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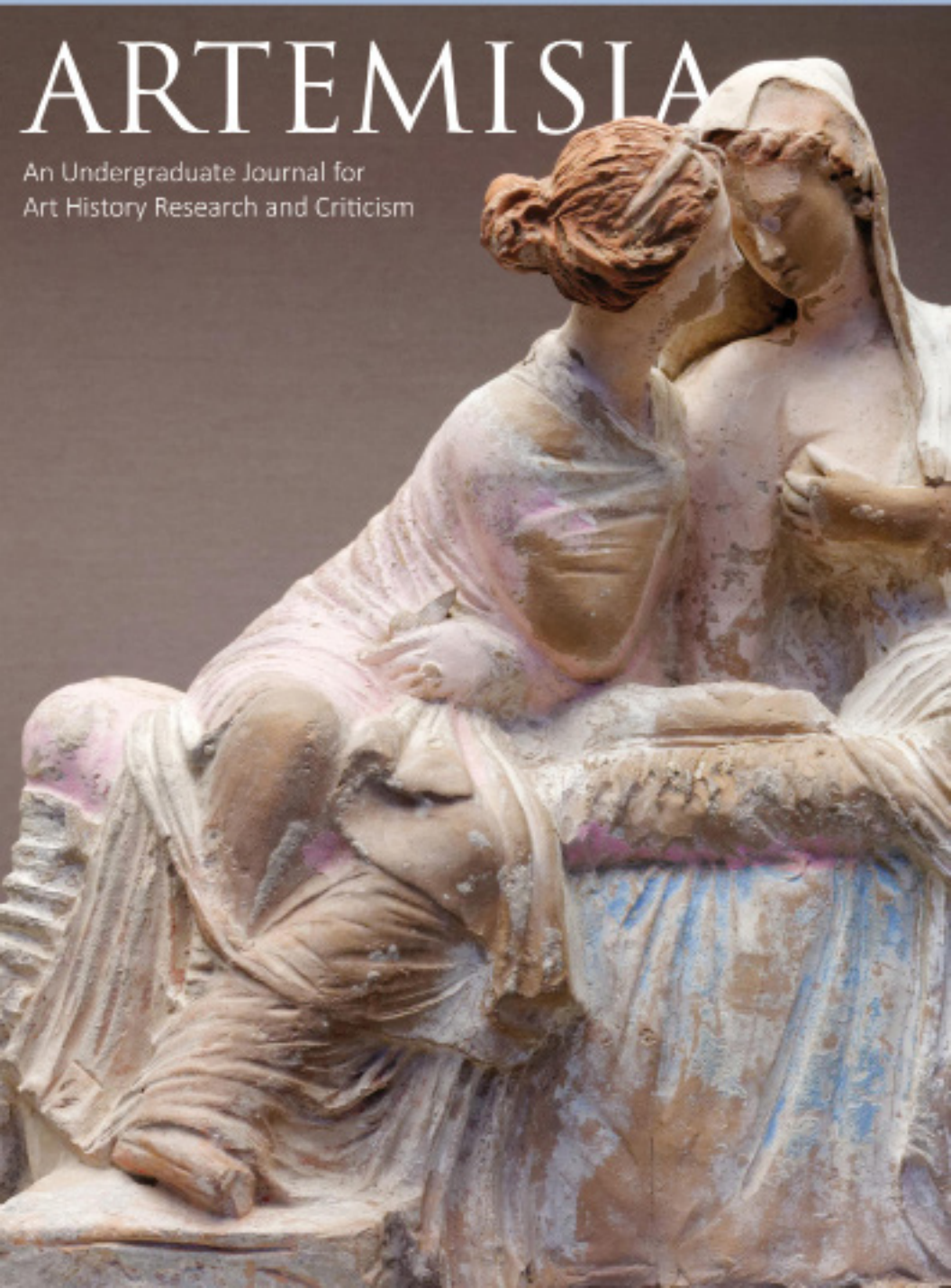
ARTEMISIA

An Undergraduate Journal for
Art History Research and Criticism



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SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Content for Research Papers: If you wish to submit a research paper for a future edition, consider what is original to that paper. Research papers, done in the compressed time of an academic semester, tend to be critical summaries of what others have said on a topic—and that's perfectly fine. For Artemisia, however, papers should go a step or two beyond. Students submitting a research paper should ask themselves what they see as being original or in some way a contribution to what is known about the topic. "Original" and "contribution" do not necessarily imply brand new research; that type of originality is what would be expected for a thesis or dissertation at the graduate–school level. For this journal, originality should be thought of as perhaps applying a fresh methodological approach to a familiar topic, asking a new question, arguing a point, and so forth. Originality in research means what you are doing is from your own perspective although you are drawing arguments from other scholars' research to support your arguments.

Format: Papers should be at least 7–8 double–spaced pages in length, and should include footnotes and works cited page in correct Chicago Manual of Style format.

Content for Art Encounters: Topics for art encounters should be based on your personal engagement with the visual arts. We would welcome a formal analysis of a favorite painting, an anecdote about an experience you had during an internship or study abroad, a personal essay about how your life has been affected by art, a review of an art exhibition you attended, your response to current practices in museum work or art education, a review of a book or film on an art historical topic, an essay describing your observations about connections between art and other professions or fields of study, etc. There is no limit to the possible subjects for you to consider. We want to hear your voice, your opinions, and your experiences.

Format: Entries should be 1–4 double–spaced pages in length. If possible, include an image related to your experience.

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The Anomoly of Sapphic Gesture: An Examination of Meaning in the Female Relationships of Classical Grave Monuments

– Aubrey Gallafent

A funerary relief from the Augustan period of two women shown cementing their eternal commitment to each other stands out like a sore thumb among the art of the Classical period (Fig. 1). Art from Ancient Greece and Rome has fascinated academia for centuries, leaving seemingly no rock unturned, except this anomalous handshake declaring marriage known as *dextrarum iunctio*. As we try to catch a glimpse of life in a lost civilization, we turn to written and visual products of the time. However, a lack of evidence regarding specific subjects cannot be taken as proof of non-existence. Without written or spoken language, we must turn to a secondary form of communication found in the figures of art. Through closer examination of cultural artifacts, the discreet existence of female homosexuality in Ancient Greek and Roman societies is clear.

Gesture is a powerful tool in art and works as a form of visual speech. Ernst Gombrich claims it is an emotional expression of the inner soul.[1] The depictions in Ancient Greek and Roman art of heterosexual relationships create a guide for interpreting gesture when the context is unclear. Rich iconography and intimate female connections seen in the art of antiquity leave space for exploration into how these depictions influenced and reflected gender and sexuality. Limited research into the role of female homosexuality negatively affects our understanding of Classical art, gender, and sexuality. There is an overwhelming imbalance in evidence and documentation of male and female same-sex relationships, allowing male relationships to take precedence in academic research. Due to the lack of definitive evidence of female same-sex relationships, it is necessary to analyze the gestures and symbolism between women in Ancient Greek and Roman art that suggest the possibility of these relationships and integrate that into historical discourses.

[1] Ernst H. Gombrich, "Ritualized Gesture and Expression in Art," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological Sciences* 251, no. 772 (December 29, 1966): 393, https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.1966.0025.

One of the most effective ways for an artist to elicit a reaction and portray a message is through gesture. A figure's body language is non-verbal communication that shows the inner emotions of the moment. This verbal language is not eternal and is lost within time, but we can attempt to understand the gestures through patterns in expressive posing, or ritual gesture. If two things are in the same setting with the same gesture, they likely mean the same thing.[2] Without written or spoken word, this is the clearest tool of communication with the viewer. When reading gesture within a work, it is important to remember that art mirrors life. It is based on natural human movement and can be a reflex. Gesture mimics the everyday aspects of human life, and we cannot argue against natural human nature and natural gesture.

One of the main obstacles in understanding female homosexuality in Greek and Roman art is the restriction of modern terms and understanding of homosexual relationships. Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz discusses this issue as well as how to discuss these issues within their historical context. She explains ancient sexuality as an idea tied to behavior rather than gender—one that cannot fit into the social construct of homosexual and heterosexual orientations.[3] There is no modern label that describes these deep personal and sexual attachments between women within the active/passive sexual views. Because of this, a common term used to refer to female same-sex intimacy and affection in antiquity is "sapphic." This term refers to motifs and themes in literature that mimic the writings of the Greek poet Sappho and is taken from the literature written during this time.[4] In several fragments of poetry, she describes her interaction with a woman who is leaving her to be married. She describes their time together with descriptions of sexual encounters. Due to the missing parts of the text, her description of sensual moments is lacking necessary context to fully understand the nature of these relationships.[5] Sappho's writings of

[2] Jean-Claude Schmitt, "The Rationale of Gestures in the West: Third to Thirteenth Centuries," *HAL (Le Centre Pour La Communication Scientifique Directe)*, January 1, 1991, 65.

[3] Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz and Lisa Auanger, *Among Women* (University of Texas Press, 2009), 3.

[4] Sandra Boehringer, *Female Homosexuality in Ancient Greece and Rome* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 196.

[5] Melissa Mueller, *The Cambridge Companion to Sappho*, ed. Patrick J. Finglass and Adrian Kelly (Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York, Ny: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 37.

amorous and undefined female relationships apply to the under-explored relationships discussed in this paper.

Strict laws on Greek and Roman marriages force discussions of homosexuality to focus on extramarital sexual relationships. Art of this period depicts male homosexual relationships with equal reverence to heterosexual marriage. With the visibility of these relationships in society, it creates the possibility for the same relationships to exist, albeit less visibly, for women. The invisibility of sapphic relationships means that depictions of female homosexual art require more analysis to uncover. The nature of relationships in classical art is visible in the physical touch and gesture of the subjects—comparisons between these two aspects in heterosexual pairings with female same-sex pairings reveal similarities that suggest female homosexual relationships.

