

## **Chardin's Domestic Rhetoric and the Poetics of the Private and Public Sphere**

by Heather McPherson

This essay reconsiders Chardin's domestic subjects in relation to the shifting dynamics of the public and private spheres in eighteenth-century France, a critical distinction originally formulated in Jürgen Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.<sup>1</sup> Drawing upon Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, I shall also argue that Chardin's genre scenes articulate a "rhetoric of domesticity" based on the thematics of vision and immersion in the materiality of paint and the poetics of ordinary objects, intimate spaces, and repetitive gestures (esp. 67-70).<sup>2</sup> This double-pronged approach provides a critical framework for investigating the widespread popular appeal and the broader cultural signification of Chardin's domestic subjects which raised the status and stakes of genre painting in mid-eighteenth-century France and implicitly challenged the academic hierarchy.<sup>3</sup> Although at first glance the two approaches may appear uncongenial or even antithetical, both are intimately concerned with the diagramming of space, individual psychology and social interaction, and the delineation of gender.

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas argued that the public and private spheres only became distinct in a specifically modern sense during the eighteenth century (11).<sup>4</sup> Since Habermas's study focuses on the "bourgeois public sphere," he only briefly alludes to the role that hybrid spaces, such as theatres, art exhibitions, concerts, salons, and coffee houses, played in facilitating social and intellectual interchange and in helping break down social hierarchies (29-37).<sup>5</sup> As Craig Calhoun has observed, the importance of the public sphere hinges upon its potential as a mode for societal integration (6). In the Habermasian scheme, the private realm is comprised of civil society and the conjugal family's internal space (30). Of particular concern in recent scholarly debates is the complex and shifting relationship between the public and private

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spheres in conjunction with the politics of gender.<sup>6</sup> Feminist scholars have investigated the position of women in prerevolutionary France and their exclusion from the “bourgeois public sphere.”<sup>7</sup> However, Lawrence Klein and Dena Goodman have cautioned against dichotomizing the public and private spheres along the fault lines of gender. Klein has questioned the so-called “domestic” thesis and the gendering of the public sphere as essentially masculine, calling for a more nuanced analysis of the relationship between the public and private spheres (97-109).<sup>8</sup>

At this point the reader may be wondering what exactly the ongoing debates about the nature of the public sphere and gender issues have to do with Chardin's quietly unassuming domestic scenes. During the 1730s and 1740s when Chardin focused on genre subjects, he typically depicted comfortable middle-class interiors inhabited almost exclusively by women and children. Significantly, Chardin devised an innovative category of genre painting—the middle-class interior—for which there were few French antecedents.<sup>9</sup> Although Chardin looked to seventeenth-century Netherlandish prototypes, he generally avoided action, narrative devices, and explicit moralizing and reduced his compositions to the bare essentials. Even when he depicted stock genre characters such as kitchen maids, he eschewed coarseness and humor, imbuing them instead with an air of seriousness and dignity. Most often he depicted daily, repetitive, and generally banal occupations with a limited number of figures. Yet despite their modest dimensions and unassuming subject matter, Chardin's domestic interiors figured prominently in the burgeoning public artistic arena. They were admired by the public at the Salons, acclaimed by critics, avidly collected by fellow artists as well as aristocrats, and widely disseminated in the form of engravings.<sup>10</sup>

This essay is concerned with the imbrication of the public and private or domestic spheres that inflected Chardin's genre subjects and that characterized the

expanding Paris art world at mid-century. In addition to the growing importance accorded the Salons which sparked the development of art criticism, the 1740s and 1750s also witnessed the birth of the Paris art market which reflected the broadened interest in art collecting. Moreover, certain key themes in Chardin's art, notably the education of children and the enhanced role of women in bringing up children, reflect Enlightenment ideals and the widespread preoccupation with pedagogy informed by the writings of Locke and Fénelon (Johnson 47-68).<sup>11</sup> Eighteenth-century architecture and interior decoration also played a crucial role in carving out private spaces for intimate social interchange and family life within the domestic dwelling.<sup>12</sup>

