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From Orientalism to Japonisme: Hugo, Baudelaire and Mallarmé

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FROM ORIENTALISM TO JAPONISME: HUGO, BAUDELAIRE AND MALLARME

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THESIS

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Introduction

Like the Classicism of seventeenth-century France when the esthetics of artistic representation often tightly coincided in form and content with the esthetics of literary representation, French nineteenth-century artists and literati developed parallel artistic forms that eventually projected the artists and their public into the twentieth century. In the avant-garde's attempt to develop an art that could express contemporary artistic sensibilities inherently felt to be far removed from those of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they often summoned what they considered to be exotic or foreign muses who were to raise them out of stifling French literary and artistic conventions. However, these exotic muses, mainly from the "Orient," only perpetuated artistic and literary tradition as well as conventional Western thought. Since the represented "Orient" was a European fabrication the Orient, and since most Europeans applied these same "Oriental" themes to all countries constituting a foreign "other,"--even Spain and the Americas, for example--twentieth century critics refer to this phenomenon as Orientalism. In eighteenth-century France, subjects related to the "Orient" were used to criticize Western society and government. In the nineteenth century, the very same "Orient" was used to promote a rejuvenation of the arts. Writers and artists believed that this "new" and titillating Orientalism would "modernize" artistic representation. However, Orientalism merely fed the sensibilities of artists and spectators in three ways--emotionally through fear or surprise; tactically through eroticism and exoticism; and visually through bright light and color.

Victor Hugo, in his preface to *Les Orientales*, blatantly suggests that a new "modern" poet must close the door on French Classical convention and must look

elsewhere for fresh inspiration. The vast "abyss" of the "Orient" lies at Hugo's doorstep, he has merely to summon this new muse. Hugo realizes as well that the key to a modern poetics lies in the discovery of a new poetic form and language. *Les Orientales* abounds with previously ignored poetic forms from sixteenth century France and innovative adaptations from contemporary Greek songs known to the French through the highly publicized Greek War of Independence. Is this book of poetry "modern?" Does this new subject of Orientalism or the use of borrowed poetic form constitute a new poetics?

An analysis of the mimeticism and linearism of the Orientalist paintings of the era aligns Hugo with the Historicism and the Neo-Classical painters of the early nineteenth century and the Academic Realist painters of the mid to late nineteenth century who, in their own way, perpetuate the lineage of the Classical representation of a Western human experience of the world. The subjects have evolved and changed, but the poet/painter/creator/God relies heavily upon his or her reason to represent his or her world in an extremely controlled and intensely clear manner.

Baudelaire is a pivotal poet in the movement from Orientalism to Japonisme, from convention towards a more "modern" representation of artistic sensibilities. By studying his Orientalist poetry, we learn how he transformed Hugo's public and European "Orient" into his own private "Oriental" and very Baudelairean muse. His metaphorical poetics obscure the previously clear visual intent of French poetics and purposefully bring the spectator into the signifying process. His contemporary avant-garde Orientalist painters developed along this same path, and Baudelaire was quick to acknowledge those who deliberately obscured the clear art of the poet/painter/creator/God, and who, like him, relied upon an inner source that differed from that of the common Academic convention. Delacroix was Baudelaire's ideal modern painter, and through an analysis of this

painter's work, and by comparing it to Baudelaire's poetry, we notice once again how the "Orient" as foreign or "new" subject merely serves to obscure the very Western perception of representation still apparent in the artistic works of Baudelaire and many of his contemporary painters. However, behind this more personal (and yet still strongly public) avant-garde representation of the "Orient," the reader or spectator notices a progressively more radical obfuscation of a clear, linear, prosaic or mimetic representation of a Western human experience of the world. This mid-nineteenth-century experience of the world was no longer as self-assured as that represented by the art of the Classical period. Convention and tradition centered on Reason gave way to a necessary re-evaluation of the human experience. The new science of the unconscious created huge gaps in human knowledge. Many artists delved into this unknown which was represented in art and literature as a break in the conventional linear signifying process. An avant-garde work of art or poetry was no longer judged by how well the artist had represented conventional ideals or common reality, but by how the work represented this new enigma of human experience, this "essence" as artists often named it.

The opening of Japanese ports in the 1850s brought with it the arrival of Japanese art in France. Here was an art whose minimalism left space for this enigmatic essence previously absent in Western art, an essence towards which artists had been striving for some time. Artists borrowed many techniques from this "new" art, which were then absorbed into Western art. Japonisme differs from Orientalism in that although artists borrowed Japanese artistic techniques, "Japan," or the "Orient" is absent from the works in question. Japonisme acted as catalyst to the avant-garde's quest for modern representation and is present in the works of the Impressionists, the Symbolists, those involved in Art Nouveau, as well as in many twentieth-century Western works.

The definition of Japonisme as mere borrowing of Japanese artistic techniques must be expanded to include the development of artistic sensibility since the mid 1850s. The Japanese art available to the French artists of the time served in part as an answer to the soul-searching avant-garde's plight of how to represent their evolving esthetics. What they saw was more than just new artistic techniques, they found the missing "essence" in Western art.

Japonisme is less apparent in mid to late nineteenth-century literature. However, if the critic moves past the "borrowing of Japanese artistic techniques," he or she may arrive at this new modern essence or myth fostered in part by the ubiquitous presence of Japanese art in France at this time.

Mallarmé's poem *Las de l'amer repos* incorporates both Japonisme and Orientalism. His blatant Orientalism describing his "Chinese" artist/monk muse gives way to a new poetics born of a Far Eastern image the poet paints on a teacup. An analysis of this poetic image reveals a deep understanding of the fundamentals of Zen art. Zen represents its indescribable reality directly through the reader's or spectator's experience of words or images that are represented in such a way as to constantly fluctuate between being and non-being. This ironic and necessary use of words and images used to aid the reader or spectator in ascertaining Zen reality resembles Mallarmé's poetic technique which must rely on words that gradually lead the reader towards the ever encroaching Nothingness (and yet, fullness) of the white page. Mallarmé, profoundly concerned with the human experience of being-in-the-world develops a poetics that directly represents his personal experience, an experience somewhat similar to that described by Zen philosophy. Mallarmé transforms his personal experience into a universal one through the disappearance of metaphor and through the necessary participation of each reader. His unconventional poetics is embedded within the Western process of signification in order to completely disrupt the normal thought processes of the Western reader.

What began as an innocent poetic adaptation of artistic "Japonisme" reveals a more profound product of this movement. This nineteenth century quest for a modern art that would reflect a modern age and modern essence of man and woman began with Orientalism and ended with Japonisme--in painting and in poetry.

The poetics of Hugo, Baudelaire and Mallarmé demonstrate a gradual esthetic movement away from Neo Classicism towards Romanticism, Impressionism, and Symbolism in French literature--a movement away from Western, traditional artistic representation to a more universal artistic esthetic, "essence" or myth and a break from many years of Western convention. French painters travelled this same path. From David to Géricault to Manet to Van Gogh, from Neo-Classicism to Romanticism to Impressionsim and to Symbolism in French painting, the spectator can visualize this esthetically similar rupture with the past. With Hugo we witness a rudimentary effort to break away from French artistic tradition, with Mallarmé we learn more about where artists wish to take us as participants in this esthetic movement.

Since Hugo was the first to specifically use the "Orient" as an answer to the need to "progress" contemporary artistic esthetics, it is useful to start here. Hugo, a Romantic in his desire to sensationalize and in his desire to modernize French poetry, represented his "Orient" in a very realistic manner more in line with the Neo Classical and Realist artists. Baudelaire, as an art critic, admired the Orientalist works of Delacroix, and learned from his favorite artists how to represent what the "Orient" meant to him. His "Orient" stems from past stereotypical representations; his Orientalism serves as an aid for metaphoric bliss in his own personal poetic world. Mallarmé's Orientalism is no different from that of his contemporaries. His "Japonisme" however, projects his poetry into the twentieth century in its attempt at capturing the modern "essence" of the modern man and woman. This "essence" is no longer a purely Christian and Eurocentric view of the world, but one that

encompasses another universal view of humanity that approaches the universal precepts of Zen.

Chapter One

A New Modern Poetics?

Towards a Visualization of the Esthetics of Hugo's *Les Orientales*

In order to attempt to define French Romantic Orientalism, one needs to understand the history and evolution of French Orientalism up to its culmination in and accepted place in the art and literature of France in the nineteenth century. The term "Orientalism" does not refer to a geographical entity but rather an attitude fostered by Western people towards an "other" unlike themselves, an "other" plainly inferior, an "other" espousing foreign lifestyles, foreign spirituality, and whose culture stems from a past other than that of ancient Greece or Rome, and whose inherited religio-philosophical perception of the world differs from that of the judeo-christian world. This becomes clear when one also considers the Western attitude towards the Native American Indian, for example. Western authors and artists of the nineteenth century who depict Native Americans do so with "Orientalist" conventions.

Pierre Martino in *L'Orient dans la littérature française au XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècle* as his title suggests, traces the interest in and knowledge (or lack thereof) gleaned from France's relationship with the "Orient" as it manifests itself in French literature. Through the influence of travel accounts, commercial logs and imports, political relations within and without France, missionary accounts, published world histories, and language studies, France, as Pierre Martino infers, by the end of the eighteenth century had fixed the Orient in its mind to be despotic and yet tolerant, voluptuous and yet austere, philosophical and humanitarian, and yet ruled by passion. Sometimes meaning Turkey, sometimes Persia, sometimes China,

sometimes India, the "Orient" also encompassed all countries outside the domain of Christiandom. (And as stated above, the nineteenth century Westerner's "Orientalist" attitude towards non Westerners extended across geographical labels of East or West towards all peoples foreign to the Judeo-Christian tradition). Not only did the interest in the "Orient" manifest itself in the fashion referred to above, i.e. travel accounts, commercial logs and imports, etc., but the "Orient" found its place in fiction and painting as well. The former corpus of literature became a source for works of art and literature which sparked more interest in the Orient, and these then gave birth to more studies on the Orient, and this in turn begot more fiction and art.

As this cycle gathered volume, the focus often changed to fit the interests of those involved in adding to, or taking from the body of information already available to them. For example, French foreign policy could sway the public interest in the Orient, or rather, in *which* Orient it preferred to read about. During France's political involvement in the eighteenth century with the Turco-Russian war, the literature published about the Orient took on a Turkish nature. Later, it would become Persian. (Martino 87-88). With the missionaries warring over China, and with all the commotion this stirred up in the French public, the Orient became very Chinese (Martino 125-130), and under the influence of philosophic minds such as Voltaire's, the Orient became quite philosophical.

Martino divides the French literature on the "Orient" into two categories, the first one--the "Orient" as seen by travellers--gives rise to works catering to the imagination and a love of the exotic. The second category he describes as works by missionaries and savants who represented an "Orient" as they themselves desired it to be understood, an "Orient" that served their own theories and purposes. This category gave rise to works "serving Idea and Reason," that compared "Oriental" civilization to French civilization and tended to be "simplified, generalized and

deformed" (169-170). As Martino writes "D'après les premiers faits on avait constitué l'image; l'image à son tour servit à expliquer les faits nouveaux" (170).

Through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the main themes tended to recur; despotism (and all its theories), religion (and all its fallacies), the "voluptuousness of the 'Orientals,'" the harem (shrouded in mystery, danger, and of course, sex), and the inherent helplessness and slavery of the "Orientals." Most often, and especially during the eighteenth century, these themes were exploited as ways to break down the power of the French monarchy or the power of the church. In the flagrant misrepresentation and misunderstanding of the "Orient", these themes mainly provided a means of commenting upon French culture and French preoccupations of the time. To quote Alain Grosrichard from the *Structure du sérail* speaking of the European Orientalist tendency to write of "Oriental" despotism, these preoccupations appear to be "l'inévitable aboutissement d'une dégénération se traduisant par le relâchement des moeurs, le naufrage de la famille, le désordre sexuel, caractéristiques, aux yeux de beaucoup, de la société contemporaine" (222).

It is unfortunate that the exploitation of the "Orient" and the "Oriental" people brought into the European mind the notion that "History" does not mean "European History" or that "Religion" does not mean "Christianity." This European Orientalism in retrospect did begin to broaden the European public mind in its relationship to the world, and in its previous assumptions of artistic beauty. Unfortunately again, this broadening of the European mind did not mean that this "deformation, simplification and generalization" of the "Orient", as Martino outlined, ceased with the Revolution. On the contrary, with the nineteenth-century the "Orient" is exploited for purposes unique to this period in time, and the themes, previously perfected into truths during the eighteenth century spread to Spain, North Africa and the Middle East with Napoleon leading the way. Nineteenth-century France elevates Orientalism to a respected academic genre that replaces

classicism (or modifies it), replaces ancient Greek and Rome, and serves as a means to reinterpret the Bible, all in an effort to rejuvenate literature, and to modernize artistic endeavors. Whereas eighteenth century Orientalism helped to erode the foundations of the Catholic institutions and the old political institution of monarchy, nineteenth century Orientalism replaced and rebuilt in the new climate now defined as Romanticism.

A different French Orientalism emerged with the onset of the new literary fervor, an Orientalism that carried to the extreme the preconceived ideas of the "Orient" from the remote and recent past, an Orientalism that culminated in the colonization of these "despotic," yet "naturally inclined to serve," these "morally incomprehensible and reprehensible" "Orientals" who to most Westerners remained frozen in their Orientalist frame for a long time to come.

The difference in French Orientalism before the Revolution and after lies in the literary aspirations of the French Romantics. In their fervor to rebuild the eroded foundations of French tradition, they saw a new artistic space in this very Orientalism which helped to bring the old powers down. Artists and painters, forced to rebuild the French tradition, searched for new subjects with which to fill their canvases and their manuscripts, and tried to forge new styles to convey their artistic inspiration. Painters found new inspiration in obscure parts, or rarely illustrated parts of ancient Greek or Roman texts to fulfill their artistic purpose and artistic sensibility of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. They also found ways to replace traditional themes with modern history, both styles often painted in a "classical" manner--very meticulous detail, clearly defined objects and subjects, perfecty framed pictorial space, rare visual obscurity, intense mimeticism. The artistic atmosphere was often one of moralizing virtue, one intending to instill fear, or one of patriotic propaganda (Rosenblum).

One example of this is Pierre-Narcisse Guérin's *Clytemnestra* (illus. 1) presented in the Salon of 1817. The style resembles that of the classical age--sculptured, static forms; great detail; a staged setting; an ordered material world, complete mimeticism--yet the theme is very much of the early nineteenth century. Guérin chose this moment of Aeschylus' play to provoke suspense and fear in the spectator viewing the imminent death of Clytemnestra's father, and to instill horror of her ominous act. In the painting, Guérin pays special attention to historical or archeological detail--another attribute of the nineteenth century.

Another example of the artistic atmosphere of the time is Antoine-Jean Gros' *Napoléon at the Pesthouse at Jaffa* of 1804 (illus. 2). Here Gros transposes the traditional Christian theme of healing into early nineteenth century Napoleonic propaganda. As in the previous example, the painter opts for a staged setting; a clear, framed linear story; intense detail; and complete mimeticism.

Another painting by Guérin, *Napoleon Pardoning the Rebels at Cairo,* (illus. 3) presented at the Salon of 1808, also glorifies Napoleon and France. Here, Napoleon stands before a group of "Oriental" men giving them a lesson in French diplomacy. As Robert Rosenblum in *Transformations in Late 18th Century Art* states:

> Inexhaustible clemency of the kind the late eighteenth century had venerated in its paintings...was attributed also to Napoleon, particularly in his attitude toward an enemy whose benighted ignorance was to be divinely enlightened by the deeds of French conquest. ... Here a civilized scene of benevolent law-giving through a native interpreter brings peace and order after the bloody insurrection fomented by natives still ingnorant, as it were, of the virtues of Napoleonic rule. (99)

French Orientalism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century (such as in the previous two examples) usually communicated these same messages--fear, horror, loathing (as illustrated in the first example), a patriotic and civilized "us" against an uncivilized, dangerous, barbarian "other" (as seen in the second and

Illus. 1. Guérin, Pierre-Narcisse. *Clytemnestra,* Salon of 1817. Paris, Louvre. Rpt. in Robert Rosenblum. *Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art.* By Robert Rosenblum. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1974 ed. Plate 14.

Illus. 2. Gros, Jean-Antoine. *Napoleon in the Pesthouse at Jaffa*, Salon of 1804. Louvre, Paris. Rosenblum. Plate 97.

Illus. 3. Guérin, Pierre-Narcisse. *Napoléon Pardoning the Rebels at Cairo*, Salon of 1808. Versailles. Rosenblum. Plate 103.

especially the third example)--along with the other many typical stereotypes associated with this "Oriental" other.

Victor Hugo was no different than the painters of his time, and used the "Orient" to promote these same messages in his Orientalist book of poetry *Les Orientales*. His poetry promoted not only political Orientalist propaganda against the "barbaric" nature of the Turcs in his support of the Greek cause in the Greek War of Independence, but also promoted the Romantic ideal of freedom of the artist to choose his/her subject matter and style. The Romantic themes of horror, fear, death, the bizarre, mystery, spirituality and sensuality abound in this "picturesque" poetic source of the "Orient."

Just as painters were searching out new sources for their inspiration, either from heretofore untold episodes of Greek and Roman literature and of the Bible, or from contemporary history itself, so too did Hugo look to on one hand contemporary political events in Greece and in France, and on the other to traditional stereotypes of the "Orient" up till then rarely presented to such a condensed extent in one book of poetry. Just as painters attempted to link their subject matter to an adequate form to express their art (Guérin's *Napoleon Pardoning the Rebels at Cairo* painted in a neo-classical style imitating other similar paintings from the classical period to befit a political figure such as Napoleon; or Guérin's *Clytemnestra*--neo-classical in style to befit it's subject matter taken from a Greek tragedy), so too does Hugo search for styles befitting his poetic themes, and assert his rights as an artist to choose or to forge new and/or rarely used poetic forms in early nineteenth century France. Hugo replaces themes from ancient Greece with modern Greece and its political strife (with the "Orient"). He replaces being "hélléniste" with being "orientaliste." In his préface to *Les Orientales* Hugo writes:

> ...on s'occupe beaucoup plus de l'Orient qu'on ne l'a jamais fait. Les études orientales n'ont jamais été poussées si avant. Au siècle Louis XIV on était hélléniste, maintenant on est orientaliste. Il y a un pas de fait. Jamais tant

> d'intelligences n'ont fouillé à la fois ce grand abîme de l'Asie. Nous avons aujourd'hui un savant cantonné dans chacun des idiomes de l'Orient, depuis la Chine jusqu'à l'Egypte. (Hugo 1: 11)

His "Asian abyss" is to him a long ignored ancient manuscript collecting dust in an old library. Like a classical poet dipping into the ancient Greek plays, writing for the glory of French literature, Hugo will use the materials from this as of yet undiscovered (according to Hugo) "manuscript" and will create a modern French poetry to fit a new French society by rejuvenating his poetic style. Again from his preface:

> Là, en effet, tout est grand, riche, fécond, comme dans le moyen âge, cette autre mer de poésie...Il lui semble que jusqu'ici on a beaucoup trop vu l'époque moderne dans le siècle de Louis XIV, et l'antiquité dans Rome et Grèce; ne verrait-on pas de plus haut et plus loin, en étudiant l'ère moderne dans le moyen âge et l'antiquité dans l'Orient?" (1: 11-12)

Yet, Hugo remains akin to his neo-classical colleagues in his approach to this book of poetry. The neo-classical painters led the way towards Realism in painting by focusing more and more on period details, on details in general. Hugo, too, as did many artists of the period, strove to recount "facts" to audiences familiar with the events and themes. In his preface he proclaims freedom for artists, yet he remains tied to contemporary political events that he sensationalizes--very aware of and concerned with his audience. And, in his determined effort to elevate Orientalism to its role of usurping the established prestige of Classical and academic subjects, Hugo blatantly groups together in *Les Orientales* every theme known to him that already exists under the genre of Orientalism--like artists depicting specific details in order to stress the "truth" or "historic reality" of their period pieces. He then places the "Orient" in as he calls it the "Asian abyss" with no geographical boundaries and no differences amongst the people. Again from his preface:

> Il resulte de tout cela que l'Orient, soit comme image, soit comme pensée, est devenu, pour les intelligences autant que pour les imaginations, une sorte de préoccupation générale à laquelle l'auteur de ce livre a obéi peut-être à son

> insu. Les couleurs orientales sont venues comme d'elles-mêmes empreindre toutes ses pensées, toutes ses rêveries et ses rêveries et ses pensées se sont trouvées tour à tour, et presque sans l'avoir voulu, hébraïques, turques, grecques, persanes, arabes, espagnoles même, car l'Espagne c'est encore l'Orient; l'Espagne est à demi africaine, l'Afrique est à demi asiatique. (1: 11)

He hypes up his new-found discovery and glorifies his "Oriental" poetry.

Hugo's preface serves as a battle cry to the French. A battle cry not only for Greek independence, but for the freedom of the artist to choose as poetic subject whatever pleases him:

> Il n'y a pas de fruit défendu. L'espace et le temps est au poète. Que le poète donc aille ou il veut, en faisant ce qui lui plaît, c'est la loi. (1: 6)

Art has no limits, he proclaims almost prophetically, in intellectual domains as well as political domains. Poets could now "offically" rebel and employ new exotic words in newly donned "noble" subjects. Yet, for awhile they seemed to teeter on the brink of a quasi neo-classical Orientalism. Eating the forbidden fruit of the "Orient" merely perpetuated a Western tradition of poetry. The road to the destruction of conventional poetic tradition was underway, but would not be complete until later in the century.

What role if any did this Orientalistic attitude towards the rest of the world play in the shift from the representation of a linear, material, and exterior perception of the world--the lineage of classicism (neo-classicsm, Realism and finally photography)--to the less mimetic representations of a more interior perception of the world--the lineage of some Romantics, certain Impressionists, Symbolists and on through many artists of the twentieth century?

"Romantic" Orientalism is indeed difficult to define. Orientalism spans many genres and periods and tends to fall under an all-encompassing genre of the "exotic." Edward Said in *Orientalism* tends to group Orientalists into categories rather than work with existing known literary genres. Is there such a thing as

French Romantic Orientalism? If so where does it begin, or end? If French Romantic Orientalism can be defined as an exploitation of this theme in the need for Romantic writers to escape their dreary world; in the need to modernize literature; in the desire to free the author from the yoke of tradition; in the need to fill the spiritual and inspirational vacuum of the Enlightenment, in the necessity to poeticize the fervor of the new political questions of the day, then one can say Orientalism has indeed been used for all these things - and not only during the early to mid nineteenth century. What changes with the advent of the climate of Romanticism is the promotion of Orientalism as a genre onto a revered esthetic plane. It eventually becomes in its turn academized and sensationalized to such an extent that artists tire of it and turn for awhile towards France and the French once again.

Les Orientales led the way towards this new noble position of Orientalism, but Hugo was not alone. Already, Napoleon had hired his own painters to paint and record life in Egypt. This drew much interest from the public who expressed the desire to see and read about the "Orient". Hugo merely fulfills this desire:

> l'Orient..est devenu...une sorte de préoccupation générale à laquelle l'auteur de ce livre a obéi peut-être à son insu. (1: 11)

And as we move through the nineteenth century and look at three poets, Hugo, Baudelaire, and Mallarmé, how do they all incorporate the "Orient" in their poetry? Does their vision of the Orient change? How does their use of the "Orient" affect their poetic development? The major difference between Hugo's use of the "Orient" and Baudelaire's use of the "Orient" seems to be that Hugo draws his subject material from what he perceives to be reality. He firmly bases his poetry in "fact." Unlike Mallarmé who "digs" (creuser) for personal poetic treasure within the "mines" of his interior world, Hugo digs into the many sources available to him at the time.

Elisabeth Barineau in her critical edition of *Les Orientales* locates many sources for Hugo's poetry. According to Barineau, Hugo draws his inspiration from many of the works of the Orientalists of the time, from translated excerpts of Arab poetry, Persian poetry, modern Greek poetry. He also had read many accounts of travellers to the "Orient"--Samson Cerfberr, whose pen name was Ibrahim-Manzour-Effendi appears to have been an important source. Hugo also familiarized himself with British Romantic Orientalist literature, with George Sale's introduction to the Koran, with Chateaubriand's *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem,* and with translations of the Arabian Nights. Articles published in the Parisian press influenced his choice of subject a great deal. Most importantly, many of his subjects were drawn from the commonly shared stereotypes of muslim countries, stereotypes depticted in the visual arts as well.

It becomes difficult to talk of the "innovations" of this poet when placed in an Orientalist context. Critics often choose to concentrate on Hugo's ability to utilize new or forgotten poetic styles. Hugo borrowed techniques from popular songs, he imitated styles from French poets of the sixteenth century, and heoften created poetic styles to complement the theme. His use of "Oriental" subjects merely serves to promote his mastery of poetic technique, to promote that generation of poets' need for an original poetry and a more modern poetic space, and to promote the desire to break away from the enforced poetic tradition.

As far as the "Orientalist" subject is concerned, Hugo merely fulfills public expectations of what this subject entails. He writes of the very stereotypically portrayed barbaric customs of the Turks. The following extract of the poem *Les Têtes du sérail,* refers to the fall of the Greek city of Missolonghi, and this stanza was probably inspired by an article in the *Journal des Débats.* (Hugo 1: 63).

> Le sérail!... Cette nuit il tressaillait de joie.
> Au son des gais tambours, sur des tapis de soie,

Les sultanes dansaient sous son lambris sacré,
Et, tel qu'un roi couvert de ses joyaux de fête,
Superbe, il se montrait aux enfants du prophète,
De six mille têtes paré! (63; v1. lines 25-30)

In this excerpt the plethora of Orientalistic detail overflows with well known signs of the "Orient" and all that this entails. The harem (le sérail) shrouded in the mystery of its private life--women who exist only to give pleasure to the sultan, their exotic clothing, eunuchs--is a theme well known to Hugo's readers as are also silk rugs (tapis de soie) which make one think of the Arabian Nights or of magic; the palace walls (lambris sacré) evoke the elaborate and exotic architecture of Eastern palaces; and the children of the prophet (les enfants du prophète) bring to mind the hundreds of years of refering to muslims as infidels. The reader practically expects to read the last line of the stanza depicting the six thousand severed heads. The horrors instilled by the violence of "Orientals" were a widespread dread for Westerners.

In *Le Voile,* a woman's brothers stab her to death for having let her face be seen by a passerby. The brothers approach her with foreboding stares, their hands on their daggers. They accuse her of her crime:

N'avez-vous pas levé votre voile aujourd'hui? (136; v1, 9)

She insists that the wind blew open her veil for just an instant and that no one could possibly have caught a glimpse of her face, but they answer in stereotypical "Oriental" language:

Le soleil était rouge à son coucher ce soir! (138; v1, 27)

As they repeatedly stab her, she cries mercy and describes what is happening:

Grâce! qu'ai-je fait? Grâce! grâce!
Dieu! quatre poignards dans mon flanc!
Ah! par vos genous que j'embrasse...

O mon voile! ô mon voile blanc!
Ne fuyez pas mes mains qui saignent,
Mes frères, soutenez mes pas!
Car sur mes regards qui s'éteignent
S'étend un voile de trépas. (138; v1, 28-35)

Her brothers respond in typically uncompassionate "Oriental" male language:

C'en est un que du moins tu ne lèveras pas! (138; v1, 36)

In *Clair de lune*, a woman is thrown into the ocean in a sack. From the fourth stanza:

Qui trouble ainsi les flots près du sérail des femmes?--(133; v1, 13)

and from the fifth:

Ce sont des sacs pesants, d'où partent des sanglots.
On verrait, en sondant la mer qui les promène,
Se mouvoir dans leurs flancs comme une forme humaine.--
La lune était sereine et jouait sur les flots. (133; v1, 17-20)

Human life, especially that of women matters little in the "Orient."

In *Chanson de pirates*, a singsong octosyllabic poem, Hugo recounts the very Orientalist story of a nun captured by pirates for the pleasures of the Sultan. The pirates already carry enslaved Christians on their boat when they spot the monastery.

Nous emmenions en esclavage
Cent chétiens, pêcheurs de corail;
Nous recrutions pour le sérail
Dans tous les moutiers du rivage. (121; v1, 1-4)

We learn she is being captured for the harem:

--La belle fille, il faut vous taire,
Il faut nous suivre. Il fait bon vent.
Ce n'est que changer de couvernt,
Le harem vaut le monastère.
Sa hautesse aime les primeurs,
Nous vous ferons mahométane...(122; v1, 17-22)

She cries out:

Osez-vous bien, fils de Satan?

and the captain replies:

> Nous osons, dit le capitan. (122; v1, 26-27)

The singsong tone of the pirates' actions and words highlights their inhumanity, and the last stanza

> Plus belle encore dans sa tristesse,
> Ses yeux étaient deux talismans.
> Elle valait mille tomans;
> On la vendit à Sa Hautesse.
> Elle eut beau dire: Je me meurs!
> De nonne elle devint sultane...
> Dans la galère capitane
> Nous étions quatrevingts rameurs. (123; v1, 31-40)

attests to their lack of compassion, and exemplifies the horrors of "Oriental" barbaric values. This poem, like in the previous examples, Orientalist details abound: religion (the capture of Christian slaves, the nun becomes a "mahométane;" the Sultan, his harem, and his virility (he likes les "primeurs"); and words that signify an "Oriental" realm (talisman, toman). This poem, like most of the others, falls into many categories of the Orientalist genre. It exemplifies not only the "barbaric" nature of the muslim infidels, but also the myth of the harem, and of course highlights Western notions of eroticism at that time.

Artists and authors alike throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century document clearly the European obsession with harems. The secret and mysterious "Oriental" harem, hidden behind closed doors is in fact a place where Europeans can openly display their own obsession with sex as they peek into this Orientalist haven. Hugo exploits this as well. A virgin nun will be raped by the viril Sultan in *La Chanson de pirates.* In *Clair de Lune,* a Sultane witnesses the horrific scene of another woman's drowning through the windows of the forbidden harem:

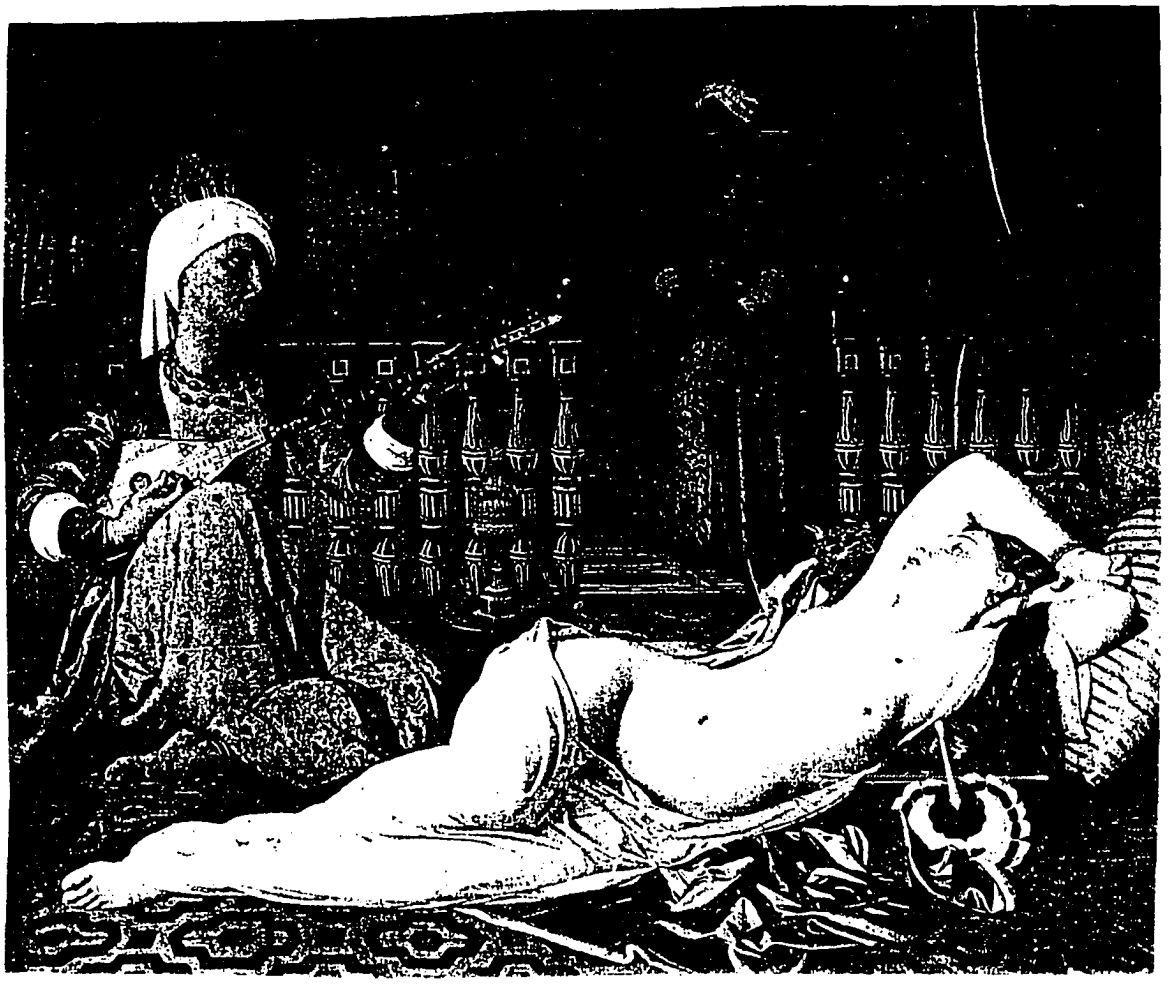
> La lune était sereine et jouait sur les flots.--
> La fenêtre enfin libre est ouverte à la brise,
> La sultane regarde, et la mer qui se brise,

Là-bas, d'un flot d'argent brode les noirs îlots. (132; v1, 1-4)

The poet accentuates the by then shared common knowledge that the harem women enjoy no freedom from the walls of the harem--*la fenêtre enfin libre. La Captive* serves not merely as a poem permitting Hugo to describe an "Oriental" country, but also to mention the harem and its sexual slavery. A woman admits she would love the country in which she lives if only it were not guarded by sabre-armed men:

> Si le long du mur sombre
> N'étincelait dans l'ombre
> Le sabre des spahis.
>
> Je ne suis point Tartare
> Pour qu'un eunuque noir
> M'accorde ma guitare,
> Me tienne mon miroir.
> Bien loin de ces Sodomes,
> Au pays dont nous sommes,
> Avec les jeunes hommes
> On peut parler le soir. (125-126; v1, 6-16)

The nineteenth century reader expects this odalisque within a harem. Most odalisques are painted with these same details--the black eunuch, the guitar and the mirror. (See Ingre's *Odalisque*, illus. 4). Hugo's poem is no exception. His "Oriental" harem is dangerously garded (*Le sabre des spahis*). Eunuchs are never far away. The Sultan exudes fantastic sexual desires (*Bien loin de ces Sodomes*). Edith Barineau points out in her critical edition of *Les Orientales* Manzour-Effendi's account of double harems--one for boys, one for women, and both solely for the purpose of pleasing the Sultan's sexual desires. (1: ftnt 2, 126). The fact that Hugo merely mentions "this country of Sodomites" implies that this is very common knowledge from which Hugo can pick and choose and simply signify "Oriental" countries by the term *ces Sodomes*.



