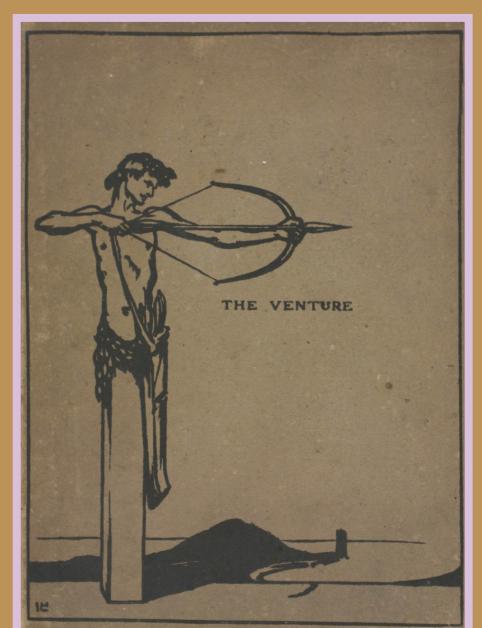
A NEW WOMAN'S VENTURE: LINKING A LITTLE MAGAZINE TO THE SUFFRAGE ATELIER

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The Venture: An Annual of Art and Literature



Front Cover of The Venture: An nnual of Art and Literature, Volume 003. Illustrated by John Baillie. Tl Yellow Nineties 2.0, Ryerson University, 2019. Public Domain

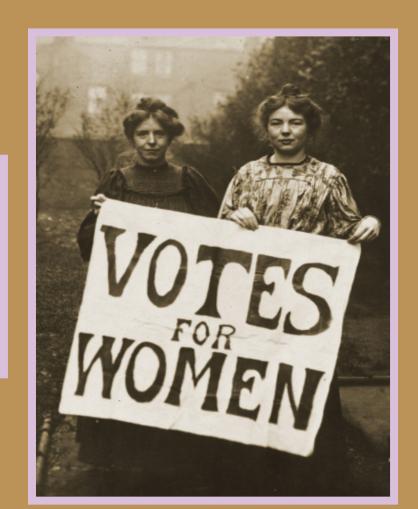
The Venture: An Annual of Art and Literature, a little magazine edited by Somerset Maugham and Laurence Housman, was published in 1903 by John Baillie in London and in 1905 by The Arden Press in Leamington. The magazine made its debut at a time when new sociopolitical ideas of femininity began to pervade literature and public discourse. Although its co-editors were both men, Maugham was a supporter of women's suffrage and Housman was notable for his activism, acting as a central figure in the Men's League for Women's Suffrage established in

The Venture presented Maugham and Housman with the opportunity to use their authority as editors to participate in broader social and political affairs. Expressed throughout the magazine is a special attention to feminism; the literary and art contents examine the varying experiences of modern women in Victorian society, and as a whole, the magazine works to promote and celebrate the achievements of New Women. The curation of feminist work in *The Venture* is unlikely a coincidence, and it would be a mistake to dismiss it as such. This analysis aims to demonstrate that Maugham and Housman edited The Venture with a primarily feminist agenda in order to promote women's suffrage, and inspire curiosity, individuality, and activism in Victorian women.

The Beginnings of Women's Suffrage

To understand the significance of *The Venture* to the women's movement in Victorian England, the state of suffrage during this time must first be considered. Women's suffrage became a prominent social and political issue in the mid 19th century. The campaign for Victorian women's suffrage which began in 1866 aimed to restructure traditional gender norms in order to end female oppression and achieve equal citizenship (Smith 7). Suffragists protested for the elimination of restrictions on women's education, employment, pay scales, and legal authority (Smith 3). In addition to active protest, the campaign encouraged feminine solidarity and pride by promoting the achievements of modern women.

Annie Kenney and



A notable moment in the women's movement was the publication of Sarah Grand's essay, "The New Aspect of the Woman Question" in 1894, which revised the definition of the "New Woman." Grand asserted that the New Woman was selfreliant, strong-willed, and achieved satisfaction through exercising her agency (Ledger and Luckhurst 80). Most importantly, the New Woman had ambitions beyond domesticity; she was considered enlightened because she was able to acknowledge the restrictive aspects of the "Home-is-the-Woman's-Sphere" and seek fulfilment beyond it (Ledger and Luckhurst 89). In redefining the New Woman, Grand significantly revised the public's perspective on conventional gender roles.

marked with a leaf from Pamela Colman Smith's Autumn Leaves." Ryersor The Suffrage Atelier "Broadsheet." 1913. Wikimedia Commons, 2019. Public Domain. University Archives and Special Collections.