Although the domestic interior may at first glance appear transparent and undeserving of protracted analysis, as Bachelard has eloquently demonstrated, there is a poetics of the house that can serve as a sort of psychological diagram, functioning as a locus for memory, the imagination, and dreams (xxxii-xxxiv).<sup>13</sup> In particular, the domestic sphere has long been associated with intimate spaces and women's daily household tasks. As Bachelard observes: "The minute we apply a glimmer of consciousness to a mechanical gesture, or practice phenomenology while polishing a piece of old furniture, we sense new impressions come into being beneath this familiar domestic duty. For consciousness rejuvenates everything, giving a quality of beginning to the most everyday actions. It even dominates memory"(67).<sup>14</sup> Moreover, as Michael Baxandall has recently reiterated, artists, like Chardin, were not insulated from culture at large, but rather worked submerged in the complex matrix of relations between visual perception, artistic traditions, and ideas (19-45).<sup>15</sup> Although I shall not attempt a sustained Bachelardian or Lockean reading, Baxandall's insistence upon the complexity of Chardin's cultural universe informs my interpretive approach in this essay. Even if Chardin can be construed as "the least literary of painters" because his art depends upon direct visual appeal, as Philip Conisbee has

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argued (16), his “domestic poetics,” which appealed to his contemporaries and have continued to intrigue modern viewers, unquestionably warrant further investigation.

In reconsidering Chardin's position within the expanding public space of the Salon and the emerging critical discourse, the first issue to examine is the critical and popular reception accorded his domestic subjects.<sup>16</sup> Why did they appeal so strongly to public and critics alike, and how were they perceived in the cultural economy of eighteenth-century France? Unfortunately, the evidence that has come down to us is limited and far from conclusive. Information about the critical reception of Chardin's pictures comes primarily from Salon reviews which rarely discuss public response in any but the most general terms.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the “relentless textualizing” of Chardin's paintings, which began during the artist's lifetime with the trivial verses appended to the prints after his paintings and the detailed descriptions of eighteenth-century critics, has continued unabated in the twentieth century.<sup>18</sup>

Arguably, by their very nature, Chardin's pictures, with their minimalist settings and generic figures, are conducive to multiple, even conflicting readings.<sup>19</sup> Although contemporaries, including Diderot, lavishly praised Chardin's technical prowess and verisimilitude, I am convinced that his domestic scenes were more than merely technical exercises. It has been suggested that Chardin, who had begun his career as a still-life painter, turned to genre subjects in the 1730s at the instigation of his friend the portraitist Joseph Aved (1702-1766) in order to enhance his artistic stature.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the extended descriptions in the Salon reviews indicate that the subject matter contributed to the appeal of Chardin's genre scenes as does the popularity of the prints attested to by Mariette (359).<sup>21</sup> Terms such as “*simplicité*” “*vérité*,” and “*naïveté*” recur in critical accounts of Chardin's genre paintings. Indeed, even Lafont de Saint-Yenne, an ardent defender of history painting, singled out Chardin's originality and compositional skill and his ability

to make ordinary moments and actions compelling. "J'aurois du parler du sieur Chardin dans le rang des peintres compositeurs, & originaux. On admire dans celui-ci le talent de rendre avec un vrai qui lui est propre, & singulièrement naïf, certains momens dans les actions de la vie nullement intéressans, qui ne méritent par eux-mêmes aucune attention" (109-11). Moreover, Chardin's pictures appear to have provided an arena for reverie and even a means of direct identification for viewers because they were firmly anchored in perceptual reality and the physicality and tactile qualities of ordinary objects (Baxandall, 102).<sup>22</sup>

