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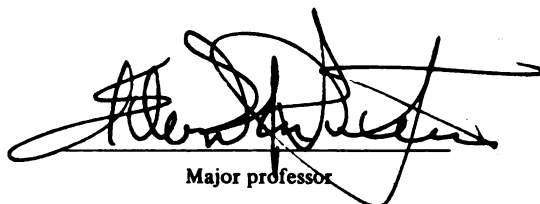
THE IMAGE OF THE CAT
AND IT'S SIGNIFICANCE AND INTERPRETATION
IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH ART AND LITERATURE

presented by

CHRISTINA R. RYBICKI

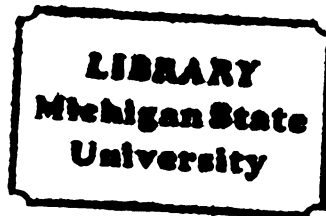
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IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH ART AND LITERATURE

By

Christina R. Rybicki

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ABSTRACT

THE IMAGE OF THE CAT AND IT'S SIGNIFICANCE AND INTERPRETATION IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH ART AND LITERATURE

By

Christina R. Rybicki

Historically the cat has been exploited as a symbol varying from the positive and fertile to the evil and perverse. This paper examines the nature of the image of the cat in nineteenth-century French culture by tracing its symbolic history, and analyzing the variables which led to the formation of its association with the image of the contemporary prostitute. The discussion appears within the framework of a historical and socio-cultural profile of nineteenth-century France, and a consideration the impact that the poetry of Charles Baudelaire had on the rest of France's artistic avant-garde. The underlying social and moral implications of industrialization and the advent of mass consumption in the second half of the century incited the need of the avant-garde to define the Modern Era with their imagery. One of the key works for this is Manet's Olympia which includes a black cat at her feet. This deciphering of the symbolic meaning of the modern image of the cat focuses primarily on the works of Baudelaire and Manet.

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1992

To my mother
Clarice Ann Rybicki
my father Stephen Albert Rybicki
and my husband Robert Thomas Kler

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INTRODUCTION

Fascination with the image of the prostitute and its association to the cat in nineteenth-century France left us with a mesh of curious parallels and exchanges among those of the artistic avant-garde. The poet Charles Baudelaire was a common thread in the fabric of this phenomenon. An observer of contemporary metropolitan life, Baudelaire thought the prostitute to be, "...the most typical figure of urban modernity,..." and coupled her essence with the image of the cat in his poetry.¹ But what causes determined the poet's vision of the prostitute as the embodiment of modernity? Why did so many artists after Baudelaire choose to employ the motifs of modern prostitution and cats? My purpose is to explain the reasons behind the use of these images. And in doing so, I will discuss the position of women, particularly those of the lower classes, during the later half of nineteenth-century France in a social and historical context, and provide a general symbolic history for the cat. This will be essential to the understanding of artists' preoccupation with the representation of the prostitute and the cat, their connections to one another, and the significance of their inclusion in the art of

the time.

In describing a social climate which allowed acceptance of these images, my analysis will also involve a recurrent theme of the gaze in a male dominated society: the ways in which the male as viewer has objectified the female body. I will show that there were two main consequences to the gaze. The first consequence was the objectification of women, and the second was men's achievement of a sense of control over female sexuality. How this relates to my central purpose will be explained through a selection of pictorial and literary examples where cats and prostitutes appear. I will discuss what the male viewer's relationship was with the works.

I have included in the examples Edouard Manet's painting Olympia. This work requires attention as it is one of the earliest, and one of the most potent in a stream of paintings from nineteenth-century France with affinities to Baudelairian imagery. And it is a synthesis of the main components of my argument. Olympia served as a hinge for the direction of avant-garde painting. The outcome was that others followed with works revealing a distinct dichotomy between the domestic and therefore moral woman, and the sexually deviant and immoral working woman or prostitute. At the same time images of prostitutes and cats were accruing new meanings. These changes in thought towards women, and their influence on the arts

were neither instantaneous nor completely linear. But clearly after Olympia, when women were depicted as virginal or as Mary, the cat as a domestic pet seldom found its way into such images. However, when something sleek, mysterious and evil, or even perverse was called for to enhance the meaning of a temptress, the inclusion was more likely. Together Manet's Olympia and Baudelaire's imagery form the foundation for a study of the image the cat of the nineteenth century.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND MASS CONSUMPTION

The beginning of the industrial revolution and the arrival of mass consumption plunged the people of nineteenth-century France into an age of transition. Its economic rearrangement of society and its dramatic increase of goods impacted all aspects of everyday life. Previously only the upper class could afford the luxury of shopping the stores. For the first time merchandise was sold in mass quantities with endless supplies of new products. And this new mode of consumption was paid for with cash or credit, which prior to this time would have been unheard of. Prior to this most people had obtained their goods through barter or self-production.² But the implications of mass consumption reached far beyond the economic realm, morals were tested as well. Actually, the two were closely linked:

"Where there is no freedom, there is no moral dilemma. But now, for the first time in history, many people have considerable choice in what to consume, how, and how much, and in addition have the leisure, education, and health to ponder these questions. The consumer revolution brought both the opportunity and the need to reassess values, but this reassessment has been incomplete and only partly conscious. While the unprecedented expansion of goods and time has obvious blessings, it has also brought a weight remorse and guilt, craving and envy, anxiety, and above all, uneasy

conscience, as we sense that we have to much,
yet we keep wanting more."³

Consumerism created insatiable appetites not only in the area of money, but also in the area of love. Social traditions of the past were challenged by new ways of thinking about the differences of the sexes. A dichotomous perception of female sexuality developed, and the lines between what characterized a decent woman and what did not was less clear than ever before. There was a definitive split, opposites within the feminine nature, on which a woman could be judged either decent or indecent, respectable or deviant, moral or amoral, a wife or a prostitute or loose woman.⁴

In the later half of the nineteenth-century French artists' depictions of women ranged from family themes, nostalgic looks back to when women's roles were simpler, to more current themes like the sudden preoccupation with fashion where well dressed women were now used to advertise anything and everything to keep up with demands of mass consumption. Yet at the same time, women were represented as diseased and perverse figures who could cause men both physical and mental harm.⁵ Dating more recently back to the sixteenth century, but as far back as ancient Rome, women were identified as the sole carriers of syphilis.⁶ This type of reasoning gave use to gynophobia. "Les filles de joie" took on a sinister dimension. Representations of prostitutes were being

formed out of a growing awareness of the rise in number of those in the practice and the government's inability to control the increases. The regulation and control of prostitution involved registering them. But, by the 1880's according to Hollis Clayson, "...the number of registered prostitutes reached an all-time low, and the collapse of the system appeared imminent."⁷ It seemed that the battle against immorality was being lost:

"Through their illegal work in the expanding covert sexual economy, it appeared that prostitutes were responsible for altering the quality of social life. Indeed, it appeared that, thanks to them, social life was turning into economic life. At the same time, women's behavior seemed less governable and female morality seemed less stable than ever before. The question 'Is she or isn't she?' became a commonplace obsession of Parisian men and women."⁸

Scenes portraying the lifestyles of prostitutes were being made for both private and public consumption. Edgar Degas produced brothel scenes but kept them largely for his personal use, while Henri Toulouse-Lautrec and others made their images of prostitutes for public consumption. There was in the nineteenth century a further distinction made between prostitutes and courtesans and this was especially explicit by the beginning of the Second Empire in 1852:

"More than a prostitute but less than a mistress, the courtesan advocated love for material gain. Women who functioned in this role had liaisons with some of the leading figures of the day. Their life-styles depended upon the success of the men close to Napoleon III. Edouard

Manet's Olympia became a symbol of heated discussion not only because of the way it was painted but because it symbolized the decadence of the Imperial court where the prostitute had been raised to a position of honor, as courtesan, equalling the goddesses of the past."⁹

This theme in nineteenth-century art reveals both the idealization and repression of women at the same time. As the English philosopher John Stuart Mill noted, "Unlike other oppressed groups or castes, men demand of (women) not only submission but unqualified affection as well."¹⁰ The paradox thrived in nineteenth-century French culture: for most the ideal was the housewife, but by attaining the ideal, women sent their husbands into the arms of prostitutes.

