BEAUX AND CASSATT offer a tempting comparison for the unsuspecting art historian. After all, two contemporary women from Philadelphia who developed artistic styles based on Impressionism should be perfect for a meaningful comparative analysis based on issues of identity. Unfortunately, it turns out to be an extraordinarily difficult task. Their different loci of activity, different theoretical viewpoints, and different approaches to the work itself mitigate the similarities of gender and nationality. Other comparisons seem more productive. Cassatt's relationship with Berthe Morisot, for example, can be rewardingly mined for all the subtle similarities and differences of two women working side by side for twenty years. In Beaux's case, many American male painters come to mind who were closer to Beaux, such as Sargent, for instance, or even better, William Merritt Chase. Beaux and Chase—both living in New York after 1900, both involved in teaching, jurying, and other art-world activities, as well as sharing stylistic and thematic similarities in their art—might easily be subjected to a close comparison of their personal and gendered contributions to the culture of their day.

Even the few obvious similarities of character between Cassatt and Beaux provide an unsatisfactory basis for meaningful comparison. To point out, for example, that they were both strong, ambitious women makes little headway toward a productive analysis. In the modern era, it is fairly safe to assume that any person who establishes herself in the highly competitive profession of fine art painting has drive, savvy, and talent. The odds of succeeding to the extent of supporting oneself financially—much less winning international recognition and a firm place in the history of art—are extremely low. Most promising art school graduates settle for a career in teaching or commercial art, if they stay in the field at all. For women, who have flocked to art
schools in very high numbers in the last two centuries, it is even more certain that the successful ones share similar levels of ambition and ability to overcome the prejudices they will face at every stage of their careers. It is no wonder, therefore, that the two women resemble each other in their gritty desire to achieve “fame and money” with their art.

Looking at their self-portraits, done during the first flush of success for each—Cassatt was thirty-three in 1878 (fig. 1) and Beaux was thirty-nine in 1894 (see Tappert, fig. 8)—they might as well have come from different planets. Cassatt, somewhat sullen and withdrawn, lounges informally on a divan, all the while dressed in the hat, gloves, and white visiting gown of a proper lady. The clash of formal costume and informal pose was typical of Cassatt’s dual identity as paragon and enfant terrible. Beaux in her self-portrait, on the other hand, presents herself much more straightforwardly. Gone are the hat and gloves; the light falls directly onto her eyes and forehead; and the simplicity of hairstyle and erect, broad-shouldered pose give her an air of strength and alertness. While Cassatt strikes the well-known pose of the fashionable Impressionist “drop-out,” Beaux associates herself with the strong but beautiful image of the “New Woman” best known in the exaggerated form made famous in the 1890s by Charles Dana Gibson.2

In another example of self-presentation, both had the chance to account for their life choices and sum up their greatest achievements toward the end of their careers. Beaux published her memoir, Background With Figures (1930), when she was seventy-five, and Cassatt, at sixty-eight, agreed to be interviewed by Achille Segard for the monograph Mary Cassatt: Peintre des Enfants et des Mères. Once again, the two “portraits” show vastly different personalities and strategies for artistic fame. Beaux’s language is calm and modest, but the woman she describes is full of confidence. She takes the reader through her artistic growth and the encouragement from the outside world that comes in the form of a continuous flow of special awards and commissions. Self-doubt, rejection, and outrage are not openly expressed—if indeed they were felt. In mild yet clear terms, Beaux portrays herself as a top

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1 Katherine Cassatt to Alexander Cassatt, July 23, 1891: “Mary is at work again, intent on fame & money she says. . . .” in Nancy Mowll Mathews, Cassatt and Her Circle: Selected Letters (New York, 1984), 222.

art professional whose equals were professionals in the highest realms of government, literature, and education. She fulfilled the aspirations of the "New Woman" that were so visible in the clear blue eyes of her self-portrait of 1894.

Cassatt, on the other hand, passed up the opportunity to recount the details of her life for Segard's monograph. Judging from the paucity of biographical information to be found in the book, she appears to have spent her time with the young writer talking about the larger ideas behind her art as they appeared to her looking back over the years. Cassatt loved talking
about art—her own and others—and was interested in placing her own works in the larger context of the Parisian art world during the heyday of Impressionism (1870s to 1890s). By 1912 she knew that day had passed, but she also knew Impressionism had taken on historical status, and she wanted to make sure her place within it was not forgotten. As in her 1878 self-portrait, she comes across as well-bred yet judgmental and pugnacious. Her description of her entrance into the Impressionist group is characteristically passionate: “I hated conventional art—I began to live!”