The first artwork that explores the nature of female relationships, is a figure made from terracotta (Fig. 2), created in Myrina in approximately 100 BCE. In understanding this terracotta, we are limited by the lack of context. This item was found by Charles Merlin and sold to the British Museum without proper documentation of its origins.[6] Without this knowledge, we must rely on iconography and trends among seated terracotta figurines of this period. In the fifth century BCE, mythological and genre scenes were common in terracotta works. Based on the archaeological evidence of Pompeii, there was variety within the subjects leading into the first century CE. Terracotta works were no longer limited to religious worship, and they were cheap and easy to obtain.[7] If Merlin is to be believed, this object came from Myrina. Within trends of terracotta figures, many Myrina figurines mimicked the Tanagra type and fit into two clear categories of mythological subjects and genre scenes. The category of genre scenes pays attention to realism and artistic expression, while mythological scenes are less detailed. In genre scenes, artists created sculpted nudes with contrasting drapery and deep emotion when showing

[6] Yannis Galanakis, "On Her Majesty's Service: C.L.W. Merlin and the Sourcing of Greek Antiquities for the British Museum," *CHS Research Bulletin* 1, no.1 (2012). http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hlnc.essay:GalanakisY.On_Her_Majestys_Service.2012.

[7] Mark Stansbury-O'donnell, *A History of Greek Art* (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Inc, 2015), 9–10.

everyday life.[8] This statuette falls into a more realistic categorization, and the careful attention to detail in drapery and the faces seems to be in line with the attention given to genre scenes.

Generally, Greek terracottas of women highlighted themes of motherhood and fertility as well as milestones in a woman's life. These milestones are typically seen in mother and child terracottas, some being about adolescence, marriage, pregnancy, breastfeeding, and motherhood.[9] Some terracottas show gods and goddesses, which some assume this statuette to be. However, most of the depictions of deities show them standing.[10]

This statuette includes many subtle gestural details. Some are more obvious, like the hand each woman rests on their own breast, while others, like the rotation of their bodies, are slight. The two figures lean together, interacting in an intimate space, while sitting closely on a *kline*, which is a couch for reclining when eating or sleeping.[11] The right figure exposes her right breast, and the left figure has a large ring on the fourth finger of her left hand. The symbol of a ring on this finger had already become an indication of marriage or engagement.[12]

The relationship of these women is unclear, and possible interpretations are either neighbors gossiping, Demeter sitting with Persephone, or a woman giving a bride last-minute advice.[13] Revealing of the right breast often has an erotic connotation while the left breast is maternal, which

[8] Caroline Amy Hutton, *Greek Terracotta Statuettes* (New York: Macmillan, 1899), 52.

[9] Barbara Bolognani, "Images of Women and Children in Pre-Hellenistic Terracotta Figurines from the Northern Levant," in *Giving Voice to Silence: Material and Immaterial Evidence of the Female World and Childhood from the Coroplastic Perspective*, ed. Ida Oggiano (Consiglio Nazionale Delle Richerche Istituto di Scienze del Patrimonio Culturale, 2024). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/385893140_Images_of_Women_and_Children_in_Pre-Hellenistic_Terracotta_Figurines_from_the_Northern_Levant#page=41.

[10] Stansbury-O'donnell, *A History of Greek Art*, 9–10.

[11] Vasiliki Kamperidou and Vasileios Vasileiou, "Ancient Greek Furniture: Source of Inspiration for the Designers and Manufacturers of Modern Times," (paper presented at XXVIth International Conference Research for Furniture Industry, January 2013), 59.

[12] Barbara Jo Chesser, "Analysis of Wedding Rituals: An Attempt to Make Weddings More M eaningful," *Family Relations* 29, no. 2 (1980): 205. https://doi.org/10.2307/584073.

[13] Donald M Bailey and British Museum, *Catalogue of the Terracottas in the British Museum*, vol. 4 (London: The British Museum, 2008), C529.

directly contradicts the idea of mother and child with Demeter and Persephone.[14] None of these classifications account for the erotic nature of the physical touch between the figures and the breast exposure.

Separately from the context, the gestures of this figurine indicate a romantic or erotic scene. When the exposure of the right breast is combined with the close pose of the figures, a familial relationship no longer feels appropriate. The gaze of these figures is a strong partner to gesture—it gives a direction for the inner emotion. In following the eyes, we can see the direction of a relationship or narrative.[15] They have leaned in so far that all they can see is each other. The figure on the left seems to be looking directly into the other woman's face, while the other looks down at the space between them.

Without written confirmation of the meaning behind the gestures of these figures, we must turn to the natural and ritual gesture that is visible. Their mutual rotation towards each other is an example of natural gesture. When we consider what situations would compel us to position ourselves this way, it is easy to assume that these two have a close and familiar relationship and that they are in a private engagement. Whether platonic or not, this moment must be meant only for the two of them as their faces nearly touch.

The very setting of this encounter is a form of ritual gesture. We see the two figures seated together on a kline, which requires a comparison of figures in the same setting. The statue resembles another terracotta figure from Myrina produced around the same time (Fig. 3) showing a glimpse into the private and sensual moment of a young man and his new wife while sitting on a kline.[16] Here we see a similar twisting of the figures as they lean in towards each other, but this couple is almost more chaste as the woman has her upper body turned away from the young man. The choice of furniture is another important aspect to consider. The casual

[14] Beth Cohen, *Naked Truths*, ed. Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow and Claire L Lyons (Routledge, 2003), 79.

[15] Andre Chastel, "Gesture in Painting: Problems in Semiology," *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 10, no. 1 (1986): 19. https://doi.org/10.2307/43444573.

[16] Herica Valladares, *Painting, Poetry, and the Invention of Tenderness in the Early Roman Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 48.

couch strengthens the intimacy of the scene, creating possible erotic connotations. The parallels in posture and intimacy of two figures on a kline is not enough to interpret this figure in a sapphic nature; however, the erotic touch and exposure support an exploration into this interpretation.

The second artwork is a funerary relief from the first century BCE (Fig. 1). The relief shows two women named in the inscription as freedwomen Fonteia Eleusis and Fonteia Helena.[17] The outside of the relief is a thick border resembling a picture frame or window. This encloses two female busts. The bust of Fonteia Eleusis on the left appears to be older due to the increased depth of her wrinkles. She is turned toward Fonteia Helena on the right, who looks out of the frame to the side. She creates a gesture with her left hand that points towards the most notable feature of the central gesture of clasped right hands. This is another example of a ritual gesture, commonly referred to as a *dextrarum iunctio*. This first appears in Archaic marble lekythoi and regains popularity within the iconography of funeral stelai. Originally, this gesture indicated the permanent and fundamental bond of family. It was exclusively used for close relatives until the 4th century BCE when it switched to primarily married couples.[18] Made within the same time frame of the same setting, we must consider the possibility of this gesture having the same meaning. The handshake—an expression of unity and tenderness—declared the marital bond. Marriage was very important in Greek and Roman societies, allowing it to claim a place in funerary art. This gesture indicates the relationship that exists even after death.[19]

While the gesture is commonly accepted as an indication of marriage, this is when the two figures are a man and a woman. It has been suggested that this relief is simply an anomaly meant to show a mother-daughter bond or a friendship due to the inability of women to marry each other at this time.[20] The suggestion of a mother-daughter bond would be as

[17] Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Women Partners in the New Testament," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 6, no. 1 (1990): 65. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25002123.

[18] Lucia Nováková and Monika Pagáčová, "Dexiosis: A Meaningful Gesture of the Classical Antiquity," *ILIRIA International Review* 6, no. 1 (June 30, 2016): 218-19. https://doi.org/10.21113/iir.2016.1.209.

[19] Nováková and Pagáčová, "Dexiosis: A Meaningful Gesture," 219.

[20] Susan Walker and Andrew Burnett, *The Image of Augustus* (London: British Museum, 1981), 44.

found family, rather than legal or biological relatives. Based on the name Fonteia, we know that these are both freedwomen, likely by the same family. They may have been related, but there is no evidence to indicate a blood relation. A common suggestion for the meaning of the *dextrarum iunctio* in this context is a declaration of commitment to each other.[21] While this gesture does indicate a commitment, there are other motifs that would not have any confusion with the commitment of marriage.

An examination of the other details of the relief is necessary to ascertain meaning due to the incongruity of the gesture in this instance. Other ways that the figures engage with each other show that the artist was purposeful in choosing the *dextrarum iunctio*. The figure on the left is turned slightly toward the right, and the figure on the right is gesturing toward the left. Her left hand is raised to chest level with her thumb and index finger extended in a manner typically used to create emphasis and direct attention to a feature of the artwork.[22] This hand points us directly to their joined hands, stating an intended meaning. There is also significance in the slight rotation of both figures as well as the gaze of each woman. Fonteia Eleusis is turned to look directly at Fonteia Helena showing her point of focus. The emphasis here is on the relationship between the two women that continues after death.[23] In combination with other iconographical features, gesturing or turning towards each other may indicate a marriage between two individuals.

This funerary relief contains many of the same features as a funerary relief of Publius Aiedius Ampho and his wife Aiedia from the first century BCE (Fig. 4). The figures turn slightly together and clasp hands in a legally recognized marriage. Aiedia raises her hand in a similar gesture to that of Helena, featuring a similar ring on her fourth finger. No matter the motivation in the relief of Fonteia Eleusis and Helena, it is crafted in the same manner and composition as the funerary reliefs of married couples. The amount of similarities between these two works seems to be more than coincidence. Typical symbols overlapping strengthens an

[21] D'Angelo, "Women Partners in the New Testament," 69.

