

## Housewife writ large

Berry, Francesca

DOI:

[10.1093/oxartj/kcx002](https://doi.org/10.1093/oxartj/kcx002)

License:

None: All rights reserved

*Document Version*

Peer reviewed version

*Citation for published version (Harvard):*

Berry, F 2017, 'Housewife writ large: *Marie mécanique*, Paulette Bernège and new feminist domesticity in interwar France', *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 40, no. 1, pp. 7–26. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxartj/kcx002>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

### **Publisher Rights Statement:**

This is a pre-copyedited, author-produced version of an article accepted for publication in Oxford Art Journal following peer review. The version of record Berry, Francesca. "Housewife Writ Large: Marie mécanique, Paulette Bernège, and New Feminist Domesticity in Interwar France." Oxford Art Journal 40.1 (2017): 7-26. is available online at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxartj/kcx002>

### **General rights**

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

### **Take down policy**

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact [UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk](mailto:UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk) providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.

## Housewife Writ Large: *Marie mécanique*, Paulette Bernège and New Feminist Domesticity in Interwar France

In January and February 1939 three vast banners featuring the monumental image of a domestic worker were suspended from the imposing portico of the Grand Palais, Paris, as more than 600,000 people passed beneath on their way into the sixteenth annual *Salon des arts ménagers* (SAM).<sup>1</sup> The March 1939 (Fig. 1) cover of the SAM's official magazine, *L'Art ménager* (1927-1939), featured the photograph of an abundant and expectant crowd of bourgeois entrants dwarfed by one of these banners.<sup>2</sup> Once inside the Grand Palais visitors were able to purchase five-franc exhibition tickets, plus catalogues, each printed with the same domestic figure.<sup>3</sup> Composed of the most fundamental of geometric shapes, from a spherical head, rectangular torso and chevron arms (without hands) to the insistent arc of a skirt that makes the otherwise abstracted figure's feminine identity explicit, the domestic worker stands proud. Frontal facing with one imaginary hand on hip, the other bearing a broom in the manner of a standard, one might consider this a public female allegory for the mid-twentieth century. In attributing to femininity an illusory political authority, the figure is comparable to Paul Moreau-Vauthier's haute-couture *Parisienne* crowning the monumental gateway to the 1900 *Exposition Universelle*, or any number of examples one might draw from the preceding century's state-commissioned Marianne statuary.

In early 1930, 1931 and 1933 this domestic worker had also dominated the public spaces of Paris in the form of thousands of small and large format red, white and blue

lithographic posters (Figs. 2, 3, 4) displayed across the city's streets and transport networks; spreading further afield and into regional homes and offices by virtue of reproduction on postage stamps and a million matchboxes.<sup>4</sup> A flat white shape cut out of a deeper blue surround, the body of the domestic worker of the early 1930s *SAM* posters is the negative, paper-colored, product of the lithographic printing process. But the V-belt and cogwheels printed into the torso, together with the cloud of dust airbrushed onto the 1931 and 1933 posters (Figs. 2 and 4), reveal this domestic worker to be an automaton. Internal mechanical ease more than muscular effort potentially powers the broom and perhaps it is this that draws the attention of two figures photo-montaged into the white heat of the 1933 figure's skirt (Fig. 4). A modern bourgeois couple - implicated in coats and hats as 'real' exhibition visitors - gaze upwards, seemingly in awe, at the scale, power and efficiency of the gigantic mechanical figure. United in contemplation of a futuristic, mechanised domesticity liberated from 'the servant problem', this article argues that the couple also bear witness to a present in which the new, socially inclusive but gender exclusive, identity of 'modern housewife' is being writ large for *all* French women.

*Marie mécanique*, as the salon's mechanical housewife quickly became known, was conceived and first designed in 1929 by Francis Bernard.<sup>5</sup> Bernard was a young commercial graphic artist working exclusively for experimental Parisian advertising agency and printing works Éditions Paul-Martial.<sup>6</sup> A member since 1930 of the progressive and leftist design collective *L'Union des artistes modernes* (itself an active contributor from 1934 to the *SAM*'s exhibitionary discourse on affordable housing) Bernard was at the forefront in interwar French graphic design of introducing mechanical

processes such as photomontage into otherwise manually drawn commercial publicity. His extensive advertising output – including thirty-two *Marie mécanique* poster designs for the *SAM*, together with campaigns for Nicolas, Autoshell, and Black & Decker - was also distinctive for its figurative emphasis, unusual in an industry contemporaneously dominated by product fetishism.<sup>7</sup> Bernard's work featured regularly in cutting-edge graphics journals such as *Arts et métiers graphiques* (1927-1939) and yet scholarly engagement to date is fragmentary at best.<sup>8</sup> I offer here the first steps towards rectifying this omission from an interwar disciplinary field otherwise still dominated by the object fetishisms of Purist painting and Surrealist photography.

The 1930 *Marie mécanique* poster (Fig. 2) itself had been commissioned in 1929 from Éditions Paul-Martial by engineer, socialist politician and director of the state sponsored *Office national de recherches scientifiques et industrielles et des inventions*, Jules-Louis Breton.<sup>9</sup> In 1923 and as part of this directorship, Breton had founded the *Salon des appareils ménagers*, a state-sponsored trade fair for domestic appliance suppliers initially held on the Champ de Mars. A poster depicting a seated neoclassical female figure, holding a hammer and compass and framed by a crown of laurel leaves, had sufficed to publicise the Salon during its first six years.<sup>10</sup> Renamed and relocated in 1926 to the Grand Palais, by the early 1930s and under the direction of his son, Paul Breton, the *Salon des arts ménagers* spectacularly displayed and aimed to sell the technology of 'the household arts' to a broadly bourgeois, aspirational audience that numbered 100,000 in 1923, 345,293 in 1933 and 608,686 in 1939.<sup>11</sup> Suspended during the Second World War, in the postwar period the exhibition expanded further to an audience of over 1.4 million

in 1955 before beginning from the mid-1960s a decline in popularity and finally ceasing in 1983.<sup>12</sup>

Technically innovative and of immediate appeal at its first iteration in 1930 (fig. 2), Bernard's housework automaton of the interwar era was in part designed to symbolise the discourses of France's new, rational domesticity discourse that had emerged in the early 1920s, most profoundly in the publishing, bureaucratic and pedagogic activities of young journalist and author Paulette Bernège. An authoritative contributor to numerous pedagogic and policy events held at the *SAM*, Bernège also regularly published articles in the salon's monthly magazine, *L'Art ménager*, and sat on its editorial board. Bernège's public association with the *SAM* was well established, therefore, by the late 1920s and it seems likely that a superficial perception of her philosophies informed Bernard's initial 1929 conception of *Marie mécanique* as a housework automaton. Bernège's parallel, but feminist, version of the interwar housewife writ large is, in other words, essential to an historical understanding of *Marie mécanique* and so, to this end, Bernard's and Bernège's work are here given equal weight.

In 1922 Bernège had founded the *Institut d'organisation ménagère* (from 1924, *Ligue d'organisation ménagère*), was director of its campaigning journal *Mon Chez Moi* (1923-1930), and was instrumental in the campaign and eventual 1929 establishment of a domestic economy section of the *Comité national de l'organisation française* (1926-1997). The latter was a professional organisation working for the adoption of Taylorist principles across a range of industrial sectors and which remained ambivalent as to

whether the domestic sphere should qualify as such.<sup>13</sup> In 1928 Bernège authored *Si les femmes faisaient les maisons*, a polemical intervention into the government's July 1928 *Loi Loucheur* house-building plan that offered cheap loans and single-family housing models to public and private developers but which, according to Bernège, entirely excluded the professional expertise of French women such as herself.<sup>14</sup> But it was the 1928 publication (and further re-publication in many French and foreign language editions until 1969) of *De la Méthode ménagère* that consolidated Bernège's status in France as the leading public advocate of the philosophical understanding and practical application by women in the home of industrial labour-saving techniques.<sup>15</sup> Bernège coached women as readers and *SAM* exhibition visitors in the habit of chronometric self-analysis; the practical application of a methodological framework intended to support women to develop a self-conscious understanding of the value of their time as the means not to fill time but to make time - for employment, leisure and intellectualism - once the housework is done.

