

Justice for Jane: A Mid-Twentieth Century Confrontation Between an Artist, His Patron, and a Modern Woman

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Abstract: Secured within the archival material of the Smithsonian Archives of American Art and New York Public Library is a more than twenty-year correspondence between the American artist Everett Shinn and his benefactor, Poultney Bigelow. Their letters include updates on the New York social scene and invitations for visits. Many of their exchanges also contain racist comments and derogatory references to women by Bigelow and bawdy sketches by Shinn. But one specific letter from October 1942 stands apart from the others for its length and tone. In it, the artist, in the guise of protector, confronts his patron's sexually offensive behavior toward Jane Huttenloch, a career-minded young woman. Examination of this letter, their overall correspondence, and their lifestyles sheds light on a revealing and disturbing series of conversations between the men and highlights how deeply their patriarchal values informed their attitudes and treatment of women. This paper adds to the lexicon of the eroding ideology of chauvinism and addresses changing ideals of womanhood in the mid-twentieth century, underscoring the history and long-held traditions that led to the early twenty-first century's #MeToo Movement when sexual predation is no longer condoned and men who belittle women can expect to be called out and castigated.

Keywords: Gender Issues, Empowerment, Patriarchy, Male Dominance, Sexual Harassment

1. Introduction

A collection of unpublished letters spanning more than two decades between the American Ashcan painter, Everett Shinn (1876-1953) and his patron, Poultney Bigelow (1855-1954) are fascinating in their revelation of male deportment and entitlement. Bigelow's hand-written and Shinn's typed correspondence relates to news about the New York social scene, updates on their shared acquaintances, and invitations for Shinn to visit the elder gentleman's up-state New York manor located near the town of Malden-on-Hudson. Much of their written banter is peppered with "locker room" type comments about women and a few racy sketches by the artist.

They both also make occasional racist remarks toward Jews and other ethnic sects. Bigelow especially embraced the virulent anti-Semitism of the era. Long before he and Shinn met, he penned articles such as "A successful colonial experiment" published in 1900 in *Harper's Weekly* and "The Russian and His Jew" from the February 1894 edition of *Harper's Weekly*. In the 1894 article, Bigelow wrote disparagingly about the habits and population numbers of

Jewish people and when comparing Russia to the United States he suggested, "The stranger walking down Broadway, guided by the signs over the shops of jobbers and importers, might conclude that the Jews own New York" [1].

However, it is the derogatory references to women and sex that seems to have most closely bonded Shinn and Bigelow to each other. Their recurrent written exchanges offer a glimpse into the reactions of many men during the mid-twentieth century who were comfortable with the long-standing patriarchal system but were now confronted by a shifting gender balance. Shinn and Bigelow had to navigate the evolving challenges to tolerated behavior and the inevitable societal changes as women were becoming more assertive and gaining more independence.

Among the many letters they exchanged, one stands apart from the others for its content, length, and tone. It is a four-page, single-spaced, carefully worded, typewritten epistle confronting the wealthy gentleman for his harassing behavior toward the artist's companion, Jane Huttenloch (1918-2003) while she and Shinn were weekend guests at Bigelow's home in early October 1942. Over the next several years, the back-

and-forth dialogue referencing this incident and other subjects chronicled in the men's continued correspondence exposes the confident justification of the entitled upper-class man, the acquiescent attitude of the womanizing artist, and the trying situation of the young working-class woman who was courageous enough to speak out against offensive sexual advances, but in doing so, opened herself to criticism, scorn, and blame [2].

This all-too-common situation and pivotal moment in Shinn and Bigelow's relationship underscores the miscues and agitations of shifting gender roles as women of the mid-twentieth century agitated against suppression of women's abilities and liberties. While markedly improved, the renegotiation of power between the sexes and quest for equality continues today, more than seventy years since Huttenloch was the recipient of Bigelow's inappropriate sexual behavior.

With the rise of the #MeToo movement in October 2017 which spotlighted the prevalence of sexual harassment against women, the deeply entrenched patriarchy that assumes men's domination over women and allows for, and at times encourages, men to behave as sexual predators has met its greatest challenge in history. This early twenty-first century wave of activism and intolerance, as women confront the unjust power men have claimed, has been aided by social media and its ability to give voice and foment change for the many who have suffered from or witnessed acts of sexual assault and coercion. In 1942, Jane Huttenloch and victims like her had no such agency to call out sexual abuse or to find support in doing so. They could harbor no expectations of a man's accountability or of his public shaming. For Huttenloch, there was a social tolerance for such transgressors of decent behavior.

2. Jane Huttenloch – A Modern Woman

Jane Huttenloch was from a respectable middle-class family in Upper Montclair, Essex County, New Jersey. Although many girls of her era were first or second-generation daughters of European immigrants, Huttenloch could trace her American roots back to colonial times. As a recent college graduate from Syracuse University who was focused on her career, Huttenloch embodied a new type of liberated spirit; she belonged to one of the first groups of free-thinking American women who eschewed traditional gender roles and expectations. She delayed marriage for an education and employment, in her quest for equal value.

Unlike many of her peers, Jane had a role-model in her own mother, Hazel Huttenloch, who was educated, worked outside of the home as a registered nurse, and had served on the New Jersey State Board of Examination of Nurses. Her mother died in 1934 when Jane was sixteen. Her father, once a cavalry officer in the U.S. Army, was a salesman and remarried someone just a few years older than his daughter; but then he died in March 1941 leaving Jane alone and free to make her own life choices.

