THE PAINTER OF MODERN LIFE

1. BEAUTY, FASHION AND HAPPINESS

The world—and even the world of artists—is full of people who can go to the Louvre, walk rapidly, without so much as a glance, past rows of very interesting, though secondary, pictures, to come to a rapturous halt in front of a Titian or a Raphael—one of those that have been most popularized by the engraver’s art; then they will go home happy, not a few saying to themselves, ‘I know my Museum.’ Just as there are people who, having once read Bossuet and Racine, fancy that they have mastered the history of literature.

Fortunately from time to time there come forward righters of wrong, critics, amateurs, curious enquirers, to declare that Raphael, or Racine, does not contain the whole secret, and that the minor poets too have something good, solid and delightful to offer; and finally that however much we may love general beauty, as it is expressed by classical poets and artists, we are no less wrong to neglect particular beauty, the beauty of circumstance and the sketch of manners.

It must be admitted that for some years now the world has been mending its ways a little. The value which collectors today attach to the delightful coloured engravings of the last century proves that a reaction has set in in the direction where it was required; Debucourt, the Saint-Aubins and many others have found their places in the dictionary of artists who are worthy of study. But these represent the past; my concern today is with the painting of manners of the present. The past is interesting not only by reason of the beauty which could be distilled from it by those artists for whom it was the present, but also precisely because it is the past, for its historical value. It is the same with the present. The pleasure which we derive from the representation of the present is due not only to the beauty with which it can be invested, but also to its essential quality of being present.

I have before me a series of fashion-plates dating from the

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1 Early in 1859 Baudelaire was writing to his friend and publisher Poulet-Malassis, to thank him for sending him fashion-plates.
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Revolution and finishing more or less with the Consulate. These costumes, which seem laughable to many thoughtless people—people who are grave without true gravity—have a double-natured charm, one both artistic and historical. They are often very beautiful and drawn with wit; but what to me is every bit as important, and what I am happy to find in all, or almost all of them, is the moral and aesthetic feeling of their time. The idea of beauty which man creates for himself imprints itself on his whole attire, crumples or stiffens his dress, rounds off or squares his gesture, and in the long run even ends by subtly penetrating the very features of his face. Man ends by looking like his ideal self. These engravings can be translated either into beauty or ugliness; in one direction, they become caricatures, in the other, antique statues.

The women who wore these costumes were themselves more or less like one or the other type, according to the degree of poetry or vulgarity with which they were stamped. Living flesh imparted a flowing movement to what seems to us so stiff. It is still possible today for the spectator's imagination to give a stir and a rattle to this 'turique' or that 'schall.' One day perhaps someone will put on a play in which we shall see a resurrection of those costumes in which our fathers found themselves every bit as fascinating as we do ourselves in our poor garments (which also have a grace of their own, it must be admitted, but rather of a moral and spiritual type). And then, if they are worn and given life by intelligent actors and actresses, we shall be astonished at ever having been able to mock them so stupidly. Without losing anything of its ghostly attraction, the past will recover the light and movement of life and will become present.

If an impartial student were to look through the whole range of French costume, from the origin of our country until the present day, he would find nothing to shock nor even to surprise him. The transitions would be as elaborately articulated as they are in the animal kingdom. There would not be a single gap, and thus, not a single surprise. And if to the fashion plate representing each age he were to add the philosophic thought with which that age was most preoccupied or concerned—the thought being inevitably suggested by the fashion plate—he would see

1 An alternative form of the word 'schall'. Cashmere shawls became fashionable in France somewhat later than in England.

2 See the remarks at the end of the Salons of 1843 and the section of the Salons of 1846 entitled 'On the Heroism of Modern Life'.

what a profound harmony controls all the components of history, and that even in those centuries which seem to us the most monstrous and the maddest, the immortal thirst for beauty has always found its satisfaction.

This is in fact an excellent opportunity to establish a rational and historical theory of beauty, in contrast to the academic theory of an unique and absolute beauty; to show that beauty is always and inevitably of a double composition, although the impression that it produces is single—for the fact that it is difficult to discern the variable elements of beauty within the unity of the impression invalidates in no way the necessity of variety in its composition. Beauty is made up of an eternal, inviable element, whose quantity it is excessively difficult to determine, and of a relative, circumstantial element, which will be, if you like, whether severely or all at once, the age, its fashions, its morals, its emotions. Without this second element, which might be described as the amusing, enticing, appetizing icing on the divine cake, the first element would be beyond our powers of digestion or appreciation, neither adapted nor suitable to human nature. I defy anyone to point to a single scrap of beauty which does not contain these two elements.

Let me instance two opposite extremes in history. In religious art the duality is evident at the first glance; the ingredient of eternal beauty reveals itself only with the permission and under the discipline of the religion to which the artist belongs. In the most frivolous work of a sophisticated artist belonging to one of those ages which, in our vanity, we characterize as civilized, the duality is no less to be seen; at the same time the eternal part of beauty will be veiled and expressed if not by fashion, at least by the particular temperament of the artist. The duality of art is a fatal consequence of the duality of man. Consider, if you will, the eternally subsisting portion as the soul of art, and the variable element as its body. That is why Stendhal—an impertinent, teasering, even a disagreeable critic, but one whose imperfections are often a useful spur to reflection—approached the truth more closely than many another when he said that 'Beauty is nothing else but a promise of happiness.' This definition doubtless overshoots the mark; it makes Beauty far too subject to the infinitely variable ideal of Happiness; it strips Beauty too
II. THE SKETCH OF MANNERS

For the sketch of manners, the depiction of bourgeois life and the pageant of fashion, the technical means that is the most expeditious and the least costly will obviously be the best. The more beauty that the artist can put into it, the more valuable will be his work; but in trivial life, in the daily metamorphosis of external things, there is a rapidity of movement which calls for an equal speed of execution from the artist. The coloured engravings of the eighteenth century have once again won the plaudits of fashion, as I was saying a moment ago. Pastel, etching and aquatint have one by one contributed their quota to that vast dictionary of modern life whose leaves are distributed through the libraries, the portfolios of collectors and in the windows of the meanest of print shops. And then lithography appeared, at once to reveal itself as admirably fitted for this enormous, though apparently so frivolous task. We have some precious monuments in this medium. The works of Gavarni and Daumier have been justly described as complements to the Comedia Humaine. I am satisfied that Balzac himself would not have been averse from accepting this idea, which is all the more just in that the genius of the painter of manners is of a mixed nature, by which I mean that it contains a strong literary element. Observer, philosopher, flâneur—call him what you will; but whatever words you use in trying to define this kind of artist, you will certainly be led to bestow upon him some adjective which you could not apply to the painter of eternal, or at least more lasting things, of heroic or religious subjects. Sometimes

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he is a poet; more often he comes closer to the novelist or the moralist; he is the painter of the passing moment and of all the suggestions of eternity that it contains. Every country, to its pleasure and glory, has possessed a few men of this stamp. In the present age, to Daumier and Gavarni (the first names which occur to the memory) we may add Devéria, Maurin, Numa, historians of the more wanton charms of the Restoration; Wattier, Tassaert, Eugène Lami—the last of these almost an Englishman in virtue of his love for aristocratic elegance; and even Trimolet and Traviès, those chroniclers of poverty and the humble life.

