

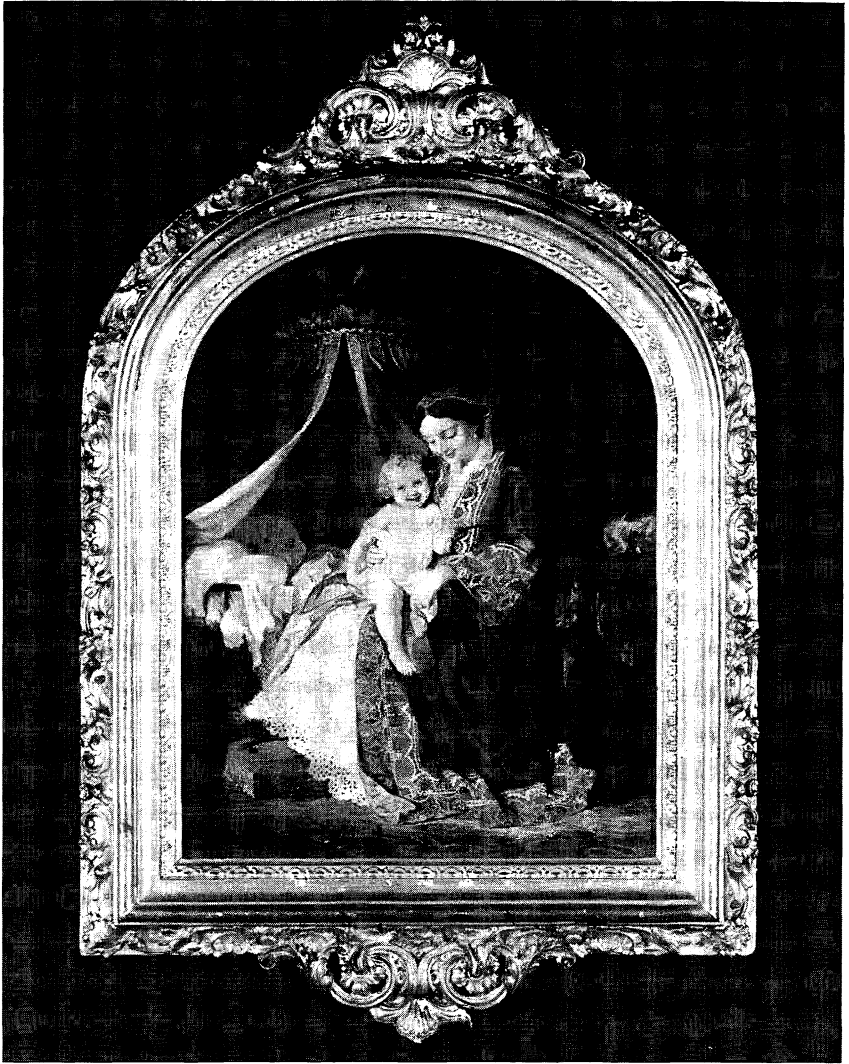


## Lilly Martin Spencer and the Art of Refinement

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Lilly Martin Spencer (1822-1902) was one of only a few nationally-known female genre painters during the middle of the nineteenth century. Unlike most women artists, she did not hail from a family who provided in-home training in art, though her parents' radical social views contributed to their willingness to support her unconventional career. She was "discovered" by Cincinnati editor Edward Mansfield, who first saw her paintings and murals of domestic life in her hometown of Marietta, Ohio. Her parents then accompanied her to Cincinnati in 1841, where she was introduced to prominent benefactors like real estate magnate Nicholas Longworth and exhibited at art institutions operated by other collectors and businessmen, such as the Western Art Union. After marrying Benjamin Spencer, she moved to New York City in 1848, where critics praised her humorous scenes of everyday domestic life. During the 1850s and 1860s she painted her most popular scenes of mothers and children, such as *This Little Pig Went to Market*, many of which became lithographs, before falling from commercial and critical favor in the late-1870s (figure 1).

In trying to understand what appears to be Spencer's singular art and practice, and what it might reveal about nineteenth-century culture, scholars have usually emphasized the importance of gender. An early monograph associated her themes of mischievous children and domestic incident with the sentimental, a style with links to popular female novelists of the period. More recently, scholars have pointed to how her paintings celebrated, yet naturalized, women's roles within a sphere of domesticity and sexuality in a manner that paralleled her own seemingly enforced specialization in feminine and maternal subjects. A tension



**Figure 1:** Lilly Martin Spencer, *This Little Pig Went to Market*, 1857. Oil on composition board with arched top, 16 x 12 in. *Courtesy of the Ohio Historical Society.*

appears to exist in Spencer's paintings (and in scholarly interpretations of them) between a constricting ideal of femininity that indoctrinated women into middle-class ideology and a style and subjects that empowered women by permitting their self-recognition.<sup>1</sup>

While Spencer's career and art certainly contributed to nineteenth-century constructions of womanhood, I propose that the best way to understand their

meaning is instead through the local politics of Cincinnati. In the antebellum period a discourse on refinement intersected with one on art and education and was wielded by city leaders interested in defining a regional vision that accorded them national economic and cultural leadership. Locating Spencer within the language of morals, taste, and feeling that developed around art, exhibitions, and behavior in Cincinnati in the 1840s reveals not just the process by which a particular city developed a distinctive culture, but also how local artists, patrons, and institutions self-consciously competed to shape the nature of and expectations for a national middle class.<sup>2</sup> Though her genre paintings did not become nationally known until her move to New York, her early training, patrons, and experiences in Cincinnati helped her succeed there and in other cities where art and related associations formed a sphere in which an elite tried to bridge political, economic, and moral factions among themselves as well as in the larger city. As an array of men and women cooperated to attach middle-class status to the cultivation of proper feelings and behavior—domestic orderliness as a sign of character—art helped spread these values and attract people to a new identity based on them rather than wealth, birth, or profession. Artists like Spencer who believed in a moral purpose for art found themselves and their work aligned with a project of moral suasion and public elevation.

Patrons in Cincinnati committed to actively fostering a sometimes idiosyncratic ideology of reform and civic boosterism—including Longworth, writers and educators Catharine Beecher and William McGuffey, and the Western Art Union—tried to persuade audiences to adopt their view of a cultured city and a polite populace. Cincinnati's outpouring of journals and literature proselytized for a larger, more encompassing view of the individual's relation to society; fiction, magazines, lectures, sermons, and conduct manuals advertised ideals of behavior and feeling that stressed self-discipline in the cause of satisfying a social debt to others, payable in the currency of polite attentions to others. They intended to elevate individuals out of their selfish (utilitarian or economic) interests by promoting such varied activities as manners, art, flower cultivation, and popular education, all signs of allegiance to a larger, common standard. Exhibitions held by such associations as the Ohio Mechanics' Institute, the Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge, the Young Men's Mercantile Library, and the Western Art Union wrapped art in their larger mission of supplying the social bonds lost in an increasingly mobile and secular society, furthering the notion of art as a refining influence.

Reformers targeted children and their education. They worked to sell the public on the notion that a school tax—support for a common education, the content of which was debated—was something an individual owed to the community. John P. Foote, an art patron and in-law of the Beechers active in numerous Cincinnati associations, noted in booster language that schools and cultural institutions gave the city “a reputation more valuable than she could have derived from any other attribute.” Such institutions attract “the industrious—the

prudent—the vigilant,” as well as helping to assimilate “foreigners” to “a homogenous and united people.”<sup>3</sup> The results of this effort at assimilation were mixed. Germans in the 1830s and 1840s traded votes with the Democrats in exchange for public schools that would teach in German as well as English, despite the disapproval of some native-born residents. The Irish, objecting to readings of the Protestant Bible in schools, formed parochial schools. Nor did common schools in Cincinnati attempt to include African Americans until 1849, when a state law required separate public schools in areas with sufficient populations. Before then, African American parents opened a private school and another briefly operated with contributions from whites like Longworth. The degree to which a set of moral values should be taught in public schools divided elite educators themselves, creating a split system of school governance, with a Board of Managers composed of Whig businessmen and patrons like New Englander Nathan Guilford and a Special Morals Board, which included Lyman Beecher and Edward Mansfield.<sup>4</sup> But both Boards spoke an egalitarian rhetoric of social harmony predicated on inculcating children in middle-class standards.<sup>5</sup> They also agreed on the value of women as schoolteachers, with reformers taking the position that they were morally superior, and the Managers happy to pay them less.

Cincinnati boosters’ support for education and art, part of its drive to become a new Rome, the Queen City, or Athens of the West, (an ambition it shared with numerous competitors) derived from an accurate perception of increased class and cultural conflict in the city. They responded by trying to create a harmonious urban culture capable of compensating for dramatic changes in the city’s population and the workplace. Between 1820 and 1850, Cincinnati’s population grew from just over 9,600 to 115,000, a result of rural and foreign immigration, creating a large pool of mostly white, landless wage-earners, whose political and other loyalties were open. In addition, manufacturing firms began to shift from small shops to larger, more impersonal workplaces with fewer chances for mobility and less control over work, increasing class consciousness.<sup>6</sup> Workers articulated class interests in trade unions, cooperatives and political parties, but divided along ethnic and social lines, while members of the elite abandoned cross-class organizations such as volunteer fire companies and taverns, and formed their own associations, from employers’ groups like the Chamber of Commerce to literary societies. In light of these increasing divisions, rhetoric stressing the harmony and mutual benefit or ties between all classes and occupations seems more designed to smooth over inter- and intra-class tensions than reflect real alliances.

But to take this ideology and the associations that espoused it as only a gloss for social control and indeed, a disguise for capitalist self-interest, is to at least partly misunderstand both city boosters and their audiences.<sup>7</sup> The project to create civic harmony through mutual intercourse and uplift of the humble served a number of different ends. The model of a society in which mutual obligation bound individuals together achieved popularity not just with conser-

vatives looking for a strong political father to order conflicting class interests but also found favor with those who envisioned a more egalitarian society able to reconcile disparate interests with the common welfare through cooperation rather than competition. Evangelists, associationists, and labor reformers all at times preached mutual dependence—one of the key ideas behind refinement’s urging of selfless behavior—as a response to the divisions produced by competitive individuals out for self gain.

