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PAINTING VERSUS PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE ROMANCE OF A SHOP AND CAPTURING THE NEW WOMAN THROUGH A MECHANICAL LENS

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PAINTING VERSUS PHOTOGRAPHY IN *THE ROMANCE OF A SHOP* AND
CAPTURING THE NEW WOMAN THROUGH A MECHANICAL LENS

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
English

by
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May 2015

Accepted by:
Dr. David Coombs, Committee Chair
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ABSTRACT

Majority of Amy Levy's scholarship is predominantly focused on her Jewish identity and its relationship to her novel *Ruben Sachs*. Importantly, very little scholarship has been done on her novel *The Romance of a Shop*. Both Elizabeth Evans and Michael Kramp have discussed Levy's desire to create a place for professional women in the urban landscape. However, neither of these scholars have critically analyzed the New Woman and its connection to photography and painting, only briefly glancing at Lady Watergate's Post-mortem photograph. By ignoring this scene and the New Woman's connection to photography, they have missed the opportunity to see how Levy is able to create a voice for the New Woman.

I argue that in *The Romance of a Shop*, the relationship between photography and the New Woman becomes apparent by analyzing Darrell's painting of Phyllis and Gertrude's photographing of the deceased Lady Watergate and their different representations of female nature. These scenes show that the confrontation between painting and photography is due to the fact there is no specific artist in photography, whereas in painting there is a prevalent masculine artist's agency. Notably, the artist's imagination is constructed by the patriarchal archetypes of the Angel of the House and the Beloved. Crucially, Levy refused to allow her female characters to be these archetypes and eliminates the artist's agency over the female image through mechanical objectivity. When Gertrude photographs Lady Watergate, Gertrude becomes an image maker and ceases to be an archetype. She documents Watergate's realistic decaying state and through this process the ideal classification of the Beloved is destroyed, which

permits the spectator to see past the ideal female figure and see their own mortality. Levy eliminates the patriarchal archetypes of the Beloved and the Angel of the House.

Ultimately, through Gertrude's position as a photographer, Levy offers a new female position, which allows the New Woman to escape archetypal placement and enter the narrative of the image maker. When the New Woman becomes a photographer, she escapes the patriarchal gaze and ceases to be a distilled archetype.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family, Brenda Naciuk, Don Naciuk, and Marisa Naciuk. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. David Coombs, Dr. Erin Goss, and Dr. Kimberly Manganelli. Thank you for being there for me and always putting a smile on my face.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In Amy Levy's *The Romance of a Shop*, there is a rivalry between painting and photography, and this conflict is because of the scandalous New Woman figure. In the novel, the Lorimer sisters, Phyllis, Gertrude, Frances, and Lucy open a photography studio after their father's death in order to gain financial security. Significantly, the sisters use this new form of mechanical labor in order to enter the public sphere and gain independence. By connecting photography with female independence and the New Woman, Levy breaks the boundaries of the public and private spheres. The relationship between photography and the New Woman becomes apparent with painting's and photography's different representations of femininity. To demonstrate this connection, I will be focusing on two key scenes within the novel: when Darrell paints Phyllis and when Gertrude photographs the deceased Lady Watergate. These scenes show that the confrontation between painting and photography is due to the fact there is no specific artist in photography, whereas in painting there is a prevalent masculine artist's agency, which is connected to the patriarchal system.

In painting, the female image is defined by the masculine artist's imagination. His imagination and cultural notions are explicitly tied to the patriarchal archetypes of the Angel of the House, the ideal wife and moral guide, and the Beloved, the seductive siren and ideal Renaissance beauty. In the novel, these unrealistic female classifications transform women into ideal aesthetic figures. For this reason, when Darrell paints Phyllis, he imagines and constructs her as the Beloved. However, the patriarchal vision does not

exist in photography's Post-mortem genre. Instead, it is replaced by mechanical objectivity: letting nature speak for itself through mechanical reproduction. Ultimately, the camera offers freedom from will, eliminating the artists' agency and their vision of nature. Through mechanical objectivity, Levy is able to eliminate the artist's agency over the female image. When Gertrude photographs Lady Watergate, Gertrude ceases to be an archetype and instead becomes an image maker. Notably, Gertrude does not capture the "ideal" female image, but rather documents Watergate's realistic decaying state. Due to this gesture towards death, the ideal classification of the Beloved is destroyed, which permits the spectator to see past the ideal female figure and recognize their own mortality. Through Gertrude's position as a photographer, Levy offers a new female position linked to photo-realism and mechanical objectivity. Thus, Levy is able to eliminate the patriarchal archetypes of the Beloved and the Angel of the House, allowing the New Woman to escape archetypal placement and enter the narrative of the image maker.

CHAPTER TWO

THE EMERGENCE OF THE NEW WOMAN AND ITS CONNECTIONS TO PHOTOGRAPHY

In *The Romance of a Shop*, photography not only redefines the traditional vision of art, but it also redefines the female's position in Victorian society, connecting the idea of the New Woman with photography itself and mechanical labor. Traditionally, patriarchal Victorian society asserted that a woman's place was in the private, domestic sphere, whereas the man's place was in the public sphere. Therefore, it was concluded that women should not venture into the public sphere because it would morally corrupt them. Despite this moral danger, when the Lorimers' father, the primary patriarchal figure in the novel, dies the sisters are left in financial ruin and decide to open a photography business, which primarily documents art pieces. Notably, by producing these images, the sisters defy the barrier between the masculine public and feminine private. However, the sisters not only produce images for the marketplace, but also become spectacles themselves as women in business. By entering the public view, they become the ultimate spectacle, the New Woman. In this manner, photography becomes the occupation of the New Woman.

However, the New Woman was primarily a discursive figure, presenting an inconsistent identity. She both enacted a performance of passivity for the patriarchal system and a declaration of independence. According to Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst, "the New Woman entered the vocabulary as a popular term in 1894, in a pair of articles by Sarah Grand and 'Ouida' in the *North American Review*" (75). Through

regular appearances in periodical articles the New Woman became a familiar phrase. By the 1890s, the question of the New Woman became a cultural phenomenon, appearing as a fictional archetype in novels, short stories, newspapers, magazine articles, and plays. In many cases, the New Woman was either viewed as a savior, a monstrous abnormality, or a sexual deviant. Ledger and Luckhurst observe that the New Woman's opponents "represented her as , variously, a 'mannish,' overeducated bore [...], a bad mother [...], and lacking in all the attributes usually associated with ideal Victorian Womanhood" (75). The New Woman was presented by her opponents as a monster, an abnormality that would wreck the institutions of marriage and motherhood. They also referred to the New Woman as an "oversexed vamp," a sexual figure that would destroy the domestic sphere through her promiscuity (Ledger and Luckhurst 75). However, this figure was also recognizable by her independence, her education, and her ability to blur the boundaries between conventional male and female behavior (Yalom 268). Notably, Sarah Grand, Mona Caird, and Ella Hepworth, well known feminist writers, used the New Woman to discuss female suffrage, enacting a desire for independence. New Woman supporters dwelled on her independence, asserting the female's intelligence, sensitivity, and sexuality. Most importantly, these advocates lingered on how these sexual women had ambitions beyond motherhood (Ledger and Luckhurst 76). Even the supporters did not agree on the concepts of motherhood and sexual freedom, "whilst Egerton's short stories celebrate it, all of Grand's writings prohibits the same" (Ledger and Luckhurst 76). This passion for independence was often derailed by a performance of passivity and an

inability to agree on the terms of motherhood and sexual freedom, which made the New Woman's identity unclear.