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III. THE ARTIST, MAN OF THE WORLD, MAN OF THE CROWD, AND CHILD

Today I want to discourse to the public about a strange man, a man of so joyful a spirit and so decided an originality that it is sufficient unto itself and does not even seek approval. Not a single one of his drawings is signed, if by signature you mean that string of easily forgeable characters which spell a name and which so many other artists affix ostentatiously at the foot of their least important trifles. Yet all his works are signed—with his dazzling scent; and art-lovers who have seen and appreciated them will readily recognize them from the description that I am about to give. A passionate lover of crowds and incognitos, Monsieur C. G. carries originality to the point of shyness. Mr. Thackeray, who, as is well known, is deeply interested in matters of art, and who himself executes the illustrations to his novels, spoke one day of Monsieur G. in the columns of a London review. The latter was furious, as though at an outrage to his virtue. Recently again, when he learnt that I had it in mind to write an appreciation of his mind and his talent, he begged me—very impetuously, I must admit—to suppress his name, and if I must speak of his works, to speak of them as if they were those of an anonymous artist. I will humbly comply with this singular request. The reader and I will preserve the fiction that Monsieur G. does not exist, and we shall concern ourselves with his drawings and his watercolours (for which he professes a patrician scorn) as though we were scholars who had to pronounce upon precious historical documents, thrown up by chance,
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man of the whole world, a man who understands the world and the
mysterious and lawful reasons for all its uses; by the first, a specialist,
a man wedded to his palette like the serf to the soil. Monsieur G. does
not like to be called an artist. Is he not perhaps a little right? His interest
is the whole world; he wants to know, understand and appreciate
everything that happens on the surface of our globe. The artist lives
very little, if at all, in the world of morals and politics. If he lives in the
British empire, he will be unaware of what is going on in the Faubourg
Saint-Germain. Apart from one or two exceptions whom I need not name,
he must be admitted that the majority of artists are no more than
highly skilled animals, pure artisans, village intellects, cottage brains.
Their conversation, which is necessarily limited to the narrowest of
circles, becomes very quickly unbearable to the man of the world, to the
spiritual citizen of the universe. And so, as a first step towards an understanding of Monsieur G., I would ask you to note at once that the mainspring of his genius is curiosity.

Do you remember a picture (it really is a picture), painted—or rather written—by the most powerful pen of our age, and entitled The Man of the Crowd? In the window of a coffee-house there sits a convalescent, pleasantly absorbed in gazing at the crowd, and mingling, through the medium of thought, in the turmoil of thought that surrounds him. But lately returned from the valley of the shadow of death, he is rapturously breathing in all the odours and essences of life; as he has been on the brink of total oblivion, he remembers, and fervently desires to remember, everything. Finally he hurls himself headlong into the midst of the throng, in pursuit of an unknown, half-glimpsed countenance that has, on an instant, bewitched him. Curiosity has become a fatal, irresistible passion!

Imagine an artist who was always, spiritually, in the condition of that convalescent, and you will have the key to the nature of Monsieur G. Now convalescence is like a return towards childhood. The convalescent, like the child, is possessed in the highest degree of the faculty of keenly interesting himself in things, be they apparently of the most trivial. Let us go back, if we can, by a retrospective effort of the imagination, 1

1 For an elaboration of this idea, and a note on the exceptions, see the "Essay of 1855, "
2 A story by Edgar Allan Poe, included among his Tales (1841), and translated by
Baudelaire in the Nouvelles Histories Extraordinaires.
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towards our most youthful, our earliest, impressions, and we will recognize that they had a strange kinship with those brightly coloured impressions which we were later to receive in the aftermath of a physical illness, always provided that that illness had left our spiritual capacities pure and unharmed. The child sees everything in a state of newness; he is always drunk. Nothing more resembles what we call inspiration than the delight with which a child absorbs form and colour. I am prepared to go even further and assert that inspiration has something in common with a convulsion, and that every sublime thought is accompanied by a more or less violent nervous shock which has its repercussion in the very core of the brain. The man of genius has sound nerves, while those of the child are weak. With the one, Reason has taken up a considerable position; with the other, Sensibility is almost the whole being. But genius is nothing more nor less than childhood recovered at will—a childhood now equipped for self-expression with manhood’s capacities and a power of analysis which enables it to order the mass of raw material which it has involuntarily accumulated. It is by this deep and joyful curiosity that we may explain the fixed and animally ecstatic gaze of a child confronted with something new, whatever it be, whether a face or a landscape, gilding, colours, shimmering stuffs, or the magic of physical beauty assisted by the cosmetic art. A friend of mine once told me that when he was a small child, he used to be present when his father dressed in the mornings, and that it was with a mixture of amusement and delight that he used to study the musculature of his arms, the gradual transitions of pink and yellow in his skin, and the blush network of his veins. The picture of external life was already filling him with awe and taking hold of his brain. He was already being obsessed and possessed by form. Predestination was already showing the tip of its nose. His sentence was sealed. Need I add that today that child is a well-known painter?

I asked you a moment ago to think of Monsieur G., as an eternal conversant. To complete your idea, consider him also as a man-child, as a man who is never for a moment without the genius of childhood—a genius for which no aspect of life has become stale.

I have told you that I was reluctant to describe him as an artist pure and simple, and indeed that he declined this title with modesty touched

1 An idea taken up and developed by Baudeleaire in Les Paradis artificiels ("Le Génie Infantil").
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unstable and fugitive. 'Any man,' he said one day, in the course of one of those conversations which he illumines with burning glance and evocative gesture, 'any man who is not crushed by one of those griefs whose nature is too real not to monopolize all his capacities, and who can yet be bored in the heart of the multitude, is a blockhead! a blockhead! and 1 despise him!'

When Monsieur G. wakes up and opens his eyes to see the boisterous sun beating a tattoo upon his window-pane, he repeats this self-remorsefully and regretfully: 'What a peremptory order! What a bugle-blast of life! Already several hours of light—everywhere—lost by my sleep! How many illuminated things might I have seen and have missed!