The Venture and The New Woman

Literary Contents

The examination of modern femininity and the New Woman is continual throughout The Venture. For example, "The Gem and Its Setting," a play by Violet Hunt, exposes the prejudice that modern women are subjected to for opposing the traditional standards of behaviour for women engaged in romantic relationships. "Poor Little Mrs. Villers" by Netta Syrett is a short story which conveys victorian society's contrasting opinions on divorce for women. "Marriages are Made in Heaven" by W. Somerset Maugham is a play which confronts the problematic notion that women are disparaged as a result of their sexual and romantic experiences. In these works, and throughout many of the literary contents in The Venture, the consequential injustice, discrimination, and prejudice associated with modern femininity are exposed.

The contributions to The Venture also depict the positive experiences of modern women as well. "The Last Journey" by Netta Syrett is a short-story featured in volume II about an Englishwoman named Cecilia who boards an omnibus alone near Piccadilly Circus and rides late into the night through the city of London. She fantasizes about her environment; perceiving the magical aspects in figures such as lampposts and shadows. She seems to be satisfied in a way that she has not been in the past, and questions to herself, "am I seeing it better this evening?" (Syrett 42) It is evident that Cecilia is incredibly excited to be able to exercise her curiosity, imagination, and independence. By exemplifying the experiences of a woman who has achieved happiness by rightfully indulging in her own agency and desire, Syrett promotes the New Woman.

Art Contents

The Venture further celebrates the modern woman and empahsizes notions of pride in femininity by featuring artistic reproductions and analyses of New Women, mostly contributed by New Women themselves. Artworks such as "Joyce" by Ann Macbeth, "Autumn Leaves" by Pamela Colman Smith, "Rose of all Roses" by Constance Halford, and "Mother and Child" by Winifred Caley Robinson convey the power of feminine independence by depicting women confidently and intimately. Other notable contributions include "The Death of Pan," engraved by Louise Glazier, an independent artist whose works were featured in numerous galleries and periodicals, and "The Blue Moon," engraved by avid activist for women's suffrage and co-founder of the Suffrage Atelier, Clemence Housman. Not only are these artworks important because they promote the achievements and values of female artists, they are also important because they mark the beginning of a creative-based approach to disseminating the ideologies of modern feminism.



Pamela Colman Smith. "Autumn Leaves." The enture, Volume II, 1905. Ryerson University and Specia Collections. Public Domain

The Suffrage Atelier

The Suffrage Atelier, which regarded itself as an arts and crafts society working for the enfranchisement of women, was established by Laurence and Clemence Housman in 1909 (Tickner 21). With the objective of forwarding the women's movement by disseminating art, the Atelier produced advertisements, banners, postcards, and decorations which promoted women's suffrage and the feminist ideologies surrounding it. Often, the arts and crafts were exhibited in galleries, published in the press, and sold for suffragist rallies and processions (Tickner 26).

Unlike the members of the Artist's Suffrage League (1907–1918) who were professional artists, the Atelier's members were comprised of both professionals and amateurs. As a result, the Atelier also functioned an educational centre by providing artists with the opportunity to experiment and develop their technique with peers of various skill levels (Tickner 28). Moreover, women were able to form relationships with those who shared their passions and values, while engaging in important public debate through the expression of their craft. In and of itself, the Atelier was integral in the formation of women's identities as suffragists.



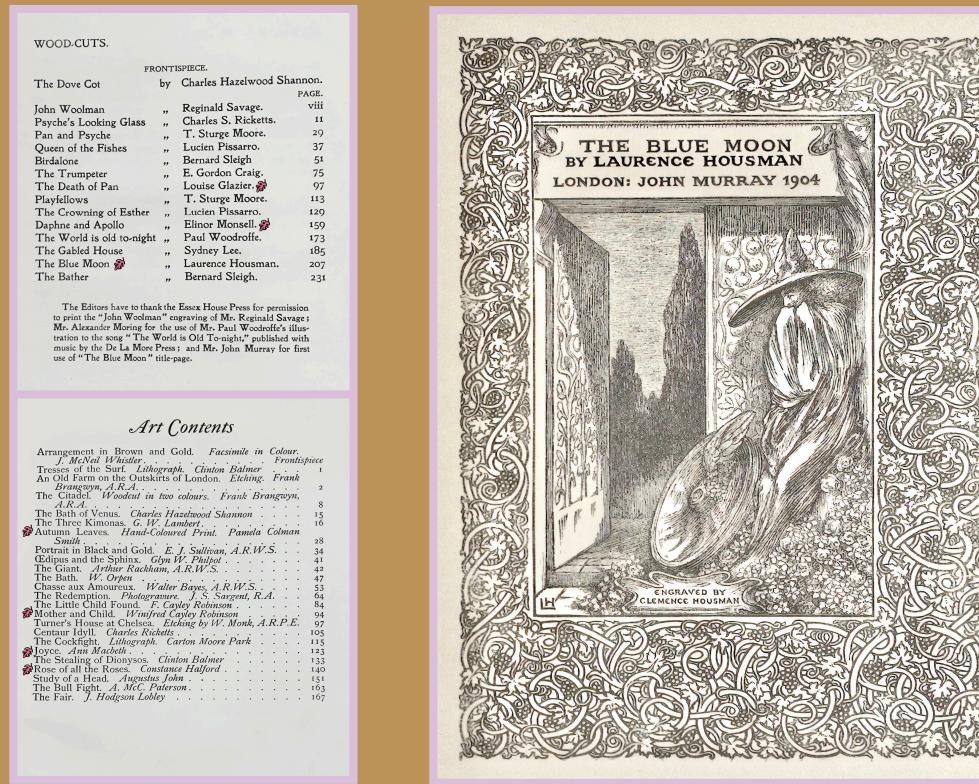
Suffrage Atelier. "Suffragette Procession." 1910. Museum of London Online. Public Domain,