During the 1730s and 1740s Chardin devoted himself primarily to genre painting. Approximately thirty-five different genre compositions by Chardin are known, although in many instances replicas or variants exist.<sup>23</sup> Chardin painted two basic types of genre scenes: servants or housewives engaged in daily household activities, and children, or occasionally adults, relaxing or amusing themselves by drawing, playing games, drinking tea, and so forth.<sup>24</sup> In addition, several pictures, such as *La maîtresse d'école* (c. 1740; National Gallery, London) and *La bonne éducation* (c. 1749; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston), depict the education of children.<sup>25</sup> The figures in Chardin's interiors exist in a hermetic, domestic universe of ordered harmony sealed off from the noise and confusion of the street. Stationary and totally absorbed in their individual activities, the subjects are enveloped by a highly tactile, psychologically defined space.<sup>26</sup> In many instances, the figures are represented in profile or have their faces averted yet they are not devoid of expression. And despite their reticence and lack of anecdote, Chardin's domestic interiors possess a mysterious psychological appeal which transcends the ordinariness of the household activities depicted. The distinctive characteristics of Chardin's domestic pictorial rhetoric will become clearer upon closer examination of several representative examples from the 1740s.<sup>27</sup> *Les aliments de la convalescence* (or *La garde attentive*), which

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was painted for Prince Joseph-Wenzel of Liechtenstein (c. 1747; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.), was exhibited at the Salon of 1747 (Rosenberg, *Chardin, 1699-1779* no. 92, pp. 283-85; Conisbee 169, 172).<sup>28</sup> This is the only genre subject that Chardin exhibited in 1747 and, exceptionally, it was not engraved.<sup>29</sup> The picture depicts an intimate corner of the kitchen with a fragment of a chair and a portion of the fireplace visible to the right of the solitary, dreamily absorbed woman. Standing in profile, she painstakingly prepares a poached egg for an invalid who remains offstage. On the table, draped with a snowy cloth, Chardin has composed an architectonic still-life consisting of a loaf of bread, a white ceramic pitcher, an egg cup with the egg lying beside it, and a steaming long-handled saucepan. Close to the woman's feet is a covered casserole and to her right stands a large crockery pitcher. What the viewer notices first perhaps is the subtle harmony of colors in the woman's costume and the care with which each individual object is illuminated so that the different textures and physical matter, ranging from the rough texture of the round loaf to the gleaming metallic surface of the egg cup, can be clearly distinguished as the eye peruses the composition. Despite the central human presence, it is the poetics of domestic space and the carefully arranged objects animating that space that resonate most strongly in this picture. Unquestionably, this is an image of order and domestic harmony which celebrates the home as a refuge governed by everyday routine. While the female protagonist could be associated with traditional representations of feminine industry or domestic virtue, the picture is not explicitly moralizing and eschews specific allegorical or emblematic references. Moreover, the fact that Chardin's genre scenes were commissioned and collected by aristocratic patrons (in this instance the Prince of Liechtenstein) mitigates against identifying them too closely with bourgeois morality. In his review of the 1747 Salon, the abbé Le Blanc praised Chardin's familiar subjects in general, although he did not discuss *Les aliments de la convalescence* in any detail (Le Blanc, *Lettre sur*

*l'exposition*).<sup>30</sup> Although the poetics of the domestic permeate the picture, it is not possible to ascribe any precise meaning to the subject represented.<sup>31</sup> Rather the picture's appeal resides in Chardin's magical technique and the ordinariness of the subject which may have served as an antidote to the luxury and *légèreté* which characterized the rococo.

The other two examples that will be considered, *Le bénédicité* (1740) and *La toilette du matin* (1741), are more complicated multi-figure compositions. *Le bénédicité* (c. 1740; Musée du Louvre, Paris; fig.1), which Chardin offered to the King in 1740, was engraved by Lépicié in 1744 (Rosenberg, *Chardin, 1699-1779* no. 86, pp. 267-72).<sup>32</sup> The fact that Chardin exhibited three different versions of the picture at the Salons of 1740, 1746, and 1761 attests both to its celebrity and its market appeal. Again the setting is a corner of a middle-class interior this time featuring a woman and two children, the youngest of whom is saying grace while the older sister and the mother listen intently. The space is delineated by the sideboard behind the table to the left and the wall with pots and pans to the right of the composition. The viewer's attention is focused on the illuminated table with the dishes invitingly laid out for the meal and the three figures who form a pyramid. The standing figure of the mother leaning over the table is counter-balanced by the two seated children. One of Chardin's most anecdotal compositions, *Le bénédicité* depicts a subject which was common in seventeenth-century Netherlandish painting, although it does not appear to have been read didactically by Chardin's contemporaries.<sup>33</sup> As Rosenberg indicates, Chardin has envisaged the scene more as a simple quotidian ritual than as a religious spectacle (*Chardin, 1699-1779* 271).<sup>34</sup> Even Lépicié's verses which were appended to the print, are highly ambivalent: they imply that the older sister is laughing at her little brother who stutters as he rushes to finish grace to appease his hunger, thus underscoring the self-interest of the children rather than