Illus. 4. Ingres, Jean Auguste Dominique. *Odalisque with Slave.* The Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Rosenblum. Plate 38.

In the Orientalist harem, jealousies among women abound and the Sultan invariably cherishes a favorite among his myriad of women. In *La Sultane favorite,* a Sultan acknowledges he has cruelly killed many rivals of his jealous Sultane:

> N'ai-je pas pour toi, belle juive,
> Assez dépeuplé mon sérail?
> Souffre qu'enfin le reste vive.
> Faut-il qu'un coup de hache suive
> Chaque coup de ton éventail? (141; v1, 1-5)

Many women in Orientalist harems invariably pine away after the Sultan's affections:

> Ne suis-je pas à toi? Qu'importe,
> Quand sur toi mes bras sont fermés,
> Que cent femmes qu'un feu transporte
> Consument en vain à ma porte
> Leur souffle en soupirs enflammés?
>
> Dans leur solitude profonde,
> Laisse-les t'envier toujours; (142; v1, 21-27)

Almost all of Hugo's Orientalist poems overflow with Orientalist signifiers. Wherever one finds a Sultan, one finds conceit, violent passion, enormous sexual desires, a harem, slaves. *La Douleur du Pacha* is no exception. In the first two stanzas of this poem Hugo mentions Allah, a dervish, treasure, sabres, a vizier, imams, ramadam, and the angel Azraël on the bridge to Hell. The harem finds its place as well:

> --Qu'a donc le doux sultan? demandaient les sultanes.
> A-t-il avec son fils surpris sous les platanes
> Sa brune favorite aux lèvres de corail? (117; v1, 19-21)

and in the same breath of this same stanza we also read of a severed head in a peasant's sack. By the end of the poem we learn that the Sultan's sadness stems merely from the death of his pet lion (yet another popular Orientalist topic).

In *Lazzara,* Omer, pacha de Négrepont would give everything to the woman he loves, Lazzara, even his three hundred concubines. In *Sara la baigneuse,* a young

woman bathing wishes she were a Sultane. For then she would take luxurious baths, and exercise more freedom from curious eyes. In the harem:

> Je pourrais folâtrer nue,
> sous la nue,
> Dans le ruisseau du jardin,
> Sans craindre de voir dans l'ombre
> Du bois sombre
> Deux yeux s'allumer soudain.
>
> Il faudrait risquer sa tête
> Inquiète,
> Et tout braver pour me voir,
> Le sabre nu de l'heiduque,
> Et l'eunuque
> Aux dents blanches, au front noir! (39; v2, 73-84)

However, the curious eyes of the European always manage to escape the dangers and invade the privacy of the harem. "Oriental" women and harems become more of an obsession with nineteenth-century artists than they had already been in the eighteenth century. Ingre's *The Bath* illustrates this obsession wonderfully (illus. 5).

Of course, any Orientalist work concerning muslim countries carries with it hundreds of years of religious disputes and misunderstandings. Hugo peppers his poetry with religious terms that signify the infidel. We have already seen this in a few of the poems cited above: *les enfants du prophète, fils du satan, mahométane, esclaves chrétiens*. Hugo's muslims speak a stereotypical Orientalist infidel language that had changed little since the crusades. In *Cri de guerre du mufti*, the mufti cries out:

> En guerre les guerriers! Mahomet! Mahomet!
> Les chiens mordent les pieds du lion qui dormait,
> Ils relèvent leur tête infâme.
> Ecrasez, ô croyants du prophète divin,
> Ces chancelants soldats qui s'enivrent de vin,
> Ces hommes qui n'ont qu'une femme! (109-110; v 1, 1-6)

Illus. 5. Ingre, Jean Auguste Dominique. *The Turkish Bath.* Louvre, Paris. Rosenblum. Plate 48.

and

...Molle Setiniah, qu'en leur langage impur
Les barbares nomment Athènes! (111; v1, 17-18)

Sometimes the crusades come to life subtly as in *La Ville prise,* a poem concerning the destruction of a city by the infidels. Mothers and virgins are slaughtered by the soldiers of a caliph, who spare no one, not even priests or children:

Les prêtres qui priaient ont péri par l'épée,
Jetant leur livre saint comme un vain bouclier.

Les tout petits enfants, écrasees sous les dalles, (61; v2, 15-17)

In *Lui,* Hugo likens Napoléon to Mahomet to be worshipped by the naive "Oriental":

Sublime, il apparut aux tribus éblouies
Comme un mahomet d'Occident. (185; v2, 47-48)

and in a large majority of poems, Hugo signifies an "Oriental" by his or her prayers to Allah.

In *Le Feu du Ciel,* a poem vaguely about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorra, Hugo depicts architectural structures that stand today, and mixes these with descriptions of "biblical" places. As the black cloud pans over the "biblical" land, one finds pyramids:

Trois monts bâtis par l'homme au loin perçaient les cieux
D'un triple angle de marbre, et dérobaient aux yeux
Leurs bases de cendre inondées;
Et, de leur faîte aigu jusqu'aux sables dorés,
Allaient s'élargissant leurs monstrueux degrés,
Faits pour des pas de six coudées. (29; v1, 67-72)

And, as the cloud moves on, it passes over biblical places that no longer exist today:

Parfois, de bruits profanes
Troublant ce lieu sacré,
Passent les caravanes

D'Ophir ou de Membré.
L'oeil de loin suit leur foule,
Qui sur l'ardente houle
Ondule et se déroule
Comme un serpent marbré, (32; v1, 101-108)

Hugo manages to bring both worlds (biblical and contemporary) to life at the same time when the cloud views the ruins of the tower of Babel. The poet signifies the location (the "Orient") of the biblical tower by placing exotic Orientalist animals amongst its ruins:

Les boas monstrueux, les crocodiles verts,
Moindres que des lézards sur ses murs entr'ouverts,
Glissaient parmi les blocs superbes;
Et, colosses perdus dans ses larges contours,
les palmiers chevelus, pendant au front des tours,
Semblaient d'en bas des touffes d'herbes.

Des éléphants passaient aux fentes de ses murs;...(34; v1,137-143)

This poem exemplifies one of the many confused notions Europeans held of the "Orient"--that antiquity, that of the biblical times, could be relived in the nineteenth century. It also becomes "true" due to the many details described by voyagers and those that the public saw with their own eyes in the Louvre.

Greek antiquity also comes to life in many of Hugo's poems. Some of the passion for the Greek War of Independence was born in this notion that aiding the Greeks would be equivalent to saving ancient Greece and Rome. From *Enthousiasme*:

Commande-nous, Fabvier, comme un prince invoqué!
Toi qui seul fus au poste où les rois ont manqué,
Chef des hordes disciplinées,
Parmi les Grecs nouveaux ombre d'un vieux romain,
Simple et brave soldat, qui dans ta rude main
D'un peuple as pris les destinées! (80; v1, 13-18)

And from *Navarin:*

Console-toi! la Grèce est libre.

Entre les bourreaux, les mourants,
L'Europe a remis l'équilibre:
Console-toi! plus de tyrans!
La France combat; le sort change.
Souffre que sa main qui vous venge
Du moins te dérobe en échange
Une feuille de ton laurier.
Grèce de Byron et d'Homère,
Toi, notre soeur, toi, notre mère, (90; v1, 40-46)

The mythical world of Ancient Greece exists alongside the biblical world in the Orientalist imagination of the "Orient," so it is easy to see how Hugo chose this "modern" theme, and yet still espoused traditional European beliefs. The "modern" Bible was the Orient, contemporary Greece evoked ancient Greece, and the two together forged an alliance for the "crusade" for the Greek War of Independence, with a bit of the picturesque on the side.

The nineteenth century public's interest of the "Orient" grew alongside the increasing voyages to the "Orient." More and more travellers brought back with them details of life, culture, geography, and architecture of the various countries they visited. At the time Hugo wrote *Les Orientales*, the public was very interested in Egypt. Enthusiasm and curiosity about Egypt grew after Napoléon's campaign there at the end of the eighteenth century, and after several authors published volumes of the events of the campaign, and published information about this country along with drawings of monuments and architecture of the Egyptians. Not long before the publication of the book of poetry, a large sphinx arrived in Paris to be displayed at the Louvre. (Barineau 1: 21-22). Also at this time, Champollion began deciphering the Rosetta Stone, and Charles X sponsored an expedition to Egypt to study its monuments and hieroglyphics. The letters of Champollion were published in all the papers. (Barineau 1: 21). Champollion also aided in obtaining the Salt and Drovetti Collections whose contents were displayed in the Louvre. (Barineau 1: 21).

To many Europeans, these monuments signified antiquity, and by travelling to these North African and Middle Eastern countries, many felt they could displace themselves into a biblical land. It was during the nineteenth century that new illustrated versions of the Bible were published showing scenes taken from the "Orient." So it is not surprising that the first poem in *Les Orientales* speaks of a biblical event, and even less surprising that this event was none other than the destruction of Sodom and Gomorra. On the one hand, Hugo brings the Bible to life by depicting the "true" geography of Egypt that Hugo either read about or heard others talk of, and on the other he implies all the stereotypical Orientalist preconceptions by depicting the destruction of two cities, their inhabitants leading debauched lives. Since these cities were destroyed by God, is it not surprising then that the second poem heralds the Greek hero Canaris fighting the barbaric Turks in the Greek War of Independence? And that the third poem portrays the horrors of the "Orientals" who rejoice at the six thousand severed heads decorating the entrance to the harem?

Despite the usual stereotypical Orientalist themes discussed above: violence, passion, sex, the harem, "Oriental" women, religion, many of Hugo's poems exist merely to allow him to rebel against traditional French poetic language, or to fulfill what Hugo feels to be the expectations and interests of his public at that time. He savors the bizarre and the exotic, and most of his poems are bereft of any sincere and meaningful import except for this desire to rebel and to rejuvenate French poetry.

In *Le Feu du ciel,* the first poem in the book, Hugo devotes over nineteen stanzas to a description of "Egypte," while the main topic of the poem is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorra. Most of his descriptions in this poem stem from his vast readings from the travel books and documents noted above, and also from biblical descriptions (Barineau, ftnt to *Le Feu du ciel* 1: 18-46). He leaves out no curiosities: pyramids, statues, architecture, sphynx, the desert, elephants, boas,

lizards. The same love of the exotic transpires in *Nourmahal la rousse* when the poet describes an "Oriental" place alive with tigers, lions, jackals, monsters, hippopotomus', boas, monkeys, serpents, elephants, and states that one would be safer in this wild place than before the "Oriental" eyes of Nourmahal.

In *La Bataille perdue,* a Turk commiserates over his loss:

> "Qui me rendra mes beys aux flottantes pelisses?
> Mes fiers timariots, turbulents milices?
> Mes khans bariolés? mes rapides spahis?
> Et mes bédouins hâlés, venus des Pyramides,...(17; v2, 7-10)

Hugo delights in using as many detailed clues as possible that signify the "Orient" and that render the Turk's speech "true," and that also displace the reader into an exotic land with these strange, "Oriental" words. He must speak an "Oriental" language. Needless to say, his speech fits in with the Orientalist depiction of Turks as a violent and war-minded people.

Hugo employs another Orientalist technique to color his poetry. He inserts exotic-sounding place names. However, his very frequent use of this technique renders the purpose for this book transparent. The Sultan in *La Sultane favorite* offers the Sultane anything she wishes to stop her jealous insistance on the deaths of the other harem woman. The Sultan offers her some of the most exotic sounding places in the "Orient" (even the Ganges): *Bassora, Trébizonde, Chypre, Fez, Mosul, Erzeroum, Smyrne, Damanhour.* According to Barineau, Trébizonde and Erzeroum were often mentionned in the Parisian press in 1828 in reports of the Turco-Russian war. Voyagers often mention Damanhour in their accounts, and Chateaubriand celebrated the houses in Smyrne (Barineau 1: ftnt 143-144). There is no other reason for Hugo to mention these names than that the public knew of most of them, and that they exuded the exotic. Hugo liked the bizarre 'z' as did most Orientalists--Racine's *Bajazet.* Hugo entitles one of his poems *Lazzara.*

In *L'Enfant*, the poet tries to cheer up a Greek child mourning the destroyed city in which he lives. The poet offers the fruit of the "*tuba*," an enormous tree that grows in the Islamic paradise, a tree whose branches are so long that a galoping horse would take one hundred years to break away from their shadow. George Sale recounts this story in an edition of the Koran. (Barineau 2: ftnt, 31)

> Ou le fruit du tuba, de cet arbre si grand,
> Qu'un cheval au galop met, toujours en courant,
> Cent ans à sortir de son ombre. (31; v2, 28-30)

Why offer a fruit of a muslim tree to a boy whose city was probably destroyed by a muslim?

In *Navarin*, a poem about the battle that took place there in 1827, Hugo describes the scene of the port at the time of the battle and creates a long list of names of exotic sounding ships: *Yachts, galères capitanes, caîques, tartanes, sloops, jonques* (carrying icoglans!), *goêlettes, barcarolles, caravelles, dogres, bricks, brigantines, balancelles, lougres, galéaces, yoles, mahonnes, prames, felouques, polacres, chaloupes, lanches, caraques,* and *gabares*! (97-100). On the one hand, Hugo describes a battle of mythological proportions, on the other, he needs to use as many "Oriental" signifying details as possible in order to make this poem historically, "Orientalistically" true.

Hugo even supplies notes to his poetry at the end of the collection. In his notes, Hugo documents the identity of certain people who appear in his poems. He also defines "Oriental" terms he uses in his poetry. For example, in *La Captive* cited above, Hugo employs the word *Sodomes* and explains in his notes:

> Voyez les mémoires d'Ibrahim-Manzour-Effendi sur le double sérail d'Ali-Pacha. C'est une mode turque. (v2, 200)

This is pure Orientalist practice. So is his definition of a djinn. As a note to *Clair de lune*:

> *Djinn*, génie, esprit de la nuit. Voyez dans ce recueil les *Djinns*. (v2, 200)

In order for the reader to learn more about these djinns, Hugo sends them to read his own poem in the collection entitled *Djinns*. Hugo also prints several extracts of Arabic and Persian poems perhaps to show the reader how "Oriental" his own collection of poems are. *The Persians are the Italians of Asia,* explains Hugo in one commentary. He is comparing Arabic poetry to Persian poetry:

> Il est curieux de trouver, à coté de ce que le génie a de plus simple, de plus mâle, de plus rude, l'esprit, rien que l'esprit, avec tous ses raffinements, toutes ses manières efféminées. (v2, 213)

His ecclectic Orientalist knowledge allows him to be an authority on all matters "Oriental." He even carries the authority to "upgrade" "Oriental" poetry into French Oriental poetry. In one excerpt of a translated Arabic poem *La Cavale,* one of the lines reads:

> Sa croupe est comme la pierre du torrent qu'a polie le cours d'une eau rapide.*

and Hugo's note replies:

> *L'auteur a traduit ce passage dans les *Adieux de l'hôtesse arabe*:
>
> Ses pieds fouillent le sol, sa croupe est belle à voir,
> Ferme, ronde et luisante, ainsi qu'un rocher noir
> Que polit une onde rapide. (v2, 205)

Hugo *translated* this into "French." He didn't say he transposed it, or simply borrowed it, or used it, or transformed it, he felt the need to *translate* this into a French "Oriental" poetry, as if the original metaphor needed Hugo's interpretation,

Hugo's magic Orientalist pen to render the metaphor more French. His notes to these effects also imply Hugo's concern for a *Truth*, an *authentic* poetry. One senses this also in the enormous amount of sources that Barineau located for her critical edition of *Les Orientales*.

However, because of the "Oriental" content of the poems, Hugo took vast liberties in basing his information in "reality." This becomes apparent with Barineau's many comments such as "We don't know where Hugo found this," or "This came from Hugo's vivid imagination." Hugo's personal imagination however, was a collective one when it came to Orientalist subjects. Even Barineau has no trouble finding "possible" sources and other similar ideas expressed by contemporaries of Hugo. On the one hand, Hugo used much material from his sources as if to document his poems and to base them in "reality." On the other, he dipped into the vast resources of common knowledge about a stereotypical imaginary land called the "Orient." This was the exciting thing about the "Orient" for artist and authors alike. They could depict an Oriental subject in a realistic style and yet this could work the imagination as well as if not more than more imaginative styles. An "Oriental" subject is much more fascinating if it is represented as True.

However, Hugo commits many errors for the sake of creating an "Oriental" book of poetry. In the long list of boats from the poem *Canaris*, many would never have been used to fight a naval battle, or were not even used in that part of the world. But, their names sounded "Oriental." *Jonques* are employed in East Asia, not in the Mediterranean, and they certainly don't carry icoglans! In *La Sultane favorite*, the Sultan states he'll even give the Sultane:

> La Gange redouté des veuves! (144; v1, 48)

Widows did not die in the Ganges, but on the funeral pyre of their husbands. In *Le Feu du ciel* discussed above, during the description of "Egypte," and more specifically near the pyramides of Gezeh, Hugo states:

> Un sphinx de granit rose, un dieu de marbre vert,
> Les gardaient, sans qu'il fût vent de flamme au désert
> Qui leur fît baisser la paupière. (30; v1, 73-75)

As Barineau points out, the sphinx *de granit rose* isn't in Gizeh, but in the Salt Collection in the Louvre. (1: ftnt. 30). In the same poem, Hugo describes statues of elephants in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrhe:

> Chapiteaux évasés; puis un groupe difforme
> D'éléphants de granit portant un dôme énorme; (36; v1, 159-160)

Again Barineau mentions that this must be from the Indian myth and the representation of the world supported by eight elephants. (v1, ftnt. 36) In *Le Poëte au calife* an arab calife even governs China:

> O sultan Noureddin, calife aimé de dieu!
> Tu gouvernes, seigneur, l'empire du milieu,
> De la mer rouge au fleuve jaune. (169; v2, 1-3)

Hugo's "Orient" begins with biblical actuality; celebrates the Greek War of Independence and a contemporary Greek Antiquity; parades before the reader all stereoypical Orientalist notions of North Africa, the Middle East, India, and China; passes through Spain, and witnesses "Oriental" admiration of Napoléon. He groups this all together, and calls it *Les Orientales*. The last poem in the collection, *Novembre*, presents clearly the idea that Hugo feels he has stumbled upon an overlooked, dusty, magical manuscript that he, as poetic magician will bring to nineteenth century life in a French nineteenth century manner. In *Novembre*, his

"Oriental" muse disappears before the gray skies of a Parisian autumn. In the excerpt that follows, Hugo lists what notions his "Oriental" muse brings.

> Alors s'en vont en foule et **sultans et sultanes,**
> **Pyramides, palmiers, galères capitanes,**
> Et le **tigre vorace** et le **chameau frugal,**
> **Djinns** au vol furieux, **danses des bayadères,**
> **L'Arabe** qui se penche au cou des **dromadaires,**
> Et la fauve **girafe** au galop inégal.
>
> Alors, **éléphants blancs** chargés de **femmes brunes,**
> Cités aux **dômes d'or** où **les mois sont des lunes,**
> **Imams de Mahomet, mages, prêtres de Bel,**
> Tout fuit, tout disparaît. Plus de **minaret maure,**
> Plus de **sérail** fleuri, plus d'ardente **Gomorrhe**
> Qui jette un reflet rouge au front noir de **Babel**!
>
> C'est Paris, c'est l'hiver.--A ta chanson confuse
> **Odalisques, émirs, pachas,** tout se refuse.
> Dans ce vaste Paris le **klephte** est à l'étroit;
> Le **Nil** déborderait; les **roses du Bengale**
> Frissonnent dans ces champs où se tait la cigale;
> A ce soleil brumeux les Péris auraient froid. (194-195; v2, 13-30; emphasis added)

Hugo's *Les Orientales* summarizes perfectly hundreds of years of Orientalism, and in a way brings to a climax this type of poetic Orientalism. Hugo's lyric (and epic) Romantic Orientalism expresses itself as a poetic Romantic "Historicism" that on one hand is aware of its fictive imaginary content (the Muse in *Novembre*), and on the other, labors over "truthfully" conveying the "Orient" through biblical antiquity, Greek antiquity, contemporary landscapes, "authentic Oriental" poetic expression, common stereotypical ideas about "Oriental" people, and Hugo's own imaginings about his "Orient." What's more, Hugo acquired his details from other Orientalist material, never having visited the "Orient" himself (except for Spain in his youth and for a brief visit much later in his adult life). His Orientalism is overt, naive, facile and very linear in its representation.

In some ways, Hugo says everything a poet could possibly say about the "Orient," no detail of Orientalism escapes the poet whose overabundance of

Orientalist knowledge he packs into his collection of poems. This overabundance of exotic and/or Orientalist detail often diverts the reader from the contemporary preoccupations of the poet--the same preoccupations as observed in the previously mentioned illustrations such as in Antoine's and Gros' paintings. The reader's eye is brought time and time again to these Orientalist details as signs--signifiers of the "Orient." *Les Orientales* is in fact a very visual book of poetry. The nature of the Orientalist genre allows for bright colors, contrasts, words that describe horrific things, erotic things and so on. Perhaps this is why this poetry lends itself well to comparisons with Orientalist painters of the nineteenth century.

Contrary to what one might think, that the "Romantic" poet Hugo must be compared visually to "Romantic" painting, the visualization of *Les Orientales* reveals (surprisingly) that this poetry is more similar to the Neo-Classical and Realist Orientalist painters than those normally associated with Romanticism. Some of Hugo's poems parallel Antoine's and Gros' works illustrated earlier. Guérin's painting *Clytemnestre* (illus. 1) shows similarties in technique with Hugo's *La Sultane favorite,* the first four stanzas of which are printed below:

> N'ai-je pas pour toi, belle juive,
> **Assez dépeuplé mon sérail?**
> **Souffre qu'enfin le reste vive.**
> Faut-il qu'un **coup de hache** suive
> Chaque coup de ton éventail?
>
> Repose-toi, jeune maîtresse.
> Fais grâce au troupeau qui me suit.
> Je te fais sultane et princesse,
> Laisse en paix tes compagnes, **cesse**
> **D'implorer leur mort chaque nuit.**
>
> Quand à ce penser tu t'arrêtes,
> Tu viens plus tendre à mes genoux;
> Toujours je comprends dans les fêtes
> Que **tu vas demander des têtes**
> Quand ton regard devient plus doux.
>
> Ah! jalouse entre les jalouses!

Si belle avec **ce coeur d'acier!**
Pardonne à mes autres épouses.
Voit-on que les **fleurs des pelouses**
Meurent à l'ombre du rosier? (141-142; v1, 1-20; emphasis added)

The subjects differ drastically--the former depicting a scene from the well-known Greek tragedy, and the latter a popular Orientalist topic issued from pure Orientalism. Both, however, attempt to convey the horror of the consequences of the pursuit of love and power by women. In Guérin's representation, the painter chooses facile signifiers of this Romantic theme of death, murder and horror--the red curtain in the foreground, the clearly depicted dagger, the pervading atmosphere of night. He recounts this story in a linear, rational Neo-classical fashion--all forms are clearly delineated; the murderers on the left will move towards Clytemnestra's sleeping husband on the right. The referent is clear--Aeschylus' Greek tragedy. The viewer is safe. The painter in no way asks the spectator to question his own Self directly through the painting. In fact, Guérin took extra precautions to "archeologically" place the setting in the period of the story--in the background one notices the Palace of Argos, and the urn with Iphigenia's ashes lies to the left of Aegisthus. (Rosenblum, 19). His style is not subversive but conventional.

We can make these same analogies through Hugo's poem. The referent is clear--everyone knows of the Orientalist cruelty of passionately violent Sultans and jealous harem women who order the murder of their rivals. These are facile signifiers of the Romantic themes of horror, murder and death. Other specific signifiers (which I have highlighted in the excerpt of the poem above, and are to be compared to visual signifiers in Guérin's Clytemnestra) are axe chops, the harem, the depopulation of the harem women, the Sultane who implores their death, her heart of steel, the dying flowers.

Hugo's language is linear and framed within the context of human discourse. The reader is safe and is not asked to question his/her inner Self--the language is not subversive and the referent supposedly lies outside in the material world. Hugo, like Guérin, has also taken precautions to "archeologically" place his poetic personnages. Despite the Orientalist theme, Hugo's work, as are many of his contemporaries, is a product of the historicism of this period. As Rosenblum states:

> "All peoples could be entered into an encyclopedic repository of knowledge and could be reconstructed with growing precision of detail." (48).

Firstly, Hugo's whole poem is embedded in the Orientalist discourse familiar to many of his readers, so the Sultan's speech appears to be "archeologically" true. Secondly, the referent is "archeologically" placed within a geographical "Orient." Within the poem, the Sultan offers the Sultane many "Oriental" cities to coax her to cease pleading with him to kill her rivals. The more bizarre-sounding the name of the city, the more "Orientally" and "archeologically" true the city become especially if it has been mentioned in the Parisian press reporting on the Turco-Russian war--Trébizonde, Erzeroum--or well-known through the fiction of the Arab tales--Bassora--or merely very far away--the Ganges. Just as Guérin attempted to historically place the fictive Greek tragedy in Ancient Greece, Hugo makes an effort at placing his fictive Orientalist poem in the "Orient."

Antoine-Jean Gros' *Napoleon at the Pesthouse at Jaffa* (illus. 2), and Guérin's *Napoleon Pardoning the Rebels at Cairo* (illus. 3) are two more examples similar in style to Hugo's *Les Orientales*. In Guérin's painting of *Napoleon*, as in his *Clytemnestra*, the action of the painting takes place within a clearly delineated three dimensional space. The scene takes place within a "true Egyptian" space--notice the architecture in the far background; and the participants in this event are dressed in their "authentic" clothing. It is very clear what is happening--Guérin takes pains to tell this story well. The ordered and democratically astute and focused Western

crowd on the left opposes the apparently disorganized Eastern crowd on the right. On this side, some stand, some sit, some lie down. Some look at Napoleon with overtly beatific and devoted faces, some show disbelief, some confusion, some menace (especially the turbaned fellow with the mustache whose arms are being untied--but this is to be expected in a painting with "Oriental" soldiers). The painting is based firmly in visual "truth" and "reality," and painted with a firm belief in the exactness of this story. The painting style is one of convention and in no way subverts a rationalized view of reality.

Hugo creates a similar effect in his poem *Lui*. Barineau located 23 sources to this poem of 17 stanzas. Most of these sources derive from current well-known works that recount stories of the legend of Napoleon in the "Orient"--*Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* (most of Hugo's poem *Lui* stems from this work according to Barineau's research), contemporary paintings of Napoléon, the Parisian Press, *Napoléon en Egypte*, Chateaubriand, Lamartine--and some sources can be traced to the Bible. The poem is recounted through the eyes of the poet in the first person singular and in the present tense. The many sources seem to put into the poet's mouth words which, after their utterance, become fixed in reality. In the ninth stanza for example:

> Leur féerie a déjà réclamé son histoire.
> La tente de l'Arabe est pleine de sa gloire.
> Tout Bédouin libre était son hardi compagnon;
> Les petits enfants, l'oeil tourné vers nos rivages,
> Sur un tambour français règlent leurs pas sauvages,
> Et les ardents chevaux hennissent à son nom. (186; v2, 49-54)

In her footnotes to this stanza, Barineau explains how voyagers to Egypt always recounted "l'impression profonde qu'avaient produite sur l'esprit des Egyptiens les campagnes de Napoléon" and she singles out Chateaubriand's *l'Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* and le comte de Forbin's *Voyage dans le Levant* as two well-known

works that speak highly of this. She also cites Abel Hugo who in his *Discours sur la poésie historique chantée* writes:

> On dit que lorsque l'armée aventureuse des Français était occupée à la conquête de l'Egypte, chaque combat devenait le sujet d'un chant historique, qui en répandait les détails dans toutes les parties de l'Afrique et de l'Asie, où le peuple arabe, ami de la poésie, avait dressé ses tentes. (Barineau 2: ftnt. 1, 186)

In Hugo's poem, these stories become fact, not *one says that*, or *I heard that*, but *Leur féerie a déjà réclamé...* (direct speech as opposed to indirect can be a very forceful statement). Notice also the fourth and fifth lines:

> Les petits enfants, l'oeil tourné vers nos rivages,
> Sur un tambour français règlent leurs pas sauvages...

This utterance refers to a famous passage in Chateaubriand's *l'Itinéraire* (Barineau 2: ftnt. 3, 186) in which he speaks of "une troupe de petits Arabes tout nus." Hugo has transformed this into "**Les** petits enfants...sauvages"--a much aggrandized statement (and a very Orientalist one as well--***enfants sauvages***). Notice also the third line ***Tout*** *Bédouin libre...* and the second line as well *La tente de l'Arabe est pleine de sa gloire* that resembles the line in Isaiah VI: 3 *Toute la terre est pleine de sa gloire.* (Barineau 2: ftnt. 2, 186). The poet not only transforms stories and legends into truths, but he speaks as a biblical personnage as well!

The eighth stanza could be an epigraph to Guérin's *Napoléon Pardoning the Rebels at Cairo*:

> Vainqueur, enthousiaste, éclatant de prestiges,
> Prodige, il étonna la terre des prodiges.
> Les vieux scheiks vénéraient l'émir jeune et prudent;
> Le peuple redoutait ses armes inouïes;
> Sublime, il apparut aux tribus éblouies
> Comme un Mahomet d'Occident. (185; v2, 43-48))

In this stanza, "authentic Oriental" signifiers abound: *Les vieux scheiks, l'émir jeune et prudent; tribus éblouies, Mahomet.* Guérin also paints what could be "vieux scheiks" who in his painting seem in fact to be "venerating l'émir jeune et prudent"--notice the third man standing from the left in the group of Egyptians. Notice also the "primitive" weapons lying to the left of the center of the painting in

the foreground, and the huge cannon to the left of the painting pointed at the group to the right--*Le peuple redoutait ses armes inouïes.* As mentioned earlier, some members of the group to the right do seem to be expressing awe or astonishment at Napoléon's words, and to some, Napoléon does appear to be emanating a certain sublime, and these people fold their arms as if they are praying to a *Mahomet d'Occident--*

> Sublime, il apparut aux tribus éblouies
> Comme un Mahomet d'Occident. (185; v2, 47-48)

The poem's syntax does not depart from the rational world. It represents normal speech whose referent lies outside the personal experience of the reader. The reader is not asked to question his/her Self. This is similar to the techniques of Guérin in the two paintings analyzed above.

One last example that will demonstrate Hugo's affiliations with Neo-Classical contemporaries is Gros' *Napoléon at the Pesthouse* (illus. 2). This painting builds upon the legend of Napoléon. Napoléon is likened to a savior, perhaps to Christ healing the sick, or perhaps to the legend of the divine touch of kings (Rosenblum 97). Reality blends here with the holy. And, both are represented as true--clearly delineated space (the material, rational world), clearly three-dimensional reality, "authentic" geographical space of Jaffa (see architecture in the middle ground and background).

Hugo does the same. We have seen this already in *Lui* with the line: *La tente de l'Arabe est pleine de sa gloire* from Isaiah. In the same poem, the poet continues to mix biblical expressions and Napoléonic feats in his prophetic speech in the present tense. From the Bible:

> Le Seigneur étendra sa main contre l'aquilon, il perdra le peuple d'Assyrie, il dépeuplera leur ville qui était si belle, et la changera en une terre où personne ne passe, et en un désert. (Sophonie II : 13) (Barineau 2: ftnt. 3, 187-188)

In Hugo's poem, this biblical prophecy becomes Napoleonic truth in the context of his poem:

> Ainsi tout, sous les pas de l'homme ineffaçable,
> Tout devient monument; il passe sur le sable,
> Mais qu'importe qu'Assure de ses flots soit couvert,
> Que l'aquilon sans cesse y fatigue son aile!
> Son pied colossal laisse une trace éternelle
> Sur le front mouvant du désert. (p187-188, v2)

We have already seen this in the poem *Le Feu du ciel*, a poem that blends biblical history with contemporary knowledge of the "Orient." Hugo creates this "biblical reality" not only through the mélange of subject matter--one biblical, one contemporary--but through his syntax as well. There is no confusion in his syntax. Subject, verb, object, and modifiers are clear and linear. Hugo does not question the rational world, he does not question European domination and the superiority of the Christian world. He trusts the rational. He trusts Christianity. He trusts the power of human reason, and does not ask the reader to transcend this world, his words. All is contained within the poem. There is no subversion of language that makes us question meaning, or question our own Selves. In these two examples that follow from *Le Feu du ciel*, notice the linear flow of Hugo's syntax and meaning:

> On entendait mugir le semoun meurtrier,
> Et sur les cailloux blancs les écailles crier
> Sous le ventre des crocodiles.
> Les obélisques gris s'élançaient d'un seul jet.
> Comme une peau de tigre, au couchant s'allongeait
> Le Nil jaune, tacheté d'îles. (30; v1, 79-84)

and:

> Ce peuple s'éveille,
> Qui dormait la veille
> Sans penser à Dieu.
> Les grands palais croulent,
> Mille chars qui roulent

Heurtent leur essieu;
Et la foule accrue
Trouve en chaque rue
Un fleuve de feu. (40; v1, 217-225)

Hugo's linear poetry appears to have immediate kinship with the Neo-Classical painters and the Academic Realists. The "Realism" of Hugo's poetic style and subject is veiled by the Orientalist content. Because of this, Hugo is often seen as a Romantic. And as mentioned before, he *was* Romantic in his intentions to rejuvenate poetry and to forge new poetic inspiration, yet his poetic syntax in this book of poetry equates him with a more conventional artistic view of the world.

