

Understanding the Role of the Arts and Women in
the Economy:
The Contributions of Creative Literature

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Abstract

This article considers the role of the arts and women in the economy from the late 19th into the early 20th century. Throughout this time period, the economics discipline did very little to address the place of either the arts or women in the modernizing economy and what little was done, on the whole, lacked complexity. This article thus begins with a brief outline of the views of the arts and women in the economy by economists during this time, but finding a greater wealth of information on these topics within creative literature, uses the work of prominent novelists as its primary research material.

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THE ARTS AND WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY: THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF CREATIVE LITERATURE

The modernization of the Western world generated expansive and revolutionary effects on late 19th and early 20th century society. The emerging Feminist and Modernist movements challenged the traditional cultural, political, and economic norms that defined the Victorian era. This paper will focus on the challenge these movements posed to the position of both the arts and women in the modern economy. The Feminist movement exposed the subservient place of women in the economy and petitioned for equality (Pujol, 1992, p. 1). The Modernist movement, simultaneously, though inadvertently, challenged the place of the arts in the modern economy. With the advance of technology brought on by industrialization, artists began to rebel against late 19th century academic and artistic traditions and embraced the new economic, social, and political aspects of the emerging modern world. This development in art known as the Modernist movement began to shift away from representational art and toward abstraction. Because the Modernist movement challenged the protocol of formal salons it lost their support, thus raising questions as to how the arts could survive in the market economy (Rainey, 1998, p. 12).

During the same period, economics began to advance rapidly into a formal discipline. Yet, despite the demands of the Feminist and Modernist movements, the economics discipline largely left the changing place of women and the arts to the humanities. Economics did little to address the role of the arts or women in the modernizing economy and what little was done, on the whole, lacked complexity. Economists who did consider the role of the arts in society tended to view these ‘goods’ as simply frivolous consumption or unproductive labor lacking the ability to produce positive benefits. Similarly, economists limited the role

of women in the economy to the management of the household, arguing that women supplied little by way of productive labor (Pujol, 1992, p. 3). Rather than incorporate the evolving discourses of the Feminist and Modernist movements, economics clung to its stereotypes of these subjects.

Some literary writers, more sympathetic to these movements, took up these emerging issues and challenged the stereotypes of the place of the arts and women in society. As participants in the arts, these authors extracted value in the supply and demand of these 'goods' beyond typical consumption or wage values that economists tended to either ignore or not understand. Of major significance is the link these writers drew between the place of women in society and the consumption and production of the arts. Creative writers not only asserted that the arts have unquantifiable positive values, such as the liberation of women from societal convention, but also raised awareness of the need for modification of attitudes toward women and the arts in the economy.

To demonstrate the important role literary writers played in bringing attention to the subjects of women, the arts, and the economy I have surveyed seven prominent works of fiction ranging in dates from 1872-1927. Listed chronologically these include: George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (1872); Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881); Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (1899); E.M. Forster, *A Room with a View* (1908); Willa Cather, *The Song of the Lark* (1915); Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* (1920); Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (1927). I analyzed the works of popular literature at the turn-of-the-century that addressed the problems facing the art market. Through my research of the art market by these writers, I discerned a recurring connection between women, the arts, and the economy.

Therefore, I have tried to demonstrate the absolute necessity of discussing the varied discourses simultaneously.

These literary works address many problems the economics discipline failed to adequately consider. Though these will be investigated in further depth throughout this paper, it is useful to list them at the start. On the demand-side of the arts: Are products of the arts fundamentally different from familiar consumption goods? If the arts are unique, how are they to be removed from wasteful stereotypes such as Thorstein Veblen's conspicuous consumption? On the role of women and the demand for the arts: How do the arts illuminate the objectification of women and their subservient role in the economy? How were women to lose this proprietary straightjacket? How may the arts aid in the liberation of women in the economy? On the supply-side of the arts: Are the arts merely an occupational prison for women? Do women produce the arts solely as a pre-requisite to marriage? Why is it unconventional for men to use their time with the arts as women do? On the function of the art market: What role does the aesthete or critic play in the market for the arts? How does the aesthete or critic affect the demand and supply functions for the arts? Given little attention in economic discourse, such questions received greater consideration in literature not only to emphasize the problems but also to develop possible solutions.

I begin this paper with a brief outline of the views of the arts and women in the economy by economists from the mid-19th to the early 20th centuries. Following this, I provide a brief overview of each plot to help the reader follow references to the texts in the paper. I then demonstrate how literary writers addressed the questions outlined above concerning the emerging role of women and the arts in the economy through a thorough textual analysis of the seven works included in the study. Finally, I conclude by arguing for the value of creating

dialogue between the humanities and social sciences, particularly in regard to subjects which are addressed in both disciplines.

THE ARTS, WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY IN SOCIAL SCIENCE

What little consideration has been paid to women and the arts in the economy has historically been one-dimensional. Throughout the generations, women and the arts inherited similar stereotypes; the arts were considered wasteful luxury and the property of the rich just as women were considered unproductive laborers and the property of men. Within the economics discourse, women and the arts were treated with chauvinism, the belief in the superiority of the male gender, and moral righteousness or were simply assumed out of the debate.

The origins of this association of the arts with the wasteful within the economics discourse stems back to the eighteenth century. Before the middle of the eighteenth century, writers on economic issues were well aware of scarcity and the need for a careful allocation of resources (Goodwin, 2004, p. 3). Survival in the subsistence economy of this time required a successful allocation of limited resources; wasteful spending could result in such extremes as starvation or death (Goodwin, 2004, p. 3). As Goodwin (2004) writes, “Identification of the fine arts, as they were here, with the luxurious vices rather than with virtues practiced in the market place, and as a waste of scarce resources, guaranteed them low status in the eyes of commentators” (p. 6). This inherited stereotype of wasteful consumption haunts the arts even to this day.

It was eighteenth century economists who first identified the arts as income elastic goods whose prices were socially determined on the demand side (Goodwin, 2004, p. 7). In

the early eighteenth century, Bernard Mandeville reflected this notion of the nature and price of art as determined by aristocratic patrons. As Mandeville wrote on the supply and demand of the arts, “The painter has nothing to do with the truth of the history; his business is to express the dignity of the subject, and in compliment to his judges, never to forget the excellency of our species: All his art and good sense must be employ’d in raising that to the highest pitch: Great masters don’t paint for the common people, but for persons of refin’d understanding” (Goodwin, 2004, p. 20). Adam Smith, in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), echoed this idea of the aristocracy as the arbiters of taste and introduced the idea of societal conventions pushing the patronage of art, “notions of beauty and deformity” were affected by “custom and fashion, principles which extend their dominion over our judgments concerning beauty of every kind” (Goodwin, 2004, p. 19). Smith thus suggested that responses to art were socially determined rather than a matter of individual taste. Combined with their inherited status as wasteful consumption, it was from such thinking that it became the norm to consider the arts as little more than demand-determined, fashionable commodities, with little value outside of their ability to solicit attention as markers of wealth.

A similar stance was taken by classic utilitarian economists in the late eighteenth century. The father of utilitarian economics, Jeremy Bentham condemned “expenditure, of money, on articles, for the accommodation or amusement of the comparatively *opulent few*, at the expense of all, including, in prodigiously great number, the *unopulent many*, who are incapable of participating in the benefit;” production of the fine arts was considered by Bentham as such expenditure (Goodwin, 2004, p. 29). Bentham regarded the arts as simply providing ‘amusement’ and favored “the arts and sciences of curiosity” over what he deemed the frivolity of the fine arts (Goodwin, 2004, p. 30). David Ricardo, another classical

economist, furthered this one-dimensional view of the arts. By contending that the value of the arts was entirely demand-determined, Ricardo implied that the arts were another form of consumption good without intrinsic value (Goodwin, 2004, p. 38).

Taking a more nuanced view of the arts, the Marginalists of the nineteenth century were somewhat more sympathetic. William Stanley Jevons for example, is considered by Goodwin (2004) to be a “closet artist or esthete” (p. 55). Jevons seemed to see a value in the arts that extended beyond simple frivolity and show, namely observing that from the arts, society may extract the means to develop a more advanced civilization. As Jevons stated, “Among the means towards a higher civilisation, I unhesitatingly assert that the deliberate cultivation of public amusement is a principal one” (Goodwin, 2004, p. 59). But though the Marginalists observed that the arts were a part of the natural development of civilization, both Menger and Jevons seemed to indicate that art and culture as human activity could only occur after sustained economic growth (Goodwin, 2004, p. 63). Thus, though the arts exerted a positive force upon civilization they were not endemic to the human experience; the opulence of the few was necessary to their existence.

The American Institutionalists, typically in revolt against the marginal revolutionaries and the Benthamite Utilitarians, were amongst the most fervently opposed to the arts as positive, productive goods. In his *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), Thorstein Veblen, leader of the American Institutionalists, grouped the arts and culture with other wasteful and unproductive activities conducted by the powerful and wealthy (Goodwin, 2004, p. 67). Veblen addressed the supply and demand of arts as directly related to the class-based behavior of conspicuous consumption, the use of wealth to purchase goods as status markers. In this vein, it was believed that only the idle rich, specifically the Victorian wife of the

lower to upper-middle class, wastefully pursued the arts as vicarious leisure and conspicuous consumption and thus these artistic commodities existed devoid of any redeeming social value.

It is in Veblen that we also find the connection between the role of women in the Victorian economy and the arts. Throughout the mid-19th and early 20th centuries the role of women in the economy was typically taken for granted as one of subservience to men by both economists and society generally. Women were often regarded as ‘belonging’ to their husbands and thus became property themselves. Women’s role in the market economy extended little beyond the household consumer and almost never to that of the productive laborer (Gorham, 1992, p. 4). This view of women is closely related to the association women held with the art market. On the supply side, if anything, it was regarded as acceptable for women to use the fine arts as a lure to attract husbands, preferably wealthy ones, for a source of income (Gorham, 1992, p. 104). On the demand side, women were expected to be frivolous conspicuous consumers of art to uphold the status acquired for them by men (Gorham, 1982, p. 8)¹. Thus, the little consideration provided by economists to both the arts and women in the economy was characterized by a certain degree of chauvinism.