Like others during this period of new-found freedoms for

women, the youthful Huttenloch may have benefitted from the work of Margaret Sanger who opened the first birth control clinic in 1916 in Brooklyn believing that "every child should be a wanted child." Sanger started the American Birth Control League, the precursor to Planned Parenthood. By 1938, the federal ban on birth control was lifted and diaphragms became a popular method to prevent pregnancy, liberating women from the consequences of casual sex much as the birth control pill did in the early 1960s [3].

2.1. Huttenloch, Career-Minded

After college in 1939, Jane Huttenloch moved to New York City to pursue a profession as a graphic artist, subsidizing her income with office work. Explaining her situation to the wealthy Poultney Bigelow, Everett Shinn wrote, "She [Jane] slaves as a typist in an Insurance company of an existence of those denials (clothes, etc.) that are most of the equipment of young girls [sic] dreams" [4].

She would later become Assistant Art Director for H. M. Mathes, Inc. and create illustrations for *The American Magazine* including "Death at the Whistling Buoy" (February 1945), "Help Wanted, Male" (August 1945), and "Murder on Tuesday" (May 1946) [5].

2.2. Huttenloch, Not-So-New Woman

As a "Career Gal" entering a workforce that was booming in the years following the Great Depression and that offered more opportunities for women as men were drafted to fight in World War II, Huttenloch and other women like her stood apart from an earlier generation's image of the "New Woman." Apparently, the label "New Woman" was first used in print by Sarah Grand (1854–1943) in the May 1894 issue of the *North American Review*. [6].

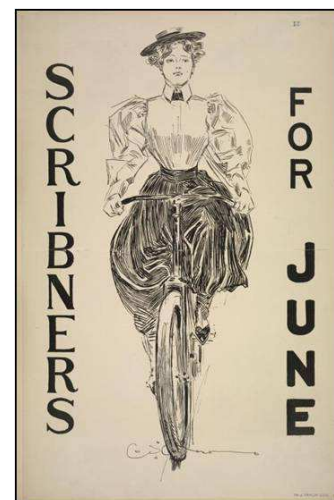


Figure 1. Charles Dana Gibson, *Scribner's for June*, 1895, New York Public Library.

An illustrated image of the New Woman was introduced by Charles Dana Gibson soon afterward. Gibson's late-nineteenth century creation, known as the "Gibson Girl," represented the ideal New Woman, as in Figure 1. According

to historian Ellen Wiley Todd, “the coolly elegant Gibson girl began her twenty-year reign as America’s most popular visual type, first in *Life* magazine, then in every imaginable artifact of American material culture.” Named for her creator, she was popular in the years between the early 1890s and World War I [7].

Gibson’s woman, while demanding equal status with men, was not directly competing with them. The Gibson Girl maintained proper decorum despite her demand for unrestricted inclusion in the privileged male sphere where she navigated areas and activities previously closed to women. Gibson’s New Woman was elevated above the working class and reflective of an innate social structure based on class distinctions, behavior protocols, and entitlement; the Gibson Girl represented a fantasy image of the modern American woman of high society. As Todd further explains, the phrase “New Woman” is multi-dimensional and can conjure up dozens of images, verbal characterizations, and notable exemplars [7].

However, at the turn of the nineteenth to twentieth century, this sobriquet stood for the middle to upper-middle-class woman’s evolutionary progress toward modernity and, in particular, her movement from the home to the public sphere. Women born between the late 1850s and 1900 made up the first two generations of New Women. Huttenloch was part of the third or fourth generation of women seeking equality – now perhaps representative of a not-so-new-women.

2.3. *Career Gal, No “Charity Girl”*

As a member of the middle-class, Jane Huttenloch could have been subject to discrimination by upper-class women as well as men. Regardless of her own moral principles, she might have been associated with some working-class girls whose liberated actions led them to be labeled the derogatory and mocking name, “Charity Girl” (a term used prior to World War I). This nomenclature referred to young women, with more liberties and possibly uninhabited morals, who enthusiastically delighted in an evening of being wined and dined by men of high society. Residing somewhere between virgins and prostitutes, these uninhibited, promiscuous Charity Girls accepted dinners and gifts, rather than money, in exchange for the pleasure of their company [8].

Even though many young women displayed liberated comportment and may have dated more men than their mothers, not all working-class women *were* Charity Girls. Some modern young women may have engaged in flirtatious games, allowed kissing and even heavy petting, but opted to protect their virtue and keep their chastity. Evidently however, Bigelow equated all single, working-class “young girls like Jane,” whether chaste or not, with the by-gone, antiquated idea of a Charity Girl [9].

2.4. *Career Gal, No “True Woman”*

As a hard-working, self-sufficient Career Gal, Huttenloch was neither a Gibson Girl nor a Charity Girl. Regardless, she was legitimately offended by the lewd tone of Bigelow’s letter,

and perhaps also by the fact that Bigelow seemed to feel no hesitation in asserting his male dominance and social superiority. In the eyes of the upper-class gentleman, only the refined, passive, demure “True Woman” was worthy of courteous regard and suitable for marriage, while the employed Career Gal was unworthy of respectful consideration and virtually stripped of her humanity [10].

To a man of Bigelow’s background and status, as a third-generation modern woman pursuing a profession, Huttenloch was by definition uncultivated, unrefined, and removed from the protection of polite society; to him, she was not a “lady” like his own privileged daughters. Evidentially, the inequality of her status and the fact that Huttenloch represented a new kind of woman – a creature who would accept an invitation for a weekend getaway from a man she was dating - indicated to the erudite Bigelow that he possessed the right to behave toward her in a forward, unrestrained, and provocative manner.