[22] Maura K. Heyn, "Gesture and Identity in the Funerary Art of Palmyra," *American Journal of Archaeology* 114, no. 4 (2010): 641. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25763805.

[23] D'Angelo, "Women Partners in the New Testament," 69.

interpretation of the Fonteia relief as showing a strong commitment—one equivalent to marriage.

Another iconographic clue is found around the necks of both women, where the stone shows remnants of veils. Women wearing veils in Roman art is another controversial issue without a clear meaning. In *Unveiling the Veil*, Lisa Hughes discussed the meaning of veils worn by freedwomen in these Roman window reliefs. She argues against veils being adorned solely to differentiate them as freedwomen, since only 67 out of the 113 freedwomen monuments included veils.[24] If these veils are included for religious reasons, they would be related to death, marriage, or sacrifice. Unfortunately, these veils are differentiated by color, which no longer remains on this relief. Hughes's research did indicate that over eighty percent of these veiled women were depicted in a funerary monument with a husband.[25] While we cannot make the same assumption between two women, it does support the consideration for this interpretation.[26]

If the intended meaning was not a deep emotional connection, comparable to marriage, then these two women chose an ineffective delivery for their meaning. The anomaly of two women in this composition eventually caused the relief to be recut to fit the common meaning of the gesture. The recarving took away the veils previously adorning both women and gave one of the women a more masculine appearance.[27] Some historians theorize that this attempt to erase the depiction of two women with *dextrarum iunctio*, which is further evidence pointing towards an unaccepted sapphic relationship. This is not the only artwork to show same-sex *dextrarum iunctio*, but other depictions usually have clarifications in the inscription of the intent and relationship or include more than two figures.[28]

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[24] Lisa A. Hughes, "Unveiling the Veil: Cultic, Status, and Ethnic Representations of Early Imperial Freedwomen," *Material Religion* 3, no. 2 (July 2007): 227, https://doi.org/10.2752/175183407x219750.

[25] Hughes, "Unveiling the Veil", 233

[26] D'Angelo, "Women Partners in the New Testament," 70.

[27] D'Angelo, "Women Partners in the New Testament," 65.

[28] D'Angelo, "Women Partners in the New Testament," 69.

While it was not possible for these women to enter into a legal marriage, it was not uncommon for masters to recognize marriages between their slaves that would only become legal if or when they were freed.[29] This relief could indicate that this was the case for these two women. Legal or not, same-sex relationships between women existed in Rome, as they have in so many societies throughout history.[30] With the visibility of male homosexuality in Rome, it is impossible for the same relationships to have been nonexistent in women. The iconographic similarities between this relief and those of married couples support the theory that these women considered themselves married in all ways except legal.

Art from Ancient Greece and Rome gives us a glimpse into the everyday life of the people. The fluid nature of sexuality at this time makes it impossible to accurately define the relationships that we see in these snapshots. The artworks in this paper show overlap in touch and gesture within nuptial and erotic art for heterosexual couples and female homosocial interactions. There is no definitive evidence to prove the motivations and intent in these depictions, but it would be an oversight to assume that the invisibility of female homosexual relationships is equal to their nonexistence. The parallels in gesture and symbolism of these artworks indicate a strong correlation in the meaning behind these works. With the visibility of male homosexuality, there is a need for the discussion of how these artworks of female relationships fit into studies of gender and sexuality in antiquity. In the artwork of Ancient Greece and Rome, there are intricacies in the interactions of women that are impossible to understand in our modern context. These works require research and discourse in order to enhance our understanding of female relationships and homosexuality in these societies.

[29] Hughes, "Unveiling the Veil," 233.

[30] Bernadette J Brooten, *Love between Women* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 60.

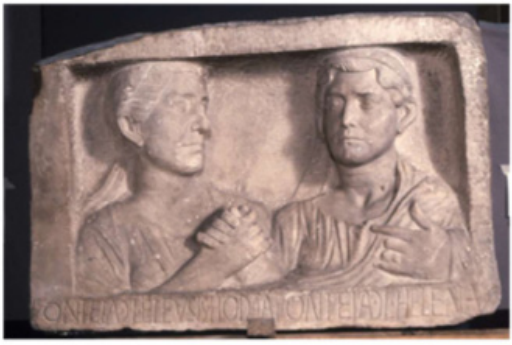

Fig. 1. *Relief of Fonteia Eleusis and Fonteia Helena*, c. 1st C BCE.
Marble, 53.75 x 56.25 cm. The British Museum, London.
Photo: The British Museum CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

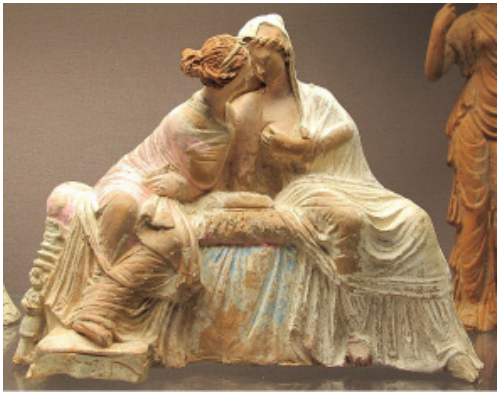

Fig. 2. *Two Seated Woman,* c. 100 BCE. Terracotta,
21 x 27.40 x 9.7 cm. The British Museum, London.
Photo: Wikimedia Commons

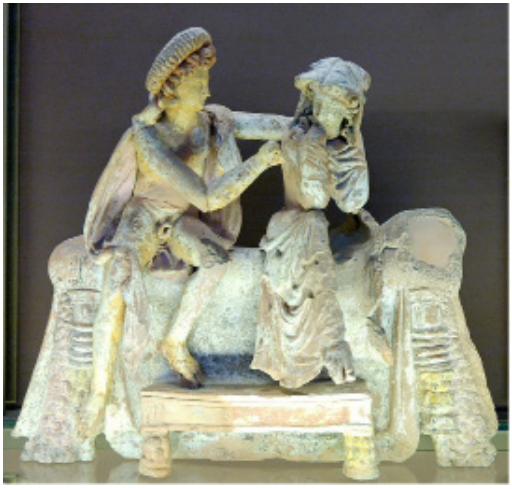

Fig. 3. Workshop of Nicostratos, *Scene of Anacalypsis, (Couple Bridal Bed)*, c. 150-100 BCE. Terracotta, 28 x 35 x 14 cm. Louvre Museum, Paris. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Fig. 4. *Funerary Relief of Publius Aiedius Amphio and Aiedia*, c. 30 BCE. Marble, 99 x 64 cm. Pergamon Museum, Berlin. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

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Marcel Duchamp and Rrose Sélavy: Gender as Readymade

– Cameron Christensen

Twice between 1920-1923, Marcel Duchamp posed for his friend Man Ray dressed as Rrose Sélavy. In this photo, Duchamp appears as a modern woman posed coyly in her fur trimmed coat and tasteful cloche hat. Rrose was not the first of his aliases, as he had already been using MarSélavy, Marcel Duchit, Martini, and many others in various publications.[1] But more than just a pseudonym, Rrose Sélavy was a major character and influence in Duchamp's life who shows up repeatedly in his artworks, publications, and even personal letters.[2] Duchamp used early twentieth-century concepts of the modern Jewish woman in his visual characterization of Rrose Sélavy in order to further subvert contemporary interpretations of gender and conflate her with the feminine commodity culture that emerged during WWI. Duchamp's interest in using mass-produced commercial products is already manifest with his ready mades such as *Fountain* and *Bottle Rack* but he develops this subversion with Rrose Sélavy. The connection between gender and mass production can be explored through Judith Butler's phenomenological gender theory that gender is a social reality made up of the repeated performances of individuals. Through this analysis the repetition of gender becomes its own mass-produced object that Duchamp asserts as art. Rrose Sélavy disrupts traditional gender ideology and becomes an attack on the bourgeois moralism that governed the European art world.

Subverting gender was a common theme throughout Duchamp's career that he explored even before Sélavy existed. In 1919, Duchamp drew a mustache and goatee on a reproduction of the Mona Lisa and titled it *L.H.O.O.Q.*, a French homonym for "elle a chaud au cul" ("there is a fire down below" or "she has a hot ass").[3] It was a defilement of academic

[1] Harvey, Robert. "Where's Duchamp?: Out Queering the Field." *Yale French Studies*, no. 109 (2006): 94.

[2] Marcel Duchamp, Marcel Duchamp to Florine, Ettie, and Carrie Stettheimer, September 1, 1921. Duchamp Research Portal, Philadelphia Museum of Art. Accessed December 2, 2024.

[3] Jack J. Spector, "Duchamp's Androgynous Leonardo: 'Queue' and 'Cul' in 'L.H.O.O.Q.'" *Source: Notes in the History of Art* 11, no. 1 (1991): 31.

art institutions that the Mona Lisa represented as well as a subversion of gender that included lewd eroticism. These provocative puns were common for Duchamp, with Rrose Sélavy's name being a French homonym for "eros, c'est la vie" (sex, that's life). The inclusion of the second "r" in Rrose references arrose, French for "to water", or colloquially meaning "to piss on" or to ejaculate.[4] Duchamp's artwork is rife with obscene and vulgar allusions that attack bourgeois sensibilities. Rrose Sélavy's gender subversion is an extension of this eroticism that he also uses to contend with the reigning narratives about male artists that had been emerging through the 19th and 20th centuries.

