

## **Concubine or Cougar? Constructing the Creative Female Persona in Early Modern Europe, and Transitioning from Indirect Power Toward Direct Power in a Man's World**

Kathleen Hitt, M.A., Professor of History, College of the Canyons

An older woman seeking a sexual relationship with a younger man has often in the past been described as a “paramour” or “illicit innamorata” but in today’s lexicon, we are increasingly utilizing the term “Cougar.” The usual mental image of the cougar is commonly of an animal ready to pounce, seeking its prey, on the offense, the epitome of empowerment. The metaphorical cougar becomes a woman seeking empowerment, personal as well as societal. The chronological construction of this study will explore the lives of Levina Teerlinc, Elizabeth I, Lettice Knollys, Veronica Franco, Marie-Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin, Madame Pompadour, and Adelaide Labille-Guiard.

Opportunities for Women of the early modern period were limited. Subliminally and often subconsciously, women sought power, and sometimes attained it. Indirect power was more easily realized, and utilized through influence that women had over their male counterparts. The indirect power was manifested using a woman’s beauty, physicality, intelligence, creativity, ability to impress, please, and entertain, platonically as well as sexually. Early Modern Europe was primarily androcentric and patriarchal, and therefore the transition from indirect to direct power, women having decision making political power was anomalous.

To cite Sir Geoffrey Elton in his forward to the work *Tudor Political Culture* by Dale Hoak, “History and our knowledge of it never stands still, and historians would therefore be ill- advised to become immobile. And though the Tudor age has of late been treated as essentially worked through, there is a lot still to be done both by way of elaboration and by way of re-thinking...”<sup>1</sup> Empowerment of women has become the dominant ideology and zeitgeist of the early twenty-first century.

Most women during the early modern period usually led lives that were severely subjugated, and their spacial boundaries strictly demarcated. Wives were expected to be passive, submissive, complacent, malleable, compliant, and physically pliant. Further, they were expected to endow their husband with all their worldly chattels, but according to the medieval ceremony in the *Sarum Missal*, a bride was expected to be “bonny and buxom in bed and at board.” Most wives were nurturers and caretakers of home and family. The opportunity for education, *trivium*, *quadrivium*, etc was reserved for male populous and to limited degree women of the upper class but usually at home, not in the universities. *Primogenitre* prescribed that property must go from oldest male to oldest male. Under Salic Law women were restricted from inheriting the crown or real property unless all male members of the family were deceased. Women could manage estates, but paradoxically could not own them.

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Geoffrey Elton. *Tudor Political Culture*, by Dale Hoak, ed. Cambridge. Cambridge UP, 1995 p. xxi.

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Yet women longed for an education. Sir Thomas More famously assured the education of his daughter Margaret More Roper with an education equaling any fine son of the peerage. However, it is doubtful that his later civil law maxim statement while on trial: *qui tacet consentire videtur* – ‘he who keeps silence seems to consent’ would have been applicable in today’s dating culture involving consensual sex.

During the reign of Edward VI, a woodcut in John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* Hugh Latimer preaching before Edward VI, women as well as men are depicted hearing the sermon.<sup>2</sup> “The scene incorporates the Erasmian Protestant appeal for the literacy of women as well as men, so that all people may understand the scriptures for themselves.”<sup>3</sup> And this would include translations into the vernacular. Most women however were educated at their mother’s knee, in the home, or in some rare cases their father’s workshop.

One example of this is Levina Teerlinc (1520-1576) a creative woman, who unknowingly constructed her own female persona. Indeed, female artists utilized indirect power through their creativity. Levina Teerlinc *nee*’ Benninck, became the only female artist during the Henrician period at the court of Henry VIII, working in a man’s world. Subsequent to artist Susanna Horenbout, (1503-1554) Teerlinc was ten years younger than her predecessor. Famous female contemporary artists of this age include Sofonisba Anguissola who was in the employment of Phillip II of Spain, and later Neapolitan artist Artemesia Gentileschi (1593-1656) who painted *Judith Slaying Holofernes* (1614–20) the gruesome subject a manifestation of her private anger directed toward her tutor and rapist Agostino Tassi when she was only seventeen years of age. Gentileschi was a survivor, whose subsequent paintings reflected sex and violence as a result of her experience.