It was as if for him, this working-class not-so-New Woman was fair game for sexual advances and conquests. To keep the gender and class differences in balance, Bigelow must have felt the need to clearly identify and differentiate his superior authority over both Huttenloch and the artist, Shinn. He may have even believed that Jane should have been flattered by the attention she received from such a highly cultured and experienced man as himself.

3. Everett Shinn, the Artist



Figure 2. Everett Shinn, *Cherry Lane Theater*, 1948, Private Collection.

Born in New Jersey, Everett Shinn was raised in a middle-class, Quaker family, had worked as a newspaper illustrator, and after moving from Philadelphia to New York City, enjoyed considerable success early in his art career as a member of The Eight (the core of what would later become known as the Ashcan School, who had been the leading artists of their era). Following a well-received exhibition of their work at New York’s Macbeth Galleries in 1908, The

Eight held sway until the Armory Show of 1913 when Shinn struggled against the modern art movements introduced by the avant-garde exhibition.

3.1. Shinn, a Lifelong Artist

Shinn created art throughout his life. In addition to paintings and drawings, he also made several wall murals painted in his neo-Rococo style for elegant homes and decorative murals for the interior of the Belasco Theater, just off Broadway on West 44th Street. He also created numerous illustrations for stories of fiction published in books and magazines. However, his resistance to change his style impacted the trajectory of his career. Basically, whatever his medium, his style did not evolve.

By age thirty-five as many painters were hitting their stride, Shinn's art career seems to have peaked, but he continued to produce work. For instance, in January 1934 he gifted Bigelow with a nude pastel drawing which Bigelow took the liberty to call *Ariadne*, in 1943 he sold a painting called *Dancing Girl*, he created a watercolor in 1945 entitled *Horse and Carriage at Plaza Square*, and another in 1948 called *Cherry Lane Theater*, Figure 2. However, his lifelong approach to painting and focus on nudes, city scenes, café society, and entertainment had become outdated [11-13].

Shinn's artwork was only shown twice between 1910 and 1937 when he was included in an exhibit at the Whitney Museum of American Art. In 1939 he showed at the Art Institute of Chicago, he had a few exhibitions in the 1940s, and again in 1950 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art [14].

3.2. Shinn's Work in Theater and Film

Expanding beyond paintings, the decorative arts, and illustration, Shinn embraced his love for entertainment and in the years following the exhibition of *The Eight*, he turned much of his focus to the stage and film industry. He wrote, produced, made costumes, and acted in a number of plays. He also worked as an art director for three movie companies: Samuel Goldwyn Pictures Corporation, Inspiration Pictures, and William Randolph Hearst's Cosmopolitan Pictures. Although his work in Hollywood ended by 1930, during the 1940s when Shinn was involved with Huttenloch, he was still absorbed with theater and the movies.

3.3. Shinn's Attitude Exposed in His Art

Throughout his life Everett Shinn was stage-struck, and one means of understanding his stance on the relationships and interactions between well-mannered gentlemen and working-class girls (like Jane Huttenloch) can be discovered in paintings made earlier in his career of vaudeville variety shows featuring female performers. His art, as scholar Rebecca Zurier posits, "captured human life as it was" and these early twentieth century images, such as his 1908 painting *Revue*, Figure 3, were emblematic of gender ideology of the period [15].



Figure 3. Everett Shinn, *Revue*, 1908, oil on canvas, 18 x 24 in., Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney.

3.4. Theatrical Scenes

In his many paintings and drawings of entertainment venues, Shinn sometimes captured the people in the audience and the musicians in the orchestra pit, but most often he turned his focus to the women onstage, as with the starlet featured in *Revue*. Such images of female entertainers reveal Shinn's fixation on their innocence and a piquant interest in their sexuality. His early twentieth-century archetype represents the ideal of many men of the time who hesitantly accepted the growing empowerment of women, possibly in part because the accompanying liberation of their sexuality made women seem (or actually be) more sexually available.

Overall, Shinn's interpretation of the showgirl as a New Woman, like the free-spirited Gibson Girl, is something of a hybrid in that she appealed to men with her bold sexuality cloaked in a non-threatening guise, and to women with her fresh combination of vitality and independence. In his presentation of female performers, Shinn enforced contradictory reactions in the viewer of both protector and predator. These traditional masculine stances seem to be echoed in the incident between the brazen predator Bigelow, the victim Huttenloch, and the heroic protector Shinn (although over time he grew critical of Huttenloch and apologetic to his patron!) [7].



Figure 4. Everett Shinn, *The Rehearsal*, ca. 1915, pastel on paper, 19 x 37 in., Frye Art Museum, Seattle, WA, Museum Purchase, 1971.006.

3.5. The Top-Hatted Gentleman

Another of his earlier works helps underscore the almost universal entitlement men of the mid-twentieth century such as Shinn and Bigelow possessed. Created in 1915, *The Rehearsal at the Irving Palace Theater*, Figure 4, perfectly combines Shinn's love of theater and his incongruous nature as a man who thought of himself as courteous, gallant, and well-bred, and yet sought not necessarily proper relations with attractive young women. Gentlemen in top hats (symbols of wealth, privilege, and authority) appear comfortable in Shinn's painting. They look sophisticated and superior. Pictured in *The Rehearsal* are the renowned actor and well-known roué, John Barrymore (seated in profile), two other well-dressed gentlemen, and a woman in the audience (probably a performer) viewing the rehearsal of another vaudeville dancer performing onstage in a flamboyant Spanish costume. The gentlemen have removed their hats and these rest prominently in the foreground, as they turn their attention to the stage. Their comfort within the theater environment and unfiltered access to the performers during a rehearsal speaks to their limitless privilege.

