we typically accept as defining modernity.

In the diaries of the artist Marie Bashkirtseff, who lived and worked in Paris during the same period as Morisot and Cassatt, the following passage reveals some of the restraints:

> What I long for is the freedom of going about alone, of coming and going, of sitting in the seats of the Tuileries, and especially in the Luxembourg, of stopping and looking at the artistic shops, of entering churches and museums, of walking about old streets at night; that's what I long for; and that's the freedom without which one cannot become a real artist. Do you imagine that I get much good from what I see, chaperoned as I am, and when, in order to go to the Louvre, I must wait for my carriage, my lady companion, my family?[27]

These territories of the bourgeois city were however not only gendered on a male/female polarity. They became the sites for the negotiation of gendered class identities and class gender positions. The spaces of modernity are where class and gender interface in critical ways, in that they are the spaces of sexual exchange. The significant spaces of modernity are neither simply those of masculinity, nor are they those of femininity which are as much the spaces of modernity for being the negative of the streets and bars. They are, as the canonical works indicate, the marginal or interstitial spaces where the fields of the masculine and feminine intersect and structure sexuality within a classed order.

THE PAINTER OF MODERN LIFE

One text above all charts this interaction of class and gender. In 1863 Charles Baudelaire published in *Le Figaro* an essay entitled 'The painter of modern life'. In this text the figure of the flâneur is modified to become the modern artist while at the same time the text provides a mapping of Paris marking out the sites/sights for the flâneur/artist. The essay is ostensibly about the work of a minor illustrator Constantin Guys but he is only a pretext for Baudelaire to weave an elaborate and impossible image of his ideal artist who is a passionate lover of crowds, and incognito, a man of the world.

> The crowd is his element as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the

> infinite. To be away from home and yet feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world and to be the centre of the world and yet remain hidden from the world – such are a few of the slightest pleasures of those independent, passionate, impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define. The spectator is a *prince* and everywhere rejoices in his incognito. The lover of life makes the whole world his family.[28]

The text is structured by an opposition between home, the inside domain of the known and constrained personality and the outside, the space of freedom, where there is liberty to look without being watched or even recognized in the act of looking. It is the imagined freedom of the voyeur. In the crowd the flâneur/artist sets up home. Thus the flâneur/artist is articulated across the twin ideological formations of modern bourgeois society – the splitting of private and public with its double freedom for men in the public space, and the pre-eminence of a detached observing gaze, whose possession and power is never questioned as its basis in the hierarchy of the sexes is never acknowledged. For as Janet Wolff has recently argued, there is no female equivalent of the quintessential masculine figure, the flâneur; there is not and could not be a female flâneuse. (See note 15.)

Women did not enjoy the freedom of incognito in the crowd. They were never positioned as the normal occupants of the public realm. They did not have the right to look, to stare, scrutinize or watch. As the Baudelairean text goes on to show, women do not look. They are positioned as the *object* of the flâneur's gaze.

> Woman is for the artist in general . . . far more than just the female of man. Rather she is divinity, a star . . . a glittering conglomeration of all the graces of nature, condensed into a single being; an object of keenest admiration and curiosity that the picture of life can offer to its contemplator. She is an idol, stupid perhaps, but dazzling and bewitching. . . . Everything that adorns women that serves to show off her beauty is part of herself . . .
>
> No doubt woman is sometimes a light, a glance, an invitation to happiness, sometimes she is just a word.[29]

Indeed woman is just a sign, a fiction, a confection of meanings and fantasies. Femininity is not the natural condition of female persons. It is a historically variable ideological construction of meanings for a sign W*O*M*A*N which is produced by and for another social group which derives its identity and imagined superiority by manufacturing the spectre of this fantastic Other. *WOMAN* is both an idol and nothing but a word. Thus when we come to read the chapter of Baudelaire's essay

titled 'Women and prostitutes' in which the author charts a journey across Paris for the flâneur/artist, where women appear merely to be there as spontaneously visible objects, it is necessary to recognize that the text is itself constructing a notion of WOMAN across a fictive map of urban spaces – the spaces of modernity.

