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Abstract:

This essay examines Degas's little-studied *Woman with Bandage* as it manifests several critical issues: the artist's own failing eyesight, his relationship with his beloved blind sister-in-law Estelle, his mother's early death, and contemporary social constructions of ophthalmologic disease. Through subject matter and experimentation with the formal limits of pigment on canvas, Degas visualizes the intersection between medical anxieties and painting practice.

Ocular Anxiety and the Pink Tea Cup: Edgar Degas's *Woman with Bandage*

by Marni Reva Kessler

"...it is addressed not only from the blind to the blind, like a code for the nonseeing, but speaks to us, in truth, all the time of the blindness that constitutes it."^[1] Jacques Derrida

We do not know exactly where or when Edgar Degas painted his small and elegant *Woman with Bandage* of 1872–73 (fig. 1). While it is common to date pictures using a span of time, the chronological, and in this case geographical, distance between 1872 and 1873 has been quite significant to the scholarship about this image, much of which is speculative and concerned with identifying the sitter and setting. Knowing whether the picture was painted in Paris, or in New Orleans during Degas's five-month stay with the Creole branch of his mother's family between October 1872 and March 1873, could possibly help us to identify the model. However, being able to conclude whether the sitter is Degas's American cousin and sister-in-law Estelle, who was by then nearly blind, another family member or friend, a household servant, a casualty of the Franco-Prussian war, or a woman at an oculist's office in Paris—all have been suggested—does little for ultimately parsing the amalgamation of issues inscribed in the painting. It seems to me that whomever it represents, the picture opens up larger interpretive issues about family, disease, and the fragility of vision.



Fig. 1, Edgar Degas, *Woman with Bandage*, 1872-73. Oil on canvas. The Detroit Institute of Art, Bequest of Robert H. Tannahill. [\[larger image\]](#)

I want, therefore, to shift the framework of analysis to a consideration of the more general subject of the image—a woman with a bandage over her left eye—in relation to Degas's own failing eyesight, to his close relationship with his first cousin Estelle (who became his brother René's wife in 1869), and to late nineteenth-century discourses of eye disease. The evidence of the painting itself, Degas's letters, and those of his contemporaries suggest that, using the motif of the bandaged eye in tandem with complicated brushwork and dramatic changes in pigment densities, Degas visualizes, probably subconsciously, his anxieties in relation to his failing eyesight. Indeed, two related narratives are generated by this image, both of which allow Degas to address through a kind of subterfuge—the very act of

representation—the unrepresentable complex of trauma associated with his and Estelle's premature ophthalmologic declines.

Eyes

In "Degas, Dance, Drawing," an essay about various aspects of his friend Degas's life and work, the poet Paul Valéry reported that the artist first realized that he was experiencing blurred vision in his right eye when he could not see clearly the target at rifle practice during the siege of Paris at the time of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. "It was confirmed that his eye was almost useless, a fact which he blamed (I heard all this from his own lips) on a damp attic which for a long time had been his bedroom."^[2] Visits to ophthalmologists as early as 1871 did nothing to alleviate Degas's fear that he would become blind (which he did not).^[3] He panicked and became depressed; he even contemplated cancelling his long-planned trip to New Orleans with his brother, René. In a letter written in Paris to his wife Estelle in New Orleans, dated September 25, 1872, René described Edgar's indecision about the trip and acknowledged its potential to damage further his brother's weak eyes: "I told you I believe we shouldn't count on Edgar. He wants to come, but I haven't pushed him; if the trip harmed his eyes, I wouldn't want to have myself to blame for it."^[4]

Degas's letters from the time are also filled with references to his eye problems. In 1871, he wrote to his close friend, the artist James Tissot: "I have just had and still have a spot of weakness and trouble in my eyes. It caught me at Chatou by the edge of the water in full sunlight whilst I was doing a watercolour and it made me lose nearly three weeks, being unable to read or work or go out much, trembling all the time lest I should remain like that."^[5] And in February of 1873, again to Tissot, he wrote: "This infirmity of sight has hit me hard. My right eye is permanently damaged."^[6] What Degas described as "a spot of weakness" would plague him for the rest of his life and develop into a larger blind spot in his central vision, leaving him with only one fully-sighted eye that itself would later also be compromised. Indeed, friend and fellow artist Walter Sickert reported in *Burlington Magazine* that "from '83 [1883] onwards, he [Degas] should sometimes have spoken of the torment that it was to draw, when he could only see around the spot at which he was looking, and never the spot itself."^[7]

The real source of Degas's early eye troubles remains unclear. Sickert confirmed Paul Valéry's report when he wrote in 1923 that Degas "attributed this affliction to the fact that, during the siege of Paris, he had slept in a studio with a high window from which the cold air poured down on his face at night."^[8] Degas's theory is fully consistent with the popular medical beliefs of his time which held that exposure to extremes of air temperatures could lead to certain eye diseases, including what the nineteenth century termed ophthalmia, an inflammation of the conjunctiva (what we now call pink eye or conjunctivitis) that, in pre-antibiotic times, could lead to blindness. According to a popular contemporary manual of family health, "At night, during sleep, one should avoid being exposed to cold air upon the eyes."^[9] The grim and unsanitary conditions in Paris during the siege could equally well have been to blame; Degas could easily have contracted an eye infection which, left untreated, could have caused him permanent damage.

Letters from other friends and family members are similarly punctuated by speculation about, and gloomy reports of, Degas's failing eyesight. While on a business trip in Paris, his

brother René described in a letter to Estelle, who was in New Orleans, his experience of seeing his thirty-eight-year-old brother for the first time in a long while: "At the station I found Edgar who has matured, some white hairs sprinkling his beard. . . Unfortunately he has very weak eyes, he is forced to take the greatest precautions."^[10] And toward the end of Degas's stay in New Orleans, his uncle Eugène Musson called Edgar "an amiable boy who, moreover, will become a very great painter if God preserves his sight."^[11]