So what did the poet Charles Baudelaire find in the image of the contemporary prostitute that made her characteristic of modern life? For Baudelaire:

"...(the prostitute) is the living embodiment of the cold cash nexus but is ambiguous, evanescent, and transient as well- a conceptualization at the center of (his) thinking about the culture of his day. In the characteristically guarded yet actively scrutinizing glance of the prostitute, (he) saw condensed the typical gaze of the modern Parisian. 'Her eyes, like those of a wild animal, are fixed on the distant horizon; they have the restlessness of a wild animal...but sometimes also the animal's tense vigilance.'"¹¹

New social relations in the form of the commodity and the moral implications of mass consumption for relations between the sexes were two of the main forces behind the appeal of the image of the prostitute to Baudelaire

and the nineteenth-century avant-gardists. Understanding the attitudes towards women during this time allows for the interpretation of the prevalence of and the meaning behind the prostitute in art:

"In the modern period men have relentlessly sexualized women, and markedly so, in the artistic representations of women that circulated in nineteenth-century Paris. The treatment of- one might prefer to say scapegoating of- prostitutes deserves therefore to be understood as a subset of the treatment that women received in general. For the prostitute- that quintessentially sexualized and objectified woman- is emblematic of the place of women in the dominant regime of visual representation in the West in the modern period."¹²

Now that the question of why Baudelaire declared the contemporary prostitute "the most typical figure of urban modernity" has been answered, there remains the issue of his attraction to the image of the cat. But first the origins of its symbolism must be dealt with. The next chapter will provide an overview of the predecessors to Baudelaire's cats and the roles the image played up to the nineteenth century.

SYMBOLIC HISTORY OF THE CAT

The selection of paintings in this section are but a very small sample from a large body of works prior to the nineteenth century in which cats are represented. Those discussed here have not been singled out for their importance, but rather note the beginnings of associations developed in this study and offer support for the idea that the cat has held a fascination from one of the earliest cultures into modern times with a curiously consistent and simultaneous association with the combination of women and evil. Where women are portrayed as evil, the greater is the likelihood of the presence of the cat to underscore her nature.

The history of the cat begins in Egypt as early as 3000 B.C. . In her study of art and Decadence, Camille Paglia writes, "One of the most misunderstood features of Egyptian life was the veneration of cats." It is her theory that, "...the cat was the model for Egypt's unique synthesis of principles. Through the cat, Egypt defined and refined its complex aesthetic. The west's eye-intense pagan line begins in Egypt, as does the hard persona of art and politics."¹³ The Ancient Egyptians worshipped deities they called Baset, Bast, Ament, Maau,

Sekhet, and Tefnut. Cats were considered earth-animals, and Baset symbolizing an earth-mother-goddess was represented in the form of the head of a cat on the body of a woman. The animal was so sacred to them that Egyptian law maintained that any individual caught harming or killing a cat committed a crime that was punishable by death.¹⁴

Descendants from the North African wildcat *Felis lybica*, the modern cat was the last animal domesticated by man.¹⁵ Paglia makes her observations on the intrinsicalities of the modern cat:

"Sleeping up to twenty of every twenty-four hours, cats reconstruct and inhabit the primitive night-world. The cat is telepathic - or at least thinks that it is. Many people are unnerved by its cool stare. Cats are both amoral and immoral, consciously breaking the rules. Their evil look at such times is no human projection; the cat may be the only animal who savors the perverse or reflects upon it. It(the cat) is eye-intense. Fashionably it loves to see and be seen. It is a narcissist, always adjusting its appearance. Haughty, solitary, precise, they are arbiters of elegance - that principle I find natively Egyptian."¹⁶

In the Middle Ages the Catholic Church condemned cats as a pagan symbol of the occult. They associated cats with the supernatural, the devil, and witchcraft.¹⁷ Cats were a symbol of evil. It was thought that witches inhabited the bodies of cats to spread mental and physical disease. Because of this, cats were killed by the hundreds of thousands during the Middle Ages and nearly became

extinct.

In the history of painting, the cat appears in such Renaissance works as Domenico Ghirlandaio's fresco of The Last Supper (Figure 1) of 1481, at the convent of San Marco in Florence. At first glance, this seems to be a charming touch, but placed as it is alongside Judas it continues the Medieval association of the cat as a symbol of evil and death that here plays a prophetic role in relation to Judas.¹⁸

In Giovanni Lanfranco's intriguing painting Naked Man Playing with a Cat in Bed (Figure 2) of 1620, a young man with a smirk, lying in bed almost completely naked, plays with a cat. The intent is clearly erotic, with the feline as a symbolic substitute for a woman who, if included, would have made the image blatantly lascivious.

While previous artists occasionally drew upon the imagery of the cat, the Swiss artist Gottfried Mind (1768-1814), who came to be called "the Raphael of cats", was obsessed with painting the feline. He produced an engraving after David Teniers the Younger's The Monkeys of the Guard Corps. Teniers' peculiar picture shows a band of military monkeys smoking, chattering, and playing cards. The door to their room has just been let open to reveal a cat in a striped shirt having just been arrested by two guards as a spy. Mind's cat is dressed in a blouse and skirt, a cat that historians have assessed as a female

of easy virtue.¹⁹ Another related painting depicts two cats that have been brought to court by monkeys. These scenes are both satirical and moralistic, and in them, "it falls to the monkeys, little mock-men, to impose order in a land where, yet again, the cat signifies trouble and perturbation."²⁰

A contemporary of Mind's Francisco Goya included three villanous looking cats in his Portrait of Don Manuel Osorio Manrique de Zuniga (Figure 3) of 1788, and these have been described by Elisabeth Foucart Walter and Pierre Rosenberg as:

"Three stout cats fixedly eye a magpie held on a string by the little boy. Goya painted cats only rarely; these are rightly among the most famous in all of art. Does the bird represent the soul threatened by the Devil? The painting may depict the fragile world of childhood threatened by the forces of Evil. We do not know whether Goya consciously intended that any meaning be read into the work. The three felines are observed with penetration and humor. With consummate psychological insight, Goya has captured the cats' cruel expectation, their careful concentration, their frustrated gluttony and mistrustful complicity. One feels that the painter harbored no great sympathy for them."²¹

Yet another interpretation is that the little Don Manuel is not all innocence, but he is the one who parades his pet bird on a string before the cats. Perhaps the boy serves Goya as an insightful interpretation of childhood, where innocence covers perversity. The cats' purpose therefore, is to reveal the evil in him.

There has been maintained a long standing tradition

of the cat as a symbol of mystery and evil. Its image first played a counterpart to women in Ancient Egypt in the deity they called Baset. Since that time there has not been a more striking appearance of the association of the image of the cat and women in art until nineteenth-century France. It was a time when women were viewed in terms of either/or; a Mary or a whore. And the artists of the avant-garde led by Baudelaire and Manet depicted the evil and perverse side to this dichotomy in women's roles by using the cat's symbolic baggage to emphasize their meaning.

