NAKED OR NUDE? A BATTLE AMONG FRENCH CRITICS OF THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY

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While we may think we distinguish clearly between the naked and nude, at least in theory, other times and perhaps our own have greater difficulty in the distinction of the practice in art.

Fig. 1. Hadol, The Week in Comedy: The Salon of Painting. Published in L'Eclipse, May 10, 1874. *Columbia University Libraries.*

Kenneth Clark's distinction between the naked and the nude particularly serves in the study of nineteenth-century French art.[1] More than at any other time, passionate belief in the female nude as the grandest of artistic subjects coexisted with a horror of the naked female body. Although the distinction between the two categories seemed clear enough in theory, it proved more elusive in practice and, year after year, works of art provoked controversy. Among the most notorious were Manet's *Olympia* (Louvre), exhibited at the Salon in 1865, and Carpeaux's *La Danse*, unveiled at the Paris Opera in 1869. These two cases have received nearly all the attention of modern scholars, but many other works also became subjects of vigorous dispute.[2] One of the first great scandals was created by Auguste Clésinger's *Woman Bitten by a Snake* (Louvre), exhibited at the Salon of 1847. Théophile Gautier explained the difficulty: "[Clésinger] had the audacity to exhibit a masterpiece without a mythological title—not a deity, nor a nymph, nor a dryad, nor an oread, nor a wood-nymph, nor an oceanid, but quite simply a woman!" Or, as Gustave Planche understood it: "The technique of Monsieur Clésinger is to sculpture as daguerreotypy is to painting. His work is not modelled, but molded [from nature]."[3] Adding insult to injury, rumor had it that the sitter for the piece was identifiable.[4]

By the 1860s, these battles over representations of the female body had become so common as to form a distinct genre of art criticism. A long piece by Ernest d'Hervilly, published in the Parisian satirical weekly *L'Eclipse* on 31 May 1874, offers a particularly full example of the type. The column concerns an Orientalist painting by Anatole de Beaulieu in that year's Salon. In its basic outline—a humorous account of the reactions of Salon visitors—d'Hervilly's piece resembles Louis Leroy's exactly contemporary review of the Impressionist exhibition, one among many examples of such criticism.[5] In at least two respects, however, d'Hervilly's column is a more interesting work. First, it fully exploits the long French tradition of antibourgeois satire. This had become a newly potent weapon in the aesthetic battles of the period, and one that had a special place in the disputes over the naked and the nude. D'Hervilly even used the character of Monsieur Prudhomme, a popular parody of the nineteenth-century bourgeois. More important, each one of his humorous formulations has its counterpart in the serious arguments of conventional criticism. Thus his satire touches on all the major themes in contemporary discussions about the nude.

Marie Ernest d'Hervilly (1839–1911) was one of many aspiring young authors who wrote for the countless periodicals that sprang up in Paris during the Second Empire.[6] Partly because of government censorship and partly because of the inevitably ephemeral nature of such publications, titles often appeared and disappeared in short order.[7] A few personalities, however, remained constant—of whom d'Hervilly was one. Despite a career in the administration of public works, he published comedies, several volumes of short stories, and many articles in a variety of Parisian periodicals—*Le Diogène*, *Le Boulevard*, *L'Artiste*, and *La Lune*, among others. Along with Eugène Vermersch (another frequent player in these circles), d'Hervilly was a founding editor of *L'Eclipse.* Named in homage to *La Lune*, which the government had suppressed in 1867, *L'Eclipse* (1868–76) published a miscellany of sharp and often funny articles about events of the day. Like others of its type, the magazine also included cartoons—typically, a large caricature on the cover, often by André Gill (sometimes altered or even printed blank because of censorship), as well as a smaller one on the upper half of the back page by artists such as Hadol and Felix Régamey. The latter usually concerned social or cultural rather than political matters.[8]

The painting about which d'Hervilly wrote was by Anatole de Beaulieu (1819–1884), a very gifted student of Delacroix, according to several critics.[9] Despite exhibiting regularly at the Salon from 1844 until his death, and winning a medal there in 1868, Beaulieu never attained more than a respectable critical reputation. Typically, few reviewers

did more than mention his Orientalist picture in 1874. To our ears, at least, its very title suggests a caricature of the type: *An Adulterous Woman Exposed at the Pillory before being Sold or Thrown into the Bosphoros;—Ancient Stamboul* (unlocated). As shown in Hadol's cartoon (Fig. 1), the painting depicted a naked young woman bound at her wrists and ankles, her body distorted from suffering. According to the reviewer for *L'Illustration,* "[one could not pass the picture] without feeling a profound sense of horror at the sight of this lovely body, so tortured, whose blueish extremities already seem in the process of decomposition."[10] Despite the terrible details, however, Beaulieu's picture surely resembled Jean-Léon Gérôme's *Slave Market* (Fig. 2) in its basic ingredients. Both works present an unclothed young woman who stands for our inspection in a recognizably exotic setting—described with a pretense of ethnographic accuracy. These were hallmarks of the Orientalist picture.[11]

Beaulieu's painting was one of many nudes at the Salon that year. Louis Gonse, writing in the *Gazette-des-Beaux-Arts,* even claimed that the "abundance of female nudes, Venuses, bacchantes, nymphs, bathers, odalisques, and sleepers, gave the Salon [of 1874] the look of a place of ill-repute."[12] Such complaints had become common. Following the great success of Alexandre Cabanel's *Birth of Venus* (Louvre) and Paul Baudry's *Pearl and the Wave* (Prado) in the Salon of 1863, nudes filled every exhibition. Some critics even worried that the popularity of the genre posed a threat to the survival of history painting. Seduced by the combination of a readily appealing subject and the full sanction of the Academy, too many younger artists seemed to be substituting nudes for every other kind of ambitious picture. Léon Lagrange, for example, warned in 1864:

> [For some], the return to the nude is the return to grand [artistic] doctrines. But we have sought our memories . . . for the chief works of painting . . . [and found that] nudes are in the minority. The chief work of Raphael is not the Galatea in the Farnese, but the School of Athens, the Virgin and the Chair, and the Transfiguration. [The same is true of Leonardo, Titian, Veronese, Lesueur, Dürer, Rembrandt, Murillo.] No matter what school I thought of, nudes never represented the ultimate expression of a master's genius.