celebrating their piety (Rosenberg, *Chardin, 1669-1779* 267).<sup>35</sup> Nineteenth-century commentators including the Goncourt brothers admired *Le bénédicité* and hailed it as a paean to bourgeois domestic virtues.<sup>36</sup> If there is a moralizing message embedded in the picture, it is both more subtle and more universal. What appears to have struck a responsive chord among eighteenth-century viewers from all walks of life, was Chardin's representation of simple, human goodness and an ideal domesticity. Philosophers, such as Fontenelle and Locke, as well as novelists, also contributed to this new image of family life characterized by mutual affection and kindly discipline.<sup>37</sup>

*La toilette du matin* (or *Le négligé*) (c. 1741; Nationalmuseum, Stockholm; fig. 2), which was commissioned by the Swedish ambassador Tessin, was exhibited at the 1741 Salon and engraved by Le Bas in 1741 with a moralizing verse alluding to the vanitas theme (Rosenberg, *Chardin, 1699-1779* no. 88, pp. 274-76).<sup>38</sup> The *Mercure de France* praised the simplicity and the piquant movement of the little girl who turns to admire herself in the draped mirror at the left of the composition. "Rien n'est plus simple en effet ni plus heureusement saisi que l'action d'une mère attentive qui attache une épingle à la coiffure de sa fille. Quelque chose de plus piquant encore, c'est le mouvement du coeur d'un enfant que l'habile peintre a trouvé l'art d'exprimer par un regard que la petite fille lance dans un miroir" (October 1741 2284-97). The author of the *Lettre à M. de Poiresson-Chamarande* discussed the popular appeal of *La toilette du matin* which he attributed to the ordinary subject matter and the anonymity of the figures which allowed each viewer to identify with them. "C'est toujours de la Bourgeoisie qu'il met en jeu. . . . Il ne vient pas là une Femme du Tiers-Etat, qui ne croye que c'est une idée de sa figure, qui n'y voye son train domestique, ses manières rondes, sa contenance, ses occupations journalières, sa morale, l'humeur de ses enfans, son ameublement, sa garde-robe."<sup>39</sup> This unique social commentary introduces the

notion of class coupled with bourgeois mores; however, once again caution is in order. *La toilette du matin* is one of Chardin's most refined interiors. It includes an elaborate Boulle style clock (which may have belonged to the artist) on the *encoignure* at the far right of the composition. The mother and daughter are fashionably dressed and the painting exudes a sense of comfortable opulence. Although the mirror at the left into which the little girl gazes is traditionally associated with the *vanitas* theme, the painting focuses on the mother's affectionate gesture and her devoted attention to her daughter thus mitigating the admonitory message about feminine vanity. Moreover, this picture highlights the senses of sight and touch, which are evoked by the objects meticulously arranged on the dressing table and the gleaming metal pitcher in the foreground. In addition, the passage of time is invoked by the clock and the smoke wafting upward from the extinguished candle. Exceptionally, there is even a suggestion of movement in the little girl's proffered gaze. And the mother's muff and missal temporarily posed on the chair in the left foreground are waiting to be picked up. Finally, the placement of the furniture and other objects in close proximity to the figures underscores the sense of touch and enhances the impression of intimacy.