The flâneur/artist starts his journey in the auditorium where young women of the most fashionable society sit in snowy white in their boxes at the theatre. Next he watches elegant families strolling at leisure in the walks of a public garden, wives leaning complacently on the arms of husbands while skinny little girls play at making social class calls in mimicry of their elders. Then he moves on to the lowlier theatrical world where frail and slender dancers appear in a blaze of limelight admired by fat bourgeois men. At the café door, we meet a swell while indoors is his mistress, called in the text 'a fat baggage', who lacks practically nothing to make her a great lady except that practically nothing is practically everything for it is distinction (class). Then we enter the doors of Valentino's, the Prado or Casino, where against a background of hellish light, we encounter the protean image of wanton beauty, the courtesan, 'the perfect image of savagery that lurks in the heart of civilization'. Finally by degrees of destitution, he charts women, from the patrician airs of young and successful prostitutes to the poor slaves of the filthy stews.

3.18 Constantin Guys
A family walking in the park

3.19 Constantin Guys
Two courtesans

Attempting to match the drawings by Guys to this extraordinary spectacle will disappoint. In no way are the drawings as vivid, for their project is less ideological and altogether more mundane as in the manner of the fashion plate.

None the less they provide some interest in revealing how differently the figures of females are actually represented according to location. The respectable women chaperoned or accompanied by husbands in the park pass by fused almost with their clothing so that, decorporealized, their dress defines their class position and meaning. In spaces marked out for visual and notional sexual consumption the bodies are in evidence, laid out, opened up and offered to view while drapery functions to reveal a sexualized anatomy (Figures 3.18 and 3.19).

Baudelaire's essay maps a representation of Paris as the city of women. It constructs a sexualized journey which can be correlated with impressionist practice. Clark has offered one map of impressionist painting following the trajectories of leisure from city centre by suburban railway to the suburbs. I want to propose another dimension of that map which links impressionist practice to the erotic territories of modernity. I have drawn up a grid using Baudelaire's categories and mapped the works of Manet, Degas and others on to this schema.[30]

GRID I

LADIES	THEATRE (LOGE)	debutantes; young women of fashionable society	RENOIR	CASSATT
	PARK	matrons, mothers, children, elegant families	MANET	CASSATT MORISOT
FALLEN WOMEN	THEATRE (BACKSTAGE)	DANCERS	DEGAS	
	CAFES	mistresses and kept women	MANET RENOIR DEGAS	
	FOLIES	THE COURTESAN 'protean image of wanton beauty'	MANET DEGAS GUYS	
	BROTHELS	'poor slaves of filthy stews'	MANET GUYS	

3.20 Edgar Degas *Dancers backstage* (c. 1872)

From the loge pieces by Renoir (admittedly not women of the highest society) to the *Musique aux Tuileries* of Manet, Monet's park scenes and others easily cover this terrain where bourgeois men and women take their leisure. But then when we move backstage at the theatre we enter different worlds, still of men and women but differently placed by class. Degas's pictures of the dancers on stage and rehearsing are well known. Perhaps less familiar are his scenes illustrating the backstage at the Opéra where members of the Jockey Club bargain for their evening's entertainment with the little performers (Figure 3.20). Both Degas and Manet represented the women who haunted cafés and as Theresa Ann Gronberg has shown these were working-class women often suspected of touting for custom as clandestine prostitutes.[31]

Thence we can find examples sited in the Folies and cafés-concerts as well as the boudoirs of the courtesan. Even if *Olympia* cannot be situated

in a recognizable locality, reference was made in the reviews to the café Paul Niquet's, the haunt of the women who serviced the porters of Les Halles and a sign for the reviewer of total degradation and depravity.[32]

WOMEN AND THE PUBLIC MODERN

The artists who were women in this cultural group of necessity occupied this map but partially. They can be located all right but in spaces above a decisive line. *Lydia at the theatre*, 1879 and *The loge*, 1882 (Figure 3.21) situate us in the theatre with the young and fashionable but there could hardly be a greater difference between these paintings and the work by Renoir on this theme, *The first outing*, 1876 (London, National Gallery of Art), for example.

The stiff and formal poses of the two young women in the painting by Cassatt were precisely calculated as the drawings for the work reveal. Their erect posture, one carefully grasping an unwrapped bouquet, the other sheltering behind a large fan, create a telling effect of suppressed excitement and extreme constraint, of unease in this public place, exposed and dressed up, on display. They are set at an oblique angle to the frame so that they are not contained by its edges, not framed and made a pretty picture for us as in *The loge* (Figure 3.22) by Renoir where the spectacle at which the scene is set and the spectacle the woman herself is made to offer, merge for the unacknowledged but presumed masculine spectator. In Renoir's *The first outing* the choice of a profile opens out the spectator's gaze into the auditorium and invites her/him to imagine that she/he is sharing in the main figure's excitement while she seems totally unaware of offering such a delightful spectacle. The lack of self-consciousness is, of course, purely contrived so that the viewer can enjoy the sight of the young girl.