Ingres, too, whose nudes were especially influential during these years, put his greatest efforts into grand pictures of classical subjects.[13]

Although twentieth-century historians have emphasized the use of mythology or narrative as a "cover" for these nineteenth-century nudes, many of them actually suggested no story at all. Representative of this type is Emile Auguste Carolus-Duran's *In the Dew* (unlocated), exhibited to considerable acclaim in the Salon of 1874 and prominently reproduced in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (Fig. 3). Critics waxed rhapsodic: "How many connoisseurs [have been able to] pass many times before her without being captured by that irresistible charm which exudes from truly beautiful works?" The loveliness of the morning light on her young body, the naturalness of her gesture, the innocence of her manner, gave the picture its subject. "In a landscape impregnated with the perfume of morning, amidst the grey, wet veils of dew just touched by the first rays of the sun, [Carolus-Duran] has painted a nude young woman, who holds her hair atop her head and, in so doing, makes a crown of her two arms."[14] Even nudes that ostensibly had a subject often inspired this sort of rapturous ecphrastic description. Baudry's *Pearl and the Wave,* for example, did not attract serious discussion about either the forces of nature or Persian poetry. The prestige of the genre provided all of the justification necessary for the picture.[15]

With such richness of possibilities, it is interesting that d'Hervilly chose Beaulieu's painting as the centerpiece for his satire. Perhaps the very qualities that led most reviewers to ignore the picture made it appropriate for his purposes. D'Hervilly's column reads in full [see Appendix for the original French]:

AT THE SALON—BEFORE A NUDE

The nude in question is a painting by Anatole de Beaulieu, the brilliant student of Delacroix. It represents a young woman, entirely stripped of her clothes, and tied to a pillory by the wrists and ankles. The scene takes place in a vaguely Turkish setting, resplendent with all the colors of the Oriental palette. Next to the beautiful creature, who writhes in a most agreeable fashion—for the spectator—is a heap of terrible things, including the grimacing skull of some decapitated person.

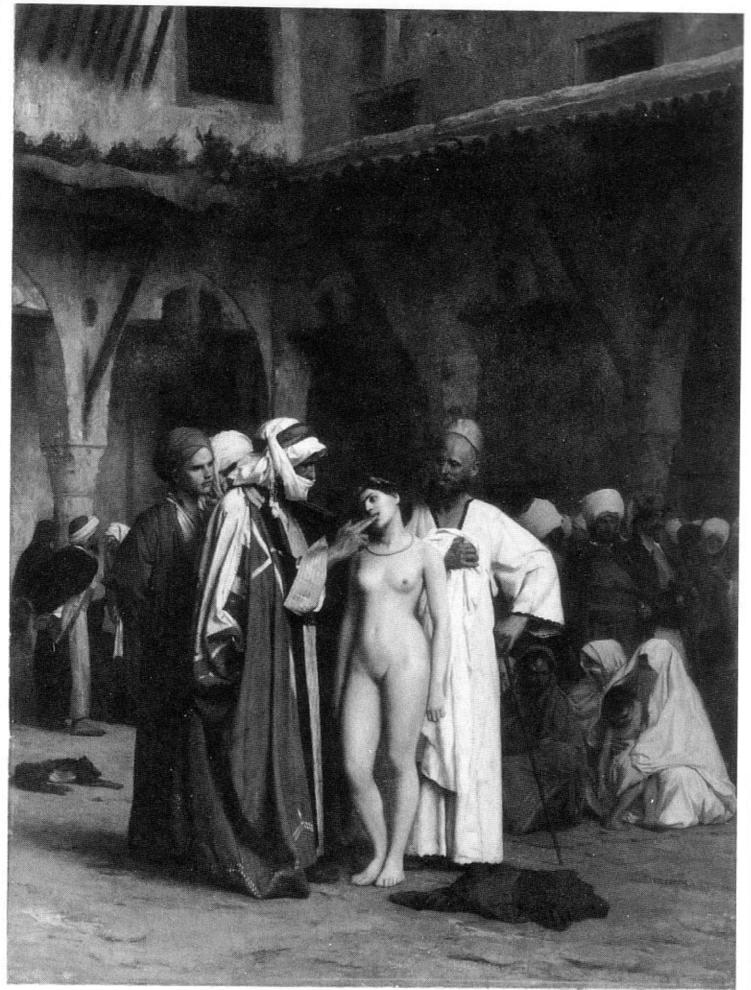

Fig. 2. Jean-Léon Gérôme,
The Slave Market, Salon of 1867.
Oil on canvas, 33¾⁄16 × 24¹³⁄16". Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts.

The catalogue gives the following explanation of this painting: *100. Adulterous woman exposed on a pillory before being sold or thrown into the Bosphoros—Ancient Stamboul.*

I was seated in front of this commendable canvas, after having surveyed the several kilometers of paintings that comprise the exhibition of the Champs-Elysées.

If front of me, visitors constantly stopped, riveted to their place by Beaulieu's nude. These are their observations, which I recorded and give you here:

M. Prudhomme and his wife.

Monsieur: Oh! There's a woman who seems to be in a bad state. Let's see what [the picture] is about.

Madame: How terrible!—Only real barbarians would commit such atrocities. Look for it in the catalogue, M. Prudhomme.

Monsieur: At your service, my dear . . . Ah, I've got it. Here it is . . . It's *Meeting of the Hunt in the Forest* . . . What? Meeting of the hunt? Meeting for the crows, maybe—I can't fathom the artist's intention.

Madame: What are you talking about?—You're looking at number 200. This is number 100!

Monsieur: That's right!—I knew it too—There it is. It's, it's the portrait of a creature who failed in her duties in Turkey. She's to be sold or thrown into the Bosphoros.

Madame: Oh! How frightful.

Monsieur: Notice, Madame Prudhomme, how ignorant artists are. It's well known that polygamy is not a hanging matter among the Moslems. And here's a painter who shows us the opposite! This is how one paints history!