This same "Realistic" expression of Orientalism can be seen in certain Realist painters all throughout the nineteenth century. One could argue that Hugo's *Sara la baigneuse* could be compared to Gérôme's *Slave Market* of the early 1860s (illus. 6). This argument is very difficult to make. First of all the overall tone of the two works differs drastically. Hugo's is playful and pure picturesque. Gérôme's is supposedly a serious vision of "Oriental" reality and is pure sensationalism. Both do portray a naked "Oriental" woman, but there is more to their simililarities. Both need the pretext of the "Orient" to "paint" a naked woman. Both use techniques in their art to distance the viewer or reader from a purely erotic experience. As Linda Nochlin writes about Gérôme's *Market Place*:

> He substituted a chilly and remote pseudoscientific naturalism--small, self-effacing brushstrokes, and "rational" and convincing spatial effect--in other words, an apparently dispassionate empiricism...(44).

First of all, Hugo writes using very conventional, rational syntax, and under the guise of a rejuvenated French poetic style from for example, the sixteenth century. From the ninth stanza:

L'eau sur son corps qu'elle essuie
Roule en pluie,
Comme sur un peuplier;

Illus. 6 Gérôme, Jean-Léon. *The Slave Market*, early 1860s. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute. Williamstown, Massachusetts. Rpt. in Linda Nochlin. *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth Century Art and Society*. New York: Harper & Row, 1989. Plate 5.

Comme si, gouttes à gouttes,
Tombaient toutes
Les perles de son collier. (38; v2, 49-54)

Hugo chose a playful style--alternating lines of seven and three syllables--and in that way diverts the reader's attention away from the potentially erotic subject. Hugo's poem is akin to Gérôme's painting in yet another way. They both can distance the viewer or reader in a moralizing manner. Gérôme presents a deplorable "Oriental" scene of a woman being bought into slavery. He "guarantees through sober 'objectivity' the unassailable Otherness of the characters in his narrative." (Nochlin 45). It could be argued that Hugo does the same perhaps without the sober tone.

Later in the poem, Sara dreams of being able to take baths as a Sultane. The poem reverts to first person singular, and the visual becomes more erotic as she enters the privacy of the harem, an erotic frought with danger and extreme Otherness:

Je pourrais folâtrer nue,
Sous la nue,
Dans le ruisseau du jardin,
Sans craindre de voir dans l'ombre
Du bois sombre
Deux yeux s'allumer soudain.

Il faudrait risquer sa tête
Inquiète,
Et tout braver pour me voir,
Le sabre nu de l'heiduque,
Et l'eunnuque
Aux dents blanches, au front noir! (39; v2, 73-84)

Another similarity between the two works is the attention to specific "Oriental" detail. Hugo takes pains to clearly signify that this is definitely an "Oriental" poem--*un hamac, l'Ilyssus, capitane, sultane, bains ambrés, bain de marbre jaune, trône, griffons dorés, ottomane, risquer sa tête, sabre nu de l'heiduque,*

l'ennuque, larges dalles, sandales, rubis--just as Gérôme takes pleasure in placing in his paintings even the minutist details of the "Orient."

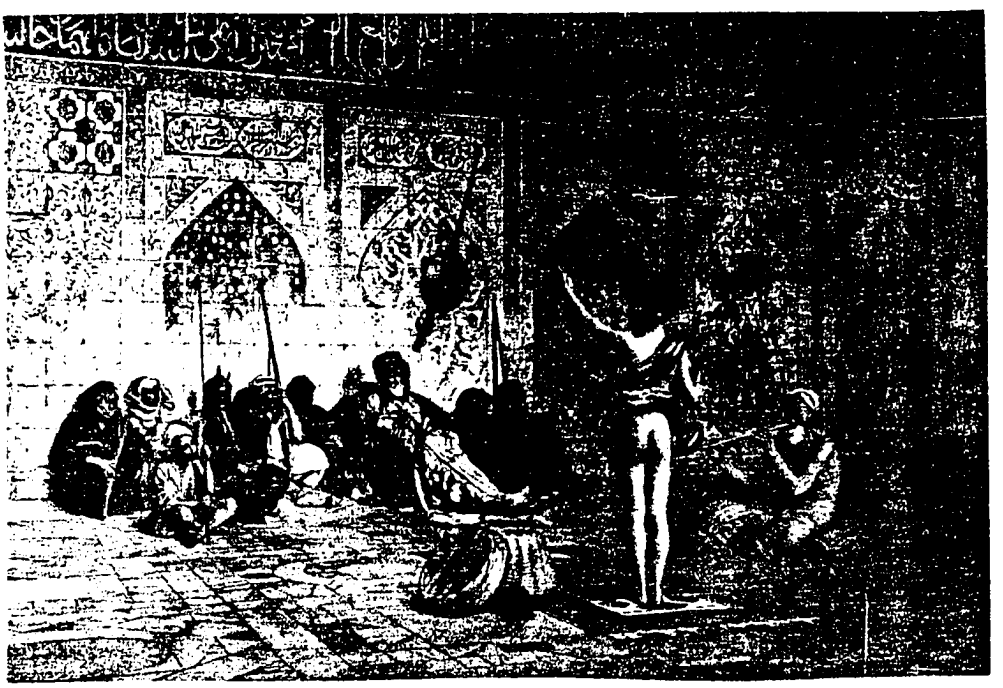
Linda Nochlin, speaking of Gérome's *The Snake Charmer* (illus. 7) states:

> Such details, supposedly there to denote the real directly, are actually there to signify its presence in the work as a whole. As Barthes points out, the major function of gratuitous, accurate details like these is to announce "we are the real." They are signifiers of the category of the real, there to give credibility to the "realness" of the work as a whole, to authenticate the total visual field as a simple, artless reflection--in this case, of a supposed Oriental reality. (38)

As we have witnessed earlier, most "Oriental" details in *Les Orientales* are there to signify the category of the "Orient" and to give credibility to the "authentic" quality of the work. However, Hugo's vision of the Orient is not an "artless reflection of a supposed Oriental reality." Everywhere is the "Romantic" presence of art. Yet, Hugo seems torn between a "factual" (his numerous sources) representation of the "Orient," and creating an innovative and original poetic form and subject--a new Art. He wishes to be the originator of a new tradition--yet still within a tradition--that of keeping within the rational world, not too revolutionary. After all, he did eat the forbidden fruit of the Orient, thus perpetuating a Western view of the world.

But, Hugo grounds his "Oriental" details in "Reality" on one hand, and on the other he is so aware of the Art of poetry and his poetic virility and knowledge, the two tendencies only end up producing a type of kitsch. Linda Nochlin sees this same aspect in Gérôme's work. Below, she is refering to Ingres' famous *Odalisques* (see illus. 4) and Gérôme's *Moorish Bath* of the 1880s (illus. 8) (and to the *Slave Market* and his work in general--see also figs. 6 & 7).

> The abstract linearism of Ingres is qualified and softened in Gérôme's painting, but is clearly meant to signify the presence of tradition: Gérôme has decked out the products of his flesh market with the signs of the artistic. His later work often reveals a kind of anxiety or a division--what might be called the kitsch dilemma--between efforts to maintain the fiction of pure transparency--a so-called photographic realism--and the need to prove that he is more than a mere transcriber, that his work is artistic. (48).



Illus. 7. Gérôme, Jean-Léon. *The Snake Charmer,* late 1860s. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute. Williamstown, Massachusetts,. Nochlin. Plate 1.

Illus. 8. Gérôme, Jean-Léon. *Moorish Bath*, 1880s. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Gift of Robert Jordan from the Collection of Eben D. Jordan. Nochlin. Plate 6.

The poem *Nourmahal la rousse* is a good example of "gratuitous detail" (whose purpose it is to authenticate and portray an "authentic Orient"), and of the kitsch this creates when transformed into poetic Art. Here is the second stanza:

> Là, dans une ombre non frayée,
> Grondent le tigre ensanglanté,
> La lionne, mère effrayée,
> Le chacal, l'hyène rayée,
> Et le léopard tacheté. (81; v2, 11-15)

The linearity of the poetic expression and the poet's belief in the reality of this "Orient," and the seriousness of the poem as "Art" in the highest sense--see Hugo's preface--give the reader the same impression as if he/she was viewing an Orientalist "Realist" painting of Gérôme.

Gérôme's *The Prisoner* (illus. 9) is another example of this. The "sign of the artistic" under the genre of "Oriental Realism" obfuscates the obvious Orientalist (and hence, un-"Realistic" and even kitsch) content.

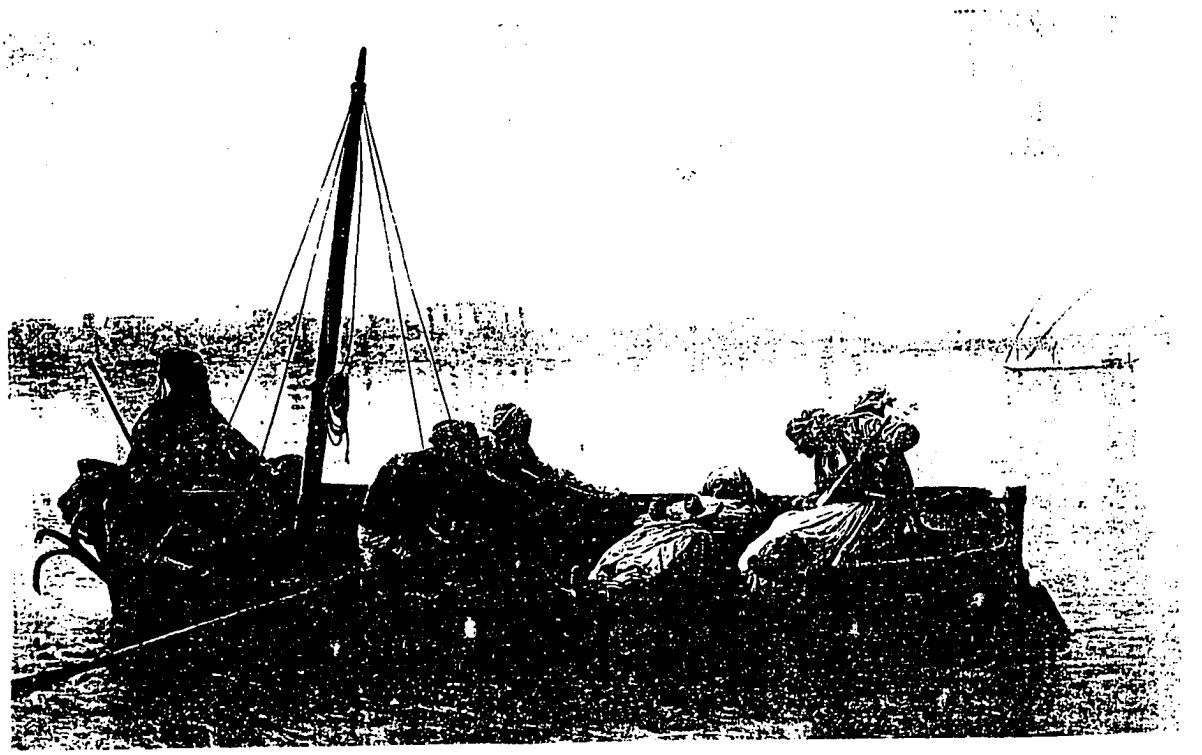
> The sign of the artistic--sometimes absorbed into, sometimes in obvious conflict with the fabric of the painting as a whole--is a hallmark of quality in the work of art, increasing its value as a product on the art market. (Nochlin 49)

Hugo does the same with the *Chanson de Pirates*. What follows below is the seventh and eighth lines of each stanza of eight lines each, all in octosyllabic meter:

> Dans la galère capitane
> Nous étions quatrevingts rameurs.

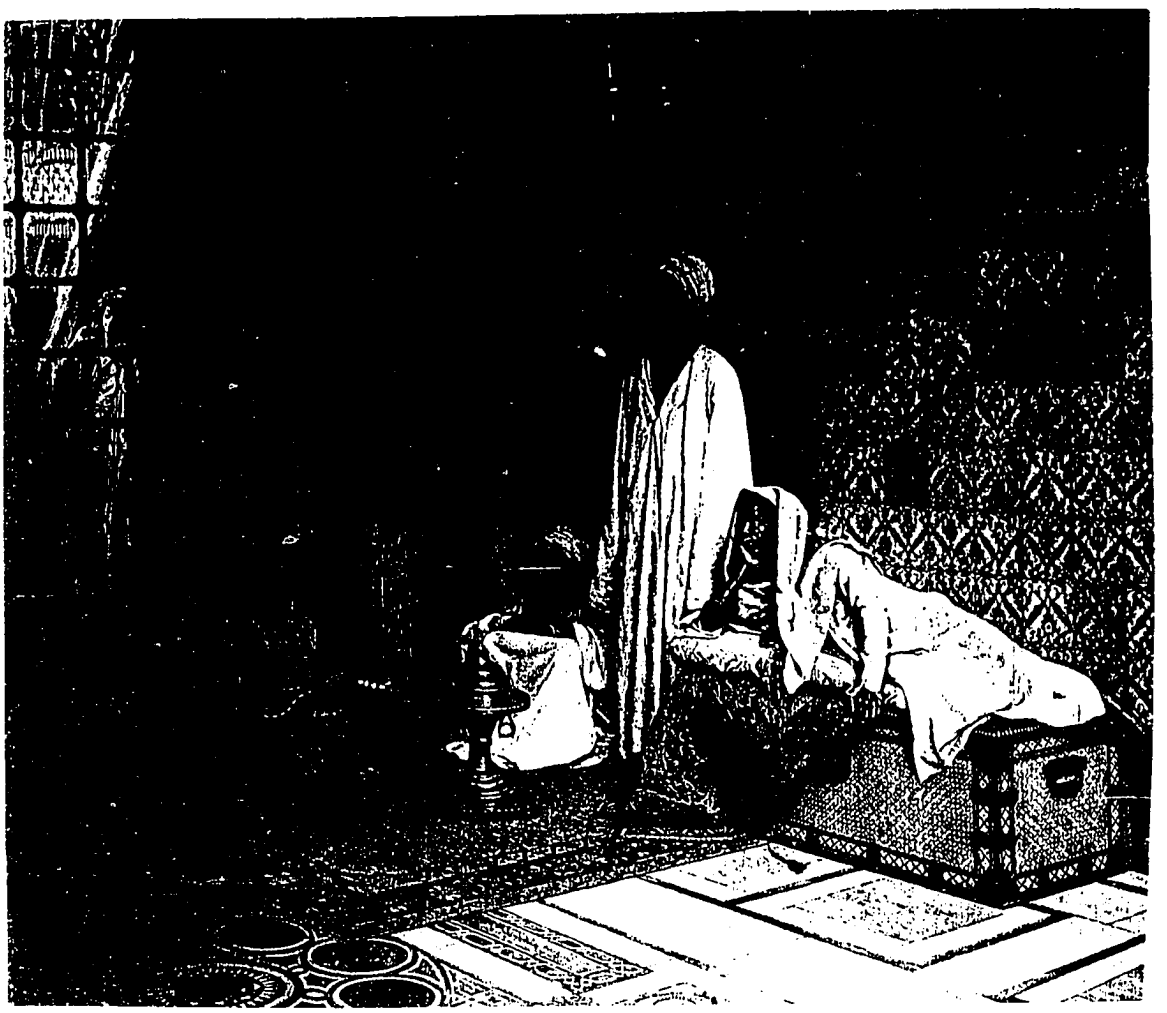
The singsong simplicity sung by the captors echos the figure in Gérôme's boat singing to the captive which of course adds to the myth of the "cruel Oriental." Yet both, Hugo's poem and Gérôme's painting, are represented as a type of "objectivity."

Two other illustrations (illus. 10 & 11) are similar in intent to Hugo's poetry. In the first one, *Summary Execution under the Moorish Kings of Grenada*, Henry Regnault chooses to portray the Orientalist idea of the passionate violence and



Illus. 9. Gérôme, Jean-Léon. *Prisoner.* Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes. Rpt. in Philippe Jullian. *The Orientalists.* Fribourg: Office du Livre, 1977. p65.

Illus. 10. Regnault, Henry. *Sumary Execution under the Moorish Kings of Granada.* Louvre, Paris. Rpt. in Jullian p79.



Illus. 11. Deutsch. *Harem Guards.* Mathaf Gallery, London. Rpt. in Jullian p213.

cruelty of the "Oriental." Great attention is paid to the signifying process of the "Orient" in order to aspire to as close a "reality" as possible, and in as rational and objective manner as possible. Hugo achieves this same goal in *Les têtes du sérail*, for example. The first part of the long poem concentrates on describing the city as "realistically" as possible,

> L'oeil distinguait les tours par leurs angles marquées,
> Les maisons aux toits plats, les flèches des mosquées,
> Les moresques balcons en trèfles découpés,
> Les vitraux se cachant sous des grilles discrètes,
> Et les palais dorés, et comme des aigrettes
> Les palmiers sur leurs fronts groupés. (62; v1, 13-18)

just as Regnault does in the elaborate tiles in the background. Then, just as Regnault drastically offsets the luxurious "Oriental" details in the background with the imposing figure of the Moorish beheader, Hugo begins the second part of his poem with:

> Le sérail!...Cette nuit il tressaillait de joie.
> Au son des gais tambours, sur des tapis de soie,
> Les sultanes dansaient sous son lambris sacré,
> Et, tel qu'un roi couvert de ses joyaux de fête,
> Superbe, il se montrait aux enfants du prophète,
> De six mile têtes paré! (63; v1, 25-30)

Both artists paint a "rational, objective Orientalist reality" that with the retrospect of over one hundred years, both reader and viewer can judge very kitsch.

In the second example, Ludwig Deutsch's *The Harem Guards*, Deutsch signifies the European eroticization of the harem--the black guards in a very "Orientalized" idle, lazy poze; the elaborate tiles on the wall, on the floor, the houkah, the rich material of the guards (an iridescent white that artistically sets off their black skin); and of course the half-hidden harem woman exposing herself not only to one of the guards, but to the Western viewer as well. All is told in this "photographic realism," this aspiration to "Oriental Realism" that would make the

illusion of "Art" transparent while at the same time inserting signs of the artistic tradition.

Hugo does the same in a wide variety of his poems. In the excerpt from *Sara la baigneuse* cited above, Hugo visually juxtaposes the white of Sara's skin against the black of the eunuch's skin-- *Et l'ennuque/Aux dents blanches, au front noir*! In fact, Hugo's poems abound with eunuchs and harems, with an overall overabundance of "Oriental" gratuitous signifiers. Yet, Hugo's novel poetic form and novel idea about raising "Oriental" subjects onto a revered pedestal of "Art" "increases its value as a work of art." Again, Linda Nochlin's statement about the sign of the artistic:

> The sign of the artistic--sometimes absorbed into, sometimes in obvious conflict with the fabric of the painting as a whole--is a hallmark of quality in the work of art, increasing its value as a product on the art market. (49)

On one hand, the poet's fervor and Romantic excitement to demonstrate a *new* poetry separates him from the Academic, static, illusionistic art of the later Oriental "Realists." On the other hand, Hugo's *Les Orientales* was a product of the historicism of the time, and indeed stylistically similar to the Orientalist "Realist" painters of the mid to late nineteenth century. *Les Orientales* was not only a product of contemporary artistic and stylistic trends, but also a product of the events surrounding Hugo at the time, one of which was the Greek War of Independence. Other artists shared Hugo's political fervor for the Greek cause. Eugène Delacroix was one of them.

Chapter 2

Visualizing the Esthetics of the Orientalist Poems of Baudelaire

The comparisons in this study are not only about Orientalism, but also about the ways artists expressed their ideas within their respective art forms. Orientalism spans many art forms and helps us to highlight the differences in and intent of using various forms of artistic expression. In the nineteenth century, especially at the beginning of the century, the ideas that artists wished to represent found their expression in many different art forms so that there is much overlapping with regards to the style or genre chosen to express the same ideas. We saw this in the comparison with Guérin's *Clytemnestra* and some of Hugo's poems from *Les Orientales*. One chose a "Neo-Classical" genre--"Classical" subject, "Classical" style--and the other chose to create a new genre of "Oriental" poetry meant to be "modern." Yet, as we saw, Hugo expressed himself poetically in the same manner as his "Neo-Classical" counterparts.

Like Hugo, Eugène Delacroix was also inspired by the Greek cause. He painted the *Massacre at Chios* in the early part of the 1820s (illus. 12), and *Greece Expiring on the Ruins of Missolonghi* in the latter half of the 20s (illus. 13). In *Greece Expiring*, the same Orientalism that gave birth to many of Hugo's poems in *Les Orientales* appears in this painting. Here, it is the "Oriental" (Turk?) in the far right hand corner. His black skin contrasts with the violent red of his turban and clothing, and against the pale skin of the personified Greece. His sabre lies dangerously within his reach. But in this painting, the illusion of a "Reality" is reduced to a minimum. The viewer deduces meaning in other ways than from a "story" that unfolds before one's eyes. The ruins of Greece are reduced to a few pieces of rubble, death is reduced to a mere arm crushed under a rock. Delacroix here is still rather conventional with his depiction of the personified Greece, and he,

Illus. 12. Delacroix, Eugène. *Massacre of Chios*, 1824. Louvre, Paris. Rpt. in Hugo Honour. *Romanticism*. New York: Harper & Row, 1979. Plate 15.

Illus. 13. Delacroix, Eugène. *Greece Expiring on the Ruins of Missolonghi*, 1826. Bordeaux, Musée des Beaux-Arts. Honour. Plate 150.

like Hugo romanticizes the disappearance of Ancient Greece with the then contemporary Greek War of Independence. His Orientalism and his enthusiasm for the Greek cause is expressed in ways other than mere pictorial signifiers of the Orient as in much of Hugo's poetry. From *Enthousiasme* (the first and the fifth stanzas):

> En Grèce! en Grèce! adieu, vous tous! it faut partir!
> Qu'enfin, après le sang de ce peuple martyr,
> Le sang vil des bourreaux ruisselle!
> En Grèce, ô mes amis! vengeance! liberté!
> Ce turban sur mon front! ce sabre à mon côté!
> Allons! ce cheval, qu'on le selle! (79; v1, 1-6)

and:

> Je veux voir des combats, toujours au premier rang!
> Voir comment les spahis s'épanchent en torrent
> Sur l'infanterie inquiète;
> Voir comment leur damas, qu'emporte leur coursier,
> Coupe une tête au fil de son croissant d'acier!
> Allons!..... (81, v1, 25-30)

Hugo's poem is simplistic. The reader is not asked to question himself, all pictorial signifiers exist for him/her already within the frame of the poem. Everything is explained for the reader: ce peuple is **martyr**, le sang is **vil**, blood flows because of the **bourreaux**, the soldier will fight for **vengeance** and **liberté**, in Oriental lands wearing a **turban**, and carrying a **sabre**, and he will see the terrible charge of the **spahis**, and the **damas** in the shape of a **croissant d'acier** will inevitably **couper une tête**. We know why he goes off to fight, in what manner, who he will see and how he intends to see it, and what he expects to see. All is explained in a linear manner, pictorially clear, and all elements of his poetic vision are carefully signified to us, even the enthusiasm through the frequent exclamation point.

Delacroix, on the other hand, expresses this with less linear techniques. Because of this, the viewer must actively participate with the painting in order to

decipher meaning--something Hugo never anticipates from the reader of *Les Orientales*. The foreboding darkness of the sky mingles with the shadows on the land. This dark foreboding present in the atmosphere is taken up by the dark "Oriental" in the far right-hand corner. We do not see him cutting heads or making blood flow over the lands. We see a few drops of blood on the fallen stone in the foreground, we see a violent red in the clothes of the "Oriental." Delacroix does not paint the battle in minute detail. We only glimpse one dead arm under the rubble. The viewer deduces the urgency to save Greece by the large stature and vulnerability of the personification of Greece in the foreground.

Instead of the obvious use of exclamation marks (as in Hugo's poem), or of sensationalizing a pictorial barbaric Orientalism that would incite the viewer to join a crusade, and instead of a perfect illusionistic three-dimensional reality (how one might transfer Hugo's poetic technique onto canvas), Delacroix chose to leave much to the imagination. Delacroix does not revert to the facile signifiers of Hugo's "Oriental" poetry. Here, his signifiers are atmospheric (the dark and stormy background will be paralled to the "Oriental" barbarism and the death of Greece), and conventionally symbolic (the personification of Greece, the one dead arm, the two or three pieces of ruins, the drop of blood). Hugo's poem is controlled, confident in its rationality. Delacroix's questions the certainty of rationality. The point of view of the painting is no longer that of the outside artist/God who creates and destroys at will. The artist creates atmospheric space that then takes a life of its own in the painting, it creates its own meaning to the viewer who must interpret it him/herself. In Hugo's poems, meaning is directed by the rational/poet/God.

Through Delacroix's work, we can begin to see a change in the European's faith in Reason. In the nineteenth century, artists began to copy directly from nature as opposed to creating a Western ideal nature in their works. One could argue that this is similar to Hugo's need to describe an "authentic Orient" evident in his many

sources to his poems. However, the copying of nature created on one hand a seemingly scientific strain of art--Realism--which Hugo's *Les Orientales* appears to follow. Delacroix appears to point towards another outcome of this phenomenon--painting nature "realistically," yet through very individual eyes--the impressionists and later the symbolists. Let us look now at the *Massacre at Chios* and see how one can interpret two very different world views.

Delacroix is no different from Hugo in his Orientalism. The ruthless, uncompassionate violent infidel is present here as well, represented by the turbaned Turks and their arms. The Turk on his horse to the right of the painting carries with him the same signifiers of this Orientalism as do Hugo's Turks--the sabre, the turbans, the bloodshed, the decapitations. What strikes the viewer first is perhaps the chaos and confusion and lack of apparent symmetry. One could argue that Hugo's attempts at mixing poetic rythm with poetic subject equal Delacroix's mixing here of chaos (lack of symmetry in the painting) and the theme (a massacre). But what the eye centers on here, a focal point if you will, is empty space first. The crowd in the foreground is split into two groups leaving the middle area open. The distant miniscule crowd of bloodshedding is the pictorial focal point, the eye then moves towards the coast and then off into the sea and sky which appear to be in shadow. After the eye rests for a moment on this enigma of empty space, the eye returns to the group of victims in the foreground. Many of their faces reflect this shadowed empty space. If one traces the line of shadow from the center, one notices that the Turk on horseback appears to create this shadow. Again, as in *Greece Expiring*, the Orientalism comes to light, so to speak, in the atmospheric gloom. The light falls on the victims in the foreground. This light is echoed by the light in the sky. The red (of blood?) is picked up again and again in a refrain of color here and there throughout the painting--first in the material flowing down from where the Turk sits on his horse at right. The red of the sabre is echoed in this flowing

material that is picked up in the women sitting in the foreground. We see blood near the man lying in the foreground, and in the woman's dress to his left. In fact, the red of the man to the left's hat drops down to a red bandage on his knee, down to the women's dress, down to the blood.

Delacroix is not as rationally explicit as is Hugo in his descriptions. The viewer deciphers meaning by metaphoric process as opposed to metonymic in Hugo. Moreover, Delacroix gives the personnages in his painting their own life (or obvious lack of it). The atrocity of the event and the questions it raises as to the value of human life can be seen within the eyes of the victims themselves. Their blank stares echo the blank expanse of background. The pain of the event echoes in the shadows over the land. The artist gives few answers to his questions, he leaves the bulk of interpretaion to the mind and eyes of the viewer. Hugo does not create this same effect. His personnages are not given substance of their own. Hugo's poems come with easy answers.

About Delacroix's *Death of Sardanapalus* (illus. 14), Linda Nochlin states:

> Delacroix evidently did his Orientalist homework for the painting, probably reading descriptions in Herodotus and Diodorus Sicilis of ancient Oriental debauchery, and dipping into passages in Wuintus Curtius on Babylonian orgies, examining an Etruscan fresco or two, perhaps even looking at some Indian miniatures. (42)

We noted this in Hugo's poems as well, this need to "document" artistic work. And, as Hugo's sources did not all derive from ancient sources, but from much contemporary literature, Delacroix, too was inspired by Byron's *Sardanapalus*. Nochlin goes on to say, "But it is obvious that a thirst for accuracy was hardly a major impulse behind the creation of this work" (42).

Much of what we see in the picture is mainly from Delacroix's own imagination (Nochlin 43). We also saw this same Orientalist inclination in Hugo's

work. In fact, critics often see similarities between Hugo's and Delacroix's work. And, it is true that Orientalism is, well, Orientalism, and both artists do work within

Illus. 14. Delacroix, Eugène. *Sardanapalus*, 1827-28. Louvre, Paris. Nochlin p23.

this genre. The Orientalism in *Death of Sardanapalus* is no different from the Orientalism in Hugo's *La Sultane favorite.* Both works exploit European fascination with sex (safely displayed within the context of Orientalism--the Harem and the cruel passions of Sultans), and Romantic obsessions with death and sexuality.

James Thompson in *The East: Imagined, Experienced, Remembered, Orientalist Nineteenth Century Painting* draws a direct parallel between Delacroix's *Death of Sardanapalus,* and Hugo's *La Sultane favorite.* From the first stanza:

> N'ai-je pas pour toi, belle juive,
> Assez dépeuplé mon sérail?
> Souffre qu'enfin le reste vive.
> Faul-il qu'un coup de hache suive
> Chaque coup de ton éventail?

and from Thompson's comparison:

> In "La Sultane favorite," for example, the violent clash of eroticism and death is expressed as harmoniously and aesthetically as the lavish slaughter depicted in "La Mort de Sardanapale." Just as Delacroix shows the icy blade of a dagger penetrating the gorgeous neck of a naked female beauty in the foreground of the picture, so in the first stanza of his poem Hugo rhymes axe-stroke with beautiful Jewess (belle juive/coup de hache suive). (9)

It is perhaps true that one work might make one think of the other as far as genres go, but does Hugo really express a *violent clash of eroticism and death* as *"harmoniously and aesthetically" as the "lavish slaughter"* depicted by Delacroix, as Thompson explains? Does one *sérail* rhymed with one *évantail* allow one to draw an equivalent between Hugo's poem and Delacroix's *Sardanapalus*?

Previously, we discussed a few of Gérôme's Orientalist works and compared some of Hugo's poems with these works. We concluded that Hugo's poetic style created the same effect as Gérôme's technique. Gérôme's Orientalist works such as the *Slave Market* or the *Bath* (figs. 6 & 8) were accepted by the Academy and viewed as "safe" works of art. Sardanapalus (illus. 14), however, was met with quite a

shock. (Nochlin 43) Gérôme's "Realistic Orientalism" kept the viewers at a safe distance, Delacroix's "Romantic Orientalism" did not. This "Realistic" artistic space and the clearly defined "Orientalism" (i.e. this genre being promoted for its *own* purposes, as in Hugo's *La Sultane favorite*--exotic words, exotic places to promote a poetic "Oriental" genre) of Gérôme gives way, in Delacroix's *Sardanapalus*, to something more personal.

One needs to go beyond Thompson's parallel between Delacroix's work of *Sardanapalus* as a whole, and mere rhyming oppositions in Hugo's poem. In Hugo's poem, the Sultan's speech contains within it all of the "Orient," or rather, it signifies all it needs to signify to the European so that he/she knows this is indeed a speech by an "Oriental" Sultan. The speech is direct, linear and puerile in its simplicity. In the fifth stanza,

> Que m'importe, juive adorée,
> Un sein d'ébène, un front vermeil!
> Tu n'est point blanche ni cuivrée,
> Mais il semble qu'on t'a dorée
> Avec un rayon de soleil. (145; v1, 36-40)

all is contained within the "picture frame" of this stanza--even the excitement the reader must feel, i.e. the exclamation point. The poet guides us in rational, pictorial view. The syntax is clear and direct with maximal delineation of images, and minimal or no suggestion of transcendant meaning or metaphorical imaging. The poet refuses to leave open ends or questions within the reader. He is assured of direct and objective communication between author and reader.

Perhaps Hugo shocked the "art" of poetry with his audacity to employ non-conventional vocabulary and innovative poetic form, but the way in which he communicates his poetic thought still assumes that the reader belongs to his similar rational and linear world. Hugo's placid and point blank tone that tells the reader all, gives way in *Sardanapalus* to an unenclosed mental and pictorial space that speaks directly to the viewer to participate in the interpretation.

