

NEO-ORIENTALISM: UGLY WOMEN AND THE PARISIAN  
AVANT-GARDE, 1905 - 1908

By

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## ABSTRACT

The Neo-Orientalism of Matisse's The Blue Nude (Souvenir of Biskra), and Picasso's Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.), both of 1907, exists in the similarity of the extreme distortion of the female form and defines the different meanings attached to these "ugly" women relative to distinctive notions of erotic and exotic imagery. To understand Neo-Orientalism, that is, 19th century Orientalist concepts which were filtered through Primitivism in the 20th century, the racial, sexual and class antagonisms of the period, which not only influenced attitudes towards erotic and exotic imagery, but also defined and categorized humanity, must be considered in their historical context.

My introduction is an investigation of current art historical scholarship which has linked the manipulation of form by Matisse and Picasso and shifting avant-garde practice in Paris in the years 1905 - 1908, when Cubism displaced Fauvism, to the concepts of Orientalism and Primitivism. The problem of the ideological content of images of women, which I undertake to address, arises from these studies which rely upon the assumed metaphysical fascination with the exotic or the intuitive, personal concern for erotic symbolism by the artists as a solution to meaning.

The absence of a rich critical discourse surrounding the paintings encourages my approach to the problem of meaning whereby in Chapter One I examine images of women produced in Paris in the specific discourses of popular and official culture in 1906. These representations of the female are identified as ideological constructions which functioned in relation to the important and broader issues of the moment affecting the dominance of French culture: class struggle and neo-colonialism.

In Chapter Two the "ugly" women of Matisse's The Blue Nude (Souvenir of Biskra) and Picasso's Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J. Version O) are analysed as intended avant-garde transformations of images of female prostitutes and compared with the images of women in popular and official culture and with each other, in recognition of their function within the historical context of their production. In conclusion I suggest that the difference in meaning between these paintings by Matisse and Picasso was ideological, operating within the context of class struggle and neo-colonialism, and defined by their distinctive conscious and unconscious use of Primitivism.

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## INTRODUCTION

Along with all other peoples variously designated as backward, degenerate, uncivilized, and retarded, the Orientals were viewed in a framework constructed out of biological determinism and moral-political admonishment. The Oriental was linked thus to elements in Western society (delinquents, the insane, women, the poor) having in common an identity best described as lamentably alien.

Edward Said, 1978.<sup>1</sup>

. . . indeed the key notion of Orientalism itself--cannot be confronted without a critical analysis of the particular power structure in which these works came into being.

Linda Nochlin, 1983.<sup>2</sup>

Dans l'histoire et dans le présent, la question du pouvoir est au coeur des rapports des hommes et des femmes.

Michelle Perrot, 1984.<sup>3</sup>



Matisse's The Blue Nude (Souvenir of Biskra) of 1907, (Fig. 1) and Picasso's Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. Version O) of 1907, (Fig. 2) are Neo-Orientalist paintings of female prostitutes. Their Neo-Orientalism is expressed through the primitivized form of their "ugly" female subjects which differentiates them from traditional erotic and exotic 19th century Orientalist paintings of women. I suggest that these two paintings by Matisse and Picasso are avant-garde products which differ significantly in the meanings they produce. My thesis is an investigation of this difference in meaning in relation to the particular function of these images as ideological constructions of avant-garde practice that manipulate both Orientalism and Primitivism in a specific historical context.

The failure of contemporary scholarship to address the different meanings of The Blue Nude (Souvenir of Biskra) and Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. Version O) in historical and critical terms is evident in the lack of understanding of the relevance and complexity of the concepts of Orientalism and Primitivism.

Art historians who have used "Orientalism" or "Primitivism" as categories for examining Matisse and Picasso have refused to recognize the serious negative and highly political use of the concepts of Orientalism and Primitivism for racial, sexual and class domination. Both "Orientalists" (authors of studies which focus upon 19th century Orientalist painting) and "Primitivists" (authors of studies which focus

upon the relationship between 20th century modern art and primitive art) look upon Matisse's imaginative use of colour and manipulation of form as a modern 20th century negation of both the realism of 19th century Orientalist painting and of ethnocentric Primitivism. Ignored by the Orientalists, Picasso's formal distortions serve as primary material for the Primitivists who consider them as affirmative, romantic equivalents to primitive form--proof of an affiliation between primitive and modern artistic "genius."

Donald Rosenthal, in his exhibition catalogue, Orientalism: The Near East in French Painting, 1800-1880, of 1982, projects the predominant contemporary Orientalist attitude. His text includes a discussion which spans centuries of art from Gentile Bellini in the 15th century to Matisse in the 20th century. According to Rosenthal, the currency of Orientalist painting, and thus his scholarly concern, was a response to the new interest of the art market in realistic paintings.<sup>4</sup> Although he admitted an awareness of Edward Said's thesis, Orientalism of 1978, which assesses Orientalism as an ideological construct of Western domination in North Africa, Rosenthal chose to reject Said's viewpoint because of its "negative" significance and thus felt he had absolved himself of any responsible critique of the issues raised by Said.<sup>5</sup> Rosenthal's choice, to dismiss the complex problem of the colonial connection as merely inevitable, neutralized the political implications of Orientalist

imagery. Thus, Rosenthal rationalized the ethnocentric attitude of Orientalist painters by his statement that they ". . . sincerely admired the peoples of the Near East, even if for the wrong reasons."<sup>6</sup>

Rosenthal failed to reflect upon the possibility of political content in the paintings themselves. He declared:

In this study, French Orientalist painting will be discussed in terms of its aesthetic quality and historical interest, and no attempt will be made at a re-evaluation of its political uses. <sup>7</sup>

Ironically, he used as a source for his catalogue, Jean Alazard's catalogue text of 1930, which was entitled L'Orient et la peinture française au XIXe siècle d'Eugène Delacroix à August Renoir, which he knew had been ". . . published in conjunction with the centennial of the French conquest of Algeria."<sup>8</sup> Rosenthal's concluding statement is a denial of history itself:

Today, when the Islamic world is less a picturesque tourist haven than a camp of powerful ideologies, the exoticism of some nineteenth-century Orientalist canvases seems meretricious and false. Still, as long as the desire to know the whole world, and not just our familiar corner, remains a powerful one, the search for the exotic of an earlier century and its brilliant manifestation in art will retain their hold on our imagination. <sup>9</sup>

This statement represents the genre of romanticized scholarship which I wish to avoid. Said refuted this type of uncritical attitude by explaining how Orientalism operates as follows:

Orientalism, . . . is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment. Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied--indeed, made truly productive--the statements proliferating out from Orientalism into the general culture. 10

Said's thesis informed Linda Nochlin's powerful response to Rosenthal's uncritical, complacent and unquestioning approach. Nochlin's vehement attack, "The Imaginary Orient," of 1983, was triggered by Rosenthal's view and his acceptance of 19th century Orientalist paintings as authentic documents in spite of their political content in relation to colonialism. Instead, Nochlin insisted on an examination of the structures of power in relation to these images. She demanded a clarification of the issues by asking specifically, "whose reality" (or imagination) was being defined by such painting, and she accused Rosenthal of avoiding a confrontation with the "important" issues as revealed by both Said's text and by historical fact.<sup>11</sup>

By deconstructing the real and imagined imagery of 19th century Orientalist painting, to show how meaning is produced, Nochlin deflated notions of presumed authenticity of the real and the innocence of romanticized vision. Central to Nochlin's article is Said's contention that Orientalism divided the East and West into two cultural entities in which white, Western male superiority played a

major role. Nochlin's feminist perspective included a critique of the strategies of domination implicit in certain Orientalist paintings, strategies which related to the contemporary French male's attitudes towards women, who were considered to be inferior and thus powerless.

It is important to note that Nochlin's dissection of the power relationships revealed in Orientalist painting differs from Said's thesis of Western male cultural hegemony implied in exotic and erotic representations. She showed how the difference of class entered into the notions of the eroticized female as an exotic subject. This notion has relevance in the production of meaning inscribed in imaginative Orientalist imagery. For instance, she suggested that these images of the female nude revealed

. . . contemporary Frenchmen's power over women, a power controlled and mediated by the ideology of the erotic in Delacroix's time . . . shared by men of Delacroix's class and time, . . .

Nochlin recognized the class basis of antagonistic attitudes between the sexes in French society which operated within Orientalist painting.

Maryanne Stevens' exhibition catalogue of 1984, The Orientalists: Delacroix to Matisse is a more scholarly effort to present Orientalist painting in its historical context. However, the significance of the power relationships implicit in Orientalist painting strategies is not adequately addressed. Stevens condemned Said's critical

literary analysis as being ". . . too simplistic an interpretation of both western visitors' intentions and their artistic work." <sup>16</sup> Her more traditionalist approach leads her to view mid-19th century Orientalist painting under the influence of Realism to be the

. . . truthful representation of the external world, based upon objective observation, (which) set an aesthetic standard for artists and patrons alike. 17

Stevens' belief in the possibility of an objective viewpoint clouds the validity of her analysis. Said's thesis provides the corrective to any notion of objectivity in Orientalism which, Said insists, must be understood

. . . as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient . . . the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action. 18

Stevens' failure is a result of her mistaken reliance on aesthetic value judgments as her investigative criteria. For her purposes, personal fascination with North Africa is an accepted and unquestioned explanation for the popular taste for Orientalist painting in the period. <sup>19</sup> An absence of serious critical reflection leads her to conclude that

. . . almost all the paintings which emerged from this encounter between two cultures speak of an enthusiasm for these foreign lands, witnesses to their splendour, their enchantment and their powerful fascination. 20

Included in the catalogue is Matisse's The Blue Nude which is described in the formal language of traditional art history <sup>21</sup> without the necessary concern for content.

The texts by Rosenthal and Stevens are representative of the traditional, uncritical art historical method wherein aesthetic and formal concerns are separated from the complex historical context in which these images were produced.

Rosenthal and Stevens are only two examples; they are not

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alone. The involvement of the French state in supporting and purchasing Orientalist art at the time of French colonial enterprise in North Africa has been documented but lacks an analysis of the reasons for the production and meaning of this art. The result is a limited and misleading viewpoint which does not question or attempt to understand the impact of ideology upon "personal fascination" which results in the conscious or unconscious production of specific representations.

This same concern with personal fascination is the focus of the Primitivists who are the contributing authors to the massive, two-volume MoMA exhibition catalogue, "Primitivism" in 20th Century Art, 1984. This traditional methodology erodes the critical value of this catalogue's content and leaves important questions unresolved with respect to the specifics of avant-garde practice. This catalogue, instead of providing a critical art historical analysis, becomes a eulogy to MoMA, its patrons and its curators for what is constructed to be their perceptive recognition, throughout years of collecting, of the affinity between the primitive and the modern. William Rubin, editor and chief contributor

to the Primitivism catalogue wrote:

That many today consider tribal sculpture to represent a major aspect of world art, that Fine Arts museums are increasingly devoting galleries, even entire wings to it, is a function of the triumph of vanguard art itself. (29) 23

It is footnote 29 which justifies and reveals the rationale behind the production of the exhibit itself. It reads:

The Michael C. Rockefeller wing of the Metropolitan Museum is the classic instance of this. It depended directly upon Nelson Rockefeller's passion for tribal art, which has led to his earlier founding of the Museum of Primitive Art. This in turn depended on and followed from his taste for and involvement with twentieth-century art and his knowledge of the importance of tribal art for many modern artists. 24

Rubin's reference to capitalism, tribal art and modern art raises questions which he does not answer and which require an explanation by a contextual, historical analysis. As well, the casual observer of the catalogue is cleverly misled to believe that tribal objects were direct models for the Parisian avant-garde. Although tribal objects were certainly known in Parisian avant-garde circles, the complexity of their relationship to artistic practice requires critical re-assessment, not just an account of which artist saw what when. The illustrations in the catalogue visually juxtapose tribal and modern art in a manner which artificially constructs a false illusion of direct influence, particularly in the period under discussion. In a footnote, however, Rubin did admit that



There is no drawing or painting by Picasso that is directly copied from any tribal object. 25

This statement fails to counteract the constructed visual illusions of direct influence presented in the catalogue.

Furthermore, Rubin took great care to dismiss the pejorative connotation of Primitivism. Instead, he repeatedly emphasized its positive character in terms of formal representation and personal fascination. His discussion of the differences between 19th and 20th century Primitivism is in terms of bourgeois art appreciation. He stated:

For the bourgeois public of the nineteenth century, however, if not for the art lovers of the twentieth, the adjective "primitive" certainly had pejorative meaning. Indeed, that public considered any culture outside Europe, or any art outside the parameters of Beaux-Arts and salon styles--which meant all non-Western and some Western art--inherently inferior. 26

Gauguin was credited with promoting the "affirmative attitude" of the "'myth of the primitive'" as an idealized "literary and philosophical concept," of social criticism.<sup>27</sup> However, instead of questioning the broader ideological implication of Primitivism, Rubin amazingly stated:

It mattered little, however, that the affirmative view of the Primitive we have been describing had almost as little relation to reality as the negative one. 28

Rubin suggested that the movement of Primitivism in its affirmative and critical form to be the basis for 20th century avant-garde interest in the Primitive was a

progressive movement from an appreciation of "Primitive life" to an appreciation of "Primitive art."<sup>29</sup> Thus, the modern artist's interest in primitive art ". . . could only by taken<sup>30</sup> by bourgeois culture as an attack upon its values." Yet, this is a peculiar twist which contradicts historical reality. As Rubin himself explained, it was this same bourgeois culture which introduced African tribal art into Western culture. He wrote:

We owe to the voyagers, colonials, and ethnologists the arrival of these objects in the West. But we owe primarily to the convictions of the pioneer modern artists their promotion from the rank of curiosities and artifacts to that of major art, indeed, to the status of art at all. 31

The question remains as to how and why the avant-garde chose a relatively traditional cult object, the female form, and transformed it into another form of cult object of modern art. While personal fascination is no doubt a factor for the individual artists, Matisse and Picasso responded differently to Primitivism. To fully comprehend these individual responses, the complexity of avant-garde ideology must be considered in extra-artistic terms. A reliance on the artist's personal taste for the aesthetic form of Primitivism provides only a partial and inadequate explanation for the incorporation of a primitive vocabulary in visualizations of women, and specifically female prostitutes, in the early 20th century.

Following Rubin's lead, his art historian colleagues,

Kirk Varnedoe and Jack Flam present similar evaluations of Gauguin and Matisse in their contribution to the Primitivism catalogue. These second-generation MoMA scholars exemplify Alfred Barr's methods where formal description, biography and criticism are devoid of critical analysis and an awareness of changing historical processes. Although content is scrutinized in terms of tradition, reference to the real political and historical issues as they relate to artistic practice is avoided. As a result the success of their ostensible objectivity is questionable. While in the Primitivism catalogue attention to the colonial factor is appended in accompanying articles, such analysis is carefully separated from the appreciation of avant-garde art where only the positive, up-beat viewpoint of the collecting, accumulation and appreciation of non-Western objects is promoted.

Flam's article, "Matisse and the Fauves," also projected the positive aspect of Primitivism. Flam proposed that African art attracted the attention of the avant-garde through its symbolic content because it offered "a new beginning" to the artists as ". . . its iconographic content and its history were unknown, . . ." <sup>32</sup> This definition of Primitivism's attraction for the Parisian avant-garde by Flam agreed with Rubin's interpretation of Picasso's Primitivism in Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. 1909) as the consequence of the artist's ". . . search into the origin of man's picturing

himself." These authors fail to see the significance of the primitivized female image. While Rubin and Flam acknowledged the importance of African tribal objects for the avant-garde they distanced themselves from the negative reality of French intrusion upon African culture and territory, which by the early 20th century was an intense and violent form of Western domination and accounted for the proliferation of African objects in French society. As well, they do not reflect upon the conditions in French society which would reveal the power relationships influencing cultural preferences in relation to the contemporary issue of class struggle.

Matisse's primitivizing of the female form in The Blue Nude, was understood by Flam in terms of personal symbolism. According to Flam, the image evolved from ". . . memory and imagination, which gave Matisse greater freedom in his restructuring of the human body."<sup>34</sup> What Flam does not confront is the fact that Matisse's "freedom" of imaginative expression is ideologically conditioned and not free at all.

The dynamics of artistic practice and ideology are revealed by a difference of opinion over the effect Matisse's trip to North Africa in 1906 had upon his art. Flam dated Matisse's trip to Biskra from March of 1906, in accordance with Alfred Barr's original research.<sup>35</sup> Pierre Schneider's monograph Matisse of 1984, revised the date of the two-week trip by Matisse to North Africa to May 10, 1906.<sup>36</sup> Flam described this trip as having had a positive influence on

Matisse's art which resulted in a fusing of a "North African subject" with a "Black African form" derived from African sculpture.<sup>37</sup> The Blue Nude was described in the following terms.

The picture is not a literal memory of anything that Matisse had seen, but rather a symbolic image of the powerful effect that his experience of Africa had had upon his imagination. 38

Schneider, in his monograph on Matisse, saw the effect of Matisse's trip differently. He pointed out the futility of the trip for Matisse in terms of art because The Blue Nude retained only an "unspecific memory" of the Orient which was represented by the palm leaves in the painting.<sup>39</sup> In formal terms, Schneider attributed Matisse's failure to Matisse's inability to picture the Orient other than as illusion.

From the standpoint of art--especially from Matisse onward--Orientalism was to appear as the negation of the Orient. 40

Schneider related this failure to Matisse's position in North Africa as a foreign outsider. Matisse had expressed his alienated feeling in a letter to a fellow-artist.<sup>41</sup> This concept of denial, according to Said's thesis, is Orientalism at work, a strategy of power which divides human cultures into "'us'" and "'they.'"<sup>42</sup> This polarization of East and West is central to the theory and practice of Orientalism.<sup>43</sup>

However, The Blue Nude is not only a painting of an Oriental subject, it is a representation of a female prostitute.<sup>44</sup> Flam's monograph, Matisse. The Man and His Art, 1869-1918, of 1986, contains the following description:

The woman is symbolic of the primitive intensity and violence of the land that Matisse perceived in Africa, a convincing metaphor for dynamic growth, a kind of modern Venus. 45

While Flam described the subject as a cult image, that is both as a primitive fertility symbol and a Western goddess he did not explain how the painting's function as an avant-garde image of the female as fertility symbol has significance within the ideological framework of Neo-Orientalism in the early 20th century. According to Said, the relationship between agriculture, reproduction and colonialism had been established as the subjugation of the weaker "other"--the Orient.<sup>46</sup> In Said's words

. . . the Orient was viewed as something inviting French interest, penetration, insemination--in short, colonization. 47

Edward Said's thesis, Orientalism of 1978, is fundamental to my study of the paintings and to an understanding of artistic intention, the production of meaning and the complex function of Neo-Orientalist imagery within the Parisian avant-garde.

Said's critical analysis, in the field of literature, is an admittedly subjective view of Western cultural hegemony which refutes the suggestion that fascination with the Orient, and specifically with the Islamic Orient, is innocent of structures of power. His analysis of the major Western powers, in particular, French, British and American, focused upon their "intellectual authority" over the Orient within

Western culture." Said wrote:

There is nothing mysterious or natural about authority. It is formed, irradiated, disseminated; it is instrumental, it is persuasive; it has status, it establishes canons of taste and value; it is virutally indistinguishable from certain ideas it dignifies as true, and from traditions, perceptions, and judgments it forms, transmits, reproduces. 49

Most importantly, Said reflected upon his position as an "Oriental subject" who was raised in the British colonial territories of Egypt and Palestine as an Islamic Oriental.<sup>50</sup>

Said's personal experience as an alienated Palestinian Arab scholar in the United States prompted him to write his book. It was in America where he felt the brunt of racial prejudice towards the Arabs and Muslims which he suggested was the result of the ". . . liberal American identification with Zionism, . . ." <sup>51</sup> He frankly stated that

The web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanizing ideology holding in the Arab or the Muslim is very strong indeed, and it is this web which every Palestinian has come to feel as his uniquely punishing destiny. 52

As the first Arab scholar in the West to courageously examine the dynamics of Orientalism through a critique of Western literature, he recognized that he was also ". . . writing the history of a strange, secret sharer of Western anti-Semitism." whose roots were ironically to be found in the same cultural prejudices which he encountered. <sup>53</sup> Said's book, written as a response to the proliferation of historically constructed racial stereotypes which functioned

as the basis for foreign policy, is an essential source for studying modernist representations of Orientalism and Primitivism. Yet, because of its controversial nature, his insistence on the pervasiveness of Orientalism in Western hegemony has been rejected, ignored or de-emphasized by many scholars. This has resulted in an incomplete picture of the historical process as it affects the production of meaning in modern visual imagery.

In his literary discussion of modern Orientalism as a doctrine of domination, Said pointed out the significance of 19th century racial theory which promoted Primitivism as a negative classification of human difference.<sup>54</sup> Linda Nochlin's article, "The Imaginary Orient" of 1983 extended Said's critique of literature to include 19th century Orientalist painting and a feminist perspective.

Orientalism, through the concept of human difference defined by the racial theory of Primitivism, not only supported racial and sexual superiority but also notions of class superiority within Western society itself.<sup>55</sup> My thesis will address this analysis of the structures of power, as exemplified by the work of Said and Nochlin, which has been missing from the scholarly discussions surrounding Matisse's The Blue Nude (Souvenir of Biskra) and Picasso's Les Demoiselles d'Avignon as examples of Orientalism and Primitivism in traditional art historical texts.

While the studies by Rubin and Flam are valuable, they



do not address the issue of the primitivized form of the female prostitute in avant-garde practice at the specific moment of production. The fact that these representations of women have been transformed differently by Matisse and Picasso must be addressed in relation to French neo-colonialism and to the issue of class struggle in the early 20th century. The "ugly" subjects of the paintings are female prostitutes--in French society, the image of the prostitute was itself an ideological construct relative to both neo-colonialism and to class struggle.

I intend to investigate the The Blue Nude and Les Demoiselles d'Avignon as Neo-Orientalist paintings and uncover the dynamics of the power relationships which are concealed in the manipulation of the female form. My study will begin with the assumption that The Blue Nude, and Les Demoiselles d'Avignon as Neo-Orientalist paintings of "ugly" female prostitutes produce meanings which are not merely reflections of the artists' interest in the African aesthetic as personal symbols, but are ideological constructions with different significance within avant-garde practice. I propose to search for their different meanings as avant-garde images of females by first examining two seemingly disparate discourses in which the female was represented at the same historical moment, that is, in both the popular and official culture. My first chapter will embody a discussion of class struggle and will focus on images of women in an illustrated

journal of the French left which are relevant to the issue of human inequity expressed by this discourse of opposition to the dominant French culture. The dominance of French official culture, which supported bourgeois values and neo-colonialism, will be discussed in relation to one painting by Georges Rochegrosse, highly valued by the official French Salon in 1906. The images in these two discourses produce meanings which relate to the power strategies inherent in Orientalism and Primitivism and, in particular, to the way women were valued in different factions of French society.

My second chapter will explain how The Blue Nude and Les Demoiselles d'Avignon were intended to function as avant-garde images in relation to the popular and official culture through the meanings imparted by their "ugly" subjects. The paintings will be critically analyzed in terms of Neo-Orientalism, which embodied different class attitudes towards the primitivized female form. It will be shown that Matisse exploited the sexual Primitivism of the exotic female prostitute yet retained the traditional Western ideal of beauty and thus upheld the values and the dominance of French official culture and neo-colonialism. Conversely, Picasso chose to oppose the ideal of beauty and these values by attempting to insert his awareness of the issue of class struggle through his use of the form and content of Primitivism, consciously aware of the inequities in Western civilization. In conclusion, it is suggested that Picasso's

painting failed to signify his intention to deflate the possibility of Western bourgeois male dominance through enjoyment of primitive sexuality by his choice of the sexually aggressive image of the brutalized contemporary female prostitute. Instead, his aggressive, primitivized prostitutes manipulated the Western bourgeois male's need to dominate. Thus, Picasso's Primitivism was rapidly absorbed as a reference to African art, which was the new aesthetic commodity promoted by the Western bourgeois male-dominated culture to reinforce its identification of superiority of race, sex and class. Therefore, the ambiguity of Picasso's primitivized females could be used by the most "civilized" element of French society as justification for its violent policies of aggression and repression at a moment of domestic and foreign crises when French neo-nationalism and neo-colonialism were threatened by socialism.