Nor did all of those trying to educate workers in a set of prescribed moral values and behaviors cynically intend to teach them to act against their own interests by identifying with the elite’s notion of the general good. Many reformers sought instead to replace old standards of merit that excluded workers (on the basis of birth, lack of economic independence) with universal moral codes of character as the sole measurement of individual worth, and exerted pressure on elite and mechanic alike to conform. As Cincinnati’s *Family Magazine*, a vigorous promoter of the arts, put the question of the moral basis of class in 1840: “By attention to the rules [of politeness] such as we have alluded to, the poorest man will be entitled to the character of a gentleman, and by inattention to them, the most wealthy individual will be essentially vulgar. Vulgarity signifies coarseness or indelicacy of manner, and is not necessarily associated with poverty or lowliness of condition.”<sup>8</sup> In essays in Cincinnati magazines like “Who is the lady?” Sarah Paxton claimed the status for all women who practice self-sacrifice and labor for others.<sup>9</sup> At least in theory, such a universal standard removed traditional barriers to mobility and achievement, and since one of the aims of workers’ movements and unions was increased material well-being and thus economic independence, even a labor newspaper might be named *The Elevator*.

For Cincinnati artists and their patrons, including art in a project of public elevation encouraged formal and iconographic parallels with the persuasive strategies employed by other proscriptive forms, from etiquette books to educational associations. Though often offering idealized rules and values, etiquette books do provide access to the key terms and assumptions about refinement. This literature describes a set of activities designed to integrate the individual into accepted forms of conversation and address, thus defining a middle-class identity. As one etiquette book said, “good company” has members in all classes, independent of rank and station, because it is “a community of those who think and feel correctly.” Yet, the advice continued, the most common source of good company is the middle class, because its members are especially “anxious to oblige, to reach harmony of thoughts and sentiments.”<sup>10</sup> These advice books and articles implicitly acknowledged that the reader may be one of the new claimants to social equality at the same time as they tried to reform him or her into following and purchasing a common standard of thinking and feeling. Much of antebellum art, like Spencer’s, which was supported by new educational and reforming associations, similarly functioned to reinforce collective social and moral norms and accordingly shared some of the same terms and tactics.

Polite social exchanges circumscribed the meaning of Spencer's paintings, which themselves portrayed family interactions in an orderly, happy domestic space, divorced from the street and commerce, and dominated by women. She painted slip-ups and transgressions in expected behavior too, but then, as illustrated manuals pointed out, it was necessary to contrast elegance with deformity, the antic with the antique, in order to educate. After being purchased, often as lithographs, buyers hung these paintings in parlors and dining rooms, sites for forming the bonds thought to soften and discipline character by subordinating individuals to a common interest. Spencer's genre paintings helped forge this harmony of sentiments and confirm viewers' gentility by arousing sympathy with and interest in different character types, but also by adopting guidebooks' recommended "manner" or style of social exchange: direct address between equals, polished surface appearance as a sign of intent to please, emphasis on expressions of sentiment, attention to detail, or the seemingly insignificant, humor, and the focus on everyday matters.<sup>11</sup>

For example, genre painting's depiction of scenes from the daily life of ordinary people follows etiquette book advice for appropriate conversation. The *Manual of Politeness* (1842) recommends choosing topics accessible to all, with nothing erudite, improper, or touching on party politics. Conversationalists should choose lighter subjects instead, and small talk comes in for special praise: those who condemn it as insipid fail to recognize the most effective means of acting agreeable, nor do they realize that it is not easy to talk about "nothing" or everyday occurrences. Instead such exchanges require an observant mind and good-humor. Small talk's mainstay, commentary on what individuals see or read in everyday life—the weather, prices, children, servants, fashion, etc.—also makes it more accessible than talk of "learning" or expensive possessions. Spencer's typical scenes of parents interacting with children, children playing, pets and domestic mishaps all suit small talk's requirements.<sup>12</sup>

The *Girl's Manual* (1839) adds that conversation must be "adorned with some refinement of sentiment, and polished with some sublimity of imagination," all carried out with a "suavity of manner and easiness of demeanor." The best conversation and manner, another manual continues, is "a vehicle for the exchange of sentiment" and as such, "involves no display of self" or self-promotion. In these exchanges, never preach; use humor or badinage instead. In the home occur the most revealing conversations of character: "Only in the artless tenor of domestic conduct can one see real character," precisely because home is an area where the "praise of the world operates but partially" and so it takes extra control to be amiable and generous; individuals and family members need to carefully monitor "trifles" in this place of apparent relaxation. Though a woman should always be "unreserved with relations," the *Girl's Manual* advises, she and they have "a duty to admonish one another for their faults" and "defects in the manners"—which appear "amidst the ease and freedom of domestic life" but are hidden "from the eyes of the world." Only the family will perform these

corrections in a selfless and sympathetic spirit and when doing so, will use a “language of mildness and affection.”<sup>13</sup>

Amiability, selflessness, and sympathy infuse polite conversations, but nothing is so important as attention to detail. The *Laws of Good Breeding* (1848) defines politeness as “kindness carried into the details of life...[and] its most common scenes.” Nothing should escape one’s observation, because details of “air, gait or manner” are key to determining how others feel and, more prosaically, little things are not trifles when it comes to the circumstances that form character—“one can be killed by an insect.” To the truly polite, things generally considered as matters of indifference will become objects of attention, with nothing neglected as trifling, since everything may furnish the opportunity for service, kindness, and attention.<sup>14</sup>

All etiquette manuals concur: “happiness depends on the trivial, hourly actions, not great events” and a refined sensibility is one that can appreciate and receive them. The *Illustrated Manners Book* (1855) adds the “graces” (manners) to the list of “little things” that require attention, since “like flowers or leaves of trees, [they are] small in themselves but add up to great significance. Happiness for most depends more on behavior in small things than on heroism.” An excerpt from the Earl of Chesterfield’s *Letters Written to His Son* in a nineteenth-century etiquette manual urges readers not to “let the trifling interrupt the amenities of social life,” but defines the trifling to include politics and religion. The reordering of priorities, to value the “little objects” of dress or address rather than great matters of state (indeed to consider the latter trifles), demonstrates a new emphasis on the significance of daily life, because it is where people create mutual obligations. The pragmatic motive in Chesterfield for this attention to details of social life is that it increases the likelihood of successfully winning admiration: “the more trifling the preference (that you pay attention to), the more winning” the action.<sup>15</sup>

Gender differences inform the discussion of detail in etiquette books. Most writers took it as a given that women possessed a special talent for detail and the graces in general. The *Laws of Good Breeding* ascribes this to women’s “natural desire to please,” which insures they are more amiable, more refined, with nicer discrimination and finer perceptions. The graces in conversation (tone, manner, gesture), trifles that are so significant because they are what please, “are associated with appeals to the heart and thus with women.”<sup>16</sup> Most etiquette books affirmed that women excelled at mastery of detail and the other conversational graces, advising men to seek women’s company in order to acquire good manners by emulating them.<sup>17</sup>

In general then, etiquette manuals instruct by contrasting good and bad behavior and promise to transform the reader who emulates their examples. Much of the impact of their anecdotal style comes from the reader’s awareness of or response to the familiarity of or embarrassment involved in the relatively trivial social moments they describe. The principle that underlines most of their rules is the obligation of self-denial: touching one’s body or clothes is bad be-

cause it calls attention to the physical self; sharp angles suggest passion or argument or disagreement with the company, relaxed curves are better. Strong contrasts and large patterns are loud—forcing attention toward the wearer; careless clothing, relaxed or leaning poses show insufficient regard for the company and too great a regard for one's own personal convenience. The genteel subordinate individuality and personal convenience to the larger order.

More than paralleling Lily Martin Spencer's choice of subjects, the discourse on politeness corresponded to her style of painting. Her paintings do not duplicate the instructions of etiquette books, but they carry a particular charge when seen within the dialogue between individuals constructing and resisting such social bonds. *Fruit of Temptation*, for example, depicts a woman entering a dining room where two children snack from a table laden with food, unobserved by an older, aproned girl, who adjusts her collar (figure 2). The lithograph repays the viewer's attention to the profusion of details of dishes, fruits, and fabrics from flowered carpet to tablecloth, to the dress appropriate to each character, with greater knowledge of their character and situation. The domestic household is in disorder: A doll, a broom, and fruit lie discarded on the floor; the children pilfer from a crowded banquet table, unsupervised by the older girl who gazes at herself in the mirror; the pets investigate a pitcher on the table and objects on a chair. Spencer limits the physical and moral mess: the tablecloth is only rumpled, most of the food is contained in dishes, with only a few objects mislaid on the rug, and those in fairly precise alignment with each other and the picture plane. The crimes of the household, committed only by the young or animals, are only lack of restraint (tempted by the fruit) and vanity. In the background, in the doorway, a nicely dressed woman enters, hand raised in an expression of dismay. Her entrance will presumably return objects and people to their correct order; an order prescribed by guides like Catharine Beecher, who insisted that in setting the table, nothing should be askew, but rather all square, smooth, straight, and regular.<sup>18</sup>

The subject certainly qualifies as trivial, but as etiquette books rush to note, like other social details, lack of self-control illumines larger issues of social obligations. On one level, wasting (fruit on the ground, spilled) and stealing food are selfish acts, because they mark unwillingness to share or personal greed. The sharing of food traditionally cements or creates social bonds. To wait to eat at proscribed times, to eat with others, while sitting in chairs, under mutual observation, is a convention that aims at order and regularity. Lydia Sigourney, writing in Cincinnati's *Monthly Chronicle*, urged that "A Family Dinner" can be a means of improvement and social happiness, by teaching order and neatness, three times a day. Performance of these conventions around eating becomes highly valued because it demonstrates one's willingness to meet expectations of behavior. To not eat between meals—even when confronted with such abundance—marks one's self-control as well as submission to society and group rules.<sup>19</sup>





**Figure 2:** Lilly Martin Spencer, *Fruit of Temptation*. Jean Baptiste Adolphe Lafosse lithograph, published by Goupil, New York, 1857. 24 1/2 x 20 1/8 in. *Courtesy of the Ohio Historical Society.*

Of course, in Spencer's painting children not adults violate their social obligations. It could be argued, however, that so doing disguises moralizing directed at adults, as children (and animals) in Spencer and other genre painters often act as props or screens for projections of adult behavior and meanings. But showing children violating polite behavior also flatters adults by indicating their superiority to or distance from children and what is expected of them. Most

people do not expect children to follow (or even know) proper manners and behavior; today as in the nineteenth century, on formal occasions, children often eat apart from adults at least in part because of their presumed ignorance or inability to meet social expectations. Society both licenses or exempts children from norms, while expecting them to learn them. To show adults “misbehaving” would not license the viewer to feel amusement, but demand a more severe judgment. But Spencer’s observation of the private home reveals the youthful inhabitants’ self-absorbed character, while at the same time establishing it as the place to correct and improve them.

