



THE CENTER & CLARK NEWSLETTER

UCLA CENTER FOR 17TH- & 18TH-CENTURY STUDIES
WILLIAM ANDREWS CLARK MEMORIAL LIBRARY

NUMBER 33

SPRING 1999



Frontispiece to François Peyrard, *De la nature et de ses lois* (Paris, 1793)

History of Women and Related Collections

The Clark Library has acquired two related collections of books concerning the history of women and sexuality. The first, and the larger one, consists of some 260 titles, the vast majority in French, from the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries: books by women writers and books on issues related to the history of women, from marriage and divorce, to childbirth and child rearing, convents, domestic duty and conduct, as well as general history, such as a translation of William Alexander's *History of Women* published in Paris in 1794. The second, smaller collection focuses on sexuality and cognate subjects such as marriage, polygamy, and prostitution as well as

erotica per se. These sixty-odd books are mostly in European languages, predominantly French, Latin, and German, although a copy of Richard Payne Knight's well-known *An Account of the Remains of the Worship of Priapus* (1786) is included.

Both of these collections were built by antiquarian booksellers, the first by a Paris dealer who put together a collection on *l'histoire des femmes* that ranged from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries and consisted of a thousand volumes. (The nineteenth- and twentieth-century books were acquired by UCLA as well and are divided between the Young Research Library and the Biomedical Library.) This collection usefully expands the Clark's holdings of early modern English books by and about women into a European context. Among the earliest books present is a so-called *canard*, or false report, printed in 1580, of the rape and murder by three Spanish soldiers of a young Flemish girl (*Cruauté plus que barbare et inhumaine de trois soldats espagnols*). Seventeenth-century books of especial interest in the collection include *Les conseils d'Ariste à Célimène, ou la conduite des actions de la vie humaine* (1686), with a contemporary ownership inscription by a woman; Johann Georg Brem's *De frigusculo* (1678), a very early text on frigidity; Claude Brunet's *Traité raisonné sur la structure des organes des deux sexes* (1696); Johan Christianus Eichorn's *De incestu* (1662); and François Mauriceau's *Observations sur la grossesse et l'accouchement des femmes* (1695).

The collection is richest in eighteenth-century imprints and was broadly enough conceived to include unexpected titles such as Mercier's *Les tableaux de Paris* (1781, in a contemporary binding) and Crébillon's *Lettres de la Marquise de M*** au Comte de R**** (1735), as well as French translations of works by Helen Maria Williams and Mary Wollstonecraft. Literary works by women writers such as Madame de Genlis and Madeleine de Scudéry are present, though the majority of the collection is devoted to nonliterary books. Interesting eighteenth-century titles include, for example, a French translation of Mademoiselle Agnesi's work on the calculus, *Traité élémentaire de calcul différentiel et de calcul intégral* (1775); a nonce volume containing Bienville's *La nymphomanie, ou traité de la fureur utérine* (1771) together with the third edition of Tissot's *L'Onanisme* (1764); Coltell's *L'Art de faire des garçons* (1787), the last chapter of which discusses pleasure in a manner unusually frank for the period; Louis Pierre Longue's *Les princesses malabares, ou le célibat philosophique* (1734), with a typically ingenious false imprint ("Andrinople, chez Thomas Franco"); and Rostaing de Saint-Jory's political allegory *Les femmes militaires, relation historique d'une isle nouvellement découverte* (1750). (The same author's *Les galanteries anglaises*, 1700, forms part of the other collection recently acquired, described below.)

The second collection was formed by the Los Angeles antiquarian bookseller Bennett Gilbert and consists of sixty-nine works in sixty-three volumes, all devoted to the history of sexuality broadly understood. Most of the books are seventeenth- and eighteenth-century, although there are a few published in the early nineteenth century and one in the sixteenth. A few of the books, including a mid-eighteenth-century manuscript of Aretino's *Dubbi amorosi*, are European erotica pure and simple, and none of these is at all common on the market. Examples include *Maitresses de toute qualité à louer* (c. 1750) and *Cupidon dans le bain* (1698), both (unsurprisingly) anonymous; Bodelon's oddly titled *Supplément de tasse rouzi friou titave* (1713) about the benefits to husbands of punishing their wives; and the first Latin edition of part of Aretino's *Ragionamenti*, published in Frankfurt in 1623 as *Pornodidascalus*. A few of these books have ingenious imprints meant to keep their printers' identities secret, such as the wonderful "Erotopolis: Chez le Dieu Harpocrates, à l'Enseigne de la Nuit, L'An du Monde 7746" found on a book entitled *Code de Cythère, ou lit de justice d'amour* issued in 1746 (not 7746, of course). But the collection also includes works on medicine (Le Roy's *Du devoir des mères*, 1675, on conception, birth, and infant care), polygamy (Lyser's *Discursus de polygamia*, 1673, and other works), prostitution (a rare French *arrêt* of 1756 as well as the *Code . . . sur les lieux de prostitutions* of 1775), virginity (*Réflexions chrétiennes sur la virginité* by C. C. Proust, 1693), and other subjects.