The following passage from the Goncourt's Journal (13 April 1850) gives an interesting account of Guys at about the same time:

'We came back from Giverny with Guys, the draughtsman of the ILLUSTRATED LONDON.

'A little man with an animated face, a grey moustache, looking like an old soldier; holding along, constantly hitching up his sleeves on his bony arms with a sharp slip of the hand, diffusing phantasies with parenthesis, zigzagging from idea to idea, going off at tangents and getting lost, but retrieving himself and regaining your attention with a metaphor from the gutter, a word from the vocabulary of the German philosophers, a technical term from shoe industry, and always holding you under the thrill of his highly-coloured, almost audible utterance. He evoked a thousand memories on that walk, throwing into the conversation handbills of ironical observations, sketches, landscapes, cities riddled with cannon-balls, blood-stained, gutted, and ambulances with rats beginning to gnaw at the wounds.

'Then on the other side, rather like an in album in which you find a quotation from Balzac on the back of a design by Decamps, there issued from the mouth of this extraordinary fellow a whole silence; reflections on the French and the English races, all new, not one that had grossly moulded in a book, two-minute letters, one-word pamphlets, a comparative philosophy of the national genius of the peoples.

'Now we were at the taking of Jena, a river of blood with dogs splashing about in it, flowing between the legs of the young Guys...'

'Now it was Dombrowski, wearing a blue shirt, his last shirt, tossing a coin, his last coin, on to a green table and nonchalantly forcing the betting up to 40,000 francs.

'And now it was an English estate, with immemorial table, a quiet country air, a quiver of life or a choral mood, conducted for by a gentleman called Simpson or Tompson (sic), whose twenty-year-old daughter travels to the Mediterranean to inspect her father's eighteen ships of which not one is less than two thousand tons, 'a fleet such as Egges never had', says Guys. Then he compared us to the English—us!—and cries: 'A Frenchman who does nothing, who is in London quietly to spend money—an unheard-of thing! The Frenchman travels in order to get over an unhappy love-affair or a gambling-lost, or perhaps to sell textiles, but to see a Frenchman in London riding in a carriage, a Frenchman who is neither a minister nor an ambassador, a Frenchman with a woman at his side who might be his mother or his sister, and not a whore, an actress or a dressmaker—no, that could never be!'

seeing! So out he goes and watches the river of life flow past him in all its splendour and majesty. He marvels at the eternal beauty and the amazing harmony of life in the capital cities, a harmony so providentially maintained amid the turmoil of human freedom. He gazes upon the landscapes of the great city—landscapes of stone, caressed by the mist or buffeted by the sun. He delights in fine carriages and proud horses, the dazzling smartness of the grooms, the expertness of the footmen, the sinuous gait of the women, the beauty of the children, happy to be alive and nicely dressed—in a word, he delights in universal life. If a fashion or the cut of a garment has been slightly modified, if bows and curls have been supplanted by cockades, if bouquets have been enlarged and chignons have dropped a fraction towards the nape of the neck, if waists have been raised and skirts have become fuller, be very sure that his eagle eye will already have spotted it from however great a distance.

A regiment passes, on its way, as it may be, to the ends of the earth, tooting into the air of the boulevards its trumpet-calls as winged and stirring as hope; and an instant Monsieur G. will already have seen, examined and analysed the bearing and external aspect of that company. Glittering equipment, music, bold determined graces, heavy, solemn moustaches—he absorbs it all pell-mell; and in a few moments the resulting 'poem' will be virtually composed. How can one see how his soul lives with the soul of that regiment, marching like a single animal, a proud image of joy in ideology?

But now it is evening. It is that strange, equivocal hour when the curtains of heaven are drawn and cities light up. The gas-light makes a stain upon the crimson of the sunset. Honest men and rogues, sane men and mad, are all saying to themselves, 'The end of another day!' The thoughts of all, whether good men or knaves, turn to pleasure, and each one hastens to the place of his choice to drink the cup of oblivion. Monsieur G. will be the last to linger wherever there can be a glow of light, an echo of pastoral, a brush, the salient of a passion that can pour before him, wherever natural man and conventional man display themselves in a strange beauty, wherever the sun lights up the swift joys of the depraved animal! 'A fine way to fill one's day, to be sure,' remarks a certain reader whom we all know so well. 'Which one of us has not every bit enough genius to fill it in the same way?' But no!

The expression derives from Rousseau; cf. also Briere de Boismont (De l'Essai): 'Comme qui pense est un animal deprave.'
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Few men are gifted with the capacity of seeing; there are fewer still who possess the power of expression. So now, at a time when others are asleep, Monsieur G. is bending over his table, darting on to a sheet of paper the same glance that a moment ago he was directing towards external things, skimming with his pencil, his pen, his brush, splashing his glass of water up to the ceiling, wiping his pen on his shirt, in a ferment of violent activity, as though afraid that the image might escape him, cantankerous though alone, elbowing himself on. And the external world is reborn upon his paper, natural and more than natural, beautiful and more than beautiful, strange and endowed with an impulsive life like the soul of its creator. The phantasmaria has been distilled from nature. All the raw materials with which the memory has loaded itself are put in order, ranged and harmonized, and undergo that forced idealization which is the result of a childlike peremptoriness—that is to say, a peremptoriness acute and magical by reason of its innocence.

IV. MODERNITY

And so away he goes, hurrying, searching. But searching for what? Be very sure that this man, such as I have depicted him—this solitary, gifted with an active imagination, ceaselessly journeying across the great human desert—has an aim loftier than that of a mere flâneur, an aim more general, something other than the fugitive pleasure of circumstance. He is looking for that quality which you must allow me to call 'modernity'; for I know of no better word to express the idea I have in mind. He makes it his business to extract from fashion whatever element it may contain of poetry within history, to distil the eternal from the transitory. Casting an eye over our exhibitions of modern pictures, we are struck by a general tendency among artists to dress all their subjects in the garments of the past. Almost all of them make use of the costumes and furnishings of the Renaissance, just as David employed the costumes and furnishings of Rome. There is however this difference, that David, by choosing subjects which were specifically Greek or Roman, had no alternative but to dress them in antique garb, whereas the painters of today, though choosing subjects of a general nature and applicable to all ages, nevertheless persist in rigging them out in the costumes of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance or the Orient. This is clearly symptomatic of a great degree of laziness; for it is much easier to decide outright that everything about the garb of an age is absolutely ugly than to devote oneself to the task of distilling from it the mysterious element of beauty that it may contain, however slight or minimal that element may be. By 'modernity' I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable. Every old master has had his own modernity; the great majority of fine portraits that have come down to us from former generations are clothed in the costume of their own period. They are perfectly harmonious, because everything—from costume and coiffure down to gesture, glance and smile (for each age has a deportment, a glance and a smile of its own)—everything, I say, combines to form a completely viable whole. This transitory, fugitive element, whose metamorphoses are so rapid, must on no account be despised or dispensable. By neglecting it, you cannot fail to tumble into the abyss of an abstract and indeterminate beauty, like that of the first woman before the fall of man. If for the necessary and inevitable costume of the age you substitute another, you will be guilty of a misstatement only to be excused in the case of a masquerade prescribed by fashion. (Thus, the goddesses, nymphs and sultanas of the eighteenth century are still convincing portraits, morally speaking.)

