

莫里索戶外畫中的現代圖像

Modernity in Berthe Morisot's outdoor paintings

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摘要

印象派與現代性的討論長期以男性藝術家的作品為範疇，而未納入女性藝術家的觀點與視角。本文將透過探索貝絲·莫里索 (Berthe Morisot, 1841 - 1895) 的畫作，去回應現代性的難題。過往對莫里索的研究多聚焦於室內作品，本文則專注於她的戶外畫作，將其作為切入點，試圖重構中產階級女性在十九世紀現代法國的日常生活與休閒。

文章從現代性的描述開始，在城市、郊區、鄉間、水域的主題架構中，展現莫里索如何在作品內表現現代性。通過這些討論，本文試圖探討兩個關鍵問題：女性是否能同樣描繪現代性，以及現代性如何被呈現於女性的作品中？最後，本文將試著回答上述問題，說明女性對現代性的描繪，以及其觀點對於該時代的全面理解至關重要，同時開拓現代性的論述以及對莫里索的討論。

Abstract

The field of Impressionism and modernity has long been dominated by the works of male artists, leaving the contributions of female artists largely overlooked. This paper seeks to address this imbalance by exploring the perspective of Berthe Morisot (1841-1895), a key figure in the Impressionist movement, and expects to offer a unique lens to examine female modernity through her outdoor paintings.

Despite her significance and numerous creations, Morisot has often been overshadowed by her male counterparts, with scholarly attention primarily focused on her indoor works and biographical interpretations. This paper aims to shift the focus to her outdoor paintings, which depict the daily lives and leisure activities of bourgeois women in the modernized 19th century France.

The analysis begins with pointing out the issue of modernity in Impressionism and its long-neglected problems. Afterward, by analyzing Morisot's cityscapes, suburbs, landscapes, and waterscapes, this paper will demonstrate how she conveyed the sense of modern life and art in her paintings. Through this exploration, the paper seeks to address two key questions: Can modernity be equally represented by women, and what might modernity look like in the works of female artists?

In contextualizing Morisot's works within the discourse of modernity, this paper argues that women can indeed represent modernity, and that understanding their perspectives is essential for gaining a comprehensive understanding of the era. Ultimately, this paper aims to contribute to both the discourse of modernity and the discussion of Morisot's life, work, and contribution within the Impressionist movement.

Keywords:

Berthe Morisot (1841-1895), Impressionism, modernity, cityscape, leisure

Introduction

When discussing Impressionism, the concept of modernity often emerges as a central theme among various topics. The documentation of daily life, leisure activities, and the evolving urban landscape all contribute to the portrayal of modern life in the works of Impressionist artists. The 19th century witnessed significant transformations in France, with rapid modernization, industrialization, and urban development reshaping the societal landscape. These changes were not only reflected in the physical environment but also captured in the artworks of the era, providing invaluable insights into the societal norms, values, and experiences of the time.

However, it's frequently overlooked that these depictions are predominantly created by male artists. Since the 20th century, the connection between modernity and Impressionism has been primarily established and explored through artworks by male artists, we learned from their artworks and appreciated them without noticing the underlying imbalance of gender in such representation. The realization of this matter raises two key questions that this paper will be taking into consideration: Can modernity be equally represented by women? What might modernity look like in the works of female artists?

In order to address and explore these questions, this paper will delve into the perspective of Berthe Morisot (1841-1895), an often-overlooked female artist. Despite her significant contribution to the founding of Impressionist movement, her work has historically been overshadowed by her male counterparts, partly due to her gender and the fact that much of her art resides in private collections. While scholarly attention has increased in recent decades after the rise of the feminist movement, the issues dealt with in her works focus principally on femininity, domesticity, and biographical interpretation of her indoor paintings, leaving her outdoor paintings remain relatively understudied.

Therefore, this paper seeks to shed new light on Morisot's oeuvre by examining her outdoor paintings, which offer a distinct perspective on modernity. By shifting the focus from indoor scenes to outdoor settings, particularly those depicting bourgeois women engaging in leisure activities outside their homes, this paper aims to uncover the nuances of female modernity as portrayed by Morisot. Through a detailed analysis of her cityscapes, suburban scenes, landscapes, and waterscapes, this paper will explore how Morisot captured the essence of modern life from a female perspective.

In doing so, this paper seeks to bridge the gap between traditional interpretations of Impressionism, which have predominantly centered on male artists and their depictions of modernity, and the overlooked contributions of female artists like Morisot. By reevaluating Morisot's outdoor paintings in the context of modernity, this paper aims to demonstrate that women can indeed represent modernity in art and provide valuable insights into the diverse experiences of French society in the 19th century. Ultimately, by considering the perspectives of female artists, we can achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the era and the role of gender in shaping artistic representation.

State of Research

Impressionism is known for picturing landscapes and capturing fleeting moments. In 1984, an exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Art Institute of Chicago along with its catalog titled *A Day in the Country: Impressionism and the French Landscape* showcased paintings that depicted urban Paris, modern sites, gardens, and suburbs. This exhibition provided insights into Impressionist paintings as documentation of society at the time.¹ While the catalog accentuated the aspect of nature and environment in the paintings, T. J. Clark's *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* published in 1985 emphasized the social aspects of Impressionist painting, drawing a connection between modernity and Impressionism.² Clark highlighted how these artworks depicted modern life, including indoor scenes of cafes, theaters, and outdoor urban settings, offering a window into the artist's perspective on contemporary society.