That Degas suffered from eye troubles has fascinated scholars of art history and medical doctors alike.^[12] Richard Kendall was one of the first art historians both to analyze in a sustained way the intricacies of the possible correspondence between Degas's eyesight and his painting practice and to point out that critical examination of this relationship is necessary to our understanding of the artist's work. Noting the abundance of images that address in some way the process of seeing or ways in which sight may be compromised, Kendall writes: "His [Degas's] monocular vision and 'blind spot' continually emphasized the unorthodox nature of his own eyesight and contributed to an exceptional awareness of the perceptual act. . . While never the slave of his eyesight, Degas had more reason to challenge, more opportunity to evaluate and more need to give expression to the nature of visual experience than most artists of his or any age."^[13]

The medical community has also entered the debate surrounding Degas's malady and its possible effect upon his work. Based upon his analysis of Degas's visual style, penmanship, and letters, Michael F. Marmor, M.D., Professor of Ophthalmology at Stanford University, has speculated about the most likely physiological explanations for Degas's compromised eyesight:

The cause of Degas's poor vision is not known definitively since no medical records survive, but several lines of evidence point to disease of the macula, which is the central portion of the retina. When the macula is damaged, a person can only see with off-center retinal cells, and visual acuity is reduced because the cellular organization of the off-center cells and their connections to the brain, are not designed to resolve very tiny objects.^[14]

Marmor goes on to argue for a direct connection between Degas's sight problems and his visual lexicon, particularly of the 1890s and on, concluding that, "It is the failure to see the effects of his work that allowed him to accept technical approaches that he might not have otherwise tolerated, and to allow imperfections that he might not have accepted with better vision."^[15] While it is certainly possible that Degas's worsening vision was responsible for what Marmor rightly recognizes as coarser cross-hatching and a lessening of space between lines in the artist's late work, I would suggest that it is also quite likely that these and earlier technical changes represent deliberate stylistic shifts in Degas's artistic practice, or at the very least, a combination of both. Ever experimental in medium and technique, Degas was far from unaware of his formal choices. Whatever his ophthalmologic illness and its possible pictorial ramifications, this remains clear: Degas's livelihood depended upon his eyes; he suffered greatly from diminished vision in one eye from the earlier part of his career in about 1870, and that this impairment progressed—ultimately affecting both eyes—throughout his life.

Estelle

Woman with Bandage may represent Estelle Musson Balfour Degas, Edgar's American sister-in-law and cousin who was nearly blind by 1872. The fact that he empathized with her condition is articulated over and over in the letters he wrote both before and during his stay in Louisiana. To cite just one example, he lamented on November 11, 1872 to his close friend Désiré Dihau: "My poor Estelle, René's wife, is blind as you know. She bears it in an incomparable manner; she needs scarcely any help about the house. She remembers the rooms and the position of the furniture and hardly ever bumps into anything. And there is no hope!"^[16] Estelle had been diagnosed in 1866 with ophthalmia and, despite extensive treatment, she gradually lost sight in each eye; she was fully blind in her left eye by 1868, retaining some vision in the right one until 1875.^[17] As James Ravin, M.D. and Christie Kenyon point out: "The parallels between his [Degas's] own situation and the more extreme case of his cousin could not have escaped Degas's attention. In fact, his own medical history bears a striking similarity to hers. Both suffered profound loss of vision in each eye, with one preceding the other by a few years."^[18] Not only would Edgar, whose own eye problems plagued him daily, have identified with Estelle's blindness, but also he likely would have seen in her traces of his French Creole mother, Estelle's aunt, who had tragically died of an unexplained illness—possibly fatigue from multiple childbirths (Marie Célestine Degas bore eight children, five of whom survived)—26 years earlier when Edgar was only thirteen.^[19]

Degas first got to know Estelle, a young war widow who had fled in 1863, with her baby, ailing mother, and sister, to Bourg-en-Bresse, France where she remained during the occupation of New Orleans at the time of the American Civil War, until 1865.^[20] Their friendship deepened over the visits that Degas made from Paris to Bourg-en-Bresse, where he painted at least one oil portrait of Estelle, made multiple drawings of her alone, and sketched a watercolor of her with her mother and sister, Désirée. In the small c.1865 pencil and pastel drawing, "Young Woman in an Armchair (drawing of Estelle Musson Balfour)" (fig. 2), Degas depicts Estelle seated in a voluminous armchair, a fluffy pillow supporting her drooping head. With her left arm, she clutches the edge of the blanket that is draped over her lower body. She looks with such sadness back at the viewer, her cousin Edgar, the man with the pencil who, through every iteration of graphite on paper, seems to consider the depth of Estelle's grief (her husband, Lazare David Balfour, a major in the Confederate Army, had been killed in a battle in Corinth, Mississippi on October 4, 1862, while she was pregnant with their daughter Josephine).^[21] With his fingertip, Degas blurs her right eye, indicating in that small swipe the hazing of vision that may accompany tears. Somehow, through the most delicate smudging of pencil and pale grey pastel, he is even able to conjure up the sense of a reddened nose—again, perhaps the result of crying. In a letter to his Uncle Michel, Estelle's father who had remained in America during the war, Degas expressed, this time in words, his sorrow for his cousin: "As for Estelle, poor little woman, it's hard to look at her without thinking that her head has hovered before the eyes of a dying man."^[22]



Fig. 2, Edgar Degas, *Young Woman in an Armchair* (drawing of *Estelle Musson Balfour*), ca. 1865. Pencil and pastel. Private Collection, The Bahamas. [\[larger image\]](#)

Even the way that Degas represents Estelle in the small and poignant oil painting *Estelle Musson Balfour* from 1865 (fig. 3) captures the sense of grief he imagined was her experience. Here, Estelle's lips are pale and pulled tightly into an expression that approximates anger, even rage. Her not-yet-ill eyes seem to presage their useless future as deeply shadowed patches of green and brown pigment almost blot them out. Her skin is permeated by a sallow and dull olive pallor, an off rhyme to the more cheerful and fresh green of the small grassy area in the distance. A copse of scraggy bare trees formally frames Estelle's head and augments the overall sense of desolation and sadness that pervades this empathetic picture. These trees—which unexpectedly echo in shape Estelle's startlingly unkempt hair—also have the curious visual effect of looking like prison bars that we imagine could encircle Estelle. Degas crops his image tightly, forcing our eye to dwell on the scumbled painted flesh of this young widow's disconsolate face, to sink into the hollowness of eyes, mouth, and nostrils. There is no visual relief from the relentlessness of grief in this painting. Neither the thin slip of white pigment that separates the top of Estelle's cloak from her neck nor the restfully pearlescent body of water beyond the trees does much to mediate the austerity of it all.