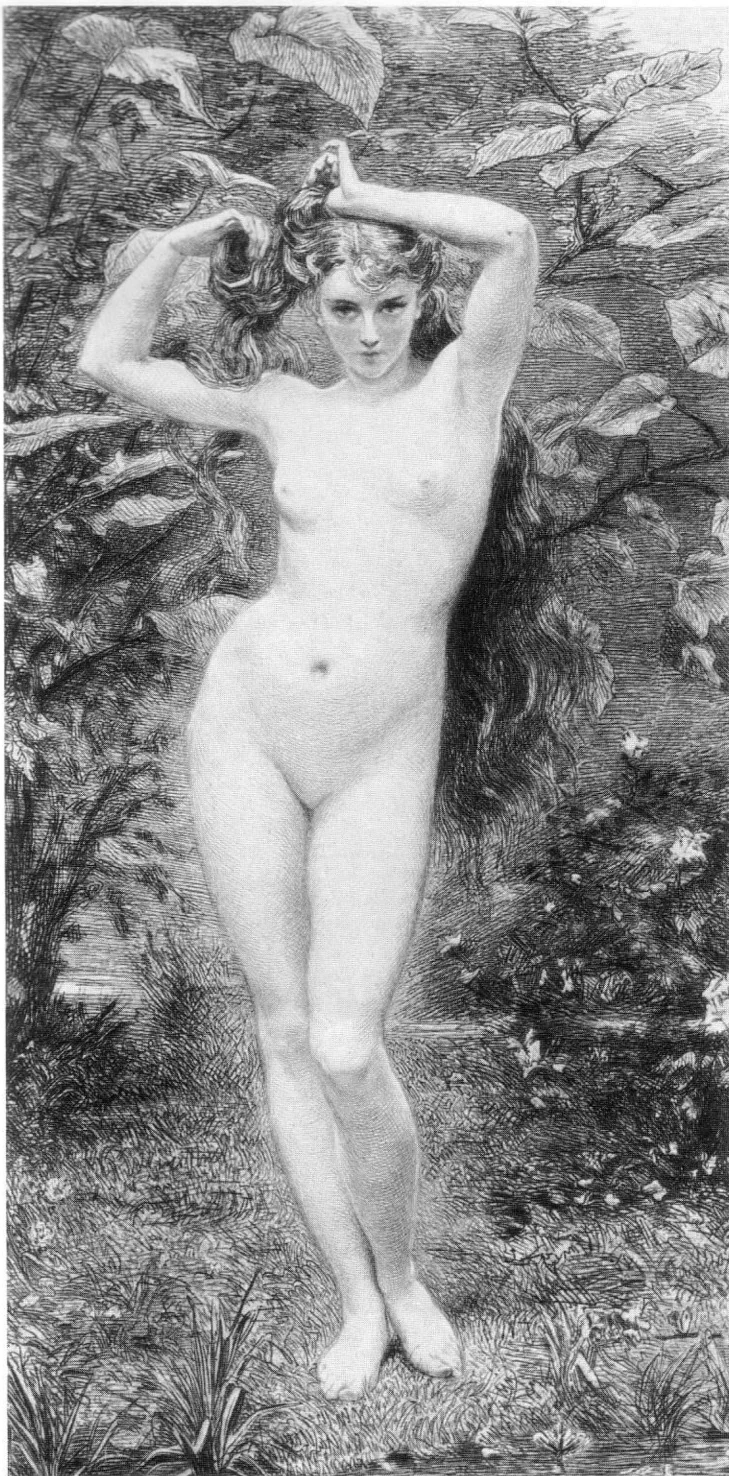

Fig. 3. Emile Auguste Carolus-Duran, In the Dew, Salon of 1874. Illustrated in Gazette des Beaux-Arts, June 1874.
Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

Madame: Let's go. I don't like these mockeries of the art student.

(They leave)

Next arrive a man and a woman, both young and very elegant. They don't seem any more married than the Sultan of Turkey and the Republic of Venice.

The man: Punishment of an adulteress. Not bad, the culprit. Nice legs. You could eat her right up.

The woman, with a little pout: You think so. Her ankles are frightfully swollen.

The man: Madame, they are tied with ropes, and the blood swells them. But she's nice all the same.

The woman: So, a creature like that pleases you?

The man: I didn't say that! But I...

The woman: That's fine. You're just the same as all the rest—you men. You're interested right away in a woman because she doesn't have any clothes on. Me, I find the painting frightful and badly made. Let's see that pretty landscape over there. It's charming.

The man: Come on, you don't like odalisques?

(They leave)

Four girls and their parents pass.

The girls (they whisper among themselves and giggle).

The mother (after having leafed through the catalogue): It's the portrait of a . . . Turkish martyr. It seems to me that one might have been able to dress her more appropriately. Let's look at something else.

The father: Oh! She's a martyr? (in a low voice) The executioner is a lucky man, the old duffer.

The mother: Hold your tongue, Stanislas! (to the young girls) Come on, girls, there are some pretty flowers over here. Are you coming?

(The family leaves)

A man and an officer.

The officer: Damn. She's having no picnic, poor Kadoudja!

The man: She's there for having overdone it, that picnic . . . Nice legs. Great body.

The officer (he opens his catalogue, finds and reads): Oh! this happened in old Stamboul. I certainly hope that such a poor little pussy couldn't get strung up like this anymore.

The man: By all indications, they're not.

(They leave)

A high school student. He looks for a long time at the beautiful body, so cruelly treated, wide-eyed with genuine feeling. But he is drawn out of his contemplation by the arrival of a man and a woman. He relinquishes his place and walks off, but not without giving the woman in question (who is pretty) a smouldering glance.

The man and the woman.

The man: She's an adulteress, Fanny.

The woman (dreamily): Ah!

The man: Yes, my dear. In Stamboul, they throw adulteresses into the Bosphoros, in a sack full of cats.

The woman (more dreamily than ever): Ah!

The man (laughing): Just imagine. I'm a Turk and you cheat on me; and bang! I'd be forced to tie you up in a sack and throw

Fig. 4. Honoré Daumier, "Let us leave, madame . . . these nudes are revolting . . . (aside) I will return by myself!" From Croquis pris au Salon, published in Le Charivari, May 5, 1865. Delteil 3475. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund.*

you into the water at the Golden Horn. The Golden Horn! What a fateful word, for a Moslem husband.

The woman (with a constrained smile): Ah!

The man: It's just like I tell you. But we are in Paris. I am French, and you are....

The woman (impatiently): Let's go.

(They leave. And if you could see into the thoughts of that woman, before whom a husband joked in such a heavy-handed manner, you'd see this: What torture to go through, in Stamboul, for a husband as worthless and annoying as mine, the loser! If he knew!... The poor thing!)

Next arrives a near-sighted priest. He looks at Beaulieu's painting, but without seeing much of anything, until finally he realizes that he has a completely naked woman under his eyes, and he hastily goes on his way. To hide his embarrassment, he coughs loudly.

After the priest, an old critic, pencil in his mouth, plants himself in front of the adulterous Mohammedan and murmurs: Romantic! Another romantic! No one knows how to paint a kneecap anymore. The stomach is too flat, the neck too pink. But that's not the problem. There are no graceful contours. We must get rid of these colorists! Blue, green, red! outlines! No lines, no modeling. Pouah! (He flees, sputtering.)

And just as I was about to leave in my turn, the guard of the room approached me and said: Why don't the painters have enough guts to come and listen to all the stupidities I hear babbled about their work for a whole month.

I had nothing to respond to that.

—Ernest d'Hervilly.

