

CLASS 1 : IT'S YOUR PEDESTAL

A. WOMEN IN TRANSITION

1. Class title 1 (Gérôme: *Pygmalion*)
2. Class structure

Before we start, let me say something about how this class will go. For much of it, I will be diving into some works from the Nineteenth Century by or about woman, so we can get a feel for the range of what we will be talking about. But I also want to spend some time on the background to the course: how I originally thought it would be *about* women, rather than *by* women. Every other class will consist of works—art, poetry, music—entirely by women; this one lays the groundwork for that and includes men.

3. Section title A (Berthe Morisot: *In the Garden at Maurecourt, 1884, Toledo*)

I am starting with the later Nineteenth Century, partly because it is an easy period to get into, but mainly because it is the beginning of an important period of transition for Western Women. Let's start by pairing a painting by a woman—the Impressionist **Berthe Morisot** (1841–95)—with the last 70 seconds of a piano quartet written by another Frenchwoman at the turn of the century. At first the playful music and picture work well together; but then I had to change the image to keep up...

4. Bonis: *Piano Quartet* (1905), ending [1:11]

What did you hear? I do hope Berthe Morisot will forgive me for transforming her picture, but that image won't work for the music with which the quartet ends; That playful quality turned into something far more assertive. The composer, **Mel Bonis** (1858–1937) is someone I had never heard of before I started researching this course; clearly, although she is writing for a small ensemble here, she is a person who thinks big; we will hear more of her at the end of the class. I have no doubt that the senior composer **Camille Saint-Saëns** (1835–1921) meant his remark as a compliment, but the very fact that he felt the need to mention the composer's gender makes it an insult to women as a whole. It seems impossible for anyone of this period to mention women without immediately **classifying** them—bringing in expectations as to what they are and are not. This class is about those traditional classifications and the difficulty—ultimately the uselessness—of making them

5. Course title slide 1 (Goddess, Muse, Creator)

I keep falling into the classification trap myself. This course is a revision of one I gave in Baltimore a year and a half ago. I gave it the title shown here, **Goddess, Muse, Creator**, because although I really wanted to talk about female *creative* artists, I doubted I would find enough of them, so I would have to pad it out with the other roles women have played in the arts: as ideals of beauty or purity, as inspirations, or simply as models. But I was wrong. By the time I was halfway into my preparation, I had discovered

dozens of wonderful painters, composers and poets (I use the term “artists” for all of them), more than half of whom were virtually unknown to me. I was stuck with the title by then, but I could at least change its emphasis; this time around, I am not even going to go there.

6. Course title slide 2 (Goddess, Muse, CREATOR)
7. Course title slide 3 (Women in the Arts)

I condemn classification, but realize that I am a similar *Catch-22* situation myself by even giving this course; why should women artists need special pleading, after all? Simply because they are not well enough known. When I did my first version of the course in Baltimore, 38% of the women mentioned in the course were entirely new to me, and about another 25% I knew only by name or from a single work. So I hope you will join me in this voyage of discovery, and excuse any inadvertent left-handed compliments—or indeed call me out on them!

B. NINETEENTH-CENTURY DECONSTRUCTIONS

8. Section title B (Gérôme, Gonzalès, Millais)

A word about my method. In the first and last half-hour of today’s class, I am going to ask you to join me in a series of **deconstructions** of works from this same general period: mostly paintings in the first half, poetry and music after it. To get the ball rolling, I invite you to join me in deconstructing these three works from the second half of the 19th century: *Pygmalion and Galatea* (1890) by **Jean-Léon Gérôme** (1824–1904), *The Death of Ophelia* (1852) by **John Everett Millais** (1829–96), and *A Box at the Théâtre Italien* (1874) by **Eva Gonzalès** (1849–83).