Spencer engages the viewer’s sympathy in two places: for the distraught mother and the mischievous children. The little boy, sitting on the ground, eating with both hands, temporarily escaping surveillance behind the tablecloth, gazes at the viewer. The motif of a figure in a genre painting who addresses the viewer is a traditional one, typically operating literally and figuratively to point the moral, suggesting a complicity between the viewer and this other self-conscious internal observer of the scene. Both are apart from and aware of what is wrong, helping to establish that the viewer is outside the scene and need not identify with the object or victim of the joke.

In Spencer’s *Fruit of Temptation*, however, the figure who eyes the viewer is a boy who recognizably belongs to his middle-class setting yet is directly involved in the action and misbehavior. Indeed, he is apparently aware of wrongdoing, and caught in the act. Because of the boy’s familiarity, the viewer might feel adult superiority, but also a certain recognition.<sup>20</sup> If the viewer feels complicit with him, then the shared glee comes at the expense of the mother or authority figure. But the boy is not caught eating by his mother—who cannot yet see him—he is caught by the viewer who is assigned the role of mother or authority. The mother enters the back of the picture as the viewer enters the front, and her dismay is recognizable to the viewer to the extent that the viewer shares the idea that food and tables should stay neat and untouched until the hour for serving.

The humor of Spencer’s painting hinges then on the knowledge of and establishment of middle-class norms of domestic order and regulation. The viewer presumably knows these norms and could laugh at but also share the feelings of the adorable children and annoyed mother rather than feeling entirely apart from their problems. The painting finally promises that though this may be a household in disorder the re-entry of the mother will return it to normal, diffusing the danger of chaos, and firmly locating the woman as the source of social bonds and moral order, despite her liminal position.

In paintings like *Shake Hands?*, also one of her most popular prints, Spencer responds to the criticisms of English writers like Frances Trollope, much of whose 1832 travel book, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, was based on her unsuccessful operation of a luxury goods store in Cincinnati (figure 3). Trollope criticized the American habit of constantly wanting to shake hands or their presumption of social equality.<sup>21</sup> In the painting, a white social inferior, or nicely-dressed servant, offers the viewer a flour-coated hand, a test of whether or not



**Figure 3:** Lilly Martin Spencer, *Shake Hands?* 1854. Oil on canvas, 30 1/8 x 25 1/8 in. *Courtesy of the Ohio Historical Society.*

the viewer acknowledges her as a lady, or equal. As with the boy eating fruit, the sympathetic woman is the one who violates the rules of good manners, but the humor arises in good part again from the viewer's predicament. Anyone who identifies with the uppity American might feel some glee at her action, yet the painting's joke relies in part on the refined viewer's acceptance and knowledge of the obligation to respond to all claims to social attentions—as well as understanding how the working-class woman makes acceptance difficult.

Spencer's conversational style—in which she directly addresses the viewer and in so doing confirms his or her sense of possession of the social and self-restraints associated with refinement—itself resembles the techniques adopted by would-be reformers in response to the pressure to open up social exchanges. Reform literature, didactic works, and etiquette books increasingly addressed “you,” or the reader, as they aimed at winning the assent of broader audiences to the norms they advocated. But it was children's advice and instructional literature that led the field in applying this rhetorical device to the demand that individuals extend sympathy to other people, animals, and things. This literature also pioneered the strategy of combining such lessons with engravings of children, animals, and everyday life. Children were the obvious place to start for reformers and writers who agreed with the *Man of Fashion* that “we have to be educated into feelings and principles that restrain us in favor of others,” for it is this discipline that elevates. William McGuffey's innovation and the key to his *Eclectic Readers'* popularity (they sold 120 million copies between 1836 and 1920; 7 million copies before 1850) was to introduce the earnest, direct address method of instruction, with accompanying illustrations.<sup>22</sup>

The McGuffey *Readers'* principal strategy engaged children in a conversation that expanded their sympathies and thereby civilized them. McGuffey's faith in this approach appears even in the title of a methodological article he wrote, “Conversations in a Classroom,” where he urged this model of teaching.<sup>23</sup> The preface to the *Second Reader* tells the teacher to “awaken the attention of his pupils” through the “conversational mode,” drawing on the questions furnished at the end of each excerpt to direct the conversation. The teacher should in turn answer questions with “simplicity, and clearness of illustration.” The questions supplied in the text generally ask children to interpret the feelings of the boys and girls in the stories: “What is in his breast?”<sup>24</sup> When a story illustrates slapstick misfortunes, for example a girl tripping in *The Thoughtless Boys*, the questions and story emulate the instructions of etiquette books to avoid satire and wit (figure 4). The *Reader* asks the viewer and reader to feel badly for her, not laugh, because laughter and sport “is dearly bought, when you purchase it at the expense [of others].” Nor does empathy stop with humans. One fairly typical dialog about the ethics of tormenting animals asks the child how he would feel if he were the mistreated turtle: “Why I am not a turtle,” the boy replies. “But a turtle can feel,” comes the answer, and “Would you like to be treated so?”<sup>25</sup> Animals in general appear in the *Readers* not solely as objects of interest themselves but also as projections of human behaviors that supply numerous morals. In *Anecdotes of The Monkey*, the monkey brushing its teeth in a mirror supplies the pleasure of recognizably human actions; *Kittens* playing are interpreted as a warning about even innocent children's cruelty; a busy cat in a picture of *The Little Idler* teaches industriousness (figure 5, 6, and 7).

Texts for older children, meant for reciting aloud, issue instructions on how to read: the reader must “imagine himself in the situation of the speaker” or “endeavor to make his own, the feelings and sentiments of the writer.” The way



3. But Edward said, "Let us tie the grass. It will be very good sport to tie the long grass over the path, and to see people tumble upon their noses as they run along, and do not suspect any thing of the matter."

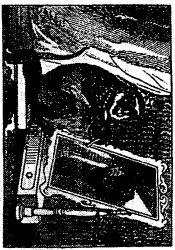
4. So they tied it in several places, and then hid themselves to see who would pass. And presently a farmer's boy came running along, and down he tumbled, and lay sprawling on the ground; however, he had nothing to do but to get up again; so there was not much harm done this time.

5. Then there came Susan the milk-maid tripping along with her milk upon her head, and singing like a lark. When her foot struck against the place where the grass was tied, down she came with her pail rattling about her shoulders, and her milk was all spilt upon the ground.

6. Then Edward said, "Poor Susan! I think I should not like to be served so myself; let us untie the grass."—"No, no," said William, "if the milk is spilt, there are some pigs that will lick it up; let us

Figure 4: *The Thoughtless Boys*, in *McGuffey's Newly Revised Second Reader* (Cincinnati, 1845), 43. From the Collection of The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County.

to do so is simple: "follow the impulse of nature in your own heart." When reading, "adapt your mode or style to the subject" and "don't ignore little words as they are important too." The self is sacrificed for others in these instructions, just as in the *Reader* story of the little boy in the woods who, instead of eating strawberries, saves them for his mother when he recalls her pleasure in them. The stories and dialogues in the *McGuffey Readers* in general invite the child's



ANECDOTES OF THE MONKEY.

1. The monkey is a very cunning little animal, and is found in many parts of the world.
2. A lady once had a monkey which had been brought home from America, as a present. This monkey liked chicken marrow-bones, and was fond of imitating whatever he saw.
3. His mistress found him one day sitting on her toilet-table, holding in one hand a little china mug with which he was drinking, and in the other a towel, with which he was cleaning his teeth, looking all the time in the glass.
4. Her little daughter, Maria, had a large doll, with a monkey's head on its neck. The monkey, when she was asleep, used to climb up to the monkey came in, took the doll in his arms, and jumping upon the washing-stand, he proceeded to wash its face with the doll's hair.
5. His first nibble it all over with a great quantity of soap; then, sitting the towel, he dipped it in the



2. How many kittens has your mother? Pass her three when they are old enough to appear.
3. Some children are so wicked and cruel as to hurt little kittens. But we will not hurt our kittens, and we will give them food, and give them milk to drink, and make them comfortable.
4. Good children are careful not to hurt any animals. Good children do not hurt each other. Oh, no! they take no pleasure in such things.
5. There is a little bird in the nest. In this nest are the birds. The bird is kind not only to the bird that sits on the unhatched, and to the egg.
6. There is a pretty hymn, which tells us how we should feel. It says:
 

\* As low as mine at your exclaim, we  
 will learn it. Let love run through every thought  
 and heart.



THE LITTLE IDLER.

1. There are some little boys who do not love their books, nor their arithmetic, but spend all their time in idleness and play. I will tell you a story of one of these boys.
2. As his play-mates knew him to be an idle and a bad boy, some of them would have any thing to do with him; so one day, being very lonely, he thought he would find some animals to play with.
3. The little boy, whose name was John, first tried to get the dog Rover to join him. But Rover was very busy, keeping the pig and hens out of the garden.
4. Then John went after Tom, the cat; but Tom was washing a little hawk, into which he had seen a mouse creep.
5. Tom wanted to catch the mouse, and John wanted to catch the hawk.
6. Then he called to the pony and said, "Pony! will you play with me?" But the pony tossed his

**Figure 5:** *Anecdotes of The Monkey*, in *McGuffey's Newly Revised Second Reader* (Cincinnati, 1845), 99. From the *Collection of The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County*.

**Figure 6:** *Kittens*, in *McGuffey's Newly Revised Second Reader* (Cincinnati, 1845), 16. From the *Collection of The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County*.

