

REALISM AND NATURALISM

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THE GENERATION OF 1830 AND THE CRISIS IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

ROMANTICISM AND THE CRISIS OF MEANING

THE POPULARITY OF EARLY NINETEENTH-century landscape painting would probably have surprised its creators; it is now admired for precisely those qualities that were once most disparaged—abstraction and expression. “The great vice of the present day,” wrote Constable himself in 1802, “is *bravura*, an attempt to do something beyond the truth.” A generation later, Friedrich wrote: “It is the [unfortunate] taste of our time to relish strong colors. Painters outdo one another in applying make-up to cheeks and lips in their paintings; the landscape painters carry exaggeration even further and put make-up on trees, rocks, water and air. . . . Landscape painting these days no longer aims for a spiritual conception of its subject.” In contrast to this nineteenth-century unease, the twentieth century has embraced *bravura* and exaggeration in landscape; Turner, Constable, and Friedrich have been celebrated as prescient forerunners of the Impressionists and the Expressionists, and their virtuosity is seen as its own justification. Indeed, we are moved, and assured of Constable’s integrity, when in 122 *Hadleigh Castle* (1829) he loosens his hold on mimesis and paints his feelings; we receive a shock of recognition, and are convinced he is speaking to posterity when he writes in 1821: “Painting is for me but another word for feeling.”

More than any previous generation of artists and writers, the Romantics prized personal autonomy and creative originality. Conceiving themselves independent geniuses above the common mien, they claimed to possess the almost divine gift of Imagination, which offered, as Blake wrote: “A Representation of what Eternally Exists, Really and Unchangeably.” As Blake’s, Constable’s, Ruskin’s, and Friedrich’s

remarks suggest, the Romantics were not proclaiming unfettered artistic abstraction and license. Art must engage “what Eternally Exists” and it must also be more than sheer mimesis and personal expression. Even landscape painting—in a sense the genre most free of moral implications by virtue of its focus on the natural instead of the human world—was tasked by them with a public moral and ethical imperative beyond both virtuosity and expressivity. Ruskin exemplified this traditional and idealist view of art; he judged the landscape art of Turner “invaluable as the vehicle of thought but by itself nothing.” In *Modern Painters* (1843) he wrote that “all those excellencies which are peculiar to the painter as such, are merely what rhythm, melody, precision and force are in the words of the orator and the poet, necessary to their greatness, but not the test of their greatness. It is not by the mode of representing and saying, but by what is represented and said, that the respective greatness either of the painter or the writer is to be finally determined.”

Ruskin’s view that the artist had a responsibility to imitate the essential truths of society, as he elsewhere wrote—and not just the appearance of nature—was shared even by those with very different politics and tastes. Although Constable was a Tory and Ruskin an early Socialist, the painter shared the critic’s belief in the moral and ethical responsibility of landscape painters. It was his ambition, we have seen, scientifically to record, for purposes of instruction and moral suasion, his vision of England as richly productive, a land of social peace and hierarchic stability. Indeed, Constable’s “six-footers” were intended to carry the ideological burden of history paintings: they were to enshrine for future generations the conservative social vision of the class of industrious rural gentry to which the artist belonged.

In Germany, the landscapes of Friedrich were also

intended to offer moral lessons; the artist described his works as transcendental exercises with the potential to help overcome the spiritual alienation of individuals within society. "Close your eye," he instructed painters, "so that your picture will first appear before your mind's eye. Then bring to the light of day what you first saw in the inner darkness, and let it be reflected into the minds of others." The task of the painter was thus again, as with Constable, to reconcile self and other, self and society, nature and society through the unique procedures of landscape mimesis and idealization. The artist, the nature-philosopher F. W. Schelling wrote, must "withdraw himself from [nature] . . . but only in order to raise himself to the creative energy and to seize [it] spiritually. Thus he ascends into the realm of pure ideas; he forsakes the creature, to regain it with thousandfold interest, and in this sense to return to nature." Schelling's language is abstract, but his injunction to artists is unmistakable: they must show us that transcendent truths do exist by creating works that are in equal parts ideal and real. Art is a means by which people can be made to understand that their freedom resides precisely in their submission to morality.

In sum then, we have seen that however experimental, virtuosic and original it may have been, English and German and also American landscape painting in the Romantic age was also expected to play an important discursive role in the unfolding of politics, ethics, and morality. Yet the very fact that painters and critics were beginning to notice a widening gap between artistic expressiveness and public meaning reveals that a cultural crisis was already underway. Increasingly estranged from a public they viewed as capricious and "simple minded" (in the English poet Shelley's phrase), artists were uncertain to whom exactly they owed allegiance. Increasingly subjected to the thrall of a market they saw as vulgar and factious, artists grew unsure about precisely how to measure their successes and failures. At once freed from oppressive structures of patronage and cut off from supportive communities, Romantic artists, finally, were unsure about just what values, morals, and precepts should be represented in their works. This crisis of cultural meaning, which ultimately led to the creation of a modern and critical nineteenth-century art, was nothing less than a crisis of the public sphere itself.

The "public sphere," writes the critical philosopher Jürgen Habermas, is "that realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body." In England, the Royal Academy exhibitions, established in 1768, were important arenas for the formation of a progressive bourgeois public sphere; there (as in the French Salon exhibitions inaugurated

a generation earlier) artists, patrons, and public could informally assemble to discuss, debate, and negotiate—through the medium of works of art—the new Enlightenment principles of liberty and equality, the hierarchies of class and gender, the roles of public and private authority, and the political structures of state and empire, among other issues. Artworks of every genre and description—especially history painting but also landscape—played parts in this drama of discursive exchange, helping to cement bourgeois class solidarity, and ultimately to secure its political hegemony. (A taste for art and literature, and the requisite skills of interpretation, was a measure of one's status within the bourgeoisie, and thus too an instrument of cultural power.) Ideally suited—by virtue of its simultaneously empirical and commodity character—to its role within the bourgeois public sphere, painting played a pivotal cultural part in the unfolding of world historical events in the eighteenth century. That elevated cultural status, however, could not outlive the public sphere itself.