Ties to the Atelier

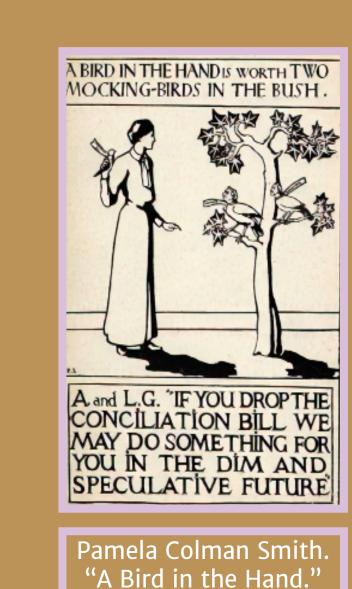
The Venture contents. New

Women contributors are

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Poster and postcar

designed for the

Suffrage Atelier.

Wikimedia Commo

"The Blue Moon." Illustrated by Laurence Housman and engraved by Clemence Housman. The Venture, Volume I, 1903. The Yellow Nineties

When comparing the art in *The Venture* to the art created and disseminated by the Suffrage Atelier, it is important to note the medium and style in which it was produced. Most of the Atelier's works were produced as block prints such as wood-cuts. They varied in size and were generally printed in hand-coloured black or white ink (Tickner 21). This production style is also true of the art contents in The Venture's first volume, which contains fifteen wood-cuts, all of which were printed in black ink with the exception of the frontispiece. A wood-cut from this volume which is especially significant to the Suffrage Atelier is "The Blue Moon," illustrated by Laurence Housman and engraved by Clemence Housman. The first use of the "The Blue Moon," title-page was in The Venture in 1903. Although the feature of "The Blue Moon" in the magazine functioned as promotion for Laurence Housman's fairy tale, it further served to popularize the work of two incredibly influential activists, their achievements and their values.

Ties to the Atelier are also evident in the contributors to *The Venture*. A number of New Women artists who are featured in the magazine are also affiliated with the Suffrage Atelier and the women's movement. Notably, Pamela Colman Smith, whose illustration "Autumn Leaves" is featured in volume II was a member of the Suffrage Atelier. In addition to her work as an independent artist, Smith was an activist for women's suffrage. She contributed her stencil designs to An Anti-Suffrage Alphabet, a book by Laurence Housman (1911), and designed multiple posters for the Atelier such as "A Bird in the Hand" (Tickner 34). Smith also edited and published her own magazine, The Green Sheaf (1903-1904) for which advertisements were placed in the second volume of The Venture.

Most importantly, political ambitions and means of activism are shared by The Venture and the Suffrage Atelier. Similar to how The Venture sponsored the women's movement by promoting art and literature which celebrated the New Woman, modern femininity, and social justice, the Atelier worked wholeheartedly towards the enfranchisement of women by publishing feminist art. Considering these similarities between The Venture and the Suffrage Atelier, and as well, noting that the first publication of The Venture preceded the Suffrage Atelier by only six years, it is likely that the magazine was deliberately edited with like intentions of inspiring female activism to those that were later involved in the establishment of the Atelier in 1909. Furthermore, it is possible that the relationships established during the creation and production of The Venture influenced the beginning of the Suffrage Atelier's formation.

Conclusion

By examining The Venture in relation to the Suffrage Atelier and women's suffrage in Victorian England, it is evident that the little magazine is historically and culturally significant because it lends insight into the direction of women's activism and artistic involvement in the late 19th and early 20th century. As Housman and Maugham sought social justice, equal rights, and the progression of the women's movement, it is clear that the contributions to The Venture, especially those which promote ideologies of the New Woman and modern femininity, were not arbitrarily curated. The magazine was deliberately published with a feminist agenda in order to engage the public in discourse about women's suffrage. Moreover, The Venture is important because it created the environment and opportunity for women to participate in meaningful discussion about the social issues which directly impacted their livelihood. In and of itself, The Venture was a product of activism which also intended to inspired it.