Bernège's aims were pragmatically feminist in the specific political and social conditions of interwar France, the period immediately following the demoralizing 1922 Senate defeat of the long-standing feminist project of female suffrage.<sup>16</sup> Political discourse in 1920s and 1930s France (which, at government level continued to exclude all women) was dominated by an overtly pro-natalist agenda linked to increased depopulation. The majority of contemporaneous feminist organisations (secular, social Catholic, socialist and communist) were maternalist; either also concerned at depopulation (the Catholic right and secular left) or beleaguered by continued exclusion from state policy-making

and, as a result, campaigning to improve the socio-economic position of women through the strategic lens of maternity.<sup>17</sup> Just a few feminist leaders resisted the maternalist consensus. Most notably the singular neo-Malthusian feminist campaigner, Nelly Roussel, who in 1920 urged women ‘to strike with our wombs’ as a radical, but pragmatic, response to that year’s *Loi scélérate* which prohibited the distribution of information on the already illegal practices of contraception and abortion.<sup>18</sup> Despite more than a decade of pro-natalist legal and economic reforms and rhetoric antagonistic towards women’s – particularly married women’s - employment, a significant 44.3% of married women in France (compared to just 10% in England) were in paid employment in 1931, when the fallout from the 1929 crash was most keenly felt.<sup>19</sup> And whilst the percentage of working-class women in the interwar workforce decreased slightly from its wartime peak - and the nature of this employment shifted away from domestic service - the percentage of bourgeois women in employment increased.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Historiographical Time and Feminist Time***

The *Salon des arts ménagers* has been the focus of serious scholarship by economic, social and cultural historians researching the rise of French mass consumer culture. The interwar *SAM* is treated as crucial to the French construction of consumerist desire for domestic appliances only fulfilled in the 1960s, but its expansive publicity programme is entirely overlooked, as is feminist critique.<sup>21</sup> The Salon has also been the subject of populist and curatorial illustrated histories including Jacques Rouaud’s two-volume *60 Ans d’arts ménagers* and, in 2000, the Centre Pompidou’s exhibition and catalogue, *Les Bons Génies de la vie domestique*.<sup>22</sup> Here the Salon’s posters feature as no more than

illustrative and metaphorical adornment. Bernard's interwar *Marie mécaniques*, the 1933 photo-montaged poster (Fig. 4) in particular, are most frequently reproduced, now reinscribed as avant-garde art posters. When illustrated, such as in the Victoria & Albert Museum's 2006 *Modernism: Designing a New World 1914-1939* exhibition catalogue, this poster operates as a metaphor for machine-age modernism – a progressive image of femininity *presumed* to have been achieved by association with technology and Constructivist form.<sup>23</sup> This article is the first to focus in detail on *Marie mécanique* and its representational politics, arguing for the figure's mass symbolic significance in France as the vehicle by which the identity 'housewife' was modernized and extended to encompass bourgeois femininity, whilst complicating its seemingly transparent relationship to the published output of Paulette Bernège. My attention to a series of mass-distributed images that put Constructivist form into state-sponsored ideological service, to profoundly inequitable structural effect, turns critical and feminist art history productively towards a significant category of twentieth-century artistic production – avant-garde, yet commercial, graphic art - that the discipline continues to hold at its margins.

Architectural, social and cultural historians have established the significant role played by Bernège in adapting, theorizing and disseminating in France principles of domestic scientific management originating in the US. Scholarly debate about Bernège is ambivalent, however, as to the feminist credentials of her activities. Those historians of French feminism that make Bernège culpable as the figurehead - the *Marie mécanique*, even - of a culture newly insisting on the pre-eminence of housework in the construction



of femininity do so problematically through the anachronistic lens of post-'68 feminist politics critiquing 1950s ideals of domesticity.<sup>24</sup> This article is aligned rather with those Bernège scholars that pay closer attention – from various disciplinary positions - to the interwar historical conditions of her pedagogic and publishing activity, which began in the early 1920s.<sup>25</sup> But these sources also tend to *presume* some purposeful correspondence between *Marie mécanique* and Paulette Bernège when, in actuality, the clear feminist intent of her 1920s writing – its positing of a domestic feminist consciousness - is inadequately refracted through *Marie mécanique*.<sup>26</sup>

There are, moreover, echoes of Bernège's 1928 accounts of flawed domesticity's impact on women in Simone de Beauvoir's 1949 critique of women's domesticity *tout court*.<sup>27</sup> Their alignment against the grain of feminist scholarship that dismisses Bernège whilst heralding de Beauvoir, challenges narratives of periodisation in French feminism's historiography.<sup>28</sup> These tend to settle upon an end marked by the belated 1945 realization of first-wave feminist demands for suffrage, and a beginning marked by de Beauvoir's 1949 initiation of the philosophical groundwork for second-wave feminist consciousness.<sup>29</sup> This periodization of feminist time has also been challenged by Julia Kristeva's distinction between, on the one hand, post-'68 feminism ('demanding recognition of an irreducible identity, without equal in the opposite sex...this feminism situates itself outside the linear time of identities') and, on the other, suffragist and Existentialist feminism's 'logic of identification with certain values...of a rationality dominant in the nation-state'.<sup>30</sup> Kristeva enables us productively to read in Bernège and de Beauvoir a comparable, experiential account of women's oppression and a comparable

interventionist aspiration for women ‘to gain a place in linear [masculine] time as the time of project and history’.<sup>31</sup> The sexually-differentiated meanings that rhetorically accrue to competing temporal modes – time that is linear, imminent, eternal, cyclical, predictable, measurable, wasted, saved and transcendent – bear conceptual significance here, as do the instances of their resistance.

### ***What is Marie mécanique?***

*Marie mécanique* functioned from the early 1930s as the logo of an annual exhibition intended from the outset in 1923 to operate as a competitive commercial platform for the public display of domestic appliances in the immediate context of a perceived decline in the bourgeoisie’s capacity to employ domestic servants.<sup>32</sup> Considerable commercial success was promised, and medals awarded, to those companies selected to exhibit their products on the basis that these appliances were considered the best at facilitating domestic work by ‘making it more agreeable’.<sup>33</sup> ‘[E]ven in the immediate future, rare will be those able to exempt themselves from domestic work’, the first catalogue threatened.<sup>34</sup> Notwithstanding this statement’s apparent dismantling of the sexual and economic division of labour - for full anxiety effect - the question of who precisely in bourgeois households was now to carry out the physical labour of housework was always at the thinly-veiled forefront of the *SAM*’s concerns. But where the *Salon* provided, initially at least, only a partial and inadequate answer by virtue of the expensive vacuum cleaners, electric irons and kettles, washing machines and dishwashers it displayed in attention-grabbing ways to both male and female visitors, *Marie mécanique* – female housework automaton - completed the ideological picture.<sup>35</sup> The presentation as fact of

domestic work as women's work is most emphatically achieved by Bernard's 1933 poster (Fig. 4). Here the photo-montaged figures receive this message from the 'immediate future' as a close-knit bourgeois couple sharing, in hats and overcoats, the sartorial mode of modern exhibition visitors. But there is, of course, sexual difference. The female figure – arms crossed over its torso, head turned slightly to the right as though looking into the vanishing point of the dust cloud - leans gently against its male companion, as a slightly daunted figure. The male figure, by contrast, raises its head to the left, fully confronting the scale of the female housework automaton; the former's facial features over-exposed to the latter's radiant internal light. But hands rest by the male figure's side as though powerless to resist this unstoppable, imminent force of feminine cleaning efficiency. It is the male figure's left arm that the female figure gently leans into but it is also this supporting arm that cleaves a vertical formal difference between the two bodies, so that the female figure appears to stand just in front of the male figure and, crucially, between him and housework.

