scenes, in which she represents women of various ages in a variety of poses engaged in the social milieu at the opera. She developed this theme in both her paintings and prints, including: *In the Opera* (Figure 25, 1878), *Woman With a Pearl Necklace in a Loge* (Figure 26, 1879), *In the Box* (1879), *At the Theatre* (1879), *In the Loge* (1879), *Woman in a Loge with a Fan Gazing Right* (1879), *In the Opera Box* (print, 1880), *Two Young Ladies, Seated in a Loge, Facing Right* (print, 1880), *Lady in Black, in a Loge, Facing Right* (print, 1881), and *The Loge* (Figure 28, 1882). These works emerged in dialogue with related scenes by Impressionist artists. Notably, Cassatt copied Renoir’s *The First Outing* (1876-77). 338 Yet, Cassatt’s paintings of women

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338 Herbert, 99-100.
at the theater unsettle and refute some of the assumptions governing Renoir’s canvas. Additionally, Cassatt’s pastel *In the Loge* (c. 1879) also evokes work by Degas. Though Cassatt invokes works by these male painters, she illustrates the experience of theater-going and more particularly, the adolescent female at the theater, in a markedly disparate manner by imbuing her canvases with a sense of subjectivity.

One of her earlier paintings within this body of work is *In the Opera* (1878), or *Woman in Black at the Opera*. The female figure in this painting is not a young girl, but is unquestionably an adult woman at the Comédie-Française, as indicated by another title, *At the Française*. Situated next to the Palais Royale, the Comédie-Française was designed by architect Victor Louis. The main theater of the Comédie-Française was the Salle Richelieu, which is most likely where Cassatt’s woman is seated. *In the Opera* offers a portrait of an assertive woman attentively observing the opera. Cassatt paints a woman in the foreground, with many smaller operagoers in black peppered in the background. As the woman peers through her binoculars at the stage, the man in the upper left corner of the composition appears to be gazing with his own opera glasses at the central woman in black. The woman in black is in the extreme foreground of the painting, intruding into the viewer’s space and implicating the viewer as a spectator of both the male and the female. This play on spectatorship, which is so prominent in Renoir’s paintings as well as many of the paintings of opera and theater-going of the period, is present in this work.

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339 Herbert writes: “The work that most resembles Degas is *In the Loge*, a pastel of c. 1879 (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts). Cassatt’s works on theater loges include the oil *Lydia in a Loge* (Philadelphia Museum of Art), the related pastel (Kansas City, Nelson-Atkins Museum), and an oil *In the Box* (Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Scott, Villanova), all of 1879, and the etchings *In the Opera Box* of 1880 and *Two Young Women in a Loge* of 1882.” Herbert, 99-100.

340 The main theater, the Salle Richelieu, next to the Palais Royale, designed by Victor Louis, its home since 1799, but this theater was enlarged and modified sometime in the 1800s, and then rebuilt in 1900 after a fire.
Figure 25. Mary Cassatt, *In the Opera*, or *In the Loge*, also titled *Woman in Black at the Opera*, 1878, oil on canvas, 81.28 x 66.04 cm (32 x 26 in.), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA.

Figure 26. Mary Cassatt, *Woman With a Pearl Necklace in a Loge*, 1879, oil on canvas, 32 x 23 1/2 inches (81.3 x 59.7 cm), Philadelphia Museum of Art.
Yet, Cassatt reverses the gender dynamics to empower the female gaze. Cassatt’s adult woman directly refutes the assumptions governing Renoir’s *The First Outing*, a painting about a female adolescent at the opera. Both Renoir and Cassatt’s works invite considerations of subjectivity and spectatorship, yet in differing ways. In *The First Outing*, the young girl is absorbed within her own theater-going experience, yet Renoir’s artistic techniques posit a very different kind of spectatorship than Cassatt’s. In *Woman in Black at the Opera*, the adult woman is also immersed in her milieu but she is less available to the viewer’s gaze, as she uses her opera-glasses, just as the male figure in the background does so, to engage in the experience of the theater. Cassatt obscures the adult woman’s face with the binoculars while lending the woman an assertive elbow and a closed fan in hand. In Renoir’s *The First Outing*, the young girl is a prettified object of display for consumption to not only the audience around her, but also to the viewer. Renoir’s “love-making brushstroke” differs from Cassatt’s tighter brushwork through which she presents the central female figure as an individual subject. Cassatt’s body of work presents the artist’s cohesive and sustained attempt to work out the complexity of adolescent subjectivity in ways that complicate the facile viewer-object dynamics, particularly like those observed in Renoir’s canvases.

Cassatt again and again revisited the popular theme of the “sortie,” this pivotal transition of a young girl’s life when she leaves the interior domestic world and enters into the public spectacle of the theater. Though one of Cassatt’s earliest works in this series, *Woman in Black at the Opera*, depicts a fully-grown woman, her subsequent canvases present young girls, including female adolescents. Within this series of works from the late 1870s, Cassatt experimented with the inclusion and absence of a number of intricate details. Between *Woman in Black* (1878) and *Woman with a Pearl Necklace* (1879), Cassatt
varied elements of her compositions. In *Woman in Black*, Cassatt shows a woman, thought to be her sister Lydia. Cassatt shifts from grown woman to slightly younger woman between *Woman in Black* and *Woman with a Pearl Necklace*. Whereas the adult female figure in *Woman in Black* is dressed in all black, Cassatt dresses her younger model in a brightly-pink colored dress in *Woman with a Pearl Necklace*. Cassatt also shifts to pastel colors and increases the prominence of the woman’s jewelry and fan. In this brighter composition, the artist displays her use of artifice in her manner of revealing the effects of light on her model’s skin. This can best be observed in the way the artist paints a mixture of greenish, grey shadows and bright light on the figure’s face and chest. To create shadows, Cassatt uses color, rather than black, which very much aligned with the Impressionists’ technique.

These loge paintings, then, exhibit a shift in mirrors, fans, sitters and arrangements. With her opera-glasses concealing half of her face, the woman in *In the Opera* looks away, deflecting the viewer’s gaze. A year later, in *Woman with a Pearl Necklace*, Cassatt displays a young woman who invites the viewer’s gaze. In this painting, Lydia rests comfortably to her side, using the furniture as support, similar to the way Manet’s young Léon Leenhoff leans confidently against the table behind him in *Luncheon in the Studio* (1868). Openly receptive to the gaze of the viewer, Lydia seems not to notice that she is being watched, and therefore lacks the self-awareness that the adult woman in *In the Opera* holds. Cassatt models Lydia with pose of ease and warmth through soft brushstrokes and glowing colors. Wearing a strapless dress that exposes her shoulders, the reflection in the mirror behind Lydia displays not only her back, but also the rounded balconies of the auditorium that surround her. In both *In the Opera* (1878) and *Woman with a Pearl Necklace in a Loge*, the curving balconies distort space. It is not certain which
theater Lydia attends: the architecture reflected in the mirror may be the Opéra Garnier or the Comédie-Française, as in In the Opera (1878).

Four years later, Cassatt renders not one adult woman, nor one younger woman, but two adolescent girls in In The Loge (1882). One of the artist’s last works on the subject of the female at the opera, The Loge most directly presents surrounding psychological debate of adolescence. Debating the relationship between adolescence and femininity, scientists and reformers attempted to define “adolescence” for the female. Adolescence, according to Hall and the dominant psychologists of the period, was a masculine phenomenon. They viewed adolescence as contradictory to femininity. Feminists, including psychologists, reforms, and the like, worked toward reconciling the two.

It is The Loge (1882) that most visibly reveals how Cassatt sought to reconcile the antithetical nature of femininity and adolescence through her art. All of the pictorial techniques, varying poses, and fine details are utterly portrayed in this painting about the awkward psychological development of the adolescent girl. By looking into such compositional objectives and complex psychology in The Loge, Cassatt’s painting can be understood as the most emblematic representation of the subject. In The Loge, Cassatt more emphatically foregrounds themes of adolescence that are not present in her earlier works within the series. The Loge renders two adolescent girls on display and at the public outing that marked their transition into the upper-middle class bourgeois society and further into adult womanhood. Cassatt defines female adolescence as a stage distinct from childhood and adulthood in this painting. This thesis primarily focuses on The Loge, which brings these tensions to the fore.
Evidently drawn to this theme, Cassatt completed *The Loge* over a long period of time, as exhibited by the numerous preparatory studies for the work. The pencil and paper study for *The Loge* (Figure 27, 1882 [recto]) provides viewers with a sense of Cassatt’s approach to the form of both the line and the pattern created by the clean contours of the figures. This proclivity links to Degas, a member of Cassatt’s circle, who had great respect for masters of line.\(^{341}\) This technique can be observed in the firm contour lines that render the uprightness of the girls in *The Loge*.