It is doubtless an excellent thing to study the old masters in order to learn how to paint; but it can be no more than a waste of labour if your aim is to understand the special nature of present-day beauty. The draperies of Rubens or Veronese will in no way teach you how to depict notre antique, satir à la reine or any other fabric of modern manufacture, which we see supported and hung over crinoline or starched muslin periwigs. In texture and weave these are quite different from the fabrics of ancient Venice or those worn at the court of Catherine. Furthermore the cut of skirt and bodice is by no means similar; the pleats are arranged according to a new system. Finally the gesture and the bearing of the woman of today give to her dress a life and a special character which are not those of the woman of the past. In short, for any 'modernity' to be worthy of one day taking its place as 'antiquity', it is necessary for the mysterious beauty which human life accidentally puts into it to be

1 These ideas are developed in the sixth section of the Salés of 1839.
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distilled from it. And it is to this task that Monsieur G. particularly addresses himself.

I have remarked that every age had its own gait, glance and gesture. The easiest way to verify this proposition would be to take oneself to some vast portrait-gallery, such as the one at Versailles. But it has an even wider application. Within that unity which we call a Nation, the various professions and classes and the passing centuries all introduce variety, not only in manners and gesture, but in the actual form of the face. Certain types of nose, mouth and brow will be found to dominate the scene for a period whose extent I have no intention of attempting to determine here, but which could certainly be subjected to a form of calculation. Considerations of this kind are not sufficiently familiar to our portrait-painters; the great failing of M. Ingres, in particular, is that he seeks to impose upon every type of sitter a more or less complete, by which I mean a more or less despotic, form of perfection, borrowed from the repertoire of classical ideas.

In a matter of this kind it would be easy, and indeed legitimate, to argue a priori. The perpetual correlation between what is called the 'soul' and what is called the 'body' explains quite clearly how everything that is 'material,' or in other words an emanation of the 'spiritual,' mirrors, and will always mirror, the spiritual reality from which it derives. If a painstaking, scrupulous, but feebly imaginative artist has to paint a courtisan of today and takes his 'inspiration' (that is the accepted word) from a costume by Titian or Raphael, it is only too likely that he will produce a work which is false, ambiguous and obscure. From the study of a masterpiece of that time and type he will learn nothing of the bearing, the glance, the smile or the living 'style' of one of those creatures whom the dictionary of fashion has successively classified under the coarse or playful titles of 'dames', 'kept women,' 'forties,' etc. The same criticism may be strictly applied to the study of the military man and the dandy, and even to that of animals, whether horses or dogs; in short, of everything that goes to make up the external life of this age. Woe to him who studies the antique for anything else but pure art, logic and general method! By steeping himself too thoroughly in it, he will lose all memory of the present, he will renounce the rights and privileges offered by circumstance—for almost all our originality comes from the sea—which Time imprints on our sensations. I need hardly tell you that I could easily support my assertions with reference to many objects other than women. What would you say, for example, of a marine-painter (I am deliberately going to extremes) who, having to depict the sober and elegant beauty of a modern vessel, were to tire out his eyes by studying the overcharged, involved forms and the monumental poop of a galleon, or the complicated rigging of the sixteenth century? Again, what would you think if you had commissioned an artist to paint the portrait of a thoroughbred, famed in the annals of the turf, and he then proceeded to confine his researches to the Museums and contented himself with a study of the horse in the galleries of the past, in Van Dyck, Borgognone or Van der Meulen?

Under the direction of nature and the tyranny of circumstance, Monsieur G. has pursued an altogether different path. He began by being an observer of life, and only later set himself the task of acquiring the means of expressing it. This has resulted in a thrilling originality in which any remaining vestiges of barbarousness or naiveté appear only as new proofs of his faithfulness to the impression received, or as a flattering compliment paid to truth. For most of us, and particularly for men of affairs, for whom nature has no existence save by reference to utility, the fantastic reality of life has become singularly diluted. Monsieur G. never ceases to drink it in; his eyes and his memory are full of it.

V. MNEMONIC ART

The word 'barbarousness,' which may seem to have slipped rather too often from my pen, might perhaps leave some few people to suppose that we are here concerned with defective drawings, only to be transformed into perfect things with the aid of the spectator's imagination. This would be to misunderstand me. What I mean is an inevitable, synthetic, childlike barbarousness, which is often still to be discerned in a perfected art, such as that of Mexico, Egypt or Nineveh, and which comes from a need to see things broadly and to consider them above all in their total effect. It is by no means out of place here to remind my readers that all those painters whose vision is synthesizing and abbreviative have been accused of barbarousness—M. Corot, for example, whose initial concern is always to trace the principal lines of a landscape—its bony structure, its physiognomy, so to speak. Likewise Monsieur
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G. brings an instinctive emphasis to his marking of the salient or luminous points of an object (which may be salient or luminous from the dramatic point of view) or of its principal characteristics, sometimes even with a degree of exaggeration which aids the human memory; and thus, under the spur of so forceful a prompting, the spectator’s imagination receives a clear-cut image of the impression produced by the external world upon the mind of Monsieur G. The spectator becomes the translator, so to speak, of a translation which is always clear and thrilling.

There is one circumstance which adds much to the living force of this legendary translation of external life. I refer to Monsieur G’s method of draughtsmanship. He draws from memory and not from the model, except in those cases—the Crimean War is one of them—when it may be urgently necessary to take immediate, hasty notes, and to fix the principal lines of a subject. As a matter of fact, all good and true draughtsmen draw from the image imprinted on their brains, and not from nature. To the objection that there are admirable sketches of the latter type by Raphael, Watteau and many others, I reply that these are not very scrupulous notes, to be sure, but mere notes, none the less. When a true artist has come to the point of the final execution of his work, the model would be more of an embarrassment than a help to him. It even happens that men such as Daumier and Monsieur G., for long accustomed to evoking in their memory and storing it with images, find that the physical presence of the model and its multiplicity of details disconcerts and as it were paralyses their principal faculty.