Duchamp's choice to represent himself through Rrose Sélavy was a radical rejection of traditional depictions of the male artist. Amelia Jones explains that modernist male artists established their image by maintaining creativity as their key attribute. This was done by rejecting bourgeois culture and the feminine domesticity associated with it. Two distinctive visual traditions sedimented themselves into male artist iconography: that of the elitist above the bourgeoisie or the populist below. Examples of these two paths can be found in the aristocratic dandy of Eugene Delacroix or the working peasant of Van Gogh.[5] Jones points out that both of these personas involve deliberate performance in the continuation of such archetypes. Duchamp chooses to eschew both of these traditions by being depicted as a woman so that "the artist as divinely inspired is effectively disembodied, and ostensibly de-sexed.. Rrose Sélavy challenges the art historical association of masculinity with artistic genius.

In order to create the image of Rrose Sélavy, Duchamp worked with his friend Man Ray who was an expert in fashion photography. The 1920s photograph of Marcel depicts Rrose Sélavy with her hand provocatively holding her fur in order to hide the sharp edges of her face. To call her a man masquerading as a woman would be incorrect, as her hands are not Duchamp's but are instead the artist Germaine Everling's. Rrose has progressed beyond imitation and has become a literal hermaphrodite.

[4] Johnson, Deborah. "R(r)Ose Sélavy as Man Ray: Reconsidering the Alter Ego of Marcel Duchamp." *Art Journal* 72, no. 1 (2013): 82.

[5] Jones, Amelia. "'Clothes Make the Man': The Male Artist as a Performative Function." *Oxford Art Journal* 18, no. 2 (1995): 19-22.

Sélavy engages with the viewer with an expression that is both confident and demure, reflecting the new independence women were attaining at the beginning of the twentieth century.[6] Duchamp has stylized Rrose as a modern woman through the use of modern commodities such as her fashionable jacket and hat, her carefully applied makeup, and the soft light that further feminizes her face. More than just an imitation of a woman, Rrose is also given a Jewish identity through her name. Duchamp called Rose an "ugly" Jewish name that is derived from Ruth, the first woman to convert to Judaism in the Hebrew bible.[7] Her last name includes "Levy" which was a common Jewish surname referencing the Levites. The reason for this characterization comes from the contemporaneous stereotype of the working Jewish woman.

During the mass emigration of Jews from Eastern Europe from 1880-1914, many Jewish women found themselves living in urban ghettos In New York and needing jobs. They mainly worked in garment industry sweatshops and ended up radicalized, becoming labor organizers, protesters, and suffragists. This led to the image of the modern Jewish woman as an active subject "wearing the pants in the family," thus masculinizing them.[8] Duchamp understood these stereotypes through his relationships with Ettie Stettheimer, Florine Stettheimer, and Gertrude Stein– all descendants of wealthy German-Jewish immigrants.[9] The most significant influence, however, was not a woman but his close friend Man Ray, who was instrumental in the creation of Sélavy. Ray was born Emmanuel Radnitsky, the son of Jewish immigrants from Russia, but changed his name in 1914 because of the antisemitism experienced both in his childhood as well as from the established Jews in America.[10] This change in identity through alias was not a new concept for artists and served as inspiration for Duchamp. Even Sonia Delaunay, the Jewish designer of the band around Sélavy's hat, used an alias instead of her given name, Sarah Stern.[11] However, unlike Man Ray, Sonia promoted her

[6] Johnson, "R(r)Ose Sélavy as Man Ray", 90-91.
[7] Johnson, "R(r)Ose Sélavy as Man Ray," 81.
[8] Johnson, "R(r)Ose Sélavy as Man Ray," 90-91.
[9] Johnson, "R(r)Ose Sélavy as Man Ray," 83-85.
[10] Johnson, "R(r)Ose Sélavy as Man Ray," 86.
[11] Johnson, "R(r)Ose Sélavy as Man Ray," 92.

Russian-Jewish heritage as a way to exoticize herself. Seeking that same provocative exoticism, Rrose's name emphasized her Jewish character and added complex layers to the gender subversion taking place. Her Jewishness redefines how her gender is supposed to operate within the artwork. A Jewish woman's gender functions differently in 1920's New York than a non-Jewish woman's gender does because the stereotypes surrounding Jewish women position them as more masculine. Duchamp is imitating a woman that is imitating a man which further emphasizes how gender is socially constructed.

Another characterization of women occurring at the time was a complicated conflation of commodity and femininity. During WWI women were the primary consumers and so became more prevalent in advertisements. Female bodies sold the products responsible for the growing economy and so were associated with the increased commodification of everyday life which in turn threatened the collapse of individualism.[12] At the same time, the Modern Woman was becoming more independent and threatening the boundaries between male and female. Amelia Jones discusses the overlap of these anxieties in "'Women' in Dada: Elsa, Rrose, and Charlie" when she states that the "Americanized New Woman, mapped onto the feminized machine image, figured the threat of industrial capitalism and the bourgeoisification of culture to Western masculinity."[13] Bourgeois culture and moralism was exactly what Dada artists were critiquing, and so feminized consumerism functioned as a tool that furthered the critique. Duchamp uses feminized machine imagery in his art, specifically *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors*, Even, to represent this deindividualizing commodity culture where "the machine enacts a two-way, bi-gendered flow, mapping gender as an effect of social processes rather than their predetermined foundation."[14] If concern for commodities was able to feminize a person, then gender is able to be influenced by cultural realities. All gendered imagery is influenced and thus manufactured by society. In response, Duchamp intentionally manufactures his own gender image through the use of commodities that

[12] Jones, Amelia. "Women' in Dada: Elsa, Rrose, and Charlie." in *Women and Dada: Essays on Sex, Gender, and Identity.* Edited by Naomi Sawelson-Gorse (MIT Press, 1999), 143.

[13] Jones, "Women in Dada," 147.

[14] Jones, "Women in Dada," 147.

are not typical of the male image. This construction of gender through objects and performances "worked in explosive antagonism to the veiled bourgeois moralism, utopian formalism, and romantic sentimentalism that … had reigned previously in the European art world."[15] Duchamp further ties Rrose Sélavy to consumer culture by putting her image on a perfume bottle in *Belle Haleine, Eau de Violette* found on the cover of his and Man Ray's magazine publication, *New York Dada*.[16] Duchamp has parodied a magazine advertisement where a personality or celebrity endorses a commercial product. With Sélavy's face on the label he is using cultural signifiers of femininity to "sell" the perfume and the magazine which further commodifies them. The association of feminine visuals with commercial products deepens the conflation of gender as a commodified object within his art.

This connection between gender and commodity can be analyzed in greater depth through Judith Butler's theory of gender performance. In "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" Butler argues that gender is not an identity from which acts proceed but rather an identity that is instituted through the "stylized repetition of acts through time".[17] These acts are performed by individuals through their mundane gestures, language, and many different symbolic social signs. This in turn constitutes our social reality which is maintained by the repetition of these acts, which repetition is both "a reenactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established."[18] The repeated performance of gender is essential to the maintenance of its meaning because it is the imitation of the established meaning that legitimizes it. This is the process that created the stereotypes about male artists and Jewish women that so heavily defined Rrose Sélavy's creation. Similarly, the repetition of manufactured commodities is an essential characteristic of his readymades since their controversy comes from their lack of unique artistic creation. Most famously with his *Fountain*, Duchamp procured a urinal from the showroom of J. L. Mott Iron Works

[15] Jones, "Women in Dada," 143.

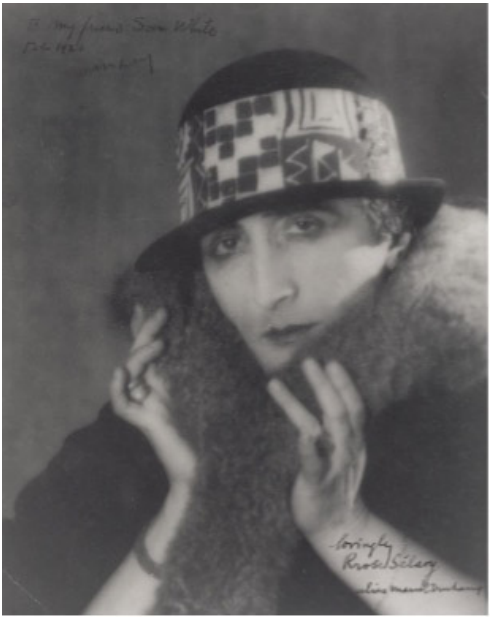
[16] Johnson, "R(r)Ose Sélavy as Man Ray", 91.

[17] Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 520.

[18] Butler, "Performative Acts," 526.

which displayed their plumbing in aestheticized recreations of bathrooms and lavatories.[19] This very literal stylized repetition of objects reenacted social interpretations of what a urinal was used for, and every object he chose had pre-existing directives defined by their commercialization. By changing the context of his readymade objects Duchamp eliminates their pre-existing directive and asserts a new directive. Gender can also be thought of as being "mass produced" by the repetition of individual acts that come together to construct repeated narratives, like the narrative about Jewish women in 1920's New York. The stereotype was created and enforced because of the widespread and similar actions of individual women. With Rrose Sélavy, the object or commodity is Sélavy's gender as the Modern Jewish Woman. Duchamp takes the commodities that denote womanhood, like fur jackets and makeup, and changes their context by applying them to his male artist body. The resulting image eliminates the pre-existing directive of his male gender and also her female gender. In Man Ray's photograph Duchamp does not function as Duchamp, he is acknowledged to be Rrose Sélavy through the signature in the corner and the title of the work. Yet Rrose isn't real and cannot function as the Modern Jewish woman she is manufactured to be. Rrose Sélavy is not a man, she is not a woman, she is art. Through this elevation in function Duchamp reveals that gender is a mass-produced performance and the subversion of such is a work of art worth repeating.

[19] Paul B. Franklin, "Object Choice: Marcel Duchamp's Fountain and the Art of Queer Art History." *Oxford Art Journal* 23, no. 1 (2000): 31.