What a bourgeois public sphere cannot tolerate is the intrusion of cultural and class factions whose beliefs and attitudes contradict its own cherished notions of reason and common sense. This was precisely what began to occur in England and France in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century. By around 1820, the temper of public life in England had indeed changed: trade unions, working-class corresponding (debating) societies, utopian socialism, dissenting churches, feminism, and an expanding radical press were signals of the decline of consensual politics and the breakup of the bourgeois public sphere that had prevailed (though not without significant strains) for a hundred years. The task of the bourgeois public sphere—debate, negotiation, and consensus building among like-minded men—had become a paralyzing and debilitating burden in the midst of a social totality fractured by working-class dissent. The later landscape paintings of Constable may be seen as a symptom of the crisis. In the midst of rural revolt and economic hard times in 1823, Constable wrote to his friend Archdeacon Fisher: "Though I am here in the midst of the world, I am out of it, and am happy, and endeavour to keep myself unspotted. I have a kingdom of my own, both fertile and populous—my landscape and my children." Indeed, it was precisely Constable's attempt to keep his art "unspotted" by the plagues of insurrection and Luddism that, as we saw in an earlier chapter, precipitated the dichotomy of representation and abstraction in his last works. That division, prefigured nearly a generation before in the recondite and mystic imagery of William Blake, would soon come to dominate English and especially French nineteenth-century art. The accepted name for the phenomenon—whereby the truth of a representation is doubted and the materiality of its form embraced—is

"modernism"; it arose wherever a well-entrenched set of cultural traditions (for example, those associated with the term Classicism) collided with a new complex of social and political hierarchies.

Constable's artistic crisis, therefore, which I see as foreshadowing the exigencies of many subsequent European and American artists, was also a public sphere crisis. His historical situation and painterly response may be summed up as follows: the breakdown of political consensus—long in coming but accelerated by the boom and bust cycle of the 1820's—was marked by the rise of working-class "combinations," the growth of rural radicalism, and demands for economic and political enfranchisement. In the face of these challenges, the Tory Constable retreated more and more into an expressive, confessional, and idiosyncratic "kingdom of [his] own." Yet his quixotism was soon judged by critics to be a cipher of the very alienation Constable sought so desperately to fend off. "Nature [in Constable]," wrote the author of an 1837 obituary, "is one vast factory and every element in it condemned to perpetual toil." Constable's defensive response to political and cultural dissidence, in other words, was itself seen as dissident. How could the painter not retreat still further into the emotional sanctuary of "bravura" if even he was judged by his contemporaries to be radical?

In Constable's personally logical, but culturally ambiguous, response to the breakdown of the bourgeois public sphere, appears a premonition of the subsequent directions of nineteenth-century art. At once defensive and aggressive, conservative and radical, traditional and modern, Constable died at a time when art was undergoing an epochal transition. After the collapse of the bourgeois public sphere, painters and sculptors in England, France, the United States, and elsewhere in the West pursued several different but inevitably risk-filled and contradictory strategies.

1) Accepting without complaint the breakdown of the public sphere, many artists settled for a new, culturally diminished role for themselves. Ideologically plaint, culturally complacent, and stylistically eclectic, the art they made might be sponsored by the church or state, or produced "on spec." Regardless of its origin or destination, however, this work would always flatter and entertain. It might inform audiences of what they already knew, or cynically remind them of what they knew they were supposed to believe. The names given today to this varied art—which arose in France with Louis-Philippe and became anachronistic within two generations—are Academic and Official Painting. (The former is the art supported by the Académie des Beaux-Arts, the latter the art sponsored by the successive state administrations—the two were generally, but not always, in basic agreement.) With hindsight, Academic and Official Painting may be seen as early instances of "mass culture" or "kitsch;" they were part

of the French and European general provisions of bread and circuses intended to secure working-class and petit-bourgeois allegiance to capital. (A more or less straight line runs from the French Academician Paul Delaroche [1797–1856] to the Hollywood director Cecil B. DeMille). The historical origins and stylistic variety of this art will be explored later in this chapter under the subheading "Art of the July Monarchy" and in the next chapter (9), under "Individualism and Naturalism in French Salon Art."

2) Reasserting cultural authority and political engagement, a few artists embraced a newly emergent "counter-public sphere." By representing the interests of audiences, constituencies, and patrons from outside of the bourgeoisie—that is, from among the peasantry, proletariat, and petit bourgeoisie—artists once again created works that become vehicles for public and political debate, contest, and consensus. This ambitious direction in art, especially pronounced in France because of the salience of its revolutionary history, was fraught with personal and professional risk, because it generally fell foul of cultural, political, and military authority, and because it sought to address an audience lacking in political, financial, and critical wherewithal. As a result, this artistic mode—described below as Avant-Garde—was generally pursued only during periods of bourgeois vulnerability or subaltern empowerment. Avant-garde art arose in France during the Second Republic (1848–51); its great apostle was the Realist Gustave Courbet. Its re-emergence there some years later among Manet and the Impressionists and in Italy among the Macchiaioli was coincident with the decline and fall of the Second Empire (1870) and with the Italian movement for unification and independence called the Risorgimento. Moments of avant-garde volition are, however, visible (*avant la lettre*) earlier in the century—as we have seen with Goya and Géricault—and later, as in the works of Vincent Van Gogh, Georges Seurat, and perhaps Paul Gauguin.

3) Seeking no social or political role at all—neither within a "counter public sphere" nor within the domain of Official and Academic entertainment—a small but gradually expanding number of artists pursued the chimera of autonomy. Carefully cultivating their posture of expressive and ideological disinterest, they were sponsored by few and criticized by all. At once embracing and disdaining modern life, these artists sought sanctuary in remote places or among people without clearly fixed class allegiances or ideological identities—the lumpen-proletariat, the petit bourgeois, and foreign and domestic "primitives." This artistic route—the origins of which, as indicated above, may be traced back at least to Goya, Blake and Constable—is conventionally called "modernism." It flourished in periods of historical transition, political stasis, or cultural pessimism, especially during the Second Empire



178 HORACE VERNET *The Duc d'Orléans Proceeds to the Hôtel-de-Ville, July 31, 1830* 1833. 89¼ × 8' 4½
(228 × 258)

with Manet, and during the *fin-de-siècle* with the Symbolists. (The art of Edouard Manet, we shall discover, engaged all three of these strategies.)

Surrender, defiance, and withdrawal—these terms broadly represent the gamut of critical responses to the crisis brought about by the decline of the bourgeois public sphere in the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century. Academic and Official, Avant-Garde, and Modernist—these labels provide a framework for examining the visual arts of the middle and late years of the century; they also provide a vantage point from which to view the expanding critical consciousness of nineteenth-century art.

THE JULY MONARCHY AND THE ART OF JUSTE MILIEU

65 In France the crisis of the bourgeois public sphere grew acute in the years following the revolution of July 1830. Striving to reinvigorate the genre of history painting, Eugène Delacroix created *The 28th of July: Liberty Leading the People* in time for exhibition at the Salon of 1831. Far from the triumph he had

hoped for and expected, the picture was little short of a public disaster. Boldly painted with the discordant colors of the French *tricolore*, populated with workers, students, and bourgeois alike, *Liberty* was too literal a depiction of the sustaining myth that the July Revolution was the creation of all the classes of Paris acting in harmony. It was one thing for Delacroix to embrace, as the officially sanctioned Horace Vernet did in *The Duc d'Orléans Proceeds to the Hôtel-de-Ville, July 31, 1830* (1833), comforting homilies about solidarity, but quite another thing to see Liberty herself wearing the dissheveled costume of the proletariat: "Was there only this rabble . . ." asked Dumas, "at those famous days in July?" Although purchased (cheaply) by the French Interior Ministry and exhibited at the Musée Luxembourg in 1832, *Liberty* was thereafter secreted from sight out of fear that it would incite sedition. The concern was not unreasonable.