This brief examination of three of Chardin's middle-class interiors from the 1740s has confirmed the complexity of their pictorial strategies, their thematization of domestic poetics, and their resistance to overdetermined, reductivist critical explication. Despite his extraordinary success as a genre painter during the 1730s and 1740s, Chardin abandoned domestic subjects and returned to still-life life in the 1750s. The last domestic scene he executed was *La serinette* (or *Une dame variant ses amusements*), which was exhibited at the Salon of 1751 (Rosenberg, *Chardin, 1699-1779* no. 93, pp. 285-89.<sup>40</sup> The announcement for Le Cars's print after Chardin published in the *Mercure* in November 1753, eulogized Chardin's compositions as simple and in accord with contemporary *mœurs* although not

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heroic. The writer concluded: "C'est en composant comme M. Chardin qu'il est permis de traiter les actions de la vie familière. Il faut le faire aimer et le faire envier" (cited in Roland Michel, 58).

The tendency of Chardin's contemporaries to emphasize his precise observation of nature and his preoccupation with the *métier* of painting might encourage us to view his genre subjects (like his still-lives) as exercises in pure painting. Indeed, objects do predominate to an unusual degree in many of his figural compositions making them resemble animated still-lives. However, in his *Essai sur la vie de M. Chardin* (1780), Charles-Nicolas Cochin recounts that Chardin, impatiently interrupted another painter's technical discourse, demanding, "But who says that one paints with colors?" Astonished, the other painter demanded to know what exactly one painted with. Chardin retorted: "One utilizes colors, but one paints with feelings" (cited by Rosenberg, *Chardin, 1699-1779* 83). And in conversations with his friend Diderot, Chardin spoke movingly of the long, arduous education of the painter who must learn to see and to seize nature *sur le fait* (Diderot 2: 57-59).<sup>41</sup> The existing evidence, although admittedly scanty, indicates that Chardin was a thoughtful painter who was deeply engaged in the artistic debates of his time. In his *Salons* of 1759 and 1761, Diderot referred to Chardin as an "*homme d'esprit*," who thoroughly understood artistic theory (Diderot 1: 66, 125). Even though he was not a history painter, Chardin enjoyed unusual respect among his fellow *Académiciens*, serving as treasurer and *tapissier* for the *Salons*.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, Chardin's own highly successful professional career is indicative of the expanding role of the talented professional classes in the emerging public sphere.

Moreover, it could be argued that genre painting, exemplified by Chardin's domestic interiors, had gained new respectability as a serious artistic enterprise by the middle decades of the eighteenth century. This paralleled a broader breakdown of political and cultural hierarchies and the emergence of new popular modes of expression such as the

novel, the *drame bourgeois*, and the *comédie larmoyante* which catered to an increasingly heterogeneous public.<sup>43</sup> The Salons, which attracted a mixed public, became an arena for critical discourse with the rise of dialogic art criticism (Crow 102-33; Wrigley 11-39, 97-119). Writing in 1783, Louis de Carmontelle described the Salon as “a vast theater where neither rank, favor, nor wealth can reserve a place for bad taste. . . . all classes of citizens come to pack the Salon. The public, natural judge of the fine arts, already renders its verdict on the merits of pictures” (cited in trans. in Crow 18). The critical and public acclaim Chardin’s domestic scenes enjoyed at mid-century is symptomatic of the shifting and uncertain boundaries between the public and private spheres in eighteenth-century France. Not coincidentally, the rise of genre painting coincided with the growing emphasis on the family and children (the private sphere) and the expanding role of the public in the Parisian art world. Ultimately, Chardin’s poetics of the domestic, whose widespread appeal cut across traditional class distinctions and undermined aesthetic hierarchies, provided a powerful visual parable about social harmony and simple virtues which struck a responsive chord in prerevolutionary France.

### Notes

\*For technical reasons, I have opted to use prints after Chardin's paintings as illustrations. Since *Les aliments de la convalescence* was not engraved, unfortunately, I have not been able to illustrate it.

1. Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962) was not translated into English until 1989. In 1992 *French Historical Studies* devoted a special forum to reassessing Habermas's public sphere (vol. 17, no. 4). For a critical overview of recent debates about the public sphere, see Calhoun; Jacob; and Van Kley.

2. On Chardin's still-lives and domestic spaces, see Bryson 91-95, 165-70, who reproduces *The Return from Market* and *Saying Grace*. Bryson's discussion of evenness of regard, tactile space, and gesture in Chardin's still-lives is pertinent for the domestic interiors, although I find his analysis of gender somewhat problematic. On food in Chardin's pictures, see Démoris.