These two rich and interesting collections nicely complement each other and give the Clark a firm beginning to expanding its holdings of works relating to the history of women from its core holdings of English books of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The European context of printed books by and relating to women in the early modern period represents a new development for the Clark, but one which can only add to the richness and usefulness to scholars of the Library's existing collection.

BRUCE WHITEMAN
Head Librarian

Fellows' Research on the Fin de Siècle

[The following articles were contributed by the Ahmanson-Getty fellows who participated in this year's core program, "Oscar Wilde and the Culture of the Fin de Siècle."]

I - Wilde's *Woman's World* and Late Victorian Cultural Philanthropy

By DIANA MALTZ, *Southern Oregon University*

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), upon hearing a dinner guest gravely observe that "the East End is a very important problem," Lord Henry Wotton replies, "Quite so, it is the problem of slavery, and we try to solve it by amusing the slaves." Wilde restates the idea a year later in his essay "The Soul of Man under Socialism," when he censures "a very advanced school" that tries to "solve the problem of poverty . . . by amusing the poor." In his fierce attack on "amusements," or free

cultural activities, for the working classes, Wilde targets the efforts of "missionary aesthetes" who worked to provide free concerts, playgrounds, and public gardens in poor neighborhoods, lobbied for extended museum and gallery hours on Sundays, and encouraged artists to open their studios to the poor. Disciples of Ruskin, missionary aesthetes believed that exposure to art and to bourgeois manners would "elevate" the poor and inculcate habits of self-regulation. These aesthetes' faith in "personal influence" through friendships with the poor betrays their desire for control over them. Wilde felt that charitable gifts degrade not only their recipient, but their bestower; pride and intransigence fall under the "multitude of sins" that he claimed charity created. He further recoiled from philanthropists' assumption that palliatives were sufficient responses to poverty: "It is immoral to use private property in order to alleviate the horrible evils that result from the institution of private property."

It is odd then that during his editorship of the *Woman's World* from 1887 through 1889, just prior to writing *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and "The Soul of Man," Wilde solicited work from central missionary aesthetes of the 1880s. These included the founders of the Toynbee Hall university settlement Samuel and Henrietta Barnett, the painter G. F. Watts, whose work adorned Toynbee Hall, the artist Walter Crane, and the leaders of the Open Spaces movement the Earl of Meath and Lady Meath. This community underpins the first volume of the *Woman's World*, from Walter Crane's frontispiece in the first issue to Wilde's commendation in his editor's notes of student sonnets inspired by a Watts painting. Here Wilde also praises the work of the Popular Musical Union, a society providing free concerts in the East End, whose treasurer was Samuel Barnett.

Wilde recognized that his magazine was catering to a middle-class female readership whose opportunities for entering the public sphere lay primarily in voluntarism. In the years of the new journal's inception and publication, economic crises among underemployed and sweated laborers of London's East End were played out on the streets—in socialist marches through the wealthy West End in 1886, in the police repression of working-class demonstrators on Bloody Sunday in 1887, and in the dramatic strikes of dockworkers and matchgirls in 1888 and 1889. Far from retreating, middle-class women established women's university settlements in East London so that they could live among the poor; they contributed to the People's Palace, the cultural center founded in 1887; and they worked as investigators for Charles Booth's massive social survey, *Life and Labour of the People of London*, which traced the root causes of urban poverty. By the late 1880s, women's philanthropy constituted a vast network that included female district visitors, rent collectors, district nurses, and poor law guardians.

Holding to Wilde's editorial promise to address "everything that is likely to be of interest to Englishwomen," the *Woman's World* featured essays not merely on middle-class women's aspirations towards university education and professional employment but also on the struggles of poor needlewomen, Irish weavers, French lacemakers, London dressmakers, and those temporary female laborers who take whatever work is seasonally available: makers of matchboxes, jam, fans. Harriet Brooke

Davies, Clementina Black, and Ellen Joyce penetrated sweatshops and calculated the difficulties of living by piecework—"slavery on 3-6 shillings a week," semi-starvation, insufficient clothing, unhealthy air—and explained to their readers the elementary economics of the division of labor, the problem of a workforce glutted by cheap foreign labor, the need to eliminate sweating and the middleman, and the need to teach women how to combine into unions and cooperatives. In her essay, "The Children of a Great City," Lady Jeune refers to the cry of homeless children, no doubt a play on the title of Andrew Mearns's sensationalistic pamphlet of four years before, "The Bitter Cry of Outcast London," whose notorious accounts of the hungry and homeless mobilized armies of philanthropic men and women.



