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In Bluebeard's House? Edgar Degas's Self-Portrait with Zoé Closier, 1895

In *Self-Portrait with Zoé Closier* (fig. 1), Edgar Degas (1834–1917) is seated, elbow on the table, looking to his right-hand side, his bearded face resting on his fist. Standing behind him is his maid and housekeeper, Zoé Closier (b. 1840–d.1919 at Mesnil-sur-Bulle, Oise). Degas seems to be the principal sitter, as he takes most of the space and catches most of the light in his shirt sleeve, hand, beard, face and handkerchief, while Closier's head, the flesh of her face both tender and solid, greys out of the blackness of her dress and shawl, as does her creased apron. The extinguished candle and the bound books that we make out lined up on the shelves in the background, and the top of a glass in the foreground, deploy a richness of blacks and whites in the depth of the space. The double portrait of the artist and his maid-of-all-work belongs in a group produced in the autumn of 1895. Having just taken up photography again, Degas began to subject friends and acquaintances to what he admitted were demanding posing sessions (first-hand accounts of which survive). This all took place at his home or at friends', and generally after dinner, because Degas was mainly after the haunting quality of nocturnal photography.¹ Like many giving themselves to the pursuit of artistic photography at the turn of the century, Degas was utterly absorbed in a process that, "not long since a purely mechanical one", in Maud Burnside's review for *Brush and Pencil* in June 1900, "in artistic hands becomes capable of splendid possibilities and which may completely obliterate the evidence of mechanical agencies." To make an artistic photograph, certain qualifications were absolutely essential: "skill in use of the camera, of course, and not less emphatically, an artist's knowledge of values, tones, light and shade, a sense of selection, and withal that personal feeling for beauty which shall render each interpretation of a subject a distinct and original thing bearing the reflection of that something which is a part of the artist."² But *Self-Portrait with Zoé Closier* is more than a technical challenge. All his life Degas painted portraits of family and friends, integrated into social bonds and rituals that were intensely personal. Suitably, Degas's photographic portraits of intimates were, firstly, statements of identity and status affirmed through likeness, attitude, expression; secondly, images of private affection. Thirdly, these photographs of the 1890s were images of introspection. In the *fin-de-siècle* artist's house, self-representation and sociability, introspection and affection took a heightened meaning for Degas, increasingly obsessed with the past, as he grieved losses by death of family and friends. In its analysis of Degas's self-portrait with Zoé, this paper places itself in the line of Hannah Williams's research on the practice of exchanging portraits and self-portraits as taken up by many eighteenth-century French artists of the Académie Royale. These gifts aimed to honour the artists' belonging in the institution, and the family and friendship connections they established on the basis of that belonging. In a practice that defined the Académie as a community of people, the exchanged portraits become starting points for reconstructing the relationships of makers and sitters. This Geertzian perspective largely underpins my reading of Degas and Closier's portrait in its understanding of portraits as "invaluable sources for an anthropologically informed art-historical inquiry," providing first-hand access to "the poetics of history



1 Edgar Degas, *Self-Portrait with Zoé Closier*, 1895 ca. Gelatin silver print, image cm 5.8 x 8.8, 2010, The Met, New York. Bequest of Robert Shapazian, 2010.

transacted beyond the official record or the explicit narrative,” and as works of art that tell stories “in a language particular to the culture of the artists.”³

Portraits of domestic servants in modernism

Representations of domestic service and portraits of domestic servants by the artists who employed them are by no means rare in the nineteenth century. These emphasise the performance of work and role of domestic servants as motifs for the practice of genre, the painting of daily life, rather than ideas of individuality and familiarity of the sitters. Moreover, the history of art has given superficial critical attention to either the representation or the portraiture of servants in modernism - the *Self-Portrait's* having been overlooked is a case in point. Pamela Todd's *The Impressionists at Home* (2005) focuses on the home as a source of subject matter “in the homely business of humble tasks,” where most of the servants in Impressionist paintings are nameless young girls at work. Todd finds that Camille Pissarro, who married his mother's maid, particularly stresses “their humanity and dignity,” industry and concentration, for instance in *The Little Country Maid* (1882, Tate) and *The Young Maid* (1896, Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester).⁴ Brettell adds that Pissarro is the only Impressionist to use the motif of the single domestic worker, as in *The Maidservant* (1875, Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, Virginia), a device which, as the maid bows to no one, injects modernist vitality and ambiguity into the genre. In his other paintings of domestic service, *In the Garden at Pontoise: A Young Woman Washing Dishes*, 1882 (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge) and the Tate painting mentioned above, we see his niece Nini Estruc. These are not for Brettell images with a personal dimension or images of bourgeois opulence or class divisions but “of family members who work – whether doing household chores or modelling – for their hosts in an easy, reciprocal manner, and, because of this, the paintings are subtly but profoundly anarchist”, given that P. Kropotkin did allow for domestic work in his anarchist utopias.⁵ Claude Monet painted his maid in the background of *The Luncheon* (1868–69, Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main): his wife Camille and child Jean are having breakfast at a table laden with food, while a visitor stands at the window on the left-hand side and their maid turns around to look on from the linen closet in the background. This painting makes visible Monet's own psychic sense of entitlement, special status, and largesse, rooted in his comfortable upbringing. But money came and went in his life, and he whinged constantly about it, in order to elicit sympathy, and fund his extravagance. According to Mary Mathews Gedo, *The Luncheon*, emphasising a luxurious lifestyle and bourgeois values at a time when his circumstances had improved, but were not quite securely bourgeois, creates “a mythic version of his life situation at the time.”⁶ We must assume that the maid here enhances this description. In 1863 Edouard Manet painted *Olympia*: she un-shrinkingly stares at us as we come into her presence, and the black servant in white dress, holding a bouquet, announces the visitor. Olympia was modelled by Victorine Meurent and the maid, according to Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, might have been modelled by Laure, “very beautiful negress” living in the rue de Vintimille who Manet put in a notebook of 1862. Against the background of the second abolition of slavery in France in 1848, the two working women stage a “Creole scene that made visible France's former colonial reliance slavery, as well as its recent enfranchisement of its colonies' slaves and redefinition of black persons as paid workers.” Grigsby reads the black maid as a signifier of racial, sexual, and class difference: free black women have entered the wage-labour economy, and are paid to work as models, prostitutes, governesses, servants, but remain “betwixt and between.” The focus here is on the invisibility of blackness and class: both Olympia and Laure live a precarious working-class existence but while the white model

“was more vulnerable and subject to violence”, the black model “was more likely to be treated as yet another object, as if slavery lingered,” connoting “objecthood and dispossession.” Manet might refuse “to sentimentalize the inequities of modernity, including the subordinate status of the black working-class woman to her white counterpart,” but Laure had to negotiate “hatred, indifference, desirability, dehumanization, fashionability, desexualization, and violence, and all for a wage.” Also, it is the black woman “whom art historians have failed to see.”⁷