Fig. 3, Edgar Degas, *Estelle Musson Balfour*, 1865. Oil on canvas. Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore.

[\[larger image\]](#)

Described by literary scholar Christopher Benfey as a "turn-of-the-century mood piece," this picture conjures up so much more than the tenor of a time. Indeed, Benfey even goes so far as to call Estelle "[Degas's] figure for the suffering American South; his representations of her face and body are his indictment of the violence afflicted on his own motherland ..."[23] Perhaps this is true, but I suspect that the workings of this painting are specifically related to Estelle and not to a generalized conception of the suffering American South. Degas's images of Estelle, together with the information contained in his and family members's letters, tells us that his feelings for her were quite complex. Indeed, Degas was so devoted to Estelle that when René abandoned his blind wife in 1878 for another Creole woman, Edgar was so disturbed by his brother's behavior that he severed ties with René until 1893.[24]

No one, including Degas, has commented on why the artist made the long and taxing journey to New Orleans in 1872. One of the primary reasons for his trip probably had to do with Degas's long-established empathy for and friendship with Estelle, but perhaps another was to connect with his mother; something he could do in the place of her birth and through members of her branch of the family. Degas painted Estelle several times during his stay in New Orleans, suggesting her vision impairment in some way in each image. In *Madame René De Gas* of 1872–73 (fig. 4), the circular blots of Estelle's blank staring eyes are further emphasized by their formal repetition in the scatter of dots across her cool blue dress. Seated awkwardly on one end of a chaise longue, Estelle takes up a good part of the left side of the canvas. Her nervous expression and uneasy posture are perhaps visual articulations of her discomfort as a person who is becoming blind and who has not yet learned to adapt fully. The lower half of the right side of the picture is filled with the other end of the chaise, above which spreads a starkly vacant wall. While Degas often decentered his compositions, purposefully finding the least stable viewpoint and using yawning compositional gaps to evoke a palpable tension, there is something different going on here. Indeed, the emptiness of the right side of this canvas seems to utter the blankness of Estelle's view, its tragic nothingness. Her off-center placement, which leaves the space beside her conspicuously unfilled, is another poignant reminder of this profound vacuity. That she was pregnant at the time of this sitting is not apparent.[25] In fact, Degas actually obscures

Estelle's advanced pregnancy by pulling in her waist with a thick black patent leather belt and by sitting her amid the voluminous spill of her dress.



Fig. 4, Edgar Degas, *Madame René De Gas*, 1872-73. Oil on canvas. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Chester Dale Collection. [\[larger image\]](#)

The model in *Woman with a Vase of Flowers*, also of 1872-73 (fig. 5), was identified by Degas's brother René, years after its execution, as a picture of his former wife.^[26] In it, the reddened rims of Estelle's eyes, along with the painting's extreme spatial distortions, suggest her condition as someone whose eyesight is severely compromised. Locked into place by the edge of the table, a dark wall, and what is probably a chaise longue, diminished in size by the excessively large vase of flowers that looms up in the right foreground, Estelle looks blankly out of the picture plane. It is hard to tell whether she is sitting, standing, or reclining. Regardless of her posture, what we can see is that the back of the chaise is larger than it should be. Degas freely manipulates scale; he makes Estelle, in her pale yellow dress, too small in relation to the plush brown piece of furniture upon which her fingers are tensely poised in a position not unlike the one required for reading a text in Braille.^[27]



Fig. 5, Edgar Degas, *Woman with a Vase of Flowers*, 1872-73. Oil on canvas. Musée d'Orsay, Paris. [\[larger image\]](#)

Exaggerated shadows, like the one produced by the vase, seem almost to take the place of actual objects; to read like blurred versions of tangible, seeable things. Estelle's head also casts an unusually dark and unfocused shadow onto the dull green wall behind her, the reflection of which marks the right side of her sad face. This strip of unmodulated brownish black paint effectively slices through her right eye, like an arrow, calling further attention to its reddened lid. The other eye is equally red and puffy, a dark and emphatic flicker of shadow beneath it. A black eyebrow hovers above this clearly ill eye like a punctuation mark luring us to it. Richly painted, seemingly touchable, golden yellow gloves lie intertwined on the right side of the table. The gloves visually supply the "fingertips" of Estelle's left hand, the front of which is cut off by the edge of the vase, and are another reference to the importance of the sense of touch especially to someone who is becoming blind.

The exploding mass of red flowers, their animated leaves splayed in the foreground, contrasts dramatically with Estelle's dull pallor, her lack of vitality, the very impossibility of her ever seeing this vivid floral display. The thin bands of frayed gold that lie in the vase's pool of shadow on the table further remind us of Estelle's compromised vision. Bracelets perhaps, these two roundish consolidations of pigment, though closer to us than anything else in the image, are less focused, less palpable as concrete and recognizable objects. And yet, the foregrounded one is somehow tangible, solid, tactile, especially to someone who is blind and for whom touch may be the most dramatic and critical of the senses.

Another related picture, *Portrait of Mme René De Gas, née Estelle Musson* from 1872–73 (fig. 6), shows Estelle arranging flowers, although she was nearly blind by this point and had a household of servants taking care of most domestic matters. Here, Degas clearly reveals Estelle's pregnancy, as a pale pink camellia follows the curved arc of her stomach. While Degas does not overtly represent the fact of Estelle's blindness, he does invoke it through the burnished shadow that cloaks her left eye as well as through the scrubbed, almost visceral, surface of the painting itself. We see the wall behind Estelle as if through compromised vision as it expands into a loamy field of shifting browns. The view out of the window is equally imprecise, an incoherent muddle of grassy green and dry brown. When Degas left New Orleans in 1873, he took with him, among other things, the three portraits he made of his cherished Estelle. To this one, he later added thin strips of canvas, hoping to expand the field of the picture, to enlarge the—Estelle's; his own?— field of vision. The strips, which were meaningless to others, were later removed when the picture was sold following the artist's death.[\[28\]](#)



Fig. 6, Edgar Degas, *Portrait of Mme René De Gas, née Estelle Musson*, 1872-73. Oil on canvas. New Orleans Museum of Art Museum Purchase through Public Subscription. [\[larger image\]](#)