In Delacroix's *Sardanapalus,* meaning is not derived in this self-assured linear manner. Through his "syntax" of curvaceous lines, and apparent asymmetry, Delacroix signifies the sensual, and, more importantly, invites the viewer to share in this erotic pleasure--something Gérôme and Hugo can only do from a moral distance. He does not delineate the forms in a traditional manner. He creates the idea of movement through this non-delineation of forms, through the use of color which transcends the forms. The constant "refrain" of red (as in the Massacre of Chios) signifies death, violence, blood and here, equates death and violence with the sensual as well. The whites are echoed in the skin of the naked women and half-naked men and again in the clothing, in the horse, the elephants at the feet of the bed, and in the ruins and smoke of the fires to the right of the painting. Hues of yellow appear throughout the image, as do blacks and browns, blues and greens. The representation of spatial reality does not extend into the background. It's as if this appears out of nowhere, as if from a dream. Contrary to most "realistic" representation where the focal point at the center organizes proportion and illusions of reality, Delacroix's focal point is devoid of the chaos of the surrounding scene. The eye must work to take in the scene, centering here and there on the different dramas that unfold. Each part of every drama in the picture echoes parts of the other dramas whether the echo be in color or form. After contemplating each detail of this painting, the viewer understands that the meaning of this painting is not merely a description of Byron's *Sardanapalus,* the meaning willfully transcends a safe, pictorial rendition of this story.

Hugo shared Delacroix's love of exotic detail. We saw this in Hugo's love for exotic words, place names and abundant stereotypical Orientalist themes. Yet, whereas Hugo's Orientalist details signify, or call out "I am the Orient, the Orient we all know," in *Sardanapalus,* the details not only signify this same "I am the Orient we all know" but the details are combined to transcend this, and transcend this

transparently. These details, these curves, these repeating colors, these naked, dying, suffering people in erotic postures (all supposedly under the guise of "safe" normal Orientalism) communicate to the viewer in a much more personal way than do Orientalists such as Gérôme. Here, the transparent eroticism transcends previously accepted Orientalist genre paintings. It caters to a more emotional reading as opposed to a more rational one. Here, Delacroix does this by breaking up his "syntax," by forcing the reader to decipher the meaning not only metonymically, by the linear reading of the story, but metaphorically, or poetically, by interpreting part by part, whether this "part" be a portion of the event (a group here, a group there), or as a detail here, a detail there (a color here, a color there, a curve here, one there, an object here or there, an emotional face here, one there, etc.).

Hugo does not break up the reading of his poems in this manner. We do not pick up similar images, or metaphors, or parallels throughout the entire poem, the reading unfolds in a linear manner. Even though Hugo does use rhythm to complement his meaning in most of the poems of *Les Orientales*, his poetry is only a step towards a non-rational, non-linear representation in art. This step is not subversive, it is a way merely to get around the status quo. The poet communicates quite easily with his audience, and participates in their world. It is in the breakdown of rational and linear representational syntax that one reads the more subversive beliefs in nineteenth century Europe, when one can objectively witness the breakdown of the total belief and assurance in rational man. Ironically, the nineteenth century in the West also saw the most rapid scientific progress.

This stylistically subversive metaphorical reading process is not apparent in *Les Orientales*, nor in the art of the Neo-Classicists, or in most Realists. One begins to see this in Delacroix--not, of course in the Orientalist subject matter, but in the process of creating meaning in his paintings. Delacroix, like Hugo and like the majority of European artists of the nineteenth century and earlier shared the same

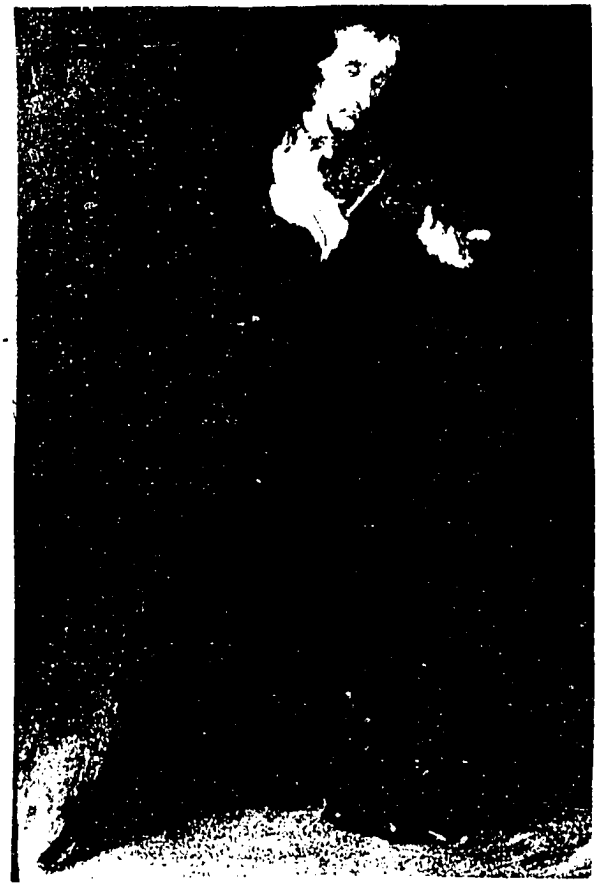
collective imagination of the "Orient." In 1832, the Count Charles de Mornay invited Delacroix to accompany him on a mission in Morocco as his official painter. Delacroix accepted, and his journey lasted four months. Many of his comments demonstrate his participation in this collective perception of the "Orient:"

> Imagine, my friend, what it is to see, lying in the sun, walking the streets or mending shoes, men of consular type, **each one a Cato or a Brutus...all in white like the senators of Rome and the Panathenaic procession....Romans and Greeks are at my doors**...The heroes of David and company would cut a poor figure here with their pink limbs. (qtd. in Prideaux 105; Emphasis added)

or his comments after having been allowed to visit an Algerian harem on his stopover in Algiers on his return trip to Paris:

> ...**in the midst of that heap of silk and gold...the lovely human gazelles**...now tame...I was exalted to the point of fever, which was calmed with difficulty by sherbets and fruit...**It is like the days of Homer**...This is woman as I understand her...not thrown into the life of the world, but withdrawn at its heart as its most secret, delicious and moving fulfillment. (qtd. in Prideaux,106; emphasis added).

We know from previous examples of Hugo's poetry that Hugo made the same associations with the "Orient." Yet, both artists entice the reader or viewer into two altogether different ways of interpreting meaning, Hugo recreates a rational, linear world and Delacroix tends to create one that is less self-assured. A good example of this is the well-known comparison between Delacroix's and Ingres' interpretation of Paganini, the famous violinist and composer who died in 1840 (illus. 15 & 16). Ingres' leaves nothing to the imagination of the viewer. His portrait is drawn to fit a higher ideal of classical art. Delacroix's, on the other hand invites nothing but the imagination and the interpretation of the viewer. The photograph of an impersonator of Paganini (illus. 17) from which Delacroix painted his portrait exemplifies the extent to which Delacroix chose to paint and signify much more than a mere "classical" portrait of Paganini.



Illus. 15. Delacroix, Eugène. *Paganini*, 1831. Phillips Collection, Washington D.C. Honour. Plate 73.

Illus. 16. Ingres, Jean-Auguste Dominique. *Paganini*. Rpt. in Horst de la Croix and Richard G. Tansey. *Art Through the Ages II: Renaissance and Modern Art*.. 8th ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986. p426.

Illus. 17. *Paganini*, photograph. rpt. in Horst de la Croix. p426.

Hugo's clear delineation of images, his linear syntax, his exactness in assuring a correct interpretation from the reader, resembles Ingres' classical style in this portrait. Delacroix has deliberately blurred his images (as a poet might scramble his syntax) in order to allow the viewer to let the whole effect signify something other than "This is a portrait of Paganini," or "This is a portrait that conveys the idea that this man was indeed important," or "This is a great modern poem about the "Orient,"" or "This is the "Orient.""

This is not to say that Delacroix was extremely radical and subversive. This is not the case at all. Delacroix in many ways was as conventional as most well-known painters or poets of his era. Most artists at this time, while displacing the Classical ideal in art with an art more intimate with the reality around them, still clung to the three dimensional reality of representation--whether this be in painting or in writing--and clung to the signifiers of their respective art and artists of the past. This is normal and inevitable. Yet, one notices a change in the interpretation process of the perceiver--a change in the manner of communicating and perceiving the world through art.

If one compares Gros' *The Snake Charmer* and Delacroix's *Women of Algiers* (illus. 7 & 18) one sees that the same signifiers of the "Orient" exist--the ornate tiles on the walls and floors, the exotic clothing, the "Oriental" articles lying about, the range of skin colors, this overall exotic displacement for the European viewer. But, whereas one chooses to keep the European at a distance with a moral coolness and detachment brought about by the photo-like quality of the painting, the other chooses intimacy and closeness. Each and every detail does not signify "I am the Orient and hence immoral and bizarre," but rather, the signs Delacroix chooses to convey this very same "Orient" tend to bring the viewer into the picture rather than to keep him/her at Gérôme's cool distance. As Nochlin explains:

Illus. 18. Delacroix, Eugène. *Women of Algiers.* Louvre, Paris. Rpt in *Eugene Delacroix 1798-1863.* New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991. p23.

> And like the exhibits displayed behind glass in the natural-history museum, these paintings include everything within their boundaries--everything, that is, except a sense of life, the vivifying breath of shared human experience. (50)

Sharing in the human experience is what Delacroix enjoins us to do, by demanding that we share in the **artistic** experience. In *Women of Algiers* he builds up a unified painting in itself, for that purpose--unity--not as in *The Snake Charmer*, to only paint as if to truthfully record "reality." In *Women of Algiers*, Delacroix paints very few sharply delineated forms, colors blend and reappear throughout the whole painting in such a way as to create this unity in his work. The second woman from the right wears a rose in her hair. The color of this rose is seen on her face, on her vest, and on parts of her skin. The woman to her left wears an orange scarf around her neck. Hints of this color are picked up in her skin as well, mixed in with the shimmering tannish blouse she wears. This is what creates meaning in his picture--the colors and curves of the women and objects--not the picture seen as just that, a picture telling a story. The meaning is derived from other ways than the objective viewing of a scene as in Gérôme's work. Meaning is derived from the process of his art. Linda Nochlin, speaking of Gérôme states,

> The strategies of "realist" (or perhaps "pseudo-realist," "authenticist," or "naturalist" would be better terms) mystification go hand in hand with those of Orientalist mystification. Hence, another absence which constitutes a significant presence in the painting: the absence--that is to say, the *apparent* absence--of art. (37).

Delacroix intends the art form--colors, curves, everything--to signify, to communicate, to reach out, speak to and move the viewer in a way that mere referential pictorial elements do not. As Baudelaire proclaims:

> L'effet produit sur l'âme du spectateur est analogue aux moyens de l'artiste. (Curiosités esthétiques (CE) 119)

It is no longer the subject matter that serves as a means to compare works of art, but its effect on the viewer brought about by the imagination of the painter and his/her ability to foster this power of imagination in the viewer as well.

> The conception of painting, however, was changing to emphasize its imaginative qualities, making possible new similarities between the former sister arts. As the source of art was seen to change from an external to an internal one, the basis of the arts' relationship similarly shifted from the imitation of shared subject matter to the analogous expression of a common inner source whose subject matter changes but whose nature is the same. (Abel 41)

As Abel points out, this change in focus from subject matter in art to the inner creative force of imagination began to emerge in the eighteenth century. Diderot's statement from "Pensées détachées," in *Essais sur la peinture,* exemplifies this movement: "Illuminate objects according to your sun, which is not that of nature; be the disciple of the rainbow, but do not be its slave" (qtd. in Abel ftnt, 5, 41). Baudelaire agrees with Diderot and vehemently denounces those who merely copy nature, or those whose work is purely referential. Of Horace Vernet, the military painter, Baudelaire writes:

> Je hais cet homme parce que ses tableaux ne sont point de la peinture, mais une masturbation agile et fréquente, une irritation de l'épiderme français;...
>
> Pour définir M. Horace Vernet d'une manière claire, il est l'antithèse absolue de l'artiste;...
>
> Du reste, pour remplir sa mission officielle, M. Horace Vernet est doué de deux qualités éminentes, l'une en moins, l'autre en plus: nulle passion et une mémoire d'almanach. (CE 165-166)

Baudelaire appreciated Delacroix's ability to awaken in the viewer this power of imagination, and believed that Delacroix was able to do this by focusing on the unifying qualities of the art, and by drawing attention to his signifying process. Abel writes:

> Delacroix himself conceived of painting as a unified network of signs that expresses a state of mind primarily through relationships rather than through the referential value of the signs. Good painting, Delacroix claims, is not reducible to statement: rather, it expresses and evokes a state of mind indirectly through the interplay of all its parts. (46)

and:

> Delacroix suggests that the painter creates a work of art whose signs respond to one another as much as they represent things....At one point in his Journal he distinguishes between "poetic" painting, which communicates through the interrelationships of all its parts, and "prosaic" painting, limited to the direct "statement" of a figure's gestures and lacking overall unity. In poetic painting, Delacroix's ideal, expression is spread throughout the total form, not isolated in any one portion in which it is set forth directly. (46-47)

According to Baudelaire, Hugo and Delacroix, although often proclaimed to head the Romantic schools of their respective arts, express their artistic sensibilities in extremely contrasting manners.

> On avait le poète romantique, il fallait le peintre...
>
> M. Victor Hugo, dont je ne veux certainement pas diminuer la noblesse et la majesté, est un ouvrier beaucoup plus adroit qu'inventif, un travailleur bien plus correct que créateur. Delacroix est quelquefois maladroit, mais essentiellement créateur. M. Victor Hugo laisse voir dans tous ses tableaux, lyriques et dramatiques, un système d'alignement et de contrastes uniformes. L'excentricité elle-même prend chez lui des formes symétriques. Il possède à fond et emploie froidement tous les tons de la rime, toutes les ressources de l'antithèse, toutes les tricheries de l'apposition. C'est un compositeur de décadence ou de transition, qui se sert de ses outils avec une dextérité véritablement admirable et curieuse. M. Hugo était naturellement académicien avant que de naître,... (CE 115-116)

> [Delacroix].... Ses oeuvres, au contraire, sont des poèmes, et de grands poèmes naïvement conçus, exécutés avec l'insolence accoutumée du génie.--Dans ceux du premier, il n'y a rien à deviner; car il prend tant de plaisir à montrer son adresse, qu'il n'omet pas un brin d'herbe ni un reflet de réverbère.--Le second ouvre dans les siens de profondes avenues à l'imagination la plus voyageuse. --Le premier jouit d'une certaine tranquillité, disons mieux, d'un certain égoïsme de spectateur, qui fait planer sur toute sa poésie je ne sais quelle froideur et quelle modération, --que la passion tenace et bilieuse du second, aux prises avec les patiences du métier, ne lui permet pas toujours de garder. --L'un commence par le détail, l'autre par l'intelligence intime du sujet; d'où il arrive que celui-ci n'en prend que la peau, et que l'autre en arrache les entrailles. Trop matériel, trop attentif aux superficies de la nature, M. Victor Hugo est devenu un peintre en poésie; Delacroix, toujours respectueux de son idéal, est souvent à son insu, un poète en peinture. (CE 116-117)

This last sentence naming Hugo a painter in poetry and Delacroix a poet in painting, reiterates what we suspected earlier. Hugo's mimetic relationship between the reader and the poetry creates a fully signified and mimetic vision within the picture frame of the poem. The reader ascertains meaning in a linear process without recourse to his/her own creative "imagination" (as Baudelaire might say). With Delacroix, the viewer must creatively reconstruct the image, or rather, the painting itself beckons an active participation on the part of the viewer. The main signifier becomes the painting process unifying the work. The referent of the subject becomes secondary. Not so with Hugo.[1]

The Hugo of *Les Orientales*, as we mentionned earlier, was a Romantic in his desire to forge new poetic styles, in his defiance of conventional subject matter and conventional vocabulary. He was not a Romantic in the way he chose to communicate to his readers. We saw that he was a "pseudo-realist" Orientalist, and we compared his Orientalist subject matter with that of Delacroix. We found that even though these Orientalist artistic expressions of both Delacroix and Hugo resembled each other as Orientalist pieces, their manners of expressing this differed greatly. One last example of this before beginning to study Baudelaire's Orientalist poetry and comparing his poetic technique with that of Delacroix's is Delacroix's *The Lion Hunt* (illus. 19) and Hugo's *La Douleur du Pacha* .

Hugo's poem, inovative and political in that the poet imitates the style of popular Greek songs of the time (Barineau, 1: 113), attempts to paint the cruelty of the "Oriental," here, a "Turk." The poem questions the sadness of the Pacha. Throughout the poem, the poet evokes the "Orient" and every stereotype known to Europeans. After naming every "Oriental" possiblity--barbaric, exotic, and/or erotic-

[1]One might be tempted to disagree and cite poems like *Sara la baigneuse*, whose rhythm echoes the hamac swinging back and forth, but as we will see in Baudelaire's poetry, a mere rhythmic similarity to only part of the subject matter (the poem is not about a swinging hamac) is not enough to activate the creative processes of the reader. Besides, Hugo's goal, as Baudelaire deduces, is to paint the scene for the reader. One exception might be *Les Djinns*, but even this is more descriptive than evocative.

Illus. 19. Delacroix, Eugène. *Lion Hunt.* Art Institute of Chicago. Rpt. in Renée Huyghe. *Delacroix.* New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1963. fig. 348.

-that might have saddened the Pacha, we read that it is only because his tiger has died. Again, Hugo writes in a linear manner and from a moralistically distant view. He merely describes in a question and answer form. There is no unity between the subject, the form, and syntax, and this unity is one of the ways Baudelaire describes what he believes is the real revolution in art. As he states: "les révolutions et les événements les plus curieux se passent sous le ciel du crane, dans le laboratoire étroit et mystérieux du cerveau" (CE 113).

Delacroix's painting, although painted in 1861 and not--as opposed to Hugo's poem--inspired by the Greek War of Independence, nevertheless derives from this same notion of the violent "Oriental." What is revolutionarily different here is the relationship between the spectator and the painting. The viewer actively participates in the reading of this painting. He/she creates the movement intended by the painter by following the movement through to its end, by following the curves and the diagonals placed throughout the work. The color red punctuates the painting at various intervals (especially, and not surprisingly, in the clothing of the "Orientals" and the mouth of the tigers). Delacroix chose the moment of sunset, the moment when the sky flares up in its most vivid colors--here taken up by the violent lion hunt, as opposed to the sky.

Baudelaire loved this painting--Delacroix painted several Lion Hunts--and says of the 1854 version: "Jamais couleurs plus belles, plus intenses, ne pénétrèrent jusqu'à l'âme par le canal des yeux" (CE 237). He says of Hugo's work: "M. Victor Hugo est un grand poète sculptural qui a l'oeil fermé à la spiritualité" (CE 235). For Baudelaire, any work of art that does not require activity on the part of the perceiver or reader in recreating a harmony of the sensual (as opposed to rational) world, or a work of art that is entirely enclosed in its own frame of reference, be this by the picture frame or the words of poetry, can not function as real art. The artist must not morally and rationally frame the world and negate the senses. A true artist

leaves space for interpretation on the part of the reader/viewer. This interpretation must include all the senses. And it is this new manner of understanding art (in opposition to past rational interpretations) that Baudelaire proclaims to be true art, and it is this new method of perceiving the artistic world that Baudelaire associates with the soul and with imagination.

> Le romantisme n'est précisément ni dans le choix des sujets ni dans la vérité exacte, mais dans la manière de sentir. (CE 103)
>
> Qui dit romantisme dit art moderne,--c'est à dire intimité, spiritualité, couleur, aspiration vers l'infini, exprimées par tous les moyens que contiennent les arts. (CE 103)

Baudelaire was no different from Delacroix and Hugo in his ideas on the "Orient." From his *Curiosités esthétiques*, we learn that Baudelaire, like Hugo and Delacroix, made numerous analogies between the "Orient," "Orientals," and ancient Greece or Rome. Below Baudelaire is speaking of Delacroix's trip to Morocco:

> Un voyage à Maroc laissa dans son esprit, à ce qu'il semble, une impression profonde; **là il put à loisir étudier l'homme et la femme dans l'indépendance et l'originalité native de leurs mouvements, et comprendre la beauté antique par l'aspect d'une race pure de toute mésalliance et ornée de sa santé et du libre développement de ses muscles.** (CE 115; emphasis added)

Even the Indians in the Americas fit the same analogy:

> M. Catlin a supérieurement rendu le caractère fier et libre, et l'expression noble de ces braves gens; **la construction de leur tête est parfaitement bien comprise. Par leurs belles attitudes et l'aisance de leurs mouvements, ces sauvages font comprendre la sculpture antique.** (CE 136; emphasis added)

Baudelaire associated the "Orient" with sex, and this he associated with "moral grief." About *The Women of Algiers*, he says:

> Ce petit poème d'intérieur, plein de repos et de silence, encombré de riches étoffes et de brimborions de toilette, exhale je ne sais quel haut parfum de mauvais lieu qui nous guide assez vite vers les limbes insondés de la tristesse. En général, il ne peint pas de jolies femmes, au point de vue des gens du monde toutefois. Presque toutes sont malades, et resplendissent d'une certaine beauté intérieure....C'est non seulement la douleur qu'il sait le

> mieux exprimer, mais surtout, --prodigieux mystère de sa peinture, --la douleur morale! (CE 128-129)

Baudelaire identified with this melancholy look that he saw in many "Orientals:"

> [speaking of Delacroix]...ou bien de quelqu'un de ces princes hindous qui, dans les splendeurs des plus glorieuses fêtes, **portent au fond de leurs yeux une sorte d'avidité insatisfaite et une nostalgie inexplicable, quelque chose comme le souvenir et le regret de choses non connues.** (CE 136)

As did most Orientalists, Baudelaire loved the exotic colors involved in a palette of the "Orient." And, like most European painters who visited the Orient, Baudelaire (from his observation of these painter's work) also loved the intense sunlight that seemed to permeate all that it touched.

> Observez, je vous prie, que la couleur générale des tableaux de Delacroix participe aussi de la couleur propre aux paysages et aux intérieurs orientaux, et qu'elle produit une impression analogue à celle ressentie dans ces pays intertropicaux, où une immense diffusion de lumière crée pour un oeil sensible, malgré l'intensité des tons locaux, un résultat général quasi crépusculaire. (CE 440)

> (About Catlin's painting): Quant à la couleur, elle a quelque chose de mystérieux qui me plaît plus que je ne saurais dire. Le rouge, la couleur du sang, la couleur de la vie, abondait tellement dans ce sombre musée, que c'était une ivresse; quant aux paysages, --montagnes boisées, savanes immenses, rivières désertes, --ils étaient monotonement, éternellement verts; le rouge, cette couleur si obscure, si épaisse, plus difficile à pénétrer que les yeux d'un serpent, --le vert, cette couleur calme et gaie et souriante de la nature, je les retrouve chantant leur antithèse mélodique jusque sur le visage de ces deux héros. --Ce qu'il y a de certain, c'est que tous leurs tatouages et coloriages étaient faits selon les gammes naturelles et harmoniques. (CE 136)

The "Orient" certainly fulfilled Baudelaire's thirst for the "bizarre:"

> *Le beau est toujours bizarre.* Je ne veux pas dire qu'il soit volontairement, froidement bizarre, car dans ce cas il serait un monstre sorti des rails de la vie. Je dis qu'il contient toujours un peu de bizarrerie, de bizarrerie naïve, non voulue, inconsciente, et que c'est cette bizarrerie qui le fait être particulièrement le Beau. (CE 215)

> Cette dose de bizarrerie qui constitue et définit l'individualité, sans laquelle il n'y a pas de beau, joue dans l'art (que l'exactitude de cette comparaison en fasse pardonner la trivialité) le rôle du goût ou de l'assaisonnement dans les mets, les mets ne différant les uns des autres, abstraction faite de leur utilité ou

> de la quantité de substance nutritive qu'ils contiennent, que par *l'idée* qu'ils révèlent à la langue. (CE 216)

We have seen that Baudelaire enjoyed the "ideas" that came to him while contemplating Delacroix's paintings--especially his Orientalist works:

> Il m'arrivera souvent d'apprécier un tableau uniquement par la somme d'idées ou de rêveries qu'il apportera dans mon esprit. (CE 217)

The "Orient" also exemplified Baudelaire's idea of the dandy. The following passage refers to American Indians, but as we stated earlier in this paper, the "Orientalization" of any non European peoples, especially those in Africa, the Middle East, the Far East, Southwest Asia, and the Americas, carried with it many similar preconceived Orientalist ideas. Here Baudelaire compares "dandysme" to the firy display of sunset (exotic colors), and to tribes in the Americas whom he perceives to be the "sunset" of their previous greatness. This also explains these people's apparently melancholy attitudes as Baudelaire interpreted them as well as Baudelaire's love of paintings such as *The Lion Hunt* at sunset, or the "melancholy" attitudes he sees in many "Orientals" in works of art. It is obvious that Baudelaire compares himself to the "Oriental." Here is the passage:

> Le dandysme est le dernier éclat d'héroisme dans les décadences et le type du dandy retrouvé par le voyageur dans l'Amérique du nord n'infirme en rien cette idée; car rien n'empeche de supposer que les tribus que nous nommons sauvage soient les débris de grandes civilisations disparues. Le dandysme est un soleil couchant; comme l'astre qui décline, il est superbe, sans chaleur et plein de mélancholie. (CE 485)

Yet, Baudelaire was not inspired by all Orientalist works. Only a few could move him to revery. The element that is lacking (according to Baudelaire) in Orientalist works such as Hugo's is the style that creates in the viewer/reader this creative process. Of course, some of what moves Baudelaire is purely personal, but most Orientalist subjects covered the same stereotypical themes, so we must look at the works themselves to find why some worked for this poet and some didn't.

As we pointed out earlier, Delacroix's art opens up a new manner of perceiving, one that, as Baudelaire believes, gives the viewer the urge to discover the soul of the work, and therefore to discover his/her own soul/spirituality.

> ...quel est donc ce je ne sais quoi de mystérieux que Delacroix, pour la gloire de notre siècle, a mieux traduit qu'aucun autre? C'est **l'invisible, c'est l'impalpable, c'est le rêve, c'est les nerfs, c'est l'âme**; et il a fait cela, --observez-le bien, monsieur, --sans autres moyens que le contour et la couleur; il l'a fait mieux que pas un; il l'a fait avec la perfection d'un peintre consommé, avec la rigueur d'un littérateur subtil, avec l'éloquence d'un musicien passionné. C'est, du reste, un des diagnostics de l'état spirituel de notre siècle que les arts aspirent, sinon à se suppléer l'un l'autre, du moins à se prêter réciproquement des forces nouvelles. (CE 424; emphasis added)

Baudelaire in *Morale du joujou* makes an analogy between the artist/viewer relationship and the child/toy relationship. The child is fascinated with color, or with toys which only minimally resemble their referents in the real world, and the child inevitably contents himself with his own imagination. Often the child rips open his/her toy doll in order to get to the soul of the thing. Baudelaire believes that works of art that communicate through other ways than that of mere Reason, works that strive for harmony or unity are spiritual works that communicate to the spectator's soul--in a way analogous to music. Notice the many analogies to music in the excerpt from "De la couleur" in the *Salon de 1846*:

> Quand le grand foyer descend dans les eaux, de rouges fanfares s'élancent de tous côtés; une sanglante harmonie éclate à l'horizon, et le vert s'empourpre richement. Mais bientôt de vastes ombres bleues chassent en cadence devant elles la foule des tons orangés et rose tendre qui sont comme l'écho lointain et affaibli de la lumière. Cette grande symphonie du jour, qui est l'éternelle variation de la symphonie d'hier, cette succession de mélodies, où la variété sort toujours de l'infini, cet hymne compliqué s'appelle la couleur.
>
> On trouve dans la couleur l'harmonie, la mélodie et le contre-point. (CE 106)

This certain style (in painting, or in poetry) instead of enclosing its message, leaves open a gap for interpretaion. This opening, then, allows for metaphoric thought

processes, that together, recreate in the viewer/reader the poem (or painting). As Baudelaire states:

> Elle [la poésie] doit venir à l'insu de l'artiste. Elle est le résultat de la peinture elle-même; car elle gît dans l'âme du spectateur, et le génie consiste à l'y réveiller. La peinture n'est intéressante que par la couleur et par la forme; elle ne ressemble à la poésie qu'autant que celle-ci éveille dans le lecteur des idées de peinture. (CE 171)

Baudelaire, in *Les Fleurs du mal,* has completely moved away from the esthetics of the Neo-Classicists, the "pseudo-realist" Orientalists, and overt Orientalism as we saw in Hugo's *Les Orientales.* His Orientalism stems from centuries of accumulative collective stereotyping, but his poems no longer focus overtly on an exterior "Orient"--this is not to say that previous Orientalist works actually painted an "Orient," but they did *pretend* to represent a geographical "Orient." As we saw, Baudelaire revels in exotic, erotic and noble dreams of the "Orient" in many of his essays in *Curiosités esthétiques* that reveal his participation in a Western myth of the "Oriental." His poetry, however, dilutes the collective myth. Not one of Baudelaire's poems in *Les Fleurs du mal* treats an explicit referent of an "authentic Orient" geographically rooted in realistic time and space. He does however, extract key words from the Orientalist vocabulary, which in turn evoke on one hand the aura of the "Orient," and on the other hand, they evoke Baudelaire's personal poetic world. Unlike Hugo who evoked a fixed "Orient" in the manner of Ingres' *Paganini* (illus. 16), Baudelaire inserts "whiffs" of the "Orient" into his personal poem. These "whiffs" transcend the words of the poem and allow for larger interpretations in the manner of Delacroix's image of *Paganini* (illus. 15). The words of the poem work against a delineation of the idea just as Delacroix's images work against a delineation of form, and both give way to a vaporous idea, an emotion or feeling.

Baudelaire associates the physical, earthly world with the *Mal*, and places it in constant opposition to the spiritual world endowed with the *Bien*. We know that for the most part he associates the "Orient" with this physical world, with the *Mal* in his world. We saw in the excerpt Baudelaire wrote on Delacroix's *Femmes d'Alger* that the painting communicated to the poet memories of *mauvais lieu* which he associated with moral grief (*la douleur morale*). We see in *Les Fleurs du mal* this same association, but in reverse. Instead of writing of a sexually explicit "Orient" that then would inspire reveries of sex, Baudelaire writes of personal sexual experiences, especially the ones he can not teach his senses to avoid. His sexuality is born of the physical world, is fatal, and irreversibly inevitable. To communicate this feeling of the powerlessness of man before the female enticer, this feeling of danger, and yet this feeling that arouses him as well, Baudelaire need only insert a specifically Orientalist vocabulary, an Orientalist vocabulary that was by then firmly entrenched in the stereotypes brought about by hundreds of years of Orientalism. It is also a vocabulary that is firmly entrenched in its own genre (especially in Orientalist painting), onto which Baudelaire projects his own personal sorrows.

For example, "Les bijoux" from *Les Fleurs du mal* is not specifically about the "Orient." This poem evokes a sensual scene between the poet and a lover. However, specific Orientalist words give the scene its Orientalist aura: *bijoux sonores, riche attirail, l'air vainqueur, esclaves des Mores, tigre dompté.* The Orientalist language is so well known that Baudelaire only has to mention a bare minimum of words (unlike Hugo, who chose to specifically signify the "Orient" with a blatant and exhaustive Orientalist vocabulary) and all of the imagined "Orient" comes to mind to add a new layer of meaning to his poem. The first stanza sets the tone:

> La très-chère était nue, et, connaissant mon coeur,

Elle n'avait gardé que ses bijoux sonores,
Dont le riche attirail lui donnait l'air vainqueur
Qu'ont dans leurs jours heureux les exclaves des Mores. (185 ; 1-4)

The woman is naked except for her jewelry. The terms *bijoux sonores*, and the *riche attirail* are all that's needed for the "Orient" to come immediately to mind--the "Orient" represented in nineteenth century painting supported by centuries of literature stressing the riches of the rulers (tyrants) of the "Orient." The poet then evokes the aura of these rulers with the term *l'air vainqueur*. In fact, the luxurious jewelry makes him think of these rulers--the two are almost always linked in visual representations. Even Hugo used this analogy in his poem. In the poem, Omer, the pacha of Négrepont, would give anything to Lazzarra, all his ships, his ornate horse harnasses, his lambs' wool, all his treasures, his three hundred concubines and even: *Son rouge turban de soie, et ses habits/Tout ruisselants de pierreries* (48; v2, 29-30). It is not surprising that in Baudelaire's poem, his very next line undermines this *air vainqueur* of Orientalist despots by equating this look to one worn by slaves of the Moors, for as all Orientalists know, the "nature" of an "Oriental" is one of dependency on the master.

In the third stanza, Baudelaire reiterates the association between sex and Orientalist themes. In the first two lines, the woman smiles down (all-knowingly, powerfully) upon her lover. The poet then builds up his theme of the danger in letting ones senses take over in the sexual act. He compares his love/lust as that of the forces of a deep ocean that swells dangerously and inevitably towards the cliff:

Elle était donc couchée et se laissait aimer,
Et du haut du divan elle souriait d'aise
A mon amour profond et doux comme la mer,
Qui vers elle montait comme vers sa falaise. (185; 9-12)

An earlier poem, "A une dame Créole" also highlights the dangerous (and perhaps fatal) spell of the "Oriental" woman. It also refers to Baudelaire's common

association of the "Oriental" as a "noble" creature. From the second stanza of "A une dame Créole:"

> Son teint est pâle et chaud; la brune enchanteresse
> A dans le cou des airs noblement maniérés;
> Grande et svelte en marchant comme une chasseresse,
> Son sourire est tranquille et ses yeux assurés. (94; 5-8)

He continues this analogy of danger/sex/Orient in the fourth stanza of "Les bijoux" in which the poet compares his lover to a *tigre dompté*, a tame tiger--the tiger being an animal closely associated with the "Orient." The woman is further associated with the "Orient" through the line; *d'un air vague et rêveur elle essayait des poses.* Baudelaire always saw the "Oriental" or even the American Indian as a proud and noble being (a dandy, like himself), but often also as one whose eyes portray a distant dreaminess--Baudelaire saw this in Delacroix's *Femmes d'Alger*, for example.