In 1868 Manet painted *Luncheon in the Studio* (Neue Pinakothek, Munich): in the centre foreground of this space, a young man in boater and black-velvet jacket, perhaps Manet’s illegitimate son, Léon Koëlla-Leenhoff looks to the right as he leans against a table, with his back to a top-hatted bearded man. The man is smoking a cigarette, seated at the other end of a table spread with a still life of wine glass, coffee pot and cup, fruit bowl, and a wonderful lemon spilling into space its curling yellow peel and white pith, the work of the gleaming metal knife poised on the table edge. Further into the background, to the left, a maid in grey uniform, with sleeves rolled up and headdress, holds a coffee pot, as she peers vaguely in our direction. To her right we see a large pot plant, a metal armour, weapons, and a black cat seated on a chair. The image has been read as a summary of Manet’s 1860s artistic commitments: to seventeenth-century Dutch naturalism (the still life), to romanticism (the armour and sword), and to Baudelairean dandyism (the young man). For Collins, the young man is Manet himself; the smoker belongs in the semantic field of romanticism; and the maid belongs in the field of the still life as she is “an ordinary type” and holds a coffee pot, symbolising Manet’s commitment to naturalism.⁸

Berthe Morisot represented her daughter Julie with her maid Pasie in *La Fable* (1883, p. coll. Paris), whose title, suggested by S. Mallarmé, might refer to the content of the book read to Julie.⁹ As an insight, Nochlin goes further, seeing Morisot’s painting of the wet nurse she hired to feed her daughter Julie (*Nurse and Julie*, 1879, p. coll., Washington DC), as a unique circumstance of “a woman painting a woman nursing her baby”: two working women confront each other here, across the body of “their” child and the boundaries of class, both with claims to motherhood and to mothering, both engaged in pleasurable activity that may be considered production in the literal sense.¹⁰

Gustave Caillebotte made portraits of his family’s valet, Jean Daurelle (in 1885 ca. and in 1887 ca., both Musée d’Orsay, Paris), one of him snapping into his jacket and readying to ensure the job is done. In 1876, after the deaths of his father and of his brother René, he painted Daurelle serving his mother and other brother in the melancholy *The Luncheon*.¹¹ These belong for Raybone in Caillebotte’s “fascination with male work,” the concept on which his art and life hinge: as a wealthy man liberated from the necessity to work, but alienated from normative bourgeois society and creatively active in various fields, including painting, Caillebotte sought model labourers “to act as a foil for an introspective examination of his own class-alienated subjectivity,” with masculinity as a starting point of commonality.¹² For Raybone, Caillebotte’s portraits of the aging and amblyopic Daurelle, focussed on his split gaze and made at a time when his stamp collecting practice failed “to screen him from loss”, are linked to the trauma of mortality and bereavement at the death of his father and brother.¹³

In the 1890s Paul Cézanne painted several portraits of workers at the Jas de Bouffan, nameless and, according to Elderfield, “unselfconsciously heroic figures, people who lived in the old ways,” as opposed to the named portraits of urban professionals (such as Gustave Geffroy) who “seemed inauthentic.” This includes *The Woman with a Coffee Pot* (1895 c., Musée d’Orsay) with its “empathetic respect for her dignity and grandeur.”¹⁴ Writers have commented on the monumental and sculptural quality of these figures and on Cézanne’s desire to “identify emotionally with the workers and peasants of Pro-

vence” as “symbols of the earth-rootedness that he struggled to achieve on a higher level.” Cézanne painted Provençal land workers like he painted still life, in order to extract symbolism and qualities of unchanging familiarity, concreteness and fullness. In the early 1900s Cézanne may also have painted Marie Brémond, his housekeeper at Aix-en-Provence (*Seated Woman in Blue*, 1904 ca., Hermitage State Museum, St Petersburg and *Seated Woman in Blue*, 1902–4, Phillips Collection, Washington DC), the lady who, instructed by his sister to keep an eye on how much money he left in alms after mass on Sunday, made sure he never had more than 50 centimes in his pocket. Lindsay also thinks she was responsible for burning his sketches of the bathers that she found to be “horrors.”¹⁵

Renoir painted *La Servante* around 1875 (The Met, New York), and his *Breakfast at Berneval* (1898) exemplifies his representations of women going about domestic chores “with apparent ease and enjoyment,” “as an extension of women’s nature.”¹⁶ Renoir’s view of the female body as essentially domestic and maternal is seen in his portraits of his son Jean with his glowing nanny Gabrielle Renard, a cousin of Aline Charigot, his wife. In the portrait at the Barnes Collection, Gabrielle is seen with the Renoirs as a member of the family. Degas widely treated domestic service in his art: maids comb their mistress’s hair (*Beach Scene*, 1869–70, The National Gallery, London; *Woman Having her Hair Combed*, 1885 ca, The Met; *Combing the Hair*, 1896 ca, The National Gallery, London), help them out of the washtub (*Femme sortant du bain*, 1876 ca, Musée d’Orsay), serve them a drink (*La tasse de chocolat après le bain*, 1905–8, Musée d’Orsay), and so forth. These are a conventional art-historical motif, not artworks about the familial association between master and servant that operates in Degas and Zoé’s photographic loyalty portrait in the artist’s house.

To this locus I shall now turn: an imbrication of domestic parlour, atelier, musée d’artiste, and photographic studio, the immediate visual-cultural context for Degas’s Self-Portrait is given by the *fin-de-siècle* Aesthetic houses and gardens that functioned as the poet or artist’s retreat to private artistically decorated interiors. Publications such as Charles Eastlake’s *Hints on Household Taste* (1868) and Clarence Cook’s *The House Beautiful* (New York, 1878) were meant for anyone interested to make home interiors stamped with the personality of their own character, taste, and sensibility.¹⁷ Edmond de Goncourt explained bricabracomanie as follows:

Oui, cette passion devenue générale, ce plaisir solitaire, auquel se livre presque toute une nation, doit son développement au vide, à l’ennui du coeur, et aussi, il faut le reconnaître, à la tristesse des jours actuels, à l’incertitude des lendemains, à l’enfantement, les pieds devant, de la société nouvelle (...) l’oubli du moment dans l’assouvissement artistique. Ce sont ces causes, et incontestablement l’éducation de l’oeil des gens du XIXe siècle, et encore un sentiment tout nouveau, la tendresse presque humaine pour les choses, qui font, à l’heure qu’il est, de presque tout le monde, des collectionneurs et de moi en particulier le plus passionné de tous les collectionneurs.¹⁸