When examining the life and oeuvre of Levina Teerlinc (1520-1576)<sup>4</sup> through various historians we know more of the life and creative milieu of this important artist who long went unrecognized, and is only just now being lauded with fresh attributions, and more appropriate accolades.

Teerlinc was the daughter of Simon Bennick (1483-1561), the illuminator of the renowned Ghent-Bruges school. Benninck trained his daughter as a manuscript painter, and she may have worked in his workshop before her marriage to George Teerlinc of Blankenberg, and settled in London in 1545 during the reign of Henry VIII where she joined the household of Katherine Parr when she was queen. Teerlinc held the position of Court Painter for a salary of 40 or 44 pounds *annum*. Teerlinc was active through three subsequent Tudor monarchies, and during the reign of Elizabeth I, was an active miniature portrait artist. During Elizabeth’s sovereignty, she introduced the portrait miniature to Queen Elizabeth I, and consequently enjoyed the patronage of this powerful female monarch.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Hugh Latimer preaching before Edward VI, woodcut in John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (1563), p. 1353.

<sup>3</sup> King, Article Tudor Political Culture. P. 114.

<sup>4</sup> Building on the work of Daphne Foskett, Sir Christopher Lloyd, Roy Strong, and Susan E. James Jim Murrell, Erna Auerbach, and Kimberly Faust,

<sup>5</sup> Kimberly Faust, *A Crisis in Royal Identity*. Introduction, Masters Thesis. P. 4

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Commissioned by the wealthy, these portraits facilitated marriages of state, and functioned as love tokens. Delicate, intimate, and designed to be hidden rather than displayed in public, miniatures were worn on ribbons, or kept private, tucked away amongst layers of clothing.

Upon the death of Court Painter Hans Holbein the younger, Teerlinc was paid 40 pounds *per annum*, which was **more** than her renown male predecessor was paid. Although her reaction is not recorded, one can only imagine that to be paid more than your male counterpart must have been a satisfying achievement in the sixteenth-century. Teerlinc trained Nicholas Hilliard in the art of limning, who went on to supersede her in fame and notoriety, and some say in expertise. Teerlinc was eventually deemed a minor artist whose style was considered inferior to Hilliard's. Teerlinc was the only miniaturist artist working at court between 1546 when she came to England, and when Hilliard signed his first work in 1560.

The portrait of Lady Katherine Grey and her son Lord Beauchamp is the first known English secular image of a mother and child. It is also, if you look very closely at the object Katherine wears round her neck, the first representation of a miniature portrait being worn. It is her husband's likeness, and so this forms a kind of family group. When this was created, Katherine was imprisoned in the Tower of London for her unsanctioned marriage to Edward Seymour, and that is where she gave birth to little Lord Beauchamp.<sup>6</sup>

The miniature *Maundy Thursday* a sublime example of ecclesiastical as well as royal ritual, and is part of Tudor Political Culture. Given as a New Years' gift to Elizabeth I, in 1563, this busy canvas depicts Elizabeth who has just finished washing the feet of the poor, accompanied by her ladies in waiting. The miniature is now in the Beauchamp collection at Sudeley Castle.

Although few if any of Teerlinc miniatures are signed, they are usually identified stylistically, and by attribution. Tiny disproportionate upper arms of the subject, signal a Teerlinc attribution.<sup>7</sup> J. Murrell wrote "Hornebolte and Levina Teerlinc too worked with the same methods, although her poor draughtsmanship and her derivative compositions can only have served to debase the previously high artistic reputation of the English limning."<sup>8</sup> Recent scholarship includes Kimberly Faust work exploring the dichotomy between the private and public realms of Elizabeth I through the work of Levina Teerlinc, and Susan James has reattributed a few Elizabethan miniatures previously considered as belonging to Hilliard, now attributed to Teerlinc. Teerlinc also would have worked on designs for jewelry, seals, portraits and documents.