Building on this foundation, Robert Herbert's 1991 work, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society* further explored the transformed Paris under Haussmann's renovation, focusing on public parks, gardens, railroads, suburbs, and coastal scenes, as well as the middle-class leisure and bourgeois culture of the time.³ Following a similar path, in 2004 Clare Willson published *In the Gardens of Impressionism*,⁴ delving into the depiction of open green spaces in Impressionist paintings. In 2015, Athena Callen published *The Work of Art: Plein-air Painting and*

¹ Andrea P. A. Belloli, ed., *A Day in the Country: Impressionism and the French Landscape* (LA: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1984).

² T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1985).

³ Robert L. Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

⁴ Clare Willson, *In the Gardens of Impressionism* (2004; repr., London: Thames and Hudson, 2016).

Artistic Identity in Nineteenth-century France,⁵ examining the materials and techniques used by artists, highlighting the connection between artistic labor and social identity.

It was in James Rubin's *Impressionism and the Modern Landscape: Productivity, Technology, and Urbanization from Manet to Van Gogh* that the notion behind the Impressionist landscape was put forward.⁶ Rubin proposed the concept of the "other landscape" in Impressionist paintings, which not only depicted urban settings but also embodied industrialization, economic events, and transportation construction in the background. While his reading reinforced the "modern" aspects of Impressionist paintings, female artists' contributions were notably absent from his analysis; throughout the extensive examination of Impressionist landscapes for more than three hundred pages in his publication, none of the paintings he listed were made by females.

In fact, female artists' works were only brought up from time to time in these publications. In *A Day in the Country*, *The Painting of Modern Life*, and *The Work of Art*, only one of Morisot's pieces was discussed.⁷ Throughout the seven categorized chapters in *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society* with an abundance of paintings from various artists, Morisot's contributions were acknowledged in three chapters, with one section dedicated to her: "Morisot's vacationers," listing the paintings she created while her family embarked on different trips.⁸ Similarly, in Willson's *In the Gardens*, three out of nine chapters included Morisot's works.⁹ This reveals a glaring gender disparity in the examination of Impressionist modern paintings, with male perspectives dominating the discourse, while female works receive comparatively little attention and depth of analysis.

The spotlight on female artists began to emerge in the latter half of the 20th century, notably after Linda Nochlin's seminal essay, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" shed light on the social background that influences female artists' works. This trend continued with Griselda Pollock's exploration of how female artists should be

⁵ Athena Callen, *The Work of Art: Plein-Air Painting and Artistic Identity in Nineteenth-Century France* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2015).

⁶ James H. Rubin, *Impressionism and the Modern Landscape: Productivity, Technology, and Urbanization from Manet to Van Gogh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

⁷ Belloli, *A Day in the Country: Impressionism and the French Landscape*, pp. 109-118; Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers*, pp. 161-2; Callen, *The Work of Art: Plein-Air Painting and Artistic Identity in Nineteenth-Century France*, pp. 238-345.

⁸ The three chapters are: ch5, parks, racetracks, and gardens; ch6, suburban leisure; ch7, at the seaside. Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society*, pp. 141-300.

⁹ The three chapters are: ch4, painting the Parisian 'bouquet'; ch5, sunshine, shadow and sanctuary; ch7, the working garden. Willson, *In the Gardens of Impressionism*, pp. 97-200.

interpreted within their social contexts to appreciate their significance, as articulated in “Modernity and the Space of Femininity” in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and Histories of Art* published in 1988.¹⁰ Pollock’s insights into modernity from a female perspective will be further discussed in the following section as one of the main issues in this paper.

Within the realm of Berthe Morisot’s research, Anne Higonnet stands as a prominent scholar. Her focus on biographical and feminine aspects led to the publication of *Berthe Morisot* in 1990 and *Berthe Morisot’s Images of Women* in 1992,¹¹ providing comprehensive insights into Morisot’s life and work. Additionally, Marni Kessler’s examination of the relationship between Morisot and her sister Edma, as presented in “Reconstructing Relationships: Berthe Morisot’s Edma Series,”¹² served as a foundation for further intimate studies on Morisot, such as Claire Moran’s “Minor Intimacies and the Art of Berthe Morisot: Impressionism, Female Friendship and Spectatorship.”¹³

The evident discrepancy between the fields becomes apparent. While discussions of Impressionist outdoor paintings that illustrate leisure life predominantly feature works by male artists, examinations of Berthe Morisot primarily focus on her domestic and intimate works from a feminine and biographical perspective. Thus, this paper aims to bridge these two realms by investigating modernity in Morisot’s outdoor paintings, emphasizing how she portrayed modern society and shaped her own identity within this context. By doing so, this paper seeks to offer a nuanced understanding of both Impressionist modern works and Berthe Morisot herself, opening the related discourse.

1. Modernity

Modernity, as elaborated in Rubin’s *Impressionism and the Modern Landscape* and Clark’s *The Painting of Modern Life*, is a central theme in Impressionist paintings, depicted through the portrayal of contemporary events and societal visions. France in the 19th century underwent rapid changes, particularly in Paris, where extensive renovation projects reshaped the city’s landscape. The construction of wide boulevards,

¹⁰ Griselda Pollock, “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity,” in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), 50–90.