Examples of such spaces devoted to the display and cult of art and the effects and sensations generated by these surroundings were the Goncourts’ house-museum and garden at 53 boulevard de Montmoyency in Auteuil, Robert de Montesquiou’s apartments at 41 Quai d’Orsay and in the rue de Varennes, his houses at Versailles, Neuilly and Le Vésinet. Within this context, the high-modernist French Aesthetic house, such as Degas’s at 37 rue Victor-Massé in Paris, was meant to suggest its being a rarity and the habitat of the poet/writer/artist as an artful extension of their creative imagination.¹⁹

The Aesthetic house as a locus of withdrawal from world is also coded in the artist's *regard perdu*, evident in Degas's 1890s photographs, signalling the artist's introspection in the confinement of his artistic interiors. In these photographs, Degas's awareness of social distinctions is always framed with statements about introspection: the artist never looks at the camera, whether in *Louise Halévy Reading to Degas*, *Self-Portrait with Christine and Yvonne Lerolle*, *Self-Portrait with Albert Bartholomé*, or in the *Self-Portrait in the Studio*, a dramatic display of artistic sensibility. In the portrait of *Auguste Renoir and Stéphane Mallarmé*, Degas is himself the camera. Renoir is seated and Mallarmé is standing close, against the background of a mirrored wall where we catch the reflection of Degas in the middle of the room, taking the photograph. Degas has staged together the poet and painters of the day as a flash of light cracks the mirror in the evening darkness: a homage to Mallarmé's dazzling verses studded with precious words, and a homage to Renoir's fête sensibility and gaiety, in the evening-party set filling the salon. Carol Armstrong has read this photograph as a "self-portrait presented and named as a portrait of others" which collapses seeing and being seen and, as well, declares "the self to be coincident with the mirror and the camera."²⁰ I would emphasise how Degas's photographs of 1895 align in one thread introspective self-portraiture, friendship portraiture and the idea of the retreat in the Aesthetic house.

In the self-portrait with Zoé, the loyal servant's direct and piercing gaze wards off outsiders and prying eyes leaving the artist to his thoughts. This Romantic cultivation of personal interiority found its tropes in poses of sitters reading or looking at artworks or doing needlework, as well as in what we see here: an introspective portrait "that has no visible object of contemplation," where the sitter gazes off into space to suggest introspection and spirituality, "not in order to present a noble profile to the camera." The double portrait links the *fin-de-siècle* Aesthetic house, the introspective artist, and the gatekeeper determined to use any means necessary to preclude invasion.

The servant as gatekeeper

Running a three-storey house that was both home and studio had its operative demands that Degas, a lifelong bachelor, shared with Zoé Closier, his housekeeper. First mentioned by Degas in a letter to Paul Durand-Ruel of October 10, 1890, Closier would work for the artist until 1912, when his niece Jeanne Fèvre moved in to attend the aged and increasingly infirm Degas.²¹ Zoé ran the errands, fetching money and carrying notes, and took care of what came from the world outside. One of her indispensable tasks was to be ready, when the bell rang, to deal with any visitors by assessing whether they were desirable or not, and checking them in and out while making sure they did not loiter. Zoé dealt with models, fellow artists, friends, dealers, collectors, and journalists who wanted to catch him in his studio. Degas was especially worried about unwanted visitors who might be too interested in the artworks to be found in his house.²² This anxiety partly derived from his *maison-musée* only gradually having taken shape, by extending over the three floors of the building as each became available for rent, beginning in 1882.²³ Zoé's role in guarding the artist's interiors and private life from the public sphere was also significant of the *Zeitgeist*. The French nineteenth-century mythography of the studio makes much of the difficulty of gaining access to the artist, and his indispensable gatekeeper, a mythography stretching all the way to Céleste Albaret, Marcel Proust's housekeeper.²⁴ The case of Eugène Delacroix and his housekeeper Jenny Le Guillou is paradigmatic: intruders did not get past her.²⁵ In the afternoon the painter might reluctantly receive visitors and Jenny, "sa gouvernante et son garde-du-corps, devenue par vingt huit ans de dévouement presque un autre lui-même, accourait au coup de sonnette; et il fallait être bien connu pour dépasser cette terrible sentinelle."²⁶ A few weeks after the death of the

painter in August 1863, Baudelaire wrote: “Si jamais homme eût une tour d’ivoire bien défendue par les barreaux et les serrures ce fut Eugène Delacroix. Qui a plus aimé sa tour d’ivoire, c’est à dire le secret? Il l’eût, je crois, volontiers armée et transportée dans une forêt ou sur un roc inaccessible. Qui a plus aimé le home, sanctuaire et tanière?” Jenny’s intransigent mission to watch over this space and lifestyle became part of both the legend of the artist and the source of her persona as the “terrible sentinel” standing in the path of those who wished to visit him:

You could only go in with her approval and most visitors were harshly dismissed. Anybody who talked too much, or especially who made him talk too much, who annoyed him or who kept him from working, was put under Jenny’s ban by Jenny herself, and it was impossible for him to get in. It was hard to know whether, in the general exclusion decided on by Jenny, it was her desire to bolster her influence or her tender concern for her master’s health that took the upper hand...²⁷

Delacroix made a portrait of Jenny (fig. 2), “the only being whose heart belongs unconditionally to me.”²⁸ Fascination and resentment in the face of female powers are of course an aspect of this dynamic: the journalists’ misogynistic and folkloric perceptions of the female helper as witch-like crone are easily recognised as the myth that plays into the Western tradition from the classical mythology to the fairy tale: ground, since Apuleius, for the characterization of the servant as the “unpredictable figure” whose “persistence and power” derive “from the conflict she embodies, of motherly (compassionate) versus wifely (subordinate and loyal) roles,” besides having “aspects of the witch” in her monstrous housekeeping. Like Bluebeard’s female helper in Charles Perrault’s tale, *Le Guillou* and Closier were a simulacrum of the painter, both his “loyal assistant” and “saviour” and his “victim or prisoner.”²⁹ There were also more recent factors of symbolic economy in play. At the turn of the century, with the rise of the dealer-critic system and a mushrooming art press of artists’ biographies and accounts of studio homes, Paris was full of an aggressively sensationalist press drawn to the public and private affairs of artists, not just the discussions of their styles and formal language.³⁰ Degas, however, was amongst those artists who did not want attention to arise to the intimate details of their lives.³¹ He complained that there was too much biography and not enough art talk in the media. As in the case of Delacroix and Jenny Le Guillou, the press took issue with the estrangement