**Figure 7:** *The Little Idler*, in *McGuffey's Newly Revised Second Reader* (Cincinnati, 1845), 14. From the *Collection of The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County*.

sympathy for the poor, for American Indians, for the handicapped, for animals, and even for objects like pebbles and trees. The anthologies omit the plight of slaves even though McGuffey's circle included abolitionists as slavery was too controversial for a market that included readers in the South as well as West.<sup>26</sup>

McGuffey intended his "eclectic" readers "to mould a uniform system of manners and customs out of the diversified elements which are scattered over the West;" so too did Spencer's paintings and lithographs participate in the spread and formation of middle-class tastes, attitudes, and behaviors.<sup>27</sup> Most of McGuffey's illustrations show children by themselves, without adults, and Spencer's most frequently lithographed paintings do the same. These images often suggest that children's play prophesizes their future professions or characters by revealing their "natural" bent, just as innumerable boys and girls teaching or playing with pets or toys appear in lithographs by Spencer like *Little Navigator*, *Young Teacher*, or *First Polka* (figure 8).<sup>28</sup> These youngsters are unformed, soft, mischievous, blank slates who by their "realistic" nature are outside of adult norms, expectations, and dress, but in their natural, if humorously inadequate, play promise future development into desirable roles. The loose clothing, at times almost falling off shoulders and arms, itself suggests their unconstrained nature, offering maximum freedom and "natural" growth in comparison to adult constriction.<sup>29</sup> Loose clothing contributed to reforming children's education, away from imposed obedience and tight-fitting clothes, toward persuading the child to internalize control.

This creation of nostalgia for idealized images of children and childhood as an escape from adult self-control itself required adult viewers who perceived themselves as different from children in their acceptance of their social obligations. Spencer based her 1871 portrait of *Telford McGuffey*, the son of Alexander McGuffey, William's brother and sometimes co-editor, on her earlier lithograph of a child at play in similar undress, *Bo-Peep* (figure 9 and 10). She presents Telford McGuffey reaching out toward the viewer, surrounded by easily shaped pillows. The viewer or parent who admired idealized images of children at play, free from constraint and convention as well as utilitarian ends, demonstrated his or her civilized nature and willing—not compelled—acceptance of their obligation to others to behave properly.

The similarities in direct address, conversational style, and themes between Spencer's work and *McGuffey Readers* are not coincidental, but the product of converging reform-minded patrons and audiences. Modern society might foster individualism, but reformers saw the possibility of creating a sense of community based on feeling and moral values. They looked to art, etiquette, and educational associations to supply the bonds lost in an increasingly mobile and secular society. Thus a Cincinnati publisher hired McGuffey, already well-known in the region as an educator and a Scotch Presbyterian minister, to compile a Western reader for the schools. McGuffey taught locally and actively supported common schools, as well as the College of Teachers and Western Literary Institute, which attracted Catharine Beecher and other advocates of women's education



**Figure 8:** Lilly Martin Spencer, *First Polka*, Jean Baptiste Adolphe Lafosse lithograph, published by William Schaus, New York, 1858, 27 1/2 x 20 1/2. *Courtesy of the Ohio Historical Society.*

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and teaching. Indeed Truman & Smith, the publishers of the *Eclectic Reader*, a firm whose first copyright was a *Child's Bible with Plates by a Lady in Cincinnati*, initially considered hiring Beecher to compile the *Readers*. The *Reader* excerpted Beecher (comparing the manners and morals of Lord Chesterfield and Saint Paul), Daniel Drake (on the Patriotism of Western Literature), Edward Mansfield (on the value of mathematics, the subject of a companion textbook),





**Figure 9:** Lilly Martin Spencer, *Telford McGuffey*, 1871. Oil, 29 1/2 x 25 in. *Courtesy of the Ohio Historical Society.*



**Figure 10:** Lilly Martin Spencer, *Bo-Peep*. Jean Baptiste Adolphe Lafosse lithograph, published by William Schaus, New York, 1858, 29 3/8 x 22 1/2 in. *Courtesy of the Ohio Historical Society.*

minister William Channing (on the role of religion and natural sympathy in holding society together), and other Cincinnati writers.<sup>30</sup>

Cincinnati boosters and supporters of education also patronized the arts. McGuffey named one of his children Edward Mansfield, after the local editor, lawyer and philanthropist, who introduced Spencer to Nicholas Longworth. Lyman Beecher's children commissioned his portrait from James Beard, one of Spencer's early art teachers; Drake's daughter, who married Alexander McGuffey, hired Cincinnati painter and poet Thomas Buchanan Read for her portrait, while Drake himself supported one of Spencer's early exhibitions. But perhaps more important, the circles that urged public elevation founded organizations that displayed art as part of their larger educational role. Early Cincinnati institutions with overlapping memberships like the Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge, the Ohio Mechanics Institute, the Young Men's Mercantile Library and the Western Art Union all included exhibitions and support for the fine arts, and as a speaker to an art union said, "the friends of educational reform in Ohio demand Normal Schools—such a one is the Cosmopolitan Art Association."<sup>31</sup>

Seeing artworks in contexts that proclaimed an educational and refining intent, whether fairs, children's books, magazines, art unions, or libraries, lent them a purpose of moral self-improvement that redeemed their appeal to the senses. Early art associations, like educators, saw their mission in terms of polishing and refining the public and admired highly finished art which promised to do just that. As E. L. Magoon, a popular minister and member of the Western Art Union, said at the laying of the cornerstone of the Ohio Mechanics Institute's new building in 1848, the founders recognized that "the best minds are [like jewels] in rough coatings and obscure caverns" and "need polish for use."<sup>32</sup> The Western Art Union's 1849 *Record* defended the style of another female artist, Sophie Gengembre, praising her "highly and beautifully finished picture" in which "nothing seems to have been slighted or passed without the most careful attention." Mademoiselle Gengembre had the "good taste" to paint every portion of a chair as carefully as an eye or mouth. The *Artist and Artizan*, reviewing the fine arts exhibition at the Ohio Mechanics Institute annual fair, praised an artist's work which, though a copy of an engraving, still shows "each figure . . . finished with the care of a miniature painter, yet blended, by skilful coloring, with the rest, to preserve the general effect unbroken." Evaluating the value of smooth canvases as a superficial artistic quality, painter John Frankenstein confirmed that Cincinnati patrons admired it when he decried Spencer's benefactor Nicholas Longworth's taste for polished surfaces, asserting Longworth would "run to feel if they [paintings] were slick." Spencer herself recognized her labor-intensive style as a selling point, for in an 1851 letter to her parents, she described the "immense amount of labour and finish that I am obliged to put upon my pictures to induce patronage." When art dealer Samuel Avery commissioned a still-life, he specifically requested that Spencer complete it "as fine as some that I have seen of yours."<sup>33</sup>

Spencer regularly exhibited at art unions and sometimes at voluntary associations like mercantile libraries and mechanics' institutes. In Spencer's words, they provided her only means of support in some years: "the Art Union, which is my chief point, indeed almost my only one, for the sale of my pictures . . . is gorged with pictures." Over its lifetime, from 1848 to 1852, she showed eighteen paintings at the American Art Union, compared to eighteen paintings at the National Academy of Design over the ten years from 1848-1858. She also exhibited and sold to the Western Art Union, the Philadelphia Art Union, the Brooklyn Art Association and the Washington Art Association. Even Goupil, the international lithograph publishing firm that bought many of Spencer's works, participated in the Art Union idea by forming an International Art Union.<sup>34</sup>

The polished, detailed style was itself associated with the goals of the art unions: the *Christian Examiner* strongly encouraged the popularization of art because of its "preeminent function" to "exert an elevating and humanizing influence, to touch the finer sensibilities, and bring the mind into sympathy with what is pure and good," and admired the Düsseldorf school, praising their "severest study of nature, and the most minute attention to the details of art. There was a perfection of finish, which could hardly be surpassed."<sup>35</sup> This was indeed the Düsseldorf image, broadcast through a gallery that opened in New York in 1849. The American Art Union warmly admired these artists' minute study of nature and gently humorous depictions of everyday or sentimental themes. Spencer not only exhibited at the Düsseldorf gallery, but also her style was associated with theirs: feminist historian Mrs. Elizabeth Ellet said "she uses the highly-finished German style," and the Cosmopolitan Art Association (based in Ohio), one of her biggest buyers, eventually purchased the Düsseldorf gallery and its collection.<sup>36</sup>

Magoon's observation that the goal of the Ohio Mechanics Institute is to polish minds into brilliance met the strictures of etiquette books: rub with good company long enough and it will polish the individual into a finished and brilliant form, removing all peculiarities. The 1857 edition of *Chesterfield* avers: "good company cuts you into shape and gives true brilliant polish; without polish, intrinsic value is of no use, for it will not be sought." The *Girl's Manual* adds that metals receive all their value from the process of refinement they undergo, which fits them for use or ornament and purifies or purges them of dross. The parlors where artworks were displayed served a similar refining function on individuals entering the home; the parlor aesthetic of smooth walls and upholstered or softened surfaces acted on the family to in turn smooth their manners and improve them.<sup>37</sup>

One of the values of this polished style to etiquette writers was that it involved calling as little attention to the self as possible. Polish is desirable because it will not catch attention on any oddity or roughness, allowing the viewer, reader or speaker to concentrate on the exchange of sentiment. In discussing how to read, the *Girl's Manual* reminds that the aim of reading is "self-improvement," so ignore "style" that might "distract attention" from thoughts and senti-

ments, and stop often to consider “Is this true?” The significance, then, of the polished style, was like that of conversation: it suggested both the gentility of the author or painter, at the same time as it proposed the convention of their modest absence, directing the viewer to the subject and its sentiment, to evaluate the degree of its truth to the viewer’s experience. For audience and painter, it secured a mutual exchange: the painter shows willingness to please a general public in attention to detail, humor, and subject, and the viewer admires the grace (or concealment of the labor) with which it is accomplished.<sup>38</sup>

The combination of a detailed, polished, and morally improving style made the art promoted by art unions and other exhibition venues ideal for reproduction, at just the time that chromolithograph techniques received a boost from the 1848 influx of German refugees. A standard feature of art unions was an annual engraving of one of their purchased works as well as additional reproductions in their in-house magazines, which helped attract memberships and reach a wider audience. Spencer herself supplied a steady number of lithographs, primarily to the publisher Goupil, and mostly of children.<sup>39</sup> A grandson of the founder and president of the Kellogg Lithograph Co., the largest in the nation after Currier & Ives, answered the question of why his company produced so many images on the themes of family and children by noting that traveling vendors distributed the bulk of prints in small towns. These peddlers sold them as decorations for the home, along with other domestic items. The firm’s founder therefore chose subjects compatible “with the life they had in their homes in these small towns and villages,” as well as themes that were “timeless” or that provided “links with home” for families that moved west and southwest. Lithographs chosen to depict conditions “common to all” thus fostered fellow feeling and social bonds.<sup>40</sup>

The *Young Students* (figure 11) is one of Spencer’s more complex lithographs of children. It shows three children and numerous kittens in an extensively delineated parlor. It also exhibits the characteristics of Spencer’s style and work that recommended it to art unions and reformers promoting the themes of domestic order and social obligations, because it shows the process of social integration or the incorporation of individuals into an encompassing system. Typical of antebellum art, its attitude is optimistic: the process itself seems natural, incorporates disorder, and does not require rejection of the present to achieve a state of future harmony. The three children sit on stools or ottomans in a semi-circle, boys with books and the older girl with needlework, all pausing in their occupations to watch the antics of the kittens chasing each other in the foreground. The mother cat approaches her children from the center, apparently about to intervene in the action.