![Figure 27. Mary Cassatt, *The Loge* [recto], 1882, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.](image)

\(^{341}\) This also links to the linear tradition of nineteenth-century American painting, which aligns with Cassatt’s biography.
As *The Loge* was most likely conceived over a long period of time in the studio, it relates in this manner more to the studio work of Manet and Degas than it does to the *plein-air* painting of Monet. These artists preferred to work in the more controlled atmosphere of the studio, where they could manipulate forces of light, shadow, and color. This was in contrast to other artists, as Mallarmé articulates in “Édouard Manet and the Impressionists in 1876,” who desired the spontaneity of outdoor work. Cassatt’s work in the studio and numerous studies for *The Loge* suggests a span of gestation, of deliberate planning and adjustment, similar to that of Degas and Manet. Not only did it have a long gestation; *The Loge* (1882) also was not created for immediate exhibition. It was only first exhibited in 1903 for the Thirteenth Annual Exhibition of the Society of Washington Artists at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Although *The Loge* shares subject matter with many of her contemporaries, Cassatt’s approach to the adolescent girl is unique in comparison to portrayals by other Impressionists. Cassatt’s transatlantic identity can be once again observed in this moment: *The Loge* was painted in Paris, but was exhibited in America, where questions surrounding the nature and gender of adolescence had emerged and shaped Cassatt’s outlook.
Reading *La Loge* (1882)

Figure 28. Mary Cassatt, *The Loge, or La Loge*, 1882, also dated as 1878-1880, oil on canvas, 79.8 x 63.8 cm (31 7/16 x 25 1/8 in.), The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
The Loge (Figure 28, 1882) portrays adolescence as a transition from girlhood to maturity through a portrait of two upper-class adolescent girls. The adolescent models were Geneviève Mallarmé, the young daughter of Stéphane Mallarmé, and Miss Mary Ellison, a visiting American whose portrait Cassatt painted twice between 1877-1880 (Figure 1 and Figure 2).\textsuperscript{342} It is known that Mallarmé’s daughter Geneviève, was born in November 1864. Cassatt began The Loge in 1878, and therefore the young Mallarmé would have been between the ages of about fourteen to eighteen during the time that the artist worked on the painting. This age range perfectly aligns with emerging definitions of the onset of adolescence and places the girls at the very same ages of students attending the Westover School for Girls. But the location of the scene of course is Paris, not Connecticut, and these girls experience the full onset of modernity, rather than being sheltered among rivers and hills. Depicted at the age of their first “sortie,” the gracefully dressed girls are seated properly in their mirrored theater box. Though it is not precisely certain where the girls are seated, it is a distinctly high-class Parisian theater. This can be observed through the reflection in the mirror, which displays the luxurious chandelier as well as gilded and painted balconies. Further, Cassatt makes it apparent that two girls sit in one of the expensive lower boxes close to the stage.\textsuperscript{343}

Cassatt portra\textsuperscript{ys} both of the young models as upper-class adolescents through an array of identity markers. The girls sit stiffly, rigorously erect in their theater box and utterly on exhibition. What this stresses for the viewer, however, is not sensuous maturity, such as in Woman With a Pearl Necklace in a Loge (1879).\textsuperscript{344} Rather, their stiffness portends the rigid correctness of upper-class adolescents: two young girls who are well-

\textsuperscript{342} Fillin-Yeh, “Mary Cassatt’s Images of Women,” 360. For more biographical information on Mary Ellison, see the Introduction of this thesis, which considers Miss Mary Ellison Embroidering (Figure 1, 1877) and Portrait of Miss Mary Ellison (Figure 3, c. 1878-1880).

\textsuperscript{343} Herbert, 100.

\textsuperscript{344} Ibid.
schooled by their elders in polite demeanor. The girls’ costume and location also marks them unmistakably as members of the upper-class. The teenage girls do not wear much jewelry, which was another sign of abnegation fitting not only to their age, but also to their purity. Yet, Mallarmé does make one allowance: a black-ribboned choker. The design of the necklace is rather simple; it is a fitting accessory for a young lady of her social class and another sign of Mallarmé’s gentility.

In *The Loge*, Mallarmé and Ellison become presentations, performing, in a sense, for their fellow bourgeois theatregoers. The adolescents appear “guarded and expressionless, holding the formal composure required of high society.” *The Loge* reveals the subtle processes of identity formation that are defined by upper middle-class language and society, yet Cassatt imbuces her subjects and composition with signs of stress and tension. In doing so, she acknowledges the complexity of female adolescence by raising the tension between genteel comportment and the “storm and stress” of adolescence.

Cassatt makes evident the adolescent girls’ suppression of their previous loose, energetic, and unselfconscious ways. The transition from childhood to girlhood can be characterized by the point at which a little girl has had “an almost unlimited freedom of out-of-door life and is toning down this mild sort of barbarism and is often attended by a painfully awkward self-consciousness.” In *The Loge*, Mallarmé tightly clutches her floral bouquet. This tension is further illustrated in Ellison’s flowered details impressed onto her open fan that veils her face from the viewer but reveals her sense of emotional

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345 Ibid.
346 Ibid.
347 Sinnett, 146.
348 Thomas, 189.
349 Ibid.
stress. In doing so, Cassatt suggests that for the female adolescent, femininity is something that is acquired, something rehearsed.

Together, the adolescent girls form a unit, yet display pronounced differences. Ellison and Mallarmé convey two ways of being an adolescent girl. While Mallarmé, the figure on the right, clutches her bouquet, Ellison, the one on the left, hides half of her face behind a fan. In these different poses, there is a kind of marked sense of uncertainty. Ellison is partly emblematic of the traits of the adolescent girl that reflect an introverted, self-absorbed state of being. The young girl clutches her fan, unfurling the flowery device to conceal her lips. Even the flowers on Ellison’s fan, in comparison with the flowers the young Mallarmé holds, are less resolved. Herbert notes, they are simply “just scumbled color notes.” Ellison is further obscured by Mallarmé, whose shoulder Ellison avails herself of as an additional cover. Clutching onto her elbows and forearms, the teenage girl creates a rigid banner between the viewer and her body. In doing so, Ellison immerses, retreating into a deeper interior self.

Cassatt constructs the outspread fan through bright colors as well as semi-circles and long diagonal axis using clean contour lines. In doing so, the artist shapes the fan as a distinct entity of the composition. Appearing stiff and rigid, Ellison’s arms and elbows seem to be an extension of this unfurled fan. Ellison’s lined white gloves, delineated elbows, and demarcated fingers all appear as an appendage to, or continuation of, the floral fan. As she grips her arms, the young girl’s elbows are pointed and sharp-cornered, particularly in the manner in which Cassatt so legibly, prominently and markedly traces them. Yet, the openness of the fan also contrasts with the closure and concealment of Ellison’s body language. Greens, pinks, purples, and yellows all softly blend on the white

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350 Herbert, 100.
surface of the fan through Cassatt’s loose brushwork. The colors on the fan mimic and accentuate the brightly colored surface of the painted balconies reflected in the mirror behind Mallarmé and Ellison. Cassatt’s imprecise, vague strokes of the fan’s painted surface are entirely at odds with the tightly demarcated lines of the angularity in Ellison’s elbows. Femininity, here, acts as a kind of shield, concealing the particularity and individuality of adolescence. Cassatt’s use of shadows under Ellison’s piercingly dark eyes and eyebrows underline the timidity and mournful facial expression of the teenage girl. By obscuring, flattening and severing parts of Ellison’s figure, Cassatt presents the young girl’s introspection and discomfort. Ellison is sundered into three distinct parts on the canvas: her timid face, the large floral fan that conceals her sexuality, and lastly, her elbows that she securely clasps, all evoking the teenage girl’s uneasiness whilst being on public display. Ellison’s clutching onto her own elbows may also insinuate a discomfort, or shame, in her own transforming pubertal body.

Geneviève Mallarmé, on the other hand, is an unobstructed presentation. Mallarmé is a female adolescent who is entirely on display and openly visible to the theatergoers who surround her. In some ways, Mallarmé could be said to symbolize societal expectations for female adolescents. She wears a light, strapless pink dress that reveals the upper-half of her torso, including her neckline, shoulders, and chest. Cassatt drains the color from the dress. In doing so, its delicate pink tint nearly matches that of Mallarmé’s skin, as Sinnett notes, “implying the acuteness of the debutante’s feeling of exposure.”

The late nineteenth-century girl’s first outing to the opera was likely the first time she wore a décolleté dress. Décolleté referred to the wearing of a strapless, or

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351 Sinnett, 144.
352 Ibid.
low-necked dress. These garments called for a dramatic shift in bodily decorum, as a
girl’s bare shoulders and upper arms became revealed oftentimes to the gaze of the men
around her.353

Although open, Mallarmé’s body nevertheless displays signs of tension. The sight
of her exposed shoulders displays the strain in the young girl’s physicality. Mallarmé’s
 collarbone is pronounced as Cassatt takes care to define her bones and musculature
through loosely painted shadows atop her bare, pale chest. In doing so, the viewer grasps
the effort required to literally and figuratively hold up the formal composure required of
members of high-class bourgeois societies. Cassatt positions Mallarmé’s shoulders in
order to support the pink dress, one which perhaps incites a certain curiosity, and thus
desire, in the viewer: will the young girl let her dress slip off? Or, will the dress stay up, in
other words, will she maintain her composure? Just as Ellison’s elbows are pointedly
drawn, Mallarmé’s arms are similarly rendered with that same tightly rigid angularity. It as
if the angle of Mallarmé’s arms is calculated and rehearsed so as to create enough tension
to maintain the dress so that it reveals just enough, yet not too much skin. Cassatt, then,
further reinforces Mallarmé as not simply a spectator of the audience but rather, an
object of spectacle. However, Cassatt takes this one step further by imparting Mallarmé
with a certain degree of control in her ability to determine the structure of her garment.