2 Eugène Delacroix, *Portrait of Jeanne-Marie, known as Jenny Le Guillou*, 1840 ca, oil on canvas, cm 45.5 x 37.5, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

of the artists who deferred to the complicitous protection of their gatekeepers, providing or denying access to the artist. Servants had a liminal status in at least two further ways: firstly, in their position in political economy on the general level and secondly, in relation to the gender relations of cohabitation.³² I examine these in what follows. For the first concern, the neglect of servants' portraiture by the social history of art parallels the exclusion of servants from political economy and from Marxist historiography.³³ Deriving the notion of unproductive servant labour from Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776) and T. R. Malthus's *Principles of Political Economy* (1820), Karl Marx's political economy excludes house servants from the working class because, like wives or children, they belong in the house of the master.³⁴ But of course they can never fully belong, because ties of employment are not indissoluble and because nineteenth-century French imagination perceives the housemaid as an organic foreign body that threatens both the family unit and society as a whole: "s'interroger sur la place des bonnes, c'est se demander dans quel lieu, dans quels interstices elles ont le droit d'exister." Denied a body and a soul, the housemaid paradoxically finds a reason for being in what most alienates her: "les codes bourgeois" which legitimate her existence.³⁵ The servant's dedication to the master's household was topical both in manuals for servants' reading and fictional works such as Alphonse de Lamartine's *Geneviève, histoire d'une servante* (1850) and Gustave Flaubert's *Un Coeur simple* (1877), all instancing the Christian morality of devoted guardianship and celibacy. Consciousness of class and gender here is unfailingly and condescendingly bestowed by the authors, as it is in Octave Mirbeau's *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* (1900). Yet, the act of portraiture enforces individuality and its visibility. Discussing Charles Beale's informal drawing portraits of his family's servants, "inexpensive and readily available models" for a young artist who needed practice, Diane Wolfthal emphasises how they retain markers of their working-class status, being neither condemnatory nor free of the class ideology, "seeing the prevalent class hierarchy as natural and ordained."³⁶ Far from revealing only the desires of their artists and patrons, these portraits show servants as individuals who work. Importantly they also perform "the cultural work of counteracting an embarrassing reality: female servants and slaves were, in fact, often sexually harassed, seduced and even raped by their masters," a most brutal aspect of the perception of servants as attached to the house of the master, entailing a status of normalised disempowerment.³⁷

To sum up, Marx's exclusion of servants from his political economy on the grounds of their unproductivity,³⁸ and Wolfthal's explanation of the rarity of portraits of servants go some way to explain why the literature on Degas has given little space to the portrait of the artist with his housekeeper. But Wolfthal points out that even fewer servants' portraits survive also because art historians display lack of both knowledge and interest about the reality of the lives of working women.³⁹ Academic feminism too, otherwise vociferous on Degas's representations of women, has resisted engagement with the image, remaining focussed on what the male artist is and does, rather than what he engages with.

The figure of the housemaid belongs less to the history of art than the history of migrant labour and of gendered labour. In 1976, in the introduction to her *The Domestic Revolution. The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France, 1820–1920*, Theresa McBride pointed out that of all the major social groups in European history servants had been the most completely ignored by social historians, otherwise concerned with class struggle, "in the same way that their employers expected them to be unobtrusively present." The distinctive fact that domestic service was not a permanent occupation but a temporary, though crucial, stage in an individual's life seemed to suggest that servants did not form a true social class, nor one capable of grasping itself as such and sharing in broader working-class struggles. Another reason behind historiographical neglect was the fact that the majority of nineteenth-century servants was female. McBride is concerned with two aspects of the servant condi-

tion: firstly, the uniquely permeable association that developed between middle class and servants, who might be “consciously educated by their masters in middle-class values,” whilst embodying “the symbol and the reward” for bourgeois success. The master-servant relationship in the nineteenth century had an element of old paternalism mixed with the modern awareness of domestic service as labour and as a commodity that did not warrant the treatment of servants as social inferiors. Combined with women’s preference for servanthood over both agricultural and industrial employment, and with urban migration in the late 1880–90s, domestic service was chosen around 1900 by many lower-class women from the countryside as work that enabled them to leave the rural world behind and acquire a degree of emancipation.⁴⁰ How far do these generalizations apply in the case of Degas and Zoé? In compensation for running Degas’s household Closier received board and lodging, a salary, a parlour to herself and annual leave. We know the duties and tasks that Closier was assigned from the accounts of visitors to Degas’s house. She was responsible for the kitchen and the pantry. Often eating at Degas’s, Paul Valéry recalled being served insipid meals, as Degas demanded, followed by Dundee orange marmalade and finally Zoé would bring coffee, and chat: “Zoé parle fort bien; il paraît qu’elle fut institutrice; les énormes lunettes rondes qu’elle porte donnent un air assez savant à son visage large, honnête, et toujours sérieux.”⁴¹ Zoé was strong on mythology.⁴² In his bohemian snobbish lifestyle, Degas liked having no money and Ingres drawings. Zoé complained loudly about the avaricious drudgery he kept her in.⁴³ He thought it extravagant of his servant to ask for new blue kitchen aprons when he might buy something for his art collection. The image of Degas’s controlling rule over his servant’s life is supplied by the account of Alice Michel, a model who experienced herself the demands the irascible Degas made when asking her to pose difficult positions in a dusty studio. Zoé, at some point aided in her work by her niece Argentine, let the models in and paid them at the end of the session. In the studio, Michel could observe Zoé going about the instructions to just light the fire and give a quick sweep of the broom around the stool, the stove and the corridor leading out, but absolutely nothing else: Degas thought that sweeping merely displaced the dust, which ruined canvases and frames.⁴⁴ This belongs in the pieties of studio life, like Edward Burne-Jones’s caricatures of himself in despair at the threat posed by a fearsome-looking cleaning lady to the contents of his studio.⁴⁵ At the model’s begging that Zoé at least clean the bench behind the screen where models left their clothes, Zoé protested Degas’s ban. But then she might seek the model’s sympathy if Degas had been rude to her in Michel’s presence, and complain about how stingy he could be when it came to provide her with money to buy food, only to always find the money to buy drawings and paintings or pay his models. When Zoé put her glasses on to read *La Libre Parole* to Degas while he had lunch, Michel, bored, looked around at the modest furniture, the thick curtains, the oil lamps, the sewing machine by the window. This room, where Degas had his lunch in the winter, was “l’office” where Zoé and Argentine spent most of the day, just contiguous to their bedroom. Michel was there one day in December 1910, when Degas thundered: “My God, Zoé, how badly you read! Stop, one does not understand a word.” Used to be thus interrupted, Zoé took her glasses off, and as if nothing said: “Sir, I fixed your jacket,” at which he replied “That’s great, I am going to wear it this afternoon to go out.” There is something self-conscious about this composition of power struggles between the irritable Degas and the undramatic and slightly subversive Zoé. One thinks here of Red Lion Mary, William Morris’s housekeeper, who was so assimilated to the Arts & Crafts group that she played jokes on them: “she and Morris were often at odds, so once when he asked her to wind his watch before he left to catch the Oxford train, she set it an hour ahead.” She also “wrote comic notes at Jones’s dictation,” “modelled for Jones when he needed her to,” “learned to embroider under Morris’s tuition,” and “- essentially- the ‘raffish’ life they led, with models