Significantly, Gertrude embraces the figure of the New Woman by opening a photography studio, which creates an independent occupation for herself and her sisters, and liberates the female figure from the patriarchal ideal professions of the teacher and the governess. However, the Lorimer sisters have some reservations about opening a photography studio, which is publicly considered an unwomanly occupation. Initially, after their father's passing the sisters consider such respectable occupations as "teaching" and "governesses." However, Gertrude decides against these positions because collectively they would be at "a great disadvantage without certificates or training" and would be separated (Levy 54). To prevent this inevitable separation, Gertrude proposes a plan to make photographs. She insists to her sisters that they have "light and other things," necessary to create professional pictures. Also, she highlights the fact: "we should all keep together," presenting a female unity (Levy 54). Despite Gertrude's convincing appeal, the sisters are not in unanimous agreement. Fanny finds the idea appalling, proclaiming, "Oh Gertrude, need it come to that- to open a shop?" (Levy 54). Fanny, like her father and other patriarchs of the time, believes that opening a shop is not womanly behavior. The rest of the Lorimer sisters do not heed Fanny's warning and instead proceed with opening the photography studio. By performing this action, the sisters venture into the public sphere and expose themselves to the dangers of the New Woman.

It is through the Lorimer sisters' position as women in business that Levy exposes the hardships that New Women such as Type-Writer Girls experienced as they created a space for themselves in London. The Type-Writer Girl was a female who was both a profitable institution for comic papers and a convenience. She had the productivity of a machine, copying a manuscript at the rate of six annas a page (Keep 402). The Type-Writer Girl was considered a new species, a woman who enjoyed working for a living. In *The Romance of a Shop*, Gertrude uses this new wave of thought to persuade Fanny and her sisters to open a photography studio. She claims that opening a business is "progressive," "a creature capable of growth," and stresses that these qualities are what women's occupations are lacking (Levy 55). Gertrude recalls how other "female" occupations are "dull," referencing predominantly private occupations, such as the typical positions of teacher and governess. Gertrude creates a deliberate contrast between these female and male jobs. Surprisingly, these proto-typical positions changed dramatically in the latter half of the century. Near the end of the period, women entered public spaces through mechanical occupations, such as postal clerks, office workers, telegraphers, and type-writers. Significantly, women typists became associated with the collapse of the family structure. Christopher Keep argues, "women typists were felt in many quarters to presage the collapse of the family: lured away by the promises of an exciting life in business, they would abandon the sacred responsibilities of raising the new generation" (402). Society believed that these women would abandon their domestic responsibilities for the exciting life of business. In this process, the woman would "unsex" herself, endangering her femininity and the domestic sphere. By not confining themselves to

female occupations these women deliberately undermined the conventional patriarchal notions of the feminine. Keep observes that “Working among men, machines, and money was felt to diminish a woman’s innate sensitivity and moral superiority” (402). When women worked with men or machines it could only have unfortunate consequences and result in a lack of purity. However, the Type-Writer Girl was the face of the New Woman: she respected traditional feminine sensibilities, but also wanted both a career and independence.

The Lorimers, as business women, also desire both a career and independence. However, in the novel the patriarchal system seeks to domesticate the sisters by using advertisements to associate their female identity with their product, the photographs. This is similar to how the patriarchal system sought to domesticate the Type-Writer Girl by associating the machine with feminine traits. Early Victorian advertisements claimed: “The type-writer is especially adapted to feminine fingers. They seem to be made for type-writing. The type-writing involves no hard labor” (Keep 405). Through these advertisements, the Type-Writer Girl became a recognizable figure in magazines, novels, and the streets of London. Similarly, in the novel when a description of the Lorimers’ studio is written by an unauthorized person in one of the society papers, they also become public figures and this produces an increase in business. Notably, this advertisement generates false rumors, such as “that all the sisters were extremely beautiful, and that Sidney Darrell was painting them in a group for next year’s Academy” (Levy 135). These falsifications present the Lorimers’ position as women in business as a spectacle. Similarly, the Type-Writer Girl also became a spectacle through false rumors, acquiring a

reputation for sexual misadventures: women who married their employers, endangering the institution of marriage. In reality, “[these] young women [were], usually between fourteen and eighteen years of age, who lived at home, or in the barest of shared lodgings, and worked either to contribute to the family income or to sustain themselves in the meanest fashions” (Keep 412). Most Type-Writer Girls were young, lived at home, and could not indulge in extravagances. However, the patriarchy deliberately produced her as a visual attraction in order to deflect the female’s potential invasion into the public sphere. The Type-Writer Girl became a public amusement because the typewriter could refer as much to the woman as to the machine (Keep 416). In multiple cases, both the machine and the woman were made available for a “trial period.” These women were used to sell the type-writer to corporations. Despite this clear commodification, the keyboard presented new possibilities of intellectual and financial independence. As a typist, a female could move quickly into the workforce due to its minimum requirement of training. It also offered her a way to assert herself and a sense of identity, which became tied to the New Woman. When the Lorimers enter into the photography business they are also offered the same new sense of identity.

Although the Lorimer sisters are not Type-Writer Girls, they do serve an important role in exploring the opportunities and dangers for the New Woman. In the novel, the harmful conditions for the New Woman are connected to the photography studio and revolve around the sisters being unchaperoned, impure, socially mobile, and in physical danger, due to their entrance into the public sphere. Throughout the novel, several women warn the sisters of the dangers of opening a photography studio and being

in the public eye. For example, Aunt Caroline alerts the Lorimers of the dangers of photography and denounces it as dangerous and “unwomanly” (Levy 72). She then explicitly preaches why such enterprises are dangerous, speaking freely of the loss of chastity, the “delicate possession of the female sex- and of the complicated evils which must unnecessarily arise from an undertaking so completely devoid of chaperons” (Levy 72). Aunt Caroline insists that a woman’s place is in the private sphere and the female sex should not wander into the public sphere without a male chaperone. When the Lorimers do not heed their Aunt’s warning about opening a studio, they expose themselves to the public sphere and lose their position as the Angel of the House and their domestic virtue.

In this manner, Aunt Caroline’s warnings foreshadow the tragic fate of Phyllis and the hardships the Lorimers will face, due to their connection to the New Woman. In reality, many women who entered into the public sphere experienced both physical and moral dangers. For instance, Type-Writer Girls constantly endured lengthy workdays, incredibly low wages, and horrible living situations: “the entry level for a typist was ten shillings a week” (Keep 410). The Lorimer sisters experience these same hardships when they establish their business. In addition to a horrible living situation, the sisters also face public scrutiny from public male figures. When the sisters establish a business their identity becomes tied to the shop and their patterns of speech, thought, and feelings become a class representation of the poor. When this connection is made male patrons deliberately avoid them in the street. In the novel, two specific encounters are described: Gerald St. Aubyn and Jack Sinclair. In both of these cases, these men deliberately avoid

the sisters because of their poor living circumstances. Phyllis recounts how “Gerald St. Aubyn dodged round the corner at Baker street the other day because he didn’t care to be seen bowing to two shabby young women with heavy parcels” (Levy 126). Gerald avoids both Phyllis and Gertrude because of the “shabby” manner in which they are dressed, indicating a lower class rank within the middle class. Typically, a middle class woman was supposed to present the illusion of not working. However, by carrying “heavy parcels,” Phyllis and Gertrude break this illusion and instead present an image of hard work and heavy lifting, which are characteristics of the lower class. Phyllis also reminds Lucy of how Jack Sinclair ignored her when they both were travelling north: “he never took any notice of you, because you happened to be riding third class, and had your old gown on” (Levy 126). Similarly, Lucy’s penurious mannerism of dress and riding third class is an indication of a state of poverty. Elizabeth Langland describes these poor characteristics as a “Social ideology inscribed [to] the lower classes as inherently less moral, less delicate, more physical, and more capable of strenuous physical work” (42). By entering into the lower class, the Lorimer sisters are designated the characteristics of physical, coarse, dishonorable, and capable of hard labor. These qualities are considered undesirable to the middle class, and as a result the sisters are snubbed from the masculine public sphere. By experiencing extreme poverty, the sisters are forced to be outcasts and experience the sterner side of life. They become independent and no longer represent the middle class conventional female behavior, transforming fully into the New Woman figure.