The contrast between Ellison’s concealment and Mallarmé’s display is even more
heightened in Cassatt’s positioning of Mallarmé’s bare, blushing shoulder in front of
Ellison’s fan. Despite her stiffness, Mallarmé appears more sure of herself than Ellison
does. Perhaps this is in part because of the manner in which Cassatt renders Mallarmé

353 Ibid, 145.
more completely; the figure appears altogether more three-dimensional than Ellison. Still, the signs of strain and diffidence are present within Mallarmé’s body, particularly in her shoulder area.

Mallarmé’s jewelry serves to reinforce her rigid correctness and formal composure. Cassatt surrounds Mallarmé’s black choker, encircling it with strokes of paint that are red and yellow and appear to illustrate shadows projected by her chin. Sinnett notes that this slightly reddish tone appears to be “pressing into her flesh and…chafing a bit as if the experience is rubbing the grave-faced girl the wrong way.” Cassatt’s delineation of the necklace gives the impression that the choker is quite tightly-fitting.

In the number of preparatory pencil and paper studies for The Loge (Figure 27, 1882, [recto]) Cassatt oscillated between allowing Mallarmé to sit comfortably or rigidly upright. Here, in the final version of the oil painting, Cassatt’s line constructs a pose that obliges Mallarmé to sit up tall. Thus, it is the mannered desire to maintain societal expectations of femininity that force Mallarmé to stiffly adopt “correct posture.” Furthermore, the young girl’s dress suggests a “delicate, yet relentless, discipline.” The tight, fixed garment enforced stiff posture, with its associations of moral rectitude. The female adolescents’ rigidity was, according to Herbert, “proof of their social worth [as] they had to distinguish themselves from young cocottes who would be brought [to the theater] by certain men.” The facial expressions of Ellison and Mallarmé connote their

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354 Sinnett also articulates what Herbert says, noting that Herbert “points out that Mallarme is more three-dimensional than her companion, as if she has more fully developed, and [he] notes that even her flowers bloom in three dimensions, while Ellison’s are restricted to the flat surface of her fan.” 156.
355 Ibid, 146.
356 Ibid.
357 Ibid.
358 Ibid.
359 Herbert, 100.
distress and stiffness under social scrutiny. The girls gaze out, but downwards as their eyelids hang, resting woodenly. There does not appear to be any sense of joy, enthusiasm nor any sense of general interest in their demeanors, quite unlike Renoir’s young girl appears in *The First Outing*. The stiffness that Cassatt illustrates is another sign of well-born identity.

Mallarmé and Ellison are remarkably different and yet together they appear to become one whole. Through their solid physical presentation, the adolescent girls form an equilateral triangle that anchors the composition. In doing so, Cassatt imparts the figures with an even greater monumentality and stability. The bodies of the two girls sit emphatically on the canvas through Cassatt’s use of line and handling of paint which render the figures as permanent, material beings. Cassatt constructs accessories such as the white bouquet and the floral fan using sharp, diagonal, and V-shaped lines. As opposed to Morisot’s sketch-like aesthetic in *Young Girl in a Ballgown* (1879), Cassatt’s starkly pronounced lines of *The Loge* delineate the body parts of the girls, including their sharply drawn shoulders, forearms, hands, and jawlines.

Cassatt creates a tension between fluid, loose brushwork and more tightly controlled lines that convey contour delineation and volume. In doing so, contrasts ensue between openness, flux, and change on the one hand and rigidity on the other, as well as between spontaneity and structure. Take, for example, the juxtaposition between the fan’s softly merging colors and it’s boldly delineated edges. This sound yet seemingly evanescent fan is held by Ellison, who, herself, embodies both of these qualities. Cassatt creates volume in Ellison’s arms by outlining her silvery white gloves with a contour line and shadows. This allows her arms to appear as constructed and distinct. Her arms are placed atop her pale blue dress, painted with broad, rough strokes that merge into the
floral bouquet her companion holds. Mallarmé’s broadly painted, patchy flowers are positioned at variance with the sharply drawn, pointed lines of her bouquet. Amidst all of the velvety, less-defined details, the bodies of the girls are stiff and upright. Cassatt locks her female figures “in place with a firm skeletal structure,” as articulated by art historian Linda Nochlin.\(^{360}\)

In *The Loge*, Cassatt reconciles the physical presences of these two girls with painting as a shifting surface of opticality. Ellison and Mallarmé are materially concrete, monumental and individual figures. Yet, Cassatt enlivens her canvas with optical effects and fluid brushstrokes that can be found within the ornamental, decorative features of the auditorium and especially the mirror reflection. The mirror and its reflection enhance the painting’s brilliant luminosity all the while sowing confusion. The mirror serves not only as another sign of the upper-class social position of the female adolescents, as it reflects the high-class theater and seats in which they sit, but also of Cassatt’s attention to optical effects. These effects can be read in relationship with Mallarmé’s essay, “Manet and the Impressionists in 1876,” which dwells on light as the primary subject of Impressionist painting. Scholars and art historians consider the two young girls to be seated in an expensive mirrored box.\(^{361}\) Reflections of a chandelier, balconies, and intimations of theatergoers are displayed in the mirror behind them as multi-colored marks, imprecisely and sketchily rendered. The agitated passage of paint sows spatial and cognitive confusion.

The mirror illuminates a third figural body, as well as glistering chandelier which reflects the curving balconies in the theater. Yet, as opposed to the definition with which


Cassatt outlines certain details, such as the bodies of the girls, the fan, the bouquet, as well as others, the background architecture is rendered indistinctly. The gold, yellowish balconies, the ornamental circles, and rectangular columns that project from the wall all are nebulously painted. The mirror also displays a curious, ancillary figure at the canvas’s right edge, which is a reflection of Mallarmé’s back shoulder. Still, the gold balconies are noticeable for their graphic simplicity and their emphatic contours, which combined with softly-smudged surfaces, echo the shape as well as surface of Ellison’s fan. While certain elements stand out, others are less distinct, such as the vague figures of audience members and the hazy reflection of Mallarmé’s back, which is abruptly served at the center. Mallarmé’s reflection, painted in mauves and violets, and the dark passage below the balcony to Ellison’s right contrast with the girls’ light pastels hedging them on both sides. The mirror therefore limits the space of the Mallarmé and Ellison, furthering a sense of compression and restraint. The reflection of the mirror also serves as a further attestation that the teenage girls are objects of the gaze. However, any sense of real division between reality and its reflection is compromised by the blurred surface of Ellison’s fan, which viewers observe head-on. The result is a sense of optical and spatial confusion, which destabilizes the viewer and withholds imaginary possession of the two girls and the space in which they are seated. By creating an arrangement that is an imprecise, and perhaps even an impossible configuration, Cassatt’s canvas underscores the artifice of the scene.

The setting that the two girls are situated in remains a mystery. It is likely that the Ellison and Mallarmé are either at the Paris Opera House, the Palais Garnier (Figures 29-30, 1861-1875), or the Comédie-Française (Figure 31). After it opened again in 1875, the Sinnett, 142-143.
Palais Garnier became a frequent site for artists of the period to visit as well as represent. Positioned behind the two girls, the mirror presumably reflects what is directly across from them: curving balconies and a chandelier. However, it is impossible to discern exactly where the girls are seated in the theater. Nevertheless, a certain amount of information can be ascertained. The Palais Garnier had four tiers above the orchestra seats. If Mallarmé and Ellison are painted at the Palais Garnier, they seem to be seated on the second tier, because of the two tiers of balconies above them reflected in the mirror. By rendering this, Cassatt clues viewers in to the social status of the adolescent girls as it can be readily ascertained that the girls are well-positioned in the theater. It appears that the girls are located in a loge that is directly next to the stage.


Figure 30. Charles Garnier, *Paris Opera House*, 1861-1875, Auditorium, interior

However, it may also be that The Loge displays two adolescent girls at the Comédie-Française. Within Cassatt’s series of women at the opera from 1878-1882, her other paintings depict female figures at the Comédie-Française, such as Woman in Black at the Opera, also titled At the Française (1878). Historical images of the interior of the Comédie-Française reveal certain features in common with the Palais Garnier, including tiers of curved balconies and a chandelier. At the Française (1878), Lydia with a Pearl Necklace (1879), and The Loge (1882) all illustrate these similar elements.

While it is possible that all of Cassatt’s theater paintings from 1878-1882 situated in the same setting, it also may be that the artist deliberately kept the location vague. Certainly, Cassatt’s paintings of young women at the theater illustrate a Parisian theater or opera house, however the precise location remains unknown for some of these works. At the Française, Lydia with a Pearl Necklace, and The Loge all share certain architectural formal features in terms of the mirrors and also the gilding and pastel colors on the surfaces of the curved balconies in all of these works. By reflecting the most rounded, curved part of the theater in the mirror, Cassatt constructs very exaggerated curves of the tiers in these paintings, and most especially in The Loge. Viewers seem to encounter the girls directly and head-on, as if seated across from them. Yet, the tiers across from the girls are so dramatically curved that the composition becomes distorted and their spatial situation doesn’t quite make sense.