D'Hervilly's "old critic," the only representative of the professional art viewer, speaks for many of his real-life colleagues. His comments offer a summary of their vocabulary: anatomical correctness, modeling, drawing, and color, with the inevitable reference to the battle of the line versus color. These terms were especially appropriate for the discussion of nudes, which belonged to the same venerable Academic traditions. Despite the conventionality of this language, however, contemporary criticism of these pictures often displays surprising thoughtfulness. The potential controversy of the subject encouraged critics to explain particular visual elements, which sometimes were all that distinguished the acceptable from the shocking. Thus reviews of exhibited nudes tend to rely less on the routine phrases that characterize so much art criticism of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the obvious ambition of the major pictures meant that at least the serious reviews, published in periodicals like *L'Artiste*, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, and *La Revue des Deux-Mondes*, treated the works with appropriate gravity. This too encouraged fuller explanations than usual.[16]

The importance of the Academy in the definition of the nude as a pictorial genre, as well as the great influence of Ingres and his students in its practice, meant that drawing had special importance. To some,

Fig. 5. Bertall, "A Hit Picture. I can't tell you exactly what is in that painting, but I'll bet it's of bathers." Published in La Comédie de Notre Temps, Paris, 1875. *Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.*

the nude seemed like the last bastion of line in an age that too often scorned old-fashioned virtues of good draftsmanship. Although (as some mourned) male nudes had become the sole province of the Prix de Rome and its attendant competitions, the female nude still could represent the cause in highly visible works for exhibition.[17] But color had a special place too. In 1859, for example, Charles Chaplin's *Aurora* (unlocated) was rejected by the Salon jury as too "erotic." A great controversy arose over the picture, which (at least one critic concluded) could not be faulted for its vivid and lifelike color.[18] Of course, sometimes a work offended on all of these counts. Manet's *Olympia* exhibited both crude drawing and a lack of modeling, while its much noted "dirtiness" surely represented another kind of difficulty with the conventional expectations for color. Like Courbet's *Bathers* (Musée Fabre, Montpellier), also described as dirty when it was exhibited in 1853, Manet's painting lacked the particular flesh tone that had come to identify the nude.[19]

Behind this scrutiny of prescribed formal qualities lay fear that the basic challenge of the genre had not been met: to transform the representation of a naked body into a work of art. At issue was not the difference between art and pornography (as some modern historians have argued) but rather the distinction between a study and a fully realized artistic composition. In the view of many critics contemporary paintings of nudes too often remained Academic studies from life. Georges Lafenestre voiced a common complaint when he remarked about exhibited works: "Most of the[se] unclothed women are only poor models, stretched out on their stomachs or backs, on their right or left flanks, in the middle of a Parisian studio, whose tenant shamelessly exposes them in all their miserable imperfection."[20] He went on to say, "These studies from life demonstrate a competence of execution which only makes more shocking the vulgarity of the pose, the vapidity of the expression, the grossness of the conception." In other words, the difficulty presented by these pictures was not political or moral but aesthetic. They lacked what the Academy defined as the purpose of the technical skills. Pose, expression and, most of all, conception, gave meaning to a composition.[21]

At the heart of these nineteenth-century explanations for the failure of contemporary nudes—from *Olympia* to Cabanel's *Birth of Venus*—lay the concept of the ideal. Most extreme was Maxime Du Camp's formulation: "Art should have no more sex than mathematics. . . . What is the Venus de Milo? An admirable statue; one must make an effort to remember that she is a woman." More typical was Paul Mantz's remark that "[A nude should not be] too visibly a woman. . . . To be a writer, you need a bit of style. To be an artist, you need an ideal."[22] Carolus-Duran's *In the Dew* was symptomatic. Despite proficient execution, it lacked the imaginative transformation necessary for true artistic success. "His woman is neither Venus, mother of all beauty, nor *La Source*, emblem of purity . . . She is nothing but your average beautiful woman." Or, as Du Camp explained: "A painter of history takes a naked woman, paints her with some modifications mostly inspired by memories of the Old Masters, and says 'It's Venus!' Not at all. It's a model, and nothing more."[23] Thus, although such a picture inevitably described the sort of woman who posed for artists, her social and economic status was not part of the intended meaning of the work. Instead, it was a symptom of the failure that many found endemic to all ambitious painting of the period: an inability to infuse old pictorial traditions with imaginative vigor.

Despite the importance of the Academy and its vocabulary, professional critics rarely referred to Classical, Renaissance, or even nineteenth-century precedents by name. The dependence of Ingres on earlier nudes seemed no more remarkable than the dependence of Carolus-Duran on Ingres or, for that matter, Manet on Titian. The explanation surely lies in the rigors of formal artistic education.[24] Years of copying plaster casts of Classical nudes and, later, Old Master paintings, as well as live models posed in the same positions, resulted in the internalization of the earlier works. Rather than a collection of discrete models, they became the definition of and the justification for the genre. The explicit art historical source was less important than the aura of age and ambition it imparted to the new work. What mattered was how the artist worked with the necessary forms rather than the creation of those forms. Ingres' nudes, for example, which to us seem near copies of older works, represented the most ambitious of efforts to them.

The ordinary Salon visitors in d'Hervilly's parody engage in quite another kind of discourse. Varieties of embarrassment and unabashed male delight were the mainstay of the humorists. Especially typical is the distinction between a male and a female response—as Daumier vividly described in his cartoon of a couple at the Salon in 1865 (Fig. 4).[25] Like d'Hervilly's father of four girls ("The executioner is a lucky man, the old duffer") or his elegant young man ("Nice legs. You could eat her right up"), Daumier's husband barely can restrain his enthusiasm for the naked behind the nude ("I'll come back by myself!"). One of Bertall's visitors to the Salon of 1874 (a nephew of "the late Monsieur Prudhomme") freely admits that "[without a doubt], Bouguereau's *Charity* pleases me so much because it represents a woman, and a pretty woman." Even more frank was his companion's response to Carolus-Duran's *In the Dew*: "She has Zingggg!"[26] Clearly, any of these men happily would have joined Bertall's breathless male group, crowded around a picture of a bather (Fig. 5). Sometimes even small boys were shown sneaking off to have a look.[27] All of these red-blooded males form a pointed contrast to the embarrassment of d'Hervilly's priest, whose dismay only demonstrates his lack of manhood.

Fig. 6. Honoré Daumier, "This year again Venuses . . . always Venuses! . . . as if there really were women made like that!" From Croquis pris au Salon, published in Le Charivari, May 10, 1865. Delteil 3440.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund.