CHAPTER THREE

MECHANICAL OBJECTIVITY AND THE ARTISTIC FEUD BETWEEN PAINTING AND PHOTOGRAPHY

In *The Romance of a Shop*, there is an intense artistic feud between the sexes due to different perceptions of the New Woman and female nature. In painting and photography mediums, the female image is represented differently. When Gertrude and Darrell attempt to capture the female figure, they produce very different results. Through photography's mechanical objectivity, Gertrude becomes an image maker and documents Watergate's realistic decaying state, whereas through the artist's imagination, Darrell paints an idealized female figure. In order to better understand the use of these mediums, it is imperative to have a clear understanding of the historical engagement between painting and photography. Since the beginning of photography in 1840, there has been a rivalry between photography and painting, due to the concept of let nature speak for itself. When Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre invented the Daguerreotype, photography was considered the most important and extraordinary triumph of modern science, due to its connection to mechanical objectivity. Many individuals believed that the Daguerreotype plate was infinitely more accurate in its representation of images than any painting done by hand. The public believed the photo-image's was that of truth. However, despite these proclamations, many critics and artists, such as Lady Elizabeth Eastlake denied photography the status of fine art, due to its mechanical nature and the elimination of the artist. Instead, Lady Eastlake denies photography any artistic status, placing it as an objective means of visual communication: "involving only the camera,

light, and chemicals,” omitting any human influence or thought (40). It is through this objective communication that photography became widely known as the most truthful pictorial report. In fact, many critics believed that photography was a purely mechanical process, involving no creativity or mental stimulation. It is this lack of creativity that Lady Eastlake uses to explore photography’s connection with art and the distinct dichotomy of the artist versus modern technology. The notion of photography was born from the technology of “blackening effects of light upon certain substances, on which it acts upon decomposing power. The silver then dissolves into a strong acid, surfaces steeped in the solution became encrusted with minute particles of metal, which in this state darkened with increased rapidity” (Lady Eastlake 43). These modern advancements were utilized by several artists, until a successful photographic image was attained. Once this photo-image was achieved, an immense fear developed that photography’s pictures were going to replace painting’s portraits.

This immense fear of replacement in the novel is connected to how mechanical objectivity can eliminate the artist’s will (imagination/ vision) from the image. The removal of the artist’s imagination can be seen with scientific image mediums like the atlases. For example, late nineteenth century atlases sought truth in nature through mechanical objectivity. Scientists and photographers like E.J Marey were highly aware of the human intervention between nature and representation; and as a result, they turned to mechanical reproduction in order to extinguish human interference. These later atlases presented figures of actual individuals, not of types or ideals. Ultimately, images of individuals came to be preferred to types, and significantly the techniques of mechanical

reproduction seemed to promise scientists salvation from themselves (Daston and Galison 96). Ultimately, photographers dreamed of an objective image, one that spoke in “the language of the phenomena themselves” (Daston and Galison 81). They believed the only way to achieve a wordless image was through the machine, the camera, eliminating all human agency. Devices like photographs became a possible way to document images without human intervention, annihilating subjectivity. The concept of mechanical objectivity was meant to combat the subjectivity of the artist. Daston and Galison argue that “this ideal of objectivity attempts to eliminate the mediating presence of the observer” (82). The photograph offered the promise to replace the intrusive artist with the solid foundation of facts. The camera offered freedom from will “from the willful interventions that had come to be seen as the most dangerous aspects of subjectivity” (Daston and Galison 83). Through technology, mechanical objectivity eliminated the artists’ will and their vision of nature. It is this possible undermining of the masculine artist’s vision that makes Darrell fear Gertrude as a photographer and an image maker.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PAINTED AND LIFELESS IMAGES OF THE ANGEL OF THE HOUSE AND THE BELOVED

In *The Romance of a Shop*, the archetypes of the Angel of the House and the Beloved are used to assert the patriarchal vision of female nature. Significantly, when the male painters utilize these types/ ideals, the Lorimer sisters become a classification. This is primarily due to the constraining nature of both the Angel of the House and the Beloved. In the nineteenth century, artists and advertisers used the restrictive nature of these archetypes to sell material goods. Significantly, when political democracy seemed to have failed, the middle class desire for self-improvement was channeled away from politics, embracing the acquisition of material objects. As department stores emerged, the advertisement became a feature of the Victorian consumer culture (Loeb 8). By the 1880s, advertisements employed stunning illustrations reproduced with meticulous care and artistry, inspiring Victorian material fantasies. The Victorian consumer believed they could have the latest fashions, own their own house, and even achieve the perfect appearance. Significantly, Phyllis has the desire to obtain these material fantasies. She wants to possess both material objects (floral arrangements and decadents- chocolates) and the unattainable perfect image. Similar to how Victorian advertisements targeted women at home in order to employ these material fantasies, Darrell uses Phyllis to capture the ideal female image in his portrait. Both artists and advertisers use the images of the Angel of the House and the Beloved to suggest that material items could create the illusion of the perfect lady and wife.

Significantly, the patriarchal system uses the archetype of the Angel of the House to transform the Lorimer sisters into the illusion of the ideal wife. Throughout the novel, Gertrude and Phyllis struggle against this fantastical image and the moral codes that are assigned with it. Originally, the term Angel of the House was created in the 1820s, due to Victorian society's constant struggle against the universality of sin, which ultimately redefined the structure of the domestic sphere and the role of women in the middle class. In order to introduce divinity back into the private sphere, the patriarchal system created a household God, an angel in the house. This figure was able to retain her asexuality and simplicity, becoming a self-sacrificing, moral-guide (Yalom 180). Both Sarah Stickney Ellis and John Ruskin, notable Victorian writers, describe the Angel of the House and its connection to ideal womanhood, emphasizing how the Victorian woman's role was to be an Angel of the House: a moral guide to men, forever self-sacrificing her needs for others. In "The Women of England: Their Social Duties & Domestic Habits," Ellis describes women's role in Victorian society by outlining the moral principles and domestic duties a woman should inhabit. Ellis argues, "To men belongs the potent [...] consideration of worldly aggrandizement; and it is constantly misleading their steps, closing their ears against the voice of conscience" (1). Victorian men belong to the world of business and wealth, which constantly sways them towards temptation. The only figure that can save them from sin is the Angel of the House. According to Ellis, the Angel of the House becomes their conscience, when a man stands before "the clear eye of a woman," this female eye is able to detect the "lurking evil of the specious act he was about to commit" (1). The female becomes his spiritual advisor, "guarding the fireside

comforts of his distant home” and sending “him back to that beloved home, a wiser and a better man” (Ellis 1). In many ways, the Angel of the House becomes not only a guardian of the domestic sphere, but also she embodies the domestic sphere itself. She reminds men of the morals of life and the sacred virtues that must be upheld at home.