Thus, as people and as art-world figures, Cassatt and Beaux could not have been less compatible. It is not surprising that Cassatt makes no appearance in Beaux’s memoir or any of her other writings, despite their many mutual friends and documented knowledge of one another. Nor is it surprising that the few times Cassatt mentions Beaux in her letters, it is with gleeful malice. “How did you like Miss Beaux,” she wrote to Louisine Havemeyer in 1902, “I hope you did not make my Beaux mistake & talk Art?”

But given the differences in personality and era that are vividly communicated by their self-portraits, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at the few connections we can find between Cassatt and Beaux. Not only does this study increase our understanding of each of them, it also reveals aspects of fame for women that are not commonly examined. Since each was an active member of the art world, and each kept a close watch on the progress and success of other women artists as role models and rivals, the connections between them help us to formulate the existence of an un-acknowledged secondary network for women. Further, in comparing their strategies for advancing in the art world and how they were placed over time into its hierarchical structure, they offer an opportunity to define female fame in an era of high feminist consciousness, from about 1890 to the passage of the Woman Suffrage Amendment in the United States in 1920.

Their strategies reflected their different personalities and, to some extent, the decade gap in their ages. In light of Cassatt’s outspoken personality, for instance, it was fortunate that she matured in the freewheeling 1870s when it was acceptable to be a rebellious critic of established systems. The more

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4 Mary Cassatt to Louisine Havemeyer, December 25 [1902], in Mathews, *Cassatt and Her Circle*, 277.
5 Cassatt was born in 1845, Beaux in 1855.
diplomatic Beaux, on the other hand, saw her first successes in the 1880s during a period of backlash against social and artistic experimentation. The cultural attitudes of this decade rewarded a compliant tone, and she used this as part of a strategy to further her ambitions. Not only did their respective ages create differences in how they reacted to the broad artistic changes occurring in their lifetimes, but both were sensitive to the relentless pendulum swings from pro- to anti-feminist attitudes, and they learned to adjust their methods of self-presentation accordingly.

The studied dismissal of one another may actually be backhanded evidence that the two artists were more important to each other than either would ever acknowledge. If we recreate the larger art world in which they spent their professional lives, their paths crossed on many occasions. They obviously met at least once, as Cassatt's cutting remark attests. But it is also quite reasonable to assume that Cassatt was an indirect presence in Beaux's world from the latter's early days as an art student in the 1870s, and that Beaux entered Cassatt's Parisian world by 1888 and loomed increasingly larger on Cassatt's horizon as the expatriate began exhibiting more frequently in her homeland in the 1890s. After 1900, the unfortunate tendency of art critics and the general public to pit them against each other no doubt had a greater effect than normal because they did not have extensive firsthand knowledge of one another. The two women, living and working in two entirely different milieux, were thus brought into a touchy, competitive relationship of which they may not have been entirely conscious.

Much of what inserted them in each other's lives arose from their connections to Philadelphia. Ironically, neither Cassatt nor Beaux was Philadelphian in the strictest sense. Cassatt's family finally settled there when she was eleven after having lived in Pittsburgh and Lancaster, Pennsylvania, as well as a five-year stint in Europe (1851–55). Beaux was born in Philadelphia, but her mother had grown up in New York and her father was a recent émigré from France. Both Cassatt and Beaux were from "good" families with fortunes made early in the century. Beaux's American grandfather, however, had gone bankrupt before she was born, throwing her mother, Cecilia Leavitt, onto the good graces of connections in Philadelphia. There she married Jean-Adolphe Beaux, who had come to the area to establish a branch of his family's silk manufacturing business, and the couple had three daughters. After her mother's untimely death following Cecilia's birth, Beaux and her surviving sister were absorbed into her mother's larger, extended family who were now settled into well-off, intellectual circles of
Philadelphia. Thus, even though her personal wealth was not as great as Cassatt's, she was also well educated and encouraged to make art a career. Coincidentally, both Cassatt and Beaux had French Huguenot heritage on their father's side, which they played to their advantage when on French soil.

By the mid-1870s, when Beaux settled on a fine art career and began taking classes at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Cassatt was already entrenched in a distant art center, having exhibited seven times at the Paris Salon, and was known as one of the most promising young Americans working in Europe. In an 1876 letter from Paris, May Alcott expressed the commonly held view that Cassatt was "a woman of real genius," who would become a "first-class light as soon as her pictures get a little circulated and known, for they are handled in a masterly way." After deciding to settle in Paris, Cassatt took one last trip home to Philadelphia in 1875 and did not return to the United States for another twenty-three years. Furthermore, once she joined the Impressionist group (1878), she even withdrew from the American colony in Paris.