This would have included *Touching for the King's Evil, Mary I 1536* by Levina Teerlinc. Touching for the King's Evil was a ceremony performed on Holy Days: Good Friday, Easter, Pentecost or Michaelmas. The Queen was seated by the high altar, had fasted beforehand, and read

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<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Freemantle, Politics and the Art of Intimacy. <http://www.elizabethfreemantle.com/blog/-politics-and-the-art-of-intimacy-levina-teerlinc-a-sixteenth-century-miniaturist>

<sup>7</sup> See Unknown Lady, Possibly Elizabeth I as Princess, c. 1550. Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.

<sup>8</sup> Murrell, V.J. *The Art of Limning*. Artists of the Tudor Court. Thames and Hudson Ltd. For V&A. 1983 P. 15.

several passages from the Bible beforehand. The Queen touched the afflicted place of the person, running her hand over the afflicted place. Laying on of hands, believing the monarch

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could cure by divine right. The Queen also would bless large containers of rings at these services. These were considered a cure for diabolical sicknesses such as cramp and epilepsy. They were then dispensed to the afflicted. It was believed that the Queen's touch could also prevent illness.<sup>9</sup>

Although most think of Elizabeth I (1533-1603) as one of the most empowered female monarchs who ever ruled, there was a time when she was disempowered. As a young woman living at Sudeley Castle, the home of her step mother Katherine Parr, Elizabeth I experienced unwanted advances from her stepmother's husband (also her brother's uncle) Sir Thomas Seymour. Elizabeth was tickled in the morning with unwanted advances. She arose earlier and earlier each day in order to be fully dressed by the time Seymour arrived in her bed chamber. When he died by beheading she was quoted as saying "this day died a man of much wit, and very little judgement." During her sister Mary's reign Elizabeth I was herself imprisoned in the Tower, and questioned, and never really secure until she ascended the throne in 1558. Ruling for 45 years alone, Elizabeth I was recognized as one of the most iconic powerful women of her time and throughout history. But initially she herself was without power.

Later in her life we do see the monarch at the pinnacle of her empowerment as evidenced by her grandiloquent speech to her troops at Tilbury "I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and a King of England too, and I think it foul scorn that Spain, or Parma should dare invade the borders of my realm." In later life, Elizabeth too focused her attention on a younger man, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, seven years her junior.

At a time when heads were falling around her like cabbages, Lettice Knollys (1543-1634) was a rival to and endured the wrath of Queen Elizabeth I, and was a consummate survivor, living to the advanced age of 91 years. Her third husband Christopher Blount (1555-1601) was twelve years her junior. Her story was further popularized in the twentieth century Historic Romance novel, *My Enemy the Queen* by Victoria Holt and BBC costume drama Elizabeth R series.

Lettice Knollys was a phenomenal woman, during one of the most tumultuous and dangerous times in the English court, *surviving seven monarchs – from Henry VIII to Charles II*, several scandalous children, and three infamous husbands. As a kinswoman to the queen she also was of Tudor-Boleyn lineage, which mirrored the queen's own. Lettice was the granddaughter of Mary Tudor, Henry VIII's sister. Knollys was more than Elizabeth's 'rival' relative. She was a most impressive, formidable figure.

As lady in waiting to Elizabeth I, Knollys initially enjoyed the parties and inclusiveness that the glittering court provided. However, she married Robert Dudley Earl of Leicester without the Queen's permission, and was exiled and ostracized from court for many years. Even in exile, Knollys had indirect power through her influence at court, facilitated by her husband, Robert

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<sup>9</sup> Monica Maria Stapelberg. *Through the Darkness: Glimpses into the History of Western Medicine*.

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Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and step-son Walter Devereux, Earl of Essex, son of her first husband. Both men ultimately were favorites of the Queen, at different stages of the Queen's life.

