Aimée Ernesta and Eliza Cecilia: Two Sisters, Two Choices

IN THE LATE 1960s, Catherine Drinker Bowen, the eminent biographer and youngest daughter of Henry Sturgis and Aimée Ernesta (Beaux) Drinker, wrote an intimate and insightful chronicle about her relatives. The publication of Family Portrait in 1970, just three years before her death, marked Bowen’s contribution to a family tradition of writing and publishing autobiographies. Among the stories that Bowen felt compelled to tell was that of her mother and her aunt, the celebrated Philadelphia portraitist, Cecilia Beaux.

During my childhood a significant conversation had taken place in the spare bedroom at Bethlehem, with Aunt Cecilia standing before the oval pier glass arranging her evening dress, and my mother watching. . . . Aunt Cecilia, accepting Mamma’s compliments on her figure, had remarked that of course Etta you can’t expect to keep your figure after having six children. . . . “But Etta,” my aunt continued, “you chose the better part of life. Think of Harry and six children! Every woman in the world can envy you Harry and those four sons.” . . . “No, no sister,” my mother replied “You chose the better part. Imagine staying in the White House and painting the President’s wife! Oh, my life has been humdrum, compared with it. Think of living in Paris, and all the fine people you know!”

Bowen’s tale of her demure but frequently high strung mother and her daring but often difficult aunt illuminates a paradox. Why did these two

1 Several Drinker relatives kept diaries, wrote family histories, or penned autobiographies. See Elaine Forman Crane, ed., The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker (3 vols., Boston, 1991); Henry Sturgis Drinker, Autobiography of Henry Sturgis Drinker ([Philadelphia], 1931); Henry Sandwith Drinker, History of the Drinker Family (Philadelphia, 1961); Henry Sandwith Drinker, Autobiography of Henry Sandwith Drinker ([Philadelphia], 1960); Catherine Drinker Bowen, Family Portrait (Boston, 1970); Cecilia Beaux, Background with Figures (New York, 1930).

sisters—who conceivably had experienced the best that life had to offer a woman in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—have such conflicted feelings about the paths that they had taken? Why did they regard each other’s choices as the better ones?

The seeds that would direct the lives of these two sisters were sown at the disturbing May 1, 1855, birth, in Philadelphia, of the younger girl. Eliza Cecilia ("Leilie") was the third daughter of Jean Adolphe, a blue-eyed silk manufacturer from Nimes, Avignon, France, and Cecilia Kent (Leavitt) Beaux, a dark-haired teacher raised in New York City. While the child’s birth should have been met with unbounded joy, the mother’s death twelve days later from a chill and fever brought on by the complications of childbirth, changed the event to one of sorrow. Adolphe Beaux was shattered by his wife’s death and found his newborn daughter to be little more than a sad reminder and pale substitute for his beloved and departed spouse. Inconsolable, he returned to his family in France, consigning the baby and her older sister to the care of their maternal grandmother, Cecilia (Kent) Leavitt. For the older child, Aimée Ernesta, the birth of her sister—quickly followed by the death of her mother, the departure of her father, and an irrevocable change in the structure of her family—was a frightening and confusing event.

Yet the Beaux family had started out like many others. The father, Adolphe Beaux, was thirty-eight years old when he emigrated to Philadelphia in 1848 to organize an American branch of his family’s business, J. P. Beaux & Co., Sewing Silks. Beaux soon met and fell in love with Jean Adolphe Beaux (ca. 1810–1884) and Cecilia Kent (Leavitt) Beaux (1822–1855) of Suffield, Connecticut, are listed in a Leavitt Family Bible. Beaux/Drinker/Leavitt Family Papers, Cecilia Drinker Saltonstall (hereafter cited as the BDL Papers); Drinker, History, 64.

4 The emotional development of a child from birth to age three must be considered in understanding the ensuing interpersonal dynamics between the two Beaux sisters. Etta was two-and-a-half years old when her younger sister was born and when her mother died. At this stage in life a child begins to develop “a more stable and complex sense of individuality.” But Etta lost both her mother and father during this phase of development and had to transfer her sense of identity and security to her grandmother and aunts. It is quite possible that Etta directed her sense of rage and blame over the loss of her parents toward her infant sister Leilie, and while Etta’s early anger toward Leilie would not have been a part of her younger sister’s conscious memory, Leilie’s later decisions not to marry and to not have children, in part, may have stemmed from these early experiences with her sister. See Margaret S. Mahler, Fred Pine, and Anni Bergman, The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant (New York, 1975); N. Gregory Hamilton, Self and Others: Object Relations Theory in Practice (Northvale, NJ., 1990), 35–57; Judith Viorst, Necessary Losses (New York, 1986).
with Cecilia Leavitt. Reverses in her family's fortunes had brought the twenty-six-year-old Cecilia to Philadelphia, where she was earning her living as a teacher. Beaux and Leavitt wed in New York City on April 3, 1850. Following the marriage, a branch of the Beaux family's silk business was established in New York City and managed by John Leavitt, Cecilia's father, until his death in 1852.\(^5\)

Adolphe and Cecilia Beaux soon started their family. Their first daughter, Alice Zepherine, was born in February 1851 but died just eleven months later; then Aimeë Ernesta, nicknamed Etta, arrived on October 26, 1852, just ten months after the death of their first baby. By 1854, Adolphe and Cecilia, and two-year-old Etta, had moved to Philadelphia and Beaux listed himself as a manufacturer. The next year their third daughter was born, but when the young mother never recovered from the trauma of her child's birth, the father fled the country and turned over the fledgling silk-manufacturing firm to his brother Edmund.\(^6\) Two years passed before Adolphe Beaux came back to America.

When he returned in 1857 he joined his mother-in-law, her children, and his own two girls in a house located in the heart of Philadelphia, at 1712 Locust Street. His daughters were now two and five years old (fig. 1). Over the next four years, Beaux tried to secure a place for himself in the Philadelphia business world, to recapture the respect of his in-laws, and to gain the affection of his children. Beaux ultimately failed at nearly every one of these ambitions. Nevertheless, in the late 1850s, J. P. Beaux & Co., Sewing Silks, located at 25th and South, was a successful enterprise, competing with other Philadelphia firms and providing employment for a number of workers, including Beaux's young brother-in-law Charles Leavitt.\(^7\)

\(^5\) The Leavitts traced their ancestry back to seventeenth-century New England, and back to England before that. Drinker, History, 64–65; Beaux, Background, 7–8; Leavitt Family Bible, BDL Papers; John W. Leavitt listing in Doggett's New York City Directory for 1847–1848 (New York, 1847) and Doggett's New York City Directory for 1851–1852 (New York, 1851).


\(^7\) Philadelphia had a long history of silk manufacturing. By the 1830s, the city was acknowledged as one of the industry's major American centers. Silk produced in Philadelphia was known in France, where the Beaux family may have first heard of it as a manufacturing center. McElroy's PCD, (1858–1860); Edwin T. Freedley, Philadelphia and Its Manufacturers: a Handbook of the Great Manufactories and Representative Mercantile Houses of Philadelphia in 1867 (Philadelphia, 1867), 270
Adolphe Beaux was a pious man, actively participating, during the years that he lived in Philadelphia, in the Huguenot French Collegiate Church in America. On occasion he took his girls with him and they liked the simple and unadorned hymns that he selected for the services. At home, he entertained his daughters by drawing “enchancing pictures of animals doing amazing things.” Elephants sat on tree branches smoking tobacco through their trunks and giraffes danced on roller skates. Etta noted that her father could have been an artist, as he “could draw without lessons.” Indeed, Beaux had more than a passing interest in art: he had brought a “few old pictures” with him from France, and while they were “unsigned” and “not very valuable,” they provided his girls with a glimpse of “the Old World and tradition.”

Yet the pleasures that Beaux derived from his business, his church, and his children were slowly eroded over the four years he was in Philadelphia by the Leavitts’ rising intolerance of his “foreign” and “peculiar” ways. Eventually the strong-minded Leavitt women judged him unqualified to make responsible decisions regarding his daughters. Cecilia Leavitt, who had already raised eight children of her own, quietly but firmly took the parental role upon herself.

An incident that may have quickened Cecilia Leavitt’s maternal feelings for her granddaughters occurred following the youngest child’s baptism. Taken to church as a two-year-old, the little girl was led down the aisle between her father and grandmother, and was christened Eliza Cecilia, for her aunt and her mother—the names that her mother had requested as she lay dying. Later, the child learned that her father felt that she was unworthy of the name and that he couldn’t bear to hear her called Cecilia. To appease him the family nicknamed her Leifie.

The child’s name had focused the family’s unspoken despair, and

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8 Adolphe Beaux was a devout Huguenot who carried a hatred for the Roman church for its persecutions of the Huguenots in the sixteenth century. Beaux, Background, 10–11, 84; Aimée Ernesta Drinker to Mrs. Bedford, April 10, [1902], correspondence, 1863–1968, letters dated by day and month only, Cecilia Beaux Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (hereafter, Beaux Papers, AAA).

9 Bowen, Family Portrait, 136–37.

10 Beaux, Background, 11–12; Drinker, History, 64; Woodland Presbyterian Church Register, 1866–83, Archives, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.
eventually Leilie herself became acutely aware that her birth had caused her father to lose his wife, and her sister to lose her mother. As a girl she acquiesced to her father’s feelings, but when she made her mark upon the world as an accomplished and internationally recognized portrait painter, it was her mother’s name—Cecilia Beaux—that she assumed for her career.

Adolphe Beaux’s strained relationship with the Leavitts was compounded in 1860, when it became apparent that he was also losing his business. The silk factory failed that year, and Beaux’s brother Edmund left the city. Reduced circumstances forced the Leavitt and Beaux families to move, this time to a house at 1510 Lombard Street. The collapse of his business and the ever-increasing disregard for his thoughts and feelings concerning the
upbringing of his children led Beaux to a difficult decision. In 1861 he returned to France and again left his daughters with their grandmother. Beaux did not come back to Philadelphia for another twelve years. 11

Etta and Leilie were nine and six years old when their father moved away. While his absence left them with feelings of abandonment and initiated a tightly knit bond between them, 12 the sisters responded to their father’s departure in very different ways. As the older sister, Etta carried real memories of both her mother and her father, and as a result was able to see her father for who he was. Her sense of the events that had so dramatically changed the life of her family also helped her to fully shift her familial identity to the Leavitts, and especially to her practical grandmother.