Ordinarily, it would be difficult to believe that a young art student in Philadelphia would have known Cassatt, much less have been influenced by her. Nevertheless, it is important to realize that Cassatt had been part of a very powerful group of students at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts during the early 1860s, a group that was now beginning to dominate the Philadelphia art scene. Classmates like Thomas Eakins and Emily and Will Sartain would become influential teachers; Earl Shinn would become an important critic and writer under the pen name of Edward Strahan; Howard Roberts would become Philadelphia's premier sculptor. Fidelia Bridges and Anne Whitney would have successful careers as sculptors in New York. Most of the group went to Paris after the Civil War to continue their studies, but Cassatt was the only one to stay and try her luck in the art capital of the world. Cassatt's success in Paris was a matter of much interest back home, in large part because she was openly critical of the most famous Salon artists and began experimenting with the Impressionist style.

If Beaux did not happen to hear Cassatt's name during the incessant student discussions of modern art, she would have seen her pictures in the Academy's annual exhibitions from 1876 to 1879. Cassatt also had a dealer, H. Teubner, in Philadelphia and had paintings for sale in Bailey's jewelry.

store. Judging from Cassatt’s own experience, Academy students were insatiable in their appetite for modern painting and kept up with all that was displayed throughout the city—in addition to haunting the exhibitions in the Academy’s galleries. The female art students of Cassatt’s day paid particular attention to successful women artists, if only to fuel the gender debates they inevitably had with the men in their classes. One imagines that Beaux’s experience at the Academy in the 1870s would have been very similar.

Not only is it likely that Beaux would have known Cassatt’s name; it is also quite likely that she assimilated the disapproval that the two prominent male teachers in Philadelphia, Thomas Eakins and William Sartain, felt toward their old classmate. Eakins spoke as little about Cassatt as he could, even in the days when they were both in Paris and she managed to wheedle private lessons from Jean-Léon Gérôme and was accepted into the Salon a year before he was. As Cassatt began to succeed in Paris and adopted an Impressionist style, she must have become anathema to the master of anatomy and perspective. Although he left no recorded thoughts about her, in later years Cassatt summed up the great gulf between them as artists in her typically dismissive manner: “[Eakins is] a draughtsman but only as an architect is—and is without a sense of art.”

Beaux steered clear of Eakins at the Academy and only heard his opinions second-hand. But the influence of Will Sartain on her artistic outlook was direct. In the early 1880s, as she emerged as a noteworthy portraitist, she participated in an informal class that he critiqued every two weeks. He was now living and teaching in New York, but often came back to Philadelphia for professional and family reasons. Beaux benefited greatly from his experience in Europe, where he worked from 1868 to 1877, and his connections in New York where she too began to make a reputation and would eventually settle. Unlike Eakins, Sartain had strong connections to Mary Cassatt. Cassatt and his sister Emily Sartain had gone to Europe together in 1871 and saw each other regularly until Emily returned to the

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8 Notes taken by Mrs. Adolph Borie on a conversation with Mary Cassatt, September 25 [1910?], Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives, 1.
9 See Tara Tappert, “William Sartain and Cecilia Beaux: The Influences of a Teacher,” in The Sartain Family and the Philadelphia Cultural Landscape, 1830–1930 (forthcoming). In examining the relationship between Cassatt and William Sartain, it should be noted that Sartain’s memoir was inaccurate when he wrote of sketching at the Pennsylvania Academy (hereafter, PAFA) “along side of Miss Cassatt, Fussell, and Earl Shinn,” in the late 1860s. Cassatt was studying in Europe at that time.
United States in 1875. It was through Emily Sartain that Cassatt met her dearest friend Louise Havemeyer who happened to take a room in the same *pension* as Sartain.

Will was in Paris at the same time and often forwarded news of Cassatt back home. In 1872, it was Will who copied a notice from an American newspaper in Paris about Cassatt’s success while working in Parma, Italy, and sent it to his father without comment:

I read this today in a paper at bankers “Miss Mary Stevenson Cassatt has just finished an original painting which all Parma is flocking to see at her studio at the Academia of that city. Prof. Raimondi and other Italian painters of reputation are quite enthusiastic in regard to our fair young countrywoman’s talent which they pronounce to be nearly akin to genius and they offer her every inducement to make Parma her home and to date her works from that city.”