3. On the significance and politics of genre painting in France, see McPherson.

4. Habermas asserts that the public sphere emerged in the eighteenth century in conjunction with the expansion of trade and early capitalism, shifts in state authority, and traffic in news and the rise of print culture. However, the origins of the private sphere are more occult. As a corollary, a new sort of sociability developed in the eighteenth century. (Calhoun 6-7).

5. Although Habermas's discussion is necessarily limited, it has opened the way for detailed consideration of diverse sites of socialization. For example, Crow and Solkin have investigated the newly emerging art public in France and England respectively.

6. Historians have recently focused their attention on the overlapping of the public and private spheres. See, for example, Baker; Maza; Backscheider; and Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*.

7. See, in particular, Landes; Pateman; Blum; and Gutwirth. In *The Republic of Letters*, Goodman reevaluates the role played by *salonnières* during the Enlightenment.

8. Klein points out the problem of the multiple meanings of the term “public” in the eighteenth century. See also Goodman, “Public Sphere and Private Life” 1-20. Goodman also discusses the instability of the conception of the public and private spheres in eighteenth-century France.

9. During the early decades of the eighteenth century the *fête galante* (invented by Watteau and continued by artists such as Lancret and De Troy) and the pastoral dominated genre production. On seventeenth-century precedents and Netherlandish influence in eighteenth-century France, see McPherson esp. 10-34.

10. The Royal Academy did not hold *Salons* on a regular basis until the late 1730s, but yearly public exhibitions were held outdoors in the Place Dauphine. On the Salons, see Guiffrey. Almost all Chardin’s genre subjects were engraved which attests to their popularity. On prints after Chardin, see the catalogue included in Roland Michel 272-83. The earliest engraving after Chardin, *Dame cachetant une lettre*, was advertised in the *Mercure de France* in 1738. Leading collectors of Chardin’s genre subjects included: the architect Pierre Boscry, Catherine the Great, William Hunter, Antoine de La Roque, the Prince of Liechtenstein, Louis XV, Louise Ulrique of Sweden, and Comte Carl Gustaf Tessin. See Rosenberg, *Chardin, 1699-1779* 74-76.

11. Locke’s *De l’éducation des enfants* (published in French in 1695), was particularly influential. Early eighteenth-

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century pedagogical literature was permeated by the philosophical concepts and practical approach of Locke and Fénelon. Johnson argues that Chardin was profoundly interested in the psychological and moral significance of childhood education.

12. This issue was addressed by Reed Benhamou in her communication entitled "Zoning in Jacques-François Blondel's *maisons de plaisance*."

13. Bachelard employs the term *topoanalysis* for the systematic study of the sites of our intimate lives.

14. In a similar vein Bryson discusses the poetics of the domestic in relation to still-life painting. Describing Chardin's *A Basket of Plums*, Bryson evokes the succession of tasks and duties, polished metal plates and cups, freshly pressed linen, and tables swept clean, which create a space built from routines (94-95).

15. See also Sheriff 19-45, who cautions against viewing Chardin merely as a "mirror of nature."

16. The principal sources on Chardin include: Georges Wildenstein (1933); Georges Wildenstein and Daniel Wildenstein (1969); Rosenberg, *Chardin, 1699-1779*, and *Chardin: New Thoughts*; Conisbee; and Roland Michel.

17. Art criticism only emerged as a truly critical public discourse at mid-century when critics began seriously grappling with aesthetic and technical issues. As the gap between actual taste and art production and academic theory began to widen, critics increasingly questioned the hierarchy of the genres. On the evolution of French art criticism, see Wrigley; Crow esp. 1-22.

18. For eighteenth-century art criticism, see the Deloynes Collection, Cabinet des Estampes, Bibliothèque Nationale,

Paris. The term “relentless textualization” is taken from Crow, who suggests that the trivializing verses tacked on to the prints helped make up for the detextualized materiality of the original paintings (37). Other writers, however, notably Snoep-Reitsma, have insisted upon the emblematic, didactic content of Chardin’s oeuvre. Conisbee also mentions the trivializing verses which may have been added to attract a wider and more popular audience, but concedes that the verses do not necessarily reflect the painter’s intentions (127).