New Orleans

As the exigency of vision is the main theme of *Woman with Bandage*, it is quite possible that Estelle was the model for it. However, several other sitters have been suggested, including a member of the Musson domestic staff.^[29] Most recently, Hollis Clayson has proposed that the figure is an anonymous victim of the Franco-Prussian war in a field hospital; a reasonable inference since, as she points out, Degas often visited field hospitals during the siege of Paris.^[30] The war, she also writes, may have inspired the sensitivity to "impaired vision and invalidism"^[31] that his trip to America reinforced. I would like to expand Clayson's proposition by asserting that this picture likely refers back to scenes from the war, that the sickness and desperation Degas encountered during that time are certainly inscribed in this image of physical suffering. But *Woman with Bandage*, to my mind, is also intimately connected to Estelle, to New Orleans, and to Degas's proclivity toward representing ill women there, a proclivity that the artist rehearsed no less than seven times.^[32] The inclusion of a delicate porcelain tea cup likely locates this image in a domestic interior. Its subject matter—sickness consolidated with the Creole feminine—places the painting in New Orleans. To be sure, this may or may not *be* a representation of Estelle; but, in its emphasis on injured eyesight, it conjures her up as much as it forces us to think about the artist himself. A kind of displaced self-portrait perhaps, *Woman with Bandage* takes as its subject the very question of vision and the ways in which it can be jeopardized.

That his ocular troubles were very much on Degas's mind during his stay in New Orleans is clear from the letters he wrote while there to family and friends in Paris, many of which describe his extreme sensitivity to the Louisiana sunlight. He complained to long-time friend, collector and amateur painter Henri Rouart, on December 5, 1872, "The light is so strong that I have not yet been able to do anything on the river. My eyes are so greatly in need of attention that I scarcely risk them."^[33] In another letter, to Tissot, dated February 18, 1873, Degas lamented the effect of this infirmity on his ability to work: "What lovely things I could have done, and done rapidly if the bright daylight were less unbearable for me. To go to Louisiana to open one's eyes, I cannot do that. And yet I kept them sufficiently half open to see my fill."^[34]

The sensitivity to light, or photophobia, that Degas characterized in his letters corresponds with contemporary medical text explanations of various kinds of ophthalmia and conjunctivitis. In their 1876 *Ophthalmic Therapeutics*, Drs. Timothy Allen and George Norton discuss in detail the "dread of light" that so many victims of conjunctivitis and ophthalmia experience.[35] Despite his severe ocular challenges, Degas did have periods of relative eye health during this year, though the fear of blindness continually plagued him. In 1873 he wrote to Tissot: "My eyes are fairly well but all the same I shall remain in the ranks of the infirm until I pass into the ranks of the blind. It really is bitter, is it not? Sometimes I feel a shiver of horror." Not long after, Degas cried, again to Tissot, "Ah! If I had my old eyes." [36]

While in New Orleans, Degas painted mainly pictures of family members, usually indoors where he could control the light that so troubled his eyes. As I have already noted, the more specific subject of most of his pictures from this time are ill women—several are of Estelle, some of other family members or friends, others unidentified. I would even go so far as to say that Degas's interest in representing sickness, indeed, his need to repeat the theme no less than seven times, is likely linked to his association of this place and these relatives with his mother.[37] That he does not as overtly address the topic of illness in his Paris pictures further endorses such an assumption.[38] In other words, depicting ill women, especially those related to his mother or to her native New Orleans, may have been for Degas a way of indirectly, and probably subconsciously, revisiting his mother's life and death.

Not overtly an image of maternal illness or any other type of illness, *The Pedicure* of 1872 (fig. 7) represents Estelle's nine-year-old daughter, Joe Balfour, relaxed and slumped on a chintz settee in their New Orleans home, a white sheet across her upper body, as her toe nails are clipped by a black-clad chiropodist. Joe's feet are tended to by a doctor because her mother, the family member who would have been charged with the health and hygiene of the child, was almost blind by this time and therefore probably unable to perform the task; so even a painting of a young girl having her feet cared for is infused with the fact of her mother's eye disease. While the picture suggests a domestic interior with lush green walls, art, foot tub, settee, and knick knacks, the context itself evokes a decidedly medical situation. The part of Joe's lower leg that is exposed is rendered in a peculiarly chalky, bloodless white, and is a stark contrast to the rosy healthiness of her heel and the underside of her toes. Her unanimated pale body, along with the bandage-like effect of the sheet upon it, also promotes a scene of ill health.[39] Indeed, the very syntax of the painting further begs us to question what is wrong with this young girl who slouches on a flowered settee.



Fig. 7, Edgar Degas, *The Pedicure*, 1873. Essence on paper mounted on canvas. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

[\[larger image\]](#)

In another image that likely dates from Degas's visit to New Orleans, *La Malade* of 1872–74 (fig. 8), the artist further explores the close association he found, perhaps even searched for, between his mother's relatives and sickness. In it he represents possibly Estelle or her sister Désirée^[40] in what can best be described as a state of great sadness or illness. Glassy eyed and depleted, this sitter wears the costume of an ill person, a billowy sleeping garment with a deep brown robe on top. The ends of a lighter brown scarf or shawl that fall limply upon the model's chest direct our eye and the composition downward, further adding to the overall sense of fatigue and despair that pervades the picture. The full weight of the woman's head is borne by a hand that seems to yield to some great pressure. Even the corners of her mouth turn slightly downward. Her red-rimmed eyes stare off unfixedly, the furrowed line of her brow punctuating her despondency. Behind the sitter, a rich flurry of thick, almost lustrous strokes of whitish paint coalesces as the edge of a bed. While the beds in so many of Degas's bather scenes engender a narrative that includes a sexual encounter, the bed here serves to underline the fact that this is a picture of convalescence, its unmade, rumpled appearance a further indication of the bed's usefulness to the weary woman in the foreground.