The subject thus contrasts animals to humans, recognizing common behavior, but with a reassuring message of superiority for the children are well-behaved. The youngest, who leans back with one leg off the floor and the broadest grin, comes the closest to the kittens’ disorderliness, since appropriately he is the least “civilized.” Similarly, the girl holds one kitten on her lap protectively, as she is the closest to assuming her adult role. Comparing the different stages of



**Figure 11:** Lilly Martin Spencer, *Young Students*. A. Siroudy lithograph, published by William Schaus, New York, 1858. 15 3/8 x 19 1/2 in. *Courtesy of the Ohio Historical Society.*

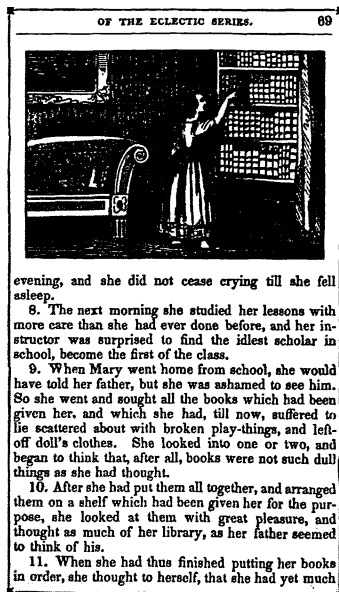
civilization is optimistic in itself, suggesting a natural progression—from animal to child to a future adult realm—even as it recognizes common feelings or behavior between the stages. “Natural” is qualified, for progress is the result of education and environment, and the children are indeed shown as students, both of books and of nature. Their pleasure in the kittens’ exuberance shows the children’s character, for their recognition of the worth of play demonstrates that they are capable of valuing qualities with no market worth. As such, the children are a model for the viewer, who also should possess the ability to judge things and people by more than economics or personal interest.

The children occupy a parlor with a matching set of furniture: upholstered couch, chairs, rugs, and table. Spencer’s care and expertise in depicting and arranging mundane furniture helps establish her authority and knowledge, reassuring the viewer that she draws on actual life in making her picture of domestic life and its influences. The repetition of items (glasses, chairs, kittens) also helps convey the sense of ordinary experience. But the children do not themselves enter into this adult space—which is mostly in the background. They sit on the floor, in between adult modes of presentation and the kittens, between childish mess—the kittens knock over a basket of mending, crumple the pages of a book, tumble an embroidered cushion—and adult gloss. Behind them, the polished and waxed surface of the table is broken by a still-life of a straight row of pitcher and glasses, whose surfaces reflect light brilliantly, but are softened by a spray

of leaves. Catharine Beecher would approve of the introduction of a touch of nature, since that helped distinguish the middle-class parlor from the aristocratic one, with its greater artifice. Where the table reaches the middle boy, its surface is broken by a casually draped cloth, as the dimpled upholstery of the sofa and chairs pads the area embracing the girl and other boy. The disorder of the foreground becomes acceptable because of the promise of the transition to the polish of the background.<sup>41</sup>

Learning self-control and expressing it by creating an orderly domestic environment—the place where public surveillance is weakest—is the lesson in the McGuffey *Readers* directed most clearly at girls. The *Second Reader's Mary and her Father* illustrates a girl in the corner of a parlor with a Grecian style sofa and a landscape hanging above it, putting carelessly tossed books away neatly on a shelf—where they belong (figure 12). The story tells how Mary “sought all the books which had been given her, and which she had, till now, suffered to lie scattered about with broken play-things and left-off doll’s clothes. . . . After she had put them all together, and arranged them on a shelf which had been given her for the purpose, she looked at them with great pleasure. . . .” and even better, became her father’s companion and favorite child. She masters the adult woman’s role of categorizing, decorating and organizing the household, with the goal of winning domestic happiness and control. As the *Monthly Chronicle* in Cincinnati said in “Order and Disorder, A Fairy Tale,” when a clever but inefficient girl chooses correctly between Fairy Disorder (ugly and tattered) and Fairy Order (neat and ironed), her newly regular work is rewarded with plaster casts, needles, watercolors, crayons and a cabinet of shells, whose value comes in great part from being all “arranged according to system.” The *Girl’s Manual* defines order as “the arrangement of things” by method, with no “promiscuous” mingling, instead placing objects with “regularity, piece by piece, in distinct rows.” Its result in the home is a happy “effect on feelings” since it will avoid confusion, haste and embarrassment. Nor is order restricted to decorations, since order is also “knowing what is due; self-control is the due paid to company.” Order then is regulation and arrangement of the environment as well as oneself.<sup>42</sup>

In behavior as well as household structure, order required thinking of individual things in larger terms, according to a general system that included them and recognized common relationships. By making order or proper arrangement of things the key to refinement, rather than the things themselves, the concept of refinement became—at least in theory—available to all. Spencer’s lithograph derives its reassurance then from the children’s containment within the orderly household and the training it offers. The connector between the present moment’s freedom and the children’s future acquisition of restraint is time and environment; the viewer who, perhaps less innocently than the children who watch the kittens, studies the appearances and relationships of children’s play and domestic life sees the influences and the progress that will shape them into refined harmony.



**Figure 12:** *Mary and her Father*, in *McGuffey's Newly Revised Second Reader* (Cincinnati, 1845), 69. From the Collection of *The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County*.

The design of the lithograph, with its clear outlines, discrete areas of color and smooth surface, is orderly too. Shapes are rhymed, so that the arched back of the pursuing cat on the right echoes the curves of the sofa behind. Shadows are fairly transparent, so no lines are lost in obscurity. The composition is simple, constructed in three planes, with three varying degrees of order and precision given to the occupants of the space. In itself then, the composition, subject and style of the lithograph was intended for the parlor. The *American Agriculturist* identified another of Spencer's scenes of children, *Dandelion Time*, as "A Beautiful Gift A Picture for the Home Circle," "gladly secured by thousands as an ornament and source of pleasure in their homes." The lithograph by itself cost \$6, or depending on the value of the frame, from \$9 to \$15. Other chromolithographs, advertised for as little as .50 cents, were similarly designated as suited for the parlor, dining room, or chamber. To some extent paintings received the same sales pitch, often sold through frame stores like Wiswell's in Cincinnati, or at art auctions that grouped them with furniture and advertised them as "good parlor ornaments," because they were "finely finished" with gilt frames. Lithographs like Spencer's helped publicize these genteel parlor arrangements, infusing them with moral qualities. By the 1850s, pictures had become one of the components recommended by magazine and etiquette writers for the home.

Artists, designers, advertisers, and illustrators depicted rooms, especially parlors, decorated with pictures.<sup>43</sup>

To the extent that lithographs and other parlor ornaments sold refinement, they reflected the idea that the polite self was expressed through the possession and arrangement of things. Descriptive details in a painting, or juxtaposed characters and objects, suggest cause and effect, on the assumption that a dress, a sewing basket, a hatpin, can represent character. They provide hooks for the viewer to hang personal associations and emotions. This style, like a conversation, empowers the viewer, who derives a narrative from the image by drawing on his or her personal experience with the arrangement of such familiar objects. The artist might try to control the narrative, perhaps through employment of direct address, but the very strategy of employing 'types' and ordinary objects draws its narrative meaning from shared or common knowledge between the viewer and artist. Hence, such a painting relies on the viewer to supply a future and past for the image, to imagine—from his or her own experience—causes and ends. The viewer of a Spencer painting or lithograph who saw the principles behind the unconnected facts, found the moral order of the painting and attached it to the arrangement of the things in it, displayed his or her own knowledge and taste. At the same time, the viewer acknowledges the importance of a purchasable environment to forming and revealing human character and action.<sup>44</sup>

While etiquette books held up what they considered naturally feminine traits, the willingness to please, to make small talk, to offer attentions to others, as a model for social behavior 'at home' and in company, they directed their reforms at both men and women. This discourse privileged women's social superiority and responsibility for modifying the conduct of children and men. At the same time, the stereotype that in theory empowered women's leadership also limited their methods. In Cincinnati, Catharine Beecher's petitioning of the city council met opposition even within her circle of friends for its violation of the codes of respectable women's behavior. Women reformers were expected to affect public opinion through example, prayer, love, persuasion, correspondence, and in some instances, literature and art.<sup>45</sup> Spencer's *Kiss me and You'll Kiss the 'Lasses* shows a woman by herself, with a glimpse into a parlor behind her, where a portrait hangs (figure 13). She is canning fruit, turning the piles of fresh grapes, apples, raspberries, and pineapples into sweetened food for household consumption. The vessels surrounding her range in type from tin tubs to glass pitchers, painted ceramic jars and, pointing between her and the door to the parlor, an elaborately embellished white pitcher. The flowered carpet further connects the two rooms while on the covered table in the parlor, flowers stand in a glass vase, next to a ceramic dish. The domestic interior shows a commitment to refining plain surfaces: wood floors, tables, walls, chairs, utensils and people (her dress includes ribbons and lace) get carpeted, upholstered, and embellished. But if this is the woman's domain, she is not alone; the title implies she addresses a





**Figure 13:** Lilly Martin Spencer, *Kiss me and You'll Kiss the 'Lasses*, 1856. Oil on canvas, 30 1/16 x 25 1/26 in. *Courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum of Art, A. Augustus Healy Fund.*

man, and refines him too: the title comment humorously reproves his forwardness.