Leilie, on the other hand, had ambivalent experiences with her father, and did not even have a “momentary, vague, child-impression” of her mother. With almost no reality on which to base her conceptions, Leilie romanticized and idealized both of them. Her father became a passionate idealist, filled with poetry and light, and she later believed that it was her French inheritance that accounted for her artistic spirit. Her mother became a beautiful and accomplished woman who was deeply loved, an image that she invented because her grandmother and aunts could not discuss the details of her mother’s death. Leilie’s impressions were forged from artifacts of her existence—dresses, cloaks, fans, ribbons, her wedding veil and wreath—and reinforced by family and friends who stared at her for a reflection of her mother. 13 Leilie came to believe it was her mother’s legacy she was destined to continue.

The impact of continuous change on the Beaux sisters during their earliest years was cushioned by the steadfast and nurturing love that they received from their grandmother Leavitt and their aunts Eliza and Emily. In the mid-1850s, in order to be near the young Beaux family, Cecilia Leavitt, 11

11 Bowen, *Family Portrait*, 138; Beaux, *Background*, 9; McElroy’s PCD, [1861]; Gopsill’s *Philadelphia City Directory* 1873 (Philadelphia, 1873), (hereafter Gopsill’s PCD, [date]).

12 Siblings bond because they have access to one another, they need each other for meaningful personal identity, and because there is insufficient parental influence. In the case of the Beaux sisters, their circumstances activated a loyal acceptance and mutually dependent relationship, each drawing on the other’s strengths. While acknowledging their differences, they always needed and cared for each other. Stephen P. Bank and Michael D. Kahn, *The Sibling Bond* (New York, 1982), 18–21, 96–99; Helene S. Arnold, *Brothers & Sisters/Sisters & Brothers* (New York, 1979), 146–50; Elizabeth Fishel, *Sisters: Love and Rivalry Inside the Family and Beyond* (New York, 1979), 149–209.

whose husband had died just a few years earlier, had moved to Philadelphia with her children. Well educated, socially adept, and an able household administrator, Cecilia Leavitt supervised a home she shared with four of her eight children. Her daughters, Eliza and Emily, were gifted musicians, artists, and seamstresses, and one friend who frequently visited them noted that the creative and lively Leavitts made “other women seem like stuffed dolls” next to them.\footnote{Ibid., 3–8; Bowen, Family Portrait, research notes, box 10, Catherine Drinker Bowen Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. [hereafter, Bowen Papers, LC]; Leavitt Family Bible, Kent Saltonstall; Beaux diary, Aug. 30, 1906, Beaux Papers, AAA; Bowen, Family Portrait, 135.}

In 1855 Cecilia Leavitt added the little Beaux sisters to the family, and their father, when he returned from France, two years later. The family’s careful economy was stretched further when Adolphe Beaux’s business failed in 1860, moving to even less expensive housing at 1510 Lombard. While this was not the only change that the Leavitt family had weathered, it was the first for the little Beaux sisters. Over the next thirteen years they would survive many others.

In the time before the family settled into a permanent home in 1873, the sisters watched their aunt Emily mary William Foster Biddle and move away in January of 1860. The following year they bid their father good-bye when he returned to France. In 1862 Emily came home while Biddle fulfilled a year of military service during the Civil War,\footnote{Biddle was an aide with the rank of captain on the staff of General George B. McClellan. Henry D. Biddle, Notes on the Genealogy of the Biddle Family (Philadelphia, 1895), 35.} and the next year their uncles, Charles and Samuel, moved away and established their own homes. During the winter of 1864, when Will Biddle was superintendent of the Freedom Iron Works, the Beaux sisters lived with him and Emily in Lewiston, Pennsylvania.\footnote{Beaux, Background, 33–34; Arthur C. Bining, Pennsylvania’s Iron and Steel Industry (Gettysburg, Pa., 1954), 21; Statistical Charts on the Iron Industry in Pennsylvania in 1850 (n.p., 1850), Collections, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.} That same year their grandmother and Aunt Eliza Leavitt relocated to West Philadelphia—a section of the city that was spacious but inexpensive; the following year the girls joined them. In 1869 the four of them moved again, and in 1870, when Will and Emily Biddle began living with them—the Biddles had moved back to Philadelphia in 1867 when Will was appointed vice president of the Lehigh Coal & Navigation Co.—they moved yet again. In 1872 Adolphe Beaux came back to Philadelphia but the Leavitts did not invite him to reside with them.
Instead, the following year, 1873, the Leavitt and Biddle families acquired the house at 4305 Spruce Street, a purchase that allowed them to settle permanently in the West Philadelphia community. After years of moving around they never budged again.

Young Leilie Beaux learned to cope with the loss of her parents and the constant state of flux in her family by indulging her imagination through make-believe and elaborate doll-playing. The dolls, Mrs. Henry Franklin, who belonged to Etta, and Mrs. Charles Wood, who belonged to Leilie, were married and had three children; reminiscent of the three children in Leilie's own family—including her dead sister, Alice. Leilie's days were filled with making clothes for the dolls, caring for them during their frequent illnesses, as well as penning letters to their husbands who were always away on business. While Etta sometimes played dolls with her younger sister, the activity never had the same urgency for her that it did for Leilie. Through doll-playing and the stories that she concocted that reflected the circumstances of her own home—her father and uncles were frequently away but her grandmother and aunts were always present—Leilie learned to translate her sense of vulnerability into a romanticized notion of feminine self-sufficiency.

Leilie's belief in the constancy of the women in her family was fueled by the stories she heard about her mother and her Aunt Eliza during the years that their father's business had failed. Cecilia and Eliza Leavitt became heroines to young Leilie as they had bravely ventured into the world and had found employment as a governess and as a music teacher. The stalwart sisters, who had purportedly stayed the Leavitt family's financial crisis, were always held up in contrast to their impractical, college-educated, Swedenborg-influenced brothers, John and Samuel. The Leavitt brothers, who apparently had done nothing to help during the family's predicament, were judged incompetent dreamers and reformers.

Even though the Leavitt brothers undoubtedly contributed to the upkeep of the family in the 1860s, Leilie seemed to have few memories of them.

17 The Leavitts are listed in West Philadelphia at 44th and Spruce between 1864 and 1867; no listing for 1868, and at 4309 Spruce in 1869. Will Biddle is first listed at the same address as the Leavitts—4359 Spruce—in the 1870 directory. The two families remained at this address until 1872. McElroy's PCD, [1864–1866]; Gopsill's PCD, [1867–1873]; Family Portrait, research notes, box 10, Bowen Papers, LC.

18 Beaux, Background, 7.

19 Charles is listed as an accountant, clerk, foreman, and bookkeeper, Samuel as a coal dealer, and John as a rubber-goods merchant (McElroy's PCD, [1858–1867]; Gopsill's PCD, [1868]).
The ones she did have were either remote or disagreeable—with one unpleasant incident involving her uncle Samuel that remained with her all her life. Samuel played a thoughtless joke on her and Etta when they were quite young. One bitterly cold night he took the sisters’ dolls out of their beds and hung them by their arms and legs from the gas fixture, the door handles, and other open places. The next morning, the sight of her babies so coldly unprotected was more than Leilie could bear; Samuel’s cruel trick had cut to the heart of her own well-being. She later wrote in her autobiography that from that time forward she “never forgot to shrink from [him] when he appeared as a guest.”20

While Adolphe Beaux and the Leavitt brothers were never able to stabilize the family, either emotionally or financially, when Will Biddle moved in he quickly accomplished what the others never could. Biddle ended years of unsettling financial uncertainty for the Leavitt women and the Beaux children, and he gave them all a new sense of cohesion and familial belonging. This kind and gentle man, who could trace his ancestry back through a long line of Quakers, who was professionally employed as a mining engineer, and who had a great avocational interest in music, absolutely thrived in the company of these creative and intelligent females. For Leilie, Will Biddle—who actively fostered her development and never abandoned her—eventually won her trust. She later noted that her uncle Will was the greatest influence in her life next to her grandmother.21

While Will Biddle, specifically, and Adolphe Beaux, more obliquely, directed the life paths of the Beaux sisters—especially that of Leilie Beaux,22 their grandmother and aunts were influential role models. Even though there were few luxuries and little self-indulgence in the Leavitt household during their earliest years, the Beaux sisters were given many intangible gifts. Their grandmother, despite the family’s many moves, managed a contented and

20 Beaux, Background, 29.
21 Ibid., 29, 33–34; Drinker, History, 69; Bowen, Family Portrait, 139–42; Bining, Pennsylvania’s Iron and Steel Industry, 21.
22 An absent father has a profound effect on a daughter, particularly on her later relationships with men. Fathers who leave do so because they lack self-esteem that makes holding a job or overcoming problems exceptionally difficult. Such men feel useless as fathers. Their daughters often idealize them and become obsessed with understanding why they left, blaming their absence on their own shortcomings. Such daughters struggle to earn their fathers’ acceptance or seek a father surrogate. Many of these dynamics were in play in the relationships between Leilie Beaux, her father, and her Uncle Will Biddle. See Barbara Goulter and Joan Minninger, The Father-Daughter Dance: Insight, Inspiration, and Understanding for Every Woman and Her Father (New York, 1993), 17–55.
lively home in which she assumed responsibility for the girls' religious training and education.²³

Etta and Leilie were home schooled by their aunts and grandmother until their early teens when they were sent to the private academy of Catherine and Charlotte Lyman, who conducted classes in their home at 226 South Broad Street. Just as Cecilia Leavitt had done for her own daughters, she provided her granddaughters with an educational opportunity that allowed them to meet other children from similar social backgrounds. Will Biddle undoubtedly paid their tuition, and in 1869, when Leilie was fourteen years old, she joined Etta at the Misses Lymans' School.²⁴