and other such undesirables visiting, held no terrors for her".⁴⁶ Degas had swinging moods. During posing sessions, he could be sad about his ageing and failing health, at which Michel tried to lift his moods by insinuating she suspected him to be sexually fully active. Suddenly relieved, Degas asked if she wouldn't mind helping him leveraging his reputation and she smiled at his wanting to pass for a lewd old man when in fact, apart from his widely free language, "il était d'une grande correction envers ses modèles et ne se permettait jamais la moindre privauté ou attouchement." He could be funny: an old man in his smock, he might sing to her standing there naked, then bow, grab her hands and make her turn while he started on a French song; he might offer her a sip of the cherry tea Zoé made him for his bladder dysfunction, and Michel pretend to empty the cup as he begged her to leave him some.⁴⁷ Isn't Degas's moody tyranny, however, another projection of male domination that downplays Zoé's and Michel's own response to Degas's bullying and ordering about? Zoé's complaints about the avaricious drudgery he kept her in suggest a position short of complete powerlessness. In their rows, Zoé might give notice or threaten to leave as an enraged Degas invoked her dismissal, until it was all over. Contretemps blew over and life resumed its course. She might be around when he entertained and Degas was witty if not rude about her, but this informality went with familiarity: the relationships between servants and employers "were completely formed through the power play surrounding emotions of dependency, shame, guilt and intimacy."⁴⁸ In contemplating Degas and his domestic servants, another reference point is Zoé's predecessor, Sabine Neyt, a Dutchwoman who worked as maid for Degas for several years, from 1873, remaining with him throughout his studio moves around the ninth arrondissement. She died when they were living at 21 rue Pigalle.⁴⁹ Their rows have been passed on to show that his authority as master was not absolute, that Sabine was not submissive and did not always do what she was told: she might not want to go on holiday, for instance.⁵⁰ These are indications that subservience between employers and domestic servants might not be cur-



3 Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-Portrait with Saskia*, 1636, etching, Gift of Henry Walters, 1917, The Met, New York.



4 Edgar Degas. *Sabine Neyt*, 1879, black pencil on green-grey paper, cm 47.5 x 30, private collection, US

rent.⁵¹ Sabine had succeeded Clotilde, a “bonne de comédie” and too lively and young, in Degas’s own words, to be a bachelor’s maid.⁵² Sabine also modelled for Degas, posing, for instance, as a mother attending a dance class in *The Rehearsal* (1873–74, The Burrell Collection, Glasgow). Like Zoé, Sabine dealt on behalf of Degas with his dealer, Paul Durand-Ruel, doing the typical “forging and maintaining social connections.”⁵³ Sabine’s judgment in artistic matters was sought and considered when a frame for a painting was needed, for example.⁵⁴ Remembrance of her industrious life is apposed in Degas’s inscription after her death to the portrait drawing of Sabine sewing: “Ma vieille bonne Sabine Neyt, morte à Paris, 21 rue Pigalle” (fig. 4). On the one hand, in Degas’s world, women were conceptualised, contracted and related to as workers. Steedman provides the terms to understand how Degas’s images of domestic servants (and working women in general) constitute visual and social thinking about female work and its role in society. Like the legal handbooks, plays, poetry and jokes used as evidence for eighteenth-century English conceptualization of domestic servants as workers, Degas’s images were “at once representations of the social order and, at the same time, part of that social order.” The service relationship “provided a major means to conceptualise the social”, which could be done in the everyday world, and “in the full range of forms with which this thinking was done”, including “jokes, rude poetry and much ruder skits and satires about servants that employers told in tap rooms and to amuse their companions and ladies sent in letters to friends.”⁵⁵ Degas’s jokes about Neyt and Closier might be perceived in a light that does not threaten their autonomy and status as women workers in modernity. But too, it is in the territory of subjectivities and emotional invest-



5 Johannes Vermeer, *The Lace-Maker*, 1669–70, oil on canvas, cm 24 x 21, Musée du Louvre, Paris



6 Abraham de Vries, *Double Portrait*, 1630–39, oil on canvas, cm 120.7 x 94, Davis Museum at Wellesley College, MA

ments that we must locate the rows and reconciliations that Zoé (and Sabine) had with Degas.⁵⁶ Their relationship, more subtle than we can ever know, is summed up in their portrait, composed in the visual language of closeness, intimacy and kinship.

Backstories also provide another point of comparison for the portrait of Degas and Zoé. In the drawing of Sabine at her needlework, of around 1879, Degas focuses on her head bent on her hands, concentrated and reflective in her task, not unlike Johannes Vermeer's *Lace-Maker* (1669–70, Musée du Louvre; fig. 5). It belongs in a lineage of portraits of female household servants, like Albrecht Dürer's *Katharina Aged 20* (1521, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence). The self-portrait with Closier invokes Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait with Saskia* (1636, fig. 3), Abraham de Vries's *Double Portrait* (1630–39, Davis Museum at Wellesley fig. 6), Pieter Paul Rubens's *The Honeysuckle Bower* (1609 ca, Alte Pinakothek, Munich), an iconology “in the Garden of Love tradition” appealing “to both the experience of marriage and the marital union.”⁵⁷ Seventeenth-century Dutch marriage portraits are a subgenre of the Italian Renaissance *portrait d'amitié*, a type of double portrait

including married couples and mothers or fathers with their child. In his portraits of friends and family, painted and photographed, Degas used all of these iconographies in numerous portraits. Further strands are the portrait of equal friendship of peers (Pontormo's 1524 *Double Portrait* at Palazzo Cini) and of unequal friendship, such as the *portrait d'héritage* (father-and-child, master-and-pupil) and the *portrait de fidélité* (prince and page, prelate and secretary, artist and patron). In these the friends are placed at different levels of height, often one behind the other, with the dominant figure on the left-hand side of the composition.⁵⁸ Specifically, the *portrait de fidélité* has its roots in Roman portraits of masters with their slaves. The Stela of Marcus Caelius (Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Bonn) shows the Roman centurion in military uniform and decorations between Privatus and Thiaminus, his *servi privati*, who probably died with him at the Teutoburg Forest in 9 CE.⁵⁹ Master-and-slave images were modelled on father-child imagery.⁶⁰ Also popular in the Renaissance were portraits of sitters with a servant, slave, or dwarf, although these “are not truly double portraits since the attendants' roles are completely subsidiary,” their faces often turned away from the spectator.⁶¹ Zoé's face-on expression by no means conforms with this. After years in the orbit of each other, Zoé and Degas knew each other's defects and roughness, but formality and constraints were not severe in their household. Their double