Veblen directly takes up this theme in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, depicting the demand and supply of the arts as a necessarily feminine form of conspicuous consumption. According to Veblen’s theory, the woman without occupation was expected to spend her time pursuing the arts while the husband engaged in more productive labors. As Veblen explains, the head of the household, or “breadwinner,” has no “pretense of leisure because *he*

¹ “Females played a crucial role in the functioning of the family as an indicator of social status . . . Through the creation of an appropriate domestic management of social life, women at all levels of the middle class were responsible for assuring that the private sphere acted as an effective indicator of status in the public sphere” (Gorham, 1982, p. 8).

must apply himself to his work;” it is thus left up to the wife to maintain appearances and carry on the “business of vicarious leisure, for the good name of the household and its master” (Veblen, 1899, p. 61). This process derives from “the guidance of traditions that have been shaped by the law of conspicuously wasteful expenditure of time and substance. [. . .] Decency still requires the wife to consume some goods conspicuously for the reputability of the household and its head” (Veblen, 1899, p. 63).

Thus, in Veblen we find one description of the oppression women faced around the turn of the century. Forced into the position of conspicuous consumers and providers of vicarious leisure by the demands of a patriarchal society, women advanced little beyond the status of property. Out of this need to “consume some goods conspicuously for the reputability of the household and its head” there is “an evolution” yet reoccurrence “of an archaic institution” (Veblen, 1899, p. 63). As Veblen states, “the wife, who was at the outset the drudge and chattel of the man, both in fact and in theory – the producer of goods for him to consume – has become the ceremonial consumer of goods which he produces. But she still quite unmistakably remains his chattel in theory; for the habitual rendering of vicarious leisure and consumption is the abiding mark of the unfree servant” (Veblen, 1899, p. 63). Though Veblen is sympathetic to the relegation of women to this role, he portrays the arts as tools of oppression and fails to see them in any more dynamic way.

In contrast to the economic literature, creative literature at this time explored more fully and fairly the role of women and the arts in the market economy. Novelists brought a unique and fresh perspective to the role of women and the arts in the economy through an emphasis on the positive feminine relationship with the arts. Novelists, centering on three

major gender paradigms – the objectification of women as artistic property² and women as both consumers and producers of art – questioned the economic and social subservience of women in their contemporary society. To understand these gender paradigms, novelists explored the stereotypes fashioned by Victorian society, and in their stories gradually liberated women from them. Presenting the arts as a source of empowerment, novelists re-fashioned the conventions associated with both women and the arts in society and the economy.

These novelists thus demonstrate that the arts possess exceptional value; one manifestation of this is the power of the arts to liberate members of society from convention. In the novels I have chosen this positive value of the arts is represented through the liberation of women. In this sense, these novelists use the association between women and the art market to describe an early strain of feminism and analyze a subject mainly ignored by the contemporary economists.

THE ARTS, WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY IN THE HUMANITIES

In opposition to the contentions leveled by economists that the arts were simply consumption goods, lacking any greater value, Enlightenment thinkers adopted a different stance, arguing that the arts had socially beneficial potentialities. David Hume and Anne Robert Jacques Turgot, two mid-18th century social thinkers, proposed that the arts may be patronized in two possible capacities – either ‘rightly’ or ‘wrongly.’ David Hume argued that luxury could either be virtuous or vicious depending on what form it took. Hume contended that luxuries carried to extremes could be considered wastefully and socially destructive, but

² The phrase “objectification of women” is defined here as regarding and treating women as objects or possessions with the capacity to be owned.

that there were some forms of luxury that were in fact “innocent” and socially beneficial (Goodwin, 2004, p. 12). As quoted in Goodwin (2004), Hume stated, “The same age which produces great philosophers and politicians, renowned generals and poets, usually abounds with skilful weavers, and ship-carpenters. . . . Thus industry, knowledge, and humanity are linked together, by an indissoluble chain, and are found, from experience as well as reason, to be peculiar to the more polished, and what are commonly denominated, the more luxurious ages” (p. 12). Hume contended that these innocent luxuries were a source of innovative power. Anne Robert Jacques Turgot, as well, suggested that there was a ‘wrong’ way to patronize the arts. Turgot reflected that through history, “blind luxury, which, born of vanity, and judging works of art less as objects of taste and as symbols of opulence, is as opposed to their perfection as a civilised love of magnificence is favourable to it” (Goodwin, 2004, p. 15). Thus a potential for enriching civilization exists within the arts, but this may only be realized if the arts are ‘properly’ pursued; such attitudes are echoed in the creative literature included in this study.

A more thorough consideration of the arts, however, did not take place until much later. Though the arts remained largely out of the debate for economists around the turn of the twentieth century, a group of artists and essayists known as the Bloomsbury Group reflected upon the place of the arts in human life. The Bloomsburys strongly denied the contentions of the contemporary economics literature “that artists were simply the producers of superior goods that were consumed only when incomes rose, or that they produced merely luxuries for times when other, more important, wants had been filled” (Goodwin, 2004, p. 72). The Bloomsburys contended, rather, that the arts “were an essential element and building block in the achievement of true human civilization; the arts were a cause not a

condition or consequence of that peculiar and precious set of civilizing circumstances that only liberated humans can produce” (Goodwin, 2004, p. 72). Rejecting the Benthamite utilitarian model, the Bloomsburys contended that artistic experience was fundamentally different from that achieved from consumer goods and services (Goodwin, 2004, p. 73).

The creative literature used in this study reflects the philosophies of the Humanists and Bloomsburys. In fact, two novelists, E.M. Forster and Virginia Woolf, used in this study were founding members of the Bloomsbury Group. These novelists find positive externalities in the arts, namely the potential for the arts to assist in the liberation of women from gender paradigms. These novelists also demonstrate that the production of the arts is not necessarily a function of income but rather an innate part of the human experience and a mechanism for self-fulfillment that may not be quantifiable in economic terms.

THE ARTS, WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY IN CREATIVE LITERATURE

Each novel considered in this study uses a slightly different backdrop to demonstrate the overarching theme of the potential to be found in the arts. Each work examines either the supply of or demand for the arts, or both, in the United States or Europe. Most works portray similar themes and characters. Without mentioning the economists by name, these authors typically set up Bentham’s or Veblen’s negative portrayals of the arts; from these cynical representations, creative writers work to present another dimension to either the supply or demand for the arts. This is done through the evolution of one particular character in each work, typically, a young, innocent woman, confined by society’s strictures and in need of liberation. In contrast to this chaste woman, the author presents an oppressive, wealthy male who expects the young woman to fit into Veblen’s category of “servant wife.” Throughout

the novel, however, there is often a young male aesthete or critic who teaches the woman about the arts and thereby helps in her liberation. Consistent throughout each work is the theme of the supply and demand for the arts functioning to liberate the woman from society's oppressive confines, a value never attributed to the arts by economists.

To better familiarize the reader with the various characters and themes which will be presented in more depth throughout this paper, it will be useful to include brief plot summaries of each work. The earliest work included in this study is *The Age of Innocence* by Edith Wharton. Wharton uses the nouveaux riche of New York society to explore the demand for the arts in America. In Wharton's work, Newland Archer plays the role of the oppressive male figure who adheres to society's expectations. May Welland is Newland's subservient fiancée, whose narrow adherence to convention prevents her from understanding the arts. The Countess Ellen Olenska is May's foil and is used by Wharton to demonstrate the liberating nature of the arts. Ellen nearly lures Newland out of his conventionality, but the pressures of New York society prove too great and he ends his life feeling unfulfilled.

Chronologically, the next work is Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*. James uses the travel narrative of a rich young American exploring the aristocratic society of England and the arts of Italy to dissect the American and British demand for the arts in Europe. Isabel Archer is a fairly independent young woman who travels to Europe in the pursuit of culture. As she travels she meets Ralph Touchett, a young aesthete who exposes her to a new dimension of the arts. Isabel also meets and marries Gilbert Osmond, a man of no social standing or wealth, but wholly devoted to art and aesthetics. Over time, it becomes apparent that Osmond's commitment to art is nothing other than a form of Veblen's conspicuous consumption and that he has no patience for Isabel's independence. Isabel struggles with the

idea of leaving her husband, but eventually succumbs to her sense of social duty and returns to him. Along the way, however, as she is exposed to the arts of Italy, she undergoes several epiphanies about her place in society.

Similarly, George Eliot uses the travel narrative of a rich young American exploring the arts of Italy in *Middlemarch* to examine the American demand for the arts in Europe. Dorothea Brooke takes on the role of the young heroine in need of liberation. Swayed by her society's conventions, Dorothea marries the stoic, Benthamite Edward Casaubon at a young age. Dorothea, however, is liberated from her subservient status through her engagement with the arts of Italy and with the guidance of the young aesthete Will Ladislaw.

In *A Room with a View*, E.M. Forster also uses the travel narrative, but his main character, Lucy Honeychurch, is a British woman of aristocratic heritage who explores the arts of Italy. Throughout her time in Italy, Lucy battles with conventional approaches to the arts. While her companions all seem to pursue the arts as conspicuous consumption goods, Lucy, with the aid of the aesthetes George Emerson and his father, is able to extract a deeper value from the arts she encounters in Italy. Forster also explores how the supply of the arts by women is a function of class and economic station. Lucy is an avid young pianist, but when the independence of her art is challenged by the expectations of her fiancée, Cecil Vyse, she begins to question their engagement. Cecil claims to be progressive, advocating the equality of women, but as Forster exposes, he is more concerned with maintaining appearances in London society than treating women as equals. Thus, Cecil comes to represent Veblen's model of the upper class husband who expects his wife to keep up appearances through her artistic skills. Lucy, however, with the help of the Emersons, maintains her artistic integrity,

and it is the awareness she gains through the arts that allow her to throw off convention and end her engagement with Cecil and marry her real love, George Emerson.

Kate Chopin, in *The Awakening*, uses New Orleans Creole society to demonstrate the production of the arts by the “servant wife” as well as the demand for the arts in the United States. Chopin focuses on the “awakening” of her main character Edna Pontellier over the course of the novel; this “awakening” occurs mostly through Edna’s exposure to and production of the arts. Léonce Pontellier, Edna’s husband, challenges Edna’s attempts at autonomy and begs her to keep her pursuit of the arts at a conspicuous consumption level. The eccentric Mademoiselle Reisz, with her powerful attitude and beautiful piano playing, however, acts as Edna’s guide to the arts and is able to continually re-inspire her to stay on her path toward independence.