Manet’s A Bar at the Folies-Bergère (1882) also presents a composition of distortion through the device of a mirror and spatial effects. In A Bar at the Folies-Bergère, Manet presents a female of an entirely different social class at the theater: a barmaid. The

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363 It is difficult to find images of the interior Salle Richelieu of the Comédie-Française.
364 Robert Herbert explains the history of the Folies-Bergère: “The Folies-Bergère (near the rue Bergère) owes the first half of its name to the eighteenth-century “foie,” an open-air place where Parisians could drink or dance while being entertained. Its evolution is another capsule history of Second Empire speculation. It began as a department store devoted to bedding, opened in 1860, one of
female figure in the painting was a waitress from the Folies-Bergère named Suzon. Manet places a gilt-framed mirror that spans the width of the picture behind the barmaid. Standing erect at the center of the composition, the barmaid is positioned in stark contrast to the indistinct, hazy image of theatergoers reflected in the mirror. Painted with clean contour lines that accentuate her wasp-like waist, navy corset, and the intricate, flowery details of her jacket, the barmaid exists as a monumental presence. Her physical solidity is all the more notable, as she appears to stand in the external narrow space between the bar and the mirror.

Figure 32. Edouard Manet, *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, 1882, oil on canvas, 96 cm (38 in) × 130 cm (51 in), The Courtauld Gallery, London.

the newer urban forms of commerce. Perhaps because of its favorable location on the rue Richer, just above the grands boulevards, it added a “salle des spectacles” to the rear of the store in 1863. This was so successful—active leisure being more lucrative than passive—that in 1869 the whole enterprise shifted to variety shows in emulation of London music halls. In November 1871, the talented entrepreneur Léon Sari took it over. He remodeled it inside and out, refurbishing two large spaces. One was the “Garden,” an impressive hall with balconies (covered by an awning until it was roofed over in 1925).” Herbert, *Impressionism*, 79.

365 Herbert, 80.
Manet’s mirror motif in *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* has given rise to much confusion and discussion. The mirror presents “a juggling of fact and illusion.” Popular in the decor of Parisian theaters and public life, in general, mirrors were essential features of theaters, especially the Folies-Bergère. This mirror reflects the theater gallery, which is filled with theatergoers who appear to be observing a trapeze performance in which the acrobat’s legs hang down in the midst of electric lights and glittering chandeliers. Manet places the viewer in the horseshoe-shaped theater of the Folies-Bergère in the area with fixed seats in the orchestra and a balcony above, supported on columns. Two of these columns can be observed in the mirror, near the reflected marble counter.

The mirror distorts the spatial effects within Manet’s composition. The barmaid’s displaced reflection in the mirror is a portrayal that is inaccurate and fallacious. It appears initially as if the viewer is being served directly by the barmaid. A mysterious image of a male figure appears along the right edge of the mirror’s reflection, as if he were standing directly in front of the barmaid. However, the viewer only sees the male client to the right of the composition, in the mirror reflection, at a rather impossible angle. Although the counter appears to be aligned with the mirror, the reflection makes it seem as though the mirror were on a sort of slant. In doing so, Manet appears to knowingly present the viewer with an outwardly distorted composition.

Manet’s urban figures share similarities with those of Cassatt’s. Manet’s *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* and Cassatt’s *The Loge* were both completed in 1882. Living near one

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368 Collins, 48.
369 Ibid 47.
370 Herbert, 80.
another, Cassatt and Manet had a personal relationship; they had mutual friends and met from time to time during the later years until Manet’s death in 1883.\textsuperscript{371} Manet, as posited by art historian Novelene Ross, may have been particularly stimulated by and appreciated Cassatt’s theater imagery.\textsuperscript{372} Ross points out that the central female figure of Cassatt’s \textit{A Woman in Black at the Opera} (1879) appears to be in the background of Manet’s \textit{Bar}.\textsuperscript{373} Peering through her opera glasses, Cassatt’s woman can be observed among the spectators in Manet’s mirror reflection. Perhaps Manet was inspired by the example of Cassatt’s earlier works, particularly in the manner that she chose to depict the space of the Paris Opera in her loge paintings. Given their close relationship, the fact that the two artists simultaneously worked on scenes of women at the theater, whether at the bar or in the audience, against the context of the theater spectacle, seems significant. While Cassatt’s \textit{The Loge} is dated to 1882, the artist worked on the painting beginning in 1878. Manet, like Cassatt, also made a number of preparatory sketches for his painting.

Given those real points of connection, it is no coincidence that both works present figures with expressions that are at once sober and somber, and within the bodies that are monumental, solid presences amidst distorted and imprecise reflections. As Herbert notes, Manet explores “the anonymity and loneliness inherent in the arbitrary encounters of modern life.”\textsuperscript{374} Herbert also writes that Suzon has a “matter-of-fact, cool glance,” that echoes Manet’s young Léon in \textit{Luncheon in the Studio} (1868). Yet, the barmaid, Suzon, differs from Léon, as well: Suzon is trapped, confined to her class, social status, occupation, and gender. Léon, a young boy, similarly glances in a cool,

\textsuperscript{373} Ross, “Manet’s \textit{Bar at the Folies-Bergère} and the Myths of Popular Illustration,” 6-7.
\textsuperscript{374} Herbert, 80.
independent manner while simultaneously provided with the mobility that Suzon, an adult woman, is denied. The inclusion of the male figure in the mirror’s reflection reinforces this, as he further confines her into her position – literally and figurately.

Cassatt and Manet therefore both use the mirror to deliberately distort their compositions. Like Manet, Cassatt’s *The Loge* (1882) presents a falsified, distorted illustration of the theater. In doing so, Cassatt employs a two-dimensional picture plane. *The Loge* is imbued with a series of curves: the looping balconies, semi-circular fan, rounded shoulders, and curved choker. A certain degree of unity, then, permeates *The Loge*. This collection of curves is juxtaposed against the two-dimensional, flat composition. This unity actually distorts the two-dimensional relationship on the surface of the picture plane. In addition to the curving theater boxes, the mirror also illuminates a glittering chandelier in front of the adolescents. The chandelier is impossibly close to the bodies of the young girls. The chandelier is a vehicle that limits the amount of space the girls have within the composition. Cassatt, therefore, uses artifice to further confine and enclose the teenagers. The chandelier seems to cast a portion of light on the bodies of Mallarmé and Ellison. Cassatt paints shadows on the bodies of the girls, such as on their arms and chins. It seems as if light is being reflected not only from the chandelier above, but also from another hidden source. The light source is therefore rather ambiguous in this painting, and viewers once again are not only made unaware of the placement and setting of seated girls, but also of their own unstable position.

Yet, while Cassatt and Manet both use the device of the mirror to distort their paintings of women at the theater, the female figures they represent are quite different. Unlike the high-class theater of *The Loge*, the Folies-Bergére was a “social mixing place…” a student, sales clerk, or prostitute could come to the Folies-Bergére, but only by
dressing up and squandering a small fortune.” It was at the Folies-Bergère that many of the barmaids were assumed by contemporary observers to be prostitutes. In this painting, Manet presents Suzon, a barmaid at the Folies-Bergère and possibly a prostitute. Cassatt’s presentation of the two upper-class, well-schooled female adolescents is a markedly different representation of the female figure as the theatrical spectacle. Manet’s barmaid has a blank expression; she lacks the self-awareness of an educated, “well-bred” woman. By contrast, Cassatt’s figures display a studied concentration and an awareness of social decorum. Whereas the barmaid’s stare is blank and inexpressive, Mallarmé and Ellison convey a certain awkwardness and sense of unease, as evidenced through their clenched hands and tense elbows. The correct propriety with which Cassatt renders Ellison and Mallarmé is precisely meant to proscribe the insinuation of prostitution that is a constitutive element of Manet’s canvas. However, Manet’s distorted mirror reflections which impossibly inscribe a male figure into the canvas put the viewer in a unique position. We do not simply believe, as T.K. Clark writes, “that all we are seeing is the professional impassivity of a barmaid or a prostitute…We cannot or will not take the place of the gentleman in the top hat, but there is no other place to occupy, it seems; we are left in a kind of suspended relation – to the barmaid, to ourselves as viewers, to the picture itself as a possible unity.”