7 Henri-Cartier Bresson, *Colette Paris, France, 1952*, gelatin silver print, cm 35.5 x 23.4

portrait, an explicit reference to their familiarity and emotionally demonstrative master-and-servant arrangement, contractual and asexual, anticipates by years Henri Cartier-Bresson's photograph of Colette and her housekeeper Pauline Vérine (fig. 7), G. Platt Lynes's portraits of gay couples and Spenser Edmiston's double portrait of Morgan Forster and his working-class lover, Bob Buckingham (fig. 8), evidence of the advancing visibility of queers and where the position of the sitters speaks "to some aspect of their psychic life together."⁶² It would be impossible to disentangle Degas's self-portrait with Zoé from the fabric of a society where the upper and lower classes unequally depend on each other for power, necessity, opportunity and the lack of it. Staging the archetypes of the portraiture of friendship and fidelity, Degas's photograph immortalizes Zoé in the cosmos of his attachments. But there is more to it in the import of the visibility it grants and in the politics of representation it plays out. This photograph shows Degas's awareness of "the complicity between a dominant



8 Spenser Edmiston Studio, *Portrait of E. M. Forster and Bob Buckingham*, 1934, photographic print, Archive Centre, King's College, Cambridge

aesthetic form and social domination." I am using here Goldstone's words from his study of servant characters in the work of proto-modernist aesthetes such as Oscar Wilde, Henry James, Villiers and J. K. Huysmans. For Goldstone, Aestheticist *fin-de-siècle* autonomy doctrine signals awareness of participation in the systems of social hierarchy and labour exploitation rather than "an uncritical affirmation of art for art's sake within a sheltered world of leisure."⁶³ Bluebeard's female helper might be a blur, but Degas's self-portrait with Closier challenges the erasure of the significance of domestic labour in modernism, the neglect of the master-and-servant portrait by the history of art and the exclusion of servants from political economy by acknowledging Closier's presence and work in the artist's house.

Endnoten

- 1 See: Daniel Halévy: *My Friend Degas*, London, 1966 (1960); Paul Valéry: *Degas Danse Dessin*, Paris 1965 (1938); Edgar Degas: *Letters*, Oxford 1947; Malcolm Daniel: *Edgar Degas, Photographer*, New York 1998, pp. 16–51.
- 2 Maud Burnside: “Artistic Photography in Portraiture”, in *Brush and Pencil* 3 (1900), pp. 122–25 and p. 127. See on Pictorialism: Robert Hirsch: *Seizing the Light. A History of Photography*, Boston 2000, pp. 185–207. Specifically on French Pictorialism and the foundation of the Photo-Club de Paris in 1888 see: Robert de La Sizeranne: “La photographie est-elle un art?”, “La Religion de la Beauté Etude sur John Ruskin: V: Sa Pensée”, in *Revue des Deux Mondes, Quatrième période* 4 (1897), pp. 825–858 and Francis Ribemont, Patrick Daum and Phillip Prodger, eds: *Impressionist Camera. Pictorial Photography in Europe, 1888–1918*, London New York 2006.
- 3 Hannah Williams: “Academic Intimacies: Portraits of Family, Friendship and Rivalry at the Académie Royale”, in *Art History* 2 (2013), pp. 338–65.
- 4 Pamela Todd: *The Impressionists at Home*, London 2005, pp. 83–93. Quotations at pp. 83–84.
- 5 Richard R. Brettell: *Pissarro’s People*, Munich London New York 2011, pp. 139–45.
- 6 Mary Mathews Gedo: *Monet and His Muse. Camille Monet in the Artist’s Life*, Chicago and London 2010, p. 92.
- 7 Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby: “Still Thinking About Olympia’s Maid”, in *The Art Bulletin* 4 (2015), pp. 430–451.
- 8 Bradford R. Collins: “Manet’s Luncheon in the Studio: An Homage to Baudelaire,” *Art Journal* 2 (1978–79), pp. 107–113. For Nan Staltnaker, however, *The Luncheon* is a biographical painting about uncertain parentage, but designed to resist interpretation to protect Manet’s privacy: “Intention and Interpretation: Manet’s Luncheon in the Studio,” in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 2 (1996), pp. 121–34.
- 9 Sylvie Patry in Jean-Dominique Rey: *Berthe Morisot*, Paris 2010 (2018), p. 36. Also see by Morisot: *In the Dining Room at the Rouart’s* (1880, private collection), *In the Dining Room* (1886, Chester Dale Collection, NGA, Washington DC), *Young Girl with An Apron* (1891, Collection of Mrs and Mr Paul Mellon, NGA, Washington DC).
- 10 Linda Nochlin: “Morisot’s wet nurse. The construction of work and leisure in Impressionist painting,” in *Women, Art, Power and Other Essays*, New York 2019, pp. 232–43.
- 11 See Gloria Groom: *Gustave Caillebotte: Urban Impressionist*, New York 1995, p. 180. In 1877 Caillebotte twice painted Daurielle’s son, Camille (Musée d’Orsay)
- 12 Samuel Raybone: *Gustave Caillebotte as Worker, Collector, Painter*, New York 2020, pp. 15–37.
- 13 Raybone 2020, pp. 38–57.
- 14 John Elderfield: *Cézanne Portraits*, London 2017, p. 27 and p. 163.
- 15 Jack Lindsay: *Cézanne. His Life and Art*, New York 1972 (1969), p. 245, pp. 272–73 and pp. 276–77, p. 322.
- 16 Tamar Garb: “Renoir and the Natural Woman” in *Oxford Art Journal*, 2 (1985), pp. 3–15.
- 17 In France, the literature included: Comtesse de Bessanville: *Le Trésor de la maison*, 1867–68 and *L’Art de bien tenir une maison*, 1878; Albert Jacquemart: *Histoire du mobilier: recherches et notes sur les objets d’art qui peuvent composer l’ameublement et les collections de l’homme du monde et du curieux*, 1876; Spire Blondel: *Grammaire de la Curiosité. L’art intime et le goût en France*, 1884; Henri Havard: *L’Art dans la maison (Grammaire de l’ameublement)*, published in several editions until 1887; Georges Rémon: *Intérieurs d’appartements modernes*, ca. 1892; Edouard Bajor: *Les Styles dans la maison française*, ca. 1889 and *Intérieurs d’appartements meublés*, ca. 1884.
- 18 Edmond de Goncourt: *La maison d’un artiste*, Paris 1881, tome premier, p. 3.
- 19 This Baudelairean retreat from worldly *ennui* into a precious space differentiates the French Aesthetic house both from its broader parent culture of decorating and collecting, and from its counterpart in England, where artists wanted “an impressive home with a studio,” a semi-public space where both the production of artworks and the social interactions thus afforded “were part and parcel of publicising and selling”: Lara Perry: “The Artist’s Household. On Gender and the Division of Artistic Labour in Nineteenth-Century London”, in *Third Text* 31(2017), pp. 15–29. On artists’ houses: Giles Walkley: *Artists’ Houses in London 1764–1914*, Aldershot et al. 1994.
- 20 Carol Armstrong: “Reflections on the Mirror: Painting, Photography, and the Self-Portraits of Edgar Degas”, in *Representations* 22 (1988), pp. 108–41.
- 21 AAVV: *Degas inédit*, Paris 1989, p. 446 and Jeanne Fèvre, *Mon oncle Degas*, Genève 1949.
- 22 Ambroise Vollard: *En écoutant Cézanne, Degas, Renoir*, Paris 1995 (1938), p. 108.
- 23 Roberta Crisci-Richardson: “The Artist as Curator: Edgar Degas’s Maison-Musée”, in *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 2 (2012).
- 24 In December 1919, an excited Gaston Gallimard visits Proust to break the news of his winning the Prix Goncourt. Gallimard is quickly sent his way and Céleste instructed to keep people out: “La consigne fut scrupuleusement observée. Pas un journaliste, pas un photographe n’ont pénétré rue Hamelin, où nous étions alors, après avoir quitté le boulevard Haussmann.”: Céleste Albaret: *Monsieur Proust*, Paris 1973, pp. 366–67.
- 25 “Delacroix se cloître avec une précaution jalouse et déteste les visiteurs. Que de journées il passerait sans pouvoir donner un coup de pinceau, si sa porte restait ouverte à l’artiste, à l’écrivain, à l’amateur proménés par l’oisiveté d’atelier en atelier (...):” Théodore Silvestre: *Histoire des artistes vivants français et étrangers: études d’après nature*, Paris 1856, p. 42.