"Overdoing It," George Du Maurier's satire on fashionable philanthropy (*Punch*, 22 December 1883). The departing guests are about to visit "a dear little Slum . . . near the Minories . . . a fearful place!" They are wearing Mackintoshes, one of the ladies explains, "to keep out Infection . . . and hide one's Diamonds, and all that!"

Missionary aesthetes, including those writing for the *Woman's World*, rarely challenged the economic status quo; few were socialists. Most adhered to the tenets of the Charity Organization Society, a clearinghouse founded to discourage indiscriminate almsgiving by distinguishing deserving recipients from nondeserving ones. In her essay, Lady Jeune explains the way philanthropic machinery works to give poor children the guidance that their inept, often drunken, parents cannot provide, and to offer a refuge from those parents. Ideally, social reformers can instill a strong desire among the young for "lives higher, purer, and happier than those of the people they see around them."

The articles Wilde solicited for the *Woman's World* seem to illustrate his ambivalence about his obligation to satisfy the desires of his readership in the face of his own growing skepticism. Offsetting well-meaning essays on ragged children and female underemployment, Walter Pater's ideal "intensity" and Wilde's ideal idleness make fleeting appearances throughout the *Woman's World*. We see moments of irreverence and rebellion. In a piece simply entitled, "Hurry," Janet Hogarth laments, "This can be said to be the Age of Societies":

[We] lose a vast amount of pleasure by not knowing how to take life lightly, and by being absolutely incapable of appreciating the greatest of all enjoyments commonly called "doing nothing," but as interpreted by the initiated, "dreaming." After all, in spite of its paradox, there is a great deal to be said for the poet's "why should he do anything? Is it not enough to exist beautifully?" or to pass from the fanciful to the sublime, for Mr. Pater's notion of the complete self-surrender of an artistic nature to the pleasurable influences of the moment . . . [is] indeed a counsel of Perfection.

We learn in another article of the proposal at Newnham College for a "Society for the Cultivation of Graceful Leisure"—a society for doing nothing, for "existing beautifully"—which is vetoed out of existence by the more straitlaced student majority. But the most iconoclastic and complex entry is M. R. Lacey's "A Plea for the Indifferent." Beginning as a defense of those "stretched at their ease by the wayside of life . . . who cannot go with the strong tide that is setting towards excitement and earnestness and noise and talk and altruism," it ends by rewriting indifference into an alternative, individualized kind of social action and accusing committees of compulsory conformity. In this way, Lacey seems to anticipate Wilde's argument in "The Soul of Man" that while "Father Damien was Christlike when he went out to live with the lepers . . . he was not more Christlike than Wagner when he realised his soul in music; or than Shelley when he realised his soul in song. There is no one type for man." Nor for woman, Lacey seems to suggest. It may not be too far a stretch to say that the oppositional voices Wilde encountered as editor of the *Woman's World* lay the groundwork for "The Soul of Man" and that his attacks there on missionary aestheticism and discriminate almsgiving are replies he permitted himself only once free of the magazine and his position as editor.

II - The Importance of Recognizing Oscar: The Dandy and the Culture of Celebrity

By LISA HAMILTON, *Harvard University*

Oscar Wilde, one might argue, was a failure as dandy. Dandyism was characterized by understatement and subtlety, but Wilde reworked its conditions so thoroughly as to transform it into an entirely different phenomenon. It isn't that he misunderstood dandyism. Wilde's genius was to market his exclusive style to the public, but in his shrewd transformation of the dandy persona into a marketable commodity he negated its very essence. By stripping away the inherent self-effacement of the dandy, Wilde became an instantly recognizable celebrity, a cultural icon who stood for something both more than, and less than, himself. This recognizability stood in stark contrast to the earliest embodiment of the dandy aesthetic by such men as Beau Brummel, whose essence is described by the French dandy Jules Barbey D'Aureville as an ineffable and intellectual influence. Brummel's genius, Barbey D'Aureville argued, lay in the sublimation of his personality and his body into the ideal of the dandy: "To be well-dressed, one must not be noticeable."

Wilde's abject failure at not being noticeable not only makes him a bad dandy, as dandyism was traditionally constructed, but casts him as the prototype of a new kind of spectacular self. In effect, Wilde created the modern category of celebrity and established the conditions under which celebrity would be evaluated after him. Celebrities have scandals, trials, and tortured personal lives that become public spectacles. They are famous for being famous, briefly. But one of the less discussed aspects of celebrity after Wilde is its component of immediate physical recognizability. His face, his body, and his clothing all became distinctive stylistic hallmarks that were instantly attributable to him. Even before the widespread use of photographs in publications, the frequency of the reproduction of the figure of Wilde by satirists and caricaturists is remarkable.