19. Snoep-Reitsma is the main proponent of an iconographic or emblematic reading. Other writers, as Sheriff has noted, have continued to approach Chardin as a “mirror of nature.” Rosenberg, Conisbee, and Roland Michel provide more nuanced interpretations of the domestic subjects. Roland Michel has proposed that Chardin’s representations of various categories or types constitute coherent series (207-24).

20. Genre painting, although officially subsumed in the so-called *petits genres*, enjoyed a slightly higher status than pure still-life because it included figures. Chardin may have been concerned that the public would lose interest in his still-lives and/or hoped to earn more for his paintings. Aved, who was trained in Holland, may have been instrumental in acquainting Chardin with Netherlandish genre painting. See Mariette 355-60. On Chardin’s ambition and concern with artistic prestige, see Rosenberg, *Chardin, 1699-1779* 43-50.

21. Mariette mentioned the vogue for prints after Chardin and decried the general public’s preference for ordinary subject matter. “Les estampes qu’on a gravées d’après les tableaux de M. Chardin, n’ont pas fait une moindre fortune; elles sont devenues des estampes de mode . . .” The eighteenth-century print trade is still poorly studied as Conisbee has noted (169). The print advertisements published in the *Mercure de France* during the 1740s and

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1750s attest to the diversity of the print trade. Genre prints after approximately 25 different artists, including 15 after Chardin, were advertised. See McPherson.

22. Baxandall, who takes *A Lady Taking Tea* as an example, has argued that Chardin narrates by representing not substance but rather the process of perceptual experience.

23. The problem of replicas and copies is extremely complex; in many cases, more than one autograph version exists, often with slight variations. Chardin also sometimes retouched studio copies. Many of Chardin's paintings are signed and a fair number are dated. For a detailed discussion of chronology and variants, see Rosenberg, *Chardin, 1699-1779*. To further complicate matters, Chardin often exhibited his paintings as pendants. Market factors help account for Chardin's repetitions of popular subjects such as *Le bénévolé*. He also apparently worked slowly and had difficulty inventing new compositions.

24. A few of Chardin's genre scenes, such as *Dame cachetant une lettre* (c. 1732-33; Schloss Charlottenbourg, Berlin) and *Le singe peintre* and *Le singe antiquaire* (c. 1738-40 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Chartres), fall outside these parameters. In addition, a number of Chardin's genre-like subjects, such as *Le souffleur* (Portrait of Aved) (1734; Musée du Louvre, Paris) and *L'enfant au toton* (Portrait of Auguste-Gabriel Godefroy) (Musée du Louvre, Paris), which was engraved in 1742, were conceived as portraits.

25. *La bonne éducation* (c. 1749) and its pendant *L'étude du dessin* (c. 1748), which depicts a young man drawing Pigalle's *Mercur*, were commissioned by Louise Ulrique of Sweden. The pictures were engraved by Le Bas in 1757. See Rosenberg, *Chardin, 1699-1779* nos. 94 and 95, pp. 289-93. Replicas were exhibited at the Salon of 1753.

26. On the theme of absorption, see Fried esp. 52-53.

27. Chardin's painting style evolved c. 1740. His compositions became more complex in spatial terms. In addition, the later genre subjects are more elegant and more finely finished suggesting the possible influence of the *fein malerei* tradition and anticipating the polished style of Boilly. (McPherson 156; Rosenberg, *Chardin, 1699-1779* 289).

28. The picture is signed but not dated. There is an oil sketch in a private collection (illus. Roland Michel 222). The Prince of Liechtenstein also owned *La gouvernante* (1738; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa), *La ratisseuse* (1738; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.), and *La pourvoyeuse* (1738; National Gallery of Art, Ottawa), which he had acquired in Paris.

29. See note 10. Presumably, in this instance, the picture was exhibited at the Salon of 1747 and then immediately sent to the Prince of Liechtenstein so there may not have been time to engrave it. The "Salon" *livret* mentions a pendant in the cabinet of the Prince of Liechtenstein, but does not specify which painting. The most likely candidate is *La pourvoyeuse*.