9. Gérôme: *Pygmalion and Galatea* (1890–92): study and exhibition version

GALATEA. This shows two versions of *Pygmalion and Galatea* (1890–92) by **Jean-Léon Gérôme** (1824–1904). As the title for this class, I chose the one on the left, an earlier study that he never exhibited, because it gives equal prominence to the artist and his sculpture. In the version that he exhibited in 1892, the two figures are reversed. So let me put the two together and ask you some questions about each. Why did he choose to exhibit the second version rather than the first? What does the change do to the relationship between the male artist and his female sculpture? And what is the significance of the myth in general? The main reason for the change, I think, is one of decorum; by showing the back of the figure rather than the front, and by hiding the kiss, Gérôme is staying within the standards of decency at the time. But what this does is to make the artist in the finished picture a subservient figure to his creation, who now towers above him and half hides him. I used the picture to illustrate my jokey title, *It’s Your Pedestal—Stay There!*, but in fact she’s *not* staying there, but very much entering his world. The Pygmalion story, I think, treads a thin line between worship of the ideal woman as goddess and the *acquisition* of such a woman as the man’s creature, invented by him and under his control. What I like about Gérôme’s second picture especially is that the question of who’s in control is left quite undecided!

10. Gérôme: *Artist and his Model* (1895, above) and photograph with Emma Dupont

Gérôme's model, like all professional models, was a real person, working in order to earn a living. We know a little about her, and even have a photo or two. Called **Emma Dupont**, she apparently followed a lover to Paris at age 17, but was abandoned by him and had to find some way to support herself. Gérôme was not the first artist to employ her, but once he did, he kept working with her for more than a decade. Although there is a decidedly erotic quality to both versions of the *Pygmalion*, there is no evidence that his relationship with Emma was ever more than professional.

11. Millais: *Ophelia*, (1852, Tate Britain)

LIZZIE SIDDAL. Moving back to the middle of the century, **John Everett Millais' *Ophelia*** (1852) exemplifies a different attitude to female subjects: what would you say it is? To me, it is the vulnerable woman as victim, with a piquant touch of hysteria and madness thrown in. It goes back of course to **Shakespeare**, who has quite a few victim-heroines—Juliet, Desdemona, and Cordelia are examples—but Ophelia goes further in losing her wits. She appealed particularly to the Victorians, who liked to see women as fragile flowers, in need of men's protection.

12. Photo of Elizabeth Siddal, c.1860

In this case, we know even more about Millais' model: **Elizabeth Siddal** (1829–62). She posed for Millais when she was only 17, spending long hours lying fully clothed in a tub of water. According to Wikipedia, Millais placed oil lamps under the tub to keep it warm, but he carelessly let them go out, and Lizzie caught a terrible cold as a result; her father sued Millais for medical expenses. Perhaps this contributed to her poor health and early death. Nothing daunted, Siddal sat for several other **Pre-Raphaelite** painters, and in 1860 she married the leader of them, **Dante Gabriel Rossetti** (1828–82).

13. Three views of Lizzie Siddal

14. Rossetti: *Regina Cordium* (1860, Johannesburg), with Siddal: *Lady Clare*

Here is one of Millais' sketches of her, and a brush-and-ink drawing by Rossetti. As you see, she is sitting at an easel, for this is the important point: **she was herself a painter**; the circular picture is her own self-portrait. Rossetti was obsessed with her, and she appears again and again in his works. The one on the right, *Regina Cordium* (Queen of Hearts), is his marriage gift. It all seems so romantic—except that Rossetti did not introduce her to his parents, because she came from a lower-class family, and the marriage was a secretive affair outside of London with only two witnesses. Still, it seems he allowed her to continue painting, and some of her works may have been collaborations; they are certainly very much in the Pre-Raphaelites' medievalizing style.

15. Christina Rossetti: *In the Artist's Studio*

It took the artist's sister, the poet **Christina Rossetti** (1830–94) to see the unhealthy side of her brother's obsession. Let me read her sonnet, *In the Artist's Studio*. The last two lines are devastating: "*Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright; | Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.*" Lizzie was clearly his muse, but was it a two-way street?

16. Elizabeth Siddal: *The Lust of the Eyes*

Like both the Rossettis, Lizzie also was a poet, and her poem *The Lust of the Eyes* is even more devastating than her sister-in-law's. Seeing herself through her husband's eyes, she realizes that he has little concern for *her* goals, and his love will stray elsewhere once her beauty is gone. [You may have noticed that both the pictures of hers that I showed are of men rejecting the entreaties of a woman.] Lizzie's health failed, both physical and mental, the latter exacerbated by post-partum depression following the stillbirth of her only child. It is pretty clear that she took her own life by an overdose of laudanum. Rossetti was devastated.