While ostracized from court, Knollys along with Leicester suffered the sadness of losing their only son Robert who died as a child. Lettice hoped to marry her daughter Dorothy to the King of Scotland. However, when the Queen discovered this plan, according to Spanish Ambassador Mendoza, Elizabeth swore she would "sooner the Scots King lost his crown" than be married to the daughter of a "she-wolf." She also said that if she could find no other way to check lady Leicester's ambition, she would proclaim her all over Christendom as the whore she was and prove Leicester a cuckold.

At about the same time there was a rumor that Leicester was jealous of his wife's attentions to Sir Christopher Blount (1565-1601), his Master of the Horse. The tale gained credence after Leicester died suddenly on Sep 4, 1588 and Lettice married Blount July of 1589. She was fond of Blount, and she certainly knew that his love for her and (like Elizabeth, she loathed growing old) but Leicester was her main connection to fame, as well as something for which Elizabeth would never forgive her. The anonymous manuscript, "*Leicester's Ghost*" claimed that Lettice and Blount had poisoned him to prevent him from killing Blount and imprisoning Lettice in Kenilworth. Leicester's will seems to disprove this. It was written on his deathbed in the form of a letter to Lettice. After her remarriage, which angered the Queen, Lettice remained primarily at Drayton Bassett, Staffordshire, a life she deemed fit "*only for the disgraced*" In 1597 her son the Earl of Essex, who had replaced Leicester as the Queen's favorite, made several attempts to reconcile the two women. After two meetings which the Queen avoided they finally came face to face and Lettice presented her cousin with a jewel, but when she requested permission to return to Court a few days later, it was refused. Her son the Earl of Essex famously went to his death for leading a rebellion against the Queen.

Lettice Knollys was a tenacious woman, who lived to old age before dying in her bed, Ultimately, even after the son of Mary Stuart, James VI of Scotland, ascended to the throne as James I in 1603, and Knollys survived.

Was the "thrill of the hunt" strictly a male endeavor? During the sixteenth-century, courtship narratives were mostly male. Elizabethan musician Thomas Whythorne understood the difference between "wooing" and wiving" Pleasures of the moment, and serious matrimonial courtship on the other." Courtship for him required strategies akin to the chess game or the hunt."<sup>10</sup>

And yet the Venetian *cinquecento* courtesan had long captured the imagination as a female symbol of sexual license, elegance, beauty, and unruliness. Veronica Franco (1546-1591) was a courtesan but more importantly, a writer and citizen of Venice.

Pietro Arentino's *Il Ragionamento della Nannae della Antonia*, 1534 is a psychosexual study of Rome during the Italian Renaissance. During this era, women did what they had to in order to survive. And a young woman usually had only three choices open to her: become a wife, a nun or

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<sup>10</sup> Cressy, David. *Birth Marriage and Death Ritual Religion & the Life Cycle in Tudor Stuart England*. Oxford, Oxford UP. P. 237.

a courtesan. A wife was a slave to her husband, a nun a slave to the church, but the courtesan was a savvy business woman. The goal was to survive and prosper.<sup>11</sup>

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In the book *The Honest Courtesan* by Margaret Rosenthal, the complex multi-talented personage of Veronica Franco takes shape. In the film *Dangerous Beauty*, based on the book, Veronica (Catherine McCormack) is brilliant, gifted and beautiful, but the handsome aristocrat she loves, Marco Venier (Rufus Sewell), cannot marry her because she is penniless and of questionable family. So Veronica's mother, Paola (Jacqueline Bisset), taught her to become a courtesan, "one of the best."

Rosenthal tells us that Sir Henry Worton, English ambassador to Venice for over ten years, reportedly fled the city in 1591 during his first trip there, because he found the climate of the city unwholesome, and not being made of stone he felt he could not trust himself among the famous Venetian courtesans.<sup>12</sup> Given Worton's account, the courtesans must have been intoxicatingly beautiful and the temptation nearly overwhelming.