The sisters' experience with the Lymans' was their first exposure to the world outside of their family, and for Leilie it marked the end of childhood. Since infancy the sisters had been extensions of each other, but by the time they had completed their studies their unique personalities and singular needs had begun to emerge. While the sisters were close they were also opposites. Etta was sweet tempered and docile, Leilie was tempestuous and passionate (fig. 2). Etta nurtured others, Leilie thought of herself. Poor vision limited Etta's activities, perfect eyesight expanded Leilie's horizons. Etta focused inwardly, her younger sister took on the world.²⁵

While the sisters always remained close and caring, when they were teenagers they began traveling on separate but related paths. Oriented to the

²³ Cecilia Leavitt was a charter member of the Woodland Presbyterian Church and reared her granddaughters there. She insisted on home schooling and domestic training for them. Emily taught them to read and write, and introduced them to poetry and literature. Eliza tutored them in history and French, and stimulated their appreciation of the arts. Etta took piano and Leilie had drawing lessons. Emily also taught them such domestic skills as furniture waxing, silver polishing, and sewing. See Mary Brainerd Smith, *A History of the Woodland Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, 1865–1948* (Philadelphia, [ca. 1948]), 7–8, 15, 71; Woodland Presbyterian Church Register, 1866–1883, and Year Book of the Woodland Presbyterian Church, 1911–1912, MS Col., Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia; Beaux to Mrs. Brown, Feb. 9, 1939, correspondence other than Bowen's, box 74, Bowen Papers, L.C.; Beaux, Background, 22–27, 29–30, 40, 73, 75; Beaux and Emily Biddle to Adolphe Beaux, Nov. 9, 1863, Beaux Papers, AAA; Bowen, *Family Portrait*, 139.

²⁴ Lyman students ranged in age from ten to eighteen, and were segregated into classes by ability rather than by grade. Leilie was with younger girls for Latin, algebra, and arithmetic, with older girls for French, English composition, and natural history, and with girls her own age for American history. Both sisters excelled at poetry recitation. *Gopsill's PCD*, [1869]; Beaux, Background, 44–56.

simple comforts of the people around her, Etta fell into a traditional domestic life. Leilie, on the other hand, sought independence, accomplishment, and the stimulation of the larger world. She also developed a keen awareness of the power and value of money. Both sisters determined their life’s direction by modeling themselves after the resourceful and creative Leavitt women. Their grandmother was the mother of eight, and while a widow for more than forty years, she managed a comfortable and busy home where she lived with her children, sons-in-law, and grandchildren. Etta identified with her and followed her example, marrying and raising six children of her own, and like her grandmother, opening her home to her youngest daughter and grandchildren when she was elderly. Their mother and their aunt Eliza, employed in the feminine occupations of governess and teacher, helped keep the family together when their father’s and grandfather’s businesses failed. Leilie identified with them and followed in
their footsteps, securing marketable, well-paying work that made it possible for her to contribute to the family finances.26

Because music was a form of creative expression for nearly every member of the Leavitt household, and it was also Eliza’s vocation, that interest sensitized the family to the value of other forms of artistry. One result was that Leilie’s artistic abilities were recognized early and her career ambitions were later supported. When she was just three years old the family noticed that she had sketched the local organ-grinder on a “slate framed in wood.” Thereafter, her Aunt Eliza—who was not only a professional musician but also an amateur artist who designed embroidery patterns, painted flowers in watercolor, and executed landscape sketches—found ways to foster Leilie’s budding talents. Eliza took the child on excursions into the countryside and encouraged her to fill sketch books with a variety of pencil drawings.27 She also took both Beaux sisters to picture galleries and special exhibitions. Leilie remembered her first visit to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts when it was still in its old building on Chestnut Street. Benjamin West’s Death on a Pale Horse (1817) caught her attention, and she lay on the floor to get a better look at it. She knew its source from the Book of Revelation. When Will Biddle joined the family, he too encouraged his niece’s aesthetic eye. An invitation to see the art collection of Philadelphia businessman Henry C. Gibson became a lasting memory.28

Leilie was given her first art lesson at the age of eight, and at thirteen her Aunt Eliza brought her “a small package of lithographs”—a collection developed for beginning art students by early-nineteenth-century English

26 Judith Stein cites the work of sociologist Rela Monson, who found a positive correlation between female achievement and the all-female-sibling family noting that the first female sibling is more likely to marry and fulfill familial expectations, thus relieving some of the pressure to conform for the younger female who may be freer in her choice of lifestyle. Stein, “Profile of Cecilia Beaux,” The Feminist Art Journal 4 (1975–76), 31, n. 9.

27 At least one of the sketches in the Beaux sketchbooks at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts is initialed ESL—Eliza Smith Leavitt.

28 Beaux noted that nearly one hundred paintings were hung in “three tiny marble rooms” in Gibson’s Walnut Street mansion. The showpiece of his collection was a replica of Alexandre Cabanel’s Birth of Venus. Gibson’s collection also included work by Thomas Couture, Jules Breton, Gustave Brion, Jean-Léon Gérôme, Eugène Fromentin, and Rosa Bonheur—all well-regarded French academic artists of the day. Beaux, Background, 14, 20–21, 35–36; Stein, “Profile of Cecilia Beaux,” 26; “Private Art Collections of Philadelphia—II, Mr. Henry C. Gibson’s Gallery,” Lippincott’s Magazine 9 (1872), 571–72.
Leilie found it impossible to replicate the lithographic effect in pencil, even when “the house was exactly the right size, the walls upright, and the drawing . . . in exactly the right place on the page.” Several years after her disheartening introduction to the medium, Will Biddle arranged for her to tour Thomas Sinclair and Sons where she was shown the lithographic process.

Leilie’s aesthetic gifts were fully apparent by the time she completed her formal education at the Lymans’ school. Shortly thereafter the family decided that she needed a structured outlet for her creativity. Will Biddle decided that Catharine Ann Drinker, a distant relative and a successful and accomplished artist, would be able to help develop his niece’s artistic abilities. In 1871, when Leilie was sixteen years old, she paid her first visit to 524 Walnut Place. For the next year, the thirty-year-old artist’s studio—the first that Leilie had ever seen—was where she diligently did copy work. There she created drawings from well-known “school studies . . . interpreted by Julien”—lithographic prints of Greek sculpture, such as “the bowed profile of the Hermes.”

While Catharine’s instruction got Leilie started, the example of her life had an even greater impact on the girl. Catharine’s unusual experiences—which included a childhood in Macao, China, and the directorship of an academy for girls in Baltimore, Maryland, when she was just nineteen years old—fascinated Leilie and helped expand her view of the world. Catharine’s achievements were impressive and when Leilie came to study with her in 1871 she was just beginning a decade of creative activity as a


31 Beaux thought this was the Julien who managed the atelier, but this was the French artist Bernard-Romaine Julien (1802–1871) who published several series of lithographic studies for use as copy work for beginners. Beaux, Background, 58–59; Gopsill’s PCD, (1874); E. Benezit, Dictionnaire Critique et Documentaire des Peintres, Sculpteurs, Dessinateurs et Graveurs, (Paris, 1956), 5: 194; Hans Vollmer, ed., Thieme-Becker Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Künstler, (Leipzig, 1926), 19: 305–306.
teacher, artist, and writer. Leilie and Catharine soon discovered that they had a great deal in common. Besides their love of art there were many personal similarities. They shared the same birthday—May 1—and both were orphans of a sort, Catharine literally and Leilie de facto, they both lived with their grandmother, and they both had moved around a great deal. The two could also trace their families back to America's earliest beginnings, and both of their families had recently fallen on financially difficult times, making it necessary for both of them to work. Student and teacher were drawn to each other, and they soon began a lifelong friendship that eventually extended beyond the two of them to embrace both of their families.

Yet when Catharine and Leilie first knew each other it was their mutual interest in art, coupled with Drinker's confidence in Leilie's ability to succeed as an artist, that sustained their relationship. After a year of copy work, Catharine suggested Leilie continue her art training at the Van der Widen School. Will Biddle paid the fees, and in 1872 Leilie began classes there. The next year, when the school's founder returned to Europe, Catharine Ann Drinker assumed the directorship and Leilie was again under her

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33 Francis Adolf Van der Widen, a Dutch-Flemish artist, trained at the Antwerp Academy, emigrated to Philadelphia in 1868. Hampered by failing eyesight he abandoned his career and took up teaching, training young women in the design arts. His school opened in 1869 at 1334 Chestnut Street.

34 The nearly two years of training that Leilie received at the Van der Wielens School introduced her to enlarging and linear and aerial perspective, and to the principles of light and shade; she also experimented with lithographic crayon on paper. When she mastered these exercises she advanced to drawing from plaster casts of Greek and Roman sculpture. The bedroom she shared with her sister was transformed into a makeshift studio, and during the Van der Wielens years the sisters slept surrounded by casts that Etta later noted depicted "all the heathen gods and goddesses." Beaux, Background, 64-69, 75; Bowen, Family Portrait, 161.
tutelage.\textsuperscript{35} The Van der Wielen School gave Leilie the rudimentary skills of a beginning artist.\textsuperscript{36}

Driven by a need for independence and a singular urgency to contribute to her family's finances—her one "rock bottom reality"—Leilie began her professional life in 1873 at the age of eighteen, shortly after completing her studies at the Van der Wielen School. Under the guidance of Catharine Ann Drinker, Leilie, who soon assumed her mother's name—Cecilia Beaux—as her artistic signature, began her career as an art teacher and commercial artist. Her first position was as Catharine's replacement as the drawing instructor at the school of Miss Weltha L. Sanford. She set off to teach there wearing a "bonnet with strings" that Etta had helped her make over so that she would "look at least as old as the big girls in the class."\textsuperscript{37} When it became apparent that her students were an insufficient challenge, Will Biddle arranged the tour at the Sinclair printing establishment, an introduction to lithography that brought her many commissions.