Ruskin echoes Ellis’s view of morality in his essay “Of Queens’ Gardens,” arguing that women should act as a moral force countering the ills of society. The essay is ultimately a statement about the ideals of Victorian womanhood, insisting that the Angel of the House is protected from all dangers and temptations, due to her domestic position. The man guards the woman from the outside world. For this reason, unless “she herself has sought it, need enter no danger, no temptation, no cause of error or offense” (Ruskin 1). However, if a woman decides to expose herself to the dangers of the public sphere, then the domestic sphere ceases to be home. A woman who ventures upon the outside world cannot be a true wife because a true wife is the embodiment of the domestic sphere, always “enduring, incorruptibly good; instinctively, infallibly wise-wise, not for self-development, but for self-renunciation” (Ruskin 1). A wife’s character is always pure, wise, and self-sacrificing. She acknowledges that as an Angel of the House, she must not place herself above her husband, but rather never leave his side. While beside him, she is required to be gentle and modest. Ruskin asserts that in order to achieve this idealized woman, the husband has “to fill and temper her mind with all knowledge and thoughts which tend to confirm its natural instincts of justice, and refute its natural tact of love” (Ruskin 3). In order to create the Angel of the House, the husband must modify the wife’s mind with thoughts of justice and love. Ultimately, through this

process, a wife should be able to demonstrate kindness to a stranger and understand the meaning of the natural laws. Through masculine instruction, she is taught to extend the limits of her sympathy and acknowledges that her prayers should be for “the momentary relief from pain of her husband or her child, when it is uttered for the multitudes of those who have none to love them- and is ‘for all who are desolate and oppressed’” (Ruskin 4). The Angel of the House becomes a savior figure, placing her husband’s needs over hers and sacrificing herself for others. It is this self-sacrificing image that the Lorimer sisters are expected to conform to, limiting any individual thought and placing them only as an archetype.

However, the image of the Angel of the House is more complex than Ellis and Ruskin would have their readers believe. For example, both Lori Anne Loeb and Marilyn Yalom, modern day Victorian critics, have commented on the confusing nature of the patriarchal use of the Angel of the House. In *Consuming Angels*, Lori Anne Loeb asserts that “Angel in the House was partly an expression of a gendered definition of separate spheres. A woman being more delicate, fragile, reserved, yet virtuous, loving where her gentleness and nurturing were best employed” (19). The figure of the Angel in the House became a way to define gender and the spheres themselves. However, the idealized image of the Angel of the House was unattainable. By mid-century, the transformation of the perfect wife into the perfect lady (the Beloved) by advertisement was a crucial mark for middle class status. However, even this figure was expected to have certain characteristics, representing a more sexual version of the Angel of the House. In *A History of the Wife*, Marilyn Yalom argues that this constrained representation was due to

the fact that “certainly women had more to lose in a society that condemned female forwardness, especially since there were more eligible woman than men” (180). In order to be marriage material, the Victorian woman had to present herself as both the idealized wife and beauty. This idealized wife had very specific responsibilities: obeying and satisfying her husband, keeping her children physically and morally sound, and maintaining the household. She was also expected to be a silent figure and abide by certain social conventions, such as no pre-marital sex. The perfect wife in the mid and late nineteenth century appeared ornamental, leisured, and expensive. The home became a refuge and separate sphere, transforming the woman into a redemptive angel and a prudent household manager. However, what complicates this vision is the connection between the Angel of the House, the Beloved, and the painter, which both of these esteemed scholars have failed to notice. Ultimately, commercial models and artists conformed to the doctrine of the separate spheres, but yet were also progressive by introducing the more sexual figure of the Beloved.

Alongside the perfect wife, the Angel of the House there is also the classification of the perfect lady, the Beloved. Later on in the novel, Darrell uses paint in order to transform Phyllis into the Beloved. Notably, the Beloved is fundamentally an idealized form of femininity, which is historically distant, swathed in robes, barefooted, and crowned with laurel wreaths. Typically, she bears no resemblance to real life and appears much more sexual than the Angel of the House. The Beloved is based on the Renaissance concept of an ideal woman. In advertisements, the Beloved became a siren that was praised for her beauty and her sexuality. She represented a promise, which was frequently

embodied in Grecian and Renaissance motifs. This infamous female figure offered sensuous beauty and the charms of womanhood. Accordingly, multiple Victorian advertisements extorted the figure of the Beloved, promising that “with the right equipment, the consumer, too could affect the beauty for with the Beloved received considerable acclaim” (Loeb 9). The beauty of the Beloved could be achieved by any woman with the right material items and price.

In the novel, Darrell uses both Pietro Testa’s and Angolo Firenzuola’s, notable Renaissance painters, aesthetic techniques to transform the female image into the Beloved. Originally, Darrell wants to paint Phyllis as Cressida, a tragic Grecian figure. However, he decides against this instead resolving to do an idealized portrait of Phyllis. Significantly, this ideal version of Phyllis mimics the Renaissance styles of Testa and Firenzuola. Notably, Testa’s and Firenzuola’s paintings helped create the perfect woman by defining specific ideal aesthetic features. In order to fully capture this ideal woman, both artists separated the female image into body parts. Accordingly, each body part had a specific function and symmetry. For example, Testa required that the female’s hair had to be blonde, fine, long, and knotted simply. Elizabeth Cropper also notes that Testa observes that “The eyebrows are to be dark, and they too should curve in perfect arches that taper gently towards the ends. Beautiful eyes are large and prominent, oval in shape, and blue or dark chestnut in color.” (372). When the mouth opens, the teeth should be gleaming white and the gums red. These female images should be harmonious and symmetrical. When Darrell paints Phyllis, he pays particular attention to symmetry and specific ideal aesthetic features. Phyllis describes the portrait as “a great thing, life-size,

and ends at about the knees. I am standing up and looking over my shoulder” (Levy 134). She notes specifically the aggrandizement of the portrait and the specific position of her body. Darrell situates Phyllis near a little table, which is decorated by fruit and rose-colored cups. Along with the table, Phyllis is also decorated with “a loose, trailing garment,” “diamonds,” and “bloom-covered grapes” (Levy 171). These aesthetic objects emphasize her “slender fingers,” defining the specific ideal aesthetic features that a Beloved should possess (Levy 171). By using Testa’s and Firenzuola’s Renaissance painting styles, Darrell is able to paint his version of the Beloved, which is connected to Phyllis.