No longer the social *mélange*, or *sans-culottes* of 1789, the Paris workers who fought on the barricades in July were becoming self-conscious *prolétaires* (the term was first used in its modern sense by Auguste Blanqui in 1832). For them, the Revolution was fought not only for restoration of the constitutional charter usurped by the Bourbon Charles X, but

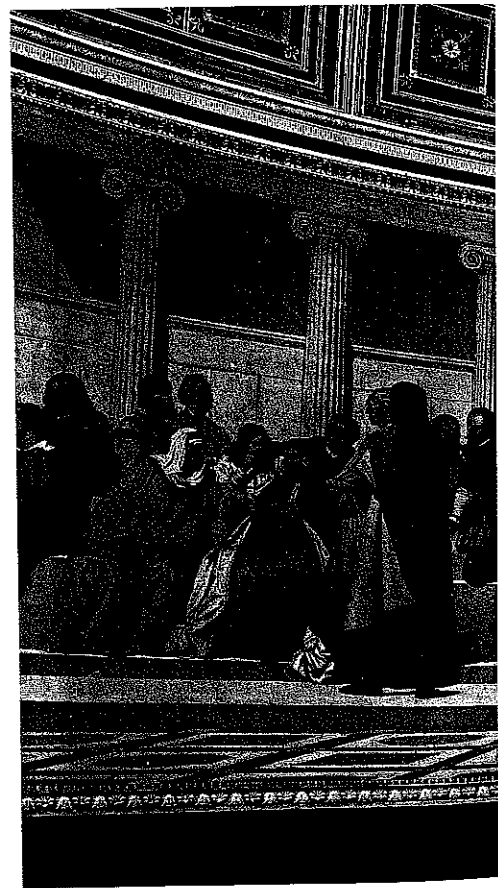
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179 HONORÉ DAUMIER *Rue Transnonain* April 15, 1834 1834. 11½ × 17¾
(29.2 × 44.8)

180 PAUL DELAROCHE *Artists of All Ages* 1836–41. 12'5 × 82'
(388.6 × 2499.4)

for the right to work, the right to a fair wage, and the right to organize trade unions. Within a year of the Revolution, a new round of insurrections had begun: in November 1831, the silk workers of Lyons were on strike in protest against economic *laissez-faire* and a low *tarif* (scale of wages for piece-work); in 1832, workers in Paris rose up in rebellion after the funeral of a popular Bonapartist general; in 1834, it was once again the turn of Lyons workers who, backed by a local Republican party, fought police and national troops in a six-day pitched battle which left hundreds dead. Within days of the Lyons uprising in April, workers in the French capital rose in anger at the closure of a radical newspaper and the arrest of the leaders of the proletarian Society of the Rights of Man. On April 14, barricades were erected by the workers to block the passage of troops through the proletarian *faubourgs* of Paris. The tactic was unsuccessful, however, and within a short time, the uprising was defeated and dozens of workers were dead on the streets or in their homes. The government massacre was depicted by the young caricaturist Honoré



179 Daumier (1808–79) in a large lithograph exhibited in a shop-
window in October, *Rue Transnonain April 15, 1834* (1834). A
few months later, a series of strict press censorship laws were
passed, and the facade of constitutionalism dropped. Neither
history paintings like Delacroix's, nor even political carica-
tures such as Daumier's "*You have the floor, explain yourself*"
(1835), created during the trial of the rebels of 1834, would be
permitted to engage the public sphere.

180 For nearly two decades following the July Revolution,
French painting and sculpture were severely circumscribed
by the policies and preferences of the French Académie and
the regime of Louis-Philippe. The Classical tradition—once
the grand, metaphoric language of enlightenment and revolu-
tion—was now compromised by bourgeois historicism, as in
Delaroche's semicircular mural painting *Artists of All Ages*
(1836–41). Created for the hemicycle auditorium in the Ecole
des Beaux-Arts in Paris, the work (more than eighty feet wide
at its base) depicts seventy-five figures representing the
progress of art from ancient to modern times. Unlike Ingres's
63 *Apotheosis of Homer*, however, which was its ostensible
inspiration, Delaroche's hemicycle is anecdotal and concilia-
tory. Here artists—from Cimabue to Puget—are seen
relaxing and kibitzing as if they were gathered during a theatre
intermission. The Romantic sculptor David d'Angers called it

a "scholarly genre painting," succinctly exposing its essen-
tially intimate (despite its size) and antiquarian character.

Just as the Classical tradition of art was giving way to
antique costume drama during the regime of Louis-Philippe,
so too history painting itself (*tableau d'histoire*) was giving way
to a hybridized historical genre painting (*genre historique*).
Seeking to discourage the creation of large-scaled, politically
tendentious subjects taken from Greek and Roman antiquity,
the state and the Academy encouraged instead the exhibition
and sale of easel-sized pictures representing nationalistic,
patriotic, and familial themes drawn from past and present
history. This new *genre historique*, as critics called it,
consonant with the historical writings of François Guizot,
Adolphe Thiers and Jules Michelet, emphasized the achieve-
ments of the *grands hommes* of French history, as well as
depicting the beliefs, manners, habits, and conditions of the
everyday people of the past. The political impetus behind
such works, represented by Ary Scheffer's (1795–1858)
sentimental *St. Augustine and St. Monica* (1846) and Jean-
Léon Gérôme's (1824–1904) lubricious *Cockfight* (1846), is of
course profoundly conservative. While the Scheffer, for
example, enshrines Catholicism and the Gérôme masculin-
ism, both occlude historical change by implicitly arguing
that the difference between the past and the present is only a

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181 ARY SCHEFFER *St. Augustine and St. Monica* 1854. 53½ × 41½ (135.2 × 104.7)

matter of costume. Unlike previous history paintings intended to function as *exemplum virtutis*, the *genre historique* was intended to elevate the present by diminishing the splendor and distinctiveness of the past. (Official and Academic painting was completely successful in this latter regard: by the time of Thomas Couture's *Romans of the Decadence* [1847, see pp. 202–05], the Classical vocabulary was suited, for the most part, only to irony, satire, and melodrama.)

The *genre historique* may be observed in the medium of sculpture as well as painting during the July Monarchy. Although exhibited at the pre-revolutionary Salon of 1827, 182 Félicie de Faveau's (1799–1866) plaster *Christina of Sweden Refusing to Give Mercy to Her Squire Monaldeschi* (ca. 1827) exemplifies the tendency in the 1830's for relief sculpture to become portable, anecdotal, historicist, and intimate. Her work is, however, a remarkable example of the genre, because of both its treatment and its theme. The relief is serious and restrained in its dramatic action and setting, consisting of two distinct but proximate figural groupings set against a blank background. The subject is no less compelling, representing an act of militancy and resolve, not unlike the actions of the

sculptor herself, who was briefly imprisoned in 1832 for her participation in a Bourbon Legitimist plot against Louis-Philippe.