Elizabeth Ellet, a patron and admirer of Spencer, wrote of Spencer's pictures that despite their "comic familiar" manner, "she has contrived to introduce a moral into every one of her comic pieces."<sup>46</sup> The lessons implicit in Spencer's art were key to her career as a professional woman artist, because they met the

demand of art promoters and institutions that art elevate as well as attract a growing audience. An Art Union *Bulletin* article addressed “to the uninitiated” warned the viewer that the sensuous beauty and pleasure of art, when seen without moral sympathies engaged, produces degraded taste.<sup>47</sup> This concept of the moral function of art permitted Spencer to have a public career without abandoning the construction of her as an avatar of true womanhood. Another feminist writer and Spencer fan agreed that an improving sentiment was essential to enabling women to achieve public acclaim for their work: “If the thought would elevate one, two, or three, would it not elevate one hundred—if one hundred, might not the million be made better thereby? Again, I ask, shall the thought die, because it is a woman’s? shall she refuse to give it utterance?”<sup>48</sup> In spreading a taste for art that drew on everyday objects to arouse viewer sympathy, the art unions and other antebellum art promoters valued the overlap between art as a civilizing influence with power over the spectator and the role of women as forgers of social bonds.

Spencer concurred with the idea of art’s higher purpose. In an 1847 letter from Cincinnati to her parents, she wrote that she wanted her painting to “have a tendency towards morale (*sic*) improvement, at least as far as it is in the power of painting, speaking from those who are good and virtuous, to counteract evil . . . a fine painting has a beautiful power over the human passions, and Oh! mankind needs all that the more powerful minds can do, in the way of painting.”<sup>49</sup> Spencer and her husband, while in Cincinnati, belonged to the “flourishing order of Sons and Daughters of Temperance,” whose *Record* illustrated its masthead with a picture of a reunited family—the mother in the center of the composition—and the slogan “Love, Purity and Fidelity.” The Spencers in 1846 also visited the new lunatic, blind, deaf, and dumb asylums or “homes” in Columbus, Ohio. Unlike earlier romantic artists interested in the extremes of human expression, Spencer commented on the beautiful and clean buildings housing inmates. Antebellum moral reforms, like her paintings, focused on better environments and regularization of life as vital to changing the hearts of individuals.<sup>50</sup>

Though Spencer’s moral fervor about painting probably derived at least in part from her parents’ involvement in cooperative living, feminism, and abolition, she never became politically active herself. But because of the role for art as an awakener of moral sympathies, Spencer’s genre painting in itself had political meaning. In a letter to her mother in which Spencer refused to attend a woman’s rights meeting, because art was her “point of exertion and attention and study,” she perhaps declares her own high expectations for art and its political—though moral—program.<sup>51</sup> Just as Angelique Martin’s act of signing a passionate feminist letter to Wendell Phillips as “A Mother” emphasized the politicization of her role, so the “feminine” and domestic content and style of Spencer’s painting politicized the role of art and the artist.<sup>52</sup>

*This Little Pig Goes to Market* (1857) exemplifies how an apolitical depiction of a domestic scene could have resonance with both the goals of antebellum

artists and reformers. Spencer shows a mother and child playing a counting game with its own lessons on the various fates of individuals otherwise bound together, with the laughing child gazing at the viewer. The canopied bed behind them forms a pyramidal composition and despite the gilded eagle on top, it would be difficult to imagine a more private, isolated scene, farther from the social or economic market. This is not a parlor, but a bedroom, promising personal and ‘true’ revelations just because of the absence of commerce and public opinion. The only intruder on the intimate moment is the viewer, who because the child giggles at him or her, is included in the scene.

In this domestic interior, the flowered carpet, cushioned footstool, elaborate bed, tablecloth and even the loose robe and lace underdress of the mother are not for show, but part of the rich private life of the family. The character revealed at home is important: the mother performs her function of creating physical and emotional bonds with her child, but does it through play. Their play reveals—as does the entire bedroom, presumably decorated by her—her ability to appreciate the value and beauty of the non-utilitarian, as well as that other characteristic of the “Female Heart:” there is no selfish interest in her love.<sup>53</sup> The viewer in whom the painting produced “a warm glow under his waistcoat” similarly exhibited this ability; to value such things was a goal of many upper class Protestant reformers.<sup>54</sup> As one poet vigorously urged, aligning the value of appreciating childish play with the ability to extend one’s moral sympathies:

“With the little dimpled child,  
 Who has dropped his precious toy—  
 With him in his pleasures wild—  
 In his happy childish joy—Sympathize.  
 With the orphan, with the poor—  
 With the chastened and the blest;  
 With what’er may pass your door,  
 Crown’d with joy—with woe distress’d—Sympathize.<sup>55</sup>”

Reform campaigns drew their critique of society in part from women’s “natural” trait of sympathy and its converse lack of self-interest.<sup>56</sup> Those same qualities seemed to uniquely qualify elite women to act in benevolent societies that sought social change. The notion of gendered disinterest made benevolence seem equally unmotivated by class interests, despite its basis in developing middle-class standards of behavior. Benevolence itself was a vehicle for middle-class identity to emerge, by its promulgation of certain lifestyles—the non-working mother, the “orderly” home, intimate family relationships—as respectable, or the product of moral rather than economic choices. As with the promoters of etiquette, associations, and art, most women active in benevolence were members of the native-born urban elite, typically Protestants and Whigs. But the ideals they promoted, of an autonomous and more prestigious domestic role for

married women, attracted middle-class women and some women from poorer families, for whom it had status advantages. At the same time, women's work in the home was a true "calling" that by its contributions to the common good gave female morality the connotations of republican virtue.<sup>57</sup> *This Little Pig* presented even the most private realm of the home as a utopian community in which mothers and children form a model of harmonious interests and test bonds of dependence, and where unselfishness and sympathy are key qualities for leadership and control.

In 1854, Mary Wilber, active in several benevolent organizations, described Cincinnati as a "social state . . . of mutual dependencies" in which perfect independence is impossible and women are responsible for caring for hearts as well as material welfare.<sup>58</sup> In addition to teaching "habits of neatness, order and self-respect," she urged women to help create a common culture in part through arts institutions which would offer the poor "self-sufficiency and self-improvement" by cultivating public taste and training women for work in the arts. The women of Cincinnati had and did follow her instructions: as early as 1818 a Young Ladies Academy was established, seminaries and the Ohio Mechanics Institute taught women drawing, and in 1854 women founded the Ladies Academy of Fine Arts, which eventually became the Cincinnati Art Museum.<sup>59</sup> The moral role for women in the home benefited Spencer's career too, lending her work special authenticity. An article on genius in *Moore's Western Lady's Book* attributed to women the poetic form of genius, which let them "reach hearts far and wide, of every grade—to refine and elevate feeling" and all without abandoning the role of wife and mother.<sup>60</sup> Such rhetoric provided a social framework in which an artist, like Spencer, who conceived her work at least in part as a morally elevating practice, could extend the women's sphere.

What empowered Spencer's emergence in particular then, though it benefitted most antebellum artists in creating a network of support for art, was this linked discourse of refinement and reform. When the sweetly rounded *Bo-Peep* lifted a blanket to look at the viewer, she invited him or her to join in practicing an ideal of adult behavior that included the ability to enter into another's sentiments, and the corresponding acquisition of a considerable degree of internalized self-restraint. For the circle of viewers and patrons promoting this art in the 1840s and 1850s, in Cincinnati as elsewhere, the project to instill these as common values among a diverse urban population had a considerable urgency, one that produced not just pictures "remarkable for Maternal, infantine and feminine expressions" but a wide range of publications and institutions, from school *Readers* to asylums modeled after homes.<sup>61</sup> It is frequently observed that Spencer's early works depicted scenes from Shakespeare and other romantic, biblical, or literary subjects, but that as she started exhibiting, she was pressured by the market and critics into adopting sentimental and humorous domestic topics. Without minimizing her ghettoization, that pressure was more than gender stereotyping; as the Cincinnati patron who authored the above quote said when Spencer moved to New York, such subjects were her triumphs in the popular

estimation, and it was that popular opinion Spencer and her patrons aimed to win to their vision of social relations through the detailed authenticity of Spencer's—and a woman's—work.

Rather than recuperating Spencer as a proto-feminist who addressed and empowered female viewers, or damning her for supporting a restrictive status quo—and her paintings provide evidence for both interpretations—by looking at the functions of Spencer's art for a circle of early patrons and institutions, it is possible to see her engaged in a process of reform and class definition. While often shallow in its reach and ideas, this project of elevation benefited her in its positioning of women as a source of order and refinement, and had considerable impact on the American tendency to believe that class equates with character rather than economics—and that consequently almost everyone is middle class. For after the Civil War, though elite disillusionment over “chromo civilization” or the democratization of culture more or less ended the effort of antebellum patrons and art-exhibiting associations to create a common culture, much of Spencer's imagery of housewives, pets, and ingenuous children (like that of her peers) entered mass culture, from advertisements to illustrations, where it retained some of its narrative and didactic purposes. At the same time, her work lost ground with late-nineteenth-century art promoters in Cincinnati and elsewhere, who turned instead to civic projects like the Cincinnati Art Museum, a survey of world and fine art that encouraged comparison with and adoption of international styles rather than attempting to forge a distinctive local one. As institutions increasingly separated the fine arts from other reform activities, so too new ideas about aesthetics separated style from morals; art still might elevate, but only because of its formal design, not because it taught lessons. Elites in Cincinnati as elsewhere identified with an international standard of culture as a means of displaying their leadership, and accordingly supported art whose very elimination of Spencer's conversational cues to refinement helped narrow the audience addressed and draw more strongly the hierarchic distinctions of modern high culture.