The attention paid to Cassatt throughout Europe—in Parma and subsequently in Seville, Antwerp, Rome, and Paris—put the other Americans in the shade. Emily and Will Sartain felt it most keenly since Emily was Cassatt’s companion in Parma, and witnessed the adulation first hand: “The compliments she receives are overwhelming—One of the professors has begged her to come to his studio and give him criticism and advice—“but managing to control her envy, she wrote “I shine a little, by her reflection.”

The relationship between Cassatt and the Sartains was strained by such amazing success, and would be further damaged by Cassatt’s increasing disaffection with the styles and artists popular in Paris. She made no secret of the fact that she disapproved of Emily joining the class of Evariste Luminais who had made a name for himself with his grand paintings of French history during Roman occupation. She was no less tactless when she spoke scathingly to Emily about Will’s teacher, Léon Bonnat. As Emily reported to her father “She is entirely too slashing,—snubs all modern Art,—disdains the salon pictures of Cabanel, Bonnat, and all the names we are used to revere.” While Emily saw beyond Cassatt’s strong language

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11 Emily Sartain to John Sartain, Mar. 7, 1872, Moore College of Art, in Mathews, *ibid.*, 95.

12 Emily Sartain to John Sartain, May 8, 1873, Moore College of Art, in Mathews, *ibid.*, 117–118.
("her intolerance comes from the earnestness with which she loves nature and her profession"), it is doubtful that William was inclined to forgive someone who voiced her opinion about his mentor to all their mutual friends—in careless disrespect for his feelings.

Will Sartain’s loyalty to Bonnat was especially strong in the first years after his return from Paris when he himself began to teach. As Tara Tappert points out, Sartain stressed the freedom he had been given in Bonnat’s studio, which seemed very modern in comparison to the detail-oriented method of Gérôme as perpetuated by Eakins. Beaux gave credit to Sartain for helping her achieve her first success in the annual exhibitions at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1884. The very next year, she entered the large double portrait of her sister and nephew, Les derniers jours d’enfance which not only won the Mary Smith Prize (for the best painting by a woman) but was accepted into the Paris Salon in 1887.

Beaux’s debt to Sartain was for the naturalist methodology that he stressed in his teachings. She had already developed a keen eye and an extraordinary interest in the physical configuration of objects in front of her. When she was a teenager, her satisfaction in drawing fragments of bone as illustrations for a geological survey is evident from the account in her autobiography: "I sat by a window where there was a steady north light, and under this [light] tiny cavities and prominences became what might have been craters and mountains in the moon...." Sartain helped her to master the brush and use paint to express the grander allusions she herself perceived in natural objects. A modest portrait she painted at this time (fig. 2) shows how fine Beaux’s touch could be when freed of the somewhat forced narrative she imposed on her Salon picture, Les derniers jours d’enfance. This portrait of Beaux’s neighbor, Eleanor Du Puy, executed during a studio session for Will Sartain’s class, echoes progressive continental art of the 1870s, including Whistler’s brooding style as seen in his mother’s portrait.

13 Ibid.
14 Tappert, “William Sartain and Cecilia Beaux.”
15 Cheryl Leibold has drawn my attention to an 1884 letter from Beaux to William Sartain in the PAFA Archives complaining that Eakins got the credit for the success of her portrait in the 1884 Academy annual: “I never expected it to be noticed at all, and I am annoyed to see that what merit there is in it should be accredited to the Academy and Mr. Eakins... You have really been my only instructor...” See Toohey in this volume for the full text.
16 Cecilia Beaux, Background With Figures (New York, 1930), 77.
which had been exhibited at the Academy in 1881.\textsuperscript{17}

But when Beaux’s portrait is compared to Cassatt’s of her sister Lydia (fig. 3), the gulf between the two approaches to naturalism is evident. In both portraits the features of the face and head are carefully delineated, but the swath of light that electrifies the center of Cassatt’s canvas as well as the radically reductive painting of the bottom half shows the power of Impressionist experimentation. Will Sartain had introduced Beaux to modern painting styles but he was just a beat behind. He left Paris just after

Impressionism had been introduced but before its transformation of contemporary painting had begun. Sartain's connection to Cassatt might have given him advanced understanding of the phenomenon. If Cassatt had not insulted both Emily and Will Sartain when the three were in Paris together, would he have brought the new style to students such as Beaux who hungered for a modern vision of the world around them? Cassatt had exhibited at the Society of American Artists (which Sartain had helped to found) since 1879 and made a rare appearance at the Academy's annual exhibition in 1885. The Sartains might have kept Cassatt more closely involved in the evolution of modern art in the United States, instead of ignoring the new art and her special role in it. Beaux, who embraced much of what Impressionism had to offer when she saw it all around her in France a few years later, would have benefited from Cassatt's intelligent guidance at an earlier stage in her development.