Together the couple are sheltered by *Marie mécanique*'s skirt, but note how the entire body of the female figure is retained within its geometric silhouette – photo-montaged head positioned precisely at the crux of gigantic arm and skirt – whilst the male figure inhabits a more transitional zone, half inside the evaporating cloud. That this version of *Marie mécanique*, the vertical one featuring a larger, semi-corrugated head, as opposed to the previous diagonal, pin-headed 1930 and 1931 iterations (Figs. 2 and 3), was cut into imposing metal relief sculptures (Fig. 5) and also printed on entrance banners, tickets and catalogues even in those few years when Bernard did not win the *SAM* poster commission

is a clear indication of its perceived ideological success in asserting housework *a priori* as women's work.<sup>36</sup>

But what is *Marie mécanique*? Is it an automated maid or an automated housewife that the bourgeois couple encounter? Is the figure symbolic of paid domestic labour or unpaid housework? There is a deliberate equivocation as to the figure's social identity that is reflected in the populist first name, 'Marie', that was soon attached to it. Certainly, to name a figure 'Marie' is to confer on it a commonplace identity, an appellation appropriate to the professional title of *bonne à tout faire* or 'maid of all work' - the much despised subject of numerous articles bemoaning the demise of large households employing a hierarchy of specialized *domestiques*.<sup>37</sup> But 'Marie' might equally indicate the new, seemingly socially-undifferentiated 'everywoman' identity of 'ménagère' or 'housewife' to which *all* women, working-class and bourgeois alike, were now expected to aspire in the discursive and material context of 'the servant problem'. Bernard's 1933 housework automaton may bear in its semi-corrugated head and full skirt the outlines of a maid's cap and apron, and its relation to the photo-montaged bourgeois couple could simply be the traditional one of *ouvrière* to *maître* and *maîtresse de maison*. But one is equally able to trace in *Marie mécanique*'s silhouette the fashionably cropped, curled hair and calf-length skirt of the look of the early 1930s *femme moderne* and to recognize what is shared between the appearances of the poster's two female figures. Implied beneath the photo-montaged visitor's cloche hat and overcoat are her cropped hair and a mid-length skirt, the early 1930s domesticated echo of the more radical *garçonne* look of the mid-1920s.<sup>38</sup> Bernard's *Marie mécaniques* (figs. 2, 3, 4) cleverly left symbolic options open

for bourgeois audiences that may have harboured a lingering will and capacity to employ a maid but who might also contemplate supplementing that labour with expensive appliances. But Bernard was more in keeping with the *SAM*'s and *L'Art ménager*'s dominant, highly public, ideology of machines replacing 'failed' domestic service when he invited the bourgeois woman as *SAM* exhibition visitor - and women in general as Parisian and provincial inhabitants, letter-writers and commuters - to encounter and contemplate, over and over again, an 'immediate future' self as a modern housewife.<sup>39</sup>

The sheer breadth of *Marie mécanique*'s annual print distribution and its monumental dominance each new year of the Grand Palais façade indicate the mass scale on which the all-encompassing new identity of *ménagère moderne* was being made to operate and be received.<sup>40</sup> The 1933 figure's towering proximity to the bourgeois couple, and incorporation, even, of these diminutive figures, suggest it was not an image to be ignored. Authoritative but sheltering, reassuring but daunting, marvelous but ordinary, *Marie mécanique* declares that femininity's 'immediate future' has arrived and is at large in the here and now. The housewife-automaton's gigantic, insistent presence was consistent with the *SAM*'s internal display agenda where scaled-up, three-dimensional, facsimiles of familiar products and their branding – a huge wooden washing machine, an enormous plaster girl with a saucepan, a giant metal coffee pot – crowned the stands of the larger companies (Fig. 6). Re-installed each year to the delight of regular *SAM* visitors, repetitive gigantism produced a compelling animation of the inanimate.<sup>41</sup> Not all commentators marveled at the 'ostentatious luxury of ingenious publicity' that characterized the Salon, concerned about the sensory affect, for example, of 'the edifice

raised to the glory of [pasta manufacturer] Bozon-Verduraz with its foundations made of boxes of noodles, its pillars covered in gratin dishes, its roof covered and crowned by a dome of saucepans!’<sup>42</sup> Notwithstanding the concern Pascale Saisset expressed at the inauthentic power of the display, she promoted *SAM*’s gender ideology and in the process symptomatically attributed an illusory professional status to unpaid housework:

[W]e are in the age of intellectual women, in which housewifely occupations are scorned, to the alarm of husbands and children. So, in order to attract young women to a profession so deprecated as that of housewife, one christened “Art” what used to be called “Domestic Economy”.<sup>43</sup>

For all its spectacular modernity and modernist form, there is one feature of Bernard’s *Marie mécanique* that seems proudly outmoded: the broom. Curiously, Bernard chose not to portray his housewife-automaton with, or even as, one of the interwar period’s most desirable new electrical appliances: the vacuum cleaner. Darling of the *SAM* and its sales demonstrations, the vacuum cleaner’s luxury commodity status was fully exploited on the November 1928 cover of *L’Art ménager* (Fig. 7). Here a fashionable *haut-bourgeoise*, styled with cropped, curled hair and dressed in a diaphanous evening gown, vacuums the heavy drapes of a large curtain. The elegant lines of the machine’s hose and nozzle, together with the tied-back curtain swags, echo the balletic figure’s willowy arms and cinched-in waist. All heavy physical drudgery and, indeed, lumpen corporeality normatively associated with (working-class) women’s paid and unpaid domestic labour has been repressed in favour of vacuum cleaning as elegant, fashionable and leisurely; at

least when ostentatiously performed by a haut-bourgeois *femme moderne*.

Despite the vacuum cleaner's availability as *the* machine associated with bourgeois consumer aspiration in the interwar period, Bernard opted to equip his housewife with a stylized version of the most fundamental, most archaic, of housework tools - the broom. But this was not an insignificant choice and one no doubt intended to emphasize *Marie mécanique*'s mass relevance whilst extending the identity of housewife beyond its traditional working-class boundaries to incorporate modern bourgeois femininity. In a February 1930 interview published to coincide with the display of his first *SAM* (Fig. 2) poster, Bernard described the design process:

For the *Arts ménagers* the aim was to put mechanics at the service of the housewife. I conveyed the concept *housewife* by cut silhouette and the concept *mechanics* by the gears. In order to reinforce the concept *housewife* I then added the broom, the classic attribute of cleaning.<sup>44</sup>

A graduate of Paris' *École des Beaux Arts*, Bernard was clearly familiar with European art's long iconographic tradition of the sweeping woman. This would have included the French Realist trope, found in the work of Jean-François Millet, Camille Pissarro, Maximilian Luce and others, of single-figure provincial servants and working-class housewives slowly, almost imperceptibly, sweeping (Fig. 8). Head submissively bowed in vacuous concentration, body and broom are bound together in spatial and temporal immanence. In this iconographic tradition, and in Bernard's *SAM* posters too, the broom functions as the metaphorical sign for housework in general. Moreover, the long iconographic tradition of the sweeping woman's endless, daily manipulation of the

broom's to and fro metaphorically embodies what Kristeva identified as phallogentrism's structuring of femininity according to two negative temporal modes associated with eternity and repetition: the monumental and the cyclical. Defined in the feminine these temporalities operate against 'time as project, teleology, linear...time as departure, progression, and arrival – in other words, the time of history'.<sup>45</sup>

*Marie mécanique*'s mode of address is more transcendent than that conventionally associated with the iconography of the sweeping woman. The gigantic figure, frontal-facing, with broom brandished as standard, is neither submissive nor implied as slow. But *Marie mécanique*'s modern femininity is no less structured by the phallogentric binary of the monumental and the cyclical than any other, more overtly traditional, pictorial attempt at making a woman hold a broom. Bernard adapted an established representational trope in order to expand the identity of *ménagère*; driving home his modernisation by imprinting a V-belt and gears onto the housewife's two-dimensional body. Contrary to what he claimed in 1930, Bernard did not 'put mechanics at the service of the housewife'. *Marie mécanique* does not use a machine for cleaning; the housewife-automaton is a machine for cleaning.<sup>46</sup> Denuded of organic internal organs and functioning independently of external energy sources, the would-be sweeping figure of the early 1930s posters is seen to operate like dependable, measurable clockwork. The tough physical labour of housework that was the new material reality for bourgeois women, and the unchanging reality for working-class women, was repressed in favour of a simplistic synthesis of the corporeal and the mechanical. Year after year *Marie mécanique* reassured its public that women's domestic service will continue without end,



safe in the knowledge that automata lack the faculties to express how that might feel.