Whereas Manet uses reflections to sow confusion into the social identity of the barmaid, Cassatt employs the same optical devices to destabilize the construction of adolescence and to implicate viewers in the play between nature and artifice. In doing so, Cassatt arranges the viewer in a rather precarious predicament in The Loge. Herbert

375 Ibid, 80.
articulates the subtle touches fashioned by Cassatt in the way she positioned the viewer. He writes:

We are slightly below the two girls, and this puts them on a visual pedestal. They are sculptural and aloof in another sense, as well. Their twinning recalls the repeated forms of antique bas-relief, an effect augmented by the geometry and the flatness of the fan, the wrapped arms and the repeated angles of elbows, fan, and bouquet paper. These flat angles, and the way the fan’s curve is continued by one figure’s elbows and the other’s shoulder, bring about a merging of surface and illusion. Of course, within her shallow space Cassatt had to give a satisfactory sense of depth, and this she did by correlating brushwork, color, and image. From the bouquet to the fan, then to the reflected balcony, we shift towards progressively less intense color and less distinct brushstrokes.\(^{377}\)

Herbert’s description of Cassatt’s manipulation in the ways she situates the viewer is useful. Positioning the solid figures in front of what appears to presumably be a mirror, Cassatt presents the curving balconies and therefore juxtaposes this curvature with the fixed verticality of the seated figures. A continuum of curves, or perhaps of semi-circles, is illustrated throughout the canvas. Cassatt reverberates these shapes in the young girls’ elegantly costumed details, such as within the opened fan covering Ellison’s face and Mallarmé black-ribboned choker as well as the arc of her curving bouquet of flowers. This is further paralleled in Cassatt’s illustration of the architectural setting of the theater: the curvature of the round crystal chandelier and the repeated seemingly gilded balconies

\(^{377}\) Herbert, 100.
loop and curve gloriously around the auditorium. Cassatt stresses form in her rendering of the girls’ arms, as observed in her brushstrokes that follow contour lines defining the young model’s sharp elbow. In these moments, it is clear that Cassatt was perceptive to and therefore emphasized form and particular shapes that make the canvas solid and flattened. The viewer confronts the two adolescent girls directly. Yet, the reflection in the mirror distorts the perception of the viewer, such as in Manet’s *Bar*. The reflection in the mirror along the right edge of the canvas denotes that the viewer is standing not only slightly below the young girls, but also to their left. Cassatt bestows contradictory positions upon the viewers, destabilizing them and withholding any imaginary possession of the scene. Yet, this disorientation is not simply through Cassatt’s positioning of the viewer, but also by calling attention to the relationship of the viewer to the girls simultaneously as bodies and surfaces on a canvas.

Along with many of the tensions Cassatt presents, the artist exhibits this very particular pull between nature and artifice in *The Loge*. Scholars have noted the Impressionists’ devotion to contemporary urban settings, and have raised the contradictory qualities of an art that was “natural,” and yet thrived on artifice. Cassatt evidently participated in this paradoxical form of art in *The Loge*. Degas, similarly to Manet and Baudelaire, was interested in not only nature, but also artifice. Herbert recalls how Degas mocked *plein-air* painting: the artist once held up a crumpled handkerchief and said it was the only model he needed in order to paint clouds. Concerned with the artifice of invention, rather than imitation, Degas shared this value with many of the Impressionist painters, including Cassatt. The artifice of the painting lies in the reflected

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378 Ibid, 33.
379 Ibid, 41.
gas light, as well as within the two-dimensional, flat surfaces and designs. On the other hand, Cassatt at the same time imbues the composition with a specific solidity and particularity of the female adolescent. The body, as well as the psyche, of teenage girl is monumentality concrete and solid. The Loge, then, is a tableau of conflicts: of adolescence and femininity, introversion and extroversion, monumentality and individuality, bold lines and destabilizing optical, fluid strokes, nature and artifice. Through these devices, Cassatt asserts the strikingly bold, and confoundingly complex phenomenon that was female adolescence all situated within the variance of American psychology co-existing with a Parisian painterly vocabulary.

**Adolescence, Femininity, and the race Américaine**

Criticism on the Impressionist exhibitions points not only to the “féminité” of Cassatt, but also to her “race Américaine.” While Cassatt’s paintings undeniably appear to be influenced by the Impressionists, there is also an unmistakably “American” nature in many in of her paintings, particularly in The Loge. Pollock notes Cassatt’s “American version of Impressionism,” yet does not explicitly elucidate what this means. Pollock may have been articulating that Cassatt’s confluence of influences was a result of her American and Parisian identities. The particular spontaneity and loose openness in the coloring as well as the quick brushwork convey the sense of vibrancy and dynamism that were emblematic of the fast-paced life associated with nineteenth-century Paris. These painterly qualities of modernity serve to illustrate the Parisian spectacle. Parisian Impressionism conveys a more transient, illusory quality of stroke. And yet, Cassatt’s

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380 Moffett et al., The New Painting, Impressionism: 1874-1886.
381 Pollock et al., Mary Cassatt 1844-1926, 90.
approach to form of both line and the pattern created by the clean contours is also made clear. The two girls in *The Loge* foreground the canvas, filling up their edges conceived in relationship to its format and surface. Furthermore, there is a certain emphaticness in the physicality of the young girls, particularly noticeable in Cassatt’s outlining of their jawlines, shoulders, and elbows. The girls exist as volumetric, physical concrete beings that render them far beyond fragmented, Impressionistic objectified surfaces. In short, Cassatt renders these figures substantial beings. The artist’s solidity of forms served to sacrifice the subject’s traditionally pure sensual appeal, and in lending her figures agency and specificity, Cassatt makes apparent the particular qualities and quandaries of the psychological states of teenage girls who struggled to conform and at the same time to assert their character and independence.\(^{382}\)

Impressionist critics intimated the peculiarity of Cassatt’s “Américaine” nature, but did not fully explain it. The criticism of the Sixth Impressionist Exhibition of 1881, in which Cassatt and Morisot both participated, reveals so. As previously cited, critic C.E. wrote “Exposition des peintures independants” in *La Chronique des arts et de la curiosite*, in which he addresses the tenacity of Cassatt’s “race Américaine” in juxtaposition to Morisot’s “nature française.”\(^{383}\)

How, then, does Cassatt’s “race Américaine” manifest itself in *The Loge*? Henry Trianon, another critic who wrote about the 1881 exhibition, highlighted Cassatt’s American identity. Writing for *Le Constitutionnel*, Trianon appreciates “the truth of the gesture and the typical individuality,” articulating that, “such are the two qualities of Miss Cassatt. They belong to the Anglo-American race.”\(^{384}\) Here, the French critic defines the

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\(^{382}\) Pollock et al., *Mary Cassatt*, 22.
“anglo-americaine” artist as one who masters the two qualities of truth of gesture and individuality, such as Cassatt does. This suggests that Cassatt’s American background allowed her paintings to present her subjects with an aura of individuality, a certain psychological awareness the French did not seem to have grasped at that point. Indeed, the psychological awareness that Cassatt introduces into *The Loge* is a reflection of the artist’s progressive, feminist attitudes.

Some of the male counterparts that Cassatt aligned herself with also believed in the advancement of the female, as well as a woman’s determined pursuit of her career. Some of Cassatt’s most important ties were with art dealers like Paul Durand-Ruel and his sons and American collectors like Henry O. Havemeyer and James Stillman.\(^385\) Cassatt was drawn toward other talented and driven American feminist women, like herself, including art educator Emily Sartain, collector and suffragist Louisine Havemeyer, curator Sarah Hallowell, businesswoman Berthe Honoré Palmer, of course, Pope and Robbins.\(^386\) There was a broader American tendency to “accept the femininity of Impressionism, which contrasts with French collecting tendencies.”\(^387\) In particular, Cassatt appreciated Havemeyer’s and Palmer’s willingness, among that of other American collectors, to take the artist’s guidance on the acquisition of paintings.\(^388\)

Among these American collectors included Maud Murray Dale, Mrs. Chester Dale, who acquired *The Loge* for the National Gallery of Art. An amateur painter, it was Maud who cultivated her husband’s interest in art.\(^389\) The two married in 1909, and it was at the beginning of their marriage that the two collected American art, including works

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\(^385\) Cassatt, Mathews, *Cassatt and Her Circle*, 12.
\(^386\) Ibid, 11-12.
by Cassatt, Benjamin West (1738-1820), Guy Pène du Bois (1884-1958), as well as others. The core of the renowned collection was assembled between 1926 and 1936 and included modern French Impressionist art. The Chester Dale Collection at the National Gallery of Art has many of Cassatt’s works that are discussed in this thesis, as well as others that are centered on the artist’s portrayal of the adolescent girl. Among these includes: Woman with a Fan (1878-1879), The Loge (1882), The Loge [graphite, recto] (1882), Girl Arranging Her Hair (1886), Woman with a Red Zinnia (1891), as well as others. By writing numerous art books, brochures, and articles, Maud occupied an active role in introducing the American public to modern French art. She organized a series of exhibitions at the Museum of French Art at the French Institute in New York, where her husband, Chester Dale, was on the board of directors. The French Institute desired to promote French arts and culture in America. The Dales’ guiding principle was to showcase French works of art from the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries not as points in the development of abstraction, as Jorgelina Orfila writes, but rather “as examples of the resilience of the Western artistic tradition against upheavals and superficial change.” Maud believed that the radical artistic movements at the turn of the century had been necessary revolutions, as helping to renew and thus reinforce the perennial artistic tradition. In Maud’s writings, such as Before Manet to Modigliani from the Chester Dale Collection, explains the couple’s “taste for uncharacteristic paintings by famous artists.”