When Beaux finally traveled to Paris to see the new styles firsthand, she...
was already an established professional. At thirty-three, she would have been older than most of the students in the classes at the Académie Julian, and there is little wonder that she immediately took a place at the head of the class. Her modesty in recalling her disappointment in the level of the other students thus strikes one as a little disingenuous: "I had worked alone, and fully believed that, in Paris, I should be among brilliant and advanced students, far ahead of a practically untaught American. I was to learn that the Académie Julien [sic] was a business enterprise, and could not be maintained for gifted students only." Since she had worked as a professional for more than ten years, and studied with the most au courant teachers in the United States, it would have been odd indeed if her work in these classes had not been routinely picked out for praise and prizes.

Beaux's 1888 summer in Brittany also placed her among the most forward-looking American artists in France at that time. She gravitated toward the best-known, T. Alexander Harrison and Charles "Shorty" Lasar, in the seaside town of Concarneau. Summer was high season for artists in Brittany. Concarneau and Pont Aven were perhaps the best-known gathering places, but all the towns on or near the coast line began to bristle with outdoor easels as soon as the classes and Salon exhibitions ended in late June. Americans particularly enjoyed the freedom of these artistic resort areas after a winter of serious study in Paris. Although the older, now established, Impressionists like Monet, Renoir, and Cassatt summered closer to Paris and did not take part in the younger Brittany "scene," there was always much talk of their style and the new versions of it offered by the Neoimpressionists as well as the Synthetists, as followers of Gauguin in Pont Aven called themselves.

Would Cassatt and Beaux have crossed paths during the year and a half Beaux was in France? It is not unreasonable to assume that Cassatt would have noticed Beaux's painting at the Salon of 1887, since she still routinely surveyed all exhibitions of modern art. The mother-and-child subject may

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18 There was no age limit for the classes at the Académie Julian. But most students tended to enter these classes after completing the normal two years at a local art academy. Thus these classes in Paris were generally viewed as "graduate" training and drew students who were in their early twenties. For more on these classes, see Gabriel P. Weisberg and Jane R. Becker, Overcoming all Obstacles: The Women of the Académie Julian, exhibition catalogue (New York, 1999), passim and 52-56.
19 Beaux, Background (New York, 1930), 118.
20 Beaux's hand-drawn map of Concarneau showing her house and the neighboring studios of Harrison and Lasar, as well as a drawing of her apartment there, are in the Academy collection.
have caused her to look twice, having occasionally attempted the subject herself (in fact, she had a mother-and-child painting in the Impressionist exhibition of 1886). She may also have met Beaux at one of the gatherings of Americans in Paris in the spring of 1888 where she was entertaining both of her brothers and their families from Philadelphia at the time. Normally, she kept her distance from the colony, but the social habits and connections of her relatives may have caused her to have more contact than usual. Beaux was not a poor, friendless art student when she came to Paris. In fact, she had an American aunt who lived there while her son studied to be a physician, and she herself studied painting with Carolus-Duran. It is not impossible that the genteel Philadelphians abroad would have found themselves in the same circles.

Artistically, Cassatt was not very visible in Paris while Beaux was there. The only opportunity Beaux might have had to see Cassatt's work was in January 1889, in the exhibition of "Painter-Printmakers," a group consisting of most of the old Impressionists. Cassatt showed only three works in the show at the Durand-Ruel Gallery—a mother-and-child pastel and two prints. If Beaux attended the exhibition, Cassatt would have stood out to her as the only woman, and one of only three Americans. If she missed her chance to study Cassatt's art while in Paris in 1888–89, it wasn't long before she could see it regularly in New York.

In 1886, the art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel began his siege on the collecting habits of American amateurs by mounting the large exhibition of Impressionist art held at the American Art Union in New York. By 1890, he had opened his own gallery there and began to ship Impressionist paintings acquired in Paris to exhibit and sell. As the only American in the group, he highlighted Cassatt and soon began lending her work to exhibitions of all kinds. At this time, Cassatt had had great success in Paris with a new series of drypoints that were so popular that Durand-Ruel would only sell them in sets of twelve. In 1890 he reproduced some of them in an article on Cassatt in his new art magazine, L'Art Dans les Deux Mondes, and exhibited them in the New York gallery. They were subsequently shown in exhibitions in 1891 and 1893 and reproduced in several popular articles.