But femininity has not been divested of all its essentialist determinations. Reduced to accommodate the photo-montaged couple of 1933 (Fig. 4), a larger set of gears had dominated the automaton's core in the first two posters of 1930 and 1931 (Fig. 2 & 3). Here the transferal of energy to the broom-wielding shoulder originates not from the region of the heart, as might be expected, but from the largest cogwheel located at the pelvis. It is this exposed-to-view, internally independent mechanism that outwardly motivates *Marie mécanique* more than some other, traditionally emotional, sense of marital duty or maternal affection. For all its demonstrable modernity, it is not impossible to imagine the figure's internal organs updating for a technocratic but pro-natalist audience, the longstanding positivist ideology that constructed feminine domesticity as a biological function of cyclical uterine interiority.<sup>47</sup>

Re-worked versions of *Marie mécanique* as broom-bearing housewife-automaton continued to feature into the 1970s as the Salon's logo in annual exhibition posters by Bernard, even after 1945 when he took up a senior marketing role at *Radiofusion-Télévision Française*. The figure's appearance developed in historically indicative ways that can only be summarised here. A heavy-duty, iron-work skeleton - originating from paired ovarian cogs and extending fully into the broom-wielding arm - fills the immediate post-war reconstruction period's 1948 *Marie mécanique* (Fig. 9). This was the era in which suffrage and, by implication, citizenship were extended finally to French women as a result of Charles de Gaulle's liberationist decree of 1944. Projecting forward to

another feminist moment, the era of the radical *Mouvement de libération des femmes* (MLF), Bernard's 1975 *Marie mécanique* (Fig. 10) is a six-colour, doll-like figure disconcertingly topped by a featureless three-dimensional head and childish bob. From the circular centre of a short dress composed in the style of a now electric washing machine springs a plastic-effect arm powering a clownishly over-sized hand. Was it irony alone that determined that all Bernard's *SAM* posters of the post-'68 period feature infantilised *Marie mécaniques*, as if to suggest that the work, art and politics of contemporary domesticity should be considered no more than child's play?

The 1975 *SAM* exhibition itself was made the target of a sit-in by MLF and *Mouvement pour la liberté de l'avortement et la contraception* (MLAC) feminists campaigning against the Salon's longstanding twin ideologies of women's domesticity powered by industrial technology and women's liberation achieved via domestic consumption.<sup>48</sup> In 1975 feminist activists deployed domesticity's tools against itself, throwing eggs and saucepans of water whilst shouting 'Non, Moulinex ne libère pas la femme!'; an inversion of the ubiquitous Moulinex advertising strapline.<sup>49</sup> *Paris-Match* ridiculed their activism in a cartoon featuring a female figure at an international feminist congress delivering a speech in which alternative roles for women are demanded, before the same figure leaves the conference and rushes to join a long line of women queuing for entry to the *SAM*.<sup>50</sup> In 1975 MLF and MLAC activists declared feminism and domesticity as incompatible whilst *Paris-Match* predicated feminism's imminent failure on women's barely repressed desire for the domestic. Antithetical in the post-'68 period, feminism and domesticity were considered anything but in the interwar period when Paulette Bernège

explicitly defined a domesticity devised by women for women as self-consciously and presciently feminist.

### ***Paulette Bernège and Women's Time***

*Marie mécanique*, the mass-distributed logo of the *Salon des art ménagers*, has been established as the crucial symbolic vehicle by which the identity 'housewife' was extended in the interwar period to incorporate bourgeois femininity. Warranting further interrogation is *Marie mécanique's* assumed relation to the publishing practices of Paulette Bernège, the singular public authority associated with interwar France's new domesticity, of which the *SAM* and *Marie mécanique* were the other most visible facets. René Descartes may account, at least in part, for Bernard's design of *Marie mécanique* as a housewife-automaton. The holder of two Philosophy degrees, Bernège acknowledged her admiration for Descartes who, of course, explained the somatic functions of the human body on the basis of an automaton composed of interlocking gears.<sup>51</sup> But a reading of her published output suggests Bernège's admiration related more to a perception of the scientific rigour of Cartesian method - the title of her 1928 book *De la Méthode ménagère* echoes the 1637 *Discours de la méthode* - and Descartes' hierarchical elevation of human consciousness over a corporeality deemed mechanical.<sup>52</sup> Bernège sought feminine subjectivity and a domestic temporality capable of shrinking and stretching to accommodate it. Yet it is human consciousness that the vacant-headed *Marie mécanique* so demonstrably functions without.

Bernège's initial engagement with the *Salon* came in its first year, 1923, when *Mon Chez*

*Moi*, the monthly journal she had established earlier that year as the mouthpiece of the campaigning *Institut* (later *Ligue*) *de l'organisation ménagère*, was invited to exhibit.<sup>53</sup> Bernège also delivered the first of many *SAM* lectures. It was on the subject of the time-saving benefits of mechanized kitchens. Also published in *Mon Chez Moi*, 'Vers une cuisine automatique' typically intervened in the immediate here and now of professional masculine discourse – the linear time of project and history - by echoing the title of Le Corbusier's book, *Vers une architecture*, also published that year.<sup>54</sup> Seven years later Bernège explicitly reflected on the year 1923 as a feminist moment, claiming *Mon Chez Moi* the first journal 'dedicated to this most practical, if not the only form, of feminism'.<sup>55</sup> It is my argument that Bernège used the journal and books, together with *SAM* lectures and populist articles in *L'Art ménager*, as the vehicles by which to campaign – as her *first* priority – for material, if reformist, improvements to the personal and professional lives of women. In doing so she offered a competing version of the housewife writ large to that proposed by *Marie mécanique*. Bernège's feminism - orientated towards domesticity because femininity and domesticity were pre-eminently defined in relation to each other - was pragmatic and interventionist. It could also be angry and direct. The 1928 book, *Si les femmes faisaient les maisons*, is dedicated to Louis Loucheur. But Bernège immediately rescinds this dedication, 'a revindication on behalf of forgotten French housewives' until such time that the new houses to be built 'under the patronage of the French government' might be 'conceived according to their needs'.<sup>56</sup> The book outlines to the masculine political and architectural establishment a set of practical construction reforms that include minimising staircases and corridors, networking homes to all utilities and deploying washable, smooth building materials.

Bernège blames ‘women’s tiredness and penance’ on masculine aggression and conscious negation, criticising ‘the thoughtlessness of men who produce a setting irrational to labour, a tyrannical house imposing work that is difficult and pointless’.<sup>57</sup> Anger further inflects the book’s closing sentence: ‘no more appearances, no more words, now action.’<sup>58</sup>

In the same book Bernège brought to the fore a number of crucial but otherwise invisible issues that project her politics forward in feminist time. These included the hours of unpaid labour women provide in housework. Of transporting plates fifteen times a day the eight metres built between the kitchen and dining room of her own apartment, Bernège claims: ‘I estimate in effect that I do not have 185 days in my life to offer *for free* for nobody’s gain’.<sup>59</sup> Rather than seeing this unpaid labour as a socially useful commodity to be recompensed Bernège repeatedly conceptualises housework as waste. Here she eclipsed the pedagogy and writing of leading domestic economy maternalists such as Augusta Moll-Weiss who, in 1897 and 1904 respectively, had established in Bordeaux and Paris an *École des mères*.<sup>60</sup> These recruited working-class and bourgeois girls at different fee structures to learn an employee’s and employer’s approach to domestic economy and hygiene, each as extensions of a shared maternal potential.<sup>61</sup> Moll-Weiss’s many books, including *Le Foyer Domestique* (1902) and *Madame et sa bonne: comment former une bonne à tout faire en s’éduquant soi-même* (1925), mine a familiar vein.<sup>62</sup> She elaborates, according to a daily, weekly, monthly and annual timetable, the minutiae of individual childcare and housework tasks, from budgeting to laundry to cooking to sweeping. Verbosity operates here as a measure of the extent to

which women's time might be filled with housework. By contrast, Bernège asserts in *Si les femmes faisaient les maisons* that the ten million housewives of France conduct hours of 'useless labour' each day that could instead be cut (ambitiously) to just two hours per week.<sup>63</sup> The feminist value of radically reducing the time women spent doing housework could not be made clearer; it is 'the key surely to all feminine and feminist crises...a considerable expansion of [women's] wellbeing and all their possibilities – familial, professional, intellectual and social'.<sup>64</sup>