The emphasis on Wilde's instant recognizability and iconicity is appropriate also in the light of his published thoughts about spectatorship. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Dorian—like the dandy on whom he is modeled, Des Esseintes in Joris-Karl Huysmans's *A Rebours*—is transformed into the spectator of his own life. In erasing the distinction between the self and the work of art both in his life and in his fiction, Wilde created a dandy persona that represented a performed version of the self, a carefully constructed spectacle that replaced any sense of an authentic identity. These are the fundamental conditions out of which celebrity can arise.

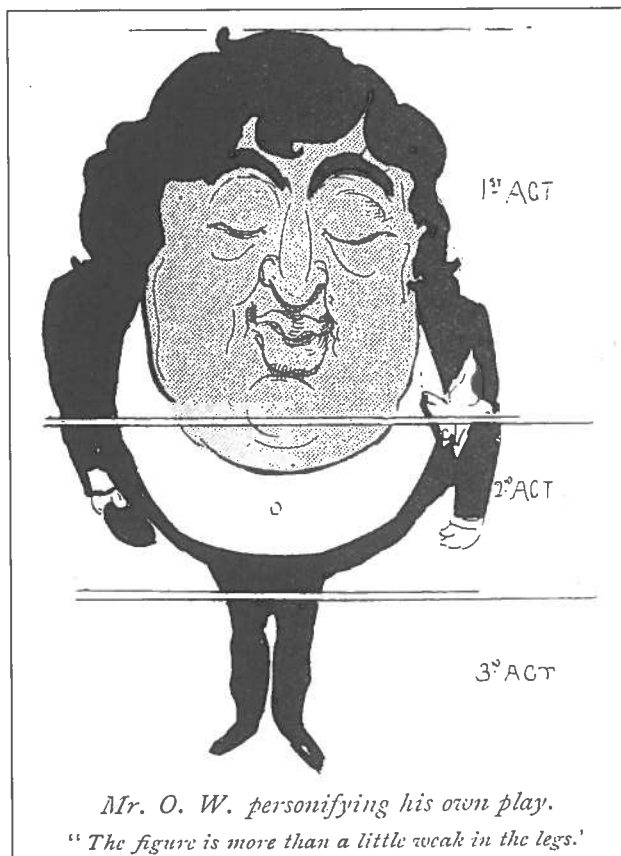
The Clark Library's extensive collection of photographs, drawings, and caricatures underscores the ubiquity of Wilde's

presence in the media and the eclipse of his art by his person. Most of these representations of Wilde in the popular press portray him as the embodiment of the effeminate aesthete, dressed in velvet knickers and carrying a sunflower or lily. Gradually, the man replaced the movement in the public consciousness; Wilde became not only its spokesperson but also its central figure, its emblem. This exploitation of the collapse of the distinction between the artist and the work of art substituted Wilde's corporeal presence for his body of work. While graphic satire often utilizes this technique of substitution, its use in the case of Wilde is notable for the extent of the substitution of his art with the grotesquely or satirically depicted artist, to the point at which the art itself disappeared behind the portrait of the artist.

Regenia Gagnier's influential study of the connections between aestheticism and popular culture emphasizes the growing influence of advertisements and the culture of consumption in the fin de siècle. Gagnier notes that Wilde's trip to America in 1882 marked the transformative moment in Wilde's reception as an object of consumption. Throughout that trip, designed partly as a promotional tour for Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera *Patience*, Wilde was contractually obligated to appear in "aesthetic" costume. A. J. A. Symons, in an unpublished essay, describes Oscar's lavender trousers and patent leather boots as "a wardrobe calculated to surprise Americans, or, indeed, anyone." Symons theorizes that the "calculation" of Wilde's public appearances, at which he was "received as a celebrity by reporters and interviewers," transformed the young man from a callous youth to a shrewd promoter of himself and his ideas. The circus-like atmosphere of the American tour that Symons believed forever changed Wilde is underscored by Symons's quotation of a letter from Swinburne that compared the publicity for the American lecture tour to the marketing schemes that promoted "Mr. Barnum and his Jumbo's [*sic*]" in London.

Wilde's collusion in the marketing of his own person operated in tandem with, and perhaps even facilitated, the media's portrayal of him as both an icon and a somatic figure that manifested the culture's anxieties about sexuality and race. Upon his return to England, Wilde's increasing success as a dramatist was answered by an unusual level of attention to his body and his person, as much as to his work. In an illustration from 1895, Wilde's body literally substitutes for his comedy *The Importance of Being Earnest*. The play, criticized in an accompanying article, "Mr. Oscar Wilde Again" (*Lika Joko*, 23 February 1895), for being "weak in the legs" (i.e. having a weak third act), is represented by a bloated figure with tiny legs. Captioned "Mr. O.W. personifying his own play," the drawing presents us with the recognizable figure of Wilde, but one that draws upon all the parodies of Wilde that have preceded it. Wilde is depicted as both mincing and corpulent, the effeminacy of his "weak" legs suggesting the gender crisis of the fin de siècle and the grotesque features pointing to the weak-willed self-indulgence of both the artist and the Irishman.