The production of the arts by women in the United States is explored Willa Cather’s *The Song of the Lark*. Cather traces the personal odyssey of her main character, Thea Kronborg, a Scandinavian-American singer, from the desert town of Moonstone, Colorado to the Metropolitan Opera House. Along the way, Thea is repeatedly given the option of sacrificing her dream of becoming an Opera singer in order to settle down and marry well. Each time that Thea is confronted with the decision to marry (which she considers the “easy way out”) or to continue with her career, she chooses her art over marriage.

Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* is the last work, chronologically, included in this paper. In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf considers the production of the arts by a British woman, Lily Briscoe. Lily is a house guest of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, two very traditional, Victorian figures. Throughout the novel, Lily is challenged by the conventionality of the Ramsays. Mrs. Ramsay tries to push Lily into marriage, but Lily resolves to remain single; she fears

marriage would interfere with her artistic integrity. Lily faces challenges to her role as a woman and a painter by other characters as well, such as Charles Tansley, who suggests that women can neither paint nor write. The novel ends ten years after its start with Lily making a definitive stroke on the canvas she had begun during her first stay with the Ramsays. Lily is finally able to achieve her vision and has maintained her artistic integrity.

Though each of these works address a particular niche of the market for the arts, taken together they demonstrate the uniqueness of both the supply and demand for the arts, apart from the one-dimensional role assumed by economists. Additionally, these works also indicate that there are potential positive benefits, such as the liberation of women from a constrained social and economic status, to be gained by association with the arts.

Significantly as well, these works suggest that there was a problem with the token role of women in the economy that required reform, but which economists consistently tended to ignore.

LOCATION OF WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY

The placement of women in the modernizing economy was given little consideration by economists at the turn-of-the-century (Pujol, 1992, p. 1). Women in this period were often classified as possessions with physical beauty as the measure of value; this association with artistic property is indicative of the subservient placement of women in the economy.

Creative writers both convey and deconstruct this convention, illuminating how the arts demonstrate the objectification of women and their obsequious role in the economy.

Throughout many works, novelists repeatedly emphasize metaphors of women as objects of art. Over the course of a work, however, novelists deconstruct this proprietary convention

and gradually liberate their heroines through participation in or performance of the fine arts. A study of the depiction of the association between women and the arts in creative literature thus illuminates the objectification of women as well as their potential for liberation from this subservient role in the economy.

Forster introduces this convention of women as art objects in *A Room with a View* to illuminate the proprietary straightjacket held by women at this time. The mild villain, Cecil Vyse, with his mediaeval approach to life, regards women as mere art objects, classifying Lucy Honeychurch as a ‘Leonardo.’ As Forster (1908) writes, Cecil thinks of Lucy, “like a woman of Leonardo da Vinci’s, whom we love not so much for herself as for things that she will not tell us” (p. 96). It is in her gradual awakening to such objectification by men like Cecil (which she discovers through a sequence of realizations inspired by her pursuit of the arts) that Lucy eventually finds autonomy. In the same way as Cecil Vyse, Léonce Pontellier in *The Awakening* objectifies his wife, Edna Pontellier, as a piece of property. As Chopin (1899) writes, when Edna returns from the beach Léonce remarks, “You are burnt beyond recognition” and looks at his wife “as one looks at a valuable piece of personal property which has suffered some damage” (p. 4). At first Edna willingly regards herself as such a piece of property; “She held up her hands, strong, shapely hands, and surveyed them critically” feeling remorse for having damaged her husband’s property (herself) (Chopin, 1899, p. 4). But over time, with her increased attention to her own artistic pursuits, Edna finds identity outside of wifely property.³

The liberating process associated with the arts, however, is not always presented as successful. The relationship of Newland Archer and his fiancée/wife, May Welland, in Wharton’s *The Age of Innocence* is an example of such a failure. At first Newland appears to

³ The liberating process referenced here will be given more detail later in this paper.

be the most progressive of characters as he declares, early in the novel, “Women ought to be free – as free as [men] are” (Wharton, 1920, p. 45). Through his relationship with May, however, Newland demonstrates that this sentiment is nothing more than a “verbal generosity” (Wharton, 1920, p. 46). Newland’s relationship to his fiancée/wife is one of ownership; with his chief instruction tool the arts, he believes he can take this pure, ignorant blank-slate of a woman and ‘teach’ her about the world. For instance, early in the novel, Newland dreams of his future life with May: “‘We’ll read Faust together . . . by the Italian lakes . . .’ he somewhat hazily confusing the scene of his projected honey-moon with the masterpieces of literature which it would be his *manly* privilege to reveal to his bride” (Wharton, 1920, p. 76). Newland’s knowledge of the arts becomes a sort of power over the women in his life. But the chauvinistic approach with which Newland approaches May’s artistic instruction eventually proves ineffectual. May is incapable of appreciating the arts, even with Archer’s instruction, and thus the “bandage” that Archer attempts to lift proves impenetrable. It is during their honeymoon that Archer realizes that “there was no use in trying to emancipate a wife who had not the dimmest notion that she was not free” (Wharton, 1920, p. 167). May thus represents an example of the failure of the arts to liberate in some circumstances; the cause of this failure, however, remains ambiguous. Wharton may be suggesting that there are some women in society who will themselves oppose a change in women’s social and economic position. Wharton’s careful description of Newland’s sexist belief that he will bring ‘light’ to May, however, suggests that the failure of May’s enlightenment may have something more to do with the approach and type of instruction Newland offers.

In contrast to their contemporary economists who did little on the subject, Forster, Chopin and Wharton convey the objectification of women in society by drawing out this association of women as objects of art. By the eventual awakening and liberating of these women through their pursuits in the arts, however, these creative writers reject and defy the prescribed objectified status of women in the mid-19th and early 20th centuries. Though May Welland represents an anomalous case, the gradual release of Lucy Honeychurch and Edna Pontellier from the status of artistic property to become autonomous actors is a significant social and economic evolution. By drawing attention to the need for this change novelists may have helped to ease society into this transition.

DEMAND ORIENTED QUESTIONS ADDRESSED IN CREATIVE LITERATURE

At the start of this paper I outlined several questions concerning the demand for the arts explored in this creative literature. The first of these was whether or not the arts are fundamentally different from the consumption of other goods and services. Secondly, if the arts are different, how do you counteract the wasteful stereotypes the arts embody, such as Veblen's conspicuous consumption? Tied to both of these questions is the relationship between the arts and the autonomy of women in the economy. Thus, in connection with their reflection on the arts as consumer goods, novelists question how women were to lose the proprietary straightjacket described in the last section of this paper and how the arts may aid in this liberation process.

The economics discipline has historically regarded the demand for the arts as one-dimensional: eighteenth century economists grouped the arts with income elastic goods, Bentham placed the arts in the category of wasteful consumption and Veblen allocated the

arts to conspicuous consumption. In contrast to this static view of the arts, novelists depict a duality to the demand for the arts. These novelists present characters that pursue the arts as status symbols, the type of demand considered by economists, yet also illustrate a second variety of demand for the arts – a demand motivated by an innate human connection to the arts unrelated to other associations. These novelists observe that elements of Veblen’s conspicuous consumption may always persist in a society, but seem to advocate the second form of demand. It is this later form of demand that the Humanists Hume and Turgot alluded to as the ‘right’ way to pursue the arts. On the whole, these works demonstrate that the arts *are* fundamentally different from normal consumption goods and that a demand for the arts exists which can produce positive values such as liberation.

Using examples from the lives of the American nouveaux riche and the European aristocracy, these novelists explore the effects of how art is consumed. These novelists do not ignore the existence of conspicuous consumption, or seem to indicate that it will ever be wholly eradicated, but rather indicate that even when the demand for the arts is rooted in conspicuous consumption it may lead to positive benefits. Novelists also suggest that the way in which art is consumed brings different things. While Veblen’s conspicuous consumption amounts to nothing but vanity and competition within society, subscription to the arts out of genuine appreciation may lead to benefits such as liberation or self-fulfillment. It is this later benefit that economists of this time failed to observe in the demand for the arts.

Novelists confront this dynamic nature of the demand for the arts by portraying how various members of society interact with the arts. There are three basic sources of demand for the arts presented by the novelists. The first of these is made up of Veblen’s conspicuous consumers; these characters, often one-dimensional women, pursue the arts simply because it

is conventional to do so. The second group may be defined as Benthamite utilitarians; also constrained by conventions, they find the arts to be amoral and wasteful and their demand for the arts is, thus, very limited. In contrast to these groups novelists present a third type of demand for the arts from liberal, unconstrained, demanders who benefit deeply from their association with the arts. These are often young women who, over time, are gradually released from the constraints of their society and are liberated by their patronage of the arts. This third type of demand is also represented by aesthetes and critics, already well-informed on the arts, who extract values from the arts beyond conventional consumer satisfaction. Economists, it seems fair to say, did not consider these disparate sources of demand. Novelists explore the third category of demand and present conspicuous consumers as silly and ignorant and Benthamite utilitarians as constrained and unhappy. Those fully engaged with the arts, however, are painted in a positive light. In this way, novelists seem to demonstrate the potential internal and external positive benefits of the arts that were ignored by contemporary economic theory.

In *A Portrait of a Lady*, Henry James considers the conspicuous consumption of art by Americans abroad, particularly women. Though James observes this phenomenon of conspicuous consumption he draws characters which seem both to confirm and to contradict the American Institutionalist perception of the arts as necessarily corrupt and wasteful. James presents both types in the American exodus to Europe on culture quests. On the one hand, James observes the presence of “conspicuous consumers” through the characters of Mrs. Touchett and the Countess Gemini who flee to Europe as a way to preserve appearances in upper class society. On the other hand, James also presents characters, such as Isabel Archer and Ralph Touchett, who have some indefinite intrinsic attachment to the arts. It is in his

portrayal of this later set of characters that James demonstrates that the arts provide the non-economic values of self-fulfillment and liberation to those who engage with them.

Another character in James' novel, Miss Henrietta Stackpole, unbiased, neutral, and sincere, sets out to investigate the complexity of American and British demand for the arts. She is sent to Europe by her newspaper in order to investigate the nature of European aristocracy. She explains, "The *Interviewer* wants some light on the nobility. My first impressions (of the people at large) are not rose-coloured; but I wish to talk them over with you, and you know that whatever I am, at least I am not superficial" (James, 1881, p. 84).