## Notes

1. David Lubin comments on this conflict in Spencer and scholarship in *Picturing a Nation* (New Haven, 1994), 159-169. The monograph is Robin Bolton-Smith and William Truettner, *Lilly Martin Spencer: The Joys of Sentiment* (Washington D.C., 1973); see also Ann B. Schumer, “Lilly Martin Spencer: American Painter of the Nineteenth Century,” (Master's thesis, Ohio State University, 1959) and Elsie Freivogel, “Lilly Martin Spencer,” *Archives of American Art* 12: 4 (1972), 9-14. Other scholars on gender and politics in Spencer include Helen Langa, “Lilly Martin Spencer: Genre, Aesthetics, and Gender in the Work of a Mid-Nineteenth Century American Woman Artist,” *Athlon* 9 (1990), 37-41; Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting*, (New Haven, 1991); Christine Bell, “A Family Conflict: Visual Imagery of the “homefront” and the War Between the States, 1860-1866,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1996); and Alice Fahs, “The Feminized Civil War: Gender, Northern Popular Literature, and the Memory of the War, 1861-1900,” *Journal of American History* 85 (March 1999), 1461-1494.

2. Dianne Macleod's *Art and the Victorian Middle Class: Money and the Making of Cultural Identity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996), 65-66, argues that a middle-class identity emerged in towns like Manchester and Leeds through new modes of art cultural patronage, especially ones emphasizing the “socially ameliorating potential” of native art and narratives that endorsed and critiqued social values. On genre painting's role in the formation of the middle class, see William

Oedel and Todd Gernes, "The Painter's Triumph: William Sidney Mount and the Formation of a Middle-Class Art," *Winterthur Portfolio* 23 (Summer/Autumn 1988), 111-127.

3. John P. Foote, *The Schools of Cincinnati and its Vicinity*, (1855; rpt. New York, 1970), v, 229. Foote participated, as did many art patrons, in the Ohio Mechanics Institute, which offered arts training, exhibitions and speeches by city boosters like James Hall and Mansfield, as well as the Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge (which included arts exhibits), the Western Art Union and the Cincinnati Academy of Fine Arts.

4. Mansfield edited newspapers and Cincinnati's *Monthly Chronicle*. Though primarily active in education, publisher Guilford supported the publication of city views of Cincinnati and later Hiram Powers' career, as well as joining the Beechers and other prominent city leaders (such as Foote, Benjamin Drake, Mansfield, Timothy Walker and Charles Stetson) in the Semi-Colon Club. The Beechers (Lyman, Harriet and Catherine), albeit active in education, did not join art associations (though Henry Ward Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe later would provide testimonials for the beneficial influence of Prang's chromolithographs), but they purchased a few art works from Cincinnati artists.

5. See Nancy Rosenbloom, "Cincinnati's Common Schools: The Politics of Reform 1829-1853" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, 1982).

6. Steven Ross describes increasing class divisions as well as the extent to which a language of mutual interests served workers, in *Workers on the Edge, Work, Leisure and Politics in Industrializing Cincinnati, 1788-1890* (New York, 1985) 67-93, 163-192. The population statistics are from Joe William Trotter, *River Jordan: African American Urban Life in the Ohio River Valley* (Lexington, Kentucky, 1998), 13-22, who describes a similar stratification of social life.

7. Lumping the audience for etiquette books, speeches at the mercantile library, fundraising campaigns for the Union Bethel, lyceums, campaigns for common schools, women's magazines, the Mechanics Institute's fairs, into one category—the middle class—considerably stretches the term, which is usually understood to refer to either non-manual laborers or professional and managerial occupations, with the elite as capitalists, owners of large manufacturing or other businesses, and the working class as manual laborers, including artisans or mechanics; see Stuart Blumin, *Emergence of the Middle Class* (New York, 1990). But although the phrase appeared by the 1850s, it overlapped considerably with the "respectable," or anyone who demonstrated willingness to adopt and display the signals and values of refinement; see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "Proslavery and Antislavery Intellectuals: Class Concepts and Polemical Struggle," in Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman, eds., *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists* (Baton Rouge, 1979), 308-336.

8. "Politeness," *Family Magazine* 8 (1840), 352. The quoted passage next de-emphasizes occupation: "Thus an operative artisan may be a gentleman, and worthy of our particular esteem; while an opulent merchant may be only a vulgar clown, with whom it is impossible to be on terms of friendly intercourse."

9. Mrs. Sarah Paxton, *Moore's Western Lady's Book* 13 (March 1856), 92-94.

10. *Manual of politeness, comprising the principles of etiquette, and rules of behavior in genteel society, for persons of both sexes* (Philadelphia, Penn., 1842), 40-43. Norbert Elias explicitly connects a centralizing, increasingly interdependent society and a strengthened demand for politeness in *The Civilizing Process*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, 2 vols. (New York, 1978), and *The Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford, 1983). On refinement in the nineteenth century, see Richard Bushman, *Refinement of America* (New York, 1992), John Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility* (New York, 1990), and Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women* (New Haven, 1982), 92-123.

11. Based on Mary Reed Bobbitt's *Bibliography of Etiquette Books Published in America Before 1900* (New York, 1947), 3-35, between 1820 and 1876 almost 300 editions of about 98 different etiquette books appeared, though this underestimates the number. Most etiquette guides of the period copied Chesterfield's *Letters*, but replaced his stress on the personal advantages gained from pleasing others with insistence that proper behavior was a matter of moral obligation and accordingly required even greater consistency. Almost all etiquette books—123—were from New York; Cincinnati publishers issued 6 books during those years, compared to Boston's 14. Many authors wrote under pseudonyms and almost all borrowed material, with the result that many books from this period share considerable content. Some book titles targeted men (13) or women (11), but the majority (74) either did not specify their intended audience or addressed men and women.

12. *Manual of Politeness*, 79-80.

13. *My Daughter's Manual or the Girl's Manual*, (New York, Philadelphia, 1839), 66, 68; Earl of Chesterfield, *Letters Written by the Earl of Chesterfield to His Son*, (Cincinnati, 1857), 167; *Girl's Manual*, 43-44.

14. *Laws of Good Breeding or the Science of Etiquette* (Cincinnati, 1848), 3, 45, 62, 287.

15. *Manual of Politeness*, p. 17; *The Illustrated Manners Book: A Manual of Good Behavior and Polite Accomplishments*, (Cincinnati, 1855), 9-10; *Chesterfield's Art of Letter-Writing, Simplified, Appended the complete rules of etiquette and the usages of Society*, (New York, 1857) 28.

Chesterfield recommended that individuals write letters in a natural manner, achieved "by thinking what you would say when conversing together," 29. Chesterfield, *Letters*, 201.

16. *Laws of Good Breeding*, p. 5; see also Naomi Schorr, *Reading in Detail* (New York, 1987). Chesterfield, *Letters*, 144. Chesterfield calls manners the "graces" because they please the senses rather than the reason. Learning the graces meant learning the art of pleasing, a phrase from Chesterfield, 129, that became the title of a nineteenth-century etiquette book, *The Art of Pleasing; or the American lady and gentleman's book of etiquette* (Cincinnati: H. M. Rulison, 1855).

17. *The Handbook of the Man of Fashion* (Philadelphia, Penn., 1847), 124, 125, 126, 147. Since women, like children, were economic and social dependents, the "natural" desire to please with its concomitant eye for detail seems more likely an expression of the necessity of pleasing. But to reformers urging recognition of mutual dependency and defining willingness to please and observance of others as social obligations, such traits of dependency needed repositioning as admirable and keys to success in a complex—and interdependent—society.

18. Catharine Beecher, *Letters to Persons Engaged in Domestic Service*, (New York, 1842), 125. The motif of the child and the pet at the table also appears in a *Godey's Lady's Book* engraving, "Not Invited," reproduced as the frontispiece of the Cincinnati Universalist Sunday School's *Youth's Friend* 2 (1847/1848), a magazine filled with advice on manners, as well as articles on Fourier, education for the masses, the principles of reform, and the progress of society, sympathy and art.

19. Lydia Sigourney, "A Family Dinner" *Monthly Chronicle* 1 (March 1839), 206. See Margaret Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner* (New York, 1991), and Kasson, *Rudeness & Civility*, 193-195.

20. Robyn Warhol's *Gendered Interventions: Narrative Discourse in the Victorian Novel*, (New Brunswick, 1989) analyzes direct address as a narrative device which in sentimental novels asks the reader to take the fiction seriously, see themselves in the narrative, and identify with the narratee "you." She argues that women authors adopted direct address as a substitute for public speaking from which respectability barred them, and as a reform strategy. While the reader's experience of how a story unfolds over time differs from the viewer's perception of narrative in a picture, the device of a figure who breaks with the action to turn toward the viewer fills a similar function to the narrator's direct address to the reader; see also Lubin on direct address in this painting and the viewer, *Picturing a Nation*, 175.

21. "Chat," *Western Literary Journal*, 1 (November 1844), 59-60, confirmed that this gesture of social equality demanded a response, regardless of gender or class: "How do you do, Mr.—, or Mrs.—, or Miss—, or Rev.—, or Dr.—, or Squire—, no matter who you are, or what your profession may be, give us your hand—a good hearty shake, a full soul'd gripe . . . We have no choice of persons to whom we proffer our hand provided they will reciprocate our good feeling and not cheat their neighbors." Frances Trollope referred to both sexes' handshake as intrusive but one that could not be rejected: "The eternal shaking hands with these ladies and gentlemen was really an annoyance," quoted in Christopher Mulvey, *Transatlantic Manners: Social patterns in nineteenth-century Anglo-American travel literature*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), 104. Elizabeth O'Leary notes that the socially superior person had the prerogative of offering the first handshake and observes that the Irish servant in *Shake Hands?* commits a social breach because of her class and ethnicity, though the gendering of class complicates it. Thus a number of cues in the painting reinforce her right, as a woman in an orderly home, to receive social recognition: the ceramic figurine on the mantel, the patterned oil cloth on the floor, the fireplace cover decorated with a courting couple. *At Beck and Call: The Representation of Domestic Servants in Nineteenth-Century American Painting*, (Washington D.C., 1996), 88.

22. *Man of Fashion*, 33. John Westerhoff III, *William McGuffey and His Readers* (Nashville, Tennessee, 1978), 14-15.

23. William McGuffey, "Conversations in a Schoolroom," *Monthly Chronicle of Interesting and Useful Knowledge*, ed. Edward Mansfield, 1 (March 1839), 147-149. See also Richard Brodhead, "Sparing the Rod: Discipline and Fiction in Ante-bellum America," *Representations* 21 (Winter 1988) 70-91, and his *Cultures of letters: scenes of reading and writing in nineteenth-century America*, (Chicago, 1993).