¹¹ Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot’s Images of Women* (London: Harvard University Press, 1994).

¹² Marni Reva Kessler, “Reconstructing Relationships: Berthe Morisot’s Edma series,” *Woman’s Art Journal* 12, no. 1 (January 1, 1991): 24–28.

¹³ Claire Moran, “Minor Intimacies and the Art of Berthe Morisot: Impressionism, Female Friendship and Spectatorship,” *Dix-Neuf* 25, no. 2 (2021): 137–157.

uniform Haussmannian apartments, and expansive green spaces of parks, squares, and gardens, altered the urban fabric significantly and flourished the city with a growing population.¹⁴ From 1848 to 1870, new parks, squares, and gardens were created, reaching a total of 4500 acres.¹⁵ The Bois de Boulogne is featured as one of the important sites among the new spaces. With its large amount of green woods, lakes (lac inférieur), race tracks (Hippodrome de Longchamp), and close location to the Arc de Triomphe (Fig.1),¹⁶ the Bois de Boulogne emerged as a prominent site that attracts Parisians, symbolizing the evolving urban lifestyle, and flourishing related depictions. Additionally, current advancements in technology, industrialization, and transportation, such as railways, factories, and light installations, further transformed the societal landscape into a new vision.

While Paris and places all over France witnessed such huge transformations and changes both in the view of the city and lifestyle, the Impressionists marked their distinctiveness solely through faithful depictions of these contemporary issues. As paintings in the Salon remained rather conservative and continued to feature classical and mythological elements without reflecting any reality of the time, the Impressionists' records of urban evolution and people's genuine leisure activities vividly portrayed modernity in comparison, establishing themselves from others. Charles Baudelaire referred to the artworks that can reflect the true image of society as "art of modern life," it was these artists who painted images of the modern city and its suburbs that captured the fleeting, transitory nature of modern urban life.¹⁷

As a result, there is no doubt that the representation of daily life itself counts as part of the expression of modernity, regardless of the artist's gender. However, why were women not included in such discussions in the past? The historical exclusion of women from discussions on modernity prompts a critical inquiry into the underlying reasons. Pollock argued for the explanation that "what modernist art history celebrates is a selective tradition which normalized, as the *only* modernism, a particular and gendered set of practice."¹⁸ While all the canonized work belongs to males, we assume indoor

¹⁴ Brian Chapman, "Baron Haussmann and the Planning of Paris," *The Town Planning View* 24, no. 3 (1953): 182.

¹⁵ Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society*, pp. 141-142.

¹⁶ Figure 1 is an engraving illustrating the activities that Parisian tourists can do, such as boating, feeding ducks and swans, walking along the path, riding on horse carriages, and horse racing at the top of the image. In the right lower corner, the Arc de Triomphe is depicted, showing the relationship and the distance between the Bois de Boulogne and Paris.

¹⁷ Westchester Community College, "The Impressionists: Painters of Modern Life," Art 109 Renaissance to Modern, <https://art109textbook.wordpress.com/new-online-textbook-2-2/the-industrial-revolution-realism-and-impressionism/painters-of-modern-life/>. (accessed March 10, 2024)

¹⁸ Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity." p. 50.

images—such as bars, operas, theaters, and cafes—and outdoor images—such as bridges, railroads, boulevards, and public buildings—to be the representation of modernity. In our perception of the 19th century, we have unwittingly adopted a masculine perspective. Just as the *flâneurs* and gawkers depicted in the paintings, we have acquiesced to be male, wandering around each artwork like a *flâneur* to witness the image of modern society. This bias has led to a tendency to overlook the works of female artists, reinforcing the notion that modernity belongs primarily to men.

Without noticing such unconsciousness, it is therefore easy to be trapped in a conventional understanding of modernity through these examples. One might focus only on male works and neglect those of female artists, for we don't really see these elements in their paintings. It seems like no one has asked the question "why" before the groundbreaking insights from Nochlin and Pollock to challenge this entrenched bias. Both scholars draw on the issue and importance of considering women's perspectives in art history. As Nochlin dealt with a more general concept, Pollock focused on modernity as the subject. By deconstructing the masculinist myths of modernism, Pollock advocates for a more inclusive approach that acknowledges the diverse experiences of female artists.¹⁹ For instance, bourgeois women like Morisot and Mary Cassatt could never fully relate to the bar scenes depicted in works like Edouard Manet's *A Bar at the Folie Bergères*,²⁰ underscoring the need to recognize the distinctiveness of women's artistic expression and their different points of view.

"To perceive women's specificity is to analyze historically a particular configuration of difference,"²¹ Pollock noted. She emphasized how the space of femininity should be considered as contributing to the enlargement of modernity. Following her path, the social framework of modernity is therefore challenged, the domestic setting and intimate depiction of female artists contribute to a more nuanced understanding of modernity. Motherhood, for instance, serves as a significant motif in the paintings of Morisot and Cassatt, offering insights into the complexities of the female experience during this period. While domesticity is investigated with great interest, discussion about female artists' outdoor painting remains relatively limited.²²

As a consequence, there is a compelling need to explore the representation of modernity in Morisot's outdoor paintings. By delving into these overlooked works, we

¹⁹ Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity." p. 50.

²⁰ Edouard Manet, *A Bar at the Folie Bergères*, 1882, oil on canvas, 96cm × 130cm, Courtauld Gallery, London.