The mark of difference between the paintings by Renoir and Cassatt is the refusal in the latter of that complicity in the way the female protagonist is depicted. In a later painting, *At the opera*, 1879 (Figure 3.23), a woman is represented dressed in daytime or mourning black in a box at the theatre. She looks from the spectator into the distance in a direction which cuts across the plane of the picture but as the viewer follows her gaze another look is revealed steadfastly fixed on the woman in the foreground. The picture thus juxtaposes two looks, giving priority to that of the woman who is, remarkably, pictured actively looking. She does not return the viewer's gaze, a convention which confirms the viewer's right to look and appraise. Instead we find that the viewer outside the picture is evoked by being as it were the mirror image of the man looking in the picture.

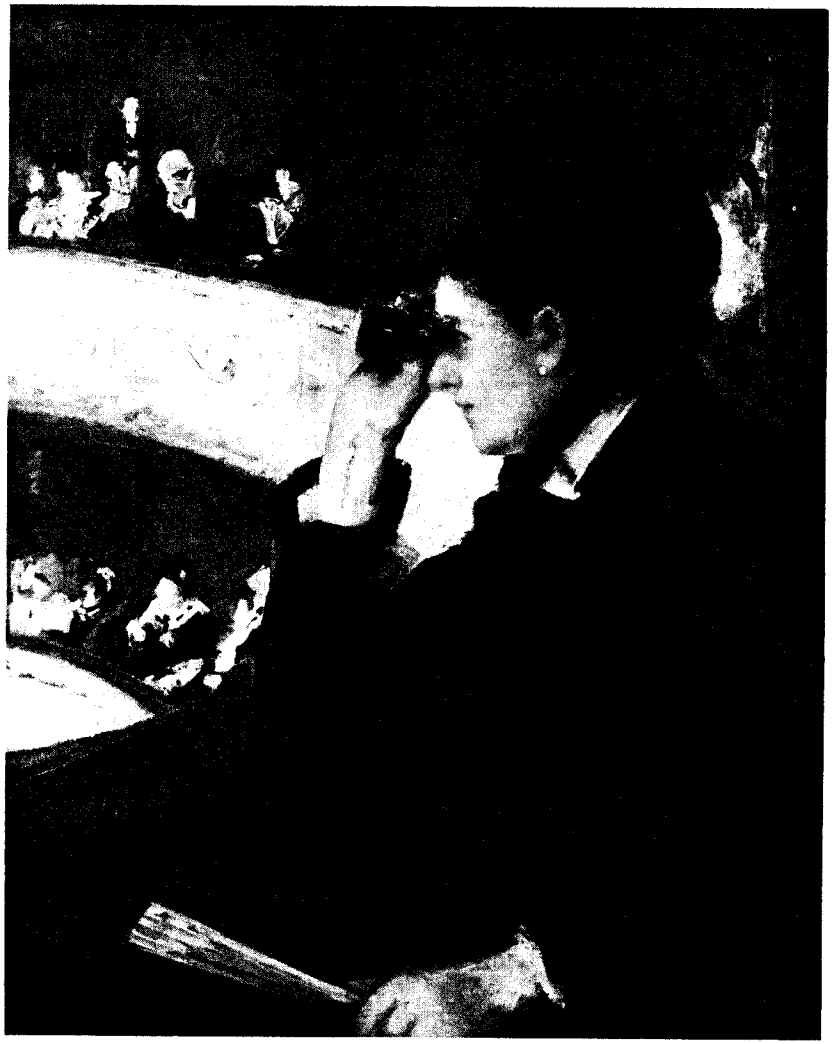
This is, in a sense, the subject of the painting – the problematic of

women out in public being vulnerable to a compromising gaze. The witty pun on the spectator outside the painting being matched by that within should not disguise the serious meaning of the fact that social spaces are policed by men's watching women and the positioning of the spectator outside the painting in relation to the man within it serves to indicate that the spectator participates in that game as well. The fact that the woman is pictured so actively looking, signified above all by the fact that her eyes are masked by opera glasses, prevents her being objectified and she figures as the subject of her own look.