Thus, the intended difference in meaning between the paintings can be clarified by the historical context where the paintings, as individual expression, connected with each other and with these larger issues. The significance of the appearance of the "ugly" representation of the female prostitute as a dominated or possibly dominating subject of Parisian avant-garde painting at a time of social crisis in France can no longer be ignored. These paintings were produced in Paris, the art capital of the world and the centre of French Imperialism where the official culture

promoted the production of erotic and exotic images of women at the moment when French society was threatened, not only by a domestic social crisis expressed through the issue of class struggle, but when France, as a nation, was threatened by the possibility of war with Germany over possession of the North African territory of Morocco.

NOTES

- 1  
Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 207.
- 2  
Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," Art in America, 7 (May 1983), 119.
- 3  
Michelle Perrot, ed., Une Histoire des Femmes est-elle Possible? (Paris: Editions Rivages, 1984), 220.
- 4  
Donald A. Rosenthal, Orientalism: The Near East in French Painting 1800-1880 (Rochester, New York: Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, 1982), 8.
- 5  
Ibid., 156 note 2.
- 6  
Ibid., 9.
- 7  
Ibid.
- 8  
Ibid., 10. See also 156 note 10.
- 9  
Ibid., 155.
- 10  
Said, Orientalism, 6.
- 11  
Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," 119.
- 12  
Ibid.
- 13  
Ibid., 123.
- 14  
Ibid., 124.
- 15  
Ibid.

16

Maryanne Stevens, ed., The Orientalists: Delacroix to Matisse: European Painters in North Africa and the Near East, (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1984), 19. See also 23 note 42.

17

Ibid., 20-21.

18

Said, Orientalism, 3.

19

Stevens, The Orientalists, 22. Stevens de-emphasized the violence and the horror of colonialism and ignored its relationship to the cultivation of taste for Orientalist painting. Stevens views Orientalism as a benign concept. With respect to Nochlin's feminist perspective, Stevens, Ibid., 23 note 59, dismissed its relevance as follows: "It has been suggested that Orientalist painting contrived to make available experiences forbidden to the prurient West . . . As well, Stevens, Ibid., enthusiastically defended collectors of Orientalist painting against Said's thesis. She stated that Said's book ". . . implies that the ownership of Orientalist painting denotes the desire of the West both to dominate the Near East and to reinforce the West's own sense of cultural superiority." Stevens does not consider the historical significance of the production of Orientalist images. However, a contributing author to this catalogue, Malcolm Warner, "The Question of Faith: Orientalism, Christianity and Islam," Ibid., 37 and 39, notes 20-21, revealed an insight into the issues raised by Said and Nochlin.

20

Ibid.

21

Ibid., 210-211.

22

Lynne Thornton is a prolific producer of Orientalist painting exhibition catalogues from a traditional, uncritical point of view. Two examples are: Lynne Thornton and Félix Marcilhac L'Art en Marge des Grands Mouvements: 2, Salons et Orientalites de 1850-1950, Vol. 2, (Paris: Hôtel Drouot, 1974), and Lynne Thornton, Les Orientalistes Peintres voyageurs, 1828-1908 (Paris: ACR Edition Internationale, 1983). Thornton, Les Orientalistes, 22, admittedly relied upon the work of Jean Alazard for her model because of his "exactitude" which she related to his position as the first curator of the National Museum of Beaux-Arts of Algeria.

- 23  
William Rubin, ed., "Primitivism" in 20th Century Art  
Vol. I, (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984), 7.
- 24  
Ibid., 75 note 29.
- 25  
Ibid., 337 note 94. See also: Cynthia Nadelman,  
"Broken Premises: 'Primitivism' at MoMA," Art News,  
(February, 1985), 88-95.
- 26  
Ibid., 6.
- 27  
Ibid.
- 28  
Ibid.
- 29  
Ibid.
- 30  
Ibid., 7.
- 31  
Ibid.
- 32  
Ibid., 212.
- 33  
Ibid., 73.
- 34  
Ibid., 225.
- 35  
Ibid., 216.
- 36  
Pierre Schneider, Matisse (New York: Rizzoli, 1984),  
158.
- 37  
Rubin, "Primitivism", 226.

- 38  
Ibid.
- 39  
Schneider, Matisse, 158.
- 40  
Ibid.
- 41  
Ibid.
- 42  
Said, Orientalism, 45. Said's reference Ibid., is to Westerners and Islamic Orientals, respectively.
- 43  
Ibid., 46.
- 44  
Andrea Thomsett, The Blue Nude (unpublished paper, University of British Columbia, 1981). This paper revealed the political implications of the painting by identifying the female subject as a prostitute and pointing out the significance of its relationship to French colonialism in North Africa in the historic context of 1907.
- 45  
Jack Flam, Matisse, The Man and His Art 1869-1918 (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), 195.
- 46  
Said, Orientalism, 219.
- 47  
Ibid.
- 48  
Ibid., 19.
- 49  
Ibid., 19-20.
- 50  
Ibid., 25.
- 51  
Ibid., 27
- 52  
Ibid.



53

ibid.

54

ibid., 232.

55

Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," 124.

## CHAPTER I

### ILLUSIONS OF POWER AND POWERFUL DELUSIONS

"Chair & travail . . . chair & plaisir!"

Paule Mink, 1883. <sup>1</sup>

The distorted form of the "ugly" female subject which emerged in the Parisian avant-garde in the years 1905 - 1908 is related to a moment in French history when the issue of class struggle intersected with neo-colonialism revealing ideological differences between the right and the left. Matisse's seductive female, The Blue Nude of 1907 differs from Picasso's outrageous females of Les Femmes d'Alger, of 1907, yet, each produces specific meanings which connect with each other and with these broader issues through the contemporaneous notions of Primitivism. These images operated within categories of constructed human difference defined by attitudes towards Primitivism. While the female figure was a prevalent subject in the history of traditional and avant-garde French art, the female subjects in these paintings by Matisse and Picasso are distinguished by their overtly distorted and primitivized forms. It is these extreme formal transformations to the female figure which raise questions with respect to content relative to their function in the specific historic context of their appearance as avant-garde products.

The subject of Matisse's painting is a single

reclining nude, her erotically primitivized form is posited horizontally in an exotic background to produce the alluring effect of an available alien prostitute. She appears to dominate an imaginative landscape. Matisse's style of exaggerated arabesque form and Fauve colour differs from more traditional representations of reclining nudes by the obvious accentuation of the subject's seemingly "primitive" female sexuality and her non-Western origins to signify a passive subjugated female. However, Matisse's nude retains allusions to the Western ideal of female beauty through her nudity and pose which reveal her feminine gender. Conversely, Les Demoiselles d'Avignon contains a group of five defeminized females vertically positioned in an ambiguously defined space which differs from traditional images of erotic and exotic females and contrasts with Matisse's emphasis on passive, primitive sexuality. In place of the overblown curves of The Blue Nude, Picasso exploited angular forms and used harsh light and natural colour to stress the aggressiveness of his "ugly" female prostitutes and to distance his subjects from traditional notions of female beauty in Western society. The aggressive mood of Picasso's figures is reinforced by a deliberate confusion and displacement of easily recognizable signs of female gender identification which are instead symbolized by the fruit.

To explain the difference in meaning between these two paintings in terms of the "ugly" female subject as a passive

victim or as a willful aggressor, it is essential to examine the relationship which existed between politics and culture, and as well, to examine the position of the avant-garde in relation to representations of the female subject in popular culture and official Salon practice at the same moment.

As the avant-garde used both high and low culture as its material, a study of these opposing discourses can provide a key to the complex structure wherein the issues surrounding neo-colonialism and class struggle were connected through contemporaneous concepts of Orientalism and Primitivism. In terms of the avant-garde, and specifically in the case of Matisse and Picasso, images of "ugly" women are Orientalist through their reference or response to the traditional representation of the erotic and exotic female as a sexual object. However, as Neo-Orientalist images which exploit Primitivism, the difference in their meaning is evident when compared with popular and official visualizations of the female subject. In formal terms the paintings by Matisse and Picasso are similar through their extensive distortion of the female figure and therefore seem to be at variance with popular and official representations of women.

For example, it was in the French popular press, in an illustrated periodical like L'Assiette au Beurre, where the question of the image of the "primitivized" female subject as victim was viewed in relation to class difference. As will

be shown at a later point, in this same discourse the powerful female was presented in relation to class struggle through the appropriation of the official view of classical beauty and not formally distorted as an "ugly" symbol of the working class. In the official bourgeois art world of the Salon, the traditional portrayals of the subjected female at the mercy of the male aggressor continued to emphasize her primitive, less than human, female nature, also without formal distortion. La Joie Rouge, (Fig. 3), by Georges Rochegrosse, is a painting of 1906 which exhibits these characteristics of the classical beauty of the female nude which were prevalent in the sphere of official Salon art.

Although for different reasons, as will be demonstrated, in both popular and official discourses, the female image retained a relationship with classical notions of beauty. It was in the realm of official culture where the false delusion of Western bourgeois male superiority was nurtured by what may be termed a negative concept of Primitivism. How this negative concept of Primitivism, which was an essential component of Orientalism's ideological authority and its importance to French neo-colonialism in the early 20th century, was developed will be explained by reference to certain theories of Primitivism. As will be seen, these theories focused on human difference as a means to categorize those who were "different" and were used to define race, sex and class. To counter this negative identification of

Primitivism with the non-Western peoples, women and the working class, segments of the popular press exposed the social condition of these marginalized social groups in relation to class difference.

As proponents of human emancipation and critics of authority, the French popular press, exemplified by a periodical such as L'Assiette au Beurre, was conscious of the inhuman condition of those groups affected by the negative connotation of Primitivism as it was used as an instrument of domination. At the same time, it was the French Marxist socialists who used a 19th century concept, which suggested that women had been powerful in ancient "primitive" matriarchal society, to promote the cause of French working class women at the turn-of-the-century. Of significance in the early 20th century is the choice of the French socialist feminists to confront bourgeois feminists over the issue of class when this issue was basic to French socialist debates over identity of the working class in the class struggle.

The history of the French socialist struggle is related to the changing class structure in France following the bourgeois Revolution of the late 18th century.<sup>2</sup> By the 19th century, the new dominant middle class, the bourgeoisie, had promised a new social order founded on the revolutionary principles of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity."<sup>3</sup> In practice, however, the bourgeois philosophy of liberalism, which promoted the rights of the individual, was applicable

only to members of a certain group. <sup>4</sup> The ruling middle class finally established the Third French Republic in the 1870's and enjoyed special privileges based on ownership of private property. <sup>5</sup> This value system, which afforded the French middle, white, masculine-dominated class its power and superior status, denied these same rights to colonized peoples, women and the working class, those who were "different," who were viewed as inferior, through the authority of Orientalism and the theory of Primitivism. Orientalism's supporting concept, Primitivism, embodied the racial theories which supported the notions of racial, sexual and class difference. <sup>6</sup>

The negative concept of Primitivism was a useful tool of domination in the economic, social and political situation in France at the end of the 19th century. As France's forest and agricultural economy was slowly eroded by modern forms of industry and transformed under the bourgeois economic system of capitalism, the rural population was forced to find new methods for survival. <sup>7</sup> At the same moment that French Imperialism intensified and exerted new pressures upon non-Western cultures, changes in land use patterns and traditional rural labour practices, which originated in the mid-19th century, accelerated, displacing segments of the rural population who were forced to seek work in the new industries in the urban environment.

French Imperialism and the restructuring of French society at its roots had a negative effect upon colonial subjects, women and the working class, those designated as inferior by the ruling class, and who were driven to take steps to counteract their displacement in the social, economic and political order. At certain moments, the working class united with socialist supporters in a class struggle against the bourgeois oppressors. This movement was complex and by no means a progressive historical process without repressive setbacks, yet a moment of unity occurred in the period of 1905-1908 when socialist concerns for social, economic and political equality supported the cause of the colonial subjects, women and the working class and coalesced into a vivid expression of class struggle.<sup>8</sup> The result was the polarization of the classes which divided society into two main opposing factions; the bourgeois, who were in fear of and threatened by socialism as a political force because of its support of colonial peoples, women and the working class and its aim to abolish private property; and the socialists, who were faced with "embourgeoisement" of the working class due to apolitical reformist trade-union organizations which weakened their cause based on class struggle.<sup>9</sup> This ideological polemic between the two factions was, of course, confused by the differing notions of race, sex and class which were at issue in the period 1905 -  
<sup>10</sup> 1908. Simultaneously, a shift in foreign policy and



colonial practice from acquisition of land and peoples to the explicit economic exploitation of French Imperialism, had dangerous national and international implications. The possibility of war with Germany over Morocco dramatically increased from 1905 - 1907.<sup>11</sup> This factor provided the necessary impetus to the emerging neo-nationalist movement of the extreme right which clashed with socialist internationalist ideals.<sup>12</sup> Economic competition due to colonial development led to a crisis in the south of France in the summer of 1907. The uprisings, caused by problems in the wine markets, verged on civil war signalling a new unrest in rural French society.<sup>13</sup>

The illustrated periodical, L'Assiette au Beurre, which appeared weekly from the spring of 1901 until the fall of 1912, is one source of visual material of French popular culture.<sup>14</sup> A satiric critique of official Republican society, this periodical promoted the social and economic emancipation of the working class. The concerns and the distribution of L'Assiette au Beurre were national and international and the general editorial policy was characterized by an entrenched opposition to all institutions of authority. This satiric critique of French society often included images of women and these offer clues to the way in which women were valued in a specific counter-culture. The meaning and function of these images also reveals issues of class conflict.

As will be demonstrated, many of the artists were influenced by the doctrine of Revolutionary Syndicalism, a militant working class notion of worker activism directed against the bourgeois state and its economic system of capitalism.<sup>15</sup> Revolutionary Syndicalism differed from the political aims and methods of the elected socialists who looked upon the economic organization of the working class as one stage of the class struggle.<sup>16</sup> The difference in focus was part of a major ideological clash which divided the French left, and which had its roots in the mid-19th century debate between Proudhon and Marx concerning the significance of class struggle.<sup>17</sup> It was Proudhon who first recognized the working class as a distinct social group defined by their common position as wage labourers. Proudhon's concept of syndicalism was based on an apolitical organization of the working class who were to be united through their similar interests for mutual social and economic benefit.<sup>18</sup> By 1902, syndicalism had taken a new form and working class syndicates were infiltrated by militant anarchists many of whom had adopted new and violent methods which brought repressive action from the dominant authorities. Their methods were at odds with both the existant bourgeois syndicates and reformist working class syndicates and as well opened debate on the revolutionary left with the elected Marxist socialists.<sup>19</sup> Within this context, L'Assiette au Beurre stands as an important document of the working class

struggle and occupies a space on the extreme left in opposition to the dominant culture. Indeed, a controversy which centered upon L'Assiette au Beurre erupted in the fall of 1905 as a result of the visual expression of class difference and working class conditions. The issue of September 30th, 1905 of L'Assiette au Beurre was removed from circulation at its Parisian outlets.<sup>20</sup> An ensuing debate over freedom of expression confirmed the mood of fear in the conservative element of bourgeois society which felt threatened by the visibility and increased organization of the working class.<sup>21</sup> However, in spite of its fragile existence, L'Assiette au Beurre continued to be published.

Significantly, the representation of the female as a victim of racial, sexual and class exploitation was the subject of a series of illustrated cartoons by Radiguet in the March 17th, 1906 issue of L'Assiette au Beurre, entitled "Images Morales." For example, L'Etat Dépraveur (Fig. 4) is a depiction of the state-supported Ecole des Beaux-Arts which has been re-named "l'école de pornographie." Radiguet attacked the bourgeois tradition which supported the use of live, nude models as subjects for paintings for which honour and gold medals were offered as reward. He pictured the "maîtres pornographes"

. . . en compagnie de nymphes dénudées. Et ils reproduiront à l'infini les formes provocantes, voluptueuses, de ces impudiques créatures. Et, ce faisant, ils acquerront gloire et fortune. 22

Most objectionable to him was the position of these older artists at L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts as teachers of the younger generation of men and women of the bourgeois class in " . . . l'étude abhorée du nu."<sup>23</sup> This practice, which assured the continuity of bourgeois morals, was not condemned by the guardians of public morality such as Senator René Bérenger, the senator responsible for the censorship laws. In fact, it was noted in the accompanying text that: ". . . M. Bérenger<sup>24</sup> ne dit rien."

Le Couturier Pornographe (Fig. 5) in the same issue, described the world of the couturier salon, the bastion of the fashion industry so important to bourgeois capitalism, as a torture chamber where the female model was victimized. The couturier is shown eroticizing the model's natural form by squeezing her into a corset which accentuates her breasts and hips. The caption explains that "Cet artiste est un infame<sup>25</sup> déformateur de la beauté féminine. C'est érotomane . . . " In comparison, the statue of the Venus de Milo is pictured as resisting this unnatural conformity to the erotic needs of the bourgeois male through her untransformed, natural nudity.

La fréquentation des oeuvres d'art lui a démontré combien le nu est peu excitant . . . Combien peu la chair est émue devant la Vénus de Milo, par exemple. Et son esprit satanique s'est acharné à mettre en valeur tout ce qui, dans la femme, peut exciter la concupiscence. 26

The natural form of the female victim has been re-formed and deformed by the male creative genius, the couturier, into the

desired image of a female, degraded to suit the bourgeois male's need for her as the object of his sexual pleasure to ensure his identity with power, masculinity, potency--his virility.<sup>27</sup>

Pour les Bérenqères (Fig. 6) is a satiric analysis of the state's attempt to regulate prostitution, an institution which revealed the power relationships of race, sex and class. The visibility of prostitution was a threat to bourgeois morals and order according to Senator Bérenger, who was also the head of the extra-parliamentary committee set up to investigate and control the White Slave Trade, which was the global market for prostitution. The prostitute was seen as a necessary commodity by the bourgeois but, if too visible, as a dangerous example to honest bourgeois women.<sup>28</sup>

The image of the prostitute presented in L'Assiette au Beurre during this period was that of a powerless victim, demoralized and diseased. Radiguet's text and illustrations showed the process by which young girls arrived in Paris from the provinces to be lured into clandestine prostitution under the guise of charity. They are greeted at the train stations by "saintes femmes" and placed as servants in the homes of the bourgeois where they become the objects of seduction. Young city girls, "midinettes" who plied their trade in the streets, were identified and reprimanded, while the most debauched of all, "les courtisanes les plus huppées," of the brothel, "la maison de passe" were encouraged to reform by

"l'exemple du travail et de la vertu." Radiguet thus uncovered the real class hypocrisy in the attitude of the bourgeois towards the growth of clandestine prostitution. The placement of young rural girls in questionably safe environments, that is the homes of the bourgeois, contradicted official efforts to control the international traffic in prostitutes, The White Slave Trade. <sup>30</sup> The bourgeois did not consider prostitution to have value as work and viewed all prostitutes as lazy and naturally degenerate. <sup>31</sup> In fact, studies have shown that prostitutes were mainly recruited from the lower classes, that is women who were displaced from their rural origins trying to survive in the increasingly industrialized society as members of the urban proletariat. These "lower working class" women were drawn into clandestine activity in Paris or into the White Slave Trade where they were treated like exotic commodities <sup>32</sup> for export to world markets. Radiguet was explicitly commenting on the fate of rural working class women as victims of prostitution in Paris who were forced into prostitution for survival at the service of the bourgeois and who suffered degradation and condemnation at the hands of the bourgeois.

It is important to note that the image of the prostitute as a degenerate was entrenched in Proudhon's particular brand of socialism in the mid-nineteenth century. In his writings, he projected the image of the prostitute as one who was both

unnatural and ugly. He viewed all women who were involved in relationships outside a mutual, devoted form of marriage as leaving themselves open to the risk of acquiring the degenerate characteristics of the prostitute. This viewpoint was similar to the bourgeois vision of the prostitute as degenerate and subhuman. In contrast, French Marxist socialists agreed with Marx and Engels that the institution of bourgeois marriage was in itself a form of prostitution and the cause of dissatisfactions producing the necessity for commercialized prostitution.<sup>34</sup>

Paule Mink, a socialist feminist active in the 1880's, blamed the condition of poverty imposed on women workers as the cause of prostitution by forcing them to supplement their inadequate wages--the same inadequate wages which were paid to their male counterparts.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, as early as 1883 she considered capitalism to be the cause of the female worker's misery which resulted in her state of double oppression as producer and sexual object--"Chair à travail, . . . chair à plaisir!"<sup>36</sup>

Paul Lafargue, a French Marxist socialist actively writing around the turn-of-the-century, identified the bourgeois male's greed for sexual gratification through prostitution as an especially destructive force to that class because of the risk of venereal disease. Lafargue transferred the image of victimization and degeneration from the female prostitute to the bourgeois male consumer, who, through his greed for power, guaranteed his self-destruction

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as a victim of the powerfully dangerous female. Within this tradition, L'Assiette au Beurre, did not project the prostitute as a powerful and dangerous force, but as a powerless victim at the mercy of the authoritarian bourgeois.

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The representation of the female nude in L'Assiette au Beurre also functioned in relation to the libertarian cause of the Revolutionary Syndicalists. Illustrated on the cover of the issue of April 14th, 1906, stood a female nude under the title of La Liberté, (Fig. 7). Her personified form in the context of this issue, which was a critique of repressive, authoritarian governments, is an obvious allusion to Delacroix's victorious Liberty Leading the People of 1830. However, La Liberté is a satiric comment upon the repressive policies of the radical government of The Third French Republic in the electoral year of 1906.

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Although, as Theodore Zeldin has stated, "Liberty was the republic's first principle." <sup>40</sup> the Republic, in 1906, was using military force to control domestic strife caused by the strike and anti-military activities of militant trade-unionists, the Revolutionary Syndicalists.

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Thus, in 1906, the solitary, dejected figure of La Liberté pictured on the cover of L'Assiette au Beurre, stands on the stone parapet of a prison. This woman raises her arms in a symbolic gesture of real anguish projecting an image of disillusionment instead of the victorious pose of Delacroix's



female. The female portrayed as La Liberté in L'Assiette au Beurre has affinities with classical representations of feminine beauty in the academic tradition through her nudity and the erotic emphasis on the line of her breast, torso and hip effected by the upward movement of her arms. However, traditional academic strategies are disrupted by the absence of classical illusion, the expected horizontal pose and the long, fair flowing hair of academia. She is not an object for a bourgeois male power fantasy, nor is she a prostitute, but she is a symbol of anguish in relation to class struggle.

Serving as a symbol for the libertarian cause of the Revolutionary Syndicalists, La Liberté is flanked on her left by two lists of names which are highlighted by a background strip of bright orange. Heading the list are the names of the artists' imprisoned colleagues, most of whom were known to be either Revolutionary Syndicalists or their sympathizers. Below are listed the names of the artists who were "free."

The issue, for which this illustration acted as a frontespiece, was dedicated to imprisoned left intellectuals who had themselves contributed to some of the contents from their prison cells. Of the many comments within the issue itself was a bitter statement by one of the activists, Laporte, interned at La Santé. He mocked the Republican concept of liberty in 1906 with the following statement: Laporte wrote:

La liberté! Privilège des aigrefins, des  
agioteurs et des arrivistes; seuls, les  
imbéciles ont foi en ce mot en régime  
capitaliste. 43

Thus, the dejected female figure of La Liberté, when juxtaposed to the lists of the names of male activists, acted in relation to the libertarian aspect of class struggle. This image's relationship with Delacroix's representation of Liberty Leading the People was satiric, especially as the revolution of 1830 was a victory for the "upper middle class."<sup>44</sup> In terms of France's revolutionary past, La Liberté functioned as the symbol of the failure of Republican promises of freedom and of the disillusionment on the left. This emphasis upon freedom by the militant left was different from the emphasis upon equality promoted by the Marxist socialists.

Also of great significance to the representation of women in a close relationship with class struggle was the artist, Grandjuoan's cover illustration, 1er mai (Fig. 8), for the April 28th, 1906 issue of L'Assiette au-Beurre. Clearly intended as propoganda for the new strategy of direct action called for by the Confédération Générale du Travail, (C.G.T.), the organized vehicle for the doctrine of Revolutionary Syndicalism, this representation of women functioned as a forceful symbol of the power of women in the context of class struggle and specifically in relation to the call for a general strike of 1906.<sup>45</sup>

Grandjouan chose the image of three females to personify the different 8-hour periods of a 24-hour day, in turn, to signify the eight hours of work, eight hours of leisure and eight hours of sleep demanded by the working class. Although transformed to serve the needs of the organized working class, the three females represented satirically allude to the Three Graces of classical myth and to the classical tradition of the French academy. The nude or semi-nude females are not degraded but are subtly eroticized by the placement of the garlands of flowers which surround the numeric "8" designated to each figure and which conceal and call attention to the genital area. These garlands functioned to connect these figures to the traditional seasonal fertility festivals which had their roots in ancient classical society and which were of significance in the May celebrations of the French peasant culture and in the contemporary organization of the rural workers in the class struggle.<sup>46</sup> Thus, in this image the female worker/reproducer was cleverly linked as a new cult figure through her described feminine "nature" and powerful status as goddess to both the class struggle of the industrialized proletariat and to rural labour. It was known in the 19th century, that while females dominated under matriarchal social systems in antiquity, by the classical period, patriarchal society superceded matriarchal society. Subsequently enslaved as a sexual object the female's power was related to the Western

ideal of beauty and reproductive capability, with women no longer being viewed as dominant either intellectually or<sup>47</sup> inspirationally.