²¹ Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity." p. 56.

²² Rosa Bonheur and her paintings of animals are in a different context so this paper will not focus on them.

can uncover new dimensions of Impressionist modernity and gain a deeper appreciation for Morisot's unique artistic perspective at the same time.

2. Cityscape

To begin with, one of Morisot's early works illustrates modernity by distinguishing itself from past landscapes. Morisot's *The Harbor at Lorient* (Fig.2) initially appears similar in composition to the work of her teacher, the Barbizon artist Camille Corot's *Le Quai des Pâquis à Genève* (Fig.3). However, upon closer examination, the two paintings reveal distinct perspectives and elements. In Corot's piece, a serene and orderly landscape unfolds, characterized by tall trees casting sharp shadows that evoke a sense of stillness. Local figures are depicted in small proportions, seamlessly blending into the picturesque background. It offers viewers an arcadia picturesque scene and a distant perspective to admire.²³ Conversely, Morisot's work employs different effects within a similar composition.

While the sea occupies the left akin to Corot's *Le Quai*, Morisot's *The Harbor* introduces watery waves and various reflections from the surrounding environment on the water's surface, offering the scene with a sense of dynamism and movement rather than tranquility. Most importantly, it is the figure that epitomizes modernity in this painting. Positioned on the stone parapet at the right-hand side of the composition, the figure in Morisot's painting occupies a significant portion of the canvas and stands out with fashionably contemporary attire. Unlike the locals or peasants depicted in traditional landscapes, Impressionist modern paintings feature figures adorned in modern clothing, signaling their identity as visitors or tourists, engaging in acts of modern leisure or travel.

While *The Harbor at Lorient* represents only an early work by Morisot, her later pieces more explicitly convey the essence of modernity. The *View of Paris from the Trocadéro* (Fig.4) pictures three female figures in the foreground and against the backdrop of the open expanse of the city. The figures are Morisot's sisters and daughter, dressed in contemporary bourgeois clothing, positioned behind the handrail from the background. In the middle ground, tiny workers are placed on the well-arranged green grass, and on the newly paved path, passengers and carriages are passing through. The Seine runs in the middle, with bridges constructed in the 19th century connecting both sides. Notably, the painting predates the construction of the Eiffel Tower, allowing for

²³ Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society*, p. 287.

an unobstructed view of the cityscape. Iconic landmarks such as Champs de Mars, Les Invalides, Notre-Dame, and Sainte-Clothilde are the recognizable features within the scene.²⁴

In the context of modernity, the current view of the city is documented, as are the bourgeois figures in the foreground who are shown to be visitors to the scene. However, there is more depth to the painting than initially meets the eye. In *A Day in the Country*, it is noted that the painting takes the viewpoint from the hills of Trocadéro, near where Morisot and her family lived.²⁵ This setting corresponds with Morisot's *Woman and Child on the Balcony* (Fig.5),²⁶ where figures stand on the balcony, gazing out through handrails at a similar angle. In the latter work, the figures standing on the balcony are pictured from the house of the Morisot family.²⁷ On one hand, balconies are one of the characteristics of modern Paris for they belong to the design of Haussmannian apartments;²⁸ on the other hand, the handrail separates the figures from the outside view as it is in the *View of Paris*. The handrail can be read as both a physical and metaphoric barrier for women, for it prevents women from entering the public world,²⁹ reflecting societal gender barriers hidden in social norms, demonstrating that women only have limited access to the "space of masculinity."³⁰ The painting illustrates the close relationship between modernity and daily life, contrasting the limited access and distance women have to the public world.

Through comparison with other male artists' works, this notion is further emphasized. Manet's *View of the 1867 Exposition Universelle* (Fig.6) presents a similar composition and perspective from Morisot's *View of Paris*. In his painting, figures are on closer ground and randomly placed on the turf. There appears to be no barrier between the figures and the modern cityscape, Manet didn't experience the same realization as Morisot, such limited access did not occur to him. The lack of the handrail that Morisot includes, symbolizes his lack of awareness of the limitations faced by women. In contrast, Morisot's use of the handrail in the *View of Paris* serves as both a visual barrier for the viewer and a metaphorical representation of the barriers women

²⁴ Belloli, *A Day in the Country: Impressionism and the French Landscape*, p. 118.

²⁵ Belloli, *A Day in the Country: Impressionism and the French Landscape*, p. 118.

²⁶ Artizon Museum. "Berthe Morisot 'Woman and Child on the Balcony.'" Artizon Museum, www.artizon.museum/en/collection/category/detail/222 (accessed 31 Dec. 2023).

²⁷ Yasuhide Shimbata, "Berthe Morisot's 'Woman and Child on the Balcony': The New Woman in Modern Paris," trans. Ruth S. McCreery, *Ishibashi Foundation*, 2020, p. 84.

²⁸ Julien Anido, "How to Recognize Haussmann Buildings," *Un Jour De Plus À Paris*, July 29, 2020, <https://www.unjourdeplusaparis.com/en/paris-reportage/reconnaitre-immeuble-haussmannien> (accessed October 29, 2023).