Miss Stackpole represents a nuanced position on the arts: she reflects American skepticism while also appreciating the potential benefits of the arts. Miss Stackpole was at one time an art-critic for a transatlantic journal and thus has a close association with the arts and is able to appreciate them beyond conspicuous consumption. James (1881) reveals Miss Stackpole's sincere connection to the arts in the following passage: "Henrietta strolled through the long gallery in his (Ralph's) society, while he pointed out its principal ornaments and mentioned painters and subjects. Miss Stackpole looked at the pictures in perfect silence, committing herself to no opinion, and Ralph was gratified by the fact that she delivered herself of none of the little ready-made ejaculations of delight which the visitors to Garden court would so frequently lavish" (p. 90). Through Miss Stackpole's character, James implies that the arts are not necessarily frivolous or wasteful consumption. This is indicated through one entirely serious and industrious person who can appreciate the arts.

James also suggests an alternate reason for a feminine pursuit of the arts through the characters of Mrs. Touchett and the Countess Gemini. Mrs. Touchett travels Europe not for some romantic or imaginative purpose, but simply to fulfill her role as an aristocratic

conspicuous consumer. Once Mrs. Touchett has checked everything off on her high society travel list, she becomes bored by new sites and the arts and consequently lives her life unfulfilled. For the Countess Gemini, patronage of the arts is entirely a tool by which she may quench her vanity. The Countess represents the Victorian trophy wife, with the base aspirations of acquiring wealth and social standing through a strategic marriage. James (1881) describes her through the statements of Isabel Archer, “The Countess seemed to her to have no soul; she was like a bright shell, with a polished surface, in which something would rattle when you shook it” (p. 385). Though the Countess has always lived with her eye toward Rome, it is the city’s society, not its history or art, which attracts her. This is demonstrated when Isabel guides the Countess through the city; though she sits quietly and gazes at the sights, the Countess can only dream of the famous socialites she will meet, caring nothing for the magnificent art before her. It is through these two characters that James implies not only the existence, but also permanence, of Veblen’s conspicuous consumption of the arts in the market economy.

James, however, also presents the possibility of an alternate demand for the arts through the heroine of the novel, Isabel Archer. To counter any Benthamite interpretations of amorality or idleness, James carefully depicts Isabel’s virtue. As James (1881) writes, she had “visions of a completed life [and was concerned] largely with moral images – things as to which the question would be whether they pleased her soul” (p. 101). Throughout his construction of Isabel’s virtue, James re-assures his readers that Isabel’s appreciation of the arts can be nothing other than genuine. Through her European travels, Isabel repeatedly refuses any pursuit of social conquests that her peers regard as the trophies of cultural travel. Isabel, rather, pursues culture and art out of a real desire to connect. For example, throughout

her London sojourn, “Isabel was constantly interested and often excited; if she had come in search of local colour she found it everywhere. She asked more questions than he (Ralph) could answer, and launched little theories that he was equally unable to accept or refute” (James, 1881, p. 131). Isabel comes to regard London as a treasure trove; she finds beauty and interest in all the city has to offer. When she visits museums and galleries, she takes a real interest in everything she sees.

James gives an award to Isabel’s genuine pursuit of the arts; because she never pursues them for fashion’s sake, Isabel is able to use the arts to liberate herself from her prescribed status as a Victorian wife. Isabel’s experiences in Italy are imbued with spirituality; in Florence, as she looks “at the pictures and statues which had hitherto been great names to her [. . .] she felt her heart beat in the presence of immortal genius, and knew the sweetness of rising tears in eyes to which faded fresco and darkened marble grew dim” (James, 1881, p. 219). The spiritual liberation Isabel finds in her pursuit of the arts contributes to her empowerment. The self-actualization she undergoes empowers Isabel to throw off the constraints of Victorian marriage and to pursue a life of economic independence. James thus implies that there exists a variety of demand for the arts which does not fit the molds set out by contemporary economists for the arts have the unique capacity to empower and liberate.

In *Middlemarch*, George Eliot also presents an example of the arts as a liberating force through the character of Dorothea Brooke. Eliot purposely presents Dorothea as an incontestably virtuous individual, pure of heart and above unnecessary or vulgar luxury, so as to preempt an interpretation of her consumption of the arts as frivolous conspicuous consumption. For example, Dorothea considers, “the solitudes of feminine fashion [. . .] an

occupation for Bedlam” (Eliot, 1872, p. 5). In line with her conventionally virtuous character, Dorothea at first rejects the artistic world. For example, because she can find no connection between herself and art, Dorothea is unresponsive to the pictures and casts her uncle, Mr. Brooke, brings back from his Continental travels. As Eliot (1872) states, without proper instruction, “these severe classical nudities and smirking Renaissance-Correggiosities were painfully inexplicable, staring into the midst of her Puritanic conceptions: she had never been taught how she could bring them into any sort of relevance with her life” (p. 60). At this stage in her development, Dorothea holds a somewhat Benthamite attitude toward the arts.

It is Dorothea’s “Puritanic” attitude that at first attracts her to the stoic Edward Casaubon. A prototypical Benthamite, Casaubon is devoted to laborious study and rigorous work. He lacks any sense of appreciation of the arts and generally regards them as frivolous consumption goods. As Casaubon describes himself, “I never could look on it in the light of a recreation to have my ears teased with measured notes. A tune much iterated has the ridiculous effect of making the words in my mind perform a sort of minuet to keep time – an effect hardly tolerable, I imagine, after boyhood” (Eliot, 1872, p. 42). Dorothea’s conventional piety at first leads her to become engaged to Casaubon, but as she is exposed to the arts in Italy she begins to realize the folly of his limited approach to the arts as well as the unhappy nature of her subservient status to him.

The arts of Rome begin to change Dorothea’s view of the world, however; as she walks through the Hall of Statues in the Vatican museum she comes to realize the limited life she has subjected herself to by her marriage to Casaubon. Eliot (1872) describes Dorothea’s awakening:

She did not really see the streak of sunlight on the floor more than she saw the statues: she was inwardly seeing the light of

years to come in her own home and over the English fields and elms and hedge-bordered highroads; and feeling that the way in which they might be filled with joyful devotedness was not so clear to her as it had been. But in Dorothea's mind there was a current into which all thought and feeling were apt sooner or later to flow – the reaching forward of the whole consciousness towards the fullest truth, the least partial good. There was clearly something better than anger and despondency (p. 130).

Upon their return to England, the reality of such a melancholy marriage begins to take effect. Their home at Lowlick Manor is cold and lacks joy; it slowly begins to kill Dorothea's spirit. As Eliot (1872) writes, "Her blooming full-pulsed youth stood there in a moral imprisonment which made itself one with the chill, colourless, narrowed landscape, with the shrunken furniture, the never-read books, and the ghostly stag in a pale fantastic world that seemed to be vanishing from the daylight" (p. 173). Her experience among the arts thus lifts a veil from Dorothea's eyes and allows her to realize that the conventional role of wife is not quite as fulfilling as society has educated her to believe. It is thus partially through her involvement with the arts that Dorothea is able to release herself from the economic and societal conventions of marriage to realize where her true happiness lies. This liberating and enlightening power of the arts was never considered by economists of the time.

Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, exhibits another balanced approach to the demand for the arts. Chopin accepts Veblen's conspicuous consumption model for the demand for the arts, but works to demonstrate that such a model is inappropriate. Mostly through the character of Léonce Pontellier, Chopin criticizes the conspicuous consumption of the Creole class of turn-of-the-century New Orleans. In line with Veblen's model, Léonce, as a successful banker, is consumed by the appearance of his home and thus cloaks it with art. As Chopin (1899) explains, "The Pontelliers possessed a very charming home on Esplande

Street⁴ in New Orleans. . . . The softest carpets and rugs covered the floors; rich and tasteful draperies hung at doors and windows. There were paintings, selected with judgment and discrimination, upon the walls. The cut glass, the silver, the heavy damask which daily appeared upon the table were the envy of many women whose husbands were less generous than Mr. Pontellier” (p. 50). Mr. Pontellier prides himself on his possessions and walks about his house “examining its various appointments and details” (Eliot, 1899, p. 50). In this sense, Chopin demonstrates that in some cases the demand for the arts can be a function of income as Veblen’s model predicts.

Chopin, however, uses the character of Edna Pontellier, the wife of Léonce, to demonstrate another variety of demand and the folly of Léonce’s conspicuous demand for the arts. In rebellion against “les convenances”⁵ and to maintain the sanctity of the arts, Edna resolves to leave her husband’s fashionable home on Esplanade Street in favor of a modest home she refers to as her “pigeon-house.” Edna fills this “pigeon-house” with both her own art as well as painting and sketches she purchases from poor artists on the street. In this way Edna is able to fulfill her relationship with the arts free of conventional restraints. Additionally, Edna’s move to this “pigeon-house” asserts her new economic role outside of her husband’s control. As Edna explains, she moves out of the house on Esplanade Street because “The house, the money that provides for it, are not mine” (Chopin, 1899, p. 79). Funding her new home entirely on her own demonstrates a new level of economic and social freedom for Edna; a freedom she acquires through her involvement with the arts.

⁴ “The most exclusive address of the Creole aristocracy, Called ‘Promenade Publique’ in the 1830s, it was the street of palatial homes shaded by live oaks, palms, and magnolias” (footnote found in the Norton Critical Edition of *The Awakening*, 2000, p. 50).

⁵ Proprieties, social conventions.

Edna's involvement with the arts and the beginning of her self-actualization begins at the fashionable Grande Isle. At the beginning of *The Awakening*, Edna Pontellier, Chopin's heroine seems to exist in a semi-conscious state, but the people she meets on Grand Isle gradually awaken her passion for music, art, and individuality. It is music in particular which eventually releases Edna from the conventions of Creole society; the piano playing of Mademoiselle Reisz releases and inspires Edna to seek her autonomy. As Chopin (1899) writes, "That summer at Grand Isle she began to loosen a little the mantle of reserve that had always enveloped her" (p. 15). Mme. Reisz provokes Edna to take the swim of solitude which changes Edna's perspective on her prescribed role in society; on this swim, "A feeling of exultation overtook her, as if some power of significant import had been given her soul. She grew daring and reckless, overestimating her strength. She wanted to swim far out, where no woman had swum before" (Chopin, 1899, p. 28). Through these encounters Edna is eventually freed from the conventions of society. As she listens to Mme. Reisz's playing, "Edna began to feel like one who awakens gradually out of a dream, a delicious, grotesque, impossible dream, to feel again the realities pressing into her soul" (Chopin, 1899, p. 32). This sense of autonomy is reinforced when she returns to New Orleans; Edna no longer defers to her husband's whims and chooses her own way of living as she declares, "I am no longer one of Mr. Pontellier's possessions to be disposed of or not. I give myself what I choose" (Chopin, 1899, p. 107). Such a release from society's strictures is catalyzed by Edna's participation in the arts; Chopin thus implies the demand for the arts may result in benefits such as self-actualization, not merely brash, wasteful displays of wealth as Veblen or Bentham might argue.