Perhaps Maud’s acquisition of these particularly unique and noteworthy works by Cassatt

392 Orfila, “Art Collecting in America During the Interwar Period,” 53.
393 Ibid, 53. This can also be seen in Maud Murray Dale’s writing: Maud Dale, Before Manet to Modigliani from the Chester Dale Collection (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929).
394 Orfila, “Art Collecting in America During the Interwar Period,” 54. Also, Dale, Before Manet to Modigliani from the Chester Dale Collection.
reflect this attitude. Cassatt was known largely for her depictions of mothers and children, and therefore it is quite interesting that the couple chose these lesser known portraits of adolescent girls. Maud’s independent approach to art-collecting not only can be observed by her tendency to collect Cassatt’s lesser-celebrated works, but also provide evidence to illustrate how these works by Cassatt were, in fact, unique in her period.

Another American collector was Berthe Honoré Palmer, a businesswoman, socialite, and philanthropist. Leading citizens of Chicago, the Palmers were quite active in the promotion of the city’s 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition. At the turn of the century, feminists in America came from an array of backgrounds, languages, classes, religious and approaches to the movement. Yet, these women all came together under the desire for equality to organize a Woman’s Building in the World’s Columbian Exposition. The building was to celebrate the cultural achievements of women. In the “Hall of Honor,” the achievements of women in the Fine Arts were to be exhibited: the two murals would depict both the allegories of “Primitive Woman,” painted by Mary Fairchild MacMonnies, and the other, “Modern Woman” commissioned to Cassatt.395

Divided into three sections, the panels of Cassatt’s 1893 mural displayed Young Women Plucking the Fruits of Knowledge or Science, Young Girls Pursuing Fame and Arts, Music and Dancing. The imagery showed adolescent girls as well as mature women in modern dress, all at different stages of the female life cycle. In doing so, Cassatt drew on her own and other imagery here from previous works. Cassatt’s Impressionist painterly techniques and American feminist attitudes coalesced once again to render the “Modern Woman.” In the epilogue of this thesis, I look at Cassatt’s representation of female adolescence and the “New Woman” in this project. While Cassatt’s mural all at once

395 McGuirk, 61.
displays these tensions of female adolescence, *Modern Woman* is situated in America and within the context of the emerging “New Woman” that was only popularized later in the nineteenth-century, and thus presents other sides of the modern female.
In the period following her depictions of young women at the opera, Cassatt’s work began to transform as she took up the new painterly vocabulary that dominated Paris in the years following Impressionism. Throughout the late 1870s and early 1880s, as discussed in the third chapter of this thesis, Cassatt’s works were mainly of her family, and young women at the theater and the opera. Cassatt worked on many paintings and studies of girls and women at the opera that led up to *The Loge* (1882), a painting which can be understood as the fullest representation of Cassatt’s reconciling with the antithetical nature of femininity and adolescence. It seems as if the artist abandoned these themes – of theatergoing, portraits of teenage girls, loge boxes – after her pinnacing *The Loge*. Cassatt encapsulated her truest ideas about female adolescence in this work.

As Webster explains, it was over the next decade (1886-96) that a new “decisiveness and control” perforated Cassatt’s works. Cassatt absorbed the new styles that emerged in Paris after Impressionism, including Symbolism and Post-Impressionism, to render the teenage girl. Cassatt partook in the flat patterning, intense color, and allegorical, Symbolist content of Post-Impressionism. The modern, adolescent girl is delineated through new decorative aesthetic and symbolic content, as made apparent in Cassatt’s later works during this period. Among these include:

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396 Webster, *Eve's Daughter/Modern Woman*, 33.
397 Ibid, 33.
398 Ibid, 124.
Woman with a Red Zinnia, or Reverie (Figure 39, 1891), Young Women Picking Fruit (Figure 38, 1891), The Family (1892), and the three panels for the Modern Woman Mural (now destroyed, Figure 33 and Figures 35-37, 1893). These works have been explored by a number of scholars, including Mowll-Mathews, Webster, Barbara Shapiro, Judith Barter, and many others. These art historians and scholars have looked at Cassatt’s feminist attitudes within her paintings, especially in consideration of the emerging concepts of the “New Woman” that proliferated American culture. The scholars do explore such themes of Cassatt’s work in relation to the European influences of Post-Impressionist and Symbolist approaches. However, scholars on Cassatt, in general, have not truly considered the artist’s portrayal of the adolescent girl in conjunction with these twentieth-century American feminist and French painterly influences. These art historians focus on the rising “New Woman” of the period in Cassatt’s later works, and particularly in her Modern Woman mural.

The primary focus of this thesis is the relationship of Cassatt, adolescence and Impressionism. The scale, medium, and composition of Cassatt’s mural very much so marks a different moment for the artist. The formal complexities observed in The Loge (1882) in the third chapter of this thesis were simply not possible for the larger mural format. This epilogue differs from the abovementioned scholarship by noting how adolescence can be situated in Cassatt’s works from this period, and most significantly the mural, in ways that have not been acknowledged. This epilogue analyzes Cassatt’s three panels of the Modern Woman mural, but through the specific lens of adolescence. This thesis understands Cassatt’s mural by looking at her unique definition of the adolescent girl as the result of a coalescence of modern Parisian painterly vocabulary and the new wave of feminism in America. In doing so, the epilogue of this thesis recognizes
how despite within the context of a new formal language (the mural), Cassatt’s study of adolescence continues into the 1890s.

As an artist and ardent feminist working during this period, Cassatt chose to embed the culture's ideology of the “New Woman” within her paintings and project.\textsuperscript{399} In her large-scale mural, \textit{Modern Woman}, Cassatt combined her learned European artistic practices with her American, feminist influences. As Cassatt grew older and more liberal attitudes emerged, the artist was more pronounced in her feminist beliefs. Cassatt’s feminism, before this time, had been individualist in nature, as Mowll-Mathews notes, as she believed that women should have the opportunity to work and should be given the recognition they deserved.\textsuperscript{400} Over time, Cassatt was fierce in her support of the growing movement for woman’s suffrage, as exemplified through her letters but also through her paintings. Subsuming herself in the ideology of the period, Cassatt imbued nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American emerging feminist practices into her art as her own form of advocacy. Certainly, Cassatt’s \textit{Modern Woman} mural is meant to embody the emerging feminist values of the “New Woman.” Cassatt’s works reflect the artist’s keen interest in defining and shaping not only the “New Woman” of the period, but also the “new” adolescent girl.

The pioneering “New Woman” emerged in the United States during the late nineteenth-century as the radical, feminist exemplar. It was this newfound image of the female that became a term to represent a sort of idealized archetype. Denoting a range of women who came of age between 1890 and 1920, the “New Woman” was a term

\textsuperscript{399} I would like to reiterate what I stated in the Introduction of this thesis: The “New Woman” is a period-specific term, whereas “modern woman” is a more general descriptive term. The “New Woman” was a term used at the end of the nineteenth-century to define the generation of women who came of age between 1890 and 1920 and asserted a new public, female presence in society. The term “modern woman” was present in Cassatt’s period, as her mural is titled “Modern Woman.” That being the case, the two terms can be considered synonyms.

\textsuperscript{400} Mowll-Mathews, \textit{Cassatt and Her Circle}, 271.
used at the end of the nineteenth-century to define this generation who asserted a new public, female presence in society.\textsuperscript{401} This group of women did so while simultaneously representing a modernity that was in direct opposition to obsolete, Victorian models, which emphasized domesticity and submissiveness.\textsuperscript{402} At the beginning of the twentieth-century in the United States, social and cultural changes took place that paved the way for a re-definition of identities. The “New Woman” came to represent any archetype associated with the rise of feminism, and eventually, the campaign for women’s suffrage. The “New Woman” ultimately was a sort of “catch-all,” or umbrella term: the New Woman did not express a unified message regarding women’s changing roles, as those varied by region, class, politics, race, ethnicity, age, time, and historical conditions.\textsuperscript{403} Cassatt’s \textit{Modern Woman} mural is, perhaps, her work that is most directly emblematic of the “New Woman,” in part because of the context under which the mural was built.

As briefly discussed at the conclusion of the third chapter of this thesis, Cassatt’s \textit{Modern Woman} mural was made for the Woman’s Building of the 1893 World Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Displaying cultural and technological achievements of the United States, the exposition aimed to impart a sense of national pride. The Woman’s Building displayed the accomplishments of women artists, poets, educators, and reformers were celebrated and honored in exhibits of books, statistics, paintings, sculpture, and applied arts.\textsuperscript{404} The Woman’s Building, designed by Sophia Hayden, had an exhibition space, an assembly room, a library, and a Hall of Honor.

\textsuperscript{402} Rabinovitch-Fox, “New Women in Early 20th-Century America.”
\textsuperscript{404} Carr and Webster, “Mary Cassatt and Mary Fairchild MacMonnies,” 55.
Placed in the building’s Hall of Honor, Cassatt’s mural faced Mary Fairchild Macmonnies’ mural, *Primitive Woman* (Figure 34, 1893). Along with the building itself, the murals celebrated the progress and achievements of the female. Both Cassatt and Macmonnies were chosen by Sarah Hallowell and Berthe Honoré Palmer. Palmer was the president of the Board of Lady Managers, the governing body whose primary task was the development of activities related to women at the fair.\(^\text{405}\) Hallowell, an established art professional, worked closely with Palmer to decide on the artists for the mural. Cassatt and MacMonnies adhered to Palmer’s suggestions for the mural. One mural, Palmer wrote, should “show woman in her primitive condition as a bearer of burdens and doing drudgery, either an Indian scene or a classic one…[the other mural should serve] as a contrast [showing] women in the position she occupies today.”\(^\text{406}\) Though differing, the two murals were to be continuous. Together, the works presented women’s progress – from the dawn of civilization to the present.