17. Manet: *Eva Gonzalès painting* (c.1870)

EVA GONZALÈS. It should be a relief now to get on to an artist who did have a modest success, and did not kill herself. This is **Eva Gonzalès** who, despite the Spanish name, was a French painter. She studied with **Édouard Manet** (1832–83), who thought highly of her, even painting her portrait at the easel—albeit dressed highly inappropriately for the purpose! Her style remained close to that of her mentor. Like him, she is often counted among the Impressionists, though also like him, she never joined in their group exhibitions, but turned to the official *Salon* instead.

18. Eva Gonzalès: *A Box at the Théâtre des Italiens* (1874, Paris Orsay)

This is probably her best-known painting, a couple in a box at the theatre. I'll show it alone for a moment, to hear what you see in it, particularly what you can guess about the two people depicted. Then I'll give you a couple of comparisons that might sharpen your focus; the points I am hoping to make are quite subtle. So what can you tell about this couple? What is their relationship? What is each looking at? I think they are married; it doesn't look like a date—for one thing, there is no chaperone. They are together, yet not together; they are each looking in quite different directions. He is probably looking at some other box on the same level; she might possibly be looking at the stage, but she seems too distracted for that, too much lost in her own thoughts.

19. Renoir: *La Loge* (1874, London Courtauld) and Cassatt: *In the Loge* (1878, Boston MFA)

20. — the Renoir with a detail of the Gonzalès

21. — the Cassatt, with detail

Here is a painting of a similar subject by **Pierre-Auguste Renoir** (1841–1919) of exactly the same date, 1874. And beside it, a work by a woman artist who *did* exhibit with the Impressionists, the American **Mary Cassatt** (1844–1926). Let's focus on just one of the questions: what are the people looking at? In the Renoir, it seems that neither is looking at the stage; she is looking down into the auditorium, and he is scanning the boxes, perhaps to see if he can find anyone more attractive. It is a reminder that theatre-going in that society was as much a matter of being seen as seeing the production—and Renoir is far more interested in the optics of being seen than in the psychology of the couple. So with this in mind, how do you view the Cassatt? It is striking how sober it is, and also how intent the woman is on looking at the stage and nothing else—even though there is a man with opera glasses further down the line looking intently at *her!* And I think it not coincidental that the painter of the independently-minded

woman is a woman herself. Eva Gonzalès' woman does not have this intense concentration, but she is no socialite either. More than either of the other two artists, I suggest that Gonzalès is inviting us to look, not at, but *into* her, and that what we see is a portrait of a troubled marriage.

22. All three pictures together

23. Eva Gonzalès: *Morning Awakening* (1876, Bremen)

Oh, one further note: When Eva Gonzalès submitted this work to the *Salon* in 1874, the judges rejected it, saying that it had such “masculine vigor” that they doubted it had been painted by the artist herself! They had no trouble, however, in accepting obviously “feminine” works like this.

24. Goddess, Muse, Creator

These three paintings, the *Gérôme*, the *Millais*, and the *Cassatt*, could be said to exemplify the three prongs of my original title: **Goddess, Muse, Creator**—though Elizabeth Siddal, the muse of Millais and Rossetti, was herself also a creator.

C. WOMEN WITH A HISTORY 10:35

25. Section title C: “Women with a History” (Manet and Cassatt)

Here are two more paintings from the later 19th century to consider: the *Olympia* of 1863 by **Manet** and one of many *Mother and Child* paintings by **Mary Cassatt**. If you knew nothing about art history, you would see two realistic works featuring quite ordinary women; what view of womanhood does each portray? The Manet is clearly an upscale prostitute; the Cassatt is a decent upper-middle-class woman in a nice home. But they resonate against centuries-old traditions of earlier art; hence my title “Women with a History.” Together, they represent the extreme categories against which women have all too often been compared: **Virgin and Whore**.