- 26 hédore Silvestre: *Eugène Delacroix, documents nouveaux*, Paris 1864, p. 44. Delacroix was “sérieux, doux, affable,” rarely impatient and “ses serviteurs l’adoraient, et lui-même adorait ses serviteurs comme Michel-Ange aimait les siens.” Desolate at the illness of his servant in the rue Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, he tells Silvestre: “Elle m’est plus chère qu’une soeur. Elle est dévouement avec en personne. Ne vous fâchez jamais de son humeur, quand vous venez ici. Elle garde une vue comme un soldat mon temps et ma vie.”: Silvestre 1864, pp. 57–58
- 27 Achille Piron: *Delacroix, sa vie et ses œuvres*, Paris 1865 (1868). See too Barthélemy Jobert: *Delacroix*, Princeton 1998 (1997) and Marc Gottlieb: “Creation & Death in the Romantic Studio” in *Inventions of the Studio: Renaissance to Romanticism*, edited by Michael Cole and Mary Pardo, Chapel Hill 2005, pp. 147–83.
- 28 Eugène Delacroix: *Journal*, Paris 2009; André Joubin, *Correspondance Générale d’Eugène Delacroix*, Paris 1938; Piron 1865 (1868); Frédéric Leblond: “Les derniers moments d’Eugène Delacroix”, in *L’Artiste: journal de la littérature et des arts* tome I (15 mars 1864). See on Jenny Le Guillou: Hélène Toussaint, “A propos de Delacroix: le Legs Le Guillou au musée du Louvre” in *Revue du Louvre* 3 (1982), pp. 181–87.
- 29 As noted by Roy McMullen: *Degas: His Life, Times and Work*, London 1985, p. 407. Rose Lovell-Smith: “Anti-Housewives and Ogres’ Housekeepers: the Roles of Bluebeard’s Female Helper” in *Folklore* 2 (2002), pp. 197–214 and Daniela Hempden: “Bluebeard’s Female Helper: the Ambiguous Role of the Strange Old Woman in the Grimms’ ‘Castle of Murder’ and ‘The Robber Bridegroom’” in *Folklore* 108 (1997), pp. 45–48.
- 30 Julie F. Codell: “The Art Press and the Art Market: the Artist as Economic Man, in *The Rise of the Modern Art Market in London 1850–1939*, Manchester 2012. See too on the relationship between criticism, popular print culture and domestic interior design: Juliet Kinchin: “Designer as Critic: E.W. Godwin and the Aesthetic Home”, in *Journal of Design History* 1 (2005), pp. 21–34.
- 31 For a sense of how appalled Degas was by intrusive behaviour of journalists “as pests”: George Moore: “Memoires of Degas” in *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 178 (1918), pp. 22–23 and 26–29, and “Memories of Degas (Conclusion)” in *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 179 (1918), pp. 63–65.
- 32 “Or un jour, un dimanche, j’ai aperçu Delacroix au Louvre, en compagnie de sa vieille servante, celle qui l’a si dévouement soigné et servi pendant trente ans, et lui, l’élégant, le raffiné, l’érudit, ne dédaignait pas de montrer et d’expliquer les mystères de la sculpture assyrienne à cette excellente femme, qui l’écoutait d’ailleurs avec une naïve application.”: Charles Baudelaire: “L’oeuvre et la vie de Eugène Delacroix,” *Oeuvres Complètes*, Paris 1954, pp. 1114–41.
- 33 Stephen Thomson: “Ancillary Narratives: Maids, Sleepwalking, and Agency in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture: in *Textual Practice* 29 (2015), pp. 91–110 and Carolyn Steedman: *Master and Servant: Love and Labour in the English Industrial Age*, Cambridge 2007.
- 34 Karl Marx: *Grundrisse*, London 1993, p. 401 and pp. 465–68 and *Capital: a Critique of Political Economy*, London 1990, pp. 573–74. See too David McLellan: *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought*, London and Basingstoke 1973, p. 295 and Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux: “Le surplus urbain des femmes en France préindustrielle et le rôle de la domesticité”, in *Population* 1–2 (2009), p.10. Marx’s exclusion of domestics from the working class explains the delay in their organization in trade unions: Geneviève Fraise: *Service ou servitude. Essai sur les femmes toutes mains*, Lormont 2009, p. 229.
- 35 Anne Martin-Fugier: *La place des bonnes. Domesticité féminine à Paris en 1900*, Paris 2004 (1979), p. 9 and p. II.
- 36 Discussed too are the portraits of Alice George, laundress or bedmaker at Wadham College, Oxford University, and John Riley’s *Bridget Holmes* (1686, Royal Collection, Windsor Castle) holding her brush or broom as her attribute in “a parody of fashionable Baroque portraits” that nevertheless grants Holmes, aged 96 and in long loyal service to the Stuarts, “great dignity.” She was the first housekeeper to be the subject of a full-length life-size independent portrait, at a time when servants were becoming much less visible due to changes in the architecture of country houses: Diane Wolfthal: “Household Help: Early Modern Portraits of Female Servants” in *Early Modern Women* 1 (2013), pp. 5–52. See too Giles Waterfield and Anne French, eds: *Below Stairs: 400 Years of Servants’ Portraits*, London 2003.
- 37 Diane Wolfthal: “Foregrounding the Background: images of Dutch and Flemish Household Servants” in *Women and Gender in the Early Modern Low Countries*, edited by Sarah Joan Moran and Amanda Pipkin, Leiden 2019, pp. 229–65.
- 38 Yet, when Marx’s family’s servant, Helene Demuth (aka Lenchen, 1820–90?), and his wife Jenny both became pregnant by him during their London exile, and Henry Frederick was born June 23, 1851, a few weeks after the legitimate Marx child, Franzisca, the name of the father was not officially registered and paternity was kindly assumed by Friedrich Engels, in order to save Marx from domestic conflict, as Engels revealed on his deathbed. Similarly, Marx, “a particular kind of bourgeois-a scholar and learned man”, never commented on his financial dependence on the family money of the bourgeois capitalist Engels from the Ermen & Engels textile mill: Jonathan Sperber: *Karl Marx: a Nineteenth-Century Life*, New York 2013, p. 486 and p. 492.
- 39 Wolfthal 2013.
- 40 Theresa McBride: *The Domestic Revolution. The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France 1820–1920*, New York 1976, p. 19, pp. 23–33; p. 119, p. 117, pp. 49–69, pp. 82–98. On nineteenth-century migrant female domestic servants as agents of emancipation: Mareike König: “Femina Migrans. German Domestic Servants in Paris 1870–1972, a Case Study”, in *Frontiers* 3 (2012), pp. 39–115. On the Renaissance idea of paternalism in the master-and-servant from L. B. Alberti’s *I libri della famiglia*, see Dennis Romano: *Housecraft and Statecraft. Domestic Service in Renaissance Venice*, Baltimore and London 1996, pp. XV–XXVI.