Cecilia's first published work, \textit{The Brighton Cats} (1874; private collection), produced when she was just nineteen years old, was well subscribed and favorably reviewed by Drinker's journalist friend Thomas Janvier.\textsuperscript{38} On the strength of that work she was hired to make lithographic drawings of fossils for the brilliant paleontologist Edward Drinker Cope, a distant relative attached to the U.S. Geological Survey.\textsuperscript{39} The plate credited

\textsuperscript{35} Leilie supplemented her studies by constantly sketching, filling note pads with drawing-book assignments of flowers, fauna, architectural details, geometric forms, and people. She also drew landscapes, her family, and renderings of shells, fossils, and bones. Eight or nine of her early sketchbooks survive. Beaux, \textit{Background}, 69–70.

\textsuperscript{36} Leilie's sketch work was undoubtedly based on early American and English drawing book assignments. These manuals followed a structured system of drawing based on the theory that lines were the essence of form, an aesthetic system developed by Sir Joshua Reynolds. At least 145 how-to-draw manuals were published in the United States between 1820 and 1860. See Peter C. Marzio, \textit{The Art Crusade: An Analysis of American Drawing Manuals, 1820–1860} (Washington, D.C., 1976), unpaginated; Diana Korzenik, \textit{Drawn to Art: A Nineteenth-Century American Dream} (Hanover, N.H., 1985), 37–53; Beaux, \textit{Background}, 43, 181; Pevsner, \textit{Academies of Art, Past and Present} (Cambridge, 1940), 227, 229.

\textsuperscript{37} Sanford's school was in operation from 1857 to 1891 Beaux, \textit{Background}, 84, 71; Gopsill's \textit{PCD}, [1874]; Gertrude Bosler Biddle and Sarah Dickinson Lowrie, eds., \textit{Notable Women of Pennsylvania} (Philadelphia, 1942), 170; Bowen, \textit{Family Portrait}, 160.

\textsuperscript{38} Thomas A. Janvier, ""The Brighton Cats, Lithograph by Miss E. C. Beaux," \textit{Philadelphia Press}, Dec., 1, 1874, in Beaux scrapbook, Beaux Papers, AAA.

to Beaux in an essay by Cope, published in 1875, testifies to the precise detail required for this type of work.40

Shortly after conquering fossil drawing and lithography Cecilia added china painting to her artistic quiver. In the spring of 1879 Catharine urged Cecilia to take lessons with Camille Piton, a noted French ceramist and author then living in Philadelphia and teaching at the National Art Training School. Beaux’s success as a design artist was immediate and lucrative, and later, in *The Delinator*, she proudly stated that “she [had] never been in need for wanting of selling her works; they [had] always been in demand.”41

As Catharine Ann Drinker’s protégée, Cecilia conquered the essential skills of an artist and then absorbed facets of the larger Philadelphia art world. Throughout the 1870s, under Catharine’s tutelage, Cecilia became a teacher and commercial artist, met John Phillips, a collector of prized steel engravings, took classes at the Pennsylvania Academy, where she may have joined Catharine in an unsupervised sketch class in 1878, and began to exhibit her work there and elsewhere.42

Drinker’s influence on Beaux was profound, but the close connection between teacher and student changed when Catharine—whom Cecilia had assumed because of her age had forfeited her “right to love” and would live out her life as a spinster—wed journalist Thomas Allibone Janvier on

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42 Even though Beaux denied studying at the Academy, she was registered there in 1876, 1877, and 1878. She primarily attended classes in 1877. Both Beaux and Drinker exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy, and at the Louisville Industrial Exposition in 1880. Student cards and student register, 1860–1884, Exhibition records, Archives, PAFA; Beaux, *Background*, 62, 86–87; Huber, *The Pennsylvania Academy and Its Women*, 67; Louisville Industrial Exposition, *Catalogue of Painting and Statuary*, (Louisville, Ky., 1880), Pre-1877 Art Exhibition Catalogue Index, NMAA.
September 26, 1878. Catharine’s marriage, coupled with her sister Etta’s nuptials the following year, to Catharine’s brother, Henry Sturgis Drinker, forced Cecilia to seriously review the direction of her own life.

The fresh beauty of the Beaux sisters was apparent by the time they were in their mid-twenties (fig. 3) a period during which Cecilia noted “the little god [of love] was pretty constantly about,” and there was much talk of marriage. Yet when it came to accepting the attentions of suitors the Beaux sisters again responded quite differently. Etta, the quiet one whose enchantment lay in her subtle beauty and her peaceful devotion to those around

43 Beaux, Background, 59; Drinker Family Papers, box 75, Bowen Papers, LC; DAB, 5: 613; Who’s Who in America, (Chicago, 1966), 7: 1097.
her, attracted serious beaus in pursuit of a faithful wife and loving mother. Cecilia, astonishingly beautiful and fashionably attired—she was thought to have “French roses in her cheeks”—was self-assured, vivacious, intelligent, and witty. She had a talent for entrancing myriad awestruck admirers, and while thriving in the company of many men, she postured a nonchalant aloofness toward those brave souls who chanced a more intimate association with her.

Etta wanted a family of her own and yearned for a husband and children. Never mind that Henry Sturgis Drinker—the man she married when she was twenty-seven years old—had first noticed her sister Cecilia and had apparently asked for her hand before giving his heart to Etta. Neither sister seemed to resent this complication, and when Etta walked down the aisle of the Woodland Presbyterian Church on the arm of her father on December 2, 1879, Cecilia noted that her sister floated “away on the happiest of marriage destinies, without a ripple to mar its certainty or one backward glance.”

Etta and Henry Drinker began their married life under the roof at 4305 Spruce Street, sharing living quarters with the Leavitts, Biddies, and Cecilia. Their first child, Henry Sandwith Drinker, was born there just ten months after the wedding. The selfless devotion with which Etta met the demands of her marriage and her role as a new mother had a profound impact on Cecilia, and from the late 1870s to the late 1880s—the years during which her professional identity solidified—Cecilia grappled with the personal dimensions of her own life.

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44 Some of Bea’s earliest suitors were young men from the Woodland Presbyterian Church. “Sam, Harry, and Robinson” all vied to walk her home, take her to a “sociable,” or share a supper with her. Bea, Background, 86; Diary of 1875, Beaux Papers, AAA; Bowen, Family Portrait, 135.

45 Henry Sturgis Drinker (1850-1937) was the third child of Sandwith and Susanna Budd (Shober) Drinker. Raised in the Orient, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, Henry attended Lehigh University and earned an Engineer of Mines degree in 1871. After graduation he began his professional life with the Lehigh Valley Coal Company, supervising the construction of the Musconetcong tunnel, an experience he recorded in, Tunneling, Explosive Compounds & Rock Drilling (1878). With the completion of the tunnel, Drinker determined to become a lawyer, passing the Philadelphia bar in 1877. When Henry and Etta married in 1879, he was working for the attorney Byerly Hart, and by 1883 he was a rising corporate lawyer for the Lehigh Valley Railroad Company. (Drinker, Autobiography of Henry Sturgis Drinker, 19-28; Drinker, History, 63-64). While Henry was apparently interested in Cecilia, she was never taken with him. On one occasion she had been away from home when Catharine and Henry dropped by for a visit. She later noted in her diary “I don’t mind missing him.” Diary of 1875, Beaux Papers, AAA.

46 Bea, Background, 86.
While no diary entries survive to document this struggle, other evidence—specific paintings and drawings completed during the late 1870s through the late 1880s, correspondence with her family while she was completing her art training in France in the late 1880s, and the cultural attitudes regarding acceptable roles for women as expressed in the literature of the late nineteenth century—suggest the forces that shaped Cecilia's perspective.

The circumstances surrounding Beaux's drawing from a plaster cast of the castrated Torso Belvedere (private collection), completed March 25, 1877, while she was a student in the Pennsylvania Academy's Antiques Class, offer a first glimpse of her fear of physicality. Cecilia attended one session of the life-class for ladies on January 30, 1877, a course for which Thomas Eakins was presumably the instructor. No doubt horrified by the dissection work required of all Eakins' life class students, as well as the plaster casts made from dissected cadavers hanging in the life-class studio, Beaux fled from this experience, and two days later was re-registered in the school's antiques class. Her drawing, completed less than two months later, reveals not only her ability to handle the subtleties of the human form, but also suggests a desire for a cooler, detached, and less impassioned way of conquering human anatomy. She later recorded that she feared "succumbing to [the] obsession of [Eakins] personality," admitting that "a curious instinct of self-preservation kept [her] outside the magic circle." The subject matter of her drawing may have been a way for her to ameliorate his power and potency.