In his effort to promote the cause of class struggle, in 1906, Grandjouan produced an illusion of female power by transforming the goddesses of classical myth into representations that referred to the working class in the period of monopoly capitalism. Grandjouan chose to effect this transformation by changing the details of the head and face of the figure on the left of the illustration to depict a female worker representing the 8 hours of "work." Although she is armed with a pick-axe to represent labour this image produces an illusion to the real situation of working women and physical labour. The position of women workers in France in relation to both physical labour and to the syndicates was somewhat problematic. While the participation of women in various sectors of industry was increasing, as was their presence in the syndicates, women were not highly visible in occupations requiring hard,<sup>44</sup> physical labour, nor in strike activity.

Grandjouan's portrayal of "leisure" in the 1er mai illustration is closer to the traditional classic nude. The gaze of this figure is indirect, her fair hair, long and flowing and her fair, smooth skin and youthful attractiveness add to the illusion of leisure. She functions as the symbol of the leisure time which the working class were denied.

While this figure, as an image of female beauty is seductive, the element of bourgeois enjoyment of her body as a male power fantasy is effectively blocked by the content of class struggle which this illustration projects in the changed form of the classical goddesses into symbols of class struggle.

The most realistic figure of the trio is the dark-haired image of "Sleep" whose deeply shadowed face is the least "beautiful" and whose partially draped figure is the least erotic. She functions more as a foil for the stereotype of leisure at center. These feminine forms, the pink blossoming garlands and blooms of the background tree almost obliterate the crowd of working class militants whose faces are represented as "ugly" which appear from behind the trio of females in colourless and mask-like form. Grandjouan has satirically replaced the image of the lower class women as "ugly" with classical beauties who function as active and inspirational leaders for the economic struggle of the French working class. Although the Revolutionary Syndicalists promoted the economic emancipation of women and were closer to the economic policies of the Marxist socialists in 1906, it was the reformist element that retained Proudhon's anti-feminist tendencies. Proudhon's influence was still felt by those male workers who saw female workers as a threat to male employment in the early 20th century. It was the Marxist socialists who were the advocates of the emancipation of women as sexual, economic and political equals. In fact,

socialist feminists separated their cause from that of the bourgeois feminists at the beginning of the 20th century over the issue of class difference. Socialist feminists promoted their struggle for equality within the structure of the socialist party where political, as well as sexual and economic equality was a possibility.<sup>49</sup> The images of women in L'Assiette au Beurre, as sexual victims of bourgeois institutions were counterposed to the illusion of power projected through their relationship to class struggle as members of the working class. This attempt to elevate the position of working class women pictured in the socialist popular press clashed with the female images in the dominant official culture where she was presented as a powerless object of bourgeois male power fantasy. However, in L'Assiette au Beurre female power functioned in relation to class struggle and working class females were neither strictly cult figures of goddesses nor were they "ugly" women.

Louis Chevalier has shown how the popular classes in France acquired the characterization of "ugly" in the 19th century and were described as inferior racially. This image of ugliness evolved from the need of the bourgeois to protect their privileged identity as "civilized."<sup>50</sup> In the 19th century, the labouring class was considered in the same context as the criminal element by the bourgeois.<sup>51</sup> As well, Chevalier explained that the lower classes were characterized

by the bourgeois as inferior with racist language such as the terms: ". . . 'barbares', 'sauvages', 'nomades', . . ." <sup>52</sup> The labouring class in the 19th century were identified as "ugly" and menacing through associations with people who were different and therefore of inferior racial origins.

Chevalier established that in the context of the early 19th century, although the imagery of popular culture appeared to refute this racist image, "Cette réfutation est une

<sup>53</sup> acceptance." Therefore, the lower classes began to identify with the racist image of inferiority foisted upon <sup>54</sup> them by the bourgeois.

The representation of working class women in the popular press, exemplified by L'Assiette au Beurre, in the early 20th century, refused the identity of "ugly" and uncivilized to express class difference. Instead, Grandjuoan satirically appropriated and transformed the dominant Western ideal of female beauty. In contrast, an official Salon work of art like the Orientalist image of La Joie Rouge, 1906, which operated within the classical tradition, retained this ideal of female beauty to exploit the concept of human difference. The dominant view of the female as a powerless object was rejected by L'Assiette au Beurre in relation to class struggle, while, as will be shown, in Rochegrosse's Orientalist portrayal, the female was pictured as racially primitive and humanly different.

The images produced by Matisse and Picasso in 1907, operated within these categories of constructed human difference. Matisse's The Blue Nude functioned as the traditional powerless female victim of Orientalist imagery whose racial and sexual difference was emphasized with distorted form, yet recognizably symbolic of the Western ideal of female beauty. Picasso's Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J. Version O), refused this traditional identification with the Western ideal of female beauty and passivity and were transformed through their distorted form into figures of aggression and power and appear to function in relation to class struggle. The "ugly" subjects produced by Matisse and Picasso are consciously or unconsciously transformed through the different attitude each artist had towards the concept of Primitivism and the dominant ideal of female beauty. It is within the tradition of Primitivism, as an ideological construction based on attitudes towards human difference that Neo-Orientalist paintings of female prostitutes must be studied.

The notion of human difference is central to Said's argument that the "main intellectual issue" of Orientalism is itself the concept of the division of humanity into categories of inferior and superior which are the very ideologies which support the relationships of power. Said's analysis of the power structures inherent in Orientalism pointed to the importance of categorizing humans into



divisions of race, sex and class.

He wrote:

For such divisions are generalities whose use historically and actually has been to press the importance of the distinction between some men and some other men, usually towards not especially admirable ends. 55

Linda Nochlin used Said's thesis to deconstruct 19th century Orientalist paintings to unveil the power structures implicit in these paintings by specifically examining the way in which images of women functioned. She considered the paintings to be significant ". . . as political documents at a time of particularly active military intervention in North Africa."<sup>56</sup> Nochlin's study reflected upon the conquest of Algeria by the French in the 19th century and the relationship of politics to culture in accordance with historical fact. She stated that:

. . . "Orientalism" itself in the visual arts is simply a category of obfuscation, masking important distinctions under the rubric of the picturesque, supported by the illusion of the real. 57

At the turn-of-the-century, the Colonial Ministry had made an official attempt to revive Orientalist painting through public exhibitions of Orientalist paintings from the 19th century.<sup>58</sup> In 1903, Camille Mauclair, a conservative critic, when confronted with the number of Orientalist paintings from the 19th century, lamented the lack of contemporary Orientalist paintings.<sup>59</sup> However, he did mention one contemporary artist with ties to both France's

Orientalist painting tradition and to French culture in North Africa, Georges Rochegrosse. Mauclair suggested that

Indirectly M. Rochegrosse may be connected with orientalism. Although he is only concerned with it from the point of view of history, he has placed many of his compositions into real Algerian landscapes. His beautiful and learned illustration to "Salambo," among others, has been faithfully reconstructed on the very spots where the war of the Mercenaries took place, and the artist has brought back from his annual visits to Algiers a number of vibrating studies which might take a place among the best of this epoch. 60

Mauclair, an avid supporter of the Impressionists as French traditionalists who had a classical respect for the human figure and colourful landscape, appreciated 19th century Orientalist painting for the same reasons. In addition, he praised Rochegrosse for his love of the Orient and considered him to be a crucial figure in the revival of Orientalist painting with its colonial content which, in the context of the 20th century, indirectly supported neo-colonialism. He stressed the importance of this artist who pictured France's colonial territory in North Africa in the form of history painting, the highest category of the French academic tradition. Rochegrosse's ability to fuse Orientalist and history painting prompted Mauclair to describe Rochegrosse as

. . . an important representative of a forsaken branch of painting, which he revives, infusing into it a strange vitality enamoured of luxury and blood. 61

La Joie Rouge, the painting by Georges Rochegrosse, made a dramatic impact at the 1906 spring Salon des Artistes

Français. The subject of the painting, the classical theme of rape, was presented in an Orientalist style. Under the guise of a history painting, La Joie Rouge functioned in relation to French neo-colonialism in the early 20th century. This relationship can be clarified by deconstructing the strategies of Western bourgeois male power inherent in 19th century Orientalist painting, which centered on the image of the nude female in the context of the early 20th century. It was J. P. Crespelle, who, in 1966 commented upon Rohegrosse's affinity with the 19th century French Orientalist tradition and his connection with North Africa. Situating the artist in this context, Crespelle noted that Rohegrosse's specialty was "le nu sensuel" and that he followed Delacroix's lead in the imaginative presentation of a "rahat-lokoum." Crespelle pictured Rohegrosse as "un maniaque de la reconstitution historique." who, as Gerome<sup>62</sup> before him, had travelled in North Africa. In her study, Nochlin found Gerome's realism as a visual interpretation wherein ". . . the Near East existed as an actual place to be mystified with effects of realness . . ."<sup>63</sup> On the other hand she explained Delacroix's Romantic Orientalism as a depiction of the Near East's existence

. . . as a project of the imagination, a fantasy space or screen onto which strong desires--erotic, sadistic or both--could be projected with impunity. 64

Nochlin suggested that it was these fantasies ". . . of forbidden passions--the artist's own fantasies . . ." which

revealed ". . . the contemporary Frenchmen's power over women. . . ." This power, according to Nochlin, was ". . . both controlled and mediated by the ideology of the erotic in Delacroix's time."<sup>65</sup> A power by which by which the enjoyment of the female body was produced through their very destruction, which Nochlin suggested was the function of Delacroix's Death of Sardanapalus, 1827-1828.<sup>66</sup> Nochlin connected this Western male power fantasy, in which the artist's sexual access to his model's body was related to male violence, to class values.<sup>67</sup>

La Joie Rouge is a graphic vision of a male power fantasy in the form of an academic history painting which functioned in relation to the dominant culture in France in 1906. The subject is a violent, murderous rape yet, through its classical references and Orientalist style the painting avoids explicit allusion to the issues of French domestic and foreign policy, such as class struggle and neo-colonialism, the message of racial, sexual and class dominance is concealed within its form and content.

Rochgrosse's subject, of violent male enjoyment of female flesh made specific references to traditional representations of women. The portrayal of this subject promoted French classicism's debt to Poussin, recalling Poussin's painting, The Rape of the Sabine Women, c. 1636. The voluptuous reclining nude in the lower right corner of La Joie Rouge recalls Titian's nude in his painting,

Bacchanal, c.1518, and evokes French classicism's debt to the 16th century Italian Renaissance tradition of paintings of female nudes for wealthy, powerful male patrons. At the same time, Rohegrosse's style is Orientalist and implies an indirect reference to North Africa. In Rohegrosse's painting, a group of males mounted on horseback, violently overpower a group of nude women. The males are themselves clothed in Roman battle attire in contrast to the females who are entirely nude. The single traditional reclining nude is sprawled suggestively in the lower right corner of the canvas where her entire form can easily be enjoyed by the spectator. The males wear grins of pleasure as the women's blood flows from the violent struggle and mingles with the profusion of exotic blossoms. As Nochlin has explained, this ". . . display of naked, powerless women to clothed, powerful men-- in a variety of guises, . . ." was a typical 19th century Orientalist painting strategy symbolic of male power of which the ultimate in male domination was the fantasy of "sexual pleasure and murder." <sup>68</sup> Rohegrosse, applying these strategies, has emphasized female inferiority through the display of female nudity without directly distorting the flesh of his live models. These women are intended to be viewed as passive victims whose sexual difference is understood in terms of their racial primitiveness constructed as an affinity with the lush, natural forms of the landscape. While overt references to class struggle and neo-colonialism

are absent from the painting they are concealed in the expression of the Roman military power of the males who represent the epitome of Western civilization, dominated by white, bourgeois heterosexual males. Their dominant position is reinforced by the inference of the natural inferiority of the female who was both racially and sexually different. The Orientalism of La Joie Rouge, in spite of the avoidance of direct reference to North Africa, can be understood through Said's thesis. Said has effectively explained how "substitution and displacement" work as Orientalist strategies and

. . . in discussions of the Orient, the Orient is all absence, whereas one feels the Orientalist and what he says as presence; yet we must not forget that the Orientalist's presence is enabled by the Orient's effective absence. 69

Therefore, Rochegrosse's choice of a classical subject and Orientalist style acts to disguise the contemporary meaning of the painting and its function in relation to French neo-colonialism. As well, Nochlin has shown how these strategies of absence are inherent in 19th Century Orientalist painting.<sup>70</sup> In particular, it is through the representation of the female as primitively sexual, powerless victims which enhanced Western bourgeois male superiority.

The audiences receptive to La Joie Rouge in 1906 can be easily identified. Specifically, the painting attracted the attention and the approval of pro-colonialist, nationalist, commercial and official circles of French culture. As was

its usual practice, the Parisian newspaper, L'Illustration presented the spring Salon of the Société des Artistes Français with an extensive photographic display in the April 28, 1906 issue. This publication coincided with Grandjuoan's ler mai strike manifesto in L'Assiette au Beurre.

L'Illustration, reproduced La Joie Rouge in a double-paged, black and white photograph which would reach its international audience.<sup>71</sup> In contrast to L'Assiette au Beurre's satiric attack on French Republican values, and dominant, authoritarian societies worldwide, L'Illustration appealed to those values by providing the bourgeois and upper classes with up-to-date information on high society, fashion and politics on a global scale. Evident in numerous photographs and accompanying texts was the journal's pro-colonial point of view which emphasized the availability of rich resources and the potential markets which could be found in Africa. Proposals for the continued penetration of African territories and assurances of the success of government policies for native pacification were elementary to its pro-colonial thrust. To reassure its audience that the natives were in fact benefiting from neo-colonial enterprises photographic depictions of ritual, native tribal dances were used as proof that dancing natives were indeed happy natives! In this same way and in the same year, La Joie Rouge could serve to justify male chauvinism as a noble enterprise expressed in terms of a history painting which

masked its real contemporary message. This delusion of power, through the strategy of male fantasy would appeal to this readership as a counter-image to the illusions of female working class power depicted in the the socialist popular press.

Le Matin, a major nationalist Parisian daily, also played up the importance of La Joie Rouge. The review of the Salon was accompanied with alphabetical listings and a detailed map of the Salon to guide the viewing public to the exact locations of the exhibits. Thus, the public's efforts to find the painting were simplified--a simplification which was necessitated by the proliferation of art objects in this period. La Joie Rouge, was number 1,434 and its position in Room "33" was noted with deliberate care by the critic, Victor de Swarte. The painting of the bloody rape, particularly the violence, excited this critic and inspired him with its "powerful" imagery. He saw harmony in its composition where

. . . une chaude lumière aux reflets  
puissants fait vibrer les personnages qui  
occupent le haut de la toile; mouvements  
bien rythmés, harmonie soutenue dans cette  
sanglante chevauchée, bravo Rochegrosse! 72

Rochegrosse was awarded the Medal of Honour by the Salon and his official success and financial reward were solidified by the purchase of the painting by the state. <sup>73</sup> The victory of both the artist and the painting itself continued to be celebrated months later in Le Journal des Arts, the



publication of the commercial art dealer, Drouot. Published reviews by two different critics appeared June 9th and 13th. The initial article stressed the importance of the artist, Rochegrosse himself, in relation to the growing French cultural enterprises in Algeria. On June 9th, "L'Ecole Française d'Alger," an article by Yvanhoe Rambosson, expressed the view that Rochegrosse's value as a French artist was imparted by his role as a teacher--a role which was vital to the promotion and revival of Orientalist painting at that moment coincident to the neo-colonialist interests of the French state.

Rambosson concentrated on the character of the artist which was constructed as "noble" and he also emphasized Rochegrosse's contribution as an ". . . éducateur ardent et désintéressé." to the establishment of a new French Academy which competed with the Ecole des Beaux-Arts d'Alger.<sup>74</sup> The new school had a high enrollment of more than thirty students, most of whom were subsidized or only paid a small amount of the costs. This was compared with the more elitist Beaux-Arts which cost the French government 50,000 francs for only half a dozen students. The function of the new French school in Algeria was

. . . d'établir sur le territoire de notre belle colonie une sorte de Villa Medicis algérienne, dont le séjour serait des plus enviés. C'est vers ce but que marchent les fondateurs de l'oeuvre et M. Jonnart, gouverneur de l'Algerie, semble disposé à entrer dans leurs idées et à acquérir une

Villa où seraient admis les artistes  
désireux de se perfectionner hors de Paris  
et ailleurs qu'à Rome. 75

Moreover, the benefit of a teacher such as Rochemgrosse was related to his use of "le modèle vivant" and his interest in the landscape. This reform of French painting toward the use of the live model and the real landscape to produce a new generation of Orientalist painters was known to be ". . . chère à M. Dujardin-Beaumetz, notre sous-secrétaire d'Etat

76  
". . ." The new school founded by the artist, M. Druet, could, with state support, transform the Algerian capital into ". . . une sorte de Florence moderne." The school represented ". . . le rêve des jeunes orientalistes. . ." such as Rochemgrosse and was intended to encourage Orientalist  
77  
imagery. Thus, Rochemgrosse's interest in the female nude and the Algerian landscape suited the cultural policies of the French state's neo-colonialist effort.

The real significance of the painting itself was not mentioned in Le Journal des Arts until June 13th, in an article by Leopold Honoré, and then only in conjunction with Rochemgrosse's personal biography which described his ties to 19th century Orientalist painting, his academic rewards and his significance to the French territory of Algeria. Written under the title which contained only the name of the artist, "Rochemgrosse," without reference to the painting itself, Honoré praised the painting with his vivid description of its imaginative rendering of

. . . une horde de cavaliers qui passe furibonde, une horde grisée de sang, de carnage et se ruant frénétiquement, avec volupté, pour le seul plaisir de voir rouge et d'être l'avant-courrier du néant. Cette chevauchée est tragique, et Mars, tout en haut du groupe, en est le metteur en scène. Des lueurs d'incendie illuminent la nature en emoi, la trombe humaine passe, de l'ivresse est dans le regard de tous ces cavaliers fantastiques, de tous ces démons qui halètent et qui hurlent. Les chevaux se cabrent, hennissent, chevauchent dans les chairs palpitantes des femmes angoissées, éperdues dans le sang qui à flots, coule, parmi les fleurs toutes de pourpre épanouies. 78

Honoré was impressed by the large size of the painting and the imaginative freedom of the presentation of the subject as an historical reconstruction but avoided the contemporary significance of its Roman military analogy. His focus was centered upon Rochegrosse and the artist's significance to French culture as an important link to the 19th century Orientalist painters who were his teachers. This author delineated Rochegrosse's successful debut at the Salon of 1882, his subsequent receipt of many awards and medals, and the fact that many of his history paintings decorated numerous public buildings in the provinces and in Paris. By 1906, as Honoré pointed out, Rochegrosse had gained membership on the jury of the Société des Artistes Français and spent his winters at his own Algerian residence outside the colonial capital, at Djenan-Mériem at El Biar. Honoré accorded this artist's success to the fact that his brilliance drove him onto ". . . un idéal artistique encore

plus beau." which contributed to his technical abilities as "un virtuose de la couleur," and was enhanced by his imaginative and compositional skills. <sup>80</sup> Rochegrosse was described by Honoré as the archetype of the male creative genius for whom the expression of beauty was the primary impetus for his creativity.

This success did not surprise Louis Vauxcelles, a critic who is better known for the attention he paid to the avant-garde at this time. However, Vauxcelles also devoted himself to full coverage of the traditional Salons and published full-length illustrated books on the subject. He perceived that even in the Parisian milieu of artistic overproduction ". . . il était normal, qu'un artiste du mérite de M. Rochegrosse . . ." would be awarded the Medal of Honour at this Salon. Vauxcelles admired his technique but did not approve of the violent Roman analogy of male power. Vauxcelles did approve of the depiction of the female nudes. He wrote:

Son tableau, vaut par des qualités exceptionnelles, et souffre de défauts étonnants; l'oeuvre est confuse, dénuée d'unité, mais les morceaux y sont extraordinaires . . . c'est l'irruption de l'idée de meurtre et de viol dans l'idée de volupté paisible et amollie. 81

Instead of describing the painting himself, Vauxcelles quoted a negative description by a "M. Ravaisson" who had said that

". . . la Joie rouge, la joie du crime et de l'horreur . . . un magnifique prétexte imaginaire pour un homme qui a voulu peindre des femmes nues . . ." 82

Despite this critic's claims, there is more at stake in this painting than the excuse to paint nude females. Of importance is how these nude females are degraded and presented as victims of male violence and pleasure through the male enjoyment of their flesh and blood. As a history painting La Joie Rouge functioned to recall the ideals of order and clarity, the basis of French classicism adopted by the academic tradition, through its references to Poussin's violent version of the legendary rape of the Sabine women by the Romans. Rochemgrosse, however, did not limit his references to the violent actions of the males toward the females, posed here as a type of subhuman species, but highlighted the male warriors' enjoyment and pleasure in the violent sexual subjugation of the female nudes. This expression of enjoyment on the faces of the male aggressors could be shared by the male viewer and enhance his delusion of racial, sexual and class superiority. While Rochemgrosse has not made his females "ugly" in the manner in which Matisse and Picasso would, La Joie Rouge functioned in relation to the assumptions of human difference and Western bourgeois male dominance critical to the preservation of the values of the French Republic at the moment of domestic social unrest and nationalist crisis.

This concept of human difference was crucial to French hegemony in North Africa and to domestic control of social unrest in the period 1905-1908. Although Algeria was firmly

under the control of the Third French Republic in 1906,  
French domination of North Africa had its origins in the  
1830's when Algeria was occupied by French forces.<sup>83</sup> By the  
early 20th century, Algeria was considered to be an extension  
of France itself.<sup>84</sup> The emergence of French neo-nationalism  
on the extreme right at this time was a direct response to  
Germany's latest aggressive challenge to French Imperialist  
schemes of expansion into Africa.<sup>85</sup> In particular, Germany's  
intention to thwart French domination in North Africa by  
intervening in French plans to annex Morocco to its North  
African territory, fuelled French neo-nationalist feeling.  
The French intention of annexation of Morocco was crucial to  
French plans to penetrate into Africa and to unify their  
North African territory with West and Central Africa. Global  
competition for access to resource materials and markets put  
pressure on intensification of French hegemony in Africa.<sup>86</sup>  
The French Imperialist effort in North Africa, promoted  
through the colonial lobby, had the full support of the  
French military.<sup>87</sup> However, the tensions between France and  
Germany were further inflamed when the French succeeded in  
instituting a protectorate in Morocco in 1906.<sup>88</sup> Yet in  
France, neo-nationalist policies, which proposed increases in  
the use of military force in French colonial territories,  
were challenged by socialist deputies in open debates in the  
French parliament.<sup>89</sup>

The construction of categories of human difference played a role in domestic relations as well. The French Republic was faced with the possibility of civil war in the spring of 1907 when a spontaneous uprising of small land proprietors and the agricultural proletariat were joined by representatives of all segments of the population in the Midi who opposed the capitalist monopoly which had produced a serious economic crisis in the wine industry.<sup>90</sup> Socialist support for the uprising conflicted with official policies of repression. At the same moment when the French were employing brutal military means to control the indigenous uprisings in various regions of Africa these same forces participated in bloody massacres of French citizens in the south of France in the summer of 1907.<sup>91</sup>

Rationalization for the French Republican measures of repression to control the social uprisings in France and colonial unrest can be found in the racial theories of Gustave Le Bon. Le Bon's theories were founded on the premise of human difference and Said has succinctly described the importance of Le Bon's theories as follows:

Since the Oriental was a member of a subject race, he had to be subjected: it was that simple. The locus classicus for such judgment and action is to be found in Gustave Le Bon's Les Lois psychologiques de l'evolution des peuples (1894).<sup>92</sup>

Le Bon's early theories of human difference were based on anatomical studies of human skulls which led him to conclude that:

". . . what distinguishes inferior from superior races is not the slight variations in the average capacity of their skulls, . . . the superior race contains a certain number of individuals whose brain is highly developed, whereas the inferior race contains no such individuals . . . as a race grows civilized, the skulls . . . become more and more differentiated; . . . civilisation conduces not to intellectual equality, but to an inequality that is always growing more pronounced . . . Among inferior peoples or the inferior classes of superior peoples the man and the woman are intellectually on much the same level. . . in proportion as peoples grow civilised the difference between the sexes is accentuated." 93

According to Le Bon, the most civilized societies exhibited the greatest degrees of racial, sexual and class difference. Therefore, for Le Bon Parisian society exemplified the most civilized society and the female Parisian was described in the most barbaric terms.