Fig. 8, Edgar Degas, *The Invalid (La Malade)*, 1868-73. Oil on canvas. J. Paul Getty Museum. [\[larger image\]](#)

Degas's most well known completed work from this period is his only one that includes men; *A Cotton Office in New Orleans*, of 1873, depicts the interior of his uncle's failing cotton office which would within the year be bankrupt.[41] Degas did another, what he called "less complicated and more spontaneous" study of the subject, called *Cotton Merchants in New Orleans*, which is a kind of ghostly and fragile depiction of cotton factors testing a frothy sea of cotton. Still, it was the theme of femininity and its convergence with ill health that seemed to occupy much of Degas's work time in New Orleans. Added to the images that I have already described are two more paintings—*The Nurse* and *Woman in a Garden*—that similarly engage the fusion of sickness with the female subject.[42] But it is in *Woman with Bandage* that we see the most explicit relationship—in both formal terms and subject matter—between artist and his sitter, artist and facture, artist and sickness. For here, the model and the very means of representation seem both literally and metaphorically manifestations of Degas's worries about his own and Estelle's weakening eyesight, melded with a nineteenth-century understanding of ophthalmologic diseases and his apparent interest in painting the convergence of illness with Creole femininity.

The Pink Tea Cup

Woman with Bandage measures only about 12 5/8 by 9 1/2 inches. It depicts a woman in profile wearing a white bonnet, an eye bandage, and what appears to be a loosely-fitting dressing gown. Her arms are crossed over her chest, her hands and sleeve cuff roughly outlined by a dry graze of gray paint. Below this lies the upper part of a dark blanket which extends out and down to the edge of the canvas to cover what we imagine is the reclining or seated lower half of the model's unseen body. Behind her head is a mysterious object that has been interpreted as being either a glass (possibly of absinthe) or a coffeemaker.[43] I read it instead as a cut crystal vase or tall glass containing a flower, its green leaf a clever area of spatial overlap with the woman's bandage, its base a few thickly laid on blotches of unblended pale yellow paint. This object pushes and pulls, jumps out at us and then recedes. The body of the vase, made up of vertical pulls of beige mixed with tan, wanes in relation to the three more thickly laid on horizontal drags of matière at the base. The aqua green of the woman's chair posits a vivid juxtaposition of color with her garment and the more densely

painted cream scarf at her neck. The wall beyond is a modulated plane of whites, grays, ochres, and small patches of pink.

Behind the sitter on what I interpret as a bureau ledge is a tea cup and saucer, the haptic contours of which are defined by several broadly articulated strokes of congealed pink, white, and red pigment interspersed with blank canvas; the saucer is constituted by a blur of whitened pink over a line of brown. This area of the image attracts our eye and becomes the point around which the composition circulates, a kind of crystallization not only of pigment but also of an idea. Perhaps Degas paints this part of the composition so much more assertively because it was easier for him to represent the domestic details of everyday life than it was the complex web of illness and blindness so poignantly epitomized by the woman in the foreground.

Whereas the tea cup is made up of layers of paint suspended upon the support, elsewhere Degas blends *matière* with the latticework of the canvas itself to create a mottled area that gives the sense of a distorted view. This is particularly apparent across the sitter's face where the skin of the cheek itself is the skin of the canvas only lightly covered by a thin shell of patchy pigment. This amalgamation of fabric backing and paint produces a magnification of the minutiae of the components of skin. It is as if we get a close-up view of the terrain of the woman's face, its pores and smooth surfaces emerging like a barely containable landscape, itself an exaggeration of its own surface.

In order to indicate the swell of the model's uncovered, yet clearly reddened and puffy eye area, Degas muffles a bit of red with pale pink and grey. He uses brownish gray, again melded with the surface of the canvas, to produce the optical effect of a shadow, imprecise, but in this context, readable as a hollow incised below the swollen under-eye. And above the eye, a curve of brown becomes another even deeper shadow. The way in which Degas puts paint onto canvas, the way in which he diffuses clarity, obscures parts of the image itself at the same time that it produces meaning for the viewer. For, by visualizing the simultaneous sense of both having and not being able to have the image—the there and the not thereness of it—Degas is consolidating in pictorial terms a symptom that he often complained of in his letters that was also one of the most common side effects associated with acute general ophthalmia, that "Objects are seen as if through a fine gauze,"^[44] to quote from Dr. John Peters's 1856 *A Treatise on the Principal Diseases of the Eye*. Not only are objects in this image "seen as if through a fine gauze," a piece of diaphanous woven fabric, but the woman's garment also appears as if it *is* a fine gauze.

The close-up format of the painting and the tight pull in of the composition also contribute to the tension between clarity and obscurity, focus and blur. Since the sitter is pushed into the foreground, we expect to see her clearly and yet we do not. She reads, instead, as a dispersed view, her red lips seem to be the most precisely rendered part of her, and we think this because their color is so dazzling, so vividly there. We view the woman as if from beside her and yet, because of her fuzziness, she seems further away. Still, the tea cup, which *is* meant to be further away, has the optical effect of seeming closer to us than the woman herself because Degas has represented it with his densest pigments and most highly-keyed colors. The small red mark at the cup's left edge even mimics in shape and hue the sitter's red lips, a painted gesture that pulls our eye between the two, linking them inextricably. The

impastoed horizontal brushstrokes of the base of the crystal vase further this effect as they act like arrows that tug our view over to the cup, drawing our eye between the most thickly material objects in the image, the very things that the model may be able to touch and in this way "see."[\[45\]](#)

Degas varies degrees of focus and consistencies of paint throughout the picture in order to address, albeit obliquely, a weakened and distorted vision that perhaps corresponded to his own way of seeing. In effect, he visually articulates a *construction* of blindness, and not the *reality* of blindness. His painting practice thus continually calls into question legibility and privileges muddled and blurred forms of the sort that may very well have been consistent with his view. And he certainly further attends to limitations of visibility by choosing to represent his model in profile, by choosing to hide some part of her face from our view.