Cassatt and Morisot painted pictures of women in public spaces but these all lie above a certain line on the grid I devised from Baudelaire's text. The other world of women was inaccessible to them while it was freely available to the men of the group and constantly entering

3.21 Mary Cassatt *The loge* (1882)

3.22 Auguste Renoir *The loge* (1874)



3.23 Mary Cassatt *At the opera* (1879)

representation as the very territory of their engagement with modernity. There is evidence that bourgeois women did go to the cafés-concerts but this is reported as a fact to regret and a symptom of modern decline.[33] As Clark points out, guides for foreigners to Paris such as Murray's clearly wish to prevent such slumming by commenting that respectable people do not visit such venues. In the journals Marie Bashkirtseff records a visit she and some friends made to a masked ball where behind the disguise daughters of the aristocracy could live dangerously, playing with sexual freedom their classed gender denied them. But given both Bashkirtseff's dubious social position, and her condemnation of the standard morality and regulation of women's sexuality, her escapade merely reconfirms the norm.[34]

To enter such spaces as the masked ball or the café-concert constituted a serious threat to a bourgeois woman's reputation and therefore her femininity. The guarded respectability of the lady could be soiled by mere visual contact for seeing was bound up with knowing. This other world of encounter between bourgeois men and women of another class was a no-go area for bourgeois women. It is the place where female sexuality or rather female bodies are bought and sold, where woman becomes both an exchangeable commodity and a seller of flesh, entering the economic domain through her direct exchanges with men. Here the division of the public and private mapped as a separation of the masculine and feminine is ruptured by money, the ruler of the public domain, and precisely what is banished from the home.

Femininity in its class-specific forms is maintained by the polarity virgin/whore which is mystifying representation of the economic exchanges in the patriarchal kinship system. In bourgeois ideologies of femininity the fact of the money and property relations which legally and economically constitute bourgeois marriage is conjured out of sight by the mystification of a one-off purchase of the rights to a body and its products as an effect of love to be sustained by duty and devotion.

Femininity should be understood therefore not as a condition of women but as the ideological form of the regulation of female sexuality within a familial, heterosexual domesticity which is ultimately organized by the law. The spaces of femininity – ideologically, pictorially – hardly articulate female sexualities. That is not to accept nineteenth-century notions of women's asexuality but to stress the difference between what was actually lived or how it was experienced and what was officially spoken or represented as female sexuality.[35]

In the ideological and social spaces of femininity, female sexuality could not be directly registered. This has a crucial effect with regard to the use artists who were women could make of the positionality represented by the gaze of the flâneur – and therefore with regard to

modernity. The gaze of the flâneur articulates and produces a masculine sexuality which in the modern sexual economy enjoys the freedom to look, appraise and possess, is deed or in fantasy. Walter Benjamin draws special attention to a poem by Baudelaire, 'A une passante' ('To a passer-by'). The poem is written from the point of view of a man who sees in the crowd a beautiful widow; he falls in love as she vanishes from sight. Benjamin's comment is apt: 'One may say that the poem deals with the function of the crowd not in the life of a citizen but in the life of an erotic person.'[36]

It is not the public realm simply equated with the masculine which defines the flâneur/artist but access to a sexual realm which is marked by those interstitial spaces, the spaces of ambiguity, defined as such not only by the relatively unfixed or fantasizable class boundaries Clark makes so much of but because of cross-class sexual exchange. Women could enter and represent selected locations in the public sphere – those of entertainment and display. But a line demarcates not the end of the public/private divide but the frontier of the spaces of femininity. Below this line lies the realm of the sexualized and commodified bodies of women, where nature is ended, where class, capital and masculine power invade and interlock. It is a line that marks off a class boundary but it reveals where new class formations of the bourgeois world restructured gender relations not only between men and women but between women of different classes.*

MEN AND WOMEN IN THE PRIVATE SPHERE

I have redrawn the Baudelairean map to include those spaces which are absent – the domestic sphere, the drawing-room, veranda or balcony, the garden of the summer villa and the bedroom (Grid II). This listing

* I may have overstated the case that bourgeois women's sexuality could not be articulated within these spaces. In the light of recent feminist study of the psychosexual psychology of motherhood, it would be possible to read mother-child paintings by women in a far more complex way as a site for the articulation of female sexualities. Moreover in paintings by Morisot, for instance of her adolescent daughter, we may discern the inscription of yet another moment at which female sexuality is referred to by circling around the emergence from latency into an adult sexuality prior to its strict regulation within marital domestic forms. More generally it would be wise to pay heed to the writings of historian Carroll Smith-Rosenberg on the importance of female friendships. She stresses that from our post-Freudian vantage point it is very difficult to read the intimacies of nineteenth-century women, to understand the valencies of the terms of endearment, often very physical, to comprehend the forms of sexuality and love as they were lived, experienced and represented. A great deal more research needs to be done before any statements can be made without the danger of feminists merely rehearsing and confirming the official discourse of masculine ideologues on female sexualities. (C. Smith-Rosenberg 'Hearing women's words: a feminist reconstruction of history', in her book *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*, New York, Knopf, 1985.)

produces a markedly difference balance between the artists who are women and men from that on the first grid. Cassatt and Morisot occupy these new spaces to a much greater degree while their colleagues are less apparent, but importantly, not totally absent.