The fifth stanza finds the poet still in a relatively safe dream world--the portent of danger lurks in the background, and yet draws him closer to his desire in an erotic fusion of Leda and the Swan:

> Et son bras et sa jambe, et sa cuisse et ses reins,
> Polis comme de l'huile, onduleux comme un cygne,
> Passaient devant mes yeux clairvoyants et sereins;
> Et son ventre et ses seins, ces grappes de ma vigne, (186; 17-20)

The sixth stanza exemplifies Baudelaire's preoccupation with the material and the spiritual, with the body and with the soul, with heaven and hell. The poet realizes the imminent sexual act, his powerlessness, his inability to remain detached from his body, his descent into hell from the pure regions of spirit and imagination--the fall of the poet/painter into the realities of the physical world mystified by the discourse of Catholicsm. Perhaps this is also why Baudelaire sees the "Orient" as a "fleur du mal." The dangerous and erotic "Orient" tempts him as the serpent tempted Adam and Eve.

> S'avancait, plus câlins que les Anges du mal,
> Pour troubler le repos où mon âme était mise,

Et pour la déranger du rocher de cristal
Où, calme et solitaire, elle s'était assise. (186; 20-24)

The last stanza leaves us with an image of the poet and his lover in a sensual and erotic hell. The flames from the fire die out and flicker, flooding the final scene of the two lovers in blood red:

--Et la lampe s'étant résignée à mourir,
Comme le foyer seul illuminait la chambre,
Chaque fois qu'il poussait un flamboyant soupir,
Il inondait de sang cette peau couleur d'ambre! (186;29-32)

Baudelaire has used the Orientalist vocabulary to paint a sensual, erotic (fraught with danger) scene that communicates directly to the senses of the reader. His vague (and often unpaintable) metaphors force the reader to interpret the meaning other than with his/her reason. How does the reader imagine the *bijoux sonores,* the *riche attirail, l'air vainqueur,* this world *rayonnant de métal et de pierre,* his love *profond et doux comme la mer,* that swells towards her *comme vers sa falaise*? How does one paint *son bras, sa jambe, sa cuisse, ses reins* if they are *polis comme de l'huile, onduleux comme un cygne*? How does one picture a room in which the lamp has died and only the dying fire lights up the room coloring the lovers in red? For the poet does not write "red," he writes "blood." He does not simply write that the fire flares up, he writes "flamboyant soupir" which encompasses ecstasy and also a final ecstasy as before the sunset, as before death--in the stanza, *soupir* rhymes with *mourir.* Baudelaire's metaphors demand more than a visual interpretation, they demand all of one's senses in order to fully imagine his poetic meaning. This is what Baudelaire desired.

The "Orient" with its perfumes, intense light, intense heat, erotic sensuality, despotic power, noble characters, symbolized an endless temptation away from a spiritual purity so difficult for the poet to maintain. The conventional code words

and images of Hugo and the Academic Orientalist Realists no longer suffice to move this mid nineteenth century poet. It was no longer an objective barbaric place which through its objective quality could shock and arouse, it pulsed through the veins of the poet as a vital and poetic impulse.

The Orientalist vocabulary utilized by the poet symbolizes at once his esthetic dream of poetically "painting" human experience by painting all the senses, and also unveils the poet's constant battle between the "Bien" and the "Mal." The need for an "objective truth" of an exterior "Orient" apparent in Hugo's *Les Orientales* (although this too eventually unveils a purely European subjective desire) gives way in Baudelaire to total subjectivity of the "Orient." The "Orient" is explicitly used for the subjective poetics of Baudelaire, whereas the subjectivity of Hugo's intent for using the "Orient" is implicit, and the Orientalism itself is blatantly explicit.

For example, fear and horror of the dangers of lusting over a harem wife is depicted in "La sultane favorite" by an objectified scene of a sultan telling his favorite wife not to demand any more deaths (which we learn the sultan has in fact carried out with axe chops). In Baudelaire, the danger of the woman becomes a metaphor of an ocean swelling towards the cliffs. The whole dramatic scenario of harems, sultans, concubines, power, palaces, riches, etc., is reduced in Baudelaire to a richly bejeweled and temptingly dangerous naked woman who smiles down at the poet from above as if she rules over him with her satanic power. The "Orient" exists consciously only in metaphor.

From "La sultane favorite:"

> Que m'importe, juive adorée,
> Un sein d'ébène, un front vermeil!
> Tu n'est point blanche ni cuivrée,
> Mais il semble qu'on t'a dorée
> Avec un rayon de soleil. (145, v1, 56-60)

As we noticed in Chapter One, Hugo demands no imagination on the part of the reader. He merely "paints" for us the picture. There is no attempt to poeticize the language, the sultan speaks directly and makes reference to merely the visual qualities. Baudelaire's "Les bijoux" rejects the simple visual, painterly referents, but invokes all the senses. Like Delacroix, Baudelaire's poetry is more atmospheric. The jewelry clinks and catches the light. He hints at inner attitudes and feelings: his deep love swelling like the sea, her candeur and lubricity. His lover's skin is glistening as if polished with oil (which adds a sense of touch), her body is as undulating as a swan's (which adds sensuality). Her body parts are grape clusters supported by the poet--the vine (this adds a sense of the erotic). The final scene of the dying fire intermittently lighting the room serves as an analogy to the final sex act. The eroticism of this poem speaks directly to the senses of the reader.

Most of Baudelaire's poems that slip into the realm of Orientalism are the poems that touch upon the poet's sexuality. Not surprisingly, his lover Jeanne Duval often engendered images, feelings, and sensations of the Orient. Claude Pichois believes Jeanne Duval inspired Baudelaire's "La chevelure." The poem, as its title suggests, describes the lover's hair. More specifically, it describes the reveries that the lover's black hair evoques. Jeanne was Baudelaire's long term mistress whom he sometimes referred to as his wife, and as Baudelaire's letters to his mother reveal, their relationship was very difficult. The present poem describes a more pleasant moment in Baudelaire's thoughts about his lover. The poem is not about physical sex, it is about what the poet imagines when he sees her black hair. Here, she is not a dangerous temptress, she only serves as a springboard for the higher realms of imagination. Hence, the poet is safe to dream. What he dreams about is his "Orient"--an "Orient" through which he can escape the chains that tie him to the physical realm. Baudelaire's "Orient" is an explicitly evasive "Orient" that brings to life the perfumes, the colors and the sounds of which Baudelaire

dreams. With the "Orient" he can actually "paint" this world that lies outside of the physical, material world.

His "Orient" is a sensual world that vascillates between an idealized world of imagination, or a dangerous world when the poet actually experiences this sensuality in his present physical world. Perhaps it is only through ideas of the "Orient" that Baudelaire can permit himself to idealize the physical world.

In the first stanza of "La chevelure" the poet speaks of a *parfum chargé de nonchaloir.*

> O toison, moutonnant jusque sur l'encolure!
> O boucles! O parfum chargé de nonchaloir!
> Extase! Pour peupler ce soir l'alcôve obscure
> Des souvenirs dormant dans cette chevelure,
> Je la veux agiter dans l'air comme un mouchoir! (54; 1-5)

Most perfumes that Baudelaire mentions usually lead him to thoughts of his ideal, sensual "Orient." Here, the perfume recalls the myth of the "Oriental" demeanor of nonchalance--whether this means sitting in the hot sun biding away the time, or just plain listlessness in general. Baudelaire reads this meaning into many Orientalist paintings. The *Femmes d'Alger* is a good example of this reading where the apparent listlessness of the women in the painting lead Baudelaire to feelings (or memories) of melancholy and sadness, feelings that he believes reveal an interior beauty (CE 128-129). In the first stanza of "A une dame Créole" we see the same association between perfume, the "Orient," and listlessness:

> Au pays parfumé que le soleil caresse,
> J'ai connu, sous un dais d'arbres tout empourprés
> Et de palmiers d'où pleut sur les yeux la paresse
> Une dame créole aux charmes ignorés. (94; 1-4)

The second stanza of "La chevelure" affirms the Orientalist reading of the poem:

> La langoureuse Asie et la brûlante Afrique,
> Tout un monde lointain, absent, presque défunt,
> Vit dans tes profondeurs, forêt aromatique!

Comme d'autres esprits voguent sur la musique,
Le mien, ô mon amour! nage sur ton parfum. (54; 6-10)

Again we witness "whiffs" of the "Orient." At this point in the history of Orientalism, it is possible for the poet to evoque the entire "Orient" with just one or two words. Listlessness, melancholy, dreaminess mixed with intense heat, light and power come together in the first line of this stanza. Indeed, as Baudelaire writes, the real Orient is absent, hardly exists. What exists is Baudelaire's imagination that comes to life in this multi-layered idealized dream world of his "Orient."

Through the medium of the poem, the poet's soul travels over the sea to arrive in this ideal imaginary place--*comme d'autres esprits voguent sur la musique*, etc. The sea becomes an analogy for the timeless world of his imagination as it travels far from the physical world. In the third stanza, the poet further expresses his desire to escape to his imaginary "Orient:"

J'irai là-bas où l'arbre et l'homme, pleins de sève,
Se pâment longuement sous l'ardeur des climats;
Fortes tresses, soyez la houle qui m'enlève!
Tu contiens, mer d'ébène, un éblouissant rêve
De voiles, de rameurs, de flammes et de mâts: (54; 11-15)

(One should recall Baudelaire's comments about the "Oriental:" *une race pure de toute mésalliance et ornée de sa santé et du libre développement de ses muscles.* (CE 115)) There, the "Oriental" is full of natural vital forces (*pleins de sève*), and lives naturally, unquestioning, peaceably, almost unconsciously (*se pâmer*) like a tree, its roots planted firmly in the soil, soaking up its nutrients from the earth as well as the unbearably hot sun (*l'ardeur des climats*). In the last two lines of this stanza, the poet returns to the black hair/sea analogy (*mer d'ébène*) and longs to depart to the poet's promised land (*un éblouissant rêve*) of perfumes, colors and sounds.

The fourth stanza takes the poet to the port of departure. This stanza is a painting made up of pure reflection. The poet does not paint the ships (in the

manner perhaps of Hugo's "Canaris"), he paints sounds (*Un port retentissant où mon âme peut boire),* odors and colors (*A grands flots le parfum, le son et la couleur*), the reflected colors of the sun on the sea (*Où les vaisseaux, glissant dans l'or et dans la moire,*), and the visual effect of the heat in the air (*Ourvrent leurs vastes bras pour embrasser la gloire/D'un ciel pur où frémit l'éternelle chaleur.*). Then, lost in his revery, his mind sets off on a pleasant ocean journey towards his promised land of timeless idealized sensuality:

> Je plongerai ma tête amoureuse d'ivresse
> Dans ce noir océan où l'autre est enfermé;
> Et mon esprit subtil que le roulis caresse
> Saura vous retrouver, ô féconde paresse!
> Infinis bercements du loisir embaumé! (55; 21-25)

Her black hair takes him over the seas to the beaches of the Orient where the poet inebriates himself with "Oriental" and exotic odors:

> Cheveux bleus, pavillon de ténèbres tendues,
> Vous me rendez l'azur du ciel immense et rond;
> Sur les bords duvetés de vos mèches tordues
> Je m'enivre ardemment des senteurs confondues
> De l'huile de coco, du musc et du goudron. (55; 26-30)

The "Orient" (her black hair) will always serve as an object of desire for the poet (*l'oasis où je rêve, et la hourde où je hume à longs traits le vin du souvenir*), and also as a place for poetic (and visual) creation (*ma main...sèmera le rubis, la perle et le saphir*):

> Longtemps! toujours! ma main dans ta crinière lourde
> Sèmera le rubis, la perle et le saphir,
> Afin qu'à mon désir tu ne sois jamais sourde!
> N'es-tu pas l'oasis où je rêve, et la gourde
> Où je hume à longs traits le vin du souvenir? (55; 31-35)

Baudelaire expresses this Orientalist idea of the "Orient" as a muse for artistic creation in the last stanza of the sonnet "A une dame Créole" as well:

> Vous feriez, à l'abri des ombreuses retraites,
> Germer mille sonnets dans le coeur des poëtes,

Que vos grands yeux rendraient plus soumis que vos noirs. (94; 12-14)

These last stanzas from "La chevelure" and from "A une dame Créole" completely define Orientalism--*Afin qu'à mon désir tu ne sois jamais sourde!*. This desire manifests itself blatantly in nineteenth century painting in particular: the mise en abîme of naked women in Ingres' bath scenes, the helpless naked harem women, the all powerful rulers, the violence, the bloodshed.

In Hugo's poem "Novembre" quoted in the previous chapter, we saw how Hugo painted a plethora of Orientalist themes and images that came to him from his "Oriental" muse. Baudelaire eliminates the totality of the "Orient" and chooses to paint only minimal images, and even in these he skirts the obvious and focuses on parts, on echoing sounds, on a few odors, on colors and their effects in the atmosphere. This poetic technique leaves the reader to complete the poetic atmosphere with his/her own senses, perhaps in the same way that Baudelaire could participate in the paintings of Delacroix that he admired.

Baudelaire picks from these stereotypical ideas of the "Orient" and uses parts of these common themes to aid in the suggestive power of his poems. These themes serve to paint tableaux rich with color, sound and smell. He moves away from the rational into a more non-rational reading of his work by stressing the world of the senses, and by creating abstract metaphors difficult to rationalize, yet easy to intuit in a non linear manner.

"La vie antérieure" is Baudelaire's most Orientalist poem. In this poem Baudelaire incorporates his admiration of a conglomerate of Orientalist paintings, his own ideal painting, and the ideal revery he associates with these. In fact, he creates an ideal Orientalist painting out of those elements in Orientalist art that he admires most, those that allow him to escape to his ideal sensual world.

J'ai longtemps habité sous de vastes portiques
Que les soleils marins teignaient de mille feux,
Et que leurs grands piliers, droits et majestueux,

Rendaient pareils, le soir, aux grottes basaltiques. (45; 1-4)

Instead of completely finishing the picture and filling in the framed space, as in the case of Hugo's poetic technique in *Les Orientales*, here, Baudelaire paints an abstract Orientalism with an eye on Impressionistic technique and concentrates in the first stanza on the reflections of the colors on the porticos. The poet paints a scene by the sea during sunset (the first part of the stanza beginning at sunset, the second ending at night). He does not linger on the exact colors, instead he chooses to infer the colors of a blazing sunset (*mille feux*), or the dark of night (*grottes basaltiques*), and even then, he concentrates on their reflections on the *portiques*. Baudelaire does not paint a static tableau, but manages to paint the movement of the reflection of color--from the fires of sunset to the black of a starry night. By focusing on the reflecting colors, Baudelaire does not delineate the images, rather, the colors overflow and give the impression of movement. The vagueness of the image forces the reader to formulate the "painting" in his/her mind given only a few material signifiers, (the *portiques*), yet even the materiality of this image transcends its boundaries by the adjective *vastes*, but still remains vaguely material through the rigidity of these "material" things--*droits, piliers, basaltiques*. What the reader ends up with is basically color and movement--movement in the changing color, and movement from a rigid form (*piliers, droits et majestueux*) to a rounded form (*grottes*), and movement in the reflected colors and non delineated forms.

Yet, there is more perhaps. The porticos near the sea remind the reader of ancient Greece. Perhaps the poet is giving an Orientalist reading of life in the "Orient?" All nineteenth century Orientalists felt one could better understand ancient history, or the Bible, by travelling to the "Orient" and observing "Oriental" culture--in this case, Eastern Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. Perhaps Baudelaire is defining his personal poetic Orientalism, for as we shall see, the connotations to Baudelaire's "Orient" take sharper form in the third stanza.

In the second stanza, the poet once again travels out to the sea (if only in spirit) and the reader enters into a purely Baudelairean abstract and evasive ideal "painting" of his poetic mood.

> Les houles, en roulant les images des cieux,
> Mêlaient d'une façon solennelle et mystique
> Les tout-puissants accords de leur riche musique
> Aux couleurs du couchant reflété par mes yeux. (45; 5-8)

The four lines follow the rhythm of large and lazy waves in the sea. The sound [u] echoes this image and is even echoed in the last line with ***couleurs*** and ***couchant***. Again, without naming any colors whatsoever, the poet manages to create in the reader an image of hundreds of variations of color--the waves reflect the colors of the sky, the colors of the sunset--and again, all the colors are reflected onto something, or off something, here, his eyes. In this stanza, not only are we asked to imagine the colors, but we are asked to imagine the colors of music--***riche musique.***

In the first stanza, the poet incorporated the idea of an above and a below. Here we have the idea of a without and within. The last line draws the reader within the eyes of the poet and the reader views the scene with him. The rhymes at the end of each line enforce this. *Yeux* rhymes with *cieux*, and thus gives an idea of vasteness within and without. Also *mystique* rhymes with *musique* which adds a spiritual connotation to the music, and one is hence drawn within.

In the last two stanzas, the poet has reached the "Orient" of his imagination--or rather, the feelings he experiences in front of Orientalist paintings, or someone or something that gives him this same feeling. And, this feeling he associated with the "Orient." First Baudelaire sets the scene:

> C'est là que j'ai vécu dans les voluptés calmes,
> Au milieu de l'azur, des vagues, des splendeurs
> Et des esclaves nus, tout imprégnés d'odeurs.(45; 9-11)

This is Baudelaire's Orient. From the poems studied previously, especially *La chevelure*, we know that Baudelaire associated his feelings of "voluptés calmes,"

with an escape to his "Orient" amidst the sky, the waves (*La chevelure* was also written with numerous analogies and metaphors of ships and oceans), exotic splendor and exotic aromas. Here Baudelaire adds the image of naked slaves and associates himself with an "Oriental" king.

The poet sits while the naked slaves fan him with palm leaves. Baudelaire associates himself even further with the "Oriental." In his essays in *Les Curiosités esthétiques*, Baudelaire often speaks of an appearance of a certain nobility of the "Oriental" and also his/her languor as he interprets the look in the "Oriental's" eyes (as painted by European painters). One can now, (at the end of the poem), visualize an image of a melancholy and yet noble poet in the "Orient" being fanned very slowly by his naked slaves.

> Qui me rafraîchissaient le front avec des palmes,
> Et dont l'unique soin était d'approfondir
> Le secret douloureux qui me faisait languir. (45; 12-14)

This poem begins with rigid images of a sparkling civilization, and slowly "decays" if we may say so, into a sad image of a melancholic "Oriental" king; however, not without first passing through a dazzling sunset of colors and sounds. It is not surprising then that Baudelaire chooses to associate his idea of the "Orient" with his feelings of dandysme. In the "Peintre de la vie moderne" Baudelaire compares the dandy to the American Indians. As we saw in chapter one, the ideas of Orientalism extend to almost all countries outside of Western Europe or outside of Christian countries.

> Le dandysme est le dernier éclat d'héroisme dans les décadences et le type du dandy retrouvé par le voyageur dans l'Amérique du nord n'infirme en rien cette idée; car rien n'empeche de supposer que les tribus que nous nommons sauvage soient les débris de grandes civilisations disparues. Le dandysme est un soleil couchant; comme l'astre qui décline, il est superbe, sans chaleur et plein de mélancholie. (CE 485)

This extract above describes the feeling Baudelaire wishes to convey, this feeling of melancholy, this feeling of a certain type of cold or distant nobility of the dandy. We can also see how Baudelaire compares in "La ve antérieure" these "noble" feelings to that of setting sun ablaze in the colors of its noble descent. The American Indians were not the only ones to express (according to Baudelaire) the nostalgia that Baudelaire seems to link to the inablility to live in a spiritual world.

> ces princes hindous qui, dans les splendeurs des plus glorieuses fêtes, portent au fond de leurs yeux une sorte d'avidité insatisfaite et une nostalgie inexplicable, quelque chose comme le souvenir et le regret de choses non connues. (CE 136)

The music that Baudelaire mixes with his colors--*les tout-puissants accords de leur riche musique/Aux couleurs du couchant reflété par mes yeux*--is meant to set the tone, to create a harmonious melody, and to recall memories--qualities that Baudelaire appreciated in some of his favorite paintings From the "Salon de 1846:"

> La mélodie est l'unité dans la couleur, ou la couleur générale.
> La mélodie veut une conclusion; c'est un ensemble où tous les effets concourent à un effet général.
> Ainsi la mélodie laisse dans l'esprit un souvenir profond.
> La bonne manière de savoir si un tableau est mélodieux est de le regarder d'assez loin pour n'en comprendre ni le sujet ni les lignes. S'il est mélodieux, il a déjà un sens, et il a déjà pris sa place dans le réportoire des souvenirs.
> Le style et le sentiment dans la couleur viennent du choix, et le choix vient du tempérament. (CE 108)

For example, when Baudelaire described Delacroix's *Femmes d'Alger*, he uses the same poetic vocabulary, mixing feeling, sound and color:

> C'est non seulement la douleur qu'il sait le mieux exprimer, mais surtout, -- prodigieux mystère de sa peinture, --la douleur morale! Cette haute et sérieuse mélancolie brille d'un éclat morne, même dans sa couleur, large, simple, abondante en masses harmoniques, comme celle de tous les grands coloristes, mais plaintive et profonde comme une mélodie de Weber. (CE 129)

For Baudelaire, the "Orient" is a "place" where *les sons, les couleurs et les parfums se répondent*, and the poet can escape into and live in this expansive infinity

through dream memories communicated to him by Orientalist paintings, by non Europeans, by association with thoughts of sensuality, by the fear of sexuality, or merely by an exotic aroma or an exotic object.

Baudelaire uses Orientalism to promote his poetic belief that prioritizes the sensual as opposed to facts and "reason." We saw how he opposed artists who chose to represent their art in this linear fashion (Hugo, Horace Vernet). He preferred artists who chose a more poetic representation, who chose to represent the impalpable--Delacroix for example. One is reminded of Delacroix's *Lion Hunt* and Baudelaire's admiration of his use of color in this painting. This change in focus from a completely finished referent--Historicism in painting, Hugo's *Les Orientales*, and the Pseudo-Realist Academic Orientalists--towards a preoccupation with technique as being as much a part of the referent as the referent itself (however illusive that may be) leads us from Baudelaire and Delacroix to certain Impressionists.

Abel, in her informative article "Redefining the Sister Arts" sees a similarity between Delacroix's art and Baudelaire's poetic style. She explains how Baudelaire attempted to recreate Delacroix's "timeless simultaneous vision of painting." As she writes:

> Delacroix's use of color prevents lines from imprisoning forms in fixed or static patterns, dissolving boundaries into the pervasive harmony of colors.
>
> Delacroix's paintings are dynamic; their curving, fluid lines and colors echo and pursue each other in perpetual interaction. They are not, however, formless. One of Delacroix's supreme virtues, in Baudelaire's opinion, was that he could balance animated movement with order and form. (48-49)

In her analysis, Abel demonstrates how Baudelaire attempted to recreate this simultaneous painterly vision by various means, some of which we have already seen in the poems analyzed above--the diffusion of light or reflection of light on objects. For example, in "Les bijoux," in the last stanza, the amber colored skin of

his lover is colored in the blood red of the fire. In the fourth stanza of "La Chevelure," heat and light reflect off the ships whose reflection is seen on the water. And, as we saw in "La vie antérieure" the porticos were painted in the fires of sunset, and the two first stanzas were mere reflections on the eyes of the poet. In all three of these poems, the color is not contained within separate objects, but extend beyond these forms. The colors converge upon one another, and in this way become more important than the object/referent. Baudelaire's colors signify painting.

This technique also suggests movement by the mere fact that no image is delineated completely in its static form. Baudelaire also infers movement through his poetic rhythm--ships or waves. And yet, as Abel explains, Baudelaire, at the same time, manages to create this timeless space that painting inhabits by slowly building his image of a single scene, by painting the colors, the sounds and the odors that surround this final timeless image--the noble dandy in "La vie antérieure," the feelings surrounding his lover in "La chevelure," and the naked bodies before the fire in "Les Bijoux." Abel also describes how Baudelaire "establishes constant patterns of repeated sounds" (52) and in this way contributes to the total harmony of all the parts and the consequent timeless vision of the poem. This was apparent in "La vie antérieure" with the [u] of *houles* and *roulant* that he echoed in the last line of this same stanza with *couleurs* and *couchant*. Another technique that not only adds to the harmony of the poem but also suggests added dimensions to objects or ideas is Baudelaire's method of combining general adjectives with concrete nouns (56)--for example the ***riche*** *musique*, or the ***vastes*** *portiques* of "La vie antérieure," or the *alcôve* ***obscure***, the *forêt* ***aromatique***, the ***éblouissant*** *rêve*, and the ***vastes*** *bras* of "La chevelure," or the *bijoux* ***sonores***, and the ***riches*** *attirail* of "Les bijoux."

Baudelaire also uses his syntax to contribute to the final poetic impression of the timeless simultaneous vision attained in painting. Martin Turnell, as Abel

writes, explains how Baudelaire "separates subject and object by subordinate clauses" which "encourages the impression of a unified image (Abel 51). Abel also speaks of "periodic syntax, which prevents the reader from forming a sequential image and creates instead a feeling of suspension until the picture takes form as a whole" (Abel 52).

The results of these techniques, vague adjectives coupled with concrete nouns, separating subject and object, periodic syntax, and the overall slow construction of the final whole image (to which the former techniques contribute) when viewed in their totality through the whole poem resemble the paintings of Delacroix:

> Both artists are attempting to synthesize movement with form, but this synthesis must be achieved in poetry by working to subsume sequential language to a single vision and in painting by enlivening the spatial form with movement. (Abel 52)
>
> The relationship between his poems and Delacroix's paintings derives neither from their subjects nor the actual patterns of their signs, but from their common emphasis on establishing interrelationships achieved in the different ways dictated by their different signs. (Abel 50)

What is interesting about this comparison of Baudelaire and Delacroix is that it can also be used to demonstrate similarites between Baudelaire's poetry and Impressionism--especially his "La vie antérieure." Delacroix depended heavily on pictorial referents for his paintings and although his techniques (harmonizing colors, painting images whose colors intermingle and reflect upon one another and move away from the clearly delineated form) often stood out in relief against the subject of the painting, he nonetheless resorted to the tradition of the pictorial referent as being first and foremost the subject of his painting (see illus. 18).

Baudelaire often transcends this pictorial tradition and caters first and foremost to his emotions, which in turn help him to shape his poetic landscape.

This is how Jules Antoine Castagnary defined the goals of the Impressionists as he understood their art:

> They are impressionists in the sense that they render not the landscape, but the sensation produced by the landscape.
>
> [the impressionists] leave reality and enter into full idealism. (Schiff 61)

As Schiff explains in "The End of Impressionism:"

> For Castagnary, to enter the world of idealism is not to discover universal principles underlying the appearances of material reality, but rather to entertain *individual* ideals, sensations, and imaginative visions. (61)
>
> If the art for which the term impressionist now usually is reserved can be defined with precision, this art must be understood in view of specific technical devices having been applied to a very general problem of both discovery and expression, a problem so fundamental to the art of the late nineteenth century that it often went unstated. The problem is that of the individual's means of arriving at truth or knowledge and the relation of this individual (or private) truth to a universal (or public) truth. Impressionists and symbolists shared this traditional concern. The impressionist artists distinguished themselves in the way they conceived and responded to the issue. For the impressionist, as the name implies, the concept of the "impression" provided the theoretical means for approaching the relation of individual and universal truth. The artists' characteristic technical devices, such as accentuated ("spontaneous") brushwork and bright color, are signs of their practical application of the theory of the impression. (69-70)

In an analysis of Hugo's Orientalism, the critic reveals the stereotypical public conception of the "Orient," whereas Hugo's individual conception of truth plays a miniscule role, if any at all. With Baudelaire, although one must understand the history of the European public stereotype of the "Orient" from which the source of his Orientalism in his art essays and his poetry stems, it is the poet's individual distortion of this public Orientalism that creates his stylistically impressionistic and emotionally private "Orient."

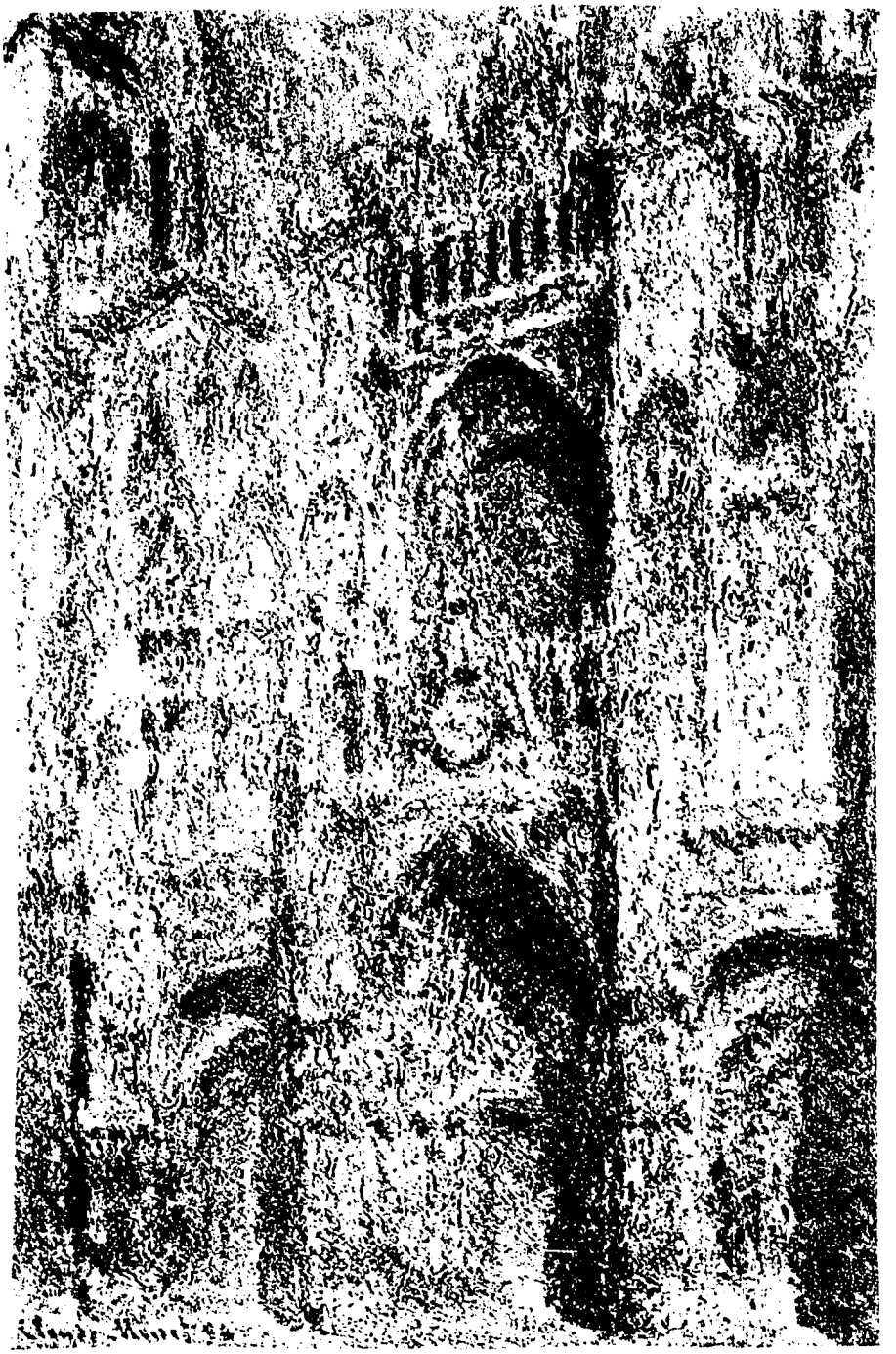
As Schiff explains in his article, the impression, according to nineteenth century art critics, *can be both a phenomenon of nature and of the artist's own being* (70), and *the impressionist...wished to call attention to the particularity or originality*

of his [or her] *sensation of nature* (70). In Baudelaire's Orientalist poetry, we could say that Baudelaire wished to call attention to the particularity or originality of his sensation of the "Orient" as he came to know it through painting and public preconceptions.

> In French art criticism of the nineteenth century, the word verité, truth, had a double sense. On one hand, it referred to a fidelity or truth to nature. On the other hand, it referred to the artist's own temperament or emotions. (Schiff 71)

Baudelaire's poetic technique belongs to the later half of nineteenth century art, whereas his poetic emotion belongs to the earlier half of this century. His poetry was not impressionistic in the sense of those whose intent was to paint a "realistic" picturesque portrait of nature observing the effects of light in the air on objects (illus. 20), rather, his poetry painted an aggrandized inner feeling, struggle, or suffering, in the manner of a Romantic. (illus. 21). If one could mix the subjects of perhaps a painting by Delacroix or Géricault with the technique of Turner perhaps (illus. 22 & 23), one could perhaps visualize Baudelaire's poetry.

Baudelaire distorts his images much more severely than Delacroix, which is also the way some impressionists painters surpassed Delacroix. In the first two stanzas of "La vie antérieure," nature, as Baudelaire poeticizes it, can barely be perceived through the "brush strokes" of light, color, rhyme, alliteration, rhythm, waves of movement, and the abstract metaphors of "referents." It is not until the last two stanzas that the image can be visualized, and the reader realizes that both parts of the poem work together mutually, building up impressionistic "brush strokes" of subjective distortion, and "realistic" "brush strokes" of objective distortion (the Orientalism of the last two stanzas), and eventually build one of Baudelaire's internal landscapes. As Schiff writes:



Illus. 20. Monet, Claude. *Rouen Cathedral* (façade), 1894. Rpt. in Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Horst de la Croix. Plate 21-55.