Franco wrote in passionate support of defenseless women, had strong convictions about inequality and in the eroticized language of her epistolary verses, the seductive political nature of all poetic contests. She had an awareness of the threat she posed to her male contemporaries. Indeed, a primary poet rival was Maffio Venier. Ironically, Franco was defended by Maffio's wealthy uncle Domenico Venier.

Veronica Franco had beauty, intelligence and eventually power influencing the political realm. Her famous *liaison* with Henri III of France, which resulted in his gift of ships to the Venetians to fight the invading Turks, greatly impacted history. In 1574 Henry III of Valois along with Alfonso III Duke of Ferrara visited Venice for ten days. Franco was 28 years old, and Henry III was 23. "How Henri learned about Veronica Franco is not clear. Famous, however for his extravagance and bizarre sexual proclivities, (unlike Worton) Henri III also reportedly indulged in all the pleasures that Venice offered such distinguished foreign visitors. Thus it would not be surprising that Franco was singled out as the kind of obligatory tourist feature that had earlier lured less-renowned foreign travelers to Venice."<sup>13</sup> Although Franco was objectified, she utilized her sexual talents diplomatically.

Franco, an intellectual, was well versed in *Ovidian* and *Boccaccian* sources.<sup>14</sup> Franco wrote a sonnet to Henry III praising him including an analogy of herself as Danae, and him as Jupiter. He departed with two gifts, her enameled portrait and her sonnet, inspired by his noble presence. This is evidence that Franco knew how to promote herself, and keep her image in the mind of Henri III, a powerful monarch.

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<sup>11</sup> Mark Lamonic. Renaissance Porn Star. P. 4

<sup>12</sup> The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Woton. Oxford UP 1907

<sup>13</sup> Rosenthal, Margaret. *The Honest Courtesan: Veronica Franco, Citizen and Writer in Sixteenth-Century Venice*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

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There is some evidence that she defended herself before the Holy Inquisition when she was put on trial. One can speculate that her experience with public speaking, having given public orations of her poetry may have facilitated her exoneration.

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By the second half of the eighteenth-century, enlightened ideas gained popularity all over Europe, however the origin was in France during the *Ancien Regime*. The French refer to this period as “*le siècle des lumieres*” or the Century of Light. Charles Pinot Duclos defined the Enlightenment as a new way of thinking that took all relevant circumstances into account using insight and understanding to arrive at new and more profound explanations.

Earlier during the proto-Enlightenment Bernard Le Bouvier Fontanelle’s interlocutor was a woman in his *Conversation on a plurality of Worlds*. In *Entretiens*, a series of informal dialogues take place on successive evenings in the Marquise’s moonlit gardens. It is here that Fontanelle describes the new cosmology of the Copernican world view to his willing female pupil. Fontanelle transcends normal paradigms by making his interlocutor a woman, inviting female participation in the exclusively male dominated intellectual world of scientific discourse. Fontanelle had female supporters in the Salons who fueled his popularity and the local newspaper, *Mercure Galant*, praised his work. The newspaper was read by an increasing number of women during this century.<sup>15</sup>

The prestige of the *salon* reached an apex in pre-revolutionary decades of the eighteenth-century. Famous *salonistes* of this period include Madame d’ Epnay, Madame de Geoffrin and Madame de Scudery, a novelist of who reigned over the Parisian Saturday. Marie-Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin, (1699- 1777), was an French Enlightenment *Salonnière*. whose salon in the *Hôtel de Rambouillet* became an international meeting place of artists and men of letters from 1749 to 1777. The daughter of a valet, she married a rich manufacturer, a member of the newly influential *bourgeoisie*. Although lacking formal education herself, Madame Geoffrin was sensitive, an excellent listener, and naturally intelligent. As a widow, following her husband’s death Madame Geoffrin became an active Parisian citizen, at the age of 50. Geoffrin inherited the salon of Madame de Tencin, and became a generous, motherly patron to her guests and protégés, offering them criticism as well as advice. She ruled her domain with tact and strictness; neither religion nor politics as a subject of conversation was permitted. On Monday she received painters, artists as François Boucher, Maurice-Quentin de La Tour, and Jean-Baptiste Greuze. On Wednesdays, scholars and writers were received including Horace Walpole, Pierre Marivaux, Bernard de Fontenelle, and Helvétius. Madame Geoffrin’s salon was also a centre for the *Encyclopédistes*, whose vast project she subsidized.<sup>16</sup> Eventually she corresponded with Catherine the Great of Russia, King Stanislaw August of Poland, and Voltaire. The Salon survived the French Revolution in a transmogrified form in political circles.