Unlike her sister and Catharine Drinker, who willingly submitted themselves to the men with whom they had fallen in love—Catharine shifted her work from the artistic to the literary, more in line with Janvier's career, and Etta began birthing babies almost immediately—Cecilia fought submission. She also dealt with Catharine's and Etta's new found devotion by producing numerous Elaine pictures. These images—based on a pathetic but highly romanticized heroine from the Arthurian legends, a character that represented death as an option for a virginal female whose misplaced affections went unrequited—reveal a fear of the potency of love, which Cecilia commingled with death. In the same way that she had idealized both of her parents, Cecilia's romantic Elaine pictures—for which a now lost...
crayon drawing was her first submission to the Pennsylvania Academy annuals in 1879—served as one of the bridges that led her away from impossible and deadly romances to a viable and stimulating art career.48

A few years later, her double portrait, Les derniers jours d'enfance (1883-85; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts) (fig. 4), a picture of her sister Etta and first born nephew, Henry Sandwith Drinker—created under the infrequent tutelage of William Sartain, Cecilia's teacher in a private art class in which she participated from 1881 to 1883—was the painting that made her acutely aware that she had turned "a very sharp corner . . . into a new world that was to be continuously [hers]."49

Loosely translated, "The Last Days of Infancy," its completion was a joint effort by the Beaux sisters.50 The finished product, a multi-dimensional interpretation of maternal devotion and artistic self-validation, depicts an appreciation of maternal longing in a rendering that gives full display to virtuosity of technique and consummate awareness of the most current artistic styles. The portrait includes a nod to Whistler's famous Arrangement in Grey and Black: Portrait of the Painter's Mother (1871; Musée d'Orsay), a picture that Cecilia had undoubtedly seen when it was on exhibit at the

48 Elaine was known as the Fair Maid of Astolat, the daughter of Sir Bernard of Astolat. In love with Lancelot, her father tried to dissuade her by telling her of Lancelot's devotion of Queen Guinevere. Elaine begged her father to desist and to let her pass from life with her illusions intact. While dying, she prepared a farewell letter to the knight and then arranged to float past him on a barge so that she could deliver it to him by her own hand after her death. Le Morte d'Arthur was popularized in the nineteenth century by Tennyson's Idylls of the King and several artists depicted the Elaine story. Tobias Edward Rosenthal's painting, exhibited and awarded a bronze medal at the Philadelphia Centennial in 1876, was probably the best known and may have been seen by Beaux. In her receipts for 1880 Beaux earned $60 from Elaine paintings, and exhibited an Elaine, priced at $50, at the 1880 Louisville Industrial Exposition. Quest for Unity: American Art Between World Fairs 1876-1893 (Detroit, 1983), 62-63; Sir Paul Harvey, The Oxford Companion to English Literature (Oxford, 1969), 265; Account book, 1879-1884, Beaux Papers, AAA; Louisville Industrial Exposition, Catalogue of Paintings and Statuary (Louisville, Ky., 1880), Pre-1877 Art Exhibition Catalogue Index, NMAA.

49 For a discussion of Beaux's experiences as a student of William Sartain, see Tara Leigh Tappert, "William Sartain and Cecilia Beaux: The Influences of a Teacher," Philadelphia's Cultural Landscape: The Sartain Family Legacy, 1830-1930 (Philadelphia, 2000); Beaux, Background, 87-88; autobiography of William Sartain, roll P-14, frame 204, AAA.

50 The painting is a contrived, imaginative, and illusionistic image. Family heirlooms brought to the studio created the setting. Etta sat in an old steamer chair and wore a frock concocted from an old black jersey of Cecilia's, to which was added a closely fitted "black satin sleeve with a little rich lace at the wrist." Draped across her lap was their grandmother's "canton crepe shawl." Henry owned the costume that he wore. The panelling in the background was from a carpenter's shop and dyed to look like mahogany. A highlight of the painting is the group of four hands at the center of the composition. For further information see Beaux, Background, 90-99.

Pennsylvania Academy in 1881. *Les derniers jours d'enfance* quickly became Cecilia’s most successful painting of the 1880s. It nearly won the $2000 prize in New York City at the American Art Association Prize Fund exhibition in the spring of 1885, and in the fall of that year it was awarded the Mary Smith Prize at the Pennsylvania Academy’s annual show. Two years later the painting was in the spring salon in Paris, where it was “well hung on a centre wall.” When it returned to Philadelphia “bearing the French labels and number,” that was the inspiration that Cecilia needed to decide to complete her art training in
Even though her art career was well on its way when she set sail for Paris, in January 1888, Cecilia had not yet resolved becoming a working woman with a single-minded commitment to a professional career. In fact, she left Philadelphia with at least three men begging for her hand in marriage. While she dismissed two of her suitors—Henry Thuron and Rev. Leonard Bacon—rather easily, the third one, Edwin Swift Balch, was another matter altogether. Cecilia’s genuine affection for him, whose proposal she rejected that summer, was the decision that finally forced her to fully address the reality of her future.

Cecilia arrived in Paris that winter and quickly became one of the star pupils at the Académie Julian. The following summer in Concarneau her dedication and talent impressed expatriate artists Thomas Alexander Harrison and Charles “Shorty” Lasar. These experiences were just a few of the forces that helped Cecilia fully recognize her own ambition. Bolstered by the cosmopolitan life she was now living in Europe, which was in marked contrast to the conservative world that she knew so well in Philadelphia, Cecilia found the fortitude she needed to fully commit to an art career.

In September 1888 Cecilia wrote her Uncle Will a heart-wrenching letter regarding her decision about Edwin Balch.

And now prepare your dear mind for the real and serious thing I have to say. You will not perhaps believe the struggle that it costs me—because I know that this is the real end. It is all over between me and Mr. Balch. It is not his fault, but I believe now that he is reconciled to it... He will never know how much I cared for him and still do. What I admired in him, what attracted me, and what I really loved—time and distance could not, and have not changed, but what was not satisfied has grown more imperative and for the first time I know that it will not do. I have expanded here and I could not get into the place I might have got into before... Of one thing I feel sure that he does not suffer now more than I do, and he has, as regards this side of life, a much more hopeful
future than I. All the same I ought to have made the sacrifice and taken the risk of losing. Do not think I am not paying for it—that is all.54

The relationship with Balch made Beaux realize that she was temperamentally unsuited for a conventional marriage, a decision which allowed her to recognize her need for independence, and her determination and restlessness. She now believed that no matter how attractive the suitor, she was simply unwilling to submit to anyone in marriage. Her experiences with Balch helped her to embrace a "beau ideal," and to accept, as she later noted, the "terrible standard of what love should be" as the reason she "held back [her] romantic heart.55

Just as she had done ten years earlier, when she had created the Elaine pictures at the time of Catharine's and Etta's marriages, Cecilia again chose an artistic outlet to help her come to terms with her decision. That winter, back in Paris, Cecilia created a painting for the 1889 Salon that contained underlying themes of love, marriage, and death. The picture—now lost and never reproduced—was a portrait of Louise Kinsella, an ethereal, golden-haired, Irish girl whom Cecilia had met in Concarneau.56 In the painting Beaux addressed her ambivalence toward marriage, her new commitment to a professional art career, and her future relationships with men.

Something about the beautiful Louise brought a series of literary sources to Cecilia's mind. She suggested a novel, an opera, and a poem, with stories of parting lovers and situations where the consequences of love and marriage for the woman was death.57 In this painting Beaux figuratively fused the

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54 Beaux to William Biddle, Sept. 30, 1888, Beaux Papers, AAA.
55 The characteristics of the nineteenth-century ideal man were as clearly defined as those of the true woman. See Rev. Daniel Wise, The Young Lady's Counselor, or Outlines and Illustrations of the Sphere, the Duties and the Dangers of Young Women (New York, 1852), 243-245, in Lee Virginia Chambers-Schiller, Liberty, a Better Husband—Single Women in America: The Generations of 1780-1840 (New Haven, Conn., 1984), 37; Beaux, Background, 86.
56 Louise is either seated in a "camp chair" wearing a "brown breton cloak with the hood thrown back," or "standing, her grand pale countenance lifted toward the light, in profile, a pearl against the shadowy suggestions of her dark costume and the darker background." Beaux to her family, Jan. 6, 1889, Beaux Papers, AAA, Beaux, Background, 177-78.
57 Cecilia described Louise as looking "like one of the English Millais heroines—Lucy Ashton or the Huguenot, golden hair tumbling around her ears and down her back." Lucy Ashton was a heroine in Sir Walter Scott's Bride of Lammermoor. First betrothed to Edgar Ravenswood, Lucy's mother forces her into a loveless marriage to Frank Hayston. Grief drives her insane and she dies on her wedding night. John Everett Millais' The Huguenot (1852) is based on Giacomo Meyerbeer's 1836 opera Les Huguenots, which in turn recalls the 1572 Catholic massacre of the French Huguenots. Millais portrays
ideals of love and marriage with a lethal reality. The associations for her were both personal and professional.

At the time that Beaux refused Balch's marriage proposal, society demanded that a woman choose either a career or marriage, an expectation that was further complicated by another contemporary notion. Professional accomplishments and successful marriages were thought to be impossible for artists, an idea popularized by Henry James in "The Lessons of the Master." Published in 1888, the very year Beaux rejected her suitors, James's story suggested that "true art" only happened at the sacrifice of marriage.58

These powerful ideas permeated the literature of the day. Authors such as Louisa May Alcott, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Henry James wrote accounts of fictional contemporary American women, while Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward, William Dean Howells, and Dinah Maria (Mulock) Craik specifically wrote novels about the lives of women artists. The persistent theme in the work of all of these authors was that women's lives were controlled by the fate of their choices. If they married, there were incalculable consequences, as career and marriage were totally incompatible.59

59 Changing roles, career opportunities, and shifting societal expectations of women fuel the story lines of these writings. The consequences of an artistic woman's choices and her fate are graphically described in Ward's unsettling Story of Avis. The author intimates the life of the artist and that of wife and mother are utterly incompatible as marriage and motherhood destroy all possibility for creative achievement. This view is confirmed in Howells' The Coast of Bohemia when Cornelia Saunders gives up her dream of an art career to marry her mentor. Craik's Olive was initially independent and artistically successful because she was crippled and considered ineligible for a woman's natural destiny. Yet she too marries and gives up her career, depriving the Scottish Academy of "no one knows how many grand pictures." See Louisa May Alcott, An Old Fashioned Girl, (1870; reprint, Boston, 1950), 258; Sarah Orne Jewett, A Country Doctor (Boston, 1884); Henry James, Portrait of a Lady, ed. Leon Edel (1881;
Beaux would have been well aware of these attitudes toward professional women and artists in the last decades of the nineteenth century. As she painted the portrait of Kinsella, the literary references suggest that she quieted her womanly romantic feelings in favor of the primacy of her career, professionally equating love and marriage with artistic death.

But the painting has even further symbolic meaning associated with Louise's physical appearance. Her looks unravel Beaux's personal reasons for relating love and marriage with death, while also revealing how she came to satisfy her private desires and public ambitions. Beaux was drawn to Louise's type of beauty because it signified a nineteenth-century ideal of innocent sensuality. She also associated her sitter's delicate appearance with classical asexuality, a kind of look that was currently touted by such Aesthetic artists as Frederic Leighton. Beaux further noted that Kinsella was a woman who did not "care at all for men," an attitude that the artist herself identified with at a physical level.