Over the course of the 1880s and early 1890s, Wilde's body became a palimpsest on which cultural anxieties about Irishness, artists, effeminate men, aesthetes, decadence, and cultural decay were written and rewritten. Wilde's recognizability was



Caricature accompanying a review of *The Importance of Being Earnest* (*Lika Joko*, 23 February 1895)

magnified by this obsessive focus on him as a broad and easy target. His distinctive appearance in caricatures both generated and was fed by the familiarity and recognizability that are the primary attributes of modern celebrity. The culture of fin-de-siècle consumption fused with the anxieties about degeneration and decadence that Wilde appeared to represent, and this fusion produced in popular representations of him that curious sort of tribute known as fame.

III - "Mademoiselle Baudelaire"

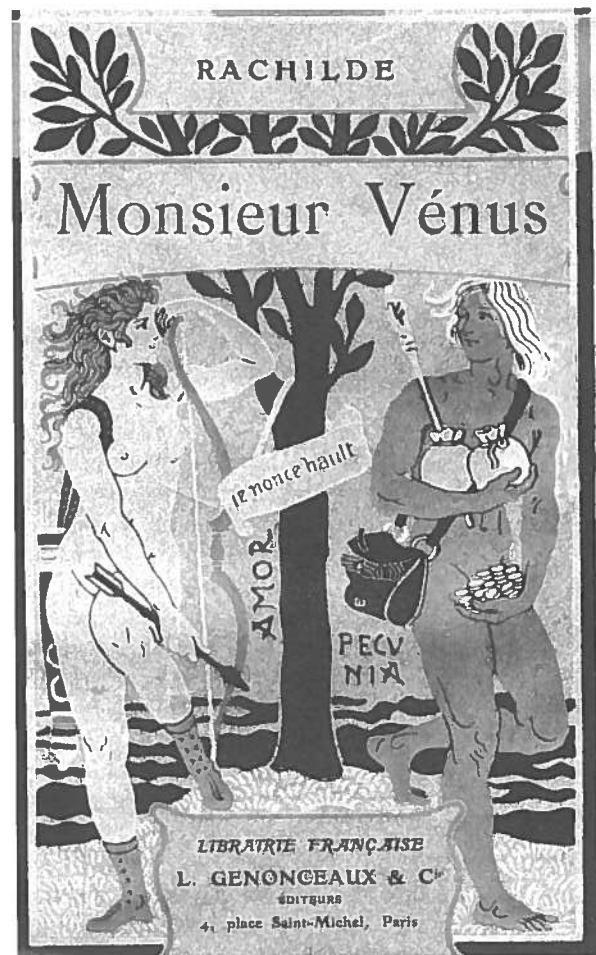
ELIZABETH E. COVINGTON, *UCLA*

Marguerite Eymery (1860–1953) spent her lonely childhood playing soldiers with peasant children and reading books on her family's estate in southwestern France. By age fifteen she had exhausted the contents of her grandfather's three-thousand-volume library, which included classics by Voltaire and Alexandre Dumas père, but more significantly, the Marquis de Sade. She turned from voracious reading to "frenzied" writing, by candlelight in her room, to avoid parental disapproval. Soon she began publishing short stories in local newspapers under the nom de plume Rachilde, an identity which later brought her both renown and infamy as the only woman novelist among the group of fin-de-siècle French writers known as decadents and symbolists.

Funded by a small inheritance, Rachilde moved to Paris. She cropped her hair and wore men's clothing, roaming about the city unhindered by skirts, corsets, and high heels. Since the seventeenth century, the use of men's apparel by women had required formal permission from the authorities, but only a handful of women, the actress Sarah Bernhardt among them, had dared to seek it. When the police refused Rachilde's request, she went about Paris in drag anyway, passing out calling cards bearing the inscription "Rachilde, Man of Letters." She explained, "I desire to dress as a man . . . so that it will be well understood that I'm a writer, and that all speak to my pen rather than my person."

Until her death at the age of ninety-three, Rachilde produced fantastical and imaginative novels, plays, and short stories which earned her a loyal readership as well as notoriety. Admirers dubbed her "Mademoiselle Baudelaire" and "Queen of the Decadents," while detractors derided her as a pornographer and monster. Rachilde's radically independent stance reaches back to late-eighteenth-century and early-nineteenth-century ideals of the Enlightened will and of the Romantic hero, and despite her pointed rejection of feminism, it reaches forward to the era of women's emancipation. Rachilde is one of those women who defied the conventions of the "eternal feminine" and thereby refused to conform to the definition of womanhood prevalent in fin-de-siècle French society.