Edith Wharton similarly explores the conspicuous consumption behavior of the nouveaux riche in America in *The Age of Innocence* and, like Chopin, criticizes the extravagant displays of wealth exhibited by this class. The upper classes of 1920's New York City that Wharton depicts are as guilty of conspicuous consumption as those of Chopin's aristocratic Creole class in New Orleans. Wharton (1920) describes New York, "[as] a small and slippery pyramid, in which, as yet, hardly a fissure had been made or a foothold gained. [. . .] stylishness was what New York most valued" (p. 57, 61). Throughout *The Age of Innocence*, this "stylishness" is demonstrated through participation in the arts as Veblen described.

The most prominent manifestation of this conspicuous consumption is found at the Opera, used by New York society as a social outlet and status marker. It is the place to go and be seen. One of the most elaborate displays of this conspicuous consumption occurs at the story's opening at a performance of Faust at the Academy of Music. Wharton portrays conspicuous consumption on a grand scale in this scene; few attendees actually pay attention to the opera for their chief purpose is to be seen and to gossip. As Wharton (1920) explains, the young men of the audience briefly said hello to one another and then "turned their opera-glasses critically on the circle of ladies who were the product of the system" (p. 18). Wharton (1920), thus, signals that the audience of the Opera does not consist of patrons of the arts, but is rather composed of a "semicircle of critics" commenting on and criticizing the society, not the art, present (p. 23).

The Opera is used also to show off personal opulence. For example, Mrs. Julius Beaufort, a nouveaux riche wife, uses Opera nights to throw her annual ball in her luxuriously appointed home. "Mrs. Julius Beaufort, on the night of her annual ball, never

failed to appear at the Opera; indeed, she always gave her ball on an Opera night in order to emphasise her complete superiority to household cares, and her possession of a staff of servants competent to organise every detail of the entertainment in her absence” (Wharton, 1920, p. 26). Mrs. Beaufort’s character thus plays out Veblen’s description of the conspicuous consumer or “servant wife” acting as her husband’s social surrogate.

Wharton does not of course advocate such vain patronage of the arts, offering, rather, the Countess Ellen Olenska as the model of genuine pursuit of the arts. In contrast to Eliot and James, however, Wharton does not create an infallible and virtuous character in Ellen to illuminate this genuine consumption of the arts. From the opening scene at the Opera, we learn not only of Ellen’s intimate engagement with the arts but also of her questionable social history. Wharton (1920) describes Ellen’s entrance to the Opera: “The cause of the commotion, she sat gracefully in her corner of the box, her eyes fixed on the stage, and revealing, as she leaned forward, a little more shoulder and bosom than New York was accustomed to seeing, at least in ladies who had reasons or wished to pass unnoticed” (p. 24). Though her exoticism and liberalism commands the unfavorable, yet enamored, attention of the rest of New York society, Ellen, so absorbed by the performance, notices only the beauty of the arts she patronizes. This early juxtaposition of sincere (represented by Ellen) and conspicuous (the other Opera attendees) consumption of the fine arts constitutes a theme that runs throughout *The Age of Innocence* and demonstrates the possibility for a dual demand for the arts.

Ellen’s character and actions reinforce this alternate positive demand for the arts proposed by Wharton (and these authors, generally). Ellen’s interest in the arts has nothing to do with social status; her pursuit derives from a genuine connection with the arts. As

Wharton (1920) explains, “Poetry and art are the breath of life to her” From a young age, Ellen defied societal convention and lived intimately within the world of the arts. She received an “expensive but incoherent education, which included ‘drawing from a model,’ a thing never dreamed of before, and playing the piano in quintets with professional musicians” (Wharton, 1920, p. 60). She also, “possessed outlandish arts, such as dancing a Spanish shawl dance and singing Neapolitan love-songs to a guitar” (Wharton, 1920, p. 60). Ellen’s connection to the arts is also demonstrated by her intimate involvement with the art community in New York and her defiance of conventions. Ellen’s new neighborhood in New York, “was certainly a strange quarter to have settled in. Small dressmakers, bird-stuffers and “people who wrote” were her nearest neighbours” (Wharton, 1920, p. 66). Ellen disregards what Newland Archer refers to as “our little social sign-posts” and settles where she feels most at home – among artists (Wharton, 1920, p. 110). Wharton thus places Ellen in direct defiance of Veblen’s model for the demand for the arts. Well endowed with money and status, Ellen willingly reject her social status and chooses to live among artists.

Ellen also represents a new sort of woman – one liberated from her husband through her pursuit of the arts. As Wharton (1920) writes, “It was incredible, but it was a fact, that Ellen, in spite of all her opportunities and her privileges, had become simply ‘Bohemian.’ The fact enforced the contention that she had made a fatal mistake in not returning to Count Olenska. After all, a young woman’s place was under her husband’s roof” (p. 215). The only compelling reason Ellen can see for going back to her abusive husband in Europe is all the opportunities to pursue the arts she sacrifices by staying in New York. But Ellen’s decision to risk economic hardship by staying in New York indicates her rejection of a subservient role. Wharton links Ellen’s empowerment to her connection with the arts. Because the arts

are so liberating, Ellen cannot help but live her life unconfined by male dominance. This is a value of the arts that certainly does not appear in the economics literature.

As portrayed in literature, the arts have the power to liberate women by consumption. These novelists make clear that there is another form of demand for the arts, beyond Bentham's wasteful expenditure or Veblen's conspicuous consumption. Why exactly a connection between the consumption of the arts and the liberation of women exists is unclear but leaves much room for interpretation. Establishing a connection between women and the arts is fairly simple. Taking Veblen's theory into account as well as the evidence of a reoccurring link between women and the arts, it seems evident that the arts were readily available and conventional for women as consumption goods. Thus, a connection between the arts and women is commonplace. It is in explicating why the arts are depicted as liberating forces that becomes more difficult. One interpretation is that there is something about the nature of the arts, perhaps their connection to free expression, which is able to inspire and strengthen those women who pursue them. At the time in which these novelists were writing, both the arts and women were constrained by societal convention; perhaps it is an alliance against convention that made the arts such powerful tools in the liberation of women. Significant, however, is the fact that neither this link nor benefit was conceived of by the economists of the time; economists ignorantly limited the potential value to be found in the demand for the arts.

SUPPLY ORIENTED QUESTIONS ADDRESSED IN CREATIVE LITERATURE

Women at the turn-of-the-century operated in what may be called an occupational prison. Unable to work the same jobs as men, a woman's sole source of income often came

from her husband. Strategic marriage into wealthy families, thus, became the chief objective for many upper middle class women (Gorham, 1982, p. 102). The arts were one resource women could use to attract wealthy men. Veblen (1899) explains this phenomenon, suggesting that women cultivated the arts as a means to feed the conspicuous consumption habits of aristocratic men, either as wives or potential fiancées (p. 63). Men were regarded as the source of productive labor and women as the suppliers of frivolity for the leisured class. Though the arts would never be regarded as economically productive, it became acceptable for women to spend their time producing the arts for the benefit of their families. But even this was limited; Women were not expected to produce the arts for their own fulfillment, but rather simply for the benefit of their husbands or the education of their children. Women, thus, lacked a degree of independence in their association with the arts.

These writers of creative literature reject this normative association between women, the arts and unproductive labor. They insist that the arts need not be a simple one-sided mechanism for maintaining or gaining social status. These creative writers claim that while the arts may be an occupational prison for some women, they are liberating for others. Through the liberation of constrained female artists, these novelists demonstrate that the arts and their market offer certain non-economic returns, namely self-expression and gender equality. These unexpected consequences from the arts indicate the complexity of categorizing these 'goods' in any traditional way within the economics discipline.

George Eliot takes up this theme in *Middlemarch*, illuminating the late nineteenth century view of a divide between male and female labor. Eliot demonstrates that society perceives male labor as productive, whereas, the pursuits of women are characterized by frivolity. This allocation of women to be suppliers of frivolous arts and men productive labor

is made clear in the following interaction between Dorothea Brookes and her uncle. When Dorothea suggests that the best use of land is communal, her uncle, Mr. Brookes, explains to Mr. Casaubon that “Young ladies don’t understand political economy, you know. I remember when we were all reading Adam Smith. *There* is a book, now” (Eliot, 1872, p. 11). Implying that a woman’s place is outside of economic thought, Mr. Brooke continues, “Well, but now, Casaubon, such deep studies, classics, mathematics, that kind of thing, are too taxing for a woman – too taxing, you know. . . . there is a lightness about the feminine mind – a touch and go – music, the fine arts, that kind of thing, they should study those up to a certain point, women should; but in a light way, you know. A woman should be able to sit down and play you or sing you a good Old English tune” (Eliot, 1872, p. 42). Thus, according to this representative Victorian view, because women were incapable of understanding economics or engaging in productive labor, they were to focus their time and energy on the comfort and pleasure of men.

Eliot also emphasizes this polarization of perceptions of male and female productivity through the character of Rosamond Vincy, who serves as a foil to Dorothea and conforms to the Victorian picture of a woman’s societal and economic role as described by Mr. Brooke. “There was nothing financial, still less sordid, in [Rosamond’s] previsions: she cared about what were considered refinements, and not about the money that was to pay for them” (Eliot, 1872, p. 76). Rosamond was the “flower” of Mrs. Lemon’s finishing school and had developed into the model Victorian woman.