Illus. 21. Géricault, Théodore. *Raft of the Medusa*, 1818-1819. Louvre, Paris. Horst de la Croix. Plate 21-15.

Illus. 22. Turner. *Snow Storm--Steam Boat off a Harbour's Mouth, 1842.* Rpt. in Honour. fig. 49.

Illus. 23. Turner. *Seascape* . c1840-45. Rpt. in Honour. fig. 55.

In his "Salon of 1859," Charles Baudelaire chose to contrast the two kinds of truth as the respective aims of two kinds of art--"realist" or "positivist," and "imaginative:"

> The immense class of artists...can be divided into two quite distinct camps: one type, who calls himself "réaliste"...and whom we, in order to characterize better his error, shall call "positiviste," says: "I want to represent things as they are, or as they will be, supposing that I do not exist." A universe without man. And the other type, "l'imaginatif," says: "I want to illuminate things with my intellect [esprit] and project their reflection upon other minds." (71)

On one hand this comment resembles the ideals of the impressionists--Emile Zola commented on impressionism as *a work of art is a bit of nature seen through a temperament* . Before, we stated how emotionally, Baudelaire belonged to the earlier part of the nineteenth century, and technically to the later impressionists. Yet, one could say that his method of transferring his emotions borders on even a symbolist esthetic. Van Gogh says that he

> should not be surprised if the impressionists soon find fault with my way of working, for it has been fertilized by Delacroix's ideas rather than by theirs. Because instead of trying to reproduce exactly what I have before my eyes, I use color more arbitrarily, in order to express myself forcibly. (Schiff 84)

and the critic Octave Mirbeau said of Van Gogh that

> he did not allow himself to become absorbed into nature. He had absorbed nature into himself; he had forced her to bend to his will, to be molded to the forms of his thought, to follow him in his flights of imagination, to submit even to those distortions [déformations] that specifically characterized him. Van Gogh had, to a rare degree, what distinguishes one man from another: style...that is, the affirmation of the personality. (Schiff 85)

One could definitely argue the similarities between Baudelaire's esthetics of his poetic vision and Van Gogh's. Baudelaire distorts his reality as much as if not more than Van Gogh in order to "express himself forcibly"--from "Les bijoux," *Ce monde rayonnant de métal et de pierre, Les choses où le son se mêle à la lumière, Pour troubler le repos où mon âme était mise/Et pour la déranger du rocher de*

cristal/Où, calme et solitaire, elle s'était assise, and from "La chevelure," *ma main dans ta crinière lourde/Sèmera le rubis, la perle et le saphir, Cheveux bleus, pavillon de ténèbres tendues,* and from "La vie antérieure," *Les houles...mêlaient...les tout-puissants accords de leur riche musique/Aux couleurs du couchant reflété par mes yeux.* Baudelaire worked along with the painters in their struggle to free themselves from the yokes of the convention of the representation of the material world.

The more the artists became preoccupied with the esthetics of Impressionism and Symbolism, and more preoccupied with technique in order to express their changing ideals, the more we move away from Orientalism as a way to express the artist's need to renovate art and literature. Although this Orientalism and all its preconceived ideas still continued and exists even to this day, it moves into the background again as a referential curosity. At this point, one notices a bifurcation between artists interested mainly in the referent as the means to an end (Realism and Naturalism, for example), and those interested in technique as a means to an end (Impressionism and Symbolism--although within these schools one can find traditional Orientalism). What picks up where Orientalism leaves off is what can be referred to as Japonisme.

Chapter three

Visualizing Mallarméen poetics: Zen Art and Japonisme

Towards a larger definition of Japonisme

The nineteenth century brought with it not only a burning desire for scientific "progress," but artistic "progress" as well. Many no longer shared aristocratic esthetic ideals of the past that to them represented French society before the revolution. In the early part of the nineteenth century, one popular stage for this battle was the theater. Writers desired a new expression, one that would reflect the new and changing society. Hugo's early plays depict this transformation. He defied the status quo by forging new heros and heroines, and by trying to modernize the worn out aristocratic language of his characters. In this same way, nineteenth century Orientalism in painting and literature played the role of catalyst for artistic "progress"--new and colorful subjects, exotic words and places. However, as we saw, these novelties became conventionalized within traditional formats--for ex. Hugo's *Les Orientales* and Gérôme's *Slave Market* (illus. 6)

Many painters and poets felt an urge to represent their individual artistic sensiblities, but felt that existing European forms and techniques were inadequate, so they began to look within themselves for answers to their dilemma. They understood the exigency to break with a tradition that no longer expressed their relationship to their inner world and to the world around them--both worlds having expanded since the beginning of the nineteenth century. As Joseph Campbell writes:

> And so it was that, during that epochal century of almost unbelievable spiritual and technological transformations, the old horizons were dissolved and the center of gravity of all learning shifted from the little areas of local pride to a broad science of man himself in his new and single world. The older, eighteenth century disciplines, which formerly had seemed to fill

> sufficiently the field of humanistic concern, had become but provinces of a much larger subject. And whereas formerly the prime question seemed to have been that of man's supernatural as against merely natural endowment, now, with the recognition of the universality of those mythological themes...with the realization that these supernatural motifs were not peculiar to any single tradition but common to the religious lore of mankind, the tension between "orthodox" and "gentile," "high" and "primitive," simply dissolved. (15)

The time was ripe for new influences, and the artists and writers of the nineteenth century were receptive to new ideas of esthetic beauty from around the world.

> Stendhal, for example, had argued that if there are five races of men, there must be five "ideal" beauties: "I strongly doubt," he wrote, "that the inhabitant of the coast of Guinea admires the truth of Titian's color." If there are five races, then there are innumerable individuals. And so, Delacroix stated that for an artist, "everything is a subject; the subject is yourself; it is your impressions, your emotions before nature." Anything observed might be suited to artistic representation, and art might appear in virtually any style. As a result, no predetermined standard of objective realism or of universal beauty would ever prove adequate. (Schiff, 74)

Baudelaire understood the artist's plight of finding new ways to express his or her vision of the contemporary world, and fought for their rights to do so not only in his own poetry, but in his essays on art criticism. Below, he is expressing the relativity of "European" esthetic standards of beauty:

> que dirait-il en face d'un produit chinois, produit étrange, bizarre, contourné dans sa forme, intense par sa couleur, et quelquefois délicat jusqu'à l'évanouissement.? Cependant c'est un échantillon de la beauté universelle;....(CE 211)

As early as 1831, Alfred Johannot stated that "every artist has a 'point of view' determined by his individual temperament and that his work could be evaluated only from that unique perspective; no fixed standard of judgement could be applied to art." (in Floyd 1: 197) The collective esthetic ideal and facile communication with a collective audience as we saw in Hugo's *Les Orientales* was giving way to an artistic esthetic of the individual and a less materialistic and mimetic representation--the artistic differences between Gérôme and Baudelaire, for

example: "The concepts of originality, individuality, and temperament dominated nineteenth century critical theory, and to some extent perpetuated Romantic views of artistic genius." (Floyd 197)

Many artists and writers were tired of an imposed artistic ideal, an ideal that to them seemed to cater to mere scientific rendering of this traditional ideal. As the critic Josse stated in 1883:

> Depuis que n'ayant plus de style en propre nous vivions sur le passé, changeant de goût et de méthode tous les quatres ou cinq ans, nous avions tout vu, tout effleuré, tout pillé; nous avions parcouru les ages, nous avions mis à contribution l'Egypte et la Grèce, Rome et Byzance, nous avions, en cinquante ans, ressassé tous les siècles de notre histoire, du celtique à la Renaissance, du roman au style rocaille; nous avions volé l'art italien et l'art flamand, et nous en étions arrivés à chercher dans les pays du Nord quelques pierres scandinaves, quelques manuscrits saxons pour y déchiffrer une façon nouvelle. Le Japon s'ouvre à nous...(Josse 330)

These conventions no longer spoke to the mid nineteenth century artist nor to his or her public, the constituency of which had changed drastically since the beginning of the century. In 1863 Jules Castagnary redefined the "ideal" in art. His definition of contemporary beauty in painting reminds one of the difference between Ingres' and Delacroix's rendition of Paganini (figs. 16 & 17):

> What is the object of painting? "To express the ideal," a choir of enthusiasts will cry, "to set forth the Beautiful." Empty words! The ideal is not a revelation from on high, placed before an upward-striving humanity forever obliged to approach it without ever attaining it; the ideal is the freely conceived product of each person's consciousness, placed in contrast with exterior realities: and thus it is the individual concept that varies from artist to artist. The Beautiful is not a reality existing outside of man and imposing itself on his mind in the form or appearance of objects; The Beautiful is an abstract abbreviation, beneath whose label we group a host of different phenomena that act upon our organs and intelligence in a certain way; thus, it is the individual concept which varies, in a given society, from epoch to epoch, and within an epoch, from man to man.[2]

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[2]"Salon de 1863," *Salons* (1857-1870) Paris: Bibliothèque Charpentier, 1892. trans. and reprinted in Linda Nochlin, ed., *Realism and Tradition in Art 1848-1900*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1966, 63-4 as qtd. in Floyd 197.

Baudelaire urged modern painters to rebel against these dying ideals in art, to stop imitating the "rules" set up by the Academy. He urged them to look within as well as without--not towards a handed down exterior ideal, but to the exterior world in which the artist participated.

> What is pure painting according to the modern conception? It is to create a suggestive magic containing both the subject and the object, the world exterior to the artist and the artist himself. (*Salon de 1846*)

So in the mid nineteenth century, when French artists were struggling to free themselves from tradition and trying to create an art that spoke to their time, it is not surprising that artists marvelled at the Japanese art that was making its way to Europe after Japan opened its ports in mid century. Here was an art that to the French appeared free of conventionality, original and expressive, an art that portrayed the natural world, expressed the emotion within this world, and that of the artist as well. Josse summarizes a general reaction to this newly arrived art:

> C'est le retour à la nature que nous indique l'art japonais, c'est le chemin de ce monde infini qui nous enveloppe et que nous ne voyons pas. Il aura fallu lire les albums des japonais et voir leur céramique, leurs laques et leurs bronzes, pour nous rappeler que nous avons comme eux un ciel, des champs, des bois, des eaux, peuplés d'oiseaux, de fleurs, d'herbes, d'insectes et de poissons aux couleurs innombrables; ils nous auront appris la poésie de ce monde, sa vie, le charme du croquis saisi au vol. Nous saurons qu'on ne doit pas copier l'oiseau mort, l'insecte desseché, la fleur coupée, le poisson hors de l'eau, mais qu'il faut sortir de la ville et rapprendre en plein air ce vieux, cet éternel style que nous ne savons plus et qui est écrit dans les oeuvres de Dieu, qui est dessiné partout et peint des plus splendides couleurs. (Josse 363)

Two of the most common examples of Japanese art available to the French public were albums of drawings (Hokusai's *Manga* being the most famous), and wood block prints. This art offered fresh views on ways to portray the world around them--new perspectives through which to capture the contemporary world, fresh subjects that differed enormously from the conventional, age old academic genres, artistic and expressive renditions of everyday people (which the new democratic age of the painters and their public welcomed), realistic and yet expressive drawings of

nature, bold, bright and emotive use of color, assymetry, and a rejection of perfect illusionistic representation. As both Floyd and Schiff indicate, all these qualities in Japanese art were qualities with which the French artist was already concerned. By studying Japanese art, French artists discovered new techniques that would facilitate their break away from convention. As Duranty, in *La Nouvelle peinture* explained in 1876:

> Les aspects des choses et des gens ont mille manières d'être imprévues, dans la réalité. Notre point de vue n'est pas toujours au centre d'une pièce avec ses deux parois latérales qui fuient vers celle du fond; il ne ramène pas toujours les lignes et les angles des cornices avec une régularité et une symétrie mathématiques...[]...Du dedans, c'est par la fenêtre que nous communiquons avec le dehors; la fenêtre est encore un cadre qui nous accompagne sans cesse,...Le cadre de la fenêtre, selon que nous en sommes loin ou près, que nous nous tenons assis ou debout, découpe le spectacle extérieur de la manière la plus inattendue, la plus changeante, nous procurant l'éternelle variété, l'impromptu qui est une des grandes saveurs de la réalité. (46)

In order to give the reader a visual example of the influence of Japanese prints and drawings on artists of the mid to late nineteenth century, illustrations 24 through 30 will demonstrate certain ways in which Japanese art showed many painters how to gradually bypass conventional European standards of esthetic beauty. In the first illustration (illus. 8), Gérôme's *Moorish Bath,* we see an "ideal" of feminine beauty, an ideal imposed on the painter by years of Western artistic convention. His artistic rendition of the nude is not altered by the "new" and "exotic" Orientalism of the painting. His art is materialistic and scientific with an eye for an "exact" and "truthful" rendering of an external ideal world with *mathematical regularity and symmetry.* In his tableau, the real, everyday world is absent.

In the second set of illustrations (illus. 24-26) from Hokusai's *Manga* we notice a completely different type of "truth." In this volume of the *Manga,* Hokusai draws from the reality of Japanese life around him--the actions of everyday people, a

Illus. 24. Hokusai, Katsushika. *Man Bathing*. From*Manga*. Tokyo, Yujiro Shinoda. Rpt. in Siegfried Wichmann. *Japonisme: Japanese Influence on Western Art in 19th and 29th Centuries*. trans. Mary Whittal et al. NewYork: Harmony Books, 1981. fig. 32.

Illus. 25. Hokusai, Katsushika. *Man Washing*. From *Manga*. Tokyo, Yujiro Shinoda. Wichmann. fig. 33.

Illus. 26. Hokusai, Katsushika. *Sumo Wrestler.* From *Manga.* Tokyo, Yujiro Shinoda. Wichmann. fig. 43.

type of "realism." However, Hokusai is not at all concerned with a materialistic truth, on the contrary, he paints a "truth" of the *essence* of the person or object he paints. It is this individual artist who decides which type of essence he wishes to depict. There is no one specific and universal essence for one specific action, or specific type of person as French Academic genres dictate. Hokusai relies on his own impression of the scene or the object and he in turn depicts a universal essence common to humanity rather than to externally prescribed "rules." With minimal detail, the artist arrives at a universal essence. In the materialistic Western Realism, the artist adds detail upon detail in order to capture a scientific truth of an idealistic reality. He or she believes to have reached a universal beauty, but in fact, he or she only carries on the tradition of centuries of Western ideals of beauty.

Hokusai's art opened the eyes of many French painters looking for fresh interpretations of the world around them. In his drawings, they recognized the value of humor, the universal beauty of the everyday experience, the expressiveness of nature, and the value of minimal expression. European artists and art critics appreciated the ability of Japanese artists to actually express the essence of the object through minimal means. In 1868 Ernest Chesneau stated in his article "L'art japonais" that:

> Dans les dessins des animaux, non seulement ils ont étudié les formes extérieures, mais encore ils ont pénétree les habitudes et le caractère moral de chacun d'eux avec une telle exactitude d'observation **qu'au moyen de quelques lignes et d'un trait de pinceau, ils atteignent à une complète définition de la nature....**(425)
>
> **La tendance dominante dans l'art japonais, c'est l'atténuation, la mise en lumière du caractère essentiel, du caractère vital et expressif de la plante, de l'animal, de l'homme en ses diverses fonctions, de la nature tout entière prise dans ses ensembles et dans ses particularités.** Cette recherche de l'expression est tellement accusée dans les dessins japonais qu'on l'y voit très fréquémment poussée jusqu'aux limites de la caricature.(440-441; emphasis added)

The American art critic James Jackson Jarves noted in 1871:

> Japanese artists emphasize forcibly the main point, and neglect side issues or aims. Their aesthetic point of view, feeling, and comprehension, is antipodal to the Occidental. **They concentrate attention on a few aims; we divide or scatter it among many. Our system gives the impression of general fidelity to nature; theirs a special.** It is broken talk like infant's speech. They display a realism seldom equalled by Europeans. By the simplest means they suggest distance, perspective, broad masses, far-off horizons of sea and land; in short, secure an effective realization of the larger features of landscape...**Our artists give us more to see but we actually see less, because nothing is left to the imagination...Grammatically, it may be all wrong, but the impression is truthfully profound...**if the latter, by rapid incisive outline, give a better idea of a given object than the former by laboured drawing, then we must recognize in the Asiatic a technical sleight of hand, and an insight into the character of the thing represented, superior to the European. (161; emphasis added)

On one hand, Japanese art expressed a certain Realism, on the other hand it transcended this realism by painting what lay behind the empirically observed world. In *Le Rappel*, in 1869, Philippe Burty wrote of the methods of Japanese art:

> Il démontre à nos professeurs qu'il est possible de devenir un homme de science en restant un homme d'esprit!

Phylis Floyd, in her dissertation *Japonisme in Context: Documentation, Criticism, Aesthetic Reaction*, summarizes many of the critics, some of whom were quoted above, who wrote of Japanese art during the latter half of the nineteenth century:

> Characteristically Japanese art was called poetic, in contrast to European art which was scientific; suggestive and interpretive, as opposed to objective and imitative; and spiritual in contrast to the materialism of Western art....All of these authors commented on the simplicity of means the Oriental artist employed in achieving his results; the main effect was emphasized, details were eliminated, leaving the spectator's imagination to complete the scene. (212-213)

Since the revolution, artists and writers were struggling with ways to renovate and "progress" French artistic expression of their time. In Japanese art, they saw an answer to the problems that they had grappled with for decades. We have already noted the changes in artistic mentality with Gérôme and Delacroix. The arrival of Japanese art merely accelerated this development. This art moved

Western artists further towards their goal of creating an art that spoke directly to themselves and to the people of the nineteenth century.

The third set of illustrations by Degas (figs. 27-29--the illustrations for both Hokusai and Degas are taken from the examples in Wichman, 28-29) demonstrate how certain aspects of Japanese art were incorporated and absorbed into French art of the time. All three sets of examples depict the common theme of bathers. Gérôme's bathers merely show the spectator a classical ideal of high art in an exotic milieu. The only common thread that links the spectator to his art is perhaps knowledge of artistic techniques, or an observance of how "real" the image pretends to be. Degas paints his nudes in familiar and intimate settings. He does not plan the tableau in the manner of Gérôme, in a clearly framed and staged scene. One is reminded of Duranty's remarks above: *Notre point de vue n'est pas toujours au centre d'une pièce avec ses deux parois latérales qui fuient vers celle du fond.* The frame seems to be arbitrarily placed in such a way that important elements of the painting are cut off, leaving the spectator to complete the image in his or her mind. Degas creates an extreme intimacy in illustration 28 by cutting off all images of the room, thus magnifying the moment. Man or woman is no longer at the center of his or her world. Again from Duranty: *Les aspects des choses et des gens ont mille manières d'être imprévues, dans la réalité...Le cadre de la fenêtre, selon que nous en sommes loin ou près, que nous nous tenons assis ou debout, découpe le spectacle extérieur de la manière la plus inattendue, la plus changeante, nous procurant l'éternelle variété, l'impromptu qui est une des grandes saveurs de la réalité.* Degas paints this same arbitrariness in illustrations 28 and 29. In the last example, he enhances the intimacy of the moment by adding a touch of humor. This is a common everyday woman unconcerned with what is going on around her--a passing impression as well as a universal moment, for the spectator identifies with this moment.

Illus. 27. Degas, Edgar. *The Bath,* 1886. Louvre, Paris. Rpt. in Wichmann. fig. 29

Illus. 28. Degas, Edgar. *The Bathtub,* 1886. The Hill Stead Museum. Farmington, Connecticut. Rpt. in Wichmann. fig. 34.

Illus. 29. Degas, Edgar. *Nude Woman, Standing,* back view (detail), 1886. Collection David Weill, Paris. Rpt. in Wichmann. fig. 42.

A few more examples will elucidate the general inclination for avant garde artists to borrow certain stylistic techniques, or certain themes from the Japanese art available to them. The first is *The Bath* by Mary Cassatt (illus. 30). Here we see a thematic borrowing (see Utamaro's *Mother doing child's hair*--illus. 31) as well as a borrowing of Japanese stylistic techniques (see above, Hokusai). Illustrations 32-35 show how various artists absorbed what they saw in Japanese art, and in turn created their own individual expressions keeping within Western traditions.

Japonisme differs from Orientalism. As we saw in Chapter One, Orientalists exploit the "Orient" for mainly thematic purposes. Orientalism is all too evident in Gérôme's works, in Hugo's *Les Orientales,* and in Delacroix's Orientalist paintings. We also saw how Baudelaire distorted the "Orient" in order to enhance his personal poetic metaphors. In our comparison of Delacroix and Baudelaire's art to Hugo and Gérôme's, to mention a few, we saw a movement away from the grandeur of a classical ideal of art, to one encompassing a more personal vision brought about by an artistic expression leading away from clear, linear perspective. Japonisme, as we said earlier, accelerates this movement. Japonisme, as it appears in European art, is not overtly about Japan, but about this change in the way European artists and writers represented their world and their artistic sensibilities. Japonisme only becomes Orientalism when "Japan" becomes distorted in European art. This sometimes occurred as illustration 36 demonstrates, or in the works of Pierre Loti for example, who used the Far East as an exotic place to stage his fiction, and in which he writes of "exotic" customs to entice his European readers. This is Orientalism--although there is a fine line between them both. On one hand Japonisme could mean the mid to late nineteenth and early twentieth century Western interest in all things Japanese. Much of the time this craze bordered on a gross distortion of "Japan" (and China for that matter--the two were often closely associated), and a gross mixture of ideas of the "vast abyss" of the "Orient," for the

Illus. 30. Cassatt, Mary. *The Bath,* c 1891. Cabinet des Estampes, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Rpt. in Wichmann. fig. 44.

Illus. 31. Utamaro, Kitagawa. *Mother bathing her son,* c 1794. Private Collection. Rpt. in Wichmann. fig. 46.

Illus. 32. Manet, Edouard. *The Railway*, 1874. Print Room, National Library, Budapest. Rpt. in Wichmann. fig. 618.

Illus. 33. Utamaro, Kitagawa. *Courtesans waiting and entertaining themselves behind sliding grilles.* Scene from the *Yoshiwara*. Repr. S. Bing, *Le Japon artistique*, 5 September 1888. Rpt. inWichmann. fig. 617.

Illus. 34. Sengai, Gibon. *Daruma*. Edo period, 1603-1867. Idemitsu Museum, Tokyo. Rpt. in Wichmann. fig. 1042.

Illus. 35. Toulouse-Lautrec, Henri de. *Jane Avril*, 1893. Rpt. in Wichmann. fig. 1041.

Illus. 36. Monet, Claude. *Madame Monet in a kimono (La Japonaise)*, 1876. Museum of fine Arts, Boston. Rpt. in Wichmann. fig. 11.

same Western nineteenth century ideas of the "Orient"--Spain, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, the Americas--were transferred to the Far East.

Often, Japanese art was judged through the rules of Western ideals of Beauty. Comments such as, "They achieve no effects of chiaroscuro," or "Their art is purely decorative and hence they have no higher ideals of beauty" created the impression among some that the Japanese must then be inferior to Europeans. In 1872 Alfred Sensier in *Souvenirs Théodore Rousseau* writes of Rousseau's encounter with Japanese art in the 1860s:

> L'art japonais, sorti comme une éruption volcanique des îles de la mer Vermeille, se présente à Rousseau dans sa plus parfaite individualité; **un produit logique et franc des contrées de la lumière**, comme une émanation impersonnelle d'artiste, **mais comme un fruit du pays des enchantements, des génies et des fabuleusess générations.** Rousseau y trouvait la configuration exacte du dessin, le résumé des horizons et des plans, la splendeur des couleurs, la phosphorence de l'atmosphère, la simplicitee du procédé, la nouveauté et l'audace des compositions. Il avait là sous les yeux une formule parlante, (217-20; emphasis added).

or Léon de Laborde in 1856:

> J'en résumerai le caractère en deux mots: le sentiment de l'harmonie, c'est sous l'influence de ce sentiment si rare en Occident, si général en Orient, que l'artiste ose associer les tons les plus violents et sait relever dans la nature et n'était jamais influencé par la mode, qui n'existe pas, il trouve dans les fleurs des champs et dans la coloration du ciel, des tons d'une finesse qui est pour nous insaisissable, d'une délicatesse célèste qui nous est inconnue et nous transporte comme une rêve dans des mondes imaginaires. (251-2; emphasis added).

and Eugène Morel in 1892:

> If faut dire très haut, notre art moderne vient tout droit du Japon. **C'est ce peuple d'abord étrange, puis si voyant, si précis, enfantinement rêveur,** qui s'est glissé en nous, a modifié notre vision... a éclairci nos tableaux, a guidé Manet dans la rénovation de la peinture. Plus même, de l'oeil? Dirais-je des doigts? Car dans cet art le toucher jouit en même temps que l'oeil. C'est le Japon qui nous a appris à mettre d'enjouisseuses choses à portée de la main..." (22; emphasis added).

In these examples, one is reminded of the earlier comments about what an European finds in North Africa, the Middle East, or even Eastern Europe, Spain and

the Americas--intense light, genies, fantasy, child-like people, strangeness. With the Far East, we can add the philosophic and wise dreamer. However, art critics, artists, and writers of that period almost always acknowledge their debt to Japan when it comes to literary and artistic "progress" in the West. Often misunderstood, or compared to European standards, Japanese art (and most Far Eastern art forms) was admired for its poetic quality, as opposed to the heavy dose of "reason," or prose quality in most Academic art forms in Europe, and especially in France at the time of its arrival.

To focus on what Western artists and writers learned from each other and themselves while they learned from these new art forms, to focus on the written or painted Western product of this encounter is to study a Japonisme that lies not in Orientalism, but a Japonisme that lies behind the written or painted work, for in most cases, Japan is not the "subject" of the literary or artistic work, the West is. It is to study the *essence* of the product of Japonisme. Japonisme encompasses many European "movements"--Impressionism, Symbolism, Art Nouveau--and even paves the way for Expressionism, Modernism, and Abstraction. The art of Japan entered Europe at a crucial moment in its literary and artistic self exploration, and the resultant "Japonisme" should be defined in perhaps a much larger context.

For example, Baudelaire's Orientalist poetry can be related to "Japonisme" if one takes into account the general tendencies of this "movement." Some of these general tendencies are: fragmented and arbitrary points of view, a lack of perfect illusionistic space and/or mimetic representation, an allowance for each artist's individual perception and expression, a more "realistic" representation--a moving away from academic ideals towards a universal essence of the object through very personalized means, using lines or "brushstrokes" to signify as much as, if not more than color and content, minimalizing detail, and letting go of the need to

completely signify everything in order to leave the bulk of interpretation to the imagination of the viewer.

We saw some of these tendancies in Hugo--a more "realistic" use of language, a move away from accepted academic standards, an attempt to situate his poetry in what he believed to be "realistic" or "historical" events. With Delacroix we examined his use of color and brushstrokes in his attempt at unifying the signifying process. We also saw some minimalization of detail in *Greece Expiring*, for example. Baudelaire appreciated Delacroix's art over Hugo's art. He understood that in order for artistic "progress" to be made, a new syntax must be created, not just a new element here, a new element there. The artist or writer must piece together many new elements (whether this be vocabulary, color or subject matter) in a creative way that would define a completely new artistic syntax in order for artistic "progress" to occur. As we mentioned earlier, Japanese art accelerated this "progress" which had already begun to take place in the early nineteenth century.

Baudelaire's Orientalist poetry combines most of the general tendencies of Japonisme outlined above even before the general advent of Japonisme in painting. To see this, one needs to abstract certain elements from Japonisme and to apply them to what was already present in the art of Baudelaire. In *La Vie antérieur* and *La Chevelure*, he deliberately fragments the point of view into several snapshots. In the first poem, the reader encounters reflected light on land, then reflected sounds and colors on the sea, then an Orientalist image. In *La Chevelure*, each stanza paints a different scenario, or essence, of Baudelaire's poetic feeling for his lover. In *Les Bijoux* , the poet focuses on a few significant elements of his lover, separating each element by the stanzas--her jewelry, her smile, her eyes, her posture, her arm, leg, thigh, waist, her hips--until the scene comes into focus in the last stanza, creating the same effect on the reader as that of a viewer of an Impressionistic painting which comes into focus only after moving slightly away from the work.

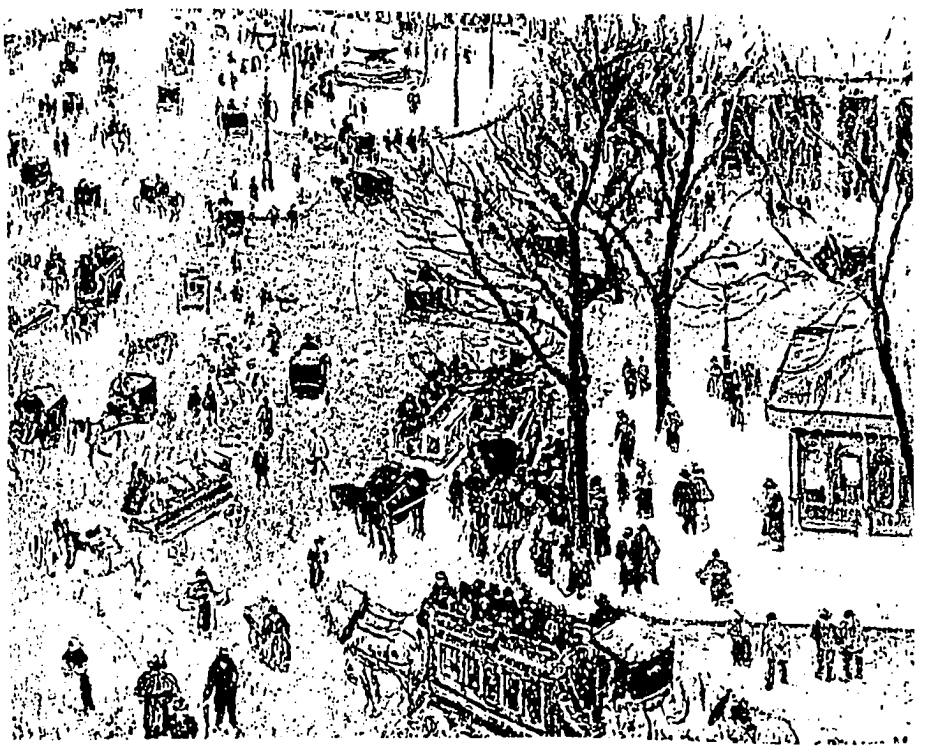
Baudelaire definitely does not attempt to recreate a publicly common and perfectly illusionistic space as in Hugo's Orientalist poetry. He is more concerned with his individual poetic feelings. These he veils behind metaphorical representations which through their vagueness and distance from a clearly defined experience, leave the bulk of the interpretation to the reader of his poems. The heavy use of personal and vague metaphors assures very minimal details of the content of the poem, and he relies on the power of these creative metaphors to signify an essence of the "content" of his poems.

The "arbritrary point of view" common to those works influenced by 'Japonisme' is difficult to argue. Degas painted his bathers from an arbritrary point of view. We can say this because the bathers are not posing for the painting in an accepted Academic setting; he has caught them unaware, in their private intimacy. Can we say the same thing for the poet? Perhaps. Baudelaire's personal point of view takes away from any common public point of view, and hence the point of view is arbitrary and not one common to the public nor to Academic standards of the time.

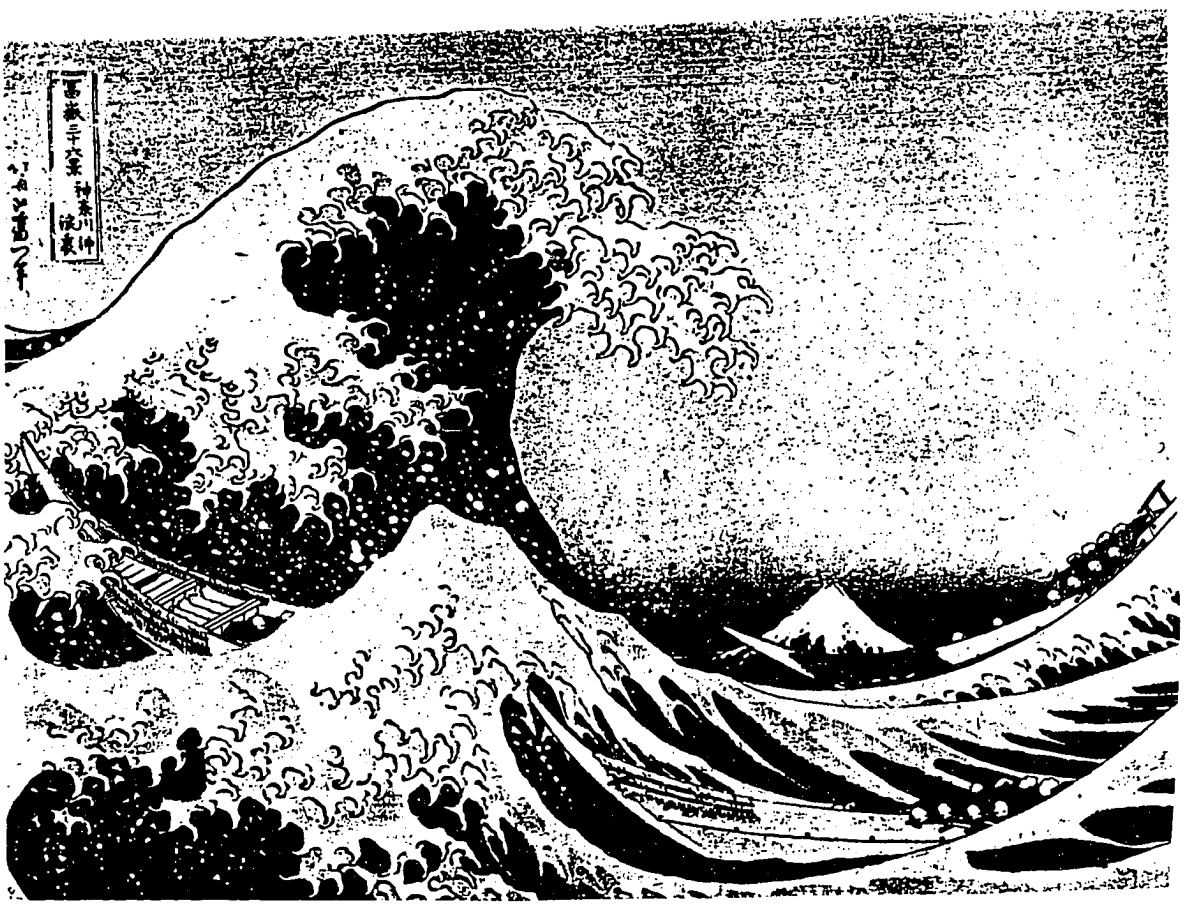
One aspect of Japanese art recognized by Western critics and artists is the ability to paint a universal essence through minimal and personal means. Baudelaire relies on his individual perception of the world, but the *essence* of his poems is essentially Eurocentric. His perception of the *bien* and the *mal*, of the spiritual and the material, of the temporal and the infinite, of life and of death is not based on universal experience, but on a Westernized and Christianized perception of the world dictated by years of tradition and habit. Of course, this does not mean that all later works that fall under the category of Japonisme shed this view of experiencing the world. Most do not, but some do, and this is mainly evident in painting, more rarely in literature at this time.