Photograph of Marcel Duchamp as Rrose Sélavy
by Man Ray, circa 1920-1921.
Photo: Philadelphia Museum of Art

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Moral Value of Breastfeeding: Mothers and Wet-Nurses in the Dutch Seventeenth Century

– Rachel Berg

In the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, motherhood was not merely a biological role but a moral and spiritual responsibility, deeply embedded in religious and cultural ideals. Central to this expectation was the practice of maternal breastfeeding, which was exalted as a sacred duty, reinforcing the mother's role as the moral and spiritual pillar of the household. Religious leaders, poets and artists alike celebrated the act of nursing as a direct transmission of virtue from mother to child, elevating it beyond mere nourishment to a symbol of purity and devotion. Seventeenth-century texts, such as Jacob Cat's *Houwelyck,* and paintings by figures like Rembrandt and Nicholaes Maes reinforced this ideal, depicting breastfeeding mothers as paragons of virtue. Conversely, the use of wet nurses was met with suspicion and criticism, perceived as a deviation from maternal duty that could introduce moral and physical corruption. This paper examines how literature and art of the period framed maternal breastfeeding as an essential virtue, while creating negative and ambiguous portrayals of wet nurses, revealing tensions between societal ideals and the practical realities of childcare in the Dutch Republic.

According to contemporary medical theory, a mother's breast milk was her blood that nursed the fetus in the womb, turned white within the breast, and was imbued with moral virtue.[1] Similarly, other authors of the time promoted maternal nursing as an essential duty. In 1781, Professor J.H. Swilden published a writing lesson book that explained the letter 'M' through a plea for maternal breastfeeding, arguing that neglecting this duty undermined "the whole well-being of society."[2] Betje Wolff, in her popular novel *Willem Leevend*, took a similar stance, portraying mothers

[1] Wayne E. Franits, *Paragons of Virtue: Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 114.

[2] Rudolf Dekker, *Childhood, Memory and Autobiography in Holland: From the Golden Age to Romanticism* (Early Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 93.

who refused to nurse their own children as degenerate and immoral.[3] The prominent Reformed Church also endorsed maternal breastfeeding, asserting that a mother who nursed her children was pleasing to God, while one who refused was considered an abomination. Religious leaders often pointed to nature, where animals instinctively nurse their young, as a divine model for human motherhood.[4]

Both authors and artists of the period drew upon historical imagery to support their arguments about the moral significance of maternal breastfeeding. Rembrandt's *The Holy Family* (1632) (Fig. 1) shows Mary nursing Jesus during their flight to Egypt, reinforcing the sanctity of maternal care. This image helped popularize the theme of nursing mothers in sacred contexts.[5] Nicolaes Maes' *Nursing Mother with Maid* (c. 1680) (Fig. 2), further exemplifies this concept, blending sacred and domestic themes to depict breastfeeding as a spiritual and moral act central to the household. The mother, sitting frontally under a high arch, is presented in a composition reminiscent of traditional Madonna and Child images set within a church interior. Her gaze remains fixed on the infant, while a nurse kneels in a manner reminiscent of the Magi offering gifts to Christ. Through this composition, Maes elevates the Dutch home into a sacred space, reinforcing the women's role as a moral guide.

Furthering the religious association of maternal nursing, Gijsbert Janszoon Sibilla's painting *Nursing Woman in Interior of Laurentiuskerk* (1635) (Fig. 3) emphasizes the spirituality of breastfeeding by showing a mother nursing openly during a sermon.[6] Seated among the congregation, she nurses quietly while paying attention to the sermon, associating her activity with respect and reverence. The praise of maternal nursing by both the church and the Dutch culture is evident in Sibilla's reverent painting. The same comparison is made by Johan de Brune in his *Emblemata of*

[3] Dekker, *Childhood, Memory and Autobiography*, 93.

[4] Christina Sorrell Dick, "The Mother in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art" (Master's thesis, University of Alabama at Birmingham, 2009), 13.

[5] Dekker, *Childhood, Memory and Autobiography*, 92.

[6] Eddy de Jongh, *Faces of the Golden Age: Seventeenth-Century Dutch Portraits*, exh. cat., (Tokyo Station Gallery, 1994), 58.

Zinne Werck: "God nurses us with his word," (1661) (Fig. 4).[7] The emblem shows a holy figure holding a child while the mother sleeps. Without the mother present to nourish her child, the baby asks for nourishment from the holy figure, and he accepts. Sanctioned by the church as a spiritual act, artists used emblems and interior paintings to endorse maternal nursing and motherhood.

In addition to being depicted as a divine nurturer, mothers were also represented as the spiritual and moral pillar of the household. This role aligned with Dutch ideals of child-rearing, which emphasized that children absorbed the behaviors and values modeled by their parents. Mothers and their servants, therefore, were expected to regulate their own conduct with the awareness that children would imitate them.[8] Caspar Netscher's *Nursing Woman with Three Girls* (1675) (Fig. 5) illustrates the idea of highly impressionable children looking to their mother as a virtuous example. Netscher shows a mother nursing an infant while the older children perform tasks traditionally associated with adult women, such as lacemaking and tending to the animals. The scene would have reminded viewers of the proverb "like mother, like daughter," and the 1624 emblem by Johan de Brune, "Even when it is small, they are alike" (Fig. 6).[9] De Brune's emblem is similar to the composition of Netscher's piece. It shows a child mimicking the character and dress of two women seated beside her, demonstrating the impressionability of children. A contemporary author writes, "our Lorde God… after he had created our children with his own precious blood hath redeemed them, and committed them to our trust and keeping, to be carefully governed, and diligently instructed."[10] Netscher's painting visually reinforces this concept by depicting the mother as the central moral guide, nurturing not only the infant but also instilling self-discipline and virtue in her older daughters through domestic tasks. By becoming a mother, one also becomes the source of virtue for a household and is responsible for actively controlling the pollution of immorality.

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[7] Johan de Brune, *Emblemata of Zinne-Werck* (Jan Everts Kloppenburch, 1624), 75.

[8] Franits, *Paragons of Virtue*, 108.

[9] De Brune, *Emblemata*, 31.

[10] Franits, *Paragons of Virtue*, 112.

In contrast to the virtuous connotations of maternal nursing, breastfeeding from a wet-nurse was highly stigmatized in the Dutch Republic. Beginning in the Middle Ages and continuing into the seventeenth century, it was common in areas like France and Italy to send infants off to be nursed by wet-nurses. Cultural beliefs in these areas stated that nursing could weaken the mother's body and was considered vulgar and unattractive. Other reasons for hiring a wet nurse included a woman's incapability of producing milk, avoiding sexual abstinence, which was encouraged during breastfeeding, and the economic benefit of returning to work sooner.[11] However, the outsourcing of childcare to wet nurses often led to neglect and infant mortality.[12] In one parish in Hertfordshire, England over 1,400 children were buried during the seventeenth-century with the same wet nurse's names appearing in the records.[13] The practice of wet nursing, therefore, was not just viewed as an inferior alternative but as a failure of maternal duty and a source of moral corruption that could result in physical harm.

Warnings against the use of wet-nurses gained popularity in both literary and artistic sources throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Jacob Cats' *Houwelyck* was a widely popular guide to marriage and domestic life and used poetry, proverbs, and illustrations to instruct young women on the virtues of motherhood. Cats often wrote about the child's ability to adopt the wet nurse's character and warned that a child would love their wet nurse more than their mother.[14] Pieter de Hooch's *Nursing Mother, and Child with Serving Maid* (1663) (Fig. 7) visually reinforces the Dutch stigma against wet-nurses. In an interior setting, a mother is sitting nursing her baby, while one of her house maids is pulled towards the door by an older child. Although the mother appears wealthy enough to afford a maid for household duties, she still chooses to nurse her

[11] Sarah F. Mathews-Grieco, "Breastfeeding, Wet Nursing and Infant Mortality in Europe (1400-1800)," in *Historical Perspectives on Breastfeeding*, ed. Sarah F. Mathews-Grieco and Carlo A. Corsini (UNICEF, 1991), 27.

[12] Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (Vintage Books, 1997), 539.

[13] Matthews-Greico, *Breastfeeding in Europe*, 32.

[14] Franits, *Paragons of Virtue*, 115.

own child, signaling an emerging cultural expectation that mothers should fulfill this role personally rather than relying on wet-nurses.

Literary works echoed this sentiment, often characterizing mothers who employed wet-nurses as negligent or indulgent. In the Dutch dramatic farce *Kraambedt of kandeel-maal van Zaartje Jans, vrouw van Jan Klaazen* (1684), playwright Thomas Asselijn critiques such women as weak and engaging in "pure extravagance."[15] Concerns also extended to the physical well-being of wet-nurses themselves, as many were believed to be in poor health and at risk of passing on diseases to the infants in their care. In 1791, Reverend Ijsbrand van Hamelsveld wrote that wet-nurses were usually "unwed mothers from the lowest walks of life," reinforcing the perception that hiring them invited both moral and physical corruption into the household. S. Chalmot's Dutch Encyclopedia *Algemeen Woordenboek* (1778) addresses the concern that wet-nurses would give their own babies the most and best milk, leading to malnourishment for other children.[16] A satirical guidebook *De Beurs der Vrouwen* (1690) published under the pseudonym Publius Felicius, uses humor and irony to issue sharp critiques of wet-nurses. It warns that these women "are so sluttish and slothful, they let everything lie around getting filthy and stinking."[17] While this statement is written for comedic effect, there was truth to the fear that wet-nurses could cause internal and external pollution to the family. This recurring theme across these sources manifests an enduring concern in Dutch society over the potential risks of entrusting infant care to outsiders.