If there is a parallel between Beaux's newly impressionistic style in the

21 Beaux, Background, 115, 125, 130.
22 Otto Bacher and Stephen Parrish were the other two. As Tappert points out, Beaux knew Parrish from Philadelphia where his studio was across from hers. See Beaux, Background, 94.
1890s and the art of Mary Cassatt, it may arise from the starkly mesmerizing images of contemplative women seen first in this series of prints. Cassatt’s *Reflection* of 1889 (fig. 4), and Beaux’s subsequent *The Dreamer* (fig. 5) share the penetrating, almost confrontational gaze of a woman caught in deep reverie. Cassatt went on to develop this theme in the paintings of monumental women such as *Woman with Red Zinnia* (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.) that she did in preparation for her “Modern Woman” mural for the Woman’s Building of the Chicago World’s Fair of 1893. Beaux also developed it in the related *Sita and Sarita* of 1894 (Musée...
Fig. 5. Cecilia Beaux, *The Dreamer*. Oil on canvas, 1894. 33 x 25". The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio.
d'Orsay, Paris) and showed both, along with her forceful self-portrait, in the National Academy of Design exhibition in 1895 after being inducted as an associate member. The mid-1890s were heady years for Beaux. Her lighter palette and more intimate modern subjects took her beyond the level of distinguished Philadelphia portraitist to nationally—even internationally recognized—painter. Her success led to her inclusion in the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, an invitation in 1895 to teach at her alma mater, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and, finally, to medals at the Carnegie Institute annual exhibitions where she became a frequent member of the jury. In 1899, when William Merritt Chase awarded Beaux the gold medal at the Carnegie's international exhibition, he pronounced her "the greatest woman painter of modern times."

The sudden rise to prominence of Cecilia Beaux must have been a shock to Cassatt. It was so generally agreed that the best artists lived and worked in Paris—not in Philadelphia or New York—that Bertha Palmer, the organizer of the Woman's Building for Chicago, came to Paris to find the women to paint the most important murals; and Cassatt was commissioned to paint the keynote "Modern Woman" mural. She was only used to looking for rivals in her own back yard. In fact, Cassatt herself had just recently become interested in her own reputation in New York since Durand-Ruel had begun promoting her there. After her successful retrospective in Paris in 1893 at the Durand-Ruel gallery, she was promised a similar show in New York and was upset when the dealer was not able to arrange it immediately. When a Cassatt exhibition finally opened in New York in 1895, many of the works in the original show had already been sold. Not only was the second exhibition smaller, it was also less varied and less representative of Cassatt's entire career to that point. Nevertheless, it was granted a warm reception by the New York press and yielded an impressive $7,100 in sales. A critic for The Collector succumbed to the now-familiar urge to proclaim his choice for "the greatest woman painter": "The recent death of Mme. Berthe Morizot leaves Miss Mary Cassatt, as far as her sex is concerned, practically in undisputed possession of the field both have cultivated so long."

22 Mathews, Mary Cassatt: A Life, 231.
23 The Collector 6 (1895), 208.
Since Beaux’s star had just begun to rise, Cassatt may not have taken such a pronouncement personally. Just two years before, in an article by Frank White, “Younger American Women in Art,” Cassatt was given special prominence for her role in the Woman’s Building and rewarded with reproductions of two of her celebrated prints on the first two pages. But many women were mentioned throughout the essay; Beaux’s friends Rosina Emmet Sherwood and Helena de Kay Gilder both got more attention than Beaux’s single line: “Cecilia Beaux, who has recently exhibited some vigorously brushed portraits.”26 Beaux’s newcomer status in the circle of women artists did not last long. After her warm reception into the National Academy of Design, she boldly tried her luck in the Paris arena in 1896. Instead of the normal one or two submissions to the Salon, she sent an unparalleled six canvases. “This seemed at first like insanity, but later consideration convinced me that to send a group was no one’s business but mine....”27 When they were all accepted, Beaux sailed for France to bask in what might be viewed as her first “one-person” exhibition. The response that pleased her most was that of the critic Paul Bion who spoke of her as representing the best of American womanhood.28 Her Parisian gamble laid the groundwork for an even more visible triumph when she won the gold medal at the Paris International Exposition of 1900. Although Cassatt snubbed that exposition according to her usual practice of not submitting to juried shows, she now knew that Beaux had emerged as a worthy opponent.