"Whereas the average volume of the skulls of male Parisians is such as to range them among the largest known skulls, the average of the skulls of female Parisians classes them among the smallest skulls . . . on a level with the skulls of Chinese women, and scarcely above the feminine skulls of New Caledonia. 1" 94

Significantly Le Bon compared the high degree of civilization among the French, specifically the Parisian French with that of Roman civilization before its decline when attacked by barbarous peoples. This comparison between Roman and French civilization is central to an understanding of Rochegrosse's La Jolie Rouge where male chauvinism can be related to French neo-colonialist policies



in Africa and to the way in which women were valued in contemporary French culture. Said has explained that:

Race theory, ideas about primitive origins and primitive classifications, modern decadence, the progress of civilization, the destiny of the white (or Aryan) races, the need for colonial territories--all these were elements in the peculiar amalgam of science, politics, and culture whose drift, almost without exception, was always to raise a European race to dominion over non-European portions of mankind. 96

Le Bon's addition of his psychological theories to the earlier physical dimension as a means of dividing humanity, supported the notion of superiority of the French nation so necessary to French neo-colonialism. He believed that:

By the aid of clearly defined anatomical characteristics, such as the colour of the skin, and the shape and volume of the skull, it has been possible to establish that the human race comprises several species which are quite distinct and probably of very different origin . . . observation proves that the majority of the individuals of a given race always possess a certain number of common psychological characteristics, which are as stable as the anatomical characteristics . . . are regularly and constantly reproduced by hereditary . . . the national character. 97

As well, it was Le Bon who used his dehumanizing racial theories to specifically argue against the socialists desire for human equality. He suggested that:

Socialism . . . proposes equality of condition, without dreaming that social inequalities are born of those natural inequalities that man has always been powerless to change. 98

Le Bon rationalized the ideology of the racial superiority of the French nation through the masculine members of its privileged class who, like the Romans before them, were superior to other races, to women of their own class and to both sexes of the lower class. Le Bon identified this group with the Romans at the height of their power and warned of the threat from the "barbarians" in the guise of socialists who argued for human equality and respect for human difference.

Such arguments for human difference were integral to Orientalism which operated as an "intellectual doctrine" in support of racist practice through the construct of Primitivism as a negative characteristic of racial, sexual and class inferiority. It is terms of human difference that Orientalism and Primitivism have signification to an analysis of the ways in which the female was envisioned in the discourses of popular and official culture. For example, in L'Assiette au Beurre, when the female was imaged in relation to the dominant culture she was an inferior human, oppressed, anguished or deformed to suit the bourgeois male's needs. When imaged in relation to the struggle of the working class she was humanized on the level of class as an illusion relating to classical notions of beauty. Grandjouan's ler mai, was a satiric illusion constructed to disrupt the historic portrayal of the working class female as "ugly" and reject the negative connotation of Primitivism associated

with women and with the working class. This insertion of the content of class struggle removed the possibility of bourgeois male enjoyment in spite of the appropriation of the Western ideal of female beauty.

Roche-grosse's portrayal of primitivized females projected the image of the victimized female in relation to the dominant culture as suggested in the popular press, but unlike L'Assiette au Beurre, Roche-grosse avoided overt reference to class difference and class struggle. La Joie Rouge portrayed women as powerless sex objects whose nude forms were subjected to the violence of male pleasure. This delusion of Western bourgeois male power was reinforced through the degradation of the females by juxtaposing their nudity to the group of males dressed as warriors of legendary Rome. This delusion of racial, sexual and class superiority was ideologically important to the authority of the French Republic in its promotion of neo-colonialism and its opposition to socialist pressure for human emancipation.

The way in which the female was pictured as an "ugly" victim of bourgeois male power, or as a beautiful illusion of female power in relation to class struggle in the popular press differed from the delusion of bourgeois male power presented in official culture. In turn this reveals the different ideologies from which an image of woman was constructed in the early 20th century. The question which remains to be answered is how the Neo-Orientalist paintings

by the Parisian avant-garde artists, Matisse and Picasso-- images in which the female figure is overtly distorted through the concept of Primitivism-- could function in relation to the issues of class struggle and neo-colonialism as expressed by popular and official culture. At a moment when attitudes towards neo-colonialism and class struggle were increasingly defined by class difference influencing French foreign and domestic policy, class difference over the issue of nationalism, had divided the French feminist movement itself. The intended meaning of the "ugly" female prostitutes of The Blue Nude and Les Demoiselles d'Avignon must be clarified in recognition of the fact that the representation of the prostitute as "primitively" seductive and dominated or aggressive and resistant to domination was ideologically constructed. The "ugly" women are symbolic of different attitudes towards the concept of Primitivism and are therefore of social significance both to class struggle and neo-colonialism at a moment of national and international crisis in French history.

## NOTES

1

Marilyn J. Boxer and Jean H. Quataert, eds. Socialist Women: European Socialist Feminism in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries (New York: Elsevier, 1978), 84. See also *Ibid.*, 110, note 21.

2

R.D. Anderson, France 1870-1914: Politics and Society (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), 1-3.

3

Edward McNall Burns, Western Civilizations: Their History and Their Culture, 8th ed., (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1973), 571.

4

*Ibid.*, 557.

5

R.D. Anderson, France 1870-1914, 96-97.

6

Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 207.

7

Annie Kriegel, Le Pain et les Roses (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), 51-53. See also: Paul Louis, Les Etapes du Socialisme, (Paris: Bibliothèque Charpentier, 1903), 328-331.

8

Jean-Marie Mayeur and Madeleine Réberlioux, eds., The Third Republic from its Origins to the Great War, 1871-1914, trans. J.R. Foster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 248-249, explained how the general strike of May 1, 1906, had both national and international implications, vividly indicating the situation of widespread social unrest in France. Although the driving force behind the working class action was the CGT (Confédération Générale du Travail), an apolitical working class movement organized on a national structure of federations, there was support from the S.F.I.O. (Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière) the avant-garde French socialist movement, which was a political party connected to the internationalist socialist cause. This action on the part of the industrial working class in support of an eight-hour work day was an important expression of working class action. Georges Lefrance, Le Mouvement Syndical sous la Troisième République (Paris: Payot, 1967), 145, stated that the elections for members to the Chamber of Deputies in the French parliament of May 6th and 20th, 1906

increased socialist representation dramatically. R. D. Anderson, France 1870-1914, 134, stated that the repressive and violent measures taken by the French government in using French military troops against the strikers influenced the vote in the 1906 elections in which the S.F.I.O. had "877,000 votes and fifty-four seats;" in the election of 1906.

9

Ibid., 121.

10

Mayeur and Réberieux, The Third Republic, 306-307.

11

Ibid., 267.

12

R.D. Anderson, France 1870-1914, 114-115.

13

Mayeur and Réberieux, The Third Republic, 251-252, have described how the disorder in the Midi region in the south of France, from March to June 1907, engaged "the agricultural proletariat" in a revolt of spontaneous action against the large industrialized winegrowers. The involvement of the rural proletariat in this spontaneous uprising was supported by the CGT and the S.F.I.O. The region relied on the economy of the wine industry, an economy which was being threatened not only by large monopoly industries but also by competition from the increased production of the Algerian wine industry. Thus neo-colonialist enterprises had a direct effect on the stability of the French rural population in the south of France, whose involvement in the uprising was counteracted by French military force and bloodshed.

14

Elisabeth and Michel Dixmier, L'Assiette au Beurre: Revue satirique illustrée 1901-1912 (Paris: Librairie Francois Maspero, 1974), 9.

15

Ibid., 106-108.

16

Lefranc, Le Mouvement Syndicale, 98.

17

Paul Louis, Histoire du Socialisme en France de la Révolution à nos Jours, (Paris: Librairie des Sciences Politiques et Sociales, 1925), 146-147 explained how Proudhon's recognition of the working class as a distinct social group was basic to his concept of syndicalism in which

the syndicate was formed by a group of workers who were united for mutual social and economic benefit. The organization was dependant upon individual initiative and not upon political allegiance. Proudhon's concept of class struggle as an economic struggle was directed towards manual labourers and ran counter to subsequent orthodox Marxist doctrine's method of collective action and its ultimate aim of political organization of the working class which was not confined to manual workers.

Louis S. Feuer (ed.), Marx & Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1959), 35-36 referred to the original writings of Marx and Engels wherein they differentiated their theory of socialism and communism from that of Proudhon. Proudhon's socialism was condemned by them as "conservative bourgeois socialism" in The Communist Manifesto of 1848. Feuer, *Ibid.*, quoted from the Manifesto as follows: "A part of the bourgeoisie is desirous of redressing social grievances, in order to secure the continued existence of bourgeois society . . . To this section belong economists, philanthropists, humanitarians, improvers of the condition of the working class, organisers of charity, members of societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, temperance fanatics, hole-and-corner reformers . . . We may cite Proudhon's Philosophie de la Misère . . . as an example of this form . . . The socialism of the bourgeoisie simply consists of the assertion that the bourgeois are bourgeois--for the benefit of the working class."

Paul Louis, Les-Etapes du Socialisme, 221, who was moved to write on this subject more than fifty year later, perceived that the historic polemic between Marx and Proudhon continued to be problematic for the unity of the French left. Louis wrote: "Proudhon se classe entre les socialistes, par les notions qu'il a apportées au corps de doctrines du XIXe siècle; dans le domaine pratique, il demeure un individualiste, un conservateur petit bourgeois.--En vérité Marx avait raison."

18

Louis, Histoire du Socialisme, 148-149. Louis, *Ibid.*, 149 quoted from Proudhon's Capacité des classes ouvrières: ". . . La révolution, qui reste à faire, consiste à substituer le régime économique ou industriel au régime gouvernemental, féodal ou militaire. Par régime industriel, nous entendons non pas une forme de gouvernement où les hommes adonnés aux travaux de l'agriculture et de l'industrie deviendraient à leur tour caste dominante, mais une constitution de la société ayant pour base, à la place de la hiérarchie des pouvoirs politiques, l'organisation des pouvoirs économiques . . ." This conflict affected the relationship between the CGT and the S.F.I.O. because of the

divisions over aim and method. Lefranc, Le Mouvement Syndicale, 138, has described the situation at the Congress of Amiens, held by the CGT from October 8-14, 1906. The result of the Congress was a clear mandate supporting the autonomy and apolitical status of the syndicates.

Thus recorded in the published transcript of the minutes of the S.F.I.O. Third National Congress, at Limoges, November 1st to 4th, 1906, 201-202, is the fact that the motion to acknowledge the autonomous apolitical organization of the working class in the CGT was passed by the S.F.I.O. after much opposition from the Guesdists. (The Guesdists were the followers of the French Marxist socialist Jules Guesde.) The acceptance of the Amiens motion following an intense series of debates was the result of majority support for the concept of "double-action" on the economic and political fronts as an essential compromise for cooperation between the two groups. Jean Maitron, Histoire du Mouvement Anarchiste en France 1880-1914 (Paris: Société Universitaire D'Editions et de Librairie, 1955), 310, outlined the importance of the Amiens congress for the Revolutionary Syndicalist movement.

19

Jean Maitron, Ravachol et les Anarchistes (Paris: Collection archives, Julliard, 1964), 14-18 provided the reasons for and described the process by which the anarchists entered the syndicates after the years, 1890-1894 when the bombings by individual anarchist extremists failed to effect social change. Maitron indicated that the adoption of Bakunin's method of "direct action" was contrary to socialist parliamentarism. Maitron, *Ibid.*, 19, explained how the economic, apolitical corporate structure of the syndicates was considered to be the ideal vehicle for the new method of collective action by the militant anarchists. Annie Kriegel Les Internationales Ouvrières (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964), 26-27, explained how Marx had won the battle against Bakunin's libertarian, anti-authoritarian notion of autonomous worker federations at the level of the International Workingmen's Association before its demise in the post-Commune repression. Insisting on a centralized political party authority, Marx refuted Bakunin's revision of Proudhon's non-violent anti-statism into a method of violent action and secret organization. This was counter to the economic and political organization of the proletariat in Marxist terms. Bakunin's death in 1874 did not deter the militant revolutionary syndicalists from adopting his methods as a means of social revolution and to view socialist politicians as collaborators of the elected bourgeois radicals at the turn-of-the-century.

Claude Willard, Les Guesdistes: Le Mouvement Socialiste en France (1893-1905) (Paris: Editions Sociale, 1965), 12 and 17. Willard, *Ibid.*, 12, documented how Marxist doctrine was introduced into France by Jules Guesde and



Paul Lafargue through their knowledge of The Communist Manifesto and Capital. The Communist Manifesto by Marx and Engels, 1848, was translated into French by Laura Lafargue and published in L'Égalité, 1882. Alexandre Zévaès, De L'Introduction du Marxisme en France (Paris: Librairie Marcel Rivière et Cie, 1947), 38, described how Marx's Capital was translated into French by Joseph Roy in 1872 and published in booklets which sold for 10 centimes by 1875.

Louis, Histoire du Socialisme, 252, has indicated that the influence of the French socialists can be discerned in the national worker federations of 1876, 1878 and 1879. The Paris Congress of 1876 was the first meeting of the working class where the French proletariat were organized on the basis of a separate class with distinct political concerns. See also: Willard, Les Guesdistes, 12 and Georges Lefranc, le mouvement socialiste sous la troisième république, Vol. I, (Paris: petite bibliothèque payot, 1977), 29. Louis, Histoire du Socialisme, 254, outlined the fact that the Congress of Marseilles in October, 1879 adopted a motion supporting class struggle. Boxer and Quataert, Socialist Women, 77-78 explained that at this founding meeting of the Parti ouvrier français (P.O.F.), and included in the policy of Jules Guesde and Paul Lafargue, who had collaborated directly with Marx and Engels, there was a call for economic and sexual equality for all workers. See also Lefranc: le mouvement socialiste, 39-41, and Willard, Les Guesdistes, 18. Maitron, Ravachol et les Anarchistes, 12, has outlined how the socialists had separated themselves from the anarchists as early as 1881.

20

"Pornographie," Supplement, L'Assiette au Beurre, October 28, 1905, No. 239. The execution of this ban was made possible through the sanction of official authority bestowed upon Senator René Bérenger, the director of the state-sponsored League for the Repression of Street Licences. Justification for this act of censorship was encoded in the law of 1898 which defined as pornographic ". . . une publication obscène ou contraire aux bonnes mœurs." Under this law, the penalty for either the production or sale of material defined as pornographic was a fine of 5,000 francs and two years imprisonment.

The artists defended their right to publish illustrations such as the banned image by Poulbot, La Graine du Boi du Lit in this special supplement of October 28th, 1905. They insisted that Poulbot's image, of a couple who were engaged in sexual intercourse while completely concealed by bedclothes, was meant as a humorous portrayal of the guaranteed misery into which a working class child would be born. The image showed another young child in the grey, colourless, crowded room which appears to symbolize the colourless world of working class reality. The artists

protested the label of pornography for the depiction of class difference and accused the censors of hypocrisy for their claims of morality when the censors own bourgeois values permitted the portrayal of violence and drunkenness without censorship. The artists protested their identity with the criminal element in society due to the severity of punishment for their attempts at free expression. The artists of L'Assiette au Beurre believed that Poulbot's image was censored strictly because it showed the existent social inequities and gave visible recognition to the increasing numbers of the working class--an image that threatened the status quo of the bourgeois. Louis Chevalier, Classes Laborieuses et Classes dangereuses à Paris, pendant la première moitié du XIXe siècle. (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1978), 604-606, has documented the process by which the French proletariat shared an identity with the criminal element of society as sub-human, an image expressed through the culture of the bourgeoisie which saw itself as superior.

Jean Rabaut, Histoire des féminismes français (Paris: Stock, 1978), 256-257, has shown that the leading socialist politicians, unlike many anarchists, were not in favour of neo-Malthusian efforts toward contraception as a method of population control--control aimed at the lower classes. Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 128, has made a study of the power relationships inherent in human sexuality. His analysis of the class structure of sexuality reveals the hegemony of the bourgeoisie in the regulation of sexual behaviour by institutionalizing differences in sexual practice in relation to systems of law and taboos.

"Les Masques de L'Assiette au Beurre," Supplement, L'Assiette au Beurre, February 17, 1906, (No. 255), 3, is an article which clearly indicates how the repressive policies of the censors had forced the artists into an organization based on the strategy of collective action. The formation of the League for the Liberty of Art was announced and ostensibly it was reported to have a membership of 500 artists, writers and intellectuals. It is important to note that the definition of class was problematic for the left and took two definitive directions in 1907. For example, Hubert Lagardelle, "Les Intellectuels et le Socialisme Ouvrier," Le Mouvement Socialiste, 1907, (January - June, 1907), 112, stated that: "Une classe est une catégorie d'hommes placés sur le même plan économiques et unis par des intérêts matériels et moraux homogènes." In contrast, the Marxist Jules Guesde, as recorded in the minutes of the 4th National Congress of the S.F.I.O., at Nancy, August 11th-14th, 1907, 496, insisted that: ". . .le prolétariat n'est pas limité à ce que vous prétendez, c'est qu'il embrasse toutes les activités, les plus cérébrales comme les plus musculaires, ingénieurs, chimistes, savants de toute nature

de venus eux aussi de la chair à profits, et en mesure d'assurer le fonctionnement de la production supérieure demain . . . Ouvert de droit à tous ceux qui travaillent du bras ou du cerveau, le Parti Socialiste est essentiellement un parti de classe, plus complet que ne peut l'être le Syndicat lui-même."

21

R.D. Anderson, France 1870-1914, 3.

22

"Images Morales," L'Assiette au Beurre, March 17, 1906.

23

Ibid.

24

Ibid.

25

Ibid.

26

Ibid.

27

Ibid.

28

Alain Corbin, Les filles de noce: misère sexuelle et prostitution (19e et 20e siècles) (Paris: Aubier Montagne, 1978), 436 and 465-468. Bérenger was a conservative member of the senate who was implicated in the passing of laws of repression with respect to public morality and the punishment of offenders. He was a favourite target of the popular press due to his position as a public authoritarian figure. The regulation of the visibility of public prostitution was his main concern and he was not interested in the eradication of the institution of prostitution itself. "Les Masques de L'Assiette au Beurre," Supplement, L'Assiette au Beurre, February 17, 1906, 3, described Senator Bérenger as "l'ancien procurer impérial."

29

"Images Morales," L'Assiette au Beurre, March 17, 1906.

30

Corbin, Les filles de noce:, 420-421.

31

Ibid., 353. Corbin, Ibid, 354, has explained how the bourgeois image of the prostitute was that of a woman of

leisure and prostitution was not considered to be work by the bourgeois.

32

Abraham Flexner, Prostitution in Europe (New York: The Century Co., 1914), 63. The majority of Parisian prostitutes were from rural France or from other countries. Ibid., 73. Pierre L. Horn and Mary Beth Pringle, eds., The Image of the Prostitute in Modern Literature (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1984), 24, have discussed the ways in which prostitutes transformed their image and often assumed the disguise of respectable working class women to entice and arouse the bourgeois male client who hoped to escape the diseased professional and enjoy a male power fantasy. Corbin, Les filles de noce, 417, described the importance of Paris train stations as recruitment areas for young rural girls into prostitution, and The White Slave Trade.

33

Ibid., 345, note 92. Corbin, Ibid., cited from Pierre Joseph Proudhon's Oeuvres Complètes, "La pornocratie," 372-374. Louis, Histoire du Socialisme, 66-67, has pointed out the role of the Utopian socialists in the recognition of the inferior position of the labouring classes and women in the new social order of the 19th century. Saint-Simon identified the social relations produced by industrial progress and privileges of property as the basic causes of social inequities. Boxer and Quataert, Socialist Women, 8, have explained that recognition of the need to elevate the position of women in society was basic to Saint Simon's social critique. Albert Brimo, les femmes françaises face au pouvoir politique (Paris: Editions Montchrestien, 1975), 16, stated that it was Fourier who coined the term "feminism" to advocate the special status of women and their need for emancipation from their oppressed state. S. Debout, Charles Fourier: Théorie des Quatre Mouvements et des Destinées Générales (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, Editeur, 1967) 157, recorded Fourier's plans (which were ultimately impractical) for social harmony. As Pauvert shows here, Fourier had blamed the inferior position of "le sexe faible" on the sexual restraints imposed by the threat of venereal disease, the Catholic religion and the illusion which made their status seem favourable when compared with the degradation afforded to barbarian women. An illusion which produced a ". . . teinte de bonheur sur la condition moins déplorable des femmes civilisées." Thus, Fourier's well-known claim, Ibid., 147, that ". . . l'extension des privilèges des femmes est le principe général de tous progrès sociaux."

Brimo, les femmes, 20, discussed Proudhon's anti-feminist position which confined women to their domestic role within marriage and family--a bourgeois viewpoint. As well,

Brimo pointed out, *Ibid.*, 46-47, that Proudhon not only denied women the opportunity for economic independence but denied them their right to political equality. He saw the possibility of their political independence as a threat to bourgeois marriage and to their husband's virility.

34

Feuer, Marx & Engels, 25-26. Marx and Engels, *Ibid.*, defined the exploitation of women as public and private prostitutes was the result of bourgeois marriage which was based on the preservation of the system of private property and inheritance and encouraged adulterous relations. Eleanor Burke Leacock, ed., The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State by Frederick Engels, 2nd ed., (New York: International Publishers, 1973), 137, quoted Engels' view of patriarchal monogamous family structures as ". . . the open or concealed domestic slavery of the wife, . . ." ensured by her economic dependence.

35

Boxer and Quataert, Socialist Women, 84.

36

Mink as quoted by Boxer and Quataert, Socialist Women, 84. The entire quote read as follows: "'Exploited as labor, just as her male companion in misery, instrumental in the reduction of men's wages--for the leader's of industry tell her cruelly that she can use her sex to complement her notoriously inadequate wages--the working woman is also exposed to every kind of obsession and tyranny. 'Chair à travail, 'she is also 'chair à plaisir!'" Louis, Histoire du Socialisme, 262, explained that from its inception the P.O.F., under the direction of the Marxist socialists Jules Guesde and Paul Lafargue, had included the economic and sexual equality of all workers in the party program of 1880.

37

Jacques Girault, ed., Paul Lafargue: Textes Choisis (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1970), 124-125. According to Girault, Lafargue wrote in the style of the pamphleteer and his Le droit à paresse was published in Guesde's L'Égalité in 1880 and has since been continuously republished. It is a Marxist critique of capitalism in which Lafargue explored the negative effect of work and abstinence as destructive forces acting upon the "flesh" of the working class. As well, he pictured the bourgeois male as increasingly victimized by the need to consume the products for which he had driven the working class to overproduce. In Girault's publication of the article in Paul Lafargue, 124-125, Lafargue wittily showed how "Aujourd'hui il n'est fils de parvenu qui ne se croit tenu de développer la prostitution and de mercerialiser

son corps pour donner un but au labour que s'imposent les ouvriers des mines de mercure;. . ." Feuer, Marx & Engels, 13, quoted The Communist Manifesto in which this process of self-destruction is clearly outlined: ". . . not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons--the modern working class--the proletarians."

38

Elisée Reclus, L'Evolution, La Révolution et L'Idéal Anarchique (Paris: P.-V. Stock, Editeur, 1902), 12-13. Reclus *Ibid.*, wrote: "Ainsi quand nous voyons une femme pure de sentiments, noble de caractère, intacte de tout scandale devant l'opinion, descendre vers la prostituée et lui dire: 'Tu es ma soeur; je viens m'allier avec toi pour lutter contre l'agent des moeurs qui t'insulte et met la main sur ton corps, contre le médecin de la police qui te fait appréhender par des argousins et te viole par sa visite, contre la société toute entière qui te méprise et te foule aux pieds'. . . "

39

Theodore Zeldin, France 1848-1945: Politics and Anger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 334.