In turning to focus, unusually, on women's *experience* of housework in *De la Méthode ménagère*, Bernège's tone of feminist exposure continued in a book targeted at an amateur and professional readership. Structured as a series of lessons and practicals that are not detailed instructions on tasks but theorisations and explications of labour-saving methods, in the first lesson Bernège invites readers to 'consider the life of a housewife'.<sup>65</sup> She describes both the mental and physical labour demanded by a list of daily tasks, peppering these competences with melancholic references to time experienced as monumental and cyclical: 'eternally to start again and re-starting at quick intervals...No beginning, no end. Who will say where the housewife's working day begins and who will say where it ends?'<sup>66</sup> Bernège's widely published claims about housework as waste find a striking counterpart in de Beauvoir's writing in her 1949 *Le Deuxième sexe*, where she too wrote:

...day after day, one must wash dishes, dust furniture, mend clothes that will be dirty, dusty, and torn again. The housewife wears herself out running on the spot: she does nothing, she only perpetuates the

present...Washing, ironing, sweeping, routing out tufts of dust in the dark places behind the wardrobe, this is holding away death but also refusing life: for in one movement time is created and destroyed; the housewife only grasps the negative aspect of it ...The wife is not allowed to *do* any positive work and consequently to have herself known as a complete person.<sup>67</sup>

Of course, de Beauvoir's feminist solution entailed women simply transcending their domestic immanence and joining men in the experience of fully rational, fully productive, individual subjectivity. Domesticity is here assumed to just fade away into meaninglessness. In Bernège's *Si les femmes faisaient maisons* descriptions of oppressive, wasteful domesticity are also set against projections of what feminine subjectivity can achieve, if only time allowed: 'think of all the walks under the beautiful natural sun I could have taken, the books I could have read or written, the works I could have accomplished, the affection I could have given.'<sup>68</sup> In the most transcendent of all her publications, 'Le Foyer sans femme', a brief 1930 article on US serviced apartments (she published elsewhere on Stockholm worker co-operatives), Bernège invites readers to imagine a centrally-administered set of residences with the housewife no longer anchored to the core - a place where the archaic 'French phrase "La Femme au foyer" has no currency'.<sup>69</sup> The article itself is illustrated by a photograph of a kitchen, at the centre of which a female figure at a cupboard has been outlined and drawn over with diagonal white lines that initiate the housewife's disappearance. Like de Beauvoir later, Bernège was capable of imagining women's transcendence. But Bernège was more pragmatically attentive than de Beauvoir would be to the lived realities of millions of contemporary

French women like herself who already negotiated ‘the double burden’ of housework and paid work in a maternalist political climate. It is the experience and potential of working women, not mothers – an experience shared by women across socio-economic boundaries, as housework now also was too - that comes to the fore of her housework philosophy. Describing the household of the working woman as one of only two then relevant in 1928, she advocates working women temporarily abandoning all housework in the hope that a labour strike might motivate domestic change.<sup>70</sup> The second type of household then considered relevant she labels ‘the hybrid form’.<sup>71</sup> Progressive, pragmatic, ultimately utopian, here housework is shared between a range of practitioners, either externally procured or collectively administered, and undertaken by the housewife, her children and, most radically of all, her husband – the elephant in the room of Bernard’s 1933 *Marie mécanique* poster (Fig. 4) and the *Salon des arts ménagers*, with its large, and mixed gender, audience.

It is well known that Bernège advocated and coached readers in the application of Taylorist time-saving solutions. In parallel with the rational installation of domestic appliances (where financially possible, which explains the emphasis given to the Loucheur plan for worker housing), Bernège promotes chronometric self-analysis - the timed analysis and gradual honing of one’s chores, ‘not by going faster...but by simplifying procedures’ – as an integral means of women moving beyond housework time.<sup>72</sup> *De la Méthode ménagère* functions against the grain of domestic economy literature as a manual by which psyches and bodies might begin cognitively to unlearn internalized time-filling habits rooted in archaic constructions of women’s time as time



without value. However, scholarship has commonly misinterpreted Taylorism as either Bernège's single ideological priority or denied Bernège feminist eligibility on the basis of her Taylorist inclinations. But it was an ideology she clearly held at arm's length, even whilst advocating its benefits when adapted thoughtfully and pragmatically to reducing housework. *De la Méthode ménagère* concludes with a crucial distinction between Taylorism detrimentally applied by 'the masculine world of industry, business and finance, where the mechanization and rationalization of work has the dominant, often exclusive, aim of increasing output and wealth, without consideration for human happiness and recreation' and an arresting feminist vision in italics of '*the woman, in her household, trying much less to get rich than to live better*'.<sup>73</sup>

Taylorist techniques are adjusted by Bernège to the fulfillment of collective feminist ends. Identified as worker and executive in a single conscious body, Bernège's housewife readers are, for example, invited during chronometric self-analysis to adopt a managerial perspective with 'the aim of improving the experience of work from the point of view of the worker'.<sup>74</sup> The disciplinary socio-economic function of Taylorism's scopic regime is thereby negated. This allows a reflective and empathetic feminine consciousness to become capable of resolving the social and corporeal feminine other to the individual feminine self. In other words, Bernège facilitates the coming to consciousness of what women might now share between and across the experience of living the identity 'housewife'. It is a feminine commonality invoked but left irresolutely suspended in the dualistic tension between the bourgeois *femme moderne* and the domestic worker of Bernard's 1933 *Marie mécanique* poster (Fig. 4).

Chronometric self-analysis constituted a core principle of Bernège's feminist philosophy and it brings us to a conclusion. Readers of *De la Méthode ménagère* were coached to use clocks - measurable time - to support the carving of transcendental women's time out of predictably eternal and cyclical housework time. Interpretations have, however, preferred to fall back on formulaic, even directly reactionary, narratives of Bernège aspiring to make housewives work like clockwork. Bernard's *Marie mécanique*, the paper-thin, geometric silhouette of a vacant-headed housewife-automaton lead the way in simplistic synthesis of the feminine, the domestic and the mechanical as a type of presumed *hommage* to Bernège. Misinterpretation seems rooted in two key lacunae that linger in the historiographical afterlife. Firstly, a refusal to recognise the feminism in Bernège's practice, albeit a feminism that was pragmatic, reformist, domestically-orientated and predominantly pre-'68 in consciousness, if also radically transcendent in aspiration. Secondly, a willful exaggeration of the primacy of the machine to Bernège's philosophy. Networked domestic appliances are only ever conceived by Bernège as supporting equipment inserted into a system over which analytical, reflective and empathetic feminine subjectivity remains sovereign.<sup>75</sup> Francis Bernard instead achieved feminine subjectivity's symbolic obliteration in programming *Marie mécanique* to be a man-made, feminine cleaning machine that naturally, unconsciously, works like clockwork. Moreover, for the state-sponsored *SAM* to repeatedly write *Marie mécanique* large as *the* public female allegory of the mid-twentieth century was, ultimately, to insist on inequitable sexual difference's monumental permanence in that uncertain moment in which 'the servant problem', working women's resilience, the domestic appliance and

new feminist domesticity threatened at least some of domesticity's long-held associations.

The state-sponsored *Salon des arts ménagers* brought the new identity and image of the modern housewife to a mass audience, to ambiguous effect. Whilst work in the home - usually considered a matter of private (feminine) life beyond the remit of the state - was made the subject of public (masculine) discourse, the 'fact' of housework as the work of *all* women was imposed, aided by the innovative, Constructivist designs of graphic artists such as Francis Bernard. Bernard's *Marie mécaniques* conveyed a series of slick simplifications, including the mechanical ease of housework as carried out by a mindless female automaton, that Bernège clearly would have rejected. But one might also conclude that under the shared banner of 'modern housewife' and in the impoverished experience of conducting housework whilst being allowed to realise the value of one's time, are found the conditions constitutive of an individual, and potentially collective, feminist consciousness developing beyond maternalism and towards the activism of the postwar era.