SOURCES FOR THE IMAGERY IN MANET'S OLYMPIA

Having established a historical and social background for the symbolic meanings behind the images of the prostitute and the cat in nineteenth-century France, the key sources for the imagery of Manet's Olympia (Figure 4) can be investigated. Poet and critic Charles Baudelaire's first edition of Les Fleurs du Mal published in 1857 contains several lurid poems pertaining to cats (Appendix). They appeared as highly sexualized creatures indifferent to the moral standards of the bourgeois. Baudelaire wasn't the only artist to achieve recognition through scandal. Manet's Olympia shocked its audience when first exhibited in the Salon of 1865. The cat was not the primary focus of the painting, but its inclusion contributed to the picture's unsettling message. By this time French society developed a conceptualization about female sexuality such that the images of the cats were interchangeable with images of the modern woman, both had the potential to be domestic companions and at the same time the embodiments of evil. Historically, women have been portrayed in the extreme as either virgin or whore. Therefore, the cat's role in the later half of nineteenth-century French art will carry shades of

meaning drawn from these two extremes.

Manet was influenced by his contemporary and friend Baudelaire, and in particular by the views expressed in such works as Les Fleurs du Mal. Examination of Manet's Olympia appears to be nearly exhausted if one looks at a bibliography dealing with this work.²² Completed in 1863 and submitted and accepted to the Salon in 1865, it caused a sensation. It has been described as: "A revelation of the significance of prostitution in Paris, and as the first modern painting, important rather for its style, the flattening of the composition, and above all for the structuring of the picture in terms of the patterning of shapes rather than by the construction of objects in space."²³ Manet's contemporary audience was less offeneded by Olympia's style than by its subject: a black servant presenting an armful of flowers to a confrontational prostitute decorated with a large, red blossom behind one ear, a bracelet, necklace, earrings, and satin slippers, shamelessly spread out before the viewer, and at her feet a black cat.

Heather McPherson in her "Manet: Reclining Women of Virtue and Vice", explores the "ambiguous connotations" of reclining women in Manet's work, paying special attention to their facial expressions and recumbant positions upon their sofas. It is her contention that women depicted reclining are almost always perceived as women of little

modesty. The reclining woman was hardly Manet's invention. The image can be found deep in the past - Giorgione, Titian, Rubens, Velasquez, Rembrandt, and Goya. Even these were preceded by works by the ancient Greeks, as is exemplified by the reclining woman who is commonly identified as one of the three Fates found on the east pediment of the Parthenon.²⁴

McPherson states that although reclining figures were typically passive, Manet's were depicted very much engaged with their audiences. She cites two other reclining paintings by him from early in his career, the Maitresse de Baudelaire and Jeune femme couchée en costume espagnol, both 1862. Of them she writes, "Both Jeanne Duval (Baudelaire's mistress), and the Jeune femme couchée stare out directly and fixedly at the viewer and challenge traditional stereotyping in the portrayal of women. Each figure is shown reclining, yet neither conveys a passive or decorous image of repose."²⁵ Their body language also suggests their lack of virtue, as the author further explores the Jeune femme couchée (Figure 5): "Her body is slightly twisted, her right hand gestures self-consciously over her head, her left grasps the canape in a movement that echoes the cat toying with the orange. This parallel emphasizes the cocotte's predatory nature."²⁶ This "playful" game that the cat engages in with a ball of yarn, or in this case an orange, is in fact an acting

out of its predatory instincts which have at their root killing and devouring - an instinctual hunger. Its superficial innocence here can be deciphered to imply its opposite, but the image of the courtesan Olympia and her cat leave little doubt about her nature. Olympia's courtesan image is accentuated by the hissing, black cat at the foot of her bed. It appears that even Manet's contemporaries recognized the cat's importance, for the cartoonists who spoofed Olympia exaggerated the cat giving it a significance equal to its recognized meaning (Figures 6 & 7).

T.J. Clark is one of the modern scholars who bases his interpretation of Olympia on the premise that the courtesan was the fundamental image of modernity. And under the guise of courtesan the prostitute comes to symbolize the developing "consumer culture." And as such, she was a mirror to the "money-hungry businessman."²⁷ Clark's view lends support to the theories behind the symbolism of the images of the contemporary prostitute discussed in the first chapter, linking her to the circumstances surrounding the industrial revolution and mass consumption. He also follows Baudelaire in proclaiming the prostitute the "fundamental image of modernity."

George Mauner also explores the meanings behind Manet's cat in his Manet Peintre-Philosophe. He offers an extensive analysis of the image and its sources.

In doing so he draws numerous connections between the artist and Baudelaire noting, "that seeing Olympia as 'Baudelarian' has become a commonplace."²⁸

By choosing to borrow from Titian's Venus of Urbino (Figure 8) 1583, Manet proved that modern artists could draw from the past and still successfully render a modern painting, in answer to Baudelaire's essay on the painter of modern life.²⁹ The women's poses are virtually the same, but Olympia's gaze is directed at the viewer/visitor, the women at the hope-chest are replaced by the black woman presenting her with flowers, and most importantly, instead of the dog present to verify the woman's faithfulness there is the black cat staring at the audience like its mistress with its back arched to emphasize its promiscuity.

A multitude of correlations between Olympia and Baudelaire's poetry has been well established.³⁰ In his "Le Desir de peindre," Baudelaire introduces the idea of the "lunar woman," where once again woman is both beautiful and dangerous:

"I would compare her to a black sun, if one could conceive of a black star shedding light and happiness. But it is the moon she leads one to dream of more readily, the moon that has probably touched her with its dangerous influence; not the white moon of the idylls who resembles a cold bride, but a sinister and intoxicating moon, suspended in the depths of a stormy night and swept by the driven clouds; not the peaceful and discreet moon that visits the sleep of pure men, but the moon torn from the sky, conquered and revolted, that the witches

of Thessaly force harshly to dance upon the terrified grass."³¹

The poet further develops these images in "Les Bienfaits de la lune." The moon creates woman, and says to her:

"You shall be beautiful in my manner. You shall love what I love: the water, the clouds, the silence and the night; the vast green sea; monstrous flowers; the perfumes that drive men wild; the cats that swoon upon pianos and moan like women with hoarse, sweet voices."³²

While it was hardly possible for the artist to paint a moon into his composition, he was able to introduce its idea with the "most lunar of all creatures", the cat and the black servant.³³

Not to be overlooked, is that though Olympia was painted in 1863, the addition of the cat was a later consideration by Manet. It is likely that Baudelaire saw Olympia without the cat while he was living in Paris that same year. In 1864 he left for Belgium. The following year he wrote to Manet after being informed of the finished Olympia by a friend who had seen it. The letter's description of the painting "the naked woman with the negress and the cat (is it really a cat?)," displays what must have been the poet's delight at Manet's selection for the replacement of Titian's dog.³⁴ Baudelaire's asking his friend, "is it really a cat?," suggests both his surprise and admiration for Manet's use of the cat.

Of course the cat relates to Baudelaire's poetry,

but another interesting aspect was Gustave Moreau's exhibition of his Oedipus and the Sphinx (Figure 9) in the Salon of 1864. This painting, generally considered the best in the exhibit, showed the sphinx having leapt cat-like onto Oedipus' chest. The threat here is that the attack and the attacker is a mysterious conglomerate that symbolizes an amoral nature in opposition to the rational male presence. A critic of the day and personal friend to the artist, Ernest Chesneau wrote of Moreau's sphinx: "She is young and blond, and if I may make so bold to say so, her very pure beauty is more modern than antique, after the fashion of today's studies of the female nude."³⁵ Baudelaire's women were also a blend of antiquity and the modern: "(Women's) beauty is 'a sphinx' against whose stone breast every man bruises himself;... She is a 'monster enormous, frightful.' The sphinx Jeanne Duval, Baudelaire's obsession,... is a 'beast implacable and cruel'; her cold cat gaze 'cuts and splits like a dart.' She is an 'inhuman Amazon.'"³⁶ The antique symbolism of Moreau's sphinx may well have struck a chord with Manet, who saw in it a clue as to what would make a point for him, but at the same time taking a jab at the traditional view. Baudelaire's cat held the answer.