Throughout the novel, Phyllis’ overwhelming beauty and innocence is emphasized through her physical descriptions. When her idealized beauty is highlighted, Phyllis is confined to the domestic sphere and classified as the Beloved. There is a constant comparison between Phyllis and the other Lorimer sisters: “the youngest, tallest, and prettiest of the sisters” (Levy 53). Phyllis’ character is primarily described through her overwhelming and superior beauty (the ideal), which is created by the harmony of her body parts. The narrator observes that “Phyllis Lorimer belonged to the rare order of women who are absolutely independent of their clothes” (Levy 113). Phyllis’ beauty goes beyond material items such as clothes. This is demonstrated at Darrell’s private showing when Phyllis is compared to Constance Devonshire. The narrator asserts that “Constance Devonshire’s spring costume looked vulgar and obtrusive; and Constance herself, in the light of her friend’s more delicate beauty, seemed bourgeoisie and overblown” (Levy 113). Next to Phyllis, Devonshire’s clothes seem ugly and intrusive, classifying her as

middle class and excessively inflated. It is Phyllis' delicate tones of pink and white complexion that classify her as a superior beauty. In addition to beauty, she is also given the appealing characteristics of innocence and youth, due to her delicate state. The narrator emphasizes Phyllis' failing health numerous times, a "delicate looking creature of seventeen, who had outgrown her strength" (Levy 53). At the mere age of seventeen, Phyllis' health is decaying. Due to Phyllis' fragile health, she is confined to the domestic sphere and presented as naïve. This shaky health causes the Lorimer sisters (in particular Gertrude) to spoil Phyllis and attempt to shield her from the unpleasantness of the world. Phyllis becomes superficial, due to her sisters' overprotective nature, believing that beauty is the only trait that matters. It is Phyllis' superficial nature and her beautiful harmonious appearance that attracts such male artists as Darrell. Ultimately, it is through Darrell that Phyllis is transformed and classified into an idealized female figure, the Beloved.

Notably, Darrell's artistic vision is connected to the patriarchal system and it is his artistic agency and his creation of the ideal female image that creates a conflict between the sexes. This is because Darrell's perspective of the female figure is guided by his imagination. Ultimately, it is his artistic vision and imagination that photography is trying to eliminate through mechanical objectivity. Significantly, Darrell's imagination transcends reality and goes against nature, which ultimately constructs a new world. In *The Salon 1859*, Charles Baudelaire praises this world arguing, "The artist, the true artist, the true poet, should paint only in accordance with what he sees and what he feels." (181). A true artist should paint with his imagination and not just copy nature. The artist

should formulate his own world because his vision creates analogies and metaphors, developing a new and better universe. However, Darrell's imagination has created a world where only feminine archetypes exist and mechanical objectivity is rejected. When Darrell rejects mechanical objectivity, he and Gertrude become entangled in a battle of artistic agency and gender equality.

In this battle of gender and artistic agency, Darrell's vision and financial success are contingent upon his masculine will and social privileges. While visiting Darrell's studio to photograph a picture of St. John's wood, the Venice Grand Canal, Gertrude recognizes his artistic limitations, and as a result, has the ability to criticize him both physically and artistically. When Gertrude first sees Darrell, his appearance is described as: "He was a man of middle height, and middle age with light brown hair, parted in the center, and a mustache and Vandyke beard of the same color." (Levy 107). Darrell's appearance is fashioned from the masculine Renaissance ideal, all of his body parts are in perfect symmetry: "middle" height and his hair is "parted in the center." Also, it is noted that he possesses a Vandyke beard and a mustache of the same color. This is significant because a Vandyke beard is a style of facial hair named after 17th-century Flemish painter Anthony van Dyck" (Barringer 33). Therefore, this beard is a sign of artistic elite and conformity. Michael Kramp explains Darrell's appearance by stating "[he] is not attractive, but [Darrell] is ordered and confident, especially in his vision, and Gertrude notes how his grooming and status facilitate his domineering behavior and objective gaze" (121). Even though Darrell is not traditionally attractive, Gertrude recognizes the allure and the power of his vision. However, this allure and Darrell's behavior are

determined by his artistic status. In this regard, Darrell's artistic imagination and social stigma are contingent upon his masculine agency and social privileges, which ultimately can be taken away.

These privileges that surround Darrell's artistic gaze initially make Gertrude feel self-conscious and "small," causing her to retreat from the New Woman position of photography, and instead embrace the archetypes of the Angel of the House and the Beloved. Through his artistic vision of femininity, Darrell reclaims his masculine control over both public and private spaces, ultimately making Gertrude feel uneasy. When Gertrude becomes aware of Darrell's vision, it is described as: "Looking up and meeting the cold, grey glance, became suddenly conscious that her hat was shabby, that her boots were patched and clumsy, that the wind had blown the wisps of hair about her face" (Levy 107). The fixation of Darrell's stare causes Gertrude to become self-consciously aware of both her class status and her poor economic state. When this occurs, she begins to question: "What was there in this man's gaze that made her, all at once, feel old and awkward, ridiculous and dowdy; that made her long to snatch up her heavy camera and flee from his presence, never to return?" (Levy 121). Darrell's imagination transforms realistic women into the aesthetic ideal. Ultimately, it is his aesthetic imagination and ties to the patriarchal system that cause Gertrude to feel self-conscious and want to escape from Darrell's gaze. Baudelaire argues that "Since [imagination] created the world, it is only right it should govern it" (181). Significantly, Darrell as an artist is the ruler of truth and plays a powerful role in the creation and government of society. It is this power that frightens Gertrude: Darrell's "air of distinction which power and the assurance of power

alone can confer” (Levy 107). Darrell believes he can capture Phyllis in a portrait and control Gertrude because of his agency. However, Darrell is unable to constrain Gertrude and the only object that he is able to capture is his imagination of the Beloved, not Phyllis or her feminine identity.

Initially, Darrell’s imagination objectifies Phyllis into the archetype of the Beloved through classification, placing her as the tragic icon of Cressida. Darrell notices Phyllis’ aesthetic beauty and comments to Frank Jermyn: “Well, you see, it’s this: I want her for Cressida” (Levy 130). Darrell has the desire to paint Phyllis in the romantic image of Cressida, a female figure appearing in both Medieval and Renaissance stories about the Trojan War. In these stories, Cressida (a Trojan woman) falls in love with Troilus, the youngest son of King Priam, and pledges everlasting love. This love does not last when she is sent to the Greeks for a hostage exchange. During this visit, Cressida forms a liaison with Diomedes and a love triangle is created. Tragically, the story typically ends with Cressida’s reputation ruined and a dire death (Barringer 20). Significantly, Darrell tells Jermyn he wants to use Phyllis to paint Cressida’s tragic end: “it is Cressida, before her fall, I want; as she stands at the street corner with Pandarus, waiting for the Trojan heroes to pass” (Levy 130). It is Phyllis’ unnaturally bright eyes that leads Darrell to believe that she would be perfect for this tragic role: “with the light of that little tender for Troilus just beginning to dawn in her eyes. She would be the very thing for it” (Levy 130). According to Darrell, Phyllis’ bright eyes are composed of love for Troilus and the ability to falsely pledge everlasting love. Once again, Darrell reduces Phyllis to this aesthetic archetype of the Beloved and fails to give her any individuality or uniqueness.