3.6. The Starlet

In his artworks, Shinn regarded female ingénues as mere sexual creatures or decorative ornaments, within the spectacle of the theater. Shinn was neither interested in celebrating individual stars nor in delving behind the façade of glamour. He even wrote of his sentiments to a patron saying, "The picture you have is one of our vaudeville theaters in those days of smothering skirts. She [the performer] has no particular identity. However, without fixing her on a known personality, she is, or the picture in its entirety is, my personality plus the forgotten vaudeville performers which inspired it" [16].

Despite the lack of individuality, most of Shinn's female entertainers possess a feistiness behind their demure façade that suggests a conflict between his desire for a passive sensual woman and his admiration for the powerful self-determination of the modern woman; attributes he must have admired in Jane Huttenloch as well.

4. The Men Involved: the Patron and the Artist

Poultney Bigelow's father, John Bigelow, the co-owner and managing editor of the *New York Evening Post* and first President of the New York Public Library, had served as American Ambassador to France under Abraham Lincoln. Young Poultney was schooled in Europe and played "Cowboys-and-Indians" with the future German emperor and King of Prussia, Wilhelm II who later wrote that "he [Poultney] was an uncommonly amiable fellow; amongst us boys he held a place of high esteem." The young Bigelow earned degrees from both Yale University and Columbia Law School [17].

By 1942, Bigelow led a relatively sedate existence after a life spent touring the world and writing books on history, politics, and world affairs and reporting his adventures in various newspapers and magazines including *The London Times*, *Harper's Weekly*, and a sports magazine Bigelow founded in 1885 called *The Outing: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation*. Bigelow wrote of sailing the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, and the North Sea. He had canoed the length of the Danube and was once shipwrecked off the coast of Japan. The adventurer traveled to Cuba, the Panama Canal, Constantinople, and throughout Africa. Sometimes he was accompanied by the artist Frederic Remington, the two writing and illustrating stories for various magazines. The duo once had to make a dark-of-night escape from Czarist Russia. Apparently unbeknown to Remington, Bigelow had agreed to spy on Russian fortifications along the Baltic for the Kaiser, and they were discovered. The great voyager decorated his home with artifacts from his exploits including poisoned arrows, Samurai swords, and fertility figures. Bigelow was a man of status, intrigue, and scandalous behavior who, even in his late eighties, still possessed a "magnetic pull and general attractiveness" [18].

4.1. Shinn and Bigelow

Beginning in the late 1920s, Everett Shinn became a regular correspondent and frequent guest of the wealthy journalist, historian, and adventurer. By this time, Bigelow had retired to his large family home built by his grandfather Asa Bigelow near Malden-on-Hudson, a small village about ninety miles north of New York City on the west bank of the Hudson River. The numerous letters of invitation Shinn received to the Bigelow homestead usually contained a twenty-dollar bill to cover train tickets and lines such as, "bring any companion whom you deem worthy of sharing the big bed" [19].

4.2. Bigelow's Relationships with Women

Although an adventurous world-traveler, Bigelow married twice. First in 1884 at age twenty-nine, to Edith Joffrey (spelled "Jaffray" in the 1889 New York Social Register and other various publications). They had three daughters and divorced in 1902. The girls were each presented as debutantes, and well-established in both East Coast and British social circles. They were raised as proper, refined young ladies, guided by manners outlined in books such as *Twentieth Century Etiquette: An Up-to-Date Book for Polite Society containing Rules for Conduct in Public, Social and Private Life, At Home and Abroad*. When eldest daughter Evelyn was introduced into London society, it was reported in the newspapers that "Miss Bigelow inherits the beauty of her mother, together with the cleverness and attractive personality of her father" [20].

Bigelow had no children with his second wife Lillian Pritchard, whom he married in April 1911. He was widowed in 1932. Bigelow confessed to Shinn that, "neither of my

wives have been sexually developed.” He went on to explain his support of the modern idea of premarital sex stating, “after all there never will be successful married conditions unless a few months of co habitation precede the definitive click of contract” [21].

4.3. Shinn and His Wives

According to what Shinn wrote to Bigelow, the first of his four wives, Florence “Flossie” Scovel, whom he married in 1898, was “afraid to bear children” and had a “revulsion to sex.” When Flossie filed for divorce from Shinn in 1913, she accused him of, according to the newspaper press coverage, “breaking the seventh commandment three times” [22].

The artist married Corinne Baldwin twelve days after his first divorce was finalized. He and Corinne had two children and divorced in 1921. He wed his third wife Gertrude McManus in 1924. They divorced in 1930, on grounds of cruelty. As reported in the newspapers, Gertrude Shinn said Shinn caused her “extreme mental anguish” [23-25].

In 1933 at age fifty-nine, Everett Shinn married twenty-one-year-old Paula Downing in a secret ceremony and divorced a few years later. Shinn’s four marriages ended in divorce, and each of these events received significant press coverage. All of his relationships were marred by scandal for his adultery, and abusive and lurid actions [22].