Due to the criticism of wet nurses in the Dutch Republic, they were typically hired only in cases of necessity, when the mother could not provide sufficient nourishment. Husbands were responsible for choosing the nurse and paying close attention to their character. Hired wet nurses typically lived within the household, offering a measure of control over the child's care, thus mitigating some of the fears associated with the practice. In seventeenth-century Dutch art, wet-nurses were rarely recognized or depicted. If nurses were included in paintings, it was to warn against the pollution they brought to the home, and to depict the measure of

[15] Dekker, *Childhood, Memory and Autobiography*, 92.

[16] Dekker, *Childhood, Memory and Autobiography*, 93.

[17] Schama, *Embarrassment of Riches*, 454.

control a mother must give in overseeing the nurse.[18] While Dutch artists sought to replicate reality, their compositions were also influenced by the popular imagery of the day. Consequently, contemporary value systems often promoted negative depictions of wet nurses.[19] Furthermore, artists themselves hid hired houseworkers in paintings by situating them in the background or cutting them off in framing, making them difficult to identify.[20] In some cases, especially later in the century, patrons desired that nurses be included in family portraits because of the close connection between the child and the nurse. In these instances, the nurse is identified by her plain black and white clothing, usually passed down from the mother of the home.

Challenging prevailing traditions and offering a nuanced perspective, Frans Hals portrayed the close, familial relationship between wet nurse and child. In *Catherina Hooft at the Age of Two Years with her Wet Nurse* (1619-20) (Fig. 8), Hals celebrates the bond between the nurse and child, depicting the nurse in a more intimate and positive light. The nurse is identified by her dated ruff, which contrasts sharply with the baby's sumptuous lace bib and gold jewelry. In a close, intimate setting, the nurse holds the child on her lap and dangles a toy near her, with both subjects seeming happy and comfortable. The nurse holds a golden apple near the child to focus her attention, which is a "distracted child" motif used often during this time to represent the child's choice between virtue and vice, rooted in the Dutch's value of child-rearing.[21] However, the warmth and joy in their interaction suggest a different interpretation. Rather than a warning about moral distraction, the apple here symbolizes the balanced and affectionate relationship between the wet nurse and the child's family.

Despite moral guidebooks and church orders portraying wet nurses as impure and incompetent, some examples deviate from this assumption.

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[18] Schama, *Embarrassment of Riches*, 457-458.

[19] Gerard Koot, *The Portrayal of Women in Dutch Art of the Golden Age: Courtship, Marriage and Old Age* (University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, 2015), 8.

[20] Diane Wolfthal, "Foregrounding the Background: Images of Dutch and Flemish Household Servants," in *Women and Gender in the Early Modern Low Countries,* ed. Amanda Pipkin and Sarah Joan Moran (Brill, 2019), 233.

[21] Mary Frances Durantini, *The Child in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting,* (UMI Research Press, 1983), 11.

Hals' painting stands out in Dutch art for its positive depiction, aligning with sentiments expressed by seventeenth-century Dutch poet Constantijn Huygen, who wrote of a wet nurse he hired: "She was a good, kind-hearted woman with a healthy constitution and a steadfast disposition."[22] While such portrayals were uncommon, some artists and writers explored the complexities of these household roles, at times subverting traditional expectations and inviting a reevaluation of societal norms.

Joost van Geel's *Interior with a Mother, a Nurse and an Infant* (1660-1680) (Fig. 9) is a distracted child scene that uses ambiguity to invite the viewer to contemplate virtue and vice. A standing woman distracts a child from nursing by dangling a toy above them, showing the child's innate interest in disobedience. The seventeenth-century biographer Arnold Houbraken found this piece striking, arguing that the roles of mother and wet nurse seem to be ambiguous or reversed. Houbraken claims that woman on whose lap the child is sitting is the nurse because of her simple dress.[23] These subjects typically would have been put together to show the measure of control mothers should have over wet nurses. Reversing these roles, Houbraken challenges societal assumptions. Houbraken's reading is supported by historical analysis of women's clothing; however, it challenge's contemporary ideas about the roles of wet nurses and mothers.

Mary Durantini counters Houbraken's interpretation by claiming that it "greatly complicates the implications of the choice between vice and virtue by not having the mother serve as the child's nurse. Now the mother is associated with vice and temptation and the nurse with virtue—a notion largely contrary to the prevailing thought."[24] Durantini strengthens her claims by comparing van Geel's painting with Gerard Dou's *The Young Mother* (1655-60) (Fig. 10). In Dou's painting, the distracting rattle toy is widely accepted as an emblem representing fleeting worldly pleasure. Durantini points to the elimination of the typical rattle and other moralizing features in *Interior with a Mother, a Nurse and an Infant* as emphasizing the contrast between the women's clothing. She claims that the seated woman holding the child must be the mother, and her simple dress represents her

[22] Dekker, *Childhood, Memory and Autobiography*, 26.

[23] Durantini, *The Child in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting* 16.

[24] Durantini, *The Child in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting*, 16.

role as "Natura." The standing woman is the personification of Venus or sensual pleasure, making the child's decision a choice between virtue and vice which aligns with the role of distracted child scenes. Durantini's view exposes anxieties about the fragility of domestic virtue, embracing the sentiment that women are moral stewards of the home. In this sense, Durantini's and Houbraken's arguments are not so contrary to each other, as they both illustrate the cultural tensions regarding women's roles as moral and spiritual guides within the home.

Ultimately, the discourse surrounding maternal breastfeeding and wet nursing in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic reflects broader cultural anxieties about morality, virtue, and the role of women in the household. Through literature, religious texts, and visual art, maternal breastfeeding was elevated as a sacred duty, reinforcing the mother's role as a moral guide and protector of domestic purity. In contrast, wet nurses were often stigmatized as a source of potential corruption, representing a deviation from idealized motherhood. Although wet nurses were often viewed with suspicion, a realistic evaluation of the practice through literature and art suggest a more complex reality, where their role in childcare was both indispensable and subject to moral scrutiny.

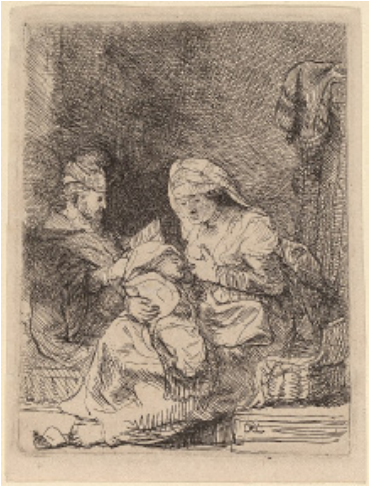


Fig. 1. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Holy Family*, 1632. Etching,
3-3/4 in. x 2-7/8 in., WNational Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
Photo: Wikimedia Commons

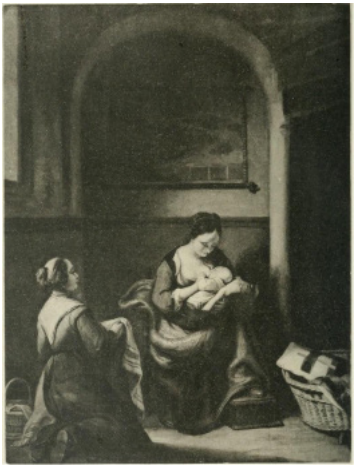


Fig. 2. Nicolaes Maes, *Nursing Mother with Maid*, c.1680.
Oil on panel. Private collection.
Photo: Wikimedia Commons

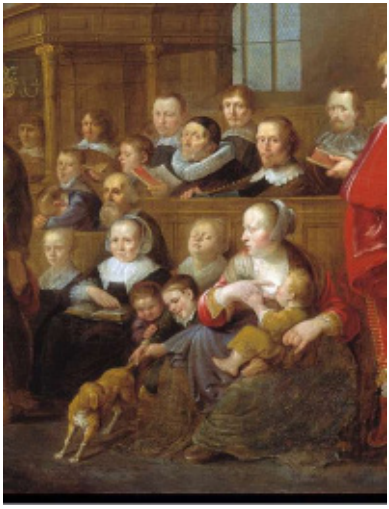
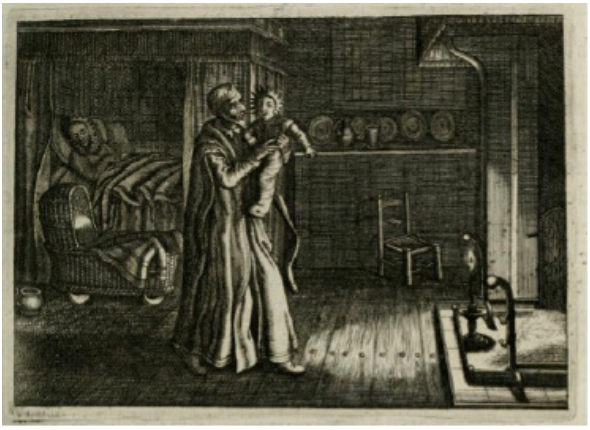


Fig. 3. Gijsbert Janszoon Sibilla,
Nursing Woman in Interior of Laurentiuskerk, 1635.