In the conclusion to his poem "Les Bienfaits de la lune," Baudelaire expresses the idea of the femme

fatale and the duality of her nature, calling her "that poisonous nurse"- a healer and giver of life, and a destroyer:

"And that is why, dear child, accursed and spoiled, I lie now at your feet, seeking in all your being the reflection of that dangerous divinity, that fateful₃₇ godmother, that poisonous nurse of all lunatics.

Clearly the inclusion of the cat in Manet's painting gives rise to a rich and varied interpretation. But what of nineteenth-century French art which included cats before Olympia? And what about the influences of this art on Baudelaire? In order to give a fuller art historical context to understand the positions held by Baudelaire and Manet in the nineteenth century, a discussion of the art before and of their time is warranted.

LATE ROMANTIC AND REALIST IMAGES OF THE CAT

During the late Romantic and Realist art movements that preceeded the work of Manet and Baudelaire, other artists made parallels between woman and her likeness to the cat. While the give and take between Manet and Baudelaire create the fulcrum for the study of the symbolism of the cat in nineteenth-century France, some of their contemporaries were also experimenting with the images of women and cats. They cannot be arranged to form a direct lineage with a clearcut beginning and end, for these artists were interdependent on one another as contemporaries, friends, critics and champions of each other's work. Eugène Delacroix, an artist of the Romantic generation; artist and friend to Baudelaire, as was the Realist Gustave Courbet; and writers Jules Champfleury and Edgar Allan Poe all produced works containing cats which in some way socially relevant to the treatment of women and the perceived duality of their nature.

Baudelaire, who was also much enamored of both the man and his work, championed Eugène Delacroix and called him the model painter.³⁸ Delacroix's cats took shape in the form of wild animals, particularly tigers (See Figure 10, Young Woman Attacked by a Tiger). Such images

of wild terror deny the mixed messages of the furtive domestic cat that maintains aspects of wildness and mystery despite its domestication. Delacroix commits to nature a brutal, irrational power.

At the Exposition Universelle of 1855, Delacroix was given a major retrospective. Also participating in the Exposition was the Realist painter Gustave Courbet. It was here that Courbet unveiled in his "Pavillon du Realisme," held outside the officially sanctioned exhibits, his The Studio: A Real Allegory of Seven Years of My Artistic Life (Figure 11). The monumental canvas shows the Artist at work, a powerful female nude figure, an admiring youth, and a white cat as the central focus. To the left is a group of those who lead everyday lives, and to the right are the artist's recognizable friends and supporters including Baudelaire and Champfleury. One suggested meaning of the symbolism of the cat here is that it stands as an attribute of Liberty. La Libertà of 1611, from Ripa's Iconologia, gives precedence for its association to her, as she appears with a white cat at her feet. Perhaps Courbet included the cat to make reference to the fact that Baudelaire championed the artist in his pursuit of liberty and independence. While all scholars agree that the painting is key to understanding Courbet, interpretations differ widely.³⁹

Jules Champfleury, leader of the realist movement

in literature, had his book Les Chats first published in 1868. Manet contributed a poster for the book, entitled Cat's Rendezvous (Figure 12), a picture of two cats, one black and the other white, in pursuit of one another on a rooftop.⁴⁰ Pivotal in the sense that for the first time, a book which was perhaps meant to be a coffee-table piece was devoted entirely to cats, it was made up of "Legends of their (cat's) sexual license based on the very aspects of the alley cat's appearance- bristling black fur, and glaring green eyes- that characterize Olympia's pet."⁴¹ Throughout these "legends", one can so easily substitute woman for the cat that the result is a book that becomes a rather perverted history of women. The main readers were the bourgeois, whose standards these "animals" were eating away at.

Chapter sixteen, "Painters of Cats", is most significant for what could be a reference to Olympia:

"It's something to note that artists taken with the exquisiteness of cats are also taken with the exquisiteness of women, and this dual comprehension is sometimes joined to the love of the fantastic and the strange. But what kind of supple pen would one need to render the nuances that characterize: women, fantasy, cats! How can one visibly connect the mysterious traits shared by such a trilogy?"⁴²

How does this trilogy connect? The answer is given in Olympia, with the woman, the black servant, and the cat. It is a mixture of exquisite longing with the exotic animal nature of the cat. The affinities between Olympia

and his trilogy are unavoidable.

Another literary source which is loosely tied into this complex overlapping of artists and their works, are the writings of Edgar Allan Poe. Baudelaire was seduced by the writer's eccentric style. Poe's ability to create terror and drama from unexpected sources was akin to Baudelaire's aesthetic aims. Among his translations of Poe's stories in the 1857 publication of Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires, was the morbid tale "The Black Cat." Poe's cat was also an instrument of death, just like the cat of Baudelaire's. It is perverse in nature in the midst of a tale of the macabre, eluding to a connection of women and their animal nature. It serves as a moral conscience for the murder. Poe and Baudelaire foreshadowed the late nineteenth-century Symbolist writers in their creation of sensuous effects through their choices of very particular, important images.

Baudelaire's poems for Les Fleurs du Mal comprise a related theme of the opposition between evil and good, between which men are torn, that translates into the love of and hatred for women. Baudelaire composed three poems about cats for the first two sections of his book. In the first of two poems entitled "The Cat," he tells how he was reminded of his mistress while receiving pleasure from stroking his cat's supple back. The dangerous perfume he speaks of may be the odor of sexual attraction, or

the odor of oozing diseases of the female genitals:

"I seem to see my mistress. Her regard,
Like yours, nice animal,
Deep and cold, cuts and thrusts like a sword,
And from her feet to her head's dark coronal
A subtle air, a dangerous perfume,
Swim round her dark body's dusky bloom."⁴³

The second of the two poems entitled "The Cat" is more obscure. Baudelaire talks of the attractions of the cat, its voice, its scent from which he was "nearly embalmed," and its mesmerizing gaze. They are enough to inspire him into poetry. And finally, Baudelaire's poem "Cats" is a poem about their characteristics, with a touch of the mysterious.

Literary interpretations of Baudelaire's poetry abound. Popular in his day only within avant-garde circles, his work has generated overwhelming criticism since his death. But one thing is clear, Baudelaire made the cat a modern symbol of social perversity; a perversity that is played out in Manet's Olympia.

The greatest offenders of this perversity were the "intellectuals" of French society, most often men with means and power. They were a hostile group who believed women had tendencies to be freaks of nature. They thought if woman were allowed, by neglecting their maternal duties, their criminal nature would over-take them.⁴⁴ The images conjured up by Baudelaire, Manet and the others discussed, reinforced this misogyny whether it was their intention or not. These artists created intimate scenes of

contemporary women, and in doing so recreated in art the social systems of the passive, but sexually charged female, at which the active and aggressive male could gaze.⁴⁵

It was Freud who said that there is never indifference in "looking": "It has always been implicated in a system of control(which equals power). Nude images throughout history have almost always been coded with a certain 'to-be-looked-at-ness.' Pictures of women, but especially nudes, were made for men to look at; they were given a degree of access to the body on display."⁴⁶

In further examining the relationship of the viewer with Olympia, one can imagine that there exists within this painting a ménage à trois. The gaze is directed by the male viewer at Olympia, her indifferent stare out, and her alter ego, the cat, staring back at the male viewer.⁴⁷ The first of two ramifications of portrayals of women, like the one found in Olympia, was that the images gave adherence to the social acceptance of the objectification of woman by engaging the male viewer in a visual contemplation. Once objectified, women could easily be de-humanized thus allowing them to be reduced to no better than animals. It is in this way that the cat could be made into the symbolic substitute for woman's other self.