In this way a struggle is launched between the will to see all and forget nothing and the faculty of memory, which has formed the habit of a lively absorption of general colour and of silhouette, the arabesque of contour. An artist with a perfect sense of form but one accustomed to relying above all on his memory and his imagination will find himself at the mercy of a riot of details all clamouring for justice with the fury of a mob in love with absolute equality. All justice is trampled under foot; all harmony sacrificed and destroyed; many a trifle assumes vast proportions; many a triviality usurps the attention. The more our artist turns an impartial eye on detail, the greater is the state of anarchy. Whether he be long-sighted or short-sighted, all hierarchy and all subordination vanishes. This is an accident often conspicuous in the works of one of our most fashionable painters—a painter, by the way,

whose faults are so well attuned to the faults of the masses that they have singularly assisted his popularity. The same analogy may be observed in the art of the actor, that art so mysterious and so profound, which today has fallen into such a slough of decadence. M. Frédéric Lemaître builds up a role with the breadth and fullness of genius. However studious with luminous details may be his playing of a part, it always remains synthetic and sculptural. M. Bouffé on the other hand creates his roles with the minute precision of a myopic and a bureaucrat. With him everything flashes forth but nothing tells, nothing demands a lodging in the memory.

Thus two elements are to be discerned in Monsieur G’s execution: the first, an intense effort of memory that evokes and calls back to life—a memory that says to everything, ‘Arise, Lazarus’; the second, a fire, an intensity of spirit that makes the pencil or the brush, amounting almost to a frenzy. It is the fear of not going fast enough, of letting the phantom escape before the synthesis has been extracted and pinned down; it is that terrible fear which takes possession of all great artists and gives them such a passionate desire to become masters of every means of expression so that the orders of the brain may never be perverted by the hesitations of the hand and that finally execution, ideal execution, may become as unconscious and spontaneous as is digestion for a healthy man after dinner. Monsieur G starts with a few slight indications in pencil, which hardly do more than mark the position which objects are to occupy in space. The principal planes are then sketched in tinted wash, vaguely and lightly coloured masses to start with, but taken up again later and successively charged with a greater intensity of colour. At the last minute the contour of the objects is once and for all outlined in ink. Without having seen them, it would be impossible to imagine the astonishing effects he can obtain by this method which is so simple that it is almost elementary. It possesses one outstanding virtue, which is that, at no matter what stage in its execution, each drawing has a sufficiently ‘finished’ look; call it a ‘study’ if you will, but you will have to admit that it is a perfect study. The values are all entirely harmonious, and if the artist should decide to take them further, they will continue to march in step towards the desired degree of completion. He works

1 Baudelaire had already put on record his admiration for Frédéric Lemaître (1820–75), one of the great French actors of the Romantic generation, in the Salut de l’âme.

H.-D.-M. Bouffé (1800-48) was a well-known comic actor.
in this way on twenty drawings a time, with an impatience and a
delight that are a joy to watch—and amusing even for him. The sketches
pile up, one on top of the other—in their tens, hundreds, thousands.
Every now and then he will run through them and examine them, and
then select a few in order to carry them a stage further, to intensify
the shadows and gradually to heighten the lights.

He attaches an enormous importance to his backgrounds, which,
whether slight or vigorous, are always appropriate in nature and
quality to the figures. Tonal scale and general harmony are all strictly
observed, with a genius which springs from instinct rather than from
study. For Monsieur G. possesses by nature the colorist’s mysterious
talent, a true gift that may be developed by study, but which study by
itself is, I think, incapable of creating. To put the whole thing in a
nutshell, this extraordinary artist is able to express at once the attitude
and the gesture of living beings, whether solemn or grotesque, and their
luminous coexistence in space.

VI. THE ANNALS OF WAR

Bulgaria, Turkey, the Crimea, and Spain have all in turn ministered
lavishly to the eye of Monsieur G.—or rather to the eye of that imaginary
artist whom we have agreed to call, for every now and then I am
reminded that, to give continued reassurance to his modesty, I have
promised to pretend that he does not exist. I have studied his archives
of the Eastern War—battlefields littered with the debris of death,
baggage-trains, shipments of cattle and horses; they are tabulae vivants
of an astonishing vitality, traced from life itself, uniquely picturesque
fragments which many a renowned painter would in the same circum-
stances have stupidly overlooked. (I would, however, listen to make
an exception of M. Horace Vernet, a military historian rather than
essentially a painter, with whom Monsieur G., albeit a subtle artist,
has manifest affinities if you are only considering him as an archivist of
life.) I am ready to declare that no newspaper, no written account, no
book has unfolded so well, in all its painful detail and melancholy scope,
the great epic poem of the Crimea. The eye wanders from the banks of
the Danube to the shores of the Bosphorus, from Cape Kertov to the

The Painter of Modern Life plains of Balaklava, from the plains of Inkermann to the encampments
of the English, French, Turks and Piedmontese, from the streets of
Constantinople to hospital wards and all the splendour of religious and
military ceremonial.

One of these drawings most vividly imprinted on my mind represents
the Construction of the Burial-ground at Scutari by the Bishop of Gibraltar.

The picturesque essence of the scene, which lies in the contrast between
its Eastern setting and the Western uniforms and attitudes of those taking
part, is realized in an arresting manner, pregnant with dreams and
evocations. The officers and men have that ineradicable air of being
gentlemen—a mixture of boldness and reserve—which they carry with
them to the ends of the earth, as far as the garrisons of the Cape Colony
and the cantonments of India; and the English clergyman give one a
vague impression of being beadle or money-changers who have put
on caps and gowns.

And now we are at Scutria, enjoying the hospitality of Omer Pasha
—Turkish hospitality, pipes and coffee; the guests are all disposed on
divans, holding to their lips pipes long as speaking-tubes whose bowls
lie on the ground at their feet. And here are the Kurds at Scutari, three
weird-looking troops whose appearance puts one in mind of some
barbarian invasion; or if you prefer, the Bashsi-Bazouks, no less extra-
ordinary, with their Hungarian or Polish officers whose damned faces
make a peculiar contrast with the baroquely Oriental character of their
men.

I remember a magnificent drawing, which shows a single figure
standing, a large, sturdy man, looking at once thoughtful, unconcerned
and bold; he wears top-boots which extend to above his knees; his
uniform is concealed beneath an enormous, heavy, tightly-buttoned
greatcoat; he is gazing through the smoke of his cigar at the threatening
military horizon; a wounded arm is carried in a sling. At the bottom of
the drawing is the following scribbled inscription: Cambray on the battlefield
of Inkermann. Taken as the spot.