VFig. 4. Johan de Brune, "Schreeuw, in de nood, naer s'hemels brood,"
in *Emblemata of Zinne-Werck* 1624.
Photo: *Emblemata,* Public domain

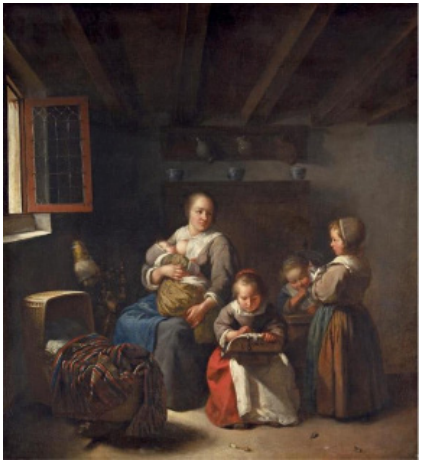


Fig. 5. Caspar Netscher, *Nursing Mother with Three Girls*, 1675.
Oil on canvas, 21.4 in. x 18.9 in. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
Photo: Wikimedia Commons

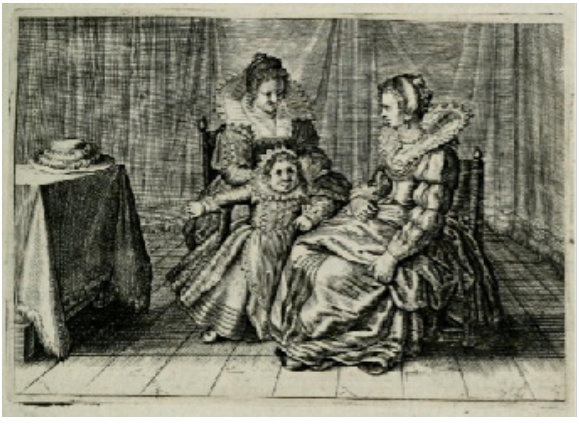


Fig. 6. Johan de Brune*, Emblemata of Zinne-werck,*
"'t is al te kleyn als 't is ghemeyn", 1661.
Photo: *Emblemata,* Public domain

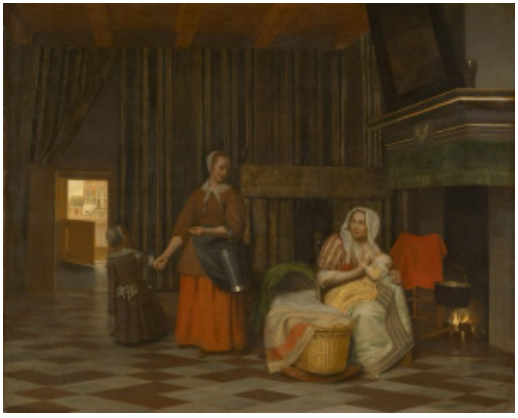


Fig. 7. Pieter de Hooch, *Nursing Mother, and Child with Serving Maid*, 1663-65.
Oil on canvas, 25.1 in. x 29.9 in. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
Photo: Wikimedia Commons

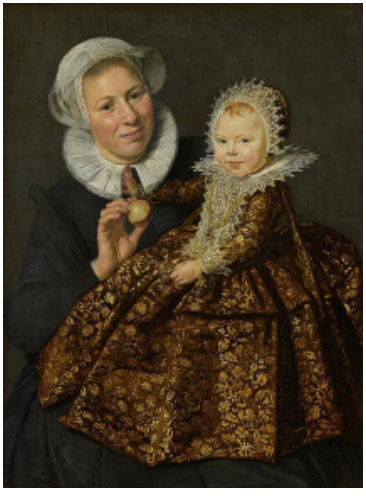


Fig. 8. Frans Hals, *Catharina Hooft and Her Wet Nurse*, 1619-20.
Oil on canvas, 26. 7 in. x 25.5 in. Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.
Photo: Wikimedia Commons

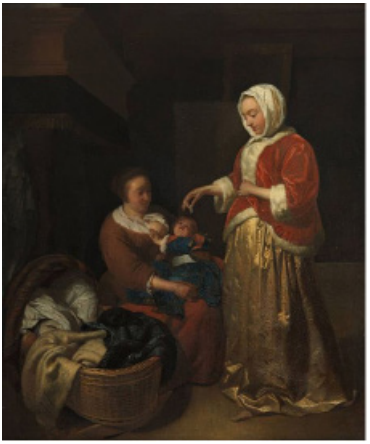


Fig. 9. Joost van Geel*, Interior with a Mother, a Nurse and an Infant,* 1660-1680. Oil on panel, 13. 9 in. x 11.6 in. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

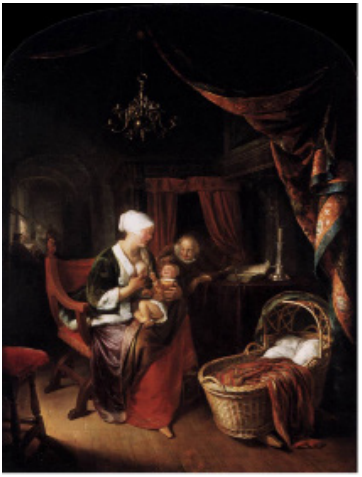


Fig. 10. Gerard Dou, *The Young Mother*, 1655-60. Oil on oak wood, 19.2 in x 14.5 in. Gemäldegalerie, Berlin. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

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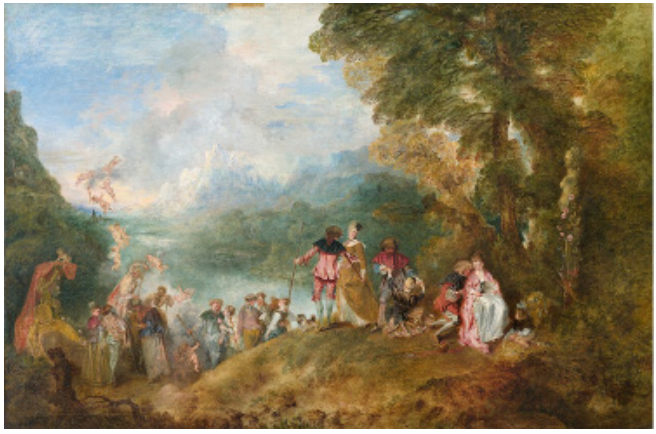
My Escape to a Melancholic Cythera

– Anna Cline

Within *Pilgrimage to Cythera,* painted in 1717 for his reception into the Academy, Antoine Watteau explores the idyllic escape to Cythera, and the freedom offered through his new interpretation of this enchanting isle. The painting focuses on a group of pilgrims, coupled off leading towards a docked boat at Cythera, the birth island of the goddess Venus. Although unclear if they are coming or going, the couples appear to be engaged in tender displays of affection. Throughout the visual journey through the painting, I am left with a sense of fulfilled longing, despite the euphoric engagement of each couple, generating a nostalgic desire for the frivolity of the mythical island of love. Hidden within the greenery of the trees on the right is a statue of Venus, goddess of love. Dancing from the bough of the boat on the left, weaving through the pilgrims' clothes, and leading to the statuesque representation of Venus, the subtle line of pink roses implies the goddess's touch with the revelers, leading towards the island in the distance where the pilgrims' journey of love ultimately originates.



Antoine Watteau, *Pilgrimage to Cythera,* 1717
Photo: Wikimedia Commons

My first encounter with this painting took me on a journey to the isle of Cythera. The fleeting joy of the pilgrims was the original emotion that drew me to their journey. How could something presumably so joyous and frivolous have a melancholic undertone? With Cythera as their destination, whether they are returning or embarking, something more about their destination must play a role in how their revelry contains a more solemn outlook. The air of a comforting mystery that draws me to the distant island is what eventually involves me into the story of the painting. Each couple, engaged with different levels of intimacy in their interaction as they lead to the bank, exemplifies the stages of the journey of love. Following the path to the boat, I found myself lost within the intimate moments of the couples, dancing and courting without any awareness of the world around them on their journey to the island of love.

A common subject in Watteau's repertoire, Cythera's significance within the cultural landscape of aristocratic France takes on a new aspect rather unexplored in the island's mythological significance; one of not only a lovers' sanctuary, but one of a liberating paradise. Watteau, although connecting Cythera to traditional depictions of romantic bliss, imbues the island with a melancholy air. In the words of Brigitte Le Juez, "This ambiguity marks the beginning of a new interpretation of Cythera: the invitation to a celebration of love in the middle of an enchanting, natural environment is now progressively perceived as a journey to an ephemeral paradise."[1] *Pilgrimage to Cythera* encapsulates both the revelry of passionate love along the pilgrimage and the lingering aimlessness of the fleeting euphoria of the proverbial journey to the island of love.

Drawing on newly emerging trends within the arts, Classical myths and the Homeric epics commonly depicted by artists represented "monarchial propaganda and with its regulation by the academies."[2] Cythera had transformed beyond its physical and erotic interpretations of the past for the aristocratic audience to represent a utopian paradise free from the

[1] Brigitte Le Juez, "The Eternal Return Interrupted: the evolution of the myth of Cythera until today," *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics* 40, no. 2 (2017): 70, https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.uvu.edu/apps/doc/A597253069/AONE?u=utahvalley&sid=ebsco&xid=eb6a7ff4.

[2] Georgia Cowart, "Watteau's 'Pilgrimage to Cythera' and the Subversive Utopia of the Opera-Ballet," *The Art Bulletin* 83 no. 3 (2001): 474, doi:10.2307/3177238.

oppressive regime of the royal court. The Paris Opera, which had become increasingly popular entertainment for the aristocracy as the power of Louis XIV waned, often used Cythera as "an anti-absolutist utopia" in its critical message against Louis XIV.[3]

Further connecting to aristocratic daydreams of freedom, Cythera came to be viewed as an escape from the oppressive authority of the king and the restrictions he imposed on his court. After the popularization of subversive Cythera, and the following Revolution, poets soon wrote of the Watteauesque Cythera. The revitalization of Rococo literature in the latter half of the nineteenth century once again returned to a nostalgic version of the island of love, but often held unsavory undertones associated with the isle.

While providing a temporary escape for the pilgrims from the harsh realities around them, *Pilgrimage to Cythera* encapsulates my own journey to escape the often somber and terrifying reality I live in daily. Like immersing myself in a good book, there is always a melancholic pull back to the realities of life, knowing that the moment of joy is fleeting. Watching the couples' blissfully unaware joy despite the undertone of sadness reminds me of the importance of escapism in how I experience my life. Anxieties are often always looming in the back of my mind, but focusing on the ephemeral joy in the moment brings a greater sense of balance to the roller coaster of human emotions. Escaping to something brighter or more promising, even if for a moment, gives levity to the uncertainty in the world around me. Escapism is only ever a temporary solution and only grants momentary relief. Fortunately, like the isle waiting in the distance, escapism can be revisited time and time again.