\textbf{Figure 33}. Mary Cassatt, *Modern Woman*, c.1892-93. Mural.

\(^{405}\) Carr and Webster, “Mary Cassatt and Mary Fairchild MacMonnies,” 53.

\(^{406}\) Ibid, 58.
Upon receiving the commission for the mural, Cassatt readily accepted, excited to a part of such a large-scale project. Though Cassatt was not as widely known as an artist in America as she was in Europe, she was a part of the Society of American Artists. Interestingly, the society supported American artists who were influenced by modern European art and its break from strict allegiance to academic painting, which very much aligned with Cassatt’s biography. Cassatt announced her decision to accept the commission in a letter to Louisine Havemeyer that dates to around 1892. In both this letter, as well as in one written to Pissarro, Cassatt points out Degas’s frustration and anger with her undertaking of this project. Cassatt wrote to Pissarro that he “ought to hear Degas on the subject of a woman’s undertaking to do such a thing, he has handed me over to destruction.” Though Cassatt admired and respected Degas, it should be noted that they held different values and had undeniable differences.

Lost today, the three panels of the *Modern Woman* mural, *Young Women Plucking the Fruits of Knowledge or Science*, *Young Girls Pursuing Fame and Arts, Music and Dancing* (Figures 35-37, 1893), exemplify the project as a representation of early stages of the life cycle of the female, including adolescence. Some of the figures appear to be adolescents (particularly those on the left), yet it seems less certain that those on the right are

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407 Webster, *Eve’s Daughter/Modern Woman*, 63-64.
408 Carr and Webster, “Mary Cassatt and Mary Fairchild MacMonnies,” 56.
adolescents, based on the surviving photographs of the mural. Perhaps Cassatt intentionally imbued her mural project with a slight gradation from younger to older adolescence, depicted left to right. In modern dress at different stages of life, young girls and mature women are portrayed. Webster and other art historians note that when seen together, the three panels of Cassatt’s mural definitely represent a woman’s life cycle: childhood, youth, and maturity. Yet, these scholars do not use the term “adolescence” to denote these stages of the life cycle of the female.

**Figure 35.** Central panel of Cassatt’s *Modern Woman* mural, “Young Women Plucking the Fruits of Knowledge or Science,” 1893.

**Figure 36.** Left panel of Cassatt’s *Modern Woman* mural, “Young Girls Pursuing Fame,” 1893.

**Figure 37.** Right panel of Cassatt’s *Modern Woman* mural, “Art, Music, Dancing,” 1893.

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409 Ibid, 60.
The panel on the left and the right show the female in differing stages: childhood and adulthood. The left panel, *Young Girls Pursuing Fame*, portrays children, running forward and into the central panel with ducks and birds flocking behind them. The young girls here are ambitious: they chase after and pursue their dreams. In the right-hand panel, *Art, Music, Dancing*, Cassatt portrays women engaged, individually as well as collectively, in the arts and leisure. If the children in the left-hand panel are determinedly running after their dreams, then the engagement of the older women in the right-hand panel symbolizes the achievements of those dreams. In the right panel, these dreams are of the girl-children are exemplified by women’s active participation in “humanity’s most exalted precinct – that of the arts.”\(^{410}\) The modernly-dressed women personify “art, music, dancing,” as indicated in Cassatt’s title. To personify dance, one figure holds her skirt out and perhaps references the popular skirt-dancing of Loie Fuller, and other modern cabaret stars in Paris.\(^ {411}\) Another figure personifies music as she comfortably sits on the grass, playing a banjo, which was a modern instrument in the nineteenth-century.\(^ {412}\) These adult female figures, as art historian Roann Barris notes, are markedly modern, female figures. The program of the mural can therefore be seen as epitomizing the cycle of a woman’s life – childhood, youth, and maturity.

*Young Women Plucking the Fruits of Knowledge or Science*, the central panel, delineates the middle, transitional stage of a woman’s life: youth. Or, as this thesis proposes – adolescence. Scholars have commented on the significance of the central panel of Cassatt’s mural, noting how it is the “heart of Cassatt’s allegorical *Modern Woman*,” or the “most important and sheds light on the meaning of the scenes in the left and right

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\(^{410}\) Webster, *Eve’s Daughter/Modern Woman*, 67.


\(^{412}\) Barris, “Inside the Woman’s Building: Allegories of Modern Women.”
panels.” Yet, these scholars have not considered how the subject matter of the central panel, female adolescence, is important. And, even more so, Cassatt’s choice to situate her most important panel through female adolescence. It is quite interesting that in depicting the life cycle of the life of the modern woman, Cassatt chose to emphasize adolescence, clearly marking it as a pivotal stage. It is these young, female adolescents who had been portrayed as girl-children chasing their dreams in the left-hand panel, *Young Girls Pursuing Fame*, and whose dreams are later symbolized in *Art, Music, Dancing* by engaging in the arts.\(^{414}\)

In *Young Women Plucking the Fruits of Knowledge or Science*, Cassatt portrays young women harvesting the fruits of knowledge and science. In an orchard, along with two turkeys and a dog, the figures are illustrated harvesting fruit. Loosely arranged into an array of groups, women of different ages are situated at the foreground of the composition. The clumps of females are rendered picking and handing fruits to one another, as well as placing fruits into baskets and carrying baskets of apples. This web of actions – picking, passing, placing, carrying – suggests a narrative structure of female companionship, working amongst one another and together for one another at a variety of ages. There is a young woman who stands on a ladder and hands down an apple to an even younger girl at the center of the composition. The female figure holds the ladder while also plucking fruit from the lower branches.

According to Webster, it is within this moment that the panel’s theme is announced: the transference of knowledge from one generation to the next.\(^{415}\) This notion of transference is further conveyed by the fourth female figure in the

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\(^{414}\) Webster, *Eve’s Daughter/Modern Woman*, 67.

\(^{415}\) Ibid.
composition’s center, who holds a basket of fruit as her gaze is averted to her left, suggesting another shift to the next group.\textsuperscript{416} In Young Women Plucking the Fruits of Knowledge of Science, Cassatt constructs a subtly “transgressive interpretation of the Genesis legend.”\textsuperscript{417} The act of young girls, female adolescents, and women plucking fruit is not a sin like in the Bible, but rather the attainment of knowledge; an essential step in a woman’s move toward equality. An awareness of this heretical program, Webster writes, actually “alters our perception of Cassatt as a sentimental painter of compliant mothers and children.”\textsuperscript{418} One can observe how the artist uses female adolescence to reveal her program. Cassatt’s mural, and her other works from this period, champion the independence the female.

Similarly, in Young Women Picking Fruit (Figure 38, 1891) and Woman With a Red Zinnia (Figure 39, 1891), Cassatt portrays independent, modern women engaged in activities or in states of absorption. Young Women Picking Fruit illustrates two female figures. One gazes toward her right hand as she reaches to pick a pear from a tree while her companion in a floral blue dress sits beside her, patiently looking up at her friend. She holds a pear in her lap, presumably given to her by the young woman in the light pink dress who continues to pluck fruit. This seated female friend serves as a kind of intimate, stable presence within the composition. Cassatt thus creates a harmonious canvas portraying young women wholly immersed within their activities and the act of being with one another. One cannot help thinking about Cassatt’s letter to Theodate Pope in 1910.\textsuperscript{419} In the letter, Cassatt writes about the significance of female friendship amongst young adolescent girls. Young Women Picking Fruit (1891) and Woman With a Red

\textsuperscript{416} Ibid, 73. 
\textsuperscript{417} Ibid, 10. 
\textsuperscript{418} Ibid, 10. 
\textsuperscript{419} See Page 64 of this thesis. Also: Cassatt, Mathews, Cassatt and Her Circle, 303-305.
Zinnia (1891) appear to be directly related to Cassatt’s mural, and particularly the central panel, which was completed only two years later, in 1893. The title and imagery are so similar to the mural’s central panel that it seems very likely that this painting reflects Cassatt working through these ideas even before her mural project in 1893.

Figure 38. Mary Cassatt, *Young Women Picking Fruit*, 1891, oil on canvas, 51 3/4 × 35 1/2 × 1 in (131.44 × 90.17 × 2.54 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art.
Another painting from this period that portrays Cassatt working through feminist attitudes, a Symbolist painterly vocabulary, and ideas of adolescence, is *Woman With a Red Zinnia*, or *Reverie* (1891). Though the title refers to a “woman,” Cassatt renders a young woman in this painting who appears to be the same model as the young woman picking a pear in *Young Women Picking Fruit* (1891). Seated on a green bench outdoors, the rosy-cheeked girl stares pensively at the red zinnia she holds. Cassatt evidently began looking at Post-Impressionist and Symbolist techniques before her mural. Cassatt takes care to descriptively detail the entirety of the young woman: the girl seated is in viewers’ focal point. The background greenery of the park is somewhat indistinct. The artist constructs the background of singular, broad, loose strokes of verdant greenery and thin strokes for the tree trunks. The young woman’s face and body, on the other hand, are drawn with purer contour lines and emphatically foregrounded. Cassatt distinguishes the young girl’s head from the greenery in the background by using clean lines. The model is markedly divorced from her green surroundings where she is seated; the stark horizontal color block of green further severs the girl from the world around her.