40

*Ibid.*, 209.

41

R.D. Anderson, France 1870-1914, 25-26.

42

"La Liberté," L'Assiette au Beurre, April 14, 1906. Georges Lefranc, Le Syndicalisme en France (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966), 130-131 has explained that: "En décembre (1905), 22 anti-militaristes, dont les syndicalistes Bousquet et Pataud, sont condamnés a des peins variant de 4 a 6 mois de prison pour avoir signé une affiche aux conscrits. En janvier 1906, lorsque se réunit la conférence d'Algésiras, la C.G.T. fait apposer une affiche: Guerre a la guerre": elle publie en février un numéro spécial de la Voix du peuple sur les Conseils de révision tire a 30,000 exemplaires; il est saisi à l'imprimerie et entraîne un debut de poursuite contre Griffuelhes et Pouget, ainsi que contre le dessinateur Grandjouan; la police a saisi les bandes abonnées; de mars a août, Yvetot est incarcéré."

43

E. Laporte, L'Assiette au Beurre, April 14, 1906.

44

R.D. Anderson, France 1870-1914, 1.

1er mai, L'Assiette au Beurre, April 28, 1906.

Lefranc, Le Syndicalisme, 20-21, explained that the concept of the general strike as a means of "direct action" was first proposed at the workers' Congress of the Federation of the Syndicates in February, 1888, in spite of the fact that there was a large faction of Guesdistes in attendance who were fundamentally opposed to the strike as a method for social revolution. Maitron, Ravachol et les Anarchistes, 121, wrote that the strike was propagated as a tactic of direct action by the militant woodcutter, Tortelier. Maitron also established, *Ibid.*, 127, that Tortelier was a member of the Woodworkers Syndicate. Lefranc, Le Syndicalisme, 20-21, concluded that Guesde did not approve of the general strike as a realistic method for social revolution. According to Lefranc, Guesde considered its effectiveness in this respect as "un mirage trompeur." However, as Louis, Histoire du Socialisme, 274, has shown, the strike was adopted as a method of international action by the working class at the Marxist International Socialist Congress at Paris in 1889, with the support of the French Marxists, who helped to draft the text. The purpose of the strike was to reduce the working day to 8 hours and was copied from the American Federation of Labor who had agreed on the date of May 1st, 1890. Louis further stated, *Ibid.*, 275, that in France, the strikes of 1890 and 1891 had resulted in acts of violent repression on the part of the authorities and arrests and deaths of the strikers and of small children were abhorrent to the non-violent Marxist socialists. In contrast, by legal elections, there were fifty socialists elected to the French parliament by 1893.

Jolyon Howorth, Edouard Vaillant: La Création de l'unité Socialiste en France (Paris: edi/Syros, 1982) 198, commented upon the significance of regional popular festivals for the ultimate unification and political organization of the French urban and rural class in relation to the 1890 and 1891 International structure of the May 1st strike date.

Paul Lafargue, The Right to be Lazy and other studies Trans. by Charles H. Kerr, (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company co-operative, 1907), 128-131 argued "On The Woman Question," that the female's inferior social position began under the classical system of patriarchy where she was deprived of the opportunity for her intellectual development--the quality for which she had been admired under ancient matriarchal society.

Ibid., 134-136. Lafargue blamed the introduction of capitalism, the economic system of the bourgeois, for the difficult social and economic conditions under which the contemporary working class female worked as producer and reproducer.

Madeleine Guilbert, Les Femmes et l'Organisation Syndicale avant 1914 (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1966), 12-13, studied the relationship of working women and the syndicates in France based on statistics from 1866-1911. Women continued to dominate the industries traditionally open to female labour, the textile and fabric industries, their numbers increased due to the mechanization achieved by the 20th century. In 1906, 55 per cent of the labour in the textile industry and 88 per cent in the fabric industry was provided by women. Industries where they participated the least were those requiring the most physical exertion, the construction, metallurgy and mining industries. There were large numbers of women employed as domestic servants. Guilbert, Ibid., 15, also established that women were increasingly active in professions, commercial enterprises and professional industries. Specifically, the number of women working in the following industries tripled from 1866-1911: rubber, paper and cardboard, metals and chemicals. The food industry was an increasingly large employer of female workers.

Guilbert's study, Ibid., 18, documented the fact that women's wages were as much as one-half to one-third lower than their male counterparts. According to Guilbert, Ibid., 20, their lower wages and their ability to perform mechanized tasks favoured their employment and in some cases they replaced male workers. Female workers were preferred in small industries such as fabric and food, especially in the Paris area. Where physical strength and knowledge of machinery was important such as metallurgy, male workers were given preference.

Guilbert, Ibid., 25, pointed out that female unemployment was less problematic than male unemployment where the highest unemployment was in the following male-dominated areas: construction, stonework, metalwork, wood industries, leather and skins, followed by the female-dominated fabric and food industries. By 1906, while mechanization had changed the conditions of the labour structure in favour of the employment of women in industries previously dominated by men, the salaries of female workers were very much lower.

As Guilbert's study shows, Ibid., 432-433, there were male workers who organized to resist the inroads made by female workers in traditionally male-dominated industries. Strikes by male syndicalists against the employment of women lessened as women's participation in the syndicates increased. Female membership in the syndicates tripled



between 1900-1914 in spite of male opposition in certain areas. There were few women activists in the strikes and the problems of women workers were not considered important and were rarely included in the agenda of the many congresses which were dominated by Revolutionary Syndicalists. Guilbert does suggest, Ibid. 406, that several of the militant leaders were interested in the economic emancipation of women workers and spoke out as individuals.

49

Boxer and Quataert, Socialist Women, 95, explained how Socialist unity had an effect upon the feminist movement which was divided by the issue of class. Socialist feminists viewed bourgeois feminists as exploiters of working class women--they "exploited their maids." Boxer and Quataert, Ibid., 96-97, discuss how these differences took on a public character in 1902 when bourgeois feminists ". . . sponsored by a clerical, nationalist party, announced their forthcoming participation in an electoral campaign, . . ." Socialist feminists responded with a request for a public debate on the issue of class difference within the feminist movement as follows: "'Members of the bourgeois class and thus beneficiaries of the present social order which guarantees your privileges . . . you have come forth to defend the right to parasitism which society affords you . . ." The bourgeois feminists refused the debate. Socialist feminists, unable to join the newly formed S.F.I.O. as an autonomous group in 1905, were subsumed within the party itself.

Although women did not have the vote this was a major step for the Socialist feminists who now had the opportunity to effect emancipation in political terms and the competition between the sexes became secondary to class antagonism. Paul Lafargue's text "On the Woman Question" of 1904, condensed and published under the title "La Femme" in L'Humanité on August 14th, 1906, was a plea for female emancipation in recognition of class struggle. His critique provided a definition of class difference and the double oppression of petit bourgeois and working class women. Calling for cooperation between the sexes he believed that ". . . la fin de la servitude féminine, qui commence avec la constitution de la propriété privée et qui ne peut prendre fin qu'avec son abolition."

As stated in the minutes of the 3rd National Congress of the S.F.I.O. at Limoges, November 1st - 4th, 1906, 150-151, Madeleine Pelletier, a prominent 20th century feminist was thus able to introduce the following resolution: "Considérant que déjà en 1891 le Conseil international de Bruxelles invitait les socialistes de tous les pays à affirmer énergiquement, dans leur programme, l'égalité complète des deux sexes et à abroger les lois qui mettent la femme en dehors du droit commun et public; Considérant que, depuis, le Parti socialiste s'est toujours, dans la question

des sexes, prononcé dans ce sens; Le Congrès national déclare légitime et urgente l'extension du suffrage universel aux femmes et charges les élus du parti de présenter dans ce sens, autant que possible cette année, un projet loi à la Chambre." Thus, recorded in the minutes of the 4th National Congress of the S.F.I.O. at Nancy, August 11th - 14th, 1907, 536, is the acceptance of the above resolution and its official adoption by the party upon motion.

The question of class was an issue in the International Suffragate movement as well. The conservative Parisian Le Temps used the suffragate movement as an opportunity to criticize socialism. Pointing to the fact that female suffragates were from the noble, bourgeois and working class it was suggested on June 15, 1906 that: "Ce simple fait ne montre-t-il pas l'insuffisance de la conception matérialiste de l'histoire d'ou découle la doctrine socialiste?" On the other hand Jean Longuet's article "Féminisme et Socialisme," in the L'Humanité of June 19, 1907, explained the necessity of working class feminist action. He quoted an English suffragate who had spoken to a Paris audience as a woman of the proletariat as follows: "'Pour nous, il n'y a pas lutte de sexe, mais lutte des classes. C'est pour et par le socialisme qu'avec des milliers d'ouvrières anglaises nous luttons pour les droits politiques des femmes." Longuet, indicated his total agreement, and concluded that "Cette pénétration du mouvement féministe parmi les femmes du prolétariat . . ." was essential.

Guilbert, Les Femmes et L'Organisation Syndicale, 435, revealed the ways in which female workers threatened male workers in situations where they were performing the same jobs and where machine-assisted labour negated the need for some specialized qualifications. This situation was sector specific and was more prevalent in ". . . la typographie dans certaines professions des métaux, dans les cuirs et peaux, voire même dans certains secteurs de l'alimentation." Guilbert, Ibid., 228, explained that it was the male-dominated reformist syndicate in the book industry, which was influenced by Proudhon's anti-feminism and was resistant to female workers. As well, Guilbert quoted statistics from the Office du Travail of 1890-1908 to show that: "Le nombre total des grèves d'hommes demandant le renvoi d'ouvrières s'élève, au cours de ces dix-huit années, à 56 dont 6 en 1907 et 3 en 1908."

Guilbert's study, Ibid., 174, revealed that it was the anarchist press which was anti-feminist in terms of female political emancipation. The anarchists saw the women's struggle for their right to vote as typical of intellectuals and of the bourgeois. Therefore, it can be shown that although the anarchists promoted the concept of the benefit of education for women for economic independence, they placed ideological limits on complete female emancipation.

See also Madeleine Réberlioux's article "L'Ouvrière," in

Jean-Paul Aron, Misérable et glorieuse la femme du XIXe siècle (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1980), 77, where she argued that the unequal conditions which faced women workers made it difficult for them to participate in the strikes and that ". . . féminisme ouvrier--en France il n'existe pas. . ." Lefranc, Le Mouvement Syndicale, 138, stated that the textile industry was under the influence of the Guesdists. Mayeur and Réberieux, The Third Republic, 249, concluded that the workers of the textile industry (which was dominated by female labour) did not participate in the strike of May 1, 1906.

50

Louis Chevalier, Classes laborieuses et Classes dangereuses, 680.

51

Ibid., 647.

52

Ibid., 613.

53

Ibid., 650.

54

Ibid., 685.

55

Said, Orientalism, 45.

56

Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," Art in America, 7 (May 1983): 189.

57

Ibid.

58

Camille Mauclair, The Great French Painters (London: Duckworth and Co., 1903), 98. Thornton, Les Orientalistes Peintres Voyageurs, 21, noted that while Orientalist painting had declined internationally, the French Society of Orientalist Painters was established in 1893 when France was becoming increasingly interested in Algeria. Orientalist painting also continued to flourish in Belgium in relation to Belgium's colonialist interests in the African Congo.

59

Mauclair, The Great French Painters, 85.

- 60  
Ibid.
- 61  
Ibid., 98.
- 62  
J.-P. Crespelle, les maîtres de la belle époque  
(Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1966), 65.
- 63  
Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient", 123.
- 64  
Ibid.
- 65  
Ibid., 123-124.
- 66  
Ibid., 124.
- 67  
Ibid.
- 68  
Ibid., 125.
- 69  
Said, Orientalism, 208-209. See also: Gustave Le Bon, The Psychology of Peoples (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1899), 70, wherein Le Bon expressed his belief that the Romans were the most civilized race before being destroyed by the barbarians. Le Bon, Ibid., 48-49, also considered cross-breeding between men and women unsuccessful unless it was between fairly similar species (In this argument, human beings were posed as not all being of the same species). Le Bon further argued that humanity was categorized and graded according to the degree of civilization of the different species. Significantly, in this construct, women were not viewed as being of the same species as men. Therefore, according to this theory, Roche-grosse's women can be understood as both racially and sexually inferior to the "civilized" male.
- 70  
Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient", 122.
- 71  
"Société des Artistes Français," L'Illustration, April 28, 1906. This entire issue was devoted to a photographic display of the 1906 Salon.

72

Victor de Swarte, "Salon des Artistes Français," Le Matin, April 30, 1906, 4.

73

Louis Vauxcelles, Salons de 1906 (Paris: Manzi, Joyant et Cie, 1906), 45 and 83.

74

Yvanhoe Rambosson, "L'Ecole Française d'Alger," Le Journal des Arts, June 9, 1906, No. 45, p. 1. This publication was the explicitly labelled the "Chronique de l'Hôtel Drouot" and referred to the sales and exhibits of a highly commercial artistic enterprise serving the French art market.

75

Yvanhoe Rambosson, "L'Ecole Française d'Alger," p. 1.

76

Ibid.

77

Ibid.

78

Leopold Honoré, "Roche-grosse," Le Journal des Arts, June 13, 1906, No. 46, p. 1.

79

Ibid.

80

Ibid.

81

Vauxcelles, Salons de 1906, 46-47. A black and white print reproduction of Roche-grosse's painting, La Joie Rouge appeared in the 1906 edition of this publication inserted between pages 45 and 46. Thornton, Les Orientalistes Peintres Voyageurs, 20, mentioned that popular Orientalist paintings were reproduced to reach a wider market. Michel Laclotte and Geneviève Lacambre, Le Musée du Luxembourg en 1874 (Paris: Editions des Musées Nationaux, 1974), 11, explained the careless manner in which paintings bought by the state were improperly documented and sent off to provincial museums or put into storage. Lacambre, Ibid., 11, also made reference to the critic, Charles Morice's statement that the Luxembourg, which was filled with erotic and exotic paintings of women purchased by the state, should be called "'une maison de passe.'"

82

Vauxcelles, Salons de 1906, 46-47.

83

Vincent Confer, France and Algeria: The Problem of Civil and Political Reform, 1870-1920 (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1966), 6-7, discussed French hegemony in Algeria which was under French control by the 1840's. Confer, *Ibid.*, 7, suggested that in the 1870's the government of the Third Republic institutionalized the cultural divisions which produced racial tension. While Algerian-born Jews were considered to be French citizens the Moslem Arabs, who comprised the major population group were denied these same rights until the decree which ". . . embodied an elective principle for Arab and Berber representation . . ." was put into practice in 1908. According to Confer, prior to that time, the Moslems had no rights as French citizens. Confer, *Ibid.*, 38, explained how the fact that Algerian Jews were considered to be French citizens produced intense anti-semitic feeling amidst the French Algerians.

84

Mayeur and Réberieux, The Third Republic, 273.

85

R.D. Anderson, France 1870-1914, 118.

86

Stuart Michael Persell, The French Colonial Lobby 1889-1938 (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1983), 18, documented the ambitious program of French Imperialists from the 1890's. Persell, *Ibid.*, quoted from a provocative speech by a French explorer who had received private financing for expeditions into Africa and which had been published in the official journal of the Comité de l'Afrique Française, L'Afrique française, 1891. The content of his statement is evidence of the global competition for control in Africa. The explorer proposed that "France has a duty to expand in Africa. It must establish a base of action for future expansion . . . Our duty is to realize the union of West, Central, and North Africa . . . We must do this to beat the Germans and English in establishing ourselves in the area." Persell, *Ibid.*, 181, note 52 referred to his source for the above quote as the BCAF, January, 1891.

87

Persell, The French Colonial Lobby, 24. Persell referred to the importance of the French Foreign Legion to the Imperialist enterprises and its function to ensure French effectiveness in controlling indigenous uprisings. All authority was placed in the hands of French officers.

Persell, Ibid., 8, explained that from 1889 French Imperialist concepts were disseminated through the colonial lobby which sponsored a series of national colonial congresses. Persell, Ibid., 33, used as an example a reference to "L'Exposition Coloniale au Bois de Vincennes," in an article of May 18, 1907 in L'Illustration, which described the native villages which were set up to depict "la vie indigène." (This was French Imperialist propoganda at work, through its ideology which counted on the allure of erotic and exotic scantily clad natives to excite the public.) Persell, Ibid., 17, has suggested that in fact, the association of the Comité de l'"Afrique with French Imperialist acquisitions in North and West Africa was so close that the Comité ". . . seemed to almost lead the government." Persell, Ibid., 35, has outlined how Colonialist lectures, associations, newspapers, congresses and expositions proliferated and stated: "Possibly the most influential gathering of colonialists during the Third Republic was associated with the 1906 Marseille Exposition, the Congrès colonial de Marseille." Persell, Ibid., reported that participants included deputies, senators, ministers, mayors, presidents of chamber of commerce, businessmen and academics as well as ". . . representatives of more than thirty colonial societies and newspapers . . ."

Confer, France and Algeria, 38-39, documented the process by which new colonial policies were implemented in North Africa and their effect on the indigenous peoples. A Moslem uprising known as the "Marguerite Affair" of 1901 occurred in the Department of Oran which shared a border with northwestern Morocco. French military intervention was justified when five European settlers and a policemen lost their lives as a result of the event. Arab survivors were tried in a French court (where they had no rights as French citizens) in the south of France. Debate over the issue of assimilation or association resulted in the separation of the native Arabs and Berbers from the Europeans to clearly distinguish and ensure the superiority of the Europeans. A French Republican anti-semitic element blamed the uprising on the Jews. Confer, Ibid., 40-41, described the conclusion to the incident--the French colonists were given more "protection" and the natives more government restrictions. The socialists sympathized with the natives and there were some Republicans who called for equal treatment. However, the Governor-General of Algeria, Jonnart, blamed the problems in Algeria on economic losses from reduced sales of Algerian wine to France and the fanaticism of religious Moslems.

Confer, Ibid., 46, has shown that by 1903 policies which institutionalized human difference were in effect in Algeria and assimilation was rejected in favour of association. The debate surrounding the problem of solutions to controlling the North African population had included suggestions of "elimination or extermination" of natives.

They were rejected as inappropriate for civilized Frenchmen but this type of inhuman behaviour was seen as a possible ". . . policy of the Moslems themselves if they should gain control of North Africa from the French." According to Confer, *Ibid.*, these views were expressed by Paul Azan, a career soldier in the French Algerian military who ". . . later became General Azan, writer on Algerian history and head of the Service historique de l'Armée . . . "

88

Persell, The French Colonial Lobby, 48-49, explained the process whereby French expansion into Morocco ". . . was a classic imperialist venture." In 1904 The Comité du Maroc was established by members of the Comité de l'Afrique française to educate and influence French public opinion under the leadership of Eugène Etienne, the Algerian deputy in the French parliament. Persell, *Ibid.*, 51, explained that access to agricultural resources and markets were promised to French colonialists who were encouraged to settle in oases on the border between Algeria and Morocco. Persell, *Ibid.*, 51-52, concluded that Etienne's neo-colonialist policies dominated French foreign policy.

Jack D. Ellis, The French Socialists and the Problem of the Peace 1904-1914 (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1967), 57, documented the significance of French foreign policy and French Imperialism in relation to the German challenge to French hegemony in Africa when Kaiser Wilhelm II landed at the port of Tangier on March 31, 1905. Ellis, *Ibid.*, 59-60, explained that in order to diminish the tension between Germany and France, an International Conference was held at Algéiras, January to April, 1906. French and Spanish interests were upheld and they won the right to police the ports. This outcome increased the tensions between Germany and France and inflamed the neo-nationalism of the extreme right in France.

89

*Ibid.*, 60-61. Ellis *Ibid.*, described how local riots brought French ships to the port of Tangier and quelled the riot with the use of military force. By 1907 French socialists were openly challenging the use of military means to control native populations in colonial territories in parliament.

90

As stated in note 13 above, the Midi uprisings from March to June, 1907 were the result of a depressed wine market which suffered from the promotion of Algerian wine by the French Imperialists and the growth of large industrialized interests in southern France. The competition for the wine market squeezed out the small landowners and caused real hardship for them and the rural labourers. Félix



Napo, 1907: La Revolte des Vignerons (Toulouse: Domaine Occitan, 1971), 53, has carefully documented how this movement against the French government took on alarming proportions when Spanish and Algerian workers joined the struggle of the small land owners and large segments of the taxpayers in the Midi. Numbering 600,000, the protestors refused to pay taxes. The movement was so massive that socialists were optimistic about the outcome. However, this optimism became a lament when massacres of protestors followed. An article entitled "La Crise Viticole: On démissionne en masse et les Troupes se mutinent," L'Humanité, of June 12, 1907, p. 1, reported on the fact that the troops who were recruited locally refused to take measures against the people from their own region and in fact mutined. See also "L'Etat de Siège dans le Midi," L'Humanité, of June 20, 1907, p. 1. On June 19th the government sent more troops to quell the unrest with force and the June 22, 1907 headline in L'Humanité read "Après des Massacres." p. 1.

91

Mayeur and Réberieux, The Third Republic, 250-252.

92

Said, Orientalism, 208.

93

Le Bon, The Psychology of Peoples, 48-49

94

Ibid., p. 70.

95

Ibid.

96

Said, Orientalism, 232.

97

Le Bon The Psychology of Peoples, 4-6.

98

Alice Widener, ed., Gustave Le Bon: The Man and His Works (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1979), 108. Paul Lafargue, The Right to be Lazy and other Studies, 137-138, argued against such theories in his article "On the Woman Question" and proposed that the loss of superior status and the "brutal subjugation of women" in contemporary society was a result of a society based on private property. He suggested that the re-institution of common property would assure ". . . the sexual relations of free and equal women and men who will not be united nor separated by sordid material interests . . . "

## CHAPTER II

### UGLY INTENTIONS

Demetrios throws upon the table the lump of damp clay which he has brought there. He presses it, he kneads it, he draws it out according to the human form; a sort of barbarous monster is born of his ardent fingers; he looks.

Pierre Louys, 1896.<sup>1</sup>

Il existe deux sortes d'hommes en bois,  
Les têtes précieusement travaillées,  
Réceptacles de doctrines admirables,  
Et les brutes, j'entends non façonnées,  
Eh! si, les brutes et les bûches.

Alfred Jarry, c. 1906.<sup>2</sup>

Le forêt n'est pas qu'un monde végétal.  
C'est aussi un monde humain . . . la société  
des hommes des bois fut l'une des sociétés  
les plus anciennement structurées.

Annie Kriegel, 1968.<sup>3</sup>

The Blue Nude (Souvenir of Biskra), by Matisse and Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, by Picasso were conceived in 1906.

While it can be shown that Matisse completed his primitivized image by the spring of 1907, there is still some controversy over the completion date of Picasso's painting in its present state. However, the primitive reference in the latter was achieved by the late summer of 1907.<sup>4</sup> In these Neo-Orientalist paintings, the Primitivism which characterizes the female subjects as "ugly" is expressed through extreme

formal distortion. When placed in the generalized context of academic and avant-garde traditions of the painted female nude as erotic and/or exotic, it is the extreme formal distortions produced by Matisse and Picasso which seems to differentiate their paintings from either tradition.

The European tradition of the painted female nude as an object of sexual pleasure dates from the Italian Renaissance. From the time of Botticelli in the 15th century and Giorgione and Titian in the 16th century, a classical context was used to distance the viewer from reality. By the 18th century, there were important challenges to the portrayal of such subject matter which departed from this classical tradition; for example, Goya's erotic and exotic paintings, the Majas 1797-1798. Here, the female subject is contemporized without allusion to classical myth. Through the 19th century, Ingres and Cabanel chose the classical tradition of mythological reference to mask the eroticism of their female nudes. However, it was Ingres who subtly distorted his female nudes to heighten their eroticism and often placed them in pseudo-realistic Oriental settings to achieve an exotic effect. In contrast, Delacroix's Orientalism, as manipulated in paintings such as The Death of Sardanapalus, 1827-8, presented female nudes as objects of male violence under the guise of imaginary visions. Manet's modernist approach to the female nude as prostitute in the 19th century was an avant-garde negation of classical and imaginary

reference in the traditional sense of the erotic and exotic. By the late 19th century, Gauguin's interest in the non-western female subject as a source for erotic and exotic replaced classical myth with the myth of the primitive Tahitian society. Cezanne's early paintings of nude females were obvious imaginary bourgeois visions of the erotic and exotic. His late bathing compositions, which integrated abstract and distorted female nudes into wooded landscape, were scenes of rural French primitivism.