Rachilde married Alfred Vallette in 1889, and the next year the couple founded the review *Mercure de France* and a publishing house of the same name. Rachilde published over fifty novels while tending to the *Mercure* book review column. For half a century, she also presided over one of the last French literary salons. "Madame Mercure," as she was called, helped



Cover of the 1899 edition of *Monsieur Vénus* (Clark Library copy)

launch the careers of other French artists, including the founder of absurdist drama, Alfred Jarry, and the novelist Colette.

Rachilde called her philosophy "the deformation of nature" and her politics "anarchical." Her avant-garde theatrics included public shouting matches and the creation of titillating books like *Monsieur Vénus* (1884), which catapulted her to fame. This novel recounts the amorous adventures of a virile young aristocrat named Raoule who, despite her male name, is a woman. Raoule fences with gentlemen, shoots pistols, professes her disgust for Catholicism, and reads pornography. Most shockingly, she refuses to produce children for what she calls her "dying race." *Monsieur Vénus* and succeeding novels like *La Marquise de Sade* (1886) and *L'Animale* (The female animal, 1892) are rife with provocative and confused sexual imagery.

By suggesting alternatives to the codes of chastity and virtue governing women's behavior, Rachilde promoted gender ambiguity. Her books tapped into a general fin-de-siècle anxiety concerning the boundaries of femininity and masculinity. Indeed, the French censors had all copies of *Monsieur Vénus* seized in 1884, accusing their author of twelve counts of "moral outrage," among them the creation of a "new vice." Unperturbed, Rachilde proclaimed, "I am the androgyne of letters," thereby positing the end of definite sexual difference. She then went on to reject new medical and scientific diagnoses of "aberrant" behaviors such as homoerotic desire.

Enter Oscar Wilde, who, according to Marc-André Rafalovich, had been “seized by an actual cerebral fever after having read *Monsieur Vénus*, and spoke of it with an admiring poetic ardor.” Apparently inspired by the reversed sexual roles and hints of “sexual inversion” in the book, Wilde came to Rachilde’s salon during his residence in Paris for the writing of the play *Salomé*. Wilde was shocked when introduced to a youthful girl of slight stature but quickly recognized the author of *Monsieur Vénus* in her theatrical bravado and witty, animated conversation.

Wilde came to Rachilde’s *Mercur* salon several times. When he was sentenced to Reading Gaol for engaging in “gross indecencies,” Rachilde published “Questions brûlantes” (Burning questions) in *La Revue Blanche*, deriding hypocritical bourgeois morality. While her fellow Frenchmen and women were debating the Dreyfus affair, Rachilde wrote about the persecution of sexual aberration. In fact, Rachilde and her three closest friends, Paul Verlaine, Alfred Jarry, and Jean Lorrain, were reputed to be *invertis* and *Uranistes*, the French and German sexual terms for what we now refer to as homosexuals. While the French literati had welcomed Wilde during his numerous sojourns in Paris, many men had turned on him by the time of his trial in 1895. They wrote newspaper columns listing just who had welcomed him during his lengthy stays in Paris and describing just how this welcome had been expressed. Some writers even challenged the men who had dared associate their names with Wilde’s to duels. A petition circulated in Wilde’s defense found no one brave enough to sign.

“Questions brûlantes” was, in this charged atmosphere, a courageous attempt to proclaim the right to express same-sex love. Protecting those who had been attacked for immorality and aberrant inclinations was Rachilde’s one overtly political stance. Rachilde couched her opinions within the rhetoric of “idealized” Platonic love that Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas had also used. At the same time, she directed an acerbic commentary at the hypocritical bourgeois double standard that punished male homoeroticism while tolerating Sapphism (lesbian sexual activity) because it stimulated male spectators.

Rachilde followed this article with more bald-faced advocacy of sexual freedom in the novel *Les hors nature* (Those beyond nature, 1898), the title of which was an easily recognized cliché for sexual inversion. This story concerned a very masculine French chemist who desired his own half brother. This chemist bemoans the disastrous consequences of medical diagnoses:

Doctors’ professional secrets? I know them by heart! They teach courses in the clinic classifying emotions and feelings, where they grab them with their forceps and apply obscene labels to them. . . . Neurosis, monomania? They exist only when a creature is forced to deviate from its path.

The rash author of *Monsieur Vénus* had reveled in the liberation of individuals to pursue sexual gratification, inverted or otherwise, as well as freedom from Catholic codes of conduct. Yet because Rachilde had to grapple with the unspoken bias that authorship was a man’s prerogative, she never became fully emancipated from some of the very codes of conduct to which she objected. The curious imagery she invoked to describe her

own existence as a woman writer reflects this discomfort: she called herself a “dog of letters,” a “werewolf,” and a member of the “third sex.”