24. William McGuffey, "Suggestions to Teachers," *McGuffey's Eclectic Second Reader* (Cincinnati, 1836), n.p.; 51-52.

25. *McGuffey's Newly Revised Second Reader* (Cincinnati, 1845), illustration 43, quote from 44, 101-102.

26. *McGuffey's Eclectic Third Reader*, (Cincinnati, 1843), 50-51, and *Fourth Reader*, (Cincinnati, 1848), 13.

27. McGuffey quoted in Richard Mosier, *Making the American Mind*, (New York, 1947), 35.

28. Photographs of *Little Navigator* (1854) and *Young Teacher* (1858) were not available but are reproduced in Bolton-Smith and Truettner's *Lilly Martin Spencer: Joys of Sentiment*, 39 (figs. 20 and 21).

29. On loosened clothing, *Manual of Politeness*, 196-7.

30. See Rosenbloom, *Cincinnati's Common Schools* and Dolores Sullivan, *William Holmes McGuffey, Schoolmaster to the Nation* (London, Toronto, 1994), 207.
31. Col. S. D. Harris, "The Mission of Art," *Cosmopolitan Art Association Transactions and Annual Report for 1854-5*, (Sandusky, Ohio, 1855), 6. The contents of the cornerstone of the Ohio Mechanics Institute included a copy of that year's Western Art Union *Transactions*. The directors of the Ohio Mechanics Institute regarded it as a "kindred association" to the Young Men's Mercantile Library Association, which held exhibitions (including a raffle of Spencer's paintings in 1842), commissioned busts, and shared the same mission of polishing the general populace through libraries, free lectures, exhibitions, and in the case of the Ohio Mechanics Institute, art and science classes, some open to ladies. Letter from Young Men's Mercantile Library Association to Ohio Mechanics Institute of 1847, Box 4, Ohio Mechanics Institute Collection, University of Cincinnati. Nicholas Longworth, an early admirer of Spencer, also rented one of his buildings, Trollope's Bazaar, to the Ohio Mechanics Institute. The organizers of the Ohio Mechanics' Institute overlapped too with those of the Western Art Union.
32. E. L. Magoon, *Oration at the Laying of the Cornerstone of the Ohio Mechanics Institute, Cincinnati*, (July 4, 1848, Gazette Office), 17. Box 74, Ohio Mechanics Institute Collection, University of Cincinnati.
33. *Western Art Union Record* 1 (October 1849), 6. Sophie Gengembre Anderson (1823-1903) was a genre painter who left France in 1848 for Ohio and Pennsylvania, where she worked for the lithographer Louis Prang & Co., before marrying and settling in England in 1854. "The Ohio Mechanics Institute: Greenland's Painting," *Artist and Artizan* 1 (October 10, 1845), 14-16, Box 77, Ohio Mechanics Institute Collection, University of Cincinnati, John Frankenstein, *American Art: Its Awful Attitude* (1864, rpt. ed. William Coyle, Bowling Green, Ohio, 1972), 38; Letter from Spencer to her parents, February 17, 1851, (Spencer Papers [Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.: Archives of American Art] microfilm roll 132). Avery is quoted in Bolton-Smith and Truettner, *Lilly Martin Spencer*, 67.
34. Letter from Spencer to her parents, Oct. 11, 1850, (Spencer Papers [Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.: Archives of American Art] microfilm roll 132).
35. "Cosmopolitan Art Association," *The Crayon* 4 (August 1857), 252-253; "American Art and Art Unions," *Christian Examiner* XLVIII (March 1850), 205, 214.
36. The Düsseldorf Gallery in New York, whose collection was purchased by the Cosmopolitan Art Association in 1857, primarily exhibited German genre and history paintings associated with Düsseldorf's liberal middle class. Düsseldorf and its Academy attracted American genre, landscape and history painters, many of whom also found support from Art Unions and associations. William Gerds also notes the popularity of this style in Cincinnati, "'Good Tidings' to the Lovers of the Beautiful": New York's Düsseldorf Gallery, 1849-1862," *American Art Journal* 30:1/2 (1999), 50-81, note 83.
37. Chesterfield, *Letters*, 186; *Girl's Manual*, 198; Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 263-267; Katherine Grier, *Culture & Comfort* (Rochester, New York, 1988), 136-164.
38. *Girl's Manual*, 135-136.
39. Of the approximately sixteen lithographs mentioned in Bolton-Smith and Truettner's *Lilly Martin Spencer*, two are of servants—*Shake Hands?* and the *Jolly Washerwoman* (1851) while the rest show children, all but three of which (*Fruit of Temptation*, 1864's *Picnic* and the 1869 lithograph of *Choose Between*, renamed *Take Your Choice*) concentrate on children apart from parents.
40. Doug Adams, "1974 Interview with William Bulkeley, President of the Kellogg & Bulkeley Co.," typescript, (Douglas Adams Papers [Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.: Archives of American Art] microfilm roll 2786). Antebellum Kellogg lithographs sold primarily in New York and the Ohio Valley, with distribution sites in Hartford, Buffalo, and Nashville.
41. On aristocratic vs. middle class parlors, see Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 305-306.
42. McGuffey, *Newly Revised Second Reader*, 69. "Order and Disorder, A Fairy Tale," *Monthly Chronicle* 1(1839), 254-255; *Girl's Manual*, 260, 266; *Manual of Politeness*, 22.
43. *The American Agriculturist*, (November 1868), 430, clipping in Spencer file, National Museum of American Art, Washington D.C.. On paintings as parlor furniture, see Frederic Alan Sharf, "Art and Life in Boston, 1837-1850: A Study of the Painter and Sculptor in American Society," 1956, typescript (Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.: Archives of American Art microfilm roll 3), 93. Examples of model parlors appear in Clifford Clark, Jr., *The American Family Home, 1800-1960* (Chapel Hill, 1986); Grier, *Culture & Comfort*; and Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women*.
44. On the performance of gentility in parlors and through objects in the parlor, see Shirley Wajda, "The Commercial Photographic Parlor, 1839-1889" in eds. Carter Hudgins and Elizabeth Collins Cromley, *Shaping Communities, Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, VI*, (Knoxville, Tenn., 1997), 216-230. On description, see Catherine Gallagher, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Discourse and Narrative Form, 1832-1867*, (Chicago, 1985).
45. Lori Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven, 1990) 67-97. On Beecher, see clipping from the



*Cincinnati Daily Times* (March 1844) in the Timothy Walker Papers, Cincinnati Historical Society. Walker editorializes against Mrs. Beecher for presenting in person a petition against liquor licenses on behalf of the Martha Washington Society. The Society's Women's Committee responded that men only condemn women for leaving their sphere when it does not suit party needs.

46. Elizabeth Ellet, *Women Artists in All Ages and Countries*, (New York, 1859), 324, (Public Library of the City of Detroit [Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C., Archives of American Art] microfilm roll D34). Ellet tried to institute an International Society of Lady Artists, to support their work through weekly parlor receptions for the "best people" to see the paintings in an atmosphere of privacy and fashion. Letter from E. H. Ellet to Spencer, Oct. 6, 1858, (Spencer Papers [Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.: Archives of American Art] microfilm roll 132). She also asked Spencer to illustrate another of her books on women in history, excerpted in *Godey's Lady's Book*.

47. Mrs. Jameson, "Some Thoughts on Art Addressed to the Uninitiated," *London Art Journal* (April 1849), (reprinted in *Bulletin of the American Art Union* (June 1849), 4-5, [Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.: Archives of American Art] microfilm roll N37). Langa argues that critical idealizations of Spencer's identity as a woman and artist contributed to her popularity in the 1850s, even as it limited her subject matter, "Lilly Martin Spencer," 38.

48. Mrs. Frances D. Gage, "Noted Women," *Western Literary Magazine*, 1(1854), 243.

49. Lilly M. Spencer letter from Cincinnati to her parents in Marietta, July 10, 1847, (Martin Family Papers, Ohio Historical Society [Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.: Archives of American Art] microfilm roll 132). Spencer's parents had contacts with intellectual and reform circles; as Fourierists, they held progressive notions about women's rights and Fourierists (among others) posited that a family's harmonizing of individual interests could extend to the larger society. See Angelique and Gilles Martin's correspondence and mention of writing for the *Phalanx* in 1845, also in the Martin Family Papers.

50. 1846 visit, (Spencer Papers, [Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.: Archives of American Art] microfilm roll 131); on asylums, see David Rothman, *Discovery of the Asylum* (Boston, 1971).

51. Spencer quoted in Freivogel, "Lilly Martin Spencer," 9.

52. Letter from Angelique Martin to Mr. Wendell Phillips, 1854 (Martin Family Papers [Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.: Archives of American Art] microfilm roll 132).

53. "The Female Heart," *Rose of the Valley* 1 (1839), 92.

54. *Cosmopolitan Art Association Journal*, (September 1857), referring to Spencer's *How Tempting!*, quoted in Bolton-Smith and Truettner, *Lilly Martin Spencer*, 145.

55. "Sympathize With All," by a lady, *Western Literary Magazine* 1 (1854), 340.

56. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*, 1-35; Christine Stansell, *City of Women* (Urbana, Ill., 1982), 64-75.

57. Daniel Scott Smith, "Family Limitation, Sexual Control, and Domestic Feminism in Victorian America," *Feminist Studies* 1 (Winter-Spring 1973), 40-57. Jean Boydston, *Home and Work*, (New York, Oxford, 1990), agrees that economically, marriage was the best option for men and women, though she argues that the sanctified role of wife/mother was a net loss of status, given the higher value the role of worker had in the larger world. On women's work as a calling, see Robert Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, 1985), 88-89.

58. Mary Wilber's "Address on Home Missions" (1854) is quoted in Carol Blum, "Women's Culture and Urban Culture," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 1987) 30.

59. The most recent writer on Cincinnati's art institutions is Paul Breidenbach, "Cultural Patronage in Cincinnati, 1820-1884," (Ph.D. dissertation in progress, University of California, San Diego). Kathleen McCarthy's *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930*, (Chicago, 1991) argues women's participation in art remained primarily charitable fund-raising and the lack of women leaders in pre-war art institutions like the art unions indicates the strength of the barriers against them.

60. "Genius," *Moore's Western Lady's Book*. 13 (February 1856), 50.

61. Letter from Frank Carnes in Cincinnati to L.M. Spencer in New York, December 10, 1848, (Spencer Papers [Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.: Archives of American Art] microfilm roll 131).