GRID II

LADIES			MANET CAILLEBOTTE	MORISOT CASSATT	BEDROOM
			RENOIR CAILLEBOTTE	MORISOT CASSATT	DRAWING ROOM
			BAZILLE CAILLEBOTTE	CASSATT MORISOT	VERANDA
			MONET	CASSATT MORISOT	GARDEN
	THEATRE (LOGE)	debutantes	RENOIR	CASSATT	THEATRE
	PARK	elegant families	MANET	CASSATT MORISOT	PARK
FALLEN WOMEN	THEATRE (BACKSTAGE)	dancers	DEGAS		
	CAFES	mistresses and kept women	MANET RENOIR DEGAS		
	FOLIES	THE COURTESAN 'protean image of wanton beauty'	MANET DEGAS GUYS		
	BROTHELS	'poor slaves of filthy stews'	MANET GUYS		

By way of example, we could cite Renoir's portrait of *Madame Charpentier and her children*, 1878 (New York, Metropolitan Museum) or Bazille's *Family reunion*, 1867 (Paris, Musée d'Orsay) or the painting of Camille in several poses and different dresses painted by Claude Monet in 1867, *Woman in the garden* (Paris, Musée d'Orsay).

These paintings share the territory of the feminine but they are painted from a totally different perspective. Renoir entered Madame Charpentier's drawing-room on commission; Bazille celebrated a particular, almost formal occasion and Monet's painting was devised as

an exercise in open-air painting.[37] The majority of works by Morisot and Cassatt deal with these domestic spaces: for instance *Two women reading*, 1869-70 (Figure 3.5) and *Susan on a balcony*, 1883 (Figure 3.7). These are painted with a sureness of knowledge of the daily routine and rituals which not only constituted the spaces of femininity but collectively trace the construction of femininity across the stages of women's lives. As I have argued previously, Cassatt's oeuvre may be seen to delineate femininity as it is induced, acquired and ritualized from youth through motherhood to old age.[38] Morisot used her daughter's life to produce works remarkable for their concern with female subjectivity especially at critical turning-points of the feminine. For instance, her painting *Psyché* shows an adolescent woman before a mirror, which in France is named a 'Psyché' (Figure 3.24). The classical, mythological figure Psyche was a young mortal with whom Venus's son Cupid fell in love and it was the topic of several paintings in the neo-classical and romantic period as a topos for awakening sexuality.[39]

Morisot's painting offers the spectator a view into the bedroom of a bourgeois woman and as such is not without voyeuristic potential but at the same time, the pictured woman is not offered for sight so much as caught contemplating herself in a mirror in a way which separates the woman as subject of a contemplative and thoughtful look from woman as object – a contrast may make this clearer; compare it with Manet's painting of a half-dressed woman looking in a mirror in such a way that her ample back is offered to the spectator as merely a body in a working room, *Before the mirror*, 1876–7 (New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum).

But I must stress that I am in no way suggesting that Cassatt and Morisot are offering us a truth about the spaces of femininity. I am not suggesting that their intimacy with the domestic space enabled them to escape their historical formation as sexed and classed subjects, that they could see it objectively and transcribe it with some kind of personal authenticity. To argue that would presuppose some notion of gendered authorship, that the phenomena I am concerned to define and explicate are a result of the fact that the authors/artists are women. That would merely tie the women back into some transhistorical notion of the biologically determined gender characteristics, what Rozsika Parker and I labelled in *Old Mistresses* as the feminine stereotype.