More representative of July Monarchy sculpture, however, is the work of Antoine-Louis Barye (1796–1875). Like most sculptors of the period, Barye came from an artisanal background and maintained strong ties to the industrial and decorative arts traditions. He was a pioneer (along with the slightly older David d'Angers) in the revival of bronze sculpture, and was among the first serially to reproduce his designs in order to reach a large middle-class audience. Barye's class background, technical innovativeness, and longstanding association with unionized bronze-foundry workers, however, did not affect his thoroughly Orléanist political allegiances. His *Lion Crushing a Serpent* (1833), which won for him the *Légion d'honneur*, was widely regarded as an allegorical celebration of the July Revolution; it could be interpreted as the French people crushing the Bourbon dynasty, or alternatively as Orléanist law destroying Republican anarchy. (Both of these messages were fully consonant with Louis-Philippe's promotion of himself as the promulgator of moral order and national prosperity.) Although Barye thereafter only rarely ventured into the mode of political allegory, his many bronze sculptures of animals in combat appealed to the regime's taste for melodrama and scientific naturalism. Partly derived from ideal ancient and Renaissance prototypes, and partly from naturalist observation at the Paris Cabinet d'Anatomie Comparée (established in the late eighteenth century by Georges Cuvier), Barye's bronzes are thus the products of typical July Monarchy compromise.

Like Barye, most artists of the July Monarchy sought to achieve in their works the same *juste milieu* (golden mean) that the king was seeking to achieve in matters of state. Louis-Philippe saw his state as the preordained reconciliation of 1789 with the Restoration; his regime would pay homage to the memory of the heroic Bonaparte even as it set store by such men as the stolid bourgeois M. Louis-François Bertin, 184 painted by Ingres in 1832. Freedom and order, democracy and stability, science and faith, progress and business-as-usual—these were the paired pillars of the *juste milieu*, paralleling France's dual revolutionary and monarchical traditions. Thus the king and his *idéologues* (the term had been coined by Napoleon) courted both eclecticism and synthesis in their cultural and economic policies alike. Alongside the new industrialization grew parochial monopolies; among the new national banks arose domestic tariffs and foreign protectionism. Together with the Classicism of Ingres was the Romanticism of Delacroix; beside the official, Romantic idealism of Scheffer was the academic, Neoclassical verisimilitude of Gérôme.

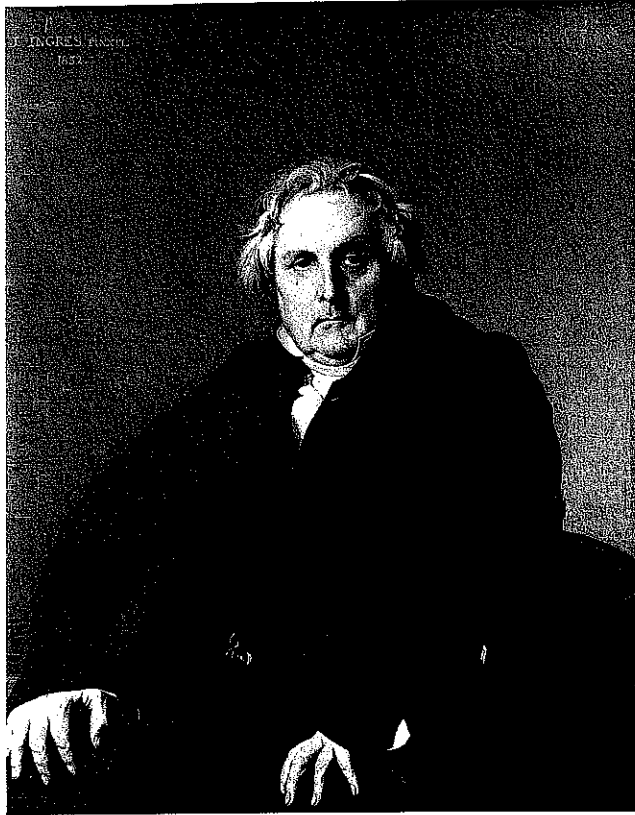
As Boime has shown, the politics and art generally pursued



182 FÉLICIE DE FAVEAU *Christina of Sweden Refusing to Give Mercy to Her Squire Monaldeschi* ca. 1827. $15\frac{1}{2} \times 22\frac{1}{4}$ (40 x 58)



183 ANTOINE-LOUIS BARYE *Lion Crushing a Serpent* 1883. Length 70 (177.8)



184 JEAN-AUGUSTE-DOMINIQUE INGRES *M. Louis-François Bertin*
1832. 46 x 37½ (116.8 x 95.3)

during the July Monarchy were those which harmoniously blended these irreconcilables. "Take a portion of monarchy, a portion of aristocracy and a portion of democracy," wrote the socialist and cynic Pierre Leroux in 1839, "and you will have the Restoration or the *juste milieu*, and that will be eclecticism." "Genius is a ready and sure perception of the right proportion [of] the ideal and the natural, form and thought," wrote the influential philosopher Victor Cousin in *Du vrai, du beau et du bien* (1853). "This union is the perfection of art: masterpieces are produced by observing it." Like *juste milieu* politics, however, *juste milieu* art was ultimately contradictory and unstable. Two cases in point, dating from the beginning and end of the July Monarchy, are David d'Angers's sculpted pediment for the Pantheon and Couture's painting for the Salon of 1847, *The Romans of the Decadence*.

THE PARADOX OF PATRIOTISM: D'ANGERS'S PANTHEON PEDIMENT

Begun in 1830, the year Delacroix was painting *Liberty Leading the People*, David d'Angers's pediment of the

Pantheon was an effort to engage the imagination and energy of a progressive and patriotic bourgeoisie. Like the painting, the relief combines real and allegorical figures in a stirring but heteroclitic ensemble. Like the painting too, the colossal sculpture was received by political moderates and conservatives with anger and incomprehension, revealing a widening schism in the public sphere. Beneath the relief appears an inscription which announces its theme: "AUX GRANDS HOMMES LA PATRIE RECONNAISSANTE" ("In gratitude to the great men of the Fatherland"). At the center of the pediment stands the allegorical figure of La Patrie, distributing laurel wreaths handed to her by Liberty, seated at her right. History sits at La Patrie's left, inscribing on a tablet the names of the *grands hommes* of military and civic affairs who are to be honored.