In 1898, Cassatt was given another exhibition in New York at Durand-Ruel’s that would then travel to Boston. She braved an ocean crossing to see the exhibition and visit friends up and down the coast from Philadelphia to Boston. When she arrived in Boston, she found that Beaux had already had an exhibition there a few months before. Their mutual friend, the powerful Boston patron and artist, Sarah Sears, had probably arranged both. Increasingly the two ambitious artists found themselves drawn together by mutual acquaintances, and it is probable that Cassatt and Beaux had their disastrous conversation about “Art” during this trip. Whether in Philadelphia, New York, or Boston, their meeting was probably arranged by well-meaning friends who were unprepared for the feelings of competition that had grown.

27 Beaux, Background, 197.
28 Ibid., 348.
The careless comments of critics giving one or the other credit for being the best "woman" or the best "American," might not have driven them to such sensitivity had it not been for the questions of loyalty that accompanied the tightening of the circles they moved in. William Merritt Chase, for example, was a faculty colleague of Beaux's at the Pennsylvania Academy from the mid-1890s, but he had been a friend of Cassatt's since at least the late 1880s. He visited her whenever he was in Paris and sent his students to her with letters of introduction. Had he forgotten about her when he paid tribute to Beaux in 1899, or did he really think that Beaux had surpassed the veteran Impressionist? Either explanation was bound to offend Cassatt and cause a rift between them.

A more serious situation arose when Beaux was asked to paint the
Fig. 7. Cecilia Beaux, *Mrs. Thomas A. Scott (née Anna Riddle)*. Oil on canvas, 1897. 48 x 37". Private Collection.

portraits of Mary Scott Newbold and her mother, Anna ("Annie") Riddle Scott in 1896 and 1897. Annie Riddle and Mary Cassatt were second cousins—their mothers (first cousins) had grown up together in Pittsburgh. Annie Riddle married Thomas Scott in the 1850s and moved to Philadelphia where Scott was president of the Pennsylvania Railroad. He brought Cassatt's brother, Alexander, into the company, and subsequently Alexander, too, would become president in 1899. The two families were extremely close, and spent several happy years together in Paris where Annie lived after the death of Thomas in 1881. Annie became interested in collecting modern art and gradually built up a collection of Impressionist
painting, including several Cassatts. As a thank-you for a gift of a Japanese tea set that Annie brought her from London, Mary Cassatt offered to paint a portrait of Annie's mother in the fall of 1883. The resulting painting now called *Lady at the Tea Table* (fig. 6) was viewed politely by Annie and her mother but outraged Annie's sister Bessie who was also traveling in Europe at that time. Cassatt put the painting in storage without comment and resumed her friendship with Annie and Mrs. Riddle.

In 1896, Annie's daughter Mary commissioned Beaux to paint her portrait shortly before her marriage to Clement Newbold. It was a provocative request since Cassatt had just painted her portrait the year before (fig. 8), and it was loaned by the Scotts to her Durand-Ruel exhibition in New York. Beaux's portrait (fig. 9) is full-length and much more lavish in dress and setting—perhaps a nod to her upcoming marriage—yet it copies almost exactly the three-quarter view of the head and the treatment of the upper body found in Cassatt's portrait. Since Cassatt's painting was readily available to Beaux, she must have been making a deliberate reference to it.

The following year Annie Scott herself asked Beaux to paint her portrait and again Beaux references an earlier Cassatt. In this painting from 1897 (fig. 7), Beaux paints Scott in virtually the same pose Cassatt had painted her mother, Mrs. Riddle (fig. 6). Although she looks straight out to the viewer instead of to the side, in other respects the similarities are striking: she sits poised in three-quarter view, about to pour tea from a beautifully painted tea set. The hat with ribbons tied under her chin evokes the style of 1880 while the elegant, expressive hand displays delicate rings on curled fingers. Over all, the style of both Beaux paintings is softer, more decorative, and more flattering to the sitters. It bears out the typical view that Beaux showed the more feminine side of the American woman, while Cassatt, a purist, made no concessions to accepted standards of beauty. One of the most cogent critics writing in the 1890s, William Walton, wrote ruefully, "The old doctrine of 'Beauty' has been superseded among the modems by a haunting fear of falling into the pretty-pretty. Miss Cassatt is probably too conscious of her strength to be much troubled by this dread, but the unregenerate spectator will sometimes wish for a little more pandering to his prejudices in this matter."

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29 This portrait was apparently painted in Paris in 1894 and shipped to New York for Cassatt's 1895 exhibition. It was then transferred to the sitter's family in Philadelphia.