In the specific context of their production in 1906 and 1907 as Parisian avant-garde representations of the female, it is the emphasis on Primitivism of form which appears to differentiate the paintings by Matisse and Picasso from the female subjects pictured in contemporaneous official and popular culture.

Placed in the context of avant-garde responses to academic tradition, The Blue Nude and Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, form a dialogue with the new taste in the 20th century for the erotic and exotic as symbolized by the revival of 19th Century Orientalist painting and the debates at that time over the continuation of the French tradition in painting. Ingres The Turkish Bath, c. 1852, was central to a retrospective which he shared with Manet at the 1905 Société du Salon d'Automne. As well, exotic and erotic female nudes by Gauguin and Cezanne and Cezanne's abstract, distorted bathers were increasingly visible at the Salon d'Automne by

1905 and 1906 in Paris.

The question to be answered however, is how the notions of Orientalism and Primitivism influenced the erotic and exotic avant-garde paintings of women by Matisse and Picasso. These paintings, which were not reproduced from live models, operated differently within the context of Orientalism and Primitivism in relation to the issue of class struggle, as pictured in the French popular press, and the world of official art where the revival of Orientalist painting coincided with neo-colonialism.

The two paintings, The Blue Nude (Souvenir of Biskra) and Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. M.) are linked through the subject of the "ugly" female as prostitute.<sup>5</sup> Matisse's The Blue Nude, is identified as a prostitute through the known codes of academic practice wherein the prostitute was signified by her horizontal pose and her nudity.<sup>6</sup> The Blue Nude, however, projects a new vision of primitive sexuality through her distorted form, which is not typical of either Orientalist painting or of Ingres more subtly idealized odalisques. She is different and Matisse has emphasized her difference by stressing the awkward contours of her form and by applying dashes of raw Fauve colour. There are allusions to the Western ideal of female beauty in the painting such as the horizontal pose itself, the female nudity, and the indirect gaze, however, the painting lacks the finish of traditional Salon painting.

The erotic effect of The Blue Nude's primitive sexuality is accomplished through the gross exaggeration of her female anatomy and enhanced by the exotic setting. While she is almost-life-sized, which produces an illusion of her dominance in the landscape, her inhumanity is accentuated by the humanly impossible pose and the abrupt intrusion of the canvas edge which cuts off part of her left arm. Her skin is different, it is tinged with blue which separates her from the creamy-pink nudes of the Western academic and Salon tradition. The Blue Nude has the status of a subjected, French possession whose grotesquely sized body and large feet are a tangible contrast to the Western ideal of female beauty and reinforce her uncivilized nature. Her head appears to be too small and youthful to fit the overblown maturity of her form. The overt sexuality of her immense, twisted torso is emphasized by her raised shoulders which thrust her massive breasts outwards and dwarf her almost superfluous head and neck. Matisse has replaced the academic convention of the classical nude with long, flowing fair locks with a female whose hair is short, black and dull.

Matisse has exploited the curve of the hip of The Blue Nude in the same way that Roche-grosse had pictured his single nude in the lower right corner of La Joie Rouge, a convention that goes back to Titian's nudes. However, in Matisse's painting the left leg of The Blue Nude is inhumanly flung across her body to expose massive amounts of fleshy thigh and

to completely obscure, and thereby focus upon, her genital area. There is an unnatural angle to her buttock which contrasts with the curves of her fleshy breasts and thigh. These vibrating curves are reproduced in the repetitive blue forms of her breast and in the dark depths of the mysterious shadow behind her torso and again echoed by a palm frond. Similar to the models in the couturier Salons of L'Assiette au Beurre, discussed in the previous chapter, The Blue Nude has been deformed to increase the size of her breasts and her buttocks. Reminiscent of Rochegrosse's exotic landscape in La Joie Rouge, crimson flowers decorate the left side of the canvas in a lush profusion of symbolic fertility. Their realism collides with the artifice and plastic unreality of the strangely-coloured palm fronds. However, while The Blue Nude functions as a sexual object in the same manner as Rochegrosse's powerless nudes, she is not just a reproductive symbol but a symbol of exotic prostitution. Her primitive sexuality marks her as an alien sub-human species--an "ugly" woman subjugated by and subject to the demands of Western civilization. Thus, while the painting is of a distorted female nude with primitive characteristics, offering a contrast to Rochegrosse's classical beauties, as a female subject The Blue Nude still remains close to the French tradition of classically posed reclining nudes. The decorative features of typical Orientalist painting of

powerless women in imaginary exotic landscape do not negate this tradition.

In contrast, Picasso's image is both anti-classic and non-decorative and breaks with the tradition of reclining nudes and decorative landscapes which are found in the paintings of Rochegrosse and Matisse. Instead, Picasso's painting of five females seems to form a closer relationship with the illusions of female power produced in the discourse of the popular press, for example, the images of female workers in L'Assiette au Beurre who function in connection with the class struggle. However, Picasso has exploited distorted form and rejected classical notions of beauty.

Picasso's composition is more complex than The Blue Nude and in place of a single figure there is a group of five nearly life-sized female figures of which four are standing and one is seated. In comparison with Matisse's painting, Picasso has also increased the effect of compressed space through the use of abstract spatial illusion and intensified the formal distortion of his subjects. In contrast to Matisse's single nude, which sprawls lazily in a confined landscape, giving the appearance she is in a dominant position, Picasso has arranged his figures in three distinctive groups; a single figure at left and two groups of two, one of which is in the middle portion of the canvas and the other on the far right. At left, stands a solitary figure in profile, breastplate in place of curving breasts



and she is draped. At centre, the pair of frontally-posed females are unified by their identical facial features which are at the same time profiles and frontal views; their legs of similar shape and colour do not align with their bodies. These figures also differ from the others through their apparel; one is in a utilitarian undershirt and the other partially draped in fabric. The feminine form of both figures, while explicit, is de-emphasized by the use of angles in place of curves as a means to highlight the feminine body. The two figures on the right have been transformed into sub-human forms with mask-faces and are differentiated by their poses and the degree to which each is primitivized. The background figure's nude torso has square patches, which in colour and form, resemble areas of tilled land yet are placed to indicate breasts: the lower portion of her body is partially blocked by the seated figure. The primitive effect of this seated figure is achieved through the lack of definition in the hands, the increased asymmetry of the mask-face and body, and the ambiguity and aggression of the open-legged pose. Some portions of this figure are obscured from view, similar to the way in which Matisse had cut off the arm of The Blue Nude at the canvas edge.

The most disturbing aspects of Picasso's seated figure are her primitive features, her aggressive pose and the disruption of immediate gender identification. The

deliberate lack of detail, such as the absence of breasts and definition of female genitalia, increases the effect of gender confusion and problematizes her identity as female. Female identification has been shifted to the still-life of fruit where displaced sexual characteristics are found in their symbolic forms. In fact, a still-life is formed within the painting itself by a white-clothed table laden with this fruit which tilts and juts into the picture space cutting through the frontal plane near the centre of the painting. The seated figure is activated by a gesture which suggests the eating of a piece of the flesh-coloured melon. This devouring motion is linked to the table by the empty rind of the melon wedge. An illusion of sexual aggressiveness is produced by the devouring motion and the open-legged pose of the most primitivized figure. Picasso's Demoiselles differ from the classical notion of beauty exhibited by the powerful nudes of the popular press, from both the traditional powerless nudes manipulated by Rochegrosse and Matisse's allusion to this same tradition. Instead, Picasso has taken Matisse's suggestions of primitive form in The Blue Nude to a new extreme. That is, whereas Matisse's distorted nude becomes an increasingly powerless object through his conception of Primitivism, Picasso's distorted nudes acquire powerful and threatening personas through his manipulation of Primitivism.

Space in the Les Demoiselles d'Avignon is compressed,

fragmented and shallow and defined by patches of sky-blue and natural earth tones of rural landscape. The flowing curves of the curtain at the upper left tend to become texturally brittle and jagged. While Matisse had stressed the exotic and decorative quality of imaginary landscape, Picasso disrupted this effect with discontinuities of form, space and colour. Picasso's spatial fragmentation is intensified by the disjointed bodies and inconsistent fleshtones which are lit by a harsh, even light. References to landscape and curtains in the compressed space produce an ambiguous interior/exterior environment. The stridency of Picasso's figures act to de-emphasize, displace and transform any construction of passive femininity through gender identity, which, in the case of the seated nude, is symbolized in the environment of the still-life. Picasso has not only reversed Matisse's strategy of exploiting the tradition of the overblown arabesque form of The Blue Nude but exploited Matisse's angular deformations to defeminize and primitivise the figures.

Picasso's figures differ from popular and official images of the nude specifically through their rejection of the Western ideal of female beauty. His aggressive use of Primitivism also contrasts with Matisse's concern for the primitive sexuality of the submissive North African female. Thus, while the female nudes in Grandjouan's popular images are presented as powerful in relation to working class

issues, and produce an illusion which rejects their identity as "ugly" women, through the appropriation of the Western ideal of female beauty, the nudes, as has already been discussed, are threatening in relation to class struggle.

Roche-grosse's nudes inhabit the world of official art and appeal directly to the male-dominated bourgeois class through their expression of the erotic and exotic without threat to French cultural dominance or to Western male dominance in terms of race, sex or class. Matisse's presentation of his seductive primitively inferior female nude supported the same viewpoint as Roche-grosse. At the same time, in spite of the formal presentation of The Blue Nude as a dominant figure, Matisse's primitivized nude exhibits a greater degree of inferiority and domination. Picasso, on the other hand, transformed his female subjects into figures of power and aggression. The two most primitivized figures on the far right appear to embody the image of the working class prostitute and act to disrupt the traditional construction of the powerless, nude female pictured for the enjoyment of the Western, bourgeois male. Picasso's reference to the working class through the subject of the prostitute exhibits an awareness of class struggle which is absent from Matisse's painting.

This difference in viewpoint between Matisse and Picasso can be illustrated by their artistic practice in relation to the production of The Blue Nude and Les Demoiselles d'Avignon

in 1906 and 1907. Although both artists were part of the same avant-garde circle in Paris their relationship with the artistic world was not the same. Eager to participate in the system, Matisse had exhibited his art in both traditional and progressive Salons.<sup>7</sup> Picasso, on the contrary, was not showing in art Salons at this time; instead, his work was known in the shops of a few small dealers and by the visitors who had access to the privacy of his studio, which also functioned as his home.<sup>8</sup> Consistent with Matisse's practice, The Blue Nude was exhibited at the spring Salon des Indépendants of 1907 under the title Tableau III.<sup>9</sup> By showing at the Indépendants, Matisse was able to bypass a jury, directly address the bourgeois public and invite its attendant critical intervention as well as its patronage. Picasso, in contrast, chose to bypass the Salon system entirely, and to ignore the bourgeois public, its critical intervention and its patronage. Instead, he kept his painting in his studio where it was seen by a select audience of friends, artists, dealers and patrons.<sup>10</sup> Matisse succeeded in luring a buyer immediately and his painting was purchased by Leo Stein, a private American collector then living in Paris.<sup>11</sup> Yet, except for two photographs from 1907 and 1908, Picasso's painting was known in this period only through anecdote and memoir.<sup>12</sup>

Although, no known documented criticism of Picasso's painting exists from 1907, there are three known published

criticisms of Matisse's painting, each from a different critical perspective. Louis Vauxcelles, was the first to describe the painting in his review of the Salon for the liberal Parisian daily, Gil Blas. His view from the anarchist left provides a vivid description of Matisse's nude as an "ugly" woman.

J'avoue ne pas comprendre. Une femme nue, laide, étendue dans l'herbe d'un bleu opaque, sous des palmiers. Je ne voudrais, en quoi que ce fut, froisser un artiste dont je sais l'ardeur, la conviction; mais le dessin ici m'apparaît rudimentaire et le coloris cruel; le bras droit de la nymphe homasse est plat et pesant; le hanchement du corps déformé détermine une arabesque de feuillage à moins que ce ne soit l'incurvation du feuillage qui motive la courbe de la femme. Il y a là un effort d'art tendant vers l'abstrait, qui m'échappé totalement. 13

Vauxcelles disliked the "ugly" abstraction of the female form and revealed his preference for a realistic, less imaginative distortion of femininity which he felt had been sacrificed to Matisse's decorative "arabesques." In the same review, Vauxcelles took special care to note that the "Fauves" had by now received official approval and could no longer be considered as avant-garde by the spring of 1907.<sup>14</sup>

A critique from the right by Georges Desvallières reflected a conservative viewpoint in praise of Matisse and explains the connection between decorative form and official acceptance. Desvallières commented on The Blue Nude in the Grande Revue, on April 10, 1907:

"Déformations voulues, un peu trop préméditées peut-être, surtout dans la grande figure. Grand effort à regarder sérieusement, attentivement, respectueusement." 15

Desvallières did not object to the primitivized form of the nude but to the overtness of Matisse's formal distortion. Unlike Vauxcelles, Desvallières approved of the decorative form which Vauxcelles had found disconcerting.

Charles Morice, critic for the Mercure and known for his sympathetic approach to the Parisian avant-garde, wrote his remarks under the title "Art Moderne," in the April 15th, 1907 issue. His disapproval related to both the form and the content of Matisse's painting and was expressed in his dislike of this

"académie disloquée: Tableau No. III; Inquiétante: prétentieuse, qui ne signifie rien ou ce parfait contentment de soi dont les vrais maîtres n'ont jamais connu que le desir . . . Il s'y obstine; et il y est suivi. Faut-il donc regarder de plus près . . . ce Tableau No. III, et tristement y voir le témoignage déplorable d'une impuissance aggravée de vanité? Il n'y a, là, ni composition,--malgré la simplicité balbutiante du dessin, on cherche l'unité du 'Tableau,' elle se perd dans les plans qui s'entreheurtenant, dans les couleurs qui refusent de s'accorder, ni décoration, ni expression, ni style." 16

It was the lack of meaning--the emptiness of the content which resulted from the absence of formal cohesiveness and an overall harmony which disturbed the Symbolist critic, Morice.

Vauxcelles was the only critic to acknowledge the subject of Matisse's painting as a female. Indeed, it was Matisse's primitivization for the sake of decoration which

Vauxcelles read as masculinizing, commenting particularly upon the deformed right arm of The Blue Nude. Vauxcelles called her an "ugly" and "masculine nymph" whose deformed curves form an unnatural, abstract presentation merely for the sake of decoration. Ironically, it was this very manner of decorative deformation of the figure which attracted Desvallières and for which he gave Matisse credit for his close observation--as if Matisse had been looking at a live model. Desvallières only concern was the obviousness of this device, not that Matisse had primitivized the form of his model. In contrast, Morice saw The Blue Nude as a failed avant-garde response to the academic tradition of the female nude which he blamed on Matisse's failure to invest the forms with significant meaning. To Morice, the painting was nothing more than an empty symbol of the artist's self-<sup>17</sup>conceit.

A year later, in the spring of 1908, Picasso's "ugly" women were considered to be the ugliest. Visited in his studio by the American artist/critic, Gelett Burgess, Picasso was interviewed and the painting, Study by Picasso, was photographed. This article by Burgess, which was not published until 1910 in the United States, described the critic's experience in the world of the Parisian avant-garde to his American audience as an initiation into ". . . a universe of ugliness."<sup>18</sup> In particular, it was Picasso's paintings which the American critic found most "primitive"



and thus the most "ugly." He wrote:

Monstrous monolithic women, creatures like Alaskan totem poles, hacked out of solid, brutal colors, frightful, appalling! . . . his pyramidal women, his sub-African caricatures, figures with eyes askew, with contorted legs, and--things unmentionably worse, . . . Where has he found his ogrillions? . . . Only the very joy of life could revel in such brutalities. 19

Burgess was therefore the first to suggest the "African" and primitive context of Picasso's Les Femmes d'Alger, at

a time when primitive art was becoming both commercialized and prized by collectors. 20

Burgess also noted that it was Matisse who was the leader of the vision of ugliness which Burgess found to be the predominant characteristic of the Parisian avant-garde. 21 According to Burgess, the production of "ugly" women by "The Wild Men of Paris," who followed Matisse's lead, was not only a sign of youthful rebellion but was the outward manifestation of their virility. 22

This conflation of Primitivism and male power in relation to the Parisian avant-garde, and to Matisse and Picasso in particular, is woven into the art historical tradition which surrounds the shifting styles of Fauvism and Cubism. The scholarship of Alfred Barr, Jr., continues to provide basic resource material for the study of Matisse and Picasso. In his article, "Matisse, Picasso, and the Crisis of 1907," Barr established the importance of Matisse's art as an influence on Picasso and the subsequent shift in avant-garde leadership. Barr's study rested on the premise of the

creative male artistic genius and his belief that these artists, different in personality, were both geniuses. He commented upon their opposite qualities in relation to their age, experience and personality to show that Matisse was the natural leader due to his maturity, intelligence, seriousness

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and talent. In contrast, Barr argued, Picasso was the youthful, Spanish prodigy who worked alone and chose to remain aloof from the Salons. Barr compared Matisse's

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Bonheur de vivre of the spring of 1906 with Picasso's Les Demoiselles d'Avignon in terms of a common stylistic source which could be found in Cezanne's bather compositions. While acknowledging that both artists borrowed freely from Western and non-western traditions, Barr suggested that there was a difference in spatial forms. Barr concluded, however, that their real difference lay in their "effect" with Matisse's painting an obvious expression of "enjoyment of the good life" and Picasso's being "forbidding, formidable, even frightening." Although he mentioned the appearance of the

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"formidable" Blue Nude in 1907, he did not discuss the painting nor question other extra-artistic factors which might influence the different "effect" of the content of

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Matisse and Picasso's production at this time. Matisse's Bonheur de vivre appeared at the same moment as Rochegrosse's La Joie Rouge and Grandjouan's 1er mai. As an expression of Matisse's liberal belief in human freedom and the enjoyment

of sexual pleasure and leisure it functioned as a symbol of bourgeois values.<sup>27</sup>

The issues of Primitivism and male power were central to the critical debates which arose in relation to the promotion for and the criticism of the Salon d'Automne of 1905. From its inception in 1903, the Salon d'Automne was intended to be a progressive, juried Salon for the exhibition and sale of art produced by its members and as an alternative to both the hierarchy of traditional Salons and to the unjuried, open disorder of the Salon des Indépendants.<sup>28</sup> According to Elie Faure, in his introduction to the 1905 catalogue, the Salon d'Automne's pride was in the suppression of traditional categories, open to all the arts, and as Faure phrased it, this newest Salon represented ". . . l'ordre confus de la vie."<sup>29</sup> In reference to the 1905 retrospective show of works by Ingres and Manet at the Salon d'Automne, Faure suggested that it was through this type of retrospective and the Salons's openness to the avant-garde that the continuity of the French tradition through "son patrimoine hereditaire" was assured and the danger of "l'allure révolutionnaire" on the part of the younger artists would be dissipated.<sup>30</sup> This retrospective would play a distinctive role in the encouragement of the avant-garde in the early 20th century to paint erotic and exotic female subjects.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Faure's interpretation of "la renaissance de l'Ecole française" was not just an expression of male domination but

also cast in the language of French nationalism. For instance, Faure's Utopian idealism embodied the belief that the new generation inherited through "notre sang" and "l'âme française" the ability to invent "un langage nouveau" from the 17th century precedent of a Poussin to the 20th century precedents of Gauguin and Cezanne.<sup>33</sup> Faure denounced scientific positivism to promote the importance of intuition as the new language of the avant-garde, a language which was ". . . la trace intellectuelle des générations disparues."<sup>34</sup> Faure viewed the influence of the Primitivism of Gauguin or Cezanne on avant-garde art as positive through its rejuvenation of the unity, superiority and virility of the French tradition. Faure believed that this positive influence, which flowed from French classicism, was embodied in the function of the Salon d'Automne as both a showplace and marketplace for French avant-garde art.

In opposition to such a view, a conservative critic like Camille Mauclair, criticized the 1905 Salon d'Automne for its indiscriminate promotion of the avant-garde.<sup>35</sup> Mauclair, an ardent promoter of Impressionism, was the most violent critic of what he termed Cezanne's "primitivism." He did not hesitate to chastize Cezanne's followers who showed at the Salon d'Automne. However, Mauclair viewed the 1905 retrospective showing of Ingres and Manet in a different light. For Mauclair, who measured the success of a work of art by positivist criteria, Ingres and Manet were the

exemplary upholders of the true forms of beauty: Ingres for his skilled draftsmanship and Manet for his use of science. <sup>36</sup>

Mauclair chose Cezanne as the main target of his critical view of the new generation of avant-garde painters. Under Mauclair's pen, Cezanne acquired the inferior persona of the rural French peasant who was uncultured and uncivilized.

Regarder les tableaux de M. Cézanne auprès d'un Monet ou d'un Renoir, cela équivaut à comparer une danse de paysans en sabots et une danse d'Isadora Duncan. 37

Mauclair saw Cezanne's influence on contemporary modern art as detrimental and identified Primitivism with both the peasant class and with African culture as a form of cultural regression. To prove his point, he compared the methods and subjects chosen by Ingres and Cezanne in relation to the difference between what he considered to be high and low cultural forms. Thus, while the paintings of Ingres were reminiscent of sophisticated opera, Cezanne's paintings were only suited to a comparison with "les tams-tams des palabres africaines." <sup>38</sup> Mauclair felt threatened by Primitivism which he viewed as a sign of degeneration of the superiority of the French classical tradition. This tradition of academic technique and aesthetic standard which, according to Mauclair, had been upheld by the Impressionists, was now in jeopardy. His fear of Primitivism was related to virility in his description of the Parisian avant-garde at the 1905 Salon as a new generation of ". . . des neutres, incapables

d'enrayer un mouvement, incapables d'en créer un."

Therefore, while the liberal, anti-positivist ideology of the Salon d'Automne projected the avant-garde's interest in Primitivism as a masculine symbol of power and potency, to regenerate French civilization, Mauclair's conservative, positivism defended the same dominant interests of race, sex and class by envisioning avant-garde Primitivism as a symptom of degeneracy and by calling the artists impotent, powerless eunuchs, dangerous to French cultural dominance.

Mauclair was confident that the popularity of the cult of Cezanne would be ephemeral in the sphere of public taste which would not accept "ugly" female subjects. He wrote:

Il (the public) aime les femmes en savon rose, parce que "c'est joli", mais il ne tolérera pas les femmes équarries à coups de serpe et les barbouillages congolais, parce que ce n'est pas joli". 40

The liberal view of the Salon d'Automne looked with approval upon the production of "ugly" female subjects of lower class prostitutes and female peasants as rejuvenating French art, while these same "ugly" female images threatened Mauclair's conservative concern for protection of the status quo. As has been discussed in Chapter One, although these attitudes towards Primitivism were different, they were supported by Le Bon's racial theories, of the superiority of French civilization through the male bourgeois class, and were in turn, supportive of French neo-colonialism and of relevance in the atmosphere of increased polarization of the classes in

France. In 1906 and 1907 class consciousness had permeated not only the industrialized working class but also the feminist movement and the rural populations, groups which challenged the status quo of bourgeois capitalist society. At the same time, the African natives were resisting easy subjugation.

As the preceding analysis demonstrates, the Primitivism of the "ugly" exotic and erotic nude in Matisse's Neo-Orientalist painting The Blue Nude differed from the Primitivism expressed by Picasso's "ugly" women of Les Femmes d'Alger. Matisse's painting functioned in support of the new taste for erotic and exotic imagery and indirectly upheld the delusion of Western bourgeois male superiority. Not reproduced directly from a model but from a damaged, hand-sculpted clay model of a decorative sculpture, similar to the subsequent Reclining Nude (Fig. 9), Matisse's seductive painting was the result of an Algerian vacation in May of 1906.<sup>41</sup> Matisse had spent some time at the oasis of Biskra which was well-known as a haven for wealthy Europeans seeking a warm, dry climate and exotic sexual experiences. Its alluring reputation was promoted in the literary works of Pierre Louÿs and Andre Gide. The novels of Louÿs, which were written for a French, bourgeois heterosexual male audience, are particularly significant as precedents for the erotic and exotic ideologies of Matisse's The Blue Nude.<sup>42</sup> Biskra's crucial importance to French cultural and political

hegemony in Africa was its position as the southern-most point on the French-Algerian railway. The availability of exotic sexual pleasure offered by the services of local prostitutes who belonged to the French dominated culture of Algeria, was an added feature indicative of French control in North Africa. North African women were not only enjoyed by tourists they were used to provide sexual services for the French military.<sup>43</sup> As pointed out in Chapter one, the military were a vital factor in the process of French neo-colonialism in North Africa.