Eliot also explores, through the character of Rosamond, the way in which women used the arts to appear passive and genteel so as to make a better ‘catch’ of a husband. Rosamond recognizes the power of her education – she possesses cultural attainments that may be used

to her advantage in finding a wealthy husband. As she grows older and thoughts of marriage become more important, Rosamond becomes more industrious in practicing her arts. “She was active in sketching . . . in practising her music, and in being from morning to night her own standard of a perfect lady. . . . She found time also to read the best novels, even the second best, and she knew much poetry by heart” (Eliot, 1872, p. 107). Additionally, Rosamond has become adroit in using these cultural talents to her advantage: “Rosamond could . . . sing ‘Black-eyed Susan’ with effect, or Haydn’s canzonets, or ‘Voi, che sapete,’ or ‘Batti, batti’ – she only wanted to know what her audience liked” (Eliot, 1872, p. 103). Rosamond has built herself up to be the ideal “servant wife,” adroit in all the skills that will maintain the appearance of her husband’s home. By creating herself into such an ideal wife, Rosamond has ensured her financial security through a strategic marriage.

Eliot’s disdain for the use of the arts in this superficial way, however, is made evident in the respective fates she allots to Rosamond and Dorothea. Though Rosamond is able to use her skills with the arts to attract a wealthy husband of high status, her marriage, on the whole, ends up unsatisfying. Dorothea, on the other hand, never uses the arts vainly. Though she at first gives into convention and marries the Benthamite Casaubon, the arts eventually help to liberate her and she ends the novel happily married to Will Ladislav.

E. M. Forster’s Lucy Honeychurch in *A Room with a View* is similarly expected to use her artistic talents to impress her fiancée, Cecil Vyse. Nevertheless, Lucy struggles to find her independence, constantly battling between her own independent thoughts and her society’s expectations of her. Lucy suppresses many of her independent feelings because she has been raised to believe in conformity. Thus at the start of the novel, “Lucy’s first aim was to defeat herself” and never exert her independence (Forster, 1908, p. 175). In an attempt to

make Lucy “one of us,” and to “rescue his Leonardo [Dorothea] from this stupefying twaddle [country life],” Cecil and his mother, Mrs. Vyse, host a dinner party in honor of Lucy “consisting entirely of the grandchildren of famous people” who seem to be “tired of everything” (Forster, 1908, p. 156, 131). Believing that Lucy’s artistic talents will impress his friends, Cecil requests that Lucy play the piano. Cecil’s request conforms to what is expected of the Victorian upper-class woman in Veblen’s model. Lucy, typically compliant with social conventions, begins to play Schumann for her fiancée and his guests. But when Cecil asks her to switch to Beethoven and attempts to control her artistic impulse, Lucy manages to assert her independence through her one source of independent expression – her piano playing. As Forster (1908) writes, “She played Schumann. ‘Now some Beethoven,’ called Cecil, when the querulous beauty of the music had died. She shook her head and played Schumann again. The melody rose, unprofitably magical. It broke; it was resumed broken, not marching once from the cradle to the grave. The sadness of the incomplete – the sadness that is often Life, but should never be Art – throbbed in its dejected phrases, and made the nerves of the audience throb” (p. 131). Thus, though Lucy at first agrees to use her artistic talent as a tool of attraction and a means to maintain appearances for her fiancée, in the end Lucy maintains her artistic integrity, playing only what she chooses. It is through this control of her art that Lucy is able to maintain some semblance of independence.

Because Lucy understands the role expected of her as the wife of an aristocratic husband, she breaks off her engagement with Cecil. Describing her reasons for doing so, Lucy states that she never had “a really good education” that she cannot remember names of painters or pieces of art and would thus “never be able to talk to your friends” (Forster, 1908, p. 184-5). Lucy could never fit Cecil’s mold; as Forster writes of Lucy’s break “From a

Leonardo she had become a living woman, with mysteries and forces of her own, with qualities that even eluded art” (Forster, 1908, p. 186). Forster skillfully draws us back to an earlier theme – the woman as an artistic possession – to indicate Lucy’s complete break from her role as Cecil’s property. Lucy’s production of the arts has helped lead her to this sense of empowerment, a productive aspect of the arts never considered by economists.

The Creole society Kate Chopin describes in *The Awakening* also fits Veblen’s model of how and why the arts were produced within the leisured class. As Chopin insists, women in Creole society were expected to provide arts for their husbands and their guests to maintain appearances, or in Veblen’s terms, to supply conspicuous consumption goods. Madame Adèle Ratignolle, a devoted wife and mother, is the epitome of this ideal Victorian Creole woman. Adèle does everything for her husband and children; she even sacrifices the joy of her music to satisfy their needs. As Chopin (1899) writes of Adèle, “She was keeping up her music on account of the children, she said; because she and her husband both considered it a means of brightening the home and making it attractive” (p. 25). She plays the piano throughout the novel expressly to entertain her husband and his guests; she never feels any passion for music because it has been reduced to a conspicuous consumption good. Madame Ratignolle thus becomes a representation of the objectified woman, both in art and as an artist, raped of any artistic passion.

Chopin contrasts Adèle’s empty association with the arts with Edna Pontellier’s fulfilling experience. Léonce Pontellier expects his wife Edna to conform to this late Victorian mold that Madame Ratignolle so embodies. As Léonce labors away on Carondelet Street, engaging in productive work, he expects Edna to maintain the appearances of the home. But though Madame Ratignolle serves as the model of the ideal wife, she ironically

catalyzes Edna's move away from such a conformist model. Edna admires Madame Ratignolle for her "Madonna-like" qualities and her honest devotion to her husband and children. But it is partially through her interactions and free speech with Madame Ratignolle that Edna realizes her own passions. Over time and with the assistance of Mademoiselle Reisz, a foil to Madame Ratignolle's conservativeness, and the young aesthete Robert Lebrun, Edna comes to reject her role as subservient wife. She begins her rebellion by abandoning her wifely "duties" to devote herself to the art of painting. This decision is completely inimical to what is expected of a late nineteenth century Creole wife; as Léonce states in reaction to Edna's painting, "It seems to me the utmost folly for a woman at the head of a household, and the mother of children, to spend in an atelier days which would be better employed contriving for the comfort of her family" (Chopin, 1899, p. 57). Edna, finally in touch with her passions, refuses to give in to her husband and simply responds, "I feel like painting" (Chopin, 1899, p. 57). Once she becomes aware of painting's power to express emotion, Edna begins painting with a new fervor. Her art is no longer a diversion from her mundane life, it becomes her principal mode of expression. Dabbling with her sketching materials offers Edna a "satisfaction of a kind which no other employment afforded her. [. . .] Being devoid of ambition, and striving not toward accomplishment, she drew satisfaction from the work in itself" (Chopin, 1899, p. 13, 73). Edna thus elevates the production of the arts from womanly frivolity to a means of self-fulfillment.

Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* also echoes these labor-gender paradigms and gradually releases its female characters from them. Woolf captures the Victorian perspective of women in the economy. Mr. Ramsay, a character based on Woolf's own father, embodies the prototypical Victorian man. He "liked that men should labour and sweat on the windy

beach at night; pitting muscle and brain against the waves and the wind; he likes men to work like that, and women to keep house, and sit beside sleeping children indoors, while men were drowned, out there in a storm” (Woolf, 1927, p. 245). Mrs. Ramsay, similarly, represents the prototypical Victorian woman. Representing conventional Victorian views of marriage, Mrs. Ramsay “would . . . insist that she [Lily] must, Minta must, they all must marry, since in the whole world whatever laurels might be tossed to her (but Mrs. Ramsay cared not a fig for her painting) . . . there could be no disputing this: an unmarried woman has missed the best of life” (Woolf, 1927, p. 77). The Ramsays assert the Victorian gender stereotypes of female labor that women were meant to act as domestic laborers and “servant wives” for their financial security.

Lily Briscoe, however, challenges Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay’s (and Victorian society’s) positioning of women in society by maintaining her one source of independent expression – painting. Lily believes that marriage is not only unnecessary, but is also detrimental for it would destroy her capabilities as an artist. Woolf (1927) expresses Lily’s feelings on the subject of marriage: “she need not marry. . . . She was saved from the dilution” though “she had only escaped by the skin of her teeth” (p. 32). Lily’s defiance of convention is, of course, not quickly accepted and she faces several challenges to her chosen path; as Woolf (1927) writes, Lily is continuously “struggling against terrific odds to maintain her courage; to say: ‘But this is what I see; this is what I see,’ and to clasp some miserable remnant of her vision to her breast, which a thousand forces did their best to pluck away from her” (p. 32). Though no other character can really grasp Lily’s work, it becomes her lasting source of autonomy and satisfaction. Woolf (1927) describes the liberation Lily finds as her painting begins to take form: “[She] felt as if a door had opened, and one went in and stood gazing silently

about in a high cathedral-like place, very dark, very solemn” (p. 255). Over the course of the novel she evolves from a frustrated woman, unable to make sense of the world around her, to an artist who achieves her vision and defeats her anxieties. Lily could not have achieved this independence if she had married and had been forced to relegate her production of art to Veblen’s conspicuous consumption.

Willa Cather in *The Song of the Lark* provides an American example of both the confining and liberating nature of production in the arts by women. Thea Kronborg is a Scandinavian-American singer raised in the desert town of Moonstone, Colorado who becomes a star at the Metropolitan Opera House. Over the course of the novel, Thea’s art evolves from an economic commodity to a source of personal fulfillment. As the musical daughter of a Methodist minister, Thea is obliged to become a “wage-earner,” giving piano lessons and playing and singing for the church in order to gain income for her family (Cather, 1915, p. 93). Confronting the Western attitude that “the railroad is the one real fact in this country,” Thea defies convention and pursues singing (Cather, 1915. P. 74). With the American Institutional attitude that “An engine wiper can get a job, but a piano player! Such people can’t make good” Thea faces many challenges to achieving her dream (Cather, 1915, p.75).

Despite this prominent attitude, Thea’s parents respect and encourage her artistic talents. Thea’s mother, unlike most other women in the early 20th century, encourages her daughter to reject conventional gender paradigms. Cather (1917) writes, “To any other woman there, [the word “talent”] would have meant that a child must have her hair curled every day and must play in public. Mrs. Kronborg knew it meant that Thea must practice four hours a day. A child with talent must be kept at the piano, just as a child with measles

must be kept under the blankets” (p. 25). Thea’s mother deconstructs the notion of producing arts to please others and also illustrates the difficulty of the labor required to produce art.