Even though Beaux enjoyed the company of men and had entertained several romances, she never allowed her relationships to progress to physical intimacy. One of the reasons she decided on a professional life was that it gave her a legitimate way to avoid the perils of pregnancy and childbirth, an almost foregone conclusion for any woman who married in the late nineteenth century. Since her own mother had died from the complications of childbirth, Beaux's decision to pursue a career was a practical one. Furthermore, she recognized the advantages of having a professional life, which would allow her to maintain a level of independence and autonomy. Compared to her contemporaries, Beaux had a unique perspective on the role of women in society, and her work reflects this consciousness.

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reprint, Boston, 1956); Elizabeth Stuart (Phelps) Ward, The Story of Avis (Boston, 1877); William Dean Howells, The Coast of Bohemia (New York, 1893); Dinah Maria (Mulock) Craik, Olive (New York, 1851).

66 Louise conformed to an Aesthetic ideal of feminine beauty, reminding Beaux of the heroine in Millais's The Huguenot, a tall, thin woman with classical Greek features, and an "appearance of otherworldliness." By the 1880s, the stylish looks of the classically natural English woman, epitomized by the tall, spare, and athletic Princess Alexandra and the actress Lillie Langtry were the height of fashion. Paintings by such Aesthetic artists as Millais, Lord Leighton, and James A. McNeill Whistler further popularized the type. Leighton's The Last Watch of Hero (ca. 1887) suggests how fully these artists embraced the classical model of beauty. They believed that the Greeks had achieved an unparalleled sense of face and form, and viewed the classical style as grand and asexual. The Venuses de Medici and de Milo were considered precursors of the natural woman, and it followed that they represented an unsurpassed ideal of asexual female beauty. Beaux, who had chosen to sketch cool antiques during her days at the Pennsylvania Academy, was "perfectly satisfied" when she saw the classical and asexual Venus de Milo in the Louvre. Beaux to Etta Drinker, Feb. 7, 1888, to her family, July 15, 1888, and to her family, January 20, 1889, Beaux Papers, AAA; Beaux, Background, 177–178; Lois W. Banner, American Beauty (Chicago, 1983), 5, 110, 129–30, 136–37.
of her delivery, Beaux had a logical reason to fear the process of birth. In choosing to pursue an art career, Beaux directed the focus of her decision away from a fear of pregnancy, highlighting instead the vocation that she regarded as a sacred calling, requiring the sacrifice of marriage. Embracing the “cult of single blessedness” that had first developed in the early nineteenth century, Beaux considered her art career as a celibate commitment, which she ironically equated with the responsibilities of motherhood.

She also equated the pursuit of an art career to the priesthood and concluded that her calling was predestined. In “Why the Girl Art Student Fails,” Beaux stated that “[t]he would-be artist should realize . . . that nothing but a high degree of natural gift will in the end prevail,” and claimed that an artist was born and was “one of the truly elect” in whom the “power of the Senses is raised to the power of Spirit.” In painting the Kinsella portrait, Beaux concluded that a professional vocation, while an acceptable alternative for a single and well-bred Victorian woman, was also a legitimate way to avoid the perils of marriage and motherhood.

While Beaux had come to terms with the primacy of her career, what she


62 The “cult of single blessedness” developed out of early-nineteenth-century Perfectionism. Its exponents believed that “no true Christian should regard marriage as either a primary or sole goal in life.” Through marriage one might serve God’s will, but marriage was, in and of itself, neither everyone’s calling nor anyone’s salvation. The idea of remaining single appealed to many women in the nineteenth century. Besides the decision to pursue a career, some found the marital institution wanting and in conflict with autonomy, self-development, and achievement, consciously rejecting the self-abnegation inherent in domesticity. Others internalized a “beau ideal” and refused to bind themselves legally, sexually, or intellectually to lesser men. Some shied away from sex or feared pregnancy and childbirth. See Chambers-Schiller, Liberty, a Better Husband, 2, 18–19, 21–22.

63 Chambers-Schiller references the author of Single Blessedness (1853) who wrote that noble work was given to the unmarried woman at the inspiration and command of her God. The idea of a vocation was not new to the nineteenth century, but when applied to the well-bred Victorian woman who was for the first time choosing a career, societal approval was accorded if she regarded her work as a spiritual “calling” and remained celibate and single. It often followed that a woman described her commitment to a certain chosen profession with language that created the illusion of participation in a formal religious order, expressing her purpose through images of godliness, sanctification, and the novitiate. Ibid., 2, 20–22; Beaux, “Why the Girl Art Student Fails,” Harper’s Bazaar 47 (1913), 221; Beaux, “Portraiture,” Lecture at Simmons College, May 14, 1907, in The Paintings and Drawings of Cecilia Beaux (Philadelphia, 1955) 112.
had not yet settled was how she would now relate to men. Well aware of her ability to attract scores of admirers, Beaux needed a barrier that could successfully dash any hopes for love or marriage but still allow friendship. Through nineteenth-century symbolism associated with blond hair, Beaux’s portrait of the flaxen-haired Kinsella addressed this dilemma. Here, Beaux compared her own fair beauty with that of Louise, producing a picture that was an iconicographic image of innocent sensuality. Louise conjured associations that allowed Cecilia to justify her career, while also embodying her notions of ethereal ideal beauty. Kinsella was Beaux’s vision of herself—a chaste but sensual woman who considered art a higher calling. Her destiny excluded marriage, but her career did not “unsex” her.⁶⁴

As Beaux settled into her decision to remain unmarried and single-mindedly pursue a career, she chose a role for herself that was quite different from that of her sister. A letter to Etta regarding her decision about Balch indicates how completely she had closed the door on marriage.

Speaking of suitability, there never will be anyone as well suited to me as that much despised individual in Philadelphia . . . I seem doomed to fix my fancy always on people who have an off side and that won’t do, and this off side is always the one the rest of the world sees. . . . You won’t have any more love affairs of mine to worry over.⁶⁵

Beaux’s genteel justifications for the choices she made and the path that she would follow, allowed her to give full rein to her professional ambitions. Her explanations made it possible for her to construct entirely different kinds of relationships with men. By taking the position that her career was a sacred calling that excluded marriage, she created a defense for herself that

⁶⁴ European culture traditionally identified dark hair with passion and blond hair with purity and innocence. Blond hair as a signifier of purity and insipidness began changing in the early 1870s with America’s fascination with the British Blondes, a British burlesque troupe brought to the States by music-hall performer Lydia Thompson. The troupe embodied the type of woman defined as voluptuous, sensual, sturdy, and buxom. With their arrival, blond hair became the vogue, and its old associations with purity and innocence were now combined with a new sensuality. America soon had its own symbol of sensual purity in the blond-haired, white-skinned actress Lillian Russell. Innocence was the major ingredient of her beauty, while her popularity rested on her portrayal, in her acting roles, of romanticized sensuality. Banner, American Beauty, 63, 124, 121–27, 135–36. “Cecilia Beaux, Artist, Her Home, Work and Ideals,” Sunday Herald (Boston), September [23], 1910, magazine section, 7, Jesse Wilcox Smith papers, AAA.

⁶⁵ Beaux to Etta Drinker, Feb. 4, [1889], Beaux Papers, AAA.
allowed friendly overtures to be no longer misconstrued. Beaux could now establish business associations, cultivate platonic friendships, and reference her aesthetic eye when observing attractive young men.

The shift in her attitude toward herself as a professional woman, and the change in her relationships with men, took hold almost immediately. During the summer of 1889 she accepted a number of portrait commissions in Cambridge, England, a decision that confirmed in her mind that she was now one of the family providers. Before she returned to Philadelphia, Beaux saw Henry Thuron in Paris and Edwin Balch in London and Cambridge. That summer she also used her mantle as a portrait painter to revel in the resplendence of potential male sitters, describing a Mr. Duckworth as “a stunning and charming young fellow—such a type and such a beauty. When a young Englishman is beautiful he can’t be matched—especially when he is in loose white flannels.” As Beaux set sail for America she met a young New Haven lawyer named George Dudley Seymour, and discovered a mutual interest in the arts. Their corresponding aesthetic pursuits—Seymour was to become a noted collector of Americana—became the basis of a lifelong friendship. This platonic, art-based relationship marked a new beginning.

Upon her return to Philadelphia the patterns of Beaux’s life were dictated by her newly fortified professional identity. In the fall of 1889 Will Biddle helped her find and set up a new studio at 1710 Chestnut Street. At home, her aunts did everything—housekeeping, meal preparation, shopping, and entertaining by playing the piano. The Leavitts’ unusual sensitivity regarding the “spirit and necessities of an artistic life” allowed Cecilia to fully focus her energies on her professional development.