The second ramification of the gaze was the male

gain of sexual control over the female. Freud referred to this when he talked about "looking" always involves a degree of control. It was thought that a woman's sexuality was something that needed to be controlled. For men on the other hand, "Réglementation (controls on female sexuality) openly acknowledged that male sexuality was an uncontrollable force that required an outlet."⁴⁸ Desires materialized in these sexually charged pictures. Images of women, in particular nudes, were "coded" with a visual appeal providing a temporary outlet for an uncontrollable sexuality and empowering the male viewer.

Contemporaries of Manet and Baudelaire produced images of women that relayed aspects of nineteenth-century French gender stereotyping. Where the cat was present, it appeared as the embodiment of the perceived mysterious, animalistic, and sometimes perverse characteristics of women. But just as the appeal of the images of women and cats did not begin with Manet and Baudelaire, it did not end with them either. Their attraction lingered well into the art of the fin-de-siecle.

IMAGES OF THE CAT IN FIN-DE-SIECLE CULTURE

By the end of the nineteenth century, the image of the cat as a dichotomous symbol had run its course. But before the symbolic potency it accrued from the modern era began to fade, artists of the fin-de-siecle put it to use one last time. The artist Paul Gauguin was at the fore-front of the Symbolist movement. He valued Manet's work and even made a copy of Olympia (Figure 13), dated 1891.⁴⁹ One scholar described Gauguin's copy in this way:

"Copies of masterpieces by experienced painters are often made too simply and with a lack of deference to the master. But in this case the result, which is two-thirds the size of the original, shows Gauguin's considerable respect for Manet, despite his legendary reputation for insolence. It is true that the act of copying this painting, which was still controversial even twenty-five years after the scandal of the 1865 salon, was in itself a provocative gesture."⁵⁰

The painting was copied not only as a gesture to Manet. Gauguin was equally drawn to Manet's choice of motifs. Gauguin too, bombarded his subjects with an array of easily recognizable and identifiable objects that at the same time became almost incomprehensible, since he alone held the key to their mysterious meanings. In the left half of his Where Do We Come From? What Are

We? Where Are We Going?(Figure 14), a woman sits clasping her hands over her ears so as to:

"... shut out expressions of hope; her attribute, the white bird, clutches the lizard in its claws, also shutting out its beguilements. A young girl sits beside the goat, biting an apple while two kittens behind her play in a bowl of milk. Gauguin intends to prove, scientifically, aesthetically, conclusively, that life is a sweet lie that withers on the vine."⁵¹

Here, Gauguin used the kittens alongside the girl to project a false sense of innocence and security. But, the old woman next to them knows the truth about the fate within female sexuality.

Wayne Andersen looks at a bitter image of the cat by Gauguin after his young Tahitian lover became pregnant and then left the painter to return home to her parents. Abandoned:

"Gauguin continued to use animal metaphors when describing women, but the magnificent animals which had peopled his early fantasies were now transformed into devouring beasts, whose sexuality was manifested in a listless and ruthless consuming: 'They are nearly all wild. They want their dole without any caresses except glances. One female cat, the only one who is civilized enough for me to be unable to go out on the road without her following at my heels, is ferocious in every way, egotistical, jealous. The only one that growls while she eats. They are all afraid of her, even the males, unless she happens to take a fancy to all of them. But even then she bites and claws.'⁵²

One moment he was taken with the golden skinned beauty of the Tahitian women, and the next he envisioned himself a dog set against a pack of whores, ravenous

cats.⁵³ He believed, like Baudelaire, "in the inevitability of corruption, in which all natural processes become tainted with imitations of doom. In this syndrome, to make love is to germinate the beginnings of death; to marry is to sell oneself into bondage, to give birth is to suffer the wages of sin."⁵⁴ It was thought that by making love to a woman, a man would lose his strength, his power, his vital fluid, which is what all devouring women craved.

The devouring female appears around the same time in a book by the novelist Emile Zola. When writing his series The Rougon-Macquarts: the Natural and Social History of a Family under the Second Empire, the artistic avant-garde no longer needed to use the symbolism of the cat that had been set for them by Baudelaire to elude to their meanings, but could openly and often bluntly express what they believed to be truths about the female nature. The premise behind Zola's series, was to prove his theories of heredity and environment in the determining of an individual's character.

Published in 1880 as part of this series, Nana, after which Manet made a painting (Figure 15), is the story of a successful, young courtesan with a theatre career who has risen up from the legitimate line of the Rougons and the illegitimate line of the Macquarts. Zola described her as:

"An extreme case of the Rougon-Macquarts. Bird-brained. Tomorrow doesn't exist. Very merry, very gay. Loves animals and her parents. At first very slovenly, vulgar; then plays the lady and watches herself closely. With that, ends up regarding man as a material to exploit, becoming a force of Nature, a ferment of destruction, but without meaning to, simply by means of her sex and her strong female odour, destroying everything she approaches, and turning society sour. As early as Chapter One I show the whole audience captivated and worshipping; study the women and the men in front of that supreme apparition of the cunt. On top of all that, Nana eats up gold, swallows up every sort of wealth; the most extravagant tastes, the most frightful waste. She instinctively makes a rush for pleasures and possessions. She eats up what people are earning around her in industry, on the stock exchange, in high positions, in everything that pays. In short a real whore."⁵⁵

Zola provided lengthy details about the surroundings of the theatre, or brothel, giving the reader a real sense of its sights, smells, and sounds. Cats often made their way into the descriptions:

"One could sense that the dressing rooms were empty, the corridors deserted; there was not a soul to be seen, not a sound to be heard, while, through the square windows on a level with the stairs, the pale November sunlight poured in, casting yellow patches of light full of dancing dust, in the deathly peace which descended from above. He was glad of this calm and this silence, and he climbed the stairs slowly, trying to get his breath back as he went; his heart was beating wildly, and he was afraid that he might behave like a child and give way to sighs and tears. Accordingly on the first floor landing, he leant against the wall, certain that nobody could see him; and pressing his handkerchief to his mouth, he gazed at the warped steps, the iron banister-rail polished by the friction of many hands, the peeling paint on the walls - all the squalor, in fact, of a brothel, crudely displayed at that pale afternoon hour when

the inmates are asleep. When he reached the second floor he had to step over a big red cat, which was lying curled up on a step. Its eyes half closed, this cat was keeping solitary watch over the theatre, drowsy from the close and now chilled smells which the women left behind them every night."⁵⁶

Cats are now accessories to the goings-on of the courtesans. No longer do they need to be present to suggest promiscuity. Zola uses powerful language to warn men against the evils of women.

To many it might appear that the cat, by the end of the century, could be interpreted as being a purely decorative device. However, these examples are offered for further analysis of the changing image of the cat. Heirs to Manet's cat image, could be said to be found under the roof of the establishment: Le Chat Noir, founded in December of 1881. The black cat was suggestive on many levels by this time, not the least of which would be Manet's image with its associations with Baudelaire, Poe, Freedom, night creatures, and even witchcraft, all of which delighted the patrons of this establishment.

The artist who designed the most famous cat for Le Chat Noir was the Swiss born Theophile Steinlen. Steinlen was an integral part of the Chat Noir scene. He was an extremely productive poster/printmaker and was asked to contribute to the decorations for the cabaret and the illustrations for its journal.