26. Raphael: *Small Cowper Madonna* (1505) with the 1906 Cassatt

But wait! Cassatt's sitter is clearly a married woman, and thus no virgin. But in a Catholic-dominated culture in which the Virgin Mary is honored simultaneously as Virgin and Mother, the two are morally identical. The Impressionists were realists and, on the face of it, the Cassatt is not a sacred picture. But isn't there also something sacred about this celebration of woman's unique role as the bearer of new life? Cassatt was not married herself, but she made a career out of painting women and children. Why do you think this was? There are lots of possible answers: **Personal**: because she was a maternal kind of person who loved children? **Practical**: because these were the subjects most readily available to her? **Professional**: because they found a market? All of these, I think, in increasing order of importance. But another reason, I think, is her awareness of the long tradition of the *Madonna and Child*, going back to the Renaissance. Though entirely realistic, Cassatt's pictures of mothers and children tap into a deep vein in the culture.

27. “Virgin and Venus” (Gothic Madonna and Greek Venus)

But even the “Goddess” portion of my original title raises questions. What are the most frequent depictions of women in Western Art? The **Virgin Mary**, hands down, probably followed by the pagan goddess **Venus**. They make two neat poles for a survey of how women have been depicted by male artists. But it is not the same as the Virgin/Whore dichotomy. Indeed, the Venus figure is curiously ambivalent. Let’s again go back to the Renaissance and look at some examples.

28. Botticelli: *The Birth of Venus* (1485, Florence Uffizi)

The Greek statue on my slide was a type called *Venus Anadyomene* or Venus rising from the sea. The most famous treatment of the subject in Renaissance art is *The Birth of Venus* (c.1485) by **Sandro Botticelli** (1445–1510). So here she is, with her lovely, naked, young-adult body, but newly born. This Venus surely virginal. My Virgin/Venus duality may not be in opposition after all.

29. Giorgione (and Titian?): *Dresden Venus* (c.1510, Dresden) Titian: *Venus of Urbino* (1534, Florence Uffizi)

All depictions of women by men, other than the most mundane, have either to **negotiate** the sexual aspect or deny it completely: Venus or Virgin. We can watch this negotiation in progress in a famous comparison of *Venus* paintings from the early 16th century: the so-called *Dresden Venus* by **Giorgione** (1477–1510) possibly with the help of his young pupil **Titian**, and then the *Venus of Urbino* by Titian alone, a quarter-century later. One is obviously based on the other, but what are the differences? The setting, the coloration, and above all the **awareness** in the later painting; the virgin Venus has become the erotic Venus with little more than a flick of the brush.

30. Titian: *Venus with a Lutenist* (c.1550, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge) Titian: *Venus with an Organist* (c.1550, Prado, Madrid)

This was in Venice, where eroticism was popular. Some years later, Titian made a number of paintings of Venus with a Musician that were quite specifically erotic. Here are two of them. Music has always had erotic connotations; so have many musical instruments. The lute with its rounded belly and phallic fingerboard is a fairly obvious symbol. And it would not have escaped those lovers of visual puns that the organ—an appropriate name—is adorned with pipes, all standing straight upward. In a class two years ago, I made some of these paintings into a montage to accompany a madrigal by Franco-Flemish composer, **Giaches de Wert** (1535–96). The text is quite racy, based on the pun that the word “die” can be used in a sexual as well as a literal sense. I pick it up at the point where the two of them are clearly getting it on. They quickly reach their goal, and there is a pause. Then the voices sing the last three lines, constantly overlapping the phrase “Che per ancor morir,” only to die again... and again... and again.

31. Giaches de Wert: *Tirsi morir volea*, last two sections [1:54] 32. Manet: *Olympia* (1863, Paris Orsay)

So now what do we think of the Manet in the light of its two obvious models? One thing that strikes me is how *non*-sexy she is. She is neither vulnerable like the Giorgione nor inviting like the Titian; the

frankness of her look seems almost challenging. In fact, we are supposed to see her as a prostitute; Olympia was the kind of name that French prostitutes took at the time. It is a realist picture, not at all an idealized one. Though the sitter, Manet's frequent model **Victorien Meurent**, was certainly not a prostitute herself.