I would also claim that Degas is equally enacting the sitter's impaired way of seeing with one covered eye and one clearly compromised though uncovered eye. Her depth perception would not only have been affected by her condition but also by the fact that one eye is bandaged. With monocular vision, there is both a lessening of vision—a cropping of the field of vision—at the same time that there may be an intensification of it. Like the effect achieved when we close one eye to get a better look at a detail, we get better looks at certain details, like the tea cup, the woman's lips, and the vase base, in Degas's monocularly-figured painting. More than in any of his other images from this period, Degas here capitulates to his own monocular way of seeing. He configures vision in this painting as a site of both privilege and extreme anxiety as material objects move in and out of focus across the ground of the canvas. A visual tease, the play of paint reminds us of what Georges Bataille would later recognize: that vision is very much a contested field and that there may be a certain pleasure in seeing things not clearly.[\[46\]](#)

The woman's bandage, which we only partially see, is the very means by which we, in the end, actually *see* the entire image. It thus becomes in some sense the organizing principal of the picture plane, serving as a kind of key for our understanding of the painting as a whole, as a synecdoche for the issues that its presence contains. A bandage is a symbolic surrogate for a physical, maybe even a psychic wound. It obscures the wound while representing it. It signifies both an absence and a presence. It maintains that something is being kept from our view. And indeed, something is being kept from view, its status made all the more palpable by the slim dash of saturated black paint that Degas uses to edge the area where the bandage almost meets the bridge of the sitter's nose. This thin line of pigment epitomizes the very tension Degas is acknowledging between transparency and opacity, between being able to see and not see, between presence and absence in this image. This gap between bandage and flesh, this area of nothingness, is both literally and metaphorically the blind spot, the spot of emptied vision that is not emptied of meaning.

Elaborate descriptions of how to apply eye bandages abound in medical treatises of the period. Dr. H.C. Angell wrote in 1870 that: "The ordinary bandage may consist of a piece of linen about ten inches long by two and a quarter inches in width, with a piece of broad tape at either end to pass around the head, and tie. A third tape may pass over the top of the head to assist in holding the bandage in place when necessary."[\[47\]](#) Or, in the case of a compressive bandage, made of either linen or flannel, one would, again in the words of Dr.

Angell, "[C]ommence above the affected eye, pass it across the forehead to the opposite side, above the ear, to the back of the head, below the ear."^[48] Later in his treatise, Dr. Angell goes on to say, "If but one eye is attacked [by conjunctivitis or ophthalmia], the other should be bandaged as a precautionary measure, and in all cases of purulent ophthalmia the attendants should be warned that the greatest cleanliness and attention to the contagious character of the secretion is necessary for their own safety."^[49] The risk of infecting the healthy eye through contact was great, but so was the threat of developing sympathetic ophthalmia, a condition in which severe trauma or disease in one eye could lead to inflammation in both that could in the nineteenth century result in complete blindness.

Based upon this information, I would propose that in Degas's painting, the sitter's bandage may very well be protecting her healthy eye, and so she sees (and we, in turn see) through the failing vision of her right eye. While it is certainly probable that even the sitter's covered eye has been blighted by disease, as was Estelle's by this time, we have here a possible explanation for why the model's bulging exposed eye looks so painfully unhealthy. Indeed, one of the common characteristics of ophthalmia, as it was described mid-century, is the likelihood of a protrusion of the eye. As Dr. John Peters explained in 1856, "In point of fact, the eye-ball is merely pressed forward by an effusion into the cavity of the ocular capsule."^[50] According to a contemporary manual of family health, ophthalmia could also produce "a flow of tears, at times so acrid as to irritate or excoriate the parts over which it runs,"^[51] thus resulting in a reddened cheek, like the one we see in the painting. So, where Degas smoothes on a buffered blend of pink, red, and purple-blue, he is, in effect, trying to conjure up in material terms the model's inflamed right cheek; more haunting proof of her status as someone who is ill, of the wound below the bandage.

In some ways it is this hidden wound that most profoundly affects our reading of this painting which, on the surface, would not seem to conjure up dramatic connections to bodily (other than the sitter's) and psychic damage. However, *Woman with Bandage* does just that. For this visual articulation of a crisis of seeing inscribes the loss of vision, but it also leads us to think about other losses. Not simply a manifestation of Degas's or Estelle's failing eyesight, this painting is rather *about* compromised vision and its attendant anxieties. The model for this painting may or may not have been Estelle, however Degas so clearly thinks *through* her as he lays paint to canvas. He thinks through Estelle to himself, and possibly back to the memory of his mother. In *Woman with Bandage*, Degas stages an ocular tragedy that capitulates to questions of visibility, blindness, and loss to such a degree that, in the end, the picture—its form and subject—actually performs itself.

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Notes

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[1] Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 4.

[2] Paul Valéry, "Degas, Dance, Drawing," *Degas, Manet, Morisot*, trans. David Paul (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960), 9. See also Henri Loyrette, *Degas* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1991), 251.

[3] For an excellent and detailed discussion of Degas's ophthalmologic treatment throughout his life, see Richard Kendall, "Degas and the Contingency of Vision," *The Burlington Magazine* 130, no. 1020 (March 1988): 180–97.

[4] Marilyn R. Brown, *The DeGas-Musson Family Papers: An Annotated Inventory* (New Orleans: Tulane University, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, 1991), 21. Since Marilyn R. Brown did such a fine job of transcribing and translating most of the letters in the DeGas-Musson archive in Tulane University's Special Collections, I am using her translations unless specified.

[5] Edgar Degas to James Tissot, September 30, 1871, Marcel Guerin, ed., *Edgar Germain Hilaire Degas Letters*, trans. Marguerite Kay (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, n.d.), 12.

[6] Edgar Degas to James Tissot, [1873?], Guerin, *Edgar Germain Hilaire Degas Letters*, 34.

[7] Walter Sickert, "Degas," *Burlington Magazine* 43, no. 249 (December, 1923): 308.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] M. Hector George *Leçons élémentaires d'hygiène* (Paris: Maison Jules Delalain et Fils, 1878), 123. "On prendra garde également de recevoir la nuit, pendant le sommeil, un courant d'air froid sur les yeux." Translation mine.

[10] René DeGas to Estelle Musson Balfour DeGas, June 26, 1872, Brown, *The DeGas-Musson Family Papers*, 19 and 50.

[11] Eugène Musson to Michel Musson, April 3, 1873, Brown, *The DeGas-Musson Family Papers*, 22 and 52.