However, two of Phyllis' characteristics do not follow the archetype of the Beloved, her unnaturally bright eyes and her admiration for the public sphere. These characteristics break the perfect archetype of the Beloved and surpass the boundaries of the traditional woman. As reflected in Phyllis' eyes and her enjoyment of the public sphere, "no image of a mere particular, no matter how precise can capture the ideal" (Daston and Galison 91). Despite Darrell's attempt to construct Phyllis as an ideal female; he ultimately fails, because Phyllis' image does not adhere to all the characteristics of the Beloved. Significantly, Phyllis feels the most comfortable at the photography studio "choo[sing] to pervade the studio when nothing better offered itself, and in moments of boredom even to occupy herself with some of the more pleasant work" (Levy 87). It is in this workspace that Phyllis amuses herself by looking onto the street: "[she] went over to the window, drew up the blind, and amused herself, as was her frequent custom, by looking into the street" (Levy 105). This public action is rejected and criticized by Lucy. The reason for this criticism is because Lucy is afraid of the moral implications this urban setting will have. Significantly, when Phyllis looks onto the city, there is a bright look in her eyes that "betokened excitement; the unimpassioned, impersonal excitement of a spectator at a thrilling play" (Levy 92). When Phyllis views the city, her eyes contain excitement; however, she is only a spectator of this urban scene, unlike the New Woman.

Darrell deceives Phyllis and confines her to the domestic sphere by entrancing her with aesthetically pleasing objects, such as floral arrangements, glimpses into the public sphere, and *decadents*- chocolates. These material goods, produce false promises

of happily ever after and an idealized vision of the artist. However, once these illusions are broken by Darrell's absence, Phyllis' concept of the artist is shattered. Originally, Darrell allures Phyllis with the falsities of "sweets and flowers galore; and [...], tickets for concerts, galleries, and theatres" (Levy 134). Ultimately, he gains Phyllis' admiration with material goods and public entertainment. Even so, not everyone is deceived by these shallow images and Gertrude warns Phyllis against this clever mirage declaring, "Put not your trust in princes, Phyllis, nor in fashionable artists" (Levy 153). Importantly, Gertrude creates a parallel between princes and fashionable artists, asserting that artists have a fantastical element and falsehood associated with them. This falsehood is primarily due to their subjective desires. The artist's vision is guided by subjectivity and their "very presence meant that images were mediated" (Daston and Galison 100). The artist dictated the meaning of the image. Popular artists, like Darrell, held a prominent position in society because they influenced the public by creating images. Gertrude stresses this importance by declaring that artists "are rather more important than princes, in these days" (Levy 153). Artists have become deceptively important because they abide by their own vision, creating ideal pictures. However, these artists should not be trusted because they have their own agenda. Phyllis does not heed this warning and therefore is forever situated under Darrell's influence: "it was sufficiently clear that he had been the means of injecting a subtle poison into her veins" (Levy 159). Through Darrell's artistic perception, Phyllis is poisoned and her demeanor changes to that of the archetype of the Beloved to an undefinable hollowness. She becomes depressed and "the buoyancy, which had been one of her chief charms, had deserted her. She was languid, restless, bored, and

more utterly idle than ever” (Levy 159). Through Darrell’s abandonment, Phyllis becomes “restless,” “bored, and “idle.” Through these hollow descriptions, it becomes evident that Phyllis can no longer be classified as the Beloved, the Angel of the House, or the New Woman, becoming the fallen woman.

Initially, Darrell abandons the idea of Cressida and decides to paint Phyllis as the “ideal” female. However, Darrell does not develop a realistic picture of Phyllis, but rather laces this portrait with lofty elements, such as “Gray gown; Parma violets; gray and purplish background” (Levy 133). These objects surrounding Phyllis coincide with the type of the Beloved. When Gertrude confronts the couple, she is entranced by these objects and Phyllis’ new image. This entrancement is because Phyllis ceases to be her little sister, but rather is transformed into an ideal feminine symbol for the patriarchal system. Initially, the narrator describes her image as “Phyllis, yet somebody new and strange; not the pretty child that her sisters had loved, but a beautiful wanton in a loose, trailing garment, shimmering, wonderful, white and lustrous as a pearl” (Levy 171). Through “trailing garments” and “pearls,” Darrell corrects Phyllis’ blemishes and creates a perfect picture: the Beloved. By posing for Darrell, the artistic masculine authority, Phyllis loses her individuality and becomes an archetype, deriving her existence from the artist. It is this “perfect” image that shocks Gertrude: “For a moment, the warmth, the overpowering fragrance of hot-house flowers, most of all, the sight of that figure by the table, had robbed Gertrude of power to move or speak” (Levy 171). Gertrude is overwhelmed by the image of Phyllis, due to the senses and items that surround her, such

as “warmth,” “overpowering fragrance,” and “hot house flowers.” Most of all, Darrell’s presence causes Gertrude for a brief moment to lose her ability to confront the artist.

However, once Gertrude sees Darrell’s flawed artistic vision, she is no longer constrained by the patriarchal artist’s imagination of the Angel of the House and the Beloved. By confronting the artist, she develops an individual persona, which is connected to her position as a New Woman and a photographer. When viewing Phyllis’ portrait being painted, Gertrude notices specific pictorial composition elements that change her perception of the painting. This is primarily due to the fact that a single observation is highly individual: “For the observer never sees the pure phenomenon [...] with his own eyes; rather, much depends on his mood, the state of his senses, the light, air weather, the physical object, how it is handled, and a thousand other circumstances” (Daston and Galison 88). These external factors determine the image for the observer, not nature itself. These components are Phyllis’ hair turning from brown to gold due to lighting, diamonds encrusting her “slender fingers,” and a cluster of grapes that are strategically placed in her hand. These artificial aesthetic objects simultaneously overwhelm and provoke a response within Gertrude. While Gertrude views Phyllis being painted, these objects trigger a storm in Gertrude’s heart. The narrator observes, “For this time, the varied emotions which devoured her had concentrated themselves into a white heat of fury, which kindled all her being” (Levy 172). It is this emotional fury that alters Gertrude’s perception of Phyllis’ and her own femininity. Gertrude develops an individual image and confronts Darrell and Phyllis as “a black rigid figure,” “glowing eyes,” and a “tragic face” (Levy 172). This unique figure is vastly different from the

symmetrical Beloved or the moral Angel of the House, tremendously altering the aesthetic female image from type to individual, creating a new female figure.

When this transformation of the female image occurs, Gertrude is able to confront the artist and tell Phyllis about Darrell's marital status. By showing Darrell's flaws, Gertrude is able to assert her "New Woman" voice and eliminate the artist's control over Phyllis. Gertrude's connections to photography and the New Woman undermine Darrell's desire to represent his own vision of nature. Significantly, as the New Woman, she presents an alternative way of being "true to nature," which creates an opposition between the public and private sphere. However, the only way Gertrude is able to eliminate Darrell's vision and control over Phyllis is to destroy his masculine agency. Gertrude has to disrupt Darrell's artistic vision to eliminate his artistic power, permitting her to assert own individual female image. This confrontation occurs when Gertrude's gaze meets Darrell's and "Gertrude knew that she, not he, the man of whom she had once been afraid, was the stronger of the two" (Levy 172). As their eyes connect, Gertrude becomes fully aware of her superior strength to Darrell and she is no longer afraid. It is at this precise moment that Gertrude is able to break free from the patriarchal system and claim her feminine independence. Significantly, she goes against Darrell's artistic authority by performing several defiant actions: covering Phyllis with her black cloak, "deliberately" pulling off her rings, and taking Phyllis home. By performing these actions, she breaks Darrell's ideal aesthetic image and claims her own female vision.