The female response was portrayed quite differently. In mixed company, women most often appeared as embodiments of societal respectability. Their embarrassment provided a dramatic counterpart to the delight of their companions, as well as emphasizing the sophisticated liberalism of male enjoyment. It was the women who thought of the children ("Come on, girls, there are some pretty flowers over here. Let's go"), or the plight of the depicted woman ("How frightful!" or "What torture to go through, in Stamboul, for a husband as worthless and annoying as mine") or simply propriety ("It seems to me that one might have been able to dress her more appropriately"). Less often, they responded with jealousy ("You're just the same as all the rest—you men. You're interested right away in a woman because she doesn't have any clothes on"). But by themselves, women behaved in another manner. Just as Bertall's and d'Hervilly's male viewers drop all pretense of confronting a work of art when they are alone and appreciate the woman as woman, so Daumier's female viewers also discuss the pictures as just that. Unimpressed by the claims of Art or of Woman, they show a disdain for the lack of realism in these representations (Fig. 6).

Confusion between art and life, especially on the part of male viewers of the nude, was hardly new. Pliny mentioned that the ardent embrace of Praxiteles' Knidean Aphrodite by one enthusiastic admirer left a permanent stain on its marble surface.[28] This story is one of the many that praise the mimesis of Greek art with anecdotes of incredible triumphs of illusion—Zeuxis' painted grapes or Parrhasios' painted curtain.[29] In terms of the nude, however, it is closer to the non-Ovidian versions of the story of Pygmalion, which describe him as only an admirer, not the artist, of the sculpted nude later called Galatea.[30] With the help of Venus, this admirer finds his wish fulfilled as the statue comes alive under his touch.

Although these stories were repeated often during the nineteenth century, they no longer corresponded to current aesthetic ideas. The contemporary embodiment of perfect illusion was the photograph, and competition with its mechanical exactitude certainly was not the path to artistic success. Du Camp, himself an accomplished photographer and a staunch upholder of Academic artistic standards, explained the common view of their relationship: "If the goal [of art is] servile imitation . . . photography is superior to painting." But such an assertion, he made clear, was ridiculous.[31] It was Zeuxis' creation of the image of perfect female beauty from a variety of women rather than his trompe l'oeil grapes that now seemed most appropriate.[32] A particularly striking reflection of this change in attitude is the difference between Ovid's Pygmalion and Balzac's Master Frenhofer. Although Balzac's painter also falls passionately in love with his creation, he is completely unable to make her come alive. In fact, his adoring labors only succeed in destroying her.[33] Balzac's story restates what contemporary critics constantly lamented: the impossibility of living up to the grand traditions.

As dramatic was the change in attitude toward the appropriate response to a work of art. In the nineteenth century, response to subject alone—especially in the case of the nude—was a mark of crude ignorance. Academic training and Academic vocabulary provided the appropriate language for the artist and the connoisseur or critic. This is seen clearly in the parody of bourgeois pretensions, Monsieur Prudhomme. Invented by Henry Monnier, the character took on a life of its own in the work of Daumier and Champfleury, among many others.[34] Champfleury's Prudhomme—even more than d'Hervilly's—plays the role of the would-be connoisseur, filled with grand pronouncements on aesthetic matters. When he looks at an Orientalist nude in the Salon of 1846, he first plays the sophisticated man for whom such things are perfectly acceptable (with the shock of his female companion providing appropriate accompaniment). Then he proclaims the nude model a necessary evil of art.[35] D'Hervilly's Prudhomme clings to his misunderstanding of the subject—bumbling trying to find sense in an incorrect title ("What's? Meeting of the Hunt?") and then proudly conveying clearly irrelevant and incorrect information ("Polygamy is not a hanging matter among the Moslems").

Undoubtedly there were many who resembled Monsieur Prudhomme. The enormous success of Monnier's character suggests that the type was familiar. But the degree to which he represents a nineteenth-century formulation of a long tradition of antibourgeois satire should not be underestimated. This tradition, which had roots in the medieval period, began to assume its modern form in the sixteenth century.[36] By the seventeenth century, such satires included the idea of cultural pretensions as an integral part of bourgeois, especially male, aspirations—as in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. Not until the nineteenth century, however, did the visual arts join music and literature as an important part of these pretensions. In France as well as in England, caricatures of audiences at art exhibitions became common fare and the would-be connoisseur a well-established character.[37] Changing social definitions as well as the disappearance of traditional systems of patronage only gave these parodies more point. As Gautier explained about Prudhomme:

> [He] is the vengeance of Henry Monnier; he revenged himself for the ennui, the vexations, the humiliations, and all the little sufferings that bourgeois cause artists, often unknowingly . . . Despite its extreme verisimilitude, [Prudhomme] is not a reproduction of reality, but a creation.[38]

Despite the claims of some nineteenth-century commentators, Monsieur Prudhomme's words cannot be taken as representative of serious opinions about nudes or sexual proprieties in general. Like the

apocryphal skirts on the legs of a Victorian piano, his responses are notably absent from the historical record. It was not Monsieur Prudhomme, but someone like the prosecutor of *Madame Bovary*, who offered intelligent discussion of the issues.[39] Arguing in the terms of criminal law, Ernest Pinard was forced to oppose art to pornography and defend societal standards of morality. But even he made it clear that the real problem was the definition of art itself. Like Lafenestre on painters (quoted above), the prosecutor found that Flaubert's technical skills made his apparent lack of artistry especially objectionable. "The style Monsieur Flaubert cultivates, and which he achieves without the circumspection but with all the resources of art, is the descriptive style: It is the realistic school of painting." He actually criticized strategems of concealment and deception: "Lascivious details cannot be screened by a moral ending." But the heart of the matter was the question of the ideal. "[Realistic literature] paints [the passions] without restraint, without bounds. Art without rules is no longer art; it is like a woman who throws off all garments."[40] In other words, it is the naked rather than the nude, with the idealism of the latter transforming life into art.

The readiness with which the prosecutor of *Madame Bovary* used the image of the naked and the nude suggests its vitality in nineteenth-century French thought. It also indicates how far we stand from their assumptions. Our own interest in the status of women has led many to group these pictures into a single undifferentiated whole, which is assumed to record social and economic realities of the period. More careful study of the material, however, shows that distinctions must be made among the images.[41] This sensitivity is particularly necessary in the study of the nude, a charged subject which excites in all of us a personal response. Only when historians have charted the whole range of nineteenth-century responses to representations of the female body, discarding inherited caricatures as well as present-day politics, will we be able to define their notions of sexuality. This work has just begun. □

*This article is part of a larger study about the representation of women in nineteenth-century France. I would like to thank the J. Paul Getty Trust and the Institute of Fine Arts for their support of my research. I also would like to thank my husband, Charles Gregor, for his usual good counsel. Unless otherwise indicated, the translations are our own. In those few cases where the particular wording of the original seemed important, I have included the French text in the notes.