33. Quotation from Linda Nochlin

We have been dealing with invidious stereotypes, born of man's desire to put women into neat pigeonholes. But **Linda Nochlin** (1931–2017)—who basically created the study of feminist art history in 1971, when she published an article in *ARTNews*, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?”—argues forcefully that women cannot be so classified; I will be doing more on her after the break.

34. Albrecht Dürer: *Adam and Eve*: engraving (1504), and painting (1507, Prado)

But there is one other figure within the Judaeo-Christian tradition that manages also to reject classification: our ancestor **Eve**. Here are two depictions by **Albrecht Dürer** (1471–1528). Eve is interesting, because she is simultaneously a sacred figure and the first sinner. She is both mother and temptress. And, like Venus, she can be portrayed naked. Her ambiguity—her humanity—makes her a much better example of the complex image of woman that Linda Nochlin was writing about.

35. Cranach and Goltzius: *Adam and Eve* (1526 and 1616)

Here are two paintings from Northern Europe that suggest this ambiguity: the relatively straightforward depiction by **Lucas Cranach** (1472–1553) and, 90 years later, a version by **Hendrik Goltzius** (1558–1617), more complex because more sexually charged.

36. Stanhope: *Eve Tempted* (1877, Manchester) with poem by Danusha Laméris

One more slide, and then we're done. The 1877 *Eve* by the second-generation Pre-Raphaelite **John Spencer Stanhope** (1829–1908) takes us back to the later 19th century where we began. Beside it, I put the voice of a woman, after so much else by men. This is **Danusha Laméris** (b.1971), a Black Californian poet I know nothing else about. Hers is clearly a modern feminist take on Eve: a woman eager to break from the myth and define herself on her own terms. I find it wonderfully refreshing.

37. Class title 2 (modified Botticelli)

38. Website 1

39. Website 2

D. FOOTNOTES NO LONGER! 11:10

40. Section title D (Guerrilla Girls poster)

I still have nineteenth-century works to visit in the fields of poetry and music, but I need to pause for ten minutes to add a couple of footnotes about the Feminist movement of the 1970s and its effect on art history. But wait! The whole point of the feminist movement is that women refusing to be relegated to being mere footnotes to male art history—hence my title for this section, **Footnotes No Longer!** Let's start with a 5-minute video produced by the Tate Gallery; the presenter is the actor **Jemima Kirke**.

41. Tate Gallery: *Where are the Women?* [4:58]

42. Alice Neel and Kathleen Gilje: portraits of Linda Nochlin

Here are two portraits of Linda Nochlin by American painters: the old-school realist **Alice Neel** (1900–84) doing an update on one of Mary Cassatt's themes, and the artist and art restorer **Kathleen Gilje** (b.1945) doing an update of Manet. I am showing them to close the circle with the later 19th century where I began this class, and also to recommend this book, *Women Artists: the Linda Nochlin Reader*. Among many other things (including illustrated essays on both Neel and Gilje), it includes her seminal 1971 article, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?*

43. Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?

Here is a summary of Nochlin's points: (1) *actually, there have been plenty of great artists, or at least many very good ones, but art history has been written mainly by men*; (2) *the concept of "great" is itself a gender construct, based on a romantic/heroic image built around men*; (3) *traditional paths to success demanded access to academies, mentors, and in particular nude models, for many centuries unavailable to women*; and (4) *it is not the usual excuse, that women are less capable, or think in different ways.*

44. Nochlin: *Representing Women*, book cover

As you heard Jemima Kirke explain at the end of that video, the solution is not easy. Slotting a few women into the canon is merely tokenism; writing separate histories devoted only to women runs the danger of divorcing the art from its social and historical context—although this could easily be my own fate in constructing this class. The only thing is to acknowledge the problem, and develop approaches to art history that operate within this larger consciousness, applying them also to work by men. This is in effect what she does in her collection *Representing Women*, in which all but one of the artists discussed are men, but I have to admit it is a more difficult book than most of the articles in the *Reader*.