- 41 Valéry 1965, p. 51.
- 42 Henri Loyrette: *Degas*, Paris 1991, pp. 446–47. On service and literacy see Carolyn Steedman: “Poetical Maids and cooks who Wrote” in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 1 (2005), pp. 1–27.
- 43 See Vollard 1995, Valéry 1965 (1938), Armand Dayot: “L’atelier de Degas” in *L’Illustration* 76 (1918), pp. 256–9; Alice Michel, “Degas et son modèle”, in *Mercure de France* 496 (1919) and Pietro Romanelli. “Comment j’ai connu Degas. Souvenirs intimes”, in *Le Figaro littéraire* 72 (1937), pp. 5–6; Fevre 1949; Halévy 1966 (1960).
- 44 “L’interdiction farouche de ne jamais frôler, même du bout du plumeau, ces entassements de chefs-d’œuvres permettait aux araignées d’y tisser leurs toiles, et à la subtile poussière Parisienne de les envelopper chaque jour d’avantage, pendant que le vieil artiste, dans son mélancolique isolement, au milieu de ces merveilles qu’il ne pouvait plus admirer, s’efforçait de mettre un peu de lumière dans l’ombre épaisse de ses dernières heures, en cherchant à faire naître d’un bloc de cire de gracieuses formes féminines sous la caresse tâtonnante de ses doigts fiévreux et tremblants.”: Dayot 1918. In *Aestheticism most artists “had a terror of their studios being cleaned”*: as in the case of Mrs Wilkinson battling with E. Burne-Jones when having to clean his studio: Charlotte Gere: *Artistic Circles: Design & Decoration in the Aesthetic Movement*, London 2010, p. 92 and Penelope Fitzgerald: *Edward Burne-Jones*, London 1975, p. 223.
- 45 Judith Flanders: *A Circle of Sisters*, London 2001, p. 166.
- 46 Flanders 2001, p. 57
- 47 Michel 1919.
- 48 See Lucy Delap: *Knowing Their Place. Domestic Service in Twentieth-Century Britain*, Oxford 2011 for an attempt to rescue service from economic, social and cultural marginality, “not the most revealing of historical frameworks”: p. 4.
- 49 Paul Lafond: *Degas*, Paris 1918, p. 94.
- 50 Lafond 1918 and Edmond and Jules de Goncourt: *Journal de la vie littéraire*, Monaco 1956–58, XII, p. 112.
- 51 Carolyn Steedman: *Labours Lost. Domestic Service and the Making of Modern England*, Cambridge 2009.
- 52 Degas 1947, p. 24.
- 53 Perry 2017.
- 54 AA VV 1989, letter of August 1885. In the absence of a wife or adult daughter social activities required by the artist were the work a butler: Perry 2017.
- 55 “Historians do not always like this approach, believing perhaps that it transgresses the boundaries between hard-won historical facts and the mere representation of those facts (people, things, events, happenings) in some kind of text. But material things-jokes, jests and the well-set jam a maidservant had just produced- were objects and entities, part of the social world or the social order.”: Steedman 2009, pp. 14–15
- 56 Halévy 1966, p. 86.
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- 58 Cécile Beuzelin: “Le *Double portrait* de Jacopo Pontormo: vers une histoire du double portrait d’amitié à la Renaissance”, *Studiolo* 7 (2009), pp. 79–99.
- 59 See Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, XIII 8648 on Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, available at: <https://cil.bbaw.de/acc/search?name=XIII%208648&page=1>, accessed 25/09/2023. On publicly owned *servi publici* and privately owned *servi privati* in Roman society: Bronislaw Sitek: “Servus publicus and servus privatus in Ancient Rome: Legal Status and Social Status”, in *Studia Iuridica Lubinensia*, 1 (2021) pp. 251–64.
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- 63 Andrew Goldstone: “Servants, Aestheticism, and ‘The Dominance of Form’” in *ELH* 3 (2010), pp. 615–43.

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1 Edgar Degas, *Self-Portrait with Zoé Closier*, 1895 ca. Gelatin silver print, image cm 5.8 x 8.8, 2010, The Met, New York. Bequest of Robert Shapazian, 2010.

2 Eugène Delacroix, *Portrait of Jeanne-Marie, known as Jenny Le Guillou*, 1840 ca, oil on canvas, cm 45.5 x 37.5, Musée du Louvre, Paris © 2015 RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre/Adrien Didierjean)

3 Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-Portrait with Saskia*, 1636, etching, Gift of Henry Walters, 1917, The Met, New York.

4 Edgar Degas. *Sabine Neyt*, 1879, black pencil on green-grey paper, cm 47.5 x 30, private collection, US

5 Abraham de Vries, *Double Portrait*, 1630-39, oil on canvas, cm 120.7 x 94, Davis Museum at Wellesley College, MA. Gift of Ina Lee Brown Ramer (Class of 1959) and Estelle Newman Tanner (Class of 1957), friends to each other and friends to Wellesley

6 Johannes Vermeer, *The Lace-Maker*, 1669-70, oil on canvas, cm 24 x 21, Musée du Louvre, Paris © RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre/Gérard Blot)

7 Henri-Cartier Bresson, *Colette Paris*, France, 1952, gelatin silver print, cm 35.5 x 23.4, 1952. © Henri Cartier-Bresson/Magnum Photos, courtesy Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson

8 Spender Edmiston Studio, *Portrait of E. M. Forster and Bob Buckingham*, 1934, photographic print, GBR/0272/EMF/27/1016; Archive Centre, King's College, Cambridge

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