None the less the painters of this cultural group were positioned differently with regard to social mobility and the type of looking permitted them according to their being men or women. Instead of considering the paintings as documents of this condition, reflecting or expressing it, I would stress that the practice of painting is itself *a site for the inscription of sexual difference*. Social positionality in terms of both class and gender

3.24 Berthe Morisot *Psyché* (1876)

determine – that is, set the pressure and prescribe the limits of – the work produced. But we are here considering a continuing process. The social, sexual and psychic construction of femininity is constantly produced, regulated, renegotiated. This productivity is involved as much in the practice of making art. In manufacturing a painting, engaging a model, sitting in a room with someone, using a score of known techniques, modifying them, surprising oneself with novel and unexpected effects both technical and in terms of meanings, which result from the way the model is positioned, the size of the room, the nature of the contract, the experience of the scene being painted and so forth – all these actual procedures which make up part of the social practice of making a painting, function as the modes by which the social and psychic positionality of Cassatt and Morisot not only structured their pictures, but reciprocally affected the painters themselves as they found, through the making of images, their world represented back to them.

It is here that the critique of authorship is relevant – the critique of the notion of a fully coherent author subject previous to the act of creation, producing a work of art which then becomes merely a mirror or, at best, a vehicle for communicating a fully formed intention and a consciously grasped experience. What I am proposing is that on the one hand we

consider the social formation of the producer within class and gender relations, but also recognize the working process or practice as the site of a crucial social interaction between producer and materials. These are themselves economically and culturally determined be they technical – the legacy of conventions, traditions and procedures – or those social and ideological connotations of subject. The product is an inscription of those transactions and produces positions for its viewers.

I am not suggesting that the meaning is therefore locked into the work and prescribed. The death of the author has involved the emphasis on the reader/viewer as the active producer of meaning for texts. But this carries with it an excessive danger of total relativism; any reader can make any meanings. There is a limit, an historical and ideological limit which is secured by accepting the death of the mythic figure of the creator/author but not the negation of the historical producer working within conditions which determine the productivity of the work while never confining its actual or potential field of meanings. This issue becomes acutely relevant for the study of cultural producers who are women. Typically within art history they are denied the status of author/creator (see Barr's chart, Figure 3.1). Their creative personality is never canonized or celebrated. Moreover they have been the prey of ideological readings where without regard to history and difference, art historians and critics have confidently proclaimed the meanings of the work by women, meanings which always reduce back to merely stating that these are works by women. Thus Mary Cassatt has been most often indulged as a painter of typical feminine subjects, the mother and child, while the following enthusiastic review by the Irish painter and critic George Moore speaks volumes about his problem with praising an artist who genuinely impressed him but was a woman:

> Madame Lebrun painted well, but she invented nothing, she failed to make her own of any special manner of seeing and rendering things; she failed to create a style. Only one woman did this, and that woman is Madame Morisot, and her pictures are the only pictures painted by a woman that could not be destroyed without creating a blank, a hiatus in the history of art. True that hiatus would be slight – insignificant if you will – but the insignificant is sometimes dear to us; and though nightingales, thrushes and skylarks were to sing in King's Bench Walk, I should miss the individual chirp of the pretty sparrow. Madame Morisot's note is perhaps as insignificant as a sparrow's, but it is an unique and individual note. She has created a style, and has done so by investing her art with all her femininity; her art is no dull parody of ours; it is all womanhood – sweet and gracious, tender and wistful womanhood.[40]

Thus it becomes especially necessary to develop means by which we can represent women as cultural producers within specific historical formations, while at the same time dealing with the centrality of the issue of femininity in structuring their lives and work. Yet femininity must not be presented as the founding cause of their work. This involves moving away from stressing the social construction of femininity as taking part in privileged social practices such as the family prior to the making of art which then becomes a merely passive mirroring of that social role or psychic condition. By stressing the working process – both as manufacture and signification – as the site of the inscription of sexual difference I am wanting to emphasize the active part of cultural practices in producing the social relations and regulations of femininity. They can also conceivably be a place for some qualification or disruption of them. The notion springs women from the trap of circularity. Socially shaped within the feminine, their art is made to confirm femininity as an inescapable condition understood perpetually from the ideological patriarchal definition of it. There is no doubt that femininity is an oppressive condition yet women live it to different purposes and feminist analyses are currently concerned to explore not only its limits but the concrete ways women negotiate and refashion that position to alter its meanings.

How sexual difference is inscribed will be determined by the specificity of the practice and the processes of representation. In this essay I have explored two axes on which these issues can be considered – that of space and that of the look. I have argued that the social process defined by the term modernity was experienced spatially in terms of access to the spectacular city which was open to a class and gender-specific gaze. (This hovers between the still public figure of the flâneur and the modern condition of voyeur.) In addition, I have pointed to a coincidence between the spaces of modernity and the spaces of masculinity as they intersect in the territory of cross-class sexual exchange. Modifying therefore the simple conceit of a bourgeois world divided by public and private, masculine and feminine, the argument seeks to locate the production of the bourgeois definition of woman defined by the polarity of bourgeois lady and proletarian prostitute/working woman. The spaces of femininity are not only limited in relation to those defining modernity but because of the sexualized map across which woman is separated, the spaces of femininity are defined by a different organization of the look.