However, after these actions are finished there are severe repercussions, by freeing Phyllis from Darrell's gaze, Gertrude inadvertently isolates Phyllis from

patriarchal Victorian society. Initially, after Gertrude breaks Darrell's vision, he proclaims, "That if you take her away you will kill her? Great God, you paragon of virtue, don't you see how ill, she is?" (Levy 173). Gertrude does not respond to Darrell's pleading, but instead gives him a glance of disdain. Throughout the novel, Phyllis has been defined by the patriarchal society and the archetype of the Beloved. Now that she is no longer controlled by the artist, her identity becomes associated with defying the patriarchal system. Phyllis pursues Darrell, a married man, despite acknowledging his marital status. Significantly, she is willing to break the patriarchal moral code in order to have her portrait finished. Therefore, due to Phyllis' actions, the patriarchal narrative convention dictates that she must die a tragic death of consumption and heart disease: "both in advanced stages, held her in their grasp; added to these, a severe bronchial attack had set in since the night of the snowstorm, and her life might be said to hang by a thread" (Levy 174). After Gertrude "rescues" Phyllis, a doctor predicts Phyllis' doom. He observes, the combination of consumption and heart disease had taken her health. Ultimately, after a severe bronchial attack had set in that wintery night, she was barely alive. Once nature took its course, Phyllis is forcefully classified into another type: the fallen immoral woman. When she becomes this distilled image, a tragic death of consumption is inevitable.

When Phyllis dies, she is fully transformed into Darrell's vision, the aesthetic Beloved, Cressida. In this aesthetic position, Phyllis reaches her fully morbid state and fulfills her aesthetic potential: "In her long, narrow coffin lay Phyllis; beautiful and still, with flowers between her hands. She had drifted out of life quietly enough a few days

before” (Levy 178). In this silence, Phyllis becomes identified only by the signifiers of her beauty and flowers. However, this romantic image cannot be sustained because “tomorrow she would be lying under the newly-turned cemetery sods” (Levy 178). The “newly-tuned cemetery sods” become symbolic of Phyllis’ sin and the breaking of the patriarchal moral code. Similar to Phyllis’ satin gown that has been hidden away, the cemetery sods signify a reminder of the destruction of Darrell’s artistic vision and the ideal beauty. As Gertrude reflects on Phyllis’ deconstructed state, she states, “That [there] also was the face of a woman, beautiful and frail; of a woman who had sinned” (Levy 179). Gertrude creates a parallelism between Lady Watergate and Phyllis. This is because both females are deemed “beautiful” to the patriarchal system and fall victim to the unattainable vision of the ideal woman. However, Lady Watergate’s representation of death is very different from Phyllis, resulting in aesthetic liberation not imprisonment.

CHAPTER FIVE

PHOTOGRAPHY AND GERTRUDE'S CONNECTION TO THE NEW WOMAN

When Gertrude photographs Lady Watergate, she becomes an image maker and is liberated from the aesthetic archetypes of the Beloved and the Angel of the House. Through Gertrude's occupation, Levy proposes a new female position linked to photo-realism and mechanical objectivity. Crucially, Lady Watergate is the first photography session the Lorimer sisters are assigned to; and according to patriarchal standards, this job is considered dangerous and inappropriate for the Lorimers because of its connection to photography and the Post-mortem genre. Through the camera's mechanical lens and the invention of the daguerreotype, Post-mortem photography became commonplace, and a realistic vision of death took form, providing the middle class a way to memorialize deceased loved ones. Individuals who were unable to afford the commissioning of a painted portrait could instead afford a photography session. Importantly, photography became a cheaper and more efficient medium than painting for the middle class. However, it is this very efficiency and public accessibility that makes photography not a suitable female occupation for the Lorimers. Initially, Lord Watergate's housekeeper happens to pass by the Lorimer's photography shop and enlists their help. Yet, even the housekeeper believes that the sisters will not like this risky employment. In their discourse, Gertrude recognizes that this employment is unsuitable, but they collectively cannot afford to refuse the work: "but it's rather a dismal sort of job. It is to photograph a dead person" (Levy 84). The work is considered gloomy/ depressing because it is a Post-mortem photograph. Stanley Burns asserts that "These images represent confrontation

with our own loved one's mortality- and our own. Healthy grieving ultimately distances us from the dead" (1). The photographing process was ultimately a way to mourn the deceased, while also distancing oneself from them. These photos were not designed by an artist, instead they simultaneously embraced and concealed the reality of death, forcing the spectator to face their own mortality. The photographer became the gateway to this realism because they were commissioned by grieving families to photograph their recently deceased family members. As a photographer, Gertrude produces photo-realism through documenting Lady Watergate's decaying state. Stanley Burns observes, "At the moment people were most vulnerable, photography offered a memento that seemed real- a tangible visual object that allowed continued closeness to the deceased" (1). It was frequent for many Post-mortem photographs to be the only photos made of the deceased. In most cases, this was the only visual remembrance of these individuals, and the photo was the family's most precious possession. In this case, Lady Watergate's photograph embraces the reality of death but does not have the same original precious connotations of visual remembrance. Instead, the photo allows Gertrude to escape archetypal placement and enter the narrative of the image maker.

When Gertrude photographs the deceased Lady Watergate; the narrator describes her image through a realistic vision, which is tied to the objectiveness of the camera's mechanical lens. Importantly, through this lens Gertrude captures Watergate's realistic decaying state, instead of the "ideal" female image. Initially, Lord Watergate hires Gertrude to deliberately position Lady Watergate as the permanent archetype of the ultimate sleeping beauty. By furthering analyzing this scene, it becomes clear that Lady

Watergate has been positioned in a Post-mortem photographic style called the Last Sleep, which dominated the genre from 1840 to 1880. According to Jay Ruby, the Last Sleep enacted a sentiment towards death and emphasized the ideology that death did not really occur (66). In these photographs, individuals did not die, but rather went to sleep. When Gertrude first sees Lady Watergate, she is described as, “A woman lay, to all appearance, sleeping there, the bright October sunlight falling full on the upturned face, on the spread and shining masses of matchless golden hair” (Levy 86). Originally, Lady Watergate’s appearance is described in a very pleasing and romantically aesthetic manner. In the scene, it appears that Lady Watergate is sleeping and she is given the specific physical description of “golden hair.” This feature is a characteristic of the Beloved, emphasizing Lady Watergate’s overwhelming beauty. In addition to Lady Watergate’s beauty there is also a comment of the “bright October sunlight” falling on her face. This mention of light highlights Lady Watergate’s “upturned face,” alluding to the earliest examples of Post-mortem photographs where the face was done as a close-up. Ruby observes that “A minority showed the entire body. But regardless of whether the image was a close-up or not, the body rested on domestic furniture, often a sofa, usually draped with a coverlet or sheet” (66). Typically, these photographs did not show the full body, instead strategically positioning the body on pieces of furniture in order to give the illusion that these individuals were in a deep sleep. Significantly, the photograph was not personalized, and the objects acted more as props in order to enhance the composition of the photo. The session was usually done in private and items, such as flowers, books, or religious articles were placed in the hands or on the chest of the deceased. For this reason, Lady

Watergate's golden hair and the light on her face are an essential part of the composition of the photograph. Initially, it is through the photograph's composition and the camera's mechanical lens, Lady Watergate becomes an archetype, the ultimate sleeping beauty.