²⁹ Aubree Zdanovec, "Seduction: A Feminist Reading of Berthe Morisot's Paintings" (thesis, The University of Arizona, 2016), p. 47

³⁰ Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity." p. 62.

encounter. In the *View of Paris*, the handrail blocks the sight of the viewer and cuts the lower part of the canvas diagonally, creating thus a unique composition. The interruption of the perspective and unique composition belongs to the characteristics of Impressionist painting, questioning the essence of the painting itself. Similar themes can be observed in Gustave Caillebotte's *Le Pont de l'Europe* (Fig.7), in which the steel structure of the bridge is placed across the canvas, disrupting the view. Having the same idea in mind, Morisot utilized the handrail to express both the modern barrier that women face and the modern concept of painting itself.

In examining Morisot's two cityscape works on comparable subjects, the potential connection between the figures in both paintings is revealed. Notably, the child in both paintings is the only one that gazes out at the city, while adults are engaged elsewhere. If we assume the woman in the black dress in both paintings is the same person, and both of them are looking at the child, an assumption of double projection can be made. It is possible that first, Morisot may project herself onto the child, who innocently and curiously is observing the outer world. As a child, she is not yet blocked by the handrail, and can still look through the fences to peak the world, but unconscious of how the filter in between might affect the view. Using children to be the representative of curiosity is not uncommon, similar treatment can also be seen in Manet's *The Railway* (Fig.8), in which the child is also facing the other side through fences. However, the projection from the artist on the child is unique in Morisot's painting, especially when keeping in mind that women are more and more restrained after they grow up.

Secondly, the projection can be made from Morisot onto the female dressed in black. The figure is Morisot's sister, who was married and had given birth to a child. The projection from Morisot might imply that women eventually have to follow the social convention, regardless of their interests, and Morisot herself was concerned about it. A contradictory feeling of wanting to follow the social norms and criticizing those who "betray" her interest to follow the social norms is projected on Morisot's intimate others,³¹ rendering the painting with complexity. Adding on top of that, the way the figure looks at the child hints at the action of Morisot looking at the child herself, which renders the projection with another layer of meaning. Additionally, the fact that the figures look away from the city view in the background highlights the issue of women as well, suggesting women's societal limitations.

In comparison, Caillebotte's *Man on a Balcony, Boulevard Haussmann* (Fig.9) depicts a man dominating the space and confidently gazing at the street below,

³¹ Kessler, "Reconstructing Relationships: Berthe Morisot's Edma Series." p. 28.

embodying the modernity depicted by men. He is the image of a *flâneur* that viewers expect to see and portray themselves to be.³² What Morisot presented is a modern view of both society and women; while the city was on its way to transformation, bourgeois women remained separated by the barriers from the public masculine spaces and were “trained” to not look outside, not curious about the outside anymore. Morisot’s cityscapes challenge societal norms and highlight the experiences of women within the evolving urban landscape, the deliberate composition choices and subtle symbolism mark the modern city view from her perspective.

3. Suburbs and Landscape

Railways had vastly developed in the 19th century, revolutionizing the traveling between the city and the suburbs, and facilitating easier and quicker access for the middle class. This newfound accessibility encouraged individuals to seek leisure opportunities in suburban retreats, leading to a proliferation of depictions showcasing vacation homes and idyllic landscapes, enabling the viewer to trace the path of the artist as well. In Morisot’s case, it is Maurecourt that her paintings in the suburbs take place in. Edma’s husband’s summer house is located in this town, not far from Paris, making it a frequent destination for the Morisot family. Within this picturesque setting, Morisot captured the essence of suburban life in works such as *Hide and Seek*, *The Butterfly Chase*, and *Beneath the Lilac at Maurecourt*.³³ These depictions of suburbs demonstrate how women and children really “live” in the world, offering viewers intimate glimpses into the daily activities of women and children within this tranquil environment.

In *Beneath the Lilac at Maurecourt* (Fig.10), Morisot captures a serene moment of domestic tranquility. Positioned centrally within the composition, Edma, clad in a dark dress, sits beneath the sprawling branches of a lilac tree, engrossed in her embroidery.³⁴ Her two daughters accompany her by her side, reaching toward their mother and together they form an intimate circle, surrounded by the tall lilac tree and its shadow. It is a static activity played by the figures. While the tone of the painting seems to be in fusion and the figures integrated naturally with the environment, their contemporary outfit, alongside the presence of a basket and parasol, grounds the scene in the

³² Hollis Clayson, *Threshold space: Parisian modernism betwixt and between (1869 to 1891)*, ed. Janet McClean, *Impressionist Interiors* (Dublin: The National Gallery of Ireland, 2008), pp. 20-21.

³³ Schuyler Krogh, “Birthing the Modern: Modernity, Maternity, and Subjectivity in the Art of Berthe Morisot” (Thesis, The University of British Columbia, 2022), p. 28.

³⁴ Krogh, “Birthing the Modern: Modernity, Maternity, and Subjectivity in the Art of Berthe Morisot,” p. 29.

modernity of its time. Their modest belongings suggest a simple outing, perhaps a leisurely picnic just steps away from their residence in the woods. This is a modern activity that was documented in the canvas, and Morisot's treatment of brushstrokes and light effects mark the modern aspect of Impressionism as well.