Difference, however, does not of necessity involve restriction or lack. That would be to reinscribe the patriarchal construction of woman. The features in the paintings by Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot of proximity, intimacy and divided spaces posit a different kind of viewing

relation at the point of both production and consumption.

The difference they articulate is bound to the production of femininity as both difference and as specificity. They suggest the particularity of the female spectator – that which is completely negated in the selective tradition we are offered as history.

WOMEN AND THE GAZE

In an article entitled 'Film and the masquerade: theorizing the female spectator', Mary Ann Doane uses a photograph by Robert Doisneau titled *An oblique look*, 1948 to introduce her discussion of the negation of the female gaze (Figure 3.25) in both visual representations and on the streets.[41] In the photograph a petit bourgeois couple stand in front of an art dealer's window and look in. The spectator is hidden voyeur-like inside the shop. The woman looks at a picture and seems about to comment on it to her husband. Unbeknownst to her, he is fact looking elsewhere, at the proffered buttocks of a half-naked female figure in a painting placed obliquely to the surface/photo/window so the spectator can also see what he sees. Doane argues that it is his gaze which defines the problematic of the photograph and it erases that of the woman. She looks at nothing that has any meaning for the spectator. Spatially central she is negated in the triangulation of looks between the man, the picture of the fetishized woman and the spectator, who is thus enthralled to a masculine viewing position. To get the joke, we must be complicit with his secret discovery of something better to look at. The joke, like all dirty jokes, is at the woman's expense. She is contrasted iconographically to the naked woman. She is denied the picturing of her desire; what she looks at is blank for the spectator. She is denied being the object of desire because she is represented as a woman who actively looks rather than returning and confirming the gaze of the masculine spectator. Doane concludes that the photograph almost uncannily delineates the sexual politics of looking.

I have introduced this example to make somewhat plainer what is at stake in considering the female spectator – the very possibility that texts made by women can produce different positions within this sexual politics of looking. Without that possibility, women are both denied a representation of their desire and pleasure and are constantly erased so that to look at and enjoy the sites of patriarchal culture we women must become nominal transvestites. We must assume a masculine position or masochistically enjoy the sight of woman's humiliation. At the beginning of this essay I raised the question of Berthe Morisot's relation to such modern sights and canonical paintings of the modern as *Olympia* and *A bar at the Folies-Bergére*, both of which figure within the sexual politics of

3.25 Robert Doisneau *An oblique look* (1948)

looking – a politics at the heart of modernist art and modernist art history's version of it. Since the early 1970s, modernism has been critically challenged nowhere more purposely than by feminist cultural practitioners.

In a recent article titled 'Desiring images/imaging desire', Mary Kelly addresses the feminist dilemma wherein the woman who is an artist sees her experience in terms of the feminine position, that is as object of the look, while she must also account for the feeling she experiences as an artist occupying the masculine position as subject of the look. Different strategies have emerged to negotiate this fundamental contradiction, focusing on ways of either re-picturing or refusing the literal figuration of the woman's body. All these attempts centre on the problem: 'How is a radical, critical and pleasurable positioning of the woman as spectator to be done?' Kelly concludes her particular pathway through this dilemma (which is too specific to enter into at this moment) with a significant comment:

> Until now the woman as spectator has been pinned to the surface of the picture, trapped in a path of light that leads her back to the features of a veiled face. It seems important to acknowledge that the masquerade has always been internalized, linked to a particular organization of the drives, represented through a diversity of aims and objects; but without being lured into looking for a psychic truth beneath the veil. To see this picture critically, the viewer should neither be too close nor too far away.[42]