In her pursuit of self-fulfillment, Thea abandons her proscribed societal role and economic station as a wife. Throughout the novel Thea grieves at the conflict between her personal and professional needs. She battles with the question of marriage over and over again, but in the end, always finds it to be the easy way out. Art always comes first for Thea; for her “Your work becomes your personal life. You’re not much good until it does. It’s like being woven into a big web. You can’t pull away, because all your little tendrils are woven into the picture” (Cather, 1915, p. 385). Thea thus offers an example of a woman who uses the arts to sustain herself economically free from the constraints of marriage. The emphasis placed on Thea’s dedication and the difficulty of her work also operates against the stereotypes of the arts as unproductive labor.

Thea’s production of the arts is multi-dimensional: on one hand, the arts represent a means for Thea to gain economic independence, but, on the other hand, Thea’s production of the arts is a founding element of her identity. Though Thea uses her piano skills to sustain herself economically, singing extends to a much deeper level, far beyond economic value. As Cather (1915) writes, “She had always told herself that she studied piano to fit herself to be a music teacher. But she never asked herself why she was studying voice. Her voice, more than any other part of her, had to do with that confidence, that sense of wholeness and inner well-being that she had felt at moments ever since she could remember” (p. 186). Thea explains this to Dr. Archie, one of her patrons, “What one really strives for in art is not the sort of thing you are likely to find when you drop in for a performance at the opera. What one strives for is so far away, so deep, so beautiful . . . that there’s nothing one can say about

it” (Cather, 1915, p. 388). Cather thus adds another dimension to the production of the arts. The arts exist beyond consumer preferences and their production is a deep, soulful experience that is necessary to the existence of the artist.

Through this array of female characters, Eliot, Forster, Chopin, Woolf, and Cather each wrote against the conventional status of women as frivolous producers of art. Though these writers seem aware of the point made in Veblen’s *Theory of the Leisure Class* of the occupational prison the arts may create, they also indicate that the production of the arts may occur at a deeper level. They concede that there will be women who use the arts to lure husbands, such as Rosamond Vincy, but also demonstrate that others, such as Edna Pontillier, Lily Briscoe, and Thea Kronborg, are motivated to produce the arts out of some innate spiritual connection to them. Additionally, these authors illustrate that those who avoid using the arts in Veblen’s negative way derive value from their production. Lacking economic incentives or returns, the production of the arts provided female artists the opportunity for liberation and autonomy in the mid-19th to early 20th century.

THE ROLE OF THE ‘EXPERT’ IN THE MARKET FOR THE ARTS

A major concern of economists in a capitalist economy is improving information in the marketplace. The more information available to the consumer or investor the better informed decisions she can make, thereby improving the efficiency of exchanges. One source of improved information is an expert; an expert helps to inform participants and reduce insecurity in the marketplace. In the art market, this expert may be either a critic or an aesthete. The creative writers used in this paper consider the role of this expert and ruminate over the productivity added by such a character.

The creative literature used in this paper indicates that within the market for the arts a critic or aesthete is almost always necessary to ‘guide’ ignorant individuals in the arts. This paper has already analyzed the theme found in creative literature of the arts as sources of empowerment and liberation for women. Often, however, the woman in need of liberation requires some sort of guidance to get her to understand the arts and use them in this way. Here enters the aesthete or critic, already an expert in the arts, ready to help the young woman understand the arts. These works repeat similar plot lines: a young woman, inculcated with conventional views of the arts as wasteful, is gradually released from this view with the helpful ‘guidance’ of an aesthete or critic. The consequence of this guidance is the awakening of the young woman to the liberating power of the arts which leads to her eventual autonomy.

The aesthetes or critics that help guide the awakening of these women in these works, however, lack the respect of other characters. Because these young men are not engaged in typical occupations, they are regarded as wasteful idlers by their peers. The occupation of these aesthetes and critics is too unconventional for their societies to understand. These creative writers indicate, however, that such a stereotype is unfounded. The young men they describe are clearly productive for they help these female characters to free themselves from subservience.

This idea of ‘guided awakening’ of a constrained woman led by a young aesthete occurs in most of the works used in this study. One incidence appears in Eliot’s *Middlemarch* in the relationship between Will Ladislaw and Dorothea Brookes. Will is an aspiring artist, fully aware of the potential to be found in the arts. Dorothea’s knowledge of the arts, on the other hand, is fairly immature; she cannot understand or find pleasure in art. In regard to the

work owned by her uncle, Eliot explains that it has no meaning to Dorothea for “she [has] never been taught how to bring them into any sort of relevance to her life” (Eliot, 1872, p. 47). Dorothea describes her ignorance in her own terms to her uncle: “I never see the beauty of those pictures which you say are so praised. They are a language I do not understand. I suppose there is some relation between pictures and nature which I am too ignorant to feel” (Eliot, 1872, p. 51). Eliot thus indicates that for some, the arts are not readily accessible.

The instruction offered by a guide, however, can make the arts not only accessible, but beneficial. With Will’s instruction, the arts come alive to Dorothea and she is able to extract positive benefits from her patronage. On the one hand, she is able to free herself from the constraints of a prototypical Victorian marriage in order to pursue her own interests and desires. On the other hand, the arts connect her with humanity and thereby equip her to battle the social ills which surround her. Directing the emotions she extracts from art into public works, Dorothea ends the novel as a “radiance” of goodness to the extent that “the effect of her being on those around her [is] incalculably diffuse” (Eliot, 1872, p. 515). Will’s role in assisting Dorothea in this discovery thus takes on significance deeper than merely exposing a woman to frivolous pleasure. In this instance, an aesthete is able to awaken another to the social reformatory power of art.

Eliot thus shows the work of the aesthete as clearly productive. Yet, Will’s society does not regard him as anything other than a wasteful idler. Will is described as a “gypsy, rather enjoying the sense of belonging to no class” (Eliot, 1872, p. 286). Casaubon captures the common stereotype of how an aesthete such as Ladislav was regarded in the Victorian era: “Now [Ladislav] wants to go abroad again, without any special object, save the vague purpose of what he calls culture, preparation for he knows not what. He declines to choose a

profession” (Eliot, 1872, p. 52). Casaubon’s opinion of Ladislaw is entirely one-dimensional; he simply views Will as idle and lazy and finds his pursuits empty of productivity. Eliot, however, converts Will into a hero, becoming the chivalrous savior of Dorothea Brookes. Will’s valor derives from his knowledge of the arts and his exposure of Dorothea to the merits of the arts; through this heroic portrayal, Eliot raises the role of the aesthete from its degraded societal position of unproductive labor to a position of enlightened guide.

Kate Chopin likewise presents the helpful role of the artist-critic in *The Awakening*. Edna Pontillier’s ‘guided awakening’ occurs with the help of the temperamental pianist Mademoiselle Reisz. Mme. Reisz’s piano playing teaches Edna the emotive power of music, stirring new feelings and probing undiscovered emotional territories in Edna’s constrained character. As Chopin (1899) describes Edna’s reaction to Mme. Reisz’s art: “By her divine art, [Mme. Reisz] seemed to reach Edna’s spirit and set it free” (p. 78). It is from this eccentric and liberated woman that Edna is able to formalize her own need for liberation. Chopin (1899) depicts the waves of liberation Edna experiences as she listens to Mme. Reisz play:

The very first cords which Mademoiselle Reisz struck upon the piano sent a tremor down Mrs. Pontellier’s spinal column. It was not the first time she had heard an artist at the piano. Perhaps it was the first time she was ready, perhaps the first time her being was tempered to take an impress of the abiding truth. [. . .] the very passions themselves were aroused within her soul, swaying it, lashing it, as the waves beat upon her splendid body. She trembled, she was choking, and the tears blinded her (p. 27).

Edna undergoes similar experiences with Mme. Reisz’s piano playing upon her return to New Orleans. Edna seeks out Mme. Reisz for continued inspiration as she battles to separate herself from her husband and pursue her artistic impulse. Her visits with Mme. Reisz quiet “the turmoil in Edna’s senses” for “the divine art, seemed to reach Edna’s spirit and set it

free” (Chopin, 1899, p. 78). Chopin, like Eliot, thus indicates the productive nature of the aesthete in society.

In *The Portrait of a Lady*, Henry James offers another example of the importance of the aesthete in the market for the arts through the character of Ralph Touchette. Ralph, by American Institutional standards, may be regarded as idle and wasteful for he is a leisurely European without regular occupation who pursues the arts out of personal desire. James, however, indicates that though Ralph may not fit traditional molds of productive labor, his work as an aesthete is significant and positive.

Ralph finds some higher value in the arts, apart from their being consumption goods. Ralph keeps a collection of paintings in the gallery of the Touchette estate and James portrays him as possessing the most enlightened view in the novel. Ralph is wholly unconcerned with money or the typical aristocratic standards. He describes his own atypical views of wealth as such: “I call people rich when they are able to gratify their imagination” (James, 1881, p. 167). James is thus careful to set up a character that does not fit into an amoral mold.

James once again uses Miss Henrietta Stackpole to investigate the European demand for the arts and the role of the aesthete in this demand function. Miss Stackpole is at first representative of the American Institutional view of the aesthete as wasteful and idle. When Miss Stackpole is told that Ralph “Does nothing. He’s a gentleman of leisure” her first response is negative. She exclaims, “Well, I call that a shame – when I have to work like a cotton-mill. I should like to show him up” (James, 1881, p. 89). Miss Stackpole’s negative view of Ralph is exacerbated when he himself states, “I am the idlest man living.” Ralph then turns to a Jean Antoine Watteau painting of a gentleman in a pink doublet, hose and a ruff,

leaning against the pedestal of a statue of a nymph in a garden, and playing the guitar to ladies seated on the grass and states, “That’s my ideal of a regular occupation” (James, 1881, p. 90). Miss Stackpole is appalled by what she calls Ralph’s lack of conscience and advises him to “cultivate one” for he “will need it the next time you go to America” (James, 1881, p. 90). Though Miss Stackpole deplors Ralph’s lack of occupation throughout much of the book, in the end, she comes to appreciate and respect his attachment to the arts. Miss Stackpole witnesses how Ralph’s guidance of Isabel Archer in the arts helps her to maintain her autonomy. Through the transition in Miss Stackpole’s approach to Ralph, James demonstrates that there is a positive productive aspect to the ‘work’ of the aesthete.