In this case, the original Cassatt painting was still in her studio in Paris and presumably was never seen by Beaux. However, we know that the portrait had been photographed, and it is quite likely that Annie Scott had a print for Beaux to refer to. There can be little doubt that both Beaux portraits were done with Cassatt in mind. But whether they were good-hearted tributes to a famous artist and dear friend, or whether they were deliberate “improvements” on portraits that skittish family members could not stomach is difficult to ascertain. What we do know is that they became a point of contention between Cassatt and her cousins and would come to illustrate the gulf that separated the Philadelphia society women from an odd relative who had spent her life as a painter in Paris.

In 1914, when Cassatt was preparing for a benefit exhibition for women’s suffrage to be held in New York at the Knoedler Gallery, she brought out the portrait of Mrs. Riddle from storage. By this time she had become a hero to a new generation of American artists who were inspired by the art and the rebellion of the Impressionists. Segard’s book had been published and Cassatt’s home in the country had become a minor pilgrimage site. The Lady at the Tea Table was the only major work from the earlier part of Cassatt’s career still in her possession, and it was eyed hungrily by dealers, collectors, and museums (including the Petit Palais and the Metropolitan Museum of Art). At this point, Annie Scott’s sister, Bessie, attempted to claim the portrait and bring it home to Philadelphia. Cassatt crowed triumphantly: “On no account shall Bessie Fisher ever own it. She sent me the most decided messages regretting that there was so little likeness to her Mother! The line of the back & the hand & that is all. Even the worm will turn, & I see no excuse for her too evident desire to snub me. Well let her rejoice in Miss Beaux’s portraits & leave me alone.”

But the rift between cousins did not end there. The Scotts and all the other Cassatt relatives in Philadelphia refused to lend their paintings to Cassatt’s exhibition in 1915 because of the show’s political purpose. The exhibition had been organized by Cassatt’s friend Louisine Havemeyer who was a major figure in the New York suffrage movement. Cassatt’s relatives, on the other hand, were affiliated with the anti-suffrage cause that attracted many society women who believed in keeping the vote a male prerogative.

31 Mary Cassatt to Alexander Cassatt, May 17 [1885], Mathews, Mary Cassatt and Her Circle, 193–4.
“I sent you a photograph of Mrs. Riddle’s portrait but I don’t think it [the photo] very good....”
32 Mary Cassatt to Louisine Havemeyer, Feb. 4 [1915], ibid., 320.
Fig. 8. Mary Cassatt, *Mrs. Clement B. Newbold (née Mary Scott)*. Oil on canvas, 1895. 33 x 27". Private Collection.

In New York, Beaux’s best friend and sister artist, Helena De Kay Gilder, was also active in the “anti” movement, although apparently Beaux herself was silent on this issue. To Cassatt, the old snub of an unappreciated portrait had become compounded by the questionable “revision” of her paintings by an ambitious rival, and finally ended up at the center of a passionate political debate.

It did not help matters that Beaux was also given an exhibition at the

Fig. 9. Cecilia Beaux, *Mrs. Clement B. Newbold (née Mary Scott)*. Oil on Canvas, 1896. 78 1/2 x 48". PAFA, Gift of Clement B. Newbold.
Knoedler Gallery in 1915 so that the two could once again be pitted against each other by those inclined to see only one great woman painter. After the suffrage amendment was passed in 1920, some of the family divisions were healed, but the rivalry between Cassatt and Beaux was carried on in the press. In 1922, *Arts and Decoration* proclaimed, “with the possible exception of Cecilia Beaux, Miss Cassatt is our most distinguished woman artist.” In time, the modernist view of art history excised such popular portraitists as John Singer Sargent and Cecilia Beaux from the accepted lineage, leaving Cassatt standing alone as if she were the only woman in her day to become a professional artist. Fortunately a more inclusive historiography has returned to the discipline, and Beaux has regained some measure of appreciation to make up for the decades of neglect.

New research on Beaux and Cassatt, in this era of inclusiveness, locates them in entirely different cultural nexuses. The fact that they are both women and both “from Philadelphia,” pales in comparison to the larger issues and circumstances that shaped their art and our subsequent reading of it. But, nevertheless, the two tenuous threads that connect them have importance in unexpected ways: the illogical yet pervasive urge to chose only one “great woman painter” from each generation forced them into a bitter competition that they themselves would not have been able to account for. This imposed competition in turn constricted the art world so that even two artists living with an ocean between them could not escape the thoughtlessness of their mutual friends—especially when colored by the closed world so peculiar to Philadelphia. In this regard, such a broad reading of “identity” does indeed help us to understand the workings of fame as it is experienced by women and the power it has to motivate and shape women’s art.

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34 “The Work of Mary Cassatt,” *Arts and Decoration* 17 (1922), 377.