Who is this white-moustached cavalry-officer, with so vividly-drawn
an expression, who, with lifted head, seems to be savouring all the
dreadful poetry of a battlefield, while his horse, sniffing the ground, is
picking its way among the corpses heaped up with feet in air, shrunken

1 J.L.N. 9 June 1855. 3 J.L.N. 4 March 1854. 4 J.L.N. 24 June 1854.
the name of illusions. It is the joy of astonishing others, and the proud satisfaction of never oneself being astonished. A dandy may be blase, he may even suffer; but in this case, he will smile like the Spartan boy under the fox’s tooth.

It can be seen how, at certain points, dandyism borders upon the spiritual and stoidal. But a dandy can never be a vulgaris. If he committed a crime, it would perhaps not ruin him; but if his crime resulted from some trivial cause, his disgrace would be irreparable. Let not the reader be scandalised by this gravity amid the frivolous; let him rather recall that there is a grandeur in all follies, an energy in all excess. A weird kind of spiritualism, it must be admitted! For those who are at once its priests and its victims, all the complicated material conditions to which they submit, from an impeccable toilet at every hour of the day and the night to the most perilous feats of the sporting field, are no more than a system of gymnastics designed to fortify the will and discipline the soul. In truth I was not altogether wrong to consider dandyism as a kind of religion. The strictest monastic rule, the ineradicable order of the Assassins according to which the penalty for drunkenness was enforced suicide, were no more despotic, and no more obeyed, than this doctrine of elegance and originality, which also imposes upon its humble and ambitious disciples—men often full of fire, passion, courage and restrained energy—the terrible formula: Per se et adaequant!

Whether these men are nicknamed exquisites, incredibles, beaux, lions or dandies, they all spring from the same womb; they all partake of the same characteristic quality of opposition and revolt; they are all representatives of what is finest in human pride, of that compelling need, alas only too rare today!, of combating and destroying triviality. It is from this that the dandies obtain that haughty exclusiveness, provocative in its very coldness. Dandyism appears above all in periods of transition, when democracy is not yet all-powerful, and aristocracy is only just beginning to totter and fall. In the disorder of these times, certain men who are socially, politically and financially ill at ease, but are all rich in native energy, may conceive the idea of establishing a new kind of aristocracy, all the more difficult to shatter as it will be based on the most precious, the most enduring faculties, and on the divine gifts which work and money are unable to bestow. Dandyism is the last spark of heroism amid decadence; and the type of dandy discovered by our traveller in North America does nothing to invalidate this idea.

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how can we be sure that those tribes which we call ‘savage’ may not in fact be the disciplae membri of great extinct civilisations? Dandyism is a sunset; like the declining daystar, it is glorious, without heat and full of melancholy. But alas, the rising tide of democracy, which invades and levels everything, is daily overwhelming these last representatives of human pride and pouring floods of oblivion upon the footprints of these stupendous warriors. Dandies are becoming rarer and rarer in our country, whereas amongst our neighbours in England the social system and the constitution (the true constitution, I mean: the constitution which expresses itself through behaviour) will for a long time yet allow a place for the descendants of Sheridan, Brummel and Byron, granted at least that men are born who are worthy of such a heritage.

What to the reader may have seemed a digression is not so in truth. The moral reflections and considerations provoked by an artist’s drawings are in many cases the best translation of them that criticism can make; such suggestions form part of an underlying idea which begins to emerge as they are set out one after the other. It is hardly necessary to say that when Monsieur G. sketches one of his dandies on the paper, he never fails to give him his historical personality—his legendary personality, I would venture to say, if we were not speaking of the present time and of things generally considered as frivolous. Nothing is missed: his lightness of step, his social aplomb, the simplicity in his air of authority, his way of wearing a coat or riding a horse, his bodily attitudes which are always relaxed but betray an inner energy, so that when your eye lights upon one of those privileged beings in whom the graceful and the formidable are so mysteriously blended, you think: ‘A rich man perhaps, but more likely an out-of-work Hercules’.

The distinguishing characteristic of the dandy’s beauty consists above all in an air of coldness which comes from an unshakeable determination not to be moved; you might call it a latent fire which hints at itself, and which could, but chooses not to burst into flame. It is this quality which these pictures express so perfectly.

X. WOMAN

The being who, for the majority of men, is the source of the liveliest and even—be it said to the shame of philosophic pleasures—of the most
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lasting delights; the being towards whom, or on behalf of whom, all their efforts are directed; that being as terrible and incomprehensible as the Deity (with this difference, that the Infinite does not communicate because it would thereby blind and overwhelm the finite, whereas the creature of whom we are speaking is perhaps only incomprehensible because it has nothing to communicate); that being in whom Joseph de Maistre saw a graceful animal whose beauty enchained and made easier the serious game of politics; for whom, and through whom, fortunes are made and unmade; for whom, but above all through whom, artists and poets create their most exquisite jewels; the source of the most exhausting pleasures and the most productive pains—Woman, in a word, for the artist in general, and Monsieur G. in particular, is far more than just the female of Man. Rather she is a divinity, a star, which presides at all the conceptions of the brain of man; a glittering conglomeration of all the graces of Nature, condensed into a single being; the object of the keenest admiration and curiosity that the picture of life can offer its contemplator. She is a kind of idol, stupid perhaps, but dazzling and bewitching, who holds wills and destinies suspended on her glance. She is not, I must admit, an animal whose component parts, correctly assembled, provide a perfect example of harmony; she is not even that type of pure beauty which the sculptor can mentally evoke in the course of his sternest meditations; nor, I think, would still not be sufficient to explain her mysterious and complex spell. We are not concerned here with Winckelmann and Raphael; and I hope that I shall not appear to wrong him when I say that despite the wide range of his intelligence, I feel sure that Monsieur G. would willingly pass over a fragment of antique statuary if otherwise he might let slip an opportunity of enjoying a portrait by Reynolds or Lawrence. Everything that adorns woman, everything that serves to show off her beauty, s part of herself; and those artists who have made a particular study of this enigmatic being owe no less on all the details of the mundus artificis than on Woman herself. No doubt Woman is sometimes a light, a glance, an invitation to happiness, sometimes just a word; but above all she is a general harmony, not only in her bearing and the way in which she moves and walks, but also in the muscules, the veins, the vast, indescribible clouds of stuff in which she envelops herself, and which are as it were the attributes and the pedestal of her divinity; in the metal and the mineral which twist and turn around her arms and her neck, adding their sparks to the fire of her glance, or gently whispering at her ears. What poet, in sitting down to paint the pleasure caused by the sight of a beautiful woman, would venture to separate her from her costume? Where is the man who, in the street, at the theatre, or in the park, has not in the most disinterested of ways enjoyed a skilfully composed toilette, and has not taken away with him a picture of it which is inseparable from the beauty of her to whom it belonged, making thus of the two things—the woman and her dress—an indivisible unity? This is the moment, it seems to me, to return to certain questions concerning fashion and finery which I did no more than touch upon at the beginning of this study, and to vindicate the art of the dressing-table from the farrago of slander with which certain very dubious lovers of Nature have attacked it.