For example, the enormous difference between Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa* (or perhaps even all of pre-mid-nineteenth century painting) and Pissarro's *Place du Théâtre Français* or Monet's *Rouen Cathedral* (illus. 20-21 & 37) for example, shows a change in the artist's perception of being in the world. In the *Raft*, the only presence in the world seems to be man and God--an all-powerful God that causes suffering. Here, man is at the hands of this God. Géricault conceived of this painting after hearing of a similar incident that occured at that time. Like Hugo, he agrandizes the event and focuses on the horror of the moment. In Pisarro's and Monet's works, the artist prefers to appear to retreat and become an observer. In the *Rouen Cathedral*, church, God and nature fuse into one. The artist does not judge, he observes. In *Place du Théâtre Français* the people in the picture do not take on such a tragic importance as in the *Raft*. Rather, they become almost insignificant in the larger spectrum of life. There is no apparent moral judgement in these works, no specifically Christian dualistic view of the world as we see in Baudelaire's works.

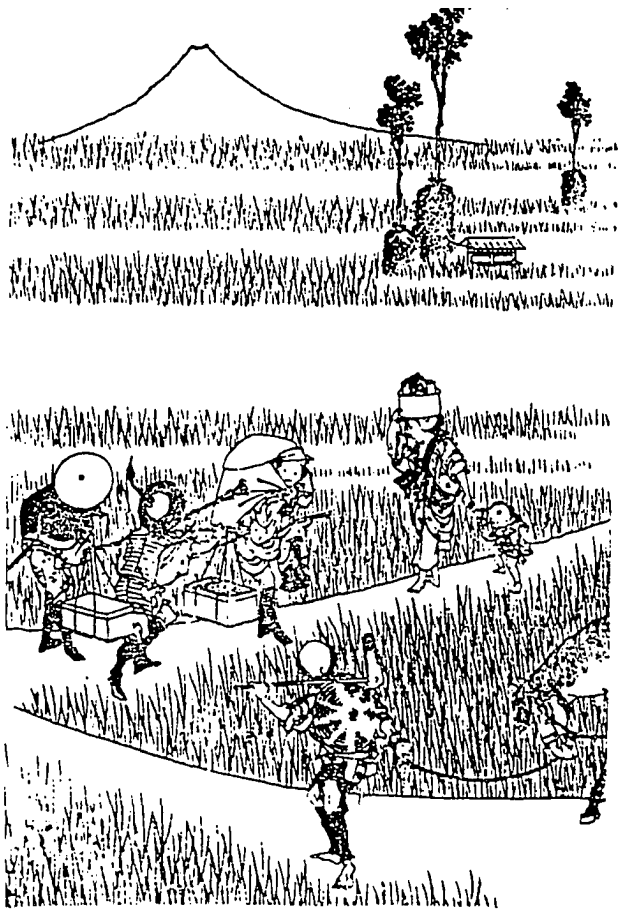
This is also true of many of the Japanese works available to the artists in the mid to late nineteeth century. For example, Hokusai's The *Great Wave off Kanagawa* (illus. 38) demonstrates a largely different view of humanity and nature than does Géricault's *Raft* , in which the world is seen from the point of view of man and man's reaction to "God" or nature, in which suffering is Academically accepted "high art." In *The Wave*, the boaters are battling through the ocean which in turn is battling them, not in an ominous sense, but naturally. Man does not loom in the forefront, the artist puts them into perspective. Hokusai even adds a slight touch of humor that seems to be aimed at the folly of man trying to overcome a power greater than theirs--a power that just "is," not one that judges or punishes. Another woodcut by Hokusai, *Mount Fuji Across Paddy Fields* (illus 39) is similar in spirit to Pissaro's *Place du Théâtre Français* (illus 37). Each artist chose an arbitrary vantage point from which to view and paint the scene. There was no



Illus. 37. Pissaro, Camille. *Place du Théâtre Français,* 1895. Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Horst de la Croix. Plate 21-56.



Illus. 38. Hokusai, Katsushika. *The Great Wave off Kanagawa.* Rpt. in J. Hillier. *Hokusai: Paintings, Drawings and Woodcuts.* London: Phaidon Press, 1955. Plate 65.



Illus. 39. Hokusai, Katsushika. *Mt. Fuji across paddy fields,* 1834-35. From *100 Views of Mount Fuji.* Private Collection. Rpt. in Wichmann. fig. 98.

logical reason to pick this corner or that corner, or that patch of paddy field or another. This in turn teaches the spectator of these paintings a less egocentric view of the world, and leaves space for the empirical reality that exists around the artist and the viewer. This same difference, between an egocentric view of the world and a more universal view exists between certain poems of Baudelaire and Stéphane Mallarmé.

Mallarmé's poem *Las de l'amer repos* represents what seems to have taken place within many artists and writers of the time. First of all, the poem incorporates both Orientalism and Japonisme. The poem's Orientalism stems from an image of a "Chinese" artist, and its Japonisme stems from on one hand an image in the poem painted in a very East Asian manner, and on the other hand by the fact that meaning is derived in an analogous manner in Zen artistic works. In both, Zen works and many poems of Mallarmé, the reader must intuit meaning in very similar ways. In Zen art forms the reader or spectator must participate in the work in order to understand (and intuit) the philosophy behind the work.

> The monk artist has merely begun a process that is reactivated when the painting is seen, leading to various levels of comunication and understanding. Because the viewer has a vital role in completing the work in his or her spirit, true Zenga embodies the actual experience (rather than merely the influence) of Zen. (Addiss 12)

Phylis Floyd in her dissertation, *Japonisme in Context* brings together numerous critics' comments concerning Japanese art, "Oriental" art in general, Impressionist works, and Symbolist works. Many art critics at this time appreciated art works that required active participation from the viewer. She summarizes their comments:

> Since the Japanese artist did not pursue objective illusionism with the same conceptual systems that had dominated Western art since the Renaissance, he created his effects of realism through an interpretive transcription of key elements and depended on the spectator's visual involvement to "fill in the

> rest." This quality prompted some critics to remark that the results were more real in that they were interactive, inviting the spectator's visual participation. The salient features of the subject were presented by the Oriental artist in such a way that the spectator's imagination was stimulated, thus bringing the work to life. (214-215)

"Japonisme" does not only imply that artists copied or borrowed from certain Japanese art works, it implies much more as well. It must also encompass the whole movement of artistic and esthetic thought pertaining to the avant-garde in mid to late-nineteenth-century France. If Japanese art was a catalyst for the final representation of this movement through art and literature, "Japonisme" must incorporate all that these changes in representation entailed.

Mallarmé captures the many facets of this movement within one short poem--stereotypical Orientalism, the use of an East Asian art form within his work, the incorporation of many "Japonisme" techniques of the period, and this in a much more specific manner than by those artists mentioned above. Mallarmé also moves towards a representation of a more universal essence directly through his use of language in much the same manner as Zen artists and calligraphers use brush strokes, images, and/or language to attain a universal essence. In this, Mallarmé's poem participates in the movement of Japonisme.

Las de l'amer repos is printed in its entirety below:

> Las de l'amer repos où ma paresse offense
> Une gloire pour qui jadis j'ai fui l'enfance
> Adorable des bois de roses sous l'azur
> Naturel, et plus las sept fois du pacte dur
> De creuser par veillée une fosse nouvelle
> Dans le terrain avare et froid de ma cervelle,
> Fossoyeur sans pitié pour la stérilité,
> --Que dire à cette Aurore, ô Rêves, visité
> Par les roses, quand, peur de ses roses livides,
> Le vaste cimetière unira les trous vides?
>
> Je veux délaisser l'Art vorace d'un pays
> Cruel, et, souriant aux reproches vieillis
> Que me font mes amis, le passé, le génie,
> Et ma lampe qui sait pourtant mon agonie,
> Imiter le Chinois au coeur limpide et fin

De qui l'extase pure est de peindre la fin
Sur ses tasses de neige à la lune ravie
D'une bizarre fleur qui parfume sa vie
Transparente, la fleur qu'il a sentie, enfant,
Au filigrane bleu de l'âme se greffant.
Et, la mort telle avec le seul rêve du sage,
Serein, je vais choisir un jeune paysage
Que je peindrais encor sur les tasses, distrait.
Une ligne d'azur mince et pâle serait
Un lac, parmi le ciel de porcelaine nue,
Un clair croissant perdu par un blanche nue
Trempe sa corne calme en la glace des eaux,
Non loin de trois grands cils d'émeraude, roseaux.
(Oeuvres complètes, 35-36)

In this poem, Mallarmé speaks of a present and a future, his present predicament and his ideal poem. In the present moment, the poet laments leaving his childhood which he represents here as a type of vivid "reality"--*l'enfance/Adorable des bois de roses sous l'azur/Naturel*--that he opposes to a useless, dream world in which he now lives and in which he now denounces his inability to represent such vividness--*Que dire à cette Aurore, ô Rêves, visité/Par les roses, quand, peur de ses roses livides,/Le vaste cimetière unira les trous vides?* At dawn his mind conjures up only pale decomposing images. His long evenings and nights preceeding the dawn spent fervently trying to create poetry only terminate in hopeless disappointment. His sterile imagination can only create empty images or as he says, empty graves--*et plus las sept fois du pacte dur/De creuser par veillée une fosse nouvelle/Dans le terrain avare et froid de ma cervelle,/Fossoyeur sans pitié pour la stérilité.*

Exasperated by his efforts at "digging" (creuser) in his soul for creative inspiration only to uncover complete emptiness, Mallarmé, much like his artist contemporaries, turns elsewhere for fresh esthetic inspiration. He realizes the need to break completely from tradition--*Je veux délaisser l'Art vorace d'un pays/Cruel...et/...Imiter le Chinois au coeur limpide et fin.* In the next few verses

Mallarmé resorts to a stereotypical Orientalist "muse"--this time a "Chinese Buddhist" artist.

An East Asian muse often brings with it a different set of Orientalist stereotypes than those of the North African, Middle Eastern or Eastern European muses of Hugo and Baudelaire. Mallarmé summons delicate images of a serene, meditative artist, white porcelain tea cups, the moon, bizarre flowers, blue souls, and with these exotic poetic ideas he then creates his own image in the manner of his "Chinese" muse. In a typical Orientalist manner, the poet then paints what he considers to be a Chinese image on a white porcelain tea cup--a serene night scene with a crescent moon above a lake bordered by a few reeds. This is a type of Orientalism in the same way Hugo portrayed and conveyed the common "knowledge" notion of the "Oriental" or the "Orient," or the interior of an "Oriental" harem. However, within the language of *Las de l'amer repos*, one discovers an inherent "Japonisme." On one hand, Mallarmé creates a poem of facile Orientalism by calling upon an Orientalist muse. On the other hand he writes a Western style poem using the tools of a Far Eastern art form as a catalyst for his future poetic development in much the same way as artists of the time were looking at the stylistic techniques and effects of Japanese art forms which acted as catalysts for their own artistic development.

Mallarmé, like Hugo and Baudelaire, draws his images of the serene "Chinese" person from widespread common notions about the Far Eastern "Oriental". In the same way Mallarmé writes *la fleur qu'il a sentie, enfant/Au filigrane bleu de l'âme se greffant*, the critic Ernest Chesneau stated in an 1873 article entitled "Le Japonisme dans les arts:"

> Dans l'art japonais jamais rien de banal, jamais rien de convenu, jamais une vulgarité. La plus éclatante fantaisie, joyeux, railleuse, spirituelle, alerte, et, si je puis dire, retentissante, dans des notes sonores de l'alacrité, **s'y graffe comme une fleur de pourpre sur le tronc vorace et robuste de la réalité.** (214; emphasis added)

In 1878 Charles Blanc stated:

> Ainsi...il se trouve que l'artiste de Nippon et à la fois amoureux de la nature et habile à s'en passer, autrement dit **fortement enclin à remplacer l'étude approfondi du vrai par l'improvisation spirituelle du vraisemblable**....[]...**Il semble que l'artiste a su par coeur la manière de rendre** la feuillée de cyprès, des châtaigneurs, des pins, des saules pleureurs, les noeuds d'une tige de bambou, les roches éboulées, les cailloux de la grève,...les plaines de riz, les fabriques, les eaux, les navires et leur voilure, l'écume des vagues et des torrents. (309; emphasis added)

In these statements and others, it is clear that at this time in nineteenth century France, Far Eastern art represented a move from material representation and interpretation of the world (whether the represented world be material or spiritual) to a more spiritual interpretation and understanding of art. Again, Charles Blanc writes:

> Nous l'avons dit déjà, le trait distinctif de cet art n'est pas la vérité comme on l'entend dans les autres écoles, mais au contraire **une interprétation libre, vive et spirituelle de la nature. Loin de s'en tenir à la réalité, l'artiste de Yédo saisit avant tout l'esprit des choses.** (309; emphasis added).

An English critic compares a Japanese drawing of a cat and one by a Western artist:

> Compare it [the Japanese rendition of the cat] with one of our respectably drawn English studies, **and it is the spirit compared to the corpse.** (F.R.C. 294; emphasis added).

In 1876 the American critic Jackson Jarves noted:

> In other words it [Oriental symbolism] conceives art to be **a supreme spiritual function of man, appealing to his faculties of mind more than those of body, and best fullfilling its office when it affects imagination by limitless capacity of suggestion, in preference to pleasing the senses by superior skill of down right realistic imitation.** (qtd. in Floyd 215; emphasis added).

The last few lines of these comments also represent the difference in esthetic practices in Hugo, Baudelaire, and Mallarmé. From Hugo to Mallarmé the reader moves from general artistic trends that "appeal to the body and the senses by superior skill of realistic imitation" to those that "appeal to the mind and

imagination by limitless capacity of suggestion." Through Mallarmé's *Las de l'amer repos* we can trace general tendancies in French esthetic concerns and artistic movements--a boredom with Western artistic tradition that confines the artist who wishes to progress, the need to turn elsewhere for fresh inspiration, an acknowledgement of Far Eastern art which appears to the European to represent more than mere materialistic concerns, and an apprenticeship of these new artistic techniques.

Mallarmé's apprenticeship, or rather, his literary "Japonisme" begins in the last seven lines of his poem. The poet has abandoned the West and decides to "paint" a *jeune paysage*, a youthful landscape, or perhaps a childlike landscape. This idea of a childlike or youthful landscape resounds with the notion most avant-garde artists harbored about either this new and refreshing art arriving from Japan, or about how "modern" artists should approach their canvases or their white sheets of paper. Baudelaire fostered this idea as well in *Salon de 1846*. He preferred the term *naïveté*:

> Ainsi un point de vue plus large sera l'individualisme bien entendu: commander à l'artist la naïveté et l'expression sincère de son tempérament, aidée par tous les moyens que lui fournit son métier. (CE 101).

In *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, Baudelaire equates artistic genius with the child:

> L'enfant voit tout en *nouveauté*; il est toujours *ivre*. Rien ne ressemble plus à ce qu'on appelle l'inspiration, que la joie avec laquelle l'enfant absorbe la forme et la couleur...Mais le génie n'est qu *l'enfance retrouvée* à volonté, ...(CE 462).

Phylis Floyd quotes Ary Renan who in 1867 "noted that even though French painters were crying "Faisons-nous Japonais!", they lacked one critical attribute -- naïveté." She also quotes Jacquemart who "in 1869, described Japanese studies after nature as having a naive charm that was not to be disdained" (207). Mallarmé joins

his contemporaries in choosing this youthful landscape that on one hand suggests a departure from age old convention, and on the other implies an admired "original quality" in Far Eastern art forms.

The image itself resembles a generic Far Eastern image that would be difficult to class as predominently "Japanese," "Chinese," or even a Western imitation of either. As the poem unfolds, however, the reader will notice a similarity to the esthetics of Zen art which both the Japanese and the Chinese practice.

Mallarmé's minimalist image refers only to itself. The "painting" is not meant to be referential as are Baudelaire's images. The image is meant to be an equivalent of a metaphyisical state. The poet paints his nighttime image on a white porcelaine teacup. As the reader delves further into the nuances of color and language in the "painting," he or she realizes that the image erases itself as it is being painted. The image contains four brushstrokes. One stroke represents a lake. Its azur hue contains within it a sense of the sky as well as the blue of the lake. Mallarmé's poem *L'Azur* was begun in 1863, a year before *Las*. In *Las*, the poet has found an artistic way of containing the infinitely haunting blue sky in one tranquil brush stroke as opposed to trying to block it out with the blacks of birds--From *L'Azur*: *Les grands trous bleus que font méchamment les oiseaux*. Incidentally, this line of poetry can also be witnessed in Japanese art--ordinarily birds create black specks on the surface of the sky. In Mallarmé's poem, an overabundance of black birds sometimes creates an opening against the sky wherein blue specks emerge. Reversing the positive and negative aspects on the painting's surface is a technique in Japanese prints.

The three remaining brushstrokes in Mallarmé's poem take the form of three delicately and effortlessly drawn emerald reeds. These three brushstrokes give the impression of fragility and also of illusion--the poet qualifies the brushstrokes as eyelashes. The other images in the "painting" appear to the reader's vision,

delineated as they are by words that form the image, yet they can not actually be seen on the white porcelain teacup--the white (clear) moon crescent is lost within a white cloud (of the exact hue of the porcelain--*porcelaine nue /blanche nue*--and dips its horn in the clear white ice (glace) of the water, or perhaps this white vision is reflected on the mirror (glace) of the water--*Un clair croissant perdu par un blanche nue/Trempe sa corne calme en la glace des eaux.* In either case, the previously nominalized azur water is now negated and erased. The poet leaves us with three delicately eyelashed brushstrokes that threaten the disappearance of the reeds with one possible blink of an eye. In other words, the poet leaves the reader with nothingness much like he left us after the first part of the poem--with the emptiness of vacant graves.

The sterile creativity in his brain before a white sheet of paper gives way to a minimalist white landscape replete with the idea of night, yet the image is devoid of the black of the night. Mallarmé takes this idea of sterile emptiness he paints in the first ten lines and creates a nothingness replete with a presence of a(n) (already erased) picture described by words. The first part is written in a purely referential and Western manner, the second image relies on the universal essence of language that strips all referential connotations in order to leave the reader with nothing but this essence. The reader's consciousness must linger on this (non) image that creates the illusion of being an objective referent. However, through the reciprocal play between reader and poem, this illusive or non existent referent tends eternally towards existence. Objectively, what is actually present is the words of the poem themselves on the one hand, and subjectively, the (perpetually self-erasing) image in the mind of the reader on the other. Through the perpetual duality of presence and absence firstly within the poem, secondly within the necessary play between reader and poem, and finally within the reader himself or herself, he or she intuits an ungraspable essence that coexists along with this absence and presence, neither

before the blinking of the eye nor after, but between this constant movement between presence and absence. This resembles the esthetics of Zen art wherein lies Mallarmé's literary japonsime.

In general, Western philosophy originates and perpetuates itself in the world of duality, in the subjectivity of an individual's mind judging the empirical world. As Masao Abe explains, reason, in Western thought always refers to human reason. In Buddhism, reason refers to a Truth outside of human reason, it just is, it is true thusness, the dharma nature (103). According to Buddhist thought, this empirical duality of subjectivity and objectivity obscures awareness of a true reality that lies outside of both. Zen reality takes into account the inseparableness of being and non-being. (Abe 108-109) What's more, being and non-being mutually and perpetually contradict themselves, and it is through this mutual and perpetual contradiction that one attains an absolute actuality that exists within this perpetual play. (Abe 109-110, 111) If being and non-being are not contradicted, then subjectivity and objectivity are not surpassed. In Zen, one must realize this absolute actuality through non-thinking (as opposed to not-thinking, Abe 120) by breaking through the duality of subject and object, by breaking through the tension between being and non-being. Mallarmé captures the immance of this universal essence taught in Zen philosophy.

The art of Zen attempts to capture this immance of absolute actuality through specific techniques that involve active participation on the part of the observer or reader in much the same way that Mallarmé's poetic technique demands more than mere rational participation on the part of his readers, especially in his later works. First of all, the Zen artist realizes the falseness of images and words that lead us into narrow objective/subjective modes of thought. The Zen artist also realizes, however, that he must use these very same words and images in order to erode this empirical mode of perceiving reality. As Izutsu explains:

> The non-commotion of the absolute dimension of Reality (the eternal present) is actualized precisely through the commotion of the phenomenal dimension (the time-space) of this same Reality (37)

There is a constant tension between this eternal and this time-space, and it is this dynamism that must be shown in works of Zen art in order for the individual to grasp absolute reality. Again, from Izutsu:

> Only through the process of activating the linguistic function of articulation which then, immediately turns into non-articulation, can a passing glimpse be afforded into the real structure of Reality. (115)

He cites the following example that explains in poetic terms the above philosphic descriptions of Zen Reality and how this is represented in art:

> The shadows of the bamboos are sweeping the staircase,
> But there is no stirring of even a mote of dust. (37)

where the first line exemplifies "motion in empirical dimension" and the second exemplifies "the supra-phenomenal dimension of Reality which is eternally calm and quiet." (37) In another written Zen example, "A white heron hidden in the light of a full moon" aids the reader to ascertain an "aspect of Absolute Unity" (38).

Zen painters attempt to communicate to the viewer this immanent dynamism between the articulated and the non-articulated. The objects painted (the articulated) tend constantly toward a void (the inarticulated). Zen artists do not attempt to fill in the picture frame with a full representation of an empirical reality, they attempt to fill it with Absolute Reality. To do this they must evoke minimal signs of images. These minimal strokes are meant to be seen to be tending towards the void, and the void (the empty space in the picture frame) is meant to be tending towards the articulated strokes (see illus. 40).

Applying this philosophy towards Mallarmé's *Las de l'amer repos* can work to clarify the last image in this poem. The first image is a very Western description

Illus. 40. Sin'etsu (1639-1696). *Bamboo in the Wind.* Mr. and Mrs. Myron S. Falk, Jr. Rpt. in Stephen Addiss. *The Art of Zen: Paintings and Calligraphy by Japanese Monks 1600-1925.* New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989. fig. 43.

of Emptiness meant to be juxtaposed with an image of Something in an objective/subjective comprehension of the world. The second image works to be this Something, yet it contains within it a Nothingness that at the same time represents the Something in an immance of Zen Reality. Mallarmé's minimalist brushstrokes create images that tend towards a presence, yet at the same time tend towards the void. This is a Zen dynamism. His image does not state "It is like..." in a Baudelairien manner, rather his image states "It is..(and is not)...yet is." The normal dualistic perception of the world--subjectivity/objectivity, eternal/transitory, particular/ universal--is transformed into a more Eastern perception of reality--in this case, one that is more universal and less egocentric. We saw a somewhat similar type of new perception of the world in other ways as well in the examples of Monet and Pissarro (figs. 38-39).

Mallarmé, however, represents this perception in a much more meaningful manner and in a much more seriously directed manner--one that is directed towards the reader. He carries a poetic fullness within him that can never be fully represented through words. The words in poetry can only take away from what he wishes to represent. Mallarmé takes this into account and works to create a poetry whose words and images tend constantly towards the void of the white page, or towards "non expression." From Izutsu:

> The principal [of non expression] stems from the awareness of the expressiveness of non expression, that is to say, the expressive absence of expression. It applies to almost all forms of art that are considered most characteristic of far Eastern culture. In the case of the pictorial art the principal of non-expression is illustrated in a typical form by black-and-white ink drawings done by a few brush strokes or some light touches of ink on a white ground, the serenity of the white space being in many cases even more expressive than the exquisitely expressive lines and glistening ink. The "absence of brush and ink" is in this sense nothing but an unattainable ideal for those painters who want to actualize the principle of expression through non expression. However, one can at least come closer and closer to the absolute absence of expression in proportion to the ever increasing inner accumulation of spiritual energy. (234-235)

and Mallarmé in his own famous poetic words:

> Je dis : une fleur! et, hors de l'oubli où ma voix relègue aucun contour, en tant que quelque chose d'autre que les calices sus, musicalement se lève, idée même et suave, l'absente de tous bouquets. (OC 386)

Mallarmé's poetic flower appears to the mind and leaves no trace in the referential world in much the same way Mallarmé's "Chinese" landscape appears to the mind, yet leaves few if any traces on the referential world of the teacup. What is left is a universal essence. Mallarmé arrives at this essence through his play with presence and absence of referents--delineated or nondelineated by his rationally confusing poetic language--through his play with presence and absence of the meaning of words, and through the ironical presence of the words themselves in the poem: ***et musicalement se lève, idée même et suave, l'absente de tous bouquets.*** Izutsu comments, "you need contradictory words to explain the seemingly contradictory nature of Reality" (38).

At the end of *Crise de vers*, written in the later part of Mallarmé's life, he professes his faith in poetry and in its ability to uncover within the reader this pure notion--*la notion pure.*

> A quoi bon la merveille de transposer un fait de nature en sa presque disparition vibratoire selon le jeu de la parole, cependant; si ce n'est pour qu'en émane, sans la gêne d'un proche ou concret rappel, la notion pure. (OC 368)

Critics disagree over this term--*la notion pure.* What did Mallarmé mean by this? Elizabeth Abel in her article, "Redefining the Sister Arts: Baudelaire's Response to the Art of Delacroix," explains how in the nineteenth century the relationship between Western literature and art shifted "from a mimetic to an expressive theory of art, however, [this shift] deprives these arts of a common ground in their objects of imitation and thrusts them into a less apparent, more problematic relationship. Indeed, the critical commonplace about the romantic period--that music replaced

painting as the analogue to literature--is itself an indication of the supremacy of expression over imitation" (39). She continues:

> The change from the empiricist conception of the passive, picturing mind to a belief in the imagination's active force affected the view of poetry and painting as nature's daughters, and fostered a new conception of these arts as the analogous but different products of an imagination that could combine aspects of both in its creation of unity. (40)

and:

> As the source of art was seen to change from an external to an internal one, the basis of the arts' relationship similarly shifted from the imitation of shared subject matter to the analogous expression of a common inner source whose subject matter changes but whose nature is the same. (41)

As we noted earlier, Baudelaire admired those artistic works that communicated to his soul. His art criticism teems with words relating to his soul, or this *inner source* of which Abel writes. His poetry attempts to communicate to his readers his own individual feelings and reactions to the world. Mallarmé's writings also often talk of this inner source. There is one difference however, his inner source is singular and yet universal. Baudelaire's is meant to be individual and Eurocentric.

Mallarmé's "inner source," his "soul" is impersonal and mental. Bertrand Marchal, in his excellent, thorough analysis of Mallarmé's complete oeuvre reveals very interesting ideas about Mallarmé's notion of God. In his translation of George William Cox's *A Manual of Mythology* which he began in the 1860s, Mallarmé inevitably depersonalizes Cox's *God* by inserting the word *divinité* (as opposed to the word *God*) and choosing the word *mythe* for Cox's *god*. (154-155, 186) Marchal concludes that Mallarmé "a manifestement repensé le manuel de Cox, et cela à partir de la question de Dieu." (155) Marchal continues to analyze Mallarmé's definition of myth and to show how Mallarmé incorporates this into his thought and oeuvre.

> Pour Mallarmé en tout cas, la véritable mythologie--celle qui rend sensible, tout en lui offrant une résolution imaginaire, l'angoisse de l'homme primitif

> devant la tragédie de la nature--témoigne ainsi de la permanence du génie religieux de l'humanité....Le mythe authentique, celui qui est encore au plus près de son origine naturaliste, et qu'il faut retrouver sous l'affabulation parasitaire des poètes, offre donc à Mallarmé l'acte de naissance symbolique de l'homme, et cette naissance sous le signe de l'angoisse inaugure l'histoire religieuse de l'humanité, une histoire qui manifeste les avatars d'une "religion unique, latente" parce qu'elle a sa source dans l'âme humaine. C'est dire que la réduction philologique des mythes, dans la mesure même où elle volatilise l'affabulation théologique--cette "parenté originelle des mots et des dieux"--à travers laquelle s'est aliénée ce que Mallarmee appelle la divinité de l'homme, vise moins, dans *Les Dieux antiques*, à retrouver en deçà des dieux volatilisés une sorte de tableau naturaliste (couchers de soleil ou aurores), qu'une conscience tragique originelle qui, du primitif au moderne, est pour l'homme la marque obligée de sa présence au monde. A l'origine des mythes dont Mallarmé reprend le procès en naturalisation, il y a moins la nature elle-même que l'angoisse fondatrice de l'humanité; moins la nature en somme que la tragédie de la nature....Retrouver dans toutes les formes de célébration collective le génie éternel de l'homme religieux, et prolonger ainsi l'enquête initiatrice des Dieux antiques par une archéologie de l'imaginaire qui s'applique à mettre au jour la "religion unique, latente" de l'humanité, tel sera désormais le propos du discours mallarméen...(161-162)

As Marchal states, myth, for Mallarmé is a tool that enables one to perceive the original source of all human beings, and at the source of all human beings lies the divinity--and as Mallarmé says, *La divinité n'est que soi.* (OC 391). Again, to quote Marchal:

> le poète ne regarde plus vers le ciel comme au temps où l'azur fascinait les rêves baudelairiens du *Sonneur*, mais tend à explorer ce fond obscur et inconscient de l'homme que Mallarmé baptise l'âme ou le moi. L'homme a donc inventé les dieux comme la projection céleste de son âme, mais s'il s'est projeté ainsi au delà de lui-même, c'est qu'il y a en lui un désir d'infini, une vertu exponentielle qui est proprement sa divinité. Dieu n'est ainsi rien d'autre que la forme aliénée de ce moi dont il s'est approprié la puissance divine, rien d'autre qu'un écho amnésique de l'âme. C'est cette divinité de l'âme humaine qu'il faut ressaisir en essayant d'en reparcourir en soi les voies obscures pour prendre conscience de cette vertu divine qui représente la dignité essentielle de l'homme, dans la mesure où elle désigne moins en lui une source inépuisable d'illusion que ce par quoi l'homme se dépasse infiniment lui-même. (100)

What began for Mallarmé in the 1860s as a personal spiritual crisis:

> Je viens de passer une année effrayante: ma pensée s'est pensée, et est arrivée à une Conception pure. Tout ce que, par contrecoup, mon être a souffert,

> pendant cette longue agonie, est inénarrable, mais heureusement, je suis parfaitement mort, et la région la plus impure où mon Esprit puisse s'aventurer est l'Eternité, mon Esprit, ce solitaire habituel de sa propre Pureté, que n'obscurcit plus même le reflet du Temps. (*Correspondance I.* 247)

becomes a tool for Mallarmé's developing poetic esthetics. Mallarmé, believed to have experienced a spiritual truth to humanity and to the world, believes that poetic language can duplicate this experience in the same way that the language of myth was meant to reveal this same spiritual truth:

> J'avais, à la faveur d'une grande sensibilité, compris la corrélation intime de la Poésie avec l'Univers, et, pour qu'elle fût pure, conçu le dessein de la sortir du Rêve et du Hasard et de la juxtaposer à la conception de l'univers. Malheureusement, âme organisée simplement pour la jouissance poétique, je n'ai pu, dans la tâche préalable de cette conception, comme vous disposer d'un Esprit. (*Correspondance I,* 259)

Mallarmé has arrived at this idea of a correlation between poetry and the universe through experience, not through scientific means (Marchal 76). Now he must portray this experience objectively--*il s'agit de tirer une preuve à travers laquelle chacun puisse se rendre à l'évidence d'un monde sans dieu.* (76)

> Voilà pourquoi, si Mallarmé s'attache par une ascèse réflexive à revivre en lui, en même temps que son drame propre, le développement spirituel de l'univers, il s'agit moins de répéter un expérience vécue que de la dépasser par une médiation symbolique qui lui donne son objectivité. Ce medium symbolique d'une entreprise réflexive qui se veut avant tout probatoire, c'est évidemment la poésie, désormais vouée à tendre au poète le miroir spirituel d'où sortira la figure de son rêve de Beauté....Mallarmé inaugure ainsi une pratique poétique nouvelle qui, en mettant en jeu toutes les virtualités réflexives du langage (du simple effet de miroir de la rime à la réflexion infinie par la mise en abyme), tend à refermer le poème, qui devient le lieu privilégiee d'une liturgie de l'immanence où le sens, rejetant toutes les cautions extérieures et les illusions réalistes, n'est plus en définitive qu'un effet de langage, ou qu'un "mirage interne des mots mêmes." (77-78)

In a complicated web of analogies, the Mallarméen *notion* begins to take on substance. The source of "la notion pure" lies within--*la Divinité, qui jamais n'est que Soi* (OC 391)--and it can be communicated through Poetry, through the

exteriorization of words that work together with the inner source in order for the reader to arrive at this neutral subjective **and** objective universal "notion" through the objective science of Mallarméen syntax and vocabulary.