---

<sup>1</sup> Anon., 'J.-L. Breton, Un homme, une idée, une oeuvre', *L'Art ménager*, vol. 13, no. 140, March 1939, p. 124.

<sup>2</sup> Anon., 'Sommaire', *L'Art ménager*, vol. 13, no. 140, March 1939, p. 122. *L'Art ménager: revue officielle du Salon des arts ménagers* ran monthly from March 1927 to August 1939. In 1949 publication re-started under the title of *Arts ménagers et culinaires* and then from 1950 to 1970 as *Arts ménagers*.

<sup>3</sup> See Archives Nationales de France (AN) 19850023/3 for *SAM* ticket prices, AN 19850023/65 for *SAM* catalogues and AN 19850023/194 for *SAM* exhibition tickets.

<sup>4</sup> See AN 19850023/158 for the one-million matchboxes distributed to advertise the 1933 *SAM*. A 1939 internal marketing report describes posters being displayed in central and suburban Parisian streets, on the metro, in railway stations, cafés, department stores and schools; AN 19850023/155.

<sup>5</sup> The first published use of *Marie mécanique* is an April 1935 interview with the graphic artist in advertising trade journal *Vendre*. Anne-Claude Lelieur, 'Au salon', Claudine Chevrel & Thierry Devynck (eds), *L'Affiche d'Arts Ménagers au XXe siècle: le plumeau, la locotte et le petit robot* (France Loisirs: Paris, 1995), p. 17.

---

<sup>6</sup> Paul Andrin, 'Francis Bernard, artiste-affichiste', *L'Affiche (et les arts de la publicité)*, vol. 6, no. 62, February 1930, p. 239. Éditions Paul-Martial was established in 1926 by Paul Martial Haeffelin. Having studied at the École de Commerce in Marseilles and then at the Paris École des Beaux-Arts, Bernard was employed as graphic artist in spring 1927. For Éditions Paul-Martial see Martine Dancer-Mourès & Danièle Méaux (eds), *Les Photographes et la commande industrielle autour des Éditions Paul-Martial* (Musée d'art moderne et contemporain: Saint-Étienne Métropole, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Between 1930 and 1977 Bernard designed thirty-two (all *Marie mécaniques*) of the fifty-two SAM posters and his *Marie mécanique* featured as the logo on banners, catalogues and tickets even in years, such as 1939, when Bernard did not gain the poster commission.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Alain Weill & Merrill C. Berman, *Francis Bernard* (Chisholm Gallery: New York, 1996).

<sup>9</sup> For Breton see Martine Segalen, 'The Salon des arts ménagers, 1923-1983: A French effort to instil the virtues of home and the norms of good taste', *Journal of Design History*, vol. 7, no. 4, 1994, pp. 269-70.

<sup>10</sup> In the mid 1930s competitions to design the annual SAM poster were held; AN 19850023/154. In other years of that decade individual designers were directly commissioned, including Paul Colin and Jean Carlu, whose 1937 SAM poster depicts a bird sweeping a nest. Some of the SAM posters not designed by Bernard showed figures engaged in housework but doing so in demonstrably professional roles such as the male valet dusting a diminutive model house in Jacques Nathan-Garamond's 1934 poster. For each original SAM poster see AN 20040262/1-48 and for digital reproductions see the website of the Musée des Arts décoratifs: <http://www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr/francais/musees/musee-des-arts-decoratifs/collections/dossiers-thematiques/publicite-et-graphisme/marques-et-personnages/salons-des-arts-menagers>. Accessed 5 December 2016.

<sup>11</sup> *L'Art ménager*, vol. 7, no. 85, March 1933, p. 179; Anon., 'J.-L. Breton' (March 1939), p. 124. A 1929 review identified the audience as 'picturesque', consisting of the 'Parisienne', 'the bourgeois man', 'the old boy', 'an elderly miser', 'schoolgirls' and 'an old provincial woman who last week buried her maid of forty years and is looking to replace her with something less tyrannical'; Pascale Saisset, 'Le Taylorisme ménager au Grand Palais', *La Grande Revue*, no. 129, March 1929, pp. 59-60.

<sup>12</sup> AN 19850023/18; Rebecca J. Pulju, *Women and Mass Consumer Society in Postwar France* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2011), p. 209.

<sup>13</sup> Odile Henry, 'Femmes et Taylorisme: la rationalization du travail domestique', *Revue Agone*, no. 28, 16 April 2003, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Paulette Bernège, *Si les femmes faisaient les maisons* (Mon Chez Moi: Paris, 1928). For the July 1928 *Loi Loucheur* plan and its limited house-building effect see Nicole C. Rudolph, *At Home in Postwar France: Modern Mass Housing and the Right to Comfort* (Berghahn Books: Oxford & New York, 2015), pp. 59-64. In 1928 Louis Loucheur proposed purchasing 200,000 of Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky's *Das Neue Frankfurt* kitchens for each working-class home planned under the Loucheur scheme but in 1929 negotiations for the purchase stalled; Susan R. Henderson, 'A Revolution in the Woman's Sphere: Grete Lihotzky and the Frankfurt Kitchen', D. Coleman, E. Danze & C. Henderson (eds), *Architecture and Feminism* (Princeton Architectural Press: New York, 1996), p. 238 & fn. 43.

<sup>15</sup> Paulette Bernège, *De la Méthode ménagère* (1928), 2nd ed. (Ligue de l'organisation ménagère/Chez Dunod: Paris, 1934). Jackie Clarke, 'L'Organisation ménagère comme pédagogie', *Travail, genre et sociétés*, no. 13, January 2005, p. 142.

<sup>16</sup> Jennifer E Milligan *Forgotten Generation: French Women Writers of the Interwar Period* (Berg Publishers: Oxford, 1997), pp. 9-12.

<sup>17</sup> Karen Offen 'Body Politics: Women, Work and the Politics of Motherhood in France, 1920-1950', Patricia Thane & Gisela Bock (eds), *Maternity and Gender Policies. Women and the Rise of the Welfare State*, (Routledge: London, 1991), pp. 138-159.

<sup>18</sup> Milligan *Forgotten Generation* (1997), p. 14. For Roussel see Elinor Accampo, *Blessed Motherhood, Bitter Fruit: Nelly Roussel and the Politics of Female Pain in Third Republic France* (John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> Milligan *Forgotten Generation* (1997), pp. 11-14.

<sup>20</sup> Milligan *Forgotten Generation* (1997), p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> Ellen Furlough, 'Selling the American way in interwar France: "prix uniques" and the Salon des arts ménagers', *Journal of Social History*, vol. 26, no. 3, Spring 1993, pp. 491-519; Robert L. Frost, 'Machine

---

liberation: inventing housewives and home appliances in interwar France', *French Historical Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1, Spring 1993, pp. 109-30; Segalen, 'The Salon des arts ménagers', pp. 267-73. For the postwar SAM see Claire Leymonerie, 'Le Salon des arts ménagers dans les années 1950: théâtre d'une conversion à la consommation de masse', *Vingtième siècle: revue d'histoire*, no. 91, July-September 2006, pp. 43-56; Pulju, *Women* (2011); Rudolph, *At Home* (2015).

<sup>22</sup> Jacques Rouaud, *60 Ans d'arts ménagers*, vols. 1 & 2 (Éditions Syros Alternatives: Paris, 1989 and 1993); *Les Bons Génies de la vie domestique* (Éditions du Centre Pompidou: Paris, 2000).

<sup>23</sup> *Modernism: Designing a New World 1814-1939* (V&A Publications: London, 2006), pp. 208-9.

<sup>24</sup> For two examples see Claire Duchén, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives in France 1944-1968*, (Routledge: London and New York, 1994), pp. 69-72; Kristin Ross, 'Starting Afresh: Hygiene and Modernization in Postwar France', *October*, vol. 67 (Winter 1994), pp. 33-44.