An ambivalence in Rachilde’s public pose became apparent in the early decades of the twentieth century. In 1918, for example, Rachilde published an article titled “Oscar Wilde et lui,” disclaiming any previous associations with Lord Alfred Douglas. A classic bourgeois retraction, it counseled that “De Profundis” should be burned for the sake of Wilde’s future granddaughters, rather than preserved for their humiliation. Yet a few years later she claimed, “there are two sexes and I believe that there’s even a third . . . that is all the glory of the one who invents it.” So mercurial as to be maddening, “Mademoiselle Baudelaire” tantalizes her readers, smudging the lines that separate her decadent posing from heartfelt desire. The two positions, of course, are not mutually exclusive; the mystery lies in their boundaries.

IV - Icons in the Public Sphere: Disciplining New Women’s Desires with Advertising Posters

By RUTH E. ISKIN, *University of British Columbia*

My current project, which grew out of an earlier study on impressionism, consumer culture, and modern women (see “Selling, Seduction, and Soliciting the Eye: Manet’s Bar at the



Poster by Francisco Tamango, *La Framboisette*, ca. 1905. Courtesy of the Wine Spectator Collection, New York.

Folies-Bergère," *Art Bulletin*, March 1995), investigates fin-de-siècle advertising posters within the context of modernity's visual culture. Many fin-de-siècle posters feature women enjoying themselves in the public spaces of modernity despite the Victorian doctrine of separate spheres, which limited them to the private sphere. While women were expected to dedicate themselves to domestic responsibilities and to have no desires of their own, advertising posters portray them enjoying a variety of activities outside the home. Linking women primarily with contemporary public spaces of consumption rather than with private spaces of domesticity, posters portray these fin-de-siècle women as fashionable, attractive, and often sexy. They are shown actively participating in modern life, traveling, frequenting places of entertainment and recreation, and engaging in a variety of sports. Because this poster iconography does not adhere to the prescribed Victorian doctrines, I find it necessary to reconsider some earlier influential feminist theories (developed primarily in film studies), which argued that women were represented as objects of masculine desire but not as subjects with desires. Contrary to these twentieth-century feminist theories, and contrary to nineteenth-century doctrines, many fin-de-siècle posters do represent women as subjects with desires, as women pursuing pleasure.

Posters introduced this new iconic vocabulary during a period when the dominant ideology, which limited women's activities to the domestic sphere, was being contested in fin-de-siècle periodicals, in *New Woman* novels, and through feminist activities. The flowering of posters in the 1890s occurred in the decade in which the term *New Woman* was coined in the press and in the period when advocates were calling for a widening of women's spheres to include work and leisure activities outside the home. Given this historical context, how are we to interpret fin-de-siècle advertising posters? Are they merely exploitative and ultimately limiting, or do many of them update outmoded middle-class strictures on femininity and transgress Victorian restraints? The following analysis of Francisco Tamango's poster *La Framboisette* (ca. 1905) demonstrates some of these issues.

The poster depicts a modern, fashionably attired woman seated in a train-station restaurant drinking the sweet liqueur *La Framboisette*. Beside her stands the opened bottle, and throughout the poster, the liqueur's brand name is repeatedly displayed: it appears on the bottle, in an advertisement on the door, on the train schedule, and even on the match holder. Furthermore, it crowns the poster: "*La Framboisette*" is spelled out in large red letters suggesting that the sexy woman below is presented under its auspices. Smiling knowingly, the woman raises the glass filled with the reddish liqueur to her lipstick-colored lips, flaunting her sense of pleasure while ignoring the commotion around her. The sign on the left announces that the stop is a three-minute one; the train is about to depart and the conductor is ringing the bell to no avail; the porter behind him is gesturing wildly and holding the whistle he must have just blown to get her attention. The engineer is ready to take off, and the three smiling men inside the train are also waiting. Everyone is staring at the woman expectantly. Oblivious to them all and to the pressures of set schedules, this traveler sipping her *Framboisette* continues savoring her pleasure.

On the one hand, this poster offers an image of a stereotype, a woman as a leisurely consumer in contrast to the working men who are fulfilling productive roles. On the other hand, it features a woman who is transgressing accepted gender roles: she is occupying a public space with extravagant ease. Her pose suggests the abandon of slight intoxication. Casting a flirtatious knowing glance, she solicits the spectators' attentions with a mischievous wink and addresses them seductively. While trains and train stations have long been recognized as emblems of nineteenth-century modernity, this icon of a woman consumer's pleasures presents another side of modernity. The poster targets women primarily as consumers of the sweet liqueur, and thus is designed to stimulate their desire for the drink, and for emulating the fashionable female icon. Promising uninhibited pleasures, it suggests that a state of bliss and seductive powers can be acquired by purchasing consumer products such as this one. The woman's ambiguous class status allows her image to appeal to any potential consumer. Her flamboyant hat, flowing scarf, ultrafashionable appearance, and leisurely manner all suggest that her financial means are much greater than those of a working-class woman. Yet her free behavior in public far exceeds what at the time would have been considered appropriate for middle- or upper-middle-class women. This image implicitly promotes a range of new freedoms for women beyond the obvious one of having a drink in a restaurant—the pleasures associated with travel, independence, and sociability in public spaces. But by linking alcohol consumption with these freedoms, seductive advertising icons such as this one discipline the *New Woman's* desires for participating in a wider sphere by channeling these desires into acts of consumption.