George Emerson in Forster’s *A Room with a View* plays a similar role to James’s Ralph Touchette. Along with his father, George Emerson guides Lucy Honeychurch’s awakening to the positive value of the arts. George and his father offer Lucy a unique “view” from the one her conventional society confines her to. Forster alludes to this view in the opening scene of the novel. As Miss Charlotte Bartlett complains about not having rooms with a view at the Pension Bertolini, Mr. Emerson interrupts to offer his and his son’s rooms, stating, “I have a view, I have a view. [. . .] This is my son, his name’s George. He has a view too” (Forster, 1908, p. 4). Though Mr. Emerson is literally referring to the views of the Arno River, his reference to “views” may be taken on a metaphorical level to mean outlooks. As Mr. Emerson and the rest of the guests at the Pension Bertolini argue over these rooms, Lucy begins to realize that the “views” they discuss are not only room-views, but also societal views. As Forster (1908) writes, “Lucy, too, was perplexed; but she saw that they were in for what is known as ‘quite a scene,’ and she had an odd feeling that whenever these ill-bred tourists spoke the contest widened and deepened till it dealt, not with rooms and views, but

with – well, with something quite different, whose existence she had not realized before” (p. 5). Thus, from this opening scene, Forster eludes to the significant impact these two aesthetes and their “views” will have on the gradual awakening of Lucy Honeychurch.

In stark contrast to the Emersons, Forster presents the character of Mr. Eager to represent an improper guide to the arts. Prominent at the turn of the century was the popular belief that one could only experience art properly and fashionably if one had the correct guidebook and instructions. In this sense, travel and the arts became a form of conspicuous consumption for the leisured class who had the income to conform to such conventions. Eager is representative of a guide to the consumption of the arts in this way and may thus be regarded as a mock aesthete. Eager portrays himself to be a well-informed critic of the arts and he is, formally, quite knowledgeable of art, but his understanding of art is limited to fashion. Thus, when Lucy and several other British tourists arrive in Italy, Eager offers to take them on a tour of the Italian countryside. Eager praises the view his fellow Englishmen witness on their way to Fiesole: “a view that Alessio Baldovinettis is fond of introducing in his pictures” (Forster, 1907, p. 63). But though Eager knows the names of artists and the titles of their works, his understanding of art is perfunctory for he cannot connect Italian art with Italian culture. Eager is strongly connected within the English residential colony and thus introduces to his ‘tour group’ the idea of having tea at a Renaissance villa with an Englishman who “*living in delicate seclusion, . . . read, wrote, studied, and exchanged ideas, thus attaining to that intimate knowledge, or rather perception, of Florence which is denied to all who carry in their pockets the coupons of Cook*” (Forster, 1907, p. 63). It is this “delicate seclusion,” however, which hinders these English ‘colonists’ from really seeing or understanding Italy or its arts. Though Eager criticizes the British tourist abroad for relying so

heavily on her Baedeker and guides, he too fails to connect with Italian culture; his understanding of art thus has no positive externalities and he cannot serve as an effective 'guide' to the arts.

Forster also criticizes this conventionally guided form of demand for the arts through the gradual change in Lucy's approach to the arts. Lucy, confined by her English middleclass upbringing, cannot approach the arts devoid of convention; thus, when she loses her Baedeker guidebook and is left in the Santa Croce without a guide she becomes frustrated and afraid of her disorientation. She fears that she will not be able to understand the art she is witnessing without such a conventional guide. As Forster (1907) writes,

A few minutes ago she had been all high spirits, talking as a woman of culture, and half persuading herself that she was full of originality. Now she entered the church depressed and humiliated, not able even to remember whether it was built by Franciscans or the Dominicans. [. . .] Of course, it contained frescoes by Giotto, in the presence of whose tactile values she was capable of feeling what was proper. But who was to tell her which they were? She walked about disdainfully, unwilling to be enthusiastic over monuments of uncertain authorship or date. There was no one even to tell her which, of all the sepulchral slabs that paved the nave and transepts, was the one that was really beautiful, the one that had been most praised by Mr. Ruskin (p. 22).

Lucy, however, is rescued from her ignorance by Mr. Emerson. Of Emerson's guidance, Forster (1907) later writes that Lucy "'never exactly understood,' she would say in after years, 'how he managed to strengthen her. It was as if he had made her see the whole of everything at once'" (p. 223).

After her interlude with the Emersons, Lucy begins to understand how inappropriate her British guides had been up until this point. Her first 'awakening' to this inappropriate approach occurs as she does her souvenir shopping. At first, when she purchases art in the

Alinari's shop she chooses only pre-approved art "for her taste was catholic, and she extended uncritical approval to every well-known name" (Forster, 1907, p. 43). Gradually, however, she comes to realize that this conventional patronage leaves her with a feeling of emptiness, that "nothing ever happens to [her]" (Forster, 1907, p. 44). Lucy thus begins to realize how inappropriate her British guides are:

Under the chaplain's guidance they selected many hideous presents and mementoes – flolid little picture-frames that seemed fashioned in gilded pastry; other little frames, more severe, that stood on bellum; a Dante of the same material; cheap mosaic brooches, which the maids, next Christmas, would never tell from real; pins, pots, heraldic saucers, brown art-photographs; Eros and Psyche in alabaster; St. Peter to match – all of which would have cost less in London. [. . .] This successful morning left no pleasant impressions on Lucy. She had been a little frightened, both by Miss Lavish and by Mr. Eager, she knew not why. And as they frightened her, she had, strangely enough, ceased to respect them. She doubted that Miss Lavish was a great artist. She doubted that Mr. Eager was as full of spirituality and culture as she had been led to suppose. They were tried by some new test, and they were found wanting (Forster, 1907, p. 56).

It is from her experience with the Emersons that Lucy is able to discern the emptiness of her previous guidance. As Forster (1907) writes, "The well-known world had broken up, and there emerged Florence, a magic city where people thought and did the most extraordinary things" (p. 59).

It takes a lot of time and effort for Lucy to reform her outlook on the arts, but when she does the benefits are innumerable. This occurs because of the help she receives from the Emersons. Lucy requires this help perhaps because she is so inundated with Victorian convention; she needs two radicals to lead her out of her puritanical upbringing in regard to art.

In a reversal of a theme found in Eliot and James, in *The Age of Innocence* Wharton begins not with a woman in need of liberation, but with one in full possession of her own autonomy and positioned to bring freedom to the most unlikely of characters – a young man. Wharton uses the cosmopolitan Ellen to liberate Newland Archer through the arts. Ellen challenges Newland to rethink his aesthetic values and the European-American traditions that create them and she reveals Newland's bondage to social codes. For example, Newland observes, in reaction to the Countess Olenska's drawing room, that the room "was so different from any he had ever breathed that self-consciousness vanished in the sense of adventure" (Wharton, 1920, p. 69). And as he explains to Ellen, "You gave me my first glimpse of a real life, and at the same moment you asked me to go on with a sham one" (Wharton, 1920, p. 203). Though Newland is given this "glimpse of life" he is unable to take advantage of it. Tied to conventions, Newland fails to become an honest patron of the arts. By the end of the novel, Newland concludes that he has missed the "flower of life." As he walks through the galleries of the Louvre: "For an hour or more he wandered from gallery to gallery through the dazzle of afternoon light, and one by one the pictures burst on him in their half-forgotten splendour, filling his soul with the long echoes of beauty. After all, his life had been too starved. . . ." (Wharton, 1920, p. 282). It is Newland's prudish denial of the arts as anything more than conspicuous consumption goods which leads him to such a melancholy fate. The relationship between Newland and Ellen thus offers an example of a failed guided awakening. Importantly, however, Wharton demonstrates the potential for enlightenment if such guidance were followed.

The presence of a "guide" in the art market who helps change the views of women toward the arts has three important implications. The first is that perhaps because changing

the position of women in society was such a revolutionary phenomenon it required an outside force to help change convention. The second implication is that perhaps the art market cannot function entirely on its own; there is a need for some sort of intervention in the market to have it function efficiently because the arts are difficult to understand without the assistance of an expert. Lastly, the stereotype associated with the critic or aesthete as unproductive or wasteful is perhaps misplaced. These authors indicate that this character is productive in unconventional ways by helping women become liberated. If the arts are viewed as socially beneficial or as an innate part of the human experience, which this paper has tried to indicate, the critic's role in the art market takes on a new importance.

CONCLUSIONS

Economists of the modern era saw both the demand and supply for the arts as simple and one-dimensional. Bentham claimed that the arts were merely an example of income elastic goods whose demand increased as incomes rose. Veblen proffered that the arts were little more than conspicuous consumption goods for the upper middle class. In regard to supply, economists contributed even less insight, relegating the production of the arts to unproductive labor. Those that produced the arts were considered wasteful idlers. Or as Veblen interpreted the production of the arts, the supply for these goods actually led to the further suppression of women. Operating in a production straightjacket, the arts constrained women into producing the arts to attract husbands or maintain the appearance of their husbands' homes. Thus, economists accepted the Victorian stereotype that there existed different types of labor for men and women; while men engaged in the productive variety, women engaged in the non-productive artistic variety. On the whole, not only did the

economic discourse lack a complex understanding of the arts, but the little it hypothesized was derogatory.

Literary writers, however, contributed several insights into how the demand and supply functions of the arts are composed. Though they observe the presence of the one-dimensional demand and supply of the arts as described by Veblen and Bentham, creative writers also indicate that the consumption and production of the arts occurs on a much deeper, innately human level. Most significantly, these literary writers imply that not only is the demand and the supply of the arts dynamic, but that in the production and consumption of the arts, society may extract positive values, such as the liberation of women or personal self-fulfillment.

The discovery of this wealth of information within creative literature on an understanding of the market for the arts holds several implications for the economics discourse generally. Economists tend to ignore social phenomena as extraneous to economic modeling. As Pujol (1992) writes, “In the neoclassical paradigm . . . the scope/subject matter has been defined in a narrow and exclusionary fashion. Neoclassical economics has traditionally focused on exchange relations, excluding non-monetary/non-market economic activity” (p. 3). The fact that the role of both the arts and women in the economy was notably absent from economic discourse but was highly prevalent within creative literature draws attention to the need for a connection between the economics discipline and general social phenomena. The arts stand opposed to simple classification and thus, by their nature, pose many problems for economists. Thus, for a better understanding of the market for the arts, some collaboration between the social sciences and the humanities is absolutely essential.

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