E. WOMEN IN VERSE 11:20

45. Section title E (Cary, Rossetti, Hardy, Patmore)

It is becoming clear to me that my method, in a course of such scope, cannot possibly be an all-over survey that touches on everything in the right proportion, but rather a series of vignettes that may or may not be relevant to a larger theme. So for this section, I want to continue the approach of focusing on specific works from the 19th century that I used in the first hour, and apply it to **four poems about women**, all written between 1854 and 1866. Two are by men, two by women. Two are complete; two are extracts from longer works.

46. Patmore: *The Angel in the House*, title

47. Patmore: *The Angel in the House*, excerpt 1

Gender roles in Victorian England were closely defined. Wives were simultaneously objects of worship and the servants of their husband's needs. And the gospel of this doctrine was the long poem *The Angel in the House*, first published in 1854 by **Coventry Patmore** (1823–96). Talking of women as goddesses, Patmore's prologue is nothing but an extended act of worship, claiming—as poets have done since time immemorial—that his feeble skills are totally unworthy of their subject: **his wife Emily**, shown here in a portrait by **Millais**.

48. Patmore: *The Angel in the House*, excerpt 2

So far so good, but what about the wife's service to her husband? These lines, which are the most quoted in the poem, lay it out neatly. She derives pleasure from pleasing him, and even when he errs or strays takes the blame upon herself. The illustration here is a photo made for the poem by **Julia Margaret Cameron** (1815–79), one of the first photographers to use the camera like a painter's brush rather than a reporter's notepad.

49. Alice Cary: *The Bridal Veil*

Let's nip across the Atlantic to an American poet, **Alice Cary** (1820–71). Published in 1866, her poem *The Bridal Veil* could hardly be more different from Patmore's concept. For Cary, marriage is not a one-time contract, but something that must be lived up to every day: "You must grow to new heights if I love you tomorrow." But note that she does admit that a happy marriage is possible; the veil can be either "A cover for peace that is dead," or in the best circumstances, "a token of bliss that can never be written or spoken." So far as I know, Cary did not actually marry; it would be an astounding poem if she had, but it is still pretty amazing.

50. Thomas Hardy: *She to Him, II*

At exactly the same time, **Thomas Hardy** (1840–1928) was writing set of sonnets called *She to Him*, though he did not publish them until 1898. In the second of the series, he imagines a wife looking back and realizing that while marriage for her was a lifelong commitment, it was no more than a passing thought to him. I find it very painful to read, because it strikes so true. Hardy was not married at the

time; he did not meet the woman shown here, **Emma Gifford**, until 1870. She too was a writer, and an activist for women's suffrage. But their marriage did turn out to be difficult; he found her impossible to live with, and had turned to at least one other woman well before Emma died in 1912. When he went through her things, however, he came upon a notebook called "What I think of my husband." So far as I know, it was never published, but it was enough to fill Hardy, at least temporarily, with remorse.

51. Christina Rossetti: *Goblin Market*, title

Now for something very strange, a narrative poem that takes the form of a children's fairy tale, but whose implications appear to be directed entirely at adults: *Goblin Market* (1859), by **Christina Rossetti**. It is the story of two sisters, **Lizzie and Laura**, who hear the call of the Goblins selling their fruits. One resists, the other doesn't. Here are the first five minutes, recorded by some Englishman on his iPhone; he does not give his name. I put it all on the web. I have added illustrations: this one and the title page are by her brother **Dante Gabriel Rossetti**; the others are from later 19th and early-20th-century illustrators. After we have heard it, I'll tell you how it ends, and then ask what on earth you make of it?

52. Christina Rossetti: *Goblin Market*, opening section [5:06]

53. Illustration by Arthur Rackham

What happens is that Laura wakes up the next morning to find that while her sister Lizzie can still hear the Goblins' call, she herself cannot. From that moment on, she begins to decline until it seems that she must die. Lizzie in desperation finds a silver coin and goes herself to the Goblins. But she refuses to taste any of their fruit herself. Instead, she lets the Goblins gorge themselves with it and lick her all over until she is covered with the juice. Then she goes back to Laura who in turn licks the juice off her. This time, the juice tastes terrible, and Laura is thrown into a paroxysm of convulsions. But she does recover, and both sisters live to tell the cautionary tale to their children!