> Prendre conscience de soi, c'est d'abord prendre conscience du néant, mais aussi retrouver en soi la source de ce qui le nie, de cette divinité dont Mallarmé dira plus tard qu'elle n'est jamais "que 'soi", et qu'il tendra désormais à objectiver sous le nom de Beauté. On conçoit dans ces conditions que l'expérience poétique de Mallarmé ait pris d'abord la forme d'une exploration de soi. (Marchal 67)

These similar ideas can be found in Zen art and its philosophy. Zen reality lies outside of the duality of the subjectivity and objectivity of the human mind. It is neither completely of the universal (the eternal) nor of the phenomenal world (the time-space), but fluctuates perpetually between the two. Zen reality is the immanence of the univeral in the phenomenal world which both coexist simultaneously within this phenomenal world (Abe 103). This dynamic immanence that is the reality of Zen must be seized (or intuited) directly and spontaneously. There are various ways of doing this.

Poetry reproduces Zen reality in that the images evoqued do not exist in the material world, they only exist subjectively in the mind of the reader. The image is present (to the mind) and yet absent (not in the phenomenal world) at the same time. The words in the poem do not refer to objective referents; instead they reflect off each other. It is within their special "reflections" that the words and the syntax create a Zen reality of absence and presence (Izutsu 112). The Zen poet must find a poetic voice that tricks the mind of the reader so that he or she must weigh the possible meanings in order to intuit the poetic expression. For example:

Today the very ice shoots flame (Chokei qtd. in Stryk 6)

The reader is obligated to attempt to understand a Zen phrase by means other than reason alone. In the previous example, a certain Zen dynamism comes to life through the many "reflections"--each word reflecting off the other with no possible material referent--produced by the confusing words joined together in the phrase. One is reminded of the line from Mallarmé's poem, *le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui.* In another example:

> Why are mountains convex
> The sea concave?
> Why I swallow them whole
> The boneless sky! (Heishin 1287-1369, qtd. in Stryk 54)

the poem is meant to confuse the reader. What does boneless sky mean? What does "I swallow them whole" mean? "Swallowing" them whole obliterates their previous existence in the material world. Swallowing them whole is the act of being filled with the universal (the eternal, the circle--concave/convex) which is once again projected out into the material world by on one hand the act of "swallowing" and by the last line "the boneless sky." The boneless sky itself is at the same time part of the phenomenal world as well as part of the universal. Here the play with absence and presence comes to life with the single word "boneless." The word "bone" presents to our minds something of substance, hard. The "less" immediately takes this away and presents to our minds the opposite of bone, something light and airy. The sky conveys the idea of the infinite. This idea was conveyed as well by "mountain" and "sea"--two very large referents. The reader's mind constantly fluctuates between the eternal and the time-space, between the universal and the particular. Zen reality vascillates between the articulate and the inarticulate in the same way as this poem directs our minds to perceive this reality.

Mallarmée does not specifically recall the Far East in subsequent poems. He does however continue with this "Japonisme" as he develops his poetic esthetics. The silence and tranquility evoked through the Far Eastern image present (and

absent) in *Las de l'amer repos* gives way in later poetry to a more impersonal Nothingness brought about by a more exacting science of his poetic language. Mallarmé's famous line from *Sonnet en yx--aboli bibelot d'inanité sonore*--presents an object (bibelot) that is at the same time present--the written word *bibelot*--and yet absent--*aboli*. The poet plays with the Western reader's normal subjective/objective thought patterns in a way similar to the various arts of Zen. From the same poem--*Sur les crédences, au salon vide : nul ptyx*--the poet presents to our minds *les crédences*, and then empties the room--*au salon vide*. The play between the articulated and the non-articulated takes place within the reader's mind which must work to understand this fluctuation between presence and absence. The *nul ptyx* functions in a similar manner as "boneless sky." The word *ptyx* is written in front of our eyes, and is thus brought into our consciousness, yet at the very same moment, its presence is annulled by the word *nul*. What's more, the questionable meaning of the word *ptyx* serves as almost a double negation the whole of which is brought into "presence" by *Sur les crédences*.

The effects of Mallarmé's poetry, especially his later poetry resembles Zen calligraphy or ink painting more so than perhaps Zen painting or poetry. In this art, there is an intense focus on each brushstroke composing the particular character or image. In calligraphy, the character is often distorted according to the feeling the artist brings to his work. In simple black and white ink drawings, the preference for minimal brushstrokes is brought to an extreme. Each brush stroke must express as much as possible.

> The artist concentrates his efforts upon strong composition and evocative line work while eliminating all non essential elements. In this way the viewer can focus his or her attention upon such zen principles as unity of subject and object, concentration of spirit, and avoidance of overt emotional displays....As is characteristic...more is suggested than pictured. (Shokado Shojo 1584-1639, qtd. in Addiss 23)

The calligraphic ideogram for "nothing," (12 strokes) for example, exists on the paper, is brought into a positive presence, and yet its meaning, "nothing" makes the reader aware of the play between nothing and yet something on a semantic level as well as on the artistic level--the actual presence of the ink on paper in an artistic manner calls attention to itself as such despite the message of the word or words. The artist may draw his strokes boldly, for example, which forces the reader to take notice of his character "nothing" (mu), and to reflect upon its portent. Illustration 41, *One Branch of Spring*, shows how the relationship between the paint and the brushstroke creates meaning. In this calligraphic work, the artist Gocho uses different variations of the black ink and white spaces inside certain brushstrokes (Addiss refers to this technique as "flying whites") to suggest perhaps the change in season or impermanence of the material world. Spring begins to show signs of life while winter prevails and has not yet disappeared. The tones range from white to dark black and back again to white. The circular form of the last character (Spring) also implies movement in time. Addiss suggests that *One Branch of Spring* refers to "the buds of a white plum tree appearing while there was still snow on the branches, signifying new life emerging from the cold of winter" (p172).

An analogy can be made between the art of Zen calligraphy or ink painting, and Mallarméen poetic esthetics. Mallarmé focuses intently on each word in the poem and its effect on the reader and his/her process of creating meaning. He often attempts to circumvent normal referential qualities of the words he uses. For example, from Prose:

> Gloire du long désir, Idées
> Tout en moi s'exaltait de voir
> La famille des iridées
> surgir à ce nouveau devoir, (OC 56)

The process of creating meaning is no longer based on linearism. Mallarmé plays with his rhymes in such a way as to make the reader question the referential quality

Illus. 41. Gocho (1749-1835). *One Branch of Spring*. Private Collection. Rpt. in Addiss, Plate 92.

of his poetic vocabulary. All words begin to reflect off each other each reflecting their own referential meaning in the material world, and also new meanings that arise as they continue to bounce off one another--for example the rhymes *désir, Idées/des iridées* and *de voir/devoir.* As the monk Isan (771-819) said:

> In this sense, the semantic function of articulation is in such a context reduced almost to nullity. For articulation loses its functional basis, it does not work properly, in the presence of trans-subjective and trans-objective awareness of the interfusion of all things, where, for example, the word "partridge," instead of establishing an independent external substance, means rather its identification with the "flower" and all other things, so that they all end up by being fused into one. The majority of authentic zen sayings are ultimately of this nature. (Izutsu 112)

Like the Zen calligrapher, ink painter or poet who must express much more than what can be seen, who must transcend the mere referential qualities of his or her work, Mallarmé packs his poetic ideas into compact semantic units out of which must arise his *notion pure* which radically differs from any possible referential meaning of his poetic language. Some examples follow:

> Ses purs ongles très haut dédiant leur onyx,
> L'Angoisse, ce minuit, soutient, lampadophore,
> Maint rêve vespéral brûlé par le phénix
> Que ne recueille pas de cinéraire amphore, (OC 68; lines 1-4)

In the above example from *Sonnet en yx,* the poet forces the reader to determine the meaning of the poem firstly through presence and absence--presence of words that seemingly signify, and yet the absence (and yet presence) of normal linear referents. In the second place, the reader generates meaning by finding partial qualities of certain words or rhyme sequences that the poet, by placing them in relationship to other words or rhymes, knows will scintillate out of their simultaneous relfections. The reader then must interpret the consequent scintillating meanings.

> Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui (OC 67; 1)

In the line of poetry above, the placement of nominalized adjectives before what the reader normally recognizes as adverbs--especially *bel aujourd'hui*--confuses the reader. The line counters the normal linear process of generating meaning. Not only is it an example of pure poetry, or metaphoric process, but Mallarmé attempts to reintegrate this poetry back into an appearance of a Western traditional linear form in order to joggle the mind of the Western reader. He breaks free from previously accepted metaphorical language, all the while simulating preconceived metaphorical poetics.

> Dieu, absent de l'univers, s'absente du poème, le lieu privilégié d'une liturgie de l'immanence où le sens, rejetant toutes les cautions extérieures et les illusions réalistes, n'est plus en définitive qu'un effet du langage, ou qu'un "mirage interne des mots mêmes." (Marchal 77-78)

In the first two stanzas of Baudelaire's *La Vie antérieure*, the poet's images tend toward the same genre of infinity, universal essence, or the eternal as that of Mallarmé's in the last lines of *Las de l'amer repos*. In *La Vie antérieure*, the images recreate a dynamic circle of infinity: there is a constant fluctuation between the action of light towards the sky and back. *J'ai longtemps habité sous de vaste portiques*--this directs our eyes upwards. *Que les soleils marins teignaient de mille feux*--the light moves downwards toward earth. *Et que leurs grands piliers, droits et majestueux,/rendaient pareils, le soir, aux grottes basaltiques*--the previous convex quality of the eye looking upwards now reflects a concave quality looking down into the dark basaltic grotto. At the same time, the reader realizes the former convex quality of the upward look although now he or she gazes at a starry night. The positive quality of the sky turns into a negative one all the while keeping its positive connotations. The reader is reminded of the Zen poem, *Why are the mountains convex, the sea concave?*

The second stanza achieves the same effects: the rolling (upwards) waves reflect (downwards) the colors of the sky at sunset. The poet contains this

objectively described scene subjectively within himself--*Aux couleurs du couchant reflété par mes yeux*--and we again are left with this image of the whole, the circle, the eternal.

However, this is not immanently dynamic in the manner of for example, *The boneless sky!* Baudelaire does not play with language in this manner. He relies heavily on metaphors that need to be interpreted, or "felt," which are sometimes difficult and confusing, but Baudelaire's semantic intent remains rooted in duality and for the most part his syntax remains relatively linear.

This is perhaps seen more readily when compared to Mallarmé's last lines from *Las de l'amer repos. Une ligne d'azur mince et pâle serait/Un lac, parmi le ciel de porcelaine nue,/Un clair croissant perdu par un blanche nue/Trempe sa corne calme en la glace des eaux,/Non loin de tros grands cils d'émeraude, roseaux.* Everything takes place here objectively (a scene on a teacup) on two levels.

Both Mallarmé and Baudelaire resort to objectivity, but Mallarmé paints nouns with a concrete, tangible image--*Rien ne transgresse les figures du val, du pré, de l'arbre* (OC 404), *de se percevoir, simple, infiniment sur la terre* (OC 404-405). He does not resort to "sense" metaphors as does Baudelaire--*Mêlaient d'une façon solennelle et mystique/Les* ***tout-puissants accords de leur riche musique***-. What's more, Mallarmé's language works constantly towards an immanence of his poetic message at the objective (scientific) level of the language (that calls attention to itself), at the objective level of the exterior image (that struggles with absence and presence), and (because of these) on the subjective level of the reader interpreting the poem. They all play off each other in an inherently dynamic, universal and impersonal manner. Baudelaire's image remains individual and static (as in a finished painting).

Mallarmé wrote *Las de l'amer repos* during a time in his life when he was questioning the reality of his being. He spent most of the 1860s in deep reflection as

to the metaphysical and spiritual state of humanity, and his poetry intentionally reflects this. As Marchal writes:

> Il veut rendre à un instinct religieux trop refoulé et profondément enfoui dans l'inconscient humain, fût-il le plus populaire, sa veritable dimension cosmique...et d'illuminer cet instinct religieux. (Marchal 359)

> Le rêve du poète qui sait regarder le néant en face, c'est de projeter sur cet écran idéal l'évidence stellaire d'une oeuvre qui témoigne, par delà l'aveuglement d'une humanité inconsciente d'elle-même, du génie éternel de l'homme. (Marchal 359)

Mallarmé's poetry works wonderfully in these attempts especially if one understands how Zen poetry and Zen painting, ink drawings and calligraphy work to express Zen philosophy. If one uses Zen techniques to comprehend Mallarméen poetics, the reader can attain the subjective "notion pure" that Mallarmé worked very objectively to demonstrate through his semantics and his syntax. For example, the two extracts that follow correspond to the above quotes from Marchal. In the following extract from *Sonnet en yx* there is a constant dynamic between the light and the dark--*purs ongles/onyx, minuit/lampadophore,* the idea of eternal light and dark incorporated in *Phénix,* the idea of light and dark included in the whole phrase *Que ne recueille pas de cinéraire amphore* wherein the idea of death (*cinéraire amphore*) is presented to the reader but is not consommated--*Que ne recueille pas.* Critics also point out the alternating rhyme sequence of *or* and *yx* and stipulate that this could also signify light and dark respectively. At the end of the poem specks of light arise out of *l'oubli*--perhaps the divinity within the human unconscious appears, an immanent divinity which has been obscured through centuries of the written tradition, of myth or of religion (which Mallarmé attempts to uncover through his poetic technique of breaking up the conventional signifying process of the West).

> Ses purs ongles très haut dédiant leur onyx,

L'Angoisse, ce minuit, soutient, lampadophore,
Maint rêve vespéral brûlé par le Phénix
Que ne recueille pas de cinéraire amphore (1-4)
and
Elle, défunte nue en le miroir, encor
Que, dans l'oubli fermé par le cadre, se fixe
De scintillations sitôt le septuor (12-14)

and from *Quand l'ombre menaça,* one could read *ombre* as an obscured consciousness of the divinity within man and woman, a divinity that has always existed and that the human mind projects outward in representation, as myth--tel vieux Rêve. Mallarmé himself wrote in a letter to Henry Cazalis in April of 1866:

> Oui je le sais, nous ne sommes que de vaines formes de la matière, mais bien sublime pour avoir inventé Dieu et notre âme. Si sublimes, mon ami! que je veux me donner ce spectacle de la matière, ayant conscience d'être et, cependant, s'élançant forcenément dans le Rêve qu'elle sait n'être pas, chantant l'Ame et toutes les divines impressions pareilles qui se sont amassées en nous depuis les premiers âges et proclament, devant le Rien qui est la vérité, ces glorieux mensonges. (Correspondances I 206)

In the lines 12-14, one could interpret *L'espace à soi pareil qu'il s'accroisse ou se nie* as a metaphysical description of an empirical and universal eternal. Notice also the intense light of the *feux* or *astre* that lends a spiritual meaning to this Mallarméen "space."

Quand l'ombre menaça de la fatale loi
Tel vieux Rêve...(1-2)
and
Oui, je sais qu'au lointain de cette nuit, la Terre
Jette d'un grand éclat l'insolite mystère,
Sous les siècles hideux qui l'obscurcissent moins. (9-11)

L'espace à soi pareil qu'il s'accroisse ou se nie
Roule dans cet ennui des feux vils pour témoins
Que s'est d'un astre en fête allumé le génie. (12-14)

Mallarmé explains in prose what he attempts to do in his poetry:

> Les constellations s'initient à buller; comme je voudrais que parmi l'obscurité qui court sur l'aveugle troupeau, aussi des points de clarté...(La Revue Blanche, août 1895)

Mallarmé knew that French painting was changing in ways analogous to what he was attempting to do through his poetry, and he acknowledges the debt owed to Japanese art. In his 1876 article published in English "The Impressionists and Edouard Manet" (the original French was lost) he wrote about the reception of Manet's work:

> A collection of pictures of strange aspect, at first view giving the ordinary impression of the motive which made them, but over beyond this, a peculiar quality outside mere Realism. And here occurs one of those unexpected crises which appear in art. (12)[3]

He understood the French artists' need to express this "essence" as opposed to the scientific empirical rendition--*but over beyond this, a peculiar quality outside mere Realism*. In this article, Mallarmé summarizes Manet's experience in this artist's effort to "progress" in his art. His language reflects how he identified with and understood the avant-garde's deep need to represent their art in a "modern" manner, in a way that would communicate to the "modern" viewer, and break through the old symbolic "rules" set up by the Academy and that could no longer communicate to the viewer--or as Mallarmé says, this new art would be *the cure of souls*. Whereas Baudelaire recognized the hunger of the modern soul, Mallarmé shows how the art of this time satisfies this "modern" hunger. From "The Impressionists and Edouard Manet:"

> In 1867 a special exhibition of the works of Manet and some few of his followers, gave to the then nameless school of recent painting which thus grew up, the semblance of a party, and party strife grew high. For several years a firm and implacable front was formed against its advance; until at length vanquished by its good faith and persistency, the jury recognised the name of Manet, welcomed it, and so far recovered from its ridiculous fears,

[3] All page numbers referring to Mallarmé's article "The Impressionists and Edouard Manet" refer to Florence who reprinted the article in its entirety.

> that it reasoned and found it must either declare him a self-created sovereign pontiff, **charged by his own faith with the cure of souls,** or condemn him as a heretic and a public danger. (12; emphasis added)

and

> It is precisely these two aspects which reveal the truth, and **give paintings based upon them living reality instead of rendering them the baseless fabric of abstracted and obscure dreams.** These have been the tentatives of Manet, and curiously, **it was to the foreigner and the past that he turned for friendly council** in remedying the evils of his country and his time. (13; emphasis added)

The above citation rings of *Las de l'amer repos---Je veux délaisser l'Art vorace d'un pays/Cruel.* It also reminds us of Hugo's previous attempts at rejuvenating French poetry by looking back to sixteenth century French poets, and his attempts at adopting foreign poetic forms and ideas. As we saw, however, Hugo's basic poetics remained in essence, traditionally French. Mallarmé's intentional choice of a Far Eastern image on a porcelain teacup may well have been a conscious selection of a tool that could *cure all souls* and express his spirituality or his experience of being in the world, an experience that was universally changing and to which the art of the past could no longer communicate, but which the art of the future must learn to impart. Again in his 1876 article, Mallarmé talks of the value of art as a public educator for the "truth" of man's existence:

> Bye and bye, if he continues to paint long enough, and to educate the public eye--as yet veiled by conventinality--if that public will then consent to see the true beauties of the people, healthy and solid as they are, the graces which exist in the bourgeoisie will then be recognized and taken as worthy models in art, and then will come the time of peace. As yet it is but one of struggle--a struggle to render those truths in nature which for her are eternal, but which are as yet for the multitude but new.
>
> The reproach which superficial people formulate against Manet, that whereas once he painted ugliness now he paints vulgarity, falls harmlessly to the ground, when we recognize the fact that he paints the truth...(13)

Below, Mallarmé acknowledges the importance of the arrival of Japanese art which showed many how they in fact could learn to impart this modern essence of humanity, or as Mallarmé says in his article--*the recovery of a long obliterated truth*:

> If we turn to natural perspective (not that utterly and artificially classic science which makes our eyes the dupes of a civilized education, but rather that artistic perspective which we learn from the extreme East--Japan for example)--and look at the sea-pieces of Manet, where the water at the horizon rises to the height of the frame, which alone interrupts it, we feel **a new delight at the recovery of a long obliterated truth.** (15; emphasis added)

In a letter to Eugène de Roberty, Mallarmé compliments the author on his work *La recherche de l'unité* and makes an anaology between Roberty's work and his own:

> Que de pages m'ont retenu (130-131 par exemple, sur ceci que nous pensons à l'aide d'images et la phrase "pourquoi des images ne se résoudraient-elles pas en des combinaisons d'éléments plus simples extraits au préalable par une sorte de chimie mentale [des données sensationnelles toujours chaotiques?]). **Tout mon rêve! Une raréfaction des images en quelques signes comptés un peu comme (vous allez sourire) l'esquissa le divinatoire dessin japonais..** (Correspondance VI 180 ; emphasis addedd)

His analysis of Manet's and the Impressionists work in general often resembles our previous Zen analysis of Mallarmé's poetry--the dynamic play between presence and absence. Below, Mallarmé speaks of a "struggle" in an analysis of Manet's *Le Linge* (illus. 42):

> Everywhere the luminous and transparent atmosphere struggles with the figures, the dresses, and the foliage, **and seems to take to itself some of their substance and solidity; whilst their contours, consumed by the hidden sun and wasted by space, tremble, melt, and evaporate into the surrounding atmosphere, which plunders reality from the figures, yet seems to do so in order to preserve their truthful aspect**....a life neither personal nor sentient, but itself subjected to the phenomena thus called up by the science and shown to our astonished eyes, with its **perpetual metamorphosis and its invisible action rendered visible.** And how? **By this fusion or by this struggle ever continued between surface and space, between colour and air.** (14; emphasis added)

Mallarmé appreciates in Manet what he tries to accomplish himself--drawing from deep within one's personal consciousness and using what he finds in his work as a

Illus. 42. Manet, Edouard. *Le Linge,* 1876. Rpt. in Penny Florence. *Mallarmé, Manet and Redon: Visual and Aural Signs and the Generation of Meaning.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986. fig. 3.

tool to bring others into this same "modern" consciousness. Again from "The Impressionists and Edouard Manet:"

> [Manet] draws from his own inner consciousness all his effects of simplification, the whole revealed by effects of light incontestably novel. This is the supreme originality of a painter by whom originality is doubly forsworn, who seeks to lose his personality in nature herself, or in the gaze of a multitude until then ignorant of her charms. (16)

Mallarmé constantly strove to drive away this ignorance he spoke about above:

> La divinité de l'homme n'a pas disparu mais "se ramassa au noir de nous" elle s'est réfugiée au plus profond de l'inconscient humain, et commande pour une large part, même si c'est de façon moins évidente qu'à travers les formes consacrées des liturgies culturelles ou artistiques, le comportement de l'homme moderne. (Marchal 351)

> [Mallarmé] désire "retirer sans l'intermédiaire du blé, le miracle de vie qui assure la présence", de ce troupeau aveugle dont le poète rêve secrètement d'illuminer le néant de quelques étoiles mentales. (Marchal, 359)

The Far Eastern art available to Mallarmé was a catalyst to his personal poetics and showed him it was possible to objectively demonstrate his poetic esthetics. His Western Reason interpretated this art and its methods in a way in which he could then apply what he discovered to his Western poetry. His spirituality that he veils in order for the reader to unveil is done so based upon this Reason, or, this *Intelligence*, as opposed to revealing this in a "sensual" poetics as did earlier poets such as the Romantics. It is this *divinité de l'Intelligence* that allows us to draw interesting rapprochements between Mallarmé's poetry and Zen esthetics.

> toute l'utopie de celui qui s'est proposé de "revivre la vie de l'humanité depuis son enfance et prenant conscience d'elle-même" est ainsi de rendre à l'homme la conscience d'un mystère humain inscrit dès l'origine dans son âme pour en tirer, une "solennisation auguste du dieu qu'il sait être" (OC 314), une célébration de ce que le poète nommait dans ses Notes de 1869 la "divinité de l'Intelligence." (Marchal 347-8)

Earlier, we stated that Japonisme encompassed much more than a mere artistic borrowing on the part of painters, that Japonisme was a catalyst to many new

"movements" in Western art, and that these movements represented much more than simple pictorial changes in Western painting. The analysis of this movement in Mallamé's poetry and the comparison to Zen art is an important step in defining what the impact of this movement means to the Western esthetics of art in literature, painting and poetry. Since an important motivation for change in the representation of these esthetics was to communicate to the viewer directly through the work as opposed to through traditional ideals, this analysis is a step towards a new definition of what the spectator or reader learned through these works. What else besides line, form, color and genre did the Western "Japoniste" borrow from Japanese art? What exactly constitutes this "essence" that artists wished to represent objectively in order to communicate subjectively to the viewer? Mallarmé's poetic techniques that aim to exude this subjective "essence" resemble closely those objective techniques of Zen art and poetry. The term "Japonisme" must be enlarged to encompass all similarities found between both world's arts. In this way, we will approach the basis of a modern "essence" of Western art.

Conclusion

While Mallarmé appears to have brought the nineteenth century's poetic quest for a rejuvenated and meaningful modern poetics to a close, he threw literary critics into turmoil. Given the nature of his polyvalent poetic language, it is not surprising that each age of criticism focused on different signifying processes: Sartre and existentialist readings, Cohen and Greek and Roman myths, Richard and his psychoanalysis of Mallarméen terminology. Perhaps now we can focus more on the meaning of an "essence" of Mallarmé's poetry--readings similar in intent to that of Marchal who brought his interpretation back into the spiritual realm of Mallarmé and that of his time.

Hugo was not interested in an "essence" of poetry in *Les Orientales.* As we noted, he mainly tried to "modernize" form and language. The rest was pure sensationalism and exoticism. With Baudelaire, we witnessed a movement towards an expression of an "essence." The essence he wished to represent was an expression of his personal poetic feeling. With Mallarmé we move into the realm of an "essence" of the universal.

As Richard Schiff points out, the difference between the wish to express an individual "essence" and a universal "essence" can be defined as the difference between Impressionism and Symbolism:

> And like the symbolist, the impressionist thought of his painting in terms of the elements of perception, especially color, out of which a whole would be formed. He never focused on discrete objects, nor observed their color merely to represent them in isolation. He regarded nature in its entirety as a stable reference that supplied a sense of permanent universal content; the painter would achieve an individualized image of this external world, "nature seen through a temperament." The symbolists, however, believed that the permanent reference was the human spirit itself, not something outside it. They often conceived of this human spirit as integral with a universal world-spirit, and any feelings common to all human-kind (and to the world)

> commanded more importance for them than those attributed only to specific individuals. For the symbolists, the means of expression (the objective means of communication) was the universal language to which all minds could respond. To repeat one of their most significant points; their language was one of formal elements rather than of the complex images of either realism or allegory. (84)

And, as we saw, the last half of the nineteenth century brought with it a reevaluation of European art, of European religion, of myth and of the unconscious which consequently obliged the European to place his or her values within those of a grander "universal" system of values. As a Symbolist, Mallarmé was part of this change of consciousness.

Nevertheless, Mallarmé was first and foremost a French symbolist poet although his friends often chided him about becoming a Buddhist. As Mallarmé stated in *Las de l'amer repos* : *Je veux délaisser l'Art vorace d'un pays/Cruel, et, souriant aux reproches vieillis/Que me font mes amis, le passé, le génie,/Et ma lampe qui sait pourtant mon agonie/Imiter le Chinois au coeur limpide et fin.*. But Mallarmé is definitely rooted in the Western tradition. His poetic techniques are only similar to those of Zen art on a level once removed from Zen.

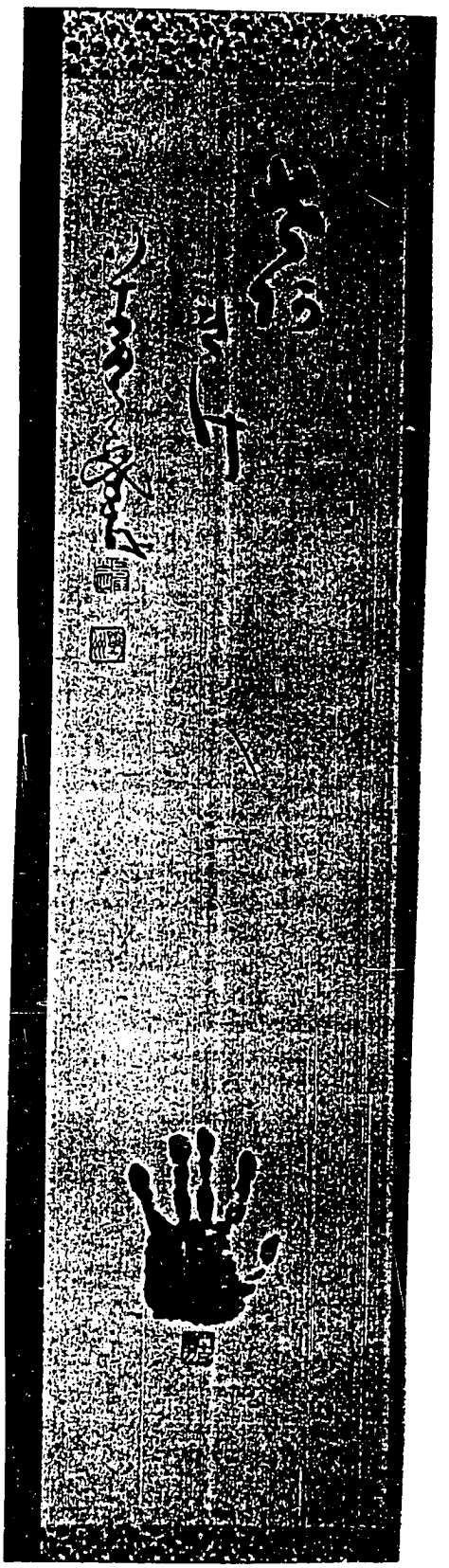
As we said earlier, Mallarmé bypasses expected metaphorical meanings and relies on a certain tangible quality of his nouns, which in turn signify a certain intangible meaning. Zen art relies on the tangible qualities of nature, of being in the world, which is represented through a necessary and ironic use of language. Because Western literary tradition relies on words to represent experience, Mallarmé's sometimes ironic and always necessary language is already one step removed from nature and a natural experience of being in the world. His nouns, however tangible these are, are already abstract. This adds to the irony of Mallarmé's poetic endeavor. At the same time that he attempts to nominalize poetic experience (as opposed to that of natural experience), he volatalizes--*abolit bibelot d'inanité sonore*--thus bringing the reader within the play of absence and

presence and closer to what is left after this play with language--the source, *l'or de la trompette d'été.*--bypassing the direct experience of nature through his Western poetry.

Hugo's nouns bring us into another "world," the "Orient" of the European mind. Baudelaire, through the intermediary of this same "Orient" brings us into the world of the senses and into his personal sense world. Mallarmé, through his objective science of poetic volatility that lies within a certain Japonisme of the time, leaves us with what's left--*la divinité de l'Intelligence*--in a similar manner as Nantembo (illus. 43). In this Zen ink drawing, the artist has represented the material and the spiritual simultaneously. The material, or time-space, is represented by the imprint of his own hand. The spiritual or eternal lies within the imprint as well, behind the physical appearance of the artist's hand, in the absent spirit of the artist. The play between presence and absence lies objectively in the ink on paper directly pointed towards the life experience of the spectator. As the spectator contemplates what lies behind the imprint of the hand--the eternel within the material--his or her eys move up the long area of blank space to read the calligraphic message: Now listen! Mallarmé's poetry leaves us with this message as well. But he does this through the intermediary of a process of a demythification of Western poetic language and convention. As Mallarmé says:

> C'est bien ce que j'observe sur moi-je n'ai créé mon oeuvre que par élimination et toute vérité acquise ne naissait que de la perte d'une impression qui, ayant étincelée s'était consumée et me permettait, grâce à ses ténèbres dégagées, d'avancer plus profondément dans la sensation des Ténèbres Absolues. La Destruction fut ma Béatrice. (Correspondance I 246)

Within the *Ténèbres Absolues* lies the light of his Beatrice. It is a more universal interpretation of Dante's Beatrice--an impersonal light of the guiding divinity that lies within. Throughout the nineteenth century, the European notion of God and traditional Christianity was constantly changing. This century in the West saw the



Illus. 43. Nantembo (1839-1925). *Hand*, 1923. Howie Collection. Rpt. in Addiss. fig. 111.

birth of the study of the unconscious--Hartman's *La Philosophie de l'Inconscient* in 1869, translated into French in 1877, Freud--the study of evolution with Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species* translated into French in 1862. The century also saw a requestioning of biblical history, further studies in non-European languages, new analyses of myths, the rise of democracy and the masses, and a new understanding of the meaning of a collective unconscious. Mallarmé saw this era as the beginning of the real modern age.

> La Renaissance, en effet, n'est pas pour Mallarmé le commencement de l'ère moderne, mais appartient de plein droit à une ère chrétienne qu'il reste encore à dépasser....Le sourire énigmatique de la Joconde trahit donc moins pour Mallarmé la duplicité culturelle d'ingénuité et d'expérience qu'y retrouve Montégut que la sensation d'un mystère de nature religieuse, inscrit au plus profond d'elle-même mais dont elle n'a pas encore la clé.
>
> C'est dire qu'au delà de cette première modernité de la Renaissance placée sous le patronage de Léonard, au delà du romantisme qui ne fait que la prolonger en prolongeant par la même occasion l'ère chrétienne de la chimère, Mallarmé appelle une modernité nouvelle, celle d'une Beauté "ayant su l'idée du mystère dont la Joconde ne savait que la sensation fatale" et faisant ainsi la synthèse de l'ingénuité antique et du mystère chrétien. (Marchal 74-75)

We should add to this synthesis of which Marchal writes, the "Japonisme" predominant in mid to late nineteenth-century France.

As we noted earlier, Mallarmé understood myth as a symbol for men's and women's experience before nature, or as Marchal states "before the tragedy of nature." Mallarmé also believed that language, through the ages, obscured this original experience, and only served to hide the true source of man (and woman). His goal was to reconstitute this hidden, unconscious source through the very same language that served to hide it. Mallarmé's "Japonisme" served as a catalyst to his future poetic esthetics, which uses language in a way that would unveil this source. Japonisme in general--in painting especially--served as a catalyst to the deconstruction of Western artistic convention and at the same time showed how to

reconstruct a new, modern Western art more in tune with the needs of contemporary men and women.

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