Consumer spaces portrayed in fin-de-siècle posters such as Tamango's are a far cry from the public sphere of rational debate in the literary cafés which Jürgen Habermas, speaking of the eighteenth century, outlines in his seminal work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Late nineteenth-century consumer culture constitutes a different kind of public sphere in which mass media in general, and advertising in particular, aim to influence public opinion and behavior. In modernity's consumer-oriented public sphere, advertising posters like *La Framboisette* act as iconic persuasions related to relevant cultural debates of the time, including those about the *New Woman*. Of course, advertising disseminates such icons into the public sphere for its own ends, mobilizing cultural complicities and contestations to sell products, but in the process its icons exert a wider influence—shaping social spaces by disciplining desires and identities.

The Center & Clark Newsletter is published by

The UCLA Center for 17th- & 18th-Century Studies
405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90095-1404
Telephone: (310) 206-8552; fax: (310) 206-8577
Internet: <http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/c1718cs>

The William Andrews Clark Memorial Library
2520 Cimarron Street, Los Angeles, California 90018-2098
Telephone: (323) 731-8529 or 735-7605; fax: (323) 731-8617
Internet: <http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/clarklib>

Editors: Marina Romani and Ellen Wilson

Donor Activities

Two programs held at the Clark this spring were dedicated to the members of our Director's Advisory Council, the Center and the Clark's primary group of supporters, as well as to fundraising. On 6 March, a staged reading of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* was presented at the Library. After dinner, served on the north lawn, a group of prominent actors brought together by John Lithgow gave a stunning reading of the play to a full, and fully delighted, house. Mr. Lithgow and Angela Lansbury headed the cast, which also consisted of Keene Curtis, David Dukes, Alex Kingston, Miriam Margolyes, Debra Messing, and Paxton Whitehead. We are immensely grateful to all the talented performers who so generously gave of their time to support us in our work.



Peter Reill and John Lithgow at dinner, before the staged reading of Earnest

As the newsletter was going to press, the Clark was preparing to host, on 23 May, its second annual "Afternoon of Acquisitions," an event designed to raise money for the Library's book fund. Some thirty-eight items acquired over the past year were

being placed on exhibition, and guests would be encouraged to adopt books, manuscripts, or artworks of their choice by contributing to the fund the cost of their particular selections. Materials from all three of the Library's major collecting areas were represented: the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the fin de siècle, and fine printing and the graphic arts. The range was indeed striking, with titles like James Hodgson's *The Theory of Jupiter's Satellites* (London, 1749); an Italian translation of Alexander Pope's *Eclogues*, with several fine engravings (1764); the typescript of a book by Stuart Mason about the Oscar Wilde trials (1912); a wood engraving by Eric Gill (1928); and *Pina-kotheca Hamptoniana* (London, 1720), a stunning book of engravings of the Raphael cartoons at Hampton Court. The afternoon, which was to include a program as well as refreshments, was organized by a committee of volunteers chaired by Gayle Samore, an involved and valued member of the Advisory Council. The event was underwritten by the Union Bank of California and the Southern California Chapter of the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America.

The Director's Advisory Council welcomes inquiries from potential members. Those interested are invited to contact Lori Stein at the Center (310-206-8552).

Bruman Summer Concerts

Chamber music will again be heard on the UCLA campus this summer. The Henry J. Bruman Summer Chamber Music Festival, by now a campus tradition, will consist of six one-hour concerts, held at Korn Hall in the Anderson Complex, at 1 P.M. on Mondays and Thursdays in July and August. Ensembles scheduled to perform are the St. Petersburg String Quartet (19 July), the Cypress String Quartet (22 July), the Armadillo Quartet (26 July), Young Artists International (29 July), Musica Angelica (2 August), and the Debussy Trio (5 August). Admission is free of charge, and no tickets are required. Program details will be announced in June. The festival is made possible by the Henry J. Bruman Trust and is arranged with the support of the Center for 17th- and 18th-Century Studies.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES
CENTER FOR 17TH- AND 18TH-CENTURY STUDIES
WILLIAM ANDREWS CLARK MEMORIAL LIBRARY
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90095-1404

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
UCLA