Most people see this, like other art of the French Rococo, as frivolous and flaunting the status and wealth of the aristocracy. They cannot be further from the true message of the painting. Each of these couples, with their wanton abandon of the real world, find satisfaction and personal freedom within their journey to the isle. The soft colors and the undefined background give the entire painting a dreamy quality, drawing me further into the narrative and emotion. This painting, seemingly about

[3] Cowart, 464.

nothing, encapsulates an idyllic escape, one that can only last a short time. And, when the moment has passed, it leaves us with a feeling of wanting, exemplified through the melancholic undertones of the painting as we ponder the escape Cythera offers for the pilgrims further.

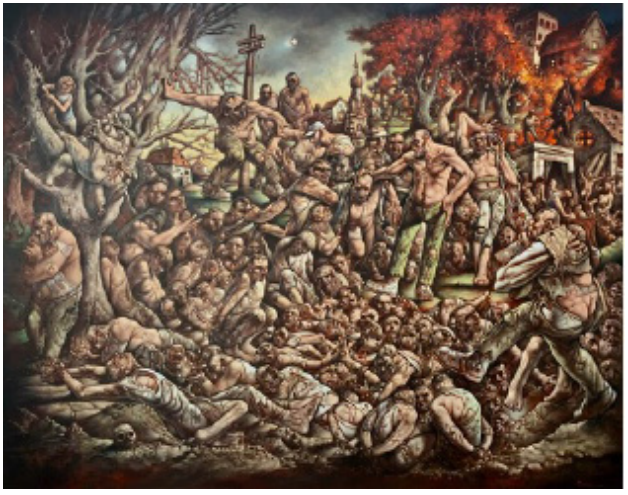
Meditations on Art and Belief

– Brittany Falkner Lund

Recently, I had the opportunity to travel to the United Kingdom, where I encountered so much incredible art. I could spend hours discussing my experience, giving details about all the elaborate castles and cathedrals, the magnificent British Museum, the luscious green fields with thousands of sheep, the quaint country villages, and the relaxing lochs. What I want to focus on, however, is one painting that had a profound impact on me and the special location in which I found it.

I took a day trip with my traveling companions, riding the train from Edinburgh to Glasgow with a plan to visit the Glasgow Cathedral. The walk from the train station to the Cathedral Precinct was invigorating as I looked around at the beautiful fall leaves. We took a guided tour with a kind old priest who seemed to know every possible detail about the ancient, chilly building. It was an interesting church with a rich history and some fun details (it being one of the filming locations for *Outlander*, a favorite television show of mine). The tour was quite long, and my feet were tired from the miles of walking on concrete and cobblestone that we had done on the trip up to that point. Some members of our group wanted to walk up the hill through the cemetery behind the church (where supposedly there's an *incredible* view), but I wanted to find a place to rest my feet. My husband and I decided to visit the St. Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art, which is located down the cobblestone path southeast of the cathedral. After entering the building and realizing there is not much on the first floor besides restrooms and a small gift shop, we went up the winding staircase to the first level of the exhibits. It wasn't busy, and I did what I always do at museums if given the chance; I took my time and rested wherever a seat was presented. I was enthralled with the details on display inside this small castle-like building. It was not a place I had heard of before, but one I will never forget. It is named for St. Mungo, the patron saint of Glasgow, who is credited for bringing Christianity to the city in the 6th century. Works of art are arranged in a way to educate about religion

and belief. Because many atrocities have been carried out in the name of religion, there were some powerfully violent and emotional pieces as well.



Massacre of Srebrenica, 2019 by Peter Howson, Glasgow, UK
Photo: Brittany Lund

One such painting is entitled *Massacre of Srebrenica* (2019) by Peter Howson, a Glasgow native who served as an official war artist during the Bosnian Civil War. This was one of the largest works on display, covering a large portion of a wall in the main gallery space on the second floor of the museum. This dark, brutal painting was especially hard to look at, considering the atrocities it portrayed. In Srebrenica, Bosnia, in 1995, over 8,000 Muslim men and boys were killed in what is now considered a genocide or ethnic cleansing. As my eyes moved around the piece, I contemplated how humans could get to a place mentally where they could do such harm. I don't know if I will ever understand, but I think it's important to be *aware*. We need to be aware of the horrors enacted on people because it may help those who suffer to heal. Awareness also helps us to not repeat patterns of violence and harm from the past. One startling thing about the painting, in addition to the blood and gore, is the young girl who sits in a tree, watching the atrocity take place. She serves as a stark

reminder of the innocence all humans start life with. She also makes me think of the powerful influence harmful ideas can have on generations of humans.

The museum had many other pieces important to specific religions, and I enjoyed learning about different beliefs and cultures surrounding them. I have already forgotten many details of them, but *Massacre of Srebrenica* will remain with me forever, as so many powerful pieces of art have done throughout my life. As I looked through the photos taken at this location, I couldn't help but ponder the irony of my husband's hat and T-shirt, which have symbols from our religion proudly displayed. His alma mater, Brigham Young University, is named after a past leader of our church, which has its own complicated history. I believe it is important to condemn wrongdoings, especially by institutions or groups with destructive beliefs and immense power to harm, but I don't believe it is necessary to completely erase entire belief systems when harm has been done in the name of religion. I understand why people choose to stop participating in religion depending on their unique circumstances. I believe actions such as this ethnic cleansing would not take place if more people stood up to damaging messaging that tells us certain people are bad just because of how they believe or who they are. After grabbing some delicious hot cocoa from a Tardis (aka Police Box) coffee stand, we walked along the road to the train station and were able to see a couple of murals on buildings of St. Mungo himself, portrayed in a modern style. The first one was him looking quite ordinary and holding a bird on his finger. The second was of him as a babe in his mother's arms. I like this reminder that even saints with buildings, cities, or museums named after them were human, too. These murals gave me a hopeful feeling as I pondered the weight of religion and various beliefs around the world. I love art that makes me contemplate the hard parts of humanity as well as the good.

Into the Void

– Isaac Hansen

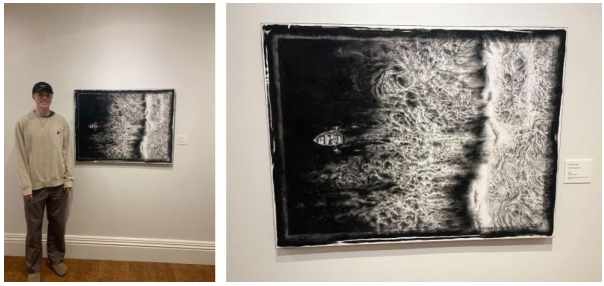
As a health science major who grew up in a family with no particular interest in art, I lacked exposure to art for most of my life. This was the case until I met my girlfriend, whose passion and knowledge for it led to an explosion of curiosity and appreciation for me. Taking trips to art museums, exploring books, and attending symposiums have all developed my liking for pieces of various styles. One such piece I discovered at the UVU art museum is titled *Into the Void* by Terrel Van Leeuwen.

Drawn using Conté crayon, the intricate strokes, shading, and detail of *Into the Void* create an elaborate portrayal of a man rowing a small boat away from a breaking wave. The painting is split into thirds: starting on the left, we see the black void the boat is rowing in; then we move into the approaching wave in the center; and finally, at the right, the break and the swirl of the wave. The sharp contrast between the tumultuous crashing of the waves and the calm of the space beyond is highlighted in the apt title. I find the man's location and direction of travel intriguing as he journeys into the void. Not only has he fought through the relentless waves, but he is also pressing on in his journey. He has overcome the obstacles in his own way despite the apparent force and confusion that Van Leeuwen portrays. In our lives, trials serve as barriers we must push through to reach the calm beyond. Whether this is overcoming fear or doubt, managing stress, or mastering a learning curve, everyone has their own figurative wave to push through.

An additional fascinating aspect of the drawing is the mysterious and slightly ominous feel of the "void" beyond the wave, which, despite being only a third of the work, feels much larger due to its emptiness and the way the boat is postured to move further into this space. Van Leeuwen adds to this feeling by pushing his art past the confines of the paintings border and out into the frame beyond, implying that there is more happening in this story than meets the eye. This theme of pushing past borders is further accentuated by the three sections of the painting, which, despite being separate, are irregular and disorganized at the borders, merging into

each other. This theme of pushing past borders and overcoming obstacles resonates with me because of how universally it is experienced; we can all reflect and learn from it. I am at a time in my life when I am constantly pushing myself in school, in work, and in my relationships to become a better student and person. I have found that while difficult, it is incredibly rewarding to improve myself and track my progress from where I was. It can be comforting to think that despite our challenges, there is calm beyond the storm.

One final aspect of the piece that I find interesting is how small the boat and man are compared to the vastness of the waves. Van Leeuwen accentuates the concept of the sublime in his artwork by contrasting the size of the boat with the size of the wave and how it dominates the frame. To be in the boat would mean to be in awe of the power of the wave and feel relief to be past it. The grandeur of the wave is captured in Van Leeuwen's style with each swirl captured in fine detail. Terrel Van Leeuwen strikingly captures the theme of pushing past obstacles in *Into the Void*. His remarkable detail and talent make for an engaging piece I thoroughly enjoyed experiencing and analyzing. Despite my inexperience and naivety in interpreting art, *Into the Void* stood out to me with its themes and design, and I feel like they feelings it evokes are ones that many people can also resonate with.



Isaac Hansen and *Into the Void.*
Photo: Isaac Hansen.