During the years that Cecilia was advancing her career, Etta and Henry were growing a large and lively family. Three of Etta’s six children—Henry, James, and Cecil—had been born before Cecilia sailed for Europe. The next three—Ernesta, Philip, and Catherine—came during the 1890s (fig. 5). Henry Drinker, an ambitious man, progressed from general solicitor to assistant to the president at the Lehigh Valley Railroad. Between 1880 and 1893 the Drinkers lived at various addresses in West Philadelphia, and from

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66 Beaux to May Whitlock, [May 21, 1889], Beaux to her family, Monday, June 1889, Beaux to Etta Drinker, July 1, 1889, and Beaux to [Etta Drinker], [ca. late July 1889], incomplete letter; Beaux to William Biddle, [Aug. 1889]; George Dudley Seymour to Beaux, Nov. 11, 1897, Beaux Papers, AAA.67 Gopsill’s PCD, [1890]; Beaux, Background, 203–204.
1893 to 1905 they resided in a large and comfortable home that they built on the grounds of Haverford College. In 1888 the family acquired Curlew Cottage at Beach Haven, New Jersey, and from that year until the children were grown they spent their summers at the seashore.\(^68\)

While Henry provided the luxuries for his family's agreeable existence, it fell to Etta to manage the house and cottage as well as her children's complicated lives. In Haverford she monitored school schedules, language

\(^68\) Drinker, History, 71, 76.
tutors, and music lessons; she also focused attention on her energetic husband, a man who had little interest in a social life beyond the family. Henry never brought "friends to the house with the exception of one or two men," and he refused to "go to anything that resembled a party [or] have one at the house." The dimensions of Etta's life remained within the confines of her home, and to assist her in its management she supervised a fleet of Irish servants. From these faithful retainers she demanded the same standards of perfection that she had been trained to as a child, allowing "no nonsense or careless work from her cook, waitress, laundress, upstairs maid, coachman, children's nurse, governess, and coachman-gardener." Under Etta's guidance a kind of "furious energy" permeated the Drinker household.\(^6^9\)

During the year and a half that Cecilia was in Europe she particularly missed her sister. When she returned, Etta's little Cecil was a strapping two and a half year old, James was nearly seven, and Henry was a precocious boy of nine. Cecilia adored her sister and the children, and upon her return she expressed her affection for them through portrait renderings. Some portrayals, such as the pastel of Henry playing the piano (1889; private collection), and the oil sketch of a beach scene depicting her sister and nephews Henry and James (1889–1890; private collection), were created for the family. Other images, such as Cecil (1891; Philadelphia Museum of Art), Ernesta with Nurse (1894; Metropolitan Museum of Art), and Sister and Brother (Erneste and Philip Drinker) (1897; Melinda and Paul Sullivan) (fig. 6) were endeavors of aesthetic and technical virtuosity, designed for self-promotion.

Just as the sisters had validated their life choices in the 1880s, when they had colluded in the creation of Les derniers jours d'enfance, in the 1890s and beyond they verified the complexities of domesticity and artistic accomplishment through new paintings they created together. Taken as a whole, Cecilia's numerous renderings of Etta, Henry (see Man with a Cat, Burns, fig. 4), their children, and grandchildren, suggest the multi-layered cultural dimensions of a contented American upper-class family fully flourishing at the turn of the century. The pictures also display the artist's most innovative painterly techniques, images delineated in the fashionable

\(^6^9\) Ibid., 80–81.
Fig. 6. *Sister and Brother (Ernesta and Philip Drinker)*. Oil on canvas, 1897, 69 x 44". Melinda and Paul Sullivan.
styles of the international grand-manner portrait. Finally, through exhibition records and complimentary reviews these paintings further reveal the professionally ambitious nature of the woman who produced them.

Cecil, exhibited between 1891 and 1893 at the Philadelphia Art Club, the National Academy of Design, and the World's Columbian Exposition, was the portrait after which, for the first time, Beaux's work was seriously compared to that of John Singer Sargent's. Ernesta with Nurse, Beaux's first portrait of her beautiful dark-haired, dark-eyed niece, was painted in her Chestnut Street studio when the child was just two years old. Etta brought her there for the sittings. Almost from the moment it was completed it went on exhibition, first to the Society of American Artists spring show in 1894, two years later to the Carnegie Art Institute's first international exhibition, where it was awarded a third-place bronze medal, and that same year to the Parisian Salon at the Champ de Mars, where Beaux was hailed as "the foremost woman artist of the day." A reviewer who saw Sister and Brother—a painting completed in the Drinkers' Haverford home—commented on the complexity of its subject matter. The image suggested an "episode of child-life . . . with real dramatic effect," the successful blending of "pictorial effect," and portraiture.

While the children's portraits told the story of a happy home, as well as the accomplishments of their creator, Mrs. Henry Sturgis Drinker (Aimée Ernesta Beaux) (1891; Mrs. Mary D. Gooch) and Self Portrait #3 (1894; National Academy of Design) were sumptuous interpretations of selfless devotion and a life given over to a sacred calling. Painted during the years that Etta was birthing children and Cecilia was developing her career, the pictures evoke the artist's feelings regarding feminine sensuality and creativity.

Stylistically, grand-manner portraits were synthetic expressions of realism, the decorative aesthetic, Impressionism, and the classical academic. Iconographically, sitters were accorded status and glamour through exquisite costumes, fashionable accessories, and lavish backgrounds. Thematically, the images expanded beyond the mechanical influence of the camera and its emphasis on true likeness to the use of sentimental, moralistic, pictorial, or commemorative themes. The most useful scholarship on grand-manner portraiture in America is Michael Quick, American Portraiture in the Grand Manner, 1720–1920 (Los Angeles, 1981).

The portrait of Etta was painted during the year that she was pregnant with her fourth child (fig. 7). Depicted in a profile pose that again suggests Whistler's *Mother*, Cecilia portrayed her sister as a serene and sensitive being, a sensuous, dark-haired woman living a full and contented life.² This

² Just as Beaux's portrayal of the blond-haired Louise Kinsella, painted two years earlier, can be read as an interpretation of "innocent sensuality," the depiction of her dark-haired, pregnant sister, can be read as a representation of fulfilled passion.
study of quiet contemplation—an ideal representation of selfless devotion—is an interpretation in marked contrast to the reality of the sitter's hectic life. Etta's busy schedule rarely allowed such prolonged moments of reflection, a fact suggested by the picture's thinly painted surface. Beaux took what precious time her sister could give her, and then created a peaceful and solitary portrayal that undoubtedly reflects the artist's own idealized vision of her sister's domestic existence.

Three years later, when Beaux was asked, as a condition of election to the National Academy of Design, to submit a self-portrait for their permanent collection, she produced a handsome and straightforward portrayal that not only captured her charms, but also intimated that she was a woman determined to follow single-mindedly her predestined professional commitment (fig. 8). At thirty-nine Beaux saw herself as both attractive and professionally dedicated, and as such she chose to submit an image of herself that was meant to challenge the conventional attitudes she regularly encountered regarding the acceptable roles for well-bred and genteel women. Her self-portrait was not only a depiction of a woman following a sacred calling, it was also an interpretation meant to defy the notion that professional women were by nature plain and sexless Beaux bristled at the notion that a beautiful woman could not be intelligent or creative.

In an article about Beaux by Chicago sculptor and writer Lorado Taft, the author addressed the artist's staunch conviction that a career did not "unsex" a woman, and that feminine beauty did not indicate a simple mind. Following her receipt, in 1899, of the Carnegie Institute's first-class gold medal, for her portrait Mother and Daughter (1898; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts) (see Toohey, fig. 9), Taft penned an essay that discussed the personification of genius and described how Beaux challenged the usual vision.

73 Beaux resisted the contemporary view that educated and intellectual women were unattractive and sexually undesirable. She refused to submerge her femininity to an androgynous identity where she was neither man nor woman but an intermediary sex comprised of qualities of both. See J. C. Nicoll, corresponding secretary for the National Academy of Design, to Beaux, May 10, 1894, "An Art Club Reception," newspaper clipping [1894], Beaux Papers, AAA; "The New Woman as Androgyne: Social Order and Gender Crisis, 1870–1936," in Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Disorderly Conduct—Visions of Gender in Victorian America (New York, 1985); Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," Journal of American History 75 (1988), 9–39; Banta, Imaging American Women.
The writer . . . was relieved to find that the gifted artist was in no sense mannish; on the contrary, she gives the impression of a most womanly woman . . . She has the air of distinction and of cultivation, which is easier inherited than acquired . . . She is strikingly handsome; tall, with hair turning gray, but the face young and finely chiseled. The modest yet interested way in which she showed her works, some of them of international fame, made the call most entertaining.\(^4\)

\(^4\) Lorado Taft, "Work of Cecilia Beaux," *Chicago Record*, Dec. 21, 1899, *Family Portrait*, research notes, box 10, Bowen Papers, LC.
While Beaux's presentation of herself as a beautiful, demure, and artistically gifted woman regularly enchanted the men that she encountered, her self-confidence was rarely appreciated by other women with similar ambitions. George Biddle noticed Mary Cassatt's "furious antagonism" toward Cecilia Beaux, whom she sarcastically referred to as "that woman." Once, when Cassatt met Beaux on the steps of the Philadelphia Museum, she "cut her dead." The animosity that Cassatt felt toward her stemmed from Beaux's popularity with Philadelphia clients—including such Cassatt relatives as the Scotts (see Mathews, figs. 7, 9) and the Fishers—who preferred Beaux's more traditional portrait style to Cassatt's avant-garde painting and printmaking. Cassatt, who disdained the facile approach of such portraitists as Beaux and Sargent, wrote to Louisine Havemeyer in 1902: "How did you like Miss Beaux? I hope you did not make my Beaux mistake & talk Art?" Furthermore, unlike Cassatt, who on principle refused to serve on art juries, because in France the system had "kept out of exhibitions the most original paintings," Beaux relished such experiences as she had in the fall of 1899, when she was the only woman chosen as a juror to select paintings in oil, watercolor, and pastel for the Exposition Universelle to be held in Paris in 1900.75

Around the turn of the century, the carefully constructed, productive, and highly successful lives that the Beaux sisters had created for themselves took a new direction. In 1905, at the respective ages of fifty-two and fifty, Etta and Cecilia both settled into new homes—residences that mirrored the particular choices of each sister. Henry Drinker had been appointed president of Lehigh University, and to accommodate his career the family moved to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Cecilia, to facilitate a routine of leisure and work, completed Green Alley, her summer home and studio in Gloucester, Massachusetts. For the rest of her life she spent each summer and fall there, and her winters and springs in New York City.

Etta and Henry Drinker lived in the eastern Pennsylvania community of Bethlehem for the next fifteen years. While Henry thrived in its wild,
industrial, and dynamic atmosphere, shy and quiet Etta never fully adjusted to the city’s raw and boisterous personality, or to the public nature of her presidential home. By the time they had moved there, Etta’s three oldest children were out on their own, and of the younger three, only Catherine, who was eight when they had moved, was still a regular member of the household—and even she left at sixteen to attend boarding school. Etta now concentrated on the accomplishments of her ambitious and competitive children. Her sons pursued brilliant careers in law, banking, and medicine, her oldest daughter became an interior decorator, and her youngest made her mark as a biographer.