1. Kenneth Clark, *The Nude. A Study in Ideal Form* (New York, 1956), is still the most important study of the nude in Western art. See also the essays collected in Linda Nochlin, ed., *Woman as Sex Object, Art News Annual* (New York, 1972), which first considered a variety of issues crucial to nineteenth-century material. Stephen Marcus, *The Other Victorians. A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth Century England* (New York, 1964), esp. 266-86, is one of the few who describes the difference between art and pornography in formal terms. Of more recent literature, see especially Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience. Education of the Senses. Victoria to Freud* (Oxford, 1984), "The Doctrine of Distance," 379-402, and "Bibliographic Essay," esp. 466-9. I heartily concur with his central argument—that we have only begun to understand nineteenth-century notions of sexuality. Gay suggests the interesting idea that much of what is taken for granted today, even by historians, is a caricature created by twentieth-century writers who established their own sexual liberation by oppostion to what (they imagined) had come before. Theodore Zeldin, *France 1848-1945*, esp. *Ambition and Love* (pbk. ed., London, 1979), also stresses the complexity of this material.

2. The most thorough and balanced discussion of the context and controversy of Manet's *Olympia* is Theodore Reff, *Manet: Olympia* (London, 1976). Beatrice Farwell, *Manet and the Nude. A Study in Iconography of the Second Empire* (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 1973; rptd. New York, 1981), includes much interesting material. My disagreement with both the arguments of T.J. Clark and his handling of the historical material in "Preliminaries to a Possible Treament of 'Olympia' in 1865," *Screen*, Spring 1980, 18-41, as well as "Olympia's Choice," Chapter 2, *The Painting of Modern Life, Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers* (New York, 1984) will be clear. For Carpeaux, see Ann Middleton Wagner, *Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, Sculptor of the Second Empire* (New Haven and Longon, 1986), esp. Chapter 6, "Art and Propriety."

3. Quoted in Adolph Tabarant, *La Vie artistique au temps de Baudelaire* (1942; Paris, 1963), 100. Planche: "Le procédé de M. Clésinger est à la statuaire ce que le daguerréotype est à la peinture. Son oeuvre n'a pas le caractère d'une figure modelée, mais bien d'une figure moulée."

4. See Farwell, 42-5, for a discussion of the fashion for portraits of mistresses and wives as nudes in mid-century France. Such identifications were not new, of course. For Renaissance prototypes, see Lynne Lawner, *Lives of the Courtesans. Portraits of the Renaissance* (New York, 1987) as well as Charles Hope's review of the book in *New York Review of Books*, 28 May 1987, 35-7 and Letters, 24 September 1987, 56-8.

5. Louis Leroy's piece originally appeared in *Le Charivari*, 25 April 1874. The French text has been reprinted in full in the French edition of Grand Palais, *Centenaire de l'Impressionisme* (exh. cat., Paris, 1974), 259-61, while an English translation appears in John Rewald, *The History of Impressionism*, 4th ed. (New York, 1973), 318-24.

6. The most complete biographies of d'Hervilly appear in *La Grande Encyclopédie* (Paris, n.d.), vol. 20, "Hervilly," and *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1878), vol. 16, suppl.

7. For basic histories of periodicals during these years, see Roger Bellet, *Presse et Journalisme sous le Second Empire* (Paris, 1967) and Jacques Lethève, *La Caricature et la Presse sous la IIIe République* (Paris, 1961).

8. One such cartoon by Gill appears in the background of Pissarro's portrait of Cézanne, discussed in Theodore Reff, "Pissarro's Portrait of Cézanne," *Burlington Magazine*, 109 (Nov. 1967), 627-33.

9. The fullest account of Beaulieu's life is his obituary in the *Chronique des arts et de la curiosité. Supplément à la Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 14 juin 1884, 191. It calls him "un des plus brilliants élèves de Delacroix," as does D'Hervilly (see below). D'Hervilly had written about Beaulieu at least once before—in 1866, when he published a collection of poems about paintings in the current Salon, including one about Beaulieu's *Le Paria et la Brahmine se recontrent au cimetière* as well as one about Monet's *Camille (L'Artiste*, no. 1, 1866, 206). He also published a humorous short story called "La Vénus d'Anatole" in *Mesdames les Parisiennes* (Paris, 1875), 330-6, about a painter who abandons a picture of Venus because his perfect model becomes pregnant.

10. *L'Illustration*, 63 (1874), 371.

11. For a discussion of the Orientalist picture, see Linda Nochlin's "The Imaginary Orient," *Art in America*, 71 (May 1983), 118-31; 187-91; as well as Donald Rosenthal, *Orientalism: the Near East in French Painting 1800-1880* (exh. cat., Rochester, 1982); Stevens, Mary Anne, ed., *The Orientalists: Delacroix to Matisse, The Allure of North Africa and the Near East* (exh. cat., London, 1984); and Lynne Thornton, *La Femme dans la peinture orientaliste* (Paris, 1985). For a highly polemical but stimulating analysis of the presentation of the Orient in the West, see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978).

12. *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, per. 2, 9 (1874), 516.

13. *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, per. 1, 16 (1864), 508. For a discussion of the distinctive nude that resulted, see L. Dimier, *Histoire de la peinture française aux XIXe siècle (1792-1903)* (Paris, 1914), esp. Chap. 21, "Le Nu Academique et le nouvel Institut" and, more recently, Robert Rosenblum, *Ingres* (New York, 1967), 41-4, and Farwell, 5 and 41-53. Surely this is the context in which to understand the remark Proust claimed Manet made: "Il paraît qu'il faut que je fasse un nu" (quoted Farwell, 28).

14. Arthur Duparc, "Salon de 1874," *Le Correspondent*, May-June 1874, 1086. Funny, sophisticated near-parodies of such descriptions are found in the commentaries to the plates in the series by Armand Silvestre, *Le Nu au Salon*, which began to appear in 1888.

15. Typical was the reaction of Hector de Callias to Baudry's title and reference to a Persian fable: "Personne ne s'est pris à cet innocent artifice; personne n'ouvert Hafiz ou Firdusi, et tout le monde a salué Vénus" (*L'Artiste*, 1863, 210). Typically, one of the few who discussed the question of the nude as allegory was Maxime Du Camp: "Que dirons-nous donc de la figure que M. Baudry expose sous le titre de la Perle et la Vague? Là du moins l'intention du peintre n'est point douteuse; il a fait ce qu'il voulait faire, et ce qu'il a cherché, nous n'avons pas à l'expliquer ici. Allégoriser une vague n'est pas une chose facile . . . " (*Revue des Deux-Mondes*, 45 [1863], 905).