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<sup>15</sup> Gelbart, Nina. Introduction. *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds*. By Bernard le Bovier Fontennelle. Los Angeles: University of California Press. 1990. P. xv.

<sup>16</sup> Eds. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. [www.Britannica.com](http://www.Britannica.com)

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The Court mistress could embody sexual as well as political intrigue. Most women were multi-dimensional, multi-layered and complex. Catherine de' Medici was known to have said "Never has a woman who loves her husband, liked his whore." Even the Queen was subject to her husband's power. Indeed it was the king who decided whether the queen would enjoy spacious royal apartments, or cramped cold rooms in a distant wing. And the court echoed his treatment of her.

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Jeanne Antoinette also known as Madame Pompadour, (1721-1764) founded her own salon which was attended by important philosophers, including her close friend, the enlightened satirist Voltaire. Voltaire wrote to her "It is something to be proud of that those who know how to think should speak thus of you." As she achieved celebrity, King Louis XV heard of her intelligence, talents, and beauty. In 1745 a group of courtiers, including de Tournehem, promoted her to the King, who was still mourning the death of his third "official" mistress, the Duchesse de Châteauroux, formerly known as Marie Anne de Mailly-Nesle, youngest of the five famous de Nesle sisters, four of whom became mistresses of the King

On the night of February 25, 1745, Louis XV (although married to Queen Marie Leszczyńska of Poland) met Jeanne-Antoinette d'Étioles, at one of the masked balls at Versailles. The king was dressed as a yew tree, and Pompadour as Diana the Huntress. She Jeanne Antoinette exhibited an acumen for languages as she was fluent in Latin as well as Greek. Pompadour a renowned beauty who absolutely extinguished everyone else when she entered the room.<sup>17</sup>

Less than a month later she became the King's mistress and was installed at the palace in an apartment directly above his. This was connected by a secret staircase. She rose from commoner to titled Marquise, which he did by purchasing the Marquisate of Pompadour in June, granting her the name by which she is known historically: Madame de Pompadour. She was formally introduced to his court on September 14, 1745.

Pompadour famously supported and defended the development of Dennis Diderot's mammoth *magnum opus*: the *Encyclopédie*, empowering to the rising middle class, and prologue of intellectualism. She also used her indirect power to facilitate the release of Voltaire from the Bastille.

During the *Ancien Regime*, Louis XV gave his *mistress en titre* real political power to hire and fire at will. Madame Pompadour was given real political power, and she used this power, acting as a Prime Minister. "Madame de Pompadour wielded the greatest power of any royal mistress ever. Initially interested only in her romance with Louis XV, the new mistress started tentatively at first-sounding out which courtiers were her friends and which were her enemies. She used her influence with Louis to dismiss high-level officials who stood resolutely against her and replace them with her friends."<sup>18</sup> She hired her own supporters and fired her opponents at court. She became directly involved with political factions. This included the comptroller who challenged her extravagant spending. She responded by replacing him with a friend of hers who paid all her bills. Eventually Madame de Pompadour controlled pensions, titles, and position at court. "The

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<sup>17</sup> *The Eighteenth Century Woman*. Metropolitan Museum of Art Production, 1982

<sup>18</sup> Herman, Eleanor. *Sex with Kings: 500 Years of Adultery, Power, Rivalry, and Revenge*. P. 163.

king, relieved that he did not have to make all the decisions himself, gratefully relied on his mistress to take care of them.”<sup>19</sup> Subsequently, government officials, ministers, courtiers and struggling artists also befriended her. When court documents were issued, the language was usually hers.