5. Huttenloch, Bigelow, and the Incident

When Shinn visited Bigelow the first weekend of October 1942, his fourth marriage to Paula Downing was ending and rather than bring his wife, the handsome painter arrived in the company of the Jane Huttenloch. For Huttenloch, a weekend invitation to Bigelow’s country estate with a famous artist must have been exciting. She possibly had never been a guest to such a grand home of such a wealthy host who enjoyed a high-brow “bohemian” lifestyle.

At that time, Huttenloch was twenty-four, Shinn was in his mid-sixties and had long benefited from the patronage of Bigelow, especially throughout the years of the Great Depression when he, like many others, was in financial straits and “hard up” [26].

Then in his late eighties, Bigelow had grown up with privilege and his perspective was formed by a society that believed, as Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote in his 1847 poem, *The Princess*:

Man is the hunter; woman is his game...
Man for the field and woman for the hearth:
Man for the sword and for the needle she:
Man with the head and woman with the heart:
Man to command and woman to obey.

5.1. Where It All Started!

It is unclear where Jane Huttenloch and Everett Shinn met, but the young woman may have been flattered to receive the attention of Shinn, a long-standing and prominent member of

the New York art scene. Although at the time of their relationship, Shinn was a 66-year-old man and far removed from his moment of artistic fame and recognition, he was still charming, and through Bigelow’s invitations and financial support could provide a nice weekend getaway to the young Career Gal.

It is also unknown exactly what transpired, but shortly after the October 1942 visit to Bigelow’s country home, Jane received a suggestive letter from their host confessing, “I fell in love with you – of course – platonically – But I dreamed of you! – Were I half a century younger!!” Bigelow concluded his note with an invitation for the couple to return and pried, “Can you and Everett share the same bed?” Offended by the blatant sexually suggestive comments, Huttenloch turned to Shinn to confront the older gentleman as she was evidently not bold enough or felt empowered enough to challenge Bigelow directly [27].

5.2. Shinn’s Chivalrous Actions

Acting in the role of male protector, Shinn intervened and admonished their host in a stern, but delicately worded note which opened with the words, “This letter is going to be the toughest and most unwanted thing I have ever done in my life.” Shinn’s correspondence with Bigelow was complicated by the fact that the former was dependent on the latter’s patronage as his financial supporter. It is evident that Shinn was uncomfortable raising the issue of sexual impropriety but may have been further inspired by the fact that he was also upset by Bigelow’s affront to gentlemanly manners and codes of conduct between male friends. Shinn stated his case in strong terms in his defense of Huttenloch, “a woman I deeply love and RESPECT.” However, Shinn couched his accusations of unseemly harassment with diplomatic language and a solicitous tone [2].

In Shinn’s letter of rebuke, he implored Bigelow to “halt your galloping amorousness [sic] with those women that I have forewarned you to stay away from,” and continued, “I know your playful spirit...yet dangerous one.” Shinn wrote that “Poultney, you can’t deny it an inference that you wished her to get that in your dreams you had been intimate with her. Else why speak of dreaming? No, Poultney, you hoped that she might think that you had dreamed an orgasm” [2].

5.3. Prior Warning

Perhaps most irksome to Shinn was the fact that he had anticipated Bigelow’s sexual advances and attempted to head off such caddish liberties. In late September 1942, just prior to their visit to Malden that first weekend in October, Shinn had sent a letter introducing “Miss Jane Huttenloch” and in it asked that Bigelow be on good behavior, to “keep inviolate my honest respect of her.” Shinn warned that “she is not of the type that is the quarry of amorousness [sic]. She is far from a prude but the freedom of speech we enjoy (You and I) would bruise a sensitiveness that would remove her from me as one might make a detour from a garbage heap” [28].

This request for restraint and gentility seems an important and distinct communication between the men, because at other times Shinn explained about his women-friends, "The last woman I brought to your place was Miss Mollie Bonner. Miss Bonner never slightly aroused an amorous [sic] interest [in me]. She was merely good looking and amusing. I took her solely to visit you to amuse you.... Mollie Bonner was an ornament not a morsel of amorous [sic] needs" [4].

5.4. *Acceptable Misbehavior*

Evidently Bigelow sometimes relied on his artist friend to procure the companionship of "loose" women. On more than one occasion, Shinn even offered to acquire the services of a prostitute who "would respond to your [Bigelow's] sex wants," writing that, "I have no doubt but that I could bring such women to you...I told you of one and you know it wasn't Jane...I warned you before I took her up to your place." Shinn made a distinction between Jane, sex workers, and the available, good-looking playthings he occasionally brought to Malden - such as Lucy Bush (who visited in 1938), Edith (who visited in 1942), and Mollie Bonner (who would accompany Shinn to Malden in 1946) [2].

Of his companion Huttenloch, Shinn made clear in the letter dated September 27, 1942, just days before their fateful trip to Malden, "that this young lady is not Edith's type" [4].

5.5. *Bigelow's Assurances*

Responding to the pre-visit written request for respect toward Huttenloch, Bigelow promised that Shinn should "fear nothing" and could "believe me forever." Bigelow further assured him that, "You may present my respectful, puritanical, and wholly patriarchal respect to Miss Jane Huttenloch [sic]...Not a sound shall cross my lips - nor other words than those carefully expurgated for carefully reared virgins." Obviously, Bigelow did not keep his word [29].