16. For an impressively thorough list of Second Empire Salon criticism, see Christopher Parsons and Martha Ward. Although invaluable, it gives no sense of relative importance among the critics and publications. For one nineteenth-century view of the matter, see the sharp and funny characterization of the leading critics in 1873 in *L'Artiste*, XLIVe année [1873], 95-105).

17. See, for example, Marc de Montifaud's Salon review in 1873: "C'est toujours en elles [les figures nues] qu'on s'efforce de retrouver, à chaque concours annuel, les tentatives de restauration de la ligne" (*L'Artiste*, XLIVe année [1873], 271); and Léon Lagrange in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, per. 1, 16 (1864), 512.

18. "Ils avaient admis les traductions les plus libres de *Rolla* d'Alfred de Musset . . . Ils avaient laissé passer des *Psyché* vêtues d'un tout petit nuage d'encens . . . Par une innovation sans précédent, je pense, c'était la couleur qui avait semblé trop vivante" (*Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, per. 1, 6 [1860], 372-3).

19. For Courbet's painting, see Cham's caricature of it in *Albums comiques. Revue du Salon de 1853* (Paris, 1853), n.p. The caption reads: "Femme de 45 ans sur le point de se laver pour la première fois de sa vie, dans l'espoir d'apporter un soulagement a ses varices." For extensive quotations from the reviews of *Olympia*, often given in French, see Clark's notes, 181-91.

20. *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, per. 2, 7 (1873), 490.

21. The best account of these Academic terms is still Rensselaer W. Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis: the Humanistic Theory of Painting* (1945; New York, 1967).

22. *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, 45 (1863), 903; and *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, per. 1, 2 (1859), 284.

23. *L'Illustration*, 63 (1874), 370; and *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, 45 (1863), 892–3.
24. The fullest account of Academic training is still Albert Boime, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1971). Philippe Grunchec, *Le Grand Prix de Peinture. Les concours des Prix de Rome de 1797 à 1863* (exh. cat., Paris, 1983) provides invaluable information about an indispensable part of the process.
25. Interestingly, this distinction rarely appears in contemporary reviews. One exception is Hector de Callias' review of the Salon in 1863: "Les hommes aiment mieux la Vénus de M. Cabanel et les femmes la Vénus de M. Baudry. C'est que la Vénus de M. Baudry est une jolie femme et la Vénus de M. Cabanel une femme d'une beauté désespérante, depuis la tête jusqu'au bout des ongles roses de ses orteils recourbés" (*L'Artiste*, no. 1, 1863, 213).
26. Bertall, *La Comédie de Notre Temps* (Paris, 1875), 328 and 376.
27. See, for example, Cham's cartoon *Albums comiques de Cham. Revue de Salon de 1853* (Paris, 1853), n.p., which shows a father discovering his son in front of Winterhalter's *Florinde*. The caption reads: "Ah! drôle, je t'y prends encore devant la Florinde, quand tu sais que je t'ai défendu de regarder des polissonneries!" Of course, children also could be voices of innocence.
28. Reprinted in translation in J.J. Pollitt, *The Art of Greece 1400–31 BC, Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1965), 128.
29. The story, from Pliny, is in Pollitt, 155.
30. H.J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Mythology* (New York, 1959), 340A.
31. Of course, Du Camp saw this as part of a larger decline: "Ce que nous voyons aujourd'hui, c'est-à-dire l'abandon du dessin pour la couleur, de la tradition pour la fantaisie, de l'étude pour le laisser-aller, et que la nature servirait de modèle au lieu de nêtre qu'un document" (*Revue des Deux-Mondes*, 45 [1863], 888).
32. For Zeuxis' search for female beauty, see Pollitt, 156.
33. Honoré Balzac, *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu*, first published in *L'Artiste* in 1831 and then again, revised and expanded, in 1837. For a discussion of Balzac's revisions, see Charles Rosen, "Romantic Originals," *New York Review of Books*, 17 December 1987, 22–31.
34. For a history of Joseph Prudhomme, as well as his relation to his creator, see J.F. Schnerb, "Henry Monnier et Joseph Prudhomme," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 44th year, 27 (June 1902), 489–99. Art critics sometimes "quoted" Prudhomme. See, for example, Charles Blanc, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, per. 1, 20 (1866), 512; and Paul Mantz, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, per. 1, 22 (1867), 513.
35. Champfleury, *Contes vieux et nouveaux* (Paris, 1852), "M. Prudhomme au Salon," 205–23 (orig. publ. 1846), 215: "C'est mal pour un bien; il n'y a pas de peinture possible sans cela."
36. Jean Alter, *Les Origines de la satire anti-bourgeoise en France*, esp. vol. 2, *L'Esprit antibourgeois sous l'ancien régime. Littérature et tensions sociales aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Geneva, 1970).
37. This material has been surprisingly neglected by art historians. I discuss the British developments in *J.M.W. Turner and the Critics of His Time* (forthcoming).
38. Theophile Gautier, *Portraits contemporains*, 5th ed. (Paris, 1886), "Henry Monnier," 36 (orig. publ. 1855). A recent analysis of the complicated relationship between Bohemia and its bourgeois audiences is Jerrold Seigel, *Bohemian Paris, Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830–1930* (New York, 1986), esp. Chap. 1.
39. Reprinted in most editions of *Madame Bovary*. I have used the English translation by Evelyn Gendel (New York, 1964).
40. Flaubert, 343; 345; and 347.
41. See, for example, Maurice Aqulhon, "Un usage de la femme au XIXe siècle: l'allégorie de la République," in *Mythes et représentations de la femme au dix-neuvième siècle*, double issue, *Romantisme, revue du dix-neuvième siècle*, 13–4 (1977), 143–52. Various attempts to relate image to societal place are in Clarissa Atkinson, et. al., ed., *Immaculate and Powerful. The Female in Sacred Image and Social Reality* (Boston, 1985).

APPENDIX: AU SALON—DEVANT UNE NUDITE

La nudité en question est un tableau d'Anatole de Beaulieu, le rutilant élève de Delacroix. Il représente une jeune femme, entièrement dépouillée de ses vêtements, et liée à un pilori par les poignets et par les chevilles. La scène se passe dans un décor vaguement turc où ruissellent toutes les couleurs du prisme oriental. A côté de la belle créature, qui se tord d'une façon très agréable—pour le spectateur—sont accrochées un tas de choses terribles, entre autres, le crâne grimaçant d'un décapité quelconque.

Le livret donne sur ce tableau l'explication suivante:

100.—*Femme adultère exposée au pilori pour être vendue ou jetée au Bosphore.—Ancien Stamboul.*

C'est en face de cette toile louable que je m'etais assis, après avoir arpenté les quelques kilomètres de peinture que renferme l'exposition des Champs-Élysées.