CHAPTER SIX

GERTRUDE'S PHOTOGRAPH OF LADY WATERGATE AND THE LIBERATION OF THE FEMALE IMAGE

However, this archetype is broken when human intervention between object and representation is destroyed. Through mechanical objectivity, Lady Watergate's photograph becomes connected to a desire to replace the patriarchal artist's will with the use of mechanical reproduction. Ultimately, the camera's lens offers freedom from will, eliminating the artists' vision of female nature. When the spectator sees an abnormality within Lady Watergate's photograph, the artistic feminine ideal is replaced with realism. This abnormality is Lady Watergate's clear decaying state, directly correlating to photo-realism and the essence of materialism. In the Post-mortem photograph, Lady Watergate has an apparent sickness: "A woman no longer in her first youth; haggard with sickness, pale with the last strange pallor, but beautiful withal, exquisitely astonishingly beautiful" (Levy 86). Lady Watergate is no longer young, but instead exhausted with sickness and lacking color. Despite these obvious signs of death and ailment, her passing represents a material sense of beauty, escaping the patriarchal archetypes of the Angel of the House and the Beloved. However, Lady Watergate's clear decaying state does not follow the Post-mortem genre, where usually the subject's decaying nature was hidden. Instead, not only is Lady Watergate's connection to death made visible, it is also embraced by the photograph. By the photograph embracing the reality of death, Lady Watergate's body is no longer a fantastical beauty in a deep slumber, instead her body becomes decaying material. With this realistic mechanical impulse, Lady Watergate's photograph serves as a new more precise language, replacing flawed written or spoken words. Photography is

able to scrutinize Lady Watergate ‘with an eye of the understanding,’ and by doing so “provide[s] us with a more useful presentation of anatomical or pathological facts” (Daston and Galison 100). Through mechanical and not human means, the factual image of the female body is achieved. Photography is able to surpass human subjectivity through the machine and enter the realm of realism. Through realism, Gertrude captures Watergate’s realistic decaying nature, which permits the spectator to see past the patriarchal system’s ideal female image and recognize their own mortality.

When Gertrude is photographing Lady Watergate, there is a grotesque masculine presence that intrudes onto the photographic process, this masculine figure is Lord Watergate. In the novel, Lord Watergate plays a crucial role for the patriarchal system by transforming both Phyllis and Lady Watergate into the archetype of the fallen woman, and ultimately representing the brutal masculine force of the patriarchal system. When Gertrude is looking onto Phyllis’ deceased state, she recalls Lord Watergate’s interest in Phyllis. Through this recognition, she comes to the conclusion “That was also the face of a woman, beautiful and frail; of a woman who had sinned” (Levy 179). Gertrude makes a direct connection between Phyllis and Lady Watergate because of their overwhelming beauty and patriarchal classification as a fallen woman. However, there is another connection between these two female characters, both of these females’ tragic fates were initiated by Lord Watergate. These women’s reputations are ruined by Lord Watergate’s acknowledgement of their sexual behavior, which prevents them from being the Angel of the House: a moral guide. Therefore, it is no coincidence that Gertrude first sees Lord Watergate while she is photographing Lady Watergate: “a man, [...] seated by the

window, in a pose as fixed, as motionless, as that of the dead woman herself” (Levy 87). Lord Watergate’s appearance startles Gertrude because it does not embody the picture-perfect artist like Darrell, but rather a brutal, grotesque patriarchal figure. For this reason, despite the figure’s obscurity and stillness, Gertrude refrains from glancing in the direction of this “dark,” bowed head,” and “a bearded, averted face” individual (Levy 87). However, when their eyes meet, Lord Watergate’s physical appearance is forever imprinted on Gertrude’s consciousness. His two “miserable gray eyes,” “pale and sunken face,” “broad forehead, projecting over the eyes,” “brown hair and beard,” and “the tall, stooping, sinewy figure,” creates an unforgettable masculine image. He does not represent the Renaissance man or the artist, symmetrical and perfect. Instead, by partaking in the classification of Lady Watergate and Phyllis, he represents the masculine force of the patriarchal system. It is this exact force that the camera’s lens is able to eliminate in Lady Watergate’s photograph, replacing it with realism.

Notably, through realism and the camera’s lens, Gertrude does not capture the “ideal” female image, but rather documents Watergate’s realistic decaying state. The ideal classification of the Beloved is destroyed because the camera captures the decaying appearance of Lady Watergate; and consequently, the spectator becomes aware of their own mortality and insignificance. This is primarily due to the fact that when taking a photograph, the camera transforms into a clock of perception, becoming linked to time and mortality. In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes argues, “The photographer’s organ is no longer the artist’s eye, but rather their finger, which triggers the mechanical lens, the noise of time (15). The photographer’s finger becomes linked to death and the

photograph reproduces a single moment, which can never be repeated existentially.

Photography interprets the world through images and has the ability to have an interest in things as they are, ultimately revealing a beauty that only the camera can reveal: material reality. In *On Photography*, Susan Sontag asserts, “Photographed images do not seem to be statements about the world so much as pieces of it, miniatures of reality that anyone can make or acquire” (4). The camera captures pieces of reality and when this encounter occurs, it breaks boundaries, permitting the return of the dead. The photograph is never distinguished from its referent and belongs to a world where dualities cannot be separated, such as life and death. It is only in this world that death can be embraced and Lady Watergate’s materiality can trigger an existential crisis for the spectator.

This existential crisis is due to the fact that during the photographic experience only two incidents can be distinguished from each other: the observed subject and the subject being observed. When an individual feels themselves being observed by the camera’s lens, a transformation occurs due to this awareness. Sontag describes this experience between the photographer and the subject as distant: “The camera doesn’t rape, or even possess, though it may presume, intrude, trespass, distort, exploit, and, at the farthest reach of metaphor, assassinate” (13). When individuals are photographed, it becomes violating because the operator can see them as they have never seen themselves, the photographer possesses a unique knowledge of their being. The subject poses in front of the mechanical eye and creates another body for themselves, becoming an image. When posing in front of the camera, the individual’s existence is derived from the photographer. However, once the subject discovers that they are an element in this

photographic operation, it becomes clear that they are death in person (Barthes 15). They are a subject becoming an object, a lifeless image. In this manner, “all photographs are *memento mori*. To take a photograph is to participate in another person’s [...] mortality, vulnerability, mutability” (Barthes 15). When Gertrude takes Lady Watergate’s Post-mortem photograph, Watergate’s mortality and vulnerability is shown, making a clear connection to time. For this reason, the spectator ultimately seeks death in a photograph. When they see Lady Watergate’s image they see their own inevitable death.

Significantly, Levy was able to see her own inevitable death. On September 10, 1889, at twenty-seven years old, Levy committed suicide by enclosing herself in an upper chamber of the Old North-West London and inhaling carbon monoxide. From an early age, Levy dealt with extreme inner turmoil, which stemmed from an early manifested homoeroticism. However, Levy never came to terms with her sexuality or the traditional view of femininity. Instead, she strived for a unique feminine marital unity with Dorothy Blomfield. In her poem “To Vernon Lee,” Levy demonstrates how these romantic feelings were never reciprocated: “Hope unto you, and unto me Despair” (line 14). Near the end of Levy’s life, she was unable to express herself sexually, creating a mood of disdain and melancholy, which resulted in an untimely death by her own hand. However, I believe that the significance in this narrative is that Levy refused to allow her female characters to be absorbed into the patriarchal marital backdrop in *The Romance of a Shop*. Instead, Levy eliminates the artist’s will and gives the New Woman a distinct voice of mechanical objectivity. Through her representation of Gertrude, Levy offers a new female position, an image maker. When the New Woman becomes a photographer, she

ceases to be a distilled archetype, gaining independence and ultimately escaping the patriarchal vision.

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