The image of the cat was so significant to him that

according to one scholar, cats for Steinlen actually, "represented his own gaze, his judgement on what he was illustrating."⁵⁷ There was still a connection between the gaze and the cat, but its meaning was no longer quite the same. However, there did remain a duality in cats' nature. Visible throughout his work as both subject and object, Steinlen's cats appear as playful pets and hellish beasts:

"Wherever Steinlen put them, his cats embody better than anything else can the alternation between indifference and tenderness, innocent play and fierce struggle, nonchalance and erotic sensuality. Steinlen knew how to depict them by themselves, given over to their games, their indolence, or in counterpoint to an intrigue in which they are not directly involved. While the streets offered a spectacle of cruelty, extravagance, and affection that his cats could mirror, his interiors also portray an image of life in which-catlike-misery, violence, and peaceful happiness co-exist. The seemingly innocent vignettes of people with cats or children are full of deeper and sometimes tragic meaning."⁵⁸

His cats are simultaneously fierce and tender, nonchalant and erotically sensual.

As he became a regular at Le Chat Noir, Steinlen designed for them its regal street sign which had, "a black cat (Art) with its tail erect, holding a terrified goose (the Bourgeoisie) under its paw."⁵⁹ Eventually, the owner, Rodolphe Salis, created a touring version of the cabaret, for which Steinlen made the poster Tournée du Chat Noir (Figure 16). In this instance the cat has been compared to the devil himself:

"Whiskers perfectly symmetrical, pupils reduced to slits, claws out, and fur stiff, this incarnation of Beelzebub-haloed by Salis's legend 'Montjoye Monmartre', a variation of the historical French war cry 'Montjoie Saint Denis'-commands rather than invites. This chat noir is wild and dangerous, which is surely what Salis wanted to suggest of his touring show."⁶⁰

Le Chat Noir provided an atmosphere rich in bohemianism. There the artistic community of Monmartre could meet and discuss the new aims in literature, art and politics as well. Naturally, their activities there continuously influenced them all. Artist Felix Vallotton owed a large part of his style to Le Chat Noir's shadow theatre. He relied heavily upon large, black silhouettes set against a plain white background. His woodcuts are composed of smaller and larger areas of flat, decorative patterning.⁶¹ La Paresse(Figure 17), a woodcut of 1896, shows a nude woman sprawled across her bed on her stomach reaching out to scratch the head of her white cat. They are almost one form, unified because they are the only solid shapes in the woodcut, and as a result are formally identified with one another to suggest a commonality. Surrounding them are alternating black and white designs of dots, diamonds, checks, zigzags, etc... . It is here, and in the example of La Flute(Figure 18) that the existence of the cat is so simplified as to appear to be purely decorative. Executed between 1896-1897, La Flute is one of a set of six woodcuts all dealing with musicians

entitled "Musical Instruments." La Flute shows a man playing to, or enticing, an intrigued white cat who is standing on top of a chest of drawers, its head cocked, its tail shooting straight up. Its presence is made obvious against an almost solid black background of which the player is made a part, with the outline of his torso on down creeping out of the blackness. There is something slightly infernal here that evokes a line from Baudelaire's Les Fleurs du Mal: "The cats that swoon upon pianos and moan like women with hoarse, sweet voices."

In 1893, Vallotton joined the group of the Nabis. Yet he, along with Pierre Bonnard, did not follow the group's other members in their practices of mysticism. Their main interests were in the commonplace scenes of domestic and city life. Bonnard, also a visitor of Le Chat Noir, especially focused on the subject of the intimate interior.

One of his paintings, L'Homme et la femme (Figure 19), is an interior of a bedroom with the male involvement visible in full, unlike Olympia where the bouquet implied a nearly male presence. And:

"Despite its candor and mix of naturalistic detail, L'Homme et la femme has a significance which extends beyond the specific identities of the protagonists, or their particular situation- which is purposely ambiguous. Man and Woman also functions as sexual archetypes on a more primal and generalized level. The figures do not interact, divided by a screen, in isolation from one another. The woman is wholly self-absorbed, her feline quality

underscored by the two cats which join her on the bed. He is in the shadows, dressing or undressing."⁶²

There seperateness by the placement of the screen reflected the ever increasing seperateness between the sexes at the turn of the century.

Societal patterns of thought are created consciously and unconsciously, and have a kind of organic life of their own that often only in retrospect one comes to understand. There is no question that a male dominated society sought to keep women in "their place", which was a place that men had made for them. Still, with a painting like Bonnard's, the inclusion of cats in the woman's section of the picture creates with her pose a kind of child-like self-sufficiency that is almost playful. Yet the cats, as has been shown, suggest something darker. It is a fascination with the unknowable. This seperates the sexes despite their necessary attractions.

As France neared the end of the nineteenth century, the image of the cat still carried its symbolic references to that certain nature of women, their "cold cat gazes", and their "amorality". But by fin-de-siecle standards the cat's inclusion was no longer as shocking as it had once been, and its appearance as such eventually grew extinct.

CONCLUSIONS

A survey of the images of cats throughout history reveals that no culture surpassed the Ancient Egyptians for their fascination with and veneration of this animal. For all of the images that include cats since then, the nineteenth century stands out for having its own uniquely pervasive, if not perverse, preoccupation with it. And if the cat leaves a surprisingly large track through the nineteenth century, Baudelaire's poetry is at the heart of this phenomenon:

"You shall be beautiful in my manner. You shall love what I love: the water, the clouds, the silence and the night; the vast green sea; monstrous flowers; the perfumes that drive men wild; the cats that swoon upon pianos and moan like women with hoarse, sweet voices."⁶³

Lines like these are not obscene, but are disturbingly evocative; the vastness, exotic blossoms that overwhelm, maddening perfumes that might well derive from the the aforementioned blossoms, but such attractions could easily be metaphors for women as are the cats that swoon "like women with hoarse sweet voices". The cat with its ambivalence of creative and destructive forces, the poet identifies with woman and her bestial pleasures.

By choosing to make the prostitute the "most typical figure of urban modernity", Baudelaire attempted to

define the changes in French society that were brought on by the industrial revolution and the novelty of mass consumption:

"We can begin to see that the attraction to prostitution was pervasive in these years, appealing especially to avant-garde painters of modern life but to many men in the larger culture as well, because she marked the point of intersection of two widely disseminated ideologies of modernity: the modern was lived and seen at its most acute and true in what was temporary, unstable, and fleeting; and the modern social relation was understood to be more and more⁶⁴ frozen in the form of the commodity."

As a result of Baudelaire's imagery, when artists combined with the images of the prostitute and the cat their meanings were loaded. The cat had already collected a long history of symbolic meaning varying from treasured pet to a conspirator of evil. Attitudes towards women's place in society conflicted with their changing roles, which gave rise to ambivalence. Out of which grew a perceived dichotomy in women's nature. They were either decent or indecent. And where the indecency was the image an artist wished to depict, the cat could be found to suggest it.

NOTES

NOTES

- ¹ Hollis Clayson, Painted Love(New Haven: Yale UP, 1991) 70.
- ² Rosalind Williams, Dream Worlds(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) 4.
- ³ Williams, 4.
- ⁴ Clayson, 10.
- ⁵ Clayson, 10.
- ⁶ Bonnie Anderson and Judith Zinsser, A History of Their Own(New York: Harper & Row, 1988) 364.
- ⁷ Clayson, 7.
- ⁸ Clayson, 7.
- ⁹ Gabriel Weisberg, Images of Women: Printmakers in France(Salt Lake City: Utah Museum of Fine Arts, 1977) 24.
- ¹⁰ John Stuart Mill, The Subjection of Women(London: World Classics Series, 1966) 441.
- ¹¹ Clayson, 8.
- ¹² Clayson, 9.
- ¹³ Camille Paglia, Sexual Personae(New York: Vintage Books, 1990) 64-66.
- ¹⁴ Ad de Vries, Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery(London: North Holland Publishing Company, 1974) 85.
- ¹⁵ Paglia, 64.
- ¹⁶ Paglia, 64.
- ¹⁷ Paglia, 64.
- ¹⁸ Rachel Hostetter, "The San Marco Last Supper By Domenico Ghirlandaio: A Dominican Message," thesis, Michigan State University, 1991, 7.