On the other hand, the remaining two paintings showcase a scene of active leisure. In *The Butterfly Chase* (Fig.11), Edma is in a flowing white dress, clutching a net diagonally in her hand—a compositional choice reminiscent of the diagonal techniques favored by the Impressionists. Adjacent to Edma stands a lilac tree, mirroring the verticality of her figure, while her children trail behind her. Positioned discreetly in the background, on the left-hand side of the composition, a figure sits upon a bench, engrossed in a book, perhaps immersed in quiet contemplation. Despite the focal point being the butterfly chase as the title indicates, the inclusion of the solitary reader adds depth to the painting, suggesting that both active and contemplative leisure pursuits coexist harmoniously within the natural surroundings. This expanded depiction captures the dynamic interplay between movement and stillness, highlighting the multifaceted nature of leisure activities in the setting of Maurecourt.

Exploring the theme of suburban figures further, Manet's *The Monet Family in Their Garden at Argenteuil* (Fig.12) offers a contrasting portrayal despite sharing a similar composition with Morisot's *Beneath the Lilac*. Manet's summer house is located near Monet's so he visited the latter, and they were later joined by Renoir the same day.³⁵ Manet's painting shows Madame Monet in a white dress, sitting straight on the grass with her son leaning on her. Despite the close relationship between the mother and child that is the same as in Morisot's painting, Manet's figures do not interact naturally, it presents a deliberate acknowledgment of the artist's presence. Madame Monet holds her body up, puts her hand under her chin, and looks straight back at the viewer, which is the painter of the work, Manet. She is aware that she's been observed and painted, and is responding back to this gaze. This self-conscious engagement with the viewer, akin to facing a camera lens, distinguishes Manet's approach from Morisot's candid documentation of leisure activities.

Despite the intimate bond between mother and child, evidenced by the son leaning against Madame Monet, their interaction feels orchestrated rather than spontaneous. The son's diverted gaze toward Renoir, who also captured the scene in *Madame Monet and Her Son* (Fig.13), further emphasizes the staged nature of the composition. In these

³⁵ The Metropolitan Museum of Art, "The Monet Family in Their Garden at Argenteuil," <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436965> (accessed November 15, 2023).

paintings, the figures are paying attention to the artist, performing and preoccupied with posing and preparing rather than engaging in authentic leisure activities. This conscious awareness of being observed pulls them out of the tranquil moment of leisure, contrasting with Morisot's naturalistic portrayal of suburban life. In Morisot's paintings, the true moment of interaction between the mother and children is documented and presented naturally, reflecting faithfully the modern activity they're doing.

Similarly, Morisot's *Hide and Seek* (Fig.14) pictures an active activity played by the figures. The presence of an open parasol in Edma's hand signifies the dynamic nature of the scene, suggesting an instant capture of documentation in the midst of a game. Unlike traditional depictions where a parasol would be used to shield from sunlight and figures remain static, Morisot captures a fleeting instance of movement and interaction. The scene unfolds naturally, with the characters fully immersed in their leisurely pursuits. They are presented in the environment and concentrating on this leisure time, so naturally depicted as if one can really imagine this is how bourgeois women pass their day at the summer house: stepping out from the house with a basket to picnic in the "garden" and play with the kids. This authenticity sets Morisot's work apart from contemporaneous paintings by Manet and Renoir, where figures appear passive and disconnected from their surroundings. Through *Hide and Seek*, Morisot offers a glimpse into the vibrant rhythms of daily life, celebrating the joys of family and leisure in the countryside. It demonstrates her ability to infuse her art with vitality and authenticity, capturing moments of genuine human experience with grace and sensitivity.

Additionally, in the background of *Hide and Seek*, the view of the village is visible not far from the green space where the figures are playing. Such distance signifies the close proximity of town and woods in modern times, illustrating how human spaces have extended into nature, especially within the context of modernization. In *Hanging Out the Laundry to Dry* (Fig.15), we observe a similar treatment from Morisot. Although the primary focus point of the painting is the landscape of Gennevilliers, chimneys, and smoke are depicted in the background along the horizontal line, indicating the integration of industrialization into the countryside and the omnipresence of modernity. While the smoke blurs the country sky, the equilibrium of nature and labor is played by Morisot in the painting.³⁶ The laundry hung in the middle of the composition stands for women's labor, juxtaposed with the industrial labor and activities of the factory that coexisted in the natural environment, offering a glimpse into the vision of modern France. Furthermore, the fences in the foreground of *Hanging*

³⁶ Willson, *In the Gardens of Impressionism*, pp. 185-186.

Out the Laundry present again the visual barrier of the view, continuously reminding the viewer that the artist is looking from an indoor perspective.

Landscape at Gennevilliers (Fig.16) also demonstrates the integration of industrialization with the countryside.³⁷ While a significant portion of the foreground portrays a grassy field and a stack of wheat in the middle ground, the horizontal line features trees juxtaposed with smoky chimneys. Despite being a suburban landscape, the presence of industrialized factories declares the modern depiction of the painting. On the contrary, paintings like Pissarro's Landscape with Factory (Fig.17) highlight the issue of the factory in its title and are meant to represent it as obviously as it is. Factories are now elements indispensable in modernized France nowadays. In Morisot's depiction, urban modernity is not loudly shouting its existence to the viewer, but is embedded into part of the reality that one does not awkwardly notice. This subtle incorporation of urban elements into the landscape reflects how industrialization has become ingrained in the everyday experience, shaping the environment without necessarily dominating it.