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Pompadour is also remembered for her artistic contributions both as patron and creator. She commissioned works from the greatest French artists of the day, and Francois Boucher was her favorite. “Pompadour wasn’t only a well-known patron of the arts but also the owner of a creative mind,”<sup>20</sup> She created etchings, cut gems, was an accomplished musician, staged court amusements and curated and commissioned artists to produce works that were displayed in her private collection and at the court. Her interest in art stretched to production—she is also remembered for supporting a royal porcelain factory that made beautiful dishes and other things at *Sèvres*, near *Versailles*, and for supporting the tapestry industry.<sup>21</sup>

Madame de Pompadour played a key role in making Paris the capital of taste and culture in Europe. As a passionately devoted patron of the arts, sciences and literature, sponsoring many painters, sculptors, architects, furniture craftsmen, interior designers and writers, including the aforementioned, Voltaire. Through her influence her guardian, de Tournehem, became *directeur général du Batiments du Roi*, overseeing all royal building projects. Following his death in 1751 he was succeeded by Madame de Pompadour’s brother, Abel-François, the Marquis de Marigny. Together they designed the *Place de la Concorde* and the *Petit Trianon* on the grounds of Versailles.<sup>22</sup>

After five years as the king’s mistress Pompadour moved from her cozy apartments under the eaves of Versailles, to palatial grand apartments on the ground floor directly below the King’s apartments. He had access to her with a secret staircase. “In these grand rooms she worked for thirteen years as the unofficial prime minister of France. Indeed she had far more power than any of Louis’s ministers, as it was she who appointed them. In 1753 the marquis d’Argenson wrote “The mistress is Prime Minister, and is becoming more and more despotic, such as a favorite has never been in France.”

The combination of her fragile health and his roving eye caused him to replace her in his bed when she was only 29.<sup>23</sup> As Madame Pompadour’s beauty faded she procured beautiful women (including virgins) to come in and service the king. However, she was careful to select only those who would not become her rivals. This included the famous Louise O’Murphy subject of Francois Boucher’s painting. Pompadour was undisputedly, the most powerful woman in France for nearly twenty years. And after suffering depression and insomnia, she died reportedly of Tuberculosis in 1764.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Marissa Fessenden for Smithsonian.com.

<sup>21</sup> Kat Eschner. Madam Pompadour was far more than a Mistress. Smart News. Smithsonian.com 2017. (accessed 5.30.17)

<sup>22</sup> <https://bonjourparis.com/history/madame-de-pompadour/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://ibid.>

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Court painter of the *Ancien Regime*, Adelaide Labille-Guiard (1749-1803) was an artist who trained other female artists and was a survivor. She had indirect power through her creativity, presence of mind, and diplomacy.

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The painting *Self-portrait with two pupils*, signed and dated 1785, and was exhibited in the *Salon* that same year. Labille-Guiard was named official painter to Louis XVI's maiden aunts Hitt, Kathleen

in 1787. In the full-length life size portrait Labille-Guiard is apparently teaching other female artists. Indeed Louis XVI had recently reiterated through his arts minister that the maximum number of women members would remain no more than four, and that no increase would be contemplated.

Although her more famous contemporary Elisabeth Vigee-Lebrun gained economic independence allowing her to escape to England during the French Revolution, Adelaide Labille-Guiard used diplomacy to survive the transition, and remained active as an artist into the First Republic of France.

On 31 May 1783, Labille-Guiard was accepted as a member of the French *Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture*. Three other women, including Élisabeth-Louise Vigée-Lebrun, were admitted as members on the same day.

The paintings of Labille-Guiard and Vigée-Le Brun were often compared by critics, with Vigée-Le Brun usually receiving more favorable reviews. Labille-Guiard's early masterpiece *Self-portrait with two pupils*, exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1785, was influenced by Vigée-Le Brun's style. The artwork of Adélaïde Labille-Guiard is now considered of equal or greater value.