30. Thanks to the officially sponsored *concours* at the 1747 Salon, history painting held pride of place. Of the approximately 120 paintings exhibited, only 7 treated genre subjects (McPherson 130; Guiffrey). Both the quantity and scope of genre painting were greatly reduced at the 1747 Salon. Most critics concentrated on history painting and responding to Lafont de Saint-Yenne's controversial *Réflexions*.

31. Snoep-Reitsma calls the protagonist "one of the most perfect images of a devoted bourgeois wife" (224). However, the appeal of the image was clearly not limited to the bourgeoisie.

32. There are multiple autograph versions of this composition, three of which were exhibited at the *Salons* of 1740, 1746, and 1761. The version now in the Hermitage is signed and dated 1744. Lépicié's engraving was exhibited at the Salon of 1745. There is also a sketch in a private collection with significant variants. According to Saint-Aubin's sketch from the 1761 "Salon" *livret*, the version exhibited in 1761 (lost) included an extra figure at the left.

33. See Conisbee, "Art and Society," who points out that contemporary commentators and early biographers say almost nothing about the didactic motives lying behind Chardin's art (117).

34. However, as Hal Opperman has pointed out, *Le bénédictin* and *La pourvoyeuse* are to some degree anecdotal (315). In his multi-figure compositions Chardin may have been attempting to extend his genre range through the implied interaction of his figures. By mid-century viewers and critics began to comment at greater length on Chardin's subjects and to project themselves into the compositions.

35. "La sœur en tapinois, se rit du petit frère, qui bégaie son oraison, lui, sans s'inquiéter, dépêche sa prière, son appétit fait sa raison." Since Chardin did not compose the legends for his prints, it is not clear to what extent they reflect his artistic intentions.

36. Rosenberg cites the lengthy anonymous text from the 1867 *Grand Larousse 2*: 523-33 (*Chardin, 1699-1779* 271). Likewise, the Goncourt brothers dubbed Chardin the "peintre bourgeois de la bourgeoisie."

37. For a useful discussion of eighteenth-century philosophy and literature on women and education, see Snoep-Reitsma 151-62. Rousseau's writings, which celebrated the simple life and the return to nature, were instrumental in relegating women to the domestic sphere. On the gradual shift in the

conception of private life and the family in France, see Chartier.

38. "Avant que la Raison l'éclaire, elle prend du miroir les avis séduisants. Dans le désir et l'Art de plaire, les Belles, je le vois, ne sont jamais Enfants" (274).

39. See *Lettre à M. de Poiresson-Chamarande . . .*, Paris, 5 sept. 1741, Deloynes 1, no. 14. See also Crow's discussion of this passage 98-100. The Goncourt brothers, echoing the *Lettre à M. de Poiresson-Chamarande*, concluded that "le dimanche, tout le dimanche bourgeois tient dans cette toile."

40. There are at least three versions of the composition. The picture was commissioned by Le Normant de Tournehem, the Directeur des Bâtiments, in 1751, and Chardin was paid 1,500 livres in 1752, the highest price he had ever received. It is not known why Chardin never completed the pendant. Although Chardin occasionally exhibited repetitions of earlier genre subjects, during the 1750s and 1760s he primarily painted still-lives. Rosenberg has suggested that his creative vein may have been exhausted (295).

41. See also Le Blanc, who states, "Les figures sont dessinées, éclairées et touchées d'une manière aussi savante que spirituelle qui lui est propre" (*Observations* 23-25).

42. Exceptionally, Chardin was *agréé* and *reçu* by the Royal Academy on 25 September 1728. On 27 November 1740, Chardin presented two paintings to the King, *La mère laborieuse* and *Le bénévolé*. In 1755 he became treasurer of the Academy and beginning in 1761 he was in charge of hanging the *Salons*. He also benefited from a royal pension and was accorded a lodging in the Louvre in 1757.

43. In *Farce and Fantasy*, Isherwood provides a useful account of the blurring of the boundaries between official

and popular theatre.

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