4. Waterscape

National identity was a significant concern for France throughout the 19th century. From the Exposition Universelle manifesting the nation's progress to the Franco-Prussian war which led to the creation of the Third Republic, it's all about demonstrating self-acknowledgment. In her article "Bourgeois Leisure on the Seine: Impressionism, Forgetting and National Identity in the French Third Republic," Tricia Cusack points out that Impressionism is highly related to the forming of identity, conveying daily aesthetic experience that everyone lives in.³⁸ With the Seine regarded as the soul of Paris, there was a proliferation of depictions of riverscapes and related activities during this period. Boating, particularly, emerged as a popular leisure pursuit for the bourgeois, and even formed clubs to gather people. Continuing in this trend, the Bois de Boulogne in which a lac inférieur is installed, had also become a spot extremely favored by the middle class to do boating.

One of Morisot's renowned works, jointly owned by the National Gallery of London and Dublin, captures scenes from Bois de Boulogne: Summer's Day

³⁷ Alison Syme, "Morisot's Urbane Ecologies," in *A Companion to Impressionism*, ed. André Dombrowski (New Jersey: Wiley Blackwell, 2021), pp. 376-377.

³⁸ Tricia Cusack, "Bourgeois Leisure on the Seine: Impressionism, Forgetting and National Identity in the French Third Republic," *National Identities* 9, no. 2 (2007): 166-167.

(Fig.18).³⁹ The setting scenery is located at the northern end of the lac inférieur,⁴⁰ with the river bank and bushes on land visible in the background of the painting. Two women on the boat enjoy their leisure in the reflecting waves of the lake, with their modern clothing and accessories such as hats and parasols to blend with the natural environment in zig zag brushstrokes. Morisot continuously created artworks in the same location, featuring most of the time with two females. On the lake in Bois de Boulogne is another example (Fig.19). The two figures in this painting sit together on a smaller boat, which is meant to be rented and rowed by women themselves instead of having an oarsman.⁴¹ These kinds of small rental boats enable people to get closer to water creatures and feed them. The blending effect between the figures and the watery background is achieved not only through Morisot's signature brushstrokes but also in the harmonious color tones of the figures' attire. The intimate connection between the figures is visible as they lean toward each other on the boat, their hands overlapping as they gaze together toward a shared point of interest.

While boating remains a popular activity and a recurring theme among artists, depictions and related caricatures often center more on the juxtaposition of the oarsman and bourgeois females.⁴² For others, the representation of females with male companions is also common; Manet's Boating is one example (Fig.20). In Manet's work, a man and a woman are sitting on one side of the boat. The outfit of the man refers to local cercle nautique,⁴³ and the woman's outfit is chic and à la mode, with a veil to prevent dust or water, which indicates her bourgeois social class. However, despite being aboard the boat, the figures appear passive and disconnected from their surroundings, they are actually not doing anything. They do not engage in boating activities, nor do they interact with each other, but one looking at nowhere and another responding to the viewer's gaze. Manet created a "strange" composition as if the water extends towards the sky without a horizontal line, exploring the flatness of the canvas but decreasing the documenting aspect of Impressionist paintings.⁴⁴

³⁹ Jason Kennedy, "Four Priceless Paintings Return to Dublin," *The Irish Times*, May 23, 2013, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/four-priceless-paintings-return-to-dublin-1.1404339> (accessed June 1, 2023).

⁴⁰ ColourLex, "Berthe Morisot, Summer's Day," ColourLex, <https://colourlex.com/project/morisot-summers-day/> (accessed June 6, 2023).

⁴¹ Syme, "Morisot's Urbane Ecologies," p. 382.

⁴² Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society*, p. 151.

⁴³ Cusack, "Bourgeois Leisure on the Seine: Impressionism, Forgetting and National Identity in the French Third Republic," p. 174

⁴⁴ Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society*, p. 236; Simon Abrahams, "Manet's Boating," *Art's Masterpieces Explained*, June 4, 2012, https://www.everypainterpaintshimself.com/article/manets_boating_1874 (accessed November 15, 2023).

Apart from the depiction of women accompanying men, Caillebotte's *Boating Party*, or *Oarsman in a Top Hat* (Fig.21) illustrates the masculinity of boating and shows how man participates in the activity. Featuring a male as the main character in the painting, it contrasts a lot with Morisot's paintings in which only female figures are present. Morisot's paintings place greater emphasis on depicting how women authentically engage in these activities, thereby reminding viewers of the true essence of boating: to connect with and appreciate nature. Indeed, water creatures can also be seen in other artists' works, but Morisot used them differently. Rather than merely serving as decorative elements, the creatures in her paintings highlight the intimate relationship between bourgeois visitors and the natural environment. In *Summer's Day*, one of the figures leans toward the boat's edge and has her body turned toward the ducks, indicating her attention and interest. In *On the Lake*, the two women are in a small rental boat to get closer to the creatures and feed them themselves. By deliberately omitting elements of oarsmen and males from the composition, Morisot enhances the sense of intimacy between the figures and the natural world depicted in her paintings.