[12] While not necessarily interested in Degas's ocular limitations, Griselda Pollock and Deborah Bershad have explored the fraught relationship between Degas and vision as a mechanism of power, sexuality, and subjectivity in their analyses of a group of related sketches and studies he made between 1866 and 1877 of a woman (perhaps there were several models) using a lorgnette. Deborah Bershad, "Looking, Power and Sexuality: Degas' *Woman with a Lorgnette*," in Richard Kendall and Griselda Pollock, eds., *Dealing with Degas: Representations of Woman and the Politics of Vision* (New York: Universe, 1991), 95–105; Griselda Pollock, "The Gaze and the Look: Women with Binoculars—A Question of Difference," in

Kendall and Pollock, *Dealing with Degas*, 106–30. Likewise, Carol Armstrong has evocatively addressed artistic agency, sight, and blindness in Degas's 1890–1900 photographic self portrait with his servant Z \acute{o} e Closier. In her compelling analysis, Armstrong notes the "interplay between dark and light, sightedness and blindness" in the image and goes on to describe Degas's photographs in general as opportunities for the artist to "harness the domain of shadow to the authority of light and sight, and yet at the same time submitting himself to the condition of blindness and making his every act of visual will subservient to the essential impotence of that condition." Armstrong sees this indulgence in shadow as an exploration of "power and powerlessness" associated specifically with the medium of photography and does not connect these technical interests to Degas's failing vision. Carol Armstrong *Odd Man Out: Readings of the Work and Reputation of Edgar Degas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 237.

[13] Kendall, "Degas and the Contingency of Vision," 197.

[14] Michael F. Marmor, *Degas Through His Own Eyes: Visual Disability and the Late Style of Degas* (Paris: Somogy editions d'art, 2002), 65.

[15] *Ibid.*, 99.

[16] Edgar Degas to Désiré Dihau, November 11, 1872, Guerin, *Edgar Germain Hilaire Degas Letters*, 13.

[17] In 1946, John Rewald called Estelle's eye disease ophthalmia. Though he cites no primary evidence for this diagnosis, he claims that Gaston Musson, the son of René and Estelle, checked dates and facts and aided Rewald in amassing the information contained in the 1946 article. Thus, the diagnosis of ophthalmia may not have survived in medical records, but it perhaps survived as family fact. See John Rewald, "Degas and his Family in New Orleans," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 6, no. 30 (August, 1946): 111.

[18] James G. Ravin and Christie A. Kenyon, "Degas' Loss of Vision: Evidence for a Diagnosis of Retinal Disease," *Survey of Ophthalmology* 39, no. 1 (July-August 1994): 58.

[19] Roy McMullen makes this speculation about the circumstances of Marie Célestine's death in *Degas: His Life, Times, and Work* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), 20.

[20] Jean Sutherland Boggs points out in her catalogue entry for the watercolor of Mme Michel Musson and her daughters Estelle and Désirée that the women went specifically to "... Bourg-en-Bresse in Burgundy because a physician had recommended the locale as a restorative for Mme Musson's health." See Gail Feigenbaum and others, *Degas and New Orleans: A French Impressionist in America*, Exh. cat. (New Orleans: New Orleans Museum of Art, 1999), 130.

[21] Rewald, "Degas and his Family in New Orleans," 109.

[22] Edgar Degas to Michel Musson, likely dated June 24, 1863, Brown, *The DeGas-Musson Family Papers*, 17 and 50.

[23] Christopher Benfey, *Degas in New Orleans: Encounters in the Creole World of Kate Chopin and George Washington Cable* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 57.

[24] We learn of the estrangement of the brothers in a letter from Michel Musson to Henri Musson dated September 29, 1879, Brown, *The DeGas-Musson Family Papers*, 33. McMullen reports that Edgar and René reconciled in 1893. See McMullen *Degas: His Life, Times, and Work*, 413.

[25] Rewald, "Degas and his Family in New Orleans," 115.

[26] Rewald called *Woman with a Vase* a portrait of Mme Challaire, a DeGas-Musson family friend. However, he cites no evidence to support this claim. Rewald also assumes that Mme Challaire modeled for "another painting of a woman arranging flowers," a painting that has always been definitively titled *Portrait of Mme René De Gas née Estelle Musson*. Rewald, "Degas and his Family in New Orleans," 118.

[27] While there is no evidence to support a claim that Estelle read Braille, it would have been quite possible that she did. Invented in 1821 (some sources say the year is 1824) by Louis Braille, this reading method, that involves fingers moving over raised dots that encode characters, was widely adopted in the 1830s in France and used in the United States by 1860.

[28] James B. Byrnes, "Edgar Degas, his Paintings of New Orleanians Here and Abroad," *Edgar Degas: His Family and Friends in New Orleans*, Exh. cat. (New Orleans: Isaac Delgado Museum of Art, 1965), 33–83.

[29] See Jean Sutherland Boggs's entry on *Woman with Bandage* in Feigenbaum and others, *Degas and New Orleans*, 197. Theodore Reff offered this observation in 1974: "Whatever her name, the subject must have been close to the artist, who has shown her with unusual

tenderness and sympathy..." Theodore Reff, "Works by Degas in the Detroit Institute of Arts," *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts* 53, no. 1 (1974): 31.

[30] Clayson is here arguing against Jean Sutherland Boggs's assertion that the painting was executed during Degas's time in New Orleans. See Hollis Clayson *Paris in Despair: Art and Everyday Life under Siege (1870-71)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 310–12; Boggs in Feigenbaum and others, *Degas and New Orleans*, 197. While I do not agree that this painting represents a field hospital at the time of the Franco-Prussian war, I concur with Clayson when she challenges Richard Kendall's argument that, based upon similarity in size of canvas and subject, *Woman with Bandage* is "Clearly identical with a canvas from the Dupuis sale of 1891 and can confidently be restored to its original title *Chez l'oculiste*." Kendall, "Degas and the Contingency of Vision," 187. While this is certainly plausible, it is also possible that *Woman with Bandage* is not the picture in question. Degas is careful to include details—such as a tea cup and what I think is a cut-glass vase—in the painting that, to my mind, situate it in a decidedly domestic realm. Additionally, I read the woman's garment as a dressing gown and not as public apparel of the sort one would have worn to visit a doctor.

[31] Clayson, *Paris in Despair*, 310.