So what did you think that was really about? There have been various interpretations: an allegory of **capitalism**, a tract about **drug addiction**, a parable of girls encountering **puberty**, or simply a covert poem about **sex**. I am inclined to think the latter. Either way, it is an interesting case: a woman writing in the "safe" mode of a fantasy for children, but dealing with quite adult subjects normally thought taboo.

F. SALOMÉ ET MÉLANIE 1 1:45

54. Section title F (Léon Herbo: *Salomé*, with Bonis)

I started, if you remember, with a snatch of the *Piano Quartet* by **Mel Bonis**. I'd like to end the class by saying a little more about her. Let's start with her piano piece *Salomé* from 1909. It is one of a series of *Femmes de légende*, about women from legend or literature. Excuse the hideous color-scheme of this video; I chose it because the pianist, **Anna Shelest**, captures the mercurial quality of the music so well. You think you are getting into a nice bit of dreamy salon music, when suddenly it takes off wildly, or

there is a pounding motif in the bass. It is music that keeps you on your toes. It is only 4 minutes, so I can play it complete. You'll find it says a lot to Nochlin's point about woman's refusal to be categorized.

55. Bonis: *Salomé* (1909), Anna Shelest, piano [4:02]

56. Gustave Moreau: *Salome Dancing Before Herod* (1877, detail)

Salome seems to have been an obsession with French artists in the last quarter of the 19th century; **Gustave Moreau** (1826–98), for example, painted dozens of pictures of her; this is a detail of one of them. And in general, there seems to have been a fascination—in artistic circles at least—with strong women who broke the mold. If I think through operas of the period, I get **Bizet's** *Carmen*, **Saint-Saëns's** *Delilah*, and **Massenet's** *Manon*, *Thais*, and *Herodiade*. If you look at how women were depicted in music at least, you are very far from the Goddess image. Salome seems to have had pride of place. It was in Paris in 1893 that **Oscar Wilde** wrote his *Salome* that was later turned into an opera by Richard Strauss, and he wrote it in French. Let me show you a little more of this Salome obsession by playing a minute or two of Bonis' later orchestration of her piano piece, accompanied by a small gallery of paintings of the subject (not all French and none by a woman). Don't let them distract you from the extraordinary colors in Mel Bonis' palette, giving it a quite new character in its orchestral guise.

57. Bonis: *Salomé*, orchestral version [1:35]

58. Mel Bonis at ages 27 and 50

It is impressive music. But if you think that this was about the time of **Richard Strauss's** *Salome* and not too long before Paris was rocked by **Stravinsky's** *Rite of Spring*, it is not so extraordinary after all. And that will continue to be the case with many of the women in this entire course. We may not be able to cast many of them in the heroic mold of the great innovators—Linda Nochlin would dismiss this as a male-modeled concept, after all—but we can treasure them for the special qualities they bring to the table, and the fact that they were able to succeed against all obstacles. In the case of **Mélanie Bonis**, her career (over 300 compositions) seems to have been a matter of sheer talent. Coming from a family of tradesmen, she had no special training and taught herself to play the piano. But she was fortunate enough to be spotted, admitted on a scholarship to the Conservatoire, and taught by **César Franck**. All looked primed for success, until she fell in love with a fellow student, the poet and singer **Amédée Hettich**. Mel's parents had gone along with the Conservatoire offer because they thought it would help her marriage prospects, but marriage to a starving poet was not what they had in mind. So they withdrew her, and married her to a wealthy businessman, **Albert Domange**, a double widower 22 years older than she was. He provided admission to a much more elevated social circle, but did nothing to encourage her music. It was only when Mel met up again with the now-successful Hettich, and indeed had a secret daughter with him, that she was able to return to music and her career took off.

Anyway, let's end with the complete final movement of the *Piano Quartet* with which I began. It may not be ground-breaking, but it is no pretty salon music either. This woman had fire!

59. Bonis: *Piano Quartet*, last movement [5:15]

60. — the same, last half only [2:49]

61. Class title 3 (“It's Your Pedestal”)