- 19 Elisabeth Foucart Walter and Pierre Rosenberg, The Painted Cat(New York: Rizzoli, 1987) 36.
- 20 Foucart Walter and Rosenberg, 26.
- 21 Foucart Walter and Rosenberg, 126.
- 22 For further interpretations of Olympia see T. Reff, Manet: Olympia(New York: Viking Press, 1977); Charles Bernheimer, Figures of Ill Repute(Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989): T.J. Clark, The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers(New York: Viking Press, 1985).
- 23 Gerald Needham, 19th Century Realist Art(New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988) 231.
- 24 George Mauner, Manet Peintre-Philosophe(University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1975) 93.
- 25 Heather McPherson, "Manet: Reclining Women of Virtue and Vice," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 115(1990): 36.
- 26 McPherson, 36.
- 27 T.J. Clark, The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers(New York: Viking Press, 1985) 24.
- 28 Mauner, 91.
- 29 In answer to Baudelaire's essay on, "The Painter of Modern Life", Mauner states as a reason for Manet to paint Olympia in the style in which he did, while borrowing from Titian's Venus of Urbino.
- 30 Both Mauner and Reff draw correlations between the two.
- 31 Mauner, 92.
- 32 Mauner, 92.
- 33 Mauner, 20. Mauner coins the term "lunar woman" for Baudelaire's invention.
- 34 T. Reff, Manet: Olympia(New York: Viking Press, 1977) 60.
- 35 Ernest Chesneau, Les Nations rivales dans l'art(Paris, 1868) 184.

36 Paglia, 422.

37 Mauner, 96.

38 Delacroix's lions and tigers, while not symbolizing an attribute of women, manifest cruelty and strength, and often express malevolence. Baudelaire devoted a portion of his essay, "The Painter of Modern Life", to singing the praises of Delacroix.

39 For interpretaions of Courbet's Studio, see especially Nochlin and Faunce. Courbet Reconsidered, and Freid. "Representing Representation: On the Central Group of Courbet's Studio." Art in America, pp.127-33.

40 Mauner, 180-184. Mauner discusses at length the properties of the Yang-Yin polarity, which he then sees expressed in Manet's Cats Rendezvous. He also cites Baudelaire's interest in the duality of man's nature and it's expression in his poetry, with which Manet was familiar. The Yang-Yin is based on the theory, says Mauner, of opposing principles such as the male-female, positive-negative, hard-soft, active-passive, black-white, etc... . Manet's poster demonstrates these dualistic characteristics, "The black and white animals, each on it's own side, cautiously stalk each other and, producing a circular movement, emerge as an extraordinary vivification of the ancient oriental emblem,"

41 Reff, 99.

42 Jules Champfleury, Les Chats(Paris: Libraire de La Societe Botanique de France, 1870) 145. "C'est une remarque à faire que les artistes épris des délicatesses des chats le sont également des délicatesses de la femme, et qu'à cette double compréhension se joint parfois l'amour du fantasque et l'étrange. Mais quelle souplesse ne faudrait-il pas à la plume pour essayer de rendre les nuances qui caractérisent: Femmes, Fantaisie, Chats! Comment tracer visiblement le mystérieux trait d'union qui relie une telle trilogie?"

43 Charles Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du Mal(New York: New Directions, 1985) 44.

44 Bram Dijkstra, Idols of Perversity(Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986) 272-332.

45 Patricia Mathews, "Returning the Gaze: Diverse Representations of the Nude in the Art of Suzanne Valadon," The Art Bulletin LXXIII(September 1991): 416-417.

46 Matthews, p.417. T.J. Clark also describes a way of "looking" that offers sexual access to the female body, without actually using the term "gaze".

47 Matthews, 417.

48 Clayson, 12.

49 It is thought that Gauguin first saw the painting, six years after Manet's death, at the 1889 Exposition Universelle. The following year Olympia was hung in the Musée du Luxembourg. In a letter to his friend Emile Bernard dated 1895, Gauguin complained of the difficulties he endured in gaining permission to copy there, needing a recommendation from a professor. However, he persevered though the formalities and arrived in Paris in February of 1891 ready to begin work.

50 The Art of Paul Gauguin(Washington D.C.: The National Gallery of Art, 1988) 203.

51 Wayne Andersen, Gauguin's Paradise Lost(New York: Viking Press, 1971) 245.

52 Andersen, 255.

53 Andersen, 255.

54 Andersen, 90.

55 Emile Zola, Nana(New York: Penguin Books, 1972) 12-13.

56 Zola, 294.

57 Francois Fossier, Steinlen's Cats(New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990) 8.

58 Fossier, 13.

59 Sir Paul Harvey and J.E. Heseltine, The Oxford Companion to French Literature(Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1959) 128.

60 Fossier, 24. By the time Salis sent his show on the road, Le Chat Noir was already fifteen years old and past it's prime. The owner had hoped to generate new interest by taking it to places like Switzerland, Belgium, and Algeria, but he died only one year later in 1897.

61 Vallotton also owed the Far Eastern white-on-black

prints for a source for his work. Exposed to France in several international exhibitions held in Paris, they complimented his experiences in the shadow theatre with their exaggerated contrasts between dark and light, and black on white.

⁶² John Russell, Bonnard The Late Paintings (London: Thames & Hudson, 1984) 46.

⁶³ Mauner, 92.

⁶⁴ Clayson, 9.