<sup>25</sup> Martine Martin, 'La Rationalisation du travail ménager en France dans l'entre-deux guerres', *Culture Technique*, no. 3, September 1980, pp. 156-65; Martine Martin, 'Ménagère: une profession? Les dilemmes de l'entre-deux-guerres', *Le Mouvement social*, no. 140, July-September 1987, pp. 89-106; Mary McLeod, 'New Designs for Living: Domestic Equipment of Charlotte Perriand, Le Corbusier, and Pierre Jeanneret, 1928-29', *Charlotte Perriand: An Art of Living* (Harry N. Abrams: New York, 2003), pp. 36-67; Henry, 'Femmes et Taylorisme' (2003), pp. 1-12; Clarke, 'L'Organisation ménagère' (2005), pp. 139-57; Roxanne Panchasi, *Future Tense: The Culture of Anticipation in France Between the Wars* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 2009); Jackie Clarke, *France in the Age of Organization: Factory, Home and Nation from the 1920s to Vichy* (Berghahn Books: New York and Oxford, 2011).

<sup>26</sup> For example, Bernard's 1933 SAM poster is reproduced, without further commentary, on the cover of Clarke, *France in the Age of Organization* (2011).

<sup>27</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe*, 2 vols. (1949), trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, *The Second Sex* (Vintage Books: New York, 2011).

<sup>28</sup> Duchén, *Women's Rights* (1994), pp. 84-8, sets de Beauvoir against Bernège as offering competing postwar versions of domestic femininity, doing so at a pivotal moment in an important book tracing debates about women's socio-political position between 1944 and 1968.

<sup>29</sup> See Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (eds), *New French Feminisms: An Anthology* (Harvester Wheatsheaf: Hemel Hempstead, 1981), pp. 39-56 for an example of this type of periodisation. De Beauvoir's 'Introduction' to *Le Deuxième Sexe* is reprinted alone in a section titled 'Beginnings'.

<sup>30</sup> Julia Kristeva 'Women's Time' (1979) intro. and trans. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 7, no. 1 (Autumn 1981), pp. 18-20. See also Emily Apter, "'Women's Time" in Theory', *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2010, pp. 1-18.

<sup>31</sup> Kristeva 'Women's Time' (1981), pp. 18-20.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Frost suggests that the interwar 'servant problem' was likely 'as much a rhetorical device as a concrete reality', driven by bourgeois aspiration performed as regret at the decline of domestic service; Frost 'Machine Liberation' (1993), p. 114. Of course, the SAM was also intended to satisfy a number of state-sponsored commercial objectives orientated towards stimulating French industry. These included providing private utilities companies with a platform for building a market for the installation of domestic gas and electricity. In 1928, 4 million out of a potential 12-15 million French households were supplied with electricity, mainly for lighting. Electricity's mass consumption was only fully realised in the 1960s; Furlough, 'Selling the American Way' (1993), pp. 506-7 and fn. 70.

<sup>33</sup> Anon., 'Le Concours et le salon des Appareils ménagers', *Catalogue officiel du salon des Appareils ménagers*, 1923, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> 'Les circonstances économiques actuelles éloignent de plus en plus la main d'oeuvre des emplois domestiques, il devient de plus, difficile de trouver des serviteurs et il semble même que dans un avenir proche, bien rares seront ceux qui pourront se dispenser des travaux du ménage.' Anon., 'Le Concours' (1923), p. 4. Unless otherwise stated all translations are mine.

<sup>35</sup> The first of many SAM 'best housewife' competitions took place in February 1936, a clear indication of SAM's sexual division of labour and one example of the pro-natalist didacticism increasingly available to view. Anon., 'La Meilleure ménagère 1936', *L'Art ménager*, vol. 10, no. 108, February 1936, p. 112.

<sup>36</sup> In addition to Figs. 1 and 5 see Grand Palais entrance photos for 1935, 1936 and 1938 in Anon., *L'Art ménager*, vol. 10, no. 107, January 1936, p. 1; Anon., 'Une parfait réussite', *L'Art ménager*, vol. 11, no. 109, March 1936, no page; *L'Art ménager*, vol. 12, no. 139, March 1938, cover.

---

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, H. de Graffigny, 'Le Taylorisation des domestiques', *L'Art ménager*, vol. 2, no. 20, October 1928, pp. 724-5.

<sup>38</sup> For the symbolic politics of the mid 1920s *femme moderne* look and its softened early 1930s variant see Mary L. Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes: reconstructing gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1994), pp. 64-86.

<sup>39</sup> 'Les maîtresses de maison comprirent immédiatement que pour remplacer les domestiques défaillants, elles avaient à leur disposition ces serviteurs toujours dociles et empressés, qui s'appellent le gaz, l'eau, l'électricité.' Louis Loucheur, 'L'Art ménager', *L'Art ménager*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1-2. See also Paul Reiter, 'Quelques réflexions sur le personnel domestique', *L'Art ménager*, vol. 3, no. 32, October 1929, pp. 2096-7 & 2106 for a comparison, in terms of reliability and annual cost, between a maid and electric appliances. The results favour the latter.

<sup>40</sup> As an example of the expanding breadth of SAM publicity, the 1930 SAM poster was printed in two sizes (120 x 160cm and 62 x 100cm) to a total of 5,250 posters and the 1938 poster was printed in four sizes (62 x 100cm; 120 x 160 cm; 160 x 240 cm and 40 x 60cm) to a total of 17,400 posters; AN 19850023/154.

<sup>41</sup> See Roger Jean-Charles, 'Décoration publicitaire', *L'Art ménager*, vol. 6, no. 67, September 1932, pp. 404-5 for SAM gigantism and the synergy between the visual address of the publicity poster and the display stands.

<sup>42</sup> 'Parfois, celles-ci n'ont rien inventé, et elles étalent le luxe ostentatoire d'une publicité ingénieuse, ingénue aussi.' 'Quelle flatteuse impression par exemple, pour un Toulonnais, provoque l'édifice élevé à la gloire des Bozon-Verdurez, avec ses fondements faits de boîtes de nouilles, ses piliers couverts de plats à gratin, son toit recouvert et couronné d'une dôme de casseroles!' Saisset 'Le Taylorisme' (1929), pp. 62-3

<sup>43</sup> 'Nous sommes à l'âge des intellectuelles, où l'on a méprisé les occupations ménagères d'une manière alarmante pour les maris et les enfants. Alors, pour attirer les jeunes femmes vers la profession tant dépréciée de ménagère, on a baptisé "Art" ce qui s'appelait "Economie domestique".'; Saisset 'Le Taylorisme' (1929), p. 61.

<sup>44</sup> 'Pour les Arts Ménagers il s'agissait de mettre la mécanique au service de la ménagère. Je traduis l'idée mécanique par un engrenage. Je complete après coup et je renforce l'idée ménagère par un balai, attribut classique des nettoyeurs.'; Andrin, 'Francis Bernard' (1930), p. 241.

<sup>45</sup> Kristeva, 'Women's Time' (1981), pp. 16-17.

<sup>46</sup> On the postwar theme of the 'woman-as-appliance' see August Jordan Davis, 'Reading the Strange Case of Woman-as-Appliance', *Third Text*, vol. 29, nos. 4-5 (2015), pp. 356-76.

<sup>47</sup> On this theme see Francesca Berry, "'Maman is my Muse": The Maternal as Motif and Metaphor in Edouard Vuillard's Intimisme', *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2011, pp. 65-6.

<sup>48</sup> Rouaud, *60 Ans* (1993), p. 162; Pulju, *Women* (2011), p. 25; Rudolph, *At Home* (2015), p. 109.

<sup>49</sup> Rouaud, *60 Ans* (1993), p. 162.

<sup>50</sup> Rouaud, *60 Ans* (1993), p. 162; Pulju, *Women* (2011), p. 220.

<sup>51</sup> See Georges Canguilhem, 'Machine and Organism' [1952], Jonathan Crary & Sanford Kwinter (eds), *Incorporations [Zone 6]* (MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, 1992), pp. 48-54.