The promotion of African erotica in French novels, pseudo-anthropological magazines, colonial expositions and art coincided with the changing structure of prostitution within France itself. Prostitution in Paris in the early 20th century became the focus of pressure groups; by those who as abolitionists wanted all regulation eliminated, and by those who were concerned that the prostitute, like the criminal,<sup>44</sup> required surveillance by state authorities. Between 1904 and 1908 strict regulation of traditional brothels (maison de passe, maison de tolérance, maison close) was liberalized and a new form of specifically bourgeois brothel emerged, the maison-de-rendez-vous, no doubt to offer less risk to the health of bourgeois clientele.<sup>45</sup>

The maison-de-rendez-vous increasingly replaced the maisons de tolérance which at the close of the 19th century had been viewed as "temples des perversions." The maisons



de tolerance functioned as erotic and exotic attractions for tourists and wealthy clientele. Their exotic decoration had provocatively enhanced the profusion of nudes who openly displayed their bodies in a variety of lewd poses. To respond to the increasing demand for exotic sexual pleasure, prostitutes were recruited, as mentioned, from other cultures through the White Slave Trade. The bourgeois male voyeur could safely observe this "tableau vivant" and various sexual spectacles from private enclosures where they were secreted and their identity protected.<sup>46</sup> The inhabitants of these brothels were often exotically costumed to match the decor and offered a wide variety of services to suit all sexual tastes and preferences. This type of brothel was an important commercial industry in Paris at the turn-of-the-century.<sup>47</sup>

The maison-de-rendez-vous functioned differently by offering a more discriminating atmosphere of bourgeois respectability and discretion. The prostitute was chosen from photographs in a milieu which differed significantly from that of the maison de tolérance. The maison-de-rendez-vous had been notable for its exotically decorated exteriors and interiors and similarly costumed prostitutes. It was through its exotic exterior that it advertised its function as a brothel.<sup>48</sup> In the atmosphere of reform, the bourgeois need for erotic and exotic sexual stimulation was disrupted and new venues were called for such as the theatre, the cafe-

concerts, the traditional progressive art salons and the proliferation of photographs which could be found in numerous publications picturing nude or semi-nude females erotically and exotically posed.<sup>49</sup> Matisse's small clay sculptures of this period were also a response to the taste for exotic and erotic images.

Pseudo-anthropological magazines were a rich source of erotic and exotic imagery and it is known that Matisse relied on such a publication for the pose of his decorative sculpture, Two Negresses, 1908, his source being a photograph published in L'Humanité Féminine: Femmes d'Afrique, issue of January 5, 1907.<sup>50</sup> Such photographs provided the "civilized" Western bourgeois male with proof of his powerful status thereby protecting his imagined racial, sexual and class superiority. The distorted female of Matisse's The Blue Nude functioned in a similar fashion to these photographs of African women, to Rochemore's La Joie Rouge, and to Louÿs' novel and musical, Aphrodite. Said has described this delusion of power as Orientalism, a belief whereby

. . . women are usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy. They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing. 51

This delusion was essential for maintaining the power structure of the male-dominated French bourgeois class in relation to both its control in Africa and in French society itself. Significantly, the violent, rapacious males of La Joie Rouge are absent from Matisse's painting. In lieu of

the viewer's identification with the depiction of Roman male power, the bourgeois male is directly implicated through the construction of an erotic and exotic male power fantasy in relation to a North African subject. While Rohegrosse's painting and Louÿs' novel retain allusions to the classical concept of female beauty, Matisse's The Blue Nude, like the more popularized images in the pseudo-anthropological magazine, is more obviously infused with the new taste for the exotic and erotic primitive sexuality of African women relative to classical forms of the exotic and erotic. Matisse's primitivized figure is Neo-Orientalism at work. The avant-garde critic Apollinaire recognized this process in Matisse's art in his critique of December, 1907. Apollinaire was convinced that Matisse relied on the concept of beauty of Western tradition in spite of his fascination with other cultures.

But although he is eager to know the artistic countenance of all human races, Henri Matisse remains devoted above all to the beauty of Europe. 52.

The sensual creature of Matisse's imagination inhabits the terrain of a lush North African oasis, unprotected by harem or veil--her subjected pose proof of the cultural breakdown for which she is a symbol. While Rohegrosse's image related to the physical abduction of women for male pleasure and procreation they are not obviously pictured as primitive, their inferiority is relative to their identification as female. In contrast, Matisse's nude is pictured as

different, an alien who has been colourfully decorated as a French subject to denote her cultural subjugation. Her function as a prostitute is reinforced by the position of the fleshy thigh which highlights her genital area in an invitingly seductive fashion which intensified her appeal as erotic and exotic.

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The most terrifying image to a bourgeois male heterosexual was that of the eunuch, the castrated male who was rendered impotent. While vacationing at Gosol, Spain in the summer of 1906, Picasso painted the image of a eunuch in The Harem, (Fig.10). The sexually impotent male slave is placed in the far right foreground of the painting where he functions as the guard of the harem, a figure of power and authority over the female inhabitants in spite of his emasculation. The eunuch's head is small and hairless, dwarfed by his fleshy form, a form which lacks the muscular tension of masculine physical power. Seated on the ground, he lazes against the wall forming a barrier between the viewer and the women within the harem. There are five female figures in the interior, four young slave girls in classical poses who are at various stages of preparing their toilet--bathing and combing their hair. An old servant is hunched in the far right corner of the harem, obviously past her prime as a sexual object. Her figure provides a foil for the youthful nude beauties. The soft ochre colour of the interior and the abundance of pink flesh tones exudes an

erotic and exotic ambiance but there is an absence of expressed sexual tension between the young nude females and the eunuch. The nude bodies and eroticized poses barely arouse the eunuch's curiosity and he continues with his meal. The only symbol of male potency is in the spout of the wine vessel, the "porron"<sup>54</sup> which rests on the ground and is firmly grasped by the left hand of the eunuch. The male viewer is spared sexual identification with the eunuch and his virility is not threatened on any level. The young female slaves, symbols of the world market in female prostitution, The White Slave Trade, are not primitivized and are made to appear as comfortable with their enslaved state as Matisse's The Blue Nude of 1907.

In Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, Picasso transformed the harem motif to include a European lower class brothel and the mood, is no longer warmly erotic and exotic like that of The Harem, in spite of the predominance of pinky flesh tones. Picasso's most primitivized prostitutes could function as symbols of contemporary female slavery in relation to working class prostitutes who were seen by the left as slaves in the "Harem of the Capitalists."<sup>55</sup> However, while Picasso's painting appears to relate to the issue of class struggle through his images of powerful females in a manner similar to female power illustrated in L'Assiette au Beurre, his figures are primitivized like the women in L'Assiette au Beurre who were shown as victims of bourgeois values. As

well, he has rejected Grandjouan's image of classical beauty and instead emphasized power as brutal aggression.<sup>56</sup> Les Demoiselles d'Avignon projects an ambiguous image which has the illusion of female power and victimization through primitivized, defeminized form.<sup>57</sup> Picasso also avoided the decorative aspects of The Blue Nude to deny the possibility of a bourgeois male power fantasy associated with the erotic and exotic.<sup>58</sup> Picasso has reversed Grandjouan's projection of female power through the classical image of the female and his subject is not a direct reference to class struggle but the issue of prostitution which related more directly to male/female power relationships and which was itself a complex ideological issue at that moment.<sup>59</sup>

Picasso, like Matisse, chose the form of a traditional cult image of the prostitute for his painting but his transformations differ from Matisse's The Blue Nude in form and content. In Picasso's painting of Les Demoiselles, the cult image of a powerful female prostitute is produced through the transformation of the Roman love goddess of the Venus de Milo to a primitive form through the addition of a wooden head reminiscent of the more ancient and powerful figure of Aphrodite.<sup>60</sup> He has reversed the process of primitivization of the female as victim of bourgeois taste for the exotic and erotic depicted in L'Assiette au Beurre, and removed references to the classical goddesses as fertility symbols. In contrast, the power of this female cult

image was effected through the exploitation of angular form, the powerful gesture of the arm and the embodiment of the bisexual form of a hermaphrodite which preceded the Roman cult figure of the enslaved female Venus.<sup>61</sup> It is the central figures which symbolize the enslaved courtesans of Roman times, for which Iberian sculpture could provide a logical allusion in terms of form and content.<sup>62</sup> Rubin has already suggested the resemblance between the left central figure and Michelangelo's The Captive Slave,<sup>63</sup> which was housed in the Louvre with the statue of Venus de Milo, which effectively provides another image of enslavement. Picasso's two cult figures of enslaved females perfectly describe the situation of the female under patriarchy where her usefulness as a prostitute was her subjugation to male power and as a female, as reproducer. At right, the two most defeminized and primitivized figures could function as the modern cult image of the female working class prostitute whose existence was a double-edged necessity and danger to bourgeois dominance.<sup>64</sup> These nudes offer an important indication of the social significance of Picasso's utilization of "ugly" primitive form, derived from his own experiments with wood sculpture to restructure his image of the working class prostitute in anti-classical form.<sup>65</sup> These defeminized females resist bourgeois male consumption as fertility symbols by denying immediate gender identification, disrupting the classical ideal of beauty and resisting the seductive element of erotic

and exotic decorative imagery. Their primitive form is aggressive and could serve to identify their relationship to the "new barbarians" of which Le Bon, the theorist of racist doctrine, recognized as the greatest challenge to the strength of the French nation.<sup>66</sup> This is particularly significant at a moment when the dominance of French culture and of the French nation was threatened.

Picasso was not a political activist at this moment but through his own experiences in Spanish society and as an alien, isolated artist in Paris, his identity was as a young Bohemian. His empathy with the oppressed is evident in his art during this period both in his new concern for anti-classical figure compositions and his non-decorative still-life paintings. The question remains, however, why his prostitutes are "ugly" aggressors.

Alfred Jarry's literary and theatrical avant-gardism offers a model which may have provided the impetus to Picasso's attempt express his dissatisfaction with the image of the working class as passive victims. Jarry, a prominent figure among Parisian Bohemia, produced a late work which indicts his awareness of the change resulting from the polarization of classes in French society and the new mood of aggression on the part of the militant lower classes, particularly the rural proletariat. Jarry's Ubu sur la Butte was originally performed with characters who were played by wooden puppets at the comic opera in Paris in 1901.<sup>67</sup> In



1906, Jarry inserted a prologue into the published text of Ubu sur la Butte which was not part of the original version.<sup>68</sup> The significance of this prologue is the fact that Jarry, who recognized the increasing division of society into two opposing classes, chose to identify with the "brutes" and characterized his provincial wooden puppets as symbols of the militant rural proletariat. While projecting their image as "ugly" and unfortunate members of French society, brutalized by the dominant class and left to console themselves with excessive alcohol consumption, in 1906, Jarry chose to depict his wooden-headed "brutes" no longer as passive victims but as brutally aggressive and dangerous. Thus, Jarry's characters not only functioned in relation to the rural proletariat but also to the most "primitive" aggressive, dangerous group, the bûcherons.

It is this new aggressive form and content of the female prostitutes in Picasso's Neo-Orientalist Les Demoiselles d'Avignon which differs significantly from the form and content of the powerless female prostitute of Matisse's Neo-Orientalist The Blue Nude. Although both artists are using Primitivism, Picasso's painting is a rejection of the Orientalist tradition of the exotic and erotic female as passive which is, in spite of the changed form of Matisse's nude, still very much present in the Primitivism of Matisse's form and content.

## NOTES

1

Pierre Louÿs Aphrodite, Trans. by Willis L. Parker (New York: Hartsdale House, 1932), 240. See also Theodore Zeldin, France, 1848-1945 Ambition, Love and Politics, Volume I, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 305-306, in which Zeldin appraised this book as follows: "Pierre Louÿs's Aphrodite was looked upon as a breviary in praise of prostitution. Published in 1896, it had by 1904 sold 125,000 copies and inspired three plays and four opera libretti, and since then has been regularly reprinted."

2

Maurice Saillet, Alfred Jarry: Tout Ubu (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1962), 457. It can be ascertained from his writings that Jarry identified with the "brutes" and the socially marginalized groups in French society.

3

Annie Kriegel, Le Pain et les Roses (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), 51. According to Kriegel, *Ibid.*, 53, the "bûcherons" represented one of the most important factions of French society in the organization of the rural proletariat at the turn-of-the-century. As the pattern of the French economy changed under industrialization, and new sources of energy were found, the bûcherons reliance on the forest for sustenance was threatened. Kriegel, *Ibid.*, 54, wrote that economic misery resulted in a spontaneous strike in rural France by the bûcherons of the Cher region in the 1890's and produced the first evidence of serious unrest in the rural labouring class. *Ibid.*, 54. Robert Forster and Orest Ranum, eds., Rural Society in France: Selections from the Annales (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 137-138 discuss the practices of the woodworkers as seasonal workers, who worked in the forests in the winter and in their off-season turned to agricultural labour in the fields and vineyards, thus were mediators between the two most ancient economic systems in France. Jolyon Howorth, Edouard Vaillant: La Création de l'unité Socialiste en France (Paris: edi/Syros, 1982), 206, note 7, described the involvement of the socialist, Vaillant, in the organization of the strike of the bûcherons in the Cher in 1891, but said the history of this strike has not yet been written.

4

Britta Martensen-Larsen, "When did Picasso complete 'Les Demoiselles d'Avignon'?", Kunstgesch 48, No. 2, 1985, 264, suggested that the painting was retouched after Burgess had photographed it in 1908. However, William Rubin, ed.,

Primitivism in 20th Century Art, Vol. I, (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984), 251, suggested the completion date of late June or early July, 1907.

5

For example, the subjects of Picasso's Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon have been described as prostitutes by: Leo Steinberg, "The Philosophical Brothel, Part 1," Art News, (September, 1972), pp. 22-29 and "The Philosophical Brothel, Part 2," Art News (October, 1972), pp. 38-47; Michael Leja, "'Le Vieux Marcheur' and 'Les Deux Risques': Picasso, Prostitution, Venereal Disease, and Maternity, 1899-1907," Art History, Vol. 8, No. 1, (March, 1985), pp. 66-81. For example, the subject of Matisse's, The Blue Nude has been described as a prostitute by Andrea Thomsett, The Blue Nude, unpublished paper, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, 1981.

6

Timothy J. Clark, "Preliminaries to a Possible Treatment of 'Olympia' in 1865," Screen, V. 21, (Spring, 1980), 23-24 has described the conjunction of the female nude in western tradition with the historically specific and ideological image of the prostitute in avant-garde French art.

7

Roger Benjamin, Matisse's "Notes of a Painter" Criticism, Theory, and Context; 1891-1908 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: U.M.I. Research Press, 1987). Benjamin presents a lengthy and detailed study of Matisse's early period which meticulously describes his exhibition practice.

8

Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946), 43.

9

Louis Vauxcelles, "Le Salon des Indépendants", Gil Blas, March 20, 1907, p. 1.

10

Pierre Daix, Georges Boudaille, and Joan Rosselet Picasso 1900-1906, Catalogue raisonné (Neuchâtel, Switz.: Editions Ides et Calendes, 1966, 62-63.

11

Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Matisse: His Art and His Public, (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1951), 94-95.

12

Michel Hoog, "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon et la peinture Paris en 1907-1908," Gazette des Beaux-Arts, V. 82 (1973), 212, fig. 5. Gelett Burgess, "The Wild Men of Paris," Architectural Record, (May, 1910), 409. Michel Hoog, "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon et la peinture Paris," 214-215 stressed the importance of the Parisian context of Picasso's painting and Matisse's The Blue Nude. He pointed out the close relationship between these paintings rather than the traditional view which linked Les Demoiselles d'Avignon and Matisse's Joie de Vivre of 1906, noting that Matisse's work was highly visible by March of 1907.

13

Louis Vauxcelles, "Le Salon des Indépendants," Gil Blas, March 20, 1907.

14

Ibid.

15

Benjamin, Matisse's "Notes of a Painter", 304, note 93. Benjamin, Ibid., 305, note 94, explained that he had reversed Barr's earlier negative reading to a positive interpretation.

16

Ibid., 295, notes 246-247.

17

Timothy J. Clark, "Preliminaries . . . ," 27, described this lack of meaning as ". . . the moment at which negation and refutation becomes simply too complete; they erase what they are meant to negate, and therefore no negation takes place; . . . "

18

Burgess, "The Wild Men of Paris," 401. Edward F. Fry, "Cubism 1907-1908: An Early Eyewitness Account," The Art Bulletin, 43, (March, 1966), 70-73, was one of the first to analyze the Burgess article. Fry, Ibid., 73, pointed out that the primitive figures in Picasso's studio were from the French colony of New Caledonia. See also Ellen Oppler, Fauvism Reexamined (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1976), 161, for a logical re-dating of the interview by Burgess to the spring of 1908 based on his description of the spring weather in Paris.

19

Burgess, "The Wild Men of Paris," 408.

20

Sandra E. Leonard, Henri Rousseau and Max Weber

(New York: Richard L. Feigen & Co., 1970), 36, demonstrated how by 1908 the avant-garde paintings of Henry Rousseau were used as "African" background by a commercial dealer in African objects in Paris.

21

Burgess, "The Wild Men of Paris," 402.

22

Ibid., 404. Burgess, Ibid., wrote, "All young, all virile, all enthusiastic, . . . "

23

Alfred H. Barr, Jr. "Matisse, Picasso, and the Crisis of 1907," Magazine of Art, 44, (May, 1951), 163.

24

Ibid., 166. Barr relied on Leo Stein's memoirs, Appreciation, 1947, for his comparison of the personalities of Matisse and Picasso.

25

Ibid., 168.

26

Ibid., 166.

27

Carol Duncan, "Virility and Domination in Early 20th-Century Vanguard Painting," Artforum, 12 (1973/74), p. 35, had praised Matisse for his concept of "human freedom" in The Joy of Living, and suggested that it ". . . remains a vision of social order without domination, a dream in which sensual beauty may be enjoyed without fear." Duncan did not see this depiction of leisure as a contradiction in the historical context of its production and instead considered Matisse to be the one artist who ". . . attempted to transcend the assertion of virility . . . "

28

For example, the Catalogue for the Société des Artistes Indépendants, of the spring of 1906, p. 1, defined its purpose as follows "La Société des 'Artistes Indépendants' basée sur la suppression des Jurys d'admission, a pour but de permettre aux Artistes de présenter librement leurs oeuvres au jugement du Public." In contrast, the 1905 Catalogue du Société du Salon d'Automne (Paris: Cie Française des Papiers-Monnaie, 1905), 199, stated that this Salon was to promote all the "Beaux-Arts" not only with an annual, fall exhibition but by helping its members in every way possible. As well, Ibid., 202-203, there was a complex administrative hierarchy in place with rules and regulations, and this Salon returned

to the Jury system. Article 21, *Ibid.*, 205, stated that: "Les discussions politiques ou religieuses sont formellement interdites dans la Société."

29

Elie Faure, Catalogue of the Société du Salon d'Automne, 1905, p. 18.

30

*Ibid.*, 19.

31

J.-C. Holl, "Le Salon d'Automne," Les Cahiers d'Art, II, Paris, (October 1905), 73-74, commented on the "Ingres et Manet," retrospective as peculiar and intriguing. In particular, ". . . le rapprochement inattendu n'était peut-être pas opportun à cette heure. Ce fut, en effet, un étonnement général de voir Ingres figurer à côté de Manet, . . . je ne vois qu'une explication plausible, la présence du Bain Turc." Holl distinguished between Ingres concern with the "contours de la forme" and his "science de la composition" of the Bain Turc and Manet's concern with colour to revive the old battle between Ingres and Delacroix. Holl described the juxtaposition of Ingres and Manet as a confrontation of ". . . deux mondes opposés, l'un vivant dans les pénombres intellectuelles, l'autre dressé en pleine lumière." Holl concluded that Ingres was out of place at this Salon while Manet exemplified an avant-garde artist misunderstood in his own time.

Louis Vauxcelles' "A Propos d'Une Rétrospective," appeared in his column, "La Vie Artistique," Gil Blas, of September 10, 1905, p. 1, had also concentrated on the example of Manet for the younger artists who were "si assoifés de gloire immédiate." In his review of Manet's difficult struggle against the critics of his time, Vauxcelles described him as "Ce martyr d'un artiste doit être un thème de méditations graves pour les artistes." Of significance was the way in which Vauxcelles revived all the old criticism of Manet in relation to his lack of idealization of the female nudes in Dejeuner sur l'herbe and Olympia, by concentrating on their subject. He revived the issue of Olympia shocking the public because of her status as "la pauvre courtisane" and the nudes in Dejeuner sur l'herbe who disturbed the jury and the bourgeois because of their state of undress while in the company of clothed males. However, according to information provided in the catalogue by Françoise Cachin, Charles S. Moffett, and Michel Melot, Manet 1832-1883 (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1983), 347-348, neither of these paintings were shown at the retrospective and the only "horizontal" was a full-portrait by Manet entitled Lady with Fans, Portrait Nina de Callias. This reclining nude is posed lounging on a chaise-louge, in

an exotic, primarily black, filmy "'Algerian' costume in which she liked to receive." visitors to Parisian salon.

32

Faure, Catalogue, Société du Salon d'Automne, 1905, 20. Faure claimed, *Ibid.*, 19, that "Le Salon d'Automne a entrepris de démontrer, par ces expositions rétrospectives, la légitimité constante de l'effort révolutionnaire pour rejoindre la tradition. La tradition d'un peuple consiste à faire germer dans l'intimité de sa nature le fruit de ses découvertes nouvelles sur le terrain des acquisitions qui constituent son patrimoine héréditaire..."

33

*Ibid.*, 21.

34

*Ibid.*, 24.

35

Camille Mauclair, "La Crise de la Laideur en Peinture," Trois Crises de l'Art Actuel (Paris: Imprimerie Deslis Frères, 1906), 286-287. Published as one chapter of this book, of June, 1906, "La Crise de la Laideur en Peinture" was an argument directed against the salon which functioned with a jury system, unlike the Independants or private galleries, and therefore had the power to be selective. In support of his disgust with the paintings ". . . qu'on n'aurait pas trois jours sur son mur sans le retourner avec colère, . . ." Mauclair then quoted from Remy de Gourmont's remarks on the Salon des Indépendants of the spring of 1906, (published in the Mercure de France, April, 1906), wherein the avant-garde were attacked for their choice of subjects. According to Mauclair, *Ibid.*, 289-291, Gourmont had asked "'Qui donc voudrait se mettre quotidiennement sous les yeux ces femmes d'hôpital ou de lupanar? . . . ils s'entetent a déshonorer leur talent par le choix des sujets, non les plus sales, mais les plus bêtes . . . L'oeuvre seule existe et tout son charme est dans la beauté. Qui a trompé les peintres en leur faisant croire que le sujet n'a pas d'importance . . . mais Manet a fait une autre oeuvre tout de meme avec Olympia qu'avec une pioche et un panier de prunes." Gourmont's greatest worry was that the "bourgeois" might turn with new appreciation toward "les Cabanel et les Bouguereau." Mauclair particularly emphasized Gourmont's objections to the lack of concern for beautiful subjects in the 1906 Salon des Indépendants. The catalogue of the Salon des Indépendants of 1906, pp. 280-281, listed eight works by Klees Van Dongen, whose figurative subjects were known for their vulgar presentation of prostitution and lower class entertainers. (Note also: Matisse's Joie de vivre was exhibited at this Salon.)

Mauclair, Trois Crises de l'Art Actuel, "La Crise de la Laideur en Peinture," 296-297 cited the reasons for the avant-garde's failure to produce nothing but bad painting as their neglect of finish and their "goût de la laideur," particularly in the nude female subject. Mauclair wrote: "Beaucoup de femmes nues figuraient là: toutes étaient laides et viles de formes et tonalites, présentées avec une misogynie étrange . . . qu'on voyait en ces galeries des femmes sortant du tub plus malpropres qu'avant d'y être entrées . . . On restait stupefait devant l'ignomie méthodique des chairs et des formes . . . Ce que certains exposants avaient peint en regardant le modèle nu était inimaginable de laideur et d'aberration."

36

Ibid., 300. Mauclair concentrated on the formal issues in relation to Manet and Ingres and not the subject of their paintings which Holl (see note 31 above) had chosen as the focus of his critique. Instead, Mauclair used Gourmont's critique of the diseased and lower class prostitute as an "ugly" subject of avant-garde paintings. See also note 35 above.