Kelly's comment echoes the terms of proximity and distance which have been central to this essay.* The sexual politics of looking function around a regime which divides into binary positions, activity/passivity, looking/being seen, voyeur/exhibitionist, subject/object. In approaching works by Cassatt and Morisot we can ask: Are they complicit with the dominant regime?[43] Do they naturalize femininity in its major premisses? Is femininity confirmed as passivity and masochistic or is there a critical look resulting from a different position from which femininity is appraised, experienced and represented? In these paintings by means of distinctly different treatments of those protocols of painting defined as initiating modernist art – articulation of space, repositioning the viewer, selection of location, facture and brushwork – the private sphere is invested with meanings other than those ideologically produced to secure it as the site of femininity. One of the major means by which femininity is thus reworked is by the rearticulation of traditional space so that it ceases to function primarily as the space of sight for a mastering gaze, but becomes the locus of relationships. The gaze that is fixed on the represented figure is that of equal and like and this is inscribed into the painting by that particular proximity which I suggested characterized the work. There is little extraneous space to distract the viewer from the inter-subjective encounter or to reduce the figures to objectified staffage, or to make them the objects of a voyeuristic gaze. The eye is not given its solitary freedom. The women depicted function as subjects of their own looking or their activity, within highly specified locations of which the viewer becomes a part.

The rare photograph of Berthe Morisot at work in her studio serves to represent the exchange of looks between women which structure these

* In earlier drafts of this chapter I explore the possibilities of co-ordinating the historical perspectives on the spaces of modernity and femininity with those of feminist psychoanalytical writing on femininity (Cixous, Irigaray and Montrelay) between which there was tantalizing coincidence on the issues of the look, the body and the tropes of distance and proximity in the construction and feminine negotiation of sexual difference under a patriarchal system. The use of a statement by Luce Irigaray as introit, and the citation from Mary Kelly, marks the possibility of that reading which could not be undertaken here without massively enlarging this chapter.

3.26 Berthe Morisot in her studio

works (Figure 3.26). The majority of women painted by Cassatt or Morisot were intimates of the family circle. But that included women from the bourgeoisie and from the proletariat who worked for the household as servants and nannies. It is significant to note that the realities of class cannot be wished away by some mythic ideal of sisterhood amongst women. The ways in which working-class women were painted by Cassatt, for example, involve the use class power in that she could ask them to model half-dressed for the scenes of women washing. None the less they were not subject to the voyeuristic gaze of those women washing themselves made by Degas which, as Lipton has argued, can be located in the maisons-closes or official brothels of Paris.[44] The maid's simple washing stand allows a space in which women outside the bourgeoisie can be represented both intimately and as working women without forcing them into the sexualized category of

3.27 Mary Cassatt *Woman bathing* (1891)

the fallen woman. The body of woman can be pictured as classed but not subject to sexual commodification (Figure 3.27).

I hope it will by now be clear that the significance of this argument extends beyond issues about impressionist painting and parity for artists who are women. Modernity is still with us, ever more acutely as our cities become in the exacerbated world of postmodernity, more and more a place of strangers and spectacle, while women are ever more vulnerable to violent assault while out in public and are denied the right to move around our cities safely. The spaces of femininity still regulate women's lives – from running the gauntlet of intrusive looks by men on the streets to surviving deadly sexual assaults. In rape trials, women on the street are assumed to be 'asking for it'. The configuration which shaped the work of Cassatt and Morisot still defines our world. It is relevant then to develop feminist analyses of the founding moments of

modernity and modernism, to discern its sexualized structures, to discover past resistances and differences, to examine how women producers developed alternative models for negotiating modernity and the spaces of femininity.

4

Woman as sign in Pre-Raphaelite literature: the representation of Elizabeth Siddall

This essay by Deborah Cherry and Griselda Pollock was first published in *Art History*, 1984. It has been revised by Griselda Pollock.

The feminist critique of art history began by berating the discipline for its discriminatory exclusion of women artists. This was a necessary but limited tactic. For art history as discourse actively produces its meanings by exclusion, repression and subordination of its Other. The feminine is located by the textual strategies and ideological formations of art history as the passive, beautiful or erotic object of a creativity exclusively tied to the masculine. Therefore feminist deconstruction of art historical texts and their highly political effects is a fundamental necessity as a preliminary for developing appropriate strategies for analysing women as cultural producers.

In 1975 I was invited to give a short paper at the second conference of the newly founded Association of Art Historians. I was offered the token space of speaking about 'Women in Victorian art'. Instead of attempting to catalogue the many women active as artists in the period or itemize their specialities, I chose to consider the complex issues raised by the case of Elizabeth Eleanor Siddall (1829–62). Well known in art history books as the beloved model and later wife of the leading Pre-Raphaelite artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–82), Siddall attracted feminist attention because she too produced paintings and drawings as well as poetry. Her case epitomized the contradictions of woman as muse for, and object of, art celebrated by art historians and woman as ignored producer. This drama had been played out at a moment of considerable historical significance in the history of women. The art