Military men occupy the right half of the pediment, led by the young Bonaparte, who reaches past History to take his crown. With the exception of the legendary drummer from the battle of Arcole, the remainder of the military figures are anonymous soldiers of the Revolution and Empire, assembled left to right, in decreasing order of rank. The men of civic and cultural affairs fill the left half of the pediment, and represent a liberal Enlightenment canon. They include Rousseau and Voltaire (seated side by side on a bench), J.-L. David (standing, with palette and brushes), the jurist and victim of the Terror Malesherbes (standing, with counselor's robes), and behind him the deputy Manuel, expelled in 1823 from the Chamber of Deputies for his opposition to French intervention on behalf of the monarchy in Spain. Among the others are Cuvier, the Archbishop Fénélon, and the Marquis de Lafayette, who was instrumental in conferring the crown on Louis-Philippe but who soon thereafter became disenchanted with the monarchy.

For the most part, David d'Angers's patriotic pantheon represents the range of his own generally liberal-to-Jacobin political sympathies, as well as reflecting the liberalism of the Orléans regime at its inception. (Even the inclusion of the monarchist Malesherbes does not detract from the overall left politics: he was as renowned for helping to end the issuance of *lettres de cachet* as for advocating the life of Louis XVI.) Yet the unanimity of artist, patron, and audience that underlay the program for the pediment would not survive 1830. As the revolutionary summer passed into a repressive winter and spring, d'Angers's cast of characters—like Delacroix's—was increasingly seen as tendentious, incendiary, or simply incoherent. Attempts were made by successive ministers of the interior in 1832–4 to block completion of the project, and the actual unveiling of the work was postponed in July 1837, probably out of nervousness over its political content. D'Angers was relentless, however, in his determination to finish and display his work, and in September 1837 he finally succeeded in having the obscuring canvas and scaffolding removed.



185 THOMAS COUTURE *Romans of the Decadence* 1847. 15'6½ × 25'10 (473.7 × 787.4)

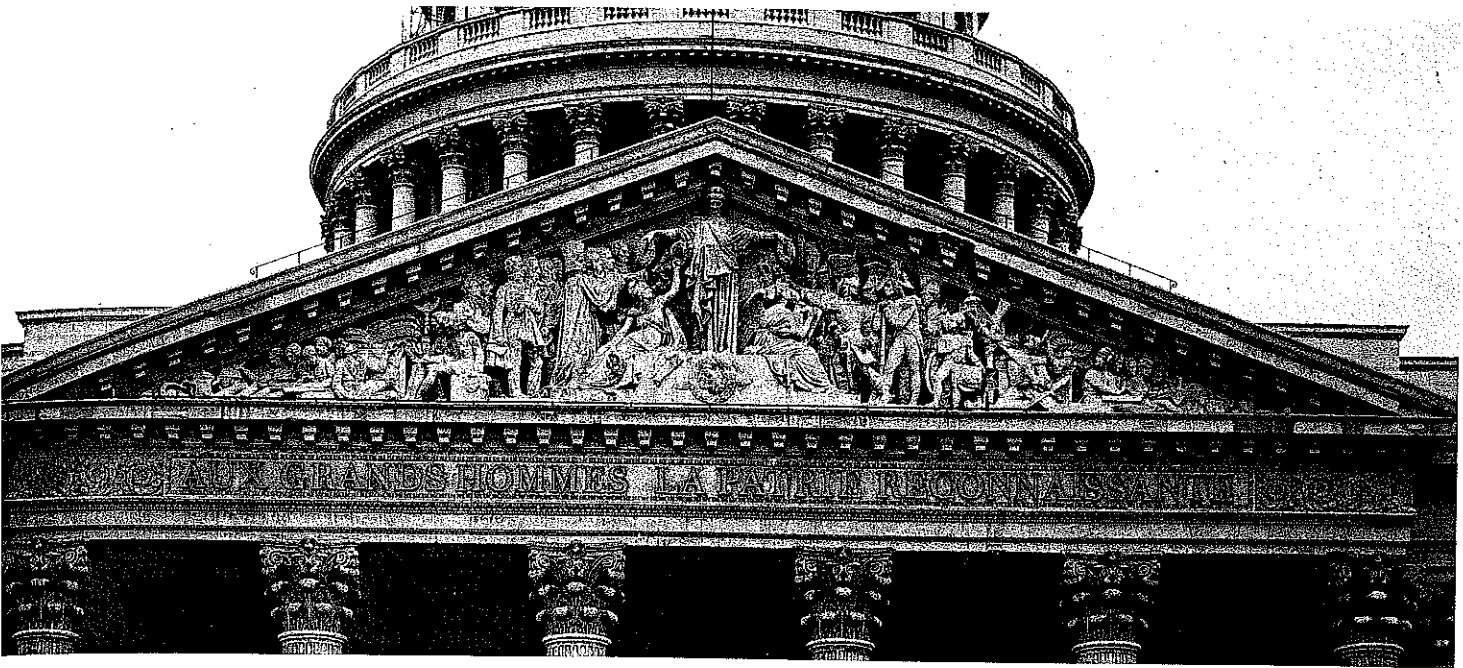
During the succeeding months and years, the Pantheon pediment was vehemently criticized from the Legitimist and Ultramontane right and the Orléanist center of the political spectrum. D'Angers's depiction of the atheists Voltaire and Rousseau among others, on the facade of a building originally consecrated in honor of Sainte-Geneviève (built 1755–80), was anathema to conservative Catholics, who included Queen Amélie. In addition, his embrace of the principles and personages of the Revolutions of 1789 and 1830 was seen in official circles as both anachronistic and provocative: anachronistic because the King had already rejected the very revolutionary principles that brought him to power, and provocative because a series of recent ministerial and economic crises threatened to precipitate a new uprising; reconciliation and quietism were now most wanted in the arts. As might be expected, therefore, the left (its voice, however, muted by press restrictions) was much more favorably disposed toward the pediment than the right, seeing in it a condemnation of Catholic revanchism, Orléanist authoritarianism and bourgeois corruption.

Yet it would probably be incorrect to view d'Angers's pediment as existing wholly outside the *juste milieu* ideological orbit. For one thing, its representation of the concept of *grands*

hommes was consonant with the historicist preoccupations of the Orléans court and its official historian, François Guizot. (We have already considered Delaroche's *Artists of All Ages* as one *juste milieu* result of that interest.) For another, d'Angers's creation of a bourgeois Enlightenment martyrology repudiates emerging radical ideas about the centrality of the proletariat in the revolutionary process, such as those held by Auguste Blanqui, represented by his friend the artist in 1840. Stylistically, too, the pediment is marked by *juste milieu* compromise, combining as it does Baroque Classicism with elements from the *genre historique*. Like his freestanding monument to Cuvier (1845), d'Angers's pediment possesses the majesty and hierarchism found in works by the greatest sculptors of the late *ancien régime*—especially Bouchardon, Pigalle, and Pajou—yet individual figures also display an informality, particularism, and even homeliness suggestive of works by Delaroche, Scheffer, and Gérôme, among others.