By isolating the model, Cassatt displays a girl entirely absorbed in her own introspection. Cassatt endows the adolescent girl with an active imagination in *Woman With a Red Zinnia*. This can be further observed through the painting’s alternate title, *Reverie*, which follows a Victorian tradition of depicting women in a dreamlike state. The artist’s frank representation focuses attention on the sitter’s contemplative, introspective mood.

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Female adolescence, for Cassatt, encompasses states of absorption, introspective and reflection that echo Hall’s ideas. “Storm and stress” in the adolescent pubertal body, according to Hall, corresponded to the adolescent mind. These later canvases by Cassatt appear to be of young, adolescent girls on the brink of womanhood. These young women therefore undergo the experience of the changing pubertal body. In *The Loge* (1882) and *Young Girl Arranging Her Hair* (1886), as well as in *Woman with a Red Zinnia* (1891), the stress of the girl’s changing pubertal body has immersed her into an interior, introspective state of mind. The girls all do not look directly at the viewer. Immersed in

*Figure 39.* Mary Cassatt, *Woman with a Red Zinnia*, 1891, oil on canvas, 73.6 x 60.3 cm (29 x 23 3/4 in.), National Gallery of Art, D.C.
states of absorption, the girls in *The Loge* and *Young Girl Arranging Her Hair* have their minds and eyes absorbed elsewhere or, in *Woman with a Red Zinnia*, at the rose they hold.

In Hall’s *Adolescence* (1904), his chapter “Adolescence in Literature, Biography and History” looks at adolescence in popular culture. The psychologist notes works that reflect these states of absorption and reflection that modern adolescence encompasses. Hall begins by highlighting adolescence from the beginning of time to the modern period: in Greek cultures, to the Christian Church in the 1600s, to Shakespeare’s adolescents. When Hall does discuss modern adolescence, most of the chapter charts the male adolescent, “modern men in well-known biographies.”[^423] It is rare to come across writers who have given true pictures of the chief traits of this developmental period for both males and females. The best observers, Hall writes, see but very little of what goes on “in the youthful soul, the development of which is very largely subterranean.”[^422] The true traits of which are unique to adolescence, according to Hall, are that which occurs and exists beneath the surface, that which is concealed. The “subterranean” – that which is concealed, internalized – is what Cassatt explores in her paintings of female adolescents.

Hall discusses female writers who depict female adolescence, he looks at how these writers define adolescence partly through states of absorption. First, Hall notes that because women are “more emotional” and “dwell more on subjective states” that they are able to accurately depict this life stage.[^423] Hall cites French novelist, Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin, best known by her *nom de plume* George Sand, who wrote *Histoire de ma vie* (1855). The work is an autobiography of Sand’s life written up until shortly before the

[^421]: Hall, *Adolescence* v.1, 536.
[^422]: Ibid.
[^423]: Ibid, 547.
Revolution of 1848. Hall writes of the French novelist that her “day-dreams and plays were so intense that she often came back from the world of imagination to reality with a shock.”424 This idea of going in and out of reality, being intensely absorbed in states of reflection and then coming back into world of reality is present in Cassatt’s paintings. In particular, *Woman with a Red Zinnia*, and the artist’s works that veer toward a Symbolist program are emblematic of this absorptive state.

While Cassatt appears somewhat aligned with Hall’s ideas of adolescence, her paintings also drastically diverge from the psychologist’s notions. As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, Hall implied a trajectory for women that ultimately culminated in motherhood. Yet, Cassatt’s paintings, as well as her mural program, starkly depart from this conclusion for the female. The fact that Cassatt’s mural foregrounds women “picking the fruits of knowledge” implies a different consummation for adolescent girls. This is one that reaches a pinnacle in true liberation and independence (not exclusively motherhood), as can be seen by the absence of male figures and traditional family units from the mural. This is consistent with the overall program of the building, which featured books, paintings, drawings, prints, sculptures, and inventions by women. Cassatt demonstrates attention to the absorption, introspection, and independence of the female. In doing so, Cassatt identifies adolescence and independence as the pivotal moment in a young person’s life where they question norms and declare their independence. It is this revolt enables them to become fully-fledged adults. The building’s whole program was a refutation of traditional limitations on the lives of women. Thus, what Cassatt was doing in her mural was consistent with the building patronesses’ vision. The *Modern Woman*

424 Ibid, 548.
mural is Cassatt’s feminist rebuttal of the emerging psychology of the period, as evidenced by Hall’s argument.

Painting, for Cassatt, was her principal manner of working through, defining and advocating for the female. In this thesis, I explore Cassatt’s doing so in regard to her construction of the female adolescent. Not involved in politics nor did she openly support suffrage until the 1910s, the artist saw opportunities for political progress in daily life. Cassatt used her paintings, as Barris writes, as a means of exerting a “silent influence.”425 Through her art, Cassatt made her silent influence visible.426

425 Barris, “Inside the Woman’s Building: Allegories of Modern Women.”
426 Ibid.
### LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 1.</strong></td>
<td>Mary Cassatt, <em>Mary Ellison Embroidering</em>, 1877.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 2.</strong></td>
<td>Mary Cassatt, <em>Portrait of Miss Mary Ellison</em> or <em>Woman with a Fan</em>, c. 1878-1880.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 3.</strong></td>
<td>Mary Cassatt, <em>The Bacchante</em>, 1872.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 4.</strong></td>
<td>Mary Cassatt, <em>A Musical Party</em>, 1874.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 5.</strong></td>
<td>Mary Cassatt, <em>The Young Bride</em>, 1875.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 6.</strong></td>
<td>Mary Cassatt, <em>The Child's Bath</em>, 1893.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 7.</strong></td>
<td>Mary Cassatt, <em>Reading “Le Figaro,”</em> 1878.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 8.</strong></td>
<td>Mary Cassatt, <em>A Woman and a Child Driving</em>, 1881.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 9.</strong></td>
<td>Theodate Pope, <em>Portrait of Mary Hilliard and Mary Cassatt</em>, 1903-1905.</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 10.</strong></td>
<td>Édouard Manet, <em>The Railway</em>, 1873.</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 11.</strong></td>
<td>Claude Monet, <em>Springtime</em>, 1872.</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 12.</strong></td>
<td>Camille Pissarro, <em>The Shepherdess</em>, 1881.</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 13.</strong></td>
<td>Mary Cassatt, <em>Children in a Garden (The Nurse)</em>, 1878.</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 14.</strong></td>
<td>Mary Cassatt, 1913. Photograph of the Artist.</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 15.</strong></td>
<td>Édouard Manet, <em>Luncheon in the Studio</em>, 1868.</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 16.</strong></td>
<td>Pierre-Auguste Renoir, <em>The First Outing</em>, 1876-77.</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 17.</strong></td>
<td>Morisot, <em>Young Girl in a Ball Gown</em>, 1879.</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 18.</strong></td>
<td>Berthe Morisot, <em>Julie Daydreaming</em>, 1894.</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 19.</strong></td>
<td>Edgar Degas, <em>The Little Fourteen-Year-Old Dancer</em>, 1878-81.</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 20.</strong></td>
<td>Edgar Degas, <em>Three Studies of a Nude Dancer</em>, c. 1878.</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 21.</strong></td>
<td>Edgar Degas, <em>Study of a Nude Dancer</em>, c. 1878-1879.</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 22. Edgar Degas, Woman Bathing in a Shallow Tub, 1881

Figure 23. Edgar Degas (?), Elie and Louise Halevy in Edgar Degas’s Living Room, c. 1895

Figure 24. Mary Cassatt, Girl Arranging Her Hair, 1886

Figure 25. Mary Cassatt, In the Opera, 1878

Figure 26. Mary Cassatt, Woman With a Pearl Necklace in a Loge, 1879

Figure 27. Mary Cassatt, The Loge [recto], 1882

Figure 28. Mary Cassatt, The Loge, or La Loge, 1882

Figure 29. Charles Garnier, Paris Opera House, 1861-1875

Figure 30. Charles Garnier, Paris Opera House, 1861-1875

Figure 31. Comédie-Française image from Wikimedia Commons

Figure 32. Édouard Manet, A Bar at the Folies-Bergère, 1882

Figure 33. Mary Cassatt, Modern Woman, c.1892-93

Figure 34. Mary Fairchild Macmonnies, Primitive Woman, 1893

Figure 35. Central panel of Cassatt’s Modern Woman mural, “Young Women Plucking the Fruits of Knowledge or Science,” 1893

Figure 36. Left panel of Cassatt’s Modern Woman mural, “Young Girls Pursuing Fame,” 1893

Figure 37. Right panel of Cassatt’s Modern Woman mural, “Art, Music, Dancing,” 1893

Figure 38. Mary Cassatt, Young Women Picking Fruit, 1891

Figure 39. Mary Cassatt, Woman with a Red Zinnia, 1891


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