[32] In addition to the paintings of Estelle, while in New Orleans Degas also painted *The Pedicure* and *La Malade. The Nurse*, of 1872–73, an image that deals less directly with sickness (for the ill person is unseen in the composition), was most likely also made during Degas's sojourn in New Orleans. *Young Woman Seated in a Garden* from c. 1868–1873, which depicts a figure on a chaise, her arms folded across her stomach, a bandage encircling her head from ear to ear, probably also dates from Degas's New Orleans trip, though much debate surrounds its date and place of execution. Boggs speculates that the sitter may be Estelle's sister Mathilde Musson Bell, though, as she points out, Paul-André Lemoisne referred to the figure as "Probably Désirée Musson in New Orleans." Feigenbaum and others, *Degas and New Orleans*, 193–94.

[33] Edgar Degas *Lettres de la Nouvelle-Orléans* (Caen: Echoppe, 1988), 8–9. "On ne fait rien ici, c'est dans le climat, que du coton. La lumière est si forte que je n'ai pu encore faire quelque chose sur le fleuve. Mes yeux ont si besoin de soin que je ne les risque guère." Translation mine.

[34] Edgar Degas to James Tissot, February 18, 1873, Guerin, *Edgar Germain Hilaire Degas Letters*, 31.

[35] Timothy F. Allen and George S. Norton, *Ophthalmic Therapeutics* (New York and Philadelphia: Boericke & Tafel, 1876), 12.

[36] Edgar Degas to James Tissot, 1873, Guerin, *Edgar Germain Hilaire Degas Letters*, 34.

[37] Gail Feigenbaum also notes the possible connection between Degas's ill New Orleans relatives and his mother in Feigenbaum and others, *Degas and New Orleans*, 15–16.

[38] When he does depict bodily deterioration outside of New Orleans, it is usually within the context of aging, mourning, or presumed depression. For example, he represents his own changing self in self portraits throughout his career; he paints his aunt, the Duchess of Montejasi, in 1876, when she is in mourning for her recently-deceased husband; in *The Bellelli Family* of c. 1858–60, Degas depicts his aunt Laura Bellelli and her family in an image of, to use Linda Nochlin's apt words, "psychological disharmonies." See Linda Nochlin, "A House is Not a Home: Degas and the Subversion of the Family," in *Representing Women* (London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 155. One could also argue that Degas's representations of bathers and laundresses indirectly raise the specter of venereal diseases, tuberculosis, and cholera. For a discussion of the ways in which the images of laundresses invoke the Parisian cholera and tuberculosis epidemics, see chapter one of my *Sheer Presence: The Veil in Manet's Paris* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming fall 2006).

[39] Boggs sees the sheet that covers Joe's body as a kind of swaddling that maintains the girl's modesty. See Feigenbaum and others, *Degas and New Orleans*, 221.

[40] Boggs asserts that, "If there is any question as to which of the Musson sisters this is, it is more likely to be Estelle than Désirée, whose face remained indomitably round." *Ibid.*, 192. Boggs cites Paul-André Lemoisne as having been the first to connect *La Malade* to New Orleans when he added "Désirée Musson" to the title of the painting in his 1946–1949 catalogue raisonné of Degas's oeuvre, and while Boggs recognizes the tenuousness of this assumption, she ultimately supports it. Susan Sidlauskas offers another possibility: she calls Estelle the "conceptual model" for *La Malade* since she epitomizes the kinds of fragility and vulnerability apparent in the painting. Susan Sidlauskas in a public lecture entitled "Degas's *La Malade*: Illness as Metaphor," presented at the University of Kansas on November 9, 2004.

- [41] For a detailed analysis of Musson, Prestidge, & Co., Cotton Factors and Commission Merchants, see Marilyn R. Brown, *Degas and the Business of Art: A Cotton Office in New Orleans* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1994).
- [42] See endnote 32.
- [43] Clayson speculates that this object is a glass of absinthe, *Paris in Despair*, 312; Boggs argues that it is a coffeemaker, Feigenbaum and others, *Degas and New Orleans*, 197.
- [44] John C. Peters, *A Treatise on the Principal Diseases of the Eyes, Including: Diseases of the Eyelids, Conjunctiva, Cornea, Sclerotica, Crystalline Lens, Choroid, Retina, and Optic Nerve* (New York: William Radde, 1856), 207.
- [45] As we look at the tea cup we are, like Mieke Bal's textual figure of the "focalizer," the looking subject who describes what he sees to the reader, for our view of the "visual nature of the [tea cup] ...is 'underlined,' such as when the thing seen is described as if through a magnifying glass or a telescope." In other words, our look at this substantially fabricated object is emphasized, amplified, underlined by the very material strategy Degas used to construct its place in the picture. Mieke Bal *The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually*, trans. Anna-Louise Milne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 3.
- [46] Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess, Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, trans. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 10–14, 57–58.
- [47] H.C. Angell, *A Treatise on Diseases of the Eye; For the Use of General Practitioners* (Boston: James Campbell, 1870), 17.
- [48] Ibid.
- [49] Ibid., 85.
- [50] Peters, *A Treatise on the Principal Diseases of the Eyes*, 208.
- [51] Edward Jenner Coxe, *Domestic Medicine; or, Medical Vade Mecum: Safe Companion and Guide for Families, Planters, Commanders of Ships or Steamers, or anyone who may require a true friend in time of need* (Philadelphia: G.T. Stockdale, 1854), 217.

Illustrations



Fig. 1, Edgar Degas, *Woman with Bandage*, 1872-73. Oil on canvas. The Detroit Institute of Art, Bequest of Robert H. Tannahill. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 2, Edgar Degas, *Young Woman in an Armchair (drawing of Estelle Musson Balfour)*, ca. 1865. Pencil and pastel. Private Collection, The Bahamas. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 3, Edgar Degas, *Estelle Musson Balfour*, 1865. Oil on canvas. Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore.
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Fig. 4, Edgar Degas, *Madame René De Gas*, 1872-73. Oil on canvas. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C, Chester Dale Collection. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 5, Edgar Degas, *Woman with a Vase of Flowers*, 1872-73. Oil on canvas. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.
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Fig. 6, Edgar Degas, *Portrait of Mme René De Gas, née Estelle Musson*, 1872-73. Oil on canvas. New Orleans Museum of Art Museum Purchase through Public Subscription. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 7, Edgar Degas, *The Pedicure*, 1873. Essence on paper mounted on canvas. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.
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Fig. 8, Edgar Degas, *The Invalid (La Malade)*, 1868-73. Oil on canvas. J. Paul Getty Museum.
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