Devant moi, à chaque minute, s'arrêtaient des visiteurs, cloués sur place par la vue de la *nudité* de Beaulieu, et ce sont leurs réflexions, que j'ai notées, que je vous donne ici.

MONSIEUR PRUDHOMME ET SON ÉPOUSE

MONSIEUR.—Oh!—voilà une dame qui me semble dans une triste position.—Voyons donc ce que ça représente.

MADAME.—Oh! l'horreur!—Il faut être bien commun pour faire de ces atrocités-la! Cherchez cela dans le livret, monsieur Prudhomme.

MONSIEUR.—M'y voilà, ma bonne ... Bon! j'y suis. C'est cela ... *Rendez-vous de chasse, en forêt* ... Comment! rendez-vous de chasse? Rendez-vous pour les corbeaux, alors ... je ne saisais pas la pensée de l'artiste.

MADAME.—Qu'est-ce que vous dites?—Mais vous cherchez au no. 200. C'est le 100 qu'il faut voir!

MONSIEUR.—C'est juste! Je me disais aussi ... c'est cela. C'est le portrait d'une créature qui a manqué à tous ces devoirs, en Turquie. Elle est à vendre ou à jeter au Bosphore.

MADAME.—Oh! c'est affreux.

MONSIEUR.—Remarquez, madame Prudhomme, combien les artistes sont ignorants! La polygamie n'est pas un cas pendable chez les musulmans, c'est connu. Et voilà comment un peintre qui nous montre le contraire! Et voilà comment on peint l'histoire!

MADAME.—Allons-nous-en. Je n'aime pas ces plaisanteries de rapin.

(Ils s'éloignent.)

Arrivent un monsieur et une dame, tous deux jeunes et très-élégants. Ils n'ont pas l'air d'être plus mariés que le grand Turc et la République de Venise.

LE MONSIEUR.—Supplice d'une adultère. Pas mal, la coupable! Jolies jambes. On en mangerait.

LA DAME, avec une petite moue.—Vous trouvez.—Elle a des chevilles engorgées à faire peur.

LE MONSIEUR.—Dame, elles sont liées par des lacets, et le sang les gonfle. Mais elle est bien tout de même.

LA DAME.—Alors, une créature comme celle-là vous plairait?

LE MONSIEUR.—Je ne dis pas cela. Mais je....

LA DAME.—C'est bon. Vous êtes bien tous les mêmes, vous autres, messieurs. Vous vous intéressez tout de suite à une femme, parce qu'elle n'a pas de chemise. Moi, je la trouve affreuse et mal faite. Venez plûtot voir ce joli paysage, là-bas. Il est charmant.

LE MONSIEUR.—Allons, vous n'aimez pas les odalisques!

(Ils s'éloignent).

Passant quatre demoiselles et leurs parents.

LES DEMOISELLES. (Elles parlent bas entre elles et rient en dessous.)

LA MÈRE, après avoir feuilleté le catalogue.—C'est le portrait d'une ... martyre turque. On aurait pu la vêtir plus convenablement, ce me semble. Allons voir autre chose.

LE PÈRE.—Oh! c'est une martyre? (À mi-voix). Le bourreau n'est pas malheureux, mazette!

LA MÈRE.—Taisez-vous donc, Stanislas! (Aux jeunes filles)—Tenez, mesdemoiselles, voilà de jolies fleurs de ce côté. Venez-vous?

(La famille s'éloigne).

UN MONSIEUR ET UN OFFICIER

L'OFFICIER.—Sacrébleu. Elle n'est pas à la noce, la pauvre Kadoudja!

LE MONSIEUR.—Elle n'y est que pour l'avoir trop faite, la noce ... Jolies jambes. Beau torse.

L'OFFICIER.—(Il ouvre le livret, cherche et lit.) Ah! ça se passait dans le vieux Stamboul. J'espère bien qu'on n'accroche plus comme ça une pauvre petite chatte maintenant?

LE MONSIEUR.—Tout l'indique.

(Ils passent.)

UN COLLÉGIEN

Il regarde longuement le beau corps si cruellement traité, au ouvrant des yeux pleins d'une émotion sincère. Mais il est tiré de sa contemplation par l'arrivée d'un monsieur et d'une dame. Il leur cède la place, et file, non sans avoir jeté à la dame en question, qui est jolie, un regard brûlant.

LE MONSIEUR ET LA DAME

LE MONSIEUR.—C'est une adultère, Fanny.

LA DAME, rêveuse.—Ah! ...

LE MONSIEUR.—Oui, ma bonne. À Stamboul, on jetait les adultères au Bosphore, dans un sac où il y avait des chats.

LA DAME, plus rêveuse que jamais.—Ah!

LE MONSIEUR, riant.—Une supposition. Je serais Turc et tu me tromperais; eh bien! je serais forcé de te coudre dans un sac et d'aller te flanquer dans l'eau, à la Corne d'Or. La Corne d'Or! hein! Quel mot fatidique, pour un mari musulman?

LA DAME, avec une sourire contraint.—Ah!

LE MONSIEUR.—C'est comme je te le dis. Mais nous sommes à Paris. Je suis Français, et tu es....

LA DAME, impatientée.—Allons-nous-en....

Ils s'éloignent. Et si on pouvait lire dans l'âme de cette femme devant laquelle un mari vient de plaisanter d'une façon si lourde, on y verrait ceci:—Quel supplice ferait-on subir, à Stamboul, à un homme aussi nul et aussi agaçant que non mari, le malheureux! S'il savait! ... Le pauvre être! ...

Ensuite arrive un ecclésiastique myope.

Il regarde, sans y voir grand'chose tout d'abord, le tableau de Beaulieu, puis il s'aperçoit enfin qu'il a sous les yeux une femme absolument nue, et il se hâte de passer son chemin. Pour dissimuler son embarras, il se mouche avec fracas.

Après le prêtre, un vieux critique, le crayon à la bouche, se plante devant l'adultère mahométane et murmure:—Romantique! Encore un romantique! On ne sait plus faire la rotule. Le ventre est très-plat, la gorge trop rose. Ce n'est pas ça. Pas de galbe. Il faut en finir avec ces coloristes! Du bleu, du vert, du rouge! des silhouettes! Pas une ligne! pas de modèle. Pouah!

(Il s'enfuit en crachant.)

Et comme je me dispose à mon tour à m'en aller, le gardien de la salle s'approche de moi et me dit:—Faut-il que les peintres aient peu de coeur pour venir ici se faire dire toutes les stupidités que j'entends débiter sur leur compte, pendant un mois.

Et je trouve rien à répondre au gardien.

ERNEST D'HERVILLY.