In "Morisot's Urban Ecologies," Syme pointed out that the coexistence of figures and creatures in the painting refers to Morisot's reading of Charles Darwin, celebrating "the close relationship of humans and other species."⁴⁵ Morisot's paintings visualize a more coherent relation between the figures and the creature; the depiction of water involves not just boating, but also the connection with the whole environment. From the blending brushstrokes of figures' clothing, boats, water waves, trees, and sky, Morisot created a vivid portrayal of reflective surfaces and dynamic movements. Morisot's artworks not only showcase women's participation in modern leisure activities but also contribute to the discourse of national identity, illustrating how women interact with one another and their surroundings. In a domain typically associated with male-dominated representations of *cercle nautique* and oarsmen, Morisot offers a fresh perspective from a female viewpoint, enriching the narrative and imagery. Her paintings challenge stereotypes by demonstrating that women are fully capable of rowing their own boats, a reality that was not commonly depicted in art of the time. Through her unique perspective, Morisot adds depth and nuance to the portrayal of modernity, emphasizing the agency and presence of women in leisure activities and broader societal contexts.

⁴⁵ Syme, "Morisot's Urbane Ecologies," pp. 382-384.

Conclusion

Throughout the discussion and by tracing Morisot's paintings in this paper, it is possible now to answer the two questions that this paper brought up in the beginning: Can modernity be equally represented by women? What might modernity look like in the works of female artists? First of all, of course, women can represent modernity. However, to fully understand and appreciate the modernity depicted by women, one must realize and deconstruct the male-centric perspective that has historically dominated discourse. While women's representations may offer a partial view of society compared to male-centric portrayals or are not "representative" enough to compete with male modernity, this very limitation underscores the significance of her paintings at the same time. Being not representative enough under the context of male modernity indicates that male modernity is not as comprehensive as one thought it should be, the inadequacy of traditional male-centric interpretations of modernity is therefore visualized. Only through re-examining women's social status, perspectives, and depictions, a more comprehensive understanding of 19th-century French society emerges.

Consequently, if taking into consideration the perspective of females, what might modernity look like in the works of female artists? When it comes to modern techniques, Morisot's mastery of modern techniques places her among her Impressionist counterparts, if not above some of them. The contemporary clothing marks the figures but with her treatment, they still integrate harmoniously with the background. The blending of the edges, the reflection of light, sun, and water, and the visual barrier and diagonal composition all signify the difference between Morisot's paintings from traditional ones. When it comes to motifs, Morisot's cityscapes deal with depictions of evolving urban landscape and new buildings in the city, such as the constructed bridges, not-yet-constructed Eiffel Tower, and the Haussmannian balconies; her suburbs and landscapes deal with depictions of captured moments of leisure during vacation, showcasing the fusion of industrialization with the natural environment extending from the city; her waterscapes deal with depictions of modern activity, boating, and its play among females.

When it comes to the messages conveyed in the paintings, we see how women's limited access to the masculine public is visualized. Such an issue is not only represented in the physical barrier of the handrail between the figures and the city view but also through the scenes that are not depicted by Morisot. Women are required to have male companions on the streets and boulevards, they are not *flâneurs* and gawkers

who can observe the city freely, thus such motifs are lacking in female artists' works. Only a few public places can women visit without too many restrictions: places near their residence, as in the *View of Paris*; areas and nature around their summer house, as in depictions in Maurecourt; and public parks as Bois de Boulogne. Through the narrowed and simple location that Morisot painted, one gets to visualize how a bourgeois woman passes her day, sees her path, and thus acknowledges that these are the only places she has access to, picture the modern life of female instead of male. As females contribute no doubt to the forming of society, so are their perspectives and existence should be taken into consideration in the discourse of modernity.

Additionally, Morisot pictured the activities that women can do on their own and deconstructed the play of oarsmen in male's depiction of boating. So is her illustration of the intimacy between mother and children in the context of outdoor painting. It is not just in the interior that intimacy can be observed, but also the interaction between them outdoors demonstrates their close relationship. Morisot's outdoor paintings can represent modernity in terms of motifs and techniques just like other male colleagues on the one hand; on the other hand, they can shed light on aspects that haven't been considered or haven't been realized in the past discourse of modernity. This is the modernity represented in the works of a female artist.

In conclusion, this paper takes its departure with Berthe Morisot, taking her outdoor painting as the context to analyze the issue of modernity in Impressionist paintings that has not yet been discussed as an independent subject. Throughout the elaboration in the paper, the main goal is to demonstrate that, as masculine modernity is deconstructed, not only the femininity and domesticity in female artworks count, but also their outdoor paintings are important and have the same value to be considered and examined. Hopefully, this paper can call for readers' re-investigation of Impressionism's modernity, bring open discourse to the field, and shed light on past research on Morisot to understand her and her works better.

A painting by Norbert Goeneutte, *Manet and Morisot–Bois de Boulogne* (Fig.22) in 1880 tells how every artist perceives the world differently in their canvas. In this artwork, Morisot is together with Manet, behind their canvas, and are perhaps having a professional dialogue or exchange. They are the observer and the ones who record the society in front of them. Interestingly, although they are looking in the same direction, the paintings they create look different, as previously elaborated in this paper. Their depictions of the same location or subject differ from one another. From this, we can tell that, only by consulting every artist's work can one get the whole vision of the era,

regardless of gender. Each one of them accentuates different perspectives and it is thus necessary to take all into consideration. In sum, Morisot's paintings present another angle of modern society at that time. In her depiction of cityscape, suburbs, landscape, and waterscape, she presents not only a feminine scene but also contemporary documentation of society in her canvas, contributing to the construction of modernity and fulfilling the image of modernity.

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