XI. IN PRAISE OF COSMETICS

I REMEMBER a song, so worthless and silly that it seems hardly proper to quote from it in a work which has some pretensions to seriousness, but which nevertheless expresses very well, in its vaudeville manner, the aesthetic creed of people who do not think. 'Nature embellishes Beauty', it runs. It is of course to be presumed that, had he known how to write in French, the poet would rather have said 'Simplicity embellishes Beauty', which is equivalent to the following startling new truth: 'Nothing embellishes something.'

The majority of errors in the field of aesthetics spring from the eighteenth century's false premises in the field of ethics.1 At that time Nature was taken as ground, source and type of all possible Good and Beauty. The negation of original sin played no small part in the general blindness of that period. But if we are prepared to refer simply to the facts, which are manifest to the experience of all ages no less than to the readers of the Law Reports, we shall see that Nature teaches us nothing, or practically nothing. I admit that she compels man to sleep, to eat, to drink, and to arm himself as well as he may against the inclemencies of the weather: but it is she too who incites man to murder

1 Here Baudelaire is following the ideas expressed by Joseph de Maistre in Les Saisies de Saint-Pétersbourg. On Baudelaire's general debt to the ideas of de Maistre, see Gillman, pp. 64-66.
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his brother, to eat him, to lock him up and to torture him; for no sooner do we take leave of the domain of needs and necessities to enter that of pleasures and luxury than we see that Nature can counsel nothing but crime. It is this infallible Mother Nature who has created patricide and cannibalism, and a thousand other abominations that both shame and modesty prevent us from naming. On the other hand it is philosophy (I speak of good philosophy) and religion which command us to look after our parents when they are poor and infirm. Nature, being none other than the voice of our own self-interest, would have us slaughter them. I ask you to review and scrutinize whatever is natural—all the actions and desires of the purely natural man: you will find nothing but frightfulness. Everything beautiful and noble is the result of reason and calculation. Crime, of which the human animal has learned the taste in his mother's womb, is natural by origin. Virtue, on the other hand, is artificial, supernatural, since at all times and in all places, gods and prophets have been needed to teach us to animallized humanity, man being powerless to discover it by himself. Evil happens without effort, naturally, far cry; Good is always the product of some art. All that I am saying about Nature as a bad counsellor in moral matters, and about Reason as a true redeemer and reformer, can be applied to the realm of Beauty. I am thus led to regard external finery as one of the signs of the primitive nobility of the human soul. Those races which our confused and perverted civilization is pleased to treat as savage, with an altogether ludicrous pride and complacency, understand, just as the child understands, the lofty spiritual significance of the toilet. In their naif adoration of what is brilliant—many-coloured feathers, iridescent fabrics, the incomparable majesty of artificial forms—the baby and the savage bear witness to their disgust of the real, and thus give proof, without knowing it, of the immateriality of their soul. Woe to him who, like Louis XV (the product not of a true civilization but of a recrudescence of barbarism), carries his degeneracy to the point of no longer having a taste for anything but nature unabombed.*

Fashion should thus be considered as a symptom of the taste for the ideal which floats on the surface of all the crude, terrestrial and loath-

* We know that when she wished to avoid receiving the king. Mme Dubarry made a point of putting on rouge. It was quite enough; it was her way of closing the door. It was in fact by beautifying herself that she used to frighten away her royal disciple of nature. (C.B.)
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represent life, a supernatural and excessive life: its black frame renders the glance more penetrating and individual, and gives the eye a more decisive appearance of a window open upon the infinite; and the rouge which sets fire to the cheek-bone only goes to increase the brightness of the pupil and adds to the face of a beautiful woman the mysterious passion of the priestess.

Thus, if you will understand me aright, face-painting should not be used with the vulgar, unavoidable object of imitating fair Nature and of entering into competition with youth. It has moreover been remarked that artifice cannot lend charm to ugliness and can only serve beauty. Who would dare to assign to art the sterile function of imitating Nature? Masquillage has no need to hide itself or to shrink from being suspected; on the contrary, let it display itself, at least if it does so with frankness and honesty.

I am perfectly happy for those whose owlish gravity prevents them from seeking Beauty in its most minute manifestations to laugh at these reflections of mine and to accuse them of a childish self-importance; their austere verdict leaves me quite unmoved; I content myself with appealing to true artists as well as to those women themselves who, having received at birth a spark of that sacred flame, would tend it so that their whole beings were on fire with it.

XII. WOMEN AND PROSTITUTES

Having taken upon himself the task of seeking out and expounding the beauty in modernity, Monsieur G. is thus particularly given to portraying women who are elaborately dressed and embellished by all the rites of artifice, to whatever social station they may belong. Moreover in the complete assemblage of his works, no less than in the swarming ant-hill of human life itself, differences of class and breed are made immediately obvious to the spectator's eye, in whatever luxurious trappings the subjects may be decked.

At one moment, bathed in the diffused brightness of an auditorium, it is young women of the most fashionable society, receiving and reflecting the light with their eyes, their jewelry and their snowy, white shoulders, as glorious as portraits framed in their boxes. Some are grave and serious, others blonde and brainless. Some flaunt precocious bosoms with an aristocratic unconcern, others frankly display the chests of young boys. They tap their teeth with their fans, while their gaze is vacant or set; they are as solemn and stagey as the play or opera that they are pretending to follow.

Next we watch elegant families strolling at leisure in the walks of a public garden, the wives leaning calmly on the arms of their husbands, whose solid and complacent air tells of a fortune made and their resulting self-esteem. Proud distinction has given way to a comfortable affluence. Meanwhile skinny little girls with billowing petticoats, who by their figures and gestures put one in mind of little women, are skipping, playing with hoops or gravely paying social calls in the open air, thus rehearsing the comedy performed at home by their parents.

Now for a moment we move to a lowlier theatrical world where the little dancers, frail, slender, hardly more than children, but proud of appearing at last in the blaze of the limelight, are shaking upon their virgin, puny shoulders absurd fancy-dresses which belong to no period, and are their joy and their delight.

Or at a café door, as he lounges against the windows lit from within and without, we watch the display of one of those half-wit peacocks whose elegance is the creation of his tailor and whose head of his mistress. Beside him, her feet supported on the inevitable footstool, sits his mistress, a great baggage who lacks practically nothing to make her into a great lady—that 'practically nothing' being in fact 'practically everything', for it is distinzione. Like her dainty companion, she has an enormous cigar entirely filling the aperture of her tiny mouth. These two beings have not a single thought in their heads. Is it even certain that they can see? Unless, like Narcissus of imbecility, they are gazing at the crowd as at a river which reflects their own image. In truth, they exist very much more for the pleasure of the observer than for their own.