In one significant way, however, David d'Angers's version of *juste milieu* stands apart from that of his contemporaries, and anticipates an emerging attitude of avant-gardism: his best sculptures achieve their power and perspicacity by embracing popular artistic traditions outside of the official mainstream. The proportion, physiognomy, and placement of





187 PIERRE-JEAN DAVID D'ANGERS, the pediment of the Pantheon, Paris, 1830-37

figures in his pediment were probably influenced by the popular prints then being issued in great numbers from the town of Epinal in northeastern France. In d'Angers's pediment and in F. Geogin and J.-B. Thiébault's woodcut

188 *The Apotheosis of Napoleon* (1834), for example, the Academic canons of graceful human proportion are rejected in favor of more squat or compact formulae. In addition, both works employ perspective only minimally; this flatness is immediately apparent in the serried ranks of soldiers in the woodcut, but it is also visible in the sculpture. Instead of conceiving the pedimental space as coextensive with the actual three dimensions of the lived world, d'Angers had created a telescoped space of shallow planes in which figures are overlapped or superimposed, one above another. To some extent, this approach to composition is dictated by the peculiar triangular format, but d'Angers's stylistic populism

190 is equally apparent in his rectangular relief panels, such as *The Motherland Calling Her Children to the Defense of Liberty* (1835) in the vault of the Arc de Triomphe at the Gate of Aix, in Marseille. Here the heroic plebeians are jumbled together in shallow relief and comic cacophony, at once recalling the paintings of Pieter Breugel the Elder and anticipating the frescos of Diego Rivera.

David d'Angers's skill at synthesizing diverse styles and traditions was shared by two other outstanding sculptors of the July Monarchy—François Rude (1784-1855) and Antoine-Augustin Préault (1809-79). In Rude's famous

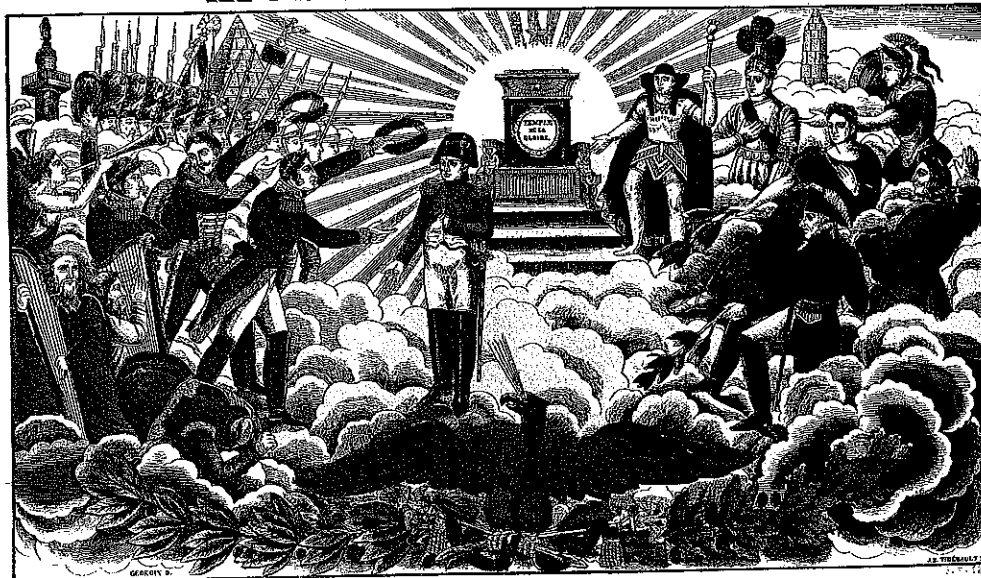
191 *Marseillaise* (or *The Departure of the Volunteers of 1792*, 1833-6), on the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, the sculptor depicts war

as an ugly siren calling the volunteers of '92 to order and arms. Part of an elaborate sculptural program intended to promote domestic tranquility, Rude's relief is marked at once by violence and humor. The figure of War above emits a blood-curdling alarm while the soldiers below react with confusion; their dishevelment and *déshabille* lends the scene a quotidianism that is at variance with its ostensible heroism. A similar combination of high and low, or ideal and anecdotal, elements may be seen in the work of Préault, who was for a time a student of d'Angers.

In Préault's plaster relief *Slaughter* (1833-4, later cast in bronze), the artist represents the massacre of a family by a helmeted warrior and a black man shown at the upper left. (The precise subject of the work, if there was one, remains unknown.) Though partly inspired by reliefs by the Baroque sculptors Pierre Puget and Alessandro Algardi, the work is remarkably abstract and experimental. The composition has the compactness of an ancient "episodic fragment of a low relief" (in the artist's words), and the flattened space of Epinal prints. Yet there is nothing static about *Slaughter*: indeed, its two-dimensionalism is almost Cubist in its jostling and juxtapositioning of forms and figures. (A century later, the figure of the screaming mother provided a model for Picasso's *Guernica*.) Préault's *Slaughter* did not find a sympathetic audience; after exhibiting it at the Salon of 1834 (the year of the slaughter of Transnonain), he was excluded from Salon exhibitions for the next fifteen years.

Less confrontational and better connected than his pupil, David d'Angers did not suffer a similar exile from patronage.

APOTHÉOSE DE NAPOLEON.



188 F. GEORGIN and J.-B. THIÉBAULT *The Apotheosis of Napoleon* 1834. 16 x 23 (40.6 x 58.2)



189 ANTOINE-AUGUSTIN PRÉAULT *Slaughter* 1833-4. 43 x 55 (109.2 x 139.7)



190 PIERRE-JEAN DAVID D'ANGERS *The Motherland Calling Her Children to the Defense of Liberty* 1835. 53½ × 10'11½ (135 × 333)

191 FRANÇOIS RUDE *The Marseillaise (The Departure of the Volunteers of 1792)* 1833-6. Height 42' (504)



However, for the remainder of his career after the Pantheon pediment he was forced to grapple with the political paradoxes of public sculpture. Indeed, it would seem that his very project had become untenable in the era in which it was conceived. The construction of an Enlightenment canon, the celebration of the principles of 1789, and the embrace of alternative or popular art traditions, were acts that engaged a progressive bourgeois public sphere that for the most part no longer existed. The insurrectionary events in Paris and Lyons had put an end to the myth of solidarity between classes on behalf of *liberté*. From now on, artists would either have to abjure highminded political principle or else embrace it and thereby unleash the very divisive ideological forces that the July Monarchy sought to control. The public sphere and the bourgeois *juste milieu*, in others words, were incompatible.