6. Details of Shinn's Letter

In the October 25th 1942 letter written on Jane's behalf, Shinn clearly wished to preserve his friendship with Bigelow and requested that if he were to bring Huttenloch again, "Can I be [sic] assured [sic] that there will be NO reference to sex, phallic [sic] symbols, nudists camps, sharing the Royal suite, etc...?" Shinn went on ask that "the Phallic symbol must lied [sic] in dark torpidity and not aluded [sic] to adroitly by you in Jane's presense [sic]. Please let the damned tired old thing, the over used thing hang limp and rest while we are in Malden." He questioned Bigelow if he intended to "indulge in a royal prerogative that permits you to usurp any female that comes under your royal eye or that tickles your testicles? ...It has been said many times," he went on to write, "that you treat all women and girls as tramps that by some stupid social law have not their names engraved in the social register" [2].

Shinn asked Bigelow, "Cant [sic] you see that Jane is to

me in respect just what you felt for your wife" and he warned, "I shall never bring Jane again if she is to be treated as a tramp," and suggested that "it would seem that I bring her to you as payment for your hospitality....This latter sentiment I strongly feel. I pray that you explode my impression" [2].

Shinn's letter was marked by the recipient with a hand-written "X" across the front page, and as was often Bigelow's habit when reading letters, he underlined words and passages. In this case, Bigelow highlighted phrases like "dreamed an orgasm," "dirty idea," "wooing," "you fast approaching Jane," "as a tramp," "as you saw your wife," and "It has hurt me to write this letter." He had read the letter carefully.

6.1. *Bigelow's Curious and Insincere Reply*

Poultney Bigelow's quick response to the emotion-filled letter from Shinn was a curious blend of friendliness and sarcasm. "Your letter" he wrote on October 29th, "has come and given me immense comfort. In you I have a real friend, who has the courage of his convictions - who tells me the truth as he sees it. Thank you ever so much, I shall hope to profit by your sage remarks...." However, Bigelow's condescending attitude towards women (and his sardonic, patronizing tone toward Shinn) was revealed when he criticized Huttenloch for showing his letter to Shinn in the first place. He remarked, "It was very feminine, to show you my innocent letter to her - a foolish act - a blunder!" Bigelow declared himself blameless and lamented that Shinn had accused him "of being a lecherous beast unfit for decent society," however he went on to make assurances of future proper behavior, promising that Huttenloch would, "hear only puritanical platitudes and not a whisper that could not find echo in our Methodist pulpit" [30, 9].

Bigelow did not apologize to Shinn nor to Huttenloch and may have felt no need to acknowledge his chauvinistic attitude. For "a moribund, a gouty historian almost ninety years old," Bigelow explained, "all young girls like Jane are objects of curiosity." He concluded, "Come again - bring Miss Huttenloch or anyone else whom you may prefer." Apparently however, Jane did not return to the estate and soon afterward she ended her affair with Shinn. She later married Daniel Joseph Purfield and died at age eighty-four in Kremmling, Colorado [31, 9, 32, 33].

6.2. *Recurring Behavior*

Huttenloch was not Bigelow's only female visitor to find that the choice of conversational topics at his fireside "altar of love" relied heavily on suggestive tales and innuendo pertaining to sex. However, it seems she was the first to raise any serious objections and call him out. For instance, in 1938, Shinn and his then wife "Paula Perfecta," as Bigelow referred to her, brought a female companion, Lucy Bush with them to visit Malden. Bush later wrote Shinn thanking him for an enjoyable trip to Bigelow's home stating, "My knowledge of things erotic has been wealthily increased by the 'Bigelow wood pile lectures,' which though I may never

have the opportunity to put to good use, shall surely make me a more profound woman" [2, 33, 34].

Moreover, Shinn wrote in the October 25th reprimand to Bigelow that "Paula told me of your catch-as-catch-can attack on her when you found her alone in your kitchen. Kissing her on the back of her neck as she tried to wipe the dishes. She will eternally dislike you for that despite my efforts to excuse you by laughing it off. Lucy records the same attacks." He went on to say Bigelow's unwelcomed rubbing of his stockinged foot on his female visitors, and his "slaps in the stomach and wiggling closeness" [2].

6.3. Two "Dirty Old Men"

Shinn and Bigelow shared a lust for life and for sex, yet neither was successful in maintaining any satisfying, long-term, serious relationship. They were both emblematic of the stereotype of "dirty old men" who enjoyed pursuing younger women but were also gauges of their patriarchal culture at the time. Always a "gentleman" as evidenced in his long, chivalrous, rather convoluted letter of October 1942 to Bigelow, Shinn insisted on proper decorum and objected to its violation. He was troubled by the offense inflicted on his paramour and also by the betrayal of the "hands-off" promise -- the gentleman's agreement -- that had been made prior to Jane's visit. Shinn was wounded by Bigelow's disloyalty writing, "I had your promise of behavior. [sic] yet within an hour you served up the dirty symbol of the Phallis [sic] garnished in learning on an hystorical [sic] plate." Although it was important to Shinn to maintain a certain sense of gentility, he most likely did not view women as equals and was primarily interested in their sex appeal. For Shinn, it seems that the real sting was in Bigelow's transgression against *him* [2].

6.4. Antiquated Ideals

The artist and his patron lived much of their lives in the twentieth century, yet they both remained essentially Victorian gentlemen shaped by the values of the nineteenth century, especially in their consideration of women, who were venerated as long as they displayed a lady-like demeanor and remained subject to men in society. As Bigelow explained to Shinn in a 1936 letter, "Virgins of the Victorian age were supposed to possess maidenheads....but I know nothing of the modern maid" [35].