37

Mauclair, Trois Crises de l'Art Actuel, 305.

38

Ibid., 308.

39

Ibid., 312.

40

Ibid., 314-315.

41

Michael P. Mezzatesta, Henri Matisse, Sculptor/Painter, (Fort Worth, Texas: Kimball Art Museum, 1984), 61.

42

H. P. Clive, Pierre Louÿs (1870-1925), A Biography, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 103-104, explained that while both Louÿs and Gide had visited Biskra and described its erotic and exotic pleasures in literary form (for example, Louÿs' Les Chansons de Bilitis of 1894 and Gide's Les Nourritures terrestres of 1896), it was Louÿs who wrote pornographic literature for the bourgeois male heterosexual which preserved his virile and superior status. Clive, Pierre Louÿs, 105-106, documented the fact that both men had been sexually involved with the same young Algerian girl of the Ouled Nail tribe--girls from this tribe were known for their exotic and erotic dancing and their "willingness" to



prostitute themselves to raise funds for their dowry.

First published in 1896, Louÿs novel, Aphrodite, (New York: 1932), centred on this classical cult figure of prostitution which acted to conceal his more overt reference to the contemporary issue and his promotion of the institution in relation to male power. His text preserved the virile image of the creative genius of the artist/hero who immortalized the lifeless form of a lower class, foreign-born courtesan as a victim of heterosexual male power. Clive, Pierre Louÿs, 186-187, stated that Aphrodite was presented as a musical on the stage of the Paris Comic Opera in March of 1906. Special lighting techniques were used to highlight the feminine forms of the dancers under the wisps of drapery which they were obliged to wear because they were prohibited from performing their role as dancing prostitutes in the nude. L'Illustration published its review of the performance on March 31st, p. 193, and suggested that its readers compare the photos of the erotic dancers in Aphrodite with the exotic Javanese dancers pictured on the following two pages. The article made explicit reference to the similarity of costume which exposed the dancers' forms and suggestive movements. Implicit in the review was the link between the real availability of the stage performers as objects of male power and the visual stimulation provided by the Javanese harem girls who were the property of one man, the Sultan. Elisabeth Hausser, Paris au Jour le Jour, Les Evénements vus par la presse, Paris, 1900-1919 (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1968), 228, quoted an article written by G. Faure, Le Figaro, April 27, 1906, as follows: ". . . Mary Garden en courtisane grecque est 'on ne peut plus belle, ni plus séduisante, ni plus touchante' et les invocations a l'amour de la première danseuse 'rappellent à s'y méprendre les esquises pantomimes de Mata-Hari.'" Obviously, therefore, the performance of Mary Garden in Aphrodite was deliberately compared with that of Mata-Hari, a well-known courtesan who specialized in exotic Javanese dancing.

43

Andrea Thomsett, The Blue Nude, 6, supported this point of view in her discussion of the relationship of prostitution with the French military and ultimately with the painting, The Blue Nude itself.

44

Abraham Flexner, Prostitution in Europe (New York: The Century Co., 1914), 327.

45

Alain Corbin, Les filles de noce: misère sexuelle et prostitution (19e et 20e siècles) (Paris: Aubier Montagne, 1978), 470-471.

46

Ibid., 182-183.

47

Ibid., 185-186.

48

Ibid., 258-259.

49

The traditional and progressive Salons were also covered by Le Rire, a satiric Parisian illustrated periodical which kept a close watch on the artistic and political communities. It attacked artistic, social and political issues with its humour directed toward the anarchists and the bourgeois. The 4th of May issue of 1907 of Le Rire, p. 2, contained a drawing by Guillaume of an older couple looking at a reclining nude at the salon. The caption, "Au Salon de La Nationale" was accompanied by the bourgeois male's warning to his wife: "Ne reste donc pas comme ça devant ce tableau, Hermance... On dit que c'est l'habitude des modèles qui ont pose pour le peintre..." Fantasio, a popular publication of the time, was filled with photographs of female entertainers, either nude or in suggestive costumes. As well, performances such as Aphrodite, and Mata Hari's erotic and exotic dances proliferated on the Paris stage.

50

Albert E. Elsen, The Sculpture of Henri Matisse (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1972), 219, note 59. Elsen had identified the photograph as the source for Matisse's sculpture but he did not identify the publication from which it was taken. The photograph appeared in the context of A. Vignola's periodical publication, L'Humanité Féminine (Paris: Librairie Documentaire, January 5, 1907), in the context of an article from this illustrated series entitled, "Femmes d'Afrique: Sud-Algérien et Tunisie," IIIe serie, p. 40. The photograph was titled, "Jeunes filles targui." This publication originated on December 1, 1906, and the first issue contained a series of articles and photographs of "Arabes et Mauresques, Etudes de nus, de costumes, de moeurs," on December 15, 1906, "Bédouins et Berbères" and on December 29, 1906, "Nègresses, Dahoméennes et Congolaises." From its first issue, L'Humanité Féminine, "Femmes d'Afrique: Arabes et Mauresques," of December 1, 1906, and its subsequent formats, it is apparent that the popularity of this periodical would rest upon its presentation of women from various African cultures as eroticized objects of curiosity. Their poses were obviously manipulated by professional photographers to appeal to the western male through the emphasis on their exotic costumes and setting or their "primitive" nudity. While their cultural diversity was

emphasized it was recast within the framework of the Western male's power fantasy. (African women were described in the Western constructs of "Eves" and "Venuses".) An ideologically constructed viewpoint was thus imposed upon the African female to emphasize her physical eroticism and her exotic origins. Measured against Western standards of classical beauty, the size of her breasts, thighs and feet as well as her facial configurations and skin colour the African woman was defined in relation to Western culture. A. Vignola, L'Humanité Féminine, "Femmes d'Afrique: Arabes et Mauresques," 3-5, imposed a form of historical reality upon this publication's content by discussing the origins of North African culture in relation to Christianity. Islamic Arabs and North African Jews were described in terms of common origin through reference to biblical stories. For example it was suggested that "Cette legende qui donne aux compatriotes de Mahomet et aux Israelites une origine commune, ne'est que le reflect de la vérité historique." Explanation for the current impurity of the Arab race and thus its degradation was related directly to Le Bon's theories through the belief that the cause was the mixing of the races which resulted from the racially different African women taken as slaves in Moslem harems. Western racist theory was thus related to and responsible for the erection of artificial barriers which divided North African cultures and eased French dominance.

51

Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978) 207.

52

Leroy C. Breunig, ed. Apollinaire on Art: Essays and Reviews 1902-1918, Trans. Susan Suleiman, (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), 38.

52

Louys, Aphrodite, 11, commented upon the relationship between virility and creativity in his preface to Aphrodite as follows: "It is because sensuality is a condition, mysterious but necessary and creative, of intellectual development. Those who have not felt to their limit the strongest demands of the flesh, whether as a blessing or as a curse, are incapable of understanding fully the demands of the spirit. Just as the beauty of the soul illumines the features, so only the virility of the body nourishes the brain. The worst insult that Delacroix could address to men--that which he threw indiscriminately at the railers of Rubens and at the detractors of Ingres--was this terrible word: 'Eunuchs!'"

54

Steinberg, "The Philosophical Brothel, Part I," 27, mentioned the sexual possibilities of the "porron" as a phallic symbol. However, he rejected the notion that this figure was a eunuch because of the nude form--an interpretation with which I do not agree.

55

Corbin, Les filles de noce, 344, cited C. Andler's Le manifeste communiste de Karl Marx et F. Engels, 151. Corbin, Les filles de noce, 349-350, also suggested that the socialists were silent on the issue of regulatory change in controlling prostitution, believing that bourgeois culture was responsible for the institution of prostitution.

56

Carol Duncan, "Virility and Domination in Early 20th-century Vanguard Painting," Artforum, 12 (1973/4), 35-36 described Picasso's painting as a justification to ". . . celebrate the domination of woman by man." Duncan ignored the specificity of the moment and ideological differences in avant-garde practice.

57

Ronald Johnson, "Primitivism in the Early Sculpture of Picasso," Arts Magazine, 49 (June, 1975), 64-68 is an important discussion of Picasso's wooden sculptures. However, he continues the traditional assumption of their close relationship to primitive art. Johnson, "Picasso's Demoiselles d'Avignon and the Theatre of the Absurd," Arts Magazine, 55, no. 2, (October, 1980), 102-113 discussed the significance of Picasso's formal Primitivism in relation to the artists subjectivity. Johnson, *Ibid.*, 106, noted ". . . the increasing primitivism from left to right. . . ." His formal analysis of the painting not only supports the fact that Picasso's figures seem to be ". . . hacked and cut out of wood . . . (but that) . . . the drapery and curtains . . . (are) rough and unsensual." While Johnson, *Ibid.*, 109, recognized Picasso's "de-feminization" as a possible symbol of infertility, he did not connect this to the ideological complexity of the historic moment.

57

Michael Leja, "'Le Vieux Marcheur' and 'Les Deux Risques': Picasso, Prostitution, Venereal Disease, and Maternity, 1899-1907," Art History, Vol. 8, No. 1, (March, 1985), 78-79 recognized the importance of the social context of prostitution as a subject but saw Picasso's painting as a failure. Leja redefined the function of the painting as a failed expression of a sexual dilemma in which Picasso failed in his intention ". . . to make the viewer recognize simultaneously the twin inevitabilities of submission and

subsequent harm . . ." Leja does not explore the possibility of Picasso's possible intention to remove the seductive content.

59

Leja, "'Le Vieux Marcheur'," 68-69 outlined the complexity of the ideological debate surrounding prostitution in the early 20th century in relation to Picasso's subjects.

60

Johnson, "Picasso's "Demoiselles. . . , 105, noted the production of Picasso's wooden sculptures in relation to the evolution of the painting and began to question the direct influence of primitive art upon Picasso's experiments.

61

Picasso's accentuation of this figure's knee appears to satirize the "perfect knees" of classical sculpture. See also Hugh Honour, Neo-Classicism (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1977), 117, where he described the "perfect knees" which were admired by academics and believed to be found only in antique sculpture.

62

Barr, Picasso, 1946, 51.

63

Rubin, "Primitivism", 245.

64

Corbin, Les filles de noce, 482, suggested that the issue of prostitution, which was surrounded by contradictory viewpoints, would, at a time of national threat take on a greater significance. Thus, the prostitute presented a problem for the French nation in the double role of essential product but dangerous through the risk of disease. Corbin, Ibid., 478-479, documented the fact that the young rural prostitutes were in fact resistant to measures of regulation and control.

65

Pierre Daix, "Il n'y a pas "D'Art nègre dans Les Demoiselles d'Avignon," Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 11, 1970, 263 argued against the imitation of primitive art by Picasso and explained that Picasso's use of "hachures" as a means "pour signifier le relief" was to produce a "code figuratif" unrelated to a live model or to a primitive mask. Therefore, Daix suggested that Picasso's formal experiments could have a social significance not directly related to African art. In fact, Picasso's search for a "primitive" form with which to express his content can be found in his experiments at Gosol, Spain. On display at the Musée Picasso, Paris, in June,

1986, was a tree branch upon which Picasso had incised the figure of a female nude in a classical pose in the summer of 1906, at Gosol, which I suggest was an early attempt by Picasso to find a vehicle for anti-classical form relative to "primitive" rural culture.

66

Widener, Gustave Le Bon, 135. Jules Guesde, Le Socialisme au Jour le Jour, Paris, 1899, 473, referred to the destructive force of the "Nana's" of the world through the threat they posed for their clients, the bourgeois male and that they should not be viewed as victims in the context of the historic struggle. See also Susan Hollis Clayson, Dissertation (U.C.L.A., 1984) Representations of Prostitution in Early Third Republic France (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI, 1985), for her important discussion of the social significance of the literary and artistic renderings of the stereotype of Nana. Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 127, argued that the function of the class ideology of the bourgeois, which saw the need to reproduce itself, was important to this class's attempt to retain its superior and privileged status. He proposed that ". . . the bourgeoisie endowed itself, in an arrogant political affirmation, with a garulous sexuality which the proletariat long refused to accept, since it was foisted on them for the purpose of subjugation . . . and we must say that there is a bourgeois sexuality, and that there are class sexualities."

67

Saillet, Alfred Jarry: Tout Ubu, 15. See also Keith Beaumont, Alfred Jarry: A Critical and Biographical Study (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984) 143.

68

Saillet, Alfred Jarry: Tout Ubu, 457-459. See also Keith Beaumont, Alfred Jarry, 143.

## CONCLUSION

L'homme est un témoin de sa propre existence  
et de l'univers qui l'entoure. L'Art est le  
témoignage qu'il laisse, . . .

1  
Gustave Geffroy, 1905.

Related through their "ugly" female subjects, Matisse's The Blue Nude (Souvenir of Biskra) and Picasso's Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.) are Neo-Orientalist paintings of prostitutes which differ in meaning through their application of Primitivism.

In Matisse's painting, the "ugly" woman functioned as a symbol of racial, sexual and class inferiority by which the Western bourgeois male-dominated French culture could retain delusions of power. The violent restructuring of her form to emphasize her primitiveness had relevance within the context of the official sphere of French culture which promoted the taste for erotic and exotic female imagery. The Blue Nude, as a passive, lazy and "willing" North African prostitute, functioned as a vital commodity within the structure of French neo-colonialism.

Picasso's "ugly" women are portrayed as prostitutes transformed through Primitivism to symbolize the changing historical process of power relationships. Picasso rejected traditional references to French classicism and the erotic

and exotic decorative content of Orientalist painting to exploit its violence. His prostitutes refuse the identification of the female prostitute as passive, willing victims and are instead symbols of aggression responding to the complexity of the debates over racial, sexual and class identity.

Matisse's well-known statement, published in 1908 reveals his affinity with bourgeois values. Matisse wrote:

Ce que je rêve, c'est un art d'équilibre, de pureté, de tranquillité, sans sujet inquiétant ou préoccupant, qui soit, pour tout travailleur cérébral, pour l'homme d'affaires aussi bien que pour l'artiste des lettres, par exemple, un lénifiant, un calmant cérébral, quelque chose d'analogue à un bon fauteuil qui le délasse des ses fatigues physiques. 2

The Blue Nude was the perfect subject for fantasies of bourgeois power. Picasso's painting of violent and aggressive females was intended to function differently from Matisse's The Blue Nude, however, through its violent, yet ambiguous content, Le Demoiselles d'Avignon could still provide pleasure to the Western bourgeois male.

The appearance of the "ugly" women in the battle over avant-garde leadership in Paris in 1907 is related to French neo-colonialism and class polarization. Primitivism, as a tool of class, sexual and racial domination was viewed in distinctive ways by the popular and official circles of culture. Incorporation of the image of the female prostitute as a primitivized subject in avant garde-painting was



influenced by class ideologies. In the violent atmosphere of social and colonial unrest to which the increasingly nationalist French Republic responded with brutal repression and Germany threatened French Imperialist hegemony in Africa, the appearance of the "ugly" women in the Parisian avant-garde should not be surprising. Afterall, "It was an 'ugly' moment."<sup>3</sup>

## NOTES

1

Gustave Geffroy, "Signification de l'Art," Les Cahiers d'Art, Paris, 1905, 3.

2

Henri Matisse, "Notes d'un Peintre," December, 1908, as quoted in Benjamin, Matisse's "Notes of a Painter," Appendix, 741-742, from Matisse's original text.

3

Serge Guilbaut, in discussion, Graduate Student Round Table, Department of Fine Arts, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, March, 1987.

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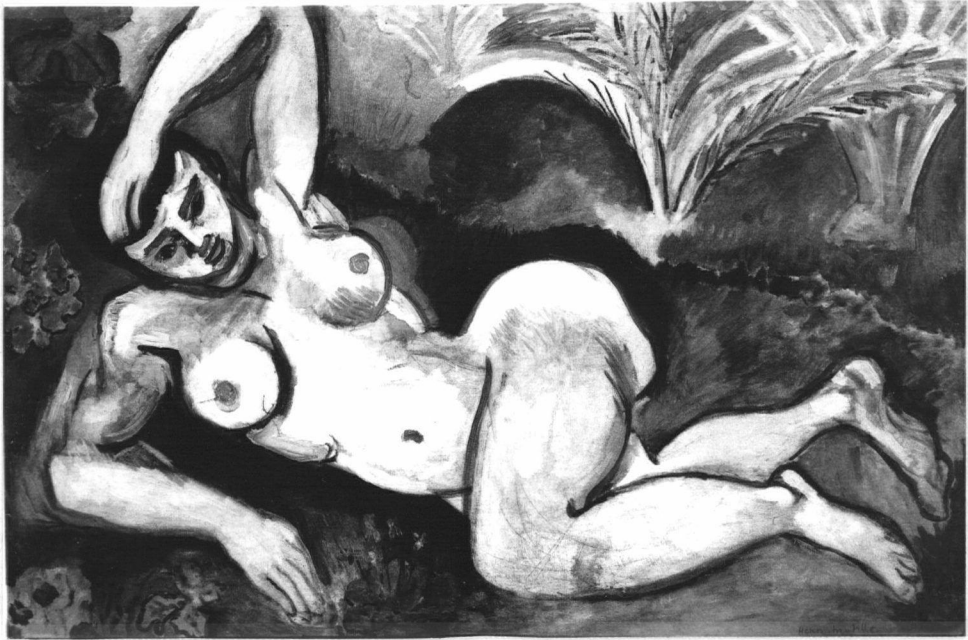


Fig. 1. Henri Matisse. The Blue Nude (Souvenir of Biskra), 1907. Baltimore Museum of Art, The Cone Collection.



Fig. 2. Pablo Picasso. Les  
Demoiselles d'Avignon, 1907.  
Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Fig. 3. Georges Rochegrosse.  
La Joie Rouge, 1906.

L'ETAT DÉPRAVATEUR



Et voilà, sur les murs de la Seine, un abaissement étrange de ces vieux tableaux obscènes tant jadis par l'Etat pour enseigner à de jeunes dépravés, l'Etat abhorré de sa.



On peut y voir également des jeunes filles sans pudor (bien que d'excellentes familles), qui passent leur temps à dévotir de sans honneur et complètement déshabillés. Cet autre tableau s'appelle - l'École des Beaux-Arts -.



De cette école de pornographie artistique sortent des êtres sans pudor, sans morale, qui passent leur immense existence en compagnie de symboles obscènes. Et se reproduisent à l'infini, en formes provocantes, voluptueuses, de ces immodiques créations. Et, en faisant, ils acquiescent glorie et fortune.



Et ces deux humbles gens leur témoignent la plus grande estime. Les femmes du monde posent dans le plus simple appareil devant ces maîtres pornographes. L'Etat les couvre d'or, de médailles, de croix. ... L'Institut leur ouvre ses portes. Et M. Bergeon en dit rien !!!

Imago 1906

Fig. 4. Radiguet. L'Etat Dépravateur, March 1906. L'Assiette au Beurre.

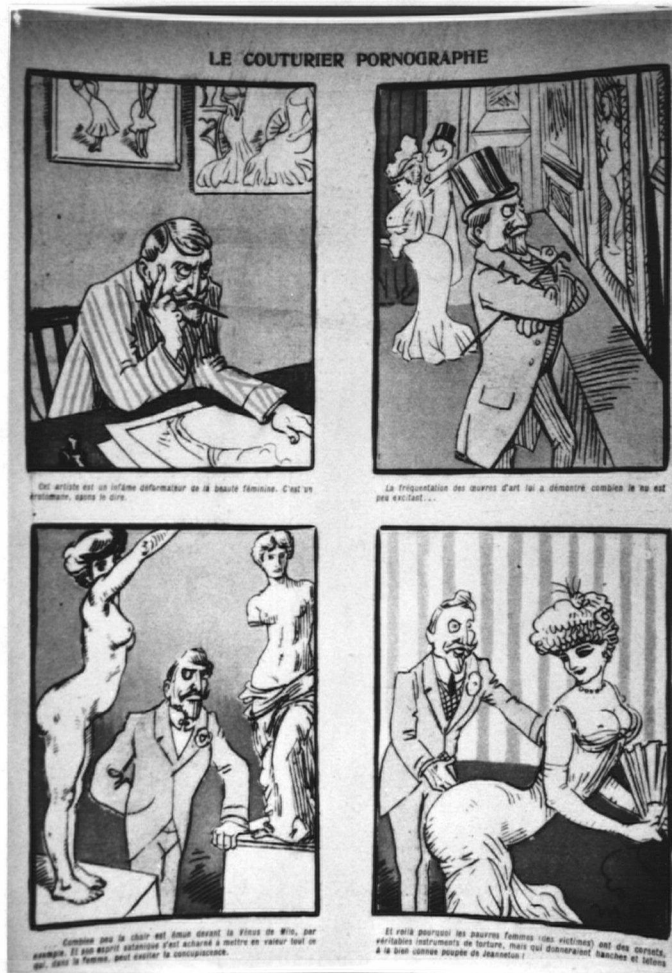


Fig. 5. Radiguet. Le Couturier Pornographe, March 1906.  
L'Assiette au Beurre.

POUR LES BÉRENGÈRES



Ces pauvres femmes sont dans les gares attendues à l'arrivée des trains, les jours où les soldats qui sont trop souvent la proie d'immenses trafiquants...



et se placent -- à la France par moi -- chez des gens respectables. Ici, non, elles sont seules !



Mais les pauvres filles de nos villes souffrent aussi que les soldats... Les Béréngères, si bien que, bien sûr, elles sont seules !



Elles accompagnent, au besoin, jusqu'au bout leurs pauvres maris, mais elles ne peuvent pas aller avec elles...



Elles sont, parfois, évadées de leurs parents et seules dans le monde...



Quelle cette vie de débouche mon enfant... vous gagnez 20 francs par jour en travaillant. Tant...

ABONNEMENTS: Un an, Paris, 50 fr.; 50 fr. à l'étranger. Les commandes et abonnements se font à l'Administration, 62, rue de Provence, Paris. L'Édition: Victor, 62, rue de Provence, Paris.

Fig. 6. Radiguet. Pour les Béréngères, March 1906. L'Assiette au Beurre.





Fig. 7. Divers. La Liberté,  
 Avril 1906. Cover. L'Assiette  
 au Beurre.



Fig. 8. Grandjouan. 1er mai,  
April 1906. Cover. L'Assiette au  
Beurre.



Fig. 9. Henri Matisse. The Reclining Nude I, 1907. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest.

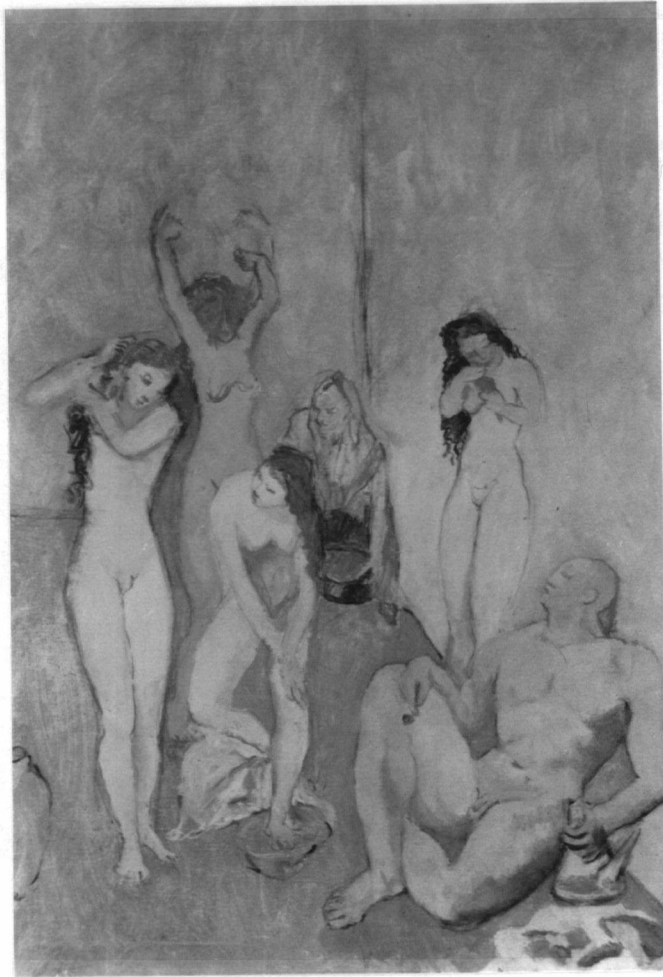


Fig. 10. Pablo Picasso. The Harem, 1906. Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland. Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Collection.