D'Angers's last years were marked by political engagement (he was elected a departmental deputy during the Second Republic) and artistic hope. His dream of a great *Monument to Emancipation*, however, would remain unfulfilled with the exception of a few drawings and models, while his small bronze medallions in commemoration of *grands hommes* would multiply to more than five hundred. In January 1841 he wrote to the German physician and painter Carl Gustav Carus (1789–1869) concerning a small terracotta statuette of Liberty: "I am very much afraid that the figure of Liberty that I am sending you will be confiscated by the German customs. The rulers of all countries fear it even in painting. They are right because Liberty is the sword of Damocles suspended continually above their heads. It is the powerful voice of humanity that will be heard some day from one end of the earth to the other." Within a decade, that voice would indeed be heard again in France, and a new, avant-garde art would be born in response.

THOMAS COUTURE: CLASSICISM AND THE WOMAN QUESTION

185-6 At the end of the July Monarchy, Thomas Couture (1815–79) painted *Romans of the Decadence* (1847) in an effort to revive monumental history painting for the public sphere. In many ways, as Boime has argued, the picture is a summation of *juste milieu* culture, combining history painting and the *genre historique*, Classicism and Romanticism, eroticism and sexual repression, political criticism and Orléanist ingratiation. At the Salon of 1847 it achieved a success as vast as its size and ambition, and was soon among the most widely admired, discussed, and reproduced paintings of the nineteenth century. Yet for all its celebrity, *Romans* was as much an end as a beginning; like d'Angers's Pantheon pediment, Couture's painting was contradictory and paradoxical, and may actually

have helped to destroy public, monumental, and Classicizing art in the attempt to save it.

Romans of the Decadence represents the debauched morning after an orgiastic night before. Within a columned hall, some forty figures in Roman costume are seen lounging, sleeping, dancing, embracing, or, in the case of the two standing men at the right, casting censorious glances. On the intarsia marble floor in the foreground is a still life of fruit, flowers, and amphoras. On the triclinium (three-sided sofa) in the middle-ground are the bulk of the figures, organized into large and small groups and appearing as a frieze parallel to the picture plane. Surrounding the revelers and bordering the chamber are alternating Corinthian columns and statues of august Romans, including Germanicus at the center of the picture. In the background is a courtyard or atrium, articulated with Classical columns, arches, pilasters, niches, cornices, and friezes.

Couture's bacchanal has formal and thematic antecedents in the work of the Renaissance artists Bellini, Titian, Raphael, and Veronese and in the painting of Géricault, Ingres, and Delacroix, among many others. Two especially apposite sources for *Romans* are Delacroix's *Women of Algiers* (1834) 192 and Dominique Papety's (1815–49) *The Dream of Happiness* 193 (1843). Together they provided a basis for Couture's attempted unification of Romantic color and Classical draftsmanship, as well as his idiosyncratic combination of sensualism and moral rectitude.

Delacroix's picture, inspired by the artist's visit to a Moroccan harem in 1832 (which in turn was made possible by the recent French occupation of the region) is a dream image of "Oriental" indolence. The three harem women and their servant are the embodiment of the European masculinist image of Middle Eastern and North African people as sensual and irrational. The third woman from the left, who is the source for the nude in profile at the center of *Romans*, holds the tube of a hookah, suggesting the timelessness of intoxication and sexual delight. Unlike Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People*, which honors the classes and heroic individuals that made the July Revolution, *Women of Algiers* celebrates social and cultural passivity: the Orient is vividly represented by the artist as a land of erotic freedom and languor outside of politics, history, and class. "It must be hard for them to understand," Delacroix wrote in his diary from Tangier, "the easy-going ways of Christians and the restlessness that sends us perpetually seeking after new ideas. We notice a thousand things in which they are lacking, but their ignorance is the foundation of their peace and happiness. Can it be that we have reached the end of what a more advanced civilization can produce?"

For Delacroix and a succession of Orientalists culminating in the Symbolist Paul Gauguin, "the East" functioned as an

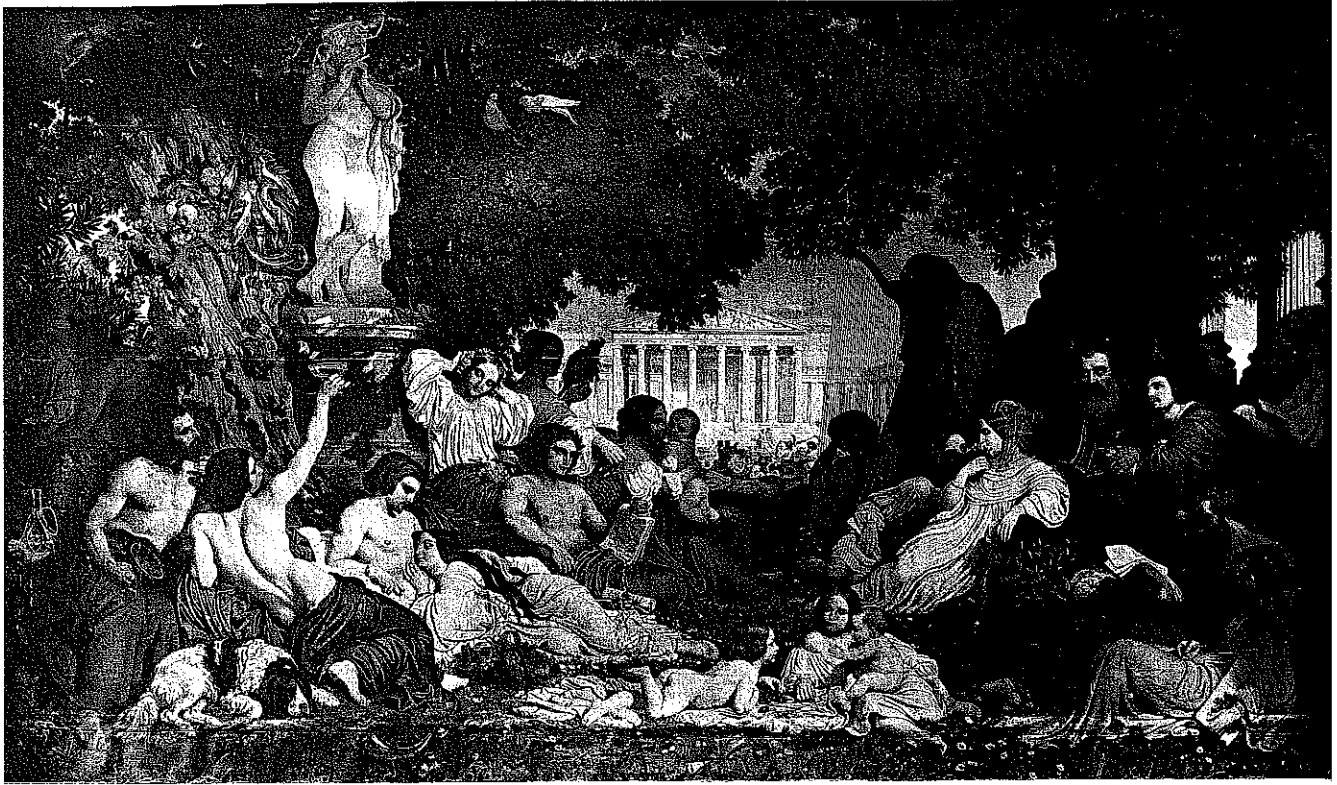


192 EUGÈNE DELACROIX *Women of Algiers* 1834. 70 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 90 $\frac{1}{2}$ (180 × 229)