The gentlemen were perhaps unsettled and thrown off by "young girls like Jane." Bigelow remarked to Shinn that he never could have "dreamed that a day would come when women would wear spurs and play at parliamentary tricks." Their out-of-date and off-the-mark attitude towards women was not uncommon. For them, little had changed since Basil Ransom, a character in Henry James' 1886 *The Bostonians* said that women were "reactionary" and "essentially inferior to men, and infinity tiresome when they refused to accept the lot which men had made for them" [35-37]. This outdated, old-fashioned notion of a woman's place informed Bigelow and Shinn's attitude

toward women. Patriarchal authority had for decades tolerated and even legitimized their behavior - believing that boys will be boys and girls will be punished.

7. Hollywood's Influence & Old Habits

At the time of the letter incident, along with the impact of World War II and a growing motion picture industry, women's roles were visibly shifting. In the movies of the 1930s and 1940s, which provided a sense of escapism from the challenges of daily life, many strong women were featured. Actresses often carried the picture with the leading men relegated to supporting roles, yet their characters were subservient to the men. By the end of the film, heroines often surrendered their independence and self-reliance, thankful to be rescued by the male movie star's character. Such was the case of Marlene Dietrich in the 1932 film *Blonde Venus* and also with Katherine Hepburn in *A Woman Rebels* of 1936 [38].

Hollywood, which captivated Shinn, also enthralled the mass population. The rapidly expanding movie industry in the first four decades of the twentieth century, together with the films which influenced the lives of millions of movie-goers, helped shape the very moral, social, and economic tenets of traditional American culture. Movies played a large role in forming and reinforcing attitudes; they both reflected and alternately influenced the way women and men thought about themselves and engaged with each other [38].

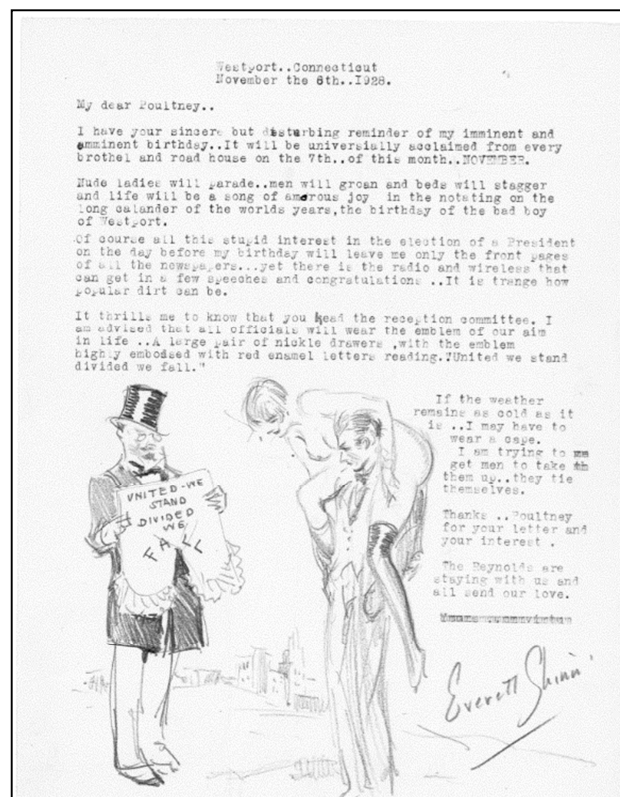


Figure 5. Letter from Everett Shinn to Poultney Bigelow, November 6, 1928, Poultney Bigelow papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, (NYPL) Box 13.

In his paintings, which avoided social commentary, war, or current events, and through his numerous letters to Bigelow, Shinn displayed his willingness to objectify women as targets of male lust; yet believing himself to be refined, he wished to maintain an air of propriety. His sensibilities were those of a Victorian gentleman who both delighted in the spectacle of societal change and bemoaned its inevitability. His seemingly innocent portrayal of showgirls may reflect his own self image as a proper gentleman, but his correspondence with Bigelow suggests an explanation for his “revolving-door” relationships with women, and a more lecherous side to his nature.

Shinn engaged in intimately explicit conversations with Bigelow, and a reoccurring topic in the letters exchanged between the two was sex, which sometimes included colorful language and bawdy drawings. For example, in a November 1928 letter to Bigelow, the “bad boy of Westport” (where Shinn was currently living), the artist discussed his upcoming birthday and the hope that “nude ladies will parade...men will groan and beds will stagger and life will be a song of amorous joy.” Shinn included a drawing of a gentleman in top hat representing Bigelow holding a pair of “nickel drawers” embroidered with the words “United we stand divided we fall” Figure 5. Shinn drew himself facing Bigelow with a nude woman perched on his shoulders.

“Hidden on the back” of another letter as “proof of my friendship” is a drawing of a sensuous reclining nude, Figure 6. The gentlemen also exchanged photographs “not fit for the very genteel,” and books on the art of lovemaking that were “of course banned by the police” such as “that charming book [of Victorian erotica]: Flossie! A most stimulating picture of Nature at her best” [39-43].

8. Continued Correspondence

Until the end of Shinn’s life, Bigelow’s invitations continued, as did the frequent references to sex, and mentions of the October 1942 incident. As an example, in 1946, Bigelow wrote of Shinn’s condemnation which he referred to as “vile insinuations,” stating that, “it never occurred to me that anyone, least of all Everett Shinn, could misconstrue my most natural admiration for one whom I was meeting for the first time and who naturally awakened interest because of her escort – my old and trusted friend, Everett” [44].