The kind and nurturing foil against which Etta’s children developed, and her husband flourished, was described by Henry as Etta’s “natural traits of loveliness” and “unselfish love and ever-present thought ... for others.” Etta regarded these qualities as merely natural expressions, but Henry recognized the sense of duty and gentle training that she lavished upon him and the children as familial values that she had learned at her grandmother Leavitt’s knee. Etta’s extravagant fidelity well benefitted her family, but she herself paid a high price for so completely devoting her life to others. Sometime in the mid-1890s, when she was in her early forties, Etta suffered “a serious nervous breakdown ... became a very bad sleeper and remained highly nervous from that time on.”

In 1891 when Beaux created her tranquil characterization of her sister, the portrayal offered few clues to the emotional collapse that Etta would later suffer. Yet in 1925—nearly five years after Etta and Henry had retired to the Philadelphia suburb of Merion, Pennsylvania, Cecilia painted another portrait of her sister that documented Etta’s persistent, high-strung condition (fig. 9).

In the same straightforward pose as her own self-portrait of 1894, Cecilia captured Etta’s dignity, and her disquieting, tightly wound energy. The unsettling portrayal is a revealing precursor to Etta’s second nervous breakdown, which occurred in May 1934, when she was eighty-one-years.

Etta never allowed herself “the stimulation of companionship with people outside the home circle” and never developed “outside interests such as games, gardening, church work or social services of various kinds, or even music.” Her life was “bound up in service to her family,” a kind of “self imposed” restrictive commitment. Drinker, Autobiography of Henry Sturgis Drinker, 88; Drinker, History, 82, 84.
old. 77 Undoubtedly, Etta’s commitment to the singular ideal of selfless care for others without regard for her own desires or ambitions, played an important role in the unbalancing episodes that she periodically suffered.

Etta’s apprehensions may well have been triggered by visits with her tough-minded and highly touted younger sister. Cecilia had carved out a

77 Beaux recounted the weeks of her sister’s breakdown in a series of letters to Thornton Oakley. Beaux to Oakley, May 3, 9, and 26, 1934, Thornton Oakley Papers, Brandywine River Museum, Chadds Ford, Pa.; Beaux to Oakley, June 24, 1934, Lansdale Humphreys, Isle of Man, Great Britain.
creative life for herself that gave her a deeply rooted sense of contentment and purpose. Yet she too had made sacrifices that may not have been fully apparent to Etta. For Cecilia, the laurels of her career were always tempered by the constraints she imposed on her personal life. Not until she settled on Gloucester’s Eastern Point—where she became a part of a congenial community of well-positioned single men and women—did Cecilia, both literally and figuratively, find a way to satisfy a lifelong hunger for personal acceptance. The world that she entered in Gloucester and the life she created at Green Alley provided her with a profoundly gratifying sense of place.  

Beaux dreamt of Green Alley as a sanctuary hidden from the road by a tangled thicket of woods, a practical, but inviting estate that would accommodate the main divisions of her life. The shell-toned stucco house with a peaked grey roof and a pink-bricked loggia, whose walls held terracotta bas-reliefs of work by such old masters as Donatello, was built for friendship. A separate and secluded studio, almost as large as the house, was built for work. Connecting the two main structures was a grassy terrace. The entire complex stands as a metaphor for the personal and professional divisions of Beaux’s life. Its layout embodies the social, cultural, and philosophical values imposed on professional women at the turn of the century.

Beaux entertained friends on her terrace, which included a loggia that she called the cloisters (see Leibold, fig. 7), and she worked in a studio that looked like a “tiny chapel” with a “pointed roof and high, narrow windows.” Inside the studio opposite its entrance was “a sort of bay [that was] treated like a chapel” (see Leibold, fig. 6). One reviewer noted that an “austerity” pervaded the place, as well as “a sense of the lofty impulse of creative labor, of a sincere devotion to truth and beauty, a feeling of the dominance of service in a high cause.”

While Beaux’s studio symbolized devotion to her craft, her home represented the nurturing balance of family and friends. The house con-

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tained a spacious living area, as well as private rooms, guest quarters, and servants’ chambers. Beaux’s two domestics, Anna Murphy and Natale Gavagnin, as well as her cousin May Whitlock, kept things running smoothly. Cecilia inherited Anna from her sister Etta, and the red-headed Irishwoman faithfully served her for forty years. Natale had been a Venetian gondolier when the Richard Watson Gilder family brought him to America (see Burns, fig. 6). Dressed in a white sailor suit with a colorful sash, he
worked for Beaux from 1907 to 1928, when bouts with heart disease took him back to Italy where he died. Anna cooked, cleaned, and fixed her mistress’s hair, while Natale chauffeured, gardened, and generally added an exoticism to life at Green Alley. Cecilia used Whitlock to entertain her sitters with readings from novels and short stories. With the help of her servants and May Whitlock, Cecilia balanced the demands of her career and the pleasures of her social life.81

Beaux maintained a select group of friends, but she enjoyed a wide variety of people, particularly young men, with whom the question of marriage never became an issue. Beaux “liked them very much,” her niece Ernesta commented, “she didn’t care . . . how bright they were. She just loved them

81 Ernesta Barlow, “Gloucester Summers,” typescript, Cecilia D. Saltonstall; Bowen, Family Portrait, 207-08.
They came to see her and they loved her." Her interests were satisfied from friendships with her neighbors, A. Piatt Andrew, a Harvard economist and U.S. Congressman (see Burns, fig. 7); and Henry Davis Sleeper, an architect and interior decorator. While these men amused and expanded her world, her friendship with illustrator Thornton Oakley, a young man some twenty-five years her junior, whom she first met in Gloucester, touched her deeply (see Burns, fig. 8, and Leibold, fig. 5).

Oakley’s determination to pursue an art career was undoubtedly the quality that first captured Beaux’s imagination. She took him under her wing, and the two of them were soon “wandering along Grape-Vine Cove; scrambling at low tide over seaweed, daring the isthmus of treacherous stones to clamber up majestic Braces, and all the time talking about art.” Beaux chatted about her portrait commissions and showed him “new paintings barely visible on the pale canvases.” As their friendship grew he spent evenings at Green Alley and nights in her New York apartment. Despite the age difference, or perhaps because of it, Cecilia permitted Thornton to touch the divergent elements of her life. He not only admired her as an artist, but also appreciated her as a woman. Oakley’s daughter later described her father’s and Beaux’s relationship as a “love affair... of a spiritual nature only.”

Beaux kept a steady stream of male admirers throughout her life, and her niece Catherine remarked that these “noticeably good-looking... willing followers” were usually “ten or twenty years her junior.” Occasionally one of the young men made more than a passing impression. John Wilkie was a New York City businessman, a widower, and the father of two young boys when Cecilia met him in March 1911. The “glorious sturdy gorse” that he sent her two weeks later launched their friendship, and that spring they spent time together. Yet Beaux gave herself a warning after a visit at the end of May, confiding in her diary that he “never seemed so attractive... I have to remember and KNOW... and beware.” Just a few days after the visit she

82 Interview with Ernesta Barlow by Frank Goodyear at Green Alley, Gloucester, Mass., Aug. 16, 1973, Beaux Papers, Archives, PAFA.


escaped to Gloucester for the summer.\textsuperscript{85}

When she returned to New York at the end of the year, Wilkie's attentions resumed. He sent her candy, flowers, and cigarettes, and invited her out to dinner. When he saw her at a gathering at the end of December, he walked her home and they had "some rather intimate talk." While Cecilia "wish[ed] there could be more," his interest both flattered and frightened her. After a New Year's Eve celebration, she noted in her diary that "J. Wilkie [was] wonderful at the party last night, standing near. I am afraid of him. I feel almost too free and happy. . . . This should not happen often [as] I should deceive myself and think I could have it."\textsuperscript{86}

As much as she appreciated the attentions of such charming men as Wilkie, she never forgot her sacred calling or the primacy of her career. In 1924 she was asked to produce a self-portrait for the prestigious Medici Collection of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy (fig. 10) Beaux produced a study that was more closely related to her recent portrayals of other professional women than it was to the vivacious thirty-nine year old she had captured on canvas for the National Academy of Design. Her solemn, seated portrayal, with paints and palette on a table to her right, shows her in "a simple painting frock of henna, against a warm red tapestrylike background." One reviewer considered the characterization "reticent" and "spiritual," a depiction suggesting "solitude," "endurance," and "unbreakable resolve."\textsuperscript{87}

Indeed, Beaux's last self-portrait, painted in her seventieth year, clearly revealed her belief that her life in the arts had been a sacred calling.

Etta's existence was defined by domesticity and devotion to her husband and children (fig. 11), while Cecilia's was distinguished by adherence to sanctioned social values fixed upon professional women. Each sister bore the consequences of her choices, yet each left a legacy for future generations.

Washington, D.C. 

TARA LEIGH TAPPERT

\textsuperscript{85} Bowen, Family Portrait, 208; Beaux diary, March 25, April 15, and May 25, 1911, Beaux Papers, AAA.

\textsuperscript{86} Beaux diary, Nov. 28, 29, Dec. 12, 15, 21, 27, 1911 and Jan. 1, 1912, Beaux Papers, AAA.

\textsuperscript{87} The request from the Uffizi was an honor extended to few other Americans: Frank Duveneck, William Merritt Chase, and John Singer Sargent. Minister, della Pubblica Istruzione, to Beaux, June 20, 1924, Beaux Papers, AAA; "Self Portrait by Cecilia Beaux," American Magazine of Art 17 (1926); Leila Mechlin, "Self Portrait by Cecilia Beaux," The Sunday Star (Washington, D.C.), Jan. 17, 1926; Alice Booth, "America's Twelve Greatest Women—Cecilia Beaux—who Has Given Back to the World Almost as Much Beauty as She Has Received From It," Good Housekeeping 93 (1931), 166.