ideal respite from the dispiriting sexual and ideological conflicts that existed in “the West.” Whereas in Paris women had begun articulating demands for the reform of property, child-custody, and divorce laws, in the East women appeared to be chattel slaves; whereas in Paris, the feminist and radical Flora Tristan (1803–44) published several tracts and a novel (*Méphis*, 1838) describing the liberation of women and the *prolétaire* as necessary and interrelated projects, in the Orient gender and class hierarchies appeared stable and timeless. Yet however racist and sexist it might be thought today, *Women of Algiers* is also a utopian tract. Like the Saint-Simonian philosopher Prosper Enfantin who dreamed in 1832 of a “beautiful army” of prostitutes destined to sanctify the flesh by fulfilling natural desire, Delacroix imagined a vividly colored Oriental utopia of feminine sexual pleasure in *Women of Algiers*. “This is a place for painters,” Delacroix wrote from Tangier. “Economists and Saint-Simonists would find much to criticize here, from the point of view of the rights of man and equality before the law, but beauty abounds. . . . Here you will see a nature which in our country is always disguised, here you will feel the rare and precious influence of the sun which gives an intense life to everything.” Delacroix’s *Women* is thus

both a testimonial to and a condemnation of the “advanced [European] civilization” of its day. In offered Couture a model of sexual blame and praise.

In Papety’s *The Dream of Happiness*, exhibited at the Salon of 1843, some two dozen men, women, and children rest, lounge, read, sing, and cavort in a bower framed by Classical sculpture and architecture. The picture is explicitly indebted to the utopian socialist doctrines of Charles Fourier (1772–1837), whose treatise *Unité universelle* is read by the young men and women at the lower right. Couture, who worked beside Papety in the studio of their teacher Delaroche, borrowed the motif of the young man offering a toast to the statue of a flute player, for his own semi-nude male toasting the statue of Germanicus in *Romans*. Like the *Women of Algiers*, *The Dream of Happiness* is located outside of European history; Papety represents a future utopia of abundance, peace, and pleasure modeled on an idealized past that combines the “noble simplicity and quiet grandeur” of the Classical age with the sumptuousness and indolence of the French *ancien régime*. *The Dream of Happiness* is a kind of *juste milieu* nudist colony, at once ascetic and libertine, which gave Couture a model marriage of conformism and liberalism.



193 DOMINIQUE PAPETY *The Dream of Happiness* 1843. 12'1¼ × 20'8 (370 × 635)

Although inspired by these and many other works, *Romans of the Decadence* has its own specific content and origins. Its subject was taken, according to the 1847 Salon catalog, from two verses of the Roman writer Juvenal's sixth *Satire*, "Against Women," which compares the "plague" of feminine sexuality and betrayal in his age to the "blessings" of feminine chastity and loyalty in an earlier time: "Now we suffer the evils of long peace. Luxury hatches terrors worse than war, avenging a world beaten down." Juvenal's misogynist paean is succinctly represented at the center of Couture's picture by a crucial juxtaposition: the reclining woman (identified by contemporaries as a courtesan) beneath the erect statue of Germanicus. Just as sexually demanding women destroyed the might of Rome—so the modern argument went—the courtesan threatens the nobility and honor of France. If the Classical tradition has been brought low, it is the fault of modern women. In Couture's *Romans*, in short, feminine sexuality is figured as tragic decadence.

Couture's reclining courtesan, along with the other sexually usurpatious women in the picture, is an important instance of the increasingly widespread representation of the erotic female as the embodiment of modern decadence and death. In *Romans*, as in the exactly contemporaneous *Woman Bitten by a Snake* by Jean-Baptiste Clésinger (1814–83) and *Two Young*

Girls or The Beautiful Rosine by the Belgian Antoine Wiertz (1806–65), Woman is the repository of bourgeois fear and masculine loathing; by her erotic independence she is both a threat to male political prerogatives and a mockery of masculine sexual desire. At the same time as these artists, the poet Charles Baudelaire was beginning to sketch the theme of the vicious courtesan for his *The Flowers of Evil* (*Les Fleurs du Mal*, 1861) and *Paris Spleen* (*Le Spleen de Paris*, 1869). Unlike Delacroix, who appears to revel in what he takes to be the sexual freedom of the harem, Baudelaire hates the prostitute for her resemblance to himself. Subjected to the vicissitudes of the marketplace, the prostitute's sexuality—like the journalist's independence—is a mere sham of freedom. Irony is thus the rhetoric of Baudelairean sexuality: "Not so many years ago," says one of the old roués in "Portraits of Mistresses" from *Paris Spleen*, "Fate granted me the possession of a woman who was without doubt the sweetest, the most submissive, and the most devoted creature in the world, and who was always ready! And without enthusiasm!" The woman in the center of *Romans of the Decadence*, by contrast, is not lacking enthusiasm: her ennui is only the result of her insatiety. "What impossible sensuality," asked the critic Théophile Gautier, "does she dream of after that night of orgiastic passions?"



194 JEAN-BAPTISTE CLÉSINGER *Woman Bitten by a Snake* 1847.
Length 31 (78.7)

195 ANTOINE WIERTZ *Two Young Girls or The Beautiful Rosine*
1847. 55½ × 39½ (140 × 100)

A year after the exhibition of *Romans*, the cliché of the temptress undermining virtue and ridiculing masculine desire would be supplemented by a still more virulent allegory: the modern prostitute would be identified with the radical proletariat leading society headlong to chaos and perdition. The origins of the “red whore” motif are to be found much earlier than 1848; certainly it may be detected in the conservative response to Delacroix’s *Liberty*, described by the German poet and critic Heinrich Heine as an “alley-Venus.” But amid the generalized panic of the months following the proletarian rising of June 1848, the image of the prostitute on the barricades became seared in bourgeois memory. Jean-François Millet depicted the subject in a lost pastel, as did a host of reactionary caricaturists. Indeed, for the generation that followed the 1848 Revolution, the body of the prostitute—in fact and image—would become a battleground upon which class and gender struggles would be waged. Couture’s *Romans of the Decadence* stands at the threshold of that new period of sexual and political antagonisms, just as surely as it stands at the close of an epoch in which the Classical tradition was the preferred metaphoric language for contest and debate within the bourgeois public sphere.