And now the doors are being thrown open at Valentino's, at the Prado, or the Casino (where formerly it would have been the Tivoli, the Idallic, the Folies and the Papadis)—those Bedlam's where the exuberance of idle youth is given free rein. Women who have exaggerated the fashion to the extent of perverting its charm and totally destroying its aims, are ostentatiously sweeping the floor with their trains and the fringes of their shawls; they come and go, pass and repass.
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opening an astonished eye like animals, giving an impression of total blindness, but missing nothing.

Against a background of hellish light, or if you prefer, an aurora borealis—red, orange, sulphur-yellow, pink (to express an idea of ecstasy amid frivolity), and sometimes purple (the favourite colour of canonnies, like dying embers seen through a blue curtain)—against magical backgrounds such as these, which remind one of variegated Bengal Lights, there arises the Protean image of wanton beauty. Now she is majestic, now playful; now slender, even to the point of skininess, now cyclopean; now tiny and sparkling, now heavy and monumental. She has discovered for herself a provocative and barbaric sort of elegance, or else she aspires, with more or less success, towards the simplicity which is customary in a better world. She advances towards us, glides, dances, or moves about with her burden of embroidered peticoats, which play the part at once of pedestal and balancing-rod; her eye flashes out from under her hat, like a portrait in its frame. She is a perfect image of the savagery that lurks in the midst of civilization. She has her own sort of beauty, which comes to her from Eulal always devoid of spirituality, but sometimes tinged with a weariness which imitates true melancholy. She directs her gaze at the horizon, like a beast of prey; the same wilfulness, the same lazy absent-mindedness, and also, at times, the same fixity of attention. She is a sort of gipsy wandering on the fringes of a regular society, and the triviality of her life, which is one of warfare and cunning, family grins through its envelope of show. The following words of that inimitable master, La Bruyère, may be justly applied to her: 'Some women possess an artificial nobility which is associated with a movement of the eye, a tilt of the head, a manner of deportment, and which goes no further.'

These reflections concerning the courtesan are applicable within certain limits to the actress also; for she too is a creature of show, an object of public pleasure. Here however the conquest and the prize are of a nobler and more spiritual kind. With her it is a question of winning the heart of the public not only by means of sheer physical beauty, but also through talents of the rarest order. If in one aspect the actress is akin to the courtesan, in another she comes close to the poet. We must never forget that quite apart from natural, and even artificial beauty, each human being bears the distinctive stamp of his trade, a characteristic which can be translated into physical ugliness, but also into a sort of 'professional' beauty.

In that vast picture-gallery which is life in London or Paris, we shall meet with all the various types of fallen womanhood—of woman in revolt against society—at all levels. First we see the courtesan in her prime, striving after patrician airs, proud at once of her youth and the luxury into which she puts all her soul and all her genius, as she deliberately uses two fingers to tuck in a wide panel of silk, satin or velvet which billows around her, or points a toe whose over-ornate shoe would be enough to betray her for what she is, if the somewhat unnecessary extravagance of her whole toilette had not done so already. Descending the scale, we come down to the poor slaves of those filthy stews which are often, however, decorated like cafés; hapless wenches, subject to the most extortionate restraint, possessing nothing of their own, not even the eccentric finery which serves as spice and setting to their beauty.

Some of these, examples of an innocent and monstrous self-conceit, express in their faces and their bold, uplifted glances an obvious joy at being alive (and indeed, one wonders why). Sometimes, quite by chance, they achieve poses of a daring and nobility to enchant the most sensitive of sculptors, if the sculptors of today were sufficiently bold and imaginative to seize upon nobility wherever it was to be found, even in the mire; at other times they display themselves in hopeless attitudes of boredom, in bouts of tap-room apathy, almost masculine in their brazenness, killing time with cigarettes, orientally resigned—stretched out, sprawling on settees, their skirts looped up in front and behind like a double fan, or else precariously balanced on stools and chairs; sluggish, glum, stupid, extravagant, their eyes glazed with brandy and their foreheads swelling with obstinate pride. We have climbed down to the last lap of the spiral, down to the femina simplex of the Roman satirist. And now, sketched against an atmospheric background in which both tobacco and alcohol have mingled their fumes, we see the emaciated flask of consumption or the rounded contours of obesity, that hideous health of the slothful. In a foggy, gilded chaos, whose very existence is unsuspected by the chaste and the poor, we assist at the Dervish dances of macabre nymphs and living dolls whose childish eyes betray a sinister glitter, while behind a bottle-laden counter there lolls in state an enormous Xanthippe whose head, wrapped in a dirty

1 See pl. 18.
2 Juvenal, Satire VI.
kercortic, casts upon the wall a satanically pointed shadow, thus reminding us that everything that is consecrated to Evil is condemned to wear horns.\footnote{1}{See pl. 19.}

Please do not think that it was in order to gratify the reader, any more than to scandalize him, that I have spread before his eyes pictures such as these; in either case this would have been to treat him with less than due respect. What in fact gives these works their value and, as it were, sanctifies them is the wealth of thoughts to which they give rise—thoughts however which are generally solemn and dark. If by chance anyone should be so ill-advised as to seek here an opportunity of satisfying his unhealthy curiosity, I must in all charity warn him that he will find nothing whatever to stimulate the sickness of his imagination. He will find nothing but the inevitable image of vice, the demon’s eye ambushed in the shadows of Messalina’s shoulder gleaming under the gas; nothing but pure art, by which I mean the special beauty of evil, the beautiful amid the horrible. In fact, if I may repeat myself in passing, the general feeling which emanates from all this chaos partakes more of gloom than of gaiety. It is their moral fecklessness which gives these drawings their special beauty. They are heavy with suggestion, but cruel, harsh suggestion which my pen, accustomed though it is to grappling with the plastic arts, has perhaps interpreted only too inadequately.

XIII. CARRIAGES

And so they run on, those endless galleries of high and low life, branching off at intervals into innumerable tributaries and backwaters. For the few minutes that remain, let us leave them for a world which, if not exactly pure, is at any rate more refined; a world where we shall breathe perfumes not perhaps more healthful, but least more delicate. I have already remarked that the brush of Monsieur G., like that of Eugène Lami, is marvellously skilled at portraying the rites of dandyism and the elegance of foppery. The physical attitudes of the rich are familiar to him; with a light stroke of the pen and a sureness of touch which never deserts him, he is able to give us that assurance of glance, gesture