The following year, Bigelow wrote, “Your eloquently scorching letter dated October 25, 1942 has just been reread [sic] and religiously returned to a fireproof box for posthumous biographers curious in psycho-analysis.” Bigelow later wrote, “Come alone or bring some good looking sleeping partner.... All our shortcomings are forgiven and we remember only the good hours.” Clearly, although forgiven, the incident was never entirely forgotten [44, 31, 45].

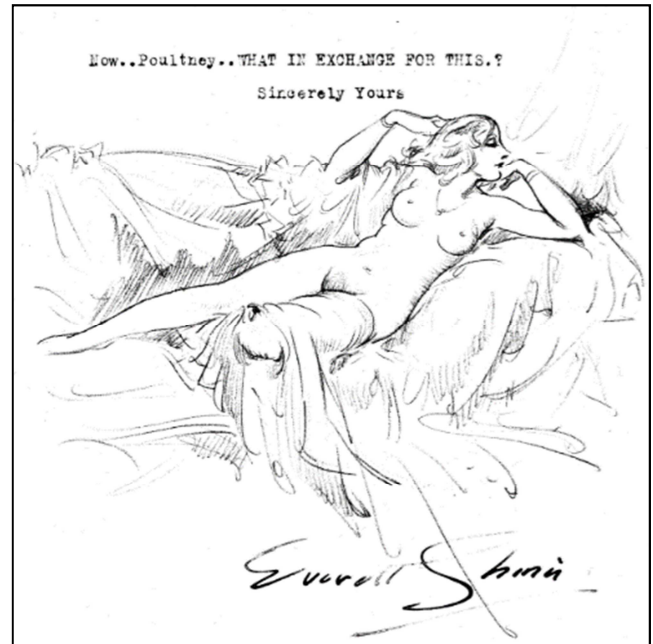


Figure 6. Letter from Everett Shinn to Poultney Bigelow, July 3, 1931, Poultney Bigelow papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, (NYPL) Box 13.

8.1. Tolerance Among Friends

Bigelow learned to humor Shinn and the artist’s sense of propriety even if he leavened it with sarcasm, stating that, “I gladly admit your being wholly in the right and myself equally in the wrong,” and continued, “You are as ever, dear Everett, a true gentleman whether drunk or sober or crazed by love or hate – and as I remain as usual yours in serene poise” [31].

By all outward appearances, Shinn was a genteel man, yet he may have only pretended to respectfully engage with women as equals in order to maintain his aspiration to appear a gentleman. His several marriages, his paintings of vaudeville soubrettes, and his surviving letters combine to paint him as something of a roué with a lustful nature. While he did pay homage to women’s emerging sense of self-determination, Shinn also clung to the earlier generations’ high regard for submissive women, and his apparent disgust for the modern girl. For instance, in a typed proposal for an advertisement, Shinn wrote, “I choke back a gulp of disgust in the sight of advertised feminine hygiene.” And in a 1946 letter he stated, “When a woman possesses a man, she scratches off the very thing she enticed to her. [sic] she cuts the life line [sic] she has tossed to the poor wretched thing” [46-48].

8.2. Intolerance of the Modern Woman

The letters that passed between Shinn and his benefactor detail some of the issues gentlemen of their time had in tolerating the developing role of newly emancipated women, and their ultimate “harsh contempt” for modern women who they felt could not be trusted. As the twentieth century approached its mid-point, they clung to an antiquated notion of

gentlemanly behavior that placed the male's sphere of influence above the world of female concerns. Calling modern women "brainless.. [sic] and physically dirty," and declaring that, "honor is not a feline virtue," they both frequently likened women to animals: "half tamed tigress," "silly goose," "pet bone of mine," and "a serpent – a sneaking thing that could not be trusted" [48, 49, 36, 50, 51, 8].

Shinn later lamented his letter in defense of Huttenloch's honor writing of his "shivering regret" and "mistake in light of defending a treasure that proved to have no value." "To hell with women," Shinn wrote to Bigelow in 1946, "they cause more trouble between men and friends than any pleasure they give. Of what value is a few seconds of physical pleasure with them compared to the long lasting [sic] trust between men friends?" Bigelow responded, "I have no recollection of this Jane you mention" Again, as in the 1928 drawing, the men stood "united" [52, 53, 47, 54].

9. Conclusion

In the end, the gentleman painter and the gentleman of high society remained friends, while the career gal moved on. Shinn died in 1953, and Bigelow died the following year, just as *Playboy Magazine* published its first issue which featured Marilyn Monroe as the "Sweetheart of the Month." Jane Huttenloch was then in her early thirties. When she was in her early forties, Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*. Jacqueline Kennedy, like her predecessor as first lady Eleanor Roosevelt, was becoming as well-known and admired as her husband.

By the time Huttenloch was fifty years old, the Women's Liberation Movement was making headlines. Huttenloch was in her sixties when Geraldine Ferraro became the first woman to run for Vice President, Sally Ride became the first American woman in space aboard the space shuttle Challenger, and Sandra Day O'Connor became the first woman to serve as a Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Hillary Clinton became the first woman Senator from New York in 2000, three years before Huttenloch died in 2003.

In her lifetime, Jane Huttenloch witnessed several waves of feminism which succeeded in gaining more rights for women to the point where, until recently, it was assumed that no self-respecting gentleman would behave towards her, as did Bigelow during that weekend in October 1942, and so easily get away with it. However, despite the significant progress in gender parity that she witnessed throughout her life, even two decades into the twenty-first century, women have yet to achieve the freedoms over their lives and their bodies that women of the mid-nineteenth century declared as their ambition, but undoubtedly, full equality will prevail.

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