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Exploring Feminine Boredom in 19th Century and Contemporary European Paintings Depicting Women Travellers

With the emergence of the railway, travel became more common for the 19th century woman. She, who did not have the same rights as a man and could not actively exist in public spaces, often saw travel as an escape and a cure for her domestic boredom. The ‘woman traveller’ as a subject became a prevalent theme in European painting, although the notion of boredom has been a recurring part of artistic representation from the beginning. Due to the characteristic effect of train travel, the relation between the world and the self was reshaped while traveling, and in light of a novel understanding of time and space, boredom occurred as a psychological response to travel itself. The first part of this article aims to explore the different types of boredom portrayed in 19th century paintings depicting women travellers searching for what is absent from their lives then experiencing more boredom: not only feminine boredom, that is boredom she suffers merely because she is a woman, but also boredom as a result of travel itself. The woman traveller’s boredom as a theme is explored through 19th century paintings including Cesar Pattein’s *Departure*, Evert Jan Boks’ *Going into the World*, Leonid Osipovich Pasternak’s *At Parents’ House*, Manet’s *Railway* and Frederick Cayley’s *The Long Journey*. The paper then invites contemporary artists’ points of view to the discussion. Although Svetlana Kurmaz’s *Exciting Journey* could be interpreted as a contemporary female artist’s answer to the depiction of a bored woman traveller in the traditional sense, the paper urges the reader to contemplate a new understanding of the relationship between boredom and travel in art. The relation between the world and the self is again being reshaped as happened in the 19th century, for the cyber age has offered a new mode of travelling, in which the virtual world serves as a prominent escape from boredom, and, just as in the 19th century train travel was seen as an escape from boredom yet resulted in an upsurge of boredom, this new mode of travelling too leads to

more boredom. Contemporary artist Nathaniel St Amour's paintings, such as *You Acquired A Suit of Power Armour* and *Infinite Boredom*, are examined in light of this new link between boredom and travel, aiming to develop a discourse concerning the representation of feminine boredom in art. The paper proposes a new dialogue between different centuries through the history of art. These paintings not only reveal the contrasts and similarities between 19th century and contemporary boredom but also tell us about the modern artists who have attempted to underscore the role of boredom as a mediating aesthetic resistance.