FIGURES

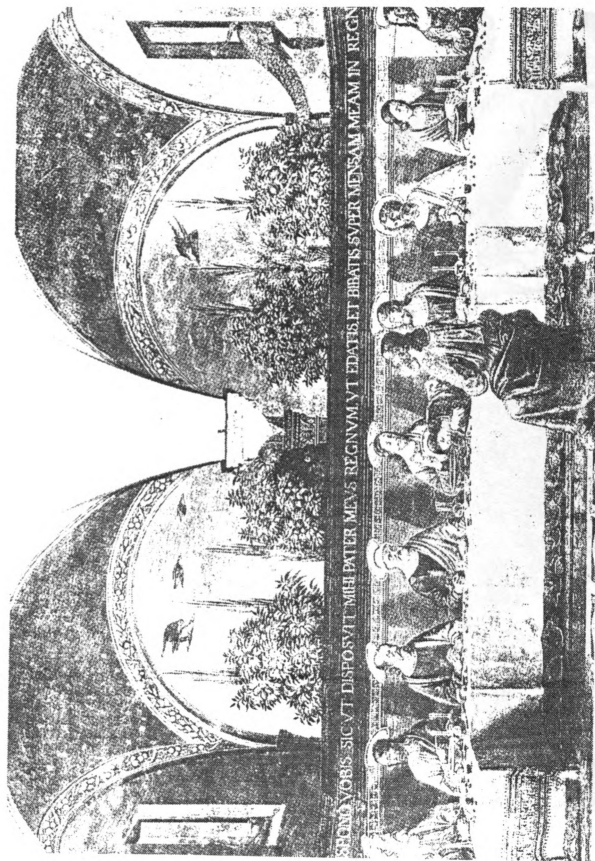


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

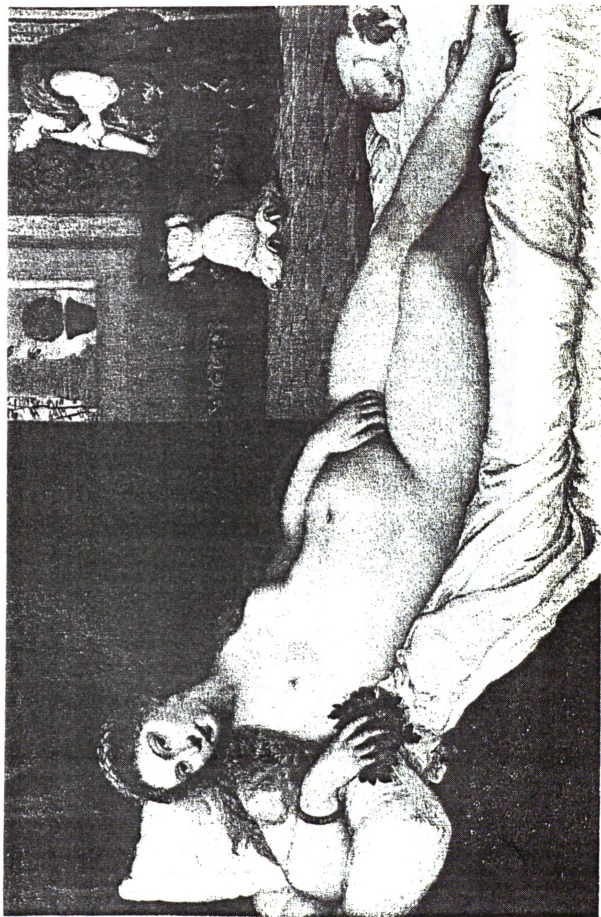


Figure 8



Figure 9

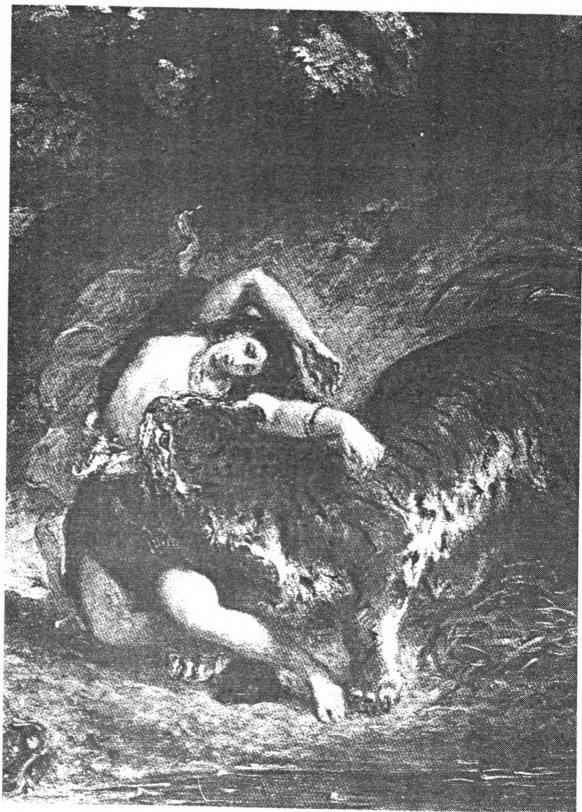




Figure 11

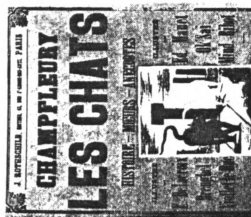


Figure 12



Figure 13

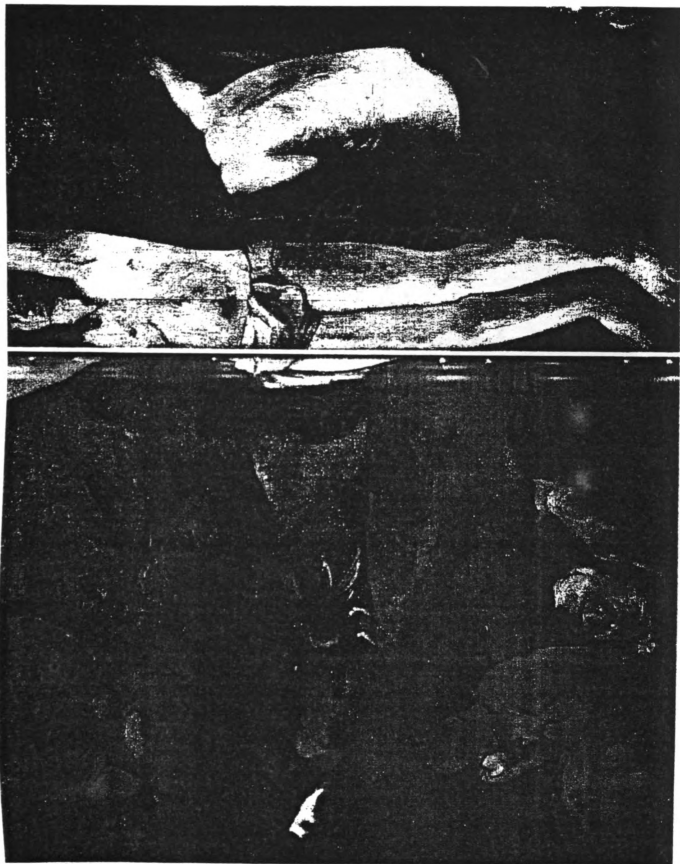


Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

THE CAT

Come, beautiful creature, sheathe your claws;
Rest on my amorous heart,
And let me plunge in your marvellous eyes,
Of mingled metal and agate.

When my fingers caress at leisure
Your supple, elastic back,
And my hand tingles with pleasure
From your body's electric contact,

I seem to see my mistress. Her, regard,
Like yours, nice animal,
Deep and cold, cuts and thrusts like a sword,
And from her feet to her head's dark coronal,
A subtle air, a dangerous perfume,
Swim round her brown body's dusky bloom.

THE CAT

I

A fine strong gentle cat is prowling
As in his bedroom, in my brain;
So soft his voice, so smooth its strain,
That you can scarcely hear him miowling.

But should he venture to complain
Or scold, the voice is rich and deep:
And thus he manages to keep
The charm of his untroubled reign.

This voice, which seems to pearl and filter
Through my soul's inmost shady nook,
Fills me with poems, like a book,
And fortifies me, like a philtre.

His voice can cure the direst pain
And it contains the rarest raptures.
The deepest meanings, which it captures,
It needs no language to explain.

There is no bow that can sweep
That perfect instrument, my heart:
Or make more sumptuous music start
From its most vibrant cord and deep,

Than can the voice of this strange elf,
This cat, bewitching and seraphic,
Subtly harmonious in his traffic
With all things else, and with himself.

II

So sweet a perfume seems to swim
Out of his fur both brown and bright,
I nearly was embalmed one night
From (only once) caressing him.

Familiar Lar of where I stay,
He rules, presides, inspires and teaches
All things to which his empire reaches.
Perhaps he is a god, or fay.

When to a cherished cat my gaze
Is magnet-drawn and then returns
Back to itself, it there discerns,
With strange excitement and amaze,

Deep down in my own self, the rays
Of living opals, torch-like gleams
And pallid fire of eyes, it seems,
That fixedly return my gaze.

CATS

Feverish lovers, scholars in their lofts,
Both come in their due time to love the cat;
Gentle but powerful, king of the parlor mat,
Lazy, like them, and sensitive to draughts.

Your cat, now linked, to learning and to love,
Exhibits a taste for silences and gloom-
would make a splendid messenger of doom
If his fierce pride would condescend to serve.

Lost in his day-dream, he assumes the pose
Of sphinxes in the desert, languidly
Fixed in a reverie that has no end.

His loins are lit with fires of alchemy,
And bits of gold, small as the finest sand,
Fleck, here and there, the mystery of his eyes.

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