Patronage by the aunt of Louis XVI of France, the princess Marie Adélaïde, gained Labille-Guiard a government pension of 1,000 *livres* and commissions to paint Adélaïde, her sister Victoire-Louise, and Élisabeth, the king's sister. The portrait of Adélaïde, exhibited in 1787, was Labille-Guiard's largest and most ambitious work to that date. In 1788 she was commissioned by the king's brother, the Count of Provence (later Louis XVIII of France), to paint him at the centre of a large historical work, *Réception d'un chevalier de Saint-Lazare par Monsieur, Grand maître de l'ordre*.

These royal connections made Labille-Guiard politically suspect after the French Revolution of 1789. In 1793 she was ordered to destroy some of her royalist works, including the unfinished commission for the Count of Provence. The exile of the Comte of Provence meant Labille-Guiard had not only lost her last royal patron, but she also did not receive a cent of the agreed upon 30,000 *livres*.

Adelaide Labille-Guiard was far from conservative, however. In the early 1790s she campaigned for the Academy to be reopened to women. At the Salon of 1791 she exhibited portraits of members of the National Assembly, including Maximilien Robespierre.

In conclusion, it is evident that these women share significant commonalities. Artists Teerlinc and Labille-Guilard were eclipsed by their more famous contemporaries: Hilliard and

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LeBrun respectively, who were also given more acclaim. Only recently have Teerlinc and Labille-Guilard achieved more visibility, and their historical impact realized, recounted, and reassessed.

Lettice Knollys and Adelaide Lebille-Guilard were survivors. Knollys surviving her powerful royal cousin's wrath, forced to endure lonely years of exile from court, and Lebille-Guilard with all diplomacy survived the wrath of the Committee of Public Safety during the French Revolution, and into the of the First Republic. She also facilitated training other female artists.

Comparably, Franco and Pompadour as courtesans moved from indirect power through their beauty, intelligence, pleasure giving, sexual capabilities to direct power, influencing the politics of the day. Franco's *liaison* with Henry III of France became the conduit for his gift of one hundred ships to the Venetians, enabling them to fight the invading Ottoman Turks at sea. Pompadour after becoming the King's mistress was given direct power by the King to act as Prime Minister with power to elevate, or eliminate persons from court at will.

Exploring the lives of women both notable or nameless, it is evident that in the past women did what they had to, for their own survival as well as sustaining and providing for their families.

Changes during the Sexual Revolution of the 1970's women began going after what they wanted, rather than waiting to be asked. One could argue that Mrs. Robinson as portrayed by Anne Bancroft In the film *The Graduate*, became the prototype for the Twentieth, and Twenty-first century Cougar.

Women have long fought gender polarity, wage disparity, and inequality, and like the metaphorical cougar, they have clawed their way up the corporate ladder, only to be restricted by the infamous and perilous glass ceiling.

With the political rise of Hillary Clinton, as First Lady during the Presidency of Bill Clinton, she moved from indirect power through influence she had with her husband, and then transitioning to direct power as Senator of New York, Secretary of State during the Obama Administration, and ground breaking Democratic Party Presidential Nominee in 2016.

And there continue to be women who use their celebrity status to facilitate change, and make a political statement. Pro-active women speak out against sexual violence used against women in war torn areas. With the Twenty-first century Harvey Weinstein scandal, subsequent #Metoo movement, women are uniting and demanding a more respectful workplace. Gendered socialization is being confronted and subverted, and great strides are being made against the objectification of women in the media, including print, film, and broadcasting.

And further evidence of modernization was realized in England with the 2011 Royal Equity Act. Royal daughters won equal right to ascend the throne, and succession is now determined by order of birth rather than gender.

At present we are seeing a paradigm shift, and a steep trajectory in the number of women becoming like the metaphorical cougar, involved in the political process, and interjecting political efficacy. Alice Walker once said "The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any." Women continue the quest for autonomy, creative milieu, personal satisfaction, and intellectual autonomy, requisite to assuring their full societal empowerment in

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what will eventually become our twentieth, and twenty-first century collective memory. *Vivant libertas momentis et progressus historiae!*

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