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#### The Cover

Biographers have had their problems with Mary Cassatt (1844-1926), the first American woman artist to achieve international eminence and author of *Mother and Little Girl* (cover).

Miss Cassatt's life refuses to fit the stereotypes—she was a rebel, but a relatively proper rebel, a broker's daughter who adopted the decidedly unconventional painting style of the Impressionists (and in the early 1870's!) while remaining aloof from the Bohemian life. Why, she never even broke away from her parents, who came to live with her in Paris—and when what may have been the romance of her life broke up, she spent the rest of her days working hard, painting—among other subjects—pictures of women and babies.

"Mary Cassatt was never a 'lady painter,' always a 'woman painter,'" wrote Forbes Watson, who knew her well. "She studied the drawings of the sternest draftsmen." One of her early works caught the eye of Edgar Degas (1834-1917), who exclaimed that at last he had found somebody who saw as he did. Though he later professed to doubt any woman could draw so well, he and Miss Cassatt became friends and the working relationship (he taught her much about painting) might have led to marriage. It didn't, due to the opposition of Mr Cassatt (Degas' family had suffered financial reverses) and that of Degas' own friends who could not conceive of a marriage between equals. As Degas told Forbes years later, "I would have married her, but I could never have made love to her [as a mistress]."

She burned Degas' letters and continued to paint, from 8 AM until light failed, until blindness forced her to stop. The later works, including the cover picture, have the qualities foreshadowed in her work from the beginning. As Frederick A. Sweet noted in his 1966 biography, *Miss Mary Cassatt*: "It is a tribute to her supreme artistic sense that a woman so forceful and dynamic could produce paintings so sensitive, so feminine, and so deeply felt. She had the ability of a truly well-disciplined person to direct her creative powers into the most perfectly modulated channels where nothing was forced or overstated. As a person she was ruthlessly outspoken; as an artist she exercised perfect control."—JAAN KANGILASKI

(*Mother and Little Girl*, c 1902-1905. Pastel on paper. 60.5×73.7 cm. Used with permission of the Art Institute of Chicago. Photograph by Joe Fletcher.)

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