<sup>52</sup> Bernège, *De la Méthode* (1934); René Descartes, *A Discourse on the Method of Correctly Conducting One's Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences* [1637], trans. Ian Maclean (Oxford University Press: Oxford & New York, 2006).

<sup>53</sup> Anon., 'Mon Chez Moi au salon des appareils ménagers', *Mon Chez Moi*, December 1923, p. 43.

<sup>54</sup> Paulette Bernège. 'Vers une cuisine automatique', *Mon Chez Moi*, October 1923, pp. 25-30; Le Corbusier, *Vers une architecture (nouvelle édition revue et augmentée)* (G. Crès, Paris: 1929).

<sup>55</sup> 'Nous avons été les premiers dans la presse à ouvrir, - il y a dix ans déjà, - une rubrique consacrée à cette forme la plus pratique, sinon la seule, du féminisme'; Paulette Bernège, 'Le Foyer sans femme', *Je Sais Tout: la grande revue de vulgarisation scientifique*, no. 300, December 1930, p. 535.

<sup>56</sup> 'La présente brochure tient donc à exprimer les désirs et les revendications des ménagères françaises oubliées pour que les maisons en voie de construction, sous le patronage du gouvernement français, soient conçues selon leurs besoins.'; Bernège, *Si les femmes* (1928), pp. 1-2.

<sup>57</sup> 'La peine et la fatigue des femmes sont dues pour la majeure part à l'irréflexion des hommes qui donnent un cadre irrationnel au travail, une maison tyrannique imposant un travail difficile et inutile, de par sa disposition mal comprise'; Bernège, *Si les femmes* (1928), p. 14.

<sup>58</sup> 'Plus d'apparences, ni de mots, mais de l'action.'; Bernège, *Si les femmes* (1928), p. 58.

---

<sup>59</sup> ‘J’estime, en effet, que je n’ai pas 185 journées de ma vie à offrir gratuitement, sans profit pour personne, à des transports d’assiettes.’; Bernège, *Si les femmes* (1928), p. 14. My italics.

<sup>60</sup> Sandrine Roll, “Ni bas-bleu, ni pot-au-feu”: la conception de la femme selon Augusta Moll-Weiss’, *Genre & Histoire*, no. 5, 2009, <http://genrehistoire.revues.org/819>.

<sup>61</sup> ‘Puisque la cause du mal est dans l’ignorance des mères, c’est à cette ignorance qu’il faut s’attaquer; il faut la combattre en s’adressant aux mères sans doute, mais surtout en s’adressant aux jeunes filles, aux futures meres.’; Augusta Moll-Weiss, *Le Foyer Domestique* (1902), (Librairie Hachette : Paris, 1905), p. viii.

<sup>62</sup> Augusta Moll-Weiss, *Madame et sa bonne: comment former une bonne à tout faire en s’éduquant soi-même* (Albin Michel: Paris, 1925). Note the social equivocation in the title to the book published in the interwar period which suggests to a bourgeois reader that one might ‘produce a maid of all work in educating oneself’ about housework.

<sup>63</sup> Bernège, *Si les femmes* (1928), p. 5.

<sup>64</sup> ‘C’est là assurément la clé de toutes les crises féminines et féministes, un grand soulagement pour la femme, un accroissement considérable de son bien-être et de toutes ses possibilités familiales, professionnelles, intellectuelles et sociales.’; Bernège, *De la Méthode* (1934), p. 50.

<sup>65</sup> ‘Considérons la vie d’une ménagère.’; *De la Méthode* (1934), p. 5.

<sup>66</sup> ‘Eternellement à recommencer et recommencement à un rythme très rapide (faire la cuisine, par exemple, trois fois par jour), le travail ménager use l’initiative...Ni commencement, ni fin. Qui dira où s’arrête la journée de travail de la ménagère?’; Bernège, *De la Méthode* (1934), p. 6.

<sup>67</sup> De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2011), pp. 474-84.

<sup>68</sup> ‘...je perdrai dans ma vie près de trois mille belle heures que je regretterai toujours, en songeant aux belles promenades sous le beau soleil de la nature que j’aurais pu faire, aux livres que j’aurais pu lire ou écrire, aux travaux que j’aurais pu accomplir, à l’affection que j’aurais pu donner.’; Bernège, *Si les femmes* (1928), p. 15.

<sup>69</sup> ‘La sentence française: “La Femme au foyer”, n’a pas cours là-bas’; Bernège ‘Le Foyer’ (1930), p. 535.

<sup>70</sup> ‘L’abandon passager des travaux domestiques par les femmes de notre époque présentera cet avantage qu’il amènera la nécessité de transformer ces travaux pour les réadapter à nos besoins modernes.’; Bernège, *De la Méthode* (1934), p. 156.

<sup>71</sup> *De la Méthode* (1934), pp. 13-14.

<sup>72</sup> ‘...non pas en allant plus vite dans vos mouvements, mais en inventant des procédés simplificateurs’; Bernège, *De la Méthode* (1934), p. 52.

<sup>73</sup> ‘...il semble que la mécanisation et la rationalisation des besognes domestiques puissent servir d’exemple...car, seules, elles représentent une libération effective, un gain absolu d’effort humain, la femme, dans son ménage, essayant beaucoup moins de s’enrichir que de vivre mieux. Au contraire, dans le monde masculin de l’industrie, du commerce et de la finance, la mécanisation et la rationalisation du travail ont eu pour but dominant et souvent exclusive, l’augmentation du rendement et de la richesse pécuniaire, sans contre-partie humaine de bonheur et des loisirs.’; Bernège, *De la Méthode* (1934), p.159.

<sup>74</sup> ‘Pour améliorer ce travail au point de vue du travailleur’; Bernège, *De la Méthode* (1934), p. 40.

<sup>75</sup> Bernège, *De la Méthode* (1934), pp. 115-16.

## Image Captions

Fig. 1. Front Cover of *L'Art ménager*, vol. 13, no. 140, March 1939. Private Collection.

(Photo: The Author).

---

Fig. 2. Francis Bernard, *VIIe Salon des arts ménagers 30 janvier-16 février 1930*, 1930, lithograph, 157 x 117.5 cm. Printed in Paris by Éditions Paul-Martial. Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris. (Photo: Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris / Laurent Sully Jaulmes).

Fig. 3. Francis Bernard, *VIIIème Salon des arts ménagers*, 1931, lithograph, 98.5 x 62cm. Printed in Paris by Éditions Paul-Martial. Collection Merrill C. Berman, New York. (Photo: Collection Merrill C. Berman).

Fig. 4. Francis Bernard, *Arts Ménagers*, 1933, lithograph, 99 x 61cm. Printed in Paris by Éditions Paul-Martial. Collection Merrill C. Berman, New York. (Photo: Collection Merrill C. Berman).

Fig. 5. Les Actualités Photographiques Internationales, *Preparations for the Salon des arts ménagers. Paris, Grand Palais, January 1939*, photograph, January 1939 (© LAPI / Roger-Viollet).

Fig. 6. Agence de presse Mondial Photo-Presse, *Salon des Arts ménagers at the Grand Palais: General View of Preparations, a Child Holding a Saucepan in the Foreground*, January 1933, photograph, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département Estampes et photographie. (Photo: Bibliothèque Nationale de France).

Fig. 7. Front Cover of *L'Art ménager*, vol. 2, no. 21, November 1928. Colour lithograph. Private Collection. (Photo: The Author).

Fig. 8. Jean-François Millet, *A Farmer's Wife Sweeping*, 1867, pastel on brown paper, 54.5 x 43 cm, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg (Photo: The Bridgeman Art Library).



---

Fig. 9. Francis Bernard, *Arts Ménagers, 17ème, 26 fév-14 mars 1948*, 1948, lithograph, 160 x 120cm. Printed in Paris by Bedos & Cie. Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris. (Photo: Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris / Laurent Sully Jaulmes).

Fig. 10. Francis Bernard, *Arts ménagers. 26 Février-9 Mars. Palais de la Défense*, 1975, lithograph, 100 x 62 cm. Printed in Toulouse by Chabrilac. Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris. (Photo: Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris / Laurent Sully Jaulmes).